

Ultimate Botswana Wildlife Safari & Birding | Species List September 13 – October 5, 2022 | with Naturalist Journeys



**Peg Abbott, tour host, with Thomas (Xaro), Shoes and George (Nxai Pan), Ewan (Mobile Camp of Masson Safaris), Jaco (Pangolin Photo Safaris at two lodges), Lasky (Pangolin Voyager) and Gee (Okavango Explors Camp) as local expert guides
with 4 participants: Bev, George, Kaki and Harriet**

Botswana 2022 Trip List compiled by Peg Abbott

(HO)= Distinctive enough to be counted as heard only

#'s in the species row indicate the number of days of 22 total that the species was seen.

Locations:

MA = Maun

XO = Xaro Lodge in the Okavango River panhandle (permanent water)

MO = Moremi Game Reserve (6-night Mobile Safari)

CH = Chobe River (from Pangolin Photo Lodge and the Pangolin Voyager Houseboat)

SE = Selinda Spillway (from Okavango Explorers Camp)

Locations are named and mapped out on this eBird Trip List: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S119379664>

Summary: We had another splendid trip to Botswana, choosing to spend ample time in this country known for incredible wildlife viewing. This year we had a small group as so many singles wanted to join us (and the houseboat has just five rooms) so we traveled with logistical ease and we were most compatible. We worked hard at our field time (52 eBird lists, 21 days of twice daily game drives) but had mid-day rests and so many wonderful amenities at lovely camps – it was all just a joy. Our bird list was the top yet for diversity and numbers with 279 species noted, and we saw 40 species of mammals. Highlights were so many! First – the number of really large and showy birds including courting Wattled Cranes and later Gray-crowned Cranes, Saddle-billed Stork, Ground Hornbill, Goliath Heron, and Kori Bustard. We saw signature species of the region including Lesser Jacana, White-backed Night-Heron, Slaty Egret, Pel's Fishing Owl, and African Pygmy Goose. We had extended time with super photo opportunities with seven species of kingfishers including the gem-toned Malachite. Common were sightings of five species of bee-eaters, each one more beautiful than the next. We had 16 species of the heron clan and four of the ibis dynasty – a sure indication we were around one of the world's most diverse wetland ecosystem. African Fish Eagles chirped from the trees and fished on graceful wings, just one of 23 species of raptors. We had luck with some elusive species like Stierling's Wren Warbler and Greater Honeyguide. The route was designed to cover differing habitats from the dry Kalahari at Nxai Pan to the vast floodplains of the Okavango. This diversity let us find 40 species of mammals including this year Spotted-necked Otter, Honey Badger, Bat-eared Fox, African Wild Dog, Leopard, Lion and numerous types of antelopes. We had time to watch their behavior and capture memorable images.

BIRDS: 279 SPECIES, IN 76 FAMILIES

OSTRICHES: Struthionidae (1)

Common Ostrich *Struthio camelus*— 3 (NP,MO) Our best views of Ostrich were at Nxai Pan where we sighted them regularly. We found a few males with red knees coming into breeding plumage. One individual was seen just beyond 3rd bridge in Moremi, just before we encountered the Wild Dogs.

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae (8)

White-faced Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*— 12 (MA,XO,MO,CH) We often heard this species first, their cheerful chatter announcing their presence. We always saw them in groups, often a dozen or more, and encountered them in all the wetland areas. In Maun we saw them from the hotel along the Thamalakane River, at Xaro we found them in flooded fields along the river, in Moremi, we found them from our first camp outside of Xanakaka, and in Chobe they were particularly plentiful.

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*— 1 (CH) We found this quiet water-loving species only at the lily lagoon that Lasky took us to on the Namibian side of the Chobe. They sit low-slung in the water and are drab compared to the African Pygmy Geese that inhabit similar areas but we were thrilled to find them and get good views.

Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*— 1 (SE) We only saw this species along the Selinda Spillway and all were non-breeding individuals. We saw them several times during a morning outing along the main waterway, typically two at a time.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*— 16 (MO,CH,SE) Quite common, at times in good light our cameras would point their way, actually a striking bird. They were vocal, and we saw them along stream banks, in trees, and in flight. At most locations we saw a pair here and there, on the floodplains adjacent to the Chobe we saw 200-300 on an outing with ease.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*—14 (XO,MO,CH) A large and very striking species, we encountered them in small groups in wetland habitats. When they fly, they sound like squeaky toys being squeezed, comical for such a massive species. At Xaro they used the flooded fields, at other locations we saw them in flooded wetland habitat and along river banks.

African Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus auritus*—4 (XO,CH,SE) We worked hard to find them in a back lagoon on our boat ride from Xaro Lodge, then found them again with Lasky in the lily lagoon on the Namibian side of the Chobe, where multiple pair were present. At Selinda they were seen from our camp and were more common, though typically seen in small numbers, 2-6 individuals.

Blue-billed Duck (Hottentot Teal) *Anas hottentota*—5 (MO, CH) We encountered a small groups in two locations while in Moremi, the first being memorable as it was Elephants walking past them that moved them into the open to clinch our id. We saw them on several days there, but less than 10 individuals in total. We saw another 4-5 at the sewage lagoon ponds outside Kasane, in the Chobe area, and then watched an African Fish Eagle repeatedly dive on and harass a lone individual in the middle of the Chobe River, that wisely did not choose to fly as we approached.

Red-billed Duck *Anas erythroryncha*—4 (MO, CH, SE) We saw this species infrequently, in small groups, the largest being one of a dozen or more at Selinda. Their cheek patches appeared dirty from feeding in the river and lagoon muds.

GUINEAFOWL: Numididae (1)

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*—13 (XO,MO,CH) There is a reason this bird appears on dishes, textiles, and various craft items as its common, comical and ever present. Its grating call alerted us to predators and signaled the rise and set of the sun. They gathered in big groups at times, puffing up their odd-shaped bodies, raising their crests and running about as if playing soccer at times. It was fun to photograph them along the Chobe River in golden light. Very common.

PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (3)

Red-billed Francolin *Pternistis adspersus*— 14 (XO,MO,CH,SE) Common and seen regularly as pairs or small groups in a variety of habitat. They were often around our tented camps, scratching like chickens for seeds and invertebrates. We got very used to their calls which were especially loud at dawn.

Swainson's Francolin *Pternistis swainsonii*— 6 (MO,SE) We first saw them at Moremi while watching a male and female lion, in all we noted them on three days at that location. They became more common in the grassland habitat at Selinda. One perched up on a termite mound as we peered into the brush with hope to find a Leopard – its wary alarm call told us the cat was there but after getting good looks before it disappeared, we had to be content to admire the francolin.

Crested Francolin *Francolinus sephaena*— 5 (MO,CH,SE) We had a first look as two hopped out of the runway shelter for fire equipment as we landed in Moremi Game Reserve, our only sighting there. We heard and saw them at the Kasane Sewage Lagoons while birding there one morning and then at Selinda they were common in the grassland areas, a pair here and there were seen on several outings.

Grebes Podicipedidae (1)

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*— 4 (MA,CH,SE) We saw them in good number on the river at Maun from our hotel, then found a few in bright plumage at the Kasane Sewage Lagoons where they were calling and chasing each other about. We then saw them each day at Selinda, at various lagoons as solo birds or in small number.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (7)

Mourning Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*— 4 (MA,XO,CH) The number of doves one encounters in Botswana can be overwhelming, several hundred in a day of various species. We found this species on the grounds of our hotel in Maun, at the lodge grounds sunning itself on treetops in the morning at Xaro, and we picked them up again along the Chobe River one morning at the tree-lined banks of the river adjacent to Mowana hotel. We were often alerted to their presence by call.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*— 22 (MA,XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) Ubiquitous and common, a bit less so than Ring-necked but present on most of our game drives.

Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola*— 22 (MA,XO,NP, MO,CH,SE) Ubiquitous and perhaps the most numerous bird seen on our journey, present everywhere. Their call of “work harder” or “Botswana” was ever present, often in surround sound. They were fun to photograph along the Chobe River in golden light when they would line the river to drink.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*— 11 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Less common and more local than the other species, we still had good looks at this smaller, very pretty dove with regularity. We usually saw them in small groups and at one location on a game drive. We had very good looks at our coffee and tea stop by the Khwai Gate of Moremi Game Reserve.

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*— 17 (XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) A small and very pretty dove, we had good light in good views to appreciate their emerald wing spots. Their call is delightful and distinctive.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*— 7 (MO,SE) One of the prettiest doves, they seemed to love to pick seeds from the sandy roadways where wind would blow them in. We saw them in the woodland areas with Mopane trees.

African Green-Pigeon *Treron calvus*— 4 (XO,MO,MA) We first found this beautiful species in its lime-green splendor atop trees in the morning light at Xaro. At Paradise Pools in Moremi Game Reserve, two landed very close to our vehicle in lovely light, picking up seeds while showing off their lipstick colored bills. We held our breath and took photos hoping they would not fly away. Bev found one on the grounds of our hotel in Maun the final morning.

SANDGROUSE: Pteroclididae (2)

Double-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles bicinctus*—9 (MO, CH, SE) We saw this species daily in Moremi Game Reserve, often several times a day. They also liked to feed on wind-blown seeds that concentrate in the vehicle tracks along sandy roadways. We found a pair with 3 tiny chicks at Selinda – fun!

Burchell's Sandgrouse *Pterocles burchelli*— 2 (NP,SE) This was the common species at the waterhole at Nxai Pan National Park. We found another that was dust-bathing and unperturbed by us while at Selinda that was nice to photograph and observe.

BUSTARDS: Otididae (4)

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*— 3 (NP) Botswana's national bird, we saw up to 13 one day as we drove from the camp to the waterhole near South Campground. We got to see them fly once, and watched them strut about and feed. Driving back one evening we saw one bedded down, regal in the very open plain.

Red-crested Bustard *Eupodotis ruficristata*— 2 (NP) Seen only while at Nxai Pan National Park, there was one we kept encountering as we drove the "bad road" section of deep sand through a thick shrub area coming and going from the lodge out to the more-open areas.

