



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Malawi

Miombo & Montane Birding and South Luangwa Extension

10th to 29th September 2016 (4 days)

Trip Report



Bohm's Bee-eater by Keith Valentine

Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader, Heinz Ortmann

Tour Summary: Malawi – Miombo & Montane Birding

This Malawi – Miombo & Montane Birding Tour was Rockjumper's second fully comprehensive tour of Malawi, and was overall an incredible experience in all respects. This tour also featured, for the first time, an extension to the world-famous wilderness and wildlife haven of South Luangwa National Park in Zambia. Overall, good accommodations, friendly hotel and lodge staff and a lot of birding specialities often not too far from where our lodges were, were some of the reasons making this a great tour. It is, however, Malawi's habitat diversity that makes it such a good African destination from a birding perspective. The fact that Malawi is a relatively small country and has decent infrastructure, allowing for access to a variety of different habitat types, results in a significant proportion of the region's most wanted birds being seen during this twenty-day trip. We managed a bird list of over 400 species, including our time in the South Luangwa Valley, more than 40 mammals, as well as an interesting selection of reptiles and butterflies.

Birding highlights were many, with White-backed Night Heron, Pel's Fishing Owl, Red-faced Crimsonwing, the rare Lesser Seedcracker, endangered Thyolo Alethe, highly localised Green-headed Oriole, Yellow-throated and White-winged Apalis, scarce Racket-tailed Roller and the exquisite Boehm's Bee-eater being some of the standouts. Mammals too were prominent with regal Sable and Roan Antelope, Leopard, stunning Serval, Cape Porcupine, little-known Meller's Mongoose, African Civet, the range-restricted Tanganyika Mountain Squirrel, Spotted Hyaena and African Elephant the major highlights.

Our adventure through the beautiful landscape of Malawi began with an early morning visit to the Lilongwe sanctuary in the capital city. It was noticeable how dry the woodland at this site was, a direct consequence of the two-year drought that Malawi was in at the time. Hot, dry and windy would be some of the more prevalent weather conditions that we would experience on this tour. However, our first morning of birding was a good, relaxed introduction to some of the more common, and a few special, birds that occur in Malawi. Grey-backed Camaroptera, Long-billed Crombec, Yellow-breasted Apalis, noisy Yellow-bellied Greenbul, a colony of Southern Masked Weaver, Cardinal Woodpecker, Arrow-marked Babbler and African Yellow White-eye were some of



African Broadbill by Hugh Chittenden

the commoner species picked up on our walk here. The specials found included brief views of the stunning Red-throated Twinspot, a Tambourine Dove on the nest, fantastically close views of a female African Broadbill and an African Goshawk that successfully caught a weaver!

Having had a successful start to the tour, we embarked on the long drive up to Makuzi Beach on the shores of Lake Malawi. Lilac-breasted Roller, Little and African Palm Swifts, Brown-hooded Kingfisher and African Openbill were seen along the way. Raptors were rather scarce, with the exception of Yellow-billed Kite and the stunning African Fish Eagle. Nearing our accommodation in



the very late afternoon, we watched a group of African Green Pigeon whizz past. Our main aim was to try and find the localised East Coast Akalat but with the light fading after a long day's drive, all we managed to find was the much more common Red-capped Robin-Chat. We arrived at our accommodation at Makuzi Beach rather tired and looking forward to the next day.



East Coast Akalat by Hugh Chittenden

Early the next morning, we re-visited to the small patch of lowland forest nearby. Blue-spotted Wood Doves were flushed off the sandy track and impressive numbers of Black Saw-wing with Lesser Striped and Wire-tailed Swallows were present at the forest edge. In the forest, we soon found Olive Sunbirds, whilst Narina Trogon and Eastern Nicator were heard as part of the rather limited early morning chorus of bird sounds. We managed to find a very responsive East Coast Akalat but much to everyone's frustration, it was incredibly skittish and after many very brief glimpses, we decided to head back to the lodge for breakfast and try again later. African Pied

Wagtail, Green Sandpiper, White-breasted Cormorant and Striated Heron were all seen along the lake shore whilst we enjoyed our breakfast. The lodge gardens had Collared and Purple-banded Sunbirds, a breeding colony of Eastern Golden Weaver, Black-throated Wattle-eye, and Bronze and Red-backed Mannikins that entertained us before we made our way towards Nkatha Bay for more lowland forest birding.

Leaving the lodge, we happened upon an African Barred Owlet perched out in the open, which provided everyone with fantastic views. Little Bee-eaters perched on the fence line in between busy bouts of hawking insects. We made our way to a different patch of forest for the remainder of the morning. Here Little Greenbul, Terrestrial Brownbul, Green Malkoha and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher were welcome additions to the growing list. It would, however, take a lot of effort, patience and finding several birds before everyone had finally seen the East Coast Akalat well enough! This would be a trend in the forests throughout the tour, as the dry conditions and possible lack of food, as a result, meant that few birds were breeding and playback and response to tape were at times non-existent! The remainder of our day was spent travelling further north to the town of Mzuzu, where we were based for that night.

We departed from our hotel in Mzuzu very early on this morning to arrive at our first birding spot, known as Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve, before it heated up and bird activity dropped too much. This reserve is a rather remote and seldom-visited reserve in north-west Malawi. It is most famously known among birders as the supreme spot anywhere on the planet to find one of our main targets for this area, the Babbling Starling, a unique starling in its own genus that spends much of its time feeding on the ground. Before reaching the entrance to the reserve, we made a stop and did some roadside birding. Here we had our first looks at Olive Bee-eater, Wood Pipit, Miombo Blue-eared Starling, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, an African Harrier-Hawk and also one of our main targets for the day, the Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver! In the reserve itself, we were joined by an armed game scout as we walked through the very dry and, in places, recently burnt miombo woodland. The conditions made it important to locate mixed flocks in order to connect with most of the local specials. Some of the more



widespread species included African Hoopoe, Brubru, Southern Black Flycatcher, Familiar Chat, Chinspot Batis, Green Wood Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Crested Barbet, Black-headed Oriole, Red-headed Weaver, Meyer's Parrot, White-crested Helmetshrike, Brown-crowned Tchagra and Greater Honeyguide. Small raptors were well represented with Little Sparrowhawk, Shikra and African Cuckoo-Hawk all seen. To our surprise, we also flushed a single Coqui Francolin in some of the taller grass that we walked through. A single Black Stork was also seen soaring overhead. Mixed flocks were few and far between and try as we might, we just could not locate any Babbling Starlings - *a huge disappointment!* However, our time was still well-used, with many specials being found, including Boehm's Flycatcher, Miombo Scrub Robin, Rufous-bellied and Miombo Tits, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Red-capped Crombec, Stierling's Wren-Warbler and Arnott's Chat to name a few. With time running out, we left Vwaza Marsh behind and headed on to the remote grasslands and forest of the Nyika Plateau.



Boehm's Flycatcher by Keith Valentine

Our first short stop was at the entrance to Nyika National Park. This was still at a lower elevation and dominated by broad-leaved and miombo woodland. African Paradise Flycatcher, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher and Purple-crested Turaco were some of the species seen here, while we looked for Black-backed Barbet. Unfortunately, the barbet would elude us and so we made our way to Nyika. Driving through the miombo in the heat of the day produced very little, with Pale Flycatcher and Yellow Baboons being the only noticeable activity we came across. Once in the grassland, we were at a much higher elevation, which in turn resulted in lower temperatures, so things began to get interesting. Black-winged Kite, Grey-rumped Swallow, Senegal Coucal, and Denham's Bustard were all seen in the grassland. At the forest edges, we had Black Sparrowhawk, Crowned Hornbill and African Olive Pigeons. A short stop at a grove of *Acacia abyssinica* resulted in good views of Brown Parisoma and the first brief meeting with the skulking, all black, Fuelleborn's Boubou! Common Duiker, the regal Roan Antelope, Southern Reedbuck and Bushbuck were all good sightings on our way to our lodge high up on the Nyika Plateau.

The Nyika Plateau is simply incredible, and enough good things cannot be written about the true spectacle of this amazing wilderness. Nyika National Park protects around 3,200 km² of rolling upland grasslands, upland forest and vast stands of miombo woodland, which in turn hold a veritable feast of unique and highly localised birds and other wildlife. During our time in Nyika National Park, we explored all of these habitats and came away with an enviable collection of the region's most prized species. Our lodge was set in superb habitat that overlooks a large drainage line and small dam. On our first morning, we explored the forest below the main lodge before breakfast. Although this particular patch of forest is not extensive, it did provide us with great looks at several special birds, including Yellow-browed Seedeater, Fuelleborn's Boubou, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Churring and Black-lored Cisticolas, Cape Batis, Dusky Turtle Dove, Malachite Sunbird, Yellow-crowned Canary, Cape Robin-Chat, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher and Baglaffeht Weaver. The highlight of the morning, however, belonged to unbeatable views of



several recently-arrived Blue Swallows! Amazingly, we saw at least three birds perched out beautifully in the morning light! *An incredible sighting of these increasingly threatened birds.*



Roan Antelope by Heinz Ortmann

Nyika has several forests, some within Malawi and others on the Zambian side of the park. We visited Mananjere Forest after breakfast, which is on the Zambian side. Before getting to the forest, we had a pair of Crowned Eagle soaring high over the forest, another Denham's Bustard striding through the grassland and our first Augur Buzzard. We were also treated to a great sighting of the Klipspringer antelope on our drive to the forest. The forest itself was rather quiet, as we searched for new birds that included Schalow's Turaco, Sharpe's Greenbul and Bar-throated Apalis. Sharpe's Akalat, the main target here, as it occurs only in this forest on the tour, was unfortunately only seen very briefly

before disappearing into the dark interior of the forest. From a mammal point of view, we had a few encounters with the extremely localised and little-known Tanganyika Mountain Squirrel and Southern Tree Hyrax while exploring Manyenjere Forest. Later that same day, we turned our focus to the grasslands. Red-winged Francolin, Rufous-naped Lark, Grey-rumped, Barn and Angolan Swallows, and Wailing and Wing-snapping Cisticolas were all seen well. The sighting of at least two pairs of Scarlet-tufted Sunbird was one of the major highlights of the afternoon! This species can be extremely difficult to find on Nyika and only occurs on a few isolated mountains in East Africa, *making this a super sighting!*

The late afternoon to early evening drive was fantastic for mammals. A group of Blue Monkeys was surprised from the grassland they were foraging in on the edge of the forest, and they dashed back to the relative safety of the trees before we could see them well out in the open. The grassy plains provided great views of the *crawshayi* subspecies of Plains Zebra, Eland, Roan Antelope, Common Warthog and as it got dark, a lovely little Scrub Hare was found. The undoubted highlight of the drive was, however, seeing a male Leopard! We watched as he swiftly moved up the road and away from us, clearly having his intended path initially blocked by our vehicle. This brought to a close what had been a tremendously successful day.

The following day, we visited a couple of forest sites on the Malawi side and all of these produced a wonderful variety of specials. Headline species included Moustached Tinkerbird, Black-browed Greenbul, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, Waller's Starling, Abyssinian Thrush, Olive-flanked Ground Robin, White-starred Robin, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Chapin's and Brown-headed Apalises, Black-fronted Bushshrike and Bar-tailed Trogon. Much to our frustration, we heard several Evergreen Forest Warblers but were unable to get any decent views of these ultimate skulkers. Overhead, we had the good fortune of seeing a White-headed Vulture soaring past on this beautiful day. Again, there were many of the same mammals on display throughout the day, as we made our way from forest patch to forest patch. Late in the evening, we went out on a night drive. Unfortunately, we were not very



successful in terms of small mammals, but we did see good numbers of Ruwenzori Nightjar and also a Spotted Eagle-Owl.



