NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK 14th OCTOBER 2017

Dear All,

After the excitement the day before with a Common Redstart in our paddock, it was hoped that for such a rarity it would have been part of a major arrival…. Not a bit of it!

The only palearctic passerines apart from Swallows were the same Spotted Flycatcher as last week, and five Northern Wheatears several of which could also have been the birds from last week, the addition of the first Isabelline Wheatear was possibly a fresh arrival.

The only new non-passerine addition was a Northern Hobby back of Hyena Dam.

So things do appear to be running late this year and this is the first arrivals list from 2016.

**2016 PALEARCTIC ARRIVALS 25TH SEPT TO 27th NOVEMBER FIRST DATES**

Black Stork 9th Oct NNP

White Stork 6th Nov Loresho Nairobi

Garganey 5th Nov Manguo Pond

Northern Shoveler 6th Nov Lake Naivasha

Red-necked Phalarope 22nd Oct Lake Nakuru NP

Common Snipe 5th Oct / 8th Oct NNP /NNP

Black-tailed Godwit 5th Oct NNP

Caspian Plover 30th Oct Mara

Common Ringed Plover 9th Oct NNP

White-winged Black Tern 5th Oct NNP

Eurasian Honey-Buzzard 22nd Nov NNP

Western Marsh Harrier 30th Oct / 14th Oct Mara / Lake Jipe

Montagu’s Harrier 16th Oct / 30th Sept Mara / NNP

Pallid Harrier 16th Oct Mara

Steppe Eagle 6th Nov Lake Naivasha

Great Spotted Eagle 10th Nov NNP

Lesser Spotted Eagle 13th Nov Garden Langata

Eurasian Buzzard 16th Oct / 11th Oct Mara / City Park Nairobi

Long-legged Buzzard 4th Nov Garden Langata

Booted Eagle 23rd Oct NNP

Common Kestrel 17th Nov NNP

Lesser Kestrel 20th Nov Garden Langata

Eurasian Hobby 29th Oct / 14th Oct Mara / NNP

Western Red-footed Falcon 29th Oct Nairobi Upper Hill

Amur Falcon 23rd Nov Garden Langata

Sooty Falcon 18th Oct Mara

Eurasian Cuckoo 5th Oct NNP

Common Swift 4th Oct Garden Langata

“Pallid-like Swift 6th Nov Garden Langata

Eurasian Nightjar 2nd Nov Kabete

Eurasian Bee-eater 15th Sept NNP

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater 2nd Dec Loldaiga Hills

Eurasian Roller 9th Oct NNP

Eurasian Wryneck 18th Oct Nairobi Museum

Red-backed Shrike 24th Oct Mara

Isabelline Shrike 5th Oct NNP

Turkestan Shrike 25th Oct NNP

Eurasian Golden Oriole 30th Sept Garden Langata

Barn Swallow

Sand Martin 5th Oct / 30th Sept NNP / NNP

House Martin 4th Oct Garden Langata

Willow Warbler 30th Sept / 27th Sept Langata / Langata

Olive Tree Warbler 4th Nov Icross Rd (Magadi Rd)

Olivaceous Warbler 8th Nov NNP

Upcher’s Warbler 17th Nov NNP

Icterine Warbler 22nd Nov NNP

Marsh Warbler 22nd Nov NNP

Eurasian Reed Warbler 30th Nov Garden Upper Hill

Sedge Warbler 2nd Dec Lower Kabete

Blackcap 31st Oct Garden Langata

Garden Warbler 5th Oct / 11th Oct NNP

Common Whitethroat 9th Oct NNP

Eurasian Rock Thrush 1st Nov Garden Langata

Rufous Bush Chat 1st Nov Nguuni

Luscinia sp 23rd Oct NNP

Common Nightingale 1st Nov Garden Langata

Thrush Nightingale 3rd Nov Kabete

Irania 4th Dec Magadi Road

Northern Wheatear 25th Sept / 15th Sept NNP / NNP

Isabelline Wheatear 25th Oct / 14th Oct NNP / NNP

Pied Wheatear 3rd Nov Suswa

Desert Wheatear 17th Nov NNP

Whinchat 8th Oct NNP

Common Redstart 13th Oct Langata (unrecorded 2016)

Spotted Flycatcher 2nd Oct / 8th Oct Thika / NNP

Tree Pipit 17th Oct Garden Langata

Red-throated Pipit 17th Nov NNP

Yellow Wagtail 9th Oct / 8th Oct NNP / NNP

Grey Wagtail 26th Oct Nairobi Arboretum

By the 16th October last year, the following had already been reported….Black Stork, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Ringed Plover, White-winged Black Tern (imm), Pallid Harrier, Eurasian Cuckoo, Common Swift, Eurasian Roller, Isabelline Shrike, Eurasian Golden Oriole, House Martin, Common Whitethroat, Whinchat and Tree Pipit.

