

**Report on a Trip to Southern Tanzania  
(with a focus on Mammals)**

**5 – 18 June 2018**



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In June I travelled with my wife, Lesley, around Tanzania's southern safari circuit. Our second time in southern Tanzania, the aim of this trip was to visit Ruaha, Udzungwa Mountains and Mikumi National Parks (NPs) and, hopefully, to catch up on some mammals that I had yet to see in Africa.

Our international flights were booked through Trailfinders <https://www.trailfinders.com/> (Emirates via Dubai to Dar es Salaam, a cheaper option than with Kenyan Airlines via Nairobi). We'd chosen to use Wild Things Safaris Ltd <https://wildthingsafaris.com/> as our ground agents. Based on our experience, I would recommend them. They were prompt at replying to questions; ground arrangements were all handled efficiently and they were flexible, e.g. I made one key accommodation change days before we left the UK and their response was immediate (having made the change and without levying additional charges). They also understood that I wanted to see specific mammals and provided a guide/ driver, Salim, who was knowledgeable, professional (and a nice guy). It's thanks to him that I was able, finally, to catch up with a couple of key species.

A couple of points on travel: there are now 50mph speed restrictions along designated sections on many of Tanzania's highways. The speed limit is strictly enforced. Even if adhering to designated limits, expect to be pulled over at one of the many police checkpoints and for the driver to have to present documentation. We were told that the police 'have to meet a quota for fines issued'! One result may indeed be safer roads, but do plan for longer journey times, e.g. Mikumi to Dar, than previous information might estimate (partly why we elected to fly). Moreover, traffic is oftentimes gridlocked in Dar. Many airlines serving the city now plan departures very early in the mornings (ours was at 0245) in an effort to ensure passengers arrive at the embarkation gates on time.

We flew first from Dar to Iringa, where we stayed two nights at the largely wildlife-free Old Farm House at Kisolanza <http://www.kisolanza.com/> (no mammals, save a single small rodent, not seen by me!). A nice place however to stop off on the way to Ruaha, but bring a jumper, or even two! The weather for sites covered in this report was warm and sunny throughout. Be prepared for the odd, sudden squall in Udzungwa, but even here we experienced just one, albeit brief, downpour.



Southern Safari Circuit, Tanzania



### Ruaha NP

Three hours after leaving Iringa, on a recently graded (thankfully) dirt road we began to draw close to Ruaha, for a four night stay at the Ruaha River Lodge <http://www.ruahariverlodge.com/> run by Foxes Safari Camps. Approaching the NP, the country becomes noticeably less populated and this corresponded with the first, welcome sight of wildlife, in the form of a **Flap-necked Chameleon** (*Chamaeleo dilepis*) crossing the road. This species has a catholic taste in habitat, so it is still relatively common, but, as it adapts well to captivity, it's become a major target for the pet trade. Sitting on a rock opposite, our first primate of the trip, a decidedly unconcerned **Vervet Monkey** (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*) and, shortly thereafter, watching us from behind broken lines of thicket, **Impala** (*Aepyceros melampus*). The name comes from the Tswana 'phala' meaning red antelope'. This beautiful and successful animal has continued in its basic form for at least five million years.



**Flap-necked Chameleon** (*Chamaeleo dilepis*)

Ruaha is Tanzania's largest NP, at over 20,000 square kilometres, but not as popular as the parks in the northern safari circuit. The temperature doesn't change much from season to season. We were there in the dry season, with day time temperatures of around 26 Celsius. In the wet season (Nov-Apr) the humidity is much higher and some parts of the park may be inaccessible. The Great Ruaha River dominates the ecosystem, certainly in terms of game viewing. A recent problem has been the decreased flows in the river, since the development of large-scale agricultural projects, mostly rice cultivation. Sections of the river now dry up completely in 'drought' years, with devastating effects on the wildlife. Poaching (for ivory, primarily) is another extant issue. A report by ITV News on the issue in Dec 17 alleged complicity on the part of some members of NP staff in the decimation of Ruaha's elephant population. This was subsequently (and vehemently) denied by Tanzania's Government. Notwithstanding, Ruaha's elephants remain under grave pressure.

With these negatives why then should one visit Ruaha? The best answer, I think, is because this is still prime Africa! A vast and comparatively unexplored wilderness, with exclusive game drives, i.e. much to oneself, yet readily accessible by road and air. Certainly, it rewards attention, given its distinctive variety of habitats, vegetation and stunning natural beauty. The NP has a unique geographical position, as it forms a biological bridge between the East African savannah and Southern Africa miombo woodland; no other Tanzanian park is it possible to see both Kudu and Lesser Kudu, for example and the array of herbivories results in a strong population of predators.



**Vervet** (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*)





### Great Ruaha River

After one has crossed into the NP itself (having received the necessary permits, from the rather surly NP staff (surely more effort could be made to ensure visitors are actually welcomed?). However, a **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** and **Western Violet-backed Sunbird** at the entrance gate provided positive diversion. From the entry gate one soon reaches the bridge across the Great Ruaha River, which forms much of the NP's eastern border. From this point we saw our first **Hippopotamus** (*Hippopotamus amphibious*) and above the bridge a flock of my very first **Grey-rumped Swallows**. Two avian Tanzanian endemics are common in this part of the park, **Ashy Starling** and **Ruaha Red-billed Hornbill**, the latter only recently recognised as a separate species. As we approached our camp we saw a sounder of **Warthog** (*Phacochoerus africanus*) together with **Greater Kudu** (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) which are also common here. **Crowned, African Grey** and **Von der Decken's** added to our tally of hornbill, followed by the welcome sight of Giraffe – here in Ruaha, the largest bodied species - **Masai** or **Kilimanjaro Giraffe** (*Giraffa tippelskirchi*). Sadly, populations have reduced by 50% in recent decades, due to hunting and habitat loss.

As we reached the camp, some of the buildings, including reception, are built into a kopje. The view of the river and surrounding country is especially impressive. The kopje has its resident **Rock Hyrax** (*Procavia capensis*) whose inhabitants, it turned out, were equally at home on the veranda of our banda). Settling into our accommodation, up to sixteen **Hippopotomus** occupied nearby pools. A troop of **Yellow Baboons** (*Papio cynocephalus*) fed, but also retained an opportunistic eye on the banda. A pair of **Smith's Bush Squirrels** (*Paraxerus cepapi*) lived in an adjacent tree hole, and shared the vicinity with some impressive reptilian neighbours, in the form of **Common** or **Red-headed Rock Agamas** (*Agama agama*). The squirrels also favoured the veranda, albeit usually more frenetically than the **Hyrax**, although the latter species would show signs of aggressive behaviour between individuals, in what I presumed to be acts designed to maintain hierarchy.

As the **Hippos** wandered up onto the banks at night to graze the grasses - and on our first night a **lion** (*Panthera leo*) wandered into camp, self-preservation meant that I didn't search for a couple of rodents I would likely have otherwise seen, one being **African Climbing Mouse** (presumably here (*Dendromus melanotis*). Again, the close escort of the camp's Maasai guides to and from the restaurant allowed no opportunity to search for **Common Genet** (*Genetta genetta*) invariably to be found around the kitchens and **Ratel** (*Mellivora capensis*). During the previous wet season, even an **Aardwolf** (*Proteles cristata*) was found wandering up the banda track. However, several **Yellow-bellied House Bats** (*Scotophilus dinganii*) were flying in and around the veranda on return from dinner, together with some larger specimens. These turned out to be **Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bats** (*Epomophorus wahlbergi*). When, at breakfast, I asked where the roost might be, it was suggested I look up to the rafters above me. Looking down were thirteen Fruit Bats. Fantastic!



