

# Tanzania's Great Migration

Naturetrek Tour Report

13th – 23rd February 2025

---



Hippopotamuses



Grey Crowned Cranes



Serval



Red-and-yellow Barbet

Tour report by Sue Bumpstead  
Photos by Julia Keddie



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour participants: Martin Malya and Gerson (leaders) with six Naturetrek clients

## Summary

This was an excellent, well-organised, and evenly-paced holiday: we saw a huge number of animals and birds. Our accommodation for the first night was to have been at the Arusha Serena hotel, but was changed to the Lake Duluthi lodge, with a wonderful location very close to the Lake. The next two nights were spent at the Ngorongoro Serena Hotel, with an unparalleled location on the crater rim overlooking the vast area of Ngorongoro. The following five nights were spent at the Lake Ndutu Kati Kati luxury tented camp, where we could not have been made more welcome.

## Days 1 & 2

## Thursday 13th & Friday 14th February

### Arrival and Arusha

Our Ethiopian Airways flight to Addis Ababa, departed from London Heathrow, and the adventure had begun. The night was spent on the plane, there was a beautiful pre-dawn rosy glow to the sky as we were coming in to land. At 8.20am our flight left Addis, bound for Kilimanjaro International Airport, near Arusha, Tanzania. We arrived at 10.40am on a beautiful sunny day, and we had an excellent view of Mount Kilimanjaro from the plane.

On landing, we had a smooth passage through passport control, and we were met by Gerson, who drove us to our destination for the first night, Lake Duluthi Lodge. En route, we drove through bustling Arusha where, here and there, were rows of motorbikes lined up: the local taxi service.

After a good lunch at the lodge, we had some time to settle into our accommodation. We had individual, beautifully furnished huts in the grounds. At 4.30pm our guide Gerson took us for a bird walk around the grounds and out by the lake. We saw the spectacular Golden Palm Weaver, a Cape Robin-chat, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Cattle Egret, and by the lake, Pied Kingfisher, Common Bulbul, and a Common Cuckoo. Down in the tangle of the undergrowth by the lake there was a Hamerkop nest, inspected by some of our group. Coming back to the lodge, we saw two Bushbucks, and also a very shy Kirk's Dik-dik. There were some lovely trees in the grounds: the flowers of the Tree Peony were especially beautiful.

## Day 3

## Saturday 15th February

### To Ngorongoro

We left the lodge at 8.00am, having met Martin, our guide for the main part of the holiday. As we were leaving, the staff treated us to the arrival/farewell song and dance 'Jambo Jambo', accompanied by drums. On the road through the towns there were people everywhere. Saturday is market day, and everyone comes to town from miles around. Children walk to school, even on a Saturday (a half day). We passed coffee plantations, always surrounded by many trees since the coffee plants don't like the sun. Martin told us that there are 120 tribes in Tanzania, each with its own language. Everyone speaks Swahili, which is the way they all communicate with each other, but they preserve the distinct and different languages.

There was a slight delay on the road when traffic was held up: the District Commissioner was due to arrive to oversee the planting of new trees. Volunteer labour being used for this. Just past this we were behind a motorbike which was piled high with what we thought were dead chickens: except they were very much alive! Occasionally we saw an eyelid move.

The vegetation we passed was lush with Golden Tulip, Lilac Jacaranda and yellow Oleander trees. Beans are grown in the centre of a plot of land, surrounded by corn and, in turn, sunflowers on the outer edge. There were Acacia and Mimosa trees, among which we saw some birds: Fork-tailed Drongo with its long tail, Little Swift, Pied Crows and a Grey Heron. On the wayside, people were roasting corn, and there were many plants for sale.

We saw the occasional herd of goats, laden donkeys (Martin joked they were the Masai people's Land Rovers!). There were lots of Cattle Egrets and Pied Crows, and Black Storks were seen flying away. We passed a military area: the School of Infantry. Then we saw Masai people with herds of cattle; the Masai wear cow skins dyed red, and they are immediately visible in the brown landscape. A Masai tribesman can have more than one wife, if he has many cattle (a sign of wealth). The Masai eat either goat or sheep.

We saw Superb Starlings, White-headed Buffalo Weavers, White-bellied Go-away Bird, and an Eastern Chanting Goshawk. We came across lots of Cattle Egrets, some by water, others in trees. There were a few termite mounds, and beehives were lodged in trees; honey is used in traditional medicine.

As we made our way towards the Ngorongoro Conservation area we were conscious of more water. Water from the hills is always present, keeping the water table high and assisting in agriculture. As the terrain became more wooded we came upon quite a large troop of Olive Baboons. Some seemed intent on heading for the wheels of our Toyota Landcruiser. Fortunately, we didn't have any mishaps.

At Lake Manyara National Park, we stopped for a ten-minute comfort break. Coming back to our vehicle there was a bit of consternation in one of the other vehicles. A window had been left open and a baboon had got in! He was soon persuaded out again.

