

TRIP REPORT UGANDA 2021

16 DAYS PRIMATE AND WILDLIFE VIDEOGRAPHEY TRIP

Customized on January 12th to 29th, 2021

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Trip Report piled by: Tonny Sserugga

Photos by: Brandon and Tonny



Sun set in Giraffe Track Lake Mburo national park

Located in East Africa, Uganda is a natural beauty, with abundance of gifts bequeathed to her; the snowcapped Rwenzori Mountain, named one of the best hiking

destinations in the world by the National Geographic, Uganda is also a home to half of the world's remaining Mountain Gorilla population, the mild weather, breathtaking landscapes, flora, and fauna, made it inevitable for Churchill to refer it as the “pearl of Africa.”

a wide variety of different habitats includes; Mountains, hills, tropical rainforest, woodland, freshwater lakes, swamps and savanna with scattered clumps of trees, were all witnessed by **Brandon Alfred, Jessica Ann** and I, during the expedition.



Photographed by Brandon at the bridge in the neck (Bwindi impenetrable forest)

We began from exciting savanna grassland in the northern part of the country's largest National Park, crossed the Nile to the southern part, while encountering the woodland which gradually turned into forest, providing remarkable observation where the chimpanzee hunted down colobus monkey and share meat in Budongo. 6-hour drive from Murchison fall National Park ended us into Kibale forest National Park for the untiring chimpanzee tracking experience, (many chimps were busy feeding on figs while others relaxing on ground). We passed-by the “mountain of the moon”, well known as mountain Rwenzori National Park, for tough exciting hiking day. (12.8 kms

in 7 hrs. from 1714 meter above sea level to 2474 meters reflex how stiff the hike was). crossing from Northern hemisphere to Southern hemisphere welcomed us to Queen Elizabeth National Park. For extraordinary game drive. (From 6:30am to 3:00pm was an excitement versing hunger, apart from different prides of lion, rescuing the leopard from the community side to the park was the highlight of the day), continuing to Southern part of Queen [Ishasha] wasn't disappointment at all. (Patience paid us, we spotted lions that had climbed the tree after many vehicles had given up).

While in the impenetrable forest, most importantly was the Mishaya's playful baby gorillas which spiced up the entire experience in the southern sector of Bwindi impenetrable forest. With all this enjoyment, we drove to Africa's second deepest lake, for the entire next day leisure canoeing. (Brandon and Jessica jumped onto local moto-boat with their parked lunch and visited different islands of lake Bunyonyi). Lake Mbuho National Park, horse ride game viewing, was a moment to remember on this last day of this expedition.



Side-striped Jackal: photographed during night game drive

DAY 1: Morning Transfer from Gulu to Murchison Falls National Park

The morning breakfast set us ready, for our drive to Murchison falls National Park, a smooth transfer from Gulu upto a few kilometers towards the park entry. After payments, we entered through Tangi gate in the eastern part of the park, while driving slowly towards the lodge, we spotted heard of **kobs, hartebeests, oribs**, this drive gave us first sighting to one of the African big fives (**Buffalo**). We checked-in to Pakuba lodge, had lunch, rested for some hours and kicked off to our first evening game drive, after a short drive, giraffes showed up, browsing while other antelopes were hiding in shades since the day was still hot. Continuing with our drive to Pakuba track, the African elephant was also sighted in a distance. As the day cooled down, lots of animals were observed in the mating ground feeding in “a community” (mixed up,) **Hartebeests, Oribis, Buffaloes, Kobs and Warthogs**. Approaching the famous hippo-pull, in closer distance, we viewed a tower of giraffes on the edges of the pull. We came out of the car to use the restrooms, and after, we progressed with our drive back to the lodge slowly through Victoria track. while driving, a friend (fellow guide) called me and he had sighted a **leopard** on the tree, I immediately turned the car and changed the directions. The leopard was on a big taller tree but far, Brandon set up his camera and zoom it very well, the **leopard** was busy eating the **Orib**. When the sun started setting, we started to drive back for dinner and prepare for the night game drive. After dinner we were joined by the ranger for the night game drive to look for the nocturnal wild life. This wasn't so productive however we managed to see the black backed jackals and Bunyoro rabbit



