

## Introduction to Mammalwatching.com

I've been drawn to animals since my first trip to the Bronx Zoo at age two. This interest morphed from dinosaurs to hoofed mammals and eventually all mammals. My goal became to see and photograph as many different species across the globe as possible. Until recently, most of my time was dedicated to photographing captive specimens (from 262 institutions across 40 countries.) After effectively exhausting the species available to see in captivity, my focus has turned to wild endeavors. In November of 2019, I set my sights on Africa.

I'm happy to report the trip was a massive success! I hit nearly every target finishing with 120 species over 33 days in Zambia, South Africa & Ethiopia. I virtually doubled my wild species count to 304 and raised my overall total (including captive) to 1220. Each country will get its own trip report. First, I present Zambia.

### Zambia

Africa was a continent I had stepped foot on for only two days on back in 2009: a hurried ferry trip to Morocco following a wedding in Southern France and running with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain. Having this big of a hole on my travel map was unacceptable; I vowed to expand my footprint.

I started with Ethiopia. Chock full of endemics, it was a must. In researching flights, the cheapest ones took me through South Africa... suddenly my trip was expanding. After Somaliland (**Dibatag, Beira, Silver Dik-dik & Desert Warthog**) proved prohibitively expensive, I decided to add Zambia for some of its own unique ungulates.

Adding Zambia last-minute proved a bit harrowing. I used [www.mammalwatching.com](http://www.mammalwatching.com) to narrow my trip into two sections: Kafue NP & South Luangwa NP. I found renting a car to be the most cost-effective way to get to Kafue with the Jonda Bus being the same for South Luangwa (more on that later.) I was able to reserve one of the last available automatic 4x4's - a necessity when driving in Kafue. Beware, some companies (including the one I used - Europcar Zambia Operated by: Voyagers® Zambia) will charge a premium per km you drive. Following pleasant and informative email exchanges I secured two affordable locales: one night camping at Kasabushi Camp in Kafue, and three nights at Thornicroft Lodge. With the logistics planned I was ready to embark.

Itinerary and key targets:

November 2: Depart NY

November 3: Stopover in Abidjan & Addis Ababa

November 4: Stopover in Johannesburg then fly to Lusaka

November 5: Drive to Kafue NP for **Puku, Sharpe's Grysbok, Lichtenstein's Hartebeest, Malbrouk & Side-striped Jackal**

November 6: Kafue NP then drive back to Lusaka

November 7: Bus from Lusaka to South Luangwa NP for **Puku, Bushy-tailed mongoose, Meller's mongoose, Kinda Baboon & Four-toed Elephant Shrew**

November 8: South Luangwa NP

November 9: South Luangwa NP

November 10: Bus from South Luangwa NP back to Lusaka then fly to Johannesburg

November 2 – 4: My journey to Zambia was quite an odyssey. I left NY on the night of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, flew to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, then to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, then to Johannesburg, South Africa (where I used a layover to visit JoBurg Zoo) then finally touched down in Lusaka, Zambia the night of November 4<sup>th</sup>. Understandably exhausted, I slept right through dinner and overnight power-cuts.

## Kafue National Park

November 5: I awoke at dawn still not quite bright-eyed and bushytailed. I had a five hour drive ahead of me. A note on driving in Zambia: it is easily the most difficult driving I've attempted. I've driven in Australia and the UK so I'm somewhat used to the left side, but this was next level. The streets are teeming with people. At dawn/dusk visibility is poor from dust, pollution and limited street lights. Some roundabouts use reverse yielding - where the cars within the roundabout yield to cars entering. Thankfully as I drove away from the capital, the roads opened up and so did the wildlife.

An hour west of Lusaka I saw the first of many small groups of **Malbrouck** on the side of the road followed by a great view of a **Slender Mongoose** scurrying across the road in front of my truck.

The next few hours were uneventful until I entered the perimeter of Kafue NP. So far directions had been simple: head West. Now Google was telling me to turn earlier than I expected. Kasabushi had provided written directions, but regrettably I had dropped them behind the seat. Like Michael Scott in The Office, I blindly followed my GPS off of the main road. What started as a well-maintained dirt road gradually descended into mere tire tracks. For 30 minutes, I followed the GPS South until any semblance of a road disappeared, leaving nothing but Zambian bush ahead. My heart sank. I prayed I could retrace my steps before getting a flat tire. Luckily, it turns out I'm able to follow GPS directions in reverse just as effectively and wound up back on the main road.