We became aware of water cascading down from the hills through the undergrowth. Martin told us it was the underground water forest. A bit further on we saw three baboons in a tree, along with a baby. There were quite a few Blue Monkeys, and also some African White-backed Vultures circling. We saw a white African Migrant butterfly; there were also yellow butterflies, large orange-tip butterflies, and Diadem butterflies (which resemble Monarchs). We saw a few Tamarind trees, Northern White-crowned Shrikes and Palm Swifts, and a Purple-crested Turaco was heard calling, but not seen. There were a few active termite mounds; they have chimneys in them that the termites can open and close to let air in and out.

A bit further on there were some Impalas, more Blue Monkeys, a couple of Bushbucks and then a Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, which resisted our efforts to photograph him. They are comparatively small birds considering the size of their 'horn' bill. Lots of times during the holiday, while activity was going on in one direction, something else could be seen in another direction at the same time: wildlife watching at its best. We often encountered rollers: one of the first was a Broad-billed Roller, its brilliant colouring making it stand out at the top of a tree. Another hornbill was spotted, this time a Southern Ground Hornbill. More Blue Monkeys made an appearance, and then we saw our first of the 'Big Five', some Cape Buffalo.

Further on, we encountered a Rattling Cisticola, another Broad-billed Roller and a Common Bulbul. We had spotted some round balls in some of the trees: Martin told us they were Tamarind fruits. We came across more buffalo, with oxpeckers on their backs. At this point, we were close to the lake, and saw another a Broad-billed Roller, along with some Vervet Monkeys and a Bushbuck, which ran off. Today was certainly the day for Blue Monkeys: one came very close to the vehicle. While looking at a Southern Ground Hornbill, which was followed closely by a Tawny Eagle and a African White-backed Vulture in the trees, we were accompanied by a large troop of baboons. We became aware that something had seriously spooked them: Martin spoke to one of the guides in another vehicle, and was told that an African Rock Python had taken a baboon a couple of minutes ago, and was in the act of constricting it, just off the road behind a brush shelter. We saw movement, obviously involving a fiercely struggling baboon. The python completed its grisly task, then slid off to recover its strength, before returning to consume its dead prey. It was quite sobering: nature in the raw. The rest of the baboon troop sat high in the branches of the surrounding trees.

We arrived at the lunch stop soon after. We ate our picnic while watching Village Weavers building nests, and also Hildebrandt's Starlings and Spotted Palm (Morning) Thrushes, all the while keeping a weather eye out for any further pythons.

After lunch, we saw Zebras, Vervet Monkeys and lots of male Impalas. We stopped to watch a stately herd of Elephants, along with a couple of Black Bishops. Later, we saw Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Grey-headed Kingfisher, and a Brown-veined White butterfly. More Elephants crossed our path, and we saw a Black-backed Puffback and a Red-billed Quelea. There were Impalas and Elephants by the lake, along with a Lilac-breasted Roller. We saw our first Hippos in the lake, along with some Egyptian Geese, and Great and Little Egrets.

A bit later, we saw fiscal shrikes, and heard a Red-chested Cuckoo and another Emerald-spotted Wood Dove; a brown bird there turned out to be a Hamerkop. Continuing by the lake, we saw a Three-banded Plover and an African Grey Hornbill. More Elephants were drinking: their trunks can hold nine litres of water at any one time.

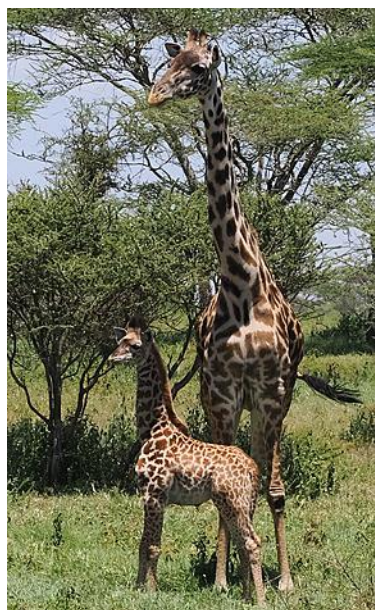
Later, we came back by the spot where we had seen the python (now long gone). The Baboon troop was still nearby, close to a Sausage Pod tree. Soon after, we saw Elephants on a bridge, which held us up a bit as there was no way around them. It was relaxing just to watch their slow, stately progress. Among the Elephants was a tiny baby with its mother. Two Waterbucks were nearby.

At this point, we were climbing towards the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater, in the Ngorongoro Conservation area, on our way to the Serena Lodge, our base for the next two nights. We saw White Storks, and more baboons. The holes we saw in the wayside we were made by Elephants taking minerals from the soil. Our last sighting of the day was of another herd of Elephants.

We arrived at the Ngorongoro Serena Lodge, overlooking the crater. We had balconies outside our rooms, and we were surprised to see a group of Cape Buffalo lying down quite close by, swatting flies with their tails and generally shooting the breeze. We had a very good evening meal at the lodge, and an excellent night's sleep.



Cheetah



Giraffes

## Day 4

## Sunday 16th February

### Ngorongoro crater

We departed the lodge at 6.30am for our day in the Ngorongoro crater. Almost immediately, we saw Abyssinian (Schalow's) Wheatear, Anteater Chats and Helmeted Guineafowl. Later, we saw a mixed group of Grant's and Thompson's Gazelles, and our first Secretarybird, the hunter of snakes. It is sometimes called the 'Walking Eagle'.

