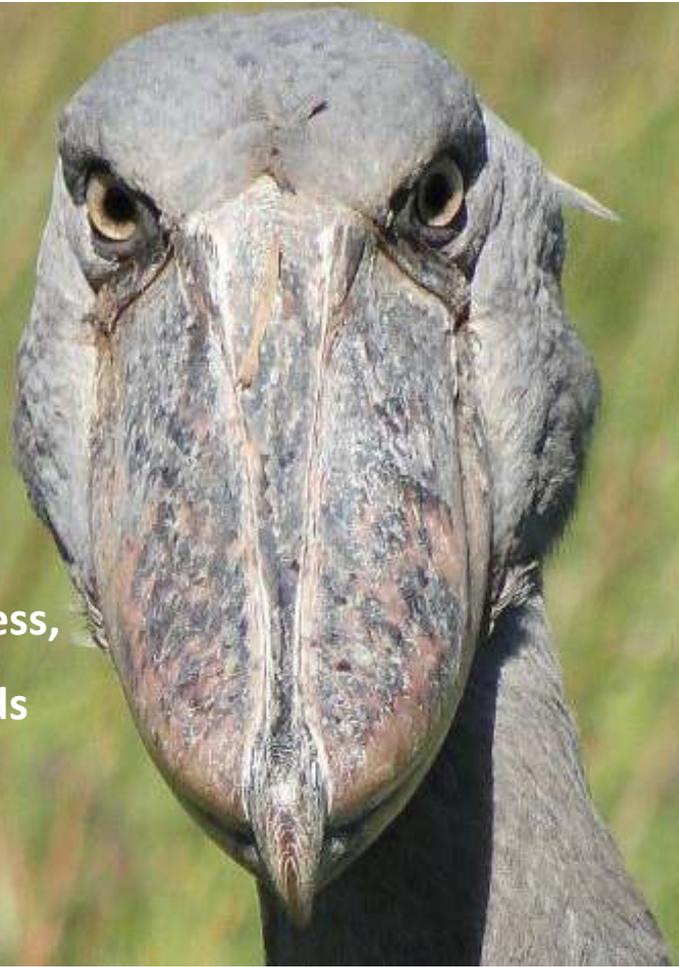


# The Bangweulu Circuit

## 11-19 June 2022

Kundalila Falls, Mutinondo Wilderness,  
Lavushi Manda, Bangweulu Wetlands  
and Kasanka National Park



**Dates:** Sat 11 June - Sun 19 June (8 nights / 9 days)

**Start and end:** Lusaka/Copperbelt

**Guide:** Frank Willems

**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, typically with ample attention for other wildlife such as reptiles and amphibians.*

**Accommodation type:** mix of glamping and lodging (3-star)

**Participants:** minimum 2, maximum 8

**Package price:**

International, per person: \$2,049 self-drive & own camping gear; \$2,349 fully inclusive self-drive; \$3,024 fully inclusive including transport.

Zambian/SADC residents, per person: \$1,379 self-drive & own camping gear; \$1,679 fully inclusive self-drive; \$2,354 fully inclusive including transport.

*Included are all guiding services, activities, catering, tea & coffee, accommodation. Excluded are drinks (available on-site) and items of a personal nature. The rate applies to BirdWatch Zambia members only. Non-members pay an additional \$20 with which comes BWZ membership for 2022 and 2023. For each booking, a donation will be made to BirdWatch Zambia and the Mwinilunga Conservation Project.*



# BIRDING ZAMBIA

Web [www.birdingzambia.com](http://www.birdingzambia.com) / email: [birdingzambia@gmail.com](mailto:birdingzambia@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The Bangweulu area is one of Africa's main protected area complexes with a combined surface of some 2 million hectares. It incorporates the vast Bangweulu Wetlands – one of Africa's largest wetlands - and other ecological jewels like Kasanka and Lavushi Manda National Park. We will combine a visit to these areas with the nearby well-known private reserve Mutinondo Wilderness and two of Zambia's prime National Monuments, Kundalila Falls and Nachikufu Cave. The combined area holds an impressive biodiversity, with well over 500 bird species, some 100 reptiles and 150 mammals recorded. Among many endemics are multiple mammals, at least one reptile and one frog. Our journey will go through an amazingly diverse landscape, from bare rock formations and dense forest, to endless open plains and papyrus-flanked water courses.

