

Amazing Uganda



Usually one places the Thanks and acknowledgements at the end of the report. But before I even get into mammal encounters, I just want to say that I would have not had such a positive experience if it weren't for the company I was surrounded by:

Harriet Kemigisha – owner and manager of Harrier Tours (advertised on the Mammal Watching blog). Harriet is the unquestionable choice for Uganda Mammal Watching. She's smart, witty, she's the queen of logistics – she will put you in the right place, at the right time. She will go out of her way to find inside-info about any species you're interested in seeing, including the really hard ones. Sometimes she'll travel with you nights and days, and other times she will hook you up with a park ranger or a local guide who is most knowledgeable. She's also funny and outgoing. And most importantly, of all the African guides I ever had so far, Harriet actually understands mammal watching! I was not disappointed.

“Sam” (Niwamanya Rwenzel Samuel) – our apprentice guide, or co-guide who was with us from Semliki to the end. Eagle eyes, enthusiasm, ability to identify down to species level – always confirmed by the pictures – are some of Sam's characteristics. Sam was ALWAYS up for finding us the next species. Even if we're looking at one and taking pictures of it, he's already looking for the next one. He was even more excited than we were about some of the mammals we found.

Joel – our driver – working tirelessly day and night to get us safely from one location to the next, and getting us the best view of any species seen from the road. “Stop! Now 2 meters backwards! 2.5cm forward! Stop!” Always happy, smiling, fun, enthusiastic and outgoing.

And last but not least, I want to thank my mammal watching partner for the trip: half human-half Sokoke Dog Mongoose, the “bat man” – Alex Meyer. When you're going to be stuck sharing a room for 13 nights with someone you have never met before, you really can't predict which way it will go. But with all the enthusiasm, knowledge of mammals and dark sense of humor, I feel like I met a real life-long friend, and for that I'm thankful. If I ever have to be stuck room-sharing in the jungles of Africa with anyone other than my fiancé, Alex it better be you!

So now that we got that out of the way, let's talk mammals.

This report is so damn long, because I think there is so much potential in Uganda that I want share as much info as I can with anyone who is interested. So here is the table of contents for this report:

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Brief Overview:

Uganda has been on my list for a LONG time, and finally, as Rwanda and Uganda started to open up for tourism amidst COVID, I decided this was the time to do it. Uganda is known as a Primate destination – but I always thought the potential was far greater than just primates. With a mammal list one can only drool over, it was clear that if one found the right guide/tour operator, spent nights in the field, spotlighting and thermal scanning – the potential would be great.

My personal targets ranged from Mountain gorillas, Chimps, L'hoest's, Ashy red colobus and Red-tailed monkeys, to even Patas monkeys which I hadn't seen yet, Side-striped jackals, Spot-necked otter, and Serval. And then of course Golden cats and Giant otter shrews were on the wish list along with Striped weasel and Giant Pangolin.

After much research, I decided that end of January would be the ideal time to visit Uganda for the driest season. July is the other best time – though most places are drier in January. Except Bwindi, which is drier in July.

I researched every possible species I was interested in seeing, and summarized it on the blog: <https://www.mammalwatching.com/2020/12/21/last-minute-opening-for-1-person-to-join-me-in-late-jan-early-feb-in-uganda/>

Itinerary:

(Jan 21 2021) Day 1: Meet in Entebbe – visit Botanical Gardens

Day 2: Mbamba Swamp (Shoebill) to Murchison Falls, staying in Pakuba Lodge.

Day 3: Murchison Falls all day, including river ride on the Nile to the falls.

Day 4: Early morning in Murchison falls, and then transfer to Semliki Wildlife Reserve. Stay at Semliki Safari Lodge.

Day 5: All day in the Semliki National Park, then stay at UWA Cottages at the edge of the NP.

Day 6: Early morning in Semliki and then transfer to Kibale. Afternoon and night at Kibale Primate Lodge and area.

Day 7: Chimp Trekking. Afternoon primate and bird watching. Stay Kibale Primate Lodge.

Day 8: Morning in Kibale, then transfer to Queen Elizabeth National Park, to Bush Lodge – Mweya area.

Day 9: All day in QENP, transferring from Mweya area to Ishasha, Stay in Topi lodge - Ishasha sector.

Day 10: Morning in Ishasha and then transfer to Bwindi national park to Buhoma Sector, staying at Haven Lodge

Day 11: Gorilla Tracking in Buhoma then afternoon transfer to “the neck” then continuing to Ruhija and stay at Trekkers Tavern Lodge.

Day 12: All day in Ruhija – Trekkers Tavern Lodge

Day 13: All day in Ruhija – Trekkers Tavern Lodge

Day 14: Early morning Ruhija and then start the journey to Entebbe.

General Notes:

Moon Schedule: The age-old debate.. but my best guess is that in Africa the moon does make a difference. On moonlit nights we saw only leopards and hyenas whereas on dark nights we saw smaller, more conspicuous creatures. But that's just my personal observation.

Thermal Vs. Spotlighting: I really think neither replaces the other. They totally complement each other with some of the highlights being found by either. The smallest stuff is usually found by thermal imaging.

Golden Cat: Golden cats are doing extremely well in Uganda. They even survive in forest remnants around Kampala. Right – I didn't believe that either. Until the CTC owner Tom told me that all 10 of their cats (which we saw) came from these forests (More on CTC later).



The problem is with golden cats.... They're hard to find! (Duh.) They're not even strictly nocturnal, so sleeping all day and searching all night wouldn't necessarily be the best strategy. In fact, on a rare occasion when people do encounter them – it can be smack in the middle of the afternoon. From my 1.5-hour encounter with wild-captured golden cats, it's evident that some individuals stay in the dense mid-levels of the canopy, descending down only to hunt (receive meat in

the CTC) and then drag their meal right back up the tree like a leopard. And they're well-camouflaged. Tom told me that they usually capture 1 cat every half a year – and that's half a year of searching with dogs and nets! He mentioned it would be a hard task releasing them in Uganda, as most parks are actually at full golden cat-capacity.

A research conducted in Kibale shows that in Kanyanchu, where the Chimp tourism is developed – golden cat activity is reduced to $\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$ of the activity recorded in the Sebitole and Kanyawara regions of the park. Only problem is that these regions are far, and I'm not exactly sure about the logistics of visiting or accommodations. Since we were interested in chimp trek and staying at Primate Lodge, we didn't actually visit Sebitole despite being part of the original plan. Next time, having seen all the primates, I would try to stay in Sebitole.

In Bwindi – golden cats are rarely seen in Ruhija, and 3 full days dedicated to the task did not yield one. The thing here is that unlike Buhoma (which may actually be richer species-wise), in Ruhija you can drive limitlessly up and down the road that cuts through the park day or night. This is where Patrick Gijbsers saw a golden cat right around 14:30, but it could have been a freak coincidence. But again – as more mammal watchers visit Uganda, it will be interesting to see how often these cats are seen. Tom did say that they are more active at night, at least with their feeding times. This doesn't really match research papers or camera-traps, but he spends way more time

with them than anyone else, so that's that. Maybe they hunt more at night but move around more during the day..?

Giant Pangolin: I researched the shit out of Ugandan giant pangolins. It doesn't sound like they're as "common" as they sound in Gabon, but most guides have even seen them at least once or twice. Interestingly – they replace Cape pangolins and take their niche in the savannahs of Murchison Falls and Queen Elizabeth. So the open savannah may actually be a better place to search for them than the rain forest. Of course they also exist in the rain forest habitats – so the good news is that they're found all over Western Uganda. But the not-so-good news is that they remain rare. It will be of course interesting to see if they're found as more mammal watchers with thermal scopes visit Uganda, despite the fact that apparently pangolins in general don't glow very bright in the scope, nor do they have noticeable eye-shine. I can attest to the latter from personal experience.

Giant Otter Shrew: Alex and I did a lot of reading on this one. Apparently, they like fast-flowing streams where they swim downstream (so always be looking upstream from your vantage point). They then walk back upstream outside the water. Apparently, they have a pretty set routine. You just have to find a stream with definite otter shrew signs – this may be the tricky part. How do you find and identify otter shrew activity? Perhaps motion-sensor cameras until you find one and then go staking it out. We staked out a stream in Kibale where Harriet thought she had seen one before, but upon further discussion, it must have been Congo Clawless otter. We staked it out 3 times, the longest being an hour and 10 minutes on our second afternoon, and were rewarded by a spot-necked otter instead. We tried another stream in Buhoma but had to leave by 19:00 because of the proximity to the D.R.C – security there is an issue since the kidnapping which took place in 2019. But this stream would have been perfect habitat for just about anything.

Finally – we also staked out another stream at “the neck” of Bwindi for well over an hour. We saw an animal in the thermal scope on the side of the stream, we were getting ready to point our lights at it, only to find out it was too far and too foggy to see it. So the animal disappeared. We later saw another similar looking thermal signature, swimming across the stream and not downstream. We never got to see it in the light, but we did see its behavior and I concluded it was most likely a bird (duck/rail/whatever). This was all happening just after dark, so a bird could still be active. Alex and I still discussed whether the first animal we saw was that same as the second one which we concluded was a bird. Or whether it was actually an otter shrew.. I believe it's the bird.

I know they are rare – and from a discussion with Vladimir it sounded like he tried to stake out an otter shrew in the CAR, but I wonder if people actually put in the time to try to find them, if they will turn up more frequently than previously expected. It's just not an animal that you see when 'regular' spotlighting in the forest, so people would really have to stake out streams similarly to how Jon and Charles staked out the pygmy hippo, in order to see it.

Day-by-day report:

Day 1: Intro & Entebbe

I took my 2nd COVID vaccine only 6-7 hours before my flight, and with hopes that the Israeli COVID regulations wouldn't change **again** in the last-minute, I headed to the airport. Of course the notorious side-effects of the 2nd vaccine include fever, which was my biggest nightmare – to develop fever while on connection in Ethiopia. So I took an Advil 45 minutes before the flight and was able to board safely upon having my temperature checked. I was on my way to Entebbe. How exciting!

