

Victoria Falls, Botswana and Caprivi Strip (Namibia)

'Pel's and Wild Dogs'

Wilton Farrelly, January 2024



(Pel's Fishing Owl, Bradfield's Hornbill and African Wild Dog)

Introduction

This is a summary of a trip to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, northern Botswana (Okavango) and two days in the Caprivi Strip, Namibia in January 2024.

I was travelling independently with my wife (a non-birder) and it was to be a general interest and wildlife trip with a desire to see African Wild Dog and me squeezing in as much birding as possible. I wanted to include a search for Pel's Fishing Owl, an iconic bird that I have dipped on in other African trips.

Travel Arrangements

I booked everything independently. Flights were booked directly via Lufthansa and were Dublin to Frankfurt, a 7 hour layover (allowing a visit in to Frankfurt old town), and then a Discover Airlines flight to Victoria Falls (which stopped at Windhoek).

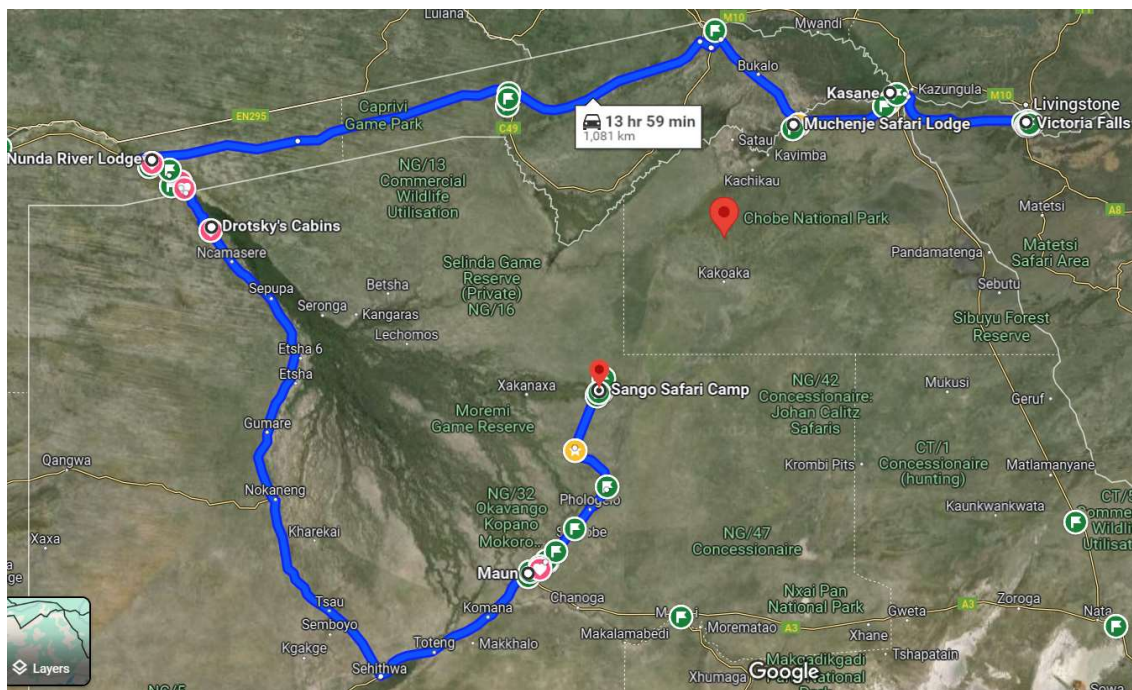
The return was Maun (using Airlink), to Johannesburg to Frankfurt to Dublin.
All flights were on a through ticket and all left on time and we had no travel issues.

In country, we did not need a vehicle in Victoria Falls. After leaving Victoria Falls, we took a hotel transfer to cross the border from Zimbabwe to Botswana where we picked up a HiLux 4x4 from Bushtrackers in Kasane. We used this vehicle throughout the rest of the trip and returned it in Maun. As this was a oneway rental, we had to pay an additional rental fee. Bushtrackers have all rental rates on their website and I found them to be very good.

Locations Visited

The key locations we visited were:

- Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, our point of arrival
- Chobe riverfront / Muchenje, Botswana
- Divundu, Namibia
- Shakawe, Botswana
- Maun, Botswana
- Khwai / Moremi, Botswana
- Return and departure from Maun.



Accommodation

We booked all our accommodation direct with the hotel / lodge. We were travelling in the 'low season' so some were offering three nights for the price of two and / or reduced low season rates.

Location	Hotel / Lodge	No Nights	Comments
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe	Ilala Lodge Hotel	3	Great location, walking distance to Victoria Falls, the Victoria Falls Hotel and Zambezi Drive.
Chobe riverfront / Ngoma, Botswana	Muchenje Safari Lodge,	3	A really nice and friendly safari lodge with good safari drives to the western Chobe waterfront.
Divundu, Namibia	Nunda River Lodge	2	A nice chalet overlooking the Kavango river and the Hippos. Has it's own bird guide, Bassi, who takes boat trips.
Shakawe, Botswana	Drotsky's Cabins	2	A superb and friendly facility. Own chalet and central lodge with swimming pool. Guide Otto was great. Took a boat trip.
Maun, Botswana	Thamalakane River Lodge	1	One night only. Chalet overlooking the river which only had a little water. A nice chalet, however we felt it was expensive when compared to other lodges / hotels.
Khwai, Botswana	Sango Safari Camp	3	Another really nice safari lodge in Khwai and where we spent a lot of time looking for Wild Dog and did a Mokoro trip.
Maun, Botswana	Sedia Hotel	1	We could have booked the Thamalakane River Lodge again but decided to get better value at the Sedia Hotel. It has reasonable grounds, a pool and is not far from the airport. Would definitely stay again.

