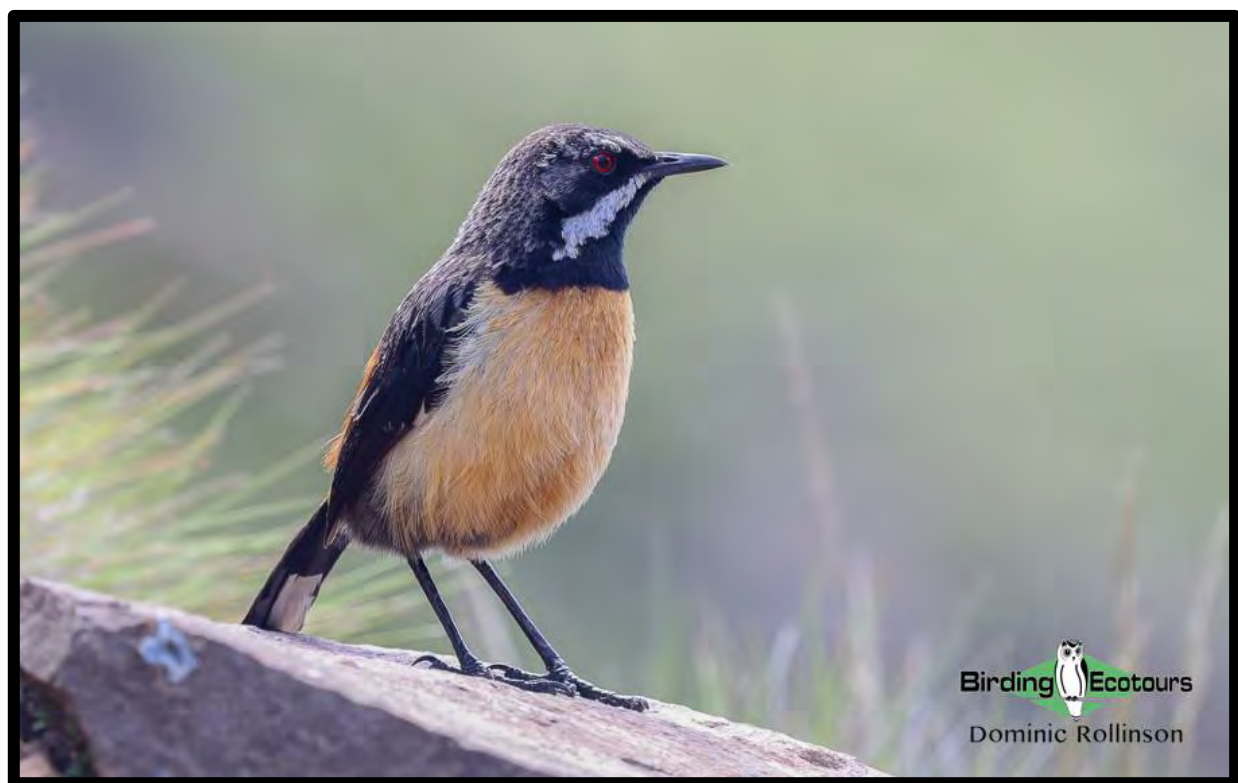




**PRIVATE SUBTROPICAL SOUTH AFRICA BIRDING TOUR:  
COMPREHENSIVE EASTERN SOUTH AFRICA TRIP REPORT**

**08-23 January 2025**

**By Joshua Olszewski**



*Drakensberg Rockjumper was one of the highlights from our time up Sani Pass!*

### Overview

Situated at the southern end of this vast continent, South Africa has a variety of habitats that is unmatched by most countries. From the expansive semidesert in the west to the warm subtropical forests and savannas in the east, this assortment of biomes is home to an even more impressive biodiversity. This includes over 850 bird species, many of which are either endemic or near-endemic. Of these we managed to record 429 species across the warmer, eastern regions of South Africa, as well as more temperate areas in the Drakensberg Mountain Range such as Wakkerstroom, Dullstroom and Sani Pass.

Despite dealing with excessive rain for most of the trip, this 16-day tour was particularly species-rich, and we managed to find some sought-after South African specials like **Knysna Warbler**, **Knysna Woodpecker**, **Yellow-breasted Pipit**, **Blue Swallow**, **Drakensberg Rockjumper**, **Gurney's Sugarbird**, **Knysna Turaco**, **Pink-throated Twinspot**, **Woodward's Batis** and **Blue Korhaan**. The rain also gifted us several scarce rain migrants like **Allen's Gallinule**, **African Crake**, **Lesser Jacana**, **Lesser Moorhen**, **Dwarf Bittern**, **Black Coucal** and **Cuckoo-finch**, while other notable species included **Stierling's Wren-Warbler**, **Southern Carmine Bee-eater**, **Denham's Bustard**, **Eastern Nicator**, **African Broadbill**, **Green Malkoha**, **Narina Trogon**, **Livingstone's Turaco**, **Rosy-throated Longclaw** and **Orange and Spotted Ground Thrushes**.



*Gurney's Sugarbird is endemic to the Drakensberg Mountains and fond of Protea flowers.*

A detailed daily account can be read below, and the full bird and mammal lists are located at the end of the report.

### Detailed Report

#### **Day 1, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Arrival in Johannesburg, transfer to Dullstroom**

After fetching Carsten from OR Tambo Airport at around midday, we made our way out of the city, stopping briefly at Rietvlei Nature Reserve for an introductory session of grassland birding. Despite being located in the middle of the Johannesburg-Pretoria metropolis, this large reserve protects a beautiful tract of highveld grassland, which delivered some interesting species right off the bat. Most exciting of all was probably a confiding male **Cuckoo-finch** perched on a roadside bush. This is a great spot for this enigmatic finch in summer, and the fields nearby play host to a number of its host species. These were namely **Zitting**, **Desert**, **Wing-snapping** and **Cloud Cisticolas**, all of which were performing their high-level display flights. Colorful weaver species were also very active in the fields, with **Southern Red Bishop**, **Southern Masked Weaver**, **Fan-tailed Widowbird**, the spectacular **Long-tailed Widowbird** and small numbers of **Cape Weaver** were all present.

Here, we also enjoyed close-up sightings of two endemic mammals: **Blesbok** and the bizarre **Black Wildebeest** (making their high-pitched alarm calls at us!), alongside a lone **Common Eland**. The sky above was filled with aerial feeders, most of which were **White-rumped Swifts** and **Barn Swallows**, with a few **European Bee-eaters**, **Greater Striped Swallows**, and the odd **Banded Martin**. Other birds seen at Rietvlei included **Neddicky**, **Black-chested Prinia**, **Common Waxbill**, **Cape Sparrow**, **African Stonechat**, **Western Cattle Egret**, **Black-headed Heron**, **Southern Fiscal**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Crowned Lapwing**, **Speckled Mousebird**, a family of **Pied Starlings** with fledglings and singing **Rufous-naped Larks**.



*The impressive **Long-tailed Widowbird** was seen frequently in highveld grasslands.*



With final additions of **Whiskered Tern** and **White-breasted Cormorant** at Rietvlei Dam, we left the reserve and made our way towards the quaint holiday town of Dullstroom: our base for the first night. No birding was done en route, but between intermittent rain showers we did manage to pick out **Common Buzzard**, **Long-crested Eagle** and **White Stork** along the roadside. A small dam just before the town delivered a few **White-backed Ducks**, as well as **Yellow-billed Duck**, **Egyptian Goose**, **Red-knobbed Coot**, **Little Grebe**, **Reed Cormorant** and a perched **African Fish Eagle**. Finally, the grounds of our guest house gave us our final dose of birding for the day, with **Amethyst** and **Malachite Sunbirds**, **Pin-tailed Whydah**, **Cape Canary**, **Red-winged Starling**, **Red-eyed Dove** and flocks of **African Olive Pigeons** providing some last-minute distractions before heading off to dinner. A very satisfying end to the first day of the tour!

### Day 2, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Transfer from Dullstroom to Skukuza, Kruger NP

This morning greeted us with miserable weather, with the full trifecta of mist, rain and full cloud cover. In spite of this, we attempted a short birding session at the nearby Verloren Vallei Nature Reserve. However, the roads had become so muddy from the persistent rain that reaching the reserve was impossible. We managed to scratch out a few birds on the way to the reserve, such as **Natal Spurfowl**, **Southern Fiscal**, **Amethyst** and **Malachite Sunbirds**, **Ring-necked Dove**, **Cape Canary** and **Southern Masked** and **Cape Weavers**. We decided to cut our losses and head back to our guest house, pack up and head into town for breakfast.



*Malachite Sunbird was one of the many sunbird species seen on this tour.*

We then headed out on the long drive to Kruger National Park. A few kilometers out of Dullstroom, the drizzle stopped, and the mist lifted, greatly improving visibility. As it did so, we spotted a magnificent **Cape Vulture** perched on a roadside telephone pole, attempting to dry itself. We

alighted from the vehicle to admire the vulture, also finding **Banded Martin**, **Streaky-headed Seedeater**, **Common Waxbill**, **Speckled Mousebird**, **Red-collared Widowbird**, **Drakensberg Prinia** and **Cape Crow** in the process. We then made a slight detour towards Oshoek, stopping at stands of *Protea* bushes, where we eventually found a pair of **Gurney's Sugarbirds** (a member of one of southern Africa's two endemic families).

