

# **KENYA BIRDS AND WILDLIFE**

## **OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 18, 2010**

### **MASAI MARA EXTENSION**

#### **NOVEMBER 17-22, 2010**

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*Kenya is well known for its great concentrations of wildlife protected in an excellent system of parks and reserves. What many people don't realize is that it is one of the great countries of the world for birdwatching. Over 1100 species, representing nearly all of the African bird families, have been recorded! Nowhere else on the continent can one see such a wide variety of birds in a small, friendly country. The emphasis of this tour will be on observing the birds, and the itinerary has been planned to include all major habitats. Limited to only six participants per vehicle, everyone has a window seat. This is the African birding trip of a lifetime!*

*Birdwatching in Kenya is a delight. As different as flamingos and weavers, Hammerkops and turacos, the birds are often surprisingly abundant, tame and easy to see. In many areas it is not unusual to record over 100 species in a day, even in the semi-arid bush. Good habitat is extensive and made easily accessible by an extensive road system. Comfortable facilities for touring, good food and lodging, and a choice of good field guides add to the pleasure. Each region that we visit has its specialties, and by the end of the trip we will have seen well over 500 species and gained an understanding of the complex bird communities of Africa, so completely different from our own.*

*Prominent geographic features dominate bird distribution in Kenya. Extensive highlands culminating in Mount Kenya are split down the middle by the Great Rift Valley in its narrowest stretch. Volcanic masses rise like islands from the vast arid plains of the north and east. These extremes are mellowed by sparkling lakes and the verdant Kakamega rainforest in the Lake Victoria basin. This is birding in spectacular surroundings!*

*Game-watching will not be forgotten as we visit some of Kenya's top reserves -- Samburu/Buffalo Springs Reserves, Nairobi and Lake Nakuru National Parks, and the Masai Mara (optional extension). Each has a wonderful variety of interesting mammals, from large-to-small. A night at a treetop lodge offers a unique opportunity to observe some of the shy forest dwellers as they come to drink. Three full days in the best big-game country in Kenya, the Masai Mara region, will be offered as an optional extension at the end of the tour, not to be missed if at all possible. Ecologically this is the northern extension of the famed Serengeti ecosystem, and the Mara is simply spectacular for both its wildlife and scenery. It is often the only site on the route at which we find lion and cheetah.*

*The following pages will give a brief sketch of the areas we visit and mention over 200 examples of birds we should see. What we cannot possibly do is list everything we will see and experience, nor can we predict the wonderful surprises that highlight any African safari. Nor can we adequately convey the intense feelings that make almost every visitor to Kenya want to return.*

## Kenya Birds and Wildlife, Page 2

**October 31-November 1, Days 1-2: USA to Europe with connections to Nairobi.** Flights depart the USA on the evening of October 31 and arrive in Europe early the following morning, connecting with flights to Nairobi arriving later that evening. Upon arrival in Nairobi and clearing customs and immigration, we will transfer to our hotel, a new and comfortable facility not far from the international airport.

NIGHTS: Day 1 on Aircraft; Day 2 Ole Sereni Hotel, Nairobi

**November 2, Day 3: Nairobi National Park.** Today we will have a full day to explore the varied habitats of Nairobi National Park, just a short distance from our hotel. This should be an exciting way to get over the jet lag and onto the proper time schedule. Much of the park is open grassland (the "classic" Africa) and large birds are conspicuous. Here we may find our first Ostrich, Egyptian Goose, Helmeted Guineafowl, Black-headed Heron, Marabou Stork, White-backed Vulture, Bataleur, Long-crested Eagle, Secretary-bird or Gray Crowned-Crane, some of the most spectacular birds of the continent. "Bush" birds are numerous in the strips of acacia woodland along the Athi River, and while learning some of the more common species we may find such tougher ones as Spot-flanked Barbet, Black Cuckoo-Shrike, Red-throated Tit, Singing Cisticola, Moustached Grass-Warbler, Crimson-rumped Waxbill and Holub's Golden-Weaver. A final drive across the plains may produce a bustard, White-browed Coucal, Little Bee-eater, larks, Hildebrandt's Starling, Long-tailed Fiscal or Yellow-throated Longclaw. We will also get an introduction to the mammals of East Africa here, for the park is home to a good variety of the smaller game animals.

