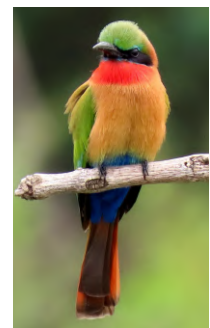
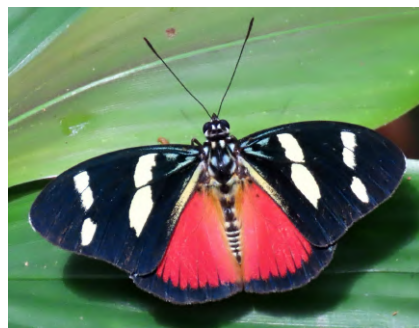
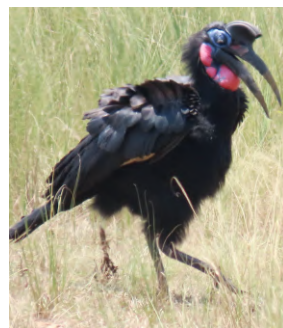


Grand Uganda: Fabulous Birds, Mammals & Butterflies | Trip Report | July 13-29, 2024 | by Robert J. Gallardo

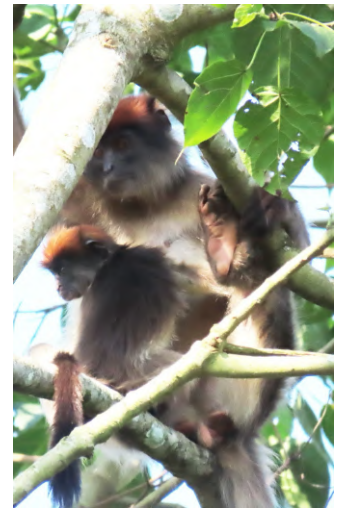


With Naturalist Journeys guide Robert Gallardo, local guide Prossy, and participants Cliff, Margaret, Marianne, Rich, and John.



Uganda: The Pearl of Africa

Winston Churchill visited Uganda in 1907 and the following year wrote a book about his trip to Africa. In it, he proclaimed Uganda as the "Pearl of Africa," due to its 'magnificence, variety of form and color, for the profusion of brilliant life-bird, insect, reptile, beast-for vast scale.' Of the 55 countries in Africa, Uganda is 93,000mi² and is but the 32nd largest country. Although small by comparison, it harbors a multitude of habitats ranging from savannahs, humid broadleaf rainforest, montane forest, vast wetlands, and dry woodland. This diversity of ecosystems harbors an incredible array of fauna that attract visitors from around the world. The chance of seeing Shoebill, eleven primates (including Eastern Mountain Gorilla and Common Chimpanzee), Lions, Giraffes, African Finfoot, many Albertine Rift endemics, and an array of dazzling tropical butterflies make a visit to this country very appealing. Five guests from across the U.S. would partake in this 17-day trip and revel in its fascinating flora and fauna.



Saturday July 13 Arrivals | Entebbe | Boma Hotel

Today the adventure began for two of the guests. Cliff, Margaret, and Robert were already in Entebbe at the Boma Hotel and decided to get a jump start on the adventure. They planned on going to the nearby botanical garden which is on the edge of Lake Victoria. In the lobby and to our surprise, was Alexandria, a guide sent by Herbert to accompany us for the morning. At the garden, we quickly saw the giant Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill which would be a common sighting throughout much of the trip. Other species we would see first and be an integral part of the trip would be Pied Crow, Egyptian Goose, Black Kite, Ring-necked Dove, African Openbill, Woodland Kingfisher, and the stately African Fish-Eagle. As we proceeded down a path, a pair of Gabar Goshawks came into view and were being harassed by crows. This would be the only sighting of this small raptor for the trip. Closer to the lake's edge were groves of large trees where a pair of Bat Hawk was seen on a day roost. A bit further on we also saw our first African Pygmy Kingfisher and Pied Kingfisher. During the trip we would indulge ourselves with the many species of multi-colored kingfishers. The first of many mammals to be seen on the trip included a few Black-and-white Colobus and Vervet Monkeys. The Colobus is such an elegant species with its skunk-like pattern and fluffy, white-tipped tail. Toward the end of the walk we spotted a colorful Common Orange Sprite (skipper butterfly) and would mark the first of many splendid butterflies that would be seen.

We returned to the hotel and later on Marianne and Rich arrived, coming in from a neighboring country. Our local guide Prossy showed up and we had a trip orientation. She is one of the top bird guides in Uganda and an integral part of the Uganda Women Birders. We dined together and later found out that the other two guests had issues with their visas and would catch up to us later.

Sunday July 14 Mabamba Wetlands | Entebbe Botanical Gardens

Right after breakfast we headed out in our bus to a site to look for a very special bird. Our driver, Gerard, would be with us the entire trip. During the drive we spotted several Long-crested Eagles and two Great Blue Turacos. We would see this latter bird much better later on in the trip. Several Yellow-fronted Canaries were seen chasing each in someone's front yard. We reached the Mabamba Wetlands, a large wetland area that is especially well known for harboring a healthy population of the prized Shoebill. In the parking lot was a pair of African Pied Wagtail which would be a constant companion during most of the trip. Also present were many of the common Village Weavers which had an active colony at the water's edge. We boarded two small motor boats and were off, making our way down various channels. Right away we spotted an African Marsh-Harrier, representing the only sighting of the trip. It didn't take long until we reached a spot where a couple of boats (with tourists) were already admiring a Shoebill. Our boatmen slowly maneuvered the boats in for a closer view until we were in a

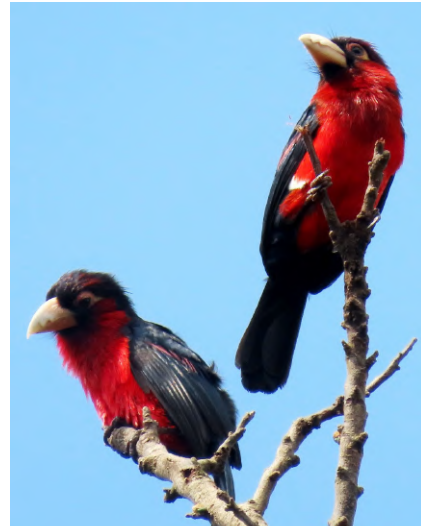
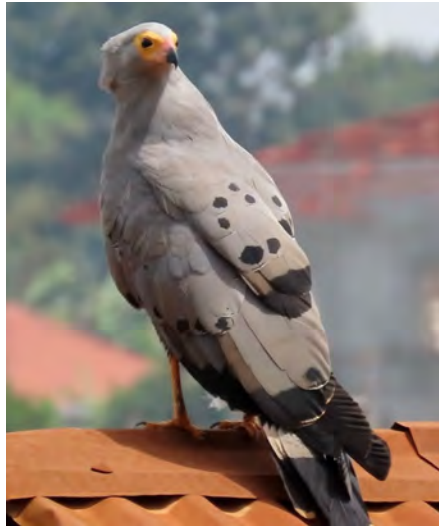


good spot to get photos. The prehistoric-looking bird looks like a stork, but is genetically closer related to pelicans and herons. While we were taking photos the Shoebill decided to lift up and ended up landing right in front of our boats!! It couldn't have been any better. Eventually, it started to slowly walk away and disappeared behind a stand of cattails. Getting such a great look at one of the most sought-after birds on the first day was a spectacular way to start the trip.