Birding Resources

Southern African Birdfinder by Callan Cohen is the reference resource for the region. However it is now over 20 years since it was first published and some of the locations and bird statuses are now outdated.

I used the Sasol eBirds App (5th edition) along with the book. The App worked well although note some species names do not match with eBirds, on which I recorded all my sightings.

Cloudbirders (www.cloudbirders.com) is the go to location for trip reports. Most trip reports in the region are from tour companies. Few reports cover safari lodges so I used E Bird to try and build up target bird lists.

Weather

This trip took place in the southern African winter. In general, daytime temperatures were 26 to 34 degrees. At night it was around 20 – 22 degrees. Those days with high temperatures made daytime birding very challenging.

We had rain during each of our first three days at Victoria Falls. We only experienced rain again on our last day in Maun. When we were travelling to Khwai, this was about 3 days after rain had been in the area and this made the road conditions from Maun to Khwai very challenging.

Detailed Itinerary

Saturday January 13th – Travel day

Departed Dublin at 11:50am to Frankfurt on Lufthansa. Frankfurt to Victoria Falls (Discover Airlines) from Frankfurt was at 10pm. With a 7 hour change over we left the airport and headed in to the Frankfurt Old Town which was about 20 minutes on the train. It took us longer than we thought to sort the train tickets, find the right train and the correct platform. About 10 bird species were added to my new German list including Great Spotted Woodpecker and Egyptian Goose. However the Gluhwein was really nice on a grey cold day in the city!

Frankfurt Airport is typical of other large airports. However we found a lack of food options at the gate and a shortage of working phone charging points but thankfully the flight left on time.

Sunday 14th January – Victoria Falls

The Lufthansa / Discover flight to Vic Falls stops at Windhoek. We spent just over an hour on the runway whilst the changeover happened. This actually worked well and is better than having to disembark and risk getting a late connecting flight. A few birds were observed at Windhoek Airport from the plane including Bradfields Swift, Greater Striped Swallow, Alpine Swift and Red-billed Firefinch.

At Victoria Falls airport, we arrived at 12:15 and were quickly through immigration. You do need dollars and the exact amount, for the visas which were \$55 each.

Ilala Hotel had arranged a pick up for us and it was only a 20 minute drive to the hotel. I had already booked a sunset boat trip on the Zambezi. It left at 4pm and thankfully it was a dry evening. I was hoping for a Finfoot but did not get one. However we did have a nice group of Hippos feeding on one of the islands and plenty of Nile Crocodiles. Top birds were White-crowned Lapwing, Grey Headed Gull, Giant Kingfisher and four African Skimmer (the latter were just about hanging on before departing and were our only Skimmers of the trip).



White-crowned Lapwing (note the protruding carpal spur)



Hippo

Monday 15th January – Victoria Falls

I had arranged for a mornings bird guiding with Charles Brightman (res@discovervictoriafalls.co.zw). Charles is a known and experienced bird guide in the area. As he has his own vehicle, the idea was to allow us to get to places we would not be able to walk. We had a first class morning birding with Charles (and his colleague Graham). Highlights included Collared Palm Thrush, African Emerald Cuckoo, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Dickinsons Kestrel and Western Banded Snake Eagle. 93 species were seen (others were heard) and Charles is a superb guide - highly recommended!



African Emerald Cuckoo (Charles Brightman)



Collared Palm Thrush (Charles Brightman)



Meves's Starling



Dickinsons Kestrel (Charles Brightman)



Green-winged Pytilia (Charles Brightman)



Wood Sandpiper



Senegal Coucal



Blue Waxbill



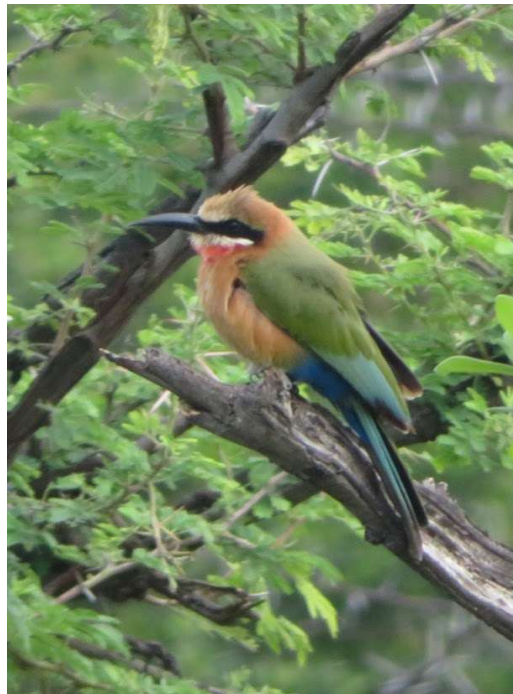
White-browed Sparrow Weaver



Pygmy Kingfisher (Charles Brightman)



Western Banded Snake Eagle



White-fronted Bee-eater

After leaving us back to our hotel for lunch, Louise and I then walked down to the Falls. The walk would be a lot more pleasant if it were not for the many hawkers hassling all tourists. However we never felt unsafe. The entry charge to the Falls was \$50 each (card accepted). It was a great experience but we were soaked, despite wearing our ponchos. There was more water flowing through the Falls than I expected. It has to be said, you wonder what the Zimbabwe government is doing with all the revenue from the thousands of daily tourists paying \$50 a time. They are certainly not spending it on the tourist infrastructure at the Falls....

