

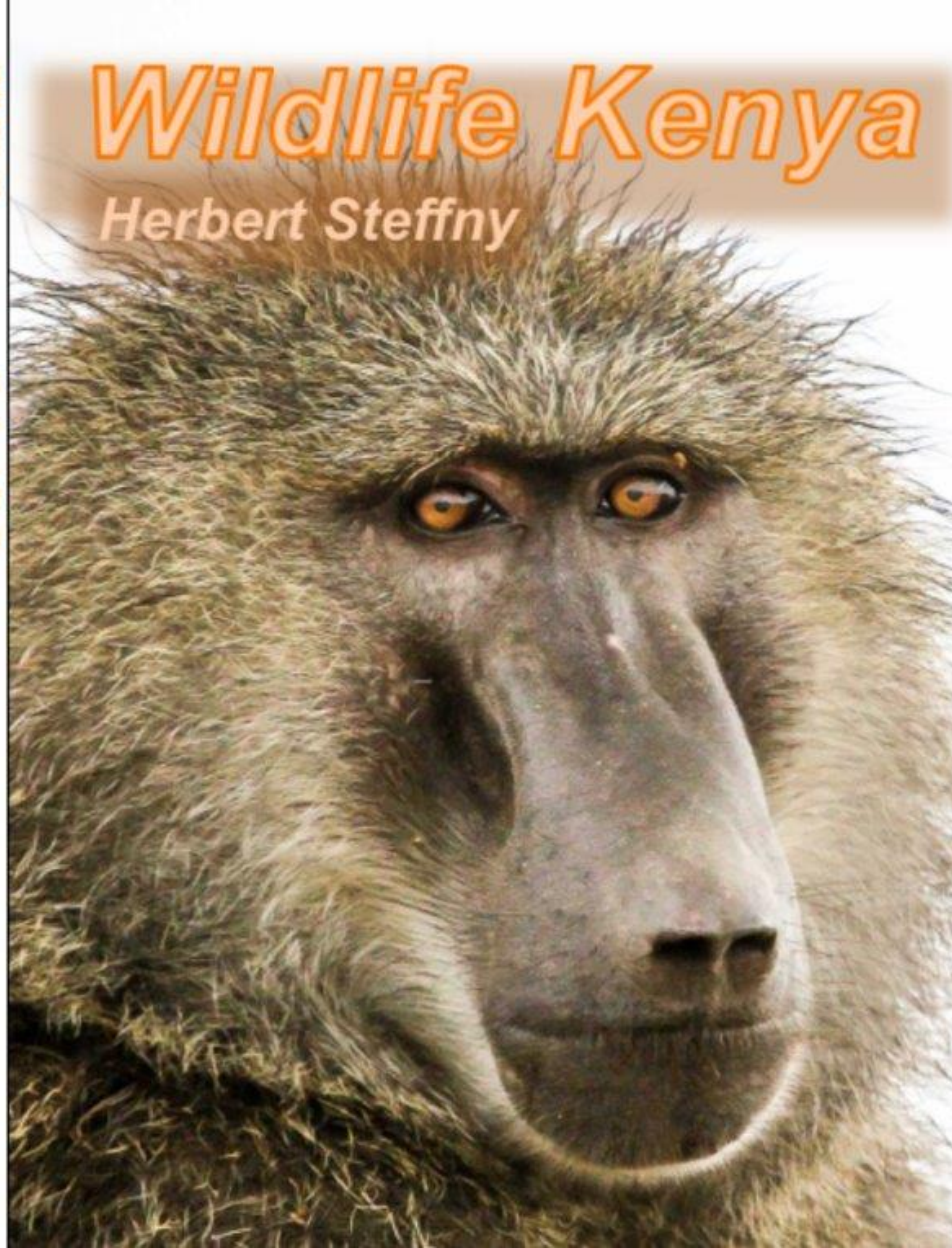
Greater Flamingo
Rosafamingo



Wildlife Kenya - Herbert Steffny

Wildlife Kenya

Herbert Steffny



Wildlife Kenya

Text, Photos: Herbert Steffny

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Recommended Literature

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- Birds of Kenya & Northern Tanzania* - Zimmermann et. al., Helm Field Guides 2018, 576 p.
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- A Field Guide to East African Reptiles* - Spawls et. al., Bloomsbury 2018, 624 p.
- Pocket Guide Butterflies of East Africa* - Martins, Pocket Guides 2016, 144 p.
- Afrika - Safari Reiseführer* - Troost, Afrika Safari Media, in German, 2019, 397 p.
- Fototipps für Kenia* - Steffny, download pdf in German 2020 www.herbertsteffny.de/kenia.htm
- Kenias Goldquelle Iten* - SPIRIDON Laufmagazin 5/1988 www.herbertsteffny.de/kenia.htm
- Das große Laufbuch* - Steffny, Südwestverlag, 9th edition in German 2019, 448 p.
- Wunderläuferland Kenia* - Fitschen (Text), Wilhelmi (Photos), in German, Narayana 349 p.

