

INTERESTING SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS IN MALAWI

Malawi's offering of seasonal natural highlights are extensive and a variety of interesting occurrences take place throughout the year. Each season offers a shift in dynamics and an abundance of wildlife activity occurs across our areas of pristine wilderness. Here are a few of many interesting wildlife and botanical occurrences which take place throughout the year in Malawi. (Average monthly temperatures displayed in brackets).



January – March (17-27°C)

Orchids bloom in Nyika National Park.

During these months over 200 orchids bloom across the grasslands in Nyika National Park. In February particularly, many terrestrial orchids come into bloom across the valleys and they can be seen in patches across the plateau.



July (6-23°C) - early January (17-27°C)

Lake fly clouds can be seen across Lake Malawi (Chintheche)

Swarms of adult lake flies (looking like dense clouds of smoke or occasionally spiraling columns that look like waterspouts) are a very common sight over the northern part of the lakeshore. The fly larvae live on the lake bottom where they feed. When they form pupae they float to the surface and hatch all at once causing the giant swarms. These swarms attract fish and many species of birds that feed on the flies. Winds often blow them to the shore and women from local communities catch them in baskets and squash them together to create a local delicacy (a burger like lake fly patty which is then deep fried).



June (7-24°C) - August (8-26°C)

Lillian's Lovebirds gather in flocks of hundreds in Liwonde National Park

Lillian's Lovebirds congregate in large flocks of hundreds from June to August in Liwonde National Park. This is a phenomenon mainly due to the fact that the Candelabra Euphorbia are flowering, which provides a feast for the birds.



October (14-30°C) -November (17-30°C)

The regrouping of eland herds in Nyika National Park

The majestic eland is the world's largest antelope. Smaller herds can be seen across the plateau throughout the year. During the months of October and November however, the eland herds start regrouping for the breeding season. The larger herds vary in size from 100 to 320 animals in one group.



June (7-24oC) – July (6-23°C)

Elephants gather in herds of hundreds in Liwonde National Park

The elephant population in Liwonde National Park, group together in the drier periods around a fixed water source (the Shire River) for water and for the more nutritious vegetation along the river's edge. Sightings of larger elephant herds during these months are plentiful and often reach into the hundreds. Once the rainy season commences and once water and fresh vegetation are no longer scarce, the elephant group dynamics change and the larger herds disperse into smaller units.



May (10-26oC) – July (6-23°C)

Crocodile courtship season (Liwonde National Park)

Mvuu Camp and Lodge are located on the edge of the Shire River which is teeming with a healthy crocodile population. The courtship process begins with males bellowing, bubble-blowing and fighting, thus establishing dominance. Males also swim with their head up for display purposes. The female usually mates with the most dominant male in the vicinity: the older the male, the bigger and thus the most dominant.



June (7-24oC) – July (6-23°C)

Crocodile mating season

Mating takes about 10 minutes and occurs in the water, usually in June and July. Two months later the female lays her eggs, which she buries underground (usually around 50 eggs) and guards by lying on top of the burying site, ferociously guarding them.



December (17-28oC)

Crocodile hatchlings born

Three months later (around December), high-pitched chirping sounds alert the mother that the incubation period is over. She then breaks open the sand-covered chamber and assists the hatchlings (which are approx 30cm long) out of their shells by rolling the eggs between her tongue and palate. The mother crocodile then delicately transports the hatchlings in her mouth to the water's edge, and continues guarding them for 2 more weeks.



October (14-30oC) – April (14-27oC)

Green Season birding

Birding all year round is incredible in both Liwonde National Park and Nyika National Park with nearly 400 species occurring in both Liwonde and Nyika. The beginning of the rains (the green season) usually coincides with the arrival of many migrant birds who come back from the less hospitable climates north of the equator. The ideal time for spotting Nyika's migrant birds is between February and March.