After acquiring **Cape Canary**, **Cape White-eye** and a stunning male **Malachite Sunbird** at the same spot, we were once again back on the road heading east. As we started the ascent over the Drakensberg Escarpment, we were greeted at the top by a beautiful male **Sentinel Rock Thrush** on a roadside boulder, and a pair of **Blue Cranes** in the adjacent fields. Continuing over the mountains down Long Tom Pass gave us breathtaking views over the valleys and hills of the Escarpment, eventually bringing us into the warm, humid lowlands just east of Kruger. A **Groundscraper Thrush** and a **Long-crested Eagle** were the only other noteworthy species seen before reaching the park at Phabeni Gate. Once we entered, an endless scene of mixed woodland and lush green savanna lay before us. With the weather having improved significantly since the morning, bird activity was lively for the entire 40 kilometers from the gate to Skukuza camp.

Getting to grips with the plethora of expected species in this habitat, we encountered **Wahlberg's Eagle**, **Bateleur**, **Lilac-breasted Roller**, **Long-billed Crombec**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Chinspot Batis**, **Southern Black Tit**, **Marico Sunbird**, **Blue Waxbill**, **Golden-breasted** and **Cinnamon-breasted Buntings**, **Southern Grey-headed Sparrow**, **Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow**, **Red-billed Buffalo Weaver**, **African Paradise Flycatcher**, **Long-tailed Paradise Whydah**, four species of starling (**Burchell's**, **Cape**, **Greater Blue-eared** and **Violet-backed Starlings**) and three species of hornbill (**Southern Red-billed**, **Southern Yellow-billed** and **African Grey Hornbill**). **Lesser Striped** and **Barn Swallows** were abundant in the sky above and were accompanied by a few swifts, specifically **African Palm**, **Little** and **White-rumped Swifts**. We also had **Hamerkop** along some of the stream crossings, and one of these also delivered a flyby from a **Green Sandpiper**: a vagrant to South Africa! The final stretch of road before Skukuza turned up **Thick-billed Weavers** and **Southern Red Bishops** breeding in a reedbed, and a small group of uncommon **Purple Indigobirds** (including some vocal males mimicking their host, Jameson's Firefinch).

Perhaps best of all was a family of **Spotted Hyenas** with several inquisitive pups lying next to the road! Between checking in and settling down in our chalets before dinner, the diversity of birds in Skukuza camp itself proved to be quite distracting. **Spectacled Weaver**, **Water Thick-knee**, **Scarlet-chested Sunbird**, **Arrow-marked Babbler** and a calling **Gorgeous Bushshrike** gave us great anticipation for the next two days of birding. Finishing off an eventful and productive first day of tour was a pair of **African Wood Owls** above our chalets, followed by a fabulous sirloin at the in-camp steakhouse!

### Day 3, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Skukuza to Tshokwane

Our first full day in Kruger saw us heading north of Skukuza towards Tshokwane Picnic Site. The bushveld and savanna along this road was teeming with birdlife in the early morning, and we saw many of the same species we saw the previous day, with the additions of **African Hoopoe**, **Brown-headed Parrot**, **Burchell's Coucal**, **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, **Green Wood Hoopoe**, **Lesser Masked Weaver**, **Sabota Lark**, **European Roller**, **Grey Tit-Flycatcher**, **Brubru**, **White-**

bellied Sunbird, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Brown-crowned and Black-crowned Tchagras, Terrestrial Brownbul, White-winged Widowbird, Red-billed Quelea, Crested Barbet, Black-backed Puffback, Spotted Flycatcher, Red-faced Cisticola, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Black-collared Barbet, Red-faced Mousebird, Kurrichane Thrush, Willow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Apalis and White-browed Scrub Robin. Just north of Skukuza, we were treated to a pair of massive Verreaux's Eagle-Owls flying passed us and over the Sabie River! Gamebirds were a regular roadside sight, with Crested Francolin, Natal Spurfowl and Swainson's Spurfowl being quite common. Seeing seven cuckoo species was also a highlight of the day. These were Diederik, Klaas's, Levillant's, Jacobin, Black, Red-chested and Common Cuckoos (the latter, ironically, an uncommon species in South Africa).



*European Roller is a common summer migrant to northeastern South Africa.*

We then arrived at Tshokwane Picnic Site, set on the banks of the Nwatswitsonto River. After treating ourselves to a delicious breakfast from the on-site deli, we took a short meander around the grounds. Among Tshokwane's expected residents are the tame **Cape** and **Greater Blue-eared Starlings** and **Laughing** and **Mourning Collared Doves** which forage for scraps around the picnic tables (or taking them right out of your hand!). Playing the call of Pearl-spotted Owlet brought in a frenetic bird party, containing at least 20 species. The many waterholes, puddles and wide river crossings we encountered provided a good number of waterbird species, such as **African Jacana**, **Hadada Ibis**, **Grey**, **Little** and **Squacco Herons**, **Little**, **Great** and **Western Cattle Egrets**, **Common Moorhen**, **African Openbill**, **Yellow-billed** and **African Woolly-necked Storks**, **Water Thick-knee**, **Black Crake** and **African Pied Wagtail**. As is expected in Kruger, we had our fair share of raptor sightings, with **African Fish**, **Tawny**, **Brown Snake**, **Martial** and **Wahlberg's Eagles**, **Bateleur**, **Yellow-billed Kite** and lots of **White-backed Vultures** being seen well.



On our way back from Tshokwane to Skukuza, the plains along the Orpen Dam track delivered great roadside (and on-road!) views of **Sabota** and **Red-capped Larks**, **Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark**, **Lesser Grey Shrike**, **Crowned Lapwing** and another **European Roller**. The Acacia thickets around the Leeupan Waterhole turnoff gave us a female **Black Cuckooshrike** and a very cooperative **Olive-tree Warbler**. Our best mammal sighting of the day had to be five **Lionesses** with four cubs walking down the Sand River bridge and right alongside our car! This was preceded by another **Spotted Hyena** doing the same, and we also saw **Smith's Bush Squirrel**, **Common Dwarf** and **Common Slender Mongooses** along our drive.

Both **Magpie Shrike** and **Southern White-crowned Shrike** (a pair on a nest) were seen on the way back, along with two singing **Black-headed Orioles** and a flyby **Common Scimitarbill**. A **White-browed Sparrow-Weaver** at Leeupan Waterhole was quite a surprise, as this species is more typical of the Kalahari thornveld much further west. The best sighting of the morning had to be a pair of **Southern Ground Hornbills** lazily foraging right next to the road! Upon arriving back at Skukuza, we were greeted by a showy **Village Indigobird** foraging on the ground near the chalets. We enjoyed dinner on the viewing deck today, and as it got dark, a **White-backed Night Heron** flew past us heading upstream! We then turned in, with the resident **African Wood Owls** once again serenading us to sleep.



*Southern White-crowned Shrikes are highly gregarious species.*

#### Day 4, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Skukuza to Lower Sabie

The weather this morning was much drearier and rainier than yesterday, and the sky was grey for as far as the eye could see. Nevertheless, we made our way south of Skukuza, following the now inundated Sabie River down to the camp of Lower Sabie. However, this was not before witnessing

a **Spotted Hyena** running through Skukuza camp past the reception area (clearly fences mean nothing to these animals!). We bumped into another three groups of hyenas walking down the road within the first five minutes of leaving camp. The rain kept bird activity minimal for most of the drive, but a few notable sightings included a **Saddle-billed Stork** at the Sabie River bridge, as well as a very close **Giant Kingfisher** perched on the bridge balustrade.

A few rain-drenched raptors were also seen, namely a **Wahlberg's Eagle**, a **Hooded Vulture**, a **White-backed Vulture**, a **Brown Snake Eagle** and, best for all, a screeching **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** (looking hilariously miserable!). Due to the lack of sandbars in the very full river, several riverine species were now standing in the road, such as **Water Thick-knee**, **Three-banded Plover**, **African Pied Wagtail** and the striking **White-crowned Lapwing**. At least six of these attractive lapwings (including two fledglings) were waltzing around the road next to Sunset Dam, which also delivered **Yellow-billed Stork**, **African Darter**, **Little Heron**, **African Jacana** and **Common** and **Wood Sandpipers**. A dead tree standing in the middle of the dam hosted a large breeding colony of **Red-billed Buffalo Weavers** and **Lesser Masked Weavers**.



*White-crowned Lapwing frequents the many major rivers flowing through Kruger.*

We then arrived at Lower Sabie and enjoyed yet another great breakfast overlooking the river, with flocks of **African Palm**, **Little** and **White-rumped Swifts** flying around the deck. Some highlights from the camp included **African Openbill**, **Black-collared Barbet**, **White-browed Robin-Chat** and a male **Diederik Cuckoo** feeding caterpillars to his mate. After breakfast, we left Lower Sabie and crossed the bridge over the river just south of the camp. The edges of the bridge were adorned with **Wire-tailed Swallows**. Continuing along this road towards Tshokwane, we were met with an intense cloudburst that dissipated into a light rain shower that lasted the whole 50-kilometer drive. This kept birding to a minimum, but a few good sightings along this road



included large groups of **European Rollers** and **European Bee-eaters** hawking termite alates, multiple pairs of singing **Red-breasted Swallows**, a **Lesser Spotted Eagle** and a flyby flock of **Wattled Starlings**.

Upon reaching Tshokwane, the open patch of low Acacia scrub before the picnic site proved to be quite birdy and delivered great views of a singing **Red-crested Korhaan**, a pair of **Kori Bustards** and two feisty **Burnt-necked Eremomelas**. Heading south towards Skukuza once more, the Leeupan intersection again delivered a special warbler species, this time, a **Stierling's Wren-Warbler** ringing away from the top of a tall Acacia. A brief female **Black Cuckooshrike** was also seen here. We continued having great views of raptors grounded due to the rain, and the high-water bridge over the Sabie River got us stunning looks at an adult **African Harrier Hawk** and a juvenile **European Honey-Buzzard**. We heard yet another **Gorgeous Bushshrike** and had a flyover **Black Cuckoo** before the unfortunate happened.



