Kenya

Mega Birding Tour



Sokoke Scops Owls by David Hoddinott

This tour is the ultimate African birding and wildlife adventure. Over three weeks of non-stop birding, we hope to see more than 700 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 endeavour 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. Our tour concludes after exploring the papyrus swamps and moist woodlands along Lake Victoria!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Nairobi, flight to Mombasa, transfer to Shimba Hills**
Day 2	**Shimba Hills to Watamu Bay via Mida Creek**
Day 3	**Arabuko-Sokoke Forest & Sabaki River Mouth**
Day 4	**Watamu Bay to Tsavo East National Park**
Day 5	**Tsavo East National Park to Tsavo West National Park via the Taita Hills**
Day 6	**Tsavo West National Park**
Day 7	**Tsavo West National Park to Thika**
Day 8	**Thika to Mount Kenya**
Day 9	**Mount Kenya to Meru National Park**
Day 10	**Meru National Park**
Day 11	**Meru National Park to Samburu**
Day 12	**Samburu & Shaba National Reserves**
Day 13	**Samburu to Aberdare National Park**
Day 14	**Aberdare National Park 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 & Kongelai**
Day 19	**Kitale to Kakamega**
Day 20	**Kakamega Forest**
Day 21	**Kakamega to Busia**
Day 22	**Busia to Kisumu**
Day 23	**Kisumu to Maasai Mara National Reserve**
Days 24 & 25	**Maasai Mara National Reserve**
Day 26	**Maasai Mara National Reserve to Nairobi & final departure**



Birding sites in detail

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.



Fischer's Turaco by Glen Valentine

Mida Creek. This site is probably most famous as one of the best locations to see Crab-plover. This unique species, placed in its own monotypic family, is usually seen here in good numbers while many other waders are often present as well.

Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. We'll have opportunities to visit several sites in and around Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. While exploring the network of trails in the forest, we'll watch for mixed bird flocks (bird parties). Some of the species found in these aggregations may include Green Malkoha, the very rare and erratic 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 Gorgeous Bushshrike and the uncommon Plain-backed Sunbirds. 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.



Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike by Glen Valentine

Along the forest edge we may find the beautiful Red-throated Twinspot and flocks of Black-and-white (Red-backed) Mannikin feeding amongst

the grass seeds. The rare and near-endemic Sokoke Pipit creeps across the forest floor and are hard to see amongst the leaf-litter. The delicate East Coast Akalat is another shy understory skulker and other key species include the endemic and little-known Clarke's Weaver, almost totally restricted to this site, the extremely localized Amani Sunbird, Scaly Babbler and Eastern Black-headed Batis. 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 brown and red 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 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 galagos.



Golden Palm Weaver by Glen Valentine

We will likely also take some time to visit the Arabuko Swamp situated in the northern part of the Reserve that has been a fairly reliable site for the localised Malindi Pipit over the past few years. Water levels fluctuate considerably at the swamp and when wet, specials like White-backed Duck, African Pygmy Goose, Coastal Cisticola, Zanzibar Red- Bishop, Black Coucal and Dwarf Bittern can be found here. However, if the swamp is dry, the only specialty likely to be found here is the Malindi Pipit.

Mammals we hope to see include Blue Monkey, the diminutive Blue Duiker and the giant Golden-rumped Elephant-Shrew, a truly impressive creature.



Golden-breasted Starling by David Hoddinott

Sabaki River Mouth. This is 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, Eurasian Whimbrel, Terek Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Pink-backed Pelican and a variety of other waders. If the area has had a fair bit of rain, the surrounding reedbeds and tall grass and sedges might support Coastal Cisticola, Golden Palm Weaver, Zanzibar Red and very occasionally Fire-fronted Bishops, while the nearby grazed grasslands support the range restricted Malindi Pipit. Other

species that occasionally turn up in the surrounding Sabaki woodlands, scrub and thickets include Eastern Black-headed Batis, Scaly Babbler, Dodson's Bulbul, Basra Reed Warbler and the little-known Violet-breasted Sunbird.



