

Kenya and northern Tanzania, 2-21 February 2005

Christoph Haag and Cathy Liautard

Introduction

From 2 to 21 February 2005, we visited Kenya and northern Tanzania on a safari holiday, combined with trekking (Mt. Kenya) and snorkeling / relaxing at the coast. As during our previous trip, bird watching was not the only objective. We therefore chose to go with a “standard” safari company, rather than with an specialized company. Nevertheless, we identified a total of 302 species, had a magnificent trek, superb observations of 44 species of mammals, and a very relaxing holiday. For me (Christoph), this was the second trip to East Africa, after a 2-month stay in Uganda in 1997. For Cathy, this was the first visit to this region.

Price

We had arranged the trip via e-mail with Eastern and Southern Safaris (see below for address) for 2000 \$ per person (all included, except flight to and from Nairobi, tips, and a couple of lunches). During safari, we stayed mostly in tents, but had hotels in-between. Part of the trip was shared with 1-2 other people, while for the rest it was just the two of us. During the trekking and the safari, we were accompanied by a guide/driver and a cook and also by a porter during the trekking. Overall it was a very relaxing way of traveling to the degree that we even felt a bit spoiled. However, we calculated on the beforehand that doing the trip independently (i.e., renting a car and driving ourselves) would have been considerably more expensive. Perhaps, we could have saved a small amount of money by doing arrangements with safari companies once we were in Nairobi, but this would have cost more time and effort, and would also have born the risk of going with a less reliable company.

Safari companies

We were very happy with the arrangements by Eastern and Southern Safaris. They took the time to design with us an itinerary fully fitting our wishes, picked us up at the airport, were flexible to changes in the itinerary even during the trip, and offered an excellent and personalized service throughout. Also “Safari makers”, the company, which took care of our safari in northern Tanzania made an excellent impression (they were sub-contracted by Eastern and Southern Safaris). Finally, we arranged for one day of bird-guiding at Arabuko Sokoke forest with the local guides from Spinetail safaris. We recommend these three companies most warmly to anyone, who wishes to do a personalized, tailor-made safari in Kenya and / or northern Tanzania. To see our final itinerary agreement with Eastern and Southern Safaris click here. The contact details of the three companies are:

Eastern and Southern Safaris Ltd., Finance house, 6th floor, Loita Street, PO Box 43332, 00100 GPO Nairobi, Kenya, e-mail: info@essafari.co.ke, www.essafari.co.ke

Safari Makers Ltd., PO Box 12902, Arusha, Tanzania, e-mail: safarimakers@habari.co.tz, www.safarimakers.com

Spinetail safaris, PO Box 107, Watamu 80202, Kenya, e-mail: spinetailsafaris@yahoo.com

Guides

We were accompanied by excellent guides throughout the trekking and safari (Francis and David from Eastern and Southern Safaris, Lyimo from Safari Makers, and Willy from

Spinetail Safaris). Their excellent skills in seeking and detecting animals in the field, their knowledge of the habits and habitats of animals and also their contacts to other guides in the field were crucial for the success of our trip.

Birding

With the exception of Willy from Spinetail Safaris, our guides were not specialized bird watching guides, but general safari guides. Thus for most of the safari it was mainly me (Christoph), who identified the birds, sometimes in discussion with one of the guides, especially Lyimo, who had a good knowledge of bird identification. The bird list is thus biased towards species, which are relatively easily seen (I remembered only very few calls from my trip to Uganda), which are not too difficult to identify (some warblers and greenbuls had to be left unidentified), and also towards larger / more colorful species because these were of greater interest to Cathy and our co-travelers. Overall, I am very happy with this travel, also from a birding point of view, and I think that also our co-travelers appreciated the extra-level of nature experience.

For one day we did go with a specialized bird watching company. Spinetail Safaris offers high-quality birding trips around Arabuko Sokoke forest, at Kenyan coast, and to Tsavo National Park. With them, we visited Arabuko Sokoke forest (a morning and an evening visit) as well as Mida Creek. Willy, our guide, knew all the birds (including songs and calls), lured them into view by “pishing”, and even detected a pair of Sokoke scops owls at their day roost in a dense thicket.

