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Ken Logan



THE BIRDS OF KENYA MAR 2016



We flew into Nairobi late in the afternoon after a short 3 hour flight from Joburg (what a pleasure after our long Asian flights). We were met by Moses and our driver Charles and headed through the Nairobi rush hour to our hotel in the northern suburbs. As in most East African cities there were plenty of Kites and Marabou Storks in the air overhead.

The next day we were up before dawn and on our way heading west- we were doing the Northern Circuit in a clockwise direction. Our first stop shortly after first light was at one of the Rift Valley viewpoints. Here we were entertained by Golden-winged Sunbird (a spectacular bird), Eastern Double-collared Sunbird and in fast succession Hunters and Singing Cisticolas. Three new birds in half an hour- we were off to great start.

Our main target of the morning was Sharpe's Longclaw on the Kinangop Plains- a difficult bird which hides in the calf-length grass and then flushes and lands 50 metres away and is happy to play that game all morning. As we climbed on to the plain we had Schalow's Wheatear alongside the road beside Kenya Rufous Sparrow and Streaky Seed-eater while Nyanza Swifts buzzed us overhead. It took over an hour to find a pair of Longclaws but Stout Cisticola and Northern Anteater Chat kept interrupting the search.



We arrived at Crayfish Camp on the shores of Lake Naivasha mid afternoon. Half an hour birding around the compound gave us White-eyed Slaty Flycatchers and Superb and Ruppells Starlings- common birds we were to see many times on the trip. Then we were off to Hells Gate NP – the only reserve we entered where you are allowed to walk on foot as there is no dangerous game there. Our targets here were Abyssinian Scimitarbill –which we had missed in Ethiopia and Red-throated Tit -plus the split on Wailing Cisticola – Lyne's Cisticola. We found all three. Game wise never having visited East African Parks before we had our first Grant's and Thompson's Gazelles and Cokes's Hartebeest. It does not take long to familiarise yourself with these animals and we were to see them in all the major reserves. In the write ups on Hell's Gate NP there is always mention of a pair of nesting Lammergeier there. No longer said Moses- they were shot by a farmer some years ago.



Day 3 saw us up early and on the road for the Crater Lake sanctuary- a small reserve (but still with a 20\$ entrance fee). Here we had a very pleasant two hours birding. We found Hildebrandt's Spurfowl on the way in and then in the great early morning light along came African Grey and Nubian Woodpeckers, Dusky Turtle Dove, and an obliging flock of Grey-crested Helmet-shrikes. We then retired to the lodge on the lake shore for a late breakfast but not before finding White-bellied Tit and Tropical Boubou in the garden and Crimson-



rumped Waxbill and Western Citril on the steep entangled slope down to the lake side. While waiting for breakfast we wandered past the chalets to look at the Fischer's Lovebirds nesting in a dead tree while a Grey-capped Warbler and Baglafaecht Weavers bathed in a bird bath near by. Kenyan roads were unbelievably bad and the road into the Masai Mara was simply appalling- and before getting on to the more pleasant aspects of the park. I should perhaps mention the only set of Public toilets in the centre/Southern end of the park. They were simply unusable. There were 5 other pop tops there when we arrived with French and

German speaking tourists amongst others and they all came out shaking their heads in disgust. They charge you 80\$ a day to enter the park and I really can't understand what kind of 3rd world mentality lets you think you can charge that sort of money and provide no public conveniences at all. Even Botswana isn't that bad!! Tanzania fortunately was a completely different story and all the park loos were clean and usable and even had toilet paper.

The road into the Mara passes through Masai tribal lands with lots of cattle around and plenty of antelope outside the park. The Mara has no fence around it. We stopped for Straw-tailed Whydah and Fischer's Sparrowlark before arriving at our lodge – Crocodile camp right on the boundary of the park with tented chalets running along the river bank- a pleasant spot with good birding inside the grounds. I photographed Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Grey Kestrel, Spot-flanked Barbet, Usambiro Barbet, Nubian Woodpecker, Buff-bellied Warbler, Red-faced Crombec, Marico Sunbird, and Purple Grenadier all within the lodge grounds.



