Day 0:
The first day was spent birding and relaxing at our lodge near Kilimanjaro International Airport while we waited for everyone to arrive. The lodge grounds proved very productive and we had good sightings of a pair of Pygmy Falcons, Western Barn Owl, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Blue-naped Mousebird, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Long-tailed Fiscal, Northern Crombec, Buff-bellied Warbler, Abyssinian White-eye, Spotted Palm-Thrush, **Superb Starling**, Lesser Masked-Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu and Reichenow's Seedeater. A mammal highlight was the nocturnal White-bellied Hedgehog. As a bonus, our lodge was perfectly situated for spectacular late afternoon views of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain and the highest free-standing mountain in the world.

Days 1-2:
We spent two full days exploring the grasslands, lakes, woodlands and forests of Arusha National Park. Shortly after entering the park we had good sightings of several mammal species at an open grassy meadow, including Plains Zebras, Giraffes, Warthogs and a few secretive Bushbucks. A juvenile African Crowned Eagle surveyed the scene, while Spot-flanked Barbet and Trilling Cisticola were in the woodland around us, and a few European Honey-Buzzards circling above was a pleasant surprise. Mosaics of grassland and woodland held the localised Taveta Golden Weaver, Yellow Bishop, Tropical Boubou, Brown-breasted Barbet, Chinspot Batis, Cape Robin-Chat, Moustached Grass-Warbler, Broad-tailed Warbler, Short-winged Cisticola, Pangani Longclaw, Long-billed Pipit, Amethyst and Bronzy Sunbird, and Southern Citril. This habitat was particularly good for mammals and there were large herds of African Buffalo with numerous Red-billed Oxpeckers in attendance, as well as Waterbuck and Kirk's Dik-dik. An albino Olive Baboon stood out amongst its troop mates in one of the numerous troops we encountered, but the undoubted mammal highlight of the park was **Serval**, of which we had not one, but two separate sightings! Waterbirds at the Momela Lakes consisted of large numbers of Greater and Lesser...
Flamingos, Cape Teal, Southern Pochard, Kittlitz’s Plover and an obliging pair of Grey Crowned Cranes and their fluffy chick.

Arusha National Park is well-known for the extensive montane forests on the slopes of Ngurdoto Crater and Mount Meru and these did not disappoint. We had good sightings of both Guereza (Black-and-White) Colobus and Sykes’s Monkey in the trees, while Harvey’s Duiker lurked in the undergrowth. Forest birds were plentiful and these included Hartlaub’s Turaco, Ayres’s Hawk-Eagle, Green Malkoha (Yellowbill), Montane White-eye, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, Collared Sunbird, White-eared Barbet, Grey-headed Nigrita, Black-headed Apalis, Tambourine Dove, African Olive Pigeon, Black-fronted Bush-Shrike, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, White-starred Robin, Mountain and Stripe-faced Greenbul, Kenrick’s and Abbott’s Starling, and both Narina and Bar-tailed Trogon. Several swift species made an appearance at higher elevation, including Scarce, Alpine and Nyanza, while Cinnamon-bracken Warbler called, and made brief appearances from the thickets in the heath zone.

Day 3:
The next day we headed for the dry and open plains in the rain shadow of Mount Meru, north of the town of Arusha near the Kenyan border. Here we hoped to find the incredibly localised Beesley’s Lark, one of the rarest birds in Africa. Within an hour after starting our walk we managed to find four birds singing and foraging right in front of us. Other larks present included Foxy, Red-capped, Athi Short-toed, and Fischer’s Sparrow-Lark. Besides larks, Pectoral-patch Cisticola, Capped Wheatear, and Double-banded Courser also utilised the open plains.

For lunch we headed into the surrounding Commiphora scrub where we were treated to a great diversity of birds. Here we had Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Greater Kestrel, Buff-crested Bustard, Black-faced Sandgrouse, White-bellied Go-Away-Bird, White-headed Mousebird, Red-and-Yellow and Red-fronted Barbet, Pygmy Batis, Rosy-patched Bush-Shrike, Tiny Cisticola, Grey Wren-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Banded Parisoma, Marico and Beautiful Sunbird, Yellow-
spotted Petronia, Chestnut Sparrow, Somali Golden-breasted Bunting and Southern Grosbeak-Canary.

Following a successful afternoon, we headed for our accommodation situated on Lake Manyara. Along the entrance road, we added many new species to our trip list including our only sightings of Black Bishop and Dwarf Bittern.

**Day 4:**
After a hearty breakfast looking out over Lake Manyara, we packed our bags and headed off for our next destination, Ndutu via Ngorongoro Crater, but not before birding the lodge grounds and surrounding palm savanna. Lake Manyara produced dense sheets of both Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Great Egret, Glossy Ibis, African Spoonbill, Great White Pelican, Grey-headed Gull, Whiskered Tern. The lodge grounds had flocks of White-faced Whistling Ducks flying past, Rufous-tailed Weavers nesting in the Acacia trees and African Palm Swifts nesting in the palm trees with an **African Harrier-Hawk** that raided their nests.

