

Tanzania's Highlights

Naturetrek Tour Report

11th – 23rd November 2023



Leopard



Kori Bustard



Secretary Bird



Lion

Tour report and photos kindly compiled by Naturetrek client Mary Ashwin



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Introduction

This Report is based on my memory, my dated photographs and my checklist which is about 90% accurate; there are probably some omissions in the Bird Checklist. There were five of us in the group and I speak for all in saying that this Naturetrek Tour was a wonderful and very rewarding experience, thanks to the knowledge and observational and driving skills of Wilfred, our local guide.

Day 1

Friday 10th November

We departed from Heathrow's Terminal 4 on the afternoon flight to Doha, catching our connection to Kilimanjaro Airport in the early hours of the following morning.

Day 2

Saturday 11th November

Lake Duluti Serena Hotel garden

We arrived at Mount Kilimanjaro Airport on time, descending through thick cloud down to ground level where it manifested itself as a steady drizzle. Exiting the Airport was easy, as was meeting the driver who took us to the hotel. It stopped raining about 10.00am. The hotel, formerly the main house of a coffee plantation, was very attractive. There was an amazing variety of flowering plants and trees in the gardens, although many were introduced. A delightful troop of Vervet Monkeys was running around, some mothers still suckling tiny babies.

We met our guide, Mr. Wilfred, in the afternoon who took us for a walk in the grounds. We saw a Safari (Driver) ant column pouring along a horizontal log over a stream. Workers were ferrying pupae, all guarded by soldier ants. Later we saw Speckled Mousebird, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Little Bee-eater, Brown-breasted Barbet, Dark-capped (Common) Bulbul, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Violet-backed Starling, Northern Black Flycatcher, White-browed Robin-Chat, Variable Sunbird, Taveta Weaver, African Pied Wagtail and an Augur Buzzard flew by. The best area was a patch of ground with some trees near the rear service gate. The rain returned in the evening. All the rooms were provided with large umbrellas which enabled us to cover the distance from the rooms to the dining area without getting soaked.

Day 3

Sunday 12th November

Arusha National Park

There was heavy rain overnight but it had cleared by the time we got to Arusha National Park at about 9.00am. Our first bird sightings were a White-necked Raven and Hadada Ibis on the roof of the Visitor Centre at the entrance gate. We found Colobus Monkeys in the Ngurdoto Crater area but not much else apart from a couple of dung beetles rolling a dung ball along the road. In the area called Little Serengeti, there were herds of African Buffalo, Plains Zebras, Masai Giraffes, Impalas and Warthogs and, close by, two very striking Saddle-billed Storks. There were a lot of Greater and Lesser Flamingos on the Momella Lakes as well as African Darters, Little Grebes, Maccoa Ducks and a lot of Cape Teal on the water's edge. At one point most of Flamingos took off in flight and moved through the Lakes – a spectacular sight. We had a picnic lunch and then drove a circuit round the Lakes

and spotted a Brown-hooded Kingfisher sitting on a branch overhanging the road. Some of us started on a walk in the Mount Meru area but turned back after 30 minutes as the walk promised to be of indefinite length and duration. We had close views of White-fronted Bee-Eaters on the walk. Finally, we had much better views of Colobus Monkeys as we headed back out of the Reserve. The rains returned about 5.00pm and stayed the rest of the night.

Day 4

Monday 13th November

Tarangire (1)

We left our hotel at about 8.00am and drove through Arusha to get to Tarangire National Park. The Park's landscape is composed of granitic ridges, river valley, and swamps. The vegetation is a mix of *Acacia* and *Combretum* woodlands, seasonally flooded grassland, and Baobab trees. The weather was clear and sunny throughout the day although there were majestic rain clouds in the east. Wilfred explained that there had been recent rains in the surrounding areas and a lot of the animals had migrated there for grazing. We saw a large number of species but no great concentrations. We used the morning as a gentle game drive getting to the Nyikani Tented Camp in time for a late lunch. We were greeted by the staff handing fly whisks to us – these whisks proved extremely useful in our later game drives. On arrival at the Lodge, there were piles of dead termite alates (*Macrotermes sp.*) near the dining tent. On the short walk to our individual tents there were large numbers of giant red velvet mites (*Dinotbrombium tinctorium*), about 5cm long. These arachnids are also known as rain bugs since they emerge after heavy rain to prey on swarming termites.

After lunch we had our second game drive of the day, accompanied by some *extremely* annoying tsetse flies which succeeded in biting us before we realised what was happening. We shooed them out of the vehicle as quickly as we could and concentrated on looking at the abundant birdlife around us. Particularly prominent were the large ground birds: Common Ostrich, Southern Ground Hornbills, Secretary Birds, Grey Crested Cranes and a quartet of Bustards – Kori, Black-bellied, Buff-crested and White-bellied. Black-faced Grouse and Red-necked and Yellow-necked Spurfowl ran up the road in front of us before dashing off into the undergrowth. Waterbirds were plentiful and included Egyptian Goose, Black Crake, Black-winged Stilt, Blacksmith, Black-winged and Crowned Lapwings and Black-headed Heron while Black-chested Snake Eagle, Bateleur, African Fish Eagle, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Lesser and Common Kestrels headed our raptor list. We had a White-browed Coucal and a miscellany of Hornbills, Bee-Eaters, Rollers and Fiscal Shrikes to delight our eyes.

