

Malawi is a popular destination for bird-watchers. For its size, Malawi contains more bird species than most African countries, reflecting the variety of natural habitats, ranging from mountain plateaus to lake shores.

Some 645 species have been recorded in Malawi, and about 530 species probably breed here. Those that do not breed here are mainly long-distance migrants from Europe or Asia mostly present in Malawi either just before or during the rainy season from about October to April.

Some of Malawi's breeding birds leave the region during the dry season, so probably the most productive time of the year for bird watching is November and December, but any time is likely to be very rewarding.

There are many good places for bird-watching, some of the best being [Kasungu National park](#), [Liwonde National Park](#), [Lake Chilwa](#), [Lengwe National Park](#), [Nyika National Park](#), [Luwawa Forest](#), [Dzalanyama Forest Reserve](#) and [Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary](#).

Some indication of the bird-watching opportunities in Malawi can be gleaned from the number and beauty of birds that you may well see in the gardens of the towns and cities. The lilac-breasted roller, little bee-eater, green loerie, a number of sundirds, the paradise flycatcher and the African hoopoe are just a few of the parade of birds that you may see in the National Parks, Forests and Lakeshores of Malawi. [More](#)

INFORMATION ON PDF FORMAT BELOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

List of birds of Malawi

The avifauna of [Malawi](#) includes a total of 650 species, of which 1 has been [introduced](#) by humans, and 31 are rare or accidental. 10 species are globally threatened. Several [subspecies](#) of bird are [endemic](#) to Malawi. One of these, the [Yellow-throated Apalis](#), is treated as a full endemic species by some authors. Several species such as the [Thyolo Alethe](#) are near-endemic to Malawi with only a restricted range outside the country.

This list's [taxonomic](#) treatment (designation and sequence of orders, families, and species) and nomenclature (common and scientific names) follow the conventions of [Clements](#)'s 5th edition. The family accounts at the beginning of each heading reflects this taxonomy, as do the species counts found in each family account. Introduced and accidental species are included in the total counts for Malawi.

The following tags have been used to highlight certain relevant categories. It must be noted that not all species fall into one of these categories. Those that do not are commonly occurring, native species.

- (A) **Accidental** A rarely-occurring species with no more than about five records in Malawi.
- (I) **Introduced** A species introduced to Malawi as a consequence, direct or indirect, of human actions.
- (Ex) **Extirpated** A species that no longer occurs in Malawi although populations exist elsewhere.

African Fish-Eagle



[African Fish-Eagle](#), common around lakes and rivers and is the National bird of Malawi

Grebe



Little Grebe, widespread on small waterbodies.

[Grebes](#) are small to medium-large sized freshwater diving birds. They have lobed toes, and are excellent swimmers and divers. However, they have their feet placed far back on the body, making them quite ungainly on land. There are 20 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

Pelican



Pink-backed Pelican, there are several breeding colonies in the south of the country.

[Pelicans](#) are large water birds with a distinctive pouch under the beak. As with other members of the order Pelecaniformes, they have webbed feet with four toes. There are 8 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Great White Pelican](#) *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
- [Pink-backed Pelican](#) *Pelecanus rufescens*

The Phalacrocoracidae is a family of medium-to-large coastal, fish-eating sea-birds that includes cormorants and shags. Plumage colouration varies with the majority having mainly dark plumage, some species being black and white, and a few being colourful. There are 38 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Great Cormorant](#) *Phalacrocorax carbo*
- [Long-tailed Cormorant](#) *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Darter



Darter, a local resident of lakes and rivers.

[Darters](#) are frequently referred to as "snake-birds" because of their long thin neck, which gives a snake-like appearance when they swim with their bodies submerged. The males have black and dark brown plumage, an erectile crest on the nape and a larger bill than the female. The females have a much paler plumage especially on the neck and underparts. The darters have completely webbed feet, and their legs are short and set far back on the body. Their plumage is somewhat permeable, like that of cormorants, and they spread their wings to dry after diving. There are 2-4 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

Heron



Goliath Heron, a shy resident of large waterbodies.

The family Ardeidae contains the [bitterns](#), [herons](#) and [egrets](#). Herons and egrets are medium to large sized wading birds with long necks and legs. Bitterns tend to be shorter necked and more wary.

Unlike other long-necked birds such as storks, ibises and spoonbills, members of Ardeidae fly with their necks retracted. There are 61 species worldwide and 18 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Gray Heron](#) *Ardea cinerea*
- [Black-headed Heron](#) *Ardea melanocephala*
- [Goliath Heron](#) *Ardea goliath*
- [Purple Heron](#) *Ardea purpurea*
- [Great Egret](#) *Ardea alba*
- [Black Heron](#) *Egretta ardesiaca*
- [Intermediate Egret](#) *Egretta intermedia*
- [Little Egret](#) *Egretta garzetta*
- [Squacco Heron](#) *Ardeola ralloides*
- [Madagascar Pond-Heron](#) *Ardeola idae*
- [Rufous-bellied Heron](#) *Ardeola rufiventris*
- [Cattle Egret](#) *Bubulcus ibis*
- [Striated Heron](#) *Butorides striata*
- [Black-crowned Night-Heron](#) *Nycticorax nycticorax*
- [White-backed Night-Heron](#) *Gorsachius leuconotus*
- [Little Bittern](#) *Ixobrychus minutus*
- [Dwarf Bittern](#) *Ixobrychus sturmii*
- [Great Bittern](#) *Botaurus stellaris*

Hamerkop



Hamerkop, a common resident.

The Hamerkop is a medium-sized bird with a long shaggy crest. The shape of its head with a curved bill and crest at the back is reminiscent of a hammer, hence its name. Its plumage is a drab brown all over.

Stork



Yellow-billed Stork, a widespread and dispersive bird of wetlands.

Storks are large, long-legged, long-necked, wading birds with long, stout bills. Storks are mute; bill-clattering is an important mode of stork communication at the nest. Their nests can be large and may be reused for many years. Many species are migratory. There are 19 species worldwide and 8 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Yellow-billed Stork](#) *Mycteria ibis*
- [African Openbill](#) *Anastomus lamelligerus*
- [Black Stork](#) *Ciconia nigra*
- [Abdim's Stork](#) *Ciconia abdimii*
- [Woolly-necked Stork](#) *Ciconia episcopus*
- [White Stork](#) *Ciconia ciconia*
- [Saddle-billed Stork](#) *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*
- [Marabou Stork](#) *Leptoptilos crumeniferu*

The Threskiornithidae is a family of large terrestrial and wading birds which includes the [ibises](#) and [spoonbills](#). They have long, broad wings with 11 primary and about 20 secondary feathers. They are strong fliers and despite their size and weight, very capable soarers. There are 36 species worldwide and 4 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Sacred Ibis](#) *Threskiornis aethiopicus*
- [Hadada Ibis](#) *Bostrychia hagedash*

- [Glossy Ibis](#) *Plegadis falcinellus*
- [African Spoonbill](#) *Platalea alba*

Flamingo



Greater Flamingo, a regular migrant to Lake Chilwa and other wetlands.

[Flamingos](#) are gregarious wading birds, usually 3 to 5 feet high, found in both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres. They are more numerous in the latter. Flamingos filter-feed on shellfish and algae. Their oddly-shaped beaks are specially adapted to separate mud and silt from the food they consume, and are uniquely used upside-down. There are 6 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Greater Flamingo](#) *Phoenicopterus roseus*
- [Lesser Flamingo](#) *Phoenicopterus minor*

Duck



White-faced Whistling-duck, the most widespread of Malawi's ducks.

The family Anatidae includes the [ducks](#) and most duck-like waterfowl, such as [geese](#) and [swans](#). These are birds that are modified for an aquatic

existence with webbed feet, flattened bills and feathers that are excellent at shedding water due to an oily coating. There are 131 species worldwide and 18 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Fulvous Whistling-Duck](#) *Dendrocygna bicolor*
- [White-faced Whistling-Duck](#) *Dendrocygna viduata*
- [White-backed Duck](#) *Thalassornis leuconotus*
- [Egyptian Goose](#) *Alopochen aegyptiacus*
- [Spur-winged Goose](#) *Plectropterus gambensis*
- [Comb Duck](#) *Sarkidiornis melanotos*
- [African Pygmy-goose](#) *Nettapus auritus*
- [African Black Duck](#) *Anas sparsa*
- [Cape Teal](#) *Anas capensis* (A)
- [Yellow-billed Duck](#) *Anas undulata*
- [Northern Pintail](#) *Anas acuta* (A)
- [Red-billed Duck](#) *Anas erythrorhyncha*
- [Hottentot Teal](#) *Anas hottentota*
- [Garganey](#) *Anas querquedula*
- [Northern Shoveler](#) *Anas clypeata* (A)
- [Southern Pochard](#) *Netta erythrophthalma*
- [Tufted Duck](#) *Aythya fuligula* (A)
- [Maccoa Duck](#) *Oxyura maccoa* (A)

Osprey



Osprey, a migrant from the Northern Hemisphere.

