Kenya
Mega Birding Tour
24th March to 18th April 2020 (26 days)

This tour is the ultimate African birding and wildlife adventure: in twenty-six days of non-stop birding, we hope to see between 750 and 800 bird species, plus an incredible diversity of wildlife, superb scenery, wonderful lodges and tented camps, and super-friendly tribal people!

Our tour begins with an exploration of the lush Shimba Hills and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Here we will endeavor to find some of the rarest birds in Africa, including the diminutive Sokoke Scops Owl and Clarke’s Weaver. We then travel through both Tsavo West and East Parks, offering excellent game viewing and a huge bird list. The isolated Taita Hills, with its critically endangered species, will no doubt
be memorable, and we’ll search all elevations of Mount Kenya’s slopes for avian gems such as Bar-tailed Trogon and Abyssinian Ground Thrush. We then enter the true arid zone at Samburu-Shaba, where highlights may include Golden-breasted Starling and Vulturine Guineafowl. The dry woodlands of Lake Baringo are home to Jackson’s Hornbill and Somali Sparrow, while the famous Kakamega forest adds a West African element to our tour with Blue-headed Bee-eater and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye being notable targets. After exploring the papyrus swamps and moist woodlands along Lake Victoria, we finally enter the plains to visit arguably the most famous game reserve in the world, the fabulous Maasai Mara!

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Day 1: Nairobi to Shimba Hills. After arrival at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, you will be met by your Rockjumper Birding Tours leader. From here we will catch a connecting flight to Mombasa. In Mombasa, we will join our local driver guides and enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant. Thereafter we begin our mega birding tour in earnest as we drive to the nearby Shimba Hills Lodge. Here we visit the Shimba Hills National Park. This reserve protects a large tract of coastal forest and grasslands and was created to save the endangered and beautiful Sable Antelope; this is the only site in Kenya where this creature is still found. Special birds we will search for in this park and around the productive grounds of our lodge include flocks of top-knotted Crested Guineafowl, Red-necked Spurfowl, the lovely Fischer’s Turaco, Mottled and African Palm Swifts, Green Tinkerbird, Black-collared, Brown-breasted and Green Barbets, Yellow-throated and Pangani Longclaws, Uluguru Violet-backed and Plain-backed Sunbirds and Golden Palm Weaver.
Day 2: Shimba Hills to Watamu Bay. After early morning birding around the Shimba Hills Reserve we will travel to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. This protected reserve covers 420 square kilometers of coastal forest consisting of *Brachystegia* woodland, dense *Cynometra* forest and *Afzelia* lowland forest that offers some of the finest birding in East Africa. Birding in the forest can be difficult and perseverance is required to find the shyer forest inhabitants.

Skulkers such as the near-endemic Sokoke Pipit creep across the forest floor and are hard to see amongst the leaf-litter. The delicate East Coast Akalat is a shy understorey skulker and other key species include the endemic Clarke’s Weaver, almost totally restricted to this site, and the localized Amani Sunbird. Our local guide keeps track of day roosts of the near endemic Sokoke Scops Owl and seeing a pair of these charming little fellows is undoubtedly one of the highlights of birding in this forest. Both brown and red morphs occur and pairs often consist of each of these totally different looking birds. If we don’t find the owls at home we will stay after dark and wait for them to call. The evening sounds are exciting and we may encounter African Wood Owl, African Barred Owlet (the disjunctive local form sometimes split off as Sheffler’s Owlet), Fiery-necked Nightjar and several species of bats and galago’s.