White-quilled Bustard (Black Korhan) *Eupodotis afraoides*— 2 An elegant bird, we never tired of seeing them. At Nxai Pan we saw them regularly, and saw a couple doing their aerial display.

Black-bellied Bustard *Lissotis melanogaster*— 3 (XO,MO,SE) Infrequent. We saw this species first on our drive out to the Tsidilo Hills World Heritage Site from Xaro Lodge and then we encountered them as we drove to the airstrip from the lodge. We found one on one drive at Moremi and then our final day at Selinda another was spotted.

TURACOS: Musophagidae (2)

Schalow's Turaco *Tauraco schalowi*— 2 (CH) We were very fortunate this year, the first time picking up this species in Botswana for our groups (we see them at Victoria Falls in neighboring Zimbabwe). We first found two calling and following each other through tall trees at Mowana hotel in Chobe where we birded with local guide Charles. We then found them again in tall trees of the Chobe Game Lodge, viewing them from our boat. We could see the lovely colors and face marks though branches made photographing them sporting. The red underwing drew oohs and ayahs as they would change branches or fly. This one made the "top three birds" list for at least one of the group.

Gray Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides concolor*— 17 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Widespread and vocal, we watched them come down to drink water and watched their antics while up in trees. Their crests were animated as they called and several times, we heard the namesake "go-away".

CUCKOOS AND ALLIES: Cuculidae (4)

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*— 3 (MO) We recognized this smaller species on three game drives while in Moremi. It had a beautiful clean look to the rust plumage, quite a striking bird.

Coppery-tailed Coucal *Centropus cupreicaudus*— 17 (XO,MO,CH,SE) Widespread, we often heard them duetting and George was able to pick out the notes which were very consistent. They puffed out their throats and bent over to make this very loud call – when duetting the rhythm was synchronous. This species was one of the first to call at dawn and one of the last to ring out as night closed in.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*— 3 (CH) We saw this species well while in Chobe, along the riverbanks from our boat. The first sighting was at the end of our birding walk at the Kasane Sewage Lagoon in pretty thick brush. From the river, we were often at eye-level so could see the streaking and face pattern well.

African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis*— 1 (SE) First heard, then we tracked it down and Bev spotted it at some distance in a tall tree – fortunately one with few leaves so we could get good looks. In flight, it looked like a raptor. Its call was loud and distinctive; we heard two calling to each other.

NIGHTJARS AND ALLIES: Caprimulgidae (3)

Fiery-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus pectoralis*— 9 (XO,MO,SE) We heard this species at night from our lodges and camps, uttering its fluty "Oh Lord, deliver me" call again and again. Peg was able to see one from her porch at Xaro Lodge at dawn. At Selinda where we could do night drives, we had one flash by our spotlights.

Swamp Nightjar *Caprimulgus natalensis*— 2 (CH,SE) We heard and saw this species from our mooring in the Serondela section of the Chobe, where our boat had a large section of flooded reeds and an island next to it. At dawn they flew in the ship's light. We heard them from Selinda on our night spotlight drives and saw one perched in the spotlight.

Square-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus fossii*— 5 (CH,SE) We heard this also from the Serondela mooring of the Pangolin Voyager houseboat on the Chobe. While driving back at night the first evening, we had several nightjars and by position of the white on the wing and the overall size deduced this was one of the species.

SWIFTS: Apodidae (2)

Little Swift *Apus affinis*—4 (MO,CH) We first saw them in Moremi, at 3rd bridge on the day we went exploring. A migrant species just returning, we heard and saw them more often on the Chobe end of our trip, flying above the lodge on the river we passed on the Namibia side and by the town site where we docked.

African Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*— 11 (MA,MO,CH) The chatter of this fast and agile flying swift was often heard around its namesake trees, or anywhere near water with tall vegetation.

RAILS, COOTS AND ALLIES: Rallidae (5)

Eurasian Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*— 3 (CH,MA) We first saw them at the Kasane Sewage ponds among the reeds, and then back in the lily lagoon on the Namibian side that we got to by boat with Lasky from the Pangolin Voyager houseboat. To our surprise, two came out of the reeds to feed in the open our final morning in Maun as well.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*— 2 (CH) We had one individual not far from our boat mooring on the Chobe, the one closer to town that had some floating mats of vegetation. We saw this same individual on two mornings.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* — 1 (CH) Seen very well, at a range we could observe, video and photograph, in the lily lagoon on the Namibian side of the Chobe we boated to with Lasky.

African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis*— 4 (XO,MO,CH) We heard it at the lily area at the end of our boat ride from Xaro Lodge on the Okavango River, then saw one in the Xanakaka area of Moremi Game Reserve. On the Chobe we saw two quite well as we looked for kingfishers and cisticolas along a dense reed area of the river and we had them in the lily lagoon on the Namibian side, walking out in the open, at times alongside Allen's Gallinule for a good comparison.

Black Crake *Zapornia flavirostra*— 10 (MA,XO,MO, CH) A bold crake, often quite visible, we saw it well, often in pairs. At one site we had a full size but much paler chick with an adult. They would call loudly at times. They liked the edges of lagoons, including the Kasane Sewage Lagoon.

CRANES: Gruidae (2)

Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*— 6 (MO,SE) We were fortunate to see this stately crane in several wetland settings. They were starting to pair up, but our first sighting was of 13 in a tight group on the Khwai River floodplains. One of the most memorable sightings was a pair at a lovely lagoon at Selinda with water in the background they made their way through the reeds feeding, then did a bit of courtship, pair bonding, jumping up and flapping wings. Wonderful to see them as they are getting to be a rare species.

Gray-crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*— 1 (CH) For the second year in a row we spotted two of this beautiful species on the islands of the Chobe River. Likely the same two that made their way here in 2021. With plentiful food no reason to leave, but they are more common in East Africa than here, not common in Botswana at all.

THICK-KNEES: Burhinidae (1)

Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*— 13 (XO,MO,CH,SE) The descending call was a part of many of our dawn and dusk hours throughout the journey. Mournful, plaintive, such a part of our soundscape. We were able to find them often by day, resting along riverbanks or on the rocks at the rapids of the Chobe above our boat launch.

STILTS AND AVOCETS: Recurvirostridae (1)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*— 14 (XO,MO,CH,SE) This elegant wader is quite common and we encountered them in most wetland areas we spent time at. They were present as singles, and small groups.

LAPWINGS AND PLOVERS: Charadriidae (7)

Long-toed Lapwing *Vanellus crassirostris*— 12 (XO,MO,CH) This wetland loving species was most impressive in flight, and we saw them several times harassing threats to their nests, dive bombing African Fish Eagles or other perceived threats. We watched them feed delicately in the wetland vegetation.

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*— 22 (MA, XO, NP, MO, CH, SE) Harriet has a Robert Bateman painting of this species and was so happy to see them in real time. And they were ever present, at all locations, in good number. Several were on nests and some had fledged chicks.

White-headed Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps*— 5 (CH) A highly vocal species, we encountered them along the Chobe River and they announced their presence with loud calls. At Elephant Bay we watched a courting pair and the male raised up to show off his height, fanning wings and tail, not unlike a Gray Hornbill.

Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus*—11 (XO by airstrips, NP, MO, SE) We first encountered this species at our airstrips, flying up to Xaro and back, then in more open country at Nxai Pan and Moremi we began to see the pattern of preference for upland, open terrain. They were also nesting and we found several egg clutches perilously close to the road and airstrip edges.

Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*— 2 (CH) This was the least common of the lapwings, and we found them twice with the keen eyes of our guide, Lasky, along the Chobe. They were on sandbars back in the reeds and rush area off the main river channel. Not quite as gaudy as White-crowned, but endowed with similar (goofy-looking?) head gear.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*— 1 (MO) We found several of this species at one lagoon area in Moremi and enjoyed seeing their soft breeding plumage colors. One flew across and landed above us on a sand ridge, and immediately started shaping a nest. It was fun to watch and video her efforts; she appeared to have a good start in a well-chosen location.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*— 7 (MO, CH, SE) This snazzy plover was fairly common, and we found them mainly as individuals or pairs, along margins of lagoons or the river edge. We mainly saw them feeding and they seemed oblivious while doing so to huge Elephant feet and the open mouths of crocodiles!

JACANAS: Jacanidae (2)

Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*— 3 (CH) This emblematic species of the Okavango was on our list of hoped to see and we saw them well. The first sighting was in the lily lagoon we visited off the Chobe, a perfect environment and we saw several feeding. We were able to compare them with almost adult sized juveniles of the African Jacana and to video and photograph them. To our surprise, right by the boat mooring for the Pangolin Voyager this year there were mats of floating vegetation and several were present right there!

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*— 21 (MA, MO, CH, SE) One of the most regularly seen species on our journey, they were very common and fun to watch. We witnessed chase scenes as males marked out territories and we watched them feed on those impossible long toes, walking with ease all through their preferred wetland environments. We laughed to watch them walk the backs of Hippos as if they were handy perches.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (8)

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*— 3 (MO, CH) We saw this species at a couple of lagoons in Moremi and then again at the Kasane Sewage Lagoons. It was good to see them at close range to measure the proportions and note leg color and other cues.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* — 1 (NP) We got very good views of this species to check proportions and bill length and shape, it fed on a sandbar across the large waterhole at Nxai Pan where doves would gather to drink away from the hooves of so many mammals seeking water.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*— 2 (MO) We saw this species feeding at lagoon edges in Moremi Game Reserve, first with the Kittlitz Plover and then at another spot.

