

Trip Report Kenya and Tanzania - October, November 2025.

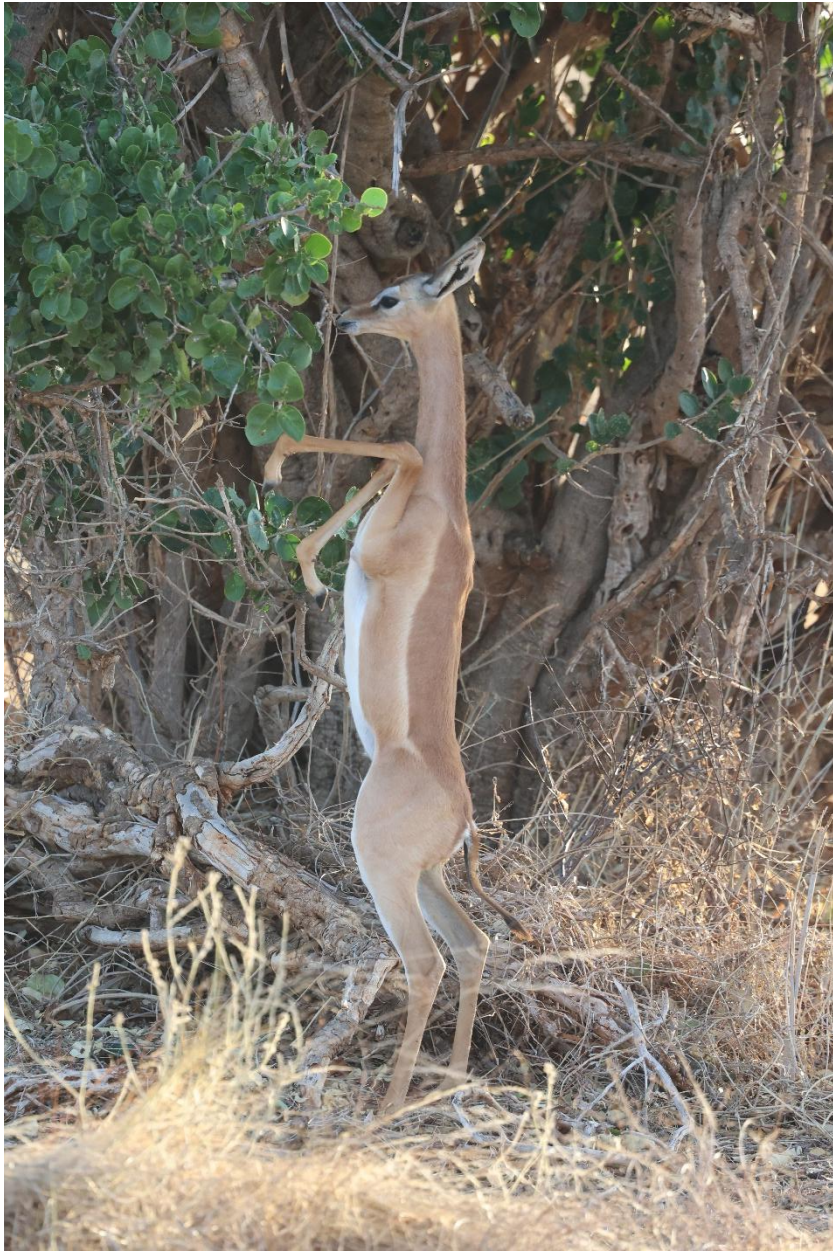


Charles Foley is a truly nice guy. Perhaps too nice for his own good. I had asked him in July if he had any thoughts about organizing an “endemic mammals of Tanzania trip” in the future and he replied that he was planning to head to Southern Tanzania in November to try to figure out how to look for some of the rare endemics. Shamelessly, I quickly asked if he would be interested in company on the trip and he graciously invited me along. I figured if I were going to Tanzania it would make sense to pick up some of the Kenyan specialties I hadn’t yet seen as well, so I made plans for 8 days in Kenya. Charles was able to join me there and Venkat Sankar decided he would like to join for the Tanzania portion of the trip as well. In addition, Daudi and Trude Peterson, old friends of Charles from Arusha, hadn’t been in southern Tanzania for some time and decided to come along as well, a fantastic addition to the trip.

