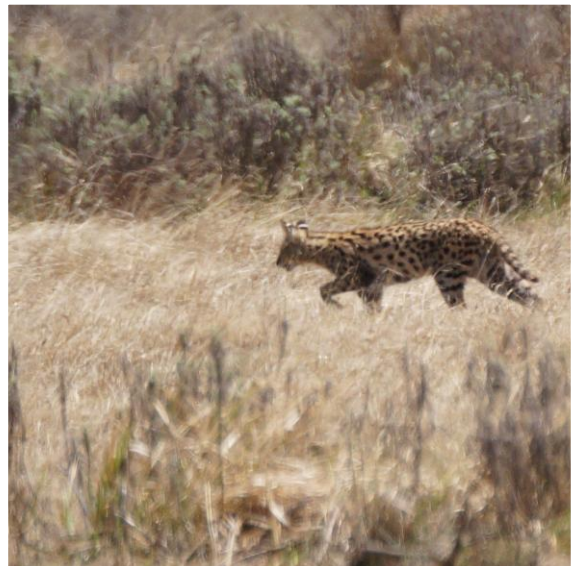


Tour Report Ethiopia Wildlife Highlights 5 – 9 March 2026

Ethiopian wolf



Serval



Rouget's rail



Elephant



Compiled by Ed Drewitt

During this two-week tour, we explored a whole range of different environments across Ethiopia in search of endemic mammals and birds, as well as enjoying the wealth of other wildlife that lives here. We saw up to 10 Ethiopian wolves, the rarest member of the dog family, as they individually roamed the highlands on the Senetti Plain in the Bale Mountains, while in the acacia scrub and marshland at Chebera-Churchura we saw elephants, waterbuck, hippos and African buffalo. Across the acacia savannah at Maze National Park, we saw many herds of the endemic subspecies of Swayne's hartebeest alongside oribis, waterbucks and a small herd of greater kudu. And at the Gaysay Grasslands, we enjoyed seeing many herds of the endemic mountain nyala and bohor reedbuck alongside many sounders of common warthogs. We were even lucky enough to see two servals on separate days. The birdlife was equally impressive, and we saw endemics such as the Ethiopian siskin, Rouget's rail, spot-breasted plover, blue-winged goose, Ethiopian cisticola and, right at the very end, brief views of the Abyssinian catbird. The menagerie of birds ranged from bee-eaters to barbets and francolins to fish eagles. The monkeys did not disappoint either with great views of guereza colobus, vervet, olive baboon and Da Brazza monkeys. Overall, we had an incredibly rewarding adventure seeing Ethiopian life and culture across the two weeks while also enjoying the wild side of the country.

Thursday 5 March 2026

Day 1:

Departed London on an overnight flight to Addis Ababa.

Friday 6 March 2026

Day 2:

Addis Ababa, including a city tour

Misty to start; bright and comfortable temperature later, 22°C

We left London Heathrow in a timely manner and arrived in Addis around 6:30 am. Outside, it was cool and as we headed out to meet our guide, Mohammed, for the day, there were several speckled mousebirds foraging in nearby trees. Other birds around the car park included red-eyed doves and a brown-rumped seedeater. At the hotel, we settled into our rooms and after a rest met again at midday to head into the centre of Addis Ababa where we had lunch at the Union Bar. Outside the restaurant, several speckled mousebirds were disappearing into the bougainvillea and Tacazze sunbirds were squeaking nearby. We stopped to watch a wattled ibis perched up in a tree while nearby pied crows were calling and flying around.

We headed on to the Museum of Ethiopia with fascinating artefacts and stories about Ethiopia's history, including a range of fossils and a sequence of fossilised early hominids including the famous Lucy or Dink'inesh *Australopithecus afarensis*. Outside, hooded vultures and a few yellow-billed kites circled overhead. We then travelled a short distance to the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, where a range of artefacts related to Ethiopia's history and cultures were on display. It is situated in the grounds of Addis Ababa University, where the watered, grassy areas were busy with a whole range of birds: at least three wattled ibises probing in the lawns, brown-rumped seedeaters, streaked seedeaters, Swainson's sparrows, baglafaecht weavers, Abyssinian thrushes with bright orange beaks and bellies, a red-eyed dove, several Abyssinian slaty-backed flycatchers and an African grey flycatcher.

We arrived back at our hotel just after 5 pm and met again for dinner at 6 pm. We were joined by Mohammed, Abel Belay – our amazing guide who would be with us for the rest of our tour – and Simeneh, a conservationist who came to speak with us about the wildlife and habitats in Ethiopia. It led to some interesting and thoughtful discussions.

Saturday 7 March 2026

Day 3:

Addis Ababa and excursion to Gefersa Reservoir and Suba- Menagesha Forest

Bright day with a cool start and sunny spells, 23°C

After an early breakfast start, we set off from the hotel at 6:30 am with Abel and our driver, Rubel, just as the sun was rising. After an hour's travel, we reached the Gefersa Reservoir – built on the Gefersa River in 1938, the reservoir is a key water source for Addis Ababa and has been designated an Important Bird Area thanks to its rich birdlife and varied habitats, which include grasslands, woodlands and open water. Indeed, on our visit today, the reservoir was teeming with waterbirds. Walking through the trees towards the water, we found Rüppell's robin-chat, chiffchaff and several brown-rumped seedeaters. Along the grassy margins, hundreds of Egyptian geese and red-knobbed coots were feeding; in the shallows, we saw small numbers of grey heron, shoveler, yellow-billed duck and African black duck. These were joined by little, cattle and intermediate egrets, along with great (white-breasted) cormorants. Looking across the water, we counted at least 50 little grebes, 20 upending pintails, three maccoa ducks, three white-backed ducks and a dozen black-tailed godwits. There were also ruffs, several green and common sandpipers, black-winged stilts, a three-banded plover and two spur-winged lapwings along the shoreline. Through the scope, we enjoyed excellent views of two augur buzzards and heard the song of an Abyssinian catbird, while in the distance, over 100 marabou storks loitered around the water's edge.

As we travelled on through the suburbs, yellow-billed kites, marabou storks and hooded vultures were common. We travelled past markets being set up for the day and the day-to-day settings of everyday life on the street, including the selling of sage grasses used around the floor of coffee drinking zones, donkeys carrying hay and grocers with neatly stacked limes, mangoes and watermelons.

We stopped to observe a small family of olive baboons, including a baby female. They were feeding on titbits by the side of the road. As we headed on, we found a pair of blue-breasted bee-eaters visiting a hole in a dumped pile of soil. We watched some nuptial feeding whereby one of the bee-eaters was catching an insect or two and feeding it to the other. Nearby, there was also a pair of southern fiscals and three grey-backed fiscals flew low overhead. We stopped in a little village to look for common garden birds and were rewarded with brown-rumped seedeater, Swainson's sparrow, two montane white-eyes, a speckled mousebird, Tacazze sunbird, dusky turtle dove, Abyssinian slaty flycatcher and African grey flycatcher.

An area of tall, dried herbs and grassland by the side of the road proved to be very productive including Rouget's rail, a pair of white-winged cliff chats, a foraging Eurasian wryneck, red-collared widow birds and several black-winged lovebirds. Further along the road we got out to view two more Rouget's rail and also saw red-billed queleas, Abyssinian thrushes, African citril finches, a female yellow bishop, red-billed firefinches, a village weaver, baglafaecht weavers and two African paradise flycatchers.

As we headed closer to the Suba- Menagesha Forest we also saw Hadada ibises, speckled pigeons, a white-collared pigeon, four western yellow wagtails, a pied wheatear, a greater blue-eared starling, an Ethiopian thrush and a moorland chat. As we headed down the road, clearly ahead, we could see large black and white forms in a tree – they were guereza colobus monkeys. We slowly approached them, although being shy, they moved from the canopy of the tree into hiding. However, we just had long enough to admire their long white tails and impressive long white hair that drapes across their backs. Birds nearby including several singing Ethiopian orioles, an African dusky flycatcher and Tacazze sunbirds.

We stopped for lunch and traditional coffee at the entrance to Suba National Park. The locally made coffee, served in small porcelain cups, was a true delight and very much enjoyed. As we continued, a single red flower was spotted briefly and further on an entire patch was poking up from the dry soil – these were African blood lilies – and had probably appeared after recent rains. Abel went for a closer look and as he did, a troop of olive baboons emerged from the trees. We spent some time observing them from the vehicle, watching their social antics including grooming, sunning themselves and feeding, alongside various interactions between dominant and less dominant individuals.