This trip is perfect for both fanatic birders and other nature enthusiasts, with the spectacular landscapes and diversity in large mammals forming a marvellous addition to an impressive bird list. Although birds are a prime focus, we will dedicate ample time to other aspects of these amazing areas as well.

Your principal guide, Frank Willems, was the resident ecologist for a decade here, exploring all corners of this vast and diverse landscape.

Your visit will support BirdWatch Zambia as well as the Mwinilunga Conservancy, Birding Zambia's conservation project of choice.



## Site descriptions

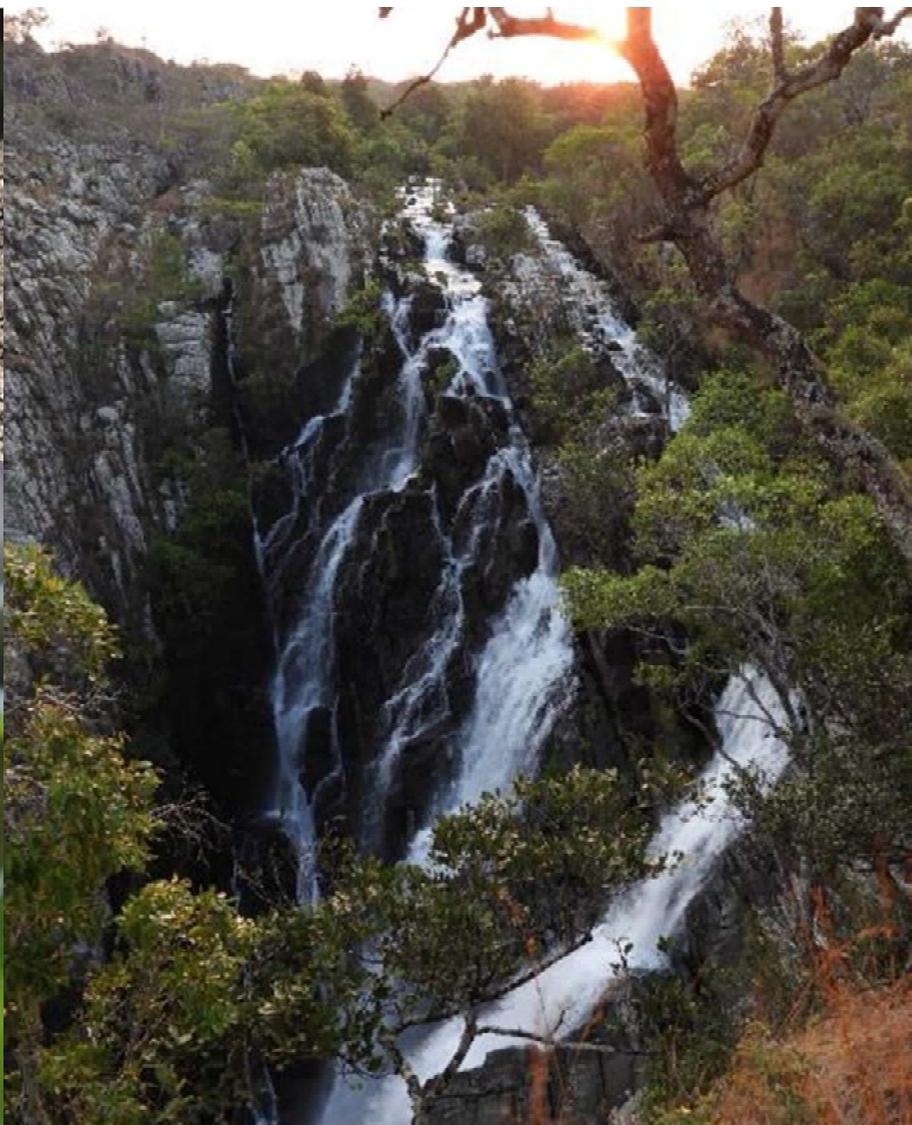
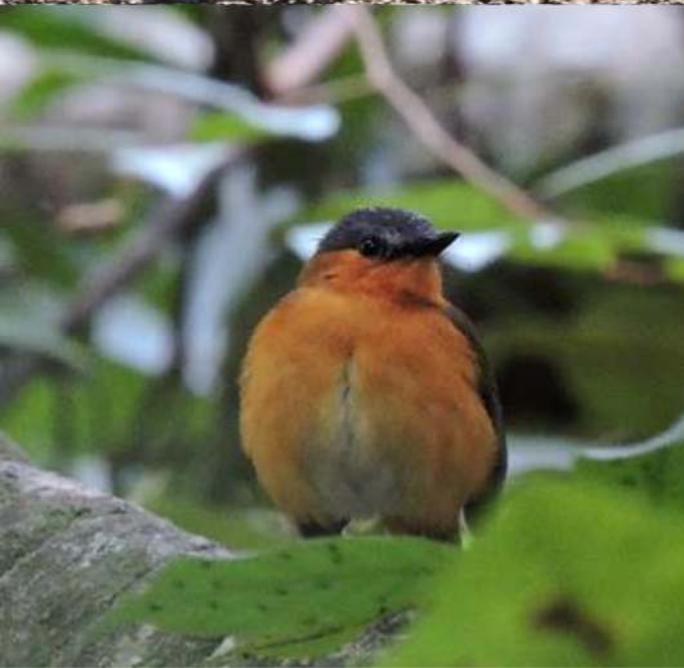
### Forest Inn