The mammal population was varied but there was no one species present in abundance. We had our first sighting of Banded Mongooses, Dwarf Mongooses, and good views of Elephants, Zebra, Wildebeest, Warthogs and Giraffes, including one cute youngster with very soulful eyes. Antelope species included Impala, Thomson's Gazelles, Waterbuck and Eland. Dusk was falling and as we neared the Lodge thousands of winged termites took to the air until it seemed we were driving through a snowstorm. After dinner, we attempted to do the day's list with the aid of our torches in the lounge tent. We quickly had to give up due to the number of beetles which crashed into us as they were attracted by the torchlights. It had been a long, but productive day, and we were all glad of the opportunity to turn in early, knowing we would be having an early start the next day.

Day 5

Tuesday 14th November

Tarangire (2)

It was another clear and sunny day with impressive rain clouds in the eastern sky. We began our safari armed with fly whisks and lethal intentions towards any flies that came into our vehicle. Of course, we were all very enthusiastic to see what delights Tarangire had in store for us. We were not disappointed. We soon came across a family pack of some 25 Banded Mongooses grubbing about in the middle of the road, followed by Dwarf Mongooses racing across the track to disappear in the vegetation. There was the usual complement of Elephants, Zebra, Wildebeest, Giraffes and Warthogs. In addition to the Antelopes seen the day before, we had good sightings of individual Red Duiker, Kirk's Dik-dik, Klipspringer, Steenbock and Bohor Reedbuck. We headed for the Silale swamp which still retains water when the surrounding areas are dry. There we saw our first Hippo and our first Spotted Hyena who soon ran off carrying a large piece of skin in his mouth. Meanwhile a prehistoric-looking Nile Monitor emerged from the swamp and climbed up a muddy bank. Further on a herd of Buffalo looked steadily at us just asking to be photographed. The challenge was to photograph the attendant Yellow-billed Oxpeckers on the Buffalo. We also spotted our first Lion stretched out fast asleep under a tree. The highlight of the day was, however, seeing two Cheetah brothers sitting together in a grassy area weighing up their chances of running down a Wildebeest and her calf. In the end they decided it was not worth the effort, but they gave us the chance of getting some memorable photographs.

Not to be outdone by the mammals, there were birds in abundance. New larger birds included a Coqui Francolin, Helmeted Guinea-fowl, Spotted Thick-knee, Spur-winged Lapwing, African Jacana, African Sacred Ibis, Glossy Ibis and Great White Pelican. Surprisingly, Vultures were not prominent and we saw very few circling overhead. One dead tree which was the favourite roost of three species, Hooded, White-backed and Lappet-faced, provided us with the best views. We did better with other raptors: Brown Snake Eagle, Bateleur, Tawny and Crowned Eagles, African Fish Eagle and African Harrier Hawk. We saw an assortment of Barbets, Parrots, Lovebirds, Cisticolas, Starlings, and other small birds too numerous to mention. But, possibly, the most beautiful bird that day was a Silverbird, a flycatcher with silvery grey upperparts and orange underparts.

Shortly before heading back to the Camp, the rain clouds cleared revealing the snow-clad top of Mount Kilimanjaro glowing pink in the setting sun. Another memorable day!

Day 6

Wednesday 15th November

Morning at Tarangire (3), Afternoon at Lake Manyara

We reluctantly left Nyikani Tented Lodge as we headed towards Lake Manyara. The journey from the Camp back to the main road served as our last game drive in Tarangire. There were no new mammals to add to the List that morning. But we did have a few new birds (in Naturetrek List order): a Bare-faced Go-away Bird, Common Buzzard, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Fischer's Lovebird, Fork-tailed Drongo and Wattled Starling. Finally we said goodbye to Tarangire and its bumpy tracks and joined the main, mercifully tarmaced, road to our next hotel, Lake Manyara Serena Lodge.

We arrived at the Lodge shortly before lunch. In the grounds we saw a White-browed Robin-Chat and some were lucky enough to see an African Pitta. From the hotel gardens, there were good views of Lake Manyara and the

road leading up the eastern edge of the Rift Valley Wall. We visited Lake Manyara Reserve in the afternoon. It was quite well wooded to begin with and there was a troop of Olive Baboons, with some extremely cute youngsters, playing in the roadway. There were a few Elephants around and a small herd of Buffalos. There were some Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Pink-backed Pelicans and small waders on the lake but it was not possible to get near the edge of the water. The ground near the Lake gave the impression of being a salt flat with dead trees which had been killed off by the brackish waters. However, in this area, we saw six different species of hornbills – Northern Red-billed, Von der Decken's, Crowned African Grey, Trumpeter and Silvery-cheeked. Brown-hooded and Striped Kingfishers were also seen. On our way out of the Reserve, we saw Green Vervet Monkeys and a few Blue (Sykes) Monkeys. There was also a small group of Kirk's Dik-diks in the undergrowth and they stayed close enough to be photographed.