African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis*— 4 (MO, SE) One evening in Moremi while we were scanning the vast floodplains there, we had a quick flyby of this species. Then at Selinda at the end of our journey we encountered them several times as they were making aerial display flights.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*— 10 (XO, NP, MO, CH) Widespread, this species is easy to recognize as it resembles our Spotted Sandpiper so closely. We found them mostly as single birds, often with other species.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*— 7 (MA, XO, MO, CH, SE) One of the largest of the Tringa clan, its notes reminded us of shorebirds we know from the USA, and as they often called loudly in flight in time all got good views. We found them most often on sand expanses also used by African Skimmers where they liked to feed.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*— 5 (XO,MO) We found this species in quieter pools away from main river channels.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*—10 (MO,CH,SE) This species was widespread and more numerous than the Marsh Sandpiper, often feeding in grass-lines river margin pools, often as single birds.

COURSERS AND PRATINCOLES: Glareolidae (3)

Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii*— 1 (NP) We found a few pairs of this sleek species, feeding in open grass areas that were cropped short by grazing mammals.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*— 11 (MO,CH,SE) Widespread, we encountered them in open areas where they were starting to nest, at Selinda they actually had fledged chicks of some size. They would feed on their long graceful wings, swooping over river margins and grasslands. They were vocal at nest areas but otherwise quiet.

Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*— 3 (CH) Each time we visited the rapids of the Chobe, which we did three times as we also had Spot-necked Otters present there, we had fun watching this species getting ready to nest on the rocks. They were vocal, paired up and getting territorial about their chosen patch of rocks. A sleek plumaged species quite local to see as they are habitat specific to such areas.

GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (4)

Gray-hooded Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*— 4 (CH) This beautiful gull was present most reliably along the Chobe River, where we got views of them perched on sandbars and flying past as we explored.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*— 1 (XO) Peg had a suspicion that the small tern we watched perched up on papyrus as we hurried to be on our way to the Tsidilo Hills for an outing was this species, and photo inspection confirmed that. The only sighting of the trip.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*— 10 (XO,MO,CH) We got good views of this species in flight and perched on river sandbars at both Xaro on the Okavango River and then the Chobe. We also had a few in Moremi by the floodplain lagoons and these were the most advanced in coming into breeding plumage.

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*— 11 (XO,MO,CH,SE) This bird made the top three for at least one of our group, they were so graceful to watch and we were thrilled to find them regularly as this is a species in steep decline. On the Okavango River from Xaro they were just beginning to nest as the water level on the river was dropping to provide them with sand beaches. On the Chobe they were much farther along and we watched with great pleasure as adults brought fish in to big begging chicks almost their size. Chicks were amply vocal, drawing adults back time and time again to fill their needs. They choose smaller islands not attractive to the herds of Elephant and African Buffalo so plentiful, but on one outing we were grateful chicks were fledged and three old bull buffalo, "Duggar boys", made their way on to the tempting grass of one small nesting island.

STORKS: Ciconiidae (4)

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*— 11 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) This species is one of the oddities of nature, its bill permanently open enough to grasp crabs, frogs and fish like pincers. We watched them feed a lot on a round snail and at times they would toss them and catch them again to angle them down the gullet. They could occur in flooded fields in huge number, 200 or more, and at dusk we watched long lines of them flying to their chosen night roosts.

Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*— 10 (MO,CH,SE) This was a top three favorite bird contender as well, so tall and so gaudy. We saw them fairly often, mostly as pairs, a few of these pairs with adult, but chocolate rather than black colored plumage. We watched them feed in the dry-down pools that concentrated fish, and also feed by working their way through reed sections of the marshes. One was on a nest, very high in a massive tree. When they took flight the startling amount of white in the wing was a thrill to see.

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer*— 7 (MO,CH,SE) Less abundant at this time of year as they are breeding at select rookeries in the Delta, we still saw good numbers on several occasions, the highest numbers at Pelican Pool in Moremi. We saw mainly juveniles but also a few adults in good color. At dawn sometimes we found them roosting in trees, huge silhouettes against the rising sun.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*— 14 (XO,MO,CH) A stunning bird and very common at almost all our locations. They were nesting above the rapids on the Chobe and we could watch them bring food to chicks. Chicks were large downy fluffballs. Adults had crisp plumage at times looking brown as they fed in muddy margins of the river.

ANHINGAS: Anhingidae (1)

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*— 16 (MA,XO,MO,CH) This elegant species, the same genus as our USA version, was often seen poised on stumps in the river, drying wings and sunning. We watched them fish, and fly, and preen. There was often a Long-tailed Cormorant with them and the contrast in proportions was so evident, the darter by far the more graceful.

CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (2)

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*— 16 (MA,XO,MO,CH) A highly successful species in the Okavango and Chobe regions, we watched them catch fish. They were on nests above the rapids of the Chobe and there were hundreds there, the flow of wings up and down the river was something to behold. At close range a lovely species, but in contrast to the darters they kept company with we compared them anthropomorphically to the homely but hopeful kid at the prom.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*— 4 (CH) We found this larger cormorant only on the Chobe, where they were on nests above the rapids. You could identify them a long way off by their gleaming white breast plumage and size.

PELICANS: Pelecanidae (2)

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*— 4 (MO,CH) Our best views of this species were at Pelican Pool where they were gathered up to feed on fish concentrating there as the water receded. They would preen in the sun, then fly a short ways to chase fish, moving in harmony to pluck them, toss heads back and gulp them down. We also had a few groups fly over on the Chobe.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*— 2 (MO) We found this species twice, each time we visited Pelican Pool in Moremi, but we scanned all the Great White Pelicans to find their key markings on the eye-patch as well as plumage. Much less plentiful, we found a few individuals each time.

HAMERKOP: Scopidae (1)

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*— 8 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Everyone enjoyed watching the antics of this bird feeding, raising its crest, jostling its body to and from, so animated. We saw their large nests often, but none were currently occupied. In flight they suggested a raptor so we checked them often when on the wing.

HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae (16)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*— 2 (XO,CH) With Thomas on the Okavango River we had two individuals spotted, both were quick views as they took flight. But in the lily lagoon, keen-eyed Bev called out, "I see a bittern!" We were able to watch it feed, and even get some difficult but possible photos. It finally took flight but for many was the best look ever at a difficult species.

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea*— 16 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Very common and widespread. We found them right away along the river at Maun, and they stayed with us the entire trip. In the mornings they would stand regally at the edge of the river, casting sunlit reflections.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*— 4 (CH) This species was plentiful at the rapids section of the Chobe River where they occupied nests. It was great to see them with time to appreciate their contrasting plumage and elegance.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*— 12 (MA,XO,MO,CH) Another top three birds' contender, this improbable giant is a most impressive member of the heron clan. They are huge, standing at the height of a short human, in our boats we were eye to eye with them. The size was most impressive when they would launch on giant wings. Their plumage was intricate but one's eye was immediately drawn to the massive bill. This tool allows them to hunt larger fish than other waders they share the river margins with.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*— 9 (MA,XO,CH) One of the most beautifully marked herons, we encountered them less frequently but always slowed down to marvel at their beauty and poise. They appeared mainly as single birds along the reedy sections of the rivers.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*— 18 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Common and widespread, we did notice a few individuals with the breeding plumage dark bill known for birds in Africa.

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia*— 10 (MA,MO,CH) Common and widespread, but less so than Great Egret.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*— 16 (MA,XO,MO,CH) We saw this delicate species often, marveling at its reflections along the river and lagoon margins. There were several across from our houseboat mooring that kept us entertained. They also took advantage of Hippos wading through wetland vegetation, hopping on their backs to scan for food, and working closely around these giant beasts to catch fish moving out of the way. At times they were joined by Sacred Ibis and African Jacana for quite a mammal-inspired feeding frenzy.

Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*— 8 (XO,MO,CH,SE) Emblematic of the Okavango region, we found this bird without difficulty. High counts were at the small dry down pools at Moremi, where they joined other wading birds to harvest concentrated fish.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*— 5 (XO,MO,CH) We marveled at the hunting technique of this species, which throws its wings out to create a large hood to shade fish. One was so intent on repeating this that we got video and fabulous photographs while at Paradise Pool in Moremi.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*— 9 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Seen often with African Buffalo around which they feed. They would join the feeding frenzies around Hippos passing through and at times we saw them by Giraffe or other grazing mammals but they were most reliably found around cattle or buffaloes.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*— 18 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) A beautiful small heron, we saw them often and in good number, in some wetland areas 10 or more at a time, spaced separately while feeding. Their glow among the reeds in dawn golden light was memorable. They do earn their name when calling, often in flight.

Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris*— 8 (XO,MO,CH,SE) More challenging to find than the other herons, we looked for them carefully. Kaki found one perched in sunlight on a tree, the best view we had of the full bird as they often sit low in vegetation as they feed.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*— 12 (XO,MO,CH) We saw this heron often, which is not true every year. Memorable was one on a nest on a limb hanging over the Chobe.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*— 6 (XO,CH) We saw this species in good number when we'd find them on day roosts, most often in large trees overhanging the river, both from Xaro on the Okavango and while on the Chobe.

White-backed Night-Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus*— 2 (CH) A most challenging species to see, we checked several likely areas before we connected and were thrilled to finally get good views. They are super challenging to photograph as they tuck into such dense branches but we managed to capture a few. Their huge eyes and wariness were memorable.

Ibis and Spoonbills: Threskiornithidae (4)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*— 11 () Common and widespread but found as groups. We found the highest numbers in flooded fields along the Chobe where the Namibian side is more agricultural.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*— 14 () Common and widespread.

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*— 4 () We often heard this species before we saw them, and encountered them only in small numbers.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*— 12 () We had numerous opportunities to watch this species feed, its spatulate bill plying the waters. A couple of times a Black Heron seemed to position itself opportunistically by spoonbills and moved with them as they edged along a water pathway.

Secretary-bird: Sagittariidae (1)

Secretary-bird *Sagittarius serpentarius*— 1 (SE) This was a species Kaki really hoped to see, and she kept watch for it until we finally found one on a game drive at Selinda. It put on a quite a show, finding a snake and stomping it, positioning to gulp it down then deciding to stomp some more. While distant seeing this feeding behavior was a

thrill. We watched it eventually fly and land in an open area where we kept an eye on it until distracted by the next wonderful sighting.