Day 3: Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Sabaki River Mouth. Our early morning birding will be a return visit to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Whilst exploring the network of trails in the forest, we will look for mixed bird flocks. Some of the species found in these aggregations may include Green Malkoha, the highly sought-after Thick-billed Cuckoo, Fischer’s Turaco, Narina Trogon, Mombasa Woodpecker, Scaly-throated and Pallid Honeyguides, Green-headed Oriole, Sombre, Fischer’s and Lowland Tiny Greenbuls, the delightful Little Yellow Flycatcher, Black-headed Apalis, Eastern Nicator, Bearded Scrub Robin, Red-tailed Rufous Thrush, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Pale and Forest Batises, Retz’s and Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrikes, the attractive Four-colored Bushshrike and the uncommon Plain-backed Sunbird. Dead trees are favorite perches of many bird species and definitely worth checking for Green Tinkerbird, White-eared and Green Barbets, and raptors including Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Ayres’s Hawk-Eagle and Black and Little Sparrowhawks. Flocks of strange Böhm’s Spinetail and Ethiopian Swallow may be seen winging their way over the forest. Along the forest edge we may find the beautiful Green and Red-throated Twinspots and flocks of Red-backed Mannikin feeding amongst the grass seeds. The localized Scaly Babbler also occurs outside the forest.
Mammals we hope to see include Blue or Gentle Monkey, the diminutive Blue Duiker and the giant Golden-rumped Elephant-Shrew, a truly impressive creature. Our next port of call will be the Sabaki River mouth, an excellent birding site where we will be looking for Brown Noddy, Sooty and Grey-hooded Gulls, Swift, Lesser Crested, Sandwich, Roseate and Little Terns, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Terek Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Madagascar Pratincole and other waders. In the surrounding reedbeds, Fire-fronted and Zanzibar Red Bishops may stand out like blossoms and nearby grazed grasslands support the range restricted Malindi Pipit.

Day 4: Watamu Bay to Tsavo East National Park. After a final early morning birding session in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, we will depart with lunch boxes for Tsavo East NP. Checking large Baobab trees along the way could produce sightings of both Broad-billed Roller and Brown-headed Parrot. The roadside offers great birding, as well as a chance to see Swahili women in their traditional regalia. Raptors are also a feature and we will look for Egyptian, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed, Rippl's and Lappet-faced Vultures, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, African Hawk-Eagle, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, migrating Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, the majestic Bateleur, Pygmy Falcon and Eurasian Hobby. Other potential ticks include Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Little, White-throated, Blue-cheeked, Olive, European and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Lilac-breasted, Purple and European Rollers, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern Red-billed and Von der Decken’s Hornbills, Nubian, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, D’Amaud’s, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Red-winged and Flappet Larks, and Chestnut-headed and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks. Tonight we will stay at Voi Safari Lodge where we will search for Nubian and Slender-tailed Nightjars.

Day 5: Tsavo East to Tsavo West via the Taita Hills. After an early breakfast, we embark on a morning game drive towards the Taita Hills-Ngangao Forest. Mammals will be a feature of our drive and we could see Lion (these descended from the famous “man-eaters of Tsavo”), Cheetah, African Buffalo, Lesser Kudu, Maasai Giraffe and Burchell’s Zebra. The Tsavo complex is home to the largest population of African Elephant in Kenya (said to number over 7000) and a healthy population of Black Rhinoceros.

The Taita Hills also harbor three regional endemics, namely Taita Thrush, Taita Apalis and Taita White-eye. All of these birds are critically endangered. Other birds that we will
be on the lookout for include Augur Buzzard, Mottled and Alpine Swifts, White-necked Raven, Stripe-faced Greenbul, Orange Ground Thrush, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler and Sharpe’s Starling.

**Day 6: Tsavo West.** The famous Ngulia Safari Lodge is situated inside Tsavo West National Park and is perched on the rim of the Ndwе Escarpment, offering a vast panorama of the Tsavo Plains below. This area is well known as a migrant trap and we can expect to enjoy some superb birding on the grounds of the lodge. At certain times of the year, the lights of the hotel attract large numbers of Palaearctic passerines during their nocturnal migration. We will look out for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin, Thrush Nightingale, Northern, Isabelline and Pied Wheatears, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Lesser Grey, Red-backed and Isabelline Shrikes and a bevy of warblers that might include Marsh, Olive-tree, Barred, River, Upcher’s and the little known Basra Reed. We will also take time to visit the shores of Lake Jipe we will look for the localized Taveta Weaver, Zanzibar Red Bishop and African Reed and Lesser Swamp Warblers. We also have a chance of finding the reintroduced Black Rhinoceros in this area.

