













ROYLE SAFARIS

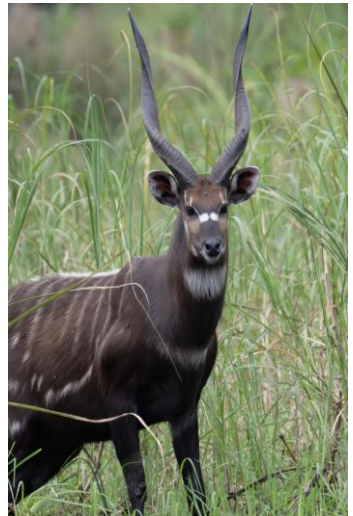
Gabon Wildlife Adventure (two trips)

Destination: Ivindo (optional pre-tour extension); Lope & Loango, Gabon

Duration: 10 Days (14 Days including extension)

Dates: 4th Jul – 12th Jul 2025 & 15th Jul – 23rd Jul 2025

-  Spending time within a troop of hundreds of **Mandrills** and seeing colourful males
-  Seeing **Gorillas, Forest Elephants, Spot-necked Otters & African Civet** in Ivindo
-  Fantastically close views of **Sitatunga & Western Yellow-backed Duiker**
-  River cruises observing many species along the Oguoue and Akaka Rivers
-  Rarely seen mammals including **Long-nosed Mongoose & White-legged Duiker**
-  139 bird species including Vermiculated Fish Owl & Lantham's Francolin
-  Sightings of 7 species of bovid including four species of forest Duikers
-  41 mammals including **Humpback Whale & Lady Burton's Rope Squirrel**
-  11 Species of primates seen including a stunning experiences with the **Gorillas**
-  Seeing several range restricted Central African Slender-snouted Crocodiles



Tour Leader / Guides

Ewan Davies (Royle Safaris Tour Leader)
 Jorge (Ivindo Guide)
 Anouck & Boris (Libreville Transfers)
 Isabel & Lisa (Mandrill Researcher)
 Gildas (Local Pygmy Guide in Lope)
 Donald (Local Guide in Lope)
 Salam (Lope Driver)
 Dimitri, Shergo & Romey (Loango / Akaka River Guides)

Participants

Dan Simon (plus Ivindo extension)
 Christof Ritcher
 Richard Birge
 Jesper Meedom (plus Ivindo extension)
 Gill Grubb (plus Ivindo extension)
 Stephen Grubb (plus Ivindo extension)
 Velauthipalli Nandapalan (plus Ivindo extension)
 Mark Golan (plus Ivindo extension)
 Ted Gatlin (plus Ivindo extension)
 Phil Davison (plus Ivindo extension)
 Martin Gottschling

Overview

Day 1: Libreville

Day 2: Akanda NP

Days 2-5: Ivindo NP

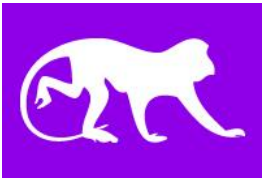
Days 6-9: Lope NP

Day 10: Lambarene

Days 11-13: Loango NP / Akaka River

Day 14: Libreville

Day 15: Home



Day by Day Breakdown

Overview

Gabon is a jewel of a country when it comes to intact, pristine forest in Africa (over 80% of Gabon is forested) and with a lack of tourism industry the country is wild and you can end up having thousands of square kilometres of pristine forest and abundant wildlife to yourself. There is probably nowhere else in Africa quite like this amazing country.

A country that has long been rich in oil and has seen no need to exploit its forests, a country that has endless forests, large savannas and huge rivers that crisscross the evergreen landscape. It is also a country with a chequered past when it comes to tourism. For a long time the country was open to tourism (mostly birding), but in the early 2000's the government cut back on tourism and the country fell away from the tourist circuit and into obscurity. But around 2015 the country started to open itself up again to tourism and particularly wildlife tourism. After a short hiatus (like the rest of the world) for the covid-19 pandemic Gabon opened up again in 2022 and we were back to running trips here. We followed up our successful 3 group tours in 2022 with two more back to back trips in the summer of 2023, more in 2024 and these back to back trips in 2025.

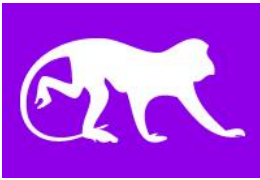
Both of these trips were guided by the incredible mammalwatching guide Ewan Davies and here we have summaries of both trips (the same itinerary repeated back to back) and a combined sightings log.

The most remarkable facet of Gabon being off the wildlife tourism radar for so long is that it is a country that offers sightings (and many reliable) of some of the most incredible, elusive, enigmatic and endangered mammals in the world. From the strikingly coloured mandrills, to large populations of African forest elephants, the beautiful red river hogs and handsome western lowland gorillas to the impossibly large giant pangolin and West African manatee. Gabon delivers on a level that few countries can. Of course seeing all of those species on one trip would be exceptional and we were not that lucky. However some of those and many more are near guarantees in Gabon. Thanks largely to the concerted effort of the government to keep their parks and forests as natural and pristine as possible and the great work of people like David Lehmann who is researching the mandrills and also establishing eco-tourism activities for red river hogs and giant pangolins (both of which are no longer available – but the groundwork is there for possibly bringing it back again in the future).

So these tours were broken up into the main trip and focused on two of the country's best national parks, Lope & Loango. We also made a quick visit to some riverside forests near Lamberene in search of northern talapoin and manatees. Our main focus was two primates, the mandrills and western lowland gorillas. But we hoped for a wealth of over wildlife and we were not disappointed. And then there was an optional pre-tour extension which nearly everyone took up to visit the very wild and rugged Ivindo National Park and experience the abundant wildlife (mostly the same species which we would see in other parks) but from large raised platforms overlooking openings called Bais which give an incredible and peaceful view into the lives of these usually secretive forest species. From Ivindo the groups would meet up with the others and our Royle Safaris tour leader Ewan in Lope and everyone would continue on from day 2 of the main trip and day 6 of the Ivindo clients together.

Gabon has so much to offer and is a veritable treasure trove of exotic and incredible mammal species that Royle Safaris will be running at least 2 trips annually for some time to come. We have sold out our trips in 2026 now, but have places on our first 2027 group tour still available.

For anyone wishing to know more about future trips to Gabon please contact us at info@royle-safaris.co.uk we have only have 4 places remaining on our first group tour for the summer of 2027 if anyone is interested.



Days 1-5 **Ivindo Extension Synopsis**

Wildlife Watching

The pre-tour Ivindo extensions were guided by Jorge and we don't have a detailed day by day breakdown however below is a synopsis of the itinerary (same for both trips) and also we have a list of the key species seen during these days.

The groups arrived into Libreville on day 1 and settled into the hotel in the city, the rest of the day were spent at rest and preparing for the trip to Ivindo the following day.

