

Holiday Highlights

Bewildering Botswana

The Kalahari Desert, the Okavango Delta, Moremi Game Reserve and the Chobe River

17 – 28 August 2023

Leader of sorts and scope carrier: Darren Rees

Guides: Dix & Kashi (Deception); Salvation & General (Setari); KB (Sango); OT (Chobe)

Guests: Franky & David Perry, Di & Nigel Hardcastle, Pam Litton, Jane Nickerson

Day 1: Getting There

We meet up at Heathrow Terminal 5 for the start of our big African adventure and everyone is excited about prospects for the holiday ahead. We've an evening flight to Johannesburg to negotiate before onwards travel tomorrow to Maun in Botswana, gateway to the Kalahari Desert and the Okavango Delta.

Day 2: Deception Valley and an African Welcome

After an uneventful and comfortable flight (aint A380s quiet!) we land in a sunny Johannesburg, passing quickly through immigration to wait just a couple of hours for our connecting flight to Maun. Arriving there we walk from the plane to the terminal building in the warm air (it's 30C), to be greeted with a smile from an official from the Ministry of Health and Wellness – it sets the tone for the coming days! We are quickly reunited with our bags and meet our Mackair reps. One of the many joys of a Botswana holiday is the number of small aircraft flights that criss-cross the desert and delta to the remote lodges. Mackair have a fleet of small cessna air taxis and ours will be here soon.

We wait a short while, crack out the binoculars and start the bird list. We start with Laughing Dove, Red-eyed Bulbul, Palm Swifts and Nigel spots a distant soaring Marabou Stork.

We are soon ready to go and we meet our pilot for the day, Sam. She takes us through the safety features of our air taxi, then it's up and away. We fly over Maun, then south over the seemingly endless scrub of the Kalahari Basin. The dusty tracks that break up the covering of thorny bushes and trees become fewer and fewer as we near our destination and base for the next two nights, Deception Valley Lodge. Below, we can see the airstrip and we slowly descend, bank and land on the bush runway.

We meet our guide for the next two days, Dix, and load up into our purpose-built Toyota safari 4x4 vehicle. The drive to the lodge is only a short distance away yet this takes a while as we start to notch up our first wildlife.

We see our first antelope of the trip, beautifully marked Impalas and Kudus. We will see so many of these in the coming days, but we will never tire of watching them: Impalas with their warm colouring, delicately marked legs with black bobby socks, and stronger and taller Kudus with spiral horns and vertical body stripes.

We next stop for a Pale Chanting Goshawk sat on a thorn bush – what will be another staple for the coming days – a subtly marked upright bird of prey, something between a harrier and an accipiter. Other birds include Red-billed Francolin, Cape Turtle Dove, Helmeted Guineafowl, Sabota Lark, Scaly-feathered Finch, Tawny-flanked Prinia and a superb Crimson-breasted Shrike (does what it says on the tin). A Slender Mongoose crosses the track before us as we arrive at the lodge. Here we are greeted by a chorus from the staff which, for reasons that will become clear, we call the Kalahari Singers – what a welcome!

Clutching our sparkling wine, we walk through the reception to the main building and there's a Honey Badger walking across the yard! It's a much wanted mammal for Nigel and Di so what a start!

We are introduced to Georgina and the other staff and settle in with some drinks, snacks and a brief intro to the layout of the lodge. The building looks over a waterhole where there are lots of new birds: Great Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow Weavers, Laughing Dove, Masked Weaver and Yellow Canary join the now familiar Red-eyed Bulbuls.

After we've been shown to our fabulous rooms and had a little time to freshen up, it's time for the late afternoon activities. We are joined by a Kalahari tracker, Kashi, who sits perched on the front of the jeep, in a purpose-built seat, to look for animal tracks in the sand. We set off heading towards the opening in the scrub around the airstrip. Lots of guineafowl are joined by Steenbok (one of the smaller antelope with large decorative ears), more Kudu and a beautiful Black-backed Jackal. We get looks at our first Pied Babblers, Red-crested Korhaan (a small bustard), Crowned Lapwings and two giant Kori Bustards (the heaviest of flying birds). Dix spots a Rock Monitor lizard in a tree and we glimpse Marico Flycatcher and a Chestnut-vented Tit Babbler (great name!). All the while the setting sun is painting the sky an intense orange and so it's time for another African custom – the sundowner. Beers, wines and G&T never tasted so good as in the African bush.

After drinks and chat we drive back to the lodge, with our guide sweeping the bushes with a powerful lamplight. We see more Kudu and get closer looks at the Kori Bustards, but the star find goes to a Spotted Eagle Owl that is walking along the track catching bugs! For such a noble, apex predator bird, there's something comical about watching it hop around in the sand.

The wildlife continues when we get back to the lodge as the resident African Porcupine is cleaning up the vegetable peelings – what an animal! How it does

anything trailing an armory of black-and-white quills is a mystery! Our evening meal is interrupted by a Small-spotted Genet that scuttles up a tree giving us great looks – what an astonishing place, and for those new to Africa, what a start to the trip.

Day 3: The Magic of the Kalahari

Our early wake up calls are at 6am and after tea, coffee and toast we are ready for another game drive. We start with Steenbok, Black-backed Jackal and Scrub Hare close to the lodge, then the new birds start with Green-winged Pytilia (formerly known as Melba Finch), Marico Flycatcher and Fiscal Shrike. Kudu and Kori Bustard are followed by a stunning Swallow-tailed Flycatcher, trailing its notched iridescent blue tail. Nigel finds our first Long-billed Crombec that reminds us of a European Nuthatch. Nearby, one of the acacia trees is in flower and this is attracting several birds. As well as bulbuls there are Chestnut-vented Tit Babbler, Masked Weaver and Yellow-bellied Eremomela – another great name but essentially a little grey bird!

Next, we come across our first Southern Giraffe – the first-time visitor to Africa can't help but be amazed at such a strangely proportioned yet elegant animal. No wonder when the first Europeans returned from Africa with tall tales of these 'freaks of nature' they were doubted – seeing is believing! We watch with fascination as it browses from the tops of thorny acacia bushes. We learn that there is keratin in the tongue to toughen it up so it can handle the thorns!

New birds keep coming and new bird families to wrestle with. An Acacia Pied Barbet is a fiesty, short, but large-billed black-and-white bird. Yellow-billed Hornbills are loaded with character – the so-called flying banana. Its cousin, the Red-billed Hornbill gets the moniker the flying chilli pepper. No wonder Disney chose one as one of the leads, Sazou, in The Lion King! Other new species include Glossy Starling, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Black-chested Prinia, Yellow Mongoose, White-backed Vulture and the wonderful short-tailed Bateleur that teeters aloft on v-shaped wings.