Nearby, the mixed Acacia and palm savanna with marshy areas were alive with birds such as Golden-backed, Village and Holub’s Golden Weaver, Arrow-Marked Babbler, Red-faced Crombec, Emerald-spotted and Namaqua Dove, Yellow-collared Lovebird, Blue-naped and Speckled Mousebird, Ashy Starling, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Malachite Kingfisher, **Silverbird**, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Red-necked and Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, and Crested Francolin. We also had our first sightings of Blue Wildebeest and Impala.

Driving through the town of Mto-wa-Mbu at the base of the escarpment we were treated to a spectacle of Marabous, Yellow-billed Storks, Pink-backed Pelicans, Grey Herons and Black-headed Herons, most of which were nesting in the large fig trees in town. After entering the Ngorongoro Conservation Area we made a stop at the scenic viewpoint overlooking the world-famous Ngorongoro Crater where we spotted large herds of African
Buffaloes down below. An African Hawk-Eagle soared past amongst Red-rumped Swallows and Black Saw-wings, while the forest on the crater rim held Baglafecht Weaver, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Hunter’s and Red-faced Cisticola, and Mountain Greenbul. As we descended into the Serengeti Plains in the west, it started to rain, providing a spectacular backdrop to the multitude of Blue Wildebeest, Plains Zebra and Thomson's Gazelle on the short grassy plains.

Day 5 - 6:
The habitat at Ndutu comprises a mix of Acacia savanna and open grassy plains along the western extremity of the Oldupai Gorge, centred around Lake Ndutu. Our lodge was a great place to see sunbirds such as Scarlet-chested and Variable, but **Beautiful Sunbird** stole the show. The lodge grounds also had nesting Fischer’s Lovebird and Rufous-tailed Weaver, while African Cuckoo called from a tall Acacia tree at the dining area near where Yellow-winged Bats were roosting. During dinner we were accompanied by the resident Common Genets that hang out in the thatched roofs of the lodge. The Acacia savanna held a large selection of birds including Pearl-spotted Owlet, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Red-fronted and Usambiro Barbet, Nubian Woodpecker, African Grey and Von der Decken’s Hornbill, Taita Fiscal, African Grey Flycatcher, Rufous Chatterer, Black-lobed Babbler, Black-faced Waxbill, Grey-headed Silverbill and Red-throated Tit, many of these occurring in mixed-species foraging flocks. The area was also particularly good for whydahs and we saw the Pin-tailed, Steel-blue and Straw-tailed varieties. Ground birds consisted of Coqui Francolin, the endemic Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Spotted Thick-knee and on the plains, Harlequin Quail and Yellow-throated Sandgrouse. Raptors were everywhere and we had close-up sightings of several pairs of Tawny Eagles, Pygmy Falcon, Augur Buzzard, Dark-chanting and Gabar Goshawk, Bateleur, Secretarybird, and vultures such as Hooded, African White-backed, Rüppell’s, White-headed and Lappet-faced. Chestnut-banded Plover was seen foraging along the shore of Lake Ndutu.

On the mammal front, although we managed to see a total of 16 Lions during our stay, the morning we spent with a **Cheetah mother and her four cubs** was a particular highlight. The interaction between her and the cubs constantly enthralled and entertained us, and we shared her disappointment when she tried her best, but failed, to catch a wildebeest calf to feed the cubs. Other predators seen were Bat-eared Fox, Golden Jackal and Aardwolf. The plains held huge numbers of Blue Wildebeest, with smaller numbers Plains Zebra, while both Thomson’s and Grant’s Gazelle were common. Eland was a new mammal for our list, made even better with the presence of a few Yellow-billed Oxpeckers hitching a ride.
Day 7 - 9:
After Nduitu, we headed for the Serengeti National Park and it was not long before we encountered the wildebeest migration. From our elevated vantage point on Naabi Hill we were surrounded by thousands upon thousands of **Wildebeest** and **Zebras** congregating on the short grassy plains before their eventual departure to the west and then north in search of grazing and water. They were accompanied by large numbers of gazelles and the ever present predators, mainly gangs of Spotted Hyenas, but also the occasional pride of Lion. A more elusive predator, the **Leopard**, was also around and we managed excellent sightings of four different individuals, one with a recently killed wildebeest calf in a tree.

The three nights we stayed in the Park allowed us ample time to explore its woodlands and plains, and, apart from those mentioned above, were rewarded with a long list of mammals such as several herds of Elephant, Hippo, Topi, Hartebeest (Kongoni), Defassa Waterbuck, Banded, Dwarf and Slender Mongoose, Rock and Yellow-spotted Hyrax, Acacia and African Grass Rat, Yellow-winged and Epauletted Fruit Bat, Senegal Galago, Serval, Cheetah and Black-backed Jackal.

