

Kenya - January 2013

By Tim Roberts

This safari was not primarily intended as a birdwatching trip; viewing mammals was the aim of my companions although they, and our guide, were happy to indulge me once they'd seen the key species. We spent three days in the Masai Mara and another day at Lake Nakuru National Park. The safari was organised through Mara Gates Safaris in Nairobi. No hesitation in recommending this small company. From our first contact they responded by return of email and were only too happy to change one of their standard itineraries to suit us.

We stayed at Ol Moran (Masai for 'The Warrior') a tented camp; basic but adequate accommodation with the friendliest of staff and located within a mile of the Oololaimutia entrance to the reserve. It was also conveniently adjacent to a working (as opposed to tourist) Masai village complete with a colourful market drawing in Masai people from miles around and a number of entertaining pubs. At Nakuru we stayed at Flamingo Hills Camp – a bit swankier.

Given that there are limited opportunities to get out of your safari vehicle – it's not encouraged when carnivores can appear at any moment - most of what I saw and managed to photograph was the big, obvious stuff. The camera I used was a Panasonic Lumix TZ30 which has a wonderful Leica lens with a 20x optical zoom. It is a compact model with many features but works really well as a point & shoot – which is pretty well my level these days as you'll see from the pictures. (Additional photos by Constance Wolstenholme and June Thomas also with Lumix TZ30.)

After our safari we returned to Nairobi to visit the David Elphick Elephant Orphanage before flying on to Zanzibar for a beach week. There was limited birdlife at our resort, so just a couple of photos from there. In Zanzibar we stayed at Pongwe Beach Hotel – aka paradise!

We saw many and varied creatures including, within the first half-hour of entering the Mara, three species of big cat.

Reference books used were:

Birds of the Masai Mara – Adam Scott Kennedy (a beautiful new photographic guide)

National Audubon Society Field Guide to African Wildlife – Alden/Estes/Schlitter/McBride

The Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe – Bruun & Singer - old faithful from 1974 useful for migrants

In addition to the birds captured on camera I listed:

White Stork	Black Kite	Sooty Chat
Marabou Stork	African Black-shouldered Kite	Yellow Bishop
Lappet-faced Vulture	Common Kestrel	Jackson's Widowbird
Martial Eagle	Wattled Starling	Saddle-billed Stork
Bataleur	Rufous-naped Lark	Sacred Ibis
Hadaba Ibis	Brown Snake Eagle	Grey-backed Fiscal
Black-headed Heron	Crested Francolin	Common Fiscal
Grey Heron	Ring-necked Dove	Common Drongo
Black-capped Avocet	African Mourning Dove	Common Bulbul
African Fish Eagle	Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Rattling Cisticola
African Jacana	Speckled Mousebird	Variable Sunbird
Spur-winged Plover	African Grey Hornbill	Ruppell's Starling
Blacksmith Plover	White-browed Coucal	Village Weaver
Pied Kingfisher	Common Scimitarbill	Von der Decken's Hornbill
African Pied Wagtail	Hoopoe	African Grey Flycatcher

Grey-headed Sparrow
Kenya Rufous Sparrow
House Sparrow
Brown-necked Raven
Pied Crow

White-headed Saw-wing
Eurasian Bee-eater
Barn Swallow
Plain Martin
Wire-tailed Swallow

Little Swift
White-rumped Swift
Common Swift

Masai Mara National Reserve



Grey-capped Social Weaver



Yellow-billed Oxpecker (and Cape Buffalo!)



Bare-faced Go-away Bird



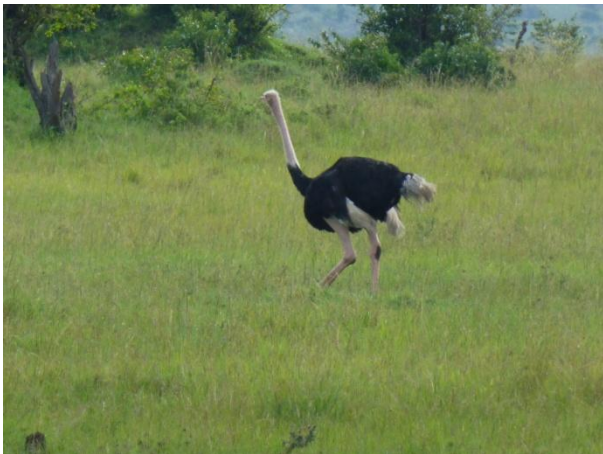
White-browed Robin Chat



White-headed Vulture



Abdim's Stork



Ostrich (ssp Masai)



Superb Starling



Grey Crowned Crane



Tawny Eagle



Helmeted Guineafowl



Red-necked Spurrow



Lilac-breasted Roller



Long-crested Eagle



African Wattled Plover



Red-billed Oxpecker (and Impala)



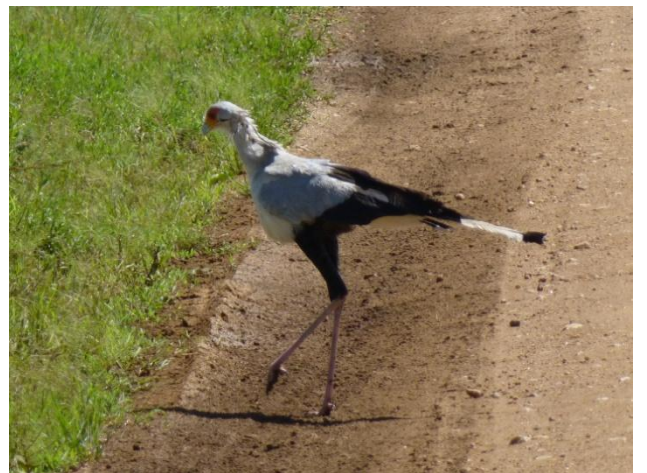
Lesser-striped Swallow



Yellow-fronted Canary



Sooty Chat



Secretary Bird

Lake Nakuru National Park



Cattle Egrets (and Cape Buffalo!)



Great White Egret



Grey-headed Gull



Red-knobbed Coot



Yellow-billed Stork



Little Egret



African Spoonbill



Hammerkop



Greater Flamingo and Lesser Flamingo (only a couple of thousand present as opposed to four million plus on my previous visit)



Black-winged Stilt, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper



Little Stint



Pink-backed Pelican



Great White Pelican

Zanzibar – Pongwe Beach



Whimbrel



Western Reef Heron

Tim Roberts, April 2013

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