*The intricately marked **Red-crested Korhaan**.*

Just before Skukuza, we came upon a back-up of 50 or so cars parked in the road. A bridge over one of the tributaries had been mostly washed away due to flooding from the excessive rain. With the masses of people waiting and hoping for a resolution, we eventually decided to back-track and find another way to camp. However, our efforts were swiftly thwarted as, just passed Nkhulu Picnic Site, the road was again closed due to flooding. The drive was not in vain though, as we did manage to get a group of **Trumpeter Hornbills** and a flyby **Purple-crested Turaco** on the way to Nkhulu. Feeling a little perplexed, we decided to catch our breath and have lunch at Nkhulu, before coming up with a game plan for getting back to camp. After lunch, we enquired from other stranded tourists at Nkhulu who said that Skukuza was now accessible from the north of the river. We promptly headed in that direction, adding **Ashy Flycatcher** to our list and getting more views

of **Green Wood Hoopoe** and **Levaillant's Cuckoo**. We tentatively managed to cross the two low-water bridges (unnervingly still covered in water) that stood between us and camp. We were then finally home free and returned to our chalets with enough time to relax before dinner.

#### **Day 5, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Skukuza to Malelane, transfer to Wakkerstroom**

Our journey out of Kruger took us south from Skukuza at dawn, towards Malelane Gate. With the rain having stopped but cloud cover remaining, the bird activity was pleasant throughout the morning and we enjoyed many previously-seen species. A male **Black Cuckooshrike** proved more cooperative than yesterday's female, and a grassy waterhole further south turned up several **Lesser Moorhens**. One of these erratic rallids was also seen at the Mathulu River bridge, along with a **Dwarf Bittern**, a **Saddle-billed Stork**, a pair of **Black Storks** and good numbers of **Hamerkop**, **Grey Heron** and **Great, Little and Western Cattle Egrets**. We also had more perched views of **Martial** and **Lesser Spotted Eagles** amidst the ubiquitous **Tawny**, **Wahlberg's** and **Brown Snake Eagles**. Exploiting the local birds' need to mob any Pearl-spotted Owlet they find, a bit of owlet playback soon created a full-blown bird party, that included a stunning pair of **Violet-eared Waxbills**; a rarity in Kruger.



*Dwarf Bittern was one of the many rain migrants we saw.*

We then arrived at Afsaal Picnic Site just in time for breakfast, for which the resident **Red-winged Starlings** were also ready! Soon after that, we were back on the road heading south, with **Southern White-crowned Shrike** and two beautiful **Southern Carmine Bee-eaters** as noteworthy sightings. Before leaving the park, we paid a visit to the nearby Berg-en-dal camp, where we managed to score exquisite views of the normally shy **Eastern Nicator**, as well as a few **Brown-headed Parrots** foraging in the camp's taller trees. This then concluded our birding in Kruger,

after which we departed and set off on the longest drive of the tour: six hours to the one-horse country town of Wakkerstroom. **Red-throated Wrynecks** in Chrissiesmeer and a perched **Jackal Buzzard** just before Wakkerstroom, were the only noteworthy sightings along the journey. Arriving at around 3pm, we were once again greeted by rain that did not stop for the rest of the day. We therefore decided to call it in and relax, preparing for a great day of birding tomorrow!

### Day 6, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Full day birding around Wakkerstroom

Leaving the guesthouse this morning was made a little tricky due to the relentless rain over the past two weeks. Nevertheless, we managed to slip and slide our way down the driveway and into town, where we met our local guide, David. Thanks to all the rain, the cool high-altitude grasslands around Wakkerstroom were absolutely teeming with birds, with many species being ubiquitous in their presence. These included **Cape Crow**, **Black-headed Heron**, **Pied Starling**, **Cape Longclaw**, **African Stonechat**, **Long-tailed** and **Fan-tailed Widowbirds**, **Southern Masked** and **Cape Weavers**, **Cape Canary**, **Southern Red** and **Yellow-crowned Bishops**, **African Pipit**, **Cape Wagtail**, the charismatic **Ant-eating Chat** and multiple cisticola species (**Levaillant's**, **Zitting**, **Wing-snapping** and **Pale-crowned Cisticolas**) were all common. Our first target which David found for us with was the attractive **Yellow-breasted Pipit**, and the hilltop south of town played host to a few nesting pairs. We even managed to find the nest of one of these Threatened species, filled with three nestlings!



*Yellow-breasted Pipits were found breeding in Wakkerstroom.*

Further along the hilltop we found another target species: a pair of **Eastern Long-billed Larks**, also feeding young. Unlike the pipit, these larks prefer rockier, boulder-strewn hillslopes and hilltops (known locally as "koppies"), and quite a few species here specialize in this microhabitat. Of these we saw **Mountain Chat**, **Cape Bunting**, **Nicholson's Pipit**, **Sentinel Rock**



**Thrush, Buff-streaked Chat** and, on one such hill near Groenvlei, **African Rock Pipit**. The grassy foot of this hill also turned up brilliant views of **Wailing Cisticola** and a **Fan-tailed Grassbird**, while a **Lanner Falcon** soared overhead. Another microhabitat in this region is the valleys of Oldwood thicket between the hills. It was here where we targeted the strange **Bush Blackcap** and charming **Rock-loving Cisticola**, both of which showed perfectly! **Drakensberg Prinia** proved to be common in this habitat, and **Streaky-headed Seedeater, Red-collared Widowbird** and **Cape Robin-Chat** were also seen. There was a near-permanent presence of hirundines flying low over the grasslands, consisting of **Banded Martin, Barn Swallow, White-throated Swallow, Greater Striped Swallow** and the breeding endemic **South African Cliff Swallow**. A pair of **Horus Swifts** were seen investigating a hole in a roadside quarry. Large birds were also common, with small groups of **Grey Crowned Crane, Blue Crane** and flocks of **Southern Bald Ibis** seen foraging in the fields, alongside the more regular **Egyptian** and **Spur-winged Geese** and **Hadada Ibis**.

We also made sure to appreciate the many inundated wetlands dotted around the grasslands. These delivered **South African Shelduck** and **Cape Shoveler**, among the more widespread waterbird species like **Yellow-billed Duck, Red-billed Teal, Red-knobbed Coot, Whiskered Tern, Hamerkop, African Spoonbill** and **African Sacred Ibis**. Continuing through the grasslands, we kept adding species to our day list and trip list, such as **African Wattled Lapwing, Common Quail, Black-throated Canary, Spike-heeled** and **Red-capped Larks, Cape Sparrow, Pin-tailed Whydah, Cuckoo-finch, Common Waxbill**, and a few regal **Denham's Bustards**. Raptors were few and far between, with **Black-winged Kite** being the most common, but we did get multiple flybys from **African Marsh Harriers**, as well as singletons of both **Lanner** and **Amur Falcons**.

The grassy hills above the town of Daggakraal got us exceptional looks at both **Cloud Cisticola** and **Eastern Clapper Lark**. Our last new bird of the morning came in the form of six **Blue Korhaans**, flushed from the roadside on the way back to Wakkerstroom. We then said goodbye to David before heading to the cozy Wakkerstroom Inn for lunch. The rest of the afternoon was more or less rained out, though we did manage to head east of town and bird a stretch of Oldwood thicket before the rain came in. A showy **African Yellow Warbler** was a real treat, as was a perched **Long-crested Eagle** en route to the spot. Once the weather deteriorated, we retreated to the comfort of our cozy chalet for the remainder of the day; but not before scoring two **African Snipes** doing their drumming display flights low over the wetland bridge! A very special experience! Two **Groundscraper Thrushes** foraging on the lawn of the guesthouse were a nice final touch to a fantastic day of birding in Wakkerstroom!

### Day 7, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Morning birding around Wakkerstroom, transfer to Hluhluwe

We awoke to sunshine and blue sky this morning, a rare occurrence up to this point of the tour. Taking the opportunity not to rush and to savor the golden hour, we had a delicious sit-down breakfast at the guesthouse, being entertained by the nesting **Greater Striped** and **White-throated Swallows** breeding nearby! The local pair of **Wahlberg's Eagles** were also flying around, being mobbed by a **Fork-tailed Drongo**! Once breakfast was done, we packed up and, after distant views of **Red-winged Francolin**, departed from the guesthouse, making one last drive up the Amersfoort gravel track into the grasslands north of Wakkerstroom. Before reaching said track, the road out of the lodge delivered a few good sightings, namely a displaying **Cloud**

**Cisticola**, a singing **Bokmakierie** and a blooming agave festooned with 20 or so **Malachite Sunbirds** (with one **Amethyst Sunbird** trying to blend in!). We encountered most of the same species in the grasslands but managed to better our views of **African Marsh Harrier** and got a pair of **Blue Korhaans** standing out in the open and calling! We also stumbled upon a warren next to the road, adorned with **Meerkats**, **South African Ground Squirrels** and a family of **Yellow Mongooses**, all enjoying the early morning sun (probably the first they'd seen in a few days!). Two distant **Secretarybirds** were also a great find here.



*The bizarre-looking **Secretarybird** was seen in the grasslands around Wakkerstroom.*

Heading back towards town, new birds added at the wetland bridge included **Lesser Swamp**, **Common Reed** and **Little Rush Warblers**, **Brown-throated Martin** and calling **African Rails** (heard only). With our business in Wakkerstroom now completed, we made our way east, trading cool, temperate climes for humidity and heat once again. We reached the low-lying savanna and sand forests near Hluhluwe by mid-afternoon, and took some time to relax before heading out for a late afternoon walk around our lodge grounds. Set amidst pristine sand forest, we were soon acquainted and acclimated with the vast array of species to be seen here.

