

Trip report Mammals of Southern and Northeastern Tanzania

November 2016 - January 2017

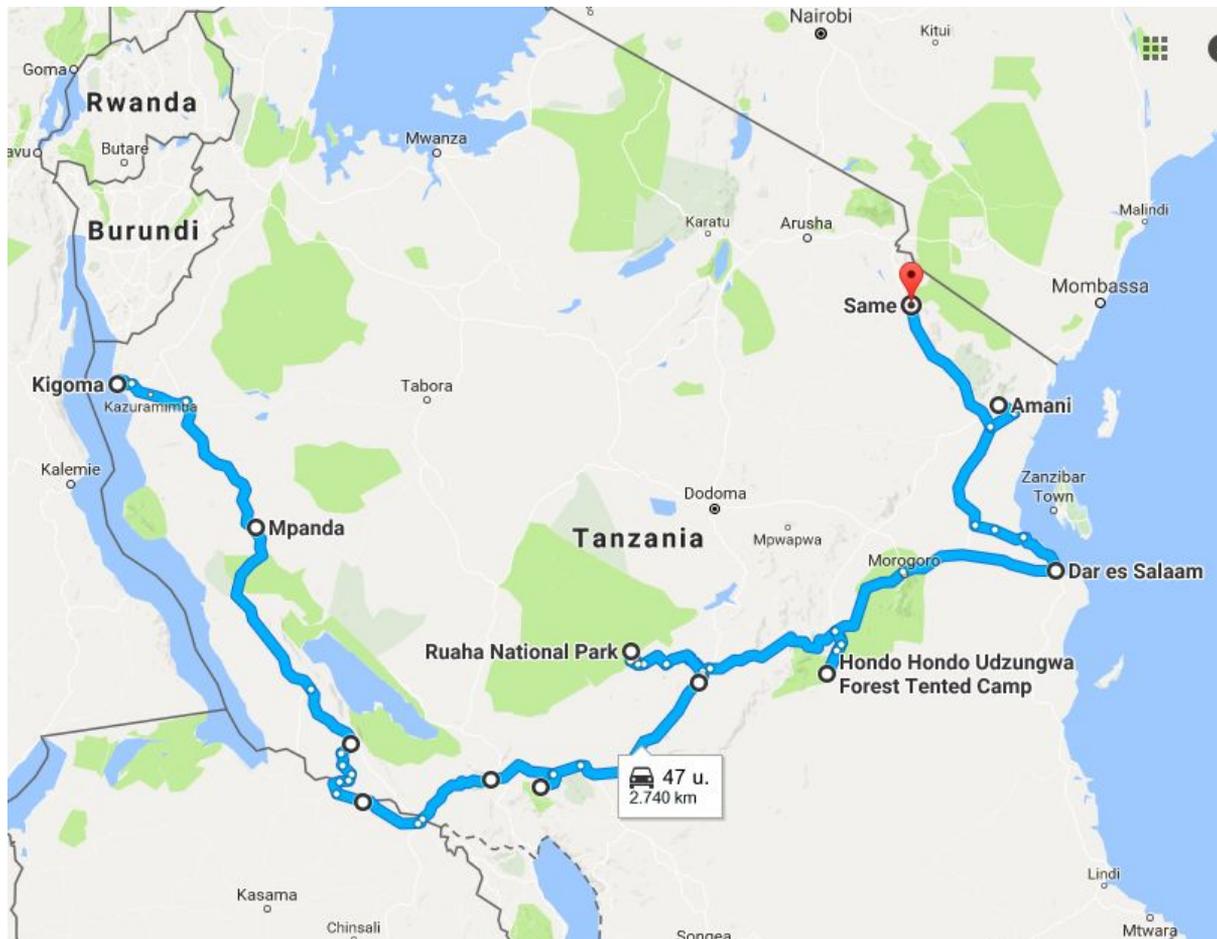
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Route



After a period of field work in Amani Nature Reserve, during which I spent a weekend in Mkomazi NP, we embarked on a 3.5 week holiday throughout the southern part of Tanzania and Zanzibar. After a short stop on Zanzibar we flew to Kigoma and visited Gombe from there. Then we went back to Dar es Salaam, making stops along the way in the Katavi, Kitulo, Ruaha and Udzungwa National Parks. We decided to take this route instead of the Northern Circuit to cut costs and avoid the crowds that come during the Christmas holidays to Serengeti and the other northern parks. Additionally the south has the advantage of seeing more mammals that are more difficult to see elsewhere and some of the primates, like Kipunji and Sanje mangabey, can only be seen on the southern circuit.

