



Pictus Safaris Trip Report – Gorongosa NP, Mozambique – October 2022

Abstract

Whilst our focus on wildlife is generally unwavering, some destinations are special not only in the fauna and flora they are home to, but also their history. Gorongosa National Park in Central Mozambique is perhaps the best example of this in Africa today. Once considered the premier wildlife destination in Africa, particularly in its heyday in the 1950s and early 1960s, Gorongosa was devastated by FRELIMO forces in the fight for independence against Portugal, but also by rebel RENAMO forces during the Mozambican Civil War from 1977 to 1992. As with many wilderness areas, its inaccessibility offered protection to fighters, and its fauna (most notably buffalo) were used to finance and sustain military operations.

Even after the cessation of the war, Gorongosa continued to be severely impacted by unfettered poaching and ineffective management. By the early 2000s, a handful of lion, antelope and elephant remained. Enter US philanthropist Greg Carr who, in partnership with the Mozambican Government, has transformed the park since 2005. The most impressive element of this has been sterling community engagement, with initiatives including the creation of coffee-growing on nearby Mt Gorongosa, girls' clubs to prevent underage marriage and huge employment opportunities associated with the park all meaning that the local community is fully supportive of the park and its activities.

When it comes to wildlife, the park has brought back species including African wild dog, leopard, spotted hyena and zebra, and bolstered existing populations of lion, elephant, buffalo, wildebeest and much more. In fact, the reintroduction of wild dogs has made this park perhaps the premier destination for them anywhere in Africa, alongside the Delta. African Parks' impending takeover of Mana Pools may reverse the declines there but, for now, anyone seeking to see wild dogs in a reasonably affordable area should be looking at Gorongosa. Not only this, but the stunning natural beauty of Gorongosa should not be underestimated – it is most famous for its incredible variety of landscapes, and one can easily feel that they have visited the Mara, the Delta, the Selous and the Kruger before brunch here.

On this tour, our focus was very much on wild dogs, which two of our clients had missed on all their previous safaris. However, we also dedicated a full day to exploring the famous Mt Gorongosa and incorporated a morning visit to the pangolin rehabilitation centre in Chitengo.

At a Glance

Dates	October 10 th – October 18th, 2022
Number of Clients	3
Countries Visited	Mozambique
Key Target(s)	African Wild Dog, Lion, Bush Elephant
Total Mammal Species Recorded	38
Total Bird Species Recorded	156



Itinerary

Day	Destination	Accommodation
October 10 th , 2022	Beira, Mozambique	Hotel Sena
October 11 th – October 17 th , 2022	Gorongosa NP, Mozambique	Gorongosa Wild Camp
October 18 th , 2022	Beira, Mozambique	Tour End

Highlights

Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

- Witnessing a pack of 35 wild dogs make a waterbuck kill
- Superb views of lion and elephant
- Arguably the most scenic park in Africa
- Rarities including spotted-necked otter and bushpig
- Night drives producing civet, genet, galago and porcupine
- Excellent savanna birding, with highlights including pied avocet and forest weaver



Daily Report

Day 1 – Beira, Mozambique

Two guests arrived this morning with Airlink having spent the previous week in Zimbabwe, and were met by tour leader Tom at the airport and transferred to the nearby Hotel Sena. Beira does not offer a huge range of hotels, particularly as several closed in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclone Idai in 2019 and COVID-19, and Hotel Sena is the best of a basic bunch. With clean rooms and a decent restaurant, it does the job. After a protracted check-in, the guests had a chance to settle in whilst the final member of our party was collected from his flight with Ethiopian Airlines. A note for anyone planning travel to Mozambique – Ethiopian continue to price-gouge across regional networks and Mozambique is no exception, and fares often exceed £1,000 on this route. Whilst shuttling to and from the airport, the first birds of the tour were recorded, including African marsh harrier, yellow-billed kite and the invasive house crow.

This afternoon two of the guests headed down to the beach, just a short walk from the hotel. Mozambique is full of stunning beaches, but Beira is not the place for them. There is however a famous shipwreck and lighthouse in Macuti that are worth a look from the outside – don't try to enter the lighthouse or you will be shaken down for the cost of a 'permit'.

After a long day of travelling for the team, we settled down to an evening meal in the hotel and a pre-tour briefing, before heading to bed for some well-deserved rest.

Day 2 – Beira to Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

We planned to leave Hotel Sena at 8am today, but a typically slow check-out process meant it was nearly 08.40 by the time we were joining the main road out of Beira. Our transfer took us first west to the town of Inchope, a drive of two hours on excellent roads, and then north on the arterial EN1 to the entrance to Gorongosa, a painful drive of about two hours on a road that had deteriorated significantly since our last visit in 2019. It is possible to fly directly to Gorongosa from Beira for those with deep pockets and a desire to avoid this section of road.

