Zambia & Malawi - The Best of Africa

Naturetrek Tour Report

2 - 9 October 2016





Red-billed Oxpeckers on Kudu in middle of breeding herd of Elephants

Red-necked Spurfowl



Looking at African Skimmers near Mwalasi



Enjoying Sable Antelopes

Report and images by Samuel Lenard Chihana



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

Tour participants: Samuel Lenard Chihana (Local Guide) with four Naturetrek Clients

Please note that this tour report only covers the first part of the tour, in Malawi, that was led by Samuel Lenard Chihana. We do not have reports from the other Local Guides.

Day 1

Sunday 2nd October

In flight to Kamuzu International Airport.

Day 2

Monday 3rd October

Weather: overcast and cloudy. We met at Kamuzu International Airport and, having sorted immigration formalities, changed their money and loaded the vehicle, we started our drive to Mvuu around 2.35pm. Along a Forest Reserve at Linthipe I offered them a packed lunch and they had an opportunity to walk around and stretch their legs. During our lunch break we saw Southern Citril and Bronze Manikin, flying and perched. On our way from the airport and just before stopping we saw Pied Crows, Lilac-breasted Rollers and House Sparrows. We also saw White-necked Ravens as we passed Dedza.

We arrived at around 7.45pm. I gave them a briefing during check in, mentioning all activities offered in the Camp, including Village Tours, Rhino tracking, Sanctuary Drives and Hides, Help Malawi and School Visiting, and also the opportunity to visit or participate in Bat or Carnivore Research, if interested.

I offered them an early 5.15am morning combination of a boat safari and a walking safari for them to recover well from the long drive from airport. The aim was to see White-backed Night Herons as they arrive from their feeding grounds for best sightings, Pel's Fishing Owl roosting, Brown-breasted Barbet, Green Malkoha and Bohm's Bee-eaters nesting across the river.

Day 3

Tuesday 4th October

Today the weather was luckily cool and cloudy. We started the boat safari at 515am with a cup of coffee or tea in our hands with some biscuits. We managed to see White-backed Night Herons on the shore of the river, Green Malkoha, Brown-breasted Barbet, Palm-nut Vulture, flying and perched, African Darters, and a pair of Rednecked Falcons feeding their chicks on the nest. We had a very productive time and, as it was not a hot day, came back at 10am. On the walk we also had a very good sighting of a snake, a Black Mamba hunting some weavers and Palm Thrushes.

After breakfast all four guests chose to rest until lunchtime. Later, after tea and coffee, we set off at 3.30pm for a game drive with sundowner by the river side in the southern floodplain. We saw a breeding herd of elephants, Warthogs, Waterbucks, Hippos, Impalas, African Buffaloes, Western Banded Snake Eagle, Lillian's Lovebirds, Bat Hawk during sundowner, Crowned Lapwings and Senegal Lapwings. Also, we saw Red-billed Oxpeckers on the back of a Greater Kudu in middle of the herd of Elephants. Other birds were Dickenson's Kestrel on the nest just after starting at the camp and another one perched in a dead Leadwood tree in the southern floodplain; Palm-nut Vulture; African Skimmers flying after sunset, skimming the water surface; Lillian's Lovebirds, Bohm's Bee-eaters, and Collared Palm Thrushes. We got back at 7pm.

Day 4

Wednesday 5th October

Weather: hot with very little cloud cover. We drove out to do a walking safari at 5.30am until 9.30am with the aim of viewing African Skimmers, other wetland birds like Yellow-billed Storks, and hybrid Blacksmith x Spurwinged Lapwing which is breeding in that area. However, although we only found a female Spur-wingwed Lapwing looking after chicks, the hybrid did not appear. Also, we were looking for Sables and Zebras drinking in the floodplain.

On afternoon drive had the aim of finding more Raptors. We started 3.30 returning at 8.30pm, and a few times, we saw Walberg Eagles sitting in trees, one was hunting and managed to catch a bird. We also found Martial Eagle, on the 'wanted list' of the group, and African Hawk-Eagles and their nests by the Naifyulu road, east of the park with a mixed woodland. We found a Red-necked Spurfowl female hiding from a displaying male; we managed to find a Red-necked Spurfowls group with one male displaying to the female, and later, the female flew into a low shrub to join other females which were close to us, and relaxed.

A male Sable Antelope along the Masanje road had just entered sanctuary from a drink. We also recorded Common Duikers, African Scops Owls calling, Porcupine, Meller's Mongoose, a few Large-spotted Genets, a black-tailed 'Scrub Hare', Grey-headed Bushshrike, Bateleur, Western Banded Snake Eagle, Lizard Buzzard, African Barred Owlet in the morning, Racket-tailed Rollers, a parent and two sub adults, plus Yellow-billed Storks, Squacco Herons and Brown-headed Parrots.