At the airport I got my SIM card and was picked up by Alex and his 1-day driver. Alex had landed early in the morning and had already visited 2 zoos. Alex is on a quest to see all the world's mammal families – in captivity or in the wild. But by visiting local or little-known zoos and conservation centers, he gets way more intimate encounters with some of the world's most exotic species, than I could ever dream of in the wild.

We bumped elbows in a COVID-like fashion and headed to our guesthouse in Entebbe – Dave & Allison's. Nothing too spectacular, and I personally wouldn't necessarily stay there again – but it was conveniently located between the airport and the botanical gardens, which was the only stop on today's agenda.

Right at the entrance we already spotted our first mammal of the trip: a group of **Vervet monkeys**, on the ground, only about 100 meters away. As we walked over to take some pictures, the local guide joined us and kind of imposed himself on us. Alex and I were getting ready to familiarize ourselves with a new term: an Entebbe Botanical Gardens Guide. The Entebbe BC guide knew his birds well and even showed us my first avian target (*Ross's Turaco*). But when it came to mammals, Entebbe Botanical Gardens guide was a total flop - he promised bats, squirrels and otters, but delivered none. Somewhere between throwing rocks at a palm tree to get the bats out, to calling "otters!" (claiming 7 or 8 of them, only a few meters from shore!) when both Alex and I clearly saw just small waves - we realized we had to leave this place and



this guide behind. With the palm trees having swallows or swifts flying around, and Entebbe BG Guide calling them bats, to the entire family of otters that managed to appear and disappear in less than a second (both of us are generally good spotters, we wouldn't have missed a family of 7-8 otters) - our mammal watching for the day was over and we had coined the phrase "Entebbe Botanical Gardens Guide". Unfortunately, this is too common of an example, and reminds us why it's beneficial to put some effort and research into finding a reliable guide. Imagine spending an entire trip with this one...



We did see **Black & White "Guereza" colobus** hanging out in the trees in the middle of the gardens, as well as *broad-billed roller*, *Woodland kingfishers*, *Black & White Casqued hornbills*, and other friends.

It should be mentioned that any resemblance between Entebbe Botanical Gardens and traditional botanical gardens is coincidental – the place looks like a random un-touched area left aside as a city park. But apparently some of the trees have been brought over from other places. Regardless, it's a nice place and has lots of cool birds.

Both Alex and I were out by 21:00 – deep asleep till I woke up at 5:00 – with new energies for the adventure to come.



Day 2: Entebbe to Murchison Falls

We were picked up by Harriet and Joel by 6:00am sharp, as promised. We travelled to Mabamba Swamp, where the main event would be the *Shoebill*. But we also had hopes of the spot-necked otters. We were there by around 7:00 and a few minutes later we were on the boat. Right from the “dock” we could see a lot of cool birds like some *weavers*, *malachite kingfisher*, *African Jacana*, *Black crakes*, *Yellow-billed ducks* etc. About 30 minutes later we connected with the magical *shoebill* which was as cool as I had hoped. Both Alex and I enjoyed the encounter, as the bird came really close and showed well. We were then hoping to catch a glimpse

of some otters, so we kept going around the swamp channels. But we only saw more birds such as *Blue-headed coucal*.

Upon returning to the dock, we quickly checked out an abandoned building which had colonies of **Ethiopian epauletted fruit bat** – our first new species for the day. On the way out, we saw our first and only pair of *African Gray Parrots* of the trip.

The road to Murchison Falls took 3-4 hours longer than expected since the Ferry hasn't worked in a few months now, due to high water levels. It was about 16:00 when we crossed the Nile River,



which was also the first time I had ever seen this very famous river. Right after crossing we



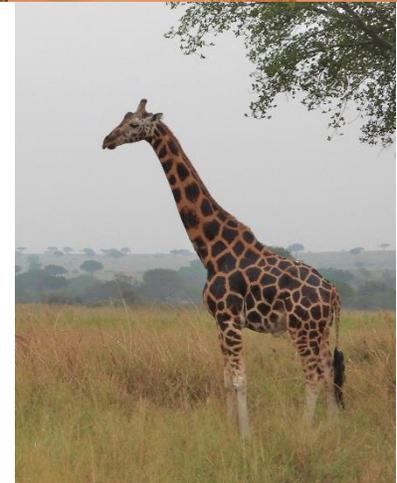
came across **Olive Baboons** on the road, followed by **Tantulus Monkeys**.

At around 17:30ish we were still not inside the park, so we just took a turn to get inside the park, despite knowing this route would take longer. At least we would start seeing some animals. Almost as soon as we got off the main road we saw our first **Uganda Kob**, followed by **Warthogs**. Upon passing the “Murchison Falls National Park” gate, and over the next hour we would have several encounters with kobs, warthogs, the great-looking **Rothchild's Giraffes**, **Bush Elephants**, **Jackson's Hartebeest**, **Patas Monkeys**, **Oribi**, **Banded**



Mongoose, African Buffalo and Defassa Waterbuck. All of these would become rather abundant over the next couple of days except banded mongoose, which we only saw once more.

As night began to fall, we busted out the old thermal scopes and flashlights, and started seeing both **Bunyoro Rabbits** with their short ears and **Scrub Hares** with their long, typical hare-like ears, 3-4 **Side-striped Jackals**, a single **Spotted Hyena**, a few **white-tailed mongooses**, and a single **Rusty-spotted genet**. Finally, we go to Pakuba Lodge around 22:00pm, exhausted but satisfied. Alex found **yellow-winged bats** in the reception building of the lodge. The only cool bird to note aside from *nightjars* on the road, were 2 *Grayish Eagle Owls*.



The lodge itself is a very pleasant, typical, semi-luxurious safari lodge, with Bunyoro Rabbits and Defassa's waterbucks hanging around the lodge gardens. We went to sleep around 11:45pm, to prepare for leaving by 5:30am the following morning.

Day 3: Murchison Falls

Even before our early morning drive, Alex had me help him photograph a tiny **micro-bat** on the side of the palm tree outside the restaurant at Pakuba Lodge, of which the picture was too blurry to identify.



We started our drive out of the lodge seeing more Bunyoro Rabbits and another side-striped jackal, as well as a Rusty-spotted Genet. Through the thermal scopes, infinite herds of sleeping antelopes lit up the savannah, and you can't stop to inspect each one to make sure it's not something rare. I did stop us for a **mouse-like rodent** that was on a tree, running up and down the branches before settling inside a cavity, never to pop out again. Trough blurry photos we have identified it as **Noack's Dormouse**. While trying to take pictures of the dormouse, a **Senegal Galago** jumped off that tree and over to the next bush.



Mongoose and Bat pictures ©Alex Meyer





Throughout the morning we saw all the usual animals, including Patas monkeys which I hadn't realized would be this common. Honestly, my targets for this park were the patas, side-striped jackals, Bunyoro rabbits and oribi which I'm sure I've seen but never got a picture of. So Oribi were

abundant, like in crazy numbers compared to other places I've been to. Patas were seen ever 1-2 hours, Bunyoro rabbits were pretty common at night (but notice the differences between them and the equally common scrub hares), and side-striped jackals were seen on every game drive in the dark, but never in the light.



Noack's Dormouse

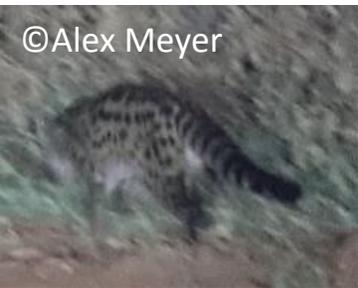
Left Picture ©Alex Meyer

I want to praise Murchison Falls for the density of mammals. While on the "main roads", you are ALWAYS surrounded by wildlife! ALWAYS. Kobs, buffalos, hartebeests, warthogs, oribis and/or waterbucks are always within sight. It's seriously amazing. Giraffes and elephants are numerous in some places throughout the drive, but not in crazy numbers like the others. At one point, while photographing some *Ruppel's vultures* and a *Martial Eagle*, Harriet noticed a kill and presumed there would be lions around. I quickly scanned the hills to the right of us and found 2



©Alex Meyer

female **lions** on a mound. We enjoyed watching them for a couple of minutes before they got up and disappeared into the vegetation. Further down this morning's drive we also saw our first **Striped Ground Squirrel** – an animal we wouldn't catch a photo of until the very last day of our trip (spoiler..). Another lifer for me this morning which would become rather common over the next day or so, is the *Abyssinian ground hornbill*.



©Alex Meyer

All the way down at the river we saw our first **Hippos** of the trip, and took a short break to walk around, where I also saw my first strikingly devilish-red, *Black-headed Gonolek*.



