



Letaka

SAFARIS

SPREAD YOUR WINGS

Private Bag 206, Maun, Okavango Delta, Botswana. Tel: +267 6800363 Fax: +267 6800955

E-mail: info@birdingsafaris.com Website: www.birdingsafaris.com

TOUR REPORT

THE LIVINGSTONE BIRDING TRAIL

08 – 24 MARCH 2010

LED BY BRENT REED



Day 1 - 08 March 2010 – Lake Ngami

Our trip started in Maun where four of our group had spent the night at Thamalakane Lodge whilst the other three arrived on Air Botswana from Johannesburg around mid-day. We left Maun and headed west out of town toward Lake Ngami. The weather was on the warm side of mild with temperatures topping out around 32 degrees Celsius, the afternoon was reasonably cloudy and we didn't feel the heat too much in the air-conditioned mini-bus. Not long after we turned off the Trans-Kalahari Highway towards the lake, we spotted a lone male **Kori Bustard** strutting around the wooded grassland, we managed to get some reasonable views before he disappeared behind a clump of shrubs. By the time we got to our camp at Lake Ngami we were all very happy to find that Chris had prepared a welcome lunch to fortify us for our first afternoon's birding. We abandoned the air-conditioned comfort of the mini-bus for the more practical 4x4 Land Cruiser which is ideally suited to the serious off-road routes around the lake. With lake levels at their highest in over 30 years our main aim for the afternoon was to try and find a gap in the woodland where we could actually have an open view of the main body of water. This proved fairly difficult but the woodland birding along the way was rewarding and produced **Common Scimitarbill, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Cardinal Woodpecker, Long-tailed Paradise Whydah, European Roller, Purple Roller, Senegal Coucal, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Red-backed Shrike** as well as a number of other 'new' birds for the list.

As we approached the water we had views of the flooded woodland but not the lake proper, these stops provided us with our first waterbirds which included the usual suspects such as **Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, African Jacana, Ruff, Squacco Heron, Red-billed Teal, African Spoonbill, Sacred Ibis, Little Egret and Black Crake**. Whilst we were looking amongst all the above Patrick managed to spot a large Snouted Cobra on a little island over the way from us, we managed to get fairly good views before it got wind of us and hightailed it back into the sedges.

When we eventually made it to open water the sheer numbers of birds was impressive and we quickly added another fifteen or so species to our ever-growing list. Amongst these were **Malachite Kingfisher, African Fish Eagle, Yellow-crowned Bishop, Little Rush Warbler, Whiskered Tern, White-winged Tern, Little Grebe, Grey-headed Gull, Great White Pelican and Pink-backed Pelican**.

With the light fading we moved on to our last spot for the day, a shallow, muddy bay off the lake which was very rewarding even in the fading light. Before sunset we managed to add **Caspian Tern, Greater Flamingo, Pied Avocet, Fulvous Duck, African Skimmer, Saddle-billed Stork, Wattled Crane and Little Stint** amongst others. When we returned to the vehicle in the dying light we found that Offentse, our trainee guide, had prepared a bar for the traditional sundowners. We watched the last shades of sunset with gin-and-tonics in hand and still managed to add **Glossy Ibis, Black-crowned Night-Heron and Yellow-billed Stork** whilst imbibing our anti-malarials. The drive back to camp started off in the dark and began fairly eventfully with two flat tyres within 5 minutes of each other. The first flat was changed in 8 minutes according to the group timekeeper and the second in significantly less than that. The only bird worth mentioning on the way back was a lovely **Bronze-winged Courser** which sat dead-still in the road allowing us all to get excellent binocular views in the headlights.

By the time we arrived back at camp we were all more than ready for dinner and after a sumptuous three-course meal it was time to do our first birdlist where the tally topped 130 species for the day - not bad going for day one.

Day 2 - 9 March 2010 – Lake Ngami

Our day began at 05h30 with the camp staff bringing hot water to our stand basins and greeting us with the traditional *Setswana* phrase *ko-ko* which is the equivalent of knock-knock. A lone **Fiery-necked Nightjar** was calling in the distance but his calls were virtually drowned out by the cacophony of **Red-billed Francolins** greeting the dawn. After coffee and a light breakfast we headed

back down to the lake where we had left off the previous day. On the way there we had great views of a **Wahlberg's Eagle** followed by a wonderful, if somewhat brief, view of a young **Martial Eagle** which flew off as Guy was about to take his award-winning photograph. As soon as we hit the grasslands before the lake we could hear a number of **Harlequin Quail** calling and it didn't take long before we had flushed a few and after several attempts we all managed to get reasonable views of a male in flight. Just a few hundred metres further on we flushed a pair of **Small Buttonquail** and noticed that they had young with them, we managed to get some great views of the youngsters in amongst the grass tufts as they pretended to be invisible. We were also treated to unusually good looks at a pair of **Common Quails** which half flushed and then decided to go it on foot, the male stopping in a little clearing to allow us a good full profile view.

Once we had reached the end of the tree-line we left the vehicle and approached the lake shore on foot. The sixty-odd **Greater Flamingos** were still standing like statuettes in the same position they were the day before but now with the addition of approximately 8 **Black-tailed Godwits** which we had not seen previously. Also present was a flock of around 170 **Collared and Black-winged Pratincoles** which would occasionally take to the air before wheeling around and settling again. Large numbers of **Fulvous Ducks and Red-billed Teal** were interspersed with **Southern Pochard, Comb Ducks, Hottentot Teal and Yellow-billed Ducks**. A number of **Pied Avocets** were still present and the three **Caspian Terns** we had seen the previous day had been joined by a further four but there were no African Skimmer in evidence this morning. We found a lone **Common Ringed Plover** as well as a number of **Kittlitz's Plovers** running about on the mud flats at the lake's edge but there was no sign of the **Chestnut-banded Plover** which we had been hoping to find along this stretch of lake. A number of **Yellow Wagtails** were also seen in the area.

We decided to try another section of the lake further to the west which meant taking on a fairly daunting road where we almost got stuck in some pretty nasty mud but managed to get out before we really got into trouble. We skirted the muddy areas and came to another narrow bay where we once again headed out on foot. The woodland alongside the lake provided our first decent views of **Pirit Batis** which we had heard on numerous occasions during the morning. The water had a great number of birds but the only new one for our list was an **Intermediate Egret** showing its yellow upper legs. Offentse had prepared tea for us back at the vehicle and after our tea and biscuits we began the drive back to camp for brunch.