Now that we saw the Shoebill, we were ready to continue exploring these vast wetlands. We began spotting Black Crakes and were seemingly everywhere. Unlike the secretive behavior of many species in this family, we would see them in the open many times during the trip. We encountered two small groups of the elegant White-faced Whistling-Duck which would be seen at only one other place during the trip. Many Yellow-billed Ducks were also observed and would be the only time seeing them on the trip. We saw many of the handsome African Jacana and good numbers of the Long-toed Lapwing. A few Yellow-billed Storks were also seen, along with Long-tailed Cormorant. In a more secluded part of the wetlands we looked for a more reclusive species; the Lesser Jacana. The local guides, with keen hearing, detected two. They paddled us through the thick emergent vegetation and we got brief looks as they scudded away. We also spotted a second Shoebill, which was mostly hidden deep within the marsh.

A Blue-headed Coucal was spotted, perched atop an emergent bush. Several of the colorful Malachite Kingfishers were observed and would be seen many times at different wetlands. Many waders were also observed including Gray Heron, Purple Heron, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, and the handsome Squacco Heron. We also got a brief glimpse of the lovely Little Bittern. Many Hadada Ibis were seen and would be heard and seen during much of the trip. Two Lesser Moorhen were spotted. After the action-packed boat ride we reached the boat ramp area. It is a major hub for people coming and going to distant homes along the shoreline of Lake Victoria. As we were getting ready to depart, Robert spotted some action in a nearby weedy field. A few Red-billed Firefinch were foraging and many Bronze Mannkins were gathering nesting material, taking it to a nearby mango tree.

Our trip back to the hotel presented its fare share of birds. A lovely African Harrier-Hawk flew by and landed atop a nearby roof. We would see many of these during the trip. A pair of Lizard Buzzards were seen perched on utility wires and would also be a frequent sighting. Four White-throated Bee-eaters perched on a wire would be the only sighting of the trip.



We had lunch back at the hotel then a little downtime. In the afternoon we all went to the Entebbe Botanical Gardens. It was fairly quiet, but near the gate we saw a pair of the distinct Northern Black Flycatcher. A few Hooded Vultures were perched in trees and we got scope views. It would be seen here and nowhere else during the trip. Closer to the lake we reached a stand of large, native trees. Foraging kind of high in the dark subcanopy were both the Black-headed Paradise-Flycatcher and African Paradise-Flycatcher, both being handsome birds. Some smaller species also noted were Little Greenbul, Green Combec, Green-backed Cameroptera (we jokingly called it the 'Camera Operator'), Tawny-flanked Prinia, and Winding Cisticola. We would see, and hear, a fair number of the similar-looking Cisticolas during the trip. Other species observed in the garden area included the Red-eyed Dove, Blue-spotted Wood-Dove, and Eastern Plantain-eater. We also saw many Broad-billed Rollers, a few Gray Parrots, and an Olive-bellied Sunbird. We would have the opportunity to see many species of the colorful sunbirds during the trip.

We returned to the hotel and were not quite finished with the birds. An immature African Goshawk was perched very close to the front door and was busy eating a small bird. It devoured every single piece of its prey. By the dining area the common, yet spectacular, Scarlet-chested Sunbirds were feeding on Bottlebrush, *Heliconias*, gingers, and Traveler's Palms. The Red-chested Sunbird was present as well. An active nesting colony of Northern Brown-throated Weaver was by the front gate and individuals were seemingly everywhere. Oh, lest we not forget the Common Bulbul!! To end the day, a handsome White-browed Robin-Chat climbed a tree and emitted its beautiful song. What a spectacular first day!

Herbert, the owner of Uganda Birds, dropped by to greet us. He is largely responsible for acquiring funding to train and equip the women bird watchers in Uganda and works in conservation throughout the country. Naturalists Journeys prides itself by working with people like him across the globe.

Monday July 15 Boma Hotel | Travel to Lake Mburo N.P.

Before departing on to our next destination, we decided to see what was stirring on the hotel grounds. We spotted a Ross's Turaco, sunning itself atop a nearby tree, its deep red flight feathers showing. We would have more encounters of this dazzling bird at other sites. The captivating Double-toothed Barbet is actually a fairly common sighting in Uganda and this morning we would have our first sighting. We also found a pair of African Hobby perched in an adjacent lot, no doubt utilizing the dead tree from which to hunt. A male Northern Puffback also appeared and we got brief, but good looks in the scope. We said 'bye' to the Boma Hotel but wanted to make a quick stop to see another special bird. Prossy got word that in a nearby hotel was a pair of



roosting Southern White-faced Owl and there they were. We would see few owls on this trip so we enjoyed this sighting.

We travelled southwest across the rolling landscape. Most of the countryside is filled with small villages, agricultural crops of various sorts, scattered papyrus-filled wetlands, and forests of non-native pines and eucalyptus. One can only imagine how much pressure 39 million people can make on a country the size of Oregon! Along the way saw a group of Gray Crowned-Cranes far off in a rice field. Foraging near them was a Sacred Ibis. This crane is Uganda's national bird and is represented on their flag. Further down the road we crossed a larger wetland and in the distance was another Shoebill standing in the open. Nice!

By mid-afternoon we reached the main gate of Lake Mburo N.P. As we were checking in we spotted our first Laughing Dove. Close to the gate we started to see small numbers of Maneless Zebra and this would be the only place we would see them. Helmeted Guineafowl, Speckled Mousebird, Wattled Lapwing, Gray-backed Fiscal, Sooty Chat, White-browed Coucal, Rüppell's Starling, Striped Kingfisher, and Bateleur were also spotted and would be seen at various sites along our journey. We spotted a mob of Dwarf Mongoose that foraged amidst the thorny scrub. A pair of the handsome Crowned Lapwing was seen and would be the least common lapwing seen during the trip. Foraging amidst the spiny thickets was a Spot-flanked Barbet and we would observe several during our stay at the park. Perched on a fence was a pair of the tiny Little Bee-eater and we paused to get some photos. As we carefully scanned the dry forest we spotted two of the vibrant Lilac-breasted Rollers. This is one of the most colorful birds that inhabit the dry woodlands.

Other mammals that we began to see were Olive Baboon, Common Warthog, Rothschild's Giraffe, Topi, African Buffalo, Impala, and Waterbuck. The giraffes were introduced there about ten years ago to help combat the acacia trees which were choking out all the open areas. As we were approaching the lodge, a Leopard jumped up that was sleeping in the shade in the ditch. So close! We reached the luxurious Kigambira Lodge and got settled into our rooms. After dinner everyone was escorted to their rooms as hippos come up from the lake each night to forage on the short grass.

Tuesday July 16 Game Drive | Boat Ride

We woke to the sounds of birds that chattered and sang from the nearby trees. After breakfast, we did our first of many game drives. Not far from the lodge we came across the first road block of the trip; a herd of the graceful Impala that were in no hurry to get off the road. We spotted the first of many Red-necked Francolins and some even posed on small mounds close to the road for great photos. We would also see the less common



and more timid Crested Francolin during the drive. We would get our first sighting of the Palm-nut Vulture, a rather handsome species that feeds on palm nuts. Perched in a nearby tree was a Lappet-faced Vulture, a much less common species. Alongside it were numerous White-backed Vultures which is the most common species in Uganda. Another unique sighting for the trip was a perched Wahlberg's Eagle. We would see a wide variety of raptors as we traveled across the landscape.

