ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Uganda

Birds & Gorillas

8th June to 24th June 2023 (17 days)

Fox's Weaver Extension

24th June to 28th June 2023 (5 days)



Shoebill by Greg de Klerk

From the source of the White Nile on Lake Victoria to the snow-capped Ruwenzori Range, the montane forests of the Virunga volcanoes, harbouring some of the last remaining Mountain Gorillas, to the extensive savannas around the awe-inspiring Murchison Falls, Uganda is an equatorial country of astonishing contrasts! No other area in Africa can match its amazing diversity of habitats (in an area approximately the size of Great Britain!), and this richness is reflected in its incredible bird list of over 1,000 species, making it arguably the richest African birding destination. Amongst these are many highly sought-after birds, including the unique Shoebill and the numerous spectacular endemics of the Albertine Rift Mountains. This tour provides a comprehensive coverage of Uganda while staying at some great lodges, and aside from the birds (over 500 species of them!), it offers superb game viewing and the chance to track Mountain Gorillas and Chimpanzees!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrive in Entebbe and drive to Masindi via Mabamba Swamp**
Day 2	**Budongo Forest - Royal Mile birding all day**
Day 3	**Masindi to Murchison Falls NP via Kaniyo Pabidi section of Budongo Forest**
Day 4	**Murchison Falls NP - Delta boat cruise & north bank game drive**
Day 5	**Murchison Falls NP to Masindi via the Butiaba Escarpment & Busingiro**
Day 6	**Masindi to Kibale NP**
Day 7	**Kibale NP – Chimpanzee tracking & birding**
Day 8	**Kibale NP to Queen Elizabeth NP**
Day 9	**Queen Elizabeth NP: Kasenyi Track & Kazinga Channel boat cruise**
Day 10	**Queen Elizabeth NP to Bwindi NP via Ishasha section of QENP**
Days 11 & 12	**Bwindi NP - Gorilla tracking and biding at Buhoma**
Day 13	**Buhoma to Ruhija via The Neck**
Day 14	**Ruhija - birding Mubwindi Swamp**
Day 15	**Ruhija to Lake Mburo**
Day 16	**Lake Mburo - game drives and boat cruise**
Day 17	**Lake Mburo to Entebbe and departure**

FOX'S WEAVER EXTENSION ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrive in Entebbe**
Day 2	**Entebbe to Jinja via Mabira Forest**
Day 3	**Jinja to Soroti via Mabira Forest**
Day 4	**Soroti**
Day 5	**Soroti to Entebbe**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…

Day 1: Arrive in Entebbe and drive to Masindi via Mabamba Swamp. This morning, we depart Entebbe early and begin our Ugandan adventure in search of a very special bird. Our prime target for today is the legendary Shoebill and we will set off through small rural villages and homesteads to Mabamba, which is a large wetland connected to Lake Victoria. This extensive papyrus swamp is home to several pairs of Shoebill, Uganda's most famous avian resident and the prime attraction to the nation for most birders. This charismatic species, the only representative of its family, is certainly amongst the most highly prized birds in the world! We will commission a boat from the nearby fishing village and search the maze of channels in an attempt to find this special species. Other water birds abound and we should find several species of herons, egrets and waterfowl, the ever-present African Fish Eagle, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, African Marsh Harrier, Purple Swamphen, Long-toed Lapwing, African and the tricky Lesser Jacanas, Malachite Kingfisher, and African Pygmy Goose. The papyrus holds the endearing Swamp Flycatcher, Blue-headed Coucal, Greater and White-winged Swamp Warblers, Grey-capped Warbler, the



Papyrus Gonolek by Adam Riley



Red-headed Lovebird by David Hoddinott

indescribable Papyrus Gonolek, and the nomadic and unpredictable Weyns's Weaver. If we are exceptionally fortunate, we may also see the rare Sitatunga, a shy swamp-dwelling antelope with splayed hooves.

Thereafter, we will bird the surrounding grasslands, papyrus swamps and farm bush. Here we might expect to see the funky-looking Long-crested Eagle perched atop telephone poles, Wahlberg's Eagle, Palm-nut Vulture, hovering Black-winged Kite, African Harrier-Hawk, Lizard Buzzard, the truly impressive Great Blue Turaco, raucous Eastern Plantain-eater, seemingly awkward Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill and floppy-flighted Crowned and African Pied Hornbills, dazzling-blue Woodland Kingfisher, Broad-billed Roller, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Angola and the endangered Blue Swallows, Splendid and Rüppell's Starlings, African Thrush, Northern Black Flycatcher, Sooty Chat, gregarious Grey-backed Fiscal, Scarlet-chested, Superb and Red-chested Sunbirds as well as the comical Pin-tailed Whydah. Should we have missed it in the swamps, we have another chance to find the scare and nomadic Weyns's Weaver before we continue onwards to the town of Masindi.