After brunch, siesta and showers we headed out on foot to the lake shore nearest camp stopping in the woodland along the way where we had excellent views of the female **Pirit Batis** as well as a pair of **African Paradise Flycatchers**. Down on the lake shore there were once again hundreds of **Red-billed Teal, Little Egrets, Black-winged Stilts, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Common Moorhen and Blacksmith Lapwing**. Scattered amongst these we found our first **Three-banded Plover** which eventually gave us a good look after emerging from some inconvenient vegetation. A male **Diederick Cuckoo** gave us several fly-bys before settling on top of a bare tree and allowing us all to get excellent binocular views. After our little walk we climbed into the vehicle and headed off for the opposite shore of the lake to try and get to the large open grasslands. The drive through Sehitwa and across the gravel road did not produce much in the way of new birds but we must have seen at least two hundred thousand **Red-billed Queleas** in 30 minutes of driving along the lake passage road. It was to be our drive back that would be most productive with excellent nocturnal views of a **Marsh Owl and a Verreaux's Eagle Owl**. We had a female nightjar in the spotlight very briefly but not long enough to get a positive ID and so it went down as *Caprimulgus sp.*

Day 3 - 10 March 2010 – Lake Ngami to Shakawe (Drotsky's Cabins)

Another 05h30 start with a much quieter dawn and no distant owls or nightjars calling in the new day. We left camp just before sunrise for the drive to Shakawe and the Okavango Panhandle. Our first raptor (of many) was a juvenile **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, the PCG's turned out to be the most numerous raptor along the roadside. Other raptors on the drive included **Gabar Goshawk, Wahlberg's Eagle, Bateleur, Tawny Eagle, Steppe Eagle and Steppe Buzzard**. We stopped to take a

walk in the *Terminalia* woodland after spotting a **Red-eyed Bulbul** which led us a merry dance as we tried to get everyone onto this uncharacteristically elusive bird. The walk did produce a good little bird party consisting of **Common Scimitarbill, Longbilled Crombec, Marico Sunbird, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Scaly-feathered Finch and Willow Warbler.**

Further down the A3 North we stopped for morning tea underneath a large Purple-pod Terminalia where a **Pearl-spotted Owl** was being berated by a group of **Red-billed Wood-hoopoes**, ably assisted by a pair of **Forked-tailed Drongos** and several **Southern Black Tits**. A **Bennett's Woodpecker** made a cameo appearance just long enough for the majority of the group to get a brief look before disappearing off into the woodland.

Around mid-day we drove in to the abysmal Sepopa Swamp Stop 'Lodge' where the extremely rude proprietor made it clear that visitors were not welcome despite numerous road-signs to the contrary. The establishment is as ramshackle as it's management is uncouth and if anyone reading this ever happens to pass by Sepopa Swamp Stop, I would suggest you do just that and keep on driving. We drove a few hundred metres on from Swamp Stop and had a picnic lunch alongside the river under a beautiful old Jackelberry tree, the shade of which afforded us excellent views of a fruiting Strangler Fig which was a hive of bird activity. During lunch we added **Hartlaub's Babbler, Green Pigeon, Retz's Helmet-Shrike, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Black-collared Barbet, Crested Barbet and Brown-throated Weaver. Wire-tailed and Lesser-striped Swallows** were both new to the list and **Pygmy Goose** was new for those who had not spent the extra night in Maun.



White-backed Night-Heron - Okavango Panhandle

Drotsky's Cabins really is without comparison when it comes to visiting the Panhandle, it has a magnificent deck which overlooks the Okavango, lush gardens and beautifully manicured campsites. Having met Herr Goebbels at Sepopa Swamp Stop it was refreshing to see the friendly face of Drotsky's affable manager, Piet, who always has the latest on what birds have been seen where and always has time for a chat. Piet arranged a boat trip for us as the Pel's Fishing Owl had been seen two days prior just down-river from the town of Shakawe. Our boat trip started off with amazing views of White-fronted Bee-eater where we could have literally reached out and touched the bird. This was followed by extreme close-ups of a little family of **Malachite Kingfishers** before our search for the Pel's got seriously underway. It was the eagle-eyes of our boat driver, Salvation, who spotted the big tawny owl sitting mid-way up a massive Jackelberry tree. Initially the views were slightly obscured but with some skilful manoeuvring of the boat we managed to get perfectly clear views. Of course in an ideal world the sun would have been on the other side but even though the owl was slightly backlit we still managed to get half decent pictures which, for **Pel's Fishing Owl** sightings, is saying something. Much elated we drifted down the Okavango River and as the sun set we had our

gin and tonics in hand to toast the end of another successful day. As it turned out the day wasn't quite over because as we sat down to enjoy another of Chris' delicious three course meals, the **Wood Owl** started calling. At first the calls were quite distant and we thought we would go and seek them out after dessert but by the end of our main course they were tantalisingly close and so we abandoned dessert and five minutes later we had fabulous views of a Wood Owl quite low down in a Knob-thorn Acacia.

Day 4 - 11 March 2010 – Shakawe (Drotsky's Cabins)

Although we were scheduled to wake up at 05h30, the resident pair of **White-browed Robin-Chats** decided that 5 o' clock would do quite nicely and they managed to rouse us all with a melodious yet raucous pre-dawn territorial display. After breakfast we took a walk around the property and were disappointed to find that one of the best birding spots has been cleared to make way for new chalets. Nonetheless we still found the **Brown Firefinch** although we only had a brief glimpse of a single pair. After the rowdy beginning our morning was reasonably quiet and it was only once we got back into the campsite area that things began to hot up again. A canopy bird party produced **Collared Sunbird, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Retz's Helmetshrike, Ashy Flycatcher and African Paradise Flycatcher**. The real highlight of the morning though was two male **Narina Trogons** both of which afforded us full-frontal views much to everyone's delight. Once back at our camp we boarded the vehicle for a drive to the town of Shakawe and some of the floodplains between the town and the border. In town we had excellent views of **Mosque Swallow** perched and in flight as well as a lone **Yellow-billed Oxpecker** which resulted in the unusual phrase of 'follow that cow'. The locals must have thought we were quite mad as we bounced along behind a rather bemused bovid trying to get a better view of his passenger, in fact they probably still speak of it to this day.

