



## Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures Ultimate Botswana Bird, Mammal & Other Species List September 6-21, 2019

*Peg Abbott, Naturalist Journeys guide, with Ewan Masson and Killor Sepapelane of Masson Safaris and a host of lodge and local guides and 11 participants: Greg, Mary, Tim, Dennis, Tina, Jan, Randall, Bob, Marsha, Colin, and Elizabeth*

*List compiled by Peg Abbott*

Summary: Labeled as Ultimate Botswana, we made an effort on this itinerary to get to a wide variety of habitats and this provided us with rich viewing opportunities of a fine mix of species. In the bird realm, we did well on the regional specialties including Wattled Crane, Slaty Egret, Rufous-bellied Heron, Lesser Jacana, Allen's Gallinule, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Bradfield's Hornbill, Chirping Cisticola and Southern Pied Babblers. We got fabulous looks at iconic species including more African Fish Eagles than we could count, numerous Saddle-billed Stork, Lappet-faced Vulture, Giant Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, African Green Pigeon and numerous (ubiquitous!) Lilac-breasted Roller. We saw 19 species of the heron clan and its allies, including the elusive White-backed Night-Heron. Time in arid Nxai Pan of the Kalahari Desert gave us a number of larks and bustards; we tallied as many as 15 Kori Bustards in a day! A rainbow of color was provided by good variety of sunbirds, waxbills and bee-eaters, including nesting White-fronted Bee-eater busy at their riverbank holes. We found Curlew Sandpiper, and both Chestnut-banded and Three-banded Plovers among varied shorebirds, and we marveled at African Skimmer feeding in sunset glow. Rock Pratincole was a nice bonus species, found this year in a rocky area of the Chobe River.

In the mammal realm we went off the charts with 8 Leopard sightings, including views of a female hunting, a female pulling a fresh-killed Impala up a tree, and a big male descending from his comfortable Sausage tree rest spot to groom and stretch and walk off into the night. We spent time with two different packs of Wild Dogs, one of which made an Impala kill right outside our camp to which we had front-row seats, all to ourselves. We followed the patrol of three huge male Lion in their prime along the Khwai, and watched Elephants, often with young, daily. We found some big aggregates (20+) of Giraffe and, in arid Nxai Pan, had a never-ending show at a crowded waterhole. Rarer species included Ardwolf, Honey Badger and on our Xakanaxa boat trip, two Sitatunga, difficult to see antelope of the Papyrus realm. Our success was in large part due to having a highly participatory group, great spotters eager to be out, and some talented local guides. A super trip!

### **Birds (269 species of 71 families):**

#### **Struthionidae: Ostriches (1)**

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**Common Ostrich** *Struthio camelus* — (6) Nxai Pan gave us our first sightings of this archaic giant and a great chance to watch its behavior. Often there were groups at the waterholes so we got to see interactions and even some wing-flapping, bowing and dancing. Nxai Pan was the stronghold for this species, In Moremi we had just one lone individual seen on a couple of days by the Mbomba Island Camp.

### **Anatidae: Ducks and Geese (8)**

**White-faced Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata*— (8) We first encountered flocks in the wet lagoons of Moremi, and the boat trip into the Xakanaxa area. We often heard them first, and at times watched flocks of twenty or more flying across to another marsh. This is a lovely duck and their white faces make them easy to spy even amid lush grasses of the scattered wetlands. High counts occurred on the Chobe River corridor.

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*— (12) Common. We had a few pair seen at Maun along the river in what tiny water areas remained, then saw them in regularly at Moremi at all the water features. They continued as an everyday bird, sometimes we saw 50 or more of them in an outing through our time at Chobe. We did not see chicks, but often pairs.

**Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis* — (3) We had one quick flyover of this large goose on our first afternoon outing by boat on the Chobe, then once on the houseboat found them repeatedly at a marshy cove west of Kasane. There were five in the group we saw regularly and we got close views of them feeding and preening.

**African Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus auratus* — (4) A water-lily habitat specialist, we first found these beautiful small geese on the boat trip to Xakanaxa where we got pretty close to them in our boat. We had them by the largest of the wetland areas we visited in Moremi, XXX, swimming as we had our coffee and tea break. We then navigated to two lagoons off the Chobe that captured this same feeling of the Delta wet water habitat. They were skittish here, not allowing us close, but always some were in view, counts of 30 or more on our second lagoon day.

**Hottentot Teal** *Spatula hottentota*— (2) We saw the same group of 3 or 4 Hottentots in a small water feature with little vegetation that we passed on game drives while in Moremi at the Mbomba Camp.

**Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata*— (1) A lone bird spotted by Peg, near Paradise Pond in Moremi, visited by one of our vehicles en route to the boat dock for our Xakanaxa trip.

**Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* — (2) Not typical for the Moremi area, we got photos and video of a small group of Cape Teal which stayed on one of the water areas not far from Third Bridge. The first sighting was one lone bird, the second in the same pond, a small group of four.

**Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythroryncha* — (1) Three individuals seen in a small pool off the main river on our game drive in Chobe National Park on our arrival day to Chobe.

### **Numididae: Guineafowl (1)**

**Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* — (15) Seen everyday, except for our first day in Maun. This often-comical species entertained us with their antics, raising their queer-shaped bodies to look flattened as they'd run, calling and running about in confused commotion, or simply sunning themselves as they showed off their beautiful patterns. We saw separate groups of 10 to 50, numerous times a day.

### **Phasianidae: Quail, Partridges, and Pheasants (3)**

**Red-billed Francolin (Spurfowl)** *Pternistis adspersus* — (11) Common. This was the most common species of francolin we encountered, with repeated sightings each day of pairs and small groups feeding, often along the road margin.

**Swainson's Francolin (Spurfowl)** *Pternistis swainsonii* — (4) This species was far less common, most often being seen as pairs, but with looking we typically found them, at times alongside the more numerous Red-billed. All sightings were in the wooded areas of Moremi Game Reserve.

**Crested Francolin** *Francolinus sephaena* — (5) Seen from both camps of Moremi Game Reserve and then again at Chobe on our land-based game drive. They were less conspicuous and not common, but present, mainly as pairs.

### **Columbidae: Pigeons and Doves (8)**

(I) **Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* — (2) Seen in Maun on two different days driving through the city.

**Mourning Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decipiens*— (2) Very few, seen first at Maun along the river, then not again until Chobe, where they occurred at the waterhole of our lodge and down in the town where we made a quick birding and gift store stop ahead of the houseboat embarkation.

**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* — (14) Common. Seen almost daily, at times in numbers of forty or more, less common than Ring-necked but always present. We heard their calls around our camps and saw them many times a day.

**Ring-necked (Cape Turtle) Dove** *Streptopelia capicola* — (16) Abundant. An everyday sighting, often in numbers exceeding 100 and seen many times a day, basically a constant flow of them in even the driest places throughout the day. Watching them drink and bathe along the Chobe was fun.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* — (4) Surprisingly few this year, we had lone individuals seen just a few times. One was alongside an Emerald Spotted Wood Dove along the Chobe across from our Serondela mooring, nice to have the two smaller doves next to each other.

**Emerald Spotted Wood-Dove** *Turtur chalcospilos* — (9) While not numerous we would see one or two individuals sometimes 2-3 times a day. First seen going out of Royal Tree, in time all got good looks at their gem-like wing pattern of color.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* — (5) Seen as lone individuals up to a group of three, not common but widespread, seen at Maun, Nxai Pan, Moremi and Chobe.

