BIRDS RECORDED ON SOYSAMBU ESTATE 31st OCT (afternoon) to 2nd NOV (morning)

For the equivalent of two full days, Nigel and Julia Hunter and myself visited the Soysambu Estate at Lake Elementeita. We were there to plan the siting of three Bird Hides along the Lake Shore where visitors can sit in comfort whilst the incredible array of birds parade fearlessly in front of them.

The remainder of the time we were birding and explored much of the area. During this time we were guests of Johnny and Serena Weller, to whom we owe much gratitude for several steps beyond that of the perfect host and hostess.

Lake Elementeita and Soysambu amount to a very rich area, and yet as close as it is to two of our major cities it is still an underwatched site, and hopefully this will change. There are several camp-sites, hotels adjacent to the estate and resident rates for visiting and the potential for this area to turn up some amazing birds is very high.

A detailed list of species recorded by us over this period follows, note that both the Common Names and Scientific Names, as well as the world adopted sequence of families and genera follow the fifth Checklist of the Birds of Kenya which will hopefully be printed very soon.

Best to All

Brian

Egyptian Goose A*lopochen aegyptiaca*

Abundant on the lakeshore in large and small concentrations

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

Mainly on north shore where one group of nearly fifty birds

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Seven on the north shore

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*

The most abundant small duck starting to pair and calling with group displays

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata*

One group of seven birds on the north shore

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Very common still in large congregations

Hildebrandt's Francolin *Pternistis hildebrandti*

Only two single separate birds and none heard

Coqui Francolin *Peliperdix coqui*

Commonly encountered and widespread

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Everywhere around the edge of the lake and many hundreds seen

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Just two birds in an inlet on the west side of the lake not far from the pelican islands

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Far more than Lesser, and more spread out around the margin of the lake

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*

Only two groups on the north shore doubtfully more than five hundred birds

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*

A few on buildings near the main offices and on a building in the north

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*

The most abundant dove and common throughout

Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola*

Almost comparable numbers to Red-eyed and seen throughout

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Small numbers met with mainly near gardens

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*

Only three birds encountered in the northern forest

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria*

A pair of adults in the northern forest

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

One near the diatomite mine and one on Congreve

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*

Just three widespread birds encountered

Dusky Nightjar *Caprimulgus fraenatus*

One male found on a rocky ridge near the west shore

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

A single bird seen at Sunbird Lodge

Common Swift *Apus apus*

A few parties seen but no large concentrations

Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae*

A few birds flying around the cliffs at Sunbird Lodge

African Black Swift *Apus barbatus*

Several around the cliffs at Sunbird Lodge

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

About twenty seen around the head office

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

Only three birds seen

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Common all around the lakeshore, many hundreds involved

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Well spread out around the lakeshore and in the inlets and lagoons, certainly equalling Stilt numbers if not exceeding them

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Common on the lake shore all single birds but no flocks however probably over a hundred birds present

Kittlitz's Sand Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Some eight widespread birds seen on the lakeshore

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

Only three birds encountered

Blacksmith Plover *Vanellus armatus*

Common around lake shore, and widespread at water tanks where some young seen

Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus*

Common but confined to lakeshore

Black-winged Lapwing *Vanellus melanopterus*

An extraordinary concentration of seventy-two birds lined up along the rocky ridge of the pipe line, and not encountered anywhere else

Crowned Plover *Vanellus coronatus*

Well over a hundred birds with Black-wings on the pipe line but otherwise common throughout

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

The most abundant wader if not the most abundant bird with several thousands present

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Common in small social gatherings with many hundreds involved

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Common and running into hundreds of individuals

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Incredibly only three birds seen (and no Green Sandpipers)

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

One of the commonest waders, only outnumbered by Little Stint, many hundreds present

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

A mere two individuals were all that was recorded

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

A solitary bird on the lakeshore

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*

Two birds resting on the north shore

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*

Seen all around the lake with gatherings on offshore islands maybe a hundred present

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

One adult in non-breeding plumages associating with Grey-headed and a small island on the west shore

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus*

One juvenile resting with Grey-headeds on the northeast shore

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

See all around the lake, with small gatherings on offshore islands, probably of fifty birds

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

Only a single bird in full breeding plumage on an isolated lagoon on the west shore

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Widespread over the lake probably over a five hundred birds present

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*

Widespread all around the lake, possibly up to two-hundred birds

European White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Only met with in the Congreve section where a dozen widespread adults