We unfortunately have to pass through Kampala, Uganda's bustling capital city, en route but once we reach open road it will become evident how birdy this country really is! We will be stopping in any likely looking habitats en route. A small wetland at the roadside often supports the localised (Hartlaub's) Marsh Widowbird in addition to the abundant Yellow-mantled and Fan-tailed Widowbirds. Further along, as we approach the town of Masindi, the countryside becomes drier and consists of fig-studded grasslands. In this habitat, we hope to encounter the shy but indescribably beautiful White-crested Turaco (often considered the most beautiful representative of this endemic African family), African and Bruce's Green Pigeons, White-headed and Spot-flanked Barbets, the scarce Heuglin's Spurfowl, White-browed Sparrow-weaver, both Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagras, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Black Bishop, the aptly named Beautiful Sunbird, and several interesting short-tailed starlings (Lesser Blue-eared, Purple, and Bronze-tailed). Piapiac, a small corvid that associated with cattle and wild game, are usually fairly common and are always interesting to watch. If there is time, we will also visit a small area of farm-bush, very near the town of Masindi, where we stand a good chance of finding the tricky Grey-



Brown Twinspot by Glen Valentine



Puvell's Illadopsis by Daniel Danckwerts

headed Oliveback and Brown Twinspot, in addition to the Black-rumped Waxbill, Black and Northern Red Bishops, and Grey-capped Warbler. Finally, we will arrive in Masindi for a two-night stay at a recently renovated colonial-era hotel.

Day 2: Budongo Forest - Royal Mile birding all day. Today will be our first introduction to central African forest birding, and a good portion of the day will be spent in the vast Budongo Forest Reserve – the largest natural forest area in East Africa. We will concentrate much of our attention on "The Royal Mile," a wide forestry track considered to be the country's premier forest birding locality. Among the numerous specials we hope to find are the Blue Malkoha (a skulking forest coucal), three forest-dwelling kingfishers (Chocolate-backed, Blue-breasted and African Dwarf), White-thighed Hornbill, Yellow-spotted, Hairy-breasted and Yellow-billed Barbets and their diminutive cousins, the tinkerbirds (Speckled, Yellow-throated and Yellow-rumped all being likely), Western Oriole, Green Hylia, the rarely encountered and difficult-to-see Uganda Woodland Warbler, Grey, Buff-throated, Black-throated, and the stunning Black-capped Apalises, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Green and the elusive Lemon-bellied Crombecs, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Purple-headed Starling, Little Green, Grey-chinned, Collared, Olive-bellied and the aberrant Grey-headed Sunbirds, and Crested and Red-headed Malimbes. Greenbuls are abundant, and we will work slowly through any flock that we encounter looking for Little Grey, Yellow-whiskered, Slender-billed, Honeyguide, White-throated, Red-tailed and the striking Spotted Greenbuls. We will search the undergrowth alongside the track for the numerous understorey skulkers, which may include Pale-breasted Illadopsis, Fire-crested Alethe, Fraser's Rufous Thrush, Red-tailed Ant (Rufous) Thrush, Red-capped and the difficult Blue-shouldered Robin-Chats, Yellow-browed and Olive-green Camaropteras and Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher.

The beautiful Nahan's Partridge is also sometimes heard, but we will require luck and a lot of patience to see this secretive and near-endemic species. Openings in the forest canopy will be carefully watched as Crowned Eagle, White-throated Bee-eater and Cassin's, Mottled and Sabine's Spinetails are all possible over the tall forest. The Budongo Forest also supports a number of interesting primate species and we may encounter Chimpanzee, Blue Monkey, Olive Baboon, and Guereza during the course of the day.



Chimpanzee by Daniel Keith Danckwerts



White-thighed Hornbills by Glen Valentine

En route to and from the forest, we will bird some farm bush. Here we stand our best chance at the tricky Brown Twinspot and Grey-headed Oliveback, while also enjoying Marsh Tchagra, Brown Babbler, Red-headed Lovebird, African Yellow Warbler, Holub's Golden and Compact Weavers, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Heuglin's Spurfowl, Black-bellied and African Firefinches, Red-headed Quelea, and Senegal Coucal while Grey Parrot is sometimes also seen overhead.

Day 3: Masindi to Murchison Falls NP via Kaniyo Pabidi section of Budongo Forest. This morning, we will bird the Kaniyo Pabidi sector of the Budongo Forest, situated within the southern section of the Murchison Falls NP. This is the only known site in East Africa for Puvel's Illadopsis and we stand a good chance of finding this special bird. Another big target for the morning is Rufous-sided Broadbill, but this species is somewhat tricky to track down. Flocks of Crested Guineafowl, sporting their "punk hairdos" are, however, more regularly encountered. Kaniyo Pabidi is also a good site for White-throated Greenbul, White-tailed and Red-tailed Ant Thrushes, Red-capped Robin-Chat, Fire-crested Alethe, Grey Longbill and Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher. A healthy Chimpanzee population also survives, though these animals are more often heard than seen here, and the giant Chequered Sengi is fairly commonly encountered on the forest floor, as is the tiny Blue Duiker.