We were up at dawn the next morning , excited at the thought of spending a full day in the famous Masai Mara. The Mara is basically a large grassy plain with the grass in March varying from long to short. In the short grazed grasslands near the entrance gate there were plenty of antelope around and we added Topi to our list of new species. There were practically no Wildebeest or Zebra around- we were to find them all at the start of the migration in the Serengeti in a month's time. As we drove deeper into the park the grass got longer and the antelope petered out, leaving us with a few plains Giraffe and the odd lone elephant out in the distance. Then we had a call on the two-way radio. A pop-top had found a female Cheetah and her single surviving youngster- we were told she had at one time had four cubs with her. We found them within five minutes but all they really wanted to do was lie down in the shade of the pop top.



Now I am sure you have all watched the videos of the Wildebeest trying to cross the Mara river with the crocs lying in wait. Don't get too excited at being able to see that spectacle yourself. The wildebeest won't cross the river with vehicles lined up along the bank , so the pop tops are banished to Look out hill half a kilometre away and only the film crews who pay thousands of dollars a day are allowed close to the river bank itself.

So there was nothing to distract our attention from the birds that morning. We found a pair of Saddle-billed Stork displaying to each other, and a pair of grey-crowned Crane with their youngster in tow. We also found a pair of Northern White-bellied Bustard who proved to be quite approachable. There were several Montagu's and Pallid Harriers quartering the grasslands and in places there were small thickets of shrubs and here we found Black-lored Babbblers and Desert and Croaking Cisticolas. There are also the odd lone acacia trees scattered across the grassland and we headed for the shade of one for our picnic lunch. Now the Rufous-tailed Weaver is supposed to be a Tanzanian endemic but there is an isolated population in the Mara and I think all 20 birds were under this one acacia scavenging on some one's picnic leftovers along with the Ruppells Starlings and Yellow-spotted Petronias.



We then went down to Mara river itself- a mere trickle at the start of the rainy season and found nothing more than a few hippo trying to find a pool deep enough to submerge in. We did however get great views of a Grey Kestrel in a tree alongside the river. The afternoon heat had by now quietened the birdlife but we found a pair of juvenile Cuckoo-finch waiting to be fed by a prinia and some difficult to see Rosy-breasted Longclaws and Quailfinch in one of the wet depressions alongside the road.



So not a great days 'game viewing and only one of the big five on show but it had proved to be an interesting days birding even though it hadn't been filled with new birds.

After some late afternoon birding around the lodge we retired for a cold Tuskers at the end of a long hot day and started looking forward to our Journey up to Kisumu and Lake Victoria in the morning. We arrived at our hotel mid afternoon in the bustling town of Kisumu right on the shores of Lake

Victoria and an hour later we heading down to the shore line in search of Angola Swallow. There were plenty of them flying under the bridge over a small creek, but flying too fast to photograph. I had to make do with a couple of birds on the telephone wire. Further down the creek we found our first White-throated Bee-eaters alongside Malachite and Pied Kingfishers and our first Red-chested Sunbird.

There is a stunning array of weavers in the scrub and reeds around the lake. That evening we had Slender-billed, Golden Backed, Northern Brown Throated and Yellow backed.

There were birds everywhere. Blue-spotted Doves, Red Cheeked Cordon-bleus, African Thrush, Swamp Flycatcher, Carruther's, and Red-faced Cisticolas, and the first of our Gonoleks- very attractive shrike-like birds – the Black-headed Gonolek- looking very similar to our Crimson-breasted Shrike. Then we found- guess what- a pair of Yellow-throated Leaflove- who needs to go to Namibia?- although we had seen them before in Uganda..

Unfortunately they flew as we approached never to





be seen again so no photograph- maybe I do need to go to Namibia?

The following morning we were on our boat half an hour before sunup listening to the birds waking in the reed beds in front of us. I was keen to get a shot of Greater Swamp-warbler - a bird I had missed on our last two trips to Namibia. It proved highly uncooperative but as the light was still way too bad for photography I was happy to be patient and wait.