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Crammed on to islands where difficult to estimate, and spread all around the lake, no sign of any young birds yet

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*

One lone adult on the west shore

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Not at all common barely a dozen met with

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

About fifteen around the lake shore

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Probably no more than ten seen

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Just one bird on the first evening along the north shore

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

Small numbers around the lake shore possibly not more than thirty

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*

Very common throughout woodland, gardens and pasture

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

One group of four birds were the only ones seen

Secretary Bird *Sagittarius serpentarius*

Just one bird seen in the farthest north

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Two birds near the Head Office and three birds on Congreve

Black-chested Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis*

One adult in the northern part

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*

One small bird near the west shore and a very large individual stooping unsuccessfully at a Thomson’s Gazelle at Congreve

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*

One in forest near the main houses, and another calling to it

Steppe Eagle A*quila nipalensis*

Two individuals seen well, two probable not seen well and a group of five reported on one morning

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

On moulting male on Congreve

African Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*

A single bird at Sunbird Lodge

Yellow-billed (Black) Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus*

Only four birds encountered

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*

About ten sightings during the period, included a dark brown not black individual

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*

Common and throughout

Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus*

Only on Congreve where a group of five were seen

Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*

Three adults and a juvenile near Monkey Bridge, there was probably a fourth adult that we could not see but four adults and a juvenile had been seen a few days earlier

African Grey Hornbill *Lophoceros nasutus*

The only one was in the north

African Hoopoe *Upupa (epops) africana*

Three sightings of single birds near the houses

Green Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*

One solitary bird seen near Simon’s Camp

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

Just one bird seen on Congreve

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*

A bird was calling from near Monkey Bridge

Nubian Woodpecker *Campethera nubica*

Just one pair recorded from near the west shore

Grey Woodpecker *Mesopicos goertae*

Recorded from gardens and near Monkey Bridge

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus*

Common and widespread throughout

Red-fronted Barbet *Tricholaema diademata*

Fairly common and widespread

White-headed Barbet *Lybius leucocephalus albicauda*

Note that this is true White-headed Barbet, not the Snowy Barbet L senex we are familiar with around Nairobi. A solitary bird near Monkey Bridge

White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides*

Particularly common in the north and on Congreve where seen feeding young, probably a good fifty seen

Eurasian Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

No obvious passage over the area, but groups near the head office and on Congreve

Rufous-crowned Roller *Coracias naevius*

Just three sightings of single birds

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus*

Fairly common and widespread

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*

Not common but five individuals met with

Yellow-collared Lovebird *Agapornis personatus*

Scattered birds in the Yellow Fever Acacias.

Black Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga flava*

The only bird found was a female-type at Congreve

Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*

Several around the main housing area

Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*

Fairly common and widespread

Brubru *Nilaus afer*

The only bird encountered was one near west shore

Grey-headed Bush Shrike *Malaconotus blanchoti*

One bird resident around the houses and another on Congreve

Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis*

One on the climb up to the watchtower was the only bird recorded

Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus*

One bird near the watchtower was the only individual

Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus major*

Met with in gardens and the forest

Common Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*

Common and widespread

Grey-backed Fiscal *Lanius excubitoroides*

Not common with a few around the gardens and several on Congreve

Northern Fiscal Shrike *Lanius (collaris) humeralis*

Not common with only a few seen near the head office and on Congreve

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

Only two single birds encountered

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

Only two females seen, near the main forest area near the north shore and one on Congreve

Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina*

One coming into a flowering Erythrina near the main housing

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis*

Very common and widespread

Bronze Sunbird *Nectarinia kilimensis*

Females seen at Sunbird Lodge and one at a nest near the Elementeita Gate

Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus*

Very common and widespread

White-browed Sparrow Weaver *Plocepasser mahali*

Seen at Sunbird Lodge and a colony in the main housing area

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*

Two birds in non-breeding plumage feeding with Red-cheeked Cordon-bleus on Congreve were the only birds

Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*

Several birds in non-breeding plumage were found in rank grass above the west side of the lake

Baglafecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafecht*

Small numbers widespread wherever vegetation scrubby of forested

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*

Only one near Monkey Bridge and two on Congreve

Speke's Weaver *Ploceus spekei*

Although an old breeding colony seen, the only bird seen was one in the far north near the Elementeita Gate

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes melanotis*

The only bird seen was a male in the main housing area, and nests were seen on two occasions in the woodlands

