

NYANJE HILLS 1-4 JULY

Dates: Saturday 1 July – Tuesday 4 July (4 days / 3 nights)

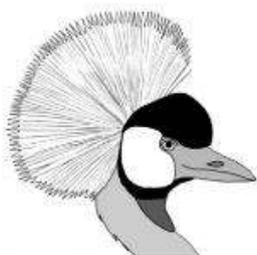
Guide: Frank Willems

Accommodation type: mobile camp (3-star)

Participants: minimum 4, maximum flexible

Package price: \$60 pppn on self-catering basis with own tent. Optional are catering (\$50 pppn) and kitted tent (\$40 pppn).

Included are all guiding services, tea & coffee, use of camp setup and a donation to the local community. Excluded are drinks which are available on request. The rate applies to BirdWatch Zambia members only. Non-members pay an additional \$25 with which comes BWZ membership for 2023 and 2024. For each booking, donations will be made to BirdWatch Zambia and the Kalwelwa Conservation Project.



Birding Zambia

Web www.birdingzambia.com - email birdingzambia@gmail.com

Introduction

Nyanje Hills, near the Mozambique border in Sinda District, Eastern Province, is among Zambia's least visited Important Bird Areas, despite its proximity to the Great East Road. The area is dominated by spectacular, huge granite boulders. A wealth of interesting birds and other animals occurs here, several of which in Zambia are only known from this tiny area, from Nyanje to Chadiza. A Birding Zambia trip to this area is therefore overdue. Frank has explored this area in the recent past hence is familiar with the whereabouts of the various key creatures.

The star bird is the Vincent's Bunting, a highly localized species endemic to granite inselbergs in southern Malawi and, marginally, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. Sightings of this rare and unobtrusive bird are far from guaranteed, but with all of Zambia's sightings falling in the period March-August, we stand a fair chance. Guaranteed are sightings of the superficially similar Cinnamon-breasted Bunting which occurs in high densities.

Another key species, endemic to the granite inselbergs of Zimbabwe and adjacent countries including Malawi, is the attractive Boulder Chat. Several pairs breed on these hills. Sightings are guaranteed though will require some rock climbing. Easier to sight are the Black Storks that are breeding in the shallow 'caves' on the rock faces. Verreaux's Eagle seems scarce here these days, while Augur Buzzard and Lanner Falcon are among common raptors. We hope to see both African Black and Alpine Swift. Bracken briar around the base of the hills holds the secretive Hildebrandt's Spurfowl and Singing Cisticola, while Yellow-throated Longclaw is among typical Eastern Province species present in the moister areas. The dominant sound after dark is that of Spotted Eagle Owl, of which high densities occur here.

Beyond birds, this is the only area in Zambia where Rock Hyrax occurs (contra the more widespread Yellow-spotted Bush Hyrax). The impressive Giant Plated Lizard, also restricted to this area in Zambia, is regularly seen. Rainbow Skink is among the many common reptiles here.



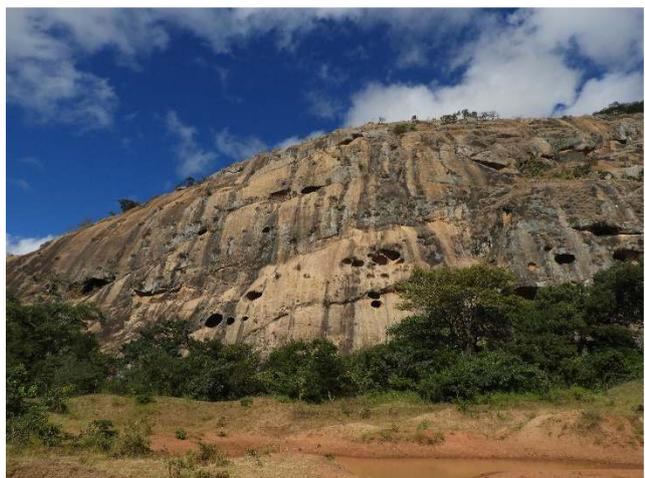
We will set up camp at a little dam in between the hills. Various waterbirds and a range of seedeaters was present here during an earlier visit.

Programme

You are welcome to arrive any time on Saturday 1 July. We will be birding the surrounds of the camp area in the afternoon.

Sunday 2 and Monday 3 July will be fully dedicated to exploring the largest granite hills. We anticipate climbing the sometimes steep mountains in the mornings, enjoying the birding and the spectacular views from the ridges during the cooler hours. After lunch, we will have time to rest and for more gentle explorations.

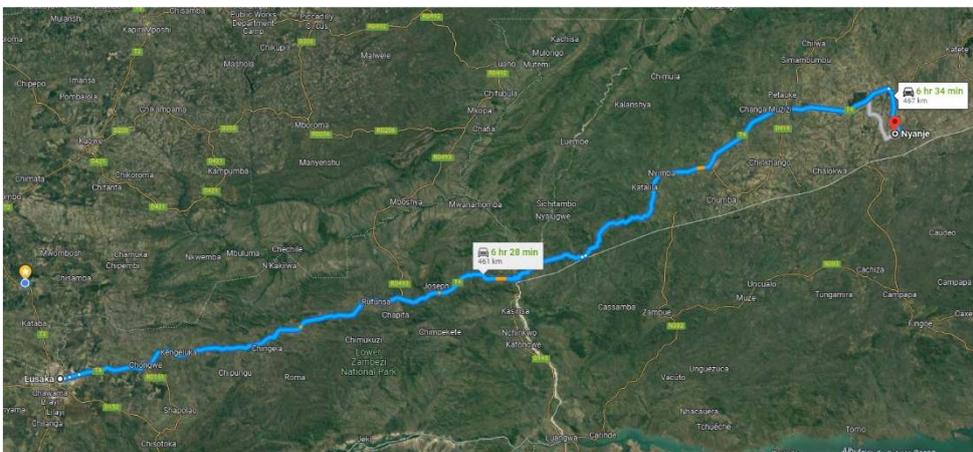
On Tuesday 4 July, we will enjoy a few hours of birding in the early morning. After breakfast, we will pack camp and head out.



What to expect and what to bring

July is the cold dry season. Please ensure to bring a sweater and wind jacket, plus sturdy hiking boots to climb the hills.

Fair fitness is required to climb the sometimes steep hillslopes. Most key species can also be seen from the base of the hills and during gentle walks, making this trip also suited for the less agile among us.



Map of the route

It is an easy 6h30m drive from Lusaka to Nyanje. Once off the T4, a good gravel road leads up to Nyanje Village, from where a small track brings you to the dam. Frank & team will set up camp on 30th and will share detailed directions.