Logistics

We got around by public transport, except when visiting the Katavi and Ruaha national parks, which are classical Safari parks and a car is necessary. Car hire for those Parks is easily done in Sitalike for Katavi and in Iringa for Ruaha. Buses in Tanzania can bring you everywhere, though sometimes you have to get up very early and they are not very comfortable normally. Driving styles vary but can be atrocious. But getting around on public transport is a lot cheaper than hiring a car. For a trip of 2000 km we spent around less than 100 USD per person on public transport, compared with a car that is easily 150 USD per day. We organized everything ourselves without any local tour operator. We used the **Rough guide to Tanzania** which was a great help and together with the internet contains all

the info that one needs. For mammal watching in Tanzania I would strongly recommend the **Field guide to the Larger Mammals of Tanzania** by Foley *et al.*. I also want to thank Charles Foley for his advice on finding Kipunji monkeys.

We visited during the rainy season, which meant that the scenery was very beautiful and the wildflowers of Kitulo in full glory. This also meant that especially in Katavi and to a lesser extent also in Ruaha the bush was very green, so visibility was lower. And in Katavi animals were more dispersed, as there was plenty of water everywhere.

The mammals:

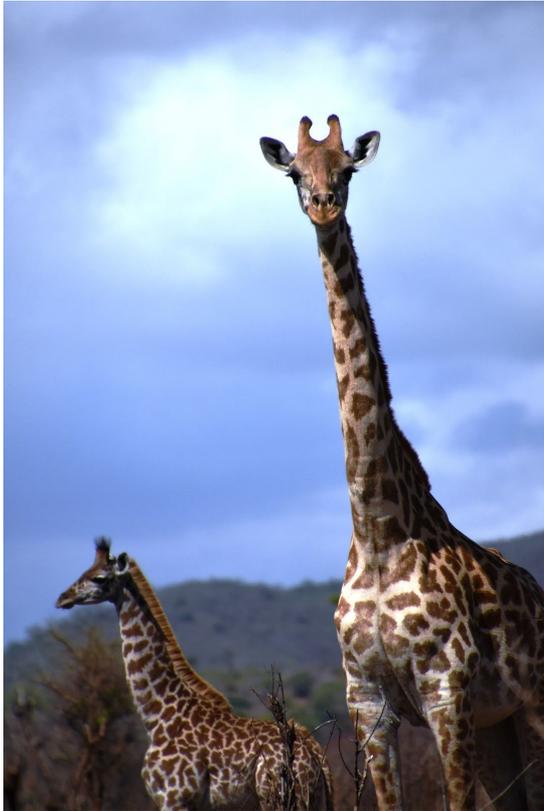
Amani Nature Reserve November - December 2016

I spent 7 weeks in Amani NR to do field work, but in the spare time I got to see some interesting mammals. I stayed in the Amani IUCN guest house. **Mitis monkey** and **Zanj sun squirrels** are the most commonly seen mammals during the day. **Angolan black-and-white colobuses** are also common but more shy, they are still regularly seen in all forests, including along the way from Muheza to Amani. **Red-bellied bush squirrels** are more difficult and I only saw them sometimes close to the main road 1-3 kilometers before reaching Amani village.

At night **Eastern tree hyraxes** are often heard in the forest from the rest house to Mbomole hill. **Mountain dwarf galago** were seen twice near the top of Mbomole hill just after dusk. In the first 1 kilometer from the Mbomole hill trail I have also seen **Bushy-tailed mongoose**, **Servaline genet** (-5.101, 38.628), **Eastern giant pouched rat** and unidentified fruit bats are common at night. Both the genet and mongoose I saw only once, so you need some luck, I also saw a **Suni** here in 2015, but not this time. **Eastern giant pouched rat** are also commonly seen on the road from sigi gate to Amani at night. I also found an **Angolan fruit bat** in roosting in a hollow tree along the Mbomole hill trail. A pair of **Garnett's galago** is resident around the guest house and is often heard at night and relatively easily seen. **African palm civet** are sometimes seen in the trees around the bedrooms of the guesthouse (this is where I found Stefan Lithner his palm civet last year ;)). I also saw 2 about 15 minutes walk north of the guest house (-5.097, 38.631).



