



We couldn't have obtained better looks at the usually secretive White-backed Night Heron (Mark Van Beirs)

MALAWI

16 - 30 NOVEMBER 2019

LEADER: MARK VAN BEIRS

“The warm heart of Africa” as Malawi is often called is a friendly, little-known, small, land-locked country in southern central Africa. It offers an amazing variety of habitats on its surface area of only four times Belgium. The dominant vegetation used to be open miombo (*Brachystegia*) woodland, but there are also small patches of montane evergreen forest, mopane forest, open montane grasslands, verdant floodplains and marshy dambos. We managed to gather an excellent list of birds, mammals and reptiles on our short tour and experienced mostly fantastic accommodation, usually good roads, fairly short drives and excellent, tasty food. But, like in so many countries, the old Nyasaland has a burgeoning population (over 19 million people) who are destroying their country at an astonishing rate. The environmental devastation which we witnessed throughout the trip was simply awful. The woodlands and forests are being chopped down at a frightening rate and the stories we heard about poaching were shocking. Some areas and reserves are already almost devoid of mammals and birds. A depressing but all-to-common theme throughout much of the planet, and one has to wonder how much longer the unique wildlife of Malawi will survive for. The trip started near Lilongwe, in the still well-preserved open miombo woodlands of Dzalanyama, where Thick-billed Cuckoo,



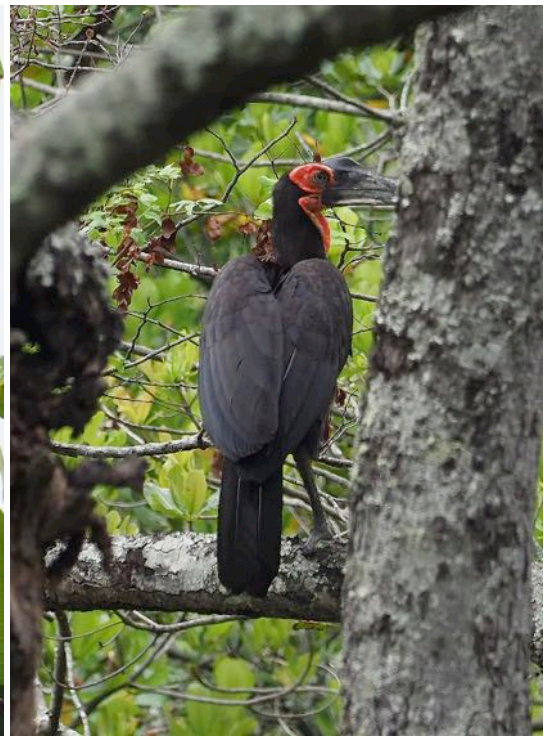
African Spotted Creepers were easy to see at Dzalanyama (Mark Van Beirs)

Pale-billed Hornbill, Half-collared Kingfisher, Stierling's Woodpecker, Souza's Shrike, African Spotted Creeper, Boulder Chat, Anchieta's Sunbird, Rufous-bellied and Miombo Tits, Reichard's and Black-eared Seed eaters and a Forest Cobra were the highlights. On the drive south the rarely-seen Vincent's Bunting was found on an isolated bare kopje. In the cool, montane evergreen forests of Mount Thyolo and the Zomba plateau specialities included Whyte's Barbet, Green-headed Oriole, Yellow-throated Apalis (Malawi's only endemic), the exceedingly smart-looking White-winged Apalis, Thyolo Alethe, Forest Double-collared Sunbird and Bertram's Weaver, while lower down the uncommon Cinnamon-breasted Tit was located. The delightful Liwonde National Park holds magnificent tracts of mopane forest and a rich floodplain along the Shire river, where African Skimmer, White-backed Night Heron, Crowned Eagle, Pel's Fishing Owl, Racket-tailed Roller, Böhm's Bee-eater, Speckle-throated Woodpecker, Dickinson's Kestrel, Red-necked Falcon, Lilian's Lovebird and Livingstone's Flycatcher made the cameras go in overdrive. Mammals were also a feature of the park and included quality creatures like African Elephant, Black Rhinoceros, Lion, majestic Sable Antelope and Greater Kudu. The dense tropical liana-tangled forest near the shore of Lake Malawi gave us African Barred Owl, Narina Trogon and East Coast Akalat. The scenic open grasslands dotted with patches of montane forest of the Nyika Plateau produced marvels like Red-winged Francolin, Pennant-winged and Montane Nightjars, Denham's Bustard, Black Coucal, Bar-tailed Trogon, Fülleborn's Boubou, Blue Swallow, Black-lored and Churring Cisticolas, Chapin's Apalis, Sharpe's Akalat, Whyte's Double-collared and Scarlet-tufted Sunbirds and displaying Montane Widowbirds. This marvellous park also gave us showy Southern Tree Hyraxes, a splendidly performing Serval, Bushpig and stately Roan Antelopes. On the return journey to Lilongwe lakes and dambos held White-backed Duck, Lesser Jacana and Rosy-throated Longclaw. 405 species of birds and 36 mammals were recorded on this very enjoyable tour.



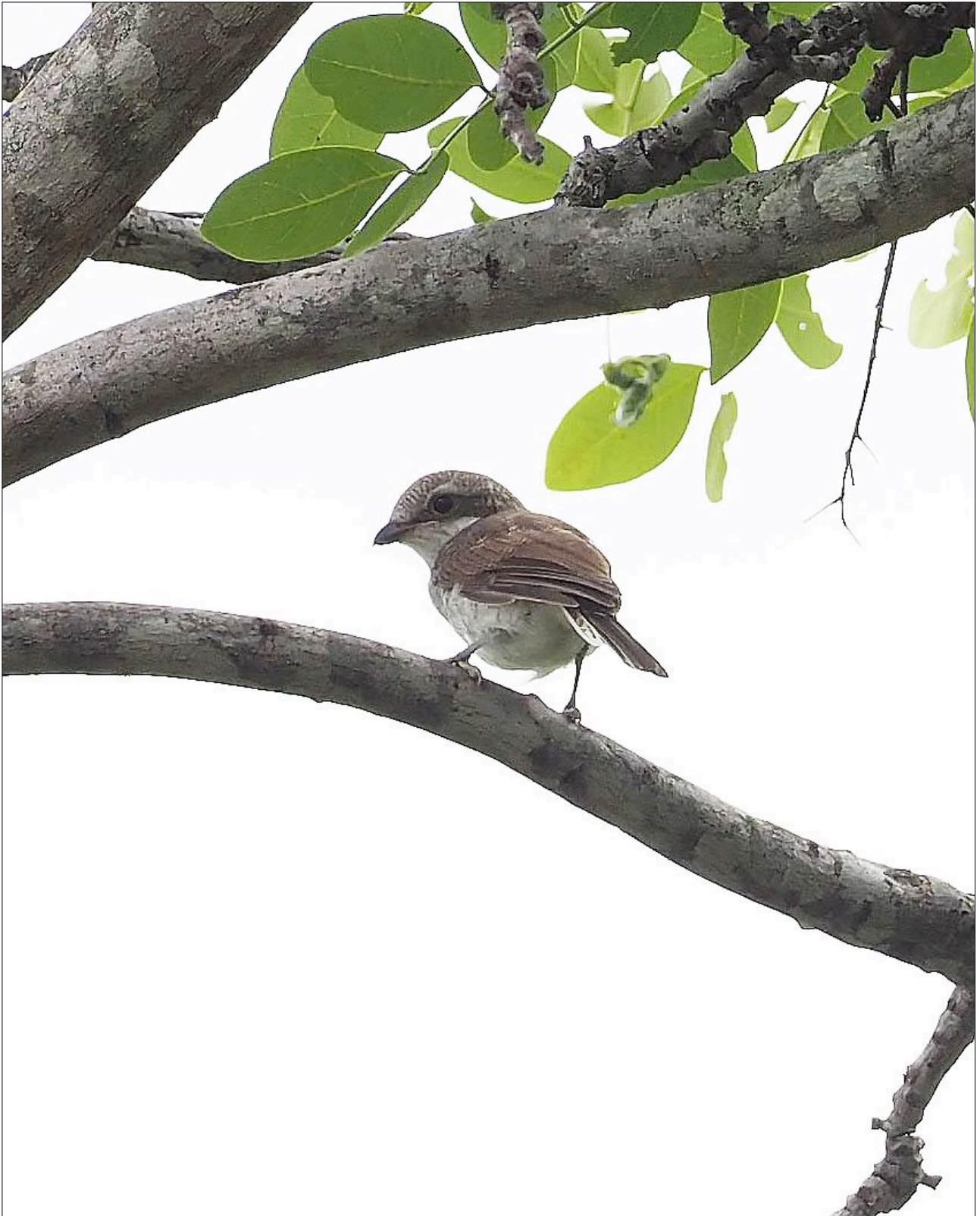
The fabulous Böhme's Bee-eater was one of the highlights of our visit to the Liwonde National Park (Mark Van Beirs)

We were welcomed at Lilongwe airport by Abasi's smiling face and immediately knew we were in very good hands, as next to being an excellent driver and organiser, our man on the spot has a very acute pair of eyes and an excellent understanding of the idiosyncrasies of very keen visiting birders. Our first drive took us via the ever-expanding suburbs of the capital to the miombo reserve of Dzalanyama, which is located close to the Mozambique border. Abdim's Stork, Black-winged Kite and a pair of dashing Red-necked Falcons entertained us and in the early evening we arrived at our simple, but cosy accommodation surrounded by beautiful woodland.