OSPREY: Pandionidae (1)

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*— 1 (CH) Unexpected, we saw the first one from the vehicle as we parked to make a circle around the Kasane Sewage Lagoons. It then flew over and all got good views. Later that afternoon we saw one in the rapids section of the Chobe, quite possibly the same individual as they are not common here.

HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (20)

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*— 6 (MA,XO,MO,CH) Hovering behavior was our key to spot this agile flyer.

African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus*— 1 (MO) Harriet and Bev spied this raptor while walking at our Camp one day in Moremi during our break, the only sighting of the journey.

White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis*— 2 (CH,SE) Kaki spotted one in flight that Lasky confirmed as we zoomed down the Chobe to our houseboat mooring. It became distant quickly so we were all delighted to find one perched on our first game drive at Selinda. Here we got good views of the head and shape.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*— 4 (NP,SE) This species was nesting at Nxai Pan where we saw it repeatedly coming and going to the main waterhole. We also saw them at Selinda.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*— 3 (MO) We watched for these with great diligence once Ewan described their habits of following the Wild Dogs. A couple teased us by perching for several hours in an area we just could not get to, possibly by a kill. As dogs finish up so thoroughly their kills do not attract the big mix of vultures that lion kills do.

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*— 11 (XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) The most frequent vulture encountered, they were also nesting in Moremi so were present near nest trees daily there.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*— 8 (MO,SE) We had good views of male and females in flight and perched, and saw several adult-sized juvenile birds as well.

Brown Snake-Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*— 2 (MO,SE) The first individual we spied was on the wing, identified mainly by deduction. So, it was great to find one perched while at Selinda to study its round face and gleaming eyes.

Banded Snake-Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*— 2 (XO,MO) We got very good views of one of this species when George spotted one on a tree perch as we drove into Tsidilo Hills World Heritage Site. We had another on a game drive in Moremi, not far from the Khwai gate.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*— 5 (MO,CH) We had very good views and time to study this species while in Moremi. Then we saw one more individual in the Kasane Forest Reserve in the teak forest.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*— 6 (NP,MO,SE) We encountered this species first at Nxai Pan, where we watched with fascination as an adult made a vocal and aggressive greeting coming in to a young one on the ground. The young one had been hunting at the waterhole and moved off to rest, perhaps the adult thought it had food to share. A second adult came in and there was quite a commotion and chasing.

African Hawk-Eagle *Aquila spilogaster*— 6 (MO,CH,SE) We found a nest of this species and not finding the adults readily, the large chick had us turning pages in the bird book, ruling out Common Buzzard and other species, it was finding the two adults perched off to the side that clinched the id. Great to get a study like this in the field. This seemed to be one of the more common raptors we encountered, we had a flyover while driving through Kasane Forest Reserve and saw another one morning early as we left Okavango Explorer Camp.

Dark Chanting-Goshawk *Melierax metabates*— 1 (CH) We saw only one individual, in the teak forest of the Kasane Forest Reserve we drove through on a birding outing with local guide, Charles.

Pale Chanting-Goshawk *Melierax canorus*— 3 (NP) A very common raptor at Nxai Pan, we marveled at their long legs and enjoyed watching them hunt. We saw 6 or 7 on some outings as we explored.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*— 2 (MO,CH) Less common this year than some, we finally encountered this species just on one game drive in Moremi, and then one more as we passed through the teak forest of Kasane Forest Reserve.

African Marsh-Harrier *Circus ranivorus*— 6 () Easy to spot over marsh habitats coursing above the reeds. Our first sightings were at Xaro, but had them at other locations as well.

Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*— 1 () We had a most exciting encounter with this species as one came in to thrash a Coppery-tailed Coucal right before our eyes. It nailed it atop a bush, but the coucal escaped with feathers flying, missing some of its tail. It dove into thick reeds on the water edge and remained so quiet that Ewan moved over to see if it was dead. It squirted out alive, but battered.

Ovambo Sparrowhawk *Accipiter ovampensis*— 1 (CH) An excellent sighting of this species with time for good looks as it flew in to a large dead tree by Elephant Bay along the Chobe. It was immediately mobbed by drongos but held its ground for several minutes before flying off across the river and onward.

Black Kite (Yellow-billed) *Milvus migrans*— 16 (XO,MO,CH,SE) Plentiful, this migrant returned just as we arrived and were seen often. We saw a few individuals with the square tail in Moremi, the nominate Black Kite form, most by far were Yellow-billed.

African Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*— 18 (XO,MO,CH,SE) The call of this regal bird and the frequency by which we saw it will mark it as one of the top memories of our journey. Pairs often called to each other, tossing their heads to the sky to carry the tones as far as possible. We saw birds of all ages, the young birds full size but very patterned. We tried our photo skills at catching birds in flight, and watched them fish. One harassed a Blue-billed Duck in the middle of the Chobe, diving again and again at it, but it stuck tight to the water and escaped the threat in this way.

OWLS: Strigidae (7)

African Scops-Owl *Otus senegalensis*— 9 (MO,SE) Heard often, every night from our camps in Moremi but with large animals about we could not walk into the night, and our attempts to call them in were ignored. We had them calling from several of the lodges as well – particularly at Selinda at the end. After our very full days and night spotlighting, we did not pursue a sighting, but with diligence one could do so.

Southern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis granti*— 1 (MO) Heard only, just one night and dawn at the camp at Khwai River.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl *Bubo lacteus*— 1 (MO) Bev spotted a large perched owl which turned out to be a chick, almost at eye-level for us as we drove out from Khwai Camp one morning. It seemed curious about its admirers, and then had enough waiting and started to emit long begging calls to the parents.

Pel's Fishing-Owl *Scotopelia peli*— 1 (XO) A true highlight of the trip was our guide Thomas's diligent search for this species while we walked the island trails at Xaro. We tried several favorite perch areas and a visiting Elephant kept us from the main area he had heard them calling from at dawn. With luck, right above the river and at the end of our walk he spotted the very large juvenile. We got super views of this intricately patterned owl. To Peg it looks like a fine Botswana basket!

Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*—6 (XO,NP,MO,SE) On several occasions we found this species during the day, first at Xaro Lodge, then in the campground at Nxai Pan, from our drives in Moremi, and in Selinda. It would often call during the day which alerted us to its presence. In Selinda as we watched to relocate the Leopard, one watched us until Jaco pointed it out.

African Barred-Owlet *Glaucidium capense*— 5 (XO,MO,SE) Our first and rather amazing views were of a calling bird the morning we walked the island from Xaro Lodge with Thomas. It called repeatedly and we were able to get close enough for photos and observation. We found them again driving in and out of camp in Moremi and we heard them on several occasions.

African Wood-Owl *Strix woodfordii*— 2 (XO) George had this species right outside his tent, and with Thomas's assist we found the pair, which stayed in the area above a small ravine likely good for prey. While during the day they stayed in shade amid branches, walking back to the tent at night we were able to see them in full view.

MOUSEBIRDS: Coliidae (1)

Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus*— 2 (CH,MA) We did not find this species often, just one sighting along the Chobe in a frenzied burst of bird activity at Chobe Game Lodge, from the boat. Peg then had two by her room at the Cresta Riley hotel in Maun the final morning.

HOOPOES: Upupidae (1)

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*—11 (MA,XO,MO,SE) Delightfully common, we loved this bird with its crazy crest raised up and down while feeding. Its musical notes often brightened our days and alerted us to its presence. Most often found in pairs, some of our best looks were at Paradise Pools in Moremi where they were feeding. They were also at the hotel in Maun, perched up on termite mounds and fence posts and the buildings.

WOODHOOPES: Phoeniculidae (1)

Green Woodhoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*— 12 () The “giggling ladies” were quite common, and encountered in groups of 5-10. They made a big commotion as they fed by probing into the bark of trees. At Xaro we saw them very closely, intent as they were on feeding. Many days we watched the fly by as a gang, going from one feeding bout to the next. Their calls, red bills and startling wing pattern gave them away.

GROUND-HORN BILLS: Bucorvidae (1)

Southern Ground-Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*—4 (MO,SE) This most impressive species was a joy to encounter, and we did so on several occasions. We could hear them in the mornings when they seemed the most vocal. We watched them feeding, moving about probing the ground for invertebrates and seeds. They would at times toss the food item in the air and catch it – fun! Twice we watched them fly – most impressive on such huge wings.

HORN BILLS: Bucerotidae (5)

Bradfield’s Hornbill *Lophoceros bradfieldi*— 8 (MA,NP,MO,CH) Less common than the other hornbills, we did find them in several locations.

African Gray Hornbill *Lophoceros nasutus*— 11 (MO,CH,SE) Highly vocal, this species loves the woodlands and were super common when we were in Mopane. They would call repeatedly, and we watched one display, throwing out its wings as its head pointed skyward, pushing out the sound.

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus leucomelas*— 8 (NP,MO,SE) We found this species mainly in pairs, and at times they were duetting. The sun shone on their bills and we admired these as major tools to thrash for prey as they probed in sand and soils.

Southern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus rufirostris*— 15 (MA,XO,NP,CH,SE) The most common and widespread of the hornbills, even at our hotel in Maun on the grounds.

Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator*— 2 (CH) We were thrilled to see this huge and gaudy species, flying between tall trees that line the river by Mowana Lodge and the rapids section of the Chobe River. While they occur here, you have to intersect their flight from boats and this was the first time Peg had seen them in Botswana, normally we find them on trips to the lush habitat surrounding Victoria Falls in neighboring Zimbabwe.

KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae (7)

Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata*— 4 (CH) An electric blue kingfisher, we were thrilled to find them. The guides had several nest areas staked out, so we knew where to look, and had good success. They would perch in thick areas, so catching a photo was a challenge, but in time we had some success.

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus*—8 (XO,CH) Plentiful and confiding, we could not believe how close they would tolerate us in the boats. We watched them again and again, even catch fish and gulp them down! We loved the jewel-like tones of turquoise in the crown and the chance to admire them so closely.