After birding the Ironwood-dominant rainforest, we will drive further north into the woodland section of the park. Here, Vinaceous Dove, Black-billed Wood Dove, Senegal Coucal, Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat, Whistling Cisticola, Buff-bellied Warbler, the elegant Silverbird, Western Black-headed Batis, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, White-crested Helmetshrike, Western Violet-backed and Beautiful Sunbirds, and Fawn-breasted and Black-rumped Waxbills may be encountered.



Black-headed Lapwing by Daniel Danckwerts

Murchison Falls is Uganda's largest national park and is famous for its big game and spectacular scenery, as well as the spectacular falls after which the park was named. The vista point at the top of Murchison Falls offers incredible views of the Victoria Nile boiling down the narrow gorge – 45m long and just 9m wide. Bare, rocky islets are favoured perches and breeding sites of Rock Pratincole. We should see good numbers of these



Abyssinian Ground Hornbill by Daniel Danckwerts

attractive waders wheeling in the spray of the falls. Thick riverine forest in this vicinity is home to the magnificent White-crested Turaco, Double-toothed Barbet, Yellow-throated Leaflove, Spotted Palm Thrush, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, the localised Red-winged Grey Warbler and Purple-banded Sunbird.

Day 4: Murchison Falls NP - Delta boat cruise & north bank game drive. We have a full day for exploration of the park. We will take a launch trip along the Victoria Nile down towards the Lake Victoria Delta, where the west-flowing Victoria Nile makes an abrupt turn and becomes the north-flowing Albert Nile.

A plethora of waterbirds throng the well-wooded banks of the river and today, we have another opportunity of spotting Shoebill. This species usually stands motionless on the edge of channels waiting for a hapless lungfish and sometimes allows close approach. In the heat of the day, Shoebills may be seen soaring over the Nile – an impressive sight indeed. Other water birds abound and we hope to see African Darter, Intermediate Egret, Goliath and Purple Herons, Woolly-necked and Yellow-billed Storks, Hamerkop, Egyptian and Spur-winged Geese, Osprey, African Fish Eagle, Black Crake, African Swamphen, the regal Grey Crowned Crane (Uganda's national bird), Senegal Thick-knee, Long-toed and Spur-winged Lapwings, African Jacana, Malachite and Giant Kingfishers and the dashing Wire-tailed Swallow. Burrows in the river banks represent colonies of either colourful Red-throated Bee-eater or querulous Pied Kingfisher, the latter is particularly abundant here, while elegant Red-necked Falcon frequent palm trees which line the banks. In addition to the birds, large numbers of huge Nile Crocodile, Hippopotamus, African Buffalo, Tantalus Monkey and Olive Baboon are often seen at very close range, and herds of African Elephant sometimes bathe en masse in the willows.



Marsh Tchagra by Glen Valentine

The scenic area north of the Nile holds a number of birds typical of dry savanna. We will search here for Secretarybird, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Tawny and Martial Eagles, Shikra, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Harlequin Quail, Heuglin's Spurfowl, Helmeted Guineafowl, flocks of Collared Pratincole, Black-headed Lapwing, Swallow-tailed and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Black



Great Blue Turaco by Daniel Danckwerts

Scimitarbill, Short-winged and Black-backed Cisticolas, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Shelley's Sparrow, Bar-breasted Firefinch and Quailfinch. A few birds with their ranges centred on the Sahel reach their southern limits here, and we hope to find the stately Abyssinian Ground Hornbill and White-fronted Black Chat. Mammals are well represented here, and we should see Bushbuck, Giraffe (belonging to the endangered form known as Rothschild's Giraffe), African Buffalo, Uganda Kob, Oribi and Waterbuck. If we are lucky, we may see groups of the shy Patas Monkey, while this is one of the best places in Uganda to find Lion.

The moist, grassy woodlands to the south of the Nile are very different from those of the North bank and support a host of localised birds including Brown-backed Woodpecker, Brown Babbler, Red-winged Prinia, the unusually proportioned Purple Starling, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Black-bellied Firefinch, Cabanis's and Brown-rumped Buntings, Green-backed Eremomela, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Yellow-billed Shrike and if we are very fortunate, Bat Hawk, African Cuckoo-Hawk, White-breasted Cuckooshrike and Red-winged Pytilia. Other species that we will search for here are African Cuckoo, African Grey Hornbill, African Grey Woodpecker, Northern and Red-faced Crombecs, African Paradise Flycatcher (often of the spectacular white morph), Northern Puffback, Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagras, Tropical Boubou and Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu.

Night drives are unfortunately prohibited now in all Uganda national parks. However, we'll try our upmost to stay out until around dusk on at least one occasion. With significant luck, we may find the spectacular Pennant-winged Nightjar. Other possibilities include Spotted Thick-knee, Greyish Eagle-Owl and Bunyoro Rabbit.