Species recorded earlier this year than in 2016 are Montagu’s Harrier, Eurasian Buzzard, Eurasian Hobby, Sand Martin, Willow Warbler, Northern and Isabelline Wheatears and Yellow Wagtail.

It will be interesting to see the dates for the remaining migrants.

NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK 14th OCTOBER 2017

Nigel Hunter kindly picked me up at 6.25am, we were at the Park Entrance at 6.40am with traffic moving steadily in spite of being Saturday. Our usual guard at the gate was not there and his replacement was a very bad example of a welcome. “Park there”, “open the back window”…. demanding in a very offensive tone. He was advised that each of the requests should be met with please which seemed a waste of time telling him. If I meet this individual again and he has not changed his attitude for the better I will report him as he is a very bad representative for KWS. Anyone else having rude personnel at the entrance should do likewise. The staff at the paying desk were friendly, cheerful and efficient and we were processed on arrival, maybe it took two minutes. The staff at the entrance into the Park were also very friendly and cheerful and very efficient.

We first visited the KWS Mess, last weeks Spotted Flycatcher was in the same place by the rubbish pit. There was a reasonable variety here, though no other migrants. The Black-collared Apalis was singing as a result of the two inches of rain that had fallen on Wed & Thurs nights, breaking the grip of the drought. There is little doubt that it is the same bird present now for four years, it’s just that a year has passed without us visiting the garden. Another interesting bird here was a male Paradise Flycatcher of the form with white central streamers on an otherwise rufous tail. It’s only the third time I have seen this form in the Park, (see image). Ivory Burning Site was extremely quiet, but the Secretarybird was patrolling the Ivory Burning Arena again. It was the only individual seen today.

There was no sign of the Thick-knee at the Nagalomon Drift, and nothing from the bridge. The water level in the dam had risen a bit but not attracting any birds, and on our first visit the only Palearctics were a single Green Sandpiper and nine Black-winged Stilts. There were a single Black-crowned Night-Heron and a very attractive Purple Heron (see image), just four Darters and a Yellow-billed Stork, a Zanzibar Greenbul called from the back. Taking the back road to Hyena Dam, there were noisy Scaly Francolins calling, the mixed pair of Augur Buzzards that have been a feature for many years, an early Eurasian Hobby winging westwards, and another Green Sandpiper. As usual numerous Speke’s Weavers, accompanied by a few Red-billed Quelea, House Sparrows and Pin-tailed Whydahs were drawn to the food left for them on the balconies. Speckled Pigeons have now moved into their water tank. Hyena Dam was also quiet, there were four Yellow-billed Storks and five African Spoonbills, a single Great White Egret, an adult Fish Eagle back in residence, an immature Martial Eagle from the Causeway and the days only Grey Crowned Cranes. Waders consisted of another nine Black-winged Stilts, an adult African Jacana, an increase of Long-toed Plovers up to six, Spur-winged Plovers with another tiny chick, three Green and Common and just four Wood Sandpipers. White-rumped Swifts were back and all through the Park, whilst Little Swifts were scarce. Last week they were in large numbers all over the Park and there were no White-rumped at all. Swallows included a few Barn and a couple of Sand Martins.

We took the road along the Mokoyeti, the female Saddle-billed Stork was at the ford, whilst on the swamp were single Great White and Yellow-billed Egrets, and an extravert African Water Rail (see image), possibly from Hyena Dam as they were not visible today, and with the further rise in water level there is almost no-where for them. The first of a number of widespread parties of Eurasian Bee-eaters made an appearance. After crossing the bridge there was a perched but singing Zitting Cisticola.

We looped around and headed for Kingfisher Picnic Site, at the nearby swamp there were two out-of plumage Yellow-crowned Bishops and the first of five Northern Wheatears. At the site were a few birds including a pair of African Hoopoes, Red-throated Tit and Brown Parisoma. The drive towards Maasai Gate was somewhat uninteresting, but after passing the inside quarry road we encountered a noisy White-bellied Bustard and at the ford below Baboon Cliffs the Pallid Honeyguide first found a few months ago, was back and singing on his territory. There was another pair of African Hoopoes above Hippo Pools, and also an Abyssinian Scimitarbill there. Further along the Mbagathi were a handsome pair of adult Fish Eagles and a displaying pair of Tawny Eagles.

