

Zambia June/July 2019

Summary

After many wonderful trips to Africa with a nice mix of wildlife and adventure it is hard not to want more. Therefore, a trip to Zambia was the perfect choice. This time however, we decided to go down a more wildlife orientated route (with a little bit of fishing!). Our 12 night stay in Zambia went as follows:

- 4 nights at Sekoma Island Lodge
- 4 nights on the Busanga Plains in Kafue National Park at Shumba Camp
- 4 nights in South Luangwa National Park at Chinombo Camp

The first 4 days of our trip was dedicated to some great fishing on the Zambezi at Sekoma Island Lodge. The goal? To catch the highly desired Tiger Fish. This was of course all done with a strict catch and release policy.

During our time at Kafue and South Luangwa we saw a wide variety of mammal and bird life. Along with all the mammals that you would expect to see in these parks, we were also lucky enough to get a few surprises too!

Our wonderful trip was organised by Richard Anderson and his team at Anderson Expeditions.

All the best mammal and bird photos from the trip can be found on my Instagram page: [@benleighbirdlifephotography](#) so feel free to take a look.

Nights 1 - 4 at Sekoma Island Lodge

We departed O.R Tambo International in Johannesburg on a private charter early on the first morning in the hope that we could arrive at Sekoma in time for some afternoon fishing. We landed at Kasane International Airport in Botswana, only a short trip over the boarder was required via bus and boat for us to arrive at Sekoma Lodge. During our time at Sekoma Island we fished each morning and late afternoon with fish not the easiest to come by. That being said, as a collective we did catch at least 2 Tiger Fish per day and good amounts of Barbell. A few of the Tiger Fish being nice and big too, 10lbs+. One member of the group also managed to catch a rather beautiful looking fish called a Nembwe. An added bonus of being out on the boat was the two Spotted-necked Otter sightings we had. I was incredibly excited as it wasn't something I was necessarily expecting.

One thing we found very interesting while staying at Sekoma is that it was situated on the quadripoint border, the point in which Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia meet. So on occasion while out on the boat switching between channels and river systems we crossed into different countries. Sometimes even between 3 of them in the space of 30 minutes!

Nights 5-8 at Shumba Camp in Kafue National Park

Upon arrival at the airstrip we were collected by 2 Shumba Camp safari guides to take us to camp. During the short journey we were on the lookout for wildlife, although by this time it was getting rather hot making it unlikely we were going to see much. However, we still encountered a pair of Oribi's not too far from the airstrip along with a nice herds of Roan Antelope, Blue Wildebeest and many Red Lechwe and Puku. Once at camp we received a very warm welcome from all the staff and an excellent lunch. We spent a good part of our afternoon scanning the plains in front of camp to see if we could spot anything. The plains were full of Puku's and Red Lechwe and we had a few laughs in our attempts to identify them apart from each other. As I am sure most of you know they look fairly similar at first glance!

After some relaxation and down time, we were ready to set off on our afternoon game drive. Shortly after leaving camp we came across a big herd of Roan Antelope again, however, this time with a rather unusual member. Within the herd there was a leucistic (White) calf making it a rather rare encounter (see photo below). Leucism is a rare condition causing a loss of skin pigmentation in animals resulting in white or pale skin. The remainder of the game drive and the spotlighting on the way back to camp didn't result in too much besides some lovely Grey-crowned Cranes, Hippos, Red Lechwe, Puku, Blue Wildebeest, Warthog's, African Fish Eagle to name a few. As we arrived back at camp, we received another warm welcome from the staff and we were ready for a nice dinner. An early night was necessary so that we would be raring to go in the morning for our drive.



