

Mwinilunga & Ikelenge

October 2023

Dates: From Lusaka: Fri 6 October – Mon 16 October (10 nights / 11 days)
Optional, from Solwezi / Kalumbila: Sat 7 October – Sun 15 October (8 nights / 9 days)

Guides: Frank Willems & Leslie Reynolds

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, with ample attention for other wildlife.*

Accommodation type: mix of lodging and mobile camp (3-star)

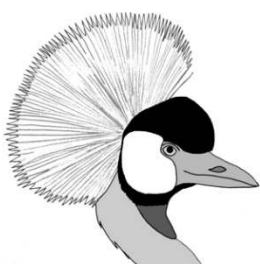
Participants: minimum 2, maximum 12

Package price (10 nights/11 days; please enquire for shorter options):

International, per person: \$2,399 self-drive & own camping gear; \$2,549 fully inclusive self-drive; \$3,199 fully inclusive including transport.

Zambian/SADC residents, per person: \$1,599 self-drive & own camping gear; \$1,749 fully inclusive self-drive; \$2,399 fully inclusive including transport.

Included are all guiding services, catering, tea & coffee, accommodation. Excluded are drinks (available on request) and items of a personal nature. 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

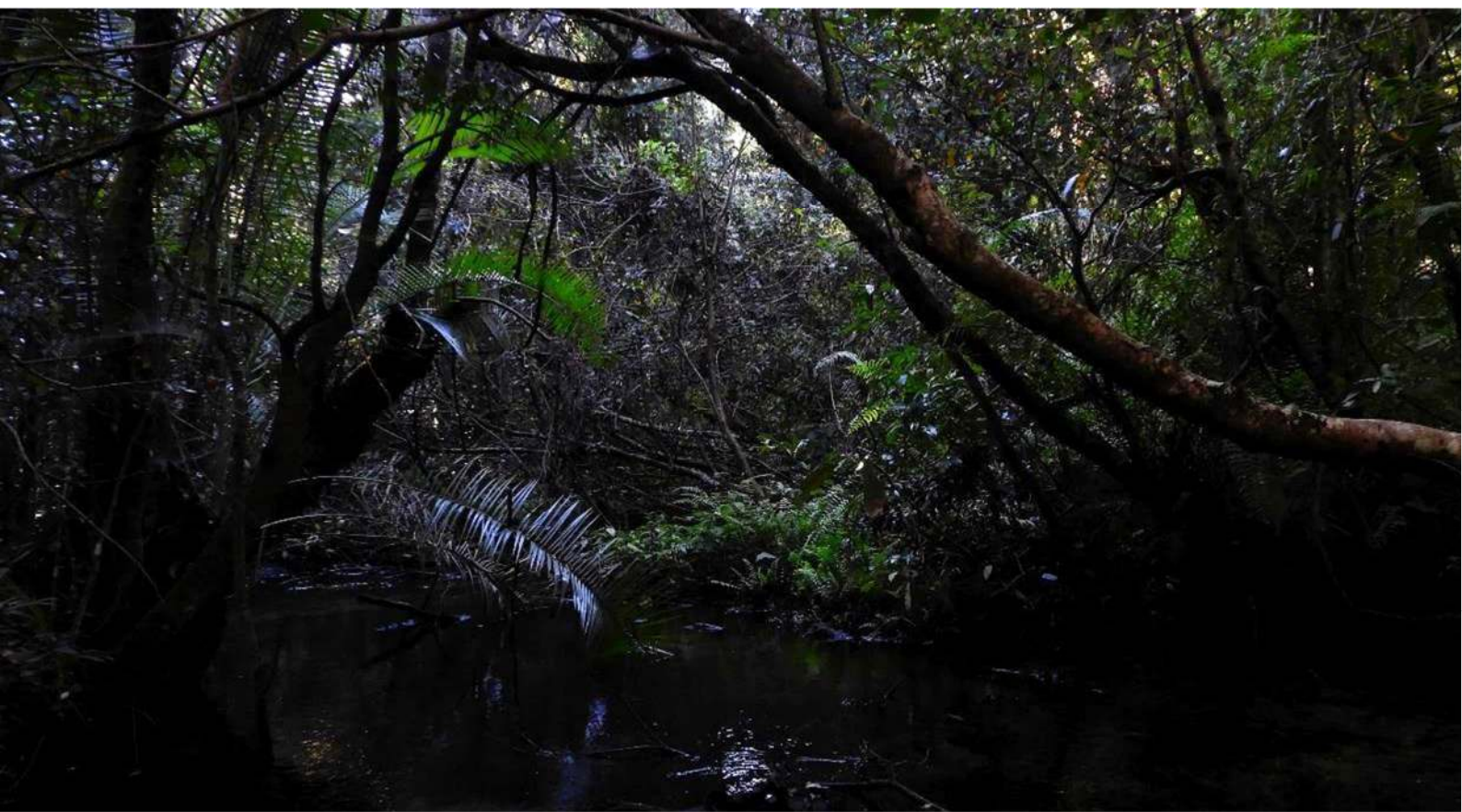
Web www.birdingzambia.com - email birdingzambia@gmail.com