Safaris

Landscapes and mammal watching during our safari was outstanding and will stay some of our best memories ever. Especially the sights of the vast plains of the Serengeti and the of the animal-packed Ngorongoro crater were truly awe-inspiring. In a single morning in the Ngorongoro crater we saw a pack of female lions unsuccessfully hunting a zebra and being afterwards chased away by a single impressive male buffalo, a wildebeest giving birth to a young one, which immediately started to stand up on its still weak legs and another pack of lions with a mother leading her cubs to a freshly killed prey. Also the trek to Mt. Kenya with its fields of giant groundsels and lobelias (the latter inhabited by Scarlet-tufted malachite sunbirds) was a real highlight.

In the following I give site-by-site overview of the highlights, as well as comprehensive lists of all birds and mammals seen during the whole trip. Pictures of our trip can be found here. If you want more information, please don't hesitate to contact me: christoph.haag@helsinki.fi.

2.2.04 Nairobi-Nanyuki

General: First observations from the bus and in the garden of our hotel in Nanyuki.

- Malachite and Scarlet-chested sunbirds
- Red-winged, Lesser blue-eared glossy, violet-backed, and Superb starlings
- Grey-headed sparrow, Baglaffeht weaver, Vitelline masked weaver
- Long-tailed widowbird, Red-headed Malimbe, Cut-throat finch

3.-6.2.05. Mt. Kenya

General: We climbed Mt Kenya from Nanyuki via the Sirimon route and descended on the other side to Chogoria: A very beautiful hike!

- Mountain buzzard (1 a bit above Old Moses Camp).
- African snipe (2 at waste-water “swamp”, Old Moses Camp)
- Red-fronted parrot (2 in forest, Chogoria side)
- Hartlaub’s Turaco (quite common in forest on both sides)
- Black saw-wing (quite common in forest on both sides)

- Alpine Chat (common on upper slopes)
- Hunter's Cisticola (common on upper slopes)
- White-eyed slaty flycatcher (quite common in forest on both sides)
- Golden-winged sunbird (quite frequent in open areas on lower slopes, mainly on Sirimon side, e.g., next to Sirimon gate)
- Malachite sunbird (common on mid slopes)
- Scarlet-tufted malachite sunbird (common on upper slopes, near giant lobelias)
- Slender-billed starling (common, mainly around camps)
- Streaky seed-eater (common, often around camps)

- Eland (2 groups)
- Black-fronted duiker (1 near Old Moses Camp)
- Bushbuck (several)
- Buffalo (several near Chogoria Camp)
- Elephant (4 in forest, Chogoria side)
- Rock hyrax quite frequent on higher slopes, e.g., next to Shipton Camp)
- Syke's monkey (several in forest, Chogoria side)
- Four-striped grass mouse

6.-8.2.05 Samburu

General: This semi-arid park is very much worth the detour. Many species of mammals and birds are present, which cannot be found in the other parks. Superb bird watching at the camp side and along the river, even during the hotter time of the day.

- Secretary bird
- Pale chanting goshawk
- Martial eagle
- Crested francolin
- Vulturine guineafowl
- Black-faced sandgrouse
- Orange-bellied parrot
- White-bellied go-away bird
- Blue-naped and White-headed mousbirds
- Pygmy kingfisher
- White-throated bee-eater
- Lilac-breasted roller
- Von der Decken's and Red-billed hornbills
- D'Arnaoud's and Red-and-yellow barbets
- Rosy-patched bush shrike
- Isabelline shrike
- Donald Smith's sparrow weaver, Black-capped social weaver, Eastern golden weaver

- Nile crocodile
- Nile monitor lizard
- Unstriped ground squirrel
- Dwarf mongoose
- Leopard (2), Lion (1)
- Elephant
- Grevy's zebra, Reticulated giraffe
- Buffalo
- Kirk's dikdik

- Grant's gazelle, Gerenuk, Impala
- Beisa Oryx
- Vervet monkey
- Olive baboon

8.-9.2.05 Lake Nakuru

General: Very nice park, especially for water birds and White rhino. Unfortunately, we did not have enough time to explore, due to the long transit time between Samburu and Nakuru.