**African Green-Pigeon** *Treron calvus* — (2) A quick flyover by a group of six as we watched a Leopard and then a yawning Hippo near a huge sausage tree in Moremi did not give us great looks, but the Sycamore Figs were not in fruit so while diligently searching, this group were the only individuals we found, though Greg spied them one other day it was again too quick a look.

#### **Pteroclididae: Sandgrouse (2)**

**Double-banded Sandgrouse** *Pterocles bicinctus* — (6) Seen daily in Moremi, pairs feeding on or near the roads.

**Burchell's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles burchelli*— (4) We had good views and good numbers in Nxai Pan where they were frequent visitors to the water holes, then scattered sightings in Moremi, typically pairs on the roads as we drove by.

#### **Otididae: Bustards (3)**

**Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori* — (6) We saw big numbers of these, as many as 15 a day while in Nxai Pan, then in Moremi we found the same single individual on two days.

**Red-crested Bustard** *Eupodotis ruficristata* — (3) Seen on all four days while at Nxai Pan, individuals and small groups, less common than White-quilled at this location.

**White-quilled Bustard (Northern Black Korhan)** *Eupodotis afraoides* — (3) We saw several groups each day while out exploring Nxai Pan, bright males in their dark black plumage with their groups of females and young.

#### **Musophagidae: Turacos (1)**

**Gray Go-away-bird (Gray Lourie)** *Corythaixoides concolor* — (11) A very common bird in Maun, Moremi and Chobe, at least 15 bathing one morning on the Chobe River is memorable. We were often alerted by their calls and Jan learned to imitate them well, we all laughed each time she talked to them.

#### **Cuculidae: Cuckoos and Allies (3)**

**Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis* — (3) The smallest of the three coucals and the least common, we got good looks and some photos in Moremi and Chobe.

**Coppery-tailed Coucal** *Centropus cupreicaudus*— (9) First seen in Maun, we then found them throughout Moremi and Chobe, a signature bird in their stronghold of the Okavango region.

**White-browed Coucal** *Centropus superciliosus* — (3) Seen on three days in Moremi, lone individuals, then one along the Chobe near Serondela, the second mooring of our houseboat stay.

### **Caprimulgidae: Nightjars and Allies (3)**

**Fiery-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus pectoralis*— (6) Heard more than seen, early risers did get some views. We heard them from Royal Tree in Maun, at Nxai Pan, and then from our camp in Chobe. “Oh Lord, please deliver me” is the local rendition of their call.

**Swamp (Natal) Nightjar** *Caprimulgus natalensis* — (1) One individual, heard from the Serondela mooring of our houseboat, calling from tall grasses repeatedly. Unlike the Square-tailed it was not responsive to call.

**Square-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus fossii*— (2) Heard at both moorings of our Chobe River houseboat, Peg heard its long repetitive call and got out early to test to see if they would respond, one came right in to the boat, and stayed some time in the lights for really nice views.

### **Apodidae: Swifts (2)**

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* — (1) A few individuals seen over the Chobe River near Kasane.

**African Palm-Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* — (7) Groups seen at Maun, Nxai Pan, Moremi and Chobe, associated mainly with palms which were scattered in these varied habitats.

### **Rallidae: Rails and Crakes (4)**

**Eurasian (Common) Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* — (2) Seen in the same water lily lagoons that we found Allen’s Gallinule and African Swampphen. This habitat this year of drought was severely condensed, and only in areas inaccessible to Elephants that feed on the tubers.

**Allen’s Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* – (2) Restricted to water lily lagoons where they remained close to the dense vegetation edges. We got good looks, often side by side with the African Swampphens, high count of four.

**African Swampphen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis* — (2) Seen only in the water lily lagoons we visited with a lot of surface vegetation, we got excellent looks at three individuals in two different locations.

**Black Crake** *Amaurornis flavirostra* — (6) A bold species for its clan, Black Crakes were seen as individuals or pairs in wetland areas with tall vegetation around the edges, both along the river and at inland lagoons.

### **Gruidae: Cranes (1)**

**Wattled Crane** *Bugeranus carunculatus* — (4) A thrill to find two pairs, one from each of our camps in Moremi. One van got to watch them at close range for some time, so elegant! This is an endangered species and Moremi and Okavango are important strongholds for them.

### **Burhinidae: Thick-knees (2)**

**Water Thick-knee** *Burhinus vermiculatus* — (6) We regularly got good views of this species along the river edges or associated with lagoons. They were in pairs or groups of three, on the Chobe our high count was 12.

**Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis* — (1) Just one view, of a pair close to the road in Nxai Pan, they lingered long enough for us to get good looks and photos.

### **Recurvirostridae: Stilts and Avocets (1)**

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* — (9) Common in wetland areas, including wide areas of the Chobe River, but not numerous, seen mainly as individuals.

### **Charadriidae: Lapwings and Plovers (9)**

**Long-toed Lapwing** *Vanellus crassirostris* — (7) Present at a couple of deeper lagoons at Moremi and on the Xakanaxa boat trip, we then had them daily along the Chobe in good number.

**Blacksmith (Plover) Lapwing** *Vanellus armatus* — (15) Common throughout. We had some pairs with chicks, varying in age from a few days old to near adult.

**White-headed (White-crowned) Lapwing** *Vanellus albiceps* — (3) Not encountered until we got to the Chobe River where they occur in small numbers along the river shorelines.

**Crowned Lapwing** *Vanellus coronatus* — (6) Seen regularly on land areas of dry Nxai Pan, vocal and ever-present there. We then had them a couple of days in more open areas of Moremi.

**Wattled Lapwing (African) *Vanellus senegallus*** — (2) We had 3 or in a fairly local area of the Chobe River. Two seen in golden light at sunset coming out of one of the lily lagoons was an image of beauty we'll long remember.

**Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*** — (1) Less common this dry year than others, one vehicle had sightings near Hippo Pool in Moremi.

**Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula***— (1) Our guide Fabian on the Pangolin Cruise boat had a spot for this species and were able to see one individual.

**Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris***— (5) A handsome plover, we saw individuals and pairs in wet areas of Moremi, and then along the Chobe River. At one of the sunset spots we parked at to watch the evening show of Baboons playing, with Implala, Kudu and sometimes Elephants coming in, a pair worked the shoreline at very close range.

**Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus***— (1) One individual seen by one of our vehicles at the Hippo Pool at sunset, in the same area as Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper earlier. Always good to see as this is a near-threatened species ranging across Southern Africa.

### **Jacanidae: Jacanas (2)**

**Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*** — (1) Just two individuals this trip, at Bodumata Lagoon, one of the only reliable and deeper water areas of Moremi this year. Peg spotted the first and got everyone on it, stressing it might be our only sighting of the trip as we missed them up Xakanaxa. It flew to a second individual and we had good views, and some photo opportunities. This is a signature species of the Okavango region, while found in other countries with wetland areas, good numbers are here.

**African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*** — (9) An awesome bird to list as common, seen in wetland areas of Moremi and then daily on the Chobe. Best views were in the two lily lagoons where we had scores of them, adult and juveniles, with lots of interaction. They would rally around a lily tuber opened up, sometimes six or seven at a time. Great viewing and great photography. A few were so close to our boats you could almost reach out and touch them.

### **Scolopacidae: Sandpipers and Allies (9)**

**Ruff *Calidris pugnax*** — (7) Present in wetland areas, we had one as a surprise in the lodge water hole at Nxai Pan, then found them on three days in Moremi, mainly at Khwai and then along the Chobe, typically 1-3 individuals.

**Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*** — (1) One individual at the Hippo Pool in with Little Stint and Black-winged Stilts.

