**NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK 5th August 2018**

Dear All,

Nigel Hunter and I arrived at the Main Entrance of Nairobi National Park at 6.40am. By then the car-park only had a couple of spaces remaining and the queue was heading out of the door across the KWS car-park, and three very busy ladies were professionally and cheerfully battling to process the large number of people visiting the Park today.

With the latest change in centralisation processing, access is no longer possible at East Gate, Maasai Gate or Langata Gate and everyone has to go through this process at Main Gate causing a massive bottleneck and not at all a pleasant introduction for this unique National Park. You can now count on wasting nearly an hour and it’s like trying to break into Fort Knox just trying to pay your way and getting into the Park.

After queuing you present your ID, be it the card, or for residents and visitors, passports with up to date entries. The details of the payment are then taken, and a ticket is raised after the information is entered into the computer, this ticket and a form is then passed to another clerk who runs off with it somewhere. You hand over your Visa card, which is entered into the machine, the figure punched in and the machine presented to you to punch in the Pin. This then whirs and now it’s back to the computer if the transaction was successful. (Not sure what happens on MPesa). Now a green card is entered into another machine, one for the passengers and a second for the vehicle. Once you have these two cards and a receipt for the balance you are through with the first stages. Now you must go to the entrance gate for the Park, and fill in the details in the visitors book, this is date, name, the number on the green plastic card you are about to present, where you are going (it’s always the Park, but a lot later than you arrived), time of entry, number of Citizens, Residents or Visitors, and sign it. The pass the two green plastic cards over to the lady and she runs them through a reader, gives you another receipt which you need to exit and keeps the plastic cards. You can now go in……

We were in by 7.20am; it was a gloomy and cold day, no sign of sunshine. At 5.20pm we exited Langata Gate (you can exit any gate) signed the book and that was it. Everywhere was open again although there had been recent rain along the Mbagathi. Water levels are still high in the dams. We took the route: Ivory Burning Site, Nagalomon Dam, back road to Hyena Dam, Karen PS Dam, Eland Hollow, Vulture Drinking Pools, Athi Dam, Pipeline, Rhino Circuit, then looped back along the southern road to Kingfisher, back to Nagalomon, then to Langata Gate via the forest. At 4.30pm it started to get sunny and desperate butterflies were out feeding.

We recorded 170 species in the course of the day, the more interesting being….

SCALY FRANCOLIN

Heard on the entrance road, and an obliging pair see on the back road to Hyena Dam.

HARLEQUIN QUAIL

One male flushed near Eland Hollow.

RED-BILLED TEAL

A Pair at Eland Hollow was the only waterfowl other than Egyptian Geese.

LITTLE GREBE

One adult in non-breeding at Karen PS Dam, and a young bird with remnant striping on the head on Langata Dam even though they had not bred there. So in spite of being immature it must have flown in from elsewhere.

YELLOW-BILLED STORK

Two at Athi Dam were the only storks recorded other than Marabou.

MARABOU STORK

Twenty along the Mbagathi River.

AFRICAN SPOONBILL

Whilst Sacred Ibis appear to have finished nesting at Nagalomon Dam, and are present in large numbers with still dependant flying young, at least two nests of Spoonbills are still incubating. Away from here the only other bird was at Athi Dam.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON

About thirty or more with many immatures at Nagalomon Dam.

STRIATED HERON

One adult along the Mbagathi flying through the woodland.

MADAGASCAR POND HERON

One at Karen PS Dam, as seen nine days previously (see image).

GREAT EGRET

The only bird was at Nagalomon Dam.

LONG-TAILED ORMORANT

With the lack of vegetation on the nesting trees at Nagalomon Dam, the nests are now easier to see.

GREAT CORMORANT

The same dapper white-breasted adult was at Nagalomon Dam as nine days ago.

AFRICAN DARTER

Ten Adults and immatures at Nagalomon Dam.

LAPPET-FACED VULTURE

One adult near Leopard Cliffs.

BATELEUR

An adult female near Leopard Cliffs. Recently only the male has been seen.

GABAR GOSHAWK

One at top of Athi Basin.

AUGUR BUZZARD

One back of Hyena Dam was the only bird recorded today, on the worst days for raptors in memory.

WHITE-BELLIED BUSTARD

One top of Athi Basin.

LESSER MOORHEN

A surprise of a first year bird at Langata Dam (see image).

GREY CROWNED CRANE

Two pairs with two young, one with one.

BLACKSMITH PLOVER

With day old chick Athi Dam.

SPUR-WINGED PLOVER

With several days old pair of chicks Athi Dam.