Game-watching and birding in Tsavo West NP will produce large numbers of new sightings which may include Somali Ostrich, Martial, Tawny and Long-crested Eagles, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Kori, Buff-crested, Black-bellied and Hartlaub’s Bustards, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, the rare and localised Friedmann’s Lark, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Tiny, Rattling and Winding Cisticolas, Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinias, African Grey, Pale and Spotted Flycatchers, Chinspot, Pygmy and Eastern Black-headed Batises, Rufous and Scaly Chatterers, White-bellied and Acacia Tits, Mouse-colored Penduline Tit, Amethyst, Scarlet-chested, Beautiful, Variable, Collared and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbirds, as well as the localized Tsavo Sunbird, now considered to be a separate species from the closely related Purple-banded Sunbird.

Other likely possibilities include Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Tropical and Slate-colored Boubous, Brubru, Black-backed and Pringle’s Puffbacks, Black-crowned, Brown-crowned and Three-streaked Tchagras, Rosy-patched, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, Northern White-crowned Shrike and White-crested Helmetshrike, Black-headed, African Golden and Eurasian Golden Oriole, both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Oxpeckers perched atop large animals, brilliant Golden-breasted, Greater Blue-eared, Rüppell's, Violet-backed, Magpie, Superb, Hildebrandt’s, Shelley’s and Fischer’s Starlings, Chestnut and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Yellow-spotted Petronia, White-browed

![Golden-breasted Starling by Matthew Matthiessen](image1)

![Jackson’s Widowbird by Cuan Rush](image2)
Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed and Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Village, Lesser and Vitelline Masked, Spectacled, Baglafecht, Chestnut and Red-headed Weavers, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-cheeked and Blue-capped Cordon-bleus, Purple Grenadier, Jameson’s Firefinch, Common, Crimson-rumped and Black-cheeked Waxbill, African and Grey-headed Silverbill, African Quail-Finch, Bronze Mannikin, Long-tailed Paradise and Straw-tailed Whydahs, and Cinnamon-breasted and Somali Buntings. Over 60 species of mammals occur in the park, including the scarce and elusive Lesser Kudu, and we will be treated to an ultimate African birding and big game experience today! Tonight we have a chance at finding a few of the numerous nightjars that forage around the lodge and species that we could encounter include Eurasian, Plain, Sombre and Donaldson-Smith’s.

**Day 7: Tsavo West NP to Nairobi.** This morning we will depart Tsavo West, continuing to look for any species that we may still need. After exiting the reserve we then head for Nairobi, passing through upland grasslands with open savannah. This area supports a good population of cisticolas and widowbirds including Pectoral-patch, Zitting, Desert, Tiny, Croaking and Ashy Cisticolas and Red-collared, White-winged, Jackson’s Widowbirds. Tonight will be spent in the capital of Kenya, Nairobi.

**Day 8: Nairobi to Thika.** We will depart after breakfast for birding along the Magadi Road south of Nairobi. Birds that we will be searching for here include Speckled Mousebird, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Spot-flanked Barbet, Lesser Striped Swallow, Capped Wheatear, Olive Thrush, African Pipit, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Eurasian Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Red-faced Crombec, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Collared and Variable Sunbirds, Abyssinian White-eye, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Spectacled Weaver, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Streaky Seed-eater and African Citril.

After birding the Magadi Road we will drive to the Thika area where additional, interesting birding awaits us. Along the Thika River we may find African Black Duck, Purple-crested Turaco, Mountain Wagtail, the localized Grey-olive Greenbul or the elusive African Finfoot. Other species to look out for in the Thika area include African Green Pigeon, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, White-headed Barbets, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Black-throated Wattle-eye and Green-headed Sunbird. At the Olorgasailie Prehistoric site, we can enjoy our lunch as we watch birds drink at a pond. Regular visitors include Red-billed Firefinch, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Cut-throat Finch, Southern Grosbeak-Canary and White-bellied Canary. This is the site which the Leakey’s made famous, after discovering remains of *Homo erectus*, a prehistoric hunter-gatherer. There is an excellent museum here which
displays many of the sub-fossils and artifacts originating from these early hominids. Thereafter, we will proceed back to Thika, birding along the way.