NIGHT: Ole Sereni Hotel, Nairobi

**November 3, Day 4: To Mountain Lodge.** Our "safari" (meaning "journey" in Kiswahili) begins by traveling north from Nairobi toward Mount Kenya, a massive snow-capped mountain astride the equator. Our first stop will be at the Blue Posts Hotel in Thika, where amidst the abundant trees and flowers we will find a good variety of the typical garden birds of upland Kenya, such as Hadada Ibis; Black Kite; Red-eyed and Laughing doves; Little Swift; Speckled Mousebird; Common Fiscal; Pied Crow; White-bellied Tit; Common Bulbul; Tawny-flanked Prinia; Yellow-breasted Apalis; White-eyed Slaty-Flycatcher; Olive Thrush; African Pied Wagtail; Streaky Seedeater; Bronze Mannikin and Baglact Weaver. Less common, but as readily located here as anywhere, are African Green Pigeon, White-headed Barbet, honeyguides, Mountain Wagtail and several sunbirds. From here we pass through the tidy farms of the Kikuyu people to the lower flanks of the mountain.

A night in the treetops is a must for any Kenya tour. This afternoon we will arrive at Mountain Lodge, an attractive lodge overlooking a mineral lick in the Mt. Kenya forest. In the evening and during the night the shy forest animals come to drink, perhaps including elephant, buffalo, bushbuck, hyena, genet and mongoose. The birdlife around the lodge is equally spectacular and the balcony allows easy viewing into the forest. Our night here should be an exciting one.

NIGHT: Serena Mountain Lodge

**November 4, Day 5: Mt. Kenya region to Samburu.** After awakening in the treetops, we will concentrate on spotting the birds of the surrounding montane rainforest and scrub. Many are limited to the higher elevations, and here we may see the Black Sparrowhawk, Mountain Buzzard, Delegorgue's and Rameron pigeons, Red-fronted Parrot, Hartlaub's Turaco, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill (big and noisy), Rueppell's Robin-Chat, Black Sawwing, Eastern Mountain-Greenbul, Hunter's Cisticola, Black-throated Apalis, Cape Wagtail, Golden-winged Sunbird, and Cape Canary, among others.

From the cool mountain forests, our route today then leads past rolling wheat fields to the north flank of Mount Kenya, where suddenly the vast Northern Frontier Province unfolds far below us. The road quickly descends to arid plains and the frontier guard post at Isiolo, beyond which lies the famous Buffalo Springs/Samburu Game Reserves. We will have dropped 5500 feet in elevation and traversed an incredible range of habitats during the day. The modern lodge at Samburu is built amidst riverine woodland, and has a wealth of birds and small mammals around the grounds.

NIGHT: Samburu Serena Lodge

**November 5-6, Days 6-7: Samburu-Buffer Springs Reserves.** We will have two full days to explore the Samburu/Buffer Springs Reserves, the most accessible part of the rugged Northern Frontier. This land of adventure is populated by nomadic herdsman, a variety of animals large and small, and a surprising numbers of birds. Little-known species of the Somali sub-region nest along the dry watercourses, while the mysterious mountain ranges that rise above the dry plains are barely explored. The Uaso Nyiro River and its fringing vegetation assure a continual supply of life-giving water for those creatures that need it. Near-desert conditions prevail away from the river and the organisms existing here survive long periods without water. Doum palms, contorted acacias, rocky hills and termite mounds add relief to the open landscape. This is indeed a land of enchantment, reminiscent of the American Southwest.

The abundance of birds in the semi-arid bush is a phenomenon of African birding, and Samburu amply demonstrates this. Typical bush species are common here and easy to see, including Eastern Chanting-Goshawk; Crested Francolin; Buff-crested Bustard; Spur-winged Lapwing; Black-faced Sandgrouse; African Mourning and Namaqua doves; White-bellied Go-away-bird; Eurasian Hoopoe; Abyssinian Scimitarbill; Red-billed, Eastern Yellow-billed and Von der Decken's hornbills; Nubian Woodpecker; Fork-tailed Drongo; Taita Fiscal; White-rumped Shrike; Brubru; Slate-colored Boubou; Spotted Morning-Thrush; Northern Crombec; Banded Warbler; Rufous Chatterer; Fawn-colored Lark; Parrot-billed and Chestnut sparrows; Red-billed and White-headed buffalo-weavers; White-browed Sparrow-Weaver (their conspicuous nests seem to be in every tree!); Kenya Violet-backed Sunbird; and many others.