The flights via Seattle and Amsterdam were uneventful and we landed in Nairobi on schedule. We had planned to stay at the Lenayan Park View Hotel, but there had been some flooding issues and we were accommodated instead in an apartment close to the airport. Paula, the owner, had kindly prepared dinner for us, which was welcome after the long flights.

The next morning, we were met by James Apolloh, our guide for the next few days, and headed to the train station located close to the airport. Security at the train station was tight and we had our bags checked by sniffer dogs and x-rayed a couple of times. The train departed exactly at 8:00 am, and within minutes we were seeing mammals in Nairobi National Park and the surrounding

landscape, including Masai Giraffe, Peters's/Grant's Gazelle, Common Zebra, Thomson's Gazelle, Impala and Beisa Oryx. Charles spotted a Lesser Kudu bull, which turned out to be the only one seen on the trip. We quickly passed Athi River, Kapiti Plains and other evocatively-named stations before arriving at Voi station at noon as scheduled. We saw a troop of Yellow Baboons near Kibwezi station and started seeing other species in the distance as well as we neared Voi. We were picked up in a Land Cruiser by Fadhili, our driver for the Kenya portion of the trip, and headed to Ngutuni Lodge, a private lodge in the 10 000 acre Ngutuni Game Sanctuary surrounded on three sides by Tsavo Park East. On the drive to the lodge, we saw Common Zebra, Gerenuk, and African Savanna Elephant. A buffet lunch was complemented by sightings of more elephants, Desert Warthogs and an Unstriped Ground Squirrel.



After a brief lie-down we headed out at 3:30 pm. New mammals for the trip included a pride of seven Lions, a group of Common Dwarf Mongoose, Common Waterbuck and a Bush Hyrax. While eating supper, the seven Lions were joined by another eight Lions, all clearly part of the same pride as the young scampered out ahead of the adults to greet their pride-mates. We left on a night drive at 8:30 pm and found Bat-eared Foxes, African Savanna Hare, at least four African Wildcats and four Common Genets, Cape Hare and a Common Duiker in addition to previously-seen species. A *Gerbillus* was seen on the road, but neither of us managed to get photos and two species are possible here, so it will unfortunately remain unidentified.



I awoke in the middle of the night and looked out the window, seeing a White-tailed Mongoose as well as the ubiquitous elephants. After a buffet breakfast we departed about 6:40 am and drove through the village and on to Tsavo's Voi Gate, adding Vervet Monkeys to the trip's mammal tally. Once inside the park, we drove quickly to Satao Camp, the favoured haunt of Hirola, the main target for Tsavo. The Hirola in Tsavo are descendants of a population introduced in the 1960's and augmented in the 1990's due to worries about them going extinct in their natural range east of the Tana River. We popped up the roof of the Land Rover once we reached the "Hirola area" and started scanning every mid-sized tan-coloured ungulate. A group of Kongoni gave us a burst of adrenaline for a moment. Fadhili spoke with other drivers but the only advice we could elicit was to keep going over the area around Satao camp and the airstrip. So that's what we did for the next four hours until, suddenly, we noticed an anomalous creature in amongst a group of gazelles and oryx. A Hirola! I had always thought the illustration of this creature in Kingdon was somewhat cartoonish until I saw

one in the wild and realized how accurately he had depicted it. We celebrated by eating lunch while continuing to keep the Hirola in view, then started driving for Sala gate. On the way we saw a second Hirola, this one an adult male. We arrived at Sala gate about 3:00 pm and stopped to admire four Common Hippopotamus in the river as well as a Nile Crocodile which came out of the water in response to an object being thrown onto the bank. Just past the river we stopped at a spot where dik-diks are seen frequently and were rewarded with a pair of Hinde's Dik-dik, either a valid species or a subspecies of Kirk's Dik-dik depending on your preferred taxonomy. A group of Common Warthogs crossed the road, providing good views.



We reached Arabuko-Sokoke forest about 5:00 pm and James insisted we stop for a brief hike to see a Sokoke Scops Owl. On the trail back, we had our first sighting of a Four-toed Sengi, followed by several more sightings on the road. We arrived at Mida Creek Eco-camp which was more rustic than the photos on Booking.com would have you believe. The “family room” was a rickety two-storey wooden building that is unlikely to survive the next windstorm. In fact, it may not exist even as I write this. James had unfortunately ordered dinner without consulting us, so a meal of fish appeared despite the fact that Charles is acutely sensitive to fish in all its forms. The rice and water spinach were good however.