Our drive though was generally very pleasant and full of anticipation and engaging conversation. The waterways we crossed before Inchope feed grasslands that produced some good birding, with long-crested eagle, little bee-eater and several other species recorded. We also noted a mammal, now deceased, for sale on the side of the road – it was a greater cane rat, although judging by its size it might have had a bit of Bernese Mountain Dog in its family history.

As our drive came to a close, we reached the relief of the graded, if slightly corrugated, road from the EN1 to the national park itself. The main settlement in the park, included the large lodge run by Montebelo is at Chitengo, is about 40km from the main road, with the entrance about a third of the way along the road – it was on this initial stretch that we nabbed our first mammals, a herd of **impala**. At the entrance we paused to go through entry formalities, and to promise not to take any lions home with us, before seizing the opportunity to photograph the large colony of village and southern masked weavers. Before getting back into our vehicle, brief views were had of a group of **Chacma baboon** passing through – I'm told this species will soon be split from Chacmas as the 'grey-footed baboon', elevating *Papio ursinus griseipes* to species status. It's a Chacma, don't let this split fool you.



By now the heat of the day was beginning to build and the remainder of the drive to Chitengo was fairly quiet, offering us our first sighting of **waterbuck**, which occur in their tens of thousands here, and several new bird species. On arrival at Chitengo at about 12.30, we took the opportunity to relax at the air-conditioned safari centre and wait for the Wild Camp team to collect us and transfer us to our accommodation.



Montebelo's lodge at Chitengo has long been an affordable and good-quality option for lodging in the park. However, it is now a building site, and large trucks are rumbling through frequently to take road-building materials into the park. I can't recommend it for lodging right now, although it is an easy place to tick off, as we did, the ultra-habituated **common warthog** and **vervet monkeys** that call the lodge home.

Before too long we were met by lead guide, Test, and our guide for the week, Richard. Wild Camp is only about a twenty-minute drive from Chitengo, although it does move according to the season. It will never be more than forty minutes or so from Chitengo as the core game-viewing area is small and the road network only offers access to about a quarter of the park. En route, it became apparent that the park was extremely dry, and that the wildlife was very much tied to water – our brief drive provided excellent views of **nyala** and crested guineafowl.

On arrival at camp we were met by the lovely Wild Camp team, and some old friends from Pictus Safaris' previous visit, Richard, Agnes and Maquina. The camp is delightful and by far the best value for money in the park, consisting of five large safari tents with outdoor en-suites, a communal fireside area and lounge overlooking the nearby pan. Power is available each night via solar power and, whilst rustic, this camp would perfectly meet the needs of all but the fussiest of visitors.

Following an hour or so to enjoy a late lunch and settle in to our new surrounds, it was time to head out on our first game activity. We were delighted to hear the dogs were being seen regularly in all corners of the



park, but the iconic view of Gorongosa is undoubtedly the Lion House, and this is where we focussed today. This abandoned lodge, situated on the floodplains of Lake Urema is well-known for photos taken prior to the Civil War which show lions having claimed both stories of the property as a good spot for a nap. There were no lions hanging out there today, but we did spot one or two (thousand) waterbuck. The population of this ungulate in Gorongosa is absurd, and the sight of up to eighty-thousand waterbuck stretching out before you on the floodplains is one that is not easily forgotten.

We continued on across the floodplains, picking up good views of grey-crowned crane, black-bellied bustard and many other bird species en route. Once across the expansive plains and into more typical grassland for the region, we were inundated with good views of **oribi** – over thirty in just a half hour or so. This antelope seems to be doing particularly well here, but we also recorded good views of **greater kudu**, **common wildebeest**, **Lichtenstein's hartebeest**, **southern reedbuck**, impala and common warthog. As we paused for a stunning sundowner at 'the Baobabs', with a sunset made all the more spectacular by significant smoke pollution in the atmosphere from intentional burns, it was noted that we could see six different species on antelope in the small section of savanna before us. Antelope diversity is certainly a highlight in Gorongosa.

There is not a deep culture of night-driving in Gorongosa, as there is in many of the areas we visit, most probably because of the insecurity that has been rife here historically. However, we had agreed to extend the typical twenty-minute drives offered to most guests to an hour or two, and we got off to a good start tonight. We immediately located a **savanna hare**, and the remainder of the drive was punctuated with views of **African civet** and **common genet**, both of which would feature heavily throughout the week. Far from the road, a **southern lesser galago** could be seen under spotlight, and we made a note to check for the Mozambique dwarf galago that has been seen here throughout the remainder of the week. As we neared camp, Tom and Richard were discussing the surprising paucity of serval sightings given the abundance of quelea here, and Richard posited that this was the result of a near total absence of small rodents in parts of the park. No sooner had the words left his mouth, than a shrew (yes, not a rodent, but still) popped out near the front wheel of the car and scurried alongside us. Too brief a view for an ID to species level, but a nice surprise nonetheless.