This lodge forms a convenient overnight option. Among naturalists, it is best known for the resident Lord Derby's Anomalure or Flying Squirrel, as well as a range of miombo birds.



### Kundalila Falls National Monument

Among Zambia's highest falls, this site hosts not only fascinating scenery but also a suite of fascinating mid-altitude flora and fauna. Most notably, we hope to see Bocage's Akalat, Yellow-bellied Waxbill (East African Swee), Lanner Falcon, Mountain Wagtail and the localised Kirk's Rock Agama.



## Mutinondo Wilderness

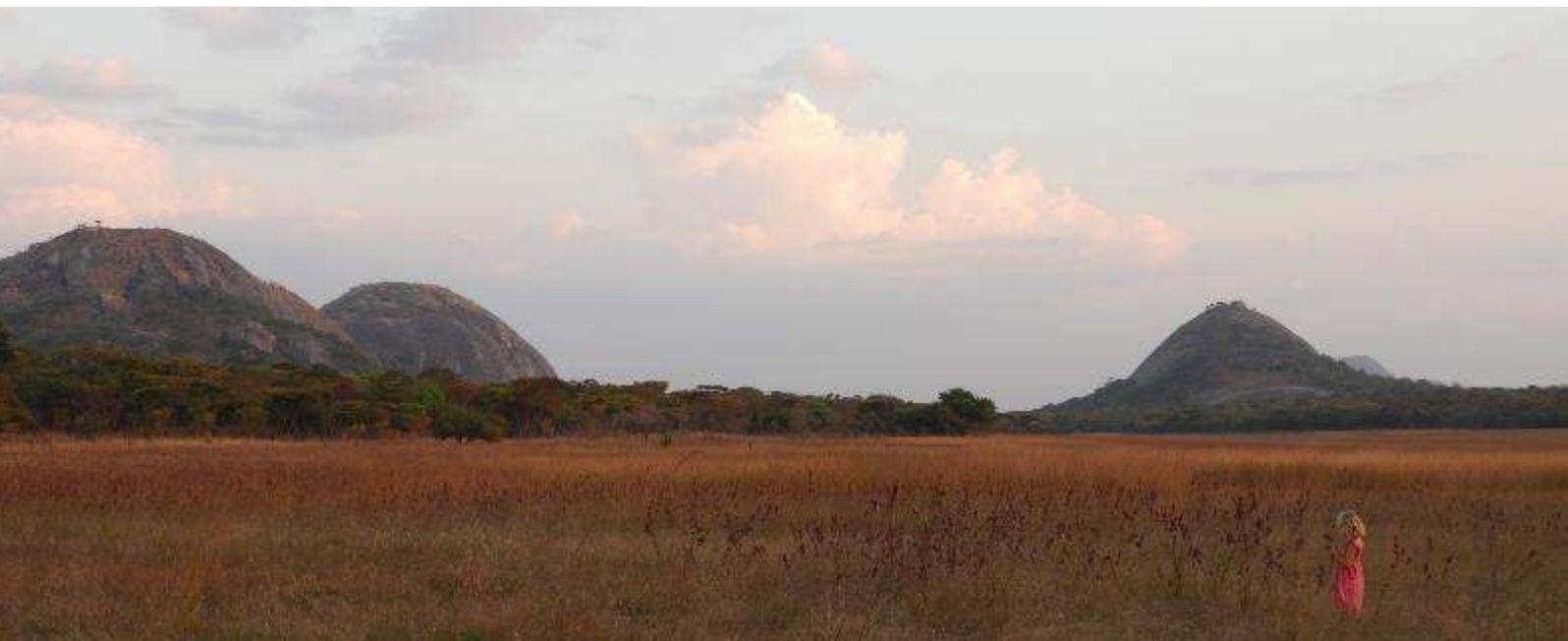
This 10,600-hectares private reserve is possibly Zambia’s most scenic destination. Massive granite inselbergs tower out above the pristine miombo woodlands, interspersed with crystal-clear streams, orchid-rich *dambo* grasslands and strips of evergreen forest. Mutinondo, recognized as an Important Bird Area, holds a long list of specials. It was here that ornithologists first realized the co-occurrence of two species of Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, now known as Western and Eastern Miombo Sunbird. Anchieta’s and Green-headed Sunbird, Ross’s Turaco, Grass Owl, Bar-winged Weaver, Laura’s Woodland Warbler, White-tailed Elminia, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Tit, Anchieta’s and Whyte’s Barbet, Marsh Widow, Bar-throated Apalis, Fawn-breasted Waxbill and Reichard’s Seedeater are among the many other specials present.



