



**8-DAY "INTRODUCTION TO AFRICA" – NORTHERN
TANZANIA**

10 – 17 NOVEMBER 2020



The endemic **Yellow-collared Lovebird** (photo Niall Perrins) is one of our targets on this trip.

This tour is designed to give you the opportunity to experience the real Africa, given only about a week. Where else can you see **Leopard, Cheetah, Lion**, and a hundred spectacular birds in a single day? Where else can you see Africa's highest mountain (Kilimanjaro) and two of the world's most famous game parks (the Serengeti and the spectacular Ngorongoro Crater) within 24 hours of arriving in Arusha?

We begin this tour at Kilimanjaro International Airport near Arusha. Flying into this airport, weather-permitting, you might get excellent views of Africa's highest mountain. From here we visit the "Lark Plains" north of Arusha for some very localized species including **Beesley's Lark** and **Pink-breasted Lark**. We then head to the spectacular Serengeti National Park, which not only has high densities of big mammals such as **Lion, African Elephant**, and all the others, but also has a number of highly sought-after birds that we'll look for. These include some very range-restricted species such as **Karamoja Apalis, Fischer's Lovebird, Rufous-tailed Weaver, Red-throated Tit, Grey-crested Helmetshrike**, and a range of others, along with a lot of more-widespread African birds. We then visit the famed Ngorongoro Crater. Finally we spend a little time at Tarangire National Park, where we look for **Northern Pied Babbler, Yellow-collared Lovebird, Ashy Starling**, and other range-restricted birds among a very high concentration of **African Elephants** and Baobab trees. All in all, Northern Tanzania has quite a number of range-restricted species, and we hope to find a large number of them.

For this trip we can also arrange private departures. We recommend combining it with

- 1) a tour of the Eastern Arc Mountains, which boast many Tanzanian mountain forest endemics, and
- 2) a short extension to Pemba Island. Pemba Island is wilder than Zanzibar and has some endemic birds.

Itinerary (8 days/7 nights)

Day 1. Arrival at Kilimanjaro International Airport, the "Lark Plains" and Arusha

This is an exciting day as we arrive in northern Tanzania, weather-permitting with views from the plane of Mount Kilimanjaro rising out of the vast African plain below us. We'll stop for photos of Africa's highest mountain as we head for our site for the Critically Endangered **Beesley's Lark** (less than 200 remaining), as well as **Pink-breasted, Foxy, Short-tailed, Athi Short-toed** and **Rufous-naped Larks**. This is also an excellent place for other larks, **Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Abyssinian, Isabelline**, and **Capped Wheatears**, shrikes, and many others. Many of the Serengeti-type birds can also be found here in the grassland and whistling-thorn habitat. **Red-throated Tit** is possible, as are some fine barbet species. We also hope to see our first mousebirds in the form of **White-headed Mousebird**. Colonially-nesting **Grey-capped Social Weaver** is always a delight (along with **White-headed Buffalo Weaver**), and we may see (and hear the loud call of) **Nubian Woodpecker**. After birding this area we eventually head to Arusha for the night (depending on flight arrival times, sometimes we bird the lark plains the next day).

Overnight: Korona House, Arusha

Days 2 – 3. Serengeti: wildebeest, predators, and a dazzling array of spectacular birds

We embark on a spectacular journey that few people would ever forget. We head out from Arusha to Serengeti National Park, having lunch (being careful not to have your food taken from your hands by opportunistic **Yellow-billed Kites**) on the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater on the way. If you've never been to Africa before, you're likely to be amazed by **African Elephants**, **African Buffalo**, and the sheer number of bird species. After an exciting drive we'll eventually reach the Serengeti, where we look at the wildebeest migration, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of **Plains Zebras** and **Thomson's Gazelles**. This is one of the best places on the planet to see big cats – we've sometimes seen **Lion**, **Leopard**, and **Cheetah** in a single day. Finding a kill should allow us to see a good number of vulture species. Birds of prey are everywhere, including the most colorful of the world's eagles, **Bateleur**. **Secretarybird** regally roams the plains, and **Common Ostrich** tries to be regal but without much success. Smaller birds absolutely abound, and so many of them are brightly-colored – such as **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, **Purple Grenadier**, **Lilac-breasted Roller**, **Yellow-collared Lovebird**, and all the others. Interestingly, the Serengeti is home to quite a few extremely localized bird species. **Karamoja Apalis**, which favors the weird whistling-thorn habitat that we'll visit mainly for this species, is one of these range-restricted birds; it only occurs here and in a tiny part of northern Uganda (it has a strangely disjunct distribution). **Red-throated Tit**, **Fischer's Lovebird**, and **Grey-crested Helmetshrike** are other examples. The Tanzanian-endemic **Rufous-tailed Weaver** is also one of the Serengeti's target birds. The impressive **Kori Bustard** can be seen roaming the grasslands throughout the Serengeti plains.