Less widespread birds that are usually present include Secretary-bird, Kori Bustard, Water Thick-knee; Red-bellied Parrot; White-headed Mousebird; Somali Bee-eater; Red-and-yellow Barbet; Rosy-patched Bushshrike; Golden-breasted, Fischers's and Magpie starlings; Northern Brownbul; Pink-breasted Lark; Golden Pipit; Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-Weaver; Black-capped Social-Weaver; and Somali Bunting. Many of these species have ranges restricted to the dry bush country of the Horn of Africa. Raptors ranging in size from the minute Pygmy Falcon to the massive Martial Eagle hunt the area, and flocks of Vulturine and Helmeted guinea-fowl, sandgrouse, doves and finches make their way to water daily. Special mammals of the dry Somali region are also found here: the endangered Grevy's zebra (largest of the wild horses), reticulated giraffe, Beisa oryx, the strange gerenuk (giraffe-antelope) and the diminutive dik-dik. Elephant are a frequent sight, and this is one of the best places in Kenya to see leopard, the most secretive of the large predators.

NIGHTS: Samburu Serena Lodge

**November 7, Day 8: Samburu to Naro Moru.** Birding our way out of Samburu this morning, we will climb back up into the valley between Mount Kenya and the Aberdares to Naro Moru, where the lower edge of the mountain forest meets the valley grasslands. The pleasant lodge here is right on the banks of a shady trout stream frequented by African Black Duck, Giant Kingfisher and a pair of Mountain Wagtails. Ornamental plantings create a riot of color--and attract up to eight species of sunbirds, among them the stunning Tacazze. Along the edge of the forest and amidst the ancient Podocarpus trees a typical assortment of highland species is to be found, such as African Harrier-Hawk, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Crowned Hornbill, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike, Tropical Boubou, Chin-spot Batis, Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling, African Dusky Flycatcher, Brown-backed Scrub-Robin, Broad-ringed White-eye, Yellow Bishop and Purple Grenadier. Nearby grasslands are home to the spectacular Long-tailed Widowbird, Crowned Lapwing, and several larks and pipits.

NIGHT: Naro Moru River Lodge

**November 8, Day 9: Naro Moru to Lake Nakuru.** The extensive grounds of the lodge at Naro Moru are well worth birding again this morning before continuing across the heavily-settled highlands to spectacular Thomson's Falls, from where we drop down steep hills to enter the Great Rift Valley for the first time. Our destination is Lake Nakuru, the first national park in Africa set aside for the conservation of birdlife. One of the great alkaline lakes of the Rift Valley, Nakuru is most famous for its flamingos. Their numbers fluctuate, but up to one million Lessers are sometimes present, an unforgettable spectacle. The lake also provides safe feeding

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and loitering grounds for other waterbirds, including Great White Pelican, Cape Teal, Black-headed Heron, Sacred Ibis, African Spoonbill, Yellow-billed and Marabou storks, Pied Avocet, Kittlitz's Sand-Plover, Gray-headed Gull and Palearctic shorebirds. Grasslands around the lake support introduced white rhino, a few black rhino (rarely seen), many buffalo, and large herds of waterbuck, while the extensive yellowbark woodlands harbor a healthy population of leopard, and a rich avifauna that includes Crowned Eagle (with luck!), Hildebrandt's Francolin, cuckoos, Rufous-necked Wryneck, Bearded Woodpecker, African Paradise Flycatcher, Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike, Black-crowned Tchagra, Arrow-marked Babbler and more. Our lodge for the night is set amidst the acacias on a slope above the lake.

NIGHT: Lion Hill Lodge, Lake Nakuru

**November 9, Day 10: Nakuru to Lake Baringo.** After a full morning enjoying the waterbird spectacle and rich woodlands of Lake Nakuru National Park, we drive a short distance up the Rift Valley to Lake Baringo. The terrain becomes increasingly drier and covered in dense thornbush until the lake is reached. Set near a line of high cliffs with acacia groves at their base, Baringo provides an oasis for a great variety of birds. The lodge is on the lakes' shore with an abundance of birds right around the grounds. At night hippos are often heard grunting and occasionally even come up onto the lawn to feed.