Although mammal densities are relatively low, the diversity is high, with interesting species like Chequered Giant Sengi, both otters, Klipspringer, Roan Antelope, Eland, Spotted Hyena and Leopard.

June unfortunately isn’t the best time to find the endemic Mutinondo Grass Frog which Frank recently described from the reserve, but we just might get lucky.

We will stay at the scenic Nsaka Campsite using our comfortable mobile kit. Please enquire if you’re keen to opt for Mutinondo’s stunning chalets instead.



### Nachikufu Cave

This national monument holds some of Zambia's finest cave paintings. Despite its convenient location close to the Great North Rd, it is little visited. From a birding perspective, it is a great site to see rock associated birds including Mocking Cliff Chat.



### Lavushi Manda National Park

This 160,000 hectare wilderness holds fascinating scenery and biodiversity, including a huge diversity of larger mammals. We will traverse the park on the way to Bangweulu, following the main road cutting through a dry section of the park. Although our brief snapshot won't do this rich park any justice, we may nevertheless come across some interesting birds or mammals. We will have a lunch stop at Mumbatuta Falls on the Lukulu River. This pretty set of small falls regularly produces interesting birds including Finfoot, Black Duck and Palm-nut Vulture.



## Bangweulu Wetlands



With a surface of some 1.5 million hectares, this is one of Africa's largest wetlands. The area is best known for the large population of Shoebills and the endemic Black Lechwe. It can further boast to hold another endemic (sub)species of antelope, the Bangweulu Tsessebe, some 15% of the global population of Wattled Crane, healthy populations of vultures, Sitatunga and Oribi, as well as enormous numbers of waterbirds. You'll hardly have a second without seeing birds! Among many specials are Katanga Masked Weaver, Lesser Jacana, Swamp Flycatcher, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Black Heron, Spur-winged and Long-toed Lapwing, Rosy-throated Longclaw. We expect to see thousands of ducks, egrets, ibises, spoonbills, pelicans and other waterbirds, as well as a great diversity and density of raptors, to name a few, in and near the river channels dotted with Papyrus and waterlilies.



Our key target obviously is the iconic and threatened Shoebill. Local expertise on the whereabouts of the birds will dictate which area(s) we will focus on during a dedicated "Shoebill Expedition". This typically involves a boat ride by banana boat, and may require walking through wet areas and even over floating vegetation.



