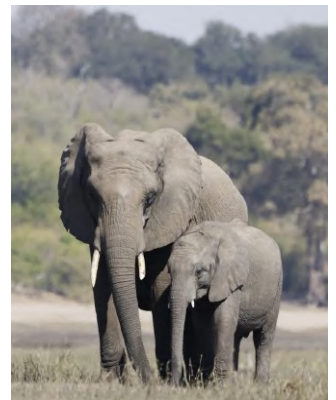
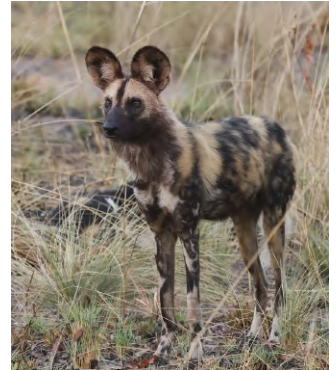


In-Depth & Incredible Africa: Botswana & Zambia

July 9 – 27, 2026 | Trip Report by Peg Abbott



Guides Peace Shamuka in Botswana, Frank Willem in Zambia and Peg Abbott of Naturalist Journeys with six participants: Harriet, Linda, Donna, Roger, Elizabeth and Carol.



Early Arrivals

Several of our group arrived early to shake off jetlag from international flights. The Cresta Mowana Hotel along the Chobe River in Kasane, Botswana provided the perfect welcome, with spacious rooms, expansive grounds, and its reception and dining area built around a stunning 800-year old Baobab tree. We were free to walk around the grounds with a good view of the river and expansive shade trees. There were Baboons, Vervet Monkeys and a host of birds to discover.

Thurs., July 9 **Our Journey Begins | Morning Bird Walk | Afternoon Chobe River Boat Trip**

As so many had arrived early, Peg added a morning bird walk for those that wanted to jump in on the lush grounds of the Cresta Mowana Hotel. The hotel sits right on the Chobe River and is the closest hotel to the local heron rookery and rapids, which we would explore in the afternoon by boat. We met at 9 AM so all could both



rest up and enjoy the lavish breakfast spread. We made a big loop of both sides of the hotel and out to the golf course. Lawn sprinklers were a draw to smaller songbirds, a fruiting tree drew in a number of species, and up and down the river a steady stream of herons, egrets, cormorants and ibis came and went. Right off the bat we got the scope on a perched female Giant Kingfisher and while we watched it, a Lilac-breasted Roller in all its technicolor finery flew in to pose. African Palm Swifts erupted out of the tall waving palm limbs, a Little Heron came out and fed on the lawn, and a Lesser Honeyguide tested out our ID skills. A gang of Magpie Shrike flew noisily tree to tree, at times dipping to the lawn, and shiny Cape Starling dazzled us with jade blue tones. We ran into a little “bird party” on the entry road, getting great looks at Collared Palm Thrush, Brubru, Black-backed Puffback, Southern Cordon-bleu and Red-billed Firefinch – fun! Peg spied a Chinspot Batis and gave it a 10 on the adorable scale. In all we had 45 species – off to a good start!

We enjoyed lunch dining on the patio, circled by eager Vervet Monkeys that kept the staff busy chasing them away. Elizabeth flew in on the 1:40 PM arrival from Johannesburg, so our flock was now complete. Peace Shamuka, our Botswana guide and operator and the owner of Last Eden Safaris, met us in his big-hearted way, so welcoming that we all immediately felt comfortable. We were excited to board a small skiff to get out on the river.

We decided to head downstream towards the rapids and found out quickly the river was high and the current was strong. Our boat captain, Tiamo, navigated well and took us right up to several islands absolutely filled with birds. There were nesting Reed Cormorants by the hundreds, White-breasted Cormorants by the dozens, beautiful Yellow-billed Storks with large chicks they were feeding, and African Darters with chicks near fledging in various shades of white, tan and brown. We were marveling at the massive size of Nile Crocodiles ready to feed on anything that dropped into the river (as well as native fish such as Tiger Fish and Bream), and at the beauty of African Spoonbills. We lingered long enough not to disturb these nesting birds but to take some wonderful photos, and headed upriver where the current was more manageable and we could amble at a slow speed along either shore. To our thrill, Tiamo spotted a Half-collared Kingfisher almost right away, one of our most-wanted Botswana birds! It was perched low to the water on an arching branch, posing nicely for us to observe – wow! It was high fives all around on that one, but soon we had another magical species to admire – a pair of White-backed Night Heron, hiding in the shade of massive riverside trees. To be so lucky our first day was outstanding.

We returned to a nice buffet dinner and retired to rest up for more adventures in the morning.



Fri., July 10 Full Morning Boat Trip on the Chobe River | Kasane Birding Hotspots

We would later be camping two nights within Chobe National Park so Peg had set up another boat trip for us to make the most of that magic of being on the water. It was cold as we boarded at 8AM, Peace urging us not to go too early as in this mid-winter time species would not yet be active. Our timing was great and in the course of the morning we'd see five species of kingfishers and almost seventy species in total. There were numbers of several waterbirds beyond imagination and estimating them on eBird was a challenge. We figured there were at least 700 beautifully patterned White-faced Whistling Ducks, resting on the banks and in the reeds alongside Knob-billed Ducks, both Egyptian and Spur-winged Geese, African Jacana, Glossy Ibis and African Spoonbills. Purple Herons put on a good show, displaying their colors when we went over to investigate why a group of Hamerkop were making a racket. Wire-tailed Swallows followed our boat and dipped in the water, African Skimmers coursed over the river in their graceful and acrobatic flight, and a group of eighty or more Collared Pratincole roosting and flying about were fun to find. White-crowned, Long-toed and Blacksmith Lapwings were plentiful, and as we watched Waterbuck and Impala come to the river to drink, we saw lovely Emerald-spotted Wood Doves fly in alongside them. Roger spied a group of at least 7 Black-collared Barbets with their brilliant red heads in the treetops, and we loved the flash of color of White-fronted Bee-eaters .

During our lunch break back at the hotel we watched Chacma Baboons and Warthogs on the hotel grounds. A little rest was great, we checked out the giftshop and at 3PM met back up in the lobby. Peace offered to take us to the women's craft cooperative which we were happy to support with a first few purchases of baskets, cloth and carvings.

We had a nice walk at the Kasane Water Treatment Works where we had super looks at Little Bee-eater, Crested Francolin, Marabou Storks (many!), three species of hornbills – Red-billed, Yellow-billed and Bradfields, and a bold group of White-crested Helmetshrike. Time passed quickly and we ended the day with sundowners at a bend of the Chobe River, where Water Thick-knees uttered their haunting calls as we watched them and a brilliant sunset. This spot was outside the park and on a beautiful night locals were gathered to enjoy each other, families and friends, fun to see.

Back at the hotel, we headed right to dinner, a very filling buffet with many vegetable dishes, salads, fresh Bream and various meats including grilled beef and sausages, and way too many tempting desserts – a cinnamon pudding featured this night.



