

# Liuwa Plain National Park

## November 2024



### One-off offer for the brand-new luxury Liuwa Camp at unique openings rates

#### Dates:

- (1) From Lusaka: Sunday 10 – Monday 18 November 2024 (9 days / 8 nights)  
Only Liuwa Plain (self-drive): Tuesday 12 – Sunday 17 November 2024 (6 days / 5 nights)  
**ONLY 2 SPACES LEFT AVAILABLE**
- (2) From Lusaka: Saturday 16 – Sunday 24 November 2024 (9 days / 8 nights)  
Only Liuwa Plain (self-drive): Monday 18 – Saturday 23 November 2024 (6 days / 5 nights)  
**FULLY BOOKED**

Guide: Frank Willems

Number of people: Minimum 4, maximum 12

Package type: Birds & Wildlife guided safari: the tour is a balanced mix of birding and wildlife watching, in an area with abundant megafauna.



# BIRDING ZAMBIA

## Introduction

Liuwa Plain National Park (366,000 ha) is bound to become one of Africa's best-known parks. The photogenic open grasslands, dotted with pans and filled with large mammals and birds, are simply spectacular.

Mid November is the prime time to visit Liuwa Plain National Park in Zambia's Western Province. The early rains have turned the vast sandy plains into a flower-rich carpet of shades of green, yellow and pink. It is perfectly timed to see the huge herds of wildebeest, for which this is calving season, and other large mammals. Among huge bird numbers that congregate in November is almost the global population of Black-winged Pratincole.



Since African Parks took on the management of the park in 2004, visitor numbers are steadily growing. The Wildebeest number over 50,000 by now, rapidly recovering from decades of neglect, representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Wildebeest migration in Africa. Large herds congregate in the central plains in November. Zebra numbers in the thousands as well, while Buffalo, Red Lechwe and Tsessebe are among large mammals seen in variable numbers. Oribi and Steinbuck are amazingly common.

The densities and visibility of carnivores and other large mammals in an incredibly scenic

landscape have made Liuwa a favoured destination for iconic film productions, such as the BBC's *The Hunt* and *Dynasty*. All Zambian large predators are present in the area, following the wildebeests in their tracks. Spotted Hyena is common throughout the system, with a population in the hundreds. Lion, Wild Dog and Cheetah reside in the plains in growing numbers and are regularly encountered. Selous's Mongoose, Meller's Mongoose, African Wild Cat and Striped Weasel are among smaller carnivores.



The area is one of the most important in the world for Wattled and Grey Crowned Crane which are commonly seen in large flocks. The wader watching here is some of the best in Zambia, with great numbers and variety. Pelicans and various duck species might occur in large numbers. A little-known wildlife spectacle is formed by the vast numbers of the rare Black-winged Pratincole. Almost the whole world population, some 150-200,000 birds, stage in the area in October – November, migrating south along a narrow flyway from their breeding grounds in the steppes of Kazakhstan and surrounds. It is likely we will see clouds of many thousands or even tens of thousands.



