

## Bird Uganda Safaris

### Field report by Judith Mirembe

#### 16 Days' Birds and Mammals

It all started on the 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 with the arrival of Warren who was picked from the Airport. Early arrival will give one an opportunity to take a walk in the Botanical Gardens, Entebbe. Birding at the Botanical gardens is best done in the morning or late in the afternoon/evening. Our highlights were the Great Blue Turaco, Orange Weaver, Black-headed Gonolek and others. The family of Guereza Colobus swinging in the trees made the day even brighter. The rest of the group came in (Marie and Michael) and we were finally full.

Like the saying, goes; "Every Bird watcher's trip starts at Mabamba Bay" we set off for the Bay to look for the Shoebill. Mabamba holds about 95% chance of the rare and vulnerable Shoebill. We saw the Shoebill in less than 20minutes as we were in a canoe paddled by the local guides from the community. It was within a distance of 10m from the canoe allowing for good photographs. Other birds seen included; Purple Swamphen, lots of African Jacana, Black-shouldered Kite, Blue-breasted Bee-eater and others. At the end of each day, we all come together as a group to do the checklists as well as share any highlights and challenges faced earlier in the day.

The next day was a travelling day to Murchison Falls National Park characterised by stops for birds and photographic opportunities as well as lunch and bathrooms. On this day we saw; the Yellow-shouldered, Red-collared and Marsh Widowbirds, the beautiful White-crested Turaco and Black-headed Batis (Eastern race) and lots of Piapiacs. We arrived at Paraa Safari Lodge at about 4pm where we would spend the next 2 nights.

**Murchison Falls National Park:** We went for a morning game drive in the Murchison Falls National Park. The highlights of the game drive included; two Shoebills, Temminck's Courser, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater and Black-headed Lapwing at the Delta, an encounter of a pride of lions (about 9), a **pack** of about 12 Hyenas and 2 Jackals. In the afternoon we took a boat trip to the bottom of the spectacular falls where the national park derives its name. The highlights were the falls, Wire-tailed Swallow at the jetty, 2 individuals of the Giant Kingfisher and the Little Bittern seen during the boat ride.

**Top of the Falls :** We drove to the top of the falls as we were heading out of the park. At the falls we saw the Little Sparrowhawk, Red-winged Grey Warbler and later drove to Masindi Hotel through the escarpment stopping enroute for lunch. On our way we saw; the Cut-throat Finch in a flock of Queleas, Vitelline Masked Weaver and the Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

**Birding at the Royal Mile;** We enjoyed the quietness of the forest with calls of the Ituri Batis and Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, high canopy dwellers. The other highlights here included; the White-thighed Hornbill, Dwarf Kingfisher, Yellow-crested Woodpecker, Black Sawwing, Forest Flycatcher, Narina Trogon, Red-tailed Bristlebill in the nest and a variety of Greenbuls. We also came across some Chimps on our way to the Budongo.

## **Kibale National Park**

Kibale Guest Cottages was the perfect place to stay after a long drive from Masindi. The cottages are surrounded by the forest attracting the Yellow-spotted Barbet, Purple-headed Starling. The gardens attract tinkerbirds, sunbirds like the Bronze Sunbird as well as baboons as they cross to the next forest patch. Chimp tracking was the highlight at Kibale, Waren can confirm this. The other highlights included, the Blue-shouldered Robin Chat, Grey Apalis, Cassin's Flycatcher and Mountain Wagtail. The board walk on the Bigodi wetland brought us to a close view of the White-spotted Flufftail, a very shy bird.

**Queen Elizabeth National Park:** The congregations of birds at the Kazinga Channel seen during the boat cruise gave us opportunities to take great photographs. The 2 individuals of Papyrus Gonolek stole the show at the Katunguru Bridge, a truly stunning bird just like other Gonoleks. Exploring the Ishasha Sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park, known for tree climbing lions was highlighted by an individual of the tree climbing Lion not forgetting the African Cuckoo-Hawk.

**Bwindi Impenetrable National Park;** Gorilla Tracking is a once in a life time experience and was a true highlight for this park. Not forgetting to mention the birds like; the Many-coloured Bush-shrike, African Broadbill, Equatorial Akalat, Black Bee-eater, Bar-tailed Trogon, Shelley's Greenbul and many others. Staying at Ride for a Woman was a home away from home, as we had entertainment from the women that are empowered by the project and this was crowned by the excellent Chef, Moses with his mouth watering meals. On our last night, he stunned us with a "**Flambee**" as we witnessed him mix his recipes for our dinner.

We were now close to the end of our trip as we headed to Lake Mburo National Park. The highlights here were the Zebras, Elands, the Crested and Black-collared Barbets, Southern Black Flycatcher. Our exclusive boat ride at the lake gave us chances to have good views of the Shinning-blue Kingfisher and about 5 individuals of the African Finfoot in the open.

All good things come to an end and so did our wonderful 16 Days' Trip. We had a total of 381 species of birds. Great appreciation for the Bird Uganda Safaris Team

As told by Judith Mirembe (Lead Guide) and Davis (Driver Guide).