



KENYA 2022

A Unique Way To Experience The Big Five

Session 1 Participants in Crescent Island



Lee Tavel, Jeffrey Rich, Heidi Rich, Reinier Munguía, Sandy Kracov, Beverly Tavel, Bill Kracov.

Session 2 Participants at the Equator Curio Shop



Thomas Wells, Shreekant, Daksha & Shivani Tripathi, Paul Womble, Reinier Munguía, James Dunn, Kay Wells, Debbie Williamsom, Mathew.



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ABOUT KENYA

KENYA 2022

Kenya is one of the most picturesque countries in Africa. Extending from Lake Victoria on the west to the Indian Ocean on the east, the land is gifted with endless savannas, wetlands and the dramatic Great Rift Valley, the origin of humankind.

The original inhabitants of the region were Bantu tribes that arrived in 500 BC. Later, European explorers and Arab traders visited the coastal areas and settled in present-day Mombasa, the oldest city. The British Empire controlled Kenya from 1895 until 1963 when it finally gained its independence.

Culturally rich, Kenya is home to 70 distinct ethnic groups and over 40 different tribes. This richness can be found in more than 60 indigenous languages and its food. Anybody visiting Kenya will soon notice the Indian influence in the food, rich in spices like fresh chili and coriander. Indian sailors and traders came to Mombasa before colonial times. At one point, nearly 30,000 Indian immigrants came to Kenya to work on the railroad that would connect Mombasa and Kisumu. Local fare includes ugali, a stiff maize flour porridge accompanied by cooked vegetables and either fish, chicken or mutton. It's not surprising to find camel milk at breakfast stops, usually mixed with tea. One of the best experiences in Kenya is to visit any of their indigenous groups like the Kikuyu, Samburu, and the Maasai.

But what brought us all here was its megafauna. Not many places on Earth can offer the variety and quantity of large mammals that Kenya does. Elephants, rhinos, giraffes, hippos, buffaloes and elands are among the largest mammals. Then you have the iconic predators prowling for gazelles, wildebeest, and zebras. These predators are the biggest draw to locations like Masai Mara and Samburu. Meet the big cats: lion, leopard and cheetah, all of which we were able to see and photograph. But we can't leave Kenya without acknowledging the variety of birds we found, from cranes to sunbirds and bee-eaters, all of which dabbed a little color on the rustic landscape.

Cheers to Kenya, its vibrant people, and its captivating wildlife, leaving us with a strong desire to return.

QUICK FACTS

Population: 55 million

Capital city: Nairobi

Name: Republic of Kenya

Government: Presidential republic

Languages: Swahili and English

Religion: mainly Christians (83%), Muslims (mainly living in the coastal regions), Hindu, Jews and other faiths

Currency: 1 Kenyan Shilling (KES) = 100 Cents | 100 KES= 1 USD

History: Became independent in 1963

National Animal: Lion (Simba)

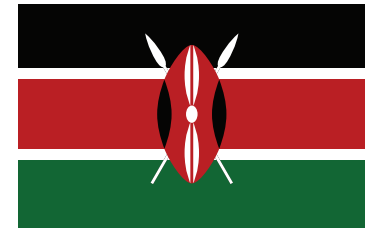
National Bird: Lilac-breasted roller

National Colours: black, red, green and white

President: William Ruto

National Day: Jamhuri Day, December 12th (Independence Day)

National Anthem: "Oh God of All Creation"



Lion in Masai Mara – Bill Kracov

Outside of Nairobi, life changes to a more agrarian lifestyle. Their pastoral tradition can be seen along the roads almost anywhere you travel. Young boys herding their animals are common and hard to miss. Sometimes the driver must slam the brakes to avoid hitting a runaway goat or swerve around a wandering camel.

As you leave the big city, you start noticing small and large-scale farming with produce like taro, sugar cane, bananas and avocados. Then suddenly as you reach areas of greater rainfall, you start seeing more large scale farming. In fact, agriculture accounts for 40% of the country's economy with products such as wheat, corn, roses, tea and coffee. These areas of rainfall are 10% of all the arable land, yet they produce more than 70% of its national agricultural output.

Every small town we crossed was easily recognized by the number of produce stands along the road, their local grocery, butcher shop and the iconic covered shelters for the “boda-bodas” - motorbike taxis. Kenya is a developing country with a large gap between social classes. Nearly two-thirds of the population is poor, making less than \$2.30 a day. Just like any other developing country, Kenya faces the struggles that come with modernization. The country is doing its best to control the use of plastics, but remote communities are left with little choice other than burning them with other disposable materials.



Kenyans go about their daily lives, which includes shopping for fresh vegetables and meats at the local markets. Buses play a double role with passengers and cargo. — Shreekant Tripathi

Various men wearing masks on a side street in Narok, a shocking reminder of the Covid pandemic spreading throughout the world. Fruits and vegetable markets dotted the roadsides at most towns we traveled through. — Reinier Munguia





The local car wash across the Equator Curio shop in Nyahururu, with its large plastic water reservoir, provides water for locals and to wash government vehicles. — Reinier Munguía



We made a stop at the Nanyuki Quickmart to buy some groceries for the Samburu tribes located near the entrance to Samburu National Reserve. — Reinier Munguía



One of the carvers working on the "The Big Five" at the Mountain View curio shop near Nanyuki. — Debbie Williamson



