

LifeBird Tours Uganda 2022 Trip Report

14 Days Of Uganda Birding, Wildlife Safari & Mountain Gorillas!

September 14-27, 2022



This tour covered many diverse habitats, including the great Albertine Rift for the montane forests birds, the mid elevation birds at Budongo Forest, plus the open woodland and savanna habitats. The main wildlife parks we visited were Lake Mburo National Park, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kibale Forest National Park, Murchison Falls National Park and Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary.

DAY 1

We arrived to Entebbe International Airport the night before where met our bird and wildlife guide, Kenneth Tumusiime. The first day we were up early to begin our Uganda adventure! This day was devoted to some urban birding in the Entebbe Botanical Gardens. Birding was excellent along the shores of Lake Victoria. We were happy to see both Ross's Turaco and Great Blue Turaco right off the bat! Also seen were Eastern Plantain-eater, Orange Weaver, Spur-winged Plover, Black-headed Gonolek, Red-chested and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Pied and Woodland Kingfishers, Crowned and Black-and-white casqued Hornbills, Vieillot's Black Weaver, Hamerkop, Double-toothed Barbet, Little Sparrowhawk, Hadada Ibis, Gray Parrot and African Openbill. We ended up with over 60 species on our first day.



Great Blue Turaco



Ross's Turaco

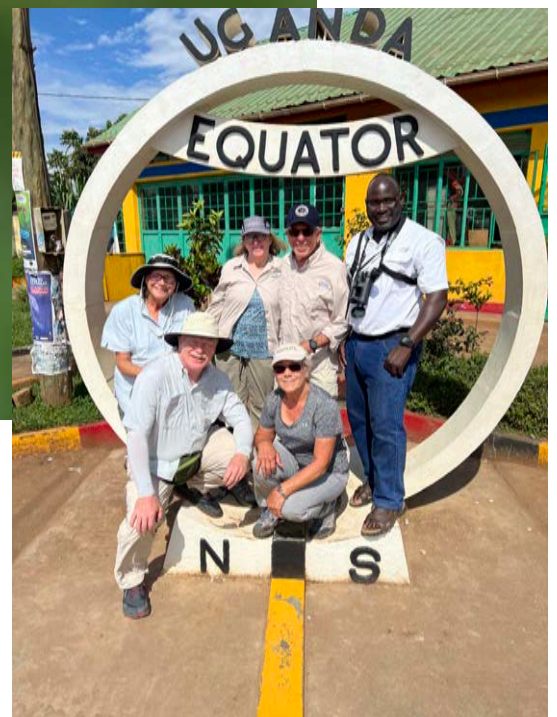
Day 2

After an early morning breakfast at the hotel we drove to Mabamba Swamp. It is a beautiful papyrus swamp located near Lake Victoria and only a short drive away from Entebbe. It's one of the very best places in the world to see the incredible Shoebill! We jumped on boats and headed out onto the lake. We quickly found a juvenile Shoebill that was posing nicely in the marsh. Then to our delight the juvies parent flew by and we followed the adult to its landing spot where we spent an amazing time observing and photographing this spectacular creature! It was truly a memorable experience!



Mabamba Swamp was loaded with other good birds such as: Blue-breasted Bee-eater, White-throated Bee-eater, Village and Slender-billed Weavers, African Fish-Eagle, African Jacana, Malachite Kingfisher, Black Crake and Swamp Flycatcher among many more!

After an incredible time birding Mabamba we began our drive to Lake Mburo NP with a photo stop along the way at the Equator crossing line in Kayabwe.



Along this drive we enjoyed the ride which evolved into sculptured landscape, rolling hills, rock outcrops, and open wooded savanna. We arrived at our next lodge which was a deluxe tented camp near Mburu National Park with wildlife roaming freely on the grounds.

