

PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

MALAWI

15 JULY – 5 AUGUST 2004

TOUR REPORT

LEADERS; CHRIS DOUGHTY AND WARREN McCLELAND

Malawi proved to be everything we had hoped for; good roads, good hotels, good food, good local beer and the cokes were ice cold! The local leader Warren was a delight and he worked very hard to find lots of good birds for us. The first area of the tour was the Liwonde National Park which was very much the preconceived idea of Africa, with huge numbers of hippos and crocodiles in the river, which were easily observed on our river cruise. As we drove around the park, mammals were plentiful and included Yellow Baboon, Vervet Monkey, Slender Mongoose, African Elephant, Common Zebra, Common Warthog, Bushbuck, Impala, Greater Kudu, Waterbuck and best of all beautiful Sable Antelope. A night drive produced a super Short-nosed Elephant-Shrew, the seldom seen Bushy-tailed Mongoose, Common Genet and African Civet, as well as good numbers of Square-tailed Nightjars. Our huge bird list in the park included such world class birds as White-backed Night-Heron and Bohm's Bee-eater. Other highlights included Dickinson's Kestrel, Brown-headed Parrot, flocks of Lilian's Lovebirds, Racket-tailed Roller, the very uncommon Brown-breasted Barbet, Reichenow's Woodpecker, White-headed Black-Chat, Stierling's Barred Warbler, Black-throated Wattle-eye and Livingstone's Flycatcher.

South of Liwonde the remaining, but severely threatened patches of montane rainforest around Zomba and Thyolo Mountain, continued the good work with such mega rarities as Eastern Sawwing, Green-headed Oriole, Placid and Grey-olive Greenbul's, White-winged Apalis, Malawi Batis and last but not least, Malawi's only near endemic, the extremely rare Cholo Alethe. On the way back to the capital city Lilongwe, we made a quick stop at a small dambo, which produced a small flock of Locust Finch, one of the least common birds in Africa.

We spent the next two days exploring the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve, which still preserves a huge area of Miombo woodland. This area produced a fine selection of Miombo specialties including Pale-billed Hornbill, Whyte's Barbet, Stierling's Woodpecker, Miombo Rock-Thrush, the highly localised Boulder Chat, Boehm's and White-tailed Blue Flycatchers, Rufous bellied Tit, Red-capped Crombec, Miombo Bearded Scrub-Robin, Southern and Yellow-bellied Hyliotas, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, the very uncommon Olive-headed Weaver, Broad-tailed Paradise-Whydah and Stripe-breasted Seedeater.

Next we drove up to the Viphya Plateau where we spent a night at the Luwawa Forest Lodge. We did some birding here in the late afternoon and the following morning; highlights included the very localized Trilling Cisticola, the very uncommon Marsh Tchagra and the extremely localized and uncommon Bertram's Weaver.

Perhaps everyone's favourite part of Malawi was the northern uplands of the Nyika Plateau National Park, an area shared with free access between Malawi and Zambia. Surrounding our very comfortable lodge were kilometers of open grassland, full of game, with very visible Eland, Southern Reedbuck and Roan Antelope. We also observed a few Klipspringer, several Common Duiker and a few Side-striped Jackals. Best of all, was a magnificent Serval, which walked across the road in front of our vehicle, in broad daylight. The supporting cast of birds included Red-wing Francolin, Lappet-faced Vulture, Red-breasted Sparrowhawk, African Grass-Owl, Montane Nightjar, Angola Swallow, Buffy Pipit, Black Lored and Churring Cisticolas and Mountain Marsh Widowbird. Interspersed amongst this pristine habitat, were patches of acacia woodland which produced Mountain Yellow Warbler, Brown Parisoma and Green-headed Sunbird. There were also patches of montane rainforest and visits to Chowo, Marjenjere and Zovo-Chipolo Forests produced Bar-tailed Trogon, Sharpe's Greenbul, Brown-headed and

Chapin's Apalises, Waller's Starling, Montane Double-collared Sunbird and tremendous work by Warren finally produced the very tough threesome of White-chested Alethe, Olive-flanked Robin-Chat and Fuelleborn's Black Boubou.

We then drove on to the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve, where we added Red-billed Teal, Knob-billed Duck, African Hobby, Blacksmith Lapwing, Common Greenshank, Marsh and Wood Sandpipers, Collared Pratincole, Meyer's Parrot, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Crested Barbet, Yellow-billed Oxpecker and Red Bishop. However, by far the best bird we saw at the game reserve, was a small group of very uncommon, but very impressive White-winged Starlings.

We then packed our luggage and headed back to Mzuzu and then down the escarpment to the shore of Lake Malawi, where we spent two very pleasant nights at the delightful Makuzi Beach Resort. In and around the grounds of the resort we found several new birds for the tour, which included Little Swift, Purple-banded Sunbird, Grey-headed Sparrow, Village, Lesser Masked and Eastern Golden Weavers. After dinner on the first evening we found a pair of Barn Owls sitting in a large tree.

On our final full day in Malawi we drove north to the Mukhawadzi Forest Reserve, one of the last patches of lowland rainforest remaining in Malawi and the best place in Malawi to see the East Coast Akalat. After some time, the elusive and endangered East Coast Akalat was seduced into view, much to everyone's delight. We also managed to track down a calling Purple-crested Turaco and we were very fortunate to literally walk straight to a White-throated Nicator, which just sat there looking at us, you can be lucky sometimes. In the afternoon we visited an area of rice paddies near the town of Sanga. Unfortunately, water levels were disappointingly low, but undeterred we still found plenty of birds to look at, including two new birds for the trip, a family party of African Marsh-Harriers and great scope views of a pair of very uncommon Rufous-bellied Herons.

The next day saw us heading back to the capital Lilongwe, we broke the long drive with an extensive birding stop at the Mpatsanjoka Dambo, near Salima. This area proved very rewarding and we enjoyed good looks at a few new birds for the trip, which included a large flock of White-faced Whistling-Ducks, a pair of the uncommon White-backed Duck, as well as a pair of equally uncommon African Pygmy-geese. We also found a large flock of Black-winged Bishops, which were in partial breeding plumage.

On our final morning in Malawi, we visited the Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary, right in the heart of town. We enjoyed a good selection of birds including two new birds for the trip, great looks at the very uncommon Half-collared Kingfisher and a small flock of the even more uncommon Magpie Mannikin, feeding on flowering bamboo. It was then off to the airport and while we were enjoying a cold drink at the airport restaurant, we enjoyed our only sighting of the very attractive Capped Wheatear. What a great way to end the tour!

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Please note the first name given in the list is the name used by Van Perlo in the Collins Illustrated Checklist to the Birds of Southern Africa. Where this differs from the name in the Clements Checklist, or Sinclair and Ryan's Birds of southern Africa south of the

Sahara, these names are also given. If the race we observed has been raised to full species level in Sinclair and Ryan's fieldguide, this name has an * placed in front of it.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Observed by some members of the group on a small dam on the Satemwa Tea Estate, at the foot of Thyolo Mountain.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Great Cormorant, * White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Large numbers nesting in Liwonde National Park with smaller numbers present at Lake Malawi. Please note Sinclair raises the White-breasted Cormorant of Africa, to full-species level.

Long-tailed Cormorant, Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Small numbers present in most wetlands.

ANHINGIDAE

Darter, *African Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Small numbers observed in Liwonde National Park. Please note Sinclair raises the African race, to full-species level.

ARDEIDAE

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers present throughout most wetland areas.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*

Common and conspicuous throughout the tour.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Small numbers present throughout most wetland areas.

Great Egret, Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

Only observed in Liwonde National Park, where small numbers were present.

Yellow-billed Egret, Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

A few birds observed in wetland habitat throughout the tour.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Frequently encountered throughout most wetland habitat.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Good numbers present in wetland areas.

Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris*

This very uncommon species of heron was observed very well on one occasion. A pair of birds was observed in rice paddies near Sanga, close to Lake Malawi. We enjoyed good scope looks at an immature bird.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Common and widespread.

Green-backed Heron, Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*

Common and widespread throughout all wetland areas.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Small numbers observed in Liwonde National Park and Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.

White-backed Night-Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus*

This very uncommon species of heron was observed very well in its nest tree, in Liwonde National Park.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Yet another uncommon species of heron, which we saw well flying over reedbeds in Liwonde National Park.

SCOPIDAE

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Common and widespread throughout the tour.

CICONIIDAE

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*

Small numbers present in a few wetland areas.

African Open-billed Stork, African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*

Good numbers throughout most wetland areas.

THRESKIORNTHIDAE

Sacred Ibis, African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Small numbers present in a couple of wetland areas.

