

NAMIBIA & THE OKAVANGO

31 OCTOBER – 19 NOVEMBER 2008

TOUR REPORT

LEADERS: DEREK SCOTT

Once again, the Birdquest tour to Namibia and the Okavango was a great success. Our epic journey of 4,420 km through this fascinating region lived up to all expectations, and was remarkably trouble free, thanks to the excellent condition of the roads, superb accommodation and very friendly and helpful service. Due to an eleventh-hour change in Air Namibia's flight schedule from London to Windhoek, we suddenly found ourselves with two extra days at the start of the tour. This meant that we had a rather less hectic start to the tour than usual, with some time to bird in the Windhoek area and an extra day in the Namib Desert en route to Walvis Bay. The weather was not particularly hot, with the temperature rarely exceeding the mid-thirties, and the rainy season had already begun. Almost everywhere, the vegetation was in good condition for this time of year, and this undoubtedly helped the birding, as we recorded a total of 431 species – the best ever on a Birdquest tour to Namibia and the Okavango. The highlights included Herero Chat at Spreetshoogte Pass, Dune Lark and Gray's Lark in the Namib Desert, Damara Tern at Walvis Bay, Hartlaub's Francolin and Rockrunner at Hobatere and Erongo, Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush and Cinderella Waxbill at the Kunene River, Blue Crane and Harlequin Quail at Etosha, Rufous-bellied Heron and Lesser Jacana at Rundu, Racket-tailed Roller and Arnott's Chat in the miombo woodland, Slaty Egret and White-backed Night-Heron along the Okavango River, and, of course, that wonderful Pel's Fishing Owl at Shakawe. As always, the tour produced an impressive selection of mammals: 55 species in all, including a total of eight Lions, over 30 African Elephants, a Black Rhinoceros and five Sable.

We arrived in Windhoek in the morning and had a quick look at some cattle pens near the airport, where we found a Burchell's Starling and a few Sociable Weavers and Scaly-feathered Finches, before heading into town and checking in at our pleasant little guest house. After a leisurely lunch and a look at some Bradfield's Swifts over the town, we drove out to the local sewage works, grandly named Gammans Water Care Plant, and here within the space of two hours found a wide assortment of the commoner waterbirds and bush birds of central Namibia. Of special interest were a pair of South African Shelducks and two pairs of White-throated Swallows – species that we were unlikely to see elsewhere on the tour – but other notable birds included Little Bittern, Cape Teal, Hottentot Teal, Black-shouldered Kite, White-backed Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Chestnut-vented Titbabbler,

Crimson-breasted Shrike, a good selection of weavers and estrildine finches including Southern Red Bishop and Pin-tailed, Shaft-tailed and Long-tailed Paradise Whydahs, and at least 1,000 Wattled Starlings. Two Hadedda Ibises were an unexpected bonus, as this is a rare bird in the Windhoek area.

Leaving Windhoek after breakfast the next morning, we drove south-west through increasingly arid bush and semi-desert towards Namibgreens Guest Farm in the Khomas Highlands near Nauchas. The birding was excellent and we made many stops along the way to enjoy the numerous raptors which included about 20 White-backed Vultures and 15 Lappet-faced Vultures at a carcass, a pair of splendid Verreaux's Eagles, four Tawny Eagles, a Brown Snake Eagle, numerous Southern Pale Chanting Goshawks and five Pygmy Falcons. We also encountered our first Ostriches, Northern Black Korhaans, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Purple Rollers and Monteiro's Hornbills, along with Sabota and Spike-heeled Larks, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Mountain Wheatear, Marico and Chat Flycatchers, Buffy Pipit and Pale-winged Starling. We arrived at our guest farm with plenty of time to explore the extensive garden and nearby rocky hills. There were lots of birds around including a pair of Gabar Goshawks, several Ashy Tits, a pair of Cape Penduline-Tits, several pairs of Karoo Robins and a pair of White-tailed Shrikes. Other species here included Groundscraper Thrush, Familiar Chat, Kalahari Scrub-Robin, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Dusky and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Great Sparrow, Green-winged Pytilia, Black-throated Canary and Lark-like Bunting.

A short walk around the guest farm early the next morning produced our first Rosy-faced Lovebirds and a Pearl-spotted Owlet, and then we were heading off to Spreetshoogte Pass, where we hoped to find the scarce and local Herero Chat. It was surprisingly cool and windy at the top of the pass, but shortly after beginning our descent, we found a very obliging pair of Herero Chats, along with a couple of White-throated Canaries, a Cape Bunting and a little group of Klipspringers. There were three more Herero Chats near the bottom of the escarpment, and here also we found a Cardinal Woodpecker and our first Common Fiscals. The short drive through the desert to Namib Desert Lodge produced our first Greater Kestrels and Rüppell's Korhaans, as well as about 10 Karoo Chats and lots of Cape Sparrows. We arrived at the lodge in early afternoon and were soon watching Speckled Pigeons, Rosy-faced Lovebirds, Red-headed Finches and Yellow Canaries coming in to drink at the small waterhole, while a Lanner Falcon cruised overhead. In late afternoon, when it was beginning to cool off a little, we set off in two four-wheel-drive vehicles in search of Dune Larks. As we headed up onto the top of the 'fossil' dunes, the views were spectacular, but access to sand dunes was limited, and we only had a brief glimpse of a Dune Lark as it disappeared over the top of a dune. Compensation came in the form of a Small Buttonquail running away through the grass, more Rüppell's Korhaans and Namaqua Sandgrouse, and good numbers of Stark's Larks and Grey-backed Sparrowlarks. Back at the lodge that evening, a short session of 'owling' failed to produce the hoped-for Spotted Eagle Owl, but gave us prolonged views of a Barn Owl circling overhead.

Most of the next day was spent driving north-west through the Namib Desert to Walvis Bay. Although birds were thin on the ground, there was plenty of quality to be found, with the highlight being a very obliging pair of Dune Larks that walked up to within a few yards of the road. Other great birds included a Secretarybird, eight Ludwig's Bustards, nine Burchell's Coursers, two Karoo Long-billed Larks, five Gray's Larks and six Tractrac Chats of the very pale desert form. A brief stop at a small canyon produced more White-throated Canaries and Lark-like Buntings, along with another Cape Bunting. We arrived at Walvis Bay with plenty of time to get a first taste of the extraordinary abundance and diversity of waterbirds for which this area is internationally famous. The tide was just right and large numbers of waders were gathering on the sandbars off the esplanade, including at least 1,000 Bar-tailed Godwits, but our attention was soon focused on a large flock of terns resting on the sand. The great majority were Common Terns, but there were also 35 Caspian, lots of Swift (Great Crested) and Sandwich, about 20 Damara and at least three Arctic. There were also several hundred

Cape and Hartlaub's Gulls about, and amongst these we found a couple of Grey-headed Gulls, while out in the bay there were two Arctic Skuas (Parasitic Jaegers).

The whole of the next morning was spent around Walvis Bay – undoubtedly one of the greatest coastal wetlands in Africa, supporting upwards of a million birds in the austral summer. Much of our time was spent checking through the large flocks of waders, gulls and terns in the bay and on the adjacent salt pans. Notable finds included 150 Cape Teal, 12 African Black Oystercatchers, 30 White-fronted Plovers, 100 dainty little Chestnut-banded Plovers, two Terek Sandpipers, at least 2,000 Curlew Sandpipers, two Red-necked Phalaropes, 500 Pied Avocets and a White-winged Tern. A short sea-watch from the ocean beach produced about 15 White-chinned Petrels, 100 Sooty Shearwaters, 20 Cape Gannets, three more Arctic Skuas, a Pomarine Skua, at least 20 Black Terns, about 10 Cape Fur Seals and a Dusky Dolphin, while a walk in the public park produced the only notable passerine of the day – an Orange River White-eye. After a quick lunch at the bakery in town, we drove north to Swakopmund, stopping on the way to look at the guano platforms where amongst the many thousands of Cape Cormorants we found a few Crowned Cormorants. From Swakopmund, we headed out into the stark desert landscapes of Namib Naukluft National Park to look for the strange *Welwitschia* plants that grow here in relative profusion. The plants were not hard to find (they had been here for a thousand years!), but there were no birds about so we returned Swakopmund to check out the sewage works, where we found a few Cape Shovelers and a Southern Pochard. We ended the day with a visit to the extensive salt works north of town, where there were 42 Lesser Flamingos along with a large flock of Greater Flamingos.

Next morning, after another quick look at the terns and waders in Walvis Bay, we set off on the 540-km drive to Hobatere, near the west end of Etosha National Park. The desert between Henties Bay and Uis was quieter than usual this year, and we found little other than two more Tractrac Chats, another Gray's Lark and a delightful band of a dozen Suricates. However, a short stop in the hills near Uis was rewarded with great views of a pair of Benguela Long-billed Larks, a pair of Bokmakieries and another Herero Chat. Further north, we stopped at the Ugab River for our picnic lunch and found our first Damara Hornbills and Bare-cheeked Babblers. We finally arrived at our lodge at Hobatere in time to relax in the hide overlooking the waterhole and watch a succession of birds coming in to drink, including several Red-billed Francolins, lots of Speckled Pigeons, two African Cuckoos, a few Cinnamon-breasted Buntings and, just as it was getting dark, about 300 Double-banded Sandgrouse. A night drive that evening produced several Rufous-cheeked Nightjars, one of which we were able to catch for close examination, as well as two Lions, four Bat-eared Foxes, two Springhares and two Small-spotted Genets.

Our full day at Hobatere was a nice, easy day, with game drives in Steve's 'battle wagon' in the early morning and late afternoon, and plenty of time during the heat of the day to wander around the compound or sit in the hide overlooking the waterhole. The birding was excellent, and the day's tally included two African Hawk-Eagles, a Little Sparrowhawk, three Hartlaub's Francolins, a Spotted Thick-knee, six Rüppell's Parrots, an African Scops-Owl, six Madagascar Bee-eaters, six Violet Woodhoopoes, two Pearl-breasted Swallows, a Carp's Tit, several noisy groups of Bare-cheeked Babblers, three Rockrunners, 10 Southern White-crowned Shrikes, some delightfully tame Meves's Starlings, large flocks of Chestnut Weavers, and our first colourful Golden-breasted Buntings. The mammals were also a delight, and included three African Elephants, 30 Mountain Zebra, a couple of Giraffe, an Eland and lots of Springbok and Gemsbok.

We left Hobatere immediately after breakfast the next morning and drove quickly north to the Kunene River on the Angolan border, stopping only briefly on the way to admire our first Martial Eagle and a party of Southern Pied Babblers. Just before reaching the river, we stopped at a small

stream where Steve had found Cinderella Waxbills in 2007. It was now mid-morning and there were lots of birds coming in to drink – mostly Chestnut Weavers and Red-billed Quelea. Steve wandered off up the stream and returned a couple of minutes later, gesticulating wildly. The Cinderellas were coming in! We approached the designated bush with caution, and sure enough, there they were – eight in all, along with a few Blue Waxbills. Gradually they hopped down through the bush and flew down to drink – giving us all great views. Well pleased, we headed down to the woodland along the Kunene River and within minutes we had found our main target here – a Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush. Although it was now mid-day and very hot, there were plenty of other birds around including a pair of White-browed Coucals, a pair of Bennett's Woodpeckers, two Yellow-bellied Bulbuls, several Rattling Cisticolas, a pair of Ashy Flycatchers, a Swamp Boubou and a few Golden Weavers. Well satisfied with the morning's work, we set off back to Hobatere, but within minutes were stopping again for an Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove and a small party of Yellow-billed Oxpeckers. The journey south came to a sudden stop when Steve spotted a bird sitting on a nest in a tree close to the road. This turned out to be a splendid Spotted Eagle Owl, and nearby we found its mate sitting in a tree and keeping a watchful eye on us. Even with this delay, we arrived back at Hobatere in time for a late afternoon stroll in the woodland around the lodge, and this produced great views of two Verreaux's Eagle Owls (an adult and a very large chick) and a pair of Golden-tailed Woodpeckers.