Sat., July 11 Kasane to Last Eden Safari Camp | Afternoon Safari Drive

We all came to breakfast early or later, timed as it fit around our packing, and by 8AM were on the road, heading west through Chobe National Park. We drove on the paved transit road eager to make some time as we were headed west on to the Linyanti River area. On the main road we picked up few bird species on the wires, the most notable being Meyer's Parrots, an adult pair and their full-sized fledgling. The two adults had huge wild cucumber fruits, half the size of their heads, and the youngster was trying every trick in the book to get a bite – they were not sharing! Our mammal thrill of the day was seeing Sable Antelope, a big herd on both sides of the road. We pulled over to watch and take photos of them, their lustrous dark chocolate coats showing off their fitness after a year that had finally brought ample rains to the region. We also saw Impala, Giraffe, and Zebra. We passed out the park, passed some picturesque small farming villages and turned off on a sand road leading to Last Eden Safari Camp, a private nature reserve linking the park and nearby forest reserve. Peace Shamuka, a long time guide has now developed this splendid place as a conservation property, working closely with the local village council. The habitats were reminiscent of Moremi National Park, with well established groves of Mopane Woodlands, open grass areas and thorn scrub. The camp staff was waiting for us with big smiles and a welcoming lunch under the central shade ramada.

We had not known fully what to expect, a first visit to this property for Peg and Naturalist Journeys and we were pleasantly surprised on our mid-day arrival to find our tents were up on individual platforms with porches. They were basic but spacious with comfortable (real) beds, and bathrooms with flush toilet and shower. All faced a central waterhole which had a resident pair of Blacksmith Lapwing that let us know when anything new was happening. We settled in quickly, and by 4PM came down for tea and to head out for the afternoon safari. We also did a quick checklist catchup as it had been several days. A delicious lemon and peach cake at tea time ahead of the safari made us feel quite spoiled.

We explored from our secluded camp, located in the Shaile/Linyanti area. We drove out through thorn scrub, finding Red-billed Spurrow, a calling Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Senegal Coucal, and Black-crowned Tchagra. We were thrilled to find an get a good look at Spotted Thick-knee and even better,



Roger spotted what he originally thought were two more on the other side, but on closer inspection they were two Three-banded Coursers, a nocturnal species roosting by day in the shade. Peace is an excellent tracker and we saw prints of Hyena, and Wild Dog – how we'd love to have intercepted these! We enjoyed sunset at a viewpoint and spotlighted our way back, getting views of Black-backed Jackal, a lone Hyena, African Spring Hare, Scrub Hare, and Square-tailed Nightjar.

Sun., July 12 Morning and Afternoon Safari Drives | Night Sky Viewing

This morning we went a different direction and saw fresh digging of Aardvark in profusion out in the sandy soil not far from camp. This is such a difficult mammal to see but we made plans to return in the evening and have try. We did find a group of Elephants and enjoyed watching their interaction and feeding. We saw almost 40 species of birds, highlights being Double-banded Sandgrouse, Red-crested Bustard, two Secretarybirds in the distance, Wattled Lapwing, and several species of brilliantly-colored starlings.

We headed west from the camp, wanting to see a part of a vital migration corridor, with the Linyanti, Kwando and Chobe Rivers being at the northern endpoint and the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans on the southern end. It's a remarkable journey, far less known than the more famous migration route of the Serengeti, and we were thrilled to witness it. With fires burning on the agricultural fields of Namibia behind them, we saw large herds of Zebra, Wildebeest and Eland intermingled across the open landscape. From our coffee break we had time to really watch the herds. Some 30,000+ Zebra make this incredible journey, with lesser numbers of wildebeest and eland, one of nature's seasonal flows that functions to keep any one area of habitat from being degraded. Peg spied a family of massive Southern Ground Hornbill strutting off the brush. Lilac-breasted Rollers and Fork-tailed Drongos sallied out from nearby shrubs. It was incredibly peaceful and we celebrated with sundowners, various sodas, gin and tonic, beer or wine – a lovely African end of the day tradition.



Driving back we spotlighted, seeing Scrub Hare and Spring Hare, but no other mammals. We just missed a Leopard, judging by super fresh tracks that crossed the road. Not too far from camp we stopped, turned off the engine, and admired the sky absolutely bursting with stars, the constellation Scorpio right overhead. Peace showed us the Southern Cross, we soaked in the silence broken by loud calls of Hyena and returned for a good dinner – then time for bed! We hated not to sit by the roaring fire they had made us, but our day had been full and we needed rest.

Mon., July 13 Morning with Giraffes, Zebra and Elephants | Afternoon Safari Drive

We left at dawn, finishing up our porridge, cereal, yoghurt and oh yes, homemade bread toast (Carol dubbed as “Holy Toast” before mounting the big step up to our safari seats. Roger let us know our morning temperature was at 42 degrees F, a swing of about 40 degrees since the high yesterday afternoon. We checked the Aardwolf, Aardvark area again with no luck, but found a group of four Giraffe that in turn found us to be quite curious. Another group of Giraffe had several youngsters and Peace picked up on one very small one that it still had an umbilical cord hanging in side profile. It must feel so good to provide safe home for these graceful giants! Several of our group were experiencing a first trip to Africa, and Giraffe of all animals really made them realize they were finally there!

We found a large group of Zebra, first observing them crossing the road, but these migrants are very wary after passing through a lot of private land as well as parks, and we caused a bottleneck with the herd split on two sides of the road. We waited patiently for them to cross at some distance, but eventually went on our way as they just did not feel quite secure. In time, they would get more used to vehicles and people in this northern part of their migration range.

Peace noted recent activity by reading the tracks as we drove. He saw Hyena tracks and then big Hippo tracks, the latter very fresh and he knew of a large pan that probably still held good water, likely their destination. We tried to bust through, with Carol giving us duck left or duck right alerts from the front (to protect us from thorny branches) but in time we just could not get through the thick Mopane woodland. We came into a lovely clearing, obviously a busy place judging by the amount of antelope and elephant dung, but we only found a couple very old Elephant carcasses with bones drying in the



sun. We had our tea and coffee break here, entertained by Little Bee-eaters and a large maternal herd of Elephants. A pair of Bradfield's Hornbill, a species of the woodlands passed overhead and we watched a kettle of White-backed Vultures stir up from the treetops into the sky.

Back for lunch and a nice rest break at camp. Ahead of tea time we heard a truck arriving with the sound of laughter and voices – beautifully dressed women from the Parakrungu village had come to welcome us with dancing and song. Their dresses were blue, with underskirts of many colors. They gathered under the huge Baobab tree behind our tents, and their voices were blended and strong. They danced with joy and that joy spread, what a vibrant, fun sharing between us. They did quick turns of the hip that splayed their dresses like peacock feathers, and the eldest of the group was the most skilled, tiny and frail compared to the other strong ladies, but wow – she could still outdance them all. The group has been together for several years now, under her leadership, celebrating their Chichiperu culture. The Last Eden Camp and reserve is on community land and ties are strong to enable it. This welcome was a surprise to us and so well received.

In the afternoon we went back to the pan by a different route, checking for those Hippos which were not there, so likely had continued on. We had a good drive, with time to watch bird and mammal behavior. Back at camp Peggy and Festus made us feel so welcome. The table was set with care and food was filling and delicious. We heard more about Peace's vision for the private reserve and camp and felt good to be a part of it at the start.

