**MUKOMA ESTATE 18th APRIL 2014**

Dear All,

This Good Friday, Rupert Watson and myself decided to devote an entire day birding where we live on Mukoma Estate. We had invited other estate resident birders, but being a public holiday they were all occupied with other excursions.

We did all of the birding on foot, using no pre-recorded sounds as a lure, but a little spishing was used in the forest to remarkably little result and not bringing in anything we had not recorded.

The estate is entirely residential, but with a few nice additions providing excellent refuges for birds. IUCN has upland forest with a rain-forest like component, and Hog Ranch drier upland forest and scrub. To the south we are bordered by the Mbagathi River, which is currently a mere trickle of shallow water two metres wide, and the riverine forest in the only publicly accessible part, non-existent. The remainder is made up of private plots, the majority being five acres but some larger ones. A few have cattle paddocks, some small dams, and there is one fairly natural vlei.

We knew we lived in a rich area, but apart from the odd look at IUCN or Hog-Ranch, the area had never received a concentrated birding day before. It revealed quite a number of surprises, especially in terms of abundances and scarcities

This was a first attempt, and in doing so gave us a good insight to plan a future event. We really did neglect the small dams, and only visited a single one. We did not make any arrangements to look along the Mbagathi River on the private plots, where there is some riverine vegetation.

The proximity of Nairobi National Park has no bearing on the numbers of birds on Mukoma, with the exception of raptors which drift in from that direction.

We started in Rupert’s garden at 6.00am in the dark, with the hope of Montane Nightjar, but more so for the dawn display of African Goshawk. Neither happened, but whilst I am writing this there is a very noisy African Goshawk outside!

Armed now with huge unspillable thermos cups we walked along Mukoma Road to the barrier and the duka. From here we walked to the edge of IUCN for a short while, but it was still very gloomy. Back up the road to Rupert’s, and up to Hog Ranch, Bryony Anderson showed us a roosting Montane Nightjar! We exited on the western side of Hog Ranch, now out of the Estate but not recording anything different walked down to the river which was back in it. Walking across to Kikenni Road, back onto Ndorobo Road and up Munderendu Road. Incredibly by this juncture we had been walking seven hours non-stop, and after looking at our paddock in the heat of the day, we had fifteen minutes sitting on the porch, which was more rewarding. Back up to Rupert’s and a snack before traversing the Archer’s to the Van Tongren Plot for their dam which just homed a Little Grebe, as the banks are steep. This was the only new bird for the Estate. From here we walked down to Magadi Road, past the entrance to the Weld-Dixon’s and back to IUCN which provided the bird spectacle of the day. After this we trudged back to Rupert’s getting in at 6.00pm, and sat in the garden until 7.00pm adding nothing new, but adding up the results. We had found 121 species on our walking marathon. Now two days later, and I am still a cripple and at this very instance I am writing there is a White-headed Barbet calling from our acacia xanthophloea. We never had a White-headed Barbet, but then that’s birding. Yesterday Northern Double-collared Sunbirds were giving it stick, and guess what!!!!

**THE SPECIES RECORDED**

**Little Grebe**

One in breeding plumage on the Van Tongren dam, incredibly the only bird species recorded that has not been found on the Estate before!

**White Pelican**

A staggering sight of over seven-hundred, one flock over 500 formed impressive chevrons across the sky as they headed south-west over IUCN. An hour later another flock of over 200, circled over Mukoma Road before heading in the same direction. Interestingly all the birds that were looked at appeared to be adults.

**Black-headed Heron**

One bird flying over Mukoma Road in the morning was the only heron of any description seen today.

**Marabou Stork**

Singles pretty much all day, but fifty in a flock towards Ongata Rongai.

**Sacred Ibis**

The commonest overflying bird throughout the day. (More so than Black Kite!).

**Hadada Ibis**

Common particularly in the mornings when going out to feed.

**Black Kite**

Common overhead all day.

**White-backed Vulture**

Three birds flying into NNP, seen from BWF balcony.

**Black-chested Snake Eagle**

A stunning adult flying over Rupert’s garden whilst we had our lunch, and later hovering over adjacent paddocks. A new bird for Rupert’s plot!

**African Harrier Hawk**

Two different immature birds seen, and a pair of adults displaying over Hog Ranch.

**Great Sparrowhawk**

An immature drying off in a Eucalypt near Hog Ranch.

**Common Buzzard**

One dark bird at the Kikenni barrier. The only migrant raptor of the day.

**Augur Buzzard**

Just two birds seen, one a black phase.

**Ayre’s Hawk Eagle**

An adult over Kikenni barrier, later seen being mobbed by three Pied Crows.

