

**Report**  
**Nkonzi Bush Camp,**  
**South Luangwa National Park, Zambia**  
**8-16 September 2022**



Report & Images by Tim & Janet Pitcher

**Day One – Thursday 8th Sep 22**

Six group members departed from the UK. The other two members of the group were already in-country. Most of the group were experienced travellers but for one it was their first trip to southern Africa.

**Day Two – Friday 9th Sep 22**

Two members were transferred to Nkonzi Bush Camp from Kafunta River Lodge around mid-day and went for an afternoon/evening game drive with Shadreck as the guide. Gavin, our host and guide, met those from the UK at Mfuwe airport. Although very tired, they all perked up on driving into the National Park as darkness fell, when game-spotting immediately began in true earnest on the way to the camp. They quickly saw a square-tailed (Mozambican) nightjar and heard a scops owl. They also saw their first elephant, elephant Shrew, bush baby, large-spotted genet, hippo, impala, sharpe's grysbok, bushbuck and red hartebeest (*Nkonzi* in, the local language). They were warmly greeted by Bev (Camp Manager) and Jacob (Front of House). Early supper and to bed in our comfortable twin-bedded tents.



### **Day Three – Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> Sep 22**

Wake-up call at 5.00, breakfast of fresh fruit, cereal, toast and jam served around a fire at 5.30, in the sandy riverbed. Departure was around 6:00. It was cool enough to need to wear a fleece or light jacket. It was apparent that most of the group had planned their visit in order to see carmine bee-eaters – they were not disappointed as they were in glorious breeding plumage and there were plenty too be seen, however, the nesting season seemed a bit late this year with the birds still in the process of establishing their colonies in the riverbanks.

Two groups of 4 out on morning game drive with Gavin and Shadreck. Open-topped, open-sided Land Rover gave magnificent all-round views. The weather was sunny with some light cloud. A juvenile martial eagle was spotted on a dead tree lying in a dry river bed and as it was approached a large male lion popped up followed by two females. A mating pair with a chaperone! A good variety of birds seen: 3 types of bee-eaters, hamerkop, lizard buzzard, wahlberg's eagle and gabar goshawk. White-browed sparrow weavers, with their marvellously fluty songs, were seen all along our routes with lots of guinea fowl, spurfowl, emerald-spotted wood dove and red-billed quelea. In addition, there were plenty of elephant and crawshay's zebra seen. A mid-morning coffee break was taken at about 08:30 with the drive lasting around 4 hours. Lunch back at camp was at around 12:00 with most people taking a siesta. After gathering for tea and cake at 15.30, the evening game drives started at shortly after 16.00 with a welcome sundowner in a scenic spot whilst allowing the nocturnal animals to become active. This late drive found some of us amongst a huge herd of buffalo (circa 200+) and others spied a spotted hyena. Large spotted genet was seen and it was later realised that these and the hyena were a fairly common sighting on all the night drives. Very good views of four-toed sengi were had with one caught between headlights and a prowling mongoose. We were back around 20:00 for drinks, supper, species list compilation and relaxing. Each day worked approximately to this plan for the rest of the trip.

Evening meal was a wonderful barbeque out on the riverbed.



### **Day Four – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> Sep 22**

Out at the 'normal' early hour after a refreshingly cool night. Iridescent lilac-breasted rollers and masses of bright green Lilian's Lovebirds flashed through the trees. An African Fish Eagle made a first appearance – the national bird of Zambia. There was much discussion about an LBJ not on Naturetrek's list – a chestnut-backed sparrowlark. The two groups met for coffee at the riverside overlooking a small colony of white-fronted bee-eaters excavating their nests in the bank. The hippos had yellow-billed oxpeckers on their backs as opposed to the red-billed ones seen on various antelope and giraffe.

