



シマウマと無数のブラックリーチュエ。ブラックリーチュエはこの地方の固有種で、雄には立派な角があり、ザンビアの20クワチャ紙幣の絵柄にもなっている



ようやく出会えたハシビロコウ。広げた翼の端から端までは最大2.5メートルにもなる



ホオカザリヅルの群れ。バングウェウルにはアフリカのホオカザリヅルの約1割が生息する



朝焼けの空を飛ぶシロガオリウキウガモ



ぬかるむ湿地を車で進むのは大変

Bangweulu: Where the water meets the sky

ザンビア・バングウェウル湿原 水と空が出会う場所

■ 無数のブラックリーチュエに感動

The area around the Bangweulu Swamps in northern Zambia isn't a well-known safari destination. Yet this watery wilderness has two claims to fame: First, it is the final resting place of legendary Africa explorer David Livingstone. Secondly, it is home to the shoebill — a huge, bizarre-looking bird that is known for attracting bird-watchers from around the world. So why has no one outside of Zambia — except for bird-watchers — heard of this place? I set off to find out.

Traversing the waterlogged expanse of Chimbwe Plain, I plunged into knee-deep water and dark mud as I tried to catch up with Simon Ng'ona, my Zambian Wildlife Authority guide. The going was tough, but the scenes unfolding before us buoyed my spirits. We were in the midst of one of Africa's most impressive — but least publicized — wildlife gatherings, and I marveled at the large number of antelope that surrounded us.

Bangweulu's wildlife-rich floodplains are part of an extensive system of lakes, swamplands, seasonally flooded grasslands and shallow water bodies that make up the 10,000-square-kilometer Bangweulu Wetlands. From April onward, as grasslands appear after floodwaters recede, black lechwe gather in their tens of thou-

sands to take advantage of the rich grazing that is left behind. These handsome, medium-sized antelopes are found only in the Bangweulu region, and while poaching has reduced the population, the sheer scale of the gathering is still extremely impressive.

Besides lechwe, Bangweulu has respectable numbers of tsessebes, sitatunga, oribi, reedbuck and zebras, along with small herds of elephants and buffaloes. Our safari walks across the plains and through the wetlands provided good sightings of all these herbivores, while a clan of spotted hyenas made regular nightly appearances at our campfire.

■ ついに見つけたハシビロコウ

For many, however, Bangweulu's big animals take a back seat to its astonishing birdlife. I was mesmerized by huge flocks of wattled cranes that stalked the plains — 10 percent of Africa's population live here — alongside egrets, spoonbills and pelicans.

Certainly the most sought-after bird on the continent is the shoebill, a stork-like species with an enormous fish-catching beak. I wanted to see one. Despite fruitless days of searching the swamp, my guide Simon remained upbeat. With the pressure mounting, he insisted he knew just the man to help.

The following morning, Simon arrived with Patson Mukosa

— a local guide who has spent over two decades at the aptly named Shoebill Island Camp. If there was a shoebill in the area, Simon assured me, Patson would know where to find it. I hopped in their small canoe, and we immediately set off in search of favored feeding sites deep within the swamp.

Patson informed me that the shoebill was easiest to find between March and August. It was May, and he was confident he could find the bird. As the day wore on and the heat sapped my energy and enthusiasm, Patson remained resolute. After seven long hours, and without the aid of binoculars, he suddenly pointed ahead and exclaimed: "Shoebill!"

And there it was: a huge grey bird with a great boot of a bill standing stock-still in the shallows. It stared into the water for what seemed an eternity, and then its head suddenly darted forward and emerged seconds later clutching a large catfish. With a quick gulp and toss of the head, down went the prize!

■ 湿原を保護しながら観光資源として活用

Back at camp, I talked with some of the hard-working African Parks staff helping to protect and restore this wetland wilderness. Bangweulu was declared a Game Management Area back in 1972, but fell off the Zambian safari circuit due to a lack of fund-

ing and qualified staff. All of this changed in 2008, when African Parks was invited by the Zambian government to help sustainably develop the wetlands so that the area might realize its huge tourism potential. The 20-year project aims not only to protect wildlife, but also to win support, build capacity and achieve real benefits for skeptical local communities.

At the end of a highly rewarding weeklong safari adventure, I was forced to admit that although Bangweulu still has some way to go before realizing its full wildlife and tourism potential, this unique watery wilderness is the ultimate playground if you have a yearning for the untamed and unexplored.

Story and photos by Stephen Cunliffe

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KEYWORDS

swamp 湿地(後出 swampland と wetland も同意)
safari (ここでは動物観察旅行(後出 safari walk は徒歩での動物観察、safari circuit はここでは動物観察の主要スポット))
watery 水の多い(後出 water-

logged は水浸しの)
claim to fame 誇らしいこと
David Livingstone スコットランド出身の探検家(1813~73年)
shoebill ハシビロコウ
bizarre とびな、一風変わった
set off 出発する
traverse 横切る
expansion (ここでは広大な土地

plain 平原
plunge into ~ ~に勢よく入る
unfold 広がる
buoy someone's spirits ~の士気を高める
publicized 宣伝された
marvel at ~ ~に驚嘆する
antelope レイヨウ(後出 black lechwe, sitatunga, oribi, reed-

buck はレイヨウの一種)
floodplain 氾濫原(洪水時に冠水する平野のこと)
shallow 浅い(後出 shallows は浅瀬)
recede 引く
grazing 青草
poaching 密猟
sheer scale of ~ 大規模な~

tsessebe クロガオカモシカ
herd 群れ(後出 clan と flock もここでは同意)
herbivore 草食動物
spotted hyena ブチハイエナ
take a back seat to ~ ~のために目立たなくなる
astonishing 驚異的な
(be) mesmerized by ~ ~に魅惑

される
wattled crane ホオカザリヅル
stalk ~ ~をゆっくり歩く
egret シラサギ
spoonbill ヘラサギ
stork コウノトリ
species (生物の)種
beak くちばし
fruitless 成果がない

upbeat 楽天的な
aptly うまく、適切に
hop in ~ ~に飛び乗る
day wears on (ここでは)一日が過ぎていく
sap (ここでは)奪う
resolute 確固とした
binoculars 双眼鏡
boot of a bill (ここでは)ブー

ツのように大きなくちばし
stock-still じっと動かない
seem an eternity 永遠のように思われる
dart 素早く動く
clutch (ここでは)くわえる
catfish ナマズ
gulp 飲み込むこと
toss 振り上げること

prize 獲物
African Parks 自然保護団体名
Game Management Area 獣保護区のこと
qualified 資質のある
sustainably 持続的に
skeptical 懐疑的な
yearning 切望
untamed 自然のままの

Bangweulu Swamps, Zambia

バングウェウルとは地元のベンバ語で「水と空が出会う場所」の意。バングウェウル湖と南東岸に広がる広大な湿地から成る。Shoebill Island Camp (www.shoebillislandcamp.com) にはテントやコテージなどの宿泊施設があり、運営団体 Kasanka Trust が首都ルサカなどからチャーターフライトを運航している。訪れるなら5~8月の乾季がおすすめ。車で移動でき、無数のリーチュエが見られる。



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多読チャレンジ レベル 2 野鳥観察者に最も人気の鳥の名は?

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