Fishing boats were starting to head out into the lake and then an African Hobby broke cover just 10

metres from us and hurtled out across the lake quickly followed by its mate. Things were starting to warm up. We started the motor and headed across the bay where we were going to potter along the reed beds for the next three hours. We missed two of our main targets Papyrus Yellow and White-winged Warblers but had good views of Sedge Warbler, Little Bittern, more White-throated Bee-eaters and loads of roosting Barn Swallows and Brown-throated Martins. I was just about giving up on the Swamp-Warbler when he surrendered and came out to give us a marvellous display but the bird of the morning just had to be the Papyrus Gonolek. This bird is a stunner and after responding to the playback from deep in the reeds for over half an hour he too put in a surprise appearance calling at the top of his voice long after we had stopped trying to lure him out.

So despite lots more weavers and Swamp flycatchers and still no sign of the two warblers we wanted we headed back to shore and headed off to Kakamega the one true piece of rain forest left in Kenya.



We had one afternoon, a full day, and another morning to explore Kakamega- plenty of time to visit different areas of the forest. We stayed at Rondo run by a Christian organisation (no booze for sale) but you can bring your own in if necessary (and with us it was). Rondo is a beautifully restored house that belonged to a forester many years ago. It is full of old world charm and had spacious chalets all with their own sitting rooms. It reminded me of places up in the Northern Transvaal around Magoebaskloof.

Unfortunately the weather was not great during our stay- it rained at night and we birded under grey leaden skies. They have a beautiful garden at Rondo with some really mature trees. There was even a Crowned Eagle nest with a youngster who looked just about ready to fly. We never saw the adults at all. They apparently leave the young bird to fend for itself for up to two days at a time. The



turacos visit the garden on a daily basis- we saw Great blue and Ross's there. Other good birds in the garden included Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, and Grey-throated and Yellow-spotted Barbets. A short afternoon walk after our arrival gave us Cabanis's and Joyful Greenbuls, Brown-chested Alethe, White-tailed Ant-thrush, Uganda Woodland Warbler, Olive-green Cameroptera, Black-collared Apalis, Northern Double collared Sunbird, Snowy-crowned and Grey-winged Robin-chats. We were off to a great start.

The next day we had a morning session in the forest Interior and in the afternoon we walked the main road through the forest. We had great views of Red-headed Bluebill but despite chasing him for over half an hour from the tea plantation back into the forest fringe I never managed a shot. We had three new weavers on the forest edge- Brown-capped, Black-billed and Viellot's Black, alongside Luhder's Bush-shrike, Turner's Eremomela and White-chinned Prinia. In the forest Interior we found Equatorial Akalat and Blue-shouldered Robin- chat, and Ansorge's Greenbul. So overall a very productive time at Kakamega- what did we miss? - a couple of Greenbuls and unfortunately the Blue-headed Bee-eater which would have complemented the Black Bee-eater we saw in Uganda.



Then we were off, back into the dry country heading for Lake Baringo and the Soi Safari lodge. We stopped for lunch right on the edge of the escarpment up at 2600 metres. The restaurant was busy with Kenyan athletes doing their high altitude training and overseas paragliders- you can fly for nearly 20 kilometres along the rift valley following the line of the escarpment.

Birding in the garden gave us Little Rock-Thrush and Chestnut-throated Apalis along with Mocking Cliff Chats and Variable Sunbirds. We missed another good bird on the escarpment edge Boran Cisticola but there was plenty else waiting for us in the dry scrub around the lake. Just before arriving at the lodge we stopped for Brown Babbler.



We were out in the dry thornveld bush just before day break ready for some different birding. Jackson's Hornbill was first to put in an appearance closely followed by Northern Red-billed Hornbill, Beautiful Sunbird, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Spotted Palm-thrush and Upcher's and Olive-tree Warblers.