Introduction: Mwinilunga, where Congo meets Kalahari

Among birders and ecologists, Mwinilunga needs little introduction. The extreme northwest of Zambia, now split into Mwinilunga and Ikelenge Districts, 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, while more southern sections are covered with scenic *mavunda* forest. 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, Dambo Cisticola and Bocage's Weaver. Others are typical for the lowland forests and grasslands of Central Africa, such as Spot-breasted Ibis and Black-collared Bulbul, while yet other species are typical of Africa's montane areas, such as Wing-snapping Cisticola and Red-throated Wryneck. We expect to see most of these "Mwinilunga specials" including some of the many exciting recent discoveries.

Palm Civet, Dwarf Galago, White-bellied Tree Pangolin, Giant Otter Shrew and Brush-tailed Porcupine are just a few of the extraordinary tropical mammals hiding in the plains and forests. Lots of regional endemics occur, such as the Sakeji Horseshoe Bat and Katanga Bush Viper.

This far-flung corner remains very remote. Birding Zambia offers a unique package, hoping to stimulate birders and nature enthusiasts to explore the area. Your guides, Frank Willems and Leslie Reynolds, have extensively explored this area, resulting in the discovery of birds and reptiles new to Zambia. The focus will be on sharing the magic of the recently discovered jewel Kalwelwa Depression, which form Zambia's largest rainforests, as well as the traditional sites Chitunta Plain, Source of the Zambezi and Zambezi Rapids, and reaching into the extreme tip of the country, Jimbe Drainage. We stay overnight in truly remote wilderness areas, though whilst lodging in style. Although the focus is on birds, one doesn't need to be a fanatic to join; there will be ample opportunity to enjoy other wildlife or just enjoy the bush. Your visit will support BirdWatch Zambia as well as the Kalwelwa Conservancy which Frank is initiating in partnership with the local community and others.



Detailed program

The itinerary starts and ends in Lusaka, with vehicle transfer to Mutanda. You are welcome to join from any other starting point in Zambia on 6th or 7th.

Solwezi is easily reached by the daily 7:00 ProFlight flight from Lusaka. The transfer to Mutanda Nature Lodge takes 30 minutes, in time to connect with the group on 7th. Return on Sunday 15th will be in time for the 16:50 Solwezi to Lusaka flight There are also daily flights from Johannesburg to Ndola.

Fri 6 October

Early morning departure from Lusaka with Leslie. The transfer to Mutanda Nature Lodge crosses the entire Copperbelt. Short stops will be made along the way to check for the likes of Red-throated Cliff and Angolan Swallow. Accommodation will be in spacious chalets.

Sat 7 October

Early morning birding on the grounds of Mutanda Nature Lodge, which is well-known for tricky species such as Cassin's Flycatcher and Bamboo Warbler, and a great introduction to the birding ahead! Zambian specials we may not see elsewhere during this trip include Bocage's Akalat, Grey-olive Greenbul, Olive Woodpecker, Half-collared Kingfisher, Black-faced Canary and Spotted Creeper.

After breakfast, you will drive to Kalwelwa Bushcamp, a journey of approximately 7 hours including birding stops and potholes along the way. The tarmac road crosses Kabompo River, a well-known site for Red-throated Cliff Swallow, Mountain Wagtail, Bamboo Warbler and Bocage's Akalat. Once you leave the tarmac beyond Mwinilunga town, it is a pleasant 2-hour drive (including some birding) through partly intact miombo and Marquesia forests to Kalwelwa.

Frank and team will await you at our comfortable bushcamp at Kalwelwa.