**Day 9: Thika to Lake Naivasha.** After an early morning bird walk and breakfast, we depart for Lake Naivasha. *En route* we will pass through Kieni Forest and the Kinangop grasslands. Kieni Forest holds a number of special birds and we hope to see Hartlaub’s Turaco, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Mountain Oriole, Placid Greenbul, Black-fronted Bushshrike, Waller’s and the scarce Abbott’s Starling and Montane White-eye. The Kinangop Plateau is an area of natural upland grasslands which are threatened by encroaching cultivation. Here we will look for the rare, endemic Sharpe’s Longclaw. More widespread species include Augur Buzzard, the magnificent Grey Crowned Crane, Black-winged Lapwing, African Stonechat, Tinkling Cisticola and Long-tailed Widowbird.

Arriving at Lake Naivasha in the late afternoon we will drive around the edge of the lake and through the woodlands. Birds that may be seen here include Southern Pochard, Black and Goliath Herons, Saddle-billed Stork, African Snipe, Three-banded Plover, Long-toed Lapwing, White-fronted Bee-eater, Northern Pied and Black-loomed Babblers, Red-fronted and White-headed Barbets, Brown-backed Honeybird, Anteater Chat, Banded Martin, Grey-rumped Swallow, the lovely Grey-capped Warbler, White-winged Widowbird and Brimstone Canary.

**Day 10: Lake Naivasha to Mt Kenya via Aberdares National Park.** After an early bird walk and a boat ride on Lake Naivasha, we will depart for the Aberdares National Park. This park protects pristine montane grasslands and forests. Whilst exploring this scenic area we may see Mountain Buzzard, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Bronzy, Malachite, the high altitude Scarlet-tufted and the spectacular Golden-winged Sunbirds and the endemic Aberdare Cisticola. Forest patches harbour Moustached Tinkerbird, Doherty’s Bushshrike, Montane White-eye and Slender-billed Starling. We then continue to our accommodations at Mount Kenya. The lodge grounds here are excellent for mammals and offer opportunities for Suni, Giant Forest Hog, African Buffalo and four species of mongoose.

**Day 11: Mount Kenya.** Today we will have a full day to bird the slopes of Mount Kenya, as we ascend to the Meteorological Station. If the weather is clear we shall awaken to views of the snow-capped summit of Mount Kenya (5199m). Birds that we will be
targeting in this area include Black Sparrowhawk, the magnificent Crowned Eagle, Jackson’s Francolin, African Olive and Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons, Red-fronted Parrot, Scarce Swift, Crowned and Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, beautiful Bartailed Trogon, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Moustached and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Black Saw-wing, Yellow-whiskered, Slender-billed and Olive-breasted Greenbuls, Moorland Chat, White-starred Robin, Cape Robin-Chat, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Hunter's Cisticola, Chestnut-throated, Grey and Black-throated Apalises, White-browed Crombec, White-bellied Tit, Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Waller’s Starling, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Brown-capped Weaver, Yellow-bellied and Black-headed Waxbills, the secretive Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Thick-billed Seedeater, Yellow-crowned Canary and, if we are lucky, Oriole Finch. Mammals we may see include the beautiful Sykes’ Monkey and Guereza Colobus. At night we should hear the eerie screams of the Tree Hyrax.

Day 12: Mount Kenya to Samburu. After a morning bird walk we will depart for Samburu/Buffalo Springs Game Reserve continuing to bird the highlands on the way down. Below the escarpment the habitat changes dramatically and dry acacia bushveld is dominant. Birds occurring in this habitat include Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Gabar Goshawk, Spotted Thick-knee, Somali and Three-banded Coursers, Chestnut-bellied, Black-faced and Lichtenstein’s Sandgrouse, Red-bellied Parrot, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Rufous Chatterer and Somali Bunting. In the evening we will arrive at the oasis of Samburu Serena Lodge.