It was only a short drive to the western (Galton) gate of Etosha National Park the next morning, and by 8:15 we had entered this famous national park on a road that is seldom travelled by tourists. It was about 275 km to our lodge at Halali, and for the first 175 km, we had the road to ourselves. Much of the western part of the park is well wooded and the big game was patchy, but there were plenty of birds about, including at least 100 Burchell's Sandgrouse along with much larger numbers of Namaqua Sandgrouse, a little group of four Chestnut-backed Sparrowlarks, and our first Yellow-billed Kites, Bateleurs, Double-banded Coursers and Capped Wheatears. Fawn-coloured, Sabota and Spike-heeled Larks were plentiful, and near Okaukuejo we found a little group of Pink-billed Larks and a Rufous-eared Warbler. Other birds of note included a Martial Eagle, a pair of Pygmy Falcons, no less than 20 Kori Bustards, a Ludwig's Bustard and three Red-crested Korhaans. As we headed east from Okaukuejo along the south side of the pan, big game became more plentiful and we started to encounter large herds of Burchell's Zebra and Springbok along with smaller groups of Blue Wildebeest and Red Hartebeest. We arrived at Halali – the smallest and in many ways pleasantest of the three lodges in the park – in time to explore the extensive compound. There had been a lot of rain in recent days and little was visiting the waterhole, but a small group of Swainson's Spurfowl and a Southern White-faced Scops-Owl were much appreciated.

As not everyone had seen the scops-owl, we were out at sunrise the next morning trying to relocate it. This turned out to be much more difficult than we had supposed. We soon found a pair of African Scops-Owls, but the Southern White-faced seemed to have gone into hiding. In desperation we enlisted the help of the security guards. Fired on by the offer of a hefty tip, they dashed off enthusiastically, and it was not long before one of them came up trumps. He had found a nest with two well-grown chicks in a hole in a tree. One of the adults was soon spotted in a nearby tree, and everyone was happy. We could now head on east to our next lodge at Namutoni. On the way, we visited an area of open grassy plains where we had superb views of four Blue Cranes and our one and only little flock of Red-capped Larks. Amongst the many vultures, we spotted a single White-headed Vulture, and at one of the waterholes, we had close views of three Greater Painted-Snipe. A very obliging Great Spotted Cuckoo was also a new addition to our list. After lunch, we went out in a large open-sided truck on the first of two game drives in the eastern sector of the park. This afternoon's drive took us around Fischer's Pan on the Twee Palms loop. The pan was dry, but the game viewing was excellent and included our first Black-faced Impala and no less than 14 Spotted Hyaenas. Birds of note included four pretty little Red-necked Falcons and half a dozen Temminck's

Courser. We were back at the lodge in time to see an assortment of egrets, including several Yellow-billed, coming in to roost at the waterhole, along with a small flock of Grey-headed Gulls.

Our game drive the next morning took us north to the Andoni Plains via a series of waterholes. The grassland on Andoni Plains was alive with singing Eastern Clapper Larks, African Pipits and Desert and Zitting Cisticolas, and here we flushed a few tiny African Quail Finches. With unobstructed all-round viewing from the truck, we also had considerable success with the bush birds, which included a very obliging Jacobin Cuckoo, several Diderick Cuckoos, Cape Penduline-Tits, Long-billed Crombecs and African Wren-Warblers, and dozens of Kalahari Scrub-Robins. Lesser Grey Shrikes were surprisingly common, and amongst them there were a few Red-backed Shrikes. Other Palearctic migrants included a Common Buzzard, a female Montagu's Harrier, two more Great Spotted Cuckoos and our first Spotted Flycatchers, while mammals of note included a herd of 26 African Elephants and a total of six Lions. However, the highlight of this drive was undoubtedly a colourful male Harlequin Quail which gave prolonged views in the open only a few feet from the road. After a leisurely lunch back at the lodge, we packed up and left in the buses again. A short detour round Did-Dik Drive produced the expected Damara Dik-Diks along with a pair of Magpie Shrikes and two Black-faced Babblers, and as we were driving along the main road towards the park entrance, a Black Rhinoceros trotted across the road in front of us. Some confusion over entrance fees at the park gate meant that we had to return briefly to Namutoni, but despite this delay, we arrived in Tsumeb soon after six, well pleased with our three days at Etosha.

From Tsumeb, it was over 300 km to our next destination, Rundu, in the north-east of the country. However, the driving was easy and there were plenty of birds along the way. Soon after leaving Tsumeb, we found three Crested Francolins by the roadside, and in the hills near Otavi, there were lots of Lesser Striped Swallows on the roadside wires. We stopped for lunch at Roy's Camp in the bush north-east of Grootfontein, and here we found another group of Black-faced Babblers and several Yellow-breasted Apalises. Further north, a short stop by the roadside produced our first White-browed Scrub-Robin, Icterine Warbler and Amethyst Sunbirds, and we also picked up our first Wahlberg's Eagles on this drive. By mid-afternoon we had reached the miombo woodland characteristic of Namibia's north-east border regions, and shortly before arriving at Rundu, we stopped for our first foray into this interesting habitat. There had just been some rain and the birding was excellent. In the space of an hour and a half, we found two pairs of Rufous-bellied Tits, a pair of Grey Penduline-Tits, several Tinkling Cisticolas and Neddickys, four Southern Black Flycatchers, two Pallid Flycatchers, our first Violet-backed Starlings, a little group of African Yellow White-eyes, a pair of Yellow-throated Petronias, and half a dozen Yellow-fronted Canaries. Raptors included a very obliging Shikra, an African Harrier-Hawk, a Eurasian Hobby and a party of 30 Red-footed Falcons passing high overhead. As we approached our lodge on the banks of the Okavango River, we were greeted by a flock of White-crested Helmetshrikes, and then, after checking in, we had a great evening's birding in the garden, finding Black Cuckoo, Senegal Coucal, Lesser Honeyguide, Hartlaub's Babbler, Dark-capped Bulbul, White-browed Robin-Chat, African Paradise-Flycatcher and Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike within the space of an hour.

Early the next morning, we paid our first visit to Rundu sewage works, where we spent a very enjoyable two hours birding along the edge of the marsh. Highlights included a Black Heron, three Rufous-bellied Herons, 200 White-faced Whistling-Ducks, three Southern Pochards, an African Rail, a Baillon's Crake, two Coppery-tailed Coucals, a Marsh Owl, several Little Rush Warblers and a dozen Fan-tailed Widowbirds. Back at our lodge, there were still more birds to be found in the garden, including a group of Swainson's Spurfowl and several Terrestrial Brownbuls. Later, as we drove east towards the west end of the Caprivi Strip, we made several stops in the teak woodland and, although it was the middle of the day and very hot, were very successful, finding an unusually

obliging Racket-tailed Roller and a male Arnott's Chat in full song (both scarce birds in this area), as well as Meyer's Parrot, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Black Cuckooshrike, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Southern Black Tit, Arrow-marked Babbler, Kurrichane Thrush and Red-headed Weaver. We also encountered a good selection of raptors, including a pair of African Cuckoo Hawks, an African Goshawk and two Dark Chanting Goshawks. We stopped briefly at a stretch of rapids near Divundu, where there were five Rock Pratincoles and a pair of African Wattled Lapwings, and a few minutes later, as we approached Ndhovu Lodge, we came across our first Southern Carmine Bee-eaters. A stroll around the lodge grounds produced our first Broad-billed Rollers, lots more Meyer's Parrots, several Purple-banded Sunbirds and a little party of Brown Firefinches, but the best birding was still to come, as we settled down with our drinks on the veranda to watch the evening flight of birds up and down the Okavango River. In the space of an hour or so, we recorded a Black Heron, two Slaty Egrets, eight Woolly-necked Storks, an African Spoonbill, two Yellow-billed Ducks, 150 Comb Ducks, at least 1,000 Spur-winged Geese, a Water Thick-knee and 10 African Skimmers. Several Hippos loafed about in the river, while two Bushbucks grazed on the far bank. Two African Wood Owls were calling as we ate dinner, and later that evening we had little difficulty in getting them in the spotlight.

It was only a short drive the next morning to the Mahango Game Reserve on the Botswana border, but first we had a quick look in the woodland along the main road and here we found a pair of Green-capped Eremomelas and a pair of Cut-throat Finches. In the Game Reserve, the birding was as good as ever, and new additions to our list included Goliath Heron, African Openbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, African Fish Eagle, African Marsh Harrier, Long-toed Lapwing, Grey-headed Kingfisher, White-fronted Bee-eater, Black-collared Barbet, Chinspot Batis and Greater Blue-eared Starling. The highlight, however, was a pair of Wattled Cranes with a well-grown chick on the floodplain. Big game was rather scarce, perhaps because of the abundant rainfall, although there were still plenty of Red Lechwe and Reedbuck out on the floodplain. Crossing the border into Botswana was relatively painless, and then it was only a short drive to Shakawe Fishing Lodge in the Okavango Panhandle. We arrived in the early afternoon and had plenty of time for some initial exploration. There were lots of birds around the lodge, including Giant and Woodland Kingfishers, Black-collared and Crested Barbets, African Pied Wagtail and five species of weavers (Thick-billed, Spectacled, Village, Golden and Southern Brown-throated), while thousands of Barn Swallows and Brown-throated Martins hawked over the river. An African Wood Owl was admired at its roost in a tree near the chalets, and a short walk in the woodland was rewarded with great views of a Red-chested Cuckoo and a Narina Trogon. But the main business of the day was still to come. As soon as it was dark, half our number headed upstream in one of the lodge's boats in search of the fabled Pel's Fishing Owl, while the rest of us waited patiently on the bank. Less than 20 minutes later the boat returned, and it was immediately obvious, from the smiling faces on board, that all had gone well. The second party jumped into the boat, and within a few minutes were also enjoying great views of this magnificent owl. The pressure was now off, and we could relax for the rest of our stay at this delightful lodge.

The whole of the next day was spent around the lodge and on the river, with boat trips upstream in the morning and downstream in the afternoon. The flowering and fruiting trees around the lodge were full of birds, including some very nice African Green Pigeons, while along the river, there were large numbers of Reed Cormorants and African Darters, and a good selection of herons and egrets. A variety of raptors passed overhead, Whiskered Terns patrolled over the water, African Skimmers rested on the sandbanks, colourful Malachite Kingfishers darted ahead of us, and an assortment of warblers and weavers dodged in and out of the papyrus. Highlights included another three Slaty Egrets, two White-backed Night-Herons, a pair of African Pygmy Geese, close views of several African Fish Eagles, fantastic views of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters at a colony in the riverbank,

Greater Swamp Warblers, Luapula Cisticolas and Chirping Cisticolas all responding well to playback, and a lovely Cape Clawless Otter. Our afternoon siesta was cut short by the discovery of a small flock of Retz's Helmetshrikes in the campground, and luckily these rather comical birds stayed around long enough for all of us to see them.

An early morning potter in the garden the next day produced good views of several Collared Sunbirds, and then after breakfast we left Shakawe and Botswana for another visit to the Mahango Game Reserve before heading back to Rundu. It was already very hot as we drove into the Game Reserve and there were relatively few birds about, although we found yet another Slaty Egret, three Yellow-billed Storks, seven Steppe Eagles and a pair of Bennett's Woodpeckers. The main excitement came from a group of five Sable including a magnificent male only a few yards from the road. The drive back to Rundu produced little other than an African Hobby that flew up from the roadside, and we arrived in time for another visit to the sewage works that evening. Here, as the sun was setting, we found a Lesser Jacana and an African Snipe, along with another Rufous-bellied Heron and another Greater Painted Snipe. Sadly no Marsh Owls emerged from the reed-beds, but just as it was getting dark, we managed to call in a Square-tailed Nightjar.

Much of the next day was devoted to driving, as we covered over 630 km from Rundu to Erongo Wilderness Lodge in the Erongo Mountains near Omaruru. We had time for a couple of quick stops at Roy's Camp and Otjiwarongo sewage works, but added nothing new to our list, and made good time, arriving at our very picturesque lodge set amongst rocky hills in late afternoon. After settling into our 'tents', we still had time for an evening stroll amongst the rocks, and this produced a little group of Hartlaub's Francolin and a Rockrunner. We reconvened outside the restaurant at dusk, and after a while, a Freckled Nightjar flew low over our heads in response to playback. Later, as we dined in the restaurant overlooking the floodlit waterhole, we were entertained by at least three Freckled Nightjars in the floodlights, as well as two Porcupines and an African Wild Cat.