Sun 8 – Tue 10 October

Three full days in the Kalwelwa Depression, a highly diverse and scenic area only known to the ornithological world since 2015. It can be argued to be among Zambia's most 'complete' systems

with habitats ranging from desert-like white sands, grasslands, sedge marsh and open water, to deciduous woodlands and both dry and wet evergreen forest. It is now known to hold almost all of the "Mwinilunga specials", most of which in great densities.

Kalwelwa Bushcamp is operated by Frank & Inge. We will spend some time 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.



We will try the extensive rainforests - Zambia's 2nd largest such forest - for Spotted Thrush Babbler, Least Honeyguide, White-spotted Flufftail, Blue Malkoha, Afep, Olive and Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Shining-blue, Blue-breasted and the elusive White-bellied Kingfisher, while the forest edges may produce Compact Weaver, Black-faced canary and White-chinned Prinia. As recent as May 2021, the presence of Vermiculated Fishing Owl and Spot-breasted Ibis was confirmed here. Vermiculated Fishing Owl forms a prime target for our visit, though sightings are not guaranteed.

We will work the plains in search of Grimwood's, Fülleborn's and Rosy-throated Longclaw, Blue Quail, Locust Finch, Black-chinned Quail Finch, Short-tailed Pipit, a wealth of cisticolas (notably Dambo, Wing-snapping, Pale-crowned, Levallant's, Stout and Tinkling), Angolan Lark, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Black-and-rufous Swallow, Red-throated Wryneck, Wattled Crane, Denham's and Black-bellied Bustard, and much more. The wealth of wetland birds is now known to include breeding African Great Bittern, one of Africa's rarest birds, while displaying African Snipes make for spectacular sunsets.



Wed 11 October

Early start from Kalwelwa. We will first dedicate a few hours to Chitunta Plain, where Zambia's only breeding colony of Bocage's Weaver is present. Our lunch will be at the Source of the Zambezi, the well-known National Monument which also is of great interest for forest birds. From here, it is another 3-4 hours to reach our mobile bushcamp in the very remote Jimbe Drainage.

Thu 12 and Fri 13 October

Full days in the Jimbe Drainage. The tall evergreen forests here have a stronger 'Guineo-Congolian affinity' than any other site in Zambia. Our camp is at "Mad Man's Crossing", a site famous as Zambia's only known locality for the elusive African Shrike-Flycatcher. It is at this very site that Frank together with Birding Zambia's Wouter van Spijker discovered Grey-chinned and Blue-throated Brown Sunbirds new to Zambia in 2020. In 2021, Zambia's first Western Nicator and Forest Hinged Terrapin were discovered during the Birding Zambia tour, while Chapin's River Frog was added in 2022! Other mouth-watering key species here include Green-throated and Orange-tufted Sunbird, Sooty Flycatcher, Red-tailed Bristlebill, Chestnut Wattle-eye and Orange-cheeked Waxbill.





In relative terms, Black-bellied Seedcracker is common in the small subsistence gardens, as is a long list of other small seedeaters including Red-cheeked Cordon-blue, Dusky Indigobird, Fawn-breasted Waxbill and Red-headed Quelea. Thomas’s Dwarf Galago and Forest Vine Snake are among other “Congo species” we may well see. And we stand a real chance of discovering yet another addition to the Zambian list!

Sat 14 October

This day is also Cornell’s (eBird) Global Big Day which we will contribute to.

Early morning in the Jimbe Drainage. From here, we will head for the extensive and scenic Zambezi Rapids, where we hope to find Forbes’s Plover and Cassin’s Flycatcher. We will traverse the Chitunta Plain and end at Wina wa Nzambi, just north of Mwinilunga Town. Time depending, we will still bird the premises.

Sun 15 October

Morning birding at Wina wa Nzambi. The scenic old house and lodge overlooks a large and deep sinkhole, surrounded by excellent miombo woodlands. A long list of miombo specials is reliably found here. Notable species include Bar-winged Weaver, Rufous-bellied and Miombo Tit, Spotted Creeper, Souza Shrike, Miombo Wren-warbler, Miombo Rock Thrush, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Black-necked Eremomela, Western Miombo Sunbird, Western Violet-backed Sunbird, Red-capped Crombec, Dusky Flycatcher and Pale-billed Hornbill, with chances of a range of honeyguides including Pallid and Scaly-throated. Both Trilling and Whistling Cisticola occur and may be found in mixed groups. Böhm’s Spinetail might be seen foraging and displaying above the “crater” or other parts of the property.

