



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Uganda

### Shoebills, Chimpanzees & Gorillas Extension II

*13<sup>th</sup> May to 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (7 days)*

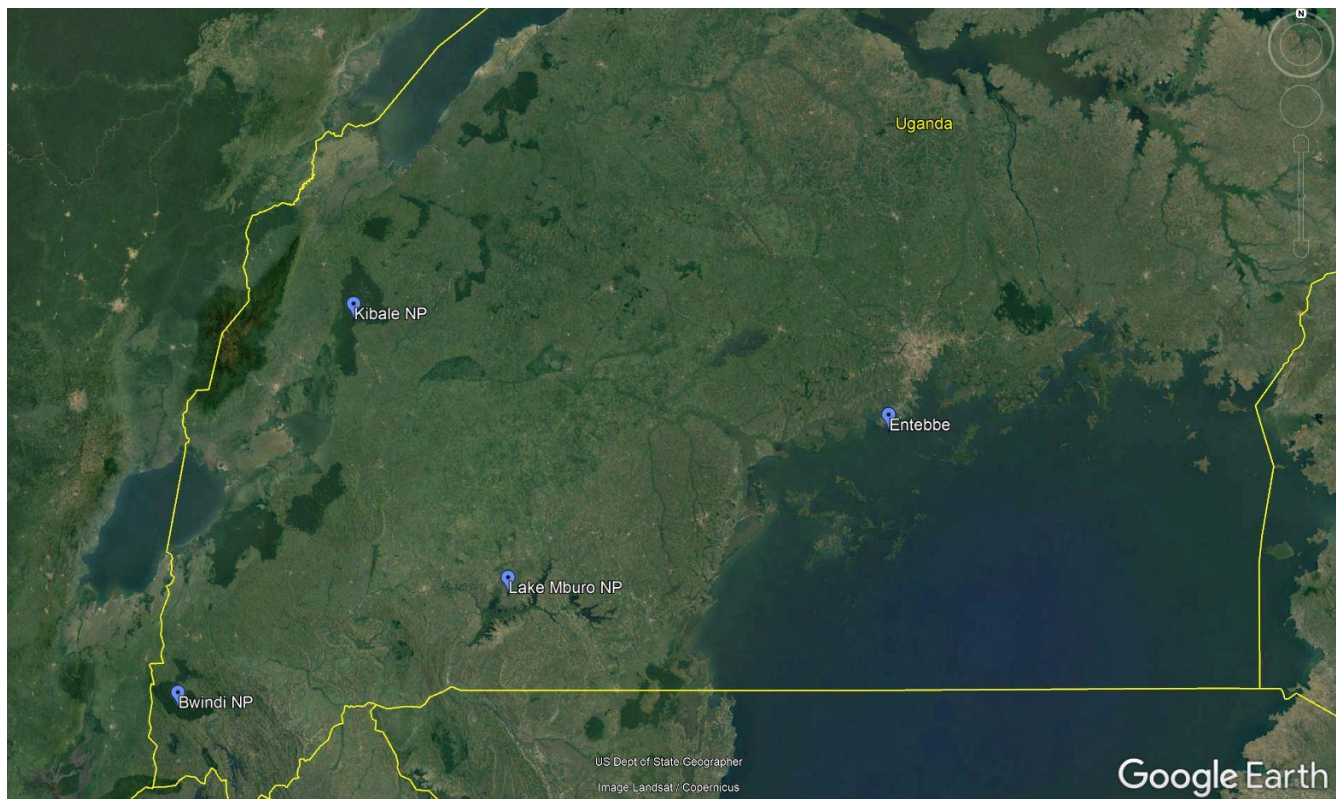


Mountain Gorillas by Adam Riley

*From the source of the White Nile on Lake Victoria to the snow-capped Ruwenzori Range and the montane splendours of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, harbouring some of the last remaining Mountain Gorillas, Uganda is an equatorial country of astonishing contrasts. No other area in Africa can match its amazing diversity of habitats (all in an area approximately the size of Great Britain!), and this richness is reflected in its incredible bird list of over 1,000 species, making it arguably the richest African birding destination. Amongst these are many highly sought-after species such as the unique Shoebill and the chance to track both Mountain Gorillas and Chimpanzees!*

**THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...****THE ITINERARY**

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>Day 1</b> | <b>Arrive in Entebbe</b>  |
| <b>Day 2</b> | <b>Mabamba Wetland to Kibale NP</b>   |
| <b>Day 3</b> | <b>Kibale NP – Chimpanzee tracking &amp; birding</b>                          |
| <b>Day 4</b> | <b>Kibale NP to Bwindi NP</b>   |
| <b>Day 5</b> | <b>Buhoma, Bwindi Impenetrable NP – Birding and optional Gorilla tracking</b> |
| <b>Day 6</b> | <b>Bwindi NP to Lake Mburo</b>  |
| <b>Day 7</b> | <b>Lake Mburo NP to Entebbe and departure</b>                                 |

**TOUR ROUTE MAP...**



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**THE TOUR IN DETAIL...**

Shoebill by Markus Lilje

**Day 1: Arrive in Entebbe.** Today is set aside as an arrival day in order for us to make an early start the following morning. Upon arrival at Entebbe International Airport, you will be met and transferred to our accommodations for the night. Time permitting, we may visit the Entebbe Botanical Gardens, situated just a short distance away from our hotel. Our primary target here is the gorgeous Orange Weaver – small, loose breeding colonies are usually present in the trees at the very edge of Lake Victoria. Other conspicuous species in the botanical gardens include both Ross’s and Great Blue Turacos, the scarce Orange-tufted Sunbird, Grey Parrot, Eastern Plaintain-eater, Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill, and the Woodland Kingfisher. Overhead we will watch for Hooded Vulture, Yellow-billed Kites, and Pied Crows and we’ll certainly find the grotesque-looking Marabou Stork. In a small remnant patch of forest, we may also find Guereza – an incredibly striking black-and-white primate with a long bushy tail. Thereafter, we return to the hotel for the evening, and a scrumptious welcoming dinner.



Papyrus Gonolek by Adam Riley

**Day 2: Mabamba Wetland to Kibale NP.** This morning, we depart Entebbe early and begin our Ugandan adventure in search of a very special bird. Our prime target for today is the legendary Shoebill and we will set off through small rural





Chimpanzee by Daniel Danckwerts

villages and homesteads to Mabamba, which is a large wetland connected to Lake Victoria. This extensive papyrus swamp is home to several pairs of Shoebill, Uganda's most famous avian resident and the prime attraction to the nation for most birders. This charismatic species, the only representative of its family, is certainly amongst the most highly prized birds in the world! We will commission a boat from the nearby fishing village and search the maze of channels in an attempt to find this special species. Other water birds abound and we should find several species of herons, egrets and waterfowl, the ever-present African Fish Eagle, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, African Marsh Harrier, Purple Swamphen, Long-toed Lapwing, African and the tricky Lesser Jacanas, Malachite Kingfisher, and African Pygmy Goose. The papyrus holds the endearing Swamp Flycatcher, Blue-headed Coucal, Greater and White-winged Swamp Warblers, Grey-capped Warbler, the indescribable Papyrus Gonolek, and the nomadic and unpredictable Weyn's Weaver. If we are exceptionally fortunate, we may also see the rare Sitatunga, a shy swamp-dwelling antelope with splayed hooves.

Thereafter, we will begin our journey to Kibale National Park. We have a fairly long drive ahead of us, expecting to arrive at our lodgings in the late afternoon.