Day 7

Thursday 16th November

Serengeti (1)

We left our hotel about 8.00 am in heavy rain and low cloud. In fact, it was a total white-out. This continued as we drove along the perimeter road of the Ngorongoro Crater until the rain stopped at about 10.am when we were well past the Highlands and had descended to the beginning of the Serengeti Plains. From then on we had sunshine for the rest of the day. We passed several Masai villages with the women sitting by the roadside selling local honey and also a number of lone goat herders, many of whom relieved their boredom by consulting their mobile phones. Once past these tribal grazing areas, more animals began to appear, mostly Wildebeest, some Zebra and some Giraffes. Then ahead of us, we saw that the horizon was completely covered by a black fuzz. It took some time to realise that this fuzz was, in fact, thousands of Wildebeest on migration. Soon we were in the thick of lines of herds which stretched from the northern horizon to the southern one. It took about 15 minutes to drive east to west through these vast herds as they crossed the road on their journey south. The rains had come early and we were seeing the beginning of the Great Plains Migration. It was an awe-inspiring sight and we all felt very privileged to see one of nature's great spectacles.

We arrived at the Naabi Hill Entrance Gate to the Serengeti National Park at about mid-day and, strangely, the migration did not continue into the Park itself. While Wilfred obtained our entrance passes we watched Superb Starlings and Red-winged Weavers in the parking area. It was about an hour to the Serengeti Nyikani Tented Camp and we arrived there in time to see a Kirk's Dik-dik run out of the dining tent. After a late lunch and a short break we were off again looking forward to all the sights and sounds the Serengeti had to offer.

The short afternoon game drive produced two new raptors – our first and only Black-winged Kite and Martial Eagle. Other new sightings included Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Woolly-necked Stork, White Stork, Fischer's Sparrow-Lark, Isabelline Wheatear and Tree Pipit. The grazing mammals were present in goodly numbers but a few sleeping Lions were the only predators we saw. We returned to the Camp about 6pm; time to settle in to our tents and unpack. Just before dinner we called our tent attendants by walkie-talkie to escort us by torchlight to the dining tent in case of wild animals in the area – just as well as there was a Hyena lurking around. We turned in early as we knew it would be another early start the next day.

Day 8

Friday 17th November

Serengeti (2)

Our Camp was located at the foot of a hill about 100-150 ft above the surrounding country. Although our overwhelming impression of Serengeti was the endless grassy plains, the terrain was, in fact, quite varied. Each day we descended through acacia woodlands at the foot of our Camp. These soon thinned out until the almost treeless long grass plains were reached. Each day we crossed a small river which had cut winding channels through the plains giving rise to small lakes, muddy pools and minor areas of marsh and swamp. But perhaps the most striking feature was the presence of rocky granitic outcrops called kopjes which played host to a different flora and fauna than the surrounding plains.

The day was clear and sunny. We began our safari at 7.00am after a 6.30 am breakfast, preceded by a very welcome wake-up cup of coffee and a biscuit brought to our individual tents. The lads from the kitchen had spotted two Lions just below the Camp and we set off in search but they had wandered off. We were, however, rewarded by seeing a Lioness walking close by our vehicle. Driving on, we soon arrived at a very odoriferous Hippo pool occupied by at least 50 almost totally submerged Hippos. Lots of small waders busied themselves in the surrounding mud whilst a Nile Crocodile sunbathed on a nearby bank in company with a Marabou Stork. Four more Marabous were perched in a dead tree by the pool.

On reaching the grasslands we were delighted to come across a group of about 15 teenage Lionesses enjoying a communal sleep-over under a Sausage Tree. They were cuddled up so close it was difficult to tell where one ended and another began. And there were two more asleep up in the tree! One woke up and shifted to a more majestic posture as if scanning the plains for prey, while the other remained insensible with her face jammed in the fork of a small branch. We spent a magical half hour just looking. We continued our journey past a kopje sheltering a large flock of Helmeted Guineafowl and then through herds of Zebra until we came across two male Lions zonked out on the edge of a pool unaware (or were they?) that they were stopping some Zebras from quenching their thirst. Then we encountered six or seven more Lionesses fast asleep on the ground. Do they do anything but sleep, we wondered. It was about mid-afternoon and we too were longing for a nap when Wilfred spotted a magnificent Leopard sitting in the branches of a thorn acacia tree. It very graciously changed its posture several times so we could take profile, three-quarter and full-face shots. We lingered for a long time admiring its beauty. It was time to head back to the Camp as we were about an hour away. Throughout the morning we saw the usual grazing mammals in goodly numbers. It was a fantastic safari that morning and we reckoned we had seen about 35 Lions in all. There were, of course, some new birds such as Shrikes and Wheatears, but really it was the felines that stole the day

After a 2.00 pm lunch followed by a siesta, some of us joined Wilfred for some gentle birding in the grounds of the Camp. We had excellent views of Scarlet-chested Sunbird, White-bellied Canary, Village Weaver, Chinspot Batis, African Silverbills and the ubiquitous Superb Starlings and Rufous-tailed Weavers that hung around the dining area.

