

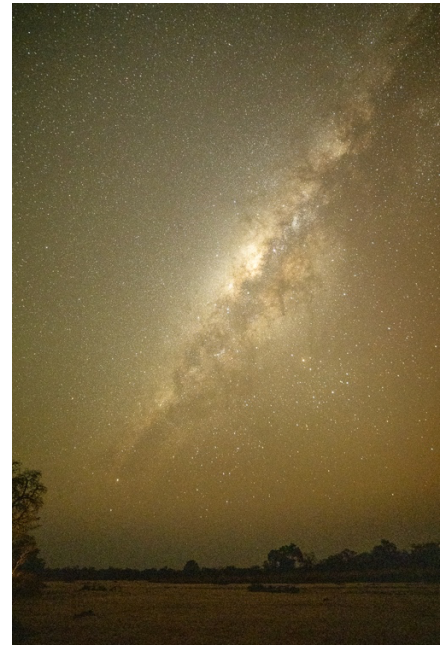
Zambia's South Luangwa National Park – Nkonzi Camp

Naturetrek Tour Report

8th – 17th September 2023



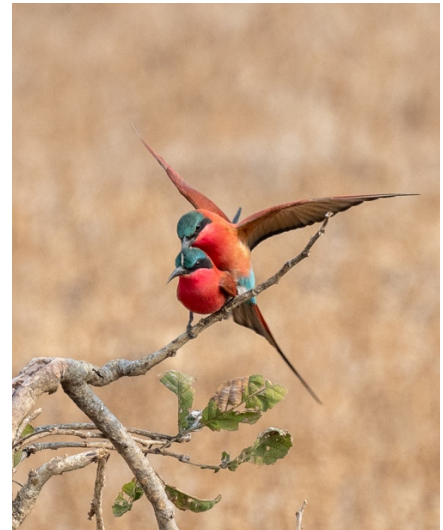
African Wild Dogs



Milky Way - Lorrain & Andrew Clifton



Lioness



Southern Carmine Bee-eater

Tour report kindly written by client Richard Trollope, photos by Lorrain Clifton



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Gavin Opie and Shadreck Njobvu (leaders) with eight Naturetrek clients

Day 1 & Day 2 Friday 8th & Saturday 9th September

The party arrived in Lusaka and shortly afterwards flew to Mfuwe in a small plane. Sadly “slash and burn” activities prevented us from seeing the land below. The final part of the journey was a jeep ride to the safari camp arriving in darkness.

Day 3

Sunday 10th September

The tented accommodation was excellent, and we awoke to see the wonderful scenery around the camp. At 6am after breakfast, we headed out for our first drive with four of us in each jeep enabling all of us to have quality views.

The first sighting was a small herd of Zebra and soon after a larger herd crossed the road in front of us. Impala were everywhere in small and large groups. Other antelope regularly spotted included Puku, Kudu and Waterbuck. Then a wonderful sighting – three Lions (lionesses) lazing on the sand in one of the dried-up riverbeds. They looked healthy and well fed.

The afternoon drive provided our first Elephants and a herd of Buffalo. After dusk we spotted two Lions and managed to get quite close for wonderful views. Next was a mongoose and Central African Large-spotted Genet. To end a brilliant first day, would you believe it, the three lionesses walked in front of the jeep again.

Birding gave us such birds as a Lilac-breasted Roller, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, African Barred Owlet, Lilian's Lovebird, Brown Snake Eagle, Blacksmith Lapwing and African Harrier Hawk. The highlight was a tea break by the nesting site consisting of a considerable number of stunning Carmine Bee-eaters – amazing colours, and who could miss the flocks of Red-billed Quelea?