Masai giraffes against the Nairobi skyline — Reinier Munguía

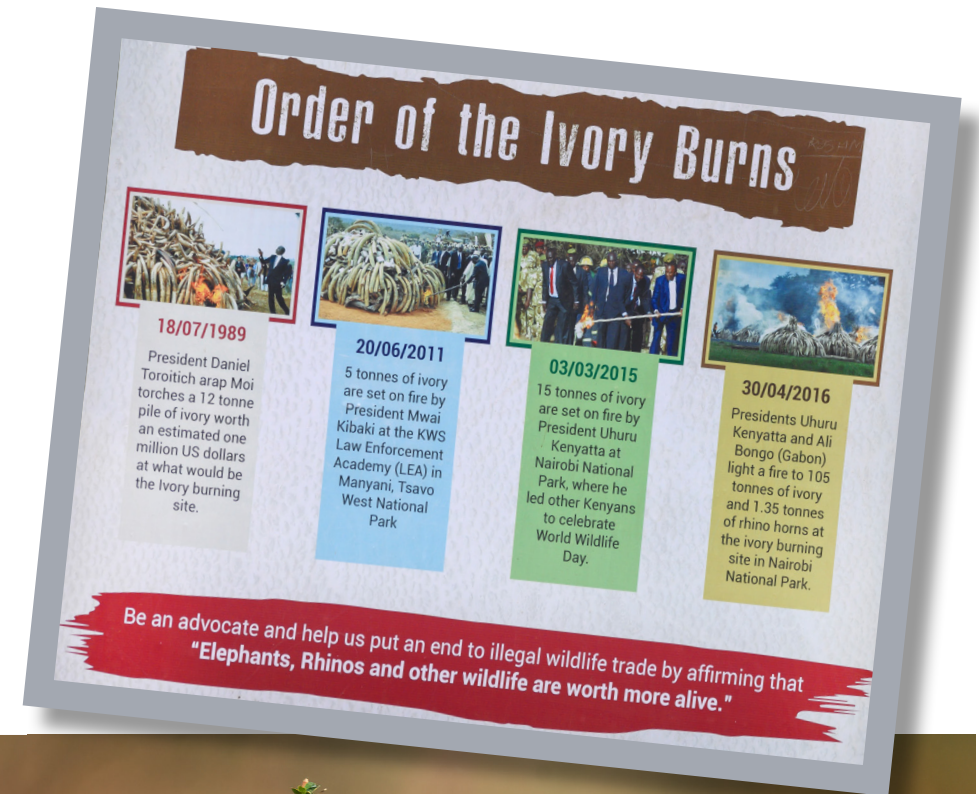
NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK

Nairobi National Park is a gem in disguise behind the busy highways and skyscrapers dotting downtown Nairobi. In fact, this is the closest National Park to any city in the world. Fenced on three sides to avoid human-wildlife conflicts, only the southern border is open to allow animals to migrate to the nearby Kitengela plains. Established in 1946, the park is the oldest of all the national parks in Kenya. It was also made famous after the burning of 12 tons of ivory by the second President of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi, in an effort to end the ivory trade and protect the elephants and rhinos from poachers.

On our first visit to this national park, we were greeted by white rhinos, giraffes, elands and a large number of cape buffaloes. Within a few minutes, we were able to spot several species of birds along the road like the spur-winged lapwing, little bee-eater, superb starlings and the massive Masai ostrich. On our second visit we were welcomed by a pride of lions that provided us with multiple opportunities to capture their mating rituals and a friendly ostrich that allowed us close enough to take headshots.

For anybody looking to find the “Big Five,” this is the ideal starting point. Only the African elephant is absent from the park. The obvious contradiction is being able to see all this wildlife with a cityscape as the backdrop. The park is easily accessible and has decent roads that almost any vehicle can drive through, making this park a great choice for those with limited time or budget. This must-see park was a perfect choice to start our adventure through Kenya and provided us with great images to take home.

One of my wishlist items was to capture the African wildlife against the Nairobi skyline. Less than an hour after entering the park my wish was granted. Not one but three Masai giraffes walked from the west.



Long-tailed fiscal feeding its young. — James Dunn



Spur-winged lapwing with baby. — James Dunn



Superb starling — Bill Kracov



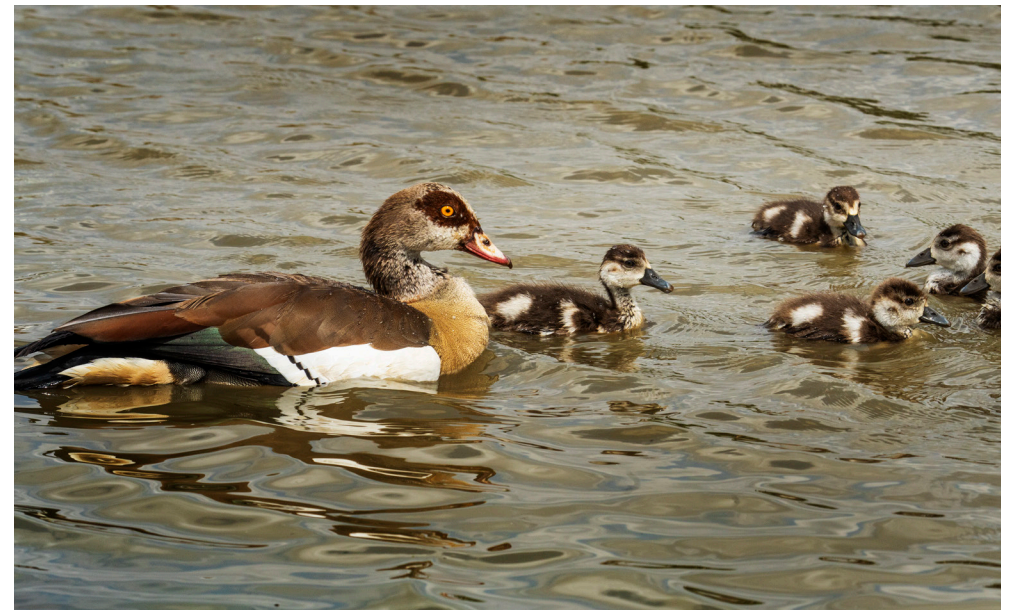
Sunset with impala. — Reinier Munguía



Little did we know we would get even closer than this to the largest of all wildlife. They seemed to have no concern about our presence. — Reinier Munguía



Little bee-eaters — Kay Wells



Egyptian goose with goslings. —James Dunn



Masai ostrich — Beverly Tavel



King of the African savanna. I had to fix his eye in Photoshop. — Reinier Munguía



Eland — Reinier Munguía



Masai ostrich — Beverly Tavel



Lioness — James Dunn



Grey-crowned crane — Reinier Munguía



Cape buffalo, the second most dangerous mammal in Africa after the hippo. — Jeff Rich



Impala — Reinier Munguía



Hartebeest — Reinier Munguía



Cape buffalo with red-billed oxpeckers. — Kay Wells



BIRDS OF THE NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK



Egyptian goose — Jeff Rich



Northern pied babbler — Reinier Munguía



Masai ostrich — Jeff Rich



Crowned lapwing — Reinier Munguía



Spotted thick-knee — Reinier Munguía



Haddada ibis — Debbie Williamson



Gray-backed fiscal — Reinier Munguía



Black-winged stilt — Reinier Munguía



Wattled starlings — Bill Kracov



Helmeted guineafowl — Bill Kracov



Three-banded plover — Reinier Munguía

A photograph of two white rhinos in a savanna environment. The rhino in the foreground is facing right, with its head slightly turned towards the camera. It has a large, thick, greyish-brown body and a prominent, curved horn. The rhino in the background is partially obscured by the first one and is facing left. The background consists of dense, green and brown shrubs and trees. The ground is dry and dusty, with some sparse grass. The overall scene is a naturalistic depiction of these animals in their habitat.