Montane Widowbird by Keith Valentine

Our final morning in this lovely area yielded great looks at a White-chested Alethe in one of the forests and a stunning sight of a herd of around 40 Eland in the grassland. The grasslands on the way down and back to the entrance gate produced better views of Montane Widowbird, Yellow Bishop, Common Quail, another group of Red-winged Francolin, the first glimpses of Hildebrandt's Francolin and flight views of a Lanner Falcon. Around the entrance gate, there was White-browed Scrub Robin, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and several species we had previously seen. Our drive took

us to the Viphya Plateau that evening. *Essentially a one night stop over to break up the long drive between Nyika and Dzalanyama.* En route we saw Brown Snake Eagle and nearby the lodge, we had two Moustached Grass Warblers feeding on the road. Arriving late in the afternoon, we decided to have a relaxed evening in preparation for another long day and an early start the following morning.

The Viphya Plateau has, unfortunately, not been given the same level of protection as the Nyika Plateau, further north, and is dominated by extensive pine plantations. There are, nevertheless, a good few patches of native vegetation around and the area still holds an excellent variety of species. In our short time of birding the area, we had some excellent views of Bronzy and Variable Sunbirds, Blue and Common Waxbills, Olive Woodpecker, Tropical Boubou, Holub's Golden and Village Weavers, Chapin's Apalis, Ashy and African Dusky Flycatchers, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, White-browed Robin-Chat and Red-billed Firefinch in the garden of the lodge that morning! A short walk down to the wetland had Red-rumped Swallows, Black Sparrowhawk, and Shikra and African Goshawk at different times flying overhead. The vegetation on the wetland edges held Little Rush and African Yellow Warblers, and Burchell's Coucal; and although we did not manage to see them, we often heard African Rail. A nearby flowering coral tree produced two cracking birds in one scope view: the range-restricted Bertram's Weaver and a Whyte's Barbet. *What a bonus sighting!* Red-throated Twinspot and White-starred Robin also spoilt us as we made our way around the dam and back to the lodge for breakfast. A short stop after breakfast, at a patch of broad-leaved woodland nearby, resulted in good views of Trilling Cisticola, Reichard's Seedeater and Yellow-throated Longclaw.



Red-throated Twinspot by Hugh Chittenden



The north and more central region of Malawi had been extremely rewarding, so it was with much excitement that we began our journey southwards, first to Lilongwe and then on to the Dzalanyama woodlands. En route from the Viphya Plateau, we made a short stop at a large wetland near Kasungu. The dry woodland and grassland surrounding the wetland had Zitting and Rattling Cisticolas and Flappet Lark. On the open water, the specials included Southern Pochard, Knob-billed and White-backed Duck, and African and Lesser Jacana. The water's edge was where we found the bizarre Hamerkop - *no doubt in search of frogs and toads*, and we were even treated to African Marsh Harriers quartering over the wetland in their typical fashion. With the temperature rising, we made our way back to the capital city of Lilongwe for lunch and a change in vehicle before heading to Dzalanyama.

The Dzalanyama area of miombo or *brachystegia* woodland is home to a huge variety of range-restricted species. Miombo Woodland is only found in a small band through south-central Africa, and most of this woodland is found in Zambia, with smaller patches in eastern Angola, Malawi, parts of Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, we arrived at our lodge for the next three nights quite late; but not without any new birds, as we had seen Lizard Buzzard on the way in.



Souza's Shrike by Keith Valentine

Early the following morning, we started out our search for Miombo Rock Thrush not far from our lodge. Walking through the woodland, it becomes apparent very quickly that mixed flocks are often the key to finding most of the specials in the area. Sunbirds were prevalent, as we found Amethyst, Miombo Double-collared and Western Violet-backed Sunbird, all easily before breakfast. Cabanis's and Golden-breasted Buntings, Wood Pipit, Southern Hyliota, African Spotted Creeper, Green-capped Eremomela, African Green Pigeon, Klaas's Cuckoo and Grey Penduline Tit all made an

appearance; but no luck with the Rock Thrush. A visit to the nearby 'dambo', or wetland, area produced African Firefinch, Orange-winged Pytilia, the stunning Anchieta's Sunbird and Thick-billed Weaver, Red-winged Warbler, Lesser Honeyguide, African Golden Oriole and a male Speckle-throated Woodpecker, to name a few. The early afternoon was spent in miombo woodland and yielded the much sought-after Souza's Shrike, Black-eared Seed eater, Pale-billed Hornbill, Green-backed Honeybird and Striped Pipit. After much walking and searching in vain, we finally located a pair of Miombo Rock Thrushes! It is a fantastic bird; with the male, in particular, showing well for the guests. It had been a rewarding day of birding these fantastic woodlands!

The next morning, we set out with the objective of birding some rocky slopes in the woodland, with the hope of locating another special in this area, the Boulder Chat. We started out at the dambo area from the previous day, where we had further good looks at Anchieta's Sunbird, as well as finding a Red-necked Spurfowl and a Fiery-necked Nightjar on day roost. Much to our amazement, we then had a fantastic flight view of a Thick-billed Cuckoo as it flew above us, calling incessantly! African Black Swift, European Bee-eater and Wahlberg's Eagle were some of the species seen flying overhead as we walked to the Boulder Chat area. Striped Kingfisher, Black-collared Barbet, Neddicky and Orange-



breasted Bushshrike were the more widespread woodland species encountered during this walk. Upon finding a mixed feeding flock in the miombo, we managed further views of Southern and Yellow-bellied Hyliotas, Red-capped Crombec, and Miombo and Rufous-bellied Tits, amongst others. The rocky slopes produced Familiar Chat and Mocking Cliff Chat, but after quite a bit of searching, we still had not even heard any Boulder Chat. With our hopes diminishing, we finally found a bird and managed to see it particularly well! *This was just fantastic!*



Boulder Chat by Hugh Chittenden

The afternoon's birding began with us knowing that there were several important species that we were yet to find. Retz's Helmetshrikes and White-breasted Cuckooshrike were the only two noteworthy species we had found, as the heat and dry conditions rendered birding tough and with very little bird activity, we soldiered on. Finally, we found some semblance of a mixed feeding flock and then...*bang...* there they were, a pair of Stierling's Woodpeckers! Dzalanyama is the only area on the trip where one can find this highly localised species, so it was with great relief and excitement that we finally managed to find this bird. Heading slowly back toward the road and our vehicle, we were passing through some moist grassland when we noticed a large

'seed eater' perched in the grass some distance away. With one look through the bins it was confirmed, a Lesser Seedcracker! *All I can say is: "What a bird!"* We observed this particular individual before it flew up and over us and alighted in the grass again some distance away. Although we were unable to relocate it, it was truly an amazing sighting, and possibly the bird of the trip! It is an interesting species, as it is both seldom-observed and little-known, with most of its range falling within countries that are infrequently visited by birders and even then, those that make the effort often return empty handed. *A rather dreadful afternoon had changed completely in a matter of twenty minutes!* Walking back to the lodge, Mother Nature had one more surprise up her sleeve for us. This surprise came in the form of a family of eight Bushpig that crossed the road some sixty metres away from us as they embarked on their foraging route for the evening. *What an incredible day it had been!*

Leaving Dzalanyama the following morning, we found several good birds in the agricultural fields on our way to Lilongwe. These included Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Temminck's Courser, Red-capped Lark and Fischer's Sparrow-Lark. Our goal for the day was to travel well and reach Liwonde National Park by mid-afternoon, so that we could go out on a late afternoon to early evening game drive. Liwonde National Park is bordered by the beautiful Shire River on its western border, which in turn holds some excellent riverine vegetation and is quite simply a wildlife haven. The remainder of the reserve is dominated by mopane woodland, which holds a good variety of unique bird species and other wildlife as well. During our exploration of Liwonde, we spent ample time in the entire reserve's habitat and had incredible success with the area's specials. The camp is idyllically set right on the banks of the Shire River and is surrounded by good woodland as well. Our visit was timed at the height of the dry season, so many species were concentrated around the vicinity of the river and the camp was also a natural mecca.



We arrived at the park entrance in the late afternoon, with a short boat trip across the Shire River to get to the lodge. The river provides ideal habitat for a host of bird species and on this first afternoon, we enjoyed views of Long-toed and Spur-winged Lapwings, Black Crake, Common Greenshank, Spur-winged Goose, Black-crowned Night Heron, Whiskered and Gull-billed Terns and a group of Southern Ground Hornbill at the water's edge, to name a few. Liwonde is also well-known for its big game and upon arrival, one could not help but notice antelope such as Impala and Waterbuck, as well as Hippo in the river. Our late afternoon drive was a pleasant one, as we enjoyed African Fish Eagle, Palm-nut Vulture, Western Banded Snake Eagle, noisy groups of Helmeted Guineafowl and Grey Go-away-birds that were all part of a new suite of bird species. Around camp, we were delighted to easily Boehm's Bee-eater, Collared Palm Thrush, Red-headed Weaver and Dickinson's Kestrel. Bushbuck, Greater Kudu, Yellow Baboon and Vervet Monkey were some of the 'furries' we encountered. Heading back to the lodge after dark, we flushed a few Square-tailed Nightjars from the road.

Our next day was a full day of exploring the wonders of Liwonde National Park. The pre-breakfast birding involved a boat trip across the river in a search for the localised Brown-breasted Barbet. Before crossing to the far side of the river, our guide took us along the water's edge near the lodge, where we had the good fortune of finding both Black-crowned and the much scarcer White-backed Night Heron. Wood Sandpiper and Water Thick-knee were also present along the river. Once across the river, we were joined by an armed game scout - as we were walking in an area where Hippo, Elephant and Buffalo are known to occur. It did not take long for us to find the elusive Pel's Fishing Owl. This individual proved to be rather skittish and we had to settle for mostly brief flight views before deciding there was no good in disturbing the bird anymore. Not long thereafter, we came across the dainty Livingstone's Flycatcher, another regional special. In good spirits, we continued on and came across at first one and then two breeding herd of African Elephant. *It is difficult to describe in words how surreal the experience is of seeing these large animals when on foot!* Not sure of whether or not we were in their space, we decided



African Spotted Creeper by Matthew Matthiesen

to call off the search for the barbet and return another day with hopefully better luck. The boat ride back allowed us to observe Yellow-billed Stork, African Spoonbill, African Darter, and Malachite, Pied and the impressive Giant Kingfisher, *the latter at extremely close quarters!*

After a lovely breakfast, we headed out into the dominant habitat of the area, mopane woodland. White-browed Sparrow-Weavers were unbelievably common, Black-crowned Tchagra, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Speckle-throated Woodpecker and Lilac-breasted Roller were all seen well. Brown, Black-chested and Western Banded Snake Eagle suggested raptors were doing well in this ecosystem. Hornbills of several kinds were present, with us finding Southern Red-billed, Southern Yellow-billed, Crowned, African Grey and Trumpeter in the surrounding woodland. One of the undoubted highlights was a flock of Lilian's Lovebird feeding on the ground, allowing us quite a close approach. Mosque



Swallow, Sombre Greenbul, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Brown-headed Parrot, Greater Blue-eared Starling and Red-billed Oxpecker were some of the other birds new for the tour that we found here. The main target, however, was a bird that prefers tall mopane woodland. It was in an area with some beautiful, mature mopane trees that we found a pair and recently fledged chick of Racket-tailed Rollers! A scarce bird throughout its range, this was a very satisfying sighting, as they allowed lengthy views before we left them in peace.

