EASTERN ZIMBABWE and CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE

17 DAY TRIP: 2 to 18 December 2018

The main target of our trip, the African Pitta, is surely the most beautifully coloured of all the birds in our region—those lustrous blue patches on the wing and the rump, the deep red belly, green back, golden-buff chest, pink throat, black tail and a boldly striped black and yellow head.

In Mozambique, our trip focuses on the region north of Beira and towards the Zambezi River.
The Pitta is by no means the only attraction of this part of the world. This area boasts all the Mozambique “specials”, with the exception of the Olive-headed Weaver. These “specials” include the following birds which, within southern Africa, are found exclusively in Mozambique: Green-headed Oriole, White-chested Alethe, East Coast Akalat, Yellow-bellied Hyliota and Speckle-throated Woodpecker. Wetland areas hold out the prospect of finding Blue Quail, Great Snipe and Eurasian Bittern. A summer trip to the area often yields exceptional cuckoo sightings, including the rare Thick-billed, Barred Long-tailed and, with extreme good fortune, Lesser Cuckoo.

We spend two nights in Zimbabwe en route to Mozambique, the first at Triangle Country Club near Gonarezhou NP and the second on a farm near the magnificent Chirinda forest near Chipinge.

A further three nights of our trip are spent in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, en route from Mozambique. We will be based in the Bvumba highlands where birding is excellent and where we are sure to add some of the Zimbabwe specials to our list.

**THE DESTINATIONS**

**Chirinda Forest** is the southernmost area of tropical rainforest in Africa, covering the two rounded hilltops of Mount Selinda. It is situated 30km south of Chipinge town and is easily accessible along a tar road. It is one of the best researched forests in Zimbabwe, with scientific collections of flora and fauna being made as early as 1900. This spectacular forest, controlled by the Forestry Commission, is well known for its magnificent trees. Over 100 species occur in the forest, the most famous being the remains of an enormous red Mahogany Khaya nyasica. Mount Selinda rises to 1,200m altitude from the surrounding plateau and Mozambican coastal plain. Being the only high ground from there to the Indian Ocean 200km away to the east, it is frequently covered in cloud and mist and receives about 1,400mm of rain per year.
Chirinda is the largest area of medium altitude rainforest in Zimbabwe and it has the greatest mix of east and southern African plant species. It is also the home of several endemic plant and animal subspecies and one endemic species of butterfly.

**Rio Savane** lies at the mouth of the mangrove lined Savane River, some 30km north of Beira. The surrounding area consists of extensive marshland and remnant patches of coastal forest.

From our base at **Catapu**, situated 32km south of the Zambezi River we explore the Zambezi River area. This area includes extensive pristine coastal forest, mixed woodland, miombo woodland, pans and swamps. Good roads traverse the area and access all the main habitats.

We have three full days of birding in this very special area. Besides the beautiful African Pitta, this area boasts all the lowland forest specials.
The variety of quality habits in the area will ensure that we chalk up an extensive list of sought after species.

Gorongosa Mountain is an isolated mountain peak of 1863m in central Mozambique. It is sacred in local tradition and the only site in southern Africa to see the Green-headed Oriole. Habitats include lowland woodland with riverine thickets at the base, cliffs, scrubby slopes and montane forests higher up, with montane grassland at the peak. Footpaths lead from the base to the forests on the slopes and birding is rewarding all the way.

Gorongosa National Park is situated approximately 200km from the Zimbabwe border. The dry woodland, grassland and seasonal marshes in this huge (3770 sq km) National Park support large numbers of birds. Gorongosa was formerly one of the great game parks of Africa, but numbers of large game animals were significantly depleted during the war years. An extensive restocking programme is currently underway. Access into the Park at this time of year is restricted to higher-lying areas as the floodplains and grassland areas are usually inundated.
The Bvumba highlands lie approximately 25km above the city of Mutare and offer exciting and varied birding opportunities. Habitats within this area are varied and include montane grassland, montane forest, miombo woodland and exotic plantations. This is undoubtedly the best birding area in Zimbabwe and we can expect many “specials”.

