

Where Congo meets Kalahari

Mwinilunga August 2020 Special



Start & end date: Fri 14 – Sun 23 August (9 nights)

Number of people: maximum of 8

Your guide: Frank Willems.

Package type: Birds & Bush, guided self-drive.

We're spending as much time as feasible in wild places, where the focus is on birding while exploring, typically with ample attention for all wildlife such as reptiles and amphibians.

Accommodation type: comfortable lodging, bushcamp, mobile bushcamp (2/3-star).

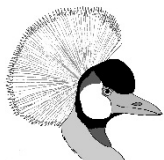
Package price: \$1,349 pp

The rate is a 2020 Special on sharing & self-drive basis. Included are guiding services, all catering, tea & coffee, accommodation, Chief's conservancy fees. Excluded are Source entry fee, drinks (available on-site).

Please enquire for transport-inclusive and single-occupancy rates. Discounts for children are available.

The rate applies to BirdWatch Zambia members only. Non-members pay an additional \$25 with which comes BWZ membership for 2020 and 2021.

For each booking, a donation will be made to BirdWatch Zambia.



BIRDING ZAMBIA

Web www.birdingzambia.com / email: birdingzambia@gmail.com

Introduction

Among birders and ecologists, Mwinilunga needs little introduction. The district in the extreme northwest of Zambia, bordering both Angola and the DR Congo, holds amazing biodiversity against a stunningly scenic background. Zambia's largest "rainforests" are set in vast grassy plains on Kalahari sands. Within Zambia, tens of bird species are found only in this area. Several are endemic to Mwinilunga and adjacent parts of Angola and DRC, such as Grimwood's Longclaw, Bocage's Weaver and Dambo Cisticola. Others are typical for the lowland forests or the grasslands of Central Africa (e.g. Spot-breasted Ibis and Black-collared Bulbul, respectively), while yet other species are more typical of Africa's montane areas (e.g. Olive Pigeon and Red-throated wryneck).

A good few other endemic organisms occur, such as the Sakeji Horseshoe Bat and Katanga Bush Viper. Giant Otter Shrew and Brush-tailed Porcupine are just two of many extraordinary tropical mammals.

This far-flung corner remains very remote. Birding Zambia offers a unique package, hoping to stimulate birders and nature enthusiast to explore the area. Your guide, Frank Willems, has extensively explored this area. The focus will be on sharing the magic of recently discovered jewels Nyachisala and Kalwelwa while tying in some of the well-known sites, Chitunta Plain and the Source of the Zambezi, as well as the *Cryptosepalum* forests, Africa's largest block of dry evergreen forest.

We stay overnight in truly remote wilderness areas. Although the focus is on birds, one doesn't need to be a "twitcher" to join; there will be ample opportunity to look at other wildlife or just enjoy the bush.

Your visit will not only support BirdWatch Zambia, but also the Mwinilunga Conservancy which Frank is initiating in partnership with the local community and other partners.



Detailed program

Day 1 - Arrival, Mutanda

Arrival at Mutanda by road (self-drive) or Solwezi flight (if available then). Time depending, we will bird the premises of Mutanda Nature Lodge. This gives a brilliant introduction into the avifauna of Northwestern Province. Specials include Bocage's Akalat, Grey-olive Greenbul (both of which unlikely to be encountered in Mwinilunga), Cassin's Flycatcher, Bamboo Warbler, Red-throated Cliff Swallow (a colony is present under the bridge of the adjacent tarmac road), White-chinned Prinia, Olive Woodpecker, Half-collared Kingfisher and Square-tailed Drongo.

Day 2 - Mutanda – Kakoma

We will make the best of the first light birding at Mutanda Nature Lodge. After breakfast, we drive towards Kakoma (6-hour drive). We might want to stop at one or two of the bridges on the tarmac road to check for the likes of Red-throated Cliff Swallow. After 160 km (partly potholed; 2 hours), we branch off onto the 65 km dirt road to Kakoma. Here we come through some stunning habitats which hold Red-throated Wryneck, Grimwood's Longclaw, Locustfinch and Black-and-rufous Swallow. Arrival in late afternoon at Nyachisala Mobile Bushcamp operated by Frank Willems.

Day 3 & 4 - Nyachisala Forest, Kakoma

Two full days at Nyachisala Forest, Zambia's largest wet evergreen forest along the West-Lunga river. This is the site of the surprising discovery of Spot-breasted Ibis in late 2017. This also proves Zambia's best site for Vermiculated Fishing Owl (an even bigger recent surprise, discovered only in 2015), Spotted Thrush-babbler, Bamboo Warbler and Shining-blue Kingfisher. We also expect to find Grey-winged Robin-chat, Fraser's Rufous Thrush, Brown-eared Woodpecker, Bates's Sunbird and Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher among others. The plains are likely to produce a wealth of cisticola's, Compact Weaver, Black-collared Bulbul and much more. We hope to catch a glimpse of some of the exciting reptiles that have been found here, such as Katanga Bush Viper, Dewitte's Five-toed Skink, Heenen's Dwarf Gecko and possibly an undescribed species of green snake.

Day 5 - Nyachisala - Kalwelwa

After a couple of hours early morning birding at Nyachisala, we will drive to Kalwelwa, a drive of some 4 hours.

Kalwelwa Bushcamp is operated by Frank Willems. We will spend the afternoon around camp, looking for the likes of Bannerman's Sunbird, Honeyguide Greenbul, Black-collared Bulbul, Stout and Whistling Cisticola, Sharp-tailed Starling and Black-bellied Seedcracker in the forest, grassland and fishponds complex. We might hear the calls of a yet to be identified Dwarf Galago at night, as well as various amphibians of interest such as Cinnamon Tree Frog.