Our guide explained that the central crater lake was steadily getting bigger. It certainly looked large looking down on it from the balcony of the hotel. We saw our first group of Elephants, eating their breakfast: they consume up to 200kg of grass in one day! An Augur Buzzard made an appearance, then a Common Fiscal shrike (the butcher bird), as well as a Grey Heron. We saw Blue Wildebeest, along with more gazelles, of both varieties. A short while later we saw two Kori Bustards, several Abdim's Storks, and then, a Lion, only about fifteen metres away. Wildebeest were close by: with a rush of blood to the head, they starting running, fast! We saw a Rufous-naped Lark close to the road.

A Tawny Eagle hove into view, along with a Grey Heron, then Zebras and a Black-backed Jackal, a Barn Swallow and lots of Abdim's Storks. There were more Wildebeest, some with offspring. We saw an African Golden Wolf (formerly Golden Jackal); it was smaller than the Black-backed Jackal, and hunting baby gazelles. A bit further we saw lots of swallows, a couple of Yellow Wagtails and no fewer than five Sacred Ibises.

A while later, we saw a lone Kori Bustard and then had our first Zebra crossing: lots of them crossing the track. Then, from nowhere, a Spotted Hyena made an appearance. We arrived at a largish pool of water, where we watched Avocets, Cape and Red-billed Teals, Black-winged Stilts, Little Stints and Ruffs. There were also Great White Pelicans and three Hippos semi-submerged, along with a flamingo, Coot, two Blacksmith Lapwings, and a Grey Crowned Crane.



Later a Serval appeared, but was equally keen to disappear from sight, and we lost it in some undergrowth. We saw a Whinchat, a male and female Ostrich in the distance, a Fan-tailed Widowbird and a group of Hartbeest. At the next pond we saw African Spoonbills, a Hamerkop, Yellow-billed Storks, Little Stint, Blacksmith Lapwing, Great White Pelicans, Grey Crowned Crane and Sacred Ibis.

Shortly afterwards, we saw a Grey Heron, a female Black-winged Kite and another Fan-tailed Widowbird. Soon after we saw more Elephants, and a Fischer's Sparrow-lark with suicidal tendencies hovering near the wheels of the Landcruiser: disaster was averted. A little bit later we saw Anteater Chat, Red-billed Firefinch, and two Dusky Turtle Doves. Then came Red-collared Widowbird, Spur-winged Goose and another two cranes. We also saw various sub-species of Yellow Wagtail: Martin was excellent at explaining the differences. A wonderful moment came when some Zebras crossed the road in front of us and were all around the vehicle. We sat in silence for a few minutes to soak up this magical spectacle.

A bit later we saw more Wildebeest and some egrets, plus a veritable log jam of Zebras with their young, which have brown stripes as youngsters. Then we saw a Common Eland, a buffalo with an attendant Cattle Egret, and an Abdim's Stork. At the lake we saw Lesser Flamingoes, Egyptian Geese, and more Abdim's Storks. A lone Kori Bustard was followed by a Crowned Lapwing. There were two Warthogs; the female had one tusk and was eating on bended knee. We came upon more water, where there were more Lesser Flamingoes, Ruffs, Little Stints, a Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, and yet more Wildebeest.

Further on, we saw an African Golden Wolf on the road. Hyenas were around and a very short while later we spotted a Lion kill, the victim being an unfortunate buffalo. Lions were coming in, with the hyenas waiting their turn; but first a male Lion made his dignified appearance. 'Out of the way you lot': there was no question of him not being first in the queue. Three more Lions were spotted walking through the grass. Second to last in the pecking order were Warthogs, and last of all vultures, which like the entrails best. Hyenas tend to rip meat away from the carcass, and then dash off to eat somewhere suitably quiet.

After that drama, we saw Thompson's Gazelle, Bustard and a Black-headed Heron. It was certainly a day for bustards: we saw another Kori, and soon after that a Black-bellied Bustard. At another small pool, we saw a Grey Heron and Hippos keeping cool. We stopped for a comfort break and saw Speke's and Rufous-tailed Weavers, pelicans by the waterside, Black Crake, Grey Heron and Speckled Pigeons, as well as Yellow-billed Duck and Superb Starling.

After the break and back on the road, we saw a Steppe Eagle and there were some Cape Buffalo, in a large mud pool, with a flock of cranes nearby. More Elephants and Zebras were crossing, and three Ostriches were running, in the distance as usual. After that we came upon lots more Zebra and Wildebeest, along with their very cute babies. There was a mega Zebra crossing, then we saw a big herd of Wildebeest and Zebra with a few Elephants thrown in, an Augur Buzzard and a Warthog. We next came upon a large Elephant giving himself a dust bath. It must have been that time of day, because a Zebra was doing the same thing, and a Wildebeest was having a siesta in the road. Then we saw a Cardinal Quelea, a Red-collared and Fan-tailed Widowbirds and a Pin-tailed Whydah.

We came upon a large troop of Olive Baboons, with some of the younger ones playing, plus a Fischer's Sparrow-Lark. The weather turned a little: there was a bit of thunder and, with this as a background, we saw Grant's Gazelle, Whinchat, Dusky Turtle Dove and Speke's Weaver.