Golden Pipit by Glen Valentine

Watamu Bay to Tsavo East National Park. Checking large Baobab trees en route to the park could produce sightings of both Broad-billed Roller and occasionally Brown-headed Parrot. If we still need Zanzibar Red Bishop or Coastal Cisticolas, we'll stop at the Jilore Swamp at the norther edge of Arabuko-Sokoke Reserve. This area is also great for Spotted Palm Thrush, Golden Palm Weaver, Northern Carmine Bee-eater and Scaly Babbler.

Our journey passes through extensive, arid acacia savanna that offers excellent birding, as well as a chance to see Swahili women in their traditional regalia. The gorgeous Golden-breasted, Shelley's, Magpie and Fischer's Starlings, Tsavo Sunbird, Steel-blue and Straw-tailed Whydahs and a number of raptors such as Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, African Hawk-Eagle, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, migrating Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, the majestic Bateleur, miniscule Pygmy Falcon, migratory Grasshopper Buzzard and Eurasian Hobby will all be looked for along the way to the National Park.

Time permitting, we'll try to find Western Barn Owl as well as Nubian and Slender-tailed Nightjars in the area.

Tsavo East National Park. We have a time to explore the massive Tsavo East National Park. Our day will be full of both bird and mammal highlights as we search for Egyptian, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed, Rüppell's and Lappet-faced Vultures, Blue-cheeked, Kori, Buff-crested and White-bellied Bustards, Black-faced and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Somali Courser, the brilliant Golden Pipit, Somali Ostrich, Black-headed Lapwing, Olive and Somali 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 and Red-and-yellow Barbets, Eastern Olivaceous and Barred Warblers, Pink-breasted, Red-winged, Foxy and Flappet Larks, Chestnut-headed and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Blue-naped Mousebird, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Slate-colored Boubou, Red-tailed Shrike, Red-fronted and Pale



Gerenuk by Glen Valentine

Prinias, Grey Wren-Warbler, Pied Wheatear, roving family groups of Vulturine Guineafowl and the stunning Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird among many other incredible dry-country birds.

Mammal highlights could include Lion, Cheetah, Plains Zebra, the strange-looking Gerenuk, regal Grant's Gazelle, tiny Kirk's Dikdik, African Buffalo, the specialized Lesser Kudu, huge Common Eland, Waterbuck, Impala, Warthog and Giraffe. The Tsavo complex is home to the largest population of African Elephant in Kenya (said to number over 7000), a small population of Black Rhinoceros and even an introduced population of the critically endangered Hirola.



Taita Thrush by David Hoddinott

Taita Hills. These hills famously harbor three highly endangered endemics, namely Taita Thrush, Taita Apalis and Taita White-eye. Recent 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 species that we will be on the lookout for include Augur Buzzard, Mottled and Alpine Swifts, White-necked Raven, Stripe-faced and Placid Greenbuls, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Striped Pipit, Singing Cisticola and White-starred Robin.

Tsavo West National Park. Our well situated lodge often provides superb birding around the grounds. At certain times of the year, the lights of the hotel attract large numbers of Palearctic passerines during their nocturnal



Vulturine Guineafowls by Glen Valentine

migration. We will look out for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin, Common and Thrush Nightingales, Common Whitethroat, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Lesser Grey, Red-backed, Red-tailed and Isabelline Shrikes and a bevy of warblers that might include Marsh, Olive-tree, Barred, River, Upcher's and the little-known Basra Reed.



Cheetah by David Hoddinott

Traversing the arid acacia savanna that dominates Tsavo West National Park, we'll target a number of special, arid-country species such as the rare and localised Friedmann's Lark, Tiny and Ashy Cisticolas, Pygmy and Eastern Black-headed Batis, Rufous and the rare and secretive Scaly Chatterers, White-bellied and Acacia Tits, Mouse-colored Penduline Tit, Hunter's, Black-bellied, Eastern Violet-backed and the localised Tsavo Sunbirds, Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Pringle's Puffback, Three-streaked Tchagra, the rare and skulking Red-naped Bushshrike, Golden-breasted and Magpie Starlings, Chestnut and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Black-cheeked Waxbill, African and Grey-headed Silverbills, Slate-colored Boubous, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Somali Bunting, Bare-eyed Thrush, Black-capped Social Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, D'Arnaud's, Red-and-yellow and Spot-flanked Barbets, the nomadic Golden Pipit, Pale White-eye, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu and the stunning Purple Grenadier.

