Kenya

Eastern and Main Tours
Tour Leaflet 2021

7-16 May 2021 + 16-29 May 2021
Our Kenya Main Tour and Eastern Kenya Tour run back-to-back, giving you the option to bird all the top birding sites in Kenya in 23 days, or to join a shorter 10-day or 14-day trip if you are time limited. These tours have a strong emphasis on arid savanna birding, with localised targets at Tsavo, Marsabit, Shaba, Samburu and Lake Baringo including Donaldson Smith’s Sparrow-Weaver, Grant’s Wood Hoopoe, Friedmann’s Lark, William’s Lark, Masked Lark, Fire-fronted Bishop and Jackson’s Hornbill.

Highland grasslands and shrublands at Kinangop and Aberdares hold Jackson’s Francolin, Aberdare Cisticola, Jackson’s Widowbird and Sharpe’s Longclaw, and in montane forests we’ll search for Olive Ibis and Abbot’s Starling on Mount Kenya and Taita Thrush, Taita White-eye and Taita Apalis in the Taita Hills. Two areas of lowland forest boost the diversity; in the eastern coastal forests at Arabuko-Sokoke we search for Clarke’s Weaver, Amani Sunbird, Sokoke Pipit and Sokoke Scops Owl, and in the western lowland forests at Kakamega our main targets include Turner’s Eremomela and Blue-headed Bee-eater. A short visit to Lamu Island gives us the chance to look for the rarely-seen Somali Boubou.

Tour Focus
Kenya offers a mind-boggling array of birds and habitats, including 20 endemics and near-endemics, making it a great destination for dedicated world listers and keen birders alike. The specials will be the main focus of our trip, and we aim to find them all excluding the questionable Tana River Cisticola, but we also expect to record well over 650 species along the way.

Being an arid country, bird breeding activity is stimulated by rainfall, and for these purposes we travel during the wettest time of the year, important when trying to find rare species of lark. At this time of the year the overall bird diversity is slightly lower because Palaearctic migrants are absent.

We will travel in one or two 4x4s. More details about what to expect, how to prepare and what to pack are provided in our Tour Instructions.

Let us know if you have target species or want to know more about the species we might encounter. A species list will be handed out to you at the start of the tour and is available beforehand upon request.
**ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS**

Accommodation and meals are generally fairly good by African standards, and vary from lodges and guest houses to rustic bush lodges and small hotels. Rooms mostly have private facilities and hot water. We may need to share ablution facilities on the odd occasion.

Meals are Western-style. Please advise if you are vegetarian and what foods you enjoy, so that we can cater for you.

Water is not safe to drink so we supply complimentary bottled water in the vehicle.

**GROUP SIZE**

Five to ten participants.

**WALKING**

This tour requires a moderate degree of fitness. Most walks will be done at a gentle pace, although there will be one tougher walk on Mount Kenya to look for Elgon Francolin, which participants and easily opt out of.

Departure from Nairobi is possible any time from 22h00 on the night of 16 May 2021 if you are only joining the Eastern Kenya Tour, and on 29 May 2021 if you are joining the Main Kenya Tour.

Please email callan@birdingafrica.com a copy of your proposed flight details for approval before paying for your ticket.

**INTRODUCTION**

Kenya, for a long time, has been regarded as among the top few countries for birding in Africa. Not only does it list over 1000 bird species, but a good network of parks protects a wide range of habitats, from coastal forests and Central African lowland forests to montane grasslands and forests, and Kenya offers lots of easy, open country birding with plenty of arid savanna and deserts.