On our return to camp, a delicious dinner was waiting for us, and it was not long before a very welcome rest was in order. We were buoyed by news that dogs had been seen in the east of the park this evening, which was a great omen for the days ahead.

Day 3 – Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

Today the search for dogs began in earnest! Waking at 5am, we were on the road by 5.30, with the plan to head towards roads 2, 6 and 8, where the dogs had most recently been seen. This area is dense bush, some of the most impenetrable vegetation in the park, and is often where the dogs den in the winter. Not long after leaving camp we had stunning views of Narina trogon flying across the road in front of us and the mammal life consisted primarily of waterbuck and impala. Brief views were had of large male nyala bulls and **bushbuck** (including a young leucistic male), and we also spotted a single **Natal red duiker** in a particularly thick section of undergrowth. These duikers are more common near the coast in this section of Mozambique, not unlike suni, but such is the variety of habitat in the park that they are increasingly being seen here, along with other small antelope such as klipspringer and Sharpe's grysbok.



As we began to scour the road network for dog tracks, we stumbled across a delightful scene at a small pan choked with lime-green weeds, with a pride of five **lion** looking back at us across the water. Three lionesses were accompanied by two cubs, flanked by several marabou storks, and it really was picture-perfect. As we were keen to make the most of the fresh early morning temperatures, we spent just a few minutes with them, but this was a great start to the day.

It didn't take too long for Tom and Richard to locate fresh tracks of dogs heading north at pace, and we carefully followed the trail until it was lost on packed earth close to 'Peninsula', where the dense bush gives way to the vast Lake Urema itself and its huge plains. Coffee on the shores of Urema was enjoyed, particularly as the locally-produced coffee is probably strong enough to be a Class A substance. Good birding was had here, with lovely views of African skimmer, black-winged stilt, spur-winged goose and much more to be had. Several pods of **hippopotamus** were seen baking in the sun, and in excess of fifty Nile crocodile were seen swimming in the shallows.

Our drive back to camp delivered plenty of general game – most notably waterbuck, impala, nyala, bushbuck and oribi, but with no further sign of the dogs. Consolation was found in a tasty brunch prepared for us back in camp as we watched the pan, which was occupied in daylight hours of wallowing warthogs, waterbuck, bushbuck, impala, chacma baboon and vervet monkey.

The birding in camp during the heat of the day was truly superb, and it was easy to locate red-billed firefinch, blue waxbill, grey waxbill and red-throated twinspot. With a bit more effort, good views were had of bearded scrub-robin, thrush nightingale, green malkoha, brown-hooded kingfisher, curlew sandpiper and glossy ibis.



Heading out again at 15.30 this afternoon, with temperatures still in the low 30s, we returned to the thick stuff in the east of the park. Significant time was dedicated to trawling the roads in each of the main blocks in this area, but the dogs had not exited the block by the time night fell, and we had only a metric tonne of waterbuck to show for our efforts. The heat and full moon suggested to us that the dogs may be tied to water deep within the block until later in the night, and we headed back to camp, picking up genet, civet and **white-tailed mongoose** en route.

Once back at Wild Camp we were delighted that the ranger stationed at camp had spotted an African rock python on a branch near one of the main walkways. Great views of this impressive juvenile snake were had by all members of the group before it made its way down its chosen tree. A great way to end the day!

Day 4 – Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

Based on the tracks we had seen the day before, we were confident that the dogs would likely have spent their day in the thick stuff between routes 2, 6 and 8, and it was here we headed this morning. As we drove through the early morning smoke, we picked up the usual waterbuck, nyala, bushbuck and impala. Despite plenty of audio from lions from three sides the night before, we surprisingly didn't spot any tawny cats on our travels, although the two dominant resident males had left plenty of tracks in their favourite spots along route 1.

Lion tracks aside, our journey through the dense bush in the east of the park was fairly quiet this morning, and there was no sign of dogs at all – we did see our first colony of **banded mongoose** early doors though. Eventually we reached the 'Peninsula', where a section of ever so slightly higher ground juts out towards the receded shores of Lake Urema, turning west to check whether the dogs had come out of this side of the block. Bingo! Tracks of 20+ dogs were located on the road in short order. As is often the case with large packs of dogs, trying to determine a final direction of travel for these animals was tricky and, in this case, we couldn't make our minds up. However, we were confident they would not have strayed too far given how close they were to water, and we combed the roads in this area carefully.