Patas Monkey: photographed in Murchison falls National Park

Day 2: Morning game drive and cross to southern part of the park

After our early morning breakfast, we checked-out of the lodge and we went for a morning game drive to enjoy the game viewing, as we were proceeding to our next destination, 2 kilometers from the lodge, using pakuba track, we found a herd of elephants crossing from one side of the track to another, turned off the engine and enjoyed the moment, this was termed a good beginning by Brandon, as we continued with our drive, joining the queen's track, we encountered a big herd of **buffaloes** grazing in the open mating ground, together with other many wildlife that we had

seen the previous day, almost reaching the turn to the hippo-pull, many tourist vehicles were sighted in one spot, indicating there was something interesting, reaching there, the leopard was in a roadside tree just close to the track although it wasn't in good views. We didn't spend a lot of time here since Jess (Jessica) wasn't feeling well at all. At this point, we agreed to driving straight to our next destination, and rest for the next morning chimp tracking activity. Using the new bridge, we crossed the Nile to the southern part of the park, and connected to Budongo Eco lodge in Kaniyo pabidi forest, still within the park. We checked-in to the lodge and ate lunch. After, Brandon and Jess went to take a nap, I drove the trackers far away from the lodge to try spotting the chimp in preparations for the next day tracking, unfortunately all guests had missed them that whole day, luckily trackers came back with a smile, meaning they had spotted them nesting, which gave higher chances of seeing them next morning. We summarized the day with dinner and some good news of (Jessica's 50 percent recovery, being able to go for tracking the next day).



Simba Africa Expedition truck: waiting for client while trekking in kanyio pabidi

Day 3: Morning Chimpanzee tracking and transfer to kibale forest

Early morning breakfast followed with a short briefing, in preparations for the morning chimpanzee tracking, few minutes after briefing, I drove Brandon and Jess to the starting point, this was close to where we had left the chimpanzees nesting previous evening. Tracking commenced, as I remained in the car, waiting for them to join me after the activity. Three hours later the activity ended with a very big smile, million-dollar footage was captured by Brandon, this comprised a community of chimpanzee hunting down and share Black and white colobus monkey. We went back to the lodge and immediately checked out of the lodge to start our long drive to kibale forest. Although the road was under construction in some areas, we still managed to make it to Hoima few minutes to lunch time, looked for pharmacy around the town to find Jessica some medicine, by the time Brandon successfully got the medicine, lunch time was already knocking, walked into a nice restaurant and enjoyed our lunch for one hour. After lunch we embarked on our journey to kibale National Park, through different towns, beautiful tea plantations, large banana plantations, craters and parts of the forest, we checked in to Isunga lodge an hour to sun set, reception was very nice with a briefing about the lodge that followed an immediate checked-in to their cottage. Dinner began around 1900hrs.

Day 4: morning Chimpanzee trekking in Kanyanchu (Kibale Forest)

