Zambia and Zimbabwe
28 November – 6 December 2009

Guide: Josh Engel
A Tropical Birding Custom Tour

All photos taken by the guide on this tour.

The Smoke that Thunders: looking down one end of the mile-long Victoria Falls.

INTRODUCTION

We began this tour by seeing one of Africa’s most beautiful and sought after birds: African Pitta. After that, the rest was just details. But not really, considering we tacked on 260 more birds and loads of great mammals. We saw Zambia’s only endemic bird, Chaplin’s Barbet, as well as a number of miombo and broad-leaf specialties, including Miombo Rock-Thrush, Racket-tailed Roller, Southern Hyliola, Miombo Pied Barbet, Miombo Glossy Starling, Bradfield’s Hornbill, Pennant-winged Nightjar, and Three-banded Courser.

With the onset of the rainy season just before the tour, the entire area was beautifully green and was inundated with migrants, so we were able to rack up a great list of cuckoos and other migrants, including incredible looks at a male Kurrichane Buttonquail. Yet the Zambezi had not begun to rise, so Rock Pratincole still populated the river’s rocks, African Skimmer its sandbars, and Lesser Jacana and Allen’s Gallinule its grassy margins. Mammals are always a highlight of any Africa tour: this trip’s undoubted star was a leopard, while a very cooperative serval was also superb.

Victoria Falls was incredible, as usual. We had no problems in Zimbabwe whatsoever, and our lodge there on the shores of the Zambezi River was absolutely stunning. The weather was perfect throughout the tour, with clouds often keeping the temperature down and occasional rains keeping bird activity high.
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ITINERARY

28 November  
Arrival in Lusaka, drive to Siavonga (Zambia)

29 November  
Birding around Siavonga (Zambia)

30 November  
Siavonga to Nkanga Conservation Area (Zambia)

1 December  
Nkanga Conservation Area (Zambia)

2 December  
Nkanga (Zambia) to Victoria Falls to Metetsi Private Reserve (Zimbabwe)

3-5 December  
Metetsi Private Reserve (Zambezi National Park) (Zimbabwe)

6 December  
Departure

DAILY LOG

Day 1, Lusaka to Siavonga:  We arrived in Lusaka and left the airport without hassle, heading out of town in a rainstorm.  We passed through the storm, but little time remained for birding.  In a couple of brief stops as we approached Siavonga we did see our first birds, including Meve’s Starling, perched Gray-headed Parrots, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Wahlberg’s Eagle, and Klaas’s Cuckoo.

Day 2, Siavonga:  We left the hotel early with great anticipation: we were heading off to look for one of Africa’s most beautiful and sought-after species, African Pitta.  But first things first: Fiery-necked Nightjar on the road.  Then, the one we were really hoping for, an unbelievable male Pennant-winged Nightjar perched on the road, then flying off, its ‘pennants’ trailing behind.

We arrived at the pitta river as the dawn chorus was beginning, but no pitta’s voice was amongst the cuckoos, scrub-robins, nicators, or other early morning songsters.  Lots of birds were singing, but we headed down into the riverbed to begin our quest.  We made a brief stop to watch the wonderful African Broadbill display, giving is strange trilling call.  Just after starting on again we first heard the strange , liquid blee-ip? of the pitta.  We great excitement we headed off towards the call.

Soon enough we were practically standing under it, searching the vine tangles and branches above us on the riverbank.  Finally we spotted it.  The scope was on it, I stepped away to let the others look, but tripped over a branch and went crashing to the ground.  When I looked up, the pitta was gone.  And no longer calling.

There was nothing else to do but keep on birding, hoping it piped up again.  Sure enough, a few minutes later we heard it again, slightly further up the river.  Déjà vu, again searching vine tangles, intensely looking for the movement of its display.  Then there it was!  This time it was further back.  Also more furtive, switching branches more frequently.  Finally it sat still, I got the scope on it once again.  This time I was more careful, and the bird more cooperative.  We all had tremendous scope looks, better than we could have dreamed of, front and back, of a male African Pitta doing its fantastic display every time it sang, jumping up and furiously flapping its wings.
With this under our belts and a relaxed guide, we carried on with our morning’s birding. *Trumpeter* and *Crowned Hornbill* were flying about the tree tops. *Terrestrial Brownbul* and *Yellow-bellied Greenbul* skulked about the vine tangles, but *Eastern Nicator* sang unseen.

Moving on to another spot, we had superb looks at a shining *African Emerald Cuckoo* singing away from a tree top. *Black-collared Barbet* hung out in a fruiting tree. And all of this before breakfast.

After breakfast at the hotel, we took a brief walk around the area, finding a few nice additions, including *European Sedge Warbler* and *Pied and Malachite Kingfisher*. We took a long and well-earned mid-day break, before setting out again in the afternoon.