Most notably of these were the range-restricted **Rudd's Apalis** and **Pink-throated Twinspot**, with the supporting cast including **Green-backed Camaroptera**, **Yellow-bellied** and **Sombre Greenbul**, **Southern Boubou**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbird**, **Grey Sunbird**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat**, **Red-billed Firefinch**, **Eastern Nicator** and a tame covey of **Southern Crested Guineafowl**. Notable flyovers came from an **African Woolly-necked Stork** and a small flock of **Sand Martins**. Before heading out to dinner, we paid a brief visit to the grassy fallow fields across the road from our lodge. This delivered an incredibly confiding

male **Black-bellied Bustard** that walked to within five meters of us! This was followed by one of the best dinners of the trip as we enjoyed an unusually cloudless sunset!

**Day 8, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Site birding north of Hluhluwe (False Bay Park to Mkuze)**

Our first stop this morning was the nearby False Bay Park on the shores of the immense Lake St Lucia. The tall sand forest here was alive with bird activity, and we amassed an impressive list in the space of an hour. Some of these included **Gorgeous Bushshrike**, **Eastern Nicator**, **Purple-crested Turaco**, **Purple-banded**, **Collared** and **Grey Sunbirds**, **Square-tailed Drongo**, **Sombre** and **Yellow-bellied Greenbul**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Southern Black Tit**, **Black-bellied** and **Violet-backed Starlings**, **Red-chested**, **Diederik** and **Black Cuckoos** (the latter being fed by its **Southern Boubou** host parent), **Green-backed Camaroptera**, **Yellow-breasted** and **Rudd's Apalises**, **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, **Dark-backed Weaver**, **African Paradise Flycatcher**, **Trumpeter Hornbill**, **Chinspot Batis**, **Yellow-rumped** and **Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbirds**, **Grey Tit-Flycatcher**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat**, **Kurrichane Thrush**, multiple **Narina Trogons**, a stubborn **Bearded Scrub Robin** and a flyover **Black Sparrowhawk**. The most notable find in the sand forests in False Bay was perhaps a showy male **Neergaard's Sunbird**.



*Probably the trickiest of the sand forest specials: **Neergaard's Sunbird!***

After an unexpected **Olive Bushshrike** near the exit gate, we left False Bay Park and headed north of Kuleni, with our next stop being some nearby tall sand forest. Here we saw many of the aforementioned species, with greater numbers of **Tambourine Dove** and the addition of **African Broadbill**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, **Southern Yellow White-eye**, **Pink-throated Twinspot**, **Orange-breasted Bushshrike**, **Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow** and **African**



**Emerald Cuckoo.** We also heard **Livingstone's Turaco** here, but the best views of this bird were yet to come!

With the final addition being a pair of **Grey-rumped Swallows** we headed to our next stop: the floodplains of the Nibela Peninsula. This system of short grassy plains, Acacia thickets and floodplains are a birding mecca, and highlights included the beautiful **Rosy-throated Longclaw**, hundreds of roosting **Collared Pratincoles**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** flying all around us, a single **White-winged Tern** and a few **Western Yellow Wagtails** and **African Wattled Lapwings** patrolling the pan-side plains. Small groups of **Pink-backed Pelicans** were constantly flying overhead, as did a rather enormous flock of **Great White Pelicans**.



*Rosy-throated Longclaw was one of the many Zululand specials that we found.*

The nearby shore of Lake St Lucia was also rewarding, and scanning the immense waterbody revealed astronomical numbers of **Red-knobbed Coot**, **Great White Pelican**, **Black Heron** and **Greater and Lesser Flamingos** on the distant shorelines. These were accompanied by smaller numbers of **Pink-backed Pelican**, **Yellow-billed Stork**, **Little, Great and Yellow-billed Egrets**, **African Darter**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Reed and White-breasted Cormorants**, **Caspian Tern**, **Grey-headed Gull** and waders like **Black-winged Stilt**, **Common Ringed Plover**, **Common and Wood Sandpipers**, **Little Stint**, **Ruff** and **Common Greenshank**. The open savanna just west of the peninsula delivered **Marico Sunbird** and the scarce **Lemon-breasted Canary**.

With some last birds in the form of **Purple Heron**, **Common Moorhen** and **Malachite Kingfisher**, we were soon heading to yet another inundated pan, Mpempe Pan. This one was so full of water that the access road to the pan had become completely flooded and impassable. Nevertheless, the small patches of dry ground alongside the floodplain delivered our main

target: **Black-winged Lapwing**, sitting in a group of **Crowned Lapwings**. A few **Banded Martins** hawking over the water and some vocalizing **Lesser Moorhens** were among the other notable species encountered here. Near to Mpempe, another pan alongside the main road turned up an exquisite pair of **African Pygmy Geese**.



*The rather smart-looking African Pygmy Goose was seen well in Zululand.*

The last pan we visited was Muzi Pan, much larger and deeper than the previous two, with more extensive reedbeds and floating rafts of vegetation. The highlight of this spot was seeing at least four **Allen's Gallinules**, which put up a struggle but were eventually seen well. A **Great Reed Warbler** was also a good find, while several weaver species were seen breeding and foraging around the pan. These were namely **Southern Brown-throated**, **Eastern Golden**, **Village**, **Lesser Masked**, **Southern Masked** and **Thick-billed Weavers**, along with **Southern Red Bishop** and both **Red-billed** and **Red-headed Queleas**. Abundant species like **White-faced Whistling Duck**, **Squacco Heron**, **African Jacana** and **Lesser Striped Swallow** were also a pleasure to see, while less common species included **Red-faced Mousebird**, **Malachite Kingfisher**, **Burchell's Coucal**, **Black Crake**, **Bronze Mannikin**, **Blue Waxbill**, **Southern Black Flycatcher**, **Burnt-necked Eremomela**, **Yellow-fronted Canary**, **Tawny-flanked Prinia**, **Lesser Swamp Warbler** and **Rufous-winged Cisticola**.

After an incredibly busy and productive morning, we returned to the restaurant near our lodge for lunch. The birding from here was enough to keep us entertained. A pair of **Wire-tailed Swallows** was constantly whizzing around the building, and a nearby water feature attracted two **Cape Starlings** and a few **Lemon-breasted Canaries** (including a family with two begging fledglings!). The fields of seeding grasses behind the water feature turned up a mixed flock of seed-eating birds. Most of which were **Red-billed Queleas** and **Southern Red Bishops**, along

with a few **Yellow-fronted** and **Lemon-breasted Canaries**, **Pin-tailed Whydahs** and even **Red-headed Queleas**.

With clouds rolling in for the late afternoon thunderstorm, we dashed out for one last foray to False Bay Park. We added a pair of **Yellow-throated Longclaws** and a **Wahlberg's Eagle** before reaching the gate, and a pair of **Crowned Hornbills** just beyond. Once the rain started, we hightailed it back to the lodge for the rest of the day until dinner, but not before getting another **Pink-throated Twinspot** right outside our chalets!

### Day 9, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Morning birding at Mkuze, transfer to St Lucia

Before departing from Mazuri this morning, we took a short stroll around our chalet, which delivered great views of **Bearded Scrub Robin**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher** and **Southern Crested Guinea fowl** amongst the expected suite of sand forest species. We then headed north to Mkuze Game Reserve, where rolling hills of woodland, thicket, lush grasslands and wetlands abound with birdlife. Our first sighting in the reserve was a fast-flying **European Honey Buzzard** just past Ophansi Gate. We then made our way toward the well-known Kumasinga hide, which gave us great looks at some low-flying **White-backed Vultures**, as well as **Common Swifts** and a feisty male **Pink-throated Twinspot**. Other notable sightings from the reserve included two **Martial Eagle** flyovers, many roadside **Crested Francolins**, a few **Striped Kingfishers**, a confiding **Black-crowned Tchagra** and a bustling foraging flock at Mantuma Camp. Birding around the camp was quite productive, and delivered great views of **Grey Penduline Tit**, **Bearded Scrub Robin**, **Black-headed Oriole**, **Cardinal Woodpecker**, **Mocking Cliff Chat**, **Southern Black Flycatcher**, **Common Scimitarbill** and a group of ten **White-crested Helmetshrikes**. The road down to Kumahlala hide also gave us some good birds like **Broad-billed Roller**, **Lesser Honeyguide** and **Pale Flycatcher**.

On the way out of Ophansi Gate we stumbled upon a **Lesser Moorhen** in a roadside dambo (flooded grassland surrounded by woodland) and an over-flying **Saddle-billed Stork**: two rare waterbirds in the park. After Mkuze, we made our way south towards our next base, the popular tourist town of St Lucia. We decided to take a shortcut through the Western Shores of the Isimangaliso Wetland Park, birding the lush grasslands as we went. Highlights from this drive included flybys from **Trumpeter Hornbills** and a **Lesser Honeyguide**, a **Croaking Cisticola** and two young **Saddle-billed Storks** at the roadside, **Brimstone Canaries** and **Kittlitz's Plovers** on the road itself, an out of place **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** and a final **Lemon-breasted Canary** near the exit gate.

After crossing the neck of the St Lucia Estuary, the town greeted us with a group of tame **Southern Crested Guinea fowl** near our accommodation. Once we were checked in, we took a walk along the iGwalagwala trail, which runs through some pristine coastal forest alongside the estuary. Bird activity was quiet in the late afternoon, but we scratched out some good forest species, even hearing a **Buff-spotted Flufftail** hooting right next to the main road! However, this reclusive rallid would, as expected, remain hidden and unseen by us, as would a skulking **Brown Scrub Robin** and a distant **Green Malkoha**. We decided to call it in and enjoyed yet another scrumptious dinner, eagerly anticipating tomorrow's birding!