Hadada, Hadada Ibis, Hadedda Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*

Common and widespread throughout the tour.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

A few birds were seen well in Liwonde National Park, at the beginning of the tour.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

Small numbers seen well throughout the tour.

ANATIDAE

White-faced Whistling-Duck, White-faced Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Only observed at Mpatsanjoka Dambo, near Salima, where we enjoyed watching a fairly large flock.

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*

A pair of this very uncommon species of duck was observed at Mpatsanjoka Dambo, near Salima, where we had fairly distant scope views.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Common throughout most wetland areas.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*

Small numbers present in Liwonde National Park and Mpatsanjoka Dambo, near Salima.

Knob-billed Duck, Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

Two small flocks of this uncommon species of duck were observed during the tour.

African Pygmy-goose *Nettapus auritus*

Another uncommon species of wildfowl, which we only observed at Mpatsanjoka Dambo, near Salima, where we observed a pair of birds. We enjoyed good looks at them in the scope.

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata*

Small numbers present on some of the wetlands.

Red-billed Teal, Red-billed Duck *Anas erythrorhyncha*

Large numbers observed in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

PANDIOIDAE

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

The Osprey is a winter migrant which occurs throughout most of Africa. Small numbers of first year birds over winter in Africa and this must have been the case with the bird we saw, in Liwonde National Park.

ACCIPITRIDAE

African Cuckoo-Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*

This uncommon species of raptor was observed very well on two separate occasions.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Often observed perched on telegraph wires, along the roadside.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Common and widespread throughout the tour.

African Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*

This superb species of eagle was commonly encountered in all wetland areas.

Palmnut Vulture, Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*

Many good sightings of this fairly uncommon raptor.

African White-backed Vulture, White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*

Small numbers present in Nyika National Park.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*

Great spotting by Dennis, enabled the entire group to enjoy good close looks at an adult Lappet-faced Vulture, flying over Nyika National Park. This very uncommon species has a rapidly declining population of less than 8,000 individuals, so we were very fortunate to see one. Widespread poisoning by strychnine, used by many farmers for predator control, has contributed significantly to this species decline. Increased use of agricultural pesticides is also another cause for concern.

Black-breasted Snake-Eagle, Black-chested Snake-Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis*

Several good sightings of this uncommon species of raptor.

Smaller Banded Snake-Eagle, Banded Snake-Eagle, Western Banded Snake-Eagle
Circaetus cinerascens

Once again, several good sightings of another uncommon species of raptor.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*

Several good flight views of this spectacular species of raptor.

African Marsh-Harrier *Circus ranivorus*

Very good close looks at male, female and immature birds flying over the rice paddies near Sanga.

Gymnogene, African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus*

Many fine looks at this very attractive species of raptor.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*

Observed in flight on several occasions.

Dark Chanting Goshawk, Dark Chanting-Goshawk *Melierax metabates*

This species was observed only once, a bird was perched on telegraph wires close to the town of Kazunga.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*

Seen well on a couple of occasions.

African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*

Another species which was observed in flight, on a couple of occasions.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

Only observed on one occasion, a bird was perched on telegraph wires not far outside the capital city of Lilongwe.

Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris*

Once again, this small species of accipiter was only observed in flight, both sightings occurred in the Nyika National Park.

Black Sparrowhawk, Black Goshawk *Accipiter melanoleucus*

Many good sightings of this very large and attractive species of accipiter.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*

Many great sightings of both pale and dark morph birds.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*

A few sightings of birds in flight.

African Hawk-Eagle *Aquila spilogaster*

Seen well flying overhead on a couple of occasions.

Ayres' Hawk-Eagle *Aquila ayresii*

We enjoyed very good looks at this rare species on two occasions, both birds were observed flying overhead in Nyika National Park.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*

We enjoyed a few good sightings of this very large species of eagle, surprisingly, most sightings where of immature birds.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*

Once again, only observed in flight, it proved to be fairly common.

FALCONIDAE

Dickinson's Kestrel *Falco dickinsoni*

This uncommon species of falcon was observed very well on a few occasions in Liwonde National Park.

African Hobby *Falco cuvierii*

A bird of this species flew straight through the group just a metre or so above the ground, while we were endeavoring to get close to White-winged Starlings in Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. Even so, it was flying so incredibly fast, that few members of the group actually saw the bird.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

We enjoyed a few sightings of this bird in flight.

PHASIANIDAE

Redwing Francolin, Red-winged Francolin *Francolinus levaillantii*

This uncommon species of francolin occurs in seven scattered locations throughout southern Africa. We enjoyed watching several close coverts of this very attractive francolin in the high grasslands of Nyika National Park.

Hildebrandt's Francolin *Francolinus hildebrandti*

A small family party was observed well in Nyika National Park.

Red-necked Francolin, Red-necked Spurfowl *Francolinus afer*

The common francolin of Malawi, which we observed well on many occasions.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Contrary to its name, this is a very uncommon species of quail anywhere in the world.

We were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at several pairs of birds in the high grasslands of Nyika National Park.

NUMIDIDAE

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

A common and conspicuous bird throughout Malawi.

GRUIDAE

Wattled Crane *Bucconas carunculatus*

We enjoyed very good looks at a solitary Wattled Crane on a daily basis, in Nyika National Park. Sadly, only the one bird was observed, we should have been observing flocks. This very uncommon crane has a world population of around 15,000 individuals and continues to decline. The main threat to this species is the disappearance of suitable habitat, caused by intensified agriculture, drainage, rice cultivation and flooding by dam construction. Too frequent grass burning is also a major problem.

RALLIDAE

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostris*

We enjoyed many good close sightings of this species in Liwonde National Park.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Some members of the group observed this species on a small dam in the Setemwa Tea Estate, at the foot of Thyolo Mountain.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

Frequently observed on a small dam in the Nyika National Park.

JACANIDAE

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*

Common and widespread throughout most wetland areas.

BURHINIDAE

Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*

We enjoyed several good sightings of this uncommon species, in Liwonde National Park.

GLAREOLIDAE

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

We enjoyed watching a large flock of this intra-African migrant, on its non-breeding grounds, in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

CHARADRIDAE

Long-toed Lapwing *Vanellus crassirostris*

A few good sightings of this uncommon species of lapwing in Liwonde National Park.

Blacksmith Lapwing, Blacksmith Plover *Vanellus armatus*

This species proved to be common in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

Spur-winged Lapwing, Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus*

A very recent colonizer of Malawi, we were very fortunate to observe a small number of this species in Liwonde National Park.

African Wattled Lapwing, Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*

Frequently observed, in most wetland areas.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Small numbers present in a couple of wetland areas.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

Also small numbers present in a couple of wetland areas.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

We observed a Marsh Sandpiper which had over-wintered in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

A small number of Common Greenshanks had over-wintered in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

A solitary Green Sandpiper had over-wintered on a small dam in Nyika National Park, this species only infrequently over-winters in Africa.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Small numbers of this species were over-wintering in several wetland areas, this species commonly over-winters in Africa.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Small numbers over-wintering in several wetland areas.

LARIDAE

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*

Large numbers present in the Liwonde National Park.

COLUMBIDAE

Feral Pigeon, Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Small numbers present throughout the towns and villages of Malawi.

Olive Pigeon, Rameron Pigeon, African Olive-Pigeon *Columba arquatrix*

Good numbers of this species were present in all forested areas of the Nyika National Park.

Lemon Dove *Columba larvata*

This shy and retiring species of dove, was only observed on one occasion, a bird was observed in the garden of Mr. Wilson in Zomba, the old administrative capital of Malawi.

Dusky Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia lugens*

Small numbers of this species were present in introduced pine forests in the Nyika National Park.

African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*

Only observed in Liwonde National Park, at the beginning of the tour, where we observed a pair nesting.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*

Common and conspicuous throughout the whole of Malawi.

Ring-necked Dove, Cape Turtle Dove *Streptopelia capicola*

Even more common and conspicuous than the above species.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Surprisingly uncommon, this species was only recorded on two separate occasions.

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*

Common throughout all forested areas of Malawi.

Blue-spotted Wood-Dove *Turtur afer*

Only definitely recorded in Dzalanyama Forest Reserve. This species is difficult to identify from the Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove, when only seen in flight.

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria*

Surprisingly, we enjoyed a few good sightings of this usually shy and retiring species of dove.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

A non-breeding visitor to Malawi, we only recorded this species near the town of Kazungu.

African Green-Pigeon *Treron calva*

Many good sightings of this attractive species of pigeon.

PSITTACIDAE

Lilian's Lovebird *Agapornis lilianae*

This extremely localized lovebird proved to be common in Liwonde National Park.

Brown-necked Parrot, *Grey-headed Parrot *Poicephalus robustus*

We were very fortunate to enjoy good scope views of a pair of this very uncommon parrot, while birding in Liwonde National Park. Please note Sinclair has split the southern races of this species, calling them Grey-headed Parrot.