Eventually, after no further sign of dogs, but plenty of waterbuck and greater kudu, we returned east along the edge of the floodplains to Paradise Pan. It was a surprise to this point that we had seen no elephants and it didn't take much driving beyond the pan to encounter our first group of young bulls. Like all **elephants** in Gorongosa, they were skittish (at best) and quickly disappeared behind the palms that characterise this area of the park. Just a few hundred yards beyond them we located another small herd, again making their way in a hurry back towards the pan. Rather than continue on towards route 11, we pulled a u-turn and headed back to the pan to intercept them, and were rewarded with brief but lovely views of three young bulls drinking from a channel near the main pan. Elephants have a deeply turbulent history in the park, and to have the chance to sit quietly and admire them is perhaps more poignant here than anywhere else in Africa.

A particularly pleasant surprise lay in store just moments away, as a bush brunch had been prepared for us on the shores of the lake. There was some excitement amongst the birders on staff at the presence of several pied avocet, a rarity for the park, feeding in the lake, and brunch was enjoyed with great views of these birds, as well as African skimmer, black-winged stilt, collared pratincole and, as we were leaving, a soaring white-headed vulture.

Our journey back to camp took us back towards the Lion House, where some lionesses had been spotted that morning. Whilst we couldn't locate the lions, we did have a superb midday sighting of several **bushpig**



in the middle of a pan. Gorongosa must be, by some distance, the best place to see this normally reclusive species anywhere in Africa today.



The brunt of the heat of the day was endured in our tents back in camp, although the birding outside was good once again – with decent views of forest weaver a particular highlight.

This afternoon we made a beeline once more for the last known position of the dogs, and we decided to expand our search area to include a new-ish loop out into the floodplains, 3A. Lo and behold, after a pause to scan some likely-looking shade-giving trees, a couple of characteristic ears popped up – **wild dogs**! We found ourselves in the company of a stunning pack of dogs, 35-strong, as they lazed in the late afternoon sunshine.





After only twenty minutes or so with them, the first yawns and snuffles indicated the pack would shortly get their evening activities underway. We were particularly amused by the antics of one of the ten pups, a stunningly-marked female, rousing most members of the pack individually and generally wreaking havoc. Understandably, the pack was soon on its feet, playing and chattering away as they do each evening. All this socialising was cut short though as the Alpha female spotted a pair of warthogs that had wandered a bit too close to the pack, and the chase was on!

Remarkably, four of the dogs closed about 50 metres of distance between them and the warthogs in seconds, gaining with every pace, and a panicked chase was only ended by the warthogs stealing away into the roots of a tree with just inches to spare. Phew!

Undeterred, the dogs regrouped, with the pups hanging back to chew on old pieces of waterbuck carcass, gnaw on waterbuck dung and generally make a nuisance of themselves behind the vehicle. The adults trotted across the plain in a stunning scene, with our vehicle trailing a respectful distance behind the main pack, offering great photo opportunities of the pups, all juxtaposed against a vivid sunset. Carefully carving their way between the dozens of waterbuck in front of them, the dogs made precise but sedate inroads until they finally identified a waterbuck calf that took their fancy. Within moments, they had forced the calf into a narrow channel extending from Urema, and a standoff began. Only a handful of dogs were brave enough to leap the channel, with their excitement and frustration visibly growing until one dog finally forced the calf an inch too close to its pack members on the other bank. They had it.





Dog kills are ruthlessly efficient affairs, and not for the faint-hearted. The calf was still taking its last panicked breaths as the dogs removed its stomach, in what is truly one of nature's greatest and goriest spectacles. After a few moments, the adults began to make way and the pups stormed in, gorging themselves first on the skin that was left, and then the marrow they could find by cracking open the calf's bones. We pulled away a short distance and enjoyed our sundowners with the dogs, before reluctantly tearing ourselves away to return to camp. Our night drive recorded civet, genet and white-tailed mongoose.

Day 5 – Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

Having located our primary target the previous day, we had several other targets to focus on this morning. Some members of the group were keen on getting better views of sable than they had had during the preceding week in Zimbabwe. Buffalo and Gorongosa's very few leopard were also mentioned as species worth pursuing, and so we chose to head west this morning to the 'Sanctuary' area of the park, which is dominated by extensive grasslands. It is here that three of Gorongosa's five leopard have set up shop since their release, but they are never seen by visitors, truth be told.

It was a lovely drive west through the grasslands, but game-viewing was a little slow. Waterbuck were present, as always, and impala, southern reedbuck, oribi, common wildebeest (in their dozens) and Lichtenstein's hartebeest were all seen. Brown snake eagles were regularly recorded, as was a juvenile martial eagle and Meyer's parrot. Sable, sadly, eluded us, which was a real surprise, but we did spot our first **dwarf mongoose** of the tour.