Gray-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*—1 (CH) Only one individual was seen, they are just arriving back, at the grounds of Mowana as we walked one morning with local guide, Charles.

Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris*— 4 (CH) Not common but evenly spread along the river, we did get very good views of this species on the banks of the Chobe.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*— 4 (MO,CH,SE) An insectivorous dry land kingfisher, we got to see them well while on game drives at first in Moremi, then on our drive through Kasane Forest Reserve and most days while in Selinda. So strange for us to see a kingfisher so happy away from water!

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*— 9 (XO,CH) This bird was a star attraction for our river time, we saw them well and often. They are huge, and their bills are imposing. We watched one absolutely thrash a fish to tenderize it. Along the Serondela area by our houseboat mooring we watched one bathing, repeatedly diving into the water, then working the water through its feathers on a serious preening bout. Wow!

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*— 19 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) One of the most numerous species along the river, we loved its presence and constant chatter. They would hover as they hunted, a photographic challenge and fun to observe. By Chobe Game Lodge we watched this species thrash a fish, taking several minutes and making several attempts to swallow it.

BEE-EATERS: Meropidae (5)

White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides*— 7 (XO,CH) This species was one we enjoyed to the max, visiting nesting colonies along riverbanks with steep slopes that could allow for the apartment like network of burrows a colony demands. We could park our boats and just watch, as Harriet said, do a prey survey, watching them come in to feed their broods with bees, wasps, big dragonflies and other items. The colors were magnetic as they came in and flew out – what an amazing experience.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*— 15 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) This little avian jewel was our joy on many outings, they were peppered throughout the woodlands and riverine areas, catching insects on the wing. They often posed on perches we could observe at close range. A regular and common species in a mix of habitats.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*— 9 (NP,MO,CH,SE) Our first was found in Nxai Pan where we saw them daily. They liked the acacia forests there, and in the Mopane forest we found them again at Moremi. At Selinda they were more common and present in our camp which was a joy. Their colors and form was exquisite – avian jewels.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*— 1 (SE) A first for Peg after six Botswana trips, just arriving back from the summer in their breeding areas, a small pulse of this species was encountered on one of our drives in Selinda.

Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*— 13 (XO,MO,CH) A glamour species that was a favorite of many and perhaps a tie as Bev described for the most colorful species alongside Lilac-breasted Roller. We found them impossible not to stop for, a magenta magnet of beauty that one simply had to admire. We watched a duo grooming in tandem on a branch, yoga poses and stretches. We watched the soar high over the landscape, and parked our boats by individuals hunting from the reeds, going out for insects and returning to the same perch, Jaco our photo coach saying “shoot, shoot, shoot” so we could try to capture them on wings. Common – thankfully so!

ROLLERS: Coraciidae (2)

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus*— 19 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Despite being common, this bird was rated a showstopper as it is every year, just can't get past those colors. It was great to see this species with regularity, several times a day, often perched and then taking off for dramatic flights.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*— 1 (CH) Peg spied on high in the trees as we left the ranger check-in station at Chobe National Park, we looped the boat around to get views and it turned out to be the only individual of the trip – this species was just arriving during our stay.

AFRICAN BARBETS: Lybiidae (4)

Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii*— 9 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) We found this species to be very confiding and were able to watch it on the grounds of several of our lodges and camps.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*— 1 (CH) We had excellent views of one individual calling, then spotted in large trees at Mowana Lodge on the riverbanks of the Chobe.

Pied Barbet *Tricholaema leucomelas* — 1 (NP) Seen and heard on a morning game drive at Nxai Pan, close to the camp.

Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus*— 6 (XO,CH,MA) One of the first really colorful showy birds we saw, it was immediately a favorite with its loud musical calls and plumage.

HONEYGUIDES: Indicatoridae (1)

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*— 1 (CH) We stopped to watch the White-fronted Bee-eater colony and had the bonus of a little bird party going on in shrubs nearby. One individual of this species was present.

WOODPECKERS: Picidae (4)

Cardinal Woodpecker *Chloropicus fuscescens*— 4 (XO,MO) We first found them on the grounds of the hotel at Xaro, and later in the campground at Moremi Game Reserve.

Bearded Woodpecker *Chloropicus namaquus*— 4 (MO,SE) This was the more common species of larger woodpecker we saw while driving through Mopane woodlands.

Bennett's Woodpecker *Campethera bennettii*— 3 (XO,MO,SE) Individuals seen here and there, often at a distance alerted by drumming. Best sighting was near Hippo Pool in Moremi where one was feeding near the ground for super good looks.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*— 2 (CH) We had morning and then afternoon views while at Chobe, first on our walk with Charles in the Kasane Forest Reserve, and then later from the boat, we had one at close range seen from the river. Then at our final camp at Selinda, there was an adult and two youngsters out of the nest but noisy and still asking to be fed.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae (2)

Dickinson's Kestrel *Falco dickinsoni*— 3 (MO,SE) We got distant, then closer looks at this handsome gray falcon, driving in the area we were looking for lions. There was another in the general camp area at Selinda.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*— 1 (NP) We had excellent views of this species, first a pair that hunted together and then a single that was dive bombing sandgrouse at the waterhole. It seems that these birds have found an easy source of prey and settled in to guard their treasure trove at both major water holes in Nxai Pan.

PARROTS: Psittacidae (1)

Meyer's Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri*— 15 (XO,MO,CH,SE) Very common, we heard them often, saw them fly by as they called, and then on a few occasions watched them feed on fruits in trees, or by Paradise Pools, on the ground. Lovely subtle colors for a parrot.

OLD WORLD ORIOLES: Oriolidae (1)

African Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*— 5 (MO,SE,MA) It was a long time into the trip until we saw this species. It called but eluded us at first, but then at Selinda we saw them well on several occasions and around the camp.

WATTLE-EYES AND BATIS: Platysteiridae (1)

Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*— 4 (MO,CH,SE) This little cutie was a favorite. We could hear its call, "three, blind, mice" uttered and then hone in on its perch. We saw males and females and got good looks.

VANGAS AND HELMETSHRIKES: Vangidae (2)

White Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus*— 3 (NP,MO) We first met this species at Nxai Pan, but did not get really good looks. We then had this species by our camp in Moremi, vocal and present much of the day with photo ops and good views.

Retz's Helmetshrike *Prionops retzii*— 1 (XO) Peg had not encountered this species since the first trip in 2010 so was particularly pleased that we saw it early on in the trip on our walk around the island that Xaro Lodge rests on. Social and vocal, we followed them as we searched for Pel's Fishing Owl, they liked the same big trees so we had time to really watch them feed and move as a group.

BUSHSHRIKES: Malaconotidae (9)

Brubru *Nilaus afer*— 5 (NP,MO,CH,SE) Several of our guides called this one (from the call) the "telephone bird". Male and female are quite different in plumage, but they were often together and common in the camps, and in the campgrounds that we stopped at for tea breaks.

Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*— 11 (MO,CH,SE,MA) Very common, one of the more regularly encountered of the songbirds. They were often feeding at eye-level which was most helpful.

Black-crowned Tchagra *senegalus*— 1 (SE) Seen one morning on a game drive, low in shrubbery, the only sighting of our trip. It was calling, and came into view which was nice.

Brown-crowned Tchagra *australis*— 6 (XO,NP,CH,SE)

Tropical Boubou *Laniarius major*— 5 (CH) We saw this species only in the Chobe area but its loud and distinctive call makes them easy to find.

Gabon Boubou *Laniarius bicolor*— 11 (MA,XO,MO,CH) Quite common and highly vocal. Some of our best views were in the area of the bird hide at Hippo Pools. Also, on the lawn of the Okavango Brewery we celebrated the end of our journey at the final day.

Crimson-breasted Gonolek *Laniarius atrococcineus*— 7 (NP,MO,SE) This bird bears shocking color, and it stands out so vividly in the dry brown foliage of Mopane woodlands. Its tucked safely on the underside so visible to other birds but less so to aerial hunters. A vocal and tolerant species, best views were from the dining tent at our last camp at Selinda.

Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus*— 3 (CH) A beautiful bird with musical song, we had to work at it for its habitat of staying high in tall tree branches. With luck one was on territory not far from our houseboat mooring in the Serondela area of the Chobe, so we had repeated tries for all to get a look.

Gray-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti*— 1 (CH) Just one sighting, in the Kasane Game Reserve as we walked out to check out the area for some of the local bird specialties.

SHRIKES: Laniidae (2)

Magpie Shrike *Corvinella melanoleuca*— 9 (MA,MO,CH,SE) We saw this social species right away at Maun, between the hotel and the river. We saw them often, their long tails a quick give away that they were present, but also their calls. Their greeting could be described as heralding, and the wing pattern in flight helped us track them.

White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus anguimans*— 4 (NP,MO) Not common, we enjoyed seeing them, typically pairs, in the Mopane woodland.

DRONGOS: Dicruridae (1)

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*— 22 (MA,XO,NP,MO,SE) An everyday and quite common. They mimic other bird calls with quite a repertoire!

MONARCH FLYCATCHERS: Monarchidae (1)

African Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*— 1 (CH) We had just one quick sighting of a male in the big trees that we watched the turaco in at Chobe Game Lodge.

CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (2)

Cape Crow *Corvus capensis*— 3 (NP) Common around the waterholes at Nxai Pan.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*— 4 (MA,XO,CH) We saw them in the city, on our way to the Tsidillo Hills from Xaro around villages, and then at the Chobe Sewage Lagoons. Find people and it seems one will find Pied Crow.

TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (1)

Southern Black-Tit *Melaniparus niger*— 4 (MO,SE) This woodland bird was quiet, but we encountered them as we stopped for other species. Each time there were Arnot's Chat we found them, and sometimes they were a member of the various "bird parties". At Selinda at our final camp there was a pair that hung out close to the dining tents.

LARKS: Alaudidae (5)

Gray-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix verticalis*— 1 (NP) Just a few individuals seen at the main waterhole at Nxai Pan, they can come in there in huge flocks but we did not witness that this year.

