

## BIRDING IN ZAKOUMA NATIONAL PARK, CHAD

**Zakouma National Park** is situated in south-eastern Chad and covers an area of just over 3000km<sup>2</sup>. Zakouma was declared a national park in 1963 by Presidential Decree, offering it the highest form of protection available under the laws of Chad. The park is in the centre of a functional ecosystem that contains the last remaining migration of fauna within the Sudano-Sahelian eco-climatic zone. Although the elephant is the flagship species, the park is an important refuge for numerous other species, many of which are threatened elsewhere within this eco-region.



The ebb and flow of life in the park is dictated by the extremely contrasted wet and dry seasons. Heavy rains from June until October inundate the park, replenishing the water courses in preparation for the oncoming dry months. As the pans and rivers slowly recede, the fauna congregates in flocks and herds around the remaining water, offering some of the most impressive game viewing in Africa. The park falls within the enormous ‘*Inundation Plains of the Bahr Aouk and Salamat*’ RAMSAR site, one of the largest in the world and an important stop-over for migrating birds and breeding ground for birds and fish alike.

Bird watching in **Zakouma National Park** is an extremely rewarding experience. Not only in the number of species (currently 373) but also in the sheer abundance of birds. Seeing literally thousands of birds at a pan in the dry season is not uncommon. White and Pink-backed Pelicans; Yellow-billed, Marabou and Saddle-billed Storks; African Spoonbills; White-faced



Whistling and Knob-billed Ducks; Spurwing Geese; Northern Crowned Crane; Great White and Cattle Egrets; Grey, Purple and Black-headed Herons and Sacred Ibises abound – all watched over by the ever present pair of African Fish Eagles and ubiquitous Black Kites. Raptors are well represented with 39 species having been recorded in the park. Insect eruptions are particularly rewarding with 10-20 Grasshopper Buzzards (left) often seen together with numerous other raptors.

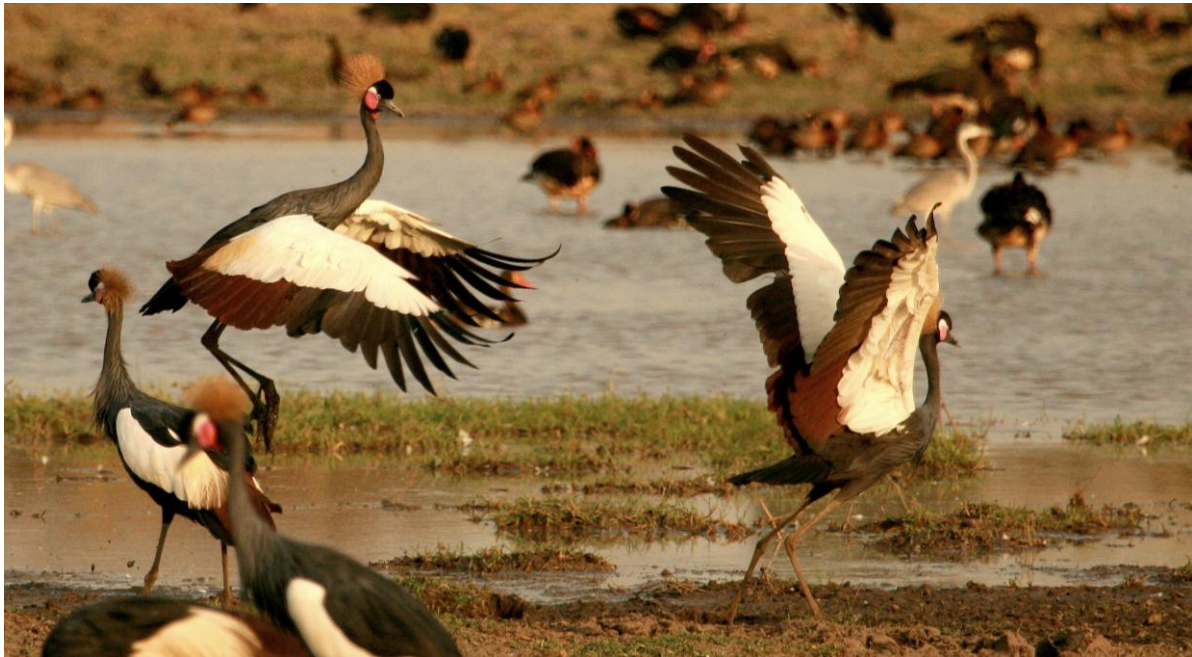
**Zakouma** has most of the Sahelian ‘specials’ such as Beaudouin’s Snake Eagle, Sahel Paradise Whydah, Long-tailed Starling, Black-rumped Waxbill, Black Scrub-Robin, Bearded Barbet, African Collared Dove, Little Grey Woodpecker, Western Bonelli’s Warbler and the Rose-ringed Parakeet. The sought after Black-breasted Barbet (*Lybius rolleti*) with its range limited to southern Chad and Sudan as well as a small strip of CAR and Uganda, has been recorded in the park. The common birds seen in and around Tinga Camp during the dry season when our tourism facility is open (mid-November to end-May) are Long-tailed and Greater Blue-eared Starling; Beautiful, Pygmy and Variable Sunbirds; Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin; Black-headed Gonolek; Western Grey Plantain-eater; Red-throated Bee-eaters (pictured on right); Black-billed Wood-dove; Speckled Pigeon; Black-rumped Waxbill; African Silverbill; Red-billed Firefinch; Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu; Village Indigobird; Grey Woodpecker; Namaqua Dove; Brown Parrot and Senegal Coucal. Fish Eagles can be heard calling regularly during the day and the Scops and Pearl-spotted Owlets at night. Egyptian and African Wattled Plover, Black-winged Stilt, White Wagtail, Hamerkop and Senegal Thick-knee can be seen when the river has still got water together with a variety of waders and herons.