As we continued the game drive we encountered a pair of Water Thick-knee, not found by water. Some species we would see there and nowhere else on the trip included Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Common Scimitarbill, the handsome Crested Barbet, Black Cuckooshrike, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, and Greater Blue-eared Starling. Today we would begin to see small flocks of Blue-naped Mousebird which would be present at most dry woodland areas we visited. The stunning bicolored Black-headed Gonolek would also be observed at many locations and at times would perch close to the tracks. Of the three tinkerbirds seen on the trip, the Yellow-rumped is the most widespread and today we saw our first. On and off during the morning we spotted many Meyer's Parrots, a tiny gray-headed species with a yellow shoulder. Other species seen include the Fork-tailed Drongo, White-headed Sawwing, Arrow-marked Babbler, Splendid Starling, and Golden-breasted Bunting. There, we would see Common Eland and nowhere else during the trip. Waterbuck were present in small numbers and we would see many of them at other sites during the trip. We spotted our first Spotted Hyena, a loner that crossed the road and quickly disappeared into the thickets.

After an incredible outing, we returned to the lodge for lunch and some downtime. On the grounds there were numerous species of sulphur butterflies, including the Common Orange Tip.

After our R&R, we traveled a short distance to the lakeshore and waited for the boat to depart. It was a large, two-story boat and people from different countries were also present. A Malachite Kingfisher was lurking in the shadows along the water's edge. We boarded and our group remained on the lower deck. Not far away we found the first bloat of hippos. They would be a common sighting throughout most of the trip, both in and out of the water. One bird many wanted to see was the African Finfoot and it didn't take long to find one. We got extended views of it, and later on we would see a group of three more. Hamerkop were also present and would be seen at many places during the trip. Many Striated Herons were spotted along the way as well. Perhaps one of the rarest birds found on the trip was the White-backed Night-Heron and Prossy's sharp eyes spotted an immature on a nest buried deep inside the vegetation. A bit further she found an adult and we were afforded a good look. Another bird seen there and nowhere else on the trip was a lone male Holub's Golden-Weaver. At



the very end of the trip the boat captain took us to see a pair of huge Nile Crocodiles that were resting on a bank in the shade. The boat trip was a big success and so ended another great day.

Wednesday July 17 Game Drive | Travel to Bwindi Impenetrable N.P.

We packed and departed the lodge this morning en route to another destination. However, we would check out one last dirt track before leaving Mbuho. In a little pond we came across a lone Little Grebe, the only one of the trip. We saw zebra again, but this time a few of them were toting Yellow-billed Oxpeckers. We also came across a couple of singing Yellow-throated Longclaw which have the appearance of a meadowlark. A Greater Honeyguide was also seen as we were leaving the wooded area. Along a fencerow with trees we briefly spotted a pair of the tiny Red-headed Lovebird and a lone Dwarf Mongoose that was inspecting cow patties.

We got on the main paved highway and made our way southwest toward Bwindi. As we were passing through the city of Mbarara there was a small wetland alongside the road, filled with cattails. Robert spotted two Gray Crowned-Cranes there so we stopped and were able to literally walk right up to them. We all got some jaw-dropping photos. As we reached more humid environs, we began to see Common Fiscals on utility wires.

As we approached the national park Prossy spotted five Woolly-necked Storks standing in a field down in a ravine. A male/female pair of Mackinnon's Shrike was also spotted foraging in a vacant lot. We reached the Engagi Lodge where we would spend three nights. No sooner than we got out of the bus when several Brown-throated Wattle-eyes appeared. We would get to see more of them on the trip. As everyone got settled into their rooms, a pair of Ross's Turaco was feeding on young leaves off the restaurant balcony. A Black-throated Apalis also made a brief appearance. When everyone arrived to do our checklist, a Crested Guineafowl called from the nearby forest. We would catch up to them later in the trip. Several of the adorable Red-tailed Monkeys came and went. We were now in a completely different habitat at a higher elevation and were sure to see many different species while there.

Thursday July 18 Bwindi Impenetrable N.P.

After breakfast, we headed up to the parking lot where we would depart for the nearby park entrance. We didn't get far because a small fig tree was fruiting and was already packed with birds. It didn't take long to spot a Speckled Tinkerbird and another Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird. One that is usually hard to spot in the forest canopy is the Yellow-spotted Barbet, but one came and went constantly and we were afforded many views. Another good bird was the distinct Honeyguide Greenbul, Yellow-throated Greenbul, Black-necked Weaver, and the



distinct Red-tailed Greenbul also came and went. A lone Dusky-brown Flycatcher made its first appearance. It was hard to leave this gold mine, but we had places to go and things to see.

We loaded the bus and parked by the front gate where we were joined by Nicholas, an expert local guide. We got started with him while Prossy took care of entry fees. In front of an office building four of the enchanting Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters were already busy foraging for insects. We would also get more views of them later at other sites. The stunning Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat also appeared and perched atop a sign. A pair of the handsome Gray-capped Warbler was foraging amidst a thicket by the road. In the front yard of a lodge we spotted two Great Blue Turacos feeding low in a fruiting fig. What incredible birds! We continued the walk and above the main park building we could see a lot of bird action in a tree. There was a snake there and it turned out to be a Forest Cobra that was being mobbed. We went to the building and climbed some stairs as quickly as we could to get a closer view. Upon arriving, the snake must have sensed us and slithered into the foliage, concealing itself. Nonetheless, many of the birds were still around and we got good views of the Gray Apalis, Buff-throated Apalis, Gray-headed Nigrita, and White-breasted Nigrita.

In no time we began to see a wide variety of sunbirds, including the Gray-headed, Collared, Green-headed, Blue-headed, Western Olive, Green-throated, and Northern Double-collared. Many of these were quite similar so we really depended on Prossy to differentiate between all of them. An African Yellow White-eye, Black-billed Weavers, and a Brown-capped Weaver also appeared before we continued on.

The handsome Tambourine Dove appeared out of nowhere and zoomed past us. Singing from the nearby shrubs was a colorful Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat and we were able to see it through the scope. Another wonderful singer was found nearby; the Gray-winged Robin-Chat. We got scope views of it as well. We came across a large mixed flock where we saw Red-chested Cuckoo, Cassin's Honeyguide, Fine-banded Woodpecker, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, Elliot's Woodpecker, Pink-footed Puffback, Many-colored Bushshrike, Slender-billed Greenbul, Anson's Greenbul, and Petit's Cuckooshrike. An immature African Emerald Cuckoo also made a brief appearance. In a nearby thicket a Luehder's Bushshrike was skulking and we could barely see it. Soaring over the canopy were Black Sawwings. There were so many birds in the morning that it seemed difficult to be able to remember them all.

A pair of mammals seen included the flashy L'Hoest's Monkeys which often wander in large troops, and a Boehm's Bush-Squirrel. As we were walking, many colorful butterflies came and went including the spectacular



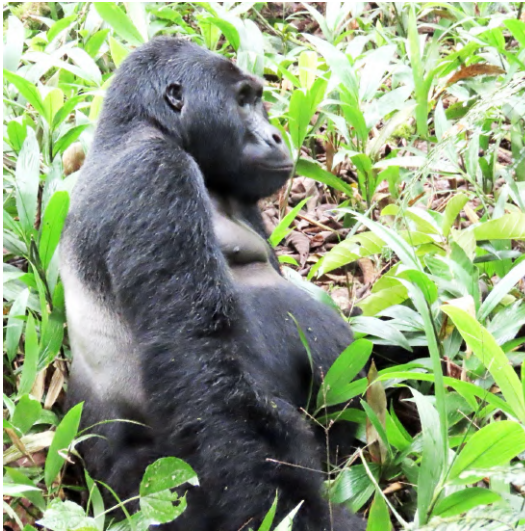
Blue Mother-of-Pearl, Dry-leaf Commodore, Montane Commodore, Lady's Maid, African Leaf Butterfly, and many more. Different species of colorful Acraea were seen puddling and some animal feces had attracted several spectacular species; Common Blue Charaxes, White-barred Emperor, and Forest Pearl Charaxes. A few species seen along a rocky part of the road included the Southern Layman and the Friar. As we were returning and close to the visitor's center, more butterflies were puddling in some mud and included many species of hairstreaks, Calypso White, Raffray's White, and other species of sulphurs. What a way to end an incredible morning.