Coverphoto: Male Olive Baboon - Anubis Pavian - Nakuru National Park

Kerio View and Valley

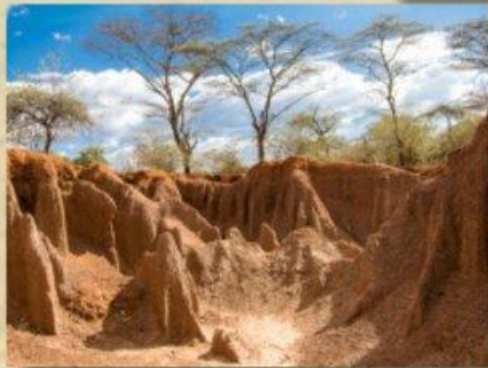


The **Kerio View Hotel** and its park is a surprising good spot to observe wildlife. As you can see in the picture, the Colobus Monkey is a common visitor, roaming in family groups around the park foraging for food and water. There is a second monkey species, the Blue Monkey, which is more timid. If you are patient, you will observe a good amount of birds, among them jewels like Ross' Turaco, the marvelous Paradise Flycatcher, the strange and noisy Hornbill, the vivid coloured Sunbirds, and the cute Mousebirds or Bee-eaters. The balconies at the escarpment are a good sport to watch birds of prey or lizards.

If you visit Iten and the Kerio View Hotel, you must go down to the Kerio Valley and Kerio River. 1200 meters below, it is a completely different world down there, hot, dry, and very exotic; you will meet a different flora and fauna. At the river you will meet the cliff jumpers. But watch carefully to spot the crocodiles (yes!) in the river in the gorge. You may visit the valley on a trip to Lake Bogoria.



Soil erosion is a big problem in Kerio valley, but it forms bizarre landscapes. On a new road at the intersection behind the river, you might take the trip to Lake Kamnarok. The savanna is dominated by acacia trees, the cows are different and more adapted to the dry harsh climate. Search the trees and you will see the beehives made out of tree trunks.



Lake Kamnarok

Lake Kamnarok is visible from the Kerio Hotel 1100m lower down in the Kerio Valley. It is worth the trip. You should plan a whole day. On the way you see a different world, which will rapidly change, when the new road is finished. Lake Kamnarok is a seasonal lake with changing water levels and since 1984 a game reserve. It houses, believe it or not, hundreds of elephants, which appear at dusk to drink water. It also harbors the second largest crocodile population of African lakes and a lot of bird species.



The Kamnarok reserve is threatened, mainly because of farming activities in the area. Fertilizer promotes the growth of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) an invasive floating aquatic plant native to South America. As a pest, it covers the surface of the lake, a common problem extremely visible also at other lakes in the Great Rift Valley and Lake Victoria. If you walk around the area watch out for elephant excrements and footprints, and crocodiles which can several meters long! Stay at least five metres away from the shore!

The area around the lake, the forest, and the shore are a perfect locations for birdwatching. Bring binoculars and/or a telephoto lens. You will encounter lots of species like herons, kingfishers, shrikes, bee-eaters, and hornbills. Flash flooding is common in the valley. On the picture you see a typical scenery. Cars get stuck in the water, cows run through the scenery and it might last several hours until the problem is over. But to a photographer's delight - this is Africa!



Elephant



African Elephant
Afrikanischer Elefant
(Loxodonta africana)

This is the worlds largest land animal. The large ears act as an effective cooling system. The tusk grows throughout lifetime. The elephants eyesight is poor, but hearing and the sense of smell is very accurate. Ivory poaching and the expansion of human settlement has reduced their numbers greatly. Whereas the old bulls have a more solitary existence, females and calves form herds of 10-20.

If you want to see elephants in the Iten area, you will be surprised that several hundred live down in the Kerio Valley. They are a regular visitor at Lake Karnarok, where they drink water in the evening. If you don't believe it, watch the foot prints on the right picture, and we also found huge elephant excrements. The locals told us about lots of elephant encounters in the wilderness. If you prefer to see this member of the 'Big Five' from a more safe position book a safari to Masai Mara (photo above).