The Pandionidae family contains only one species, the Osprey. The Osprey is a medium large [raptor](#) which is a specialist fish-eater with a worldwide distribution.

- [Osprey](#) *Pandion haliaetus*

Kite



Yellow-billed Kite, the breeding form of the Black Kite.



Lizard Buzzard, common in woodland throughout Malawi.

Hawk



Wahlberg's Eagle, a breeding migrant present from August to April.

Accipitridae is a family of birds of prey and includes [hawks](#), [eagles](#), [kites](#), [harriers](#) and Old World vultures. These birds have powerful hooked beaks for tearing flesh from their prey, strong legs, powerful talons, and keen eyesight. There are 233 species worldwide and 43 species which occur in Malawi.

- [African Cuckoo-Hawk](#) *Aviceda cuculoides*
- [European Honey-buzzard](#) *Pernis apivorus*
- [Bat Hawk](#) *Macheiramphus alcinus*
- [Black-shouldered Kite](#) *Elanus caeruleus*
- [Black Kite](#) *Milvus migrans*
- [African Fish-Eagle](#) *Haliaeetus vocifer*
- [Palm-nut Vulture](#) *Gypohierax angolensis*
- [Hooded Vulture](#) *Necrosyrtes monachus*
- [White-backed Vulture](#) *Gyps africanus*
- [Lappet-faced Vulture](#) *Torgos tracheliotus*
- [White-headed Vulture](#) *Trigonoceps occipitalis*
- [Black-breasted Snake-Eagle](#) *Circaetus pectoralis*
- [Brown Snake-Eagle](#) *Circaetus cinereus*
- [Banded Snake-Eagle](#) *Circaetus cinerascens*
- [Bateleur](#) *Terathopius ecaudatus*
- [Western Marsh-Harrier](#) *Circus aeruginosus*
- [African Marsh-Harrier](#) *Circus ranivorus*
- [Pallid Harrier](#) *Circus macrourus*
- [Montagu's Harrier](#) *Circus pygargus*
- [African Harrier-Hawk](#) *Polyboroides typus*
- [Lizard Buzzard](#) *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*
- [Dark Chanting-Goshawk](#) *Melierax metabates*
- [Gabar Goshawk](#) *Micronisus gabar*
- [African Goshawk](#) *Accipiter tachiro*
- [Shikra](#) *Accipiter badius*
- [Little Sparrowhawk](#) *Accipiter minullus*
- [Ovampo Sparrowhawk](#) *Accipiter ovampensis*
- [Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk](#) *Accipiter rufiventris*
- [Black Goshawk](#) *Accipiter melanoleucus*
- [Eurasian Buzzard](#) *Buteo buteo*
- [Mountain Buzzard](#) *Buteo oreophilus*
- [Augur Buzzard](#) *Buteo augur*
- [Lesser Spotted Eagle](#) *Aquila pomarina*
- [Tawny Eagle](#) *Aquila rapax*
- [Steppe Eagle](#) *Aquila nipalensis*
- [Wahlberg's Eagle](#) *Aquila wahlbergi*

- [Verreaux's Eagle](#) *Aquila verreauxii*
- [African Hawk-Eagle](#) *Aquila spilogaster*
- [Booted Eagle](#) *Aquila pennatus*
- [Ayres's Hawk-Eagle](#) *Aquila ayresii*
- [Martial Eagle](#) *Polemaetus bellicosus*
- [Long-crested Eagle](#) *Lophaetus occipitalis*
- [Crowned Hawk-Eagle](#) *Stephanoaetus coronatus*

The Secretary-bird is a bird of prey in the order [Falconiformes](#) but is easily distinguished from other raptors by its long crane-like legs.

- [Secretary-bird](#) *Sagittarius serpentarius*

Falcon



Red-necked Falcon, an uncommon raptor which is often associated with palm trees.

Falconidae is a family of diurnal birds of prey. They differ from hawks, eagles, and kites in that they kill with their beaks instead of their feet. There are 62 species worldwide and 12 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Lesser Kestrel](#) *Falco naumanni*
- [Eurasian Kestrel](#) *Falco tinnunculus*
- [Gray Kestrel](#) *Falco ardosiaceus* (A)
- [Dickinson's Kestrel](#) *Falco dickinsoni*
- [Red-necked Falcon](#) *Falco chicquera*
- [Red-footed Falcon](#) *Falco vespertinus*
- [Amur Falcon](#) *Falco amurensis*
- [Sooty Falcon](#) *Falco concolor* (A)

- [Eurasian Hobby](#) *Falco subbuteo*
- [Lanner Falcon](#) *Falco biarmicus*
- [Taita Falcon](#) *Falco fasciinucha*
- [Peregrine Falcon](#) *Falco peregrinus*

Francolin



Red-necked Francolin, the commonest francolin in Malawi.

The Phasianidae are a family of terrestrial birds which consists of [quails](#), [partridges](#), [snowcocks](#), [francolins](#), [spurfowls](#), [tragopans](#), [monals](#), [pheasants](#), [peafowls](#) and [jungle fowls](#). In general, they are plump (although they may vary in size) and have broad, relatively short wings. There are 156 species worldwide and 11 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Coqui Francolin](#) *Francolinus coqui*
- [Crested Francolin](#) *Francolinus sephaena*
- [Red-winged Francolin](#) *Francolinus levaillantii*
- [Shelley's Francolin](#) *Francolinus shelleyi*
- [Scaly Francolin](#) *Francolinus squamatus*
- [Hildebrandt's Francolin](#) *Francolinus hildebrandti*
- [Red-necked Francolin](#) *Francolinus afer*
- [Swainson's Francolin](#) *Francolinus swainsonii*
- [Common Quail](#) *Coturnix coturnix*
- [Harlequin Quail](#) *Coturnix delegorguei*
- [Blue Quail](#) *Coturnix adansonii*

Guinea Fowl



Helmeted Guineafowl, domesticated in many areas.

Guineafowl are a group of African, seed-eating, ground-nesting birds that resemble partridges, but with featherless heads and spangled grey plumage. There are 6 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Helmeted Guineafowl](#) *Numida meleagris*
- [Crested Guineafowl](#) *Guttera pucherani*

The buttonquails are small, drab, running birds which resemble the true quails. The female is the brighter of the sexes, and initiates courtship. The male incubates the eggs and tends the young. There are 16 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Small Buttonquail](#) *Turnix sylvatica*
- [Hottentot Buttonquail](#) *Turnix hottentotta*

Crane



Wattled Crane, now very rare and local.

Cranes are large, long-legged and long-necked birds. Unlike the similar-looking but unrelated herons, cranes fly with necks outstretched, not pulled back. Most have elaborate and noisy courting displays or "dances". There are 15 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Gray Crowned-Crane](#) *Balearica regulorum*
- [Wattled Crane](#) *Bufo carunculatus*

Corn Crake



Corn Crake, a declining migrant from Eurasia.

Rallidae is a large family of small to medium-sized birds which includes the [rails](#), [crakes](#), [coots](#), and [gallinules](#). Typically they inhabit dense vegetation in damp environments near lakes, swamps, or rivers. In general they are shy and secretive birds, difficult to observe. Most species have strong legs, and have long toes which are well adapted to soft, uneven surfaces. They tend to have short, rounded wings and be weak fliers. There are 143 species worldwide and 17 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Buff-spotted Flufftail](#) *Sarothrura elegans*
- [Red-chested Flufftail](#) *Sarothrura rufa*
- [Chestnut-headed Flufftail](#) *Sarothrura lugens* (A)
- [Streaky-breasted Flufftail](#) *Sarothrura boehmi*
- [Striped Flufftail](#) *Sarothrura affinis*
- [African Rail](#) *Rallus caerulescens*
- [African Crake](#) *Creopsis egregia*
- [Corn Crake](#) *Crex crex*
- [Black Crake](#) *Amaurornis flavirostris*
- [Baillon's Crake](#) *Porzana pusilla*

- [Spotted Crane](#) *Porzana porzana*
- [Striped Crane](#) *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*
- [Purple Swamphen](#) *Porphyrio porphyrio*
- [Allen's Gallinule](#) *Porphyrio alleni*
- [Common Moorhen](#) *Gallinula chloropus*
- [Lesser Moorhen](#) *Gallinula angulata*
- [Red-knobbed Coot](#) *Fulica cristata*

The Heliornithidae are small family of tropical birds with webbed lobes on their feet similar to those of grebes and coots. There are 3 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [African Finfoot](#) *Podica senegalensis*

Bustards are large terrestrial birds mainly associated with dry open country and steppes in the [Old World](#). They are omnivorous and nest on the ground. They walk steadily on strong legs and big toes, pecking for food as they go. They have long broad wings with "fingered" wingtips, and striking patterns in flight. Many have interesting mating displays. There are 26 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Stanley Bustard](#) *Neotis denhami*
- [Black-bellied Bustard](#) *Lissotis melanogaster*

Jacana



African Jacana, very common in well-vegetated wetlands.

