

## Uganda Birding Itinerary – 21days

**Date:** Available from June through October 2012

**Number of Participants: Min 2 and Max 11**

**Guides: Deo Muhumuza and Paul Tamwenya**

**Specialty:** Forest Birding and Gorilla tracking

### Overview

*The tour starts and ends in Entebbe on the shores of Lake Victoria. Upon arrival, we shall be picked from the Airport by your driver guide to your hotel for dinner and overnight stay. We spend our next day at Mabamba bay before proceeding to Masindi Town.*

*June to August is dry; mid August to early September is the beginning of the Rainy season in Uganda. We may expect short showers that do not last too long to jeopardize our birding activities. Some of our routes connecting to sites are long with a few smooth tarmac roads (some still under construction); they are sometimes bumpy and dusty/muddy taking you through a patchwork of Uganda's scenic areas passing through engrossing village streets with isolated pockets of woodland, tropical forest, Papyrus swamps, fertile farmlands, and captivating hilly landscapes.*

*Although we do our best to adhere to the schedule below, this itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control including flight schedule changes, group interests, weather, road, lake or trail conditions. The right is reserved to substitute hotels, lodges or camps of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in your interests.*

### Destinations

This Particular Uganda Birding holiday takes you to some of the country's finest and most diverse birding sites including Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park – famous for world's endangered mountain Gorillas and a high number of albertine rift endemics; Lake Mburo National Park; Murchison Falls National park; Semliki Forest for the lowland forest species and Congo biome species; Mabamba Shoebill wetland – only reliable site for the iconic shoebill; Budongo Forest providing prime forest birding; Queen Elizabeth Conservation area (hosts the highest number of biodiversity than any other national nature reserve in Africa); Kibale Forest National Park which holds 13 primate species including the Chimps, and a considerable number of albertine rift endemics; and many others.

The tour will likely cover a multitude of habitats from lush rainforest, wild savannahs, dry acacia forests, to wetlands some with papyrus Reed beds and others with open water.

The scenery is varied and arguably some of the finest in all of Africa. This tour will likely give a chance to see more than 400 species of birds, and the mammal experience will be great enough with chances for about 50 species, including elephants, zebras, lions, and leopard, Hippo, Crocodile etc

We shall be in company of our best bird guides with the help of a superb network of other on-site guides in the respective destinations.

This Safari is specifically designed for birders who are interested in tracking mountain gorillas in Uganda plus exploring endemic bird species of the Albertine Rift and Highland areas. Trekking up the hillside to view a family of gorillas nestled in casual frolicking play, is a fascinating once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Many of the high-altitude areas we'll visit on this trip will be chilly (10-18 °C, 50-65°F). The terrain is rugged and walkways can be very slippery. You are hereby advised to carry warm layered clothing, rain gear and hiking shoes (jungle boots) to negotiate the slippery surfaces.

### **Accommodation**

Accommodations on this trip have been carefully selected. They are in the midrange category and are clean, comfortable with ensuite rooms. With the exception of Vanilla Lodge, all the hotels and lodges serve both local and continental dishes, have well stocked bars and a few have recreation facilities to help you relax after long journeys and long hours in the field. Most of them are strategically located in areas where we shall only be separated from the wild life by the wall; we shall have an opportunity to hear buzzes of insects, birds and while you are outside your rooms, occasional visitors will mostly amaze you!

### **Price**

**Two Persons - US\$5,340 each participant**

**Four – six Persons – US\$4,450 each Participant**

**Single Room Supplement - US\$780**

*Note: with more participants on this tour, the price will definitely go down*

The above quotation is discounted and based on the current commodity prices (with exception of accommodation) e.g. fuel, national park charges and the prevailing US dollar exchange rate against the Ugandan local currency. Where prices change beyond our control, or a case of a sudden economic crisis, the price of the tour package will be affected accordingly.

This price includes all park and forest reserve entrance fees, car hire and fuel, all accommodation and meals. bottled drinking water, Ferry crossing fees. Launch Cruise at Kazinga Channel and Nile River, Boat hire at Mabamba and Lake Mburo, site guide fees in Bwindi, Budongo, Kibale and Semliki, Gorilla Permits, forest bird walk fees, services of a professional bird guide, and Game / birding drive fees in savannah parks. Excluded are your airfares to and fro your country of origin, tips to guides/drivers and Hotel Staff, your visa fees, telephone calls; special drinks or alcoholic beverages; travel and medical insurances, Laundry services and other items of a personal nature.

### **Detailed Itinerary**

#### **Day 1**

Arrival at Entebbe Airport this evening, meet your driver guide and transfer to your hotel for dinner and overnight stay.