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A short drive further up the track we stopped in an area of primary forest dominated by African juniper trees. The baboons had caught up with us and were busy raiding a camper's lunch. As the wind picked up and clouds loomed, the birds fell silent, with the exception of several Ethiopian orioles which were singing around us. When the light improved, more birds began to sing, including montane white-eyes. We heard a distant white-cheeked turaco and caught glimpses of two birds in a nearby juniper tree. A thick-billed raven circled overhead before dropping down to the campsite to retrieve some cached food, providing us with some great views of the largest crow in the world.

We began our journey back to Addis Ababa at around 3 pm and stopped to watch a sounder of common warthogs moving through the woodland. As we left the primary forest for the plantation areas, we paused to scan for more birds. Seven European bee-eaters passed overhead on migration and a blue-breasted bee-eater was seen perched with a butterfly in its beak. A nearby acacia tree was bustling with activity, including a female variable sunbird, a northern puffback, a brown parisoma and a yellow-fronted tinkerbird. In the vicinity, an Abyssinian woodpecker was also calling, and a common fiscal could be heard singing in the distance. Two black saw-wings also made several passes through the trees. We departed nearer 4 pm, passing through short, rocky agricultural grasslands where we spotted several pied and isabelline wheatears, with common fiscals appearing frequently on bushes or wires. We also stopped to admire an African paradise flycatcher in full breeding plumage with long white tail streamers, as well as the spiky, furry seed heads of *Echinops kerbericho*. We arrived back at the hotel at 6.30 pm and met for dinner at 7.15 pm.

Sunday 8 March 2026

Day 4:

Flight to Jimma and transfer to Chebera-Churchura National Park

Mixed cloud and sunshine, hot c. 28°C

We met at 6:30 am and headed to the domestic airport terminal for our 8:45 am flight to Jimma, an hour's flight further west. After arrival, we met our two drivers and wildlife guides Zewdu and Temu while over a hundred swallows swarmed around the tops of nearby evergreen trees. We made a short drive into Jimma to a hotel for an Ethiopian coffee outdoors. We were entertained by several male African paradise flycatchers, alongside a female who was sitting on her tiny nest just above people drinking coffee. We left at 11:30 am and drove just out of Jimma to an area of marshland and open water. Amongst people swimming in the nearby water and others wading into the grassy marsh, using part of it as a crop, there was a rich mix of waterbirds including great egrets, African jacanas, moorhens and yellow-billed ducks. In amongst them we also saw a squacco heron, a purple heron, several black egrets and glossy ibises. We had close views of a woodland kingfisher and watched a colony of village weavers busily attending their nests or displaying. Nearby, a black crane was creeping out of the sedges and a pair of woodland kingfishers were perched in the trees above. We also saw several marabou storks, a western marsh harrier, a green sandpiper and yellow-billed kites. A variety of dragonflies were flying low over the water, including over half a dozen broad scarlets, an African black widow and an egg-laying hawk dragonfly. We left around 12:30 pm and stopped again a short distance to watch nine black-crowned cranes feeding in a cereal field.

We then headed up into the hills and higher ground, passing villages, low intensive agriculture plots and cylindrical wooden bee hives hung in the trees (and one on a pylon!) along the way, offering fascinating insights into the lives of local people. We paused to see a huge buzzard-sized black sparrowhawk that flew across the vehicles and into a tree. We stopped for a packed lunch at 2:30 pm with stunning views across the highlands. Nearby, a tree was busy with a flock of 20 montane white eyes, a red-shouldered cuckoo-shrike and an Abyssinian thrush. We also heard and saw duetting Ethiopian boubous and a black-spotted wood dove was calling nearby. As we headed on our way, Zewdu spotted two huge silvery-cheeked hornbills feeding on fruit down the valley. By 4:30 pm we had reached the river Gojeb, where we stopped for a break. Abel found a guereza colobus monkey lying out sleeping in a tree some distance away. Three pied kingfishers were perched in a tree overhanging the river and a reed cormorant was sitting on a rock. Over one hundred little swifts were flying low over the bridge and uttering a trill-like call. As we left, a brown snake eagle was also spotted perched in a nearby tree. As we passed through the town of Cheda we paused

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to see six fan-tailed ravens and eight roosting yellow-billed kites.

Chebera-Churchura National Park is in the Kafa region of southern Ethiopia and covers 1250 square kilometres (482 square miles) with habitats including cloud forest, woodland grassland and dense riparian forest. We arrived at Chebera-Churchura Lodge, which is just inside the national park, at just after 6:30 pm. Being an eco-lodge, there is no mains power and, as it was quickly getting dark, we relied on power from a generator until 10 pm. We met again at 7:30 pm for a delicious buffet dinner and an opportunity to catch up on our day's events. We had a background chorus of insects and bleeping frogs; at one point, Abel pointed out the call of a spotted hyena and a little later, some of us heard the calls of an elephant not too far away. As we headed back in torchlight to our rooms, the night sky was as bright with stars as it could be in the absence of any light pollution.

Monday 9 March 2026

Day 5:

Chebera-Churchura National Park

Overcast and cool to start with; hot and sunny later, 25°C in the shade.

During the night, we had heavy rain showers which cleared by morning. The generator was back on at 5:45 a.m., and we met at 6:30 am to head out early looking for mammals. We were quickly on the track that meanders through the bushland. The deposits of poo on the tracks indicated that both elephants and Africa buffaloes had been using the track overnight. Our watch out scout on top of one of the vehicles soon spotted some elephants and, in the distance, up a slope, we watched a small herd of five animals, including a baby, slowly moving through the vegetation – it was incredible how such large animals could disappear so easily as they went behind a tree or bush. We also heard the low, rumbling call of another elephant in the distance.

We continued along the track, encountering several groups of helmeted guineafowls and a single African fish eagle sat on the top of a dead palm trunk. The songs of Ethiopian boubous dominated the soundscape. We came to an open marshy area where, in the distance were 18 African buffaloes were resting and feeding; a few young animals were amongst them. Meanwhile, the marshy area was busy with a small flock of white-faced whistling ducks, three black-crowned cranes, two woolly-necked storks, half a dozen hadada ibises, a young family of Egyptian geese and a grey heron. As we watched, several waterbucks were feeding in the far distance, although they were hard to see. A few guereza colobus monkeys were also resting at the top of a tree. Three hippos, one of which was young, moved their way across the marsh, their pale grey skin easy to pick out from the yellow and green grasses. They encountered the buffalo and then carried on out of sight. A male common warthog also appeared while some olive baboons were in a nearby tree. Metres away, a pair of African pygmy kingfishers were each holding a prey item in their bills, a frog and a beetle respectively, and no doubt had a nest nearby. As we drove back along the track to the lodge for breakfast, we encountered a male waterbuck, several female waterbucks in another marshy opening, two olive baboon families and a family of common warthogs. Other highlights included a double-toothed barbet, common bulbuls, three white-cheeked turacos, one and then two silver-cheeked hornbills, black saw-wings and a stunning violet-backed starling. We arrived back c. 8:45 am and headed straight to a delicious and Ethiopian-style breakfast buffet before having a rest till 10:30 am.

While some of the group rested, a few joined Ed, Abel, Zewdu and Temu to do some local birdwatching close to our rooms before it got too hot. Close by, 20 grosbeak weavers were in a bush and village weavers were busy at their nests by some buildings. In the shade, a pair of red-headed weavers were glimpsed and two pale flycatchers followed us closely as we walked along a path full of herbaceous herbs and other flowering plants; these were busy with tiny grass blue butterflies along with a few soldier commodores, a dotted border and unidentified orange *Acraea*-like butterflies. Several bronze mannikins were feeding on thistle-like seed heads while on the entrance gates, 20 less striped swallows, with bright orange heads, were perched or flying around and white-rumped swifts were often flying overhead. In the bright sky, both a tawny and steppe eagle were soaring overhead, followed by a bateleur, a Wahlberg's eagle and a crowned eagle and an African harrier hawk. In the bushes, we could hear tawny-flanked prinias, Ethiopian boubou and a yellow-fronted tinker bird. Back by the buildings, after a little patience, we had brilliant views of a

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snowy-crowned robin-chat foraging in front of us; earlier it had been chasing a Gambian sun squirrel which then went to sunbathe on a tree. Nearby, a northern black flycatcher was perched. We finished off listening to hundreds of bees in the flowering trees above us and briefly seeing a female Klaas's cuckoo. This was followed by stunning scope views of a male Klaas's cuckoo showing his bright, shiny green back. We had an hour's rest and all met again for lunch at 1 pm for a delicious buffet.