The [jacanas](#) are a group of tropical waders in the family Jacanidae. They are found worldwide in the Tropics. They are identifiable by their huge feet and claws which enable them to walk on floating vegetation in the shallow lakes that are their preferred habitat. There 8 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Lesser Jacana](#) *Microparra capensis*
- [African Jacana](#) *Actophilornis africanus*

Painted-snipe



Greater Painted-snipe, a difficult-to-see bird of marshes and the edges of waterbodies.

Painted snipe are short-legged, long-billed birds similar in shape to the true snipes, but more brightly coloured. There are 2 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [Greater Painted-snipe](#) *Rostratula benghalensis*

Recurvirostridae is a family of large wading birds, which includes the [avocets](#) and the [stilts](#). The avocets have long legs and long up-curved bills. The stilts have extremely long legs and long, thin, straight bills. There are 9 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Black-winged Stilt](#) *Himantopus himantopus*
- [Pied Avocet](#) *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Thick-Knee



Spotted Thick-knee, a scarce and little-known nocturnal bird.

The thick-knees are a group of largely tropical waders in the family Burhinidae. They are found worldwide within the tropical zone, with some species also breeding in temperate Europe and Australia. They are medium to large waders with strong black or yellow black bills, large yellow eyes and cryptic plumage. Despite being classed as waders, most species have a preference for arid or semi-arid habitats. There are 9 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Water Thick-knee](#) *Burhinus vermiculatus*
- [Spotted Thick-knee](#) *Burhinus capensis*

Pratincole



Collared Pratincole, a colonial nester of grassland and wetlands.

Glareolidae is a family of wading birds comprising the [pratincoles](#), which have short legs, long pointed wings and long forked tails, and the [coursers](#), which have long legs, short wings and long pointed bills which curve downwards. There are 17 species worldwide and 5 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Temminck's Courser](#) *Cursorius temminckii*
- [Bronze-winged Courser](#) *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*
- [Collared Pratincole](#) *Glareola pratincola*
- [Black-winged Pratincole](#) *Glareola nordmanni* (A)

- [Rock Pratincole](#) *Glareola nuchalis*

Lapwing



Wattled Lapwing, locally fairly common in short, moist grassland.

The family Charadriidae includes the [plovers](#), [dotterels](#), and [lapwings](#). They are small to medium-sized birds with compact bodies, short, thick necks and long, usually pointed, wings. They are found in open country worldwide, mostly in habitats near water, although there are some exceptions. There are 66 species worldwide and 15 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Long-toed Lapwing](#) *Vanellus crassirostris*
- [Blacksmith Plover](#) *Vanellus armatus*
- [Spur-winged Plover](#) *Vanellus spinosus*
- [White-headed Lapwing](#) *Vanellus albiceps*
- [Senegal Lapwing](#) *Vanellus lugubris*
- [Crowned Lapwing](#) *Vanellus coronatus*
- [Wattled Lapwing](#) *Vanellus senegallus*
- [Pacific Golden-Plover](#) *Pluvialis fulva* (A)
- [Black-bellied Plover](#) *Pluvialis squatarola*
- [Common Ringed Plover](#) *Charadrius hiaticula*
- [Kittlitz's Plover](#) *Charadrius pecuarius*
- [Three-banded Plover](#) *Charadrius tricollaris*
- [White-fronted Plover](#) *Charadrius marginatus*
- [Greater Sandplover](#) *Charadrius leschenaultii* (A)
- [Caspian Plover](#) *Charadrius asiaticus*

Sandpiper



Common Sandpiper, a very common Eurasian migrant.



Ruff, a widespread migrant to wetlands and grassland.

The Scolopacidae are a large diverse family of small to medium sized shorebirds including the [sandpipers](#), [curlews](#), [godwits](#), [shanks](#), [tattlers](#), [woodcocks](#), [snipes](#), [dowitchers](#) and [phalaropes](#). The majority of species eat small invertebrates picked out of the mud or soil. Variation in length of legs and bills enable different species to feed in the same habitat, particularly on the coast, without direct competition for food. There are 89 species worldwide and 21 species which occur in Malawi.

- [African Snipe](#) *Gallinago nigripennis*
- [Great Snipe](#) *Gallinago media*
- [Common Snipe](#) *Gallinago gallinago* (A)
- [Black-tailed Godwit](#) *Limosa limosa* (A)
- [Bar-tailed Godwit](#) *Limosa lapponica*
- [Whimbrel](#) *Numenius phaeopus*
- [Eurasian Curlew](#) *Numenius arquata*
- [Spotted Redshank](#) *Tringa erythropus* (A)
- [Common Redshank](#) *Tringa totanus*
- [Marsh Sandpiper](#) *Tringa stagnatilis*
- [Common Greenshank](#) *Tringa nebularia*
- [Green Sandpiper](#) *Tringa ochropus*
- [Wood Sandpiper](#) *Tringa glareola*

- [Terek Sandpiper](#) *Xenus cinereus*
- [Common Sandpiper](#) *Actitis hypoleucos*
- [Ruddy Turnstone](#) *Arenaria interpres*
- [Sanderling](#) *Calidris alba*
- [Little Stint](#) *Calidris minuta*
- [Curlew Sandpiper](#) *Calidris ferruginea*
- [Broad-billed Sandpiper](#) *Limicola falcinellus* (A)
- [Ruff](#) *Philomachus pugnax*

Gull



Gray-headed Gull, a resident of larger lakes and rivers.

Laridae is a family of medium to large birds seabirds and includes [gulls](#) and [kittiwakes](#). They are typically grey or white, often with black markings on the head or wings. They have stout, longish bills and webbed feet. There are 55 species worldwide and 3 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Lesser Black-backed Gull](#) *Larus fuscus*
- [Gray-headed Gull](#) *Larus cirrocephalus*
- [Black-headed Gull](#) *Larus ridibundus* (A)

Terns



Whiskered Tern, frequent at Lake Chilwa where a breeding colony has been recorded.

[Terns](#) are a group of generally general medium to large sea-birds typically with grey or white plumage, often with black markings on the head. Most terns hunt fish by diving but some pick insects off the surface of fresh water. Terns are generally long-lived birds, with several species now known to live in excess of 25 to 30 years. There are 44 species worldwide and 5 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Gull-billed Tern](#) *Sterna nilotica*
- [Common Tern](#) *Sterna hirundo* (A)
- [Sooty Tern](#) *Sterna fuscata* (A)
- [Whiskered Tern](#) *Chlidonias hybridus*
- [White-winged Tern](#) *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Skimmers



African Skimmer, breeds along the River Shire.

[Skimmers](#) are a small family of tropical tern-like birds. They have an elongated lower mandible which they use to feed by flying low over the water surface and skimming the water for small fish. There are 3 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [African Skimmer](#) *Rynchops flavirostris*

Sandgrouse have small, pigeon like heads and necks, but sturdy compact bodies. They have long pointed wings and sometimes tails and a fast direct flight. Flocks fly to watering holes at dawn and dusk. Their legs are feathered down to the toes. There are 16 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [Double-banded Sandgrouse](#) *Pterocles bicinctus*

Pigeon/Doves



Laughing Dove, widespread in drier regions and increasing in numbers.

[Pigeons](#) and [doves](#) are stout-bodied birds with short necks and short slender bills with a fleshy [cere](#). There are 308 species worldwide and 13 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Rameron Pigeon](#) *Columba arquatrix*
- [Delegorgue's Pigeon](#) *Columba delegorguei* (Ex?)
- [Lemon Dove](#) *Columba larvata*
- [Dusky Turtle Dove](#) *Streptopelia lugens*
- [African Mourning Dove](#) *Streptopelia decipiens*
- [Red-eyed Dove](#) *Streptopelia semitorquata*
- [Ring-necked Dove](#) *Streptopelia capicola*
- [Laughing Dove](#) *Streptopelia senegalensis*
- [Emerald-spotted Wood Dove](#) *Turtur chalcospilos*
- [Blue-spotted Wood Dove](#) *Turtur afer*
- [Tambourine Dove](#) *Turtur tympanistria*
- [Namaqua Dove](#) *Oena capensis*
- [African Green Pigeon](#) *Treron calva*

Parrots



Meyer's Parrot, occurs in woodland in northern and central Malawi.

