



Gorgeous Bushshrike – Mkuze Game Reserve | © Martin Benadie

*(Note: All images used to illustrate this tour report were taken on the actual 2017 tour).*

# ULTIMATE SOUTH AFRICA

10 NOVEMBER – 4 DECEMBER 2017

**LEADER:** MARTIN BENADIE

The **2017 Birdquest Ultimate South Africa** tour certainly lived up to its name – yet again! An outstanding birding destination and this tour delivered, with an amazingly high proportion of the targets (the hoped for endemics, regional endemics and specialities) being not only found, but also seen remarkably well. 510 bird species were seen well by all group members (out of 523 species recorded on tour). The mammals also put in a good showing with over 50 species observed.

Top birds included the fantastic Pink-throated Twinspot, confiding Victorin's and Barratt's Warblers, magical Blue Swallows, the stunning Drakensberg Rockjumper, which along with its close relative the Cape Rockjumper, and the two sugarbirds (Cape and Gurney's Sugarbirds), are all truly iconic species. Other memorable specials included the graceful Black Harrier, Green Barbet, the trio of wonderful cranes, Bokmakierie, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Karoo Eremomela and nine superb species of bustard. Colour was added by showy Cape Parrots, vivid Gorgeous Bushshrikes, Ground Woodpecker and three species of splendid turacos, elegance by the Buff-streaked Chats, comedy by African Penguins and rarity by Rudd's Lark and Taita Falcon, not to mention the rapidly disappearing vultures! Four per cent of our species were members of the *Alaudidae* family as we saw 22 species of lark in what has to be the lark capital of the world. The great thing was that we saw them all well enough for all to appreciate their subtle differences. This of course just highlights a fraction of the wonderful and varied bird life encountered overall. But it wasn't just the

birds. We also notched up an impressive mammal list, including rarities such as Aardvark and Aardwolf, enjoyed varied and wonderful scenery throughout, and all this whilst making the most of the excellent roads, accommodation and restaurants. South Africa is certainly a world-class birding destination with a quiet, rural atmosphere over much of the country.



Malachite Sunbird – Harold Porter Botanical Gardens | © Martin Benadie

#### **Day 01: 10 November**

Started the tour with a morning walk right from Sacred Mountain Lodge in Noordhoek in Cape Town. This was just perfect to ease into things and we tallied a good number of species on our pre-breakfast meander. Notable sightings included African Goshawk, White-rumped Swift, Red-eyed Dove, Cape White-eye, Cape Wagtail, Greater Striped Swallow, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Hadedra Ibis, Helmeted Guineafowl, Southern Fiscal, Cape Bulbul, Cape Weaver, African Harrier-Hawk, African Sacred Ibis, Egyptian Goose, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Southern Boubou, Sweet Waxbill and African Paradise Flycatcher.

After breakfast we headed to the acclaimed Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, set in the foothills of Table Mountain that dominates the city, where we spent the rest of the morning. This was very relaxed birding on foot, and being a Friday was relatively quiet from a visitor perspective. During our time here we notched up a great number of species too including the likes of Peregrine Falcon, Little Swift, Red-winged Starling, Rock Martin, Black Saw-wing, White-necked Raven, Forest Canary, Black Sparrowhawk, Cape Spurrow, Malachite Sunbird, Black Saw-wing, Karoo Prinia, Alpine Swift and African Black Swift in good numbers flying low over the gardens, Sombre Greenbul, African Dusky Flycatcher and our first showy Cape Sugarbirds.

The afternoon was spent birding the wetlands of Tableview to the north of the city as well the Strandfontein Sewage Works, the latter also an internationally renowned bird sanctuary. This was a great way to finish off the day and our list was bolstered considerably with Zitting Cisticola, Little Rush Warbler, Spur-winged Goose, Black-shouldered Kite, Common Greenshank, Kelp Gull, Brown-throated Martin, Common Waxbill, Ruddy Turnstone, South African Shelduck, Lesser Swamp Warbler, African Fish Eagle, White Stork, Kittlitz's Plover, African Pipit, Caspian Tern, Great White Pelican, Common Ringed Plover, Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Water Thick-knee, Cape Sparrow, Red-billed Teal, Glossy Ibis, Red-knobbed Coot, Black-winged Stilt, White-breasted Cormorant, Hartlaub's Gull, Swift Tern, Sandwich Tern, Speckled



Pigeon, Pied Avocet, Greater Flamingo, Southern Pochard, Maccoa Duck, Cape Teal, Red-billed Teal, Western Cattle Egret, Black-headed Heron, Common Moorhen, Little Grebe, Whiskered Tern, Yellow-billed Kite, Cape Turtle Dove, White-throated Swallow, Grey Heron, African Spoonbill, White-faced Whistling Duck and Levallant's Cisticola.



Cape Sugarbird, Cape Batis, Victorin's Warbler – © Martin Benadie

### Day 02: 11 November

We did a pelagic trip today, which thankfully did run. Cape Town is famous for the concentrations of seabirds that can be found offshore and our boat took us out to the trawling grounds which lie about 30-40 nautical miles offshore in the cold Benguela Current. Conditions were calm but there was quite heavy fog for most of the day that hampered the birding a bit, as we could not locate any fishing trawlers. Needless to say an enjoyable day was had and we saw the likes of Shy Albatross, White-chinned Petrel, Cape Gannet, Sooty Shearwater, Parasitic Jaeger, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, large numbers of Cape Cormorant, a few Bank Cormorant, Sabine's Gull, big numbers of Common Tern, and a single European Storm-Petrel. Interesting marine mammals recorded were Humpback Whale and Afro-Australian Fur Seal.

### Day 03: 12 November

This morning we explored the Hottentots Holland Mountains, a dramatically rugged, windswept range which receives the brunt of the southeasterly gales that are so frequent in the Cape. Our first stop was the quiet hamlet of Rooiels set in a dramatic scene where huge boulders protect delicate fynbos flora and meets the icy-blue Atlantic coast. Our key target here was the iconic Cape Rockjumper, which we thankfully saw well! A side cast of other exciting endemics noted here included Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Rock Thrush, Cape Siskin, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Cape Grassbird and Grey-backed Cisticola.