We returned to the lodge for lunch and some R&R. John finally caught up to our group after fixing the visa issue, but his wife stayed home. In the late afternoon part of the group went back out. Near the main gate of the park were several vibrantly colored African Blue-Flycatchers foraging on insects. A Bronze Sunbird and Blue-throated Brown Sunbird were feeding on a red coral tree. It was quite quiet in terms of bird activity, but we did see a few Black-and-white Shrike-Flycatchers foraging high above the forest canopy. Our first day at Bwindi was unforgettable.

Friday July 19 Bwindi Impenetrable N.P.

Our second full day at Bwindi brought new experiences and memories for our group. Cliff, Rich, and Marianne had acquired permits to hike up and see the Mountain Gorillas. Herbert also had a permit for Robert to go so he would join them. Prossy would take Margaret and John out bird watching again along the access road inside the park. It was a cloudy, cool morning when we reached the park headquarters. We all attended the ceremony and orientation prior to the hike. The room was packed with people from all over the world.

At the end, we were assigned a park guide and other tourists to complete our group. We had an additional four Americans who were doing missionary work in Uganda. Our guide would be Joy and she gave us a briefing regarding the hike, who are park guards were, and the name of our gorilla troop. It was called 'Friendly' as they were known to be so. It consisted of a silverback and four females, one with a newborn. All our porters joined so we ended up being quite the group. We set off down the trail and didn't get far when Joy received a call from the trackers who were out in the forest looking for Friendly. We were informed that the Silverback had a shouting match with another group so they were all a bit on edge. We had to wait along the trail for an hour, but used the time to ask Joy questions about gorilla behavior and look for birds. Since it was cold, we heard very little bird life, let alone see any movement in the dark understory. We were then given the 'green light' to continue the trek and it didn't take long to catch up to the trekkers. In fact, we ended up doing a short loop



inside the forest and the Friendly group wasn't too far away. When we reached the trekkers they pointed out that all four females were above us, feeding high in a fig tree. There they were, all munching away on leaves. So, we all got in position to get photos of a couple of females that were more or less in plain sight. Normally, a group of visitors is allowed to spend an hour with the gorillas, but our clock had not yet begun to tick. We waited patiently to see if the silverback would return. Joy informed us that a few of the trekkers were out looking for him. Our patience paid off. Out of nowhere, he came rambling in and stopped just short of the fig tree. Sensing the females, he remained looking up at them. He moved closer to the base of the fig and waited. One by one, three of the females descended the tree and they all huddled together. Mutual grooming started, as well as our precious hour with them. The last female hesitantly descended and joined the troop. The mother held her baby very close to her chest and we rarely got clear views of it. We all enjoyed every minute of this precious hour and am sure we were all moved by this unforgettable experience. We said 'bye' to the Friendly group and backtracked a bit. We found a suitable place and sat down for lunch, still awestruck at the moments we had with the gorillas. When we were just about finished eating, we noticed that the Friendlys were not fifty feet away and eventually passed behind us.

We quickly made our way back to the visitor's center where we received a gorilla trekking diploma. Prossy was also there to pick us up and we returned to the hotel. Those who went bird watching in the morning said it was slow, likely due to the cool, cloudy weather. However, they did find an immature Black Goshawk, Gray-throated Barbet, Gray-green Bushshrike, Red-tailed Bristlebill, Cabanis's Greenbul, Red-capped Robin-Chat, White-tailed Ant-Thrush, Mountain Wagtail, and a Black-fronted Duiker.

After some downtime we loaded up the bus and drove a short distance down the road. Prossy said Nicholas had some good news; an owl was on a day roost. We reached someone's yard which was filled with small trees, bamboo, and a near-abandoned house. Tucked up in the subcanopy was a pair of African Wood-Owls. Not much else was stirring there except for a few Snowy-crowned Robin-Chats. Back at the hotel there was more action at the fruiting fig tree. A beautiful African Emerald-Cuckoo came in and we got superb looks. Also present were Dusky-blue Flycatcher, White-eyed Slaty-Flycatcher, and Streaky Seedeater. That wrapped up another exciting day.

While we were doing our checklist, Marianne let us know that she saw a pair of Red-headed Bluebills by their cabin deck. Prossy told us that this colorful bird is a rare forest-dwelling seedeater.



Saturday July 20 Bwindi | Travel to Queen Elizabeth N.P.

Today was mostly a travel day, but we would always look for and see birds and wildlife along the way. As we were leaving Bwindi, we stopped to look at a lone Village Indigobird perched atop a wire. Just a little ways down the road we stopped as Gerard wanted to help a fellow tour guide who had car problems. So, we all got out to see if there were any birds around, and there were. A Eucalyptus grove was just uphill, a weedy field was nearby, and some shrubs were along the road. It was enough habitat to support some birds. A group of Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters was perched high on wires where they sallied out for insects. Prossy heard something calling from deep within the Eucalyptus. It was a Yellow-billed Barbet and eventually it flew in and perched high, but we did get some views of it. A few Golden-breasted Buntings also passed by the grove and a Variable Sunbird stopped briefly to gather nectar before leaving. Gerard was successful in helping his friend and off we went.

We reached the Isasha sector of Queen Elizabeth N.P., the place that was famous for the lions that climbed trees. So, we began our first visit into the reserve. There were no lions that day, but we would soon catch up to them. As we crossed a large section of moist broadleaf forest we saw a lot of colorful butterflies. Ahead of us Prossy spotted many objects on the side of the road. It was a flock of Crested Guineafowl foraging in the weeds and we were quite lucky to see so many of them in the open. We were fortunate to see this otherwise secretive forest bird. We eventually reached savannah habitat and found another African Harrier-Hawk. We also had our first sightings of Rüppell's Griffon, two Banded Snake-Eagles, Crowned Hornbill, Gray-headed Kingfisher, Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eater, Gray Kestrel, Moustached Grass-Warbler, Plain-backed Pipit, and Red-billed Quelea. This later bird is quite likely one of the most abundant species in Africa. We would begin to see bigger mammals and in larger quantities. Elephants would start to be a daily sighting, and we would either see individuals, pairs, or small herds. Uganda Kob was another new mammal for the trip and we saw small numbers on this first day.

