

For our sixth trip to Kenya (already but what a great country ☺ !), we decided for the 2019 year-end vacation to spend a few days visiting both the classic but wonderful Masai Mara reserve and the Samburu National Park up North. This was a relatively short trip as we spent only 5 days in Samburu, 3 days in Masai Mara and ½ day in lake Naivasha en route between the two main parks. We stayed in the Samburu Sopa lodge, a fairly nice lodge with a beautiful swimming pool and dining area near a water hole and comfortable and clean bungalows. The staff was very nice and helpful. The main issue of this lodge is that it is located quite far away from the river and the main areas where most of the game is typically observed but this appeared to not be a problem at this period of the year. We then stayed at the very scenic Masai Serena Lodge that I think has probably the best view of all lodges in Masai Mara! Being quite close to the Mara river, the view from the lodge during the great migration must be fantastic!! I found its architecture really cool and the view from the rooms is awesome. On the other hand, I did not find the food/restaurant and service particularly good there... In lake Naivasha, we stayed at the luxurious Sopa Lodge that has super large and comfy rooms, an amazing swimming pool and restaurant, and the hotel park is gorgeous and contains many roaming wild animals. We stayed there for New Year's Day and then enjoyed the dinner party that was organized for the occasion.

I booked this trip once again with Leboo Safaris, a local agency owned by a French guy. The organization from Leboo Safaris was good and our driver/guide James was quite good: not really counting hours during game drives and good at spotting animals. We were a group of 3 persons from my family equally interested in both mammal and bird watching.

We wanted to visit this time the Triangle Section of the Masai Mara reserve since we didn't know it and read many good things about it, especially the fact that black rhinos were relatively easy to see there. Indeed true for rhinos and this section contains some nice landscapes but overall I did not find the Triangle particularly richer in wildlife than other parts of the Masai Mara reserve and the rules are much stricter there. This was quite disappointing as for example off-road is strictly forbidden and we had to be back at the lodge no later than 6:30pm, which was about an hour before dark! On the other hand, we can do night safaris from the Serena Lodge and they are quite interesting.

We had no specific mammal targets for this trip except for some very rare or tough ones to see like striped hyenas, wild dogs or pangolins ☺ and I was not really counting on seeing them... As a matter of fact, we did not see anything special during this short trip in terms of mammals with only the Guenther's dik-dik as a new species although I think we already saw it when we first visited Samburu a few years ago but I was not really paying attention to all the correct mammal species at that time. I wanted to go back to Samburu because I found this park really beautiful and because its wildlife is different to what we can see in Masai Mara. I also wanted to see and take good photos of Somali bee-eaters that are quite common there in my quest to see all the bee-eaters of the World and this was a success ☺

The main problem we had this year when we visited these two beautiful places was related to the heavy rain (even catastrophic with severe floods and many people killed) that hit Kenya early December. As a consequence, all the parks were beautiful and all green under sunny days but the grass was very tall and the bush very thick, thus making quite tough the observation of mammals, especially the small ones. Anyway we scored 45 different species in 10 days and observed a great variety of birds.

Below is the detailed list of what we could observe during this trip:

| <b>Mammals with photos or well seen (lifers in green)</b> |                    |                                    |   |            |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|------------|
| <b>Species</b>  | <b>Espèces</b>     | <b>Latin Name</b>                  | <b>Where seen</b>   | <b>Pic</b> |
| Vervet Monkey   | Vervet bleu        | <i>Cercopithecus pygerythrus</i>   | Observed in all parks   | X          |
| Mantled Guereza   | Colobe guéréza     | <i>Colobus guereza kikuyuensis</i> | A couple seen in the hotel ground in lake Naivasha  | X          |
| Olive Baboon  | Babouin Anubis     | <i>Papio anubis</i>                | Observed in all parks   | X          |
| Black-backed Jackal                                       | Chacal à chabraque | <i>Canis mesomelas</i>             | Several observed in Masai Mara including a family of 6  | X          |
| Bat-eared fox   | Otocyon            | <i>Otocyon megalotis</i>           | A family observed in Samburu; 3 more in Masai Mara in the day and 4 others at night   | X          |
| Common Genet  | Genette commune    | <i>Genetta genetta</i>             | 2 seen at night in Samburu Sopa Lodge and another one in Masai Serena Lodge   | X          |
| Dwarf Mongoose  | Mangouste naine    | <i>Helogale parvula</i>            | Several seen on termite mound in Samburu and several around Masai Serena Lodge  | X          |
| Banded Mongoose   | Mangouste rayée    | <i>Mungos mungo</i>                | A group quickly ran out in front of our car in Masai Mara   |            |
| Spotted Hyaena  | Hyène tachetée     | <i>Crocuta crocuta</i>             | Several seen at night and during the day in Masai Mara  | X          |
| Cheetah   | Guépard            | <i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>            | A mother with 2 cubs well seen in Samburu and a beautiful pair seen in Masai Mara right at the border with Tanzania/Serengeti | X          |
| Leopard   | Léopard            | <i>Panthera pardus</i>             | 2 individuals seen very well resting in trees at Samburu  | X          |
| Lion  | Lion               | <i>Panthera Leo</i>                | Several observed in Masai Mara including 2 mating couples and a lioness trying to chase impalas during our night safari!      | X          |

|  |                             |                                   |   |   |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Serval   | Serval                      | Leptailurus serval                | One observed quickly before it disappeared in the tall grass in Masai Mara  |   |
| Yellow-spotted rock hyrax  | Daman de steppe             | Heterohyrax brucei                | Several seen in Masai Serena Lodge  | X |
| Bush Elephant  | Elephant d'Afrique          | Loxodonta africana                | Common in Samburu and Masai Mara  | X |
| Common Zebra   | Zèbre de Grant              | Equus quagga boehmi               | Common in Masai Mara  | X |
| Grevy's Zebra  | Zèbre de Grévy              | Equus grevyi                      | Only 3 observed in Samburu. The situation of this zebra species looks concerning...   | X |
| Black Rhinoceros   | Rhinoceros noir             | Diceros bicornis                  | 1 seen well in Masai Mara and another car saw a mother and calf the day after. So nice to see newborns of such an emblematic and endangered species | X |
| Desert Warthog   | Phacochère du desert        | Phacochoerus aethiopicus          | Only a few observed in Samburu  | X |
| Common Warthog   | Phacochère commun           | Phacochoerus africanus            | Several observed in Masai Mara  | X |
| Hippopotamus   | Hippopotame                 | Hippopotamus amphibius            | Common in lake Naivasha and Masai Mara  | X |
| Reticulated Giraffe  | Girafe réticulée            | Giraffa Camelopardis reticulata   | Common in Samburu. A beautiful animal!  | X |
| Masai Giraffe  | Girafe Masai                | Giraffa Camelopardis tippelskirki | Common in Samburu and several in the Naivasha Sopa Lodge ground   | X |
| Topi   | Damalisque Topi             | Damaliscus lunatus topi           | Common in Masai Mara  | X |
| Coke's Hartebeest  | Bubale de Coke              | Alcephalus busephalus cokei       | Only a few observed in Masai Mara   | X |
| Blue Wildebeest  | Gnou bleu                   | Connochaetes taurinus             | Only a few observed in Lake Naivasha  |   |
| Impala   | Impala                      | Aepyceros melampus                | Commonly observed everywhere  | X |
| Bright's Gazelle   | Gazelle de Bright           | Nanger granti notate              | Several observed in Samburu   | X |
| Grant's Gazelle  | Gazelle de Grant            | Nanger granti                     | Quite common in Masai Mara  | X |
| Thomson's Gazelle  | Gazelle de Thomson          | Eudorcas thomsonii                | Common in Masai Mara  | X |
| Gerenuk  | GérénuK                     | Litocranius walleri               | Surprisingly not seen a lot in Samburu this year  | X |
| Cape Buffalo   | Buffle d'Afrique            | Syncerus caffer                   | Nice herds seen in Masai Mara + a few in lake Naivasha  | X |
| Common Eland   | Eland du Cap                | Taurotragus oryx                  | Several seen in Masai Mara  | X |
| Bushbuck   | Guib harnaché               | Tragelaphus scriptus              | A couple seen roaming around Masai Serena Lodge   | X |
| Beisa Oryx   | Oryx beisa                  | Oryx beisa                        | Several observed in Samburu   | X |
| Guenther's dik-dik   | Dik-dik de Guenther         | Madoqua guentheri                 | A lot observed in Samburu   | X |
| Kirk's Dik-dik   | Dik-dik de Kirk             | Madoqua kirkii                    | Only seen during a night drive in Masai Mara  | X |
| Defassa Waterbuck  | Cobe defassa                | Kobus defassa                     | Several observed in Lake Naivasha and Masai Mara  | X |
| Common Waterbuck   | Cobe à croissant            | Kobus ellipsiprymnus              | Several observed in Samburu   | X |
| Greater kudu   | Grand koudou                | Tragelaphus strepsiceros          | Only 2 females observed in Samburu  | X |
| Bohor Reedbuck   | Redunca Nagor               | Redunca redunca                   | 2 shy females and 1 male observed in Masai Mara   | X |
| Yellow-winged bat  | Mégaderme à ailes orangées  | Lavia frons                       | Several seen at night around Samburu Sopa Lodge   | X |
| Unstriped ground squirrel  | Ecureuil fouisseur africain | Xerus rutilus                     | Everywhere in Samburu!  | X |
| Scrub Hare   | Lièvre des rochers          | Lepus saxatilis                   | 1 glimpse of a running one in Samburu and several observed at night in Masai Mara   | X |
| <b>Total Species Recorded = 44</b>   |                             |                                   |   |   |
| <b>Extra mammals observed along the road in the enclosures of private reserves in Laikipia</b> |                             |                                   |   |   |
| Southern white Rhinoceros  | Rhinoceros blanc du Sud     | Ceratotherium simum               | 3 observed resting in Laikipia  |   |
| Rothschild's giraffe   | Girafe de Rothschild        | Giraffa Camelopardis rothschildi  | Several observed in Laikipia  |   |