Day 9

Saturday 18th November

Serengeti (3)

Although there was quite a lot of cloud, the sun shone all day for us. Again, we were off at 7.00 am following the same route past the Hippo pool and into the grass plains. Soon we spotted a Yellow-throated Longclaw perched low down on some stalks. We could see how the species got its name. There were more raptors and vultures around – Secretary Birds, Hooded, White-backed and Lappet-faced Vultures, Black-chested Snake-Eagle, Tawny and Steppe Eagles, Common Kestrel and Dark Chanting Goshawk. New birds included Green Woodhoopoe, Purple Roller, Little Bee-eater, Red-fronted Barbet, Black- and Brown-crowned Tchagras, Red-backed Shrike and Kenya Sparrow.

Continuing our journey, we found two young Lionesses lounging in the middle of the road for 15 minutes or so before we drove on. Past the usual herds of Zebras and Impalas, we came across a male Topi standing sentinel on top of a termite mound, or maybe he was just looking to see where his friends had gone as there were no others around. We were heading towards higher ground and a large kopje where a flat slab of rock enabled six or seven Lions to sleep undisturbed in the shade of a tree. Amazingly, silhouetted against the sky, there was a nonchalant Klipspringer standing on top of an adjacent boulder. A keen-eyed member of our group spotted some Rock Hyrax close by on another rock. Soon we (or rather Wilfred) identified another Leopard sprawled asleep in a thorn tree. It looked most uncomfortable jammed into the angles of the branches. Throughout the morning we saw the usual mammals – Elephants, Giraffes, Zebras, Impalas, Wildebeest, Warthogs, Elands, Bushbucks - and added Thomson's and Grant's Gazelles to the List. The information overload was incredible.

After a delicious lunch at 2.00 pm and an afternoon siesta, we again joined Wilfred for some birding around the Camp. This produced Tropical Boubou, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Beautiful Sunbird, with House and Swahili Sparrows and the usual Superb Starlings near the dining tent. An African Grass Rat made a brief appearance there before scurrying off.

Day 10

Sunday 19th November

Serengeti (4)

It was another sunny day for us. After our usual early morning start, we headed off again to the Serengeti Plains. Again, we saw the usual mammals – Giraffes, Zebras, Impalas, Wildebeest, Warthogs, Bushbucks and Reedbucks. Elephants were more in evidence today with several large herds each with a few babies being shepherded about. Our route today took us past a different Hippo pool with more open water and which was home to about 100 submerged Hippos. A Black Crake emerged briefly at the waters' edge. Further on, in the long grass, we saw a Spotted Hyena being tailed by a Black-backed Jackal, our first Jackal of the trip. Later on a huge male Elephant with one of his tusks broken half off was a lone dominating presence. Wilfred was very adept in navigating his way across the long grass plains using smaller and even smaller tracks to vary the routes we took. We stopped at one kopje and, to our delight, found a small family of Rock Hyraxes, mother and three youngsters, on top of one of the boulders. Not far away Wilfred found our third leopard, fast asleep, stretched out on a branch of a Sausage Tree. Another excellent photo opportunity. We saw several Lions as we went along, mostly sleeping in groups in the shade of some thorn bushes.

The “usual” birds too made their appearance but we had one new raptor – a Pygmy Falcon. We were lucky to find a “hotspot” in a light woodland clearing. In one tree, there were two Fischer’s Lovebirds and a Brown Parrot while a Red-and-Yellow Barbet flitted about in the bushes below, followed by a Green-winged Ptilia. Arrow-marked Babblers occupied some more bushes and Purple Grenadiers, Red-billed Firefinches and Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu hopped about on the ground.

Our evening walk in the grounds of the Camp produced a few new birds: a Yellow-rumped Seedeater and a Pale Flycatcher. Just as dusk was falling some Blue-naped Mousebirds chose the path to our tents to have a dust bath – a lovely image to close the day.

Day 11

Monday 20th November

Morning: Serengeti to Olduvai Gorge.

We left our camp, very reluctantly, at 7.00am to begin the long drive back east through the Serengeti to the Ngorongoro Crater stopping at Olduvai Gorge on the way. Our weather luck held and we enjoyed sunshine all day. Re-tracing our arrival route, we saw the usual mammals and birds but managed to pick up two new species: Speckled Pigeon and Grey-capped Babbler. Shortly before reaching the Naabi Hills Gate we had good views of a Spotted Hyena and then of a male and female Lion. He was very interested in her and as she walked away from him, smelt her to see if she was receptive. She clearly was not as he puckered up his face in a most amusing grimace – caught on camera! After exiting Serengeti, we were in the Ngorongoro Conservation area and again found ourselves amid enormous numbers of Wildebeest and Zebras migrating across the plains. It was a cause of wonder that this migration had been in progress all the time we were in the Serengeti. Closer to the Ngorongoro Crater highlands there were large groups of Giraffes seemingly uninvolved in the migration.

Eventually we turned off the main road and took a side track to the Visitor Centre at Olduvai Gorge. We enjoyed a packed lunch at the view point overlooking the Gorge and were then given a very informative talk by one of Visitor Centre’s staff who explained the archaeological and anthropological importance of the site. The Centre has a very impressive modern Museum setting out the story of early hominids in the area and displaying many fossils and ancient artefacts.