**Rock Hyrax** (*Procavia capensis*)

Commencing our first game drive **Black-faced Sandgrouse** and **Red-necked Francolin** were both particularly numerous on the tracks. Our first mammal, a **Slender Mongoose** (*Galerella sanguinea*) with its distinctive black tipped tail and, shortly thereafter, a **Black-backed Jackal** (*Canis mesomelas schmidtii*) only one of three that we saw. Then, hidden at first, a pair of **Thomas's Dik Dik** (*Madoqua thomasi*) (dependant on opinion) a full species native only to Tanzania. We were actually on a mission to find **Lesser Kudu** (*Tragelaphus imberbis*). Instead we found Tsetse flies. Many, many tsetse (one or other of the 23 species found today in Africa). An impressive insect, particularly when one considers a fossil record stretching back 34 million years. One mammalian surprise was a dark-coated young **Leopard** (*Panthera pardus*) seen again on the return to camp.





**Smith's Bush Squirrel** (*Paraxerus cepapi*)



**Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat** (*Epomophorus wahlbergi*)

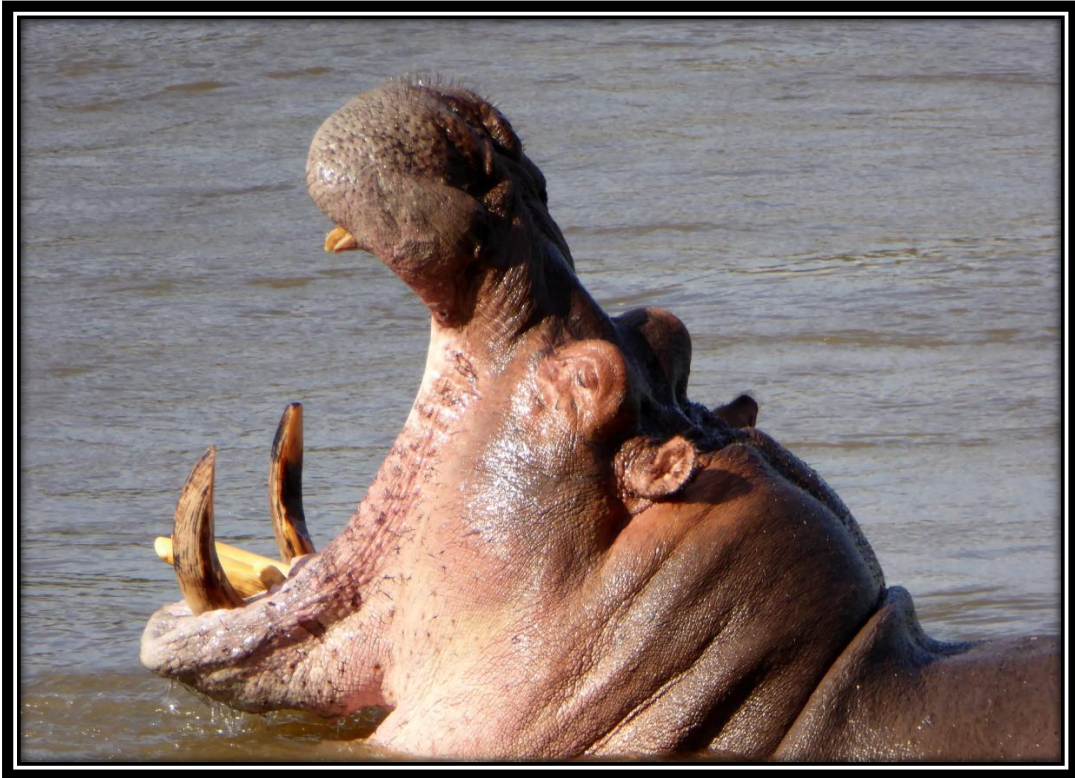
In the afternoon we found our first **Elephant** (*Loxodonta africana*) a matriarch with three younger animals, one still quite young. We were later rewarded with sight of good numbers bathing in the river. Birds today included **Buff-chested Bustard**, along with the commoner **Black-bellied Bustard**, **Brown (or Meyer's) Parrots** and, towards dusk a hundred or so **African White-backed** and **Hooded Vultures** (a very welcome sight, certainly after the absolute paucity of vultures anywhere in India).



**Ruaha NP showing position of Ruaha River Lodge**

One of the (many) attractions of Ruaha is the opportunity to find three species of antelope rare or absent from other areas of Tanzania, namely **Roan** (*Hippotragus equinus*), **Sable** (*Hippotragus niger*) and **Liechtenstein's Hartebeest** (*Alcelaphus lichtensteinii*). As with Lesser Kudu, Roan was a specific target species. We were told that they had recently moved westward, upwards of three hour's drive away. So off we set, quickly ticking off **Broad-billed**, **Lilac-breasted** and **Racket-tailed Rollers**, a large **Nile Monitor** (*Varanus niloticus*) a species that can grow to 2.4m and weigh 20kg. We then passed through an area of thorny woodland when, suddenly, a **Lesser Kudu** (*Tragelaphus imberbis*) momentarily darted right in front of the vehicle! Driving on, we began to see groups of **Crawshay's Zebra** (*Equus quagga crawshayi*) associating closely with **Masai Giraffe**. Along the river we had our first **Nile Crocodile** (*Crocodylus niloticus*) and an impressive herd of over 300 **African Buffalo** (*Syncerus caffer*) crossing the track, only then to disappear almost immediately back into the forest, each adult a 600kg ghost. Finally, we began to search an area of extensive Miombo, focused on the clearings beyond, when, there they were! An unmistakable herd of seven **Roan** (*Hippotragus equinus*) and they looked amazing. I will hand it to Salim. To have found these animals in such a vast swathe of broken country was a singularly impressive feat. On the return leg, a **Great Sparrowhawk** was a nice avian surprise, as were the myriad **Grey-capped Social Weavers**, and our last mammal of the day, a lone **Defassa Waterbuck** (*Kobus Ellipsiprymnus*).