- Long-tailed cormorant
- African spoonbill
- Greater and lesser flamingos
- African fish eagle
- Tawny and steppe eagle
- Hildebrandt's francolin
- Grey-crowned crane
- Kittlitz's plover, Blacksmith lapwing, Marsh sandpiper
- Grey woodpecker
- Mocking cliff chat, Northern ant-eater thrush
- White helmet shrike

- Olive baboon, Vervet monkey
- Burchell's zebra
- White rhinoceros
- Warthog
- Bushbuck
- Waterbuck
- Grant's and Thomson's gazelle, Impala

10.2.05 Tarangire

General: Worth a visit from a landscape point of view (baobab savanna). Has some specialty birds (e.g., mottled spinetail) and good opportunities for wildlife observations. Baboons at the picnic site are very rude. They are afraid of black people, but not of white tourists. We saw some ladies who got deprived of their lunch bags. So watch out and do not feed them!

- Massai ostrich
- Knob-billed duck
- Greater spotted eagle
- White-bellied bustard
- Spotted thicknee
- Yellow-collared lovebird
- Mottled spinetail
- Grey hornbill
- Magpie shrike, Long-tailed and grey-backed fiscals
- Ashy starling
- Marsh- and white-winged widowbird

- Olive baboon, Vervet monkey
- Elephant
- Massai Giraffe, Burchell's zebra
- Warthog
- Kirk's dikdik, Waterbuck, Grant's gazelle, Impala, and Coke's hartebeest

11.-13.2.05 Serengeti

General: A must-see. Vast plains, kopjes, and woodlands inhabited by loads of animals. Mammals were not as dense here as in the Ngorongoro crater, but many bird species were only found here.

- Striated and Goliath heron, Black stork (3)
- Brown snake eagle, Dark chanting goshawk
- White-backed, Rueppell's griffon, Lappet-faced, and White-headed vulture
- Pygmy and Lanner falcon
- Grey-breasted spurfowl
- Black crane
- Kori, White-bellied, and Black-bellied bustard
- Two-banded courser
- Fischer's and yellow-collared lovebird
- Black coucal
- Green wood-hoopoe, Grey and Red-billed hornbill
- Grey woodpecker
- Fischer's sparrow lark
- Isabelline and Capped wheatear
- Silverbird, Brubru
- Magpie shrike, Long-tailed fiscal
- African rook
- Hildebrandt's, Ashy, and Wattled starling
- Rufous sparrow
- Speckle-fronted, Grey-headed social, and Rufous-tailed weaver
- Red-billed buffalo weaver, Jackson's widowbird
- Red-cheeked and Blue-headed cordonbleu

- Nile crocodile
- Olive baboon, Vervet monkey
- Black-backed jackal
- Banded and Dwarf mongoose
- Spotted hyena, Bat-eared fox (2)
- Cheetah, Lion, Leopard
- Hippopotamus
- Warthog
- Plains Zebra, Massai Giraffe
- Buffalo
- Kirk's dikdik
- Eland, Waterbuck
- Thomson's, and Grant's gazelle, Impala
- Topi, Coke's hartebeest, Wildebeest

14.2.05 Ngorongoro crater

General: Fantastic! Would be worth several day's visit, especially if one wants to see "action". The density of animals is unbelievable.

- Spur-winged goose, Hottentot teal
- White-bellied, Black-bellied, and Kori bustard
- Kittlitz's and Chesnut-banded plover
- Black-winged lapwing
- Curlew sandpiper
- Yellow-throated sandgrouse

- Dusky turtle dove
- Rosy-throated longclaw

- Golden and Black-backed jackal, Spotted hyena
- Cheetah, Lion
- Elephant
- Warthog
- Plains Zebra
- Black Rhinoceros
- Hippopotamus
- Buffalo, Eland
- Thomson's and Grant's gazelle
- Coke's hartebeest and Wildebeest

15.2.05 Lake Manyara

General: Nice ground-water forest, and very good water-birds, probably even better than Nakuru for the latter, but flamingos were very distant (several km away).