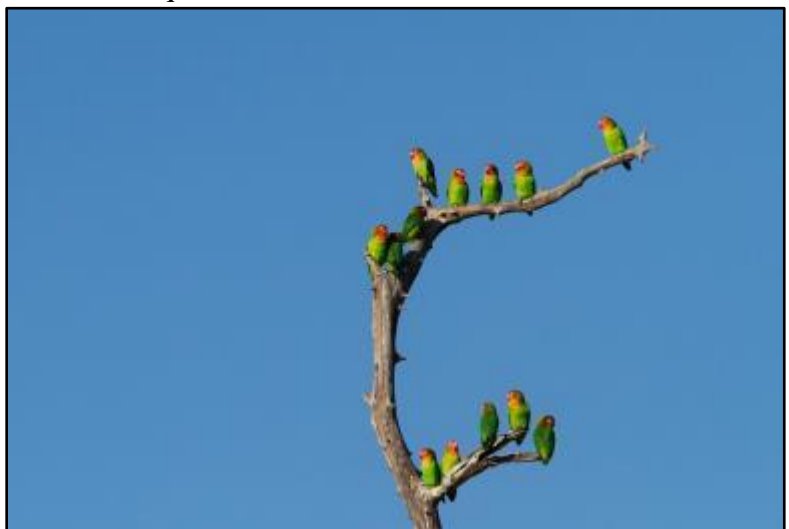


Sable Antelope by Heinz Ortmann

On our late afternoon drive, we returned to this area of mopane woodland and had some good fortune in finding a herd of African Buffalo, as well as some good looks at the stunning Sable Antelope. We positioned ourselves near a set of large baobab trees for our sundowner, whilst patiently waiting for some returning Brown-necked Parrots. A pair did return not long before dark, and we had to be satisfied with some decent flight views of these birds before continuing on with our night drive. The avian highlight was certainly flushing a Bronze-winged Courser, but this would arguably be outdone by the phenomenal variety of small mammals seen on the drive. Marsh, White-tailed and Meller's

Mongoose, African Civet, Blotched Genet, Thick-tailed Greater Galago, Four-toed Sengi, Scrub Hare and Cape Porcupine were all encountered on this drive! Meller's Mongoose, in particular, is a rare, nocturnal mongoose not often seen, and we managed fantastic views of at least three different individuals!

Liwonde National Park was truly delivering some amazing moments, and the next day proved to be no different. Our boat trip had several interesting observations, including that of several Nile Crocodile ripping into a dead Hippopotamus. Marabou Stork, Squacco Heron, African Sacred Ibis, Little Stint, African Wattled Lapwing, Common Ringed and Kittlitz's Plovers, Black-winged Stilt and an incredible flock of over 200 African Skimmers were all new additions to the trip list. Raptors were also prominent on this day, as we found Bateleur, Martial Eagle and African Hawk-Eagles at various times. Pin-tailed Whydah, Cut-throat Finch, White-winged Widowbird and Wattled Starlings made appearances throughout the day. In the afternoon, we found several of the yellow-faced Black-collared Barbets and had good sightings of Red-necked Spurfowl and a family group of Hildebrandt's Francolin.



Lilian's Lovebirds by Marius Coetzee



The final night drive in Liwonde, yet again, produced several unforgettable sightings. Not long into the drive, two Spotted Hyaenas were found next to the road and we enjoyed a lengthy view of these interesting creatures. The drive outdid the previous night's experience, with as many as six Cape



African Skimmers by Heinz Ortmann

Porcupine seen on this drive alone. We again found Meller's and White-tailed Mongoose, Blotched Genet and African Civet and added Serval and Lesser Sengi to the growing mammal list, as well as re-acquainting ourselves with Bushpig! *There certainly would be no complaints as to the quality of sightings that we had on any of these drives at Liwonde!*

Our final morning in Liwonde National Park dawned with more good weather and lovely views of Bearded Scrub Robin in the camp, before we climbed onto the boat to cross the Shire River for some final birding before breakfast. An astonishing five White-backed Night Heron were seen

on their day roost this morning, *simply unbelievable!* Once across the river, we were making one final attempt at locating Brown-breasted Barbet, this time hopefully finding the birds before the elephants extinguished any hope of locating the birds in relative safety! We had great views of Green Malkoha, Purple-crested Turaco and a distantly perched Red-necked Falcon whilst in the area. Fortunately, this time our luck was good, and a pair of Brown-breasted Barbets was viewed well and having seen the main target, we made our way back across the river to the lodge for a final meal before leaving this stunning area. Having had a fantastic time in Liwonde, it was time to leave and make our way to the Zomba region.

The three major targets for the Zomba area, however, are Yellow-throated and White-winged Apalis and Thyolo Alethe. The latter species has become rare due to the wide-scale destruction of its habitat, and is now widely regarded as rare in Malawi. The Yellow-throated Apalis is a recent split from Bar-throated and is the country's only endemic, while the White-winged Apalis is one of Africa's most gorgeous species and is rare to boot, being confined to only a few localised sites in Tanzania's Eastern Arc Mountains, and a few remnant forests in southern Malawi. Our lunch time stop, en route to our hotel atop the Zomba plateau, was a garden on the lower slopes, where we were to look for White-winged Apalis in particular. We were in luck as a pair of apalises was busy nest building but, frustratingly, most of our views were of these birds high up in the canopy!



African Elephant and Hippopotamus in Liwonde National Park



During our short walk in the garden and surrounds, we had point-blank views of a male Red-throated Twinspot and found several new species for the trip, which included Pallid Honeyguide, Dark-backed Weaver, Placid Greenbul and the delightful Mountain Wagtail! Having had a wonderful time in the garden, we made our way to our hotel for some late afternoon birding.

The Zomba plateau is now characterised by small remnant patches of forest that dot the plateau. Thankfully, some of the best forest birding in the area is quite close to the hotel, meaning we did not need to venture far to find most of the region's specials. Olive-headed Greenbul was the first local special to be found in the area. Yellow-throated, White-winged and Black-headed Apalises were all seen well, there were exceptionally close views of the stunning Livingstone's Turaco and we also found a Lazy Cisticola on a rocky hillside at the edge of the forest. Blue Monkeys were the constant mammalian presence in the area, with their high-pitched calls often heard in the forest. Just before heading back to the hotel, we were treated to our first views of Red-faced Crimsonwing, which at times can be relatively easy to find here. *A super end to a good day!*



Yellow-throated Apalis by Keith Valentine

The following day was a full day of birding in the Zomba area. The morning produced several of the species that we had encountered the previous day, with the addition of Rock Martin flying around our hotel, Forest Double-collared Sunbird noisily feeding on the few flowers present, and White-eared Barbet and Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler moving in the upper canopy. During the morning, we came close to finally seeing the incredibly skulking Evergreen Forest Warbler, but still had to remain content with mere glimpses in dense, tangled thicket vegetation, *utterly frustrating!* Finally, later that morning, we would have better luck along a small forest stream where three birds were seen exceptionally well as far as this species goes! Having searched both the previous afternoon and this particular morning for the endangered and rare Thyolo Alethe, without luck, we returned to this part of the forest, focussing our efforts along the stream. It took lots of effort, patience and perseverance but eventually, we all had satisfactory views of one of the rarest birds on this trip! With the light fading fast, we returned to our hotel.

Some early morning birding near our lodge the following day produced the best views of Red-faced Crimsonwing, and we finally managed to see the noisy Square-tailed Drongo. Travelling from Zomba, we made a late-morning stop at a patch of forest in amongst a tea plantation. It did not take long for us to hear the main target, Green-headed Oriole - *a localised species occurring in isolated locations of south-east Africa*. We had good scope views of a bird on the edge of the forest! Yellow-streaked Greenbul and Green-backed Camaroptera were two further additions to the trip list whilst we enjoyed the oriole. We then made a short visit to the nearby Thyolo Forest, which was mostly unproductive, with the notable exception of the brief glimpses of two Silvery-cheeked Hornbills that we had. Again, one could not help but notice how dry the forest was and how small the remnant patches of forest had become. Continued pressure for firewood and charcoal are serious concerns, as the birds and animals continue to be put under more and more pressure. We left the tea and coffee estate and made our way further south-east to Mt Mulanje, our final birding spot for the main tour.





Thyolo Alethe by Keith Valentine

The conditions at Mt Mulanje, where we were hoping to find the range-restricted Vincent's Bunting, were hot, dry and windy, as the effects of the two-year drought were quite evident in the area. Furthermore, there had, unfortunately, been a significant area of the woodland cleared for firewood and/or charcoal, that had taken place even within the boundaries of the reserve and especially along the lower slopes where the bunting had been recorded before. Bird activity and numbers in the area were unsurprisingly low, but we did manage to find several more common species, such as Bronze Mannikin, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Yellow-fronted Canary, Olive Bee-eater, Southern Citril, Northern

Grey-headed Sparrow and Yellow-throated Petronia. Two Lanner Falcons, as well as a pair of African Hawk-Eagle, were also seen soaring overhead, whilst the highlight of the afternoon was certainly the pair of Pale Batis that we had great close up views of. Unfortunately, we had no luck in finding the bunting and as evening approached, we made our way to our hotel for the night.

Having re-visited the site at Mt Mulanje without any luck in locating Vincent's Bunting, the remainder of our final day after lunch was travelling to Blantyre, where we had a delicious final dinner before some of us continued on the extension into the South Luangwa National Park in Zambia the following day.

Tour Summary: South Luangwa Extension

South Luangwa National Park is currently viewed as one of Africa's premier wilderness and wildlife destinations. We had the privilege of spending three nights in this amazing wilderness area, which provided the guests with numerous top sightings of some of Africa's flagship mammal species. The Luangwa Valley is famous for its high Leopard density, close up Lion sightings and being the only place in the world to see the stunning Thornicroft's Giraffe. This extension to South Luangwa had a slightly more mammal focus compared to the main Malawi tour, but nevertheless held several highlights, such as seeing a breeding colony of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters in the riverbanks of the impressive Luangwa River.

Having to travel from Blantyre in the south of Malawi, our first day was a long travel day, including the necessary border post stops, which went quite smoothly. We arrived at our wonderful lodge on the banks of the Luangwa River in the late afternoon to early evening and enjoyed a relaxed dinner and a good night's rest thereafter, ready for an exciting day ahead within the park itself.

South Luangwa National Park is a wonderful mix of riverine and riparian zones, floodplain grassland and mixed woodland types. We visited during the peak of the dry season in one of the warmer months, which resulted in animals and a lot of the birds being concentrated along or near the Luangwa River



and the course it follows. During our two full days on this extension, the raptors were not surprisingly a common sight, with Hooded, White-backed and White-headed Vultures, African Harrier-Hawk, Tawny Eagle, Bateleur, Martial Eagle, Western Banded Snake Eagle and African Cuckoo-Hawk all seen well. Blacksmith and White-crowned Lapwings, Three-banded and White-fronted Plovers, the impressive



Southern Carmine Bee-eaters by Heinz Ortmann

Saddle-billed Stork, Ruff, Green Sandpiper, White-browed Coucal, Collared Pratincole and Grey Crowned Crane were some of the attractions along the river course. Arguably, the birding highlight of this park was visiting the breeding colony of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters. These dazzling birds were an amazing site at their nest holes, with several White-fronted Bee-eaters also present. In the woodland, Bennett's Woodpeckers were observed with their unusual behaviours of spending quite a bit of time foraging on the ground. Atop the larger species of game, we came across the scarcer Yellow-billed Oxpecker, whilst mixed flocks of swallows and swifts held

Common House and Brown-throated Martins and White-rumped Swifts. We also found a few new finches in the form of Jameson's Firefinch, Red-billed Queleas and the brood parasite of Red-billed Firefinch, the Village Indigobird. The last morning also produced great views of the tiny Pearl-spotted Owlet and the massive Verreaux's Eagle-Owl.

