



**SUBTROPICAL SOUTH AFRICA BIRDING TOUR:
COMPREHENSIVE EASTERN SOUTH AFRICA - TOUR REPORT**

21 November – 08 December 2024

By Joshua Olszewski



*The colorful **Knysna Turaco** was seen well on our first day of the trip.*

Overview

This 18-day South Africa birding tour was mostly spent traversing the warm subtropical forests and savannas of South Africa, with short periods spent in the cooler, temperate grasslands along the Drakensberg Mountain Range. The latter included sites like Wakkerstroom, Dullstroom and Sani Pass, all of which are rich in species that are either endemic or near-endemic to South Africa. The savannas and forests, on the other hand, are home to fewer endemics, but host an impressive variety of species. The savanna reserves are also home to large, iconic mammals such as **Lion**, **African Savanna Elephant** and **White Rhinoceros**, all of which were seen on this tour. All these factors tie together to create an unforgettable birding experience in one of Africa's most biodiverse countries!

Of the regional specials, we encountered such tantalizing species as **Drakensberg Rockjumper**, **Gurney's Sugarbird**, **Mountain Pipit**, **Knysna Turaco**, **Yellow-breasted**, **Short-tailed** and **African Rock Pipits**, **Neergaard's Sunbird**, **Pink-throated Twinspot**, **Woodward's Batis**, **Brown Scrub Robin**, **White-throated Robin-Chat**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Blue Korhaan** and **Blue Crane** (SA's national bird). Other notable species seen included **Allen's Gallinule**, **Slaty Egret**, **Caspian Plover**, **Livingstone's Turaco**, **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon**, **Orange Ground Thrush**, **Black-throated Wattle-eye**, **Red-chested Flufftail**, **Southern Banded Snake Eagle**, **Crowned Eagle**, **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk**, **Southern Ground Hornbill**, **Green Barbet**, **Gorgeous Bushshrike** and **Mosque Swallow**.



Blue Korhaan, a grassland special that we saw around Wakkerstroom.

A detailed daily account can be read below, and the full bird and mammal lists are located at the end of the report. Thanks to tour participant, Tim, for providing his excellent photos for this report.

Detailed Report

Day 1, 21st November 2024. Morning birding near Durban, transfer to Pennington

The group met up in Durban around mid-morning, after which we made our first birding stop of the tour at Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve on Durban's north coast. This patch of lush dune forest around the mouth of the Umhlanga River is a great birding spot right on the outskirts of a major city. Our first species here included widespread ones like **Cape White-eye**, **African Palm Swift**, **Barn Swallow**, **Red-eyed Dove** and **Common Bulbul**. This site also acquainted us with many lowland forest species we would see throughout the tour. These included **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Sombre** and **Yellow-bellied Greenbuls**, **Green-backed Camaroptera**, **Square-tailed Drongo**, **Black-bellied Starling**, **African Paradise Flycatcher**, **Grey**, **Olive**, **Collared** and **Purple-banded Sunbirds** and the striking **Purple-crested Turaco**. The thickets along the forest edge delivered **Southern Boubou**, **Red-faced Cisticola** and **Burchell's Coucal**, while the reed-lined riverbed played host to **Tawny-flanked Prinia**, **Rufous-winged Cisticola**, **Lesser Swamp Warbler**, **Little Rush Warbler** and breeding colonies of various weaver species (namely **Eastern Golden** and **Thick-billed Weavers** and **Southern Red Bishop**). The shoreline near the river mouth also gave us a few waterbirds, such as **Blacksmith Lapwing**, **Egyptian Goose**, **Three-banded Plover**, **Greater Crested Tern**, **Grey-headed Gull**, **African Woolly-necked Stork** and **Little Egret**. The most exciting finds at this reserve were a surprising **Garden Warbler** and a pair of **Black-throated Wattle-eyes**: a specialist of the swamp forest growing along the riverbanks.



*The striking male **Black-throated Wattle-eye** was seen near Umhlanga.*

After we had left Umhlanga, we made a brief stop at a reedy pond nearby for the scarce **Red-headed Quelea**. These shy, nomadic weavers breed here in small numbers every summer, and we managed to find a handful of them in and amongst the hordes of displaying weavers and bishops. With our final sighting of an **Osprey** over the Umhlanga River, we headed south towards our base for the night at Umdoni Park near Pennington. Situated on a sprawling golf course interspersed with tracts of tall coastal forest, we decided to take a walk around the property upon our arrival. Despite the looming grey skies above, we managed to acquire several new species, most notably the endemic **Knysna Turaco** and a beautiful male **Narina Trogon**. Other new species seen here included **Dark-backed** and **Village Weavers**, **Hadada Ibis**, **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, **Tambourine Dove**, **Trumpeter Hornbill**, **Lesser Striped Swallow**, **Violet-backed Starling**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat** and **African Pied Wagtail**. We then turned in for the evening, enjoying a great meal with a sea view, and looking forward to the two weeks of birding that lay ahead.

Day 2, 22nd November 2024. Birding at Umdoni Park, transfer to Sani Pass

We started this morning with an early morning walk around the park, which added **White-eared** and **Black-collared Barbets**, **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird**, **Spectacled Weaver**, **Golden-tailed Woodpecker**, **Southern Black Flycatcher**, **Amethyst Sunbird**, **Pin-tailed Whydah** and **Yellow-fronted Canary** to our list. We then visited the same forest patch we had birded yesterday. This proved to be quite productive, and we spent a good two hours meandering along the trails that cut in and out of the forest. Raptors like **Yellow-billed Kite**, **Long-crested Eagle** and **European Honey Buzzard** (scarce in South Africa) were all new for us, as were **Bar-throated Apalis**, **Black-headed Oriole**, **African Green Pigeon** and the near-endemic **Brown Scrub Robin**. We also had two sightings of the skittish **Lemon Dove**, as well as a family of **Grey Waxbills** lining an old **Dark-backed Weaver** nest with grasses.



*Umdoni Park is an excellent place to find **Brown Scrub Robin**.*

After returning to the guesthouse for a scrumptious breakfast, we departed from Umdoni and headed inland towards the Drakensberg mountains, the forest quickly giving way to rolling hills of grassland and sugarcane. We paid a visit to a known site for Blue Swallow, but unfortunately the birds were not around at the time. A welcome consolation was a few raptor species soaring at eye-level passed us, including **Common** and **Jackal Buzzards**, **African Harrier-Hawk**, the near-endemic **Cape Vulture** and a raucous family of **Lanner Falcons**. **Fork-tailed Drongo**, **Olive Thrush**, **Willow Warbler** and **Red-chested** and **Klaas's Cuckoos** were seen in the degraded forest around the lookout spot, while **Drakensberg Prinia**, **Neddicky**, **Wailing Cisticola** and **Rufous-naped Lark** were seen on the grassy slopes below. **Greater Striped Swallows** and **Black Saw-wings** careened around the treetops, and we heard **Red-necked Spurfowl**, **Barratt's Warbler** and **Lesser** and **Greater Honeyguides** calling in the distance.

We then continued on our journey north, without much intentional birding on the way, but we did see **Red-collared Widowbird**, **African Olive Pigeon**, **Spur-winged Goose**, **Cape Crow**, **Grey Crowned Crane** and **African Stonechat** along the roadside as we went. A group of endemic **Southern Bald Ibis** in a fallow field was a great sighting. We then arrived at our idyllic lodge, set at the foot of the Drakensberg Mountains on the shore of a large lake system: a truly picturesque setting for our second night of tour!

Day 3, 23rd November 2024. Full day birding on Sani Pass

This morning, we were met at our accommodation by our local guides, Stuart and Emile, who would be taking us in 4x4 vehicles up the renowned Sani Pass. This 20-kilometer pass ascends the Drakensberg Mountains along the Mkhomazana River, up into the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. Here, we would be searching for many species that are endemic to the various habitats of the Drakensberg, from the grassy slopes and *Ouhout* thickets at the bottom, to the rocky crags, outcrops and cliffs at the top, to the scrubby, karroid plains beyond.

Before even leaving our lodge, we were treated to several waterbird species on the adjacent lake, namely **Red-knobbed Coot**, **Pied Kingfisher**, **Little Grebe**, **African Sacred Ibis**, **White-throated Swallow** and a pair of **Grey Crowned Cranes**. Once we were on the main Sani Pass road, we made plenty of roadside birding stops before even reaching the South African Border Post. The many gulleys lined with woody *Ouhout* shrubs delivered specials like **Black Cuckoo**, **Cape Robin-Chat**, **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Bokmakierie**, **African Yellow Warbler**, **Cape Weaver**, **Common Waxbill**, **Streaky-headed Seedeater** and **Cape Canary**, while the grassy hillslopes between them held **Common Quail** (heard), **Wailing Cisticola**, **Cape Grassbird**, **Red-collared Widowbird** and **Yellow Bishop**. A lone farmhouse delivered a **Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow** and a **Cape Rock Thrush**, while **Little** and **African Black Swifts** circled overhead, and a vivid **Malachite Kingfisher** surveyed the river.

Farther up the pass, the slopes quickly became strewn with large boulders, rocky outcrops and blooming *Protea* trees. On the latter, we found the stunning **Malachite Sunbird** and unique **Gurney's Sugarbird** (one of two endemic families in southern Africa), while the grassy slopes delivered **Nicholson's Pipit**, **Buff-streaked** and **Familiar Chats**, **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** and the bizarre **Ground Woodpecker**. We even managed to spot a pair of **Bearded Vultures** soaring above the cliff line before reaching the border, along with **White-necked Raven** and a flock of 30-odd **Alpine Swifts**.