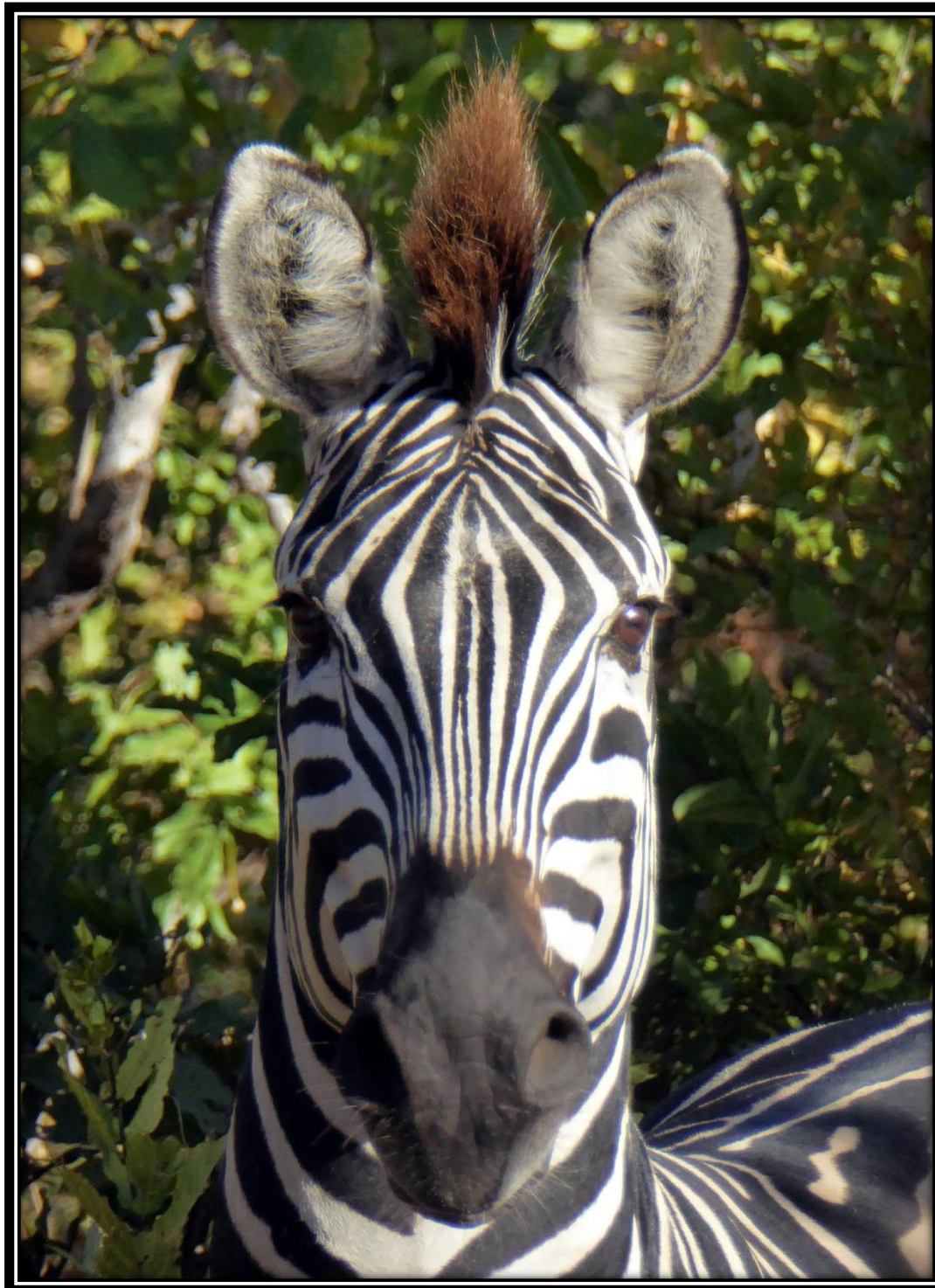


**Hippopotamus** (*Hippopotamus amphibious*)



**Nile Monitor** (*Varanus niloticus*)





**Crawshay's Zebra** (*Equus quagga crawshayi*)

As it transpired our third day at Ruaha had an avian focus; **D'Arnaud's Barbet**, **African Firefinch**, **Crimson-rumped Waxbill**, **Yellow-collared Lovebirds** and **Hueglin's Courser** welcome additions to my Afrotropical list. The absolute highlight however was to witness the courtship dance of a pair of **Grey-crowned Cranes**. Only two new mammals for the trip today, a party of 31 **Banded Mongoose** (*Mungos mungo*) followed by a pair of very active **Southern Tree Hyrax** (*Dendrohyrax arboreus*). **Bat-eared Fox** (*Otocyon megalotis*) eluded me (again) but there was always tomorrow.





**Thomas's Dik Dik** (*Madoqua thomasi*)

Fourth day in Ruaha and an early start, heading up to Kimilamatonga Hill. On the track I spotted a crepuscular **Violet-tipped Courser**. A new bird for Salim (and a thank you, of sorts, for the Roan!). As we gained altitude, a **Red Rock (or Veld) Rat** (*Aethomys chrysophilus*) crossed in front of us. Perfect **Klipspringer** (*Oreotragus oreotragus*) and **Leopard** country, but we saw neither today. An unexpected find however was an **Ayer's Hawk Eagle**. Heading back towards the river we had our only **Unstriped Ground Squirrel** (*Xerus rutilus*). This area held many **Impala**, associating closely with a troop of **Yellow Baboons**; a scene reminiscent of Chital and Langurs in India (presumably a related case of mutualism; each species benefiting from the warning of the other to a predator. In Ruaha, this primarily relates to **Lion**, which favour the shade alongside the dry riverbeds, to lie up. Around 10% of all lions remaining in Africa are here. Almost on cue, we found two Lionesses, camouflaged perfectly against the sand, with three cubs, and, close by, the pride's male Lion.