**Day 10, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Birding the Eastern Shores of Isimangaliso Wetland Park**

We left early this morning to get to the gates of the park at opening time. For one of the first times on the trip, we were greeted with sunshine and clear skies at dawn, and it remained sunny and warm for the whole day (rather surprisingly!). We first birded the series of wetlands and pans near the reserve entrance, which delivered **Spur-winged Goose**, **African Jacana**, **White-backed Duck**, **Yellow-billed Egret** and **Croaking and Rufous-winged Cisticolas**. Two chatty pairs of **Black-crowned Tchagras** having a territorial dispute in the middle of the road were quite amusing. Large numbers of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** adorned the telephone wires along the road, while **Barn Swallows** enjoyed the warmth of the asphalt road.

Shortly after the wetlands, one of the day's highlights came in the form of an **African Cuckoo-Hawk** gliding slowly towards the car, then dropping into the grass, picking up a chameleon and retreating to a distant tree to enjoy its prize! This was followed by a **Hamerkop** walking down the road and an immense **Goliath Heron** flying past. Other raptors seen in the park during the day included a **Black-chested Snake Eagle**, a **European Honey Buzzard** and small numbers of **Common Buzzard** and **Yellow-billed Kite**.



*African Cuckoo-Hawk was seen well in Isimangaliso Wetland Park.*

Perhaps the best birding came from the forest patch just before the beach at Mission Rocks. We were able to walk around here and compiled a great list of species, the best of which were a male **Woodward's Batis** and two **Brown Scrub Robins** (both showed extremely well!). These were supported by **Ashy Flycatcher**, **Eastern Nicator**, **White-eared Barbet**, **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat**, **Dark-backed Weaver**, **Black-bellied Starling**, **Sombre** and **Yellow-bellied Greenbuls**, **Grey**, **Collared** and **Purple-banded Sunbirds**, **Rudd's** and **Yellow-breasted Apalises** and the exquisite **Livingstone's Turaco**! The beautiful green

grasslands along this road offered great views of **Yellow-throated Longclaw** and **Red-breasted Swallow**, as well as game such as **Greater Kudu**, **Southern Bushbuck**, **Blue Wildebeest**, **Cape Buffalo**, **Plains Zebra**, **Impala**, **Common Warthog** and a surprising **Steenbok**.

We then arrived at Cape Vidal, where we didn't see much due to the heat of the day, but a sunbathing **Olive Sunbird** and more views of **Brown Scrub Robin** and **Woodward's Batis** were appreciated. We then paid a visit to Lake Bhangazi along the Bhangazi track, which delivered **Goliath** and **Little Herons**, **Malachite Kingfisher**, **Common Greenshank**, **Water Thick-knee**, **Rufous-winged Cisticola** and **Eastern Golden Weaver**. The journey back to St Lucia didn't yield much, but we managed to find the same **European Honey-Buzzard** again, as well as **Black Saw-wing** and **Fan-tailed Widowbird**. We returned to town for lunch, with flybys from **Crowned Hornbill** and **Purple-crested Turaco** to entertain us.

Afterwards we had a midday siesta and then returned to the park for a short foray. This didn't add any new species, but large numbers of **European Rollers** and **European Bee-eaters** had joined the ubiquitous **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** on the telephone lines, and a **Wood Sandpiper** at a roadside pan was a nice finishing touch to another great day of birding in Zululand.

### Day 11, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Leisurely morning at St Lucia, transfer to Eshowe

This morning, we decided to take it easy and partake of the delectable sit-down breakfast that our St Lucia accommodation provides. After enjoying a much-needed break, we packed up and made one last stop before leaving St Lucia. This was at a beautiful lily-covered pan near the Bhangazi Horse Safari Centre. This delivered many of the same waterbirds that we had seen the previous day, but with a notable addition: a diminutive **Lesser Jacana**! The surrounding forest was also quite birdy, and echoed with the calls of **Woodward's Batis**, **Brown Scrub Robin**, **Livingstone's Turaco**, **Scaly-throated Honeyguide**, **Rudd's Apalis** and **Eastern Nicator** among the more common species.

We then left St Lucia and made our way to Eshowe, arriving in the early afternoon. We rested up at our accommodation in the heat of the day, and then went out for a late afternoon walk into the nearby Dlinza Forest. The heat made things fairly quiet, but we still managed to find **Cape Batis**, **Square-tailed Drongo**, **Lemon and Tambourine Doves**, **Green-backed Camaroptera**, **Ashy Flycatcher**, **Olive Woodpecker** and a brief **Blue Duiker** darting across the pathway. We then returned to our lodge for dinner, being greeted by an **African Harrier-Hawk** as we drove in.

### Day 12, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Full day birding around Eshowe and Mtunzini

We made an early start this morning to meet our local guide, Sakhamuzi, at Dlinza Forest by dawn. Now being here at the optimal time of day, the birding was far more productive than it had been yesterday afternoon. With Sakhamuzi's help, we scored great views of the scarce **Spotted Ground Thrush**, as well as **Chorister Robin-Chat**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **African Olive Pigeon** and a host of other forest species. We also heard the elusive **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon**, though it would remain unseen. We then headed towards the coastal town of Mtunzini, where an isolated patch of lush grassland gave us point blank views of a pair of **Black Coucals**, and an exceptional sighting of a family of **African Crakes** sunning themselves on the road verge. Other good birds here included **Rufous-winged** and **Pale-crowned Cisticolas**, **Yellow-throated Longclaw** and four swallow species.

We then moved on to another well-known patch of montane forest. With at least five endemic species of fig tree, Ongoye Forest hosts southern Africa's only population of **Green Barbet**. The subspecies of **Green Barbet** that occurs in Ongoye is endemic to this one forest and was once regarded as a separate species. Thanks to our guide, we swiftly managed to find one of these barbets perched low down and in good view. We also found a very cooperative **Yellow-streaked Greenbul**, a rather localized species in Zululand. Before leaving Ongoye, we made one or two roadside stops in the hilly grasslands outside the forest, which delivered **Croaking** and **Zitting Cisticolas**, **Rufous-naped Lark**, **Yellow-throated Longclaw**, **African Pipit** and, best of all, a **Striped Pipit** singing its sweet song from atop a telephone wire!

Our last area to address with our guide was the road that runs along the railway track heading south of Mtunzini. This got us distant views of a **Palm-nut Vulture** perched atop a *Raffia* palm, as well as **Brimstone Canary**, **Southern Black Flycatcher**, **Violet-backed Starling**, **Green Twinspot** and a nice flyby from a **Black Sparrowhawk**. After this we left Mtunzini, dropped off our guide at Gingindlovu and returned to Eshowe.



*Palm-nut Vulture are strongly associated with Raffia palms.*

### Day 13, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Eshowe to Sani Pass, birding en route

Today we birded a couple of sites en route to our next destination in the foothills of the Drakensberg. First off was a stream crossing just south of Eshowe, where we found a **Mountain Wagtail** and a large colony of **Eastern Golden Weavers**. We then reached Mtunzini and, once again, ventured down the railway track road, where we saw the same **Palm-nut Vulture** perched atop the same tree as yesterday! We saw much of the same birds we'd seen here already, with the addition of **Tambourine Dove**, **Long-crested Eagle** and **Red-collared Widowbird**.



By mid-morning we'd reached Durban and were heading inland through the upper suburbs of the city. Being full of greenbelts and parks surrounded by forest patches, Durban has a plethora of birdlife for a large city. One such park, known as Springside Nature Reserve, was particularly productive and in just over an hour, we managed to find 50+ species which included **Holub's Golden** and **Spectacled Weaver**, **Greater Double-collared Sunbird**, **Forest Canary**, **Brown-backed Honeybird**, **Natal Spurfowl**, **Southern Black Tit**, **Purple-crested Turaco**, **Bar-throated Apalis**, **Cape Batis**, **Olive Thrush** and **Black-and-white Mannikin** amongst others.



*The brightly colored **Purple-crested Turaco** is common in coastal KwaZulu-Natal.*

Another, more arbitrary spot near Hillcrest produced **African Firefinch**, **Willow Warbler**, **Cape Grassbird**, **African Paradise Flycatcher**, **Little Rush Warbler** and the endemic, and secretive, **Knysna Warbler** (not an expected bird on this tour!).

Our last area of focus before heading straight to Sani Pass was the Karkloof Valley. The agricultural fields and grassland patches in this area turned up **Drakensberg Prinia**, **African Yellow Warbler**, a pair of **Wattled Cranes** and a group of **White Storks**, while the picturesque Benvie Gardens got us several **Orange Ground Thrushes** amongst the more common **Olive Thrushes**, as well as jaw-dropping views of **Knysna Turaco**, **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler** and **Chorister Robin-Chat**.

#### **Day 14, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025. Full day birding Sani Pass**

Today we met up with a local 4x4 driver to tackle the well-known and awe-inspiring Sani Pass, which crosses from South Africa into the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. The lower reaches of the pass are wetter than the top on the Lesotho side, and the slopes here are covered in lush grassland

crisscrossed with Oldwood-lined gulleys. The latter habitat yielded a great many species, some of which included **Swee Waxbill**, **Southern Boubou**, **Bar-throated Apalis**, **Willow Warbler**, **Cape Grassbird**, **Bokmakierie**, **Drakensberg Prinia**, **Bush Blackcap** and the normally shy **Barratt's Warbler** (we saw multiple individuals being uncharacteristically showy!).

Further up the pass, the Oldwood thickets along the Mkomazana River became less extensive and gave way to lush rolling grassland dotted with boulders, outcrops and stately sugarbushes (*Protea* sp.). Here we encountered different species like **Yellow Bishop**, **Wailing Cisticola**, **Cape Bunting**, **Malachite Sunbird**, **Gurney's Sugarbird** and the first of many **Ground Woodpeckers**. At the South African Border Control Post, a family of **Cape Rock Thrushes** and a showy pair of **Red-chested Cuckoos** kept us entertained as we finished the crossing process and passed through towards the Lesotho Border Post at the top of the pass.