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*

Common and widespread

Purple Grenadier *Granatina ianthinogaster*

Not too common but seen on a number of occasions

Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus*

Fairly common and widespread, but abundant in scrub on Congreve

Cut-throat *Amadina fasciata*

Eight in dry scrub neat the Elementeita Gate included a male feeding a juvenile

African Quailfinch *Ortygospiza atricollis*

Fairly common in the hay field on Congreve otherwise a few in dry scrub near the diatomite mine

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

Not common but widespread

Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata*

A male and several female plumaged birds living in the main housing area

Kenya Rufous Sparrow *Passer motitensis*

Very common and widespread

Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*

A few of the race ugandae in the main housing area

Grassland Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*

Very common throughout the grasslands

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys goodsoni*

Widespread on the plains but in far less numbers than Grassland Pipit

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

About four birds seen on the ridge centred around the watchtower

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

One bird on Congreve was the only example recorded

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Only about ten seen, the only identified male being lutea

Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara*

A party of three on the river above Monkey Bridge probably indicate local breeding

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*

A few around buildings but not seen away from habitation

Reichenow’s Seedeater *Crithagra reichenowi*

Note seen commonly but widespread throughout

Brimstone Canary *Crithagra sulphuratus*

Frequent around buildings and farm yards but not too common

Golden-breasted Bunting *Fringillaria flaviventris*

A stunning bird seen sunning itself in the northern area

White-bellied Tit *Melaniparus albiventris*

A family living near the main housing area

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*

Common and widespread

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*

A few on plains along the west shore and head office, and on Congreve

Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii*

Widespread and common throughout

Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*

Fairly common throughout

Grey-capped Warbler *Eminia lepida*

A pair on Congreve were the only birds encountered

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*

Fairly common and widespread in thick growths

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*

Very common throughout

Stout Cisticola *Cisticola robustus*

Only found in the hay field on Congreve

Pectoral-patch Cisticola *Cisticola brunnescens*

A few on plains around head office, the far north but particularly numerous on Congreve

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*

Widespread and common throughout

Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*

A single bird in a large swallow concentration over the plains near the main housing area

Black Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne pristoptera*

A couple in the main housing area and one on Congreve

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Small numbers were associating with large numbers of other swallows on the plains neat the main housing area

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Very common around the main office and the main housing area

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Very common and widespread but major concentrations on lines near the main housing area

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

Only two individuals see, one near the pelican islands and one on Congreve

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Common along the cliffs and near the housing area

Banded Martin *Neophadina cincta*

Only on Congreve where at least twenty over the hay field

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*

A couple on the north lakeshore and a couple at the swallow concentration near the main housing area

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Just small numbers but quite widespread

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Widespread but not particularly numerous

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Small numbers in the forested areas and gardens

Brown Parisoma *Sylvia lugens*

One in the main housing area

Northern Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis jacksoni*

Several in the main housing area coming to bathe were the only individuals seen

Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*

Fairly common and widespread where vegetation provides dense cover

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*

Small numbers widespread but not particularly common

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*

Eight on Congreve were the only ones seen

Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

Fairly common and widespread

Rüppell's Starling *Lamprotornis purpuroptera*

Much confined to the forest near the north shore where numerous

Superb Starling *Lamprotornis superbus*

Very common throughout

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

One wet bird in the garden of the head office

Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus*

Not common but singles to trios seen about four times in different places

Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina*

Just one bird in heavy woodland in the north

White-browed Robin Chat *Cossypha heuglini*

Widespread and common particularly garden areas

Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

Two immatures in the northern part were keeping together, and for the species incredibly tame but no others seen

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

One adult male near head office

Northern Anteater Chat *Myrmecocichla aethiops*

Widespread and common

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata*

Three birds on plains hear head office were the only birds found

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Only contributed a fraction to the total number of Wheatears seen

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

An incredible arrival saw this species all over the higher country, and although hardly any around the lake there must have been between 100-150, yet only a few Isabelline

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

One adult male near the west shore was the only bird seen

African Thrush *Turdus pelios*

A pair each around the main housing area and on Congreve

Key to Montage

1 SOUTHERN GROUND HORNBILL

2 WHITE-FRONTED BEE-EATER

3 GOLDEN-BREASTED BUNTING

4 MONTAGU’S HARRIER

5 COMMON ROCK THRUSH

6 AUGUR BUZZARD (BROWN)

7 BLACK-HEADED GULL (LEFT)

8 YELLOW-BILLED STORK

9 NESTING WHITE PELICANS

10 STEPPE EAGLE

11 RED-RUMOED SWALLOWS

12 GREY-HEADED BUSH-SHRIKE