From Libreville the groups took the overnight train to Ivindo and then further travelled via car and walking to Dilo Camp for breakfast and then onwards again to Rock Camp and on again (a long day is needed today as Ivindo is very pristine and the infrastructure nearly non-existent, the benefit from this means that visiting is a genuine wilderness experience (something unusual in modern Africa). The final destination being Langoue Bai and the home for the next couple of nights. This was only applicable for the first trip as the platform in the bai had collapsed beyond safe use between the first and second groups, so the second group stayed at the Kongo Falls area. This resulted in some stunning views of the waterfalls here, but the wildlife is lesser in this region.

The first trip was successful in having amazing views of **red river hogs** and large numbers of **African forest elephants, forest buffalo** and **sitatunga**. As well as seeing some **western lowland gorillas** which come out of the forest and feed on the rich vegetation around the marshes here. It is amazing to see these **gorillas** interacting with other species, especially the **elephants**.

Other species seen here were **grey-cheeked mangabey** and **putty-nosed monkeys** these species were also seen on the second group tour to Ivindo as well as nice views of a small group of **spot-necked otters** around the waterways heading to the waterfall. Other species seen in with the second group in Ivindo were **African palm civet** on the drive to Lope one car also saw an **African civet**.

One of the most amazing things about Ivindo (and large parts of Gabon in general) is just how wild and pristine they are, every time we bring groups here we are the only people in the whole park, there is probably nowhere else in Africa where you can have such a vast and untouched area of forest completely to yourself.

On leaving Ivindo the walked back to the park headquarters and due to the ever changing and frustrating train schedules (and an unexpected improvement in the road) they took a vehicle to get from Ivindo to Lope, and met up with Zarek and the rest of the groups at Lope Hotel on the night of day 2 below.

GROUP 1

Day 1 Libreville

Arrival

With Dan on the Ivindo extension and Richard delayed en route (he would arrive the following day and we arranged catch up transport for him), it was a lowkey start to the trip as just Christof and Ewan set off from Libreville to Lope.

With the trains not running that day we were driven by Anouk. Along the way we saw our first Pied hornbills, Woodland kingfishers, African grey parrots and more en-route and stopped briefly at the equator.

Much of the route was forested, giving us a strong idea of what the country looked like. As the day wore on we approached Lope and the forest began to be interspersed with areas of savannah. At dusk our first mammal sighting was an excellent view of a **Yellow-backed duiker** by the roadside. It didn't run but slowly ambled off into the forest.

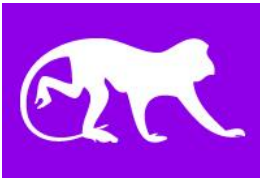
Soon after arriving we were joined by Dan and Jorge as they arrived from Ivindo. As we settled down to dinner, the tale of Ivindo was told. Gorillas and Elephants had visited the Bai every day giving prolonged views, as well as sitatungas from the platform.

After dinner neither Christof nor Dan wanted to go out for a walk, but a quick circuit of the camp produced nightjars and lapwings as well as our first **Forest buffalo**.

Day 2 Lope National Park

Travelling

At dawn Lesser striped swallows and African palm swifts flew above the camp, while Long-legged pipits and African thrushes hopped about on the lawns, and sunbirds visited the flowers. A herd of **Forest buffalo** grazed in front of



the camp.

Heading into the park we saw our first monkeys, a mixed group of **Putty-nosed monkeys** and **Moustached monkeys** feeding in a tree along with hornbills. A **Forest giant squirrel** was also present.

We moved on to an area where **Black colobus** were frequently seen. As we left the vehicle the cries of **Chimpanzees** were heard nearby, we diverted to investigate, but sadly we could not find the source of the calls. Moving back into the woods we saw plentiful signs of **Red river hogs** and **Chimps** but saw neither. A **Northern bushbuck** watched us from between the trees, and **Moustached monkeys** fed overhead.

With no success we moved on to a second area where we eventually found a group of three **Black colobus**. These outlandish looking monkeys stayed high in the trees but we watched them for fifteen minutes and were able to get good photographs.

As we returned to the lodge the vehicle we were using had a flat tire, and with the spare also flat we continued on foot through the savannah while another car came to meet us. While on foot we noted the numerous tracks on the road, including numerous tracks of a **Leopard**.

After lunch, an afternoon drive we saw our first **Forest elephants** and we were able to safely approach quite closely to a feeding mother and her calves. More **Forest buffalo** were also seen. At dusk the vehicle again had problems, so the group set out on foot once more before being picked up and driven back to camp.

Day 3 **Lope NP**

Wildlife Watching

Early in the morning, Richard and Ewan took an early bird walk around the camp before breakfast. Village weavers, Woodland Kingfishers, and Pied hornbills were much in evidence.

Today was to be **Mandrill** tracking day, so while we had breakfast, the team arrived to pick us up. The first task was to find them. The Troupe were a long way away so stopped several times on high ground to triangulate. As we closed in on them the vehicle had to move very slowly through scrub while one of the researchers walked in front of us to hack veg from rarely used path,

After the long drive we were fortunate that only a short walk was required to reach them. crossing savannah and a small stream. In long grass where we had a close encounter with a **Forest buffalo**, we soon found the mandrills.

The **Mandrill** troupe consists of around 800 individuals although how many we saw is impossible to say. 90 percent of adults are female, with only a few full grown males. The group was centred around a few trees above a stream. Full adult males were present but not out in the open, but young males and females were seen well. Unusually the group stayed in more or less the same place for the duration of our visit and we were able to enjoy our time with them. After an hour we made the journey back.

In the afternoon we visited some different areas of the lodge to try to get better views of monkeys and concentrated on the forested areas. We caught only glimpses of monkeys although again we had great views of **Forest elephants** and **Forest buffaloes**.

