



CAT EXPEDITIONS

Classic Safari in Zambia Photo Tour 2024 Trip Report

October 13, 2024 - October 22, 2024



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Trip Leaders: Sebastian Kennerknecht
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Guides:* Simon
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*This trip helped support 2 local guides,
and 12 local staff members

Places Visited: Lower Zambezi National Park, Kafue National Park, Zambia



Trip Highlights

Leopards We photographed nine different leopards, but the biggest highlight was time spent with a male that was mating with two different females. It turned out one of the females, was the daughter of the other female the male was mating with. Both females threw themselves at the male, trying to get him to mate with them.

Lions: We saw two different prides, and spent a fair amount of time with two males patrolling their territory. Highlights for the guests were a couple of very close encounters, where the males walked just a few feet from us. We saw them feed on a carcass and drink, both special encounters!

Elephants: We spent a ton of time with elephants as our group was obsessed with them. It was fantastic to watch herd social dynamics playing out in front of us, watching browsing behavior, and watching males fight for dominance.

Day 1 | Sunday, October 13

Everyone landed in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, where we settled into the hotel for the night, after a fun dinner where we presented what will happen over the course of the trip.

Day 2 | Monday, October 14

We arose bright and early to head back to the airport, to take a bush flight to Lower Zambezi National Park. Our guides from Kutali were patiently waiting for us at the gravel airstrip. We piled into two safari gameviewers and started to make the drive toward Kutali, our camp for the next few days. Since none of our guests had never been to Africa before, we took it nice and slow, stopping for all the common game, like impala and Chachma baboons. Our whole group of guests had a mild obsession with elephants, so we spent a fair chunk of time with a five month old calf that was bumbling along behind mom. She was adorably cute. As we continued our way towards camp we found a couple of sleeping male lions and even more impressively a large bull Eland, a true rarity.

We were greeted by deliciously refreshing drinks at camp, where we settled in, took in the beautiful river views, before heading back out for our afternoon game drive.

We encountered the lions again, still sleeping, and surprisingly unnerved by elephants feeding extremely close by. Continuing on we found a Cape buffalo in a nice mud-wallow and then stumbled upon two



leopards in a tree. They were still sleeping, but the temperatures started to drop so we figured they would probably soon get up. The thick neck of one of the leopards revealed it as a male, the other leopard was much smaller and therefore likely a female. She raised herself up, walked along a branch, and climbed over to the male, throwing her body into the face of the male. She wanted to mate. Reluctantly, he obliged. We were ecstatic. Then, all of a sudden, another leopard revealed itself in a different part of the tree. Another female. She too made her way to the male, obviously just as interested in mating with him. Reluctantly he obliged once more.

Seemingly to get away from his eager partners he climbed down the tree, but his peace and quiet didn't last long. The two females quickly followed and continued their passionate pursuit of him. We watched him mate with the females, back-and-forth for the next hour and a half. The females didn't seem to share the same affinity for each other that they felt towards the male, often retreating quickly as the other one approached.

We learned later that one of the females was the daughter of the other, and it was obvious she was submissive to her mom.

We finished the afternoon by encountering a pack of nineteen wild dogs. They ran after a warthog, but since it was quite dark already, we didn't pursue them, not wanting to impact their hunt negatively. It was an incredibly exciting first day in Africa for our guests.



Day 3 | Tuesday, October 15

As we ate breakfast overlooking the Lower Zambezi river, as night turned to dawn, our guests excitedly told us about all of the animal noises they heard from their safari tents. Grazing hippos that sounded like washing machines, and cackling hyenas in the distance that raised their curiosity. As we left for our mourning game drive we found another female leopard in a tree. She came down, and carefully stalked some impala, but was spotted and loudly alarm called before she had a chance to make a strike.

Around a few more corners we ran into a pride of lions — three adult females and five cubs. They were doing what lions do best — sleep, but we stayed with them for a bit nonetheless. All of a sudden one of the females picked up a distant scent. She raised herself quickly and started to stalk. On cue, the other two females followed, while the cubs took cover in a bush nearby. The hunt was short-lived, as the targeted warthog caught on before the lions really had a chance to give it a proper go.

Over second breakfast in the bush, we discussed the connection between impalas and baboons. As the baboons fed in the canopy of the trees, they would often drop fruit, which the impalas were only too eager to scoop up. They served as alarm systems for each other, providing more security in their partnership than if alone.

On our way back to camp we came across a huge bull elephant. It was feeding on the bark and branches of a tree that it would shake with its forehead periodically. After a few minutes another bull showed up and it was fascinating to watch their interaction. Subtle tail, trunk, and foot movements signaled nervousness and dominance. A third male joined in a few minutes later and all bets were off. The three elephants moved synchronously in a circle, never getting too close to one another. Not wanting to physically engage, the two newcomers left as quickly as they first arrived.