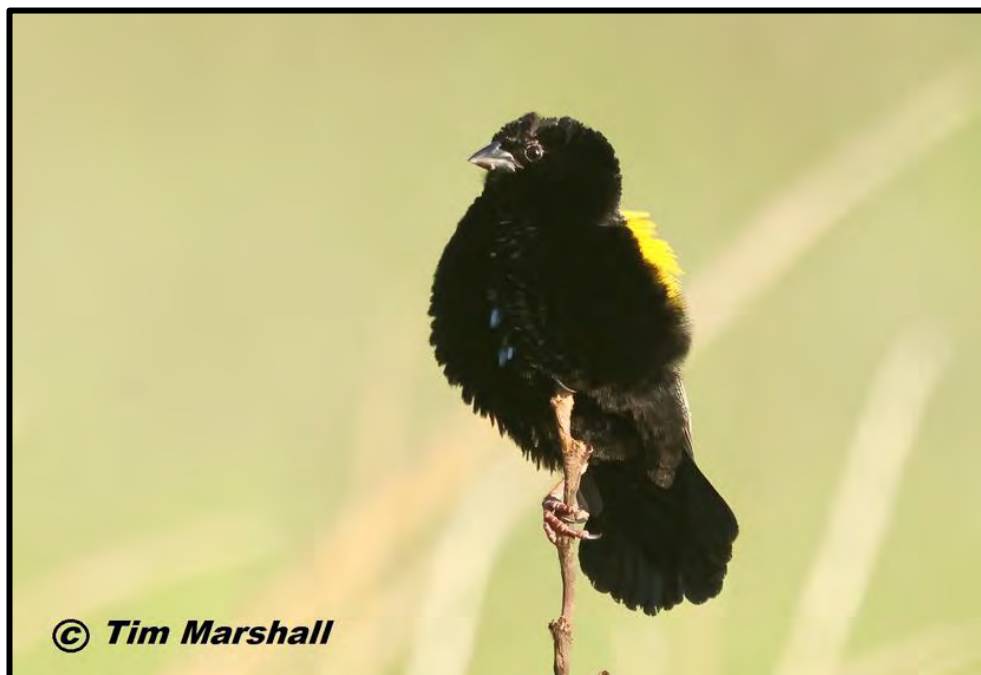
Ground Woodpecker was one of our many targets up Sani Pass.

At the South African Border Post, we added **White-rumped Swift**, **Southern Boubou**, **Southern Grey-headed Sparrow** and **Greater Double-collared Sunbird** while going through the border control. Once we were through, the smooth tarred road we had driven up to this point turned into a rugged, nearly impassable gravel track. This was when the need for our 4x4 vehicles became apparent. As we lumbered on, the hillslopes became steeper and the switchbacks more extreme. Nevertheless, we continued trudging up the valley, adding **Brown-throated** and **Large Rock Martins**, **Cape Bunting** and the secretive **Barratt's Warbler** along the way. Just before reaching the top, we stopped on one of the last switchbacks to take in the view behind us. While we were doing so, we came upon a pair of charismatic **Drakensberg Rockjumpers** foraging around the roadside boulders and trilling away with their shrill calls. These were followed by another high-altitude special of the Drakensberg: a group of **Drakensberg Siskins**!

Shortly after, we reached the Lesotho Border Post at the top of the pass, where we went through the border crossing process again. Around the buildings we had our first looks at **Cape Wagtail**, **Cape Sparrow** and the beautiful **Sentinel Rock Thrush**, as well as more **Drakensberg Siskins**. Continuing past the border post, we noted how the grassy, boulder-strewn slopes had given way to flat, stony plains covered in low, semidesert scrub. This completely new habitat revealed a whole new suite of birds to us, many of which are more typical of the dry semidesert in the west of South Africa (known as the "Karoo"). Among these **Large-billed Lark**, **Sickle-winged Chat** and **Karoo Prinia** proved to be common, while **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Layard's Warbler**, **Grey Tit**, and **Yellow Canary**, **Black-headed** and **White-throated Canaries** were less so. Karoo specials aside, we completed the trifecta of high-altitude Drakensberg endemics with several displaying **Mountain Pipits**: a species that only breeds in these alpine climes and disappears in the non-breeding season!

During our time in Lesotho, we managed to pick out several **Horus Swifts** from the ever-present flocks of **Alpine** and **African Black Swifts** and had another great **Bearded Vulture** sighting. **Mountain Chat**, **Red-winged Starling**, **Cape Bunting**, **Ground Woodpecker** and **Sentinel Rock Thrush** were common on the rocks in the area, while **Red-capped Larks**, **White-necked Ravens**, **Southern Bald Ibis** and two **White Storks** foraged on the plains near the border post. We also witnessed a **Grey-winged Francolin** being dived on by a hungry **Jackal Buzzard** (it managed to escape unscathed)!

With the final species in Lesotho being **Pied Starling**, we started on the return journey back down the pass, only adding **Brimstone Canary**, **Speckled Mousebird**, **Red-throated Wryneck** and **Giant Kingfisher** along the drive. When we arrived back at the lodge, we relaxed for a bit and then took a walk around the lake shore before dinner, which gave us a plethora of new species. Among these were **Common Greenshank**, **Reed** and **Great Cormorants**, **Yellow-billed Duck**, **South African Shelduck**, **African Darter**, **African Fish Eagle**, **Common Moorhen**, **African Snipe**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Yellow-billed Egret**, **Black-headed Heron**, **Whiskered Tern**, **African Wattled Lapwing**, **Southern Fiscal**, **Levaillant's Cisticola**, **Banded Martin** and **Long-tailed Widowbird**.



*We saw **Yellow Bishops** along the lower stretches of the Sani Pass..*

Day 4, 24th November 2024. Birding in Underberg and the Karkloof, transfer to Eshowe

We had another early walk around the lake this morning, seeing many previously seen species again and adding **Cape Longclaw** and **Hamerkop** to the list. More views of **Lanner Falcon**, **Giant Kingfisher**, **Buff-streaked Chat**, **Nicholson's Pipit**, **Long-crested Eagle** and **Grey Crowned Crane** were welcomed.



*All three South African crane species were seen on this trip including **Grey Crowned Crane**.*

Once we had departed, we made a short foray down a nearby farm road that runs through bird-rich patches of wetland, grassland and fallow land. **Helmeted Guineafowl**, **Western Cattle Egret**, **Grey Heron**, **African Pipit**, **Red-billed Quelea**, **African Spoonbill**, **Speckled Pigeon**, **Pied Crow**, **Pale-crowned Cisticola**, **Fan-tailed Widowbird** and the regal **Blue Crane** were among the new species seen along this road. These beautiful cranes are South Africa's national bird and were feeding alongside large groups of **Southern Bald Ibis**, **Grey Crowned Crane**, **Egyptian** and **Spur-winged Geese** and **South African Shelduck**. Further down the road, we bumped into **Ant-eating Chats** and **Banded Martins** sitting on the roadside fence, as well as a soaring group of **Cape Vultures**.

When we'd finally had our fill of the productive grassland birding here, we started on the long journey to Eshowe through the hilly interior of KwaZulu-Natal. Due to the ground we had to cover, not much birding was done along this drive. However, we made sure to visit Benvie Gardens in the Karkloof while en route, to add a few species onto our list. The farmlands before Benvie delivered a pair of **Wattled Cranes** (completing our set of cranes for the tour), while the lush, temperate forest surrounding the gardens themselves were quite fruitful indeed. Here, we found endemics like **Forest Canary**, **Southern Double-collared Sunbird** and **Chorister Robin-Chat**, as well as **African Dusky Flycatcher**, **Olive Woodpecker**, **Black-and-white Mannikin**, **Grey Cuckooshrike** and the elusive **Orange Ground Thrush**: the main target of this site! Finishing up at Benvie, we completed the rest of the drive and arrived in Eshowe just in time for dinner and to review the day's highlights.

Day 5, 25th November 2024. Guided birding at Eshowe, Mtunzini and Ongoye

We made an early start this morning to reach the coastal town of Mtunzini, an hour southeast of Eshowe. Here, we met up with our local guide, Junior, who would be taking us around the greater region of southern Zululand for the day. We started out birding the coastal forest below the town, where we encountered a cooperative pair of **Narina Trogons** along with **Tambourine Dove**, **Black-headed Oriole**, **Black-backed Puffback**, **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird**, **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** and other common forest birds. We then made our way towards the next spot located in the hills north of Mtunzini: Ongoye Forest. This large, isolated tract of Afromontane forest is home to an endemic subspecies of **Green Barbet** found nowhere else in the world (previously split as “Woodward’s Barbet”)! Junior got us onto a lively pair of these special barbets without delay, along with **Cape Batis**, **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Yellow-streaked Greenbul** (also a localized bird in South Africa), the strange **Eastern Nicator** and yet another **Narina Trogon**.



*The distinctive ‘pop-pop-pop’ sound of **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds** was heard throughout Zululand.*

Our next port of call was the valley bushveld to the north of the forest. The heat was already beating down by this point, but we still connected with many great birds in these random patches of thickets. Most notable of these were **Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbird**, **Grey Waxbill**, **Grey** and **White-bellied Sunbirds**, **Eastern Nicator**, **Yellow-breasted Apalis**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat** and four territorial **Gorgeous Bushshrikes** having a vocal showdown! We headed back towards Mtunzini after this, making a detour via the grassland patches at Emoyeni. Here, another reed-lined dam hosted a breeding colony of **Red-headed Quelea** (much bigger than the colony near Durban), as well as small numbers of **African Jacana**, **White-backed Duck** and the stunning **African Pygmy Goose**. The surrounding grasslands delivered **Zitting Cisticola**, **Yellow-throated**

Longclaw, Fan-tailed Widowbird and Neddicky, while **Southern Black Flycatcher, Scarlet-chested Sunbird** and a family of **Palm-nut Vultures** occupied the trees around the dam.

We then returned to Mtunzini, picking up a **Lesser Honeyguide** in town, before bidding farewell to our guide and making a much-needed lunch stop. We had one last birding session at Umlalazi Nature Reserve just below the town, which proved to be quite productive in the late afternoon. **Hamerkop, Grey Heron, African Woolly-necked Stork, Wood Sandpiper** and **Grey and Common Ringed Plovers** were seen foraging on the estuarine mudflats while **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** and **Trumpeter Hornbills** gave us near constant flybys. Several **Palm-nut Vultures** were present, including one rather showy individual. After bettering our views of **Rufous-winged Cisticola**, we checked the forest near the boat launch where we heard a distant **Green Malkoha** and saw groups of **Common Swifts** among the ubiquitous **Little Swifts**. An out-of-place **Namaqua Dove** was our last bird of the day before we headed back up the hills to Eshowe.