The next morning started with the early morning call to prayer and a walk down to the mangroves close to the camp. We drove to an entrance to the Arabuko-Sokoke forest which is now fenced in its entirety, then walked a trail near the entrance and almost immediately spied a Golden-rumped Elephant Shrew/Sengi. Apparently, ninety percent of the world population of this species lives in the Arabuko-Sokoke forest, and we saw a number of them that morning. A Four-toed Sengi was the next mammal seen, followed by a Suni seen by Charles and James and then a Red Bush Squirrel. The

highlight of the morning was an Aders's Duiker which ran across the trail ahead of us. I had told Charles that Aders's Duiker was one of the species I was most hoping to see in Arabuko-Sokoke and he had implied that we were about as likely to see a unicorn. Fortunately, both he and James got a good look at this one as I'm not sure I would have been believed otherwise.



After lunch and a shower we returned to the forest, initially seeing only species we had seen earlier that day. After nightfall we drove to a different part of the forest where we saw several Large-spotted (Blotched) Genets, an African Civet, several Four-toed Sengis and a galago, likely a Kenyan Coastal Galago. A late dinner of beef stir-fry and French fries was extremely welcome.



The next morning started with a pre-dawn call to prayer. I'm not sure if the call was pre-recorded and accidentally sped up, but it was certainly the most accelerated call to prayer I've ever heard. We returned to the forest about 6:30 and soon saw several more Golden-rumped Elephant Shrews. James heard the call of a Zanj Sun Squirrel which was briefly seen by Charles. We returned to Mida creek about 9:30 for breakfast, packed up and said our goodbye to James, who was headed back to Nairobi to guide another safari the following day. After stopping to pick up supplies in Malindi we continued northeast, passing through open country with occasional Somali encampments of thatch and plastic sheeting, announced well in advance by the presence of goats and discarded plastic bags blowing around. We turned off onto the dirt entrance to the Kenya Wildlife Service office, where we were told that payment could only be made by Mpesa, the digital payment service. Unfortunately, neither Charles nor I had this, but our driver came to the rescue by driving to the nearest village where he could put the money into his Mpesa account and pay the fees. I realize this is done to try to cut down on corruption in the parks, but it does make life difficult for foreign visitors. We spent the time waiting for his return chatting with the park officials and photographing an Egyptian Tomb Bat under the roof of the office. We drove off, spotting a pair of Kirk's/Hinde's Dik-diks, and soon got lost in the monotonous scrub. Fortunately, one of the camp staff members was able to locate us and guide us to the campsite.

The Tana River Primate Reserve campsite is lovely, set near the river under some enormous fig trees. We were greeted by Tana River Red Colobus and Sykes' Monkeys in the trees overhead. We set up camp and then wandered down to the river, seeing a Common Waterbuck and a group of

seven Bushpigs on the opposite bank of the Tana River. Bushpigs are a criminally under-appreciated species in my opinion. These pigs glowed in the light of the setting sun as they moved unconcernedly along the riverbank. A couple of Common Hippopotamus completed the scene.



After a spaghetti dinner, the standard meal of so many camping trips, we walked around and found a female Bushbuck, Kenya Coast Dwarf Galagos, Northern Greater Galagos and Epauletted Fruit Bats. We fell asleep to a panoply of forest sounds, accompanied by the rather more disturbing sounds of fruit bats defecating on the tents.

The next morning, we walked a short distance to see a troop of Tana River Crested Mangabeys foraging in the forest. A Red Duiker ran past providing a brief look. Walking around we were able to see Yellow Baboons, Sykes's Monkeys, Tana River Red Colobus and a Red Bush Squirrel. We departed about 10:30 am, stopping at Peter's Tire Repair to retrieve a valve which had accidentally been knocked into one of the tires. We arrived at Watamu in the mid-afternoon and checked into the Tatu Inn, a new Italian-owned operation on the edge of town. The afternoon was spent showering, washing clothes, catching up on the news and enjoying air conditioning. Fadhili collected us about 7:00 pm and we stopped for burgers, then picked up our guide for the night, Samson. Entering through Gede gate, we had not gone a kilometre before we got a flat tire. We were eventually on our way about 8:30. The night was fairly quiet, but we did see a genet, a number of Four-toes Sengis, a Southern Giant Pouched Rat and, best of all, a Caracal which wandered down the road towards us, unconcerned about the light shining on it, but then disappeared when we turned the lights off hoping that might encourage it to come closer. We left the forest about 12:30 without having seen a Sokoke Dog Mongoose, but well-satisfied otherwise.