Sabota Lark *Calendulauda sabota*— 2 (NP) This lark species is common at Nxai Pan, though with so many species to see we did not stop for many after clinching a good identification.

Fawn-colored Lark *Calendulauda africanoides*— 2 (SE) Lovely pale-toned lark, we saw several during our time in Selinda.

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*— 2 (SE) Found on our last two game drives. Our guide Jaco had a keen ear and we located our first individuals this way. He described it as a noise indelible from being a childhood song for him in South Africa.

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*— 1 (NP) Present at the waterhole in Nxai Pan but this year only a few.

AFRICAN WARBLERS: Macrosphenidae (1)

Cape Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens*— 6 (NP,CH,SE) Often seen in pairs, and often calling, we saw this little nuthatch-like species probing into bark of branches of trees on several occasions.

CISTICOLAS AND ALLIES: Cisticolidae (10)

Barred Wren Warbler *Calamonastes fasciolatus*— 1 (MO) We had just one sighting of this intricately patterned species, in a small bird flock in the Mopane woodland of Moremi Game Reserve.

Stierling Wren Warbler *Calamonastes stierlingi*— 1 (CH) We had good views of an individual of this species as we particularly looked for it in habitat they like, the Zambezi teak forest of Kasane Forest Reserve.

Green-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*— 11 (NP,MO,CH,SE) Very common and present wherever we had a good density of shrubs. First views were at Xaro on our walk around the island. They were often in camps and around our tents at lodges.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*— 9 (MO,CH,SE) These were quite common and vocal in a mix of habitat.

Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans*— 2 (NP) Seen only at Nxai Pan, we had them tee up for good views as we came back from the main waterhole one morning, keeping company with a Chestnut-vented Warbler.

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*— 7 (XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) The most common of the cisticola clan for us, we got good looks and often heard them calling.

Luapula Cisticola *Cisticola luapula*— 3 (CH) Seen in reed areas, often perched up where we could get good looks at its bold patterning.

Chirping Cisticola *Cisticola pipiens*— 3 (CH) A bird of the wetlands and reeds, we identified them by plumage and tested them with calls.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*— 4 (MO,CH) Thankful that this species was calling, as it always helps to have visual and voice for this group.

Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus*— 1 (NP) One individual was on the path to our tents at Nxai Pan, at times hopping on the boardwalk.

REED-WARBLERS: Acrocephalidae (4)

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*— 1 (CH) We actually had several good looks at this species, both along the Chobe River one day and also close views in the reeds surrounding the Kasane Sewage Lagoons – on the same day.

African Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*—3 (CH) Very good looks this year from the boat, along the river margin of the Chobe, several individuals per outing.

Lesser Swamp-Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*—1 (XO) Seen only with us of playback on Okavango River from Xaro Lodge.

Greater Swamp-Warbler *Acrocephalus rufescens*—1 (XO) Two individuals were perched up on reeds in the flooded field off the Okavango River from Xaro Lodge, singing.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLERS: Locustellidae

Little Rush Warbler *bradypterus baboecata* —1 (XO) We had great looks at this inquisitive species working low to the water edge in reeds on the Okavango River.

SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae (7)

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*— 3 (MA,XO,CH) Present along the riverbanks, easy to overlook but present.

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta*— 13 (XO,MO,CH,SE) Quite common, the most regularly encountered swallow and often over open areas, interior wetlands but also dry grass areas.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*— 1 (MO) Seen just on one day as we made our way to the airstrip to leave Moremi Game Reserve.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*— 9 (CH,SE) Very common, especially along the Chobe. They were incredibly confiding and seemed to want to nest above the door frames of our houseboat. The boat would move, so the

adults would have to go along. Perhaps as the movement is regular, they have learned to tolerate it! They would sleep at night on the boat and be out feeding by daylight.

Lesser Striped-Swallow *Cecropias abyssinica*—10 (XO,MO,CH,SE) Common and easy to spot with their lovely pattern, best views was by the dry river bed we waited for our ride to the airstrip out of Moremi by, perched in a tall picturesque dead tree.

Rufous-chested Swallow *Cecropias semirufa*— 6 (MO,CH,SE) The larger size and deep bold breast covering helped us to find this swallow, they seemed to like the smaller ponds and lagoons spread throughout the Mopane forest.

Southern Africa (African Cliff) Swallow *Petrochelidon spilodera* — 1 (CH) Seen in flight and perched on the wires at the Kasane Sewage Lagoon.

BULBULS: Pycnonotidae (4)

Yellow-bellied Greenbul *Chlorocichla flaviventris*— 4 (CH) Our best views of this species was at the place we looked for African Finfoot, without success, but happily there were other birds such as this lovely species around.

Terrestrial Brownbul *Phyllastrephus terrestris*—2 (CH) A skulker, we had our best views on the walk at Mowana, by the pumping unit, scraping in leaves at the base of trees like our towhees do.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*— 16 (MA,XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) Very common, and numerous – their musical call was our most heard call and it's a lovely one.

Black-fronted Bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans*— 10 (MA,XO,SE) Less common than Dark-eyed, we found them around our lodges, and when present, always in groups or good numbers.

LEAF-WARBLERS: Phylloscopidae (1)

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*— 2 (CH,SE) Seen with a flock of other species in the dense shrubbery surrounding the Kasane Sewage Lagoon, then see in a mixed flock while at Selinda in shrubbery. Both single individuals.

SYLVIID WARBLERS: Sylviidae (1)

Chestnut (Rufous)-vented Warbler *Sylvia subcaerulea*—3 (XO,MO) A handsome warbler, we found them on game drives often when we stopped to view a mammal or other species. Their song was easy to track and they were for the most part pretty confiding, often so close it made it a jostle to see from vehicles.

WHITE-EYES: Zosteropidae (1)

Southern (African) Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*— 1 (CH) Seen just one time at the Chobe Game Lodge one morning when we had a bird blast there. It was in dense shrubbery below the big tree canopy – a flock of a half dozen or so.

LAUGHINGTHRUSHES AND ALLIES: Leiothrichidae (3)

Hartlaub's Babbler *Turdoides hartlaubii*— 12 (MA,XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) Common and widespread, easy to find for all their chatter.

Southern Pied-Babbler *Turdoides bicolor*— 1 (MO) We saw this species just once, as we were in the midst of a lion and hyena scramble, trying to follow them in the vehicle, bumping along in the Mopane. Such a handsome species and easy to identify, it was our only encounter with two individuals.

Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*— 13 (MA,XO,MO,CH,SE) Common and widespread, often around hotels, lodges and camps.

OXPECKERS: Buphagidae (2)

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*— 12 (NP,MO,CH,SE) Very common, seen in flocks, vocal, and on a variety of species, key species were giraffe, buffalo, hippo, and kudu.

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*— 9 (MO,CH,SE) Often seen with Red-billed Oxpeckers, common.

STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (7)

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*— 6 (MO,CH) Seen in big numbers first by Paradise Pool, then around buffalo herds they were especially common.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*— (Introduced) 3 (MA,CH) 9 () Not seen in the early years we visited Botswana, they seem to be moving in. They were at the Kasane Sewage Lagoons where we first found them in 2021, but now we found them on the grounds of the Cresta Riley hotel in Maun as well.

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*— 2 (CH) A beautiful species seen well on the grounds of Mowana, then two were seen in a tree by the White-throated Bee-eater colony along the river.

Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*— 12 (MO,SE) Plentiful in woodland habitats, often around our lodges, and in the field seen multiple times daily, common.

Meves's Starling *Lamprotornis mevesii*— 14 (XO,MO,SE) Less common than Burchell's but a bit more widespread. At home around lodges, vocal.

Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*— 3 (CH,SE) Seen on the grounds of Mowana Lodge in Kasane and around our camp at Selinda.

Cape Starling *Lamprotornis nitens*— 9 (NP,MO,CH)

THRUSHES: Turdidae (2)

Groundscraper Thrush *Psophocichla litsitsirupa*— 1 (MO) We found a pair of this handsome and bold-patterned thrush just once, on a game drive in Moremi Game Reserve.

Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyana*— 4 (MA,MO,SE) We saw this species in Maun on the lawn of the Okavango brewpub as well as at our hotel, and a few other times while in woodlands.

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS AND CHATS: Muscicapidae (11)

Mariqua Flycatcher *Bradornis mariquensis*— 4 (NP,MO) Very common at Nxai Pan, twenty or more seen a day. A few were seen in Moremi but nowhere near as commonly.

Chat Flycatcher *Agricola infuscatus*— 1 (NP) We found a few of these on the longer game drive at Nxai Pan, out in the very open dry portion of the road.

Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens*— 1 (NP) One immature individual seen while we were photographing Bat-eared Fox, pointed out by George, our guide.

Southern Black-Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina*— 2 (MO) Peg noticed one on a game drive in Moremi and then tracked one down for the group to see at the campground at Khwai. This species looks so much like a drongo it is often overlooked.

Kalahari Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas paean*— 3 (NP, CH) Seen at Nxai Pan and then again, one individual at the Kasane Sewage Lagoon.

Red-backed (White-browed) Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys*— 2 (SE) Heard first, we found this species on some of the game drives from Okavango Explorer's Camp.

White-browed Robin-Chat *Cossypha heuglini*— 8 (MA,XO,CH) Quite tame around lodges, a lovely species that is confiding and musical.

Collared Palm-Thrush *Cichladusa arquata*— 3 (CH) No need to set the alarm at Pangolin Safari Lodge, this bird will wake you by sunrise, echoes of its call ripple through the rafters. It seems to like gardens and lodges, we found them on our walk at Mowana Lodge as well.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*— 4 (MO,CH) This species was often perched up on reeds along the riverbanks where reeds grew in extensive patches.

Annot's (White-headed Black) Chat *Myrmecocichla annoti*— 2 (MO) Seen several times in the Mopane woodland, at one spot we had at least four males singing and flying from tree-top to tree top. Otherwise we would find pairs, feeding often with other species in the Mopane.