**Day 3: Kibale NP – Chimpanzee tracking & birding.** The towering Kibale Forest has the highest primate concentration and species diversity of any reserve in East Africa. Primate highlights might include sightings of localised Central African Red Colobus, handsome L'Hoest's Monkey and the scruffy Ugandan Grey-cheeked Mangabey. We will also embark on a Chimpanzee trek and our chances of finding these, one of our closest living relatives, are excellent! The birds are typical of the medium-altitude forest, with excellent mixed species flocks and specials such as Afep and the rare and globally threatened White-naped Pigeon, Red-chested Owlet, Blue-throated Roller, Narina Trogon, African Shrike-flycatcher, Scaly-breasted and Brown Illadopsis, Superb and Green-headed Sunbirds, Black-billed Turaco, Plain Greenbul, Chestnut Wattle-eye and Black-and-white Mannikin. The stunning Green-breasted Pitta also occurs in this forest, however, a pre-dawn start and a good deal of luck and perseverance will be needed to locate this mythical low-density understory



Great Blue Turaco by Jonathan Rossouw







L'Hoest's Monkey by Daniel Danckwerts

inhabitant! At night we may encounter Demidoff's and Thomas's Galagos (more commonly known as bushbabies) and African Wood Owl; all of which are usually resident around our accommodations in the forest.

**Day 4: Kibale NP to Bwindi NP.** Today we depart Kibale and head for the famous Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, a bastion for gorilla conservation and a hotspot for Albertine Rift Endemics.

After a long drive, we will reach the headquarters of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park at Buhoma, where we will

be based for three nights. The Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to approximately half of the world population of 800 Mountain Gorillas. This vast reserve offers arguably some of the most productive montane forest birding in Africa and supports almost the entire suite of Albertine Rift endemic bird species. Once part of a much larger forest that included the Virunga Volcanoes in neighbouring Rwanda, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is now an ecological island within a sea of human cultivation and therefore of immense conservation importance. Buhoma lies in the valley of the Munyaga River at 5,100 feet and is flanked by steep, forested hills. Excellent forest birding, not least the prospect of numerous rare and localised Albertine Rift endemics, makes this a true birding Mecca.

**Day 5: Buhoma, Bwindi Impenetrable NP – Birding and optional Gorilla tracking.** From our comfortable base, those departing on an optional gorilla trekking adventure will search for a habituated family group of Mountain Gorilla. Spending an hour with these gentle giants is, without a doubt, one of the greatest wildlife experiences on Earth!

We will spend the balance of our time here birding the trails leading out from the camp. Species we will search for include Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Bar-tailed Trogon, Dusky Tit, Abyssinian (Kivu) Ground Thrush, White-bellied Robin-Chat, Equatorial Akalat, rare Grey-chested Babbler, Red-throated Alethe, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, Northern Double-collared Sunbird, Willcocks's Honeyguide, newly described Willard's Sooty Boubou, Black-billed Weaver and Magpie Mannikin. High exposed perches in the open forest are favoured by African Goshawk, the dazzling Black Bee-eater, Sooty Flycatcher and forest starlings including Waller's, Stuhlmann's and Narrow-tailed. One of Bwindi's star avian attractions is the diminutive, pitta-like Neumann's Warbler, a vocal yet very secretive bird! We will require luck and patience to see



Black Bee-eater by David Hoddinott





Regal Sunbird by Adam Riley

this skulker – one of the Albertine Rift endemics. Other understory birds we hope to see include displaying African Broadbill, Black-faced Prinia and the handsome but shy Black-faced Rufous Warbler. The mid-storey and canopy support Elliot's and Tullberg's Woodpeckers, Cabanis's, Kakamega and Ansorge's Greenbuls, the enigmatic Chapin's Flycatcher and White-browed Crombec. The rare Jameson's Antpecker may also be seen probing under moss on dead branches or gleaning warbler-like in the canopy, though finding this localised species requires immense luck, while Scarce Swifts forage over the forest. Birding at Buhoma is a truly magical experience!

Other wildlife that we may be fortunate enough to find here includes Black-fronted and the huge Yellow-backed Duiker, Guereza Colobus, L'Hoest's, Blue and Red-tailed monkeys, Chimpanzee and several species of squirrels, including Fire-footed Rope, Carruthers' Mountain, Ruwenzori Sun and Red-legged Sun Squirrels.

**Day 6: Bwindi NP to Lake Mburo.** After a spot of further birding at Bwindi, we will depart the montane rainforests and begin our journey to Lake Mburo to the north-east. Our long travel day will take us through the highlands, ravaged by the high human population density, before arriving at the *Acacia* woodlands and wetlands of Lake Mburo National Park.

