



A regional endemic occurring only in Malawi and neighbouring Mozambique, the endangered Thyolo Alethe is a must-see bird and we were fortunate enough to see it well this year. (Nik Borrow)

MALAWI

17 - 30 DECEMBER 2016

LEADER: NIK BORROW assisted by ABASI JANA

During this tour we visited extensive miombo woodlands, mopane forests, montane copses, rolling open moorlands, dense thickets and riverine marshes and we stayed in some extremely comfortable and well-appointed locations enjoying some superb food and excellent birding. Our adventure began in the capital, Lilongwe and soon after stepping out of the plane we found ourselves looking at tiny Locust Finches in a small dambo where we also flushed a Great Snipe and in the local nature sanctuary enjoyed fine views of African Broadbill. Two full days were spent in the miombo woodlands of Dzalanyama Forest Reserve searching for the roving and often large bird parties that contained some mouth-watering species such as the localised Stierling's Woodpecker and colourful Anchieta's Sunbirds. We enjoyed unbelievably close views of Souza's Shrikes and hunted out a family party of the rather strange Boulder Chat. Driving south along the

border with Mozambique we spotted a pair of Bertram's Weavers during a roadside stop as we journeyed to Thyolo Mountain where we scored well with the near-endemic Thyolo Alethe as well as Buff-spotted Flufftail, Green-headed Oriole and the exquisite White-winged Apalis. In the small remaining patches of scrubby forest above Zomba we found Malawi's only endemic, the pretty Yellow-throated Apalis but did not linger long here as we traveled onwards to sample the plentiful wildlife in Liwonde National Park. A cruise up the Shire River enabled us to gain an intimate view of the birds and game and highlights were eyeball-to-eyeball views of White-backed Night Heron, the enormous marmalade coloured Pel's Fishing Owl, a pair of Racket-tailed Rollers, Böhm's Bee-eater, Brown-breasted Barbet and a large herd of Southern Sable Antelope. On Christmas Eve a long drive took us up to Chintheche on the shores of Lake Malawi and nearby a pair of East Coast Akalats performed incredibly well. Christmas itself was celebrated in the superb Chelinda Lodge on the scenically stunning Nyika Plateau. The cool mountain air was a glorious change from the hot and humid lowlands and the birding was excellent on the expansive moorlands with wonderful views of a male Scarlet-tufted Sunbird, Blue Swallows, Montane Widowbirds and Denham's Bustards. In the miombo woodlands surrounding Vwaza Marsh we tracked down a family group of unique Babbling Starlings as well as the striking Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver. Breaking the journey back at Luwawa a Red-chested Flufftail was seen there and en route to Lilongwe the delightful Lesser Jacana was added to the list. Other avian treasures included Red-winged Francolin, Livingstone's and Schalow's Turacos, Burchell's Coucal, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Ruwenzori Nightjar, Pale-billed Hornbill, Whyte's Barbet, Moustached Tinkerbird, Miombo Pied Barbet, Brown-backed Honeybird, Pallid Honeyguide, Bennett's Woodpecker (heard only), Speckle-throated Woodpecker, Dickinson's Kestrel, Brown-necked Parrot (Grey-headed form), Lilian's Lovebird, Cape Batis, Fülleborn's Boubou, Rufous-bellied and Miombo Tits, Black-browed, Olive-headed and Sharpe's Greenbul, Pearl-breasted Swallow, Livingstone's Flycatcher, Black-lored, Churring and Wailing Cisticolas, Chapin's and Brown-headed Apalises, Green-backed Camaroptera, Stierling's Wren-warbler, Brown Parisoma, Miombo Blue-eared and Meves's Starlings, Miombo Scrub Robin, Böhm's Flycatcher, White-chested Alethe, Olive-flanked Ground Robin, Sharpe's and East Coast Akalats, Miombo Rock Thrush, Arnott's Chat, Miombo, Ludwig's and Forest Double-collared Sunbirds, Southern Brown-throated Weaver, Orange-winged Pytilia, Red-throated Twinspot, Wood and Striped Pipits, Southern Citril and Reichard's, Black-eared, and Yellow-browed Seedeaters.



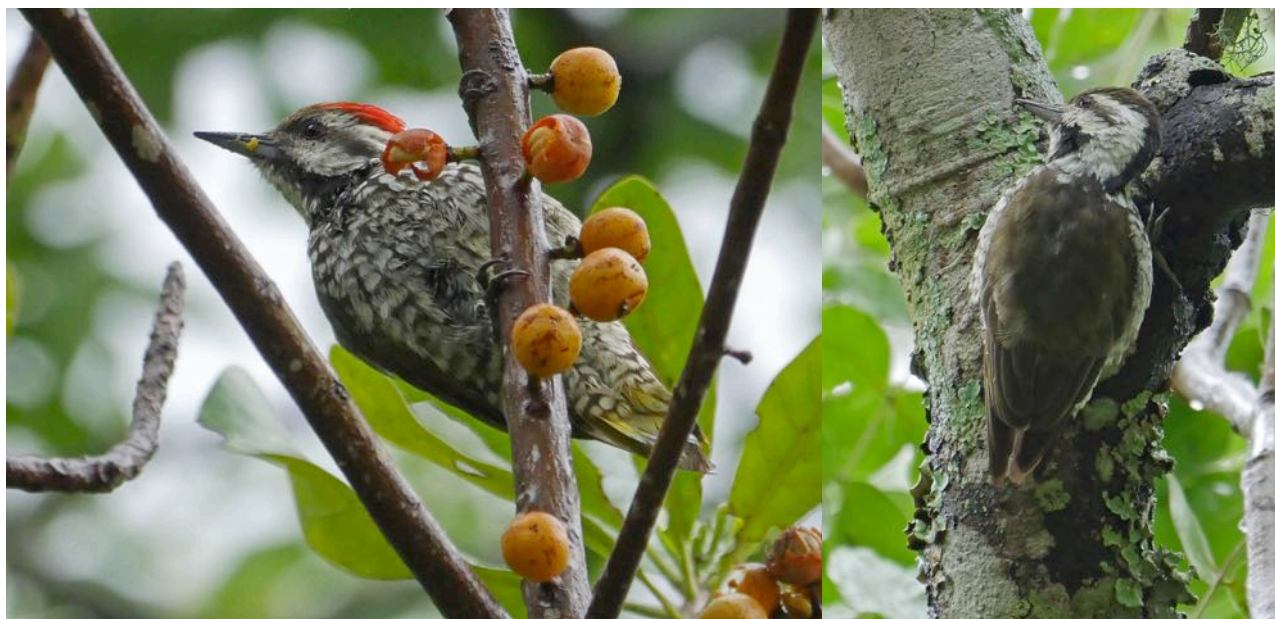
White-browed Robin-Chats are vociferous and colourful inhabitants of Lilongwe (left). A pair of African Black Ducks floats downstream in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary (right). (Nik Borrow)

Our arrival in the early afternoon at Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi was followed by refreshingly smooth immigration and customs formalities where our extremely professional outfitters warmly welcomed us and before we knew what was happening we were out of the airport and promptly dragging ourselves across a small dambo in search of the tiny, colourful Locust Finch which was present in small numbers thus starting the tour with a bang. A flock of Orange-breasted Waxbills flew around us, a Great Snipe was flushed and there were also Western Cattle Egret, Black-headed Heron, Singing, Croaking and Short-winged Cisticolas, Yellow-mantled Widowbird and Yellow-throated Longclaw to be seen. We headed into town noting common birds such as Grey Heron, Red-eyed Dove, African Palm Swift, Little Swift, Rock Kestrel, Pied Crow, Dark-

capped Bulbul, Barn Swallow and an impressive flock held just some of the large number of Amur Falcons that spend the non-breeding season in this part of the world. We dropped our luggage off at our delightful lodge where the gardens held Schalow's Turaco, Black Cuckoo, Speckled Mousebird and the pretty White-browed Robin-Chat before heading back out to the local nature sanctuary.

Although it was the end of the afternoon and our time was limited we managed to see a few nice birds. Perhaps the star of the show was a male African Broadbill that sat quietly above our heads but we also enjoyed good looks at Golden-tailed and Cardinal Woodpeckers as well as Black-throated Wattle-eye and Orange-breasted Bushshrike. Along the river, there was a pair of African Black Ducks with Hamerkop, Reed Cormorant and Brown-hooded and Malachite Kingfishers and during our visit we also noted Tambourine Dove, Common Swift, Green Wood-hoopoe, Black-backed Puffback, Tropical Boubou, Terrestrial Brownbul, Kurrichane Thrush, Spectacled, Southern Masked and Village Weavers and Red-throated Twinspot before it was time to leave.

The days begin early in Malawi for it was already light by five in the morning and we left our very comfortable lodge early in order to reach the attractive open woodlands of the famous Dzalanyama Forest Reserve soon after dawn. However this timing set the pace of the tour and gradually we acclimatised to these early starts in order not to miss the most fruitful parts of the day. The vegetation in the reserve is dominated by miombo, which is a Swahili word for the genus of tree named *Brachystegia*. This distinctive habitat is only found in the southern central part of Africa and is home to a very distinctive avifauna. Our visit was timed at the beginning of the rainy season and the dry branches were well covered with striking fresh green leaves, which here and there were also interspersed with splashes of rich red and orange reminiscent of temperate autumn colours. In recent years there has been much illegal logging in this reserve to the extent that there is now a permanent army camp based there to prevent further extraction.