The afternoon/evening drive started out going past a large hamerkop nest over a small pool with several catfish (nicknamed 'Catfish Crossing'). One group set out with the intention of spending time watching the Milky Way before moon-rise and had a spectacular view of the stars because the night sky was so dark. The other group had great sightings of 2 leopards. Other sightings included 2 honey badgers jogging along through the grass and a good view of a barred owlet. In addition, a scops owl was heard but not seen.

### **Day Five – Mon 12 Sept 22**

Up and breakfast as usual – one group of 4 went on a walking safari with Gavin, followed by a jeep drive. The remainder went out for the normal game drive. The walking group enjoyed the exercise and looking at flora and fauna in small detail and slow time. Their real highlight on the returning game drive was hugely lucky. They had stopped to look for a woodpecker when a pack of wild dogs with 9 medium sized puppies (4-5 months) and 4 adults cautiously appeared, to drink at a water hole. It was guessed that these pups would just be old enough be out of their den and roaming. The other group however, managed to see two male lions and a leopard drinking.



In the evening both groups went out for an evening/night drive. The ones who had missed the wild dogs went to the small water hole where they had been seen drinking in the morning. After a couple of sweeps nothing was seen and they decided to stay in the area for their sundowner. Then, as they were sipping their drinks, the wild dogs cautiously emerged from the bush and came across the open to drink and subsequently disappeared down a track. Several new birds were seen including the elusive white-faced duck, african harrier hawk, pearl-spotted owlet, black-backed puffback and black-headed oriole. The other group saw an african civet for the first time.



### **Day Six – Tue 13<sup>th</sup> Sep 22**

A sunny hot day. Gavin led one group on a walking safari, followed by a game drive. While walking, there was puzzlement about the sound of a frog in a tree – it turned out to be a fork-tailed drongo mimicking a frog! The other group went on a normal morning game drive. Both groups saw the wild dogs again. This time 3 adults with 9 pups.



In the evening one group went on a game drive, and the other group went for a walking safari followed by a game drive, having a very close encounter with a large male lion sauntering past the jeep in the dark. The evening drive delivered a pride of lions with kill (though we didn't linger as there were many other jeeps there), a herd of buffalo, a young male leopard loping along the edge of an oxbow lake.

### **Day Seven – Wed 14<sup>th</sup> Sep 22**

Today was planned as a whole day out with a 2-hour picnic lunch stop. One group had a different guide, Efraim, for the day whilst Gavin caught up with office work. It started out somewhat overcast but cleared to bright sun by 10:00. Initially very few animals were seen but masses of biting flies for one group. We were taken north and crossed over the Luangwa River. After coffee break there were plenty of kudu, elephant, puku, impala and zebra. Brilliant views over the river – first skimmer and crowned cranes were seen. At lunch stop we had a view of a large herd of elephant coming down to drink beside a pod of hippo where a tiny hippo piggy-backed on its mother. Good thing as there were several big crocodiles lurking. A sand island was filled with masses of yellow-billed storks just resting. The other group, with, had good sightings of birds, including first african openbill, white-headed vulture and racket-tailed roller. The animal sightings included three snoozing lions and a leopard unusually close, just 200 yards away, lying at the edge of woodland in the shade. A highlight was to find a cloud of southern carmine bee-eaters circling and pirouetting around their river bank nesting site. Later two young male giraffes were seen actively having a neck swinging jousting match



near a rather scrawny and somewhat out of condition female. Several sightings of slender mongoose were had along with a couple of visits to a sleeping male Lion. Back to camp before dark.



### **Day Eight – Thur 15<sup>th</sup> Sep 22**

In the morning Gavin took 3 of the party out on a walking safari followed by a game drive. The others went on a game drive and found a young leopard sleeping in a sausage tree but later witnessed him stalking a small herd of Impala from under and in front of a safari truck. Sleeping lions also seen. Back for lunch and the usual siesta.

