



## **KENYA (Main & Coastal) - TRIP REPORT Aug 20-Sept 8, 2007**

**By Adrian Binns**

Main:

Day 1 / arr. Nairobi

Day 2 / Nairobi NP

Day 3 / Lake Naivasha & Nakuru NP

Day 4 / Nakuru NP to Kakamega

Day 5 / Kakamega

Day 6 / Kamaega to Baringo

Day 7 / Baringo & Bogoria NP

Day 8 / Baringo to Nakuru NP

Day 9 / Nakuru NP to Naro Moru

Day 10 / Naro Moru to Mountain Lodge

Day 11 / Mountain Lodge to Samburu NR

Day 12 & 13 / Samburu NR

Day 14 / Samburu NR & fly to Maasai Mara NR

Day 15, 16 & 17 / Maasai Mara NR

Day 18 / Maasai Mara NR to Nairobi

Coastal extension:

Day 19 / Nairobi to Amboseli NP

Day 20 / Amboseli NP to Tsavo West NP

Day 21 / Tsavo West to Taita Hills

Day 22 / to Malindi Mida Creek

Day 23 / Arabuko-Sokoke Forest

Day 24 / Arabuko-Sokoke & fly to Nairobi

During our two and a half week tour of western Kenya and the short extension to the coast, we found over 570 species, including 3 of the 6 endemics - Aberdare Cisticola, Sharpe's Longclaw and Clarke's Weaver - and representation from all 7 endemic families that can be found in Kenya (there are 9 African-endemic families in total). We found an impressive array of raptors including Wahlberg's, Tawny, Verreaux's, African Hawk-Eagle, Long-crested, African Crowned, Martial Eagle and Africa's smallest raptor, the Pygmy Falcon. Our list included 15 dove and pigeon species; all 10 hornbills with dozens of Red-billed, Von der Decken's and Grey's at the feeding table at Kilaguni in Tsavo West, as well as a pair Southern Ground Hornbills with nesting material at the entrance to their tree cavity nest hole in the Mara; 16 Barbet and Tinkerbirds, with a Red-and-yellow Barbet handing off berries to its mate to take into their nest tunnel in a termite mound, and coming across a noisy commotion that had a very agitated pair along with a Nubian Woodpecker, several Superb Starlings and White-browed Sparrow-Weavers letting the whole world know their displeasure that a mongoose had entered the termite mound; 4 gorgeous Turacos with the bright red wings of Ross's being one to the truly amazing forest sights in flight; 23 Sunbirds and a great many Weavers along with their relatives, and on the coast at Malindi, wintering Crab Plovers.

Several species were in the throngs of courtship display. We saw a male Ostrich fluttering his wings as he crouched down, raising and arching them like a swan, and a Buff-crested Bustard with its crest fully opened slowly pursuing a female across the road. In the Mara we watched Secretary Birds bonding on their nest atop a lone acacia tree at dusk. Nest parasitism by cuckoos was very much evident with a Spotted Morning-Thrush feeding the much larger Red-chested Cuckoo.

At Baringo, the high water levels meant that we were able to get our boat back into the rushes and witness nesting weavers up close, as well as the normally secretive Allen's Gallinule and a Lesser Moorhen. Our close approach allowed for great looks at a group of hippos. An African Fish Eagle was nesting on the grounds just outside our rooms, and we had the good fortune to witness it catching a catfish in front of us. On another occasion we encountered a Fish Eagle at Nakuru feeding on a flamingo with a Tawny Eagle patiently waiting for its chance of a free meal while 3 Marabouts stalked and paced around it waiting for the slightest opening in order to grab the food.

Colorful birds abounded with nattily attired Vulturine Guineafowls, and Sulphur-breasted and Grey-headed Bush-shrikes. At Kakamega, the last remnant of rain forest, we encountered very confident Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters and the stunning Red-headed Bluebill. While at Nakuru, we had an amazing showing of a million or so (who's counting) Lesser Flamingos. At one stage, a great many were very agitated and restless, and it took a while to realize why. We finally saw a Spotted Hyena come charging through the shallow, alkaline lake and back to land with a flamingo in its jaws. Within a minute Tawny Eagles, Marabou Storks and Pied Crows descended upon the kill waiting for the slightest opportunity to get an easy meal.

The sheer volume of animals, particularly in the Mara, is astounding. The Wildebeest crossing the Mara River was the best encounter we have had to date, with some crossings lasting 45 minutes, and one of them included crocs picking off one or two! A Cheetah family of 4 stalked and tracked down a wayward Wildebeest which was very exhilarating to witness! We encountered myriad cat species, including lions, leopards and a Serval pouncing on prey. Though it is not the calving season, we came across a Zebra with a brand new calf still wobbly on its feet. Male Giraffes paired off and sparred with their necks for dominance. A Crocodile hung about the base of a small waterfall with its mouth open, waiting for a fish to travel right down its throat.

Kenya really is that one rare, magical country where the combination of mammals and birds one encounters are never-ending and in every place we visit there is something new, different and exciting.