One of the special birds of Dzalanyama Forest Reserve is the localised Stierling's Woodpecker. We had repeated opportunities to see this species, which we currently see on no other tour. (male left, female right). (Nik Borrow)

Upon arrival at the forest virtually the first birds seen were two male Anchieta's Sunbirds, which sat nicely for telescope views. Black-collared and Whyte's Barbets were seen well, a dainty White-tailed Blue Flycatcher sat on its lichen cup nest and a Thick-billed Cuckoo flew over our heads but could not be persuaded to return. During a short climb up the lower slopes of one of the wooded kopjes a singing Striped Pipit was seen and a family party of the hoped for and somewhat strange Boulder Chat showed briefly. However it was with some ominous thunderous rumblings that the rain started and frustratingly remained with us all day. Everything became more and more sodden but despite the weather we soldiered on because there was actually quite a lot of bird activity. At this time of the year there are many young birds and the bird parties came fast and furious. There was certainly no problem finding birds and wave after wave enticed us into the

soaked woodlands in search of the specialties. One of the main targets of our visit was the restricted range and uncommon Stierling's Woodpecker and it was with some relief that this target fell so easily on more than one occasion during our explorations. Böhm's Flycatchers can also be tricky to see but this time we saw them easily along with other miombo specialties such as Rufous-bellied and Miombo Tits, Green-capped Eremomela, Red-capped Crombec, Yellow-bellied and Southern Hyliotas, African Spotted Creeper, Miombo Rock Thrush, Amethyst, Western Violet-backed and Miombo Double-collared Sunbirds, Yellow-throated Petronia and Black-eared Seedeater. Stierling's Wren-warblers uttered their endless mechanical *tlip-tlip-tlip* calls and the bird parties would also typically involve species such as noisy Fork-tailed Drongos, Chinspot Batis, White-crested and Retz's Helmetshrikes and silvery White-breasted Cuckooshrikes. Probably due to the foul weather, raptors were inconspicuous but we did note Wahlberg's Eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Shikra, Common (Steppe) Buzzard and Eurasian Hobby. Black (Eastern) Saw-wings showed off their white underwing coverts as they zipped to and fro and other species seen during the day included Ring-necked Dove, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, African Green Pigeon, Klaas's and Red-chested Cuckoos, Lilac-breasted and Broad-billed Rollers, Striped Kingfisher, Little and European Bee-eaters, Common Scimitarbill, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Green-backed (Little Spotted) Woodpecker, Brubru, African Golden Oriole, African Paradise Flycatcher, White-necked Raven, Lesser Striped Swallow, Willow Warbler, Garden Warbler, African Yellow White-eye, Violet-backed Starling, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, Red-headed Weaver, Black-winged Red Bishop, Red-collared Widowbird, African Firefinch, Blue Waxbill, Bronze Mannikin, Pin-tailed Whydah, Tree Pipit, Southern Citril, Yellow-fronted Canary and Golden-breasted and Cabanis's Buntings. The rain finally stopped as the light was fading last decent bird of the day was a Pearl-breasted Swallow perched on the branches of a bare tree.



Striped Pipit was seen well in Dzalanyama (left) and we managed some amazing close looks at Souza's Shrikes (right). (Nik Borrow)

The following day was drier and somewhat brighter and Lesser Honeyguide, Grey-olive Greenbul, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Arrow-marked Babbler, Grey Tit-flycatcher and Fan-tailed Grassbird were found and we managed to find most of the missing specialties. A responsive Miombo Scrub Robin showed well and a very obliging family party of Souza's Shrikes allowed particularly close approach. Noisy Pale-billed Hornbills appeared to be part of a large bird party that included Pallid Honeyguide, Neddicky, Wood Pipit and Reichard's Seedeater. After a superb picnic lunch we made another attempt to see the Boulder Chats better. We flushed a Spotted Eagle Owl as we climbed through the rocks and eventually the chats were seen well resting on the rocks. Other species seen during the day included African Hawk Eagle, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Crowned Hornbill, Black Cuckooshrike, Black-headed Oriole, Flappet Lark, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Southern Black, Pale and Ashy Flycatchers, Olive and Variable Sunbirds, Holub's Golden Weaver, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Red-backed Mannikin, Mountain Wagtail and Brimstone Canary. As the afternoon drew to a close the wind strengthened and another belt of heavy rain approached thus bringing another days birding to a slightly premature close.

These first two days certainly turned up a heap of amazing birds but it was time to move on and the following day we drove through mile after mile of cultivation. The road carried us down along the Mozambique border and not for the first time during this tour we found ourselves divided between one country and another although here it was somewhat strange to see signs in English on one side of the road and in Portuguese on the other! At one stop a number of Abdim's Storks were gathered in the fields and at another we managed to get a fine pair of Bertram's Weavers on both our Malawi and Mozambique lists! Other species recorded during our journey included African Stonechat, House Sparrow, Yellow Bishop and Red-billed Firefinch and we arrived at our destination of the Satemwa tea estate in good time for initial exploration.

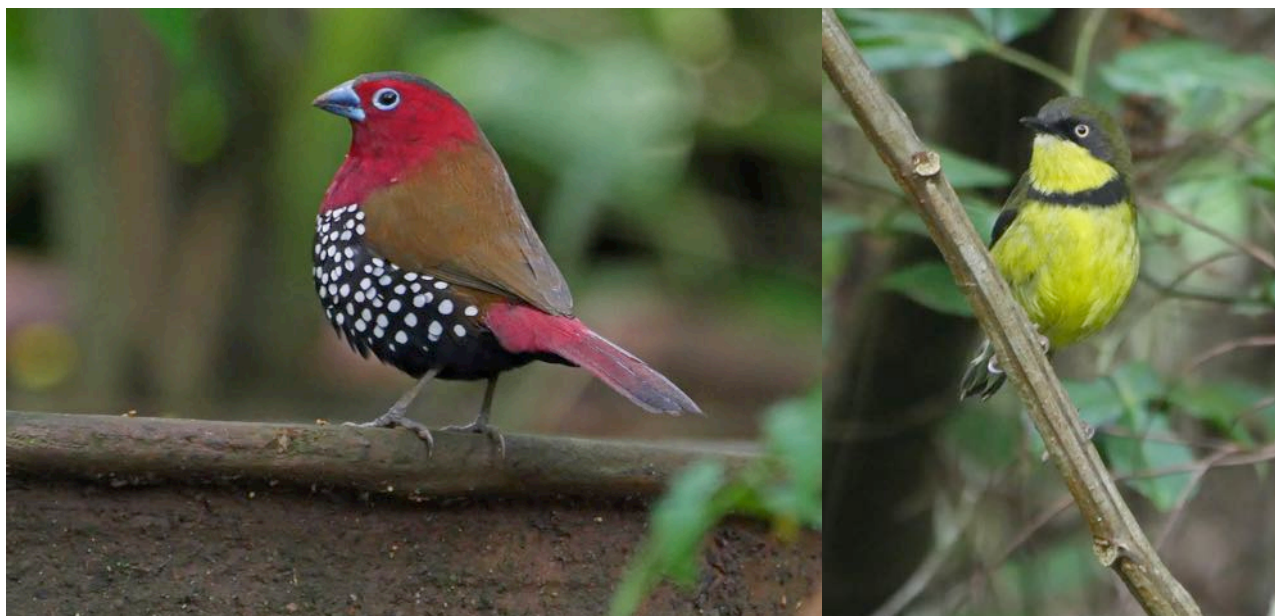
Virtually all of the forest on Thyolo Mountain has been cleared and the only surviving tiny patch survives in a far corner of the Satemwa tea estate. It was here that we came to search for some very endangered species and in particular the alethe that is named after the mountain. We had the afternoon and the following morning to track down our quarry. We arrived in the early afternoon and checked in to our impressive accommodation in a tea estate colonial style house built in 1936 that held nesting Wire-tailed Swallows and there were also Livingstone's Turacos in the fruiting trees in the grounds. The weather looked promising and a Silvery-cheeked Hornbill was glimpsed flying away as we arrived at the tiny patch of remnant forest where a Thyolo Alethe was already calling as we entered the forest. But no sooner had we done so than the situation changed for the worse and once again the rain came tumbling down for a good hour. We resumed our quest once the rain had subsided and although the alethe called persistently for short periods it showed no sign of allowing us to even glimpse it. The bird it seemed was teasing us and as it was getting later and more gloomy we were just about to give up when it started to call from a more accessible part of the forest and we couldn't have been more surprised when finally we saw it perched on an open branch right in front of us! Instead of being something of a damp squib, the afternoon was suddenly a brilliant success and we returned to the lodge, stopping on the way for a party of Red-necked Spurfowl, for a fine evening meal which was followed by a spectacular display from one of the resident African Wood Owls and some fig-munching Thick-tailed Greater Galagos.



In the Thyolo area we saw African Wood Owl by night (left) and the exquisite Green-headed Oriole by day (right). (Nik Borrow)

The following morning the weather was fine and soon after dawn we visited some other forest patches in search of the beautiful Green-headed Oriole and the exquisite White-winged Apalis, perhaps Africa's most beautiful warbler? Wailing Trumpeter Hornbills greeted us and we could hear the chitterings of the apalis and the liquid cries of the oriole but neither of these species initially gave themselves up easily and a battle ensued to set eyes on them but in the end we managed walk-away views of both! We celebrated the early morning success with a hearty breakfast and then returned to the forest to see what other species we could find. An African Goshawk was spotted in the shadows. A bird party contained 'Ludwig's' Square-tailed

Drongo and wing-flicking Yellow-streaked Greenbuls whilst a Buff-spotted Flufftail was persuaded to show itself to some of us. A colourful male Black-fronted Bushshrike showed extremely well and we also had good views of the dainty Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, a glittering African Emerald Cuckoo, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Black-headed Apalis, Spotted Flycatcher, Green-backed Camaroptera, Collared and Bronzy Sunbirds, Dark-backed Weaver and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. Even the Thyolo Alethe was seen again and it was definitely a sad moment when we had to leave Satemwa where the grandiose accommodation had brought a whole different meaning to 'normal BirdQuest standard' and our final birds was a pair of stunning Red-throated Twinspots hopping around on the drive!