Further up the river we stopped at an elbow in the river which had a number of **Pygmy Geese** and also provided our first views of **Fantailed Widowbird**. The real star was a magnificent **Western-banded Snake-Eagle** which flew directly towards us over the papyrus before landing in a nearby Jackalberry tree where it politely sat for scope views before flying right by us. Just after the snake-eagle had flown by we were treated to fly-bys from a pair of **Bradfield's Hornbills** which provided a good end to the morning. We stopped off at the Mohembo Ferry which crosses the Okavango River but found nothing of interest except a highly amused local populace who derived great merriment from watching a sweaty gaggle of birders clambering out of the minibus to scope the papyrus beds.

Our afternoon outing was on the boat again and we were back with the sharp-eyed Salvation whom we had given a short but demanding wishlist which was topped by White-backed Night-Heron. Twenty minutes after departing we were watching a pair of **White-backed Night-Herons** on a nest with chicks. We had phenomenal views of this often-difficult bird and most of us managed to get half-decent photographs. Warblers were surprisingly non-responsive and the **Greater Swamp Warbler**, normally a dead cert on this stretch of the river, refused to be drawn out of any of the dense papyrus stands. There were loads of **Sedge Warblers** about and everything we saw flitting turned out to be a '*Sedgy*' – we should have paid more attention when we saw the Greater Swamp Warbler across the river in the morning. Leaving the papyrus beds we headed off to the Mohembo Plains which consists of about 150 acres of prime Lesser Jacana habitat. On our way to the plains we saw a monstrous Nile Crocodile lying on the bank under a **Brown-throated Weaver** colony, the beast was all of 15ft long and must have weighed in excess of 800kg (1,760lbs). As we approached the croc it slipped into the water leaving scarcely a ripple on the surface and we were reminded that underneath the tranquil surface of these waters, *there be dragons*. At Mohembo Plains we managed to find exactly zero Lesser Jacanas after forty minutes of searching, it seemed we had used most of our luck on the Pel's the previous day. We did see **Goliath Heron, Long-toed Lapwing, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Purple Heron, Pygmy Geese** and several hundred **African Jacana** but the Lesser

continued to elude us. We managed to console ourselves with a gin and tonic and another extraordinary Okavango sunset before heading back to camp.



Sunset on the Okavango River – Okavango Panhandle

Day 5 - 12 March 2010 – Shakawe to Kwando River (Namushasha)

With our bags packed we headed out of camp before sunrise to get to Mahango Game Reserve in Namibia at a reasonable hour in the morning. We stopped at a likely looking patch of habitat on the way for a short walk and were rewarded with **Little Sparrowhawk, Black-headed Oriole, Pin-tailed Whydah, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Red-billed Firefinch, European Roller, Broad-billed Roller and Swamp Boubou**. The border crossing into Namibia was totally painless with friendly officials on both sides, the female immigration officer in Botswana greeted each of us individually and seemed genuinely pleased to see us. Long may that last. At the border we had **Little Swift** and really close-up views of a pair of **Mosque Swallows** perched above our heads. Just after the border post we entered Mahango Game Reserve and immediately opened up our lark account with a **Fawn-coloured Lark** on the left-hand side of the road and a **Rufous-naped Lark** on the right. Whilst we were looking at the larks we saw a male Sable Antelope giving us the proctologists view before disappearing into the *Terminalia* woodland. Further down the road as we reached the moist grasslands we had our first view of a **Plain-backed Pipit** before stopping for tea beneath the Giant Baobab tree on the banks of the Okavango River. Our first Lappet-faced Vulture flew overhead to start off what was to be a good morning for vultures. On our drive out of the park we had excellent views of a pair of **White-headed Vultures** both perched and flying, these were joined by a number of **White-backed Vultures** and another **Lappet-faced Vulture**. Unfortunately there was no Hooded Vulture to complete the pack but we did manage to find a female Boomslang in a scrubby *Acacia* tree. The **Burchell's Starlings** and **Crimson-breasted Shrikes** alerted us to its presence and were most annoyed that we didn't dispatch the offending reptile. Our little jaunt into the park also bolstered our mammal list with Blue Wildebeest, Burchell's Zebra, Red Lechwe, Impala, Kudu, Sable, Tsessebe, Warthog, Giraffe and Reedbuck being added to the list.

We left the park, crossed the Okavango River bridge and commenced our eastward journey along the dead-straight Caprivi Highway. Our lunch stop didn't produce much but we did get our first glimpses of a **Neddicky** as well as a male **Violet-eared Waxbill**. By mid-afternoon we were at Kongola Bridge which crosses the Kwando River, the same river that runs past our campsite for the next two nights. We stopped on the bridge and found both **Horus and White-rumped Swifts** flying about, the wetlands refused to yield any Lesser Jacana but **Brown Firefinch** appeared to be plentiful. We drove on to Namushasha where our trusty camp staff had set up camp for us and were waiting with ice cold glasses of fruit juice to refresh us after the journey.

After 30 minutes of time-out for settling in and washing up we set off on a walk around the lodge gardens. We were frustrated by a vociferous and excellently hidden **Black Cuckoo** but well rewarded by numerous excellent views of male and female **Diederick and Klaas' Cuckoo, Copper and Marico**

sunbirds were abundant and the afternoon light was perfect for highlighting their more splendid features. **Brown Firefinch** appeared once again on the lawns and **Ashy Flycatcher** was common throughout the gardens. At sunset we returned to camp for dinner and then a late drive to seek out nightjars and owls. Our first owl joined us just after dinner, as we were getting ready to go a **Wood Owl** landed in the Camelthorn Acacia above our heads and spent enough time there for everyone to get a good view before heading off again. Our drive down to the nightjar spot was fairly uneventful but as we were arrived we spotted a male **Square-tailed Nightjar** in flight. Shortly after that we managed to get a really close look at a female Square-tailed Nightjar showing markings perfectly. We got distracted for a while as we searched out some of the hundreds of frogs calling all around us and found Bubbling Kassina, Painted Reed Frog, Broad-banded Grass Frog, Sharp-nosed Grass Frog and Western Olive Toad. This was followed by an unconfirmed sighting of a **Swamp Nightjar** which flew low overhead but too quickly to be entirely sure of what we had seen. Our evening ended with an unexpected sighting of a **Serval** hunting the flooded grasslands.