Purple-banded Sunbirds are usually common around Mtunzini.

Day 6, 26th November 2024. Morning birding at Dlinza, transfer to St Lucia

Another early morning saw us birding along a random stream crossing under the main road just south of Eshowe. Despite the unassuming nature of the site, we notched up a couple good species here, namely a brief **Half-collared Kingfisher** and a family of **Holub's Golden Weavers**. We then returned to Eshowe to bird the Dlinza Forest Reserve on the south side of town. This small patch of montane forest is another major site on this tour, mainly for two species: **Spotted Ground Thrush** and **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon**. The thrush would remain heard only, but we did manage to get brief views of the pigeon from the canopy tower near the entrance. Fortunately, we had plenty of other great species here to entertain us, including another confiding **Narina Trogon** (they had been unusually cooperative on this tour), **Cape Batis, Scaly-throated Honeyguide**,

African Emerald Cuckoo (heard), **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Red-capped** and **Chorister Robin-Chats**, **Black-bellied Starling**, **African Olive Pigeon**, **Olive Sunbird** and a **Green Malkoha** that actually showed itself! **Purple-crested Turacos** and **Trumpeter Hornbills** proved to be abundant in this forest, and the whole valley echoed with their calls. We also saw at least seven **Lemon Doves** with one **Tambourine Dove** feeding at a bird hide set up near the entrance.

After a fulfilling morning at Dlinza, we returned to our guesthouse for breakfast, before packing up and moving on towards St Lucia. Passing through Mtunzini once more, we did some light birding around the town, which got us **Cardinal Woodpecker** and second sightings of **Scaly-throated Honeyguide**, **Scarlet-chested Sunbird** and **Green Malkoha**. Leaving Mtunzini behind, we approached St Lucia, stopping at a roadside wetland just before which held numbers of **White-backed Duck**, **White-faced Whistling Duck**, **African Pygmy Goose** and a single **Great Egret**.

As we approached the bridge over the St Lucia Estuary, we took time to stop and walk out onto the bridge where we found **Thick-billed**, **Eastern Golden**, **Lesser Masked** and **Southern Brown-throated Weavers** breeding in the reedbeds. Aerial feeders were also prevalent overhead, and included **Little** and **African Palm Swifts**, **Barn**, **White-throated** and **Lesser Striped Swallows** and the odd **Sand Martin**. Finally, after we had checked in to our lodge, we paid a visit to the boardwalk that leads to the beach at the estuary mouth. The heavy wind made things tricky on the beach, but we managed to find the near-endemic **African Oystercatcher**, along with **Purple Heron**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Sandwich** and **Greater Crested Terns** and an **African Marsh Harrier** quartering over the estuary.



Thick-billed Weavers and other weavers were seen along the St Lucia estuary.

Day 7, 27th November 2024. Birding Isimangaliso Wetland Park

Our main focus for today was to bird the Eastern Shores section of Isimangaliso Wetland Park, north of St Lucia town. We arrived at the park gate at opening time and birded the bright green savanna grasslands and scattered forests that stretched out along the road. The savanna was full of **Rattling Cisticolas**, and their calls rung out all over the reserve. The larger **Croaking Cisticola** was also evident, albeit less common. **Red-breasted Swallows** flew low over the fields in small groups, while **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** and the odd **European Bee-eater** adorned the telephone lines for most of the way. Other species seen throughout the savanna included **Yellow-throated Longclaw**, **Fan-tailed Widowbird**, **Zitting Cisticola**, **Tawny Flanked Prinia**, **Burchell's Coucal**, **Rufous-naped Lark**, **Black-crowned Tchagra**, **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, **Speckled Mousebird**, **Village and Lesser Masked Weavers** and **Brimstone Canary**. Scattered throughout the savanna was a network of marshes and lily-covered pools which were home to good numbers of waterbirds. One such wetland near the entrance delivered **Spur-winged** and **African Pygmy Goose**, **White-backed Duck**, **White-faced Whistling Duck**, **Little Grebe**, **Purple Heron**, **Yellow-billed Egret**, **African Jacana**, **Malachite** and **African Pygmy Kingfishers** and about five **Rufous-bellied Herons** (a scarcity in South Africa).

The savanna here was not just home to birds. Large mammals also abound here, and we managed to find groups of **Cape Buffalo**, **Blue Wildebeest**, **Plains Zebra**, **Greater Kudu**, **Waterbuck**, **Southern Reedbuck**, **Common Warthog** and even **White Rhinoceros**. Many of these were adorned with **Red-billed Oxpeckers**, including **Common Hippopotamus** that inhabits the wetlands. Raptors were also a feature of the day, most notable were **Brown Snake Eagle**, **Crowned Eagle**, **Black Sparrowhawk**, **African Fish Eagle** and **Southern Banded Snake Eagle**. The latter is Near-Threatened and this is arguably the best site in South Africa to see it.

The bushy sections and forest patches in the park were equally as prolific and yielded many of the usual suspects, with the forest around Mission Rocks being particularly productive. Here we found two localized specials of the northern Zululand sand forests: **Rudd's Apalis** and **Woodward's Batis** (the latter being rather scarce) and added **Ashy Flycatcher** and **Orange-breasted Bushshrike** to the trip list. We also heard **Livingstone's Turaco** here but would have to wait until tomorrow to see it. The forest at the very end of the road near Cape Vidal was less productive, but we did find a troop of scarce **Blue Monkeys** here, a nice change from the ubiquitous **Vervet Monkeys**. **Natal Red Duiker** was also a common site around the fringes of the camp site.

Our return journey towards the gate didn't yield much new, apart from some **Collared Pratincoles** and a couple stately **Saddle-billed Storks**. Once we had left the park, we went into town for lunch, after which we took a short siesta before venturing out again in the late afternoon. Birding the forest along the iGwalagwala Trail next to town was fairly quiet at this time, but a party of comical **Southern Crested Guinea fowl** was a nice way to end the day.

Day 8, 28th November 2024. St Lucia forest birding, transfer to Hluhluwe via Western Shores

We returned to the iGwalagwala Trail this morning before breakfast, with the main objective of seeing **Livingstone's Turaco** which we had dipped yesterday. After a bit of searching and hearing many calling around us, we finally got visuals of two of these beautiful turacos, along with other great forest birds like **Southern Crested Guinea fowl**, **Green Malkoha**, **Rudd's Apalis**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat**, **Dark-backed Weaver**, **Grey**, **Olive** and

Purple-banded Sunbirds and **Grey Waxbill** (another pair building a nest). This was followed by the best breakfast of the trip at our St Lucia accommodation, after which we packed up and headed north towards Hluhluwe.



*We had a couple good sightings of **Grey Waxbill** on this trip.*

We took a detour through the Western Shores section of Isimangaliso Park, seeing many of the same savanna birds and mammals we'd seen yesterday, with the addition of **Squacco Heron** and our first **Southern Giraffe**. Notable mentions were **Rufous-winged** and **Croaking Cisticolas**, **Trumpeter Hornbill**, **Red-breasted Swallow**, **Yellow-throated Longclaw**, **Blue-cheeked** and **European Bee-eaters**, **African Jacana**, **Red-billed Oxpecker**, **Great Egret**, **Wahlberg's Eagle** and **Scarlet-chested Sunbird**. Another patch of forest along the lake shoreline here delivered the hyperactive **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, as well as **Rudd's Apalis** and another **Livingstone's Turaco**.

Once we had passed through Western Shores, we completed the journey to our lodge near Hluhluwe. We stopped for lunch at the restaurant outside the entrance gate, where we were treated to **Wire-tailed Swallows** doing laps around the building and, best of all, a **Lemon-breasted Canary** drinking at the water feature in front of our table! This canary is another localized Zululand special, and breeds in these coastal savannas that are dotted with Lala Palms. Quite a special sight having one coming to drink at a restaurant water fountain!

We then checked in to our lodge, set amidst beautiful sand forest and teeming with birdlife. We took the opportunity to walk around the premises in the late afternoon finding both **Bearded Scrub Robin** and the lovely **Pink-throated Twinspot** without too much difficulty! **Southern Crested Guinea fowl**, **Eastern Nicator**, **Rudd's Apalis** and **Orange-breasted Bushshrike** were among the other good bird seen on our walk, before we returned for dinner. A **Thick-tailed Greater**

Galago attempting to steal food from our plates made for an entertaining end to another great day in Zululand.



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

Day 9, 29th November 2024. Sand forest and waterbirding north of Hluhluwe

This morning we took another walk around the lodge grounds, seeing more afore-mentioned species like **Pink-throated Twinspot**, **Bearded Scrub Robin**, **Eastern Nicator**, **Orange-breasted** and **Gorgeous Bushshrike**, **Dark-backed** and **Spectacled Weaver**, **Ashy Flycatcher**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, **Square-tailed Drongo**, **Black** and **Red-chested Cuckoos**, **Yellow-breasted** and **Rudd's Apalises**, **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** and **Black-backed Puffback**. We also had flyovers from **Hamerkop** and **Sand Martin** while adding **Emerald-spotted Wood Dove** and a pair of **Broad-billed Rollers** to the list. When we finally managed to tear ourselves away from the fantastic lodge birding, we headed east towards False Bay Park, but not before stopping in the nearby grassy fallow fields for more views of **Lemon-breasted Canary** feeding amongst other seed-eating birds. These included **Yellow-fronted Canary**, **Southern Grey-headed Sparrow**, **Pin-tailed Whydah**, **Village Indigobird**, **African Firefinch**, **Blue** and **Common Waxbills**, **Southern Red Bishop** and **Red-billed Quelea**.

