



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

ABA Kenya **Coastal & Tsavo Extension** *16th to 24th February 2022 (9 days)*



Sokoke Scops Owl by Rich Lindie

A number of Kenya's most well-known birding sites and reserves are covered on this incredible extension. We start out exploring two coastal sites, 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 second half of our extension is spent exploring the exceptional Tsavo reserves which hold a wonderful assortment of dry country species and a plethora of big game including more opportunities to see a variety of antelope species, African Elephant and Big Cats such as Lion, Leopard and Cheetah. On the birding front the list of quality species is numerous and includes Scaly Chatterer, Red-naped Bushshrike, Pringle’s Puffback, Tsavo Sunbird, Taveta Weaver, Golden-breasted and Fischer’s Starlings, White-throated Robin, the rare and little known Friedmann’s Lark, Hartlaub’s Bustard and Grey-headed Silverbill to name a few. We also take time to visit the Taita Hills where three extremely localized Kenyan endemics can be found - Taita Thrush, Taita White-eye and Taita Apalis.

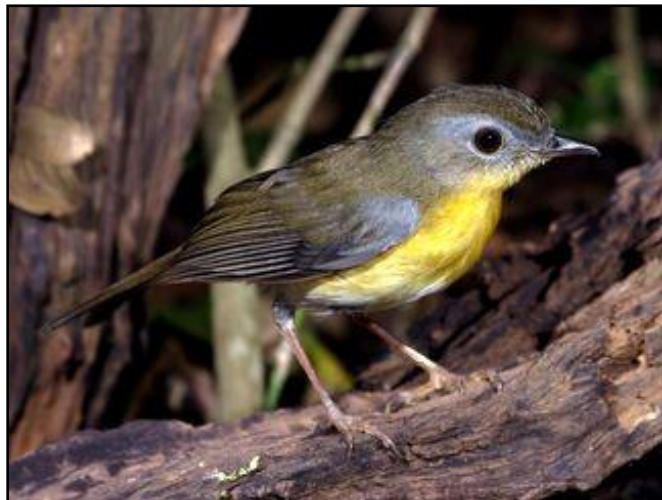
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

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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	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest to Tsavo East
Day 6	Tsavo East
Day 7	Tsavo East to Tsavo West via Taita Hills
Day 8	Tsavo West
Day 9	Tsavo West 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



Red-throated Twinspot by Markus Lilje





Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike by Markus Lilje

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





Red-naped Bushshrike by David Hoddinott

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

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 Tsavo East National Park. After a final early morning birding session in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, we will depart with lunch boxes for Tsavo East NP. Checking large Baobab trees along the way could produce sightings of both Broad-billed Roller and occasionally Brown-headed Parrot. The roadside also offers great birding, as well as a chance to see Swahili women in their traditional regalia. We should see a wonderful assortment of dry country species on a drive into Tsavo East this afternoon. Tsavo East National Park is one of the oldest and largest parks in Kenya and is over 13,000 square km in extent and is covered by a large network of roads which we will have plenty of time to explore. This reserve is drier on the whole than neighboring Tsavo West with large open flat plains that are excellent for species such as Somali Ostrich, Secretarybird, elegant Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Buff-crested, Kori and White-bellied Bustards, Black-headed Lapwing, Northern Carmine and Somali Bee-eaters, Red-winged and Pink-breasted Larks, Ashy Cisticola, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Black-faced Sandgrouse and Cut-throat Finch. Tonight, we will stay in the Voi area on the western edge of Tsavo East where species such as Western Barn Owl and Nubian and Slender-tailed Nightjars are sometimes seen.

Day 6: Tsavo East. The dry country of Tsavo East holds a huge variety of species and we have a full day set aside to explore the reserves wonderful variety of habitat. Raptors are often a major feature and we will look for Egyptian, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed, Rüppell's and Lappet-faced Vultures, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, African Hawk-Eagle, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, migrating Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, the majestic Bateleur, Pygmy Falcon and Eurasian Hobby. Other potential ticks include Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Little, White-throated, Blue-cheeked, Olive and European Bee-eaters, Lilac-breasted, Purple and



Golden-breasted Starling by Matthew Matthiessen





Taita Apalis by Keith Valentine

European Rollers, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern Red-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbills, Nubian, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, D'Arnaud's, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Flappet Lark, and Chestnut-headed and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks.

Day 7: Tsavo East to Tsavo West via the Taita Hills. After an early breakfast, we embark on a morning game drive towards the Taita Hills-Ngangao Forest. Mammals will be a feature of our drive and we could see Lion (these descended from the famous "man-eaters of Tsavo"), Cheetah, African Buffalo, Lesser Kudu, Maasai Giraffe and Plains Zebra. The Tsavo complex is home to the largest population of African Elephant in

Kenya (said to number over 7000) and a small population of Black Rhinoceros.

The Taita Hills is a beautiful area and extremely fertile but has suffered massively at the hands of man with most of the native forests cut down. These hills famously harbor three highly endangered endemics, namely Taita Thrush, Taita Apalis and Taita White-eye. Recent research has found the apalis to be the species most at risk of extinction as it appears to be completely absent from the largest extant patch of forest in the Taita Range. The entire world population may be less than 100 breeding pairs! Ngangao forest, the patch we visit, holds some of the last pairs of this rare species. The thrush, while shy, occurs in reasonable numbers but is never easy to find while the white-eye is the most numerous. Other birds that we will be on the lookout for include Augur Buzzard, Mottled and Alpine Swifts, White-necked Raven, Stripe-faced Greenbul, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Striped Pipit, Singing Cisticola and Sharpe's Starling.