A very short while later, two Hartebeest were spotted, as well as another Grey Crowned Crane and a solitary Kori Bustard. There had been a build-up of dark clouds and a bit of thunder, and soon enough a storm quickly came over. During the storm, in the distance, we saw two Black Rhinos: it is estimated that some twenty-five frequent the crater. The storm didn't last very long, and we saw more Grant's Gazelles, and some Elephants with their young; the youngsters feed from their mother for four years until they develop teeth.



Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu



Village Weaver

Soon, after the rain had stopped, we saw two Grey Crowned Cranes, Sacred Ibises and three Eland, plus two Blacksmith Lapwings. A Marsh Harrier flew across our path. On small puddles and ponds and saw Greenshank, Glossy Ibis and more Yellow Wagtails. A bit later we had African Swampphen, two Black Crakes and Lesser Swamp Warbler. We saw our first kingfisher: a Malachite. A second Serval came into view briefly, but was not very keen to come closer, and quickly disappeared.

A bit later we came to a pool with a good variety of birds: Southern Red Bishop, Black-crowned Night Heron, African Rail, Ruff, African Snipe, Black Crake, Blue-billed and Red-billed Teal, Moorhen, Grey Heron and Gull-billed Tern.

By the lake shortly afterwards we saw Common Waxbill, Avocet and African Spoonbills, plus many Greater and Lesser Flamingoes, Blue-billed Teal, Egyptian Geese, a Hamerkop (eating a large frog), and a Squacco Heron. There was also Cormorant, Ruff, Whiskered Terns, Grey-headed Gull, some Hippos, Red-billed Teal, Wood Sandpiper, a couple of Glossy Ibises, Little Stint, Blacksmith Lapwing, Rosy-throated Longclaw, and a Kittlitz's Plover. We could have stayed all afternoon.

Tearing ourselves away from the lake, we soon spotted a number of Thompson's Gazelles, another Kori Bustard, another Golden Wolf, and a Warthog. One of our group informed us that they had done 9,000 steps on their FitBit yesterday, while we had been ensconced in the safari vehicle all day!

It was time for our late lunch at one of the rest stops. A variety of wildlife was present and on the alert for dropped food: a slightly menacing-looking Marabou, Speke's Warbler, Superb Starling (ever present at lunch stops), Black-lored Babbler, White-browed Robin, chat, Common Bulbul, Brown-crowned Tchagra and a Hamerkop nest.

Back on the trail we saw some lionesses, and later a Black-backed Jackal, Black-lored Babbler, White-browed Robin Chat, some Warthogs, a Black-bellied Bustard and three Blacksmith Lapwings. A little bit later we saw a Kori Bustard, two Black-headed Herons, and watched a few more stately Elephants: always a lovely sight. Then we had a White-browed Coucal, Grey-headed Sparrow, Hildebrandt's Francolin and an African Collared Dove, plus a couple of Yellow Bishops, Speckled Mousebird, Hildebrandt's Starling, Woodland Kingfisher and a Long-crested Eagle.

As we were nearing the Ngorongoro Serena Lodge we saw Mountain Buzzard, Brown Snake Eagle, Ring-necked Dove, White-browed Robin-Chat and another Hildebrandt's Francolin, plus Purple Grenadier and a group of baboons, with a tiny baby hanging on to its mum. As a finale, we saw a male Lion, then lastly several Rhinos, one with a baby.

## Day 5

Monday 17th February

### Ngorongoro to Lake Ndutu

We had breakfast at the lodge, checked out, and handed over the keys. With all our luggage loaded, we set off through the Conservation Area, on our way to our next overnight stay at Lake Ndutu Kati Kati camp. Early on, we saw a Giraffe and Common Fiscal, then Augur Buzzard and a Rattling Cisticola. A short while later we couldn't miss a Variable Sunbird, whose plumage was startlingly bright: a beautiful bird. A little later we saw another Rattling Cisticola and White-necked Raven, and four Eland made an appearance, along with Zebra and Wildebeest (including one which had managed to lose its herd). A little later we saw a number of Egyptian Geese, Abdim's Stork, Pin-tailed Whydah, more Eland, Red-rumped Swallow and lastly lots of Zebras crossing.

A little later we saw a Straw-tailed Whydah, different Acacia trees, cocktail ants, Brimstone Canary, Helmeted Guineafowl, a couple of Superb Starlings, and a Ring-necked Dove. Later, we found a Black-winged Kite, Red-eyed Dove, Anteater Chat, a couple of Speckle-fronted Weavers, and a sedate Giraffe.

With a slight change in vegetation, and after seeing a Lilac-breasted Roller, we saw some Umbrella Thorn trees, while Masai tribespeople were around. We saw Honey Acacia trees, which the Masai use to make and sell Acacia honey. Shortly afterwards, passing a Masai encampment, we saw their village football pitch!

It was time for a comfort/admin break at Olduvai Gorge, the site of numerous important hominin and early human fossil finds. We took a group photo by the sculptures of *Paranthropus boisei* and *Homo habilis* skulls (the latter is believed to be 'our' ancestor).