We eventually reached the Enganzi Lodge on the western perimeter of the park and checked into our rooms. It is nestled on the side of hill that overlooks the plains. In the late afternoon we did a short walk on the grounds centered on the flatter, upper area. An Augur Buzzard soared past us, disappearing over the steep hillside. In a nearby ravine we found a Blue-spotted Wood-Dove and Tropical Boubou. The latter species has quite the loud vocalizations. A Cardinal Woodpecker came in and perched atop a leafless stem, allowing for a scope view. At



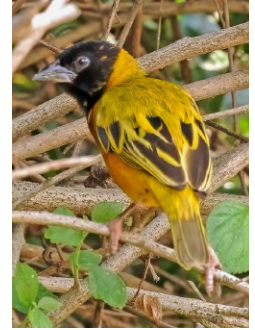
the edge of a corn field there was a lot of action that included Yellow-fronted Canaries and two Western Citril. A Double-toothed Barbet descended to ground level to feed on ripened tomatoes. The Red-backed (White-browed) Scrub-Robin was also seen through the scope as it sang atop a lone tree. To top off the day's list, a pair of White-headed Barbets was seen foraging in a fig tree. It was a good start to another area of Uganda.

Sunday July 21 Queen Elizabeth N.P. | Wildlife Viewing and Boat Ride on Kazinga Channel

Today would be remembered for many reasons; the sheer abundance of wildlife that remain in these parks and how raw nature plays its roll through life and death. We headed out on a wildlife drive to a sector called the Kasenyi Plains. It's an area where many mammals are seen, including big cats. Fires are managed in the parks to keep areas from being overgrown with Acacias and scrub, allowing grasses to grow as forage for ungulates. Before reaching the park, an Elephant was seen along the paved highway. More roadblocks! We reached the entrance gate to the Plains where other visitors were checking in. We hopped out for a minute to see what was stirring. Several Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eaters were foraging, sallying out for insects and landing low enough for good looks. A pair of Black-headed Weavers was foraging for seeds on the ground and a pair of Wire-tailed Swallows was building a nest inside a building.

We set out on the drive and saw more Uganda Kob, Elephants, Waterbuck, and Buffalo. During the drive we found more birds that were new for the trip including Beaudouin's Snake-Eagle, Black Coucal, two Black-bellied Bustards, and around twenty of the elegant Senegal Lapwings. A pair of Rufous-naped Larks was also seen singing atop shrubs. Another guide passing by with a group informed us that there were lions in the area so we were keeping our eyes peeled for any movement in the tall grass. With patience and keen eyes we spotted them. They would occasionally wave their tails in the air or see their heads pop up. We slowly followed them and could see there were four females. At one point, two of them sat atop a small mound to peer over the grass and that was the best view we got of them. We eventually made our way to the top of a crater where artisan vendors were set up. Far down below, villagers were producing salt in evaporation ponds in part of the lake. The remainder of the area was covered with hundreds of Lesser Flamingoes and more Marabou Storks. Robert spotted something else flying along the shorelines. There were small numbers of Black-winged Stilts, but even through the scope we couldn't see much detail. We would get much better views later on in the trip.

We continued the drive and slowly made our way to the area where our boat ride would commence. We bumped into a pair of the wildly colorful Saddle-billed Storks which were quite far from water. Two more birds

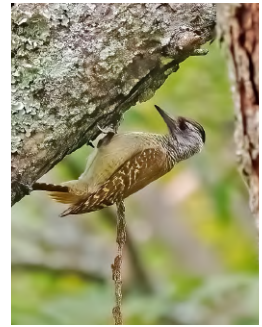
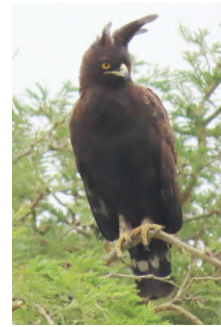


that were new for the trip included White-tailed Lark and African Gray Hornbill. Two Giant Forest Hogs were also observed digging into some moist soil.

We eventually reached the place where we would board our boat, named 'Kingfisher.' We headed out along the scenic Kazinga Channel and could see game trails where animals came and went to drink water or wallow in the muddy shoreline. Hippos and buffalo were common, the latter often seen partially submerged in mud. We began to witness the incredible numbers of Pied Kingfishers and seeing that alone was quite the phenomena. Virtually every available piece of embankment was riddled with their burrows. At one point, we saw a Nile Monitor Lizard making its way close to some burrows and was being dive bombed by many kingfishers. We headed out to a certain spot along the channel to see a bird we wouldn't see anywhere else on this trip; the African Skimmer. Before reaching the small bluff we could see that it was littered with several hundred black dots. They were all skimmers, all spaced out on the ground. We got close enough to see them well and their odd-shaped bills.

We backtracked and part way down the channel noticed some action along the bank. It was huge hippo carcass that must have just reached the shoreline. It was bloated and riddled with fresh scars, likely made from the giant Nile Crocodiles found there. There were four hyenas that must have sniffed it out and were eagerly trying to find a soft spot to chew into. They could not make any headway and had to constantly grab the carcass by the nose as it tried to float away. After this extended tug-of-war, a nearby buffalo grew tired of the hyenas and chased them off. It was kind of like one of those scenes we got to see on a nature program, but this time it was live and real. It would be one of the trip highlights.

As we continued down the channel we saw a pair of Egyptian Goose with some adorable goslings. With so many predators around, how many would actually make it to adulthood? Atop some small trees we got our first views of the attractive Red-throated Bee-eater. What a stunning bird! One sallied out and nabbed a Sulphur butterfly for lunch. At another spot we found a group of ten Water Thick-Knees. Several Goliath Herons and Sacred Ibis were also observed. From a distance we spotted a bird on the side of tree doing something. It was an immature African Harrier-Hawk digging into a hollow in search of prey and we were able to watch it for a moment. We came across a few more Black-winged Stilts, but this time much closer. We found a baby hippo sleeping with its head resting cozily on the snout of its sleeping mother. How adorable and priceless! As we approached Lake Edward we came across two large gatherings of birds. They were filled with many Great and Long-tailed



Cormorants, both Pink-backed and Great White Pelicans, different species of storks and waders, and one Gray-hooded Gull. Although we had seen numerous species of lapwings at many places, we were glaringly missing any type of plover. Robert made a concerted effort to find one and continued to scan all the muddy shorelines. It paid off. Behind all the monstrous storks and pelicans, he spotted something tiny scurrying away. Prossy got on the bird and it turned out to be a Kittlitz's Plover, the only plover to be seen on the trip. Where the channel gave way to the lake, we turned around and headed back to the boat ramp.

Upon arriving at the landing, we could see a lot of critters moving about the beached boats and buildings. It was a large pack of Banded Mongoose that included many adults, young ones, and a couple of babies. They were busy finding scraps of food (no doubt thrown out by local staff) and some were trying to get into a large trash bin. We had fun watching all their antics and then departed. As we were just about to reach the paved highway we briefly saw several Southern Red Bishops perched atop a bush. We made our way back to the lodge for a little rest, do our checklist, and enjoy a hot meal. It was another spectacular day in Uganda.

Monday July 22 Enganzi Lodge | Travel to Chimpanzee Lodge

We began the day with some early morning bird watching on the lodge grounds. We were able to get close looks at the adorable Speckled Mousebird. They seemed somewhat tame and were keen on eating ripe Lantana berries and small figs. Their 'hang-ten' perching posture is quite whimsical. A pair of Gray-capped Warblers singing in a thicket also caught our attention. We enjoyed a male/female pair of Bronze Sunbirds that were quite fond of red hibiscus and other flowers in the gardens. As it started to warm up, the colorful Blue-headed Agama lizards started to appear. We packed up and departed this special place.