Mkomazi National Park *December 3-4*



Wildlife here is rather shy. **Grant's zebra**, **Common eland**, **Coke's hartebeest**, **Common warthog** and **Masai giraffe** are easily seen in the open plains in the west of the park, **Grant's gazelle** occurs here as well, but in low numbers. **Steenbok** is also relatively common in the western parts of the park. **Kirk's dikdik** and **Lesser kudu** are common but shy everywhere where there are enough shrubs. **Fringe-eared oryx** were seen two times, both in the northwestern section of the park at -3.926, 37.880 and -3.938, 37.878, in this area we also saw **African buffalo** twice. **Unstriped ground squirrel** are common in the drier central section of the park, **Lesser kudu** are also common here. **African elephant** were only seen once, a group of 6 just west of the fenced off rhino area. Other mammals seen are **Black-backed jackal**, **Impala**, **Dwarf mongoose**, **Zebra mongoose** and **Yellow baboon**

Jozani Chwaka National Park *December 26*

Zanzibar red colobuses are easily seen in the Guava dominated forests around the park HQ and are completely ignorant of people. **Black-and-rufous sengi** were seen twice. Once just before the Mangrove boardwalk and once in the shrub on the road from park HQ to the boardwalk, about 200 meters from the main road. The sengi are not really shy and if you find the right guide, they can find them for you. In the mahogany forest north of the park HQ we saw several **Zanj sun squirrels** and a group of **Mitis monkey**. Zanzibar is really warm though, so it good to arrive early, we saw the elephant shrews at 10:00 and at 12:00, so they remain active even when it is somewhat warmer.



Gombe stream National Park *December 29*

We went here on a day trip from Kigoma. The Jakobsen beach camping offers boat transfers for 210USD return on the same day, regardless of the amount of passengers, which might well be the cheapest way to visit the park, ignoring the dangerous water taxis.

During the boat trip to Gombe we saw **Red-tailed monkeys** and **Olive baboons** along the shore, just as a dead bush pig. During the chimp tracking we found a single **red-tailed monkey**, more **Olive baboons** and a group of **Central-African red colobuses**. After a 3 hour hike we also found the **Chimpanzees**, one group is habituated and sightings are almost guaranteed, which is not the case in Mahale NP.



Katavi National Park *January 1-2*

We stayed in the Hippo Garden hotel just outside the national park, they have a large **Common hippo** pod (80+ animals) in the river right next to the river. On arrival we also saw a wild canid running away, which most probably was a **Side-striped jackal** as it had a white tip to the tail. We hired a safari car from Juma (07-67754740) for about 150 USD, including a capable driver. The first mammals we saw inside the park were **Banded mongoose** at the park headquarters. The main game drive areas are in the central section of the park around the Katisunga floodplain. We saw a pack of **African wild dog** in the northeastern part of the floodplain. **Common buffalo, Topi, Impala, Grant's zebra, Common hippo, Common warthog, Masai giraffe, Defassa waterbuck** and **Bohor reedbuck** were common along the

floodplain and close to the Ikuu ranger post and Lake Chada. **African elephant** were also relatively common. We also saw a single **Bushbuck**, **Spotted hyena** and a small group of **Yellow baboons**. **Yellow-winged bats** were seen at one of the picnic sites close to Lake Chada. Throughout the park **Banded mongoose** are common and **Dwarf mongoose** are also sometimes seen. We saw an **Egyptian mongoose** on the northern shore of Lake Chada, here larger herds of **Common eland** were also seen. In a recently burnt area west of the main road we saw more **Common eland** and **Bohor reedbuck** we also saw a single **Southern reedbuck** here. **Lichtenstein's hartebeest** and **Lion** were only seen from a bus in the early morning along the main road going through the park.

Night drives are allowed here, but we did not do any...

Kitulo National Park *January 5-6*

For independent visitors Geoffrey from National Park is a great help in organizing your trip, e-mails to the park are a waste of time, but sms and calling works very well, his number is 07-67536130.

The main goal here was to see **Kipunji**, which occurs in the Livingstone forest inside the park. There is only one trail from the escarpment into the forest, but we found a single **Kipunji** within 15 minutes of walking, the animal was very shy though, so we saw it only briefly. For the rest the only mammals here were heard only **Angolan black-and-white colobuses**. We were camping on the plateau, so we did not spend more than 1.5 hour in the forest proper. If you want to have more time to look, it is possible to camp inside the forest, though you will need porters then. Cooking equipment and gas can be rented from the National Park and basic food can be bought in Matamba village, though it is advisable to shop in Mbeya. Camping should also give you the chance to look for Rungwe dwarf galago.

The Kitulo plateau itself is amazing for flowers in the rainy season, the only mammals we saw here were **Common duiker**, which were regularly flushed. Side-striped jackal, slender mongoose and southern reedbuck are apparently also regularly seen.