Around the Falls, my target was Schalow's Turaco. Unfortunately I did not find it but birding highlights in the forest set back from the Falls were an African Goshawk and a flock of Retz's Helmetshrikes.

The evening was spent around the Ilaya Lodge Hotel and the nearby 'The Three Monkey's Restaurant' which was recommended by Charles and was worth the visit.



Part of Victoria Falls, looking towards Zambia.

Tuesday 16th January – Victoria Falls

Early morning I did a 1 hour walk around the Victoria Falls train station and the gardens in the adjoining area. A few trip 'fillers' were seen such as Cut-throat Finch, Bronze Mannikin and Common Myna.

Back for breakfast and it started raining - and did not stop until about 2pm.... Birding was out of the question in these conditions. Mid-morning we decided to walk down to The Lookout Café, only about 15 minutes away. It has a fantastic viewpoint over the lower gorge. I had two targets here - Schalows Turaco and Taita Falcon. At the café, as it was, Louise said, 'what's that green bird with the red wings?'..... and I had the Turaco below the cafe! However no sign of the falcon nor African Black Swift.

That afternoon, I had booked Victoria Falls Hotel for high tea as the gardens are a reliable site for the Turaco. However the Turaco was heard but not seen, but good views were had of a family party of Trumpeter Hornbills.

Evening spent at Ilaya Lodge Hotel.



Trumpeter Hornbill



View from The Lookout Café

Wednesday 17th: Victoria Falls to Muchenje \ Ngoma

Between 6-7:30 am I did a walk down from the Ilala Hotel along Zambezi Drive to the Braai \ picnic area. A guard was present but I paid him a tip to access the shoreline. Excellent views were had of the river above the falls and sightings included Rock Pratincoles, African Pygmy Goose, Brown Firefinch and Hooded Vultures.



Hooded Vultures



Burchell's Starling



Yellow-billed Kite

We left the Ilala hotel at 8:30 for our transfer drive to Kasane, Botswana (arranged by Ilala Hotel). Along the road we encountered our first sign of Elephants about 10 miles out of Victoria Falls and on the way to the border crossing we seen 5 in total.

The border crossing was smooth. Our transfer involved us changing drivers at the border crossing. Into Botswana we picked up our vehicle (a Toyota HiLux on a one way rental from Kasane to Maun) from Bushtrackers at Kasane Airport. We went into Kasane which is a little dilapidated in places. I tried to find some accessible riverside woodland and river habitat in Kasane but could not access any.

We then drove on for an hour west to near Ngoma where we went to our lodge for the next 3 nights, Muchenje. The transit road from Kasane to Ngoma goes through the Chobe National Park and it is well worthwhile taking it easy as this is a wildlife corridor.

Muchenje is a nice and very friendly safari lodge which enjoys views over the Chobe river floodplain and Namibia.

At Muchenje, we took our afternoon game drive to the western Chobe waterfront area. This was a beautiful area and our guide was 'GB'. Birding highs included Pink-backed Pelican, White-browed Coucal, Whiskered and White-winged Terns and a local rarity – Caspian Tern. However the volumes of game were very impressive with large numbers of Impala, Giraffe and Kudu. A number of herds of Elephants on the flood plain made for a very atmospheric setting. A dead Elephant had about 40 White-backed Vultures around it.

In the evening, I did a one hour night drive in the area with GB and the best was a Civet.



Caspian Terns



Elephants, western Chobe Riverfront



View from our chalet at Muchenje, looking towards Namibia



African Fish Eagle

Thursday 18th: Muchenje

Today started with a 5:30am game drive. We had a young male Lion within 4km of the lodge. We then went round western Chobe close to the waterfront again. Best birds were Brown-crowned Tchagra, Yellow Wagtails, African Golden Oriole, Kori Bustard and great views of Southern Ground Hornbills calling to each other.



Young male Lion, near our lodge at 6am.



Southern Ground Hornbill



White-backed Vulture

At 10 we left Muchenje lodge to head to Kasane for a boat trip with GB on the Chobe and around Sedudu Island. This boat trip was excellent and birds seen included Collared Pratincole, Marabou Stork, Black Heron, Purple Heron, Goliath Heron, Brown Snake-Eagle, Southern Carmine Bee-eater and Southern Red Bishop. We also had Nile Crocodile, Red Lechwee and Buffalo on the Island.

We then returned on a long drive from Kasane to Muchenje, via the Chobe waterfront. Birds seen included African and Levallants Cuckoos, Bradfields Hornbill, Martial Eagle, Red-necked Falcon, Amur Falcon, Eurasian Hobby and Tropical Boubou.



Goliath Heron



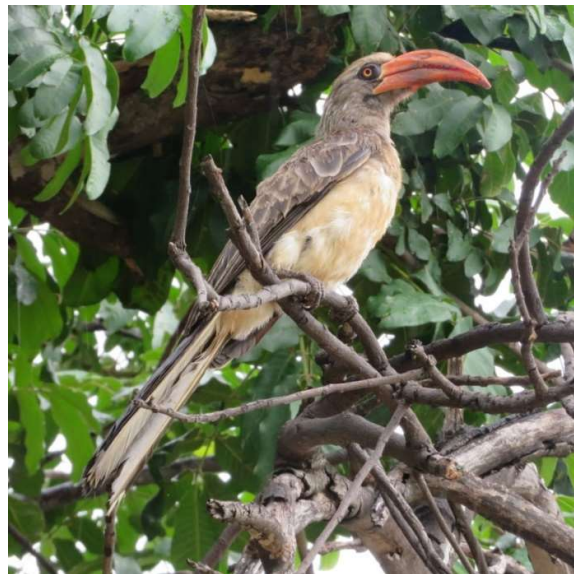
African Darter



Nile Crocodile and Waterbuck.