Red-throated Twinspot at Satemwa (left) and the endemic Yellow-throated Apalis above Zomba (right). (Nik Borrow)

We headed back northwards to Zomba where in some more hill forest patches we went in search of Malawi's only endemic, the delightful Yellow-throated Apalis. Most of the slopes at Zomba have been converted to rather birdless pine plantations, but here and there gullies with original montane forest remain and these are home to the recently split and immediately endangered apalis. We found this species, recently split from Bar-throated Apalis after a short search during which time we also encountered Long-crested Eagle, Lemon Dove, hulking African Olive Pigeons and skulking Evergreen Forest Warblers, the dainty White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, pretty White-starred Robin, Cape Robin-Chat and some most obliging Placid Greenbuls. A pre-breakfast walk in the same area gave us some White-eared Barbets and Forest Double-collared Sunbirds. Our first Little Greenbul and African Dusky Flycatcher were seen and finally got to see Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird as opposed to only hearing it. A Brown Snake Eagle and a flock of African Black Swifts were in the skies above our heads whilst our final birds were another pair of White-winged Apalis and a Red-winged Starling on the roof of the hotel!

Next we turned to the serene Shire River and Malawi's famed Liwonde National Park. Our journey took us all the way by boat from Liwonde town to the very special Mvuu Wilderness Lodge thus allowing a marvellous wildlife extravaganza to pass us by as we travelled upstream. Able to relax and sit back in our seats, a veritable frieze of wildlife passed us by. African Savanna Elephants and vast numbers of Hippos often decorated with Red-billed Oxpeckers dominated the riverbanks and there were also plenty of Common Impala, Ellipsen Waterbuck and Yellow Baboons to be seen. At times the floodplains were covered with waterbirds and these included Egyptian and Spur-winged Geese and White-faced Whistling Ducks. African Openbills were numerous and interspersed with Yellow-billed and Woolly-necked Storks and even a pair of enormous Saddle-billed Storks and a lone White Stork. There were also African Sacred, and Hadada Ibises, African Spoonbill, Western Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets, Black, Striated and Squacco Heron and ultimately the world's largest; the Goliath Heron. A number of African Fish Eagles and occasional Western Ospreys were stationed along the banks at regular intervals, Black Crakes ran along the shoreline and African Jacanas tripped across the lily pads. Waders included resident Black-winged Stilt, Water Thick-knee,

African Wattled, Spur-winged and Long-toed Lapwings and Collared Pratincoles alongside Palearctic migrants such as Common Greenshank and Common and Wood Sandpipers. We also encountered a superb flock of African Skimmers resting on a sandbank, large numbers of Pied Kingfishers and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters as well as Southern Brown-throated Weavers and a few Burchell's Coucals.



A large flock of African Skimmers on the Shire River in Liwonde National Park allowed close approach. (Nik Borrow)

Arriving at Mvu Camp we were welcomed ashore and greeted by the much-wanted Böhm's Bee-eater and the striking Collared Palm Thrush before being shown to our spacious rooms that overlooked an inlet of the main river. Settling down to a tasty lunch we could watch the birds on the river and eat at the same time and a Western Banded Snake Eagle with a snake caught just outside the restaurant was a great show during this first lunch! That afternoon and the rest of the following day were spent exploring on foot, in open-top safari vehicles and boats the waterways, thickets and mopane woodlands that make up the park. In the woodlands White-browed Sparrow Weavers were nothing less than abundant and we had great views of the pretty little Lilian's Lovebird. Speckle-throated Woodpecker fell relatively easily, the localised Dickinson's Kestrel showed well and we managed to locate a pair of Racket-tailed Rollers during our first afternoon and obtained some great scope views. The strikingly pied Arnott's Chat favoured the mopane where we also saw our first Purple-crested Turaco as well as African Grey, Southern Red-billed and Southern Ground Hornbills, Brown-headed Parrot and plenty of Meves's Starlings. A nice feature of the tour that we had little difficulty getting used to was a succession of sundowners and in Liwonde we enjoyed watching the sun set with a drink in hand and the chance to spot a Bat Hawk or a Red-necked Falcon dash past. At night we found Square-tailed Nightjar and mammals such as Marsh, White-tailed and Meller's Mongooses and Rusty-spotted Genet.

The next day we went out early to check the usual roost sites of Pel's Fishing Owl but frustratingly we repeatedly drew a blank. However by way of compensation, a Brown-breasted Barbet was much appreciated, as was the attractive Livingstone's Flycatcher that frequented the thickets around our camp. The waters edge held several White-backed Night Herons tucked into the riverbank and we had eyeball-to-eyeball views! Surely Malawi is *the* place to see these amazing creatures. Mammals included some stately Zambezi Kudu and in the afternoon we located a fine herd of Sable Antelope. We tried through the day and evening to find an owl but to no avail but other birds included Helmeted Guineafowl, Black-crowned Night Heron, Black Stork, Marabou Stork, Glossy Ibis, African Darter, White-breasted Cormorant, Bateleur, Senegal Lapwing, Mourning Collared Dove, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Grey Go-away-bird, Red-faced Mousebird, Levillant's, Diederik and African Cuckoos, European Roller, Woodland and Giant Kingfishers,

African Hoopoe, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Sand Martin, Mosque Swallow, Red-backed Shrike, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Southern Black Tit, Sombre Greenbul, Icterine Warbler, Rattling Cisticola, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Lesser Masked Weaver and Southern Grey-headed Sparrow.



Flocks of Lilian's Lovebirds frequent Liwonde National Park (top left) and Böhme's Bee-eaters are usually easy to see (top right). The park is also well known for being a superb place to see White-backed Night Heron (bottom left) and the huge Pel's Fishing Owl although it was somewhat shy this year! (bottom right) (Nik Borrow)

We were determined not to give up on the owl and early the next morning we tried one more time at a spot that was considered to be most reliable for the bird and this time we were lucky for as we approached the giant marmalade-coloured Pel's Fishing Owl exploded from the riverine shrubbery and we managed to get some good scope views of this amazing creature before it departed to find a more peaceful roost site for the

day. A pair of Brown-necked Parrots of the grey-headed form were also seen and so our little excursion was an undeniable success and all that remained was for us to pack our bags onto the boat to carry us back down the Shire River where a few Gull-billed Terns were seen before we reached Liwonde town and re-joined our vehicle to embark on a long drive up to Chintheche on the shores of Lake Malawi for an overnight stop. This part of Malawi is densely populated with most of the countryside transformed into farmland and little new was seen on the journey except some Eastern Golden Weavers although our travels certainly provided some insights into the African way of life. Our hotel garden enabled us to obtain excellent views of several fierce-looking African Barred Owlets in broad daylight. Purple-banded Sunbirds were in rather scrappy non-breeding plumage and in the environs we also found Brown-crowned Tchagra, White-browed Scrub Robin and a rather showy Little Rush Warbler.



No less than four African Barred Owlets were seen in the garden of our hotel at Chintheche (left). East Coast Akalat aka Gunning's Robin proved easy to see this year in some nearby forests (right). (Nik Borrow)

The following early morning we paid a visit to one of the nearby blocks of lowland forest that is home to the skulking East Coast Akalat. This year we had marvellous views of a pair in the dense undergrowth and tangled lianas along with some showy Grey-olive Greenbuls. There was little else new to see here but we saw Eastern Nicator briefly before deciding to head onwards. A short roadside stop provided a pair of dapper Mocking Cliff Chats and we also made another stop in an open patch of degraded miombo woodland where we have previously seen Babbling Starlings. Sadly the starlings were nowhere to be seen although we had great views of the localised Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver. The dry hillsides were fairly devoid of birds although we did add Miombo Blue-eared Starling, Collared Flycatcher and Familiar Chat to the list and in the surrounding areas we also found Black-winged Kite, Black-chested Snake Eagle and Meyer's Parrot before continuing on towards the Nyika Plateau.

Entering into the Nyika National Park we drove through stunted miombo climbing higher into cooler air and made some more roadside stops where we were fortunate to find both Chapin's Apalis and Brown-headed Apalis along with Black-browed Greenbul, Brown Parisoma, White-headed Saw-wing and an African Yellow Warbler before reaching the plateau itself where a striking male Pallid Harrier was spotted and our first Augur Buzzard put in an appearance. We arrived at the extremely comfortable Chelinda Lodge in the heart of the park and settled into our spacious wooden chalets for a three nights stay in the cool mountain air. This was Christmas day and we celebrated in true fashion starting on the balcony overlooking the plateau with a candlelit recital given by the local staff whose sweet harmonies filled the night air. The performance was followed by a sumptuous Christmas dinner of succulent Cornish Chicken and Gammon with all of the trimmings as well as Mince Pies and Christmas crackers! The alcohol flowed and spirits were high and with good stories and conversation it certainly was a wonderful night to remember.

During the next two days we spent our time exploring the pockets of evergreen forest, the open grasslands and the marshy gullies with their small dams. We woke to views over the open bracken-cloaked, rolling hills that cover vast expanses of this splendid reserve. A pre-breakfast walk took us through woodland and the marshy, vegetated gullies where impressive Montane Widowbirds with their spectacular tails drifting behind them were displaying. This area was home to Dusky Turtle Dove, Fülleborn's Boubou, White-necked Raven, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Bar-throated Apalis, Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird, Baglaffeht Weaver, Yellow-crowned Canary and Yellow-browed Seedeater. We savoured our views of glittering elegant Blue Swallows with their long tail streamers skimming low over the grasses in the company of Angola Swallows. A variety of cisticolas as usual either fascinated or repelled but we were pleased to find the restricted range Churring and Black-lored Cisticolas.



