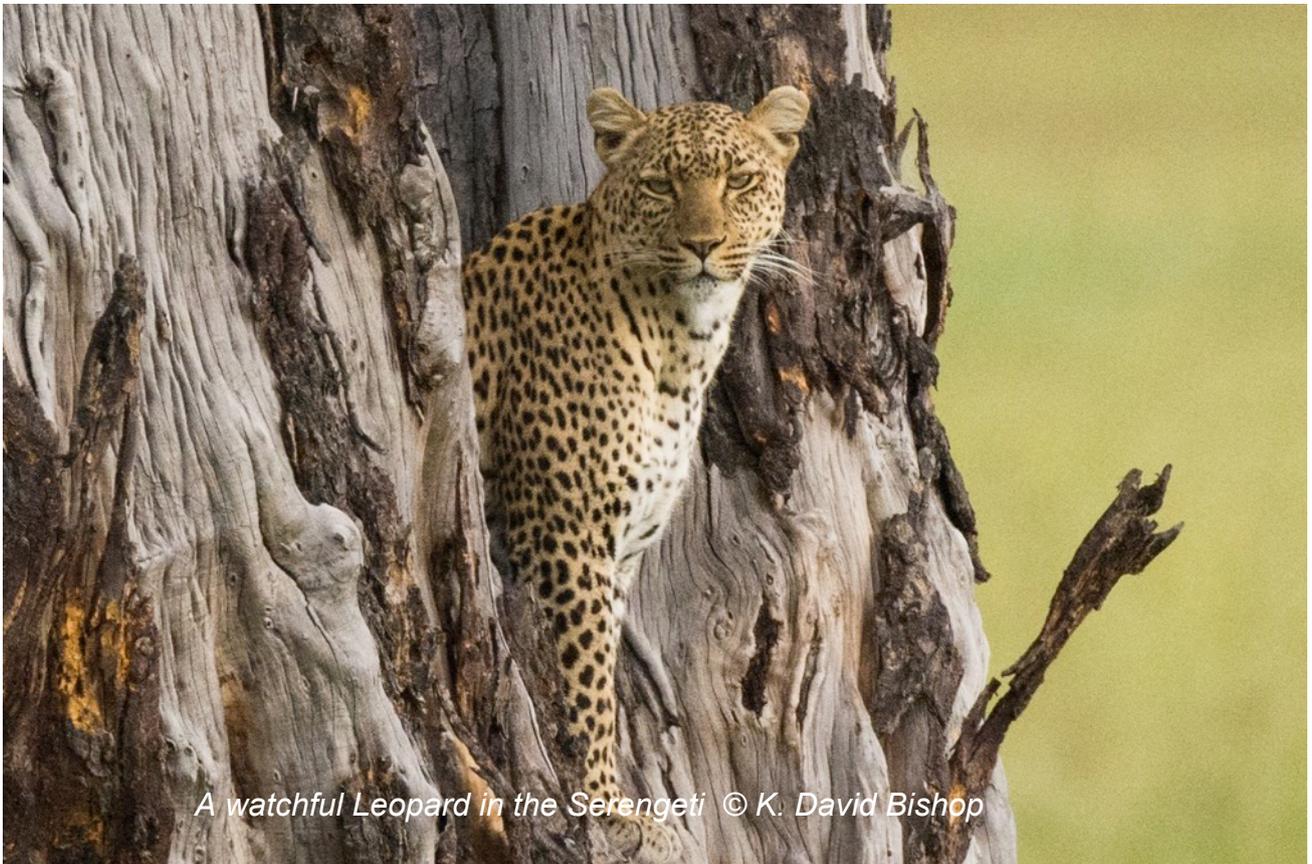


BIRD TOURS
David Bishop

TANZANIA SAFARI

14 MAY TO 7 JUNE 2015



A watchful Leopard in the Serengeti © K. David Bishop

**Compiled and led by K. David Bishop
and Anthony**

TANZANIA SAFARI 2015

This was without a shadow of doubt the most wonderful and uplifting safari I have ever led to Africa and likely the finest tour of my career. Quite simply I could have easily turned around and done it all again. The nature, the landscapes and wildlife of Tanzania coupled with superb accommodations, glorious weather, exceptional food AND four people who were a dream to travel with made it thus. Add to this the warmth, skills and knowledge of my colleague Anthony and our two fabulous drivers plus all the un-heralded people we met and who looked after us made for an absolutely unforgettable adventure.

I love Africa dearly. The wide-open spaces; the clear skies; those dawns with the last stars blinking away against a satin backdrop and the sounds of elephants trumpeting or a lion roaring are incomparable. The timing of our safari was near perfect; everywhere was lush and green with a profusion of flowering plants and the weavers, whydahs, widowbirds and bishop birds were all in prime breeding plumage and what is more they were displaying. To stand and watch a mighty herd of wildebeest on the move, the dust partially backlit by the afternoon sun was a spectacle none of us will ever forget. A magnificent Leopard surveying his territory from a loan tree; a Cheetah snoozing whilst surrounded by half a million ungulates; myriads of flamingoes at close quarters at the Momela Lakes; an incredibly obliging Dwarf Bittern that just sat and posed until we could take no more; a dream come true, an amazing Zanj Elephant Shrew joining us at Amani for our morning stroll. There was the fun of sharing, the laughter and the tears at parting. What a trip. I can never thank you enough.