**BIRDING ATTRACTIONS**

**Chirinda Forest**


**Rio Savane/Beira**

Great Snipe, Blue Quail, Mangrove Kingfisher, Collared Pratincole, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Short-tailed Pipit, Locustfinch, Tiny Greenbul, Copper Sunbird, Green Malkoha,
Magpie Mannikin, Red-headed Quelea, Rufous-winged Cisticola, Square-tailed Nightjar.

Zambezi Delta area (Catapu)


Gorongosa Mountain and Gorongosa area:

Ayre’s Hawk-Eagle, Green-headed Oriole, Anchieta’s Tchagra, Livingstone’s Turaco, Blue-spotted Wood-Dove, Pallid Honeyguide, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul, Lesser Seedcracker, Broad-tailed Warbler, Moustached Grass-Warbler, Black-winged Bishop Grey-headed Parrot, Arnot’s Chat, Western Violet-backed Sunbird, Speckle-throated Woodpecker, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Pennant-winged Nightjar, Racket-tailed Roller,
Great Snipe, Blue Quail, Mangrove Kingfisher, Collared Pratincole, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Short-tailed Pipit, Locustfinch, Tiny Greenbul, Copper Sunbird, Green Malkoha, Magpie Mannikin, Red-headed Quelea, Rufous-winged Cisticola, Square-tailed Nightjar.

Bvumba Highlands (Seldomseen, Bvumba Botanical Gardens, Cecil Kop NR, Mutare)

MAMMALS
We can expect to see some mammal species, including; Chacma Baboon, Samango Monkey, Vervet Monkey, Greater Kudu, Bushbuck, Impala, Oribi, Suni, Red Duiker, Warthog, Large Grey Mongoose, Slender Mongoose, Sun Squirrel, Red Squirrel, Tree Squirrel, Scrub Hare, Thick-tailed Bushbaby,
And with some luck, African Wild Dog, Large Spotted Genet, African Civet, Sable Antelope

**ITINERARY**

**Day 1 (Johannesburg–Triangle Country Club)**
Depart bright and early and head for Zimbabwe
Enter Zimbabwe at Beitbridge, arriving at destination in mid- afternoon
Afternoon birding and overnight at Triangle Country Club.

**Day 2 (Triangle-Chirinda)**
Early morning birding around Triangle
Depart after breakfast for Chirinda Forest, arriving around lunchtime
Afternoon birding in forest
Overnight at farm near Chirinda.

**Day 3 (Chirinda-Beira)**
Early morning birding in Chirinda Forest.
Depart after brunch for Beira, via Inchope
Late afternoon arrival at Macuti Complex, Beira
Overnight at Macuti Complex

**Days 4 & 5 (Beira/Rio Savane)**
Day spent exploring marshlands and forests.
Overnight at Macuti Complex

**Day 6 (Beira-Catapu)**
Early morning birding departure for Catapu, via Dondo and Muanza
Birding on route, arrive Mphingwe camp, Catapu mid-afternoon
Overnight at Mphingwe camp, Catapu

**Days 7, 8, 9 (Catapu)**
Days spent birding the surrounding area.
Overnight at Mphingwe Camp.

**Day 10 (Catapu-Gorongosa area)**
Early morning birding around camp
Depart after breakfast for Gorongosa Adventures camp, Gorongosa area
Arrive mid-afternoon and bird around camp
Overnight at Gorongosa Adventures
Day 11 (Gorongosa area)
Early morning ascent of Mt Gorongosa
Return to camp late morning
Rest of day spent birding around area
Overnight at Gorongosa Adventures

Day 12 (Gorongosa area)
Day spent birding in Gorongosa National Park
Overnight at Gorongosa Adventures

Day 13 (Gorongosa-Bvumba)
Early morning birding around Gorongosa Adventures
Depart after breakfast for Zimbabwe
Enter Zimbabwe around lunchtime and head for Seldomseen Cottages, Bvumba
Overnight at Seldomseen

Days 14 & 15 (Bvumba area)
Days spent birding in miombo woodland and forests
Overnight at Seldomseen

Day 16 (Seldomseen –Bubi River)
Early morning birding around Seldomseen
Depart after breakfast
Arrive Bubi River mid afternoon
Overnight at the Lion and Elephant, Bubi River

Day 17 (Bubi River- Johannesburg)
Early morning birding around camp
Depart after breakfast for Johannesburg
Arrive at destination late afternoon