ROCKJUMPER
Worldwide Birding Adventures

Kenya

Mega Birding Tour I

15th March to 9th April 2023 (26 days)



Sokoke Scops Owl by Rich Lindie

This tour is the ultimate African birding and wildlife adventure: in twenty-six days of non-stop birding, we hope to see between 750 and 800 bird species, plus an incredible diversity of wildlife, superb scenery, wonderful lodges and tented camps, and super-friendly Kenyans.

Our tour begins with an exploration of the lush Shimba Hills and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Here we will endeavor to find some of the rarest birds in Africa, including the diminutive Sokoke Scops Owl, Sokoke Pipit, Green-headed Oriole, Amani Sunbird and Clarke's Weaver. We then travel through both Tsavo West and East Parks, offering excellent game viewing and a huge bird list. The isolated Taita Hills, with its critically endangered species, will no doubt be memorable, and we'll search all elevations of the Aberdare's and Mount Kenya's slopes for avian gems such as Jackson's Francolin, Bar-tailed Trogon, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, localized Hinde's Babbler and Abyssinian Ground Thrush. We then enter the true arid zone at Samburu-Shaba, where highlights should include Golden-breasted Starling, Vulturine Guineafowl, Williams's Lark, Somali Bee-eater and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse. The dry

woodlands of Lake Baringo are home to Jackson's Hornbill, Northern Masked Weaver and Somali Sparrow, while the famous Kakamega forest adds a plethora of forest specials with Blue-headed Bee-eater. Turner's Eremomela, Chapin's Flycatcher, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye being notable targets. After exploring the papyrus swamps and moist woodlands along Lake Victoria, we finally enter the plains to visit arguably the most famous game reserve in the world, the fabulous Maasai Mara!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Nairobi to Shimba Hills**
Day 2	**Shimba Hills to Watamu Bay via Mida Creek**
Day 3	**Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Sabaki River Mouth**
Day 4	**Watamu Bay to Tsavo East National Park**
Day 5	**Tsavo East to Tsavo West via the Taita Hills**
Day 6	**Tsavo West**
Day 7	**Tsavo West NP to Thika**
Day 8	**Thika to Mt. Kenya**
Day 9	**Mt. Kenya to Meru NP**
Day 10	**Meru NP**
Day 11	**Meru NP to Samburu**
Day 12	**Samburu and Shaba National Reserves**
Day 13	**Shaba to Aberdares NP**
Day 14	**Aberdares NP to Soysambu Conservancy via Kinangop**
Day 15	**Soysambu Conservancy to Lake Baringo**
Day 16	**Lake Baringo**
Day 17	**Lake Baringo to Kitale**
Day 18	**Kitale and Kongelai**
Day 19	**Kitale to Kakamega Forest**
Day 20	**Kakamega Forest**
Day 21	**Kakamega to Busia**
Day 22	**Busia to Kisumu**
Day 23	**Kisumu to the Maasai Mara**
Day 24 & 25	**Maasai Mara**
Day 26	**Maasai Mara to Nairobi and departure**

TOUR MAP:


Kongelai
Kitale
Busia
Lake Baringo
Samburu
Kakamega
Meru NP
Kisumu
Mt. Kenya
Soysambu Conservancy
Kinangop
Aberdare NP
Thika
Nairobi
Maasai Mara
Tsavo East
Tsavo West
Taita Hills
Arabuko Sokoke & Watamu
Shimba Hills
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Google Earth

THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Hartlaub's Turaco by Markus Lilje

Day 1: Nairobi to Shimba Hills. After arrival at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, you will be met by your Rockjumper leader. From here we will board a connecting flight to Mombasa where we will meet-up with our local driver/guide and enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant. Thereafter we begin our mega birding tour in earnest as we drive to the nearby Shimba Hills Lodge. Our lodge is perfectly situated for easy access to the beautiful Shimba Hills National Park. This reserve protects a large tract of coastal forest and grasslands and was primarily created to save the endangered and beautiful Sable Antelope, and this is the only site in Kenya where this creature is still found. Special birds that we will be searching for in this park and around the productive grounds of our lodge include flocks of top-knotted Crested Guineafowl, Red-necked Spurfowl, the lovely Fischer's Turaco, striking Green-headed Oriole, Mottled and African Palm Swifts, Black-collared, Brown-breasted (rare) and Green Barbets, Green Tinkerbird, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, East Coast Boubou, Little Yellow Flycatcher, Yellow-throated and Pangani Longclaws, Plain-backed Sunbird and Golden Palm Weaver.