NIGHT: Lake Baringo Club

**November 10-11, Days 11-12: Lake Baringo area.** We spend two full days birding around Lake Baringo, including a boat trip one morning. Waterbirds are always conspicuous here, although the species composition and numbers vary a great deal with the water level. Among the birds often present are White-faced Whistling-Duck, Intermediate Egret, Goliath Heron (immense!), Purple and Squacco herons, Hammerkop, shorebirds, and Collared Pratincole. Weavers abound, including the Northern Masked-Weaver and Orange Bishop, two species not found elsewhere in Kenya. Bush birds are remarkably abundant in the dry acacia woodland and scrub around the lake, and here we will search for Gabar Goshawk; Blue-naped Mousebird; African Pygmy-Kingfisher; Rufous-crowned Roller; Jackson's Hornbill; Black-throated and D'Arnaud's barbets; Red-fronted Tinkerbird; Lesser Honeyguide; Pygmy Batis; Rueppell's Glossy-Starling; Red-backed Scrub-Robin; Buff-bellied Warbler; Yellow-bellied Eremomela; Mouse-colored Penduline Tit; Green-winged Pytilia; Blue-capped Cordonbleu; Cut-throat; Hunter's and Beautiful sunbirds; and White-bellied Canary, to mention but a few. The spectacular cliffs nearby provide a specialized nesting habitat for Hemprich's Hornbill, Fan-tailed Raven, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Brown-tailed Chat, and the scarce Bristle-crowned Starling. This is a locality where over 100 species can easily be seen in a day.

With the help of the local "bird-boys," we will also look for several nocturnal species. Slender-tailed Nightjars are usually to be found, Black-headed Lapwings emerge from the bush at dusk, and with luck we will find a Three-banded Courser or Spotted Thick-knee. Verreaux's Eagle-Owl and Northern White-faced Owl sometimes hunt around the lodge lights after things quiet down. Another afternoon we will visit scenic Lake Bogoria, known for its flamingos, geothermal activity, and greater kudu (a magnificent large antelope).

NIGHTS: Lake Baringo Club

**November 12, Day 13: Baringo to Kakamega.** Western Kenya, with its wide altitudinal range and high rainfall, is home to many species of birds not found elsewhere in the country. As we travel across this region today we will make birding stops at tall acacia woodland, marshy streams, and rich farmlands. Our destination is the Kakamega Forest region. This superb mid-elevation rainforest is unique in Kenya, home to a varied and colorful avifauna more typical of Central Africa. We will have two full days to bird this region, with our headquarters at a wonderfully peaceful retreat center located near some of the best remaining forest. Many of the special birds of the area can be found amidst the beautifully landscaped grounds.

NIGHT: Rondo Retreat Center, Kakamega

**November 13-14, Days 14-15: Kakamega region.** Kakamega is a true rainforest and exhibits many of the characteristics that make forest birding both exciting and challenging the world over. Sometimes we must endure long lapses when almost no birds are seen, before suddenly encountering a mixed-flock frantically foraging at all levels, and seemingly containing every bird in the vicinity. Beautiful voices ring from the dense undergrowth, but some of the birds themselves can be difficult to see unless one responds to tape of its calls. Bird diversity is high here, but this also means discouragingly similar species present in the same area (take the eleven species of greenbuls here for example). We hope to find a fruiting or flowering tree luring the well-hidden canopy species out into the open; or a driver ant swarm with attendant birds pursuing the fleeing insects.

In our two days here we should observe the above phenomena and most of the following select species: White-spotted Flufftail; Blue-spotted Wood-Dove; Tambourine Dove; Great Blue Turaco (spectacular); African Emerald Cuckoo; Yellowbill; Bar-tailed Trogon; Blue-headed Bee-eater; White-headed Wood-Hoopoe; Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill; Grey-throated, Yellow-spotted, Double-toothed and Yellow-billed barbets; Least Honeyguide; Brown-eared and Golden-crowned woodpeckers; Square-tailed Drongo; Petit's Cuckoo-Shrike; Pink-footed Puffback; Luehder's and Gray-green bushshrikes; wattle-eyes (four species are possible); Brown-chested Alethe; Stuhlmann's Starling; Equatorial Akalat; White-headed Sawwing; Chubb's Cisticola; White-chinned and Banded prinias; Black-collared and Buff-throated apalis; Olive-green Camaroptera; Black-faced Rufous Warbler; Uganda Woodland-Warbler; Dusky Tit; Grey-headed Negrofinch; Red-headed Bluebill (secretive); Vieillot's, Forest, Brown-capped and Black-billed weavers; Red-headed Malimbe; Green, Western Olive, Green-headed and Green-throated sunbirds; and Thick-billed Seedeater. Mammals are scarce here, except for squirrels and three entertaining species of monkeys, including the striking Black-and-white Colobus.