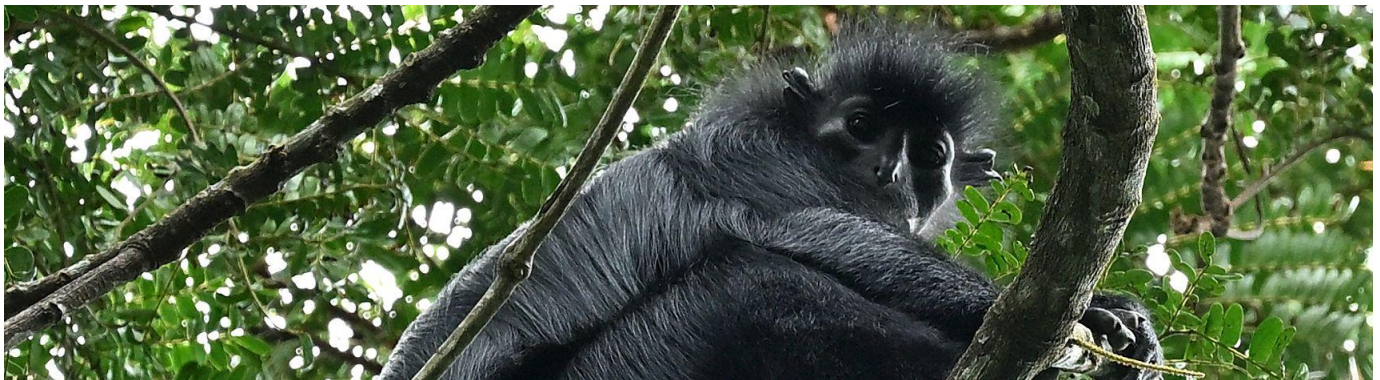
Day 4 **Lope NP**

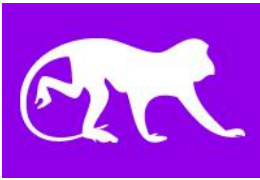
Wildlife Watching

The next morning, with the trains still not running, we took the long drive to Lamberene, leaving Lope the front car saw a **Black-fronted duiker** running up a slope and into the forest beside the road. At Ndjole we stopped at a market for lunch, where Dan, Christof and Richard could enjoy the local offerings.

Onward then, to the Lamberene and the Albert Schweitzer memorial hospital. We arrived just before dark, in time for a first glimpse of the African Skimmers and Caspian Terns on the river.

Dinner at the hospital was excellent, but after a long day, interest in an evening walk was minimal. Dan, Richard and Christof all headed for bed, but Ewan persevered seeing a great many **Straw coloured fruit bats**, as well as a single **Franquet's fruit bat** and several small rodents that were not identified to species level but were thought to be *Hylomyscus sp.* of some sort.





Day 5 Lamberene

Travelling & Wildlife Watching

First thing in the morning, a family of three **Red-legged sun squirrels** could be seen running through the trees in front of the refectory. Breakfast followed, then a tour of the fascinating Albert Schweitzer Museum. This documented the life of the Nobel prize winner, and included a tour of a reconstruction of his hospital (the original having decayed long ago).

In the afternoon we took a boat upstream to search for **Northern talapoins**. These diminutive monkeys are the smallest of the old-world monkeys, and with their dependence on river edges for their habitat, are under extreme pressure.

As we searched for them, we paused to look at the many waterbirds on the river. Grey pratincoles were numerous and large Pink backed pelicans stood on the sandbanks. Some large obstacles in the water resolved into **Common hippopotamus** as we neared them, our first of the trip.

Eventually a group of **Northern talapoins** were seen very close to the boat, close but brief views ensued, and while the monkeys were still present they could no longer be seen. We detoured down some side channels, where we had great views of White-throated blue swallows but no more talapoins. Returning to the main river a second group of **Talapoin** were found. Again the views were good but the foliage made photography difficult. A short delay caused by a minor engine fire on the boat followed before a final group of talapoins who were more obliging for photographers.

Day 6 Lamberene / Loango National Park Travelling & Wildlife Watching

After an early breakfast we said goodbye to Jorge. Before the long boat ride to Loango, stopping for a huge colony of **Egyptian rousettes** under a nearby bridge. The boat trip through hours of pure green forest, towards the coast. Reaching our first destination, a car journey followed, before another boat pickup took us on to Akaka.

The journey to Akaka was a riot of colour as water birds of all shapes and sizes were seen. Kingfishers, finfoots, jacanas, hammerkops. Along the waters edge, slender snouted crocodiles dived into the water as we passed. Pods of **Hippos**, watched on and we were able to get close to **elephants** browsing in the papyrus along the banks. Richard spotted a bull **Forest elephant** already in the water close to the boat wanting to cross. We were in its way as it eyed us with some annoyance before finally moving past us and crossing the river.

As we began to lose the light we came across a beautiful female **Sitatunga** calmly sitting by the river, shortly after a young male on the other bank. Finally made it to camp after a long day and everyone headed to bed for a deserved rest.



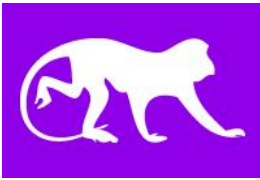
Day 7 Akaka River

Wildlife Watching & Gorilla Tracking

After a night disturbed by the sound of **Hippos** and the call of the Vermiculated fishing owl we left camp early to head for the **Western lowland gorillas**. Pausing along the river for more Sitatungas and Elephants, while the group watched some **Hippos**, a **Lady Burton's rope squirrel** was seen in the trees behind. At the camp Christof, Dan and Richard were briefed on the **Gorilla** family and the rules for visiting them. They then headed into the forest. Thankfully the **Gorillas** were not in the wettest part of their territory and the terrain was traversed with ease. The time with the **Gorillas** went quickly and after a special hour with them the group returned. The route back took slightly long due to an uncooperative **Elephant** in the path, but on return everyone was pleased with their encounter.

In the afternoon, we took a boat river in the opposite direction from the lodge, to an abandoned village in the forest. A great many photos of river birds were taken and some new species seen including Great blue turaco and Black bee eater

After dinner we took the boat out again for an event cruise. The river is very different by night, with many more Slender-snouted crocodiles in the water. We surprised a **Hippo** on the bank which crashed straight back into the water, and saw several **Sitaungas** and **Elephants**. Moving into forested areas we saw many sleeping birds, and bats. Rodents in the bushes over the water were later identified as **Rufous nosed rat**. We also had frustratingly brief views of **Demidoff dwarf galago** and **Lord Derby's anomalure**.



Day 8 Loango NP / Akaka River

Wildlife Watching

In the morning for a change of pace, we took a hike in the forest for a couple of hours to enjoy the ambiance. This gave us some nice new birds such as the red-breasted paradise flycatcher. We could hear **Grey-cheeked mangabeys** in the trees above and two **Blue duikers** were found with the thermal imager.

Returning to camp we packed up and headed for Ndola. A wonderful welcome awaited us. Lodge on the bay with terns feeding in front. Behind the lodge **Forest buffalo** were grazing on the savannah. Heading out in the safari vehicle, Christof reiterated his desire to see surfing hippos, although at the time of year this was unlikely. We headed for the beach, and found a **Hippo** in a lagoon behind the beach. We agreed that while it was not currently surfing, it had the look of one that did. A bull **Elephant** sauntered past and passing the end of the lagoon we did manage to see a group of four **Forest buffaloes** that were on the beach more or less.

On the beach, Dan looked out over the clear skies to where the distant flares from oil industry platforms could be seen. As he did so, he noticed the large but distant splashing of a breaching whale. Eventually we were all able to pinpoint this and for several minutes we had distant views of what was likely to have been a **Humpback whale**. These are present in the area during the middle of the year as part of their breeding season.