Day 13: Samburu to Shaba Game Reserve. After breakfast we will carry picnic lunch boxes and embark on a full day birding in the Samburu and Buffalo Springs Game Reserve. This area holds a
number of north-east African dry country species shared with Ethiopia and Somalia. We will be on the lookout for the incredible Vulturine Guineafowl, Secretarybird, Greater Kestrel, Red-necked and Lanner Falcons, the localized White-headed Mousebird, Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Somali Bee-eater, Pygmy Batis, African Bare-eyed Thrush, Pink-breasted, Red-winged and Singing Bush Larks, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Fischer’s and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Larks, Acacia Tit, Northern Brownbul, the stunning Golden Pipit, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Ashy Cisticola, Grey Wren-Warbler, Banded Parisoma, Spotted Palm Thrush, Fischer’s and Golden-breasted Starlings, Hunter’s, Marico, Shining and Black-bellied Sunbirds, Chestnut Weaver, Donaldson-Smith’s Sparrow-Weaver, Black-capped Social Weaver and Reichenow’s Seedeater.

Mammals that we will be on the lookout for include the bizarre Gerenuk, Beisa Oryx, Grevy’s Zebra, Reticulated Giraffe, Lesser Kudu, Klipspringer, Kirk’s Dik-dik, Angola Pied Colobus, Cheetah, Leopard and Lion. We then head to the nearby Shaba National Reserve. Dinner and overnight today will be at Sarova Shaba Lodge set inside Shaba National Reserve. This area was made famous by the late Joy Adamson and her lioness Elsa and is often referred to as "Born Free Country". Located on the banks of the Ewaso Ngiro River, our lodge offers an unexpected luxury found deep in the African bush.

**Day 14: Shaba to Naro Moru.** Early birding within the campsite and along the river is very productive and we will be looking for Striated Heron, Hamerkop, Little Sparrowhawk, Giant and Grey-headed Kingfishers, Grant’s Wood Hoopoe, Northern Puffback and Grey-headed Bushshrike. After breakfast we will visit an area where we have the opportunity to search for the extremely range-restricted William’s Lark.

After a final game and birding drive in Shaba, we will head back into the highlands and enjoy a packed lunch at Timau. On the way we will visit the Meru-Imenti Forest to look for Hartlaub’s Turaco, Narina Trogon, White-eared Barbet, Tullberg’s Woodpecker, Kenrick’s and Black-bellied Starlings, Grey Apalis, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher and Yellow-bellied Greenbul. Roadside birding could produce Jackson’s Widowbird in natural grasslands and Dusky Turtle Dove and Yellow-crowned Canary on the telegraph lines. Our destination for the night is Naro Moru River Lodge, a charming small lodge built alongside a stream on the slopes of Mt Kenya.

**Day 15: Naro Moru to Lake Nakuru.** Early birding in the 100-acre lodge gardens will produce good numbers of forest edge bird species and we will target any species we might not have found on our earlier

Later we depart for the Solio plains in search of grassland species including Kori, Denham’s, Black-bellied and White-bellied Bustards, migrant Montagu’s Harrier, Amur Falcon and Capped Wheatear. Further on down the road we make a stop at a quarry to look for a roost of the rare Cape Eagle-Owl, this local race is sometimes split off as Mackinder’s Eagle-Owl. Birding along the way, we will visit the impressive Thompson Falls. Thereafter, we will drop down the eastern rim of the Great Rift Valley and arrive in Lake Nakuru National Park in time for an evening game drive. Originally declared a national park because of its vast flamingo population, the park is also known for supporting populations of both species of Rhinoceros. The levels of the blue-green alkaline waters of the lake vary and this, with other accompanying environmental changes causes considerable variation in the flamingo population. However, when they are present en masse the lake turns a gorgeous rosy pink and the Lesser Flamingos usually form a “pink wall” along the entire length of the lake. Our lodge offers a unique vantage point overlooking this spectacle.