After breakfast the next morning we met up with Simon Kajengo. Simon was trained by Paul Webala about the local bats and acts as a community guardian, escorting 10 to 12 groups of people per year who want to visit the local bat caves. The first cave we entered contained three or four bat species – two different-appearing *Miniopterus* bats, African Sheath-tailed Bats and Hildegard's Tomb Bats. The next cave, Makuruhu Cave, was nothing short of spectacular. Enormous caverns admitted piercing rays of light in a scene straight out of "Raiders of the Lost Ark." We saw at least five species here – Cape Roundleaf Bats, Least Long-fingered/Bentwing Bats, African Trident Bats, Hildegard's Tomb Bats and Greater Long-fingered/Bentwing Bats. The third cave we visited was on Simon's father's property and contained Heart-nosed Bats, *Cardioderma cor.* After leaving Simon, we headed south, taking the bypass road around Mombasa and crossing a big new bridge which appears to have relegated the epic traffic jams for which Mombasa was known into the dustbin of history. Hopefully, anyway.



Fadhili, who had confessed to us previously that he didn't like bats, kindly went out of his way to take us to a large colony of Straw-coloured Fruit Bats in Diani Beach. The power of mammal-watching!

We had supper at a delicious restaurant overlooking the ocean while watching Vervet Monkeys frolicking. Back at Stilts, the nightly galago-feeding session was in progress and several Greater Northern Galagos showed up for pieces of banana.



Ali Toya arrived the next morning to guide us to the Shimoni caves. After a 90-minute tuktuk ride we entered the Shimoni Slave Cave, which contained Giant Roundleaf Bats, African Sheath-tailed Bats, Webala's Horseshoe Bats and Hildegarde's Tomb Bats. A second chamber contained some Heart-nosed Bats, *Cardioderma cor*. A brief drive followed by a motorcycle ride brought us to the Three Sisters Cave, which is a complex containing three separate caves.

The first cave was a nightmare. I don't like tight spaces at the best of times, and I like them even less when they involve lying on my back in a thick layer of guano and wriggling myself through an opening so narrow that I had to keep turning my head one way or the other to conform with the angles of the rock. This turned out to be the better part of the experience. I stood up once I was through the passageway catching my breathe, to realize that my clothes were covered in a layer of army ants which I hadn't noticed in the darkness. I proceeded to slap at them while trying to take photos of the bats, all the while being crapped on by the disturbed bats flying around. Charles made it through the same passageway and we hurriedly took our photos, then had to retrace the process. The cave contained African Trident Bats, Webala's Horseshoe Bats, Eloquent Horseshoe Bats, and Least Long-fingered/Bentwing Bats. The next cave was full of Egyptian Rousette Bats, the reflection of their eyes forming a light-reflective wall as we entered the chamber. Striped Roundleaf/Leaf-nosed Bats and African Sheath-tailed Bats rounded out the species list in this chamber. The third and final cave contained only species we had seen previously.



We departed about 1:15 pm and were back in Diani Beach by 3:00 pm. Both Charles and I felt somewhat disgusted by the amount of guano on our clothes and could hardly wait to shower. Neither of us was feeling up to further adventures that day, so we went out to an Italian restaurant for pizza and called it a night.

Zarek Cockar, well known to readers of this website, came by the following morning and we had a good chat about wildlife in Kenya. Charles departed for Tanzania and the next phase of the trip while I went for a swim and ended up chatting with Kruger, a Kenyan who does drone photography. Although this morning's shoot was of a South African influencer in a transparent kayak (a common request, according to Kruger), he also does surveillance of illegal fishing boats, etc. After dinner I walked to Nomads to meet up with Atti, a friend of Zarek's, seeing a White-tailed Mongoose along the way. On the entrance road I found three Suni and a gerbil which unfortunately disappeared too quickly for even a reference shot. Walking the trails with Atti we found a dik-dik, at least four more Suni and what appeared to be a Lesser Galago.



The next morning was rainy and grey, to the point that I considered not bothering to return to Nomads for a forest walk. The rain eased a little however, so I headed down there about 7:30 and wandered down to the beach bar. On the return walk I saw a Red Bush Squirrel on the ground and a Zanj Sun Squirrel high in the branches of a tree. I hung around Stilts for much of the day waiting for the bus to Dar es Salaam, which arrived somewhat later than scheduled about 5:20 pm. The border crossing into Tanzania was straightforward and I fell asleep soon afterwards, awakening on the outskirts of Dar. And with that, I will pass the story on to Charles Foley for his description of the Tanzania portion of the trip.