Day 6 & 7 - Kalwelwa

Two full days in the Kalwelwa depression, a highly diverse and scenic area only known to the ornithological world since 2015. We will try the extensive evergreen forests for Least Honeyguide, White-spotted Flufftail, Blue Malkoha, Afep and Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Blue-breasted Kingfisher and the elusive White-bellied Kingfisher, while the forest edges may produce Compact Weaver, Black-faced canary and White-chinned Prinia. We will work the plains in search of all 3 species of longclaws, Damboo, Wing-snapping, Pale-crowned, Stout, Croaking and Tinkling Cisticola, Angolan Lark, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Black-and-rufous Swallow, Red-throated Wryneck, Wattled Crane, Denham's and Black-bellied Bustard, and much more.

Day 8 – Chitunta Plain, Source of the Zambezi

Early start from Kalwelwa. Morning birding will be at the Chitunta Plain, which is best known for Grimwood's Longclaw and other plain species. The first prize here, however, is Bocage's Weaver. Chitunta still is the only known breeding colony in Zambia. We may get lucky with an early Short-tailed Pipit.

We'll continue from here to the Source of the Zambezi. This National Monument has impressively tall and very productive evergreen forest and woodlands. In addition to visiting the source itself, we hope to find among others Buff-throated Apalis, Red-bellied Flycatcher, Fraser's Rufous Thrush and a range of miombo woodland birds.

Overnight at Kwakuwahi Guesthouse, Mwinilunga. This comfortable guesthouse is situated on the banks of the West-Lunga river and may produce Cassin's Flycatcher, Olive Pigeon and Shining-blue Kingfisher.

Day 9 - Cryptosepalum, Mutanda

Early start from Kalwelwa to reach the Cryptosepalum forests, 100 km S of Mwinilunga town, where we hope to see Margaret's Batis, Gorgeous Bushshrike (formerly known as Perrin's Bushshrike) and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher.

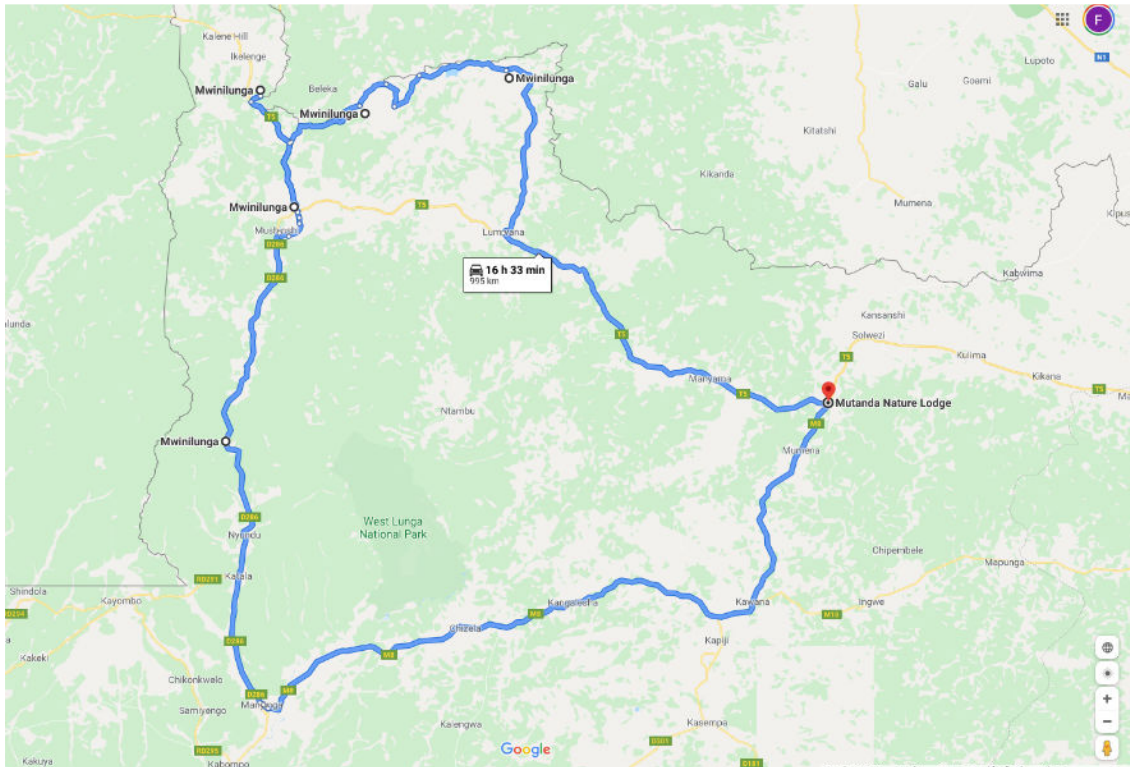
Around noon, we will head south towards Kabompo and back to Mutanda where we will arrive late afternoon.

Day 10 - Connect to Solwezi/Lusaka

Optional early morning birding, depending on travel times.



BIRDING ZAMBIA – MWINILUNGA AUGUST 2020



Package route (Google Maps). From Mutanda, we will drive anti-clockwise

Notes

Over the course of the coming months, we will develop additional modules for:

- 1) Hillwood – Zambezi Rapids – Jimbe
- 2) West-Lunga NP, Chavuma-Minyanya and Liuwa NP

These modules can be linked to the current package.

Please enquire for details.