White rhinos — Debbie Williamson

SOLIO RANCH

Established in 1970, Solio Ranch is the world's first rhino conservation preserve. The fenced property encompasses 17,500 acres of land that are constantly monitored against poachers. From 1970 to 2003, the world population of the African black rhinoceros declined from about 65,000 to an estimated 3,725 individuals. In Kenya, the population was estimated to have dropped from 18,000 to 1,500 in 1980 and by 1990 only 400 remained.

The ongoing poaching for rhino horns that has existed since the late '60s is the cause of the sharp decline. In 1970, Mr. Courtland Parfet, the owner of the Solio Cattle Ranch was approached by Kenya's Wildlife and Conservation Management Department to help with the decline by providing a safe place for the remaining rhinos. The goal was to relocate some of the remaining black rhinos inside the fenced 13,000 acres provided by the ranch to reduce poaching. The first five individuals were moved in 1970, and for the next 10 years many more were relocated to what became the Solio Game Reserve.

Today Solio Game Reserve is home to more than 250 rhinos and their breeding program has translocated more than a 100 black and 60 white rhinoceros to other parts of Kenya, and six to Uganda. Many other species roam the ranch, including lions, gazelles, giraffes and a variety of birds. It was its wetland area where we encountered the most colorful of all storks, the saddle-billed stork. Birds were plentiful along the watershed including wagtails, black-billed duck and spoonbills. Other interesting wildlife here included the only invasive mammal in Kenya, the nutria, which is native to South America.

To end the day on a high note, we glamped at the Rhino Watch Safari Lodge, a tented lodge on the foothills of Mount Kenya. We photographed a few birds around the lodge including the speckled mousebird, the bronze sunbird and the African paradise flycatcher.



Mysterious pictographs appeared on the side of our vans before we entered Solio Ranch. For sure we found the rhinos at this preserve. — Debbie Williamson



African paradise flycatcher at the Rhino Watch Safari Lodge. — Bill Kracov



Nutria, the only invasive mammal in Kenya. — Debbie Williamson



White rhino with young. — James Dunn



White-bellied bustard — Reinier Munguía



African firefinch — Reinier Munguía



Discovering the saddle-billed stork, the tallest stork species globally, in the wetlands of Solio Ranch was a remarkable surprise. This particular stork is a female. Females are characterized by vibrant yellow eyes, whereas males have notably dark eyes. Interestingly, as adults, they are unable to vocalize due to the absence of a syrinx. However, their chicks can produce a hissing sound to attract their parents' attention. — Reinier Munguía



Secretarybird — Bill Kracov



African spoonbill. — Reinier Munguía



Bringing supplies to the Samburu Tribe — Jeff Rich

THE SAMBURU TRIBES

The Samburu are a semi-nomadic tribe of north-central Kenya, a pastoralist community who herd cattle, goats and camels. They speak the Maa language which is also shared by other tribes including the Maasai. The Samburu settlements are called manyattas and are enclosed by means of a heavy thicket to protect their animals from predators at night. Their homes are made of interwoven leleshwa sticks and saplings that are covered with leaves or any available material including cardboard.

Samburu women are responsible for gathering vegetables and roots, collecting water and raising the children, while the men look after the cattle and provide security to the tribe. Young girls help their mothers with the daily chores. Like any gerontocratic society, the elders decide when events such as weddings and circumcisions will take place. Men and women are not allowed to get married until they are both circumcised. Once a boy is circumcised, he becomes a warrior also known as a Moran.

The traditional dress of the Samburu tribe is a red cloth wrapped like a skirt and a white sash. The women wear very colorful beaded collars and necklaces giving the Samburu the nickname “Butterfly People” due to their colorful clothing.

Our first session visited a conventional Samburu village with both women and men living in the same village. On the second trip we visited the Unity Women’s Village which is made of independent women that make their living from tourism by selling their crafts and providing lodging within the tribe for those interested in experiencing the Samburu daily life. This village serves as a refuge for women looking to start a new, independent life with their children, free from the oppression, abuse and inequities found at the traditionally male dominated tribes. Here the women have an opportunity to collaborate with other women and provide for their families.

Dancing is a very significant part of the Samburu culture and very similar to that of the Maasai people where men dance and jump, and the women chant and dance in a circle, but rarely will the two occupy the stage at the same time. On both visits we brought them food, as they have been going through an extended drought that has killed many of their animals, and foraging for roots and vegetables has become more difficult.

A Samburu necklace or Mporro is a status jewelry worn by the married women. When a girl is to be married, her mother gives her beads from her own marriage necklace. Traditionally they were made of animal hairs and red glass beads (Mporro) which gives the necklace its name.



A simple Samburu dwelling known as a manyatta constructed with leleshwa sticks and cardboard.



A Samburu man from the Namnyak tribe — Jeff Rich



Samburu girl and her mom selling art crafts. — Jeff Rich



Visiting the Unity Women's Cultural Village, a women only Samburu tribe. — Reinier Munguia



Samburu woman tending her animals. — Debbie Williamson



Samburu Woman with her baby. — Shreekant Tripathi



Namnyak Samburu settlement near the entrance to the Samburu National Reserve. — Bill Kracov

THE SAMBURU TRIBES



African Elephant — Beverly Tavel

SAMBURU NATIONAL RESERVE

Samburu National Reserve is a 64 square mile protected area located on the northern side of Kenya. Bordered to the south by the Ewaso Ng'iro river, the landscape is dominated by desert and semi-desert ecosystems flanked by rocky mountains. The reserve is famous for its own special five: the reticulated giraffe, Grevy's zebra, Beisa oryx, Somali Ostrich and the gerenuk. It's also one of the best places to spot leopards and large groups of elephants and reticulated giraffes that come to drink from the river.