Along the track we saw a Red-headed Agama lizard. Then, in quick succession, we saw a Northern Wheatear and a Common Fiscal. Martin pointed out a Sisal tree, the product of which is used for floor coverings. Further on we saw a Grassland Pipit, an Ostrich in the distance, Kori Bustard and a large herd of Thompson's Gazelle. Further on we saw Giraffe: three in a row. We were told that Giraffe have seven neck vertebrae, the same number as humans. Along with a Taita Fiscal, we saw a group of four Giraffe, and by a lake we saw six Marabous, Egyptian Geese, and two Thompson's Gazelles.



Finally, we were at the border of the Serengeti National Park. We spotted an African Golden Wolf, and a couple of Crowned Lapwings. There were lines of Wildebeest across the horizon, each knowing exactly where they were going. Soon we saw two European Rollers, Thompson's Gazelles, the young running after their mums, then a Barn Swallow, a Giraffe and some Zebra. A bit later we saw a couple more European Rollers (very striking birds), a Rattling Cisticola, and two Superb Starlings.

Soon after, we saw a juvenile Black-headed Heron, along with another European Roller, Coqui Francolin, the ever-present Helmeted Guineafowl, Taita Fiscal, two Black Herons; a Tawny Eagle made a dignified landing in a tree, and close by were three Superb Starlings. A bit later we saw a Montagu's Harrier and a Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

Later in the morning, we saw a Cheetah with cubs. Up to the age of two months the mother feeds the cubs; from four months they will tuck into food the adults eat. We spent a bit of time watching the group. One of the cubs was making a foray up a low tree. Cheetahs do not have retractable claws and rarely climb trees: the cub seemed to work this out. It was a wonderful safari experience. Later, we saw three male Cheetah; in big cats this is called a 'coalition', as they work together to catch and kill prey. A little later, we saw another coalition of three male Cheetahs on the look-out for food. We saw Rattling Cisticola, two European Rollers, and a Common Fiscal. Other bird life included African Mourning Dove, Fork-tailed Drongo, another two European Rollers, three Superb Starlings and a Rattling Cisticola. Then we saw the large nests of Red-billed Buffalo Weavers, Ring-necked Doves, Yellow-billed Storks, three Brubrus and two Northern White-crowned Shrikes.

A very short while later we arrived at the ranger station for a ten-minute break and for Martin to do some admin. Back on the trail, we saw an Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Red-necked Dove and two very dark Giraffes. Close by was a Red-billed Oxpecker, and Helmeted Guineafowl, two Cavendish's Dik-diks and a Fork-tailed Drongo. Another Giraffe hove into view, close to a Superb Starling and a Common Cuckoo eating a fat juicy caterpillar.

Masai tribesmen and camp staff were on hand to welcome us and carry our luggage when we arrived at our home for the next five nights, Lake Ndutu Kati Kati camp. We were warmly welcomed by the staff, were taken to our tents and then had a delicious lunch. After a short while to orientate ourselves at the camp, we were back on the trail. The first birds we saw were Fischer's Lovebirds, then a White-bellied Canary.

New species this afternoon were African Grey Woodpecker, two Mourning Doves, a couple of Lappet-faced Vultures, Wattled Starling, Diederik Cuckoo, a Rufous Chatterer, Grey-breasted Spurfowl, African Grass Rat, Rufous-crowned Roller, a Dark Chanting Goshawk chasing a Tawny Eagle, Black-lored Babbler, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Three-banded Plover and (African) Hoopoe.

Just to ring the changes, we saw a small herd of Impala and a Grey-breasted Spurfowl. A little bit later we watched for a while as a Vitelline Masked Weaver built a nest for his mate, and saw an Augur Buzzard.

Further on, at a large pond in the Lake Ndutu area, we saw Lesser Flamingoes, Ruff, a couple of Little Stint, Black-winged Stilt, two Blacksmith Lapwings and a Silverbird. On the Lake itself the salt crust attracts lots of Greater Flamingoes: quite a spectacle, which we enjoyed. We also saw Cape Teal, a couple of Chestnut-banded Plovers, and Black-winged Stilts striding around. There were Hippos in the shallow water. Another Tawny Eagle made an appearance and a bit later a Black-chested Snake Eagle, a White-browed Coucal, and a Rufous-tailed Weaver.

Wattled Starlings flew by; then we saw an African Cuckoo and a biggish herd of female Impala with a solitary male. Next was a Great Spotted Cuckoo, a Gabar Goshawk, and a Red-billed Oxpecker.

A little bit later and close to the camp, we saw Red-chested Cuckoo, Rüppell's Griffon Vultures, a White-backed Vulture and a Grey-breasted Spurfowl, then a European Roller, Spotted Hyena, and a Spotted Thick-knee. Cavendish's Dik-diks were regular morning and evening. We returned to the Kati Kati camp in time for a shower and our evening meal.

## Day 6

**Tuesday 18th February**

### Ndutu

5.30am: rise and shine. Masai tribesmen collected us to go for breakfast (it was still dark and walking about in the dark unaccompanied was a big no-no). One of the camp staff cooked fresh omelettes each morning: what a treat. We saw lots of hot air balloons taking to the skies; our early morning sightings of birds included Red-breasted Spurfowl, Ring-necked and Laughing Doves, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Superb Starling and Crowned Lapwing. A few Impala were around, along with Cavendish's Dik-diks, an Eland and a Slender Mongoose.