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata*— 3 (NP) A stunning birds, we'd spot them in good number driving in and out of Nxai Pan in the open areas by the waterholes. They perched up on elephant skulls, elephant dung and rocks to survey for insects and other wheatears.

SUNBIRDS: Nectariniidae (4)

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*— 2 (XO) We saw this species on the grounds of the lodge, feeding on flowering shrubs and trees.

Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina*— 1 (CH) Seen feeding on flowering shrubs at the Kasane Sewage Lagoons.

Mariqua Sunbird *Cinnyris bifasciatus*— 4 (XO,MO,CH) This was the more widespread of the sunbirds and we had good views on a number of days.

White-breasted Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala*— 4 (CH) This species was common along the Chobe, and easy to spy. Very good views were a male and female that fed above the White-throated Bee-eater colony.

WEAVERS: Ploceidae (12)

Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver *Bubalornis niger*— 8 (MA,MO,CH,SE) Common, very busy around their huge stick nests. We also saw them in good number feeding on the ground.

Scaly Weaver *Sporopipes squamifrons*— 3 (NP,CH) We had the best sightings while at Nxai Pan but ran into a few again at the Kasane Sewage Lagoons.

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali*— 3 (NP) Best seen at Nxai Pan, we learned that they like to put their nests on the west side of trees and locals used that for orientation when in flat terrain. The nests hang in groups like oversized Christmas balls on the trees there.

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*— 4 (MO,SE) A beautiful species, Peg spied the first pair as we stopped for photos of Carmine Bee-eaters. We jostled the vehicle around at this spot in Moremi, and later saw them with more ease on the grounds of the Selinda camp and the hotel in Maun.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularius*— 4 (XO,CH) Best views were in the riverine areas where they were working on nests.

Holub's Golden-Weaver *Ploceus xanthops*— 4 (XO,CH,MA) A beautiful weaver, we watched them at Xaro Lodge and then again along the river on the Chobe.

Southern Brown-throated Weaver *Ploceus xanthopterus*— 2 (CH) Seen feeding on lily lagoons, visiting the flowers and pads, likely nesting there.

Lesser Masked-Weaver *Ploceus intermedius*— 5 (XO,CH,SE) There are SO many weaver flocks and eye color is needed to distinguish the non-breeding plumage individuals which at this time of year are the majority. As they often drop to the ground to feed, they were a bit easier to id when we could see the pale yellow iris well.

Southern Masked-Weaver *Ploceus velatus*— 7 (MO,CH,MA) Dark-eyed females confirmed this species for us when we had the patience to sort the multiple flocks seen a day out. This is stated to be the most common species of weaver in Botswana, seen in multiple habitats and not dependent on being near water.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*— 3 (CH) The very streaky back of the male, and the abundance of red-eyed individuals clued us in to this species, which might have been more common than we noted. They like woodlands near water.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*— 10 (NP,MO,CH) In a burn area at Nxai Pan we encountered small clouds of them and our guides explained that they are not liked by farmers as massive numbers, thousands, can descend on crops, devastating them. The most numerous bird on earth, we saw plenty!

Fan-tailed Widowbird *Euplectes axillaris*— 3 (CH) We mainly found this species in grassy stretches of the Chobe, where they flew low over vegetation, showing red epaulets not unlike our red-winged blackbirds.

WAXBILLS: Estrildidae (8)

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*— 5 (XO,NP,CH) Not common but in with other species in the mixed flocks. Some were present at the Namibian immigration building.

Black-faced Waxbill *Estrilda erythronotos*— 2 (NP) Seen in the mixed flock that hung around camp at Nxai Pan.

Southern Cordonbleu *Uraeginthus angolensis*— 12 (MO,CH,SE) One of the more common small birds encountered in mixed flocks, feeding on the ground and in shrubbery.

Violet-eared Waxbill *Granatina granatina*— 2 (NP) Seen in the mixed flock that hung around camp at Nxai Pan.

Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba*— 2 (SE) Peg had a pair regularly getting water, bathing, then preening in shrubbery, their pool was water in an elephant footprint not far from the lagoon but close to the tents.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*— 4 (MO,SE) Seen regularly at camps in the woodland settings.

Brown Firefinch *Lagonosticta nitidula*— 1 (XO) Seen well at Xaro, a small flock feeding close to the tents back in a shrubby area.

Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*— 2 (XO,CH) Seen at Xaro but seen then in good number feeding on the ground at the Kasane Sewage Lagoon.

Bronze Manakin *Spermestes cucullata*— 1 (CH) One individual perched for some time on a tree overhanging the path through Mowana Lodge in Kasane.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae (2)

Southern Gray-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus*—14 (NP,MO,CH,SE) Very common, seen regularly.

Yellow-throated Petronia *Petronia superciliaris*— 5 (NP,MO,CH,SE) At times present with Gray-headed Sparrows or on their own in small flocks in the woodlands.

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS: Motacillidae (5)

Cape Wagtail *Motacilla capensis*— 3 (CH) Seen around the herds of buffalo, Puku and Waterbuck on islands of the Chobe River.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*— 11 (XO,NP,MO,CH) Confiding and vocal, they would be at waterholes walking past the feet of giant elephants, and they landed on our houseboat to sing in the morning. They balanced on rocks in the rapids section of the Chobe.

African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*— 9 (NP,MO,CH,SE) The most widespread and common the pipit clan.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*— 5 (MO,SE) We often spied this species when were parked looking and scanning for mammals, fairly common.

Buffy Pipit *Anthus vaalensis*— 2 (MO) Seen well in Moremi where we had time to study them as we parked to scan the floodplains of the Khwai.

FINCHES: Fringillidae (2)

Black-throated Canary *Serinus atrogularis*— 7 (NP,MO,CH,SE) We saw this species in flocks on several occasions.

Yellow Canary *Serinus flaviventris*— 5 (NP,MO) This bright gem was most common at Nxai Pan, their color really shone in the sun and stood out in the brown and gray Kalahari terrain.

OLD WORLD BUNTINGS: Emberizidae (1)

Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris*— 5 (MO,CH,SE) A beautiful birds, our first sighting was near a small lagoon in Moremi, we then found them in mixed flocks in the other two wooded locations.

MAMMALS (40 species):

Peters' Epauletted Fruit Bat *Epomophorus crypturus*— 3 (XO) Palms outside the dining area of Xaro Lodge held a roost for this species, it was fun to get so close!

African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*— 21 (XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) Botswana has LOTS of Elephants and they framed many of the stops of our trip. We watched the feed, play, swim, take mud baths, challenge each other, prod babies along – so many aspects of their lives observed. From arid Nxai Pan where they scraped out a living to grassy watered lands of the Chobe, we watched them at all locations except Maun.

Chacma Baboon *Papio ursinus*— 11 (NP,MO,CH,SE) We were surprised to run into a lone male baboon at Nxai Pan, apparently it arrived about a month ago and is a loner there. Once in Moremi we started to encounter groups but the Chobe for sure was baboon land. There we parked the boat and watched them groom, play, court, feed, swing from branches, nurse babies, squabble and sun bathe. We watched huge troops fan out to feed in the upland habitats and watched them leap across a water channel to avoid getting wet. Noisy and present, and good Leopard food!

Vervet Monkey *Chlorocebus pygerythrus*— 12 (NP,MO,CH,SE) We watched this species in the Mopane Woodland and along river courses, they were widespread and pretty common but less obvious than the baboons.

Scrub Hare *Lepus saxatilis*— 5 (NP, SE) We saw these towards dusk and at night on game drives, they were quite common on the airstrip at Selinda towards the end of our trip.

Lion *Panthera leo*— 9 (NP,MO, CH,SE) This was a lion trip for sure. From the first group we encountered at Nxai Pan, we kept thinking well, now we've seen lions. And each new sighting brought out more stories and understanding of this huge social cat's behaviors. At Nxai Pan we had set out on a game drive and the staff called us back, lions had just passed the waterhole. We intercepted a line of females, heading to the woods, but they were alert and aware – in the distance a male was running rapidly. Our guides skillfully read the scene and stayed with the females, knowing the male would come. They bedded down in view (thankfully!) at the woodland edge where we could watch him arrive. Later we saw him mating one of the females, repeatedly, both initiating the mating with taps of a paw and body language. They kept at it about every 15 minutes as lions will do, in time we left them be. In Moremi we first saw a male attending a female but she likely was not yet in estrus, and we now of a huge group of five males that might soon be vying for her. We found a group of five huge males that had formed a coalition, actually at one point they were six but one had succumbed to wounds inflicted by buffalo. Watching them groom and interact in golden light at the day's end was so memorable. Near our camp at Khwai, Kaki spotted a female on the move with purpose, Ewan could see she probably had cubs and was returning to feed them. Off we went and we were able to see the greeting, cubs piling in and over her – fabulous! Then at Selinda we saw fresh tracks and successfully read and followed them to find a coalition of three more big males. Lots of lion action this time.

Leopard *Panthera pardus*— 2 (MO, SE) Both sightings of this incredible predator could be considered highlights of the journey. The first we had a tip on from another vehicle in an area we saw a lot of vehicles on the other side of the Khwai River, but none on our side. We followed the calls of Red-billed Francolins that were agitated by her climb up into a nice shade tree. We parked and just watched it, we could not see if it were a male or female, Ewan suspected a young male. It peered out at us, but in time we elected to go see a large group of female lions attracting a crowd across the river, but looking like they would come to the river to drink. When we returned the Leopard was gone. At Selinda, we looked at length for a young female, recently on her own after being with her mother in the camp area for almost two years. We drove past many of her rest trees and looked and looked, checking most carefully when hearing squirrel and francolin alarm calls. At almost the edge of her territory, we were still scanning when Bev said, "I have a Leopard!" She was a good distance, maybe a quarter mile away, but we watched her look at us, then bed down for a bit, then get up to start hunting squirrels. Our last sighting was of her white tail tip twitching with attentiveness as she melted into the thick Mopane woodland.