**African Buffalo** (*Syncerus caffer*)





**Dry Season Ruaha**



**Baobab (*Adansonia digitate*)**

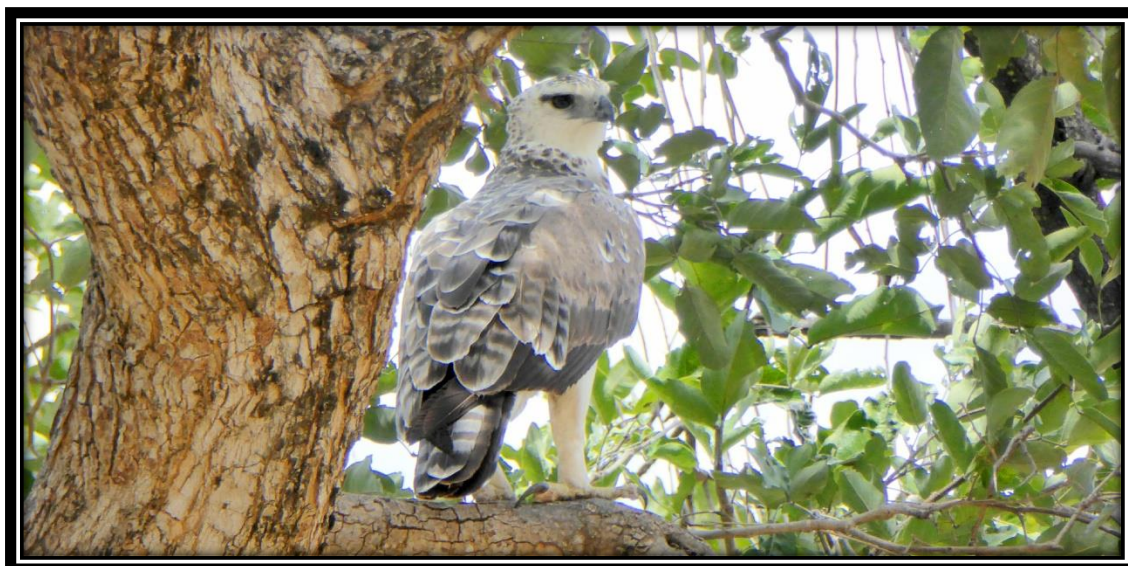


### Martial Eagle v Banded Mongoose

Witnessing an attack by one species on another is rare, in my experience. Perhaps I have led too sheltered a life! However, having encountered the lions, the next animals we came upon were 21 **Banded Mongoose**. As they ran together, in a loosely-weaving line, the leading members came to a snag of brushwood underneath a densely leafed tree. Suddenly, a **Martial Eagle** hidden in the canopy, swooped out from its cover and caught a leading Mongoose on a horizontal bough and held it, trapped firmly in its huge talon. As the eagle prepared, however, to take off, with its still-struggling victim, several other mongooses snaked up the trunk and along the bough like a liquid column of tooth and claw, forcing the eagle to drop its quarry. With more mongooses joining the fray – the Eagle flew up to a safer, more defensive position. This stand-off continued for some moments, until, with the victim now apparently recovered, the whole group returned to the ground, reformed their original formation and headed off on their way, leaving the Eagle to rue its misfortune. To place the event in context, a Martial Eagle is Africa's largest eagle (by body mass) weighing 6.5kg (a Banded Mongoose is 1.3kg) with a wingspan of six and a half feet and, 'reputedly to have enough power in one foot to break a man's arm'. An impressively-mounted defence.



**Banded Mongoose** (*Mungos mungo*)



**Martial Eagle** (*Polemaetus bellicosus*)

One of the distinctive sights of Ruaha is the impressive number, age and size, of its **Baobabs** (*Adansonia digitate*) the largest of the world's eight species. However, research has shown the population to be under stress from the **Elephants** which favour them as a food source. In a single year elephants killed '3% of the Baobabs in the Msembe area of Ruaha'. Hence, if the elephant population remain at current levels, the trees may suffer extinction 'over the next 30 to 170 years'. Another example of the fascinating, and sometimes surprising connection that exists between different species. As mentioned, there is of course a question over elephant numbers in Ruaha, ever since poachers turned their attention from Selous, where the carnage has been devastating. Interestingly, the elephants in Ruaha do appear quite nervous of vehicles and will quickly form a protective huddle around the youngest members of the herd, screening them from one's view.

Final afternoon. Dipped on **Bat-eared Fox**, much to the surprise of the other drivers in camp, who saw them regularly. That's just the way of things, but worth noting perhaps that the wet season is a particularly good time to see them, when burrows can get waterlogged, forcing the animals to spend a greater period of the day above ground. Back at camp, meanwhile, Lesley had a young bull **Elephant** approach within a few feet of the veranda, with two Maasai, prompting and guiding the reluctant pachyderm to return to the other side of the river, which, most magisterially, it did.

Although we didn't see **African Hunting Dog** (*Lycaon pictus*) staff at the upper (kopje) bar said that they 'frequently' saw them coming down to the river to drink. Having been a research student focused on Ruaha's Wild Dog population, Salim estimated that the three known packs that he had studied comprised *only* 48 animals in total. And yet this NP remains one of their last strongholds!

Next morning we left, but with a final mammal sighting, a **Dwarf Mongoose** (*Helogale parvula*).

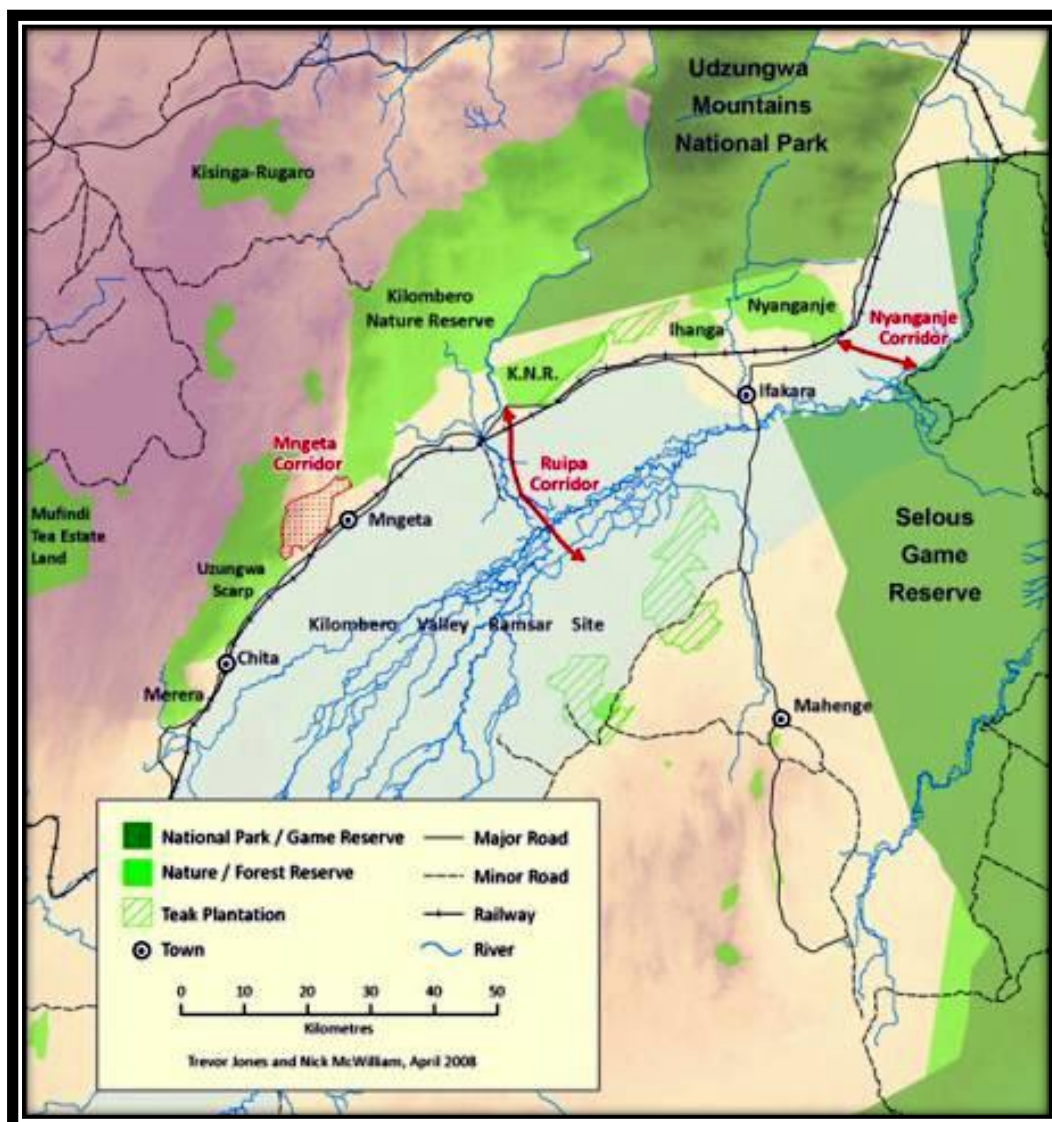


**A Close Encounter**



### Udzungwa Mountains NP and the Kilombero Valley

It is 76km from Ruaha to Hondo Hondo Tented Camp <https://www.udzungwaforestcamp.com/> located on the edge of the Udzungwa Mountains NP. Approaching the Udzungwas, the extent of deforestation is especially sobering given this is the largest block of the Eastern Arc Mountains, with an unbridled level of biological endemism (300 animals and 800 plants). Equally dramatic; the Klondike-like boom towns sprouting along the edge of the Udzungwas and bordering the Kilombero Valley, a vast floodplain formed by the Kilombero River. The human population in the Kilombero District has grown from 50,000 in the 1960s to half a million today, spurred by foreign economic investment in sugar, teak and rice production from, primarily, UK and US aid agencies. Tanzania is a poor country and its people need economic development, but wildlife, it seems always pays the price. Up until the 1990s, the valley still held 600 lions, large herds of elephant and 60,000 Puku (75% of the world's population, of which barely a 1000 survive here); testament to the dramatic changes that have taken place environmentally. The ability for elephant and other large animals to now move between the Udzungwas and Selous ecosystems has been critically eroded. Proposals to create and safeguard wildlife corridors remain just that... proposals.