We will stay at Nsobe Community Campsite, making use of Birding Zambia's mobile kit, in the very edge of the on the vast Chimbwi Plains. Large numbers of Black Lechwe and smaller numbers of Tsessebe are commonly seen from the camp. Collared Pratincole and Kittlitz's Plover are among bird occurring in huge numbers here, while finding specials like Denham's Bustard may require more effort. The adjacent termitaria woodlands host beauties like Black-backed Barbet and White-winged Black Tit, while the rain-fed plains slightly further south hold specials like Blue Quail, Black-rumped Buttonquail, Locust Finch and Fülleborn's Longclaw, plus isolated populations of Long-tailed Widow, Desert Cisticola, Sooty Chat and Rufous-naped Lark. Oribi and Reedbuck are among the ungulates in these parts. Carnivores regularly encountered include Spotted Hyena and Side-striped Jackal. Cheetah was reintroduced to the area in 2021 and may be seen hunting on the plains.



## Kasanka National Park

Despite being one of Zambia's smaller national parks, Kasanka is renowned for its biodiversity and rich mosaic of dry and wet habitats. The world-famous migration of some 10 million Straw-coloured Fruit Bats, which occurs between early October and early January, may well be the largest mammal concentration on earth and has frequently been dubbed among the world's greatest wildlife spectacles.

With 480 bird species recorded, it has the longest birdlist of all Zambia's parks and Important Bird Areas apart from the massive Kafue N.P. – remarkable considering the small size and lack of variation in elevation. Among the many specials commonly seen are Böhm's Bee-eater, Ross's Turaco, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, a wide range of waterbirds including the occasional Shoebill, and many miombo woodland specials such as Black-necked Eremomela.

The ever-growing mammal list stands at some 130 species. This park offers possibly the world's best Sitatunga viewing and a large population of Puku, while we are likely to see specials like Rump-spotted ("Blue") Monkey and Kinda Baboon in addition to megafauna such as Elephant and Hippopotamus.



## Detailed program

### 11 June

Start from Lusaka or Copperbelt in the morning – details TBC. We will all meet up at Forest Inn in the afternoon, in time for birding around the lodge's premises. During dusk, we hope to see the Lord Derby Anomalures emerge from their nesting tree.