After dinner, we also went out for star gazing; we saw the Pleiades rising while Scorpio was setting, and we also saw a famous two-year-old Meller's Mongoose without a tail. We started seeing it with its mother when it was small, now it is moving on its own. It's been nick-named Kiwi Meller's Mongoose.

Day 5

Thursday 6th October

Weather: another hot day. Our last activities at Mvuu Camp were two boat safaris. The first was from 5.30am until 8.30am, with an aim of having a second enjoyment of White-backed Night Herons and to try for Pel's Fishing Owl. The second one was from 9.30 until 11.30am, looking for Sable Antelopes and Zebras along the Shire River. We managed to find two Zebras among a breeding herd of Sable Antelopes, a very good sighting from the boat. We also enjoyed Southern Ground Hornbills on both last boat Safaris we did at Mvuu.

After lunch, at 2.30pm we drove to Zomba Ku-Chawe Inn for two nights, reaching there at 5pm. We managed to see Livingstone's Turaco flying across the road; Red-throated Twinspots feeding on the ground opposite Mulunguzi Dam, Southern Ground Hornbills, Meve's Starlings, Livingstone's Flycatchers, Bohm's Bee-eaters and Lesser Swamp Warbler.

Day 6

2

Friday 7th October

Weather: a hot day. At 6am we went birding at the Botanical Gardens and in Dr. John Wilson's gardens for White-winged Apalis, returning at 8.30am. We heard the White-winged Apalis calling as we were looking around in tall *Newtonia buchanananii* trees (which is the food plant for the caterpillars these Apalis feed on). We saw a Scaly-throated Honeyguide sub-adult being fed by a pair of Cardinal Woodpeckers until we left the site. The

White winged Apalis near Dr. John Wilson's house did not show up on its nest, but he said it was around the whole day before, when we were driving to Ku Chawe Inn.

From 10am until 5pm, we were birding at the Trout Farm, Williams Falls, Queen's and Emperor's Views and Chingwe's Hole.

At the Botanical Gardens we heard African Emerald Cuckoo, saw two Mountain Wagtails flying and later on walking on the bridge along the road, plus we saw White-browed Robin-Chats, a female Black Cuckooshrike, Red-billed Waxbills, Dark-backed Weavers, Bertrand's Weavers, White-eared Barbets, the Scaly-throated Honeyguide being fed by a pair of Cardinal Woodpeckers, Eastern Saw-wing swallows, Square-tailed Drongo and Little Greenbul.

After breakfast, around the bridge before the Trout Farm, we saw Mountain Wagtail, Black-headed Apalis, Yellow-throated Apalis, and the near-endemic to South Africa Olive Bushshrike gave good views a few times. A Livingstone's Turaco also gave good views for a long time while calling, sitting in the shade.

At Williams Falls we had good views of the White-starred Robins and Yellow-throated Woodland Warblers. White-tailed Crested Flycatcher (Elmina) also appeared during lunch while we were sitting on rocks, and we had another good sighting of Mountain Wagtail entering in little cave along the upper side of falls; it was possibly sitting on eggs, as was not seen coming out until we left. We also had a sighting of a Crowned Eagle in flight.

At Chagwa Dam we heard, followed, and saw, Yellow-throated Woodland Warblers, heard Eastern Evergreen Forest Warblers, and saw Eastern Saw-wing Swallow, Little Greenbul and Olive Sunbirds. We also went to viewpoints where we enjoyed a lot of flowers in the grassland, including False Copper Flowers, *Dissotis*, *Polygala*, *Hypericum* and many more. For two years after independence Malawi, then Nyasaland, was a Monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II. She was Sovereign until 6thJuly, 1966, when the role of Queen and Governor General was abolished in Malawi. Queen's View is named after her. Emperor's View is named after Emperor Haile Selassi, who visited soon after Malawi became independent. We also enjoyed the view of Zomba City.

At Chingwe's Hole we saw a Rock Kestrel flying around until we left, Red-winged Starlings on the cliffs, and African Black Swifts feeding down in the cliff. We also heard a Red-necked Spurfowl around there. On the way down back to Ku Chawe Inn we saw Bertrand's Weavers, Southern Citrils, Olive Sunbirds, African Firefinch, and Southern Mountain Greenbuls feeding on Himalayan Raspberries Rubus ellupticus.