We will spend the latter part of the afternoon birding in Lake Mburo National Park, a superb wetland and *Acacia* savanna sanctuary that hosts some very special species. Raptor watching will be a major feature and potential targets will include African Marsh Harrier, White-backed, Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures, Brown Snake Eagle and African Hawk-Eagle. Lake Mburo's woodlands are the northern-most example of the southern savanna system and are therefore home to several species at the edge of their range. Most sought-after of these is the elusive Red-faced Barbet, known only from remote north-eastern Tanzania, Rwanda, and here, while other specials include the aptly-named Long-tailed Cisticola and Green-capped Eremomela.

We will also search for Crested and Coqui Francolins, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Red-chested, Jacobin, Levillant's, and African Cuckoos, Blue-naped Mousebird, Lilac-breasted Roller, Striped Kingfisher, Green Wood Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Spot-flanked Barbet, Bearded and the uncommon Golden-tailed Woodpeckers,



Black-fronted Duiker by Daniel Danckwerts







**Red-faced Barbet by Daniel Danckwerts**

several swallows including Lesser Striped, Red-breasted, Mosque, Red-rumped and White-headed Saw-wing, Black Cuckooshrike, White-browed Scrub Robin, Trilling Cisticola, the meadowlark-like Yellow-throated Longclaw, Chinspot Batis, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Grey Penduline Tit, Arrow-marked Babbler, Brubru, Wattled Starling, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Marico Sunbird and Red-headed Weaver. Papyrus swamps and other overhanging vegetation along the edge of Lake Mburo may yield sightings of Black-crowned and the shy White-backed Night Heron, confiding African Fish Eagle, African Finfoot and Greater Swamp Warbler.

Mammals we may find include foraging groups of Banded and Dwarf Mongooses surveying the world from atop their adopted termite mounds, Plains Zebra, Hippopotamus, Common Warthog, Eland (the world's largest antelope), Defassa Waterbuck, Bohor Reedbuck, Impala, Oribi, and Topi. Just outside the park, we will come across some of the world-famous long-horned Ankole cattle – always a highlight to see.

**Day 7: Lake Mburo NP to Entebbe and departure.** After breakfast, we shall depart on a fairly lengthy drive to Entebbe where the tour will conclude.

### **FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

**Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.**

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 7;
- Bottled drinking water while in transit;
- Accommodations;
- Ground transportation during the tour;
- Gratuities for drivers/guides; and
- All guiding services.

The tour fee does not include:

- **Any** airfares;
- Visa fees;
- The optional gorilla trek permit (see above);
- Any drinks over and above the bottled drinking water supplied while in transit;
- Any gratuities other than those mentioned above;
- Telephone calls; and



- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:** The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**
- b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.**
- c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

**TIPPING:** As noted above, gratuities for local guides and drivers are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader and other staff (restaurants, hotel staff etc.). If, therefore, you feel that your Rockjumper leader and/or any other staff have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

**Please Note:**

- In some areas, it can be hot. On most mornings, we will be up and out very early and the days will be long with most of the day dedicated to exploring for birds and mammals.
- At times, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails (entirely optional) to find a few special birds. Our pace will, however, be slow in the forests.
- Although this Uganda tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in **good general health** as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. There will be a few lengthy drives and many of the days will be long with early starts. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- The optional gorilla trek at Bwindi Impenetrable Forest generally involves several hours of strenuous walking on steep slopes, often off-trail. The chance of finding the gorillas is very high, but not guaranteed. New regulations have meant that family group permits will be allocated on the morning of the trek. It is also possible that we will be split up into a few different trekking parties.
- The vehicles used are comfortable stretched Landcruiser 4X4's with open roof-hatches.

**ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:**

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour starts with a welcome dinner on the evening of day 1 in Entebbe. The tour will conclude in the **late afternoon/early evening** of day 7 at Entebbe International Airport.





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The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

**FLIGHTS**

Entebbe International Airport, Entebbe (IATA: EBB) is the main port of entry for international flights on this tour and is well serviced by most of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