For the evening drive the group changed around into different vehicles. Those with Gavin watching a lot of banded mongoose at a large waterhole when we were surprised by an angry male elephant with a single tusk. He arrived, ears flared, so quietly that by the time Gavin had started the car the elephant was only 20 metres away. Obviously unhappy he then chased the vehicle round a corner and then a second time up the track for around 500 metres. Gavin thought it prudent to drive away from another male elephant tossing its head and digging into the river bank. We drove to a sundowner site to calm down and discuss our adventure. We later found out the bull was in 'musth' as he was easily recognised as our single tusker.

One group witnessed a 'kill' – a serval cat on a mouse. Highlighted in the lamp-light the serval's hunting action and kill was seen, followed by the cat taking its prey into the open where it proceeded to dine leisurely. Terrific sighting. The others were not left short as they had sightings of leopard and lions. Throughout the week, we saw many species with young, which added to our enjoyment of the thriving South Luangwa Valley.

We all had an enjoyable last evening meal reflecting on the highlights and exciting moments of the wonderful week in Nkonzi Bush Camp.

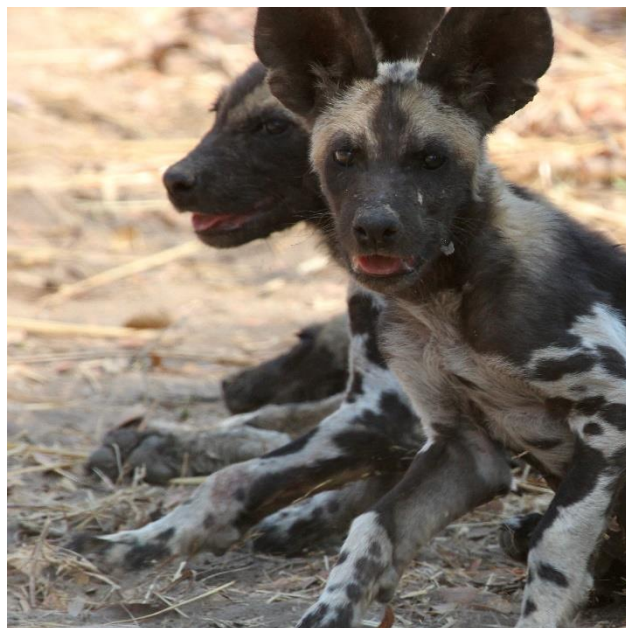
Many thanks to Gavin, Shadreck, Bev, Jacob and the rest of the crew for a great African (or Zambian) safari experience.

### **Day Nine – Fri 16<sup>th</sup> Sep 22**

Prior to our departure there was a two-hour game drive followed by the final pack and an early brunch of scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage and beans.

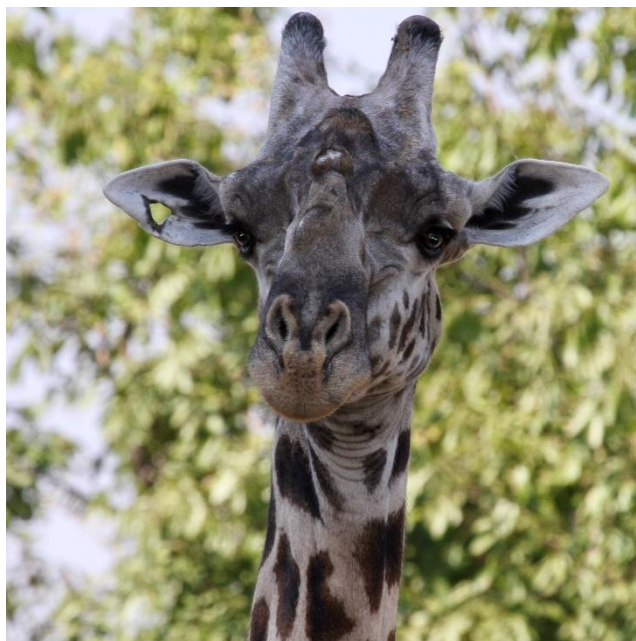
As we were driven through the park on departure to Mfuwe Airport, we continued to spot birds, stopped to watch an enormous black python slithering out of an old aardvark hole, and found a pride of 8 lions lounging beside the road just off the bridge that led to the main gate.