- Black egret, Goliath heron, Saddle-billed stork
- White-faced whistling duck, Spur-winged goose, Red-billed teal, Hottentot teal
- African jacana, Water thicknee, Common pratincole
- Long-toed Lapwing
- Brown parrot, Fischer's lovebird
- Woodland and Striped kingfisher
- Narina's trogon
- Silvery-cheeked and Crowned hornbill
- Lesser honeyguide
- Rufous-breasted swallow
- Spotted morning thush
- Banded parisoma
- Amethyst sunbird
- Magpie starling
- Black bishop, Paradise and Straw-tailed Wydah
- Green-winged Pytilia, Village indigobird

- Olive baboon, Vervet monkey, Blue monkey
- Elephant, Buffalo
- Zebra, Hippopotamus, warthog
- Massai Giraffe, Bushbuck, Impala, Wildebeest

16.2.05 Arusha-Nairobi-Malindi

General: There are many animals along the road Arusha-Nairobi. We saw Ostrich, Giraffe, Zebra, and Warthog from the bus.

17.-21.2.05 Malindi (with visit to Arabuko Sokoke Forest and Mida Creek)

General: Birding on the coast (Malindi beach), in Mida Creek, and in the Arabuko Sokoke forest was great. We were a bit disappointed with the snorkeling in Malindi, mainly because of abundant jellyfish on some days, and because of turbidity. Nearby Watamu is said to be much better, though we did not visit. In the following list, A stands for Arabuko Sokoke, MB for Malindi beach, and MC for Mida creek.

- Osprey MB
- Southern banded snake eagle, African harrier hawk A

- Crab plover MC
- White-fronted Plover MB
- Greater and Lesser Sandplover MB, MC
- Curlew sandpiper, Terek sandpiper, Marsh sandpiper MB, MC
- Sooty gull MB
- Caspian, Swift, Lesser crested, and Common tern MB
- Sokoke scops owl A
- Fiery-necked and European nightjar A
- Striped kingfisher MC
- Scimitarbill A
- Mombassa and Green-backed woodpecker A
- Grassland pipit MC
- Yellow-bellied, Fischer's and Zanzibar somber Greenbul, White-throated nicator A
- Red-tailed ant-thrush A
- Black-headed apalis, Ashy flycatcher A
- Forest and East coast batis A
- Yellow and Blue-mantled crested monarch A
- Amani sunbird A
- Black-backed puffback A
- Tropical Boubou A
- Retz's and Chesnut-fronted helmet shrike A

- Four-toed and Golden-rumped elephant shrew A
- Lesser galago A (heard only)
- Cape hare A
- Ochre bush squirrel MB
- Dead seaturtle sp MB

Species List

(3 = abundant /easily seen /seen in several places; 2 = not abundant but seen several times or at large number at one locality; 1 = seen only 1-2 times in one locality).

1. Birds

Masai ostrich	2-3
Little greebe	1-2
Great cormorant	2-3
Long-tailed cormorant	1-2
White pelican	2
Squacco heron	1-2
Cattle egret	3
Little egret	2-3
Black egret	1-2
Great white egret	3
Striated heron	1-2
Grey heron	3
Black-headed heron	3
Purple heron	1
Goliath heron	1
Hammerkop	2
Yellow-billed stork	2

Black stork	1
White stork	3
Abdim's stork	3
saddle-billed stork	1
Marabou	3
Hadada ibis	3
Glossy ibis	2
Sacred ibis	2-3
African spoonbill	2-3
Greater flamingo	2-3
Lesser flamingo	3
Egyptian goose	3
Spur-winged goose	1-2
White-faced whistling duck	1
Knob-billed duck	1-2
Garganey	1-2
Northern shoveler	1-2
Hottentot teal	1-2
Red-billed teal	2
Secretarybird	2-3
Black-winged kite	2
Black kite	3
Yellow-billed kite	3
African fish eagle	2-3
Egyptian vulture	1
Rueppell's griffon vulture	2-3
African white-backed vulture	3
Lappet-faced vulture	2
White-headed vulture	2
African harrier-hawk	1
Black-chested snake eagle	2-3
Brown snake eagle	1
Southern banded snake eagle	1
Bateleur	2-3
European Marsh harrier	2-3
Montague's harrier	3
Pallid harrier	3
Dark chanting goshawk	1
Pale chanting goshawk	1
Common buzzard	3
Augur buzzard	2-3
Mountain buzzard	1
Tawny eagle	2-3
Steppe eagle	2-3
Spotted eagle	1
Lesser spotted eagle	1-2
Long-crested eagle	1-2
Martial eagle	1-2
Osprey	1
African pygmy falcon	1
Lesser Kestrel	3