Day 5: Murchison Falls NP to Masindi via the Butiaba Escarpment & Busingiro. After some final birding in Murchison Falls National Park, we begin our journey back to Masindi. En route we'll make an effort to locate the rare Dusky Babbler, localised White-rumped Seedeater and Cut-throat Finch (a rarity in Uganda that was first discovered here in 2016 and continues to be present in the area) before arriving at the dry Butiaba Escarpment, at the head of the Albertine Rift Valley. This productive birding site may produce Namaqua Dove, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Black-billed Barbet, White-shouldered Black



Black Bee-eater by David Hoddinott



Black-crowned Waxbill by Daniel Danckwerts

Tit, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Mocking Cliff Chat, Green-winged Pytilia, Foxy Cisticola, Little Weaver and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

The dry scrub soon changes to moist rainforest as we again approach the Budongo Forest Reserve, this time at Busingiro. We will bird a section of this forest in the afternoon where the elusive canopy-dwelling Ituri Batis is a possibility. Busingiro also provides an excellent back-up opportunity for several of Budongo's trickier species such as Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, Jameson's Wattle-eye, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher and Rufous-crowned Eremomela. In the late afternoon, we continue to Masindi where we'll arrive around dusk at our now familiar hotel.

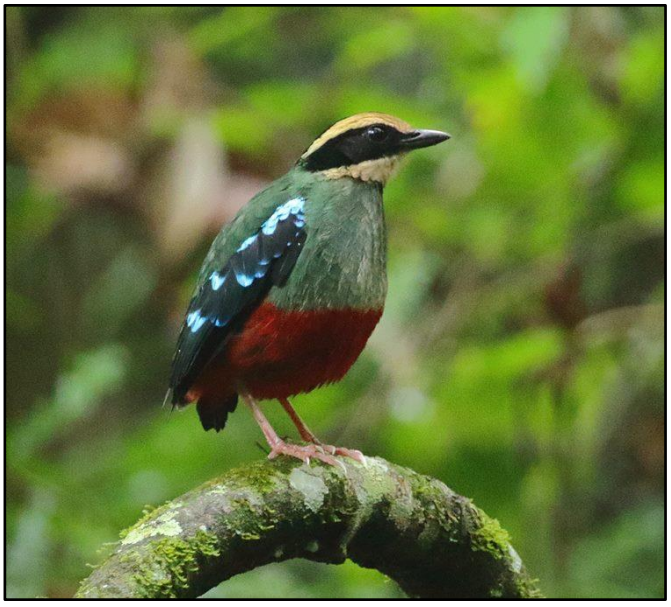
Day 6: Masindi to Kibale NP. Today will be our longest travel day as we head south from Masindi to the expansive Kibale National Park. Our first birding stop will be in an area of rich farm bush where Red-headed Lovebird, African Yellow Warbler, Ross's Turaco, African Blue Flycatcher, Brown-backed Scrub Robin, Compact Weaver, Orange-tufted Sunbird, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Brown Twinspot and the beautiful Grey-headed Oliveback may be found. Further on, papyrus swamps hold the stunning Papyrus Gonolek and skulking White-winged Swamp Warbler; the latter species requiring patience to see.

In the mid to late afternoon, we will reach the northern section of Kibale Forest known as Sebitole. Our target species will include Joyful Greenbul, Lowland Masked Apalis, Dusky Long-tailed and African Emerald Cuckoos (the latter fairly common and conspicuous at this site), Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Many-coloured and Lühder's Bushshrikes, Narrow-tailed and Chestnut-winged Starlings, Tiny and Blue-throated Brown Sunbirds and Dark-backed Weaver. Thereafter we will continue to our lovely accommodations at the edge of Kibale National Park.



African Blue Flycatcher by Glen Valentine

Day 7: Kibale NP – Chimpanzee tracking & birding. The towering Kibale Forest has the highest primate concentration and species diversity of any reserve in East Africa. Primate highlights might include sightings of localised Ugandan Red Colobus, handsome L'Hoest's Monkey and the scruffy Grey-cheeked Mangabey. We will also embark on a Chimpanzee trek and our chances of finding these, one of our closest living relatives, are excellent! The birds are typical of the



Green-breasted Pitta by David Hoddinott

medium-altitude forest, with excellent mixed species flocks and specials such as Afep and the rare and globally threatened White-naped Pigeon, Red-chested Owlet, Blue-throated Roller, Narina Trogon, African Shrike-flycatcher, Scaly-breasted and Brown Illadopsis, Superb and Green-headed Sunbirds, Black-billed Turaco, Plain Greenbul, Chestnut Wattle-eye and Black-and-white Mannikin. The stunning Green-breasted Pitta also occurs in this forest, however, a pre-dawn start, and a good deal of luck and perseverance will be needed to locate this mythical low-density understory inhabitant! At night we may encounter African Wood Owl and Verreaux's Eagle-Owl around our accommodations.