Next up was a White-browed Coucal, a Coqui Francolin, a (heard) White-bellied Bustard, a couple of Secretarybirds and a Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. A couple of Zebra came by, followed by another European Roller and a couple of Thompson's Gazelle. A bit later we saw three Hyenas, a Greater Kestrel and, amazingly, an African Wild Cat. It didn't stay long. Soon after we saw some more Zebras then five Lesser Kestrels, and a Greater Kestrel in the middle. A short while later we saw Abdim's Storks and two Spotted Hyenas: the females are bigger than the male. The females dominate the clan, and when they give birth the cubs are black. Dotted around were a few ringtail Montagu's Harriers, along with some Abdim's Storks and a Mourning Dove.

Soon after we saw two Lionesses on the prowl for old, sick or young Wildebeest. In any group of Wildebeest the calves will be in the middle of the group. More birdlife included a Black-winged Kite, Black-lored Babblers, and a Black-chested Snake Eagle.

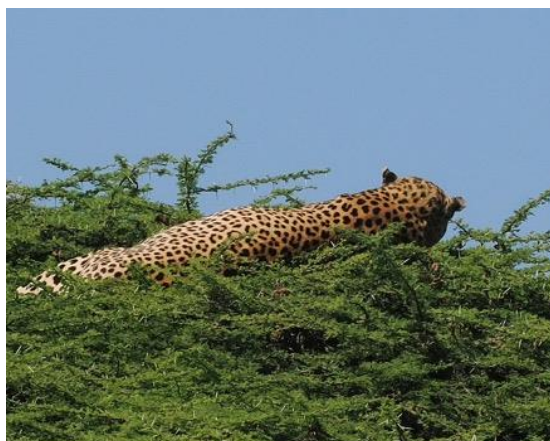
At this point we had a comfort stop at the central zone of the Serengeti Park. Our first sightings within the park, were Giraffe, a Lilac-breasted Roller, a Cuckoo, Tawny Eagle, and lots of Wildebeest stretching away to the horizon – a wonderful sight. A little later we saw a Great Spotted Cuckoo, and Ostrich in the distance. Grants Gazelle's made an appearance, along with an Isabelline Wheatear, Gull-billed Terns, and White-bellied Bustards. Thompson's Gazelles grazed around with a couple of Cattle Egrets. Close by was a Yellow-Throated Sandgrouse.

During the morning, we came across some kopjes, granite outcrops formed by volcanic activity in the dim and distant past. On top of the first of these was a Lion, surveying the scene. There were four Lions in the shade of the tree at the base of the kopje. Martin thought one of them was possibly pregnant and lying low. The females have a three-month gestation period, during which time it is difficult to hunt, and they will go on to produce between one and four cubs. As we were watching, one of the lions got up and went for a walk, the others staying put. Flying above was a Steppe Eagle.

Then we saw a Topi: what an impressive animal. At this stage there were no Buffalo present: they are water dependent and like longer grass. A flock of Yellow-throated Sandgrouse flew over, and one was present on the ground. Some species seemed to like being near the wheels of our Landcruiser. A Pallid Harrier, having a rest in a nearby tree, took off as soon as we spotted it: our vehicle had spooked it. A little later we saw a Black-headed Heron having a meal of bugs, and later still a Rüppell's Griffon vulture, looking a bit lonesome with no entrails from a kill to occupy it.



Lion



Leopard

Soon after we saw three safari trucks: usually a sign of activity. There were a couple of Lions, but they were dozing and not doing very much at all. But very soon we saw a solitary Caracal, with its tufted ears.

As we were driving along, we became aware of a male Lion, then another, coming from a different direction, looking purposeful. Four male lions in total met up in a coalition. Martin said that two of them could be brothers. They carried on down to some water, and as we were watching this intently, a lone baby Wildebeest pitched up. Then, from the side, a Hyena hove into view. We all watched, but while the Lions were on high alert, it was obvious they had eaten fairly recently, because they didn't give chase. In the end we carried on our journey, knowing that it wouldn't end well for the baby Wildebeest.

At this point we were in the Eastern Central area of the Serengeti, the Miri Plain. We saw a Montagu's Harrier, a Great Kestrel, termite mounds and Barn Swallow. At one of the pools, we saw stilts, Avocets, Little Stint, a Green Sandpiper, Wood Sandpipers, a Black-headed Heron and another Serval. At another pool we saw a Ringed Plover while we were on the trail of another Serval, which was determinedly playing hide and seek, mainly the hiding part.

There were more Wildebeest close to another kopje: close by a Lion was on high alert. Lots of trucks had zeroed in on this. A bit later we saw several Elephants with their young, and then Croaking Cisticola, some Lappet-faced Vultures, a Rüppell's Griffon Vulture, and two Tawny Eagles chasing each other; one was slightly younger than the other and had paler colouring.