*Racket-tailed Roller* is an inconspicuous resident of miombo and other broad-leaved woodlands of south-central Africa. We found this cooperative individual near Siavonga.

Cloudy skies kept the temperature blissfully cool as we headed to a nearby woodland. The cool temps also meant bird activity was relatively high. We soon had great views of an *Eastern Nicator*, a species that had been elusive earlier in the morning. We were pleasantly surprised to come upon a female *Miombo Rock-Thrush* carrying nesting material, and likewise a very cooperative *Racket-tailed Roller*, sitting motionless in the mid-stratum. A pair of *African*
Golden Orioles actively flew about the canopy, while a flock of Meyer’s Parrots were very cooperative.

It was a superb first day, and we retired to the hotel for dinner very contented.

Day 3, Siavonga to Nkanga Conservation Area: We departed Siavonga early, making a couple of early morning stops. We soon had nice views of African Golden Oriole where we had seen them briefly the afternoon before. We stopped again at a thicket-lined riverbed, where we played hide-and-seek with many birds that hid better than we sought. Narina Trogon was particularly shy, and we heard but could not call out several cuckoo species, including the highly local Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo. Fortunately, a beautiful Dark-backed Weaver, here isolated from the rest of their Zambian range, was more cooperative and showed nicely.

We continued on our way, stopping when we saw a large flock of soaring African Openbills. We got out of the car, only to find that many other birds were also migrating along the same route, including a flock of Glossy Ibis, Steppe Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Yellow-billed Kite, and many more openbills, totaling perhaps 800 or more individuals.

Soon after the turnoff to our lodge, we stopped next to a large field where a Rufous-naped Lark was singing from atop a small bush and a pair of Sooty Chats fed in the grass. A small flock in woodlands along the road contained a responsive Brown-backed Honeybird, never a numerous bird. We made it to Masuku Lodge for lunch, and spent the remainder of the afternoon in the vicinity of the lodge. We quickly ticked the lodge resident Arnott’s Chat and we had nice views of a group of singing and displaying Bennett’s Woodpeckers. We had another heard-only Narina Trogon. A male White-breasted Cuckooshrike was very cooperative and we enjoyed watching a flock of European Bee-eaters drinking from the dam and dodging the Amur Falcons that were occasionally harassing them.

We finished the day in the miombo woodlands near the lodge, where things were rather quiet. We enjoyed a flock of Retz’s Helmetshrikes, while a stunning African Green-Pigeon gorged itself on a fruit. A pair of Pale-billed Hornbills was most uncooperative, but Crowned Hornbills showed very nicely.

Day 4: Nkanga Conservation Area: We began the morning with a search for Zambia’s only endemic, Chaplin’s Barbet. Before we had reached the site though, we had found several other good birds, including the localized Black Coucal quickly followed by the more widespread Senegal Coucal, and both Red-necked and Swainson’s Francolins.

Our local guide led us to a barbet nest site, and soon we had quick looks at a pair flying away from us. We chased them down, and eventually had superb looks at a Chaplin’s Barbet teed up atop its favorite fig tree.

It was then down to the gallery forest along the river, where a month old African Crowned Eagle chick sat in its nest. Despite patiently waiting for the adults, they never showed, so we headed down to the nearby dam. Along the way a number of Yellow-mantled Widows, including a couple nearing full breeding plumage, flitted about the grasslands. A number of
large mammals were present around the dam, including Lichtenstein’s hartebeest and tsessebe. Our first of Zambia’s national bird, African Fish-Eagle, sat atop a dead snag and nearby an adult Chaplin’s Barbet fed a juvenile.

Zambia’s only endemic is Chaplin’s Barbet, which favors grasslands dotted with its favorite tree, sycamore fig Ficus sycamorus. After a brief chase we had superb views of this individual, and later we found an adult feeding a juvenile.

Our drive back to the lodge was punctuated by a mixed flock as we passed through a patch of miombo woodland, and we got great looks at Miombo Pied Barbet and Sterling’s Wren-Warbler. We made it back for a delicious breakfast before heading out again on foot. We tracked down a calling Red-chested Cuckoo, but things had quieted down in the midday heat. We met up with the lodge owner in his Land Rover as we were walking back, and he gave us a tour of the property, which included seeing two young male sable antelope as well as small numbers of reedbuck, warthog, and zebra. We also saw a female Coqui Francolin with a chick cross the track in front of us.

The afternoon was gray and rainy and bird activity was significantly lowered because of the weather. We did have nice views of a White-browed Robin-Chat, but for the most part birding was slow. We finished the day off with a brief night drive around the property, getting decent views of the often tough-to-find Three-banded Courser, as well as a genet and a scrub hare.