Tues., July 14 Chobe National Park | Wildlife Along the River

We did some birding after breakfast at the camp, where a bird party (mixed flock) moved through, giving us a chance to see Southern Cordon-bleu, Red-billed Firefinch, and to our surprise, Orange-winged Pytilias, what beauties!



We had a super-productive wildlife day as we made our way back east towards Kasane, with a two night stay in a game reserve just outside of Chobe National Park. After a hearty breakfast (oh that “holy” toast grilled over the campfire...) we headed out with a picnic lunch, planning to make our way back along the river, in no rush so as the camp staff could also move, and prepare for us at the new site.

We stopped at a village craft stand, Kachikau Basket Stand, having had such fun with the local ladies the afternoon before, when Peace paused Peg said, “why not!”. It was way more fun than a shop, and they had baskets, carvings, a few trinkets and some textiles. Kids gathered round and were curious, we were sure a group of birders with all their garb and some wearing optics was a wonder. With a few mementos and big smiles all around we continued. Our coffee break as back at the road junction to the camp, where a Crimson-breasted Shrike and a family of Rattling Cisticolas entertained us. Driving through the Mopane woodlands we were able to see and photograph beautiful Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, a species we would not see again. We searched hard for signature Arnott’s Chat to no avail but Peg spied a Southern Black Tit on the fly and we were able to reverse and see it well.

Our next stop was back at the incredibly scenic stop we’d made in route along the river. There were so many water birds, hippos, crocodiles, gulls and terns that we had plenty to look at as we dined. Amid the sightings and our lunch chatter, to our amazement, Carol announced (looking up), “I have an owl!” Right over our picnic was a beautifully patterned Pearl-spotted Owlet, and we all got wonderful views.

We entered the park at a gate we’d not return to, and were able to have a good long stretch of viewing the river with few cars around. There were many Impala, Giraffe, and Elephants to watch, and our bird list increased impressively as we found African Skimmer, White-faced and Knob-billed Ducks in profusion, our first Swainson’s Spurfowl, several Double-banded Sandgrouse, African Spoonbill, Great White Pelicans, and our first Goliath Heron, the largest heron in the world, dwarfing the Great Egrets and Purple Herons it shared space with. We saw a Gabar Goshawk, our only White-browed Scrub Robin foraging in the shrubs, and Common Hoopoe in the open woodland, always a favorite species.



The mobile camp was beautiful! Peace had picked a treasure of a spot, in mature forest, accessed on a two-track road through a quiet, almost hidden valley. On the way we saw Sable Antelope again, a treat. When we pulled in, Festus told us with well-deserved excitement, Wild Dogs had run almost through camp only an hour or so before our arrival! Our dining table was beautifully set under a massive tree, with light from solar lanterns and a lively campfire. In the night we heard Hyena, Lion and Leopard – we were truly out in the bush but comfortably so!

Wed., July 15 Mobile Safari Camp, Chobe NP

July is winter in Botswana, we were bundled up for our camping portion of the trip. A crackling fire and hot homemade bread helped jumpstart our day. We headed out early, having seen evidence of a Leopard near the camp the night before Peace was anxious to see if he could follow any tracks. We checked several large trees. There were possible resting places, no luck today. We were looking at tracks and skulls but Peg got itchy to get to the park and urged us on. This proved to be a good move as not soon after entry, while we were parked at the river watching a beautiful Black-winged Stilt with full reflections, one of Peace's colleagues called him to report activity of Wild Dogs, that had just had their kill taken from them by Lions. Could we get there?

We held on tight as he headed down that way using all his driving skill, with a good three miles to travel. We held our breath just hoping we'd be lucky enough to see this elusive predator, Africa's Wild Dogs. It was hard to piece the story together at the moment we arrived, still not seeing the dogs but we saw several vehicles parked and just looking into the brush. We heard warning calls from a group of Gray Go-away-birds, and we diverted our attention to that direction. Out of the thick brush they came, a pack of six heading for the road. To our surprise, they did not race across it, but chose to lie down and rest under some shade-giving shrubs right next to the road. There were other vehicles, but it wasn't a big jam up and Peace was able to get us in a wonderful position to try to photograph. Capturing good images proved difficult due to the intense contrast of shade and bright sun, combined with the pattern of the six different dogs, each unique, that blended right in. Despite the challenges,



we had a wonderful time, almost 15 minutes of being able to view them greeting each other, sniffing various bushes, and moving off to regroup and hunt again as they had just lost their kill. We watched them they disappeared in to bushes too thick to follow. We got there in time and more!

Then it was off to see those that had ripped them of their kill, a group of Lions, we saw at least four of the pride bedded and grooming, wiping blood off their paws and faces. A scrappy Black-backed Jackal was sitting not far off and in time we also got great views of him. Vultures were starting to gather in the sky, and Peace took us away to stop for a moment and summarize the whole story, saying how lucky we were to see this entire drama unfold.

We need to stretch our legs and find a pitstop so we went to an official spot to do that by the river, but super cheeky Vervet Monkeys awaited us, and as we took out our coffee and cookies we found out just how tenacious they could be. One actually grabbed a cookie out of Carol's hand, which was shocking. She teased us from then on whenever a Vervet came near saying she was suffering from PTSD - post traumatic Simeon disorder - after that. We observed that they readily retreated from large African male humans, didn't think much about fair toned male tourist (Roger), and paid no attention at all to females (the rest of us). With three female females surrounding our cookies and coffee – and then grabbed an entire pack of ginger cookies which it took up a tree to eat one by one with relish.

We headed out to search for birds, as we'd already seen almost 60 species even with all this mammal action. Peace had heard on the bush news about yet another amazing sighting, right after Donna had said "I sure hope we get to see some smaller cats...". This sighting not a smaller cat, but a beautiful female Leopard, resting in the shade of the Woolly Caper bushes, not much affected by Safari vehicle vehicles there to admire her. Vehicles and guides were surprisingly respectful of each other, allowing turns for each to view, a credit to the Botswana style of character, where gentleness prevails as to allow fairness in these situations. We've had a morning to remember, and by the time we return to our camp for lunch, we were still all smiles from our sightings.

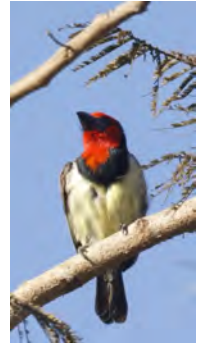


In the afternoon, after a nice respite, we thought we'd go back to the area so rich and predators as there were a lot of Kudu, an Impala, and in general abundant wildlife activity. Stopping by the gate to do paperwork, we took a few minutes at the shop as Harriet had her eye on one of the irresistible wall hanging there, with elephants and giraffes and African geometric design designs in bright colors. Others soon joined in the fun. Roger, always so friendly, engaged with the local women running the shop and all had good fun. With treasures in hand, we headed into the field, and while we didn't find any other large predators, we did find a group of Giraffe that were absolutely fascinating to observe. They were going down in the same position they do to drink, with their legs spread wide, but this was for the purpose of eating calcium salt salts. They took this position rapidly and repeatedly, and there were at least four individuals doing the same behavior. In the midst of the group was a young female, probably just starting to come into estrous as the big adult male was allowing the other younger males to sniff and follow her which he would not do if she was receptive. So we watched a long, graceful ballet of Giraffes, bending and twisting and sniffing and following the female as the sun cast a golden glow on their heights. There were numerous Elephants sharing the same floodplain zone, and tourist boats on the river behind. We had to tear ourselves away but finally had to made our way at the gate, pausing to watch a troop of baboons where the babies were sliding down a tree with smooth bark. They seem to delight in the game in a group, as did the kids in the Jeep next to ours, and it was fun to watch the young of two species interact.