Dzalanyama's miombo woodland held Schalow's Turaco and Southern Ground Hornbill (Mark Van Beirs)

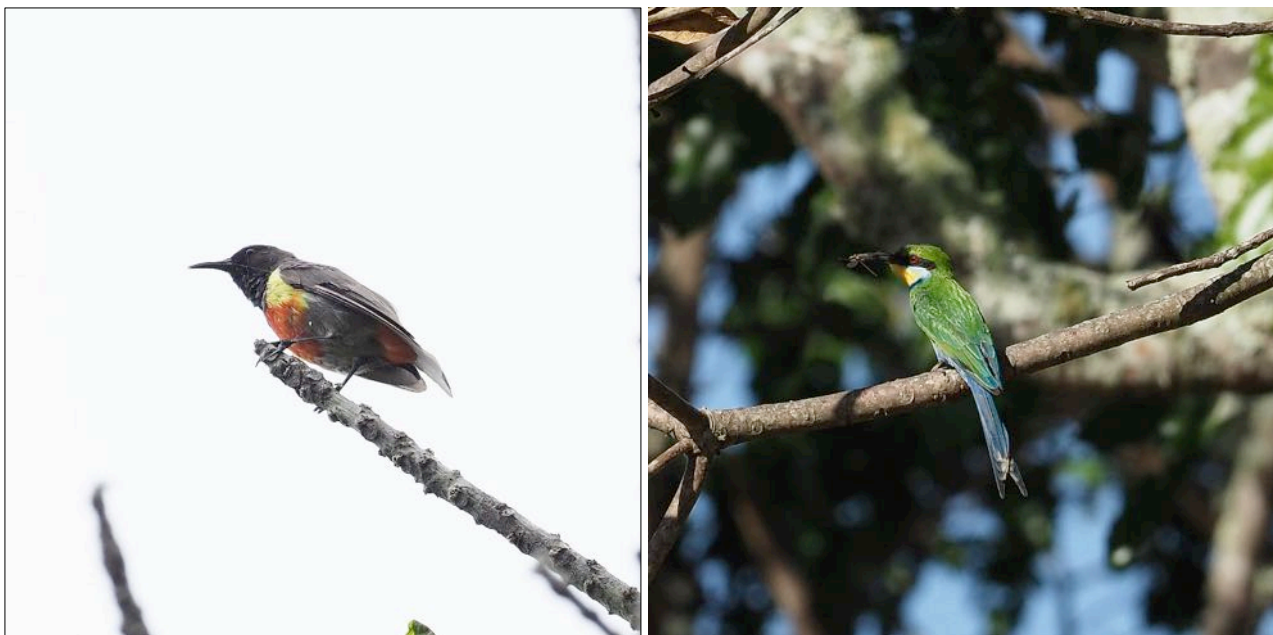
The open *Brachystegia* woodland of Dzalanyama ("the place where god planted the animals") holds an excellent variety of miombo specialities and on our walks we connected several times with the large and fast bird parties that are so typical of this habitat. We found a great selection of goodies and rarely encountered species. Gaudy Schalow's Turacos played hide and seek in the canopy, a pair of hulking Southern Ground Hornbills showed beautifully, a Pale-billed Hornbill allowed scope studies, a Half-collared Kingfisher was flushed along a stream, a modest Scaly-throated Honeyguide and a lovely Whyte's Barbet sat about, a rare Stierling's Woodpecker performed well, several White-breasted Cuckooshrikes and African Golden Orioles gave good views, a pair of perky Rufous-bellied Tits played about, a dapper Red-capped Crombec sang from a treetop, a Stierling's Wren Warbler showed off, a party of very vocal Green-capped Eremomelas flitted past, several Yellow-bellied and Southern Hyliotas could be studied at length, unobtrusive African Spotted Creepers proved quite regular, a pair of Miombo Rock Thrushes foraged in a fruiting tree, a male Eastern Miombo Double-collared Sunbird allowed close inspection, a pair of gorgeous Red-throated Twinspots fed at the edge of a track and Reichard's and Black-eared Seedeaters and Cabanis's Bunting foraged on the forest floor. We had to climb a rocky kopje to get to the habitat of Boulder Chat and Striped Pipit and after a bit of sweating obtained cracking views of both these jewels. More widespread species included Helmeted Guineafowl, Klaas's Cuckoo, Red-eyed and Ring-necked Doves, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Wahlberg's Eagle, Lizard Buzzard, Common (Steppe) Buzzard, Speckled Mousebird, Green Wood Hoopoe, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Little Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Green-backed and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Chinspot Batis, Black-crowned Tchagra, Black-backed Puffback, Tropical Boubou, Brubru, Northern Fiscal, Black Cuckooshrike, Black-headed Oriole, Fork-tailed Drongo, African Paradise Flycatcher, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Dark-capped Bulbul, Black Saw-wing, Common House Martin, Lesser Striped Swallow, Neddicky, Red-winged Warbler, Violet-backed Starling, Kurrichane Thrush, Southern Black Flycatcher, Ashy and African Dusky Flycatchers, White-browed Robin-Chat, Western Violet-backed, Olive, Amethyst and Variable Sunbirds, Yellow-throated Bush Sparrows, Holub's Golden Weaver, Red-collared Widowbird, Common Waxbill, Bronze and Red-backed Mannikins, Yellow-fronted and Brimstone Canaries and Golden-breasted Bunting. A very smart male Blue-headed Tree Agama got the reptile list started. An after-dinner walk produced a pair of African Wood Owls and a cute Thick-tailed Greater Galago.



Souza's Shrike is one of the specialities at Dzalanyama (Mark Van Beirs)

Another full day wandering about the marvellous miombo woodland of Dzalanyama produced many of the same species, but luckily we also added quality birds like Green-backed Honeybird, Souza's Shrike, Miombo Scrub Robin, Anchieta's Sunbird and Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah. Other new additions included African Harrier-Hawk, Shikra, Swallow-tailed and European Bee-eaters, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Flappet Lark, Pearl-breasted Swallow, Willow Warbler, Fan-tailed Grassbird (nice display), Croaking Cisticola, Arrow-marked Babbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Southern Masked Weaver, Red-billed Quelea,

Black-winged Red Bishop, Orange-breasted Waxbill and Southern Citril. A small curled up Forest Cobra was a good find, as was a large black scorpion! We also identified a Kirk's Rock Agama here.



The colourful Anchieta's Sunbird and the Swallow-tailed Bee-eater added a splash of colour (Mark Van Beirs)

A pre-breakfast stroll through the miombo near our lodge gave us new species like Thick-billed Cuckoo (in flight only), a sprightly Miombo Tit and Blue Waxbill. And then it was time to leave this delightful spot and make our way south. We stopped at a bare rocky hill near the Mozambique border, where, after a bit of scrambling, a cracking, rarely-seen Vincent's Bunting showed quite well. This recent split from Cape Bunting is a very localized resident in Malawi. While searching for our target we also found Rock Kestrel, Rock Martin, Lazy Cisticola, Red-winged Starling, Pale Flycatcher, African Stonechat, Mocking Cliff Chat and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. We continued our travels south and in late afternoon arrived at the lovely Satemwa Tea Estate, where we enjoyed some good colonial hospitality and scrumptious food. On the journey African Palm Swift, Western Cattle Egret, African Marsh Harrier, Yellow-billed Kite, Eurasian Hobby, Wire-tailed Swallow, Collared Sunbird and Plain-backed Pipit were noted.



This African Wood Owl was found on its day roost at Mount Thyolo (tour participant Olof Persson); The gorgeous White-winged Apalis performed very well at Zomba (Mark Van Beirs)

Our pre-breakfast walk in the forest on the slopes of Mount Thyolo was great fun. It didn't take too long to connect with the extremely rare Thyolo Alethe and we even managed scope views of this extremely localized speciality. This is now one of the rarest birds on the African continent, as its total population consists of just a handful of birds, confined to a few mountaintops in Malawi and Mozambique. We obtained good looks at a smart Black-fronted Bushshrike hiding in the canopy and a Bertram's Weaver showed well as it was creeping

along a branch. We also found Red-necked Spurfowl, lots of Livingstone's Turacos, Tambourine Dove, African Wood Owl, Trumpeter and Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Common Square-tailed Drongo, Little, Grey-olive, Placid and Yellow-streaked Greenbuls, White-starred Robin, Dark-backed Weaver and Pin-tailed Whydah. The foghorn-like call of a Buff-spotted Flufftail emanated from a marshy gully. After a tasty breakfast we explored a stretch of submontane forest, where a fabulous Green-headed Oriole allowed excellent studies. A gorgeous White-winged Apalis left quite an impression and we obtained scope views of a displaying African Broadbill. Other additions to the list included Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Black-throated Wattle-eye, a cute Mutable Sun Squirrel and Slender Mongoose. Around midday we left the Tea Estate and made our way north to the Zomba plateau, where we birded a nice patch of montane forest. The most important bird here was the lovely Yellow-throated Apalis, Malawi's only endemic. We had good looks at this attractive species as it darted about in the mid canopy. A White-eared Barbet sat up, a couple of cheerful Yellow-throated Woodland Warblers hopped about and a skulking Evergreen Forest Warbler behaved quite well. We also noted Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Red-chested Cuckoo, Black-headed Apalis, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, Olive-headed Greenbul and Yellow Baboon.



The Zomba plateau gave us attractive Livingstone's Turacos (Mark Van Beirs)

We spent the better part of the morning on the predominantly deforested slopes of the Zomba plateau finding goodies like Scarce and African Black Swifts, Long-crested Eagle, Black Sparrowhawk, Pallid Honeyguide and Forest Double-collared Sunbird next to more widespread species like Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Olive Woodpecker, African Yellow Warbler, Singing Cisticola, Cape Robin-Chat, Yellow Bishop, African and Jameson's Firefinches, Yellow-bellied Waxbill and Mountain Wagtail. In the late morning we drove north to the small town of Liwonde. A short stop in a patch of nice woodland gave us a huge Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, a party of Retz's Helmetshrikes, several rare Cinnamon-breasted Tits and some Miombo

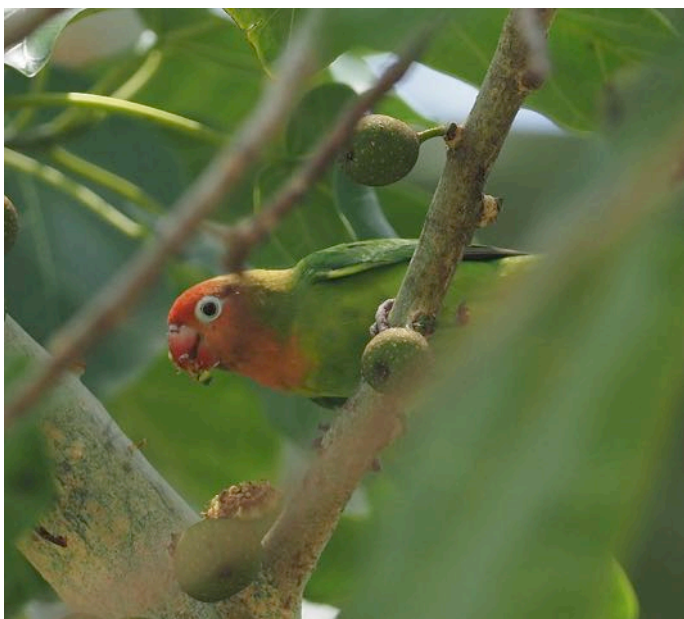
Blue-eared Starlings. Around midday we arrived at the Shire River where we boarded a small boat that took us slowly upriver along the reed-lined and floodplain bordered banks to the marvelous Mvu camp. A party of c200 African Skimmers was a particular highlight, as these unusual-looking birds showed so very well, both sitting and in flight. The river was extremely birdy and we added Spur-winged and Egyptian Geese, Namaqua Dove, Black Crake, Water Thick-knee, Black-winged Stilt, Long-toed, Spur-winged and African Wattled Lapwings, African Jacana, Common and Wood Sandpipers, Common Greenshank, Collared Pratincole, White-winged Tern, Yellow-billed Stork, African Openbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Reed and White-breasted Cormorants, African Darter, African Sacred, Hadada and Glossy Ibises, Squacco, Grey and Goliath Herons, Great and Little Egrets, Hamerkop, Pink-backed Pelican, Western Osprey, Bateleur, African Fish Eagle, Pied Kingfisher, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Red-billed Oxpecker, White-winged Widowbird and Long-tailed Paradise Whydah to the tally. Mammals were delightfully easy to spot. The river was literally full of Hippos and our boat had to cruise diligently amongst the many groups. Fair-sized herds of African Elephants were always in view, next to good numbers of Common Warthog, Impala and Ellipsen Waterbuck. A few African Buffalo, a single Common Eland and some skittish Bushbuck were also seen. Several impressive Nile Crocodiles were slowly swimming about. Upon arrival at the magnificent Mvu camp, we had lunch and settled in. In the camp grounds Crowned Eagle, a juvenile Pel's Fishing Owl, striking Böhm's Bee-eaters, Red-backed Shrike, Collared Palm Thrush, Southern Brown-throated Weaver and a Greater Kudu obliged. After a very short break we went for an introductory game drive through the stark-looking mopane woodland and found specialties like Racket-tailed Roller, Speckle-throated Woodpecker, Lilian's Lovebird and Meves's Starling. We also picked up African Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Broad-billed Roller, Long-billed Crombec, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Red-billed Firefinch, Vervet Monkey and a huge Nile Monitor. An unexpected heavy shower ruined our birding a bit, but soon it was time for our sundowner on the bank of the Shire River, where we were surrounded by impressive cloud formations and distant thunderstorms. A wary Sable Antelope showed well and a Square-tailed Nightjar gave excellent views. The return drive in the dark produced Southern Lesser Galago, Central African Large-spotted Genet, Side-striped Jackal and a Common Duiker. While having dinner a young Pel's Fishing Owl kept begging for food as it sat only 50 meters from our dining table. Unforgettable moments!