Day 2: Shimba Hills to Watamu Bay via Mida Creek. After early morning birding around the Shimba Hills Reserve we will travel to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest via Mida Creek. Mida Creek is probably most famous as one of the best locations to see Crab-plover. This unique species, placed in its own monotypic family, is often seen here in good numbers while many other waders are often present as well. During the afternoon we will move across to Arabuko-Sokoke Forest for an initial exploration. This protected reserve covers 420 square kilometers of coastal forest consisting of *Brachystegia* woodland, dense *Cynometra* forest and *Afzelia* lowland forest that offers some of the finest birding in East Africa. Birding in the forest can be difficult and perseverance is required to find the shyer forest inhabitants.

Skulkers such as the near-endemic Sokoke Pipit creep across the forest floor and are hard to see amongst the leaf-litter. The delicate East Coast Akalat is a shy understory skulker and other key species include the endemic and little-known Clarke's Weaver, almost totally restricted to this site, and the extremely localized Amani Sunbird. Our local guide keeps track of day roosts of the near endemic Sokoke Scops Owl and seeing a pair of these charming little fellows is undoubtedly one of the highlights of birding in this forest. Both grey and rufous morphs occur and pairs often consist of each of these totally different looking birds. If we don't find the owls at home we will stay after dark and wait for them



East Coast Akalat by Hugh Chittenden



Red-throated Twinspot by Markus Lilje

to call. The evening sounds are exciting and we may encounter African Wood Owl, African Barred Owlet (the disjunctive local form sometimes split off as Sheffler's Owlet), Fiery-necked Nightjar and several species of bats and galago's.

Day 3: Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Sabaki River Mouth. Our early morning birding will be a return visit to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Whilst exploring the network of trails in the forest, we will look for mixed bird flocks. Some of the species found in these aggregations may include Green Malkoha, the highly sought-after Thick-billed Cuckoo, Fischer's Turaco, Narina Trogon, Mombasa Woodpecker, Scaly-throated and Pallid Honeyguides, Sombre, Fischer's and Lowland Tiny Greenbuls, the delightful Little Yellow Flycatcher, Black-headed Apalis, Eastern Nicator, Bearded Scrub Robin, Red-tailed Rufous Thrush, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Pale and Forest Batis, Retz's and Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrikes, the attractive Four-colored Bushshrike and the uncommon Plain-backed Sunbird. Dead trees are favorite perches of many bird species and definitely worth checking for Green Tinkerbird, White-eared and Green Barbets, and raptors including Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle and Black and Little Sparrowhawks. Flocks of strange Böhm's Spinetail and Ethiopian Swallow may be seen winging their way over the forest while the scarce Forbe's-Watson's Swift is another species to watch out for. Along the forest edge we may find the beautiful Red-throated Twinspot and flocks of Red-backed Mannikin feeding amongst the grass seeds. The localized Scaly Babbler also occurs outside the forest.

Mammals we hope to see include Blue or Gentle Monkey, the diminutive Blue Duiker and the giant Golden-rumped Elephant-Shrew, a truly impressive creature. Our next port of call will be the Sabaki River mouth, an excellent birding site where we will be looking for Sooty, Lesser Black-backed and Grey-headed Gulls, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Sandwich, Roseate and Saunders's Terns, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Terek Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and a variety of other waders. In the surrounding reedbeds, Golden Palm Weaver, Zanzibar Red and very occasionally Fire-fronted Bishops may stand out like blossoms while the nearby grazed grasslands support the range restricted Malindi Pipit. Other species that occasionally turn up in the surrounding Sabaki woodlands and scrub include the little-known Violet-breasted Sunbird, Eastern Black-headed Batis and Scaly Babbler.



Taita Thrush by Paul Ellis

We will likely also take some time to visit the nearby Arabuko Swamp which has also



Taveta Weaver by Markus Lilje

produced Malindi Pipit over the past few years. Water levels can fluctuate at the swamp, but conditions are usually conducive to holding specials like White-backed Duck and African Pygmy Goose while Coastal Cisticola can be found in the adjacent grassy areas. We will also keep our eyes open for rarer species such as Black Coucal and Dwarf Bittern which turn up when conditions are suitable.

