**NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK 16th August 2018**

Dear All,

Nigel Hunter and myself arrived at the Main Entrance of Nairobi National Park at 6.40am, the road all the way was moving at a steady pace, for this time it was a Thursday. Having suffered badly in delays caused by the cumbersome and customer unfriendly system currently adopted, we were delighted to not see anyone ahead of us in the queue and from arrival we were in the Park having completed everything by 6.45am. Thursday was the way to go!

The weather was miserable, there was light drizzle at times requiring windscreen wipers, but only for a matter of minutes, but it was cold, and cold for the entire day, the sun broke out of the gloom at 5.00pm! This really is a horrible winter, and a long one.

The route we followed was the main entrance road, turning off to Ivory Burning Site via the KWS Mess road, Nagalomon Dam, back road to Hyena Dam, Hyena Dam, through the run-off with a detour back up to the Mokoyeti oxbow, back and across the Mokoyeti Bridge to Nagalomon Dam for the second look. Then the road to Kingfisher Picnic Site, and the south road on to the inside quarry road near Maasai Gate, all the way to Hippo Pools and the Mbagathi Oxbow, which still fairly full has the potential of attracting waders and waterbirds this coming season. Rhino Circuit, back on the old Cheetah Gate road to the Pipeline road, and in to Athi Dam. Up onto the top road to the Vulture Drinking Pools, the track to the main north road as far as Karen Primary School Dam, Eland Hollow and the inside road back to Hyena Dam for a second look. Past Nagalomon Dam for the third time, then up to Langata Pond and the vlei near the gate, exiting at 5.10pm from Langata Gate, and having an easy time with the traffic back down Magadi Road. We did not visit the Kisembe Forest on this occasion, neither the Forest Edge Dam nor the Nagalomon River drive.

We recorded 172 species in the course of the day, the more interesting being….

HARLEQUIN QUAIL

Single birds Hyena Dam Run-off (male) and near Vulture Drinking Pools (female).

WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK

The only birds were a pair at Eland Hollow.

RED-BILLED TEAL

One at Eland Hollow the only bird seen.

LITTLE GREBE

A pair on the Mbagathi oxbow, one Karen Primary School Dam and the stripy-faced young bird on Langata Dam.

YELLOW-BILLED STORK

Thirteen at Athi Dam of which eleven adult, and several getting breeding colours. (See image).

MARABOU STORK

After singles the past couple of months, at least four hundred concentrated around the Mbagathi Oxbow whilst none at any other dam.

AFRICAN SPOONBILL

There were a dozen on Nagalomon Dam, which included birds fledged there, and three still incubating.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON

Smaller numbers than usual, but several incubating at Nagalomon Dam.

STRIATED HERON

An immature along the seasonal creek on Rhino Circuit, and what might be my first ever at Athi Dam, an adult.

GREAT EGRET

The only egret not Cattle day was a single bird at Nagalomon Dam.

LONG-TAILED CORMORANT

A number of pairs incubating, now that the Sacred Ibis have stopped nesting and have fledged but still dependant young.

GREAT CORMORANT

Still no obvious nest, but one white-breasted ad and a black bird present at Nagalomon Dam.

AFRICAN DARTER

Eight birds included three incubating birds at Nagalomon Dam.

SECRETARYBIRD

A pair on the inside Maasai Gate road were the only ones seen.

AFRICAN BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE

One on the inside Maasai Gate road was the only bird today.

RUPPELL’S VULTURE

One in a tree full of White-backed near Kingfisher. (See image).

WHITE-BACKED VULTURE

There were twenty-three vultures in the top of the small tree near Kingfisher, which obviously had a recent kill nearby. At the vlei near Langata Gate, nineteen were roosting in a single Eucalypt, but none came to the Drinking Pools, as it was too cold! (See image).

AFRICAN HARRIER HAWK

One adult in the Mbagathi Canyon.

GABAR GOSHAWK

One adult at Hyena Dam.

AUGUR BUZZARD

A dark form on the back road at Hyena Dam was the only bird seen.

