

My trip to Tanzania and Kenya in May 2022

by Marcus Burkhardt

Being fascinated by animals as long as I can remember, it was my wish to go to Africa since my early childhood. In 2019 I started species collecting and photographic documentation in European zoos and from the beginning I focused on bovids to not get out of hand. As a base for my work as an artist and illustrator I also need a quantity of photos what makes it difficult to follow other taxa the same way. I decided to collect bovids systematically for future artwork and do the rest by chance, or when I have a particular artistic idea for a non-bovid. Having almost all captive taxa accessible in Europe so far, Africa with its high antelope diversity became an even greater target. Highly inspired by the report of Charles Foley about his Abbott's duiker encounter, I saw my (probably only) chance to have a look on one of the most difficult antelopes to see in the world, and the chance to see it for a longer time in an open area made me decide it was time to make my dream come true.

I contacted tour guide Shaban Mputa, who successfully guided Charles to the spot at Machame Camp a few months earlier, to organize a trip to several national parks to visit in about 2 weeks. Getting as many new and rare antelopes as possible was the driving force for the selection of parks. Unfortunately, as we prepared the trip there was a high increase in prices around the world, including Tanzania, and under these circumstances I couldn't afford the original trip I planned. So, with a heavy heart, I had to refuse some targets, like Selous Game Reserve (with the most beautiful species of wildebeest!) and an Ader's duiker trip on Zanzibar. At least one day at Saadani NP was a small substitute for Selous as they have the beautiful Lichtenstein's hartebeest.

Itinerary

- 12.5. Arusha NP
- 13.5. Kilimanjaro NP
- 14.5. Kilimanjaro NP
- 15.5. Kili - Moshi town
- 16.5. Drive from Moshi town to Voi
- 17.5. Tsavo East NP
- 18.5. Tsavo East NP
- 19.5. Drive from Tsavo to Lake Manyara
- 20.5. Lake Manyara via Olduvai Gorge to Serengeti
- 21.5. Serengeti NP
- 22.5. Serengeti NP
- 23.5. Serengeti and Flight to Dar es Salaam
- 24.5. Saadani NP
- 25.5. Zanzibar Kilos Conservation

My plane from Frankfurt took off in the evening on May 11th. This was the first flight in my life and I was somewhat agitated, but everything went well. The next morning, we landed on Zanzibar and I took a small plane by an East African Airline to Arusha, as direct flights from Germany to Arusha start in June. On this flight I had a great view on this beautiful landscape.

Shaban welcomed me at the airport, and after a few organizations we headed for Arusha National Park. It is a very diverse park with dense bushes, forests and open plains. One of the first sights was a large herd of **cape buffalo**, and some **warthogs** nearby. Driving further, we saw **Colobus and blue monkeys** and we had a great view from a picnic place down on a plain. We met another group who told us they had seen mountain suni where we had seen the monkeys. We drove back to check, but without success. Other interesting sights which occurred several times were **Ellipsen waterbucks** in the forest. A short time before, I finished reading the book "Natural history of antelopes" by Clive Spingale, and he did his main research about waterbucks (albeit, defassa waterbuck in Uganda). However, I couldn't remember ever reading that waterbucks occur in forests, so this was a big surprise, and it seems to be common at Arusha NP. We had also several sights of **Harvey's duiker**, which was a new species for me, but my photos were not the best due to the shy behavior

of these animals. As with bushbuck, which were also very shy and at first seen only by Shaban and the driver.



Western Harvey's duiker (Cephalophus harveyi harveyi)

When we had to return (around this time a large male **baboon** scared me as hell while infiltrating the car!), we searched further for sunis but they didn't show themselves. When crossing the plains again, a big surprise waited for me: at least 10 **south-eastern bushbucks**, males, females and young, were foraging in the open area, without any fear. I used the chance to take many photos, a good decision as bushbuck were never seen again like this on the whole trip. My theory is that the poaching in the park occurs only in the forest where the poachers are hidden, but the bushbuck know that they are safe from humans in the open. I saw also a white baboon there. I had to learn that the sun goes down very early in the equatorial region, and on our way out many cars drove by since a public street goes through the park. Very annoying, especially when you want to see shy animals. Nevertheless, I finally saw the **mountain sunis** running through the bushes like arrows, with one or two even crossing the road. Unfortunately, they were too fast to take a photo. The time at the park ended with some beautiful landscape sightings. On the way to Salinero lodge, where I would sleep, we picked up the 2 porters for the mountain tour the next day.