African Skimmers showed ever so well along the Shire river (Mark Van Beirs)

A pre-breakfast walk in the nearby dense thickets soon gave us a pair of tiny, but cheerful Livingstone's Flycatchers. A Palm-nut Vulture flew past and an African Goshawk was displaying overhead. A couple of colourful Black-collared Barbets were calling loudly from a treetop and a Bearded Scrub Robin played hide and seek in the undergrowth. We also spotted Levillant's and Diederik Cuckoos, Sombre Greenbul, Terrestrial Brownbul, Southern Black Tit, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, White-bellied Sunbird, Smith's Bush Squirrel and Banded Mongoose. After a scrumptious breakfast we took a short boat trip on the Shire river and soon found a cracking adult White-backed Night Heron hiding in the riverside bushes. While admiring this rarely

seen jewel, an immature bird popped into view. Along the river we also observed Grey-headed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Black-crowned Night and Striated Herons, Malachite Kingfisher and a beautiful male Red-headed Weaver. An exploration of a patch of forest holding many fruiting trees on the other shore of the Shire river produced good looks at Purple-crested Turaco, a fabulous Crowned Eagle, Brown Snake Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, terrific Lilian's Lovebirds performing well in fruiting fig tree, African Green Pigeon and a male Eurasian Golden Oriole. During the hot hours of the day Crowned Hornbill and Peregrine Falcon were noted at the camp. The afternoon game drive in the extensive mopane woodland and the adjoining floodplain gave us a male African Emerald Cuckoo, African Cuckoo, a smashing Racket-tailed Roller (scope views), Greater Honeyguide, Brown-necked Parrot, Arnot's Chat, Plains Zebra and four sleeping Lions. The return drive in the dark produced a roosting White-backed Vulture, a hunting Spotted Eagle-Owl and a scurrying Central African Large-spotted Genet.



The marvelous Liwonde National Park gave us Lilian's Lovebird and Dickinson's Kestrel (Mark Van Beirs)

Our final gamedrive in the Liwonde National Park started at dawn and took us through another stretch of the reserve, where a neat Dickinson's Kestrel posed well on a dead trunk. A pair of Red-necked Falcons performed beautifully and a covey of Hildebrandt's Francolins foraged under cover. Grey Go-away-bird was new for the list and a young Bateleur was trying to break into the shell of a Speke's Hinged Tortoise. Other interesting observations included African Grey Hornbill, a family of Banded Mongooses, a party of impressive Sable Antelope, a mother and her grown up youngster Black Rhino and a pencil-thin Southeastern Green Snake. Just before leaving fabulous Liwonde National Park an adult Pel's Fishing Owl was located and the big "marmalade-coloured bear" allowed pretty good looks. Another quick peep in the dense riverside vegetation gave us no fewer than three White-backed Night Herons, one of which walked out its hiding place for terrific studies. A Giant Kingfisher was our final new bird at Liwonde National Park. Then followed a long drive north through densely populated countryside following the west shore of huge Lake Malawi. We arrived in late afternoon at our Chintheche accommodation. A walk in the gardens soon gave us a pair of fabulous African Barred Owlets, Striped Kingfisher and Purple Banded Sunbird.



This fledgling Pel's Fishing Owl was active day and night around our camp at the Liwonde NP (Mark Van Beirs)

A tremendous thunderstorm raged overhead during the night and lingered on till the early morning, so we postponed our departure a bit. Smart Eastern Golden Weavers were displaying at their recently constructed nests in the garden. We drove to a patch of well-preserved evergreen forest surrounded by rubber tree plantations. It was very quiet at first, but eventually we obtained good looks at a dainty East Coast Akalat in the dense understorey it favours. A skulking Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher proved hard to get onto and a male Narina Trogon stayed in the highest canopy. We then continued our drive towards the famous Nyika National Park. A Flap-necked Chameleon crossing the track made for an interesting stop. We entered the park and had our picnic lunch in a nice area of miombo woodland where Trilling Cisticola obliged. On the drive through the open grasslands dotted with patches of montane forest we encountered African Olive Pigeon, Olive Woodpecker, White-winged Black Tit, Black-browed Greenbul, White-headed Saw-wing, Red-breasted and Red-rumped Swallows, Brown-headed Apalis, Black-lored and Churring Cisticolas, Brown Parisoma, Waller's Starling, Bronzy Sunbird, Baglaffeht Weaver and Yellow-crowned Canary. A striking Roan Antelope

and several Southern Reedbuck represented the mammal department. In late afternoon we arrived at the magnificent Chelinda Lodge where we were warmly welcomed. The very pleasant, comfortable chalets with their burning woodfire were very much appreciated.



The Flap-necked Chameleon is a wonderful creature (Mark Van Beirs)

On our morning walk in the Chelinda area we explored varied habitats: Hagenia forest, a marshy valley, a reed-lined dam, stretches of dense bracken and the edge of the wide grasslands. Gloriously elegant Blue Swallows stole the show here as they performed very nicely. We admired a displaying Montane Widowbird and observed several Whyte's Double-collared Sunbirds in a flowering tree. We worked on several skulkers and came away with more or less satisfactory views of Fülleborn's Boubou, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler and Olive-flanked Ground Robin. Cape (Malawi) Batis, Bar-throated Apalis and the restricted range Yellow-browed Seedeater showed very well at the forest edge. Yellow-billed Duck, a pair of huge Lappet-faced Vultures and a Banded Martin were also new for the list. We encountered several Southern Tree Hyraxes playing about rather unconcernedly in shrubby trees. The afternoon game drive started under threatening dark clouds. The rolling grasslands gave us well-camouflaged Red-winged Francolins next to more widespread species like Dusky Turtle Dove, Red-knobbed Coot, Little Grebe, Augur Buzzard, Rufous-naped Lark, Wing-snapping Cisticola and Yellow-billed Oxpecker. Five well-marked Bushpigs were foraging in the open and we encountered a nice herd of truly impressive Eland Antelopes. A kopje dotted with flowering proteabushes produced two wonderful males Scarlet-tufted Sunbird. While searching for the sunbirds we flushed a female Pennant-winged Nightjar and found Wailing Cisticola, Slender-billed Starling and three Klipspringers. On the return drive we spotlighted a Montane Nightjar, a Spotted Eagle Owl, several African Savanna Hares and a brief Serval.



Our observation of this exquisite Serval was a highlight of our visit of the Nyika National Park (Mark Van Beirs)

After a rainy night, we visited a well-preserved patch of evergreen montane forest in the Zambian part of the Nyika National Park. Particular highlights included two very skulking and localized species: the well-dressed White-chested Alethe and the lovely Sharpe's Akalat. It took quite a while to get to grips with these shy undergrowth dwellers. A fine Bar-tailed Trogon showed well, several wing-lifting Sharpe's Greenbuls were seen climbing tree trunks and a cute Chapin's Apalis sang its heart out. A party of Blue Monkeys were watched running cautiously from one forest patch to another and a formidable Crowned Eagle was seen and heard displaying overhead. The game drive over the open grasslands around the Chelinda Lodge was a really enjoyable affair. We encountered five gracious Denham's Bustards and an elegant male Pallid Harrier, next to a female Montagu's Harrier, an adult and a young Temminck's Courser, a White-backed Vulture, several lovely Amur Falcons, a dashing Lanner Falcon, a male Malachite Sunbird, several Klipspringers and a shaggy

Egyptian Mongoose. On the return drive in the dark four Spotted Eagle Owls, a Marsh Owl, a fabulous, very showy Serval and three splendidly impressive Cape Porcupines were found.



Churring and Black-lored Cisticolas showed well at Nyika (Mark Van Beirs)