We came back to the cozy welcome of Festus and Peggy, who had cooked a dinner of roasted potatoes, beef fillet, and vegetables for us. She had a milk tart for dessert that was just divine. In the middle of dinner, Festus called and we looked over to see his flashlight shining on a Spotted Eagle owl that had dropped in - perching upright in plain view. What a day!

Thurs., July 16 More Wild Dogs! | Victoria Falls | Gracious Waterberry Inn

We had an early breakfast in camp, and sad good-bye to Peggy, Festus and the crew. We checked for a Leopard to be resting in one of the trees as Peace had seen drag marks not far from camp indicating activity the day before. No Leopard, so off we went. We wound our way out the dirt two-track, turning to the park gate on the



main highway, at that point we'd meet our transfer vehicle to cross the border in Zimbabwe for a first look at incredible Victoria Falls.

There was not a lot of traffic but several heavy trucks. We could see animals on the road ahead and slowed down – unbelievably it was a pack of Wild Dogs! In fact it was the same pack we had observed in detail the previous day, some 10 kilometers away! We recognized several individuals. They were totally chill, too chill for a busy highway location. While Lions had stolen their kill yesterday, today they were now well fed so had obviously made a kill that morning, several had blood on their faces, some were grooming and cleaning and four were relentless playing, leaping into the air, grabbing ears and noses, chasing each other under and around a fallen log. At times they ran downhill and the play spilled out into the road much to our chagrin. A few small cars passed without lingering. Then a heavy truck approached. We feared the worse, but the driver slowed down and came to a stop, stayed there some time to watch them or let them pass. We applauded the driver when he moved slowly away. We watched for about 15 minutes. They showed no real sign of moving, but another truck slowed and asked us to move on even though we were pulled fully off the road. It was time for us to go and the dogs safety with us staying could be viewed either way so we headed out, totally amazed by all the pack dynamics we witnessed with this pack for a second time.

We met Peace's niece, Beauty, who had a comfortable van ready for us to depart in. We said good-bye to Peace – hard to leave his big smile and kind, protective care. It was a short drive to the Zimbabwe border and we completed immigration quickly.

Once in Victoria Falls, about an hour's drive away, we had plans to meet the team from the Painted Dog Research organization at the River Brewing Company for lunch and miraculously were on time, despite our unexpected moments of viewing dogs. They were eager to hear of our sightings, and started their talk by giving us the history of this pack over the last decade or more. Greg Rasmussen is the director and founder of the organization and it was clear he has made a huge impression on the younger Zambian biologists with him. The older of this trio, MK, had been with Greg for over ten years as an experienced tracker. They had some wonderful stories to share of field adventures. The other two, Vincent and Jonathan, were working on projects, one on the impact of den disturbance on reproductive success of the packs and one on road collisions. They



were keen to know what trucking company driver had been so responsible and Peg pledged to write a letter, perhaps useful in their SLOW DOWN, Stop the Carnage campaign. Roger would later comment on how meaningful these visits were, to help us all understand the challenges these species face and to witness the dedication of those trying to make a difference.

We had to tear ourselves away, taking a photo of our combined group for memories. Nearby, one of the seven wonders of the world, a World Heritage Site was calling – Victoria Falls! We had a fun afternoon walking the rim trail and feeling the spray of very high water levels making the falls just roar. We took lots of photos, admired birds that we could find, and just soaked in all the beauty. The Zimbabwe side has the primo views; we walked directly in line with the water crashing over this hard basalt rock in thundering force.

We met back up with Beauty at 4PM and she helped us navigate one more final border crossing into Zambia, thankfully with a combined 2-country visa so it was pretty quick. Drivers from Waterberry Lodge were there to meet us and the drive was about 40 minutes upriver.

We arrived and marveled at the property as if it was a mirage. After five days of camping and cold winter nights we were at a lodge. Best of all our group fit perfectly into their “farmhouse” section so we had it all to ourselves. Massive Waterberry and other trees surrounded what felt like an elegant private home with five bedrooms and a central living area, extensive gardens and a riverfront view. Hot showers, some wine or juice by the campfire and then an elegant dinner followed. The food was beyond amazing, each of the three entrees offered was divine. The presentation of the food made us feel so special, and we slept under electric blankets so we could bake all we liked. We all agreed next trip plan TWO nights here, this time was so rejuvenating for us.

Fri., July 17 Dawn Boat Trip | Flight to Lusaka | Free Time to Rejuvenate

We woke up ahead of dawn feeling luxurious in our warm rooms. We’d scheduled a dawn boat ride, a chance to get out on the Zambezi River to look for Finfoot and other species. We left in the dark and listened to the mournful calls of Water Thick-knee, joined in time by the bell like tones of African Fish Eagle. Our trip turned out to be more about quiet, beauty, the sunrise and sense of space and we all enjoyed it, though Elizabeth joked she could feel Peg’s let’s get birding vibe... Our local boat man was knowledgeable and once we dove in, our best bird experience was a sunlit group of Pink-bellied Pelicans, new for the trip.

We returned to a beautifully decorated table and then perfectly cooked breakfast choices of our selection. That was between birds – the gardens were hopping and we had super views of Scarlet-breasted, Collared and White-



bellied Sunbirds. We found Gray-headed Bushshrike, Collared Palm Thrush and enjoyed the antics of a mob of Green Wood Hoopoe. Time went quickly but we had a scheduled flight to Lusaka, the last scheduled for that day. This was the airport closest the next part of our journey, river time in Kafue NP along a remote section of the Lunga River.

The afternoon was largely taken up by travel and rest. Staff from Wild Dogs Lodge in Lusaka greeted us, and we were there in time to enjoy a free afternoon. Roger and Donna enjoyed the pool, several took naps and showers, and Peg, Elizabeth and Harriot walked around the grounds for some birding, getting good looks at Brown Firefinch down by the chicken coop. Wild Dogs is about twenty-five minutes from the airport so very handy. It is welcoming with a nice swimming pool, a lawn with fruit trees, bananas, and huge shade trees, sculptures and art abound. We all enjoyed a patio dinner, chicken with veggies and other fixings, and re-organized our gear for the following days.

Sat., July 18 Drive to Kafue NP | Lunga Kikiju Camp

We had a fairly long drive, the first part on paved road through the city of Lusaka, then passing through rural areas with agricultural fields and lots of life with people coming and going on bicycles, cars, and old tractors. The road turned to dirt before we reached a mining area. We took a break roadside in a woodland with our sandwiches, then passed by some pretty horrific looking mining camps quickly constructed for new mine laborers.