In the village we all stopped off for a bit of retail therapy and refreshments in the local shops. Lots of goodbyes at Mfuwe Airport and an uneventful departure to Lusaka.



### **Day Ten – Sat 17<sup>th</sup> Sep 22**

Flight to Dubai and then on to UK.





## Species Lists



(√=recorded but not counted; H = heard only; T = track only;  
J = juvenile; + large numbers)

## Birds

	Common Name	Scientific Name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>				√				
2	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>			√	√	√	√	√	√
3	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	Red-necked Spurfowl	<i>Pternistes afer</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
5	Swainson's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistes swansoni</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
6	Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>			√			√	√	
7	African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>						√	√	
8	Saddle-billed Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>			√	√	√	√	√	√
9	Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>			√	√		√		√
10	African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
11	Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	√		√	√	√	√	√	
12	African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>						√		
13	Striated Heron - Greenbacked	<i>Butorides striata</i>						√		
14	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				√				
15	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			√	√		√	√	
16	Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>				√		√	√	
17	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			√	√		√	√	
18	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>		√	√	√	√	√		

19	Great White Pelican	Pelecanus onocrotalus			√			√		
20	African Harrier-Hawk	Polyboroides typus				√				√
21	Hooded Vulture	Necrosyrtes monachus		√	√		√	√	√	
22	White-backed Vulture	Gyps africanus		√	√		√	√	√	√
23	White-headed Vulture	Trigonoceps occipitalis					√	√		
24	Lappet-faced Vulture	Torgos tracheliotus		√						
25	Brown Snake Eagle	Circaetus cinereus			√	√	√	√		
26	Western Banded Snake Eagle	Circaetus cinerascens		√	√					
27	Bateleur	Terathopius ecaudatus		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
28	Martial Eagle	Polemaetus bellicosus		J√						
29	Long-crested Eagle	Lophaetus occipitalis		√						
30	Wahlberg's Eagle	Aquila wahlbergi		√					√	√
31	Tawny Eagle	Aquila rapax				√	√		√	√
32	African Hawk-Eagle	Hieraaetus fasciatus			√	√		√	√	J
33	Lizzard Buzzard	Kaupifalco monogrammicus	√		√					
34	Gabar Goshawk	Micronisus gabar	√					√		
35	Dark Chanting Goshawk	Melierax metabates		√						
36	Shikra	Accipiter badius			√	√				
37	Little Sparrowhawk	Accipiter minullus								√
38	Ovambo Sparrowhawk	Accipiter ovambpenisis							√	
39	Yellow-billed Kite	Milvus parasiticus		√	√	√	√	√	√	
40	African Fish Eagle	Haliaeetus vocifer		√	√	√	√	√	√J	√
41	Common Buttonquail	Turnix sylvaticus					√			
42	Water Thick-Knee	Burhinus vermiculatus	√	H	√	√	√	√	√	
43	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus						√		
44	Blacksmith Lapwing	Vanellus armatus		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
45	White-crowned Lapwing	Vanellus albiceps		√	√	√		√	√	
46	Senegal Lapwing	Vanellus lugubris			√					
47	Crowned Lapwing	Vanellus coronatus						√		
48	African Wattled Lapwing	Vanellus senegallus			√					
49	Three-banded Plover	Charadrius tricollaris				√				
50	African Jacana	Actophilornis africanus		√	√	√	√	√	√	
51	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola			√		√			
52	Common Sandpiper	Actites hypoleucos			√			√	√	
53	African Skimmer	Rynchops flavirostris						√	√	
54	Double-banded Sandgrouse	Pterocles bicinctus				√	√	√	√	
55	Red-eyed Dove	Streptopelia semitorquata		√				√		
56	Ring-necked Dove	Streptopelia capicola	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
57	Laughing Dove	Spilopelia senegalensis	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
58	Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Turtur chalcospilos	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
59	Namaqua Dove	Oena capensis			√			√		
60	Purple-crested Turaco	Tauraco porphyreolophus							√	H
61	Grey Go-away-bird	Corythaixoides concolor		√	√	√		√	√	√
62	Senegal Coucal	Centropus senegalensis	√		√	√	√	√	√	√
63	White-browed Coucal	Centropus superciliosus	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
64	African Scops Owl	Otus senegalensis	H		H					
65	Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	Bubo lacteus					√		√	
66	Pearl-spotted Owlet	Glaucidium perlatum			√					
67	African- Barred Owlet	Glaucidium apense	√	√	√		√		√	
68	Square-tailed Nightjar - Mozambique	Caprimulgus fossii		√	√		√	√		
69	African Palm Swift	Cypsiurus parvus		√	√	√				√