Day 3

After breakfast we headed to Lake Mburu National Park for our first of many game drives which of course includes excellent birding. This park is home to a surprising amount of wildlife with 332 known bird species, and 69 species of mammals. We began seeing Impalas, Waterbuck, Bushbuck, Warthog, Baboons, Vervet Monkeys, Elands, Zebras, Topis, Giraffes, Klipspringers, Buffalos and lots of new bird species such as Gray Crowned-Crane, Emerald-spotted and Blue-spotted Wood-Doves, Ring-necked Dove, Black-bellied Bustard, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, White-backed Vulture, Bateleur, Tawny Eagle, Blue-naped Mousebird, African Gray Hornbill, Woodland Kingfisher, Lilac-breasted Roller, Crested, Red-faced and Black-collared Barbets, Ruppell's Starling, Saddle-billed Stork, Black-headed Gonolek, Crested Francolin, Wattled Lapwing and Black-headed Heron.

We crossed through the savannas of the National Park to Lake Mburu for some birding by boat on the lake. Our private boat moved along the shores of Lake Mburu where we saw our target... African Finfoot! These finfoots are shy birds that usually stay hidden on the lakes marshy shores, but we got lucky and saw 3 males and 1 female during our 2 hour boat ride. We found many other great birds such as: African Darter, African Fish-Eagle, Northern Brown-Throated Weaver, Striated Heron, Purple Heron, Gray Heron, Squacco Heron, Malachite, Giant and Pied Kingfishers, African Palm-nut Vulture and Black Crane.



African Finfoot



Malachite Kingfisher



Woodland Kingfisher



Lilac-breasted Roller



Wattled Lapwing

DAY 4

After early morning breakfast we began the drive to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park with several stops for birding. Some of the birds seen en-route included: Eastern Plantain-eater, Yellow-billed Stork, Didieric Cuckoo, Black-headed Heron, Black Kite, Brown-chested Lapwing, Speckled Mousebird, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Icterine Warbler, White-browed Robin-Chat, and Red-cheeked Cordonbleu.



Yellow-billed Stork



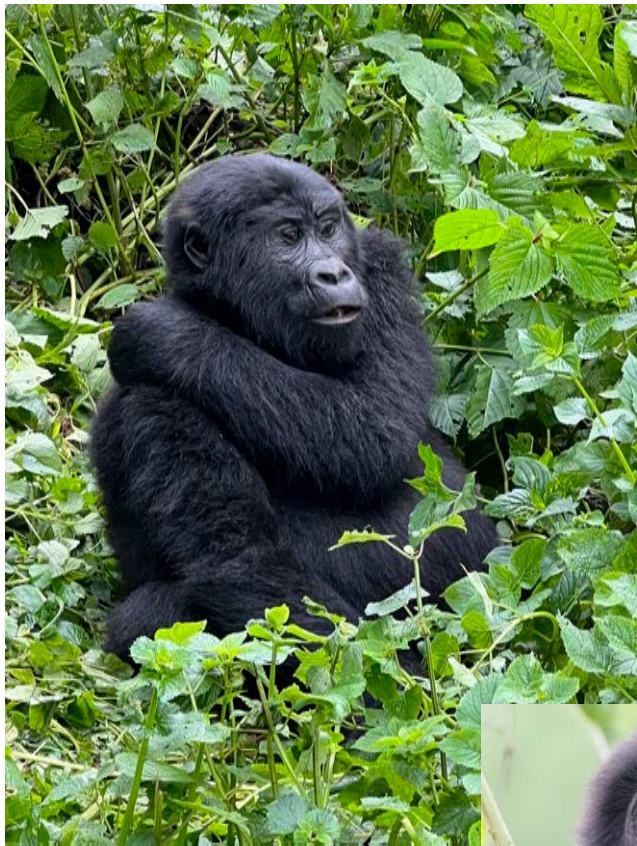
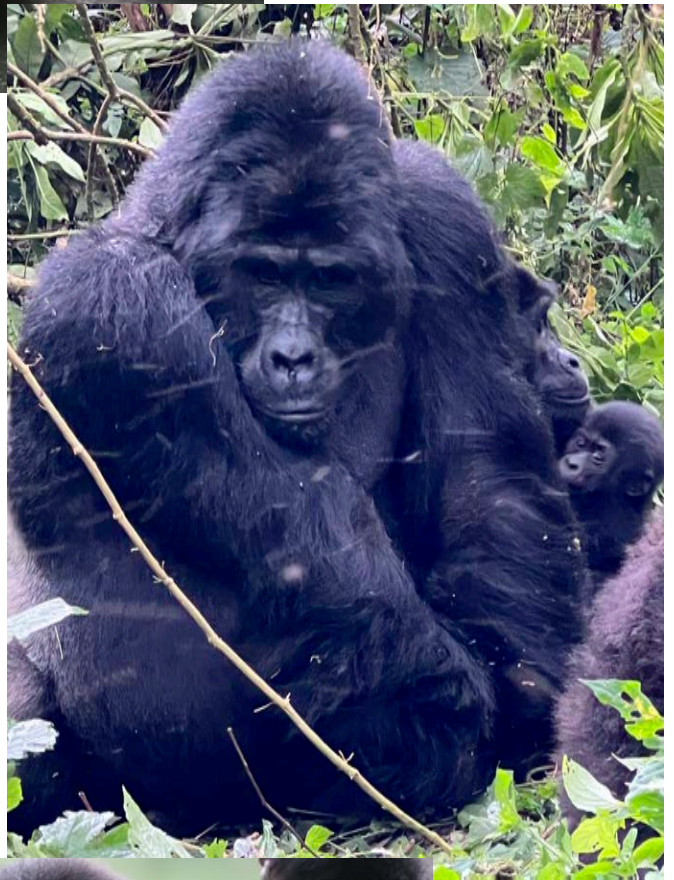
Didieric Cuckoo