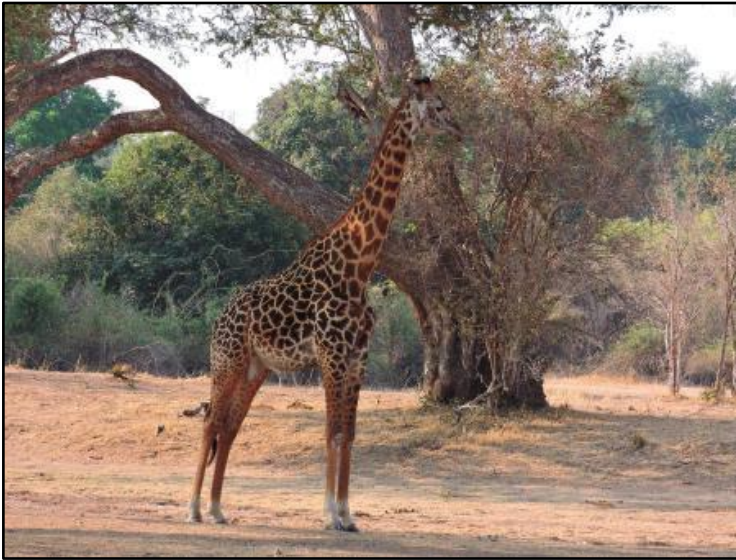
Being in South Luangwa with several impressive large mammals present, this aspect did take up the majority of our time and provided the group with a number of fantastic sightings and unforgettable experiences. We had numerous sightings of the Luangwa Valley's very own Thornicroft's Giraffe - *a truly stunning animal which appears to be doing well, with good numbers of these large creatures seen during our time in the park*. South Luangwa is also home to the *crawshayi* subspecies of Plains Zebra that we had seen previously in Malawi, with the animals in South Luangwa allowing much closer approaches and subsequently better photographic opportunities. It is an interesting subspecies of 'pyjama donkey', as they lack any shadow stripes, which is more similar to the mountain zebras of western Southern Africa than the other subspecies of Plains Zebra that are distinguished by the presence of these shadow stripes. Puku, an antelope in the kob complex, was the dominant species of the open floodplain grassland, which at this time of year was dry with large areas of bare soil. The largest of the land mammals was arguably the one that provided the most entertainment. We had a small family group of African Elephant wander through the lodge grounds every afternoon and one particular afternoon, we all stood in the dining hall area gazing in amazement as



Lion by Heinz Ortmann



they fed and walked past less than ten metres away from us! *Another amazing encounter with these incredible gentle giants! There is something about elephants and Africa that is just so special and this experience was something I'm sure the guests will not forget!*



Thornicroft's Giraffe by Heinz Ortmann

Smaller mammals were also seen fairly regularly. We again came across White-tailed Mongoose and Blotched Genet on our night drives and were pleasantly surprised by two separate sightings of one of the animals with the most character in the African bush, the Honey Badger. *This was a major highlight for everyone and it was a great bonus to have been able to see this on the tour.*

Large wilderness areas such as South Luangwa, with the high number of plains game present, also support good populations of large predators. South Luangwa, in particular, is famous for its Lions, but also for one of the highest

densities of Leopard on the African continent. We were fortunate to see both species of big cat on more than one occasion. The Lion sightings were all quite good, with the first being of a male and female mating, the second: a small pride lying on the banks of the Luangwa River, and the third and final sighting was that of another male affectionately known as 'Ginger', due to his strange fur colour. He was particularly obliging, allowing us to get close for some good photographs. Leopards are the epitome of stealth and intelligence, as well as 'street smarts', as far as Africa's big cats go. Our first sighting was during our first night drive in the park. What looked like an adult female was attempting to stalk a herd of Impala. Unfortunately for her, the number of safari vehicles at the sighting eventually blew her cover and what could have been a once in a lifetime sighting was spoilt by people. Our second and final Leopard sighting was far more pleasant and memorable. On the last morning, we found an impressive male Leopard and followed him through the bush for some distance. *This was a great parting gift after what had been a fantastic time in this special park!* We left South Luangwa with many fond memories and made the journey back to Lilongwe and the end of a superb trip.

And so ended a fantastic time to the seldom-visited birding hotspot of Malawi and an excellent end to the trip with lots of wildlife in South Luangwa in Zambia! Thanks to a great group of participants, as well as a superb ground operations team.



Herd of African Elephant in the Luangwa River by Heinz



Annotated List of Birds recorded (including South Luangwa Extension)

BIRD LIST (403 species including 11 heard only)

Note: Names and taxonomical order of the bird species list follows that of IOC (International Ornithological congress), Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). 2016. IOC World Bird List (v 6.3). doi : 10.14344/IOC.ML.6.3.

KEY: E = South African endemic; RE = regional endemic; RNE = regional near-endemic

NR = National Reserve; NP = National Park; WP = Wetland Park; BG = Botanical Gardens; GR = Game Reserve, SW = Sewage Works

NNP = Nyika National Park

LNP = Liwonde National Park

SLNP = South Luangwa National Park (Zambia)

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

This widespread and common duck was found at a small wetland outside Kasungu and in LNP.

White-backed Duck

Thalassornis leuconotus

A bonus sighting of two birds at a wetland outside Kasungu.

Knob-billed Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

A pair was found amongst the water lilies at the wetland outside Kasungu.

Spur-winged Goose

Plectropterus gambensis

This large goose was a common sight in LNP and later again in SLNP.

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiacus

As for the previous species, this goose was seen often in LNP and SLNP.

Yellow-billed Duck

Anas undulate

Seen in NNP, Kasungu and LNP.

Red-billed Teal (Duck)

Anas erythrorhyncha

Seen well at the wetland near Kasungu.

Southern Pochard

Netta erythrophthalma

Five of these ducks were found at the wetland outside Kasungu.

Guineafowl Numididae

Helmeted Guineafowl

Numida meleagris

A common sight in LNP and later again on the extension in SLNP.

Pheasants & Allies Phasianidae

Coqui Francolin

Peliperdix coqui

A single bird was flushed and briefly seen in flight at Vwaza Marsh GR.

Red-winged Francolin

Scleroptila levaillantii

We were spoilt with fantastic views of two groups of six and then five birds two days after our first sighting in NNP.

Hildebrandt's Francolin

Pternistis hildebrandti

After mostly frustratingly brief views in NNP and Dzalanyama, we later had great views of two family groups of first three and then five birds in LNP.

Red-necked Spurfowl (Francolin)

Pternistis afer

Brief views at Dzalanyama, LNP and several wonderful views later on the extension in SLNP.

Swainson's Spurfowl (Francolin) (RNE)

Pternistis swainsonii

This large spurfowl was seen well in SLNP.

Common Quail

Coturnix coturnix

Three birds were flushed on our way out of NNP.



Grebes Podicipedidae**Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

This small grebe was encountered at NNP and the small wetland outside Kasungu.

Storks Ciconiidae**Yellow-billed Stork***Mycteria ibis*

We found this stork in LNP and SLNP.

African Openbill*Anastomus lamelligerus*

A strange stork seen on day one en route to Makuzi Beach and again in LNP.

Black Stork*Ciconia nigra*

A single bird was seen in flight near Vwaza Marsh GR.

Marabou Stork*Leptoptilos crumenifer*

Seen in LNP and in good numbers in SLNP.

Saddle-billed Stork*Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*

This beautiful stork was found in LNP and seen exceptionally well on several occasions during our time in SLNP. Of conservation significance was the several immature birds seen in SLNP.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**African Sacred Ibis***Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Seen in LNP and SLNP.

Hadada Ibis*Bostrychia hagedash*

This noisy ibis was found in LNP and SLNP.

Glossy Ibis*Plegadis falcinellus*

An ibis that has a slender build we found this species in LNP.

African Spoonbill*Platalea alba*

Seen at LNP and SLNP where it was found in good numbers.

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae**White-backed Night Heron***Gorsachius leuconotus*

This usually very tricky species was seen incredibly well on two different mornings in LNP. As many as five different birds including an immature were seen on the second morning! The views were unbeatable!

Black-crowned Night Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

A common sight along the Shire River on their day roost in LNP.

Striated Heron*Butorides striata*

We had good views of birds at Makuzi Beach and later again in LNP.

Squacco Heron*Ardeola ralloides*

Singletons found in LNP and SLNP.

[Western] Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Seen regularly en route to Makuzi Beach on day one and subsequently near Kasungu and LNP.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

Seen regularly at various wetlands during the tour.

Black-headed Heron*Ardea melanocephala*

Similarly common to the previous species but found in drier habitats generally away from water.

Goliath Heron*Ardea goliath*

This stunningly large heron was seen well at LNP and SLNP.

Great Egret*Ardea alba*

This impressively large egret was a common sight in LNP and SLNP.

Intermediate Egret*Egretta intermedia*

A few of these medium-sized egrets were found amongst the previous species along the Shire River in LNP and later on the tour in SLNP.



Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Several birds were seen along the Shire River during our time in LNP.

Hamerkop Scopidae**Hamerkop***Scopus umbretta*

This bizarre bird was seen near Makuzi Beach, near Kasungu, LNP, en route to Mulanje from Zomba and SLNP.

Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae**Reed (Long-tailed) Cormorant***Microcarbo africanus*

Seen distantly at the wetland near Kasungu and subsequently frequently on the Shire River in LNP.

White-breasted (Great) Cormorant*Phalacrocorax lucidus*

A large cormorant seen well at Makuzi Beach and in good numbers along the Shire River in LNP.

Note: Clements treats this sub-Saharan bird as a race of the Great Cormorant *P. carbo*.

Anhingas Anhingidae**African Darter***Anhinga rufa*

Seen well on several occasions along the Shire River in LNP.

NOTE: The resident African form *P. rufa* is sometimes lumped with the Asian *P. melanogaster* and the enlarged species called Darter. Clements uses this treatment of lumping these forms.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**Black-winged (shouldered) Kite***Elanus caeruleus*

This small raptor was seen en route to Nyika from Mzuzu and again on the Nyika plateau.

African Harrier-Hawk*Polyboroides typus*

Seen on several occasions including at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Palm-nut Vulture*Gypohierax angolensis*

Seen on two occasions in LNP.

African Cuckoo-Hawk*Aviceda cuculoides*

A single bird was seen outside Vwaza Marsh GR on our way up to the Nyika plateau.

Hooded Vulture (EN)*Necrosyrtes monachus*

We had good flight views of several of these small vultures during our time in SLNP.

White-backed Vulture (NT)*Gyps africanus*

Ten birds were seen in Mkuze GR with further sightings in Mapungubwe NP and Nylsvlei NR.

White-headed Vulture (EN)*Trigonoceps occipitalis*

Initially, we had a flight view of a single bird on the Nyika plateau with a second sighting in SLNP.

Black-chested Snake Eagle*Circaetus pectoralis*

Seen in LNP.

Brown Snake Eagle*Circaetus cinereus*

First seen near the town of Rumphi with great views at our lodge in Dzalanyama and later again in LNP.

Western Banded Snake Eagle*Circaetus cinerascens*

Seen well on several occasions in LNP and later during our time in SLNP in Zambia.

Bateleur (NT)*Terathopius ecaudatus*

A fantastic bird seen in flight in LNP with perched and in flight views later in the trip at SLNP.

Crowned Eagle*Stephanoaetus coronatus*

A pair of these large eagles was seen near one of the forests on the Zambian side of the Nyika plateau.

Martial Eagle*Polemaetus bellicosus*

This incredible eagle was seen in LNP, Zomba and in SLNP.

Wahlberg's Eagle*Hieraaetus wahlbergi*

A summer breeding visitor, this small eagle was encountered in Dzalanyama and LNP.



Tawny Eagle*Aquila rapax*

Strangely we only found this large eagle during our stay in SLNP in Zambia.

African Hawk-Eagle*Aquila spilogaster*

A stunning eagle seen well in LNP and at Mulanje.

Lizard Buzzard*Kaupifalco monogrammicus*

Recorded at several localities including Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

African Goshawk*Accipiter tachiro*

Our first views were of a bird at the Lilongwe Sanctuary that successfully caught a Village Weaver on the first morning of our trip. Other sightings were had near Nkatha Bay, Dzalanyama and LNP.