COMMON GREENSHANK

One at Athi Dam (see image).

COMMON SANDPIPER

One on Rhino Circuit, two on the Mbagathi ox-bow were the only birds and the first for this season in NNP. No Green or Wood were encountered which was strange.

WHITE-WINGED BACK TERN

An adult with no trace of breeding dress similar to the bird seen two weeks ago at Athi Dam indicated that it had not left the African continent this season and not a fresh migrant (see image).

BLACK-FACED SANDGROUSE

Even though not reliably recorded in NNP at the time the checklist was produced, there have been a number of singles since and one pair with chicks. But today we met males in three widely separate locations including a pair in the SE corner of Athi Dam. The others were at the junction of the Empakasi Dam road and above Hippo Pools. This does indicate a local incursion.

SPECKLED PIGEON

After only relatively recently discovered the rooves and water tanks of the unit block behind Hyena Dam with its reliable House Sparrows, there were twelve pigeons there now.

DUSKY TURTLE-DOVE

As with nine days ago birds were unusually numerous around Hyena Dam, and the Mokoyeti River with an outlier feeding out in the plains at Karen PS Dam.

WHITE-RUMPED SWIFT

The only bird was one at the bridge on Nagalomon Dam.

NARINA TROGON

Two males in Kisembe Forest.

AFRICAN HOOPOE

Two separate males along the Mbagathi, both were calling persistently.

RED-THROATED TIT

On Rhino Circuit where an impressive mixed party was encountered, and also further along the Mbagathi pair were met with trios of young.

PLAIN MARTIN

Thirty resting in the now healthy sedges at Hyena Dam indicated visitation. Also birds were picking up nesting material from the ground and yet the species has never been recorded as nesting in NNP.

BANDED MARTIN

Twelve birds at Eland Hollow were the only ones recorded.

BARN SWALLOW

As adult first returning bird at Athi Dam.

ZANZIBAR SOMBRE GREENBUL

Singing well at Ivory Burning Site.

HIGHLAND RUSH WARBLER

They have suddenly found their voices with calling birds at back of Hyena Dam, Hyena Dam, Hyena Dam run-off, Mokoyeti Oxbow and swamp near Kingfisher. (Note the name following the separation from Little Rush Warbler).

BANDED PARISOMA

Singles at Athi Dam and above Hippo Pools.

WHITE-STARRED ROBIN

One in Kisembe Forest.

LESSER MASKED WEAVER

Many with the mixed feeding flock on Rhino Circuit.

WHITE-WINGED WIDOWBIRD

Non-breeding birds at swamp near Kingfisher.

RED-COLLARED WIDOWBIRD

Non-breeding birds back of Hyena Dam.

CRIMSON-RUMPED WAXBILL

Many parties along the Mbagathi indicating an incursion into the area.

AFRICAN QUAILFINCH

Widespread but small numbers.

ORANGE-BREASTED WAXBILL

Several near the Mokoyeti Oxbow.

PARASITIC WEAVER

One only at the Hyena Dam run-off ford.

PANGANI LONGCLAW

A pair with two young Athi Dam (see image).

ROSY-BREASTED LONGCLAW

Just one bird near the eastern railway underpass.

**KEY TO MONTAGE**

1 WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN adult non-breeding

As this is an adult with no trace of breeding plumage it is unlikely have arrived from the north.

2 SCALY FRANCOLIN

The pair on the back road to Hyena Dam is regularly encountered here.

3 BLACK-FACED SANDGROUSE adult male

The bird at the Empakasi Road junction

3b close up of eye showing our reflection and what a cloudy day it is!

4 NARINA TROGON adult male

We couldn’t resist a visit to the Trogons. The bright turquoise-blue is the bare skin of the throat, but is only visible as part of the display when the bird is giving its territorial call.

5 MADAGASCAR POND HERON non-breeding

This very attractive individual could easily the same that wintered in the same place last year.

6 PANGANI LONGCLAW dependent young

The young of this species are really nondescript and pipit-like, but they have a little yellow on the shoulder when the wing is open, but is otherwise concealed, and this individual is already starting some lemon colouring to the lower-breast.

7 COMMON GREENSHANK adult breeding plumage

This is an interesting individual, as it is in full breeding plumage it is almost certainly an early returning adult from the north. Birds that don’t return do not go into breeding plumage and remain plain.

8 LESSER MOORHEN Immature getting adult plumage

It seems an unusual date to find this species. It is an immature but just starting to get the grey of adult plumage, a yellower bill and stronger flank line.