

## **The Parks and Wildlife**

**Tarangire National Park** is the sixth largest national park in Tanzania named after the Tarangire River which flows through the park and is a perennial river that assures water to both humans and animals even during the dry period. It has an area of 2,850 square kilometres (1,100 sq mi) to the south east of Lake Manyara.

Mammals in the park are a number of elephants and migratory wildebeest, zebra, buffalo, impala, gazelle, hartebeest and eland. Predators seen are the tree climbing lions and leopards. The most common reptile seen is African pythons climbing the baobab trees. The park has 550 breeding species of birds stated to be the largest number in any park in the world; Kori bustard (heaviest flying bird), the stocking-thighed ostrich (world's largest bird), ground hornbills, yellow-collared lovebird, rufous-tailed weaver and ashy starling which are endemic to savanna habitat are seen in the park. Termite mounds, dwarf mongoose and pairs of red-and-yellow barbets are a common sight in the park.

**Serengeti National Park** is the oldest and most popular national park which was established in 1951, with an area of 14,763 square kilometres (5,700 sq mi). The habitat. Bordered by Lake Victoria on the west, is characterised by plains, savannah, wooded hills, large termite mounds, rivers, and acacia woodlands. The spectacular wildlife witnessed in the park is of a million wildebeest seen in 40 square kilometres (15 sq mi) long columns migrating across the rivers to the north, over a distance of 1,000 square kilometres (390 sq mi), after spending three weeks of mating and giving birth to 8000 calves daily. This migration and life cycle creation is an annual feature witnessed in the park. This migration is in unison with 200,000 zebra and 300,000 Thomson's gazelle in search of grazing pastures, aptly described as "six million hooves pound the open plains". Other mammals seen here are buffalo, elephant, giraffe, large number of eland, topi, kongoni, impala, and Grant's gazelle. The predators inhabiting the park are lions, leopards, jackals, spotted hyenas, and serval cats. Reptiles seen are agama lizards and rock hyraxes. Bird species recorded are more than 500, which include ostrich and secretary bird. 100 varieties of dung beetle are also reported.

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**Ruaha National Park** is Tanzania's largest national park, covering 20,226 square kilometres (7,809 sq mi). It has rugged, semi-arid bush country, typical of central Tanzania. The Ruaha River flows through the park and gets flooded during the rainy season, otherwise remaining an ephemeral stream with ponds, sand and rocky river bed and banks. It lies within riverine and palustrine wetland ecosystem. Open grasslands, the acacia savannah and the Usangu plains abound in the park. There are reportedly 10,000 elephants, zebras, giraffes, impala, waterbuck and other antelopes, cheetahs, striped and spotted hyena, sable and roan antelope, greater kudu with corkscrew horns (which is the park's emblem) in the park. Of the reported 450 bird species, notable ones are the crested barbet, endemics such as the yellow-collared lovebird and ashy starling. It is located 128 km west of Iringa.

The **Selous Game Reserve** is one of the largest faunal reserves of the world, located in the south of Tanzania. It was named after Englishman Sir Frederick Selous, a famous big game hunter and early conservationist, who died at Beho Beho in this territory in 1917 while fighting against the Germans during World War I. Scottish explorer and cartographer Keith Johnston also died at Beho Beho in 1879 while leading a RSGS expedition to the Great Lakes of Africa with Joseph Thomson. The Selous was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 due to the diversity of its wildlife and undisturbed nature.

The reserve covers a total area of 54,600 km<sup>2</sup> (21,100 sq mi) and has additional buffer zones. Within the reserve no permanent human habitation or permanent structures are permitted. All (human) entry and exit is carefully controlled by the Wildlife Division of the Tanzanian Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. Some of the typical animals of the savanna (for example bush elephants, hippopotami, lion, East African Wild dog, cheetah, cape buffalo, Masai giraffe and crocodiles can be found in this park in larger numbers than in any other African game reserve or national park