South-eastern Bushbuck (Tragelaphus sylvaticus)

The next morning, we started early to walk up from Salinero to Machame camp where the Abbott's duiker was frequently seen the last months. I planned almost 3 days to wait for the animal to appear. I really enjoyed the climb, not only because I love the workout, but also because of the beautiful forest we went through. As a paleoartist, it gave me much inspiration for prehistoric landscapes to depict, so I took tons of photos. When we arrived at the camp, I clearly recognized the spot of which Shaban send me a video showing the Abbott's duiker foraging. Immediately I set up my tripod and prepared everything. From now on I used every sunray to stand there and observe the place for my target species to appear. Sometimes I changed the position a bit over the days. When I had my lunch soon after the arrival, I observed the forested slope under my position from where the animal came up in the last months. Suddenly I saw something in the size and color of my target moving on the slope. Immediately I put my plate away and went to my camera, which was foolishly not ready in hand but prepared to catch the duiker on the open area. It was just a second where I saw the "duiker" and I waited anxiously for it to appear on the open. Shaban saw my excitement and watched the slope but saw nothing (and he is much better at spotting animals than me). But what I saw did not appear again that day. The next day was fruitless, except for a shy female bushbuck. I was worried to have wasted the shot of my life the day before, and feared that I may not have another chance (although I at least learned from the mistake I made when I had my lunch). Maybe I assumed it would be easy to see from what I had heard and read before, which made me careless the first few hours, but I think it was also a lack of experience in such situations. The last day brought one more female bushbuck and a group of blue monkeys sporting on the slope, which I was observing now with the camera ready. Was it one of these monkeys I saw 2 days ago? Probably, but I will never know for sure...

At about 2 o'clock we had to make our way down again. I was in a rather good mood and of course I expected that this could happen. Again, I took a lot of photos of the beautiful forests, where the Abbott's duiker lives...

There was also the possibility, if the Abbott's would have appeared on the first day, to go further to Shira 1, where according to Shaban many bush duikers can be seen. Later I read that these shaggy animals are a still undescribed subspecies of bush duiker. I could not have known if the Abbott's duiker would have appeared, so I decided to stay at Machame camp.

After a night at Moshi town, we went to the Kenyan border, heading for Tsavo East NP, where of course the hirola was my main target. After the drivers picked us up at the border, I was surprised the road goes through Tsavo West NP, where I already had the chance to observe wildlife and saw my first **Coke's hartebeests** or **kongoni**. I spent the next three nights at Voi wildlife lodge, and the days were used for full game drives in Tsavo East NP, around Dika plains to be more exact. Unfortunately, only now did I realize the lengthy driving distance from Voi wildlife lodge to Dika plains. For other animal enthusiasts I would highly recommend Aruba lodge or Satao Camp to not lose time to look for the elusive hirola. My bad luck with rare antelopes continued: two days of intense search in their range did not bring success. This critically endangered antelope, only member of its genus, remained hidden. Nonetheless, I do not regret my time there: I saw a lot of new antelopes for my collection: many coke's hartebeests, of which I would have liked to take a photo of every individual; hundreds of the amazing **Peter's gazelles**, which I even photographed mating; **fringe-eared oryx**, which can still be found in some zoos, but for me these were the first in my life; my first steenbok: the **East-African steenbok**, which was one of my favorite sightings on the whole trip; and the **East-African Eland**, which was always very shy and kept a great distance from the car, as was also the case in Serengeti. Also, the local species of **dik-dik** was new for me. I read in some sources that it is *Madoqua hindei*, while others say it's *M. kirkii*. Taxa I already had in my collection from European zoos were ellipsen waterbuck, cape buffalo, **southern gerenuk** and **southern lesser kudu**.



Peter's gazelle (Nanger petersi)



Fringe-eared oryx (Oryx callotis)



East-African steenbok (Raphicerus campestris neumanni)



Kirk's dik-dik (Madoqua kirkii)

The luck which failed to arrive with the hirola came instead with a rare sighting of an **East-African leopard**: the animal crossed the street not far before us and I was able to take some photos before it disappeared into the bushes. As we continued an excited yelling started from its direction. A closer look revealed a group of **bat-eared foxes**. Two of them crossed the street behind us, and the leopard went away with something big in its mouth. This must have been also one of the foxes, as the animals live in families and don't have prey matching their own size. Because it was too difficult to take photos of the hunt, I just decided to observe it as well as possible.