DAY 5

After breakfast at our beautiful lodge near the entrance to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park we drove the short distance to the gorilla trekking briefing point. Mountain gorilla trekking is a huge highlight event, even on a birding tour! This activity can take anywhere between an hour to eight, but we got lucky again and saw a family of gorillas after hiking about a hour into the mountains. It was a beautiful experience to stare into the eyes of these gentle giants and watch them as they ate leaves,

groomed, rested and the young ones played swinging from vines around us. We spent a magical hour, closeup to the Nshongi family group which consisted of one silverback, one blackback, five females, three juveniles and one infant. It was indeed a “once in a lifetime” experience that will linger.





After our very successful gorilla trekking experience, we had the afternoon to bird the forest where we saw Mackinnon's Shrike, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Northern Yellow-eye, Green-throated and Regal Sunbirds, Kandt's Waxbill and Shelley's Rufous Sparrow to name a few.

DAY 6

This morning we continued birding our way through Bwindi Impenetrable Park as we gradually headed towards the remote southern sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park...heading to the Great East African rift valley. Some of the birds seen in the Bwindi area included Black-throated and Buff-throated Apollis, Chinspot Batis, Trilling Cisticola, Gray-throated Tit-Flycatcher, Baglaffeche Weaver, Rwenzori Turaco, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Western Black-headed Oriole, African Paradise Flycatcher, Mackinnon's Shrike, White-necked Raven, White-bellied Crested-Flycatcher, Black Sawwing, Yellow-Streaked Greenbul, White-breasted Nigrita, Black-bellied Seedcracker, Gray Cuckooshrike, Western Black-headed Oriole, and we had a nice fly over Congo Serpent-Eagle!



Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater



Western Black-headed Oriole

DAY 7

After an early breakfast at our lodge we began a game ride enjoying the beauty of Queen Elizabeth National Park with a lovely sunrise. The Kasenyi section of the park offers excellent lekking grounds for the Ugandan Kob (antelope) with open grasslands and sparsely distributed thickets that provide perfect habitats for shy birds that we observed such as Rufous-napped, White-tailed and Flappet Larks. Other notable birds included Yellow-throated Longclaw, White-backed and White-headed Vultures, Fork-tailed Drongo, Red-necked Spurfowl, African Marsh-Harrier, Ruppell's and Greater Blue-eared Starlings, African Thrush, Fan-tailed Widowbird, African Firefinch, Black-headed Gonolek and Pin-tailed Whydah. We also had our first sightings of African elephants, leopards and lions in this section of the park



Yellow-throated Longclaw



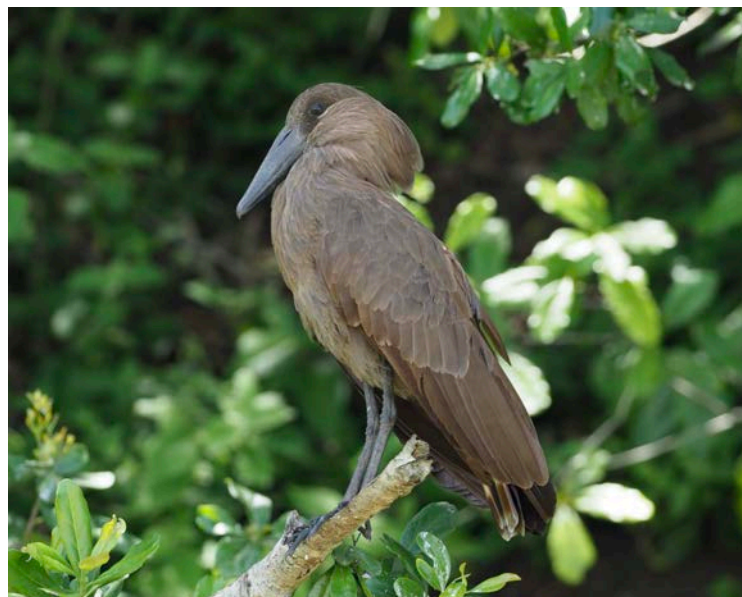
Black-headed Gonolek



We made our way, while observing birds and mammals, to the Kazinga channel. This natural channel connects two major lakes in this park; Lake George and Lake Edward. We boarded a private boat and began birding the banks of the channel! The boat ride produced African Skimmer, Water Thick-knee, African Jacana, Common Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Saddle-billed, Yellow and Marabou Storks, Hamerkop, Gray, Black-headed and Goliath Herons, Madagascar Bee-eater, Red-headed Lovebird, White-headed Sawwing, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Copper Sunbird, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, and Red-billed Firefinch among many others. We also saw beautiful displaying Gray Crowned-Cranes which is Uganda's National bird.



Gray-crowned Cranes above and Hamerkop below





Madagascar Bee-eater



Yellow-billed Oxpecker on Buffalo

DAY 8

We drove to Kibale National Park with birding along the way. New birds for the day included White-headed and Double-toothed Barbets, Gray Kestrel, Black-crowned Tchagra, Piapiac, Winding Cisticola, Northern Double-collared Sunbird, Compact Weaver, Holub's Golden-Weaver, Cardinal and Red-billed Quela, Southern Red and Yellow Bishops, Red-collared Widowbird, Yellow-fronted Canary and this Martial Eagle below. We arrive at our lodge, the beautiful Chimpanzee Guesthouse in the afternoon.