We met back again at 3:30 pm and headed back to the main road and stopped at a place looking out across the national park. Remarkably, various small groups of elephants were spotted – just one or two animals, and four or five in total – a long way away, yet through the scope we were able to see their tusks and flapping ears. We also passed a flock of grosbeak weavers, and a large silvery-cheeked hornbill flew past below us. Further along the road, we turned off back into the national park and headed along the narrow track. It was not long before we encountered a distant herd of African buffaloes, mostly resting, with ears and tails twitching – we could even smell them! A little further, we stopped to watch at least eight bushpigs foraging in a thick, grassy meadow giving the opportunity to see their dark hairy coats and tusks. We continued along the track around to the wet marshy area where we were this morning. The African buffaloes we had seen this morning were now all half-submerged in the mud, keeping cool. Two male waterbucks were just behind them and wandered off into the tall grasses. Meanwhile, common warthogs were feeding down on their knees alongside a herd of nine waterbucks of mixed age. In between the warthogs' feet, at least half a dozen western yellow wagtails were feeding on the insects around them. We also heard vervet monkeys and olive baboons. Carrying on along the track, we stopped to look across another area of marsh where two more waterbucks were feeding. Nearby, two African fish eagles were perched. We had wonderful views of a little bee-eater as it flew out to catch insects and return to the same branch. On one occasion, it caught a cicada and we watched it beat the insect against the branch for some time before finally swallowing it whole. We also saw a perched violet-backed starling and an Ayres's hawk eagle soaring overhead. As we headed back, we encountered another small sounder of common warthogs.

We waited for the sun to set and for it to get dark enough to look for nightjars; we saw one or two distant montane nightjars, a few bats and an isabelline wheatear that was catching insects along the track in the headlights' light. We arrived back at the lodge by 7:30 pm and met for dinner at 8 pm for another delicious buffet dinner.

Tuesday 10 March 2026

Day 6:

Chebera-Churchura National Park

Cool and overcast to start; afternoon hot and sunny, 23–25°C in the shade.

After a very wet and thundery night we met again at 6:30 am to the chorus of frogs outside. It was a cool, damp morning and low cloud was hanging in the valleys. It was not long before we had our first mammals of the day, two bushpigs by the side of the road. They quickly scampered and we headed on. Zewdu had spotted a Verreaux's eagle owl fly into a tree. It was incredibly well camouflaged against the tree it was in, so we mostly relied on seeing it through the scope. It flew several times to other trees, often being mobbed by other birds, before disappearing.

We headed on and saw another vehicle was stopped ahead; nearby, we could see an elephant only 60 metres away. We spent time watching it, although it mostly had its back to us as it fed. Another elephant was more hidden amongst the vegetation further to the right of us. After spending some time watching the first elephant – which had started to meander left more into view before disappearing, we headed back for breakfast. Three male waterbucks were on the track in front of us and quickly disappeared. Further along, another three waterbucks were on the track and lingered in the vegetation, just enough time for us to slowly drive past and see them reasonably close.

After breakfast, we met again at just after 10 am and drove a short distance down the road to the river where four Nubian woodpeckers were calling together on a dead tree and a female violet-backed starling was perched. We spent the next few hours exploring grassy, bushy elephant-engineered habitats

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interspersed with impressive fig trees, looking for the shy De Brazza's monkey. During this time, we enjoyed the mindful experience of simply hearing all the insects, frogs and birdlife; we managed to see one tiny lime-green frog. Around us, we were hearing silvery-cheeked hornbills, splendid starlings, yellow-fronted tinkerbirds, a red-fronted cuckoo, red-eyed dove and tambourine doves. In the distance, we caught a glimpse of one or two guereza colobus monkeys and found some of the long, white mane hair from one on the ground. A troop of olive baboons was also around us, with several barking nearby. Some of the Brazza monkeys were sighted by the guides; we slowly edged closer and closer before starting to get glimpses ourselves. Over time, as we got closer, we managed to see the Brazza monkeys moving between the trees and got some lovely scope views revealing their striking facial features, including their white beards. As we headed a little closer, three black storks flew between the trees and when we headed back we saw a giant kingfisher and a common sandpiper by the river. We arrived back at 12:30 pm and relaxed till dinner at 2 pm. Behind the restaurant area, there were three or four thick-billed ravens, two fan-tailed ravens, two hooded crows and half a dozen yellow-billed kites coming down or waiting for scraps put out for them.

We headed back out into the national park at 3:30 pm and stopped not long after to see a white-throated bee-eater in a tree; several others were also around along with a pair of violet-backed starlings. Above, we had close views of a Wahlberg's eagle and a tawny eagle. As we drove along the track, numerous clusters of butterflies – blues, yellows and browns – were settled or flying round in circles above the wet soil. We headed through the national park and stopped to view a waterfall; we walked along a suspended metal bridge to the other side and watched as the muddy water, from all the rain – came down into the pool and river below. Various swallows and martins were feeding overhead while two red-winged starlings were flying across the cavern. On our way back, we stopped at one of the marshy zones seeing two fish eagles, a black crane, three African jacanas and three or four elephants passing by an open area at the very back of the marsh. We were entertained by a pair of little bee-eaters catching small insects, including a butterfly, metres away from us. Heading on, we passed another elephant being watch by a family and stopped just before we got back to the lodge to see a few other elephants feeding in an area of very tall herbaceous plants. They were so tall that the most we could see was the back of an elephant or its flapping ears. Meanwhile, at least 20 white-throated bee-eaters were flying all around overhead, catching insects. Higher in the sky, two bat-like bateleur eagles were soaring along with a yellow-billed kite, a Rüppell's vulture and a Wahlberg's eagle. We arrived back to the lodge at 6 pm and met together for our final dinner here at 7 pm.

Wednesday 11 March 2026

Day 7:

Dawro Zone

Cool and overcast start, gradually getting brighter and sunnier, 21–23°C.

During the night, there had been further rain and the frogs outside our rooms were in full chorus! We met for breakfast at 7.30 am and enjoyed a quiet moment looking out across the national park while Ethiopian boubous and a red-chested cuckoo sang. Hooded vultures, yellow-billed kites and a few thick-billed and fan-tailed ravens were gathering around the back of the restaurant kitchen. We had a little time to finish packing before saying farewell to Chebera-Churchura Lodge at 9 am. As we departed, we passed barn swallows, a green sandpiper, a snowy-crowned robin-chat, several tambourine doves, black saw-wings, lesser striped swallows, southern fiscal and a western yellow wagtail. We spent the day driving to our next destination in the Dawro zone, driving through villages and farmland with stunning views of the hills and mountains further in the distance. The Dawro zone is in the Ethiopian Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' region and is a hilly landscape. As we travelled, various swallows were perched on wires or flying past including wire-tailed swallow, Ethiopian swallow, lesser striped swallow and mosque swallow. Along the way, some of us saw four black-winged lovebirds perched by the roadside. We stopped to admire an Abdim's stork that flew up to a tree from a marshy field and one person spotted two hamerkops. After around three hours, we stopped at a beautiful viewpoint looking out across the hilly farmland landscape; it was also a great place to be looking down on flying raptors. Overhead, a Wahlberg's eagle flew while below us an auger buzzard was seeing off a tawny eagle. Four wattled ibises were also in a nearby field and flew off noisily. As we continued on, we stopped again to watch a troop of vervet monkeys on either side of the road, climbing in the bushes and crossing the road. A little further along, a strikingly marked auger buzzard was foraging

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in a field. We reached our lunch destination in the town of Tarcha at around 1:30 pm, visiting a hotel restaurant for local people, where we finished off with delicious local coffee that had the addition of fresh pieces of the herb called rue (with slight mint aromas). As we continued our journey, it was evident there had been lots of rain all across this region of Ethiopia with many puddles and stony debris across the roads. It was good for the frogs, though and colonies were often croaking – in various forms of loudness and croakiness – in ditches and puddles by the sides of the road. A green sandpiper was also taking advantage of one big puddle. We arrived at Halala Kella Lodge just after 4 pm and settled into our rooms for a few hours before meeting together again at 7pm. The rooms overlook the spectacular rocky landscape and huge gorge of the Omo River, where nearby there is the Gilgel Gibe III Dam, the second largest in Ethiopia. Around the lodge's flowering plants, citrus swallowtail butterflies were busy feeding. While everyone was settling in Ed spotted house martins, Nyanza swifts and the odd alpine swift overhead and a grey-headed bush-shrike near the rooms. We met at just after 7 pm and relaxed for the evening with the sound of insects and frogs in the background. In the far distance, we could see the flashes of lightning while the sky above us were clear and full of stars.