As our flight back to London was not until late evening, we were able to spend the whole of our last morning at Erongo Wilderness Lodge and enjoy some leisurely birding amidst beautiful scenery. There were no new birds to be found, but our morning's tally included a number of Namibia's special birds, notably Hartlaub's Francolin, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Monteiro's Hornbill, Carp's Tit, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Rockrunner, Pirit Batis and White-tailed Shrike. Three Smith's Rock Elephant Shrews and two Dassie Rats appeared outside the restaurant, and provided two last-minute additions to our mammal list. We stopped briefly on the way back to Windhoek for good views of a Pearl-breasted Swallow, but otherwise the journey was uneventful, and we arrived at the airport with plenty of time to check for South African Cliff Swallows around the terminal buildings. Unfortunately, no swallows were to be found, perhaps because the buildings where they used to nest had recently been renovated, but we did see a Sand Martin – a last-minute addition to most of our lists. Then suddenly it was time to pack up our binoculars and check in for the long flight home, at the end of another really great tour to Namibia and the Okavango.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leaders are indicated by the symbol (NL).

STRUTHIONIDAE

Common Ostrich *Struthio camelus*: Many great sightings of these stately giants on the way to Namibgrens, in the coastal desert, at Etosha, and in the Mahango Game Reserve.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe (Dabchick) *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Good numbers at freshwater wetlands throughout. It was interesting to see them nesting at some of the small waterholes at Etosha.

PROCELLARIIDAE

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*: Good views of at least 15 off the ocean beach at Walvis Bay.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: At least 100 passing south off the ocean beach at Walvis Bay.

PELECANIDAE

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*: At least 200 in the Walvis Bay area, and two over Fischer's Pan in Etosha National Park.

SULIDAE

Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*: About 20, mostly immature birds, moving south in ones and twos off the ocean beach at Walvis Bay.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*: Two at the sewage works in Windhoek, and over 150 in the Walvis Bay area.

Cape Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis*: Vast numbers along the coast, with large breeding colonies on the guano platforms.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed Cormorant) *Phalacrocorax africanus*: A dozen at the sewage works in Windhoek, and common in freshwater habitats in the north.

Crowned Cormorant *Phalacrocorax coronatus*: Rather distant views of eight at the guano platforms near Walvis Bay.

ANHINGIDAE

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*: Three at the sewage works in Windhoek, several along the Okavango in Namibia, and at least 50 along the river at Shakawe.

ARDEIDAE

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: One at the sewage works in Windhoek, about 10 in the Walvis Bay area, over 60 at Etosha, and one over the river at Rundu.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*: One in the Walvis Bay area, one on the drive to the Kunene River, and 12 around waterholes at Etosha.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*: One in the Mahango Game Reserve on our first visit, one along the river at Shakawe, and two in the Mahango on our second visit.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: About 12 along the Okavango at Shakawe, and also seen at Rundu sewage works and in the Mahango Game Reserve.

- Great Egret (Great White Egret) *Egretta alba*: About 12 in the Mahango Game Reserve, but only three along the river at Shakawe.
- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: About 50 in the Walvis Bay area, small numbers along the Okavango in Namibia and Botswana, and odd ones at freshwater wetlands elsewhere.
- Yellow-billed Egret (Intermediate Egret) *Egretta intermedia*: A dozen roosting in the reed-beds at Namutoni in Etosha National Park were unusual. More typical were the small numbers seen along the Okavango in the north-east.
- Black Heron (Black Egret) *Egretta ardesiaca*: One at Rundu sewage works on both our visits, one flying along the river at Ndhovu Lodge, and two feeding with their peculiar tent-like action in a backwater of the Okavango below Kavango River Lodge.
- Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*: Two flew past as we were relaxing on the veranda at Ndhovu Lodge, three gave great views from the boat at Shakawe, and Steve found another during our return visit to the Mahango Game Reserve – a good showing for this scarce and local species.
- Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: About 50 at the sewage works in Windhoek, a few along the Kunene River, at least 80 roosting at the waterhole at Namutoni, and very common along the Okavango in the north-east.
- Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: Five at the sewage works in Windhoek, one at the waterhole at Namutoni, small numbers along the Okavango in Namibia, and about 30 along the river at Shakawe.
- Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris*: Decent views of three on our first visit to Rundu sewage works, one in the Mahango Game Reserve, and one on our second visit to Rundu sewage works.
- Green-backed Heron (Striated Heron) *Butorides striatus*: One at the sewage works in Windhoek and small numbers along the Okavango in the north-east.
- Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Four at the sewage works in Windhoek, three or four at the waterhole at Namutoni, and good numbers along the Okavango in the north-east.
- White-backed Night-Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus*: Two very sneaky individuals (an adult and an immature) with a small roost of Black-crowned Night-Herons in dense bushes by the river at Shakawe.
- Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: One at the sewage works in Windhoek, one at Rundu sewage works, and one by the Okavango at Shakawe. The subspecies involved is *payesii* which breeds in sub-Saharan Africa.

SCOPIIDAE

- Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*: First encountered at Rundu sewage works, and then seen in small numbers on several occasions along the Okavango in Namibia and Botswana.

CICONIIDAE

- Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*: A party of eight flew over as we were relaxing on the veranda at Ndhovu Lodge.
- African Openbill (African Open-billed Stork) *Anastomus lamelligerus*: Distant views of about 30 on the floodplain in the Mahango Game Reserve on our first visit, and a lone individual on our return visit.
- Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*: Distant views of a pair on the floodplain in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*: Close views of three at one of the waterholes and distant views of about 25 in flight at Etosha.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*: Distant views of three in the Mahango Game Reserve on our second visit.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: A flock of 20 at Rundu sewage works on our first visit, and two birds on our second visit.

Hadedda Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*: Two at the sewage works in Windhoek were very unusual. We also saw a bird on two occasions near the lodge at Shakawe.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*: One flew downriver off the veranda at Ndhovu Lodge.

PHOENICOPTERIDAE

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopus ruber*: Great views of about 500 in the Walvis Bay area. According to the locals, the birds were only just beginning to arrive back from their breeding areas.

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopus minor*: Close views of a flock of 42, very largely immature birds, at Swakopmund salt works.

ANATIDAE

White-faced Duck (White-faced Whistling-Duck) *Dendrocygna viduata*: At least 200 at Rundu sewage works, 150 over the Okavango at Ndhovu Lodge, and smaller numbers at Shakawe and in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*: One at the sewage works in Windhoek, seven at the sewage works in Swakopmund, a couple at a dam near the Ugab River, several pairs and family parties at waterholes at Etosha, a few in the Mahango Game Reserve, and about 200 at a reservoir on the drive from Rundu to Omaruru.

South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana*: Good views of a pair at the sewage works in Windhoek.

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata*: A pair flew upriver off the veranda at Ndhovu Lodge in the evening and back downriver the next morning. This is a very scarce bird in Namibia, and was new for Steve's Namibia list.

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*: One with Red-billed Teal at the sewage works in Windhoek, about 150 on the salt pans in the Walvis Bay area, two pairs at waterholes at Etosha, and one at Rundu sewage works.

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*: Good views of about a eight, including a female with small chicks, at the sewage works in Windhoek, and up to 60 at Rundu sewage works.

Red-billed Teal (Red-billed Duck) *Anas erythrorhyncha*: A flock of 15 at the sewage works in Windhoek, 40 at the small dam north of the Ugab River, small numbers at several of the waterholes at Etosha, up to 100 at Rundu sewage works, and six at Otjiwarongo sewage works.

Cape Shoveler *Anas smithii*: Ten at Swakopmund sewage works.

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*: A male at Swakopmund sewage works, and a party of three on both our visits to Rundu sewage works.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*: Extraordinarily close views of a pair of these very pretty little 'ducks' on a quiet backwater of the Okavango near Shakawe.

Comb Duck (Knob-billed Duck) *Sarkidiornis melanotos*: Up to 10 at Rundu sewage works, and about 150 flying up and down the river at Ndhovu Lodge.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*: At least 1,000 flying up and down the river at Ndhovu Lodge in the evening and again the next morning, but only a few at Shakawe and in the Mahango Game Reserve.

SAGITTARIDAE

Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius*: Good views of one on the drive from Namib Desert Lodge to Walvis Bay, and even better views at Etosha, where we recorded six individuals.

ACCIPITRIDAE

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*: The most commonly encountered vulture, seen well on many occasions. The largest concentration was at a carcass in Etosha National Park.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*: Great looks at these huge vultures on several occasions, including a concentration of 15 on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens.

White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis*: A single bird soaring with other vultures over the plains at Etosha.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*: First encountered at Etosha, and then recorded commonly in the north-east, where we saw up to 100 in a day.

Black-shouldered Kite (Black-winged Kite) *Elanus caeruleus*: Several in the Windhoek area, and then recorded on several occasions at Etosha and in the north-east.

African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*: A pair gave good flight views in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu.

Verreaux's Eagle (Black Eagle) *Aquila verreauxii*: Great views of a pair soaring over the road on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens, and also single birds at Hobatere and in the Erongo Mountains. This is definitely one of the world's great eagles.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*: Many great looks at this resident eagle, especially on the drive to Namibgrens, at Hobatere and at Etosha.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*: One in the Mahango Game Reserve on our first visit, two soaring over the marshes at Shakawe, and seven in the Mahango on our second visit.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*: One soaring over the Mahango Game Reserve on our first visit.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*: It took us a while to see our first – a pair on the drive north to Rundu – but we then had several good sightings in the north-east.

African Hawk Eagle *Hieraetus spilogaster*: Great views of two birds at Hobatere, and also seen at Etosha, on the drive south from Rundu, and in the Erongo Mountains.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*: Great views of this magnificent eagle on four occasions: one on the drive from Hobatere to the Kunene River, two individuals in Etosha National Park, and one in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*: About ten individuals recorded, mostly sitting on pylons.

Black-chested Snake Eagle (Black-breasted Snake Eagle) *Circaetus pectoralis*: One of the commoner large raptors, recorded on nine dates. We saw about 15 individuals, usually sitting on telegraph poles or pylons.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*: Several excellent sightings of this bizarre raptor at Etosha and in the north-east. We logged about 15 individuals.

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*: Distant views of two or three in the Mahango Game Reserve on both our visits, and excellent views of about 10 along the river at Shakawe. The evocative call of this splendid eagle is definitely one of the characteristic sounds of Africa.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: About 15 individuals of the form *vulpinus*, mostly in the north-east. This form (as in the latest SASOL guide) is sometimes split off as a separate species, the Steppe Buzzard *B. vulpinus*.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*: Good views of one on the drive from Walvis Bay to Hobatere and a couple by the Kunene River.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* (H): One heard calling in the distance near the entrance gate to the Mahango Game Reserve.

- Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*: Brief 'fly-by' views of one at Hobatere and one on the drive to the Kunene River.
- Shikra (Little Banded Goshawk) *Accipiter badius*: A single bird at Hobatere, one at Roy's Camp, a very obliging perched bird in the forest south of Rundu, and one in the forest between Rundu and Divundu.
- African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*: Good flight views of one in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu – a scarce bird in Namibia.
- Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*: Several excellent sightings, including a bird at its nest with two chicks and two dark-phase individuals.
- Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus*: One of the commonest and most conspicuous raptors, absent only in the relatively humid north-east.
- Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*: Good views of a couple in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu.
- African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*: Distant views of a singleton in the Mahango Game Reserve, and much better views of five along the Okavango at Shakawe.
- Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*: Close views of a female over the plains near Namutoni in Etosha National Park.
- African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus*: Distant views of a soaring bird at Grootfontein, then better views of another over the forest south of Rundu later the same day.

PANDIONIDAE

- Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: Two at the sewage works in Windhoek, one over the Kunene River, and half a dozen along the Okavango in the north-east.

