

# Botswana's Desert & Delta (Mammals)

Naturetrek Tour Report

2nd –11th October 2023



Hyena



Leopard



Wildebeest



Lions

Report and images kindly compiled by Julie Evans



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Tour participants: Partner Kadisa and Nelson Ndambo (Leaders) with 12 Naturetrek clients, plus local guides and the camp team

## Day 1

**Monday 2nd October**

In flight to from Heathrow to Botswana, via Johannesburg

## Day 2

**Tuesday 3rd October**

Ten Naturetrek clients arrived at Maun airport in the middle of the day, after a full day travelling via Johannesburg to meet with our guides Partner and Nelson from African Big 5 Safaris. Two of the group got delayed in the chaos of Johannesburg airport would join us the following day.

We loaded our luggage into two open sided vehicles, chose our seats and set off headed for our camp site in the Khwai concession. We drove for about an hour on tarmac and then the African bush massage began as we bounced along for another three hours on uneven roads. About 30 minutes from camp, we were given a choice - did we want to go to camp or to check out what was happening in the park? We were tired, very hot, uncomfortable.....of course we chose the park! And we were rewarded by sightings of Elephants, Giraffe, Lions, a Steenbok, hornbills and a Green Wood Hoopoe. A fantastic start to the holiday!

We arrived at camp at around six and were provided with hot water for a shower. Bathrooms open to the sky were a new thing to most of us, but it quickly became the norm. The ladies even got used to balancing on toilet seats that were super heated from the sun!! Dinner - butternut soup and lamb stew - was a great example of the amazing food we would eat for the rest of the week, all of it cooked over a fire. Everyone was in bed before nine, and we fell asleep to the sound of the frogs in the river and a few louder sounds from passing hyenas.

## Day 3

**Wednesday 4th October**

An early morning wake up was accompanied by a bowl of hot water for a quick freshen up before breakfast, and then it was into the vehicles and out into the wild! This was the best time of the day for wildlife (and for us) before the temperature climbed too high. Highlights of the morning were Lions, a Honey Badger scurrying along trying to avoid us and a pack of five Wild Dogs. We returned to camp late morning and sat in the shade until lunch time, when we were distracted by Elephants just across the river.

It didn't seem long until more food was served - high tea at 3.30 - before our afternoon drive. This would be the timetable every day - safari drives punctuated by eating!

The definite star of this afternoon's drive was a young male Leopard, very relaxed and posing for photos. Back at camp the last two members of our group had arrived ready to join us for good food and more wildlife sightings.

## Day 4

**Thursday 5th October**

This morning nine of the group had booked a Mokoro trip so we had a later wake up call at 7am. A Mokoro is a long canoe used for fishing and as transport along the waterways of the Okavango delta. After the bumpy journeys of the last two days it was a welcome relief to travel slowly and smoothly up the river! We had good close up sightings of Elephants and Hippos, and after a stop for coffee we were treated to some wonderful singing by the



Mokoro polers. Those who didn't choose the Mokoro had another great morning drive, watching Wild Dogs and a Leopard.

Another sighting this afternoon of a Leopard and the Wild Dogs completed the last day at our camp site by the river.

## Day 5

## Friday 6th October

Moving day, and we were treated to a full English breakfast to prepare us for a full day in the vehicles! We set out around 7am and headed for Moremi Game Reserve. Not long after entering the reserve we met a Lioness and two cubs walking down the road towards us. A good start to a morning that also had views of Sable Antelope, Wild Dogs and Red Lechwe. We stopped for lunch expecting a sandwich, but tables were laid and we were fed a full meal of minced meat, lentils, rice and salad! We set off again at 1.30 and drove for three hours to reach our new camp in a clearing amongst some trees, where hot water was waiting for us. It was noticeably hotter today and the high temperature, probably reaching 40 or even a bit higher continued for the rest of the week.

Dinner tonight was interrupted by marauding Honey Badgers, trying to get access to the food tent! They were never going to succeed with Partner in charge!

## Day 6

## Saturday 7th October

This morning's drive started with a Hippo wallowing in the mud and a pair of Reed Bucks hiding in the reeds. As we had spent all of yesterday travelling, we had a shorter drive and were back in camp by 10am. After struggling through the heat of the afternoon it was a relief to get back in a moving vehicle to feel a breeze, and we headed for some pools to watch the Hippos and water birds. We spotted spoonbills, storks, egrets, Wattled Cranes and a Goliath Heron as well as many Hippos.

## Day 7

## Sunday 8th October

This morning's plan was to find a Cheetah, but it wasn't to be. But we did see Black-backed Jackals, Lions and Tsessebe along with Zebra, Giraffe and Elephants. We also saw a Martial Eagle, a Kori Bustard and many other birds.

This afternoon's drive saw one of the big highlights of the holiday. At first we saw a young female Leopard under a tree. She moved in front of us with purpose towards a second Leopard, a male, and they began mating. We watched them for about an hour, mating and resting, with the male taking a break to unsuccessfully stalk an Impala. Hopefully her cubs will be born in January!

## Day 8

## Monday 9th November

Another Cheetah hunt this morning in a different part of the reserve. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful again, but we did see Hyena, Baboons and Ostrich and had some great views of a Crested Barbet during our coffee break.