Olive-flanked Ground Robin allowed some amazing views in the dark forests on the Nyika Plateau (left). A territorial male Scarlet-tufted Sunbird was most obliging on the open moorlands (right). (Nik Borrow)

After breakfast we set off to the Zambian side of the border and drove along a little used track, which proved popular with a Temminck's Courser and eventually led us to a remote patch of forest. The plan was to see as many of the forest specialties as possible but the birds seemed to have a completely different agenda and despite the woodlands being filled with bird song very little seemed to want to show itself. We managed to successfully obtain views of Moustached Tinkerbird, Cape (Malawi) Batis, Sharpe's Greenbul but Sharpe's Akalat, White-chested Alethe and Olive-flanked Ground Robin were only glimpsed at best! As the morning progressed, the invisible birds eventually fell silent and so we decided to give up and try again the following day and instead turned our attentions to the open grasslands with its invasive bracken and rocky outcrops. This habitat offered good grazing for mammals such as majestic Eland, striking 'Crawshay's' Zebra, Southern Reedbuck and the appealing Roan Antelope. A Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk was seen perched on the road and Montagu's Harriers and Banded Martin quartered the plains over stately Denham's Bustards. Rufous-naped Larks were not uncommon and the dark montane form of Grassland Pipit (that has been involved in some misleading historical confusion with an apparently mythical species known as 'Jackson's Pipit') was seen. In an area where dwarf proteas were flowering profusely we found a pair of glorious Scarlet-tufted Sunbird and enjoyed terrific views of the male, even noting the scarlet tufts that are normally hidden under the wing. The sundowners tasted particularly delicious that evening and then out came the blankets to keep us warm and the spotlights to pierce the darkness and during a night drive we had excellent looks at Side-striped Jackals and a Cape Porcupine that galloped along the track ahead of us for quite a distance! The days ended with an excellent dinner around a snug and inviting wood fire in the dining room.

As planned the following day we returned to the forest, determined to fare better than our previous attempt. Although there was far less birdsong on this occasion we soon encountered a perched White-chested Alethe

by chance and everyone had good views of this rich chestnut and gleaming white bird. A short distance ahead we finally discovered a vocal Sharpe's Akalat and this particular individual was a lot more cooperative and was watched preening for some minutes. The successes felt good and so we tried our luck with a vocal Olive-flanked Ground Robin that was teased out of the dense undergrowth to flaunt itself in front of us. We were extremely satisfied but it wasn't over yet and we finished the morning session with a fine male Bar-tailed Trogon perched in the canopy above us. Success tasted sweet and we ate our picnic lunch at the Zambian rest house where a pair of Mountain Yellow Warblers and White-eyed Slaty Flycatchers showed well. On the drive back to the lodge we found a young Leopard lazing on a rock by the side of the road. Our attentions disturbed it but it did not go far and gazed curiously out at us from the safety of some thick grasses. In the late afternoon the grasslands yielded a pair of Red-winged Francolins and some Wing-snapping and Wailing Cisticolas. A pair of Lappet-faced Vultures circled in the skies, a pair of Yellow-billed Oxpeckers was seen atop a Roan and at sundowner time several Malachite Sunbirds chased around our vehicle. The only notable bird on the night drive back was a Spotted Thick-knee.



At present we only encounter the unique Babbling Starling during our Malawi tour and this year we had great looks at a family group in Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. (Nik Borrow)

It was time to leave the big skies and spacious heights of the Nyika plateau but paused on the way down to grab a pair of Hildebrandt's Francolins before heading down to Vwaza Marsh where we had to concentrate on finding one bird in particular. We had missed the Babbling Starling on the way up so this was to be our last chance on the way down. It was quiet to start with and the day was already getting hot but eventually a few faint calls reached our ears and alerted us to a bird party somewhere nearby and then suddenly the starlings were in our sight. It took a while to track them down so that everyone had good views as the birds were moving very fast through the miombo and we had to repeatedly catch up with them. Finally the family group settled and we had fine views of both adults and juveniles. During our walk we also flushed a Shelley's Francolin and obtained views of Grey Penduline Tit and Orange-winged Pytilia. Around lunchtime rain

stopped play and coincided with the time to leave and head south for an overnight stop at Luwawa where a shadowy fly by Ruwenzori (Usambara) Nightjar was the final bird of the day.

Luwawa Forest Lodge is situated on the Viphya plateau amongst a rather barren pine plantation. However it was a pleasant location for an early morning walk around the lake where we found Olive Woodpecker, Lesser Swamp Warbler, Thick-billed Weaver and Green Twinspot and even managed to prise a Red-chested Flufftail from its hiding place. We left after breakfast and headed back towards Lilongwe but stopped en route in a patch of miombo. Here we encountered three Coqui Francolin and a juvenile Greater Honeyguide as well as gained brief views of Miombo Pied Barbet and both Green-backed and Brown-backed Honeybirds. Another stop at a roadside dam gave us no less than 10 Lesser Jacanas and there were also Yellow-billed Duck, Southern Pochard and Red-knobbed Coot.

Back at Lilongwe some of us visited the sewage farm before flying home and added a selection of Palearctic waders to the list including Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint and Ruff as well as resident Three-banded Plovers. Also present were Little Grebe, Yellow-billed Kite, Zitting Cisticola, Western Yellow Wagtail of the race *lutea* and Plain-backed Pipit.

All that remained was for us now was to pack our bags and head home. The trip had been an enormous success with some stunning views of some very localised species. Malawi is an extremely comfortable country with a good infrastructure that enables the visitor to see many miombo specialities as well as some iconic species such as Pel's Fishing Owl and Boulder Chat alongside true rarities such as Thyolo Alethe, Yellow-throated Apalis and Babbling Starling, and remains one of Africa's best-kept secrets.



Yendani Bwino means "Travel Safely" in Chichewa! (Pete Waterman)



A superb male Denham's Bustard, a species that is easily seen on the Nyika Plateau. (Nik Borrow)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

CR = Critically Endangered, **E** = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

BIRDS

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park and on Kasungu Dam.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* Easily seen in Liwonde National Park.

Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (LO) 2 en route to Nyika Plateau.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Easily seen in Liwonde National Park.

African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* A pair in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary and 1 on the Nyika Plateau.

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* 6 on Kasungu Dam.
Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* 1 male on Kasungu Dam.
Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.
Coqui Francolin *Peliperdix coqui* 3 seen well in Chimaliro Forest.
Red-winged Francolin ♦ *Scleroptila levaillantii* A secretive pair on the Nyika Plateau.
Shelley's Francolin *Scleroptila shelleyi* 1 flushed in Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.
Hildebrandt's Francolin *Pternistis hildebrandti* A pair as we left the Nyika Plateau.
Red-necked Spurfowl (R-n Francolin) *Pternistis afer* Seen well at Satemwa.
Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (H) Heard on the Nyika Plateau.
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* 1 on the Nyika Plateau.
Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* Easily seen in Liwonde National Park.
African Openbill (A Open-billed Stork) *Anastomus lamelligerus* Easily seen in Liwonde National Park.
Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* 1 in Liwonde National Park.
Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii* A flock of about 25 as we left Lilongwe.
Woolly-necked Stork (African Woollyneck) *Ciconia [episcopus] microscelis* At least 6 in Liwonde National Park.
White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* 1 of these Palearctic migrants in Liwonde National Park.
Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* At least 1 pair in Liwonde National Park.



Abdim's Storks by the roadside (left) and Saddle-billed Stork in Liwonde NP. This is the yellow-eyed female (right). (Nik Borrow)

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* 4 in Liwonde National Park.
African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Easily seen in Liwonde National Park.
Hadada Ibis (Hadedda I) *Bostrychia hagedash* Easily seen in Liwonde National Park.
Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* At least 30 in Liwonde National Park.
African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* 1 in Liwonde National Park.
White-backed Night Heron ♦ *Gorsachius leuconotus* Great views of 4 in Liwonde National Park.
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Great views in Liwonde National Park.
Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.
Squacco Heron (Common S H) *Ardeola ralloides* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Commonly encountered during the tour.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Small numbers encountered during the tour.
Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.
Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.
Great Egret (Western G E) *Ardea [alba] alba* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.
Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E) *Ardea [intermedia] brachyrhyncha* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.
Black Heron (B Egret) *Egretta ardesiaca* 1 in Liwonde National Park.
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* A small number of scattered sightings but most common in Liwonde National Park.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Abundant in Liwonde National Park.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Small numbers in Liwonde National Park.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* 2 sightings in Liwonde National Park.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in Liwonde National Park.

Black-winged Kite (B-shouldered K) *Elanus caeruleus* 2 sightings in the Nyika area.

African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus* Singletons at Satemwa and Chimaliro.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos* (E) A pair circling over the Nyika Plateau.

Black-chested Snake Eagle (B-breasted S E) *Circaetus pectoralis* 1 in the Vwaza area.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* 1 at Kuchawe.

Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens* 1 in Liwonde National Park.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* (NT) 2 sightings in Liwonde NP and 1 in the Vwaza area.

Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus* 1 at dusk in Liwonde National Park.

Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (NT) (H) Heard displaying over the Nyika Plateau forests.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis* 1 as we drove up to Kuchawe.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* 1 at Dzalanyama.

African Hawk-Eagle *Aquila spilogaster* 1 at Dzalanyama and pairs in Liwonde National Park.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* Only seen at Dzalanyama.

African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* Singletons at Satemwa and Kuchawe.

Shikra (Little Banded Goshawk) *Accipiter badius* 2 at Dzalanyama.

Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk (R-chested S) *Accipiter rufiventris* Good views of 1 perched on the Nyika Plateau.

African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus* 3 sightings on the Viphya Plateau.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (NT) 4 sightings of this Palearctic migrant on the Nyika Plateau.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* 3 sightings of this Palearctic migrant on the Nyika Plateau.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Sightings at Mzuzu and Lilongwe.

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* Most numerous in Liwonde NP.



A surprising encounter with a Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk on the Nyika (left). African Fish Eagle in Liwonde NP (right). (Nik Borrow)

Common Buzzard (Steppe B) *Buteo [buteo] vulpinus* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* 3 sightings on the Nyika Plateau.

