



Mamili (Nkasa Lupala) & Mudumu National Parks

An astonishing variety of birds

The Mamili (Nkasa Lupala) and Mudumu National Parks are at the heart of Namibia's Caprivi Region, home to more than 450 species of birds. But where are they most at home? Check out these areas:

The skies

This is the domain of the raptors, such as the long-crested eagle, distinguished by the striking plumage on its head, and the agile bateleur, whose name means 'acrobat' in French. Above swampy areas look out for the African marsh-harrier, or a rare sighting of the western banded snake-eagle, a predatory bird which frequents the mainstream fringes. Perhaps the bird whose sight and sound is most synonymous with the area is the African fish-eagle.

Backwater birds

These tranquil waters are home to many different species of ducks and geese, including the fulvous duck and the African pygmy-goose. The African jacana and the uncommon lesser jacana move between water lilies in search of food. Their exceedingly long toes allow for such a wide distribution of weight that these birds appear to walk on water. The vibrant purple gallinule is seen alone or in pairs, while the lesser gallinule is an uncommon and irregular resident, but a great 'tick' for bird watchers.

Sandbanks

The lapwings, terns and collared and black-winged pratincoles are at home on the beaches. With hippos, buffaloes and elephants milling about, it is also a rather

dangerous breeding ground for African skimmers. White-faced ducks are seen in large flocks on the few sandbanks in the area, while other common residents, the sacred and glossy ibis, are seen singly or in flocks.

Mainstream

Several different herons are found in the mainstream. The Goliath heron, the largest of the species, may stand motionless for hours as it fishes in deeper waters. The purple heron, with its slender, strikingly coloured neck, is somewhat reclusive. The rufous-bellied heron, an uncommon summer resident, is a must for any bird watcher.

Channels

The swamps are the domain of the pied, malachite, giant and half-collared kingfishers. The black and white pied kingfisher hovers over water before plunging headfirst into the water on a targeted fish. Green-backed herons also feed along these channels. Diminutive dwarf and little bitterns are also found here. Sometimes mistaken for a white cattle egret, especially when in flight, the squacco heron is also at home in the channels.

Swamps

The murky swamps are home to a variety of ducks, rails, weavers (including thick-billed), red-headed quelea, red-shouldered and white-winged widows and a number of firefinch species. The slaty egret with its distinctive green eyes is a much sought-after sight for birders. African openbills flock in large numbers. In shallow waters, black



egrets and black herons hunt by spreading their wings like an umbrella that casts shadows across the water where unsuspecting fish swim in search of shelter, only to meet a dubious end.

Riverbanks

Southern carmine, white-fronted, little and blue-cheeked bee-eaters are often found along the rivers. Small birds with stunning plumage, all the species mingle along the water's edge but nest separately. Carmine bee-eaters breed in colonies, flying in and out of small holes in sandy cliffs along the water's edge to feed their young. It is a stunning sight, but intensive nesting also draws predatory birds and snakes to the colonies.

Grasslands

During drier periods, the Denham's and kori bustard, as well as black-bellied bustard and ostriches are drawn to the area's grassland. Birds that come with the rains include the kurrichane buttonquail, harlequin and common quail, rufous-naped lark and red-faced cisticola. When they have been flooded, these grasslands are excellent for pink-throated longclaw, wattled crane, slaty egret and black coucal. But be warned: they may be difficult to find and extreme caution is advised, as crocodiles and hippos also come up into these flooded areas to feed.

Woodlands

A long list of birds that includes the pale and southern black flycatchers, long-billed (wood) pipit, white-breasted cuckooshrike, green-capped eremomela, grey cisti-

cola, African golden oriole, trumpeter hornbill, African goshawk, African little sparrowhawk, crested barbet, African emerald cuckoo, white-browed and red-capped robin-chats, coppery sunbird and grey tit-flycatcher, orange-breasted bush shrike, black-crowned tchagra and grey-headed bush shrike, inhabit the woodlands.

Nocturnal

Found perched in trees along the water's edge or in woodlands nearby during the day, owls come into their own at night. The prized sighting for most birders is Pel's fishing-owl, a large, cinnamon-coloured bird that dives feet first into the water after its prey. The African wood-owls, African barred owlets and barn owls are much more common residents. Black-crowned and white-backed night herons, secretive birds that hide in dense waterside vegetation, also appear only at night.

Look out for the southern long-tailed starling, narina trogon, red-capped robin-chat, grey-headed bush shrike, African emerald cuckoo, ashy flycatcher, white-rumped babblers, greater swamp warblers, cisticolas, black coucals, coppery-tailed and senegal coucals, wattled cranes, pink-throated longclaws and knob-billed duck.

The list goes on and on. Grab your binoculars, a bird book and start counting!

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Environmental Care Code

Please adhere to the following:

- For your own safety, stay on existing roads and in your vehicle.
- Note that fishing is not permitted inside the park.
- Collecting firewood is not allowed inside the park.
- Visitors must report to the MET office before entering the park.
- Please follow the rules and regulations listed on your permit.

Have a fabulous, wet, wild time!

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