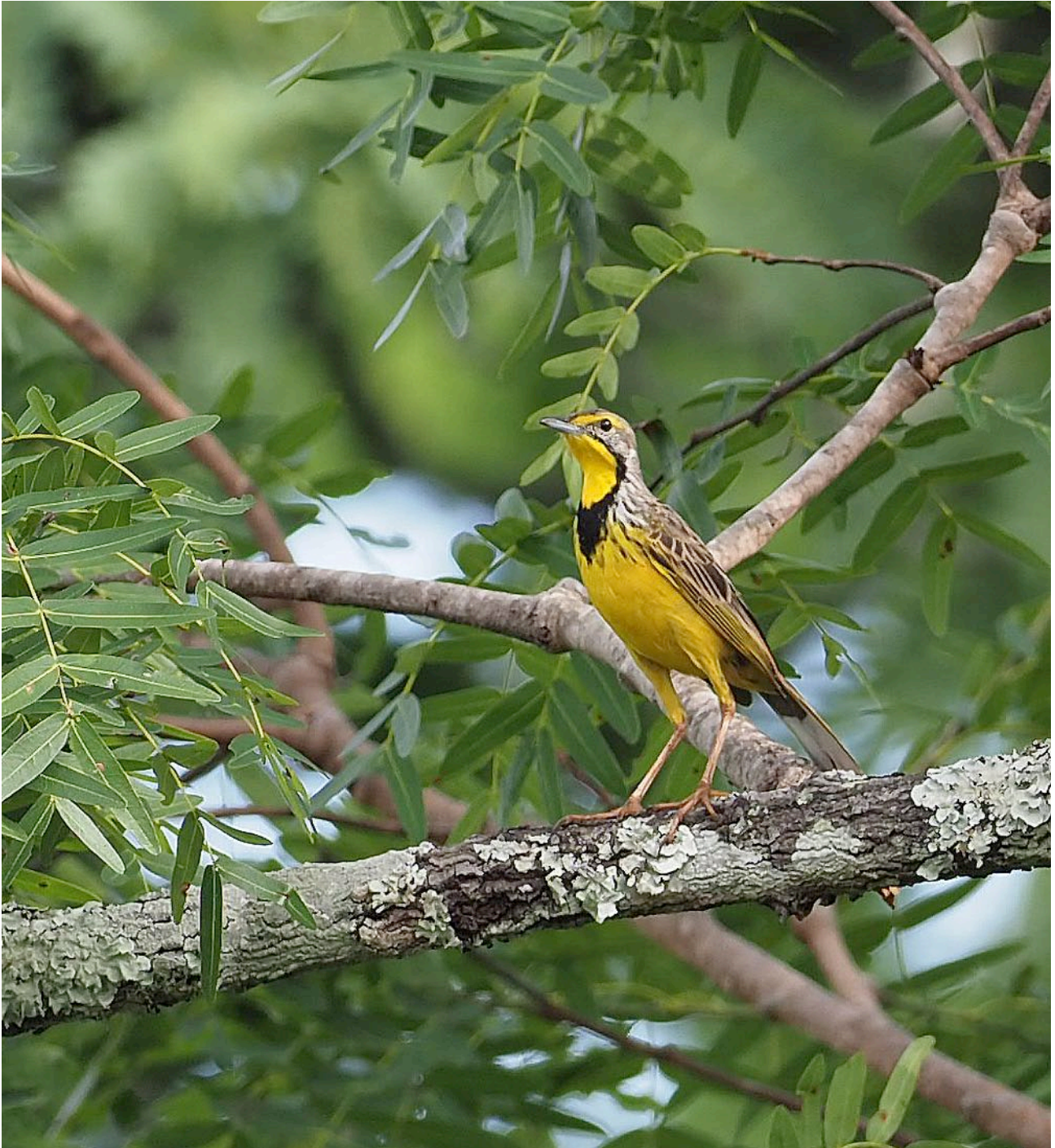
A final visit to one of the Nyika forest patches was rewarded with a nice sighting of a Moustached Tinkerbird. We heard a close Olive-flanked Ground Robin, but it didn't want to show. On the drive out we saw two Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawks and enjoyed excellent looks at a pair of cracking Black Coucals. Our next stop was the miombo woodland of the Vwaza Marsh National Park, but as soon as we arrived the skies opened and it rained persistently for hours on end. We waited and waited and waited and eventually the rain stopped, but we only had a short time left to try to find our targets. Sadly, not a sniff was had of the much-wanted Babbling Starling, nor of the Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver. We did observe Black Cuckoo, Bearded Woodpecker, Meyer's Parrot, Mosque Swallow, Arnot's Chat and Familiar Chat, but were rather disappointed... bloody rain. In the afternoon we continued our travels and after an uneventful drive over the pine forest-covered Viphya plateau arrived at the peaceful Luwawa Forest Lodge.



Black Coucal sat up at Nyika and Lesser Jacana was seen at Kasungu (Mark Van Beirs)

On our rainy pre-breakfast walk in the gardens of the Luwawa Forest Lodge we managed to observe a pair of African Black Duck, a perched Black Sparrowhawk, attractive White-headed Saw-wings, singing Lesser Swamp and Little Rush Warblers, Chapin's Apalis, Forest Double-collared Sunbird and Green-winged Pytilia. We glimpsed an African Rail and heard the distinctive hooting of a Red-chested Flufftail at very close range.

A short stop in a nice patch of miombo on the long drive to Lilongwe gave us Whyte's Barbet and a party of curious Retz's Helmetshrikes. The main bird at the Kasungu dam was the tiny Lesser Jacana. Three birds were seen in the distance at the other side of the lake, a real pity. Ducks were well represented here as we scored on White-faced Whistling Duck, Knob-billed Duck, Red-billed Teal and Southern Pochard. Further south, a small, well-vegetated lake produced much better sightings of several dainty Lesser Jacanas walking over lily pads. We also noted Fulvous Whistling Duck, the rarely-seen White-backed Duck, Three-banded Plover and a singing Moustached Grass Warbler. The famous dambos near Lilongwe airport held a splendid Rosy-throated Longclaw, next to White Stork, Zitting Cisticola, Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Pin-tailed Whydah, Yellow-throated Longclaw and Tree Pipit. In late afternoon we arrived at our delightful accommodation in a quiet part of the capital.



The attractive Yellow-throated Longclaw was seen at several venues (Mark Van Beirs)

On the final morning of the tour we briefly visited several sites in and near Lilongwe. We found the famous roost of the Amur Falcons unoccupied and the sewageworks only produced a handful of already encountered

waterbirds. A patch of nice woodland gave us a selection of miombo specials and then it was time to pack up and make our way to the airport, where this delightful, bird and mammal packed tour ended.



Denham's Bustard showed very well on the grasslands of the Nyika plateau (Mark Van Beirs)



The Woodland Kingfisher is a common and vocal species (Mark Van Beirs)



The rare Green-headed Oriole brightened up our visit to Thyolo (Mark Van Beirs)

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, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* A handful of observations.



Red-winged Francolin (Mark Van Beirs)

Red-winged Francolin ◊ *Scleroptila levaillantii* Great sightings of the endemic race *crawshayi* at Nyika.

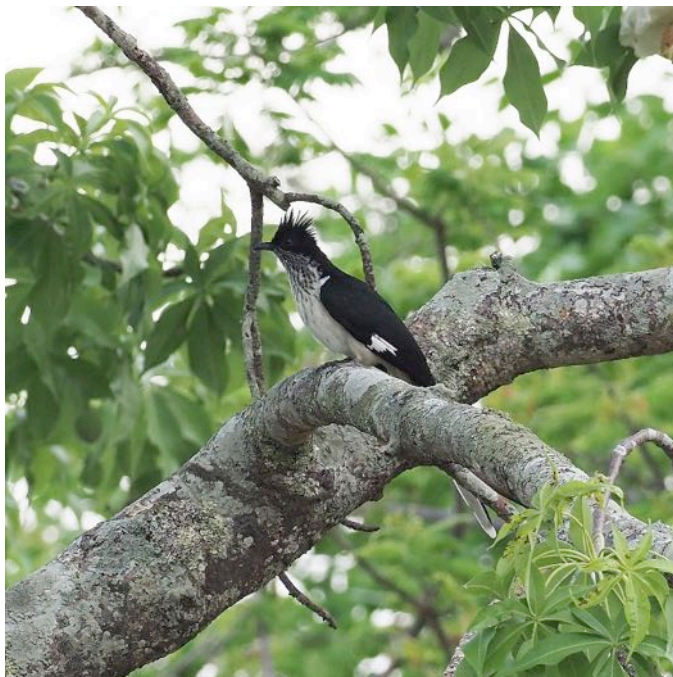
Hildebrandt's Francolin *Pternistis hildebrandti* Good looks at a covey at the Liwonde NP.
Red-necked Spurfowl (R-n Francolin) *Pternistis afer* Nice looks at Satemwa.
Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (H) We heard it regularly on the Nyika Plateau.
White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* Several flocks on the penultimate day of the tour.
Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* A single bird was noted south of Kasungu.



White-backed Duck (Mark Van Beirs)

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus* Good looks at six on a pond south of Kasungu.
Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* Common along the Shire river at the Liwonde NP.
Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* Several showed well on the penultimate day of the tour.
Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Common at the Liwonde NP.
African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* A pair was seen at the Luwawa Forest Lodge.
Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* Regular.
Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha* Good numbers were noted on the Kasungu dam.
Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* c20 showed well on the Kasungu dam.
Montane Nightjar ♦ (Ruwenzori N, Usambara N) *Caprimulgus [poliocephalus] guttifer* Nice at Nyika.
Square-tailed Nightjar (Mozambique N, Gabon N) *Caprimulgus fossii* Good looks at the Liwonde NP.
Pennant-winged Nightjar *Caprimulgus vexillarius* A female was flushed at Nyika.
Scarce Swift ♦ *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* Regular on the Zomba plateau.
African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Common.
Common Swift *Apus apus* Good numbers all over.
African Black Swift *Apus barbatulus* Good looks at a few on the Zomba plateau.
Little Swift *Apus affinis* Regular observations.
White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* Nice looks at Lilongwe airport and at Luwawa.
Livingstone's Turaco ♦ *Tauraco livingstonii* Regular in the southeast.
Schalow's Turaco ♦ *Tauraco schalowi* Common west of the rift.
Purple-crested Turaco (P-c Lourie) *Tauraco porphyreolophus* Good looks in the Liwonde NP.
Grey Go-away-bird (G Lourie) *Corythaixoides concolor* A couple of sightings of this southern species.
Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami* NT Great looks at five on the Nyika plateau.

Burchell's Coucal ♦ *Centropus burchellii* A handful of encounters. More often heard.
Black Coucal *Centropus grillii* Terrific studies of a pair at Nyika.
Green Malkoha *Ceuthmochares australis* (H) We heard it at the East Coast Akalat spot.



Levaillant's and African Emerald Cuckoos (Mark Van Beirs)

Levaillant's Cuckoo (Striped Crested C) *Clamator levaillantii* Excellent at Liwonde.
Thick-billed Cuckoo ♦ *Pachycoccyx audeberti* Flight views at Dzalanyama.
Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* Regular.
Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* A male was seen at Dzalanyama.
African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus* A glittering male was scoped at Liwonde NP.
Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* Good looks at the Vwaza reserve.
Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* Seen well at Kuchawe. Often heard.
African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* A singing bird Was observed at Liwonde NP.
Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*
African Olive Pigeon (Rameron P) *Columba arquatrix* Regular on the Nyika plateau.
Lemon Dove (Cinnamon D) *Columba larvata* (H) We heard it on the Nyika plateau.
Dusky Turtle Dove (Pink-breasted T D) *Streptopelia lugens* Small numbers were noted at Nyika.
Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* Regular.
Ring-necked Dove (Cape Turtle D) *Streptopelia capicola* Common.
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos* Regular observations.
Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* A single sighting at the Satemwa Tea Estate.
Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria* Several nice observations.
Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Just a few encounters.
African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus* Excellent looks at Chintcheche.
Buff-spotted Flufftail ♦ *Sarothrura elegans* (H) One was heard at close range at Mount Thyolo.
Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa* (H) Heard at Nyika and at Luwawa, but no joy.
African Rail (A Water R) *Rallus caerulescens* Brief looks at one at Luwawa.
Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* Nice views at Liwonde.
Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C) *Fulica cristata* Quite regular.
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* A handful of sightings.
Water Thick-knee (W Dikkop) *Burhinus vermiculatus* Some nice encounters at Liwonde.
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Regular at Liwonde.
Long-toed Lapwing (L-t Plover) *Vanellus crassirostris* Common along the Shire river at Liwonde.



Water Thick-knee (Mark Van Beirs)

Spur-winged Lapwing (S-w Plover) *Vanellus spinosus* Common along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Crowned Lapwing (C Plover) *Vanellus coronatus* A single bird was seen near Lilongwe.