Other likely possibilities include Common Ostrich, Martial, Verreaux's, Tawny and Long-crested Eagles, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Black-bellied and Hartlaub's Bustards, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinias, African Grey, Pale and Spotted Flycatchers, Chinspot Batis, Amethyst, Beautiful and Variable Sunbirds, Tropical Boubou, Brubru, Black-backed Puffback, Black-crowned Tchagras, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, Northern White-crowned Shrike, White-crested Helmetshrike, Black-headed, African Golden and Eurasian Golden Orioles, both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Oxpeckers perched atop large mammals like Giraffe and Buffalo, the brilliant Greater Blue-eared, Violet-backed and Superb Starlings, Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed and Red-billed Buffalo Weavers, Lesser and Vitelline Masked, Spectacled, Baglafecht, Black-necked and Red-headed Weavers, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Jameson's Firefinch, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Bronze Mannikin, Long-tailed Paradise and Straw-tailed Whydahs and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.



Kikuyu White-eye by Adam Riley



Black-bellied Sunbird by Glen Valentine

Over 60 species of mammals occur in the park, including the scarce and elusive Lesser Kudu and African Wild Dog, while Lion, Spotted Hyena, Yellow-spotted Hyrax, Banded and Dwarf Mongooses, Beisa Oryx and Coke's Hartebeest are more likely. We will certainly be treated to an exceptional African birding and big game experience today!

We have a chance for a few species of nightjar with scarce species such as Sombre and Donaldson-Smith's being possible together with Eurasian.

Tsavo West National Park to Thika. Whilst mostly a travel day, we do pass through upland grasslands with open savanna. 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 and we'll keep our eyes peeled for these as we drive.

Thika area. 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.

Mount Kenya. We will spend the majority of the day exploring the lush forests around our lodge. 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, 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,



Hinde's Babbler by Greg de Klerk



Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher by David Hoddinott

Yellow-bellied and Kandt's Waxbills, the secretive Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Thick-billed Seedeater, Yellow-crowned Canary and, if we are lucky, even 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.

Mount Kenya to Meru National Park. En route we will bird through various forests including Chogoria and the Nyambenis. These spectacular forests hold many of the species we targeted around Mount Kenya, but as they are lower in altitude, and moister, they might produce species like Kenrick's Starling and Orange Ground Thrush.

Meru National Park. One of Kenya's forgotten birding gems. The moist woodland offers some of the best birding in the area. The Kenyan endemic Hinde's Pied Babbler is remarkably common along the trails and a pair of Black-and-white Shrike-flycatchers often breed nearby.

The stream 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 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.

Meru National Park to Shaba National Reserve. The habitat changes dramatically on this drive, 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,



William's Lark by Stratton Hatfield



Aberdare Cisticola by Stratton Hatfield

Black-faced and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Red-bellied Parrot, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Rufous Chatterer and Somali Bunting.

Samburu & Shaba National 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 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.

Samburu to Aberdare National Park. This is mostly a travel day, one of the longest driving days of the tour. We will make 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 another 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.



Sharpe's Longclaw by Stratton Hatfield

Aberdare National Park. Our time 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



Elgon Francolin by Stratton Hatfield

our morning walk might dip below freezing and we will near 12 000 feet above sea level (3 650 meters) so those sensitive to altitude sickness should bring appropriate medication.

Kinangop Plateau. Here we hope to find Lesser Jacana, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, and Sharpe's Longclaw. From Kinangop, we will drop down the eastern rim of the Great Rift Valley towards Soysambu Conservancy.