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo*— 3 (CH) We encountered good sized groups while at Chobe, a pack seemed to inhabit the boat ramp area we parked and another was up by the lodges.

Dwarf Mongoose *Helogale parvula*— 2 (SE) We finally caught up with this social and often easy to see species at our final camp in the Selinda Spillway area. We enjoyed them while on a game drive, but on the final day when we were at camp mid-morning, there was a gang right outside the dining tent, peering out of a big eroded termite mound. Bev had her camera and we look forward to seeing those shots.

Slender Mongoose *Galerella sanguine*— 3 (MO,SE) The dark-tipped tail on this species gave them away, most looks were quick but good ones.

Spotted Hyena *Crocuta crocuta*— 9 (NP,MO,CH,SE) We had some great hyena dramas this trip, intercepting groups that knew what they were up to, moving purposefully, but we could only surmise predators were about and they could smell a meal a mile away. Our first good sightings were in Moremi, not far from our camp at Khwai, and we got excellent looks at adults and one juvenile at close range. We heard them many evenings, and caught sight of them at a few other locations.

Aardwolf *Proteles cristatus*— 1 (NP) We saw this species at a great distance, and for some time thought it might be a Bat-eared Fox. But the size for the distance, and the amount of dirt that was flying as it dug a burrow suggested a larger animal. The ears were rounded, and the face pattern was gray with a black area around the eyes. Not an ideal look, but an encounter.

Side-striped Jackal *Canis adustus*— 2 (MO, SE) We left a group of five sunlit, gorgeous male lions that we were lucky to find in Moremi, in a quiet area that only one colleague of Ewan's was in so no pressure at all on them. As we drove out, feeling so satisfied, we came on to a pair of this beautiful species! Light was fading but we followed them and got good views, a few photos. We saw one shy one again near the airstrip at Okavango Explorer's Camp.

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas*— 3 (NP) This species was very common in Nxai Pan, but we did not see them at other locations this year. They have beautiful coats and striking markings.

Bat-eared Fox *Otocyon mgalotis*— 3 (NP) Incredible views this year for this often elusive species. We watched pairs grooming and a family group listening intently as they started their feeding bout at dusk. Very special to spend time with this mammal, a highlight for the Nxai Pan visit.

African Wild Dog *Lycaon pictus*— 2 (MO) This magnetic species was a prime reason many of us venture to Botswana regularly as this nation remains a stronghold for this struggling species. Outside of the denning season when they are anchored, this species is hard to see, their livelihood is to be on the run. So, we were thrilled to see pack interaction by 3rd bridge, first encountering two adult babysitters with a pile of five pups, then the incoming adult hunters and a robust commotion with the twittering calls of pups ringing clear. This was a magic moment of the trip for all. We later bumped into a lone female separated from her pack. She showed signs of recent feeding and we can only hope she reunites soon.

Honey Badger *Mellivora capensis*— 5 (NP, MO) This was a Honey Badger trip! After explaining how hard they were to see, we were able to find one in Nxai Pan and watch it run fast for a long way out into open short grass areas. We then saw one spotlighting coming back as well. To then find one in Moremi on a couple of occasions was amazing. Bev spotted the Moremi individuals; she was our Honey Badger whisperer.

Burchell's Zebra *Equus quagga burchellii*— 13 (XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) So elegant and fun to watch, several of the big herds had young ones, and they are just impossible to drive by. Some were frisky, others seemed a bit lost but glued to mothers – some were just a month old.

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus*— 13 (NP,MO,CH,SE) We saw them in mudholes, in grasslands and forest, but we mostly watched them scamper away with their tails up. Occasionally one would confide and get down on its padded knees to graze. We saw two totally encrusted in mud on the edge of one of the lagoons. On our night spotlight returning to camp, we caught one with just the head up and out of its burrow, checking us out.

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibious*— 17 (MA,XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) Their sound is described as “chortling” and that it was. We saw and heard them often. Patrick called out to us as we sat around the campfire in Moremi, “Dad, there is a Hippo in Camp” and we sprung out of our chairs to stand at the vehicle like a muster station – a Hippo is not an animal to contend with. This giant ate its way out of view, but some nights at this and then subsequent camps we heard them grazing from our tents. A couple of times we encountered one out of the water, resting, and their sheer size was so hard to take in. Driving about, we could see Hippo tracks showing they use the road network at night as well.

(Southern Reticulated) Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis*—12 () We spent quite a bit of time with giraffes, we encountered aggregations of ten or more on several occasions and thoroughly enjoyed watching them move so gracefully through an area. We watched them up close use their long tongues to suck nectar from sausage tree lowers and pry leaves off of spiny branches. We watched oxpeckers groom them from nose to tail, and a few times saw them lope across the plain. One group was very curious about a probable predator that we could not see, from their height they could but we were blocked by vegetation. Later we found a large group of lions not far from them but across a river while in Moremi.

Blue Wildebeest (Brindled Gnu) *Connochaetes taurinus*— 12 () We saw this species frequently, in small groups, often with other antelopes.

Tsessebe *Damaliscus lunatus*—11 () (XO,MO,SE) The Botswana equivalent of Topi in East Africa, we admired their polished pelage and lightning quick speed. We saw them often, but not in big numbers.

Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis*— 3 (NP) The most common antelope of Nxai Pan, desert adapted and plentiful.

Steenbok *Raphicerus campestris*— 6 (NP,MO,SE) We often surprised this species resting under the shade of a bush or tree. They are small, territorial, and have big soft eyes – we all enjoyed the sightings.

African Buffalo *Syncerus caffer*— 16 (XO,NP,MO,CH,SE) Quite common, and impressive in numbers especially in Moremi where herds were 300+. With the lion pressure there being high, the big herds probably helped keep them safe or at least reduce their individual chances of not surviving the night. On the Chobe River we got close to bands of “Dugga Boys”, non-breeding males that choose not to keep up with the herds. Named for a native word for cement, or mud, they often wallow and are caked with mud, perhaps to repel insects. Wading birds including cattle egret were drawn to this species. They were impressive and foreboding. At times in the boats, we got very close, and in the heat of day it was not unusual to find them submerged partway on the river edge, still feeding but cooled off.

Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus*— 3 (XO) We saw this species only at Xaro, a couple of individuals that hung around the camp, a bit shy but enjoying shade and grass and probably a sense of refuge from predators.

Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*—13 () We saw female kudu often, in small groups, once a larger group concentrated at a salt area, they were getting minerals. We watched them browse and they were fairly tolerant of us. From the houseboat we were able to see a couple of large males with their massive antlers, fascinating to see how they navigated the terrain with such head gear!

Common Duiker *Sylvicapra grimmia*— 1 (SE) Quick looks at one that George spotted on a game drive from Okavango Explorer's camp.

Sable Antelope *Hippotragus niger*— 2 (CH,SE) Our first look was a group of females with young in the teak forest of the Kasane Forest Reserve. We then saw one male as we drove out of Okavango Explorers camp for an afternoon game drive in the Selinda area.

Roan Antelope *Hippotragus equinus*— 2 (CH,SE) We were pleased to see two of this species one night at dusk as we watched wildlife from the boat on the Chobe, from our houseboat portion of the tour. Then we found it more plentiful at Selinda, in the upland open areas, and while shy, with patience we got very good views. We watched a male keep his dominance by chasing off another, and admired this very local and hard to see antelope.

Impala *Aepyceros melampus*— 17 (NP,MO,CH,SE) Every present in good number. We watched males with their harems of females and bands of unattached males racing around to test their strength. We did not see any kills but know this species feeds a lot of predators in this ecosystem.

Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*— 11 (MO,CH,SE) Described as the fuzzy antelope with a bulls-eye on its butt, the males actually look pretty regal in good light. They were often mixed in with other species of antelope especially at river and lagoon margins.

Puku *Kobus vardonii*— 4 (CH) We saw this species that comes in from the east, just to the Chobe area of Botswana, on river islands, in small groups. We saw males and females.

Red Lechwe *Kobus leche*— 11 (MO,CH,SE) A signature species of the wetlands, their deep red coats shone in the sun. We watched them graze and when startled, leap through water with grace. They were numerous in their preferred wet marshy habitat and its margins.

Southern Reedbuck *Redunca arundinum*—2 (SE)

Smith's Bush Squirrel *Paraxerus cepapi*—13 (XO,MO,SE) Their chatter in woodland areas helped us find predators, and they were pretty common around our lodges and camps.

Spring Hare *Pedetes capensis*— (3) In the rodent family, this species leaping antics earned it the name "Africa's kangaroo". It was fun to see, new for us at Selinda where we could do night drives as it was a private concession.

Southern Lesser Gallago (Bushbaby) *Galigo mohili* —1 (SE) We had only a quick view in the spotlight one night returning from our game drive at Selinda.

Spotted-necked Otter *Hydriectis maculicollis*— 3 (CH) One of the highlights of our time on the Chobe, we went repeated up to the rapids where a family group was using the rocks and riffles to feed. The adults would venture out into the quicker water and we watched them eating fish. The youngsters seemed tucked back in quieter coves, likely learning hunting skills still. With patience we watched them and were able to get photos and video.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (6 species):

Nile Monitor Lizard *Varanus niloticus*—Fairly common on the Chobe River especially, we watched with fascination as two devoured a large catfish head, the interactions with the two of them and a Great Egret standing very close off to the side was a highlight.

Western Green Snake *Philothammus angolensis*— We saw this species barely alive as it went down the gullet of a Secretary Bird while at Selinda.

Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*— We saw some MONSTER sized crocodiles on a regular basis, certainly no one wanted to brave swimming. We would find them with mouths open, resting and sunning, or swimming low in the water, searching for a meal.

Painted Reed Frog *Hyperolius marmoratus*— We heard them regularly when camping or at lodges bordering wetlands, their bell-like sounds a joy.

Guttural Toad *Sclerophrys gutturalis* – Also calling regularly in wetland environments, almost deafening at times! We found them on the path at our last lodge in Selinda as well.

House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus* – At home on the walls of several of our tented lodges, doing their work eating insects.