We then stopped in the quaint coastal town of Betty's Bay, and visited the Stony Point Nature Reserve which harbours a large colony of African Penguins. A boardwalk takes one through the colony and we spent some time here just observing their antics. The colony lies on the site of the old *Waaygat* Whaling Station, which was used to harvest and process whale meat in the early to mid-1900s. Stony Point is also an excellent site for seeing South Africa's marine cormorants. We saw nesting Bank Cormorant and a few Crowned Cormorant here together with loads of Cape and White-breasted Cormorants. African Oystercatcher were also seen on the rocky shoreline here and we had marvellous views of a vocal male Klaas's Cuckoo too.

Harold Porter Botanical Gardens is just as picturesque as Kirstenbosch and was a wonderful spot for some lunch and another obligatory stroll in awe-inspiring scenery. This secluded garden (which mixes cultivated fynbos gardens with pristine natural fynbos) is set between mountain and sea, in the heart of the Cape Fynbos region within the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve. Most memorable was probably finding a flowering patch of yellow and orange *Leucospermums* (pincushions) where Cape Sugarbirds and Malachite Sunbirds put in quite a show for us as they were feeding and displaying. Other new species included the impressive Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Canary and Yellow Bishop in full breeding plumage.

After another full day we took the scenic drive all along False Bay and back to Noordhoek.

#### **Day 04: 13 November**

We left Noordhoek at 04:30am in order to get to Grootvadersbosch Forest Reserve early enough, arriving here around 08:30. From Cape Town the drive takes one through the Overberg where the landscape is dominated by endless wheat and canola fields with ribbons of remnant *renosterveld* in between. Here we saw our first stately Blue Cranes and Denham's Bustard and dainty Neddicky before arriving at the forest where we stayed until early afternoon. Here we picked up Victorin's Warbler, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Forest Canary, Olive Bushshrike, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher and African Olive Pigeon. The very shy and cryptic Knysna Warbler required a lot more work to see and even though it was calling beautifully we only managed brief but conclusive views none-the-less. Grootvadersbosch comprises 250ha of forest, the most precious in the southwestern Cape and largest remaining example in the Langeberg.

From Grootvadersbosch we birded the Suurbraak area back to Buffelsjagsrivier and the Agulhas plains towards Malgas. A productive small wetland fringed with some large trees was a worthwhile stop. Here we saw our first African Swamphen, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Black Cuckooshrike, Hamerkop, African Darter and a pair of African Black Duck. We also tallied Streaky-headed Seedeater, Terrestrial Brownbul and dainty Pearl-breasted Swallows in the area.

The late afternoon was enjoyed in the Agulhas wheatlands and patches of remnant indigenous vegetation where we marvelled at more Blue Cranes, Jackal Buzzard, Spotted Thick-knee, Cape Crow, Yellow Canary, Red-capped Lark, Cape Clapper Lark, African Stonechat and hunting Lesser Kestrel which is a summer migrant to Southern Africa. We were also happy to find Agulhas Long-billed Lark and Capped Wheatears also put in a good display. Rain was building back towards Swellendam and we decided to call it a day but not before seeing a Giant Kingfisher along a wooded stream! A wonderful home-cooked meal was enjoyed at our impressive old Cape Dutch homestead where we stayed the night.

#### **Day 05: 14 November**

Another early start (as most days) to make the most of the exciting birding on offer. Good rains the night before continued for most of the day but we made the most of the conditions tallying an impressive day list none-the-less. Initially we birded a mosaic of Overberg wheatlands (surprisingly productive), indigenous strips of low scrub-like *renosterveld* and small wetlands. The birding was really pumping and new birds included Large-billed Lark, Grey-winged Francolin, Red-capped Lark, Grey-backed Cisticola, Karoo Korhaan, Acacia Pied Barbet, Namaqua Dove and nice views of Southern Tchagra. Karoo Scrub Robin was also seen as well as our first Black Harrier, huge numbers of Southern Red Bishop, Southern Masked Weaver and Cape Weaver as well as a dazzling pair of Bokmakierie. Interesting mammals were Cape Porcupine, Scrub Hare, Chacma Baboon and Cape Grey MongOOSE.





Cape Siskin, African Penguin, Klaas's Cuckoo, Cape Penduline-Tit – © **Martin Benadie**





Damara Canary, Black Harrier, Chestnut-banded Plover - © Martin Benadie

Another birding spot on our radar today was the scenic and productive De Hoop Nature Reserve which we birded for most of the morning to make the most of what was on offer here. Upon arrival, this wonderful reserve stretched out ahead of us, all the way to the wild Atlantic Ocean, and we had the morning to explore the vleis, pans, restioid grasslands and thickets. Unfortunately it rained quite a bit whilst we were here but luckily we could carry on birding – mostly. More views were enjoyed of species already seen such as Southern Tchagra amongst the likes of Common Ostrich, South African Shelduck, numerous Maccoa Duck, Blue Crane, Wood Sandpiper, White-throated Canary and Cardinal Woodpecker.

A detour was then made to Struisbaai to visit a small breeding colony of Damara Tern resident at this time of year. Luckily we had a welcome window in all the rain today and managed to see three birds really well as well as White-fronted Plover! Lunch was enjoyed at Agulhas, the most southern tip in Africa, before the long drive to Wellington where we arrived early evening.

#### **Day 06: 15 November**

First up today was a visit to the Tienie Versveld Wildflower Reserve, slightly west of Darling, which we birded for just over an hour. Here we saw the streaky nominate form of Cloud Cisticola, Cape Longclaw, another Black Harrier, Blue Cranes and Large-billed Lark.

West Coast National Park was where we spent most of the day birding the coastal *strandveld* which dominates the landscape here, the picturesque Langebaan Lagoon and a small freshwater wetland. Species recorded at this locality were Karoo Scrub Robin, Cape Penduline Tit, Damara Canary, Banded Martin, Southern Black Korhaan, Grey Plover, Lesser Flamingo, Sanderling, White-fronted Plover and African Oystercatcher.

Late afternoon saw us visiting the Berg River Estuary near Velddrift. The key target here was Chestnut-banded Plover which we saw well. Other enjoyable species included Spotted Eagle-Owl, Black-necked Grebe, Ruff, Karoo Scrub Robin, Cape Sparrow, White-backed Mousebird, European Bee-eater and exceptional views of Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper.

Our drive back to Langebaan was uneventful except for Douglas saving a huge mole snake from certain death on a busy road.