FALCONIDAE

- Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*: One perched on an artificial palm tree (radio mast) in Walvis Bay, and one at Hobatere.
- Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*: Five sightings of single birds and pairs, but surprisingly none at Etosha this year.
- Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Thirteen birds logged in the north-east, with several giving excellent views. Far more than usual.
- African Hobby *Falco cuvierii*: Close views of a bird flushed off the roadside as we were driving back from the Mahango Game Reserve to Rundu.
- Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera*: Excellent views of four on the Twee Palms loop at Etosha, and two more at Namutoni the next day.
- Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*: A flock of about 30 drifting south-west high over the forest south of Rundu.
- Rock Kestrel (Common Kestrel) *Falco tinnunculus*: Fairly common in the west, especially on the drive from Namib Desert Lodge to Walvis Bay, but then only one at Etosha and a couple in the Erongo Mountains. The local breeding birds are a potential split.
- Greater Kestrel (White-eyed Kestrel) *Falco rupicoloides*: Many great views in the semi-desert between Namib Desert Lodge and Walvis Bay, on the drive from Hobatere to the Kunene River, and at Etosha.
- Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus*: Good views of five on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens, including a pair near their nest in a Sociable Weaver colony, a single bird at Namibgrens Guest Farm, and a couple at Etosha.

PHASIANIDAE

- Coqui Francolin *Peliperdix coqui* (H): One heard calling in the miombo woodland south of Rundu, but rather distant and unresponsive to the tape.
- Crested Francolin *Peliperdix sephaena*: Great views of a pair and a single bird by the roadside on the drive from Tsumeb to Rundu, and heard on several occasions in the north-east.
- Red-billed Francolin *Pternistes adspersus*: A common species on this tour, seen extremely well on many occasions and especially tame at Hobatere.
- Hartlaub's Francolin *Pternistes hartlaubi*: Good views of a group of three of these near-endemics in the rocky hills at Hobatere, and even better views of at least eight amongst the boulders at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Swainson's Spurfowl (Swainson's Francolin) *Pternistes swainsonii*: Good views of four at Halali in Etosha National Park, a party of four near Rundu, and half a dozen in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*: Fantastic views of a very obliging male during our second game drive at Etosha, thanks to some remarkable spotting by Steve. The female was much less co-operative, and soon scampered off into dense cover.

NUMIDIDAE

- Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*: Common throughout the arid savanna habitats of central and eastern Namibia, but apparently absent from the coastal deserts and scarce in the relatively humid north-east.

TURNICIDAE

- Small Buttonquail (Kurrichane Buttonquail) *Turnix sylvatica*: Good views (for some of us) of a bird running away through the grass on our game drive at Namib Desert Lodge, and one flushed from the side of the track in Etosha National Park.

GRUIDAE

- Wattled Crane *Grus carunculata*: Reasonable scope views of a pair with a juvenile on the floodplain in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradisea*: Excellent views of four in the grassland between Halali and Namutoni in Etosha National Park. The isolated population of this very attractive crane centred on Etosha Pan is believed to number only 60 individuals.

RALLIDAE

- African Rail (African Water Rail) *Rallus caerulescens*: Good views, eventually, of a bird responding to playback in the reed-beds at Rundu sewage works.
- Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostris*: Seen exceptionally well on several occasions in the north, most notably by the pond outside the restaurant at Shakawe, and also seen at the waterhole at Namutoni.
- Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*: Close but sadly very brief views of a bird in the reed-beds at Rundu sewage works.
- African Purple Swamphen (African Purple Gallinule) *Porphyrio madagascariensis*: Up to six at Rundu sewage works, and a single bird along the river at Shakawe.
- Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: Present in most freshwater habitats.
- Red-knobbed Coot (Crested Coot) *Fulica cristata*: At least 150 at the sewage works in Windhoek, three at Swakopmund sewage works, one at the waterhole at Namutoni, and about a dozen at Rundu sewage works.

OTIDIDAE

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*: A single bird at the waterhole near the lodge at Hobatere, another on the drive to the Kunene River, and large numbers at Etosha, where we must have seen close to a hundred. A very impressive bustard.

Ludwig's Bustard *Neotis ludwigii*: Superb views of a total of eight as we were driving north from Namib Desert Lodge, and a single bird in the western sector of Etosha National Park.

Rüppell's Korhaan *Eupodotis rueppellii*: Excellent views of at least 30 in the coastal desert between Namib Desert Lodge and Walvis Bay, and also a pair on the drive from Henties Bay to Uis.

Red-crested Korhaan (Crested Bustard) *Eupodotis ruficrista*: A single bird at Hobatere, another on the drive to the Kunene River, and then about a dozen at Etosha, where we had several great views.

Northern Black Korhaan *Eupodotis afroides*: First encountered on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens, but our best views were at Etosha, where we saw over 30.

JACANIDAE

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*: Two at the sewage works in Windhoek, and common in most freshwater wetlands in the north-east.

Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*: Good scope views of a single bird at Rundu sewage works on our second visit. This is a very scarce bird in Namibia.

ROSTRATULIDAE

Greater Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*: Superb views of three at one of the waterholes in Etosha National Park, and also a single bird at Rundu sewage works.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini*: Distant scope views of 12 on a sandbar in Walvis Bay. This species occurs only as a non-breeding visitor in the Walvis Bay area, and numbers seem to have been decreasing in recent years.

CHARADRIIDAE

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*: About half a dozen in the Walvis Bay area.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*: At least 30 in the Walvis Bay area.

Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus*: At least 100 of these pretty little plovers at the saline lagoons in Walvis Bay.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*: Our only sighting was of six at one of the waterholes in Etosha National Park – a very poor showing for this widespread species.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*: Small numbers at scattered locations throughout the tour.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied Plover) *Pluvialis squatarola*: About 35 in the Walvis Bay area.

Crowned Lapwing (Crowned Plover) *Vanellus coronatus*: Good numbers at Hobatere and Etosha, and the odd pair at several other localities.

Blacksmith Lapwing (Blacksmith Plover) *Vanellus armatus*: Common around the waterholes at Etosha and in wetlands in the north-east, and odd ones seen at several other localities.

African Wattled Lapwing (African Wattled Plover) *Vanellus senegallus*: Good views of a pair by the river near Divundu, two pairs by the river at Ndhovu Lodge, and four in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Long-toed Lapwing (Long-toed Plover) *Vanellus crassirostris*: Distant views of about 20 in the Mahango Game Reserve, and close views of four along the river at Shakawe. The subspecies here is *leucopterus* which is confined to the southern half of the species' range. This race shows far more white in the wing than the nominate race.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: About 150 at Walvis Bay.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*: Great views of two individuals at Walvis Bay. This is a very scarce winter visitor this far south.

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*: Odd ones at wetlands throughout.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: First recorded at the dam north of the Ugab River, and then encountered in good numbers at the waterholes in Etosha National Park and at wetlands in the north-east.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: Eight in the Walvis Bay area and one at Otjiwarongo sewage works.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: About 25 in the Walvis Bay area, and small numbers at the waterholes at Etosha and wetlands in the north-east.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*: A little group of three with other waders on the shore at Walvis Bay.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: Much the commonest small wader at Walvis Bay, present in thousands.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: A couple of hundred at Walvis Bay.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*: At least 150 at Walvis Bay, and one with a large flock of Ruff at Rundu sewage works.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: About 15 in the Walvis Bay area, over 60 at waterholes in Etosha National Park, up to 100 at Rundu sewage works, and odd ones at several other localities.

African Snipe (Ethiopian Snipe) *Gallinago nigripennis*: A single bird flushed at Rundu sewage works on our second visit.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*: At least 1,000 at Walvis Bay.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: About 25 at Walvis Bay.

PHALAROPODIDAE

Red-necked Phalarope (Northern Phalarope) *Phalaropus lobatus*: Superb views of two, one of which was a female still almost in full breeding plumage, on the salt pans at Walvis Bay. This species is a regular visitor in very small numbers to south-west Africa. The origin of these birds is unknown, as no major wintering areas have been discovered in the Atlantic Ocean, and the nearest regular wintering area is in the northern Indian Ocean, off the Arabian Peninsula.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*: At least 500 at Walvis Bay.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: About 40 in the Walvis Bay area, a few at waterholes in Etosha National Park, and small numbers at several wetlands in the north-east.

BURHINIDAE

Spotted Thick-knee (Spotted Dikkop) *Burhinus capensis*: A single bird at Hobatere and about 10 in Etosha National Park, several of which gave great views.

Water Thick-knee (Water Dikkop) *Burhinus vermiculatus*: Distant views of one by the river at Ndhovu Lodge, and much closer views of several along the river at Shakawe.

GLAREOLIDAE

Burchell's Courser *Cursorius rufus*: A party of nine in the desert between Solitaire and Walvis Bay. Sadly the birds were very wary, and soon ran off into the heat haze.

Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii*: Good views of six at Etosha.

- Double-banded Courser (Two-banded Courser) *Rhinoptilus africanus*: Several great views of this very attractive courser at Etosha.
- Collared Pratincole (Red-winged Pratincole) *Glareola pratincola*: A couple over the river near Divundu, and six over the floodplain in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*: Reasonable scope views of five of these attractive little pratincoles on rocks in the river near Divundu, and another two by the river at Ndhovu Lodge.

STERCORARIDAE

- Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*: Two birds in Walvis Bay on our first evening there, and three chasing terns off the ocean beach the next day.
- Pomarine Jaeger (Pomarine Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus* (NL): One seen by Roger P. off the ocean beach at Walvis Bay.

LARIDAE

- Cape Gull *Larus vetula*: At least 200 in the Walvis Bay area. This is a recent split from Kelp Gull *L. dominicanus*.
- Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*: Good views of at least three birds amongst the hundreds of Hartlaub's Gulls at Walvis Bay, and up to 13 at the waterhole at Namutoni in Etosha National Park.
- Hartlaub's Gull *Larus hartlaubii*: This rather attractive gull, endemic to Southern Africa, was very common along the coast. We must have seen well over 1,000.

STERNIDAE

- Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: Good views of at least 35 at Walvis Bay.
- Swift Tern (Greater Crested Tern) *Sterna bergii*: At least 30 at Walvis Bay.
- Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*: At least 100 at Walvis Bay.
- Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Many hundreds if not thousands in the Walvis Bay area. The birds wintering in Southern Africa originate mainly from the Baltic Sea area, while birds from Western Europe winter mainly in West Africa.
- Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*: At least three with a large flock of Common Terns resting on a sandbank in Walvis Bay – well picked out by Roger P.
- Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum*: Many great views of at least 30 of these attractive little terns in the Walvis Bay area.
- Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: At least 20 with a large mixed flock of terns feeding far out off the ocean beach at Walvis Bay.
- Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*: Good views of half of dozen, including a couple of adults in breeding plumage, along the river at Shakawe.
- White-winged Tern (White-winged Black Tern) *Chlidonias leucopterus*: A single bird over the saline lagoons at Walvis Bay. The main arrival of migrants was yet to come.

RYNCHOPIDAE

- African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*: Good views of 10 over the river at Ndhovu Lodge and 12 on sandbanks in the river at Shakawe.

PTEROCLIDIDAE

- Namaqua Sandgrouse *Pterocles namaqua*: Several small flocks in the arid west, at Hobatere and on the drive to the Kunene River, and very common in the western half of Etosha National Park.
- Burchell's Sandgrouse *Pterocles burchelli*: Great views of several flocks totalling at least 100 individuals in the western sector of Etosha National Park. This can be a very elusive bird.

Double-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles bicinctus*: Great views (in the floodlights) of at least 300 coming in to drink after dark at the waterhole at Hobatere.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*: Present in urban areas.

Speckled Pigeon (Rock Pigeon) *Columba guinea*: Close views of birds coming in to drink at the waterholes at Namib Desert Lodge, Hobatere and Erongo Wilderness Lodge, and also seen at Walvis Bay.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*: Common in the moister habitats in the north-east, calling 'I am a Red-eyed Dove'.

African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*: Seen well at Ndhovu Lodge, and also recorded at Shakawe. The pale iris and red eye-ring of this species give it a very distinctive appearance.

Cape Turtle Dove (Ring-necked Dove) *Streptopelia capicola*: Generally the commonest dove throughout, exhorting us to 'work harder, work harder'.