Shikra*Accipiter badius*

This small accipiter was found at Vwaza Marsh GR, Luwawa and SLNP.

Little Sparrowhawk*Accipiter minullus*

A tiny raptor found at Vwaza Marsh GR and SLNP on this tour.

Black Sparrowhawk*Accipiter melanoleucus*

A large accipiter seen well at the entrance to NNP and again at Luwawa and Zomba.

African Marsh Harrier*Circus ranivorus*

Two birds seen during our morning on the Vipha plateau.

Yellow-billed Kite*Milvus aegyptius*

Seen at various locations on ten different dates.

Note: This bird is often considered conspecific with the Black Kite M. migrans from which the IOC splits it.

African Fish Eagle*Haliaeetus vocifer*

The iconic bird of Africa seen near Makuzi Beach, the Shire River of LNP and SLNP.

Augur Buzzard*Buteo augur*

Two birds seen well in NNP.

Bustards Otidae**Denham's Bustard***Neotis denhami*

We had three separate sightings of the highest quality in the grasslands of the Nyika plateau.

Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae**(H) African Rail***Rallus caerulescens*

Unfortunately, this species was heard only at a wetland near our accommodation on the Vipha plateau.

Black Crake*Amaurornis flavirostra*

This unusually bold rallid was seen well along the banks of the Shire River in LNP.

Red-knobbed Coot*Fulica cristata*

Small numbers present at the wetland outside Kasungu.

Cranes Gruidae**Grey Crowned Crane***Balearica regulorum*

We had fantastic sightings in SLNP of this crane species.

Thick-knees Burhinidae**Water Thick-knee***Burhinus vermiculatus*

Seen well along the Shire River in LNP and the Luangwa River in SLNP.

Stilts & Avocets Recurvirostridae**Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

Seen on the Shire River in LNP and later in SLNP on the Luangwa River.

Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae**Long-toed Lapwing***Vanellus crassirostris*

Surprisingly only a single individual seen at sunset on our first afternoon in LNP.

Blacksmith Lapwing (Plover) *Vanellus armatus*

A common sight in SLNP.

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*

Seen regularly along the Shire River in LNP.

White-crowned Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps*

A constant presence on the banks and sandbars of the Luangwa River in SLNP.

African Wattled lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*

Seen once on this trip along the Shire River in LNP.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

At least three birds seen on our boat cruise along the Shire River in LNP.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Another species that was found along the Shire River in LNP and later in SLNP.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

Seen in SLNP.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*

Not common at inland sites this small plover was seen in SLNP.

Jacanas Jacanidae

Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*

We found four of these jacanas at the wetland near Kasungu.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*

Seen near Kasungu, LNP and SLNP.

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

The most regularly seen shorebird in LNP and SLNP.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Singeltons seen well at Makuzi Beach and SLNP.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

This shorebird was present in Nyika NP, LNP and SLNP.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Encountered at Makuzi Beach, Nyika NP, LNP and SLNP.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Seen along the Shire River in LNP and later in Zambia in SLNP.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Seen on three days in SLNP.

Pratincoles & Coursers Glareolidae

Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii*

Three birds were seen well in recently ploughed agricultural fields en route from Dzalanyama to Lilongwe.

Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*

A much sought-after species that we were lucky to find on a night drive in LNP.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

Small numbers were seen along the Luangwa River in SLNP.

Gulls & Terns Laridae

African Skimmer (NT) *Rynchops flavirostris*



A top sighting as we found a flock of over 200 of these birds roosting on a sandbank in the Shire River LNP.

Grey-hooded (headed) Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*

These gulls were seen on several occasions flying up and down the Shire River of LNP.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Small numbers of these terns in non-breeding plumage were seen on the Shire River of LNP.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrid*

This small tern species was encountered in LNP and SLNP.

Doves & Pigeons Columbidae

Rock Dove (I) *Columba livia*

A common sight in the urban areas on our tour.

African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix*

This large forest pigeon was

(H) Lemon Dove *Columba larvata*

Heard only in two forests on the Nyika plateau.

Dusky Turtle Dove *Streptopelia lugens*

Small numbers of these scarce doves were seen in and around the lodge on the Nyika plateau.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*

A common species seen on 11 different days throughout the tour.

Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola*

The most often seen dove species encountered on 14 different days.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Interestingly found only at Vwaza Marsh and in LNP on this tour.

Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer*

A regular sight along Lake Malawi at Makuzi Beach, the Vipha plateau, Zomba and SLNP.

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*

This small dove was found in drier areas compared to the previous species and was most encountered at Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP with further sightings en route to the Vipha plateau.

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistra*

We had good views of a bird on the nest at Lilongwe Sanctuary with brief mostly in-flight views of subsequent birds near Nkatha Bay, Nyika forests and Zomba.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

A single female was seen in dry woodland in SLNP.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calva*

These large parrot-like pigeons were seen near Makuzi Beach, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Turacos Musophagidae

Livingstone's Turaco *Tauraco livingstonii*

A noisy and often seen bird in the Zomba area.

Schalow's Turaco *Tauraco schalowi*

Seen in various forests on the Nyika plateau, Dzalanyama and Vipha.

Purple-crested Turaco *Tauraco porphyreolophus*

This cracking bird was seen near Makuzi Beach, Nkatha Bay and much better in LNP.

Grey Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides concolor*

A noisy and conspicuous presence in LNP and SLNP.

Cuckoos Cuculidae

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*

A scarce resident seen on the Nyika plateau



Burchell's Coucal*Centropus burchelli*

The common coucal of Malawi seen well in LNP.

White-browed Coucal*Centropus superciliosus*

Seen in SLNP where it replaces the previous species.

Green Malkoha (Yellowbill)*Ceuthmochares australis*

Initial glimpses near Nkatha Bay with a subsequent much improved view at LNP.

Klaas's Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx klaas*

Two birds seen well at Dzalanyama.

Thick-billed Cuckoo*Pachycoccyx audeberti*

A fantastic find at Dzalanyama.

Owls Strigidae**(H) African Scops Owl***Otus senegalensis*

This small owl was heard only in LNP and SLNP.

Spotted Eagle-Owl*Bubo africanus*

Seen on a night drive in NNP.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl*Bubo lacteus*

Heard at a number of locations and seen well in LNP and SLNP.

Pel's Fishing Owl*Scotopelia peli*

Always a highlight seeing these incredible owls, we were treated to flight views and good scope views of two different individuals in LNP.

(H) African Wood Owl*Strix woodfordii*

Heard only in SLNP in Zambia.

Pearl-spotted Owlet*Glaucidium perlatus*

Seen well on our last morning in SLNP.

African Barred Owlet*Glaucidium capense*

An amazing early morning sighting on our way out of the lodge at Makuzi Beach. Also heard at Vwaza Marsh GR and LNP.

Nightjars and Allies Caprimulgidae**Fiery-necked Nightjar***Caprimulgus pectoralis*

Seen at Dzalanyama and heard in Lilongwe and LNP.

Ruwenzori Nightjar*Caprimulgus ruwenzorii*

A common sight on all three evenings at NNP.

Square-tailed Nightjar*Caprimulgus fossii*

Seen well in LNP and heard in SLNP.

Swifts Apodidae**African Palm Swift***Cypsiurus parvus*

Seen on 13 different days, most regularly at LNP and SLNP.

African [Black] Swift*Apus barbatus*

A few birds seen on one day at Dzalanyama.

Little Swift*Apus affinis*

These small swifts were seen at Makuzi Beach, Lilongwe and SLNP.

White-rumped Swift*Apus caffer*

Another species seen only during the excursion in SLNP.

Mousebirds Coliidae**Speckled Mousebird***Colius striatus*

Encountered on 11 days from Lilongwe to SLNP.

Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus*

A woodland species seen several times in LNP and SLNP.

Trogon Trogonidae

(H) Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina*

Unfortunately, this trogon species was heard only near Nkatha Bay and at NNP.

Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum*

We had superb views of a pair in the forest on the Nyika Plateau in NNP.

Rollers Coraciidae

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus*

The more common roller species seen near Lilongwe, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Racket-tailed Roller *Coracias spatulatus*

We had the good fortune of observing a pair and their recently fledged chick in mopane woodland in LNP.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae

Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris*

A widespread woodland kingfisher seen well in Lilongwe, LNP and SLNP.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*

A smaller version of the previous species that was found in Dzalanyama and LNP.

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristata*

Seen along the Shire River in LNP and the Luangwa River in LNP.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*

Seen at a wetland on the Vipha plateau, cracking views along the Shire River in LNP and also at SLNP.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

Bee-eaters Meropidae

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*

Interestingly this species was seen on just one day in LNP.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*

This small bee-eater was encountered from Lilongwe through to SLNP on 14 different days.

White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides*

These colourful birds were a delightful addition to the trip list in SLNP.

Boehm's Bee-eater *Merops boehmi*

One of the main attractions for this tour we managed to have superb sightings of this species on all days in LNP.

Olive Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

A large bee-eater that was seen at several localities including Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP, Mulanje and SLNP.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

This Palearctic migrant was found at Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*

It was a real treat observing these birds at their breeding colony along the Luangwa River in SLNP. We had superb views on all days during our visit to SLNP.

Hoopoes Upupidae

African (Eurasian) Hoopoe *Upupa africana*



Always a highlight to see this species which we encountered at Makuzi Beach, Vwaza Marsh, NNP and LNP.

Note: Clements lumps this species with Eurasian Hoopoe as *Upupa epops*

Wood Hoopoes Phoeniculidae

Green Wood Hoopoe

Phoeniculus purpureus

Small groups of these noisy birds were seen at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Common Scimitarbill

Rhinopomastus cyanomelas

Seen well at Dzalanyama and LNP.

Ground Hornbills Bucorvidae

Southern Ground Hornbill (VU)

Bucorvus leadbeateri

These incredible birds were seen well in LNP and later again in SLNP in Zambia.

Hornbills Bucerotidae

[Southern] Red-billed Hornbill

Tockus rufirostris

A fairly common sight in LNP and SLNP.

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill

Tockus leucomelas

Interestingly quite scarce on this tour and seen only on one day in LNP and near Mulanje.

Crowned Hornbill

Tockus alboterminatus

Seen regularly in NNP, LNP and SLNP.

African Grey Hornbill

Tockus nasutus

Found in drier woodland in LNP and SLNP.

Pale-billed Hornbill

Tockus pallidirostris

A special for this tour seen well on two days at Dzalanyama.

Trumpeter Hornbill

Bycanistes bucinator

These large and noisy hornbills were seen on several occasions in LNP and later on one day in SLNP.

Note: Clements places this species under the genus *Ceratogymna*

Silvery-cheeked Hornbill

Bycanistes brevis

Frustratingly brief glimpses of this large hornbill at Cholo (Thyolo) Forest.

Barbets Capitonidae

White-eared Barbet

Stactolaema leucotis

Seen at Zomba and Cholo (Thyolo) Forest.

Whyte's Barbet

Stactolaema whytii

A miombo woodland specialist seen on the Vipha plateau and at Dzalanyama.

Moustached Tinkerbird

Pogoniulus leucomystax

One of the most commonly heard birds in the forests of Nyika we did manage decent views of two birds during our time in the forests of NNP.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird

Pogoniulus bilineatus

Seen at our accommodation on the Vipha plateau and again at Zomba.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird

Pogoniulus chrysoconus

Seen in the miombo woodland of Nyika and at Dzalanyama.

Black-collared Barbet

Lybius torquatus

This barbet was found at Dzalanyama, LNP (mostly birds with yellow instead of red faces) and SLNP.

Brown-breasted Barbet

Lybius melanopterus

A highly localised species in Malawi that we found after quite some searching in LNP.

Crested Barbet

Trachyphonus vaillantii

We encountered this colourful barbet at Vwaza Marsh GR and LNP.



