

20 August 2014

Matusadona Game Count 2014

Team Birdlife Zimbabwe



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Team Members: Carl Wilson, Innocent Magunje, Damian Newmarch

Friday 8th August

Harare to Gubu Bomas

Birdlife Team arrives at Chifudzi and meets Peter for briefing and handover of radio. Proceed to Villunduli to collect our designated scout Makon.

Arrive Gubu Bomas last light and walk upstream after deciding not to camp at the bomas. Numerous signs of animals drinking kudu leopard lion elephant duiker dassie and impala. Terrapins seen in the pools. Camped at the site of the old road camp by the tin hut.



Birds seen that afternoon on the river Hooded Vulture, D/Banded Sandgrouse Black-backed

Puffback Shrike, Three-banded Plover, Terrestrial Bulbul, Shelley's Francolin Hamerkop Meve's Starling, White-browed Sparrow-weaver, Cape Turtle Dove, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Pied Kingfisher, Southern Ground Hornbills, Natal Spurfowl, Red-billed Hornbill, Arrow-marked Babbler, Forktailed Drongo, Swainson's Francolin and African Scops Owl.

During the night 4 bush babies were forging in the trees around camp. Hyena were heard on all side from around 8:00pm.

Saturday 9th August

Gubu River Camp to Shushuma Spring

Left for the Springs after a morning bird walk down stream and back in loop as per GPS track submitted.

Packed and walked up the river bed to the first escarpment. Fresh signs of kudu spoor and dung. Aardvark spoor and porcupine spoor and dung seen on the track. Serval cat spoor seen on track. Large evidence of buffalo passing through the area although it was old spoor and dung. Plenty of grazing available even 2km from the Gubu Crossing. Very old zebra spoor. Sand-bellied sand snake seen.

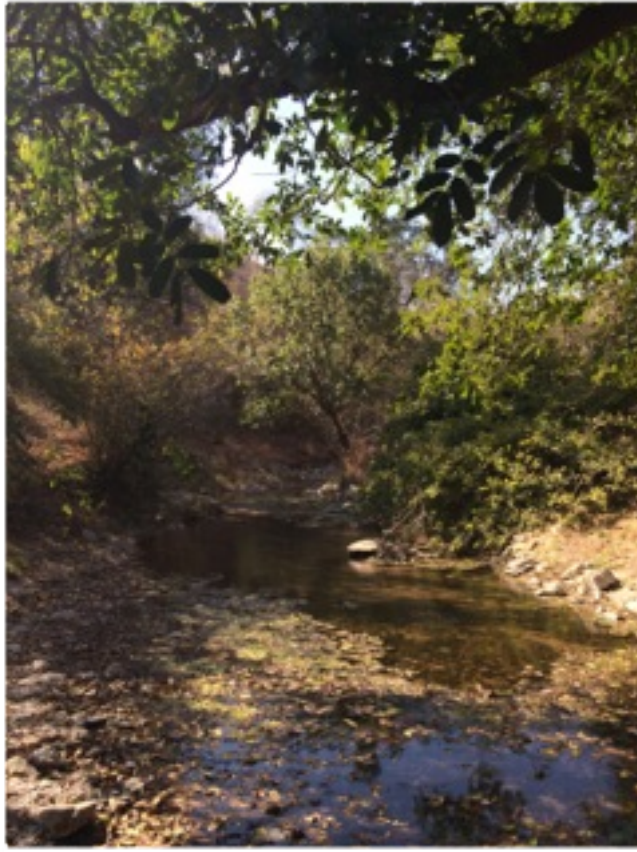
After climbing to the second escarpment the signs of an old poachers camp were found 35K0664178,8127122.



Suspected hyena den found 35K0665395, 8126364. Leopard spoor found around the den site.

Small herd of impala seen. As we approached the spring from the south

west we spooked two small herds of buffalo no more than 10-15 individuals per herd. Baboon drinking from the lower spring.



Two bushbuck 1 x ram and 1 x female seen at the second spring.

We made camp at on the ridge above the spring. Grazing still plentiful. Lots of water available in the pools. Mainly buffalo spoor seen at the water.

Birds seen that day were: African Fish Eagle, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Green Wood-hoopoe, Black-headed Oriole, Yellow-throated Petronia, Marabou Stork, Grey-headed Sparrow, White-bellied Sunbird, Grey Go-away Bird, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Red-eyed Dove, Chinspot Batis, Blue

Waxbill, Laughing Dove, Cinnamon-

breasted Bunting, Southern Black Tit, Kurrichane Thrush, Rietz's Helmet Shrike, Common Scimitarbill, Shikra, Livingstone's Flycatcher (first record for the area), Black-collared Barbet, Spotted Thick-knee, Meyer's Parrots, Black-backed Puffback, Red-billed Oxpecker, African Grey Hornbill, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Lesser Honeyguide, Purple-crested Turaco, Augur Buzzard, Jameson's Firefinch, Crested Barbet, African Green Pigeons, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, African Scops Owl, Fiery-necked Nightjar, African Barred Owlet.