Our drive took us circuitously back to Chitengo, where we had arranged to meet the team working on rehabilitating ground pangolins there. They had just returned from encouraging the pangolins to feed out in the wilds of Gorongosa, and we spent a delightful half hour learning more about the work being done here. Six pangolin, we learnt, were currently being rehabilitated having been rescued from traffickers across the Sofala and Manica provinces. We were able to get to know a young male who was extremely photogenic. Gorongosa remains a real asset to the wildlife within, but also outwith, its borders, and these pangolins will eventually be re-introduced to the park – over 80 have already been released here.



After brunch and a rest in camp, our focus this evening was on lions. A lengthy drive all the way along the edge of the floodplain from camp brought us sightings of oodles of waterbuck and greater kudu, before we reached the Pungwe River, where there was a healthy population both of hippo and Nile crocodile. Sundowners were very pleasant indeed, only to be interrupted by a young male lion wandering across in front of us. Having heard him vocalise moments before, it was a surprise he was so talkative given his presence in the established territory of two mature males, and he was skittish under the spotlight, so we left him to his business. Bushpig, oribi, galago, genet and civet were the only sightings of note on our night drive tonight.

Day 6 – Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

Our morning drive today followed a familiar route, weaving through the dense bush in search of wild dogs before emerging out onto the spectacular waterbuck-ridden floodplains. We stumbled across the tracks of two lionesses and cubs in a sodic area near camp, but despite distant alarm calls from baboons, we were unable to track them down. The sighting of the morning undoubtedly had to be time spent with a bull elephant at Paradise Pan. Clearly in musth, this gentleman put on a real show in the shallows of the pan, before approaching the vehicle for an inspection. We passed muster, although the vehicle behind us was seen off in slightly less accommodating fashion. Continuing on, we followed the road from Paradise to one of the most remote areas of the park, which was filled with elephant sign and there was momentary excitement at fresh aardvark tracks. The road had not been maintained for some time, and most of our time was spent avoiding branches, and we burst out the far end of the route with only some nyala and waterbuck for our efforts. We did however manage brief views of dwarf mongoose on route 11, which was once the main road to Beira, and some good birding near the old bridge.



Given how far east we had come, we decided to continue on to Sable Pan to seek out the eponymous ungulate, but left empty-handed in that regard. However, we were surprised to spot a male **spotted hyena** near the pan, who quickly scarpered for some shade. There are just four hyena in park, all recently re-introduced, so this was a great find. By the sounds of it, all four have now gone in different directions, and despite looking for his mates, he seemed to be alone. The remainder of the morning drive went swiftly as it got hotter, although nyala, bushbuck and yet more bushpig were recorded.





Our afternoon drive was largely quiet until we pulled over for sundowners only for the radio to immediately crackle with news of the two resident male lions having been seen nearby. One quick 'Ferrari safari' later delivered us to the two males fast asleep opposite the Lion House. Soon, we were one of two vehicles present and we just sat quietly, enjoying the presence of the snoozing cats until darkness fell.

The evening wasn't over though, as we swiftly had a pride of four lions under spotlight a short distance away. These cats were particularly wary of the vehicle and, despite some careful manoeuvring to put everyone at ease, a park vehicle steamed towards them and the sighting was swiftly cut short. A large civet was the only other sighting of note thereafter.

Day 7 – Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

Today was mountain day, taking us to the north of the main park to Mt Gorongosa. The mountain is the source of all the watercourses that come through the park and, as such, steps have been taken to protect the mountain. With that in mind, a portion of Mt Gorongosa above a certain altitude has been proclaimed a part of the national park itself. Wildlife-wise, the main draws here are for birders, with green-headed oriole being the primary reason many visit the mountain. The mountain is also where Gorongosa's famous coffee is grown and the community-focussed initiatives here are admirable.

Our day started with an early cooked breakfast before heading out of the park in a northwesterly direction. The plains here offered us a reasonable chance for both sable and buffalo, but we dipped on both, ending up instead with a handsome number of Lichtenstein's hartebeest, common wildebeest, greater kudu, nyala and impala. A highlight was multiple sightings of **blue monkey** both inside and outside the park, as well as a pair of Natal red duiker, our first **slender mongoose** and another flock of crested guineafowl.

The mountain is about a three-hour drive from the park, using the EN1, which is in poor condition. During our visit, visibility was impacted by uncontrolled burns in Malawi, which was a shame. As it was a weekend, the factory and plantations used to grow and process coffee were empty, but the trip was made worthwhile by some good birding (Livingstone's turaco being the highlight) and an appreciation of the unique history of the mountain – it was only a few years ago that the mountain was off-limits as the last hideout of RENAMO rebels prior to the signing of a peace accord in Gorongosa National Park itself.

The lengthy drive back eventually delivered us to the main entrance gate and, shortly afterwards, we finally got our first view of **sable** this trip – a handsome herd of around a dozen just off the main access road. In a further attempt to pick up leopard or buffalo, we headed off west before Chitengo, but were rewarded only with the more common ungulates for our efforts.