In one of the large grassy clearings there is a small waterhole and this is attracting birds. It seems a good place for a mid-morning coffee so we park, drink and watch. We see Black-faced, Violet-eared and Blue Waxbills – all perfectly describing the characteristic features of these small seed-eaters. Red-billed Quelea and Masked weavers also join in the drinking session.

On our return route we pass another waterhole with Grey-headed and Great Sparrows, Namaqua Dove and nearby there's a Common Duiker and a Warthog family. It's been a great morning!

After brunch, there's lots of time spent watching the waterhole as there are lots of game gathered now we've reached the warmest part of the day. Impala, Kudu and Burchell's (or Plains) Zebras take it in turn drinking from the water, though these give way to a single Giraffe that slowly makes its way to the edge of the

pool. It does the splits in ungainly fashion as it drinks, at times kicking out at other animals that approach. Even a Slender Mongoose waits for the all clear when the Giraffe moves away. A family of Warthogs comes in for a mud bath – we have lots of fun watching them wallowing about – such characters! Both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Oxpeckers are clinging to the backs of Kudu and Giraffe.

At the smaller water feature, closer to the deck, the birds are packing in and we get fab looks at some cracking species: Red-headed Finch, Yellow Canary, Great Sparrow, Violet-eared and Black-faced Waxbills, Lark-like Bunting and gleaming Glossy Starlings.

All the commotion attracts a dark, melanistic Gabar Goshawk but its unsuccessful at catching anything. So too is the Pale Chanting Goshawk that passes this way and that to no avail – our best looks are when it drinks from the water – a very smart bird. We also see Crimson-breasted Shrike, Long-billed Crombec, Fork-tailed Drongo and a large Tawny Eagle before refreshments.

After high tea and nibbles we set off into the bush, this time to share the Kalahari Bushman experience. Our tracker Kashi changes into traditional hunting attire (Steenbok hide trunks) and is joined by other similarly clad locals walking barefoot through the bush. With the aid of Dix as translator we learn some details of their hunter-gatherer culture: what bushes make the best moonshine; what bushes to make the best arrows and how to make your quiver from sunken roots; how to catch a Steenbok with a thick stick and how to prepare its skin; how to gather water and store in a ostrich egg; how to steal an ostrich's egg in the first place; how to track and hunt game with a bow and arrow and finally how to make a fire with sticks. We gather around our friction-made fire and have sundowners, showing the bushman family the crescent moon through the telescope, much to their approval. We then start the ride back to the lodge, using the opportunity for a short night drive. We see a few things but fail to see the lioness that has just visited the lodge water hole! Maybe tomorrow..

Day 4: A Kalahari Prince and Setari Arrival

We have a charter flight around Ilam to our next camp, so the guides have offered us a morning game drive - that sounds like a plan! We have breakfast at 6.30am and get on our way shortly after 7am. The morning light is striking a Crimson-breasted Shrike as we leave, making the already rich red colour even more intense.

We work our way to the opening around the airstrip again, which is busy with birds and mammals. Nigel finds some Burchell's Sandgrouse, but they are tricky to view (more of them to come). There are the now regular faces like Yellow-billed Hornbill, Crowned Lapwing, Steenbok and the resident Rock Monitor. As we are watching, the radio crackles into life – someone has found two Lions, albeit some distance away.

We decide that breakfast can wait and we set off hoping to see these magnificent animals... we drive through the bush largely ignoring the small birds alongside the track. We do stop when we see a handsome Oryx drinking at a waterhole with some Kudu. It's a great look at Burchell's Sandgrouse too (along with Groundscraper Thrush). A little further onwards Kashi, who has been diligently watching the ground for tracks, stops the vehicle and on the right is the king of the jungle – or perhaps prince of the jungle is more appropriate - a young male African Lion is looking his finest.

Close by is a smaller female and both animals are in perfect condition, particularly the male, with no scars or nicks in the ears more commonly seen on other, older animals. We watch him yawn and stretch, then wander over to the female. It's an electric encounter and not without a frisson of danger, particularly when we note that Kashi has come from his exposed tracker's seat to the safety of the jeep.

All this 'lion action' means a dash back to the lodge for breakfast. When we get there we are asked for our breakfast orders and Darren queries if we have enough time... "No problem" is the response – the Botswana way! However, we don't quite finish our breakfast before we are directed to leave, as the plane has already landed. It's a final goodbye to Georgina and the staff at Deception Lodge, then a quick drive to the airstrip for further goodbyes to Dix and Kashi.

The flight to Maun, piloted by Ash, is a quiet one with everyone thinking of the special morning experience with the Lions – its not every day you meet the king of the beasts. At Maun it's a smart turnaround for another Mackair flight north, to the Okavango Delta and what a vision from the air it is. Below us is one of the great geographical wonders of the world, formed by waters from the Angolan Highlands draining into the land-locked Kalahari Basin. A natural tapestry of convoluted channels of water twist across the landscape brightened here and there with silver ribbons, as light catches the water. Larger, green-fringed lakes point to substantial bodies of water and reed beds. All the while the desert scrub encroaches with patches of raised land and these are marked by the scars of dried up waterholes that radiate paths trodden by animal herds.

We descend to Jedibe airstrip, where we are met by our guide Salvation and assistant, General. There's a short walk to the boat - what a stylish way to arrive! As soon as we enter the reedy system of water channels there are new birds popping up everywhere. Green-backed Heron, Squacco Herons, African Darters, Reed Cormorant and Nigel spots a delightful Black Crake. Up ahead, Salvation points to something in the water – our first Nile Crocodile! We'd better not fall in the water then. Wire-tailed Swallows skim over the water surface hawking for insects and rounding another bend we see our first African Elephant! He's mostly obscured by the papyrus reeds, but a beast that big can't hide – nevertheless we continue our journey knowing there will be more to come. Our first aquatic antelope is the shy Sitatunga – it disappears quickly into the reedbed. More obliging are the Red Lechwe that are along the river bank.

After nearly an hour we arrive at the beautifully appointed Setari Lodge. Walking from the jetty, a raised boardwalk takes us to the arrangement of buildings elevated above the world of reeds on timber stilts. On the wooden path in front are our first primates - delightful Vervet Monkeys – we mustn't feed them, tempting though it is!

At the main building that houses the dining room, bar and lounging area, we are introduced to Angie, the lodge manager and her team. She takes us through the house rules and shows us to our stylish rooms, each with a private deck. We shall be very comfortable here.

After a quick freshen up we are invited to join Salvation for an afternoon cruise around one of the nearby lagoons. We walk along the boardwalk, noting noisy Arrow-marked Babblers in the bushes, then Salvation points to a group of Peter's Epauletted Fruit Bats that are hanging like fruit in the canopy – they look great through the telescope with their big-eyed foxy faces and neat white epaulettes. At the jetty, Salvation points out Chirping Cisticola and the nesting Wire-tailed Swallows, there are also Marico Sunbirds on the tops of bushes.