NIGHTS: Rondo Retreat Center, Kakamega

**November 15, Day 16: To Lake Naivasha.** A travel day, across the Lake Victoria plains (dotted with ponds and rice-farming areas with a variety of waterbirds) to the western highlands, where we will check a remnant patch of forest before dropping down into the Great Rift Valley in its narrowest stretch. Sparkling Lake Naivasha is considered by many to be the best birding area in Kenya, and for us it will provide a grand review of many of the species we have seen on our safari, plus a number of Rift Valley specialties and waterbirds. Birds are abundant and varied right around our hotel, and after arriving we will check the nearby lakeshore.

NIGHT: Lake Naivasha Country Club, Naivasha

**November 16, Day 17: Lake Naivasha area.** This jewel of a lake, set amidst dry rocky hills and dusty plains, but lined with tall acacia groves, is completely fresh water and has extensive marshes. Black Crakes and African Jacanas scurry along the edges where Giant and Malachite kingfishers scan from their perches. The wild yelping of the African Fish-Eagle is heard everywhere at dawn, while Little Grebe, Pink-backed Pelican, Long-tailed Cormorant, dabbling ducks, Southern Pochard, Grey-headed Gull, and Whiskered Tern frequent the open water. The lakeshore attracts herons and egrets; ibis; Long-toed Lapwing; Blacksmith Lapwing, Three-banded Plover; and migrant shorebirds. Usually we spot at least one rare surprise here, such as Black Heron, Lesser Moorhen, Greater Painted-Snipe or African Skimmer. In the dense swamps are found such secretive birds as Purple Heron, Little Bittern, African Rail, and Lesser Swamp Warbler.

Landbirds are abundant in the "fevertrees" around the hotel, where a typical assortment might include Red-chested Cuckoo, Pearl-spotted Owlet, White-fronted Bee-eater, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Grey Hornbill, Red-fronted Barbet, Black-throated Honeyguide, Gray-headed Woodpecker, Grey-backed Fiscal, Grey-headed Bushshrike, White-browed Robin-Chat, Grey-capped Warbler, Black-lored Babbler, Purple Grenadier, Pin-tailed Whydah, and Spectacled Weaver.

Not far from the lake is Hell's Gate National Park, a geologically active area of towering cliffs and dry eroded gullies. The huge Rueppell's Griffons nest here, as do Verreaux's Eagle, Augur Buzzard, Lanner, Speckled Pigeon, Schalow's Wheatear, and thousands of swifts and swallows. A surprising variety of game can be seen

too, including eland and klipspringer (a small rock-loving antelope). You will be astounded by the number of species seen in a day's birding at Naivasha.

NIGHT: Lake Naivasha Country Club, Naivasha

**November 17-18, Day 18-19: To Nairobi; departure for Masai Mara or home.** After breakfast at Naivasha we will return to Nairobi. On a clear day there are spectacular views across the entire Rift Valley along this drive. Participants not continuing on the Masai Mara Extension will have dayrooms at an airport area hotel prior to your evening flight to Europe, arriving early the next morning in time for connecting flights home.

## **MASAI MARA EXTENSION NOVEMBER 17-22, 2010**

*Ecologically a part of Tanzania's renowned Serengeti ecosystem, the Mara is quite simply the best big-game country in Kenya, and should not be missed on a Kenya safari. It is a land of immense vistas and seemingly limitless plains, home to a superb array of mammals and birds. The core inner part of this huge area is a protected game reserve, while the large outer region is home to the proud Masai people as well as the wildlife. We will have three full days in which to explore the varied habitats of the western Mara, on morning and afternoon game drives. We should see lion and spotted hyena here (possibly the only ones of the trip); and cheetah are not rare, though they can be hard to find. Elephant, hippo, and buffalo are present in sizable herds, and the abundant resident wildlife includes giraffe, warthog, and a variety of antelope. Although the vast numbers of wildebeest and zebra that migrate into the Mara from the Serengeti have mostly moved on by mid-November, we usually encounter some of the last herds working their way southward. Birds are abundant in the Mara, and while we will not see a huge number of new species here, some of those present are very special and not likely to be seen elsewhere on the trip.*