Although the Serengeti is well-known for its mammals, birding was just as good, and we managed to record a long list of birds, including raptors such as several vulture species, Tawny Eagle, Black-winged Kite, Long-crested Eagle, Secretarybird and Greater Kestrel. Bustards were numerous and we had great views of Kori, Black-bellied and **White-bellied Bustard**. The plains supported Ostrich, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Plain-backed Pipit, Fan-tailed Widowbird, White-browed and Black Coucal, Cape Crow, White-tailed and Rufous-naped Lark, and several Cisticola species consisting of Winding, Croaking, Zitting, Desert and Pectoral-patch. Highlights in the woodlands were Meyer’s Parrot, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Diderick Cuckoo, Lilac-breasted Roller, Striped and Woodland Kingfisher, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill,
Southern Ground Hornbill, Von der Decken’s Hornbill, Bearded and Eastern Grey Woodpeckers, Usambiro Barbet, Magpie Shrike, Grey-backed Fiscal, Grey (African) Penduline Tit, Flappet Lark, Rüppell’s, Superb and Hildebrandt’s Starling, Cinnamon-breasted and Golden-breasted Bunting, Rufous-tailed Weaver, Grey-capped Social Weaver, Kenya and Swahili Sparrow, Red-billed and White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Vitelline Masked-Weaver, Purple Grenadier and Blue-capped Cordon-bleu. We had Freckled Nightjar, Red-headed Weaver, Marico Sunbird and Grey-crested Helmet-Shrike at our lodge.

Day 10: Eventually it was time to say good bye to the Serengeti but we had the Ngorongoro Crater to look forward to next. En route we made a stop for lunch at Oldupai Gorge, a world-famous archaeological site best known for its paleoanthropological discoveries that played a definitive role in our understanding of human evolution. We visited the museum and birded the area, enjoying good sightings of White-browed Scrub-Robin, Variable Sunbird, Vitelline Masked-Weaver and White-bellied Canary. After lunch we proceeded to our lodge on the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater, and managed to see a host of birds in the highlands that included Scarce and Nyanza Swift, Streaky Seedeater, African Stonechat, Red-collared Widowbird, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Baglafecht Weaver, Bar-throated Apalis, African Goshawk, Little Sparrowhawk, Ayres’s Hawk-Eagle, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater and a very confiding Grey-capped Warbler at our lodge.
Day 11:
We all looked forward to spending a full day in the crater and enjoying its magnificent scenery and wildlife such as Elephant. Birding started in earnest even before we reached the crater floor and our descent produced Hildebrandt’s Francolin, Dusky Turtle-Dove, Singing and Short-winged Cisticola, Southern Citril, Thick-billed Seedeater, Yellow Bishop, Bronzy and Malachite Sunbird, Brown Parisoma, Long-billed Pipit, Abyssianian (Schalow’s) Wheatear, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Anteater Chat and a pair of Lanners. At the bottom, Lake Magadi hosted Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Cape and Red-billed Teal, Gull-billed and Whiskered Tern, Grey-headed Gull, and waders such as Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Long-toed Lapwing and Ruff. Marshy areas and grasslands produced African Quailfinch, African Pipit, African Openbill, African Spoonbill, Spur-winged Goose, Grey-crowned Crane, Grey-rumped Swallow, Banded Martin, Speke’s Weaver, Rosy-throated Longclaw and numerous displaying Jackson’s Widowbirds.

Mammals were abundant and we had large numbers of Blue Wildebeest, Plains Zebra, African Buffalo, Thomson’s and Grant’s Gazelle, and smaller numbers of Elephant, Warthog, Eland, Hippo and Defassa Waterbuck. We also had our first sightings of Black Rhino for the trip, completing the big five for the tour. Golden Jackal, Spotted Hyena, Lion and Marsh Mongoose were also seen.

On our way back to the lodge in the late afternoon we travelled through well developed woodland and forest where we encountered Green Pigeon, Broad-billed Roller, Woodland Kingfisher, Little Bee-eater, Black-backed Puffback, Brubru, Schalow’s Turaco and Cinnamon Bracken Warbler. The evening at the lodge saw us having great views of Montane Nightjar just before dinner.
Day 12:
The final morning was spent birding the grounds of our lodge and this resulted in the addition of Tacazze and Golden-winged Sunbird, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk and Yellow-crowned Canary to our list, as well as seeing some old favourites such as Baglaefct Weaver, Dusky Turtle-Dove, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird and White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher. En route to our lunch stop at Arusha we recorded African Black Duck, Spectacled Weaver and Malachite Sunbird. The gardens of the hotel where we had lunch produced Red-billed Firefinch, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Hadeda Ibis, White-eared Barbet, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, African Dusky Flycatcher, Olive and Collared Sunbird, Rüppell’s Robin-Chat and Grey-backed Camaroptera. There was also an Ochre Bush Squirrel, a new mammal for our list. Some late afternoon birding at our lodge near the Kilimanjaro International Airport resulted in good birds such as Temminck’s and Double-banded Courser, African Hoopoe, Violet-backed Starling and Yellow-fronted Canary.

At the end of the tour we recorded a total of 390 birds and 48 mammal species.