Love

David



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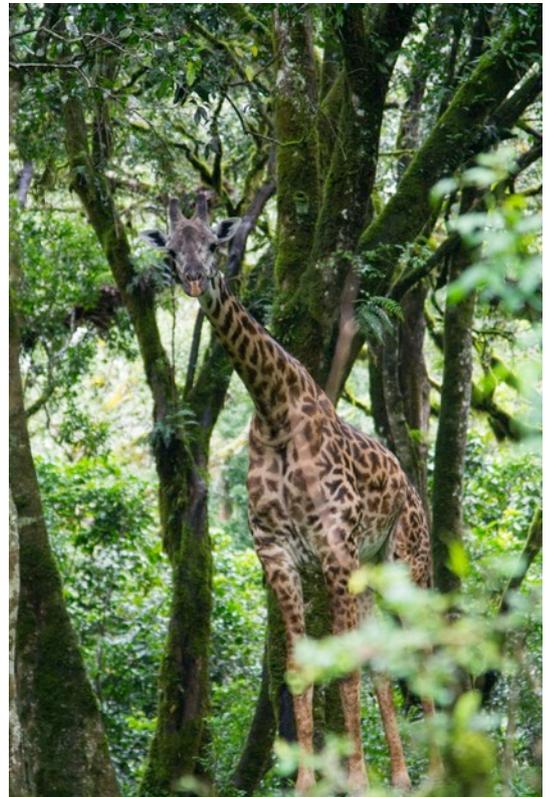


*Gray-crowned Crane overflies the Ngorongoro Crater
© K. David Bishop*

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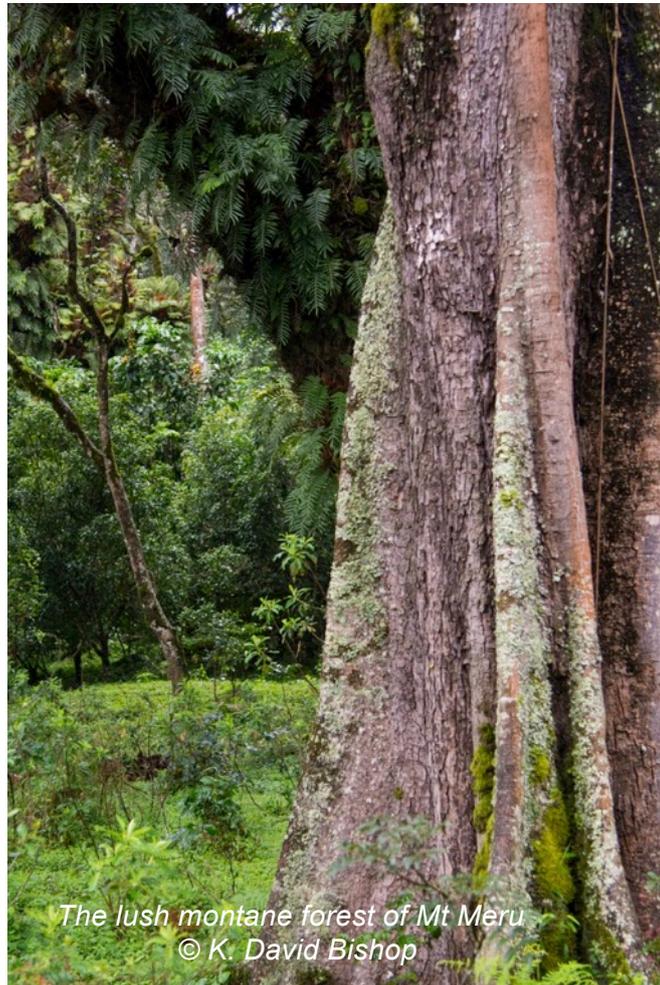
15th May – Ngare Sero Lodge: After arriving the previous evening this was a great opportunity to rest and recuperate from the long international flight. And to enjoy the beautiful grounds of this lovely lodge that literally teems with birds and other wildlife. The food was delicious too.

16th May - Arusha NP: Our first venture into the wilds of East Africa. This morning, damp and drizzly though it was, we headed into nearby Arusha National Park located on the slopes of Mt Meru and the adjoining lakes and plains. Africa is so birdy that actually getting to the park entrance was feat of determination in itself, there was so much to see along the way. As we were to discover throughout this safari everywhere was lush and verdant and the birds were all in their finest dress. Despite that it was quite wet and rainy to start out with especially in the forest we nevertheless ended up recording more than



A surprise! An adult Giraffe in Mt Meru's forests © K. David Bishop

80 species of birds and twenty species of mammals. So many highlights: a Giraffe in the forest; Momela Lakes absolutely teeming with flamingoes --- the colours; massed flocks of Quelea all in breeding plumage and so much more. We will sleep well tonight.



*The lush montane forest of Mt Meru
© K. David Bishop*

17th May – Ngare Sero to Speke Bay, Lake Victoria: After a delectable breakfast we headed down the highway to Kilimanjaro airport and a very efficient and modern facility it was too. After a ‘naughty little hick-up’ we were on our way and our 90-minute flight, unfortunately mostly cloudy soon had us delivered to the city of Mwanza. The driver sent to pick us up had apparently forgotten about us and fallen asleep so we entertained ourselves watching hordes of nesting herons and egrets plus good numbers of Marabou Storks right at the airport. Eventually we were on our way to lunch on the shores of Lake Victoria where we were entertained by a constant procession of great birds and our first Mwanza Red-headed Agama. Having persuaded our driver that it really wasn’t acceptable to cram us all into such a tiny car we finally hired a second vehicle and very slowly, very slowly trundled our way to the fabulously lovely Speke Bay Lodge. I suspect the least said about our drivers, their vehicles and the stress of the journey, the better ☺ Oh joy to be at this lovely lodge with such

good cold beer, great food and hordes of birds. I for one found it hard to sleep that night I was so excited at the prospect of the next day.