After a flyby **Crowned Hornbill** and a perched **Brown Snake Eagle** on a roadside telephone pole, we arrived at False Bay Park and proceeded to bird the tract of sand forest that lay between the gate and the lake shore. Among the new species we saw in this reserve were **Greater Honeyguide**, **Black Cuckooshrike**, **Southern Black Tit**, **Southern Yellow White-eye**, a flushed **Spotted Eagle-Owl** and, best of all, a pair of **Neergaard's Sunbirds**. These sunbirds were our last Zululand sand forest endemic and are arguably the trickiest to find, so having a pair was a real highlight!

We then left False Bay Park and headed north, with our next stop being the floodplains and savannas along the Nibela Peninsula. This spike of land juts out into Lake St Lucia and its shoreline plays host to astronomical numbers of waterbirds. Here we witnessed hundreds of **Red-knobbed Coots**, **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos** and waterfowl like **Spur-winged Goose**, **Cape Shoveler**, **Fulvous Whistling Duck**, **Blue-billed** and **Red-billed Teal** and **Yellow-billed Duck** smothering the distant sandbars in the lake, with smaller numbers of **Pink-backed** and **Great White Pelican**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Pied Avocet**, **Grey-headed Gull**, **Great Egret**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Little Stint**, and even a **Green Sandpiper** (rarity) also present. The adjacent floodplains hosted breeding **Collared Pratincoles** alongside **African Wattled Lapwing**, **Common Ringed Plover**, **Yellow-billed Stork** and **African Pipit**.

After enjoying this birding mecca, we went back to the lodge restaurant for lunch, picking up a **Striped Kingfisher** while we did so. After this we headed north again, passing Nibela and arriving at the rather unassuming plains around Mpempe Pan. While we didn't see much new here, our two main targets, **Black-winged** and **Senegal Lapwing** quickly revealed themselves, feeding together with the more common **Crowned Lapwings**. Another nearby pan got us a few more waterbirds like **African Pygmy Goose**, **Black Crake**, **Pied** and **Malachite Kingfisher** and **White-faced Whistling Duck** before we left the area and headed back to the lodge for dinner.



Senegal Lapwing can sometimes prove tricky to find, but we saw it well near Lake St Lucia.

Day 10, 30th November 2024. Zululand birding to Mkhuze, transfer to Wakkerstroom

We decided to take one last walk around our lodge this morning. The myriad of expected species was in evidence, with the additions of **Long-billed Crombec** and **Chinspot Batis** (and two more **Narina Trogons**!). Leaving the lodge after breakfast, we made a quick stop at False Bay Park again, seeing more **Southern Crested Guinea fowl**, **Southern Yellow White-eye**, **Bearded**

Scrub Robin, Woodward's Batis and another **Neergaard's Sunbird**. We also paid another visit to the Nibela Peninsula where, seemingly, the waterbird numbers had double overnight! There were now thousands of the afore-mentioned waterfowl and flamingos with new additions of **Ruff, Little, White-winged** and **Caspian Tern, African Swampphen, Marsh, Curlew** and **Common Sandpipers, Common Greenshank, Squacco, Grey, Purple, Goliath** and **Black Herons, Yellow-billed** and **Little Egrets, African Spoonbill, Yellow-billed Stork** and **African Marsh Harrier**.

After indulging in this waterbird bonanza, we visited the pratincole floodplains again where we added **Kittlitz's Plover, Little Bee-eater** and **Red-backed Shrike** to the list. This was followed by our last stint of sand forest nearby. Not much new was seen here, but a massive flock of **Barn Swallows** and **Sand Martins** also delivered a single **Grey-rumped Swallow**. After one last pair of **Lemon-breasted Canaries** (nesting in a roadside Lala Palm), we continued on our northward journey. The degraded scrub in and amongst the villages along this road delivered two new cuckoos for us: **Jacobin** and **Great Spotted Cuckoos** (the latter a regional rarity here), as well as **Red-faced Mousebird** and **Lilac-breasted Roller**.

We only had one more session of birding before the long drive to Wakkerstroom. Although we didn't have much time to bird Mkhuze Game Reserve, the eMshopi campsite on its eastern side got us some good species like **Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Southern Black Flycatcher, Lesser Striped Swallow** and **Scarlet-chested Sunbird**. This concluded our birding for the day and we then headed inland towards Wakkerstroom, leaving the warm, humid lowlands behind and entering the cool, high-altitude grasslands once again.



The colorful African Yellow Warbler was seen the village of Dirkiesdorp.

Day 11, 1st December 2024. Full day of birding the Wakkerstroom grasslands

We had a full day of birding the rolling hills around Wakkerstroom today with a local guide, David. Before leaving our accommodation, the birding was already in full swing, with **Cape Starling**, **Southern Masked** and **Village Weavers**, **Cape Wagtail**, **White-throated** and **Greater Striped Swallows**, **Bokmakierie**, **Wahlberg's Eagle**, **Fork-tailed Drongo** and a distant **Red-winged Francolin**, all in evidence. The farmlands adjacent to the guesthouse were also teeming with birds like **Swainson's Spurfowl**, **Helmeted Guineafowl**, **Pied Starling**, **Bokmakierie**, **Red-throated Wryneck**, **Hadada Ibis**, **Fan-tailed** and **Long-tailed Widowbirds** and even **African Firefinch**. Once we had met up with our guide, we first birded the bridge over the Wakkerstroom Wetland. This is a well-known RAMSAR site and is part of the town's fame among birders. In less than an hour, we had seen **Blue-billed** and **Red-billed Teals**, **Southern Pochard**, **South African Shelduck**, **Grey Crowned Crane**, **Three-banded Plover**, **Purple** and **Squacco Herons**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Common Reed**, **Lesser Swamp** and **Little Rush Warblers**, **African Marsh Harrier**, **African Swamphen**, displaying **African Snipes** and even the elusive **African Rail** and **Red-chested Flufftail**.



*We found the bizarre **Secretarybird** in the grasslands of Wakkerstroom.*

We then headed east of Wakkerstroom towards the village of Dirkiesdorp, crossing over hills with swathes of *Ouhout* thicket much like the Drakensberg. Species typical of this habitat like **Drakensberg Prinia**, **Willow Warbler** and **African Yellow Warbler** were present, as were aerial feeders that included **African Black Swift**, **Greater Striped Swallow** and **Western House Martin**. Further along where the *Ouhout* gave way to grassland, another roadside stop got us distant views of a **Denham's Bustard** as well as close-up views of a **Buffy Pipit**. Two male **Diederik Cuckoos** chasing each other was also a great sighting here. Once we arrived at

Dirkiesdorp, we crossed a small bridge over a stream under which **South African Cliff Swallows** were breeding. The overgrazed fields alongside the settlement are home to the endemic subspecies of **White-bellied Bustard** (previously split as “Barrow’s Korhaan”), and it didn’t take long for us to find a pair of these attractive birds walking through the short plains. Other good birds seen around Dirkiesdorp included **Brown-throated** and **Banded Martins**, **Spike-heeled Lark**, **Ant-eating Chat**, **Cape Crow**, **Crowned Lapwing**, **Zitting** and **Wing-snapping Cisticolas**, **Pied Starling**, **Pin-tailed Whydah**, **Golden-tailed Woodpecker**, **Hamerkop** and a flyby **Black Sparrowhawk**.

We then headed back towards Wakkerstroom, getting distracted on the way by a **Secretarybird** striding through a distant meadow. Stopping for this regal (albeit strange) raptor also got us two male **Cuckoo-finches** having a stand-off! With all this excitement keeping us going, we made it back to town where we got some food for lunch and headed back out into the grasslands. Driving north of town this time, the grasslands along the Amersfoort road were alive with bird activity. Weavers, bishops and widowbirds seemed to coat the landscape, and there was a constant presence of swallows and martins in the air. Among these were more **South African Cliff Swallows** as well as the handsome **Yellow-crowned Bishop**. Other common birds included **Common Waxbill**, **Red-capped** and **Spike-heeled Larks**, **Crowned Lapwing**, **African Pipit**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Egyptian Goose**, **Black-headed Heron**, **African Stonechat** and **Levaillant’s Cisticola**. Smaller numbers of **Blue Crane** and **Cape** and **Black-throated Canaries** were also present, and a roadside farm dam hosted lots of waterfowl including **Southern Pochard**, **White-backed** and **Maccoa Ducks**, and **Black-necked** and **Great Crested Grebes**.

After having lunch at the dam, we continued on to the town of Daggakraal. The grassy, rocky hills surrounding the town were home to most of the expected grassland species, with the added bonuses of **Eastern Clapper** and **Eastern Long-billed Larks**, **Quailfinch**, another **Denham’s Bustard** and a pair of **Blue Korhaans** (our third bustard species of the day!). Feeling accomplished at what we had achieved, we then headed back towards Wakkerstroom, only adding one more **Denham’s Bustard** and a family of **Lanner Falcons** as notable sightings. We then dropped our guide off in town and made our way to the guesthouse for a lovely, homecooked dinner.

Day 12, 2nd December 2024. Morning birding around Wakkerstroom, transfer to Kruger

This morning we went out before breakfast to a small settlement on the south side of Wakkerstroom called Groenvlei. The rocky hillslope about this village is home to the endemic **African Rock Pipit**, which we found without much difficulty. We also birded some of the slopes between Groenvlei and Wakkerstroom as well as the bridge over the wetland again. Notable species seen included **African Marsh Harrier**, **Lesser Kestrel**, **Lanner Falcon**, **Red-throated Wryneck**, **Eastern Long-billed Lark**, **Buff-streaked Chat**, **Grey Crowned Crane**, **African Swamphen**, **Banded Martin** and **Cape Longclaw**. We returned to the guesthouse afterwards for breakfast, before packing up and heading out on the longest drive of the tour (six hours) towards Kruger National Park.

This drive would see us crossing various subranges of the Drakensberg Mountains (known here as the Escarpment) and venturing into the warm, humid lowlands once again. However, instead of forest, the dominant habitat here is true savanna woodland: acres of Acacia and mixed woodland stretching out as far as the eye can see. This is the quintessential habitat of Kruger, which we traversed for two hours as we made our way from Malelane Gate up to Skukuza Camp. Birding

the bridge over the Crocodile River at Malelane gave us our last major fix of birding for the day, with **Black Crake, African Jacana, Water Thick-knee, Black-winged Stilt, Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, African Openbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Glossy Ibis, Reed Cormorant, Little, Grey and Goliath Herons, African Fish Eagle, Pied and Giant Kingfishers, Wire-tailed Swallow** and **African Pied Wagtail** all showing well.