We then continue on our drive to Tsavo West where we will have a few hours in the afternoon to enjoy a game drive between the park entrance gate and our idyllically situated lodge. This time of the afternoon is often extremely productive from both a birding and mammal watching point of view and we can definitely expect to see something special.

Day 8: Tsavo West. Our lodge is situated inside Tsavo West National Park and is perched on the rim of the Ndewe Escarpment, offering a vast panorama of the Tsavo Plains below. This area is well known as a migrant trap and we can expect to enjoy some superb birding on the grounds of the lodge. At certain



Red-and-yellow Barbets by Markus Lilje





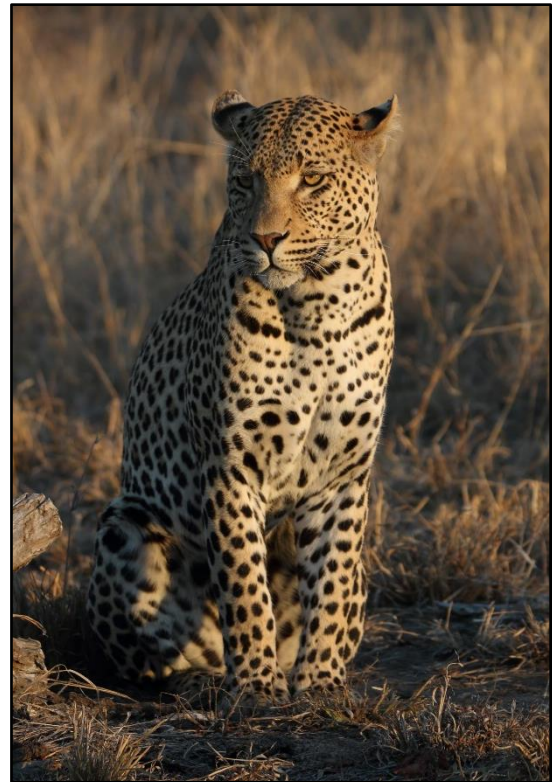
Secretarybird by Julian Parsons

times of the year, the lights of the hotel attract large numbers of Palaearctic passerines during their nocturnal migration. We will look out for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin, Thrush Nightingale, Northern, Isabelline and Pied Wheatears, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Lesser Grey, Red-backed and Isabelline Shrikes and a bevy of warblers that might include Marsh, Olive-tree, Barred, River, Upcher's and the little known Basra Reed. We will also take time to visit the shores of Lake Jipe we will look for the localized Taveta Weaver, Zanzibar Red Bishop and African Reed and Lesser Swamp Warblers. We also have a chance of finding the reintroduced Black Rhinoceros in this area.

Game-watching and birding in Tsavo West NP will produce large numbers of new sightings which may include Somali Ostrich, Martial, Tawny and Long-crested Eagles, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurrow, Harlequin Quail, Kori, Buff-crested, Black-bellied and Hartlaub's Bustards, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, the rare and localised Friedmann's

Lark, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Tiny, Rattling and Winding Cisticolas, Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinias, African Grey, Pale and Spotted Flycatchers, Chinspot, Pygmy and Eastern Black-headed Batis, Rufous and Scaly Chatterers, White-bellied and Acacia Tits, Mouse-colored Penduline Tit, Amethyst, Scarlet-chested, Beautiful, Variable, Collared and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbirds, as well as the localized Tsavo Sunbird, now considered to be a separate species from the closely related Purple-banded Sunbird.

Other likely possibilities include Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Tropical and Slate-colored Boubous, Brubru, Black-backed and Pringle's Puffbacks, Black-crowned, Brown-crowned and Three-streaked Tchagras, Rosy-patched, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, Northern White-crowned Shrike and White-crested Helmetshrike, Black-headed, African Golden and Eurasian Golden Oriole, both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Oxpeckers perched atop large animals, brilliant Golden-breasted, Greater Blue-eared, Rüppell's, Violet-backed, Magpie, Superb, Hildebrandt's and Fischer's Starlings, Chestnut and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed and Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Village, Lesser and Vitelline Masked, Spectacled, Baglafaecht, Chestnut and Red-headed Weavers, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-cheeked and Blue-capped Cordon-bleus, Purple Grenadier, Jameson's Firefinch, Common, Crimson-rumped and



Leopard by Riaan Botha





Taveta Weaver by Rich Lindie

Black-cheeked Waxbill, African and Grey-headed Silverbill, Quailfinch, Bronze Mannikin, Long-tailed Paradise and Straw-tailed Whydahs, and Cinnamon-breasted and Somali Buntings. Over 60 species of mammals occur in the park, including the scarce and elusive Lesser Kudu, and we will be treated to an exceptional African birding and big game experience today! Tonight, we have a chance at finding a few of the numerous nightjars that forage around the lodge and species that we could encounter include Eurasian, Plain, Sombre and Donaldson-Smith's.

Day 9: Tsavo West NP to Nairobi. This morning we will depart Tsavo West, continuing to look for any species that we may still need. After exiting the reserve, we then head for Nairobi, passing through upland grasslands with open savannah. This area supports a good population of cisticolas and widowbirds including Pectoral-patch, Zitting, Desert, Tiny, Croaking and Ashy Cisticolas and Red-collared, White-winged and Jackson's Widowbirds. Later in the afternoon we arrive in Nairobi where the tour concludes.

