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Trip Report: Tanzania 12 day tour in August 2008

Overview

12-day tour (from 31 July to 11 August 2008)

Areas visited: Mikumi, Uluguru South, Kilombero, Usumbaras, Same and the South Pare Mountains

Detailed Tour Report

This short Tanzania trip was custom-designed to maximise the chances of finding the remaining birds Tom Gullick could find, without launching too major an expedition, in Tanzania. Of the 15 species Tom was after, we managed to find fourteen, only **Usambara Eagle Owl** proving elusive. Although there was little time for other birding, we managed to see most of the local specials while concentrating on the main targets. Below is a brief summary of the trip.

31 July 2008: Dar es Salaam to Mikumi National Park

We arrived at Dar es Salaam's International Airport shortly after midday, and immediately hit the road for Mikumi National Park, where we arrived at the comfortable Vuma Hills Lodge after dark. The only bird of note seen en route was **Rufous-bellied Heron**.

1-2 August 2008: Uluguru South

Leaving our travel companions behind in the comfort of Vuma Hills Lodge, Tom and I headed back to Morogoro and on to Teketelo Mission in the South Ulugurus, where our main target was the striking and very rare **Uluguru Bush-Shrike**. We arrived at our campsite, well inside the forest, by the early afternoon, en route notching up **African Citril**, **Yellow-bellied Waxbill**, **Waller's Starling**, **Fullerborn's Boubou**, **Evergreen Forest Warbler**, **Uluguru Violet-backed Sunbird** and **Loveridge's Sunbird**. After setting up camp we birded nearby, where a large foraging flock held **Uluguru Mountain Greenbul**, **Shelley's Greenbul** and **Forest Batis**. But our attention was quickly pinned on the nearby calls of **Uluguru Bush Shrike**. The bird came in briefly, but was restless and allowed only brief views. It was getting dark, so we decided to try again the following morning.

Up at first light, we soon located a foraging flock with **Uluguru Bush-Shrike**. After some patience and persistence, we enjoyed fantastic views of the bird, alongside **Green Barbet** and **White-winged Apalis**. In the late morning we made our way back to the vehicle, seeing **Red-throated Twinspot** en route, and back to Mikumi, where we met up with our travel companions.

3-4 August 2008 Mikumi to Kilombero

We spent the morning on some leisurely game drives in Mikumi. Interesting species included **Northern Pied Babbler**, **Taita Fiscal**, **Von Decken's Hornbill**, **Pale-billed Hornbill**, **Grey Kestrel**, **Black-bellied Bustard**, **Temminck's Courser** and **Fischer's Sparrow-Lark**, before heading south for Sanje. We paused briefly near Mikumi village for some Miombo birding, finding **Cinnamon-breasted Tit**, **Miombo Blue-eared Starling**, **Pale-billed Hornbill**, **Red-throated Wryneck** and **Arnot's Chat**.

Before sunrise we started the jumpy trip to Ifakara on the edge of Kilombero swamp. Here we arrived while the air was still cool, and quickly found the two endemic cisticolas (**White-tailed Cisticola** and **Kilombero Cisticola**), both very vocal, and some Kilombero Weavers in partial breeding plumage feeding on the road. Other species seen over the morning included **Coppery-tailed Coucal**, right at the northern edge of its range, **Black Coucal**, flocks of **Pink-backed Pelican**, **White-headed Lapwing** and a single **Madagascar Squacco Heron** among the many **Common Squacco Heron**. In the afternoon we returned to Sanje, where some relaxed birding near our accommodation produced a couple of interesting species, including **Narina's Trogon**, **African Broadbill** and **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**.

5-8 August 2008: The Usambaras

With a long drive ahead of us, we wasted no time in hitting the road northwards, stopping briefly only to see a pair of **Grey-headed Parrot**. With little time to stop we pressed on, with a brief pause near Amani in the East Usambaras producing **Magpie Mannikin** and **Yellow Weaver**, but not the hoped-for **Coastal Cisticola**

Early the next morning saw us birding the lower-latitude forests below Amani, where we managed to locate an unobtrusive **Usambara Hyliota** feeding quietly in the canopy, and **Little Yellow Flycatcher** and **Red-tailed Ant Thrush** nearby. From here we continued to the coastal plain to find **Coastal Cisticola** (a split of the galactotes group), which didn't give itself up too easily, and required quite a bit of marching about in the heat of the day. The late afternoon was spent on some leisurely birding near our rest house, with the localised **Banded Green Sunbird**, **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill**, **Moustached Green Tinkerbird**, **White-eared Barbet**, **Green Barbet**, **Green-headed Oriole**, **Black-bellied Starling**, **Green Twinspot**, **Fischer's Turaco** and **Kenrich's Starling** as the highlights.