Meyer's Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri*

This common species of parrot was only observed on one occasion in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*

This common but very range restricted species was seen very well in Liwonde National Park.

MUSOPHAGIDAE

Livingstone's Turaco *Tauraco livingstonii*

This beautiful bird proved to be common throughout the forested areas of southern Malawi.

Schalow's Turaco *Tauraco schalowi*

Very similar to the above species, it also proved to be common, it replaces the above species in northern Malawi.

Purple-crested Turaco *Tauraco porphyreolophus*

This fairly common species was only observed on one occasion, a rather shy individual was observed in bad light on the edge of the Mukhawadzi Forest, near Lake Malawi.

Grey Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides concolor*

A widespread species, which we observed in most forested areas.

CUCULIDAE

Klaas's Cuckoo, Klaas' Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*

This fairly common species was only observed on one occasion, we saw it very well in Liwonde National Park.

Yellowbill, *Green Malkoha *Ceuthmochares aereus*

This uncommon, shy and retiring species was observed well on one occasion in Liwonde National Park. Please note, Sinclair has split the Yellowbill, into two separate species.

Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*

This species occurs widely throughout southern Africa but it nowhere common. We were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at an adult and an immature bird at a small dambo, near the town of Kazunga.

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*

Common and widespread throughout much of Malawi.

Burchell's Coucal, White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*

Observed on several occasions throughout the tour. Please note both Van Perlo and Sinclair split the southern races of White-browed Coucal, into Burchell's Coucal.

TYTONIDAE

African Grass-Owl *Tyto capensis*

This very local and uncommon species of owl was observed by members of the group in one of the jeeps during the night-drive in the Nyika National Park, it sat in the middle of the track and just looked at us!

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

A pair of this very cosmopolitan and world-wide species of owl was nesting in the grounds of the very pleasant Makuzi Beach Resort, on the shore of Lake Malawi.

STRIGIDAE

Spotted Eagle-Owl *Bubo africanus*

A few good looks at this very large and attractive species of owl.

African Wood-Owl *Strix woodfordii*

We cheated; this large species of owl responded well to tape in full daylight in Liwonde National Park.

Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*

A small species of day-time owl, an individual responded very well to tape in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

African Barred Owlet, Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense*

We enjoyed a couple of very good looks at this small species of owl during the tour.

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Mountain Nightjar, Montane Nightjar, Rwenzori Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruwenzorii*

We enjoyed several good sightings of this species, during the night-drive in the Nyika National Park. Please note Van Perlo mistakenly refers to this species as Mountain Nightjar, which only occurs in Northeast Africa.

Square-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus fossii*

This species was observed incredibly well during the night-drive in the Liwonde National Park.

APODIDAE

African Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

Common and widespread throughout Malawi.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Commonly observed nesting under road bridges, along the edge of Lake Malawi.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*

There were a couple of good sightings of small flocks of this species, during the course of the tour.

COLIIDAE

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*

Common and widespread throughout northern Malawi.

Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus*

Common and widespread throughout southern Malawi.

TROGONIDAE

Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum*

This very attractive bird was voted bird of the trip. It proved to be common in most forested areas.

ALCEDINIDAE

Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata*

This widespread but very uncommon species was observed very well on one occasion in the Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.

Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata*

Common and widespread throughout Malawi.

Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris*

Several good sightings throughout the tour.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*

Commonly observed in Miombo woodland.

African Giant Kingfisher, Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*

Several good sightings throughout the tour.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

A common and conspicuous bird throughout the tour.

MEROPIDAE

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*

A very common and widespread species.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*

A couple of very good sightings, of this uncommon Miombo specialty.

Boehm's Bee-eater *Merops boehmi*

This uncommon and range restricted species was observed every day in Liwonde National Park.

CORACIIDAE

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudata*

Common and widespread throughout the whole of Malawi.

Racket-tailed Roller *Coracias spatulata*

We enjoyed two very good sightings of this Miombo woodland specialty.

UPUPIDAE

Hoopoe, Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

This very attractive species proved to be common in Liwonde National Park.

PHOENICULIDAE

Green Woodhoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*

Common and widespread throughout Miombo woodland.

Scimitar-bill, Common Scimitar-bill *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*

This widespread species was seen well on several occasions in Liwonde National Park.

BUCEROTIDAE

Red-billed Hornbill, *Southern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus*

Another widespread species which was observed well on several occasions, in Liwonde National Park. Please note Sinclair splits the southern races of this species, into Southern Red-billed Hornbill.

Crowned Hornbill *Tockus alboterminatus*

Another widespread species which was seen well throughout the tour.

African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*

Common and widespread throughout Malawi.

Pale-billed Hornbill *Tockus pallidirostris*

We enjoyed good scope views of this uncommon Miombo specialty, in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Trumpeter Hornbill *Ceratogymna bucinator*

Many good sightings throughout the trip.

Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Ceratogymna brevis*

An uncommon species of hornbill, which we only saw on one occasion. However, we did see it very well, in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain.

Southern Ground-Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*

We enjoyed several good sightings of this huge species of hornbill.

CAPITONIDAE

White-eared Barbet *Stactolaema leucotis*

This species only occurs in the extreme southern part of Malawi. It was here on Thyolo Mountain that we enjoyed very good looks at this attractive and large species of barbet.

Whyte's Barbet *Stactolaema whytii*

Another Miombo woodland specialty, we observed it very well in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Moustached Green Tinkerbird, Moustached Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus leucomystax*

An uncommon resident of montane forest from Kenya to Malawi, although we heard it calling often, we only saw it well on one occasion. This took place in the Manjenjere Forest, in the Nyika National Park, across the border in Zambia.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*

Several good sightings throughout the tour of this attractive species of small barbet.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*

This widespread and common species of barbet, was observed very well throughout the tour.

Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus*

Another widespread and common species of large barbet, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Brown-breasted Barbet *Lybius melanopterus*

This very uncommon to rare species of barbet has only been recorded in Malawi, in the last couple of years. It is unclear whether it is a recent colonizer, or if has previously been overlooked. We enjoyed two very good looks at this species in Liwonde National Park.

Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii*

This very attractive species of barbet was only observed by Chris, while attempted to get close to White-winged Starlings, in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

INDICATORIDAE

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*

An immature and an adult bird were observed very well in Liwonde National Park.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

Observed well on a few occasions, throughout the tour.

PICIDAE

Reichenow's Woodpecker, Speckle-throated Woodpecker *Campethera scriptoricauda*

This very uncommon species of woodpecker inhabits areas of open woodland, this is exactly where we observed it very well, in Liwonde National Park.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*

This common and widespread species of woodpecker was observed well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicus fuscescens*

This very common and widespread species of woodpecker was commonly observed throughout the tour.

Stierling's Woodpecker *Dendropicos stierlingi*

One of the rarest woodpeckers in Africa, restricted in range to Miombo woodland in northern Mozambique and southern Malawi. We were extremely fortunate to enjoy good close looks at a solitary individual in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Bearded Woodpecker *Dendropicos namaquus*

A much more common and widespread species of woodpecker, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Olive Woodpecker *Dendropicos griseocephalus*

This fairly common species of woodpecker only occurs throughout the northern areas of Malawi, where we saw it well on a couple of occasions.

EURYLAIMIDAE

African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*

This attractive but uncommon species was observed well on two occasions; the first was in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain and the second sighting was of a bird in the Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.

ALAUDIDAE

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafraga africana*

This widespread species of lark was only recorded in montane grassland, in Nyika National Park.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis*

This widespread species of lark was seen well in swampland on a couple of occasions.

Fischer's Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucopareia*

Confined to Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi, this species was observed on only one occasion. A pair of birds was observed very well in a small dambo, near the township of Kazungu.

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*

Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Grey-rumped Swallow *Hirundo griseopyga*

Several good sightings throughout the tour.

Rock Martin *Hirundo fuligula*

A common and widespread resident over the greater part of Africa, it occurs in the vicinity of rocky hills, cliffs and gorges. We observed a small group on only one occasion, in the Nyika National Park.

Angola Swallow *Hirundo angolensis*

This uncommon species of swallow just makes it into northern Malawi, where it was not uncommon in the Nyika National Park.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

By far the most common and conspicuous species of swallow, throughout the tour.

Lesser Striped-Swallow *Hirundo abyssinica*

Particularly common around Lake Malawi.

Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegalensis*

A species with a wide distribution throughout Africa, it is an uncommon species in Malawi, we observed a solitary pair very well in the Nyika National Park.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

This species inhabits the Rift Valley of Africa, from Sudan down to Malawi. In Malawi it is an uncommon bird which only occurs above 1,200 metres on the Viphya and Nyika Plateaus. We observed this species on only one occasion; a pair of birds was nesting under the eaves of the Luwawa Forest Lodge, on the Viphya Plateau.