©Alex Meyer

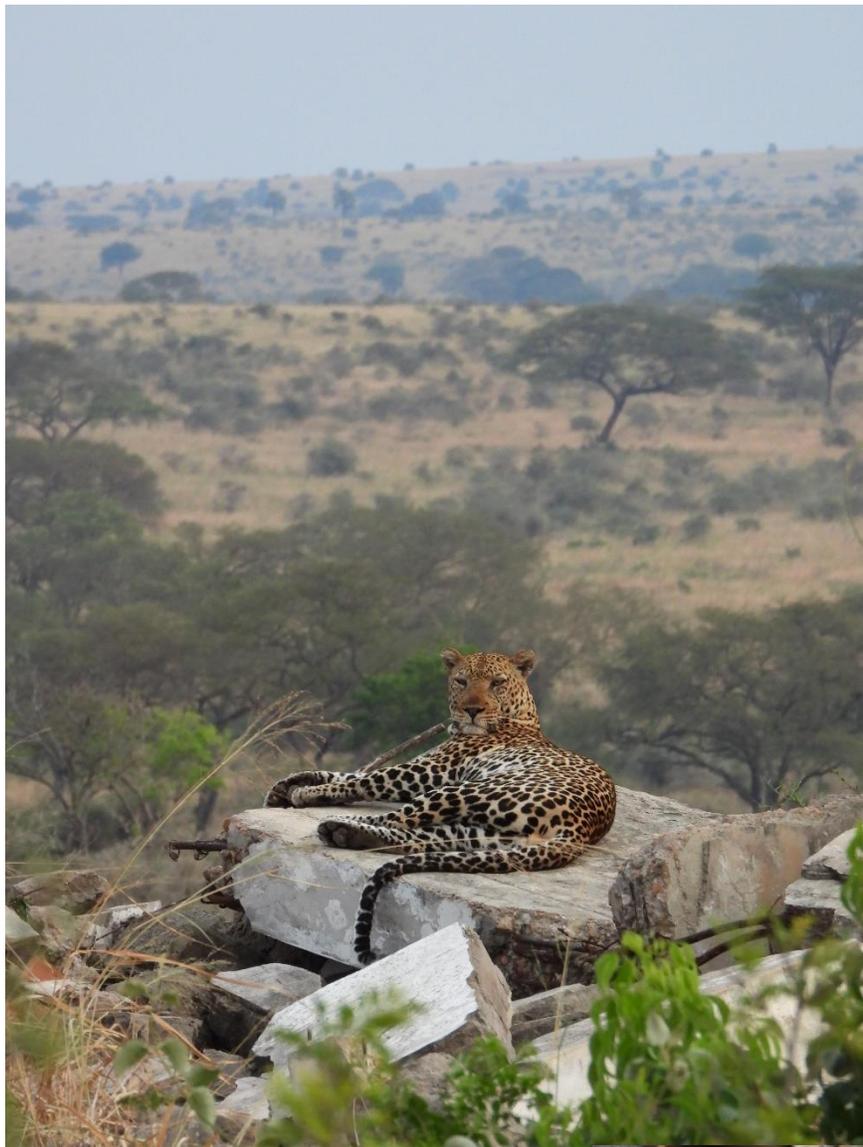
After lunch we headed out on a boat, cruising the Nile River which was such a relaxing and welcomed activity after a year of COVID... This was such a relief from "real life" during COVID, with hippos and elephants bathing in the river as we're passing by, and birds flying all-around. My main goal for the boat ride was the *Northern Carmine bee-eater*, which we finally saw half-way through the ride, along with the equally-striking *Red-throated bee-eater*, *Scarlet-chested Sunbird*, *Pied*, *Malachite* and *African Giant Kingfishers*, a *Monitor Lizard*, and a pair of *Barn Owls* nesting inside the riverside cliffs, which our boat guide found for us. We also saw 100s of *African Skimmers* flying in a great flock. Otherwise, we saw a few more elephants inside the river, waterbucks, hippos, crocodiles and another striped ground squirrel running alongside the riverside cliffs. The waterfall itself was also very picturesque, even though we couldn't get as close as usual due to high water levels and extreme gushing flow.



©Alex Meyer

Upon our return to shore, it started to rain and kept raining on-and-off for the next hour and a half or so. As we tried to escape the rain while managing an afternoon drive, we saw nothing new. But literally 2 minutes before we got back to Pakuba Lodge we came across another Safari vehicle (which was in itself a rare occurrence considering COVID!) who informed Harriet that a **Leopard** was seen at the Pakuba Ruins. This is a place Alex had wanted to check out anyway, because of... you guessed it – bats! We made the tiny detour to the Pakuba Ruins to look for the leopard, and there it was – laying on a rock, with the most dramatic African savannah backdrop you could imagine. We were very close to it, and yet managed to not disturb it. Until it noticed some warthogs and finally climbed down towards them and disappeared. We never relocated it, but went down to see the ruins, where Alex took some pictures of **Noack's** and most likely **Sundevall's roundleaf bats** before we returned to the lodge for dinner. But of course we were just in time to take a picture of another bat in the palm tree outside the restaurant – this time **Mauritian tomb bat**.

That night we drove to another area (more scrubby, less open) where we saw more white-tailed mongoose, a **Kemp's Gerbil** which was found by my thermal scope, and the questionable mongoose which turned out to be a sick-but-now-recovering, black-phased-white-tailed mongoose. Woohoo. Lol.



Day 4 – Murchison to Toro-Semliki Wildlife Reserve

Since the Ferry was out, Harriet managed to bend the rules for us (that's one of her specialties!), so that we don't have to take the extra 3-5 hour detour. The only stipulation is that we would have to be at the Chinese Workers' bridge by 7:00am. On the way there we saw some more side-striped jackals, a black-phased white-tailed mongoose, Bunyoro rabbits and most of the usual suspects.

Long-story-short, we could have arrived at the bridge by 8:00 or even 8:30, but after a long, slightly frustrating session of waiting for a semi-non-cooperative bridge worker to open the gate for us (for a small bribe, of course), we were off to Toro-Semliki Reserve. This kind of situation is not



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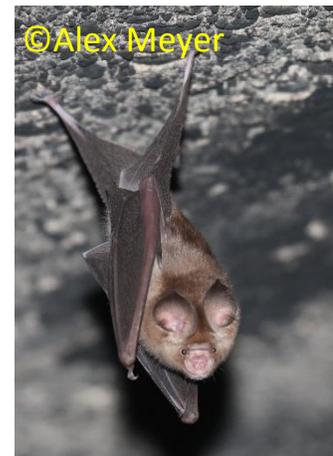
©Alex Meyer

uncommon in Africa, and having a well-connected guide such as Harriet again proved to be an asset. We did see another *giant kingfisher* while waiting on the bridge, and a beautiful sunrise.

We took a shorter route to Toro-Semliki, so we didn't drive through the Budongo Forest which was too bad, but we had a long way ahead. After lunch on the way, we continued to the VERY expensive Semliki Safari Lodge. In-between Alex and I's deep philosophical discussions, I heard Harriet calling the Lodge and asking about specific species that can be seen at night. She was very specific too, she asked them how often they see them, and where. I heard her asking about cane rats, servals, pangolins, water chevrotains and golden cats. She meant business!

Around 15:30 we entered the reserve, which has one long unpaved road that runs through it, among woodland savannah with burned fields on both sides. We only saw kob, waterbuck, baboons and black & white colobus on the drive in. Upon reaching the lodge, we took some time to relax and appreciate the super comfortable and picturesque setting, and asked about Pousargue's mongoose – which according to them, come to the kitchen every day between 13:00-14:00, but we were informed that today they had showed up around noon. Unfortunately, we were to leave the lodge by 5:15am the following morning, so if the mongooses wouldn't show up between now and dinner, we would miss them – and that's what happened. Alex, our bat man, was taken to see bats underneath the old swimming pool, which turned out to be **Aba roundleaf bat**. Of course I came along to see them.

After a tasty dinner, the lodge guide took us on a night drive. Being on the border between the savannah and the Congolese rain forest (Semliki valley is an extension of the Itury forest ecosystem) I had high hopes for this area. We asked the guide about all the Congolese species and Harriet asked him to take us to a trail he rarely visits, so that we can find some of those rare specialties we had asked about. It was only after an hour and a half or so of driving on the savannah right next to the burning fields that we realized this guy was either not very smart, or didn't internalize our request. We were very specific with our request, and yet he took us right next to burning fields – the smell of smoke and fire enveloped our entire night game drive, and we didn't go into the rainforest habitat at all. We did see a HUGE *rock python* at the beginning of the drive, followed by kobs, waterbucks, white-tailed



mongoose and a rusty-spotted genet.

From my experience I would say I was disappointed – the lodge itself is super luxurious, comfortable, pampering and I would stay there any day on a non-wildlife vacation. But we seriously couldn't have been more specific with our request to see forest animals, and this guy even told us he sees chevrotains, golden cats and pangolins on camera traps, so I couldn't figure out why he didn't take us to the forest. In retrospect, maybe we should have requested a forest hike right out of the lodge instead of the game drive.

Regarding the mongooses – I couldn't tell if they actually come every day, or if it's just something they told us, as many people in Africa

tend to tell you things just to get you excited. In reality, I haven't heard of anyone since Jason who has seen the mongooses there.

Day 5 – Semliki National Park

Today was one of the highlights in every aspect. Well – we had to leave Semliki Safari Lodge before 5:30am in order to make it to Semliki (or Semuliki) National Park in time to see De Brazza's monkeys during the peak of their activity, which is supposedly from 7:00 – 8:00. On the way out we saw nothing but kobs, and on the way to Semliki NP we also saw Tantulus monkeys again.

It was about a 1.5-ish hour drive to the Semliki NP office, where we would also sleep at the Uganda Wildlife Authorities (UWA) cottages right in the Semliki Forest. This would be quite a contrast from last night's luxurious Semliki Safari Lodge, as these would be the only accommodation that wouldn't have hot water. It was very basic – but the location was the key!

We had a few goals for the day:

1. De Brazza's monkey
2. Dent's monkey
3. Semliki Red Colobus, which was just recently discovered in this park
4. Reaching the Semliki River, the other side of which is the Itury forest in the DRC.

Goal #4 was the most challenging, as the hike is about 13-14km each way. Of course the benefit of reaching the river is the very, very unlikely chance of seeing an Okapi on the other side. Not that anyone has ever seen one from across the river, but nobody has tried either. Other animals that apparently occur in Semliki National Park that and not in other places in East Africa are: Central African Oyan (linsang), Red River Hogs, Bongos, Pygmy and Dwarf scaly-tails, Giant Genet, Bate's Pygmy Antelope and others.

The national park is very pristine and virgin – we saw no other people on our hike, but there is little infrastructure and night hikes are technically not allowed. More on that later.

At the UWA cottages we left our luggage and connected with our local guide and forest rangers: Moses, Sam and Alex. Yes, another Alex.. This would be the 2nd of 3 Alexes in Uganda...

From the first moment, it was very clear that all our new participants were extremely knowledgeable, enthusiastic, knew our targets and had an idea of where to find them.

We were first taken to the Female Hot Spring, which is actually one of the only tourist attractions in the park. It's a few minutes down the road from the UWA cottages. You park along side the road and walk a few minutes in the forest before reaching the open geothermal area. As soon as we walked in the forest, Alex the guide announced "**De Brazza's monkey!**" and we saw a large-ish monkey jumping but that's all we saw for the moment. Within a few minutes we also saw our first **Red-tailed monkeys** of the trip. From the clearing we also saw **Blue monkeys** together with **red-tailed monkeys** and only a few minutes later guide-Alex found us the **De Brazza's monkeys** which were a bit far but clearly visible from the wooden trail of the thermal spring clearing. After enjoying a few minutes with the De Brazza's, we were back to the car to pick up our porter for the day and start the long hike on the main trail.