The following day we headed to slightly higher altitude to find two localised endemics, **Long-billed Forest Warbler (Long-billed Apalis)** and **Kretschmer's Longbill**, before heading for Lushoto in the West Usambaras. We arrived in time for some late afternoon birding near our accommodation, which produced **Usambara Double-collared Sunbird**, **Red-capped Forest Warbler**, **Usambara Mountain Greenbul** and **Black-fronted Bush Shrike**. In the evening we enjoyed watching **Usambara Nightjar** around our lodge.

The following morning found us at the superb Magamba forest, where the much-wanted **Usambara Weaver** showed itself fairly quickly. Other specials seen during the morning were **Red-faced Crimsonwing**, the very rare **Usambara Akalat**, a smart **Oriole Finch**, **Bar-tailed Trogon**, endemic albigula subspecies of **Tiny Greenbul**, **Placid Greenbul**, **White-starred Robin**, **Bar-throated Apalis**, the unusual and very skulking **Spot-throat**, **Shelley's Greenbul** and localised **Usambara Thrush**.

9-11 August: Same and the South Pare Mountains

From Lushoto we continued our journey westwards into the arid savannas of the Same district, where we spent the morning in some very productive habitat. Highlights included **Pink-breasted Lark**, **Eastern Black-headed Batis**, **Somali Golden-breasted Starling**, **White-bellied Canary**, **Blue-capped Cordon-Blue**, **Fischer's Starling**, a pair of very elegant **Golden-breasted Starling**, **Rosy-patched Bush-Shrike**, **Slate-coloured Boubou**, **Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird**, **Northern Grey Tit**, **Pygmy Batis**, **Red-fronted Warbler**, **Ashy Cisticola**, **Bare-eyed Thrush**, **Abyssinian Scimitarbill** and **Orange-bellied Parrot**.

Early the next morning we found ourselves bumping up the rocky slopes of the South Pare mountains. Near the summit, a small patch of relatively intact montane forest quickly revealed our main quarry, the endemic **South Pare White-eye**, which we watched at close quarters. Other birds seen here during our brief visit included **Bar-throated Apalis**, **Sharpe's Starling**, **Golden-winged Sunbird**, **Usambara Double-collared Sunbird** and **Hartlaub's Turaco**. On our way back to Same we birded some of the Acacia-lined watercourses in the lowlands, with highlights including **Black-bellied Sunbird**, **Taveta Golden Weaver**, **Tsavo Purple-banded Sunbird** and **Southern Grosbeak Canary**.

From Same the Gullick group continued to Arusha and Kenya, and I returned to Dar es Salaam for my flight back to South Africa.

Trip report by Birding Africa tour leader [Michael Mills](#)

Practical tour information

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Focus	For keen birders and mammal enthusiasts. Designed to see as many as possible endemic birds and mammals, but while on the walks we spend a lot of time looking for other aspects of wildlife such as the myriad of chameleons, geckos, butterflies and interesting plants. We can customise any itinerary to suit to the keen birder, the wildlife enthusiast or both. Adding a Zanzibar extension is possible too.
Photography	Many participants on our trips are amateur wildlife photographers. And when we get excellent views of a bird or mammal, some time is usually spent watching and photographing it. However, this is not a photographic tour and once the majority of the people have felt that they have absorbed the animal or bird to their satisfaction, then we move on in search of the next encounter. Thus, while the photographic opportunities are very good, the group will only occasionally wait for somebody who wants to spend even longer getting better photos.
Fitness	No fitness is required. We will spend much time in the National parks where most birding must occur from the vehicle or from a hide. Elsewhere, walks are generally short and in relatively flat areas with occasional small inclines.
Timing	Varies

Climate	Hot in the lowlands, cool at night in the highlands.
Comfort	A good standard of accommodation in lodges and luxury tented camps.
Transport	We travel by minibus or four wheel drive vehicle.
Group Size	Maximum 14 participants.
Top birds	Usamibro Barbet, Fischer's Lovebird, Beesley's Lark, Karamoja Apalis, Grey-crested Helmetshrike, Grey-headed Silverbill, Narina Trogon, Hartlaub's Turaco, Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, Kori and Hartlaub's Bustards, Crowned Eagle, Rueppell's Griffon
Top mammals	Black Rhinoceros, African Elephant, Blue Wildebeest, Serval Cat, Leopard, Cheetah, Lion, Guereza Colobus, Samango Monkey, Harvey's Red Duiker
Booking	Please email us if you wish to book . You will receive the booking form and conditions and a tour information pack.

About Birding Africa

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[African Tailorbirding CC (CK2003/020710/23) trading as Birding Africa]
4 Crassula Way, Pinelands 7405, Cape Town, South Africa.

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