On the boat we are immediately into new birds: the first of many African Jacanas, and African Fish Eagles and our first Hippos. We are in Okavango Delta!

When we enter the next lagoon both the water surface and edge are dotted with lots of birds and we work our way around. There are two neat Pygmy Geese, White-faced and White-backed Ducks, roosting African Darters, Hadedda Ibises, and exquisite jewel-like Malachite Kingfishers and Little Bee-eaters. Green Pigeons are seeking their roost spots in the taller trees and the first Red-faced Mousebirds fly across with their long tails trailing. A Whiskered Tern reminds us that many European species head for Africa as the summer ends. We get nice fly-bys from incomparable Carmine Bee-eaters, flashing vivid red. We also see African Marsh Harrier and Coppery-tailed Coucal before we pause for sundowners as the sun gleams like a big red ball in the west. It's a very birdy place to be based – we are all purring with content!

Day 5: A Wonderfully Watery World

After an early breakfast we wander along the raised boardwalk to the jetty, noting a few things along the way. We get nice looks at Green Pigeon, Dark-eyed Bulbul, Marico Sunbird and through the scope we check the wires on the Wire-tailed Swallow. The roost of Fruit Bats is bigger too.

We load into the boat and we are off into the delta, with Little Egrets, Jacana, Darters and Rufous-bellied Heron making early appearances. We join the main channel of the Okavango River escorted by Green-backed Herons and Squaccos. Down a tributary Salvation knows of a Giant Kingfisher territory and there they are on cue! Spur-winged Geese and Malachite Kingfishers follow in quick succession, then we take off down a very narrow channel through the papyrus. We are brushed both sides by reeds and a mantis hitches a lift on Nigel!

Back on the larger channels we disturb three Fish Eagles that are tucking into their catfish breakfast. A Sitatunga makes a brief appearance but quickly disappears into the reeds. We keep adding species: Whiskered Tern, Little Bee-eater, Night Herons, Purple Heron, White-backed Duck, Openbill and Carmine Bee-eater. A Black-shouldered Kite perches in a dead tree, though we don't drift too near as a Hippo is nearby and Salvation tells us how easily they can puncture and sink a boat!

The landscape opens up a little with big breaks in the reedbeds, so we can scan further. An African Swampphen makes a brief show, followed by Long-toed Lapwing, Blacksmith's Lapwing and Glossy Ibis. Salvation points to a small young Nile Crocodile on the bank. On the opposite bank we see a large Wattled Crane and Slaty Heron. Groups of Lechwe can be seen on the open grassy areas and Collared Pratincoles are overhead. On a sand bar in front are some dream birds – the curious and elegant African Skimmer. Nearby is Egyptian Geese and we briefly disturb a Water Thick-knee.

We reach another open area and park up for teas and coffees. It's a great place to be based and scan the panorama. An African Snipe takes to air and starts displaying or winnowing – it's very similar to the birds at home. Waterfowl include Pygmy Geese, Yellow-billed and Red-billed Teal. A Painted Snipe lands then disappears and we add Plain-backed Pipit and Cape Wagtail. Two Sitatunga are in the open and as they are distant they seem less bothered by us – we manage to get the scope on them. New birds include Red-shouldered Widowbird and Rosy-throated Longclaw.

The return trip yields Goliath Heron, Wattled Crane, Pied Kingfisher and two White-fronted Bee-eaters. It's been a great morning in a special place.

We meet at 3pm for high tea and then we are off at 3.30pm for our late afternoon activity. Salvation wants to take us downstream to an area he knows that attracts very big animals. It's a bit of a distance, twisting this way and that through the reedbeds pausing a couple of times for Red Lechwe. We also add Brown-throated Martins and smart White-fronted Bee-eaters to the species list.

At the furthest point we spot our targets – and very big targets they are too. A trio of African Elephants comprising two females and a two year old calf is foraging in the drier vegetation away from the bank. What a sight, particularly special to those who have never been to Africa. No matter how many Elephants you've seen they are a joy to watch as they meticulously handle their food, dusting off dry grasses before eating or snapping off larger branches of bushes. Birds are following the Elephants as they forage, picking up invertebrates that are disturbed whilst they are feeding. A few Cattle Egrets are joined by lots of Hartlaub's Babblers. We also see Swamp Boubou, Wattled Lapwing and a hunting Black-shouldered Kite.

Nearby are a group of Yellow-billed Storks and African Spoonbills – our first of the trip and a few Sacred Ibis make an appearance – iconic birds.

Further back along the river course we pause in a big opening that has two big jumbos doing their thing. Another perfect place for sundowners and our first with Elephants and Lechwe. The ride back is an interesting one, if not a thrilling sensory experience as we chase the fading light - we are blasted with insects all the way back!

Before another memorable meal the Setari singers perform and encourage some audience participation – a fun way to end another fab day.

Day 6: To Sango and the Spotty Couple

It's our transfer day so our morning activity is a short one, joining Salvation for a stroll around the island on foot. We notice birds in the bare tree-tops with both Grey Go-away Birds and much smaller Red-faced Mousebirds cutting interesting silhouettes against the morning sky. Salvation takes us beyond the staff quarters to a stand of taller trees as he suspects it's there that an owl may be roosting – he's heard birds calling there at night. Bingo! His sharp eyes spot an Okavango speciality – a large Pel's Fishing Owl is perched high in one tree at its daytime roost. We get fantastic looks through the scope at an unusually buffy-coloured bird with big dark eyes. Other species on the walk include Crested Barbet, Blue-eared Starling, White-browed Robin Chat, Swamp Boubou, Collared and Marico Sunbird.

Around the breakfast area some of us get looks at a neat White-browed Robin Chat and a less neat (frankly dull) Lesser Honeyguide. Then it's goodbyes to the staff and off to the jetty for the journey to the airstrip. There are lots of birds on the way and some large crocs too, however what's this? A reed block! Those foraging hefelumps have been a bit too boisterous and brought down a barrier of papyrus that obstructs the channel. General starts moving and cutting a few then Salvation, with full throttle, pushes the boat through. Crisis over and we arrive at the airstrip on time to see an empty aircraft land and it's a familiar face in the cockpit – it's Ash who flew us from Deception to Maun.

With no fuss we are soon airborne and bound for Khwai, but there is a brief stop at Mopiri to pick up three guests – more fun landings and take-offs! Again, the views across the delta are spectacular and some forty minutes later we are getting lower as we approach the Khwai River airstrip. Clearly visible below are the herds of Lechwe and Elephants – wow!