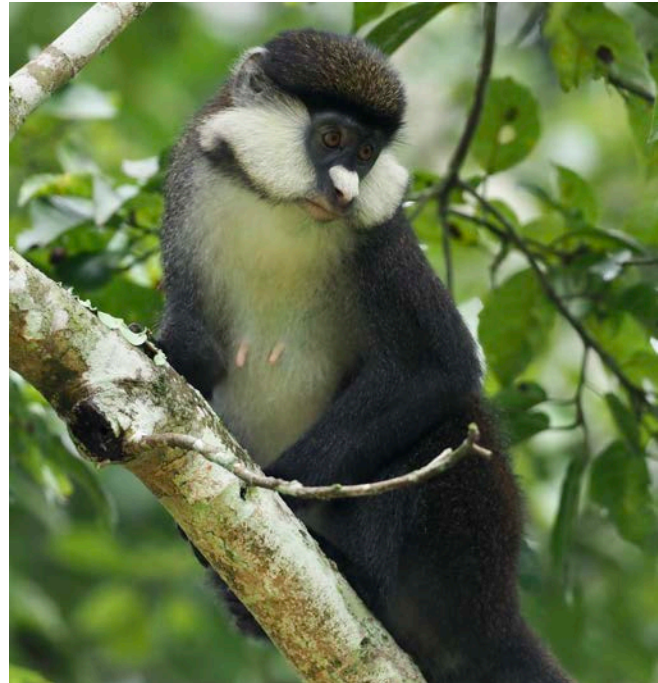


DAY 9

From our lodge we drove to Kanyanchu Visitor center of Kibale National Park for chimpanzee tracking. Kibale is a lush tropical rain forest and known as “the primate capital of the world” because it hosts 13 species of primates including the chimpanzee. We once again got lucky and quickly heard the chimps calling each other. We were able to get close up views of several of them.



Chimpanzee



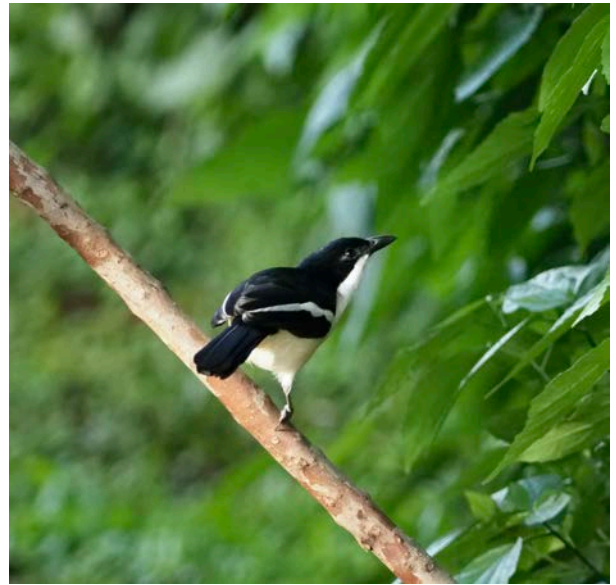
Red-tailed Monkey

The afternoon was filled with birding Kibale National Park and the lovely grounds of the Chimpanzee guest house. Notable birds seen: Long-crested Eagle(see below photo), Olive-green Camaroptera, Tambourine Dove, African Green-Pigeon, Red-chested Cuckoo, Lizard Buzzard, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Tropical Boubou, African Blue Flycatcher, Green White-eye, Bronze and Variable Sunbirds, Red-headed Malimbe, Black-crowned Waxbill and Brimstone Canary.





Lizard Buzzard



Tropical Boubou



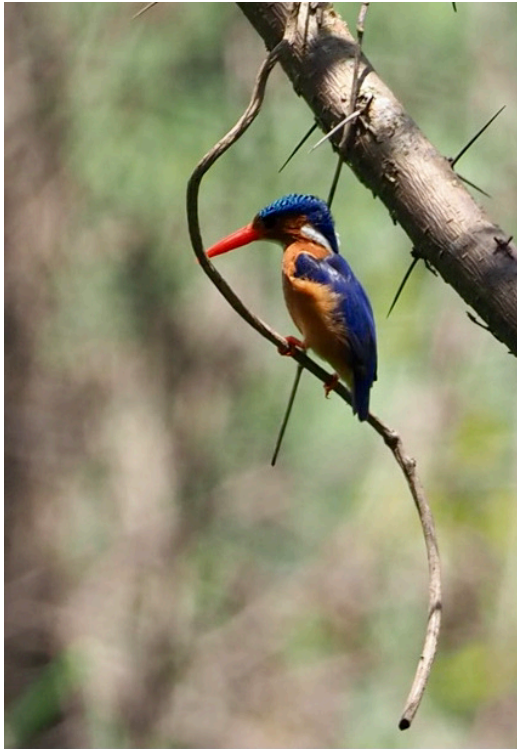
African Blue Flycatcher



Green White-eye

Day 10

This was a travel day to Masindi with birding stops along the way. We added several new birds along the drive such as African Pygmy Kingfisher, Olive-bellied Sunbird, African Sacred Ibis, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Western Citril and Brown-backed Scrub-Robin to our growing list.