Nearly 450 species of birds have been recorded in this reserve known for its large flocks of Vulturine Guinea Fowl. Various species of weaver birds and hornbills were spotted as well as a good selection of raptors. Perhaps one of the highlights was watching hornbills interacting with pygmy mongooses and a Gray-Headed kingfisher eating a scorpion.

Samburu rewarded all of us with awesome elephant images, giraffes crossing the river, impalas grassing and the ultimate encounter with a female leopard. Birds were plentiful even at the lodge, where many came to pay us a visit while having lunch. At night we had the chance to see one of the most secretive animals, the genet.

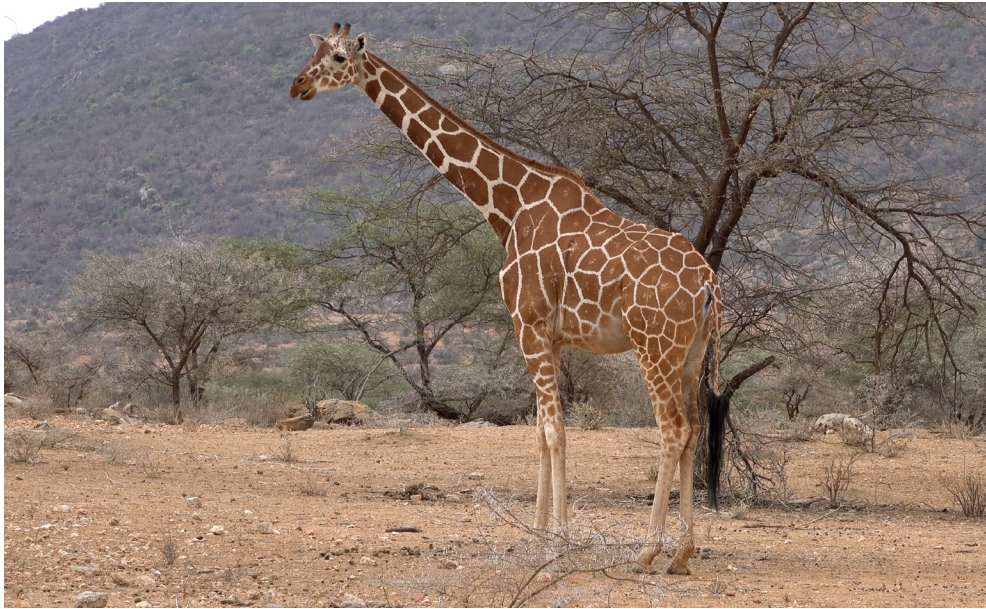
Samburu Reserve and the nearby Meru National Park, is where conservationists George and Joy Adamson raised the famous lioness Elsa that was later released into the wild. The 1966 movie Born Free is based on their story.

Dwarf Mongoose & Hornbill Mutualism

Two species of hornbills provide an essential service to the foraging mongooses: the Eastern Yellow-billed and the Von der Decken's hornbill. Their keen vision allows them to recognize the slightest chance of danger from a distant predator before the mongooses can perceive it. The hornbills raise the alarm and everybody runs for safety. In exchange, the hornbills get some free food from the mongooses as they dig out more than they can eat. Both species are under predation pressure from raptors. In an altruistic fashion, the hornbills warn about predators that do not predate them, but will predate on the mongooses. This symbiotic relationship is so strong that hornbills can be seen waiting for the mongooses to wake up and start foraging in the early morning. In the same manner, the mongooses won't leave their mounds unless there are hornbills present on the feeding grounds.



Eastern yellow-billed hornbill foraging with dwarf mongooses. — Reinier Mungaia



Reticulated Giraffe — Tom Wells



Family of African elephants drinking at a man-made pond. — Jeff Rich



A Martial Eagle dispatching a Vulturine Guinea Fowl. — Kay Wells



Dik Dik the smallest of the antelopes. — Reinier Munguía



Male Impala against the scrubby open land typical of the Samburu Preserve. — Lee Tavel



Up-close Leopard. — Jeffrey Rich



A family of elephants drinking at the man-made pond in Samburu National Reserve. — Lee Tavel

SAMBURU NATIONAL RESERVE



A Lioness mom on the prowl. — Debbie Williamson



The lioness cub. — James Dunn



Samburu elephants feeding. — Tom Wells



A female leopard rest on a fallen tree. We later learned there were two males following her. — Bill Kracov