Finally we were in the bush, back to quiet, and stopping for a pontoon ferry we spied some birds, the Lesser Moorhen a highlight species. The pontoon took one vehicle at a time, an adventure in itself! Continuing on through the woodlands, we kept seeing vultures and decided to follow their activity. This led us to an Elephant that had died of natural causes, probably a week to ten days ago. It was a gripping scene with vultures going inside the carcass from two ends and the stench was strong, so we took a peek and got out of their quickly. We did get good views of two White-headed Vultures among the far more plentiful Hooded and White-backed. Frank reported it to the wildlife authorities that went in subsequent days who confirmed our hunch it had died a natural death.

We got into riverine vegetation about twenty minutes out from the lodge and marveled at the large trees. We took a quick coffee break and watched the antics of a young Hippo, with a group standing out of the water, as it investigated a medium sized Nile Crocodile. We found hornbills, various songbirds, and both Pied and Brown-hooded Kingfishers too.



Our welcoming bush camp on the banks of the Lunga River was incredibly peaceful. The river was its centerpiece, with four tents on platforms facing it, and a spacious dining and bar/ rest area under a huge thatched roof. With massive riverine corridor trees it was shaded, comfortable and quiet. There was no boat traffic on the river other than our own. And no road other than a dirt track winding through Kafue NP.

Birds were the main feature here, but Harriot and Linda had a good mammal find soon after arrival, a Gambian Sun Squirrel. Black-backed Barbets called from the treetops, Gray-headed Bushshrikes called and finally came into view, and an Olive Woodpecker was often in trees by the dining area.

Sun., July 19 Travel through Kafue NP | Lunga River | Lunga Kikuji Camp

We did two boat safaris today, morning and afternoon, wanting to maximize the unique attributes of this site. These were wonderful, relaxing and a chance to see wildlife in a totally different way. Brilliantly colored Schalow's Turaco was highly visible here, often vocal and not difficult to find, a treat! For our tea and coffee stop in the morning, we landed and (once clearing the area of any danger from crocodiles or hippos) had a great time exploring, finding a pair of African Fish Eagles on a nest, a dozen Water Thick-knees, a Black-throated Wattle-eye and a Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike. Linda was amazed at the huge Hippo beds carved in the sand beneath shade trees.

Along the river we saw several Finfoots, male, female and immature. African Openbill and Wooley-necked Storks were seen, and Frank explained just how the Openbill used its highly unusual beak. Even though they were common, we all enjoyed watching Hamerkop with their crazy head feathers changing shape on a whim. This was our first location to observe African Harrier Hawk as well as African Goshawk. Trumpeter Hornbills crossed the river in good numbers, we saw them perched and flying – massive and highly vocal birds only Carol had seen previously at Mowana Lodge in Botswana. Bee-eaters were active along the bank. We saw many White-fronted and a few Bohm's Bee-eater, the only location on the trip for this handsome species. We found four species of kingfishers but Roger's spotting of Half-collared, shortly after our arrival, won the prize. Black-backed Barbets, showy on their treetop perches were new for the trip as was Greater Honeyeater. Shrieks of Brown-necked Parrot seemed to split the sky.

It was fun to just explore the river. Donna had a big smile on her face with such good sightings and the chance to watch bird behavior. At first and last light there were perfect, artistic reflections of tree limbs; in the afternoon a few clouds dotted the sky. There was no other habitation for miles around and for the full day we saw no other boats.



Back on the sand island our wonderful team from the lodge were waiting with a lovely table set up to provide us with sundowners, how lovely to find them with drinks waiting and a basket of popcorn after a lively full day!

Mon., July 20 Lunga Kikiju Camp to the Busanga Plains Safari | Kafue NP

We met by the fire on a chilly morning (42 degrees F) for breakfast, Roger catching us up on his latest necked Doves as the background chorus.

We traveled to our next camp in open Safari vehicles, with all of us in one vehicle and luggage in the other going direct. They made it in four hours, but we stretched our trip to more like six hours, with various stops for birding.

Most of the route was through Miombo forest where we found a group of Pale-billed Hornbills, a bird party that included Green-capped Eremomelas, and a species we really hope to find, and noisy Racket-tailed Rollers. These are big rollers and spectacular both in color and in their raucous calling. We found a pair and one flew back and forth over and opening, giving us at least a good show, and though we were disappointed not to have perfect perched views showing off their rackets, we were still happy to find them.

Veronica, Chi-Chi, and others that we knew from the first camp we're there to welcome us at the second, it was great to see their smiles before enjoying lunch in a beautiful dining ramada of our bush camp that overlooked the expansive Busanga Plain.

We were happy to have three nights here and knew the area to be quite rich and wildlife. We were amazed at the size and variation of habitat within Kafue National Park.

We got here later than we thought we would, so we took a shorter break and then headed out for sundowners in the open plain and a short night drive. We were rewarded with good views of Side-striped Jackal which we've not seen before. We also saw Swamp Nightjar in the sunset, nice!

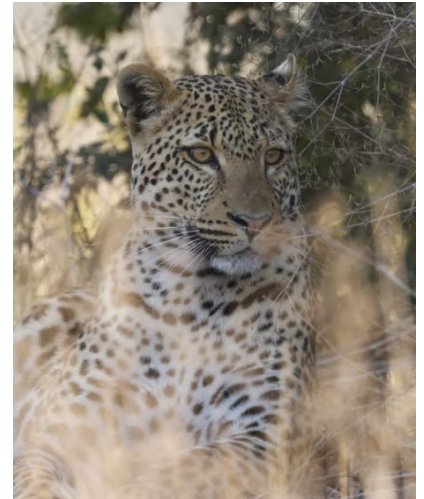
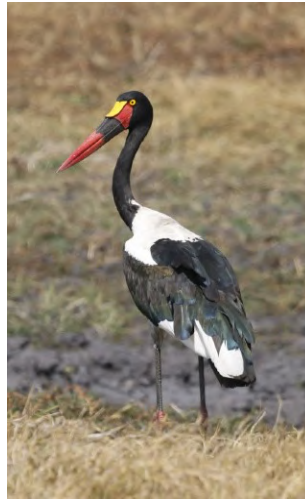


Tues., July 21 A Memorable (BONANZA!) Day in Kafue NP

We were bundled up for breakfast by the campfire and had just put together our bowls of yogurt and fruit cups of steaming coffee when we watched a Reedbuck race by in the near darkness and then heard yipping and realized right out front of the Lodge, crossing a road that led off into the grass, was a Wild Dog! First one and then two, three... ten in all!