[Parrots](#) are small to large birds with a characteristic curved beak shape. Their upper mandibles have slight mobility in the joint with the skull and they have a generally erect stance. All parrots are zygodactyl, having the four toes on each foot placed two at the front and two back. There are 335 species worldwide and 4 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Lilian's Lovebird](#) *Agapornis lilianae*
- [Brown-necked Parrot](#) *Poicephalus robustus*
- [Meyer's Parrot](#) *Poicephalus meyeri*
- [Brown-headed Parrot](#) *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*

Turaco



Livingstone's Turaco, common in forest and woodland in the south-east.

The turacos, plantain eaters and go-away birds make up the bird family Musophagidae. They are medium-sized arboreal birds. The turacos and plantain eaters are brightly coloured birds, usually blue, green or purple. The go-away birds are mostly grey and white. There are 23 species worldwide and 5 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Livingstone's Turaco](#) *Tauraco livingstonii*
- [Schalow's Turaco](#) *Tauraco schalowi*
- [Purple-crested Turaco](#) *Tauraco porphyreolophus*
- [Bare-faced Go-away-bird](#) *Corythaixoides personatus*
- [Gray Go-away-bird](#) *Corythaixoides concolor*

Cuckoos



Pied Cuckoo, a migrant from other parts of Africa and perhaps also from Asia.

The family Cuculidae includes [cuckoos](#), [roadrunners](#) and [anis](#). These birds are of variable size with slender bodies, long tails and strong legs. Unlike the cuckoo species of the Old World, North American cuckoos are not brood parasites. There are 138 species worldwide and 19 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Pied Cuckoo](#) *Clamator jacobinus*
- [Levaillant's Cuckoo](#) *Clamator levaillantii*
- [Great Spotted Cuckoo](#) *Clamator glandarius*
- [Thick-billed Cuckoo](#) *Pachycoccyx audeberti*
- [Red-chested Cuckoo](#) *Cuculus solitarius*
- [Black Cuckoo](#) *Cuculus clamosus*
- [Common Cuckoo](#) *Cuculus canorus*
- [African Cuckoo](#) *Cuculus gularis*
- [Lesser Cuckoo](#) *Cuculus poliocephalus*
- [Madagascar Cuckoo](#) *Cuculus rochii* (A)
- [Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo](#) *Cercococcyx montanus*
- [Klaas's Cuckoo](#) *Chrysococcyx klaas*
- [African Emerald Cuckoo](#) *Chrysococcyx cupreus*
- [Dideric Cuckoo](#) *Chrysococcyx caprius*

- [Yellowbill](#) *Ceuthmochares aereus*
- [Black Coucal](#) *Centropus grillii*
- [Coppery-tailed Coucal](#) *Centropus cupreicaudus*
- [Senegal Coucal](#) *Centropus senegalensis*
- [White-browed Coucal](#) *Centropus superciliosus*

Barn owls



Barn Owl, often around farms and villages.

[Barn owls](#) are medium to large sized owls with large heads and characteristic heart-shaped faces. They have long strong legs with powerful talons. There are 16 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [African Grass-Owl](#) *Tyto capensis*
- [Barn Owl](#) *Tyto alba*

Typical owls





Spotted Eagle-Owl, common and present in many habitats.

Typical owls are small to large solitary nocturnal birds of prey. They have large forward-facing eyes and ears, a hawk-like beak, and a conspicuous circle of feathers around each eye called a facial disk. There are 195 species worldwide and 10 species which occur in Malawi.

- [African Scops-Owl](#) *Otus senegalensis*
- [Southern White-faced Owl](#) *Ptilopsis granti*
- [Cape Eagle-Owl](#) *Bubo capensis* (A)
- [Spotted Eagle-Owl](#) *Bubo africanus*
- [Verreaux's Eagle-Owl](#) *Bubo lacteus*
- [Pel's Fishing-Owl](#) *Scotopelia peli*
- [African Wood-Owl](#) *Strix woodfordii*
- [Pearl-spotted Owlet](#) *Glaucidium perlatum*
- [African Barred Owlet](#) *Glaucidium capense*
- [Marsh Owl](#) *Asio capensis*

Nightjars

Nightjars are medium-sized nocturnal birds with long wings, short legs and very short bills that usually nest on the ground. Most have small feet, of little use for walking, and long pointed wings. Their soft plumage is camouflaged to resemble bark or leaves. There are 86 species worldwide and 6 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Eurasian Nightjar](#) *Caprimulgus europaeus*
- [Fiery-necked Nightjar](#) *Caprimulgus pectoralis*
- [Abyssinian Nightjar](#) *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*
- [Freckled Nightjar](#) *Caprimulgus tristigma*
- [Square-tailed Nightjar](#) *Caprimulgus fossii*
- [Pennant-winged Nightjar](#) *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*

Swifts



African Palm-Swift, common around palms in lowland areas.

[Swifts](#) are small aerial birds, spending the majority of their lives flying. These birds have very short legs and never settle voluntarily on the ground, perching instead only on vertical surfaces. Many swifts have long swept-back wings that resemble a crescent or a boomerang. There are 98 species worldwide and 11 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Scarce Swift](#) *Schoutedenapus myoptilus*
- [Mottled Spinetail](#) *Telacanthura ussheri* (A)
- [Bat-like Spinetail](#) *Neafrapus boehmi* (A)
- [African Palm-Swift](#) *Cypsiurus parvus*
- [Alpine Swift](#) *Tachymarptis melba*
- [Mottled Swift](#) *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*
- [Common Swift](#) *Apus apus*
- [African Swift](#) *Apus barbatus*
- [Little Swift](#) *Apus affinis*
- [Horus Swift](#) *Apus horus*
- [White-rumped Swift](#) *Apus caffer*

Mousebirds



Speckled Mousebird, a sociable bird which often visits gardens.

The mousebirds are slender greyish or brown birds with soft, hairlike body feathers and very long thin tails. They are arboreal and scurry through the leaves like rodents in search of berries, fruit and buds. They are acrobatic, and can feed upside down. All species have strong claws and reversible outer toes. They also have crests and stubby bills. There are 6 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Speckled Mousebird](#) *Colius striatus*
- [Red-faced Mousebird](#) *Urocolius indicus*

Trogons



Bar-tailed Trogon, resident in highland rainforests.

The family Trogonidae includes trogons and quetzals. Found in tropical woodlands worldwide, they feed on insects and fruit, and their broad bills and weak legs reflect their diet and arboreal habits. Although their flight is fast, they are reluctant to fly any distance. Trogons have soft, often

colourful, feathers with distinctive male and female plumage. There are 33 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Narina Trogon](#) *Apaloderma narina*
- [Bar-tailed Trogon](#) *Apaloderma vittatum*

Kingfishers



Striped Kingfisher, widespread in open woodland and savanna.

Kingfishers are medium-sized birds with large heads, long pointed bills, short legs, and stubby tails. There are 93 species worldwide and 9 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Half-collared Kingfisher](#) *Alcedo semitorquata*
- [Malachite Kingfisher](#) *Alcedo cristata*
- [African Pygmy-Kingfisher](#) *Ispidina picta*
- [Gray-headed Kingfisher](#) *Halcyon leucocephala*
- [Woodland Kingfisher](#) *Halcyon senegalensis*
- [Brown-hooded Kingfisher](#) *Halcyon albiventris*
- [Striped Kingfisher](#) *Halcyon chelicuti*
- [Giant Kingfisher](#) *Megaceryle maximus*
- [Pied Kingfisher](#) *Ceryle rudis*

Bee-eaters



Boehm's Bee-eater, a local resident most common near rivers.

The bee-eaters are a group of [near passerine](#) birds in the family Meropidae. Most species are found in Africa but others occur in southern Europe, Madagascar, Australia and New Guinea. They are characterised by richly coloured plumage, slender bodies and usually elongated central tail feathers. All are colorful and have long downturned bills and pointed wings, which give them a swallow-like appearance when seen from afar. There are 26 species worldwide and 8 species which occur in Malawi.