**Little Stint *Calidris minuta*** — (3) A group of five or six were at the Hippo Pool in Moremi, and we then found scattered individuals, Moremi and Khwai only.

**African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis*** — (4) We saw lone individuals on two days along the Khwai, then on our Xakanaxa boat trip and one along the Chobe.

**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*** — (10) Common in wetland and riverine areas. One to five seen a day.

**Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*** — (3) Scattered lone individuals in wetland areas.

**Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*** — (5) With time and scanning in Moremi only, we found them at each wetland site.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***— (6) Seen regularly, typically one individual at a time, in Moremi.

**Sanderling *Calidris alba***— (1) One individual seen in a green cove with scattered pools of the Chobe River.

### **Glareolidae: Coursers and Pratincoles (3)**

**Double-banded Courser *Scolopax africana*** — (1) A nice find our middle day at Nxai Pan, seen both morning and afternoon.

**Collared (Red-winged) Pratincole *Glareola pratincole*** — (7) Common around wetland areas, the most impressive numbers were on the island in the Chobe River, where 30 or more could be seen at a time. They were first seen as we were watching three huge male Lions. One would fly almost right next to our vehicle, vying for our attention.

**Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*** — (1) Great views on the rocks by the Namibia customs station in the Chobe River, fantastic to see!



#### **Laridae: Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers (4)**

**Gray-hooded (Grey-headed) Gull** *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* — (1) Not expected, we saw one individual at the lodge water hole at Nxai Pan. Peg, Bob and Marsha staying on a few days also found one up by the rocky area of the Chobe River near the customs station.

**White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* — (1) Seen in Moremi at the Hippo Pool area

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* — (1) One individual was seen flying above the rocky area of the Chobe River up by the customs station.

**African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* — (10) Nice to see this species of concern in good number. We had them regularly at the Hippo Pool in Moremi, resting and feeding at sunset, lovely in the golden light. We had them resting on islands of the Chobe River on our houseboat cruise regularly.

#### **Ciconiidae: Storks (4)**

**African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus* — (13) Seen at Maun, Moremi and Chobe, quite common. Great fun to watch them with snails, using that open bill.

**Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* — (6) A charismatic species of beauty and height (one of Greg's tallied five taller than North America's tallest birds), a trip favorite for several. We mainly saw them in pairs, of which a few had an older youngster still feeding with them.

**Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* — (12) Common, seen at Maun, Moremi and Chobe in good number, flying and resting with their great sacs distended. Tim kept commenting on just what that wattle was for! Homely giants, we saw big numbers at a couple of lion kills, then mainly to 6 here and there, searching out food or roosting. At Xakanaxa we found a few pair starting to nest, flying in with sticks and courting, somewhat comical!

**Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis*— (9) This stunning species showed off its elegance at all wetland areas, we watched them catch fish, and found their beauty in golden sunlight to be a marvel.

#### **Anhingidae: Aningas (1)**

**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa*— (10) We often saw these in the pose with wings spread wide, sometimes five or six on a picturesque dead snag in the river. Common and regularly seen in Moremi and Chobe.

#### **Phalacrocoracidae: Cormorants (1)**

**Long-tailed (Reed) Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus* — (9) A regular at wetlands and along rivers, we watched them catch feisty tiger fish and wrestle them down.

#### **Pelecanidae: Pelicans (1)**

**Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* — (7) There was a small group of under ten at the Hippo Pool we saw each time we passed. They were at Bodumatau Lagoon and a couple of small drying up lagoons in between at Moremi.

#### **Scopidae: Hammerkop (1)**

**Hammerkop** *Scopus umbrette* — (5) A favorite for many, this odd creature was seen on their gigantic stick nests, fishing on river banks and in flight. Not numerous, we saw scattered individuals here and there.

#### **Ardeidae: Herons and Egrets (15)**

**Gray Heron** *Ardea cinerea* — (10) Seen mainly as lone individuals, we would spy several a day in all wetland areas.

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* — (2) We found one individual, localized across from the island near Kasane. A beautiful heron, we were happy to find this one as its not a common sighting along our route.

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* — (6) Greg spied the first one at Bodumatau Lagoon, peering out over tall reeds. When it took flight, all gasped – what grandeur! Happily we found them regularly, and from the boat often got good close observation.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* — (2) This beauty seemed to like the quiet back, lily-clad lagoon areas and we found one individual at each one.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* — (11) Common, regularly encountered.

**Intermediate (Yellow-billed) Egret** *Mesophyx intermedia*— (3) Far less common than the Great, we did find them and at times had good direct comparisons when they fed near to Greats.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*— (8) Scattered lone individuals, often feeding on shorelines in riverine and lagoon habitats.

**Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* — (5) This species is very tightly associated with the Okavango Delta, this year due to drought we saw fewer than we normally do, but we got excellent looks at both lone birds and pairs.

**Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* — (1) Numbers for this species were down this year, we were lucky to find one, that was actively “tenting”, showing off its unique hunting style, in Moremi at Bodumatau. This well-watered location saved us on a couple of species normally more common, but this year found only there.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*— (8) Common, largest numbers were around Buffalo especially on the island of the Chobe River near Kasane.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* — (10) Common, often 3 to 5 individuals seen at a time, spread out in a marshy area.

**Rufous-bellied Heron** *Ardeola rufiventris* — (4) This is a furtive species one has to look for, we were lucky to find several and get good views, always lone individuals.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* — (1) Finally, what should have been easy and was not, we accomplished seeing our final morning en route to a lily lagoon. This bird completed our list of herons possible for the trip and we were happy to find one individual.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* — (3) Found roosting along the river margins at Xakanaxa and along the Chobe, up to 10 individuals at a time.

**White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* — (1) A thrill to find this species, we actually saw them at two locations on the same day, one close to Kasane and the docks for various lodges and the other up by the Namibia customs station as we checked out to return to Botswana. Both seen from our boats, in thick vegetation hanging over the river.

#### **Threskiornithidae Ibis and Spoonbills (4)**

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*— (4) A bird we quickly recognized, we found them feeding along the riverine edges and lagoons in small number.

**African Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* — (8) Common, frequently encountered, often in small groups in flight or feeding.

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* — (5) We often heard, then saw this highly vocal species, flying overhead.

**African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba* — (10) We got splendid views of this species. Memorable was a group at sunset, showing off their outrageous bills along the sandbar of the Chobe River, backed by pink light. We watched them feed at close range from the boats, fun!

#### **Sagittariidae: Secretary-bird (1)**

**Secretary-bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius* — (2) Another one of Africa’s iconic species, we saw one on two different days in Nxai Pan, strutting through that arid habitat regally.

#### **Acciptridae: Kites, Hawks and Eagles (20)**

**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* — (1) One individual seen in marshy habitat along the Chobe River.

**African Harrier-Hawk** *Polyboroides typus* — (1) We had good looks from the boat tour on the Chobe of one working the bark of a big tree on the bank, probing its bill and searching, then flying to another tree to do the same. Such a queer-faced raptor, and a pleasure to see.

**Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotos* — (7) We thankfully say this at risk species on many of our tour days, typically one or two in flight or perched. A lion kill on the Chobe River shore attracted big numbers of mixed species and two of these came in like small planes to claim their share.

**Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* — (6) We found this species fairly often, always a sign for us that predators might be around.

**White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* — (1) Colin snapped a photo of one flying over at Nxai Pan, probably drawn in by the presence of lions near the waterhole.