#### **Day 07: 16 November**

With some species still needed for the area we decided another early start was in order and birding a very productive stretch of coastal *strandveld* north of Langebaan. This proved to be a very good move and a highly enjoyable birding session was had tallying the likes of several displaying Karoo Lark, Grey Tit, Grey-winged Francolin and probably our best view of Black Harrier. In scrubby, harvested wheatlands we also saw our first pair of Sickle-winged Chat here as well.

We then proceeded north along the N7, birding a secluded gorge in the Clanwilliam area. This was another good birding stop where we eventually saw the localised Protea Canary as well as Long-billed Crombec, Verreaux's Eagle, Layard's Tit-Babbler and Fairy Flycatcher. Jo also spotted a small Klipspringer (rock-loving antelope) here which was a good find!

After a light lunch was enjoyed in Clanwilliam to get out of the hot sun a bit we birded along back roads through the Cedarberg Mountains to Calvinia into the Karoo. Several birding stops were had and new birds for the afternoon session included Booted Eagle, Karoo Chat, Mountain Wheatear, Namaqua Warbler, African Reed Warbler, a surprise Double-banded Courser and our first stunning Pale Chanting Goshawk.

#### **Day 08: 17 November**

A pre-breakfast trip to the nearby Akkerendam Nature Reserve was first-up on the day. This was a stunning birding setting, with the backdrop of the Hantam Mountains, situated just outside Calvinia, in the arid region of the Northern Cape. Here we saw Rufous-eared Warbler, Ludwig's Bustard, Karoo Long-billed Lark and Long-billed Pipit. After a delicious traditional South African breakfast back at the Hantam Huis we headed up to the Brandvlei area for rest of the day taking in various birding spots to the north and east of this small, idiosyncratic, town. This starkly beautiful northern Karoo region where arid, stony plains are bisected by sandy wadis dotted with thorn trees, give rise to shimmering mirages during the heat of the day. These harsh landscapes hold some very interesting endemics and near-endemics and we recorded Kori Bustard, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, Spike-heeled Lark, Lark-like Bunting as some of the new species. One of our biggest targets was Sclater's Lark and thankfully we picked up a few birds late afternoon coming into drink at a small water point. A definite highlight of the day!

#### **Day 09: 18 November**

We continued our Karoo birding experience taking in another back road north of Calvinia, up to Loeriesfontein and onto Springbok. It was a long driving day but still managed roadside birding, exploring the Gamoep area and the western boundary of Goegap Nature Reserve, before arriving in Springbok late afternoon.

New species tallied for the day were Greater Kestrel, Pririt Batis, Martial Eagle, Pale-winged Starling and Cinnamon-breasted Warbler.





Karoo Chat, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Sclater's Lark – © Martin Benadie

#### Day 10: 19 November

After an early breakfast we set out to explore the nearby Goegap Nature Reserve which was a great morning for birds and mammals alike. Soon after arriving a Karoo Eremomela was heard and thankfully we found it after a short walk from the car. Amongst the huge granite boulders of this scenic reserve we also found Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Capped Wheatear, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Cape Sparrow, Pirit Batis and Dusky Sunbird. Mammal-wise we saw Cape Mountain Zebra and Gemsbok (Oryx) here as well.

We enjoyed some lunch back in Springbok and a very welcome short rest before heading onto Port Nolloth right on the coast. We had a few localised targets here and in no time were enjoying cracking views of Cape Long-billed Lark. We also travelled further north of town to find the localised Barlow's Lark which we also saw very well in the end. An interesting mammal for the afternoon was a Brant's Whistling Rat. A delicious seafood dinner was enjoyed in Port Nolloth before heading back to Springbok.

#### Day 11: 20 November

First light saw us heading for the ancient Koa River red dune system near Aggenys, arriving while it was still cool. In the still morning air here we soon picked up the rattling call of Red Lark and enjoyed good views of several birds in the end together with Fawn-coloured Lark and cute Scaly-feathered Finches.



We also birded the area around Pofadder towards Onseepkans. This drive was hot and fairly birdless but the highlight was certainly all the huge Sociable Weaver nests!

From here we still had a way to go and arrived at the magical Augrabies Falls National Park in the early afternoon. At the Augrabies Falls the river is forced through a dramatic series of gorges where, as well as the falls themselves, there are turbulent, boiling rapids over a distance of several kilometres. The strip of cultivation on either side of the river is rich and luxuriant but just a short distance away begins a stark and arid landscape.

Tired of the vehicle we all opted for a walk around camp which was highly productive for Spotted Flycatcher, Alpine Swift, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Black Cuckoo, Orange River White-eye, Common Scimitarbill, Southern Masked Weaver, Ashy Tit, Cape Glossy Starling, Karoo Thrush, Crested Barbet and African Red-eyed Bulbul. Banded and Cape Grey Mongoose and Rock Hyrax were also very visible around camp.

#### **Day 12: 21 November**

First thing another birding walk was taken around camp and the various viewpoints of the Falls before a good breakfast and hitting the road. On our pre-breakfast jaunt, African Pied Wagtail, White-rumped Swift, Little Swift, African Palm Swift, Rock Martin, Goliath Heron and Brubru were all seen. Our last new birds in the Augrabies area were Jacobin Cuckoo, and Malachite Kingfisher which we saw on the drive out.

Today saw us continue north-eastwards towards the Kimberley area. It was another long drive day via Upington and Campbell but with surprisingly good roadside birding necessitating frequent stops, thankfully along mostly quiet roads. Class sightings on the day were Booted Eagle, Pygmy Falcon, Lanner Falcon, Northern Black Korhaan, Fawn-coloured Lark, Rock Kestrel and Short-toed Rock Thrush,

A picnic lunch was also enjoyed overlooking a scenic waterbody with good birding in general and our first Squacco Herons were tallied here. In the acacia scrub more towards Kimberley we also found a Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill.