Laughing Dove (Palm Dove) *Streptopelia senegalensis*: Common throughout.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*: Common throughout the drier areas, but rather scarce in the north-east, although we did see the odd one in Botswana.

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove (Green-spotted Dove) *Turtur chalcospilos*: Recorded in small numbers near the Kunene River, at Shakawe, and in the teak forest and miombo woodland near Rundu.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calva*: Excellent views of eight or more visiting fruiting trees around the lodge at Shakawe.

PSITTACIDAE

Meyer's Parrot (Brown Parrot) *Poicephalus meyeri*: Fairly common in the forest in the north-east. Our best views were in the garden at Ndhovu Lodge and around the lodge at Shakawe.

Rüppell's Parrot *Poicephalus rueppellii*: Good views of about half a dozen at Hobatere.

Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis*: First encountered in the garden at Namibgrens Guest Farm, and then recorded in good numbers at Namib Desert Lodge, Hobatere and Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

MUSOPHAGIDAE

Grey Go-Away-Bird (Grey Lourie) *Corythaixoides concolor*: Common wherever there were trees.

CUCULIDAE

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: Four in the Mahango Game Reserve on our first visit, one at Shakawe, and two in the Mahango on our second visit. It is unusual to see so many of these migrants from Europe this early in the season.

African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis*: Often heard and seen well on several occasions, notably at the waterhole at Hobatere.

Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius*: First encountered in the woodland between Rundu and Divundu, and then seen well in the scope at Shakawe.

Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus*: First heard calling at Hobatere, and then encountered on many occasions in the north-east, although only a few showed well.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*: Great views of three in Etosha National Park, and also seen in the Mahango Game Reserve and near Shakawe.

Jacobin Cuckoo (Black-and-white Cuckoo) *Clamator jacobinus*: First encountered at Etosha, where we had great views, and then seen on many occasions in the north-east, where we recorded up to 10 in a day.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* (H): Heard calling once at Etosha.

Diderick Cuckoo (Didric Cuckoo) *Chrysococcyx caprius*: Heard calling on many occasions, and seen well at Etosha, Ndhovu and Shakawe. This was certainly a good year for cuckoos.

Coppery-tailed Coucal *Centropus cupreicaudus*: First encountered in the reed-beds at Rundu sewage works, where we had good scope views, and then found in small numbers at Ndhovu Lodge, in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Shakawe.

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*: Good views of a pair in the garden at Sarasungu River Lodge, and also recorded at the Kavango River Lodge in Rundu.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*: Excellent views of a pair responding to playback by the Kunene River, and also recorded at Ndhovu Lodge, in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Shakawe.

TYTONIDAE

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*: One put on a splendid aerial display in response to playback at Namib Desert Lodge, and we saw the species again briefly at Rundu and heard it on several occasions in the north-east.

STRIGIDAE

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii*: Great views of a pair at Ndovu Lodge and a pair at their daytime roost in a tree by our chalets at Shakawe.

Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*: One seen by Judy and Roger P. at Namutoni, and then scope views for us all of a bird perched in the reeds at Rundu sewage works.

African Scops-Owl *Otus senegalensis*: Superb views of a bird at its daytime roost near the lodge at Hobatere, a pair in the compound at Halali, and a single bird in the garden at Sarasungu River Lodge.

Southern White-faced Scops-Owl *Ptilopsis granti*: Excellent views of an adult watching over its two chicks at their nest in a hole in a tree in the compound at Halali, thanks to some diligent searching by the friendly security guards.

Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*: First encountered in the garden at Namibgrens Guest Farm, and then seen and heard on many occasions, usually in response to playback.

African Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense*: The only disappointing owl of the trip! Heard calling a couple of times at Shakawe and seen briefly by Judy, but unresponsive to playback and presumably now breeding.

Spotted Eagle Owl *Bubo africanus*: Excellent views of a bird on its nest (probably the old nest of a crow) and its mate in attendance in a nearby tree, on the drive back from the Kunene River to Hobatere. Another bit of remarkable spotting by Steve as we were driving south at high speed.

Verreaux's Eagle Owl (Giant Eagle Owl) *Bubo lacteus*: Great views of an adult and a large juvenile in a big tree near the lodge at Hobatere.

Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli*: Very obliging this year. We quickly found one of these magnificent owls on our first attempt up the river from Shakawe, and everyone had great views in the spotlight. Once again, this splendid bird was voted 'Bird of the Trip' by a considerable margin.

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufigena*: Heard calling at Namibgrens Guest Farm, and seen well during our night drives at Hobatere, where Steve managed to catch one for close examination in the hand.

Freckled Nightjar *Caprimulgus tristigma*: Good views of at least three in the floodlights at the waterhole at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

Square-tailed Nightjar (Mozambique Nightjar, Gabon Nightjar) *Caprimulgus fossii*: Heard calling at Ndhovu Lodge, and seen well in response to playback at Rundu sewage works.

APODIDAE

Common Swift (European Swift) *Apus apus*: Very common this year, with many large flocks in the north and east.

Bradfield's Swift *Apus bradfieldi*: Small numbers seen well around Windhoek and over the waterhole at Hobatere.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*: Seen well on several occasions, mostly over waterholes and around culverts under the highways.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*: Fairly common and widespread.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*: Small numbers seen on several occasions, notably over the waterhole at Hobatere.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*: Fairly common and widespread, almost invariably in the vicinity of palms.

COLIIDAE

White-backed Mousebird *Colius colius*: Fairly common around Windhoek, at Namibgrens and at Namib Desert Lodge, and also seen in the Walvis Bay area and on the drive to Hobatere.

Red-faced Mousebird *Colius indicus*: Widespread and fairly common in the north and east, but usually seen hurtling by at high speed. The best views for many of us were at Shakawe.

TROGONIDAE

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina*: Good views of a bird responding to playback in the riverine woodland at Shakawe.

ALCEDINIDAE

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*: Common along the river in the north-east.

Giant Kingfisher *Ceryle maxima*: Great views of at least half a dozen along the river at Shakawe, and also seen in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Rundu.

Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata*: A couple at Rundu sewage works and at least 20 along the river at Shakawe.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*: Common, noisy and conspicuous this year; first encountered at Rundu, and then seen well on many occasions at Ndhovu, in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Shakawe.

Grey-headed Kingfisher (Grey-hooded Kingfisher, Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher) *Halcyon leucocephala*: Great scope views of one in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*: One on roadside wires near Ndhovu Lodge.

MEROPIDAE

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*: Surprisingly few of these migrants this year. We saw a small party over Windhoek, heard a couple overhead in Etosha National Park, and had good views of a couple in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Madagascar Bee-eater (Olive Bee-eater) *Merops superciliosus*: Great views of six around the lodge at Hobatere, where they were nesting, and also about 10 by the Kunene River.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*: Good views of about 30 at Rundu sewage works, a few in the Mahango Game Reserve, and about 30 along the river at Shakawe.

Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*: First encountered near Ndhovu Lodge, and then seen well on several occasions in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Shakawe. The

breeding season was almost over, and there were only a few large chicks left at the colony in the riverbank at Shakawe.

White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides*: Good views of about 10 in the Mahango Game Reserve and 30 or so at Shakawe, but far fewer than usual. Most of the birds had apparently finished breeding and moved on.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*: Small numbers recorded on a number of occasions in the north-east.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*: Much the most widespread bee-eater in Namibia, recorded in small numbers just about everywhere.

CORACIIDAE

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudata*: First recorded on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens, and then seen well on numerous occasions in the north-east.

Racket-tailed Roller *Coracias spatulata*: Excellent views of one perched on top of a dead tree in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu – a very scarce breeding bird in this area and an excellent find. Sadly, the bird had only one racket.

Purple Roller (Rufous-crowned Roller) *Coracias naevia*: Fairly common and widespread, usually encountered on roadside wires.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*: Great views of three at Ndhovu Lodge and a pair at Shakawe, and also seen in the Mahango Game Reserve. The display flight of this species is particularly impressive.

UPUPIDAE

African Hoopoe *Upupa africana*: Recorded in ones and twos on a number of occasions, except in the very arid west. Many authors include this species in Eurasian Hoopoe *U. epops*, although it looks very different in flight.

PHOENICULIDAE

Green Woodhoopoe (Red-billed Woodhoopoe) *Phoeniculus purpureus*: Good views of small parties at Ndhovu Lodge, at Shakawe and in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Violet Woodhoopoe (Southern Violet Woodhoopoe) *Phoeniculus damarensis*: Good views of a very responsive party of six in the woodland at Hobatere, and also seen by the Kunene River.

Common Scimitarbill (Greater Scimitarbill) *Phoeniculus cyanomelas*: A couple on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens, fairly common in Etosha National Park, a few in the Mahango Game Reserve, and odd ones elsewhere.

BUCEROTIDAE

African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*: First encountered at Hobatere, and then recorded in small numbers almost daily to the end of the tour, although we failed to find any in Botswana.

Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus*: Seen well on several occasions in the eastern portion of Etosha National Park, where this species replaces the next.

Damara Hornbill *Tockus damarensis*: The dark-eyed and pale-faced relative of the above, common at Hobatere and in the western half of Etosha National Park. The relationship between this and the previous species is less than clear-cut, as we saw both dark-eyed and pale-eyed individuals in the same 'family party' near Namutoni.

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus leucomelas*: First encountered on the drive to Hobatere, and then recorded on many occasions throughout the rest of the tour.

Monteiro's Hornbill *Tockus monteiri*: Seen well on several occasions in the dry woodland, notably on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens, at Hobatere and at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

LYBIIDAE

- Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus*: Great views of several around the lodge at Shakawe, and also seen in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Acacia Pied Barbet (Pied Barbet) *Lybius leucomelas*: Fairly common in the drier thorn scrub areas and seen well on many occasions.
- Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird (Yellow-fronted Tinker Barbet) *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*: Scope views of a calling bird in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu.
- Crested Barbet (Levaillant's Barbet) *Tachyphonus vaillantii*: Excellent close views of two or three birds around the lodge at Shakawe.

INDICATORIDAE

- Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* (H): One heard calling in the distance in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*: A pair gave excellent views in the garden at Sarasungu River Lodge, and single birds were seen briefly at Namibgrens and Shakawe, and in the Mahango Game Reserve.

PICIDAE

- Bennett's Woodpecker *Campethera bennettii*: Superb views of a very responsive pair of the plain-breasted form (*buysi*) in the woodland by the Kunene River, and good views of a pair of the nominate spot-breasted form in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*: Seen well in the woodland at Hobatere, at Roy's Camp and around the lodge at Shakawe.
- Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*: A scattering of records, including one at the bottom of Spreetshoogte Pass, one at Namib Desert Lodge, one near Namutoni, one in the woodland south of Rundu, and three at Shakawe.

ALAUDIDAE

- Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*: First encountered on the drive to the Kunene River, and then seen well on several occasions in Etosha National Park and the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Eastern Clapper Lark *Mirafra fasciolata*: Remarkably common and singing everywhere on the Andoni Plains at Etosha. The fancy song flight of this otherwise unexceptional lark never ceases to amuse.
- Fawn-coloured Lark *Mirafra africanoides*: First encountered on the drive to the Kunene River, and then seen well on several occasions in Etosha National Park, near Rundu and in the Mahango Game Reserve. This species inhabits areas of red sand.
- Sabota Lark *Mirafra sabota*: The commonest lark in the drier habitats with scattered trees, especially common at Etosha and often seen perched on the tops of bushes. All birds seen were of the large-billed form which is sometimes split off as a separate species, Bradfield's Lark *M. naevia*.
- Benguela Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda benguelensis*: Good views of a pair in the stony hills near Uis. This is one of the products of the splitting up of the original Long-billed Lark into five species.
- Karoo Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda subcoronata*: Brief views of one on Spreetshoogte Pass and then much better views of a pair on a stony hillside on the drive from Namib Desert Lodge to Walvis Bay. Another product of the Long-billed Lark split.
- Dune Lark *Certhilauda erythrochlamys*: Glimpses of a bird in the dunes at Namib Desert Lodge, and then superb views of a pair in the dunes on the drive north to Walvis Bay the next day. This species is endemic to the dune habitats of coastal Namibia.

- Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*: Half a dozen on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens and at least 25 in Etosha National Park, where we had some very close views.
- Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*: Surprisingly scarce at Etosha this year, although we eventually managed to find a flock of about a dozen.
- Pink-billed Lark *Spizocorys conirostris*: Great views of half a dozen on the barren plains near Okaukuejo in Etosha National Park.
- Stark's Lark *Eremalauda starki*: Fairly common at Namib Desert Lodge and on the drive north to Walvis Bay, and also recorded on the drive from Henties Bay to Uis. This is a highly nomadic species, and can be quite elusive in some years.
- Gray's Lark *Ammomanes grayi*: Good views of a little group of five in stony desert on the drive from Namib Desert Lodge to Walvis Bay, and one seen in the desert between Henties Bay and Uis. This species is endemic to the dry coastal deserts of Namibia and adjacent Angola.
- Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark (Chestnut-backed Finchlark) *Eremopterix leucotis*: Excellent views of a party of four in the western sector of Etosha National Park.
- Grey-backed Sparrowlark (Grey-backed Finchlark) *Eremopterix verticalis*: Common at Namib Desert Lodge and on the drive north to Walvis Bay, and also recorded on the drive from Henties Bay to Uis, but strangely absent at Etosha.

HIRUNDINIDAE

- Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Common and widespread. Much the largest numbers were at Shakawe, where there were thousands over the river on our first evening.
- White-throated Swallow *Hirundo albigularis*: Good views of two pairs at the sewage works in Windhoek – a well-known stake-out for this species.
- Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*: One at the Kunene River and small numbers along the Okavango near Divundu, at Ndhovu and at Shakawe.
- Pearl-breasted Swallow *Hirundo dimidiata*: A couple on the drive to Hobatere, a couple briefly over the waterhole at Hobatere, and finally good views of a single bird on the drive back to Windhoek on our last day.
- Red-breasted Swallow (Rufous-chested Swallow) *Hirundo semirufa*: A pair at the sewage works in Windhoek, fairly common in the eastern half of Etosha National Park, and a few pairs recorded elsewhere in the north and east. These large and attractive swallows nest in the culverts under the road.
- Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegalensis*: Fairly common around habitation along the Okavango in the north-east, and seen well on several occasions.
- Greater Striped Swallow *Hirundo cucullata*: Commonly encountered in the dry bush country, but absent in the extreme west and humid north-east.
- Lesser Striped Swallow *Hirundo abyssinica*: Good views of about 25 on the drive from Tsumeb to Grootfontein, and also seen on the drive back from Rundu to Omaruru.
- Rock Martin (African Rock Martin) *Hirundo fuligula*: First encountered at Windhoek airport, and then seen commonly in the drier areas.
- Common House-Martin *Delichon urbica*: Two or three at Hobatere, half a dozen at Etosha, and a flock of 30 near Ndhovu Lodge.
- Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*: One seen by Roger S. between Rundu and Divundu, and one at Windhoek airport on our last day.
- Brown-throated Martin (Plain Martin) *Riparia paludicola*: Hundreds over the Okavango at Shakawe.
- Banded Martin *Riparia cincta*: Fairly common over the grassland at Etosha, and also seen near the Kunene River, in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Shakawe.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Black Cuckooshrike *Campephaga flava*: A pair in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu, one in the Mahango Game Reserve, and a pair at Roy's Camp.

White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis*: Superb views of a bird responding well to 'pishing' in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu.

DICRURIDAE

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*: Very common and widespread, except in the coastal deserts.

CORVIDAE

Cape Crow (Cape Rook, Black Crow) *Corvus capensis*: First encountered on the drive north from Namib Desert Lodge to Walvis Bay, and found commonly at Etosha, where we recorded up to 50 in a day.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*: Odd ones and twos here and there throughout the tour.

ORIOLIDAE

Eurasian Golden Oriole (European Golden Oriole) *Oriolus oriolus*: Three at Roy's Camp, one in the forest between Rundu and Divundu, one on the drive south from Rundu, and one at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus*: One at Namutoni, one in the forest between Rundu and Divundu, three at Ndhovu Lodge, one in the Mahango Game Reserve, and one on the drive south from Rundu.

Black-headed Oriole (Eastern Black-headed Oriole) *Oriolus larvatus*: One seen and another heard in the forest between Rundu and Divundu, and one in the Mahango Game Reserve. A better-than-average showing by the three orioles this year.

PARIDAE

Ashy Tit (Ashy Grey Tit) *Parus cinerascens*: Great views of four in the garden of Namibgrens Guest Farm, and also seen at Roy's Camp and Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

Southern Black Tit *Parus niger*: Seen well on several occasions in the woodlands in the north-east.

Carp's Tit (Carp's Black Tit) *Parus carpi*: A single bird seen briefly at Hobatere, and four showing well at Erongo Wilderness Lodge. Although very similar to the previous species, this species exhibits little, if any, sexual dimorphism.

Rufous-bellied Tit *Parus rufiventris*: Great views of two very responsive pairs in the miombo woodland south of Rundu. This is a scarce bird in Namibia, and can be very elusive.

REMIZIDAE

Cape Penduline-Tit *Anthoscopus minutus*: Great views of a pair at Namibgrens Guest Farm and five during one of our game drives at Etosha.

Grey Penduline-Tit (African Penduline-Tit) *Anthoscopus caroli*: Excellent views of a pair in the miombo woodland south of Rundu. This is a scarce bird in Namibia, and was another lucky find.

TIMALIIDAE

Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*: Good views of a party of four in the woodland between Rundu and Divundu, and also seen a couple of times in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Black-faced Babbler (Black-lored Babbler) *Turdoides melanops*: Brief views of a couple near Namutoni and a party of eight in the bush at Roy's Camp, but the birds were unresponsive and elusive, presumably because they were already breeding.

Hartlaub's Babbler *Turdoides hartlaubi*: The common babbler in the north-east, seen extremely well on many occasions.

Southern Pied Babbler *Turdoides bicolor*: Good views of a party of six on the drive north to the Kunene River and two groups of four in Etosha National Park. Although widespread in the Namibian bush, this can be a hard bird to find.

Bare-cheeked Babbler *Turdoides gymnogenys*: First encountered at our lunch stop by the Ugab River, and then seen very well on several occasions at Hobatere and also by the Kunene River. This species is endemic to Namibia and Angola.

PYCNONOTIDAE

African Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans*: The common bulbul for much of the tour.

Dark-capped Bulbul (Black-eyed Bulbul) *Pycnonotus tricolor*: Common in the more humid areas in the north-east, where it largely replaces the previous species.

Terrestrial Brownbul (Terrestrial Bulbul) *Phyllastrephus terrestris*: First encountered at Sarasungu River Lodge, and then seen well at Ndhovu Lodge and Shakawe, and also found in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Yellow-bellied Greenbul (African Yellow-bellied Bulbul) *Chlorocichla flaviventris*: First encountered by the Kunene River, and then seen well on several occasions at Sarasungu River Lodge, Ndhovu Lodge and Shakawe in the north-east.

TURDIDAE

Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyanus*: Found on a couple of occasions in the miombo woodland in the north-east, and seen well around the lodge at Shakawe.

Groundscraper Thrush *Psophocichla litsipsirupa*: Several good sightings of this strange and attractive thrush, notably at Namibgrens Guest Farm, Hobatere and Etosha.

Short-toed Rock Thrush *Monticola brevipes*: Good views on several occasions at Namibgrens Guest Farm, Spreetshoogte Pass, Hobatere and Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

Mountain Wheatear (Mountain Chat) *Oenanthe monticola*: Common in the arid hill ranges near the coast and seen well on many occasions. Males of the scarce pale form are especially handsome.

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata*: Seven of these smart, long-legged wheatears were found in the west and central portions of Etosha National Park, but rather surprisingly, these were the only ones of the tour.

Familiar Chat (Red-tailed Chat) *Cercomela familiaris*: Commonly encountered around habitation in the semi-arid bush country, and living up to its name at Namibgrens Guest Farm, Namib Desert Lodge and Erongo Wilderness Lodge

Tractrac Chat *Cercomela tractrac*: Great views of this strikingly pale bird on the drive through Namib Naukluft National Park to Walvis Bay, and also seen on the drive from Henties Bay to Uis.

Karoo Chat *Cercomela schlegelii*: Fairly common in the stony desert between Namib Desert Lodge and Walvis Bay, and also seen on the drive from Henties Bay to Uis.

Arnott's Chat *Myrmecocichla arnotti*: Superb views of a male in song from an exposed perch in open woodland between Rundu and Divundu. Although fairly common in the Caprivi Strip, this is a scarce bird this far west.

Southern Ant-eating Chat *Myrmecocichla formicivora*: First encountered near Windhoek, and seen again during one of our night drives at Hobatere and on the drive to the Kunene River, but our best views were at Etosha, where the species is common.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*: Good views of a pair and a single bird by the river at Shakawe. The stonechats have recently been split into three species, with the nominate group from Africa being renamed African Stonechat.

- White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin's Robin) *Cossypha heuglini*: A colourful robin of the north-east, seen well at Sarasungu River Lodge, Ndhovu Lodge and Shakawe.
- Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush *Cichladusa ruficauda*: Great views of a very responsive bird in palm trees by the Kunene River. This Angolan speciality, here at the extreme southern edge of its range, always seems to be very obliging.
- White-browed Scrub-Robin (White-browed Robin) *Cercotrichas leucophrys*: Seen well on several occasions in the woodland in the north-east, and also found at Erongo Wilderness Lodge. The subspecies in this area, *ovamboensis*, is more or less unstreaked on the underparts which can show quite a peachy wash. In this respect, it is superficially similar to the Eastern Bearded Robin *C. quadrivirgata*.
- Kalahari Scrub-Robin (Kalahari Robin) *Cercotrichas paena*: A common and attractive bird of the dry thorn scrub, first seen on the drive to Namibgrens and especially common at Etosha.
- Karoo Robin (Karoo Scrub-Robin) *Cercotrichas coryphaeus*: Superb views of at least half a dozen of this very dull-coloured scrub-robin in the garden at Namibgrens Guest Farm. The species occurs here at the northern extremity of its range, and was a 'write-in' for the Birdquest Namibia tour.
- Herero Chat *Namibornis herero*: Fantastic scope views of a pair at close range near the top of Spreetshoogte Pass, three others seen well near the bottom of the pass, and yet another in the hills near Uis. This scarce and local near-endemic can be a difficult bird to find.

SYLVIIDAE

- Chestnut-vented Titbabbler (Common Titbabbler) *Parisoma subcaeruleum*: A common bird of the dry bush, seen well at the sewage works in Windhoek, Namibgrens Guest Farm, Namib Desert Lodge and Etosha.
- Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*: One seen well on the drive north to Rundu, one at Ndhovu Lodge, and a third in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- African Reed-Warbler (African Marsh Warbler) *Acrocephalus baeticatus*: Common at the sewage works in Windhoek, Swakopmund and Otjiwarongo.
- Sedge Warbler (European Sedge Warbler) *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*: Three in the reed-beds at Rundu sewage works, and three by the pond outside the restaurant at Shakawe, where one of the birds was in song.
- Lesser Swamp Warbler (Cape Reed Warbler) *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*: Good views of about 20 in the reed-beds at Rundu sewage works.
- Greater Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus rufescens*: Good views of two very responsive birds in the papyrus swamps at Shakawe.
- Little Rush-Warbler (African Sedge Warbler) *Bradypterus baboecala*: Good views of a couple in response to playback at Rundu sewage works, and heard on several occasions at Shakawe.
- Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: A common Palearctic migrant, first recorded at Namibgrens Guest Farm and found on many occasions in the north and east. It always seems strange to hear their pleasant little song in the African bush.
- Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*: Seen well at Roy's Camp, and also recorded at Sarasungu River Lodge and in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens*: Seen well on several occasions at Etosha, in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*: Many good sightings in the drier woodland in the west and at Etosha.
- Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops*: Great views of a responsive pair in the woodland near the Mahango Game Reserve.