Our 23-day Kenya tour is conveniently split in two to allow you to sample some or all of the main birding sites. On our Eastern Kenya Tour we start off with a flight to Lamu Island to look for the localised Somali Boubou, Malindi Pipit and Golden Palm Weaver, before crossing to the nearby mainland to visit Sokoke Forest, where an impressive range of forest birds can be seen, including Sokoke Pipit, Sokoke Scops Owl, Clarke’s Weaver and Amani Sunbird. Heading inland from the coast we first visit Tsavo East where we hope to find Fire-fronted Bishop, before visiting the Taita Hills for Taita Apalis, Taita Thrush and Taita White-eye. Descending back into the lowlands around Tsavo West we now look for Friedmann’s Lark, Hartlaub’s Bustard and Pangani Longclaw, before heading back to Nairobi to complete the Eastern Kenya Tour.

Leading straight on to the Main Kenya Tour we now head off north of Nairobi to Mount Kenya, searching for Hinde’s Babbler en route. On Mount Kenya we search for Abbot’s Starling, Jackson’s Francolin, Elgon Francolin and Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird, before moving on to the open deserts north of Marsabit in the far north of the country, where we hope to find Masked Lark and, with some luck, Heuglin’s Bustard. Returning south we pause in the Shaba and Samburu areas for a host of dry-country species, including William’s Lark, Donaldson Smith’s Sparrow-Weaver and Grant’s Wood Hoopoe. We then make the long drive to Lake Baringo, pausing en route to search for Cape Eagle-Owl, and for an overnight break at Nyahururu. The Baringo area offers a good variety of birds, with highlights potentially including Northern Masked Weaver, Jackson’s Hornbill and Northern White-faced Owl. For a complete change of scenery we then visit Kakamega Forest in the far west where our top targets will include Turner’s Eremomela, Blue-headed Bee-eater and Jameson’s Wattle-eye, alongside a host of Central African forest species. Finally we return to Nairobi with time spent along the way in the Kinangop, Aberdare and Gatamaiyu areas for Lynes’s Cisticola, Sharpe’s Longclaw, Hunter’s Cisticola, Jackson’s Widowbird, Aberdare Cisticola and Jackson’s Francolin.
DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

----------------- EASTERN KENYA -----------------

Day 1 (7 May): Arrive Nairobi
Welcome to Kenya! From the airport we transfer to our hotel for dinner and an overnight stay. Overnight on the southern side of Nairobi.

Day 2 (8 May): Nairobi to Lamu
This morning we fly from Nairobi to the coastal island of Lamu. Dry bush here is home to Somali Boubou, otherwise only known from Somalia. We have an afternoon and morning to search for it in coastal thickets, alongside Golden Palm Weaver, Scaly Babbler and Coastal Cisticola. Overnight in the historical town of Lamu with its atmospheric white coral buildings.

Day 3 (9 May): To Malindi
After some final birding on Lamu we’ll take a very short flight to Malindi on coastal Kenya, where we’ll be based during our visit time in the area. If time allows we’ll do some introductory birding near Malindi.

Day 4-5 (10-11 May): Sokoke Forest
Sokoke Forest is arguably the most important forest for birding on the entire east coast of Africa and we have two full days to explore its riches. Our main targets are Clarke's Weaver, for which the entire world population is confined to Sokoke and some adjacent woodlands, Sokoke Pipit, Sokoke Scops Owl and Amani Sunbird. However, a long list of other specials can be found in the forest, including Red-throated Twinspot, Lowland Tiny Greenbul, Green Tinkerbird, *fisheri* form of Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Fischer's Greenbul, African Barred Owlet, Little Yellow Flycatcher, East Coast Akalat, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Scaly Babbler, Kenya Crested Guineafowl, Fischer's Turaco, Red-tailed Ant Thrush, Pallid Honeyguide, Little Spotted Woodpecker, Mombasa Woodpecker, Plain-backed Sunbird, Forest Batis and Southern Banded Snake Eagle. Open areas around the forest hold Malindi Pipit, Zanzibar Red Bishop, Coastal Cisticola and Golden Palm Weaver, and there is an outside chance for Violet-breasted Sunbird. Waterbirds at Mida Creek and Sabaki River Mouth could include Madagascar Pratincole and Crab Plover.

Nights in the Malindi area.