As the morning light grew stronger we found Gambaga Flycatcher, Three-streaked Tchagra, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Slate-coloured Boubou, Pygmy Batis and along the rocky hillside edge Brown-tailed Rock Chat. Before heading back for lunch we found a local who knew where to find a Northern White-faced Scops-Owl and he too was added to the list.

We had a nice room overlooking the lake at Soi Safari Lodge, an enormous place of 200 plus rooms with just the usual handful of people staying there and after resting up for a couple of hours through the midday heat we were back in the field. Our first bird was a great bird for me- Heuglin's or Three-banded Courser. The East-African field guide by Stevenson and Fanshawe still uses all the old East African names which can be confusing at times. It was first published in 2002 and it is really surprising that it has never been replaced or updated since. Compared to South Africa where

updates happen every couple of years it desperately needs something more recent. We found a party of four Coursers resting in the shade of a bush and I was delighted to get some nice shots after some careful stalking. Beside the coursers there were some Grey-headed Silverbills in a close-by tree. That evening we tried our hand for the first and only time for some Nightjars. We went to a disused runway which had now become a thoroughfare for the locals on their motorbikes so it was not a great success but





we did find and photograph a Slender-tailed Nightjar. We didn't do well on this trip for nightjars or owls largely because you can't drive at night in all the major parks but it is something that Moses needs to make a plan around for future trips.

After some early birding the next day it was time to head for Nakuru and Thompson Falls but not before stopping for White-bellied go-away-bird, Greater Honeyguide, Northern Brownbul and White-browed Scrub-Robin.

Day 11 of our trip saw us heading for Samburu NP our most northern destination on our circuit. I really liked Samburu – it proved to be my favourite of all the Kenyan National Parks. It is the essence of Africa with a stark and harsh beauty softened, while we were there, by lots of greenery from the recent rains they had had. The reserve on both the Samburu and Buffalo Springs sides is fed by the Uaso Ngiro river which is a natural magnet for most of the game. We stayed at Samburu lodge right on the banks of the river- a great place with the best restaurant we had in Kenya. They feed the crocodiles just in front of the restaurant so you had to pass five or six really huge beasts every evening on your way to supper. The monkeys were a nuisance- but a Masai with a catapult kept them at bay.

The reserve itself simply teems with birds and game. Once through the gate we quickly found Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-weaver. White-throated Bee-eaters were everywhere and where you find White-throated you will rarely find Somali Bee-eater. And that proved to be the case as we missed Somali Bee-eater here (and luckily found it in Tsavo) but the other four Somalis- the Ostrich, Courser, Long-billed Crombec and Golden-breasted Bunting we did find on our travels. Birding stops were numerous –we spent twenty minutes with the Vulturine Guineafowl (my bird of the trip), Golden Pipit (they were plentiful) recalled the long drive down to see the bird in KZN, and then we ventured on something really quite special.



We caught a glimpse of an Irania (White-throated Robin-chat)- this bird is normally a skulker but eventually he posed beautifully singing away in his full breeding plumage. This of course reminded me of the one and only record in South Africa when a farmer in the Northern Cape found the bird in his garden; recognised it as something different and took a few photos. It took two weeks for the news to get out and when the twitchers arrived in the Cape the next day they found to their horror



the bird had left overnight. So only one farmer has seen the Irania in South Africa. Check my photos to see what you missed!

The raptors were few and far between- we saw Tawny, Steppe, Wahlberg's, African Hawk, Martial and Lesser Spotted but they are as scarce here in Kenya as they are now in South Africa. After the Vultures the Eagles should be next on Birdlife's protection agenda. Another unusual sighting was a pair of Harlequin Quail that walked across the road



in front of us and stopped and asked if they could have their photograph taken! We had two bustards in the park White-bellied and Buff-crested but no Heuglin's. We had two Sandgrouse -Black-faced and Chestnut-bellied but no Lichtenstein's. We found our first White-headed Mousebirds along with Blue-naped. There were lots of Hornbills- Eastern Yellow-billed, Northern Red-billed, African Grey, Crowned and Von Der Decken's. Barbet-wise we had D'Arnauds, Black-throated and Red and Yellow and we found most of the Larks- Foxy, Pink-breasted, and Red-winged.