Day 5, Nkanga to Metetsi Private Reserve, Zimbabwe: We have one final morning in the conservation area where birds were extraordinarily active after the previous day’s rains. Beginning around the lodge, a large flock of Miombo Blue-eared Starlings sat in a tree, including a particularly distinctive juvenile. We had our first views of Black Cuckoo, then
chased and chased singing *Narina Trogons* through the thicket, getting only quick views of these shy birds before moving on to the miombo. A *Shikra* perched cooperatively for us, and we had great views of a pair of the localized miombo specialist *Southern Hyliota*. After a final farewell to our wonderful hosts, we were again on our way.

![Violet-backed Starling](image1.png)

Violet-backed Starling was common throughout the tour. Although this species is a year-round resident in this area, its numbers are supplemented in summer by large numbers of migrants.

The drive to Livingstone was uneventful save for *Mosque Swallows* gathering nesting material from a muddy puddles and lots of road works. We dropped off the car and met our driver, and we easily crossed the border into Zimbabwe. The drive through Victoria Falls National Park on the way to the lodge was punctuated by a very confiding group of the fantastic *Southern Ground Hornbill*.

After a snack and great views of a young *Greater Honeyguide* at the lodge, it was time for our first game drive. Mammals were plentiful, including *giraffe* (with attendant *Red-billed Oxpeckers*), *Burchell’s zebra*, *warthog*, *kudu*, and a remarkably large herd of elephants that included some adorable newborns. A mixed flock of *Eastern Paradise-Whydahs* and *Village Indigobirds* briefly distracted us from the massive pachyderms. We also thoroughly enjoyed watching dozens of dung beetles hard at work on a fresh pile of elephant dung.

Birds, of course, were plentiful. A highlight was seeing a *Dwarf Bittern* perched atop a puddle-side bush and having great views of a perched *Spotted Eagle-Owl*. We came across our first *Magpie Shrike* and *Gray-headed Kingfisher*. We stopped for drinks along the Zambezi, where *White-crowned Lapwings* were plentiful but only a lone *Long-toed Lapwing* stuck its head above the grass. A *Yellow-billed Egret* fed in the flooded grass while *Rock Pratincoles* were
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busy flying over the river. Our drive back in the dark was uneventful, but it was nice to have great views of a Water Thick-knee on the road in front of the vehicle.

Dung beetles (right) come out in force after the rains come. They favor elephant dung with its large quantity of undigested plant matter that provides nutrients for their larvae.

Day 6, Matetsi Private Reserve: After an early morning coffee, we set out for our first early morning game drive. After seeing relatively few raptors in Zambia, we were pleased to add a number of new ones this morning. We had great views of Gabar Goshawk and Little Sparrowhawk, a Tawny Eagle perched obligingly, and we caught a Hooded Vulture at its roost in a large dead tree among a group of White-backed Vultures.

Wet spots yielded some interesting waterbirds, including Ruff and Marsh Sandpiper and a lone Hottentot Teal among a group of Red-billed Teal. Our first Marabou Stork sat peacefully next to the water. Our tea stop was well positioned: a Bradfield’s Hornbill seemed to be attending a nest in a large silver cluster-leaf Terminalia sericea nearby.

Levaillant’s Cuckoos were numerous throughout the morning, and we had excellent views of our first Purple Roller and a stunning breeding-plumaged male Shaft-tailed Whydah.

As we sat for breakfast, we had one of the best breakfast birds ever, an African Finfoot that we saw both swimming along the river’s edge and perched in a tangle of roots, showing off its bright red legs and feet. After the scrumptious breakfast we took a short walk along the Zambezi in front of the lodge. Bearded Scrub Robin and White-browed Robin-Chat both sat for extended looks and we had fun watching a large variety of butterflies feeding on riverside flowers.

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Bearded Scrub-Robin was a musical camp resident at Matetsi, where they were unusually confiding.

The afternoon was spent cruising the Zambezi near the lodge. The weather was gorgeous, the beer cold, and the birds plentiful. We had superb looks at two of Africa’s large river specialists: **Rock Pratincole** and **African Skimmer**. An **African Finfoot** gave us incredible views as it motored its way along the river’s edge. Indeed, we did well with shy birds, having spectacular views of **Lesser Jacana** and **Allen’s Gallinule**. Shorebirds were numerous, and included improved looks at **Long-toed Lapwing** and our first **White-fronted Plover**. A **Yellow-billed Stork** shared a sandbar with the **skimmers** and a variety of other waterbirds. Two **hippos** watched us nearby, and we saw some massive (and some not so massive) **crocodiles**.

We arrived back at the dock just after dark, and embarked on a short night drive. A pair of **Three-banded Courser** was in a field, and a young **Verreaux’s Eagle-Owl** perched in a bare tree. The real highlight, though, was when we spotted a **leopard** walking into the bush. She paused and looked back at us, giving us perfect looks at her stunning pelage before disappearing into the bush. Despite driving off-road trying to get another view, she was gone.