*To get a taste of what a safari in Africa once was like, nights will be spent in a tented camp. Nowadays the "camps" are permanent and luxurious, and the amenities are many, including huge tents with electric lights, complete indoor plumbing, hot showers, excellent food and drink, and a hard-working staff always ready to take care of you, but it is still thrilling to feel and hear the African night around you. Kichwa Tembo is one of the finest of the many camps in the Mara and is set in a lovely wooded niche near the Mara River. It offers great birding right on the grounds plus a peaceful view over the plains with only an electric fence separating you from the wildlife. From this comfortable base we will take game drives further afield in the Mara.*

**November 17, Day 18: Flight to Kichwa Tembo (Masai Mara).** After driving back to Nairobi first thing this morning we will fly to Kichwa Tembo Camp in the northwestern corner of the Masai Mara region, on a regularly scheduled flight. If the weather is clear we should have spectacular views of the Great Rift Valley, several dormant volcanoes, and the vast plains of the Mara. After lunch and settling in we will make our first game drive in the Mara. The grasslands literally right in front of Kichwa Tembo often have numerous animals scattered around them.

NIGHT: Kichwa Tembo Camp

**November 18-20, Days 19-21: Masai Mara region.** We will have three full days of birding and game-viewing in the Mara, a place where we can expect the unexpected. It may be great lines of wildebeest racing madly across the plains; or lions at a kill; or jackals and vultures cleaning up; or bustards displaying on the open plains; a lone cheetah resting in the shade; or Bat-eared Foxes sunbathing by their den. Maybe it will be a Martial Eagle gorging on prey, or the wild nocturnal scream of the harmless three hyrax, or hippos splashing in the river while a Ross's Turaco flies past. Almost anything is possible here and our visit is sure to be exciting. With three days we will have the time to seek out and watch most of the larger mammals, often within close enough range for

photography, and still stop to enjoy the diverse birdlife. We have an excellent chance of finding the large cats, and the Kichwa Tembo driver-guides are among the very best.

The terrain in the Mara is varied, and during our time here we will visit such habitats as short and long-grass plains, open wooded savannah, riverine forest, and dense croton bush. Among the many birds to be especially watched for are Rufous-bellied Heron, Saddle-billed and other storks, White-headed Vulture, snake-eagles, Martial Eagle, Grey Kestrel, Coqui Francolin, Red-necked Spurfowl, Black-bellied Bustard, Wattled Lapwing, Meyer's Parrot, Narina's Trogon, Striped Kingfisher, Southern Ground-Hornbill, oxpeckers (on the large mammals of course), Sooty Chat, Banded Martin, Stout Cisticola, waxbills, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Yellow-fronted Canary, and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. This is an excellent time of year for migrant raptors and other birds from Eurasia.

NIGHTS: Kichwa Tembo Camp

**November 21-22, Days 22-23: to Nairobi; departure for home.** After a final short excursion in the Mara we will take the late morning flight back to Nairobi, our Kenya safari complete. After a special final lunch participants will have day rooms at an airport area hotel prior to your evening flight to Europe, arriving early the next morning in time for connecting flights home.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements, often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT:** All participants will be **required** to purchase a medical evacuation policy for this tour and will be asked to sign and return to the VENT office a waiver stating that this has been done. Such a policy should be available from any insurance company which provides trip cancellation coverage.

**TOUR SIZE:** Both the main tour and the Masai Mara extension will be limited to 6 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS: David Wolf**