18th May – Speke Bay: Tea, coffee and fruit; then followed what I can only describe as THE most fabulous morning's birding imaginable. We had originally planned to be back for breakfast at 09.00 but the birds were so fabulous, with new ones appearing so thick and so fast that we barely made it back for 11.00 – a morning I doubt any of us will ever forget. After helping organize us a gorgeous repast on the verandah, George then escorted us to see a pair of Three-banded Coursers. Wow! What gems. Finally we took a short break before lunch and an afternoon wander in a completely different part of the lodge grounds. Again more wonderful birds concluding with an intense sunset providing a spectacular backdrop for hundreds of egrets, storks and cormorants going to roost on a tiny island on the edge of Lake Victoria. I sometimes have to pinch myself to remember where I am. Some of today's highlights included: Our first Gray-breasted Francolins, African Openbills, good numbers of large wading birds, a pair of Black-breasted Snake-Eagles, very confident Spotted Thick-knees, Pied Cuckoo, Verreux's Eagle Owl with a large young bird, Blue-naped Mousebird, Usambiro Barbet, fabulous close views of a Gray Kestrel, Black-headed Gonolek, African paradise-Flycatcher, nesting Angola Swallows, gorgeous Superb Starlings, hordes of Red-chested Sunbirds and myriads of weavers, many trying to feed off the table, and displaying Eastern Paradise Whydahs.



19th May – Speke Bay then drive into Serengeti NP: Birded the lodge grounds which again proved remarkably productive. Anthony and our driver Roger arrived and much to our relief Roger was able to accommodate all the bags in relatively little space - impressive. Breakfast and then we were off, heading north before turning east and

entering the Serengeti at the Ndabaka Gate (11.00). A short stop here for Roger to complete some paperwork and us to find a few birds before finally entering the great, immense, magical Serengeti. Words can never really express the wonder as you ride out on to the vast open grasslands liberally dotted with large mammals and birds. It was sheer heaven. So much to see - and photograph, and so easy. Hmmm bliss. Thanks to some brilliant spotting by Chris we enjoyed prolonged and intimate views of a rarely seen Dwarf Bittern and then thanks to Anthony's knowledge a very localized Karamoja Apalis. We took our packed lunch at the Grumeti River along with Bare-faced Go-away Birds and Eastern Gray Plainain Eaters. Thereafter we continued through the western corridor stopping every few minutes for yet another bird or mammal. At one point we happened to stop right in the path of a mass migration Wildebeeste. What an incredible sight to see thousands of these large mammals wending their way in great dusty lines across the plains. With a long way to go – our original destination, the Serena Lodge had recently burnt down, we pressed on but with innumerable wonderful stops including evocative views of a Leopard in a lone dead tree surveying his domain. A family of Elephants moving across an unforgettable landscape at dusk eventually brought us to the beautifully appointed and superbly located Serengeti Sopa Lodge.

20th May – Serengeti NP: Heading out shortly after dawn we spent the first few hours threading our way through Acacia woodland adding bird after bird to our wonderfully burgeoning list and steadily overloaded flash cards. Slowly we emerged out on the vast grasslands that characterize the central Serengeti. The wonder of so much wild, wild space; fascinating to contemplate that these grasslands and their associated woodlands support such unimaginable numbers and diversity of mammals and birds. It seemed that every few seconds we were stopping for something or other. Our driver never seemed to become irritated by our constant demands and in fact he and Anthony produced the most amazing 'spots' time and again as they were to do throughout our safari. A welcome break on a small hill produced good looks at several birds not so easily seen from our safari vehicle as well as a cup of coffee. Then it was back to the vehicle. We ate our packed lunch at the Visitor Center, where several birds and mammals were delightfully tame. We also birded here on foot for an hour or so exploring the kopje before reluctantly returning to our lodge at dusk. Highlights were so numerous but these are just some of them: Ostrich, Secretary-bird, African Hawk-Eagle, Great Spotted Cuckoo, amazingly close study of a pair of Spotted Eagle-Owls, Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill, Pygmy Falcon, Fischer's Lovebird nesting, our only Banded Parisoma of the entire Safari, both species of oxpecker, Rufous-tailed Weaver, Grey-headed Silverbill, Dwarf Mongoose, two Leopards and 220 African Elephants including one herd of 70, Cape Buffalo,

21st May - Serengeti NP and drive to Ndutu: Sadly taking our leave of the attractive Serengeti Sopa Lodge we headed southwards through increasingly shorter grass plains exiting via the Naabi Hills Gate. We

then birded our way across the Naabi-Ndutu Triangle short-grass plains, wending our way through great herds of zebra and wildebeest and to our surprise White Storks and Gull-billed Terns. Seeking shade from what was now quite a hot day we lunched in acacia woodland before finally arriving at the wonderful Ndutu Safari Lodge. I have so many fond memories of time at this lodge with my family some years ago. The water bath kept us entertained as lovebirds and various others splashed around and made for good images. Our first chameleon got the afternoon off to a good start as we headed out, via a very bird-rich area of woodland to a swampy area and some very localized species. Some of today's highlights included: Harlequin Quail, Greater Flamingo, Pink-backed Pelican, Brown Snake-Eagle, Kori Bustard – enormous; White-bellied Bustard, Kittlitz's Plover with adorable tiny chicks; Double-banded Corser on the nest; Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Hoopoe, Red-fronted Barbet, at least seven Greater Kestrels on the short-grass plains; Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, Red-throated Tit, Red-faced Crombec, Northern Anteater Chat, masses of Wattled Starlings in bizarre breeding dress; Red-headed Weaver, fabulous Black-faced Waxbill and very first Lions albeit very dopey.