Day 7

Saturday 8th October

Weather: hot. This morning we drove from Ku Chawe Inn to Kayak Africa Base, leaving at 7am. En route we did a short city tour in Zomba to the Memorial Pillar for the First and Second World Wars. When we reached Cape Maclear, I showed the guests the famous Rock 'Mwala Wa Mphini' a large rock marked with erosion scars, considered by some local people to be sacred. We arrived at the Kayak Africa Base at 10am.

The group then transferred to Mumbo Island for two nights before continuing on to Zambia, and I said goodbye to them.

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Viewing Williams Falls

Malawi Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

			October					
	Common name	Scientific name	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Helmeted Guineafowl	Numida meleagris		✓	✓	✓		
2	Red-necked Spurfowl	Pternistis afer		✓	✓			
3	White-faced Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna viduata		✓	✓	✓		
4	Spur-winged Goose	Plectropterus gambensis		✓	✓	✓		
5	Egyptian Goose	Alopochen aegyptiaca		✓	✓	✓		
6	Yellow-billed Duck	Anas undulata					✓	
7	Yellow-billed Stork	Mycteria ibis		✓	✓	✓		
8	African Openbill	Anastomus lamelligerus		✓	✓	✓		
9	African Sacred Ibis	Threskiornis aethiopicus		✓				
10	Hadada Ibis	Bostrychia hagedash		✓	✓	✓		
11	Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus		✓				
12	White-backed Night Heron	Gorsachius leuconotus		✓		✓		
13	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax		✓		✓		
14	Striated Heron	Butorides striata				✓		
15	Squacco Heron	Ardeola ralloides			✓	✓		
16	Western Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis		✓	✓	✓		
17	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea		✓	✓			
18	Goliath Heron	Ardea goliath		✓				
19	Great Egret	Ardea alba		✓	✓	✓		
20	Intermediate Egret	Egretta intermedia			✓	✓		
 21	Black Heron	Egretta ardesiaca				✓		
<u>-</u> . 22	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta		✓	✓	/		
23	Hamerkop	Scopus umbretta		✓	✓	✓		
24	Reed Cormorant	Microcarbo africanus		✓		✓		
25	White-breasted Cormorant	Phalacrocorax lucidus		✓	✓	✓		
26	African Darter	Anhinga rufa		· ✓	,	· ✓		
27	Western Osprey	Pandion haliaetus			/			
28	African Harrier-Hawk	Polyboroides typus			· ·			
29	Palm-nut Vulture	Gypohierax angolensis		✓		✓		
30	Western Banded Snake Eagle	Circaetus cinerascens		✓	✓	,		
31	Bateleur	Terathopius ecaudatus		,	· ·			
		Macheiramphus alcinus		✓	_			
32	Bat Hawk	•		•		✓		-
33	Crowned Eagle	Stephanoaetus coronatus			/	V		-
34	Martial Eagle	Polemaetus bellicosus			∨ ✓			
35	Wahlberg's Eagle	Hieraaetus wahlbergi		✓	V			-
36	African Hawk-Eagle	Aquila spilogaster		•				-
37	Lizard Buzzard	Kaupifalco monogrammicus			√			-
38	African Fish Eagle	Haliaeetus vocifer		✓	✓	✓		-
39	Red-necked Falcon	Falco chicquera					✓	-
40	Red-footed Falcon	Falco vespertinus		√				-
41	Dickinson's Kestrel	Falco dickinsoni		√				-
42	Black Crake	Amaurornis flavirostra		✓		✓		_
43	Water Thick-knee	Burhinus vermiculatus		✓	✓	√		_
44	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus			✓	✓		
45	Spur-winged Lapwing	Vanellus spinosus		✓	✓	✓		<u> </u>
46	Senegal Lapwing	Vanellus lugubris		✓				
47	Crowned Lapwing	Vanellus coronatus		✓				