Right behind the pack of dogs was our guide, John in the vehicle – ready to GO. He encouraged us to drop our breakfasts, saying “get in they are hunting and it will be quick!” It was not long till we caught up with one of the dogs seemingly separated from the others. The pack had spread out, and three or four were left behind in the road, we watched as they paced and leaped up tall to see over the high grass. Soon they were off and so were we. Wild Dogs eat very quickly (as so many other predators scavenge their kills) and while we moved our position taking maybe 5 to 10 minutes to reach another vantage point, what we found was a group of dogs that had finished feeding and were resting. Some had blood on their faces. One young one was carrying around what was left of the head and nose of the Reedbuck and other frisky dogs were chasing it. They were energetic and frolicking, and we guessed that it was the elders were the ones sitting quietly in the grass and trees. We sat there for quite some time just taking it all in and watching the pack dynamics. Each dog had a unique pattern, one particularly unique animal was mainly black, which is unusual. A couple of the dogs carried collars placed on them by the Zambian Carnivore Project team. We looked forward to hearing more about this pack and its evolution when we met with them in a few days. For now we learned firsthand just how much ground they can cover and how quickly they had consumed the unlucky Reedbuck.

In time another vehicle came by and by drivers talking to each other we learned they had seen a trio of Cheetah brothers, well known in the area, about an hour ago. What a dilemma, stay with the dogs who are starting to disperse with some already heading back to the den or head on to find possible Cheetahs. We had seen some wonderful behavior, lots of frisky play, and even the inquisitive encounter of two dogs with a roosting Square-tailed Nightjar that held its ground then did a quick flight, landing right below Roger in our vehicle.



We decided to head out and look for the Cheetah as several in our group had never seen one in the wild. The sun was giving us more beautiful light for photos and we caught some quick images as followed three dogs down the road giving them plenty of space as we enjoyed watching their beautiful and now illuminated patterns. The dogs headed off to the woods which freed the road for us and we took off, hoping to find the Cheetahs. We went at a leisurely pace, knowing it was getting late and they were likely resting. While we did not find our target species, we found a big male Roan Antelope, sometimes called the Clown Antelope for its floppy ears and comical face pattern. It was in the company of Wattled Cranes and a Saddle-billed Stork along a small drainage - a lovely combination of fauna all in an open landscape.

We returned for camp for lunch, a nice break and a chance to catch up on our species list.

We left at 3:30 pm, hoping to find the Cheetah brothers gang but again, we did not find them. We found along the wetlands, watching huge groups of Lechwe and Puku. John took us to an area known for Lion activity and Roger was the first to spot them. These were female lionesses with 5 to 6 month old cubs and they were lying around a large vegetated island as if it were sunbathers at the beach. Several were rolled upward with bellies exposed to the sky, likely cooling off, and we watched as some rolled leisurely over on their backs. Some preened their paws; the cubs moved around a bit and it was just a wonderful experience to see them all. This is a large pack locally called the Papyrus Pack and it number is 21 in total. We stayed with the ladies and cubs until sunset, then pulled over to the side near an adjacent water lagoon at a safe distance for sundowners. We got out our scopes and scanned, finding African Spoonbills, African Jacana and African Painted Snipe. Donna got her fix on Warthogs, a favorite animal.

We were so happy with our day we that we lingered in this relaxing African end of day sundowner tradition. It was dark as we headed out, we saw a number of eyes in the spotlight, moving animals coming off of the island – Lions. They were led by the big females, heading to the water for a drink, then likely out to hunt. Moving in a single file line they looked impressive. We let them be not to shine



lights on them further and continued on. Ahead of us our evening turned out to be one of the most memorable night drives in all of Peg's time in Africa!

First off in the road we saw a Large Spotted Genet, and shortly after in tall grass an African Civet, two members of a mammal family we do not have on our side of the world, Viviperidae. We continued on and off to the side of the road saw two African Porcupine and soon after that a Serval! This beautiful, small cat stared back at us in the distance, thankfully it did not go back into tall grass around it and we were able to study its pattern and watch it move through an opening. We couldn't believe our luck and had the buzz of a successful drive as we headed into a wooded section of the road. Then, we came around a bend and almost bumped into the three Cheetah Brothers! John cut the engine and even so close to us, they were engrossed in activity and oblivious to us, and we were the only vehicle there. We were speechless by this point and trying to get photos and videos as we could in the spotlight. They were marking territory, each one turn squirting scent onto various bushes and downed logs. One came over to a tree and we thought it might even climb it but instead scratched it and left a good scent mark on the trunk. We watched for several minutes before they eventually headed down the tree line out to the open plains and out of sight. We did get some images – even using our phones!

We continued on and there was one more African Porcupine very close to us in the road, and we all got a stunning view. Both Frank and Peg said it was the best view they'd ever had with many night safaris in their experience. No photos of this one as it was just too quick and we were still getting over the Cheetah buzz. We picked up sightings a Scrub Hare, then thought we best head in - by now it was getting quite cold and dark. But one more event capped off the night – Wild Dogs! They were heading out to hunt and we saw them licking, chirping and encouraging each other, then they ran off into the night. We had come full circle on this amazing day starting and ending with one of Africa's most elusive species. Kafue National Park at impressed us beyond anything we imagined.

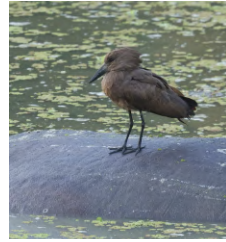
A good dinner and our trusty hot water bottles to curl up around and we were out like lights!



Wed., July 22 Zambia's Busanga Plains – Exploring Wetlands in the Dry Season

We heard the dogs again at breakfast, seeing a few shadows in the grass, so we were not surprised when we ran into them again this time it quite a distance, but with a fascinating story that unfolded. We had made a big loop around the camp and actually we were not looking for the dogs, but looking at whatever we found when we saw antelope bunching up and starting to move out of the area. It was fascinating it looked like they were pouring out of a funnel, hundreds of them, Puku and Lechwe alike. John reckoned right away that it was Wild Dogs putting on the pressure, just by the behavior of so many animals running. He said with Lions they bunch up and stay alert with dogs they just run because everything is chaotic and everything happens so fast. We heard a kill, and at the same time watched a Lechwe herd erupt from behind one of the tree islands.

To get there, we had to navigate cross-country and find a way ourselves to cross the drainage. By the time we got up to them, there was nothing left of the animal, so fast was the feeding. They had grouped up again as if they might hunt. Linda and Harriot who have worked in conservation to help Wild Dogs were just beside themselves as we watched more playful interactions with leaping and circling in a general huddle. They moved off down drainage on the opposite side of the one we were so we were able to follow them without disturbing them. It was absolutely beautiful, watching the pack move as they made perfect reflections in the water on the route chose to go down the ridge of the drainage. We stopped and watched from the distance as they seem to want to cross. Several times they bunched up and it looked like one would take the leap only to dip their heads down to what looked like fairly deep water, and pull back to continue further to find an easier place. With morning sunlight on the ridges of the drainage edge, it looked a bit like the Badlands terrain back home. By now a few of the braver dogs had crossed so the pack was split and probably for close to 30 minutes. We watched them on two side sides of the river, trying to regroup. One just would not cross and two waited up for it as three other others set the pace to cross a huge area of the plane and disappear. Peg



named him Pokey and it stuck. In time, all 11 were accounted for and off they went.