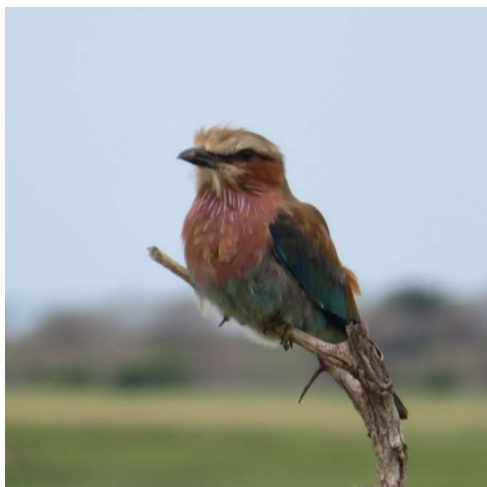
Tawny Eagle



Bradfield's Hornbill



Lappet-faced Vulture



Lilac-breasted Roller



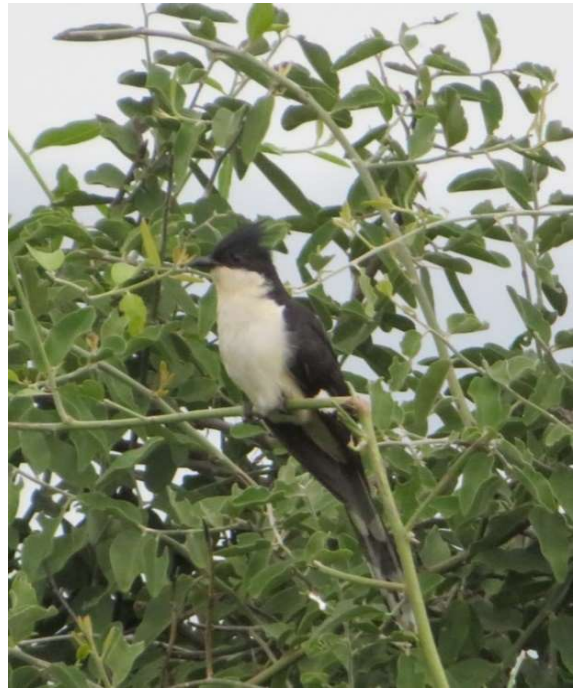
Long-tailed Paradise Whydah



Red-necked Falcon



Levillant's Cuckoo



Jacobin Cuckoo



African Cuckoo



Juvenile Martial Eagle

Friday 19th : Muchenje

We had a 5:30am game drive which was very quiet. Birding highlights were Three-banded Courser, Lesser Grey Shrike, Lappet-faced Vulture, White Helmetshrike and Diederik Cuckoo. We were back at the lodge for 8:30 and I then spent some time birding around the lodge.

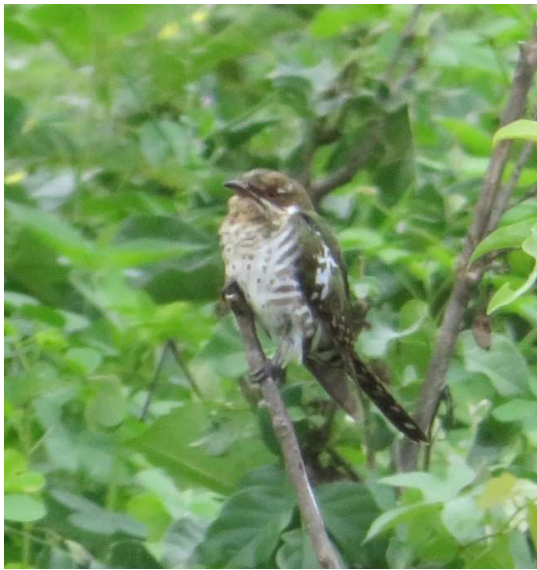


Three-banded Courser



Collared Pratincole

The next game drive was 3:30pm and after a quiet morning, this afternoon we had a Python, a Lion pride with 2 females and 2 cubs (sizeable) and a second pride with one male (same one from 2 days previous), two females, 4 cubs (2 of which were less than 6 months). Bird wise, highlights were Amur Falcons, Crested Francolin, African Hawk-Eagle, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Meyers Parrot and Golden-breasted Bunting.



Diederik Cuckoo



Juvenile Grey-headed Kingfisher

Saturday 20th: Muchenje to Divundu

This was our last morning at Muchenje and we went out on a 5:30 game drive, starting with a look for a kill that one of the Lion prides had made the previous day.



Male Lion with young Giraffe kill



Female Lion

Our game drive started brilliantly with a pride of Lions close to the roadside Giraffe kill from the night before. We watched them drink from potholes on the edge of the road. We then went for a game drive along the western waterfront. There was nothing new bird or mammal wise but some nice herds of Zebra were on the floodplain.

The weather during our 4 days in Chobe was slightly poorer than we expected. It was both wetter and cooler. However it did not in any way ruin our visit but at times, made wildlife watching more challenging. Locals said that the rains had been late this year so perhaps we were unlucky? Overall Muchenje was a really nice safari lodge with a very friendly atmosphere.

After breakfast we left Muchenje for a 5 hour drive to Nunda River Lodge which was near Divundu, Namibia. Departing Botswana was easy at the Ngoma border crossing. Getting in to Namibia took about 40 minutes with queues and a highly inefficient process involving immigration and registration of the vehicle. We were able to pay the car fee of NAM\$271 using our UK bank card. Our advice for anyone arriving at the Namibian checkpoint is find

the immigration forms and complete (they are not obvious) immediately. Also, at the vehicle counter go and ask for the vehicle form as soon as you arrive.

