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**Volume 16
December 2017**

**THIS EDITION:
THE RED ISSUE
KENYA**

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 16th edition of WANDER to WONDER

This 16th edition of Wander to Wonder focuses on Kenya's RED ISSUE – red animals, flowers, and symbols in the country of Kenya.

Until next edition, with another theme,

Martina

MARTINA NICOLLS



the kenyan flag







red spitting cobra

The Red Spitting Cobra (*Naja pallida*), is a medium-sized African spitting cobra between 0.7 and 1.2 meters (2.3 and 3.9 feet) long.

The Red Spitting Cobra is usually bright salmon-red contrasted with a broad black throat band and teardrop markings, but the colour varies. The Kenyan Red Spitting Cobra has an orange-red colour, with a broad, dark blue or black throat band. Most will have a throat band, but it will fade or even sometimes disappear in larger adults.

The body of the Red Spitting Cobra is slightly tapered and moderately slender with a broad head. They have 21-27 dorsal scales at the mid-body, 197-228 ventral scales, and 61-72 subcaudal scales.

They prey on small rodents, such as small rats and mice, but also birds, lizards, toads, frogs, eggs and other snakes.

Like other spitting cobras, it can eject venom from its fangs.

The Red Spitting Cobra is found in East Africa, in savanna and semi-desert regions, as well as locations near rivers. They are terrestrial, preferring to move along the ground and not in trees. It hides in termite mounds, logs, and holes in the ground.

They can be nocturnal (active at night) or diurnal (active during the day).

Like other cobra species, the Red Spitting Cobra is oviparous, which means that it lays eggs. Females lay 6-21 eggs, which take about 60-70 days to hatch.





red-headed rock agama

The Red-Headed Rock Agama (*Agama agama*) is a lizard found in most of sub-Saharan Africa.

The Red-Headed Rock Agama has a brown-black body, red head, white underbelly, and a tail with a light stripe down the middle. The dominant male has a red head, blue body and yellow tail, whereas females and adolescents have an olive-green head.

Its size varies from 13-30 cm (5-12 inches) in total length.

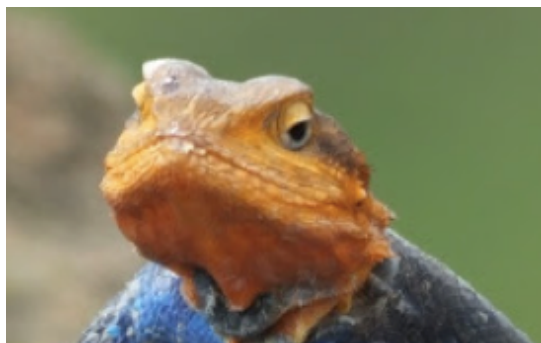
The Red-Headed Rock Agama is native to countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo in arid conditions.

It is active throughout the day. It is an insectivore, feeding mainly on insects, but also vegetation. They catch their prey using their tongue. The tip of their tongue has mucous glands that enable the agama lizard to hold onto their prey.

Male agamas are territorial and fight other males to claim their territory. The Red-Headed Rock Agama lives in social groups including a lead male, about six females and subordinate males. Subordinate males can only lead their own group if they eliminate the existing lead male (a cock). Only the cock mates with the females. The centre of a cock's territory is usually marked by a physical object, such as a tree or boulder.

Females are ready to mate when they are 14-18 months old, while males take two years to mature. Females will dig a hole in damp soil, about five centimetres deep with her nose and claws. She lays 5-7 eggs, that hatch after about 8-10 weeks.

The Red-Headed Rock Agama has thermoregulated embryos, which means that it has temperature-dependent sex determination. If the temperature around the eggs is 29 degrees Celsius, the babies will be male. If the temperature is 26-27 degrees Celsius, the babies will be female.



hadida ibis

The Hadada Ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*) is a medium-sized, common African wading bird, found in the grasslands, rainforests, and urban areas of Sudan, Ethiopia, Senegal, Uganda, Tanzania, Gabon, Zaire, Cameroon, Gambia, Kenya, Somalia and South Africa.

The Hadada Ibis has brown and iridescent green feathers, a long black downward-curved beak with a red stripe on its upper mandible (top beak), and long black legs. It is related to the Spoonbill.

It is about 76 centimetres (30 inches) tall.

It has a very loud ha-ha call.

The Hadada Ibis eats mainly earthworms. It uses its long beak to poke the soil and dig out earthworms. It also eats insects, spiders, snails, small lizards, beetles, butterflies, and fly larvae. It forages by touch, not scent or vision.

It nests in a tree. The male gathers twigs and materials to give to his partner to make the nest. Females lay 3-6 eggs, which the male and female incubate until they hatch. The chicks are altricial – bald, blind, and helpless – until they are fully feathered.







saddle-billed stork

The Saddle-Billed Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*) is the largest African stork, with a height of 1.8 metres (six feet) and a wingspan of 2.7 metres (9 feet).

It has striking colours with an iridescent black head, neck, back, wings, and tail. The rest of the body and primary flight feathers are white.

The long beak (bill) is red with a black band and a yellow shield, which is called the saddle (like a horse saddle). They have black legs and feet with pink knees.

Males have black eyes and females have yellow eyes.