We later rejoined the main road which climbs up to the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater before turning off into the entrance road to our next hotel, the Ngorongoro Serena Lodge. This was situated on the rim of the crater at about 7,500 ft and each room had a balcony which overlooked the crater itself. The views were stunning particularly with the sun illuminating the bottom of the crater some 2,000 ft below. Wilfred told us it wasn’t really a crater but a caldera formed by the collapse of an enormous volcano into its centre after an eruption. We had a short afternoon “off” to give us time to settle in to our rooms before dinner. We had been warned that it would be very cold in the evenings and mornings due to rain clouds covering the caldera rim. This proved to be correct and the hot radiators in the bathroom and bedroom were very welcome. We enjoyed a relaxing evening which was just as well as we were to start very early the next day for our first descent into the crater.

Day 12

Tuesday 21st November

Ngorongoro Crater (1)

After a quick cup of coffee, we left the Lodge at 6.00 am. The rain clouds blanketed everything, and it was extremely cold. We began our long descent to the caldera floor. About half-way down we emerged below the clouds, which soon lifted completely and we had another lovely sunny day. The caldera is nearly 20 km across and is covered by extensive grassland, forested areas, marshes and lakes. We were heading towards Lake Magadi, a shallow soda lake in the southwest of the caldera. Thousands of Lesser and Greater Flamingos lined the waters' edge accompanied by many species of ducks (Blue-billed Teal, Northern Shoveler, Maccoa Duck), Egyptian Geese, waders (Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed Plover, Three-banded Plover, Ruff and Little Stint), a Yellow-billed Stork and the ubiquitous Marabou Storks. There were several Hippos as well, one of whom strolled along the edge of the water – our first view of a non-submerged Hippo. But our attention was riveted by a pack of Spotted Hyenas squabbling over a well-gnawed carcass, accompanied by yelps, squeals and snarls as they asserted social dominance over one another.

Leaving the lake shore we headed through the caldera grasslands. We saw large numbers of Grey Crested Cranes and a Kori Bustard and a Black-bellied Bustard both displaying. The former fluffed himself up into a puffball and the latter first stuck his neck out and then lifted his head making a “pop” sound like a champagne cork. Hundreds of Red-rumped Swallows skimmed the surface of the grass and we had our first sighting of an Anteater Chat. Zebras, Impalas, Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles, Buffalos and Wildebeest were contentedly grazing all around us.

We had a packed breakfast on the banks of a small lake. Superb Starlings, Speke's Weavers and Fan-tailed Widowbirds hung around for tit-bits. After breakfast we birded some wetland areas which were very productive. Sacred Ibis, Glossy Ibis and African Spoonbills occupied centre ground against a backdrop of Flamingos and hundreds of Red-knobbed Coot, while in the foreground African Jacanas and Squacco Herons were numerous and there was a single African Swampheaven in the reeds. An African Marsh Harrier temporarily spooked the Coot. Various Lapwings skurried about including a Long-toed Lapwing, a new one for the trip. On the other side of the track was a small Hippo pool, at one end of which several Black-crowned Herons were roosting in bushes and a Little Bittern skulked nearby.

In the woodland area where we had our packed lunch, the thorn bushes were full of Red-billed Queleas. We then returned to Lake Magadi where the Hippos were more in evidence. A very small, mud-caked baby Hippo was being shepherded by his mother past several slumbering hulks. One got annoyed and a Hippo scuffle broke out, with several crashing through the shallows with jaws wide open. The Flamingos just ignored them unless they were in danger of being trampled.

We then headed back towards the woodland area because a line of several vehicles indicated something important was there. We arrived to get magnificent, close views of a Serval for about twenty minutes. It was quite habituated to the vehicles and at one point walked down the line and crossed the track behind us. It was the most beautiful cat you ever saw. We then continued traversing the grasslands and ascended a small knoll which a few Vultures were using as a launch pad. Later we spotted a Common Jackal slinking past a herd of Wildebeest. Our safari that day was coming to an end and we headed for the exit road to make the ascent out of the crater. The clouds started

to close in as we neared the top. We were glad to get back to our rooms at 4.00pm for a warm shower followed by a hot coffee and biscuits.

Day 13

Wednesday 22nd November

Ngorongoro (2)

We again left at 6.00am and felt quite virtuous on being told we were the first vehicle to enter the crater. Today was Lions day. Soon after we entered the grasslands, Wilfred spotted two Lions in the vegetation. They slowly got up and walked past our vehicle to drink from a roadside puddle. Then a third started moving in the same direction. Wilfred also pointed out four Spotted Hyenas lurking 100 yards away. Seeing the Lions move off from what must have been a kill, the Hyenas drew close to the kill site only to be scared out of their wits by two more Lions rising and chasing them off. They fled straight into the path of the first two Lions who joined in the chase. The Lions were not serious but simply enjoyed giving the Hyenas a nasty surprise.