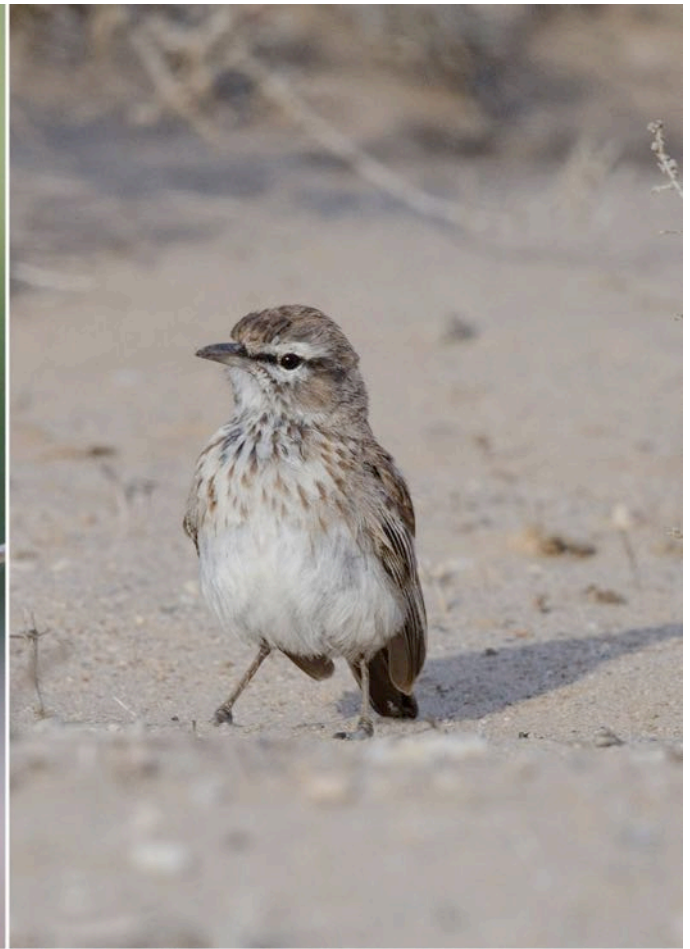
We arrived at Marrick Game Farm on the outskirts of Kimberley late afternoon – enough time to settle in, have a good dinner and then set out on a night drive on the property. Some rain initially delayed our departure but this thankfully cleared for what was to be an absolutely incredible drive for mammals in particular! Good views were had in particular of Aardvark, Aardwolf, loads of Springhare and Cape Porcupine. Western Barn Owl was also seen.

#### **Day 13: 22 November**

The day was spent exploring the Marrick property at leisure, birding drives interspersed with short walks and visiting a few well-placed hides. We racked up some great sightings as a result.

Star birds seen at Marrick included: Pale Chanting Goshawk, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar (nightdrive), Speckled Pigeon, African Red-eyed Bulbul, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Ludwig's Bustard, Namaqua Dove, Crowned Lapwing, Red-faced Mousebird, Cape Starling, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Ashy Tit, Common Buttonquail, Swainson's Spurfowl, Lesser Kestrel, Plain-backed Pipit, Rufous-eared Warbler, Black-shouldered Kite, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Red-billed Quelea, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Gabar Goshawk, White-bellied Sunbird, Greater Kestrel, Tawny Eagle, Secretarybird, Northern Black Korhaan, European Bee-eater, Spike-heeled Lark, Double-banded Courser, Common Ostrich, Blue Crane, Capped Wheatear, Eastern Clapper Lark (many displaying), Ant-eating Chat, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Desert Cisticola, Red-headed Finch, Black-faced Waxbill, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, Barn Swallow, Red-backed Shrike, Sabota Lark, Violet-eared Waxbill, Black-chested Prinia, Neddicky, Acacia Pied Barbet, Marico Flycatcher, Scaly-feathered Finch, Cape Turtle Dove, Diederik Cuckoo, Yellow Canary, Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler, Fiscal Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, African Hoopoe, Cape Sparrow, Red-faced Mousebird, Familiar Chat, Laughing Dove, Southern Masked Weaver, Greater Striped Swallow, Cape Robin-Chat and Kalahari Scrub Robin.

Mammal viewing was also enjoyable here with Black Wildebeest, Springbok and Giraffe amongst diurnal species seen. We decided upon another nightdrive and saw Aardvark again, as well as Bat-eared Fox, Common Genet and Zorilla.



Fiscal Flycatcher, Barlow's Lark, Red Lark, Cape Long-billed Lark – © **Martin Benadie**





Eastern Clapper Lark, Orange River White-eye, Double-banded Courser, Diederik Cuckoo – © Martin Benadie

#### Day 14: 23 November

The early morning saw us exploring some sites around Kimberley. Bradfield's Swift was seen exceptionally well in the morning light. We had a long journey ahead of us today so set off for Johannesburg. We took a more indirect route however with the odd detour adding species like Red-breasted Swallow, Blue Korhaan, Long-tailed Widowbird, Melodious Lark (which took some searching but seen well in end), Zitting Cisticola, Pin-tailed Whydah, Grey-headed Gull and South African Cliff Swallow. By late afternoon we arrived at Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve but not much new was added, and being dog-tired, we continued onto Johannesburg's East Rand where we stayed the night.

#### Day 15: 24 November

Not wanting to be stuck in morning traffic we left Johannesburg early again and spent the morning birding broad-leaved and acacia woodlands just north of Pretoria. Today was a perfect day weather wise and after the rains the previous evening the morning birding was just incredible with overall diversity picking up significantly in the east of the country.

New for us were Crested Francolin, Woodland Kingfisher, Brown Snake Eagle, Groundscraper Thrush, Dark-capped Bulbul, Village Weaver, Cut-throat Finch, Black Cuckooshrike, Violet-backed Starling, Grey Go-away-bird, Southern Black Flycatcher, Black-backed Puffback, Lesser Striped Swallow, Karoo Thrush,



Chinspot Batis, Black-collared Barbet, Tawny-flanked Prinia and White-throated Robin-Chat – all seen at our first stop. Moving deeper into the secluded Seringveld Conservancy we also added Yellow-fronted Canary, African Grey Hornbill, Amethyst Sunbird, Common Buzzard, Red-chested Cuckoo, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Neddicky, African Hoopoe, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Brown-backed Honeybird, Long-billed Crombec, Willow Warbler, Southern Black Tit, Jameson's Firefinch, White-fronted Bee-eater, Green-capped Eremomela, Lizard Buzzard and confiding Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. Moving into a more acacia dominated area around Pienaarsrivier we also connected with Lesser Grey Shrike, Marico Sunbird, African Wattled Lapwing, Magpie Shrike and Burchell's Starling.

