



BOTSWANA

MOREMI MEMORIES

A brief but enchanting trip to the Wildlife Reserve sprawling at the wetland doorstep of the fabled Okavango delta



African elephant *Loxodonta africana* in a typical semi-flooded Moremi environment. On the title page, adult female and baby hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius*.

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Moremi Game Reserve is a protected area in Botswana on the eastern side of the Okavango Delta. It was designated as a Game Reserve, rather than a National Park, when it was created. This designation meant that the BaSarwa or Bushmen that lived there were allowed to stay in the reserve. We briefly visited it on our way to Chobe National Park.

Moremi Game Reserve is just under 5,000 square kilometres (1,900 sq mi) in extent, covering much of the eastern side of the Okavango Delta, combining permanent water with drier areas and creating some startling contrasts. Here one can experience excellent views of savannah game as well as bird-watching on the lagoons. There are also thickly wooded areas, which are home to the Cape wild dog *Lycaon pictus pictus* and leopard. To the northeast lies the Chobe National Park which borders the Moremi Game Reserve. Only about 30% of the reserve is mainland, with the bulk being within the Okavango Delta itself.

Although not one of the largest Parks, Moremi presents insights and views even for the most experienced of travelers. Its habitats are surprisingly diverse, combining mopane woodland and acacia forests, floodplains and lagoons. It is home to nearly 500 species of bird (from water birds to forest dwellers), and a vast array of other species of wildlife including Cape

buffalo, Angolan giraffe, black rhinoceros, lion, elephant, hippopotamus, zebra, cheetah, hyena, jackal, impala, and red lechwe. Cape wild dogs have been the subject of a project run in the area since 1989. The Reserve offers the opportunity to explore not only in 4x4's but on foot and by mokoro - a dug-out canoe. Game viewing is at its peak from July to October, when seasonal pans dry up and the wildlife concentrates on the permanent water. From October until the start of the rains in late November or early December, the weather can be extremely hot. Malaria is prevalent throughout the Reserve and it is strongly recommended that visitors should take precautions before, during and after a visit. The Reserve itself has very few lodges and only four areas set-aside for camping, but there are a number of relatively affordable lodges on the outskirts of the Reserve.

Roads in Moremi Game Reserve change dramatically depending upon the season and the water level of the Delta. When the flood waters are high some of the roads are waterlogged, while exposed sandy areas are much harder to navigate during the hot summer months.

Starting April 2019, poaching has sadly risen at an alarming rate in the Reserve. Organised poaching rings slaughtered 46 rhinos in 10 months, representing almost 10% of Botswana's 500 rhinos. ●

Southern red-billed hornbill *Tockus rufirostris*.



Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*, a large, heavy-bodied antelope which favours wetlands and wooded areas.