Day 6 - 13 March 2010 – Caprivi (Namushasha)

Our morning started off with a **Fiery-necked Nightjar** calling just outside camp. Patrick, Claire and I were in the vicinity and popped out to have a look and after calling once more for good effect the bird took off and flew over our heads. We left camp before sunrise towards the Kongola Bridge to pick up some of the dawn activity around the river and associated reedbeds. At the bridge new birds for the trip included **Luapula and Chirping Cisticola, Rufous-bellied Heron and Black-crowned Tchagra**. Our little walk on the bridge ended with some idiotic officials from the Department of Environment and TOURISM no less. The gentlemen in question stopped in an official vehicle from the ministry and began telling us that we needed to purchase a permit in order to look at birds or animals on either side of the bridge. According to these gentlemen we were only allowed to look directly ahead of us whilst crossing the bridge as looking to either side constituted entering into the Bwabwata National Park. When we tried to point out the inanity of their argument the finer details of our disagreement seemed to be lost on them and no matter how much we tried to point out that they were in fact being idiotic, they were unable to understand this simple fact. According to their logic, if one were to gaze from Dover to Calais on a clear day you would need a Schengen visa even though your feet were firmly planted on the chalky cliffs of Blighty. When the officials realised they were not going to get a bribe out of us and once they realised that we were very likely to report them (we did) they decided to move off to greener pastures. Undeterred by our little run-in with officialdom we headed to the a community campground known quite peculiarly as Bum Hill. Bum Hill turned out to be deserted (I guess they must have had a hard time with the marketing) but we did manage to turn up a **African Barred Owlet** which showed well after some coaxing. **Brown-backed Honeybird** was also seen again which was good as some who had missed it yesterday. Next we headed off to seek out some bird parties in the teak woodlands but never managed to find any really coherent parties and had to be contented with bits and pieces here and there. Our efforts did turn up decent views of the **Neddicky** which some had missed yesterday as well as **Dickinson's Kestrel, Shikra, Martial Eagle, Black-chested Snake-Eagle, Bateleur, Tawny Eagle and European Roller**. The star of the show for the morning was a leopard which came out of nowhere and crossed the road in front of us just before the Kongola bridge. The sighting was so unexpected that it took most of us a while to process the fact that we had in fact just seen a leopard saunter across the Caprivi Highway.

Back in camp we had great views of a very confiding **Grey Tit-Flycatcher** from our lunch table. Also in camp in the early afternoon were **Eurasian Golden Oriole, Golden Weaver, Paradise Flycatcher, Ashy Flycatcher, Paradise Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Marico Sunbird, Copper Sunbird, African Yellow White-eye, Brown Firefinch, Cardinal Woodpecker, Klaas' Cuckoo, Diederick Cuckoo** and yet another **Black Cuckoo** which called all afternoon and yet managed to remain hidden in the tree canopy.

We had decided to do a boat trip in the afternoon, a decision we would live to regret as we had a boat driver who was so totally lacking in both knowledge and boat driving skills as to be almost comical. The boat trip itself is best forgotten except for the addition to our lists of an **Allen's Gallinule**. In fact the highlight of our boat trip was the walk to the boat which afforded us great views of a **Wood Owl** at close range on a sunlit branch. During our boat trip, our boat driver managed to invent several new species of bird, most notable amongst these being the Black-fronted Bee-eater, Lazy Moorhen and Mutton Swallow. It must also be noted that the boat trip started off with a tale of how he managed to evade game wardens on his poaching trips into the national park, whilst we didn't know whether or not these tales were true, the fact that he thought we would find it amusing said a lot in itself.

Day 7 - March 14, 2010 – Namushasha to Katima Mulilo (Caprivi Cabins)

Early morning saw us heading for the Kongola bridge once again for a final attempt at the **Lesser Jacana**. This time luck was on our side and after ten minutes of searching and walking the fringes of the backwaters of the Kwando, Patrick spotted a Lesser Jacana that had come in behind us. Having had great views of the jacana we packed it in and headed east towards the town of Katima Mulilo. We had a few stops in the teak woodlands along the way but none of these was very productive and the only new bird to make it onto our list was a **Golden-breasted Bunting**. A visit to the secret **Racket-tailed Roller** hideout was most productive with a little bird party at the beginning of the trail producing **Southern Black Flycatcher, Cut-throat Finch, Golden-breasted Bunting, Stierling's Wren-Warbler (guide only), Copper Sunbird, Retz's Helmet-shrike and White-bellied Sunbird**. Our traipsing through the woodlands proved productive and we found three **Racket-tailed Rollers** only eighty yards from where I had seen them last time. We got fabulous views before making our way back to the vehicle and on to Katima to purchase lunch supplies. We had a picnic lunch along the Zambezi River which was bursting its banks in peak flood. Our lunch break provided **Half-collared Kingfisher** which was a new addition to the list.

Our lodge that we were staying at was almost inaccessible with the very high river but the trusty minibus did the 500 metres of water without any problems and soon we were relaxing in the lush gardens along the Zambezi River. Three of the group opted out of the afternoon excursion to soak up the riparian atmosphere, for the rest of us we were off to our favourite patch of *mopane* woodlands. Our first new bird for the afternoon was a **Jameson's Firefinch** at one of the roadside ponds where we stopped to search for Painted Snipe and Lesser Moorhen both of which eluded us once more. The *mopane* was much kinder and we were kept busy from the time we arrived right until the end when we had to pull ourselves away to get to some wetland habitat before the day was done. Our woodland birding produced **African Harrier-Hawk, Bearded Woodpecker, Cardinal Woodpecker, Bennett's Woodpecker, Amethyst and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Arnott's Chat, Retz's Helmet-Shrike, Black Cuckoo-Shrike, African Golden Oriole, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Chinspot Batis, Paradise Flycatcher, Southern Black Flycatcher and Cut-throat Finch** amongst others.

On our way to the wetlands we stopped off at a site for **Eastern Bearded Scrub-Robin and Schalow's Turaco** and scored a double hit with both birds popping up within metres of where we stopped to look for them. After soaking up the beauty of the Turacos through scope and binoculars it was time to shift on to the wetlands. With wetland on one side of the road and woodland and telephone lines on the other we were kept fairly busy. Our initial stop was for a pair of **Pygmy Geese** but soon we were onto a pair of **African Finfoot** swimming in open water and affording everyone very good scope views. Two **Great-Spotted Cuckoos** were flying around us and harassing their foster parents, a weary looking pair of **Burchell's Starlings** which were clearly looking forward to having an empty nest. A number of **Rufous-bellied Herons** flew by as well as numerous other birds which had been seen before but watching the in profusion over the swollen Zambezi somehow made them special.