We had to pull ourselves away mid-morning as still wanted to also allow some time to bird the equally productive Polokwane Nature Reserve. Along the way our impromptu picnic-style lunch stop was just great for birding too with memorable sightings being Bronze Mannikin, Spectacled Weaver, Kurrichane Thrush, Thick-billed Weaver, Rattling Cisticola and the stunning Blue Waxbill. A flock of circling Marabou Stork were seen circling just before Polokwane.

The afternoon was spent exploring the dry acacia woodland of Polokwane Nature Reserve for added species diversity on the day which included Golden-breasted Bunting, Black-crowned Tchagra, Violet-eared Waxbill, Arrow-marked Babbler, Little Bee-eater, Lesser Masked Weaver and Burnt-necked Eremomela. From Polokwane we essentially just drove to Magoebaskloof Hotel via Haenertsburg, arriving early evening.



Kurrichane Thrush, Marico Sunbird, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Marico Flycatcher – © **Martin Benadie**



### Day 16: 25 November

There was a lot on the cards today necessitating an early start as per normal to explore the immediate area for the day. The lush and misty Afromontane forests around Magoebaskloof mark the northern edge of the range for several Southern African endemics.

Today we were accompanied by local guide, David Letsoalo. Unfortunately the weather did not play along and we birded mostly in heavy rain. Luckily we had spells where it lifted a bit allowing some birding to be done. We persisted in the adverse weather adding displaying African Goshawk, Barratt's Warbler, Drakensberg Prinia, Long-crested Eagle, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Knysna Turaco, Olive Bushshrike, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Cape Batis, Grey Cuckooshrike, Terrestrial Brownbul, Bar-throated Apalis and another big target, the Cape Parrot. The localised Magpie Mannikin was later added and a stop at the picturesque Debengeni Falls added Mountain Wagtail, Chorister Robin-Chat and White-starred Robin.

Dropping to lower altitudes, we then birded the arid Mamabola rural grasslands back towards Polokwane, and although it was still raining here too, it was not quite as hard. Here we tallied Scaly-feathered Finch, Green-winged Pytilia, European Honey Buzzard, Fiscal Flycatcher, Violet-eared Waxbill, Dusky Lark, Black-throated Canary, Short-clawed Lark and a pair of Temminck's Courser. Popping into the indigenous forest at Kurisa Moya, the rain picked up again and after a quick lunch we headed to a bird hide on the property. Here we managed insanely good views of African Firefinch, Lemon Dove and a surprise Striped Pipit on the drive out. From here we headed back to Magoebaskloof Hotel and called it a day.

### Day 17: 26 November

We woke up to heavy mist and rain and it was decided to rather have breakfast and hit the road. Dropping in altitude again, the rain lifted and we were able to do some productive birding around the lush town of Tzaneen for the likes of Red-faced Cisticola, Spectacled Weaver, Holub's Golden Weaver, Purple Heron, Burchell's Coucal, Purple-crested Turaco, Green-backed Camaroptera, White-browed Robin-Chat, Golden-breasted Bunting, Red-collared Widowbird and Broad-billed Roller. We then did a slight detour to visit a Bat Hawk nesting/roosting site, where one bird showed well, before undertaking a very scenic drive skirting the Drakensberg escarpment (where Hooded Vulture was a surprise addition) before making an extended stop at the Abel Erasmus Pass. Our objective here was to find the highly localised Taita Falcon. After seeing two distant birds in flight, one bird swooped in and perched on a ledge high above us allowing protracted scope views! What a bird. Thanks must also go to the keen eyes and great company of local craft seller and falcon custodian, Micheal Kumako, who assisted us greatly in finding these star birds! Another great endemic seen here was Cape Vulture.



The diminutive Taita Falcon perched high upon a cliff afforded great scope views – © Martin Benadie

From here we essentially continued the long drive to Wakkerstroom (although a great sighting of a covey of Red-winged Francolin necessitated a stop along the way!) and enjoying a first-class dinner at Dekotzenhof after checking.

**Day 18: 27 November**

We spent a productive day exploring the high-altitude grasslands and wetlands surrounding Wakkerstroom with a specific list of targets. We were joined by local guide, Lucky, traveling in just about every direction from this strategically placed town. It was a long day, but a successful one as we tracked down nearly all of our targets including Red-throated Wryneck, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Grey Crowned Crane, White-bellied Bustard, Southern Bald Ibis, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Wing-snapping Cisticola, Buff-streaked Chat, Ground Woodpecker, Eastern Long-billed Lark, the Critically Endangered Rudd's Lark and Pale-crowned Cisticola. The grasslands here were also resplendent with many displaying Long-tailed Widowbirds putting in quite a show.

**Day 19: 28 November**

A pre-breakfast trip took us out to another area in the district where African Rock Pipit was seen well with White-backed Duck and African Snipe also added. Another exciting sighting was an African Clawless Otter! With one key target evading us the previous day we headed back to the Daggakraal area after breakfast to try find Botha's Lark. Unfortunately this lark species remained elusive even after trying another area around the Langeberg range. As consolation prize we found Cuckoo-finch however and Yellow-crowned Bishop was another new trip bird. We then headed onto Mkuze via Piet Retief and Pongola, arriving at Ghost Mountain Inn late afternoon. At the hotel grounds we were met by large breeding colonies of Village and Lesser Masked Weavers in the garden.

