Zimbabwe

Comprehensive



Eastern Miombo Sunbird by Reece Dodd

Zimbabwe is justly famous as a superb birding destination that leaves one with a lasting impression of having experienced the real 'wild Africa.' Pristine wilderness areas, spectacular landscapes and an amazing variety of ecosystems make Zimbabwe a natural history paradise. The diversity of habitats is astounding and ranges from open grassland and afro-montane evergreen forest to broad-leaved miombo woodlands, gallery forest and seasonal wetlands, which together host a large and impressive variety of birds and game. Our tour to this under-birded African destination has been specially designed to incorporate the key habitats and species which are difficult, if not impossible to find elsewhere.

The superb miombo woodlands are home to a vast suite of avian specialities such as the scarce Boulder Chat, recently split Eastern Miombo Sunbird, White-breasted Cuckooshrike and Southern Hyliota, while we can expect seldom-seen and extremely localised species like Chirinda Apalis, Roberts's Warbler, the delightful Swynnerton's Robin, Bronzy Sunbird, Black-fronted Bushshrike, little-known Zambezi Indigobird and Cinnamon-breasted Tit in the picturesque Bvumba Mountains of the Eastern Highlands which border Mozambique.

The middle part of the tour is spent around the extensive, seasonal wetlands and bird-rich miombo woodlands around the capital city of Harare. Miombo specialities include Green-backed Honeybird, Whyte's Barbet, Miombo Tit, African Spotted Creeper, Miombo Rock Thrush whilst the seasonal wetlands within the city

boundaries include Streaky-breasted Flufftail, Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Cuckoo-finch, African, Baillon's, Striped and Corn Crakes.

We complete the tour in the northeast of the country, taking in the majestic Victoria Falls, rightly considered one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. We'll target a smattering of Okavango delta specials which reach their eastern limit here such as Slaty Egret, Rufous-bellied Heron, the huge Coppery-tailed Coucal, Hartlaub's Babbler, White-crowned Lapwing, Swamp Nightjar, Racket-tailed Roller, Rock Pratincole, Schalow's Turaco, Bradfield's Hornbill, and the rare Shelley's Sunbird.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Harare**
Day 2	**Harare to Bvumba Mountains via Gosho Park**
Days 3 & 4	**Bvumba Mountains & Burma Valley**
Day 5	**Bvumba Mountains to Nyanga**
Day 6	**Nyanga to Harare via Gosho Park**
Days 7 & 8	**Harare wetlands & surrounds**
Day 9	**Harare, flight to Victoria Falls**
Days 10 & 11	**Victoria Falls area**
Day 12	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Whyte's Barbet by Reece Dodd

Haka Park. The small park is dominated by pristine miombo trees, home to a host of mouth-watering miombo specialities. We will specifically target Boulder Chat, Black-eared Seedeater, Western Violet-backed Sunbird, Wood Pipit, African Spotted Creeper, Red-faced Crombec, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Cinnamon-breasted Tit, Green-capped Eremomela and both Brown and Green-backed Honeybirds.

Gosho Park. Located near Marondera, this is another pristine patch of miombo woodland. This is one of the strongholds of the dainty African Spotted Creeper, and good views should be had whilst it characteristically clambers upwards from the base of these tall, straight trees. Copper, Variable and Western Violet-backed Sunbirds, Shelley's and Coqui Francolins, as well as Boulder Chat will also be sought.

Bvumba Mountains. The Bvumba (Vumba) Mountains, or 'mountains of the mist' are situated to the south-east of the large city of Mutare. As we make our way up the Bvumba Road, we may stop at several likely sites. Dense scrubby foliage and bracken covered forest edges host Cape Grassbird, Cape Robin-Chat, Roberts's Warbler and Singing Cisticola, whilst introduced bottlebrush trees may produce Bronzy, Variable, Eastern Miombo and even Western Violet-backed Sunbirds.

Lush Afromontane forest drape the majority of the mountains producing excellent opportunities for Livingstone's Turaco, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, African Emerald Cuckoo, White-eared Barbet and African Olive Pigeon clamber around the forest canopy, while Lemon and Tambourine Doves, Buff-spotted Flufftail and Barratt's Warbler inhabit the forest understory.

Mixed species flocks are a feature of these forests and could reveal the presence of Cape Batis, Black-fronted and Olive Bushshrikes, Yellow-streaked and Stripe-cheeked Greenbuls, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, the shy and brilliant Orange Ground Thrush, Chirinda and Bar-throated Apalises, Dark-backed Weaver, Grey Cuckooshrike, White-tailed Crested and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatchers.



Chirinda Apalis by Reece Dodd

With stealth, careful listening and watching should hopefully reveal the extremely localised and stunning Swynnerton's Robin, which is restricted to a few Afro-montane forests in



Swynnerton's Robin by Reece Dodd

south-eastern and eastern Africa. We should require so such luck to find the morphologically similar White-starred Robin, which is rather unusually comfortable showing itself off at the forest edge.