- [White-fronted Bee-eater](#) *Merops bullockoides*
- [Little Bee-eater](#) *Merops pusillus*
- [Swallow-tailed Bee-eater](#) *Merops hirundineus*
- [Boehm's Bee-eater](#) *Merops boehmi*
- [Blue-cheeked Bee-eater](#) *Merops persicus*
- [Madagascar Bee-eater](#) *Merops superciliosus*
- [European Bee-eater](#) *Merops apiaster*
- [Southern Carmine Bee-eater](#) *Merops nubicoides*

Typical rollers



Lilac-breasted Roller, widespread in open woodland and savanna.

Rollers resemble [crows](#) in size and build, but are more closely related to the [kingfishers](#) and [bee-eaters](#). They share the colourful appearance of those groups with blues and browns predominating. The two inner front toes are connected, but the outer toe is not. There are 12 species worldwide and 5 species which occur in Malawi.

- [European Roller](#) *Coracias garrulus*
- [Lilac-breasted Roller](#) *Coracias caudata*
- [Racket-tailed Roller](#) *Coracias spatulata*
- [Rufous-crowned Roller](#) *Coracias naevia*
- [Broad-billed Roller](#) *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Hoopoes

Hoopoes have black, white and orangey-pink colouring with a large erectile crest on their head. There are 2 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [Hoopoe](#) *Upupa epops*

Woodhoopoes



Common Scimitar-bill, a widespread resident in woodland.

The woodhoopoes are related to the [kingfishers](#), [rollers](#) and [hoopoe](#). They most resemble the last species with their long curved bills, used for probing for insects, and short rounded wings. However, they differ in that they have metallic [plumage](#), often blue, green or purple, and lack an erectile crest. There are 8 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Green Woodhoopoe](#) *Phoeniculus purpureus*
- [Common Scimitar-bill](#) *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*

Hornbills



Southern Ground-Hornbill, disappearing from more densely-populated areas.

Hornbills are a group of birds whose bill is shaped like a cow's horn, but without a twist, sometimes with a casque on the upper mandible. Frequently, the bill is brightly coloured. There are 57 species worldwide and 8 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Red-billed Hornbill](#) *Tockus erythrorhynchus*
- [Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill](#) *Tockus leucomelas*
- [Crowned Hornbill](#) *Tockus alboterminatus*
- [African Gray Hornbill](#) *Tockus nasutus*
- [Pale-billed Hornbill](#) *Tockus pallidirostris*
- [Trumpeter Hornbill](#) *Ceratogymna bucinator*
- [Silvery-cheeked Hornbill](#) *Ceratogymna brevis*
- [Southern Ground-Hornbill](#) *Bucorvus leadbeateri*

Barbets



Black-collared Barbet, a widespread and common resident.

The barbets are plump birds, with short necks and large heads. They get their name from the bristles which fringe their heavy bills. Most species are

brightly coloured. There are 84 species worldwide and 12 species which occur in Malawi.

- [White-eared Barbet](#) *Stactolaema leucotis*
- [Whyte's Barbet](#) *Stactolaema whytii*
- [Green Barbet](#) *Stactolaema olivacea*
- [Moustached Tinkerbird](#) *Pogoniulus leucomystax*
- [Green Tinkerbird](#) *Pogoniulus simplex*
- [Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird](#) *Pogoniulus bilineatus*
- [Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird](#) *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*
- [Miombo Barbet](#) *Tricholaema frontata*
- [Black-collared Barbet](#) *Lybius torquatus*
- [Brown-breasted Barbet](#) *Lybius melanopterus*
- [Black-backed Barbet](#) *Lybius minor*
- [Crested Barbet](#) *Trachyphonus vaillantii*

Honeyguides

Honeyguides are among the few birds that feed on [wax](#). They are named for the behaviour of the [Greater Honeyguide](#) which leads large animals to bees' nests and then feeds on the wax once the animal has broken the nest open to get at the honey. There are 17 species worldwide and 6 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Scaly-throated Honeyguide](#) *Indicator variegatus*
- [Greater Honeyguide](#) *Indicator indicator*
- [Lesser Honeyguide](#) *Indicator minor*
- [Pallid Honeyguide](#) *Indicator meliphilus*
- [Green-backed Honeyguide](#) *Prodotiscus zambesiae*
- [Wahlberg's Honeyguide](#) *Prodotiscus regulus*

Woodpeckers



Golden-tailed Woodpecker, a widespread resident most common in the south-east.

Woodpeckers are small to medium sized birds with chisel like beaks, short legs, stiff tails and long tongues used for capturing insects. Some species have feet with two toes pointing forward, and two backward, while several species have only three toes. Many woodpeckers have the habit of tapping noisily on tree trunks with their beaks. There are 218 species worldwide and 8 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Bennett's Woodpecker](#) *Campethera bennettii*
- [Reichenow's Woodpecker](#) *Campethera scriptoricauda*
- [Golden-tailed Woodpecker](#) *Campethera abingoni*
- [Green-backed Woodpecker](#) *Campethera cailliautii*
- [Cardinal Woodpecker](#) *Dendropicos fuscescens*
- [Stierling's Woodpecker](#) *Dendropicos stierlingi*
- [Bearded Woodpecker](#) *Dendropicos namaquus*
- [Olive Woodpecker](#) *Dendropicos griseocephalus*

Broadbills

The broadbills are small, brightly coloured birds that feed on fruit and also take insects in flycatcher fashion, snapping their broad bills. Their habitat is canopies of wet forests. There are 15 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [African Broadbill](#) *Smithornis capensis*

Pittas

Pittas are medium-sized by passerine standards, and stocky, with fairly long, strong legs, short tails and stout bills. Many, but not all, are brightly coloured. They spend the majority of their time on wet forest floors, eating snails, insects and similar invertebrate prey which they find there. There are 32 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [African Pitta](#) *Pitta angolensis*

Larks

Larks are small terrestrial birds with often extravagant songs and display flights. Most larks are fairly dull in appearance. Their food is insects and seeds. There are 91 species worldwide and 6 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Rufous-naped Lark](#) *Mirafraga africana*
- [Flappet Lark](#) *Mirafraga rufocinnamomea*
- [Dusky Lark](#) *Pinarocorys nigricans* (A)
- [Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark](#) *Eremopterix leucotis*
- [Fischer's Sparrow-Lark](#) *Eremopterix leucopareia*
- [Red-capped Lark](#) *Calandrella cinerea*

Swallows and martins



Barn Swallow, large numbers migrate to Malawi from the Northern Hemisphere.



Lesser Striped Swallow, a common bird which has adapted to urban areas.

The Hirundinidae family is a group of passerines characterized by their adaptation to aerial feeding. Their adaptations include a slender streamlined body, long pointed wings and short bills with wide gape. The feet are designed for perching rather than walking, and the front toes are partially joined at the base. There are 75 species worldwide and 21 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Bank Swallow](#) *Riparia riparia*
- [Plain Martin](#) *Riparia paludicola*
- [Banded Martin](#) *Riparia cincta*
- [Mascarene Martin](#) *Phedina borbonica*
- [Gray-rumped Swallow](#) *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*
- [Rock Martin](#) *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*
- [Barn Swallow](#) *Hirundo rustica*
- [Angola Swallow](#) *Hirundo angolensis*
- [White-throated Swallow](#) *Hirundo albigularis*
- [Wire-tailed Swallow](#) *Hirundo smithii*
- [Blue Swallow](#) *Hirundo atrocaerulea*
- [Pearl-breasted Swallow](#) *Hirundo dimidiata*
- [Greater Striped-Swallow](#) *Cecropis cucullata* (A)
- [Lesser Striped-Swallow](#) *Cecropis abyssinica*
- [Rufous-chested Swallow](#) *Cecropis semirufa*
- [Mosque Swallow](#) *Cecropis senegalensis*
- [Red-rumped Swallow](#) *Cecropis daurica*
- [South African Swallow](#) *Petrochelidon spilodera* (A)
- [Common House-Martin](#) *Delichon urbica*
- [White-headed Sawwing](#) *Psalidoprocne albiceps*
- [Blue Sawwing](#) *Psalidoprocne pristoptera*

Wagtails and pipits



African Pied Wagtail, common near water and in urban areas.



Yellow-throated Longclaw, fairly common in grassland.

The Motacillidae are a family of small passerine birds with medium to long tails. They include the wagtails, longclaws and pipits. They are slender, ground feeding insectivores of open country. There are 54 species worldwide and 14 species which occur in Malawi.