Day 4: Watamu Bay to Tsavo East National Park. After a final early morning birding session in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, we will depart with lunch boxes for Tsavo East NP. Checking large Baobab trees along the way could produce sightings of both Broad-billed Roller and occasionally Brown-headed Parrot. The roadside offers great birding, as well as a chance to see Swahili women in their traditional regalia. Raptors are also a feature and we will look for Egyptian, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed, Rüppell's and Lappet-faced Vultures, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, African Hawk-Eagle, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, migrating Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, the majestic Bateleur, Pygmy Falcon and Eurasian Hobby. Other potential ticks include Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Little, White-throated, Blue-cheeked, Olive, European and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Lilac-breasted, Purple and European Rollers, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern Red-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbills, Nubian, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, D'Arnaud's, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Red-winged and Flappet Larks, and Chestnut-headed and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks. Tonight, we will stay in the Voi area on the western edge of Tsavo East where species such as Western Barn Owl and Nubian and Slender-tailed Nightjars are sometimes seen.

Day 5: Tsavo East to Tsavo West via the Taita Hills. After an early breakfast, we embark on a morning game drive towards the Taita Hills-Ngangao Forest. Mammals will be a feature of our drive and we could see Lion (these descended from the famous "man-eaters of Tsavo"), Cheetah, African Buffalo, Lesser Kudu, Maasai Giraffe and Plains Zebra. The Tsavo complex is home to the largest population of African Elephant in Kenya (said to number over 7000) and a small population of Black Rhinoceros.



Golden-breasted Starling by Matthew Matthiessen

The Taita Hills is a beautiful area and extremely fertile but has suffered massively at the hands of man with most of the native forests cut down. These hills famously harbor three highly endangered endemics, namely Taita Thrush, Taita Apalis and Taita White-eye. Recent



Jackson's Widowbird by Cuan Rush

research has found the apalis to be the species most at risk of extinction as it appears to be completely absent from the largest extant patch of forest in the Taita Range. The entire world population may be less than 100 breeding pairs! Ngangao forest, the patch we visit, holds some of the last pairs of this rare species. The thrush while shy occurs in reasonable numbers but is never easy to find while the white-eye is the most numerous. Other birds that we will be on the lookout for include Augur Buzzard, Mottled and Alpine Swifts, White-necked Raven, Stripe-faced Greenbul, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Striped Pipit, Singing Cisticola and Sharpe's Starling.

Day 6: Tsavo West. Our lodge is situated inside Tsavo West National Park and is perched on the rim of the Ndewe Escarpment, offering a vast panorama of the Tsavo Plains below. This area is well known as a migrant trap and we can expect to enjoy some superb birding on the grounds of the lodge. At certain times of the year, the lights of the hotel attract large numbers of Palaearctic passerines during their nocturnal migration. We will look out for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin, Thrush Nightingale, Northern, Isabelline and Pied Wheatears, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Lesser Grey, Red-backed and Isabelline Shrikes and a bevy of warblers that might include Marsh, Olive-tree, Barred, River, Upcher's and the little-known Basra Reed. We will also take time to visit the shores of Lake Jipe we will look for the localized Taveta Weaver, Zanzibar Red Bishop and African Reed and Lesser Swamp Warblers. We also have a chance of finding the reintroduced Black Rhinoceros in this area.

Game-watching and birding in Tsavo West NP will produce large numbers of new sightings which may include Somali Ostrich, Martial, Tawny and Long-crested Eagles, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Kori, Buff-crested, Black-bellied and Hartlaub's Bustards, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, the rare and localised Friedmann's Lark, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Tiny, Rattling and Winding Cisticolas, Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinias, African Grey, Pale and Spotted Flycatchers, Chinspot, Pygmy and Eastern Black-headed Batis, Rufous and Scaly Chatterers, White-bellied and Acacia Tits, Mouse-colored Penduline Tit, Amethyst, Scarlet-chested, Beautiful, Variable, Collared and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbirds, as well as the localized Tsavo Sunbird, now considered to be a separate species from the closely related Purple-banded Sunbird.



Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater by Cuan Rush

Other likely possibilities include Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Tropical and Slate-colored Boubous, Brubru, Black-backed and Pringle's Puffbacks, Black-crowned, Brown-crowned and Three-streaked Tchagras, Red-naped, Rosy-patched, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, Northern White-crowned Shrike and White-crested



Kikuyu White-eye by Adam Riley

Helmetshrike, Black-headed, African Golden and Eurasian Golden Oriole, both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Oxpeckers perched atop large animals, brilliant Golden-breasted, Greater Blue-eared, Rüppell's, Violet-backed, Magpie, Superb, Hildebrandt's and Fischer's Starlings, Chestnut and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed and Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Village, Lesser and Vitelline Masked, Spectacled, Baglafecht, Chestnut and Red-headed Weavers, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-cheeked and Blue-capped Cordon-bleus, Purple Grenadier, Jameson's Firefinch, Common, Crimson-rumped and Black-cheeked Waxbill, African and Grey-headed Silverbill, Quailfinch, Bronze Mannikin, Long-tailed Paradise and Straw-tailed Whydahs, and Cinnamon-breasted and Somali Buntings. Over 60 species of mammals occur in the park, including the scarce and elusive Lesser Kudu, and we will be treated to an exceptional African birding and big game experience today! Tonight, we have a chance at finding a few of the numerous nightjars that forage around the lodge, and species that we could encounter include Eurasian, Plain, Sombre and Donaldson-Smith's.

Day 7: Tsavo West NP to Thika. This morning we will depart Tsavo West, continuing to look for any species that we may still need. After exiting the reserve, we then head for Nairobi, passing through upland grasslands with open savannah. This area supports a good population of cisticolas and widowbirds including Pectoral-patch, Zitting, Desert, Tiny, Croaking and Ashy Cisticolas and Red-collared, White-winged and Jackson's Widowbirds. Tonight, will be spent in the Thika area on the outskirts of the capital of Kenya, Nairobi. Along the Thika River we may find African Black Duck, Purple-crested Turaco, Mountain Wagtail, the localized Grey-olive Greenbul or the elusive African Finfoot. Other species to look out for in the Thika area include African Green Pigeon, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Northern Pied Babbler, White-headed Barbet, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Black-throated Wattle-eye and Green-headed Sunbird.

Day 8: Thika to Mt. Kenya. After an early morning bird walk and breakfast, we depart for the slopes of Mt. Kenya. We hope to arrive late-morning and will spend the rest of the day exploring the forest around our accommodation. Birds that we will be targeting include the rare and secretive Olive Ibis, endemic Kikuyu White-eye, Black Sparrowhawk, the magnificent Crowned Eagle, African Olive and Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons, Red-fronted Parrot, Scarce Swift, Crowned and Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, beautiful Bar-tailed Trogon, secretive Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo,



Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar by Adam Riley



Aberdare Cisticola by Stratton Hatfield

White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Moustached and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Black Saw-wing, Yellow-whiskered, Slender-billed and Olive-breasted Greenbuls, White-starred Robin, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-throated, Grey and Black-throated Apalises, White-browed Crombec, White-bellied Tit, Grey Cuckooshrike, Waller's Starling, the scarce Abbott's Starling, Brown-capped Weaver, Yellow-bellied and Kandt's Waxbills, the secretive Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Thick-billed Seedeater, Yellow-crowned Canary and, if we are lucky, Oriole Finch. Mammals we may see include the beautiful Sykes' Monkey and Guereza Colobus. At night we should hear the eerie screams of Eastern Tree Hyrax.

Day 9: Mt. Kenya to Meru NP. After an early morning bird walk and breakfast, we depart for Meru NP. En route we will bird through various forests including Chogoria and the Nyambenis. These spectacular forests hold many of the species we targeted on the previous day, but as they are lower altitude and moister, they might produce species like Kenrick's Starling and Orange Ground Thrush. In the evening we will arrive at our tented camp situated perfectly along a well-wooded stream on the edge of Meru NP.

Day 10: Meru NP. Today we will have a full day to explore Meru NP – one of Kenya's forgotten birding gems. The moist woodland that our camp is situated in offers some of the best birding in the area. The Kenyan endemic Hinde's Pied Babbler is remarkably common along the camp's nature trail and a pair of Black-and-white Shrike Flycatchers often breeds in the trees in front of the lounge and bar. The stream running through camp holds African Finfoot, and rarely Pel's Fishing Owl has been recorded. Meru NP is an incredibly diverse landscape. In the west of the park is moist broadleaf woodland and in the east is dry Acacia woodland. Running through the park are several permanent fast flowing streams and the riverine woodland surrounding these offers rewarding birding. Our trip is timed perfectly to coincide with peak migration in Kenya and hopefully the bushes in Meru are dripping with migrants. Mammals in Meru NP are also not poorly represented, and we stand a chance of seeing all the charismatic megafauna that Kenya is famous for, including our best chance for both White and Black Rhino. Meru also has a healthy



Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher by David Hoddinott

population of Naked Mole Rat. This bizarre denizen of the subterranean world will be a trip highlight if we are lucky enough to see one.