Puku



Lechwe

After our 5 0'clock wakeup call we had a quick snack and a coffee before heading to the vehicle. Early on we encountered the usual, Puku's and Red Lechwe as well as a lovely herd of Elephants. A bit further on we had a beautiful sighting of an African Wood Owl just sitting

in the grass close to the road. After about an hour or so of driving our guide began to pick up on some unusual behaviour from the Lechwe and Puku. They seem agitated and were all looking in the same direction, towards a nearby collection of bushes. Once we heard the alarm calls begin, we knew that there must have been a cat close by. Sure enough as we approached the bush a shy Leopard slinked through the grass into the thick bush. It was only a few seconds before he was well hidden, therefore making it far too quick for a photo opportunity. We quickly realised that he was not going to show himself anytime soon so we moved on. Not more than 15 minutes later we came across the famous Busanga pride of Lions. They were lazing about on a section of scorched grass, shading themselves from the sun. We spent a good amount of time just sitting and watching as the cubs enjoyed playing and being rather mischievous towards the adults. When we were ready we headed back to camp.



We found the Lions again during our evening drive, this time however, showing a lot more activity. At one stage one of the females became irritated with one of the males (see picture below) and made sure he knew who the boss was! All the interactions made for nice photos and happy guests! After we enjoy our time with the pride, we found a beautiful sundowner spot and had a drink with a few tasty snacks prepared by the excellent chefs at camp. During the journey to our spot we unfortunately came across a very sad sight. We found a dead Honey Badger that looked as though it had been in quite a battle. It was located perfectly in the middle of where we saw the lions in the morning and where we had just seen them moments ago. This lead us to believe they had encountered one another and sadly the Lions had won. This came as a big shock as it is well known that Honey Badgers are extremely ferocious and often come out of fights with big cats unharmed. The night drive on the way back didn't result in too much but we still had a great first full day in Kafue.



The following morning after another great evening in camp, we jumped back into the vehicle and set off. Straight away we came across a lovely herd of Elephants with numerous calves. They were lit up on the plains by a beautiful morning sunlight. Soon after we spotted some White-backed Vultures and Lappet-faced Vultures perched in a tree. They were close to the spot where the Lions were the previous day so we were almost sure the Vultures were probably checking them out. After a quick look around, we once again found the Lion pride, this time with a couple of new members we hadn't previously seen. After spending lots of time with them yesterday we didn't stay for too long as we were keen to look for new things. We got some great photos again and then moved on. At our coffee spot we scanned the plains as we always do and managed to spot two Honey Badgers running in the far distance. It was extremely brief but they are always one of my favourite animals to see! Later on we saw a beautiful Red Lechwe sighting of them jumping some small streams, a must see when visiting Kafue National Park. The rest of the drives brought, Blue Wildebeest, a small bachelor herd of Buffalo, Puku to name a few. Now it was time to head back to camp and enjoy the famous Shumba Camp brunch that was waiting for us.



Before setting off for our evening drive, we quickly discussed our game plan and decided that we wanted to explore a new area. We decided to go to an area called Papyrus, named after of course, its huge amounts of Papyrus bush. The first part of the drive produced, wonderful amounts of birds including Goliath Heron, Purple Heron, White-headed Vulture, Wattled Cranes, Saddle-billed Storks, Marabou Storks, African Openbill's to name a few. Along with these we saw a large Red Lechwe herd and some Roan Antelope too. The real excitement of the drive came as the sun was beginning to set. We decided to go and check out the thick

Papyrus bushes in the off chance of finding the rarely seen Sitatunga. With little more than a few minutes of looking, there it was, a stunning male Sitatunga strolling along the edge of the Papyrus! We couldn't believe it knowing how hard they are to find usually. After a few minutes, he slipped off into the thick bush and was gone like a ghost. If we had been only a minute later we would never have even known he was there. Our guide said he hadn't seen one in well over a year until then. Believe it or not, the drive was about to get better just moments later. After deciding against stopping at our first sundowner spot due to large amounts of Tsetse Flies, we turned around and 10 seconds later our guide calls out "Serval in the grass!" He wasn't more than 15 feet from us at first. We followed him for a long time as he weaved back and forth through the grass and over the roads in front of the car. Often you find Serval's can be quite skittish and sightings are very brief but this one was very relaxed with us which we were ecstatic about! After about 15 minutes we left him to go about his business and we went in search of a nice sundowner spot. As you can imagine, the sundowner chat revolved around our two amazing sightings. When ready we set off for our night drive back towards camp. The night drive gave us a nice White-tailed Mongoose sighting as well as a quick Large-spotted Genet.