- Burnt-necked Eremomela *Eremomela usticollis*: Good views of one on a couple of occasions in the compound at Namutoni, and also seen in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Grey-backed Camaroptera (Grey-backed Bleating Warbler) *Camaroptera brevicaudata*: A common bush bird, first encountered at Hobatere and then seen well on a number of occasions in the north and east.
- African Wren-Warbler (African Barred Warbler) *Camaroptera fasciolata*: Good views of several very responsive birds at Etosha, and also seen at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Rockrunner *Achaetops pycnopygius*: Somewhat distant views of three in the rocky hills at Hobatere, and much better views of a couple at Erongo Wilderness Lodge. A true Namibian endemic.

CISTICOLIDAE

- Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Cisticola) *Cisticola juncidis*: First encountered at the sewage works in Windhoek, and then found commonly in the grassland at Etosha and also seen at Otjiwarongo sewage works.
- Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus*: Abundant in the grassland at Etosha, and also seen on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens.
- Tinkling Cisticola *Cisticola rufilatus*: A couple responded well to playback and gave good views in the miombo woodland near Rundu.
- Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chinianus*: Fairly common in the north and seen well on several occasions, notably by the Kunene River and in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Luapula Cisticola *Cisticola luapula*: Two seen well on the floodplain by the Okavango at Shakawe. These birds responded well to the tape of the closely related Black-backed Cisticola *C. galactotes*, but showed little interest in the Chirping Cisticola tape.
- Chirping Cisticola *Cisticola pipiens*: Common in the papyrus swamps at Shakawe, and seen very well in response to playback. We also heard a couple in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Neddicky (Piping Cisticola) *Cisticola fulvicapillus*: Good views of four in the miombo woodland near Rundu.
- Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*: Fairly common in the moister habitats in the north, and seen well by the Kunene River and at Shakawe.
- Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans*: Common and widespread in the dry country and seen well on many occasions.
- Rufous-eared Warbler *Malcorus pectoralis*: Superb views of one of these pretty little warblers in low scrub near Okaukuejo.

MUSCICAPIDAE

- Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: Recorded on several occasions at Etosha and in the woodland in the north-east.
- Ashy Flycatcher (Blue-grey Flycatcher) *Muscicapa caerulescens*: Good views of a pair in the woodland by the Kunene River, and also seen around the lodge at Shakawe.
- Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina*: Good views of four in the miombo woodland south of Rundu and a couple the next day on the way to Divundu. An easy bird to overlook amongst the many Fork-tailed Drongos.
- Marico Flycatcher *Melaenornis mariquensis*: Common in the drier habitats, and abundant at Etosha.
- Pale Flycatcher (Pallid Flycatcher, Mouse-coloured Flycatcher) *Melaenornis pallidus*: Good views of a pair in the miombo woodland south of Rundu and a single bird near the entrance to the Mahango Game Reserve. A very nondescript flycatcher.
- Chat Flycatcher *Melaenornis infuscatus*: One of the commoner birds on the roadside wires in the semi-desert habitats in the west, first encountered on the drive to Namibgrens Guest Farm.

PLATYSTEIRIDAE

Chin-spot Batis *Batis molitor*: Good views of a pair in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Pirit Batis *Batis pririt*: This generally fairly common bird of the dry bush was strangely elusive this year. We saw one well in the garden at Namib Desert Lodge, but no more until our last day at Erongo Wilderness Lodge, where several birds responded well to playback.

MONARCHIDAE

African Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*: Common in the moister habitats in the north-east, and watched building a nest near the lodge at Shakawe.

MOTACILLIDAE

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*: A very striking wagtail, encountered once by the river near Divundu and on several occasions at Shakawe.

Cape Wagtail *Motacilla capensis*: An unimpressive wagtail, first encountered at the sewage works in Windhoek, and then seen commonly in the west, especially around Walvis Bay.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: Two birds near Ndhovu Lodge. This is a very scarce Palearctic migrant in Namibia.

African Pipit (Grassveld Pipit) *Anthus cinnamomeus*: The common pipit over much of Namibia and particularly numerous at Etosha.

Buffy Pipit *Anthus vaalensis*: One at the sewage works in Windhoek, two on the drive to Namibgrens, and three at Etosha. This otherwise unexciting pipit has a very distinctive way of bobbing its tail.

LANIIDAE

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*: First encountered in the eastern part of Etosha National Park, where we recorded up to 20 in a day, and then seen commonly in the north-east.

Common Fiscal (Common Fiscal Shrike) *Lanius collaris*: First encountered on the drive to Namib Desert Lodge, and then seen well on several occasions in the arid west. The subspecies concerned shows a white eyebrow, and may one day be split off as a separate species, the Latakoo Fiscal *L. subcoronatus*.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: Fairly common at Etosha and in the north-east.

Magpie Shrike (African Long-tailed Shrike) *Corvinella melanoleuca*: A very striking shrike, seen well in the eastern sector of Etosha National Park, in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Shakawe.

MALACONOTIDAE

Swamp Boubou *Laniarius bicolor*: First encountered in the woodland by the Kunene River, and then seen well on many occasions in the north-east, notably at Sarasungu River Lodge, Shakawe and Kavango River Lodge.

Crimson-breasted Shrike *Laniarius atrococcineus*: A common and attractive bird of the bush, seen well on many occasions, notably at Etosha and in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*: A fairly common bush bird, seen well on several occasions, usually in response to the Pearl-spotted Owlet tape.

Brubru *Nilaus afer*: Another fairly common bush bird, but more often heard than seen. Our best views were at Hobatere and in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu.

Brown-crowned Tchagra (Three-streaked Tchagra, Brown-headed Tchagra) *Tchagra australis*: Seen well on several occasions at Etosha and also on a couple of occasions in the Mahango Game Reserve. This species is not to be confused with the Three-streaked Tchagra *T. jamesi* of East Africa.

- Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala* (H): Heard calling in the distance in the woodland south of Rundu.
- Bokmakierie *Telophorus zeylonus*: Great views of a pair of these colourful bush-shrikes in the hills near Uis.
- Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus*: Superb views of a very responsive pair in the garden at Sarasungu River Lodge, and heard calling at Ndhovu Lodge and Shakawe.
- White-tailed Shrike *Lanioturdus torquatus*: A strikingly coloured and inquisitive bird of the dry bush, first seen at Namibgrens Guest Farm and then encountered on several occasions in the Hobatere area, near the Kunene River, in the western part of Etosha National Park and at Erongo Wilderness Lodge. This aberrant shrike looks more like a large batis than a true shrike and may, in fact, be more closely related to the batises.

PRIONOPIDAE

- White-crested Helmetshrike (White Helmetshrike) *Prionops plumatus*: Great views of a group of eight in the riverine woodland near Sarasungu River Lodge.
- Retz's Helmetshrike (Red-billed Helmetshrike) *Prionops retzii*: Superb views of a very inquisitive group of eight in the large trees by the river at Shakawe – a great find by Roger S. while most of us were having a siesta.
- Southern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus anguimans*: A bird of the dry woodland, seen well at Hobatere, the Kunene River and Etosha.

STURNIDAE

- Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*: Widespread and common this year. There were at least a thousand at the sewage works in Windhoek, and we recorded small flocks and little groups at many localities throughout the tour.
- Violet-backed Starling (Plum-coloured Starling) *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*: Small numbers recorded on several occasions in the woodland near Rundu, between Rundu and Divundu, at Ndhovu Lodge, and near the entrance to the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*: First seen just outside the airport near Windhoek, and then found commonly at Etosha and in the north-east.
- Meves's Starling (Meves's Long-tailed Starling, Long-tailed Glossy Starling) *Lamprotornis mevesii*: Common in the north, and delightfully tame at Hobatere.
- Cape Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis nitens*: Much the most widespread of the starlings, and particularly common at Hobatere and Etosha.
- Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*: Good views of a couple of pairs in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Pale-winged Starling *Onychognathus nabouroup*: Common in the vicinity of rocky hills. First encountered on the drive to Namibgrens, and seen especially well in the grounds of Namib Desert Lodge where the birds were remarkably tame.

BUPHAGIDAE

- Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*: Six with cattle near the Kunene River, a dozen at Ndhovu Lodge, and three with a little group of Kudu in the Mahango Game Reserve.

NECTARINIIDAE

- Marico Sunbird *Nectarinia mariquensis*: A widespread species, recorded in Windhoek, at Etosha, at Ndhovu Lodge, in the Mahango Game Reserve and at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Purple-banded Sunbird *Cinnyris bifasciatus*: Close views of at least four in the garden at Ndhovu Lodge. This species has a very restricted range in Namibia; it closely resembles the previous species, but is smaller and has a very different song.

- White-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia talatala*: Recorded in small numbers on several occasions in the moister habitats in the north, from the Kunene River to the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Dusky Sunbird *Nectarinia fusca*: The common sunbird of the dry country, first encountered in Windhoek and seen well on many occasions.
- Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Nectarinia senegalensis*: Good views on several occasions, notably in the garden at Namibgrens Guest Farm and Ndhovu Lodge.
- Amethyst Sunbird (African Black Sunbird) *Nectarinia amethystina*: Good views of a couple on the drive north to Rundu and four in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu.
- Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*: Excellent views of about half a dozen in the garden at Shakawe.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

- Orange River White-eye *Zosterops pallidus*: A single bird showed well in the park in Walvis Bay, and there was one near our hotel the next morning. Note the name change in the new SASOL guide now that Cape White-eye *Z. virens* has been split off.
- African Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*: Good views of a group of four in the miombo woodland south of Rundu, and heard in the forest between Rundu and Divundu the next day.

PLOCEIDAE

- Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis niger*: A fairly common bird of the bush, especially at Hobatere and Etosha. Their large, untidy stick nests were a common feature of the landscape.
- White-browed Sparrow Weaver *Plocepasser mahali*: Very common in the drier areas.
- Sociable Weaver *Philetairus socius*: Locally abundant in the drier bush. We had our first good views of birds at their huge communal nests on the drive from Windhoek to Namibgrens, and saw big flocks at Hobatere and Etosha.
- House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Common in the towns.
- Great Sparrow *Passer motitensis*: Another fairly common bush bird, seen well on many occasions, notably at Namibgrens Guest Farm, Hobatere, Etosha and Erongo Wilderness Lodge. Certainly one up on House Sparrow.
- Cape Sparrow *Passer melanurus*: A very attractive sparrow found commonly in the arid west from Spreetshoogte Pass and Namib Desert Lodge to the Walvis Bay area.
- Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus*: Widespread and fairly common in the dry bush and around several of our lodges.
- Yellow-throated Petronia (African Yellow-throated Sparrow) *Petronia supercilialis*: A couple in the miombo woodland south of Rundu and two near the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Scaly-feathered Finch *Sporopipes squamifrons*: An odd little finch of the dry bush, first encountered near Windhoek airport and then seen well on several occasions, notably at Namib Desert Lodge and Etosha.
- Thick-billed Weaver (Grosbeak Weaver) *Amblyospiza albifrons*: Great views of about 20 birds at their colony by the small pond outside the restaurant at Shakawe.
- Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*: A single bird in the woodland by the Kunene River, another at Ndhovu Lodge, and a few around the lodge at Shakawe.
- Village Weaver (Spotted-backed Weaver) *Ploceus cucullatus*: A few birds in non-breeding plumage around the lodge at Shakawe.
- Chestnut Weaver *Ploceus rubiginosus*: Large flocks of birds in non-breeding plumage at Hobatere and the Kunene River, and also a couple at Rundu sewage works and a couple at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

- Southern Masked Weaver (Masked Weaver) *Ploceus velatus*: The most widespread of the weavers, first seen in Windhoek and recorded commonly throughout the tour, except in the extreme north-east.
- Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius*: A couple in the garden of our hotel in Windhoek, and also recorded at Hobatere.
- Golden Weaver (Holub's Golden Weaver) *Ploceus xanthops*: Fairly common along the Okavango in the north-east, and also recorded by the Kunene River. This was the most conspicuous weaver around the lodge at Shakawe.
- Southern Brown-throated Weaver *Ploceus xanthopterus*: Common at the lodge and in the reed-beds along the river at Shakawe.
- Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*: Seen well on several occasions in the teak forest between Rundu and Divundu, and also in the woodland in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*: A few at the sewage works in Windhoek, and locally abundant in the north and east. There were huge roosts in the reed-beds at Namutoni and Rundu sewage works.
- Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*: A dozen birds at the sewage works in Windhoek, one of which was starting to come into breeding plumage.
- Fan-tailed Widowbird (Red-shouldered Widow) *Euplectes axillaris*: Good views of a dozen at Rundu sewage works and up to 30 along the river at Shakawe.