So a thoroughly enjoyable stay with a leopard climbing down from its tree as dusk was falling as a closing highlight.

A very different National Park now awaited us – The Aberdares

From Samburu we detoured to Mukuruweini for two special birds. Moses had arranged for two local birders to find the birds to save us some time on arrival and sure enough we were quickly led to Hinde's and Northern Pied Babblers. Hinde's is a strange Babbler- a skulker who would fly closer when called but would always stay deep inside the bush. I spent an hour chasing it and never got a shot. We added Brown-backed Honeybird to our list before leaving for Nyeri.

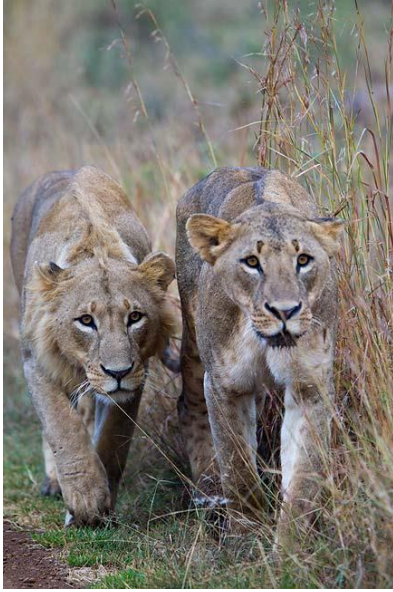


We left Nyeri early the next morning for the Aberdares. We had a great day in this park. We had it to ourselves and had great sightings of Leopard and Buffalo on the narrow track. It is very scenic and we birded from the pop top as we climbed up to over 2000 metres. We found Hartlaub's Turaco and another Palearctic migrant -Blackcap early on and then chased the specials- Jacksons and Scaly Francolins, Mountain Yellow Warbler, and on top Aberdare Cisticola, Alpine Chat, and Scarlet-tufted Sunbird. Just before we started the climb to the moorlands on the summit we spotted a large buck which was already disappearing into the forest. It looked like a Bongo but with just a brief glimpse we will never know for sure.

Things were quieter on the way down but we spotted the same Leopard in the same place we had seen him earlier in the day. We grabbed a quick lunch in Nyeri and headed to Castle Forest Lodge in



The Mount Kenya NP. Here as dusk fell we had distant sightings of Waller's Starling and Red-fronted Parrot but the Olive Ibis didn't co-operate with a fly by to their roosting site. The next morning- still no Olive Ibis but we picked up Tullberg's Woodpecker on our walk but never found the Oriole Finch along the banks of the stream: to compensate I got a photo of the Brown Woodland Warbler. The tsetse flies were really bad here and the forest went very quiet after eight o'clock so we didn't tarry long and packed up after



breakfast and headed for Nairobi to complete the Northern Circuit.

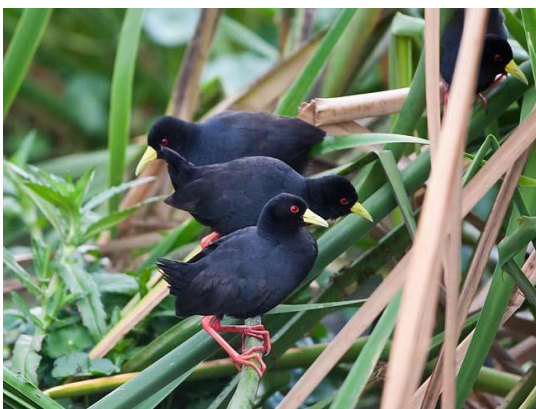
One bird we had tried for and missed in several places was Jackson's Widowbird and Nairobi NP was probably our last chance. As it turned out we were eventually to find it on the crater rim in Tanzania but that didn't detract from a very pleasant morning in Nairobi NP; a mere ten kilometres from the city centre. We had one great experience where a young male and female lion used our vehicle to stalk a herd of Impala. Just look at the intensity of their focus in the photos. They didn't however fool the impala and gave up as soon as they were spotted. We found a young Martial Eagle and in the wetland areas Sedge warbler and Winding Cisticola alongside Black Crake and Spur-winged Lapwing but we had a long way to travel down the dreaded Mombasa road to Tsavo East and we were out and on the road by 10.am