Rock Hyrax
Klippschliefer
(Heterohyrax brucei)

What the heck is this funny looking 'Koala' doing on the 'elephant-page'? Believe it or not this cute rodent-like animal is the closest relative of the elephant! The Hyrax lives in rocky areas or cliffs like the 'Baboon Cliff' in Nakuru park, or in the lodge where I took this picture. It was resting on the roof of my hut. So I kept telling my folks: 'I have an elephant on my roof!' ;-) The Rock Hyrax is like his big brother a vegetarian.



Giraffe, Zebra

Giraffe
Giraffe

(Giraffa camelopardalis)

The Giraffe is the worlds tallest animal! Surprisingly this beauty is not a member of the 'Big Five' club. Despite of its length the neck has seven neck bones, like in humans. As the giraffe drops its head down to drink, specialized valves in the neck arteries withstand 300/180 millimeters of mercury, preventing them from bursting. The giraffe has the highest blood pressure in the animal kingdom.



Yes, the giraffe has a bluish tongue! With this sensitive tool it nibbles the smallest leaves between the thorns from higher trees. New genetic research has shown that the subspecies 'Masai, Reticulated and Rothschild's Giraffe' might be separate species. Their habitats are isolated and they can be recognized by their coat pattern. The western Kenyan herds of Lake Nakuru, Hells Gate and Krüger farm belong to the 'Rothschild' group, which have almost white legs below the knees with no pattern. The two giraffes from Masai Mara on the picture on top belong to the 'Masai Species'.

Plains Zebra
Steppen-Zebra
(Equus quagga)

This foal belongs to the most common Plains Zebra, one of the three African species. It has less stripes than the 'Mountain- and Grevy's Zebra' and the stripes extend over the white belly. The stripe pattern is individually different and a leading hypothesis is that the stripes confuse the vision of biting flies like Tsetse or Horse Flies. They also may cool down the zebra creating convection currents.



Lion, Leopard



Lion

Löwe
(*Panthera leo*)

The 'Simba' is the largest and most powerful cat in Africa. It is a member of the 'Big Five' club. The males have a dark brown mane and can weigh up to 200kg. The lion lives social in open grassland and slightly wooded areas. The females undertake most of the hunting. Although capable of running up to 60km/h Lions have little stamina and give up chases if they are not successful within 200 metres.

Lions spent a lot of time resting in the shadow of a tree. They live in declining numbers in national parks and reserves like Masai Mara or Nakuru. The male on the right and above was successful in chasing a Zebra in Nakuru National Park. In Masai Mara we observed lions successfully hunting a buffalo.



Leopard

Leopard
(*Panthera pardus*)

The Leopard is another member of the 'Big Five'. It is more powerful than the Cheetah with shorter legs and a larger head. The black spots form rosettes. They are mostly nocturnal to some extent arboreal and solitary cats and therefore far less often seen than the rarer Cheetah. Leopards favor riverine forest and woodlands. They prey on many mammals especially antelopes and baboons.

Photo: Anja Janoschka, Namibia



Ostrich, Crane, Pelican

Ostrich

Strauss
(*Struthio camelus*)

The Ostrich can't fly but is the largest bird (up to 150kg) and with up to 60km/h the fastest two-legged animal on earth. Sexes have different plumage. The male (*Masai race*) is brownish black with pinkish legs and neck (or bluish grey in the northern *Somali race*). The female and juveniles are greyish-brown. They live in bushland and semi-desert (Masai Mara, Nakuru) or when semi-domesticated on farmland (Bogoria).



Grey-crowned Crane

Kronenkranich
(*Balearica regulorum*)

This marvellous bird has a crown consisting of a stiff crest of golden yellow feathers. The neck is light grey with loose feathers at the base. They live mostly above 1300m and inhabit in pairs shallow wetland like Lake Nakuru, Kammarok or grassland like Masai Mara. I also met this attractive bird on farmland near Eldoret. Unusual for cranes: they can overnight on trees. They feed upon insects, reptiles and grains.



Great White Pelican

Rosapelikan
(*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)

The Pelican is a huge bird with a wingspan of almost three metres. It is white except for black and grey flight feathers. The large bill and pouch is yellow to pinkish-white. Extremely gregarious birds, fishing together in tight groups, resting in large amounts on shore or soaring in huge flocks in thermal currents. Common on inland waters in vast numbers on Lake Nakuru or with less individuals at the pond in Krüger farm.



Vultures



Bearded or Lammergeier

Bartgeier
(*Gypaetus barbatus*)

This is my favorite! A very large vulture with a wingspan up to 2,80m. Head and breast rusty coloured, face with black mask and little black beard. The rusty colour comes from bathing in red mud. In the field the long pointed dark wings and the conspicuous long wedge-shaped tail help to identify the species which feeds on bones only. Scarce in Cherangani Hills and used to be in Hells Gate Park (Photo from Switzerland).