Overnight: Serengeti

Day 4. The incomparable Ngorongoro Crater

The crater rim is wetter and more forested than the crater floor, and we spend some time here, looking for localized birds such as **Golden-winged Sunbird** and **Brown-headed Apalis**. The curious **Oriole Finch** is another bird we may be lucky enough to come across here too. The prehistoric-looking **Schalow's Turaco** adds a spectacular flash of crimson and green, and, if one gets a good view, the spectacular crest leaves even a hardened birder gobsmacked. **Grey-capped Warbler** is one of those more widespread, characteristic East African species we might also encounter here. Sunbirds such as **Eastern Double-collared Sunbird**, **White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher**, **Thick-billed Seedeater**, and others are also often present in this area.

Descending into the crater floor is an unforgettable experience. There's a very high density of **Lion** and large herbivores, some of them to some extent "trapped" by the natural enclosure formed by this huge, nicely intact caldera. About 25,000 large mammals, which also include **Black Rhinoceros** and a pool with **Hippopotamus**, inhabit the crater floor. With luck we might also see **Serval**, **Bat-eared Fox**, and other amazing smaller mammals. The highlight for many is, however, the **African Golden Wolf**, formerly classified as an African variant of the Eurasian Golden Jackal but now thought to be more closely related to the grey wolf! As always, however, our main focus is on birds, although we stop for the other wildlife too, and we expect many additions to our growing bird list – **Lesser Flamingo**, **Pallid Harrier**, **Montagu's Harrier**, **Pectoral-patch Cisticola**, **Dusky Turtle Dove**, **Abdim's Stork**, **White Stork**, and many others are expected.

The large African animals, spectacular birds, and stunning scenery combine to make this one of the most incredible wildlife experiences Planet Earth has to offer: the rim of this amazingly

intact crater rises spectacularly 600 meters (2000 feet) above the plain at the bottom (which has a diameter of 24 km (15 miles).

Overnight: a lodge on the crater rim with spectacular views onto the floor far below

Day 5. Onward to Karatu with a possible visit to Lake Manyara National Park

Depending on time we can visit Lake Manyara National Park today, where we usually add quite a number of birds to our list, which might include the beautiful **Spotted Palm Thrush**, bee-eaters, tinkerbirds, barbets (the spectacular-looking **Red-and-yellow Barbet** often joins us during our picnic lunch), **Crowned Hornbill**, huge **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill**, various storks, ducks, **Collared Pratincole**, **Great White Pelican**, the massive **Goliath Heron**, and more. Troops of thickset **Olive Baboons** are common here.

Today, if we are still missing them, we also look for some extravagant-looking seedeaters such as **Long-tailed Paradise Whydah**, **Straw-tailed Whydah**, **Steel-blue Whydah**, and the jet-black **Village Indigobird**.

Overnight: Karatu

Days 6 – 7. Tarangire National Park

Today we will visit Gibb's Farm, which is a great place to have a meal and add new birds to the growing list. Eventually we continue to Tarangire, a breathtaking place of red (because of the soil) elephants, baobabs, savanna-clad hills, and wild rivers: the real Africa as far as scenery goes. Here at magnificent Tarangire National Park we have some localized Northern Tanzania specials and endemics to find: **Yellow-collared Lovebird**, the long-tailed **Ashy Starling** (but duller than the much more widespread **Superb Starling**), and the charismatic **Northern Pied Babbler**, which we usually manage to find rather easily. We may also come across larger terrestrial birds such as **Hartlaub's** and **Buff-crested Bustards** and the massive **Southern Ground Hornbill**, while **Common Ostrich** puts them all to shame as far as size goes.

Overnight: Tarangire National Park

Day 8. Departure

Today the trip unfortunately comes to an end as we fly out of Kilimanjaro International Airport, just outside of Arusha.

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: 8 days
Limit: 4 – 9
Date: 10 – 17 November 2020
Start: Kilimanjaro International Airport near Arusha
End: Kilimanjaro International Airport near Arusha

Price: US\$5123 per person sharing
Single supplement: US\$427

Price includes:

Accommodation

All meals

A local birding guide

All park, conservation, and entrance fees

Excursions and activities as detailed in the itinerary

Transport by minibus or converted 4 x 4 safari vehicle with professional safari guide

Price excludes:

Items of a personal nature

Laundry

Drinks

Gratuities

International flights

International airport taxes

Visa

Insurance

Medical curtailment of the tour