Landing, we are greeted by a familiar face, KB, one of the guides at Sango Lodge that we met on our last visit. He whisks us away to the nearby lodge where we get the Sango singing welcome and a juice to pep us up. Brooklyn is the lodge manager and after a brief orientation we have a late lunch. There's a little time to sort out bags and freshen up, but it seems in no time we are ready for our afternoon game drive.

We assemble for our drive, noting the many Burchell's Starling around the lodge – several are slighter in build and even longer in the tail – these are Meve's or Long-tailed Starlings. Our route will take us on a tour through the Khwai Concession, an area of protected land on the same side of the river as Sango lodge, that acts as an addition to the much larger Moremi National Game Reserve on the south side of the river. Wildlife is free to move back and forth between the two.

We drive along the track noting Red-billed Hornbill and our first Magpie Shrike. What's this? Its tail is missing! Thankfully, only a few hundred yards further is another bird with its tail intact and what a fine, long, wispy tail it is.

Soon we are with the larger game animals, stopping at our first group of Burchell's or Plains Zebras. They are resting in the shade with some animals acting like bookends, pointing in opposing directions and resting their heads on their partner's rump. KB tells us how to differentiate between male and female (without inspecting genitalia) – it's all in the stripes on the rump! We also note that one zebra has no tail – what is it with tails going missing around here?

Nearby is our first Khwai Giraffe and it's a large male with a raised convex profile to the forehead and nose. We watch him browse but as he moves into the open and nearer we can see a wire trapped around his lower front leg. It doesn't seem to impair his movement but KB reports the individual to the authorities nevertheless.

We drive to the Khwai River where there are several Elephants and a herd of Lechwe. There are lots of birds too and there is a big juvenile Saddle-billed Stork that lacks the adult's brightly coloured beak. We also see Double-banded Sandgrouse and our first Bennett's Woodpecker. We don't linger too long though as KB is on a mission.

Ahead are a number of jeeps parked and the excitement builds. There, in the middle of an arc of vehicles is a truly beautifully marked Leopard. It has the broad head of a male and KB tells us that he has been seen in the area for two days and there has been a female associating with him too. We watch, admiring his gorgeous coat of spots on the head and limbs and more open 'rosettes' on the flanks and rump – there's a black collar-like marking around the base of the neck too. All the while he pants in the warmth of the day, his body raising and falling in a gentle rhythm and we gaze at the perfection before us.

Then, as we are watching, another Leopard walks into view from the cover of the bushes. She paces over to the male and starts making soliciting gestures, with sweeps of her tail across his face. We are breathless at what we are witnessing and all cameras are faced at the pair, as she crouches low and he mounts her. The act of coupling is brief and finishes with him roaring as he bites at her neck and ears. She quickly disappears and we look at each other, rendered speechless at what we've just seen... Holy, spotty, bonkers.

After a short while the male gets up and moves back into the bushes but KB's instinct is to keep with him, so we move to a position where he may reappear. It works a treat and we are thankful for KB's fieldcraft, as by now the other jeeps have vanished and as the Leopard comes into view we have the beast to ourselves. He pauses then sits down in the grass for us to gaze and admire. It's quiet, there's a male Leopard in front and the only purring I sense is from contented viewers.

Then, again, the sequence of events repeats and unbelievably the ritual of courtship unfolds. She returns with a soft growling and paces up to the male, swishing her tail coquettely about his face. This time she makes two or three passes, before provoking the desired response from the male and again he mounts her. Once more it ends abruptly with him roaring and biting at the neck and ear. This time as they part she sits beside him and rolls over exposing her belly in submission. I think there are tears in the eyes and I'm not talking Leopards' eyes.

She walks off and there is some more quiet time for the male. By now a second jeep with lucky wildlife-watchers has parked up, but there is a respectful distance and lack of noise. Again, after a while the female Leopard moves in and the mating game starts. No fewer than four times do we see the mating game and its denouement. Leopards getting jiggy with it. One of life's all time high I reckon.

Eventually, the male decides to take a wander (and get some peace?) yet still KB's instinct tells him we should follow. KB tells us that there is an Elephant carcass just a few hundred yards away and he senses the big cat will wander over to eat. We drive through the thicket to where the fallen giant rests at the base of small tree and bush.

Sure enough, within a few minutes the male Leopard appears and walks up to the carcass, trying to find an in where he can get to the soft parts. We watch it work the belly of the elephant then decide to move on, leaving the cat to feast in peace (its also partially obscured by foliage).

What an introduction to Khwai.

Day 7: Off The Scale

Our destination for this morning is the famous Moremi Game Reserve that lies across the Khwai river. We drive through the little dusty village of Khwai noting the small school and shopping centre that needs a bit of repair. We pause on the wooden bridge just before the entrance gate to check out the water birds – a Black Crake is with a Jacana giving us a good show.

We proceed through the gates and drive slowly along the sandy tracks. We stop here and there for some new birds: Emerald-spotted Dove and four bizrre Ground Hornbills strutting around the grass. KB then gets a message on the radio that the a group of Lions are on show back across the river. As we've just entered

the Park its not far to double back, so we retrace our steps to the Khwai Concession.

We travel to where a couple of jeeps are parked in the long grass and we can make out a few Lions. As we approach more come into view and soon we are amongst eight individuals! These are the so called Lechwe Pride with some females and large cubs and one young male that's showing the beginnings of a mane. All are in playful mood and there is lots of mock play fighting, just like domestic cats. It's a privilege to watch as they go through mock stalking and charging at each other. At one point they find a large stick and there is a tug of war between some of the group, practicing their chewing and tugging. We spend time with them, observing them at play and rest – other jeeps have their fill and we are left alone with the Lechwe Pride which is very special. Finally, it's time to move on, especially as we start clocking the birds in the bush (Southern Black Tit and Spotted Flycatcher) whilst the Lions are still there just feet away.

We continue our morning taking coffee and tea at a nice location where we can stretch our legs and view a little marshy area. There are new birds to be seen: a Rufous-bellied Heron stalks in the reeds; diminutive Lesser Jacanas are flying back and forth looking so much smaller than the African Jacanas; two African Hawk Eagles are soaring in the clear sky and Nigel locates a White-browed Scrub Robin that is singing in the trees.

Other species for the morning include Senegal Coucal, Meyer's Parrot, Puffback, White-bellied Sunbird and a distant Chacma Baboon. It's been another great morning!

Brunch is followed by more down time with everyone happy to watch the slow build up of Elephants that emerge from the forest to drink at the water. Eventually fifteen are enjoying a drink at the hottest part of the day. At one point a Hippo sails past them in the water. A young Bateleur makes an appearance, as does a Tawny Eagle and Saddle-billed Storks. Some watch the Grey Louries (Go-away Birds) that are giving us our best views of this charming species.