**Day 7, Matetsi Private Reserve:** This morning started with a bush walk, a great way to see birds and to have an up-close look into the bush. Birds were abundant and there was always something to look at. We added two new **kingfishers**, **Striped** and **Woodland**, as well as yet another cuckoo, this time the striking **Jacobin Cuckoo**. A group of **Retz’s Helmetshrikes**
sauntered by, and we watched a juvenile Gabar Goshawk sitting in its cobweb-laden nest. Our walking drew the undivided attention of herds of zebra and giraffe, until they decided we were too close and they sprinted away.

Another accomplished songster, White-browed Robin-Chats were welcome camp residents at Musuku and Matetsi, where this photo was taken.

After breakfast we headed into Victoria Falls town for a visit of the world-famous falls, screeching to a halt on the way to watch an African Harrier-Hawk be dive-bombed repeatedly by an African Gray Hornbill. It was my first visit to the Zimbabwe side of the falls, and it was well worth the wait. Especially at this time of year, before the river has begun to rise, the Zim side is the place to be. The falls feel like they go on forever, so wide is the Zambezi at this point. After a bit of souvenir shopping we returned to the lodge.

We had a quick snack and coffee and departed for our afternoon game drive. A Dwarf Bittern provided superb looks in the short grass next to a flooded pan. We tracked a small herd of the beautiful sable antelope, then tracked a small herd of the less beautiful but no less dramatic Cape buffalo. As we headed out into some nearby grasslands, we stopped for unbelievable views of a male Kurrichane Buttonquail. This was followed by a very impressive male Kori Bustard. After our sundowner, we embarked on a night drive back to camp. Before it was even dark, we had incredible looks at a serval, who didn’t seem to care at all about our presence. It was also great to have another look at Pennant-winged Nightjar, a flyby of a male and the
female seated on the road. The last highlight was provided by a family group of the usually solitary **white-tailed mongoose**, as the mother taught her two young ones the ropes.

**Day 8, Matetsi Private Reserve:** Our final full day at Matetsi was a relaxing one. We took a morning game drive, finding a stunning male **sable antelope** and a large herd of **buffalo**. Birding was fairly slow, but we did see our first **Golden-breasted Bunting** and flushed a pair of **Double-banded Sandgrouse** off the track. We stopped for coffee along the river, where a single flock of over 30 **African Jacanas** was an odd sight resting in the long grass. At breakfast, our overdue first **Bataleur** cruised across the Zambezi, while a **Lesser Swamp-Warbler** showed well as it sang from reeds adjacent to our table. Hippos had moved into this stretch of river overnight and they too kept us entertained during our meal.

We spent the day enjoying the surrounds of the lodge, and set out again in the afternoon for another bush walk (we made a point of driving well past the small herd of **elephants** before disembarking from the Land Rover). A **Pearl-spotted Owlet** came in to playback of **African Scops-Owl**, which was interesting, and after an incredible African sunset we drove back to the lodge, stopping en route for great views of **Three-banded Courser** and a two-meter **rock python** slowly crossing the track in front of us. At dinner we were accompanied by hundreds of flying termites, newly emerged after the day’s rains. The dance of their wings in the lights of the lodge was a sight to behold.

**Day 9, Departure:** We had time for one final short drive in Matetsi, enjoying the beautiful scenery from hills overlooking the Zambezi River. Our first **Dark Chanting Goshawk** sat up nicely for us, but **Double-banded Sandgrouse** was less cooperative, just like yesterday flushing off the track before we could get a good view. We had great looks at **Amur Falcons** perched in several large dead trees, perhaps waiting to dry out after the overnight rains before commencing their daily activity. We had company at breakfast in the form of **vervet monkeys**, having arrived to gorge themselves on the termites that emerged from the mound last night. Finally it was time to say goodbye to this spectacular lodge and incredible area (after sampling the termites ourselves, but not relishing them quite like the smaller primates despite having them fried and salted), to head on to our respective destinations.

**BIRD LIST**

**Phasianidae: Pheasants, Francolins, and allies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coqui Francolin</th>
<th>Peliperdix coqui</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crested Francolin (H)</td>
<td>Dendroperdix sephaena</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natal Spurfowl (Francolin)</td>
<td>Pternistis natalensis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-necked Spurfowl (Francolin)</td>
<td>Pternistis afer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swainson's Spurfowl (Francolin)</td>
<td>Pternistis swainsonii</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helmeted Guineafowl</td>
<td>Numida meleagris</td>
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**Anseridae: Ducks and Geese**

| White-faced Duck | Dendrocygna viduata |
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Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*
Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*
Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*
Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*
Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*

**Turnicidae: Buttonquail**
Kurrichane Buttonquail *Turnix sylvaticus*
We had outrageously good views of a male at Matetsi.