Day 8 – March 15, 2010 – Katima Mulilo to Livingstone (Taita Falcon Lodge)

Due to the high waters of the Zambezi our lodge was cut off from the road and we had to ferry all the luggage across on a dug-out canoe to the dry land on the other side. This process combined with the first rains of the trip delayed our departure somewhat and we got off to a late start with swollen grey skies above meaning poor light below. Our morning mission was **Shelley's Sunbird** which we had previously found to be fairly reliable in a section of flowering teak outside of town. This morning was not our day and we dipped on the Shelley's although the woodland did produce birds in reasonable number including **Amethyst Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, White-bellied Sunbird, Purple-banded Sunbird, Marico Sunbird, Violet-backed Starling, Striped Kingfisher and Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**.

The border crossing into Zambia was not as painful as it can sometimes be and went off relatively smoothly. Once in Zambia we crossed the Zambezi bridge to Sesheke and began the drive eastwards to Livingstone which was to be our base for the next two nights. The floodplains alongside the road were alive with birdlife although there wasn't much we had not already seen it was pleasant just to see the profusion of birdlife in these wetlands. Our lunch stop was under an Acacia tree at the side of the road and the only new bird this produced was a **Pale Flycatcher** which only I saw as everyone was sitting down to lunch at the time and I assumed, being a flycatcher, that it would hang around. Apparently I was mistaken.

Once we were through the town of Livingstone we stopped alongside the Zambezi where one can view the spray of the Victoria Falls from up-river. With the Zambezi in full spate it is a monumentally impressive sight and one which I still appreciate after 15 years of coming here on an almost monthly basis. Having seen the falls from afar we left the real visit for the following day and headed on to the magnificent Taita Falcon Lodge.

The lodge is situated on the edge of the Batoka Gorge on a 90 degree bend in the river course, with the Zambezi raging 330 feet below you and sheer cliffs on either side it certainly makes for a dramatic vista. Having sorted luggage and got everyone settled in to their rooms it was time to do some seriously relaxed birding from the viewing deck in front of the lodge. Sitting down and gazing over the amazing view before us we added **Rock Martin, Common House Martin, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Red-Winged Starling and Augur Buzzard** to our lists. We also heard **Crowned Hornbill and Natal Francolin** in the valley below but were unable to scope them out of the dense bush. Patrick spotted a **Klipspringer** on the far side of the gorge and we had excellent views of that through the scopes as it foraged it's way up the slope. For some reason it attracted the interest of a **Red-winged Starling** which first flew up to the Klipspringer and then flew up onto the Klipspringer's back where it stayed for the next several minutes with no apparent purpose.

With a very early wake-up planned for tomorrow we called it a night after dinner and headed to bed with the roaring of the Zambezi in the background.

Day 9 – March 16, 2010 – Livingstone (Taita Falcon Lodge)

We got up long before dawn and after tea, coffee and a light breakfast we headed off into the dark, balmy morning, destination – the Livingstone sewerage works. Oh smelly joy. Although the sewerage works weren't up to their normal standards we managed a couple of hours of productive birding. Our birding would have been more productive were it not for the constant attentions of a pair of **Red-necked Falcons** which streaked over the ponds with such regularity that a lot of the birds kept to deep cover despite the early hour. **Black-headed Herons, Glossy Ibis, Sacred Ibis, Great White Egret, Black Crake, Common Moorhen and Sedge Warbler** were all abundant. Other species proved a little more difficult but **Red-faced Cisticola, African Rail, Lesser Moorhen, Purple Swamphen,**

Lesser Swamp Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Little Bittern and Allen's Gallinule were all seen at the smelly birding haven.

After the sewerage farm four of our group were taking to the air to view the Victoria Falls from a microlight aircraft whilst the rest of us did some sedentary birding at the aerodrome. After the flights were completed we drove a short way down the road to a **Collared Palm-Thrush** site, five minutes later we had all had good views of a singing CPT and we were on our way to our stakeout for the Half-collared Kingfisher, this took slightly longer and a bit more searching was required but fifteen minutes after arriving we were looking at a well-lit **Half-collared Kingfisher** full-frame in the scope.

Our next destination was the miombo woodlands outside of town but the police threw a spanner in the works when they turned us around due to a manhunt being underway for some local desperados who had robbed a Bureau de Change in town. That put paid to our plans to get out to some *miombo* birding but and we decided to put it off until the following morning. We headed off to the shopping centre to pick up some Subway sandwiches which we then took to the Victoria Falls where we discovered the entry fee had doubled as of the 1st of March and was now USD20.00 per person. We took our sandwiches and ate with our feet practically dangling in the roaring waters above the Victoria Falls, a truly memorable lunch. After viewing the falls from the 'wet' side we made our way down the Boiling Pot pathway to find the **Trumpeter Hornbills**, we had the hornbills after just a few minutes and were ready to head on back to the lodge from some armchair birding on the viewing deck back at the lodge.

The lodge did not deliver Taita Falcon or Verreaux's Eagle but we did have fabulous views of a pair of **Augur Buzzard** as well as decent scope views of a Peregrine Falcon.



View from the start of pathway to the Boiling Pot - Trumpeter Hornbill haven

Day 10 – 17 March 2010 – Livingstone to Kasane (Kubu Lodge)

We rose a little later and had a sunrise breakfast on the viewing deck overlooking the Zambezi river. Good light did not bring in the Taita Falcon the air was full of screaming swifts and swallows all swirling about in the early morning light. **Rock Martin, Common House Martin, Little Swift, Common Swift, Lesser-striped Swallow and Barn Swallow** were all around but the highlight was a

pair of **Bohm's Spinetail** which flew fairly close in excellent light. The **Mocking Cliff-Chat** and **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** were around again and a pair of **Little Sparrowhawk** were seen in the gorge below. The **Natal Francolins** continued to mock us by calling loudly from deep cover three hundred feet below us but the **Crowned Hornbills** were more co-operative and flew right overhead. We eventually dragged ourselves away from the lodge and headed for our miombo woodland site which had been previously occupied by the yesterday's desperados. The police gave us the all clear and we headed off as the clouds began to gather. As soon as we arrived we picked up **African Hobby** in flight and managed to scope it about 15 minutes later when it landed close-by. We dipped on the Miombo Pied-Barbet and rain prevented us from getting to our Tinkling Cisticola site but we did manage to pick up **Stierling's Wren-Warbler** before heading for the border and the ferry crossing to Botswana.