**Long-crested Eagle**

One at the Kikenni barrier.

**Martial Eagle**

An adult flying into the NNP seen from BWF balcony.

**Lanner Falcon**

A pair of adults displaying over Kikenni Road.

**Scaly Francolin**

Calling in the forest at Hog Ranch.

**Southern Crowned Crane**

Whilst we regularly have Crowned Cranes on the estate, the only birds were heard calling from NNP when we were at the Speke’s Weaver colony at the end of Mukoma Road.

**African Green Pigeon**

One attractive adult sitting in the sun on Hog Ranch.

**Tambourine Dove**

A pair at IUCN.

**Emerald-spotted Wood Dove**

One at IUCN was amazingly the only individual recorded today.

**Red-eyed Dove**

Common throughout.

**Dusky Turtle Dove**

Common and widespread all over area.

**Hartlaub’s Turaco**

In many woods and gardens over the estate south of Mukoma Road.

**Black Cuckoo**

The bird that has been around the past ten days had speights of vocal activity on Kikenni Road.

**Red-chested Cuckoo**

At least seven territories located with an immature near the Mukoma barrier.

**Eurasian Cuckoo**

One adult in Hog Ranch.

**African Emerald Cuckoo**

Three active territories located.

**Klaas’ Cuckoo**

Four active territories.

**Diederik Cuckoo**

Three active territories.

**Montane Nightjar**

A silent nightjar morning, with just the one roosting at Hog Ranch kindly shown by Bryony Anderson.

**African Palm Swift**

A common species all day and everywhere.

**Nyanza Swift**

One lone bird with White-rumped and Little Swifts flying up and down Kisembe Ridge from BWF balcony.

**White-rumped Swift**

Widespread and fairly common.

**Little Swift**

Common and widespread with noisy social groups.

**Speckled Mousebird**

Fairly common throughout.

**Eurasian Bee-eater**

Recorded on passage four times. Firstly a compact group of twenty-five over Mukoma Road, leaving a local roost and heading into NNP. Second a group of fifteen feeding low over lantana at the Kikenni barrier, third was five over Munderendu Road, the final group not being seen but heard over IUCN in the evening.

**Little Bee-eater**

Three on Hog Ranch were the only birds.

**Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater**

Encountered in several places including Mukoma Road, Munderendu Road and Hog Ranch/Kikenni barrier.

**Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird**

There are an amazing number of these on the Estate, and it was heard throughout.

**Red-fronted Tinkerbird**

Birds were calling in five different territories.

**Spot-flanked Barbet**

Scattered birds pretty much throughout.

**Lesser Honeyguide**

This estate has recorded six species of honeyguides, but our only bird was one singing at IUCN in the evening.

**Cardinal Woodpecker**

Heard calling at Rupert’s, where the species has been seen investigating tree holes in the past.

**Grey Woodpecker**

One heard calling along the river.

**Brown-backed Woodpecker**

One female along Mukoma Road.

**African Pied Wagtail**

Heard singing on Mukoma Road. Otherwise strangely absent, and usually in most gardens.

**Tree Pipit**

One calling bird flying north-east over Rupert’s garden.

**Barn Swallow**

A very few birds flying through the area.

**Red-rumped Swallow**

Common and widespread, but wide ranging.

**Lesser Striped Swallow**

By far the most abundant swallow throughout the area.

**Rock Martin**

Small numbers seen over most of the area.

**Black Saw-wing**

A few in Hog Ranch and IUCN.

**Yellow-whiskered Greenbul**

Several in IUCN and Hog Ranch.

**Cabanis’s (Placid) Greenbul**

Parties in IUCN and Hog Ranch.

**Common Bulbul**

Common throughout.

**Northern Pied Babbler**

Parties on the edge of Hog Ranch, and also Van Tongren garden.

**Ruppell’s Robin-Chat**

Encountered over much of the Estate, usually in cover.

**Cape Robin-Chat**

An amazingly common bird throughout the area.

**White-browed Scrub Robin**

Three seen near the river.

**White-starred Forest Robin**

Secretive but calling softly at Hog Ranch.

**Northern Olive Thrush**

Widespread throughout, but far less numerous than species like Cape Robin Chat.

**White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher**

Seen in four different locations.

**Garden Warbler**

Birds singing Hog Ranch and Kikenni barrier.

**Willow Warbler**

Seen near IUCN, Rupert’s garden, near Hog Ranch and Brian’s garden.

**Dark-Capped Yellow Warbler**

This was a surprise, not thought of as common on the estate but found in four locations, with a pair of adults and two young by the river.

**Singing Cisticola**

Common absolutely throughout.