### 12 June

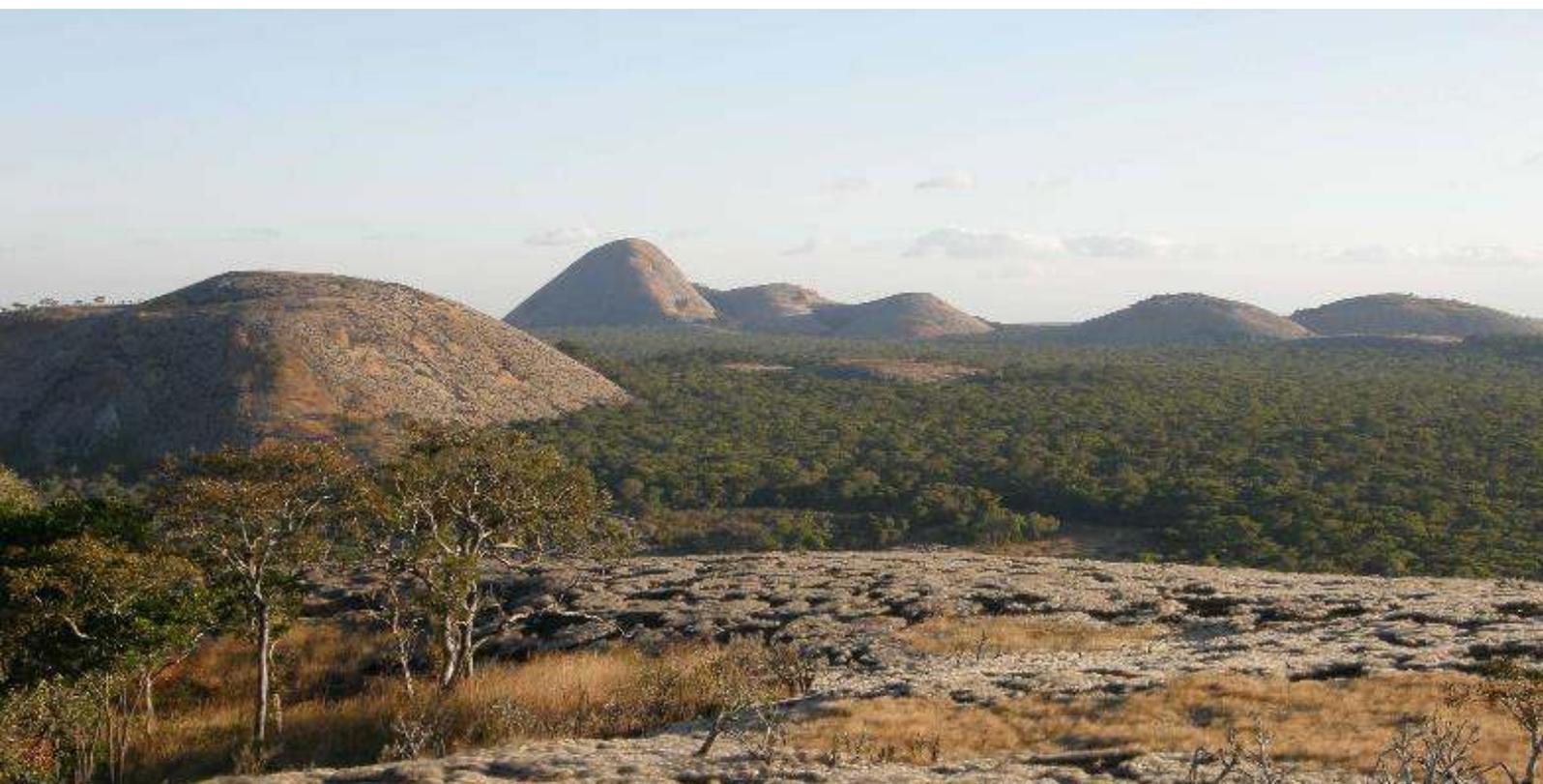
After an optional very early start to see the Anomalures returning to their tree around 4:30, and an early breakfast, we will proceed towards Serenje – with a brief stop at a productive roadside birding spot, known for the likes of Evergreen Forest Warbler and Red-winged Prinia – and on to Kundalila Falls (202 km - 3 hours), where we will take a few hours for birding and seeing the falls. After a lunch on the spot, we will proceed to Mutinondo Wilderness (143 km – 2h45m). Depending on arrival time, we will do some late afternoon birding around the campsites and nearby Choso Falls, or opt to enjoy the marvellous view and scan for birds from Mutinondo's famously scenic bar.

### 13 June

Full day of exploring Mutinondo Wilderness. We will get an excellent impression of the wide variety of habitats and birds within these, including the streams and rapids, miombo woodlands, wet evergreen forest, open dambo grasslands and rocky habitats. Not only does the area offer great birding, but also the choice between walking and driving, and even canoeing and swimming – all great ways to enjoy the different habitats and wildlife. And not to forget the many sites for unforgettable birding-and-sundowner combo's!

### 14 June

We'll aim for a timely start from Mutinondo, heading towards Nachikufu Cave (45 minutes) and on to Lavushi Manda N.P. – some 2-3 hours from Nachikufu to Mumbatuta Falls, depending on bird activity along the way. We'll have a good couple of hours to enjoy the rapids, birds and a lunch at Mumbatuta. Another 3 hours of dusty driving will be needed to reach Nsoke Campsite in the Bangweulu Wetlands, where we'll use the rest of the afternoon to set up camp and enjoy the bird and mammal rich surroundings.





*15 & 16 June*

Two full days to explore the Bangweulu Wetlands. We'll incorporate a "Shoebill Expedition", an additional birding session by boat, and several drives and (optionally) walks to ensure we cover all major birding and wildlife habitats in the area.

*17 June*

Early morning birding and breakfast around Nsoke Campsite, after which we embark on our 6-hour journey to Kasanka National Park. Along the way we will stop at the scenic Lake Waka Waka for lunch. We expect to check in at Wasa Lodge in good time to settle in and do some birding around the lake.