Sitatunga



Serval

After arriving back at camp we sat down for dinner. As we were enjoying ourselves, we noticed outside that something rather large was occasionally swooping by the window. We

went to investigate, it was a Marsh Owl hunting the bats flying around the camp deck. She stayed all night to our enjoyment.

Our final full day arrived and we decided once again to go and check out a new location. We headed to the woodland areas in an attempt to find the Sable Antelope that often frequent the airstrip close by. On the way to the airstrip we encountered Hippos, Grey-crowned Cranes, Oribi's, Blue Wildebeest, Grey Duiker, Yellow Baboons and a nice Bateleur Eagle. Arriving at the airstrip now, we began to scan in search of the Sable. About halfway up we found a small herd of Lichtenstein's Hartebeest but no Sable. We decided to head further along into the woodland to carry on our search. As we drove along the woodland edge we noticed some cat like tracks. We stopped to investigate and realised they were Cheetah tracks and very recent too. So of course we decided to follow them and head in a similar direction. However, we lost the trail and found nothing so decided to carry on with our Sable search. Not long later, we spotted one far in the distance through our binoculars. As we got closer we found the rest of the herd hidden behind the trees. It was a great sight as it was a pretty large herd that were comfortable in our presence which sometimes is not the case. After enjoying some time with the Sable we went to find a nice spot for morning coffee and then headed back to camp. On the journey back we saw a lone Roan male, Hippos again and lots of Lechwe and Puku.



For our afternoon drive we decided that we would keep it short and instead go to a special place for sundowners and enjoy watching the sunset as we say goodbye to Kafue after such a memorable stay. Back at camp the staff had a wonderful evening planned for us in traditional Zambian style that we all thoroughly enjoyed! It was a fantastic way to end a great 4 days!

Nights 9-12 at Chinzombo Camp in South Luangwa National Park

We flew early in the morning from Kafue in an effort to maximise our time at South Luangwa. We had to stop and refuel the plane on route, thus we had to leave enough time to make sure we arrived for lunch and our afternoon drive. We made good time and soon landed just outside South Luangwa and met our guides who were waiting for us. It was about an hour drive to camp but a portion of that would be inside the National Park so that was an added bonus. Just after we entered the park gates we were greeted by a tower of Thornicroft Giraffe's, a subspecies indigenous to South Luangwa. As we arrived at camp we quickly noticed how beautiful it was with it being situated on the Luangwa River. During the afternoon we enjoyed a delicious lunch and some downtime with lots of activities available around camp.

Before leaving for our drive the camp put on a nice afternoon tea which was a nice touch and prepared us nicely for our game drive. We set off with the hope that our drives would be as successful as the ones we experienced at Shumba Camp, Kafue. Just around the corner from camp we had a nice viewing of a Hippo out of the water grazing with the light providing nice photo opportunities. Not long after we had our first Leopard sighting in South Luangwa. A cub was lying on the edge of some thickets with the mother deeper into the undergrowth. The cub lay and looked around for a while and relaxed before getting bored and moving deeper into the bush where her mother was sleeping. As we carried on we had some nice sightings of Elephants, Greater Kudu, Yellow Baboons, Impala, Warthog to name only a few. We then stopped for a nice sundowner overlooking the Luangwa River which was very special. As we spotlighted on the way back our eagle-eyed guide spotted a Flap-necked Chameleon in the bush next to the road which we got a fantastic view of. We then spotted an African Scops Owl on a branch over hanging the road before encountering the Leopard mother and cub again. This time they were wandering together just off the road. As we were watching them, we heard a rustling in the bushes just behind us. We turned the torch to have a look and there was a Spotted Hyena investigating what the two Leopards were up to. He then swiftly moved off. This behaviour from the Hyena is normal as they are often found in the vicinity of big cats looking for any chances to scavenge from any kills they might get. With all of this happening so close to camp, we were swiftly back and ready for dinner.