On the way, we dropped off Harriet who hurt her foot. We picked up the porter, Shem, and drove to the trailhead.

On our drive to the trailhead we saw our first **Uganda Crested Mangabey** on a tree right above the road, followed by my most-wanted hornbill of the trip: *White-crested Hornbill*, with its impressive long tail. Both Alex and Moses told me we I was lucky to have spotted this rare species just on the side of the road, right out in the open.

It was probably about 8:30am when we actually started hiking the trail. We didn't see much for the first few km, except more red-tailed monkeys, Crested Mangabey and Mantled guereza, but guide-Alex and Moses were on a mission to take us to red colobus hotspot, for which Alex Meyer had the hots for. Along

the way, we saw a few squirrels, at least one of which we identified as **Red-Legged Sun Squirrel**.

We reached the area where we would start looking



for the red colobus, but we kept spotting 'regular' colobuses. At one point I was already embarrassed for having spotted just another family of black & white colobus, and was ready to keep moving, when Moses pointed out to me that in fact, a single **Semliki Red Colobus** was hanging out with them. These red colobus had noticeably redder limbs than the "ashy red colobus" we would see later on this trip. Great find for Moses!



A few minutes later, Moses found another family of De Brazza's monkeys with a baby which made for blurry but cute pictures.



Alex's photo w/ my camera

By 10-ish we had breakfast at a beautiful little forest pond full of *chocolate-backed* and *malachite kingfishers*, with pairs of *Black-casqued Wattled hornbills* flying above us. Long-story-short, we spent the entire rest of the morning chasing Dent's monkeys, which kept eluding us. At one point, Alex and I were left at the pond while guide-Alex, Sam and Moses would spread out with their walky-talkies and communicate among themselves until someone finds them. This happened, actually, but the monkeys were gone by the time we were taken to see them. We had lunch across the pond at a campsite that looks like an abandoned



village in the middle of the forest, where I assume we would camp if camping was allowed. More on this at the end...



Finally, after lunch, Sam would find the monkeys and guide-Alex took us to finally have our first glimpses of **Dent's monkeys**. I hadn't realized these monkeys were so small, smaller than even the red-tailed ones. On the way back to camp we also saw our first **Boehm's squirrel**. Back across the pond we also had some views of an **Alexander Dwarf Squirrel**. You can easily distinguish between them thanks to the stripe pattern.

At this point, having woken up at 4:45ish, Alex and I decided to take a nap. We had decided not to rush all the way to the river, since it was another several hour hike and we weren't even half-way. We would stay around the campsite, then start hiking back before dark to have a 2-3 hour "night hike" session before returning to trailhead.



Across the pond we had a view of *Hartlaub's duck*, which I've seen before in the C.A.R but which apparently is super rare for Uganda so guide-Alex and Moses had me take a couple of pictures for them. Of course I was happy to do so. We saw a few more hornbills (*Piping* and I think *African Pied*), a *blue-headed tree agama*, a young *Jameson's Mamba* and an upside-down turtle we saved and put back in the pond, and then we were off to take a 1.5-hour nap.

After nap, guide-Alex woke up Alex Meyer in a hurry, as he found some bats in one of the abandoned huts. These turned out to be **Doryhina Leaf-nosed Bat**.



After that, Sam found more Dent's monkeys not too far away from the campsite, and another Boehm's squirrel. Around 16:30ish we started hiking back, with the intention of getting back around 21:00-21:20. Along the way we saw the Red Colobus again, together with mantled quereza, Dent's and red-tailed monkeys all in the same trees. It should be mentioned that Red-tailed monkeys are super social, and they came into physical contact (climbing over, leaning on, eating along-side) with about every other species we saw today except the De Brazza's.

As it started getting dark we waited on a tiny bridge over a stream for about 20-25 minutes but didn't see much. Later, Alex Meyer spotted a dull-looking bird, but both guide-Alex and Moses got extremely excited as this was the apparently very rare *Nkulengu Rail*.





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At this point we busted out the old flashlights and thermal scopes. Alex Meyer also taught Sam how to use his scope. Throughout the next 2.5ish hours we found **Wahlberg's epauletted fruit bat**, **Spectacled (Dusky) galago**, **Hammer-headed Fruit Bat** (female), and a **Lord Derby's Anomalure**, which I found using the thermal. This was especially exciting for Alex Meyer who had really hoped to see an anomalure on this trip, as it would also be a "family" lifer for him. But it was even more special for Moses and guide-Alex, who have spent so many years as guides and rangers in Semliki and have never seen or heard of a scaly-tailed flying squirrel or anomalure.



In fact, they hope that from my report and pictures on social media, more people will be interested in night-activities at Semliki National Parks, and the management will start offering these. You gotta love the enthusiasm exhibited by literally everyone we were surrounded by. It was very encouraging, and I do hope that more mammal watchers will spend time in Semliki and find out what other cool species this place has to offer.



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In addition, camping was once permitted inside the park, but because of COVID-19 and also because of some recent unrest in the DRC, it's been prohibited. But I want to believe that if enough people show interest and once COVID is under control, it will be allowed again. Camping 6-7km deep in the park would be a great opportunity when trying to find rare nocturnal animals. And it would allow for a more realistic chance to hike all the way to Semliki River and back without having to rush through it.

Aside from mammals, the thermal scope also picked up a few sleeping birds, including *Speckle-breasted woodpecker* and a *crested guinea fowl* both which were lifers for me,

Day 6 – Semliki to Kibale

We were back on the trail to the hot springs by 5:30ish. We chose the geothermal clearing for its potential to yield red river hogs and water chevrotains. On the way to the clearing, I thermal-scoped 3 different rodents, 2 which were too quick for photography, but the 3rd which ended up being a **link rat**, or more appropriately named **Congo Forest Mouse**. Unfortunately, we didn't see any mammals in the clearing, but we did find the De Brazza's monkeys again at the same



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place as yesterday, but they were still sleeping and it was too dark so we let them go. We hiked the long way which takes you through the Male hot spring and to the actual headquarters and visitor center of Semliki National Park. We saw a ton of footprints – supposedly duikers and if I think river hogs as well, but no sightings.

At the visitor center Alex found **Mauritian tomb bats** again. Back at the UWA we had our tasty breakfast, and with a great deal of gratitude we said goodbye to the Semliki crew including Alex, Moses, Sam and Sham our porter. We took a group picture together and said goodbye, only to find out Sam was continuing with us for the rest of the trip. What a bonus for us!

The drive to Kibale was about 2 hours. But before we would arrive at the lodge, Harriet stopped near a bridge on the main road through Kibale, which overlooks a small stream where she had previously seen Congo Clawless otter. She thought this would be a good place to stake out a Giant Otter Shrew. We spent a few minutes on the bridge, but figured we'd come back after dark and try again. We reached Kibale Primate Lodge in time for lunch, accompanied by Uganda Crested Mangabey, the first of 6 or 7 primates we would see on the grounds of the lodge!

After the UWA at Semliki, Kibale Primate Lodge was luxurious and modern. Plus we had **Angolan rousettes** roosting on our private balcony.



After lunch we were taken to the Bigodi Wetland area, with the targets for the afternoon being Ashy red colobus and L'hoest's monkeys. We took about 2.5-3 hours to get through the trail, seeing mostly birds throughout most of the first half, including *Tambourine dove*, *shining-blue kingfisher*, *red-breasted sunbird*, *black & white shrike-flycatcher*, *speckled tinkerbird* and others. Sam was very excited about the Vervet monkeys we saw there, which he claimed were different from the ones in the lowlands. Still I'm not 100% sure which ones are considered Tantalus and which ones are Vervets... We also saw black & white colobus as always.

Finally, after about 2-hours we found our **Ashy red colobus** and spent 10-15 minutes with them. And about half an hour later, right before departing, we also had our first encounter with **L'hoest's monkeys**. At this point, we had seen all the diurnal monkeys we could see on our itinerary in Uganda!



After dinner we took a night drive on a trail Harriet got special permission to go on.. but as soon as we got out of the lodge, Harriet found an **African palm civet**. It was relaxed and we had a great few minutes with it. When we got to the trail/road we spotlit and thermalled our way, but as I'm writing this report, I'm realizing we should have actually walked it instead of drive it. The road was narrow for driving but in a great forested and well-

protected area. We saw a genet-like animal in the thermal, but it ran off before we got a chance to identify it. We also saw a rodent running across the road, too quick to ID. We gave up on





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the narrow road and went back to the main road, where we saw dusky bushbaby again (I didn't know that one existed in Kibale too) and the tiny **Demidoff's galago**. The latter – too quick and bouncy for a clear picture or video. But I have some unclear video of it... I tried to distinguish between the two species by: 1. Thomas's being generally higher up on the canopy whereas Demidoff's is generally lower to the ground, and 2. The vocal differences suggested by Rod Cassidy and Coen Betjes: <https://www.wildsolutions.nl/vocal-profiles/>

Finally, before heading back to the lodge we checked out the bridge over the stream again, in hopes for the otter shrew, but again it was getting late and we had to be up early the next morning, so we only ended up spending a couple of minutes and not seeing anything.

Day 7 – Chimp Day!

We woke up very early in order to start our pitta and chimp searching before dawn. Yes, you read that right – the pitta (a bird!), is mostly active right around dawn, whereas the chimps wake up a little later. But they both hang out in the same general area. I use the term “area” loosely – how the guides memorize the rain forest is beyond me – in my head we were far into a forest abyss... but I digress.

When Sam came to pick before 5am from our cabin, we heard a call of what he was positive was a genet. But we had no time to search. We walked to the visitor center, were handed over to a local guide plus Sam, while Harriet would stay behind to work out all the paperwork. She would join us a little later. Before dawn we tried thermal-scoping and spotlighting, and we actually found a duiker in the thermal right beside the trail but before we got a good view of it in the light, it got up and walked away. From the size we can assume Weyn's Duiker, but we can't really rule out blue duiker either, since the perceived size in the thermal could be misleading.