We then continued on our journey to Nunda on the B8. The Namibian roads were very good and tarred with only a few potholes. However at the Bwabwata gate there is a police checkpoint. We were given a lecture for not driving with our lights on (note it is a requirement when driving in Namibia but not in Botswana). If it were not for an impatient lorry driver behind us, I would speculate that he would have been keen to extract a few dollars from us....

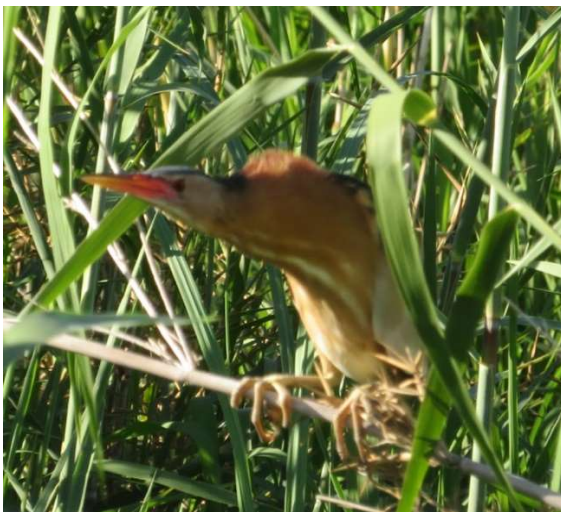
We arrived at the really nice but quiet Nunda River Lodge at 3:45pm and shortly afterwards took a 'Sundowner' Boat trip to Popa Falls. When I realised that Bassi, the boat captain, was a great birder, I made sure we were focussed on some of my local target species! Key birds seen included Luapula Cisticola, White-backed Night Heron, Allens Gallinule, White-fronted Plover, Dwarf Bittern, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater and Arrow-marked Babbler.



Luapula Cisticola



White-backed Night Heron



Little Bittern



Rock Pratincole

The Sundowner trip was actually very nice and we enjoyed the makeshift 'bar' at Popa Falls!

Sunday 21st : Nunda River Lodge, Divundu

Wakening to the sound of Hippos, I did a walk around the grounds of Nunda Lodge before breakfast. Birds seen included Grosbeak (Thick-billed) Weaver, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Willow Warbler, White-browed Robin Chat, Black-backed Puffback, Levillant's Cuckoo and African Crane.

We stocked up with some supplies in Divundu and then headed to the Mahango core area in Bwabwata National Park. Entry was NAM \$250 (circa £10), cash only. This is an easy self drive. We started along the riverfront and then took the road inland, higher up to the waterhole. This really is a superb park with great habitat, birds and mammals. New birds for the trip included White-headed Vulture, Ovambo Sparrowhawk, Green Woodhoopoe, Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, Southern Black-tit, Dusky Lark, Southern Yellow White-eye, Violet Backed Starling, Pin-tailed Whydah and Yellow-fronted Canary.

We had our lunch at the picnic site – having first checked for any animals. The reserve had some great mammal sightings including Sable, Wildebeest, Impala, a herd of Elephants, Buffalo, Red Lechwee and Zebra. We did not have any predators but we do know that they are about



Yellow-bellied Greenbul



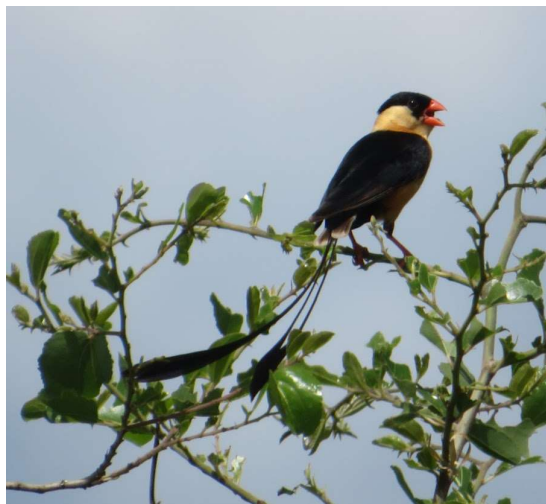
Southern Carmine Bee-eater and Long-tailed Paradise-Whydah

We were back to Nunda for 4pm and had a relaxing sundowner and evening meal overlooking the river, watching the Rock Pratincoles feeding in the fading light and listening to the Hippos on the sandbank.





Elephant and Buffalo, Mahango



Shaft-tailed Whydah



African Cuckoo-Hawk

Monday 22nd: Nunda to Mahango to Drotsky's Shakawe

This morning we had a dedicated birdwatching boat trip from the Nunda River Lodge with Bassi. We went much further downstream than the sundowner trip. Highlights included Luapula Cisticola, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Swamp (Gabon on e-bird) Boubou, Southern Pochard, African Crake, Striated Heron, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Giant Kingfisher, Eurasian Hobby, Lesser Moorhen and Banded Martin.

After breakfast, we left Nunda for our onwards travel south. However we decided to stop again at the Mahango Waterfront, even though we were only there 24 hours previously. The safari results were different and the top bird was Wattled Crane. We also added Ostrich (our only ones of the trip) and Saddle-billed Storks. We also had some excellent Elephant sightings, many more than yesterday.



Water Monitor



Wattled Crane

We travelled on to Shakawe, crossing the border. Again border formalities took longer than expected, this time the processing of our vehicle tax in Botswana. The £4 it cost was not



worth the 30 minute wait whilst they sorted out IT problems. 30 mins later we were at Drotskys Cabins, Shakawe. This is a magnificent lodge with great accommodation, food and hospitality. We had hoped to go out on an afternoon boat ride to try to get Pels. However we were told that all places were taken by a visiting group and that we would have to wait until the next day. We therefore took it easy in the late afternoon heat, using the pool and walking around the gardens and their adjoining campsite.