We drove down to Tsavo East, stayed overnight and then drove east through the park heading east for Watumu and the coast but not before spending the last couple of hours before dusk in the Arabuko Sokoke forest- a low lying sandveld forest very similar to those in Mozambique. We met up with David who looked as though he was in his early sixties- a man who had lived and worked in Arabuko forest all his life. We could not have a better guide to show us the birds of the forest. First on the list was the Sokoke Scops Owl. Can you believe he slept in the forest the previous night, waited for the owls to start calling and then tracked them through the night to their day time roost.



We drove for at least 10 kilometres through the forest and then while David went off to see if the birds were still there, we had 20 minutes of birding which gave us Black-headed Apalis, Forest Batis and Fischer's and Tiny Greenbuls. David soon returned to tell us the birds were there and then led us through the thickest bush imaginable for ten minutes to a tree which contained a family of Sokoke Scops owls- the adults with two youngsters. How he found them again I will never know! But what a special sighting!

Delighted with our find we retired to the very pleasant Temple Point Resort in Watumu for a well-earned beer. I am not sure why any South African holiday-maker would want to lie on an East



African beach when we have so many great ones of our own. The climate is incredibly oppressive- the heat and humidity hit you like a wall when you leave your air-conditioned room.

We were up early the next morning and keen to get to grips with more Arabuko specials. Again we had David to thank for the Sokoko Pipit- what a difficult bird to find and get a view of as it hopped across the forest floor. Its camouflage is so good you only see it when it moves. The Malindi Pipit was much easier – a grassland Pipit threatened by an ever shrinking



habitat and preyed upon by the Southern-banded Snake-eagles. We tried hard for the Green Tinkerbird and Mombasa woodpecker but with no luck but picked up Little Yellow Flycatcher on our way back to lunch.

In the afternoon we headed down to Midas Creek hopefully to catch the waders on an incoming tide. The tide was a million miles out but comes in quickly across the shallow estuary- I needed Sooty Gull and Saunder's Tern and some shots of Crab Plover. We didn't spend much time on the waders; there was

the usual assortment- Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Grey Plover, Curlew Sandpipers, Whimbrels and Eurasian Curlews. Then the Crab Plovers arrived- first in their tens and then in their hundreds. Even with the tide pushing them closer they were still a long way off. All my photos were taken with the 500mm lens and a two times converter. Then as the water rose higher they all took off together flying further inland- a truly spectacular sight.

We found Saunder's Tern here at the creek, but would need to move closer to the sea to find the Gull. From the bird hide on the edge of the estuary they have a rope ladder walkway across the mangrove swamp back to the car park. Moses said he did not like swinging walkways and decided to wade his way back to the car. I followed a couple of Australian girls and their guide out on to the walkway. And so we swung our way over a poorly maintained walkway- sometimes there were three wooden slats missing in a row which meant jumping a metre from one foothold to the next to the first staging point 40 metres away. Then another 40 metres and another 40 metres. This walk way seemed to have no end in sight. The girls in front were agonisingly slow and I eventually managed to pass them as they rested at one of the staging points. And with binos, 500mm lenses and monopod in hand ploughed for another seemingly unending 100 metres across gaping gaps in the walkway with two hands on the wire and every now and then with two feet on the bottom wire as well.



I had words to say to Moses when I finally got back to the car. Then we were off for the Gull- half an hour's drive north of Watumu and a two kilometre walk to the estuary mouth. We passed a couple of Dimorphic Egret a long way off and some Zanzibar Red bishops that were extremely skittish. The



Sooty Gulls were again a long way off on a sand bar in the middle of the estuary along with a couple of Pallas's Gulls in non breeding plumage. So a successful but extremely hot and uncomfortable afternoon!

