Tanzania

Highlights of the North: Birds and Big Game

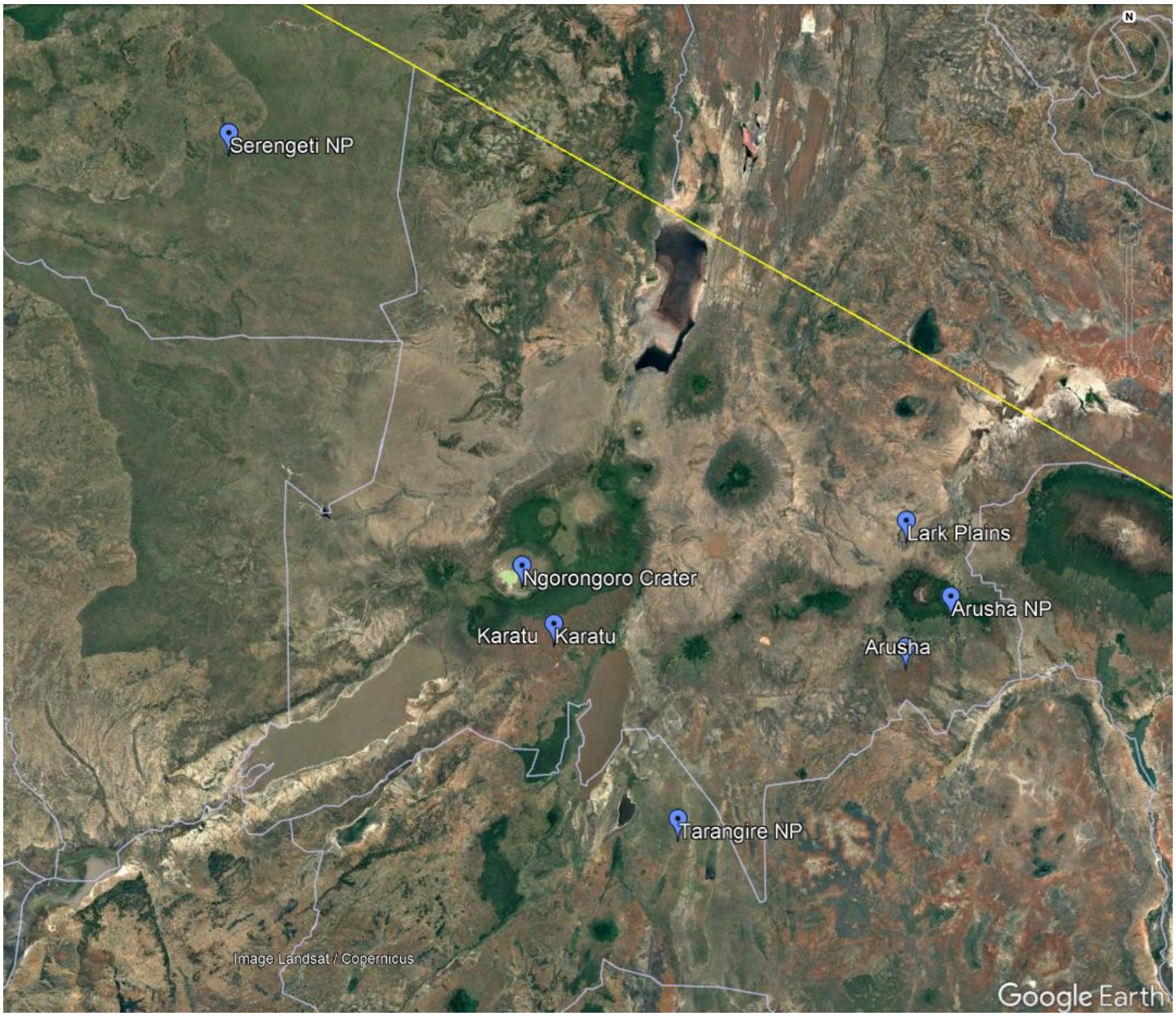


Fischer's Lovebirds by Adam Riley

Our tour explores the famous and quintessential birding and wildlife reserves of northern Tanzania, Tarangire, the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater. The tour will focus on Tanzanian endemics and regional specials whilst having ample time to marvel at some of the highest concentrations of wildlife to be found anywhere on our planet, and all this amidst spectacular scenery in one of Africa's wildest, most stable and least spoilt destinations. Some of the many regional specials and endemic birds that we will target on this tour are the beautiful Fischer's and Yellow-collared Lovebirds, Ashy Starling, Grey-breasted Spurfowl and Rufous-tailed Weaver. With Mt. Kilimanjaro as a backdrop, we will search for the highly localized Beesley's Lark, one the world's rarest lark species with perhaps no more than 250 birds left. Our tour uses a good standard of accommodation and comfortable safari vehicles with pop-up roof hatches to optimize viewing. This incredible and immensely rewarding birding safari is augmented by some of the most outstanding mammal viewing the world has to offer.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Arusha**
Day 2	**Lark Plains**
Day 3	**Arusha National Park**
Day 4	**Arusha to Tarangire National Park**
Day 5	**Tarangire National Park to Karatu**
Day 6	**Karatu to Serengeti National Park**
Days 7 & 8	**Serengeti National Park**
Day 9	**Serengeti National Park to Ngorongoro ridge**
Day 10	**Ngorongoro Crater to Karatu**
Day 11	**Karatu to Arusha & depart**



Birding sites in detail



Beesley's Lark by Adam Riley

Lark Plains. We head north of Arusha today, to visit the Oldonyo Sambu area. The site we explore here is known as Angyata Osugat or 'Lark Plains', and rightly so, as it is possible to record up to eight species of lark at this site including the erratic Athi Short-toed, Pink-breasted, the nomadic Short-tailed and the rare, endemic Beesley's (a recent split from Spike-heeled Lark). Situated in the rain-shadow of Mt. Meru, this area is also home to a host of dry-country specials which include White-headed Mousebird, Ashy and Tiny Cisticolas, Red-fronted Warbler, Northern Crombec, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Taita Fiscal and Steel-blue Whydah. In addition to the aforementioned avian gems, we could find some interesting wildlife including the bizarre Gerenuk (an antelope with a giraffe-like neck), Speke's Sand Lizard and the camouflaged Tropical Spiny Agama.