#### **O/N: Sojovalo Hotel**

*This is Kampala's newest boutique Hotel with ultra modern look; all set on a quiet surrounding of Rubaga Hill. The rooms are spacious enough with modern amenities like telephone, minibars, wireless internet and Dstv. All rooms are ensuite with nice deep-blue bathrooms, wooden furniture, and crispy cotton linen.*

#### **Day 2**

Start very early at 6:00 carry packed breakfast and drive to Mabamba Wetland.

Mabamba is about 50km west of Entebbe area on the shores of Lake Victoria. This is one of the few remaining swamps in the country protected by the local communities. The bay comprises of an extensive marsh with a labyrinth of channels and lagoons, classified as an IBA (Important Bird Area) and home to several pairs of Shoebills, Uganda's most famous avian resident. This charismatic species, the only representative in its family, is certainly amongst the most sought-after birds in Africa and we'll make special efforts today to find it by paddling through the channels on a canoe. There will, of course, be a likely good selection of classic East African waterbirds: Pink-backed Pelican, Long-tailed Cormorant, Goliath Heron, African Fish-Eagle, African Marsh-

Harrier, Yellow-billed Duck, White-faced and fulvous whistling ducks, pygmy geese, African and lesser jacana, black crane, Malachite Kingfisher along with slightly more local species such as Long-toed Plover, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Blue-headed Coucal, Papyrus Gonolek, Swamp Flycatcher, White-winged Warblers, etc.

Several trails out of the marsh or along the way normally produce good results of interesting species like Grey Kestrel, Eastern Grey Plantain-Eater, African Green Pigeon, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, superb sunbird, rufous-naped lark, grey-capped warbler, colored sunbird, green hylia, dusky tit, speckled tinkerbird, red-headed lovebird, the rare Weyn's Weaver etc

We shall be here till late this morning and later travel to Kampala for Lunch and later proceed to Masindi Town.

**O/N: Masindi Hotel for 3nights**

*This is Uganda's oldest hotel located in the picturesque and peaceful Masindi town. All rooms come with en suite bathrooms, hot water and DSTV. Their Kabalega restaurant and terrace serves à la carte and Buffet menus featuring local, Indian and continental cuisine. The Hemingway bar is fully stocked to cater for the needs of the most discerning guests offering drinks, cocktails, snacks etc. Digital Satellite Television is available on big screen.*

**Day 3**

**Whole day Birding the Royal Mile.**

We shall have an early morning breakfast, carry picnic lunch and drive to one of “**Uganda's bird watching hot spot**”, the **Royal Mile**. This is Uganda's historically known leisure spot for the traditional King of Bunyoro, hence the name Royal Mile. Here the forest has been cut back a few meters along the sides of the main trail, which makes it particularly a good viewing area in this excellent forest.

Key species include African dwarf and Chocolate-backed kingfisher, Yellow and grey Long bills, Olive-bellied Crombec, Brown-eared Woodpecker, Crowned eagle, Forest Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Camaropera, African Emerald Cuckoo, Yellow-mantled Weaver, yellow-browed Camaroptera, Green Crombec, Crested Malimbe and red-headed bluebill.

Other include: White-thighed and Black-and-white-casqued Hornbills, Yellow-spotted and Yellow-billed Barbets, Western Black-headed Oriole, along with Red-tailed and Blue Monkeys.

Overhead, Sabine's and sometimes Cassin's Spinetails soar over the clearings.

As you walk quietly along the trail, Red-tailed Ant-Thrushes skulk in the shadows, as do Red-tailed Bristlebill, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, Pale-breasted Illadopsis, Brown Illadopsis. Greenbuls are ever a challenge and include Cameroon Sombre, Slender-billed, Honeyguide and Spotted, whilst other regular species like Jameson's Wattle-eye, Blue-throated Brown Sunbird, Little Green Sunbird, Rufous Flycatcher Thrush, Yellow-mantled Weaver, Red-headed Malimbe and Uganda Woodland Warbler, Ituri Batis, etc.

#### **Day 4**

##### **Whole day birding Busingiro section of Budongo forest**

On this day, we shall bird in the Busingiro section of Budongo forest. Specialties here include Red-headed Malimbe, Sooty Flycatcher, Ituri Batis, Tit Hylia, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Buff-throated Apalis, Black-throated Apalis, Chestnut Wattle-eye, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Green Sunbird, Superb Sunbird, Tambourine Dove, Golden-breasted Bunting, Rufous Flycatcher Thrush, African Jacana, African Fish Eagle, Sabine's Spinetail, White-rumped Spinetail, Pied Kingfisher, Angola Swallow, Purple-headed Starling, Hamerkop, White-headed Saw-wing, Cassin's Spinetail, Osprey, Black-shouldered Kite, and Senegal Coucal.

#### **Day 5**

##### **Transfer to Murchison Falls National Park.**

After an early morning breakfast, we shall check-out Masindi Hotel and drive to Murchison Falls National Park while birding on the way. This is Uganda's largest national Conservation area and it is famous for its big game, spectacular scenery and the falls for which the park was named. Abundant Hippos, Crocodiles, Elephant, Buffalo, Uganda Kob and Waterbuck can be seen along with occasional Lions and Patas Monkeys.

