

Here is a new report for our 7<sup>th</sup> trip to wonderful Kenya in July 2021. It was our first trip outside Europe during the COVID pandemic and we were glad we could make it due to the endlessly evolving travel restrictions imposed by our French government. Because of such situation, we went back to Kenya as it wasn't too complicated to organize thanks to some local contacts we knew from past trips. We stayed in Kenya for 3 full weeks visiting the following parks: Masai Mara, Baringo Lake, Kakamega forest, Amboseli and both Tsavo West & East. We organized this trip with Melting Pot Safaris, a Kenyan-French owned company that has a lovely camp in Masai Mara and mostly dedicated to photographers rather than pure mammal watchers. Most of the rest of the trip was booked with Leboo Safaris that we used in the past and were always very pleased with their service.

Like everywhere else in the world I guess, we could notice the climate change is impacting Kenya. Although it was supposed to be the dry season, we had during our trip terrible weather most of the time with lots of rain, grey skies, strong winds and very cold weather. We had to keep our polar coats throughout entire days sometimes! There were still very few tourists in the country in July 2021, which was good for us: we could book lodges inside the parks at fairly low rate and it is a real pleasure to observe cats or some rare mammals with only 1 or 2 cars around but it was obviously not good for the local tourism economy... I don't know if this was related to both the cold weather and parks being quiet with tourists or if we were just lucky but animals were seen in great numbers and we could observe 59 species of mammals with many cool observations of some uncommon, if not rare, species. Indeed, during this 3 week-long trip, we could observe in daylight some species like hirolas, striped hyenas, African civet and 6 species of cats! I don't think we can do better than this in Kenya as I never heard we could see golden cat in this country. With such a success on our daylight sightings we did not bother to do any night drive but only some spotlighting in our camp/lodge grounds. A great trip overall even if of course after so many trips done in Kenya we could not see many lifers and I would have preferred to go to Borneo or South America but this was not possible because of the French travel rules...

We don't present **Masai Mara** any more. This world famous reserve is to me the park in Kenya with the highest fauna density and the place where it is easier to see and take nice photos of big cats. On the other hand, this is not where we can see the highest diversity of mammal species. During our trip, we could indeed see several prides of lions, at least two different leopards and 6 cheetahs with one missed hunt on zebra! We were lucky to see this time three different servals in great conditions, one having a cute little cub. There was a great number of ungulates and it was the beginning of the wildebeest migration river crossing in Masai Mara. We could see one crossing just at the border with Tanzania, nice! Elephants were also in good numbers with many babies. We missed black rhinos and I was surprised to see only one Coke's hartebeest during this trip there. The grounds of our camp proved to be very rich with wildlife with many hippos on the adjacent river banks, Cavendish's dik-dik, common dwarf and banded mongooses during the day and at night, there were genets, white-tailed mongoose and greater galagos.

**Lake Baringo** and **Kakamega forest** were primarily birding destinations with the hope to see blue-headed bee-eaters, which we saw very well in the forest but there were also some common mammals like hippos, vervets, olive baboons but also Mantled guereza and red-tailed monkeys in the forest. We could also see in Kakamega forest a couple of red-legged sun squirrel and one striped grass mouse. We did not see African pottos but did not make any effort though to see one. Apparently, Lord Derby's anomalure can also be seen in this forest and a dead one killed by the African crowned eagles nesting in the Rondo Retreat lodge where we were staying was seen a few weeks before our visit.

We went to **Amboseli** for the large herds of elephants, the picturesque Kilimanjaro and the hope to take some typical photos of elephants or giraffes in front of the mountain, which we could do nicely since we had clear skies during the 3 days we stayed in the park. Besides the usual suspects (elephants with some impressive tuskers, giraffes, ungulates and lions) we were spoilt with unexpected and really cool observations of an African civet one day and both a caracal and an African wild cat another day!! I could not believe we could see so much diversity in this park. In addition, a rare black serval had been seen for several weeks in Amboseli before we arrived but we failed to see it. Some people we know could see it again a few days after we left the park. Damned ☺!

We did not know **Tsavo West** so we decided to spend a couple of days in this section of the huge Tsavo National Park. The park terrain and fairly dense vegetation makes wildlife watching quite challenging and sometimes a bit disappointing so I would not recommend Tsavo West for mammal watching. However, the landscape is simply gorgeous with volcanoes, cliffs, lava fields, crystal clear springs and endless pristine views, which to me makes Tsavo West one of the most beautiful park we've ever visited in Eastern Africa. On particular notice, Kirk's did-diks were amazingly numerous, we had some nice observations of klipspringers in the cliff area and we were lucky to see very early in the morning a leopard at the waterhole in front of our lodge! Actually, we probably saw more mammals and diversity while staying at the lodge (the superb Kilaguni Serena Safari Lodge) sipping glasses of white wine in front of the waterhole than during all our game drives