Day 4 | Wednesday, October 16

Two of our guests went on a guided morning safari walk, where they saw warthogs, antelope, and elephants. For one of the elephants, they had to make a big circle around it, to stay downwind and experience it in a safe manner. The rest of us found the two male lions, who we had seen at the carcass the night before, walking in the valley floor. We positioned the vehicle in a way that allowed for eye level views of them. Everyone took a turn in the front of the vehicle, which created a very intimate and vulnerable feeling, as there is no door on the car. At one point, one of the male lions walked right by us. They both went to drink water before continuing on their territorial walk. At one point we had one of the males walking right at us and roaring, with his brother walking behind him. It was such an impressive sight and sound.



We finished the morning off with two male elephants which were chewing on extremely thick branches for over an hour. We watched them from the ground, and they were close enough for us to hear their bellies rumbling, and even their farts. When they left, one of them left the branch he had been chewing. A quarter of what he started with was left. We picked it up and were shocked by its weight, it easily must have weighed 20-30 lbs. In the evening, we tried to find the wild dogs, making our way east. We searched hard and wide, but could not find them. At sunset, we focused our attention on buffalo in the

beautiful evening light, in the winterthorn acacia forest. After that we spent a significant time with a large herd of elephants chewing on the branches of a fallen tree. There was a tiny baby that came in with the mother. It was adorable. At one point a distant elephant trumpeted and it riled up the calf. It flared its ears and stared at the sound [which was behind us]. It was probably the cutest moment of the trip. We had sundowners after the sun had set. One of our guests went to use the bush-toilet. As he came back to the vehicle, an elephant walked right out from where he went to the bathroom without him noticing.



Day 5 | Thursday, October 17

It was an overcast morning and the animals were not active, at all. We drove around a ton, with very little action. As the morning progressed we found a nice floodplain to take a coffee break at. Three male elephants ended up coming our way, which we observed from the ground, before they waded across the lower Zambezi river. After that, we found a large elephant carcass, which had been completely eaten. A big herd of buffalo made their way down to the water nearby. It was awesome watching them push up the dust as they barreled down the hillside.

From there we practiced birds in flight, as a pied kingfisher was hovering nearby, searching for food in the shallow water below. As we left, our guide Richard somehow spotted a Verreaux's Eagle-Owl in the trees above. It's always amazing how good these guys are at spotting hidden animals. The quiet morning turned into a rather productive outing!



In the evening, we went for a boat ride, with the primary goal of reaching the Southern Carmine Bee-eater colony. As we made our way up the river, we came across plenty of crocodiles, a couple of which were huge. A terrapin was basking on a washed up log, and a common sandpiper was foraging along the river's shores. We made our way passed some hippos before reaching the bird colony. Seeing these bright red birds is always a highlight, as they catch insects on the wing, and bring them back to their riverbank nests, buried six feet deep into the soft sand. A couple of times, some bee-eaters had a disagreements and fought feverishly in mid-air. We spent about an hour with the birds, and it was an incredible time.

Day 6 | Friday, October 18

First thing in the morning we watched a sub-adult hyena chow down on a kill it had stole from a leopard. We then found the same female leopard from the day before, sunning on a termite mound. From there it was time to go to the airstrip. We looked for the dogs along the way, as we had heard reports they had been seen, but were unsuccessful.

After our 2.5 hour bush flight we landed on the dirt airstrip of Musekese, in Kafue National Park. Upon our arrival we were greeted by our guide John Deere, yes, like the tractor. We took a leisurely boat ride down the Kafue river, to camp, stopping for an elephant family feeding in its waters. Upon arriving at camp, we were welcomed by vervet monkey mother's and their babies. We settled in and got ready for our

afternoon drive.

We quickly found a beautiful male leopard, already quite independent from mom, as he emerged from the bush and walked right passed our car, on his way to drink at the river's edge. As he was walking back towards cover, his mom suddenly emerged. They greeted and then disappeared. We waited for a bit, when mom suddenly emerged again, this time carrying a baby impala [one of the first of the season]. Within a few seconds she carried it up a tree, where she and the male fed on it more [though separately].

On the dark drive back to camp, we found a white-tailed mongoose and square-tailed nightjar on the road.



Day 7 | Saturday, October 19

The morning was a bit more quiet, but we got to see a hippo use its “hippo highway”, checked out a civet latrine, where civets use the bathroom routin [called a civitrine], and saw some hartebeests, an antelope that can often be difficult to see up close.

