

ANGAMA MARA

Birding at Angama Mara

THOUGH WELL-KNOWN TO KEEN BIRDERS, THE AVERAGE SAFARI-GOER MAY NOT REALIZE THAT KENYA RANKS AMONG THE WORLD'S RICHEST BIRDING DESTINATIONS



In fact, with 1,132 species recorded to date in an area smaller than the US state of Texas, Kenya is the second most avian-dense country on the planet after Ecuador. To further prove this point, in 1986 Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe (authors of *Birds of East Africa*) set the world record for most species of birds seen in a 24-hour period - at 342 species! And it took nearly three decades to break that record: only as recently as 2014 did Kenya relinquish the crown to Peru.

BIRDING THE MARA TRIANGLE & ANGAMA MARA

Even here, in our tiny little 500-square kilometre slice of Kenya, the Mara Triangle boasts a checklist upwards of 400 species (470+ in the Greater Mara), of which more than half (224 and counting) have been recorded at Angama Mara in less than a year. We can thank the diversity of habitats for that: the seasonal marshes, open plains, and riverine gallery forests of the Mara below are complemented by rocky escarpment, dry acacia woodland, and montane forests around the Lodge. It is not uncommon to record 50 species on a morning bird walk along the escarpment, and a dedicated effort will yield 100+.



BIRDING CALENDAR

Seasonality is one of the primary factors that lends itself to the great diversity of birds in the Mara Ecosystem:

- **January – March:** migrants from Europe and Asia (known as Palearctic migrants) enjoy their wintering-grounds, particularly large numbers of raptors that hunt the drying grasslands before the long rains begin
- **April – June:** The wettest quarter of the year, but also the ‘birdiest’. Water birds and other “rain migrants”- show up in pursuit of the rains, Palearctic migrants from Southern Africa pass through on their return north to Eurasia, and many species transition into breeding plumage (such as the flamboyant widowbirds and whydahs)
- **July – September:** following the long rains, many species have established territories and begun breeding; the onset of the wildebeest migration also brings a new host of birds, perhaps most notably massive kettles of vultures (up to five species) and other scavengers
- **October – December:** Palearctic migrants begin their journey south, including a fantastic raptor migration- along the Escarpment at eye-level; November’s short rains replenish thirsty marshes and entice flocks of- storks, herons, waders, and other waterfowl

ANGAMA BIRDING FUNDIS

While all our guides are well versed in the local avifauna, we have a few guides who are true birding experts, including one who has been a favoured resource of the most prestigious global birding tour operators for years, and another who used to lead bird walks at the National Museum in Nairobi. Our Maasai Naturalists also know the birds of their backyard, and where to find them, better than just about anybody.

EARLY BIRDS

For our novice guest birders, we tasked our Guide Team to come up with a list of a dozen of their favourite resident avian icons. We’ve turned this list into a handsome and informative booklet designed by the renowned naturalist and artist Duncan Butchart. For new birders, it’s a soft introduction to the overwhelming world of birds in East Africa, and for beginners and experts alike, it is an entertaining challenge to see all 12.

NOTABLE SPECIES OF ANGAMA MARA

Below is a sample, but certainly not exhaustive, list of some of the more noteworthy and exciting species observed around Angama Mara to date:

Bateleur	Hornbill, Black-and-White-Casqued	Warbler, Grey-capped
Buzzard, Augur	Hornbill, Crowned	Wren-Warbler, Miombo
Buzzard, Mountain	Barbet, Grey-throated	Bush-Shrike, Grey-headed
Eagle, African Crowned	Barbet, Usambiro **	Bush-Shrike, Orange-breasted
Eagle, Martial	Barbet, White-headed	Helmet-shrike, Grey-crested **
Eagle, Verreaux's (Black)	Wryneck, Red-throated	Starling, Hildebrandt's *
Hawk, Bat	Lark, Foxy **	Starling, Superb
Courser, Temminck's	Saw-wing, White-headed	Starling, Violet-backed
Dove, Blue-spotted Wood-	Longclaw, Yellow-throated	Sunbird, Amethyst (Black)
Dove, Dusky Turtle-	Cuckooshrike, Grey	Sunbird, Bronze
Dove, Tambourine	Tit, Red-throated *	Sunbird, Golden-winged
Green-Pigeon, African	Greenbul, Cabanis'	Sunbird, Green-headed
Pigeon, Olive	Greenbul, Joyful	Sparrow, Kenya Rufous *
Parrot, Brown (Meyer's)	Greenbul, Slender-billed	Sparrow, Swahili *
Go-away-bird, Bare-faced	Babbler, Black-lored **	Bishop, Yellow
Turaco, Ross'	Chat, Mocking Cliff	Widowbird, Jackson's **
Turaco, Schalow's	Rock-Thrush, Little	Widowbird, Red-collared
Cuckoo, African Emerald	Blue-Flycatcher, African	Citril, African
Owl, (African) Barn	Crested-Flycatcher, Blue-mantled	Seed-eater, Streaky
Eagle-Owl, Spotted	Paradise-Flycatcher, African	Seed-eater, Thick-billed
Nightjar, Freckled	Wattle-eye, Brown-throated	Grosbeak-Canary, Southern **
Nightjar, Montane (Abyssinian)	Apalis, Grey	Grenadier, Purple
Trogon, Narina	Cisticola, Trilling	Mannikin, Bronze
Bee-eater, Cinnamon-chested	Cisticola, Rock-loving	Bunting, Cinnamon-breasted
Wood-Hoopoe, White-headed	Eremomela, Green-capped	Bunting, Golden-breasted
Ground-Hornbill, Southern	Warbler, Buff-bellied	

* Birds endemic to East Africa that have been observed at Angama Mara

** Birds endemic to East Africa that have yet to be recorded at Angama Mara

This list of notable and exciting species is ever growing as we encounter birds not only new to Angama's list, but also new to the region (such as the Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher, not previously known from this area). The Oloololo Escarpment offers much to discover, as historically it has been fairly neglected by bird surveys. We are at a unique crux of habitat diversity, and anticipate finding more species at the extreme edges of their range.

