

Kenya

Eastern and Main Tours

Tour Leaflet 2025



Superb Starling © Tertius Gous

21–28 April 2025 (Eastern Kenya)
28 April – 10 May 2025 (Kenya Main Tour)

Kenya 2025



MEGA-DIVERSITY

- Target Kenya's endemics, near-endemics and specials
- Brilliant dry-country birding
- Varied habitats: arid savanna, montane grassland, highland forest, coastal forest and lowlands forest
- Two shorter tours, back-to-back

Sokoke Scops Owl © Tasso Leventis



TOUR LEADER: MICHAEL MILLS



Michael's incredible focus, dedication and ability to locate and show Africa's toughest birds is probably unequalled on the continent. He has led dozens of tours across Africa and his experience in locating birds on just the softest of calls or briefest of views impresses those who travel with him.

DATES (2025)

Eastern Kenya	18 – 28 Apr
Main Kenya Tour	28 Apr – 10 May

PRICES

Eastern	\$4850 + \$440
Main Kenya Tour	\$5850 + \$510

BOOK ONLINE

Visit www.birdingafrica.com
Deposit (\$150) by credit card
Email info@birdingafrica.com



Pangani Longclaw © Michael Mills

Our Kenya Main Tour and Eastern Kenya Tour run back-to-back, giving you the option to bird all the top birding sites in Kenya in 23 days, or to join a shorter 11-day or 13-day trip if you are time limited.

These tours have a strong emphasis on arid savanna birding, with localised targets at Tsavo, Marsabit, Shaba, Samburu and Lake Baringo including Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver, Grant's Wood Hoopoe, Friedmann's Lark, William's Lark, Masked Lark, Fire-fronted Bishop and Jackson's Hornbill. Highland grasslands and shrublands at Kinangop and Aberdares hold Jackson's Francolin, Aberdare Cisticola, Jackson's Widowbird and Sharpe's Longclaw, and in montane forests we'll search for Olive Ibis and Abbot's Starling on Mount Kenya and Taita Thrush, Taita White-eye and Taita Apalis in the Taita Hills. Two areas of lowland forest boost the diversity; in the eastern coastal forests at Sokoke we search for Kilifi Weaver, Amani Sunbird, Sokoke Pipit and Sokoke Scops Owl, and in the western lowland forests at Kakamega our main targets include Turner's Eremomela and Blue-headed Bee-eater. A short visit to Lamu Island gives us the chance to look for the rarely-seen Manda Black Boubou.

TOUR FOCUS

Kenya offers a mind-boggling array of birds and habitats, including 20 endemics and near-endemics, making it a great destination for dedicated world listers and keen birders alike. The specials will be the main focus of our trip, and we aim to find them all excluding the questionable Tana River Cisticola, but we also expect to record well over 650 species along the way.

Being mostly an arid country, bird breeding activity is stimulated by rainfall, and for these purposes we travel during the wettest time of the year, important when trying to find rare species of lark. At this time of the year the overall bird diversity is slightly lower because Palaearctic migrants are absent.

We will travel in one or two 4x4s. More details about what to expect, how to prepare and what to pack are provided in our Tour Instructions.

Let us know if you have target species or want to know more about the species we might encounter. A species list will be handed out to you at the start of the tour and is available beforehand upon request.

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

Accommodation and meals are generally fairly good by African standards, and vary from lodges and guest houses to rustic bush lodges and small hotels. Rooms mostly have private facilities and hot water. We may need to share ablution facilities at Marsabit.

Meals are Western-style. Please advise if you are vegetarian and what foods you enjoy, so that we can cater for you.

Water is not safe to drink so we supply complimentary bottled water in the vehicle.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Please plan to fly in to Nairobi by the night of 18 April 2025 if you are joining the Eastern Kenya Tour, or by midday on 28 April 2025 if you are joining only the Main Kenya Tour.

Departure from Nairobi is possible any time from 15h00 on the night of 28 April 2025 if you are only joining the Eastern Kenya Tour, and from 22h00 on 10 May 2025 if you are joining the Main Kenya Tour.