I'm adding to this report a few pictures of some of the iconic species we observed during that trip or that were new to me.





Cheetah



Leopard



Black-backed Jackal



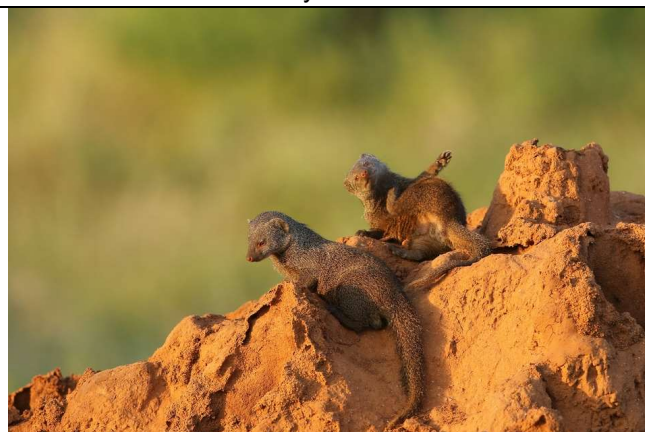
Bat-eared fox



Grevy's Zebra



Black rhinoceros



Dwarf mongoose



Common genet





Coke's Hartebeest



Guenther's dik-dik



Reticulated Giraffe



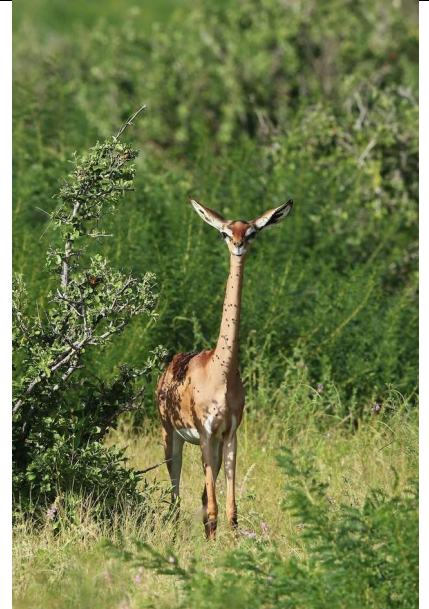
Unstriped ground squirrel



Yellow-winged bat



Mantled Guereza



Gerenuk



Lions