After high tea we load into the vehicle for another game drive, once again heading for Moremi Game Reserve. This time as we cross the bridge over the river Khwai there is a large Elephant to our left. KB sorts the paperwork (while we watch a Tree Squirrel in the eaves of the roof) then we enter along the sandy track. We stop very soon as three Dwarf Mongeese are scuttling through the bush to the left – a new mammal species.

As we continue to the first clearing there is an alpha male Vervet Monkey strolling through the trees – KB points out the signs that he's the bees knees – or should that be the monkey's bollocks – his testicles are bright powder blue!

Meanwhile, out in the open sweep of grass is the classic scene out of Africa with Zebra, Kudu, Impala and our first Blue Wildebeeste. Close by we see a dark Tawny Eagle mob a White-backed Vulture.

In the flood plain near the river we stop to investigate two Bateleurs perched on the ground. KB suspects they have some sort of prey item, but as we approach they fly – such dynamic birds with white underwings contrasting so well with their black bodies. Great looks! We park and scan the area, setting up the telescope to view the many species on show. The nearest is a nice Three-banded Plover and smart Wood Sandpiper. The late afternoon light is catching the under-wings of Collared Pratincoles as they land (confirming i.d.). More distant are Ruff and Greenshank that are wading amongst the many Red Lechwe. Other species include African Marsh Harrier, Long-toed and Blacksmiths Lapwings, African Jacana, African Fish Eagle, Egyptian Geese, Cape Wagtail, African Pipit, Intermediate Egret, Great Egret, Grey Heron and a lazy Nile Crocodile.

We continue our route around the Khwai Concession adding Goliath Heron, Waterbuck and Reedbuck. As we enter drier areas we approach a couple of jeeps that are parked up... there are more Lions! It seems that two males have stolen a Lechwe kill from a group of Lionesses with cubs - such is the way of Lions. We park and watch the two large maned beasts dominate proceedings, one still with the largest part of the prey item. All the Lionesses can do is watch too.

Soon, a radio message about another special animal forces us to move – someone has found an unusual and seldom-seen Pangolin! Sure enough, a little further along the track we see a circle of parked jeeps and we join in. In the long grass we can make out the scaly carapace of one of the rarest of animals – sightings of this armour plated ant-eater are so scarce that this is only the fourth time in his career that KB has seen one! One of the other guides is on the ground nearby, parting the grasses to please the photographers. We never, in our wildest dreams, imagined that we would be watching this special animal. As with earlier in the day, all the jeeps move off after getting their fill and we are left alone with the Pangolin. It doesn't want to move, so after taking some pics we leave the animal in peace.

We retrace our route checking in with the Lion group as the sun sets, noting that the dominant male has made a impact on the body of the Lechwe, now much reduced in size. It seems a little incongruous a time for sundowners yet the beers and snacks are much enjoyed watching the most African, if a most brutal, of scenes.

It's time to move on as we must reach the gate before the curfew, so we briskly drive back through the woodland. We do manage to squeeze in a new species when a Pearl-spotted Owlet swoops up to a branch in a large mopane tree.

So to another fabulous meal at Sango. And still the new experiences keep coming as we have a night drive planned. After eats we load up into the vehicle and go off into the dark with KB sweeping the bush with a lamp, us watching for eye-shine.

We haven't travelled long before we see our first – a tiny Lesser Bushbaby hops and bounces from tree to tree! Leaving the village we soon see a single Elephant crashing his way through trees; next are Impala; then Giraffe and Kudu browsing through the night. KB's eagle-eyes spot an African Wild Cat prowling in the grass – we get nice looks through the binoculars. Next is a Small Spotted Genet slinking its way through the trees – brilliant! We also get close to an Elephant family group with a very small young – these are crashing their way through the night.

We see Spotted Thick-knee on a dried up section, then as we return to the scrubby area we see bright eyes bouncing up and down. Through binoculars we can see the strangest of animals looking like a cross between a rabbit and a wallaby, these are Spring Hares! They have beautifully marked black-tipped tails as they hop through the night – another special species to end what's been another special day.

Day 8: Lazy Spots in a Tree

Our early morning game drive takes us into Moremi once again and this time KB works the east section of the Park. Soon after entering the gate we see a beautifully marked Honey Badger, which we follow for a while – nice views!

Whilst still in the mopane woodland we come across a group of Vervet Monkeys and these are really fun to watch. Some groom themselves, others swing from hanging branches – all totally engaging.

Close by, in some bushes, we come across some activity from Black-chested Prinia, Blue Waxbill and a sweet Grey-backed Camaroptera with its yellowy-green wings and upright tail. We keep pushing east facing the rising red sun, until we come to the first large opening. Here there are Waterbuck, Lechwe and Reedbuck in the long grasses and reeds. A little further is a nice wetland and we work the perimeter. Two Black-backed Jackals work the far corner and along the shore we stop and enjoy fabulous looks at Painted Snipe. There are also Spur-winged Geese, White-headed Duck, Openbill, Jacana and Wood Sandpipers. In the far distance we can see a jeep parked and just make out a Lion walking past so we go and see if we can get better looks.

As we get closer we can make out the large female Lion sat in the reedbed, not too far from where a Reedbuck is standing. We are hoping for some action but they both remain quiet and still so, having had such great looks at Lions over the past days, we drive on.

The next body of water is obviously deeper as we can see Hippos surfacing and disappearing. A small Crocodile is sunning itself and we get our best looks at a Rufous-bellied Heron. At the next waterhole there are African Hoopoes, Blue Waxbill, Long-toed Lapwing and shimmering Blue-eared Starlings. It's here that KB gets the message about a nearby Leopard so we forgo coffees for the moment and drive on. Approaching the area of thick bush Nigel spots two Crested Francolins in the road but we don't linger with them as KB is on a mission.

He takes off into the undergrowth, weaving around larger trees and flattening smaller ones. We seem to be working our way to one of the tallest mopane trees and there, sleeping along the large bough in the shade is the most beautiful spotted big cat. A superb female Leopard rests, occasionally opening her eye to engage with her admiring fans. We can see fine markings and note a few nicks in her ears – as we've now witnessed Leopard love-making we speculate that these might be notches inflicted by a male partner. Whatever, she's a keeper!

Coffee break is at one of the bodies of water where there are Hippos out on the land. Two Hawk Eagles circle low overhead and there are two Pied Kingfisher amongst other species. Continuing around the wetland we see a small group of Roan Antelope with some Zebra. These are unusual and shy antelope so it's good to see them in the open. They have smart black-and-white facial markings and longer, thinner ears than Kudu or Impala. Beautiful animals. Retracing our route back through the woodland we see Kurrichane Thrush, Red-billed Wood-hoopoes, Hooded Vulture, and get better looks at Chacma Baboons.