African Wattled Lapwing (A W Plover) *Vanellus senegallus* Common along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* A single bird was found at a pond south of Kasungu.

Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis* Three at Kasungu and four at a small pond further south.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Common at Liwonde and a handful elsewhere.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Just a few observations.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Small numbers were noted at Liwonde.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Small numbers were noted at Liwonde.

Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii* An adult and a youngster showed well at Nyika.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Regular observations along the Shire river at Liwonde.

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris* NT THE BIRD OF THE TOUR. c200 showed very well at Liwonde.

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* A few were noted along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Five were seen along the Shire river at Liwonde.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Eight were found along the Shire river at Liwonde.



African Skimmers (Mark Van Beirs)

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* 30 showed along the Shire river at Liwonde.

African Openbill (A Open-billed Stork) *Anastomus lamelligerus* c200 showed at Liwonde.

Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii* A single near Lilongwe on day one and dozens on the final day.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* A single bird was foraging at one of the airport dambos.



Saddle-billed Stork; African Darter (Mark Van Beirs)

Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* Several pairs showed well at Liwonde.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Regular at Liwonde. A few elsewhere.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus* 100+ along the Shire river at Liwonde.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* Good looks at several along the Shire river at Liwonde.

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Small numbers along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Hadada Ibis (Hadedda I) *Bostrychia hagedash* A handful of vocal birds at Liwonde.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* c100 along the Shire river at Liwonde.

White-backed Night Heron ♦ *Gorsachius leuconotus* Fantastic views of several birds at Liwonde.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Small numbers along the Shire river at Liwonde.



Immature White-backed Night Heron (Mark Van Beirs)

Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* A single bird was seen at Liwonde.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Four at Liwonde and a single near Kasungu.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Regular.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Small numbers along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* Fairly common. Several colonies were noted.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* Five showed well along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Great Egret (Western G E) *Ardea [alba] melanorhynchos* Small numbers.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Regular.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Just a few sightings of this peculiar species.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* Two were noted along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* A single bird showed well along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Six observations of this widespread species.

African Harrier-Hawk (A Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus* Terrific looks at several at Dzalanyama.

Palm-nut Vulture (Vulturine Fish Eagle) *Gypohierax angolensis* A single sighting at Liwonde.

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* CR Seen in very small numbers at Liwonde and at Nyika.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos* EN Two birds performed well at Nyika.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* A single immature bird obliged at Liwonde.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* NT Several showed at Liwonde. Extreme close ups of an immature bird.

Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* NT Great views of one at Liwonde. Also seen at Nyika.



Black-winged Kite; African Harrier-Hawk (Mark Van Beirs)



immature Brown Snake Eagle; immature Bateleur (Mark Van Beirs)

- Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* Several were noted on the Zomba plateau.
- Wahlberg's Eagle** *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* Seven observations of this narrow-tailed species.
- Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* A single bird flew over the Chukawe hotel.
- African Hawk-Eagle** *Aquila spilogaster* A couple of encounters in the Liwonde NP.
- Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* Four observations at Dzalanyama.
- African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro* A displaying bird was showing off at the Liwonde NP.
- Shikra (Little Banded Goshawk)** *Accipiter badius* Two sightings of this widespread bird of prey.
- Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk (R-chested S)** *Accipiter rufiventris* Two observations at Nyika.
- Black Sparrowhawk (Great S)** *Accipiter melanoleucus* Two encounters – perched and in flight.
- African Marsh Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* A single encounter upon leaving Dzalanyama.
- Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* NT A splendid male was quartering over the Nyika grasslands.
- Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* A female was identified at Nyika.
- Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* Only seven observations...
- African Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer* Common, showy and vocal along the Shire river at Liwonde.
- Common Buzzard (Steppe B)** *Buteo [buteo] vulpinus* A handful of observations of this migrant.



African Fish Eagle (Mark Van Beirs)

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* A single observation at Nyika.

Spotted Eagle-Owl *Bubo africanus* Six encounters – mainly at Nyika. Also recent fledglings.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl (Giant E O) *Bubo lacteus* A single bird was seen near Liwonde.

Pel's Fishing Owl ♦ *Scotopelia peli* Terrific looks at a fledged youngster and at an adult at Liwonde.

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* Two showed well at Dzalanyama. Also seen at Thyolo.

African Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense* Perfect views at Chintheche.

Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* A single bird was noted on a night drive at Nyika.

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* Regular observations.

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* A male showed quite well near Chintheche.

Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum* Scope views in the forest at Nyika.

African Hoopoe *Upupa africana* A few observations at Liwonde.

Green (Red-billed) Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* Regular at Dzalanyama and Liwonde.

Common Scimitarbill (Greater S) *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* Just a few at Dzalanyama.

Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri* VU Superb looks at Dzalanyama and Liwonde.

Southern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus rufirostris* Regular at Liwonde.

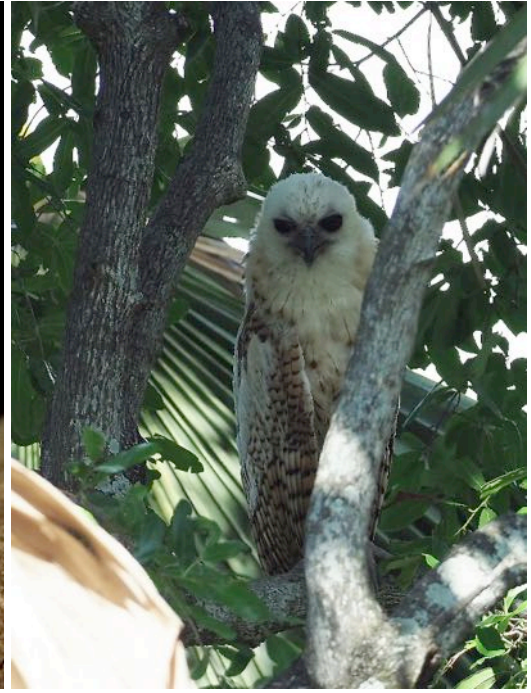
Crowned Hornbill *Lophoceros alboterminatus* Seen at Liwonde and Nyika.

African Grey Hornbill *Lophoceros nasutus* A handful of observations.

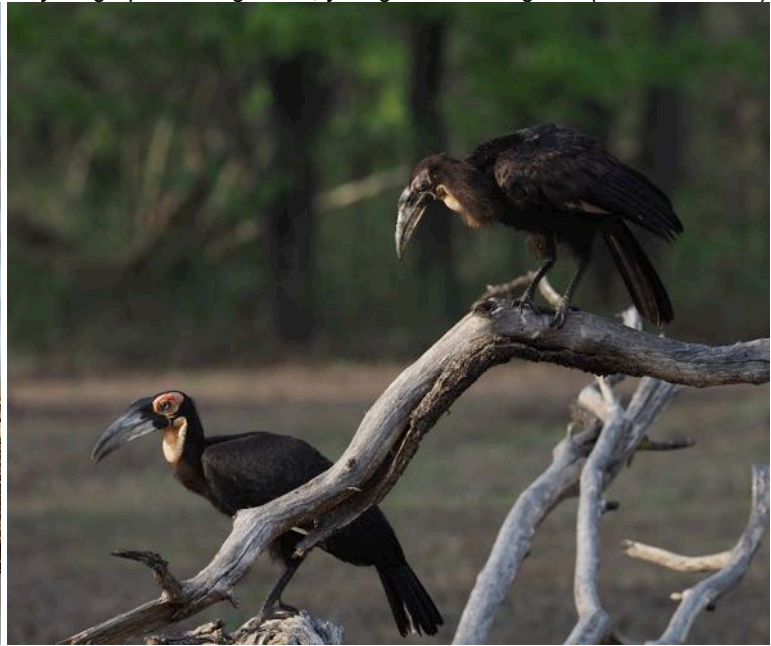
Pale-billed Hornbill ♦ *Lophoceros pallidirostris* This miombo specialist showed well at Dzalanyama.

Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator* Regular encounters, often at fruiting fig trees.

Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis* Good looks at a single bird at Thyolo.



young Spotted Eagle-Owl; young Pel's Fishing Owl (Mark Van Beirs)



African Barred Owl; young Southern Ground Hornbills (Mark Van Beirs)

- Racket-tailed Roller** ♦ *Coracias spatulatus* Scope views of this speciality at Liwonde.
- Lilac-breasted Roller** *Coracias caudatus* This beauty was regularly seen all along our route.
- Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* Regular observations.
- Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* Four excellent sightings.
- Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti* Good looks at two at Chintheche.
- Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* Common and very vocal.
- African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta* Perfect views at Dzalanyama and Satemwa.
- Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus* A few along the Shire river at Liwonde.
- Half-collared Kingfisher** *Alcedo semitorquata* Brief looks at one at Dzalanyama.
- Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* Excellent views along the Shire river at Liwonde.
- Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Regular observations along our route.
- Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops hirundineus* A single bird showed well at Dzalanyama.
- Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus* Regular encounters along our route.



African Pygmy Kingfisher; Giant Kingfisher (Mark Van Beirs)

Böhm's Bee-eater ♦ *Merops boehmi* Fantastic close ups at Liwonde. A real jewel!

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* Two were noted along the Shire river at Liwonde.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Regular observations of this northern migrant.

White-eared Barbet *Stactolaema leucotis* Several showed well on the Zomba plateau.

Whyte's Barbet ♦ *Stactolaema whytii* Seen well at Dzalanyama and in the Chimaliro miombo.

Moustached Tinkerbird ♦ (M Green T) *Pogoniulus leucomystax* Seen and heard at Nyika.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (Golden-r T) *Pogoniulus bilineatus* Scope views at Chukawe.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* Regular in miombo woodland.

Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus* Nice looks at Liwonde and in Lilongwe.

Green-backed Honeybird (Slender-billed Honeyguide) *Prodotiscus zambesiae* One at Dzalanyama.

Pallid Honeyguide ♦ *Indicator meliphilus* Excellent looks at two at Chukawe. Unobtrusive.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* (H) We heard it at Vwaza.

Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus* Several obliged beautifully at Dzalanyama.

Greater Honeyguide (Black-throated H) *Indicator indicator* Perfect looks at two at Liwonde.

Speckle-throated Woodpecker ♦ *Campethera scriptoricauda* One performed briefly at Liwonde.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* A couple of nice encounters.

Green-backed Woodpecker (Little Spotted W) *Campethera cailliautii* Two seen well at Dzalanyama.

Bearded Woodpecker *Chloropicus namaquus* Good views of one at Vwaza.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Regular.

Stierling's Woodpecker ♦ *Dendropicos stierlingi* NT Excellent looks at a single on day 1 at Dzalanyama.

Olive Woodpecker *Dendropicos griseocephalus* Several nice observations.

Rock Kestrel *Falco rupicolus* Good looks at a male at the Vincent's Bunting kopje.

Dickinson's Kestrel ♦ *Falco dickinsoni* One performed very well at Liwonde.

Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera* A fantastic showing at Liwonde!