Speke Bay, Lake Victoria at dusk © K. David Bishop

22nd May – Ndutu Safari Lodge then drive to Ngorongoro Crater Rim: This was one of those unimaginably wonderful mornings on safari that you dream of. We stepped from our bungalows to be greeted by the most beautiful pre-dawn light – deep satin sky studded with the silver of winking stars and all to the accompaniment of elephants rumbling, hyenas yipping and the occasional deep, far off roar of a Lion. We gobbled breakfast quickly and headed off across the swamp, through the woodland and out on to the vast, vast plains stopping now

and again for something special but knowing that our real quarry was hopefully a cheetah. It seemed we had only been out among the teeming herds of ungulates a few moments before Anthony spotted a male Cheetah on the horizon. For the next two hours we carefully tracked this most lithe of cats as he calmly checked out the herds, loped along and then proceeded to disappear by lying down in some low vegetation. This permitted us incredibly close views of this very confiding feline before we drove off leaving him in peace. To enjoy such a wonderful encounter with a Cheetah and all the while surrounded by half a million ungulates left us all speechless. Everything else was superfluous. We rode back to our lodge, packed up, lunched and headed up on to the rim of the enormous and very spectacular Ngorongoro Crater. From the bright hot sunny conditions of plains it quickly become cool, almost cold and rainy and the birds followed suit with a whole suite of new species presenting themselves seemingly at every turn. It almost seems obscene to talk of today's highlights after our encounter with the Cheetah but here goes: Tawny Eagle, Lappet-faced Vulture along with three other species at a kill; Black-winged Lapwing, Taita Fiscal, Northern Black Flycatcher, Kenya Rufous Sparrow, Southern Red Bishop, displaying Red-collared Widowbirds in the grassland of the crater rim and the superb Purple Grenadier.



23rd May - Ngorongoro: Descending from eyrie atop the crater we braved the low cloud, cool and damp to find ourselves at dawn in tall lush forest that gradually gave way to gentle rolling grasslands and the extraordinary concentration for which the Ngorongoro is so rightly world renowned. Much of the day was spent exploring the surprisingly varied habitats of the crater floor, from extensive grasslands interspersed with small freshwater swamps; important scrublands; patches of tall woodland and the magnificent Lake Mkata literally seething with birds

and other wildlife. Wonderful, but oh so poignant to see the prehistoric-looking male Black Rhinoceros. Truly an icon of man's greed and foolishness. At the end of the day we slowly wound our way up the crater walls to our lovely hotel where we birded the Usnea draped montane forests at 2400m elevation. Some of today's highlights included: Hildebrandt's Francolin, circa one million flamingoes, African Harrier-Hawk, Kori Bustard – up close and personal; Gray-crowned Crane, Dusky Turtle-Dove, Malachite Kingfisher, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Gray-rumped Swallow, Eastern Mountain-Greenbul, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Brown-headed Apalis, Hunter's and Pectoral-patch Cisticolas, Cape Robin-Chat, Olive Thrush, Golden-winged Sunbird, Rosy-throated Longclaw, Holub's Golden-Weaver, displaying Fan-tailed Widowbirds,

24th May – Ngorongoro to Karatu and Gibbs Farm: Today began adrift in cloud, grey and wet – so frustratingly classical of montane areas. However, a generous breakfast helped blow the gremlins' away and we were soon on our way. Out of the blue (actually grey) a group of Crested Guineafowl snuck along the roadside permitting us unusually good views of this elusive bird. It was still raining when we reached the exit gate and birds were hibernating so we headed downhill to the sun and warmth. Quite a change of scene. From vast wild lands to verdant farmlands and urban settlement characterized by a whole suite of different birds. Further down the road we parked up and explored what turned out to be a very birdy area of dry, partially degraded thorn scrub. Eventually it became too hot, bird-quiet and perhaps more importantly it was time to head to the Gibbs Farm. Now converted to a ridiculously up-market lodge we nevertheless enjoyed the spectacular luncheon at a place I had such splendid memories of from another time. As always the gardens resounded with birds, perhaps exceptionally so. I doubt anyone has ever enjoyed such extraordinary views of Green-Backed and Scaly-throated honeyguides. Eventually we retired to the very hospitable and comfortable Country Lodge for one night. Highlights today included: Wahlberg's Eagle, Tambourine Dove, Red-chested Cuckoo, Nyanza Swift, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, White-headed Barbet, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Mountain Gray Woodpecker, Chinspot Batis, Black-backed Puffback, White-tailed Blue-Flycatcher, Arrow-marked Babbler, Rueppell's Robin-Chat, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Mourning Wheeler, Green-headed Sunbird, Streaky Seedeater, Black Bishop, Gray-headed Nigrita and Steel-blue Whydah.