Eastern Sawwing *Psalidoprocne orientalis*

Common and widespread throughout the tour.

MOTACILLIDAE

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*

Another very common and conspicuous bird.

Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara*

This uncommon species of wagtail is found along seasonal streams in mountainous country. We saw it very well on a couple of occasions on Thyolo Mountain.

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

A common bird of grassland areas.

Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventris*

This attractive species of pipit is confined to rocky areas with scattered trees, we saw it well on a few occasions.

Buffy Pipit *Anthus vaalensis*

An uncommon pipit of central and southern Africa; it is a dry season breeding visitor to Malawi. We saw it on only one occasion, a bird was seen very well along the roadside in Nyika National Park.

African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*

Common and widespread throughout the entire tour.

CAMPERHAGIDAE

White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina pectoralis*

Seen well on several occasions.

Grey Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina caesia*

A resident of montane forest, with a discontinuous range throughout eastern Africa. In Malawi, this species is confined to an isolated population on Thyolo Mountain, where we saw it well on a couple of occasions.

Black Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga flava*

An uncommon species of cuckoo-shrike, we observed both males and females during the tour.

PYCNONOTIDAE

Common Bulbul, *Dark-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Observed on almost every day of the tour. Please note Sinclair splits off the southern races of Common Bulbul and makes them the Dark-capped Bulbul.

Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*

A bird of west and central Africa, Malawi is at the bird's extreme southeastern edge of its range. It occurs in montane forest in northern and southern Malawi. We saw it well on a few occasions on Thyolo Mountain, in southern Malawi.

Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunus*

A bird of coastal eastern and southern Africa, extending inland to varying degrees. In Malawi it is confined to the upper Shire Valley and the southern areas of Lake Malawi. It proved to be fairly common in Liwonde National Park.

Mountain Greenbul, Eastern Mountain-Greenbul, *Southern Mountain Greenbul *Andropadus nigriceps*

A common and surprisingly confiding species of greenbul, which we saw well on several occasions. Please note Sinclair splits off the southern races of Eastern Mountain Greenbul, making them the Southern Mountain Greenbul.

Stripe-cheeked Greenbul, *Andropadus milanjensis*

This species is confined to southern Kenya, central Tanzania, Malawi and western Mozambique, where it is fairly common. We only saw this species on one occasion, in Mr. Wilson's garden in the town of Zomba, the old administrative capital of Malawi.

Yellow-bellied Greenbul *Chlorocichla flaviventris*

A fairly common resident throughout Malawi.

Cabanis' Greenbul, Placid Greenbul *Phyllastrephus placidus*

Endemic to southeast Africa, east of the Rift Valley; it is a bird of montane forest undergrowth; we observed it in two areas, in Mr. Wilson's garden in Zomba and again in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain. Please note Van Perlo erroneously refers to this species as Cabanis' Greenbul. Placid Greenbul has been split off from this species for several years and is split off in Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World.

Terrestrial Brownbul *Phyllastrephus terrestris*

This ground frequenting bulbul, proved to be common throughout Malawi.

Grey-olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris*

A bird of limited distribution throughout central Africa. In Malawi it occurs in most forested areas, where it is a shy inhabitant of thick tangles along forested streams and rivers. We observed it on Thyolo Mountain and in the Mukhawadzi Forest.

Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Yellow-streaked Bulbul *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*

A bird of patchy distribution throughout southeast Africa, where it is locally common. It is surprisingly confiding for a greenbul, allowing itself to be easily seen. We found it to be plentiful on Thyolo Mountain.

Yellow-streaked Greenbul, *Sharp's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus alfredi*

This species is mainly treated as a race of Yellow-streaked Greenbul. However, the bird looks very different and the vocalisations are quite different. Sinclair splits this species and it would appear to be a good split. It is endemic to southwestern Tanzania, northeastern Zambia and northern Malawi. We saw the bird well on a few occasions in Chowo Forest, in the Nyika National Park, on both the Malawi and Zambian sides of the border.

White-throated Nicator, Eastern Nicator *Nicator gularis*

A bird of coastal east Africa, extending inland to varying degrees, it does follow the Zambezi River far inland, all the way to Victoria Falls, in Zimbabwe. This is a fairly common but extremely shy and infrequently observed species. We were extremely fortunate to observe this bird very well, within a few metres in Mukhawadzi Forest, not far from Lake Malawi.

TURDIDAE

Miombo Rock-Thrush *Monticola angolensis*

A Miombo woodland specialty of central Africa; we observed both male and female birds on many occasions near Dedza and in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Olive Thrush, *Mountain Thrush *Turdus olivaceus*

A forest thrush, confined to mountains of east Africa. We only observed this species on one occasion and this bird was in flight. It flew across the road in front of the bus as we were driving through Nyika National Park. Please note Sinclair splits off the northern races of Olive Thrush, calling them Mountain Thrush.

Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyanus*

The most common and conspicuous thrush throughout Malawi.

Cholo Alethe, Thyolo Alethe, *Alethe choloensis*

This species has a very small and severely fragmented distribution, during the last 10 years all the montane forests where this species occurs is now under severe pressure from deforestation and forest degradation, making this bird one of the most endangered birds in Africa. The Cholo Alethe occurs in 15 small, fragmented patches of forest, 13 of them occur in southeastern Malawi and two are in adjacent Mozambique. The forest on Thyolo Mountain, where we observed this species very well, is the second largest patch of forest where this species occurs! This illustrates all too well, that this is a critically endangered species.

White-chested Alethe *Alethe fuelleborni*

Endemic to the mountains of central Tanzania, northern Malawi and northern Mozambique. This uncommon species responded well to tape in the Zovo-Chipolo Forest, in the Nyika National Park. Allowing the group to enjoy good looks at this normally very shy and retiring species.

CISTICOLIDAE

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythropus*

This widespread species of cisticola is extremely shy and always stays in dense cover close to the ground. It was only observed by Chris in Liwonde National Park.

Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans*

A cisticola of tangled undergrowth, which we saw well on several occasions.

Trilling Cisticola *Cisticola woosnami*

An endemic resident of eastern Africa, where it occurs in treeless grassland and rocky hillsides. We saw it well on one occasion on the Viphya Plateau.

Black-lored Cisticola *Cisticola nigriloris*

Endemic to brushy areas of the highlands of southern Tanzania and the Viphya and Nyika Plateaus of Malawi and Zambia. We observed this species extremely well in the Nyika National Park.

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*

A common species of scrub and thickets, which we saw well on several occasions.

Wailing Cisticola *Cisticola lais*

Endemic to the highlands of eastern and southern Africa, where it is fairly common in treeless grassland. We saw this species well on one occasion on the Viphya Plateau.

Churring Cisticola *Cisticola njombe*

Endemic to the highlands of southern Tanzania and the Nyika Plateau of adjacent Zambia and Malawi. Where it occurs in montane grassland, it proved to be very common in the Nyika National Park.

Winding Cisticola, *Luapula Cisticola *Cisticola galactotes*

A bird of marshy vegetation, including reedbeds, sedges and rank grassland. We saw it well on several occasions throughout the tour. Please note Sinclair has split off the southern races of Winding Cisticola, calling them Luapula Cisticola.

Tinkling Cisticola, Levaillant's Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens*

Endemic to southern Africa, it is a bird of open woodland. We saw it well in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*

Widespread throughout the whole of Africa, it is most often found in coarse, tall grass, with scattered bushes. We saw it well on a couple of occasions.

Neddicky, Piping Cisticola *Cisticola fulvicapillus*

Endemic to southern Africa, it is a bird of grass and scrub in areas of bushes and trees. We saw it well on a few occasions during the tour.

Fan-tailed Cisticola, Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, it is a bird of scrubby grassland, often near water. We saw it on many occasions throughout the tour.

Wing-snapping Cisticola *Cisticola ayresii*

A bird with a discontinuous distribution throughout central and southern Africa, it is a bird of montane grasslands, which proved to be common in the Nyika National Park.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*

A common bird, seen on several occasions throughout the tour.

Bar-throated Apalis *Apalis thoracica*

Endemic to eastern and southern Africa, this very variable species was observed well in the grounds of the Luwawa Forest Lodge, on the Viphya Plateau and again in the Manjenjere Forest, in the Zambian portion of the Nyika National Park.

White-winged Apalis *Apalis chariessa*

This species has a highly fragmented range in Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi. A population census conducted in Malawi in 1983 concluded that there was a total population of 100 pairs of birds. This population will have severely declined since this time, due to rapid deforestation throughout Malawi. We enjoyed very good looks at this species on Thyolo Mountain, where sadly, the forest was literally being chopped down and carried away on the heads of women, as we stood watching, what must surely be, the most beautiful apalis in the world.

Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*

Commonly encountered throughout the entire tour.

Chapin's Apalis *Apalis chapini*

Endemic to montane forests of eastern Tanzania and the Nyika Plateau of Zambia and Malawi. This common but highly localised apalis is a bird of the forest canopy, which we saw well in the Chowo Forest, in both the Zambian and Malawi portions of Nyika National Park.

Black-headed Apalis *Apalis melanocephala*

Endemic to east African coastal, mid-altitude and montane forest from southern Somalia to southern Mozambique. In Malawi it occurs in the montane forests of the south, where we saw it well on Thyolo Mountain.

Brown-headed Apalis *Apalis alticola*

Endemic to highland forests of central Africa. In Malawi it is confined to small forest patches on the Nyika Plateau. We saw this species well in the Manjenjere Forest of Zambia, in the Nyika National Park.

Green-backed Bleating-Warbler, Green-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*

Proved to be common throughout the whole of southern Malawi.

Grey-backed Bleating-Warbler, Green-backed Camaroptera, * Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata*

This species is not split off by Clements, but is by Van Perlo and Sinclair and is probably a good split. It proved to be common throughout northern Malawi.

Stierling's Barred Warbler, Miombo Camaroptera, *Stierling's Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes undosus*

This Miombo woodland specialty is endemic to central Africa. We saw it well on a few occasions.

SYLVIIDAE

Little Rush Warbler, African Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*

This widespread African species is an inhabitant of tall reedbeds and rushes. It is an extremely secretive species and in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve, it responded fairly well to tape, calling back and even doing its flight display, fluttering and hovering amongst the dense vegetation.

African Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*

A common resident of eastern and central Africa, where it is confined to reedbeds and sedges. We saw it very well during the boat trip along the Shire River in Liwonde National Park.

Lesser Swamp-Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*

Another common resident of eastern and central Africa, where it is confined to reedbeds and sedges. We observed this species very well on a couple of occasions.

African Yellow Warbler, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta natalensis*

A widespread African species which we observed very well at the Luwawa Forest Lodge, on the Viphya Plateau.

Mountain Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta similis*

Endemic to the mountains of east Africa, in Malawi it only occurs in the forests of the Nyika Plateau. We saw it well on a couple of occasions in the Nyika National Park.

Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*

A widespread species occurring throughout much of Africa, we observed it on one occasion, amongst a mixed species feeding flock, in Miombo woodland in Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Green-capped Eremomela, Greencap Eremomela *Eremomela scotops*

A bird of broad-leafed woodland throughout central Africa, where it proved to be fairly common.

Red-capped Crombec *Sylvietta ruficapilla*

A Miombo woodland specialty of central Africa, we saw it very well on a few occasions.

Long-billed Crombec, Cape Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens*

Endemic to southern Africa, Malawi is at the northern edge of its range. This species was only observed by Chris, in Liwonde National Park.

Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler, Yellow-throated Wood-Warbler *Phylloscopus ruficapillus*

A bird with a fragmented range throughout eastern and southern Africa, in Malawi it occurs in the mountain forests of the north and the south. We saw this species very well in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain.

Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster*

A widespread African species, which occurs in open woodland. We saw this species very well in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis*

Predominately occurs in Miombo woodland of southern Africa. We saw this species very well in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Brown Parisoma, Brown Warbler *Parisoma lugens*

An endemic resident of mountain forests of east Africa. In Malawi, it occurs in forests of the north and south. We saw it well on one occasion in Nyika National Park.

MUSCICAPIDAE

Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus*

A common and widespread flycatcher throughout Africa, which we observed well on several occasions.

White-eyed Slaty-Flycatcher *Melaenornis fischeri*

An endemic resident of mountain forests of east Africa. We saw it well on several occasions.

Southern Black-Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina*

A common endemic of eastern and southern Africa. We saw it on many occasions throughout the tour.

Boehm's Flycatcher *Muscicapa boehmi*

Endemic to Miombo woodland of central Africa. We were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at this species in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta*

A widespread flycatcher, which occurs throughout much of Africa. We saw it well on several occasions.

Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens*

Another widespread African flycatcher, once again, we saw well on several occasions.

Grey Flycatcher, Grey Tit-Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus*

A widespread African species, which we saw extremely well in the Liwonde National Park.

White-starred Robin *Pogonocichla stellata*

An endemic resident of montane forest, throughout eastern and southern Africa. We saw it very well on several occasions.

East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi*

This endangered species occurs in four areas of remnant forest, one in southeast Kenya, one in eastern Tanzania, one in central Mozambique and in the Mukhawadzi Forest, near Lake Malawi, in northern Malawi. It was in the latter area, where we observed this species very well. Unfortunately, the East Coast Akalat is highly sensitive to habitat alteration and its population is expected to decline rapidly in the near future.

Olive-flanked Robin-Chat *Cossypha anomala*

A very uncommon resident of Tanzania, Mozambique and the Nyika Plateau of Zambia and Malawi. Following a great deal of effort, this species responded well to playback, giving itself up in the Zovo-Chipolo Forest, in the Nyika National Park.

Cape Robin-Chat *Cossypha caffra*

Endemic to eastern and southern Africa, this attractive species was observed well on a few occasions.

White-browed Robin-Chat *Cossypha heuglini*

This widespread African species, was observed well on several occasions.

Red-capped Robin-Chat *Cossypha natalensis*

Another widespread species of robin-chat, which was seen well on several occasions.

Collared Palm-Thrush *Cichladusa arquata*

Endemic to central Africa, this species proved to be extremely common in the Liwonde National Park.

Eastern Bearded Scrub-Robin, Bearded Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata*

Endemic to eastern and southern Africa, this species proved common in the Liwonde National Park.

Miombo Bearded Scrub-Robin, Miombo Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas barbata*

Endemic to Miombo woodland of central Africa, where we saw it well on a few occasions.

White-browed Scrub-Robin, Red-backed Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys*

This widespread African species was seen well on a few occasions.

African Stonechat, *Common Stonechat *Saxicola axillaris*

Common and widespread throughout the whole tour. Please note, surprisingly, Sinclair does not split off the African Stonechat, from the Common Stonechat.

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata*

A widespread species throughout eastern and southern Africa. It is a bird of dry grassy plains, the only place we saw it was at the airport at Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi.

Familiar Chat *Cercomela familiaris*

A widespread species throughout Africa, which we saw well on a few occasions.

White-headed Black-Chat, Arnott's Chat *Myrmecocichla arnotti*

A Miombo woodland specialty which is endemic to central Africa. We were very fortunate to enjoy very good looks at a few pairs of this uncommon species, in the Liwonde National Park.

Mocking Cliff-Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris*

A widespread African species which inhabits granite hillsides, escarpments, cliffs, gorges and bolder-strewn slopes. It was on a bolder-strewn slope where we enjoyed our only sighting of this bird, in the Nyika National Park.

Boulder Chat *Pinarornis plumosus*

Restricted in distribution to bolder-strewn hills of Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe. In Malawi it is only known from three areas, Mchinja, Mt. Majete and rocky knolls in Dzalanyama Forest Reserve. It was in the latter area that we enjoyed great looks at this very uncommon and habitat specific species.

PLATYSTEIRIDAE

Black-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira peltata*

Endemic to eastern and central Africa, this rather uncommon species of flycatcher was observed well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

Cape Batis, *Malawi Batis *Batis capensis*

Sinclair splits this species, it would appear to be a good split. If so, it is endemic to Malawi and northern Mozambique, where we found the bird to be common in most forests.

Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*

The common batis of east and southern Africa, it proved to be very common throughout Malawi.

East Coast Batis, Pale Batis *Batis soror*

Endemic to east Africa, it was only observed by Chris, near the township of Dedza.

MONARCHIDEA

Livingstone's Flycatcher *Erythrocerus livingstonei*

Endemic to southeast Africa, this uncommon species was seen very well, on a few occasions in the Liwonde National Park.

White-tailed Blue-Flycatcher *Elminia albicauda*

This uncommon species of flycatcher is endemic to central Africa. We saw it well on a couple of occasions during the tour.

White-tailed Crested-Flycatcher, White-tailed Elminia *Elminia albonotata*

Endemic to eastern and central Africa, we enjoyed a few good looks at this species during the course of the tour.

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, African Crested-Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas*

A widespread resident of eastern and southern Africa, this uncommon species was seen well on one occasion on Thyolo Mountain.

African Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

This widespread African species, was seen well on several occasions.

TIMALIIDAE

African Hill Babbler *Illadopsis abyssinica*

A widespread and common species throughout much of Africa, in Malawi it is restricted to montane remnant forest on the Viphya and Nyika Plateaus. We enjoyed very good views of a solitary bird in the Chowo Forest, in Zambia, in the Nyika National Park.

Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*

This widespread central African species, proved to be common throughout Malawi.

PARIDAE

Southern Black-Tit *Melaniparus niger*

Endemic to southern Africa, it is a bird of broad-leaved woodland. We saw it well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

White-winged Black-Tit *Parus leucomelas*

This widespread African species was observed on one occasion in the Nyika National Park.

Rufous-bellied Tit *Melaniparus rufiventris*

A Miombo woodland specialty of central Africa, which was seen well on a few occasions.

Miombo Grey Tit, Miombo Tit *Melaniparus griseiventris*

Yet another Miombo woodland specialty, which is endemic to central Africa. We saw it well on a few occasions

CERTHIDAE

Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*

A widespread but very uncommon bird in Africa. In central Africa it only occurs in Miombo woodland, we were very fortunate to enjoy a good look at this very uncommon species in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

REMIZIDAE

Grey Penduline-Tit, African Penduline-Tit *Anthoscopus caroli*

A widespread species throughout southern Africa, it is a very unobtrusive and inconspicuous bird, though not uncommon. We saw it very well in the Liwonde National Park.

NECTARINIDAE

Violet-backed Sunbird, Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*

A widespread species found throughout much of Africa, we only observed this species in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*

Another species of sunbird which occurs throughout much of Africa, proved to be very common throughout Malawi.

Green-headed Sunbird *Cyanomitra verticalis*

Another species of sunbird with a wide distribution throughout Africa. Malawi is at the bird's most southeasterly point of distribution and because of this it is not common there. We only observed this species on one occasion, we saw it very well in the Nyika National Park.

Olive Sunbird, Eastern Olive-Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea*

This species occurs throughout much of Africa and proved to be very common throughout Malawi.

Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina*

A common bird of eastern and southern Africa, we observed this species on many occasions throughout the tour.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis*

The species is found throughout much of Africa, we only recorded this species in Liwonde National Park, where it was common.

Bronze Sunbird, Bronzy Sunbird *Nectarinia kilimensis*

A bird of montane forests, which we saw very well on many occasions.

Yellow-tufted Malachite Sunbird, Malachite Sunbird *Nectarinia famosa*

Another sunbird of montane forest, which we also very well on many occasions.

Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Miombo Sunbird *Cinnyris manoensis*

A Miombo woodland specialty of central Africa, it proved to be quite common in all areas of Miombo woodland.

Montane Double-collared Sunbird, Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis*

This species only occurs in gallery forest in Angola and montane heath and forest edge on the Nyika Plateau of Malawi and adjacent Zambia. This species proved to be common in the Chowo and Manjenjere Forests, in the Nyika National Park

Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, *Forest Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris mediocris*

A bird of montane forest which we saw well at the Luwawa Forest Lodge and one or two other areas on the Viphya Plateau. Please note Sinclair splits off the southern races of Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, making them Forest Double-collared Sunbird.

Purple-banded Sunbird *Cinnyris bifasciatus*

Quite a widespread sunbird throughout Africa. In Malawi, we only recorded this species in the grounds of the Makuzi Beach Resort, on the shore of Lake Malawi.

White-bellied Sunbird, White-breasted Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala*

Endemic to central Africa, we only recorded this species in the Liwonde National Park, where it was very common.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird, Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus*

A common and widespread species throughout Africa, it also proved to be common and widespread throughout the whole of Malawi.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Yellow White-eye, African Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, it also proved common and widespread throughout Malawi.

ORIOOLIDAE

African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus*

This very beautiful bird is common and widespread throughout much of Africa, as it is in Malawi.

Green-headed Oriole *Oriolus chlorocephalus*

An uncommon bird of montane forest of east Africa, we were very pleased to observe this species well, in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain.

Black-headed Oriole, African Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*

A widespread African oriole, which we saw very well on a couple of occasions.

LANIIDAE

Fiscal Shrike, Common Fiscal *Lanius collaris*

The common shrike throughout much of Africa, this was very much the case in Malawi.

MALACONOTIDAE

Brubru *Nilaus afer*

This very small species of shrike is common and widespread throughout Africa, we saw it well on a couple of occasions.

Southern Puffback, Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*

A widespread species throughout eastern and southern Africa, it proved to be fairly common throughout Malawi.

Marsh Tchagra, *Anchieta's Tchagra *Tchagra minuta*

Sinclair splits the southern form of Marsh Tchagra into Anchieta's Tchagra. Where ever this species occurs it is uncommon, so we were very pleased to enjoy good looks at a solitary individual in the grounds of the Luwawa Forest Lodge, on the Viphya Plateau.

Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, as it was in Malawi.

Brown-headed Tchagra, Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis*

This species is also common and widespread throughout much of Africa, as it was in Malawi.

Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus*

Yet another species which is common and widespread throughout much of Africa, this was also the case in Malawi.

Fuelleborn's Black Boubou, Fuelleborn's Boubou *Laniarius fuelleborni*

Endemic to the Eastern Arc montane forests of Tanzania, northern Malawi and northeast Zambia. We were very pleased to observe this shy and retiring species on one occasion in the Nyika National Park.

Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike, Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus*

Another widespread species throughout much of Africa, we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.

Black-fronted Bush-Shrike *Telophorus nigrifrons*

Endemic to eastern and southern Africa, it proved to be fairly common in the montane forests of Malawi

Grey-headed Bush-Shrike *Malaconotus blanchoti*

A fairly common and widespread species throughout Africa, surprisingly, we only recorded this species on one occasion, we saw it well in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

PRIONOPIDAE

White Helmet-Shrike, White Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus*

The common helmet-shrike throughout Africa, we enjoyed several good sightings throughout the tour.

Retz's Red-billed Helmet-Shrike, Retz's Helmetshrike, Retz's Helmet-Shrike

Prionops retzii

A common endemic of central Africa, we enjoyed watching a few flocks of this very attractive species.

DICRURIDAE

Square-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus ludwigii*

The common forest drongo of Africa. In Malawi, this species only occurs in the southern mountains, it proved to be common on Thyolo Mountain.

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*

The common savanna drongo of Africa. Common and widespread throughout Malawi.

CORVIDAE

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

The common crow throughout Africa, including Malawi.

White-necked Raven *Corvus albicollis*

Restricted in distribution to mountainous and hilly areas of eastern and southern Africa. This attractive species was very common in the Nyika National Park.

STURNIDAE

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*

A widespread species throughout eastern and southern Africa. We recorded a small flock of this species in the Liwonde National Park.

Greater Blue-eared Starling, Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

The common glossy starling of Africa, it proved common throughout Malawi.

Lesser Blue-eared Starling, Lesser Blue-eared Glossy-Starling, * Miombo Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus*

Sinclair splits the southern race of the Lesser Blue-eared Starling, to the Miombo Blue-eared Starling. It is probably a good split. It proved to be fairly common throughout Miombo woodland in Malawi.

Southern Long-tailed Starling, Meves' Glossy-Starling, Meves' Starling *Lamprotornis mevesii*

Endemic to central Africa and Angola. In Malawi, there is an isolated population in the upper Shire River Valley. It proved very common in the Liwonde National Park, in the Shire River Valley.

Waller's Red-winged Starling, Waller's Starling *Onychognathus walleri*

Endemic to montane forests of east Africa, with an isolated population in Cameroon.

Northern Malawi is the most southerly part of this bird's range; it proved common in the forests of the Nyika National Park.

White-winged Starling, Babbling Starling, White-winged Babbling Starling *Neocichla gutturalis*

This very uncommon species of open woodland, has four isolated populations. One in Angola, one in Tanzania, one in northern Zambia and one in eastern Zambia, which just spills over the border into Malawi, in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. We were extremely fortunate to not only observe a flock of these birds, but to observe them very well.

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*

Common and widespread throughout eastern and southern Africa, including game reserves in Malawi.

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*

This species is the common oxpecker of west Africa and is very patchily distributed throughout the rest of southern Africa. In Malawi we watched a few small flocks in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Introduced to Africa from Europe, it was not uncommon in the larger towns of Malawi.

Grey-headed Sparrow, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*

The common sparrow of western and eastern Africa. We recorded this species in the grounds of the Makuzi Beach Resort on the shore of Lake Malawi and near the small township of Nkhotakhota.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Cape Sparrow *Passer diffusus*

The common sparrow of southern Africa. In southern Malawi this species reaches its northernmost limit. It proved to be common in Liwonde National Park. Please note Clements erroneously refers to this species as Cape Sparrow.

Yellow-throated Petronia *Petronia superciliaris*

The common petronia of southern Africa. We enjoyed a few good sightings throughout the tour.