ESTRILDIDAE

- Green-winged Pytilia (Melba Finch) *Pytilia melba*: This colourful little bird showed well at the drinking troughs in the garden of Namibgrens Guest Farm, and was then seen on several occasions at Etosha and in the north-east.
- Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*: A pair at the sewage works in Windhoek, and several pairs and small groups in the north-east.
- Brown Firefinch *Lagonosticta nitidula*: Good views of four outside Mark's cabin at Ndhovu Lodge, about a dozen at Shakawe, and a couple in the Mahango Game Reserve – a good showing for a species that can be missed.
- Blue Waxbill (Blue-breasted Cordon-bleu) *Uraeginthus angolensis*: A common bird of the woodland and bush, seen well by the Kunene River, at Etosha, and on many occasions in the north-east.
- Violet-eared Waxbill *Uraeginthus granatinus*: Fairly common and seen well on several occasions at Etosha, Roy's Camp, the Mahango Game Reserve and Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*: Small parties at Windhoek sewage works, Namibgrens Guest Farm, Walvis Bay, Rundu, Shakawe and Otjiwarongo sewage works.
- Black-faced Waxbill (Black-cheeked Waxbill) *Estrilda erythronotos*: One of the more attractive estrildine finches, seen well at Etosha, the Mahango Game Reserve, Kavango River Lodge and Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Cinderella Waxbill *Estrilda thomensis*: Superb views of a little flock of eight coming to drink at a small stream near the Kunene River. This pretty little estrildine finch, an Angolan speciality here at the southern extremity of its range, came second in the 'Bird of the Trip' contest.
- African Quail Finch *Ortygospiza atricollis*: Eight flushed from the grassland during one of our game drives at Etosha. The views were not great, but one rarely gets anything other than flight views of this tiny little finch.
- Red-headed Finch *Amadina erythrocephala*: A common Southern African endemic seen well on a number of occasions in the drier habitats, notably at Namib Desert Lodge where about 100 were coming in to drink at the waterhole.

- Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*: Good views of a pair in the woodland near the entrance to the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*: Three (including two males in breeding plumage) at the sewage works in Windhoek, and another bird in the Mahango Game Reserve.
- Shaft-tailed Whydah *Vidua regia*: A single bird in non-breeding plumage at Windhoek sewage works on our first day was the only one of the tour. This is usually the commonest of the three whydahs on this tour.
- Long-tailed Paradise-Whydah (Eastern Paradise-Whydah) *Vidua paradisaea*: Good views of one at Windhoek sewage works and a couple at Hobatere, and also recorded on the long drive south from Rundu. All were in non-breeding plumage.

FRINGILLIDAE

- Yellow-fronted Canary (Yellow-eyed Canary) *Serinus mozambicus*: Good views of about six in the woodland south of Rundu.
- Black-throated Canary *Serinus atrogularis*: A common bird of the dry country, first encountered on the drive to Namibgrens, and seen at close range in the garden at Hobatere and at the drinking pools at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Yellow Canary *Serinus flaviventris*: Good views of about half a dozen coming in to drink at Namib Desert Lodge, and also recorded on the drive to the Kunene River and on several occasions at Etosha.
- White-throated Canary *Serinus albogularis*: Good views of small numbers on several occasions in the arid west: at Sreetshoogte Pass, Namib Desert Lodge, Ghaub Canyon (en route to Walvis Bay), Uis and Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

EMBERIZIDAE

- Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris*: A very colourful bunting, first encountered at Hobatere and then seen well on a number of occasions in the woodland in the north-east.
- Cape Bunting *Emberiza capensis*: Single birds at Namibgrens Guest Farm, Sreetshoogte Pass and Ghaub Canyon, and three or four at Erongo Wilderness Lodge, where we had some very close views.
- Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting) *Emberiza tahapisi*: Common at Hobatere and also seen by the Kunene River, at Etosha and at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Lark-like Bunting *Emberiza impetuani*: A nondescript little bird, seen well at the drinking troughs at Namibgrens Guest Farm, Sreetshoogte Pass, Ghaub Canyon, Uis and Erongo Wilderness Lodge (where we saw all four species of bunting).

MAMMALS

- Angolan Epauletted Fruit Bat *Epomophorus*: One seen and others heard at Rundu.
- Commerson's Leaf-nosed Bat *Hipposideros commersoni*: Great views of one roosting in the restaurant at Shakawe.
- Common Slit-faced Bat *Nycteris thebaica*: Common around the lodge at Shakawe.
- Smith's Rock Elephant Shrew *Elephantulus rupestris*: Great views of three of these extraordinary animals amongst the rocks at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.
- Striped Mouse *Rhodomys pumilio*: Good views of a couple in the garden at Namib Desert Lodge, and two more at Etosha.
- Black-tailed Tree Rat *Thallomys nigricauda*: Great views of one clambering about outside one of the chalets at Namutoni.
- Dassie Rat *Petromus typicus*: Close views of two of these attractive little rodents outside the restaurant at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

Ground Squirrel (Cape Ground Squirrel) *Xerus inauris*: Fairly common in the western deserts and very common at Etosha.

Mountain Ground Squirrel *Xenus princeps*: Great views of at least three at Hobatere.

Striped Tree Squirrel (Kuhl's Tree Squirrel) *Funisciurus congicus*: Close views of several at Hobatere.

Tree Squirrel (Smith's Bush Squirrel) *Paraxerus cepapi*: Several around the lodges at Etosha, Shakawe and Rundu, and also seen in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Porcupine (South African Crested Porcupine) *Hystrix africaeustralis*: Good views of two of these impressive beasts at the waterhole at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

Springhare *Pedetes capensis*: A couple of these strange creatures during our first night drive at Hobatere.

Scrub Hare *Lepus saxatilis*: Single individuals recorded on four occasions in the dry bush.

Rock Dassie (Cape Dassie, Cape Rock Hyrax) *Procavia capensis*: Very common on Spreetshoogte Pass and around Erongo Wilderness Lodge, and seen in small numbers at several other localities where there were rocks. This is the preferred food of Verreaux's Eagles.

African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*: Up to eight at the waterhole at Hobatere, a single individual in the western sector of Etosha National Park, and a herd of 26 near Namutoni. Because of the recent rain, the waterholes at Etosha had lost their attractiveness and most of the elephants had wandered off into the bush.

Mountain Zebra *Equus zebra*: A total of 13 on the drive from Namib Desert Lodge to Walvis Bay, at least 30 at Hobatere, and about 40 in the western part of Etosha National Park, where this and the next species come together.

Burchell's Zebra *Equus burchelli*: Abundant in the central and eastern parts of Etosha National Park. Not quite as pretty and intricately marked as the previous species.

Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis*: Good views for the front bus (but only rear-end views for the back bus) of one that trotted across the road as we were on our way out of Etosha National Park.

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius*: A few in the river at Ndhovu Lodge, good numbers in the Mahango Game Reserve, and about 10 along the river at Shakawe.

Warthog *Phacochoerus aethiopicus*: About 20 at Etosha, a few in the Mahango Game Reserve, and six on the long drive south from Rundu.

Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis*: Only a few around Hobatere, but large numbers at Etosha, where we had many close encounters.

Blue Wildebeest (Brindled Gnu) *Connochaetes taurinus*: Common at Etosha.

Red Hartebeest (Hartebeeste) *Alcelaphus buselaphus*: About 60 at Etosha.

Tsessebe (Sassaby) *Damaliscus lunatus*: Good views of six in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Common Duiker (Grey Duiker) *Sylvicapra grimmia*: One seen briefly in the eastern sector of Etosha National Park.

Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis*: Common in the western deserts and at Hobatere, and abundant at Etosha.

Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus*: Excellent views of two small groups on Spreetshoogte Pass, at least three at Hobatere, and three at Erongo Wilderness Lodge – as always, amongst the rocks.

Damara Dik-Dik (Kirk's Dik-Dik) *Madoqua kirkii*: Great views of several on dik-dik drive at Etosha, and also four at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

Steenbok (Steinbok) *Raphicerus campestris*: Seen on several occasions by the roadside as we were driving through the bush, and quite common at Etosha.

Impala *Aepyceros melampus*: At least 100 of the black-faced form in the eastern half of Etosha National Park, and 50-80 of the regular form on both our visits to the Mahango Game Reserve. The former is sometimes treated as a separate species, the Black-faced Impala *A. petersi*.

Sable (Sable Antelope) *Hippotragus niger*: Excellent views of five on our second visit to the Mahango Game Reserve, including a very fine male.

Gemsbok (Oryx) *Oryx gazella*: Several small groups in the western deserts, and common at Hobatere and Etosha.

African Buffalo (Cape Buffalo) *Syncerus caffer*: A distant herd of at least 32 on the floodplain in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Kudu (Greater Kudu) *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*: Superb views on several occasions at Hobatere, Etosha and the Mahango Game Reserve, but far less numerous than usual.

Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus*: Distant views of a couple on the riverbank across from Ndhovu Lodge, and great views of three in the Mahango Game Reserve, including a fine male.

Eland *Taurotragus oryx*: Only a single individual in the distance at Hobatere. This is a rather scarce antelope in Namibia.

Reedbuck (Common Reedbuck) *Redunca arundinum*: Fairly common in the Mahango Game Reserve on both our visits.

Waterbuck (Common Waterbuck) *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*: A single individual on both our visits to the Mahango Game Reserve, where the species has recently been introduced.

Red Lechwe (Lechwe) *Kobus leche*: About 50 feeding on the floodplain in the Mahango Game Reserve on our first visit, and some 30 on our return.

Spotted Hyena *Crocuta crocuta*: A total of 14, mostly in one loose group, on our afternoon game drive at Etosha.

Lion *Panthera leo*: A very poor showing this year. We only saw two at Hobatere and six at Etosha, and the only big male was a long way off!

African Wild Cat *Felis lybica*: Great views of a small individual apparently begging for scraps outside the restaurant at Erongo Wilderness Lodge.

Bat-eared Fox *Otocyon megalotis*: Superb views of seven during our night drives at Hobatere.

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas*: First encountered on the drive north from Namib Desert Lodge and at Walvis Bay, and then seen well on many occasions at Hobatere and Etosha.

Cape Clawless Otter (African Clawless Otter) *Aonyx capensis*: Close views of this very big otter in the river at Shakawe, and also seen in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Small-spotted Genet (Common Genet) *Genetta genetta*: Excellent views of two during both our night drives at Hobatere.

Suricate (Meerkat) *Suricata suricatta*: Good views of a troop of 12 in the desert between Henties Bay and Uis.

Yellow Mongoose (Bushy-tailed Meerkat) *Cynictis penicillata*: Three on the drive from Namib Desert Lodge to Walvis Bay and five at Etosha.

Slender Mongoose *Galerella sanguinea*: Only a couple in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo*: Close views of a band of 18 in the compound at Namutoni.

Chacma Baboon *Papio ursinus*: Encountered on many occasions along the roadside in the arid west, but strangely absent at Etosha.

Vervet Monkey *Cercopithecus aethiops*: Small groups by the Kunene River and at Roy's Camp, and about 25 in the Mahango Game Reserve.

Cape Fur Seal (Afro-Australian Fur Seal) *Arctocephalus pusillus*: About ten in the surf off the ocean beach at Walvis Bay.

Dusky Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*: One seen briefly off the ocean beach at Walvis Bay.

THE BIRD OF THE TRIP

1 st	Pel's Fishing Owl
2 nd	Cinderella Waxbill
3 rd	Harlequin Quail
4 th	Dune Lark
5 th	Retz's Helmetshrike
6 th	African Hobby
7 th	Violet-eared Waxbill
=8 th	Rosy-faced Lovebird
=8 th	Rufous-bellied Tit
=10 th	Giant Kingfisher
=10 th	Blue Waxbill