

5 Fascinating Birds of Prey in Uganda

To you and other people it may be the Pearl of Africa but truth be told, Uganda is a Paradise on Earth. A country with over 1080 species of birds (10% of the World's species of birds) can never run short of surprises. Every corner of the country has something to offer and not only that, the country has everything you would ever wish in a destination. When it comes to bird species, you will be totally amazed and surprised by what you will see in the Pearl of Africa. Most interestingly, you will be able to sight some of the birds of prey within the country. Uganda is a haven to over 90 species of Raptors also known as birds of prey and they range from the small Pygmy Falcons within Kidepo Valley National Park and the Northern region to the great Crowned Eagles found within the tropical rainforests.

Owls

Owls are one of the common birds of prey and are sub-divided into 18 species within Uganda and range from the giant Pel's fishing Owls to the small African scops owls. What all the birds of prey have in common is that they attack and kill their victims (prey) with their gripping feet made up of long sharp talons.

Vultures

Vultures are also birds of prey although are carrion eaters whereby some of the typical attributes and characteristics of birds of prey (eating flesh) have died out. For instance, the Palm-nut vultures consume palm-nut just as their name suggests.

Buzzards

One of the common species of buzzards is the Red-necked Buzzard; medium-sized migrant birds that sometimes visit the North-western side of Uganda especially from December to March although are rarely seen within East Africa. Nonetheless, they have wider geographical habitats from Mauritania (South of Angola), Central Ethiopia and in Uganda they are found in the North-west of the country, especially within Otzi East Forest Reserve, west of the White Nile. These exceptional birds prefer forest edges, woodlands, secondary forests and farmlands, and feed on mainly birds, reptiles and small mammals. They were listed as being birds of least concern under IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species because of habitat loss. Other Buzzard species include the Steppe buzzards, Lizard buzzard, Honey buzzards and the Grasshopper Buzzards among others.

Eagles

There are over 20 species of Eagles in Uganda and the common ones include the crowned eagle (scientifically known as *Stephanoaetus coronatus*) and are considered the most charismatic of all the Eagle species. They are always cunning and clever when it comes to hunting. For instance, the female will fly above the forest canopies calling and diverting the attention of monkeys

whereas the aggressive males surprise the victim by grabbing the monkeys with the claws thereby killing it.

The Martial eagles scientifically known as *Polemaetus bellicosus* are the savannah cousins of the crowned eagles but are larger yet weaker. Their prey always includes smaller antelopes like oribis, mongoose, young warthogs, monitor lizards and vervet monkeys.

Other species of eagles include the stunning Bateleur and the long crested eagles among others.

Falcons

Falcons are also species of raptors/birds of prey and some of their sub-species include the fast Peregrine falcons, the beautiful Grey Kestrel with an all grey but dark yellow facial skin. The shy Red-necked falcons are common with Murchison Falls National Park

One fascinating fact about majority of Uganda's raptors is that they from as far as Europe (such as the steppe Buzzard, Booted eagles, Honey Buzzard and Osprey among others), from South Africa, Egypt, Tanzania and Somalia.

Other species of raptors or birds of prey in Uganda include the Bat Kites, the African Goshawk and the Lizard Buzzard among others. Therefore a Uganda birding safari will introduce you to these and other birds of prey.

8 Unique Birds to See on a Birding Safari in Uganda

Uganda is known as Africa's premier birding destination with the list of birds found in the country topping 1000, most of these birds live only in these tropical forests with the are sightings being described as mythical while it's believed that some of the birds living in the remote forests of Uganda may not even be classified as of yet. These birds have greatly attracted many people to come for safaris to Uganda.

Shoebill Stork

The shoebill is one of the most attractive birds in Uganda and is endemic to Africa and the birders from around the globe flock to Uganda to catch a rare glimpse of this clumsy giant, the type of bird was not protected and its egg were also frequently from the nets.

Green Breasted Pitta

The green breasted pitta is also a difficult bird to find despite its relatively common status in the Central African countries. It lives a well camouflaged in the lowland tropical forest and photographing some of these little guys is a good dream.

African Green Broadbill

This can only be seen in two places in the world, i.e. the Itombwe Mountains of DRC and Uganda in Bwindi Forest. The specie is declining due to loss of its habitat from the forest clearing and degradation, this bird species has greatly attracted many tourists for Uganda safaris.

Great Blue Turaco

The great Blue Turaco and the white crested Turaco are some of the largest, most exquisite birds which are found in Uganda. These birds are actively hunted their meat and the feathers are liked as high commodities which has decreased their numbers.

Shelley's crimson

Shelley's crimson wing is one of the world's rarest birds and can be found on most bird bucket lists. They live in a thin strip of the mountains and the volcanoes which are known as the Albertine Rift which border Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic republic of Congo.

Winged Nightjar

The standard winged nightjar is a bird characterized by the central flight feathers which appear during the breeding season on the male. It is also a dream come true to view these birds during this short time span when their feathers which can be stretched up to 38m in length.

Bar Tailed Trogon

The bar tailed Trogon is a beautiful medium sized bird which lives in high altitude forests and has a large range throughout central and southern Africa although it's rarely seen.

Black breasted barbet

Finally is the black breasted barbet which is seen by very few individuals and is highly sought after by the bird watchers. It tends to live in the areas of conflict and it rarely seen by the tourist who come for safari tours to Uganda.