PLOCEIDAE

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali*

A common bird of eastern and southern Africa. In Malawi it only occurs in the Shire River Valley. It proved very common in the Liwonde National Park, which is situated in the Shire River Valley.

Bertram's Weaver, Bertrand's Weaver *Ploceus bertrandi*

This uncommon species inhabits three isolated areas of open woodland. One in eastern Tanzania, one in southern Tanzania and northern Malawi and one in southern Malawi. We very much enjoyed observing this species at the Luwawa Forest Lodge and close by on the Viphya Plateau.

Lesser Masked-Weaver *Ploceus intermedius*

Common and widespread throughout eastern and southern Africa. We only observed this species nesting in the grounds of the Makuzi Beach Resort, on the shore of Lake Malawi.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*

A common species throughout eastern and southern Africa, including Malawi.

Eastern Golden Weaver, African Golden-Weaver, Yellow Weaver *Ploceus subaureus*

A bird of Africa's east coast, occurring from Kenya in the north, to South Africa in the south. The extent of its range inland varies along the entire length of the coast. The furthest inland it occurs is along the west coast of Lake Malawi. It proved to be a common nesting bird in the grounds of the Makuzi Beach Resort, on the shore of Lake Malawi.

Large Golden Weaver, Holub's Golden-Weaver, Golden Weaver *Ploceus xanthops*

Widespread throughout eastern and central Africa, it proved quite common throughout Malawi.

Southern Brown-throated Weaver *Ploceus xanthopterus*

An uncommon weaver of southern Africa, it was a common nesting bird in the Liwonde National Park.

African Masked-Weaver, Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*

The common masked weaver of southern Africa, we saw it well on a few occasions.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*

The most widespread and common weaver in Africa. In Malawi, we only recorded it along the west coast of Lake Malawi.

Dark-backed Weaver, Forest Weaver *Ploceus bicolor*

The common forest weaver of Africa. We only observed this species in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain.

Olive-headed Weaver *Ploceus olivaceiceps*

A very uncommon species of weaver, whose distribution is centered on Miombo woodland surrounding Lake Malawi. We very much enjoyed watching this species in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*

A common and widespread species throughout Africa, as it was in Malawi.

Black-winged Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus*

The common red bishop of Africa, excluding southern Africa. We observed a small flock near the small township of Nkhotakhota, not far from Lake Malawi.

Red Bishop, Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*

The common red bishop of southern Africa. We recorded small flocks of this species in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

Yellow-mantled Whydah, Yellow-shouldered Widowbird, Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macrourus*

Widely distributed in western, eastern and central Africa, it proved fairly common throughout Malawi.

White-winged Whydah, White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus*

Occurs throughout much of Africa, it proved fairly common throughout Malawi.

Red-collared Whydah, Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*

Widely distributed in rank grassland throughout Africa. We only recorded this species in the grounds of the Luwawa Forest Lodge and other areas on the Viphya Plateau.

Mountain Marsh Whydah, Buff-shouldered Widowbird, Montane Widowbird *Euplectes psammocromius*

This highly localized species only occurs in one small area; it is restricted to the Nyika Plateau of northeast Zambia and northern Malawi and spreads over the border to the highlands of southwestern Tanzania. We found it to be common in the Nyika National Park.

Thick-billed Weaver, Grosbeak Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*

A common bird throughout much of Africa, we only saw this species on one occasion, a small flock was observed in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain.

ESTRILDIDAE

Orange-winged Pytilia *Pytilia afra*

A widespread species throughout eastern and central Africa proved fairly common throughout Malawi.

Melba Finch, Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Red-throated Twinspot, Peters' Twinspot *Hypargos niveoguttatus*

Fairly widespread throughout eastern and central Africa, we enjoyed several good looks at this very attractive species.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Blue-billed Firefinch, African Firefinch *Lagonosticta rubricata*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*

A widespread and common species throughout eastern and central Africa, including Malawi.

Blue Waxbill, Blue-breasted Cordonbleu *Uraeginthus angolensis*

A common and widespread resident of central Africa, including Malawi.

East African Sweet Waxbill, Sweet Waxbill, Yellow-bellied Waxbill *Estrilda melanotis*

An uncommon inhabitant of east Africa. Malawi is at the southernmost extent of the birds range, we enjoyed watching several small flocks.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Zebra Waxbill, Orange-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*

Common and widespread throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Locust Finch, Locustfinch *Ortygospiza locustella*

This very uncommon primitive species of finch is patchily distributed throughout central Africa. An uncommon species in Malawi, we were very fortunate to watch a small flock, in a small dambo near to the township of Dedza.

Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata*

Widespread and common throughout west, east and central Africa, including Malawi.

Red-backed Mannikin, Black-and-white Mannikin *Lonchura bicolor*

Common and widespread throughout much of east Africa, including Malawi. Please note that Clements and Sinclair split off the southern race of Black-and-white Mannikin, calling it Red-backed Mannikin. It is probably a good split.

Magpie Mannikin *Lonchura fringilloides*

This very uncommon species has a patchy distribution throughout Africa. In southern Africa, the distribution of this species is closely associated with the flowering of Bindura Bamboo (*Oxytenanthera abyssinica*), which grows alongside rivers. Unfortunately, this bamboo flowers only approximately once every 20 years. Generally found in pairs or small flocks which follow the flowering bamboo. We were very fortunate to observe a small flock of birds feeding on Bindura Bamboo flowers in the Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary.

VIDUIDAE

Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata*

This common inhabitant of much of Africa, parasitises the Red-billed Firefinch. We observed this species on a couple of occasions in the Liwonde National Park.

Pin-tailed Widow, Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

This species is very common and widespread throughout Africa, including Malawi.

Long-tailed Paradise-Widow, Eastern Paradise-Whydah *Vidua paradisaea*

Common and widespread throughout eastern and central Africa. We only recorded this species on one occasion, near the township of Dedza.

Broad-tailed Paradise-Widow, Broad-tailed Paradise-Whydah *Vidua obtusa*

An uncommon Miombo woodland endemic, of central Africa. We were very pleased to enjoy good scope views of a male in full breeding plumage, in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

FRINGILLIDAE

Cape Canary, * Yellow-crowned Canary *Serinus canicollis*

Occurs in montane grassland throughout eastern and southern Africa. Large flocks were observed in the Nyika National Park. Please note Sinclair split off the northern races of this species, calling it the Yellow-crowned Canary.

African Citril, *Southern Citril *Serinus citrinelloides*

A common and widespread species throughout east Africa, including Malawi. Please note Sinclair splits the African Citril into three species, the most southerly races, which we saw, now becomes Southern Citril.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*

A common and widespread canary throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Brimstone Canary *Serinus sulphuratus*

A common and widespread species occurring throughout eastern and southern Africa, including Malawi.

Stripe-breasted Seedeater, Reichard's Seedeater *Serinus reichardi*

This species has two centres of distribution, one in the Ethiopian highlands and the other in Miombo woodlands of central Africa. We were very fortunate to observe a couple of small flocks of this species, in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

Black-eared Seedeater *Serinus mennelli*

This uncommon species of seedeater is endemic to the Miombo woodlands of central Africa. We enjoyed good scope views of this species on a few occasions in the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve.

EMBERIZIDAE

Cinnamon-breasted Rock-Bunting, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*

A common and widespread species throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris*

A common and widespread species throughout much of Africa, including Malawi.

Yellow Baboon *Papio cynocephalus* One of the smallest baboons, they are common throughout east Africa, including Malawi. The males are often twice the female's body weight. The average troop size is 20 – 50, but has been recorded as high as 100. Young Yellow Baboons are tolerated while in their “baby fur”, as they molt into adult colouration, females take their place at the base of the troop hierarchy. Males are driven off and must battle their way into another troop.

Vervet Monkey *Ceropithecus pygerythrus* We enjoyed watching several small troops throughout the tour. It is the typical monkey of Miombo woodland, where *acacia* dominated riverine strips are their primary habitat.

Sykes' Monkey *Cercopithecus albogularis* Widespread yet inconspicuous over its large range, we enjoyed watching a small group in remnant forest on Thyolo Mountain. This monkey marks its territory with saliva and scent; it avoids rather than challenges any intruders. It uses deep, booming calls to communicate; it feeds mainly on seeds and fruit.

Short-snouted Elephant-Shrew *Elephantulus brachyrhynchus* We enjoyed watching one of these unusual mammals, whilst spotlighting in the Liwonde National Park. The long, pointed snout, which is flexible and highly sensitive, gives elephant-shrews their name. They have keen senses of hearing and vision and long, powerful back legs, which enable them to run swiftly around their territory. These secretive animals occur only in Africa, the Short-snouted Elephant-Shrew lives in dense evergreen undergrowth in forest and woodlands. It lives without any burrows or shelters and uses well worn pathways, with regularly spaced cleared areas of bare earth. It is most active in the early morning and evening, when it feeds mainly on ants and termites, it will also take crickets and grasshoppers.