Returning to Ndola after sunset we spotlit the route and we were pleased to find another new species for the trip, a **Central African blotched genet**, that watched us from the bushes only a few feet from the vehicle.



Day 9 Loango NP - Libreville

Wildlife Watching & Travelling

On our final morning we took the vehicle out early in the hope of seeing **Red river hogs**. Sadly these were not in evidence, but we did find a **Red-capped mangabey** moving across the savannah. Once again we drove to the beach and this time stopped at the mouth of the river and called a boat to pick us up and take us back to camp. On departure, more **Red-capped mangabeys** appeared just outside the camp to see us off, before travelling by boat, car and plane back to Libreville.

GROUP 2

Day 1 Libreville

Arrival

With most of the participants on the Ivindo extension with Jorge before the trip, the official beginning in Libreville had only one member, so Martin and Ewan began with an hour or two of birdwatching before catching the overnight train to Lope.

Meanwhile those at Ivindo spent the day travelling to Lope. Arrival at Lope was late in the evening, but in time for a late dinner before bed.

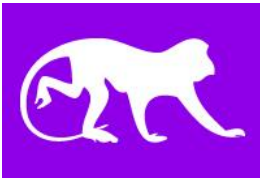
Day 2 Lope National Park

Travelling

The train was significantly delayed meaning Martin and Ewan arrived only 20 minutes before breakfast, where the group met up in full for the first time before setting out for the day.

Those scheduled to look for **Mandrills** on the first day met the researchers and quickly headed out with Jorge to look for them. The other group prepared for a morning drive. Unfortunately this drive never started as the park staff were required for training that morning so we could not access the park. Instead the morning was spent birdwatching and birds seen included sunbirds, kingfishers, palm nut vultures, African thrush as well as skimmers and pratincoles by the river. Martin found another mammal in 2 **Peter's epaulated dwarf fruit bats** roosting above his room, and a further 13 were found by the pool.

Meanwhile the mandrill group headed for high ground to work out where the **Mandrills** would be. They were fortunate that the **Mandrills** were close to an area that could be driven to, so required only minimal walking. The views of the **Mandrills** were excellent that morning and the group spent a very productive hour with them although they were disappointed not to photograph a large male, who make up only a small percent of the 800 strong troop.



In the afternoon we set out into the park proper and quickly honed in on our main target for the afternoon, **Black colobus**. We found 3 of these strange primates high in the trees in a forest fragment, and with some effort got some decent photographs. Mark also spotted a **Red legged sun squirrel** nearby.

As the sun went down we spotted several elephants emerging from the edge of the forest. As we left the park more mammals were added to our growing list, a **Harnessed bushbuck** sat calmly in one of the wetter areas. One last sighting for the afternoon was a **Long-nosed mongoose** that ran down the track in front of the vehicle.

After dinner a loop of the hotel grounds produced no mammals other than **Forest buffalo** on the lawns, but some nightjars were also photographed for later identification.

Day 3 **Lope NP**

Wildlife Watching

The next morning early risers were treated to views of **Moustached monkeys** that had roosted by the river, as they woke up and moved off. After breakfast the roles from the previous day were reversed, with those who had been denied entry to the park the previous day joining Jorge and the **Mandrill** researchers, and those who had already seen the **mandrills** again stopped from entering the park due to staff training. Once more the **Mandrill** viewing proved excellent, with another **Long-nosed mongoose** seen on the way in by Ted and Martin.

For our second afternoon, we looked for monkeys, with **Moustached monkey** and **Putty-nosed monkey** seen as well as a **Blue duiker** crossing the road and with more found in the thermal. On driving out we came across a group of 5 **elephants** and climbed onto a large rock above them for a better view. The matriarch of the group was unimpressed by our presence and moved angrily towards us, but we were safely out of reach so having made her point she returned to feeding as her family slowly joined her.

Another post dinner spotlighting session proved disappointing, with nothing seen but the same nightjars and plovers, so we turned in for the night to be fresh the next morning.

Day 4 **Lope NP**

Wildlife Watching

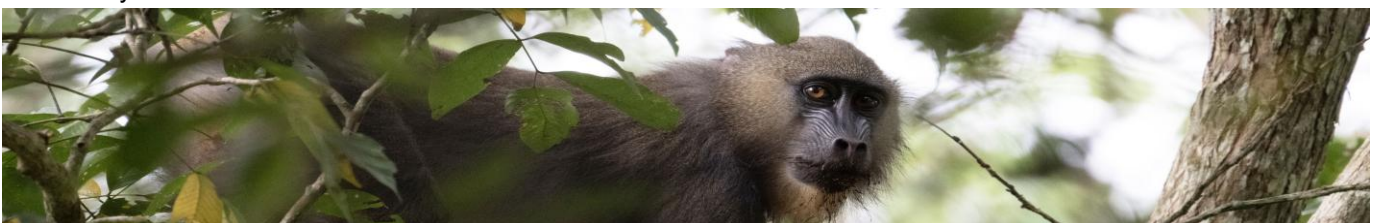
At the third attempt we finally made it into Lope for a morning drive. Our intention was to walk in some forest areas to see what we could find. En route we encountered the first **Grey cheeked mangabeys** of the main tour, who were feeding in a stand of trees along with **Moustached monkeys** and **Putty-nosed monkeys**. More mangabeys followed, before a solitary individual high in a tree gave good views for the photographers.

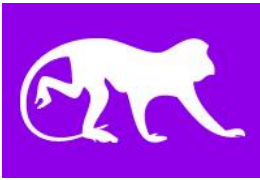
Moving into the forest, a **Red-legged sun squirrel** was spotted, before Ewan spotted a duiker in the thermal imager. This proved to be **White-legged duiker**, a lifer for all of the group. Although always partially blocked by intervening saplings, several of the group managed surprisingly good photos. Moving on, a large thermal signature proved to be a herd of **Forest buffalo**. The herd was spooked by our presence and ran down the slope near us making a terrific racket, and causing some alarm to those at the back of the line who had not been aware of their presence. Not all of the buffalo had stampeded, so were able to get views of those that remained. A great bird sighting followed as a Latham's Francolin was spotted on the forest floor. Finally as we exited back into the savannah, two **Blue duikers** ran from the path.

The afternoon would be our last chance in Lope before we departed by train that night. We headed far into the park towards the gorilla and chimp research station in the hope of encountering some wildlife in the forests around there. The drive proved slow with only occasional groups of **Grey cheeked mangabeys** and distant **Forest elephants** seen. As the light began to fade, and we headed back towards the park entrance though we had a surprise. The same area that had contained three species of primate that morning, now held a fourth. A group of **Mandrills** were making their way through the trees preparing to roost for the night. Sightings of unhabituated mandrills are unusual in the park so this was a surprise.