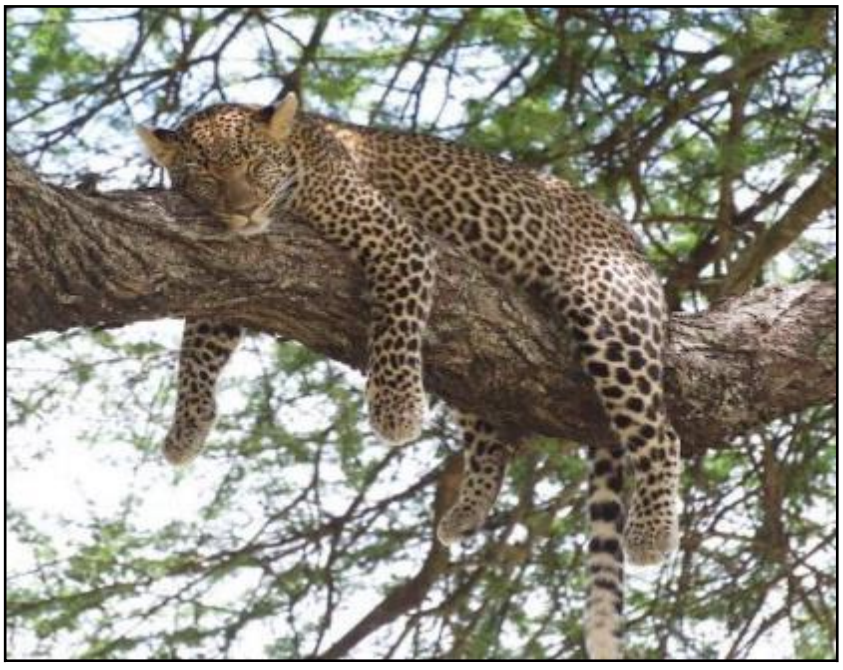
Soysambu Conservancy. The Soysambu Conservancy is located on the shores of Lake Elementeita, one of the rift valley's famous flamingo filled alkaline lakes. The levels of the blue-green alkaline waters of the lake vary and this, with other accompanying environmental changes, causes considerable variation 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.

Aside from 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.

Megafauna in the reserve includes African Buffalo, Plains Zebra, glamorous Rothschild's Giraffe, several antelope species and both Lion and Leopard.

Lake Baringo. We'll spend time 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 include Verreaux's and Greyish Eagle-Owls and Northern White-faced and African Scops Owls, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Hemprich's Hornbill, African Black and



Lazing Leopard by Clayton Burne



Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat by Glen Valentine

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.

Kerio Valley. 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.

Cherangani Mountains. We will make a brief stop at one of the last known haunts of African Spotted Creeper in Kenya.

Kongelai Escarpment. 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.

Keringet Marsh & Dam. Here we hope to find Marsh (Hartlaub's) Widowbird, Splendid Starling, and African Water Rail.

Kakamega Forest. 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. Fabulous, introductory garden birds we are likely to encounter include the striking White-headed Saw-wing, Brown-capped, Dark-backed, Vieillot's Black and Baglafecht Weavers, nesting Grey-throated Barbets, chattery Joyful Greenbul and Yellow-throated Leaflove, African Blue Flycatcher, the impressive Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill, Mackinnon's Shrike,



Black-faced Rufous Warbler by Daniel Danckwerts



Papyrus Gonolek by Stratton Hatfield

Stuhlmann's Starling, Chubb's Cisticola, Northern Double-collared Sunbird and the dazzling African Emerald Cuckoo.

The birding at Kakamega is five-star and we'll be mesmerized by the bounty of spectacular, new species. Birding our way along the wide, open trails through Kakamega's magnificent primary forest, we'll be searching for target species like the giant Great Blue and Black-billed Turacos, Grey Parrot (now rare in Kakamega), Blue Malkoha, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, the incredibly beautiful but scarce and unobtrusive Blue-headed Bee-eater, Yellow-billed, Yellow-spotted and Hairy-breasted Barbets, Thick-billed and Least Honeyguides, Cassin's Honeybird, Brown-eared, Buff-spotted and Yellow-crested Woodpeckers, African Broadbill, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Petit's Cuckooshrike, 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!), a bevy of greenbuls including Kakamega, Ansorge's, Cabanis's, Slender-billed, Honeyguide, Plain, Yellow-whiskered, Little Grey and the rare Toro Olive Greenbuls, Buff-throated and Black-throated Apalis, Green Hylia, Uganda Woodland Warbler (much easier to find here than in Uganda!), very localized Turner's Eremomela, Dusky Tit, White-breasted and Grey-headed Nigritas, Red-headed Bluebill, Black-crowned Waxbill, the scarce and unobtrusive Black-billed Weaver, Red-headed Malimbe, Bar-tailed Trogon and Olive Sunbird.