Amongst a huge variety of widespread African bird species in the wetlands and various dry savanna and open woodland habitats are more special birds: African Finfoot, Stanley's Bustard, Saddle-billed Stork, Rock Pratincole, Bat Hawk, Little Sparrowhawk, Bruce's Green-Pigeon, Red-necked Falcon, Senegal Thick-knee, Long-toed Plover, Blue-headed Coucal, White-crested Turaco, Heuglin's Francolin, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Blue-spotted and Black-billed Wood Doves, Blue-breasted, Madagascar, Red-throated and Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Broad-billed & Abyssinian Rollers, Piapiac, Black-billed & Double-toothed Barbets, Moustached Grass-Warbler, Marsh Tchagra, Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Black & Black-winged Red Bishops, Yellow-throated Leaflove, Whistling, Siffling & Singing Cisticolas, Broad-tailed, Red-winged & Red-winged Grey

Warblers, White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike, Black-headed Gonolek, White-fronted Black-Chat, Sooty Chat, Copper & Olive-bellied Sunbirds, Brown Babbler, Black-headed Batis, Slender-billed & Compact Weavers, Black-bellied and Bar-breasted Firefinches and African Quailfinch, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, White-rumped Seedeater, and Cabanis's Bunting.

We shall check-in you Safari Lodge this afternoon, have your Lunch break here and later head for a birding/game drive to the top of the falls.

### **O/N: Sambiya River Lodge for 2nights**

*Situated only 15 minutes from the top of the magnificent Murchison Falls, Sambiya River Lodge is strategically located for those who want to experience the tranquility of unspoiled Africa. The Lodge's unique charm is in the atmosphere of intimacy provided to the guests. Accommodation is in double rooms designed as individual and family thatched cottages which have en suite bathrooms, fans, screened doors & windows, mosquito nets, and a veranda to relax and enjoy the commanding views of quintessential Africa.*

### **Day 6**

After an early morning breakfast at 6:00, carry packed lunch and drive for a short while to the ferry. We shall cross the Nile River and continue birding / game viewing towards the delta. Later in the afternoon we shall return to the Nile and take a Launch Cruise to the Bottom of the falls. In the evening, return to your lodge for relaxation, dinner and overnight stay.

### **Day 7**

#### **Travel to Kibale National Park.**

After breakfast, we shall start early and drive south towards Kibale area. This is a long journey and we shall spend most of the day driving with less birding. If time allows, we shall bird in the evening at the forest edge or around the Nature Lodges upon arrival. Along the way, we may also have time for birding the Rift Valley escarpment looking out for Vinaceous Dove, Black-billed Barbet, Cliff-chat, Foxy Cisticola, Red-winged Pytilia and Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver. Birding here and en-route should continue to produce species not found elsewhere in East Africa and more akin to West African rainforest: Western Banded Snake-Eagle, Great Blue Turaco, Lizard Buzzard, Red-Chested Swallow, Joyful Greenbul, Masked Apalis and Green-headed Sunbird.

### **O/N: Nature Lodge / Kibale Forest Camp for 2nights**

*Accommodation is in comfortable and spacious ensuite tents. Kibale Forest Camp offers this unique classic canvas experience in the form of African safari style tents set in a lush forested surrounding. Complemented by excellent food and service, it forms your perfect base to explore the area. While on your bed, you will hear buzzes of nocturnal birds like the wood owl, small insects and elephants too, somewhere in the forest, laughing out loud. Black and white colobus monkeys too cavort nearby.*

### **Day 8**

#### **Forest birding in the morning and Bigodi wetland in the afternoon.**

After an early morning breakfast, we shall make an early start for the forest, where more than 335 rainforest species have been recorded. Superb birds and primates combined with easy access, a good infrastructure and a variety of interesting activities make this forest a "must-see."

Kibale is an extensive National Park, protecting a large block of rainforest that offers excellent birding. It harbors the greatest variety and concentration of primates found anywhere in East Africa and is famous for its Chimpanzees. Kibale protects a remarkable 13 primate species, including the very localized Red Colobus and L'Hoest's Monkey, Galagos, Blue monkey, Red-tailed and Vervet Monkey.

Bird life in Kibale is magnificent and prolific: The Green-breasted Pitta is the sought-after bird in the forest. African Crowned-Eagle, Afep Pigeon, Red-winged Francolin, Black-billed Turaco, Narina Trogon, Black Bee-eater, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, African Pitta, Grey-winged Robin-chat, African Broadbill, Willcock's & Thick-billed Honeyguides, Cassin's Honeybird, Mountain Wagtail, Velvet-mantled Drongo, Petit's Cuckoo-Shrike, Joyful & Honeyguide Greenbuls, Banded Prinia, Masked Apalis, Black-and-white Flycatcher, Pink-footed Puffback, Chestnut-winged Starling, Superb, Green-headed & Green-throated Sunbirds, Dark-backed Weaver are all possible specials of the area.