Once Harriet joined, she found me a *Narina Trogon*, which was nice, as I have never seen any of the African trogons before. Our next mission was clearly the chimps and while we could hear them, they seemed to be harder to find than I thought. In addition, one has apparently been caught by a snare this morning, and a crew was trying to rescue it and take care of it. But this meant that its troop has dispersed into the forest. Regardless, after about 45 minutes longer, we finally caught up with a single **common chimpanzee**, with which we spent about an hour, and at one point got very close to it. It was really awesome on one hand, and on the other hand I was kind of expecting a family with young, and to be observing behaviors and stuff. So I hoped we would find more.



After breakfast, *Green-breasted pitta* was the goal, since they can be found relatively easy in Kibale. Harriet busted out her Bluetooth speaker and called in a few pittas, at least 1 of which we had several glimpses of. Alex usually went along with my bird sessions, but upon seeing my picture of the pitta his comment was "Wait, that's it?!". It cracked me up, as this is actually one of the most sought-after birds in Uganda.



Around 11:00 we started heading back. Unfortunately for Alex and I, Harriet – who usually kept behind us, walked ahead and flushed out another duiker! Being very familiar with blue duikers, she said it wasn't one – but she wasn't sure which species it was, meaning it could again probably be Weyn's duiker. I asked how likely it would be that we would see another chimp on the main road or near the accommodation, but everyone seemed convinced that it was near impossible.

Back at the lodge on the way to our room we had a troop of Ashy-red colobus again right above us, accompanied by the omnipresent red-tailed monkeys, Uganda Crested Mangabey and black & white colobus.

After lunch, Alex and I had made plans to finally spend a good portion of the afternoon staking out the bridge. But before that, the lodge manager (and apparently a wildlife guide even though I would put him in the same category as the Entebbe Botanical Gardens guide) took Alex to see

some bats, and after searching a few locations unsuccessfully, he did manage to find us **Franquet's epauletted fruit bat** at the lodge.

We just stopped by our cabin when I noticed a large male **chimp** on a tree right outside our window! This was exciting to have our own personal chimp encounter without a guide or a tracker, or any limitation. This was really cool and, in my opinion, made up for only seeing one chimp earlier in the day.

Happy with that encounter, we walked to the bridge (about a 30-ish minute walk) while enjoying the forest along the road. We saw the omnipresent baboons on the road, and another *Ross's turaco*. Waiting on the bridge until around 18:10, a *Superb sunbird* posed for us and finally, right when we were about to leave Alex spotted an **otter** swimming downstream toward us. It swam under the bridge, as we tried to sneak in a few photos of it breaking the surface of the water in its otter-like routine, then as we crossed the road to catch it from other side of the bridge. It then popped up and showed itself well on the stream-side rocks. This was sufficient to identify it as a **speckle-necked otter**, a species I was really hoping to see in Uganda! What a day this had already turned out to be! Other than that, there was a roadside drainage where Sam found us more Sundevall's roundleaf bats.



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day. You could clearly see the signs of cane rat-sized animal activity in the crops, but nobody's home. He said they would be more easily found asleep during the day.

On the drive back through the fields we did again see an unidentified rodent, and then at the same place where Harriet had previously seen the cusimanse, she spotted a mongoose! Though it turned out to be a **Marsh Mongoose**.

After dinner Harriet suggested to take us to another area, outside the rain forest and closer to her village (she's from Bigodi village). She had 2 reasons:

1. She had just photographed an Alexander's Cusimanse in the crop fields a few weeks prior, and
2. There is a guy (also named Alex!) who has cane rats nest in his crop fields.

On the drive in, I thermal-scoped several rodents which we never found in the light, and 2 which we did see but not photographed including a mouse and a rat. We reached the farmland which belonged to Alex the Cane rat guy. We spent a good hour or so on his property in the fields looking for the cane rats, and him showing us where they usually sleep during the



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For the rest of the night we drove back up the main road and drove out of the park again to where Harriet last saw a golden cat (at least a year or 2 ago) but the only thing of note was yet another mongoose, this time turned out to be a very quick **Egyptian mongoose**.

Day 8 – Kibale to Queen Elizabeth

We had an early breakfast and then were taken by our lodge manager and 'guide' to a supposed treehouse overlooking a forest clearing where forest elephants are sometimes seen. It was a nice trail through the forest, only when we got there and wanted to go up, he informed us we couldn't, because the structure hasn't been maintained and could potentially collapse. We were bewildered that he hadn't thought to mention it before. Regardless, we insisted on carefully climbing at least half-way up so that we could at least observe the clearing. We spent about 40 minutes up there from like 7:40 but saw no mammals. We did see black-necked weavers.

Alex had wanted to go back to Cane Rat place, but Cane-Rat-Alex. Who had seen the rats this morning, apparently scared them off from the nest. And so we were off to Queen Elizabeth National Park, crossing the equator en-route.

We reached Bush Lodge in the Mweya Sector of QENP, which was again a semi-luxurious tented camp with an elegant set-up and comfortable dining tents. The lodge is located on the peninsula overlooking the channel, right in the middle of the bush (as its name suggests). The specialty of this lodge is the abundance of **giant forest hogs** that live on the grounds. A lodge staff member



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took us to see one within an hour of our arrival. While abundant, they always stay too far in the bush for a great picture.

The view from the lodge are awesome and wild, with elephants, hippos and *crocodiles* bathing and drinking across the channel from our room, and pretty birds all around, including the *double-toothed barbet*, *black-headed gonolek*, *pin-tailed whydahs*, tons of *sunbirds* etc.

We had lunch at the lodge and asked for a packed dinner so that we could go

on an extended afternoon drive into the night. In the afternoon we saw kobs, buffalos, waterbucks, plus the trip's first **bushbuck**, and a *monitor lizard*.

At one point, I got out to check out what I was sure at the time was an *aardvark's* den, but it was vacant.

After a notably delicious take-away dinner in the car (way to go Bush Lodge!) we started our night drive. Unfortunately, the grass in this area was tall, and even though we found a few small carnivores in the thermal scope, we never got a clear view and couldn't





ID them. Next, we found a blotched genet in a cactus, followed by a leopard which nearly jumped on hood of our vehicle. It was a collared animal so it may have been too comfortable with people.

Not sure if this is relevant, but it was pretty much full moon – and we saw no small or surprising mammals. We did see scrub hares, elephant, hippos, 2 more leopards, 3 spotted hyenas, and Verreaux's eagle owl. Back at the camp, we would have to be escorted back to our room, as hippos patrol the restaurant area.



Day 9 – Mweya to Ishasha through Maramabambo Forest

Alex really wanted to get good pictures of the giant hogs, so we spent the early morning giant hoggin' around the lodge. We got our fix for the morning as we walked around and on the main road. But I was perturbed by the presence of elephants on the road, and the fact that we were un-escorted. Having been warned about hippos and what-not – we agreed to go and find an escort on the perfect hog-picture escapade.

After breakfast we drove to Maramagambo Forest – another sector of Queen Elizabeth NP, where golden cats, Chimps and Bate's antelopes have been recorded, and where supposedly many of those Congolese and Rwenzori species that still need to be discovered. But as we arrived around 10:30-ish and stayed through the hottest part of the day, we didn't see too much except the



bats in the Python cave, which were **Egyptian Fruit Bats** by the 10s of thousands.

I hope this forest will be more explored at night, though I'm not sure how that would be done. After lunch we headed out for Ishasha sector, which is a couple of hours' drive. On the way we saw very little including the usual mammals and birds, plus *saddle-billed stork* and *crowned hornbill*.

Around 17:00ish we reached the entrance to Ishasha sector where Harriet tried to negotiate our night game drive. This area is a bit challenging because it's adjacent to the DRC border and is where a kidnapping of an American tourist took place a couple of years ago by Congolese ransom-seekers who crossed the border. So the authorities are taking serious precautions in this area. This puts a damper on night activities. Meanwhile, right inside the metal gate of Ishasha sector, Alex found **Angolan free-tailed bats** roosting, and Sam found a *White-headed barbet*.



We drove to our hotel outside the park – Topi Lodge, located in wilderness area, but technically outside the park. After dinner I just thermal-scoped around the restaurant and found what I'm pretty sure is a **Gray climbing mouse**.

On the night drive, we didn't see anything of note except another yellow-winged bat. It was somewhat disappointing as Ishasha should be a prime location for servals. In fact, it's a wide-known fact that servals are common in Ishasha. But the armed ranger we had took us on a shorter trail through tall grass.



We would only learn the next morning that further in, where the topis hang out, is where grasses are much shorter, and is where we should have asked to go. Ishasha of course also has African Striped weasels, honey badgers, zorillas, and a ton of other cool creatures, but being in the tall grassy area didn't help our chances.

On the drive back to the lodge, both Sam and I saw an animal through the thermal scopes, too far for spotlighting, which looked like it could be a serval. We asked Joel to speed up, but the animal disappeared into the bush never to return. It could have been our serval, or a jackal... we will never know.

Day 10 – Ishasha to Bwindi

Early morning we left our lodge for the Ishasha Gate right after sunrise. Our goal for this morning were Topi, while Serval was still an option. Shortly upon entering the park we saw 3 lion cubs and then a lioness searching for them, an Egyptian mongoose right near the car, and finally a **Topi** – and then lots of it. Then we saw kobs, baboons and elephants. We realized we should have come to this area last night.

We saw another **mouse** running through the grass. I didn't see it as well as Alex, but he's pretty sure it was one of the **Lemniscomys mice**, so I'll take his word for it.



The cool new bird for this morning was a *violet starling*, which I told Sam I wanted to see, so of course he found me one.

Right around 9am it started to rain, which was fine because we were just on our way back to the lodge for breakfast. Throughout the next 2-3 hours it actually rained pretty heavily which hadn't happened all trip. We hoped it wouldn't rain in Bwindi, even though I knew this was the potentially rainiest location of the trip in general, and particularly in the "short" dry season of Jan-Feb.