Tuesday 23rd : Drotsky's, Shakawe

After breakfast, we took a 4hour boat trip with Otto, Drotsky's own wildlife guide. It was a



really excellent boat trip with Otto knowing where to go for my targets. Highlights included Pels Fishing Owl, Swamp Boubou, Southern Brown-throated Weaver, Long-crested Eagle, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Little Swift, Lesser Jacana, Black Heron, Red-faced Mousebird, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Black-collared Barbet, Lesser and Greater Swamp Warbler, Plain Martin, Hartlaubs Babbler, Holub's Golden Weaver, Southern Brown-throated Weaver and Village Indigobird.



White-fronted Bee-eater



Malachite Kingfisher



Water Thick-Knee



Coppery-tailed Coucal

In the afternoon we decided to relax in the gardens and pool as it was now a stifling 30+ degrees.

Late afternoon we went for a walk around camp with Otto. Birding highlights were another Pel's Fishing Owl, 3 Narina Trogon and 2 African Wood Owls.



African Wood Owl



Pel's Fishing Owl

Drotsky's was a really nice and friendly lodge and seeing three Pel's during our two night stay was a real highlight.

Wednesday 24th : Drotskys to Maun

We left Drotsky's Cabins at 8:30 for our drive to Maun, the longest drive of our trip and which would be close to 5 hours. The road was in parts good but was heavily potholed in many places which slowed us up. There were also plenty of donkeys, dogs and pedestrians to slow you down. However a herd of Elephants crossing the road was something special that you don't experience every day.

We made it to Maun in under 5 hours and got fuel, Pula and snacks. We then made our way to Thamalakane Riverside Lodge (it's about 20 minutes north east of Maun) for an early afternoon check in. The lodge overlooked the Thamalakane River which had no 'running' water but it had a large pool. This pool had plenty of waders including Marsh Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint and Black-winged Stilts. However the heat was around 30 degrees and too stifling for any birding. My best find was a Spitting Cobra on the path from our chalet. It was small, probably a young one, but it kept turning and showing its intent! To say that we were more careful on where we walked afterwards would be an understatement!



Spitting Cobra



Dwarf Bittern

Thursday 25th : Maun to Sango, Khwai

Like yesterday, this would largely be a travel day. However it would be like no other as we had to travel to Khwai along challenging roads. There had been heavy rain the week previous and we had been warned that the road would be 'terrible' and a test of my 4x4 driving skill - which was non-existent in these road conditions! There are two roads options to Khwai from Maun. I asked a fellow guest at Thamalakane Riverside Lodge and he suggested the longer but 'better' road via Mbabe. He had travelled it the day before and said it was better but to be careful as he did have to rescue a driver.

True enough, north of Shorobe, the road become muddy with lots of 'puddles'. We took the detours around these puddles where possible but a few were close calls. The most challenging part of the road was however the sandy stretch, on the detour road before reaching Mababe. It appeared daunting and was a real test of my nerves. However after nearly 4 hours from leaving Maun, we reached Sango Safari Lodge, Khwai, our home for the next three nights.

Our first safari drive was at 4pm with our guide KB. No Wild Dog were seen but we enjoyed a great sighting of four female Hyenas at a den, with cubs and a herd of buffalo. Hyena's really are a superb and fierce looking animal.

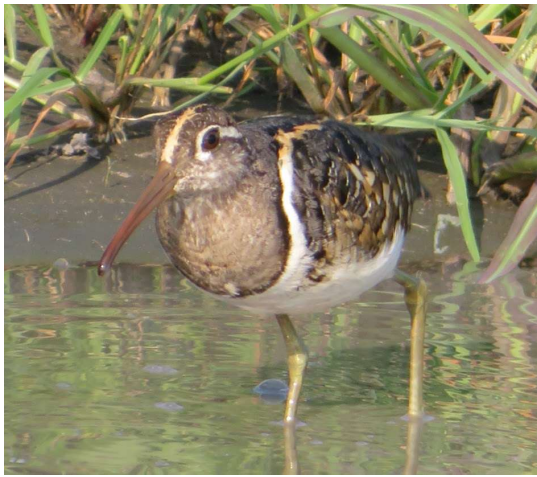
A one hour night drive had a Verreaux's Eagle-Owl and Swamp Nightjar for the trip.



Hyena den



Hippos



Greater Painted Snipe



Double-Banded Sandgrouse

Friday 26th: Sango, Khwai

We had an early morning breakfast and game drive. Mammals seen included Elephant, Impala, Blue Wildebeest, Burchells Zebra and Red Lechwe. Bird wise, the best new birds were Rufous-bellied Heron, Double-banded Sandgrouse and Lesser Spotted Eagles.

The afternoon game drive started at 4pm. We took a quick run to Moremi North Gate to check out an area of open ground for Wild Dog. At this time of year, many areas have very high grasses (some we seen were as high as two meters) and Wild Dog are a lot harder to find. We drew a blank but our guide KB spread the word with some locals that we were really serious about looking for Wild Dog!



Elephant Skull with aStriated Heron



Kori Bustard

Saturday 27th : Sango, Khwai

Another early 5:30 breakfast and we were on our safari drive at 6am. KB decided that we should stick with looking for the dogs in the eastern Moremi. However we stopped first to look for Arnot's Chat and we had a pair.



