

JBL Tanzania Expedition 2010



Photos by the author unless otherwise stated. Giraffes and Zebras in the savannah setting.

When JBL agreed to run an amazing competition in our celebratory 100th August 2009 issue last year I was over the moon – and when the winner was picked, so was he. Over the next three issues, Iggy Tavares reports on an amazing adventure that he took on behalf of *Tropical Fish* magazine and our competition winner that accompanied him

Elliott Carter, winner of the *Tropical Fish* – JBL competition and I, met at Heathrow Airport on Wednesday 10th February to start our JBL Tanzania Expedition with a six and a half hour flight to Addis Ababa on Ethiopian Airways. That gave us plenty of time to chat and to get to know each other. At Addis Ababa, we were joined by the other 73 participants of the expedition on the next leg of the journey to Kilimanjaro International Airport via a stop over in Mombasa on a smaller Ethiopian Airways jet.

Arusha Game Park

Four mini busses met us at Kilimanjaro Airport, Thursday 11th February, to take us to our lodges near Arusha Game Park arriving there at around 5.30pm. After freshening up with a cold shower, we returned to the main lodge for dinner that consisted of a starter soup and nice buffet with beef, fish plus lots of extras and dessert too, washed down with Kilimanjaro beer. Heiko Blessin,

organiser and team leader of the JBL expedition, gave a run down on the activities that we were going to take part in the next few days.

Next morning, Friday 12th February, after breakfast consisting of mango, pineapple and other fresh fruit as well scrambled egg and sausages, we were split into two groups of two coaches each, setting out at around 9.30am. Elliot and I were in Rodolphe Ruelle's group, but we also had Heiko Blessin in our coach sitting just ahead of me at the front. Our first trip was to Lake Duluti, where we principally explored the insect life taking images of butterflies and flowers as well some weaver birds and luckily two species of chameleon. We also spotted a pair of large black Hornbills high up in tall tree and many cormorants fishing in the lake. A young Tanzanian lad



fishing here with a home made rod with some success was happy to show off his catch of small tilapia (seven to 10cm). Light readings were taken at this location.

Animal spotting

The minibuses took our group to Arusha Game Park, which has its main gate near our main lodge, where the entrance fee was \$35 per person. Here we had our first sight of zebras, buffalo, wart hogs and a few giraffe all in the distance in a savannah type setting dotted with acacia trees. Driving on from here, the savannah changed to denser scrubland with a good number of

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Elliot helping with the JBL Water Tests



Butterfly

tall trees including large fig tree. The mini bus stopped frequently on route whenever anything interesting was spotted, including some Colobus monkeys, a troop of baboons, some antelope and more. Finally we arrived at a vantage point on high ground overlooking Momella Lake for lunch. We enjoyed our picnic lunch of well cooked tandoori chicken leg, cutlets and more, while enjoying superb views of the lake.

Continuing our drive, we arrived in the late afternoon at the swampy area, fed from waters that had passed through a trout farm that was to be explored for its fauna. The star catch here was a non-poisonous green snake (seven-centimetres) that I handled and finally released once all the photos had been taken. The main catch in the swamp consisted mainly of crabs, some frogs but no fish. The other main activity here was to do an extensive water test using the JBL Water Test Kit that depended on colour changes after special reagents had been added to a 5ml sample of water for each test. We then returned back to main lodge for dinner and a few beers. That evening

we listened to an interesting lecture by Uwe Wünnel, who owns a reptile zoo in Germany, talking about lizard collecting in Saudi Arabia.

The Savannah

The next day, Saturday 13th February, we took the mini coach back to Arusha Game Park to revisit the open savannah areas with its large group of buffaloes, zebra, giraffe and antelope. Heading towards the more arid region of the park, involved driving through dense scrubland with a lot of trees again. Here I got marvellous images of a kingfisher, dik-dik and red buck interspersed with chatting with Heiko Blessin. We arrived at Ngordoto Crater and enjoyed some great views of animals feeding in the distance.