Kibale Forest has the highest number of recorded sightings of Red-winged Francolin, White-napped Pigeon, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Red-chested Flufftail, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher, Uganda Woodland Warbler, White-collared Oliveback, Leaf-love, African Broadbill, Willcock's Honeyguide, White-winged Warbler, White-spotted Flufftail, and Scaly-throated Honeyguide.

Later in the Afternoon, after lunch at your lodge, we shall drive to Bigodi Wetland. The communities here have created a 4km trail in the wetland adjacent to the forest. The habitat here consists of a swamp surrounded by low, scrubby secondary forest and cultivation. The bird list includes; Green-backed Twinspot, Scaly Illadopsis, Olive Camaroptera, Uganda Spotted Woodpecker, White-tailed Ant-thrush, Red-capped Robin Chat and Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush, Great Sparrow-hawk, Red-headed Bluebill, Luhder's Bush Shrike.

It is a good site for a number of birds that are hard to find elsewhere including Speckle-breasted Woodpecker, Cabanis's Greenbul and Joyful Greenbul as well as White-spotted Flufftail, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Lesser Honeyguide, Blue-shouldered Robin Chat, White-chinned Prinia, Grey Apalis, Olive-green Camaroptera and White-collared Oliveback. We may encounter chimps, black and white colobus, red tailed monkeys etc, on this trip, as well.

## **Day 9**

### **Transfer to Semliki Forest while birding on the way.**

After an early breakfast, we shall check-out Kibale Forest Camp (buy lunch and other foodstuffs in Fort Portal Town) and proceed to Semliki Forest. A large number of Guinea-Congo biome species reach their eastern limits here. Semliki forest is one of the richest for forest birds in Uganda and marks the eastern extension of the great Ituri Forest. This therefore makes it the best place in Uganda with high chances of encountering some of the West and Central African species that cannot be easily accessed from other places.

This site is ranked number 2 in Uganda Birding spots. Specialties here include Congo Serpent Eagle, Black-throated Coucal, Grey-throated Rail, Nkulengu Rail, Long-tailed Hawk, Spot-breasted Ibis, Capuchin Babbler, Yellow-throated Nicator, Northern Bearded Scrub Robin, Red-chested Owlet, Western Bronze-napped Pigeon, Black-collared Lovebird, White-bellied Kingfisher, Red-rumped Tinkerbird, Lyre-tailed Honeyguide, Zenker's Honeyguide, White-throated Blue Swallow, Bate's Nightjar, Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Orange-tufted Sunbird, Black-winged Oriole, Red-billed Helmet Shrike, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Icterine Greenbul, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Crested Malimbe and Blue-billed Malimbe, Fiery-breasted Bush-shrike, Pale-fronted Negrofinch and Piping, Red-billed Dwarf, Black Dwarf, White crested, Black-casqued Wattled and White-thighed Hornbills.

**O/N: Vanilla Hotel for 2nights**

*Situated in the remote town of Bundibugho, Vanilla Hotel is a basic facility with a few ensuite rooms. Food served is mostly local, and sometimes snacks are available. It is advisable that you carry your own foodstuffs and a caterer.*

## **Day 10**

### **Whole day birding along the Kirumila Trail.**

We shall start at dawn after an early breakfast and set off with our packed lunch. You spend the whole day bird watching the Kirumila Trail or any other part of the forest depending on the reliable information from our site guides. The Forest is home to some of the Congo biome species. These include Red-billed, Black-wattled, Black-billed and White-crested Hornbill, African Piculet, Zenkel Honey-guide, Black-chested Cuckoo, Red-rumped Tinkerbird, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Nkurengu Rail, White-bellied, Dwarf, and Pygmy Kingfishers, Piping, White-thighed, Black and White-casqued, and African Pied Hornbills, Fire-crested Alethe, Red-bellied and Blue-billed Malimbe, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Forest Scrub Robin, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Leaf Love, Red-breasted Sparrowhawk, Long-tailed Hawk, Pale-fronted and Chestnut-breasted Negrofinches, Black-winged Oriole, and others.