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* Regular on the Nyika plateau and on the drive south from Vwaza.

Eurasian Hobby (European H) *Falco subbuteo* Five observations of this speedy northern migrant.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Two encounters. Always a delight to see it in action.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* An immature bird showed well at Liwonde.

Brown-necked Parrot ♦ (Grey-headed P) *Poicephalus [fuscicollis] suahelicus* Good looks at Liwonde.

Meyer's Parrot (Brown P) *Poicephalus meyeri* A single was noted at Vwaza.

Lilian's Lovebird ♦ (Nyasa L) *Agapornis lilianae* NT Delightfully common and showy at Liwonde.

African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* Perfect scope views at Thyolo. Heard elsewhere.

Cape Batis ♦ (Malawi B) *Batis [capensis] dimorpha* Several nice encounters in the Nyika forests.

Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor* Regular.

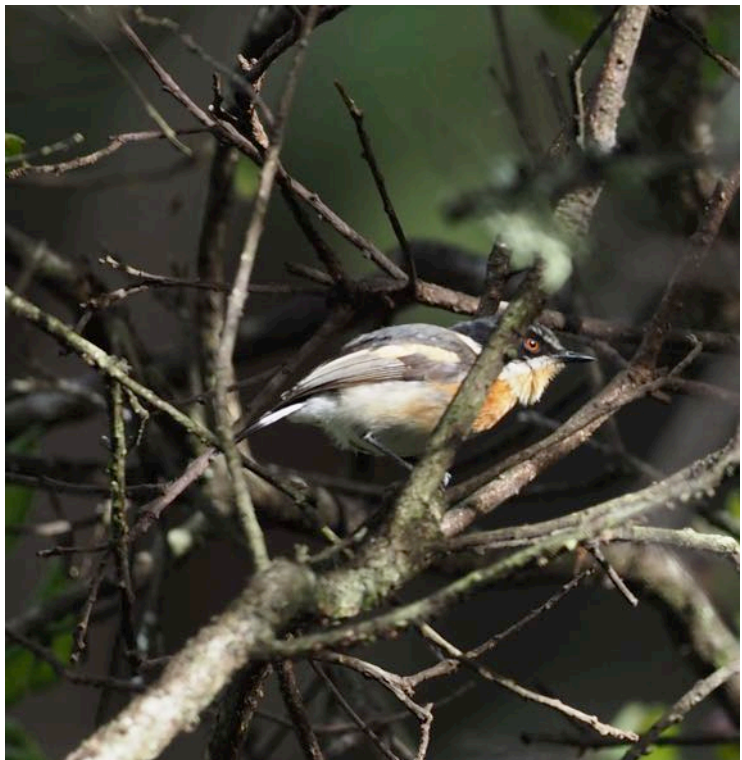


Böhm's Bee-eater (Mark Van Beirs)

Black-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira peltata* Good looks at a pair at Thyolo.
Grey-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* Brief looks at one at Dzalanyama.
Black-fronted Bushshrike *Chlorophoneus nigrifrons* Nice views at one in the canopy at Thyolo.
Orange-breasted Bushshrike (Sulphur-b B-s) *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* A single at Liwonde.
Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis* A couple of excellent encounters.
Black-crowned Tchagra (B-headed T) *Tchagra senegalus* Regular. More often heard.
Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla* Common.
Fülleborn's Boubou ♦ *Laniarius fülleborni* Two showed well near our accommodation at Nyika.
Tropical Boubou *Laniarius major* Regular and vocal.
Brubru *Nilaus afer* Fairly common at Dzalanyama.



Red-necked Falcon (Mark Van Beirs)



African Broadbill; female Cape (Malawi) Batis (Mark Van Beirs)

White-crested Helmetshrike (W H-s) *Prionops plumatus* Two nice encounters with parties.
Retz's Helmetshrike (Red-billed H-s) *Prionops retzii* These curious birds showed very well.
White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Cebilepyris pectoralis* Regular in the Dzalanyama miombo.
Black Cuckooshrike *Campephaga flava* Fairly common.
Souza's Shrike ◇ *Lanius souzae* Excellent looks, eventually, at Dzalanyama. A miombo specialist!



male Red-backed Shrike; White-necked Raven (Mark Van Beirs)

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* A few at Liwonde.
Northern Fiscal *Lanius humeralis* A handful of observations.
Eurasian Golden Oriole (European G O) *Oriolus oriolus* Good looks at a male at Liwonde.
African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus* Regular in the Dzalanyama miombo.
Green-headed Oriole ◇ *Oriolus chlorocephalus* Fantastic looks at Satemwa. A real beauty!
Black-headed Oriole (Eastern B-h O) *Oriolus larvatus* Regular encounters.
Common Square-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus ludwigii* Several showed well at Thyolo.
Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* Regular and obvious.
Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas* A male showed quite well near Mzuzu.
African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Regular and handsome.
Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Very common.
White-necked Raven (W-naped R) *Corvus albicollis* Regular at Zomba and on Nyika.



Southern Black tit; Miombo Tit (Mark Van Beirs)

White-tailed Blue Flycatcher *Elminia albicauda* Several showed well at Dzalanyama.

White-tailed Crested Flycatcher *Elminia albonotata* Several were seen on the Zomba plateau.

White-winged Black Tit *Melaniparus leucomelas* A single bird gave brief looks in the Nyika foothills.

Southern Black Tit *Melaniparus niger* Regular sightings.

Rufous-bellied Tit ♦ *Melaniparus rufiventris* Nice looks at Dzalanyama. Also seen at Chimaliro.

Cinnamon-breasted Tit ♦ *Melaniparus pallidiventris* Two showed well near Liwonde.

Miombo Tit ♦ (Northern Grey T) *Melaniparus griseiventris* Two observations at Dzalanyama.

Eastern Nicator (White-throated N, Yellow-spotted N) *Nicator gularis* (H) Heard near Mzuzu.

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafraga africana* A few were seen on the Nyika plateau.

Flappet Lark *Mirafraga rufocinnamomea* A couple of encounters.

Dark-capped Bulbul (Black-eyed B) *Pycnonotus tricolor* Very common.

Black-browed Greenbul ♦ (Southern Mountain G) *Arizelocichla fusciceps* Seen well near Mzuzu.

Olive-headed Greenbul ♦ *Arizelocichla olivaceiceps* Several were noted at Chukawe.

Little Greenbul (L Green Bulbul) *Eurillas virens* Regular in the mountains of the southeast.

Sombre Greenbul (Zanzibar S G) *Andropadus importunus* Scope views in the Liwonde thickets.

Yellow-bellied Greenbul *Chlorocichla flaviventris* Brief looks at Liwonde.

Terrestrial Brownbul (T Bulbul) *Phyllastrephus terrestris* Excellent views at Liwonde.

Grey-olive Greenbul (G-o Bulbul) *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris* A single showed well at Satemwa.

Placid Greenbul *Phyllastrephus placidus* Two obliged nicely at Thyolo.

Yellow-streaked Greenbul (Y-s Bulbul) *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus* Several performed at Thyolo.

Sharpe's Greenbul ♦ *Phyllastrephus alfredi* Good looks in the montane forests of Nyika.

White-headed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne albiceps* Seen well at Nyika and at Luwawa.

Black Saw-wing (Eastern S-w) *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] orientalis* Regular.

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta* A single at Nyika.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Fairly common.

Angolan Swallow *Hirundo angolensis* A few at Nyika.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* Common and very obliging.

Blue Swallow ♦ *Hirundo atrocaerulea* VU This gorgeous species showed very well at Nyika. A real gem!

Rock Martin (African R M) *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* Regular.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* A fairly common migrant.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* Common.

Red-breasted Swallow (Rufous-chested S) *Cecropis semirufa* A few in the lower reaches of Nyika.

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis* Several showed well at Vwaza.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* Regular on the Nyika plateau.



Moustached Grass Warbler; Mountain Yellow Warbler (Mark Van Beirs)

Moustached Grass Warbler (African M W) *Melocichla mentalis* Excellent looks south of Kasungu.
Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens* Good looks at Liwonde.
Red-capped Crombec ♦ *Sylvietta ruficapilla* Two performed nicely at Dzalanyama.



Livingstone's Flycatcher; Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler (tour participant Ueli Weber)

Livingstone's Flycatcher ♦ *Erythrocerus livingstonei* An excellent performance at Liwonde.
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Common. We regularly heard them sing.
Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus ruficapilla* Nice looks at Chukawe.
Lesser Swamp Warbler (Cape Reed W) *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* Good looks at Luwawa.
Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (H) One was heard at Liwonde.
African Yellow Warbler (Dark-capped Y W) *Iduna natalensis* Scope views on the Zomba plateau.
Mountain Yellow Warbler *Iduna similis* Perfect looks at Nyika.
Fan-tailed Grassbird (Broad-tailed W) *Catriscus brevirostris* Good looks at displaying birds.
Evergreen Forest Warbler *Bradypterus lopezi* Good looks, eventually, at Chukawe.
Cinnamon Bracken Warbler *Bradypterus cinnamomeus* This skulker performed quite well at Nyika.
Little Rush Warbler (African Sedge W) *Bradypterus baboecala* Nice display at Luwawa.
Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops* Seen well at the Lilongwe dambos. Heard elsewhere.
Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans* Regular.
Trilling Cisticola *Cisticola woosnami* Showed well in the Nyika miombo.
Black-lored Cisticola ♦ *Cisticola nigriloris* Common and obvious at Nyika. A speciality!
Lazy Cisticola *Cisticola aberrans* Good looks at the Vincent's Bunting site.
Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana* Regular.
Churring Cisticola ♦ *Cisticola njombe* Common and easy to see at Nyika.
Wailing Cisticola ♦ *Cisticola lais* A few were noted at rocky outcrops on the Nyika plateau.
Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis* A handful of sightings.
Neddicky (Piping Cisticola) *Cisticola fulvicapilla* Several showed well in the Dzalanyama miombo.
Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed C) *Cisticola juncidis* Seen at the Lilongwe dambos.
Wing-snapping Cisticola *Cisticola ayresii* All too brief looks on the Nyika plateau.
Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava* Regular.
Red-winged Warbler *Heliolais erythropterus* Good looks at Dzalanyama.
Bar-throated Apalis *Apalis thoracica* A few in highland forests.
Yellow-throated Apalis ♦ *Apalis flavigularis* EN Malawi's only endemic showed well at Chukawe.
Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flava* Seen in Lilongwe.
White-winged Apalis ♦ *Apalis chariessa* NT This beauty gave great looks on the Zomba plateau.
Black-headed Apalis *Apalis melanocephala* Two were noted at Zomba.
Chapin's Apalis ♦ *Apalis chapini* Seen very well at Nyika and Luwawa.
Brown-headed Apalis ♦ *Apalis alticola* Good looks in the lower reaches of the Nyika plateau.
Green-backed Camaroptera ♦ *Camaroptera brachyuran* (H) Heard at Satemwa.
Grey-backed Camaroptera (G-b Bleating Warbler) *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Regular.
Stierling's Wren-Warbler ♦ *Calamonastes stierlingi* Nice views in the Dzalanyama miombo.
Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops* Good looks at several parties at Dzalanyama.