- [African Pied Wagtail](#) *Motacilla aguimp*
- [Yellow Wagtail](#) *Motacilla flava*
- [Gray Wagtail](#) *Motacilla cinerea*
- [Mountain Wagtail](#) *Motacilla clara*
- [Yellow-throated Longclaw](#) *Macronyx croceus*
- [Rosy-throated Longclaw](#) *Macronyx ameliae*
- [Striped Pipit](#) *Anthus lineiventris*
- [Woodland Pipit](#) *Anthus nyassae*
- [Plain-backed Pipit](#) *Anthus leucophrys*
- [Buffy Pipit](#) *Anthus vaalensis*
- [African Pipit](#) *Anthus cinnamomeus*
- [Bush Pipit](#) *Anthus caffer*
- [Tree Pipit](#) *Anthus trivialis*
- [Golden Pipit](#), *Tmetothylacus tenellus* (A)

Cuckoo-shrikes

The cuckoo-shrikes are small to medium-sized passerine birds. They are predominantly greyish with white and black, although some species are brightly coloured. There are 82 species worldwide and 3 species which occur in Malawi.

- [White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike](#) *Coracina pectoralis*
- [Gray Cuckoo-shrike](#) *Coracina caesia*
- [Black Cuckoo-shrike](#) *Campephaga flava*

Bulbuls



Common Bulbul, one of Malawi's commonest birds.

Bulbuls are medium-sized songbirds. Some are colourful with yellow, red or orange vents, cheeks, throat or supercilia, but most are drab, with uniform olive brown to black plumage. Some species have distinct crests. There are 130 species worldwide and 12 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Common Bulbul](#) *Pycnonotus barbatus*
- [Shelley's Greenbul](#) *Andropadus masukuensis*
- [Little Greenbul](#) *Andropadus virens*
- [Sombre Greenbul](#) *Andropadus importunus*
- [Eastern Mountain-Greenbul](#) *Andropadus nigriceps*
- [Stripe-cheeked Bulbul](#) *Andropadus milanjensis*
- [Yellow-bellied Greenbul](#) *Chlorocichla flaviventris*
- [Cabanis's Greenbul](#) *Phyllastrephus cabanisi*
- [Terrestrial Brownbul](#) *Phyllastrephus terrestris*
- [Gray-olive Greenbul](#) *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris*
- [Yellow-streaked Bulbul](#) *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*
- [Eastern Nicator](#) *Nicator gularis*

Thrushes



Groundscraper Thrush, small numbers occur in open woodland, gardens and golf courses.

The [thrushes](#) are a group of passerine birds that occur mainly in the Old World. They are plump, soft plumaged, small to medium-sized insectivores or sometimes omnivores, often feeding on the ground. Many have attractive songs. There are about 176 species worldwide and 8 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Miombo Rock-Thrush](#) *Monticola angolensis*
- [Orange Ground-Thrush](#) *Zoothera gurneyi*
- [Spotted Ground-Thrush](#) *Zoothera guttata*
- [Groundscraper Thrush](#) *Psophocichla litsipsirupa*
- [Olive Thrush](#) *Turdus olivaceus*
- [Kurrichane Thrush](#) *Turdus libonyanus*
- [Cholo Alethe](#) *Alethe choloensis*
- [White-chested Alethe](#) *Alethe fuelleborni*

Cisticolas and allies



Wailing Cisticola, a bird of mountain grassland.



Tawny-flanked Prinia, a very common and widespread resident.

The Cisticolidae are warblers found mainly in warmer southern regions of the Old World. They are generally very small birds of drab brown or grey appearance found in open country such as grassland or scrub. There are 111 species worldwide and 26 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Red-faced Cisticola](#) *Cisticola erythrops*
- [Singing Cisticola](#) *Cisticola cantans*
- [Trilling Cisticola](#) *Cisticola woosnami*
- [Black-lored Cisticola](#) *Cisticola nigriloris*
- [Rock-loving Cisticola](#) *Cisticola aberrans*
- [Rattling Cisticola](#) *Cisticola chiniana*
- [Gray Cisticola](#) *Cisticola rufilatus*
- [Wailing Cisticola](#) *Cisticola lais*
- [Churring Cisticola](#) *Cisticola njombe*
- [Winding Cisticola](#) *Cisticola galactotes*
- [Croaking Cisticola](#) *Cisticola natalensis*
- [Piping Cisticola](#) *Cisticola fulvicapillus*
- [Siffling Cisticola](#) *Cisticola brachypterus*
- [Zitting Cisticola](#) *Cisticola juncidis*
- [Wing-snapping Cisticola](#) *Cisticola ayresii*
- [Tawny-flanked Prinia](#) *Prinia subflava*
- [Red-winged Prinia](#) *Prinia erythroptera*
- [Bar-throated Apalis](#) *Apalis thoracica*
- [White-winged Apalis](#) *Apalis chariessa*
- [Yellow-breasted Apalis](#) *Apalis flavida*
- [Rudd's Apalis](#) *Apalis ruddi* (Ex?)
- [Chapin's Apalis](#) *Apalis chapini*
- [Black-headed Apalis](#) *Apalis melanocephala*
- [Brown-headed Apalis](#) *Apalis alticola*
- [Green-backed Camaroptera](#) *Camaroptera brachyura*
- [Miombo Camaroptera](#) *Calamonastes undosus*

Old World warblers



Marsh Warbler, large numbers winter in the Lower Shire Valley.



Willow Warbler, a common migrant from Eurasia.

The family Sylviidae is a group of small insectivorous passerine birds. The Sylviidae mainly occur as breeding species, as the common name implies, in Europe, Asia and, to a lesser extent Africa. Most are of generally undistinguished appearance, but many have distinctive songs. There are 291 species worldwide and 32 species which occur in Malawi.

- [African Bush-Warbler](#) *Bradypterus baboecala*
- [Cameroon Scrub-Warbler](#) *Bradypterus lopezi*
- [Cinnamon Bracken-Warbler](#) *Bradypterus cinnamomeus*
- [Moustached Grass-Warbler](#) *Melocichla mentalis*
- [Eurasian River Warbler](#) *Locustella fluviatilis*

- [Sedge Warbler](#) *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
- [Eurasian Reed-Warbler](#) *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
- [African Reed-Warbler](#) *Acrocephalus baeticatus*
- [Marsh Warbler](#) *Acrocephalus palustris*
- [Great Reed-Warbler](#) *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*
- [Basra Reed-Warbler](#) *Acrocephalus griseldis*
- [Lesser Swamp-Warbler](#) *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*
- [Olive-tree Warbler](#) *Hippolais olivetorum*
- [Icterine Warbler](#) *Hippolais icterina*
- [African Yellow Warbler](#) *Chloropeta natalensis*
- [Mountain Yellow Warbler](#) *Chloropeta similis*
- [Yellow-bellied Eremomela](#) *Eremomela icteropygialis*
- [Greencap Eremomela](#) *Eremomela scotops*
- [Burnt-neck Eremomela](#) *Eremomela usticollis*
- [Red-capped Crombec](#) *Sylvietta ruficapilla*
- [Red-faced Crombec](#) *Sylvietta whytii*
- [Cape Crombec](#) *Sylvietta rufescens*
- [Yellow-throated Wood-Warbler](#) *Phylloscopus ruficapillus*
- [Willow Warbler](#) *Phylloscopus trochilus*
- [Yellow-bellied Hyliota](#) *Hyliota flavigaster*
- [Southern Hyliota](#) *Hyliota australis*
- [Fan-tailed Grassbird](#) *Schoenicola brevirostris*
- [Blackcap](#) *Sylvia atricapilla*
- [Garden Warbler](#) *Sylvia borin*
- [Greater Whitethroat](#) *Sylvia communis*
- [Barred Warbler](#) *Sylvia nisoria* (A)
- [Brown Warbler](#) *Parisoma lugens*

Old World flycatchers and chats



Spotted Flycatcher, a common and widespread migrant.



African Stonechat, most common in highland areas.