Honeyguides Indicatoridae

Green-backed Honeybird

Prodotiscus zambesiae

An unobtrusive and sometimes difficult to locate species that we managed to see well on a few occasions at Dzalanyama.

Pallid Honeyguide

Indicator meliphilus

Very similar to the next species we had great views near Zomba of this honeyguide.

Lesser Honeyguide

Indicator minor

Seen well at Dzalanyama.

Greater Honeyguide

Indicator indicator

A large honeyguide found at Vwaza Marsh GR and LNP.

(H) Scaly-throated Honeyguide

Indicator variegates

A difficult species that was heard only on this trip at Dzalanyama and Zomba.

Woodpeckers Picidae

Bennett's Woodpecker

Campethera bennettii

A pair of these woodpeckers were observed feeding on or close to the ground in SLNP.

Speckle-throated Woodpecker

Campethera scriptoricauda

Another special bird for this tour that was encountered at Dzalanyama and LNP.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker

Campethera abingoni

Heard at several locations until it was finally seen on the last morning in SLNP.

(LO) Green-backed Woodpecker

Campethera cailliautii

Seen by the leader only at Dzalanyama.

Cardinal Woodpecker

Dendropicos fuscescens

Seen on 10 different days in Lilongwe, Vwaza Marsh GR, near Nyika, Dzalanyama, LNP, Zomba and SLNP.

Stierling's Woodpecker (NT)

Dendropicos stierlingi

After much effort and searching, we eventually had superb views of a pair at the nest in Dzalanyama.

(H) Bearded Woodpecker

Dendropicos namaquus

A large woodpecker that was heard only in LNP.

Olive Woodpecker

Dendropicos griseocephalus

A forest species that was seen at our accommodation on the Viphya plateau.

Falcons Falconidae

Dickinson's Kestrel

Falco dickinsoni

Seen on three different days during our stay in LNP.

Red-necked Falcon

Falco chicquera

A single bird was seen briefly in flight in LNP.

Lanner Falcon

Falco biarmicus

Two sightings were had of this species, one at Nyika and the second of a pair at Mt. Mulanje.

Parrots & Allies Psittacidae

Lillian's Lovebird (NT)

Agapornis lilianae

These small parrots spoilt us with cracking views of flocks feeding on the ground in LNP and SLNP with many further sightings of birds in flight and perched at both locations.

Brown-necked Parrot

Poicephalus fuscicollis

We had to wait until very late afternoon for distant in-flight views of a pair of these large parrots in LNP.

Meyer's Parrot

Poicephalus meyeri

These noisy birds were encountered at Vwaza Marsh GR and SLNP.

Brown-headed Parrot

Poicephalus cryptoxanthus

A total of eight birds were seen on one day in LNP.



Wattle-eyes and Batises Platysteiridae**Cape Batis***Batis capensis*

This forest dweller was seen on several occasions in different forest patches on the Nyika plateau and later at Zomba.

Chinspot Batis*Batis molitor*

A woodland species seen at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Pale Batis*Batis soror*

Superb views were had of a pair at Mt. Mulanje.

Black-throated Wattle-eye*Platysteira peltata*

Three birds seen at Makuzi Beach with a sighting later on the tour Zomba.

Helmetsrikes Prionopidae**White-crested Helmetshrike***Prionops plumatus*

We had good views of this species at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Retz's Helmetshrike*Prionops retzii*

Far less common and widespread than the previous species we still managed two good sightings first at Dzalanyama and subsequently in SLNP.

Bushshrikes Malaconotidae**(H) Grey-headed Bushshrike***Malacanotus blanchoti*

This large bushshrike was heard only in Lilongwe and LNP.

Black-fronted Bushshrike*Chlorophoneus nigrifrons*

A striking bushshrike that was seen well in one of the forest patches on the Nyika plateau.

Orange (Sulphur)-breasted Bushshrike*Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus*

Heard at several localities and seen well at Dzalanyama and LNP.

(H) Marsh Tchagra*Bocagia minuta*

Unfortunately, we only managed to hear this species at a wetland on the Vipha plateau.

Brown-crowned Tchagra*Tchagra australis*

Seen at Vwaza Marsh GR and in SLNP.

Black-crowned Tchagra*Tchagra senegalus*

Another species that was heard at a number of sites and seen well at Dzalanyama and in LNP.

Black-backed Puffback*Dryoscopus cubla*

A common sight during this tour, seen on 15 different days.

Fuelleborn's Boubou*Laniarius fuelleborni*

An all dark boubou that skulks in the undergrowth and thick tangle of Nyika's forests we eventually managed great views of a pair near our lodge in NNP.

Tropical Boubou*Laniarius major*

Seen well at Vipha, Dzalanyama, LNP, Zomba and SLNP.

Brubru*Nilaus afer*

This small shrike was encountered in mixed flocks at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama and LNP.

Cuckooshrikes Campephagidae**White-breasted Cuckooshrike***Coracina pectoralis*

Found in mixed flocks at Vwaza Marsh GR and Dzalanyama.

Black Cuckooshrike*Campephaga flava*

Seen near Nkatha Bay, LNP and Zomba.

Shrikes Laniidae**Souza's Shrike***Lanius souzae*

A scarce and difficult species that we had exceptional views of at Dzalanyama.



Northern Fiscal

Lanius humeralis

Seen on 9 different days during the tour.

Figbirds & Orioles Oriolidae

African Golden Oriole

Oriolus auratus

Seen well at Dzalanyama and near Cholo (Thyolo).

Green-headed Oriole

Oriolus chlorocephalus

A stunning bird scoped well in a patch of forest near Cholo (Thyolo).

Black-headed Oriole

Oriolus larvatus

The most regularly encountered oriole on this trip seen on 9 different days including Vwaza marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP, Mt. Mulanje and SLNP.

Drongos Dicruridae

Square-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus ludwigii

Seen only at Zomba on this tour.

Fork-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus adsimilis

A common species encountered throughout the tour on 14 different days.

Monarchs Monarchidae

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher

Trochocercus cyanomelas

A single bird was seen in lowland forest near Nkatha Bay.

African Paradise Flycatcher

Terpsiphone viridis

Seen en route to Nyika, at Viphya, Dzalanyama, LNP and Zomba.

Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae

Pied Crow

Corvus albus

Seen on 16 days.

White-necked Raven

Corvus albicollis

A common sight on 9 different days mostly at Nyika and the Zomba region.

Fairy Flycatchers Stenostiridae

White-tailed Blue Flycatcher

Elminia albicauda

Found at the entrance to NNP and Dzalanyama.

White-tailed Crested Flycatcher

Elminia albonotata

A good find in forests on the Nyika plateau and at Zomba.

Chickadees & Tits Paridae

Southern Black Tit

Melaniparus niger

Seen at Vwaza Marsh GR and LNP.

Rufous-bellied Tit

Melaniparus rufiventris

A busy species found in mixed flocks at Vwaza Marsh GR and Dzalanyama.

Miombo Tit

Melaniparus griseiventris

Seen at the same locations as the previous species.

Penduline Tits Remizidae

Grey (African) Penduline Tit

Anthoscopus caroli

These tiny birds were found at Vwaza Marsh GR and Dzalanyama.



Nicator Nicatoridae**(H) Eastern Nicator***Nicator gularis*

Unfortunately, this species was heard only in the lowland forests of Makuzi Beach and Nkatha Bay.

Larks Alaudidae**Fischer's Sparrow-Lark***Eremopterix leucopareia*

We had brief but decent views of a pair perched briefly on the ground in agricultural fields en route to Lilongwe from Dzalanyama.

Rufous-naped Lark*Mirafra africana*

A large lark seen in the open grasslands of the Nyika Plateau.

Flappet Lark*Mirafra rufocinnamomea*

Seen at Kazungu wetland and in LNP.

Red-capped Lark*Calandrella cinerea*

We found two birds in agricultural fields en route from Dzalanyama to Lilongwe.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae**Dark-capped (Common) Bulbul***Pycnonotus tricolour*

One of the most common species seen on the tour on 18 days.

Note: Clements lumps this bird with Common, Somali and Dodson's Bulbul as Common Bulbul P. barbatus

Olive-headed Greenbul*Arizelocichla olivaceiceps*

A special of the forests at Zomba.

Black-browed Greenbul*Arizelocichla fusciceps*

Seen at Nyika and around our accommodation on the Viphya Plateau.

Little Greenbul*Eurillas virens*

A noisy inhabitant of the forests near Nkatha Bay and Zomba.

Sombre Greenbul*Andropadus importunus*

Only found at LNP on this tour.

Yellow-bellied Greenbul*Chlorocichla flaviventris*

Seen at the Lilongwe sanctuary, LNP and SLNP.

Grey-olive Greenbul*Phyllastrephus cerviniventris*

Found in the forests near Nkatha Bay, Nyika, Dzalanyama and Zomba.

Placid Greenbul*Phyllastrephus placidus*

Noisy and common in the forests at Zomba and Cholo (Thyolo).

Yellow-streaked Greenbul*Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*

A localised species in Malawi that we found at a patch of forest near Cholo (Thyolo).

Sharpe's Greenbul*Phyllastrephus alfredi*

A recent split from the previous species that was found on a number of occasions in the forests of the NNP.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae**Black Saw-wing***Psalidoprocne pristoptera*

Large numbers were present at Makuzi Beach with further views of birds at NNP, Viphya Plateau, Dzalanyama and Zomba.

Grey-rumped Swallow*Pseudhirundo griseopyga*

A regular sight on this tour over 11 different days with regular sightings on the Nyika plateau, Dzalanyama and SLNP.

Brown-throated (Plain) Martin*Riparia paludicola*

Interestingly we only saw this martin in SLNP on this tour.

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica*

Surprisingly only seen on one day at NNP and later at LNP and Zomba.

Angolan Swallow*Hirundo angolensis*

Very similar to the previous species it was encountered in NNP.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

The most regularly seen hirundine on this trip, seen on 13 different days.

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Seen in the Zomba region and SLNP.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

A singleton was found amongst a mixed flock of swifts and swallows in SLNP.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica*

Seen regularly around Lake Malawi, Dzalanyama and SLNP.

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis*

A large swallow that was surprisingly only seen once in LNP.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Six of these swallows were present at our lodge on the Viphya plateau.

Crombecs & African Warblers Macrosphenidae

Moustached Grass Warbler *Melocichla mentalis*

Two of these large warblers were seen by some on our way into the lodge on the Viphya plateau.

Long-billed (Cape) Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens*

This strange almost tailless bird was encountered in the Lilongwe sanctuary, LNP and SLNP.

Red-capped Crombec *Sylvietta ruficapilla*

A miombo specialist seen well in Vwaza Marsh GR and at Dzalanyama.

Yellow Flycatcher Erythroceridae

Livingstone's Flycatcher *Erythrocerues livingstonei*

A bright and restless flycatcher seen well in LNP.

Leaf Warblers & Allies Phylloscopidae

Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus ruficapilla*

Two of these warblers were seen at Zomba.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

A Palearctic migrant seen at Dzalanyama.

Reed Warblers & Allies Acrocephalidae

Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*

Seen in reedbeds along the Shie River in SLNP.

African Yellow Warbler *Iduna natalensis*

A pair of these warblers was seen on our morning walk at our lodge on the Viphya plateau.

Mountain Willow Warbler *Iduna similis*

After quite a bit of searching, we found a pair near the lodge on the Nyika plateau.

Grassbirds & Allies Megaluridae

Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*

Seen at the wetland near our lodge on the Viphya plateau.

Cinnamon Bracken Warbler *Bradypterus cinnamomeus*

We eventually had good views of a bird in a patch of forest on the Nyika plateau.

Evergreen Forest Warbler *Bradypterus lopezi*

After brief views in different forests on the Nyika plateau and Zomba, we finally had great views of three birds together near Zomba.



Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae**(H) Red-faced Cisticola***Cisticola erythropus*

Surprisingly this noisy cisticola was heard only at NNP and Dzalanyama.