Please email info@birdingafrica.com a copy of your proposed flight details for approval before paying for your ticket.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum 10 participants.

WALKING

This tour requires a moderate degree of fitness. Most walks will be done at a gentle pace, although there will be one tougher walk on Mount Kenya to look for Elgon Francolin, which participants can easily opt out of.



Elgon Francolin © Callan Cohen

INTRODUCTION

Kenya, for a long time, has been regarded as among the top few countries for birding in Africa. Not only does it list over 1000 bird species, but a good network of parks protects a wide range of habitats, from coastal forests and Central African lowland forests to montane grasslands and forests, and Kenya offers lots of easy, open country birding with plenty of arid savanna and deserts.

Our 23-day Kenya tour is conveniently split in two to allow you to sample some or all of the main birding sites. On our Eastern Kenya Tour we start off with a flight to Lamu Island to look for the localised Somali Boubou, Malindi Pipit and Golden Palm Weaver, before crossing to the nearby mainland to visit Sokoke Forest, where an impressive range of forest birds can be seen, including Sokoke Pipit, Sokoke Scops Owl, Clarke's Weaver and Amani Sunbird. Heading inland from the coast we first visit Tsavo East where we hope to find Fire-fronted Bishop, before visiting the Taita Hills for Taita Apalis, Taita Thrush and Taita White-eye. Descending back into the lowlands around Tsavo West we now look for Friedmann's Lark, Hartlaub's Bustard and Pangani Longclaw, before heading back to Nairobi to complete the Eastern Kenya Tour.

Leading straight on to the Main Kenya Tour we now head off west of Nairobi to

Naivasha. From here we'll climb up into the central Kenyan highlands, visiting Kinangop and the Aberdares to search for Lynes's Cisticola, Sharpe's Longclaw, Hunter's Cisticola, Jackson's Widowbird, Aberdare Cisticola and Jackson's Francolin. Crossing to Mount Kenya we'll pause to look for Hinde's Babbler en route. On Mount Kenya we search for Abbott's Starling and various other forest birds, before moving on to the open deserts north of Marsabit in the far north of the country, where we hope to find Masked Lark and, with some luck, Heuglin's Bustard. Returning south we pause in the Shaba and Samburu areas for a host of dry-country species, including William's Lark, Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver and Grant's Wood Hoopoe. We then make the long drive to Lake Baringo, pausing en route to visit Mount Kenya again, and to search for Cape Eagle-Owl. The Baringo area offers a good variety of birds, with highlights potentially including Northern Masked Weaver, Jackson's Hornbill and Northern White-faced Owl. For a complete change of scenery we then visit Kakamega Forest in the far west where our top targets will include Turner's Eremomela, Blue-headed Bee-eater and Jameson's Wattle-eye, alongside a host of Central African forest species. Finally we fly back to Nairobi.

Red-and-yellow Barbet © Tertius Gous



ITINERARY AND MAP

EASTERN KENYA ITINERARY

- Day E1 Arrive. Overnight in Nairobi.
- Day E2 Nairobi birding. Fly Nairobi to Lamu/Manda. Overnight Lamu.
- Day E3 Fly Lamu to Malindi. Overnight at Watamu.
- Day E4 Full day Sokoke Forest and surrounds. Overnight at Watamu.
- Day E5 Full day Sokoke Forest and surrounds. Overnight at Watamu.
- Day E6 Watamu to Tsavo East. Overnight in Tsavo East.
- Day E7 Tsavo East to Taita Hills. Overnight in the Taita Hills.
- Day E8 Taita Hills to Tsavo West region. Overnight in Tsavo West region.
- Day E9 Full day in Tsavo West region. Overnight in Tsavo West.
- Day E10 Tsavo West to Swara Lodge. Overnight at Swara Lodge.
- Day E11 Swara Lodge to Nairobi. Tour ends at midday.

