



## KENYA: 20-DAY BIRDING ADVENTURE

10 - 29 SEPTEMBER 2020



The endangered **Rüppell's Vulture** is one of the birds we hope to see on this trip.

Kenya has a unique and diverse array of habitat types, ranging from the snow-capped mountains at about 5000 meters above sea level, tropical lowlands, highland forests, vast savannas, and rolling plains and grasslands to the coastal dry forests and the shores of the Indian Ocean. There is a total of 1100+ bird species recorded on the country's checklist from its 62 Important Bird Areas (IBAs), with 117 of these being migrants from the Eurasian region. This twenty-day tour will enable us to find around 600 species and will take us through many spectacular habitats. We'll experience some fantastic birding and excellent large game viewing, so there will always be something to draw the eye. We'll have a chance to walk in the forests and drive among the many large game animals that the plains of East Africa are famous for.

### Itinerary (20 days/19 nights)

#### Day 1. Nairobi

At your arrival at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Nairobi you will be met by our drivers and the tour leader and transferred to your hotel.

Overnight: Nairobi

#### Day 2. Nairobi - Maasai Mara National Reserve

This morning we'll be departing for the amazing Maasai Mara National Reserve. This drive will already present some special rewards, like a sudden surprising, stunning outlook from a viewpoint at the top of the escarpment over the width of the Great East African Rift Valley, with **Yellow-spotted Rock Hyraxes** also enjoying the view, or all kinds of great birds and game animals – **Grey Crowned Crane, Secretarybird, Blue Wildebeest, Thomson's Gazelle, Plains Zebra, Impala, Black-backed Jackal, Common Duiker, Vervet Monkey**, and even **Masai Giraffe** – roaming freely in the field and using the road together with the traffic, long before we even enter any game reserve. We'll arrive in time for lunch and take an afternoon game drive for some of the big game animals and local birds like **Kori Bustard, Secretarybird**, several of the seven species of **Vulture** here, which include **Egyptian, Hooded, Rüppell's, Lappet-faced**, and **White-headed**.

Overnight: Maasai Mara National Reserve

#### Day 3. Maasai Mara National Reserve

We have a full day of birding in the park with a picnic lunch. We'll visit the Mara River, hoping to see part of the great wildebeest migration crossing the river, but this can of course not be guaranteed. We'll also check for the "big five": **African Elephant, Lion, Leopard, Rhinoceros**, and **African Buffalo**. We will also see **Hippopotamus** and other plains game like **Thomson's Gazelle, Topi, Masai Giraffe**, and **Black-baked Jackal**. Among the birds in the area we'll be looking for **Helmeted Guineafowl, Red-necked Spurfowl, Kori Bustard, White-bellied and Black-bellied Bustards, Secretarybird, Lappet-faced, White-backed, Hooded, and Rüppell's Vultures**, and many other raptor species like **Martial, Long-crested, Tawny, and Wahlberg's Eagles, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Bateleur, Shikra**, and **African Goshawk**. Several species of bee-eaters are possible as well as kingfishers, rollers, cuckoos, and a profusion of starlings and finches. The grasses and woodlands are also home to apalises, cisticolas, francolins, pipits, and larks.

Overnight: Maasai Mara National Reserve

**Day 4. Maasai Mara - Lake Naivasha**

After breakfast we depart for Lake Naivasha, arriving in time for lunch. Lake Naivasha is a birdwatcher's paradise; over 200 bird species can be found around here. Our afternoon birding may yield **Tropical Boubou**, **Orange-breasted Bushshrike**, **Yellow-breasted Apalis**, **Tambourine Dove**, **Red-headed Weaver**, **Scarlet-chested Sunbird**, **Variable Sunbird**, **Purple Grenadier**, **White-browed Robin-Chat**, **African Paradise Flycatcher**, **Red-faced Crombec**, **Yellow-billed Stork**, **Blacksmith** and **Spur-winged Lapwings**, **Malachite Kingfisher**, **African Spoonbill**, and **African Sacred Ibis**.