Day 4

Monday 11th September

Hippo day. We headed to one of flowing rivers and there were our first Hippos. They were mostly submerged with only their heads and backs in view. Many had Red-billed Oxpeckers nibbling away at ticks or flesh wounds. Patience was rewarded with a wonderfully wide yawn – a sign of annoyance. We were all amused by the regular grunting noises. Next, we headed to an open plain seeing Yellow Baboons and Warthogs en route. The next treat was a group of six Giraffes busy feeding. One walked straight towards the jeep providing excellent close-up views if not a little concern! The journey back to camp was delayed as a huge bull Elephant blocked the road – something that became a regular occurrence.

The afternoon gave us another group of “nearly” active Hippos. The dusk drive was targeted at an area favoured by Leopards and after only a few minutes a Leopard was spotted under a bush barely 10 feet from the jeep. We stopped the Leopard looked up and just trotted round the side and then back of the jeep. What an amazing meeting. All of the park's animals seem accustomed to the jeeps and unconcerned by our presence and smell. Further along the track was a mongoose, a Genet, an Elephant Shrew (Dusky Sengi) and three different Spotted Hyenas. Another

treat was to come – a Cape Porcupine scurrying in front of us with its spines fully extended. Birding provided the stunning Saddle-billed Stork, Green-winged Pytilia, Blue Waxbill, Grey Go-away-bird, Tropical Boubou, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and several clear views of the beautiful African Fish Eagle.

Day 5

Tuesday 12th September

The morning started with a two hour walk starting from the camp. This allowed to get a good understanding of the environment – the grasses, shrubs and trees. The highlight was a group of Warthogs because there were four hoglets – not a good idea being in the open for too long with so many predators around. An extra treat – a pile of hyena poo well it is white because of the calcium ingested from animal bones.

The afternoon drive gave us a herd of eight Elephants including a youngster probably about a year old. New antelopes were Reedbuck, Wildebeest and Hartebeest.

Birding provided lots of Maribou Storks on branches and In flight – such huge wingspans, African Openbill, Black-winged Kite, Grey-crowned Crane, Green Wood Hoopoe, African Skimmer and African Grey Hornbill.

Day 6

Wednesday 13th September

Time for an all-day drive further afield where we might find a pack of Wild Dogs. First of all was an old Lion, flat out asleep by the roadside and oblivious to the many jeeps which stopped to admire. Later two Leopards were spotted running across the plain giving us good views. Word passed between the jeeps, and we headed to find the Wild Dogs. They were probably about 16 very dozy dogs although the occasional one did move around. They had extremely nice colouring. Later after night fell, three pairs of eyes on the hillside – Honey Badgers. Although not good views, we could see enough detail to enjoy the sighting. Final sightings were a Sharpe's Grysbok – a small deer with huge ears – a gorgeous galago (bushbaby).

Birding provided a Tawny Eagle, Water Thick-knee, Southern Red-billed Hornbill, Bennett's Woodpecker, Jamieson's Firefinch, Bateleur, Martial Eagle and Arrow-marked Babbler.

Day 7

Thursday 14th September

Three of the birders went a focussed birding trip. New birds included Common Scimitarbill, Meyer's Parrot, White-crested Helmetshrike, Racquet-tailed Roller and Red-billed Buffalo Weaver.

Naturally we saw lots of our favourite animals as well – groups of Elephant, Warthog and two adult Giraffes with youngsters only six feet tall! As usual there were plenty of Elephants hogging right of way on the tracks.

Day 8

Friday 15th September

Another all-day trip. This allows for nice tea-break sites and gives us plenty of time to admire the Hippos. Highlights were a sleepy pack of about 16 Lions spread out in little groups and ignoring us although one of us moved in the jeep and disturbed a lioness who walked further away. A second pack of Wild Dogs was found – one

dog having a considerable injury on its belly. On the way back we followed a Honey Badger down the road. It had been digging in the road and was reluctant to leave its discovery.

On the journey back to camp we saw a few Hippo out of the water and heading away to graze.