The next morning we woke at our usual time of 5am, enjoyed a quick coffee and then assembled on the vehicle for our drive. The drive started with nice sightings of Kudu, Yellow Baboon, Hippos, Elephants and an African Harrier-Hawk. We also saw some Crawshay's Zebra which like the Thornicroft Giraffe's are a sub species found in South Luangwa. We had a brief sighting of a young Leopard too, quickly moving through some bushes, it was gone pretty swiftly. Not long later we found a lone female Lion. We watched her for a while as she wandered and called in search of the rest of her pride. We were then informed by another vehicle that she had recently been chased off from a Hippo carcass by a sub-adult male close by. We headed over to take a look and sure enough there was the young male Lion lying by the carcass, accompanied by a Hooded Vulture. The male soon got fed up with the Vulture however and chased him away which was a fun watch. Soon though the smell of the carcass became a bit much and we decided to set off back to camp. At camp, we had our usual delicious lunch and a nice relax.



As always we were ready for our evening drive at 4pm. After the fantastic staff had provided us with lovely snacks and drinks once more we were ready to go. Only about 10 minutes into our drive we managed to see something that is famous in South Luangwa National Park, an Elephant herd crossing the Luangwa river. Amazingly it was not just one herd but in fact 3 crossed one after another! The guide allowed us to get out and stand on the river bank and properly take in what a magnificent sight it was. Before the trip, many of the group were hoping to see a crossing so as you can imagine they were extremely happy. The rest of the drive wasn't very successful but we still encountered Hippos, Puku's, Yellow Baboons, Zebra among others. The spotlighting on the way back brought us a couple of Large-spotted Genet's, a Greater Galago and a Bushy-tailed Mongoose.



The next morning, South Luangwa's reputation of being a Leopard paradise didn't disappoint. Firstly we got a distant view of a Spotted Hyena wandering across the plains. Five minutes later though we found a lovely female Leopard lazing on the edge of some long grass. It was extra special as for a large period of time we were alone with her which can sometimes be unusual in South Luangwa. Unlike the one Leopard we saw in Kafue, the Luangwa Leopards are significantly more relaxed around vehicles. We moved on and came to a small section of water, quickly noticing that around 5-6 Crocodiles were having a feeding frenzy. It was an Impala that was most likely killed only minutes before we arrived. We watched as they rolled and ripped frantically at the carcass. There was numerous Impala's standing by the edge of the water noticeably distressed at what they were witnessing. Once the Crocodiles had almost finished with the Impala we carried on to see what else we could find. We noticed a small herd of Elephants on the other side of a gully, so we crossed to have a look. As we dipped down into the channel, to our surprise there was a male Leopard lying only 10 metres away. A nice surprise for sure. The guide told us how they are often found in gullies due to the Leopards finding them of use when hunting. This is

a unique hunting style that only the Leopards of a handful of parks employ. After a great drive we returned to camp.