I later determined Google was not updated with the newly built road that leads to Kasabushi. So the app did its darndest to bring me towards the camp albeit on the opposite side of the Kafue River! This little detour did provide my first glimpses of a herd **Southern Puku** at a stream in the distance. My first wild antelope! The moment reminded me of Dr. Grant first laying eyes on a herd of dinosaurs in Jurassic Park.

Headed in the right direction, now with Kasabushi's printed directions proudly in hand, I spotted three more species along the park road: **Common Impala, Central African Warthog and Lichtenstein's**

**Hartebeest.** I was thrilled to get the Hartebeest already, knowing that they weren't found in South Luangwa. Many female **Southern Puku** could be seen as well.



**Common Impala**



**Southern Puku**

Upon arrival to Kasabushi, camp was deserted. Previous guests had left for the day and the owners, Libby and Andy, had taken to the river. I located my tent on top of a hill adjacent to the Kafue River. While unpacking the car I heard bestial roars coming from the river. I meandered down the hill to discover my first wild **Cape Hippopotamus** occupying the river - a couple hundred yards from where I'd be sleeping that night. What an exhilarating feeling stumbling upon these impressive animals on my own!

Walking from my tent to the dining area I saw a male **Chobe Bushbuck**. Soon after, Libby and Andy returned from the river. They had gone out to inspect a juvenile **Sable Antelope** that had been killed by crocodiles. They graciously welcomed and fed me before I went out to drive the Sable Loop before dusk. Here I got my first views of a male **Southern Puku**, more **Impala & Warthogs**, a pair of **Central Oribi**, a group of shy **Lichtenstein's Hartebeest** and my first **Malbrouck** photos.



**Central Oribi**



**Lichtenstein's Hartebeest**

Following a delicious home-made dinner, Libby & Andy took me out on a night drive. Pennant-winged Nightjars were the first nocturnal animals to greet us. Further spotlighting yielded **Brown Greater Galago**, **African Savanna Hare** and several **Rusty-spotted Genets** along the road between camp and the Sable Loop.



**African Savanna Hare**



**Rusty-spotted Genet**

Once on the loop we found **Zambesi Greater Kudu, Angolan Common Duiker, South African Springhare, Mohol Bushbaby, Hippo** and the first of two **Sharpe's Grysbok**! Having not been in captivity outside Africa in my lifetime, Grysbok were high on my target list. I couldn't have been happier with my first African night drive. I slept peacefully in my tent to the sounds of Hippo grunts.



**Angolan Common Duiker**



**South African Springhare**



**Sharpe's Grysbok**

November 6: I left at dawn for another drive around the Sable Loop, this time hoping to locate its namesake. After finding a **Warthog** family with piglets I saw an unmistakable black shape at the top of a hill behind some brush. A lone **Zambian Sable Antelope**! Unfortunately, the animal ran off at the sound of my window lowering before I could get the iconic profile shot. Lesson learned.



**Warthog with piglet**



**Zambian Sable Antelope**

Next, I saw some juvenile **Defassa Waterbuck**, and later a group of males that began sparring. Finishing out the morning, I got more **Malbrouck & Impala** sightings and my third and final **Lichtenstein's Hartebeest** interaction.



**Malbrouck**



juvenile **Defassa Waterbuck**



male **Defassa Waterbuck**



**Lichtenstein's Hartebeest**



After breakfast, I spent time searching the river's edge for **Cape Clawless Otter** to no avail. On the campgrounds I got my first photos of a male **Chobe Bushbuck** as well as a **Warthog** bathing in mud left in a drying watering hole.



**Chobe Bushbuck**



**Central African Warthog**

It was then that Andy noticed my 4x4 was a touch uneven. “You’ve got yourself a flat tire!” he exclaimed. All I could think was thank God that didn’t happen during my little detour the day before. Not being the handiest of guys, I happily accepted Andy’s assistance to switch out the tires. I lost a chunk of the day, but not nearly as much as I would’ve lost had the flat occurred outside of camp.

Now a bit rushed, Andy took me on a mini boat tour to experience the **Cape Hippos** in their element. We also kept an eye out for Otters, albeit unsuccessfully.



**Cape Hippos**

Back on dry land, I thanked Libby & Andy again for their top-notch hospitality and guidance, then I was off. The first few hours of my drive back to the capital ran through Kafue where I desperately kept an eye out for **Side-striped Jackal**. Being mid-day, my chances were slim to none, emphasis on the none. In retrospect I wish I had left more time to find the Jackals. I did enjoy the best views of **Southern Puku, Zambesi Greater Kudu & Central African Warthog**.



