

Linyanti Swamps

The Kwando River flows southeastwards through the Caprivi Strip into Botswana, until it encounters a subtle faultline which diverts it in a northeasterly direction. At this corner, the river changes name and becomes the Linyanti and spreads out into a substantial swamp, with Zibadianja Lediba as a major feature. This is a paradise for waterbirds, with significant numbers of Slaty Egrets and Wattled Cranes (globally threatened species), Rufous-bellied Herons, African Darters, Great Egrets, African Openbills and Marabou Storks (congregatory waterbirds which exceed 0,5% of the global population at this site).



Marabou Stork and Great Egret – found in significant numbers in this IBA (Photos: P Hancock)



The Linyanti Swamps, formed against the wooded faultline
(Photo: M Muller)

Further to the east near the Chobe National Park boundary, the river again changes name and becomes the Chobe River. This part of the river is included within the Chobe Natinal Park Important Bird Area, and is also a hotspot for waterfowl.

However, the Linyanti Swamps IBA is not only important for waterbirds. The woodlands to the south are renowned for the abundance and diversity of raptors. Controlled Hunting Areas NG 14 (Kwando), NG 15 (Linyanti) and NG 16 (Selinda Reserve) provide protection to breeding populations of White-backed Vultures (60⁺ nests), Tawny Eagles, Hooded Vultures, and African Fish-Eagles.

Fewer nests of Bateleur, African Hawk-Eagle, Martial Eagle, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl and Secretarybird have been recorded.

In addition, there are important populations of range- and biome-restricted birds such as Arnot's Chat, Burchell's and Meves's starling, Bradfield's Hornbill, Hartlaub's Babbler and

Dickinson's Kestrel found in the riparian woodlands and mopane veld of these concessions which are an integral part of the IBA.

Photo: P Hancock



All the above-mentioned birds are 'trigger species' that 'qualify' the Linyanti Swamps and surrounds as an Important Bird Area, but of course there are many other interesting bird species as well. This is due largely to the diversity of habitats, from the wetland with its well-developed riparian woodland, and open *Hyphaene* palmveld, to the mature Mophane and *Acacia erioloba* savannah. The Dumatau area is one of the few places in Botswana where Wood Owls are found, and in recent years there have been sightings of the Collared Palm-Thrush here; it appears to have recently extended its range to include this area. White-breasted Cuckoo-Shrike, Grey-headed Bush-Shrike and Orange-breasted Waxbill are among the other interesting species that can be seen here. Southern Carmine Bee-eater are very abundant during the summer months, and several large breeding colonies exist – interestingly, all of them are situated on flat ground.

The Linyanti Swamps IBA is contiguous with the Eastern Caprivi IBA in Namibia, and together they form a large, bird-rich area of vital importance for the conservation of birds in Africa.



Aerial view over Linyanti, looking into Namibia (Photo: P Hancock)