Thursday 12 March 2026

Day 8:

Sodo

Warm and bright start with cloud and occasional mist as we headed through the hillsides, 22°C.

We met for breakfast at 7:30 am and enjoyed many of the birds that were visiting the trees and bushes around us. A small group of lesser blue-eared starlings were foraging around the grounds while a vinaceous dove, a black-billed barbet and a lesser honeyguide called or sang nearby. Common bulbuls were often perched at the tops of bushes and a violet-backed starling came down nearby. Scarlet-chested sunbirds and beautiful sunbirds were also flitting between the bushes. Other birds included pied crows, fan-tailed ravens, speckled pigeon, ring-necked dove and two red-winged starlings.

We left at 9 am and headed further east to the town of Sodo. We meandered our way through the hills, following the contours of the landscape and the Omo Gorge, often in view. As we travelled, we observed everyday life along the villages that line the road, especially today as it was market day and people were waiting or packing their goods into local green buses that take them to the larger towns or a city such as Sodo. Along our journey, we stopped several times for a break and a chance to look for wildlife. At one stop we saw at least two 'growling' broad-billed rollers, while in the distance, we saw two long-crested eagles and a tawny eagle. A troop of olive baboons were by the roadside further along, and we stopped to see a lone guereza colobus monkey looking out from a fruiting tree. At our last stop along the journey, we looked out across the vast, hazy mountain landscape with the Omo River below. A mix of steppe and tawny eagles was soaring and circling above us, getting higher and higher. We also heard European bee-eaters and a white-cheeked turaco. We arrived in Sudo with yellow-billed kites drifting around at 12:15 pm and settled into our rooms before a hearty (huge) lunch and some time to relax after. Also known as Walaita Sodo, this city acts as the hub for the Wolaita and Southern regional states.

We met again at 4 pm and headed out to visit a traditional coffee bar. We walked along the streets passing busy cafes and small shops. After a while, most of us jumped into a bajaj (the local name for a rickshaw); however, the bar we visited was not quite as authentic as Abel hoped so we were driven to another. This was just the ticket, a traditional and authentic coffee bar. Abel gave us interesting insights into what Ethiopians eat and drink in such bars, including a special yoghurt and flatbreads made from maize. Abel talked about how coffee tree leaves alongside the outer parts of a coffee bean are put with hot water and served as an acquired-taste coffee. And finally, we tasted the local coffee in the traditional small cups that we have become accustomed to over the past week. We, the light beginning to fade we all got back into bajajs and headed a relatively short distance back to the hotel where we went straight for dinner at 7 pm.

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Friday 13 March 2026

Day 9:

Maze National Park and Yirga Alem

Bright sunny day; rain later as we approached Yirga Alem, 25°C and upwards at Maze National Park.

We met for breakfast at 6 am and headed out at 6:30 am to Maze National Park, 1.5 hours away. The roads were very quiet for cars or lorries, although busier with mule-drawn carts and cows being herded to drinking water. Along the way, Rüppell's starlings, speckled pigeons, fork-tailed drongos and lesser blue-eared starlings were common. The land along some of the journey was very flat with open grassy fields often with cows and goats; one field had at least 12 Abdim's storks foraging. Yellow-billed kites were very common, often loitering by the side of the road or swooping down to snatch a morsel. As we neared Maze National Park, we saw three hamerkops, either collecting nest material or carrying food from a pool. A purple roller was perched in a tree, into which three eastern plantain eaters flew into. We arrived at the ticketing buildings and while we waited for the paperwork to be completed the garden area with shrubs and trees was full of birds, including two fork-tailed drongos, a crested francolin, a singing cisticola, white-browed sparrow-weavers, a pair of Rüppell's robin-chat, speckled mousebirds, a northern black flycatcher and a marico sunbird.

After collecting our paperwork and picking up a local scout for our visit, we headed along the road to explore the national park, which was established in 2007 and covers 2000 hectares (5000 acres). As we headed down the road, we soon stopped on the right to have wonderful views of four Abyssinian ground hornbills foraging in a recently ploughed field. There was one male and three females; the male was trying to woo the females but they just moved away from him. It was fascinating watching them probe the soil; when they flew, they revealed their bright white primary wing feathers.

Even before we had turned off into the grassland scrub, we spotted the special animal here, the Swayne's hartebeest, a subspecies of hartebeest only found here at Maze and in a sanctuary in Ethiopia. The hartebeests were around 100 metres away, with a mix of adults and young. Two oribi, much smaller antelopes, were closer and moving away from us. Overhead, a large flock containing hundreds of red-rumped swallows, house martins and little swifts was gathering overhead. A sunning eastern chanting goshawk flew right past us.

As we headed off-road into the national park, we were surrounded by an area that has naturally and relatively recently burned. However, the recent rains had meant it was all covered in bright green new grasses intermingled with acacia trees. We spent the next few hours enjoying watching various herds of hartebeests, often with 10 or 20 animals, including very young calves. Sometimes there were just lone males, often snorting at our presence. We saw at least 15 oribi, often in twos or threes and frequently resting on the ground with just their heads visible. Helmeted guineafowls were often scurrying away from the track while two separate pairs of African wattled lapwings made their presence easily known. At least two black-bellied bustards were sighted, blending in well with the surrounding vegetation. A pair of yellow-necked spurfowl was also seen. Southern fiscals and grey-backed fiscals were also frequently seen flying away or to acacia bushes. We met some surveyors counting the large mammals and they pointed us in the direction of some greater kudu. We walked across the terrain and looked across to some nearby hills where five greater kudus, females with large calves, were resting close to some trees. Around us, two or three flappet larks were displaying, exhibiting their rasping sound with their wings as they flew or were perched. We also looked closely at two green dung beetles with shiny green iridescent wing cases. As we walked back to the vehicles, several guereza colobus monkeys were seen in trees in the distance. Waterbuck were also commonly seen in small groups of three or four animals. Other birds include white-browed coucals, a striped kingfisher, a black-winged kite and a greater honeyguide. A gathering or committee of over 25 white-backed vultures indicated something was recently dead, although they were not feeding. Ed and Abel went to check the area for any large predators or carcasses, but did not find anything. More vultures were circling overhead. After a really great morning, we headed back to the main road and back to Sodo. Just as we joined the road, we stopped to see a long-crested eagle perched not far from the road. A grey-backed camaroptera and a willow warbler were also singing nearby.

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We arrived back at the hotel at 1:15 pm for lunch and departed again with our luggage at 2:40 pm, heading east to Aregesh Lodge in Yirga Alem, an area excellent for coffee growing. Along the way, we stopped to look at an incredible view across the vast landscape. The short and more arid steppe-like grassland habitat was home to a selection of new birds, including a white-fronted black chat, a flock of Reichenow's seedeater, four cinnamon-breasted buntings, a male red-cheeked cordon-bleu, an Abyssinian wheatear and three striking red-and-yellow barbets. As we came into Yirga Alem, over 100 yellow-billed kites were circling overhead and in another part of the town, we stopped to see vervet monkeys right by the side of the road, including a female holding twins. We arrived at the lodge at 5:30 pm and were shown to our accommodation – we were each sleeping in our own traditional round tukul dwelling, built in the style of the Sidama villages and using local bamboo and stone. The lodge sits within the grounds of an organic farm that has been in the Missalides family for more than 20 years. We were soon seated with a welcome banana smoothie waiting for spotted hyenas to come out for their dinner while Ethiopian orioles sang in the nearby trees. Each evening, the hyenas emerge from the nearby forest; a clan of up to 15 hyenas live within a cave deep within the forest and each evening they visit the lodge grounds to eat some scraps from the kitchen and left out for them. We did not have to wait long; after some small scraps were laid out and the tin bowl was tapped loudly, three hyenas came to feed and a smaller individual appeared further back. They quickly devoured their food and did not linger; they dispersed back into the forest. Later in the evening, they could be heard calling nearby. We met again at 7:30 pm for some soup, main dinner and pudding before heading to bed after our early start.