**Day 20: 29 November**

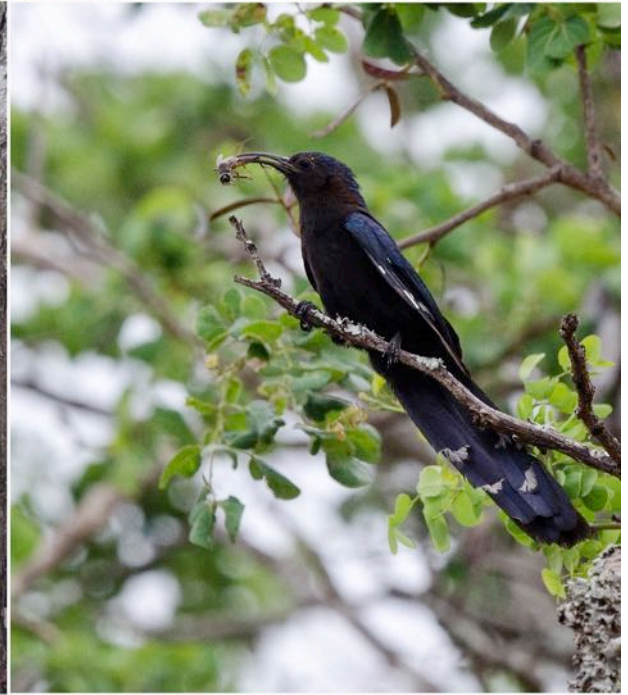
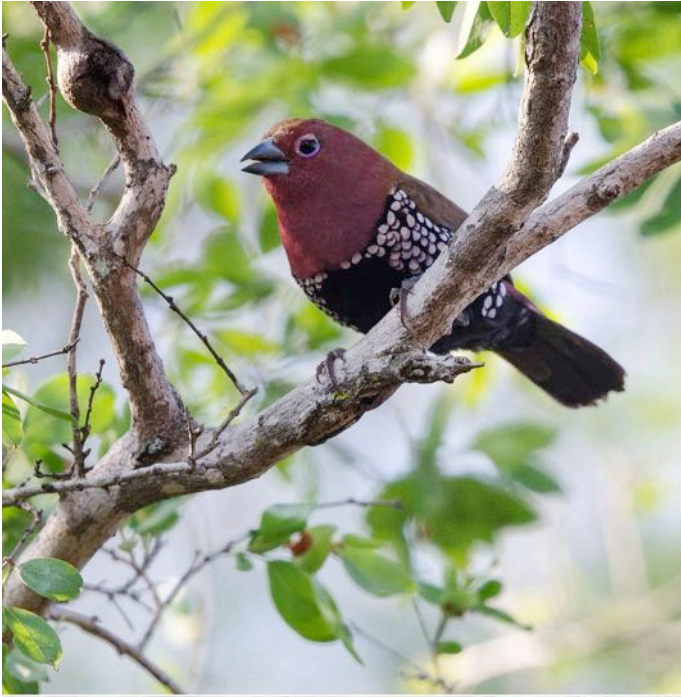
Our full day in Mkuze Game Reserve proved to be very successful and one of the highlights of the entire trip. The Kwazulu-Natal province is very productive for birding and the bird-rich *bushveld*, lakes and papyrus swamps of Mkuze is one of the top birding spots in the country. We were at the reserve gate when it opened at 5am in order to make the most of what Mkuze had to offer. The birding was simply staggering on the day due to habitat variety of acacia and terminalia woodlands interspersed with small tracts of dense sand forest. We made sure to try spend sufficient time in all these various habitat types.

Working the various areas of the reserve we logged Grey Sunbird, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Black-bellied Bustard, White-browed Scrub Robin, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Pink-throated Twinspot, Chinspot Batis, Red-chested Cuckoo, Striped Kingfisher, Yellow-throated Petronia, Grey Waxbill, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Retz's Helmetshrike, Neergaard's Sunbird, Gorgeous Bushshrike, White-backed Vulture, Crested Guinea fowl, White-crested Helmetshrike, Rudd's Apalis, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Grey Penduline Tit, Wahlberg's Eagle, Purple-banded Sunbird, Blue Waxbill, Cape Starling, Red-billed Firefinch, Red-billed Quelea, Rattling Cisticola, Red-faced Mousebird, Red-eyed Dove, Purple-crested Turaco, Thick-billed Weaver, Kurrichane Thrush, Bearded Scrub Robin, Brubru, Red-breasted Swallow, Long-billed Crombec, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Crested Barbet, Black-bellied Starling, Black-backed Puffback, Cape Turtle Dove, Little Bee-eater, Trumpeter Hornbill, Green Wood Hoopoe, Sombre Greenbul, Lilac-breasted Roller, African Hoopoe, Sabota Lark and Marico Sunbird.

Birding around the Nsumo Pan area was also excellent and we spent the latter part of the day here. Birding from various hides we added Glossy Ibis, Black-bellied Starling, Whiskered Tern, Pink-backed Pelican, Saddle-billed Stork, African Openbill, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, White-faced Whistling Duck, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Great Egret, African Jacana, White-winged Tern, African Fish Eagle, Yellow-billed Stork, Ruff, Trumpeter Hornbill, Red-billed Oxpecker, Southern Black Tit, Purple Heron, Woodland Kingfisher, Western Cattle Egret, Water Thick-knee, Malachite Kingfisher, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Wood Sandpiper, Squacco Heron, African Darter, Goliath Heron, Little Egret, Bateleur, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Rufous-winged Cisticola, White-throated Robin-Chat, Green-backed Camaroptera, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Ashy Flycatcher, Broad-billed Roller, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Southern Boubou, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Pink-backed Pelican, Jacobin Cuckoo, Cardinal Woodpecker, Crested Barbet, Rattling Cisticola, Black Saw-wing, Crested Francolin, Dark-backed Weaver, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Speckled Mousebird, White-winged Widowbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Fork-tailed Drongo, Common Scimitarbill, Yellow Weaver and Hottentot Teal.

Mammal viewing was also exciting on the day and quite varied with Lion (big surprise!), Nyala, Giraffe, Blue Wildebeest, Burchell's Zebra, Common Warthog, African Elephant, Vervet Monkey, Chacma Baboon and Hippopotamus all seen well.





Pink-throated Twinspot, Crested Barbet, White-throated Robin-Chat, Common Scimitarbill, Rudd's Apalis, Little Bee-eater © **Martin Benadie**





African Pygmy Kingfisher, Grey Waxbill, Purple-crested Turaco, Harlequin Quail – © Martin Benadie

### Day 21: 30 November

We decided upon another early morning visit to Mkuze which was just as productive as the day before and which we birded for the whole morning again. More good views of species seen the previous day and further new species logged such as Flappet Lark, Rufous-naped Lark, Common Buzzard, Spectacled Weaver, Black-crowned Tchagra, Common Buttonquail, Harlequin Quail, African Green Pigeon, Golden-breasted Bunting, Terrestrial Brownbul, Black-collared Barbet, Crowned Hornbill, African Yellow White-eye, Black Cuckoo, Wire-tailed Swallow and Collared Sunbird. A picnic lunch was enjoyed in the shady grove of sycamore figs before sadly bidding farewell to Mkuze that was hard to do!

We then headed to the eastern shores of iSimangaliso Wetland Park where we spent some time, adding the likes of Lemon-breasted Canary and Temminck's Courser.

