

## Day 8, Saturday, 15 Dec 2001

### Our Day Off

Up at 5:30 to visit the sitatunga hide in time for sunrise. The hide is in the center of one of the marshes and we reached it just as the sun came up - beautiful sight! Crowned cranes and sacred ibis set the scene. Blacksmith plovers were having a grand time - calling, flying and mating. Hadada were calling importantly while smaller, quieter birds slipped in and out of the reeds and water - going about their daily business. Noises, both recognized and anonymous blended into a symphony of morning all punctuated by the steely hammer-on-anvil sound of the blacksmith plover. Finally the spell was broken by the interjection of dogs barking and a small engine plane coming in to land.

**New bird sightings:** African reed warbler, grey heron, African marsh harrier, and marsh sandpiper.

By 9 we were home for breakfast, or in my case bed. It was a day to laze around, catch up on reading, writing, or whatever. Tom, Mary Locke and I decided to go exploring down the trail from Anna's house to the canyon. We went just before lunch, and of course, were late returning. The view was magnificent as we slipped down a few rocks to a small stream in a glade. Tom decided to jump a small chasm (with a waterfall) and landed on a tall island outcropping. Mary Locke was quite concerned and when Bel joined (read - checked up on) us, she was a bit surprised he had gone down to the lower level. A few unsuccessful attempts to climb out brought out the stories of people lost and reportedly sighted from time to time. We were considering rope, etc. when Tom managed to find a climb out to the area above us (black rhino territory according to Bel). We all made it back up to the house, although the climb up was my first really aerobic exercise of the trip - felt wonderful.

Late afternoon Tom and Mary Locke and I opted for a guided walk from Lerai Tented Camp. Half our group went horseback riding from West Gate (Rose Dyer's place) to the Tented Camp. Daniel was our guide. We heard first and then spotted a white browed coucal. They make a sound rather like water cascading into a glass. Daniel imitates it quite well. We caught a quick glimpse of a spotted hyena as it loped over a ridge and out of sight. At a lovely waterfall and cave, we spotted a beautiful Malachite kingfisher. We saw many rhino tracks and mizzens as well as leopard prints. Near the top of the climb, we identified a white crowned bush shrike.

Sean picked us up in the jeep and on the way back to the tented camp we encountered two black rhinos, a 4 or 5 year old female and her considerably bigger, attentive, adult male friend. We drove to within 60 or so yards, but when they turned toward us, we prudently drove off. We saw another hartebeest (imagine we had not seen 2/7 of all the hartebeests on Lewa) and a Verreaux's eagle owl.



*Rhino footprint we encountered  
on our walk*

At Lerai, we settled in by the firs for a drink and to catch up on what the other group saw on their trip. I had a Jameson's and thought of my Mother.