Moving eastwards through the grasslands, we had good views of Grey Crested Cranes which were again out in force, a Lanner Falcon, a Hildebrandt Spurfowl, a Familiar Chat and a Singing Bush-Lark. An Auger Buzzard on the ground gave us some good photographic shots and close by was a Rose-breasted Longclaw – a very handsome bird indeed. Of course, the usual grazing mammals were in abundance. Later, we encountered three male Elephants, with magnificent tusks, as well as large numbers of Wildebeest. As we neared our breakfast spot, threatening rain clouds encircled the crater rim. However, instead of rain we had a rainbow as we ate our breakfast accompanied by the same bird junkies as the previous day. Continuing on, we passed by herds of Wildebeest and some Hippos grazing on the grass while it was still cool enough for them. Strangely, the overall impression of the grassland plains is one of serenity. The herds graze peacefully, Wildebeest alongside Zebras, Waterbuck and Warthogs; some sit down in the meadows quietly gazing into space. We returned to yesterday's Hippo pool. There were no new surprises but it was great to see all the waterbirds again.

We returned to Lake Magadi to regale ourselves with the colourful spectacle of massed Flamingos and to catch up on any small waders we may have missed. Numerous Blacksmith Lapwings had settled into scrapes in the muddy ground near the Lake. We heard rumours of Black Rhinoceros being seen in the woodland area and we headed in that direction. Our attention was at first diverted by two young Lions by the side of the road and then by a series of Zebras enjoying a roll on a patch of dusty ground. Arriving at the Rhinoceros site, we did see two far off amongst some trees but they were so distant that an even a 60x zoom camera did not produce a good picture. It was time to leave the caldera and to head back up to the rim and our Lodge for lunch.

The Lodge had organised a 4.00pm nature walk around its grounds on the crater rim. This concentrated on the plants and their medicinal properties. As we ended the walk, a magnificent Schalow's Turaco glided down showing its large crimson wing patches as it passed overhead. What a bird to end the day!

Day 14

Thursday 23rd November

Ngorongoro Crater to Mount Kilimanjaro Airport

We left the Lodge at 8.00 am travelling in easy stages to the Airport. For morning coffee, we stopped at a small private museum called the Tanzanite Experience and learned how the rare gemstone tanzanite was mined. Lunch was at the Arusha Coffee Lodge set in a coffee plantation on the southern outskirts of Arusha. We said our goodbyes as two of the group left for another night's stay at the Lake Duluti Serena Hotel, while the remaining three travelled on to the airport well in time to catch their flights back to the UK.

Postscript – Flora

Baobab Trees (*Adansonia digitata*) and Candelabra Trees (*Euphorbia candelabrum*) were characteristic of Tarangire. Sausage Trees (*Kigelia Africana*), Flat-topped Acacias (*Vachellia abyssinica*), Umbrella (Thorn) Acacias (*Vachellia tortilis*) and Yellow-barked Acacias (*Vachellia xanthophloea*) were the most common trees in the Serengeti. In the Ngorongoro Caldera/Serengeti area Fire Lilies, (*Scadoxus multiflorus*) and Pyjama Lilies (*Crinum macowanii*) occurred at intervals along the road side. Typical flowers in the Caldera included Common Heliotrope (*Heliotropium steudneri*), Savanna Hibiscus (*Hibiscus flavifolius*), Sodom's Apple (*Solanum incanum*), Lion's Ear (*Leonotis nepetifolium*), African Ironweed (*Vernonia auriculifera*) and Thorn Apple (*Datura stramonium*). Common to both the Serengeti and Ngorongoro were the Tissue Paper Flowers (*Cycnium tubulosum*). Also known as Vlei Ink Flowers, they resemble white *Phlox* flowers, but are members of the broomrape family and hemi-parasitic on grass roots.

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Species lists

Birds

1. White-faced Whistling-Duck
2. Egyptian Goose
3. Spur-winged Goose
4. Knob-billed Duck
5. Cape Teal
6. Red-billed Teal (Duck)
7. Maccoa Duck
8. Blue-billed (Hottentot) Teal
9. Northern Shoveler
10. African Darter
11. Little Grebe
12. Great White Pelican
13. Grey-headed Gull
14. Gull-billed Tern
15. Whiskered tern
16. Spotted Thick-knee
17. Black-winged Stilt
18. Pied Avocet
19. Common Ringed Plover
20. Three-banded Plover
21. Long-toed Lapwing
22. Blacksmith Lapwing
23. Spur-winged Lapwing
24. Black-winged Lapwing
25. Crowned Lapwing
26. African Wattled Lapwing
27. African Jacana
28. Common Snipe
29. Green Sandpiper
30. Wood Sandpiper
31. Terek Sandpiper
32. Common Greenshank
33. Ruff
34. Little Stint
35. Collared Pratincole
36. Double-banded (Two-banded) Courser
37. Greater Flamingo
38. Lesser Flamingo
39. Hamerkop
40. Abdim's Stork
41. White Stork
42. Saddle-billed Stork
43. Yellow-billed Stork
44. Marabou Stork
45. Grey Crowned-Crane
46. Little Bittern
47. Black-crowned Night Heron
48. Little Egret
49. Squacco Heron
50. Western Cattle Egret
51. Great Egret
52. Grey Heron
53. Black-headed Heron
54. Glossy Ibis
55. African Sacred Ibis
56. Hadada Ibis
57. African Spoonbill
58. Eurasian (Common) Moorhen
59. Red-knobbed Coot