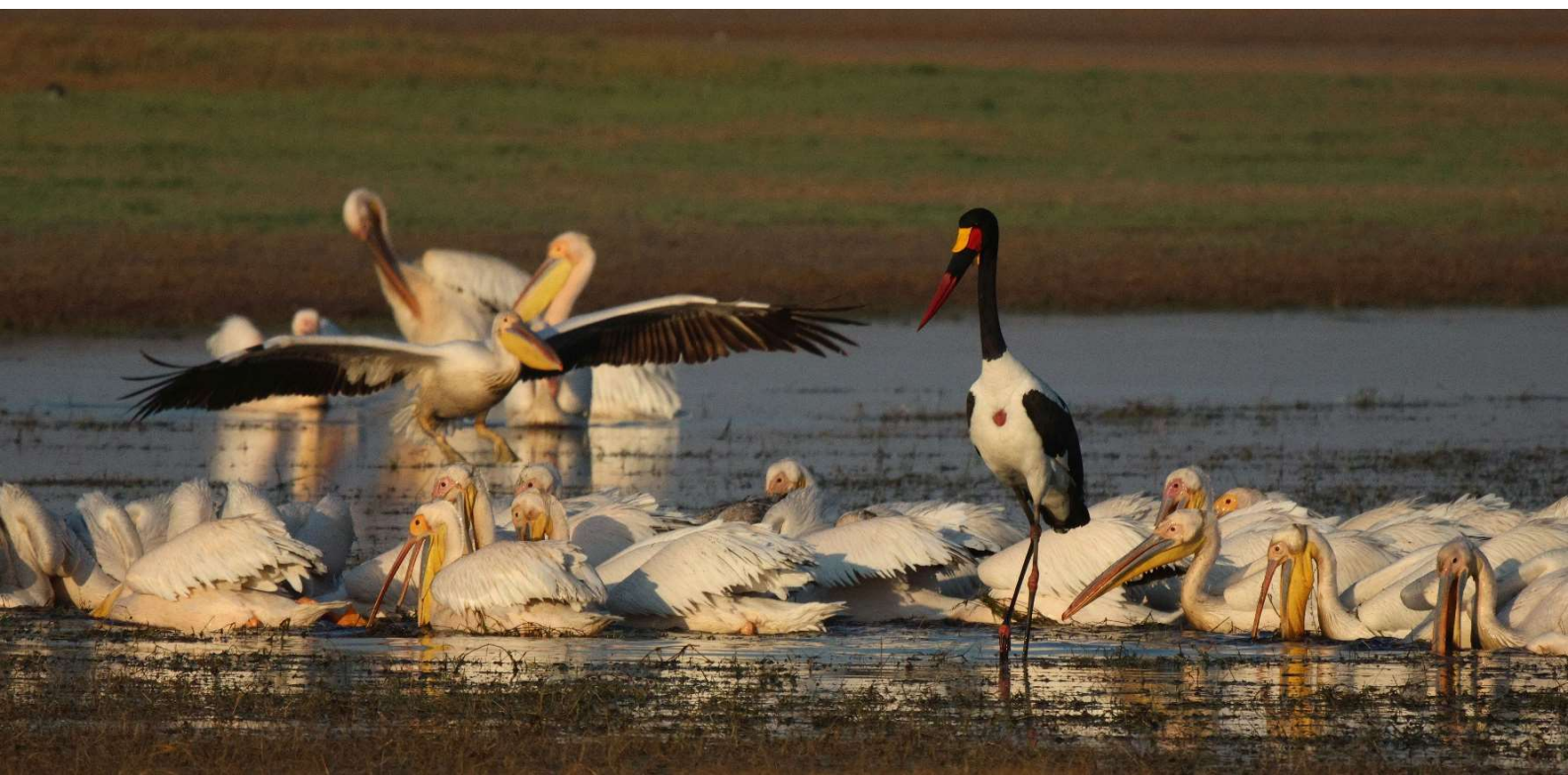
Of global importance are also the numbers of migratory Caspian Plover which is abundant in November. Other characteristic waders include Pied Avocet and a range of migrants, including often scarce species like Curlew or Black-tailed Godwit. The attractive White-bellied Bustard is among several bustard species and is commonly seen. Raptors are everywhere including the characteristic Secretarybird (largest population in Zambia) and Greater Kestrel. We expect to see excellent numbers of White-backed, Lappet-faced, Hooded and White-headed Vultures, together with other scavengers like Bateleur and Tawny Eagle. Red-footed Falcon and Amur Falcon both occur. We may get lucky finding Red-necked Buzzard, a species only recorded three times in Zambia to date, with all records coming from Liuwa Plain.



Several races of passerines are endemic to the area, notably the local forms of Clapper and Pink-billed Larks. These occur alongside other characteristic larks including Grey-backed Sparrow-lark which is rare elsewhere in Zambia. Swamp and Rufous-cheeked Nightjar are of interest. Flamboyant Long-tailed Widows display above wetter sections of the grasslands.



The timing is excellent also to come across some of Liuwa's fascinating amphibians and reptiles, such as Anchieta's Cobra and the recently described Beytelli's Bullfrog.



## Detailed program

**The itinerary starts and ends in Lusaka, with vehicle transfer to and from Liuwa. You are also welcome to join on a self-drive basis, for the full length of the package or the days in Liuwa only.**



### *Day 1*

Pickup from Lusaka International Airport. A 3-hour drive takes us to the town of Mumbwa where we will stay in chalets in the Excellent Guesthouse.