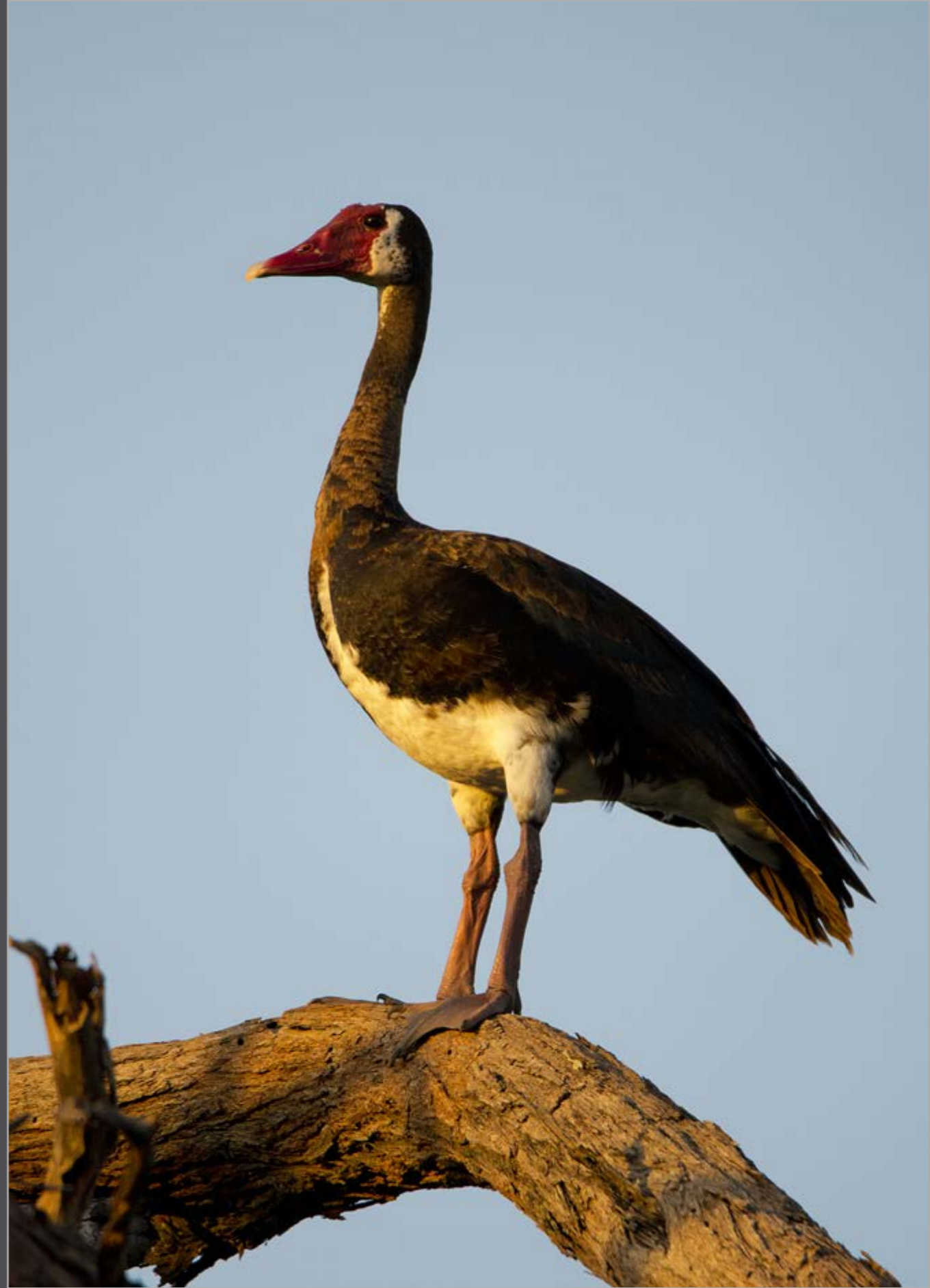
African lion *Panthera leo*.



A typical water-snail eater, the African openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*.



Little bee-eater *Merops pusillus*.



Spur-winged goose *Plectropterus gambensis*.



Wattled crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*, a beautiful but rarely encountered species.



Striped or Le Vaillant's cuckoo *Oxylophus levaillantii*.



Adult bull hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius*, arguably Africa's most dangerous large animal.



Green-backed heron *Butorides striatus*.



Adult hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius* showing dominance.



African lioness *Panthera leo*.



African elephant *Loxodonta africana* caked in mud.



African grey hornbill *Tockus nasutus*.



African darter *Anhinga rufa*.



African elephants and hippos sharing the same pools and small, meandering watercourses - a typical Moremi habitat scene.



African fish eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*.



Tawny eagle *Aquila rapax*.



Mother and baby hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius* grazing in the open at twilight.



Dwarf mongoose *Helogale parvula* in anthill den.