After midday, we reached the arid, largely sparse region with just a few acacia trees and a sprinkling of grass to have our picnic lunch. In the immediate vicinity there were some Masai children tending their cows while looking at us with curiosity. I finally managed to befriend some of the children after taking an image of a willing child and showing them the



Cichlid and eggs

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Scorpion



Chameleon



image on the camera screen. Then they all wanted their photos taken. The children were rewarded with some of our picnic lunch which they eagerly took. We then concentrated on locating two species of scorpion found by carefully overturning some of the large boulders. We also found some millipedes and centipedes but unfortunately no snakes. Dung beetles were busy moving balls of cow dung, while ants were eager to bite when disturbed on their acacia pods. Light readings were taken at this location.

Mount Meru

We drove through some more arid land as we made our way to the streams at the base of Mount Meru. Leaving the mini busses, we tracked on foot for 20-minutes or so with our heavy gear to a smaller slower flowing stream nearer human habitation, with cows with children in attendance in the background. The stream was as

narrow as 50cm in parts but often widened to two-metres in other parts. 50cm or less when we visited but probably swelled whenever it rained. The stream was well vegetated with several plant species that we did not identify and some trees along banks.

We fished with the larger JBL nets that had extendable handles. Pushing the net under the vegetation toward the bank yielded the best catches with several different fish species being captured. Most abundant or perhaps easiest to catch was one cichlid species, including a mouth brooding adult (seven-centimetres). Other species included some elongated Golden barb (10-centimetres) and several smaller fish (one to two-centimetres) that were difficult to identify and unfortunately not photographed because of lack of time as night fell at around 6pm. We also caught water boatmen and water scorpions. Water tests and



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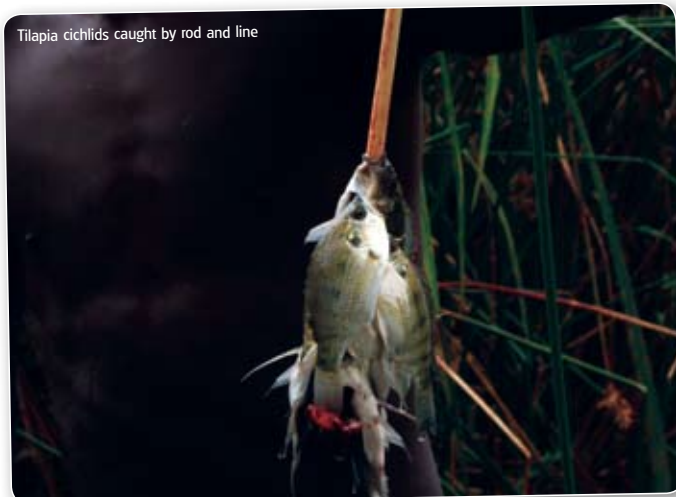
light readings were taken at this site too.

Night hunting

That same night we searched for chameleons along a roadside in Ngarananjuki. Here we found plenty of one species of bright green chameleons that were easy to spot with flashlights as they rested on bushes out in the open. I even found mosquitoes feeding on one chameleon. Also seen were colourful grass hoppers on bushes mating and several other insects. We then moved to another area off the road where there were fewer chameleons but other night life, such as lizards, toads, smaller spiders with glowing eyes and even a small black snake. It had been a long day as we got back at 10pm to enjoy a good dinner and a beer or two at the lodge.

After breakfast on Sunday 14th February we had a free morning and went to the large gift shop near park entrance, where I took lots of photos in the shop. Others went to snake farm near by where they saw green mamba, African python, cobra and more. Later that afternoon we took the Precision Air plane from Kilimanjaro Airport to Zanzibar.

Be sure to follow the JBL Expedition in Zanzibar in *Tropical Fish Magazine* next month. **FIN**



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