East-African leopard (Panthera pardus suahelica)

After my trip I had some very interesting correspondence with experts in Kenyan fauna, who highly recommended me Ishaqbini Hirola Conservancy to have higher chances (if not a guarantee!) to see the hirola, plus seeing their natural habitat. Of course, I read about it before, but there were three reasons why I had chosen Tsavo East: 1. Ishaqbini was much farther away from my other destinations, 2. I wasn't sure if the political situation in the Tana River region was save enough for tourists (a few questions via Facebook would have been enough to clarify, as I learned later), 3. I didn't expect that it would be THAT difficult to see hirola in Tsavo East.

After my third night at Voi, we drove back to Arusha in the morning. Again, passing Tsavo West NP brought amazing sightings, like more steenboks, kongonis, and my only sighting of **southern Grant's gazelles** on the whole trip, a group of females which were accompanied by two kongonis, far away and unfortunately mostly covered with vegetation.



Southern Grant's gazelles (Nanger granti granti), accompanied by two kongonis

We stopped in Arusha to change the driver and car and to have a visit to Arusha Natural History Museum. Before my trip, I had checked pictures of the museum on Google Maps, and found out that there is a stuffed Abbott's duiker on display. This was a stop that had to be taken. I also had a chance to see some interesting bovid fossils. After that we continued on, finally sleeping at Lake Manyara.

The next day we drove on through the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. It is still inhabited by Maasai people and it was interesting to see herdsmen with their animals relatively close to the herds of **western white-bearded wildebeest**. This was the fourth wildebeest taxon I have seen so far, unfortunately the fifth and last one, the Nyassaland wildebeest, was not possible to see as I had to cut the trip to Selous Game Reserve from the tour. Other interesting antelopes in Ngorongoro were **Western Thomson's gazelles** and **Robert's gazelles**, animals I can never get enough of.



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Western white-bearded wildebeest (Connochaetes mearnsi)



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Western Thomson's gazelle (Eudorcas nasalis)

One stop on the way was the famous Olduvai gorge with a museum that shows the casts of many fossils of prehistoric men, (it would be too precious to exhibit the originals). My main interest were of course the many interesting bovid fossils, for example, **Antidorcas recki**, **Parmularius** and **Pelorovis**. I also looked for wild **Thomas's dik-dik** in the area, but we saw only a latrine. When driving further, one dik-dik appeared behind a tree, but unfortunately not for very long, so just one blurry photo could be taken. We also saw a **hare** running, and later the reason, as three Maasai kids were running after it. Following the road through the beautiful dry landscape with some more giraffe and antelope sightings, we came to the gate for Serengeti. I could leave the car at that point and was able to come very close to a falcon on top of a bush. Again, a beautiful male Robert's gazelle showed itself.



Thomas's dik-dik (Madoqua thomasi)



Robert's gazelle (Nanger grant robertsi)

The landscape didn't change immediately, but the fauna did a bit. We saw a **serval** lying next to the road, completely undisturbed by us. On the whole trip, the lack of luck I had with rare antelopes was compensated with rare cat sightings! I saw the same shyness of common eland as I saw in Tsavo. And then, three individuals of a species appeared which was my number 2 animal I wanted to see in life: the topi (in this case the **jimela!**). Far away, I took some acceptable photos. In the whole NP I took much more than hundred photos of them. Later my first **bohor reedbuck** appeared just beside the street, and besides laying down with his head looking out of the grass, he also showed no sign of shyness. We saw also 1.2 **lions**, with the male feeding on something. Soon thereafter we passed a smelly **hippo** pond before we arrived at Seronera Camp, where I slept the next 3 nights.



Eastern serval (Leptailurus serval hindei)



Serengeti topi (Damaliscus jimela)



East-African eland (Taurotragus oryx pattersonianus)



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Bohor reedbuck (Redunca bohor)

The next morning, we started heading north early to the area of Lobo lodge, as it is the home of the small oribi antelope. On our way we saw more topis, kongonis and frequently **klipspringers** of a species I hadn't seen so far. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to come close to them. Arriving at the Lobo area, intense search for the oribi began but ended without success. The genus *Ourebia* will be unseen by me for some time more. But again, I had some amazing sights of steenbok, males and females, and far away on a slope Shaban spotted some more antelopes. I had to look with the binoculars, and first I didn't know what I saw. Then I realized that it was a species I didn't expect on the trip anymore: the rare **Chanler's mountain reedbuck!** In terms of my main interest, the antelopes, I think this was the only really lucky sight of a big rarity. Driving back to the Seronera Camp we had more animal encounters, like herds of Cape buffalo, a single wildebeest coming close to the jeep, and a wildebeest killed by lions.