After dinner, no one was keen to do a night walk. Those on the previous evenings having had little success and an early start required to catch the train, but with insect activity seeming higher than on previous nights, Ewan headed out anyway and was joined by Martin and Phil who were photographing geckos. The group stopped to look at some roosting birds, and also to take pictures and sonograms of two bats displaying unusual behaviour.

More mammals followed, with **Forest buffalo** feeding around the rooms, and a **Harnessed bushbuck** in the marshes near the camp. Looking once more into the palms down by the river, we noticed a heat signature that was beside, but not actually in the always warm palm hearts. Checking with a spotlight, we saw eyeshine and getting closer had good views of an **African palm civet** before it moved on and biting ants where we were standing sent us on our way.





Day 5 Lamberene

Travelling & Wildlife Watching

At 4AM we left for the train and waited; there were bats feeding on insects in the waiting area of the train station. Based on information from previous trips and from photographs we believe these were **Sundvell's roundleaf bats**. The train arrived around 5.30AM, which meant we had some daylight during the train journey so while some of the group caught up on lost sleep others kept an eye on the surrounding forest. They were eventually rewarded with a very close elephant.

Switching to cars at Ndjole, we travelled the remaining distance to Lamberene and the Albert Schwitzer memorial hospital where we would stay for the night. Here the river flows much more slowly and waterbirds are plentiful. We saw our first Darters of the trip as well as Pelicans, Purple herons and Caspian terns. Also near the rooms a family of three **Red-legged sun squirrels** were racing through the trees.

Some of the group went on the museum tour before we headed upstream to look for **Northern Talapoins**. These diminutive monkeys are the smallest of the old world monkeys and live exclusively in riparian environments so are highly endangered due to habitat loss. They did not prove easy to find, the first monkeys seen were **Grey cheeked mangabeys**, and when a talapoin was seen it quickly disappeared.

As the afternoon wore on we became concerned that we might miss our only chance to see them, but late into the boat trip our driver saw a group of them in the trees along the bank.

Living in thick vegetation, viewing these monkeys is never easy but over the course of half an hour we had repeated glimpses of a group of at least twelve **Talapoins** moving along the bank, jumping and running along the branches. Eventually as we lost the light we headed for home.

After dinner, Jesper, Phil and Martin headed out with Ewan to look for nocturnal mammals, some small fast moving rodents proved difficult to identify or photograph (probably *Hylomyscus* sp.). The same could not be said for the many **Straw coloured fruit bats** feeding and roosting in the trees throughout the hospital grounds. These large and noisy mammals posed by the dozen, allowing Martin to practice his photographic skills on bats in flights.

Day 6 Lamberene / Loango National Park Travelling & Wildlife Watching

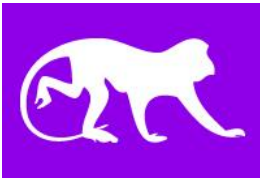
In the morning we set off by boat towards Loango. A smaller boat that we had hoped for meant that some of the group kindly travelled with only minimal luggage, sending the bulk of their kit back to Libreville. Before leaving Lamberene the boat took a short detour under the old bridge where a massive colony of around ten thousand **Egyptian Rousettes** could be seen. We took some pictures but didn't stay long because sitting under a fruit bat colony is not a great idea when the canopy on your boat doesn't cover the whole thing. The boat journey was long and uncomfortable, with some difficulties in the lagoon where waves caused the seats to jump out of their sockets, but eventually we made it to land.

Here we stopped for coffee and switched to the road for a two hour journey to the next lagoon. The road journey included sight of our first **Red-capped mangabeys** for those on the left of the vehicle, but was otherwise uneventful before we were dropped at a waterside village.

Our guide Karl met us there and crossing another lagoon we made our way into the channels and streams where Akaka camp is located. We stopped for many bird photographs along the way, with five species of kingfisher on the journey, as well as finfoots, hammerkops and rosy bee eaters, while watched by Moustached monkeys. Further in we saw our first **Common hippopotamus** of the trip and had close encounters with **Forest elephants** swimming in the water just a few meters away from us.

At Akaka, we settled into our rooms and learned the rules of the camp (watch out for elephants being a key one). A fine dinner followed, attended not only by us, but also by a Vermiculated fishing owl perched by the restaurant. After the meal most of the group headed out by boat to see what we could see. We were late getting out and couldn't go that far, but we encountered **Elephants** by the water and numerous rodents in bushes along the streams. Our first **Sitatunga** was a highlight and stayed quite still for photographs. Although not identified, Martin also found a small snake in the water, and lots of eyeshine on the water surface proved the existence of large numbers of Slender Snouted Crocodiles.





Day 7 Akaka River

Wildlife Watching & Gorilla Tracking

Morning came, after a night disturbed by the calls of the fishing owl and the sound of passing **Hippos**. We went our separate ways, Mark, Ted, Martin and Phil set out by boat to look for **Western lowland gorillas**. Gill and Steve also took a boat to photograph birds. Vel, Jespar and Ewan took a forest walk in the hope of seeing something new.

Gill and Steve had a great morning on the boat with Karl, seeing huge numbers of birds on the small channel opposite the camp including good views Black bee eaters as well as the abundant Rosy Bee eaters. Shining Blue, Malachite and Giant kingfishers also made for good photography as well as the many species of heron. For mammals they saw several **Situatuga**, **Buffalo** and **Elephant**, and reptiles were represented by the Slender snouted crocodile.

On the forest walk there was much activity though it was difficult to get views of the wildlife. **Grey-cheeked mangabeys** were regularly overhead, as were **Moustached monkeys** and **Putty-nosed monkeys**. Squirrels seen in the thermal and glimpsed by eye were **Red-legged sun squirrel** and **Western Palm Squirrel**. Duikers also found by thermal proved even harder to see by eye. A hollow log along the path contained three roosting **Benito roundleaf bats**. Sign of other wildlife was plentiful, including **Red river hog** tracks, **White-bellied pangolin** diggings, and what we were told was a burrow excavated by a **Giant pangolin**.

Meanwhile the gorilla tracking group made their way to the briefing centre and set out, the walk was not too hard and they found the gorillas in the open in one of the swampy areas they often frequent at this time of year. In the swamp photography can be easier but footing is harder, and a misstep can put you waist deep in water and mud. They spent a very happy hour with the family of sixteen **Western lowland gorillas** before their time was up and they headed back. Their trip back was eventful though as they met some of the gorilla researchers who had just been charged by an angry **Forest elephant**. The route around this was a long detour but did mean they met a troupe of **Red-capped mangabeys** along the way. The group eventually returned happy with their encounter.