Day 16: Lake Nakuru to Lake Baringo. After breakfast, we will enjoy a morning game and bird safari in Lake Nakuru National Park. African Buffalo, Burchell’s Zebra, glamorous Rothschild’s Giraffe, several antelope species and both Lion and Leopard may be found. Besides the flamingos, other waterbirds abound and we can expect to find good numbers of Great White Pelican, cormorants, egrets, ibis, ducks, African Spoonbill, the regal African Fish Eagle and noisy groups of Pied Kingfisher. Further species we may encounter include Black-headed Lapwing, Coqui and Hildebrandt’s Francolins, White-fronted Bee-eater, Green Wood Hoopoe, Red-throated Wyrmeeck, Red-rumped and Mosque Swallows, Mocking Cliff Chat, Little Rock Thrush, Arrow-marked Babbler, the scarce Grey-crested Helmetshrike, Rüppell’s Starling and Speke’s Weaver.

Thereafter we depart for Lake Baringo, set in dry rocky country. Our afternoon will be spent birding Lake Baringo Country Club’s beautiful grounds, the surrounding shoreline, Baringo Cliffs and targeting various owl species. Birds that we will be searching include Verreaux’s Eagle-Owl, Northern White-faced Owl and Greyish Eagle-Owl, Hemprich’s and Jackson’s Hornbills, African Black and Nyanza Swift, Mocking Cliff Chat, the quirky Bristle-crowned Starling, Red-fronted Apalis, Abyssinian White-eye, Fan-tailed Raven, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Black-throated Barbet, Pygmy Batis, the aptly named Beautiful Sunbird, Little,
Day 17: Lake Baringo and Kapedo. Today we plan to visit the Kapedo area. This region lies to the north of Lake Baringo and is an area of semi-desert. Special birds here include Three-banded Courser, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Crested Lark, Pied and Isabelline Wheatear, Somali Fiscal, Magpie Starling, White-billed Buffalo Weaver and the scarce Somali Sparrow. Kapedo is unfortunately not always accessible as bad roads and flooding can hamper conditions on occasion, should this be the case then additional time will be spent birding in the superb Baringo area. Over 470 bird species have been recorded in the general Baringo area and we can expect to generate a massive bird list, especially with the help of local lads who have become expert bird guides and stake out some really special birds.

Day 18: Lake Baringo to Kitale. This morning after breakfast we will depart through the scenic Kerio Valley often lively with bird activity, and up the eastern escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. Birds that we could see along the way include Grey Kestrel, Lizard Buzzard, the stunning White-crested Turaco, Green-backed Eremomela, Pale and the rare Gambaga Flycatcher, Silverbird, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Golden-breasted Bunting, Yellow-billed Shrike, Double-toothed Barbet and Hemprich’s Hornbill. Later in the evening we will arrive at Kitale Club for a nights stay.

Day 19: Kitale to Kakamega Forest. After breakfast and morning birding, we head to the famous Kakamega Forest. This is long drive and will take u most of the day. We expect to arrive at Kakamega Forest in the late afternoon and we will bird the grounds of the peaceful Rondo Retreat Centre. Kakamega Forest is one of Africa’s most famous birding forests and it supports a number of species that can only be found again in Central or West Africa.

