

Uganda, a trampse along the equator.

Contributed by Jos

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Introduction

Bringing my accumulated time in Africa to over three years, this latest month on the continent took me to one of the region's lesser visited pearls - the relatively small, but bird-rich, Uganda. In a diversity of habitats from high mountain to equatorial rainforest, extensive papyrus swamp to semi-desert, the country packs in over 1000 species of birds in a land area barely larger than the UK. Add onto that, a wealth of mammals, landscapes that are spectacular and a welcoming people and the ingredients are all there for an excellent adventure.

Many persons visiting Uganda tend to employ drivers and guides throughout and visit all the key sites on a loop out to the west, taking in the Ruwenzori Mountains and the fantastic Murchinson Falls and Queen Elizabeth National Parks. This approach, especially if Semliki is added to the itinerary, could result in over 600 species being logged on a fairly intense three to four week trip, though 450-500 is more usual. My trip, however, was rather different - as always, I travelled independently, did not use drivers or guides and, furthermore, did not visit two of the country's premier birding localities - the Ruhizha highlands at Bwindi and Semliki National Park. Ruhizha was not visited simply due to laziness on my part, but plans to visit the remote Semliki had to be shelved due to an outbreak of the highly contagious and incurable Ebola disease in the area, killing many persons, particularly in the village of Bundibugyo, just 14 km from Semliki.

The end result was I also had ample time to explore the east of the country, rarely visited by foreign birders, but including some fantastic destinations in their own rights. Climbing the lower slopes of Mount Elgon, hiking into the arid north-eastern savannahs and spending several days in Mabira Forest, I managed to add a number of unexpected species and, by the trip's end, had accumulated a total of 512 species, a very respectable total and higher than I had expected.

For ease of reading, this report will be divided into the following parts:

- a. Part One. The Western Loop. Including the fantastic Murchinson's Falls, the chimpanzee forests of Budongo, the animal-packed Queen Elizabeth National Park, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Lake Mburo, plus some of the sites in the Kampala and Entebbe areas. This part of the trip took 19 days, the bulk of it in a self-drive rented landrover. [Click here to read.](#)
- b. Part Two. The Eastern Loop. By public transport and foot, visiting Mount Elgon, the savannahs north of there, Mabira Forest and a return to the Entebbe area, including the chance finding of Lutembe Bay. [Click here to read.](#)

(work in progress, the systematic lists will be added in due course)