**NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK 17th APRIL 2019**

I have taken the liberty of taking these records from eBird, for Rupert Quinnels day in Nairobi National Park on 17th when he had a very fortunate encounter with a lost Abyssinian Roller!

Little Grebe Long-toed Plover (5), African Jacana, Green Sandpiper, Pink-backed Pelican (2), Goliath Heron, Yellow-billed Egret, Glossy Ibis (2), African Hawk-Eagle, Violet Woodhoopoe, Eurasian Roller (3), Abyssinian Roller, Red-backed, Turkestan and Lesser Grey Shrikes, Willow Warbler, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Upcher’s Warbler (2), Spotted Flycatcher (3), Nightingale, Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush (2), Whinchat, Long-billed Pipit, Pangani Longclaw (2).

I think that James Bradley did a sterling job of getting the message about the Abyssinian Roller onto kenyabirdsnet so quickly and we should all be very grateful that we have someone on the lookout for the unusual records that appear there, it was just so unfortunate that the bird was a mean individual on this occasion!

**NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK 19th APRIL 2019**

Dear All,

Nigel Hunter took almost empty roads to the Main Entrance of Nairobi National Park, braving a visit on Good Friday. When we arrived the queue was outside the door and across the car park when we were through with the formalities. It took forty minutes but three desks were operating and the girls did an excellent job. Not surprisingly we headed first to Nagalomon Dam just in case the Abyssinian Roller from two days ago makes a reappearance, but it didn’t. It is what is known as a “Finders Bird,” meaning that it is only ever seen by the person who originally found it. Luckily it was on the Nagalomon Causeway, and photographed on wither side of the road in the trees, and once when it dropped down to pick something off the road in front of the car.

Both Nightingale and Garden Warbler were in the scrub, but the dam was really quiet, no Palearctic waders of any description. There were six Darters, a Squacco Heron, a pair of Striated Herons which are rare here at any time but certainly never a pair before, and the days only Great Egret. Several African Spoonbills were trumpeting from potential nest sites on the island. The adult African Jacana was still present, and a young Gabar Goshawk flew by.

We drove by the Mokoyeti and back up to Nagalomon Dam in case the Roller was in scrub along the edge. Here we found the first of over fifty Red-backed Shrike seen today, though we only had two each of Turkestan and Lesser Grey. There was a Northern Hobby flying over high, and the only one seen today, and the first of two Tawny Eagles, the first of six Back-winged Kites, a handsome Jacobin Cuckoo posed on a bush and a group of some fifty Parasitic Weavers shared some stubble with an out of plumage male Jackson’s Widowbird.

From here were went to Hyena Dam doing this small circuit this time in reverse. The young Goliath Heron is still with us, a little more colour on the head, and very attractive patterning of black markings on the underparts (see image). It is absurdly indifferent to any vehicle now. There was a Yellow-billed Stork and three African Spoonbills, whilst waders apart from the usual currently six Long-toed Plovers, Blacksmith, Spur-winged, Crowned and Three-banded Plovers, also had twenty-two Black-winged Stilts, single Ruff and Common Snipe (see image), ten Wood and two Common Sandpipers but no Green seen at all today, and five Little Stints. It was quiet along the back road to Ivory Burning Site, The first of four Augur Buzzards including two different dark birds, the first of nine Spotted Flycatchers met with today some are now quite dapper in their spring dress (see image), the only White-winged Widowbird of the day in non-breeding plumage, another couple of Nightingales and at Ivory Burning Site flying with a mixture of White-backed Vultures and Yellow-billed Kites was a very handsome adult African Hawk-Eagle.

Now heading off to Kingfisher, we found a number of Parasitic Weavers in the swamp below Impala Lookout, but apart from many holiday celebrators little was new in the Kingfisher area so the next stop would be Ololo. Whilst the mighty Mbagathi is about six inches wide at the bridge, there were a few birds about, The days only Fish Eagle was calling along the river, there was a second Gabar Goshawk, the Secretarybird was still incubating, a Diederic Cuckoo, another Nightingale, the first of just six Willow Warblers today, and a stop in the acacias gave us our first Speckle-fronted Weavers for the day, Banded Parisoma but the prize went out to an Olive Tree Warbler, it was videoed (see images). It didn’t say a word, and ponderously moved through the vegetation with the odd tail flick. The importance of the record is that whilst uncommon there are a few records from the Acacia mellifera out on the road towards Cheetah Gate, but this one was a new species for “Finch Pentad.” The Abyssinian Roller with nice images two days ago at Nagalomon Dam was the 483rd species for the pentad, and here a couple of days later the Olive Tree Warbler providing number 484. Five hundred cannot be far away.

The drive through the southern grasslands was unproductive, hot, dry and dusty and a part from a few normal riparian species along the Mbagathi we picked up precious little.