**David Wolf** is a senior member of the VENT staff and one of our most experienced tour leaders. After birding the U.S. and Mexico for over a decade, an interest in the wildlife of Africa led him to Kenya in 1975, where he spent over a year studying the birds and other wildlife of the African continent. Soon after his return to Texas he began leading Rockport Wildlife Weekends for VENT, at that time a new company, and he hasn't looked back since. In addition to Africa, David has extensive birding and tour-leading experience in North America and the Neotropics, and has birded widely on all of the continents. He unites great birding skills with a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of natural history, which he shares readily with tour participants. David and his wife, Mimi, live on a small farm in Nacogdoches, Texas, with assorted horses, cats, and dogs. They have two grown children, Matt and Elena, and are now the happy grandparents of Reimer and Ellison Rose, Matt and Tiffany's children.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the main tour is **\$9310** per person based on double occupancy from Nairobi, Kenya and includes all meals beginning with breakfast on Day 3, ending with lunch on Day 18. The fee for the Masai Mara Extension is **\$3670** per person based on double occupancy from Nairobi and includes all meals beginning with lunch on Day 18, ending with dinner on Day 22, and roundtrip internal flights Nairobi/Kichwa Tembo/Nairobi. Fees include accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, tipping, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. Fees do not include airfare from your home to Nairobi and return, alcoholic beverages, bottled water except at meals, phone calls, laundry, items of a personal nature, or special gratuities to the local drivers and guides. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement may have to be charged.

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The single supplement for the main tour is **\$1275**; and the single supplement for the Masai Mara extension is **\$560**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Single accommodations are limited at some facilities. At times, even if a single room has been confirmed and paid for, single accommodations may not be available. If this occurs, an appropriate refund of the single supplement will be made upon the group's return.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposits for these tours are **\$500** per person for the main tour and an additional **\$500** per person for the Masai Mara extension. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$250*
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

**TRIP INSURANCE:** A brochure and application form regarding optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available however stipulations apply usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

**Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is required for this tour.** This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by *Travel Insured International*. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through *Travel Insured International*, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: [www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com).

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**BAGGAGE:** While on this tour, you will be in the vehicle much of the time. To ensure your comfort and that of your traveling companions, it is **extremely important** that you limit yourself to one small or medium-sized duffel bag or a small soft-sided suitcase, and one carry-on bag (camera, daypack, tote, etc). Please note that there is a 33 pound weight limit for the flights to and from the Masai Mara, including hand-carried items. Laundry services are available everywhere that we spend more than one night, so you only need a few changes of clothing. Most people find that they have brought far more "stuff" than they need. Please use the VENT luggage tags sent to you, as they help immensely in identifying our group's baggage. **Extra/excess baggage can be stored in Nairobi**, as vehicle space is very limited.

**CLIMATE:** Upland Kenya has a pleasant climate, and generally temperatures will be warm during the day and cool at night. Night temperatures are cooler at a few places, reaching the low fifties, while daytime temperatures may reach into the nineties at Samburu and Lake Baringo. We can expect some showers and misty weather at a few locations.

**CLOTHING:** Long-sleeved and light-weight blouses or shirts and slacks are appropriate, with a sweater or light jacket for the evening, and a thermal top for "layering." Neutral colors such as gray, khaki and tan are best for field wear (bright colors and patterns, including white, can spook the birds and animals). Clothing that can be easily rinsed out and that dries quickly is helpful. Dress will be casual throughout the tour. There is no need to bring formal dinner attire. The hotels are not heated, so bring something warm to sleep in. You can get by with light footwear, but may want to have hiking boots for the places that are muddy or where we do more walking. On some days, shorts will be appropriate, and a few of the hotels have swimming pools. Please remember that luggage space in the vehicles is very limited, and laundry can be done at every lodge where we spend more than one night.

**CURRENCY:** Kenyan Shilling (KSh); Currency can be exchanged at the airport banks and major hotels. MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, while American Express has limited acceptance. **Please note that traveller's checks are no longer widely accepted** (and we suggest that you do NOT use them). ATM machines are available at a few select stops if you need additional cash.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure and a visa IS required for United States citizens to enter Kenya. A yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required if entering from an infected area. Non U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions. It is very important to have your passport and traveler's checks/money with you at all times. Suggestions for doing so are a money belt or a pouch with a shoulder strap to be worn on your side or around your neck. We caution against carrying these in a purse or daypack. It is also wise to carry a copy of your passport information pages in a separate piece of luggage.

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**EQUIPMENT:** You should have a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a day pack for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc. Your tour leaders will have a spotting scope; however, you are welcome to bring your own if you so desire. You should bring all the camera equipment and spare batteries that you will need, as they will be difficult to obtain once we leave Nairobi. And yes, do bring a small folding umbrella or rain jacket, as we may encounter mist or rain on a few occasions.