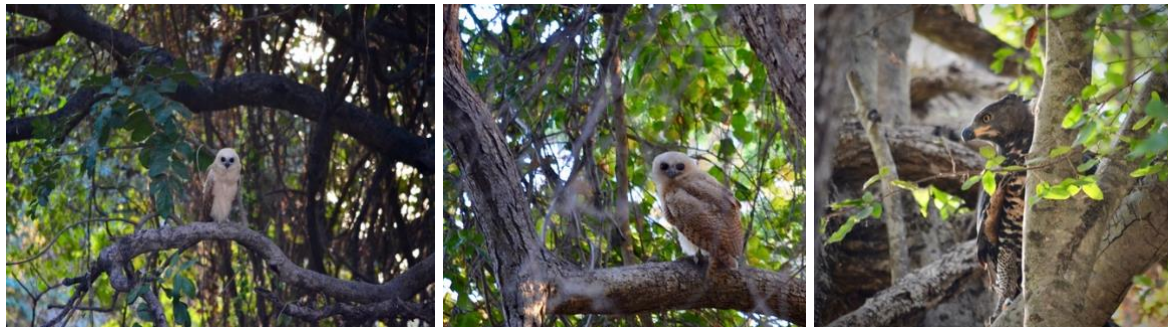


After being thoroughly looked after all afternoon again at camp it was time to head out into the park again. After some nice sightings of Elephants and all the usual game we found a Spotted Hyena having a nap up on a bank under some trees. Shortly after continuing our drive we came across another Leopard, this time not so close but on a small cliff edge. It walked along for a short while before disappearing into the bushes giving us little chance to get closer. We stopped at a beautiful spot for a nice sundowner and discussed all of our sightings so far from the day. We took the chance for some nice photos in the setting sun and then got the spotlights out and continued our game drive. The most notable sighting was a magnificent spot from our guide. He saw some eyes that must have been over a hundred metres away and he immediately said it was a Leopard peeping out of a small gully. It was in an open plain so easy enough for us to move in closer and to our amazement he was absolutely right, a beautiful Leopard was just resting behind the protection of the gully. After a great day full of Leopards we went back to camp very very happy with an added sighting of White-tailed Mongoose on the way.



Our final full day had arrived and although we were sad it was all coming to an end, we were still excited for the day as you never quite know what you could see. We were soon treated to something pretty special after leaving camp for our last morning drive. We had just turned a corner into a dense section of woods and perched directly ahead of us was a Pel's Fishing Owl. It was a juvenile but still a stunning bird. We were all extremely excited as we knew how hard it can be to see them. It then flew off through the woods so we left him be. However, the incredible bird sightings didn't stop there. About a kilometre further down the road we came across two African Crowned Eagles. The thing even more amazing about this sighting was that they were hunting as a team for Vervet Monkey's. It was special to see how

they cooperated together to push the monkey's to the tree tops. In the end the monkey's had to resort to leaping out of the trees to the ground causing them to become stunned. The Crowned Eagles came very close to taking one but eventually failed to catch any. As we continued we saw many of the common animals including Giraffe's, Baboons, Zebra and a big herd of Buffalo's wallowing in a nice patch of mud. Our game viewing was pretty much concluded as we decided that just as we did in Kafue, we were going to find a nice spot out in the bush to have an extended sundowners.



We did as planned and wrapped up our amazing 12 nights in Zambia with sundowners under an enormous Baobab tree. The fantastic camp staff drove ahead of us to set up which was great. They made it incredibly memorable for us. After all of our festivities it was time to drive back to camp with the spotlights one more time. We managed to see another African Scops Owl and also a small Hyena cub tucked away in a bush, presumably hidden by the mother while she was away. Back at camp, one more great dinner awaited us. We spent the evening around the camp fire soaking it all in before we had to head home in the morning.

Species List

Mammals (36 Species)

Name	Extra Comments
Yellow Baboon	Common at both Kafue and South Luangwa
Vervet Monkey	Common at both Kafue and South Luangwa
Greater Galago	One seen at South Luangwa on a night drive
Scrub Hare	Seen at both Kafue and South Luangwa
Stiped Bush Squirrel	A few seen at Kafue
Leopard	One seen briefly at Kafue and 7 at South Luangwa
Lion	Seen well at Kafue and South Luangwa
Serval	One seen well at Kafue
Large-spotted Genet	Seen at both Kafue and South Luangwa
Banded Mongoose	A few seen at South Luangwa
Bushy-tailed Mongoose	A few seen at South Luangwa
Slender Mongoose	A few seen at South Luangwa
White-tailed Mongoose	One seen in Kafue and South Luangwa
Honey Badger	Two seen at Kafue
Spotted-necked Otter	Four seen on the Zambezi at Sekoma Island
Spotted Hyena	Three seen at South Luangwa
African Elephant	Common at both Kafue and South Luangwa
Burchell's (Crawshay's) Zebra	Common at South Luangwa
Common Warthog	Common at both Kafue and South Luangwa