The faint call of lion was heard from the east over the mountains. Bush babies forged around camp again at night. Except for the call of nightjars and owls everything was very quiet. No fires were seen on any of the

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surrounding hills. Buffalo moved past camp in the night but were nowhere to be seen in the morning. They had crossed the stream beneath our camp and headed north over the ridge.

Sunday 10th August

Shushuma Spring to Gubu Mouth.

Birdlife were keen to log some water fowl and it was decided to head to the mouth of the Gubu River and do the necessary. We left camp and waded back to the Gubu River camp via the waterfalls. Walking back on a different path we came across a buffalo head very old and killed by lions. Poached elephant skull found, evidence of hacking on the skull. No tusks



found. Scout thought a young bull as teeth in good condition. Position logged as 35 K 0665966, 8126216.

At position 35 K 0665915, 8126230 another elephant carcass was found with tusks still in the skull. Another young

bull. Scout Makon collected the tusks and messaged his finding to Villunduli on site.

Warthog spoor seen around a pool in the lower slopes before the gorge. Old warthog den found at 35 K 0665256, 8126131.



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Skull of male warthog found nearby. Hyena spoor abundant here. We now were entering the gorge. Still large pools of water and impala and kudu spoor. Climbing down the gorge two sightings of klipspringer in pairs were seen. Slender mongoose seen twice. Kudu bull seen as we exited the gorge. Baboons seen here. Large kudu bull carcass found, lion kill. Position 35 K 0664366, 8122760. Five kudu cows cross in front of us heading west one kilometer from the exit of the gorge.



Walked back to the Gubu Camp and restocked. Carried on down to the Gubu Mouth criss crossing the Gubu. Herd of 20+ impala 35 K 0660576, 8129571. Dassies seen in the red cliffs close to the water. As we near the Gubu mouth pools of water are more frequent and many type of water



birds seen, list below. Evidence of elephant but none seen up till now.
Bushbuck male and kudu bull seen near Gubu Mouth.



Birds seen, African Goshawk, Freckled Nightjar, Flappet Lark, Giant Eagle-owl, Tropical Boubou, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Natal Spurfowl, Grey-hooded Kingfisher, Giant Kingfisher, African

Harrier-hawk, Southern Black Flycatcher, Greater Honeyguide, Black Stork, Crested Francolin, Bearded Woodpecker, Pied Wagtail, Green-backed Heron, Three-banded Plovers, Black-chested Snake Eagle, White-crowned



Lapwing, Blacksmith Lapwing, Wood Sandpiper, Black Winged-stilt, White-fronted Bee-eaters, African Hoopoe, Common Greenshank, Wire-tailed Swallow, Red-winged Starling, Glossy Ibis, Egyptian Geese, African Jacana, Water Thick

Knee.



Hyena heard calling at night from all around us. Hippo heard in the lake. Fish eagle pair seen fishing till after sunset.

Monday 11th August

Gubu Mouth Camp to Gubu Mouth Camp



We decided to do a bird walk in a quadrant from the camp along the shore in a northerly direction turn east away from the lake and then south and back to camp. Directions as per the positions submitted.

Walking along the shoreline a herd of 12 hippo were seen 35 K 065787, 8130657. One small crocodile seen only. Young hippo calf seen on the land at 35 K 0658112, 8130986. Injuries on its back and headed towards water when we disturbed it. No sign of the mother and a carcass in the area, no birds either. Later on that day we did not see the youngster again.



Following a river eastwards we found lion spoor fresh at 35 K 0658488, 8131879. Saw a small herd of three elephants with one youngster. Another herd of elephants +- 5 individuals with young again 35 K 065888, 8131862. All very skittish and headed off without a sound. Of mention here are two Pels Fishing Owl sightings. One at 35 K 0658947, 8131756 and 35 K 0658798, 813 0399.



Pels Fishing Owl

Returning to camp we encountered a small herd of elephant. They had one really small calf with them. We took cover near the bank and they approached us quite close. The scout thought they were going to be too close and discharged his rifle in the air. The herd fled into the bush. The scout reported immediately that he had discharged his rifle to the necessary authority.