We were to get one last fiscal slap from the Zambians before we left their dear country, we were stopped and ordered to pay K25,000.00 (approx USD8.00) Council Tax for the privilege of using the collection of potholes which the Zambians refer to as a road. I must confess that I did vent a little and the poor chap collecting the funds was left with no doubt as to my feelings towards his government for fleecing tourists at every conceivable opportunity. We finally managed to get through the shambles which passes for border formalities in Zambia and boarded the ferry to cross the Zambezi River back into Botswana. Home sweet home.

Once at the lodge in Kasane we dumped our bags and got ready for the afternoon drive which would take us to the Kasane Sewerage Works and landfill. The landfill had over a hundred **Marabou Storks** which were sifting through the rubbish and poking their unspeakably ugly heads into evil-looking piles of rubbish. Three **Abdim's Storks** were also seen on the grassland away from the rubbish heap. As we arrived at the sewerage works we had excellent sightings of **Greater Painted Snipe** females and males which was followed shortly by an **African Crake** in flight over the same body of water. When we rounded the corner we were treated to one of those vistas that only Africa can produce. With the sewerage ponds to our right a grassland stretched out before us with a large rainwater pool inhabited by a single bull hippo, the grassland had a herd of impala, two warthogs and three elephants sauntering towards us and the rainwater pool. After watching the hippo open his mouth to show off his impressive weapons we watched the elephants drinking before they moved up into the teak woodlands. Our drive further along the edge of the sewerage works produced another **Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah** before we made our way back to the lodge for dinner.

Day 11 – 18 March 2010 – Kasane (Kubu Lodge)

05h30. Birders business day commences. We hit a snag as we were leaving the lodge for our morning drive, the night watchman had deserted his post and left the gate locked. We looked everywhere but could not locate the gentleman, thankfully one of the duty managers was wandering around and he opened up for us. Once free of the lodge we headed out to The Seep where we walked around the flooded short grasses looking for the **Rosy-throated Longclaw** which managed to elude us. We did however turn up a **Temminck's Courser** which we had missed at the airport due to recent mowing activities. From 'the seep' we drove up into the Chobe National Park where we managed to dip on Coqui Francolin at two normally reliable sites. Ronny managed to spot a **White-browed Coucal** skulking in the deep cover of a Woolly Caper Bush and we managed to get reasonably good looks at this bird although it didn't ever come out into the open. The only other new birds for the morning were a **Red-footed Falcon** and a pair of **Red-breasted Swallows** both of which were on the telephone wires outside town and a lone **Black Kite** which did several fly-bys to show off all his diagnostic features.

We had our lunch on the banks of the Chobe River where we tried in vain to find the Emerald Cuckoos which normally frequent this area in the height of summer but had perhaps already begun their northwards trek.

Our afternoon boat cruise on the Chobe River lived up to all its expectations and we had a wonderful afternoon cruising on the river with some excellent bird and mammal-watching opportunities from the comfort of our boat. Although only one species was new to the list, a **White-crowned Lapwing**, we had excellent views of a number of birds we had seen previously and were also able to enjoy some real armchair birding with the backdrop of large pods of hippo as well as a number of elephants playing in the water. After our boat cruise we headed back to the lodge for dinner and then it was time for the nocturnal excursion.

Our night drive turned up no owls but we did manage to find a male **European Nightjar** as well as a female **Square-tailed (Mocambique) Nightjar**. Considering that our drive was outside of the national park we saw a surprising amount of mammals but the highlight was definitely an **aardvark** right next to the road. I was ecstatic to see this as it was only my second aardvark sighting in 15 years of living in Botswana and aardvark sightings give us guides serious bragging rights amongst our peers. Other mammals on the drive included buffalo, elephant, hippo (a very large bull grazing on the fields), waterbuck, impala, side-striped jackal and spotted hyena (a pair initially and later a group of four). Elated and exhausted we made our way back to the lodge to catch some precious sleep.

Day 12 – 19 March 2010 – Kasane to Makgadikgadi Pans (Nata Lodge)

A pre-breakfast drive to the Mowana Lodge didn't provide much in the way of new birds and we had to wait until we stopped off at the 'seep' once more to add our first new bird for the day, a **White-fronted Plover**. Although the drive only added one new bird, the species seen on the pre-breakfast drive would help to make today's birdlist the highest of the trip with a total of 160 species.

After breakfast it was time to leave the Chobe district and head south toward the Makgadikgadi Pans, a drive of approximately 300km on good tarred road.

We took a little detour off the main road in an attempt to reach a breeding site where Croaking Cisticola had been seen fairly recently, it soon became apparent that the recent rains had made this road impassable but it was to deliver something special for our efforts. Just at the point where we realised we could get no further we were walking back to the vehicle when a **Spotted Crane** flew across the road into the flooded grasses on our right. We rushed in to try and flush the bird again but true to form it disappeared and we had to be satisfied with our one brief look.

Back on the tarred road we made our way down towards the town of Nata and the newly rebuilt Nata Lodge which had burnt down eighteen months previously. The drive yielded **Greater Kestrel** and **Lesser Kestrel**, several **Montagu's Harrier** and that a bird which I was not happy to see, the filthy **Indian Mynah** which had made to the town of Nata. These pestilential exotic birds are abundant in South Africa in most urban areas but this is the furthestest north I have seen them and they appear on this list as a reluctant write-in.