			October							
	Common name	n name Scientific name	3	4	5	6	7	8		
48	African Wattled Lapwing	Vanellus senegallus			✓	✓				
49	African Jacana	Actophilornis africanus		✓		✓				
50	African Snipe	Gallinago nigripennis			✓					
51	Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia		✓						
52	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola			✓	✓				
53	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos		✓	✓	✓				
54	African Skimmer	Rynchops flavirostris		✓	✓					
55	Grey-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus			✓					
56	Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica			✓					
57	Mourning Collared Dove	Streptopelia decipiens		✓	✓	✓				
58	Red-eyed Dove	Streptopelia semitorquata		✓	✓	✓				
59	Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Turtur chalcospilos		✓	✓	✓	✓			
60	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	Turtur afer								
61	Tambourine Dove	Turtur tympanistria					✓			
62	Lilian's Lovebird	Agapornis lilianae		✓	✓	✓				
63	Brown-headed Parrot	Poicephalus cryptoxanthus			✓					
64	Livingstone's Turaco	Tauraco livingstonii					√			
65	Purple-crested Turaco	Tauraco porphyreolophus		✓	1	/				
66	Grey Go-away-bird	Corythaixoides concolor			✓					
67	Green Malkoha	Ceuthmochares australis		✓	,					
68	Diederik Cuckoo	Chrysococcyx caprius		· ✓		✓				
69	African Emerald Cuckoo	Chrysococcyx cupreus					Н			
70	African Scops Owl	Otus senegalensis			Н		11			
71	Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	Bubo lacteus		✓	11					
72	African Wood Owl	Strix woodfordii		✓						
73	African Barred Owlet			•	/					
74	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Glaucidium capense		✓	V					
75	Square-tailed Nightjar African Palm Swift	Caprimulgus fossii		V ✓	V	/	✓			
76		Cypsiurus parvus		•	· ·	•	∨			
77	Common Swift	Apus apus					· ·			
78	Racket-tailed Roller	Coracias spatulatus	 	✓	✓	✓				
	Lilac-breasted Roller	Coracias caudatus	V		V	V				
79	Broad-billed Roller	Eurystomus glaucurus		√						
80	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	Halcyon albiventris		✓	✓	✓				
81	Striped Kingfisher	Halcyon chelicuti			✓					
82	Malachite Kingfisher	Corythornis cristatus		✓	✓	√				
83	Giant Kingfisher	Megaceryle maxima		Н		✓				
84	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis		✓	✓	✓				
85	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	Merops hirundineus		✓	✓	✓				
86	Little Bee-eater	Merops pusillus		✓	✓					
87	Böhm's Bee-eater	Merops boehmi		✓	✓					
88	African Hoopoe	Upupa africana			✓	✓				
89	Common Scimitarbill	Rhinopomastus cyanomelas			✓					
90	Crowned Hornbill	Tockus alboterminatus		✓	✓	✓				
91	African Grey Hornbill	Tockus nasutus			✓					
92	Southern Red-billed Hornbill	Tockus rufirostris		✓	✓					
93	Trumpeter Hornbill	Bycanistes bucinator		✓	✓					
94	Southern Ground Hornbill	Bucorvus leadbeateri				✓				
95	Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	Pogoniulus bilineatus					Н			
96	Black-collared Barbet	Lybius torquatus		✓	Н					
97	Brown-breasted Barbet	Lybius melanopterus					✓			
98	Scaly-throated Honeyguide	Indicator variegatus					✓			

_			October					
Common name	Scientific name	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Speckle-throated Woodpecker	Campethera scriptoricauda		✓	✓				
Cardinal Woodpecker	Dendropicos fuscescens					✓		
Bearded Woodpecker	Dendropicos namaquus		Н					
African Broadbill	Smithornis capensis							
Chinspot Batis	Batis molitor		✓	✓				
Black-throated Wattle-eye	Platysteira peltata		✓					
White-crested Helmetshrike	Prionops plumatus			✓	✓			
Grey-headed Bushshrike	Malaconotus blanchoti		100	✓				
Olive Bushshrike	Chlorophoneus olivaceus					✓		
Orange-breasted Bushshrike	Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus		Н					
Black-crowned Tchagra	Tchagra senegalus			✓				
Black-backed Puffback	Dryoscopus cubla		✓	✓	✓			
Tropical Boubou	Laniarius major		✓	✓				
Brubru	Nilaus afer			Н				
Burchell's Coucal	Centropus burchellii		✓		✓			
Black Cuckooshrike	Campephaga flava					√		
	Oriolus larvatus			Н				
			✓	✓	✓			
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	LURGOIGGO IORGINGU		1	✓				
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namaquus African Broadbill Smithornis capensis Balts molitor V V Black-throated Wattle-eye Platysteira peltata White-crested Helmetshrike Prionops plumatus Orange-breasted Bushshrike Chlorophoneus olivaceus Orange-breasted Bushshrike Chlorophoneus olivaceus Orange-breasted Bushshrike Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus Black-crowned Tchagra Black-crowned Tchagra Black-crowned Tchagra Black-crowned Tchagra Black-backed Puffback Dryoscopus cubla V V Tropical Boubou Laniarius major Brubru Niliaus afer Black-Cuckooshrike Campephaga flava Black-cheaded Oriole Campephaga flava Black-cheaded Oriole Oriolus Iarvatus Black-cheaded Oriole Oriolus Invation Black Cuckooshrike Campephaga flava Black-headed Oriole Oriolus Invation Black Cuckooshrike Campephaga flava Black Cuckooshrike Campephaga Bran Sulvaria Brownbul Brutheneted Apalis Apalis Invited flaviventris Apalis Invited flaviventris Apalis Invited flaviventris A	Cardinal Woodpecker	