After dinner in camp tonight, a spot of batting revealed the presence of at least five species – the air above the pan was thick with bats, and analysis of recordings after the trip gave us a good certainty for **Schlieffen's bat**, **little free-tailed bat**, **Angolan mops bat**, **African yellow bat** and **banana serotine**. Spotlighting the pan for a few minutes produced bushpig, civet, white-tailed mongoose, marsh mongoose and, best of all, excellent views of spotted-necked otter with a young one.

Day 8 – Gorongosa NP, Mozambique

Our final full day in Gorongosa was to be split in two – a morning focussed on lions and an evening focussed on getting one last view of the dogs. The previous night, lion audio had been very close until just a few minutes before our wake-up call, and our suspicions were confirmed with fresh tracks just a few metres from camp heading towards the pan.



It took a bit of searching beyond the pan, but eventually we spotted a lone lioness in the middle of a sodic area east of camp and a few minutes following her took us to her small pride – the same pride we had driven away from on our first full day in the park. It was a real pleasure to spend half an hour so in the company of these lions, who were half-resting and half-keeping an eye out for any prey, and their bellies were clearly empty. One cub was particularly photogenic, with the other buried deep in a bush, and we left them to it as the heat of the day began to build.



We continued north-east into the denser reaches of the park where we knew the dogs had headed, and located fresh tracks at a remote pan a significant distance from both Lake Urema and camp. A brief walk revealed no sign that they had stuck around but, knowing the importance of water given the heat, we made a plan to come back this evening.

And come back we did, enjoying unexpected views of a lone bull elephant at the far end of the remote pan. Our best hope for a final dog sighting was to patiently wait to see if the dogs would return to water, but eventually the sunset came and went without a sighting, and we made our way back towards camp, disturbing several majestic nyala bulls, as well as civets, genets and a very bouncy marsh mongoose, on our way. Swinging by a rapidly drying pan en route, we bumped into our first breeding herd of elephants of the trip. Whilst nervous, they afforded us a cautious and standoffish audience in the dying light of the day – like every elephant encounter in Gorongosa this was a very special moment indeed.

Our evening wasn't over though, as the Gorongosa team had prepared a lovely bush dinner atop the Lion House – a superb and fitting way to end our final drive in the park surrounded by great company and zillions of waterbuck.

We chatted about our hits and misses during the tour, with just a handful of genuine misses. Perhaps the oddest, we said, was porcupine, which are normally very common here. Somebody must have been listening as, on the very short drive back to camp, we had to slam on the brakes to narrowly avoid, you



guessed it, a **cape porcupine**. Great views were had by all of this weird and wonderful rodent, a sighting which neatly tied up another wonderful trip to Gorongosa.

Day 9 – Beira, Mozambique

Saying goodbye to somewhere as beautiful as Gorongosa is never easy, and today we slowly made our way back to Chitengo to meet our transfer back to Beira. We recorded our final mammals of the tour, nyala, waterbuck, impala, bushbuck, warthog, vervet monkey and chacma baboon, as we left the park, with an uneventful drive back to Beira bookending a successful tour.

Mammal List – 38 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
Carnivora – 11 species		
Marsh Mongoose	<i>Atilax paludinosus</i>	GNP
African Civet	<i>Civettictis civetta</i>	GNP
Spotted Hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>	GNP
Common Genet	<i>Genetta genetta</i>	GNP
Common Dwarf Mongoose	<i>Helogale parvula</i>	GNP
Common Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>	GNP
Spotted-Necked Otter	<i>Hydricotis maculicollis</i>	GNP
White-Tailed Mongoose	<i>Ichneumia albicauda</i>	GNP
African Wild Dog	<i>Lycaon pictus</i>	GNP
Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>	GNP
Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>	GNP
Cetartiodactyla – 14 species		
Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>	GNP
(Lichtenstein's) Hartebeest	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>	GNP
Natal Red Duiker	<i>Cephalophus natalensis</i>	GNP
Common Wildebeest	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>	GNP
Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>	GNP
Sable Antelope	<i>Hippotragus niger</i>	GNP
(Common) Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>	GNP
Oribi	<i>Ourebia ourebi</i>	GNP
Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>	GNP
Bushpig	<i>Potamochoerus larvatus</i>	GNP
Southern Reedbuck	<i>Redunca arundinum</i>	GNP
Nyala	<i>Tragelaphus angasii</i>	GNP
Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>	GNP
Greater Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>	GNP
Chiroptera – 5 species		
Banana Serotine	<i>Afronycteris nanus</i>	GNP
Little Free-Tailed Bat	<i>Chaerephon pumilus</i>	GNP
Angolan Mops Bat	<i>Mops condylurus</i>	GNP
Schlieffen's Bat	<i>Nycticeinops schlieffeni</i>	GNP
African Yellow Bat	<i>Scotophilus dinganii</i>	GNP