MAIN KENYA TOUR ITINERARY

- Day 1 Arrive (tour starts midday). Nairobi to Naivasha. Overnight at Naivasha.
- Day 2 Naivasha to Mt Kenya via Kinangop and Aberdares. Overnight Mt Kenya.
- Day 3 Full day at Mount Kenya. Overnight at Mount Kenya.
- Day 4 Mount Kenya to Marsabit. Overnight at Marsabit.
- Day 5 Marsabit area. Evening to Shaba/Samburu. Overnight at Shaba/Samburu.
- Day 6 Full day at Shaba/Samburu. Overnight at Shaba/Samburu.
- Day 7 Shaba/Samburu to western Mt Kenya. Overnight at Naro Moru.
- Day 8 Mount Kenya to Lake Baringo. Overnight at Baringo.
- Day 9 Full day around Lake Baringo. Overnight at Baringo.
- Day 10 Baringo to Kakamega via Kerio Valley. Overnight at Kakamega Forest.
- Day 11 Full day at Kakamega Forest. Overnight at Kakamega Forest.
- Day 12 Full day at Kakamega Forest. Overnight at Kakamega Forest.
- Day 13 Fly Kisumu to Nairobi. Tour ends.



DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

----- EASTERN KENYA -----

Note that Lamu faces periodic security threats. If Lamu is unsafe to visit at the time of the tour, we will adjust the itinerary accordingly.

Day E1: Arrive Nairobi

Welcome to Kenya! From the airport we transfer to our hotel for dinner and an overnight stay. Overnight on the southern side of Nairobi.

Day E2: Nairobi to Lamu/Manda

This morning we fly from Nairobi to the coastal island of Manda/Lamu. Dry bush here is home to Manda Black Boubou, otherwise confined to Somalia. We have an afternoon and morning to search for it in coastal thickets, alongside Golden Palm Weaver, Malindi Pipit, East Coast Boubou, Scaly Babbler and Coastal Cisticola. Overnight on Lamu island.

Southern Grosbeak-Canary © Tertius Gous



Day E3: To Malindi

After some final birding on Manda Island we'll take a very short flight to Malindi on coastal Kenya, not far from Watamu where we will be based during our time in the area. If time allows we'll visit the Sabaki River mouth, where Madagascar Pratincole, Crab-Plover and a variety of terns, gulls and waders are possibilities. Overnight at Watamu.

Days E4–E5: Sokoke Forest

Sokoke Forest is arguably the most important forest for birding on the entire east coast of Africa and we have two full days to explore its riches. Our main targets are Kilifi Weaver, for which the entire world population is confined to Sokoke and adjacent woodlands, Sokoke Pipit, Sokoke Scops Owl and Amani Sunbird. However, a long list of other specials can be found in the forest, including Red-throated Twinspot, Lowland Tiny Greenbul, Eastern Green Tinkerbird,



Hartlaub's Bustard © Michael Mills

Fischer's Greenbul, Little Yellow Flycatcher, East Coast Akalat, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Scaly Babbler, Kenya Crested Guineafowl, Fischer's Turaco, Red-tailed Ant Thrush, Pallid Honeyguide, Little Spotted Woodpecker, Mombasa Woodpecker, Plain-backed Sunbird, Forest Batis and Southern Banded Snake Eagle. Open areas around the forest hold Malindi Pipit, Zanzibar Red Bishop, Coastal Cisticola and Golden Palm Weaver, and there is an outside chance for Violet-breasted Sunbird. Nights at Watamu.