Rhino Circuit also dry and dusty gave up very few species, there were two lonely immature Violet Woodhoopoes, otherwise we found an incredibly quiet Striped Kingfisher by now thinking this bird was going to break the record and not be seen today, and a couple of Lesser Masked Weavers. No migrants at all on the Pipeline, and the water had greatly receded at Athi Dam and apparently was not attractive to waders. However there were two Pink-backed Pelicans, eight roosting Black-crowned Night-Herons, three White, an adult Open-billed, a new record of 53 Yellow-billed Storks including some very young birds, and several hundred Marabous. Seven White-faced Whistling-Ducks, and two Red-billed Teal were around the edge, and a Secretarybird was in for a drink, whilst a Ruppell’s Vulture, which intended to do the same was harassed and poked mercilessly by the Marabous and flew off, which is strange as there was so much shoreline with no Marabous. There were also a dozen African Spoonbills. One Spotted Thick-knee was resting under the Acacia mellifera on the SE end, but undoubtedly others were well-buried loser to the trunks as it was very hot now. Still six Black-winged Stilts, a Ringed Plover, the days only Common Greenshank, ten Wood and four Common Sandpipers, and ten Little Stint. Whilst having our lunch on the causeway we were entertained by a Sedge Warbler feeding in the acacias over the water, an Olivaceous Warbler was in the acacias and maybe the same bird present the past few months, the same could b said for the Spotted Flycatcher as well, but the Willow Warblers were fresh in migrants and the resident Banded Parisomas were singing.

Now on the return journey on the top of Athi Basin we had a single then no less seven together, Shelley’s Francolins sheltering from the sun under small isolated acacias, and at the empty Vulture Drinking Pools The days only Wheatear, an Isabelline (see image).

We stopped to admire the days second only Lesser Grey Shrike which was in a small acacia which looked a kilometre away from the nearest tree and whilst watching it an Upcher’s Warbler appeared and was in full dancing mode. Three (including one ex-) Hippolais Warblers in one day is not at all bad. Not far from here we had a very very lonely looking male Lesser Kestrel. We thought we would go and check out the Tree Nursery near East Gate, but the gate was locked, which is not surprising as it was a public holiday, but we had the days only Common Whitethroat in the acacias there, and a male Wattled Starling on an Impala. Retracing back up the road we stopped at a large flowering acacia at the junction with the Service Road. We sat and waited to see what was there, such a tree must attract warblers. There were at least a couple of Willows, but Nigel spotted an Icterine and in spite of waiting for it to appear for some twenty minutes only the Willow Warblers, Yellow-breasted Apalis and Winding Cisticolas appeared in the foliage. So Nigel has the distinction of seeing all four of the formally Hippolais Warbler in NNP on the same day, one of each. (Olivaceous has been moved to Iduna, but Upcher’s, Olive Tree and Icterine are still in Hippolais). On on, but not much to make us stop for we arrived for a final check of Hyena Dam where at long last we found a female Whinchat, there has been a major withdrawal of those in the past week as with Wheatears.

Time for a last and very wishful look at Nagalomon Dam, which wasn’t a waste of time, as sitting on an open acacia branch on the Causeway, and if it had been in the same place all day, in the open sunlight, sat a Eurasian Nightjar (see image). We took the Road along the Mokoyeti in Kisembe Forest but did not see anything apart from Suni, nor anything at all on the large vlei. The Langata Dam on it’s last legs as far as water is concerned graced us with the days only Yellow Wagtail, a female flava type. We were through Langata Gate at 5.00pm, and hardly any traffic again.

It was a great day in spite of the major miss, and we finished the day with 175 species. It might be added here that Barn Swallows were strangely scarce, and yet major passage should be underway. Mammals were widespread, Zebra were possibly more plentiful than usual and Wildebeest were common enough in Athi Basin with many new young.

BUT…. On this same date in 2000 Nairobi Park had 300 Willow Warblers, 500 Red-backed and a 100 Lesser Grey Shrikes.

Best to all

Brian

KEY TO MONTAGE

1. OLIVE TREE WARBLER

This was in Acacia brevispica (?) stands on the road to Ololo Lodge. It’s a large bird behaving like a typical Olive Tree but lacks the spring plumaged yellower bill when seen laterally, and lacking the whiter frosting of a spring male (1a-1c). I wonder if it was female, it was completely silent. I went on line and found an exact match in HBW which lacks the same features (1e). Image 1d is the bird in flight away from the observer, this shows the pale edgings to the secondaries which on the closed wing and they overlap create the pale panel effect. I have had OTW in the hand at Ngulia but had really never appreciated just how long the legs were, or the fullness of the white undertail coverts.

1. EURASIAN NIGHTJAR

This silvery bird is of the eastern race unwini, this species always roosts across elevated branches not on the ground.

1. ISABELLINE WHEATEAR

Just here as it might be the season’s last.

1. COMMON SNIPE

….and same for this

1. SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

This shows how nicely marked some spring birds can be.

1. GOLIATH HERON

Still on Hyena Dam