Arusha National Park. Arusha National Park is located close to the city of Arusha, the capital of the northern safari circuit in Tanzania, and is a complete contrast to birding anywhere else in the much drier surroundings. We will spend the day exploring the mosaic of forest and grassland habitats in search of the park specials which could include Scaly Francolin, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Narina Trogon, White-starred Robin, White-eared Barbet, Stripe-faced and Grey-olive Greenbuls, Red-throated Twinspot, Black-throated Wattle-eye, African Emerald Cuckoo, Red-winged and Violet-backed Starlings, Retz's Helmetshrike, Pallid Honeyguide, Black-headed Oriole, Broad-ringed White-eye, Red-backed Mannikin, shy Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Green-backed Honeybird, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Moustached Grass Warbler and Bronzy Sunbird. Mammal highlights may include sightings of Blue Monkey, African Buffalo, Waterbuck, 'Maasai' Giraffe, Harvey's Duiker and Bushbuck.

Tarangire National Park. The Tarangire ecosystem is the third largest in Tanzania, sprawling over a vast 20 000km^2 (over 7 700 miles^2). Seasonally, the park supports the second largest concentration of wildlife in Tanzania surpassed only by the Serengeti during peak migration! However, Tarangire is most famous for its huge numbers of African Elephant that congregate along the meandering Tarangire River. We will take time to observe these massive pachyderms and will be amazed at their tender family interactions. Other mammals likely to be seen include the stately Waterbuck, Impala, comical Common Warthog and (Maasai) Giraffe.



Superb Starling by Adam Riley

The Acacia woodland and Baobab studded grasslands also provide a home for many birds, with the park total exceeding 500 species! During our time here we have the opportunity to find



Rufous-tailed Weaver by Rob Williams

African Hawk-Eagle, the diminutive Pygmy Falcon, Double-banded Courser, Red-necked and Yellow-necked Spurfowls, Black-faced Sandgrouse, White-bellied Bustard, Meyer's and Red-bellied Parrots, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Red-and-yellow and D'Arnaud's Barbets, Mottled Spinetail, Spotted Palm Thrush, Banded Parisoma, flocks of Northern Pied Babbler and delightful Red-cheeked and Blue-capped Cordon-bleus. Two major targets for the area are the Tanzanian endemic, Ashy Starling and East African endemic, Yellow-collared Lovebird.