The Kilombero-Udzungwa-Selous Ecosystems (the corridors are proposed)



**View from Hondo Hondo Bar**

Stepping out into the grounds surrounding Hondo Hondo we immediately encountered a small troop of **Udzungwa Red Colobus** (*Procolobus gordonorum*) feeding in the tops of the closest tall trees. An endangered, primarily arboreal primate, 25,000 to 35,000 individuals live only in the Udzungwas and a few remaining forest patches in the Kilombero Valley. A privilege to step out and see them! Few birds were seen today, other than **Crowned Hornbills**, which every morning make a 12km commute to Selous, retuning late in the afternoon, an **Eastern Olive Sunbird** and (by following the trail of its fluty call) a **Red-capped Robin-Chat** completed the inventory for the day.

I'd pre-arranged with Hondo Hondo to drive the few hundred meters down the road to the NP HQ, where I'd pick up a guide to search for another endangered primate, the **Sanje Crested Mangabey** (*Cercocebus sanjei*). 60% of the remaining 2,800 to 3,500 animals are found within Udzungwa NP, often to be found feeding on fruit, nuts and seeds in the understory of these montane forests. The morning didn't augur well, despite fine views of **Udzungwa Red Colobus** in the HQ's car park, when, being introduced to my young guide for the day, I was told that the habituated troop of Mangabeys hadn't been located. My heart sank. So, we set off with hope, rather than promise.

The humidity is very high in the forest and it's a steep climb, but ascending rapidly (to my mind, anyway!) we eventually heard **Sanje Crested Mangabeys** calling up ahead. It was not one of the habituated groups, so we approached very cautiously. And then there they were... and, albeit initially anxious, having retreated a little into the trees, after 15 minutes they returned and started to feed, looking up every now and again just to check on us. We watched two animals in particular while my young guide told me all about them. Although he was very knowledgeable it was his passion for these very rare primates that most struck me. On the way down we encountered a troop of very shy **Angola Black and White Colobus** (*Colobus angolensis*), an **Eastern Tree Hyrax**



(*Dendrohyrax validus*) a flock of **Crested Guineafowl**, which exploded nosily from the forest floor, **Black-backed Weavers** and a **Bush Pig** (*Potamochoerus larvatus*) which was no more than four feet away from us when it snorted and crashed through the undergrowth, so thick with vines and branches that neither of us actually saw anything of it! Back at camp I was fortunate to gain good, prolonged views of a family of **Blue or Sykes Monkeys** (*Cercopithecus mitis*) feeding and grooming.

Hondo Hondo has a nature trail that skirts the back of the property. Unfortunately, it was very overgrown. Notwithstanding, that evening I went in search of Sengis (I presumed **Checked Elephant Shrew** (*Rhynchocyon cirnei*) to be most likely on the fringe of the forest). However, like the Bush Pig experience, I could see, with the flashlight, movement in the grass, but I didn't get a glimpse of what I guessed was my quarry. Frustrating, but the staff had mentioned earlier in the day that a **Gaboon Viper** (*Bitis gabonica*) had taken up residence close by, so I thought it prudent to foreclose early on my search. I now understand that Gaboon Viper isn't native to the area and that their description more accurately denoted a far more aggressive **Puff Adder** (*Bitis arietans*)!



**Udzungwa Red Colobus** (*Procolobus gordonorum*)

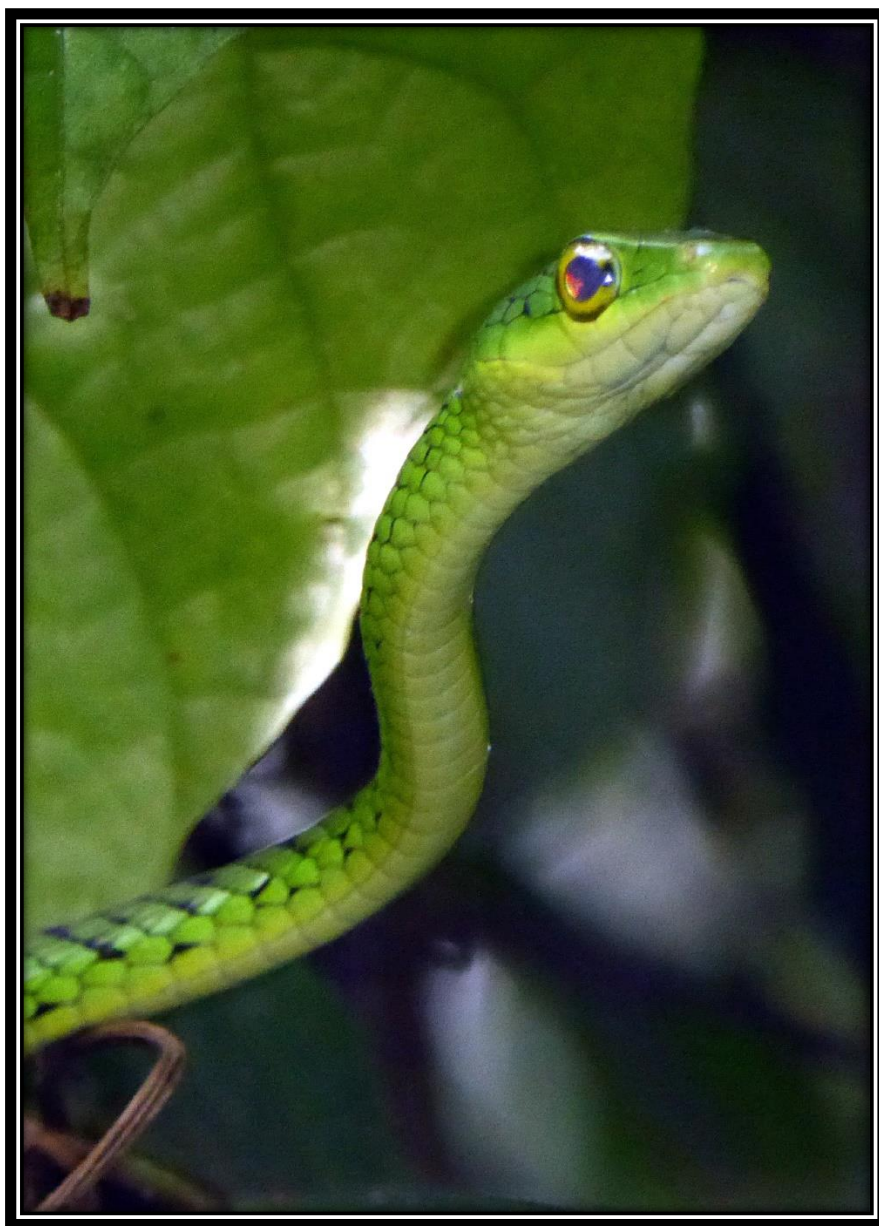
Very early on our third day at the Camp I awoke to a definite sound of scampering rodent! Turning on the flashlight I caught in the beam a cute-looking grey mouse, but as soon as I took the beam away (to grab my camera) it scarpored. The NP HQ has a photo board of Udzungwa rodents, so I was later able to ID it easily, as the animal in the photo had struck exactly the same pose!!