Denham's Bustard (Stanley's B) *Neotis denhami* (NT) 5 individuals seen well on the Nyika Plateau.

Buff-spotted Flufftail ♦ *Sarothrura elegans* Some people got views of a male on Thyolo Mountain.

Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa* A male in flight at Luwawa.

Black Crane *Amaurornis flavirostra* Easily seen in Liwonde NP.

Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C) *Fulica cristata* Common on Kasungu Dam.

Water Thick-knee (W Dikkop) *Burhinus vermiculatus* Small numbers along the river in Liwonde NP.
Spotted Thick-knee (S Dikkop) *Burhinus capensis* 1 seen at night on the Nyika Plateau.
Long-toed Lapwing (L-t Plover) *Vanellus crassirostris* Common along the river in Liwonde NP.
Spur-winged Lapwing (S-w Plover) *Vanellus spinosus* Common along the river in Liwonde NP.
Senegal Lapwing (Lesser Black-winged Plover) *Vanellus lugubris* Adults with young in Liwonde NP.
African Wattled Lapwing (A W Plover) *Vanellus senegallus* Easily seen in Liwonde National Park.
Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* 3 at Lilongwe sewage farm.
Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis* 10 seen well on Kasungu Dam.



Long-toed Lapwings are numerous along the Shire River (left). No less than ten Lesser Jacanas on Kasungu Dam(right). (Nik Borrow)

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Common along the river in Liwonde NP.
Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (NT) 1 of these Palearctic migrants was flushed at a dam in Lilongwe.
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* 4 of these Palearctic migrants at Lilongwe sewage farm.
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants in Liwonde NP and Lilongwe.
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Easy to see these Palearctic migrants in Liwonde NP and Lilongwe.
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Easy to see these Palearctic migrants in Liwonde NP and Lilongwe.
Little Stint *Calidris minuta* 110+ of these Palearctic migrants at Lilongwe sewage farm.
Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* 6 of these Palearctic migrants at Lilongwe sewage farm.
Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii* 1 seen on the Zambian side of the Nyika Plateau.
Collared Pratincole (Red-winged P) *Glareola pratincola* 150+ in Liwonde NP.
African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris* (NT) A flock of 200+ impressed us along the Shire River in Liwonde NP.
Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 3 on the Shire River in Liwonde NP.
Feral Pigeon (Rock Dove) *Columba livia* 'Table' birds only.
African Olive Pigeon (Rameron P) *Columba arquatrix* Seen on the Zomba and Nyika Plateaus.
Lemon Dove (Cinnamon D) *Columba larvata* 1 seen at Kuchawe.
Dusky Turtle Dove (Pink-breasted T D) *Streptopelia lugens* Singletons on the Nyika Plateau.
Mourning Collared Dove (African M D) *Streptopelia decipiens* 1 seen in Liwonde NP.
Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* A common and widespread species.
Ring-necked Dove (Cape Turtle D) *Streptopelia capicola* A very common and widespread species.
Laughing Dove (Palm D) *Spilopelia senegalensis* Just seen on the journey to Luwawa.
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove (Green-s D) *Turtur chalcospilos* Small numbers seen in the dry bush country.
Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* Small numbers seen in moister habitats than the preceding species.
Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria* More often heard than seen but several good sightings.
African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus* Common at Dzalanyama.
Livingstone's Turaco ♦ *Tauraco livingstonii* Easily seen on Thyolo Mountain and at Kuchawe.
Schalow's Turaco ♦ (S's Lourie) *Tauraco schalowi* The more widespread turaco in Malawi.

Purple-crested Turaco (P-c Lourie) *Tauraco porphyreolophus* Wonderful views in Liwonde NP.
Grey Go-away-bird (G Lourie) *Corythaixoides concolor* Singletons in Liwonde NP.
Burchell's Coucal ◇ *Centropus burchellii* Widespread sightings during the tour.
Levaillant's Cuckoo (Striped Crested C) *Clamator levaillantii* 1 in Liwonde NP.
Jacobin Cuckoo (Black-and-white C) *Clamator jacobinus* 1 in the Nyika NP.
Thick-billed Cuckoo ◇ *Pachycoccyx audeberti* 1 in flight at Dzalanyama.
Diederik Cuckoo (Diederik/Didric C) *Chrysococcyx caprius* Seen in Liwonde NP.
Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* Seen in Dzalanyama and on Thyolo Mountain.
African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus* A glittering male seen on Thyolo Mountain.
Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* 2 in Lilongwe and 1 in the Vwaza area.
Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* Often heard and seen well at Dzalanyama.
African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* 1 in Liwonde NP.
African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* (H) Heard only in Liwonde NP.
Spotted Eagle-Owl *Bubo africanus* Easy to see on the Nyika Plateau at night.



Purple-crested Turaco in Liwonde NP (left) and Spotted Eagle Owl at night on one of our chalets on the Nyika (right). (Nik Borrow)

Pel's Fishing Owl ◇ *Scotopelia peli* No adjective can do this superb owl justice. Seen well in Liwonde NP.
African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* Seen well on Thyolo Mountain.
African Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense* Super during the day views at Chintcheche.
Ruwenzori Nightjar ◇ (Usambara N) *Caprimulgus [ruwenzorii] guttifer* 1 at dusk at Luwawa.
Square-tailed Nightjar (Mozambique/Gabon N) *Caprimulgus fossii* Seen at night in Liwonde NP.
African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Common with widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Common Swift (European S) *Apus apus* Some large numbers of this Palearctic migrant were noted.
African Black Swift *Apus barbatus* A flock was seen over Kuchawe.
Little Swift *Apus affinis* Widespread sightings during the tour.
Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* Widespread sightings during the tour.
Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus* Sightings in Liwonde NP and on the drive to Chintcheche.
Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* (H) Heard in the Vwaza area.
Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum* Great looks at a male on the Nyika Plateau.

Racket-tailed Roller ♦ *Coracias spatulatus* A pair of these much-wanted birds showed well for us in Liwonde NP.
Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus* Most numerous in Liwonde NP.
European Roller *Coracias garrulus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen in Liwonde NP.
Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris* Small numbers noted throughout the tour.
Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* Sightings in Liwonde NP.
Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* Small numbers in Liwonde NP.
African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta* 1 was seen at Dzalanyama.
Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus* Easy to see along the river in Liwonde NP.



Woodland Kingfisher (left) and Malachite Kingfisher (right) in Liwonde NP. (Nik Borrow)

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima* 1 was seen along the river in Liwonde NP.
Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Common and very easy to see along the river in Liwonde NP.
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus* Small numbers in Liwonde NP and Vwaza Marsh GR.
Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* Easily seen at Dzalanyama and in Liwonde NP.
Böhm's Bee-eater ♦ *Merops boehmi* This localised bee-eater was easy to see in Liwonde NP.
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* Good numbers were seen along the Shire River in Liwonde NP.
European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Good numbers of this Palearctic migrant at widespread localities.
African Hoopoe *Upupa africana* 2 were seen in Liwonde NP.
Green Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* Small numbers noted at Dzalanyama and in Liwonde NP.
Common Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* Small numbers noted at widespread localities during the tour.
Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri* (V) Pairs seen twice in Liwonde NP.
Southern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus rufirostris* Commonly seen in Liwonde NP.
Crowned Hornbill *Tockus alboterminatus* 2 at Dzalanyama.
African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus* 2 in Liwonde NP.
Pale-billed Hornbill ♦ *Tockus pallidirostris* 1 seen well at Dzalanyama.
Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator* Easy to see but sounds more like a wailing baby than a trumpet!
Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis* 1 seen briefly in flight at Thyolo Mountain.
White-eared Barbet *Stactolaema leucotis* Just 4 seen at Kuchawe.
Whyte's Barbet ♦ *Stactolaema whytii* 5 seen well at Dzalanyama.
Moustached Tinkerbird ♦ (M Green T) *Pogoniulus leucomystax* 1 seen well on the Nyika Plateau.
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (Golden-r T) *Pogoniulus bilineatus* Seen well at Kuchawe and heard elsewhere.
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* Seen well at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.
Miombo Pied Barbet ♦ *Tricholaema frontata* This elusive species showed for some at Chimaliro.
Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus* Seen well at Dzalanyama.
Brown-breasted Barbet ♦ *Lybius melanopterus* Great views of 1 in Liwonde NP.

Green-backed Honeybird (Slender-billed Honeyguide) *Prodotiscus zambesiae* 1 at Chimaliro Forest.
 Brown-backed Honeybird ◊ (Wahlberg's H) *Prodotiscus regulus* (LO) Nik saw at Chimaliro Forest.
 Pallid Honeyguide ◊ (Eastern L H) *Indicator meliphilus* 1 at Dzalanyama.
 Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* 1 at Dzalanyama and heard at Thyolo Mountain.
 Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus* Seen at Thyolo Mountain and in the Nyika Plateau forests.
 Greater Honeyguide (Black-throated H) *Indicator indicator* 1 juvenile at Chimaliro Forest.
 Bennett's Woodpecker ◊ *Campethera bennettii* (H) Heard only in the Vwaza area.
 Speckle-throated Woodpecker ◊ (Reichenow's W) *Campethera scriptoricauda* Seen well in Liwonde NP.
 Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* Seen well in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.
 Green-backed Woodpecker (Little Spotted W) *Campethera cailliautii* Seen well Dzalanyama.
 Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Widespread sightings during the tour.
 Stierling's Woodpecker ◊ *Dendropicos stierlingi* (NT) Great views of this localised bird at Dzalanyama.
 Olive Woodpecker *Dendropicos griseocephalus* 1 on the Nyika Plateau and seen well at Luwawa.
 Rock Kestrel *Falco rupicolus* A few in the Lilongwe area.
 Dickinson's Kestrel ◊ *Falco dickinsoni* 2 in Liwonde NP.