Day E6: To Tsavo East

Today we leave coastal Kenya, driving west into increasingly arid habitats toward Tsavo East National Park. Along the way we'll watch out for Steel-blue Whydah, but the grasslands of the park will be our main destination, where we hope to find Fire-fronted Bishop in breeding plumage in the afternoon. If the rains have been reliable we should see good numbers of displaying Red-winged Lark,

Singing Bush Lark and Pink-breasted Lark. Tsavo East holds a wide range of arid country species, and we'll be on the lookout for Somali Ostrich, Vulturine Guineafowl, Buff-crested Bustard, Hartlaub's Bustard, Black-headed Lapwing, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Somali Bee-eater, Grant's Wood Hoopoe, Southern Ground Hornbill, Black-throated Barbet, Red-and-yellow Barbet, D'Arnaud's Barbet, Pygmy Falcon, African Orange-bellied Parrot, Eastern Black-headed Batis, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Acacia Tit, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Foxy Lark, Dodson's Bulbul, Red-fronted Warbler, Red-naped Bushshrike, Grey Wren-Warbler, Banded Parisoma, Kenyan White-eye, Golden-breasted Starling, Fischer's Starling, Golden Pipit, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Black-capped Social Weaver, Parrot-billed Sparrow, White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Straw-tailed Whydah and Purple Grenadier. There is a remote chance for Quail-Plover. Overnight in Tsavo East.



Yellow-necked Spurfowl © Michael Mills

Day E7: To Taita Hills

We will spend the morning in Tsavo East, before driving to the nearby Taita Hills. The tiny remnant patches of montane forest here are home to three highly threatened endemics, namely Taita Apalis, Taita Thrush and Taita White-eye. Besides looking for these species we also have chances to find Brown-breasted Barbet, Usambara Double-collared Sunbird, Stripe-faced Greenbul, Placid Greenbul and Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler. Overnight in the Taita Hills.

Day E8: To Tsavo West area

We'll spend the morning birding the Taita Hills, before dropping down into the surrounding lowlands of Tsavo West. Here we'll be staying on a community conservancy rather than in the national park itself, which has the advantage that we can also do some birding on foot.

Day E9: Tsavo West area

The open grasslands of this area are especially good for White-winged Widowbird, Ashy Cisticola and Red-winged Lark, Pangani Longclaw, Taita Fiscal, Long-tailed Fiscal, Foxy Lark, Hartlaub's Bustard and Harlequin Quail, but we will be hoping

to find the very poorly-known Friedmann's Lark in display, where we found it during our last tour.

Acacia bushveld and Commiphora thickets give good opportunities for a range of other species, and the following will be on our radars: Hildebrandt's Starling, Tsavo Sunbird, Hunter's Sunbird, White-headed Mousebird, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Scaly Chatterer, Grey-headed Silverbill, Pringle's Puffback, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Tiny Cisticola, Southern Grosbeak-Canary, African Grey Flycatcher, Red-naped Bushshrike, Acacia Tit and Three-streaked Tchagra.

Day E10: To Swara

After some final birding in the Tsavo area we towards Nairobi, pausing at Swara lodge on the eastern edge of the Athi plains.

Day E11: To Nairobi

Some final birding at Swara could produce goodies such as Red-throated Tit, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse and Grant's Wood Hoopoe. The tour ends at midday on arrival in Nairobi. New arrivals will join those staying on for the Main Kenya Tour, and drive onwards together to Naivasha.

----- MAIN KENYA TOUR -----

Day 1: Arrive Nairobi and drive to Naivasha

The tour starts at midday in Nairobi, with lunch, after which we drive to Lake Naivasha. Late afternoon birding in our lodge grounds could produce Black-lored Babbler and Grey-backed Fiscal. Overnight on the shores of Lake Naivasha.

Day 2: Kinangop and the Aberdares

Today we climb into the Aberdare Mountains, stopping en route above Naivasha town to look for Lynes's Cisticola. Next, in the grasslands of Kinangop, the localised Sharpe's Longclaw will be our main target. Here we may also find Jackson's Widowbird, Long-tailed Widowbird, Hunter's Cisticola, Levillant's Cisticola, Schalow's Wheatear, Black-winged Lapwing, Cape Crow, Wing-snapping Cisticola and Northern Anteater Chat. Once we've climbed to around 3000 m altitude we'll start looking out for Aberdares Cisticola, and other possible species include Jackson's Francolin and Moorland Chat. As we descend the eastern slopes of the Aberdares we'll watch out for forest birds such as Hartlaub's Turaco and Mountain

Buzzard. Exiting the park we'll look for Hinde's Babbler nearby before continuing onto the southern slopes of Mount Kenya. Overnight at Mount Kenya.