Kongonis (Alcelaphus cokii)

One antelope frequently seen was the **Cavendish's dik-dik**. The dik-dik seems to be the only small sized antelope being both often seen in relatively open areas and not hiding too fast, which allows many rather good photos.



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Maasai-klipspringer (Oreotragus schillingsi)



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Chanler's mountain reedbuck (Redunca chanleri)



Cavendish's dik-dik (Madoqua cavendishi)

The next day we went out to look for more bohor reedbucks and klipspringers and it was possible to see latter a bit closer. I also saw hyraxes outside on rocky hills on which lions were also relaxing, of course at an appropriate distance. There were many encounters with Thomson's gazelles, ranging from solitary animals, sometimes juveniles, to herds of hundreds of animals. One herd was very nervous and the driver said it was because of fear of predators in the tall grass they were standing in (which isn't their preferred habitat). We saw also a **cheetah** standing on a small hill. After a while the animal went to a small lake to drink, and the drinking process took a noticeable amount of time. They asked me if I wanted to see it closer, and of course I said yes. We drove directly to the cheetah, which wasn't disturbed when standing just a few meters away from us. I could even see its special claws, unique among cats as far as I know. One bohor reedbuck was seen that day in the marshes, jumping away quickly without the possibility to take a photo.



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East African cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus fearonii)

The next morning, I flew in the late morning to Dar es Salaam via Arusha airport. But before that, Shaban and our driver Abdul offered to help me search again for reedbucks in the area. We started early to observe the marshes, where we finally spotted them: several male bohor reedbucks appeared in a small swamp area, where they sometimes were completely hiding in the tall grass. Two safari hot-air balloons appeared next to us. For sure they saw us standing there observing the area, and expected something like a rhino or leopard. The noisy balloons caused our reedbucks to remain hidden, not appearing again. I wished I would have had a big paperboard which I could show them with something written like: „GO AWAY! I AM NOT A NORMAL PERSON, I’M LOOKING FOR ANTELOPES INSTEAD OF BIG CATS!“

After that we drove to the Seronera Airstrip, where I took my flight to Dar es Salaam. It was time to say goodbye to my guide Shaban, who was with me the whole trip so far, and my driver Abdul. Arriving at Dar es Salaam, my new driver Davey picked me up directly at the airport, from where we drove north in the direction of Saadani NP, and slept halfway in a hotel at the ocean.

The next morning, we arrived early at the gate of Saadani. The park is relatively new, still inhabited by people and therefore leaving many animals shy. In the morning I saw my last duiker on the trip. Again, Harvey’s duiker, which didn’t show itself well, but was the only species of duiker that appeared on the trip. Saadani was my last hope to see a bush duiker, but these animals didn’t show. This was surprising to me, as I thought they are rather common and their habitat makes them relatively easy to spot. Chatting later with Charles Foley, he explained me that for that regions I visited it is not very likely to see bush duiker. Another animal I wanted to see in Saadani was the Roosevelt’s sable antelope. I talked with Davey during the drive about my target animals, and he said he never saw them there, so didn’t expect to see them myself in just one day of visit. Driving further through the park, which has a very beautiful vegetation with many palm ferns, we saw giraffes, impala and waterbucks. At one point I saw Bohor reedbuck jumping away in the high grass, which was a pleasing sight. We saw them at least two times more in the park, one time lying under a bush directly beside the street. We took our lunch in a small restaurant at the ocean, where we had to protect everything from thievish monkeys. I had a nice short walk on the beach, where I saw an interesting crab running in the sand.

One of my highest goals here was to see the beautiful **Lichtenstein’s hartebeest**. The first herd we spotted was very far away and shy, so no good photos could be taken. The second and last herd seemed to be a bit closer, standing on the road before us. I had my extender on the camera, which allows a closer view, but also decreases photo quality. Luckily, I made also a video of them, and at home I realized that the videos have a very good resolution, much better than the photos.



Lichtenstein's hartebeest (Alcelaphus lichtensteinii)

After that no more hartebeest were seen. But still, it was a good place to take inspiring landscape photos. On the way out I had one last surprise: a female **eastern coastal bushbuck**, which ran directly into the bush and was not very happy to be photographed. But still, a new taxon on my list. I will maybe never come again into its restricted home range.