The nearby Vumba Botanical Gardens provide good birding in more open surrounds. Birding here is particularly enjoyable, and a leisurely stroll should produce many of the same species as above but is arguably better for several forest edge specialists like the elusive Red-faced Crimsonwing, brilliant Red-throated and Green Twinspots, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, African Firefinch and an array of exquisite sunbirds that include Bronzy, Collared, Variable and Olive Sunbirds. Both Roberts's Warbler and Chirinda Apalis are commonly found; both species only occurring in these highlands and in the rather inaccessible adjacent highlands in neighbouring Mozambique.

We'll also pay special attention to the large raptors in the region. These include Crowned and Long-crested Eagles as well as an isolated population of Augur Buzzard. Several species of mammal also occur in this area and include Bushbuck, the diminutive Blue Duiker, adorable Blue Monkeys and Mutable Sun Squirrel. The rare (practically never seen) African Palm Civet occurs in low numbers, this being the only place it can be found in the southern African sub-region.

Burma Valley. We plan to spend a morning birding down the Burma Valley in search of the rarely seen Zambezi Indigobird, whilst also being in position to find Miombo Rock Thrush, both Miombo and Cinnamon-breasted Tits, as well as specialist aerial feeders such as Scarce and Mottled Swifts.

Nyanga. Host to an extensive part of the Eastern Highlands, including Mount Nyangani, the highest point in Zimbabwe at 2 592m. Whilst the habitat is varied, we'll be paying special attention to the montane grasslands for Wattled Crane and the increasingly vulnerable Blue Swallow that breeds in old Aardvark burrows.

We'll also keep an eye overhead for Scarce, African Black and Mottled Swifts, Augur Buzzard and Verreaux's Eagle. Flowering trees and garden plants often produce Bronzy and Malachite Sunbirds as well as the possibility of Gurney's Sugarbird.



Roberts's Warbler by Daniel Danckwerts

Cecil Kop. Situated at the high point of Christmas Pass overlooking Mutare, this patch of miombo woodland is easily accessed by a



Zambezi Indigobird by Daniel Danckwerts

road leading higher up the mountains to a radio mast. The tall woodland and miombo offer up Cabanis's Bunting, Green-capped Eremomela, Whyte's Barbet, Miombo Rock Thrush, Pallid and Greater Honeyguides, Miombo Tit and Violet-backed Starlings.

Harare area. We will explore the flooded grasslands of Monavale and Marlborough Wetlands and any other potentially productive temporarily flooded marshes and grasslands in the area in search of Striped Crake, Streaky-breasted Flufftail and several other wetland specialties.

Our timing should be perfect to co-inside with the summer rains that will usually have inundated the Harare Wetlands thereby creating a haven for migratory crakes, rails, flufftails, quails and other seasonally flooded grassland species that make the most of these short-lived conditions to quickly breed and fatten up before returning to their wintering grounds in central and east Africa.

While searching intently for the above-mentioned two main targets, we'll also keep a lookout for, and stand an excellent chance of finding several other desirable and rarely seen species such as African and Corn Crakes, Red-chested Flufftail, Black Coucal, Rosy-throated Longclaw, the nomadic Cuckoo-finch and the elusive African Grass Owl. If we are fortunate, and conditions are perfect, there is even a chance at the rare, tiny, and unpredictable Blue Quail, as well as Black-rumped Buttonquail, Spotted Crake and Locust Finch.

Other more widespread but nonetheless note-worthy species that might also be around include Lesser Moorhen, Allen's Gallinule, African and Western Marsh Harriers, Marsh Owl, Greater Painted-snipe, African Snipe, Pale-crowned, Wing-snapping and Croaking Cisticolas, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Quailfinch, Yellow-mantled Widowbird and Grey-rumped Swallow.



Blue Swallow by David Hoddinott



Striped Crake by Adam Riley

We may also spend time in the miombo woodland searching for any species we may still be missing such as African Spotted Creeper, Western Violet-backed and Copper Sunbirds, Southern Hyliota, the spectacular Pennant-winged Nightjar, Whyte's Barbet, Green-backed Honeybird, Miombo Tit, Eastern Miombo Sunbird, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, African Golden Oriole and perhaps even the rare, but regular Collared Flycatcher.

Christon Bank. A small patch of Miombo woodland and rolling hills overlooking the Mazowe River. We be looking for any outstanding Miombo species, which could include Whyte's Barbet, Green-backed Honeybird, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, African Golden Oriole, Miombo Tit, Miombo Rock-thrush, Southern Hyliota, Red-faced Crombec, Green-capped Eremomela, Stierling's Wren-warbler, Tree Pipit and Black-eared Seedeater. The site is however best known for their Boulder Chats and the Collared Flycatcher, the latter a scarce summer visitor.