**Macmillan's Thicket Rat** (*Grammomys macmillani*) my 100<sup>th</sup> rodent species (and on my birthday). In a statistic of worth only to me, **Sanje Crested Mangabey** was, coincidentally, my 100<sup>th</sup> primate.

This day was focused on the Kilombero Valley and it was a day for birds. **Kilombero Weaver**, only discovered in 1986, and the still to be formally described **Kilombero (Melodious) Cisticola** and **White-tailed Cisticola** are key species with a vulnerable status restricted solely to this valley.

Fourth and final day at Hondo Hondo and a visit to Magombela Forest, a community forest in the Kilombero Valley and an important remnant of the habitat that once flourished in this area.

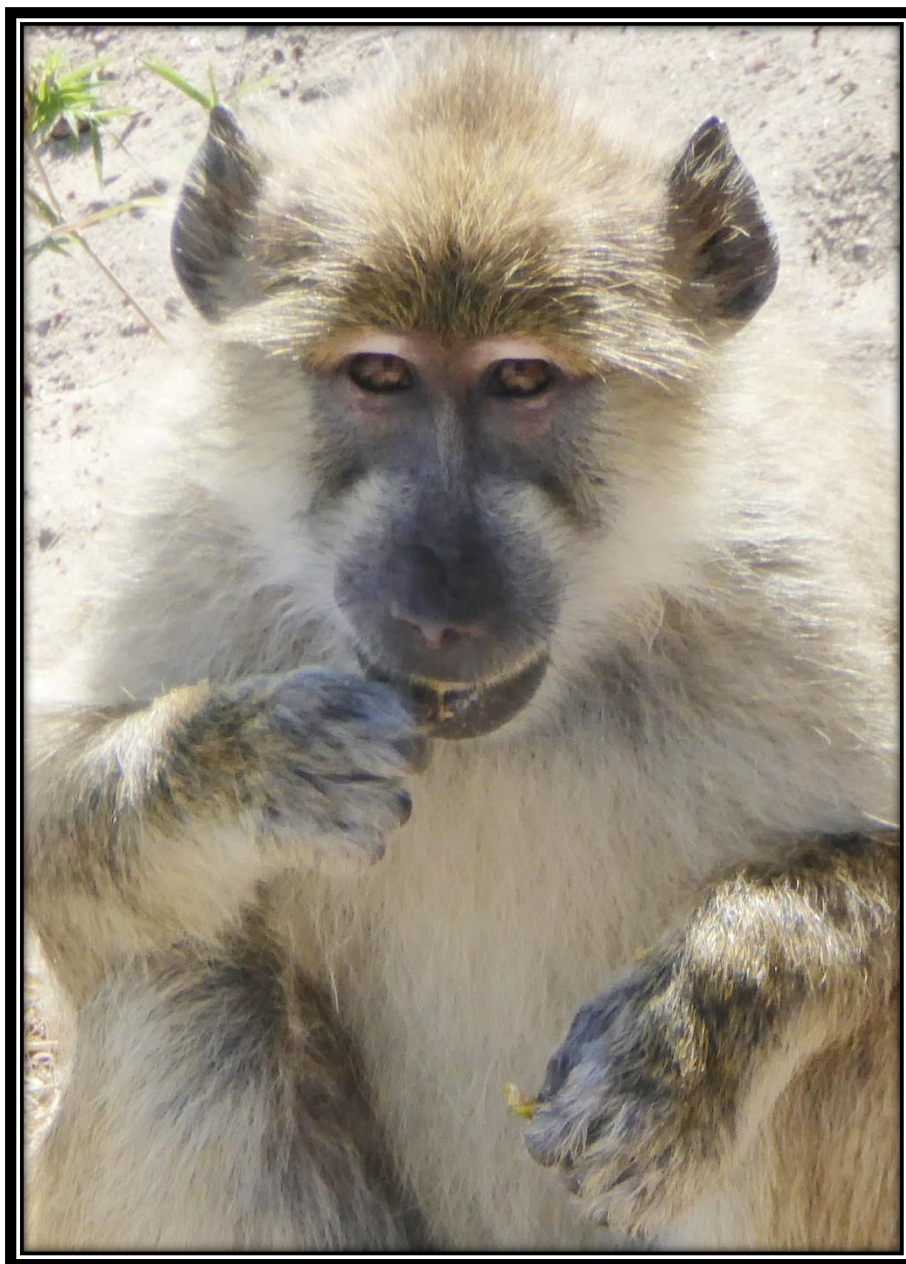
**Udzungwa Red Colobus** and **Angola Black and White Colobus** are both still found here, but recent studies suggest a worrying trend of in-breeding, given the more arboreal species now have no link to the main areas of forest. We also found fresh **Elephant** dung, providing proof of large animals, still using this small sanctuary as a corridor between Selous and the Udzungwas. A **Spotted Bush Snake** (*Philothamnus semivariiegatus*), **Udzungwa Grass Frog** (*Ptychadena uzungwensis*) a large **Freshwater Crab** (*Potamonautes suprasulcatus*) a host of butterflies, including the **Dark Palm Forester** (*Bebearia mardania*) an elusive **Peter's Twinspot**, **Blue-mantled Flycatcher**, **Dark-throated Apalis**, impressive **Silvery-cheeked Hornbills**, a flock of **Retz's Helmeted Shrikes**, noisy **Fischer's Greenbuls**, an endemic **Kipengere Seedeater** and my 1,000 Sub-Saharan species, **African Moustached Grass Warbler**, all provided the briefest snapshot of life here and what could be so easily be lost, even the climbing ants, reminding me, painfully, to always watch where one stands!



**Spotted Bush Snake** (*Philothamnus semivariiegatus*)



My afternoon was spent much as the previous three had been, sitting in the bar staking out the spot where the **Harvey's Duiker** (*Cephalophus harveyi*) regularly would creep out from the forest in the late afternoon, to feed. Except it didn't. I wish others better luck. I made do with a new reptile, **Brooke's** or **Spotted House Gecko** (*emidactylus brookii*) and the sight of twenty or so **Banded Mongoose** feeding, with impunity, amongst the many **Yellow Baboons**. The behaviour of the baboon troops was absolutely fascinating; both in respect of their complex interactions with one another, but also with us. For example, the wide and watchful berth given to any man in their proximity, as opposed to the distinctly relaxed attitude when a woman, or women, were close by. Utilising the protection of the camp they would often hop over the road to reconnoitre the farms, seeking out dietary opportunities, before running back upon discovery and to safety. Very clever. Just to be aware, disconcertedly, they also sit on the bathroom wall and watch one's ablutions.