TAWNY EAGLE

One at the vulture tree near Kingfisher, and another near the vulture roost below Baboon Cliffs.

MARTIAL EAGLE

Single adults along the Mbagathi and the Beacon, which now looks like a small railway station!

CROWNED EAGLE

A surprise was a young male being harassed by Pied Crows near Leopard Cliffs. This is a personal first along the Mbagathi, and new for me in this Pentad.

WHITE-BELLIED BUSTARD

Five birds seen above the Athi Basin, a pair, and another pair with a male intruder. (See image).

GREY-CROWNED CRANE

A pair with two young below Impala Lookout, a pair with one young near Hyena Dam, five adults in the run-off, one at Vulture Drinking Pools looked as if it were on a nest, but there was no nest to be seen. Strange to see them crouching and not moving if no nest. A pair with three young vlei near Langata Gate. They are having a good season.

SPOTTED THICK-KNEE

Every visit to the causeway on Athi Dam, there is a bird calling. So we played a recording back to see what would happen and suddenly we had a chorus from different bushes, but we did not see one. We have in the past recorded up to eleven from here, and there is an amazing concentration for this small area.

LONG-TOED PLOVER

It was so good to see that after months of absence a pair is back at Hyena Dam.

KITTLIZ’S PLOVER

Also absent for a few months, there were now three at Athi Dam. It’s interesting that whilst up to thirty can be seen regularly at this site and of course a few pairs breed here, no Kittlitz’s Plover has ever been recorded at another site in NNP! That’s what you call site fidelity!

COMMON GREENSHANK

The adult seen ten days ago was still at Athi Dam.

WOOD SANDPIPER

The only birds were seen with a Little Stint at Hyena Dam.

COMMON SANDPIPER

Two at the Mbagathi Oxbow were the only birds.

LITTLE STINT

One at Hyena Dam, four Athi Dam and six Vulture Drinking Pools.

DUSKY TURTLE DOVE

Why would I put this woodland bird down as an interesting observation? That is the reason, it is a woodland and forest species, but things are changing in NNP. Now it is turning up regularly in the isolated dams in the dry grassland. There were even three together at Karen Primary School Dam. It has become increasingly numerous around Hyena Dam in the past few years, and likewise at East Gate where it is in the Crotons. Obviously Ring-necked Doves are not competition for it, yet Red-eyes do not like to get into the open at all.

LAUGHING DOVE

One along the Mbagathi just down from Nagalomon Dam was in much the same place a few weeks ago.

KLAAS’ CUCKOO

One immature bird was the day’s only cuckoo, it was near the Mbagathi Oxbow.

BLUE-NAPED MOUSEBIRD

Four near the upper Mokoyeti Bridge were the only birds today.

GREY-HEADED KINGFISHER

One on Rhino Circuit.

VIOLET-WOOD-HOOPOE

Four in the most impressive mixed feeding flock on Rhino Circuit I have ever seen. Usually a flock moves through the acacias there fairly rapidly and can be frustrating to keep up with, but today the birds were cold, hungry and much more thorough, working the same small are for some time before moving to another branch. (See images).

ABYSSINIAN SCIMITARBILL

This is another bird that although not common in NNP. Does not get into the “interesting bird” category. However one was near Kingfisher Picnic Site, and the first I have ever seen in NNP in the western sector. New for this Pentad. (See image).

D’ARNAUD’S BARBET

One sluggish bird at the end of the Rhino circuit where it has been seen previously. (See image).

RED-THROATED TIT

A pair at Kingfisher Picnic Site.

BANDED MARTIN

Five around Athi Dam.

DECOLA DAY

That’s when you get all ten of NNP’s Cisticolas on the same day!

BANDED PARISOMA

One in the woodland above Hippo Pools and one Athi Dam causeway, both regular sites.

WHITE-STARRED ROBIN

One for the first time ever on the KWS Mess road, never seen out of Kisembe Forest before. We were on a mixed flock when someone loudly honked a horn behind us and it was no longer in evidence!