Overnight: Naivasha

**Day 5. Lake Naivasha, Crescent Island Game Park**

We will wake early and do some morning birding before breakfast. After breakfast we'll head for Crescent Island Game Park. This is a game sanctuary on the eastern side of Lake Naivasha. It was created in 1988, and following a sudden drop in water levels in 2000 Crescent Island became part of the mainland and is now a peninsula. Big game animals, including **Plains Zebra**, **Thomson's Gazelle**, **Impala**, and **Masai Giraffe**, are all up-close. Other wildlife includes **Defassa Waterbuck**, **Common Eland**, and **Blue Wildebeest**. This park supports a healthy variety of terrestrial bird life as well. Among the birds around the lake we might find **Black Crake**, **Red-knobbed Coot**, **African Jacana**, **Black-headed Heron**, **Squacco Heron**, and **Marabou Stork**. We'll have a chance to do some night birding for **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** and **Northern White-faced Owl**.

Overnight: Naivasha

**Day 6. Lake Naivasha - Lake Baringo National Reserve**

After an early breakfast we will be checking out and departing toward the wonderful Lake Baringo National Reserve. Driving north we first head to Lake Oloidien. This is a volcanic crater lake found at the south-west corner of Lake Naivasha. It separated from the main lake in 1979. Since then it gradually became saline, increasing the level of the spirulina, a blue-green freshwater alga, which attracts **Lesser Flamingos**, since it forms their major food source. The birds first discovered this site in July 2006 and have used this area as a feeding site ever since. We then should arrive at our lodge for lunch. After lunch we'll drive to the lake itself, where we use motorboats to navigate the lake for waterbirds. Herons are a main target here, with **Goliath** and **Purple Herons** as well as **Great** and **Little Egrets**.

Overnight: Lake Baringo

**Day 7. Lake Bogoria National Reserve**

We'll take an early morning walk to check the cliffs for **Hemprich's Hornbill**, **Verreaux's Eagle**, and **Rock Hyrax**, the eagle's main prey. With the help of a local naturalist we'll walk along the famous Tugen Hills, known for their great diversity of raptors, owls, and interesting passerines. We'll return to our lodge for breakfast and later drive to Lake Bogoria National Reserve and have a chance to go birding as we enter the reserve. The lake has only one river inlet, hence it is not affected by heavy rains, which can dilute the spirulina. Therefore we have a good chance to see Lesser Flamingo here when Lake Nakuru is diluted by heavy rain. We also have the opportunity of visiting the hot springs. The lake has woodland dominated by *Acacia* and *Ficus* and to the north is a papyrus swamp. Birds unique to this area include massive

congregations of **Lesser Flamingos** and a few **Greater Flamingos** too. In the surrounding parkland and rock cliffs we can find **Steppe Eagle**, **African Fish** and **Tawny Eagles**, **Black-necked Grebe**, **Three-banded Courser**, **Slender-tailed Nightjar**, **Greyish Eagle-Owl**, **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**, **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**, **White-bellied Canary**, **Mocking Cliff Chat**, **Brown-tailed Rock Chat**, **Golden-breasted Bunting**, **Emerald-spotted Wood Dove**, **Common Kestrel**, **Hemprich's** and **Jackson's Hornbills**, **Little** and **White-throated Bee-eaters**, **Speckle-fronted Weaver**, **Northern Masked Weaver**, **White-billed** and **White-headed Buffalo Weavers**, **Gabar Goshawk**, **Dark Chanting Goshawk**, **Cardinal**, **African Grey**, and **Nubian Woodpeckers**, **Red-and-yellow** and **D'Arnaud's Barbets**, **Purple** and **Lilac-breasted Rollers**, and many others

Overnight: Lake Baringo

### Day 8. Lake Baringo - Kakamega Forest National Reserve

We'll make a pre-breakfast bird walk, and after we've eaten we'll drive to the Kakamega Forest National Reserve. This drive takes us through the beautiful scenery of the Kerio Valley. We stop in the valley for a picnic lunch and do some birding, looking for **White-crested Turaco** and **Orange-breasted** and **Grey-headed Bushshrikes**, among others. The Kakamega Forest is Kenya's only true tropical forest, and this area is alive with birds. We will have a full of day tomorrow to explore this bird-rich area.