**Yellow Baboon**

## MIKUMI NP

Our last stop and just one night at Vuma Hills Tented Camp <http://www.vumahills.com/> I wish we had stayed longer. A great spot and where it's possible to see some decidedly nocturnal species, which is why I'd changed our location from the equally nice, but less obviously animal-rich Stanley Kopje Camp <http://www.stanleyskopje.com/> a little further to the north. Certain animals seen in Mikumi but not present in Ruaha, include **Johnson's Wildebeest** (*Connochaetes johnstoni*) of which there were several herds. We also saw a single **Common Eland** (*Taurotragus oryx*) and the classic, 'though distant view of a male **Leopard** sprawled in the fork of a large acacia tree. The **elephants** in Mikumi are smaller than those found in Selous, or Ruaha, the effect of drought, given that Mikumi had no guaranteed permanent water sources until the recent construction of artificial wells. **Crayshaw's Zebra**, **Yellow Baboon**, **Warthog**, **Impala** and **African Buffalo** were also seen. **Sable**, **Greater Kudu** and **Liechtenstein's Hartebeest** are present, but more likely encountered in the miombo-covered hills surrounding the NP. **African Hunting Dog** occasionally occurs here, but there is no resident pack in Mikumi; those that do appear having crossed from the contiguous areas of Selous. Although **Lion** numbers are currently low, **Hunting Dogs** haven't correspondingly benefited. One cause is thought to be disease contracted from village dogs (the three villages that border the NP are clearly visible from Vuma Hills). **Impala** are also impacted by the local villagers, i.e they're eaten, should they stray! New birds seen today included **White-headed** and **Palm Nut Vultures**, a flock of **Northern Pied Bblers**, **Red-fronted Barbet** and a 'lifer', **Black Saw-wing**.



**Johnson's Wildebeest** (*Connochaetes johnstoni*)

Vuma Hills is located amongst well vegetated hills, with commanding views over Mikumi NP immediately to the north and the Usumbara Mountains beyond. One of the staff here, Evia, is an excellent naturalist and responsible for the regular feeding of various nocturnal species. At dusk, the **Northern Greater Galagos** (*Otolemur garnettii*) begin to stir in the trees surrounding the bandas and four animals shortly thereafter appeared in the bar area. They are used to visitors and pretty fearless (one stealthily approached our dinner table and made off with a bread roll). The problem was that I couldn't concentrate on dinner, because I was too interested in what might have been attracted to the kitchen waste put out below the bar, an area easily viewed from the encircling balcony. Two **African Civets** (*Civettictis civetta*) were first to arrive (followed later by a third) picking out the sweet items from the offerings provided. They were then joined by two **Honey Badgers** or **Ratels** (*Mellivora capensis*) which seemed to focus on the meat offerings, hence the two species fed together with little competition for available resources. As if two new lifers weren't enough, within another few minutes (possibly longer, but I was mesmerised!) two huge **Crested Porcupines** (*Hystrix cristata*) appeared, and began to feed, without any apparent antagonism with, or towards, the **Ratels**. A third, smaller Porcupine subsequently joined them. A third lifer for me (and they only appear once every three or four days, so this time I did get lucky!).



**Southern Giant Pouched Rat** (*Cricetomys ansorgei*) is also a regular visitor, but not that evening. While some may frown at these animals being enticed to appear with regular food dumps, there is also a view that wildlife needs all the help it can get. Seventeen trips to Sub-Saharan Africa and I had never come close to seeing these animals before, so mine isn't necessarily an objective view! Regardless, Vuma Hills is a natural bridging point between Selous and Mikumi. I suspect that as a mammal watching location it would reward more detailed attention. On return to Dar, our last evening, 300 **Straw-Coloured Fruit Bats** (*Eidolon helvum*) flew south over the Botanic Gardens.



**African Civets** (*Civettictis civetta*) and **Ratel** (*Mellivora capensis*)



**Crested Porcupine** (*Hystrix cristata*) and **Ratels** (*Mellivora capensis*)

### Mammal Checklist

**Southern Tree Hyrax** (*Dendrohyrax arboreus*)  
**Eastern Tree Hyrax** (*Dendrohyrax validus*)\*  
**Rock Hyrax** (*Procavia capensis*)  
**African Elephant** (*Loxodonta africana*)  
**Smith's Bush Squirrel** (*Paraxerus cepapi*)  
**Unstriped Ground Squirrel** (*Xerus rutilus*).  
**McMillan's Thicket Rat** (*Grammomys macmillani*)\*  
**Red Rock Rat** (*Aethomys chrysophilus*)\*  
**Northern Greater Galago** (*Otolemur garnettii*)  
**Yellow Baboon** (*Papio cynocephalus*)  
**Vervet Monkey** (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*)  
**Blue Monkey** (*Cercopithecus mitis*)  
**Sanje Crested Mangabey** (*Cercocebus sanjei*)\*  
**Udzungwa Red Colobus** (*Procolobus gordonorum*)\*  
**Angola Black and White Colobus** (*Colobus angolensis*),  
**Straw-Coloured Fruit Bat** (*Eidolon helvum*)  
**Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat** (*Epomophorus wahlbergi*)\*  
**Yellow-bellied House Bat** (*Scotophilus dinganii*)\*  
**Crested Porcupine** (*Hystrix cristata*)\*  
**Ratel** (*Mellivora capensis*)\*  
**African Civet** (*Civettictis civetta*)\*  
**Lion** (*Panthera leo*)  
**Leopard** (*Panthera pardus*)  
**Slender Mongoose** (*Galerella sanguinea*)  
**Banded Mongoose** (*Mungos mungo*)  
**Dwarf Mongoose** (*Helogale parvula*).  
**Black-backed Jackal** (*Canis mesomelas schmidtii*)  
**Warthog** (*Phacochoerus africanus*)  
**Hippopotamus** (*Hippopotamus amphibious*)  
**Masai Giraffe** (*Giraffa tippelskirchi*).  
**Crawshay's Plains Zebra** (*Equus quagga crawshayi*)  
**Impala** (*Aepyceros melampus*).  
**Thomas's Dik-Dik** (*Madoqua thomasi*)\*  
**Roan** (*Hippotragus equinus*)\*  
**Lesser Kudu** (*Tragelaphus imberbis*)\*  
**Greater Kudu** (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*)  
**Defassa Waterbuck** (*Kobus Ellipsiprymnus.*)  
**Common Eland** (*Taurotragus oryx*)  
**Johnson's Wildebeest** (*Connochaetes johnstoni*)  
**African Buffalo** (*Syncerus caffer*)

40 Mammal Species (Lifers denoted \*)



**Reptiles and Amphibians Checklist**

**Udzungwa Grass Frog** (*Ptychadena uzungwensis*)\*  
**African Helmeted Turtle** (*Pelomedusa subrufa*)\*  
**Flap-necked Chameleon** (*Chamaeleo dilepis*)  
**Red-headed Rock Agama** (*Agama agama*)  
**Spotted House Gecko** (*emidactylus brookii*)\*  
**African Striped Skink** (*Trachylepis striata*)\*  
**Spotted Bush Snake** (*Philothamnus semivariegatus*)\*  
**Nile Monitor** (*Varanus niloticus*)  
**Nile Crocodile** (*Crocodylus niloticus*)