Satisfied with the views of the canary we then made our way towards the forested town of St. Lucia where we spent the late afternoon birding around town itself and at the St. Lucia mouth. Great sightings for the afternoon included a breeding colony of Southern Brown-throated Weaver, Crested Guineafowl, Brown Scrub Robin and Red-capped Robin-Chat. At the mouth we added White-faced Whistling Duck, Yellow Weaver, Black-winged Stilt, Common Greenshank, Common Waxbill, Pied Kingfisher, Sandwich Tern, Marsh Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern (South African rarity), Grey Heron, Little Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Yellow-billed



Stork, Yellow-billed Duck, Pied Avocet, Grey Plover, Swift Tern, White-fronted Plover, Curlew Sandpiper and Common Ringed Plover.

After a delicious seafood dinner in town we also undertook a short night drive and got amazing views of Fiery-necked Nightjar. Although a Swamp Nightjar also called very close to us, we unfortunately could not locate it in the long grass. Content, we decided to call it a night.

#### **Day 22: 01 December**

We opened the birding today with exploration of several trails around St. Lucia which was interspersed with a breakfast stop. The estuary and coastal forests at St Lucia are another top birding spot in the country and we saw the likes of Crowned Hornbill, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Crowned Hornbill, Lesser Honeyguide, Olive Sunbird, Trumpeter Hornbill, Dark-backed Weaver, Woodward's Batis, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Square-tailed Drongo, Green-backed Camaroptera, Grey Sunbird, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Brown Scrub Robin, Red-capped Robin-Chat, African Pied Wagtail, Livingstone's Turaco, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Purple-banded Sunbird, African Green Pigeon, Narina Trogon and White-eared Barbet.

From St. Lucia we travelled down the N2 towards Eshowe making a detour to the coastal town of Mtunzini where we added the localised Palm-nut Vulture. We arrived in Eshowe early evening and enjoyed a dinner in town itself.

#### **Day 23: 02 December**

First light had us at the nearby Dlinza Forest, in the company of local guide and friend Sakhamuzi Mhlongo. Our key target here was the localised Spotted Ground-Thrush, which has become a lot harder to find in recent years. Luckily we saw one bird very well! Around Dlinza we also enjoyed Black-headed Oriole and Olive Woodpecker.

A quick breakfast was enjoyed back at the guesthouse before packing and heading onto another forest locality. Ngoye is a relict 3,900 hectare forest patch in the rolling hills of KwaZulu-Natal is the only place in southern Africa to see Green Barbet. Here we worked hard for this highly localised barbet and eventually had great views of two birds! Easily, another star bird of the trip. Whilst looking for the barbet we were also distracted by Black-backed Puffback, Cape White-eye, Yellow-streaked Greenbul and even better views of Olive Woodpecker.

From Ngoye we visited a hidden wetland surrounded by raffia palms where we managed to locate a stunning pair of African Pygmy Goose, displaying Yellow-throated Longclaw and a Palmnut Vulture amongst others.

Our last stop in the area was at the magical Amatikulu Nature Reserve, a real gem. We walked through a mix of pristine coastal grasslands and the edge of dune forest. Our primary reason for visiting was to locate Red-headed Quelea and we eventually found a nice flock with many males in breeding plumage. Here we also had great views of Croaking Cisticola and Green Malkoha.

From Amatikulu we bade farewell to Sakha and then undertook the drive to the Underberg area of the Drakensberg, arriving, you guessed it, early evening!

#### **Day 24: 03 December**

The following day was our day to explore the high Drakensberg and enter the Kingdom of Lesotho. The rough road still (currently) necessitates four wheel drive, and so we were picked up by our knowledgeable guide, Stuart Mclean, and professionally led from one bird to the next! Highlights were numerous on the day including Gurney's Sugarbird and confiding Ground Woodpecker, Bush Blackcap, Red-throated Wryneck, Wailing Cisticola, Broad-tailed Warbler, Cape Rock Thrush, as well as Forest Buzzard. Continuing on up, we climbed the sinuous and rocky road towards the pass and here we found the absolutely delightful Drakensburg Rockjumper and Drakensburg Siskin. We continued on into Lesotho, where the road suddenly turned into a perfectly smooth tarmac road. Sloggett's Rats dived in and out of their holes at the border post, and pretty soon we found the other birds we were after, enjoying great views of specialities such as Mountain Pipit, Sickle-winged Chat and Sentinel Rock Thrush. A Lammergeier was also seen.

After a fine picnic lunch we headed back down again. In the late afternoon, Stuart took us around the Himeville district with a breeding pair of localised Wattled Crane being the star act! The closing act for the day went to a flock of 24 Amur Falcon, a long-distance migrant to southern Africa that just arrived.



Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Chorister Robin-Chat, Green Barbet, Brown Scrub-Robin – © **Martin Benadie**

### **Day 25: 04 December**

The last day of the tour suddenly arrived. After our last breakfast, our first birding stop was Marutswa Forest. The forest birding here was rather quiet but we did add Red-necked Spurfowl on the forest edge and had great views of Dark-capped Yellow Warbler.

From here we drove via the scenic Hella Hella Pass to Highover Nature Reserve where we spent the rest of the morning. Here we found a stunning pair of Blue Swallow, flushed a few Common Quail, saw Cape Vulture overhead, had our best views of Red-chested Cuckoo and also added Lazy Cisticola.

Then we basically drove back to Durban and King Shaka Airport via Richmond bringing this action-packed tour to a fitting end. We had covered a total driving distance of almost 9000km!





Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Bush Blackcap, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Mountain Pipit – © **Martin Benadie**



Drakensberg Rockjumper - © Martin Benadie

#### SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

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

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

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Conservation threat categories and information is taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

**(EW)** = Extinct in the wild, **(CR)** = Critically Endangered, **(EN)** = Endangered, **(VU)** = Vulnerable, **(NT)** = Near Threatened, **(DD)** = Data Deficient.

For polytypic species, the subspecies seen on the tour, where known, is placed in parentheses at the end of the species comment. Generally, species listed with trinomials are not currently split by the IOC.

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **2017. IOC World Bird List (v 7.1)**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Please note, this was the current version when the report checklist was created. Some alternative names are given in parentheses.

All of our checklists are powered by our partner iGoTerra ([www.igoterra.com](http://www.igoterra.com)) who provide web and mobile applications for bird and wildlife enthusiasts. Their suite of services cover observations, rankings, lists, photos and trip management tools.