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We already visited **Tsavo East** a few years ago but we enjoyed this park very much so we wanted to visit again. This time we booked at the Ashnil Camp which is conveniently located at the Aruba Dam inside the park. The dam was totally dry during our visit... For the second time, I found Tsavo East very interesting for mammal watching as the fauna is quite rich there, both in terms of density and diversity. We were again lucky with many interesting sightings. Indeed, during the 3 days we spent there, we could see several prides of lions including 2 males with a recent kill of a giraffe, 1 female cheetah with 2 cubs (fantastic observation on the side of a road alone with our car only) and no more than 4 leopards (one individual relaxing in a tree and a female with 2 young ones). We also had a very cool observation in full daylight of a striped hyena for several long minutes: we could follow him walking quite relaxed, then sitting and resting before he disappeared in the bush. We saw several Somali dwarf mongooses, many red mud-covered elephants, surprisingly very few desert warthogs, many lesser kudus, Peters' gazelles, Fringe-eared Oryx, and the odd looking generuks with several of them standing up to eat leaves on tall bushes. Last but not least, we were spoilt to observe hirolas 3 times! I was really happy to see again hirolas as I knew our chance to see them was slim, like during our first visit a few years ago when we could see two individuals but very far away from the tracks and the pictures I took were not great. This time, we could see the hirolas very close to the tracks with perfect photo opportunities: 2 individuals once early in the morning, then the same two I believe later around noon resting on the grass and another day, we went across a herd of 11 hirolas with several young ones. I was pleased to see that such a species being at the verge of extinction seems to do well in Tsavo East. All our observations like a few years ago have been done in the Aruba Dam area so I guess this is the good place to look for hirolas in Tsavo East.

<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>
Rock hyrax	Daman des rochers	Procavia johnstoni	A few seen in Masai Mara	X
Yellow-spotted rock hyrax	Daman de steppes	Heterohyrax brucei	Several seen in Tsavo West	X
Bush Elephant	Elephant de savane	Loxodonta africana	Many groups observed in Masai Mara, Amboseli, Tsavo West & East	X
Mantled Guereza	Colobe guéréza	Colobus g. kikuyuensis	Several observed in Kakamega forest	X
Olive Baboon	Babouin olive	Papio anubis	Several groups observed in Masai Mara and Kakamega forest	X
Yellow Baboon	Babouin cynocéphale	Papio cynocephalus	Several groups observed in Amboseli and Tsavo	X
Vervet Monkey	Vervet bleu	Cercopithecus pygerythrus	Many observed in Baringo lake, Amboseli and Tsavo	X
Blue Monkey	Cercopithèque à diadème	Cercopithecus m. stuhlmanni	Several observed in Kakamega forest	X
Red-tailed Monkey	Cercopithèque ascagne	Cercopithecus a. schmidtii	A few seen in Kakamega forest	X
Greater galago	Galago argenté	Otolemur c. argentatus	A few (melanistic form) observed at night in our camp in Masai Mara, 1 in the lodge at Amboseli and 1 around the Springs in Tsavo West	X
Red-legged Sun Squirrel	Héliosciure à pattes rousses	Heliosciurus rufobrachium	A couple seen in Kakamega forest	X
Unstriped ground squirrel	Ecureuil fouisseur africain	Xerus rutilus	Several seen in Baringo lake and Tsavo	X
Striped grass mouse	Rat rayé d'Afrique	Lemniscomys striatus	One briefly seen in Kakamega forest	
Scrub Hare	Lièvre des rochers	Lepus saxatilis	1 seen in Masai Mara and another one in Tsavo	X
Yellow-winged bat	Mégaderme à ailes orangées	Lavia frons	Several seen in Baringo lake and Tsavo	X
Horseshoe bat ?	Rhinolophe ?	Rhinolophus (ssp?)	Several observed in Tsavo East in the lodge. Not sure at all of the species but body shape suggests rhinolophus	
Black-backed Jackal	Chacal à chabraque	Canis mesomelas	A few couples observed in all visited parks	X
Cheetah	Guépard	Acinonyx jubatus	6 observed in Masai Mara + a female with 2 cubs in Tsavo East	X
Leopard	Léopard	Panthera pardus	2 individuals observed several times in Masai Mara, 1 in Tsavo West at the waterhole in front of the lodge early morning and 4! in Tsavo East	X
Lion	Lion	Panthera Leo	Several families including cubs observed in Masai Mara, Amboseli and Tsavo East	X
Serval	Serval	Leptailurus serval	Several observed in Masai Mara including 1 cub	X