Kipunji habitat - Bamboo forest interspersed with Hagenia trees

Ruaha National Park *January 8-10*

We stayed in the bandas inside the park close to the park HQ. The bandas are now being equipped with ensuite bathrooms and food can be prepared at the restaurant a few hundred meters away at the Park HQ. You need a car for this at night though because of the wild animals. In the area around the bandas and park HQ **Vervet monkey**, **Common hippo**, **Black-backed jackal**, **Yellow baboon**, **African elephant** and **African grass rat** are common. There are also bats roosting under the roofs and we found a weakened **Lesser free-tailed bat** one morning.



Mammal densities in the park were lower than expected, **Impala**, **Masai giraffe** and **Grant's zebra** were still commonly seen. **African elephant**, **Greater kudu**, **Common warthog** and **Thomas's dikdik** were also reasonably common. **Grant's gazelle** were seen only on the grasslands east of the park HQ along the river drive. In the bush along the Mwagusi sand river we saw a single **Lesser kudu** as well, **Defassa waterbuck** are also relatively scarce. **Lions** were seen 3 times, two prides along the Mwagusi sand river and a single male along the river drive. **Bat-eared foxes** were seen twice on grassy areas around the Park HQ. We saw an **Egyptian mongoose** north of Kilimatonge hill. **Bush hyrax** are common on rocks and were also seen in large fig trees. **Dwarf mongoose** and **Ochre bush squirrel** are also relatively common in the woodlands.



Udzungwa National Park *January 12-16*

We stayed in HondoHondo (also called Udzungwa forest camp) and wildlife viewing on their grounds is very good. **Yellow baboon** are very common and both **Mitis monkey** and **Udzungwa red colobus** are regularly seen next to the restaurant. One day we also saw a group of **Angolan black-and-white colobus** there. They have a small nature trail and apart from the monkey **Checkered elephant shrew/sengi** are very common here, but shy. At night **Southern tree hyraxes** are heard continuously and with some spotlighting we found one. We also found **Zanzibar dwarf galago** here. A habituated group of **Sanje mangabey** also lives close by and especially in the morning they are normally easily found on the lower slopes of the mountains, when it gets warmer they tend to move up and it takes somewhat more effort. When we tried, they were about 10 minutes walk from the camp. Along the Sanje waterfall trail we also saw another **Checkered sengi** and a **Zanj sun squirrel** and a group of over 20 **Udzungwa red colobuses**. We also found a group of **Red colobuses** right next to the main road at the junction to the park HQ.



Mikumi National Park *January 16*

We only passed here by bus, but from the bus we still saw **African elephant, Masai giraffe, Impala, Crawshay's zebra, African buffalo** and **Common warthog**.

Dar es Salaam *January 16*

At dusk large groups of **Straw-coloured fruit bats** were seen flying along some of the main roads close to the city center.

Species list

1. Black-and-rufous sengi
2. Checkered sengi
3. Bush hyrax
4. Southern tree hyrax
5. Eastern tree hyrax (heard only)
6. Savanna elephant
7. Chimpanzee
8. Angolan black-and-white colobus
9. Zanzibar red colobus
10. Central African red colobus
11. Udzungwa red colobus
12. Sanje mangabey
13. Kipunji
14. Olive baboon
15. Yellow baboon
16. Vervet monkey
17. Red-tailed monkey
18. Mitis monkey
19. Small-eared greater galago
20. Zanzibar dwarf galago
21. Mountain dwarf galago
22. Zanj sun squirrel
23. Red-bellied bush squirrel
24. Ochre bush squirrel
25. Smith's bush squirrel
26. Unstriped ground squirrel
27. Eastern giant pouched rat
28. African grass rat
29. Angolan fruit bat
30. Straw-colored fruit bat
31. Lesser free-tailed bat
32. Yellow-winged bat
33. Black-backed jackal
34. Side-striped jackal (?)
35. African wild dog
36. Bat-eared fox
37. African palm civet
38. Lion
39. Servaline genet
40. Spotted hyena
41. Bushy-tailed mongoose
42. Egyptian mongoose
43. Banded mongoose
44. Dwarf mongoose
45. Crawshay's + Grant's zebra
46. Common warthog
47. Common hippopotamus
48. Masai giraffe
49. African buffalo
50. Lesser kudu
51. Greater kudu
52. Common eland
53. Bushbuck
54. Bush duiker
55. Steenbok
56. Kirk's dikdik
57. Thomas's dikdik
58. Grant's gazelle
59. Southern reedbuck
60. Bohor reedbuck
61. Defassa waterbuck
62. Impala
63. Topi
64. Coke's hartebeest
65. Lichtenstein's hartebeest
66. Fringe-eared oryx