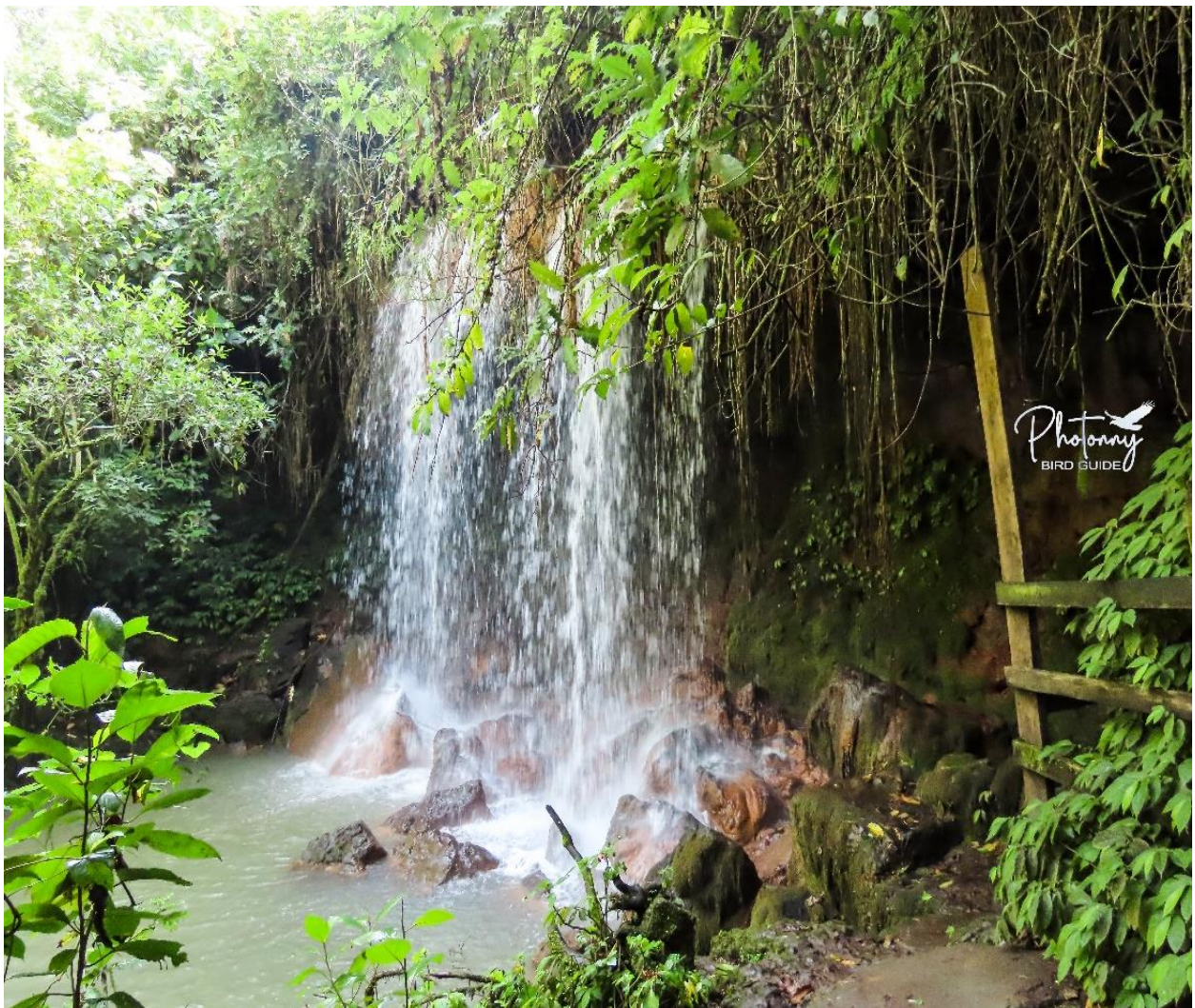


Male Chimpanzee: photographed in kibale forest

Day 4: morning Chimpanzee tracking in Kanyanchu (Kibale Forest)