**Indicatoridae: Honeyguides**
Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*
Brown-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus*
We had nice views of one with a mixed flock in Nkanga.

**Picidae: Woodpeckers**
Bennett’s Woodpecker *Campethera bennettii*
Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*
Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*
Bearded Woodpecker *Dendropicos namaquus*

**Lybiidae: Old World Barbets**
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*
Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata*
This miombo specialist was seen well with a mixed flock at Musuku.
Chaplin’s Barbet *Lybius chaplini*
Great views were had of Zambia’s only endemic in Nkanga.
Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus*
Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii*

**Bucerotidae: Hornbills**
Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus*
Crowned Hornbill *Tockus alboterminatus*
Bradfield’s Hornbill *Tockus bradfieldi*
This range-restricted species was seen well at Matetsi.
African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*
Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator*

**Bucorvidae: Ground Hornbills**
Southern Ground-Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*
One of Africa’s most unusual birds, we only heard it in Zambia but fortunately caught up with great looks several times in Zimbabwe.

**Upupidae: Hoopoes**
African Hoopoe *Upupa africana*

**Phoeniculidae: Wood-hoopoes and Scimitarbills**

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Green Wood-Hoopoe  
Common Scimitarbill

**Trogonidae: Trogons**

Narina Trogon

Trogons really gave us the run-around this trip. After several failed attempts to see singing birds, we finally had brief looks at Musuku.

**Coraciidae: Rollers**

Lilac-breasted Roller  
Racket-tailed Roller

We had great views of this broad-leaved woodland species near Siavonga.

**Alcedinidae: Kingfishers**

Malachite Kingfisher  
Grey-headed Kingfisher  
Woodland Kingfisher  
Brown-hooded Kingfisher  
Striped Kingfisher  
Giant Kingfisher  
Pied Kingfisher

**Meropidae: Bee-eaters**

White-fronted Bee-eater  
Little Bee-eater  
European Bee-eater  
Southern Carmine Bee-eater

**Coliidae: Mousebirds**

Red-faced Mousebird

**Cuculidae: Cuckoos and Coucals**

We did extraordinarily well with cuckoos this trip, seeing nine species (eight with scope views), hearing another, and seeing all three possible coucals including the uncommon Black Coucal.

Jacobin (Pied) Cuckoo  
Levaillant's Cuckoo  
Great Spotted Cuckoo  
Red-chested Cuckoo  
Black Cuckoo  
Common Cuckoo  
Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo (H)

This rare cuckoo was its usual shy self, singing loudly but not showing for us near Siavonga.

Klaas's Cuckoo

**Notes:**

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African Emerald Cuckoo  
Diderick Cuckoo  
Black Coucal  
Senegal Coucal  
White-browed Coucal

**Psittacidae: Parrots**
Grey-headed (Brown-necked) Parrot  
Meyer's Parrot

*We had nice views of perched parrots our first afternoon on the drive to Siavonga.*

**Apodidae: Swifts**
Böhm's Spinetail

*This bizarrely shaped little swift was seen well around Siavonga near its favorite tree, big baobabs Adansonia.*

**Musophagidae: Turacos**
Schalow's Turaco

*We had nice views our first afternoon at Musuku, which was a good thing because they were elusive thereafter.*

**Strigidae: Owls**
African Scops-Owl (H)  
Spotted Eagle-Owl  
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl

*A juvenile was seen consecutive nights at Matetsi perched in what was apparently its favorite tree.*

**Caprimulgidae: Nightjars**
Fiery-necked Nightjar  
Pennant-winged Nightjar

*Another of Africa's most unusual-looking birds, we had good looks at both males and females near Siavonga and at Matetsi.*

**Columbidae: Doves and Pigeons**
Rock Dove  
Laughing Dove  
Cape Turtle-Dove

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**Columbidae: Doves and Pigeons**
Rock Dove  
Laughing Dove  
Cape Turtle-Dove
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Red-eyed Dove  
Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove  
Namaqua Dove  
African Green-Pigeon  

**Otididae: Bustards**  
Kori Bustard  
Red-crested Korhaan (Bustard) (H)  

**Heliornithidae: Finfoots**  
African Finfoot  

We had great looks at this superb bird swimming casually along the shores of the mighty Zambezi River.

**Rallidae: Rails and allies**  
Black Crake  
Allen's Gallinule  

We had superb looks at this often secretive species on our afternoon boat trip on the Zambezi.

**Pteroclididae: Sandgrouse**  
Double-banded Sandgrouse  

Unfortunately seen only very briefly as they flew away from our vehicle at Matetsi.