Lilac-breasted Roller – a common and colorful Kruger resident.

Day 13, 3rd December 2024. Kruger birding – Skukuza to Tshokwane

We had the next two days to bird this iconic park from an open-top safari vehicle with a safari guide as our driver. Our first day saw us heading north of Skukuza towards Tshokwane picnic site. All along this 40-kilometer stretch of road, we were treated to spectacular woodland birding and amassed an impressive species list at the end of the day. Of the regularly encountered species, **Swainson's Spurfowl, White-browed Scrub Robin, Diederik and Red-chested Cuckoo, Marico Sunbird, Grey Go-away-bird, Red-backed Shrike, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Eurasian Hoopoe, Brown-crowned and Black-crowned Tchagra, Woodland Kingfisher, Southern Boubou, Chinspot Batis, White-bellied Sunbird, Lilac-breasted Roller, Burchell's, Cape and Greater Blue-eared Starlings** were common.

Others that were present in smaller numbers included **European Roller, African Grey Hornbill, Red-billed Oxpecker** (on most big game in the park), **Green Wood Hoopoe, Black Cuckoo, Gorgeous Bushshrike** (heard), **Sombre Greenbul, Red-headed Weaver, White-fronted Bee-eater, Black Cuckooshrike, Black-headed Oriole, Brown-headed Parrot, Magpie Shrike, Golden-breasted Bunting** and **Grey-headed Bushshrike**. The bridges over the Sabie and Sand Rivers delivered waterbirds like **Little Heron, Common Sandpiper, Reed Cormorant, Grey Heron, African Fish Eagle**, and. Kruger is also a mecca for raptors with **Wahlberg's** and **Tawny**

Eagles, African Fish Eagle, Bateleur and White-backed Vulture being the most common. **Brown Snake Eagle** was also around in small numbers.

When we arrived at Tshokwane, we enjoyed a hearty breakfast at the deli while **Cape** and **Greater Blue-eared Starlings** tried to steal crumbs from our table. **Laughing** and **Mourning Collared Doves** also foraged for scraps around the tables, in a more civilized manner than the starlings! Playing the call of Pearl-spotted Owlet nearby created a bustling bird party that contained most of the same species we had already seen, plus **Kurrichane Thrush, Yellow-breasted Apalis, White-throated Robin-Chat** (near-endemic), **Collared** and **Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Violet-backed Starling** and **Red-faced Cisticola**. We also managed to pick out a **Mosque Swallow** from the circling **Wire-tailed** and **Lesser Striped Swallows** here.



White-throated Robin-Chats are usually found without too much difficulty in Kruger National Park.

After our time at Tshokwane, we headed towards Orpen Dam, getting a brief view of two **Southern Ground Hornbills** walking away from us. We also added **Southern Black Tit, Arrow-marked Babbler, Crested Barbet, Sabota Lark, Common Scimitarbill** and the uncommon **Yellow-billed Oxpecker** before reaching the dam. Orpen Dam didn't deliver much new apart from a distant singing **Monotonous Lark, Goliath Heron, Black Crane, Common Swift** and **Red-faced Mousebird**. In the heat of the day, the journey back to Skukuza was also fairly quiet, but a huge perched **Martial Eagle**, a soaring **Lappet-faced Vulture** and a group of bathing **Hooded** and **White-backed Vultures** were all great sightings.

We decided to kill the heat of the day back at camp and took a long, welcomed break for most of the afternoon. We did venture out again for one short foray to Lake Panic near Skukuza when it finally cooled down later on. Finding a nesting **Crested Francolin** on the roadside en route was

quite surprising. The hide at Lake Panic provided great views of **Black, Squacco and Little Herons, African Jacana, Water Thick-knee, Three-banded Plover** and **African Fish Eagle** while the surrounding bushveld delivered **Ashy Flycatcher, Black Cuckooshrike, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Neddicky, African Green Pigeon, Magpie Shrike** and **Southern Black Tit**.

Day 14, 4th December 2024. Kruger birding – Skukuza to Lower Sabie

Today started with **Purple-crested Turaco** and **Village Indigobird** around our chalets at Skukuza before we headed off on another safari drive, this time heading south along the Sabie River to Lower Sabie camp. Many of the usual suspects from yesterday were seen again on today's drive, with additional species including **Natal Spurfowl, Wattled Starling, Western House Martin, Southern Red-billed Hornbill, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Jacobin Cuckoo, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Broad-billed Roller, Little Sparrowhawk, Marabou Stork, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Trumpeter Hornbill, Levillant's Cuckoo** and **Brubru**. A **Wahlberg's Eagle** nest with a chick was a lucky find, as was a black morph **Jacobin Cuckoo**. We also found a **White-headed Vulture** amongst the **Hooded** and **White-backed Vultures** that were constantly soaring overhead. The river itself delivered the expected waterbirds as well as **Collared Pratincole** and the striking **White-crowned Lapwing**.



*Kruger National Park is a reliable place to see the smart-looking **White-crowned Lapwing**.*

After enjoying **Yellow-billed Stork, Common and Wood Sandpiper** and a bustling **Lesser Masked Weaver** colony at Sunset Dam, we arrived at Lower Sabie Camp around lunchtime. Like, Skukuza, this is one of Kruger's larger, more popular camps, so we enjoyed having lunch at the café overlooking the river. A **Booted Eagle** flying past was an unexpected sight, while the birdbath

near the reception hosted **White-browed Robin-Chat**, **African Paradise Flycatcher**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Green-backed Camaroptera** and **Spectacled Weaver**.

Once we were done with lunch, we drove down to the bridge over the river just south of the camp, where we found a single **Knob-billed Duck** and improved our views of **Wire-tailed Swallow** and **White-crowned Lapwing**. Once again, not much was seen on the drive back to Skukuza, most notable being some **Red-breasted Swallows**, more **Wahlberg's Eagles** and another **Levaillant's Cuckoo**. The rest of the afternoon was spent relaxing before dinner, after which we turned in with a nearby **African Wood Owl** serenading us to sleep.

Throughout our time in Kruger we were also treated to a multitude of mammal sightings, that included one **Lion** sighting, multiple **Spotted Hyena**, **Common Dwarf** and **Common Slender Mongooses**, **Vervet Monkey**, **Chacma Baboon** and plenty of herbivores like **African Savanna Elephant**, **Cape Buffalo**, **Impala**, **Plains Zebra**, **Southern Giraffe**, **Common Warthog**, **Common Hippopotamus**, **Impala**, **Greater Kudu**, **Klipspringer**, **Waterbuck**, **Nyala**, **Southern Bushbuck**, **Blue Wildebeest** and even **White Rhinoceros**.

Day 15, 5th December 2024. Kruger morning birding, transfer to Dullstroom

For our final morning in Kruger, we went for a drive along some of the riverside loops near camp before breakfast. Our best find here had to be a pair of **Verreaux's Eagle-Owls** flying over the river from a known roost site. **Burnt-necked Eremomela**, **African Green Pigeon**, **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Green Wood Hoopoe**, **Grey Tit-Flycatcher**, **Purple-banded Sunbird**, **Black Sparrowhawk**, **Common Scimitarbill**, **Natal Spurfowl**, **Marabou Stork**, **Village Indigobird** and **Little Bee-eater** were some other notable mentions for this morning's drive.

After this, we returned to camp for breakfast overlooking the river. We then packed up and left Skukuza, stopping briefly at the site where we had seen the **Verreaux's Eagle-Owls**. They were now roosting out in the open next to the road! A group of **Cape Buffalo** was now loafing around the river and were carrying a few **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers**. We then exited the park through Paul Kruger Gate and made our way into the Escarpment, west of Kruger. We stopped for lunch at Mount Sheba, picking up **Blue Crane**, **Denham's Bustard**, **Cape Crow** and **Bontebok** in the hilltop fields en route. We were now back in the high-lying mountainous grasslands, similar to those around Wakkerstroom and the Drakensberg. By late afternoon, we arrived in the quaint holiday town of Dullstroom, and made our way towards our accommodation. We did some final birding along the gravel track to the guesthouse, where we found **Jackal Buzzard**, **African Olive Pigeon**, **Fan-tailed** and **Long-tailed Widowbirds**, **Natal Spurfowl**, **Cape Weaver**, **Bokmakierie** and **Alpine** and **African Black Swifts**.

Day 16, 6th December 2024. Birding near Dullstroom, transfer to Dinokeng

This morning, we were greeted by some good birding just around our chalets, that included **Olive Thrush**, **Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow**, **Streaky-headed Seedeater**, **African Olive Pigeon**, **Long-crested Eagle**, **Natal Spurfowl**, **Greater Double-collared Sunbird** and **White-throated Swallow**. We then departed and continued down the gravel track past the guesthouse towards Verloren Vallei Nature Reserve. This area of grassy, rocky hillslopes is protected thanks to the large wetland at its center, making for quite the birding hotspot. Some of the highlights from this

drive were **Eastern Long-billed Lark**, **Buff-streaked** and **Mountain Chat**, **Quailfinch**, **Malachite Sunbird**, **Yellow Bishop**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting**, a flyby from a **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk** and a very showy **Yellow-breasted Pipit**. The latter is Vulnerable and localized to just a few areas of high-altitude grassland along the Drakensberg Mountain Range.



*The attractive male **Buff-streaked Chat**.*

Leaving Verloren Vallei and heading back down the gravel track towards Dullstroom, we added a few more birds for the day including **Long-crested Eagle**, **Blue Crane** and **Bokmakierie**. A cluster of *Protea* trees near the roadside hosted a couple of **Gurney's Sugarbirds** as well as an out-of-range **Common Whitethroat**. After having breakfast in Dullstroom, we headed west towards Johannesburg and ultimately, Dinokeng Game Reserve: our last base. Making one or two fuel stops along the way got us a few interesting species like **Grey-headed Gull**, **Speckled Pigeon** and the endemic **Karoo Thrush**. We arrived at our lodge in Dinokeng in the late afternoon once again, with just enough time before dinner to enjoy the resident **Southern Black Flycatchers**, **Marico Sunbirds** and **Southern Red-billed Hornbills** that were milling around the dining area.