Day 8: Kibale NP to Queen Elizabeth NP. This morning, we pay a visit to the birdy swamp forest and wetland habitat at the nearby Bigodi Wetland. A number of quality species can be seen here, including Yellow-billed Barbet, the rare Speckle-breasted and Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, White-tailed Ant Thrush, Honeyguide and Joyful Greenbuls, White-spotted Flufftail, Shining-blue Kingfisher, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Red-headed Bluebill, Grey-winged and Snowy-crowned Robin-Chats, Black-crowned Waxbill, Black-and-white Shrike-Flycatcher, Bocage's Bushshrike and if we are extremely fortunate, perhaps even the very rare and elusive White-collared Oliveback. After lunch back at our lodge, we will bid farewell to these enchanted forests and head for the open savannas of Queen Elizabeth National Park.

After passing beautiful crater lakes and the foothills of the mighty Ruwenzori Mountains, we arrive at our accommodations close to the famous Queen Elizabeth National Park, formerly known as Kazinga National Park but renamed in the Queen's honour after her visit in 1954.

Day 9: Queen Elizabeth NP: Kasenyi Track & Kazinga Channel boat cruise. We will spend the morning birding in the spectacular Crater area in the foothills of the Ruwenzori Mountains and the main game-viewing area along the Kasenyi track. The area can be particularly productive for raptors and species that will be the focus of our search include Rüppell's Vulture, Bateleur (one of Africa's most spectacular raptors), Brown Snake Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Grey Kestrel. Queen Elizabeth National Park also offers a wonderful variety of



White-collared Oliveback by Glen Valentine



Narrow-tailed Starlings by David Hoddinott

grassland-dominated habitats which hold Red-necked Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Common and the rarely encountered Black-rumped Buttonquail, African Crake, Temminck's Courser, Senegal and Crowned Lapwings, the marsh-dwelling Black Coucal, Flappet, Rufous-naped, Red-capped and the scarce White-tailed Larks, Plain-backed Pipit, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Croaking, Red-faced, and Stout Cisticolas, Marsh Tchagra, Southern Red Bishop, flocks of Red-billed Quelea and Quailfinch, while Black-lored Babbler, Greater Honeyguide and Red-billed Firefinch occur in the surrounding woodlands. Mammals will also be a highlight in this area and we are likely to encounter herds of African Elephant and African Buffalo, Uganda Kob, Bushbuck and Common Warthog, while we'd be very fortunate to see Lion, Leopard, Spotted Hyaena or the impressive Giant Forest Hog, the largest and undeniably ugliest pig on Earth!

One of the undoubted tour highlights will be our afternoon boat trip on the Kazinga Channel that links Lakes George and Edward and allows very close approach and intimate encounters with Buffalo, Elephant and Hippopotamus, as well as numerous waterbirds. Among many other species, we're likely to encounter large numbers of African Skimmer and Pied Kingfisher, as well as Pink-backed and Great White Pelicans, White-breasted Cormorant, African Openbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Hamerkop, Glossy Ibis, African Wattled and Spur-winged Lapwings, Water Thick-knee, Grey-headed Gull, White-winged and Gull-billed Terns, Malachite Kingfisher, Collared Pratincole, Swamp Flycatcher, Lesser Swamp Warbler, Winding Cisticola and plenty of nesting weavers.

This evening we hope to find Square-tailed Nightjars around dusk.

Day 10: Queen Elizabeth NP to Bwindi NP via Ishasha section of QENP. Today we depart QENP and head for the famous Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, a bastion for gorilla conservation and a hotspot for Albertine Rift Endemics. If conditions allow, we will drive through the extensive southern Ishasha section of Queen Elizabeth National Park en-route to Bwindi. Savanna bird and mammal species are likely to be seen and we may be fortunate in sighting Ishasha's famous tree-climbing Lions. The elusive Scaly Spurfowl is another species that we hope to find along this route.

After a long drive, we will reach the headquarters of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park at Buhoma, where we will be based for three nights. The Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to



Mountain Gorilla by David Hoddinott



Black-fronted Duiker by Daniel Danckwerts

approximately half of the world population of 1 000 Mountain Gorillas. This vast reserve offers arguably some of the most productive montane forest birding in Africa and supports almost the entire suite of Albertine Rift endemic bird species. Once part of a much larger forest that included the Virunga Volcanoes in neighbouring Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is now an ecological island within a sea of human cultivation and therefore of immense conservation importance. Buhoma lies in the valley of the Munyaga River at 1,500m and is flanked by steep, forested hills. Excellent forest birding, not least the prospect of numerous rare and localised Albertine Rift endemics, makes this a true birding Mecca.

Days 11 & 12: Bwindi NP - Gorilla tracking and birding at Buhoma. From our comfortable base, those departing on an optional gorilla trekking adventure will search for a habituated family group of Eastern (Mountain) Gorillas. Spending an hour with these gentle giants is, without a doubt, one of the greatest wildlife experiences on Earth!