Old World flycatchers and chats are a large group of small passerine birds native to the Old World. They are mainly small insectivores. The appearance of these birds is very varied, but they mostly have weak songs and harsh calls. There 274 species worldwide and 30 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Pale Flycatcher](#) *Bradornis pallidus*
- [White-eyed Slaty-Flycatcher](#) *Melaenornis fischeri*
- [Southern Black-Flycatcher](#) *Melaenornis pammelaina*
- [Spotted Flycatcher](#) *Muscicapa striata*
- [Boehm's Flycatcher](#) *Muscicapa boehmi*
- [African Dusky Flycatcher](#) *Muscicapa adusta*
- [Ashy Flycatcher](#) *Muscicapa caerulescens*
- [Gray Tit-Flycatcher](#) *Myioparus plumbeus*
- [Collared Flycatcher](#) *Ficedula albicollis*
- [White-starred Robin](#) *Pogonocichla stellata*
- [Sharpe's Akalat](#) *Sheppardia sharpei*
- [East Coast Akalat](#) *Sheppardia gunningi*
- [Thrush Nightingale](#) *Luscinia luscinia*
- [Olive-flanked Robin-Chat](#) *Cossypha anomala*
- [Cape Robin-Chat](#) *Cossypha caffra*
- [White-browed Robin-Chat](#) *Cossypha heuglini*
- [Red-capped Robin-Chat](#) *Cossypha natalensis*
- [Collared Palm-Thrush](#) *Cichladusa arquata*
- [Bearded Scrub-Robin](#) *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata*
- [Miombo Scrub-Robin](#) *Cercotrichas barbata*
- [Red-backed Scrub-Robin](#) *Cercotrichas leucophrys*
- [Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin](#) *Cercotrichas galactotes* (A)

- [Whinchat](#) *Saxicola rubetra*
- [African Stonechat](#) *Saxicola torquata*
- [Northern Wheatear](#) *Oenanthe oenanthe*
- [Capped Wheatear](#) *Oenanthe pileata*
- [Familiar Chat](#) *Cercomela familiaris*
- [White-headed Black-Chat](#) *Myrmecocichla arnotti*
- [Mocking Cliff-Chat](#) *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris*
- [Boulder Chat](#) *Pinarornis plumosus*

Wattle-eyes

The wattle-eyes or puffback flycatchers are small stout passerine birds of the African tropics. They get their name from the brightly coloured fleshy eye decorations found in most species in this group. There are 31 species worldwide and 7 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher](#) *Bias musicus*
- [Black-throated Wattle-eye](#) *Platysteira peltata*
- [Short-tailed Batis](#) *Batis mixta*
- [Cape Batis](#) *Batis capensis*
- [Woodward's Batis](#) *Batis fratum*
- [Chinspot Batis](#) *Batis molitor*
- [Pale Batis](#) *Batis soror*

Monarch flycatchers

The monarch flycatchers are small to medium-sized insectivorous passerines, which hunt by flycatching. There are 99 species worldwide and 5 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Livingstone's Flycatcher](#) *Erythrocercus livingstonei*
- [White-tailed Blue-flycatcher](#) *Elminia albicauda*
- [White-tailed Crested-flycatcher](#) *Elminia albonotata*
- [African Crested-flycatcher](#) *Trochocercus cyanomelas*
- [African Paradise-flycatcher](#) *Terpsiphone viridis*

Babblers

The babblers or timaliids are somewhat diverse in size and coloration, but are characterised by soft fluffy plumage. There are 270 species worldwide and 4 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Spot-throat](#) *Modulatrix stictigula*
- [Mountain Illadopsis](#) *Illadopsis pyrrhoptera*
- [African Hill Babbler](#) *Illadopsis abyssinica*
- [Arrow-marked Babbler](#) *Turdoides jardineii*

Tits

The Paridae are mainly small stocky woodland species with short stout bills. Some have crests. They are adaptable birds, with a mixed diet including seeds and insects. There are species 59 worldwide and 4 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Southern Black-Tit](#) *Melaniparus niger*
- [White-winged Black Tit](#) *Melaniparus leucomelas*
- [Rufous-bellied Tit](#) *Melaniparus rufiventris*
- [Miombo Tit](#) *Melaniparus griseiventris*

Treecreepers

Treecreepers are small woodland birds, brown above and white below. They have thin pointed down-curved bills, which they use to extricate insects from bark. They have stiff tail feathers, like woodpeckers, which they use to support themselves on vertical trees. There are 6 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [Spotted Creeper](#) *Salpornis spilonotus*

Penduline tits

The penduline tits are a group of small passerine birds, related to the true tits. They are insectivores. There are 13 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [African Penduline-Tit](#) *Anthoscopus caroli*

Sunbirds



Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, very common in mountain rainforest.



Copper Sunbird, many move down to lowland regions outside the breeding season.

The sunbirds and spiderhunters are very small passerine birds which feed largely on nectar, although they will also take insects, especially when feeding young. Flight is fast and direct on their short wings. Most species can take nectar by hovering like a hummingbird, but usually perch to feed. There are 131 species worldwide and 20 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Anchieta's Sunbird](#) *Anthreptes anchietae*
- [Western Violet-backed Sunbird](#) *Anthreptes longuemarei*
- [Collared Sunbird](#) *Hedydipna collaris*
- [Green-headed Sunbird](#) *Cyanomitra verticalis*
- [Eastern Olive-Sunbird](#) *Cyanomitra olivacea*
- [Mouse-colored Sunbird](#) *Cyanomitra veroxii*
- [Amethyst Sunbird](#) *Chalcomitra amethystina*
- [Scarlet-chested Sunbird](#) *Chalcomitra senegalensis*
- [Bronze Sunbird](#) *Nectarinia kilimensis*
- [Red-tufted Sunbird](#) *Nectarinia johnstoni*
- [Malachite Sunbird](#) *Nectarinia famosa*
- [Miombo Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris manoensis*
- [Montane Double-collared Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris ludovicensis*

- [Eastern Double-collared Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris mediocris*
- [Shelley's Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris shelleyi*
- [Purple-banded Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris bifasciatus*
- [Oustalet's Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris oustaleti* (A)
- [White-breasted Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris talatala*
- [Variable Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris venustus*
- [Copper Sunbird](#) *Cinnyris cupreus*

White-eyes

The white-eyes are small and are mostly of undistinguished appearance, the plumage above being generally either some dull color like greenish olive, but some species have a white or bright yellow throat, breast or lower parts, and several have buff flanks. As their name suggests many species have a white ring around the eyes. There are 96 species worldwide and 1 species which occurs in Malawi.

- [African Yellow White-eye](#) *Zosterops senegalensis*

Old World orioles

The Old World Orioles are colourful passerine birds. They are not related to the New World orioles. There are 29 species worldwide and 4 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Eurasian Golden Oriole](#) *Oriolus oriolus*
- [African Golden Oriole](#) *Oriolus auratus*
- [Green-headed Oriole](#) *Oriolus chlorocephalus*
- [African Black-headed Oriole](#) *Oriolus larvatus*

Shrikes



Common Fiscal, conspicuous in open country.

Shrikes are passerine birds known for their habit of catching other birds and small animals and impaling the uneaten portions of their bodies on thorns. A typical shrike's beak is hooked, like a bird of prey. There are 31 species worldwide and 6 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Red-backed Shrike](#) *Lanius collurio*
- [Rufous-tailed Shrike](#) *Lanius isabellinus* (A)
- [Souza's Shrike](#) *Lanius souzae*
- [Lesser Gray Shrike](#) *Lanius minor*
- [Common Fiscal](#) *Lanius collaris*
- [Magpie Shrike](#) *Corvinella melanoleuca* (A)

Bushshrikes and allies



Tropical Boubou, a very common resident.

Bushshrikes are similar in habits to shrikes, hunting insects and other small prey from a perch on a bush. Although similar in build to the shrikes, these tend to be either colourful species or largely black; some species are quite secretive. There are 46 species worldwide and 12 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Brubru](#) *Nilaus afer*
- [Black-backed Puffback](#) *Dryoscopus cubla*
- [Marsh Tchagra](#) *Tchagra minuta*
- [Black-crowned Tchagra](#) *Tchagra senegala*
- [Brown-crowned Tchagra](#) *Tchagra australis*

- [Tropical Boubou](#) *Laniarius aethiopicus*
- [Fuelleborn's Boubou](#) *Laniarius fuelleborni*
- [Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike](#) *Telophorus sulfureopectus*
- [Olive Bushshrike](#) *Telophorus olivaceus*
- [Black-fronted Bushshrike](#) *Telophorus nigrifrons*
- [Four-colored Bushshrike](#) *Telophorus viridis*
- [Gray-headed Bushshrike](#) *Malaconotus blanchoti*

Helmetshrikes



White Helmetshrike, a gregarious bird of woodland.

The helmetshrikes are similar in build to the shrikes, but tend to be colourful species with distinctive crests or other head ornaments, such as wattles, from which they get their name. There are 12 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [White Helmetshrike](#) *Prionops plumatus*
- [Retz's Helmetshrike](#) *Prionops retzii*

Drongos

The drongos are mostly are black or dark grey in colour, sometimes with metallic tints. They have long forked tails, and some Asian species have elaborate tail decorations. They have short legs and sit very upright whilst perched, like a shrike. They flycatch or take prey from the ground. There are 24 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Square-tailed Drongo](#) *Dicrurus ludwigii*
- [Fork-tailed Drongo](#) *Dicrurus adsimilis*

Crows and ravens



Pied Crow, has adapted well to man-made habitats.