Day 17, 7th December 2024. Birding the Zaagkuilsdrift road and Dinokeng

For our last full day of tour, we ventured west of Dinokeng Game Reserve and birded the gravel road that runs between the settlements of Zaagkuilsdrift and Kgomo-Kgomo. This 20-kilometer dirt track is one of the most famous birding sites in the wider Gauteng region. It runs through Acacia savanna with a strong Kalahari influence that is obvious in the birds that occur here. This granted us access to a host of new species we hadn't had access to on the tour. Among these were **Chestnut-vented Warbler**, **Scaly-feathered Weaver**, **Grey-backed Camaroptera**, **Black-**

chedsted Prinia, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Barred Wren-Warbler and Marico Flycatcher. The area is also well known for migrant warblers and, although a bit early in the season, we managed to find plenty **Willow Warblers** and a few **Garden Warblers**. The fallow fields at the east end of the road delivered a group of **Abdim's Storks** and a raucous **Northern Black Korhaan** squawking out it's piercing display song. Both **Red-backed** and **Lesser Grey Shrikes** were also common all along the road, while other interesting species included **Levaillant's, Jacobin, Klaas's** and **Black Cuckoos, Burnt-necked Eremomela, White-winged Widowbird, Red-billed Firefinch,** flybys from both **Gabar Goshawk** and **Shikra** and a soaring **Black-chested Snake Eagle**.

Unfortunately, the intense heat was in full effect by mid-morning and severely subdued the bird activity. We then headed back to our lodge at Dinokeng and relaxed for most of the afternoon. Around 16:30, we headed out for a drive around the reserve itself. This proved to be quite fruitful, with several bird parties containing species like **Icterine Warbler, Brown-backed Honeybird, Brubru, Chinspot Batis,** the stunning **Violet-eared Waxbill** and equally dazzling **Crimson-breasted Shrike**. The nearby Fischer Dam delivered **Water Thick-knee, African Jacana, Lesser Striped** and **White-throated Swallows, Whiskered Tern** and **Black Crake,** while **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill** somehow ended up being our last hornbill of the tour! Later in the evening, we went for a short night drive through the reserve which got us a **Spotted Thick-knee** and a couple of singing **Rufous-cheeked Nightjars**.

Day 18, 8th December 2024. Mkhombo Dam, transfer to OR Tambo Airport

For our final morning, we paid a visit to Mkhombo Dam, an expansive dam east of Dinokeng with a large floodplain on its western side. Thanks to the moderate rains over the past few weeks, the dam was looking quite full when we arrived while still maintaining a fair amount of shoreline and plain around its margins. This mix of microhabitats hosted astronomical numbers of birds, and we managed to score over 90 species here during the morning. Waterfowl of many species thronged the shores, while the muddy fringes and grassy plains surrounding the water hosted large numbers of waders. **Ruff, Little Stint, Marsh** and **Wood Sandpipers,** and **Kittlitz's Plover** were the most common, along with smaller numbers of **Common Greenshank, Pied Avocet, Common Ringed Plover** and even a **Grey Plover** and a **Caspian Plover**. The shoreline was also riddled with **Western Yellow Wagtails** and **African Pipits,** among them was a single **Red-throated Pipit:** a mega rarity in South Africa which was attracting masses of local twitchers.

Hérons were also in abundance, with lots of **Black** and **Squacco Herons** being especially notable. A **Slaty Egret** was another rarity that was present here at the time, also receiving a lot of eye service from the many twitchers present. The same was true for a cooperative **Allen's Gallinule** nearby, a far less common species than the **African Swamphens** and **Black Crakes** we'd seen around the dam. Other birds that were in particularly large numbers included **African Jacana, White-winged** and **Whiskered Terns** and **African Spoonbill.** Flocks of wintering **Black-winged Pratincoles** with the occasional **Collared Pratincole** were also noteworthy, as were **Goliath Heron, Quailfinch, Lesser Kestrel, Osprey, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Caspian Tern, Yellow-billed Stork** and thousands of **Wattled Starlings** streaming over the dam to the south.

With satisfaction, we eventually left Mkhombo and headed back to our lodge at Dinokeng for one last meal together, before packing up and heading to the airport in Johannesburg, where the tour concluded.