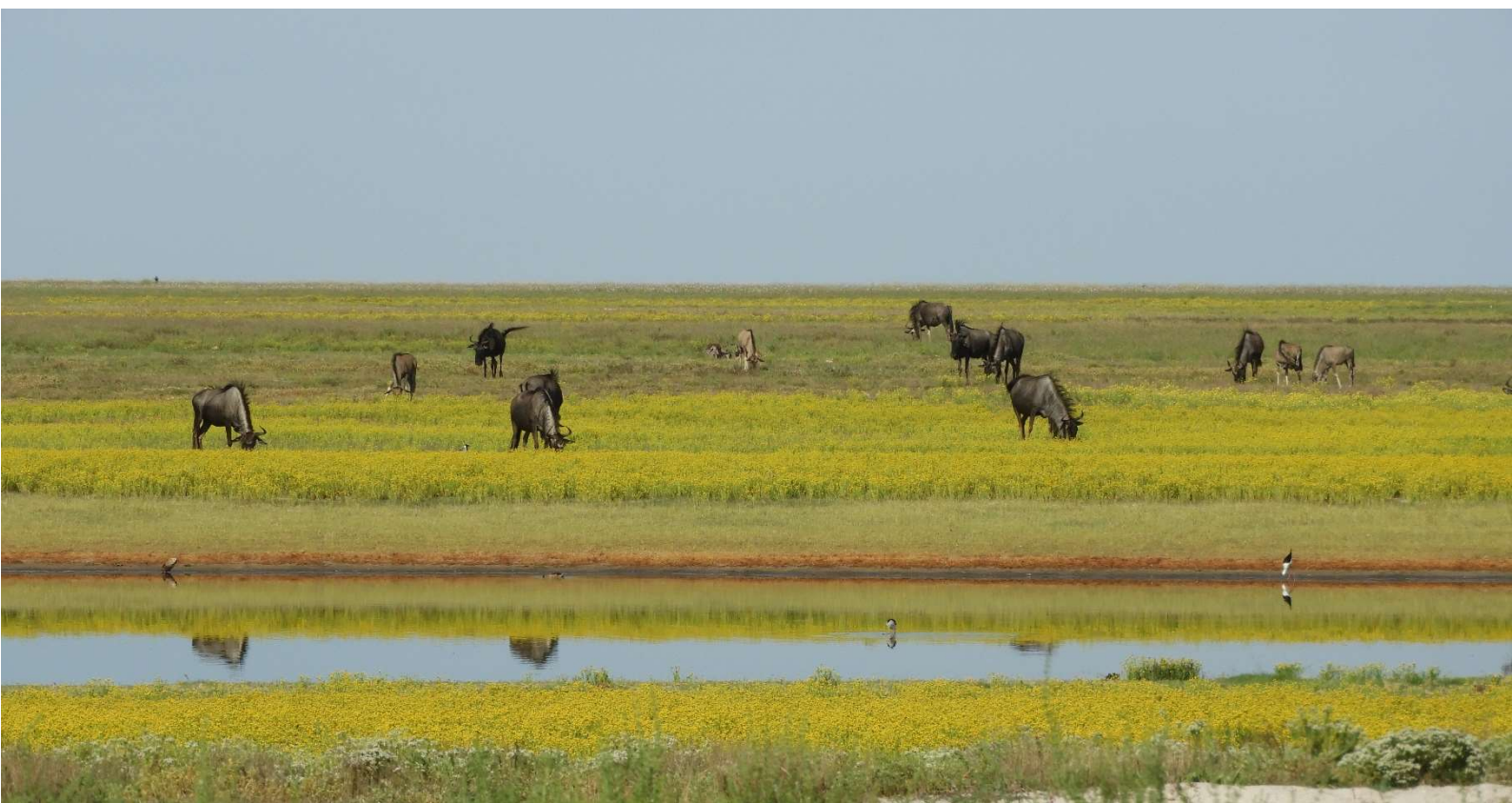
### *Day 2*

Early start so that you will have ample time to watch for birds and mammals along the road through the vast Kafue National Park. Puku, Impala, Warthog and Kinda Baboon are among common mammals here. Elephant, Hartebeest and Sable antelope are often seen as well. Large carnivores like Lion and Leopard are common but require more luck to see. The interesting birdlife includes Wattled and Grey Crowned Crane, Saddle-billed Stork and a range of raptors.

Total driving time from Mumbwa to Mongu is about 5 hours. You will arrive in good time at the comfortable Liseli Lodge where you will meet Frank.