## **Day 11**

### **Birding in Semliki towards the Hotsprings and later transfer to Queen Elizabeth National Park.**

After breakfast we shall embark on short trip to the Sempaya Hotsprings while birding on the way as you transfer to Queen Elizabeth National Park. We shall have lunch in Fort Portal Town. Queen Elizabeth National Park is yet another area with some of the highest biodiversity ratings of any game reserve in the world. Its varied habitat of open savannah, dense papyrus swamps and lakes, makes it one of the richest parks in Africa. Game in the park includes Elephant, a profusion of Hippos, the elusive Giant Forest Hog and handsome Uganda Kob, with occasional Lion and Leopard. An exploration in some of the trails in the park will be on game-drives and provide good birding in an open East African Savanna setting. While in the park, look out for raptors, Helmeted Guinea Fowl, Red-necked Spurfowl, Barbets, Tinkerbirds, Kingfishers, Bee-eaters, Red-chested Cuckoo, Lesser Striped Swallow, Black-lored Babbler, Grey-backed Fiscal-Shrike, Common Fiscal, Sunbirds and more.

### **O/N: Simba Safari Camp for 3 nights**

*Located on a hill, Simba Safari Camp provides spectacular views of Lake George, Lake Kikorongo and savannah plains stretching till the far horizon. Here we shall be staying in an en*

*suite double room, spacious and comfortably furnished with 2 single beds and mosquito nets. Part of the floor is covered with smooth pebbles giving your feet a pleasant feeling as you take a shower. There is hot water in the showers, heated by a special solar energy system. The room has a verandah where you can relax in private as you wind up your birding day. There is an open air restaurant where delicious meals are served. They are prepared by professionals to give you the taste of the African cuisine. Lunch and dinner can be ordered from the a-la-carte menu and sometimes a buffet is served.*

## **Day 12**

### **Birding the Savanah in Queen Elizabeth National Park**

The Park, which is named after the Queen of England who visited it in 1954, is the second largest national park in Uganda. In terms of biodiversity, this park ranks among the best birding destinations in East Africa with over 610 species recorded, and a one-day record of 296 species.

After breakfast, we shall follow one of the numerous trails in the park on a game drive.

We shall be treated to special birds of this park that include Harlequin Quail, Blue Quail, Small (Common) Buttonquail, African Crane, White winged Warbler, Martial Eagle, Stout Cisticola, Black-crowned Tchagra, Trilling Cisticola, Speckle-breasted woodpecker, African Skimmer, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Amur Falcon, Ovampo Sparrowhawk, Secretary Bird etc. Mammals include African Elephant, Spotted Hyena, Leopard, Lion, Ugandan Kobs, Side-striped Jackal, Baboons, Bush and Water Bucks, Warthogs, Giant Forest Hogs to mention but a few.

## **Day 13**

Birding to the Kyambura Gorge and afternoon Launch cruise along the Kazinga Channel. Our Kazinga channel launch cruise is the most luxurious in the western Uganda, plying these waters with comfort, elegance and attentive service, affording superb wildlife viewing from your observation deck, is far much re-assuring!

## **Day 14**

### **Drive to Bwindi Impenetrable forest.**

Start Early for Bwindi Impenetrable national park. Depending on weather and road conditions, we may drive through Ishasha section famed for its tree climbing lions. Alternatively, drive through the beautiful sceneries of Rukungiri district. Bwindi is generally at a higher altitude and therefore is cooler. Temperatures range between 10 - 18 ° C. Forest birding at Bwindi ranks the best in Uganda and Africa as well. It is home to over 23 highly localized Albertine Rift endemics. Special

birds include Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Banded Prinia, Black-faced Apalis, Black-throated Apalis, Mountain Masked Apalis, Red-throated Alethe, Yellow-eyed Black-Flycatcher, Ashy Flycatcher, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, Chin-spot Batis, cassin's Grey Flycatcher, Rwenzori Batis, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, White-bellied Crested-flycatcher, Pale-breasted Illadopsis, Mountain Illadopsis, African Hill-Babbler, Dusky Tit, Blue-throated Brown Sunbird, Blue-headed Sunbird, Northern Double-collared Sunbird, Grey-headed Sunbird, Mackinnon's Fiscal, Sooty Boubou, Pink-footed Puffback, Doherty's Bush-shrike, White-naped Raven, Montane Oriole, African Golden Oriole, Stuhlmann's Starling, Narrow-tailed Starling, Waller's Starling, Strange Weaver, Brown-capped Weaver, Black-billed Weaver, Dusky Crimsonwing, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Magpie Mannikin, Yellow-crowned Canary, Thick-billed Seedeater, Streaky Seedeater, African Green Broadbill, Shelly's Crimsonwing, Oriole Finch, Mountain Buzzard, Ayre's Hawk-eagle, Handsome Francolin, Black-billed Turaco, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, African Wood-Owl, Rwenzori Nightjar, Scarce Swift, Bar-tailed Trogon, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Black Bee-eater, (Western) Bronze-naped Pigeon, Red-chested Owlet, Tullberg's Woodpecker, Elliot's Woodpecker, African Broadbill, Western Green Tinkerbird, Lagdens Bush Shrike, Petit's Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Archer's Ground Robin, Toro Olive-Greenbul, Anson's Greenbul, Equatorial Akalat, White-bellied Robin-chat, Olive Thrush, White-tailed Ant-Thrush, Grauer's Rush-warbler, Short-tailed Warbler, Neumann's Warbler and Red faced Woodland-Warbler. In addition to this excellent birding spot in Africa, Bwindi is home to the most sought after cousins of human beings, the mountain gorillas. Other mammals among others include Ruwenzori and Yellow-backed Duikers and L'Hoest Monkey.