Day 6 (12 May): to Tsavo East
Today we leave coastal Kenya, driving west into increasingly arid habitats toward Tsavo East National Park. Along the way we'll watch out for Steel-blue Whydah, but the grasslands of the park will be our main destination, where we hope to find Fire-fronted Bishop in breeding plumage in the afternoon. If the rains have been reliable we should see good numbers of displaying Red-winged Lark, Singing Bush Lark and Pink-breasted Lark. Tsavo East holds a wide range of arid country species, and we’ll be on the lookout for Somali Ostrich, Vulturine Guineafowl, Buff-crested Bustard, Hartlaub's Bustard, Black-headed Lapwing, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Somali Bee-eater, Grant’s Wood Hoopoe, Southern Ground Hornbill, Black-throated Barbet, Red-and-yellow Barbet, D’Arnaud’s Barbet, Pygmy Falcon, African Orange-bellied Parrot, Eastern Black-headed Batis, Rosy- patched Bushshrike, Northern Grey Tit, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Fischer’s Sparrow-Lark, Foxy Lark, Dodson’s Bulbul, Red-fronted Warbler, Red-naped Bushshrike, Grey Wren-Warbler, Banded Parisoma, Kenyan White-eye, Golden-breasted Starling, Fischer’s Starling, Golden Pipit, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Black-capped Social Weaver, Parrot-billed Sparrow, White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Straw-tailed Whydah and Purple Grenadier. There is a remote chance for Quail-Plover.

Overnight in or adjacent to Tsavo East.

Day 7 (13 May): To Taita Hills
We will spend the morning in Tsavo East, before driving to the nearby Taita Hills. The tiny remnant patches of montane forest here are home to three highly threatened endemics, namely Taita Apalis, Taita Thrush and Taita White-eye. Besides looking for these species we also have chances to find Brown-breasted Barbet, Usambara Double-collared Sunbird, Stripe-faced Greenbul, Placid Greenbul and Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler. Overnight in the Taita Hills.
Day 8 (14 May): To Tsavo West
We’ll spend the morning birding the Taita Hills, before dropping down into the surrounding lowlands of Tsavo West. Here we’ll be staying on a community conservancy rather in the national park itself, which has the advantage that we can also do some birding on foot.

Day 9 (15 May): Tsavo West area
The open grasslands of this area are especially good for White-winged Widowbird, Ashy Cisticola and Red-winged Lark, Pangani Longclaw, Taita Fiscal, Long-tailed Fiscal, Foxy Lark, Hartlaub’s Bustard and Harlequin Quail, but we will be hoping to find the very poorly-known Friedmann’s Lark in display, where we found it during our last tour. Acacia bushveld and Commiphora thickets give good opportunities for a range of other species, and the following will be on our radars: Hildebrandt’s Starling, Tsavo Sunbird, Hunter’s Sunbird, White-headed Mousebird, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Scaly Chatterer, Grey-headed Silverbill, Pringle’s Puffback, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Tiny Cisticola, Southern Grosbeak-Canary, African Grey Flycatcher, Red-naped Bushshrike, Acacia Tit and Three-streaked Tchagra.

Day 10 (16 May): To Nairobi
After some final birding in the Tsavo area we return to Nairobi where the Eastern Kenya Tour ends. New arrivals will join those staying on for the Main Kenya Tour. Overnight in Nairobi.

Day 2 (17 May): To Mount Kenya
Our main tour starts as we leave Nairobi to the north, travelling towards Mount Kenya. Various stops will be made in the central highlands, including to search for White-headed Barbet and the endemic Hinde’s Babbler. In the afternoon we’ll bird the moist southern slopes of Mount Kenya. Overnight on Mount Kenya.