60. African Swamphen
61. Black Crake
62. Common Ostrich
63. Kori Bustard
64. White-bellied Bustard
65. Buff-Crested Bustard
66. Black-Bellied Bustard
67. Helmeted Guineafowl
68. Coqui Francolin
69. Yellow-necked Spurfowl
70. Gray-breasted Spurfowl
71. Red-necked Spurfowl
72. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse
73. Black-faced Sandgrouse
74. Speckled Pigeon
75. Mourning Collared Dove
76. Ring-necked Dove
77. Laughing Dove
78. Namaqua Dove
79. Secretary Bird
80. Black-winged (Black-shouldered) Kite
81. Hooded Vulture
82. White-backed Vulture
83. Lappet-faced Vultures
84. Bateleur
85. Black-chested Snake-Eagle
86. Brown Snake-Eagle
87. Martial Eagle
88. Tawny Eagle
89. Steppe Eagle
90. Dark Chanting-Goshawk
91. Eastern Chanting-Goshawk
92. African Marsh Harrier
93. Pallid Harrier
94. Yellow-billed Kite
95. African Fish-Eagle
96. Common Buzzard
97. Augur Buzzard
98. Pygmy Falcon
99. Lesser Kestrel
100. Eurasian Kestrel
101. Greater Kestrel
102. Eurasian Hobby
103. Lanner Falcon
104. Little Swift
105. Banded Martin
106. Bank Swallow (Sand Martin)
107. Rock Martin
108. Barn Swallow
109. Red-rumped Swallow
110. Mosque Swallow
111. Schalow's Turaco
112. Bare-faced Go-away-bird
113. White-bellied Go-away-bird
114. White-browed Coucal
115. Fischer's Lovebird
116. Yellow-collared Lovebird
117. Meyer's (Brown) Parrot
118. Red-bellied Parrot
119. Grey-headed Kingfisher
120. Brown-hooded Kingfisher
121. Striped Kingfisher
122. Pied Kingfisher

123. Little Bee-eater
124. White-fronted Bee-eater
125. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater
126. European Roller
127. Lilac-breasted Roller
128. Purple Roller
129. Eurasian Hoopoe
130. Green Woodhoopoe
131. Common Scimitarbill
132. Speckled Mousebird
133. Blue-naped Mousebird
134. Southern Ground-Hornbill
135. Crowned Hornbill
136. African Grey Hornbill
137. Von der Decken's Hornbill
138. Northern Red-billed Hornbill
139. Silvery-cheeked Hornbill
140. Trumpeter Hornbill
141. Red-and-yellow Barbet
142. D'Arnaud's Barbet
143. Red-fronted Barbet
144. Spot-flanked Barbet
145. Black-throated Barbet
146. Brown-breasted Barbet
147. Usambiro Barbet
148. House Crow
149. Cape Crow
150. Pied Crow
151. White-naped Raven
152. Northern Black Flycatcher
153. African Grey Flycatcher
154. Pale Flycatcher
155. Silverbird
156. Cape Robin-Chat
157. White-browed Robin-Chat
158. Whinchat
159. Familiar Chat
160. African Stonechat
161. Anteater Chat
162. Northern Wheatear
163. Capped Wheatear
164. Isabelline Wheatear
165. Chinspot Batis
166. Black-backed Puffback
167. Brown-crowned Tchagra
168. Black-crowned Tchagra
169. Tropical Boubou
170. Slate-coloured Boubou
171. Red-backed Shrike
172. Magpie Shrike
173. Long-tailed Fiscal
174. Taita Fiscal
175. Southern (Common) Fiscal
176. Common (Dark-capped) Bulbul
177. Arrow-marked Babbler
178. Black-lored Babbler
179. Tawny-flanked Prinia
180. Trilling Cisticola
181. Rattling Cisticola
182. Winding Cisticola
183. Croaking Cisticola
184. Zitting Cisticola
185. Sedge Warbler

186. Grey-backed Camaroptera (Bleating Warbler)
187. Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird
188. Scarlet-chested Sunbird
189. Tacazze Sunbird
190. Beautiful Sunbird
191. Variable Sunbird
192. Marico Sunbird
193. Western Yellow Wagtail
194. African Pied Wagtail
195. Grey Wagtail
196. African Pipit
197. Tree Pipit
198. Plain-backed Pipit
199. Yellow-throated Longclaw
200. Rosy-throated Longclaw
201. African Pitta
202. Fischer's Sparrow-Lark
203. Fawn-coloured Lark
204. Singing Bushlark
205. House Sparrow
206. Kenya Rufous Sparrow
207. Swahili Sparrow
208. White-headed Buffalo Weaver
209. Rufous-tailed Weaver
210. Grey-headed Social Weaver
211. Baglafaecht Weaver
212. Taveta Golden Weaver
213. Lesser Masked Weaver
214. Little Weaver
215. Speke's Weaver
216. Village Weaver
217. Red-billed Quelea
218. Fan-tailed Widowbird
219. African Silverbill
220. Purple Grenadier
221. Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu
222. Green-winged Pytilia
223. Red-billed Firefinch
224. Yellow-fronted Canary
225. White-bellied Canary
226. Brimstone Canary
227. Yellow-rumped Seedeater (Serin)
228. Wattled Starling
229. Superb Starling
230. Ashy Starling
231. Rüppell's Long-winged Starling
232. Red-winged Starling
233. Red-billed Oxpecker
234. Yellow-billed Oxpecker
235. Fork-tailed Drongo