**O/N: Buhoma Community Rest Camp for 3 nights.**

*The Camp is just at the entrance of the park with good views of the forest. The Bandas have flush toilets with hot showers. Meals are good and are prepared by the members of the community.*

**Day 15**

**Gorilla tracking**

On this day, we set off early, with packed lunch, to the park headquarters for a briefing prior to Gorilla Tracking. This is the most exciting lifetime experience of all time! The gorillas are gentle animals and it is an unforgettable experience to photograph them as they interact. It is a wonderful experience to stare in to the eyes of these gentle giants; watch them in awe as they play and go about their daily activities. It is indeed a "once in a lifetime" experience that you must never miss. Each encounter is different and has its own rewards; you are likely to enjoy the close

view of adults feeding, grooming and resting as the youngsters frolic and swing from vines in a delightfully playful display.

## Day 16

### Whole day birding the main trail in the forest.

Species we shall search for include Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo; Bar-tailed Trogon; Dusky Tit; Kivu Ground-Thrush; White-bellied Robin-Chat; Equatorial Akalat; White-tailed Ant-Thrush; Red-throated Alethe; White-bellied Crested- Flycatcher; White-eyed Slaty-Flycatcher; Gray-green Bush-shrike; Northern Double-collared Sunbird; Black-billed Weaver and Magpie Mannikin. High exposed perches in the open forest are favored by African Goshawk; the dazzling Black Bee-eater; Blue-throated Roller; Sooty Flycatcher and forest starlings including Waller's, Stuhlmann's and Narrow-tailed. One of Bwindi's star avian attractions is the diminutive, pitta-like Neumann's Warbler, a vocal yet very secretive bird! Other under-storey birds we hope to see include displaying African Broadbill; Banded Prinia and the handsome Black-faced Rufous-Warbler. The mid-storey and canopy supports Elliot's and Tullberg's woodpeckers; Cabanis', Shelley's and Ansorge's greenbuls; the strange Grauer's Warbler and White-browed Crombec. The rare Jameson's Antpecker may also be seen probing under moss on dead branches or gleaning warbler-like in the canopy. Overhead, Scarce Swifts forage over the forest. Other wildlife that we may be fortunate enough to find here include the huge Yellow-backed Duiker; L'Hoest's; Blue and Red-tailed monkeys; Chimpanzee and several species of squirrels including Fire-footed Rope, Carruthers' Mountain, Ruwenzori Sun and Red-legged Sun Squirrel.

## Day 17

### Birding to Ruhija

This day we shall travel further south to Ruhija. This is a popular place for the endemics of the albertine rift region. We shall have some time in the popular "neck" birding. Evening birding along the new trail at Ruhija that goes that goes to the community will give you a chance of more endemics.

### O/N: Trekkers Tavern for 2nights

*Trekker's tavern Cottages is located at the hill top in Ruhija overlooking the Bwindi Impenetrable forest National Park. The lodge is eco-friendly and has a lovely cozy atmosphere with spacious cottages all with ensuite bathrooms with hot showers and flush toilets. A place of infinite calm surrounded by untamed majesty and commanding panoramic views of the Virungas on a clear day, the beautiful sunrise, L. Edward and Bwindi forest in the south.*

## Day 18

### **Birding Ruhiiija – Mwindi Swamp**

After breakfast, we shall carry picnic lunch and head for a whole day birding to Mubwindi Swamp. The 4 km trail to Mubwindi Swamp drops from 2350m to 2050m ASL and is the best place for some of the most difficult to find of all rift endemics including; Grauer's (African Green) Broadbill, the beautiful Regal Sunbird, and Archer's Robin Chat. Mubwindi Swamp is home to Dwarf Honeyguide, Stripe-breasted Tit, Rwenzori Apalis and African Hill Babbler (sometimes treated as a separate species), Rwenzori Hill Babbler, the rare and localized Grauer's Scrub-warbler and Carruthers' Cisticola.

Other species include Fraser's Eagle-Owl, Purple-breasted Sunbird, Blue-headed Sunbird, Archer's Robin Chat, Eastern Mountain-Greenbul, Strange Weaver, Black-headed Waxbill, Bar-tailed Trogon, White-headed Wood-hoopoe, Waller's Starling, Stuhlmann's Starling, Ludher's Bush-shrike, Handsome Francolin and Montane Nightjar.

