

A close-up photograph of a cheetah's head and neck. The cheetah has a light brown coat with dark, solid black spots. There is a visible, bloody wound on the side of its face, near the jawline. The cheetah's mouth is slightly open, showing its teeth. The background is a blurred green, suggesting a natural habitat.

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**THIS**  
**EDITION:**  
**MASAI MARA,**  
**KENYA**

**WANDER to WONDER**

# WANDER to WONDER

by MARTINA NICOLLS



**The world will never starve for wonder, but only for want of wonder.  
G.K. Chesterson**



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## editor's note

*Welcome to the 15th edition of WANDER to WONDER*

This 15th edition of Wander to Wonder focuses on Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve – known locally as The Mara – contiguous with the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, and famous for the annual Great Migration of wildebeests from July to October. There are also a vast number of residential animals that make The Mara home.

Until next edition, with another theme,

*Martina*

MARTINA NICOLLS





# map: the mara region, kenya







## MASAI MARA national reserve

The Masai Mara National Reserve was established in 1961, beginning with 520 square kilometres (200 square miles). In 1984 it covered 1,510 square kilometres (583 square miles). In May 2001 the not-for-profit organization, Mara Conservancy, assumed management of the Mara Triangle.

The Mara is contiguous with the Serengeti National Park in the Mara Region of Tanzania. Although the two countries have a border, animals know no borders, especially during migration. The Mara in Kenya is a small part of the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem, which is also called the Greater Mara Ecosystem. The GME covers the ranches of Koiyaki, Lemek, Ol Chorro Oirowua, Olkinyei, Siana, Maji Moto, Naikara, Ol Derkesi, KerinKani, Olirien, and Kimintet. The Mara in the southwest of Kenya lies in the northern section of the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem.







## MASAI MARA 3 rivers

Three rivers drain into the Masai Mara National Reserve: The Sand, The Talek River, and The Mara River.

The Mara is mostly flat grassland with acacia trees. The western border is the Esoit Escarpment of the East African Rift, the famed Rift Valley, which stretches from Ethiopia through Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique for 5,600 kilometres (3,500 miles). The eastern border is 224 kilometres (139 miles) from Kenya's capital, Nairobi. Therefore, the eastern regions of The Mara have the most tourists.









## MASAI MARA big 5 & more

The Masai Mara National Reserve is not only famous for the Great Migration of the white-bearded wildebeest (gnu), zebra, topi, eland, and Thomson's gazelle. It is also noted for the prevalence of the "Big Five" animals: lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, and rhinoceros. There are also the cheetah, hippopotamus, crocodile, hyena, jackal, and bat-eared fox.

The Mara also has more than 470 species of birds, with 60 species of raptors. Most are migratory birds, although there are residential birds. Birds include vultures, storks, hornbills, ostriches, crested cranes, and Kenya's national bird, the lilac-breasted roller.





*topi*



## MASAI lion

The Masai lion, and indeed the Masai cats, were the centre of attention in the BBC television documentary "Big Cat Diaries" (2003-2006, and 2008). The documentary followed the lives of the big cats in Kenya's Masai Mara – lions, cheetahs, and leopards. However, the cheetah is not technically a big cat.























## MASAI MARA high roller

The lilac-breasted roller is Kenya's national bird. They are a large crow-sized bird with bright feathers in lilac, olive, blue, black, and white.