We will spend the balance of our time here birding along the famous and bird-rich Buhoma Track that leads into the mid-elevation forest of Bwindi just past the town of Buhoma and our wonderful accommodations at the edge of the forest. Species we will search for include Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo, Bar-tailed Trogon, Dusky Tit, Abyssinian (Kivu) Ground Thrush, White-bellied Robin-Chat, Equatorial Akalat, Red-throated Alethe, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, Northern Double-collared Sunbird, Willcocks's and Least Honeyguides, the newly described Willard's Sooty Boubou, Black-billed Weaver and Magpie Mannikin. High exposed perches in the open forest are favoured by African Goshawk, the dazzling Black Bee-eater, Sooty Flycatcher and forest starlings including Waller's, Stuhlmann's and Narrow-tailed. One of Bwindi's star avian attractions is the diminutive, pitta-like Neumann's Warbler, a vocal yet very secretive bird! We will require luck and patience to see this skulker – one of the Albertine Rift endemics. Other understorey birds we hope to see include displaying African Broadbill, Black-faced Prinia and the handsome but shy Black-faced Rufous Warbler. The mid-storey and canopy support Elliot's and Fine-banded Woodpeckers, Cabanis's, Kakamega and Ansorge's Greenbuls, the enigmatic Chapin's Flycatcher and White-browed Crombec. The rare Jameson's Antpecker may also be seen probing under moss on dead branches or gleaning warbler-like in the canopy, though



Black-faced Rufous Warbler by Daniel Danckwerts



Regal Sunbird by Adam Riley

finding this localised species requires immense luck, while Scarce Swifts forage over the forest. Birding at Buhoma is a truly magical experience!

Other wildlife that we may be fortunate enough to find here includes Black-fronted and the huge Yellow-backed Duiker, Guereza Colobus, L'Hoest's, Blue and Red-tailed monkeys, Chimpanzee and several species of squirrels, including Fire-footed Rope, Carruthers' Mountain, Ruwenzori Sun and Red-legged Sun Squirrels.

Day 13: Buhoma to Ruhija via The Neck. Although the distance is not large, we will spend the entire day on this route due to the superb birding it provides. In scrubby areas beyond Buhoma, we will search for Ross's Turaco, Red-throated Wryneck, Brown-backed Scrub Robin, Bronzy, Copper and Variable Sunbirds, Baglafecht and Black-necked Weavers, Yellow Bishop, Village Indigobird, Red-headed Bluebill and Black-throated Canary. Further along the road, we will pass through Kitahurira or "The Neck,' another well-known birding locality. Here we will search for species that could include Black Sparrowhawk, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Cassin's Honeybird, Petit's Cuckooshrike, White-chinned Prinia, Mountain Wagtail, Pink-footed Puffback, the rare Tiny Sunbird and the attractive Brown-capped Weaver. If we are incredibly lucky, we may also encounter the rare and little-known Lagden's Bushshrike here!

Even further up the road, cultivated areas provide feeding opportunities for many seedeaters. Our main targets here will be the highly sought-after Dusky Twinspot and Yellow-bellied, Kandt's and Black-crowned Waxbills, African Stonechat, Streaky and Thick-billed Seedeaters, Western Citril and Yellow-crowned Canary. The noisy Chubb's Cisticola will mock us from deep within the bracken, and the beautiful Doherty's Bushshrike can be lured out from the dense vegetation. Mackinnon's Shrikes survey the road from high, exposed perches and will be a regular feature throughout today.

Finally, we will reach the seldom-visited higher camp in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The ranger station at Ruhija is situated at an altitude of 2,250m, with breath-taking views over steep, forested valleys toward the distant Virunga Volcanoes. Ruhija is likely to be one of the highlights of any trip to Uganda with excellent birding in spectacular surroundings.



Bar-tailed Trogon by Glen Valentine



Lagden's Bushshrike by David Hoddinott

Day 14 : Ruhija - birding Mubwindi Swamp. We will concentrate our birding on the trails to the unique Mubwindi Swamp and along the main access roads. This area is the most accessible site on Earth for the rare and localised Grauer's Broadbill, one of Africa's most sought-after birds. This globally threatened species is only known from two sites in the world, the other being a remote forest in eastern Congo. Carruthers's Cisticola and the localised Grauer's Swamp Warbler are resident in Mubwindi Swamp and if we are very fortunate we will see the shy Red-chested Flufftail and African Rail.

Today's other target species include Mountain and Augur Buzzards, the scarce Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, the furtive Handsome Spurfowl, African Olive Pigeon, Black-billed Turaco, extremely shy and unobtrusive Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, the rare Western Tinkerbird, Olive Woodpecker, Thick-billed and the elusive Dwarf Honeyguides, Black Saw-wing, Grey Cuckooshrike, Olive-breasted and Yellow-streaked Greenbuls, Abyssinian Thrush, White-starred Robin, Archer's Ground Robin, Stripe-breasted Tit, Mountain Illadopsis, Ruwenzori Hill Babbler, Mountain Masked, Ruwenzori, and Chestnut-throated Apalises, Cinnamon Bracken, Mountain Yellow, Red-faced Woodland and Grauer's Warblers, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher, Ruwenzori Batis, the recently split Albertine Sooty Boubou, the rare Lagden's Bushshrike, Sharpe's Starling, Mountain Oriole, Strange Weaver, the rare, local and extremely shy Grey-chested Babbler and the beautiful but uncommon Oriole Finch. Flowering trees attract the incredible Blue-headed, Regal Sunbird and scarce Purple-breasted Sunbirds – all three being beautiful Albertine Rift Endemics. Dusky, Red-faced, Abyssinian and the near-mythical Shelley's Crimsonwings – amongst the most beautiful and sought-after of African seedeaters – are all possible at Ruhija. At night, we stand a chance of seeing Montane Nightjar and African Wood Owl.