Day 3: Mount Kenya

Set in forest, our lodge is the perfect base from which to bird the montane forests of Mount Kenya. In the early morning we'll hope to see Olive Ibis near the lodge. Over the rest of the day, birding both above and below our lodge should produce a good list of forest species that may include Abbot's Starling (rare), Hunter's Cisticola, Scaly Francolin, African Olive Pigeon, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Scarce Swift, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Grey Cuckooshrike, Mountain Oriole, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Black-collared Apalis, Black-headed Apalis, Black-throated Apalis, Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Brown-capped Weaver, Kandt's Waxbill and Thick-billed Seed eater. Other possibilities include African Black Duck, Crowned Eagle, Doherty's Bushshrike (rare) and Mountain Wagtail. Overnight at Mount Kenya.

Scaly Chatterer © Michael Mills





Somali Courser © Michael Mills

Day 4: Mount Kenya to Marsabit

After some final birding at Mount Kenya we'll drive far north to Marsabit, set in much more arid surrounds. Night in Marsabit town.

Day 5: Dida Galgalu Desert; to Shaba

This morning we bird the very arid plains of the Dida Galgalu Desert along the main road north of Marsabit town. Our main aim will be to find the very localised Masked Lark, but other possibilities include Northern Grosbeak-Canary, Greater Kestrel, William's Lark, Egyptian Vulture, Somali Courser, Somali Fiscal, Somali Crow, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Crested Lark, Thekla Lark, Heuglin's Bustard (rare), Bristle-crowned Starling and Somali Sparrow. In the late afternoon we'll drive southwards to the Shaba area, stopping to look for Boran Cisticola en

route. Overnight in the Shaba/Samburu area.

Day 6: Shaba and Samburu

We have a full day in the arid reserves of Shaba and Samburu. Our main target will be William's Lark that breeds on the lava fields in Shaba, alongside the localised Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver. A long list of other arid-country birds is possible, including Somali Ostrich, Somali Courser, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Somali Bee-eater, White-throated Bee-eater, White-headed Mousebird, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Banded Parisoma, Acacia Tit, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Foxy Lark, Red-winged Lark, Magpie Starling, Black-bellied Sunbird, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, Black-cheeked Waxbill, African Silverbill and Golden Pipit. Overnight in the Shaba/Samburu area.

Days 7: To Mount Kenya

After a final morning of birding in the Shaba/Samburu area we'll drive south to Mount Kenya. Overnight near Naro Moru.

Day 8: Mount Kenya to Lake Baringo

This morning we'll drive as high as possible up the western slopes of Mount Kenya, where the road ends at 3100 m. We'll continue on foot, climbing 500 m in altitude to heathlands above the upper forest where we hope to find the rarely-seen Elgon Francolin. Other birds we hope to see this morning include Jackson's Francolin, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Moorland Chat, Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird and Red-fronted Parrot. There is ample opportunity for those not wanting to do the tough climb to bird around the vehicle.

In the afternoon we'll make the drive to Lake Baringo, pausing for Cape Eagle-Owl en route.

Day 9: Lake Baringo

Lake Baringo, set in arid savanna, offers some excellent birding and it will be good to be back on foot after all our time in the

car. Around the lake shore we expect to find Northern Masked Weaver, Golden-backed Weaver, Jackson's Hornbill and Goliath Heron. The surrounding area holds arid bush with some rocky ridges, and birds here may include Three-banded Courser, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Northern White-faced Owl, Greyish Eagle-Owl, African Scops Owl, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Hemprich's Hornbill, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Red-fronted Barbet, Nubian Woodpecker, Eastern Grey Woodpecker, Pygmy Batis, Three-streaked Tchagra, Slate-coloured Boubou, Grey-backed Fiscal, Buff-bellied Warbler, Red-fronted Warbler, Grey Wren-Warbler, Rufous Chatterer, Rüppell's Long-tailed Starling, African Grey Flycatcher, Spotted Mourning Thrush, Mocking Cliff Chat, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Hunter's Sunbird, Parrot-billed Sparrow, Chestnut Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, White-bellied Canary, Fan-tailed Raven, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Magpie Starling, Pale Prinia, White-billed Buffalo Weaver, Little Weaver, Crimson-rumped Waxbill and Beautiful Sunbird. Nights at Baringo.