Gerenuk — Kay Wells



Elephant crossing the river. — Lee Tavel



Black-backed Jackal — Kay Wells



Reticulated giraffes about to cross the Ewaso Ng'iro river. — Lee Tavel

BIRDS OF THE SAMBURU RESERVE



Hunter's Sunbird — Beverly Tavel



Golden-breasted Starling — Lee Tavel



Variable Sunbird — Reinier Mungaía



White-bellied Go Away — James Dunn



Von der Deckens Hornbill — Reinier Mungaía



Twany Eagle — Bill Kracov



Pygmy Batis — Reinier Mungaía



Black-capped Social Weaver — Reinier Mungaía



Von der Deckens Hornbill — Reinier Mungaía



Eastern Chanting-Goshawk — Kay Wells



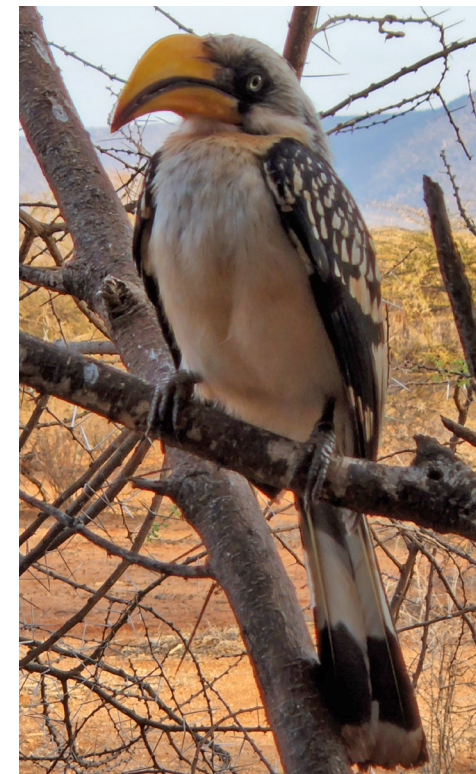
Buffalo Weaver — Bill Kracov



Laughing Dove — Reinier Munguía



Gray-headed Kingfisher — Bill Kracov



Southern Hornbill — Debbie Williamson



Pygmy Falcon — Kay Wells



Vulturine Guinea Fowl — Reinier Munguía



Buff— Reinier Munguía



Yellow-throated Spur Fowl — James Dunn



Bateleur eagle — Bill Kracov



Red-fronted Barbet — Bill Kracov

BIRDS OF THE SAMBURU RESERVE

NAKURU NATIONAL PARK

Lake Nakuru is one of many lakes along the Rift Valley and is protected under the Lake Nakuru National Park. The lake used to be one of the most important feeding grounds for lesser and greater flamingos, but an increase in the water levels in 2013 has caused many of the birds to move to Lake Bogoria to the north. The park, established in 1961, contains 25 critically endangered black rhinos and about 75 white rhinos. Game wardens can be seen patrolling the park on foot, keeping track of these magnificent animals.

The landscape is very diverse, with open savannas with iconic acacia as well as forested areas containing large strands of fever trees and a thick shrub layer. The open savannas provide room for large mammals like the rhinos, cape buffaloes and giraffes to roam. This is the best place to find the Nubian giraffe subspecies which can be distinguished from the Masai giraffe by the lack of spots below the knees. These open areas gave us many opportunities to capture the most iconic bird in Africa, the Lilac-breasted Roller. Another great bird encountered here was the Secretary Bird, one of the unusual raptors that prefers walking with its heron-like feet rather than flying like most birds do.

Monkeys were encountered fairly often, especially large troops of olive baboons and vervet monkeys. But the best monkey award goes to the black and white colobus monkeys we encountered in the fever tree forest and at the picnic area near the Makalia Falls. On our first visit to the picnic area, we had to scare away a few baboons that had set their eyes on our food. Some of the birds in this area of the park include the cinnamon-chested bee-eater and the white-browed robin-chat.

The lake shoreline offered us some great opportunities to capture birds like the grey crowned-cranes, yellow-billed storks and African spoonbills. The nearby forest was the hiding place of a family of tree climbing lions.



A ranger truck drives pass a fever tree. These trees are very common in Nakuru National Park, one of few places in Africa where tree climbing lions can be found. — Jeffrey Rich



Rhino with calf. — Tom Wells



Common Zebras drinking. — Bill Kracov



Egyptian Geese foraging in the shallows at Lake Nakuru. — Jeff Rich



Grey-crowned Cranes. — Beverly Tavel



Two cape buffaloes fighting on the road to Baboon Hill. — Tom Wells



Two Common Zebras playing or fighting? — James Dunn



Ironically a Lilac-breasted roller perched on the sign near the end of the runway. — Jeff Rich



Southern Ground Hornbill — Reinier Munguía



Olive Baboon baby. — Bill Kracov



Colobus Monkey at Makalia Falls. — Shreekant Tripathi

Lilac-breasted Roller, national bird of Kenya. — Debbie Williamson



A herd of impalas grassing in Nakuru National Park. — Reinier Munguía

KENYA 2022



Nubian Giraffes — Reinier Munguía



Warthog walking against a backdrop of dead trees as result of water levels increase. — Jeff Rich



Young Olive Baboon. — Shreekant Tripathi

NAKURU NATIONAL PARK



Olive baboon with baby. — Shreekant Tripathi



A mixed flock of Greater and Lesser Flamingoes. — Bill Kracov



Greater Flamingo — Reinier Munguía



Lilac-breasted Roller feeding young. — Shreekant Tripathi

BIRDS OF LAKE NAKURU



Yellow Bishop — Bill Kracov



Lilac-breasted roller — Debbie Williamson



Secretarybird — Kay Wells



Blue-eared Starling — Reinier Munguía



Crested Eagle — Bill Kracov



Grey-crowned Cranes — Beverly Tavel



Pied Kingfisher — Debbie Williamson



Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater — Reinier Munguía



White-browed Robin Chat — James Dunn



Yellow-throated Longclaw — Reinier Munguía



Grey-headed Kingfisher — James Dunn



Hammerkop — Jeff Rich

LAKE NAIVASHA

Lake Naivasha sits at the highest elevation of the Kenyan Rift Valley at 6,181 feet above sea level. The lake is the remnant of a much larger lake composed of volcanic rocks and sedimentary deposits that existed during the Pleistocene Era. Two perennial rivers feed the lake, the Malewa and the Gilgil, but the outflow appears to be underground. With an average depth of 20 feet, the deepest area is 98 feet near Crescent Island.

The lake is known for its sizable population of hippos and it boasts nearly 400 species of birds. But more impressive was the amount of wildlife that roamed the grounds of the Naivasha Sopa Lodge where we stayed. The lodge, located on the eastern shores of the lake, provides a wildlife haven for waterbucks, common zebras, giraffes, colobus monkeys and the not-so-welcome hippos that came at night to graze on the grounds. Every night, we were escorted to our rooms to prevent any hippo surprises. These water-loving giants could be seen basking on the shores during the day or happily moving on the water, but at night they use the cover of darkness to feed on vegetable matter around the lodge. Hippopotamus are the most dangerous animal in Africa, causing an estimated 500 deaths every year. In comparison, lions only cause an average of 20 deaths per year. This made it all the more impressive to watch young fishermen setting their nets with water to their necks not too far from these temperamental beasts.



Lake Naivasha has a long history and none more interesting than the fact that it was Kenya's first international airport. Back in 1932, the first commercial flight was inaugurated as a mail route from Britain to Cape Town. But it didn't take long for passengers to join the flights; in fact it took only three months. The flight would take about 10 days to complete on huge flying boats. By 1935, British Airways was formed and later merged in 1945 to become the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC). It all came to an end with the dawn of the jet era and the introduction of the Boeing 707 in 1958.

Today the lake continues to serve the people of Kenya as a water reservoir for intensive irrigation for neighboring fields, potable water for both humans and wildlife, and hydroelectric power. It also provides various recreational opportunities and it has become a very successful tourist destination.