Saturday 14 March 2026

Day 10:

Hawassa and Lake Awassa

Cool start and bright, clear skies; sunny and hot in Hawassa, c. 25°C and upwards.

We met for breakfast at 7:30 am, with many of us having enjoyed seeing a large troop of vervet monkeys sitting in the morning sunshine on tree branches and later foraging around the lodge grounds. Some also heard the calls of the spotted hyenas during the night. Two or three Ethiopian orioles were calling in trees above the restaurant tukul and as we had breakfast, we could hear a guereza colobus calling. We headed out just after 8:30 am to Hawassa, a busy town bordering the east side of Lake Awassa. We first headed to the bustling Hawassa Fish Market, where people were preparing their fish for sale while those who had been fishing were extracting their fish or sorting out their fine nets. Aside from people, there was plenty of birdlife, particularly the huge marabou storks. They were positioned close to where the fish are hand-processed, ready to snatch a quick meal that is thrown to them. As a result, we were metres, if not less, from them. Meanwhile, white-winged terns were busily circling round, frequently dipping down to the water to grab a small morsel of fish. A hamerkop was standing on a nearby boat and a marsh sandpiper was busily foraging along the shoreline. In the distance, a pool was full of several hundred red-knobbed coots. Amongst them several common sandpipers, little egrets and moorhens and a glossy ibis. A pair of spur-winged lapwings was also on the bank of the pool. The marabou storks were also perched on nearby buildings and trees; there were nesting colonies in many of the nearby large trees. One tree was also full of African sacred ibises, all lined up, while the building where the fish is sold was home to three cattle egrets.

We left the fish market and headed next door to the peaceful Amore Gedel Park, a lovely green space with mature trees along the edge of the lake. The park and woodland birds were tamer here and we got to see many up close, starting with a pair of grey-backed camaropteras and followed by an African dusky flycatcher, two eastern black-headed batises and an African grey flycatcher. Nearby, a willow warbler was singing and a western yellow wagtail flew past. In the nearby reeds, we saw two African jacanas and a female spur-winged goose. Small banded groundling dragonflies were flying all around us in the sunshine. Two woodland kingfishers were perched in a nearby tree and two pied kingfishers were hovering over the pool nearby. An African fish eagle flew right overhead and perched in a nearby tree.

Vervet monkeys were all across the park and we were able to get close to many just feeding or sitting on the grass or trees, including many mothers with young. Further into the park, we stopped to have a close encounter with a pair of Nubian woodpeckers busily pecking at a tree branch and continually pecking at

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small insects, perhaps ants. In the same tree, there was a stunning scarlet-chested sunbird and a little weaver. A hadada ibis was also resting beneath a tree on the grass while a double-toothed barbet was in the canopy of the same tree. On the pathways, half a dozen red-cheeked cordon-bleus were feeding while several western yellow wagtails were feeding in the nearby grass. We had reached the point in the park where we then encountered a troop of guereza colobus monkeys resting in trees, some above our heads and others at head level – some tame individuals were also coming up to some visitors, Abel quickly discouraged this. We had time to see them up close, take some lovely photos and watch their behaviour, particularly a mother and her baby.

Meanwhile, we spotted a male silvery-cheeked hornbill visiting a nest with young in a nearby fig tree – the female and her young were sealed inside with mud; just a thin slit was left, enough for the male to pass food to her or the young. We saw him twice, and each time his visit was brief. We set up nearby and waited for him to return. After 20 minutes or so he called and the chicks called back. We spotted him nearby on the ground where he flew from with loud wing beats. He perched above us and then visited the nest to feed his mate or young before flying above us again and then off to find more food. Wow!

Meanwhile, the trees above were full of marabou stork nests and fledging young; the adults came in with loud, beating wings like the hornbill. We headed back to the vehicles at the park entrance and went to the nearby Haille Hotel for a delicious lunch and from where three or four African fish eagles could be seen flying and interacting with each other. Out on the water, gull-billed terns were flying around while red-knobbed coots fed on the waterweed. After looking in some of the hotel shops – and seeing a Rüppell's starling and a baglafaecht weaver up close – we headed back to Yirga Alem and our lodge, arriving back at 4 pm.

We met again at 5 pm to see and learn more about the full coffee-making process that happens in Ethiopia. One of the staff from the lodge laid out everything and began the process of washing the coffee beans, browning them on a pan and then crushing them in a special tall wooden pot. The coffee grains were then placed into a special kettle with water and heated over the charcoal stove; after some while, the coffee was then poured into the tiny special coffee cups and shared around. Abel kindly provided live commentary as the process took place. While the coffee beans were being browned another of the lodge's team placed out some scraps for the spotted hyenas. Four hyenas quickly appeared – in much better light than last night – and ate up the scraps before disappearing again, allowing a single hooded vulture to drop down and find any remaining morsels. During the evening, before we headed for dinner, we also saw two white-cheeked turacos and two guereza colobus monkeys and heard singing Ethiopian orioles, a red-chested cuckoo, an Abyssinian ground thrush, a brown-throated wattle-eye and a Rüppell's robin-chat. Three wattled ibises were also noisily flying into the nearby trees. We headed for dinner at 6:45 pm before retiring at 8 pm ready for our next adventure.

Sunday 15 March 2026

Day 11:

Transfer to Bale Mountains National Park

Bright, clear skies and sunshine; cooler as we headed up and over 3,000 metres above sea level, c. 20°C.

As dawn broke, the red-chested cuckoo began calling, as did one of the guereza colobus monkeys with its loud, grating call. Both the colobus and vervet monkeys were around, although today the colobus monkeys seemed to be dominating the trees around our tukuls. During breakfast, the Ethiopian orioles and the Abyssinian ground thrush were singing. One member of our group also spotted a common duiker on their way back to their room.

After breakfast at 7 am, we left the lodge at 8 am for a long drive to the Bali Mountains and our hotel in the local town of Robe. It was a fascinating journey and as we began to climb in altitude and head east the farmland became more open and vaster – more steppe-like. We noticed that people were using horses more than donkeys, green pumpkins were in abundance along the roadsides at one location, and the houses and gardens were more self-contained and away from the road. The scenery was stunning, especially as we

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headed up high, looking back on the lowlands. Just after Hawassa we stopped to see six stunning pink northern carmine bee-eaters perched on electricity cables. Beneath them five red-billed oxpeckers were perched on a few cows and western yellow wagtails fed beneath the cows' feet. At one point in the journey, we stopped for a bush stop. A steppe eagle flew overhead and a juvenile eastern chanting goshawk was sitting in a tree. Nearby, there was also a perched dusky turtle dove and an isabelline wheatear.

As we entered the Bale Mountain National Park, we came to the Gaysay Grasslands between 3000 and 3500 metres above sea level. The open landscape was very dry and arid and covered in short, grazed grasses and dried everlasting flowers. We first stopped at a pond which contained many birds, including 30 endemic blue-winged geese, many of which were sleeping or preening. There were also yellow-billed ducks, red-knobbed coots, several little grebes, a common sandpiper and two wood sandpipers. Two Ethiopian cisticolas were also calling and two Thekla's larks were flying and perching nearby.

Moving on, we began to see many mammals and stopped to watch a sounder of common warthogs happily grazing while down on their knees by the side of the road. On the other side of the road, around 50 metres away, was a lovely male mountain nyala, an endemic to the Ethiopian highlands. As we headed on, we encountered many more warthogs, perhaps over 100 individuals in total, including some small young and a group of female and sub-adult mountain nyala were resting on the ground in the distance. As we were driving along Abel was suddenly very excited and called several. To our right, just on the edge of some heather, was a serval! We got out of the vehicles and stood together and waited. The serval moved along the edge of the heather and disappeared for a bit. However, in stealth mode, we resighted it and the cat then hurried along the grassland in the open, appearing to be focused on hunting. Finally, it turned around and scurried back into the heather. Wow, what a sighting! Nearby were wary warthogs and, further away, half a dozen bohor reedbuck. A confident olive baboon was also living in hope of some food and climbed up onto one of our vehicles. A female western marsh harrier was also hunting over the grassland. Delighted with what we had seen, especially the serval, we headed on to our town hotel – we arrived around 2:45 pm and headed to a late lunch. After a well-earned break, we met again for dinner at 8 pm and then headed to bed, ready to look for the Ethiopian wolf the following day.