Early morning Shaba scenery by Rainer Summers

Day 11: Meru NP to Shaba National Reserve. After a morning bird walk, we will depart for Shaba National Reserve. Along the way, we will stop and target bird on the northern slopes of Mt. trying to pick up any highland species we might have so far missed. By early afternoon we will leave the highlands and start the decent towards Shaba. Along the way you will note the habitat changing dramatically, from rich forest to dry acacia bushveld. Birds, which we will keep our eyes open for, that occur in this habitat include Eastern Chanting and Gabar Goshawks, Spotted Thick-knee, Somali and Three-banded Coursers, Chestnut-bellied, Black-faced and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Red-bellied Parrot, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Rufous Chatterer and Somali Bunting. In the evening we will arrive at the Shaba National Reserve. Tonight, will be spent at another excellent lodge set inside the reserve. This area was made famous by the late Joy Adamson and her lioness Elsa and is often referred to as "Born Free Country". Located on the banks of the Uaso Nyiro River, our lodge offers an unexpected luxury found deep in the African bush.



Vulturine Guineafowl by Markus Lilje

Day 12: Shaba, Samburu, and Buffalo Springs National Reserves. We will spend the entire day exploring the incredible Shaba, Samburu and Buffalo Springs Game Reserves. This area holds a number of north-east African dry country species shared with Ethiopia and Somalia. We will be on the lookout for the implausible Vulturine Guineafowl, Secretarybird, Greater Kestrel, Red-necked and Lanner Falcons, localized White-headed Mousebird, Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Somali Bee-eater, Pygmy Batis, African Bare-eyed Thrush, Pink-breasted, Red-winged and Singing Bush Larks, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Fischer's and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Larks, Acacia Tit, Northern Brownbul, stunning Golden Pipit, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Ashy Cisticola, Grey



William's Lark by Stratton Hatfield

Wren-Warbler, Banded Parisoma, Spotted Palm Thrush, Fischer's and Golden-breasted Starlings, Hunter's, Marico, Shining and Black-bellied Sunbirds, Chestnut Weaver, Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-Weaver, Black-capped Social Weaver and Reichenow's Seedeater. Early in the day we will visit an area where we will search for the extremely range-restricted William's Lark. This species was first discovered in 1955 and still today very little is known.

Mammals that we will be on the lookout for include the bizarre Gerenuk, Beisa Oryx, Grevy's Zebra, Reticulated Giraffe, Lesser Kudu, Klipspringer, Gunther's Dik-dik, Guereza Colobus, Cheetah, Leopard and Lion.

Day 13: Shaba to Aberdares NP. We will depart Shaba NR after an early breakfast and make our way to the northern region of the Aberdares NP. Today will be one of the longest driving days of the tour, but we will take a short detour early in the day to look for Somali Crombec, Yellow-vented Eremomela and Northern Grosbeak Canary. Further on down the road we will make a stop at a quarry to look for the rare Cape Eagle-Owl at a day roost. The race here is sometimes split off as Mackinder's Eagle-Owl.

Our destination for the night is a charming lodge built alongside a natural salt lick deep within the ancient cedar forests of the Aberdares NP.

Day 14: Aberdares NP to Soysambu Conservancy via Kinangop. Our morning in the northern Aberdares will undoubtedly be our coldest of the trip. At dawn we will be journeying to the high elevation moorlands in search of several range restricted and localized species. Our targets for the morning will include the near endemic and recently split Elgon Francolin, the comically tame Jackson's Francolin, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Alpine Chat, Slender-billed Starling, the endemic Aberdare Cisticola, and Red-tufted Sunbird (formerly Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird). Temperatures on our morning walk might dip below freezing and we will near 12000 feet ASL (3650 meters) so those sensitive to



Sharpe's Longclaw by Stratton Hatfield

altitude sickness should bring appropriate medication.