Very early morning breakfast was served but Jessica wasn't feeling well to head out for trekking activity, after a quick breakfast, I and Brandon went to kibale forest head offices, to inquire if we could be given chance and change to afternoon trekking since one of the clients was terribly not feeling well, fortunately the warden accepted and promised to be waiting for us in the afternoon, this gave us more time to drive Jessica up to Alpine clinic in fort portal for total checkup before more medication, all went well and just drove straight to the forest for tracking, Jessica was fairly well and able to join Brandon for trekking that afternoon (I was indeed very happy to see her improving), after briefing, Brandon offered me a chance to go and track with them, (wow.. excitement almost killed my inner man). I humbly joined them for this ever-

enjoyable activity, heavy rain started after briefing, which really worried me, because most of the time when it rains chimpanzee lazily keep up on trees, few meters from the starting point we were surprised as we met the first chimp on ground seated as it had just stopped raining in few minutes, sun started raising again and chimps became more active. (Climbing up on fig trees for food and running around shouting). After an hour, I and Jessica drove back to the briefing point as Brandon decided to take a walk through the forest with the ranger to join us later, nor sooner had he reached, then we set off immediately and sun-set found us back at Isunga lodge. The would-be planned afternoon programs were pushed to next day, as we transfer to the mountain of the moon, due to inevitable circumstances.



Water falls: at the caves of Amabere ganyina mwiru

Day 5: Visiting Amabere caves and transfer to Rwenzori Mountain Forest

After morning breakfast, we checked-out the lodge and hit the road to the caves, through stunning green cultivated hills and valleys, finally we pulled into fresh green parking, used the restrooms and walked straight to the reception for payments, we were joined by the site guide who later took us in after a briefing. Walking through a well naturally maintained foot path, we were welcomed by sizzling sound of water falls, magnificent distraught waterfalls soaring over the Amabere caves. The environment is pretty much cool because of the moisture content of the falls and thick forest cover doesn't allow much of it to escape. Inside these drapes seems like a whole new world, breathing in the fresh crisp air, sights of the beauty and wonder, tranquility, actually it was like being in the air-conditioned atmosphere so fulfilling fresh and heavenly.

Breast like features, hang on the roof of the cave with whitish milk like substance tickling out- these were created by the chemical reactions between water and salt in the course of years and this is where the place gets its name of Amabere ganyina mwiru local word of the breast of nyinamwiru. Scientifically these are stalactites and stalagmites.

After walking through this interesting cave, the truck faced mountain of the moon direction through Fort portal town, before Kasese town, we checked-in at Ruboni community camp, just one kilometer to the park headquarters. We had plans of visiting the hot springs after lunch but the community camp manager informed about me about heavy rains that brought floods which washed away the hot springs the previous day but she instead advised us to take a walk along the big mountain streams edges, which seemed exciting. The walk started from the lodge as soon as lunch was done, and ended later in the evening.



Stream flowing from Rwenzori Mountain

Day 6: Mountain Rwenzori hiking day

After early morning breakfast, Brandon and Jessica, went to their room for further preparations since we still had some good time to start, I sloped to parking area and started the car engine while waiting for them. I noticed a flat tire and straight away started to change the tire, unfortunately in the middle of the rush, the cross-wheel spanner got broken and I couldn't use it any more. At this moment plan B was unavoidable, I called park Clark, requesting him to arrange for me a ranger guide to pick-up my clients and begin the hike from Ruboni community camp, the Clark together with the ranger came at the camp immediately, Brandon and Jessica registered and joined the ranger to start the hike. The Park driver came and helped me out with his wheel spanner, after changing the tire, I drove to Kasese and repaired the tire.

From town to the camp, Brandon and Jessica had returned from the hike, exhausted but excited for experience as well. "It was tough exciting hike," said Brandon. He

added that in 7 hours they had managed to hike 12.8 kms from 1714 meter above sea level to 2474 meters, indeed this was a stiff hike. While being served early dinner, I took advantage of the small stream nearby the parking to clean the car, preparing for the morning transfer to our next destination.



Male Waterbuck:

Day 7: Transfer to Queen Elizabeth National Park.