Their later return gave them only a short rest and a chance to put their muddy boots in for cleaning before we all headed out on a short afternoon boat ride. The afternoon was damp and drizzly and mammals were few apart from **Forest elephants** and **Buffalo** but a few new birds such as Hartlaub's duck were added to our list. After dark we headed out by boat again, this time in the smaller channel where we hoped the taller trees might yield something interesting. The downside being that this boat was less manoeuvrable. So although we spotted our first **Lord Derby's anomalure** and a **Gabon Squirrel galago**, views were brief and many missed them. Eventually we had more luck with the **Anomalure** and everyone in the boat had good views of it in the tree. A further two were seen, with Martin even managing a photograph.

Day 8 Loango NP / Akaka River

Wildlife Watching

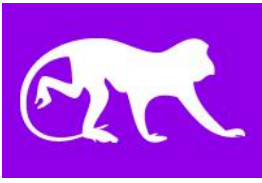
The following morning roles were reversed, with Jespar, Vel, Gill and Steve visiting the **Western lowland gorillas** and Martin, Mark, Phil and Ted taking a forest walk with Karl. The walk proved successful with views of **Blue duiker**, **White-legged duiker**, **Red-legged sun squirrel** and **Western palm squirrel**, as well a black guinea fowl, before getting back on the boat and heading to Ndola camp.

Meanwhile the others travelled to the gorilla station and waited for news that the **Western lowland gorillas** had been found. This took a while and when news came it was not good, at 11.30 the gorillas were found, at the far edge of their territory, in the swampiest area. Undaunted, the group set out and while the walk was long they were lucky that the gorillas were constantly moving towards them so by the time they were intercepted the group family, they had come out of the swamp and were in dry forest, much to everyone's relief. The late departure time meant that by the time they returned to the gorilla research station and travelled to Ndola, the others had already set out on an afternoon drive. No one minded though as the gorillas were the main target so they had a well earned drink instead.

At Ndola, things were quiet, the hoped for **Red river hogs** had not been seen for several weeks and there was little sign of their activity. **Forest elephants** and **Forest buffalo** were around but no sign of anything else. After dinner we set out for a final evening drive in the hope of something good. Nightjars were plentiful so we stopped to look at these before Martin saw eyeshine in the distance. A genet. Ted approached on foot to get photographs and eventually most of us joined him. The animal was hiding in a bush, visible but difficult to get a good look at. We first thought this might be a **Servaline genet**, but photographs showed clearly the pattern was that of a **Central African blotched genet**.

Eventually moving on Ewan picked up a second genet close to the vehicle, this one appeared much darker and with more uniform small spots along its body. Although it swiftly moved away from us into vegetation, this one is thought to have been a **Servaline genet**.

Martin found a third, a long way off, but we tracked it as close as we could and then squeaked at it to get its attention. It showed interest and came a long way towards us before the wind changed and gave us away. In all we watched this **Central African blotched genet** for over ten minutes. A herd of **Forest buffalo** marked as far as we were to go that night so we headed back, with a distant **Whalberg's epaullated fruit bat** seen on the return journey.



Day 9 **Loango NP - Libreville**

Wildlife Watching & Travelling

For the final morning we tried to get to the beach, the larger vehicle required for the group size being difficult to drive in the sand. We made some progress but after we stopped for what appeared to be a lone **mangabey**, the vehicle had significant problems and what appeared to be the driveshaft came off. We waited while the park authorities sent another vehicle to pick us, and then continued as far as it could take us down the beach. We walked the last few hundred yards to the mouth of the river while a white backed vulture circled overhead, then photographed ghost crabs on the shore until the camp sent a boat to pick us up. After a pleasant lunch we began the journey back to Port Gentil, Libreville and eventually our homes.

Species List

Gabon Wildlife Adventure

Jun/Jul 2025

Mammals (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Lord Derby's anomalure	<i>Anomalurus derbianus</i>
2	White-legged duiker	<i>Cephalophus crusalbum</i>
3	Blue duiker	<i>Cephalophus monticol</i>
4	Black-fronted duiker	<i>Cephalophus nigrifrons</i>
5	Yellow-backed duiker	<i>Cephalophus silvicultor</i>
6	Red-capped mangabey	<i>Cercocebus torquatus</i>
7	Moustached monkey	<i>Cercopithecus cephus</i>
8	Putty-nosed monkey	<i>Cercopithecus nictitans</i>
9	African civet	<i>Civetta civittus</i>
10	Black colobus	<i>Colobus satanas</i>
11	Straw coloured fruit bat	<i>Eidolon helvum</i>
12	Western palm squirrel	<i>Epixerus ebii</i>
13	Whalberg's epauletted bat	<i>Epomophorus wahlbergi</i>
14	Franquet's singing fruit bat	<i>Epomops franqueti</i>
15	Lady Burton's rope squirrel	<i>Funisciurus isabella</i>
16	Demidoff's dwarf galago	<i>Galagoides demidoff</i>
17	Blotched genet	<i>Genetta maculata</i>
18	Servaline genet	<i>Genetta servalina</i>
19	Western gorilla	<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>
20	Red-legged sun squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus rufobrachium</i>
21	Common hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>
22	Benito roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros beatus</i>
23	Sundevall's roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros caffer</i>
24	Spot-necked otter	<i>Hydrictis Maculicollis</i>
25	Wood mouse sp.	<i>Hylomyscus sp.</i>
26	Grey-cheeked mangabey	<i>Lophocebus albigena</i>
27	African forest elephant	<i>Loxodonta cyclotis</i>
28	Mandrill	<i>Mandrillus sphinx</i>

Key: Ivindo (IVI) / Lope (LOP) / Lamberene (LAM) / Loango (LOA) / Akaka River (AKA)				
IVI	LOP	LAM	LAO	AKA
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29	Humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
30	Peter's dwarf epauletted bat	<i>Micropteropus pusillus</i>
31	Northern talapoin	<i>Miopithecus ogoouensis</i>
32	African palm civet	<i>Nandinia binotata</i>
33	Rufous nosed rat	<i>Oenomys hypoxanthus</i>
34	Chimpanzee	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>
35	Forest giant squirrel	<i>Protoxerus stangeri</i>
36	Egyptian rousette	<i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i>
37	Gabon squirrel galago	<i>Sciurocheirus gabonensis</i>
38	Forest buffalo	<i>Synceros nanus</i>
39	Harnessed bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>
40	Sitatunga	<i>Tragelaphus spekei</i>
41	Long-nosed mongoose	<i>Xenogale naso</i>

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*Some bats identified 100% at roosts or with good views. Others identified with spectrograms in combination with sightings (no spectrograms without visual confirmation are recorded), behaviour and habitat – so not 100% but best educated guesses. For more information please email me.