HOLUB’S GOLDEN WEAVER

I always think of this species as an independent loaner, the species keeping fairly much to themselves, but two were active members of the very active bird party high in the canopy on Rhino Circuit.

LESSER MASKED WEAVER

About ten birds in the mixed feeding flock on Rhino Circuit.

YELLOW-CROWNED BISHOP

Small groups were coming to drink at Karen Primary School Dam and Eland Hollow Dam. None in breeding plumage.

WHITE-WINGED WIDOWBIRD

More than for some time, large numbers in dam near Kingfisher picnic site, scattered around Hyena Dam and both sides of upper Mokoyeti area, and a few along the Mbagathi all non-breeding plumage.

RED-COLLARED WIDOWBIRD

Over a dozen in the Hyena Dam area in non-breeding plumage.

AFRICAN FIREFINCH

A pair on the back road to Hyena Dam is the first here for a year, whereas it used to be a regular site for them.

CRIMSON-RUMPED WAXBILL

Small parties along the Mbagathi.

BLACK-FACED WAXBILL

A pair on the Athi Dam causeway.

AFRICAN QUAILFINCH

Small numbers scattered widely.

PARASITIC WEAVER

Along the Mokoyeti in the run-off area, a flock of about thirty birds were in vegetation on the road, but also actually feeding on the road itself, in the evening a flock of birds were flying in formation and doing aerobatics around and around, there were some 130 birds, they then came down and landed on the vegetation and all were Parasitic Weavers. (See images).

PANGANI LONGCLAW

Seven birds encountered in the southern grasslands.

**KEY TO MONTAGE**

VIOLET WOOD-HOOPOE

As it was cold and overcast a large mixed flock on Rhino Circuit containing a party of four Violet Wood-Hoopoes were feeding voraciously and staying for long periods in the same groups of branches. This was a golden opportunity to get some images that were not influenced by sunlight on the iridescence, and the fact that they were unusually confiding rather than flighty enabled some useful images and also they were videoed.

There is still some scepticism that Violet Wood-Hoopoes are present anywhere near Nairobi, and hopefully this will lay any doubts that exist.

Both adults are immatures (with black bills) are involved. The young birds lack any iridescent body feathering at all, and the back is matt deep purplish, darker than the iridescent wings, the head and mantle are much the same colour. The adults are shown perched at all different angles, and even with wings open revealing entire back, and again they are all deep purplish with no iridescence of any sort. Two of the images of the adult in the bottom right of the set clearly show both the matt purple back, and glittering iridescent green on the throat. There is absolutely no doubt that all birds in NNP are Violet Wood-Hoopoes, not a remote hint of ever having any Green W-H in their make-up, being completely pure bred, most definitely no hybridism. In fact these could be even more violet than birds from their core range!

1 THE BEACON

Once the most conspicuous thing on the plains, now dwarfed by the monstrous size of the railway construction.

2 PARASITIC WEAVER

An immature bird and birds feeding on the road next to Hyena Dam run-off.

3 YELLOW-BILLED STORK

An adult, part of thirteen, this individual getting the flush of pink associated with breeding.

4 WHITE-BACKED VULTURES

Gathering in a small tree near Kingfisher Picnic Site.

5 WHITE RHINOCEROS

This female and two offspring aged years apart were in a forest glade near Langata Gate, normally found in open grassland. The two siblings in spite of their age difference were playing together.

6 BLACK RHINOCEROS

This female and calf were in open grassland near Hyena Dam, though more associated with bushes and forest.

7 WHITE-BELLIED BUSTARDS

Female left, Male right.

8 d’ARNAUD’S BARBET

In acacias near the east end of Rhino Circuit.

9 WHITE-BACKED VULTURES

Part of the group near Kingfisher Picnic Site. The three show amazing differences in overall colouring, black, orange and grey.

10 ABYSSINIAN SCIMITARBILL

The bird near Kingfisher Picnic Site, my first in the west of the Park.

11 LIONS

A couple of young females quenching their thirsts at Hyena Dam.