List of mammals seen in Kenya:

1. Bush Hyrax – *Heterohyrax brucei*
2. African Savanna Elephant – *Loxodonta africana*
3. Four-toed Sengi – *Petrodromus tetradactylus*
4. Golden-rumped Giant Sengi – *Rhynchocyon chrysopygus*
5. Tana River Red Colobus – *Piliocolobus rufomitatus*
6. Yellow Baboon – *Papio cynocephalus*
7. Tana River Mangabey – *Cercocebus galeritus*
8. Vervet Monkey – *Chlorocebus pygerythrus*
9. Sykes's /Blue/White-throated Monkey – *Cercopithecus (mitis) albogularis*
10. Kenya Coastal Dwarf Galago – *Paragalago cocos*

11. Northern Greater Galago – *Otolemur garnettii*
12. Lesser Galago – *Galago senegalensis*
13. Unstriped Ground Squirrel – *Xerus rutilus*
14. Zanj Sun Squirrel – *Heliosciurus undulatus*
15. Red Bush Squirrel – *Paraxerus palliatus*
16. Southern Giant Pouched Rat – *Cricetomys ansorgei*
17. African Savanna Hare – *Lepus microtis*
18. Cape Hare – *Lepus capensis*
19. Straw-coloured Fruit Bat – *Eidolon helvum*
20. Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat – *Epomophorus wahlbergi*
21. Egyptian Rousette – *Rousettus aegyptiacus*
22. Heart-nosed Bat – *Cardioderma cor*
23. Webala's Horseshoe Bat – *Rhinolophus webalai*
24. Eloquent Horseshoe Bat – *Rhinolophus eloquens*
25. African Trident Bat – *Triaenops afer*
26. Cape Roundleaf Bat – *Hipposideros caffer* – clade 2
27. Cape/Noack's Roundleaf Bat – *Hipposideros caffer* clade 3
28. Giant Roundleaf/Leaf-nosed Bat – *Macronycteris gigas*
29. Striped Roundleaf/Leaf-nosed Bat – *Macronycteris vittata*
30. African Sheath-tailed Bat – *Coleura afra*
31. Egyptian Tomb Bat – *Taphazous perforatus*
32. Hildegard's Tomb Bat – *Taphazous hildegardae*
33. Least Long-fingered/Bent-wing Bat – *Miniopterus minor*
34. Greater Long-fingered/Bent-wing Bat – *Miniopterus* clade 5
35. Bat-eared Fox – *Otocyon megalotis*
36. Lion – *Panthera leo*
37. Caracal – *Caracal caracal*
38. African Wildcat – *Felis lybica*
39. African Civet – *Civettictis civetta*
40. Common Genet – *Genetta genetta*
41. Large-spotted (Blotched) Genet – *Genetta maculata*
42. White-tailed Mongoose – *Ichneumia albicauda*
43. Common Dwarf Mongoose – *Helogale parvula*
44. Common (Burchell's) Zebra – *Equus quagga*
45. Bushpig – *Potamochoerus larvatus*
46. Desert Warthog – *Phacochoerus aethiopicus*
47. Common Warthog – *Phacochoerus africanus*
48. Common Hippopotamus – *Hippopotamus amphibius*
49. Masai Giraffe – *Giraffa tippelkirschi*
50. Lesser Kudu – *Tragelaphus imberbis*
51. Bushbuck – *Tragelaphus scriptus*
52. Suni – *Nesotragus moschatus*
53. Bush Duiker – *Sylvicapra grimmia*
54. Aders's Duiker – *Cephalophus adersi*

55. Red Duiker – *Cephalophus natalensis*
56. Hinde's Dikdik – *Madoqua hindei*
57. Thomson's Gazelle – *Eudorcas thomsonii*
58. Grant's Gazelle – *Nanger granti*
59. Peters's Gazelle – *Nanger petersi*
60. Gerenuk – *Litocranius walleri*
61. Common Waterbuck – *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*
62. Impala – *Aepyceros melampus*
63. Hirola – *Beatragus hunteri*
64. Kongoni/Coke's Hartbeest – *Alcelaphus buselaphus cokii*
65. Beisa – *Oryx beisa*