After chasing off a monkey that was stealing the bread rolls from the lunch table, we rested through the hot afternoon and set out again at 4pm. We saw Steenbok, Kudu, Warthogs, Giraffe, Zebra, Hippos, and a long procession of Wildebeest moving through the reserve. We returned to camp for a final dinner which was a traditional Botswana feast, preceded by singing and dancing with the whole camp team.

## Day 9

Tuesday 10th November

All that was left was a full English breakfast and the journey to Maun for our return flight, but the wildlife sightings weren't over yet. We saw a pride of about 16 Lions resting in the shade just outside Moremi Reserve, and to finish off we spotted a Leopard Tortoise crossing the road. We arrived at the airport in plenty of time for our journey home.

Thank you to Partner and Nelson for an amazing week of expert guiding and for their interesting stories and great company. Thanks also to the camp team - to B for her excellent cooking; to Esther for looking after us and managing the dining tent; to T and Octopus for bringing hot water when we needed it and to the three other team members for keeping everything running smoothly. It was a holiday that I think all 12 of us will remember for a very long time.



Delta scenic & Leopards mating

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## Species lists

Mammals (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	October 2023							
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
African Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Serval	<i>Leptailurus serval</i>						✓		
Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Spotted Hyaena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>		✓					✓	
Common Dwarf Mongoose	<i>Helogale parvula</i>					✓		✓	
Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>		✓					✓	
Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Black-backed Jackal	<i>Lupulella mesomelas</i>			✓			✓		
African Wild Dog	<i>Lycaon pictus</i>		✓	✓	✓				
Honey Badger	<i>Mellivora capensis</i>		✓		✓	✓		✓	
Plains Zebra	<i>Equus quagga burchelli</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Southern Giraffe	<i>Giraffa giraffa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Wildebeest	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Roan Antelope	<i>Hippotragus equinus</i>				✓				
Sable Antelope	<i>Hippotragus niger</i>			✓	✓				
Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>		✓		✓	✓			
Southern Lechwe	<i>Kobus leche</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Steenbok	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Southern Reedbuck	<i>Redunca arundinum</i>					✓			
African Buffalo	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>		✓	✓			✓		
Greater Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Tsessebe	<i>Damaliscus lunatus</i>					✓	✓		
Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Vervet Monkey	<i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i>		✓		✓			✓	
Chacma Baboon	<i>Papio ursinus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cape Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>			✓					
Smith's Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus cepapi</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Birds

Common name	Scientific name
Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>
Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
Helmeted Guinea fowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
Crested Francolin	<i>Ortygornis sephaena</i>



Common name	Scientific name
Red-billed Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis adspersus</i>
Swainson's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis swainsonii</i>
African Black Swift	<i>Apus barbatus</i>
Grey Go-away-bird	<i>Crinifer concolor</i>
Kori Bustard	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>
Red-crested Korhaan	<i>Lophotis ruficrista</i>
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
Copperty-tailed Coucal	<i>Centropus cupreicaudus</i>
Black Coucal	<i>Centropus grillii</i>
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>
Double-banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
Wattled Crane	<i>Grus carunculata</i>
Common Buttonquail	<i>Turnix sylvaticus</i>
Water Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
Spotted Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Long-toed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus crassirostris</i>
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Temminck's Courser	<i>Cursorius temminckii</i>
Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>
African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>
Saddle-billed Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>
Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>
African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
Reed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>
African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Rufous-bellied Heron	<i>Ardeola rufiventris</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Black Heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>
Slaty Egret	<i>Egretta vinaceigula</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
White-headed Vulture	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>
Lappet-faced Vulture	<i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>
Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>
African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
Pearl-spotted Owllet	<i>Glaucidium perlatus</i>
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>
African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>
Green Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
Southern Ground Hornbill	<i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>
Southern Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus rufirostris</i>
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus leucomelas</i>
Bradfield's Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros bradfieldi</i>
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>
Purple Roller	<i>Coracias naevius</i>
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>
Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>
Southern Carmine Bee-eater	<i>Merops nubicoides</i>
Black-collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>
Crested Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>
Bennett's Woodpecker	<i>Campethera bennettii</i>
Bearded Woodpecker	<i>Chloropicus namaquus</i>
Red-necked Falcon	<i>Falco chicquera</i>
Meyer's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>
Black-backed Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>

Common name	Scientific name
White-crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>
Magpie Shrike	<i>Urolestes melanoleucus</i>
Southern White-crowned Shrike	<i>Eurocephalus anguitimens</i>
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
African Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
Rattling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>
Desert Cisticola	<i>Cisticola aridulus</i>
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>
Arrow-marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>
Hartlaub's Babbler	<i>Turdoides hartlaubii</i>
Cape Starling	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>
Meves's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis mevesii</i>
Burchell's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis australis</i>
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>
Red-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>
Groundscraper Thrush	<i>Turdus litsitsirupa</i>
African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow	<i>Gymnoris superciliaris</i>
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
Red-headed Weaver	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>
Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
Brown Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta nitidula</i>
Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>

## Reptiles

Common name	Scientific name	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Nile Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus niloticus</i>	✓	✓			✓			
Leopard Tortoise	<i>Stigmochelys pardalis</i>								✓