**Scolopacidae: Sandpipers**  
Marsh Sandpiper  
Common Greenshank  
Wood Sandpiper  
Common Sandpiper  
Curlew Sandpiper  
Ruff  

**Jacanidae: Jacanas**  
African Jacana  
Lesser Jacana  

It seemed unusual to see a single flock of 32 African Jacanas together in a wetland along the Zambezi.

**Burhinidae: Thick-knees**  
Water Thick-knee  

**Recurvirostridae: Stilts and Avocets**  
Black-winged Stilt  

**Charadriiiidae: Plovers**  

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Three-banded Plover  Charadrius tricollaris
White-fronted Plover  Charadrius marginatus
Somewhat uncommon inland, one was on a sandbar in the Zambezi.

Long-toed Lapwing  Vanellus crassirostris
We had great looks at this lovely lapwing along the Zambezi.

Blacksmith Lapwing  Vanellus armatus
White-crowned Lapwing  Vanellus albeeps
A species that's not always easy to find, they were common along the Zambezi at Matetsi.

African Wattled Lapwing  Vanellus senegallus
Crowned Lapwing  Vanellus coronatus

Glareolidae: Coursers and Pratincoles

Three-banded Courser  Rhinoptilus cinctus
After getting unsatisfying views at Musuku, we had great looks on night drives at Matetsi.

Rock Pratincole  Glareola nuchalis
Although we had great views at Matetsi, including a chick sitting under its parent on a rock, it was perhaps more dramatic seeing them flying over Victoria Falls.

Rhynchopidae: Skimmers

African Skimmer  Rynchops flavirostris
Several were on sandbars at Matetsi, including a juvenile. Our timing was good--when the river begins to rise in a few weeks the skimmers will disappear to the north.

Accipitridae: Hawks, Eagles, and allies

Black-shouldered Kite  Elanus caeruleus
Yellow-billed (Black) Kite  Milvus (migrans) aegyptius
African Fish-Eagle  Haliaeetus vocifer
Hooded Vulture  Necrosyrtes monachus
White-backed Vulture  Gyps africanus
Black-chested (-breasted) Snake-Eagle  Circaetus pectoralis
Brown Snake-Eagle  Circaetus cinereus
Bateleur  Terathopius ecaudatus
African Harrier-Hawk  Polyboroides typus
Lizard Buzzard  Kaupifalco monogrammicus
We had many great looks at this species.

Dark Chanting Goshawk  Melierax metabates
One was seen very well on our last morning at Matetsi.

Gabar Goshawk  Melierax gabar
Shikra  Accipiter badius
Little Sparrowhawk  Accipiter minullus
Steppe (Eurasian) Buzzard  Buteo vulpinus
Steppe Eagle  Aquila nipalensis
Tawny Eagle  Aquila rapax
African Hawk-Eagle  Aquila spilogaster
Wahlberg's Eagle  Aquila wahlbergi
Long-crested Eagle  Lophaetus occipitalis
African Crowned Eagle (Crowned Hawk-Eagle)  Stephanoaetus coronatus
Our Chaplin's Barbet guide took us to a nest of this species with a large juvenile seated inside.

**Falconidae: Falcons**
- Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*
- Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*
- Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

We were surprised to see one dart overhead near Siavonga.

**Anhingidae: Darters**
- African Darter *Anhinga rufa*

**Phalacrocoracidae: Cormorants**
- Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

**Ardeidae: Herons and Egrets**
- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
- Yellow-billed (Intermediate) Egret *Egretta intermedia*
- Great Egret *Egretta alba*
- Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
- Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*
- Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
- Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
- Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*
- Green-backed (Striated) Heron *Butorides striata*
- Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii*

We had superb looks at this uncommon nomad at Matetsi.

**Scopidae: Hamerkop**
- Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

**Threskiornithidae: Ibis**
- Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*
- African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

**Ciconiidae: Storks**
- Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*
- African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*

One of the more impressive sights of the tour was flock after flock heading south over agricultural land and forest as we drove from Siavonga to Nkanga. A rough estimate of 800 birds total was surely an underestimate.

**Pittidae: Pittas**
- African Pitta *Pitta angolensis*

The hands down bird of the trip, we had ridiculously good views of a male displaying near Siavonga. Even by pitta standards this is a difficult species to find, and one of Africa's
most colorful birds. Seeing it on our first attempt gave us plenty of time to look for other
birds near Siavonga, which was a real treat.

**Eurylamiidae: Broadbills**
- African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*

Even though our views weren't clear, it was a joy to watch one display in a thicket not far
from where we found the pitta.