### *Day 3*

Early morning transfer to the Liuwa Plain National Park. The route goes through the vast Barotse Floodplains. This floodplain complex is among the biggest such systems in the world, covering thousands of square kilometers. Internationally important waterbird concentrations occur here, with Openbill Stork, African Skimmer and many herons occurring in large numbers. Lesser Black-backed Gull surprisingly occurs year-round and may be seen from the main bridge with luck. It is also here that the famous Kuomboka Ceremony takes place.



Via the recently constructed bridges over the Zambezi and the Luanginga, we will enter the Liuwa system. It is a pleasant 1-2 hour drive to our base for the coming days, Liuwa Camp. This comfortable camp has 8 spacious tented units.

*Days 4 - 7*

We will have four full days to fully explore the Liuwa Plain National Park. Liuwa Camp is strategically located in the southwest corner of the central plains (formerly Lyangu Campsite). We will explore the vast plains, many pools and the Matamanene Stream system in search of birds, mammals and other wildlife. We will return each day to the camp to enjoy the top cuisine prepared by the Liuwa team and a campfire under the stars.

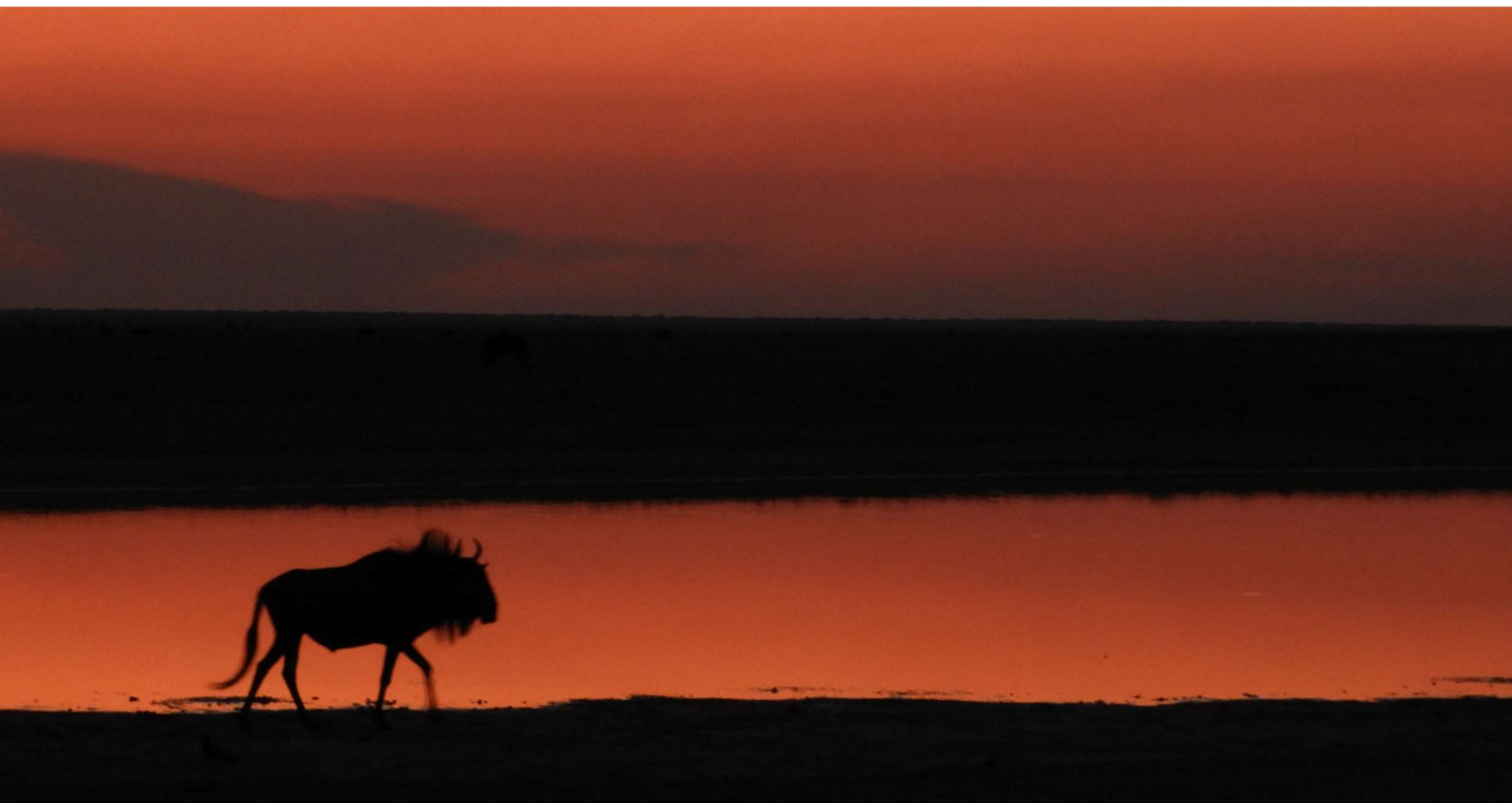
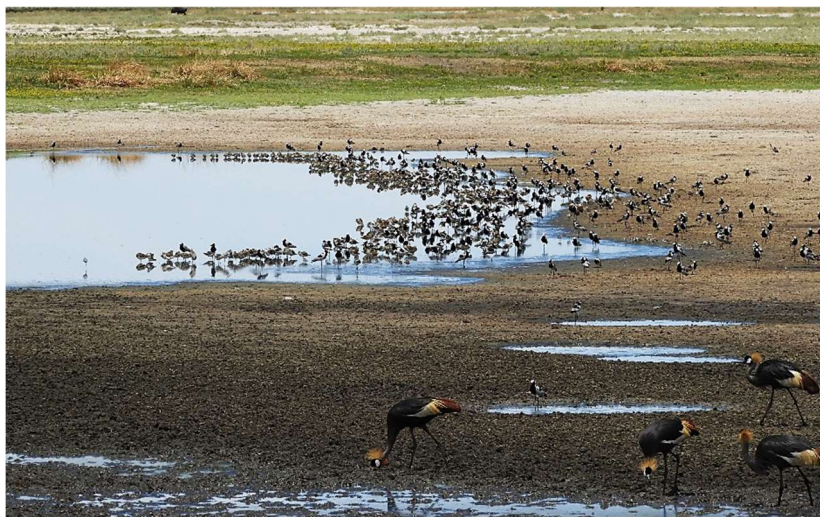
The waterhole at Liuwa Camp itself attracts a lot of wildlife including frequently the rapidly growing buffalo herds.