Elgon Francolin by Stratton Hatfield

Late morning, we will descend the mountain and slowly make our way to Soysambu Conservancy on the shores of Lake Elementeita. We will bird enroute on the Kinangop Plateau where we hope to find Lesser Jacana, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, and Sharpe's Longclaw (the last of the Kenyan endemics that we will be targeting on tour). From Kinangop, we will drop down the eastern rim of the Great Rift Valley and arrive in Soysambu Conservancy. Soysambu borders Lake Elementeita, one of the rift valley's famous flamingo filled alkaline lakes. The levels of the blue-green alkaline waters of the lake vary and this, with other accompanying environmental changes, causes considerable variation in the flamingo population. However, when they are present en masse the lake turns a gorgeous rosy pink and the Lesser Flamingos usually form a "pink wall" along the entire length of the lake. Our lovely lodge offers a unique vantage point overlooking this spectacle.

Day 15: Soysambu Conservancy to Lake Baringo. After breakfast, we will enjoy a morning game and bird safari through Soysambu Conservancy. African Buffalo, Plains Zebra, glamorous Rothschild's Giraffe, several antelope species and both Lion and Leopard may be found. Besides the flamingos, other waterbirds abound and we can expect to find good numbers of Great White Pelican, cormorants, egrets, ibis, ducks, African Spoonbill, the regal African Fish Eagle and noisy groups of Pied Kingfisher. Further species we may encounter include Coqui and Hildebrandt's Francolins, White-fronted Bee-eater, Green Wood Hoopoe, Brown Parisoma, Red-rumped and Mosque Swallows, Mocking Cliff Chat, Little Rock Thrush, Abyssinian (Schalow's) Wheatear, Arrow-marked Babbler, the scarce Lynes's Cisticola, Rüppell's Starling and Speke's Weaver.



Rüppell's Starling by Adam Riley

Thereafter we depart for Lake Baringo, set in dry rocky country. Late afternoon will be spent birding the surrounding lake edge, Baringo Cliffs and targeting various owl species. The two most special birds at Lake Baringo both have very small global distributions with Baringo being the most easily accessible place on the planet to find them. These are Jackson's Hornbill and Northern Masked Weaver. Recently Gambaga Flycatcher has been found here as well, a species that is nowhere common. Other species that we will be searching for



Gambaga Flycatcher by Paul Ellis

include Verreaux's and Greyish Eagle-Owls and Northern White-faced and African Scops Owls, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Hemprich's Hornbill, African Black and Nyanza Swifts, Mocking Cliff Chat, the quirky Bristle-crowned Starling, Red-fronted Apalis, Pale White-eye, Fan-tailed Raven, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Black-throated and Spot-flanked Barbets, Pygmy Batis, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, the aptly named Beautiful Sunbird, Little, Village and Golden-backed Weavers, and Yellow-crowned and Northern Red Bishops.

Day 16: Lake Baringo. With more than 470 species of bird recorded in the general Baringo area, we'll spend a full day here targeting any species we may have missed to date.

Day 17: Lake Baringo to Kitale. This morning after breakfast we will depart through the scenic Kerio Valley often lively with bird activity, and up the eastern escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. Birds that we could see along the way include Grey Kestrel, Lizard Buzzard, the stunning White-crested and Ross's Turacos, Green-backed Eremomela, Pale and another chance at finding the rare Gambaga Flycatcher, Silverbird, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Golden-breasted Bunting, Yellow-billed Shrike, Western Black-headed Batis, Boran Cisticola, Double-toothed Barbet and Hemprich's Hornbill. In the afternoon we will climb a newly paved road that charts it way through the Cherangani Mountains. Here we will stop briefly in one of the last known haunts for Spotted Creeper in Kenya. We hope to arrive at our overnight accommodation just outside the town of Kitale at sunset.

Day 18: Kitale and Kanyarkwat. Most of today will be spent exploring the Kongelai escarpment in an area known as Kanyarkwat. This region offers better chances for many of the species we targeted in the scenic Kerio valley, plus opportunities for species like Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Foxy Cisticola, African penduline Tit, Familiar Chat, Lesser Blue-eared Starling, Bronze-tailed Starling, and Stripe-breasted Seedeater. In the evening we will bird around the Keringet Marsh and Dam where we hope to find Hartlaub's Marsh Widowbird, Splendid Starling, and African Water Rail.



Black-crowned Waxbill by Daniel Keith Danckwerts

Day 19: Kitale to Kakamega Forest. After breakfast we head to the famous Kakamega Forest. We expect to arrive at Kakamega Forest around lunch and in the afternoon, we will bird the grounds of the peaceful Rondo Retreat Centre. Kakamega Forest is one of Africa's most famous birding forests and it supports numerous species that can only be found in Central or West Africa.