**Red-faced Cisticola**

Three birds down along the river.

**Stout Cisticola**

Secveral pairs displaying in the Weld-Dixon vlei.

**Siffling Cisticola**

One bird singing on the descent road at IUCN.

**Tawny-flanked Prinia**

Fairly common and widespread.

**Grey-backed Camaroptera**

A common species throughout.

**Yellow-breasted Apalis**

Common and widespread over whole estate.

**Grey Apalis**

Singing in Hog Ranch, but not heard in IUCN where it is also resident. An interesting thing is that the species is unrecorded just over the road in NNP.

**Black-collared Apalis**

This was a surprise in that only a few pairs were thought resident on the estate, we found eight territories which included birds in both Brian’s and Rupert’s gardens, IUCN, Hog Ranch and Kikenni barrier.

**Grey-capped Warbler**

Although secretive, it is noisy and found all through the area where there is sufficient thick growth.

**Red-faced Crombec**

A common bird on the estate, but only heard twice, and finally seen at IUCN in the evening.

**Buff-bellied Warbler**

A lone bird in an acacia in Rupert’s garden was our only bird, though a resident on the estate.

**Brown Parisoma**

One seen on edge of Hog Ranch and another in the evening in Rupert’s garden could be the same individual.

**Abyssinian White-eye**

Strangely only encountered twice, Mukoma Road and Kikenni barrier.

**White-bellied Tit**

Seen at several locations.

**African Paradise Flycatcher**

Encountered at a number of places.

**Chin-spot Batis**

A pair in Rupert’s garden were the only birds recorded today.

**Red-backed Shrike**

A female in the hedgerow at Weld-Dixon’s was the only bird.

**Common Fiscal**

A common species throughout.

**Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike**

A bird singing from the Archer’s was the only individual recorded, for a bird that is certainly resident on the estate.

**Tropical Boubou**

Common and widespread in small numbers.

**Black-backed Puffback**

Recorded in several locations.

**Black Cuckoo-shrike**

A male singing from the top of a tree near the gulley on Mukoma Road.

**Black-headed Oriole**

Recorded in three different locations.

**Pied Crow**

Fairly common and over the whole area, only seen flying over.

**Superb Starling**

About six at the usual site bordering Hog Ranch.

**Variable Sunbird**

One of the most abundant species seen.

**Collared Sunbird**

Fairly frequent and widespread in heavy growth and forests.

**Amethyst Sunbird**

More commonly heard than seen, but widespread.

**Scarlet-chested Sunbird**

Seen in several places during the day.

**Bronze Sunbird**

Seen all through the area just singles and pairs.

**Parrot-billed Sparrow**

Although this bird is inexplicably rare in NNP it was seen several times on the estate.

**Rufous Sparrow**

This species vies with Streaky Seedeater and Variable Sunbird as the commonest species seen.

**White-browed Sparrow-Weaver**

Small numbers all over the estate, out of the forests.

**Grosbeak Weaver**

Seen several times, including a dozen over Mukoma Road coming from a roost.

**Baglafecht Weaver**

Common and widespread throughout the estate.

**Spectacled Weaver**

Seen IUCN and Weld-Dixon’s.

**Holub’s Golden Weaver**

Seen in several locations.

**Speke’s Weaver**

Colonies active bottom of Mukoma Road, and corner of Kikenni Road.

**Village Weaver**

Scattered birds seen, but none breeding.

**Yellow Bishop**

One breeding plumaged male by river.

**Red-collared Widowbird**

One adult male still showing a streaky back along the Weld-Dixon hedge.

**Red-billed Firefinch**

Small numbers throughout.

**Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu**

Small numbers widespread.

**Purple Grenadier**

Seen several locations.

**Common Waxbill**

Just encountered twice, two along river and one Weld-Dixon hedgerow.

**Bronze Mannikin**

Very common throughout.

**Village Indigobird**

This was a major surprise. It was quite evident that most plots had a territorial male. Pin-tailed Whydah used to be considerably more numerous at least at our place. Fifteen years ago we could have had as many as twenty male Pin-tailed on the bird-table, now we don’t have one. We encountered Indigobirds about a dozen times all over the estate.

**Pin-tailed Whydah**

The only bird was one male at the Kikenni barrier.

**Streaky Seedeater**

This and Rufous Sparrow run it very close for who is the commonest bird here.

**Yellow-rumped Seedeater**

Two were feeding on weed seeds near the Weld-Dixon hedgerow.

**African Citril**

Seen several times in various places.

**Brimstone Canary**

Encountered on several occasions all over the estate.

**Golden-breasted Bunting**

One bird along Wasaa Road was the only individual recorded.