Egyptian Vulture

Schmutzgeier
(*Neophron percnopterus*)

The Egyptian Vulture has a wedge-shaped tail like the Lammergeier, but is smaller. The plumage is pale buff coloured with black flight feathers. It is a widespread bird frequenting open plains in Rift Valley below 2000m. Feeds like most vultures on carrion. The Egyptian Vulture is famous for the use of tools, which is rare in birds. The Vulture tosses a stone with its bill over an ostrich egg until the egg cracks from the blows.



White-backed Vulture

Weißrückengeier
(*Gyps africanus*)

The African White-backed Vulture is the most common large vulture of national parks and game reserves like Masai Mara or Lake Nakuru. Body brown, becomes paler with age. The white lower back and rump is only seen when bird takes wing. In flight short black tail, light body and wings with black flight feathers.



Vultures

White-backed Vulture

Weißrückengeier
(*Gyps africanus*)

The head and neck of the White-backed Vulture are black with grey-white short downy feathers. Soars like most vultures in search for carrion in game reserves and national parks. The birds on the photo from Masai Mara were patiently waiting in groups in front of two lions with a killed buffalo to get their share.



Nubian Vulture

Ohrengerier
(*Torgos tracheliotos*)

The large Nubian or Lapped-faced Vulture has a bare pinkish head and neck and fleshy lappets on sides of face. It has a massive bill much larger than the Hooded Vulture. In flight shows whitish leg feathers and thin forewing line. Widespread on open plains with large herbivore populations, most numerous in Masai Mara (Photo).



Hooded Vulture

Kappengeier
(*Necrosyrtes monachus*)

The Hooded Vulture is a small dark-brown vulture with a slender bill and short tail. The head and neck are largely bare pink and the hindcrown is covered with buffy white down. In flight similar to Nubian Vulture, but smaller and lacking the white stripe near the leading edge. Widespread species but in declining numbers. The specimen on the photo is from Masai Mara.



Crocodile, Agama, Turtle



Nile Crocodile

Nilkrokodil
(*Crocodylus niloticus*)

Nile Crocodiles are large with up to 5.5m. They live in open water holes or river pools, where they ambush their prey mammals, birds and fish. Nile Crocodiles are long-lived and estimated to reach 70 years. They have excellent sight, hearing and taste. So it is not easy to approach the animals at Lake Kamnarok (Photo). Watch careful, have a telephoto lens with you and stay at least 5m from the water's edge!

Rock Agama

Felsenagame
(*Agama agama*)

Rock Agamas are common reptiles in East Africa. A dominant male has a bright orange red head and a vivid blue body. Agamas can be found on a prominent rock where they will engage in bobbing displays to rival other males. The females are greyish-brown with lighter spots. Agamas hunt insects and small lizards. This picture was taken on the Baboon Cliff in Nakuru National Park.



Leopard Tortoise

Pantherschildkröte
(*Stigmochelys pardalis*)

The Leopard Tortoise is the largest in Africa and has its name from the black and yellow carapace which fades with age to a more dull uniform greyish-brown. They are heavy up to 60kg and long-lived, 50 years have been reported in captivity. The vegetarians can be found in Nakuru (Photo), but also outside national parks in Kerio Valley, where warning signs 'turtle crossing' can be seen on the way to Nakuru.



Chameleon, Skink, Gecko

Slender Chameleon

Sporechamäleon
(*Chamaeleo gracilis*)

Chameleons are typical African reptiles with a compressed body covered with small granular scales. They can move their eyes independently. Food is captured with the familiar telescopic tongue. This specimen is from Eldoret at Kipchoge Keinos Kazimungi Farm. It changed its colour from green to orange. The famous three-horned **Jackson Chameleon**, *Trioceros jacksonii* inhabits wooded highlands around Nairobi.



Striped Skink

Afrikanischer Streifenskink
(*Trachylepsis striata*)

The Striped Skink is common in East Africa in suitable habitats and often seen in towns or on walls or stairs in Kerio View Hotel garden. Both sexes grow to a total length (including tail) of 25 cm. Their tails are often missing due to predators.



Gecko

Gecko
(*Geckonidae*)

Geckos are nocturnal lizards found in warm climates throughout the world. They range from 1.6 to 60cm. This specimen from Kerio View Hotel found in my room was not much bigger than a one Euro-Cent coin. Several species make their home inside human habitations. These are often welcomed, as they feed on insects, including mosquitoes. Most geckos cannot blink, but they often lick their eyes to keep them clean and moist.