From this point, the road quality switched from smoothly tarred to borderline impassable (hence our 4x4 driver!). The roadside slopes became steeper and rockier the further up we drove. As we went, we had more views of **Swee Waxbill**, **Ground Woodpecker** and **Barratt's Warbler** while adding **Common Waxbill**, **Cape Canary**, **Jackal Buzzard**, **White-necked Raven** and **Streaky-headed Seedeater** to the day list. Near the top, we were enveloped by cloud and drizzle, and this, coupled with the rugged switchbacks along the final stretch of the pass, made for quite an exhilarating experience.



*Mountain Pipit is one of the high-altitude specials we look for up Sani Pass.*

Once passing through Border Control, we drove into Lesotho, and a few kilometers on, the clouds lifted and we were greeted by flat plains and dramatic peaks. These were covered in karroid, subalpine scrub and heathland; the quintessential habitat of Lesotho. Henceforth, it didn't take long for a completely different suite of birds to start unveiling itself. These were a mix of high-altitude

Drakensberg specials and dry-country species more typical of the true Karoo semidesert further west. **Mountain Pipit**, **Red-capped** and **Large-billed Larks** and **Sickle-winged Chat** were among the first to show and proved to be quite common (the pipit unusually so). **Cape Wagtails** and **Cape Sparrows** frequented the clusters of huts and rocky ruins, and **White-necked Ravens** were regular, both on the ground and in the air.

The road, now tarred again, then approached another series of switchbacks, known as Black Mountain Pass. It was here where we connected with a soaring immature **Bearded Vulture** and a pair of characterful **Drakensberg Rockjumpers** (members of the second bird family endemic to southern Africa). After summiting this short pass, the road descended into a spectacular valley, and we made a few stops to bird the rocky, scrubby slopes and riverside along this route. Between all these stops we found more groups of **Drakensberg Rockjumpers** and **Ground Woodpeckers**, as well as good numbers of **Karoo Prinia**, **Grey Tit**, **Mountain Wheatear**, **Sentinel Rock Thrush**, **Large Rock Martin**, **Horus** and **African Black Swifts** and four canary species: **Black-headed**, **Cape**, **Yellow** and **White-throated Canaries** (the latter being a regional rarity). Less common species seen here included **Speckled Pigeon**, **Brown-throated Martin** and **African Rock Pipit**. We also had another two **Bearded Vultures** soaring low overhead (these ones adults) and two separate sightings of **Cape Vulture** doing the same.



*Drakensberg Siskin was seen well in the Drakensberg Mountains.*

Returning to the top of Black Mountain Pass, we got stunning views of **Drakensberg Siskin** drinking from a stream and perching all around us, while a vocal and responsive group of **Grey-winged Francolins** were also a notable highlight. Once we were back at the start of this pass, we took a short walk through the roadside shrubland which, after some work and much persistence, delivered our final two targets for the pass: **Fairy Flycatcher** and **Layard's Warbler**.



We then made our way back into the drizzle at the Lesotho Border Control, and went for lunch at the aptly named, "Highest Pub in Africa"! After enjoying a hot drink and a good meal, we started on the journey back down the mountain and into South Africa. This didn't add much, but more **Barratt's Warbler** visuals, a confiding **Bush Blackcap** at border control, a **Familiar Chat** further down and one final **Cape Rock Thrush** were all noteworthy.

### Day 15, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025. Underberg birding, transfer to Pennington

This morning we opted to leave our accommodation early, being seen off by the local **Pied Kingfishers** and **Hamerkops**. We made one brief stop a few kilometers up the pass again to try for one species we had missed yesterday due to the weather. After a little wait, we were rewarded with three **Short-tailed Pipits** flying around, chasing each other and emitting their distinctive buzzing flight calls! We then left Sani Pass, picking up many previously seen species as we descended, along with a single **Buff-streaked Chat**.

We made a short foray down a dirt track near Himeville which rewarded us with glorious views of two **Wattled Cranes** performing their morning rituals of preening and breakfast! Further along the road, we accumulated some interesting species like **Banded Martin**, **South African Cliff Swallow**, **Pied Starling**, **Ant-eating Chat**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Long-tailed Widowbird**, **Common Quail** and **Quailfinch** (the latter two heard only), while a flock of over sixty **Southern Bald Ibis** very close to the road in golden-hour lighting was a highlight of the whole trip! A small dam on this road played host to a couple of **South African Shelduck**, **White-backed** and **Yellow-billed Ducks** and **Cape Shoveler** amongst the myriad **Red-knobbed Coots**, while a pair of **Blue Cranes** duetted in an adjacent field.

After some great views of a few wind-hovering **Amur Falcons** and a surprising **European Roller**, we turned heel and left the Underberg, making our way southeast towards the coast. Roadside raptors perched on telephone poles along the way included **Long-crested Eagle**, **Amur Falcon** and **Jackal** and **Common Buzzards**. The forest thickets along Hella-Hella pass delivered great views of **African Firefinch**, while the Roselands Outdoor Centre near Richmond delivered **Western House Martin** and brief views of the Threatened **Blue Swallow**.

### Day 16, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025. Birding Oribi Gorge, transfer to Durban

Our last morning of tour was once again an early one and saw us heading south of Pennington to the beautiful Oribi Gorge near Port Shepstone. This massive canyon is lined with lush forest, and we had an excellent three hours of birding here. Some of the highlights included **White-starred Robin**, **Brown Scrub Robin**, **Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbird**, **Grey Waxbill** (including one building a nest in the picnic area), the endemic **Knysna Woodpecker**, **Cape Vulture** and two vocal **European Honey Buzzards** gliding overhead.

After leaving Oribi Gorge, we made our way north towards Durban, stopping at Illovo for lunch and to visit the Illovo River mouth. Here we found a group of **African Oystercatchers** alongside **Kelp Gull**, **White-breasted Cormorant** and a sizeable tern roost. This mostly consisted of **Common**, **Sandwich** and **Greater Crested Terns**, but we also managed to pick out two **Lesser Crested Terns** and a single **Arctic Tern** (rare on land in South Africa). Once we arrived at our Durban accommodation, we relaxed for a while before making a brief visit down to the Umhlanga Promenade. This beach walk is lined with coastal thickets where we found our last new species of

the tour: a confiding pair of **Southern Tchagras**. We concluded the trip with one more fabulous meal at Jack Salmon, anticipating the next seven days of seabirding on BirdLife South Africa's Flock to Marion 2025 cruise, starting tomorrow!



*The endemic **Knysna Woodpecker** tends to be more secretive than its congeners.*

**Bird List - Following IOC Version 15.1 (February 2025)**

Birds 'heard only' are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen.

The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following the IUCN Red List:

CR = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable.

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Ostriches (Struthionidae)</b>	
Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
<b>Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)</b>	
White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>
White-backed Duck	<i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i>
Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
South African Shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>
African Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus auritus</i>
Cape Shoveler	<i>Spatula smithii</i>
Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>
Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>
<b>Guineafowl (Numididae)</b>	
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
Southern Crested Guineafowl	<i>Guttera edouardi</i>
<b>Pheasants &amp; Allies (Phasianidae)</b>	
Crested Francolin	<i>Ortygornis sephaena</i>
Red-winged Francolin	<i>Scleroptila levaillantii</i>
Grey-winged Francolin	<i>Scleroptila afra</i>
Natal Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis natalensis</i>
Swainson's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis swainsonii</i>
<b>Swifts (Apodidae)</b>	
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
African Black Swift	<i>Apus barbatus</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>



Common Name	Scientific Name
Horus Swift	<i>Apus horus</i>
White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>
<b>Turacos (Musophagidae)</b>	
Grey Go-away-bird	<i>Crinifer concolor</i>
Purple-crested Turaco	<i>Gallirex porphyreolophus</i>
Livingstone's Turaco	<i>Tauraco livingstonii</i>
Knysna Turaco	<i>Tauraco corythaix</i>
<b>Bustards (Otididae)</b>	
Kori Bustard	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>
Denham's Bustard	<i>Neotis denhami</i>
Blue Korhaan	<i>Eupodotis caerulescens</i>
Red-crested Korhaan	<i>Lophotis ruficrista</i>
Black-bellied Bustard	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>
<b>Cuckoos (Cuculidae)</b>	
Burchell's Coucal	<i>Centropus burchellii</i>
Black Coucal	<i>Centropus grilii</i>
Green Malkoha	<i>Ceuthmochares australis</i>
Levaillant's Cuckoo	<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>
Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
Diederik Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>
Klaas's Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>
African Emerald Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx cupreus</i>
Black Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus clamosus</i>
Red-chested Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
<b>Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)</b>	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
African Olive Pigeon	<i>Columba arquatrix</i>
Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon (H)	<i>Columba delegorguei</i>
Lemon Dove	<i>Columba larvata</i>
Mourning Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>
African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>
<b>Flufftails &amp; Forest Rails (Scolothruridae)</b>	
Buff-spotted Flufftail (H)	<i>Scolothrura elegans</i>
<b>Rails, Crakes &amp; Coots (Rallidae)</b>	
African Rail	<i>Rallus caerulescens</i>
African Crake	<i>Crecoptis egregia</i>
Lesser Moorhen	<i>Paragallinula angulata</i>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
Allen's Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio alleni</i>
African Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i>
Black Crake	<i>Zapornia flavirostra</i>
<b>Cranes (Gruidae)</b>	
Grey Crowned Crane - EN	<i>Balearica regulorum</i>
Wattled Crane - VU	<i>Grus carunculata</i>
Blue Crane - VU	<i>Grus paradisea</i>
<b>Grebes (Podicipedidae)</b>	
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
<b>Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae)</b>	
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>
<b>Stone-curlews, Thick-knees (Burhinidae)</b>	
Spotted Thick-knee (H)	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
Water Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
<b>Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)</b>	
African Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>
<b>Stilts, Avocets (Recurvirostridae)</b>	
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Plovers (Charadriidae)</b>	
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
White-crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus albiceps</i>
Black-winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus melanopterus</i>
Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>
Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Anarhynchus pecuarius</i>
<b>Jacanas (Jacanidae)</b>	
Lesser Jacana	<i>Microparra capensis</i>
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
<b>Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)</b>	
African Snipe	<i>Gallinago nigripennis</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
<b>Courasers, Pratincoles (Glareolidae)</b>	
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
<b>Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae)</b>	
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Grey-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i>
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>



Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Storks (Ciconiidae)</b>	
African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>
Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>
Saddle-billed Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>
African Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia microscelis</i>
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
<b>Anhingas, Darters (Anhingidae)</b>	
African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
<b>Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)</b>	
Reed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
<b>Ibises, Spoonbills (Threskiornithidae)</b>	
African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
Southern Bald Ibis - VU	<i>Geronticus calvus</i>
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>
<b>Hérons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)</b>	
Dwarf Bittern	<i>Botaurus sturmii</i>
Black Heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
White-backed Night Heron	<i>Calherodius leuconotus</i>
Little Heron	<i>Butorides atricapilla</i>
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Yellow-billed Egret	<i>Ardea brachyrhyncha</i>
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>
<b>Hamerkop (Scopidae)</b>	
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Pelicans (Pelicanidae)</b>	
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotatus</i>
Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>
<b>Secretarybird (Sagittariidae)</b>	
Secretarybird - EN	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>
<b>Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)</b>	
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
African Harrier-Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>
Bearded Vulture	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
African Cuckoo-Hawk	<i>Aviceda cuculoides</i>
European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Hooded Vulture - CR	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
White-backed Vulture - CR	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
Cape Vulture - VU	<i>Gyps coprotheres</i>
Black-chested Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>
Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
Bateleur - EN	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
Martial Eagle - EN	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>
Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus wahlbergi</i>
Tawny Eagle - VU	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>
African Goshawk	<i>Aerospiza tachiro</i>
Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Astur melanoleucus</i>
African Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus ranivorus</i>
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>
African Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga vocifer</i>
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Jackal Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>
<b>Owls (Strigidae)</b>	
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	<i>Ketupa lactea</i>
African Wood Owl	<i>Strix woodfordii</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Mousebirds (Coliidae)</b>	
Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>
Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>
<b>Trogon (Trogonidae)</b>	
Narina Trogon	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>
<b>Hoopoes (Upupidae)</b>	
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
<b>Wood Hoopoes (Phoeniculidae)</b>	
Green Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
Common Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>
<b>Ground Hornbills (Bucorvidae)</b>	
Southern Ground Hornbill	<i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>
<b>Hornbills (Bucerotidae)</b>	
Southern Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus rufirostris</i>
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus leucomelas</i>
Crowned Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros alboterminatus</i>
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>
Trumpeter Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes bucinator</i>
<b>Rollers (Coraciidae)</b>	
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>
<b>Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)</b>	
Brown-hooded Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon albiventris</i>
Striped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
<b>Bee-eaters (Meropidae)</b>	
Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>



Common Name	Scientific Name
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
Southern Carmine Bee-eater	<i>Merops nubicoides</i>
<b>African Barbets (Lybiidae)</b>	
Crested Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>
Green Barbet	<i>Stactolaema olivacea</i>
White-eared Barbet	<i>Stactolaema leucotis</i>
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>
Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus pusillus</i>
Black-collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>
<b>Honeyguides (Indicatoridae)</b>	
Brown-backed Honeybird	<i>Prodotiscus regulus</i>
Lesser Honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>
Scaly-throated Honeyguide	<i>Indicator variegatus</i>
Greater Honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>
<b>Woodpeckers (Picidae)</b>	
Red-throated Wryneck	<i>Jynx ruficollis</i>
Ground Woodpecker	<i>Geocolaptes olivaceus</i>
Golden-tailed Woodpecker	<i>Campethera abingoni</i>
Knysna Woodpecker	<i>Campethera notata</i>
Bearded Woodpecker	<i>Chloropicus namaquus</i>
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>
Olive Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos griseocephalus</i>
<b>Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)</b>	
Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>
Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
<b>African &amp; New World Parrots (Psittacidae)</b>	
Brown-headed Parrot	<i>Poicephalus cryptoxanthus</i>
<b>African &amp; Green Broadbills (Calypomenidae)</b>	
African Broadbill	<i>Smithornis capensis</i>
<b>Wattle-eyes, Batises (Platysteiridae)</b>	
Cape Batis	<i>Batis capensis</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Woodwards' Batis	<i>Batis fratum</i>
Chinspot Batis	<i>Batis molitor</i>
<b>Bushshrikes (Malaconotidae)</b>	
Olive Bushshrike	<i>Chlorophoneus olivaceus</i>
Orange-breasted Bushshrike	<i>Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus</i>
Gorgeous Bushshrike	<i>Telophorus viridis</i>
Bokmakierie	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>
Brown-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>
Southern Tchagra	<i>Tchagra tchagra</i>
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>
Black-backed Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>
Southern Boubou	<i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>
Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>
<b>Vangas &amp; Allies (Vangidae)</b>	
White-crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>
<b>Cuckooshrikes (Campephagidae)</b>	
Grey Cuckooshrike	<i>Cebilepyris caesius</i>
Black Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga flava</i>
<b>Figbirds, Old World Orioles, Piopios (Oriolidae)</b>	
Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus larvatus</i>
<b>Drongos (Dicruridae)</b>	
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Square-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus ludwigii</i>
<b>Monarchs (Monarchidae)</b>	
Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher	<i>Trochocercus cyanomelas</i>
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
<b>Shrikes (Laniidae)</b>	
Southern White-crowned Shrike	<i>Eurocephalus anguitimens</i>
Magpie Shrike	<i>Lanius melanoleucus</i>
Southern Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Crows, Jays (Corvidae)</b>	
Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
White-necked Raven	<i>Corvus albicollis</i>
<b>Rockjumpers (Chaetopidae)</b>	
Drakensberg Rockjumper	<i>Chaetops aurantius</i>
<b>Fairy Flycatchers (Stenostiridae)</b>	
Fairy Flycatcher	<i>Stenostira scita</i>
<b>Tits, Chickadees (Paridae)</b>	
Southern Black Tit	<i>Melaniparus niger</i>
Grey Tit	<i>Melaniparus afer</i>
<b>Penduline Tits (Remizidae)</b>	
Grey Penduline Tit	<i>Anthoscopus caroli</i>
<b>Nicators (Nicatoridae)</b>	
Eastern Nicator	<i>Nicator gularis</i>
<b>Larks (Alaudidae)</b>	
Spike-heeled Lark	<i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i>
Eastern Long-billed Lark	<i>Certhilauda semitorquata</i>
Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>
Sabota Lark	<i>Calendulauda sabota</i>
Eastern Clapper Lark	<i>Corypha fasciolata</i>
Rufous-naped Lark	<i>Corypha africana</i>
Large-billed Lark	<i>Galerida magnirostris</i>
Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
<b>Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)</b>	
Sombre Greenbul	<i>Andropadus importunus</i>
Yellow-bellied Greenbul	<i>Chlorocichla flaviventris</i>
Terrestrial Brownbul	<i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i>
Yellow-streaked Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus flavostriatus</i>
Dark-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)</b>	
Black Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i>
Banded Martin	<i>Neophedina cincta</i>
Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
Large Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>
Blue Swallow - VU	<i>Hirundo atrocaerulea</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
White-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>
Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Greater Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis cucullata</i>
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>
Red-breasted Swallow	<i>Cecropis semirufa</i>
South African Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon spilodera</i>
<b>Crombecs, African Warblers (Macrosphenidae)</b>	
Cape Grassbird	<i>Sphenoeacus afer</i>
Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
<b>Leaf Warblers (Phylloscopidae)</b>	
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus ruficapilla</i>
<b>Reed Warblers &amp; Allies (Acrocephalidae)</b>	
Lesser Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i>
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
African Yellow Warbler	<i>Iduna natalensis</i>
Olive-tree Warbler	<i>Hippolais olivetorum</i>
<b>Grassbirds &amp; Allies (Locustellidae)</b>	
Fan-tailed Grassbird	<i>Catriscus brevisrostris</i>
Knysna Warbler	<i>Bradypterus sylvaticus</i>
Barratt's Warbler	<i>Bradypterus barratti</i>
Little Rush Warbler	<i>Bradypterus baboecala</i>
<b>Cisticolas &amp; Allies (Cisticolidae)</b>	
Red-faced Cisticola	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>
Rock-loving Cisticola	<i>Cisticola aberrans</i>