Understory skulkers include White-spotted Flufftail, Blue-shouldered and Grey-winged Robin-Chats, beautiful but rare and shy Grey-chested Babbler, Scaly-breasted and more rarely Pale-breasted, Mountain and Brown Illadopsis, White-chinned and Black-faced Prinias and the musical and attractive, Black-faced Rufous Warbler. If we're fortunate to encounter an ant swarm we'll watch out unobtrusive ground-dwellers like White-tailed Rufous Thrush, Brown-chested Alethe, Equatorial Akalat and Red-tailed Bristlebill that are attracted to these ant gatherings.



Red-headed Bluebill by Stratton Hatfield

A grassy clearing at the forest edge sometimes yields Crowned Eagle and African Goshawk in display flight in the late morning when temperatures rise, as well as Yellow-mantled Widowbirds buzzing over the rank grass, Stout Cisticolas calling and



Compact Weaver by Stratton Hatfield

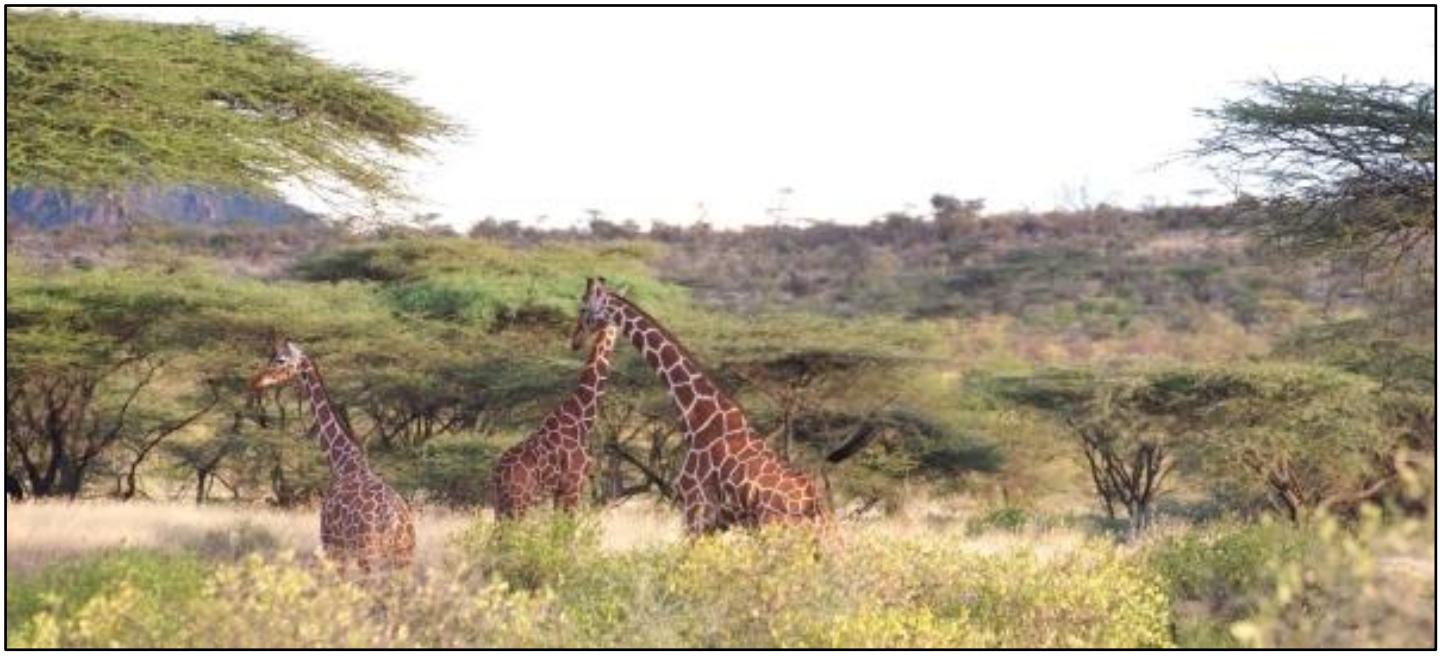
displaying, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Yellow-throated Longclaw and the two prize species here: the stunning and patchily distributed Orange-tufted Sunbird and the rare and ultra-elusive Blue Quail.