The Saddle-Billed Stork is found in tropical Africa, where there is water, such as marshes, rivers, lakes and grasslands.

They are waders – birds that wade in water. They eat frogs, fish, crabs, mollusks, lizards, grasshoppers, and young birds.

Saddle-Billed Storks do not make a sound. They do not have a syrinx in their voice box. Instead of making a sound with their throat, they rattle their bills to communicate.

They do not migrate – they are territorial birds. They live either on their own or in a pair. When they fly, they extend their necks to full length.

Female Saddle-billed Storks lay one to two eggs, which take 30-35 days to hatch. Both the male and female storks take turns looking after the young birds until they are fledged (they can fly), which is about 70-100 days after hatching.

Their life expectancy is about 30 years.







masai red

The *shuka* cloth of the Masai in East Africa is red with black stripes. The Masai live in the Rift Valley of Kenya and Tanzania.

Red is the most common colour of the *shuka* cloth, but the Maasai also use blue, striped, and checkered cloth to wrap around themselves.





southern ground hornbill

The Southern Ground Hornbill (*Bucorvus cafer*) is a large bird with a heavy curved beak found in southern Africa, especially in central Kenya, Botswana, and South Africa.

The Southern Ground Hornbill has dull-black feathers, a small rounded casque (bony growth) on its head, bright red skin around its eyes, and a pouch under its chin. It has long eyelashes.

It can grow to about one metre (44 inches) tall. It has short legs and long tails.

Its voice sounds like a lion's roar.

The Southern Ground Hornbill likes open grasslands and woodlands. It can walk up to 11 kilometres (7 miles) a day, but will fly if it cannot walk. It feeds along the ground, looking for rodents with his beak. It sticks its beak into holes. It eats rodents, rabbits, snakes, lizards, toads, snails, and large insects.

It flies towards bushfires so that it can catch the insects and small animals that are trying to escape the flames.

Females lay one or two eggs on a bed of leaves in a tree hole, rock face, or river bank.











red-billed hornbill

The Red-Billed Hornbill (*Tockus erythrorhynchus*) is a medium-sized bird with a red curved beak found in east Africa, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Namibia.

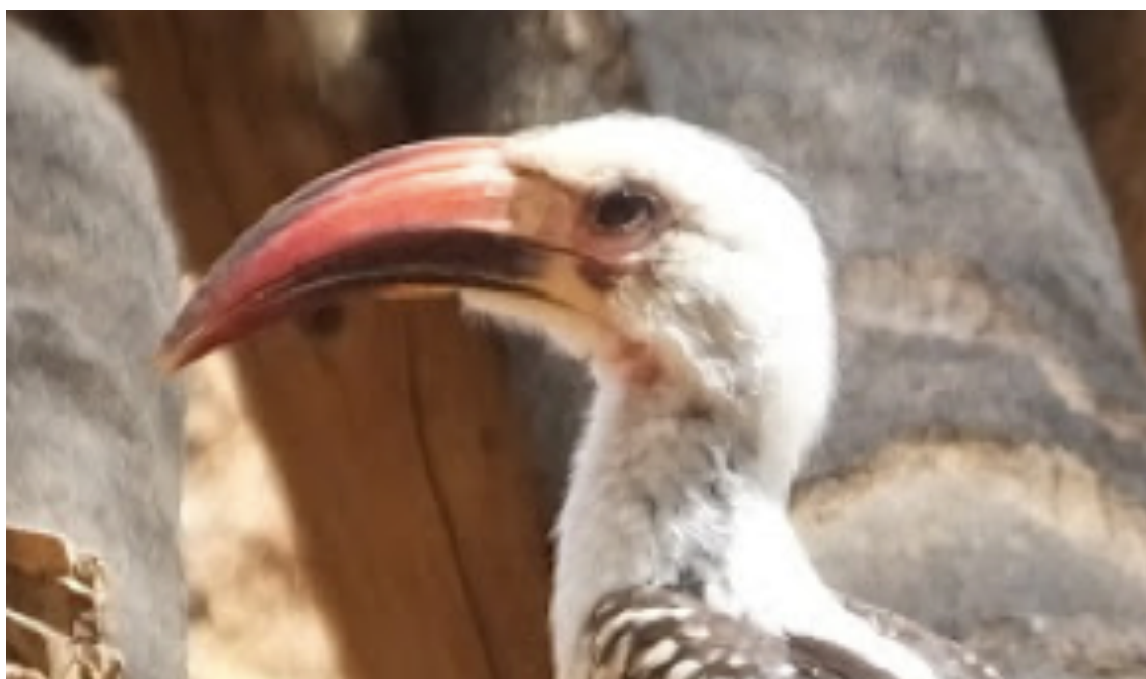
The Red-Billed Hornbill has a white face, white underbelly, black back and tail, with large white spots on its shoulders.

It can grow to about 45 centimetres (18 inches) tall.

Its voice sounds like *wok* noises.

The Red-Billed Hornbill likes wooded savannas, and streams near thorny shrubs. It is a social bird, found in groups of up to a dozen. It forages on the ground for beetles, larvae, scorpions, centipedes, and insects.

Females lay 2-7 eggs in tree cavaties. Eggs take about 24 days to hatch.











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

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