25th May – AM Lake Manyara; drive to Tarangire NP: Dropping down the eastern slope of the Great Rift Valley we quickly found ourselves immersed in the luxuriant and very distinctive 'Ground-water Forests' of Lake Manyara National Park. Quiet at first, a mixed flock immediately changed that perspective. From this narrow band of forest we headed out to the lake which it and its swampy margins was thronging with birds and other wildlife. Undoubtedly we needed a lot more time at this site as there was so much to take in within such a short space of time.

Lovely to enjoy so many great birds and mammals up close and very photographable. Arguably the best of the lot was our first Southern Ground Hornbill – what a bird .. prehistoric. Driving further down into the Maasai lands we again found ourselves amidst new birds, more large mammals and a welcome warm sunny day. Lunch at the entrance to Tarangire National Park we then spent the entire afternoon 'birding' our way to the Tarangire Sopa Lodge. So many goodies today and these are just some of them: Many Ostriches with well grown young; Comb Duck, Crested, Yellow-necked and Red-necked francolins, a flock of 60 Yellow-billed Storks, Great White Pelican, Black Heron including several in classic umbrella pose; African Spoonbill, Long-toed Lapwing, Greater Painted-Snipe, African Jacana, 140 Collared Pratincole, Black-faced Sandgrouse, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Mottled Swift, Northern Red-billed Hornbill, 20 Silver-cheeked Hornbills, Yellow-collared Lovebird, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Long-tailed Fiscal, Rufous Chatterer, Ashy Starling, a group of 21 Banded Mongooses out foraging in a dry river bed and elephants everywhere.

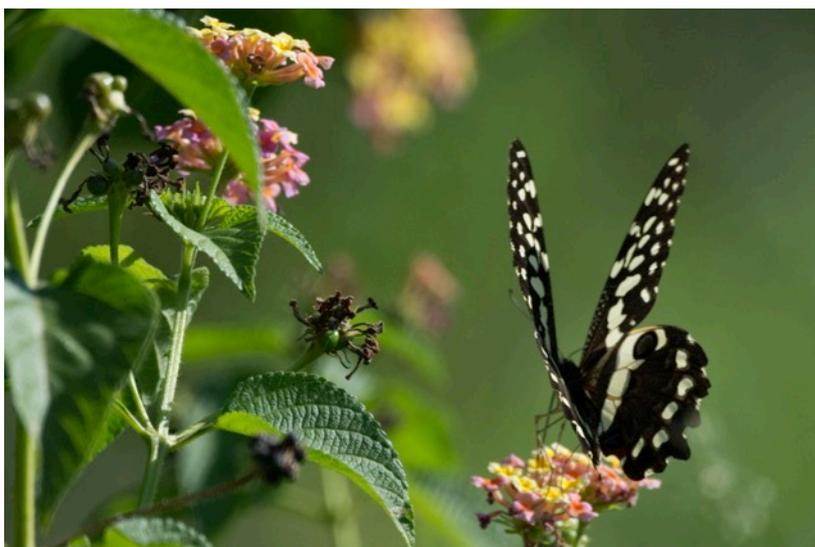


26th May – Tarangire NP: Tarangire exemplifies just how big Tanzania is and just how much land the country has set aside as conservation reserves. Despite that we seemed to have covered a huge area of wild land it was only when we looked at a map that we realized that we had

only seen a bare 5% of the park, albeit that much of the southern two-thirds is inaccessible. This lovely reserve dominated by Baobabs and elephants is a joy to putter around and just enjoy whatever one encounters. As with anywhere in East Africa there was so much to see whether at the lodge or in the back of our vehicle and it was a great opportunity to revisit with species we had previously seen. Undoubtedly today's standout highlight was the leopard, which was hiding in a drain next to our rooms at dusk and then hunted through the lodge as we returned from dinner.

27th May – Tarangire NP then drive to Negare Sero Lodge: This morning we packed up and birded the entire morning northwards to the beautifully located Tarangire Safari Camp. Between our drive and the camp grounds we garnered a good number of new birds and mammals including: a Dwarf Bittern in flight, Martial Eagle, Three-banded Courser, two African Scops-Owls at their day roost; great looks at Mottled and White-rumped swifts, Abyssinian Scimitar-bill, Bearded Woodpecker, Northern Pied-Babbler, Silverbird, Straw-tailed Whydah, Steinbuck and Unstriped Ground Squirrel. Finally it was time to get on down the dusty road and return to the lovely Negare Sero Lodge.