Arnot's Chat



Dwarf Mongoose

After nearly four hours of driving around eastern Moremi looking for the needle in a haystack, we had success!! A pack of 13 Wild Dog. We followed them for 10 minutes until they took cover under some bushes. This was our third day and fourth game drive looking for them but our guide KB had used local information to identify an area where they could be. After nearly 4 hours, it was relief all round! Seeing the dogs resting under the bushes you could easily have driven past them. This was a real high for us after first looking for them in Africa over 15 years ago.



On the journey back to the lodge, it was back to looking at birds and we quickly came across one of my targets of the area, Slaty Egret.



Red Lechwee



Slaty Egret

With the dogs in the bag after the morning safari drive, we decided to take up the offer for an afternoon ride in a Mokoro along the River Khwai. It was a really pleasant experience with our 'Poler' Steve. Nothing new from a wildlife point of view but the peacefulness of a Mokoro ride is fantastic.



Sunday 28th : Khwai to Maun



We had our last early morning game drive with KB today. We tracked Wild Dogs and Leopard but could not see them. Indeed it was a relatively quiet morning and our best find was a Side-striped Jackal and a pair of day roosting Verreaux's Eagle Owls.



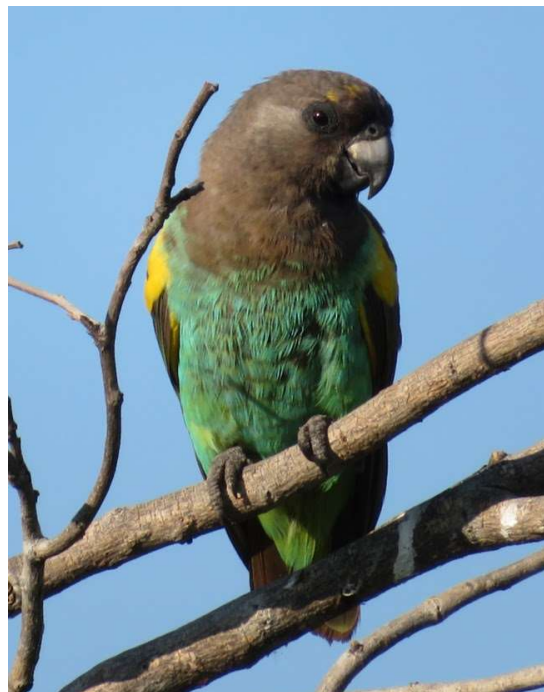
Verreaux's Eagle Owl



Side-striped Jackal



Rufous-bellied Heron



Meyer's Parrot

After an early lunch we did the 4 hour drive from Sango Lodge to Maun. It was now a lot easier as 3 days of sunshine had dried up many of the huge road puddles. There was however still the 1km of sand just south of Mababe to navigate. This really is a challenge to drive in but we got through it in our lowest 4 wheel drive differential. In Maun we did not have any accommodation booked so we tried the Sedia Riverside Hotel. It was reasonable, friendly, had a pool and large rooms with quiet air conditioning and was ideal for preparing to travel home the following day.

Monday 29th: Maun \ travel home

This was our last morning and we had some thundery rain so time was spent in the gardens. The tall trees near the rooms held a Fruit Bat and some other previously recorded bird species were seen. Our departing Airlink flight to Johannesburg was at 2:30pm. We had checked in three hours early and went across the road to the fabulous 'The Duck Café', where we sat outside with our last Botswana Muffin. When we went back in to the airport, security and immigration were a breeze. However there was virtually nothing airside so there is no need to arrive early at Maun Airport!

Summary

Victoria Falls, Botswana and the Caprivi Strip were all thoroughly enjoyable and highly recommended. Throughout the trip we felt safe and everywhere staff in the lodges were very hospitable. Whilst not a dedicated birding trip, I did see 249 species and many, many mammals, including our key target of Wild Dog.

Wilton Farrelly, (wilton.farrelly at live.co.uk)

Species list:

All sightings are on eBird.

1	Common Ostrich	26	Senegal Coucal	53	African Jacana
2	White-faced Whistling-Duck	27	Coppery-tailed Coucal	54	Common Sandpiper
3	Knob-billed Duck	28	White-browed Coucal	55	Marsh Sandpiper
4	Egyptian Goose	29	Levaillant's Cuckoo	56	Wood Sandpiper
5	Spur-winged Goose	30	Dideric Cuckoo	57	Common Greenshank
6	African Pygmy-Goose	31	African Emerald Cuckoo	58	Ruff
7	Blue-billed Teal	32	Swamp Nightjar	59	Little Stint
8	Cape Teal	33	African Swift	60	Three-banded Courser
9	Red-billed Duck	34	Little Swift	61	Rock Pratincole
10	Southern Pochard	35	African Palm Swift	62	Collared Pratincole
11	Helmeted Guineafowl	36	African Crake	63	Grey-headed Gull
12	Crested Francolin	37	Lesser Moorhen	64	African Skimmer
13	Red-billed Spurfowl	38	Red-knobbed Coot	65	Caspian Tern
14	Swainson's Spurfowl	39	Allen's Gallinule	66	Whiskered Tern
15	Little Grebe	40	Black Crake	67	White-winged Black Tern
16	Mourning Collared Dove	41	Wattled Crane	68	African Openbill
17	Red-eyed Dove	42	Water Thick-knee	69	Saddle-billed Stork
18	Ring-necked Dove	43	Black-winged Stilt	70	Marabou Stork
19	Laughing Dove	44	Three-banded Plover	71	Yellow-billed Stork
20	Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove	45	Long-toed Lapwing	72	African Darter
21	Namaqua Dove	46	Blacksmith Lapwing	73	Long-tailed Cormorant
22	Double-banded Sandgrouse	47	White-crowned Lapwing	74	Pink-backed Pelican
23	Kori Bustard	48	Crowned Lapwing	75	Hamerkop
24	Schalow's Turaco	49	Wattled Lapwing	76	Dwarf Bittern
25	Grey Go-away-bird	50	White-fronted Plover	77	Little Bittern
		51	Greater Painted-Snipe	78	Black-crowned Night Heron
		52	Lesser Jacana	79	Slaty Egret