Speckle-throated Woodpecker (left) and Dickinson's Kestrel (right) in Liwonde NP. (Nik Borrow)

Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera* 1 at sundowner time in Liwonde National Park.
 Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* Good numbers were seen over Lilongwe and also Vwaza Marsh.
 Eurasian Hobby (European H) *Falco subbuteo* Widespread sightings of these Palearctic migrants.
 Brown-necked Parrot ◊ (Grey-headed P) *Poicephalus [fuscicollis] suahelicus* A pair in Liwonde NP.
 Meyer's Parrot (Brown P) *Poicephalus meyeri* A few were seen in the Vwaza Marsh area.
 Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus* Small numbers in Liwonde NP.
 Lilian's Lovebird ◊ (Nyasa L) *Agapornis lilianae* Good numbers seen in Liwonde NP.
 African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* A male seen well in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary and heard elsewhere.
 Cape Batis ◊ (Malawi B) *Batis [capensis] dimorpha* Seen well on the Nyika Plateau and at Luwawa.
 Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
 Black-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira peltata* Seen in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary and Liwonde NP.
 White-crested Helmetshrike (W H-s) *Prionops plumatus* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
 Retz's Helmetshrike (Red-billed H-s) *Prionops retzii* Seen well at Dzalanyama and the Vwaza area.
 Grey-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* (H) Heard in Liwonde NP and the Vwaza area.
 Black-fronted Bushshrike *Chlorophoneus nigrifrons* A male showed extremely well on Thyolo Mountain.
 Orange-breasted Bushshrike (Sulphur-b B-s) *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* Seen well at Dzalanyama.
 Brown-crowned Tchagra (B-headed/Three-streaked T) *Tchagra australis* 1 seen at Chintheche.
 Black-crowned Tchagra (B-headed T) *Tchagra senegalus* A few widespread sightings.
 Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla* A commonly encountered and widespread bird.

Fülleborn's Boubou ♦ (F's Black B) *Laniarius fuelleborni* Seen well on the Nyika Plateau.
Tropical Boubou *Laniarius major* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Brubru *Nilaus afer* Seen well at Dzalanyama Forest Reserve and in the Vwaza area.
Grey Cuckooshrike *Coracina caesia* 1 in the mist in the Vumba Mountains.
White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis* A regularly encountered member of miombo bird parties.



A stunning male Black-throated Wattle-eye (left) and the silvery White-breasted Cuckooshrike (right). (Nik Borrow)

Black Cuckooshrike *Campephaga flava* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Souza's Shrike ♦ *Lanius souzae* Excellent views at Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.
Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (LO) Both male and female Palearctic migrants noted in Liwonde NP.
Northern Fiscal *Lanius humeralis* Widespread sightings throughout the tour. See Note.
Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (LO) This Palearctic migrant was seen by Nik in Liwonde NP.
African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus* Widespread sightings in Malawi.
Green-headed Oriole ♦ *Oriolus chlorocephalus* Now a rare bird in Malawi we saw a pair in the Thyolo area.
Black-headed Oriole (Eastern B-h O) *Oriolus larvatus* Seen at Dzalanyama and Chimaliro Forests.
Square-tailed Drongo (Ludwig's Drongo) *Dicrurus ludwigii* Seen on Thyolo Mountain. See Note.
Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* A commonly encountered and widespread bird.
African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Pied Crow *Corvus albus* A commonly encountered and widespread bird.
White-necked Raven (W-naped R) *Corvus albicollis* A common bird on the Nyika Plateau.
White-tailed Blue Flycatcher *Elminia albicauda* Sightings at Dzalanyama where we also found one bird on a nest.
White-tailed Crested Flycatcher *Elminia albonotata* Seen well at Kuchawe and in the Nyika forests.
Southern Black Tit *Parus niger* Seen well at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.
Rufous-bellied Tit ♦ *Parus rufiventris* Excellent views at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.
Miombo Tit ♦ (Northern Grey T) *Parus griseiventris* Good views at Dzalanyama.
Grey Penduline Tit (African P T) *Anthoscopus caroli* (LO) Nik saw 1 at Vwaza Marsh.
Eastern Nicator (White-throated N, Yellow-spotted N) *Nicator gularis* Views for some at Vizara.
Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafr africana* The endemic race *nyikae* was seen well on the Nyika Plateau.
Flappet Lark *Mirafr rufocinnamomea* 1 seen displaying at Dzalanyama.
Dark-capped Bulbul (Black-eyed B) *Pycnonotus tricolor* A commonly encountered and widespread bird.
Black-browed Greenbul ♦ (Southern Mountain G) *Arizelocichla fusciceps* Seen well in the Nyika forests.
Olive-headed Greenbul ♦ *Arizelocichla olivaceiceps* Seen well on Thyolo Mountain and at Kuchawe.
Little Greenbul (L Green Bulbul) *Eurillas virens* Heard on Thyolo Mountain and seen at Kuchawe.
Sombre Greenbul (S Bulbul, Zanzibar S G) *Andropadus importunus* 1 seen in Liwonde NP.
Terrestrial Brownbul (T Bulbul) *Phyllastrephus terrestris* Seen in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary and in Liwonde NP.
Placid Greenbul *Phyllastrephus placidus* Seen well at Kuchawe.

Yellow-streaked Greenbul *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus* A wing-flicking greenbul at Thyolo.
Sharpe's Greenbul ♦ *Phyllastrephus alfredi* Great views on the Nyika Plateau on the Zambian side!



Rufous-bellied Tit at Vwaza Marsh GR (left) and Rufous-naped Lark on the Nyika Plateau (right). (Nik Borrow)

White-headed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne albiceps* Small numbers on the Nyika Plateau.
Black Saw-wing (Eastern S-w) *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] orientalis* Common in the south of Malawi.
Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia* A couple of these Palearctic migrants in Liwonde NP.
Banded Martin *Riparia cincta* (LO) Just 1 was seen on the Nyika Plateau.
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Good numbers of this Palearctic migrant throughout.
Angolan Swallow *Hirundo angolensis* Small numbers seen on the Nyika Plateau.
Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* Widespread sightings in the south.
Blue Swallow ♦ *Hirundo atrocaerulea* (V) This beautiful swallow was in breeding plumage on the Nyika Plateau.
Pearl-breasted Swallow ♦ *Hirundo dimidiata* Small numbers were noted at Dzalanyama.
Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant on the Nyika Plateau.
Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* A few widespread sightings.
Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis* Widespread sightings.
Moustached Grass Warbler (African M W) *Melocichla mentalis* (H) Heard at a dambo in Lilongwe.
Red-capped Crombec ♦ *Sylvietta ruficapilla* Great looks were obtained at Dzalanyama.
Livingstone's Flycatcher ♦ *Erythrocerus livingstonei* A pair was seen well in Liwonde NP.
Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus ruficapilla* 1 seen on Thyolo Mountain.
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.
Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* 1 seen at Luwawa.
Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants near Rumphu.
African Yellow Warbler (Dark-capped Y W) *Iduna natalensis* 1 seen well in the Nyika area.
Mountain Yellow Warbler *Iduna similis* A pair was seen well on the Nyika Plateau on the Zambian side.
Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* (LO) Nik saw 1 of these Palearctic migrants in Liwonde NP.
Little Rush Warbler (African Sedge W) *Bradypterus baboecala* Seen well at Chintheche and heard elsewhere.
Cinnamon Bracken Warbler *Bradypterus cinnamomeus* (H) Heard on the Nyika Plateau.
Evergreen Forest Warbler *Bradypterus [lopezi] mariae* Seen at Kuchawe and Luwawa.
Fan-tailed Grassbird (Broad-tailed W) *Schoenicola brevirostris* 1 was scoped at Dzalanyama.
Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops* (H) Often heard at many localities.
Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans* Widespread sightings during the tour.
Trilling Cisticola *Cisticola woosnami* (H) Heard in the Nyika area.
Black-lored Cisticola ♦ *Cisticola nigriloris* Seen well on the Nyika Plateau.
Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana* Seen in Liwonde NP.
Churring Cisticola ♦ *Cisticola njombe* Easy to see on the Nyika Plateau.
Wailing Cisticola ♦ *Cisticola lais* Easy to see on the Nyika Plateau.
Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis* Seen well near Liwonde airport and heard elsewhere.
Short-winged Cisticola (Siffling C) *Cisticola brachypterus* Widespread sightings during the tour.

Neddicky (Piping Cisticola) *Cisticola fulvicapilla* Several sightings at Dzalanyama and the Vwaza area.
Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed C) *Cisticola juncidis* 1 at Lilongwe Sewage Farm.
Wing-snapping Cisticola (Ayres's C) *Cisticola ayresii* Small numbers were seen on the Nyika Plateau.
Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Bar-throated Apalis *Apalis thoracica* Seen well on the Nyika Plateau.
Yellow-throated Apalis ♦ *Apalis flavigularis* (E) Just 2 of these rare birds were seen at Kuchawe.
Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flava* Widespread sightings during the tour.
White-winged Apalis ♦ *Apalis chariessa* (V) Pairs of these beautiful warblers seen well at Thyolo and Kuchawe.