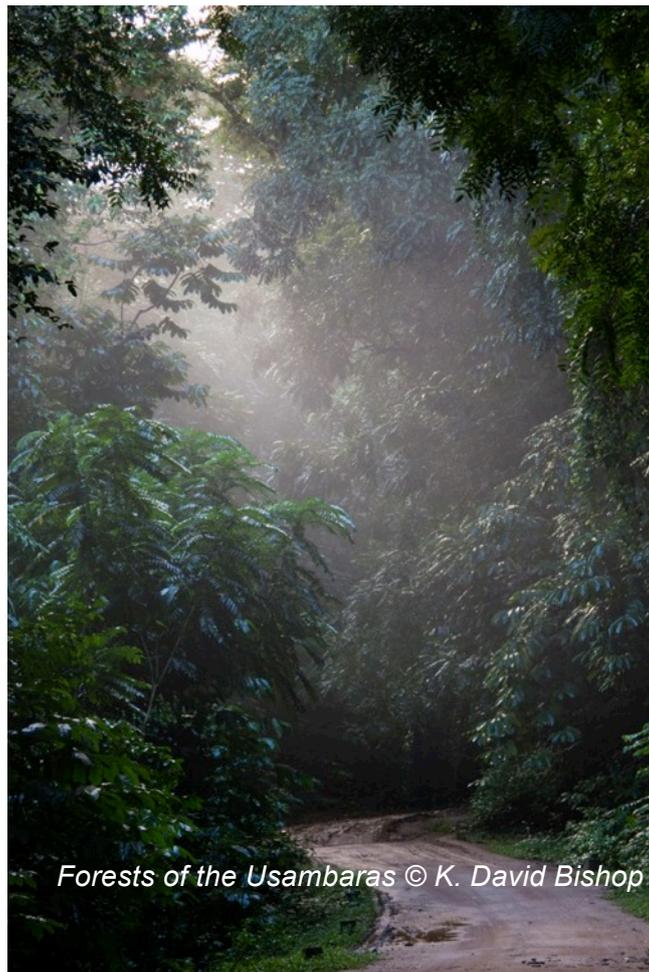
28th May – Negare Sero Lodge via Moshi to Nyumba na Mungu Dam; PM drive to Same: Despite that this was a long driving day and at times rather hot it was endlessly fascinating. As soon as we stopped in the dry country of the South Pare Plains we encountered new birds. Despite that it was midday and hot (although not unbearably so) our lunch was constantly interrupted by something 'good'. From our hideaway in the thorn thicket we made our way down to the Nyumba na Mungu Dam where the waterbirds were not quite what we had hoped for. With still quite a ways to go before our bed for the night we made one more stop in an area of rather degraded thorn scrub, again full of largely new and exciting birds. Much to our pleasant surprise the Elephant Hotel was much nicer than advertised with what turned out to be the best Wifi of the entire trip. Highlights today included: Our sole Woolly-necked Stork of the safari, D'Arnaud's Barbet, Black-throated Barbet, Pygmy Batis, Pink-breasted Lark, Northern Crombec, Scaly Chatterer, Kenya Violet-backed Sunbird, Tsavo Sunbird, Somali Bunting, Reichenow' (Yellow-rumped) Seedeater, Southern Grosbeak Canary, fabulous Zanzibar Red Bishop males displaying and Green-winged Pytilia.



29th May – Same via Lushoto to West Usambaras: A couple of hours birding an area of degraded scrub not far from hotel produced Verreaux Eagle and Pygmy Batis. From Same we continued across the South Pare Plains with occasional stops for anything of interest. At one very productive patch of low very dry thorn scrub we finally dug out a striking Rosy-patch Shrike and good fly-byes of Buff-crested Bustard. Finally turning off the highway we headed northwards winding our way high into the West Usambara Mountains. Approximately 90 kilometres long, ranging from 30–50 kilometres in width, this range constitutes part of the Eastern Arc Mountains, which stretch from Kenya southwards through Tanzania. The Usambara Mountains are regarded as one of the world's Biodiversity hotspots. Commonly split into two sub-ranges, the West Usambara Mountains and the East Usambara Mountains. The East Usambara are closer to the coast, receive more rainfall, and are significantly smaller than the West Usambara. The mountain range was formed nearly two billion years ago. Due to a lack of glaciation and a relatively consistent climate, the forests of the Usambaras has been relatively stable for a long time resulting in the evolution of a high number of endemic taxa including some very special birds. Based at the attractive Muellers Guest House we enjoyed the lush grounds with its exquisite Purple-banded Sunbirds, and a good lunch before heading out to explore a nearby patch of degraded forest. Barely had we started out when we found a group of five Oriole Finches – Wow!!! Otherwise birding was a little quiet although African Tailorbirds were very confiding.

30th May – West Usambaras: This was a sad day as Chris and Karen had to head for home. Nevertheless we did our best to give them a good send off and began the morning by birding a very lush patch of tall moist riverine forest. Spot-throats were in good song but as always elusive only giving Karen a good look. Other gems we garnered here included: Mountain Buzzard, Lemon Dove, great looks at Black-fronted Bushshrike, Shelley's and Stripe-cheeked greenbuls, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Bar-throate Apalis, White-chested Alethe and

Eastern Olive Sunbird. Having said goodbye to a wonderful friends – gosh we will miss them, we headed back to the track we explored yesterday afternoon. Here we managed a handful of really great birds before bird-activity just died: Olive Woodpecker, Short-tailed Batis, Fulleborn’s Black Boubou, White-starred Robin, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, African Tailorbird, both Evergreen Forest and Cinnamon Bracken warblers were both heard but showed no interest in showing themselves; Usambara Double-collared Sunbird and Common Waxbill. During the afternoon we explored along the Magamba Track, which got us into some very good looking forest as exemplified by Delegorgue’s Pigeon, Hartlaub’s Tauraco and fine views of Angola Pied Colobus.



31st May – West Usambaras to Amani, East Usambaras: These mountains are decidedly wet. The lushness and beauty of the forests are a clear testament to that! With umbrellas akimbo we slogged on down to the riverine forest where after many attempts we finally partook of good views of the very skulking, shadow-loving Spot-throat. What a songster though. In some ways the rains helped as I’m sure we would not have seen the two Usambara Thrushes which popped out on to the track to feed. Then it was time to go. Heading back down to the sun and warmth and dryness of the lowlands we returned to the highway and continued heading east, the Usambaras a constant

presence to our north. Eventually we turned off on to an unheralded track and suddenly we were in the midst of THE most gloriously lush forest. Crystal clear streams trundled by and but for the rain and the mud I'm sure we would have seen so much more. However, it was good to finally make to the Amani Field Research Station where we were given warm welcome and surprisingly OK rooms. But best of all we were located right in the midst of the forest. Colobus and Trumpeter Hornbills vied for perching rights whilst a mixed flock including good views of a mixed flock before the heavens again opened.