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 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Ostriches (Struthionidae) | |
| Common Ostrich | <i>Struthio camelus</i> |
| Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae) | |
| White-faced Whistling Duck | <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i> |
| Fulvous Whistling Duck | <i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i> |
| White-backed Duck | <i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i> |
| Spur-winged Goose | <i>Plectropterus gambensis</i> |
| Knob-billed Duck | <i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i> |
| Egyptian Goose | <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i> |
| South African Shelduck | <i>Tadorna cana</i> |
| African Pygmy Goose | <i>Nettapus auritus</i> |
| Blue-billed Teal | <i>Spatula hottentota</i> |
| Cape Shoveler | <i>Spatula smithii</i> |
| Yellow-billed Duck | <i>Anas undulata</i> |
| Red-billed Teal | <i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i> |
| Southern Pochard | <i>Netta erythrophthalma</i> |
| Maccoa Duck | <i>Oxyura maccoa</i> |
| Guineafowl (Numididae) | |
| Helmeted Guineafowl | <i>Numida meleagris</i> |
| Southern Crested Guineafowl | <i>Guttera edouardi</i> |
| Pheasants & Allies (Phasianidae) | |
| Crested Francolin | <i>Ortygornis sephaena</i> |
| Red-winged Francolin | <i>Scleroptila levaillantii</i> |
| Grey-winged Francolin | <i>Scleroptila afra</i> |
| Common Quail (H) | <i>Coturnix coturnix</i> |
| Natal Spurfowl | <i>Pternistis natalensis</i> |
| Swainson's Spurfowl | <i>Pternistis swainsonii</i> |
| Red-necked Spurfowl (H) | <i>Pternistis afer</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Nightjars (Caprimulgidae) | |
| Rufous-cheeked Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus rufigena</i> |
| Swifts (Apodidae) | |
| 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> |
| Horus Swift | <i>Apus horus</i> |
| White-rumped Swift | <i>Apus caffer</i> |
| Turacos (Musophagidae) | |
| 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> |
| Bustards (Otididae) | |
| Kori Bustard | <i>Ardeotis kori</i> |
| Denham's Bustard | <i>Neotis denhami</i> |
| White-bellied Bustard | <i>Eupodotis senegalensis</i> |
| Blue Korhaan | <i>Eupodotis caerulescens</i> |
| Red-crested Korhaan | <i>Lophotis ruficrista</i> |
| Cuckoos (Cuculidae) | |
| Burchell's Coucal | <i>Centropus burchellii</i> |
| Green Malkoha | <i>Ceuthmochares australis</i> |
| Great Spotted Cuckoo | <i>Clamator glandarius</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 Name | Scientific Name |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae) | |
| Rock Dove | <i>Columba livia</i> |
| Speckled Pigeon | <i>Columba guinea</i> |
| African Olive Pigeon | <i>Columba arquatrix</i> |
| Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon | <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> |
| Emerald-spotted Wood Dove | <i>Turtur chalcospilos</i> |
| Tambourine Dove | <i>Turtur tympanistria</i> |
| Namaqua Dove | <i>Oena capensis</i> |
| African Green Pigeon | <i>Treron calvus</i> |
| | |
| Flufftails & Forest Rails (Scolothruridae) | |
| Red-chested Flufftail | <i>Scolothrura rufa</i> |
| | |
| Rails, Crakes & Coots (Rallidae) | |
| African Rail | <i>Rallus caerulescens</i> |
| Common Moorhen | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> |
| Red-knobbed Coot | <i>Fulica cristata</i> |
| Allen's Gallinule | <i>Porphyrio alleni</i> |
| African Swamphe | <i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i> |
| Black Crake | <i>Zapornia flavirostra</i> |
| | |
| Cranes (Gruidae) | |
| Grey Crowned Crane - EN | <i>Balearica regulorum</i> |
| Wattled Crane - VU | <i>Grus carunculata</i> |
| Blue Crane - VU | <i>Grus paradisea</i> |
| | |
| Grebes (Podicipedidae) | |
| Little Grebe | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> |
| Great Crested Grebe | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> |
| Black-necked Grebe | <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> |
| | |
| Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae) | |
| Greater Flamingo | <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i> |
| Lesser Flamingo | <i>Phoeniconaias minor</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Stone-curlews, Thick-knees (Burhinidae) | |
| Spotted Thick-knee | <i>Burhinus capensis</i> |
| Water Thick-knee | <i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i> |
| Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae) | |
| African Oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus moquini</i> |
| Stilts, Avocets (Recurvirostridae) | |
| Black-winged Stilt | <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> |
| Pied Avocet | <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> |
| Plovers (Charadriidae) | |
| Grey Plover | <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> |
| 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> |
| Senegal Lapwing | <i>Vanellus lugubris</i> |
| Black-winged Lapwing | <i>Vanellus melanopterus</i> |
| Crowned Lapwing | <i>Vanellus coronatus</i> |
| African Wattled Lapwing | <i>Vanellus senegallus</i> |
| Caspian Plover | <i>Anarhynchus asiaticus</i> |
| Kittlitz's Plover | <i>Anarhynchus pecuarius</i> |
| Jacanas (Jacanidae) | |
| African Jacana | <i>Actophilornis africanus</i> |
| Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae) | |
| Eurasian Whimbrel | <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> |
| African Snipe | <i>Gallinago nigripennis</i> |
| Common Sandpiper | <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> |
| Green Sandpiper | <i>Tringa ochropus</i> |
| Marsh Sandpiper | <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i> |
| Wood Sandpiper | <i>Tringa glareola</i> |
| Common Greenshank | <i>Tringa nebularia</i> |
| Ruff | <i>Calidris pugnax</i> |
| Curlew Sandpiper | <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> |
| Little Stint | <i>Calidris minuta</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Coursers, Pratincoles (Glareolidae) | |
| Black-winged Pratincole | <i>Glareola nordmanni</i> |
| Collared Pratincole | <i>Glareola pratincola</i> |
| Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae) | |
| Little Tern | <i>Sternula albifrons</i> |
| 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> |
| Common Tern | <i>Sterna hirundo</i> |
| Sandwich Tern | <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i> |
| Greater Crested Tern | <i>Thalasseus bergii</i> |
| Grey-headed Gull | <i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i> |
| Storks (Ciconiidae) | |
| African Openbill | <i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i> |
| Marabou Stork | <i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i> |
| Yellow-billed Stork | <i>Mycteria ibis</i> |
| Saddle-billed Stork | <i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i> |
| Abdim's Stork | <i>Ciconia abdimii</i> |
| African Woolly-necked Stork | <i>Ciconia microscelis</i> |
| White Stork | <i>Ciconia ciconia</i> |
| Anhingas, Darters (Anhingidae) | |
| African Darter | <i>Anhinga rufa</i> |
| Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae) | |
| Reed Cormorant | <i>Microcarbo africanus</i> |
| White-breasted Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i> |
| Ibises, Spoonbills (Threskiornithidae) | |
| 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> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Herons, Bitterns (Ardeidae) | |
| Slaty Egret | <i>Egretta vinaceigula</i> |
| Black Heron | <i>Egretta ardesiaca</i> |
| Little Egret | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> |
| Little Heron | <i>Butorides atricapilla</i> |
| Rufous-bellied Heron | <i>Ardeola rufiventris</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> |
| | |
| Hamerkop (Scopidae) | |
| Hamerkop | <i>Scopus umbretta</i> |
| | |
| Pelicans (Pelicanidae) | |
| Great White Pelican | <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i> |
| Pink-backed Pelican | <i>Pelecanus rufescens</i> |
| | |
| Secretarybird (Sagittariidae) | |
| Secretarybird - EN | <i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i> |
| | |
| Ospreys (Pandionidae) | |
| Osprey | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> |
| | |
| Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae) | |
| 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> |
| White-headed Vulture - CR | <i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i> |
| Lappet-faced Vulture - EN | <i>Torgos tracheliotos</i> |
| Hooded Vulture - CR | <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i> |
| White-backed Vulture - CR | <i>Gyps africanus</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cape Vulture - VU | <i>Gyps coprotheres</i> |
| Southern Banded Snake Eagle | <i>Circaetus fasciolatus</i> |
| Black-chested Snake Eagle | <i>Circaetus pectoralis</i> |
| Brown Snake Eagle | <i>Circaetus cinereus</i> |
| Bateleur - EN | <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i> |
| Crowned Eagle | <i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i> |
| Martial Eagle - EN | <i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i> |
| Long-crested Eagle | <i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i> |
| Wahlberg's Eagle | <i>Hieraaetus wahlbergi</i> |
| Booted Eagle | <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i> |
| Tawny Eagle - VU | <i>Aquila rapax</i> |
| Gabar Goshawk | <i>Micronisus gabar</i> |
| Pale Chanting Goshawk | <i>Melierax canorus</i> |
| Little Sparrowhawk | <i>Tachyspiza minulla</i> |
| Shikra | <i>Tachyspiza badia</i> |
| Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk | <i>Accipiter rufiventris</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> |
| Owls (Strigidae) | |
| Spotted Eagle-Owl | <i>Bubo africanus</i> |
| Verreaux's Eagle-Owl | <i>Ketupa lactea</i> |
| African Wood Owl (H) | <i>Strix woodfordii</i> |
| Mousebirds (Coliidae) | |
| Speckled Mousebird | <i>Colius striatus</i> |
| Red-faced Mousebird | <i>Urocolius indicus</i> |
| Trogon (Trogonidae) | |
| Narina Trogon | <i>Apaloderma narina</i> |
| Hoopoes (Upupidae) | |
| Eurasian Hoopoe | <i>Upupa epops</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Wood Hoopoes (Phoeniculidae) | |
| Green Wood Hoopoe | <i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i> |
| Common Scimitarbill | <i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i> |
| | |
| Ground Hornbills (Bucorvidae) | |
| Southern Ground Hornbill | <i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i> |
| | |
| Hornbills (Bucerotidae) | |
| 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> |
| | |
| Rollers (Coraciidae) | |
| Lilac-breasted Roller | <i>Coracias caudatus</i> |
| European Roller | <i>Coracias garrulus</i> |
| Broad-billed Roller | <i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i> |
| | |
| Kingfishers (Alcedinidae) | |
| Brown-hooded Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon albiventris</i> |
| Striped Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon chelicuti</i> |
| Woodland Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon senegalensis</i> |
| African Pygmy Kingfisher | <i>Ispidina picta</i> |
| Malachite Kingfisher | <i>Corythornis cristatus</i> |
| Half-collared Kingfisher | <i>Alcedo semitorquata</i> |
| Giant Kingfisher | <i>Megaceryle maxima</i> |
| Pied Kingfisher | <i>Ceryle rudis</i> |
| | |
| Bee-eaters (Meropidae) | |
| Little Bee-eater | <i>Merops pusillus</i> |
| White-fronted Bee-eater | <i>Merops bullockoides</i> |
| Blue-cheeked Bee-eater | <i>Merops persicus</i> |
| European Bee-eater | <i>Merops apiaster</i> |
| | |
| African Barbets (Lybiidae) | |
| Crested Barbet | <i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i> |
| Green Barbet | <i>Stactolaema olivacea</i> |
| White-eared Barbet | <i>Stactolaema leucotis</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird | <i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i> |
| Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbird | <i>Pogoniulus pusillus</i> |
| Black-collared Barbet | <i>Lybius torquatus</i> |
| Honeyguides (Indicatoridae) | |
| 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> |
| Woodpeckers (Picidae) | |
| Red-throated Wryneck | <i>Jynx ruficollis</i> |
| Ground Woodpecker | <i>Geocolaptes olivaceus</i> |
| Golden-tailed Woodpecker | <i>Campethera abingoni</i> |
| Bearded Woodpecker | <i>Chloropicus namaquus</i> |
| Cardinal Woodpecker | <i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i> |
| Olive Woodpecker | <i>Dendropicos griseocephalus</i> |
| Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae) | |
| Lesser Kestrel | <i>Falco normanni</i> |
| Rock Kestrel | <i>Falco rupicolus</i> |
| Lanner Falcon | <i>Falco biarmicus</i> |
| African & New World Parrots (Psittacidae) | |
| Brown-headed Parrot | <i>Poicephalus cryptoxanthus</i> |
| Wattle-eyes, Batises (Platysteiridae) | |
| Cape Batis | <i>Batis capensis</i> |
| Woodwards' Batis | <i>Batis fratum</i> |
| Chinspot Batis | <i>Batis molitor</i> |
| Black-throated Wattle-eye | <i>Platysteira peltata</i> |
| Bushshrikes (Malaconotidae) | |
| Grey-headed Bushshrike | <i>Malaconotus blanchoti</i> |
| 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> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Black-crowned Tchagra | <i>Tchagra senegalus</i> |
| Black-backed Puffback | <i>Dryoscopus cubla</i> |
| Southern Boubou | <i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i> |
| Crimson-breasted Shrike | <i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i> |
| Brubru | <i>Nilaus afer</i> |
| Cuckooshrikes (Campephagidae) | |
| Grey Cuckooshrike | <i>Cebilepyris caesius</i> |
| Black Cuckooshrike | <i>Campephaga flava</i> |
| Figbirds, Old World Orioles, Piopios (Oriolidae) | |
| Black-headed Oriole | <i>Oriolus larvatus</i> |
| Drongos (Dicruridae) | |
| Fork-tailed Drongo | <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i> |
| Square-tailed Drongo | <i>Dicrurus ludwigii</i> |
| Monarchs (Monarchidae) | |
| Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher | <i>Trochocercus cyanomelas</i> |
| African Paradise Flycatcher | <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i> |
| Shrikes (Laniidae) | |
| 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> |
| Crows, Jays (Corvidae) | |
| Cape Crow | <i>Corvus capensis</i> |
| Pied Crow | <i>Corvus albus</i> |
| White-necked Raven | <i>Corvus albicollis</i> |
| Rockjumpers (Chaetopidae) | |
| Drakensberg Rockjumper | <i>Chaetops aurantius</i> |
| Fairy Flycatchers (Stenostiridae) | |
| Fairy Flycatcher | <i>Stenostira scita</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Tits, Chickadees (Paridae) | |
| Southern Black Tit | <i>Melaniparus niger</i> |
| Grey Tit | <i>Melaniparus afer</i> |
| | |
| Penduline Tits (Remizidae) | |
| Cape Penduline Tit | <i>Anthoscopus minutus</i> |
| | |
| Nicators (Nicatoridae) | |
| Eastern Nicator | <i>Nicator gularis</i> |
| | |
| Larks (Alaudidae) | |
| Spike-heeled Lark | <i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i> |
| Eastern Long-billed Lark | <i>Certhilauda semitorquata</i> |
| Sabota Lark | <i>Calendulauda sabota</i> |
| Monotonous Lark | <i>Mirafrapa passerina</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> |
| | |
| Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae) | |
| 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> |
| | |
| Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae) | |
| Black Saw-wing | <i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i> |
| Grey-rumped Swallow | <i>Pseudhirundo griseopyga</i> |
| Banded Martin | <i>Neophedina cincta</i> |
| Brown-throated Martin | <i>Riparia paludicola</i> |
| Sand Martin | <i>Riparia riparia</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> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Greater Striped Swallow | <i>Cecropis cucullata</i> |
| Lesser Striped Swallow | <i>Cecropis abyssinica</i> |
| Red-breasted Swallow | <i>Cecropis semirufa</i> |
| Mosque Swallow | <i>Cecropis senegalensis</i> |
| South African Cliff Swallow | <i>Petrochelidon spilodera</i> |
| Crombecs, African Warblers (Macrosphenidae) | |
| Cape Grassbird | <i>Sphenoeacus afer</i> |
| Long-billed Crombec | <i>Sylvietta rufescens</i> |
| Leaf Warblers (Phylloscopidae) | |
| Willow Warbler | <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> |
| Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler | <i>Phylloscopus ruficapilla</i> |
| Reed Warblers & Allies (Acrocephalidae) | |
| Lesser Swamp Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i> |
| Common Reed Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> |
| African Yellow Warbler | <i>Iduna natalensis</i> |
| Grassbirds & Allies (Locustellidae) | |
| Barratt's Warbler | <i>Bradypterus barratti</i> |
| Little Rush Warbler | <i>Bradypterus baboecala</i> |
| Cisticolas & Allies (Cisticolidae) | |
| Red-faced Cisticola | <i>Cisticola erythrops</i> |
| Rock-loving Cisticola | <i>Cisticola aberrans</i> |
| 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> |
| 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> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 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> |
| Grey-backed Camaroptera | <i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i> |
| Green-backed Camaroptera | <i>Camaroptera brachyura</i> |
| Barred Wren-Warbler | <i>Calamonastes fasciolatus</i> |
| Burnt-necked Eremomela | <i>Eremomela usticollis</i> |
| Sylviid Babblers (Sylviidae) | |
| Garden Warbler | <i>Sylvia borin</i> |
| Bush Blackcap - VU | <i>Sylvia nigricapillus</i> |
| Layard's Warbler | <i>Curruca layardi</i> |
| Chestnut-vented Warbler | <i>Curruca subcoerulea</i> |
| Common Whitethroat | <i>Curruca communis</i> |
| White-eyes (Zosteropidae) | |
| Cape White-eye | <i>Zosterops virens</i> |
| Southern Yellow White-eye | <i>Zosterops anderssoni</i> |
| Laughingthrushes & Allies (Leiothrichidae) | |
| Arrow-marked Babbler | <i>Turdoides jardineii</i> |
| Sugarbirds (Promeropidae) | |
| Gurney's Sugarbird | <i>Promerops gurneyi</i> |
| Starlings, Rhabdornises (Sturnidae) | |
| Common Myna | <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> |
| Common Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> |
| 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> |
| | |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Oxpeckers (Buphagidae) | |
| Yellow-billed Oxpecker | <i>Buphagus africanus</i> |
| Red-billed Oxpecker | <i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i> |
| | |
| Thrushes (Turdidae) | |
| 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> |
| Kurrichane Thrush | <i>Turdus libonyana</i> |
| Karoo Thrush | <i>Turdus smithi</i> |
| | |
| Chats, Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae) | |
| Brown Scrub Robin | <i>Tychaedon signata</i> |
| Bearded Scrub Robin | <i>Tychaedon quadrivirgata</i> |
| White-browed Scrub Robin | <i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i> |
| Grey Tit-Flycatcher | <i>Fraseria plumbea</i> |
| Ashy Flycatcher | <i>Fraseria caerulescens</i> |
| Southern Black Flycatcher | <i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i> |
| Marico Flycatcher | <i>Bradornis mariquensis</i> |
| African Dusky Flycatcher | <i>Muscicapa adusta</i> |
| Spotted Flycatcher | <i>Muscicapa striata</i> |
| White-browed Robin-Chat | <i>Cossypha heuglini</i> |
| Chorister Robin-Chat | <i>Cossypha dichroa</i> |
| Red-capped Robin-Chat | <i>Cossypha natalensis</i> |
| White-throated Robin-Chat | <i>Dessonornis humeralis</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> |
| Buff-streaked Chat | <i>Campicoloides bifasciatus</i> |
| Sickle-winged Chat | <i>Emarginata sinuata</i> |
| Ant-eating Chat | <i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i> |
| Mountain Chat | <i>Myrmecocichla monticola</i> |
| Familiar Chat | <i>Oenanthe familiaris</i> |
| | |
| Sunbirds (Nectariniidae) | |
| Collared Sunbird | <i>Hedydipna collaris</i> |
| Olive Sunbird | <i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 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> |
| | |
| Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passeridae) | |
| 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> |
| | |
| Weavers, Widowbirds (Ploceidae) | |
| White-browed Sparrow-Weaver | <i>Plocepasser mahali</i> |
| Scaly-feathered Weaver | <i>Sporopipes squamifrons</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> |
| Village Weaver | <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i> |
| Dark-backed Weaver | <i>Ploceus bicolor</i> |
| Red-headed Weaver | <i>Anaplectes rubriceps</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> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Long-tailed Widowbird | <i>Euplectes progne</i> |
| Waxbills, Munias & Allies (Estrildidae) | |
| Bronze Mannikin | <i>Spermestes cucullata</i> |
| Black-and-white Mannikin | <i>Spermestes bicolor</i> |
| Grey Waxbill | <i>Glaucustrilda perreini</i> |
| Common Waxbill | <i>Estrilda astrild</i> |
| Quailfinch | <i>Ortygospiza atricollis</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>Lagonostica rubricata</i> |
| Indigobirds, Whydahs (Viduidae) | |
| Village Indigobird | <i>Vidua chalybeate</i> |
| Pin-tailed Whydah | <i>Vidua macroura</i> |
| Cuckoo-finch | <i>Anomalospiza imberbis</i> |
| Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae) | |
| Western Yellow Wagtail | <i>Motacilla flava</i> |
| Cape Wagtail | <i>Motacilla capensis</i> |
| African Pied Wagtail | <i>Motacilla aguimp</i> |
| Cape Longclaw | <i>Macronyx capensis</i> |
| Yellow-throated Longclaw | <i>Macronyx croceus</i> |
| African Pipit | <i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i> |
| Mountain Pipit | <i>Anthus hoeschi</i> |
| Nicholson's Pipit | <i>Anthus nicholsoni</i> |
| Buffy Pipit | <i>Anthus vaalensis</i> |
| Red-throated Pipit | <i>Anthus cervinus</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> |
| Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae) | |
| Forest Canary | <i>Crithagra scotops</i> |
| Black-throated Canary | <i>Crithagra atrogularis</i> |
| Lemon-breasted Canary | <i>Crithagra citrinpectus</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 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 Seedeater | <i>Crithagra gularis</i> |
| White-throated Canary | <i>Crithagra albogularis</i> |
| Cape Canary | <i>Serinus canicollis</i> |
| Black-headed Canary | <i>Serinus alario</i> |
| Buntings (Emberizidae) | |
| Cape Bunting | <i>Emberiza capensis</i> |
| Golden-breasted Bunting | <i>Emberiza flaviventris</i> |
| Cinnamon-breasted Bunting | <i>Emberiza impetuani</i> |
| Species seen: | 446 |
| Species heard: | 2 |
| Total recorded: | 448 |