We didn't go far before having a first stop. A stretch of highway had papyrus-filled wetlands on both sides and we were after a very special bird; the Papyrus Gonolek. It didn't take long for a pair to show up and we got incredible looks at this spectacular bird. While there, a Nubian Woodpecker appeared and we got scope views. We also got brief views of a Slender-billed Weaver and Common Waxbill before they disappeared back into the papyrus. We continued slowly down the road and stopped to admire two huge elephants that were just on the other side of some brush. There, Prossy heard something familiar calling just behind us so we backed up a bit. There were five Black-lored Babbblers hopping about then scurried away. A bit further, a Tawny Eagle flew across the road and out of sight.



We spent the rest of the morning travelling to our next destination. We reached a scenic spot in the hills and stopped at the Nyinambuga Crater to have our boxed lunch. It was a place that sold small souvenirs and home-grown vanilla beans and was a nice spot to eat. A very cooperative Northern Black-Flycatcher hung around for photos and we also got our first looks at a Compact Weaver. As we were approaching our lodge a pair of Blue Malkoha flew across the road and into a dense tree.

We reached the Chimpanzee Lodge and were given a brief orientation to their facilities. A Common Reed-Frog was crouched down by a porch light. Everyone was shown to their rooms and after a little downtime we were ready to see what was stirring. Great Blue Turacos were on the grounds as well as Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill. These two large birds seemed to be almost everywhere we went in Uganda. Another Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird was spotted along with an African Yellow White-eye. New for the trip was a Speckle-breasted Woodpecker and we got scope views of it. There were at least five African Blue-Flycatchers on the grounds chasing insects and were often tame enough to get really great pictures. To end the day we caught up to the Olive-bellied Sunbird and added Bronze Sunbird to the trip list. We found ourselves in a different part of the country and new experiences awaited us.

Tuesday July 23 Kibale N.P. | Bigodi Wetlands Sanctuary

We begin each day with the anticipation of going to new places and seeing different animals. Today would end up being another exciting day. We traveled to the nearby Kibale N.P. headquarters which actually consists of a rather small building. There, we received an orientation talk alongside people from many different countries. As in Bwindi, we were going to be split up into groups to go look for the Common Chimpanzee. Benson would be our local guide. We boarded our bus and travelled just a short distance into the forest. It wasn't far down a forested path that we came upon a huge fig tree where at least twenty chimpanzees were feeding. The tree was packed with yellow-colored figs and the troop of chimps was loving them. Two very young chimps were also spotted. There was a constant 'rain' of pieces of figs falling to the forest floor, along with showers of 'golden rain'. We all took the best photos we could since they were high up. After awhile, the forest understory started to warm up and rays of light began to filter down, creating sunny spots. It didn't take long for Robert to notice that the forest understory started to come alive with a host of incredibly colorful butterflies. Robert, Cliff, and Rich began to approach the tree, not minding the falling figs. Some butterflies would bask in the sun with wings spread wide open, while others fed on the fallen figs. Some of the more fascinating species included the Equatorial Mimic Forester, Herminia Glider, Edward's Forester, Ansonge's Forest Glider, Rapid Forester, and



Forest Glade Nymph. Seeing these interior forest species alone was an amazing experience. We could hear some European tourists chuckling at our butterfly adventure, but we didn't mind. After about an hour, the group of people there got larger as they were informed of the closeness of these chimps. Suddenly, the local guides said we needed to move back from the tree. The chimps were on the move and many quickly started to descend the tree. Tourists were scrambling to get into position to get photos of them before they disappeared into the thick forest. The show was over. We returned to the hotel for lunch and some downtime.

After lunch, we travelled to the nearby Bigodi Wetlands, a small reserve managed by local communities. It was warm and the bird action was quite slow, but we were also on the lookout for some other wildlife. It didn't take long when we saw a few Red-tailed Monkeys as they foraged nearby. We also got great views of the Ugandan Red Colobus and some Uganda Mangabey that were shier. This would be the only encounter of these two species during the trip. We also spotted a distant Grosbeak Weaver and a small group of Magpie Mannikins feeding on grass seeds. As we were approaching the visitor's center, we saw a good number of the colorful Violet-backed Starlings that were hawking insects, utilizing some Eucalyptus trees as perches. That was one showy bird!

We returned to the lodge for a bit of rest and reflection on another fabulous day.

Wednesday July 24 Chimpanzee Lodge | Travel to Masindi

After a hearty breakfast, we did a short walk on the grounds. Two Palm-nut Vultures came soaring in and one landed on a nearby palm tree. It was the best look yet of this colorful species. Four Gray Parrots flew by, squawking away. In the garden we saw a pair of Brown-crowned Tchagra, the first species of the trip in this group. A handsome Gray-green Bushshrike came through, foraging in a nearby lone tree. We would get another look at different sunbirds, including the Green-headed, Olive-bellied, Bronze, and Copper. In the small tea plantation a flock of the adorable Black-crowned Waxbill foraged on seeding grasses. It was a nice way to end our visit there.

As we made our way down the road to the next destination, we stopped at a small marsh along the road in Fort Portal. A lone Sacred Ibis was foraging in the wetland. Prossy pointed out a lone, singing Chubb's Cisticola. A specialty bird we were really after was the Northern Masked Weaver and Prossy was able to get us onto two of them. A small flock of Black-and-white Mannikin and a soaring Brown Snake-Eagle were spotted before we continued on. Further along we made a lunch stop. There were active colonies of both the Village and



unicolored Viellot's Weavers. It was fun watching them build their nests as they returned from a nearby swamp filled with papyrus.

Toward the end of the day we reached the town of Masindi, home for the next two nights.

Thursday July 25 Budongo Forest (Royal Mile)

We set out early for our last visit to a tropical rainforest. We began spotting birds as we approached some massive sugar cane fields and weedy areas, and many were new for the trip. These included Red-collared Widowbird, Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Yellow Bishop, Black Bishop, and Northern Red Bishop. At a weedy patch we saw more Bronze Mannikins and a lone Yellow-bellied Waxbill. Waiting for us along the road was Raymond, an expert local guide. We walked down a path that led into agricultural plots that had a few scattered trees, shrubs, and weedy fields. We saw more widowbirds, bishops, and close up views of Compact Weavers. We got a brief look at a Fawn-breasted Waxbill, Variable Sunbird, Brimstone Canary, and a singing Brown-backed Scrub-Robin. We were off to a great start.

We reached the entrance to a site called the Royal Mile inside the Budongo Central Forest Reserve. It didn't take long before we started seeing more new birds. A specialty was the White-thighed Hornbill and we got to see several pair. A tiny surprise appeared; it was an African Dwarf Kingfisher and we were afforded good looks of it. Calling high in the subcanopy was a Chocolate-backed Kingfisher and Raymond searched in vain. We heard others as the day continued and all would evade us! A Blue-breasted Kingfisher was also heard high up and it also evaded us. Yikes! Another tiny denizen of these forests was calling; a Yellow-throated Tinkerbird. This one did appear and we got great looks. Also high in the subcanopy was a Hairy-breasted Barbet and Robert was able to get the scope on it. Prossy spotted a Willcock's Honeyguide, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, and a Gray Greenbul. Raymond's sharp eyes spotted something high in the canopy. It was a Western Tree Hyrax foraging lazily on leaves. What a great sighting! We walked slowly down the shaded road and would constantly find more and more birds. A pair of Chestnut Wattle-eyes were seen and then their nest, nestled high above the road hidden in the leaves. Several Chestnut-capped Flycatchers were spotted, all chasing insects much like the American Redstart. We were seeing so many good birds! A Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo started calling and another one answered nearby. We got brief looks at this shy bird as it glided through the subcanopy. A handsome Western Black-headed Oriole showed up and we got brief scope views. We did stop to eat lunch and enjoy this beautiful place.