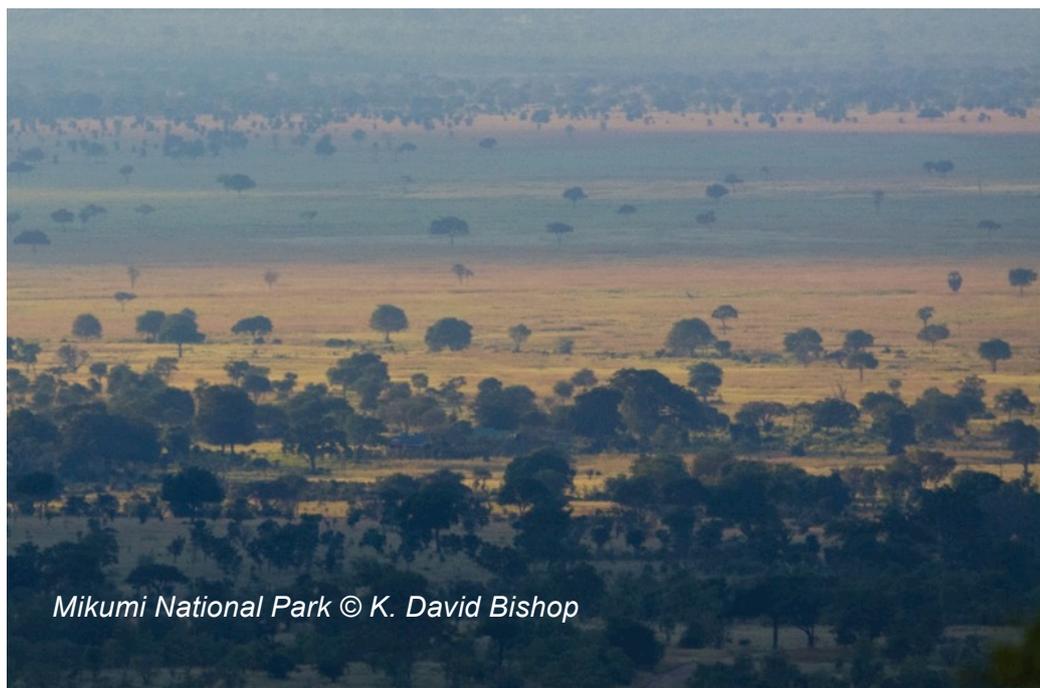
1st June – Amani, East Usambaras Happily we woke to a bright clear day that was to persist for most of the daylight hours. Located, as it is, in the heart of the forest one thus steps out of one's room to be assailed by all manner of wondrous sights and sounds. Our extended pre-breakfast walk barely more than a couple of hundred meters from our lodging produced a fine coterie of new and interesting birds and to everyone's amazement a most astonishingly lovely Zanj Elephant-Shrew. Joy. Breakfast accomplished we spent the rest of the morning exploring nearby forest tracks and trails including a fabulous experience with four Fischer's Turacos and White-chested Alethe. The afternoon was fascinating; we drove out through a landscape largely dominated by tea-estates but with here and there good patches of lush forest. Our first stop was a patch of sadly degrading riverine woodland where we successfully found the severely endangered Long-billed Tailorbird in addition to a great flight of Trumpeter Hornbills, a Bat Hawk and at long last a Black-throated Wattle-eye. Climbing up through increasingly lovely and luxuriant streamside forest we searched unsuccessfully for kingfishers.

2nd June – Amani to Vuma Hills Lodge, Mikumi NP Departing before dawn we headed downhill through fabulous forest to b'fast at the ranger's post in the fabulously rich-looking lowland forest. With frustratingly so little time to spare we did well to find a very strikingly marked group of Green-headed Orioles before making the long journey south to Mikumi National Park. The road was surprisingly good but we were very glad to finally arrive at our lovely Vuma Hills Safari Camp. And what a lovely welcome. Barely had we settled in than and the sun set than a whole mess of nocturnal mammals emerged to attend the 'feeder' below the lodge balcony including much sought after Ratel – I prefer Honey Badger. Boy they are impressive; a similarly impressive family of African Civets and a massive African Porcupine whilst chirping away on the balcony were numerous and very demanding Greater Galagos.

3rd June – Miombo woodland and Mikumi NP: Departing well before sunrise we drove across the park to an area of very well developed Miombo woodland. Here, just beyond the park boundary we explored along narrow trails adjacent to the pipeline track that snakes its way across Tanzania from Zaire to the Indian Ocean. However, we had to be discrete as the area apparently comes under the auspices of

Tanzanian military – no photos today! Typically of the Miombo birding was slow, the Tsetse were annoying and it got hot very quickly. Nevertheless we found a much desired mixed flock in addition to a fine list of other birds: our only Common Scimitar-bills of the entire safari; a total of eight Pale-billed Hornbills sitting out for fabulous 'scope views; a striking Red-throated Wryneck, here at a very disjunct part of its range; brief views of Stierling's Woodpecker; as many as ten Brown-headed Parrots; good numbers of Pale Batis; a group of very dapper Rufous-bellied Tits in a mixed flock; two African Penduline-Tits and at least one Green-capped Eremomela also in the mixed flock; Piping Cisticola, great looks at a pair of Arnots' or White-headed Black-Chats; a gorgeous male Scarlet-chested Sunbird, a pair of Cabinis's Buntings and many, almost too many Yellow-throated Petronias. As we made our way back to a much anticipated lunch we lucked onto a fabulous Purple-crested Turaco and all-too brief views of two Bat-like Swifts.