*18 June*

Full day to explore Kasanka. We will do our best to get a good impression of all that this park has on offer within our relatively limited time here. Pontoons are the best area to see the secretive Sitatunga, at first light, while a long list of bird specials are often seen here, including Pel's Fishing Owl and Böhm's Bee-eater. From here, we will continue to explore the Kasanka Floodplains and adjacent woodlands, up to Bufumu Forest – an amazing jewel including Zambia's tallest known tree and the magical *mateshe* dry evergreen forest – where we will have lunch. The return drive during the afternoon passes by the Bat Forest – home to the world famous colony of Straw-coloured Fruit Bats in Oct-Dec, as well as resident groups of Kinda Baboon, Rump-spotted ("Blue") Monkey and Malbrouck's Monkey and a wide range of birds.



*19 June*

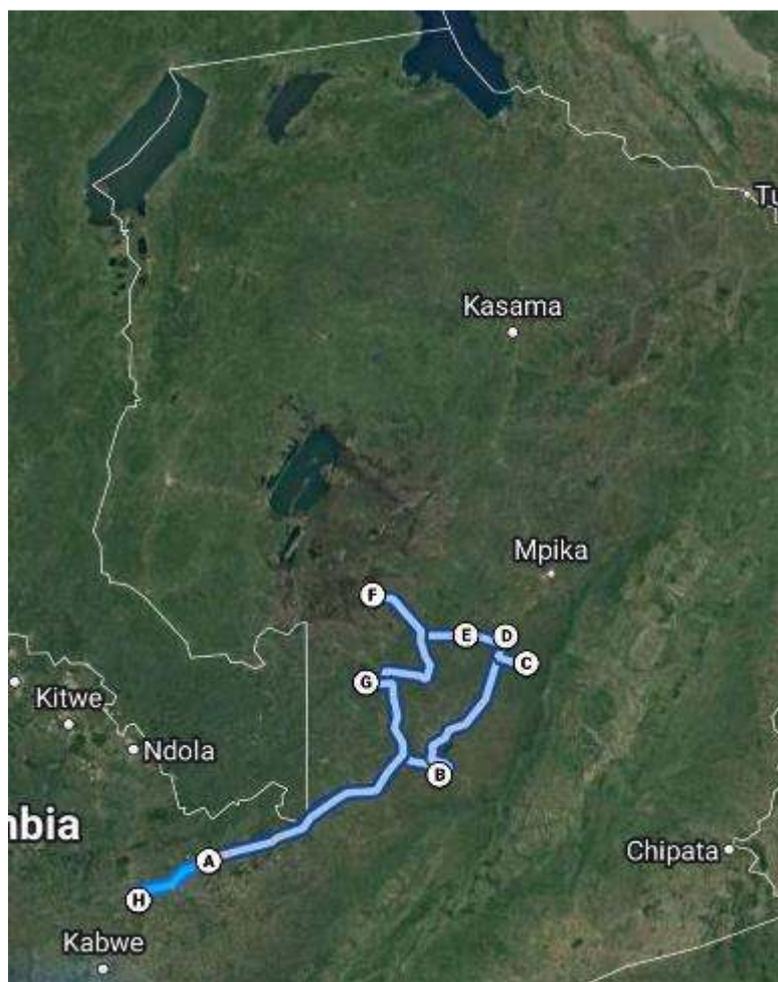
We will let the program during this last morning depend on personal preferences. We may head back to the Bat Forest for another chance to enjoy the many birds and mammals here, as well as the good miombo birding to be had along the way. Alternatively, Wasa makes for a great location to have a more relaxed birding session focusing on the camp grounds and the lake.

We will aim to start off from Wasa around 11:00, so that we exit the park before noon. It is approximately 7 hours (500 km) from here to Lusaka, or some 6 hours to Ndola and Kitwe.



## Map of the route

Map of the route, starting from and ending at Kapiri Mposhi (turn off from Lusaka-Ndola Rd, onto the Great North Rd towards Tanzania).



- A: Forest Inn
- B: Kundalila Falls
- C: Mutinondo Wilderness
- D: Nachikufu Cave
- E: Mumbatuta Falls – Lavushi Manda NP
- F: Nsobe Campsite – Bangweulu Wetlands
- G: Kasanka National Park

The roundtrip to and from Lusaka is approximately 1450 km – excluding movements within the reserves.