Black-faced Rufous Warbler by Daniel Danckwerts

Day 20: Kakamega Forest. Today we will enjoy a full day birding through Kakamega Forest. Our targets include Crowned Eagle, Western Banded Snake Eagle, African Goshawk, the secretive White-spotted Flufftail, which we will make a concerted effort to see, Grey Parrot (now rare in Kakamega), the giant Great Blue and Black-billed Turacos, African Emerald and Black Cuckoos, Blue Malkoha, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, the incredibly beautiful and quite secretive Blue-headed Bee-eater, Grey-throated, Yellow-billed, Yellow-spotted and Hairy-breasted Barbets, Thick-billed Honeyguide and Cassin's Honeybird, Brown-eared, Buff-spotted and Yellow-crested Woodpeckers, African Broadbill, African Blue Flycatcher, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Petit's Cuckooshrike, Mackinnon's Shrike, Pink-footed Puffback, Lühder's and Bocage's Bushshrikes, African Shrike-flycatcher, Brown-throated, Chestnut, Jameson's and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eyes (the last two mentioned species are absolute stunners!), White-tailed Rufous Thrush, Brown-chested Alethe, Stuhlmann's Starling, Blue-shouldered and Grey-winged Robin-Chats, a bevy of greenbuls including Kakamega, Ansorge's, Cabanis's, Slender-billed, Honeyguide, the rare Toro Olive and Joyful Greenbul, White-chinned and Black-faced Prinias, Buff-throated and Black-throated Apalis, Green Hylia, Uganda Woodland Warbler (much easier to find here than in Uganda!), skulking Black-faced Rufous Warbler, very localized Turner's Eremomela, beautiful but shy Grey-chested Babbler, Scaly-breasted and more rarely Pale-breasted and Brown Illadopsis, Dusky Tit, White-breasted and Grey-headed Nigritas, Red-headed Bluebill, Black-crowned Waxbill, Black-billed, Vieillot's Black, Dark-backed and Brown-capped Weavers, Red-headed Malimbe and Olive Sunbird. Mammals we might find include the long-tailed Blue Monkey, Red-tailed Monkey and regal Guereza Colobus. After a very exciting day of forest birding, we will end the day at Rondo Retreat Centre.

Day 21: Kakamega to Busia. We depart after breakfast with lunch boxes for Busia, on the Ugandan border. We will first stop and bird in degraded forests and cultivated areas along the road. These are nevertheless very productive for birds and we will look for Ross's Turaco, Senegal Coucal, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Double-toothed Barbet, Little Greenbul, Yellow-throated Leaflove, Moustached Grass Warbler, Chubb's Cisticola, Olive-bellied and Copper Sunbirds, Thick-



Red-headed Bluebill by Stratton Hatfield

billed Weaver and Bar-breasted Firefinch.



Papyrus Gonolek by Stratton Hatfield

Birding stops at the Mungatsi and Mumias grasslands might produce Western Marsh Harrier, the uncommon Compact Weaver, Cardinal Quelea, Black and Black-winged Red Bishops, Marsh and Yellow-shouldered Widowbirds and Fawn-breasted Waxbill. At Mumias the surrounding woodland patches support populations of Red-headed Lovebird, Eastern Plantain-eater and Speckle-breasted Woodpecker. Nearby is Kenya's only regular site for the cute Rock Pratincole. Thereafter, we continue on to the town of Busia for an overnight stay.

Day 22: Busia to Kisumu. After breakfast we continue birding the area around Busia and after lunch will then depart for Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria. Birding stopovers along the way include Lake Road, the Busia grasslands and the Papyrus swamps at Sio Port and Yala. Birds that we might encounter while exploring the grasslands include the globally threatened Great Snipe, and other species we may see include Harlequin Quail and Small Buttonquail.

Day 23: Kisumu to the Maasai Mara. This morning, we will enjoy an early bird walk at the Dunga Swamps (Hippo pools) where potential ticks include White, Woolly-necked and Abdim's Storks, African Openbill, Sacred and Glossy Ibis, Knob-billed Duck, White-faced and Fulvous Whistling Ducks, Common Buzzard, Wahlberg's and Booted Eagles, Allen's Gallinule, Lesser Moorhen, Spotted Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Green Sandpiper. We will also take time to bird the papyrus swamps for Little Bittern, Blue-headed Coucal, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Greater Swamp and the localized White-winged Warbler, Winding and the look-alike Carruthers's Cisticola, Swamp Flycatcher, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Red-chested Sunbird, the rare Papyrus Yellow Warbler, stunning Papyrus Gonolek and the uncommon Papyrus Canary.