African Pygmy Kingfisher



Pin-tailed Whydah

Day 11

This was our day to bird the famous Royal Mile of Budongo Forest. We were up before dawn and brought with us boxed breakfast so we could set off early to Budongo for birding one of Uganda's most productive spots. The Royal mile was named in memory of Omukama (King) Kabalega who ruled the Bunyoro Kingdom from 1870 to 1899. It is a big road in the middle of the forest with a beautiful canopy cover. Upon arrival we were met by a local guide who knew of a place that the Green-breasted Pitta had been seen, so we set off on a long forest trail to find it, but unfortunately we dipped on this target bird. However, we did get good looks at Nahan's Partridge as a consolation prize. The trail eventually led us to the Royal Mile where the forest edges were very productive and we added White-thighed Hornbill, African Dwarf and Blue-breasted Kingfishers, Speckled and Yellow-throated Tinkerbirds, Wilcock's Honeyguide, Golden-crowned and Brown-eared Woodpeckers, African Shrike Flycatcher, Western

Nicator, Green Crombec, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Olive-green Camaroptera, Slender-billed Greenbul, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Purple-headed Starling, Little Green Sunbird, Blue-throated Brown sunbird, Black Bishop, Red-headed Bluebill and Gray Wagtail.

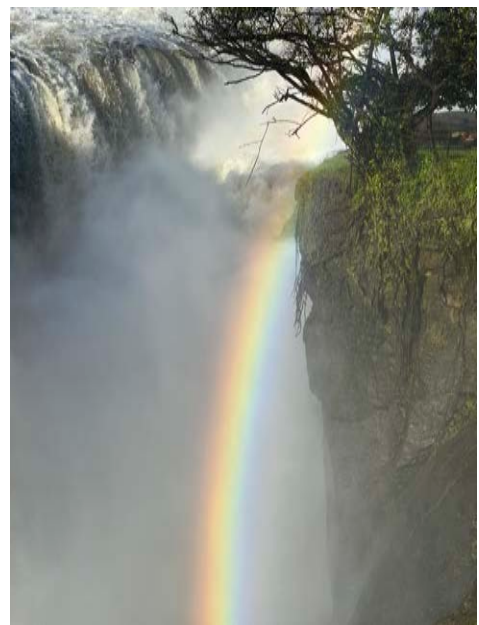


White-thighed Hornbill



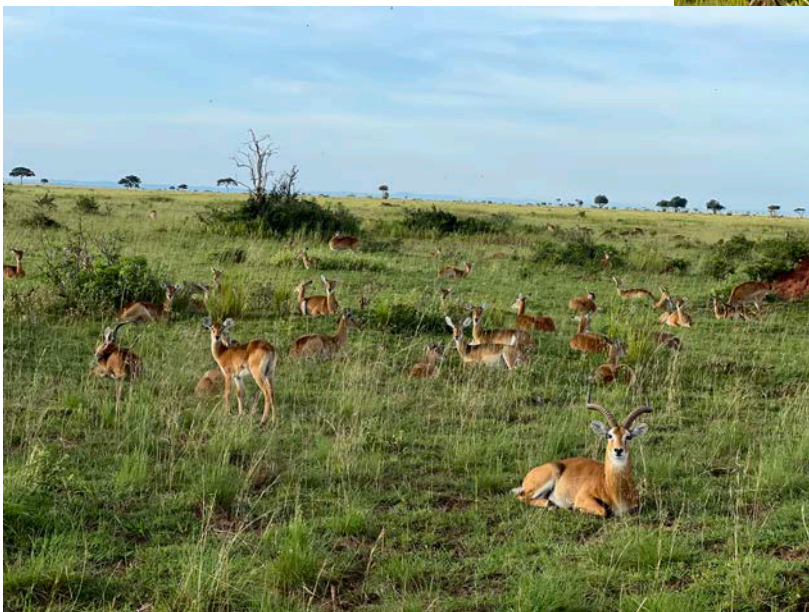
Yellow-throated Tinkerbird

Our next destination was Murchison Falls NP which is Uganda's largest national park, and the lowest in elevation. We arrived in time to visit the top of the Murchison Falls. These very dramatic falls are arguably the world's most powerful. This is where the Nile River, world's longest river, squeezes through a very narrow cleft of about eight feet and drops for a straight forty feet down! Here we found several Rock Pranticoles (see below) resting on the rocks.



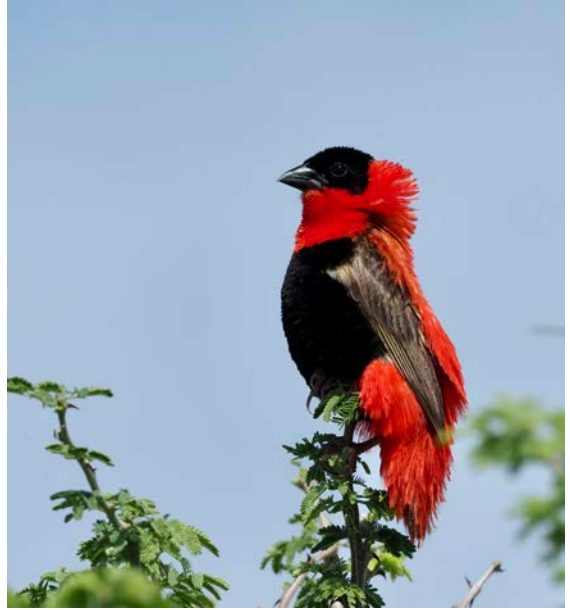
DAY 12