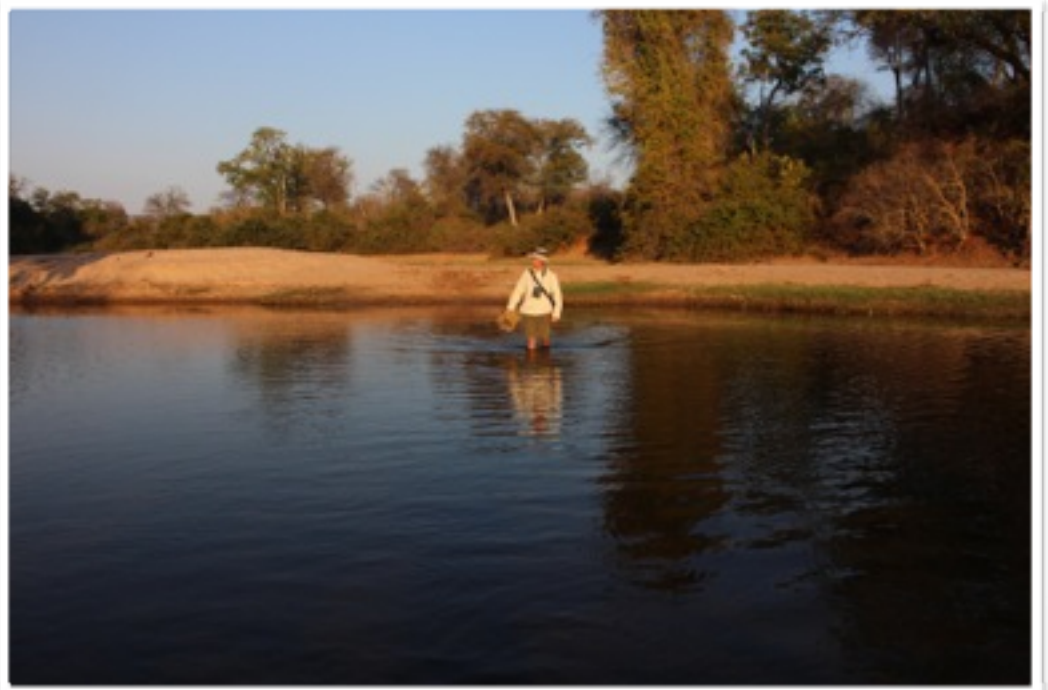
In the afternoon we took a walk on the opposite side of the Gubu. Saw a female leopard drinking at 35 K 0657675, 8130384. Three hippo seen on land grazing in the jesse. Found evidence of a leopard kill in a tree at 35 K 0657817, Fish Eagle nest at the same site. Numerous terrapins seen in the lake and river. Dassies seen living in clump of trees.

Birds seen, Lesser-striped Swallow, African Palm Swift, Wire-tailed Swallow, Bohm's Spinetail, Long-billed Crombec, Glossy Ibis, Green-backed Heron, Tropical Boubou, Black-backed Puffback, Dark-capped Bulbul, White-browed Scrub Robin, White-browed Robin-chat, Little Egret, Blacksmith Lapwing, Kittlitz's Plover, Hooded Vulture, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Great White Egret, African Jacana, Ruff, Reed Cormorant, Malachite Kingfisher, White-backed Vulture, Mosque Swallow, Lilac-breasted Roller, White-rumped Swift, African Green Pigeons, Helmeted Guineafowl,

Saddle-billed
Stork, Square-
tailed Nightjar.

Tuesday
12th August

Gubu
Mouth Camp to
Exit



Today being our last day we decided to walk back to the vehicle and then take a walk back towards the escarpment up the river we had seen the springs and Pels Fishing Owls on.

On the way we saw two herds of impala +- 20 in each. Hyena spoor found all along the track to the Gubu River. The walk out through the jesse proved uneventful but as we neared the road there were signs of buffalo

moving up towards
the escarpment.



We walked up the
river to the
escarpment. There
was no spring on the
river we had followed
so we walked along
the bottom in the
direction of the Gubu.

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We came upon rhino spoor from that morning walking in the direction of the Gubu. Rhino spoor at 35 K 0664702, 8129953. Once at a spring there



was more rhino spoor of one male and female. Spring at 35 K 0664287, 8129579. Scout messaged immediately to get a group to come and track the rhino from Chifudzi.



Walk back to car was uneventful, passed a herd of elephant in the jesse but did not see them. Steenbok, scrub hare also seen.

Once at the vehicle we packed and left the park via Villunduli and Chifudzi.

Birds seen that day: Arnott's Chat, Cut-throat Finch, Yellow-billed Canary, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Black Stork, Hamerkop, Short-tailed Eagle, White-backed Vulture on a nest at 35 K 0663808, 8130423.

Thanks again for the opportunity to take part in the game count.