80	Black Heron	135	Giant Kingfisher	190	Rufous-chested Swallow
81	Little Egret	136	Pied Kingfisher	191	Yellow-bellied Greenbul
82	White-backed Night Heron	137	White-fronted Bee-eater	192	Common Bulbul
83	Striated Heron	138	Little Bee-eater	193	Willow Warbler
84	Rufous-bellied Heron	139	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	194	Southern Yellow White-eye
85	Squacco Heron	140	European Bee-eater	195	Arrow-marked Babbler
86	Western Cattle Egret	141	Southern Carmine Bee-eater	196	Hartlaub's Babbler
87	Great White Egret	142	European Roller	197	Red-billed Oxpecker
88	Yellow-billed Egret	143	Lilac-breasted Roller	198	Yellow-billed Oxpecker
89	Grey Heron	144	Broad-billed Roller	199	Common Myna
90	Purple Heron	145	Crested Barbet	200	Violet-backed Starling
91	Black-headed Heron	146	Black-collared Barbet	201	Red-winged Starling
92	Goliath Heron	147	Cardinal Woodpecker	202	Meves's Starling
93	Glossy Ibis	148	Golden-tailed Woodpecker	203	Sharp-tailed Starling
94	African Sacred Ibis	149	Lesser Kestrel	204	Greater Blue-eared Starling
95	Hadada Ibis	150	Greater Kestrel	205	Cape Starling
96	African Spoonbill	151	Dickinson's Kestrel	206	Groundscraper Thrush
97	Osprey	152	Red-necked Falcon	207	Kurrichane Thrush
98	African Harrier-Hawk	153	Amur Falcon	208	Southern Black Flycatcher
99	White-headed Vulture	154	Eurasian Hobby	209	Spotted Flycatcher
100	Lappet-faced Vulture	155	Brown-necked Parrot	210	Ashy Flycatcher
101	Hooded Vulture	156	Meyer's Parrot	211	Kalahari Scrub Robin
102	White-backed Vulture	157	Black Cuckooshrike	212	Red-backed Scrub Robin
103	Black-chested Snake-Eagle	158	African Golden Oriole	213	White-browed Robin-Chat
104	Brown Snake-Eagle	159	Chinspot Batis	214	Collared Palm-Thrush
105	Banded Snake-Eagle	160	White Helmetshrike	215	African Stonechat
106	Long-crested Eagle	161	Retz's Helmetshrike	216	Arnot's Chat
107	Lesser Spotted Eagle	162	Black-backed Puffback	217	Scarlet-chested Sunbird
108	Wahlberg's Eagle	163	Brown-crowned Tchagra	218	Purple-banded Sunbird
109	Tawny Eagle	164	Tropical Boubou	219	Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver
110	African Hawk-Eagle	165	Gabon Boubou	220	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
111	Gabar Goshawk	166	Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike	221	Red-headed Weaver
112	African Marsh Harrier	167	Fork-tailed Drongo	222	Holub's Golden-Weaver
113	African Goshawk	168	African Paradise-Flycatcher	223	Southern Brown-throated Weaver
114	Ovambo Sparrowhawk	169	Red-backed Shrike	224	Southern Masked-Weaver
115	Black Kite	170	Lesser Grey Shrike	225	Village Weaver
116	African Fish-Eagle	171	Magpie Shrike	226	Red-billed Quelea
117	Common Buzzard	172	White-crowned Shrike	227	Southern Red Bishop
118	Verreaux's Eagle Owl	173	Pied Crow	228	Grosbeak Weaver
119	Pel's Fishing-Owl	174	Southern Black-Tit	229	Bronze Mannikin
120	African Wood-Owl	175	Dusky Lark	230	Common Waxbill
121	Red-faced Mousebird	176	Green-backed Camaroptera	231	Cut-throat
122	Narina Trogon	177	Tawny-flanked Prinia	232	Violet-eared Waxbill
123	Eurasian Hoopoe	178	Luapula Cisticola	233	Southern Cordonbleu
124	Green Woodhoopoe	179	Zitting Cisticola	234	Green-winged Pytilia
125	Southern Ground-Hornbill	180	Lesser Swamp Warbler	235	Red-billed Firefinch
126	Bradfield's Hornbill	181	Greater Swamp Warbler	236	Brown Firefinch
127	African Grey Hornbill	182	Banded Martin	237	Pin-tailed Whydah
128	Southern Red-billed Hornbill	183	Plain Martin	238	Eastern Paradise-Whydah
129	Trumpeter Hornbill	184	Sand Martin	239	Village Indigobird
130	Malachite Kingfisher	185	Rock Martin	240	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow
131	African Pygmy Kingfisher	186	Barn Swallow	241	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
132	Grey-headed Kingfisher	187	Wire-tailed Swallow	242	Cape Wagtail
133	Woodland Kingfisher	188	Western House Martin	243	Western Yellow Wagtail
134	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	189	Lesser Striped Swallow	244	African Pied Wagtail

245 African Pipit
246 Yellow-fronted Canary

247 Black-throated Canary
248 Yellow Canary

249 Golden-breasted Bunting



View from the terrace at the Victoria Falls Hotel, Zimbabwe.



Burchell's Zebra, western Chobe waterfront.