A bit later we saw another Lappet-faced Vulture, a Lilac-breasted Roller, Magpie Shrike, and then Zebras crossing. Then we came across a large group of Wildebeest and Zebras followed by a couple of Little Bee-eaters, Hildebrandt's Starling, Grey-backed Fiscal and Pygmy Falcon, Usambiro Barbet, African Grey Flycatcher, Fork-tailed Drongo and another Topi.

It was time for a well-earned lunch stop (for Martin anyway). While eating our food, we watched Grey-capped Social Weavers, Superb Starlings and Hildebrandt's Starlings, and a Swahili Sparrow. Back on the trail, we soon came to a pool full of Hippos.

We came upon a Cheetah under a tree, enjoying the shade. We came to what Martin called Simba kopje: a pride of Lions is normally resident here, but they seemed to be having an awayday. Very shortly afterwards, though, we came upon two lionesses (and one cub) lunching on Wildebeest, ripping through thigh and intestines (normally the vultures' job). One cub went into the long grass and one more lioness joined the group. Another male Lion lay close to vegetation - this was the lion pride massing together. Later we saw a long line of Wildebeest, two Secretarybirds and a Giraffe on his stately progress. At this point we were leaving the Park.

In the trees, surveying the scene, we came upon a Verreaux's Eagle Owl: what an impressive bird. At this point it was the end of the day's journey. We had drinks before supper, looking down at the watering hole visible from camp, with a lone Giraffe checking out the water supply. At this point the Masai tribesmen get the fire going: we caught up on the log.

## Day 7

Wednesday 19th February

### Ndutu/Serengeti

The talk at breakfast was of hearing Lion and Hyena outside our tents during the night. There were Lion paw prints, and Zebra hoof prints. Today we are headed to the southern part of the Serengeti. There was a whole family of Dik-diks (including a baby) and a Black-lored Babbler. There were also Hyena tracks: it was all happening last night. A bit later we saw a Hyena, then a White-browed Coucal in the Fever trees.

A few minutes later we saw a Fischer's Lovebird, then Purple Grenadier, Northern Black Flycatcher, and a male Giraffe which we watched for a while as he carefully avoided the thorns of the acacia tree. We stopped for a comfort break at the ranger station; our attention was taken by a Wire-tailed Swallow, with the most amazing tail and gorgeous colours. A bit later we saw Southern Red Bishop, Diederik Cuckoo and a Laughing Dove. What we thought was an eagle was in fact a juvenile Augur Buzzard. There was also a juvenile Little Bee-eater, and a Grey-back Fiscal. We had excellent views of a Pin-tailed Whydah, Red-tailed Shrike and a Slender Mongoose.

There was a whole herd of Wildebeest, the older animals keeping a weather eye out for any danger, Plain-backed Pipit, Steppe Eagle, and four Wattled Starlings. Martin said this was usually a good area for bat-eared foxes. We saw Red-billed Buffalo Weavers, Double-banded Courser, several Barn Swallows and Gull-billed Tern.

A short while later we saw a Wildebeest giving birth. We watched from a distance for quite a while. It was very interesting to watch members of the herd breaking off from their own journey to be in attendance, and to keep a careful watch over the mother. They all have to move on very soon after the birth. When we could tear ourselves away, we saw Crowned Lapwing and later, a dead Wildebeest with attendant Rüppell's Griffon, Lappet-faced and African White Backed Vultures, and Marabous. Martin said it would take about an hour and a half to finish off the carcass. Wildebeest and Zebra passed in a long, long line, inexorably making their way to the border and beyond to find fresh grass. Martin said that the Wildebeest cover many, many kilometres in a day. He also said that two million Wildebeest and 800,000 Zebras do the migration. Apparently, Zebras can give birth at any time, whereas

Wildebeest all give birth at around the same time. Martin said Wildebeest are not found in this area from March through to July.

The area for lunch was quite deserted. In the gents' toilet, a nest of Egyptian Rosetti bats was discovered. Suitably refreshed and back on the trail, we saw Long-crested Eagle, Secretarybird, Kori Bustard and a Black-winged Lapwing. Passing a water hole, we saw a solitary Egyptian Goose.

Further on we saw the three Cheetahs we'd seen earlier in the same place, having the afternoon siesta as opposed to the late morning nap. A few minutes later we saw two male lions at the base of a tree trunk with red faces – they were having a late lunch - munching away on a dead Wildebeest. Later still we saw a juvenile Bateleur and a Tawny Eagle. Shortly afterwards we spotted a Lion up a tree, and an Ovambo Sparrowhawk. There were vultures in the trees behind and another baby Wildebeest on its own.

We returned to camp for a shower and then a drink before supper, and watched the water hole below the tented camp.

## Day 8

Thursday 20th February

### Ndutu/Serengeti

A Lion was heard roaring close to the camp just before 6.00am. Breakfast happened without incident and we set off. After a morning filled with many of the same species we had already seen, plus Black-bellied Bustard and Harlequin Quail, Martin spotted a Leopard on an umbrella thorny acacia! When Leopards have made a kill, they can't take large prey up a tree. They can take the intestines from the prey (cue vultures) which makes it lighter to drag up the tree, where it can eat undisturbed. He had a kill up there, a baby Wildebeest, which it would have killed during the night. During this time, we noticed Rufous-tailed Weaver nests, with a couple of the occupants making some adjustments under the nest (unimpressed by the Leopard and its kill). We were at this site for 35-40 minutes, without the Leopard moving or even attempting to tuck into lunch.