On arriving at the lodge we were advised that we would not be able to get to the pans in our vehicle, this turned out to be nonsense but as we had seen the conditions of several of the dirt roads as a result of the rains we decided not to take a chance and we enlisted the services of one of the lodge vehicles to transport us to the pans. As we left the lodge a monstrous storm was brewing in the east and it seemed inevitable that we would be drenched in our open land cruiser. Once we got into the bird sanctuary we soon forgot about the threat of rain and became absorbed in the birding. Everyone was desperately keen to see a Secretarybird and we spent much time scanning the far horizons for this bird without any joy. We did see a number of birds on the drive to the pan, many of which were new, these included: **Cape Teal**, **Cape Shoveller**, **Anteater Chat**, **Red-capped Lark** and **Pink-billed Lark**. At the pans themselves we saw **Greater and Lesser Flamingo**, **Pink-backed Pelican** and **Chestnut-banded Plover** as well as large numbers of **Ruff**, **Red-billed Teal**, **Little Stints**, **Black-winged Stilts** and several **Pied Avocet**. The birds were definitely not as abundant as one would normally expect at this time of year and I wondered if the monstrous storm still raging behind us had anything to do with that. Just before the storm seemed about to descend on us with all its fury, the weather gods gave us a smile and a wink and the storm abated just a kilometre short of us. Whilst we were enjoying our sundowners alongside one of the smaller pans we found a **Grey Crowned**

Crane on walking through the grass a hundred metres away. Getting good scope views was difficult but everyone managed to see at least the glorious head and neck if not the entire body. Our drive back to the lodge provided a couple of **Marsh Owls** and one unidentified nightjar which flew off without showing any features. The fact that the roads were totally inundated after the storm meant that no nightjars would be settling on or near the road.

Day 13 – 20 March 2010 – Nata Lodge to Maun (Thamalakane Lodge)

Today was pretty much a travel day and after breakfast and a short walk around the lodge grounds we were on our way westwards to Maun through the Makgadikgadi Pans and Nxai Pan National Parks. We didn't do much birding along the way but we did manage to pick up **Cape Crow, Chat Flycatcher, Sabota Lark** and **Grey-backed Sparrowlark**. Our tea break was under a large baobab tree just after the town of Gweta, here we found a Pearl-spotted Owlet being mobbed by a number of little birds including **Southern Black Tit, Brubru, African Paradise Flycatcher, Grey-backed Cameroptera, Chinspot Batis** and **Willow Warbler**.

We stopped for lunch along the Boteti River near the village of Makalamabedi. The Boteti drains from the Okavango Delta via the Boro and Thamalakane Rivers and is the southern-most river of the Okavango alluvial fan. This year is only the second year in the last thirty-odd years that the water has made it this far down the river. Back in Maun it was an afternoon at leisure at the Thamalakane Lodge whilst the guides swapped over vehicles and prepared for the 4x4 segment of the safari.

Day 14 – 21 March 2010 – Thamalakane Lodge to Moremi Game Reserve

We were joined for the last three days of the trip by Tim Stowe and Werner Schroeder who had just been at the Birdlife International conference in Kasane. We departed from Thamalakane River Lodge and made our way northwards to the Moremi Game Reserve which conserves much of the south-eastern Okavango Delta. We crossed the Buffalo Fence which separates the domestic animals in the south from the wild animals to the north and entered into the protected areas south of the Moremi Game Reserve. Almost immediately we began seeing wildlife in the form of impala, giraffe and kudu with plenty of evidence of elephant about although it took a few more kilometres to catch up with the grey giants. Once we entered Moremi Game Reserve itself we had a coffee break in the public campsite at Southgate (Maqwee) before heading further north on the 3rd Bridge road. The first rainwater pan we came to there was a single male hippo and at the edge of the pan a flock of around 70 **White-faced Ducks** were all gathered around a termite mound as if awaiting instructions.

The Xini Lagoons (pronounced with a palatal click on the 'x') produced our first **Slaty Egret** which caused much excitement as it strutted behind the grass only allowing the briefest of glimpses before it finally flew up to give a good view of its pale yellow legs. Also at the lagoons was an albino Red Lechwe which has been around for at least three years now and looks more like a large goat than a lechwe. The lagoons were full of birds of all descriptions and just at one stop we saw **Slaty Egret, Yellowbilled Egret, Great Egret, Little Egret, Black Heron, Glossy Ibis, Sacred Ibis, Grey Heron, Squacco Heron, Egyptian Geese, Spurwing Geese, Blacksmith Plover, Blackwinged Stilt, Collared Pratincole, African Jacana, African Marsh Harrier, Red-billed Teal, White-faced Duck** and **Comb Duck**.



Birding the Bodumatau Hippo Pools – Moremi Game Reserve

As we left the lagoons we were forced to make a detour as three lions lay sprawled in the road. After having a good look at the lions we drove around them and continued on to the Bodumatau area where we had lunch under the shade of a Large Fever Berry tree overlooking a hippo-filled lagoon. Not far from where we were having lunch we heard a group of Burchell's Starlings mobbing something in one of the trees, a few of us went over to have a look and there was a 7ft Black Mamba in the tree looking less than amused at the abuse he was receiving from the starlings.

After lunch we drove back over the lagoon crossing and this time there were 11 **Wattled Cranes** gathered on the edge of the small lagoon, this was the largest group of cranes we had seen on the trip. We finally arrived in camp around mid-afternoon and re-united with the camp crew that had been with us for the first six days of the safari. After settling in to camp it was time to head out again for a short afternoon excursion on the vehicle. The afternoon was fairly quiet although we did get some good little bird parties the only new sighting was a really good look at a **Buffy Pipit** in the road which even allowed us to get scope views from as little as 20 metres. The area where we were going to look for Black-bellied Bustard turned out to be flooded and we were forced to give up on that particular bird. The most exciting part of the afternoon was definitely when we were on our way back to camp after sunset when we were given a very raucous mock charge by a young bull elephant. The screaming trumpeting and flapping of the ears made everyone vow they'd have extra gin and tonic back at camp. We had actually stopped to look at a nightjar in the road when the elephants started acting up but with all the elephant interference the nightjar managed to disappear without being identified.

Back at camp **Scops Owl** was calling and came quite close to camp but every time we went out to look for the bird it would hear us coming and move off.



Sundowners at Croc Pools - Moremi Game Reserve

Day 15 – 22 March 2010 – Moremi Game Reserve

Our morning started with a large Puff Adder in Bill and Cheryl's toilet. The most startling part of this was the extremely calm manner in which Bill handled this. After informing Cheryl that she should 'be careful' if she used the toilet, Bill called me aside and quietly informed me of the situation. "Brent, you know what, I think there is a snake in our toilet. If you have a minute I would appreciate it if you would have a look". Because Bill was so calm I expected to find a worm or a lizard or some such thing and so I was rather surprised when I lifted the carpet to find a large healthy Puff Adder relaxing under cover. I caught the offending reptile and deposited him in a cooler box which we then took with us on our morning drive to release far away from camp.