Monday 16 March 2026

Day 12:

Senetti Plateau, Bale Mountains National Park

Cool start and clear skies; beautiful sunshine all day. 20°C in Robe, while much cooler in the mountains (between 8°C and 15°C with a cold breeze at times).

After breakfast, we headed to the Senetti Plateau, a vast alpine landscape and afroalpine grassland environment studded with boulders and giant lobelias as well as small moorland pools, many of which were dry. Along the way, we picked up our cheerful and experienced scout Muhamud, who would be with us over the next two years. As we travelled up into the higher ground, we passed plantations of juniper trees and eucalypts and small plots where people had a small house, plastered with mud, and cattle. We also moved into a zone where there were lots of the Ethiopian redwood *Hagenia abyssinica*. We watched as women rode horses down the track, with several other horses close by, carrying varying goods to the market. Once at the entrance to the national park, the habitat became more natural with thick heathers and occasional red hot poker flowers. Along the roadside, there were many moorland chats, Rouget's rails, Ethiopian siskins, the occasional African stonechat and red-throated pipits. We were very lucky to encounter a group of five moorland francolins while a little further up, we briefly saw a chestnut-naped francolin, while another was perched on a boulder further along. The various pools still with water were home to yellow-billed ducks, blue-winged geese, small numbers of ruddy shelducks and a few red-knobbed coots. Several pairs of crowned lapwings were also by water next to the roadside. Just further up from one pool was a small flock of spot-breasted lapwings, an endemic to Ethiopia. They were obvious to see and often flying around. Raptors were common, including augur buzzards, a bateleur, a lanner falcon, a Montagu's harrier, a western marsh harrier and several tawny eagles. At one point, we had close views of two golden eagles interacting with each other and a steppe eagle.

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As we were watching for wildlife, we saw numerous medium-sized rodents, in particular Ethiopian narrow-headed rats and Blick's grass rats, both specialists in this extreme environment, especially where we were reaching altitudes of over 4000 metres above sea level. These species are both important food for the Ethiopian wolf and it was not long before Abel had spotted two distant wolves. Alas, they were moving away from us, so we continued to drive on looking for more. We did a short walk to look over some boulders to see five Ethiopian highland hares; they are large hares with particularly long ears, and we saw them both running and resting. At this higher level, we had lost the heathers and were surrounded by scrubby plants such as African or wild wormwood (*Artemesia afra*) and Cape gold (*Helichrysum splendidum*), one of more than ten species of everlasting flower found in Bale. Giant lobelias were also common all across this rocky landscape.

At 11:20 am we had some better luck with the wolves and spotted one individual that was scent marking and then went hunting; it caught a large rodent, which it spent time dispatching before hiding it in a crevice in a boulder and continuing its path through the terrain. We headed up to the highest point on the plateau, Tulu Dimtu, at 4377 metres, looking out across the mountains and looking down on the cloud that had formed over the Harena Forest on the lower ground. As we travelled back down another Ethiopian wolf was spotted making its way across the boulders. Then, half an hour later, we spotted another – only 50 metres away resting on the ground with its front legs stretched out. It got up and wandered off giving us some lovely views. A further adult wolf was walking across the terrain and crossed the road in front of us before disappearing. And finally, we were rewarded with a young wolf, old enough to be away from its parents, hiding by a boulder and then walked along the edge of the track past our vehicles. We had quite the morning encountering the Ethiopian wolf!

We headed back down to the lower ground from 1 pm, stopping for Abel to show us the flowers of *Rosa abyssinica*, the Ethiopian rose. We arrived back at our lunch spot, another hotel in Robe, around 2 pm – a small flock of Somali crows was flying over the car park. After a much-welcomed lunch, we headed back to our hotel and had a few hours to rest before meeting at 7 pm for dinner and heading to the earlier hotel.

Tuesday 17 March 2026

Day 13:

Webb Valley and Kotara, Bale Mountains National Park

Bright, cool morning turned into a sunny, warm day with clouds forming; later afternoon, heavy rain showers. Up to 23°C.

We met at 7 am and headed ten minutes down the road to the other hotel for breakfast, where an Ethiopian thrush was singing. We left at 8 am and headed for the Webb Valley and Kotara. Along the way, there were lots of speckled pigeons and smaller numbers of red-eyed doves, Somali crows, southern fiscals and lesser blue-eared starlings. The local tip was busy with lots of hooded vultures, marabou storks and African sacred ibises. As we turned off the main road and started to climb through the fertile farmland, we started to see single Ethiopian thrushes, white-collared pigeons, rock martins, Nyanza swifts and red-throated pipits. One small grassy plot we found was feeding Ethiopian siskins and yellow-fronted canaries. As we climbed further, the terrain became rockier and covered in thousands of red hot poker plants, although not flowering. We stopped to look down a gully and a stream. Half a dozen Ethiopian rock hyraxes were resting in the sunshine or moving across the rocks. A small group of yellow-naped francolins were also pottering around a grassy area and hopping across the rocks, going across the stream. A herd of 10 mountain nyala were foraging amongst the tall herbage while red-rumped swallows were hawking insects around us. A green sandpiper was also feeding along the stream.

As we headed on, we passed through a stream where three yellow-billed ducks were residing, and a flock of several hundred Ethiopian siskins were flying around and coming down to drink. We came out into a more open plain with cliffs all around us. The ground was full of holes and was moving – tens of narrow-headed rats were scurrying around. And they were creating a lot of attention as several lanner falcons were flying around and swooping low; we saw a peregrine falcon fly low over the ground and catch one of the rats before flying off with it. A kestrel was also resting on nearby rocks. The sparsely vegetated ground was

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also home to many red-breasted wheatears and moorland chats. By 11 am, we had reached our destination, a hut and a building, an area often used for camping. We were quickly directed to the holes and burrows of giant mole rats and were soon watching their antics as different individuals popped up to grab some vegetation or move some soil or stones before quickly retreating into their hole again. We spent a mindful hour or so watching the mole rats alongside other tame birds such as the moorland chats, Thekla's larks, pied crows, a baglafaecht weaver, Ethiopian siskins and Somali crows. A flock of four red-legged choughs also flew overhead, as did a group of eight wattled ibises. As we were getting ready to leave, a lanner falcon was dive bombing two immature golden eagles, their plumage bright and well-marked in the sunshine.

We left at midday and arrived at our lunch destination at 1:30 pm, before leaving at 2:45 pm. After lunch, we spent the rest of the afternoon at the Gaysay Grasslands, which was a brilliant experience. The mountain nyalas were out in big numbers with several small herds of females, some with calves, and often with one male. A loose group of at least seven males were in one area giving very close views. It was brilliant to see this endemic mammal – limited to the highlands of Ethiopia – at such close quarters. Bohor reedbucks were also out in large numbers, often spread out in herds of 20 animals or so at a time. Some females had well-grown calves, and the males could be identified by their distinctive lyre-shaped horns that hook forward. We also passed a troop of at least 25 olive baboons and various small sounders of common warthogs or sometimes just single males rooting around or grazing; one female was heading off with at least four young. While a male bohor reedbuck was resting on the ground, one of the driver guides spotted a serval. It was 20 metres in front of the reedbuck and only 50 metres from us, also resting. We had lovely views as it began to walk away, at one point pouncing for something (but didn't catch anything) before disappearing and blending in with the taller vegetation. As we began to make our way back, we also saw a few more birds, including a male pallid harrier, a green sandpiper, at least six Rouget's rails and a long-legged buzzard perched on the top of a post. The short, grazed grassland was also busy with foraging cape crows and pied crows. We headed back at 5:30 pm, passing through some heavy rain before arriving in Robe at 6:30 pm and headed out to dinner an hour later.

Wednesday 18 March 2026

Day 14:

Senetti Plateau, Bale Mountains National Park and Addis Ababa

Cool start, some low cloud on the mountains; sunny and warm in Robe, 23°C.