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Eulipotyphla – 1 species		
Unidentified Shrew Species	<i>Crocidura sp.</i>	GNP
Lagomorpha – 1 species		
African Savanna Hare	<i>Lepus victoriae</i>	GNP
Primates – 4 species		
Blue Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus mitis</i>	GNP
Vervet Monkey	<i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i>	GNP
Southern Lesser Galago	<i>Galago moholi</i>	GNP
Chacma Baboon	<i>Papio ursinus</i>	GNP
Proboscidea – 1 species		
African Savanna Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	GNP
Rodentia – 1 species		
Cape Porcupine	<i>Hystrix africaeaustralis</i>	GNP

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Bird List – 156 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
Accipitriformes – 21 species		
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	GNP, MG
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	GNP
African Hawk-Eagle	<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>	GNP, MG
Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>	GNP
Brown Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	GNP
Southern Banded Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus fasciolatus</i>	GNP
Black-Chested Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>	GNP
African Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus ranivorus</i>	B
Palm-Nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	GNP
White-Backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	GNP
African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	GNP
Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus wahlbergi</i>	GNP
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	GNP
Long-Crested Eagle	<i>Lophaelus occipitalis</i>	I
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	GNP
Yellow-Billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	B, I, GNP, MG
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	GNP
Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	GNP
Gymnogene	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	GNP
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	GNP
White-Headed Vulture	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	GNP
Anseriformes – 3 species		
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	GNP
White-Faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	GNP
Spur-Winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>	GNP
Bucerotiformes – 5 species		
Southern Ground Hornbill	<i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>	GNP
Trumpeter Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes bucinator</i>	GNP
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	GNP
Green Woodhoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	GNP



Crowned Hornbill	<i>Tockus alboterminatus</i>	GNP
Caprimulgiformes – 3 species		
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	B, GNP
Fiery-Necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus pectoralis</i>	GNP
African Palm-Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	GNP
Charadriiformes – 13 species		
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	GNP
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	GNP
Water Thick-Knee	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>	GNP
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	GNP
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	GNP
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	GNP
Black-Winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	GNP
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	GNP
African Skimmer	<i>Rynchops flavirostris</i>	GNP
Kurrichane Buttonquail	<i>Turnix sylvaticus</i>	GNP
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	GNP
Senegal Lapwing	<i>Vanellus lugubris</i>	GNP
African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	GNP
Ciconiiformes – 5 species		
African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	GNP
African Woollyneck	<i>Ciconia microscelis</i>	GNP
Saddle-Billed Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	GNP
Marabou	<i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>	I, GNP
Yellow-Billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>	GNP
Coliiformes – 1 species		
Red-Faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>	GNP, MG
Columbiformes – 4 species		
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	B
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	GNP
Ring-Necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	GNP
Emerald-Spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>	GNP
Coraciiformes – 8 species		
Lilac-Breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>	GNP
Broad-Billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	GNP, MG
Brown-Hooded Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon albiventris</i>	GNP
Striped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>	GNP
Grey-Headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	GNP
European Bee-Eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	GNP
Southern Carmine Bee-Eater	<i>Merops nubicoides</i>	GNP
Little Bee-Eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	I, GNP
Cuculiformes – 5 species		
Black Coucal	<i>Centropus grillii</i>	GNP
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	GNP
White-Browed Coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>	GNP
Green Malkoha	<i>Ceuthmochares aereus</i>	GNP
Red-Chested Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>	I
Falconiformes – 2 species		
Red-Necked Falcon	<i>Falco chicquera</i>	GNP
Dickinson's Kestrel	<i>Falco dickinsoni</i>	GNP
Galliformes – 4 species		
Crested Francolin	<i>Dendroperdix sephaena</i>	GNP