We were lucky. It was clear sky in Buhoma and we were greeted to the lovely Haven Lodge with a plethora of birds including *African green pigeon*, *African blue flycatcher*, and several *sunbirds*. But the mammal of the afternoon was our

first **Rwenzori Sun Squirrel**. It is noteworthy that the view from the lodge is quite spectacular as well!



After lunch we headed down to the national park. While Harriet sorted out the bureaucracy at the entrance, we spotted another Boehm's squirrel on the way to the Gorilla Tracking Center. We then headed to the stream, where we wanted to stake out otter shrews. This seemed to be a great spot for wildlife, and there were even sandbanks, streamside rocks and entry points to the river. The only problem is – we had to be out of the park strictly by 19:00. This was

highlighted by the fact that there were armed guards everywhere around the gorilla tracking center, due to the instability in the DRC.

So Alex and I hung out on a rock right by the stream, while we had Sam watch over the small bridge, to warn us if anything was coming. *African Paradise flycatchers* were common there. Then, within minutes, a L'hoest's monkey came right on the bridge next to Sam, and I also saw a large squirrel far in the forest which I never got a picture of, but I'm guessing it could be either red-legged sun squirrel or giant forest squirrel. Unfortunately, it turned out that Sam had a much better vantage point than we did, as he got our attention and mouthed "DUIKER". But by the time we climbed back up, the animal was gone. We did try to go up the trail and relocate it but weren't optimistic in 'chasing' after it on a trail. But Sam, who had gone around on a side-trail in an attempt to 'herd' the duiker back in our direction, actually saw it between where he was and where we were. He tried to get our attention and point at it, but we didn't notice him through the dense vegetation, so we missed the duiker altogether. Sam was sure this wasn't a black-fronted duiker, and that it was a darker one, describing it as "bush-buck colored". Again, our best guess is a Weyn's duiker, but of course it could be something else. Damn!



During the few minutes of spotlighting from the stream to the visitor's center we did find another *crested guineafowl* sleeping in a tree. We were back at the visitor center by 19:45, and Sam got reprimanded by the armed guards for being 'irresponsible' and keeping us in the forest after dark.

We tried spotlighting and thermal scoping near the lodge, but being up on the side of the mountain closer to the village and outside the park – this yielded no animals. If I come back, I would stay at one of the 2-3 lodges inside the park. You're not allowed to stray from the lodge, but even just hanging out in the parking lot or right behind the lodge – at least you're right in the protected forest. That's not to take from the charm and amazing views of our own lodge – Haven Lodge. One last note about Buhoma – even though it's the most popular sector of Bwindi, definitely doesn't make it any less interesting or biodiverse. In fact, being right on the border with the DRC, it probably has the highest biodiversity of Bwindi, but the strict prohibition on night activities really puts a damper on the possibility to see rare animals, especially by the river.

Day 11 – Buhoma to Ruhija

Today was Gorilla Tracking day!

Well, we had originally intended to track gorillas in Ruhija but Harriet told us that Buhoma is better: it's the oldest, the most well-structured and in her opinion – the best. During the briefing, I spotted some red-tailed monkeys far in the distance.

Having been told that the gorillas were right near the river, Harriet scheduled us with the “easy” gorilla group (along with some elderly participants) so that we would be back for breakfast and then try hiking the waterfall trail in search of duikers. Well, the gorillas managed to move up further onto the steep mountainside, and what was supposed to be a quick and easy hike ended up being an hour and a half intense climb, where we had to stop every few minutes and wait for the elderly trackers. Even for Alex and I this was a challenging exercise. But being in-shape and far ahead of the group gave us the advantage of a few extra minutes with the Silverback before the rest of the group arrived.



All-in-all, this experience was truly magical and surreal, as we were surrounded by several **Mountain gorillas** ranging from the giant silverback only a few meters from myself, to the tiny baby that was playing almost at my feet, climbing after his brother, and being pushed back to the ground which was adorably hilarious. This was truly such an experience, but I do recall my experience back in the C.A.R with the lowland gorillas which was more powerful/emotional for me – perhaps because it was my first, or perhaps because it was just



Luke and I plus a tracker and a guide, with all the distance rules being more strictly enforced – whereas here Alex and I were with an entourage of about 15-17 people including trackers, guides, porters



and a total of 8 visitors. But this is no less amazing, as I was physically closer to the gorillas here, and got to observe their unobstructed behavior for slightly over an hour.

Greatly satisfied, we hiked back down to the visitor center, but by the time we arrived it was after 11:30. This resulted in us taking out our breakfast and eating it along the trail while watching some more L'hoest's monkeys. These were seen throughout the morning and for the rest of the time at Bwindi. We only hiked about a third of the trail, and saw no duikers.

The plan was to hang out at the lodge until after lunch, and then start heading to “the Neck” of Bwindi in the afternoon, which is something Harriet suggested. The idea is that people generally bird-watch “the neck” but nobody ever mammal-watches it around dusk or night time, so it would be interesting. Plus there is a nice wide stream that runs through it, and Harriet suggested it might be our next place to look for giant otter shrews. That sounded like a good plan for us!

On the way out of Buhoma, Harriet hooked us up with a local who had a bat roost in his yard, and while it started to rain anyway, there was nothing better to do than check out some bats. We ended up seeing two species, both which we had seen previously: Ethiopian epauletted fruit bats and Angolan Rousettes.

Before continuing to “the Neck”, Harriet got word of some supposed cane rats which hang out on a farm just a little out of our way. Luckily, the rain was stopping as we took the detour to see the rats. These actually turned out to be **African Root Rat**, otherwise known as **East African Mole Rat**. Harriet is trying to promote awareness and conservation even among rats, since the kids catch them and unfortunately eat them. We made damn-sure our rat was let burrow back its way to safety. But just our presence, our small contribution, and a video we made after having seen the animal, is all material for Harriet to promote ecotourism instead of local hunting.



Down at the neck, we tried to find the best angle from the bridge to the river. The problem was, again, the lack of entry points or shallow sand bars. But we were hopeful to catch something swimming through. As it got dark, Alex, Sam and Joel went to look for bats, and I saw a large-ish animal in my thermal scope far in the distance behind the sharp turn in the river. But I wouldn't be able to see it with a flashlight as it was quite far. I saw it once going from right to left, supposedly to drink in the river, and then the same shape going back from left to right. From the size of it, it could be a duiker... or a golden cat.. who knows.

When Alex came back, we sat down and waited with the lights off, looking only through the thermal. We did see an animal hanging out on the left side of the river from the bridge and were sure it would be our otter shrew. But upon switching the light on, we realized it was far, and it had become too foggy to see this far out. The thermal signature disappeared, probably to the shore. Then we saw another thermal signature in the same place. It could be the same animal, or not, but this time we saw it swimming across to the right, and then back to the left. From its behavior, I concluded it must be a bird, because it was swimming across the stream and not down it, and it swam at the surface and not in-and-out as otters or otter shrews would. Alex and I discussed whether it was the same animal both times. My best guess is that they were the same, and that it was a bird. So with that, we left the neck and started to spotlight and thermal-scope our way to Ruhija. But our night was only beginning!

On the way to Ruhija, which runs alongside villages on one side and pristine forest on the other, we first came across a carnivore down a valley from the road. I had clearly ID'ed it as a side-striped jackal as soon as we spotted it, but just for the small chance it was something cooler, we spent a good 15-20 minutes trying to re-locate it as it came in-and-out of view until Alex finally got some clear pictures of it, confirming my original ID. I could tell Harriet thought it would be our cat, as she was getting pretty anxious and very excited. But alas, it was just a jackal.

Later on, we spot-lit a melanistic rusty-spotted genet, which was really cool because it looked very marten-like, as it hopped across the road and onto the rocks before heading into the forest. This was especially funny because I had just asked Alex if there was anything marten-like in Uganda, as we discussed my fondness to mustelids.

As the night continued, we spotted several **Thomas's Galagos** and a couple Demidoff's galagos, and an **African Civet** crossing the road, before finally reaching our last accommodation for the trip – Trackers Tavern Cottages. I'll just note that being the 3rd night after full moon, the first couple of hours after sunset were particularly dark, during which all of these animals came out. We had seen 5 different species, and many individuals (particularly galagos) in just a few hours, including one prolonged and relaxed Thomas's galago



Both photos ©Alex Meyer

which posed for some decent photos. The only other thing to note was another rodent I thermal-spotted in the grass at the roadside near one of the villages we passed by. Joel got out to try to get it out of the vegetation into view, but we never got to identify it.



Thomas's Galago. Middle Picture ©Alex Meyer

At Trackers Tavern Lodge, at 2300 meters ASL, it gets COLD at night! Luckily, and amazingly, they have the best fireplace suitable for the occasion, and upon my wish, our dinner table was set up right by it. This was everything I could ask for at that time. A nice cold beer next to the fireplace was the perfect way to end this day – another beautiful day in Uganda.

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Day 12 & 13 – Ruhija

I combined these two days because we spent both days driving up&down the road in Ruhija looking for basically duikers and golden cats. From the stories we heard, golden cats can be active any time of the day, and the papers support this hypothesis as I mentioned in my Golden Cat note.

Ruhija is a beautiful forest high in the Bwindi mountains, with little traffic, especially at night. There is a gate on both ends of the road, but if you have a good reason, you can be let in or out any

time because this is a public road. If you're purposely inside the park after dark, stay far enough from either entrance, and then when you're finished, just say you came from Entebbe or something. Of course in our case, Harriet took care of all of it, and we never had to deal with the logistics.

On both days we saw 1 **black-fronted duiker**, around the same place both times, several **Carruther's Mountain squirrels** throughout the day, and at least 1 Rwenzori sun squirrel. L'hoest's monkeys were the most common along the road, with the occasional blue monkey. Birdwise, we saw *Grey-throated barbets*, *regal* and *Rwenzori double-collared sunbirds*, *Rwenzori* and *chinspot batis*, *black-billed turaco*, *mountain oriole*, *black-billed weaver*, *Handsome francolin* and others.