**Oriolidae: Orioles**
- African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus*
- (African) Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*

**Dicruridae: Drongos**
- Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*

**Monarchidae: Monarch Flycatchers**
- African Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

**Malacoenotidae: Bush-shrikes**
- Brubru *Nilaus afer*
- Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*
- Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus*
- Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis*
- Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus*
- Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike *Telophorus sulphureopectus*

**Prionopidae: Helmet-Shrikes**
- White-crested Helmet-Shrike *Prionops plumatus*
- Retz’s Helmet-Shrike *Prionops retzii*

**Platysteiridae: Batises and Wattle-eyes**
- Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*

**Corvidae: Crows**
- Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

**Laniidae: Shrikes**
- Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*
- Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*
- Common Fiscal *Lanius collaris*
- Magpie Shrike *Corvinella melanoleuca*

**Campephagidae: Cuckooshrikes**
- White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis*
- Black Cuckooshrike *Campephaga flava*

**Remizidae: Penduline-Tits**
Grey (African) Penduline-Tit  
*Anthoscopus caroli*

We had nice views of this diminutive passerine at Musuku.

**Paridae: Tits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Black Tit</td>
<td>Parus niger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hirundinidae: Swallows**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banded Martin</td>
<td>Riparia cincta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn Swallow</td>
<td>Hirundo rustica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-throated Swallow</td>
<td>Hirundo albicollari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser Striped Swallow</td>
<td>Hirundo abyssinica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-breasted (Rufous-chested) Swallow</td>
<td>Hirundo semirufa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque Swallow</td>
<td>Hirundo senegalensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Martin</td>
<td>Hirundo fuligula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common House-Martin</td>
<td>Delichon urbicum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pycnonotidae: Bulbuls**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dark-capped (Common) Bulbul</td>
<td>Pycnonotus tricolor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-bellied Greenbul</td>
<td>Chlorocichla flaviventris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial Brownbul</td>
<td>Phyllastrephus teretris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Nicator</td>
<td>Nicator gularis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After several attempts, we eventually had great looks at a singing bird near Siavonga.

**Sylviidae: Old World Warblers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-billed Crombec</td>
<td>Sylvietta rufescens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedge Warbler</td>
<td>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser Swamp-Warbler</td>
<td>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow Warbler</td>
<td>Phylloscopus trochilus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Hyliota</td>
<td>Hyliota australis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We had wonderful looks at a pair of this localized bird on our final morning at Musuku.

**Timaliidae: Babblers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrow-marked Babbler</td>
<td>Turdoides jardineii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cisticolidae: African Warblers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red-faced Cisticola</td>
<td>Cisticola erythrops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattling Cisticola</td>
<td>Cisticola chiniana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croaking Cisticola</td>
<td>Cisticola natalensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neddicky (Piping Cisticola) (H)</td>
<td>Cisticola fulvicapilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zitting Cisticola</td>
<td>Cisticola juncidis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawny-flanked Prinia</td>
<td>Prinia subflava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-breasted Apalis</td>
<td>Apalis flavida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey- (Green-) backed Camaroptera</td>
<td>Camaroptera brevicaudata (brachyura)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stierling's (Barred) Wren-Warbler</td>
<td>Calamonastes stierlingi (fasciolata)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We had great looks at a singing bird with a mixed flock at Musuku.

**Alaudidae: Larks**

[Image] www.tropicalbirding.com
Zambia and Zimbabwe 28 November – 6 December 2009

Rufous-naped Lark  
*Mirafra africana*

Flappet Lark  
*Mirafra rufocinnamomea*

We enjoyed watching one doing its eponymous flapping display in Nkanga.

Sabota Lark  
*Calendulauda sabota*

### Turdidae: Thrushes

Miombo Rock-Thrush  
*Monticola angolensis*

It was a very pleasant surprise to find a female carrying nesting material near Siavonga.

Groundscraper Thrush  
*Psophocichla litsitsirupa*

Kurrichane Thrush  
*Turdus libonyanus*

### Muscicapidae: Old World Flycatchers and allies

Pale Flycatcher  
*Bradornis pallidus*

Southern Black Flycatcher  
*Melaenornis pammelaina*

Spotted Flycatcher  
*Muscicapa striata*

Ashy Flycatcher  
*Muscicapa caerulescens*

Collared Flycatcher  
*Ficedula albicollis*

We found a couple of this palearctic migrant at Musuku, where it is at the southern end of its non-breeding distribution.

White-browed Robin-Chat  
*Cossypha heuglini*

Red-capped Robin-Chat  
*Cossypha natalensis*

Bearded Scrub-Robin  
*Cercotrichas quadrirvigata*

These were very confiding camp residents at Matetsi.

White-browed Scrub-Robin  
*Cercotrichas leucophrys*

Capped Wheatear  
*Oenanthe pileata*

Arnot’s (White-headed Black-) Chat  
*Myrmecocichla arnoti*

This broad-leaved woodland specialist was breeding in the roof of our lodge at Musuku, so we had many great views.

Sooty Chat  
*Myrmecocichla nigra*

A pair was seen well in a field near Nkanga, here at the southern limit of its distribution.