A game drive will almost certainly produce sightings of Ostrich; Abyssinian Roller; African Grey and Northern Red-billed Hornbill; Abyssinian Ground Hornbill (pictured on left); Woodchat Shrike, Grey-backed Fiscal Shrike; Blue-naped Mousebird; Four-banded Sandgrouse; Stone Partridge; Black-headed Lapwing; Beaudouin’s Snake Eagle; Swallow-tailed Kite; Egyptian Vulture; Clapperton’s Spurfowl; Helmeted Guineafowl; Delham’s and Arabian Bustard; African Collared Dove; Rose-

ringed Parakeet; Black Scimitarbill; Veillot’s and White-headed Barbet; Northern Carmine, Little and Little Green Bee-eater; Yellow-billed Oxpecker; Fine-spotted Woodpecker; Heuglin’s and Northern Wheatear; Chestnut-backed Finchlark; Speckle-fronted Weaver and Brown Babbler. Enormous flocks of Red-billed Quelea’s weave their way between the trees to and from water and their roosts. Sightings of Greyish Eagle-owl, Barn owl, Long-tailed, Plain and Standard-winged Nightjar as well as Spotted Thick-knee are likely on a night drive.

Visit [www.zakouma.org](http://www.zakouma.org) for more information on the park and the work being done here to protect one of the most important central African elephant populations. For information on the other parks managed by **African Parks**<sup>1</sup> visit [www.african-parks.org](http://www.african-parks.org). The best months to visit Zakouma are December – April. For reservations or specific questions please contact us on [tingacamp@african-parks.org](mailto:tingacamp@african-parks.org). For general information on visiting Chad please visit <http://africageographic.com/safari/#9/10>.



---

<sup>1</sup> African Parks (AP) is a non-profit organisation that takes on direct responsibility for the rehabilitation and long-term management of national parks, in partnership with governments and local communities. By adopting a business approach to conservation, supported by donor funding, AP aims to make each park sustainable in the long term, thereby contributing to economic development and poverty alleviation. AP currently manages seven parks in six countries - Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia - with a combined area of 4.1 million hectares.