Waterbuck — James Dunn



Hippo and baby sunning on the shores of Lake Naivasha. — Reinier Munguía



Shivani admiring the zebras grazing around the lodge. — Reinier Munguía



Young Vervet Monkey. — Jeff Rich



Variable Sunbird on the gardens of the Naivasha Sopa Lodge. — Reinier Munguía



Colobus Monkey at the entrance to the lodge in Lake Naivasha. — Shreekant Tripathi



Nubian Woodpecker — Reinier Munguía



A male zebra demonstrating the Flehmen response. — Shreekant Tripathi



African Wagtail — Reinier Munguía

BIRDS OF LAKE NAIVASHA



Hadada Ibis — Bill Kracov



Black Crake — James Dunn



African Jacana — Bill Kracov



Wood Hoopoe — Reinier Munguía



Marabou Stork — Jeff Rich



Blacksmith Plover — Bill Kracov



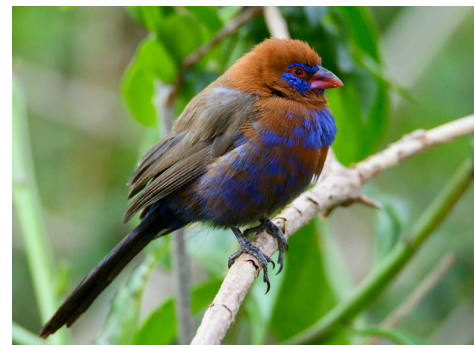
White-eyed Slaty flycatcher — Bill Kracov



Pied Kingfisher — Reinier Munguía



Squacco Heron — Bill Kracov



Purple Grenadier — Reinier Munguía



Goliath Heron — Shreekant Tripathi



African Fish Eagle — James Dunn

CRESCENT ISLAND

Crescent Island emerged in 1988 as the water levels in Lake Naivasha receded, revealing its distinctive shape. Access to the island is solely by boat, although locals sometimes take a risky stroll when the water is low to fish along the shores, despite the presence of numerous hippos on the premises.

Crescent Island gained recognition following the 1985 movie “Out of Africa” starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford. Many wildlife scenes were filmed on the island, with various animals brought in from different parts of Kenya for easier filming and containment on the island. Interestingly, after filming concluded, many animals were left behind, except for the lions, which were returned to the Masai Mara.

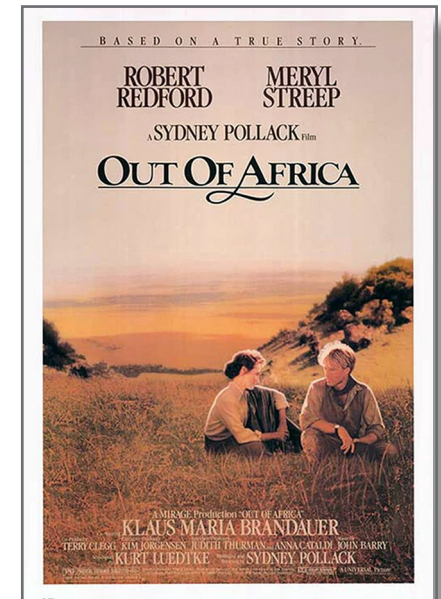
The airstrip where Denys (played by Robert Redford) is seen taking off on his plane is located on the island. We walked the runway surrounded by gazelles, zebras and wildebeest and made friends with a giraffe as we climbed the hill on our way back to the boats.

Today, Crescent Island is a private game sanctuary that offers accommodations for those eager to explore the island and its diverse wildlife. Here, you can encounter various animals, including jackals, Masai giraffes, impalas, Thompson and Grant gazelles, wildebeests, white-tailed mongooses, and even African rock pythons. This small island provides ample opportunities for birdwatching,

with species like the African Fish Eagle, Hadada Ibis, Hamerkop, Lilac-breasted Roller, and many more.

Following our visit to Crescent Island, we returned to our boats to photograph the African Fish Eagles. We made several attempts to toss fish for the eagles to retrieve from the water. This proved to be a challenging task, as we had to aim our cameras while compensating for the boat’s movement. Nevertheless, everyone had a great opportunity to capture these birds in flight.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Crescent Island is the ability to walk among large and medium-sized herbivores without the fear of encountering predators. This location stands out as one of the most picturesque spots on Lake Naivasha.



Above: Out of Africa, the movie partially filmed at Crescent Island.

Below: A view of the Longonot mountains from Lake Naivasha.





Shooting birds and hippos on the way to Crescent Island. — Reinier Munguía



Fish eagle on the upwind. — Bill Kracov



African Fish Eagle — Shreekant Tripathi



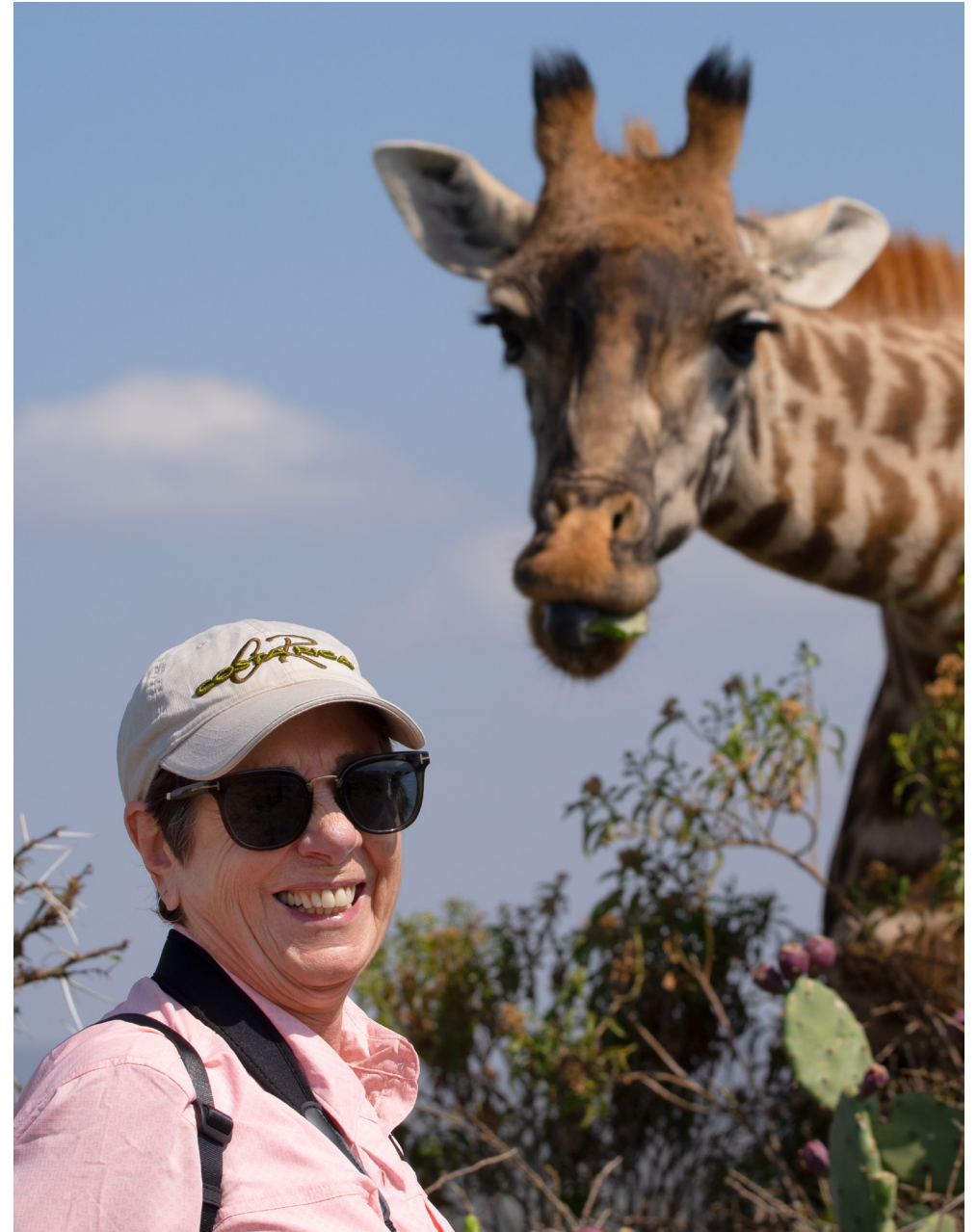
African Fish Eagle about to catch the fish. — Reinier Munguía