We started off with an early morning game drive where we saw several African Lions, African Leopard, Rothschild Giraffes, Lelwel's Hartebeest, Oribi, Side-striped Jackal, and the shy Bohor Reedbuck. There were large herds of elephants that would gather together at the river to quench their thirst. The birds were exciting too with new species such as Morning Collared-Dove, Denham's Bustard, Spotted Thick-knee, Black-headed Lapwing, African Harrier-Hawk, Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Silverbird, Northern Red Bishop and Gray-headed Kingfisher.





Denham's Bustard



Northern Red Bishop



Northern Carmine Bee-eater



Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill

Day 13.

After an early breakfast we began our game drive to the northern part of the park which is open savannah covering the section north of river Nile. Upon arrival to the river we boarded a private boat for 3 hours of birding the shores of the Nile River by boat. This boat ride led to the base of the Murchison Falls where many Nile Crocodiles were waiting for fish to come to them after tumbling down the waterfall. Also the hippos were plentiful with babies on their backs. The birding was excellent and we had great looks Red-throated Bee-eaters nesting on the clay banks. We enjoyed drinking a Nile beer on the Nile River on the way back to the dock.



Red-throated Bee-eater



White-browed Coucal



Day 14

On this our last day in Uganda we left Murchison Falls NP and traveled towards Entebbe to make our night flights home. On our way back we made an awesome stop at the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary. At Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary we enjoyed tracking the southern White Rhinoceros which are critically endangered. This is the only place in Uganda where you can find White Rhinos in the wild. Presently there are 32 rhinos and the numbers have been increasing under their protection. It was amazing watching these huge animals forage in the wet grasslands. We were successful to observe all of Africa's Big Five – Lion, Leopard, Buffalo, Rhinos and of course the African Elephant.. however, in Uganda you need to make it the Big Six and add Mountain Gorillas!





Silverbird



African Harrier-Hawk

We saw a total of 259 species of birds and the complete list available at the below link.

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/75149>

