

**Trip Report : Robert Falkner**

**Namibia endemics 4-11 February 2015 with Batis Birding Safaris**



All in all a very productive and in many respects lucky trip with Robert, having seen 252 species and of those 102 were lifers adding to his already long list and target of seeing half the world's bird species. I saw 260 species at the end of the trip. Robert saw 30 mammal species and I managed 32. A pretty straightforward trip with the idea of covering most of the important endemic/near endemic bird species in Namibia . All went according to plan and the trip was a huge success.



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I met Robert Falkner at 08h00 on the morning of 4<sup>th</sup> February and we proceeded along the Walvis Bay Lagoon toward the salt works. All the common Palearctic migrants and residents were easily located and good views were had. Robert had five Terek Sandpiper in the lagoon before meeting me the morning. We then added the ever present Pacific Golden Plover to the list and proceeded toward the old nursery in the Kuiseb Delta. En route we had good views of Black-chested Prinia, Pale Chanting Goshawk and Zitting Cisticola. On stopping I immediately heard a Dune Lark calling nearby and we easily located and had decent views of it. We then had a quick walk around the nursery and had good views of Red-faced Mousebird in good numbers as well as Dusky Sunbird and White-rumped Swift.

We continued towards the salt pans and saw Black-necked Grebe in their thousands although only in the distance. We located four Red-necked Phalarope, the mist started getting really thick so we decided to head toward Swakopmund for lunch. En route we had a quick stop at the bird island where we found Crowned Cormorant and African Black Oystercatcher. All the more common Terns were easily seen and good views of Damara Tern were also had. I decided to try for the Orange River White-Eyes before lunch and also immediately located them in the lover's lane area. After lunch we headed towards the Swakop Salt Works and easily located Gray's Lark and Tractrac Chat. At the salt works we had all the common species and better views of Black-necked Grebe.



The next morning before heading towards Spitzkoppe I convinced Robert to do a quick Living Desert Tour in the dunes across from Swakopmund and we quite easily located a Web-footed Gecko, Namaqua Chameleon, Shovel-nosed Lizard and Fitzsimmon's Burrowing Skink. En route to Spitzkoppe we checked off several more common species like Chat Flycatcher, Common Fiscal and Karoo Chat. A calling Rüppell's Korhaan was also located and the elusive Herero Chat was also very easily

located as well as a pair of Verreaux's Eagles all before entering the gate to Spitzkoppe. Around the rooms we added Pale-winged Starling, Mountain Wheatear, Greater Striped Swallow and Rosy-faced Lovebirds. After a short siesta we drove to the west side of the massif to try and locate Layard's Tit Babbler, but were unsuccessful. On a loose boulder slope we located another pair of Herero Chat as well as Rockrunner, Bokmakierie, White-tailed Shrike and Karoo Long-Billed Lark. We decided to return the next morning for another go at the Tit Babblers.



We left before breakfast and stopped and once again immediately I heard one calling from the top of a Camelthorn Tree (*Acacia erioloba*). Despite the light not being good, we had decent views and he called for a long while and we also added Cape Bunting and Chestnut-vented Tit Babbler to the list. En route to Uis we had our first views of Ashy Tit, Black-chested Snake Eagle and better views of Karoo Long-Billed Lark and Rüppell's Korhaan. We stopped in at Uis for a tyre repair. While having our take-away lunch under a tree, we located Benguela Long-Billed Lark just outside Uis. Huge numbers of Yellow-billed Kite were viewed on some dams along the route. A colony of breeding Chestnut Weavers were spotted right next to the road as a lucky bonus. Good numbers of Madagascar Bee-eater were spotted just outside Kamanjab on the power lines. After dinner we took the spotlight and managed to find a White-faced Scops Owl and catch a Fiery Necked Nightjar!! We also spotted two Aardwolf, Springhare and Barn Owl.