We then then ambled our way along, looking for birds finding small Buttonquail, Capped Wheatear, four species of cisticolas (Carol's favorites), and Quailfinch. Carol who joked she did not do "small birds" kept us laughing. We found Southern Ground Hornbills which filled the size requirements for all, over time seeing two family groups with different aged young.

The morning passed quickly. We saw a distant Hyena, many water birds, 50+ Collared Pratincole and a big pod of Hippos. The landscape of tree islands, all started on termite mounds with growing complex overtime, and the sea of grass was just enchanting. Frank plucked up one of the columnar mounds, about the size of a giant zucchini, and tore it open explaining the fungal gardening and other aspects of termite ecology – fascinating and vital to the ecosystem.

Thurs., July 23 Travel to Mfuwe | South Luangwa National Park

We kept to our morning routine, waking to calls of "morning, morning" and in the background Hyena, Gray-crowned Crane and Jackal. A Barred Owl called, passing the baton to daytime birds, Tropical Boubou and Ring-necked Dove.

We decided to follow the woodland edge farther than we had before. We passed herds of Wildebeest and Zebra, then found a group of Lichtenstein's Hartebeest and a lone Sable Antelope. Over coffee and tea and shortbread cookies (no calorie Carol says) we counted up 14 different antelopes seen in Kafue, of a potential 21 - the largest # of any national park in Africa.

Back to the lodge to pack up, freshen up, have brunch and head to the airstrip for our arranged charter flight. We saw vultures circling above a wooded island, and went over to check. We found only the skull and neck bone left of a Reedbuck, another wild dog kill in the night. Our flight was a bit late, so we looped around the plain. A sighting of a Tawny Eagle being chased by the Lanner Falcon we had spied earlier was our reward. Spencer entertained Carol and Roger who stayed on the airstrip, clearing the runway then zooming back as if a pilot in training.

We had two planes, one for our luggage and a Chieftain for ourselves. It has space just enough for our group. From the dirt airstrip we had a fine view of the plains, dotted with tree islands, laced by shrinking lagoons and



threaded with game trails in all directions. A two-hour flight would set us down in the final location of our journey, Zambia's most well-known and visited South Luangwa NP.

We landed too late for a safari drive, but no one seemed to mind, we were ready for some creature comforts in this exquisite riverside lodge, with beautiful furnishings, a bit of luxury but not overdone, just right with ambience of African design and a bonus of plentiful birds and wildlife right on the grounds. Our rooms were built right at the edge of a lagoon, loaded with wading birds, Hippos and Nile Crocodiles. We teased Carol, a giant fan of Hippos, that this was the closest she'd ever get to sleeping next to her beloveds.

We settled in, lovely hot showers, then met for drinks, dinner, our list and the plan for the next day.

Fri., July 24 & 25 Exploring South Luangwa National Park

We had one more segment to our in-depth exploration of this part of Africa, highlighting some of its most significant wildlife areas in detail. Our stay would be two nights at Mfuwe Lodge inside the park, and 2 at their associated Kayenda Bush Camp, a high end camp and as an ending treat, quite an uptick from our previous ones. This lodge and camp have an impressive community outreach and conservation support reputation and we were glad to know our visit has far-reaching impact.

We had two vehicles here, different as we'd been in one at all other locations on the trip. By this time everyone enjoyed spreading out, and we could always radio each other for important sightings. Our lodge guides Elijah and Prince were top-rate. They were professional, knowledgeable, flexible to our pace and what we wanted to see, but always ready to provide information. They were great at getting us to just the right place for morning coffee break and evening sundowners.

On morning and afternoon drives, we looped around varied habitats, including a number of oxbow lakes, some still seasonally connected to the Luangwa River. The river itself was the top signature of the park. At this time of year, it has a good flow of water, but also extensive sand flats which were great places to look for birds, including White-fronted Plover and African Skimmer. Groups of Hippos were always cavorting, oxpeckers of both flavors (Red-billed and Yellow-billed) looked for ticks on massive Nile Crocodiles lined the shores. Occasionally we'd see a local fisherman poling his way in a small wooden canoe through these creatures - what nerves of steel!



Some oxbows held palms that had big fruits in abundance. Others were lined by huge African Ebony trees, in one of these we found a Pel's Fishing Owl. There were inland areas hammered by Elephants in the 1970's when populations were high, these looked like small deserts. Three species of hornbills liked to perch on standing dead trunks, and we often found Zebra here, a subspecies unique to the valley. The Luangwa Valley is a southern extension of Africa's famous rift valley system, exposing some of the oldest rocks on the continent.

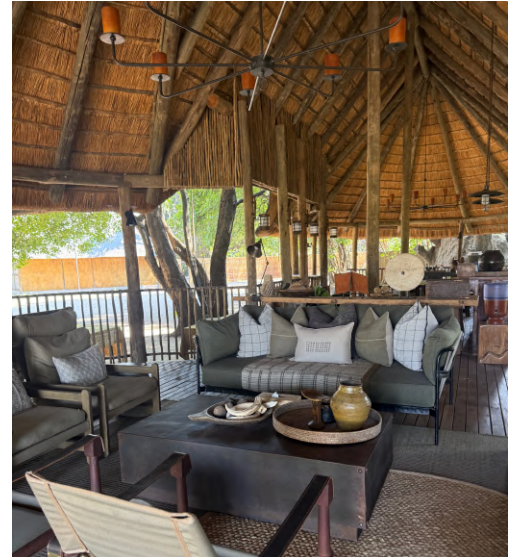
Each day we had breakfast at 6 AM and were out by 6:30 AM as the sunrise. We stayed out until 10:30-11:00 AM, returning to freshen up for a lavish brunch. We all enjoyed a post-lunch break with time to nap, sort through photos, check out the lodge's gift store, one of the best of the trip. At 3 PM we had tea, watching off the spacious deck to see Puku with young, African Sacred Ibis, Yellow-billed Storks, and on one occasion, a Hippo demonstrating just how far his tail fan mechanics could send his liquified poop. Tea time gave us lots of laughs and a chance to enjoy each other's company.

One afternoon we left early to stop in town at Tribal Textiles, a community supporting women's cooperative with inspired fabrics in a rainbow of colors. Peg had primed everyone based on her past positive experience there and we all had a lot of fun. Peg, Linda and Harriot dove deep in the bins to find Wild Dog patterns. Carol had fun buying gifts, and Donna and Roger found a few treasures then took time to interact with the staff and some local kids, dancing and creating rock art in the sand. Our guides teased us that all our packages weighed down the land rovers. We all felt good supporting the local community.

We had a full day from the lodge, with morning and afternoon safaris and then a morning safari drive on which we wound our way up to Kuyenda Bush Camp.

Sat., July 25 (afternoon) & Sun., July 26 One Last Outpost: Kuyenda Bushcamp

Kuyenda Bush camp exceeded all of our expectations. We had driven through a lot of Elephant-browsed Mopani scrub to get there, fairly bleak and here was a lovely oasis with palms and large shade trees. The central dining and relaxation area was well covered with a high thatched roof and decorated by a designer with real talent to give it a feel of the old Africa, carried in all details. This camp is in the location prized by one of the Pioneer founders, Phil Berry, and the design motif was chosen to honor him. Comfortable furniture inside and captures around a campfire ring outside give us plenty of seating areas. And in this rustic setting, it was a bit crazy that they had Wi-Fi and people immediately gravitated to their phones. But it was good to catch up with family and home for a bit and then return our thoughts to Africa.