Birds (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
2	African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
3	African goshawk	<i>Aerospiza tachiro</i>
4	Red-headed Lovebird	<i>Agapornis pullarius</i>
5	Black Guinea fowl	<i>Agelastes niger</i>
6	Shining-blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo quadibrachys</i>
7	Hartlaub's Duck	<i>Anas hartlaubi</i>
8	African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
9	Reichenbach's Sunbird	<i>Anthobaphes reichenbachi</i>
10	Long-legged Pipit	<i>Anthus pallidiventris</i>
11	Yellow-breasted Apalis	<i>Apalis flavida</i>
12	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
13	Yellow-billed Egret	<i>Ardea brachyrhyncha</i>
14	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
15	Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>
16	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
17	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>

18	Pale-throated Greenbul	<i>Atimastillas flavigula</i>
19	Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
20	Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>
21	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
22	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>
23	Water Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
24	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
25	White-thighed Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes albotibialis</i>
26	Piping Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i>
27	Green-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>
28	Square-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus fossii</i>
29	Swamp Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus natalensis</i>
30	Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>
31	Rufous-chested Swallow	<i>Cecropis semirufa</i>
32	Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
33	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
34	Carmelite Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra fuliginosa</i>
35	Forbes's Plover	<i>Charadrius forbesi</i>
36	Simple Greenbul	<i>Chlorocichla simplex</i>
37	Dideric Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>
38	African Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia microscelis</i>
39	Olive-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chloropygius</i>
40	Copper Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>
41	Johanna's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris johannae</i>
42	Superb Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris superbus</i>
43	Chattering Cisticola	<i>Cisticola anonymus</i>
44	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
45	Winding Cisticola	<i>Cisticola marginatus</i>
46	Rock/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
47	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
48	Great Blue Turaco	<i>Corythaeola cristata</i>
49	Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>
50	Green-headed Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i>
51	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
52	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>
53	Shining Drongo	<i>Dicrurus atripennis</i>
54	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
55	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
56	Orange-cheeked Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>

57	Little Greenbul	<i>Eurillas virens</i>
58	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
59	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
60	Latham's Francolin	<i>Francolinus lathamii</i>
61	Eurasian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
62	Grey Pratincole	<i>Glareola cinerea</i>
63	Rock Pratincole	<i>Glareola nuchalis</i>
64	Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>
65	White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
66	Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>
67	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>
68	Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>
69	African Fish-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
70	Ayre's Hawk Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus ayresii</i>
71	Ethiopian Swallow	<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>
72	White-throated Blue Swallow	<i>Hirundo nigrita</i>
73	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
74	African Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina lecontei</i>
75	African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>
76	Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>
77	Splendid Starling	<i>Lamprotornis splendidus</i>
78	Swamp Boubou	<i>Laniarius bicolor</i>
79	Bronze Manakin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>
80	Congo Pied Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros fasciatus</i>
81	Yellow-thoated Longclaw	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>
82	Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>
83	White-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>
84	Black Bee-eater	<i>Merops gularis</i>
85	Rosy Bee-eater	<i>Merops malachurus</i>
86	Blue-breasted Bee-eater	<i>Merops variegatus</i>
87	Reed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>
88	African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>
89	Cassin's Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa cassini</i>
90	Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>
91	Cassin's Spinetail	<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>
92	Cassin's Spinetail	<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>
93	Banded Martin	<i>Neophedina cincta</i>
94	Western Nicator	<i>Nicator chloris</i>
95	Gray-headed nigrta	<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>

96	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
97	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
98	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
99	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
100	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>
101	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
102	Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>
103	Red-throated Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon rufigula</i>
104	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>
105	Orange Weaver	<i>Ploceus aurantius</i>
106	Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
107	Vieillot's Black Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigerrimus</i>
108	Black-necked Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>
109	Slender-billed Weaver	<i>Ploceus pelzelni</i>
110	African Finfoot	<i>Podica senegalensis</i>
111	Double-toothed Barbet	<i>Pogonornis bidentatus</i>
112	African Harrier-hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
113	Square-tailed Sawwing	<i>Psalidoprocne nitens</i>
114	Square-tailed Sawwing	<i>Psalidoprocne nitens</i>
115	African Grey Parrot	<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>
116	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
117	Black-bellied Seedcracker	<i>Pyrenestes ostrinus</i>
118	Sabine's Spinetail	<i>Rhaphidura sabini</i>
119	African Skimmer	<i>Rynchops flavirostris</i>
120	African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
121	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
122	Vermiculated Fishing-Owl	<i>Scotopelia bouvieri</i>
123	Black-and-white Manakin	<i>Spermestes bicolor</i>
124	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
125	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
126	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
127	Mottled Spinetail	<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>
128	African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsichore viridis</i>
129	Red-breasted Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>
130	Swamp Greenbul	<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>
131	Black-casqued Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>
132	African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>
133	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
134	African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>

135	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>
136	White-crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus albiceps</i>
137	Senegal Lapwing	<i>Vanellus lugubris</i>
138	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
139	Black Crake	<i>Zapornia flavirostra</i>

Reptiles (* = heard or signs only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Peter's rock agama	<i>Agama picticauda</i>
2	Slender-snouted crocodile	<i>Mecistops cataphractus</i>
3	Nile monitor	<i>Varanus niloticus</i>

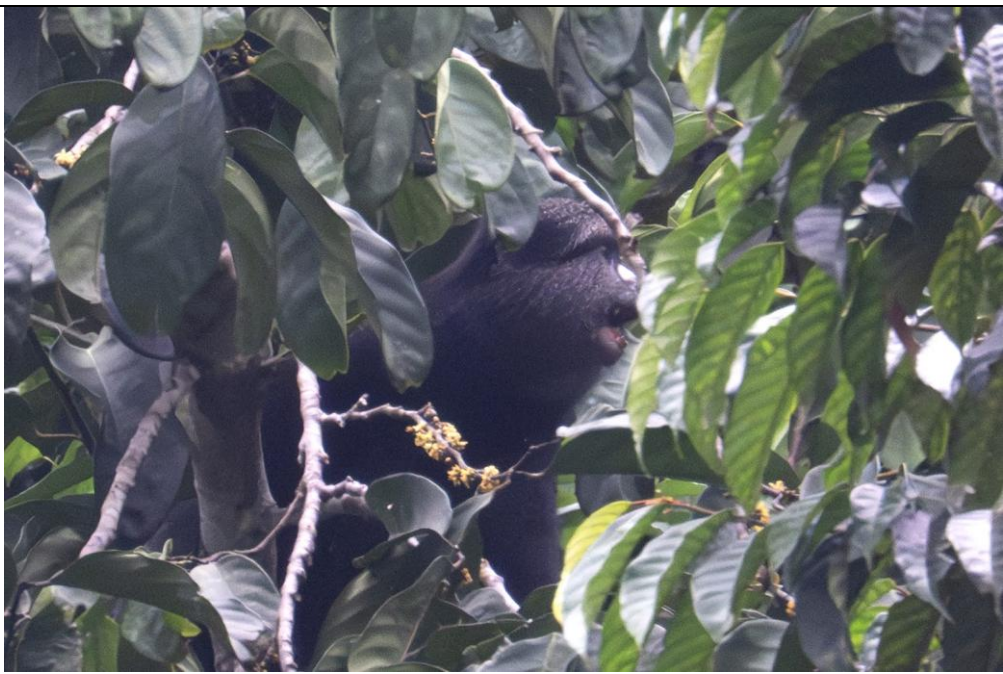
Pictures used with permission from Ewan Davies, Ted Gatlin, Christof Richter & Mark Golan