Overnight: Kakamega

### Day 9. Kakamega Forest National Reserve

We will spend this day enjoying the sights and sounds of this unique forest. We'll walk the numerous forest trails here in search of many of Kakamega's 194 bird species. The forest is West African in character, and many birds here are not found elsewhere in Kenya, reaching the eastern extent of their range here. The rainforest here is a haven for butterflies and other insects, along with its vast avian riches. In this tropical greenhouse we'll get a chance to see **Great Blue Turaco**, gemlike **African Emerald Cuckoo**, and the cacophonous **Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill**. A range of primate species such as **Blue** and **Red-tailed Monkeys** and **Eastern Black-and-white Colobus**, as well as **DeBrazza's Monkey**, can also be seen in this forest. Forty percent of the total butterfly population of Kenya is found in Kakamega Forest as well. We'll also get a chance to experience more of the diverse African culture of the Luhya people.

Overnight: Kakamega

### Day 10. Kakamega Forest National Reserve – Lake Nakuru National Park

We'll depart after breakfast for Lake Nakuru National Park, allowing time to search for several key species along the way. In the early afternoon we'll arrive at Lake Nakuru National Park, home to one of the greatest birding spectacles on earth! Huge numbers of **Lesser Flamingos** feed in the shallow alkaline water, sometimes up to a million, with smaller numbers of **Greater Flamingos**. Sometimes the Lesser Flamingos migrate to other Rift Valley saline lakes due to shortage of blue-green algae (spirulina), which is their main food source. If there is heavy rain we will check the other lakes for this species. Lake Nakuru National Park was recently named an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International due to the huge bird population and number of species in this magnificent park. A large rocky escarpment en route is a favorite roosting spot for Mackinder's Eagle-Owl, the local subspecies of **Cape Eagle-Owl**, and we may be able to find this highly sought-after bird hidden in a dusty crag. The *Acacia* scrub is a favorite haunt for

**Little Rock Thrush, Mocking Cliff Chat, Pale Flycatcher, and Purple Grenadier.** Exploring the *Acacia* woodland and the lakeside marshes we will no doubt come across many wonderful avian delights, such as **Great White Pelican, White-breasted Cormorant, African Spoonbill, African Fish Eagle, African Harrier-Hawk, Hildebrandt's Francolin, Grey-headed Gull, Levillant's Cuckoo, White-browed Coucal, Green Wood Hoopoe, Red-throated Wryneck, African Grey Woodpecker, Black Cuckooshrike, Anteater Chat, Grey-backed Fiscal, Brown-crowned Tchagra, and African Firefinch.** Mammals are also quite common in the park, and this is one of the few places in East Africa where both the endangered **White and Black Rhinoceroses** can be found. Some of the other mammals we hope to encounter are **Rothschild's Giraffe and Bohor Reedbuck.**

Overnight: Nakuru

### **Day 11. Lake Nakuru National Park – Mount Kenya National Park**

We'll depart after breakfast for Mount Kenya National Park, allowing time to search for several key species along the way. We will also have a stopover at Thomson's Falls at Nyahururu. Nyahururu is one of Kenya's highest towns, at 2360m above sea level. Just outside the town lies Thomson's Falls on the Ewaso Narok River. It falls 72m, with the mist feeding the dense forest below. At Thomson's Falls we're likely to see **Chestnut-winged Starling, Slender-billed Starling, Rock Martin, and Grey Cuckooshrike.** In the afternoon we arrive at Mount Kenya National Park. Here, looking down on a waterhole and salt-lick, we can watch the many **African Elephants, African Buffalos, Bushbucks, and Common Warthogs** that are attracted to the minerals. We may take a walk in the forest, where we'll be looking for **Red-fronted Parrot, White-starred Robin, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Narina Trogon, Cabanis's Greenbul,** and any of the other many species we should come across here.