A young giraffe running down the hills of Crescent Island. — Jeff Rich



Walking the airstrip at Crescent Island. — Reinier Munguía



Sandy and her favorite giraffe, Shirley. — Reinier Munguía

CRESCENT ISLAND



Hells Gate National Park — Lee Tavel

HELLS GATE NATIONAL PARK

Hell's Gate National Park is located south of Lake Naivasha and is named after a narrow break in the cliffs. The area was once a huge lake. The park is well visited by Kenyans as it's very affordable and offers a variety of recreational opportunities including bike riding, camping, and even mountain climbing. Wildlife is plentiful including Cape buffalo, giraffes, hartebeest, Thompson gazelles and zebras. With nearly 130 species of birds described in the park, it wasn't hard to find a few Helmeted Guinea Fowls, an Auger Buzzard and a cooperative pair of White-fronted Bee-eaters.

The park is also home to one very unique animal, the rock hyrax. A distant relative of the elephant and the manatee, these rodent-like mammals tend to hide in rocky areas. Our encounter with them was very friendly, to the point that we could almost touch them as they grazed a few inches from our feet.

The south end of the park reveals multiple geysers spouting water vapor into the sky. The geothermal activity is being used to produce energy. Currently there are six geothermal plants owned by KenGen within the park.

Hell's Gate, with its outcrops and escarpments, was also the inspiration for many of the landscape scenes in the Lion King movie. Looking at Fischer's tower, one can see where the inspiration for Pride Rock might have come from. This 75-foot-tall monolith is a well-known formation for rock climbers.

The beauty of this park lies in the ability of visitors to ride their bikes along herds of zebras, wildebeest and cape buffaloes. It's also one of the few sites where camping is allowed, not far from Nairobi. Hell's Gate is a well visited park by Kenyans looking to spend the weekend outdoors in the wilderness.

From afar, one can observe the emissions of steam arising from the geothermal features within this park, serving as a crucial electricity source for Kenya.



Fischer's Tower is an iconic landmark at Hell's Gate National Park. — Reinier Munguía



The park is geologically different from all the others we visited. — Reinier Munguía



Black Kite — Bill Kracov



Our guides didn't believe me that we could find Rock Hyraxes here — Reinier Munguía



Rock Hyrax — Debbie Williamson



The Rock Hyrax is a distant relative of the elephant — Shreekant Tripathi



"Pumba"- Swahili for warthog. — Reinier Munguía



Masai giraffes waving goodbye as we exited the park. — Shreekant Tripathi



White-fronted Bee-eater — James Dunn



Cheetah Family — Bill Kracov

MASAI MARA

The Masai Mara National Reserve, situated in the southwestern region of Kenya and bordering Tanzania, stands out as one of Kenya's most renowned reserves, attracting visitors from around the globe. Covering an expansive area of 938 square miles, these undulating African savanna plains serve as a distinctive sanctuary for wildlife. Among the most frequently encountered animals here are lions and cheetahs, which closely trail the vast herds of migrating wildebeest and zebras that annually traverse the Mara in search of fresh vegetation following the rainy season. During the period from December to May, most animals can be found in Tanzania, as this is their calving season. However, as the land begins to dry out, they gradually migrate northward in June to take advantage of the remaining lush grasslands.

The distinctive grassland prairies, with its sausage trees and scattered rocky patches, serve as a habitat for a myriad of species, including the Mwanza Flat-headed Rock agama, recognized as one of the most vibrantly colored lizards globally. Within the low shrubs and bushes, a diverse array of birds such as the little bee-eater and the white-browed coucal find refuge. The grasslands also host several species of lapwings, finches, and the graceful secretarybird. Along the creeks, large herds of elephants can be observed grazing on the green vegetation. It might be surprising to encounter a hippopotamus or two in ponds seemingly too small for them, but water sources are limited to a few oases and the formidable Sand and Mara Rivers.

The Mara River is renowned for the iconic river crossings that animals undertake during their migration from Tanzania to Kenya. Unfortunately, the rise in visitor numbers and the actions of unscrupulous guides may be hindering many of these natural events, consequently diminishing the number of animals reaching the prime pasture lands. In the 1970s, only 40 camps were present in the Mara, but today, there are over 200 camps established within the reserve, attracting more than 300,000 visitors annually. Ensuring a sustainable future for the Mara requires controlled development and educational initiatives to mitigate further impact on this globally acclaimed ecosystem.