### Stunidae: Starlings

Red-winged Starling  
*Onychognathus morio*

Greater Blue-eared (Glossy-) Starling  
*Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

Miombo (Lesser) Blue-eared (Glossy-) Starling  
*Lamprotornis (chloropterus) elisabeth*

A large flock, including a distinctive juvenile, was in the trees around our lodge on our last morning at Musuku.

Meves's (Glossy-) Starling  
*Lamprotornis mevesii*

Violet-backed Starling  
*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

Wattled Starling  
*Creatophora cinerea*

Red-billed Oxpecker  
*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*

### Nectarinidae: Sunbirds

Scarlet-chested Sunbird  
*Chalcomitra senegalensis*

White-bellied Sunbird  
*Cinnyris talatala*

### Ploceidae: Weavers

[Logo]

[www.tropicalbirding.com](http://www.tropicalbirding.com)
Zambia and Zimbabwe 28 November – 6 December 2009

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver  
Plocepasser mahali
Lesser Masked-Weaver  
Ploceus intermedius
(Holub's) Golden(-)Weaver  
Ploceus xanthops
Southern Masked-Weaver  
Ploceus velatus
Village Weaver  
Ploceus cucullatus
Dark-backed Weaver  
Ploceus bicolor
Red-headed Weaver  
Anaplectes melanotis
Red-billed Quelea  
Queuea quelea
Yellow Bishop  
Euplectes capensis
Yellow-mantled (-shouldered) Widowbird  
Euplectes macrourus

Estrildidae: Estrildid Finches
Common Waxbill  
Estrilda astrild
Blue Waxbill (Blue-breasted Cordonbleu)  
Uraeginthus angolensis
Red-throated (Peter's) Twinspot  
Hypargos niveoguttatus
Green-winged Pytilia  
Pytilia melba
Red-billed Firefinch  
Lagonosticta senegala
Jameson's Firefinch  
Lagonosticta rhodopareia
Bronze Mannikin  
Spermestes cucullatus

Viduidae: Whydahs and Widows
Pin-tailed Whydah  
Vidua macroura
Long-tailed (Eastern) Paradise-Whydah  
Vidua paradisaea
Shaft-tailed Whydah  
Vidua regia
Village Indigobird  
Vidua chalybeata
Purple Indigobird  
Vidua purpurascens

Passeridae: Sparrows
House Sparrow  
Passer domesticus
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow  
Passer diffusus
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow  
Passer griseus
Yellow-throated Petronia  
Petronia superciliaris

Motacillidae: Wagtails and Pipits
African Pied Wagtail  
Motacilla aguimp
African Pipit  
Anthus cinnamomeus
Wood (Woodland)Pipit  
Anthus nyassae
Tree Pipit  
Anthus trivialis

Fingillidae: Canaries
Yellow-fronted Canary  
Crithagra mozambicus

Emberizidae: Buntings
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting  
 Emberiza tahapisi
Golden-breasted Bunting  
 Emberiza flaviventris

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MAMMAL LIST

Peters’s Epauletted Fruit Bat  Epomophorus crypturus
These fed on fruiting trees on the grounds of our hotel in Siavonga.

Egyptian Slit-faced Bat  Nycteris thebaica
We had fun watching a roost during the day in a large baobob tree at Matetsi.

Chacma Baboon  Papio ursinus
Vervet Monkey  Cercopithecus aethiops
Scrub Hare  Lepus saxatilis
Sun Squirrel  Heliosciurus mutabilis
Tree Squirrel  Paraxerus cepapi
Springhare  Pedetes capensis

We had great views watching these funny little animals hop around at Matetsi.

Black-backed Jackal  Canis mesomelas
Banded Mongoose  Mungos mungo
Slender Mongoose  Galerella sanguinea
White-tailed Mongoose  Ichneumia albicauda

We watched a female and two young ones feeding on a night drive at Matetsi.

Small-spotted (Common) Genet  Genetta genetta
Serval  Felis serval

We got lucky with great views of a completely unconcerned cat at Matetsi.

Leopard  Panthera pardus
We had very nice views of one walking into the thick bush after staring us down on a night drive at Matetsi.

Elephant  Loxodonta africana
Yellow-spotted Hyrax  Heterohyrax brucei
Burchell's Zebra  Equus burchellii
Warthog  Phacochoerus aethiopicus
Hippopotamus  Hippopotamus amphibius
Giraffe  Giraffa camelopardalis
Buffalo  Syncerus caffer
Kudu  Tragelaphus strepsiceros
Bushbuck  Tragelaphus scriptus
Sable  Hippotragus niger

We had great looks at this gorgeous and rare antelope at Matetsi.

Waterbuck  Kobus ellipsiprymnus
Blue Wildebeest  Connochaetes taurinus
Impala  Aepyceros melampus
Common Duiker  Sylvicapra grimmia