After a decent late morning brunch, you will head to Mutanda Nature Lodge, a 4-hour drive.

Mon 16 October

Early morning birding within the premises of Mutanda Nature Lodge, followed by breakfast and the return drive (9 hours to Lusaka, or 30 minutes to Solwezi Airport).



Map of the route

Only the sections from and to Mutanda Nature Lodge are indicated.

A & G: Mutanda Nature Lodge

B: Kalwelwa Bushcamp

C: Chitunta Plain

D: Source of the Zambezi

E: Mad Man's Crossing, Jimbe Drainage

F: Wina wa Nzambi

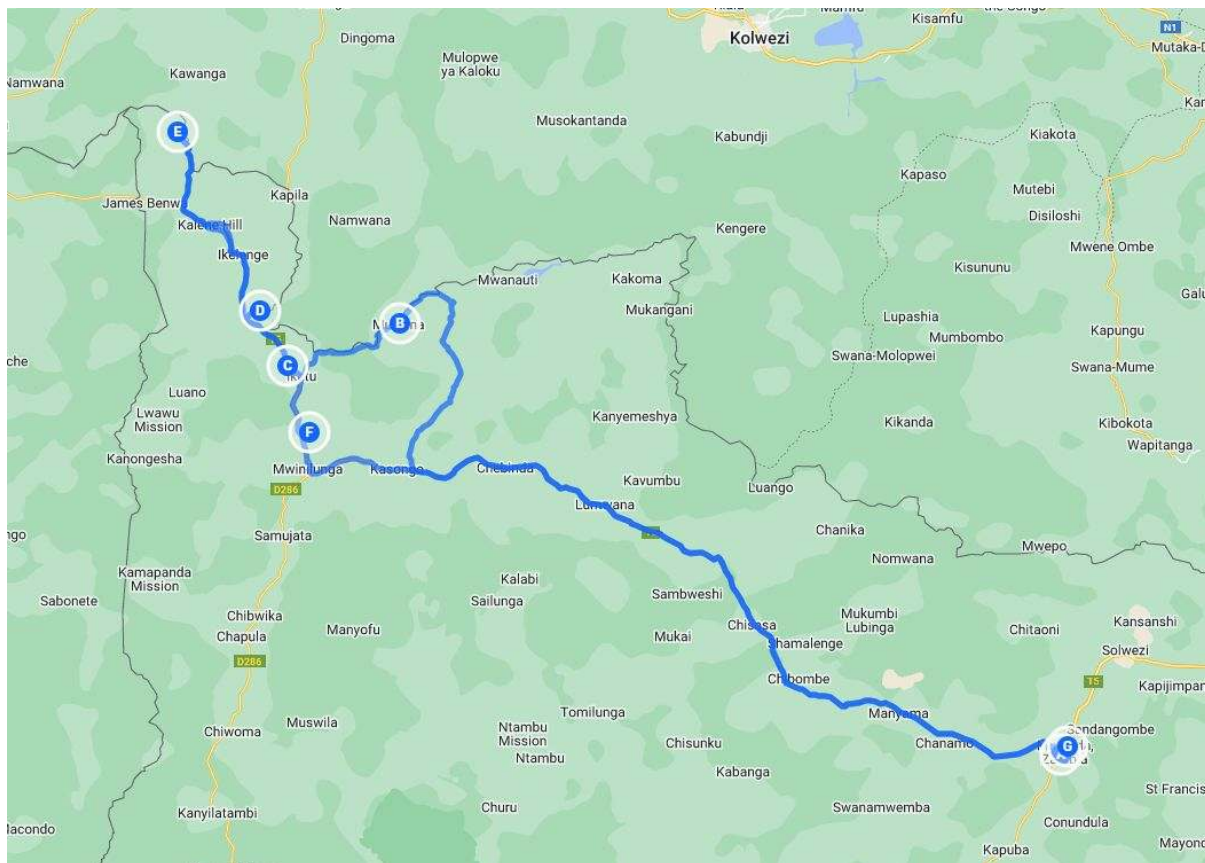


Photo credits: Ross Gallardy (Vermiculated Fishing Owl - Kalwelwa), Wouter van Spijker (Blue-throated and Grey-chinned Sunbird - Jimbe), Frank Willems (all other images - Kalwelwa/Kakoma/Jimbe)