Lanner falcon	1
Crested francolin	2-3
Hildebrandt's francolin	1
Red-necked spurfowl	2-3
Grey-breasted spurfowl	1-2
Yellow-necked spurfowl	3
Vulrurine guineafowl	1
Helmeted guineafowl	3
Black rail	1
Grey crowned-crane	2-3
White-bellied bustard	2
Kori bustard	2-3
Black-bellied bustard	1-2
African jacana	2
Crab plover	1-2
Black-winged stilt	2-3
Avocet	1-2
Water thicknee	1
Spotted thicknee	1
Two-banded courser	2
Common pratincole	2
Ringed plover	2-3
Kittlitz's plover	2-3
Three-banded plover	2-3
White-fronted plover	1-2
Chesnut-banded plover	1-2
Greater Sandplover	2-3
Lesser Sandplover	2-3
Grey plover	2-3
Spur-winged Lapwing	3
Blacksmith lapwing	3
Black-winged lapwing	2
Long-toed lapwing	1-2
Crowned lapwing	2-3
Sanderling	2-3
Little Stint	3
Curlew sandpiper	2-3
Ruff	2-3
Snipe	2
African snipe	1
Black-tailed godwit	1
Whimbrel	2
Curlew	2-3
Spotted redshank	1-2
Marsh sandpiper	2-3
Greenshank	2-3
Wood sandpiper	2
Common sandpiper	3
Terek sandpiper	2
Turnstone	2
Sooty gull	2-3

Grey-headed gull	2-3
Lesser black-backed gull	2-3
Gull-billed tern	2-3
Caspian tern	2-3
Lesser crested tern	2-3
Swift tern	2
Common tern	2
Whiskered tern	1-2
White-winged tern	1
Black-faced sandgrouse	2
Yellow-throated sandgrouse	2
Olive pigeon	2
Tambourine dove	3
Emerald spotted wood dove	3
Red-eyed dove	3
African mourning dove	2-3
Ring-necked dove	3
Dusky turtle dove	1
Laughing dove	2-3
Namaqua dove	2-3
Fischer's lovebird	2
Yellow-collared lovebird	2
Brown parrot	1
Red-fronted parrot	1
African orange-bellied parrot	1
White-bellied go-away bird	2-3
Hartlaub's turaco	2-3
Klaas's cuckoo	1
Red-chested cuckoo	2
White-browed coucal	2
Black coucal	2
Sokoke scops owl	1
European nightjar	1
Fiery-necked nightjar	2
Mottled spinetail	1-2
Little swift	2
Palm swift	2
Speckled mousebird	3
White-headed mousebird	2-3
Blue-naped mousebird	2-3
Narina's trogon	1-2
Grey-headed kingfisher	2-3
Woodland kingfisher	1
Striped kingfisher	1
African pygmy kingfisher	1
Pied kingfisher	2
Eurasian Bee-eater	2-3
Little bee-eater	2-3
White-throated bee-eater	2-3
Eurasian Roller	3
Lilac-breasted roller	3

Green wood-hoopoe	3
Scimitarbill	1
Hoopoe	1-2
Silvery-cheeked hornbill	1
Crowned hornbill	1
African gray hornbill	1-2
Von der Decken's hornbill	2
Red-billed hornbill	2-3
D'Arnaud's barbet	2
Red and yellow barbet	1
Lesser honeyguide	1
Golden-tailed woodpecker	1
Green-backed woodpecker	1
Cardinal woodpecker	1
Grey woodpecker	1-2
Fischer's sparrow lark	2-3
Rufous-naped lark	2-3
Red-winged lark	3
Brown-throated sand martin	1
Rock martin	1-2
Barn swallow	2-3
Wire-tailed swallow	1-2
Lesser striped swallow	3
Rufous-breasted swallow	1-2
Black saw-wing	1-2
African richard's pipit	1
Red-throated pipit	1
Rosy-throated longclaw	1
Yellow wagtail	2-3
African pied wagtail	3
Cape wagtail	1
Sombre greenbul	1
Common bulbul	2-3
Yellow-bellied greenbul	1
Fischer's greenbul	1
White-throated nicator	1
Eastern bearded scrub-robin	2
African stonechat	2
Isabelline wheatear	1
Capped wheatear	2-3
Spotted morning thrush	1
Mocking cliff chat	1
Northern ant-eater thrush	1
Alpine chat	2-3
Red-tailed ant thrush	1
Olive thrush	2-3
Hunter's cisticola	2-3
Black-headed apalis	1
Grey-backed camaroptera	1
Banded parisoma	1
Spotted Flycatcher	1