70	Red-faced Mousebird	Urocolius indicus			√		√			
71	Racket-tailed Roller	Coracias spatulata			√		√			
72	Lilac-breasted Roller	Coracias caudata			√	√	√	√	√	√
73	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	Halcyon albiventris			√			√		√
74	Malachite Kingfisher	Alcedo cristata				√		√	√	
75	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis	√		√			√		
76	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	Merops hirundineus					√	√	√	√
77	Little Bee-eater	Merops pusillus	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
78	White-fronted Bee-eater	Merops bullockoides	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
79	Southern Carmine Bee-eater	Merops nubicoides	√	√	√	√+	√	√	√	√
80	African Hoopoe	Upupa africana	√	√	√					
81	Green Wood Hoopoe	Phoeniculus purpureus		√	√		√	√	√	√
82	Common Scimitarbill	Rhinopomastus cyanomelas			√					
83	Southern Ground Hornbill	Bucorvus leadbeateri		√				√		√
84	Southern Red-billed Hornbill	Tockus rufirostris	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
85	Crowned Hornbill	Lophoceros albiterminatus		√	√	√		√	√	
86	African Grey Hornbill	Lophoceros nasutus	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
87	Trumpeter Hornbill	Bycanistes bucinator		√	√		√		√	√
88	Black-collared Barbet	Lybius torquatus			√					
89	Greater Honeyguide	Indicator indicator			√		H	H		
90	Bennett's Woodpecker	Campethera bennettii				√	√			
91	Dickinson's Kestrel	Falco dickinsoni	√							
92	Meyer's Parrot	Poicephalus meyeri	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
93	Brown-necked Parrot	Poicephalus fuscicollis								√
94	Lilian's Lovebird	Agapornis lilianae		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
95	Chinspot Batis	Batis molitor			√					
96	White-crested Helmetshrike	Prionops plumatus			√					
97	Retz's Helmetshrike	Prionops retzii			√					
98	Grey-headed Bushshrike	Malaconotus blanchoti								H
99	Orange-breasted Bushshrike	Chlorophoneus sulfurepectus			√			√		
100	Brown-crowned Tchagra	Tchagra australis							√	√
101	Black-crowned Tchagra	Tchagra senegala		√	√					
102	Black-backed Puffback	Dryoscopus cubla			H	√		H	H	√
103	Tropical Boubou	Laniarius major			√	√		√	√	√
104	Brubru	Nilaus afer							H	
105	Black-headed Oriole	Oriolus larvatus				√				√
106	Fork-tailed Drongo	Dicrurus adsimilis	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
107	African Paradise Flycatcher	Terpsiphone viridis								√
108	Dark-capped Bulbul	Pycnonotus tricolor		√	√	√		√	√	
109	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica						√		
110	Wire-tailed Swallow	Hirundo smithii			√					
111	Lesser Striped Swallow	Cecropis abyssinica						√		
112	Rattling Cisticola	Cisticola chiniana				√	√			H
113	Tawny-flanked Prinia	Prinia subflava				√	√			√
114	Grey-backed Camaroptera	Camaroptera brevicaudata			√					
115	Arrow-marked Babbler	Turdoides jardineii		√	H	H	√	√	√	H
116	Greater Blue-eared Starling	Lamprotornis chalybaeus			√			√	√	√
117	Meves's Starling	Lamprotornis mevesii	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
118	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	Buphagus africanus			√	√	√	√		√
119	Red-billed Oxpecker	Buphagus erythrorhynchus		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
120	White-browed Robin-chat	Cossypha heuglini		√					H	