Overnight: Mount Kenya National Park

### **Day 12. Mount Kenya National Park - Samburu National Reserve**

In the morning we will take a bird walk, and after breakfast we will depart for Samburu National Reserve. This is one of our longer drives, of approximately four hours without stops. But since we will be birding on the way we will have opportunities to stretch our legs and to enjoy more of Kenya's magnificent birdlife. In particular we will keep our eyes open here for **Long-tailed and Red-collared Widowbirds** along the roadside. Samburu is an arid reserve, thus presenting us, on our drive through the reserve to the lodge, with an avifauna completely different from what we have experienced so far. Our hosts here are the Samburu people, who are pastoralists, herding their cattle like their brothers in the South, the Maasai. We'll have a chance for an evening game drive in search of some of the many unique birds and animals that inhabit this park.

Overnight: Samburu National Reserve

### **Day 13. Samburu National Reserve**

Samburu is one of the most exciting reserves in Kenya, and maybe even in greater East Africa. The semi-desert habitat and the rich woodlands along the Ewaso Ng'iro River are teeming with wildlife. Exploring this fantastic reserve will always produce a most overwhelming array of bird species, such as **Hooded Vulture, Bateleur, Martial Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Vulturine Guineafowl, Buff-crested and White-bellied Bustards, Black-faced and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Red-bellied Parrot, African Scops Owl, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Somali Bee-eater, Purple Roller, Von der**



**Decken's Hornbill, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Bearded Woodpecker, Pink-breasted Lark, Bare-eyed Thrush, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Hunter's and Black-bellied Sunbirds, Golden-breasted and Fischer's Starlings, Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-Weaver, and Cut-throat Finch**, among others. Mammal life is also prolific, with many species not seen elsewhere on our tour. Just a few of the many possibilities are **Olive Baboon, Vervet Monkey, Common Dwarf Mongoose, Grevy's Zebra, Reticulated Giraffe, Kirk's Dik-dik, Common Waterbuck, Gerenuk**, and the magnificent **Beisa Oryx**.

Overnight: Samburu National Reserve

#### **Day 14. Samburu National Reserve – Nairobi**

We'll leave Samburu soon after breakfast and drive southward toward Nairobi. Birding along the way, we proceed past the semi-arid Northern Frontier District into the Mount Kenya region. On the drive we pass through spectacular scenery, and the grasslands along the roadside are a great place for **Black-winged Lapwing, Black-winged Kite, Dusky Turtle Dove, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Cape Crow, Long-tailed Widowbird, and Speke's Weaver**. After crossing the equator we enter the Central Kenya Highlands between the Aberdare Range and Mount Kenya. On a clear day we may get glimpses of the second-highest mountain in Africa, Mount Kenya, with its snow-capped peaks. Making our way farther south out of the Central Kenya Highlands, we'll see the pineapple plantations of Thika and many neat Kikuyu subsistence farms before arriving once more in Nairobi.

Overnight: Nairobi

#### **Day 15. Nairobi - Tsavo West National Park**

After breakfast we'll proceed to Tsavo West National Park, birding along the way. The Tsavo habitat is a relatively dense thicket of savanna dominated by *Acacia* and *Camiphora* bush with baobabs, grassy plains, riverine woodland, and the Mzima Springs. We'll arrive in time for lunch. In the afternoon we will take a game drive in the park, which supports a large number of big game such as **African Elephant, Rhinoceros, Lion**, huge herds of **African Buffalo**, and more. There will be a large number of new species for us here, including **Splendid and Hildebrandt's Starlings, Common Ostrich, Hartlaub's Bustard, African Grey and Northern Red-billed Hornbills**, night birds including **Donaldson Smith's and Freckled Nightjars, Pearl-spotted Owlet, and African Wood Owl, Black and Abyssinian Scimitarbill**s, and several species of larks, pipits, chats, and cisticolas, among others. We'll also visit Mzima Springs with an underground water hide, where you will enjoy watching **Hippopotamus** and fish as well as **Malachite and Grey-headed Kingfishers**.

