

Blue Lagoon National Park

Fri 29 July – Mon 1 August 2022



Guides: Frank Willems & Leslie Reynolds

Package type: “Birds & Bush” guided safari

We’re spending as much time as feasible in wild places, where the focus is on birding while exploring with ample attention also for other wildlife.

Accommodation type: bush camping

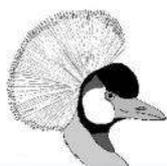
Package price: \$80 pppn including photographic boat ride

This includes specialist guiding, use of general camp setup (toilet & shower, kitchen and dining) and assistance by staff. Excluded are park fees (k135.50/k57 pppn for resident/citizen including camping, and k25.50 per vehicle per night). Boating will be with a small but stable 2-pax boat with silent electric engine, ideal for birding and bird photography. For a 3-night booking, a 3-hour boat ride is included.

The following are optional: use of kitted tent (\$40 pppn), catering (\$50 pppn), transport (\$265 pp for the whole trip), drinks (on cash bar basis). Prior notice essential.

The rate applies to BirdWatch Zambia members only. Non-members pay an additional \$25 with which comes BWZ membership for 2022 and 2023.

For each booking, a donation will be made to BirdWatch Zambia and to Birding Zambia’s Mwinilunga Conservation Project.



BIRDING ZAMBIA

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Introduction

Large herds of the endemic Kafue Lechwe, high densities of Wattled and Grey Crowned Crane and amazing waterbird concentrations and diversity are just some of the attractions of this ecological jewel. At less than three hours driving from Lusaka, Blue Lagoon is among Zambia's easier parks to visit. Yet few people have explored this park.



Blue Lagoon incorporates part of the northern end of the Kafue Flats, one of Africa's great floodplain systems at roughly one million hectares. The northern section of the park is largely covered by acacia woodlands, home to a rich avifauna including many breeding White-backed Vultures. Our main focus will, however, be the southern half, which consists of seasonally inundated open plains and swamps. Here, big herds of Kafue Lechwe and small numbers of Zebra and Buffalo keep the vegetation short. Huge numbers of ducks, herons, ibises, waders and other waterbirds congregate. Slaty Egret is frequently encountered. A number of species occurs which are more typical for brackish water and largely limited to the Kafue Flats in Zambia, notably Caspian Tern, Gull-billed Tern and Avocet. The area is also the single area in Africa's southern third where the migratory Black-tailed Godwit occurs in numbers, with some staging year-round. Other Palearctic waders may also still be found in small numbers, though outnumbered by species breeding locally, such as Collared Pratincole, Kittlitz's Plover, Black-winged Stilt and Long-toed Lapwing. Marsh Owl and Swamp Nightjar are among nocturnal species we hope to find.

We will give it our very best effort to find some rarities, for which the Kafue Flats is arguably the best area in Zambia. In July these may include Cape Vulture (of which an influx seems to be ongoing at time of writing), Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Cape Teal and Cape Shoveler.

Other wildlife which we hope to come across includes Rock Python, for which Blue Lagoon has an excellent reputation, and Serval which occurs in relatively high densities in the Kafue Flats area.

In addition, the timing of this trip is of interest from a conservation perspective. The Kafue Flats may well be at a pivotal moment in time. The area has undeniably had a rocky past, with conflicting interests and insufficient protection leading to neglect and sharp declines in wildlife numbers. Earlier this year, the International Crane Foundation together with WWF signed a co-management agreement with the Zambian government and local communities. Although early days, there is lots of reason for optimism. The restoration of the viewing tower at the end of the causeway in Blue Lagoon stands symbol for change. It is here where we plan to set up camp.



Itinerary

The below description is indicative as all depends on water levels and hence accessibility and distribution of birds and other wildlife.

Friday 29 July

You are welcome to arrive any time of day. We will aim to have the camp up and running by midday on Friday latest. In the afternoon, we will explore the areas along the causeway.

Saturday 30 & Sunday 31 July

Full days in Blue Lagoon National Park. We will dedicate the mornings to working the floodplains a long morning to the floodplains west of the causeway, which holds the highest lechwe numbers and tends to be the most productive birding area. After a lunch at camp, the afternoon will be dedicated to the floodplains east of camp.

Monday 1 August

We will use the morning to further explore the areas we found to be of most interest. Depending on preferences of participants, we are likely to be back at camp well before noon to ensure we have enough time to pack camp and return home in good time.



Map

Blue Lagoon National Park is located south of the M9 (Lusaka – Mumbwa Rd) some 100 km west of Lusaka.