Day 3 (18 May): Mount Kenya
Set in forest, our lodge is the perfect base from which to bird the montane forests of Mount Kenya. In the early morning we’ll hope to see Olive Ibis near the lodge. Over the rest of the day, birding both above and below our lodge should produce a good list of forest species that may include Abbot’s Starling (rare), Hunter’s Cisticola, Scaly Francolin, African Olive Pigeon, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Scarce Swift, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, White-eared Barbet, Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Mountain Oriole, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Black-collared Apalis, Black-headed Apalis, Black-throated Apalis, Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Brown-capped Weaver, Kandt’s Waxbill and Thick-billed Seed eater. Other possibilities include African Black Duck, Crowned Eagle, Doherty’s Bushshrike (rare) and Mountain Wagtail. In the late afternoon we’ll relocate to another lodge on the western side of Mount Kenya, for our ascent up the mountain the following morning. Night near Naro Moru.

Day 4 (19 May): Mount Kenya to Marsabit
This morning we’ll drive as high as possible up the western slopes of Mount Kenya, where the road ends at 3100 m. We’ll continue on foot, climbing 500 m in altitude to heathlands above the upper forest where we hope to find the rarely-seen Elgon Francolin. Other birds we hope to see this morning include Jackson’s Francolin, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Moorland Chat, Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird and Red-fronted Parrot, and there is a small chance for Striped Flufftail. There is ample opportunity for those not wanting to do the tough climb to bird around the vehicle. In the late morning we will descend into the lowland around Mount Kenya, and spend the rest of the day driving north to Marsabit town in much more arid surrounds. Night in Marsabit town.
Day 5 (20 May): Dida Galgalu Desert; to Shaba

This morning we bird the very arid plains of the Dida Galgalu Desert along the main road north of Marsabit town. Our main aim will be to find the very localised Masked Lark, but other possibilities include Northern Grosbeak-Canary, Greater Kestrel, William’s Lark, Heuglin’s Bustard, Egyptian Vulture, Somali Courser, Somali Fiscal, Somali Crow, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Crested Lark, Thekla Lark, Bristle-crowned Starling and Somali Sparrow. In the afternoon we’ll drive southwards to the Shaba area, stopping to look for Boran Cisticola en route. Overnight in the Shaba/Samburu area.

Day 6 (21 May): Shaba and Samburu

We have a full day in the arid reserves of Shaba and Samburu. Our main target will be William’s Lark that breeds on the lava fields in Shaba, alongside the localised Donaldson Smith’s Sparrow-Weaver. A long list of other arid-country birds are possible, including Somali Ostrich, Somali Courser, Lichtenstein’s Sandgrouse, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Somali Bee-eater, White-throated Bee-eater, White-headed Mousebird, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Banded Parisoma, Acacia Tit, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Foxy Lark, Red-winged Lark, Magpie Starling, Black-bellied Sunbird, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, Black-cheeked Waxbill, African Silverbill and Golden Pipt. Overnight in the Shaba/Samburu area.

Day 7-8 (22-23 May): To Baringo

After a final morning of birding in the Shaba/Samburu area we’ll start the long drive to Lake Baringo, with an overnight stop at Nyahururu along the way. Birding stops will include looking for Cape Eagle-Owl.

Day 9 (24 May): Lake Baringo

Lake Baringo, set in arid savanna, offers some excellent birding and it will be good to be back on foot after all our time in the car.


Day 10 (25 May): To Kakamega

Today we drive to Kakamega Forest via the Kerio Valley, where we hope to find Stripe-breasted Seedeater, White-crested Turaco, Black-headed Gonolek, Double-toothed Barbet, Meyer’s Parrot, Northern Puffback and Brown Babbler. Overnight in Kakamega Forest.
Day 11 (26 May): Kakamega Forest