This morning, after breakfast, we headed back up to the Senetti Plateau as we had a morning to spare before our flight back to Addis Ababa. As we headed up Africa, thrushes seemed to be everywhere, and we had stunning views of one right by the car. An Abyssinian catbird sang as we drove past, and a little further up, one appeared briefly. A cinnamon bracken warbler was also singing on the opposite side of the road. As we headed up into the heather zone, Ethiopian cisticolas were often calling or perching on top of heather and moorland chats were all over; several pairs of Rouget's rails were also showing well by the side of the road. Zewdu spotted a bush duiker, a new mammal for the tour, against the backdrop of some boulders, so it was hard to see but revealed itself when it scampered off. As we slowly headed up the mountain, we saw two flocks of chestnut-naped francolins. As we left the heather behind and moved into the lichen-clad boulders and giant lobelias, four immature golden eagles were soaring around overhead, giving stunning views. Up to 10 spot-breasted lapwings were calling and flying around, too. At 10:20 am we could not believe our luck; we had found another Ethiopian wolf, a young animal carrying a giant mole rat! It had spotted us and started to run away from us out of view. We turned around and headed back down, and on the right side of the track, we found another wolf, a young adult, very close to the vehicles (only 50 metres away) and it did not seem to mind us. We got some great views as it walked past and then crossed the track behind us. What a way to finish the tour. As we headed back down the highlands, two tawny eagles came to rest on the boulders, also giving some brilliant views – the first eagles we had seen at rest. On our way back to Robe, hundreds of migrating barn swallows were swooping low over the road and nearby vegetation, appearing to be feeding while some were resting on nearby electricity cables.

Very happy with our final Ethiopian wolf sightings, we had lunch and arrived at the airport just after 1:30 pm in good time for our 3 pm flight in a propeller plane back to Addis Ababa. With a half-hour transfer to

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the hotel, we were able to freshen up and relax before meeting for dinner at 8 pm. We had a lovely dinner chatting with Molla, who runs Anbessa Travel, of which Abel, Zewdu and Temu are part of. He then helped transfer most of us to the airport with Mohammed (who took us around Addis on the first day).

Thursday 19 March 2026

Day 15:

Return to the UK

The 1:35 am flight back to London Heathrow left a little late; however, this all seemed to be factored in, and we arrived back in London just after 6:35 am, where it was a fresh and sunny day.

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Checklist for Ethiopia Wildlife Highlights

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13
	BIRDS														
1	White-faced whistling duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>				✓									
2	White-backed duck	<i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i>		✓											
3	Spur-winged goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>									✓				
4	Blue-winged goose	<i>Cyanochen cyanoptera</i>										✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Egyptian goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		
6	Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>											✓	✓	
7	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓											
8	African black duck	<i>Anas sparsa</i>		✓											
9	Yellow-billed duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>		✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	
10	Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		✓											
11	Maccoa duck	<i>Oxyura maccoa</i>		✓											
12	Helmeted guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>				✓	✓			✓					
13	Moorland francolin	<i>Scleroptila psilolaema</i>											✓		
14	Crested francolin	<i>Dendroperdix sephaena</i>								✓					
15	Chestnut-naped francolin	<i>Pternistis castaneicollis</i>											✓	✓	✓
16	Yellow-necked spurfowl	<i>Pternistis leucoscepus</i>								✓					
17	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓								✓			
18	Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>				✓									
19	Abdim's stork	<i>Ciconia abdimii</i>						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
20	Woolly-necked stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>				✓									
21	Marabou stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>		✓	✓		✓				✓	✓		✓	
22	African sacred ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>		✓	✓						✓	✓		✓	✓
23	Hadada ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>		✓	✓	✓			H		✓				
24	Wattled ibis	<i>Bostrychia carunculata</i>	✓	✓				✓		✓	H	✓	✓	✓	
25	Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>			✓						✓				
26	Squacco heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>			✓										

27	Western cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		✓	✓						✓	✓			
28	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓		✓									
29	Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>			✓										
30	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			✓						✓				
31	Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>		✓											
32	Black heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>			✓										
33	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓							✓				
34	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>						✓		✓	✓	✓			
35	Great white pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>		✓											
36	Reed cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>			✓						✓				
37	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓											
38	Black-winged kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>								✓					
39	African harrier-hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>				✓									
40	Hooded vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
41	White-backed vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>								✓					
42	Rüppell's vulture	<i>Gyps rueppelli</i>					✓			✓					
43	Brown snake eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>			✓										
44	Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>				✓	✓						✓		
45	Crowned eagle	<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>				✓									
46	Long-crested eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>							✓	✓					
47	Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>											✓	✓	✓
48	Wahlberg's eagle	<i>Hieraaetus wahlbergi</i>				✓	✓	✓							
49	Ayres's hawk-eagle	<i>Hieraaetus ayresii</i>					✓		✓						
50	Tawny eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓
51	Steppe eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>				✓						✓	✓		
52	Eastern chanting goshawk	<i>Melierax poliopterus</i>								✓		✓			
53	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>				✓									
54	Black sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>			✓										
55	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			✓							✓	✓		
56	Yellow-billed kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	African fish eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>				✓	✓					✓			
58	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>					✓								
59	Augur buzzard	<i>Buteo augur</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
60	Long-legged buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>												✓	
61	Black-bellied bustard	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>								✓					

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62	Rouget's rail	<i>Rougetius rougetii</i>		✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
63	Black crane	<i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i>			✓		✓							
64	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			✓					✓				
65	Red-knobbed coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>		✓				✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
66	Black crowned crane	<i>Balearica pavonina</i>			✓	✓								
67	Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓								✓		
68	Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		✓										
69	Spur-winged lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>		✓						✓				
70	Crowned lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>										✓	✓	
71	African wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>							✓					
72	Spot-breasted lapwing	<i>Vanellus melanocephalus</i>										✓		✓
73	Three-banded plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>		✓										
74	African jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>					✓			✓	✓			
75	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		✓										
76	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		✓										
77	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		✓			✓				✓			
78	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓	✓			✓					✓	
79	Marsh sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>								✓				
80	Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		✓							✓			
81	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>								✓				
82	Gull-billed tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>								✓				
83	White-winged tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>								✓				
84	Speckled pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
85	Dusky turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia lugens</i>		✓							✓			✓
86	Red-eyed dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>		✓	H	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
87	Ring-necked dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>							✓				✓	
88	Vinaceous dove	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>							✓	H				
89	Blue-spotted wood dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>			H	✓	✓	✓		✓				
90	Tambourine dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>					H	✓						
91	Namaqua dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>		✓										
92	White-cheeked turaco	<i>Tauraco leucotis</i>		✓		✓	H		H		✓			
93	Eastern plantain-eater	<i>Crinifer zonurus</i>								✓				
94	Blue-headed coucal	<i>Centropus monachus</i>				✓					✓			
95	Senegal coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>				H								
96	White-browed coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>								✓				

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97	Klaas's cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>				✓									
98	Red-chested cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>					H	H			H	H			
99	Verreaux's eagle-owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>					✓								
100	Montane nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus poliocephalus</i>				✓									
101	Nyanza swift	<i>Apus niansae</i>						✓						✓	✓
102	Little swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>			✓		✓	✓		✓					
103	White-rumped swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>				✓									
104	Speckled mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓		✓	✓
105	Purple roller	<i>Coracias naevius</i>								✓					
106	Broad-billed roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>							✓						
107	Grey-headed kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>				✓									
108	Striped kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>								✓					
109	Woodland kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>			✓		H		H		✓				
110	African pygmy kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>				✓	✓								
111	Giant kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>					✓								
112	Pied kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>			✓						✓				
113	Little bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>				✓	✓								
114	Blue-breasted bee-eater	<i>Merops variegatus</i>		✓		✓									
115	White-throated bee-eater						✓								
116	European bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		✓					H	H					
117	Northern carmine bee-eater	<i>Merops nubicus</i>									✓	✓			
118	Eurasian hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		H											
119	Black scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus aterrimus</i>					✓								
120	Abyssinian ground hornbill	<i>Bucorvus abyssinicus</i>								✓					
121	Hemprich's hornbill	<i>Lophoceros hemprichii</i>		H											
122	African grey hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>							✓	✓					
123	Silvery-cheeked hornbill	<i>Bycanistes brevis</i>			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			
124	Yellow-fronted tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>		✓		H	H				H				
125	Black-billed barbet	<i>Lybius guifsobalito</i>							✓						
126	Double-toothed barbet	<i>Lybius bidentatus</i>				✓	✓				✓				
127	Red-and-yellow barbet	<i>Trachyphonus erythrocephalus</i>								✓					
128	Lesser honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>							H						
129	Greater honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>								✓					
130	Eurasian wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>		✓											
131	Nubian woodpecker	<i>Campethera nubica</i>					✓				✓				