There were a few more species on Rhino Circuit which included another pair of Abyssinian Scimitarbills and more Red-throated Tits, at the Pipeline we heard the only Banded Parisomas for the day, further towards East Gate a stunning roadside Martial Eagle which stayed after we had stopped to admire it at very close quarters, and equally ignored us when we drove back past it later! (See image). The dry bush was exactly that and not much activity although we did run across Speckle-fronted and Vitelline Masked Weavers and a party of African Silverbills.

Athi Dam was interesting with five Red-billed Teal, five Yellow-billed Storks, seven roosting adult Black-crowned Night-Herons and the first single Cattle Egret for the day. After a few weeks ago having had my largest single group of Pink-backed Pelicans for the Park at twelve, then superseded last week with a staggering nineteen, this week the total was a ridiculous sixty-six!!!, and Whites have increased to just five. The friendly adult Fish Eagle was present, a Spotted Thick-knee was calling in the early afternoon and persistently, and waders were rather poor with two Black-winged Stilts, the Spur-winged Plover twins still with their parents, five Common Greenshank, single Green, two Wood and three Common Sandpipers and just two Little Stints only. However sitting on a mud spit was the bird of the day, the Park’s third only record of Gull-billed Tern, a probable adult as plumage clean grey with no brown feathers or wing-pattern, and flight feathers quite worn, (see image). Some forty Yellow-throated Sandgrouse fed on weedy growth at the northern end (see image).

Strangely there were Violet Wood-Hoopoes along the Causeway, I have seen them here twice before, but no-where else in the Park away from the immediate vicinity of the Mbagathi.

The drive back was not very productive, we met with three Banded Martins, the best bird being the seasons first Isabelline Wheatear (see image), at the “Beacon.” Nothing new had come into Hyena Dam, but Nagalomon now had an impressive Spur-winged Goose (see image). We visited Forest Edge and Langata Dams but both were dry, there was a group of scavengers attracted to a dead Buffalo towards Langata Gate. It included two Ruppell’s Vultures, one of which was taking control (see image). There was also an Emerald Cuckoo singing, the only true cuckoo recorded today.

There were plenty of mammals seen today, but they were quite widespread apart from Wildebeeste which were mainly in herds in the Athi Basin area. Three Lions were seen not far from Nagalomon Dam.

It was largely quiet, but there was still a good variety and we ended with 177 species recorded today. We exited Langata Gate at 5.20pm.

KEY TO MONTAGE

1 RUPPELL’S VULTURE

The “king of the castle” individual near Langata Gate

2 SPUR-WINGED GOOSE

Late afternoon bird at Nagalomon Dam

3 RED-CAPPED LARK

Singing in response to the rain

4 RING-NECKED DOVE

Casual pose

5 MARTIAL EAGLE

The confiding adult in Athi Basin

6 WOOD & GREEN SANDPIPERS

Nice comparison at Hyena Dam

7 NORTHERN WHEATEAR

Biscuit-toned individual

8 GULL-BILLED TERN

Just NNP’s third ever record at Athi Dam

9 MARABOU STORK

Of two hundred feeding along a drain into Athi Dam, these were the only two birds that were in attractive breeding plumage.

10 YELLOW-THROATED SANDGROUSE

A regular afternoon feature currently is the flock feeding in the weedy growth on the north end of Athi Dam, there were forty on this occasion.

11 SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

The only one seen in the Park was a hanger on from last week.

12 STRIPED KINGFISHER

Present at Kingfisher Picnic Site, which is why it is called that.

13 PARADISE FLYCATCHER

The male coming into breeding plumage at KWS Mess. It is the form that has a reddish tail apart from white central streamers.

14 BROWN-CROWNED TCHAGRA

At an angle where only the black side to the crown can be seen.

15 ABYSSINIAN SCIMITARBILL

Seen at the wood above Hippo Pools and on Rhino Circuit today.

16 AFRICAN WATER RAIL

Another extravert bird at the swamp along the Mokoyeti on the way to the ford near Hyena Run-off, or is it the Hyena Dam bird relocated.

17 PURPLE HERON

This adult at Nagalomon Dam didn’t twitch all the time we watched it.

18 MOUSTACHED GRASS WARBLER & SPOT-FLANKED BARBET

Strange bedfellows, not two species usually seen in such close association.