Crested Guineafowl	<i>Guttera edouardi</i>	GNP
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	GNP
Red-Necked Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis afer</i>	GNP
Gruiformes – 2 species		
Grey-Crowned Crane	<i>Balearica regulorum</i>	GNP
Black Crake	<i>Zapornia flavirostra</i>	GNP
Musophagiformes – 2 species		
Grey Go-Away Bird	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>	GNP
Livingstone's Turaco	<i>Tauraco livingstonii</i>	MG
Otidiformes – 1 species		
Black-Bellied Bustard	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>	GNP
Passeriformes – 57 species		
Plain-Backed Sunbird	<i>Antheptes reichenowi</i>	MG
African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>	GNP
Pale Batis	<i>Batis soror</i>	GNP
Red-Billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>	GNP
Grey-Backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>	GNP
White-Browed Scrub-Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>	GNP
Bearded Scrub-Robin	<i>Cercotrichas quadrivirgata</i>	GNP
Scarlet-Chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>	I
Yellow-Bellied Greenbul	<i>Chlorocichla flaviventris</i>	GNP
Collared Palm-Thrush	<i>Cichladusa arquata</i>	GNP
White-Bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris talatala</i>	MG
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	B, I
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	B
Wattled Lapwing	<i>Creophora cinerea</i>	GNP
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	B
Fork-Tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	GNP
Square-Tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus ludwigii</i>	GNP
Black-Backed Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>	GNP
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	GNP
Grey Waxbill	<i>Estrilda perreini</i>	GNP
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Hirundo abyssinica</i>	GNP
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	GNP
Mosque Swallow	<i>Hirundo senegalensis</i>	GNP
Red-Breasted Swallow	<i>Hirundo semirufa</i>	GNP
Wire-Tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	GNP
Red-Throated Twinspot	<i>Hypargos niveoguttatus</i>	GNP
Red-Billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	GNP
Tropical Boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>	GNP
Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	GNP
Grey-Headed Bush-Shrike	<i>Malaconotus blanchoti</i>	GNP
Southern Black Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i>	GNP
Southern Black Tit	<i>Melaniparus niger</i>	MG
Flappet Lark	<i>Mirafr rufocinnamomea</i>	GNP
African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>	B
Eastern Nicator	<i>Nicator gularis</i>	GNP
Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>	GNP
Black-Headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus larvatus</i>	GNP
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	B
Southern Grey-Headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>	B, GNP
Yellow-Streaked Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus flavostriatus</i>	GNP, MG



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Terrestrial Brownbul	<i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i>	GNP
Dark-Backed Weaver	<i>Ploceus bicolor</i>	GNP
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	GNP
Spectacled Weaver	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>	GNP
Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>	GNP
Southern Brown-Throated Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthopterus</i>	GNP
Dark-Capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>	GNP
Red-Billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	GNP
African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	MG
Brown-Crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>	GNP, MG
Black-Crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	GNP, MG
Orange-Breasted Bush-Shrike	<i>Telophorus sulfureopectus</i>	GNP
African Paradise-Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	GNP, MG
Arrow-Marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>	GNP, MG
Kurrichane Thrush	<i>Turdus libonyanus</i>	GNP
Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>	GNP
Pin-Tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	GNP
<i>Pelecaniiformes – 15 species</i>		
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	GNP
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea brachyrhyncha</i>	GNP
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	GNP
Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>	GNP
Black-Headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	I, GNP
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	GNP
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	GNP
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	GNP
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	I, GNP
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	B, I, GNP
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	GNP
African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>	GNP
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	GNP
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	GNP
African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	GNP
<i>Piciformes – 3 species</i>		
Golden-Tailed Woodpecker	<i>Campethera abingoni</i>	GNP
Bennett's Woodpecker	<i>Campethera bennettii</i>	GNP
Black-Collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>	MG
<i>Psittaciformes – 1 species</i>		
Brown-Headed Parrot	<i>Poicephalus cryptoxanthus</i>	GNP
<i>Trogoniformes – 1 species</i>		
Narina Trogon	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>	GNP

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Reptile List – 6 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
<i>Crocodylia – 1 species</i>		
Nile Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus niloticus</i>	GNP
<i>Squamata – 5 species</i>		



Western Yellow-Bellied Sand Snake	<i>Psammophis subtaeniatus</i>	
Striped Skaapsteker	<i>Psammophylax tritaeniatus</i>	GNP
Southern African Rock Python	<i>Python natalensis</i>	GNP
African Striped Skink	<i>Trachylepis striata</i>	GNP
Nile Monitor	<i>Varanus niloticus</i>	GNP

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Amphibian List – 1 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
<i>Anura – 1 species</i>		
Grey Foam-Nest Tree Frog	<i>Chiromantis xerampelina</i>	GNP

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Misses

The primary targets on this trip were all seen, and memorably so, particularly in the case of the wild dogs. We were unlucky to miss **eland** and **buffalo**, and rarer species including **sun**i, **klipspringer** and **Sharpe's grysbok** are present in the fringes of the park. **Leopard** have been reintroduced but are extremely rarely seen, and **serval**, **caracal**, **aardvark** etc should not be expected on a typical visit. **Zebra** are present in extremely low numbers. Several of the galago we saw were likely **Mozambique dwarf galago**, but we didn't get close enough to make positive ID. This is as good a place as anywhere to see **ground pangolin**, but we dipped on this occasion.

Contact Details

Pictus Safaris can be contacted by email at contact@pictus-safaris.com or via our website at www.pictus-safaris.com. We are a tour operator specialising in small-group and private departures across Africa, with confirmed 2023 departures to Dzanga-Sangha in the CAR, Zakouma in Chad and South Africa's Northern Cape.