Mammal List – Following Mammalwatching.com (November 2024)

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 |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Elephants (Elephantidae) | |
| African Savanna Elephant - EN | <i>Loxodonta africana</i> |
| Hyraxes (Procaviidae) | |
| Rock Hyrax | <i>Procavia capensis</i> |
| Old World Monkeys (Cercopithecidae) | |
| Blue Monkey | <i>Cercopithecus mitis</i> |
| Vervet Monkey | <i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i> |
| Chacma Baboon | <i>Papio ursinus</i> |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Bushbabies (Galagidae) | |
| Thick-tailed Greater Galago | <i>Otolemur crassicaudatus</i> |
| | |
| Hares and Rabbits (Leporidae) | |
| Scrub Hare | <i>Lepus saxatilis</i> |
| | |
| Squirrels and Relatives (Sciuridae) | |
| Smith's Bush Squirrel | <i>Paraxerus cepapi</i> |
| Red Bush Squirrel | <i>Paraxerus palliatus</i> |
| | |
| Old World Mice, Rats and Gerbils (Muridae) | |
| Sloggett's Vlei Rat | <i>Otomys sloggetti</i> |
| | |
| Bats (Chiroptera) | |
| Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat | <i>Epomophorus wahlbergi</i> |
| | |
| Mustelids (Mustelidae) | |
| Spotted-necked Otter | <i>Hydrictis maculicollis</i> |
| | |
| Canids (Canidae) | |
| Black-backed Jackal | <i>Lupulella mesomelas</i> |
| | |
| Felids (Felidae) | |
| Lion - VU | <i>Panthera leo</i> |
| | |
| Mongoose and Fossa (Herpestidae) | |
| 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> |
| | |
| Hyaenas (Hyaenidae) | |
| Spotted Hyena | <i>Crocuta crocuta</i> |
| | |
| Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae) | |
| White Rhinoceros | <i>Ceratotherium simum</i> |
| | |

| Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Equines (Equidae) | |
| Plains Zebra | <i>Equus quagga</i> |
| Bovids (Bovidae) | |
| Impala | <i>Aepyceros melampus</i> |
| Blue Wildebeest | <i>Connochaetes taurinus</i> |
| Bontebok | <i>Damaliscus pygargus</i> |
| Natal Red Duiker | <i>Cephalophus natalensis</i> |
| Blue Duiker | <i>Philantomba monticola</i> |
| Bush Duiker | <i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i> |
| Klipspringer | <i>Oreotragus oreotragus</i> |
| Waterbuck | <i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i> |
| Rhebok | <i>Pelea capreolus</i> |
| Southern Reedbuck | <i>Redunca arundinum</i> |
| Mountain Reedbuck | <i>Redunca fulvorufula</i> |
| Cape Buffalo | <i>Syncerus caffer</i> |
| Nyala | <i>Tragelaphus angasii</i> |
| Greater Kudu | <i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i> |
| Southern Bushbuck | <i>Tragelaphus sylvaticus</i> |
| Giraffes and Okapis (Giraffidae) | |
| Southern Giraffe | <i>Giraffa giraffa</i> |
| Suids (Suidae) | |
| Common Warthog | <i>Phacochoerus africanus</i> |
| Hippopotamuses (Hippopotamidae) | |
| Common Hippopotamus - VU | <i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i> |
| Species seen: | 40 |
| Total recorded: | 40 |