At leisure, we had our breakfast and few minutes later, embarked on journey to Queen Elizabeth National Park, after one and half hours drive, we reached the Equator line, Jessica was so excited to cross to southern hemisphere for the very first time, the guide at the equator gave us a very good briefing which he accompanied with a stimulating Coriolis effect demonstration, Brandon took interesting videos and

we finally navigated to the southern hemisphere for rest of our trip. From the forest national park experience, we entered one of Uganda's most popular savannah park, set against a backdrop of the Rwenzori Mountain, with the additional scenic points of kazinga channel. on a peninsula within the heart of Queen Elizabeth National Park, we checked-in to Mweya lodge close to 1100hrs. after enjoying lunch, Brandon and Jessica, went for a short break.

Approaching evening, we slowly drove from mweya to the open grasslands of kasenyi which provides the park's primary game viewing areas. A herd of **elephants** were sighted few kilometers from the lodge, alongside the; **warthogs, kobs, and Buffalos** in the course of the drive, sunset found us on our way back to mweya lodge.



A cow with a little one

Day 8: Relaxation and afternoon boat cruise at kazinga channel

Waking up at leisure, late breakfast was predictable. Parting Brandon and Jessica at the lodge to enjoy their vacation, I drove to the nearest Gas station to refill, also the park head offices being at the same range, was an advantage to pass by and book for the experiential that we had arranged to do next morning.

After lunch, Brandon suggested to top up some money and book for an exclusive small boat. His proposal came after carefully observing the movement of the big boat the previous day, he believed it couldn't give him enough time to do his filming as he preferred. After successfully switching to the small boats, we were notified about the starting time and the boat allocated to us, around 0300hrs, we boarded a small luxury boat named "Sunbird" which seats ten passengers, the availability of space, provided me a chance to join the clients who were also so welcoming. While sailings, we sighted a big heard of **Elephants** sloping to the shores for a sip of water, the captain slowly took the boat at the shore and turned off the engine, we spent about two hour with elephant, "this was amazing, I have never spent a lot of time with elephants this close" Brandon said (folds his fingers and rises his thumb with a nature smile waring his face) the captain took us to a different spot where we spotted the **crocodiles**, different species of birds, including; **Spur-winged Lapwing, Wood Sandpiper, Sacred Ibis, Egyptian Goose, Goliath Heron, Yellow-billed Stork and Cattle Egret** picking insects from the **buffaloes** lying on the shores, hippos out of water, by the time we reached the fishing village, rain was seriously threatening to drop, at this moment the captain suggested to sail back straight before the heavy rains storms us, surprisingly at the landing, it wasn't raining as suspected, no sooner had the boat docked, than Brandon and Jessica jumped into the car to head back to the lodge for next day preparation.



Leopard: in Queen Elizabeth National Park

Day 9: Early morning game drive

Very early morning breakfast, made us ready to join the guide in charge of “experiential”, experiential is a special game drive that provides clients a chance to track leopard and different prides of lions. thirty minutes’ drive took us at the park offices, presented our payments and started our search, turning left right, we found the first pride of lions of about seven individuals, three were sighted first and later realized others were feeding on a kill in a nearby bush, tried to drive close to the bush but we weren’t able to spot them clearly, after spending over two hours with them, the ranger searched for a **lioness** with two cubs in a different bush away from the big pride.

The search for the most elusive and secretive panther began, although this seemed challenging due to unstable signals, while still struggling with the signal search the ranger received a call from someone who had spotted a **leopard** few kilometers ahead in the community, we rapidly drove to the area, unfortunately, the guide we

found around had lose it. We looked for the same leopard again until we finally found it in a very difficult angle of euphorbia candelabrum that was in middle of a bush, all of the search was going on after alerting the veterinarian doctor, the ranger told us that the vet doctor was on his way to give this very leopard a caller. Brandon asked if we could wait and witness the activity, the vet doctor arrived and darted the leopard to change the caller in our attendance, the doctor permitted us to get out of our vehicle and help them to carry the leopard to their land rover if we wanted, this was more like sending a stink to the grass hatched roof. We immediately jumped out of our vehicle to be part of this incredible mission, with a lot of excitement, the leopard was transferred from the community boundaries back inside the park. Around 0400hrs the leopard started to recover, but very weak, at this moment, we all drove off and left the doctor's land rover behind. Lunch was served in the evening but was very ok.