**Zambesi Greater Kudu**



**Southern Puku**

## South Luangwa National Park

November 7: The Jonda Bus is an experience unto itself. I chose to Jonda based on its \$25 roundtrip price compared with flying for \$550. Scheduled as a 12-hour bathroom-less trek (with few stops) from Lusaka to South Luangwa, one should at the very least receive a t-shirt afterwards boasting "I Survived the Jonda Bus." The seats were caked in dirt and I can't guarantee this for every ride but there were maggots in the overhead luggage area (and so in my camera bag.) Not exactly the sort of animal I'm looking for. I did have the pleasure of sharing the ride with a young man named Moses who helped the hours pass with great conversation and helpful advice at pitstops.

Nadja from Thornicroft Lodge was waiting for me at the Mfuwe arrival stop. Because of Jonda delays I had missed the start of the evening game drive, but at my request they set up a private game drive to leave as soon as I dropped my bags off. Geoffry would prove to be an excellent guide and driver, employing expert vehicle maneuvering for optimal photography.

We raced to catch up with the other cars that had already begun their tours, and arrived at the gates to South Luangwa just before dusk. **Senga Puku & Kinda Baboons** greeted us as we entered the park. We drove around without seeing much at first; the calm before the storm.

Then the first spotlighting success - my best view of an **African Savanna Hare**. After this, the floodgates opened up and the mammals came fast and furious for the next 90 minutes before curfew. First a **Rusty-spotted Genet**. A minute later a **Meller's Mongoose** - a species I've barely even seen photos of! Five minutes later another Genet. Five minutes later, reddish **Horseshoe Bats** emerged from a hole in a tree. Five minutes later, a pride of **Southern Lions** appeared amidst the darkness (my first wild lions!) Eight minutes later, a **Spotted Hyena** approached the pride (my first wild hyena!) A minute later, a **Cape Hippo** lumbered past the spotlight. Two minutes later, a **Brown Greater Galago** in the tree. Seven minutes later, another Genet. A minute later, two more Hippos.



**Horseshoe Bats**



**African Savanna Hare**



**Rusty-spotted Genet**



**Southern Lions**



**Meller's Mongoose**

Five minutes later, I spot eye shine at a unique height. Not on the ground, but also not in the top of a tree. Turns out it's an **African Leopard** sitting on the stump of a fallen tree! For the next eighteen minutes, we observed the leopard meandering around - such an incredible sight! My only previous wild leopard experience lasted a matter of seconds when one darted across the road at dawn on an Indian safari. In general, they seemed pretty confident to find leopards at South Luangwa almost every night.

Rounding out the evening, we found our fourth genet followed by an excellent extended view of my first wild **African Civet**! We stopped by the bat tree once again on our way out and then got a clear unobstructed view of a **Brown Greater Galago** on the road approaching Thornicroft Lodge. **Chobe Bushbuck** were seen sleeping on the grounds of the lodge. The evening was perfect. I've never been more excited about a mammal watching experience.



**African Leopard**

**Brown  
Greater  
Galago**





**African Civet**

November 8: Included in your stay at Thornicroft Lodge are two daily four-hour game drives, the first of which is from 6am-10am. Entering the park shortly after dawn we were met with a full-grown **African Bush Elephant**. Soon, **Chobe Bushbuck**, **Zambesi Greater Kudu** and an impressively large flock of Red-billed Quelea would follow. The Quelea moved together in the air as if they were one single organism. Further along, we enjoyed the epic sight of a line of elephants crossing a small river.

**Red-billed  
Quelea**





**Zambesi Greater Kudu**

A few hours would pass before we spied the lodge's namesake - two **Thornicroft Giraffes**, followed by a lone **Crayshaw's Zebra**. Today's elephants, giraffes and zebra were all my first wild experiences! Next, we had some daylight views of a **Spotted Hyena** and **Cape Hippos** as well as my first **Smith's Bush Squirrel**.



**Smith's Bush Squirrel**





**Thornicroft Giraffe**



**Crayshaw's Zebra**



Then we came across the same pride of **Lions** from the night before, now gorging themselves on a fresh **Cape Buffalo** kill. Eight lions huddled around the carcass, ripping out recognizable organs such as heart and intestines. One lion had disappeared into the body cavity of the fallen buffalo, up to her hind legs. What a way to end the morning!