Mammals

1. Rock Hyrax
2. African Elephant
3. Cheetah
4. Serval
5. Lion
6. Leopard
7. Spotted Hyena

8. Common Dwarf Mongoose
9. Banded Mongoose
10. Black-backed Jackal
11. Common Jackal
12. Plains Zebra
13. Black Rhinoceros
14. Common Warthog
15. Masai Giraffe
16. Impala
17. Natal Red Duiker
18. Common Wildebeest
19. Cokes Hartebeest
20. Topi
21. Thomson's Gazelle
22. Common Waterbuck
23. Kirk's Dik-dik
24. Grant's Gazelle
25. Klipspringer
26. Steinbok
27. Bohor Reedbuck
28. African Buffalo
29. Common Eland
30. Bushbuck
31. Hippopotamus
32. Blue (Sykes) Monkey
33. Black-faced Vervet Monkey
34. Guereza (Colobus) Monkey
35. Olive Baboon
36. Unstriped Ground Squirrel
37. African Grass Rat

Reptiles & Amphibians

1. Agama Lizard
2. Nile Monitor
3. Nile Crocodile
4. Leopard Tortoise
5. *Ptychadena* Grass Frog - Sharp-nosed Grass Frog – *Ptychadena oxyrhynchus*

Insects

1. Little Pansy – *Junonia sophia*
2. Soldier Commodore (Pansy) – *Junonia terea elgiva*
3. Clouded Flat – *Tagiades flesus*
4. Winged termite – *Macrotermes sp.*
5. Red velvet mites – *Dinothrombium tinctorium*
6. Darkling Beetle - *Renatiella reticulata*
7. Grasshopper nymph – *Dictyophorus griseus* nymph
8. Eastern (Giant) Carpenter Bee – *Xylocopa flavorufa*
9. Blue-winged Carpenter Bee – *Xylocopa sp.*
10. Driver (Safari) Ants - *Dorylus sp.*
11. Ant-mimicking Beetle – *Atractonotus mulsanti*
12. Shining Leaf Beetle – *Adoretus sp.*
13. Ladybugs – *Chnootriba hirta*
14. Long-horned Woodborer – *Macrotoma palmata*
15. Unidentified Long-horned Beetles
16. Black Dung Beetle – *Copris sp.*
17. African Praying Mantis – *Sphodromantis sp.*

Flora

A = Arusha, T = Tarangire, S = Serengeti, Ng = Ngorongoro

Trees

Baobab (*Adansonia digitata*)
 Candelabra Tree (*Euphoria candelabrum*)
 Sausage Tree (*Kigelia Africana*),
 Flat-topped Acacia (*Vachellia abyssinica*),
 Umbrella (Thorn) Acacia (*Vachellia tortilis*)
 Whistling Acacia (*Vachellia drepanolobium*)
 Yellow-barked Acacia (*Vachellia xanthophloea*)
 Bush willow (*Combretum sp.*)

Wild Flowers

Northern Ammocharis (*Ammocharis tinneana*) S-Ng
 Fire Lilies, (*Scadoxus multiflorus*) S-Ng
 Pyjama Lilies (*Crinum macowanii*) S-Ng
 Asiatic Dayflower (*Commelina communis*) A
 Asparagus (*Asparagus sp.*)
 Common Heliotrope (*Heliotropium steudneri*) S, Ng
 Savanna Hibiscus (*Hibiscus flavifolius*) S, Ng
 Sodom's Apple (*Solanum incanum*) S, Ng
 Lion's Ear (*Leonotis nepetifolium*) S, Ng
 African Ironweed (*Vernonia auriculifera*) A, Ng
 Thorn Apple (*Datura stramonium*) S, Ng
 Tissue Paper Flower (Vlei Ink Flower) (*Cycnium tubulosum*) S, Ng
 African Cabbage – (*Cleome gynandra*) S
 Conkerberry (*Carissa spinarum*) A
 Egyptian Starcluster (*Pentas lanceolata*) Ng
 Hairy Indian Mallow (*Abutilon grandifolium*) S
 Ipomoea (*Ipomoea cairica*) S
 Small Bead Bean (*Maerua triphylla*) T
 Rosy Hibiscus (*Hibiscus aponeurus*) S

Introduced - Lake Duluti Serena Lodge

Blue Ginger (*Dichorisandra thyrsiflora*)
 Crepe Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)
 Cup of Gold Vine (*Solandra maxima*)
 Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia littoralis*)
 Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*)
 Painter's Palette (*Anthurium andraeanum*)
 Red Cestrum (Jessamine) (*Cestrum fasciculatum*)
 Sago Plam (*Cycas revoluta*)