After lunch we meet up at 3pm for high tea and prepare for our afternoon activity. Today we are taking a *mokoro* trip – mokoros are the traditional dug out boats that have been used by the peoples of the delta. Today, with the advent of ecotourism, it has been decided not to cut down more trees to supply mokoros for tourists, so the new design, to traditional dimension and style, is fashioned from man-made fibre glass. They do look authentic though and we are assigned a mokoro for two persons, and a handler – it's rather like an outing on a Cambridge punt.

As we leave the bank of the river we can see Elephants one way and Hippos the other. We take a look at the Hippos first, noting that there are also two Crocodiles in the water. Thou shalt not pass is the message!

We reverse direction and pause at the Elephant group that are drinking in the river. There are a group of females and a couple of infants. These work their way across the river right in front of the flotilla of mokoros. It's such a wonderful experience being so low in the water and having these gentle giants towering above.

Birds are part and parcel of the watery landscape with Jacanas, Squacco Heron, Pied Kingfishers and Drongos going about their business. We drift downstream getting looks at all of these, plus two Little Bee-eaters and a handsome Fish Eagle standing proud on a dead tree. We reach the furthest point of the excursion then head to the bank for some drinks in the bush – the make-shift bar is an upturned mokoro. Pula!

We slowly wander back with the setting sun giving a glow to the rusty mopane woodland either side of the water. We thank our guides for the session then take a circuitous drive back with KB, noting more Elephants and a roosting Bateleur on the way.

After dinner we have another night drive into the Khwai Concession, this time doing a sweep of a different area from the previous night. It's not long before we encounter a few Giraffe and Impala, then KB spots something in the grass to the right. It's another African Wild Cat and this one is a lot closer than last night. The buffy ears and striped legs are clearly visible – so is the unmarked sides. It walks to a bush and disturbs a Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler that looks good in the lamplight.

We continue across grassy openings with surprisingly few encounters, but those we do have tend to be of the Elephant kind! We also see Waterbuck and bouncing things. Those low in the grass are Spring Hares; those lights in the trees are Lesser Bushbabies.

We find another Wild Cat to the left – it's quite content to just sit there while we look with the lamp – smart kitty! It's been another fun adventure in the African night.

Day 9: Farewell to Sango to Welcome to Chobe

There is time for one last early morning game drive with KB and he lets all the other guides know that we are on a wild dog quest, so we are hopeful that someone will come up trumps.

We head into the Khwai Concession noting some of the now familiar birds like Magpie Shrike, Red-billed Hornbill and Lilac-breasted Roller – birds we'll never tire of! We drive through the mopane woodland to the area where the Spotted Hyaenas have dened and as we are the first vehicle in the area we get good looks of three adults around the den with the young cubs. They soon move away when another jeep arrives, just leaving the young in the safety of the den.

We continue to the Elephant carcass, which by now has a rancid odour that makes us move on. There are no animals present though we do note that there is still a lot of bulk to the dead animal – I imagine there will be scavengers visiting for days to come – the circle of life, if a very smelly circle.

We push through to the eastern section of Khwai where KB has seen dogs most recently. We speak with another guide in a jeep that has heard dogs quarreling with hyaenas, but sadly on the other side of the river so not reachable for us today.

We take coffee and tea by a wetland with lots of standing dead trees. Burchell's and Double-banded Sandgrouse are coming to drink though are a little distant. Franky finds a nearby Brown Snake Eagle in a tree though it flies off before we can get a scope on it. We continue to work our way back to Sango for our last brunch.

We have some downtime to gather our thoughts at what has been a special stay at a delightful lodge. We manage to get great looks at a Black-collared Barbet that

has been calling – a smart new bird. We also manage scope views, albeit distant, of a Meyer's Parrot in the far trees across the wetland. Its time to move, so we say our final byes to the staff and Elephants too! Brooklyn and KB take us to the airstrip where we see air-traffic control, Botswana style, as a jeep is trying to move a Giraffe off the runway in preparation for the incoming flight! Then it's a farewell to KB and Brooklyn before another exciting flight.

At Kasane we meet our guide Oteng, or OT, from Chobe Elephant Lodge then load the minibus preparing to drive west to the lodge through famous Chobe National Park. We start noting some birds at the car park of the airport, with Red-winged Starling and a recent coloniser, Common Myna. Along the road we stop for Red-crested Korhaan, Magpie Shrike, Blue Waxbill and smart Golden-breasted Bunting. Further along, we add White-crested Helmet-shrike, Dark Chanting Goshawk, as well as noting familiar Steenbok, Ground Hornbills, Lilac-breasted Roller and our first Chobe Elephants! The second of the two groups are just browsing beside the road and we stop for some close views of females with young.

When the view opens out, the panorama is simply magnificent. From the elevated ridge above the valley we can see the Chobe River meandering through the flood plain, shining as the sun is lowering over Namibia in the west. We drive down a dust track that takes us through bushes and thickets towards the river. Through a stony section we are surrounded by a troop of Baboons and we enjoy watching their antics as they peel bark and wood from fallen trees searching for bugs. Jane points to a Slender Mongoose that is also firkling around the tree stumps. The river course is attracting lots of animals to the water and the lush grasses alongside. Hundreds are on show with groups of Impala, Plains Zebras and Waterbuck.

We work our way to the river shore where OT chooses the perfect spot for sundowners. Along with cold beers, gin-and-tonics and chilled white wines we see two Black-backed Jackals and masses of birds, most noticeably huge groups of White Pelicans that dwarf the equally large numbers of Spoonbills. Yellow-billed Storks are joined by giant Marabou Storks and Nigel points out Comb Duck and African Skimmer. Black-winged Stilts and Ruff pick along the water's edge and Pam points out a lone Greenshank. Big flights of Glossy Ibis pass across the setting sun with countless egrets. Other species include Black-crowned Night Heron, Blacksmith's Lapwings, Common Sandpiper, White-faced Duck, Red-billed Teal, Grey-headed Gull, Collared Pratincole and Double-banded Sandgrouse.

Onto the beautifully Chobe Elephant Lodge where we are greeted by the Chobe singers and a welcome fruit juice. We are shown to our rooms, all, alledgedly, with views over the Chobe River flood plain, but its now dark so we'll have to imagine!

Day 10: Chobe National Park and River Cruising

After an early-morning wake-up call we assemble for breakfast at 6am, keen to get away in good time for our game drive within the world-famous Chobe National Park.

After eating we load into the jeep and take off down the slope that leads towards the river, following the course of a dry ravine. On the lower slopes are groups of Chacma Baboons and Impala. We start picking up bird species, many that seem familiar by now but there is one that proves tricky to identify – it has the characteristic white tail markings of a Honeybird, but is really unremarkable in any other features. It lacks the white throat of Brown-backed so we plump for Green-backed – a new species for the list.