On the 13th day we started the day with a hike guided by the park



rangers, to find duikers and a golden cat but the trail was too muddy, narrow and dense to see anything. They did show us some birds including the *white-headed wood hoopoe*, *mountain orioles* and *black-billed turaco* but mammal-wise we only saw squirrels. The other goal of this hike was the Grauer's Broadbill, but we didn't see it,

nor did we put our full-dedication to it, having wanted to see yellow-backed duiker and of course the cat.

On one of the afternoon we stopped at a roadside ditch which has a secret cave, where Alex photographed the apparently rare, regionally endemic **Rwenzori horseshoe bats**.

At night on the 12th we saw more Thomas's and Demidoff's galagos than we could ever hope for, and another genet crossing the road – probably blotched genet again.

On the 13th and final night of the trip, Alex didn't feel well (most likely altitude sickness) and I went on a night drive with Sam and Joel only. Sam suggested we drive back the opposite way from the park, through the road that has forest on one side and villages on the other. This is the road we came through, 2 nights ago. We saw 4-5 African Civets throughout the evening (but my damn camera



©Alex Meyer



wouldn't focus on any, as they crossed the road).

We also came across some of the usual galagos but didn't stop to identify them. As we were turning back around, I thermal-spotted a rodent in the vegetation on the roadside cliff. After almost dismissing it as another unidentifiable rat, we noticed it had a bushy tail. Joel called out "galago!", but I knew it wouldn't be one. Sam was on a mission to find it. It was just a couple of meters above the

road, so Sam grabbed a long branch to move the vegetation it was hiding behind to expose it. After a few attempts, a **Woodland dormouse** jumped down on the road. It wasn't particularly fast-moving. It climbed up a thin leaf on the side of the road, and when it got to the top, the leaf couldn't support its weight and buckled over, placing the dormouse back on the road. This all happened within a few inches from me, and yet my stupid camera wouldn't focus! I literally could have grabbed it, posed for a picture with it, and then re-released it. But instead, we just let it go, as it climbed back up the roadside cliff and disappeared. I was so excited because I thought this was my first dormouse, not realizing I had actually seen another one earlier on, until reviewing the photos.

Still excited about the dormouse, I thermal-spotted an (**Eastern**) **Potto**, which would be the 20th primate for the trip! This is pretty spectacular considering this is all in a single country, and only on a rather narrow strip at the Western edge of it. My camera wasn't focusing again for a picture, so I just tried shooting a video before it disappeared into the thick vegetation. It worked. Phew.



Day 14 – Back to Entebbe

The plan was to wake up around 3:00 and drive pre-dawn through the forest as we start our journey back to Entebbe. We entered the park around 3:30am, and took about an hour and a half to get through the road, without seeing a single animal. I can only attribute it to 2 things: moon schedule again (bright early mornings after a full moon), and how freaking cold it was.

I had already accepted Potto as the final mammal of the trip, but after breakfast we were a bit ahead of schedule, so Harriet decided to make a quick detour to Lake Mburu National Park. This is the only park in Western Uganda which has **zebras**, **impalas** and **eland**s, all which we easily found in the little time we spent there. We also had a nice sighting of a male bushbuck and vervet monkeys, which (again) are supposedly different from the Tantulus monkeys seen elsewhere on the trip. Right before getting back out on the main road, we finally got a decent picture of a striped ground squirrel. This would close our mammal list for the trip at roughly 79 which is the most I have ever seen on a single trip.

According to Harriet, a night in Lake Mburu would pretty much guarantee a Brown greater galago, and also a bushpig, which I still need to see!





We had lunch at the Equator and took some pictures, but the day was again, not over!



Throughout the entire trip, Alex had been in contact with Tom from the CTC conservation center, about visiting and observing their golden cats. In my original report, I wrote about the CTC and posted a link. But then people commented about the CTC owner's shady history with animal trafficking. Consequently, I did some research, and found out that indeed, this place, which presented itself as a conservation and education center about golden cats and other interesting animals, may be a 'technically-legal-but-not-ethical' business, to say the least. Of course I do not condone any activity which unethically removes wild animals from their habitat for any reason. I won't get into it much further because I don't know the fine details, nor have I read the owner's previous convictions with animal trafficking. I do know it's legal, and I know some of his workers are actual conservation activists, but I advise anyone who intends to visit this place to do their own research and decide if they morally and ethically agree with it before visiting. At least we didn't pay money, so we didn't support it financially. I still want to share what I learned about golden cats in the next few paragraphs:

I hadn't realized golden cats are so different in their behavior than other similar-sized cats like servals: the serval rubbed up against me like a house cat, while our first golden cat nearly pounced on me before I even saw it, and clearly did not want anything to do with me. Both cat species were wild-born – it's just that golden cats are more ferocious. The entire time we were inside the enclosure, whenever we ran out of meat (this was their feeding time) the cat would hiss and look at us like our flesh was going to be eaten next. Fascinatingly unpleasant animals – and seriously awesome.



One interesting thing to note is that they had several different color variations of golden cats including grayish and golden. Apparently, the color variations correlate with altitude or region where they're found, with Bwindi generally having darker cats.

After the CTC we made our way to the airport where we sadly had to say our goodbyes to Harriet, Sam and Joel, all of which I truly hope to meet again in the future. I can't express how grateful I am for this enriching experience I had in Uganda. And then I also had to part ways from my roommate for the past 2 weeks – Alex,

which was also sad. Alex, of course, was excited as he was heading over to Kenya to continue his mammal watching adventure – and he did very well there! Stay tuned for his report. I continued to Rwanda where I was only meant to spend 2 nights, but ended up there for 2 more nights because of COVID-related airport closures.

To sum up Uganda:

It's an amazing country, with so much wildlife! I think I want my main message to be "Uganda is not only about primates!" but with that said, we saw 20 fucking primate species in 14 days, so primates are pretty dominant... But there is so much more to find! In fact, just 2 weeks after we left Bwindi, a white-bellied pangolin was caught and released in the village.

Primate-wise, we almost cleared out ALL the species that occur in Uganda, but adding a night in Lake Mburo supposedly would guarantee the brown greater galago, and a day in Mgahinga gorilla park would add the golden monkey, which some consider a species.

Missed species included bush pig, which are supposedly guaranteed in Lake Mburo (Ask Harriet where to stay), the uncommonly-seen yellow-backed duiker in Ruhija and of course the potential Pousargue's mongoose in Semliki Safari Lodge, though I'm still not sure how reliable it is. Other than giant pangolin, golden cat and otter shrew, I think our only notable dip was actually a serval, which should be findable in Ishasha at night. Serval, along with Caracal, continues to elude me (in life, not in Uganda).

Speaking of caracals, a trip to Kidepo valley may be worth it for someone who wants to cram the entire African Safari experience into Uganda, as they have cheetahs and caracals there, along with most of the regular savannah species. But Kidepo is far and completely disconnected from all the other parks, as it's in the North-Eastern corner of Uganda.

White Rhinos are trackable in the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, not far from Murchison Falls, and I think they will eventually be reintroduced to Murchison.

The last 2 places I want to mention are: Budongo Forest and Rwenzori Mountains National Park. Budongo is yet another isthmus of Congolese forest into Uganda, with chimps frequently seen just by chance, and checkered elephant shrews among other animals. These are all also found in Semliki, so I'm not sure whether one is better than the other for any particular species. Budongo's famous Royal Mile does have a wide road, which could be a huge benefit in seeing, identifying, and photographing animals, and it would be interesting to see what mammal watchers could find there at night. There is no accommodation though, so I think camping would be the only option.

Finally, Rwenzori Mountains is another gem to be explored, with tons of regional endemics including the Rwenzori otter shrew and the Rwenzori subspecies of black-fronted duiker.

Bat identifications are thanks to Alex, in conjunction with Ugandan bat expert Waswa Sadic Babyesiza (Msc Zoology Makerere University; Phd Fellow Sokoine University Tanzania). This guy is clearly the bat expert in Uganda, having identified all our bats with no questions, and who also pointed out bat locations for Alex, in advance. He would be happy to help any mammal watchers interested in bats in Uganda, and his email address is: waswasadic@gmail.com.

Appendix – 1 day in Nyungwe:

Due to COVID-related airport closures I found myself spending 2 extra nights in Kigali, so I just took the first available guide to Nyungwe on a 12-hour notice. If I had time to plan, I may have had a better guide. While not a mammal watching guide in any way, I can't complain about the logistics – he arranged everything well. He did initially place me in a shithole for the night, but I wanted a hot water shower and wifi, so he upgraded me to the beautiful Nyungwe Nziza Ecolodge at no extra cost.

I will make this brief: Nyungwe needs to be explored – it's a beautiful and megadiverse park!

I was picked up around 5:00 and by 7:30 we were already at the Eastern entrance of the park, with lush mountainous rainforest on both sides of the road. We saw baboons, L'hoest's monkeys and a black-fronted duiker on the drive in, toward the Uwinka Visitor Center, where I asked to see Angolan Colobus. This was my only real target for the day, as I have seen literally every other primate there. But they informed us we would have to drive to the Western entrance of the park, to the Gisakura visitor center. They were right. We drove another hour or so through this beautiful park to Gisakura visitor center. After checking in and showing our



negative COVID test, we met the guide who would show me the monkeys. Before that, right at the visitor center I also saw a Carruther's mountain squirrel on the ground and several species of sunbirds including mostly *Rwenzori double-collared* and *Variable sunbirds*.

It wasn't an easy hike, and it had rained all morning. So everything was wet and muddy. We stayed outside of the forest in the tea plantations as we tried to find the colobus trackers. Eventually we found the trackers, and later we were taken to see the actual monkeys. Finally, around 11:30 or so we were right among the **Angolan Colobus** which is a species I had been wanting to see! I can't say my experience was super positive, but I was satisfied.



Back at the visitor Center, a guy walked in, who seemed to know his shit: his name is Kenny Babilon and his number is +27781310220. He is the operations manager for Nyungwe – apparently the park is undergoing some changes, and this guy is in charge of the infrastructure, including implementation of night hikes in the next few months. He knew the mammals, birds and reptiles, and I asked him a ton of questions which he seemed to know all the answers to. If I ever go back to Nyungwe I will certainly give him a call.