## Day 19

### **Travel to Mbuo National Park**

After breakfast we shall drive eastwards towards to Lake Mbuo National Park – a superb wetland and Acacia savanna sanctuary. Birding here is a delightful experience, with beautiful scenery and a markedly different fauna to other reserves. This is the best place in the country to see game animals such as Eland as well as Zebra, Topi, Impala, and acacia-associated birds. The lakes within the park attract Hippos, Crocodiles and a variety of waterbirds, while fringing swamps hide secretive papyrus specialists such as Sitatunga. Some of the specials we are most likely to encounter here include: African Darter, White-winged Tern, Banded Snake-Eagle, African Fish Eagle, African Finfoot, Augur Buzzard, Crested Francolin, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Spot-flanked Barbet, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Black-headed & Papyrus Gonoleks, White-winged Warbler, Red-headed Lovebird, Ross's Turaco and Red-faced Barbet.

Lake Mbuo's woodlands are the northern-most example of the southern savanna system and home to several species at the edge of their range. Most sought-after is the Red-faced Barbet and the Tabora Cisticola, known only from remote north-eastern Tanzania, Rwanda and here.

### **O/N: Arcadia Cottages for 2nights**

*The cottages are bar and a majestically set on a hillside in extensive gardens stretching over 14-acre area. They are designed to provide the client with uniquely tranquil and serene atmosphere. They provide amazing vistas, service with a smile, and a warm welcome. All the rooms are en*

*suite. They also provide a fully stocked restaurant whose aim is to tantalize your taste buds; serving both local and international dishes.*

## **Day 20**

### **Whole day in Mbuoro National Park**

We shall dedicate the whole morning on a boat ride along the lake as we look for specialties like African Finfoot, Black-crowned Night Heron, Rufous-bellied Heron, and White-backed Night Heron etc. Hippos and crocodiles can also be seen here.

In the afternoon, we shall go birding in the savanna area.

## **Day 21**

### **Travel to Entebbe to Airport Guest House**

Drive to Entebbe and check in at your Guest house for refreshments and dinner. Later at night transfer to the Airport for your flight.

**~End of your tour~**

## **Notes**

### **Policy**

A non-refundable deposit of 30% of the total trip price will confirm a commitment to travel with us. The balance of the fee is due 60 days prior to departure. We quote our fares in US dollars, and must be paid in US dollars. A portion of your package price includes a tax deductible for our membership with East African natural history society, which is used to help fund organization's many conservation education and awareness projects.

All taxes, service charges and VAT while at destinations are included

### **Trip cancellation**

When the traveler notifies us more than 45 days prior to the first day of any of our safaris, 75% of the final payments will be refunded. With 30-45 days notice, one receives a 50% refund of the final payments of the tour. No refund can be made with less than 30 days notice. No partial refund can be given once a tour begins. We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment.

### **Travel insurance**

We strongly recommend that you consider a plan to help protect your trip investment. Travel insurance helps to cover; unexpected events prior to departure causing the need to cancel or change your dates, weather events or local strikes causing interruption or changes to your itinerary, missed connections, delayed arrival, lost/delayed baggage and medical or evacuation coverage.

### **Weather**

Much of your trip will take place in places where the weather can change suddenly. There are variations in weather due to the typically equatorial climate of Uganda. Generally Uganda's climate from September – December and April – May is wet and cool. The dry spell is experienced between Jan – Early March and June – Mid August and the days are generally warm or hot and sunny. Mean annual temperatures range from about 16° C in the southwestern highlands to 25° C in the northwest; but in the northeast, temperatures exceed 30° C about 254 days per year. Daytime temperatures average about eight to ten degrees warmer than nighttime temperatures in the Lake Victoria region, and temperatures are generally about fourteen degrees lower in the southwest. However, overcast conditions are frequent, particularly in the forest and mountain areas. Nights can be mild to warm, cooler at higher altitudes.

### **Clothing**

In order to stick to the eco-principles and avoid cultural shock, we advise our clients especially women, to put on relatively long dresses, skirts or shorts covering the knees at least. The tops should not show the belly bottom. The traditional Kitenge dress earns more respect and gives pride to our people. Otherwise, recommended for the field is light-weight, neutral-colored clothing that can be easily rinsed out and quickly dries-cottons or cotton blends. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants will help protect you from insects, thorny plants, and sunburn. Shorts will be appropriate for some occasions; long pants that convert into shorts by unzipping the legs are generally very useful and popular. A sweater or jacket is useful for cooler nights and early mornings. Bring a bathing suit, as there will be opportunities to swim at some of the lodges, as well as a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen. You should also bring raingear, including a small umbrella. Strong-soled shoes or hiking boots are essential, as we will spend a good amount of time on our feet. Dress is casual throughout. Laundry service will be available regularly during the tour (cost not included), which should help you in deciding what to pack. Making use of laundry service means we shall not need to bring as many items of clothing as you would otherwise. Alternatively, to lighten your load, you may consider bringing some clothes you have planned to

discard. These can be worn on tour and left behind; they will be well received by local people we meet on the tour.