Our route takes us back to the paved road and OT stops to sign in with the official National Park gate. Then we take off down a sandy track and soon OT finds some fresh tracks Leopard tracks in the road. Its fun driving along following the animals course, but sadly they disappear into the undergrowth. We do stop at our first Elephant of the day that is foraging in the woodland. Its interesting to note that birds are attracted to its movements as it disturbs the ground and low branches – we see several Drongos and Puffbacks and nearby we see a young Bateleur on the forest floor.

The terrain opens up and we see groups of Giraffes ahead. There seems bigger numbers here that we've seen at Moremi and we enjoys wonderful looks. OT is keen to keep following a dry ravine as he has seen Leopard there before and believes it to be a creature of habit – our first sweep is unsuccessful but we do enjoy fine views of a perched Brown Snake Eagle that has caught its breakfast – not a snake but a large Rock Monitor lizard – fantastic! Next up is a tree full of Baboons that are feasting on a fruiting tree – OT tells us it is a Monkey Apple tree – that figures! Its nice to watch as all the activity is attracting Impala and Kudu at the base of the tree, looking for fallen and discarded fruit.

We continue our route and soon find our first Cape Buffalos, or widow-makers as OT calls them as they are the most dangerous of Africa's large animals. OT takes us through the features to look for when separating males and females as they are both large and horned. The males have a heavier base to the horns that give them a helmeted look.

Soon after, OT gets a radio message that a Leopard has been found neaby, so we return to the same ravine that we passed through earlier.

When we arrive another jeep is parked and we can see the big cat settled at the base of the rocky slope, under a tree. It is looking alert to the few Kudu that are browsing up the slope and its tail is twitching in the way of a cat in hunt mode. It looks like a female with a narrow face and we watch the show unfold... the Kudus are soon aware of the Leopard and start barking and she seems to lose interest after a while. She then starts to wander and we enjoy the game of getting

into position for the best looks. A couple of other jeeps arrive and we all enjoy wonderful looks at a truly beautiful animal.

Lunch is at Serondela on the banks of the river and we meet up with other guests from the lodge. It must be a regular place to stop as the local wildlife is ready for us – brazen Vervet Monkeys make attempts on people's lunches and Yellow-bellied Greenbuls are looking for scraps, so any unattended food is up for grabs! Birds around the wooded lunch spot include Red-billed Francolin, Blue-eared Starling, Go-away Birds and two low-flying African Harrier Hawks.

After lunch we drive to Kasane, a busy little town on the Chobe River – there are hotels, shops and people going about their daily business. From here we can get a boat west along the river, back into the National Park and view wildlife from the water. The boat has two decks and we choose the top deck to get the best vantage point. As we get the introduction we note Wire-tailed Swallows and Rock Martin zipping around. Marabou Storks are circling above the town – our guide tells us that there is a rubbish dump there. Pied Crows are also spiralling with the larger storks and a Yellow-billed Kite drifts over the treetops. We see Brown-headed Kingfisher in a tree on the bank and a smart African Pied Wagtail on the water's edge. African Fish Eagles are sat on treetops close to a nest and at one point one adult bird catches a fish right in front of the boat. Next we see a smart White-crowned Lapwing (with a wattle!) and a charismatic Nile Crocodile -what a grin!

Across the river is our first Red Lechwe – sturdy, rich-coloured antelope. More noble looking Greater Kudu are drinking along the water's edge and we see a Pied Kingfisher before spending time with a large group of Elephants. It's a scene straight from an Attenborough documentary with animals wandering to the water's edge for their daily drink – mother's escorting young animals, larger males filling their boots.

Further along we enjoy looks at African Skimmers that are on a small sandy island – a couple of birds fly around on buoyant wings and even start skimming! As we complete the circuit around Setutu Island we get great looks at rich-coloured Lechwe, Water Thick-knees, Pied Kingfishers and two Little Bitterns fly along the reed edge.

It's been another fabulous day and we still have to drive back through the Park to the lodge – there are more stops along the way for Elephant crossings and OT's sharp eyes pick out some new birds: Striped Kingfisher, Purple Roller and Lizard Buzzard.

Day 11: One Last Game Drive

We are scheduled for an early afternoon flight home, so we are squeezing in one last game drive. We meet for a light breakfast at 6am before getting in the safari jeep for the last time. We weave our way through the bush and down to the river at the first opportunity noting the now familiar sight of masses of herbivores

scattered across the plain. The birds are the familiar species we've become accustomed to but Di spots something a little different. It seems a non-descript little bird, but has the distinctive black-and-white tail markings of a honeyguide – but which one? We do the matrix of features and distribution maps and work it out as a Green-backed Honeybird, but drab-coloured might be more appropriate!

We work our way to Ngoma gate and then drive slowly through the woodland. A very close Elephant is fun to watch as it strips the twigs. The trees have lost most of their leaves, but OT explains that there is still moisture in the outermost small branches and twigs and this is what the Elephant is after. Its movement is attracting small birds, most noticeably two Drongos, but we also see Puffback, and Black Tit.

As we drop through the mopane woods to the valley floor we pause to scan the busy flood plain. We can see a Marabou with vultures on a carcass in the distance, so move closer for a better look. Parking up we can see two large White-backed and a finer Hooded Vulture are picking at a young Water Buffalo.

OT gets a radio message that a Lion has made a kill a short distance away, so we move along to where three Black-backed Jackals are sitting in the open. Nearby, at the base of a bush is a big Lioness that is guarding its nearby, out-of-sight, kill. It looks a stalemate and we move on, but soon OT notices that the small animals are looking elsewhere and scolding so we investigate. Sure enough we find a Leopard walking down a dry ravine. We watch for fifteen minutes or so as it works through the bushes and towards the water. Once it is in the open it attracts the attention of the three Jackals that start barking and yipping. The calls summon more Jackals – now there are five. The Leopard has had her fill of water and starts to move to the cover of the bushes, all the while being yelped at by the Jackals. She moves between our jeep and an adjacent jeep giving us perfect looks at her beautiful coat and shape.

Our last stop is a short coffee break with the elevated view across the flood plain. Its simply wonderful with a myriad of animals on show. There are big groups of Zebra, Impala and Buffalo as well as birds everywhere. In the far distance, on the Namibian side of the border, we can see a huge flock of smaller birds on and flicking low to the ground. Through the scope all is revealed – over three hundred Carmine Bee-eaters! It's a shame they aren't closer but it's a spectacle nevertheless. A fitting end to another fantastic wildlife drive – time to start heading back.

It's a quick turnaround at the Chobe Elephant Lodge – time to pack and freshen up for the long journey home. There are goodbyes and thanks to the staff before we drive with OT to the airport where we bid a fond farewell to another first rate guide – he has great and taught us well. And so to waiting at airports and working out who gets the all important votes in the Botswana wildlife elections.