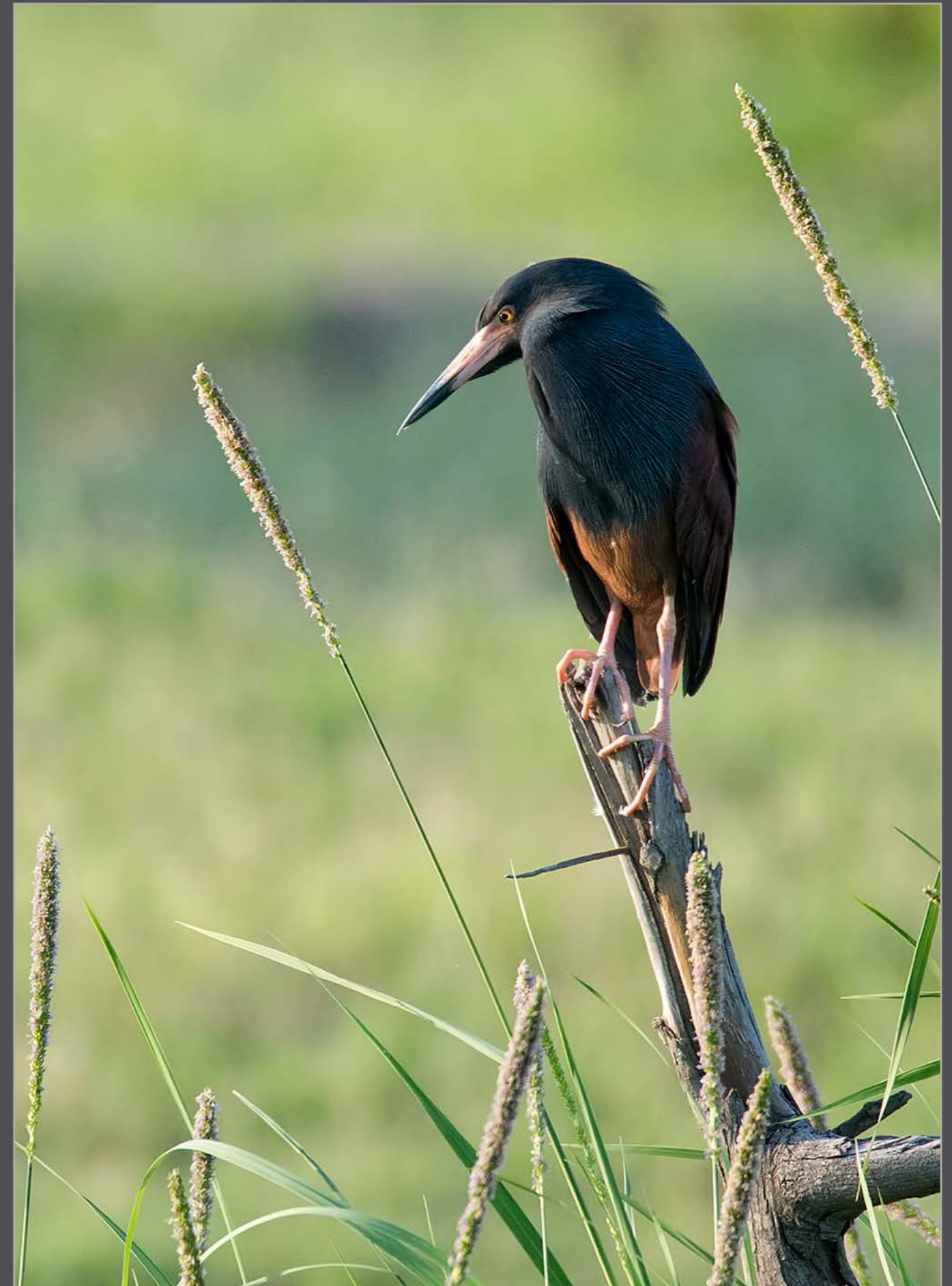
Goliath heron *Ardea goliath*.



Adult hippos *Hippopotamus amphibius* are extremely powerful and easily angered animals, with bulls always vying for dominance.



Arrow-marked babbler *Turdoides jardineii*.



Rufous-bellied heron *Ardeola rufiventris*.



Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*.



Red-billed teal *Anas erythrorhynchos*.



Spotted hyena *Crocuta crocuta*.



Red lechwe *Kobus leche sub. leche*.



Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*.



Bull African elephant *Loxodonta africana*.



African openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*.



Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*.



Red lechwe *Kobus leche* sub. *leche*, a robust-bodied antelope species beautifully adapted to wetland and semi-flooded habitats.