

Lucky to visit Botswana last October for 6 nights on a late booking offer on an all inclusive deal (food, lodging, guiding, all drinks and three internal flights), organised very capably by Expert Africa, who I have used many times and can recommend. I stayed in two camps run by Kwando Safaris, North and East of the Moremi Game reserve in private concessions where there are just two camps. This gives the benefit of keeping the number of possible vehicles at a sighting down and only up to three permitted at once. Each vehicle only has a maximum of six people plus the guide and spotter. Sightings therefore do not disturb the animals and hence give the chance to witness normal behaviour.

I visited NG34 concession east of Okavango delta camp MMA Dinare and then Splash camp in Kwara concession NG20 more northerly

The weather was very hot over 40 degrees celsius for the last two days, but then it is their summer and the rains do not arrive until November.

As someone who has been on many safaris this beat the trip we went on in November 2021, which was a blockbuster.

Given most birds and mammals are well known I have held back on most unless there was a particular image related to my story. Hence only four shots of cats, three of antelopes and three birds.

Day one 14th October afternoon, plains animals seen , impala, tsessebe, elephants, and red lechwe, image below, not normally seen that close. Some birds including a lifer Bennett's woodpecker also below.



In the evening a spotted hyena wandered close to us at our sundowner sniffing the air then left when a torch illuminated it. This after a couple of wild dogs chased an impala behind our parked vehicle. Quite a start!

Day two before breakfast saw a genet below scurrying around the main building in the early light (5am) below.



We saw different wild dogs at a distance the other side of the river. A skittish Duiker was seen near camp, another lifer. Extended time was spent with four young lion cubs playing and suckling(a first for me) with mother while her sister snoozed except when a cub tried to suckle from her and was quickly ejected. Priceless interactions to witness. Post siesta, while we waited for the wild dogs to emerge we saw a dickensons kestrel above right, another lifer and wattled crane extreme right above. Another hyena early evening in dim light with a pup was seen. Closer view later of four wild dogs in the day when they went out hunting.

Day three saw a female cheetah failing to kill an impala, the situation was reversed late afternoon.



We spent a lot of time with a young leopard up a tree, snoozing. Saw her very briefly early evening come down and scent mark a tree, she was a tiny female one year old.

Saw elephants lying down late morning a first for me.

Day four short flight and transfer to Splash camp. Almost immediately saw sables (on my hit list) in



the harsh mid day heat on the way to camp.

Post siesta saw two wild dogs close up having a nap. Six ground hornbill seen another first for me.

Day five (Thursday 17th October) two male lions seen near camp. Bat eared foxes seen out on safari. Then another two male lions, the dominant ones for the area, who spotted a dead giraffe courtesy of the vultures along with maribou storks/yellow billed kites and claimed it for themselves. Meantime a couple of little bee eaters capturing bees while this was going on. We then continued looking for a leopard, which was found on the ground with it's kill a steenbok up the tree.



En route spotted a group of five Roan antelopes including young. Single animal seen another day shown above, which was not too skittish at a distance. During siesta kudu, elephants, zebras and

giraffes visited the water hole adjacent to our chalet. Revisited the female leopard in the afternoon



when she was eating the kill.

Another group of lions were having a siesta late afternoon.

Day 6 saw a male leopard in a tree. Three brave lions a male and two females had started weakening a buffalo by severing tendons in a rear leg. The herd kept protecting the victim when the lions continued to approach all the time the buffalo was getting weaker. The lions would greet each other/bond between attacks and confirm they were all okay. Priceless behaviour and another first for me. Carried on for a mokuru trip where we saw frogs another lifer, Angolan ridge frog.



En route good views of carmine bee eaters and pied kingfishers. Returned after a boat trip in the early evening for the buffalo and the lions that had followed the herd of 100 buffaloes. All three lions were on top of the buffalo at one stage with one trying in vain to break the back leg. After cries the herd returned to chase off the lions, this was seen with the aid of infra red light. The buffalo eventually succumbed in the middle of the night some distance away from there, where it had managed to hobble to.

Day 7 last morning, saw two then three lions, this was en route to see if cheetah brothers had returned. Without seeing any tracks we stopped and the spotter saw the cheetahs behind us, one was shy and retreated to the bushes. They both then moved to a mound for a better view and another lie down, great to see. Not much to see this morning of the buffalo, obviously hyenas must have come and helped eat the large buffalo, yellow billed kites were having a feed on the leftovers. Finally last flight back to Maun for international flights back to England.

SUMMARY OF SIGHTINGS

Mammals -23

Bat eared fox, Banded mongoose, springhare, warthog

Giraffe, African elephant, buffalo, zebra

Antelopes - Sable, roan, kudu, impala, tsessebe, red lechwe, water buck, steenbok, duiker

Cats - lions male, female and cubs, leopard male and female, cheetah male and female, genet.

Wild dogs, spotted hyena

Amphibian - Angolan ridge frog

Birds -27

Bee eater - Little, carmine,

Stork - Saddle billed, yellow billed, marabou

Kingfisher - Pied and malachite

Hornbill – Red billed, yellow billed, southern ground

Eagles - Bateleur, brown snake, African fish , tawny, martial

Others -

Lilac breasted roller, lappet faced vultures, ground hornbill, red necked falcon, Dickinson kestrel, blue waxbill, Bennett's woodpecker, wattled crane, yellow billed kite, goliath heron, verreaux eagle owl, great egret.