**White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* — (10) This was the most common vulture encountered, seen all of our days in Moremi where we'd follow them if they were circling. Several seemed to keep good track of the Wild Dog pack at Khwai, assured of continuous meals!

**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* — (8) We learned right away to tell males from females and young, and we often had one or two aloft to study. Good to see them doing well, as this is another at-risk species across Africa.

**Black-breasted (Black-chested) Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus pectoralis*— (1) Just one distant view as we went to the Santawana Airstrip to catch our flight to Chobe.

**Brown Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* — (2) As we are in two vehicles, we were happy to have repeated sightings of this fine raptor. One memorable one was seen our final day in Moremi, perched up and staring down at us with those brilliant yellow eyes.

**Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* — (1) Seen at Nxai Pan, good views.

**Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* — (1) We found a pair flying across from the lodges and docks of Kasane. Later in the week Peg, Bob and Marsha saw them again in the same spot, courting, looking like they would construct a nest.

**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* —(7) Emblematic for us, this powerful raptor was seen often, including a few coming down to carcasses and kills.

**African Hawk-Eagle** *Aquila spilogaster* — (2) We had two sightings a few days apart while in Moremi, perched and flying – good looks but not a common species.

**Dark-chanting Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* — (1) One individual seen in the Xini area where we encountered the White Rhinos this year.

**Pale-chanting Goshawk** *Melierax canorus* — (4) Quite common in the Nxai Pan area, we found them several times a day.

**Gabar Goshawk** *Micronisus gabar* — (4) We got super looks at this species at the airstrip as we left Nxai Pan, then had one in camp working the songbirds attracted to our kitchen area in Moremi.

**African Marsh-Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* — (7) We spent a lot of time in wetlands during this very arid year, and thus saw this species coursing over the reeds and papyrus vegetation fairly often.

**Shikra** *Accipiter badilus* — (2) We had a couple of sightings of this small accipiter, one near Bodumatau Lagoon and another along the banks of the Chobe from our houseboat.

**Black (Yellow-billed) Kite** *Milvus migrans aegyptius* — (12) Very common and ever present, though not in big numbers, typically one or two at a time.

**African Fish-Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer* — (13) Emblematic as well, we heard or saw them daily once in Moremi and on to Chobe. High count was 26 in one day! We admired the very patterned immatures and the elegance of adults in flight, and perching. Our photographers loved time with them, trying to capture that perfect take off or landing shot. We watched them throw their heads up in the air to emit loud calls, a sound we will long remember for Africa.

#### **Strigidae: Owls (4)**

**African Scops Owl** *Otus senegalensis* (HO)— (4) This little rascal called often by our camps in Moremi, but it was not safe to venture out and they did not take our play-back invitations to come in to camp so this one is a heard-only.

**Verreaux's (Giant) Eagle-Owl** *Bubo lacteus* — (2) Great views, one at tea time, another in a sausage tree near a Leopard sighting. One vehicle had one fly right by coming back to camp at dusk.

**Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatum* — (2) This little cutie put on a good show for us at a rest stop at Nxai Pan, a campground with tall trees and thickets. We heard them on several occasions as well.



**African Barred-Owlet** *Glaucidium capense* — (4) One vehicle had views one afternoon of this species but for the most part had to be content with heard only, including a pair calling as we watched a female Leopard stalk Kudu. After the trip at Xaro Lodge Peg, Bob and Marsha had close encounters and got some wonderful photos.

#### **Coliidae: Mousebirds (1)**

**Red-faced Mousebird** *Urocolius indicus* — (2) Seen in Maun and Nxai Pan in flocks, comical and fun to witness.

#### **Upupidae: Hoopoes (1)**

**Eurasian (African) Hoopoe** *Upupa epops africana* — (3) This charismatic species pleased everyone with its wild crest and patterned presence, typically seen in pairs in the woodland areas.

#### **Phoeniculidae: Woodhoopoes (2)**

**Green Woodhoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus* — (7) We found this species to be quite common, would see them in flight or probing in bark as we passed through woodland areas. Vocal, and bold in flight with white bars on the wing, they were easy for us to spot. Groups were typically 5 to 8 individuals.

**Common Scimitar-bill** *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* — (6) This species was regularly encountered in woodlands, but often one individual or a pair. At Nxai Pan one was quite active around our casitas.

#### **Bucorvidae: Ground-Hornbills (1)**

**Southern Ground-Hornbill** *Bucorvus leadbeateri* — (5) Bold and fun to spend time around, these huge waddlers were easy to spot from a long distance. We found pairs and small family groups, watched them dig and feed, and a few times take flight, an impressive species.

#### **Bucerotidae: Hornbills (5)**

**Bradfield's Hornbill** *Lophoceros bradfieldi* — (6) We found the first one in a tiny woodland fragment at the rest camp in Nxai Pan, a surprise. We then found them in woodlands regularly in small number in Moremi particularly.

**African Gray Hornbill** *Lophoceros nasutus* — (6) Fairly common in a variety of habitats.

**Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill** *Tockus leucomelas* — (11) Numerous, frequently encountered.

**Southern Red-billed Hornbill** *Tockus rufirostris* — (13) The most common and widespread of the hornbill species, regular and frequent sightings.

**Trumpeter Hornbill** *Bucanistes buccinator* — (1) Three seen in flight over the tall trees lining the Chobe at the golf course at Muawana as we came out of the lily lagoon. Our group post-tour at Victoria Falls also had this species.

#### **Alcedinidae: Kingfishers (5)**

**Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus* — (3) This little cutie was seen on our Xakanaxa boat trip and then again in the lily lagoon quiet waters and river edges of Chobe River while on our houseboat.

**Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* — (3) We had a pair across from the second mooring of our houseboat so got very good views daily while in that Serondela area.

**Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti* — (2) Seen in woodland areas of Moremi.

**Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* — (2) What a bird! This huge kingfisher was readily found on the Chobe River, including one perched on a boat that was being repositioned, it rode along looking for a movable feast. We saw males and females.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* — (8) Not as abundant as other years, but we'd still see numerous individuals in any wetland large enough to host fish for it. Along the Chobe they were quite common, we were alerted by their trilling calls as they hovered in flight, hunting.

#### **Meropidae: Bee-eaters (4)**

**White-fronted Bee-eater** *Merops bullockoides* — (4) We saw quite a few of these beauties, but a highlight was watching a nesting colony along the Chobe, during our houseboat stay.

**Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus* — (9) Quite common, we saw them in pairs and small groups, often perched over the river edge of Khwai and Chobe, but also around smaller wetland areas.

**Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops hirundineus* — (4) This was our most common bee-eater in Nxai Pan and we found a few scattered individuals in Moremi.

**Southern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicoides* — (10) What a thrill to see numbers increase daily as this gem-quality beauty returned to breed here in Botswana. We got super looks, daily once in Moremi and Chobe, often several were in flight above us, and at times they perched close to us as we'd stop to view mammals, perching on elephant dung to find their insect prey. Great fun to follow their sallies and try for that perfect photo...

### **Coraciidae: Rollers (2)**

**Lilac-breasted Roller** *Coracias caudatus* — (15) Iconic for Africa, a beautiful common bird!

**Rufous-crowned (Purple) Roller** *Coracias naevius* — (2) We had good looks at this species while in Nxai Pan.

### **Lybiidae: Barbets (4)**

**Crested Barbet** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* — (2) This species was seen at very close range, Marsha got I-phone photos while in Maun at Royal Tree Lodge. We found them again going to the docks for our boat trip at Xakanaxa.

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* (HO) — (2) Heard on Moremi in the woodlands, repeatedly, but we never chased it down, just listened to its long repetitive call.