Day 15: Ruhija to Lake Mburo. After some final early morning birding at Ruhija in search of any of the specialties we may still be missing, we will depart the beautiful, moss-draped montane rainforests of Bwindi and begin our journey to Lake Mburo to the north-east. Our long travel day will take us through the highlands, ravaged by the high human population density, before arriving at the acacia woodlands and wetlands of Lake Mburo National Park. Here, we will spend the next two nights.



L'Hoest's Monkey by Daniel Danckwerts



African Finfoot by David Hoddinott

Day 16 : Lake Mburo - game drives and boat cruise. We have a full day to explore the incredible Lake Mburo National Park, a superb wetland and *Acacia* savanna sanctuary that hosts some very special species. Raptor watching will be a major feature and potential targets will include African Marsh Harrier, White-backed, Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures, Brown Snake Eagle and African Hawk-Eagle. Lake Mburo's woodlands are the northern-most example of the southern savanna system and are therefore home to several species at the edge of their range. Most sought-after of these is the elusive and highly-localised Red-faced Barbet, known only from remote north-eastern Tanzania, Rwanda, and here, while other specials include the aptly-named Long-tailed Cisticola and Green-capped Eremomela.

We will also search for Crested and Coqui Francolins, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Red-chested, Jacobin, Levaillant's, and African Cuckoos, Blue-naped Mousebird, Lilac-breasted Roller, Striped Kingfisher, Green Wood Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Spot-flanked, Crested and Black-collared Barbets, Bearded and the uncommon Golden-tailed and Bearded Woodpeckers, several swallows including Lesser Striped, Red-breasted, Mosque, Red-rumped and White-headed Saw-wing, Black Cuckooshrike, White-browed Scrub Robin, Trilling Cisticola, the meadowlark-like Yellow-throated Longclaw, Chinspot Batis, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Grey Penduline Tit, Arrow-marked Babbler, Brubru, Wattled Starling, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Marico Sunbird and Red-headed Weaver.

One of the highlights of our time at Lake Mburo will be the boat trip on the lake where we have excellent chances of finding two of Africa's most attractive, elusive and sought-after species, the African Finfoot and nocturnal White-backed Night Heron. Other interesting species we may encounter during the trip include Black-crowned Night Heron, Ross's Turaco, the handsome African Fish Eagle and Greater Swamp Warbler among many others.



Grauer's Broadbill by David Hoddinott

Mammals are also a feature of Lake Mburo National Park and we stand a good chance of seeing Banded and Common Dwarf Mongooses surveying the world



White-spotted Flufftail by Daniel Danckwerts

from atop their adopted termite mounds, Plains Zebra, Hippopotamus, Common Warthog, Eland (the world's largest antelope), Waterbuck, Bohor Reedbuck, Impala, Oribi, Giraffe and Topi. Just outside the park, we will come across some of the world-famous long-horned Ankole cattle – always a highlight to see.

Day 17: Lake Mburo to Entebbe and departure. After final early morning birding at Lake Mburo, we will make our way back to Entebbe. Once back in Entebbe, those departing this wonderful country will have some time to freshen up before transferring to the airport.

Fox's Weaver Extension

Day 1: Arrive in Entebbe. Today we will explore the areas immediately surrounding Entebbe, while we wait for those joining us on this extension. We'll start at the nearby Entebbe Botanical Gardens where we hope to find Orange Weaver, scarce Orange-tufted Sunbird, Ross's and Great Blue Turacos, Grey Parrot, Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill and a plethora of waterbirds along the edge of Lake Victoria. From there, we will drive to the nearby Mpanga Forest. This excellent patch of lowland swamp forest supports an incredible diversity of forest species, in spite of its isolation. We will search for the tricky Blue-shouldered and Red-capped Robin-chats, Forest Robin, Red-tailed and Yellow-lored Bristlebills, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo, Chestnut Wattle-eye, White-spotted Flufftail, Black-billed Turaco, Honeyguide and Toro Olive Greenbuls, Lowland Sooty Boubou, Red-headed Bluebill and the tricky Black-bellied Seedcracker.