### **Currency**

Uganda currency is the Shilling; at time of writing the exchange rate is approximately 2400UgShs for US\$1. Credit cards are not used in most hotels and lodges where we shall be staying. They are commonly used in a few shopping centers in the capital Kampala. ATM machines too are available in some towns, **but are not reliable!** Travelers' cheques can be changed for local currency at the airport upon arrival, **though not a reliable service too nowadays.** Thereafter only cash can be changed once on safari. Larger bills (\$50 and \$100) attract a significantly better rate of exchange than smaller bills or Traveler's cheques. Any local currency can be changed back to US Dollars at the airport on departure. US Dollars cash notes **MUST** be dated 2001 or newer and must be in good condition.

### **Documents**

A passport with a tourist visa valid for at least six months after your departure is required for United States and Canadian citizens to enter Uganda as well as a yellow fever vaccination certificate. You may not be required to obtain the tourist visa for Uganda prior to your departure, as it can be obtained upon arrival in Entebbe (cost at time of writing is \$50.). Citizens of other countries should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

It is very important that your passport and traveler's cheques be on your body at all times. We caution against carrying these items in your backpack or purse as petty crime is inevitable.

### **Equipment**

As avid birders, you are encouraged to carry your own birding equipment if you are to get the best memories of your tour. Amongst the equipment you may need are; a good pair of binocular, a spotting scope with its tripod and an MP3 playback for bird calls. Other equipment include an alarm clock, a water flask or canteen, a flashlight, camera and its batteries, small backpack for carrying essentials on day activities, insect repellent and sunscreen.

### **Health**

It is important to note that modern medical facilities and prescription drugs are not common in Uganda; apart from a few recommended hospitals of international standards like Nairobi and International hospital Kampala; so you should be in reasonable health to consider this tour.

Although food hygiene and quality is excellent and we rarely experience any serious stomach

problems, you may want to bring the remedy you prefer or are prescribed for an upset stomach. Moist toiletries are useful for keeping refreshed and clean during travelling and before packed lunches.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Malaria is present, including the chloroquine-resistant strain; most areas are at risk. There have been some recent changes in recommendations for malaria prophylaxis. Mefloquine (Lariam) is now the drug of choice in areas where chloroquine-resistant malaria is found. A single dose should be taken one week before the start of the tour, continued throughout the tour, and for four weeks after its conclusion. Mefloquine is available by prescription only, and may not be suitable for those using cardio-vascular medication; consult your physician.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. It is recommended that you only eat well-cooked meat and fish, served hot. Pork, salad, and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

### **Other**

Departure Tax – none

Electricity - 220-240 volt AC, with British type 13-amp 3-prong plugs.

Language - English is the official language and widely spoken.

Time – Uganda is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

### **Safety**

Uganda is considered safe and politically stable. Petty crime is minimal. The recent suicide bomb blasts in the city Kampala by the Al Shabab militia, posed threats but has also alerted security agencies across the globe, and security has been beefed up in all the corners of the country while several arrests have been done and put every situation under control. The Bwindi killings in 1999 gave Uganda a bad reputation; however a strong military presence in all the National parks has ensured that no further incidents will reoccur. All the parks we will be travelling to are well protected by the Ugandan army. We are constantly monitoring the security situation and will alter

the itinerary should any area be considered to pose a risk in any way. Ugandan people are incredibly welcoming, polite and friendly.

## Recommended Readings

### For Birds

Stevenson, Terry and John Fanshawe. A Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. Academic Press, 2001

### Other

Kefa M. Otiso, Culture and Customs of Uganda (Culture and Customs of Africa) 2006. (Book Available at Amazon Sales).

Philip Briggs with Andrew Roberts (6th Edition). Uganda, the Bradt Travel Guide 2010. A good guide to travelling in Uganda.

Finlay, Hugh, M. Fitzpatrick, M. Fletcher and N. Ray (5th Edition). East Africa Lonely Planet Publications. 2000. An excellent general reference work to travelling in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania.

Kingdon, Jonathan. The Kingdon Fieldguide to African Mammals Academic Press, 1999. This excellent book covers all of Africa's mammals. Larger mammals (squirrel size and larger) are covered to species level and smaller mammals to genus level. This is the recommended mammal book.

Spawls, Stephen, Kim Howell, Robert C. Drewes and James Ashe. A Field Guide to the Reptiles of East Africa Academic Press, 2001. A superb and comprehensive but rather bulky guide to all the species of reptiles occurring in Uganda.

Dharani N. Field Guide to the Common Trees and Shrubs of East Africa Struik, 2002. A newly published guide to the more common trees and shrubs found in East Africa