Compact Weaver by Stratton Hatfield

Later on we depart for the world famous Maasai Mara with lunch boxes, allowing the opportunity for birding on the way. We plan to arrive in the Maasai Mara in time to enjoy a birding and big game safari en route to our camp.



Martial Eagle by Stratton Hatfield

Days 24 & 25: Maasai Mara. The Mara, as it is affectionately called, is Kenya's most well-known reserve, and it boasts an astonishing amount of game. Unfenced, it is bounded in the east by the Ngama Hills, in the west by the Oloolollo or Siria Escarpment and to the south by the vast Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. Famously, the Mara is the northerly end of the Great Migration, that unrivalled primeval surge of wildebeest, zebra and antelope that sweeps in from Tanzania's Serengeti to Kenya's Maasai Mara as the Tanzanian grass starts to fail. Although we will not experience the migration at this time of year, we can still expect to see first class African big game. The impressive black-maned Mara Lions are possibly the stars of the show, however, Cheetah, Leopard, Spotted Hyeana and others are present in good numbers. Other animals we can expect to see include African Elephant, African Buffalo, Maasai Giraffe, Plains Zebra, Hippopotamus, Impala, Waterbuck, Topi, Coke's Hartebeest, Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles, Banded and Common Dwarf Mongooses and Warthog.

Not only is this a great place in which to find game, but also the wide golden-green savannas, dotted with *Acacia* trees, make it ideal for photography. The Mara is ravishingly beautiful and offers long, undisturbed views and utterly dramatic panoramas. As for the birding, the Mara is also world-renowned, and we will have time in the western and eastern sections of the reserve. New species we may find include Rufous-bellied Heron, Temminck's Courser, Scaly Francolin, Black Coucal, Schalow's Turaco, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, D'Arnaud's Barbet (the local form sometimes split as Usambiro Barbet), Green-backed and African Grey Woodpeckers, Flappet and Melodious Larks, Rosy-throated Longclaw, Long-billed Pipit, Sooty Chat, Northern Black Flycatcher, Trilling, Stout, Croaking, Pectoral-patch and Black-backed Cisticolas, Green-capped Eremomela, Yellow-bellied Hyliota and Yellow Bishop.



Mara Lions by David Hoddinott

We will also spend some time in the eastern section of the Mara which gives access to some different habitat and better chances for a few species such as Double-banded Courser, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Spotted Eagle-Owl, African Black

Swift, Athi Short-toed Lark, Long-tailed Cisticola, Grey-capped Social Weaver, Red-throated Tit, Swahili Sparrow and Magpie Shrike.

Day 26: Maasai Mara to Nairobi and departure. After breakfast we will depart on a final morning game drive before making our way out of this vast wilderness and back to Nairobi. Along the way, we will stop at the Limuru Ponds, a seasonal wetland that fills when there have been sufficient rains. This site supports a good selection of duck species including Hottentot Teal, White-backed and occasionally Maccoa Duck together with a variety of waders. We then make our way to Nairobi Airport for our evening flights home.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to dinner on day 26;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings as stated in the itinerary;
- Ground transportation in safari-style 4x4 minibuses;
- Reserve Entrance Fees;
- Gratuities for local guides and services; and
- All guiding services.

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** airfares (see above);
- Visa fees;
- Optional excursions not mentioned in the itinerary;
- Beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry or other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special Notes:

- Our Mega tours are fast-paced birding adventures designed for the dedicated lister and serious birder. The focus of the tour is to see as many of the endemics and area specials as possible in the time given. In order to cover the route needed to maximize the species list we stay for a single night only at most sites. This tour is not suitable for those with a casual interest in birds or those who do not enjoy a fast paced and demanding tour.
- In order to cover the variety of sites in this large country we will have to cover a lot of ground and as a result there is a lot of driving on this tour. Furthermore, in the areas with big game we will be confined to the vehicles.
- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kgs (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg's (18lb) for hand luggage.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of range from comfortable to rather luxurious. There is no camping on this trip.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **any** airfares. The tour will depart from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO) on the **morning** of day 1 of the tour and it is advised that you arrive the day before the tour starts. The tour will conclude in the **early evening** of day 26 in Nairobi.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Nairobi International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO), in Kenya is the main port of arrival and exit for this tour. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**