Butterflies started appearing and Robert was able to snap some pictures of a delicate Ribbe's Glassy Acraea. A fruiting fig was also attracting some flashy species including Brunhild's Forester, Ochre Glider, Olive Forester, Phantom Forester, and Blue Diadem. These are all jaw-dropping species. Calling nearby inside the forest was another prized bird, a Nahan's Francolin. This quail-like bird is very secretive and seldom seen well. We stepped onto a narrow path and waited patiently as one crossed twice then disappeared. We were also able to see several Blue Monkeys which had evaded us in Kibale. An attractive Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush was also seen chasing insects. Getting our attention were three Golden-crowned Woodpeckers chasing each other through the canopy. As the day was coming to an end, we ended up at a small creek and Prossy heard another good bird calling upstream. We waited patiently until a White-spotted Flufftail quickly ran across a small mudflat. This species pertains to a small family that is closely related to crakes and rails.

We departed and along the edge of a field Prossy spotted a Marsh Tchagra. At the end of the trip she would tell us that it was one of the least common species we observed. We returned to Masindi and had a delicious meal to end the day.

Friday July 26 Travel to Murchison Falls N.P. | Pakuba Lodge

We departed Masindi and soon entered the southern part of Murchison Falls National Park. A pair of Lesser Striped Swallows was perched on a wire at the entrance gate. We continued and drove through a long stretch of the humid Budongo forest. We spotted several more White-thighed Hornbills. Eventually, the humid forest gave way to drier forest and we made a steep descent down into the more arid lowlands. We spotted our first Dark Chanting-Goshawk with one perched in plain view. Prossy spotted a small group of birds crossing the road and we stopped. It was the handsome, yet whimsical, White Helmetsrike. They popped in and out from behind a tree and we wished they had come closer. When we finally reached the lowlands we began to see large mammals again. There were giraffes and buffalos. Two that were new for the trip were Lelwel Hartbeest with its stretched out facial appearance. The other was the tiny Oribi and were seemingly everywhere. We also got our first look at the giant Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill and would see many while there. The Piapiac, a crow-like bird, was common and often seen perched atop buffalo. We saw more African Gray Hornbill as well.

We reached a special place inside the park; the falls themselves. Just a short stroll down a path and we were standing close to one of the most powerful waterfalls on the planet. The Victoria Nile pours over the edge, creating clouds of cool mist and a permanent rainbow. The water level was high, so a bird Prossy was looking for



wasn't on its normal perch. On the other side of the river, however, were several Rock Pratincole and we could barely see them through the scope. We would get better looks later.

We continued on toward our lodge and encountered yet another primate, the Patas Monkey. With this species, we would see a total of 11 primates during the trip. We reached Pakuba Lodge and got settled in. After a brief rest we took a stroll on the grounds. We didn't have to go far to see a lot of birds. New for the trip were Mourning Collared-Dove, Black-billed Wood-Dove, Green Woodhoopoe, and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird. A pair of Black-billed Barbet was also spotted and we found their nest high inside a dead snag behind the swimming pool. Also seen on the grounds were Black-crowned Tchagra, Northern Crombec, the snazzy Silverbird, Spotted Morning-Thrush, Shelly's Rufous-Sparrow, Little Weaver, and Vitelline Masked-Weaver. The tiny and adorable Red-cheeked Cordonbleu were common on the short, stubby grass.

The lodge was quite large and people from all over the world were there to see this wonderful park.

Saturday July 27 Game Drives at Murchison Falls N.P.

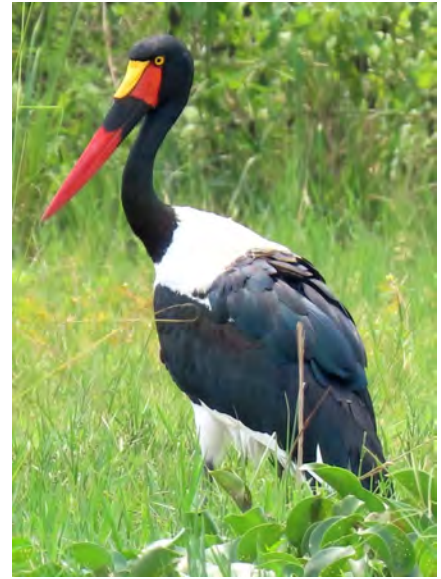
We spent the entire day at this large national park, driving numerous tracks that led off into different directions. In the morning we took the Victoria Track. It didn't take long for us to see two Banded Snake-Eagles and the large Denham's Bustard. Although the first bustard was far away, we would get close up views later in the day. We also saw our first Nile Bushbuck, a handsome reddish antelope with white markings. We saw two more Rüppell's Griffons, more Bateleurs, a close up look at a Black-bellied Bustard, and a huge Martial Eagle. We spotted our first Levillant's Cuckoo, a handsome black-and-white species with a long tail. We saw many more Abyssinian Ground-Hornbills, some of them at close range, and in small groups. It was fun watching them saunter across the plains searching for food. We saw our first, and only, African Gray Woodpecker and Croaking Cisticola of the trip. We caught up to the Plain-backed Pipit and a pair of Black-rumped Waxbill that foraged on grass seeds. At one point, we came across a small van full of tourists and were blocking the track. They ended up being a family from the Netherlands and were just looking around. Prossy then began to scan and saw something in a far off tree. She couldn't tell if it was a monkey or something else. Inside the bus, Robert set up the spotting scope and could see that it was a lion. It was tucked up in the shade, resting on the large branches. Prossy looked around and said it was safe, so we all got out. Through the scope we could see that it was a



female lion and at one point one of her front legs dangled down. She was looking at us too! We let the family look in the scope before continuing down the track. Even though it was far off, we were glad to see it.

We reached a spot where there were bathrooms by the edge of the lake. A lot of people were there too. There were many Spur-winged Lapwings scattered about. Nearby, just inside the thickets, were a lot more birds. There were eight Water Thick-Knees, all resting in the shade of the bushes. However, there was another species disguised amongst them; two Senegal Thick-Knees. Their plumage is quite similar. A pair of Buff-bellied Warbler, a Speckle-fronted Weaver, and Golden-backed Weaver were also seen. The Speckle-fronted looks nothing like all the rest of weavers. A couple more showy species were also spotted; a pair of Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters that have the general appearance as the Little Bee-eater. Suddenly, an even flashier species showed up. It was a Northern Carmine Bee-eater and then several more appeared. As we were getting ready to depart, Robert spotted something shiny foraging inside another bush. It was a Dideric Cuckoo. What a gorgeous species! After this incredible morning we returned to the lodge for some lunch and a little break. During lunch, a Shikra soared low by the restaurant, showing its distinct plumage.

In the afternoon we returned to the field and visited the Queen Track. We saw a lot of big game, including many giraffes, kob, buffalo, and elephants. It was the most game witnessed in any of the parks and was spectacular. We took a side track to an isolated wetland where we would try to get John a Shoebill, since he missed the ones early on in the trip. We got there and unfortunately that species was nowhere to be seen. However, we did see more White-faced Whistling-Ducks, our first African Darter, and another Blue-headed Coucal. We continued our search and found another Lappet-faced Vulture and two more Tawny Eagles, perched together! We got close up views of several more Denham's Bustards that were close to the track. It was getting late so we returned to the lodge. As we got close to the front gate we saw that there were two large elephants lazily grazing alongside the road and were blocking us. We had to wait for quite some time until they slowly moved into a nearby field. Marianne and Rich had stayed behind and said they were getting a bit worried. No worries, just another road block! As we were having dinner, everyone suddenly got up to go see something from the balcony. Someone had a spotlight on a female lion going through the brush. This is why guests are not allowed to wander around after dark.