As it was already lunch time after our Colobus expedition, I was taken to some guest house for

lunch, and was told I have a birdwatching session back on the other side of the park, at Uwinka Visitor Center so we had to start driving soon after lunch. On the way there we saw yet another black-fronted duiker, and L'hoest's monkeys.

The bird-watching session was nice, and we saw more Boehm's squirrels and a Blue Monkey, as well as my first *Rwenzori Turaco* which I had wanted to see, more *Regal sunbirds*, *Rwenzori batis* and other local specialties. At the very end of the hike we came across more L'hoest's monkeys on the road, and a final Carruther's mountain squirrel near the visitor center.



With the curfew in place, I just had the tour operator (Peter) drive slow so that we could see if something crosses the road. We did see a 3rd black-fronted duiker, and a large raptor eating something on the road, but nothing else of note. At night I was already exhausted, and together with the curfew I made no attempt to go thermal-scoping or spotlighting. Instead I sat around the bonfire, had spaghetti Bolognese and a beer with a random German guy who was there.



List of mammal species seen (lifers in bold):

									Bwindi			
	Common Name	Scientific name	Entebbe/ Mabamba	Murchison	Toro- Semliki	Semuliki NP	Kibale	Queen Elizabeth	Buhoma	Ruhija	Lake Mburo	Nyungwe
1	African Bush Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>		X				X				
2	(Eastern) Potto	<i>Perodicticus potto (ibeanus)</i>								X		
3	Spectacled Galago	<i>Galago matschiei</i>				X	X			X		
4	Senegal Bushbaby	<i>Galago senegalensis</i>		X								
5	Thomas's Bushbaby	<i>Galagoidese thomasi</i>								X		
6	Prince Demidoff's bushbaby	<i>Galagoides demidovii</i>					X			X		
7	Patas Monkey	<i>Erythrocebus patas</i>		X								
8	Vervet Monkey	<i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i>					X				X	
9	Tantulus monkey	<i>Chlorocebus tantalus</i>	X	X	X			X				
10	Red-tailed Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus ascanius</i>				X	X		X			
11	L'Hoest's Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus lhoesti</i>					X		X	X		X
12	Blue Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus mitis</i>				X	X			X		X
13	De Brazza's Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus neglectus</i>				X						
14	Dent's Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus denti</i>				X						
15	Uganda Crested Mangabey	<i>Lophocebus ugandae</i>				X	X					
16	Olive Baboon	<i>Papio anubis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Rwanda	Angola Colobus	<i>Colobus angolensis</i>										X
17	Mantled Guereza	<i>Colobus guereza</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
18	Semliki Red Colobus	<i>Piliocolobus semlikiensis</i>				X						
19	Ashy Red Colobus	<i>Piliocolobus tephrosceles</i>					X					
20	Eastern Gorilla	<i>Gorilla beringei</i>							X			
21	Common chimpanzee	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>					X					
22	East African Mole Rat	<i>Tachyoryctes splendens</i>							X			

23	Lord Derby's Anomalure	<i>Anomalurus derbianus</i>				X						
24	Striped ground squirrel	<i>Xerus erythropus</i>		X							X	
25	Carruther's Mountain Squirrel	<i>Funisciurus carruthersi</i>								X		X
26	Red-legged Sun Squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus rufobrachium</i>				X			?			
27	Ruwenzori Sun Squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus ruwenzorii</i>							X	X		X
28	Alexander's bush squirrel	<i>Paraxerus alexandri</i>				X						
29	Boehm's bush squirrel	<i>Paraxerus boehmi</i>				X	X		X	X		X
30	Noack's dormouse	<i>Graphiurus microtis</i>		X								
31	Woodland dormouse	<i>Graphiurus murinus</i>								X		
*32	Gray climbing Mouse	<i>Dendromus melanotis</i>						X				
33	Link Rat	<i>Deomys ferrugineus</i>				X						
34	Kemp's gerbil	<i>Tetera kempii</i>		X								
**35	Striped grass mouse sp.	<i>Lemniscomys sp.</i>						X				
36	Bunyoro Rabbit	<i>Poelagus marjorita</i>		X								
37	African Savanna hare	<i>Lepus microtis</i>		X				X				
38	Ethiopian epauletted fruit bat	<i>Epomophorus labiatus</i>	X						X			
39	Wahlberg's epauletted fruit bat	<i>Epomophorus wahlbergi</i>				X	X					
40	Franquet's epauletted fruit bat	<i>Epomops franqueti</i>					X			X		
41	Hammer-headed bat	<i>Hypsignathus monstrosus</i>				X						
42	Angolan rousette	<i>Lyssonycteris angolensis</i>					X		X			
43	Egyptian Fruit bat	<i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i>						X				
44	Angolan free-tailed Bat	<i>Mops condylurus</i>						X				

45	Mauritian tomb bat	<i>Taphozous mauritanus</i>		X		X						
46	Yellow-winged bat	<i>Lavia frons</i>		X				X				
47	Ruwenzori horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus ruwenzorii</i>								X		
48	Aba roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros abae</i>			X							
49	Sundevall's roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros caffer</i>		X								
50	Noack's roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros ruber</i>		X								
51	Doryhina Leaf-nosed Bat	<i>Doryrhina camerunensis</i>				X						
52	Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>		X				X				
53	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>		X				X				
54	African Civet	<i>Civettictis civetta</i>								X		
55	Rusty-spotted Genet	<i>Genetta maculata</i>		X	X			X		X		
56	African Palm Civet	<i>Nandinia binotata</i>					X					
57	Marsh Mongoose	<i>Atilax paludinosus</i>					X					
58	Egyptian Mongoose	<i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>					X	X				
59	White-tailed Mongoose	<i>Ichneumia albicauda</i>		X	X							
60	Banded mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>		X								
61	Spotted Hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>		X				X				
62	Side-striped Jackal	<i>Lupulella adusta</i>		X						X		
63	Spotted-necked otter	<i>Hydrictis maculicollis</i>					X					
64	Plains Zebra	<i>Equus quagga</i>									X	
65	Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>		X				X				
66	Giant Forest Hog	<i>Hylochoerus meinertzhageni</i>						X				
67	Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>		X				X				
68	Rothchild's Giraffe	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i>		X								
69	Jackson's Hartebeest	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>		X								
70	Topi	<i>Damaliscus lunatus</i>						X				
71	Oribi	<i>Ourebia ourebi</i>		X								

72	African buffalo	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>		X				X			
73	Common Eland	<i>Tragelaphus oryx</i>								X	
74	Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>						X		X	
75	Black-fronted duiker	<i>Cephalophus nigrifrons</i>							X		X
***P.	Weyn's Duiker	<i>Cephalophus weynsi</i>					Th/H		S		
76	Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>								X	
77	Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>		X				X		X	
78	Kob	<i>Kobus kob</i>		X				X			

* Gray climbing mouse is not 100% confirmed but is the best I could do with the videos and pictures I took

** Striped Grass Mouse only identified to genus level based on Alex's account. Only 2 species occur in QENP: *striatus* and *macculus*.

*** Weyn's Duiker was possibly seen by us in the thermal scope in Kibale, then only by Harriet Kibale, then by Sam in Buhoma. Missed by us.

Notable birds seen:

- *Hartlaub's duck – an apparently very rare species in Uganda
- *Yellow-billed duck
- *Helmeted guineafowl – only seen at night (Bwindi and Semliki)
- *Crested guineafowl
- *Handsome francolin
- *Crested francolin
- *Tambourine dove
- *African green pigeon
- *Great blue turaco
- *Black-billed turaco
- *Rwenzori turaco – only in Nyungwe
- *Ross's turaco
- *Eastern plantain-eater
- *Blue-headed coucal
- *White-browed coucal
- *Nkulengu rail – our guides were so excited we saw this one in Semliki
- *Black crane
- *Gray-crowned crane
- *African jacana



- *Wood sandpiper
- *African openbill
- *Saddle-billed stork
- *Shoebill – the most notable bird in Uganda
- *Hamerkop
- *Palm-nut vulture
- *White-backed vulture
- *Ruppell's griffon
- *Bateleur
- *Martial Eagle
- *Long-crested eagle
- **Other eagles, buzzards, harriers and kites – ???
- *Barn owl
- *Grayish eagle-owl
- *Verraux's eagle-owl
- *Narina trogon
- *White-headed woodhoopoe
- *Abyssinian ground-hornbill
- *Crowned hornbill



- *African pied hornbill
- *African gray hornbill
- *White-crested hornbill
- *Black-casqued wattled hornbill
- *Black-and-white casqued hornbill
- *Piping hornbill
- *Shining-blue kingfisher
- *Malachite kingfisher
- *White-bellied kingfisher
- *Chocolate-backed kingfisher
- *Woodland kingfisher
- *Giant kingfisher
- *Pied kingfisher
- *Red-throated kingfisher
- *Cinnamon-chested bee-eater
- *White-throated bee-eater
- *Blue-cheeked bee-eater
- *Northern carmine bee-eater
- *Broad-billed bee-eater
- *Gray-throated barbet
- **1-2 tinkerbirds (I don't remember which species)
- *White-headed barbet
- *Double-toothed barbet
- *Speckle-breasted woodpecker
- *Nubian woodpecker
- *African gray parrot
- *Green-breasted pitta

- *Mountain oriole
- *Rwenzori batis
- *Chinspot batis
- *Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher
- *Black-headed gonolek
- *African paradise flycatcher
- *African blue flycatcher
- *Violet-backed Starling
- *Snowy-crowned robin-chat
- *White-browed robin-chat
- *Green-throated sunbird
- *Scarlet-chested sunbird
- *Rwenzori double-collared sunbird
- *Northern double-collared sunbird
- *Variable Sunbird
- *Regal sunbird
- *Red-chested sunbird
- *Superb sunbird
- *Black-billed weaver
- *Strange weaver
- *Red-cheeked cordonbleu
- *Red-billed firefinch
- *Black-capped waxbill – Nyungwe
- **One of the twinspace species
- *Black-and-white mannikin
- *Pin-tailed whydah



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The Crew in Semliki: Sam, Moses, Myself, Alex, Sham and Guide-Alex