One of the highlights of the morning was the discussion during our bush breakfast spot, where we learned about many facets of the sausage tree: burning of its bark can be used as an ointment for tsetse bites. Their

fruits are eaten by hippos and bushbuck, their flowers are eaten by impala. In the local beliefs, the sausage fruit, when mixed with torch wood can be used as an elixir to increase penis size.

In the afternoon we found some unique antelope (Kafue is home to more antelope species than any other park in Africa), including two pairs of common duiker, and at night a Sharpe's grysbok. Another rare sight was two bushpigs in the afternoon. We also found KLI-967, a collared female lion resting near on old zebra carcass. She didn't just look full, she also looked pregnant, ready to give birth any day. We rounded out the day with a Angolan genet seen at night and a female leopard who quickly disappeared into the darkness. practicing our Lightroom skills!

Day 8 | Sunday, October 20

Right at first light we found the resident male lion coalition, two brothers about five years old. They were basking in the morning sun, soaking up the warm rays. We waited until they moved, which was only a few meters into the shade. It was amazing nonetheless to see their strength and power. We found some vultures in the trees, and hoped there was a kill around, but found that not to be the case. A hippo chomping on grasses halfway in the river provided a ton of amusement until we found a young sub-adult male lion, son to the female we saw the day before hiding in the shade of the solar panels of camp!



During lunch we were given a presentation about Musekese Conservation, a very important NGO working on protecting Kafue National Park and its surrounding buffer areas. It also allows for our guests to understand the larger picture, its sadly not always just rainbows and butterflies.

In the afternoon we went on a river boat ride, to see what we could see from the water. We had some nice views of pied kingfishers, photographed the very rare African finfoot, and enjoyed the hippos lounging in the water. On the way back to camp, John Deere, spotted a brown greater galago which was cool!

Day 9 | Monday, October 21

This started out as our slowest morning, we saw some birds, a crocodile female near her nest, but then, we heard a ton of alarm calls from vervet monkeys. We raced over to see what they were looking at. We circled around the area a few times, and couldn't find anything in the direction they were staring. Then, our guest Erin called out "leopard!". In the crotch of a large ebony tree, a leopard was sleeping, totally careless about the freaked out monkeys. We watched her a long time, admiring her grace and power. She got up a few times, stretched, and laid back down. We left her knowing she would probably remain in the tree for the day, to avoid the midday heat. Later, through the id booklet from musekese, we found out it was MSF5, a nine year old female.



Day 10 | Tuesday, October 22

We drove from Musekese camp back to Lusaka, spotting a few more impalas and pukus before hitting the tarmac and getting a small glimpse of life in Zambia along the road back to the capital.

Redunca arundinum

SPECIES LIST

Mammals

African Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>
Brown Greater Galago	<i>Otolemur crassicaudatus</i>
Vervet Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus pygerythrus</i>
Yellow Baboon	<i>Papio cynocephalus</i>
Chacma Baboon	<i>Papio ursinus</i>
Cape Porcupine	<i>Hystrix africaeaustralis</i>
Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
African Civet	<i>Civettictis civetta</i>
Common Genet	<i>Genetta genetta</i>
Angolan Genet	<i>Genetta angolensis</i>
Common Dwarf Mongoose	<i>Helogale parvula</i>
White-tailed Mongoose	<i>Ichneumia albicauda</i>
Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>
Spotted Hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>
Side-striped Jackal	<i>Lupulella adusta</i>
African Wild Dog	<i>Lycaon pictus</i>
Plains Zebra	<i>Equus quagga</i>
Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>
Bushpig	<i>Potamochoerus larvatus</i>
Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>
Lichtenstein's Hartebeest	<i>Alcelaphus lichtensteinii</i>
Sharpe's Grysbok	<i>Raphicerus sharpei</i>
Cape Buffalo	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>
Common Eland	<i>Tragelaphus oryx</i>
Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>
Greater Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>
Common Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>
Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>
Puku	<i>Kobus vardonii</i>
Southern Reedbuck	<i>Redunca arundinum</i>

Birds

Egyptian Goose
Spur-winged Goose
Helmeted Guineafowl
Southern Crested Guineafowl
Crested Francolin
Natal Spurfowl
Swainson's Spurfowl
Red-necked Spurfowl
Ring-necked Dove
Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove
African Green-Pigeon
Black-bellied Bustard
Gray Go-away-bird
Schalow's Turaco
Senegal Coucal
Klaas's Cuckoo
Fiery-necked Nightjar
Square-tailed Nightjar
Black Crake
African Finfoot
Gray Crowned-Crane
Water Thick-knee
Black-winged Stilt
Long-toed Lapwing
Blacksmith Lapwing
White-crowned Lapwing
Wattled Lapwing
African Jacana
Common Sandpiper
Wood Sandpiper
Common Greenshank
Collared Pratincole
African Openbill
Saddle-billed Stork
Marabou Stork
Yellow-billed Stork
African Darter
Reed Cormorant
Glossy Ibis
African Sacred Ibis