Yellow-throated Apalis (tour participant Ueli Weber)

Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii* Regular at Dzalanyama.

African Hill Babbler (Abyssinian H B) *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica* (H) We heard it at Nyika.

Brown Parisoma ♦ *Sylvia lugens* Fair views in the lower reaches of Nyika.

Southern Yellow White-eye *Zosterops anderssoni* Regular.

Yellow-bellied Hyliota (Y-breasted H) *Hyliota flavigaster* Fairly common at Dzalanyama.

Southern Hyliota (Mashona H) *Hyliota australis* A single bird was identified at Dzalanyama.

African Spotted Creeper *Salpornis salvadori* Repeated great looks at Dzalanyama. Always a delight.

Greater Blue-eared Starling (G B-e Glossy S) *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* Common at Liwonde.

Miombo Blue-eared Starling ♦ (Southern Lesser B-e S) *Lamprotornis elisabeth* Nice looks at Vwaza.

Meves's Starling ♦ *Lamprotornis mevesii* Quite common at Liwonde.

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Common.

Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio* A few showed well at the Vincent's Bunting kopje.

Slender-billed Starling (S-b Red-winged S) *Onychognathus tenuirostris* Good looks at Nyika.

Waller's Starling *Onychognathus walleri* Scope views at Nyika.

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus* Regularly seen on Eland and Zebra at Nyika.

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Common at Liwonde.

Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyana* Regular.

Bearded Scrub Robin (Eastern B R) *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata* Good looks in the Liwonde thickets.

Miombo Scrub Robin ♦ (Central Bearded R) *Cercotrichas barbata* Scope views at Dzalanyama.

White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys* A single encounter near Zomba.

Grey Tit-Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus* A few encounters in miombo woodland.

White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis fischeri* Regular at Nyika.

Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* Fairly common in the Dzalanyama miombo.

Pale Flycatcher *Melaenornis pallidus* A single sighting at the Vincent's Bunting kopje.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* Regular.

Ashy Flycatcher (Blue-grey F) *Muscicapa caerulea* One showed well at Dzalanyama.

African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* A few at Dzalanyama.

White-chested Alethe ♦ (W-breasted A) *Chamaetylas fuelleborni* Brief looks in the Nyika forests.



Violet-backed Starling; Thyolo Alethe (tour participant Ueli Weber)

Thyolo Alethe ♦ (Cholo A) *Chamaetylas choloensis* **VU** Scope studies at Thyolo!
Olive-flanked Ground Robin ♦ (O-f R) *Cossypha anomala* **NT** Unusually brief looks only at Nyika.
Cape Robin-Chat (Cape R) *Cossypha caffra* Regular.
White-browed Robin-Chat *Cossypha heuglini* Common.
White-starred Robin (Starred R) *Pogonocichla stellata* Very nice looks in the mountain forests.



Sharpe's Akalat (tour participant Ueli Weber); Collared Palm Thrush (Mark Van Beirs)

Sharpe's Akalat ♦ *Sheppardia sharpei* Great looks, eventually, in the Nyika montane forests.
East Coast Akalat ♦ *Sheppardia gunningi* **NT** Very nice looks in tangled forest near Mzuzu.
Collared Palm Thrush *Cichladusa arquata* Common and showy at Liwonde.
Miombo Rock Thrush ♦ *Monticola angolensis* Regular at Dzalanyama.
African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* A regular species of the montane areas.
Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* Great looks at the Vincent's Bunting kopje.
Arnot's Chat ♦ (White-headed Black C) *Myrmecocichla arnotti* Seen well at Liwonde and at Vwaza.
Familiar Chat (Red-tailed C) *Oenanthe familiaris* A few encounters only.
Boulder Chat ♦ *Pinarornis plumosus* Great looks at three birds on a forested kopje at Dzalanyama.
Anchieta's Sunbird ♦ (Red-and-blue S) *Anthreptes anchietae* Terrific views at Dzalanyama.
Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei* This beauty showed well at Dzalanyama.
Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* Regular.
Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* Quite common.
Amethyst Sunbird (African Black S) *Chalcomitra amethystina* Regular in miombo woodland.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* A few sightings of this attractive species.

Bronzy Sunbird (Bronze S) *Nectarinia kilimensis* Seen well at Nyika and Luwawa.

Malachite Sunbird *Nectarinia famosa* Two were noted at Nyika.

Scarlet-tufted Sunbird ♦ (S-t Malachite S) *Nectarinia johnstoni* Scope views of this speciality at Nyika

Eastern Miombo Sunbird ♦ (M Double-collared S) *Cinnyris manoensis* A few at Dzalanyama.

Whyte's Double-collared Sunbird ♦ *Cinnyris whytei* Regular in the montane forests of Nyika.

Forest Double-collared Sunbird ♦ *Cinnyris fuelleborni* Several nice observations in the highlands.

Shelley's Sunbird ♦ *Cinnyris shelleyi* Fair looks at a female at Dzalanyama.

Purple-banded Sunbird (Little P-b S) *Cinnyris bifasciatus* Several showed well at Chintheche.

White-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala* A few were seen around the Mvuu camp at Liwonde.

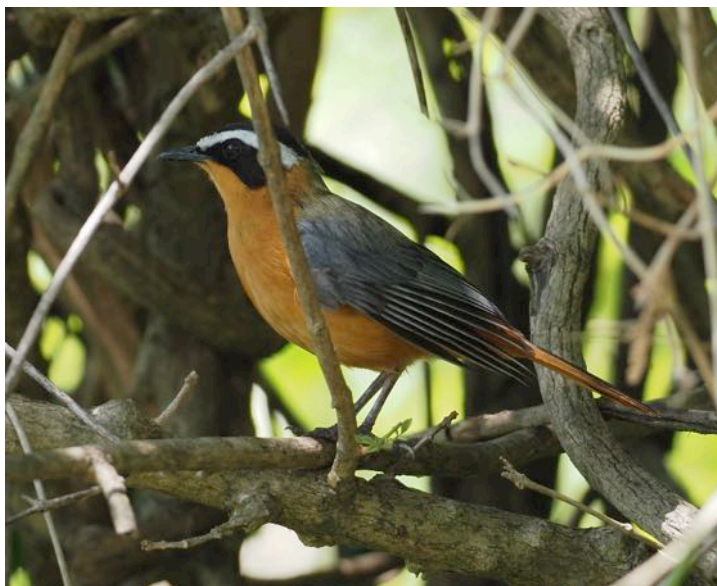
Variable Sunbird (Yellow-bellied S) *Cinnyris venustus* Just a handful of observations.

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Common in Liwonde.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* Just a few observations on transit in villages.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus* Good looks at several at Liwonde.

Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow *Gymnoris superciliaris* Common in miombo woodland along our route.



White-browed Robin-Chat; White-browed Sparrow-Weaver (Mark Van Beirs)

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali* Common and vocal at Liwonde.

Baglafaecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafaecht* A few were seen at Nyika.

Bertram's Weaver ♦ *Ploceus bertrandi* Good looks on the Zomba plateau.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis* A handful of sightings of this widespread species.

Eastern Golden Weaver *Ploceus subaureus* Displaying in the Chintheche gardens.



Southern Brown-throated Weaver; Eastern Golden Weaver (tour participant Ueli Weber)

Holub's Golden Weaver (Golden W) *Ploceus xanthops* Regular.
Southern Brown-throated Weaver ♦ *Ploceus xanthopterus* Display and nest-building at Liwonde.
Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius* A few at Liwonde.
Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* A male showed well at Dzalanyama.
Village Weaver (Spotted-backed W) *Ploceus cucullatus* Fairly common.
Dark-backed Weaver (Forest W) *Ploceus bicolor* A few at Thyolo and at Liwonde.
Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* Great looks at males at Liwonde and at Vwaza.
Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* A party showed well at Dzalanyama.
Black-winged Red Bishop (B-w B, Fire-crowned B) *Euplectes hordeaceus* Just a few sightings.
Yellow Bishop (Yellow-rumped B) *Euplectes capensis* Nice looks on the Zomba plateau.
Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura* A few at the Lilongwe dambos.



Montane Widowbird (Mark Van Beirs)

Montane Widowbird ♦ (Mountain Marsh Whydah) *Euplectes psammacromius* Glorious at Nyika.
White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus* Regular along the Shire river at Liwonde.
Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens* Common.
Orange-winged Pytilia ♦ (Golden-backed P) *Pytilia afra* Brief looks at Dzalanyama.
Green-winged Pytilia (Melba Finch) *Pytilia melba* A nice showing at the Luwawa Forest Lodge.
Red-throated Twinspot ♦ *Hypargos niveoguttatus* This beauty showed well at Dzalanyama.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* Regular observations.

African Firefinch (Blue-billed F) *Lagonosticta rubricata* Good looks on the Zomba plateau.

Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia* A male performed very well on the Zomba plateau.



Blue Waxbill (tour participant Ueli Weber); Mountain Wagtail (Mark Van Beirs)

Blue Waxbill (Southern Cordon-bleu) *Uraeginthus angolensis* Regular.

Yellow-bellied Waxbill (East African Sweet) *Coccyzygia quartinia* Fairly common and very attractive.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* Regular.

Orange-breasted Waxbill (Zebra W) *Amandava subflava* Regular observations of this gem.

Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata* Common.

Red-backed Mannikin *Lonchura nigriceps* Regular encounters.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* Fairly common. Some were getting into breeding attire.

Long-tailed Paradise Whydah (Eastern P W) *Vidua paradisaea* Small numbers along the Shire river.

Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah *Vidua obtusa* A moulting male showed well at Dzalanyama.

Mountain Wagtail (Long-tailed W) *Motacilla clara* Very nice on the Zomba plateau.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Common.

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus* Several excellent observations.

Rosy-throated Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae* Terrific studies of this jewel at the Lilongwe dambos.

African Pipit (Grassveld, Grassland P) *Anthus cinnamomeus* Regular.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* A single bird was at Dzalanyama.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* This northern migrant was seen at the Lilongwe dambos.

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

Southern Citril ♦ *Crithagra hyposticta* Several excellent encounters.

Yellow-fronted Canary (Y-eyed C) *Crithagra mozambica* Common.

Brimstone Canary (Bully C) *Crithagra sulphurata* A handful of sightings.

Reichard's Seedeater ♦ (Stripe-breasted Canary) *Crithagra reichardi* A few showed at Dzalanyama.

Black-eared Seedeater ♦ *Crithagra mennelli* Two performed well at Dzalanyama.

Yellow-browed Seedeater ♦ *Crithagra whytii* Great looks at this localized species at Nyika.

Yellow-crowned Canary *Serinus flavivertex* Common at Nyika.

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (C-b Rock B) *Emberiza tahapisi* A few encounters.

Vincent's Bunting ♦ *Emberiza vincenti* Scope views of this rare bird on a bare kopje.

Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris* Several nice sightings.