Caracal	Caracal	Caracal caracal	1 unexpected and very cool observation in Amboseli	X
African wild cat	Chat sauvage	Felis sylvestris	Another unexpected observation in Amboseli	X
African civet	Civette d'Afrique	Civettictis civetta	1 observed early morning running away in Amboseli	X
Large-spotted Genet	Genette panthère	Genetta maculata	Several observed at night in our camp in Masai Mara	X
Spotted Hyena	Hyène tachetée	Crocuta crocuta	Many seen in every parks	X
Striped hyena	Hyène rayée	Hyaena hyaena	A superb observation of one individual in Tsavo East	X
White-tailed Mongoose	Mangouste à queue blanche	Ichneumia albicauda	1 observed at night in our camp in Masai Mara and another one at night in our lodge in Amboseli	X
Slender Mongoose	Mangouste rouge	Herpestes sanguineus	1 individual observed in the grounds of our lodge in Baringo lake	X
Banded Mongoose	Mangouste rayée	Mungos mungo	Several groups observed in Masai Mara and Tsavo	X
Common dwarf Mongoose	Mangouste naine du Sud	Helogale parvula	Several observed in Masai Mara	X
Somali dwarf Mongoose	Mangouste naine orientale	Helogale hirtula	A few observed in Tsavo East	X
Common Zebra	Zèbre de Grant	Equus quagga boehmi	Commonly observed everywhere	X
Desert Warthog	Phacochère du desert	Phacochoerus aethiopicus	A few observed in Tsavo East	X
Common Warthog	Phacochère commun	Phacochoerus africanus	Commonly observed everywhere	X
Hippopotamus	Hippopotame	Hippopotamus amphibius	Commonly observed everywhere	X
Rothschild's giraffe	Girafe de Rothschild	Giraffa c. rothschildi	A group of 9 observed at the sanctuary in Baringo lake	X
Masai Giraffe	Girafe Masai	Giraffa c. tippelskirchi	Several observed in Masai Mara, Amboseli and Tsavo	X
Cape Buffalo	Buffle d'Afrique	Syncerus c. caffer	Many seen in every parks	X
Lesser Kudu	Petit koudou	Tragelaphus imberbis	Many seen in Tsavo West & East	X
Common Eland	Eland du Cap	Taurotragus oryx	Several seen in Masai Mara, Amboseli & Tsavo	X
Steenbok	Raphicère champêtre	Raphicerus campestris	Only 1 seen in Masai Mara	X
Kirk's Dik-dik	Dik-dik de Kirk	Madoqua k. kirkii	Seen in large numbers in Tsavo	X
Cavendish's Dik-dik	Dik-dik de Naivasha	Madoqua k. cavendishi	A few observed in Masai Mara	X
Thomson's Gazelle	Gazelle de Thomson	Eudorcas thomsonii	Common in Masai Mara, Amboseli	X
Grant's Gazelle	Gazelle de Grant	Nanger g. granti	Common in Masai Mara, Amboseli	X
Peters' Gazelle	Gazelle de Peters	Nanger g. petersi	Common in Tsavo East	X
Gerenuk	Gérénuk	Litocranius walleri	Several observed in Tsavo East	X
Bohor Reedbuck	Redunca Nagor	Redunca redunca	1 observed in Masai Mara and fairly common in Amboseli	X
Defassa Waterbuck	Cobe defassa	Kobus e. defassa	Several seen in Masai Mara	X
Common Waterbuck	Cobe à croissant	Kobus e. ellipsiprymnus	Several seen in Amboseli & Tsavo	X
Klipspringer	Oréotrague	Oreotragus oreotragus	5 nicely observed in Tsavo West	X
Impala	Impala	Aepyceros melampus	Commonly observed everywhere	X
Hirola	Hirola	Beatragus hunteri	Wonderful observations of 2 individuals in one place and a herd of 11 in another location, both in the Aruba Dam sector	X
Topi	Damalisque Topi	Damaliscus lunatus jimela	Very common in Masai Mara	X
Coke's Hartebeest	Bubale de Coke	Alcephalus busephalus cokii	Surprisingly only 1 observed in Masai Mara but then common in Tsavo	X
Western white-bearded wildebeest	Gnou bleu	Connochaetes t. mearnsi	Common in Masai Mara with migration crossings just starting	X
Eastern white-bearded wildebeest	Gnou bleu	Connochaetes t. albojubatus	Common in Amboseli	X
Fringe-eared Oryx	Oryx à oreilles frangées	Oryx beisa callotis	Several seen in Tsavo	X
		<b>Total Species Recorded = 59</b>		



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.



Lions



Leopards



Cheetahs



Servals



Caracal



Wild cat





African civet



Striped Hyena



A not so happy Grant's zebra ☺ !



A not so happy lioness either ☺ !



Drinking Masai giraffes



Lesser kudu





Large-spotted genet



White-tailed mongoose



Red-tailed monkey



Greater galago



Somali dwarf mongoose



Hirola



Elephants and the Kilimanjaro