9 Species (Lifers denoted \*)



**Udzungwa Grass Frog** (*Ptychadena uzungwensis*)



**Red-headed Rock Agama** (*Agama agama*)

### Birds Checklist

Great White Pelican	African Jacana	African Grey Hornbill
Long-tailed Cormorant	Buff-chested Bustard	Von Der Decken's Hornbill
Cattle Egret	Black-bellied Bustard	Crowned Hornbill
Little Egret	Black-faced Sandgrouse	Trumpeter Hornbill
Squacco Heron	Water thick-knee	Silvery-cheeked Hornbill
Goliath Heron	Bronze-winged Courser	Southern Ground Hornbill
Purple Heron	<b>Heuglin's Courser</b>	<b>Ruaha red-billed Hornbill</b>
Grey Heron	Collared Pratincole	Black-collared Barbet
Black-headed Heron	Wattled Lapwing	<b>D'arnaud's Barbet</b>
Hamerkop	White-crowned Lapwing	Crested Barbet
Yellow-billed Stork	Spur-winged Lapwing	Red-fronted Barbet
Open-billed Stork	Crowned Lapwing	<b>Grey-rumped Swallow</b>
Marabou Stork	Three-banded Plover	Black Saw-wing
Hadada Ibis	Common Sandpiper	Lesser-striped Swallow
African Spoonbill	Emerald-spot. Wood Dove	Wire-tailed Swallow
Egyptian Goose	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	Chestnut-back Sparrow-lark
Knob-billed Duck	African Mourning Dove	African Pied Wagtail
Yellow-billed Duck	Dusky Turtle Dove	African Grassland Pipit
White-faced Whistling Duck	Namaqua Dove	Black-eyed Bulbul
Yellow-billed Kite	Feral Dove	<b>Fischer's Bulbul</b>
African Fish Eagle	Ring-necked Dove	Yellow-bellied Bulbul
Hooded Vulture	Red-eyed Dove	Heuglin's Robin-Chat
White-headed Vulture	<b>Yellow-collared Lovebird</b>	Red-capped Robin-chat
African White-backed Vulture	Bare-faced Go Away Bird	African Stonechat
Black-chested Snake Eagle	Meyer's Brown Parrot	White-browed Scrub Robin
Brown Snake Eagle	<b>Coppery-tailed Coucal</b>	Collared Palm Thrush
<b>Southern Banded Snake Eagle</b>	White-browed Coucal	Lesser Swamp Warbler
Dark Chanting Goshawk	<b>African Wood Owl</b>	Red-faced Crombec
Lizard Buzzard	Little Swift	<b>Moustached Grass Warbler</b>
Palm-nut Vulture	White-rumped Swift	<b>Red-faced Cisticola</b>
<b>Great Sparrowhawk</b>	African Palm Swift	Rattling Cisticola
African Harrier Hawk	Speckled Mousebird	<b>White-tailed Cisticola</b>
Mountain Buzzard	Blue-naped Mousebird	<b>Kilombero Cisticola</b>
Tawny Eagle	Pied Kingfisher	Siffling Cisticola
Bateleur	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	Tawny-flanked Prinia
Long-crested Eagle	Woodland Kingfisher	Green b. Camaroptera
Ayer's Hawk Eagle	Malachite Kingfisher	Grey b. Camaroptera
Martial Eagle	African Pygmy Kingfisher	<b>Pale Wren-warbler</b>
Grey Kestrel	Little Bee-eater	Yellow-breasted Apalis
Helmeted Guineafowl	Olive Bee-eater	<b>Bar-throated Apalis</b>
<b>Crested Guineafowl</b>	Broad-billed Roller	Ashy Flycatcher
Hildebrant's Francolin	Lilac-breasted Roller	African Dusky Flycatcher
Crested Francolin	Racket-tailed Roller	Black-headed Batis
Red-necked Spurfowl	Green Wood-hoopoe	<b>Vanga Flycatcher</b>
Grey-crowned Crane	African Hoopoe	<b>Blue-mantled Flycatcher</b>



Black-throated Wattle Eye  
 African Paradise Flycatcher  
 Northern Pied Babbler  
 Yellow White-eye  
 Green-headed Sunbird  
**Miombo–Double Coll. Sunbird**  
 Western Violet-back. Sunbird  
**Eastern Olive Sunbird**  
 Variable Sunbird  
 Common Fiscal  
 Tropical Boubou  
 Northern White-crown. Shrike  
 Retz’s Red-billed Helm. Shrike  
 Black-backed Puffbird  
 Brown-crowned Tchagra  
 White-crested Helm.-Shrike  
 Fork-tailed Drongo  
 House Crow  
 Pied Crow  
 White-naped Raven

African Golden Oriole  
 Red-billed Oxpecker  
**Ashy Starling**  
 Red-winged Starling  
 Gr. Blue-eared Starling  
 Superb Starling  
 Grey-headed Sparrow  
 White-br. Sparrow-weaver  
 Spectacled Weaver  
 Grosbeak Weaver  
 White h. Buffalo-weaver  
**Grey-cap. Social Weaver**  
 Dark-b. Forest Weaver  
 Baglafaecht’s Weaver  
 Red-headed Quelea  
**Kilombero Weaver**  
**Fan-tailed Widowbird**  
**Zanzibar Red Bishop**  
 Yellow Bishop  
 Southern Red Bishop

Black-winged Red Bishop  
 Green-winged Pytillia  
 Red-cheek. Cordon Bleu  
 Southern Cordon Bleu  
 Red-billed Firefinch  
**Blue-billed Firefinch**  
**Crimson-rumped Waxbill**  
 Fawn-breasted Waxbill  
**Zebra Waxbill**  
 Bronze Mannikin  
**Magpie Mannikin**  
 Village Indigobird  
 Yellow-fronted Canary  
**Kipengere Seedeater**  
**Southern Citril**  
 House Sparrow  
**Lesser Seedcracker**

193 Species (33 new in bold)



**Black-bellied Bustard** (*Lissotis melanogaster*)

## Lepidoptera

**Common Acraea** (*Acraea encedon*)  
**Sulphur Orange Tip** (*Colotis eucharis evarne*)  
**African Caper White** (*Belenois creona severina*)  
**Forest Queen** (*Euxanthe wakefieldi*)  
**Guineafowl** (*Hamanumida Daedalus*)  
**Large Glasswing** (*Ornipholidotos peucetia peucetia*)  
**Eastern-dotted Border** (*Mylothris agathina*)  
**Common Grass Yellow** (*Eurema hecabe solifera*)  
**Flame-bordered Charaxes** (*Charaxes protoclea azota*)  
**Veined Swordtail** (*Graphium leonidas Leonidas*)  
**Black (Mamba) Swordtail** (*Graphium Colonna*)  
**Horniman's Swallowtail** (*Papilio horniman*)  
**Green-banded Swallowtail** (*Papilio phorcas*)  
**Citrus Swallowtail** (*Papilio demodocus demodocus*)  
**Angular Glider** (*Harma theobene*)  
**Common Diadem** (*Hypolimnas misippus*)  
**Blue Spot Pansy** (*Junonia westermanni suffuse*)  
**Soldier Commodore** (*Junonia terea elgiva*)  
**Yellow Pansy** (*Junonia hierta cebrene*)  
**Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui cardui*)  
**African Grass Blue** (*Zizeeria knysna*)



**Dark Palm Forester** (*Bebearia mardania*)