My wife and I have been looking to visit Uganda for many years to see chimps and mountain gorillas but it was always postponed for good (or bad) reasons... Having heard that Rwanda recently increased their gorilla permits up to 1500 USD and that Uganda is no longer proposing permit discounts during the low season, we thought it was really time to visit this country before the gorilla permit cost in Uganda also becomes too insane to afford.

We organized a 14-day trip to Uganda with Royle Safaris who used the local travel agency Gorilla Tours. The trip organization was very good and we decided to focus on a South West itinerary to avoid too much driving time and allowing us more time in the parks for guided walks or game drives. The tour consisted in the following: Entebbe – Mabamba swamp (for shoebill – yes we’re also interested in birds 😊) – Kibale NP – Semliki NP and Game Reserve – QENP – Ishasha – Bwindi – Lake Mbuvo – Entebbe.

We knew we went to Uganda during the raison season and we were not disappointed as we had rain everyday: from short showers to heavy thunderstorms with rain pouring for hours at 3 different occasions, once being during our CHEX tracking in Kibale, which spoiled most of the experience. Well, that’s life…

Uganda is a lovely country with beautiful landscapes and some pristine parks like the Ishasha section of QENP for example. I also found the hilly region near Bwindi very scenic to drive through. Globally, Uganda has very different landscapes to offer compared to the other Eastern African countries we visited like Kenya or Tanzania, which is good. People are also very friendly and welcoming. We had very nice accommodations throughout the trip but it did not find the food particularly good. Uganda is developing quite well and from past trip reports I could read on MammalWatching, the roads are now fully tarmacked in Kibale forest and to get to Semliki forest. This probably has a consequence to see less wildlife than before. For example, the Kibale Primate Lodge is still a great place in terms of comfort but not deep in the forest anymore. Although there are still some monkeys wandering around the lodge during the day, we did not see any animals at night during long spotlighting. On the other hand, the tarmac road is not preventing animals to cross it and we had great views of forest elephants on the road side on a very early morning start. Wonderful!

As I said earlier, we were a bit disappointed by the CHEX experience in Kibale for chimps mostly due to the weather that prevented us from observing chimps in good conditions. However, our guide booked us later another chimp tracking walk in the gorge section of QENP where we saw very well and close of several male chimps so all in all, chimp observations were globally good. For the mountain gorillas, we were booked in the Buhoma section of the Bwindi impenetrable forest. Buhoma is a nice location and both gorilla groups we visited on 2 consecutive days had the good idea to be close to the starting points of our trek, which considerably limited the time and make the trekking easy. Lucky us 😊 ! On the other hand, I believe Buhoma is less wild than the Ruhija section and therefore, beside gorillas we did not see much other mammals. However, birds were plentiful. We could see some tree climbing lions in Ishasha and it looks like we had the chance to see many leopards in QENP as we saw 4 different individuals in 3 days, which was the first time ever for our guide. We don’t complain 😊

Beside the well-known parks of QENP, Bwindi and Kibale, I found that the less visited Lake Mbuvo and Semliki forest parks were also very interesting and worth visiting. Lake Mbuvo has a healthy population of ungulates, not only in numbers but also in diversity, plus has a nice lake for boat tours offering very good birdwatching opportunities. The Semliki forest is great to walk through for unusual/rare primates like Dent’s mona or De Brazza monkeys and it also contains lots of forest birds we don’t see anywhere else in the country. The Tooro Game Reserve part of Semliki is also interesting with the forest is great to walk through for unusual/rare primates like Dent’s mona or De Brazza monkeys and it also contains lots of forest birds we don’t see anywhere else in the country. The Tooro Game Reserve part of Semliki is also interesting with the forest is great to walk through for unusual/rare primates like Dent’s mona or De Brazza monkeys and it also contains lots of forest birds we don’t see anywhere else in the country. The Tooro Game Reserve part of Semliki is also interesting with the

If day activities were great, I was not impressed by the night walks or drives on the other hand. We indeed saw quite a few animals although we did night spotlighting on 5 occasions. I can’t tell if this was due to our guides or us not being well prepared or if just animals were not there…

Finally, if Uganda is definitely a prime destination for primates (we could see 13 different species during our trip – even 15 if I count glimpses of 2 other species as explained in the table below), the national parks we visited in this country don’t offer the same concentration / diversity of other wildlife compared to Kenya or Tanzania for example. It is good to be aware of this before visiting Uganda to avoid any disappointment.

Bottom line, we were very happy about this trip to Uganda even if we did not see so many different mammal species with only 39 recorded (see table below), which I don’t find particularly good. However, we had 4 main targets before this trip: shoebill, chimps, mountain gorillas and tree climbing lions and we saw all of them very well with great photo opportunities so by itself, this makes this trip successful.

Below is the list of mammals observed during such Uganda trip (lifers in red):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>Where seen</th>
<th>Pic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chimpanzee</td>
<td>Pan troglodytes</td>
<td>Several seen in Kibale (mostly females and juveniles) and another great sighting of several males in the gorges sector of QENP</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain gorilla</td>
<td>Gorilla beringei beringei</td>
<td>2 groups visited in the Buhoma sector of the Bwindi impenetrable forest</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African red colobus</td>
<td>Pilocolobus oustaleti</td>
<td>Only a few seen in Kibale forest and Bigodi swamp</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guereza colobus</td>
<td>Colobus guereza</td>
<td>A lot seen almost everywhere</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mammals with photos or well seen

Species                        | Espèces               | Latin Name              | Where seen                                                                 |
--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
Below are a few other mammals that I don’t really count as observed since it was either a glimpse or in conditions such that it was not possible for me to be certain which species it was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>Where seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De Brazza’s monkey</td>
<td>Cercopithecus neglectus</td>
<td>A glimpse observation during a walk in the Semliki forest. It was so quick that I could only see a fairly pale grey fur disappearing in the trees but no face to be certain which monkey it was. However, our local guide (Moses) said it was a De Brazza monkey due to the sounds it made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House mouse</td>
<td>Mus musculus</td>
<td>A lot seen in Ishasha + a few in lake Mburu NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savanna mongoose</td>
<td>Dologale dybowskii</td>
<td>We went to the Semliki Safari Lodge where J.Woolgar saw them in 2013. We quickly saw one individual with a cute little face staring at us near the kitchen area but it ran away by the time I had a chance to take a photo for clear identification. It was small in size and had a dark fur. According to our local guide, it was a savanna mongoose. We unfortunately did not see any others during that day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Demidoff’s galago                     | Galagogidae demidoff     | Some red eyes seen in trees during our night walk at Kibale. According to our guide there were of Demidoff’s galagos but to me, seeing only eyes doesn’t count

**Total Species Recorded = 39**
I’m adding to this report some pictures of the most iconic species we observed during that trip and/or those new to me:

- Chimpanzee
- Mountain gorilla
- Central African red colobus
- Guerezza colobus
- Ugandan mangabey
- L’Hoest’s monkey
- Dent’s mona monkey
- Blue monkey
Common Eland

Bushbuck