Male kob: Uganda national animal

Day 10 Transfer to southern part of the park (Ishasha) evening game drive

Morning breakfast was served at sunrise, we checked out of the lodge to start over 90 kilometers drive to Ishasha, we were delayed by the ferry to cross to another side of the channel since the bridge was under construction, after spending over four hours, we crossed and went to have good views of Kyambura gorge for a short while, we later embarked on our drive to near the far most south-western rim of queen Elizabeth national park, on the way we enjoyed good views of the savanna grassland with some antelopes, woodland that raises slowly into a big forest, big streams crossing road with small bridges. We checked in at Ishasha jungle lodge for lunch.

After lunch, we drove to the park to try our luck, on the tree climbing lions, but the dark clouds that turned the whole day cool, made it very difficult to spot these tree climbing lions since they always climb to hide away from the sun when its hot. The **Topi**, **buffaloes**, **elephant** and **kobs** were also sighted during this game drive.



Tree climbing Lion in Ishasha (southern part of Queen Elizabeth National Park)

Day 11 morning game drive and transfer to the southern sector of Bwindi (Rushaga)

Early morning check-out, came after breakfast, driving through the middle track was an additional trial for the second chance, we visited several sycamore fig trees but the sun wasn't hot enough for these lions to climb, we agreed to keep waiting much as most of the guides had given up, the more we waited the more chances to visit the Batwa in Bwindi were getting limited because of the distance and condition of the roads, the waiting finally paid off, when we found one lion up on the sycamore fig tree in the middle track, nice videos were taken, later we kicked off to Bwindi impenetrable forest, the rough drive involved climbing mountains with good views of terraces, we entered the eastern sector of Bwindi impenetrable forest (Ruhija) and stopped for a quick lunch at Bakiga lodge.

After lunch we continued to the southern sector (Rushaga), the sharp corners reduced us down, leading us to a sunset checked-in to Ichumbi lodge, a heartfelt welcome was given to us, briefing and finally took clients to their room, dinner followed and the day ended.



Photographed by Brandon. Mishaya family member in Rushaga

Day 12 Gorilla trekking and transfer to lake Bunyonyi

Early morning breakfast, followed driving to the briefing point for registration. Around 8:45am Brandon and Jessica were allocated to Mishaya's group, and I had to drive them to the starting point. the park warden assured me that Mishaya wasn't very far with no stiff hike, this was all because, I had to drive to Bunyonyi as soon as they finish trekking. Interestingly the trekking took like 3 hours, the ranger guide graduated the whole group for the successful trek, while driving to Ichumbi lodge, Brandon and Jessica shared with me their remarkable experience with the gorillas, the silverback and playful infant gorillas were the highlights of the day. cleaned up and commenced to Africa's second deepest lake, checked in to Birdnest resort

located on the shores of the lake Bunyonyi, after checking in the clients, I drove to Kabale (biggest town close to lake bunyonyi) to secure a hotel for myself.



Photographed by Brandon: Moto-boat cruising at lake Bunyonyi

Day 13 canoeing at lake Bunyonyi

Because of lake Bunyonyi's popular green and lush terraced hills, its winding shores of 25 km long and 7km wide, accommodating 29 islands. Brandon and Jessica preferred canoeing to hiring a moto-boat and spent the whole day, visiting different islands of this Africa's second deepest lake.

After a restful breakfast, picked their parked lunch boxes and walked to the landing stage, Brandon asked boat owner, if he could hire them his moto-boat and cruise themselves for the whole day without him at an extra pay, the boat owner thought about it and finally accepted, he added them more fuel and exchanged contact just in case. (Jessica with her smile boarded and Brandon happily started cruising the boat). They visited different islands, docked and walked to a certain lodge, where they had their parked lunch from, got onto the boat and continued their adventure. After moving around the lake, they decided to return to bird nest resort.