**Pied (Acacia Pied) Barbet** *Tricholaema leucomelas* — (3) Seen at Maun and Nxai Pan.

**Black-collared Barbet** *Lybius torquatus* — (6) This striking bird was seen in woodland areas and liked to frequent our camps where they would come in close in hopes of kitchen scraps. Vocal and easy to find.

### **Indicatoridae: Honeyguides (2)**

**Lesser Honeyguide** *Indicator minor* — (1) Seen only by Greg at the waterhole at Royal Tree Lodge in Maun, a location we had seen it in previous years.

**Greater Honeyguide** *Indicator indicator* — (1) Seen in a mixed flock on the island we took a lunch break on while boating up the channel at Xakanaxa.

### **Picidae: Woodpeckers (3)**

**Bearded Woodpecker** *Chloropicus namaquus* — (2) First seen at dusk at Royal Tree, we thought the long discussion of Bearded or Bennett's would end with good light. As we saw them again, good light was always an issue, and each sighting was a project as we sorted through the facial, neck and back markings, male and female plumages between the species almost overlapping, demanding careful inspection.

**Bennett's Woodpecker** *Campethera bennettii* — (3) This species seemed to be the more common, we got good looks in woodland habitat and near our lodges.

**Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* — (2) Bob spotted the first one, quite low on small Mopane trees, we got a second chance while on the Chobe.

### **Falconidae: Falcons and Kestrels (3)**

**Greater Kestrel** *Falco rupicolides* — (2) Seen on two days in Nxai Pan.

**Dickinson's Kestrel** *Falco dickinsoni* — (2) Seen in an open area of Moremi at our Mbomba Island camp, hunting from prominent perches and hunting. On the houseboat, the afternoon Bob and Marsha arrived one perched on the railing of the boat, then sat for some time on a snag over the river watching pipits and stonechats ashore.

**Red-necked Falcon** *chicquera* — (1) Seen on a big Baobab near Third Gate.

### **Psittacidae: Parrots (1)**

**Meyer's (Brown) Parrot** *Poicephalus meyeri* — (8) Quite common and vocal, seen around large trees, especially fig trees, throughout our trip.

### **Platysteiridae: Wattle-eyes and Batis (2)**

**Chinspot Batis** *Batis molitor* — (4) This personable bird was in and around our camp at Nxai Pan, then we found it in wooded areas of Moremi on a couple of days, typically a pair.

**Pirit Batis** *Batis pririt* — (1) One individual seen on our walk at Royal Tree in Maun.

### Vangidae: Vangas and Helmetshrikes (1)

**White (-crested) Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus* — (1) A noisy group of five came in to a mixed flock making a fuss as we walked the trail at Royal Tree in Maun. This was our only sighting.

### Malaconotidae: Bushshrikes (8)

**Brubru** *Nilaus afer* — (3) Seen and heard, in wooded areas of Moremi as we'd stop for tea or to view other species, their calls alerted us to find them. We also had one at the rest camp in Nxai Pan not far from the big waterhole.

**Black-backed Puff back** *Dryoscopus cubla* — (6) One of the more regularly seen songbirds, often a pair seen in wooded areas and around lodges. We had a couple of chances to hear the commotion and see two males display, raising the feathers on their back – the puff...

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus* — (4) Seen in woodland areas of Moremi, at close range feeding on the ground and in low shrubbery.

**Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra australis* — (3) Seen from our second camp in drier areas of Moremi.

**Tropical Boubou** *Laniarius major* — (2) Seen once we reached the Chobe River area, alerted by calls – a great sound to wake up to.

**Gabon (Swamp) Boubou** *Laniarius bicolor* — (5) Widespread, we saw them at Royal Tree Lodge in Maun, at Moremi and then in Chobe where they overlap range with Tropical Boubou.

**Crimson-breasted Gonolek (Shrike)** *Laniarius atrococcineus* — (7) Seen in Nxai Pan and from both camps in Moremi. They were surprisingly common and easy to spot with their bright breasts shining.

**Sulphur-breasted (Orange-breasted) Bushshrike** *Telophorus sulfureopectus* — (3) We had great looks on our morning walk at Royal Tree Lodge in Maun, then a male called and showed off his colors from tall trees just across from our second houseboat mooring on the Chobe River.

### Dicruridae: Drongos (1)

**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* — (16) Common, over a dozen seen on many days and seen every day of the tour.

### Laniidae: Shirkes (2)

**Magpie Shrike** *Corvinella melanoleuca* — (8) Common, especially in Moremi in all the woodland areas. We also saw an individual on our walk at Royal Tree in Maun.

**White-crowned Shrike (Southern)** *Eurocephalus anguitimens* — (6) Seen at Nxai Pan and Moremi, we would find a pair or family group several times a day.

### Corvidae: Crows and Jays (2)

**Cape Rook** *Corvus capensis* — (4) Common in Nxai Pan, often at water holes or around groups of grazing mammals.

**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* — (4) Seen around towns and settled areas

### Alaudidae: Larks (6)

**Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark** *Eremopterix leucotis* — (1) A few individuals seen coming to the waterhole at Nxai Pan, one day, then later in the day a hoard of them (100+) in adjacent arid grassland.

**Gray-backed Sparrow Lark** *Eremopterix verticalis* — (3) Seen daily at the waterhole at Nxai Pan in flocks.

**Sabota Lark** *Calendulauda sabota* — (4) Common in the open grasslands of Nxai Pan.

**Fawn-colored Lark** *Calendulauda africanoides* — (1) Seen on the 8<sup>th</sup> in Nxai Pan by Greg and those in his vehicle, typically seen at this location.

**Rufous-naped Lark** *Calendulauda africana* (HO) — (1) Silly to have only as heard only, but so much was going on at the water hole, our attention was drawn elsewhere despite hearing the call, and we did not find them again, two individuals.

**Red-capped Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* — (2) A pair seen well on two days at the Nxai Pan waterhole.

### **Macrosphenidae: African Warblers (1)**

**Cape (Long-billed) Crombec** *Sylvietta rufescens* — (7) First views in Maun at Royal Tree, then seen in wooded areas at both Nxai Pan and Moremi.

### **Cisticolidae: Cisticolas and Allies (10)**

**Yellow-bellied Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis* — (1) Seen briefly only at Maun and Royal Tree, in thickets by the main lodge building.

**Green-backed (Gray-backed) Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brachyura brevicaudata*— (11) Common and widespread, noisy and often quite tame.

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* — (2) Seen on both walks from Royal Tree in Maun.

**Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* — (5) Widespread, seen in riverine vegetation as well as woodlands.

**Black-chested Prinia** *Prinia flavicans* — (6) Seen daily at Nxai Pan around our lodge, and a couple of times at our tea breaks in Moremi where they would vocalize and alert us to their presence in shrubby vegetation.

**Rattling Cisticola** *Cisticola chiniana* — (3) Found at Nxai Pan and Moremi in open grass-shrub areas, sometimes singing.

**Winding (Luapula) Cisticola** *Cisticola galactotes luapula* — (1) A strongly patterned cisticola, we found them in reedy vegetation on the Chobe River shorelines.

**Chirping Cisticola** *Cisticola pipiens* — (1) Great views of five individuals on our boat trip at Xakanaxa in tall reedy vegetation.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* — (1) Seen by one vehicle in grassy area of Moremi, Bob got photographs.

**Desert Cisticola** *Cisticola aridulus* — (1) Seen in Moremi in an open sparsely vegetated area.

### **Acrocephalidae: Reed Warblers (1)**

**African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus* — (1) Two individuals seen in a lily lagoon off the Chobe River.