Day 20: Kakamega Forest. Today we will enjoy a full day of birding at Kakamega Forest. Our targets include Crowned Eagle, Western Banded Snake Eagle, African Goshawk, the secretive White-spotted Flufftail, which we will make a concerted effort to see, Grey Parrot, the giant Great Blue and Black-billed Turaco, African Emerald and Black Cuckoos, Green Malkoha, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, the incredibly beautiful and quite secretive Blue-headed Bee-eater, Grey-throated, Yellow-billed, Yellow-spotted and Hairy-breasted Barbets, Thick-billed Honeyguide and Cassin's Honeybird, Brown-eared, Buff-spotted and Yellow-crested Village, Golden-backed and Northern Masked Weavers, and Yellow-crowned and Northern Red Bishops.
Woodpeckers, African Broadbill, African Blue Flycatcher, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Petit’s and Purple-throated Cuckooshrikes, Mackinnon's Shrike, Pink-footed Puffback, Lühders and Bocage's Bushshrike, African Shrike-flycatcher, Brown-throated, Chestnut, Jameson’s and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eyes (the last two mentioned species are absolute stunners!), White-tailed Rufous Thrush, Brown-chested Alethe, Stuhlmann’s Starling, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, a bevy of greenbuls including Kakamega, Ansorge's, Placid, Slender-billed, Honeyguide, the rare Toro Olive and Joyful Greenbul, White-chinned Prinia, Buff-throated Apalis, Green Hylia, Uganda Woodland Warbler (much easier to find here than in Uganda!), skulking Black-faced Rufous Warbler, the very localized Turner’s Eremomela, the beautiful Grey-chested Babbler, Scaly-breasted and Brown Illadopsis, Dusky Tit, White-breasted Nigrita, Red-headed Bluebill, Black-crowned Waxbill, Black-billed, Vieillot's Black, Dark-backed and Brown-capped Weaver, Red-headed Malimbe and Eastern Olive Sunbird. Mammals we might find include the long-tailed Blue Monkey, Red-tailed Monkey and regal Guereza Colobus. After a very exciting day of forest birding we will end the day at Rondo Retreat Centre.

Day 21: Kakamega to Busia. We depart after breakfast with lunch boxes for Busia, on the Ugandan border. We will first stop and bird in degraded forests and cultivated areas along the road. These are nevertheless very productive for birds and we will look for Ross's Turaco, Senegal Coucal, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Double-toothed Barbet, Little Greenbul, Yellow-throated Leaflove, Moustached Grass Warbler, Chubb’s Cisticola, Olive-bellied and Copper Sunbirds, Thick-billed Weaver and Bar-breasted Firefinch.

Birding stops at the Mungatsi and Mumias grasslands might produce Western Marsh Harrier, the uncommon Compact Weaver, Cardinal Quelea, Black and Black-winged Red Bishops, Marsh and Yellow-shouldered Widowbirds and Fawn-breasted Waxbill. At Mumias the surrounding woodland patches support populations of Red-headed Lovebird, Eastern Plantain-eater and Speckle-breasted Woodpecker. Nearby is Kenya’s only regular site for the cute Rock Pratincole. Thereafter, we continue on to the town of Busia for an overnight stay.

Day 22: Busia to Kisumu. After breakfast we continue birding the area around Busia and
after lunch will then depart for Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria. Birding stopovers along the way include Lake Road, the Busia grasslands and the Papyrus swamps at Sio Port and Yala. Birds found at the grasslands include the globally threatened Great Snipe and other species we may see include Harlequin Quail, Kurrichane Buttonquail, Crowned, African Wattled, Spur-winged and Blacksmith Lapwings.

**Day 23: Kisumu to the Maasai Mara (Kichwa Tembo).** This morning, we will enjoy an early bird walk at the Dunga Swamps (Hippo pools) where potential ticks include White, Woolly-necked and Abdim’s Stork, African Openbill, Sacred and Glossy Ibis, Knob-billed Duck, White-faced and Fulvous Whistling Duck, Common Buzzard, Wahlberg’s and Booted Eagles, Allen’s Gallinule, Lesser Moorhen, Spotted Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Green Sandpiper. We will also take time to bird the papyrus swamps for Little Bittern, Blue-headed Coucal, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Greater Swamp and the localized White-winged Warbler, Winding and the look-alike Carruther’s Cisticola, Swamp Flycatcher, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Red-chested Sunbird, the rare Papyrus Yellow Warbler, stunning Papyrus Gonolek and the seldom seen Papyrus Canary.

Later on we depart for the world famous Maasai Mara with lunch boxes, allowing the opportunity for birding on the way. We plan to arrive in the Maasai Mara in time to enjoy a birding and big game safari en route to our luxury tented safari camp where we spend two nights. As we head southwards, the countryside becomes drier and less undulating and we’ll begin to come across the tall and proud Maasai cattle-herders.