Prince and Elijah stayed with us for this section of the trip and we kept our same rhythm of early breakfast back for brunch a good midday break and out in the late afternoon lingering into the evening so we could spotlight our way home and see a few of the night animals.

The night safaris both in Kafue and here at South Luangwa are among our best memories of the trip. Every single one gave us views of animals we might not have otherwise seen, and we pinched ourselves over what we got to see. Kafue's drive had been legendary but South Luangwa's were still really good. Here we found tiny nocturnal mammal, the Elephant Shrew, which was really wonderful to witness as we watched it wave it's little proboscis in the grass. Elizabeth got wonderful photos. We repeatedly genets and civets and their beautiful cost patterns were a wonder. We found ginger-colored Pel's Fishing Owl, a large, and highly specialized owl of the riverine habitat. We saw Giraffes sitting down on their hind legs to rest. We saw a super fit male Leopard walk out from the trees, survey the adjacent meadow where a herd of Puku grazed at some distance, and then walk right back to the trees.

Our day outings were pleasing as well, we had seen so many birds and mammals. There were not a lot of new sightings, but we were able to take time and watch behavior. We had a family of tree squirrel going in and out of holes in a dead Mopani at various levels. Their scampering was quite entertaining. We watched Elephants at length and many had babies so watching the behavior and interactions was really fun. One fairly massive animal had a great scratch over a downed log, stepping over it in one direction to rub its belly and private parts and then turning around and doing the other side with equal delight. We watched Giraffes, almost always found in groups, and one set of young males looked like they were in for a long bout of necking, to us a form of ballet and for them away of testing each other strength. We stopped at lagoons where African Fish Eagles called and glided overhead. Various ibis, herons, and egrets proved into the mud. Sometimes a gang of Green Wood-hoopoes would giggle their way through the tall trees. We had a little bird parties that Frank was especially good at sorting through to pull out some of the rarities. One of our vehicles found beautiful Purple-crested Turacos while the other had to be content to watch the antics of Grey Go-away-birds another member of that family. Each outing was different, but had special sightings and it was really good to have time to watch and photograph Zebra, each with such a beautiful and unique straight pattern. Our coffee breaks were often near rivers or lagoons, so we had ample time to watch hippos, which were feeding a Nile Cabbage, and when they come up for air, sometimes wore the cabbage as hats, African Jacanas walk upon their massive backs and an occasional egret would join them on this movable feeding perch. In our third week of safari, it was very satisfying how many of the birds and mammals we could recognize and how much we had learned firsthand from our own observations



and from the stories of our local guides who had decades of experience with them. On our final day, we found ourselves saying goodbye to our favorites. Goodbye Elephants. Goodbye Zebra. Goodbye Giraffe.

Africa had truly stolen our hearts, and we would all love to return. Our group had been wonderfully compatible, all intrigued by the backstory of each animal we saw all eager to learn and experience, all patient with the occasional foibles of group life. We had several career ecologists with us that added depth to our sightings. There was a lot of humor shared. When we did our final wrap-up of favorite things in Africa, almost everyone mentioned the group as well as the animals, landscapes and dynamic animal behavior moments. Everyone listed the extraordinary time we've had with Wild Dogs at two of our locations in which we saw was so much more than we might hope for again we all knew it was special. Other highlights mentioned included Sable Antelope, chocolate in color and blending in so beautifully with the Mopani woodlands. We mentioned the poignant saga of the Cheetah brothers which had been separated, and we witnessed two calling for the lost third one loudly into the night. We had witnessed together the saga of an old, weak, and injured male Lion. He had spent three days at a Hippo carcass, so at least had a full belly, but it looked like his time was short and the ending would not be easy as Hyenas and vultures were constantly following these two brother lions, and once they showed weakness, wouldn't hesitate. We had seen adorable baby animals of many species. We'd watched the curious feeding techniques of the African Openbill. We glided big rivers and had sundowners on an island where we walked into the woods to see Hippo beds etched in the sand. We met the staff of two conservation organizations on three different occasions and heard news about a lot of their projects. The lasting impression was of incredible talent, and dedication which gave us hope that people were present that could help Africa face it's future wildlife challenges. It was satisfying to know that our travel benefited the local areas and also contributed to community benefit for those that live next to parks, helping them to be tolerant of animals that can create havoc with daily life, such as Elephants. Our local guides were absolutely terrific and Frank, our main guide had outdone himself to share his knowledge at every return. Memorable was him coming to get us breakfast to share a sighting of a new mammal, two tiny door mice that were cuddled up next to his sink in the slats of his safari tent. He told us the story of termites and how critical they are to the entire ecosystem. He shared information on insects and lizards, landscapes, birds and mammals.

Mon., July 27 Morning Game Drive | Flight to Lusaka | Departures

We had one final morning drive from bush camp, finding many of our favorites, leisurely watching herds of Elephants, looking for turacos and other bird species, and soaking in our last looks at elegant Giraffe and young

Zebra foals. We had enjoyed each other's company so much, and celebrated our highlights of the journey over lunch back at Mfuwe Lodge, outside on the patio as Puku grazed and Hippos cavorted.

It was a short one hour flight back to Lusaka, and a simple walk from the domestic section of the airport to the international check-in desks for those leaving that night. Several of us booked an extra night to rest up ahead of travel. We hated to see our herd scatter, but it was time to head home. We hope to reunite on future Naturalist Journeys adventures!

Photos: Group (Elizabeth Trimble - ET), African Wild Dog (Peg Abbott - PA), Elephants (PA), Southern Cordonbleus (PA), Birding by Boat (PA), White-backed Night-Heron (PA), Half-collared Kingfisher (PA), African Openbill (PA), Baby Elephant (PA), Giraffe (PA), Sable (PA), Peace Guiding (PA), Yellow-billed Stork (PA), African Fish Eagle (PA), Exploring by Boat (PA), Safari Vehicle (ET), Zebra (ET), Little Bee-eater (PA), Scenic (ET), Pearl-spotted Owlet (PA), Campfire (ET), Baobab (PA), Baboon (PA), Breakfast on safari (ET), Giraffe (ET), Camp (ET), Black-collared Barbet (PA), Collared Sunbird (PA), Red-throated Twinspot (ET), Half-collared Kingfisher (ET), Black-throated Wattleeye (ET), Warthog (ET), Schalow's Turaco (PA), Safari Drive (ET), Leopard (ET), Lion cub (ET), Leopard (PA), Lechwe (PA), Cheetah (ET), Side-striped Jackal (PA), Zebras (ET), Hippos (ET), Enjoying safari (ET), Crowned Hornbill (PA), Hippo Pile (PA), Hamerkop (PA), Gray-crowned Crane (PA), Lion (PA), Hyena (PA), Elephants (PA), Common Waxbill (PA), African Buffalo (PA), Hadada Ibis (PA), Giraffe (PA), Zebra (PA)