Mammals we might find include the long-tailed Blue and Red-tailed Monkeys and regal Guereza Colobus.

Kakamega to Busia. We will 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-billed Weaver and Bar-breasted Firefinch.

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.

Kisumu. Kisumu is located at the edge of Lake Victoria, where we'll visit Hippo Point (Dunga Swamp) for a bounty of new and exciting species. Nesting weavers of various types will grab our attention and include Northern Brown-throated, Slender-billed, Black-headed, Village and Golden-backed. Swamp Flycatchers and Red-chested Sunbirds perch at the papyrus-edge and we'll also watch out for Black-headed Gonolek, the uncommon Papyrus Canary, Winding Cisticola and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Double-toothed Barbet and Eastern Plantain-eater in the surrounding trees.



Reticulated Giraffe by Clayton Burne



Mara Lions by David Hoddinott

We'll take some time to bird the area's papyrus specialties such as the rare Papyrus Yellow Warbler, stunning Papyrus Gonolek, Carruthers's Cisticola, the localized White-winged, Greater Swamp and Highland Rush Warblers and the scarce Papyrus Canary, while other interesting species we might find include Little Bittern, Western Reef and Purple Herons, Blue-headed Coucal, Woolly-necked Stork, African Openbill, Sacred and Glossy Ibis, African Jacana, Gull-billed Tern, African Reed, Sedge and Lesser Swamp Warblers and if we're extremely lucky, Allen's Gallinule or Lesser Moorhen.

Maasai Mara National Park. 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 Oloololo 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.

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.



Martial Eagle by Stratton Hatfield

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	🟥⬜⬜	Difficult. This a Mega style tour designed for the dedicated lister & serious birder. Not suitable for dedicated / avid photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges.
Birding Ease	🟥🟨⬜	Demanding. Some species density is low, forest birding present typical challenges. Several difficult target species.
Accommodation	⬜🟨🟩	Moderate to comfortable, some safari tented camps, a few basic lodges.
Walking / Trails	⬜🟨🟩	Restricted to vehicles in megafauna reserves. Roadside and lodge gardens. Moderate walking at several locations (possibility of off trail hiking).
Vehicles / Roads	⬜🟨🟩	Comfortable safari vehicle with pop open roof. Mostly flat sealed roads between major towns. Dirt roads within most wildlife areas. Road conditions can be variable during the wet season. Several very long drives.
Photography	⬜🟨🟩	Worthwhile to good but limited by time constraints.
Annoyances	⬜🟨🟩	Can be bright & hot with humidity on the coast. Biting Tsetse fly may be encountered. One morning at high altitude (3 650m) in very cold conditions (freezing).

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to dinner on day 26;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- 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.

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 you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check-in luggage and 8kg (18lb) for hand luggage.
- To cover the variety of sites in this large country, there are some long drives. Our vehicle is a comfortable safari modified Toyota Landcruiser.
- We will be visiting several national parks and reserves where there are good numbers of megafauna; for our safety we are naturally confined to the vehicles while on game drives but can exit at dedicated rest stops.
- We will be birding in some parts of this beautiful land that are far away from medical facilities.
- 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. To cover the route needed to maximize the species list we stay for a single nights 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.
- Due to Maasai Mara NP regulations, departure day game drives are not permitted. Vehicles are required to remain closed as they drive to the gate.



Typical 4x4 birding and game viewing Toyota Landcruiser.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour departs from Nairobi on the morning of day 1. Please do arrive the evening before to ensure there is no delay to departure. The tour concludes in Nairobi in the late afternoon/early evening of day 26.

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.

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO) is the main port of entry/departure for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.