Cabanis's Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi* Regular at Dzalanyama.



African Skimmers (tour participant Juan Calvente)



African Skimmers (tour participant Juan Calvente)



African Paradise Flycatcher; Trumpeter Hornbill (tour participant Juan Calvente)



Rosy-throated Longclaw; Scarlet-tufted Sunbird (tour participant Olof Persson)



Black Crake; Diederik Cuckoo (tour participant Ueli Weber)



Lilian's Lovebird (tour participant Ueli Weber)



Pel's Fishing Owl; Blue Swallow (tour participant Ueli Weber)



African Elephant (Mark Van Beirs)



Southern Tree Hyrax (Mark Van Beirs)

MAMMALS

African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* Common at Liwonde and also seen at Nyika.

Southern Tree Hyrax *Dendrohyrax arboreus* Fabulous encounters at Nyika.



Black Rhino (Mark Van Beirs)

Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* A mother and her large young showed well at Liwonde.

Thick-tailed Greater Galago (T-t Bushbaby) *Otolemur crassicaudatus* One showed at Dzalanyama.



Mutable Sun Squirrel; Black-and-red Bush Squirrel (Mark Van Beirs)

Southern Lesser Galago (South African Busjbaby) *Galago moholi* A single sighting at night at Liwonde.

Blue Monkey (Sykes's M, White-throated M) *Cercopithecus mitis* Several were seen at Nyika.

Vervet (V Monkey) *Chlorocebus pygerythrus* Common and cheeky at Liwonde.

Yellow Baboon *Papio cynocephalus* Common at Liwonde and in the lower reaches of Nyika.

African Savanna Hare *Lepus microtis* Regular at Nyika.

Cape Porcupine (South African P) *Hystrix africaeaustralis* Some great looks at Nyika.

Mutable Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus mutabilis* Regular in the southeastern montane forests.

Smith's Bush Squirrel (South African Tree Squirrel) *Paraxerus cepapi* Common at Liwonde.

Black-and-Red Bush Squirrel (Tanganyika Mountain S) *Paraxerus lucifer* Seen well at Nyika.

Serval *Leptailurus serval* Fantastic views of this exquisite species at Nyika.



Lion (Mark Van Beirs)

Lion *Panthera leo* Four were seen very well at Liwonde NP.

Egyptian Mongoose *Herpestes ichneumon* One showed well at Nyika.

Slender Mongoose (Common S M) *Herpestes sanguineus* One showed briefly at Satemwa.

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo* A party was seen at Liwonde.

Spotted Hyaena *Crocuta crocuta* (H) Regularly heard at night.

Central African Large-spotted Genet *Genetta maculata* Two showed well at Liwonde.

Side-striped Jackal *Canis adustus* Seen at Liwonde and Nyika.

Plains Zebra (Crawshay's Zebra) *Equus quagga* A few at Liwonde and common at Nyika.

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* Common at Liwonde and a single at Nyika.

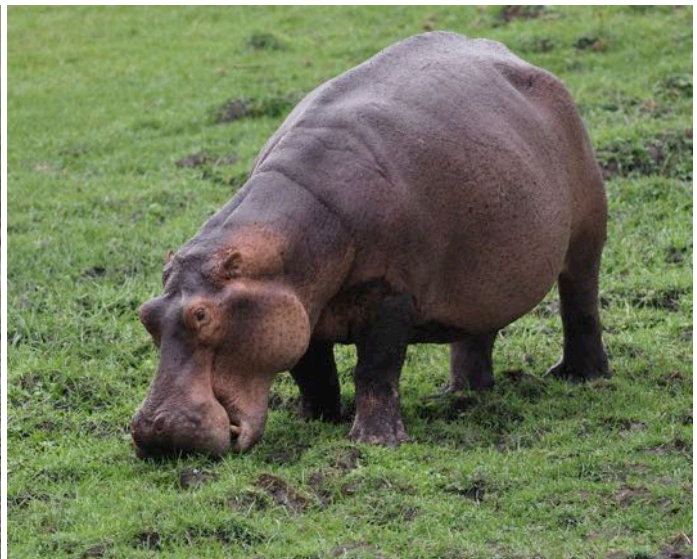
Bushpig *Potamochoerus larvatus* Five showed quite well at Nyika. A fine animal!

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* Abundant in the Shire river at Liwonde.

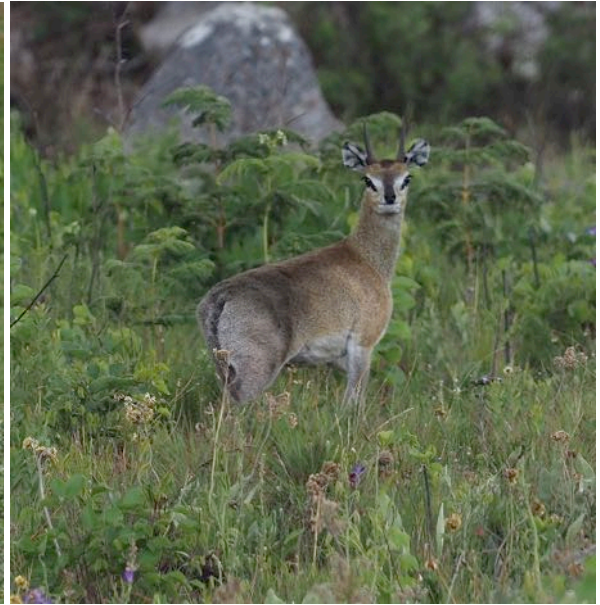
Impala *Aepyceros melampus* Common at Liwonde.



Plain's (Crawshay's) Zebra (Mark Van Beirs)



Warthog; Hippopotamus (Mark Van Beirs)



Waterbuck; Klipspringer (Mark Van Beirs)



Southern Reedbuck (Mark Van Beirs)

- Roan Antelope (Roan) *Hippotragus equinus*** Small numbers were seen at Nyika.
- Sable Antelope (Southern S A) *Hippotragus niger*** This imposing animal was seen at Liwonde.
- Waterbuck (Ellipsen W) *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*** Common at Liwonde.
- Klipspringer (Zambian K) *Oreotragus [oreotragus] centralis*** Good looks at several at Nyika.
- Southern Reedbuck (Zambian R) *Redunca [arundinum] occidentalis*** Common at Nyika.
- Common Duiker (Grey D, Common D) *Sylvicapra grimmia*** Regular observations at Nyika.
- African Buffalo (Cape B) *Syncerus caffer*** Small numbers were seen in the Liwonde NP.
- Common Eland *Tragelaphus oryx*** A few at Liwonde and several small herds at Nyika.
- Bushbuck (Cape B) *Tragelaphus [scriptus] sylvaticus*** Common at Liwonde and Nyika.
- Greater Kudu (Zambezi K) *Tragelaphus [strepsiceros] zambesiensis*** Small numbers at Liwonde.



African Buffalo (Mark Van Beirs)



Common Eland (Mark Van Beirs)



Bushbuck; Greater Kudu (Mark Van Beirs)



Costus spectabilis; Fireball Lily (Mark Van Beirs)



Scorpion (Mark Van Beirs)



Blue-headed Tree Agama; Southeastern Green Snake (Mark Van Beirs)

REPTILES

Speke's Hinged Tortoise *Kinixys spekii* One was being attacked by a young Bateleur at Liwonde.

Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus* Quite common along the Shire river at Liwonde.

Nile Monitor *Varanus niloticus* Some large individuals at Liwonde.

Angulate Dwarf Gecko *Lygodactylus angularis* A single at Dzalanyama.

Kirk's Rock Agama *Agama kirkii* Good looks at Dzalanyama.

Blue-headed Tree Agama *Acanthocercus atricollis* This impressive species showed at Dzalanyama.

Flap-necked Chameleon *Chamaeleo dilepis* One was crossing the track on our way to Nyika.

Angola Blind Snake *Afrotyphlops angolensis* One crossed the road near the airport.

Southeastern Green Snake *Philothamnus heterolepidotus* One at the Mvuu camp at Liwonde.

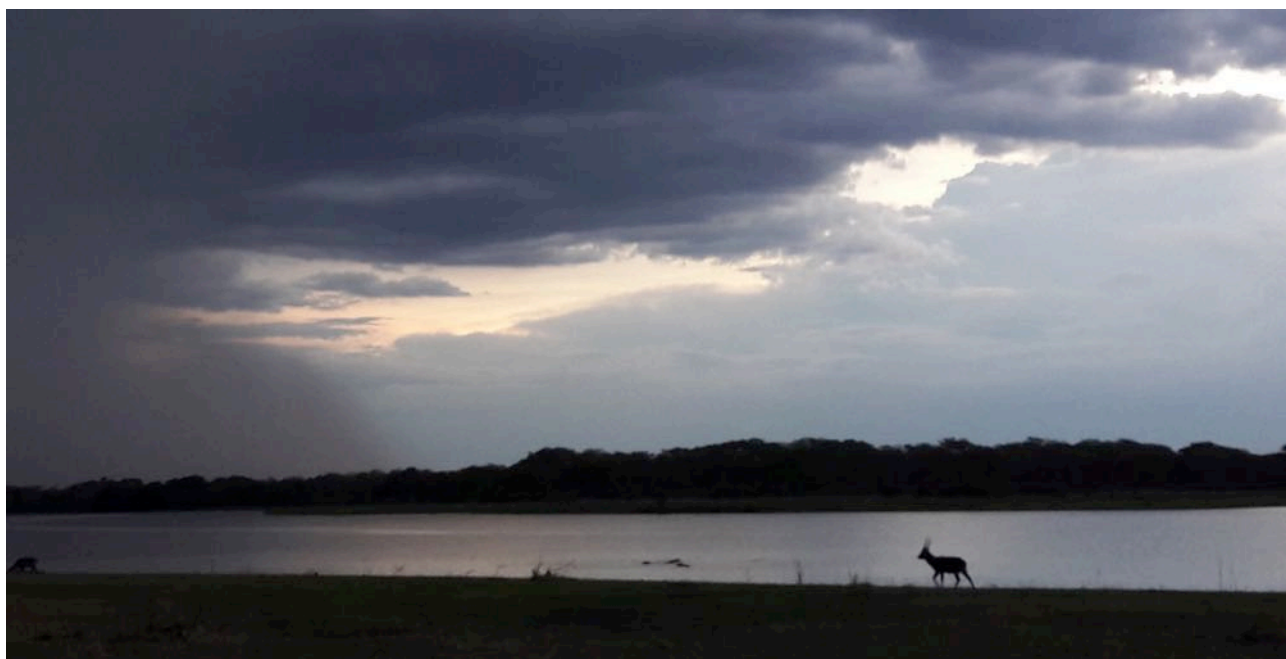
Forest Cobra *Naja melanoleuca* A small individual was found at Dzalanyama.



Liwonde NP floodplain; mopane woodland at Liwonde NP (Mark Van Beirs)



Nyika NP scenery (Mark Van Beirs)



Liwonde NP sunset (Mark Van Beirs)