We moved on and saw a Rufous-napped Lark, Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Sacred Ibis, Greater Painted-snipe and Marsh Sandpiper, among others.

Soon after we saw a Lion having a laze by some water, and there were two Elephants with a baby (mother and aunt); the two females had a dust bath while the week-old baby fed. Dust with water forms a muddy crust (the mammal form of suntan lotion). We saw Gull-billed Terns and then some Zebras moving downhill towards the water.

A short while afterwards we were in what Martin called 'the hidden valley', where water from the mountains floods the area; a pride of Lions lives close by. We saw Yellow Wagtail, Marsh Sandpiper, Spur-wing Geese and White-winged Terns. We came to an area which marked the border of the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro conservation area: Martin needed to get two permits. Soon after we saw Eland, Great Spotted Cuckoo, a few Giraffes, oxpeckers and more. It was time for lunch and siesta (for some).



We met at 3.45pm at the Landcruiser for a late afternoon drive. We saw Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Green-backed Camaroptera, Banded Parisoma, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Lizard Buzzard and Red-backed Shrike, plus various other birds and many mammals.

Time was getting on, and we had to get back to the Camp before dusk. We saw two White-browed Coucals, several male Impalas, Grey-backed Fiscal and Three-banded Courser. It started raining and we saw a Lion walking in the lake area. Very shortly afterwards, we saw two rainbows side by side. We saw a Black-winged Kite, and for our very last sighting, as dusk was starting to close in, Martin pointed out a Puff Adder sliding across the road. Very shortly afterwards, we arrived at Kati Kati for another lovely evening spent, with drinks by the fire and another excellent meal.

## Day 9

Friday 21st February

### Serengeti

Our last full day on safari: we travelled to the Central Serengeti area. Notable species included African Golden Wolf, Savannah Hares and Temminck's Courser. Seeing a couple of safari trucks, Martin headed over to them. Between two of the trucks, there were some lions and cubs (Martin thought they were about three months old, also a young male of seven months). Male lions can still be part of the pride at two years. Lionesses can start producing young at six years.

Soon after we arrived at the Ranger station by Naabi Hill where there is an observation point: it is also a popular place for Lions, so we were cautious. We saw Little Swift, and Rattling and Trilling Cisticolas. Shortly afterwards we saw a Black-winged Kite and a European Marsh Harrier. We counted nineteen Elephants eating the taller, rather than the shorter, grass. Soon after we saw a Rufous-naped Lark eating a caterpillar. Then we saw a Pintail Whydah with its bright red beak, some Matabele ants busying about, and a Superb Starling.

With Morou Mountain in the distance, we saw a Spur-winged Lapwing, a couple of Water Thick-knees, Wood Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover and a Ruff. We saw a slightly unusual tree: a candelabra euphorbia. A short while later there were two Lilac-breasted Rollers, a couple of Giraffe, a Grey-backed Fiscal, Striped Kingfisher and a single sighting of a Tsetse fly. Then we saw an impressive six Magpie Shrikes, five of which were displaying. We saw a Hamerkop nest on a sausage pod tree; Martin told us that Hippos love the sausage pods.

Further on we saw many more species, including Warthogs, White-bellied Bustard, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Pygmy Falcon, White-winged Widowbird and Yellow-throated Sandgrouse. At a pool of water there was a dead Hippo: four Nile Crocodiles were closing in and preparing to enjoy lunch. Crocodiles don't have tongues: they have a gular flap which closes so that no water gets in. Away from the pool, we saw some Elephants under a tree with a very cute baby. Further on we saw a Rüppell's Starling, a Whinchat and yet another Lion.

We enjoyed our last evening at Kati Kati camp, and had a relaxing meal and a couple of drinks.

## Day 10

Saturday 22nd February

### Transfer to Arusha

We had breakfast, and then said our goodbyes to the lovely staff at the camp; then it was off to Seronera airfield for the Cessna flight bound for Arusha airfield. As we were departing, we saw Slate-collared Boubou, and the usual gang of Helmeted Guineafowl were there. A few final good species: Black-winged Kite, White-bellied Canary, African Cuckoo, Grey-backed Fiscal, Red-capped Lark, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Grassland Pipit, a herd of Eland and all the familiar ungulate mammals, plus a final couple of Lions.

Finally, we arrived at Seronera airfield, where we said our goodbyes to Martin, and took the short light aircraft transfer to Arusha, where we connected with our flights home.

## Day 11

Sunday 23rd February

### Homeward travel

We flew home via Addis Ababa once more, and arrived safely back at Heathrow early in the morning.

### Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek email list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers.

[naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup](https://naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup)

Scan to  
sign up!



### Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky and X and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers, exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



[instagram.com/naturetrek\\_wildlife\\_holidays](https://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)



[facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](https://facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[naturetrek.bsky.social](https://naturetrek.bsky.social)



[x.com/naturetrektours](https://x.com/naturetrektours) (formerly Twitter)