The next morning before sunrise Robert and I set out to the Dolomite outcrops near Rustig Toko's campsite. I spotted something that resembled Hartlaub's Spurfowl near the top of the outcrop. I put the scope up and there were five very obliging francolins these were responding to another call further on. Short-toed Rock Thrush, African Barred Wren Warbler, Black Cuckoo, Augur Buzzard and Carp's Tit were located before breakfast. After breakfast we departed for Okaukuejo via the Galton Gate in the west of Etosha NP. We viewed a Monteiro's Hornbill at its nest and many Ant-eating Chats en route. Also good numbers of Hartmann's Mountain Zebra due to good rains in some areas in the west. Toward Okaukuejo it was still very dry and we added Burchell's Courser, Grey-backed Sparrowlark, Bateleur, Abdim's Stork, White-backed and Lappet-faced Vultures. Several Elephant bulls were also sighted on the way. After lunch at Okaukuejo we headed towards Okondeka and encountered several Pink-billed and Spike-heeled Larks, Double-banded Courser with a chick as well as African Pipit were also added to the list. Okondeka had hundreds of Burchell's Zebra and en route back to Okaukuejo we had another Elephant bull sleeping against a Mopane tree (*Colophospermum mopane*) as well as a family of Bat-eared Foxes at a den right next to the road. We added Ground-scraper Thrush in the camp grounds and after dinner saw several Elephant bulls and a Black Rhino and many Double-banded Sandgrouse at the floodlit waterhole.



After an early breakfast we headed toward Newbrownii in search of Rufous-eared Warbler. We saw a Spotted Hyena as well as a family of young Black-backed Jackal playing in the first light of the morning. A little later we called up called a pair of Rufous-eared Warblers and were also rewarded with large numbers of Western Red-footed Falcon and a single Amur Falcon these were accompanied by Abdim's Storks in the plains. We presumed that there had been a termite emergence in the area with all the birds around. We saw Namaqua Sandgrouse at Gemsbokvlakte and a pride of Lions at Olifantsbad. At Rietfontein we encountered around a thousand Abdim's Storks perched on the ground and trees around the waterhole. We saw several Lesser Kestrel around Salvadoria we then proceeded to Halali for lunch and check in. We had Spotted Flycatcher around the rooms and when it cooled down we popped in at Rietfontein again and saw large numbers of European Bee-eater and a immature African Harrier Hawk. On Rhino drive we encountered a Kurrichane Buttonquail and finally a small group of African Quail Finch. We also had good views of Secretary Bird, European Roller, and a Lilac-breasted Roller with a Thread Snake which he had caught. We had a lovely Black Rhino at sunset at the Halali waterhole. After dinner we located a calling Scops Owl in the camp grounds.



On a pre-breakfast walk we encountered Damara Hornbill, Swainson's Spurfowl, Red-headed Weaver and we were also lucky to find four Bare-cheeked Babblers. Towards Namutoni we found a large congregation of around 45 Elephant drinking at Kalkheuwel waterhole. Later we had lunch and checked in at Namutoni, here we added Willow Warbler, African Golden Oriole and Black-backed Puffback. We took an afternoon drive around Fisher's Pan and found another large congregation of elephant mud bathing along the road side. Further along there were several thousands of Lesser and Greater Flamingos as well as good numbers of Cape Shoveller, Cape Teal and Pied Avocet. Later we added White-browed Scrub Robin, Green-spotted Dove, White-bellied Sunbird and Brubru along Dik-dik drive.



Deciding against driving all the way to look for Clapper Lark we decided to proceed to Waterberg and get more birding done that side. Along the route we added Black-shouldered Kite and many Steppe Buzzard. At the entrance gate to Waterberg Resort we found a large flock of Pied Babbler. After checking in we had good views of Burchell's Starling at the reception. In the trees above the rooms we had several Rüppell's Parrots greet us while they fed on fresh Leadwood (*Combretum imberbe*)

seeds. After a downpour of rain we headed up toward the Plateau in search of Violet Woodhoopoe. We had lovely views of the surrounding area from near the top as well as lovely views of a pair of Rockrunner on the pathway. The trees had an abundance of Lovebirds and Pale-winged Starling along the route. Rock Hyrax were also scattered everywhere. On our descent we heard the Woodhoopoes calling nearby and with the help of the recording had them all displaying within meters of us. We also had a very fleeting view of a Golden-tailed Woodpecker flying off.



After breakfast we added African Paradise Flycatcher and Long-billed Crombec to the list and then headed on towards Windhoek. We went directly to the Gammans sewage works where we encountered large numbers of Common Moorhen, Red-knobbed Coot, Wood Sandpiper and Purple Swamphen. We had a very unexpected sighting of Lesser Moorhen, Southern Pochard and Osprey. Intermediate Egret, African Darter, Sacred Ibis and Red Bishop were new additions. We then continued on towards Avis in search of the well twitched vagrant Red-throated Pipit. We located the Pipit almost immediately and had brilliant views. Before leaving we got our first African Fish Eagle. There were also many Quail Finch, Whydahs, Bishops and Waxbills in the tall grasses along the dam. We then headed out toward the airport where I dropped Robert.

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