# *white-backed vulture*





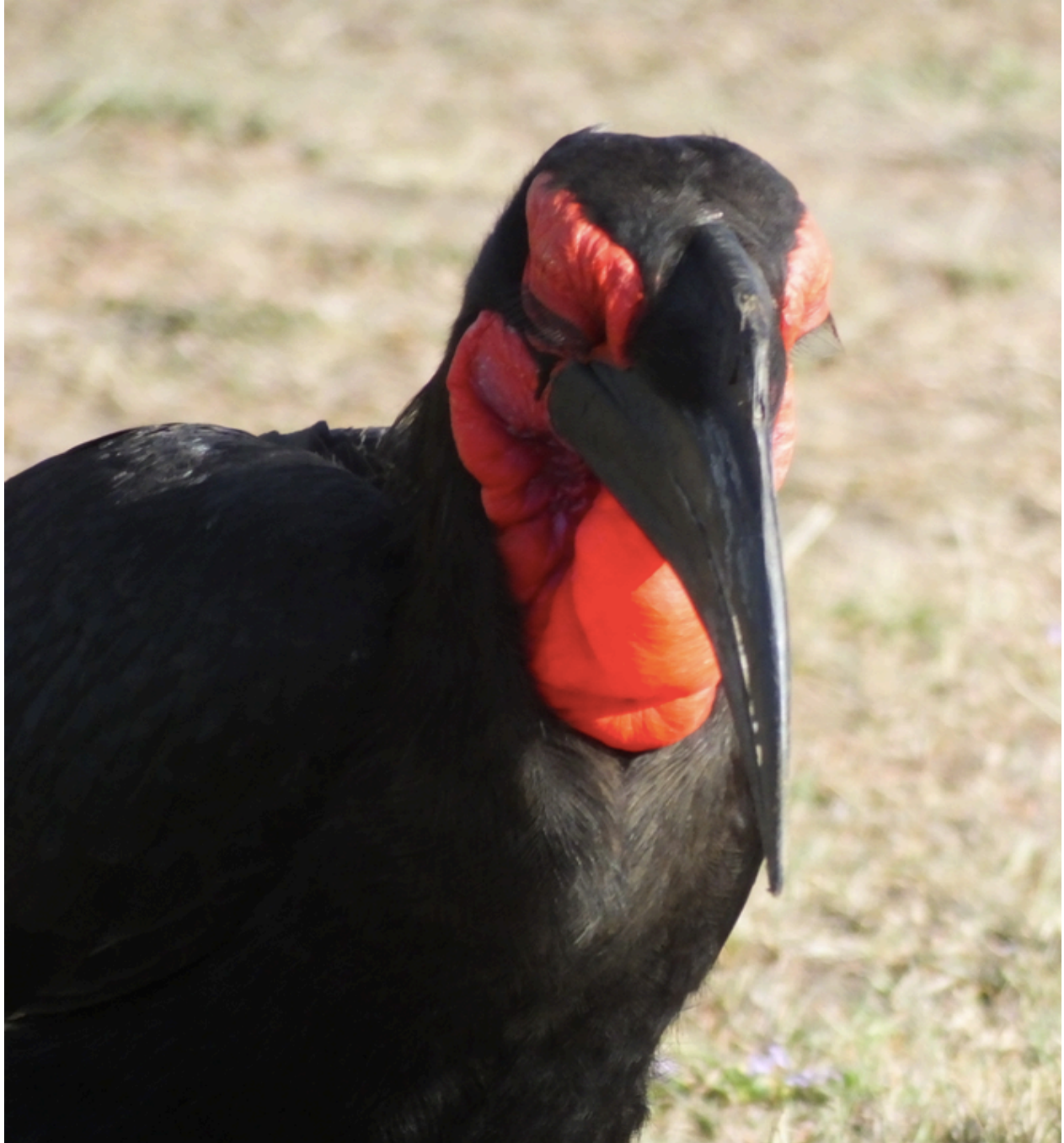
# *bat-eared fox*







# *southern ground hornbill*





# the author: Martina Nicolls

I am an author and humanitarian aid consultant with over 30 years' experience in the management, implementation, and evaluation of international aid development projects, particularly in post-conflict environments and countries with transitional governments, such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Darfur, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Georgia, Kosovo, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka, and also Mauritius, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia – and others. I provide technical advice on areas such as peace-building and conflict mitigation, education, poverty reduction, human rights, child labour, data quality and financing models.

But mostly I am a wanderer. Wherever I am and wherever I go, I take photographs and I write. My books include:

Similar but Different in the Animal Kingdom (2017)  
A Mongolian Lament (2015)  
The Komodo Verses (2012)

Liberia's Dearest Ends (2012)  
Bardot's Comet (2011)  
Kashmir on a Knife-Edge (2010)  
The Sudan Curse (2009)

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