Birding provided a Black-bellied Bustard which landed on the track ahead of the jeep. The guide spotted a Double-banded Sandgrouse – the camouflage is so good it takes ages to find the bird in my photo. Other new birds were Red-billed Firefinch, Giant Kingfisher and Bronze Mannikin.

On the last night some of the group walked into the river bed to capture images of the stars.

Day 9

Saturday 16th September

Three of us opted for a final morning walk. Surely we had seen everything. We set off across the river bed – no stop - there are two Lions walking about 800 yards away. We return to our bank and walk further down. We had barely stepped onto the sand when we saw four lionesses sitting on the opposite bank and posing like the statues at Trafalgar Square. What a sight. The two Lions were still on the river bed. Naturally we waited for them to move away and eventually crossed led by the very careful guide. Another highlight was a Warthog with a newly born hoglet. We found a site of a recent kill (Zebra) and a couple of left over bones. The final new bird was a Lizard Buzzard.

Let's not forget the everywhere birds – Helmeted Guineafowl, White-browed Sparrow-weaver, Spurfowl and Fork-tailed Drongo.

The group then left on an early evening flight to Lusaka from Mfuwe, and onto Heathrow via Dubai, arriving in the morning of the 17th September.

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Species lists

Birds

Common name	Scientific name
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
Red-necked Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis afer</i>
Swainson's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis swainsonii</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 Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
African Harrier-Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
Western Banded Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinerascens</i>
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>
African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
Black-bellied Bustard	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>
Grey Crowned Crane	<i>Balearica regulorum</i>
Water Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
White-crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus albiceps</i>
Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
African Skimmer	<i>Rynchops flavirostris</i>
Double-banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>
Grey Go-away-bird	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
White-browed Coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>
African Barred Owllet	<i>Glaucidium capense</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Square-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus fossii</i>
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Racket-tailed Roller	<i>Coracias spatulatus</i>
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>
Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>
White-fronted Bee-eater	<i>Merops bullockoides</i>
Southern Carmine Bee-eater	<i>Merops nubicooides</i>
Green Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
Common Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>
Southern Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus rufirostris</i>
Crowned Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros alboterminatus</i>
Pale-billed Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros pallidirostris</i>
Black-collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>
Bennett's Woodpecker	<i>Campethera bennettii</i>
Brown-necked Parrot	<i>Poicephalus fuscicollis</i>
Meyer's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>
Lilian's Lovebird	<i>Agapornis lilianae</i>
White-crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>
Brown-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>
Tropical Boubou	<i>Laniarius major</i>
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Dark-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>
Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
Red-faced Cisticola	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>
Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>
Arrow-marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>
Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
Meves's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis mevesii</i>
Red-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
Green-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia melba</i>
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
Jameson's Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta rhodopareia</i>
Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name
Dusky Sengi	<i>Elephantulus fuscus</i>
African Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>
Southern Lesser Galago	<i>Galago moholi</i>
Vervet Monkey	<i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i>
Yellow Baboon	<i>Papio cynocephalus</i>
Scrub Hare	<i>Lepus saxatilis</i>
Cape Porcupine	<i>Hystrix africaeaustralis</i>
Smith's Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus cepapi</i>
Serval	<i>Leptailurus serval</i>
Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>
White-tailed Mongoose	<i>Ichneumia albicauda</i>
Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>
Spotted Hyaena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>
Central African Large-spotted Genet	<i>Genetta maculata</i>
African Wild Dog	<i>Lycaon pictus</i>
Honey Badger	<i>Mellivora capensis</i>
Plains Zebra	<i>Equus quagga</i>
Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>
Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>
Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>
Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>
Puku	<i>Kobus vardonii</i>
Southern Reedbuck	<i>Redunca arundinum</i>
Sharpe's Grysbok	<i>Raphicerus sharpei</i>
Common Eland	<i>Taurotragus oryx</i>
Red Hartebeest	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus caama</i>
Blue Wildebeest	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>
Common Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
African Buffalo	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>
Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>
Greater Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>
Giraffe	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i>

Nile Crocodile also recorded