Overnight: Tsavo West National Park

#### **Day 16. Tsavo West National Park - Taita Hills**

We will bird in the park en route to the forests of the Taita Hills, where we hope to see the endemic "Taita three": **Taita Apalis, Taita White-eye, and Taita Thrush**. Other specialties here include **Striped Pipit, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul**, and more.

Overnight: Taita Hills

**Day 17. Taita Hills –Watamu**

We'll leave for the Indian Ocean coast to the beach resort of Watamu (meaning sweat). Today we'll relax in the cool tidal breeze on the snow-white sandy beaches after our adventurous journey.

Overnight: Watamu

**Day 18. Arabuko-Sokoke National Reserve**

Today we'll take a short drive to this unique natural area, where we'll be walking trails around the forest. It is one of the last remnant indigenous forests in Kenya, the largest and most intact coastal forest in East Africa, and by far the largest remnant of the forests that once dominated Kenya's coastal fringe. The Arabuko-Sokoke Forest supports remarkable biodiversity. It contains at least three distinct vegetation types, which provide the habitat for several endangered species, and has a very high number of species in relation to the size of the area. Twenty percent of Kenya's bird species and about thirty percent of its butterflies have been recorded in this small part (0.07%) of Kenya. At least 24 rare or endemic bird, mammal, and butterfly species are restricted to this stretch of coast. This high proportion of endemic species, some known only from Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, makes the forest a key part of the East African Coastal Forests Endemic Bird Area. The forest holds some rare endemic species like **Sokoke Scops Owl**, **Sokoke Pipit**, and **Clarke's Weaver**, as well as other species like **Amani Sunbird**, **Fischer's Turaco**, **Crested Guineafowl**, **Spotted Ground Thrush**, **Trumpeter Hornbill**, **Chestnut-fronted** and **Retz's Helmetshrikes**, **Black Cuckooshrike**, **Scaly-throated Honeyguide**, **Eastern Nicator**, **Mombasa Woodpecker**, **Mangrove Kingfisher**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, and **Black-bellied Starling**.

Overnight: Arabuko-Sokoke National Reserve

**Day 19. Mida Creek**

Mida Creek, part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is a large inlet that opens into the sea south of Watamu and rises and falls with the tides. Mida Creek is one of Africa's largest mangrove creeks and a very important part of the marine ecosystem in the Watamu/Sokoke World Biosphere Zone. The mangrove roots provide a rich source of food for fish, crabs, shrimp, and oysters. The fish and crustaceans then provide the food for Mida's legions of birds. Mida Creek is an excellent birdwatching area. Thousands of migratory birds regularly visit the creek, and Crab-plover is its star attraction. We walk on the boardwalk to Mida Village through the mangrove habitat, looking for birds like **Dimorphic Egret**, **Yellow-billed Stork**, **African Spoonbill**, **Fulvous Whistling Duck**, **Water Thick-knee**, and **African Sacred Ibis**, and if we're lucky we may find **Crab-plover**.

Overnight: Arabuko-Sokoke National Reserve

**Day 20. Departure**

After breakfast we transfer to the Moi International Airport in Mombasa or to the airport in Malindi for your flights back home.

*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.*

**Duration:** 20 days  
**Group size:** 2 - 8  
**Date:** 10 – 29 September 2020  
**Start:** Nairobi  
**End:** Mombasa or Malindi

**Price:** US\$9,780 per person sharing

**Single Supplement:** US\$1,844

**Please note:** By using moderate accommodations this year, the price has been reduced.

**Price includes:**

Accommodation as specified  
All meals  
Guiding fees  
Local birding guide  
All park, conservation, and entrance fees as described  
Excursions and activities as detailed in itinerary  
All transport while on tour

**Price excludes:**

Items of a personal nature  
Drinks  
Laundry service  
Gratuities  
International flights  
International airport taxes  
Visa  
Insurance  
Medical curtailment of safari