132	Abyssinian woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos abyssinicus</i>		H														
133	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>											✓			✓		
134	Lanner falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>												✓		✓		
135	Black-winged lovebird	<i>Agapornis taranta</i>		✓								✓						
136	Eastern black-headed Batis	<i>Batis minor</i>											✓					
137	Brown-throated wattle-eye	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>											H					
138	Grey-headed bushshrike	<i>Malaconotus blanchoti</i>														✓		
139	Northern puffback	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>		✓														
140	Ethiopian boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>			✓	✓												
141	Red-shouldered cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>			✓													
142	Grey-backed fiscal	<i>Lanius excubitoroides</i>		✓									✓					
143	Northern fiscal	<i>Lanius humeralis</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓					✓		H	✓	✓	✓
144	Ethiopian oriole	<i>Oriolus monacha</i>		H									H		H			
145	African paradise flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>			✓													
146	Cape crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>		✓	✓										✓		✓	✓
147	Pied crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
148	Somali crow	<i>Corvus edithae</i>														✓	✓	✓
149	Fan-tailed raven	<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
150	Thick-billed raven	<i>Corvus crassirostris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
151	White-backed black tit	<i>Melaniparus leuconotus</i>		H														
152	Flappet lark	<i>Mirafraga rufocinnamomea</i>											✓					
153	Thekla's lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>													✓	✓	✓	✓
154	Common bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓
155	Black saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
156	Grey-rumped swallow	<i>Pseudhirundo griseopyga</i>				✓	✓											
157	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
158	Ethiopian swallow	<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>					✓	✓										
159	Wire-tailed swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>					✓	✓										
160	Rock martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>		✓			✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
161	Common house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>						✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		
162	Lesser striped swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>				✓	✓	✓										
163	Mosque swallow	<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>					✓	✓										
164	Red-rumped swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>					✓	✓				✓						
165	Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>											H	H				
166	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓										✓				

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167	Cinnamon bracken warbler	<i>Bradypterus cinnamomeus</i>												✓		✓
168	Singing cisticola	<i>Cisticola cantans</i>												✓		
169	Ethiopian cisticola	<i>Cisticola lugubris</i>											H	✓	✓	✓
170	Tawny-flanked prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>					H									
171	Grey-backed camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>											H	✓		
172	Abyssinian catbird	<i>Parophasma galinieri</i>			H											✓
173	Brown parisoma	<i>Sylvia lugens</i>			✓											
174	Montane white-eye	<i>Zosterops poliogastrus</i>			✓	✓										
175	Greater blue-eared starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>			✓											
176	Lesser blue-eared starling	<i>Lamprotornis chloropterus</i>					✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
177	Rüppell's starling	<i>Lamprotornis purpuroptera</i>										✓	✓			
178	Superb starling	<i>Lamprotornis superbus</i>					✓	✓					✓			
179	Violet-backed starling	<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>					✓	✓		✓	✓					
180	Red-winged starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>						✓		✓						✓
181	Red-billed oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>					✓				✓		✓		✓	
182	Abyssinian slaty flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis chocolatinus</i>	✓	✓												
183	Northern black flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>					✓				✓					
184	Pale flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis pallidus</i>					✓									
185	African grey flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis microrhynchus</i>	✓	✓	✓								✓			
186	African dusky flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>			✓								✓			
187	Rüppell's robin-chat	<i>Cossypha semirufa</i>			✓	✓					✓	H				
188	Snowy-crowned robin-chat	<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>					✓	✓	✓							
189	White-winged cliff chat	<i>Monticola semirufus</i>			✓											
190	Abyssinian thrush	<i>Turdus abyssinicus</i>	✓		✓											
191	Africa thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>					✓	H								✓
192	Ethiopian thrush	<i>Turdus simensis</i>			✓									✓	✓	
193	Abyssinian ground thrush	<i>Goekichla piaggiae</i>			H								H	H		
194	African stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>				✓							✓	✓	✓	
195	Moorland chat	<i>Pinarochroa sordida</i>			✓									✓	✓	✓
196	Red-breasted wheatear	<i>Oenanthe bottae</i>														✓
197	Isabelline wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>			✓		✓	✓					✓			
198	Pied wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>			✓											
199	Abyssinian wheatear	<i>Oenanthe lugubris</i>											✓			
200	White-fronted black chat	<i>Oenanthe albifrons</i>											✓			
201	Scarlet-chested sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>									✓		✓			

202	Tacazze sunbird	<i>Nectarinia tacazze</i>	H	✓									✓		✓
203	Beautiful sunbird	<i>Cinnyris pulchellus</i>							✓						
204	Marico sunbird	<i>Cinnyris mariquensis</i>								✓					
205	Variable sunbird	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>		✓											
206	Swainson's sparrow	<i>Passer swainsonii</i>	✓	✓						✓			✓		✓
207	White-browed sparrow-weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>								✓					
208	Baglafaecht weaver	<i>Ploceus baglafaecht</i>	✓	✓							✓			✓	
209	Little weaver	<i>Ploceus luteolus</i>									✓				
210	Village weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
211	Grosbeak weaver	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>				✓									
212	Red-billed quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>		✓											
213	Red-billed weaver	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>				✓									
214	Yellow bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>		✓								✓			
215	Red-collared widowbird	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>		✓											
216	Red-billed firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>		✓											
217	Red-cheeked cordon-bleu	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>								✓	✓				
218	Yellow-bellied waxbill	<i>Coccyzygia quartinia</i>		✓		✓	✓								
219	Bronze mannikin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>				✓									
220	Western yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓			
221	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓		✓									
222	Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>								✓					
223	Red-throated pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>											✓	✓	
224	African citril	<i>Crithagra citrinelloides</i>		✓											
225	Reichenow's seedeater	<i>Crithagra reichenowi</i>								✓					
226	Yellow-fronted canary	<i>Crithagra mozambica</i>												✓	
227	Brown-rumped seedeater	<i>Crithagra tristriata</i>	✓	✓											✓
228	Streaky seedeater	<i>Crithagra striolata</i>	✓										✓		✓
229	Ethiopian siskin	<i>Serinus nigriceps</i>												✓	✓
230	Cinnamon-breasted bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>								✓					
	MAMMALS														
1	Ethiopian rock hyrax	<i>Procavia habessinica</i>											✓		
2	African bush elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>			H	✓	✓								
3	Grivet monkey	<i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i>				H		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
4	Guereza colobus	<i>Colobus guereza</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

5	Olive baboon	<i>Papio anubis</i>		✓		✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	
6	Da Brazza's monkey	<i>Cercopithecus neglectus</i>					✓								
7	Ethiopian highland hare	<i>Lepus starcki</i>											✓		
8	Ethiopian striped mouse	<i>Muriculus imberbis</i>											✓		✓
9	Black-clawed brush-furred rat	<i>Lophuromys melanonyx</i>											✓		
10	Ethiopian narrow-headed rat	<i>Stenocephalemys albocaudata</i>												✓	
11	Gambian sun squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus gambianus</i>				✓	✓			✓	✓				
12	Serval	<i>Leptailurus serval</i>										✓		✓	
13	Spotted hyaena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>			H				✓	✓					
14	Ethiopian wolf	<i>Canis simensis</i>											✓	✓	✓
15	Common warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>		✓		✓						✓		✓	
16	Bushpig	<i>Potamochoerus larvatus</i>				✓	✓								
17	Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>				✓									
18	Hartebeest	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>								✓					
19	Oribi	<i>Ourebia ourebi</i>								✓					
20	Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>				✓	✓			✓					
21	Bohor reedbuck	<i>Redunca redunca</i>										✓		✓	
22	Common duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>										✓			✓
23	Mountain nyala	<i>Tragelaphus buxtoni</i>										✓		✓	
24	Greater kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>								✓					
	INSECTS														
1	Soldier commodore	<i>Junonia terea</i>				✓				✓					
2	Grass blues	<i>Zizina or Zizula spp.</i>				✓									
3	Western dotted border	<i>Mylothris chloris</i>				✓									
4	Broad scarlet	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>			✓										
5	African black widow	<i>Palpopleura lucia</i>			✓							✓			
6	Banded groundling	<i>Brachythemis sp.</i>										✓			
7	Leaf katydid	<i>Tettigoniidae</i>							✓						
8	Green dung beetles	<i>Scarabaeidae</i>								✓					
9	Brown chafers	<i>Scarabaeidae</i>			✓	✓	✓								
10	Water scorpion	<i>Nepidae</i>				✓									