Typically the afternoon was a great deal slower, hotter and the Tsetse 'great fun'. But yet again we came away with a wonderful haul of birds including fabulous encounters with Southern Ground-Hornbills and sole Racket-tailed Roller of the safari. Then it was back to our lodge for more nocturnal encounters and of course a scrumptious dinner.



4th June – Mikumi NP: Twenty-one days in to our safari and we still could not get enough of this exhilarating part of the world. This was to be our last excursion into the grasslands and thus the big mammals. And what a morning it was. Trundling out across the Mkata Plains we enjoyed the opportunity of seeing again 'old friends' and adding new ones to our burgeoning list. Highlights this morning included: a pair of Gray-breasted Francolins with tiny chicks; our only Saddle-billed Stork of the safari; great looks at a fine array of vultures including four White-

headed, two enormous Lappet-faced, and 40 White-backed; an immature Martial Eagle, a total of 19 Water Thick-knees, three pairs of Crowned Lapwings, fabulous, absolutely fabulous views of a pair of Bronze-winged Coursers – it was an amazing safari for this group of usually very elusive birds; more Southern Ground-Hornbills, huge Trumpeter Hornbills, our first Dickinson's Kestrel, White-tailed Lark, lovely Wire-tailed Swallows, Northern Pied-Babblers, 'Southern' Lesser Blue-eared Glossy-Starlings, an exquisite pair of Beautiful Sunbirds, several Yellow-throated Longclaws, and impressive flock of Red-billed Buffalo-Weavers, Southern Cordon-bleu, several Broad-tailed Paradise-Whydahs and massive herd of African Buffalo that crossed very close to our path. Oh and then there were the 'usual' elephants, zebra, warthogs and giraffe. I for one can never get enough of such magnificent beasts and such a wonderfully wild setting. Sometime one forgets quite how wild it is and we were quickly reminded becoming almost stuck in a very sticky mire. However, thanks to the consummate skills of our driver we managed to extract ourselves and then god-bless him, he backed his way out for nearly 3km until there was a safe place to turn around. Most impressive.

We elected to spend the afternoon birding in the grounds of the camp and it proved to be a good choice. Not only was it very hot today and it was nice just to have some time to relax and ponder on what we had seen but we also found a displaying African Broadbill displaying in the densest of thickets just below the verandah. 'Way cool'. Yet another fine dinner accompanied by galagos, honey-badgers and tonight a very lovely but not surprisingly timid Blotched Genet concluded another day in paradise.

5th June – Drive to Udzungwa NP; PM Udzungwa NP: Sadly taking our leave of the lovely Vuma Hills Camp we enjoyed a last few hours on the Mkata Plain where Stephannie found us at long last a Black-bellied Bustard. Then it was off to the southern foothills of the Udzungwa National Park. We only had one night there before we had to make the final dash to the coast and Dar e Salaam and what a time we had. This little known area with its lush tall forests and endemic primates provided us with a delightfully rewarding finale. After been confined to our vehicle for so much of the safari it was a joy to walk out of our accommodations and into the park. And there lo and behold was amuch desired male Peter's Twin-spot gracing the entrance road with his beautiful plumage. We were then joined by two local lads who were learning to be bird-guides and with their help we garnered some really neat birds including a wonderful canopy mixed flock: two Yellowbills, White-eared Barbet, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds, Wahlberg's Honeyguide, fabulous views of three Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrikes with the mixed flock; large numbers of Square-tailed Drongos and great views of a pair of nesting Dark-backed Weavers. We also heard but just could not get to respond a Livingston's Turaco and enjoyed fine views of the strange-looking Iringa Colobus.. As we wandered home glowing with what we had seen a male Black-tailed Waxbill put on a

great show sufficient that we were even able to photograph such a quiet skulking gem.

Gosh Africa I love you.

6th June – AM Udzungwa NP; drive to Dar e Salaam: As with all good things they have to come to an end some time. Yet again Anthony's intimate knowledge of the natural history of his country came to the fore and just as the sun was creeping over the ridge we enjoyed our first views of a Half-collared Kingfisher. We heard Livingston's Turaco again but it was not to be. We enjoyed a last hour or so at the forest edge enjoying Trumpeter Hornbills and finally a pair of Black Cuckooshrikes. Then it was time to make tracks and head for Dar e Salaam. The traffic congestion a hundred km out from the city was fascinating – well that's the positive spin anyway. Yet again Anthony had put us into a lovely place to stay and our meal that night with the waves of the Indian Ocean lapping just yards away quickly dispelled any angst we may have had at the journey.



7th June – Tour ends: With late afternoon international flights home scheduled we spent the morning wandering the very birdy gardens, yet again adding more birds or gaining even better views of 'old friends': nesting Grey Herons, Dimorphic Egret, Sacred Ibis, a handful of Common Terns wandering by; Speckled Mousebirds, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, the lovely Brown-breasted Barbet, A pair of gorgeous Purple-banded Sunbirds, nesting Spectacled Weavers and for KDB his last kingfisher in Africa – Mangrove Kingfisher which chirped goodbye as the taxi whisked us off to the airport.