Night birding around our lodge can be fruitful for Slender-tailed and Freckled Nightjars and the diminutive African Scops Owl.

Oldupai Gorge. The well-known Oldupai Gorge, so named after the wild Sisal plant that grows there. As a result of massive geological activities over the eons, Oldupai provides a unique record of countless years of fossilized creatures and plants in a series of stratified rock-layers. Most famous of all discoveries, which revolutionized thinking on hominid evolution, have been those of Australopithecine hominid remains found by the Leakey family. We will have time to explore the very informative museum at the site that exhibits replicas of the hominid fossils and extinct animals that used to inhabit the region, ranging from River Elephant and Giant Swine to Short-necked Giraffe!

A bird walk around the site may yield arid-country species such as Slate-colored Boubou, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Rufous Chatterer, Kenya Sparrow, Vitelline Masked Weaver, White-bellied Canary, Southern Grosbeak-Canary and the beautiful Purple Grenadier.

Serengeti National Park. Extending for an incredible 15 000km^2 (5 790miles^2), the Serengeti is one of the world's largest natural sanctuaries. Despite the vast space, the numbers of game that we can expect to see is still astounding. The Serengeti, literally meaning 'Endless Plain' in Maasai, consists mostly of grasslands interspersed with Acacia woodlands and rocky outcrops. There is little permanent water in the park and this fact, combined with a fairly regular rainfall pattern, has resulted in the world-famous Wildebeest migration, when up to two million large ungulates move between the Serengeti in Tanzania and Maasai Mara in Kenya. Migration



Lazy Leopard by Clayton Burne



Serval by Julian Parsons

is relatively predictable from year to year but is dependent on rainfall. Any changes to rain volume and location, can impact the position of the herds.

During our visit to the Serengeti, we will primarily explore the southern and central areas. Once again, we have the chance of finding the full complement of African megafauna. We hope to see lazing prides of Lion, Leopard draped over large trees, aloof Cheetah resting on or vantage points, skulking Spotted Hyena, jackals and, if we are fortunate, the bizarre Bat-eared Fox. Several species of smaller cats such as Caracal, Serval or African Wild Cat may also be seen. Besides Common Wildebeest, the Serengeti supports huge populations of Plains Zebra, African Buffalo, (Maasai) Giraffe, Common Warthog, Thomson's and Grant's Gazelles, Impala, Tsessebe, Hartebeest, Bohor Reedbuck, Eland and smaller numbers of African Elephant, Common Hippopotamus, rubber-nosed Kirk's Dikdik, Oribi and Defassa Waterbuck.

Additionally, there will certainly be a veritable feast of superb birds to keep us very busy for our time spent exploring the park. Star birds include the East African endemics Grey-crested Helmetshrike, and Red-throated Tit, the striking Steel-blue Whydah and the highly localised Karamoja Apalis. Other specials are Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Fischer's Lovebird, Rufous-tailed Weaver, Usambiro Barbet and Athi Short-toed Lark.

These birds can be found together with a host of other species such as the magnificent Saddle-billed Stork, up to six species of vulture, the grotesque Marabou Stork, stately Secretarybird, Bateleur, Chestnut-bellied and Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Kori and White-bellied Bustards, coveys of Coqui Francolin, Temminck's Courser, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Red-fronted Barbet, Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill, the whimsical Southern Ground Hornbill, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Black-lored Babbler, Taita and Grey-backed Fiscals, Magpie Shrike, Hildebrandt's and splendid Rüppell's Starlings, both species of oxpecker, Silverbird, the cute Buff-bellied Warbler, aptly named Beautiful Sunbird, Red-headed and Speckle-fronted Weavers, Grey-capped Social Weaver, Chestnut Sparrow, Blue-capped Cordonbleu, Black-faced Waxbill and, if we are fortunate, Grey-headed Silverbill.



Grey-crested Helmetshrike by Adam Riley

Not only is this a great place in which to find game and birds, but the wide green-gold savannas, dotted with thorn trees, also make it ideal for photography. The Serengeti is ravishingly beautiful and offers long, undisturbed views and utterly dramatic panoramas.



Ngorongoro Crater vista by Rob Williams

Ngorongoro Crater Conservancy. The vast Ngorongoro Conservation Area covering 8 300km^2 (3 200miles^2) is a World Heritage Site that protects Earth's largest intact volcanic caldera (260km^2 / 100miles^2) and one of the world's most scenically breath-taking natural areas. What's more, the crater is also home to one of the planet's densest populations of large mammals.