Victoria Falls. Rightly considered to be one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, the falls are a spectacular curtain of cataracts formed by the mighty Zambezi River, as it plunges thunderously into the gorge 300 feet below. Never far from its earth-moving grumble, we shall scan the river islands for roosting Rock Pratincoles, while a search of the small patch of 'rain forest' (formed by the falls' perpetual spray) may turn up such tropical species as Trumpeter Hornbill, Schalow's Turaco, the attractive African Emerald Cuckoo, the vocal White-browed Robin-Chat and attractive and melodic Collared Palm Thrush.

Zambezi National Park. During our time here, we will embark on boat trips along the Zambezi River and games drives into the surrounding Zambezi National Park and private concessions.

Drifting along slowly, soaking in the wonderful sights and sounds of the African wilderness, we will be on the lookout for the many avian specialties that inhabit this bird-rich area. While meandering through the floodplain dominated by



Boulder Chat by Reece Dodd



Cabanis's Bunting by Clayton Burne

Papyrus beds, Phragmites reeds and flooded grass and sedge we hope to find Rufous-bellied Heron, the elusive and localized Slaty Egret, Collared Pratincole, White-crowned and Long-toed Lapwings, Allen's Gallinule, Lesser Moorhen, the miniscule Lesser Jacana, gigantic Coppery-tailed Coucal, Luapula and Chirping Cisticolas, Greater and Lesser Swamp Warblers, the boldly-coloured African Pygmy Goose and with some luck Rosy-throated Longclaw, Wattled Crane, the scarce and nocturnal White-backed Night Heron and much-desired Pel's Fishing Owl.

Swamp Boubou, Collared Palm Thrush, Brown Firefinch, Senegal Coucal and Hartlaub's Babbler can be seen right around the lodge and favour riverside thickets. Areas of more open water and sandbanks along the river are home to migratory African Skimmers* that make their way down from central Africa to breed here in summer.

During our rewarding and relaxing boat trips we may also encounter an array of exciting mammals that could include Southern African Giraffe, Plains Zebra, Impala, Greater Kudu, Hippopotamus and herds of muscular African Buffalo and giant African Elephant. Troops of Vervet and Chacma Baboons roam playfully in the riverine woodland, and we may even encounter Cape Clawless and Spotted-necked Otters feeding in the river. We can also expect to see good numbers of impressive Nile Crocodile basking in the sun on the sand banks.

At dusk we'll enjoy sundowners from our deck with incredible views, as birds begin to move around between their feeding and roosting grounds. We might also encounter a Bat Hawk hunting overhead or perhaps African Hobby.

During our stay we will also take a night-drive in the hopes of seeing Common and Central African Large-spotted Genets, White-tailed Mongoose, Springhare, Wild Cat, Southern Lesser Galago and African Savanna Hare, amongst many other rarer species like Serval, Side-striped Jackal, African Civet, Cape Porcupine, Striped Polecat (Zorilla), Honey Badger (Ratel) and Selous' Mongoose. Several species of owl and nightjar are also possible including the rare Swamp Nightjar, which may be found on the floodplain itself, as well as African Wood Owl and the tiny African Barred Owlet.



Schalow's Turacos by Adam Riley



Victoria Falls by Glen Valentine

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate tour with some easy days & some demanding days. Suitable for the keen to dedicated birder. Not suitable for anyone with mobility or significant health & fitness challenges.
Birding Ease		Moderate. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions. Forest birding is more challenging, Miombo birding can be slow. Several low-density target species.
Accommodation		Good to comfortable lodges.
Walking / Trails		Mostly roadside birding. Some trails, a few may be steep.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable minibus or midibus style vehicles. Mostly flat sealed roads between major towns, some are bumpy and potholed. Dirt roads within most wildlife areas of variable quality, rain dependent.
Photography		Worthwhile to good. Forest photography is challenging, as are rallids. Somewhat easier around Vic Falls. No dedicated hides.
Annoyances		Can be bright and hot. Biting Tsetse fly are encountered at times.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

This tour is made available through our Tailor-made tours department. To explore this offering further for pricing, precise day to day itinerary, inclusions & exclusions, or to tailor the tour to your personal requirements, please contact our Tailor-made team on tailormade@rockjumper.com

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag (20 kg / 44 lb) and one carry-on bag, as space in the vehicles is limited.
- Potentially dangerous game is present in several areas of this tour, we will be restricted to vehicles or be accompanied by armed safari rangers whilst birding in these areas.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts with afternoon birding near to Harare on day 1. The tour will conclude in Victoria Falls by mid-morning of day 12.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport, Harare (IATA: HRE) is the main port of entry and Victoria Falls Airport (IATA: VFA) is the main port of departure. Several airlines (South African Airways, Kenya Airways and Ethiopian Airlines) operate flights to both airports.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.