					Oct	ober		
	Common name	Scientific name	3	4	5	6	7	8
150	Greater Blue-eared Starling	Lamprotornis chalybaeus		✓	✓			
151	Meves's Starling	Lamprotornis mevesii		✓	✓	✓		
152	Violet-backed Starling	Cinnyricinclus leucogaster				✓		
153	Red-winged Starling	Onychognathus morio					✓	
154	Red-billed Oxpecker	Buphagus erythrorhynchus		✓	✓	✓		
155	White-starred Robin	Pogonocichla stellata					✓	
156	Cape Robin-Chat	Cossypha caffra				✓	✓	
157	White-browed Robin-Chat	Cossypha heuglini		✓			✓	
158	Red-capped Robin-Chat	Cossypha natalensis			✓			
159	Collared Palm Thrush	Cichladusa arquata		✓	✓	✓		
160	Bearded Scrub Robin	Erythropygia quadrivirgata			✓			
161	African Stonechat	Saxicola torquatus					✓	
162	Ashy Flycatcher	Muscicapa caerulescens		✓	✓	✓		
163	Collared Sunbird	Hedydipna collaris		✓	✓	✓		
164	Olive Sunbird	Cyanomitra olivacea					✓	
165	Forest Double-collared Sunbird	Cinnyris fuelleborni					✓	
166	White-bellied Sunbird	Cinnyris talatala		✓		✓		
167	Variable Sunbird	Cinnyris venustus		✓				
168	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	Plocepasser mahali		✓	✓	✓		
169	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	✓					
170	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	Passer diffusus			✓	✓		
171	Spectacled Weaver	Ploceus ocularis		✓	✓	✓		
172	Southern Brown-throated Weaver	Ploceus xanthopterus		✓	✓	✓		
173	Lesser Masked Weaver	Ploceus intermedius			✓			
174	Dark-backed Weaver	Ploceus bicolor					✓	
175	Red-headed Weaver	Anaplectes rubriceps				66		
176	Red-throated Twinspot	Hypargos niveoguttatus			✓			
177	African Firefinch	Lagonosticta rubricata				✓		
178	Blue Waxbill	Uraeginthus angolensis		✓	✓			
179	Bronze Mannikin	Lonchura cucullata	✓	✓	✓	✓		
180	Mountain Wagtail	Motacilla clara				✓		
181	Yellow-throated Longclaw	Macronyx croceus			✓			
182	African Pipit	Anthus cinnamomeus		✓				
183	Southern Citril	Crithagra hyposticta	✓			✓		

Mammals

1	Four-toed Elephant Shrew	Petrodromus tetradactylus			✓			
2	African Elephant	Loxodonta africana		✓	✓	✓		
3	Yellow Baboon	Papio cynocephalus		✓	✓	✓		v
	Cape Porcupine	Hystrix africaeaustralis			✓			
4	Mutable Sun Squirrel	Heliosciurus mutabilis			✓		✓	
5	Smith's Bush Squirrel	Paraxerus cepapi	✓					
6	Striped Bush Squirrel	Paraxerus flavovittis		✓	✓			
7	Scrub Hare	Lepus saxatilis	✓	✓				
8	Large-spotted Genet	Genetta maculata	✓	✓				
9	Marsh Mongoose	Atilax paludinosus	✓					
10	White-tailed Mongoose	Ichneumia albicauda	✓					
11	Banded Mongoose	Mungos mungo			✓			
12	Meller's Mongoose	Rhynchogale melleri		✓				
13	Spotted Hyena	Crocuta crocuta		Н				
14	Plains (Crawshay's) Zebra	Equus quagga crawshayi			✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	October							
			3	4	5	6	7	8		
15	Hippopotamus	Hippopotamus amphibius		✓	✓	✓				
16	Impala	Aepyceros melampus melampus		✓	✓	✓				
17	Bushbuck	Tragelaphus scriptus	✓	✓	✓	✓				
18	Greater Kudu	Tragelaphus strepsiceros		✓	✓	✓				
19	Common (Grey) Duiker	Sylvicapra grimmia		✓	✓					
20	Sable Antelope	Hippotragus niger			✓	✓				
21	Common Waterbuck	Kobus ellipsiprymnus		✓	✓	✓				
22	Southern Reedbuck	Redunca arundinum			✓					



Boat before taking a Walk