121	White-bellied Sunbird	Cinnyris talatata			√	√				
122	White-browed Sparrow Weaver	Plocepasser mahali	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
123	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	Passer diffusus		√			√	√		√
124	Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	Bubalornis niger				√	√	√	√	
125	Village Weaver	Ploceus cucullatus			√					
126	Red-billed Quelea	Quelea quelea	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
127	Green-winged Pytilia	Pytilia melba							√	
128	Red-billed Firefinch	Lagonosticta senegala	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
129	Blue Waxbill	Uraeginthus angolensis	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
130	African Pied Wagtail	Motacilla aguimp	√		√			√	√	
131	Yellow-fronted Canary	Crithagra mozambica			√					
132	Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark	Eremopterix lecotis			√					

## Mammals

	Common Name	Scientific Name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	Four-toed Sengi	Petrodromus tetradactylus		√	√	√	√		√	
2	South Lesser Galago (Bushbaby)	Galago moholi		√		√				
3	Cape Porcupine	Hystrix Africae australis					√		√	
4	Vervet Monkey	Cercopithecus aethiops	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
5	Yellow Baboon	Papio cynocephalus	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
6	Southern Scrub Hare	Lepus saxatilis	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
7	Smith's Bush Squirrel	Paraxerus cepapi	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
8	Serval	Felis serva							√	
9	Lion	Panthera leo		√		√	√	√	√	√
10	Leopard	Panthera pardus			√	√	√	√	√	
11	Bushy-tailed Mongoose	Bdeogale crassicauda			√	√			√	
12	Common Dwarf Mongoose	Helogale parvula				√				
13	Slender Mongoose	Herpestes sanguineus		√	√		√	√	√	√
14	White-tailed Mongoose	Ichneumea albicauda				√	√		√	
15	African Elephant	Loxodonta africana	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
16	Banded Mongoose	Mungos mungo		√		√		√	√	
17	Spotted Hyaena	Crocota crocuta	H	√		√		√	√	
18	African Civet	Viverra civetta		√	√		√			
19	C. African Large-spotted Genet	Genetta maculata	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
20	African Wild Dog	Lycaon pictus				√	√			
21	Honey Badger	Mellivora capensis			√		√			
22	Crawshay's Zebra	Equus quagga crawshayi	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
23	Common Warthog	Phacochoerus aethiopicus	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
24	African Buffalo	Syncerus caffer caffer		√+	√	√+	√	√	√	√
25	Hippopotamus	Hippopotamus amphibius	√		√	√	√	√	√	
26	Impala	Aepyceros melampus	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
27	Waterbuck	Kobus ellipsiprymnus	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
28	Puku	Kobus vardonii	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√



29	Southern Reedbuck	Redunca arundinum		√	√	√	√	√	√	
30	Sharpe's Grysbok	Raphicerus sharpei	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
31	Common Eland	Taurotragus oryx							T	
32	Cookson's Wildebeest	Connochaetus taurinus cooksoni		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
33	Common Duiker	Sylvicapara grimmia		√					√	
34	Bushbuck	Tragelaphus scriptus	√		√			√	√	√
35	Greater Kudu	Tragelaphus strepsiceros		√	√	√	√	√	√	√
36	Thornicroft's Giraffe	Giraffe camelopardalis	√		√	√	√	√	√	
37	Red Hartebeest	Alcelaphus buselaphus		√	√	√	√			
38	African Woodmouse (1 of 8 species)	Hylomyscus			√					