Malawi is a great country for Apalises! Bar-throated Apalis in the Nyika (left) and White-winged Apalis at Kuchawe (right). (Nik Borrow)

Black-headed Apalis *Apalis melanocephala* Seen on Thyolo Mountain and at Kuchawe.
Chapin's Apalis ♦ *Apalis chapini* Excellent views of the race *straussae* on the Nyika Plateau.
Brown-headed Apalis ♦ *Apalis alticola* A pair seen well in the Nyika area.
Green-backed Camaroptera ♦ *Camaroptera brachyura* Seen on Thyolo Mountain and heard elsewhere.
Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* (H) Heard in Lilongwe.
Stierling's Wren-warbler ♦ *Calamonastes stierlingi* Seen well at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.
Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops* Easy to see at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.
Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii* Easy to see at Dzalanyama.
African Hill Babbler (Abyssinian H B) *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica* (LO) Seen by Abasi in the Nyika forests.
Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* 4 sightings of this Palearctic migrant.
Brown Parisoma ♦ *Sylvia lugens* 1 was seen well in the Nyika area.
African Yellow White-eye (Southern Yellow w-e) *Zosterops [senegalensis] anderssoni* Common. See Note.
Yellow-bellied Hyliota (Y-breasted H) *Hyliota flavigaster* Small numbers at Dzalanyama.
Southern Hyliota (Mashona H) *Hyliota australis* Small numbers at Dzalanyama.
African Spotted Creeper *Salpornis salvadori* Seen well at Dzalanyama.
Greater Blue-eared Starling (G B-e Glossy S) *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* Seen well in Liwonde NP.
Miombo Blue-eared Starling ♦ (Southern Lesser B-e S) *Lamprotornis elisabeth* Seen well in the Vwaza area.
Meves's Starling ♦ *Lamprotornis mevesii* Common and easy to see in Liwonde NP.
Violet-backed Starling (Plum-coloured/Amethyst S) *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Common and widespread.
Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio* 1 at Kuchawe.
Babbling Starling ♦ (White-winged B S) *Neocichla gutturalis* Great views of a family group in Vwaza Marsh GR.
Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus* 2 seen on a Roan Antelope on the Nyika Plateau.
Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Small numbers seen in Liwonde NP.
Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyana* Seen well at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.
Miombo Scrub Robin ♦ *Erythropygia barbata* Seen well at Dzalanyama and Vwaza Marsh GR.
White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys* 1 was seen at Chintheche.

Grey Tit-flycatcher (Fan-tailed/Lead-coloured F) *Myioparus plumbeus* Seen well at Dzalanyama.

White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher *Dioptrornis fischeri* A pair was seen on the Nyika Plateau on the Zambian side.

Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* Just 1 at Dzalanyama.

Pale Flycatcher (Mouse-coloured/Pallid F) *Bradornis pallidus* Just 3 at Dzalanyama.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* A few of these Palearctic migrants at Satemwa and in the Vwaza area.

Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens* Just 1 at Dzalanyama.

African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* Singletons at Kuchawe and on the Nyika Plateau.

Böhm's Flycatcher ♦ *Muscicapa boehmi* Excellent views of this localised flycatcher at Dzalanyama and Vwaza.



African Spotted Creeper (left) and the localised Böhm's Flycatcher (right) were easy to see at Dzalanyama. (Nik Borrow)

White-chested Alethe ♦ *Pseudaethe fuelleborni* 2 sightings in the Nyika forests on the Zambian side.

Thyolo Alethe ♦ *Pseudaethe choloensis* (E) Hard work but everyone saw this bird well on Thyolo Mountain.

Olive-flanked Ground Robin ♦ *Cossypha anomala* Excellent views on the Zambian side of the Nyika Plateau.

Cape Robin-Chat (C R) *Cossypha caffra* Seen well at Kuchawe and on the Nyika Plateau.

White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin's R) *Cossypha heuglini* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

White-starred Robin (S R) *Pogonocichla stellata* This pretty bird seen well at Kuchawe and on the Nyika Plateau.

Sharpe's Akalat ♦ *Sheppardia sharpei* Excellent views on the Zambian side of the Nyika Plateau.

East Coast Akalat ♦ (Gunning's Robin) *Sheppardia gunningi* (NT) Great views of a pair near Chintheche.

Collared Palm Thrush *Cichladusa arquata* Easily seen in Liwonde NP.

Thrush Nightingale (Sprosser) *Luscinia luscinia* (H) This Palearctic migrant heard in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Several of these Palearctic migrants were seen well in the Vwaza area.

Miombo Rock Thrush ♦ *Monticola angolensis* Several seen well at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* Most numerous on the Nyika Plateau.

Mocking Cliff Chat (M Chat, Cliff C) *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* A pair near Rumphi.

Arnott's Chat ♦ *Myrmecocichla arnotti* Great looks in Liwonde NP.

Familiar Chat (Red-tailed C) *Oenanthe familiaris* 1 in the Vwaza area.

Boulder Chat ♦ *Pinarornis plumosus* Excellent views of a family group at Dzalanyama.

Anchieta's Sunbird ♦ *Anthreptes anchietae* At least 5 birds seen at Dzalanyama.

Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemare* A few seen at Dzalanyama.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* A couple at Satemwa.
Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* Seen well in southern Malawi.
Amethyst Sunbird (African Black S) *Chalcomitra amethystina* Scattered sightings in miombo throughout the tour.
Bronzy Sunbird *Nectarinia kilimensis* (LO) Just 1 for Nik and Abasi at Satemwa.
Malachite Sunbird *Nectarinia famosa* Small numbers on the Nyika Plateau.
Scarlet-tufted Sunbird ♦ (S-t Malachite S) *Nectarinia johnstoni* 2 males and a female seen well on the Nyika.
Miombo Double-collared Sunbird ♦ (Eastern M S) *Cinnyris manoensis* At Dzalanyama and Chimaliro. See Note.
Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird ♦ (Whyte's D-c S) *Cinnyris [ludovicensis] whytei* Seen on the Nyika. See Note.
Forest Double-collared Sunbird ♦ *Cinnyris fuelleborni* Several seen at Kuchawe and more at Luwawa.
Purple-banded Sunbird (Little P-b S) *Cinnyris bifasciatus* Small numbers seen at Chintheche.
Variable Sunbird (Yellow-bellied S) *Cinnyris venustus* A few seen at Dzalanyama and in the Vwaza area.
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali* Abundant in Liwonde NP.
Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver ♦ (C-mantled S-w) *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus* Seen well in the Vwaza area.



The forest dwelling Sharpe's Akalat (left) and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver, a localised Miombo specialist (right). (Nik Borrow)

House Sparrow (Introduced) *Passer domesticus* Occasionally seen in towns and villages.
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* Occasionally seen in towns and villages.
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus* Good numbers were seen in Liwonde NP.
Yellow-throated Petronia *Gymnoris superciliaris* A common Miombo species.
Thick-billed Weaver (Grosbeak W) *Amblyospiza albifrons* Just 1 female at Luwawa.
Baglafaecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafaecht* Just a few on the Nyika Plateau.
Bertram's Weaver ♦ (Bertrand's W) *Ploceus bertrandi* A pair in Mozambique and Malawi!
Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis* Widespread sightings in small numbers throughout the tour.
Eastern Golden Weaver (Yellow/African G W) *Ploceus subaureus* Nesting in the Chintheche area.
Holub's Golden Weaver (G W) *Ploceus xanthops* Scattered sightings during the tour.
Southern Brown-throated Weaver ♦ *Ploceus xanthopterus* Easy to see in Liwonde NP.
Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius* Small numbers in Liwonde NP.
Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* Seen well in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.
Village Weaver (Spotted-backed W) *Ploceus cucullatus* Seen well in Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.
Dark-backed Weaver (Forest W) *Ploceus bicolor* 2 on Thyolo Mountain.
Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* 4 sightings at Dzalanyama and in Liwonde NP.
Black-winged Red Bishop (B-w B, Fire-crowned B) *Euplectes hordeaceus* Non-breeding plumages only.
Yellow Bishop (Yellow-rumped Whydah) *Euplectes capensis* 3 widespread sightings, non-breeding plumages only.
Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura* Seen by the airport on the first day.
Montane Widowbird ♦ *Euplectes psammacromius* Breeding plumaged birds on the Nyika Plateau.
Red-collared Widowbird (R-c/R-naped Whydah) *Euplectes ardens* Non-breeding plumages only.
Orange-winged Pytilia ♦ (Golden-backed P) *Pytilia afra* A male in Vwaza Marsh GR.
Green Twinspot (G-backed T) *Mandingoa nitidula* 1 at Luwawa.
Red-throated Twinspot ♦ (Peter's T) *Hypargos niveoguttatus* Our best views were at Satemwa.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* Our best views were at Satemwa.

African Firefinch (Blue-billed F) *Lagonosticta rubricata* Scattered sightings during the tour.

Blue Waxbill (Southern Cordon-bleu) *Uraeginthus angolensis* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Yellow-bellied Waxbill (East African Sweet) *Coccyzygia quartinia* A few at Dzalanyama and on the Nyika Plateau.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* Flocks on the Nyika and at Luwawa.

Orange-breasted Waxbill (Zebra W) *Amandava subflava* Seen by the airport on the first day.

Locust Finch ♦ *Paludipasser locustella* 5 seen well and even on the ground near the airport on the first day.

Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata* Commonly seen in the south.

Red-backed Mannikin (Rufous-b/Brown-b M) *Lonchura nigriceps* Small flocks at widespread localities.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* Scattered sightings during the tour.

Yellow-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] lutea* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Lilongwe sewage farm.

Mountain Wagtail (Long-tailed W) *Motacilla clara* Seen well at Dzalanyama.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Commonly encountered during the tour.

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus* First seen by the airport on the first day.

African Pipit (Grassveld, Grassland P) *Anthus cinnamomeus* Numerous on the Nyika Plateau.

Wood Pipit ♦ (Woodland P) *Anthus nyassae* Seen at Dzalanyama and on the Nyika Plateau.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* 1 at Lilongwe sewage farm.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* This Palearctic migrant was seen at Dzalanyama and on the Nyika Plateau.

Striped Pipit ♦ *Anthus lineiventris* Great views at Dzalanyama.

Southern Citril ♦ *Crithagra hyposticta* Several chances to see this well in the south.

Yellow-fronted Canary (Y-eyed C) *Crithagra mozambica* Most numerous at Dzalanyama.

Brimstone Canary (Bully C) *Crithagra sulphurata* Just 1 at Dzalanyama.

Reichard's Seedeater ♦ (Stripe-breasted Canary) *Crithagra reichardi* 2 seen well at Dzalanyama.