Sunday July 28 Game Drive | Boat ride to Murchison Falls | Night Drive

Today marked the last full day in Uganda. Although we had already seen so much everywhere we visited, there was more yet to discover. We did an early morning walk on the grounds to see what was stirring. A male/female pair of Dideric Cuckoo was foraging in the nearby vegetation. Not seen since Lake Mburo was a Spot-flanked Barbet and Lesser Honeyguide. Robert spotted something coming in fast from the lake's direction. It turned out to be a Red-necked Falcon and it continued zooming past us. Prossy heard a familiar sound, something she detected during one of the game drives. It was a Flappet Lark which makes a strange sound with its wings during flight. She spotted it, flying high above. A pair of Banded Martins foraged just above the roof tops. A pair of Moustached Grass-Warbler was seen foraging in the bushes along with a Beautiful Sunbird. It was a great way to start the day.

After breakfast we headed out for the days' main activity; a boat ride to see the Murchison Falls. Along the way we spotted a Grasshopper Buzzard, more African Gray Hornbill, and a Zitting Cisticola. We reached the boat dock area and hopped on our boat. It didn't take long when we started to see Red-throated Bee-eaters and they would be a common sighting during this outing. More hippos were heard snorting, hidden amidst the water hyacinth. A Goliath Heron graced the shoreline. We saw numerous Malachite Kingfishers and at one point were able to glide right up to one. Its gaze was fixed on the water below, no doubt watching small fish. One particular species we really wanted to see was the Giant Kingfisher. Measuring up to 18" long it is the largest species in Africa. During the ride, Robert spotted something coming low over the water right at the boat. It was the kingfisher! It landed against an embankment, partially hidden behind some tree roots. We slowly rolled up to it, getting a good look before it zoomed away. As we got closer to the falls, we spotted several Rock Pratincoles resting on an upright snag where we were able to get great views. We went into a small wetland and saw more White-faced Whistling-Ducks, Egyptian Goose, and another lovely Saddle-billed Stork. African Darters were common and we saw many. We arrived at the limit where boats could go to see the falls. Our captain narrated history of when the first foreigners laid eyes on it and others that followed. It was an impressive sight. We began the return trip and spotted a sole Osprey, the only one of the trip. The captain said he had a surprise for us and took us into an inlet. We could see that a sandy shore was inhabited by many huge Nile Crocodiles and there were more swimming in the water. It was an awe-inspiring sight. Upon arriving at the dock we loaded the bus and returned to the lodge. As we got closer, we found a group of no less than 15 Northern Red Bishops foraging on grass seeds close to the road.



After lunch we had some downtime and later on did our final checklist and dinner. After dinner, some of us went out on a night drive to see what was stirring. During any outing, one never knows what will be encountered. Close to the lodge was a Common Genet that was hunting amidst the thick vegetation. As we cruised along we found a giant Verreaux's Eagle-Owl sitting atop a log that was lying across the ground. It was an interesting place to see it. A Blotched Genet was also seen hunkered down in a barren field. Several White-tailed Mongooses were spotted until one was close enough to see its white tail. Six hyenas were seen up close as we were passing over a small dike. Our park guide said he thinks they use the drainage pipes as a place to rest. Very close to the road was a newborn buffalo curled up beneath a lone tree. We couldn't even tell if it could walk yet. Mother was nowhere to be seen but we didn't stay around long enough to find out. We then came across a very special bird; a Pennant-winged Nightjar, and one that Margaret really wanted to see. It flew up and away and showed off its long wing feathers. What a graceful bird! We came across a second one and were able to get close enough for pictures. We then spotted a second Grayish Eagle-Owl, this one sitting on the road. We returned to the lodge and as we got closer Prossy spotted a Leopard cross a side road. It went into some bushes and trees right behind the last row of rooms at the lodge!! What a memorable way to end to this spectacular trip.

Monday July 29 Drive to Entebbe for Departures

After breakfast we made the lengthy drive back to Entebbe, taking a different and direct route. John was taken directly to the airport for his flight and the remainder of us had lunch at a nearby diner. Afterwards, we returned to the Boma Hotel and before dinner Robert gave a presentation on the birds and butterflies of Honduras. And so ended this great trip.

Favorite Sightings of the Trip

Cliff-Shoebill, Gray-headed Kingfisher, African Blue-Flycatcher, Northern Red Bishop, Mountain Gorillas, Chimpanzees and photographing the butterflies on the figs at Kibale.

Margaret-Shoebill, African Finfoot, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Hamerkop, Red-throated Bee-eaters, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Giraffes, all the Banded Mongoose on the boat ramp, and birding by boat was an A+.

John-African Skimmers, Bwindi Lodge, best bird watching at Royal Mile, Uganda Kob.

Rich-Shoebill, African Finfoot, Giant Kingfisher, all boating trips, Gorilla encounter.

Marianne-Shoebill, friendly Ugandan people, Gorilla encounter.

Prossy-Marsh Tchagra a very good sighting, Tree Hyrax.

Robert-The hyenas trying to eat the dead hippo.

Photos: Hippo (Cliff Hensel - CH), Red-throated Bee-eater (Robert Gallardo - RG), Giraffe at Murchison Falls (RG), Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill (RG), Euphaedra imitans (RG), Pied Kingfisher (RG), Mountain Gorilla (RG), Ugandan Red Colobus (RG), Shoebill (CH), Malachite Kingfisher (RG), African Openbill (CH), African Jacana (RG), African Harrier-Hawk (RG), Woodland Kingfisher (CH), Impala roadblock (RG), Crested Barbet (CH), Black-headed Gonolek (CH), Fork-tailed Drongo (CH), Water Thick-knee (CH), Little Bee-eater (CH), Gray Crowned-Crane (CH), Ross's Turaco (RG), Green-headed Sunbird (CH), Great Blue Turaco (RG), Blue Mother-of-Pearl (RG), L'Hoest's Monkey (RG), Mountain Gorilla with Young (RG), African Wood-Owl (CH), African Emerald Cuckoo (CH), Colotis evagore (RG), Group Birding (RG), Crested Guineafowl (RG), Moustached Grass-Warbler (CH), Striped Kingfisher (RG), Lions (RG), Yellow-billed Oxpecker on buffalo (RG), Hippo with young (RG), Black-headed Weaver (CH), Elephant (RG), Papyrus Gonolek (CH) Long-crested Eagle (RG), Nubian Woodpecker (CH), Chimpanzee (RG), Preussi's Forester (RG), Cymothoe herminia (RG), Red-tailed Monkey (RG), Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill (CH), Scarlet-chested Sunbird (CH), Hypolimnus salmacis (RG), Bebearia brunhilda (RG), Red-collared Widowbird (CH), Red-cheeked Cordonbleu (RG), Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill (CH), Black-billed Barbet (CH), Scenic (RG), Northern Red Bishop (RG), Oribi (RG), Denham's Bustard (RG), White-backed Vulture (CH), Gray-headed Kingfisher (CH), Northern Carmine Bee-eater (CH), Swallow-tailed Bee-eater (CH), Saddle-billed Stork (RG), Nile Crocodile (RG), Pennant-winged Nightjar (CH), Grayish Eagle-Owl (RG), Red-throated Bee-eater (CH), Giant Kingfisher (RG)