Western Gorilla



Mandrill



Putty-nosed Monkey



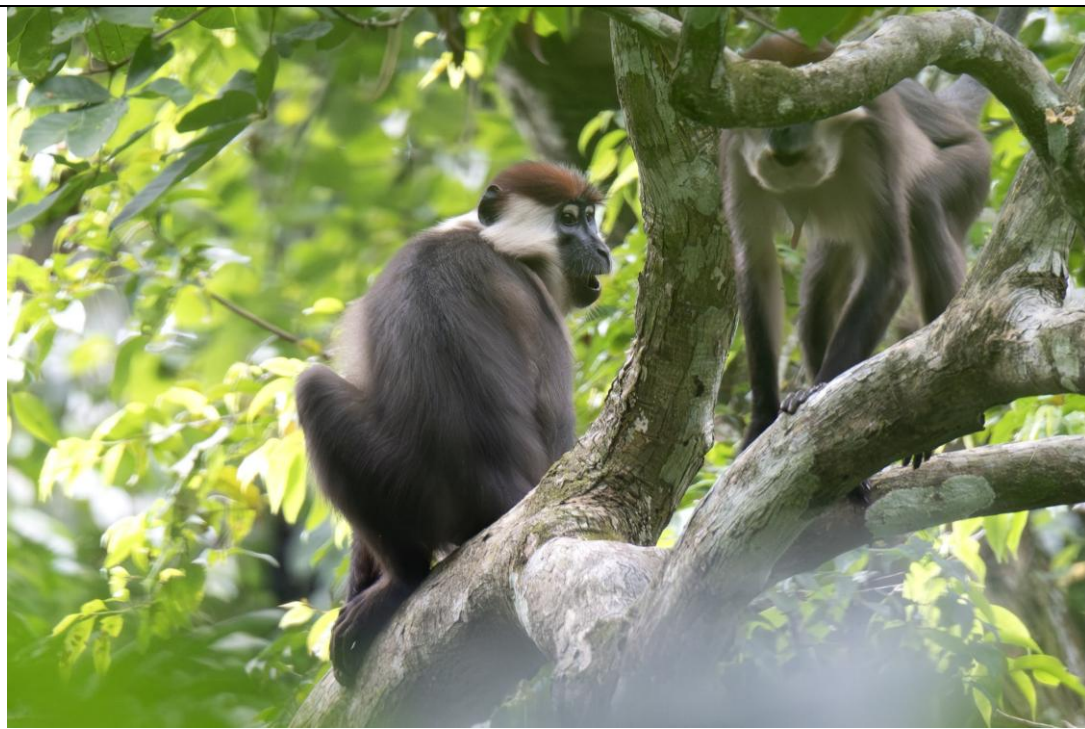
Moustached Monkey



Grey-cheeked Mangabey



Northern Talapoin



Red-capped Mangabey



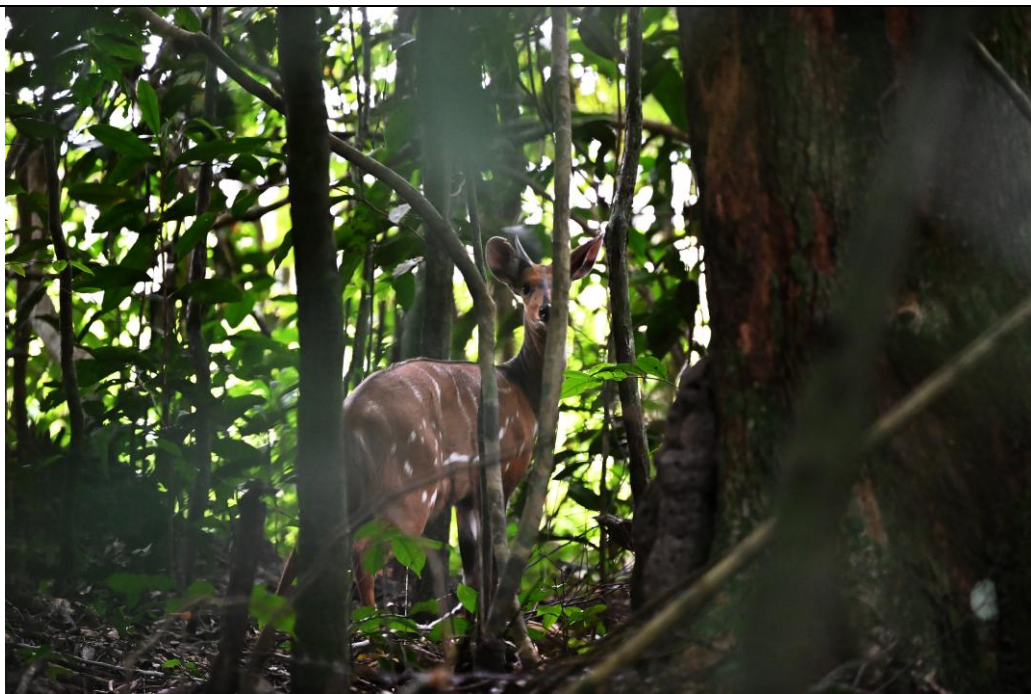
Black Colobus



Common Hippopotamus



Sitatunga



Harnessed (Central) Bushbuck



Forest Buffalo



African Forest Elephant



Spot-necked Otter (only shot with them facing to see the neck markings)



Servaline Genet



Central African Blotched Genet



Peter's Dwarf Epauletted Fruit Bat



Rufous Nosed Rat



Black-casqued Hornbill



African Darter



African Skimmer



Little Egret



Yellow-billed Stork



Pink-backed Pelican



Hammerkop



Lantham's Francolin



Water Thick-knee



Malachite Kingfisher



Shining Blue Kingfisher



Pied Kingfisher



Village Weaver



Square-tailed Nightjar



White-throated Bee-eater



Rosy Bee-eater



Central African Slender-snouted Crocodile



Ornate Monitor



Rainbow Rock Agama