Eastern coastal bushbuck (Tragelaphus fasciatus)

The drive back to Dar es Salaam took hours. I noticed the intense traffic and the reckless behavior of most drivers and I don't think that I would be able to drive a car here myself. Arriving at the hotel, I said goodbye to Davey. The next morning a taxi driver brought me to the ferry to Zanzibar. It was nice on board. After the long procedure at the harbor, my new guide Hassan welcomed me and we drove directly to my goal for my last day in Tanzania: Kilosas Conservation! I could have tried for Ader's duiker on my last day, but my bad experience with duikers so far had me instead choosing Kilosas. This little nice sanctuary had 5 coastal sunis in their collection. I became aware of that by checking pictures on Google Maps for all Tanzanian zoos and sanctuaries. The genus *Nesotragus* is gone from all public collections outside Africa for a long time, and as I was unable to take any photos of the mountain sunis at Arusha NP, but now I was able to take about 500 photos of these relatively tame individuals in a short time. Who knows, it may be the last time when I see this genus alive, and as I want to paint and draw every bovid genus at least once in my life I am itching to have my own reference photos. One male lived in one enclosure with 3 females. His son moved to the visitor's area because of fights with his father when reaching maturity. The only one tame enough to be touched was the oldest male. He was never aggressive towards humans according to the keepers. (Surprising, as I read about the zoologist and antelope researcher Clive Spingale who once had to leave the enclosure of a suni because it attacked him badly.) It was also the first time on the trip when I used my sketchbook: before that there was no time to sketch as I wanted to use the time to search for rare antelopes. I can recommend this sanctuary to every visitor of the island.

After this amazing visit, which again was a confirmation that for shy forest animals the best option for artistic studies is to see them in captivity, we drove back to Zanzibar city where I spent my last night in a nice hotel. The next morning, I was picked up by the driver from the day before to bring me to the airport. I was happy. The two weeks were exhausting, but successful despite little luck. I just looked forward to come home again.



Coastal suni (*Nesotragus moschatus*)

Species list

As the trip was mainly dedicated to bovids, and my identification skills are largely limited to this group, I will also limit the species list on them. The rare sightings of other animals are mentioned in the text.

Animals	Arusha NP	Kili-manjaro NP	Tsavo West	Tsavo East	Ngoro-ngoro Conservation Area	Seren-NP geti	Saadani NP	Kilosas Conservation
Common Impala (<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>)			X	X			X	

Kongoni (<i>Alcelaphus cokii</i>)			X	X		X		
Lichtenstein's hartebeest (<i>Alcelaphus lichtensteinii</i>)							X	
Southern lesser kudu (<i>Ammelaphus australis</i>)				X				
Western Harvey's duiker (<i>Cephalophus harveyi harveyi</i>)	X						X	
Eastern white- bearded wildebeest (<i>Connochetes albojubatus</i>)			X					
Western white- bearded wildebeest (<i>Connochaetes mearnsi</i>)					X	X		
Serengeti Topi (<i>Damaliscus jimela</i>)						X		
Western Thomson's gazelle (<i>Eudorcas nasalis</i>)					X	X		
Ellipsen waterbuck (<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>)	X			X			X	
Southern gerenuk (<i>Litocranius walleri</i>)				X				
Cavendish's dik- dik (<i>Madoqua cavendishi</i>)						X		
Kirk's dik-dik (<i>Madoqua kirkii</i>)				X				
Thomas's dik-dik (<i>Madoqua thomasi</i>)					X			

Southern Grant's								
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gazelle (<i>Nanger granti granti</i>)			X					
Robert's gazelle (<i>Nanger granti robertsi</i>)					X	X		
Peter's gazelle (<i>Nanger petersi</i>)				X				
Mountain suni (<i>Nesotragus kirchenpaueri</i>)	X							
Coastal suni (<i>Nesotragus moschatus</i>)								X
Maasai klipspringer (<i>Oreotragus schillingsi</i>)						X		
Fringe-eared oryx (<i>Oryx callotis</i>)			X	X				
East-African steenbok (<i>Raphicerus campestris neumanni</i>)			X	X		X		
Bohor reedbuck (<i>Redunca bohor</i>)						X	X	
Chanler's mountain reedbuck (<i>Redunca chanleri</i>)						X		
Cape buffalo (<i>Syncerus caffer</i>)	X			X		X		
Eastern common eland (<i>Taurotragus oryx pattersonianus</i>)				X		X		
Eastern coastal bushbuck (<i>Tragelaphus fasciatus</i>)							X	
South-eastern bushbuck (<i>Tragelaphus sylvaticus</i>)	X	X						