Day 2: Entebbe to Jinja via Mabira Forest. We will depart Entebbe early this morning. Though we only have a short distance to cover, we hope to beat the worst of the Kampala traffic and arrive in the town of Jinja with sufficient time to still visit the nearby Mabira Forest. This protected forest supports over 300 bird species, some of which are very difficult to see elsewhere in Uganda. One of the first sites that we will visit is a small forest pond where a wonderful selection of very secretive forest birds regularly comes down to drink. Targets here include Red-tailed and the elusive Yellow-lored



Fox's Weaver by David Hoddinott



Karamoja Apalis by David Hoddinott

Bristlebills, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, Forest Robin, Dusky Crested Flycatcher, Brown-chested Alethe, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, and two glowing seedeaters: Black-bellied Seedcracker and Red-headed Bluebill. Some of the other specials we will search for are Grey Parrot, the highly localised Forest Wood Hoopoe, uncommon Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Grey-throated Barbet, Buff-spotted, Brown-eared and Yellow-crested Woodpeckers, Grey and Yellow Longbills, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Velvet-mantled Drongo, Toro Olive Greenbul (one of nine greenbuls species found here), Western Nicator, the striking Jameson's Wattle-eye, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher (scarce but possible), Green-throated Sunbird, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Lowland Sooty Boubou, Yellow-mantled and the nomadic Weyns's Weaver, the rare Tit-Hylia and White-breasted and Grey-headed Nigritas.

Day 3: Jinja to Soroti via Mabira Forest. We have a little extra time this morning to visit the Mabira Forest, where we shall focus on any species that we may have missed previously. This added time will give us our best chance at several of the more challenging species including the Forest Wood Hoopoe, Blue-shouldered Robin-chat, Yellow-lored Bristlebill, and Black-bellied Seedcracker. After a quick lunch break in Jinja, we will then drive through to the village of Aturtur where we plan to spend the next two nights.

Day 4: Soroti. A pre-dawn start from Aturtur will see us at prime position in the Soroti area at first light. We will spend the entire day exploring this remote region, scouring the Whistling Thorn savannas for two very special birds: the recently re-discovered Ugandan endemic Fox's Weaver and the highly localised Karamoja Apalis. The latter is fortunately quite common here and is best located by its distinctive piping call. Fox's Weaver could prove considerably more challenging though we stand an excellent chance at finding this mega. It is the only true-endemic bird species in Uganda but remains extremely elusive and is poorly known. It is recorded in the vicinity of Lake Bisina, Lake Opeta and Lake Kyogo but the species totally disappeared for several years and was thought to be in dire straits; surveys conducted in 2015 completely failed to find this species after five years in which the species was apparently lost! A small



Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher by Glen Valentine

population was then discovered in 2018 and our reconnaissance trip in 2019 was successful – in fact, we found the birds breeding!

Other species we expect to see in these arid areas include the huge Yellow-billed Shrike, Northern Red Bishop, Trilling Cisticola, Shelley's Sparrow, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Silverbird, Cardinal Quelea, Marsh Tchagra, Striped and Woodland Kingfishers, Flappet Lark and Grey-backed Fiscal. Flocks of Mottled Swifts are also sometimes seen overhead.

Day 5: Soroti to Entebbe. Today, we will depart Aturtur and slowly meander our way back to Entebbe where our epic East African adventure will sadly come to an end. As before, those departing this evening will have sufficient time to quickly freshen up our familiar hotel in Entebbe before transferring to the airport.

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 lunch on day 17 of the main tour; and from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 5 of the extension;
- Bottled drinking water throughout the tour;
- Accommodations as stated in the itinerary;
- Ground transportation during the tour;
- All boat excursions mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including gratuities for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** flights;
- Passport and visa fees;
- Airport departure taxes;
- The optional gorilla trek permit (see above);
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and 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 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.

Please Note:

- Although Uganda is an equatorial nation, much of the country is situated on a plateau at roughly 1000 metres above sea level, and as a consequence, the climate is relatively mild. However, in some areas (e.g. Murchison Falls and Lake Mburo NP's), it can be hot (more than 30ºC).
- At times, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails (entirely optional) to find a few special birds. Our pace will, however, be slow as we bird in the forests.
- Although this Uganda tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in **good general health** as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. There will be a few lengthy drives and many of the days will be long with early starts. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- The optional gorilla trek at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest generally involves several hours of strenuous walking on steep slopes, often off-trail. The chance of finding the gorillas is very high, but not guaranteed. New regulations have meant that family group permits will be allocated on the morning of the trek. It is also possible that we well be split up into a few different trekking parties.
- The optional walk down to Mubwindi Swamp entails hiking along a long trail (roughly 10 km return) which is steep and at times muddy. As the pace is often slow, we will be walking for a considerable amount of time on this day. Please note that should you have any physical limitations, then it is not recommended that you partake in this activity, however, alternative birding arrangements will be made for you on this day should you opt not to do this walk.
- The vehicles used are comfortable stretched Landcruiser 4X4's with open roof-hatches.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. On the first day of the tour we have a full day's birding and it is therefore required that you arrive a day before the tour starts. The tour will conclude in the **afternoon** of day 17 at Entebbe International Airport.

The Fox's Weaver Extension departs Entebbe International Airport on day 1, and as this is an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. The extension will end in the late afternoon of day 5 at Entebbe International Airport.

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

Entebbe International Airport, Entebbe (IATA: EBB) is the main port of entry for international flights on this tour and is well serviced by most of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**