Scrub Hare *Lepus saxatilis* We flushed this species from ground cover on a few occasions. As a special adaptation to the high temperatures in this region they have very large, naked ears in which fine veins help to cool the blood.

Tanganyika Mountain-Squirrel *Paraxerus lucifer* Endemic to montane forest of southern Tanzania and Malawi. We observed this species very well in the Chowo Forest, in the Nyika National Park. This now rare species of squirrel is unfortunately extremely venerable and totally dependant upon continued protection of their now highly fragmented forest patches. They feed on fruits, nuts and invertebrates.

Red-bellied Coast Squirrel *Paraxerus palliatus* This species of squirrel inhabits forests along the east coast of Africa from Kenya to South Africa. It normally only occurs inland for approximately 200 kilometres. The furthest inland it occurs is in the Liwonde National Park of southern Malawi, where we enjoyed a few good sightings. It occurs mainly in coastal forests and evergreen thickets. In Liwonde National Park it occurs mainly in lowland riverine forest. This species is still fairly common and feeds on fruits, berries, seeds and various plant parts.

Smith's Bush Squirrel *Paraxerus cepapi* We enjoyed many sightings of this species in the Liwonde National Park and the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. This species shows a preference for low-level vegetation and shade, spending much of its time on the ground. It relines its nest each night with freshly plucked leaves.

Mutable Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus mutabilis* This species of squirrel lives in lowland to montane forests and thickets, including riverine strips and cultivation mosaics, it

occurs from Kenya southwards to Zimbabwe and Mozambique. We only observed this species in remnant montane forests on Thyolo Mountain. This is a common species; it is not endangered and feeds on various plant foods and the occasional insect and small vertebrates.

Side-striped Jackal *Canis adustus* These omnivorous, opportunistic jackals live in breeding pairs, outside the breeding season they tend to wander alone. We enjoyed a few good sightings in the Nyika National Park.

Slender Mongoose *Herpestes sanguinea* The most widespread and successful species of mongoose in the world; the reason for this is thought to be this species remarkable agility which enables them to climb trees at great speed, enabling them to reach resources that other species of mongooses are unable to. We enjoyed a few good sightings throughout the tour.

Bushy-tailed Mongoose *Bdeogale crassicauda* This species of mongoose lives in coastal thickets, dry forests and well-vegetated valleys in the moister eastern Miombo woodlands. Its distribution is fairly continuous along the coast from Kenya southwards to Mozambique; it is more patchily distributed inland, not penetrating much further than Lake Malawi. Although widely distributed, it is an uncommon species and we were very fortunate to observe one whilst spotlighting in the Liwonde National Park. They may be active during the day as well as at night, especially during the wet season. They feed mainly on ants, termites, caterpillars, crickets, grasshoppers and beetles. Snakes, lizards and rodents are more rarely eaten.

Common Genet *Genetta genetta* This species has a wide distribution throughout Africa and occurs in a wide range of drier habitats from seasonally arid woodlands to sparsely bushed near-desert. They are able to live without water and are fast but clumsy killers, relying on speed and agility and cryptic colouring to catch food. They eat a large variety of food items, consisting mainly of rodents, birds and reptiles. We were fortunate to observe this species during the night drive in the Liwonde National Park.

African Civet *Civettictis civetta* A widespread species throughout much of Africa, it occurs mainly in dry, open country where dense cover grows along watercourses. In spite of its dependence on thick cover, the African Civet is most often seen trotting along established roads and pathways. This is exactly how we saw this mammal during a night drive in the Liwonde National Park. Outside the breeding season it is a solitary and very intolerant animal. It is omnivorous, eating vertebrates and plants. It is able to eat poisonous fruits, distasteful insects, millipedes and dangerous snakes. It is also able to feed irregularly and can fast for us to two weeks. It is known to kill prey up to the size of a hare or mongoose.

Serval *Felis serval* Resembling a small cheetah, with its lean body and long limbs, a Serval has yellowish fur with black spots. We were extremely fortunate to observe a solitary individual walk right in front of our vehicle, in broad daylight, in Nyika National Park. Having located prey, usually at dusk and mainly by hearing, the Serval excels at the cat pounce. It leaps up to 4 metres horizontally and more than 1 metre in height to strike the victim with its forepaws. It eats rats and similar sized rodents, birds, fish and large insects such as locusts. Frogs are a favorite with wetland-dwelling Servals.

- African Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* We very much enjoyed watching several small herds of elephants, the largest living land animal in the world, we saw them in the Liwonde National Park and in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. The male African Elephant can attain a height of 4 metres and weighs nearly 10 tones.
- Common Zebra** *Eauus quagga* We enjoyed watching small numbers of zebras in several areas on the tour. This very successful animal has a diet, which is 90% grass; the remaining 10% consists of leaves and buds.
- Hippopotamus** *Hippopotamus amphibious* Hippopotamuses are still abundant in many parts of Africa, we enjoyed watching large groups splashing around in Liwonde National Park and in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve. This huge animal has a semi-aquatic lifestyle and is thought to be more closely related to whales than to other even-toed hoofed mammals. They can float and swim and may remain submerged for over five minutes.
- Common Warthog** *Phacochoerus africanus* We enjoyed several good sightings of this long-legged pig, with a large head. When running, its tail is held straight and upright. Generally active by day, it lives in mixed groups of 4-16 young males or females with young. They shelter and raise their young in grass-lined burrows, dug by themselves or by Aardvarks.
- Bushbuck** *Tragelaphus scriptus* This antelope was commonly encountered in the Liwonde and Nyika National Parks. It is a browser and solitary, except when courting or when a mother is with her young.
- Greater Kudu** *Tragelaphus strepsiceros* This proved to be fairly common throughout most protected areas. The male Greater Kudu is one of the tallest and longest-horned antelopes and has a long throat fringe.
- Eland** *Taurotragus oryx* The largest and most cow-like of all the antelopes, male Eland's can weigh up to 1,000kgs and have spiraling horns up to 1.2 metres long. The Eland browses in bush, plains and open woodland. It gathers food with its lips and digs up bulbs and tubers with its hooves. Like the camel, it allows its body temperature to rise by up to 7 degrees C., to avoid losing water as sweat and thereby surviving drought. We enjoyed watching good numbers of this species in the Nyika National Park.
- Common Duiker** *Sylvicapra grimmia* One of the smallest antelopes, we enjoyed several good sightings in the Nyika National Park. It is mainly a nocturnal browser but it also takes small animals and carrion. It lives alone or in pairs and males defend their territories against rivals.
- Klipspringer** *Oreotragus oreotragus* This small, short-muzzled, tiny-hoofed antelope leaps skillfully over the steep, rocky terrain of its native mountains and river gorges. This was exactly the habitat where we watched a family party in the Nyika National Park.
- Southern Reedbuck** *Redunca arundinum* We saw many of this species in the Nyika National Park. This species converges on water sources in the dry season and only disperse widely when it is wet and the grass grows tall again.
- Puku** *Kobus vardonii* One of the least common antelopes in Africa, where there are high population densities it forms leks, in areas of low population density it only forms territories. The long coat is a uniform golden yellow and the horns are approximately

50cm in length. The Puku grazes morning and evening and, like other plains antelope, they have the ability to flee rapidly from danger. Small numbers of this uncommon antelope were observed in the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve.

Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus* One of the heaviest antelopes, the Waterbuck has coarse, long, oily hair that ranges in colour from grey to red-brown and darkens with age. The horns, normally present only in the male, are up to 1 metre in length. Up to 90% of its diet is grass; the rest is made up of leaves. When threatened, the Waterbuck usually dashes to water, where it swims fast or submerges except for the nose. Good numbers were present in the Liwonde National Park.

Impala *Aepyceros melampus* We saw many Impalas in the reserves and game parks, they are very adaptable feeders and form large mixed herds during the dry season. During the breeding season bachelor males compete with one another for territories and females.

Roan Antelope *Hippotragus equines* We very much enjoyed watching many small herds of this uncommon species in Nyika National Park. This species of antelope is unusual, as both sexes have both horns and manes. It also has the ability to survive on poor grass growth, but does need to drink 2-3 times per day. Herds consist of 12-15 females and young with one dominant male, or younger bachelor males.

Sable Antelope *Hippotragus niger* Small numbers of this very attractive antelope were present in the Liwonde National Park. Similar in many respects to the above species, however, the Sable Antelope gathers in herds of 100 or more during the dry season, when browsing replaces the usual grazing. In the wet season, herds split into bachelor groups of 1-12 males, while dominant males occupy territories and mate with the females there.