Southern black flycatcher	2-3
White-eyed slaty flycatcher	2
Grey flycatcher	2-3
Silverbird	2
Forest batis	1
East-coast batis	1
Yellow monarch	1
Blue-mantled crested monarch	1
Rufous chatterer	1
Collared sunbird	2
Amani sunbird	1
Northern double-collared sunbird	2
Malachite sunbird	2-3
Scarlet-tufted malachite sunbird	2-3
Scarlet-chested sunbird	2-3
Golden-winged sunbird	2
Amethyst sunbird	2
Golden oriole	2
African black-headed oriole	2
Rosy-patched bush shrike	1
Brubru	1
Black-backed puffback	1
Black-headed bush shrike	2
Grey-headed bush shrike	2
Isabelline shrike	2-3
Red-backed shrike	1
Grey-backed fiscal	1
Common fiscal	3
Long-tailed fiscal	2-3
Magpie-shrike	2
White helmet shrike	1
Retz's helmet shrike	1
Chesnut-fronted helmet shrike	1
White-rumped helmet shrike	3
Indian house crow	2-3
African rook	1-2
Pied crow	3
White-necked raven	3
Rueppell's long-tailed starling	3
Lesser blue-eared glossy starling	1
Violet-backed starling	1
Hildebrandt's starling	1-2
Superb starling	3
Magpie starling	1
Ashy starling	2
Wattled starling	2-3
Slender-billed starling	2
Red-winged starling	1
African drongo	3
Yellow-billed oxpecker	2-3
Red-billed oxpecker	2-3

Grey-headed sparrow	3
Rufous sparrow	2
Speckle-fronted weaver	2-3
White-browed sparrow weaver	3
Donaldson-smith's sparrow weaver	2
Grey-headed social weaver	2
Black-capped social weaver	2
Rufous-tailed weaver	2
Red-billed buffalo weaver	2
White-headed buffalo weaver	3
Black-headed weaver	3
Dark-backed weaver	1-2
Baglafecht weaver	2
Vitelline masked weaver	2
Eastern golden weaver	1
Red-headed malimbe	2
White-winged widowbird	1
Black bishop	2
Long-tailed widowbird	2-3
Jackson's widowbird	1-2
Marsh widowbird	1
Green-winged pytilia	1
Red-cheeked cordon-bleu	2
Blue-capped cordon-bleu	2
Pin-tailed whydah	2-3
African paradise whydah	1
Village indigobird	1
Straw-tailed whydah	1
Cut-throat finch	2-3
African citril	2-3
Streaky serin	2-3

Mammals

Olive baboon	3
Yellow baboon	1-2
Vervet monkey	3
Blue monkey	2
Lesser galago	1-2
White-bellied hedgehog	1
Four-toed elephant shrew	1
Golden-rumped elephant shrew	1-2
Cape hare	1
Unstriped ground saquirrel	2
Ochre bush squirrel	1
Four-stripe grass mouse	2
Golden jackal	1
Black-backed jackal	1
Bat-eared fox	1
Dwarf mongoose	2
Banded mongoose	2
Spotted hyaena	1-2

Leopard	1
Lion	2
Cheetah	1
Rock hyrax	2
African elephant	3
Common zebra	3
Grevy's zebra	1
Black rhinoceros	1
White rhinoceros	1-2
Hippopotamus	2-3
Common warthog	2-3
Giraffe	3
African buffalo	3
Bushbuck	2
Eland	2
Black-fronted duiker	1
Kirk's dikdik	2-3
Waterbuck	2-3
Thomson's gazelle	3
Grant's gazelle	3
Gerenuk	2
Impala	3
Topi	2
Hartebeest	2
Wildebeest (Gnu)	3
Beisa oryx	2