Hippopotamus	Common at both Kafue and South Luangwa
Thornicroft's Giraffe	Common at South Luangwa
Cape Buffalo	Seen at both Kafue and South Luangwa
Common Bushbuck	One seen at Kafue
Grey Duiker	One seen at Kafue
Lichtenstein's Hartebeest	A small herd seen at Kafue
Common Impala	Seen in Kafue and very common at South Luangwa
Greater Kudu	Common at South Luangwa
Red (Kafue) Lechwe	Very common at Kafue
Southern Oribi	A few seen at Kafue
Puku	Very common at Kafue and South Luangwa
Southern Reedbuck	One seen at Kafue
Roan Antelope	Common at Kafue
Sable Antelope	A nice big herd seen in Kafue
Central African Sitatunga	One seen at Kafue
Defassa Waterbuck	A couple seen at South Luangwa
Blue Wildebeest	Common at Kafue

Birds (126 Species)

Name	Name	Name
Reed Cormorant	African Darter	Little Bittern
Cattle Egret	Great White Egret	Little Egret
Black-crowned Night Heron	Black-headed Heron	Common Squacco Heron
Goliath Heron	Green-backed (Stiated) Heron	Grey Heron
Purple Heron	Rufous-bellied Heron	Hamerkop
African Open-billed Stork	Marabou Stork	Saddle-billed Stork
Yellow-billed Stork	Glossy Ibis	Hadedda Ibis
Sacred Ibis	African Spoonbill	Egyptian Goose
Secretarybird	Bateleur	Lizard Buzzard
African Crowned Eagle	Martial Eagle	Tawny Eagle
Wahlberg's Eagle	African Fish Eagle	African Marsh Harrier
African Harrier-Hawk	Black-chested Snake-Eagle	Brown Snake-Eagle
Western Banded Snake-Eagle	Hooded Vulture	Lappet-faced Vulture
White-backed Vulture	White-headed Vulture	Red-necked Spurfowl
Helmeted Guineafowl	Black Crake	Grey Crowned Crane
Wattle Crane	African Jacana	Black-winged Stilt
Water Thick-knee	Temmick's Courser	Collard Pratincole
Blacksmith Lapwing	Crowned Lapwing	Long-towed Lapwing
White-headed Lapwing	Common Greenshank	Grey-headed Gull
Whiskered Tern	African Skimmer	African Mourning Dove
Cape Turtle Dove	Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Namaqua Dove
Red-eyes Dove	African Green-Pigeon	Brown Parrot
Lillian's Lovebird	Grey Go-away-bird	Purple-crested Turaco
Coppery-tailed Coucal	White-browed Coucal	Verreaux's Eagle Owl
Pel's Fishing Owl	Marsh Owl	African Scops Owl
African Wood Owl	Square-tailed Nightjar	African Palm Swift
Red-faced Mousebird	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	Giant Kingfisher
Malachite Kingfisher	Pied Kingfisher	Little Bee-eater

White-fronted Bee-eater	Lilac-breasted Roller	African Hoopoe
Green Wood-Hoopoe	Southern Ground-Hornbill	African Grey Hornbill
Crowned Hornbill	Black-collard Barbet	Bennett's Woodpecker
Red-capped Lark	Lesser Striped Swallow	Fulleborn's Longclaw
Rosy-breasted Longclaw	Fork-tailed Drongo	Pied Crow
Dark-capped Bulbul	Yellow-bellied Greenbul	Hartlaub's Babbler
White-browed Robin-Chat	African Stonechat	Capped Wheatear
Yellow-throated Apalis	Rattling Cisticola	Tawny-flanked Prinia
Tropical Boubou	Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike	Meve's Starling
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Red-billed Quelea	Golden Weaver	Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
White-browed Sparrow Weaver	Yellow-fronted Canary	Red-billed Firefinch
Green-winged Pytilia	Blue Waxbill	Long-tailed Paradise Whydah

Reptiles (5 Species)

Name	Extra Comments
Striped-bellied Sand-Snake	One seen in South Luangwa
Nile Crocodile	Very common at all three locations
Flap-necked Chameleon	One seen on a night drive at South Luangwa
Water Monitor	A couple seen at Sekoma Island Lodge
Tropical House Gecko	Common at all three camps