



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

ABA Kenya

Coastal Extension

16th to 20th February 2022 (5 days)



Sokoke Scops Owl by Rich Lindie

On this special extension we explore two fabulous areas on the Kenyan coast, the lush Shimba Hills and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, that hold several highly localized and range-restricted species. Here we will endeavor to find some of the rarest birds in Africa, including the diminutive Sokoke Scops Owl, Sokoke and Malindi Pipits, stunning Fischer's Turaco, Mombasa Woodpecker, highly prized Green-headed Oriole, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Green Tinkerbird, East Coast Akalat, Little Yellow Flycatcher, Scaly Babbler, Amani Sunbird and Clarke's Weaver.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...**THE ITINERARY**

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| Day 1 | Nairobi flight to Ukunda to Shimba Hills |
| Day 2 | Shimba Hills to Watamu Bay via Mida Creek |
| Days 3 & 4 | Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Sabaki River Mouth |
| Day 5 | Watamu Bay to Mombasa flight to Nairobi and depart |

TOUR MAP:

THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

East Coast Akalat by Hugh Chittenden

Day 1: Nairobi to Shimba Hills. This morning we will board a connecting flight to Mombasa where we will meet-up with our local driver/guide and enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant. Thereafter we begin our short extension in earnest as we drive to the nearby Shimba Hills Lodge. Our lodge is perfectly situated for easy access to the beautiful Shimba Hills National Park. This reserve protects a large tract of coastal forest and grasslands and was primarily created to save the endangered and beautiful Sable Antelope, and this is the only site in Kenya where this creature is still found. Special birds that we will be searching for in this park and around the productive grounds of our lodge include flocks of top-knotted Crested Guineafowl, Red-necked Spurfowl, the lovely Fischer's Turaco,

striking Green-headed Oriole, Mottled and African Palm Swifts, Green Tinkerbird, Black-collared, Brown-breasted (rare) and Green Barbets, Green Tinkerbird, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, East Coast Boubou, Little Yellow Flycatcher, Yellow-throated and Pangani Longclaws, Plain-backed Sunbird and Golden Palm Weaver.

Day 2: Shimba Hills to Watamu Bay via Mida Creek. After early morning birding around the Shimba Hills Reserve we will travel to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest via Mida Creek. Mida Creek is probably most famous as one of the best locations to see Crab-plover. This unique species, placed in its own monotypic family, is often seen here in good numbers while many other waders are often present as well. During the afternoon we will move across to Arabuko-Sokoke Forest for an initial exploration. This protected reserve covers 420 square kilometers of coastal forest consisting of *Brachystegia* woodland, dense *Cynometra* forest and *Azelia* lowland forest that offers some of the finest birding in East Africa. Birding in the forest can be difficult and perseverance is required to find the shy forest inhabitants.

Skulkers such as the near-endemic Sokoke Pipit creep across the forest floor and are hard to see amongst the leaf-litter. The delicate East Coast Akalat is a shy understory skulker and other key species include the endemic and little-known Clarke's Weaver, almost totally restricted to this site, and the extremely localized Amani Sunbird. Our local guide keeps track of day roosts of the near endemic Sokoke Scops Owl and seeing a pair of these charming little fellows is undoubtedly one of the highlights of birding in this forest. Both brown and red morphs occur, and pairs often consist of each of these totally different looking birds. If we do not



Red-throated Twinspot by Markus Lilje





Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike by Markus Lilje

find the owls at home, we will stay after dark and wait for them to call. The evening sounds are exciting, and we may encounter African Wood Owl, African Barred Owlet (the disjunctive local form sometimes split off as Sheffler's Owlet), Fiery-necked Nightjar and several species of bats and galago's.

Days 3 & 4: Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Sabaki River Mouth. We have two full days to explore the wonderful Arabuko-Sokoke Forest complex as well as other nearby sites. Our first early morning birding will be a return visit to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Whilst

exploring the network of trails in the forest, we will look for mixed bird flocks. Some of the species found in these aggregations may include Green Malkoha, the highly sought-after Thick-billed Cuckoo, Fischer's Turaco, Narina Trogon, Mombasa Woodpecker, Scaly-throated and Pallid Honeyguides, Sombre, Fischer's and Lowland Tiny Greenbuls, the delightful Little Yellow Flycatcher, Black-headed Apalis, Eastern Nicator, Bearded Scrub Robin, Red-tailed Rufous Thrush, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Pale and Forest Batis, Retz's and Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrikes, the attractive Four-colored Bushshrike and the uncommon Plain-backed Sunbird. Dead trees are favorite perches of many bird species and definitely worth checking for Green Tinkerbird, White-eared and Green Barbets, and raptors including Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle and Black and Little Sparrowhawks. Flocks of strange Böhm's Spinetail and Ethiopian Swallow may be seen winging their way over the forest while the scarce Forbe's-Watson's Swift is another species to watch out for. Along the forest edge we may find the beautiful Red-throated Twin-spot and flocks of Red-backed Mannikin feeding amongst the grass seeds. The localized Scaly Babbler also occurs outside the forest.

Mammals we hope to see include Blue or Gentle Monkey, the diminutive Blue Duiker and the giant Golden-rumped Elephant-Shrew, a truly impressive creature. Our next port of call will be the Sabaki River mouth, an excellent birding site where we will be looking for Sooty, Lesser Black-backed and Grey-headed Gulls, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Sandwich, Roseate and Saunders's Terns, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Terek Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Madagascar Pratincole and a variety of other waders. In the surrounding reedbeds, Golden Palm Weaver, Zanzibar Red and very occasionally Fire-fronted Bishops may stand out like blossoms while the nearby grazed grasslands support the range restricted Malindi Pipit. Other species that occasionally turn up in the surrounding Sabaki



Bearded Scrub Robin by Keith Valentine



woodlands and scrub include the little-known Violet-breasted Sunbird, Eastern Black-headed Batis and Scaly Babbler.



Golden Palm Weaver by Keith Valentine

where our tour will conclude.

We will likely also take some time to visit the nearby Arabuko Swamp which has also produced Malindi Pipit over the past few years. Water levels can fluctuate at the swamp, but conditions are usually conducive to holding specials like White-backed Duck and African Pygmy Goose while Coastal Cisticola can be found in the adjacent grassy areas. We will also keep our eyes open for rarer species such as Black Coucal and Dwarf Bittern which turn up when conditions are suitable.

Day 5: Watamu Bay to Mombasa flight to Nairobi and depart. After a final early morning birding session in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, we will drive back south to Mombasa before boarding a flight to Nairobi