Southern Lions feeding

Back at the lodge, after expressing my interest in mammals large and small, the manager, Dylan, brought me to their equipment shed where he had seen bats roost. We immediately found the bats - a group of **Sundevall's Roundleaf Bat** and a lone **Large-eared Slit-faced Bat**. Two lifer mammal families in one equipment shed!



**Sundevall's Roundleaf Bat**



**Large-eared Slit-faced Bat**

The newly arriving guests decided to sit their first night out, so once again I had a private tour. Tempted by tales of **Side-striped Jackal** sightings around Mfuwe Airport I convinced the managers to allow for an alternative evening game drive location. While we waited for dusk, my guide for the night brought me to a local school to meet the principal. Least nervous I've been in a principal's office. The detour was random and confusing, but thankfully not too long and we soon headed back out to locate jackals. We weren't permitted into airport territory but we did our best to search the surrounding area. Alas, stray dogs were the only canines seen. We did have the intrigue of meeting the town drunk who insisted on driving his truck through giant puddles. Ten minutes later, on our way to South Luangwa we left the same man, and his stalled-out truck tire deep in mud, in our rear-view mirror. Once dark settled in, we drove over to the Park.

Tonight's return to the park focused on species I hadn't yet seen. We managed to add three more: my first living, breathing **Cape Buffalo**, a few distant sightings of **Four-toed Elephant Shrew**, and **Bushy-tailed Mongoose**. The guide knew a good place to look for the mongoose not far outside the park. On the drive home, we found one there feverishly feeding, making photography difficult. All in all, a great day!



**Cape Buffalo**



**Bushy-tailed Mongoose**



**Four-toed Elephant Shrew**

November 9: For my final day in the park, we targeted **Cape Hunting Dogs**, which had eluded me so far. They are often found in the park and were seen by fellow guests days earlier. Our guides made an effort to look in the usual spots, but with no luck. Canines were quite the challenge for me so far!

On this morning we did come across our first male **Southern Lion** - not quite full grown. I also managed my first daylight shots of **Kinda Baboons**. We headed over to the river's edge where we saw plenty more **Senga Puku** as well as sizable group of **Cape Hippos** sharing the water with crocodiles. Later we got very close to a **Spotted Hyena** whose entire head was covered in the blood of its last meal.

**Senga Puku**



male **Southern Lion**



**Cape Hippos**



**Kinda Baboons**



**Spotted Hyena**

A cute look at a wobbly newborn **Common Impala** immediately preceded a revisit to the buffalo carcass. Life and death personified. The carcass, now lorded over by vultures, had been picked almost completely clean in the span of 24 hours, with skin visible only at the ankle of one leg. The pride of lions was in the distance, heavily sleeping.



**Common Impala** young



I spent the mid-afternoon photographing the Lodge's resident **Chobe Bushbucks** before paying one more visit to the very batty equipment shed to find the same two species as the day before. I chatted with both managers who couldn't have been more wonderful hosts. Dylan mentioned seeing a rodent in his office recently and was formulating a plan to help me photograph it. I couldn't wait! In the minutes leading up to our evening game drive I spotted a **Slender Mongoose** (my second sighting without a photo!) as well as a pack of **Banded Mongoose**.



**Chobe Bushbucks**



**Banded Mongoose**



Our final night drive produced a few nice moments. A lone male and a group of female **Ellipsen Waterbuck**. A squirrel identified by the guide as a **Mutable Sun Squirrel** but turned out to be a uniquely colored **Smith's Bush Squirrel**. Some beautiful golden hour shots of lazy, well-fed lions. Another pack of **Banded Mongoose** and my first **White-tailed Mongoose** bringing my civet/mongoose park total to an impressive seven species.



**Ellipsen Waterbuck**



**Ellipsen Waterbuck**



**African Bush Elephant**



**Malbroucks**



**Southern Lion**



### White-tailed Mongoose

As we pulled back into the lodge's driveway, I assumed my species count had ceased for the night. I thought wrong. Nadja awaited my return with an excited smile. "We have a gift for you!" She said, eagerly awaiting my reaction. Could it be the rodent Dylan had spoken of earlier? Impossible!

She returned gingerly holding a small plastic container. Fantastic! They managed to safely detain the office rodent for me to photograph and later identify as a **Common Fat Mouse**. I burst out with joy! I was so incredibly happy with my stay at Thornicroft Lodge. They listened to every request I had and did anything they could to make it happen. Can't recommend this place enough!

November 10: Jonda Bus Part Deux. Twelve more hours to get back to Lusaka. Preferably in time for my late afternoon flight. No maggots this time. In fact, my camera bag wouldn't even fit in the overhead this time. I wasn't about to put it under the bus, so I rode for twelve crammed hours with my feet on top of the bag. I survived! (still awaiting my t-shirt).

