

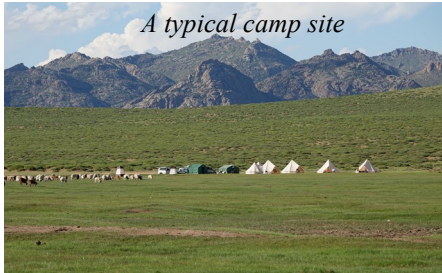


Royles Christmas Newsletter 2024



Well, one year older and we are still trying to get away to far-flung places! (I started the Newsletter with this line last year and it hasn't changed!!) In fact we had to cancel a couple of trips in December and February which meant we were even more desperate to get away. So we booked a cheap trip to Cyprus in April in compensation - a very pleasant week but birds were in short supply for some reason - the migrants seemed to have flown straight over! Good eating and drinking though.

Our next trip was described as follows: "a unique and pioneering tour an overland journey across some of Mongolia's most dramatic landscapes" which indeed was true - we travelled from Ulaan Baatar in the east to the



A typical camp site



Pallas's Cat



Breakfast at 2,800 metres

Altai mountains in the west, driving mostly on dirt roads and tracks and staying in a very comfortable mobile tented camp. We saw rare birds, our guides found both Pallas's Cat and Snow Leopard for us and we experienced huge wide open spaces and amazing scenery. And the food was much better than we had been led to expect!

In August we did something rather different - we went on an Amazon cruise, starting from Manaus. Not quite the usual cruise though. We spent much of our time in small boats being paddled through shallow waterways looking for elusive birds and mammals. We were based on the Iracema, a lovely Amazon river boat, all built and fitted out in wood. The food was excellent, the cabins very comfortable and the

crew exceptionally helpful and friendly. The air-conditioning worked well which was handy as we had some very high temperatures - up to 40° on some days. We managed to see not one, but two, enormous Harpy Eagles, a bird which has eluded us for some time, and had magnificent views of the vividly coloured



Harpy Eagle



Guianan Cock-of-the-rock

Guianan Cock-of-the-rock - different from the one in Peru and perhaps even more stunning.

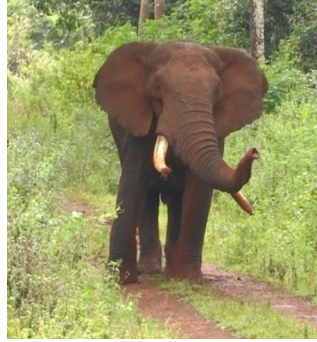
Our final trip in 2024 was to Kenya. We had been to Kenya before, in 1980, on our first safari holiday. This was a camping trip and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We fell in love with Africa straight away and have since visited 12 African countries. However we have always wanted to go back to Kenya and look at the birds properly - the first trip was mostly focussed on animals, though we did see about 200 species of the bigger and more colourful birds which can be seen in the main safari areas which we visited. Now we needed to see some of the remaining 1060 species! Many of these we have seen on trips to Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia but there were still well over 200 remaining. So we put together an itinerary with Cisticola Tours in Kenya for a 3 week trip in November and it was very successful indeed. With a driver, a birding guide, and a 7 seater Toyota Landcruiser all to ourselves we travelled around the coastal areas then through Tsavo to the central mountains and then further north to Samburu and managed to find 116 new species. We visited many different types of scenery, saw a good selection of animals and stayed in some lovely lodges. One special area we visited was an isolated forest called Arabuko-Sokoke near the Kenyan coast. The Sokoke Scops Owl was a key target and here it is. Only 7 inches high, very rare, difficult to find and seriously cute:

Continued overleaf



The Iracema tucked into the bank





Left: Rosemary eating a typical huge packed breakfast by our very solid 4WD
Middle: A situation when we were glad of the aforementioned 4WD
Right: A Golden Palm Weaver



There were a few changes in the domestic situation this year. Peter has hung up his Castlemartin Range walk-leading boots while he still felt at the top of his game. Also we have sold our small caravan which has served us very well for 11 years. Most years it spent the summer at a Caravan Club site called Gwern-y-bwlch east of Machynlleth - the site was delightfully quiet (20 pitches) and it was situated on a steep hill which meant you always had a view. There were lots of interesting places and wildlife nearby to keep us amused. However, the Caravan Club decided to sell the site and so we decided to sell the caravan! The picture was taken at the end of March when we took the caravan to the site for the last time - we weren't expecting snow!



We are expecting a very quiet Christmas and a busy winter of editing the community newsletter (Peninsula Papers), looking after the community website and the Pembrokeshire bird sighting blog, producing the South Wales Butterfly Conservation Newsletter, acting as treasurer for 3 churches, looking after the Ministers expenses and Gift Aid for the local group of 19 churches, administering the Dale moorings, doing bird surveys etc. I'll leave you to guess who does which! Rosemary is still nothing - the total garden species count is now 616. We keep occupied!

With all best wishes for Christmas
and the New Year

Rosemary Pels