Other items that will be useful are a hat and sunscreen for sun protection, small flashlight, alarm clock, washcloth, and a small amount of non-spray insect repellent (insects are remarkably few, but the best way to avoid any chance of disease is not to get bitten). You may also want to have a small supply of snacks. Moist towelettes are also refreshing to have. Pepto-Bismol is recommended in case of mild stomach upset. Bottled water is available throughout Kenya, so a canteen is not necessary. All participants should bring a good supply of all their medical/pharmaceutical supplies, as they will be very difficult to obtain anywhere on the tour.

**HEALTH:** 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. Food standards are high in Kenya and few people experience any problems. We recommend drinking only bottled water (available everywhere) or filtered water provided by the lodges. Roads are often rough in Kenya and for those with bad back problems, this trip may not be appropriate.

No vaccinations are required although as standard travel precautions you should be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B and current on your yellow fever protection. It is strongly recommended that you follow a program for malaria prophylaxis. There have been some recent changes in recommendations for malaria prophylaxis. Mefloquine (Lariam) is recommended for chloroquine-resistant malaria as well as the newer Malarone which has fewer side effects. Both are available by prescription only and may not be suitable for those using cardio-vascular medication; consult your physician.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

**MISC:**

- Departure Tax – USD \$20 (usually paid with intl. airline tickets)
- Electricity – 240 volts, 50 cycles
- Language – Kiswahili is the national and English is the official language
- Time – 8 hours ahead of EST
- Internet Service is only available at a few locations and is not always reliable.

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) which specializes in ornithology books.

### ***Birds (Field Guides):***

Stephenson, Terry, and John Fanshawe; Illustrated by Brian Small, Norman Arlott, and John Gale. *Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa*. T & A D Poyser Ltd. London. 2002. A comprehensive field guide to all the birds of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda. It includes concise text on identification and illustrations from three of the best bird illustrators working today.

Van Perlo, Ber. *Collins Illustrated Checklist: Birds of East Africa*. Collins London, 1997. Compact but only marginally adequate as primary field guide.

Zimmerman, Dale A, Donald Turner, and David Pearson. *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*. Princeton University Press, 1999. A comprehensive field guide to Kenya alone; very complete. The field guide edition (paperback) is more manageable in size than hardback volume.

**Field Guides (other topics):**

Blundell, Michael. *Wild Flowers of East Africa*. HarperCollins, 1994. Good field guide with high-quality photos.

Dorst, Jean and Pierre Dandelot. *Collins Field Guide to Larger Mammals of Africa*. HarperCollins, London, 1998. Adequate alternative to Jonathan Kingdon's guide.

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. Academic Press Inc., 1998. The most recent, complete and informative guide to all of the mammals. All the known species of African land mammal are covered in a concise text providing full information on identification, distribution, ecology, evolutionary relationships, and conservation status.

Williams, John George and R. Fennessy. *Collins Field Guide to the National Parks of East Africa*. HarperCollins Inc., 1998. Very useful guide with background information and simple maps for each park and reserve, plus a section on mammal identification and the more conspicuous birds.

There is a wealth of reading material available for this region, and the following are just a few selections from various topics. A personal favorite is *The Tree Where Man Was Born/The African Experience* by Peter Matthiessen and Eliot Porter. The results of several long-term studies of the mammals have been published as popular books. The best include *Among the Elephants* by Iain Douglas-Hamilton, *The Serengeti Lion* by George Schaller, and *Portraits in the Wild* by Cynthia Moss. Especially if you have never been to East Africa, you may enjoy some of these "light" books about the region, history and wildlife: *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen, *Flame Trees of Thika* by Elspeth Huxley, *I Dreamed of Africa* by Kuki Gulman, and *A Bird Watcher in Kenya* by C. van Someren. *Nine Faces of Kenya*, compiled by Elspeth Huxley, is a good introductory primer to East African history and settlement.

Any reading list should include something on the peoples of Kenya and there are many books available. Among the most interesting are *The Peoples of Kenya* by Joy Adamson (which has superb portraits painted by the author), and *Vanishing Africa* by Mirella Ricciardi (an extravaganza of photos). For those with a political bent, *Facing Mt. Kenya* by Jomo Kenyatta is a classic written by the man who led Kenya to independence and was its first president. There have also been numerable articles in the natural history magazines and special films on television; enjoy them as they come along and they will help you prepare for your visit to East Africa.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused

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portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect January 28, 2010 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.