Common Name	Scientific Name
Rattling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>
Wailing Cisticola	<i>Cisticola lais</i>
Rufous-winged Cisticola	<i>Cisticola galactotes</i>
Levaillant's Cisticola	<i>Cisticola tinniens</i>
Croaking Cisticola	<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>
Neddicky	<i>Cisticola fulvicapilla</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Desert Cisticola	<i>Cisticola aridulus</i>
Cloud Cisticola	<i>Cisticola textrix</i>
Pale-crowned Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cinnamomeus</i>
Wing-snapping Cisticola	<i>Cisticola ayresii</i>
Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>
Black-chested Prinia	<i>Prinia flavicans</i>
Karoo Prinia	<i>Prinia maculosa</i>
Drakensberg Prinia	<i>Prinia hypoxantha</i>
Bar-throated Apalis	<i>Apalis thoracica</i>
Rudd's Apalis	<i>Apalis ruddi</i>
Yellow-breasted Apalis	<i>Apalis flavida</i>
Green-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>
Stierling's Wren-Warbler	<i>Calamonastes stierlingi</i>
Burnt-necked Eremomela	<i>Eremomela usticollis</i>
<b>Sylviid Babblers (Sylviidae)</b>	
Bush Blackcap - VU	<i>Sylvia nigricapillus</i>
Layard's Warbler	<i>Curruca layardi</i>
Chestnut-vented Warbler	<i>Curruca subcoerulea</i>
<b>White-eyes (Zosteropidae)</b>	
Cape White-eye	<i>Zosterops virens</i>
Southern Yellow White-eye	<i>Zosterops anderssoni</i>
<b>Laughingthrushes &amp; Allies (Leiothrichidae)</b>	
Arrow-marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>
<b>Sugarbirds (Promeropidae)</b>	
Gurney's Sugarbird	<i>Promerops gurneyi</i>
<b>Starlings, Rhabdornises (Sturnidae)</b>	
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>
Black-bellied Starling	<i>Notopholia corusca</i>
Cape Starling	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>
Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
Burchell's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis australis</i>
Pied Starling	<i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i>
Violet-backed Starling	<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>
Red-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>
<b>Oxpeckers (Buphagidae)</b>	
Red-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>
<b>Thrushes (Turdidae)</b>	
Spotted Ground Thrush - VU	<i>Geokichla guttata</i>
Orange Ground Thrush	<i>Geokichla gurneyi</i>
Groundscraper Thrush	<i>Turdus litsitsirupa</i>
Olive Thrush	<i>Turdus olivaceus</i>
Kurriichane Thrush	<i>Turdus libonyana</i>
<b>Chats, Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)</b>	
Brown Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas signata</i>
Bearded Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas quadrivirgata</i>
Kalahari Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas paena</i>
White-browed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>
Pale Flycatcher	<i>Agricola pallidus</i>
Grey Tit-Flycatcher	<i>Fraseria plumbea</i>
Ashy Flycatcher	<i>Fraseria caerulescens</i>
Southern Black Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i>
African Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
White-starred Robin	<i>Pogonocichla stellata</i>
White-browed Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha heuglini</i>
White-starred Robin	<i>Pogonocichla stellata</i>
Chorister Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha dichroa</i>
Red-capped Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha natalensis</i>
Cape Robin-Chat	<i>Dessonornis caffer</i>
Sentinel Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola explorator</i>
Cape Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola rupestris</i>
African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Buff-streaked Chat	<i>Campicoloides bifasciatus</i>
Sickle-winged Chat	<i>Emarginata sinuata</i>
Mocking Cliff Chat	<i>Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris</i>
Ant-eating Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i>
Mountain Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla monticola</i>
Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>
Familiar Chat	<i>Oenanthe familiaris</i>
<b>Sunbirds (Nectariniidae)</b>	
Collared Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>
Olive Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>
Grey Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra veroxii</i>
Amethyst Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra amethystina</i>
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>
Malachite Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia famosa</i>
Southern Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chalybeus</i>
Neergaard's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris neergaardi</i>
Greater Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris afer</i>
Marico Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris mariquensis</i>
Purple-banded Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris bifasciatus</i>
White-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris talatala</i>
<b>Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passeridae)</b>	
Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow	<i>Gymnoris superciliaris</i>
Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
<b>Weavers, Widowbirds (Ploceidae)</b>	
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
Thick-billed Weaver	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>
Spectacled Weaver	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>
Cape Weaver	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>
Eastern Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus subaureus</i>
Holub's Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthops</i>
Southern Brown-throated Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthopterus</i>
Lesser Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus intermedius</i>
Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
Dark-backed Weaver	<i>Ploceus bicolor</i>
Red-headed Quelea	<i>Quelea erythrops</i>
Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
Yellow-crowned Bishop	<i>Euplectes afer</i>
Southern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>
Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>
Fan-tailed Widowbird	<i>Euplectes axillaris</i>
White-winged Widowbird	<i>Euplectes albonotatus</i>
Red-collared Widowbird	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>
Long-tailed Widowbird	<i>Euplectes progne</i>
<b>Waxbills, Munias &amp; Allies (Estrildidae)</b>	
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullata</i>
Black-and-white Mannikin	<i>Spermestes bicolor</i>
Sweet Waxbill	<i>Coccygia melanotis</i>
Green Twinspot (H)	<i>Mandingoa nitidula</i>
Grey Waxbill	<i>Glaucostrelda perreini</i>
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Quailfinch	<i>Ortygospiza atricollis</i>
Orange-breasted Waxbill	<i>Amandava subflava</i>
Violet-eared Waxbill	<i>Granatina granatina</i>
Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>
Green-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia melba</i>
Pink-throated Twinspot	<i>Hypargos margaritatus</i>
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
African Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta rubricata</i>
<b>Indigobirds, Whydahs (Viduidae)</b>	
Village Indigobird	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>
Purple Indigobird	<i>Vidua purpurascens</i>
Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
Long-tailed Paradise Whydah	<i>Vidua paradisaea</i>
Cuckoo-finch	<i>Anomalospiza imberbis</i>
<b>Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae)</b>	
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
Mountain Wagtail	<i>Motacilla clara</i>



Common Name	Scientific Name
African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>
Cape Longclaw	<i>Macronyx capensis</i>
Yellow-throated Longclaw	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>
Rosy-throated Longclaw	<i>Macronyx ameliae</i>
African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
Mountain Pipit	<i>Anthus hoeschi</i>
Nicholson's Pipit	<i>Anthus nicholsoni</i>
Striped Pipit	<i>Anthus lineiventris</i>
African Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus crenatus</i>
Short-tailed Pipit	<i>Anthus brachyurus</i>
Yellow-breasted Pipit - VU	<i>Anthus chloris</i>
<b>Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae)</b>	
Forest Canary	<i>Crithagra scotops</i>
Black-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra atrogularis</i>
Lemon-breasted Canary	<i>Crithagra citrinpectus</i>
Yellow-fronted Canary	<i>Crithagra mozambica</i>
Drakensberg Siskin	<i>Crithagra symonsi</i>
Yellow Canary	<i>Crithagra flaviventris</i>
Brimstone Canary	<i>Crithagra sulphurata</i>
Streaky-headed Seed eater	<i>Crithagra gularis</i>
White-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra albogularis</i>
Cape Canary	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>
Black-headed Canary	<i>Serinus alario</i>
<b>Buntings (Emberizidae)</b>	
Cape Bunting	<i>Emberiza capensis</i>
Golden-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza flaviventris</i>
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza impetواني</i>
<b>Species seen:</b>	<b>425</b>
Species heard:	4
Total recorded:	429

### Mammal List – Following Mammalwatching.com (November 2024)

Birds 'heard only' are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen.

The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following the IUCN Red List: EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable.

Common name	Scientific name
<b>Elephants (Elephantidae)</b>	
African Savanna Elephant - EN	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>
<b>Hyraxes (Procaviidae)</b>	
Rock Hyrax	<i>Procavia capensis</i>
<b>Old World Monkeys (Cercopithecidae)</b>	
Blue Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus mitis</i>
Vervet Monkey	<i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i>
Chacma Baboon	<i>Papio ursinus</i>
<b>Bushbabies (Galagidae)</b>	
Thick-tailed Greater Galago (H)	<i>Otolemur crassicaudatus</i>
<b>Squirrels and Relatives (Sciuridae)</b>	
Smith's Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus cepapi</i>
Red Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus palliatus</i>
South African Ground Squirrel	<i>Geosciurus inauris</i>
<b>Old World Mice, Rats and Gerbils (Muridae)</b>	
Sloggett's Vlei Rat	<i>Otomys sloggetti</i>
<b>Bats (Chiroptera)</b>	
Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat	<i>Epomophorus wahlbergi</i>
<b>Canids (Canidae)</b>	
Black-backed Jackal	<i>Lupulella mesomelas</i>
<b>Felids (Felidae)</b>	
Lion - VU	<i>Panthera leo</i>

Common name	Scientific name
<b>Mongoose and Fossa (Herpestidae)</b>	
Yellow Mongoose	<i>Cynictis penicillata</i>
Common Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>
Common Dwarf Mongoose	<i>Helogale parvula</i>
Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>
Meerkat	<i>Suricata suricatta</i>
<b>Hyaenas (Hyaenidae)</b>	
Spotted Hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>
<b>Civets, Genets, and Oryxes (Viverridae)</b>	
Cape Genet	<i>Genetta tigrina</i>
<b>Equines (Equidae)</b>	
Plains Zebra	<i>Equus quagga</i>
<b>Bovids (Bovidae)</b>	
Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>
Black Wildebeest	<i>Connochaetes gnou</i>
Blue Wildebeest	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>
Bontebok	<i>Damaliscus pygargus</i>
Steenbok	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>
Natal Red Duiker	<i>Cephalophus natalensis</i>
Blue Duiker	<i>Philantomba monticola</i>
Bush Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>
Rhebok	<i>Pelea capreolus</i>
Southern Reedbuck	<i>Redunca arundinum</i>
Cape Buffalo	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>
Nyala	<i>Tragelaphus angasii</i>
Common Eland	<i>Tragelaphus oryx</i>
Greater Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>
Southern Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus sylvaticus</i>
<b>Giraffes and Okapis (Giraffidae)</b>	
Southern Giraffe	<i>Giraffa giraffa</i>
<b>Suids (Suidae)</b>	
Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>

Common name	Scientific name
<b>Hippopotamuses (Hippopotamidae)</b>	
Common Hippopotamus - VU	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>

<b>Species seen:</b>	<b>39</b>
Total heard only:	1
Total recorded:	40