We had a final morning in the forest before heading back to Tsavo. Both the Tinkerbird and Woodpecker were found after much effort along with Fischer's Turaco and Amani Sunbird - the turaco a shy bird impossible to photograph and the sunbird a canopy species which proved

likewise. We never got close to Clarke's Weaver and the time of year was wrong for Forbes Watson's Swift. Bird of the morning though was a Golden-rumped Elephant-shrew- a spectacular little beast

The climate at the coast was too dreadful for words and I was glad to head back to the birds of the Tsavo East National Park.

We travelled back to the Voi Safari lodge where we were pleased to see we had been upgraded to a private camp with our own private pool after complaining about the disco noise which went on well after midnight (US embassy officials nog al) on our first night there.

All in all we had the equivalent of two full days in Tsavo East. Tsavo is Kenya's largest national park- roughly the size of Wales- another dry and arid park with a mixture of habitats but mainly grasslands with mixed acacia scrub. We found many of the bird species we had seen in Samburu including Somali Bee-eater which we had missed in Samburu. The grasslands contained plenty of Montagu's and Pallid Harriers along with Kori, Northern White-bellied and Buff-crested Bustards. And in the



damper areas Yellow-billed and Abdim's Storks. A great find early on was Pangani's Longclaw which completed our East African Longclaw set and I was delighted when we chanced upon a Grasshopper Buzzard resting up in the heat of the day.

We revisited Somali Coursers, Black-headed Lapwings, Black-faced and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse and Slender-tailed Nightjar but new for the list was a Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar right at the entrance to the lodge. We found our first Northern Carmine Bee-eaters which were very responsive to their call flying

around the pop top just feet away from us There were more Pink-breasted and Red-winged Larks and our only Chestnut-backed Sparrow-lark. We didn't go short on Wheatears with Northern and Isabelline and we finally cracked Yellow-vented Eremomela –a new bird for us. Tsavo Sunbird evaded us despite hours of searching but some flowering acacia gave us Blue-naped Mousebirds and more Hunter's and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbirds and we had great views of a Eurasian Hobby late in the afternoon.

Our morning trip up in to the Taita hills proved to be an excellent outing. We had lots of Scaly Chatterers on the way up – the three big specials – Taita Thrush, Apalis and White-eye at the summit (found with the help of more local guides) and Brown-breasted and Black-throated Barbets on the way back down. We knocked off a couple more Greenbul-Placid and Stripe-faced along with the more common Sombre and Northern Brownbul.



And so we came to our final day. – a drive out through Tsavo West for lunch at Lake Jipe before a rendezvous with our Tanzanian driver at the Taveta border post who would take us through to Arusha.

The southern end of Tsavo West is mainly grassland but a patch of acacias near the entrance gate gave us a couple more Palearctic warblers- Common White-throat and Barred Warbler, and we finally cracked Friedmann's Lark after a couple of days with no luck. A new Bustard went down well- Hartlaub's- a shy bird which crouched down and hid in the long grass making a photograph impossible. We reached Lake Jipe in the middle of the day- not that the Double-banded Coursers and Water thick-knees minded the heat and the Zanzibar Red Bishops and the very attractive Taveta Golden Weavers were still active at midday. Then it was just a long 2 hour drive to the border.

Kenya was a fantastic place to go birding- I still can't believe how good it was- 600 birds in 23 days and 115 lifers. And can you believe it – we didn't see a flamingo! The National Parks were great although if you had been going only for the game it would have been a little disappointing. We only saw lion twice In Nairobi and Tsavo East but the "Red" Elephants of Tsavo were worth watching as they covered themselves in red mud. Moses and our driver Charles were great guys to have along- nothing was too much trouble and Charles was good at backing up to get that wanted photograph.

If you are going to Kenya you must use these guys kandyrop@yahoo.com – they need the work and their prices especially if you go as group of 4 or 6 are incredibly competitive