Trilling Cisticola*Cisticola woosnami*

We enjoyed fantastic views of a bird on the Vipha plateau.

Black-lored Cisticola*Cisticola nigriloris*

This cisticola with its 'rusty gate' call was seen exceptionally well on the Nyika plateau.

Lazy Cisticola*Cisticola aberrans*

This species was a bit of a bonus find during our time in the Zomba area.

Rattling Cisticola*Cisticola chinianus*

A large cisticola seen at the Kasungu wetland, LNP and SLNP.

Churring Cisticola*Cisticola njombe*

Seen well on several occasions in NNP.

Wailing Cisticola*Cisticola lais*

Usually very common we had only one sighting of this grassland species in NNP.

Neddicky (Piping Cisticola)*Cisticola fulvicapilla*

Seen on two occasions at Dzalanyama.

Zitting Cisticola*Cisticola juncidis*

A rather strange occurrence that we only saw this species once near the Kasungu wetland.

Wing-snapping Cisticola*Cisticola ayresii*

The common small cisticola of the grasslands at Nyika.

Tawny-flanked Prinia*Prinia subflava*

A noisy species encountered often at Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Red-winged Warbler*Heliolais erythropterus*

Unfortunately, this species was only seen briefly by some participants at Dzalanyama.

Bar-throated Apalis*Apalis thoracica*

Vocal and regularly seen in the forests of Nyika and the Vipha plateau.

Yellow-throated Apalis*Apalis flavigularis*

We had superb views of this species, Malawi's only country endemic, at Zomba.

Yellow-breasted Apalis*Apalis flavida*

Seen at Lilongwe, Nkatha Bay, Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

White-winged Apalis*Apalis charriesa*

This striking apalis was seen well at Zomba.

Black-headed Apalis*Apalis melanocephala*

Another apalis that we managed to track down in the forest at Zomba.

Chapin's Apalis*Apalis chapini*

Good views of this species were had in NNP and the Vipha plateau.

Brown-headed Apalis*Apalis alticola*

A vocal apalis found in a patch of forest on the Zambian side of NNP.

Green-backed Camaroptera*Camaroptera brachyura*

Heard in Nkatha Bay and seen at Zomba.

Grey-backed Camaroptera*Camaroptera brevicaudata*

Seen in Lilongwe and SLNP.

Stierling's Wren-Warbler*Calamonastes stierlingi*

Encountered at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama and LNP.

Yellow-bellied Eremomela*Eremomela icteropygialis*

These small warblers were seen only in LNP.

Green-capped Eremomela*Eremomela scotops*

Groups of these birds were seen at Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.



Laughingthrushes Timaliidae**Arrow-marked Babbler***Turdoides jardineii*

Seen in Lilongwe, near Nkatha Bay, Dzalanyama and SLNP.

Old World Babblers Sylviidae**Brown Parisoma***Sylvia lugens*

A single bird was found in a stand of *Acacia abyssinica* on the Nyika plateau.

White-eyes Zosteropidae**African Yellow White-eye***Zosterops senegalensis*

Encountered on 11 different days from Lilongwe to Zomba.

Hyliotas Hylotiidae**Yellow-bellied Hyliota***Hyliota flavigaster*

A mixed flock species seen on a few occasions at Dzalanyama.

Southern Hyliota*Hyliota australis*

Same as the previous species.

Treecreepers Certhiidae**African Spotted Creeper***Salpornis salvadori*

A singleton was seen during our stay at Dzalanyama.

Starlings Sturnidae**Wattled Starling***Creatophora cinerea*

Seen on a single day in LNP.

Greater Blue-eared Starling*Laprotornis chalybaeus*

A brilliantly glossy blue and green starling seen in LNP and SLNP.

Miombo Blue-eared Starling*Lamprotornis Elisabeth*

A miombo specialist seen at Vwaza Marsh GR, Viphya and Dzalanyama.

Meves's Starling*Lamprotornis mevesii*

The common glossy starling seen in Lilongwe, LNP and SLNP.

Violet-backed Starling*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

Seen at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and Mulanje.

Red-winged Starling*Onychognathus morio*

A small flock was seen in flight in NNP.

Waller's Starling*Onychognathus walleri*

Three birds seen in one of the forests in NNP.

Oxpeckers Buphagidae**Yellow-billed Oxpecker***Buphagus africanus*

Seen in association with larger game species in SLNP.

Red-billed Oxpecker*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*

Found in LNP and SLNP. At the latter location with the previous species.

Thrushes & Allies Turdidae**Kurrichane Thrush***Turdus libonya*

Seen at Lilongwe, Nkatha Bay, Vwaza Marsh GR, LNP, Dzalanyama and Zomba.

Abyssinian Thrush*Turdus abyssinicus*

Single bird of the *nyikae* subspecies seen in a forest in NNP.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

Grey Tit-Flycatcher

Myioparus plumbeus

This busy flycatcher was seen at Dzalanyama.

White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher

Melaenornis fischeri

Encountered at NNP.

Southern Black Flycatcher

Melaenornis pammelaina

Seen at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama and LNP.

Pale Flycatcher

Melaenornis pallidus

A woodland species that was found in the miombo belt at lower elevation in NNP.

Ashy Flycatcher

Muscicapa caerulescens

Seen at Makuzi Beach, Vipha plateau, Dzalanyama, LNP, Zomba and SLNP.

African Dusky Flycatcher

Muscicapa adusta

A tiny flycatcher we found at the entrance to Nyika, Dzalanyama and Zomba.

Boehm's Flycatcher

Muscicapa boehmi

What a lovely bird that we managed to see on a few occasions at Vwaza Marsh GR and Dzalanyama.

White-chested Alethe

Pseudalethe fuelleborni

We were treated to brief but great views of a singleton in NNP.

Thyolo Alethe

Pseudalethe choloensis

After much effort, we managed to get all participants to see this rare bird exceptionally well at Zomba.

Bearded Scrub Robin

Cercotrichas quadrivirgata

Ever present in camp at LNP.

Miombo Scrub Robin

Cercitrichas barbata

Replaces the previous species in miombo habitat at sites such as Vwaza Marsh GR where we had a good sighting.

White-browed (Red-backed) Scrub Robin

Cercotrichas leucophrys

Seen on the Vipha plateau and at Dzalanyama.

Olive-flanked Ground Robin

Cossypha anomala

Unfortunately only seen by some in NNP.

Cape Robin-Chat

Cossypha caffra

Seen well at Nyika and Zomba.

White-browed Robin-Chat

Cossypha heuglini

We found this species in Lilongwe, at our lodge on the Vipha plateau, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Red-capped Robin-Chat

Cossypha natalensis

Restricted to the lowland forests such as Nkatha Bay and Makuzi Beach where we encountered this species on day 1.

White-starred Robin

Pogonocichla stellata

A stunning small forest robin seen exceptionally well at Nyika, Vipha and Zomba.

Sharpe's Akalat

Sheppardia sharpie

A single bird was seen, not by all, in a forest on the Zambian side of NNP.

East Coast Akalat

Sheppardia gunning

After much hard work, we finally had great views of this shy bird near Nkatha Bay.

Collared Palm Thrush

Cichladusa arquata

Seen at LNP and SLNP.

Miombo Rock Thrush

Monticola angolensis

After missing this special in the morning we finally tracked down a co-operative pair one afternoon at Dzalanyama.

Arnott's Chat

Myrmecocichla arnotti

A broad-leaved woodland and miombo specialist seen in Vwaza Marsh GR and LNP.



Mocking Cliff Chat*Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris*

A pair of these chats was found at Dzalanyama during our search for Boulder Chat.

[African] Stonechat*Saxicola torquatus*

Seen mostly in NNP but also at Dzalanyama, LNP and Zomba.

Note: Clement's calls this species Stonechat and lumps it with Eurasian and Siberian Stonechats.

Familiar Chat*Oenanthe familiaris*

This active chat was found at the entrance to Nyika and at Dzalanyama.

Boulder Chat*Pinarornis plumosus*

It took quite a bit of searching and hard work but we eventually managed to find one of these much sought-after birds at Dzalanyama.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae**Anchieta's Sunbird***Anthreptes anchietae*

Another major target for the tour which was seen well at Dzalanyama!

Western Violet-backed Sunbird*Anthreptes longuemarei*

Preferring miombo woodland, we did well to locate this species on two separate days at Dzalanyama.

Collared Sunbird*Hedydipna collaris*

A small colourful sunbird seen at Lilongwe, Makuzi Beach, LNP, Zomba and SLNP.

Olive Sunbird*Cyanomitra olivacea*

A noisy inhabitant of the forests near Nkatha Bay, Makuzi Beach, Nyika and Zomba.

Amethyst Sunbird*Chalcomitra amethystina*

A large dark sunbird seen well at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and Mulanje.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird*Chalcomitra senegalensis*

Encountered at Lilongwe and LNP.

Bronzy Sunbird*Nectarinia kilimensis*

This high altitude species was seen well at our accommodation on the Viphya plateau.

Malachite Sunbird*Nectarinia famosa*

Seen feeding on *Protea* on hillsides on the Nyika plateau.

Scarlet-tufted Sunbird*Nectarinia johnstoni*

This ultra localised and special sunbird was seen exceptionally well on one of the *Protea* covered hillsides on the Nyika plateau.

Miombo Double-collared Sunbird*Cinnyris manoensis*

Fairly commonly seen during our time at Dzalanyama.

Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird*Cinnyris ludovicensis*

This double-collared sunbird was found at higher elevation in NNP.

Forest Double-collared Sunbird*Cinnyris fuelleborni*

Seen in association with the previous species at Nyika with the best views coming later in the trip at Zomba.

Purple-banded Sunbird*Cinnyris bifasciatus*

This lowland forest sunbird was seen near Nkatha Bay and at Makuzi Beach.

White-bellied (breasted) Sunbird*Cinnyris talatala*

Seen in LNP.

Variable Sunbird*Cinnyris venustus*

Seen at Viphya, Dzalanyama and SLNP.

Old World Sparrows Passeridae**White-browed Sparrow-Weaver***Plocepasser mahali*

Amazingly abundant in LNP and seen at the end of the trip in SLNP as well.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver*Plocepasser rufoscapulatus*

Found only at Vwaza Marsh on our particular route we were delighted to have good views of three birds just outside the reserve.

House Sparrow (I)*Passer domesticus*

An introduced species seen in urban areas mostly.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*

Larger than the next species we found birds in LNP and Mulanje.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffuses*

Common in LNP, Dzalanyama and SLNP.

Yellow-throated Petronia *Gymnoris superciliaris*

Often associated with mixed flocks we found this species at Vwaza Marsh GR, Dzalanyama, LNP and Mulanje.

Weavers & Allies Ploceidae

Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis niger*

One of a few species seen only during the extension to SLNP.

Thick-billed (Grosbeak) Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*

A single male was found one day at Dzalanyama.

Baglafaecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafaecht*

Seen near our accommodation on the Nyika plateau.

Bertram's Weaver *Ploceus bertrandi*

A fantastic find of three birds at our lodge on the Viphya plateau!

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*

Seen in Lilongwe, Viphya plateau, LNP, Zomba and SLNP.

Eastern Golden Weaver *Ploceus subaureus*

A small colony of these birds was present at Makuzi Beach.

Holub's Golden Weaver *Ploceus xanthops*

A large all yellow weaver seen at our lodge on the Viphya plateau and at Dzalanyama.

Southern Brown-throated Weaver *Ploceus xanthopterus*

These weavers were present along the Shire River in LNP.

Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius*

As for the previous species they were found in LNP.

Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*

Seen at Lilongwe Sanctuary and SLNP.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*

A larger version of the previous species seen at Lilongwe, Viphya plateau, Dzalanyama and SLNP.

Dark-backed Weaver *Ploceus bicolour*

Seen well at Zomba.