Alopochen aegyptiaca
Plectropterus gambensis
Numida meleagris
Guttera edouardi
Ortygornis sephaena
Pternistis natalensis
Pternistis swainsonii
Pternistis afer
Streptopelia capicola
Turtur chalcospilos
Treron calvus
Lissotis melanogaster
Crinifer concolor
Tauraco schalowi
Centropus senegalensis
Chrysococcyx klaas
Caprimulgus pectoralis
Caprimulgus fossii
Zapornia flavirostra
Podica senegalensis
Balearica regulorum
Burhinus vermiculatus
Himantopus himantopus
Vanellus crassirostris
Vanellus armatus
Vanellus albiceps
Vanellus senegallus
Actophilornis africanus
Actitis hypoleucos
Tringa glareola
Tringa nebularia
Glareola pratincola
Anastomus lamelligerus
Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis
Leptoptilos crumenifer
Mycteria ibis
Anhinga rufa
Microcarbo africanus
Plegadis falcinellus
Threskiornis aethiopicus

Hadada Ibis
Striated Heron
Squacco Heron
Western Cattle-Egret
Great Egret
Yellow-billed Egret
Gray Heron
Black-headed Heron
Goliath Heron
Hamerkop
Pink-backed Pelican
Osprey
African Harrier-Hawk
White-headed Vulture
Lappet-faced Vulture
Hooded Vulture
White-backed Vulture
Bateleur
Western Banded Snake-Eagle
Brown Snake-Eagle
African Hawk-Eagle
African Goshawk
African Fish-Eagle
Green Woodhoopoe
Southern Ground-Hornbill
African Gray Hornbill
Trumpeter Hornbill
White-fronted Bee-eater
Little Bee-eater
European Bee-eater
Southern Carmine Bee-eater
Half-collared Kingfisher
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Striped Kingfisher
Giant Kingfisher
Pied Kingfisher
Lilac-breasted Roller
Broad-billed Roller
Black-collared Barbet
Bearded Woodpecker

Bostrychia hagedash
Butorides striata
Ardeola ralloides
Ardea ibis
Ardea alba
Ardea brachyrhyncha
Ardea cinerea
Ardea melanocephala
Ardea goliath
Scopus umbretta
Pelecanus rufescens
Pandion haliaetus
Polyboroides typus
Trigonoceps occipitalis
Torgos tracheliotos
Necrosyrtes monachus
Gyps africanus
Terathopius ecaudatus
Circaetus cinerascens
Circaetus cinereus
Aquila spilogaster
Aerospiza tachiro
Ichthyophaga vocifer
Phoeniculus purpureus
Bucorvus leadbeateri
Lophoceros nasutus
Bycanistes bucinator
Merops bullockoides
Merops pusillus
Merops apiaster
Merops nubicoides
Alcedo semitorquata
Halcyon albiventris
Halcyon chelicuti
Megaceryle maxima
Ceryle rudis
Coracias caudatus
Eurystomus glaucurus
Lybius torquatus
Chloropicus namaquus

Cardinal Woodpecker
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Lilian's Lovebird
Brown-necked Parrot
Meyer's Parrot
White-crested Helmetshrike
Black-backed Puffback
Fork-tailed Drongo
African Paradise-Flycatcher
Southern Black-Tit
Croaking Cisticola
Wire-tailed Swallow
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Common Bulbul
Arrow-marked Babbler
Red-billed Oxpecker
Wattled Starling
Common Myna
Violet-backed Starling
Meves's Starling
Kurrichane Thrush
White-browed Robin-Chat
African Stonechat
Arnot's Chat
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Red-headed Weaver
Spectacled Weaver
Lesser Masked-Weaver
Yellow-mantled Widowbird
Southern Cordonbleu

Dendropicos fuscescens
Campethera abingoni
Agapornis lilianae
Poicephalus fuscicollis
Poicephalus meyeri
Prionops plumatus
Dryoscopus cubla
Dicrurus adsimilis
Terpsiphone viridis
Melaniparus niger
Cisticola natalensis
Hirundo smithii
Chlorocichla flaviventris
Pycnonotus barbatus
Turdoides jardineii
Buphagus erythroryncha
Creatophora cinerea
Acridotheres tristis
Cinnyricinclus leucogaster
Lamprotornis mevesii
Turdus libonyana
Cossypha heuglini
Saxicola torquatus
Myrmecocichla arnotti
Plocepasser mahali
Anaplectes rubriceps
Ploceus ocularis
Ploceus intermedius
Euplectes macroura
Uraeginthus angolensis