The fabulous forests that cloak the rim of this iconic site are home to a feast of Afro-montane forest species such as Hildebrandt's Francolin, Schalow's Turaco, the elusive Brown-backed Woodpecker, beautiful Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Mountain Greenbul, Brown-headed Apalis, Brown Parisoma, skulking Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Dusky and White-eyed Slaty Flycatchers, busy flocks of Broad-ringed White-eyes and dazzling Tacazze, Golden-winged and Eastern Double-collared Sunbirds, Baglafecht Weaver and Streaky Seedeater.

The drive down to the Ngorongoro crater floor (600m / 1,970ft) is excellent for birding, and we will keep our eyes peeled for Variable Sunbird, Singing, Hunter's and the localized but dapper Lynes's Cisticolas, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Yellow-crowned Canary and Southern Citril.

The crater is deluxe 'Big Five' territory and a photographer's dream. Most of the animals are extremely relaxed and habituated to the presence of human admirers and the high crater walls, usually cloaked in a pure white frosting of clouds, make for dramatic backdrops to animal photography. In addition, the crater floor provides a mini example of a complete African ecosystem with forests, lakes, grasslands, swamps, and rivers. Between 25,000 and 30,000 large animals reside in the crater and great concentrations of Common Wildebeest and Plains Zebra are supplemented by smaller numbers of African Elephant (we hope to find some of the crater's famous Tuskers), African Buffalo, the highly endangered Black Rhinoceros, Common Hippopotamus, Eland and both Thomson's and Grant's Gazelles. The crater reputably boasts the world's highest concentration of



African Elephant by David Hoddinott



Martial Eagle by Rob Williams

predators, and these include Lion, Cheetah, Leopard, Serval, Golden and Black-backed Jackals, Bat-eared Fox, and Spotted Hyena.

The birding is equally rewarding, and we can expect to find many of the picture-book species that make Africa so famous. Pink rafts of Greater and Lesser Flamingos on Lake Magadi, Common Ostrich striding over the grasslands, regal Kori Bustard (the world's heaviest flying bird), Saddle-billed and Yellow-billed Storks, the elegant Grey Crowned Crane and good numbers of raptors including the unique Secretarybird, Bateleur, Martial Eagle, Black-chested Snake Eagle and Augur Buzzard could all be found. Amongst the many other species that we may encounter, we hope to see the uncommon Shelley's Francolin, Black-bellied Bustard, Dusky Turtle Dove, White-headed Barbet, Pectoral-patch Cisticola, comical Anteater Chat, Black-crowned Tchagra, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, attractive and melodious Grey-capped Warbler, Yellow Bishop, the range-restricted Rufous-tailed Weaver, beautiful Rosy-throated and the East African endemic Pangani Longclaws, Fan-tailed Widowbird and the skittish Quailfinch, the latter probably more easily seen here than anywhere else!

Maasai Experience. As we approach Oldupai Gorge (Day 6), we pass through an area that is home to the Maasai people. These tall, proud nomadic warriors are famous for their legendary prowess in battle and single-handed acts of bravery in fights with wild animals. Here, we have the opportunity for an optional (non-inclusive) excursion to a traditional Maasai village. A local guide will explain their unique culture as you watch the people busy about their daily chores. You will also be treated to a display of the famous Maasai dancing and will have unlimited photographic opportunities.



Cheetah by Rob Williams

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions. Forest edge birding is limited.
Accommodation		Comfortable lodges & tented safari camp
Walking / Trails		Limited walking, mostly around lodge gardens.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable safari vehicle with pop open roof. Mostly flat sealed roads between major towns. Dirt roads within most wildlife areas.
Photography		Excellent. From vehicle and in lodge gardens. No dedicated hides.
Annoyances		Can be bright and hot. Biting Tsetse fly are encountered at times.

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 dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 11;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- 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 excursion to a traditional Maasai village;
- Optional guided forest walks;
- 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.**

- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag (20 kg / 44 lb) and one carry-on bag, as space in the vehicles is limited.
- Due to the presence of potentially dangerous game, we will be spending much of this tour in vehicles, including birding time.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts with a welcome dinner on the evening of day 1. As this is an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in the late afternoon of day 11.

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.

Kilimanjaro International Airport, Arusha (IATA: JRO) is the main port of entry and exit 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.