Black-eared Seedeater ♦ *Crithagra mennelli* Easy to see at Dzalanyama and Vwaza Marsh GR.

Yellow-browed Seedeater ♦ *Crithagra whytii* Good views of a pair on the Nyika Plateau.

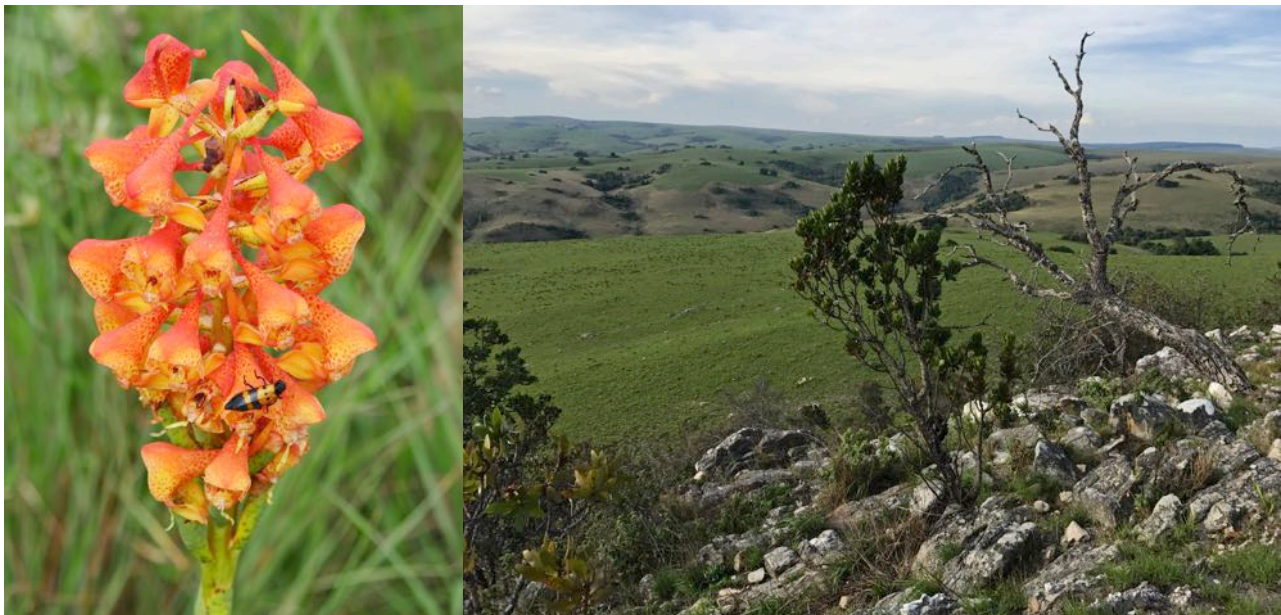
Cape Canary ♦ *Serinus canicollis* Seen in the Botanical Gardens in the Vumba Mountains.

Yellow-crowned Canary *Serinus flavivertex* Some large flocks on the Nyika Plateau.

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (C-b Rock B) *Emberiza tahapisi* 1 on Thyolo Mountain.

Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris* Several seen at Dzalanyama.

Cabanis's Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi* Small numbers seen at Dzalanyama and Vwaza GR.



The orchid Disa robusta (left) and the rolling hills of the Nyika Plateau. (Nik Borrow)



Yellow-billed Oxpeckers on the back of a Roan Antelope and Common or 'Crawshay's' Zebra on the Nyika Plateau. (Nik Borrow)

MAMMALS

Yellow Baboon *Papio cynocephalus* Commonly encountered in Liwonde NP.

Vervet Monkey (Vervet) *Cercopithecus pygerythrus* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Sykes's Monkey (White-throated M) *Cercopithecus albogularis* Small numbers on Thyolo and Zomba.

Thick-tailed Greater Galago (T-t Bushbaby) *Otolemur crassicaudatus* At night at Satemwa and in Liwonde NP.

African Savanna Hare *Lepus victoriae* Seen at night in Liwonde NP and on the Nyika.

Black-and-red Bush Squirrel (Tanganyika Mountain Squirrel) *Paraxerus Lucifer* 2 sightings in the Nyika forests.

Smith's Bush Squirrel (South African Tree Squirrel) *Paraxerus cepapi* Easy to see in Liwonde NP.

Mutable Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus mutabilis* Several seen on Thyolo Mountain and again in the Chintcheche area.

Cape Porcupine (South African P) *Hystrix africaeaustralis* A great sighting of 1 at night on the Nyika Plateau.

Side-striped Jackal *Canis adustus* 2 at night on the Nyika Plateau.

Common Slender Mongoose (S M) *Herpestes sanguinea* Several widespread sightings.

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo* A group in Liwonde NP.

Marsh Mongoose (Water Mongoose) *Atilax paludinosus* 3 at night in Liwonde NP.

White-tailed Mongoose *Ichneumia allicauda* 3 at night in Liwonde NP.

Meller's Mongoose *Rhynchogale melleri* 1 at night in Liwonde NP.

Rusty-spotted Genet (Large-spotted Genet) *Genetta maculata* Small numbers at night in Liwonde NP.

Leopard *Panthera pardus* A youngster seen on the Nyika Plateau.

Southern Tree Hyrax *Dendrohyrax arboreus* 3 seen on the Nyika Plateau.

African Savanna Elephant *Loxodonta africana* Common in Liwonde NP and small numbers on the Nyika.

Common Zebra (Plains/Crawshay's Zebra) *Equus quagga* Seen well on the Nyika Plateau.

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* Abundant in Liwonde NP.

Bushpig *Potamochoerus larvatus* 2 in Liwonde NP.

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* Common in Liwonde NP.

Cape Bushbuck *Tragelaphus sylvaticus* Seen in Liwonde NP and on the Nyika Plateau.

Zambezi Kudu *Tragelaphus zambesiensis* Seen well Liwonde NP.

Common Eland *Taurotragus oryx* Good numbers on the Nyika Plateau.

Bush Duiker (Grey D, Common D) *Sylvicapra grimmia* Several timid animals on the Nyika Plateau.

Zambian Klipspringer *Oreotragus centralis* At least 5 on the Nyika Plateau.

Zambian Reedbuck *Redunca occidentalis* Common on the Nyika Plateau

Ellipsen Waterbuck (Common W) *Kobus ellipsiprymnus* Common in Liwonde NP.

Impala (Common I) *Aepyceros melampus* Abundant in Liwonde NP.

Roan Antelope (Roan) *Hippotragus equinus* Good numbers on the Nyika Plateau.

Sable Antelope (Southern S A) *Hippotragus niger* A herd of about 30 and a solitary male in Liwonde NP.



Top: African Savanna Elephant and Hippopotamus. Bottom: Bushpig and Red-billed Oxpeckers in Liwonde National Park. (Nik Borrow)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST



This female Northern Fiscal photographed on the Nyika Plateau shows a trace of the white supercilium normally associated with Southern Fiscal *L. collaris marwitszi*. (Nik Borrow)

Northern Fiscal *Lanius humeralis* At least one of the birds seen on the Nyika Plateau appeared to be a hybrid between Southern Fiscal *L. collaris marwitszi* and Northern Fiscal *L. humeralis capelli* and showed traces of a white

supercilium. Hybrids have been well documented on the plateau. Many authors lump the two forms as a single species in which case it is renamed Fiscal Shrike or Common Fiscal *L. collaris*.

Square-tailed Drongo (Ludwig's Drongo) *Dicrurus ludwigii*

It has recently been suggested that *ludwigii*, the form concerned along with *muenzneri* and *tephrogaster* should be treated as a separate species Ludwig's Drongo *D. ludwigii*. The remaining two western races, *sharpei* and *saturnus* are then named Sharpe's Drongo *D. sharpei*. *Diversification across major biogeographic breaks in the African Shining/Square-tailed Drongos complex (Passeriformes: Dicruridae)* Fuchs, J., Fjelsda, J., Bowie, R. C. K. *Zoologica Scripta* (2016).

African Yellow White-eye (Southern Yellow w-e) *Zosterops [senegalensis] anderssoni*

It has recently been suggested that the form concerned, *anderssoni* be treated as part of a separate species Southern Yellow White-eye *Z. anderssoni*. *A taxonomic review of the genus Zosterops in East Africa, with a revised list of species occurring in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania*. Pearson, D. J. and Turner, D. A. *Scopus* 37(1) (2017).

Miombo Double-collared Sunbird (Eastern M S) *Cinnyris [manoensis] manoensis*

The form *manoensis* found in the south of Malawi up to Ntchisi 13°S has recently been split from the form *pintoii* found in the north. If this treatment is accepted then the species are renamed Eastern Miombo Sunbird *C. manoensis* and Western Miombo Sunbird *C. gertrudis* as *pintoii* is a synonym. We only encountered *manoensis* during this tour. *There are two distinct, not immediately related species of Miombo Double-collared Sunbirds: Cinnyris manoensis and C. gertrudis*. Irwin, M.P.S., Leonard, P.M. and Colebrook-Robjent, J. F. R. *Honeyguide* 60 (2). 2014.

Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird (Whyte's D-c S) *Cinnyris [ludovicensis] whytei*

The form concerned has recently been split off as part of a separate species: Whyte's Double-collared Sunbird *C. whytei*. Alternatively, some authors include this species in Prigogine's Double-collared Sunbird *C. prigoginei* or in Greater Double-collared Sunbird *C. afer*. *A new member of the greater double-collared sunbird complex (Passeriformes: Nectarinidae) from the Eastern Arc mountains of Africa*. Bowie, R. C. K., Fjelsda, J., Kiure, J. and Kristensen, J. B. *Zootaxa* 4175 (1): 023-042.



Christmas at Chelinda Lodge on the Nyika Plateau. (Nik Borrow)