Zambia proved to be a spectacular introduction to Africa that I will never forget. But the next leg of my adventure awaits in... South Africa!



**Fat Mouse**

## Zambia Species Trip List:

	<u>Kafue</u>	<u>S. Luangwa</u>	<u>Photo</u>
1. four-toed elephant shrew ( <i>Petrodromus tetradactylus</i> ) TL	O	X	X
2. African bush elephant ( <i>Loxodonta africana</i> ) WL	O	X	X
3. Mohol bushbaby ( <i>Galago moholi</i> ) WL	X	O	X
4. brown greater galago ( <i>Otolemur crassicaudatus</i> ) WL	X	X	X
5. malbrouck ( <i>Chlorocebus cynosuros</i> ) TL	X	X	X
6. Kinda baboon ( <i>Papio kindae</i> ) TL	O	X	X
7. Smith's bush squirrel ( <i>Paraxerus cepapi</i> ) WL	O	X	X
8. South African springhare ( <i>Pedetes capensis</i> ) WL	X	O	X
9. fat mouse ( <i>Steatomys pratensis</i> ) TL	O	X	X
10. African savanna hare ( <i>Lepus victoriae</i> ) TL	X	X	X
11. Sundevall's roundleaf bat ( <i>Hipposideros caffer</i> ) TL	O	X	X
12. large slit-faced bat ( <i>Nycteris grandis</i> ) TL	O	X	X
13. Horseshoe Bat ( <i>Rhinolophus</i> sp.) TL	O	X	X
14. Southern Lion ( <i>Panthera leo melanochaita</i> ) WL	O	X	X
15. African leopard ( <i>Panthera pardus pardus</i> ) TL	O	X	X
16. African civet ( <i>Civettictis civetta</i> ) WL	O	X	X
17. rusty-spotted genet ( <i>Genetta maculata</i> ) WL	X	X	X
18. bushy-tailed mongoose ( <i>Bdeogale crassicauda</i> ) TL	O	X	X
19. slender mongoose ( <i>Galerella sanguinea</i> ) WL	X	X	O
20. white-tailed mongoose ( <i>Ichneumia albicauda</i> ) WL	O	X	X
21. banded mongoose ( <i>Mungos mungo</i> ) WL	O	X	X
22. Meller's mongoose ( <i>Rhynchogale melleri</i> ) TL	O	X	X
23. spotted hyena ( <i>Crocuta crocuta</i> ) WL	O	X	X
24. Crawshay's zebra ( <i>Equus quagga crawshayi</i> ) TL	O	X	X
25. Central African warthog ( <i>Phacochoerus africanus massaicus</i> ) TL	X	X	X
26. Cape hippopotamus ( <i>Hippopotamus amphibius capensis</i> ) TL	X	X	X
27. Thornicroft's giraffe ( <i>Giraffa camelopardalis thornicrofti</i> ) TL	O	X	X
28. Common Impala ( <i>Aepyceros melampus melampus</i> ) WL	X	X	X
29. Lichtenstein's hartebeest ( <i>Alcelaphus buselaphus lichtensteinii</i> ) TL	X	O	X
30. Zambian Sable Antelope ( <i>Hippotragus niger kirkii</i> ) WL	X	O	X
31. Defassa Waterbuck ( <i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus defassa</i> ) WL	X	O	X
Ellipsin Waterbuck ( <i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus ellipsiprymnus</i> ) WL	O	X	X
32. Senga Puku ( <i>Kobus vardonii senganus</i> ) TL	X	O	X
Southern puku ( <i>Kobus vardonii vardonii</i> ) TL	O	X	X
33. Central oribi ( <i>Ourebia ourebi hastata</i> ) TL	X	O	X
34. Sharpe's grysbok ( <i>Raphicerus sharpei</i> ) TL	X	O	X
35. Angolan Common Duiker ( <i>Sylvicapra grimmia splendidula</i> ) TL	X	O	X
36. Cape Buffalo ( <i>Syncerus caffer caffer</i> ) WL	O	X	X
37. Chobe bushbuck ( <i>Tragelaphus sylvaticus ornatus</i> ) TL	X	X	X
38. Zambezi Greater Kudu ( <i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros zambesiensis</i> ) WL	X	X	X

TL= Total Lifer (never seen before captive or wild)

WL= Wild Lifer (never seen before in wild)

38 species (40 including sub-species) in 5 days