Somali Sparrow © Michael Mills





Moustached Green Tinkerbird © Michael Mills

Day 10: To Kakamega

Today we drive to Kakamega Forest via the Kerio Valley, where we hope to find Stripe-breasted Seedeater, White-crested Turaco, Black-headed Gonolek, Double-toothed Barbet, Meyer's Parrot, Northern Puffback and Brown Babbler. Overnight in Kakamega Forest

Days 11–12: Kakamega Forest

Kakamega Forest, with the nearby Nandi Forests, hold the only Central African lowland forest in Kenya, and thus add a large number of species to the country list. We'll have two full days to explore these forests, with our main targets including Turner's Eremomela, Blue-headed Bee-

eater, Jameson's Wattle-eye, Uganda Woodland Warbler, Joyful Greenbul, Toro Olive Greenbul and what is currently called 'Southern Hyliota', but could be a distinct species. A range of other forest birds can be found and include Crowned Eagle, White-spotted Flufftail, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Lemon Dove, Great Blue Turaco, Ross's Turaco, Bar-tailed Trogon, Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, Grey-throated Barbet, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Yellow-spotted Barbet, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Yellow-billed Barbet, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, African Broadbill, African Shrike-Flycatcher, Chestnut Wattle-eye, Bocage's Bushshrike, Pink-footed Puffback, Lühder's Bushshrike, Petit's Cuckooshrike, Mackinnon's Shrike, Western Black-headed Oriole, Square-tailed Drongo, Dusky Tit, Western Nicator, Kakamega Greenbul, Ansorge's Greenbul, White-headed Saw-wing, Green Hylia,

Chubb's Cisticola, Black-faced Prinia, Black-collared Apalis, White-chinned Prinia, Buff-throated Apalis, Olive-green Camaroptera, Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, Brown Illadopsis, Mountain Illadopsis, Grey-chested Illadopsis, Stuhlmann's Starling, White-tailed Ant Thrush, Brown-chested Alethe, Equatorial Akalat, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, Grey-winged Akalat, Green-throated Sunbird, Olive-bellied Sunbird, Black-billed Weaver, Red-headed Malimbe, White-breasted Nigrita and Southern Citril. Nights in Kakamega Forest.

Day 14: To Nairobi

After some final birding in the Kakamega area we'll fly from Kisumu to Nairobi, where the tour will end on arrival.

Hunter's Cisticola © Tertius Gous



INCLUDED IN TOUR PRICE

- Services of Birding Africa tour leader and local guides
- Entry fees and activities as per itinerary
- Ground transport in one or two safari 4x4s
- Accommodation and all meals starting with dinner on the first night and ending with lunch on the last day
- Bottled water in the vehicle and one soft drink per meal
- General tips and airport transfers
- Internal flights as per itinerary

BOOKLET AND CHECKLIST

Birding Africa provides:

1. Tour Details leaflet with detailed itinerary (this document).
2. Tour Information Pack, emailed to you.
3. Tour Booklet with checklists, provided in hard copy at the start of the tour.

QUESTIONS?

Please email the office, info@birdingafrica.com, to reserve a place or ask questions (you can also cc michael@birdingafrica.com and callan@birdingafrica.com who are both involved in the planning of this tour).

HOW TO BOOK

1. Complete our easy online booking form.
2. Secure your booking deposit by credit card on our 3D secure online payment site (\$150)
3. Settle the balance by bank transfer 150 days before the tour. We will email you a reminder and the banking details.