Magic Moments

There are so many moments to choose from.. here's three that were most popular:

Jackals harrassing Leopard

Playful Lions

Mating Leopards

Place of the Trip

Joint Winners: Setari, Okavango and Deception Valley

Mammal Top Ten (10)

1 Leopard (5)

2= African Elephant (4)

2= Honey Badger

4 Southern Giraffe (3)

5= African Lion (2)

5= Spotted Hyaena

5= Ground Pangolin

5= Cape Fox

5= Spring Hare

5= Chacma Baboon

Top Antelope

Roan Antelope

Sound of Africa

Setari Singers

Birdy Top Ten

1 = Carmine Bee-eater (3)

1 = Brown Snake Eagle

1 = Painted Snipe

1 = Pale Chanting Goshawk

5 = Lilac-breasted Roller (2)

5 = Crimson-breasted Shrike

5 = African Skimmer

5 = Little Bee-eater

5 = Emerald Spotted Dove

5 = Blue Waxbill

BIRDS

Little Grebe
Great White Pelican
Reed Cormorant
African Darter
Grey Heron
Goliath Heron
Purple Heron
Great Egret
Intermediate Egret
Little Egret
Western Cattle Egret
Slaty Egret
Squacco Heron
Green-backed Heron
Rufous-bellied Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
Little Bittern
Hammerkop
African Openbill
Saddle-billed Stork
Marabou Stork
Yellow-billed Stork
African Sacred Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Hadedda Ibis
African Spoonbill
Spur-winged Goose
Egyptian Goose
Pygmy Goose
Comb (Knob-billed) Duck
Yellow-billed Duck
Red-billed Teal
White-faced Duck
White-backed Duck
Hooded Vulture
White-backed Vulture
White-headed Vulture
Yellow-billed Kite
Black-shouldered Kite
Tawny Eagle
African Hawk-Eagle
Martial Eagle
Brown Snake Eagle
Bateleur
Lizard Buzzard
Gabar Goshawk
Pale Chanting Goshawk
Dark Chanting Goshawk
African Marsh Harrier
African Fish Eagle
African Harrier Hawk
(Gymnogone)
Crested Francolin
Red-billed Spurfowl
Swainson's Spurfowl
Helmeted Guineafowl
Wattled Crane
Black Crake

African Swamphen
Common Moorhen
African Jacana
Lesser Jacana
Kori Bustard
Red-crested Korhaan
Kittlitz's Plover
Three-banded Plover
Crowned Lapwing
Blacksmith Lapwing
White-crowned Lapwing
Wattled Lapwing
Long-toed Lapwing
Ruff
Common Greenshank
Wood Sandpiper
Common Sandpiper
Painted Snipe
African Snipe
Black-winged Stilt
Spotted Thick-knee
Water Thick-knee
Collared Pratincole
Grey-headed Gull
Whiskered Tern
African Skimmer
Burchell's Sandgrouse
Double-banded Sandgrouse
Mourning Collared Dove
Red-eyed Dove
Cape Turtle Dove
Laughing Dove
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
Namaqua Dove
African Green Pigeon
Meyer's Parrot
Grey Go-away-bird
Coppery-tailed Coucal
Senegal Coucal
Pel's Fishing Owl
Pearl-spotted Owllet
Fiery-necked Nightjar (h)
African Palm Swift
Red-faced Mousebird
Giant Kingfisher
Malachite Kingfisher
Pied Kingfisher
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Striped Kingfisher
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater
Little Bee-eater
White-fronted Bee-eater
Purple Roller
Lilac-breasted Roller
Southern Carmine Bee-eater
Southern Ground Hornbill
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
African Grey Hornbill

Bradfield's Hornbill
African Hoopoe
Green Wood Hoopoe
Common Scimitarbill
Acacia Pied Barbet
Black-collared Barbet
Crested Barbet
Lesser Honeyguide
Green-backed Honeybird
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Bennett's Woodpecker
Cardinal Woodpecker
Sabota Lark
Wire-tailed Swallow
Lesser Striped Swallow
Banded Martin
Brown-throated Martin
Rock Martin
Fork-tailed Drongo
Black-headed Oriole
Pied Crow
Southern Black Tit
Arrow-marked Babbler
Hartlaub's Babbler
Southern Pied Babbler
Red-eyed Bulbul
Dark-capped Bulbul
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Kurrichane Thrush
Groundscraper Thrush
Capped Wheatear
African Stonechat
White-browed Robin-Chat
White-browed Scrub Robin
Kalahari Scrub Robin
Yellow-bellied Eremomela
Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler
Long-billed Crombec
Grey-backed Camaroptera
Zitting Cisticola
Rattling Cisticola
Chirping Cisticola
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Black-chested Prinia
Marico Flycatcher
Spotted Flycatcher
Chinspot Batis
African Pied Wagtail
Cape Wagtail
African Pipit
Plain-backed Pipit
Magpie Shrike
Swamp Boubou
Crimson-breasted Shrike
Black-backed Puffback
Brubru (h)
Brown-crowned Tchagra
White-crested Helmetshrike
Southern White-crowned Shrike

Common Myna
Wattled Starling
Burchell's Starling
Meves's Starling
Cape Glossy Starling
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Red-winged Starling
Yellow-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Oxpecker
Marico Sunbird
White-bellied Sunbird
Collared Sunbird
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Great Sparrow
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Yellow-throated Petronia
Scaly-feathered Finch
Southern Masked Weaver
Lesser Masked Weaver
Golden Weaver
Red-billed Quelea
Fan-tailed (Red-shouldered)
Widowbird
Green-winged Pytilia
Jamesons Firefinch
Blue Waxbill
Violet-eared Waxbill
Black-faced Waxbill
Red-headed Finch
Yellow Canary
Yellow-fronted Canary
Golden-breasted Bunting
Lark-like Bunting

Mammals

Impala
Greater Kudu
Red Lechwe
Common Reedbuck
Roan Antelope
Sitatunga
Steenbok
Common Duiker
Common Waterbuck
Blue Wildebeeste
Tsessebe
Oryx
Lesser Bushbaby
Chacma Baboon
Vervet Monkey
African Porcupine
Tree Squirrel
Cape Ground Squirrel
Small-spotted Genet
African Wild Cat
Leopard
African Lion
African Elephant
Hippopotamus
Cape Buffalo
Burchell's (Plains) Zebra
Southern Giraffe
Spring Hare
Scrub Hare
Spotted Hyaena
Black-backed Jackal
Side-striped Jackal
Cape Fox
Slender Mongoose
Banded Mongoose
Yellow Mongoose
Dwarf Mongoose
Honey Badger
Ground Pangolin
Warthog
Peter's Epauletted Fruit Bat

Reptiles and Amphibians

Nile Crocodile
Rock Monitor
Striped Skink
Tropical House Gecko