*Mwanza flat-headed rock agama (Reinier Munguía)
against the rolling hills of the Masai Mara (Lee Tavel).*





A Maasai herding the cows through the park. — Shreekant Tripathi



A lost cow becomes an easy kill. Vultures feasting on the remains. — Reinier Munguía



White-backed Vulture — Jeff Rich



Three Chetah brothers playing. — Lee Tavel



Cheetah resting in the shade. — Debbie Williamson



We were greeted by mating lions on session one. — Lee Tavel



Hyenas are always on the look out for an easy meal. — Beverly Tavel



Hartebeests — Beverly Tavel



Elephant herd feeding. — Debbie Williamson



Black-backed Jackal — Shreekant Tripathi



Elephant showing his pride. — Beverly Tavel



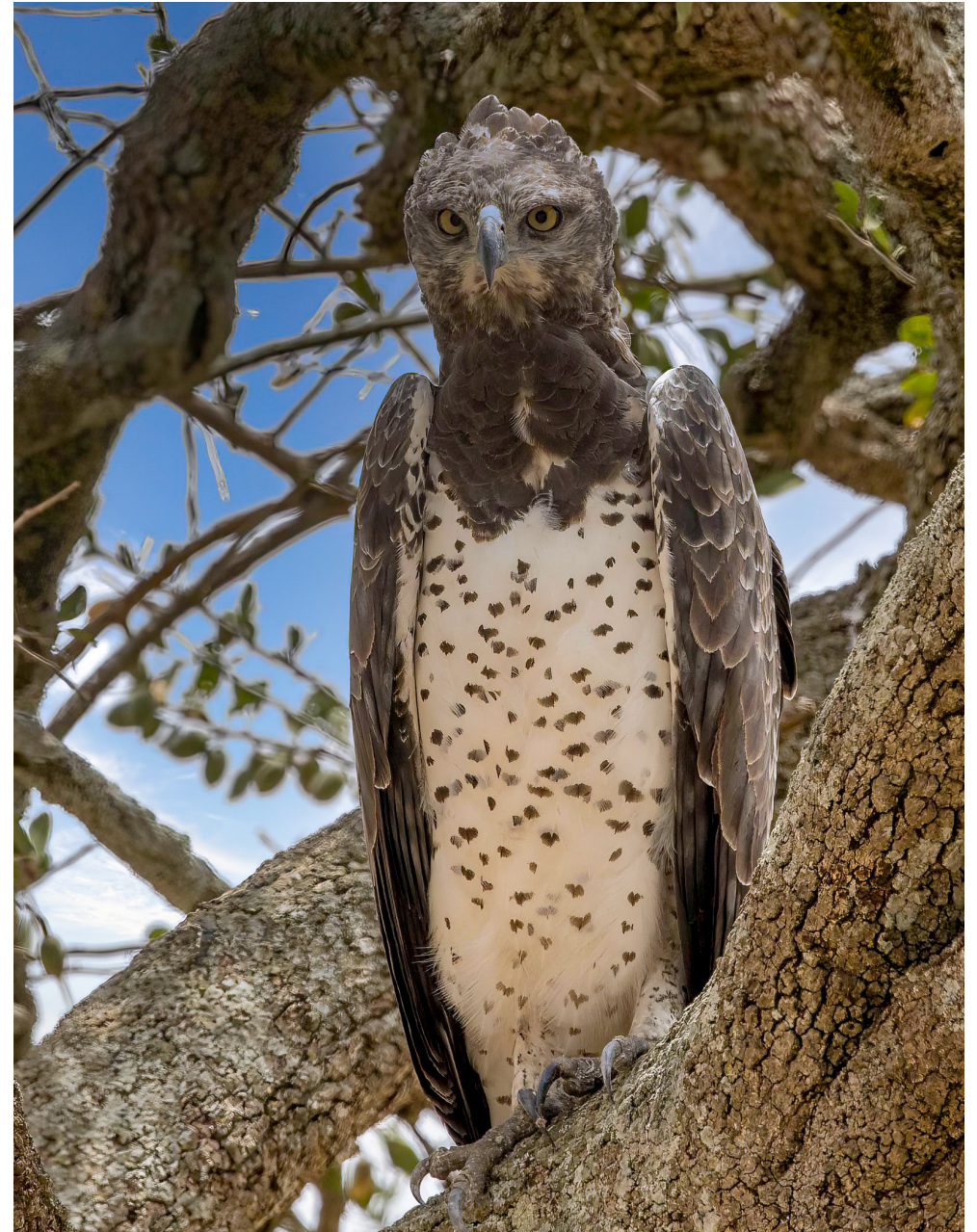
A lonely sausage tree in the Masai Mara. — Shreekant Tripathi



Topis having a fight. — Shreekant Tripathi



Can you count how many hippos? — Tom Wells



Martial Eagle — Bill Kracov



Hippos in the Mara River — Tom Wells



This little creek is an oasis for the animals in the dry Mara.— Reinier Munguía



Hyenas are always on the prowl. — Jeff Rich



Traffic jam at the Mara river crossing. — Reinier Munguía



Secretarybird — Reinier Munguía



Secretarybird on nest. — Shreekant Tripathi



Thompson's Gazelles, a.k.a cheetah's ice cream. — Reinier Munguía



Grant's gazelle nursing young. — James Dunn

BIRDS OF MASAI MARA



African Grey Hornbill — Bill Kracov



Yellow-throated Sandgrouse — Reinier Munguía



Red-necked Spurfowl — Bill Kracov



Gray-backed Fiscals — Bill Kracov



African Hoopoe — Kay Wells



Bare-faced Go-away — James Dunn



Brown Snake Eagle — Shreekant Tripathi



Wattled Lapwing — Reinier Munguía



Gabar Ghosthawk — Bill Kracov



Gray-crested Helmetshrike — Reinier Munguía



Lappet-faced Vulture — Shreekant Tripathi

A FEW PEOPLE PHOTOS



The Tripathi family at the Unity Women Village.



Only the ladies were invited, the guys could only watch.



Are you taking a picture of me???



Lee and Beverly in the washing machine. Was Paul driving?



All having lunch at Rhino Watch.



Heidi and Jeff watching for food-snatching baboons.



Tippi (Samburu Chief) and Jeff taking pictures of the group.



What's wrong with this dog?



Bouncing around the Mara.