The Corvidae family includes [crows](#), [ravens](#), [jays](#), [choughs](#), [magpies](#), [treepies](#), [nutcrackers](#), and [ground jays](#). Corvids are above average in size for the bird order Passeriformes. Some of the larger species show high levels of learning behavior. There are 120 species worldwide and 2 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Pied Crow](#) *Corvus albus*
- [White-necked Raven](#) *Corvus albicollis*

Starlings



Red-billed Oxpecker, mainly found in national parks and nature reserves where there are populations of large wild mammals.

Starlings are small to medium-sized passerine birds. Their flight is strong and direct, and they are very gregarious. Their preferred habitat is fairly open country. They eat insects and fruit. Plumage is typically dark with a metallic sheen. There are 125 species worldwide and 11 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Wattled Starling](#) *Creatophora cinerea*
- [Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling](#) *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*
- [Lesser Blue-eared Glossy-Starling](#) *Lamprotornis chloropterus*
- [Meves's Glossy-Starling](#) *Lamprotornis mevesii*

- [Violet-backed Starling](#) *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*
- [Red-winged Starling](#) *Onychognathus morio*
- [Slender-billed Starling](#) *Onychognathus tenuirostris*
- [Waller's Starling](#) *Onychognathus walleri*
- [Babbling Starling](#) *Neocichla gutturalis*
- [Red-billed Oxpecker](#) *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*
- [Yellow-billed Oxpecker](#) *Buphagus africanus*

Weavers and allies



Village Weaver, breeds in colonies near water.



Red Bishop, locally very common.

The weavers are small passerine birds related to the [finches](#). They are seed-eating birds with rounded conical bills. The males of many species are brightly coloured, usually in red or yellow and black, some species show variation in colour only in the breeding season. There are 116 species worldwide and 26 species which occur in Malawi.

- [White-browed Sparrow-Weaver](#) *Plocepasser mahali*
- [Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver](#) *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus*
- [Baglaffeht Weaver](#) *Ploceus baglaffeht*
- [Bertram's Weaver](#) *Ploceus bertrandi*
- [Lesser Masked-Weaver](#) *Ploceus intermedius*

- [Spectacled Weaver](#) *Ploceus ocularis*
- [African Golden-Weaver](#) *Ploceus subaureus*
- [Holub's Golden-Weaver](#) *Ploceus xanthops*
- [Southern Brown-throated Weaver](#) *Ploceus xanthopterus*
- [Southern Masked-Weaver](#) *Ploceus velatus*
- [Village Weaver](#) *Ploceus cucullatus*
- [Forest Weaver](#) *Ploceus bicolor*
- [Olive-headed Weaver](#) *Ploceus olivaceiceps*
- [Red-headed Weaver](#) *Anaplectes rubriceps*
- [Cardinal Quelea](#) *Quelea cardinalis*
- [Red-headed Quelea](#) *Quelea erythrops*
- [Red-billed Quelea](#) *Quelea quelea*
- [Black-winged Bishop](#) *Euplectes hordeaceus*
- [Red Bishop](#) *Euplectes orix*
- [Yellow Bishop](#) *Euplectes capensis*
- [Fan-tailed Widowbird](#) *Euplectes axillaris*
- [Yellow-shouldered Widowbird](#) *Euplectes macrourus*
- [White-winged Widowbird](#) *Euplectes albonotatus*
- [Red-collared Widowbird](#) *Euplectes ardens*
- [Buff-shouldered Widowbird](#) *Euplectes psammocromius*
- [Grosbeak Weaver](#) *Amblyospiza albifrons*

Waxbills and allies



Common Waxbill, occurs in grassland and marshes throughout Malawi.

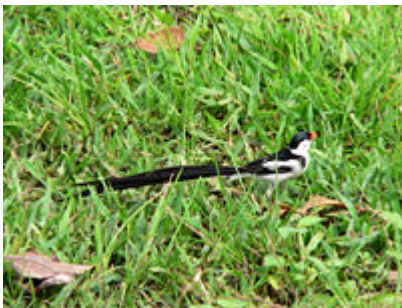


Bronze Mannikin, very common in grassy areas.

The [estrildid finches](#) are small passerine birds of the Old World tropics and [Australasia](#). They are gregarious and often colonial seed-eaters with short thick but pointed bills. They are all similar in structure and habits, but have a wide variation in plumage colours and pattern. There are 141 species worldwide and 21 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Orange-winged Pytilia](#) *Pytilia afra*
- [Green-winged Pytilia](#) *Pytilia melba*
- [Green-backed Twinspot](#) *Mandingoa nitidula*
- [Red-faced Crimson-wing](#) *Cryptospiza reichenovii*
- [Lesser Seedcracker](#) *Pyrenestes minor*
- [Peters's Twinspot](#) *Hypargos niveoguttatus*
- [Red-billed Firefinch](#) *Lagonosticta senegala*
- [African Firefinch](#) *Lagonosticta rubricata*
- [Jameson's Firefinch](#) *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*
- [Blue-breasted Cordonbleu](#) *Uraeginthus angolensis*
- [Black-tailed Waxbill](#) *Estrilda perreini*
- [Yellow-bellied Waxbill](#) *Estrilda quartinia*
- [Crimson-rumped Waxbill](#) *Estrilda rhodopyga*
- [Common Waxbill](#) *Estrilda astrild*
- [Zebra Waxbill](#) *Sporaeginthus subflavus*
- [African Quailfinch](#) *Ortygospiza fuscocrissa*
- [Locustfinch](#) *Paludipasser locustella*
- [Bronze Mannikin](#) *Spermestes cucullatus*
- [Black-and-white Mannikin](#) *Spermestes bicolor*
- [Magpie Mannikin](#) *Spermestes fringilloides*
- [Cut-throat](#) *Amadina fasciata*

Indigobirds



Pin-tailed Whydah, lays its eggs in the nests of waxbills and mannikins.

The indigobirds are finch-like species which usually have black or indigo predominating in their plumage. All are brood parasites, which lay their eggs

in the nests of estrildid finch species. There are 20 species worldwide and 8 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Village Indigobird](#) *Vidua chalybeata*
- [Variable Indigobird](#) *Vidua funerea*
- [Green Indigobird](#) *Vidua codringtoni*
- [Purple Indigobird](#) *Vidua purpurascens*
- [Pin-tailed Whydah](#) *Vidua macroura*
- [Eastern Paradise-Whydah](#) *Vidua paradisaea*
- [Broad-tailed Paradise-Whydah](#) *Vidua obtusa*
- [Parasitic Weaver](#) *Anomalospiza imberbis*

Buntings

The emberizids are a large family of passerine birds. They are seed-eating birds with a distinctively shaped bill. In Europe, most species are named as buntings. In North America, most of the species in this family are known as Sparrows, but these birds are not closely related to the Old World sparrows which are in the family Passeridae. Many emberizid species have distinctive head patterns. There are species 275 worldwide and 4 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Cinnamon-breasted Bunting](#) *Emberiza tahapisi*
- [Vincent's Bunting](#) *Emberiza vincenti*
- [Golden-breasted Bunting](#) *Emberiza flaviventris*
- [Cabanis's Bunting](#) *Emberiza cabanisi*

Finches



Yellow-fronted Canary, common everywhere except high mountain regions.

[Finches](#) are seed-eating passerine birds, that are small to moderately large and have a strong beak, usually conical and in some species very large. All have 12 tail feathers and 9 primaries. These birds have a bouncing flight

with alternating bouts of flapping and gliding on closed wings, and most sing well. There are 137 species worldwide and 9 species which occur in Malawi.

- [Oriole Finch](#) *Linurgus olivaceus*
- [Yellow-crowned Canary](#) *Serinus flavivertex*
- [Southern Citril](#) *Serinus hypostictus*
- [Lemon-breasted Seedeater](#) *Serinus citrinpectus*
- [Yellow-fronted Canary](#) *Serinus mozambicus*
- [Brimstone Canary](#) *Serinus sulphuratus*
- [Reichard's Seedeater](#) *Serinus reichardi*
- [Black-eared Seedeater](#) *Serinus mennelli*
- [Yellow-browed Seedeater](#) *Serinus whytii*

Sparrows



House Sparrow, introduced to South Africa, this species has since spread, reaching Malawi in 1967.

[Sparrows](#) are small passerine birds. In general, sparrows tend to be small, plump, brown or grey birds with short tails and short powerful beaks. Sparrows are seed-eaters, and they also consume small insects. There are 35 species worldwide and 4 species which occur in Malawi.

- [House Sparrow](#) *Passer domesticus* (I)
- [Gray-headed Sparrow](#) *Passer griseus*
- [Southern Gray-headed Sparrow](#) *Passer diffusus*
- [Yellow-throated Petronia](#) *Petronia superciliaris*