Little Bee-eater

Day 14 Transfer to lake Mburo national park afternoon game drive

From Kabale town, I joined Brandon and Jessica for breakfast at bird nest resort, they checked out of their room and we started our drive to lake mburo national park, our first stop was at the gas station where we visited the washroom, the drive continued up to Igongo cultural center, here Brandon and Jessica took some coffee as I choose to have my early lunch. From here one hour drive took us to the park entry via Sanga gate, after making park payments, we continued through Impala track to the lodge, while on the way, we encountered many animals including **Impalas**, **zebras** and **Buffaloes**. Warm welcome was given to us as we checked in to the lodge, lunch orders were taken and we were served in an hour.

Immediately after lunch, we started our afternoon game drive, while in zebra track, Brandon spotted a stunningly beautiful bright-colored **Little Bee-eater** and due to its interesting feeding behavior of returning to the same perch after each feeding attempt, it tempted us to park the car for a period of time, set our cameras to capture it flying and landing in that same feeding spot, this indeed worth a stop, continuing with the same track, we came across different dazzles of **Zebras** and herd of **Impalas**, since the park was so dry, most of the ponds completely empty, **skinny warthogs** and **waterbucks** witnessed staving situation. Connecting to Giraffe track, sun was setting, we luckily saw the **giraffes**, and several mother **Topi** with their tinny calves. We returned to the lodge for dinner a little late.



Brandon and Jessica setting off from the starting point

Day 15 morning game drive and evening horse ride.

After early morning breakfast, we started our game drive before sunrise in search for the spotted hyenas and may be leopard. few kilometers from the lodge, we saw a

Verreaux's Eagle Owl perched on the tree close to the road. We continued our drive and sunrise found us around giraffe track where we neared a big herd of **eland**s, **Zebras** mixed with **waterbucks** in one community, we also sighted **Dwarf Mongoose** in the same spot while heading to Ruroku track, I expected to find lots of animals in this track because of its big water dam, true the dam had some water but very stinky with a dead buffalo, so most of animals could not drink it. Only a flock of **Ruppel's** and **Splendid Starling** were seen trying to take a sip. We drove back to have lunch at the lodge.

After lunch, Brandon suggested to go at Mihingo lodge earlier and rest before, the horse ride, on our way we came across a flock of vultures feeding on carcass of a warthog, spent some good time taking videos of vultures fighting for feeding space in more of survival for fittest system, among the vultures were, **Lappet-faced Vulture**, **Ruppel's Griffon Vulture**, **African White-backed Vultures** and one **Hooded Vulture** was seen perched on the tree watching the fight because it couldn't participate in a giant guys scrap. Near the exit gate, I expected some animals gathering for water, but the dam was completely empty. We exited the park and proceeded to Mihingo lodge, as soon as we reached the park, some was already waiting to receive us, he walked us to the reception where we grabbed some drinks, relaxed as we waited for the moment of horse ride. Few minutes to the ride, I drove to the starting point, and we found guides already setting the horse ready for the activity. two hours horse ride through herd of **zebras** and **impalas** was indeed remarkable, at sunset the horse riders (Brandon, Jessica with two guides) come back, got into our car and drove to the lodge for our dinner.



Zebra in lake Mburu National Park

Day 16 Driving to Entebbe

After morning breakfast, we checked out of the lodge and go on board to our journey back to Entebbe, few animals were seen on our way out of the park and included: **zebra, Impalas, Vervet monkeys, warthogs**. Out of the park, we found a herd of long horned cattle in the middle of the road, slowed down and drove through them. we stopped at the equator for our lunch and crossed the equator line back to the northern hemisphere with some record photos. Through tight security inspection at Munyonyo, we finally checked-in at Munyonyo speak resort, it was a sad moment to say good bye to my best friends.