**Day 24: Maasai Mara (Kichwa Tembo).** The Mara, as it is affectionately called, is Kenya’s most well-known reserve, and it boasts an astonishing amount of game. Unfenced, it is bounded in the east by the Ngama Hills, in the west by the Oloololo or Siria Escarpment and to the south by the vast Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. Famously, the Mara is the northerly end of the Great Migration, that unrivalled primeval surge of wildebeest, zebra and antelope that sweeps in from Tanzania’s Serengeti to Kenya’s Maasai Mara as the Tanzanian grass starts to fail. Although we will not experience the migration at this time of year, we can still expect to see first class African big game. The impressive black-maned Mara Lions are possibly the stars of the show,
however, Cheetah, Leopard, Spotted Hyena and others are present in good numbers. Other animals we can expect to see include African Elephant, African Buffalo, Maasai Giraffe, Burchell’s Zebra, Hippopotamus, Impala, Waterbuck, Topi, Kongoni, Grant’s and Thompson’s Gazelle, Banded Mongoose and Warthog.

Not only is this a great place in which to find game, but also the wide golden-green savannas, dotted with Acacia trees, make it ideal for photography. The Mara is ravishingly beautiful and offers long, undisturbed views and utterly dramatic panoramas. As for the birding, the Mara is also world-renowned. New species we may find include Rufous-bellied Heron, Temminck’s Courser, Scaly Francolin, Black Coucal, Schalow’s Turaco, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, D’Arnaud’s Barbet (local form sometimes split as Usambiro Barbet), Green-backed and African Grey Woodpecker, Flappet and White-tailed Larks, Rosy-throated Longclaw, Long-billed Pipit, Sooty Chat, Northern Black Flycatcher, Trilling, Stout, Croaking and Long-tailed Cisticolas, Green-capped Eremomela, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Red-throated Tit, Swahili Sparrow and Yellow Bishop.

Day 25: Maasai Mara (Siana Springs). We bid goodbye to Kichwa Tembo after breakfast and head across the plains to Siana Springs on the eastern edge of the National Reserve. We will certainly enjoy further big game and bird sightings en route. This section of the park will give us better chances of finding Double-banded Courser, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Spotted Eagle-Owl, African Black Swift, Athi Short-toed Lark, Grey-capped Social Weaver and Magpie Shrike. We will spend the night at a luxury tented camp at the base of the Ngama Hills.

Day 26: Maasai Mara to Nairobi and departure. After breakfast we will depart on a final morning game drive before making our way out of this vast wilderness and reluctantly back to Nairobi. Along the way, we will stop at the Limuru Ponds, a seasonal wetland that fills when there have been sufficient rains. This site supports a good selection of duck species including Hottentot Teal, White-backed and Maccoa Duck and a variety of waders. We plan to arrive in Nairobi in the evening for our final dinner and later transfer to airport for our home flights.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to dinner on day 26;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings as stated in the itinerary;
- Ground transportation in safari-style 4x4 minibuses;
- Reserve Entrance Fees;
• Gratuities for local guides and services; and
• All guiding services.

The tour fee does not include:
• ANY airfares (see above);
• Visa fees;
• Optional excursions not mentioned in the itinerary;
• Optional guided forest walk at Mount Kenya
• Beverages;
• Special gratuities; and
• Telephone calls, laundry or other items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:** The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

**Tipping:** As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

**Special Notes:**

- Our Mega tours are fast-paced birding adventures designed for the dedicated lister and serious birder. The focus of the tour is to see as many of the endemics and area specials as possible in the time given. In order to cover the route needed to maximize the species list we stay for a single night only at most sites. This tour is not suitable for those with a casual interest in birds or those who do not enjoy a fast paced and demanding tour.
- In order to cover the variety of sites in this large country we will have to cover a lot of ground and as a result there is a lot of driving on this tour. Furthermore, in the areas with big game we will be confined to the vehicles.
- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kgs (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg’s (18lb) for hand luggage.
Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of range from comfortable to rather luxurious. There is no camping on this trip.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:
This tour does not include any airfares. The tour will depart from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO) on the morning of day 1 of the tour and it is advised that you arrive the day before the tour starts. The tour will conclude in the early evening of day 26 in Nairobi.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:
Nairobi International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO), in Kenya is the main port of arrival and exit for this tour. Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.