### **Hirundinidae: Swallows and Martins (8)**

**Plain (Brown-throated) Martin** *Riparia paludicola* — (3) A few individuals on the Chobe River seen as the houseboat repositioned and up around the lily lagoons

**Banded Martin** *Riparia cincta* — (1) A hint of moisture brought out the swallows one morning in Moremi, a mixed swirling aerial feed in which this was the main species

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* — (2) One individual was seen on the single morning in Moremi we had a good number of swallows and then one was noted along the Khwai's open grassy areas.

**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* — (5) Common along the Chobe River.

**Lesser Striped-Swallow** *Cecropias abyssinica* — (8) Common and widespread.

**Rufous-chested (Red-breasted) Swallow** *Cecropias semirufa* — (1) Seen by Greg from our lodge at Pangolin, sitting on the phone wires.

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* — (2) A few seen in Moremi in the swallow flight of one morning over grasslands, and a few spied along the Chobe, near town.

**Gray-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* — (1) Local, seen only at the entrance waterway to one of the lily lagoons on the Chobe for this tour.

### **Pycnonotidae: Bulbuls (4)**

**Yellow-bellied Bulbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris* — (3) Seen on three days in the Chobe area, in larger trees by the river edge and at our lodge there.

**Terrestrial Brownbul** *Phyllastrephus terrestris* — (2) A furtive pair was at the lunch stop at Xakanaxa on our boat trip, we found them again birding near the resorts along the Chobe River, a better look that time.

**Common (Dark-capped) Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus tricolor* — (12) Ever present and numerous except at Nxai Pan.

**Black-fronted (African Red-eyed) Bulbul** *Pycnonotus nigricans*— (6) The common bulbul at Nxai Pan and then a few found in Moremi.

#### **Phylloscopidae: Leaf Warblers (1)**

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* — (2) Seen in the riverine vegetation of the Chobe River, a few individuals, often in a mixed flock.

#### **Sylviidae: Sylviid Warblers (2)**

**Chestnut -vented (Rufous-vented) Warbler** *Sylvia subcaerulea* — (3) Found at Nxai Pan, a few individuals daily including a pair in our camp.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* — (1) A pair spotted in the reeds on our boat trip at Xakanaxa, they are present in winter but this seemed early, so we circled the boat around and tried playback and the male sang back to us, perching up on the reeds.

#### **Zosteropidae: White-eyes (1)**

**African Yellow White-eye** *Zosteropos senegalensis* — (1) A nice small flock encountered by our second houseboat mooring in tall trees along the river on the Chobe.

#### **Leiothrichidae: Laughingthrushes and Allies (3)**

**Hartlaub's Babbler** *Turdoides hartlaubi* — (9) Widespread, these little chattering bands flashed their white rumps at us throughout the journeys, overlapping Arrow-marked wherever we saw them, but keeping to their own small flocks.

**Southern Pied Babbler** *Turdoides bicolor* — (4) Seen daily at Nxai Pan and then at one location in Moremi in a drier area from our Mbomba Island camp.

**Arrow-marked Babbler** *Turdoides jardineii* — (11) Numerous, vocal, roaming bands of chattering birds, ever present at our camps, and seen frequently throughout the day at all locations except Nxai Pan.

#### **Buphagidae: Oxpeckers (2)**

**Red-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*— (12) Common, observed on a variety of animals and also noisy flocks in flight.

**Yellow-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus africanus*— (8) Less present than Red-billed but encountered at all locations, also on a variety of animals.

#### **Sturnidae: Starlings (5)**

**Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* — (1) A big flock was in the campground leading into Xakanaxa and the boat ramp but watching them was cut short by the drama of a BIG male Elephant coming into the campground and towering over two people in their small camper truck. We watched as it sniffed the vehicle and then lifted (tore) up the roof-rack...

**Burchell's Starling** *Lamprotornis australis* — (8) Abundant. Maun and Moremi.

**Meves's Starling** *Lamprotornis mevesii* — (8) Common, Maun and Moremi.

**Greater Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* — (2) These bright gems were only seen on the Chobe, once from the river and once while birding around the lodges of Kasane.

**Cape (Glossy) Starling** *Lamprotornis nitens*— (8) Common, Nxai Pan and Moremi.

#### **Turdidae: Thrushes (2)**



**Groundscraper Thrush** *Psophocichla litsitsirupa* — (2) Seen on two days in Moremi, the same location close to where we watched the female Leopard stalking Kudu.

**Kurrichane Thrush** *Turdus libonyana* — (1) Seen on the lawn at Eco-villas in Maun, by just a few our first stay and then verified again post tour by Marsha, Bob and Peg.

#### **Muscicapidae: Chats and Old World Flycatchers (11)**

**Mariqua (Marico) Flycatcher** *Bradornis mariquensis* — (5) Very common at Nxai Pan, over a dozen seen on each day. A few then seen in Moremi.

**Chat Flycatcher** *Agricola infuscatus* — (4) Several individuals seen daily at Nxai Pan.

**Ashy Flycatcher** *Fraseria caerulescens* — (1) Great views on our first walk from Royal Tree at Maun, one individual.

**Kalahari Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas paean* — (4) Seen each day at Nxai Pan, including one pair at our coffee stop in the campground which was quite tame.

**Red-backed (White-browed) Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* — (1) Seen by one of our vehicles the first afternoon in Moremi. Peg and Bob then saw on post-tour outside our lodge in Maun where Bob got photos.

**White-browed (Hueglin's) Robin-Chat** *Cossypha hueglini* — (4) Scattered and widespread sightings, Maun, Moremi and Chobe.

**Collared Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa arquata*— (1) Two pair seen around the lodges in Kasane.

**African Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus*— (6) Fairly common in Moremi and Chobe.

**Southern Anteater-Chat** *Myrmecocichla formicivora* — (1) Only one individual seen on the drive in from the airstrip to our lodge in Nxai Pan, where they are normally more common.

**Annot's (White-headed Black) Chat** *Myrmecocichla annoti*— (1) Seen in a woodland area, a mixed flock we encountered in Moremi.

**Capped Wheatear** *Oenanthe pileata* — (4) This handsome bird was seen in good number, daily, at Nxai Pan.

#### **Nectriniidae: Sunbirds (5)**

**Collared Sunbird** *Hedychia collaris* — (1) Observed by Greg the final morning, birding in Kasane. Also seen post-trip by Peg at Xaro Lodge.

**Amethyst Sunbird** *Chalcornitra amethystina* — (1) One individual seen atop a tall tree, viewed from our moving boat by the second Chobe mooring, a challenging find but a bright male as reward.

**Scarlet-chested Sunbird** *Chalcomitra senegalensis* — (1) One bright male on a flowering tree, the same one we spied both Amethyst and White-breasted in by our houseboat mooring on the Chobe.

**Mariqua Sunbird** *Cinnyris bifasciatus* — (3) Several sightings in Moremi, they loved feeding in the Sausage Tree flowers so present during our stay.

**White-breasted (White-bellied) Sunbird** *Cinnyris talatala*— (4) The most common sunbird encountered, both in Moremi and Chobe. Often singing.

#### **Ploceidae: Weavers (12)**

**Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver** *Bubalornis niger* — (11) Common and widespread, large flocks encountered.

**Scaly Weaver (Scaly-feathered Finch)** *Sporopipes squamifrons*— (4) Flocks seen daily in Nxai Pan.

**White-browed Sparrow-Weaver** *Plocepasser mahali*— (7) Scattered individuals and pairs constructing nests seen in Nxai Pan and Moremi.

**Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps* — (1) Just one pair, seen at the coffee stop of Ewan's vehicle alongside a Verreaux's Owl, a nice pair of birds in one binocular view Greg would say!

**Holub's Golden Weaver** *Ploceus xanthops*— (7) Our first sighting was the pair by the small water feature off the deck at Royal Tree, we then found pairs often by water, in Moremi and Chobe.

**Southern Brown-throated Weaver** *Ploceus xanthopterus* — (2) Seen in small numbers in the lily lagoon areas where they are known to breed on the Chobe River.

**Lesser Masked Weaver** *Ploceus intermedius* — (1) One vocal group observed in a lily lagoon of the Chobe River.

**Southern Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus velatus*— (7) The most common of the off-plumage weavers encountered, often in good number and multiple sightings a day in Nxai Pan, Moremi and Chobe.

**Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus*— (1) Probably more common than noted, we inspected so many that this we noted as a sure sighting after some work one day in Moremi. They should be common in Chobe, but we did not find them so.

**Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea*— (2) Normally VERY common we looked and looked for this species, finding a few flocks in shrubbery on two days in Moremi.

**Cardinal Quelea** *Quelea cardinalis*— (3) Not expected, a lovely pair was in a mixed flock across from our second houseboat mooring on the Chobe at Serondela.

**Fan-tailed Widowbird** *Euplectes axillaris* — (3) Small flocks in reedy vegetation, Moremi and Chobe.

### Estrildidae: Waxbills (10)

**Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild*— (1) Four individuals seen during a river pit stop near the customs station for Namibia, sadly some of the group were pre-occupied and missed this little beauty.

**Black-faced Waxbill** *Estrilda erythronotos* — (1) Seen once in Moremi in a dry area with shrubs, a pair.

**Southern Cordonbleu (Blue Waxbill)** *Uraeginthus angolensis*— (8) Frequently encountered, several times a day in Moremi and Chobe, lovely to see them down on the water edge drinking and bathing.

**Violet-eared Waxbill** *Granatina granatina* — (4) Seen regularly at Nxai Pan and then one day in Chobe, drinking along the riverbank

**Peter's (Red-throated) Twinspot** *Hypargos niveoguttatus*— (1) An incredible sighting, this gem came through the sprinkler area outside Chobe Safari and Chobe Bush lodges. It is not in the Botswana bird book and is a controversial sighting, but it is a totally unmistakable bird with its black drawers and belly with bright bold spots. It seemed to be accepted as being seen by local guides and not a surprise. It is close in range to neighboring lush forest areas of Zimbabwe and Zambia in this four-corners area. Interesting find!

**Green winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba*— (2) Seen well at our rest stop used daily in Nxai Pan at a campground, then one other sighting in Chobe.

**Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala*— (2) Encountered in small number, often along the road feeding, in Moremi.

**Brown Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* — (1) Seen at the Botswana border check by Greg the final morning, as some ventured on to Victoria Falls.

**Jameson's Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*— (1) Very good views a couple of times in wooded areas of Moremi on the same day.

**Red-headed Finch** *Amadina erythrocephala* — (1) Seen well at Nxai Pan at the big waterhole, in with weavers drinking and feeding.

### Viduidae: Indigobirds and Whydahs (1)

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* — (1) Seen by Greg from the Pangolin Lodge, visiting the water hole.

### Passeridae: Old World Sparrows (3)

**Great Rufous Sparrow** *Passer motitensis*— (1) Seen by Greg only, in Maun.

**Southern Gray-headed Sparrow** *Passer diffusus*— (11) Common and widespread.

**Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow (Petronia)** *Gymnornis superciliaris*— (3) Small flocks seen in wooded areas of Moremi.

### Motacillidae: Wagtails and Pipits (5)

**Cape Wagtail** *Motacilla capensis* — (4) Seen along the Khwai River in Moremi and the Chobe River often feeding on shorelines.

**African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* — (4) Seen only along the river in Chobe, pairs.

**African Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus* — (6) The most common pipit encountered, widespread.

**Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* — (3) Individuals seen at close range in both Moremi and Chobe.

**Buffy Pipit** *Anthus vaalensis* — (2) Lone individuals and pairs seen in Nxai Pan and then on one day in Moremi.

**Fringillidae: Finches (3)**

**Yellow-fronted Canary** *Serinus mozambicus* — (4) Observed each day at waterholes in Nxai Pan but small numbers, we then encountered them on one location the Chobe.

**Black-throated Canary** *Serinus atrogularis* — (4) Numerous at Nxai Pan at waterholes.

**Yellow Canary** *Serinus flaviventris* — (5) Quite numerous at Nxai Pan at waterholes, big flocks.

**Emberizidae: Old World Buntings (1)**

**Golden-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza flaviventris*— (7) This beauty was first seen on our morning walk in Maun at Royal Tree. They were often present ground-feeding at some of the rest areas in Moremi, and then we found them daily along the river, feeding at shoreline and drinking, on the Chobe.

For reference, in a week of scouting at two lodges for our future tours, Peg, Bob and Marsha found these additional species:

African Swift *Apus barbatus* – Chobe

Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* (Maun)

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina* (Khwai, early migrant)

Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli* (Xaro Lodge)

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* (Xaro Lodge)

African Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*

Southern Black-Tit (White-winged Tit) *Melaniparus niger* (Khwai and Tsidilo Hills)

Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* (Chobe)

Greater Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus rufescens* (Chobe)

Monotonous Lark *Mirafra passerine* (Tsidilo Hills)

Our five going on to Victoria Falls added two primo species and got better looks at Trumpeter Hornbill and added:

Shallow's Turaco *Turaco schalowi*

Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio*

**Mammals (40 species):**

**Peter's Epulet Fruit Bat** *Epomophorus crypturus* — (1) A few seen along the Chobe, roosting

**African Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* — (15) Elephants were ever present for us on this trip, we saw big herds constantly. We had them in camp (Marsha said one blocked out the moon near her window!) and along drives, a few closer than we'd like. We watched them swim the Chobe River, trunks up like snorkels. We watched young ones, small enough to fit under their mom's bellies. We saw the effect their high numbers are having on woodland habitats and wetlands.

**Chacma Baboon** *Papio ursinus* — (8) While not encountered as often as some years, we did have time with big troops, especially on the houseboat portion of our trip where at sunset we'd watch them gather ahead of going to roost trees. Tim was fascinated by their incessant play as we all were – young baboons have quite the life!

**Vervet Monkey** *Chlorocebus pygerythrus* — (6) We encountered vervet troops in woodland habitat and got to watch their antics.

**(African) Scrub Hare** *Lepus saxatillis* — (1) We had quick looks at a Scrub Hare in Nxai Pan, driving back at dusk from our outing.

**Lion** *Panthera leo* — (7) Males were seen regularly, especially the three brothers in their prime at our Khwai Camp in Moremi. We heard them each night, found track and followed them to find them at dawn, grooming, yawning, and preparing for sleep after a big night for patrol. However females and young were scares this year, and we did not see them until our land drive and then boat trips at Chobe. They made a kill along the river one morning and

vehicles lined our view from the river, they ignored them completely and fed voraciously, fending off the pile of vultures and a hopeful jackal.