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*

A dry woodland species seen at Vwaza Marsh GR, Viphya plateau, Dzalanyama and LNP.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*

This species was only seen in SLNP on this trip.

Black-winged Red Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus*

Seen at Dzalanyama in non-breeding plumage.

Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*

A usually common and widespread species that we only found en route to Nyika and in SLNP.

Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis*

Good views at Nyika and Dzalanyama to Lilongwe were had of this bishop.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura*

This species was seen en route from Dzalanyama to Lilongwe.

White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus*

Seen by some of the participants in LNP.

Montane Widowbird *Euplectes psammocromius*

A rather localised special that we had good views of on the Nyika plateau.



Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae**Orange-winged Pytilia***Pytilia afra*

Scarcer than the next species but still seen well at Dzalanyama.

Green-winged Pytilia*Pytilia melba*

Found only in SLNP on this tour.

Cut-throat Finch*Amadina fasciata*

Three of these lovely finches were seen in LNP.

Red-faced Crimsonwing*Cryptospiza reichenovii*

A real highlight was seeing these beautiful finches on a few occasions at Zomba. Our last morning there produced a great sighting of three birds including a perched male!

Lesser Seedcracker*Pyrenestes minor*

Absolutely one of the top highlights of the tour was seeing this bird! We had good views of a single bird at the edge of moist grassland at Dzalanyama.

Red-throated Twinspot*Hypargos niveoguttatus*

A stunning finch glimpsed often on this tour at Lilongwe Sanctuary, Vipha, Vwaza Marsh and much better views at Zomba and SLNP.

Red-billed Firefinch*Lagonostica senegala*

First seen at our lodge on the Vipha plateau with many more sightings in LNP and SLNP.

African Firefinch*Lagonostica rubricata*

Seen at Dzalanyama.

Jameson's Firefinch*Lagonosticta rhodopareia*

A scarce firefinch seen during our stay in SLNP.

Blue Waxbill*Uraeginthus angolensis*

Seen at Vwaza Marsh GR, Vipha plateau, Dzalanyama, LNP and SLNP.

Yellow-bellied Waxbill*Coccyzygia quartinia*

These lovely little waxbills were observed near the entrance to Nyika, in NNP, Vipha and Zomba.

Common Waxbill*Estrilda astrild*

Seen in Nyika and the Vipha plateaus.

Bronze Mannikin*Lonchura cucullata*

First observed at Makuzi Beach with subsequent sightings at Dzalanyama, LNP and Zomba.

Note: Clements places this bird in the genus Spermeres

Red-backed (Black & White) Mannikin*Lonchura nigriceps*

A few were present at Makuzi Beach, Vipha plateau, Dzalanyama and Zomba.

Note: Clements places this bird in the genus Spermeres

Indigobirds & Whydahs Viduidae**Village Indigobird***Vidua chalybeate*

Seen in SLNP.

Pin-tailed Whydah*Vidua macroura*

Seen in LNP and SLNP.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**Mountain Wagtail***Motacilla clara*

Found in the Zomba area.

African Pied Wagtail*Motacilla aguimp*

A regular sight from Lilongwe through to SLNP on 14 different days.

Yellow-throated Longclaw*Macronyx croceus*

First observed on the Vipha plateau and again at Dzalanyama in moist grassland.

African Pipit*Anthus cinnamomeus*

Common on the Nyika plateau and seen near Kasungu.



Wood Pipit*Antheus nyassae*

A good find at Dzalanyama and Vwaza Marsh GR.

Striped Pipit*Antheus lineiventris*

We managed to find this pipit on two occasions at Dzalanyama.

Finches Fringillidae**Southern Citril***Crithagra hyposticta*

First seen on the Viphya plateau then at Dzalanyama and the Zomba region.

Yellow-fronted Canary*Crithagra mozambica*

The most regularly encountered canary seen on 13 different days.

*Note: Clements places this bird in the genus Serinus.***Brimstone Canary***Crithagra sulphurata*

Seen often during the first half of the tour including Lilongwe, Nyika and Dzalanyama.

Reichard's Seedeater*Crithagra reichardi*

Seen on the Viphya plateau and Dzalanyama.

Black-eared Seedeater*Crithagra mennelli*

Seen on several occasions at Dzalanyama.

Yellow-browed Seedeater*Crithagra whytii*

Quite a pretty seedeater this special was seen well in NNP.

Yellow-crowned Canary*Serinus flavivertex*

Another species seen quite often and in decent numbers in NNP.

Buntings Emberizidae**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting***Emberiza tahapisi*

This bunting was seen at Vwaza Marsh GR and Mulanje.

Golden-breasted Bunting*Emberiza flaviventris*

A woodland species encountered often at Dzalanyama.

Cabanis's Bunting*Emberiza cabanisi*

This striking bunting was seen on two separate occasions at Dzalanyama.

MAMMAL SPECIES LIST (42 species)*Note: Names and taxonomical order of the land mammals follow that of 'The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals'; additional names are given in parenthesis and are likely to appear in other popular field guides.***Cats Felidae****Serval***Leptailurus serval*

This stunning small cat was seen well on a night drive in LNP.

Lion*Panthera leo*

Spoilt with great sightings of this charismatic cat in SLNP.

Leopard*Panthera pardus*

Our first sighting was of a large male in NNP before having two more sightings of these special cats in SLNP toward the end of the trip.

Mongoose Herpestidae**Marsh Mongoose***Atilax paludinosus*

A not often seen species that we were fortunate enough to see well during our first night drive in LNP.

White-tailed Mongoose*Ichneumia albicauda*

This large nocturnal mongoose was found during our night drives in LNP and SLNP.

Slender Mongoose*Herpestes sanguineus*

A solitary and diurnal mongoose species glimpsed in LNP.

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo*

These social creatures were found on a few occasions during our time in SLNP n Zambia.

Meller's Mongoose *Rhynchogale melleri*

This unusual, poorly known and rare mongoose was a highlight on our two night drives in LNP.

Hyaenas Hyaenidae

Spotted Hyaena *Crocota crocuta*

Two sightings of these amazing animals were had in LNP and SLNP.

Weasels, Skunks, Otters Mustelidae

Honey Badger *Mellivora capensis*

Much to the delight of the guests, we managed to find this interesting and characterful animal on two different occasions in SLNP.

Civets, Genets Viverridae

African Civet *Civettictis civetta*

Both night drives in LNP produced sightings of this nocturnal species.

Large-spotted (Blotched) Genet *Genetta maculata*

We had several great views of this nocturnal cat in LNP and SLNP.

Bovids & Horned Ungulates Bovidae

Impala *Aepyceros melampus*

A common antelope seen in LNP and on the extension in SLNP.

Roan *Hippotragus equines*

These graceful large antelope were a fairly common sight on every day during our time at NNP.

Sable *Hippotragus niger*

A stunning large black and white antelope seen on two different days in LNP.

African Buffalo *Syncerus caffer*

A single herd was seen in LNP with several further sightings in SLNP in Zambia.

Common Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*

Seen well in LNP and later again in SLNP in Zambia.

Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus*

Several fantastic sightings of this rocky outcrop dweller were had in NNP.

Common Eland *Taurotragus oryx*

These large antelope were seen well in NNP.

Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*

A beautiful animal seen in LNP and SLNP.

Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus*

We found this shy antelope in NNP, LNP and SLNP.

Southern Reedbuck *Redunca arundinum*

Seen in very good numbers in NNP with a single sighting coming later in LNP of two animals.

Blue Duiker *Cephalophus monticola*

This tiny antelope was glimpsed briefly in a forest in NNP.

Common (Grey) Duiker *Sylvicapra grimmia*

Seen on all our days in NNP and later again in Dzalanyama and LNP.

Puku *Kobus vardonii*

Numerous on the floodplains of SLNP.



Giraffes Giraffidae**Giraffe***Giraffa camelopardalis*

We had the privilege of many close-up sightings of ‘Thornicroft’s’ Giraffe in SLNP. This *tippelskirchi* subspecies is entirely restricted to the Luangwa Valley in Zambia.

Hippopotamuses Hippopotamidae**Hippopotamus***Hippopotamus amphibius*

Always a special sight, we had numerous sightings on the Shire River in LNP and later along the Luangwa River in SLNP.

Pigs Suidae**Common Warthog***Phacochoerus africanus*

These interesting pigs were a common sight in NNP, LNP and later in SLNP in Zambia.

Bushpig*Potamochoerus larvatus*

These usually shy and difficult to see pigs were seen well in Dzalanyama and later in LNP.

Old World Fruit Bats Pteropodidae**Epauletted Fruit-Bat sp.***Epomophorus sp.*

We found a group of day roosting fruit bats at our accommodation in Lilongwe. Unfortunately, field markers are not sufficient to discern between Wahlberg’s and Petter’s Epauletted Fruit Bats.

Hyraxes Procaviidae**Southern Tree Hyrax***Dendrohyrax arboreus*

A scarce and localised species seen during our time in NNP.

Hares & Rabbits Leporidae**Scrub Hare***Lepus saxatilis*

Seen on numerous night drives in NNP, LNP and SLNP.

Elephant Shrews (Sengis) Macroscelididae**Four-toed Sengi***Petrodromus tetradactylus*

These hyper-energised rodents are usually incredibly difficult to find and then see well yet we were treated to two fantastic sightings on our night drives in LNP.

Zebras Equidae**Common (Burchell's/Plains) Zebra***Equus quagga*

The *crawshayi* subspecies was seen well in Nyika, LNP and SLNP.

Old World Monkeys Cercopithecidae**Yellow Baboon***Papio cynocephalus*

Although varying in size and intensity of yellow colouration all the baboons seen on this tour were of this species which were seen well in NNP, LNP, Zomba and SLNP.

Vervet Monkey*Cercopithecus aethiops*

Seen mostly in LNP and SLNP with other sightings coming in Lilongwe and near Zomba.

Blue Monkey*Cercopithecus mitis*

Our first sighting was surprising a large group feeding on the ground in grassland on the edge of the forest in NNP with subsequent sightings of these large and striking monkeys in Zomba.



Galagos Galagidae**Thick-tailed Greater Galago***Galago crassicaudatus*

A large species of galago seen well at LNP.

Elephants Elephantidae**African Elephant***Loxodonta africana*

These majestic animals were seen in LNP where we had a particularly special encounter on foot with two breeding herds with many more sightings in SLNP toward the end of the trip.

Old World Porcupines Hystricidae**Cape Porcupine***Hystrix africaeaustralis*

These strange rodents were a great treat on both night drives in LNP with as many as six individuals seen on the second night alone!

Squirrels Sciuridae**Smith's Bush Squirrel***Paraxerus cepapi*

Common in LNP and SLNP.

Black-and-Red Bush Squirrel (Tanganyika Mountain Squirrel) *Paraxerus Lucifer*

This rare and range restricted squirrel was found in two forests on the Nyika Plateau in NNP.

REPTILE and AMPHIBIAN SPECIES LIST (7 species)**Nile Crocodile***Crocodylus niloticus*

Seen in LNP and SLNP.

House Gecko*Hemidactylus mabouia*

Seen on the Viphya plateau and SLNP.

Nile Monitor*Varanus niloticus*

Seen at a wetland on the Viphya plateau.

Variable Skink*Trachylepis varia*

Seen in NNP.

Striped Skink*Trachylepis striata*

Seen in Lilongwe, NNP, Viphya, LNP and SLNP.

Leopard Gecko sp.

Seen in LNP.

Serrated Hinged Terrapin*Pelusios sinuatus*

Seen at scattered waterbodies on the tour.

Rockjumper Birding Ltd**Labourdonnais Village****Mapou****Mauritius****Tel (USA & Canada) toll-free: [1-888-990-5552](tel:1-888-990-5552)**

Email: info@rockjumperbirding.com
Alternative email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com
Website: www.rockjumperbirding.com