Our first new birds for the day were a couple of **African Quailfinch** that popped up from the grasses alongside the road and disappeared into the dawn with their characteristic *zinking* call. Our only site for **Rosy-throated Longclaw** in this section of the park proved fruitless and we were forced to move on without the bird. After I had walked through the Dead Tree Island crossing to check that the vehicle would make it an **African Rail** flew out from and showed twice before finally disappearing into the rank vegetation. We crossed over onto the island to visit the mud flats at Dead Tree Lagoon. Recent rains had filled the mud flats and they were perhaps not as productive as they could have been but did provide one new bird in the form of a **Marsh Sandpiper**. Other birds which were present were **Kittlitz's Plover, Three-banded Plover, Greenshank, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Hottentot Teal, Comb Duck, Yellow-billed Duck, Red-billed Teal, White-faced Duck and a Purple Swamphen** which we heard calling but did not see. We left Dead Tree Island and headed for the Xakanaxa Public Campsite where we had a walk around to see if we would pick up any of the birds missing from our list. Although we found a few good bird parties we didn't manage to add anything new to the list, we did find another pride of lions on our way back to camp and although the views were not as good as the previous day these lions at least seemed healthier.

Back at camp we had an African Harrier-Hawk being mobbed by around 40 Burchell's Starlings as it flew from one dead tree to another apparently oblivious to its glittering entourage. As we left camp for the afternoon drive we almost drove over a **Red-crested Korhaan** which gave us very good views before skulking off into the undergrowth. A small bird party produced **Icterine Warbler, Collared Sunbird, Chinspot Batis, White-browed Scrub-Robin, Village Indigobird, Violet-eared Waxbill, Blue Waxbill, Scaly-feathered Finch, Grey-headed Sparrow, Marico Flycatcher, Rattling Cisticola & Red-backed Shrike**. Later on in the drive we picked up **Greater Painted Snipe** at a large rain-filled pan towards the 2nd Bridge area after which Patrick managed to spot a **Dwarf Bittern** that eventually gave us reasonable views after a bit of driving around. At sundowners we had terrific views of a pair of **Verreaux's Eagle-Owls** which came out and perched fully exposed on some nearby trees at Sedgefield Pan between 1st and 2nd Bridge. We had some excellent early evening nightjar action on our way back to camp with **Square-tailed Nightjar, Swamp Nightjar** on the road up to 3rd Bridge and a single **Rufous-cheeked Nightjar** just outside our camp as we arrived back for dinner.

Day 16 – March 23, 2010 – Moremi Game Reserve

Our morning drive took us down towards the Second Bridge area along the Bodumatau Loop drive. Not far from camp we came across a pair of Bat-eared Fox which allowed us good views before trotting off into the long grass. The big bird of the morning was a pair of **Secretarybirds** which Offentse managed to spot miles away in the top of a small *acacia* bush. It was a great relief to find these birds having dipped on them in the Makgadikgadi Pans which was always going to be our best chance. Three Black-backed Jackal were also seen on one of the old floodplains south of 1st Bridge as well as a troop of Banded Mongoose disappearing off into the grass. At the Bodumatau lagoon we found the **Wattled Cranes** had increased their numbers and this morning 14 of these lovely birds graced the fringes of the lagoon and we had excellent views of cranes flying in and out of the area. The lagoon was full of hippos and we had our morning coffee here whilst watching the antics of the hippos.

After leaving the lagoons we made our way further into the Bodumatau area where we were looking for the **Black-bellied Bustard**. Although we didn't manage to find the bustard we did have some good birding with **Lesser Jacana, Pygmy Goose, Long-toed Lapwing** around the water lily covered ponds and a few **Montague's Harriers** cruising the grasslands.

The water levels around Bodumatau were pretty high and several of the crossings had to be walked to check the depth before we could drive through. I volunteered Offentse for this task at the first crossing and then had to do the second one myself although Offentse kindly kept me company. Neither of us were really thinking of birds as we marched through the water, crocodiles occupied our thoughts and we scanned the water very carefully as we waded through. Luckily anything that might have been lurking in the crossings decided we were not really that attractive and the crossings were made without further ado.

Our afternoon destination was the northern section of Mboma Island around HATAB 11 where we took a walk to try and shake out any Black Coucals which had not yet left for the north. After much trudging through the vicious *Fossia* grass we eventually got one to flush out whilst everyone was perched atop a termite mound. General birding was good with some excellent bird parties producing **Yellow-breasted Apalis, Green-capped Eremomela, Marico Sunbird, Cardinal Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Petronia, Greater Honeyguide, Black-backed Puffback, Blue Waxbill, Chinspot Batis, Levillant's Cuckoo, Bennett's Woodpecker, Bearded Woodpecker, Hartlaub's Babbler, and Green Woodhoopoe**. Our drive back to camp was less eventful than the previous day and the only nightjars we saw were too far off to identify. We did finally get a look at an African Scops Owl and also found a Pearl-spotted Owlet consuming a large grasshopper.

Day 17 – March 24, 2010 – Moremi Game Reserve

It started raining at about 3am this morning and was still raining intermittently at 8am. Great weather for crakes and flufftails but unfortunately we got no response when we played the Red-chested Flufftail call over the wetlands at the back of our camp. As we had a charter flight out of Moremi we decided it would be best to send all our luggage back by vehicle to keep our charter flight as light as possible in the unfavourable weather conditions. This decision had interesting and almost (but not quite) dire consequences. We eventually made it out of camp around 08h30 to make our way slowly towards the Xakanaxa airstrip where our charter flight was scheduled to depart at 12h30. The rain never let up, it was the first day in seventeen days that rain had seriously affected any of our scheduled activities. We did manage to find a couple of birds along the way but the only new bird was a really unsatisfactory look at a **Grey Penduline-Tit** that very few of the group managed to get onto before it disappeared for good into the murky rain soaked bushes.

Because the weather was so foul we decided to radio Letaka base in Maun and request an earlier flight out. We rescheduled our flight for 11h30 and it was around about this time that we heard the vehicle that was transporting our luggage to Maun had become bogged down just short of the park exit gate. To cut a very long and quite stressful story short, the luggage arrived at the airport in Maun literally as the Air Botswana ATR aircraft was about to begin taxiing down the runway. Stuart Mackay, owner of Mack Air was a great help in convincing Air Botswana to wait for the luggage to be loaded before departing for Johannesburg. All in all a rather manic end to a wonderful safari.



Download the full birdlist from this trip at www.birdingsafaris.com/birdlists.html