Kakamega Forest, with the nearby Nandi Forests, hold the only Central African lowland forest in Kenya, and thus add a large number of species to the country list. We’ll have a full day to explore these forests, with our main targets including Turner’s Eremomela, Blue-headed Bee-eater, Jameson’s Wattle-eye, Uganda Woodland Warbler, Joyful Greenbul, Toro Olive Greenbul and what is currently called ‘Southern Hyliola’, but could be a distinct species. A range of other forest birds can be found and include Crowned Eagle, White-spotted Flufftail, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Lemon Dove, Great Blue Turaco, Ross’s Turaco, Bar-tailed Trogon, Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, Grey-throated Barbet, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Yellow-spotted Barbet, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Yellow-billed Barbet, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, African Broadbill, African Shrike-Flycatcher, Chestnut Wattle-eye, Bocage’s Bushshrike, Pink-footed Puffback, Lühder’s Bushshrike, Petit’s Cuckoo-shrike, Mackinnon’s Shrike, Western Black-headed Oriole, Square-tailed Drongo, Dusky Tit, Western Nicator, Kakamega Greenbul, Ansonji’s Greenbul, White-headed Saw-wing, Green Hylia, Chubb’s Cisticola, Black-faced Prinia, Black-collared Apalis, White-chinned Prinia, Buff-throated Apalis, Olive-green Camaroptera, Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, Brown Illadopsis, Mountain Illadopsis, Grey-chested Illadopsis, Stuhlmann’s Starling, White-tailed Ant Thrush, Brown-chested Alethe, Equatorial Akalat, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, Grey-winged Akalat, Green-throated Sunbird, Olive-bellied Sunbird, Black-billed Weaver, Red-headed Malimbe, White-breasted Nigrita and Southern Citril.

Day 12 (27 May): Kakamega to Naivasha

After some final birding at Kakamega Forest we drive to Lake Naivasha for an overnight stay.

Day 13 (28 May): Kinangop and Aberdares

Today we climb into the Aberdare Mountains, stopping en route above Naivasha town to look for Lyne’s Cisticola. Grasslands around Kinangop will be our next stop, where Sharpe’s Longclaw will be our main target. Here we may also find Jackson’s Widowbird, African Snipe, Long-tailed Widowbird, Hunter’s Cisticola, Levallant’s Cisticola, Schalow’s Wheatear, Black-winged Lapwing, Cape Crow, Red-capped Lark, Wing-snapping Cisticola and Northern Anteater Chat. Once we’ve climbed to around 3000 m altitude we’ll start looking out for Aberdares Cisticola, and other possible species include Jackson’s Francolin and Moorland Chat. In the evening we will return to Naivasha.

Day 14 (29 May): To Nairobi

On our final day we’ll start off birding in the montane forests at Gatamaiyu, which will give us a second chance to look for the rare Abbot’s Starling. Other forest birds we could encounter include Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Brown-capped Weaver, Scaly Francolin, Lemon Dove, White-headed Wood hoopoe, Red-backed Parrot, Mountain Oriole, White-browed CROMBEC, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Black-collared Apalis and Brown-chested Alethe. In the afternoon we’ll drive back to Nairobi, pausing at some wetlands near Limuru where White-backed Duck is often seen. The tour ends on arrival in Nairobi.
BOOKLET AND CHECKLIST

Birding Africa provides:
1. Tour Details leaflet with detailed itinerary (this document).
2. Tour Information Pack, emailed to you.
3. Tour Booklet with checklists, provided in hard copy at the start of the tour.

QUESTIONS?

Email Michael at michael@birdingafrica.com and copy callan@birdingafrica.com.

HOW TO BOOK

1. Complete our easy online booking form.
2. Secure your booking deposit by credit card on our 3D secure online payment site ($150)
3. Settle the balance by bank transfer 150 days before the tour. We will email you a reminder and the banking details.

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TOUR

- services of Birding Africa tour leader and local guides
- entry fees and activities as per itinerary
- ground transport
- Internal flight from Nairobi to Lamu and Lamu to Malindi (Eastern Kenya only)
- accommodation and all meals starting with dinner on the first night and ending with lunch on the last day
- airport transfers
- bottled water in the vehicle
- one soft drink per meal
- general tips

Steel-blue Whydah

© Tertius Gous

Spotted Palm Thrush

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