*Day 8*

Early start, enjoying the southern section of the Liuwa Plain and Barotse Floodplains on our way out. We will push up to Mumbwa, a drive of some 8 hours from Kalabo.

*Day 9*

Return to Lusaka. The airport is a 3-hour drive from Mumbwa.





### Package price

We will stay at the new Liuwa Camp. This package was originally scheduled for the now dissolved Sibika Camp. African Parks has very kindly offered us to stay at the new luxury Liuwa Camp at a similar rate. A unique opportunity!

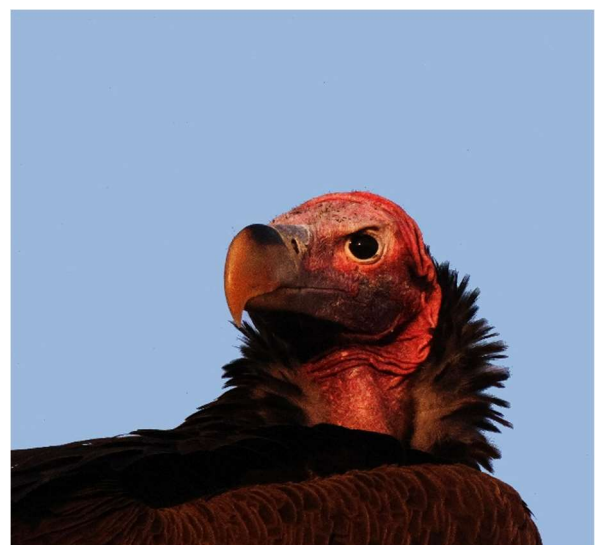
Your guide, Frank Willems, is Zambia’s best known birding guide and expert on Zambia’s birds and other wildlife with nearly two decades experience in the Zambian bush.

#### **Liuwa only, 6-day package, self-drive:**

\$2,049 SADC residents, \$2,559 international

#### **9-day package, fully inclusive including transport from/to Lusaka:**

\$3,199 SADC residents, \$3,999 international



*Included are all guiding services, catering, tea & coffee, accommodation. Excluded are park fees (per person per night \$40 international / \$20 SADC / \$12 resident / K30 citizen, \$15 / \$7 for international/local vehicle), drinks 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 2024 and 2025. For each booking, donations will be made to BirdWatch Zambia and the Mwinilunga Conservation Project.*