**Leopard** *Panthera pardus* — (6) This was the Leopard year! Somehow we had EIGHT sightings, different individual leopards, likely a record that will stand for some time. We watched a female stalking Kudu, watched one with a very fresh Impala kill, pulling it up a tree. Jan spied one in a sausage tree just about overhead as we passed by a small Hippo Pool, with patience we were able to see it come down from the tree, stretch like a cat doing yoga and head off to hunt. Peg and Marsha and Bob kept the streak going, watching a mother and her almost grown youngster along the Khwai, the young one stalked a francolin which exploded from the grass to get away.

**Banded Mongoose** *Mungos mungo* — (3) Troops roaming the terrain were spotted on three days.

**Dwarf Mongoose** *Helogale parvula* — (1) Dennis spied a group using a termite mound, just quick looks this year of what is normally a common mammal.

**Slender Mongoose** *Galerella sanguine* — (4) Seen as lone individuals in a variety of habitats.

**Spotted Hyena** *Crocuta Crocuta* — (5) We saw them several times, mainly associated with kills. Killor's vehicle had a close encounter when he mimicked the sounds they make, talking in hyena language.

**Bat-eared Fox** *Otocyon megalotis* — (3) Seen as pairs, appearing to be seeking den sites, at Nxai Pan, on some days we saw two different pairs and watched them groom each other while resting on termite mounds only to trot across the grasslands at our presence.

**Black-backed Jackal** *Canis mesomelas* — (6) Common and widespread, we watched them at waterholes and at kill sites and just moving about the terrain.

**Ardwolf** *Proteles cristata* — (1) Seen on Day 9, coming from Third Bridge, our transfer day. Peg and Bob noticed two round gray ears sticking out of a hole, and Ewan came to a halt. We waited some time for a nose and two eyes to pop out, and both vehicles got to see at least part of this elusive, mainly nocturnal mammal.

**African Wild Dog** *Lycaon pictus* — (4) Extraordinary time with Wild Dogs happened on this trip. Both Dennis and Bob filmed kill scenes on their phones while we were surrounded by packs of 20 or more dogs. We watched pups getting in on the action, twittering for food to be regurgitated then jumping in to grab some of their own. We saw them spread out over the grasslands, determined to hunt. What a thrill!

**Honey Badger** *Mellivora capensis* — (2) Seen in Nxai Pan near the camp by those taking the bushman demonstration walk, and then again on the Khwai.

**Burchell's Zebra** *Equus quagga burchellii* — (13) Beautiful views of this charismatic species, lots of behavior to observe.

**White Rhinoceros** *Ceratotherium simum* — (1) Wonderful views of two big males and then a female with a young one in the Southern part of Moremi Game Reserve.

**Common Warthog** *Phacochoerus africanus* — (15) Daily, we loved watching them despite their being ever-present. They liked to mud bathe and we often watched them run with tails up, all in a line.

**Hippopotamus** *Hippopotamus amphibious* — (11) This could be the mammal of the trip, we saw so many, and we saw quite a few out of the water. They are stressed this year due to drought so spending a lot of time feeding, extending this normally nighttime activity into the daylight hours. We had a few grumpy ones that gaped at our vehicles when we neared their precious water pools. Males showed signs of scarring and fighting due to overcrowding.

**Giraffe** (Southern) *Giraffa camelopardalis* — (16) These graceful, elegant giants were with us daily, and we never tired of watching them delicately eat the leaves of acacia, or canter away from a waterhole. They were seen in small groups and then large aggregates of up to 22 individuals.

**Brindled Gnu (Blue Wildebeest)** *Connochaetes taurinus* — (11) The densest groups were found in Nxai Pan where they would gallop into a waterhole, the run away with legs kicking and dust flying. We saw scattered individuals and small groups feeding, then leaving Moremi we had a big group with two frisky ones exciting the two large White Rhino they grazed beside.

**Tsessebe** *Damaliscus lunatus* — (8) Beautiful "polished" antelope, we saw them quite often. One group being stalked by a Leopard (unsuccessfully) was memorable.

**Blesbock** *Damaliscus pygargus phillipsi* — (1) We again had one at the farm at Royal Tree, while open to wild animals, this one is more at home in South Africa, and perhaps not truly free. It was lovely to spot in the dry scrub forest and wary

**Common Eland** *Taurotragus oryx* — (1) Seen only at Royal Tree Lodge, Maun, on our way in from the airport.

**Springbok** *Antidorcas marsupialis*— (4) A favorite of Jan's, this graceful small antelope liked the arid terrain of Nxai Pan and Maun

**Steenbok** *Raphicerus campestris*— (7) This territorial small antelope was fun to spot, seen as individuals and pairs in a variety of settings.

**African Buffalo** *Syncerus caffer*— (12) Very common, widespread, impressive! Largest herds were on the Chobe River.

**Bushbuck** *Tragelaphus sylvaticus*— (1) We saw the Chobe subspecies while spending time there, on the hillside above the river.

**Sitatunga** *Tragelaphus spekii* — (1) Finally! This was a life mammal for Peg, we spied two different individuals on the boat trip to Xakanaxa, a lucky find for our group as this was the fourth trip for Peg and a first sighting.

**Greater Kudu** *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*— (13) We loved this graceful antelope, seen often but a few times stand out, a regal male standing atop a termite mound as we were chasing the Wild Dog Pack in Moremi, lit by sunset. And then the herds at mineral licks on the Chobe at dusk.

**Roan Antelope** *Hippotragus equinus* — (2) A good find, we had two chances in Moremi to see them.

**Gemsbok (Oryx)** *Oryx gazella*— (1) Seen only from Maun at Royal Tree, by one of the vehicles coming from the airport

**Impala** *Aepyceros melampus* — (13) Common and widespread.

**Waterbuck** *Kobus ellipsiprymnus* — (7) We found them in wetland areas, and got good views at males and females, a few youngsters from late-season births.

**Puku** *Kobus vardonii* — (4) Found only on the Chobe, an antelope that likes the open islands and does not tend to use woodlands at all.

**Red Lechwe** *Kobus leche* — (8) Big groups along the Khwai River and Chobe River, they like the wetland habitat.

**Southern (Common) Reedbuck** *Redunca arundinum*— (4) This secretive antelope took some searching but once trained, our eyes picked them up in the tall reedy vegetation they prize.

**Common Duiker** – Seen at Royal Tree Lodge, Maun

**Smith's Bush Squirrel (Tree Squirrel)** *Paraxerus cepapi* — (8) Common and widespread

#### Reptiles and Amphibians (5 species):

**Nile (Water) Monitor Lizard** *Varanus niloticus* (4) Seen in wetland areas, on the Chobe we watched one eat a frog.

**Nile Crocodile** *Crocodylus niloticus*— (11) Very common in all wetland and riverine habitats

**Painted Reed Frog** *Hyperolius marmoratus* (HO)— (2) Vocal at our camp by Hippo Pool in Khwai

**Turner's Giant Frog** *Chondrodactylus turneri* — (1) Seen in Moremi, near the Leopard that we watched stalk Kudu

**Striped Skink** – species pending id from photos — (3) Seen at Nxai Pan at the lodge, daily

#### Trees of Note (among many fascinating plants too numerous to list...)

**Rain Trees** – No flowering in this dry year...

**Baobabs** - some of the large ones likely over 1000 years in age

**Mopane** - numerous, a favorite food of elephants, they provided shade for camps. High Elephant numbers are taking down whole swaths of this habitat so vital to songbirds, ecological change in action in Moremi.

**Acacias**, various species, several in bloom including the Camelthorn so popular with herbivores

**Hyphaene Palms** - tall palms of the delta region

**Gomoti Figs** - trees of the islands, magnets for birds

**Sycamore Fig** – large and sculptured white-barked figs near water, the tree of life