**Common Ostrich** *Struthio camelus* Seen at widespread sites, many of dubious origin. Best in De Hoop? [*australis*].

**White-faced Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* Two at Strandfontein first; largest nos. at Mkhuze and St. Lucia

**White-backed Duck** *Thalassornis leuconotus* Two seen well on a small wetland near Wakkerstroom [nominate].

**Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis* Quite a few seen, especially in fields in the Overberg district [*niger*].

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Fairly common and widespread. First seen around Cape Town.

**South African Shelduck** ◊ *Tadorna cana* Good numbers seen. First seen well at Strandfontein.



**African Pygmy Goose** ♦ *Nettapus auritus* A pair seen at wetland in Eshowe area.

**Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* Fairly common in the Cape area.

**African Black Duck** *Anas sparsa* One bird seen close to Suurbraak.

**Mallard (introduced)** *Anas platyrhynchos* A feral bird in Table View area, Cape Town.

**Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [nominate].

**Cape Shoveler** ♦ *Anas smithii* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythrorhynchos* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**Hottentot Teal** *Anas hottentota* Nine birds seen in Mkuze.

**Southern Pochard** *Netta erythrophthalma* Seen a few times, the first at Strandfontein, Cape Town [brunnea].

**Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa* (NT) Several seen on the lake at De Hoop. Also seen at Strandfontein, Cape Town.

**Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [coronatus].

**Crested Guineafowl** ♦ *Guttera pucherani* A few seen well in Mkuze Game Reserve and St. Lucia [edouardi].

**Coqui Francolin (H)** *Peliperdix coqui* One bird heard north of Pretoria.

**Grey-winged Francolin** ♦ *Scleroptila afra* Several great views. Seen in West Coast NP and near Langebaan.

**Red-winged Francolin** ♦ *Scleroptila levaillantii* Great views of a pair with chicks driving to Wakkerstroom [nominate].

**Crested Francolin** *Dendroperdix sephaena* A few seen, the first north of Pretoria [nominate].

**Cape Spurrow** ♦ *Pternistis capensis* Common and widespread in the Southern Cape. First seen at Kirstenbosch.

**Red-necked Spurrow** *Pternistis afer* A pair seen at Marutsa Forest [castaneiventris].

**Swainson's Spurrow** ♦ *Pternistis swainsonii* A few seen, the first at Marrick [nominate].

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* A few heard; seen well in flight at Highover, where a 4 were flushed [africana].

**Harlequin Quail** *Coturnix delegorguei* Cracking male spotted in Mkuze Game Reserve.

**African Penguin** ♦ *Spheniscus demersus* (EN) Great views of the colony at Stony Point, Betty's Bay.

**Wilson's Storm Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Several on the pelagic out of Simon's Town [oceanicus/exasperatus].

**Shy Albatross** *Thalassarche cauta* (NT) Good numbers seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town [steady?].

**Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** ♦ *Thalassarche carteri* (EN) One seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

**European Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* One bird seen on pelagic out of Simon's Town.

**Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* One seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

**White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis* (VU) Plenty on the pelagic.

**Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea* Small numbers seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [capensis].

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* A couple near Cape Town then very good nos. at De Hoop [infuscatus].

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* Seen a few times, the first at De Hoop [gurneyi].

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus* Common with good nos. at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.

**Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* (NT) Seen well at several sites. First seen in the West Coast National Park.

**Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* A few seen in the Mkuze Game Reserve area.

**African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus* A few seen in the Mkuze Game Reserve area [nominate].

**Abdim's Stork** ♦ *Ciconia abdimii* A single bird seen in the Tzaneen area.

**Woolly-necked Stork (African Woollyneck)** *Ciconia [episcopus] microscelis* A few in the east; first at St Lucia.

**European White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* First seen at Strandfontein, and a few more in the east [nominate].

**Saddle-billed Stork** ♦ *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* Only a few seen at Mkuze.

**Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* c12 seen circling south of Polokwane.

**African Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**Southern Bald Ibis** ♦ *Geronticus calvus* (VU) Great views of good numbers around Wakkerstroom.

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* Common, noisy and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [nominate].

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Seen at several wetland sites, the first around Cape Town.

**African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba* First seen at Strandfontein and plenty more in the east of the country.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* Juvenile bird seen at Wakkerstroom.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Reasonable numbers in the east, the first at the wetland on route to Kimberley.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town [nominate].

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* A smart grassland species first seen on the Cape Peninsula.

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* Just a couple seen, first at Augrabies Falls.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* A few at several wetlands, the first at Tzaneen [nominate].

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Good numbers in Mkuze.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Solitary birds seen, mostly in the east [nominate].

**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta* About eight seen with the first good views around Suurbraak [nominate].  
**Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Just a handful seen in the Cape Town area.  
**Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* Good numbers seen around Nsumo Pan in Mkuze GR.  
**Cape Gannet** ♦ *Morus capensis* (VU) At least 45 on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.  
**Reed Cormorant** *Microcarbo africanus* Widespread at many wetlands, first on route to Kimberley [nominate].  
**Crowned Cormorant** ♦ *Microcarbo coronatus* (NT) Two at Betty's Bay.  
**Bank Cormorant** ♦ *Phalacrocorax neglectus* (EN) c20 seen at the colony at Stony Point, Betty's Bay.  
**White-breasted Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.  
**Cape Cormorant** ♦ *Phalacrocorax capensis* (EN) 1000s on the Cape coast; great looks at the colony at Stony Point.  
**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa* Small numbers at several sites, a majority in the east [nominate].  
**Secretarybird** *Sagittarius serpentarius* (VU) Single bird seen at Marrick.  
**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* Just one seen in Mkuze.  
**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites [nominate].  
**African Harrier-Hawk** *Polyboroides typus* Only two birds seen, first in Noordhoek [nominate].  
**Bearded Vulture** (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus* (NT) One seen in Lesotho, also juvenile on nest [meridionalis].  
**European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* Two birds recorded, in Polokwane and Wakkerstroom areas.  
**White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* (CR) A few seen around Mkuze.  
**Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* (CR) Single bird seen in the Klaserie area  
**White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* Good numbers seen in Mkuze GR.  
**Cape Vulture** ♦ *Gyps coprotheres* (EN) One around the Abel Erasmus Pass, and a few others at Highover.  
**Black-chested Snake Eagle** *Circaetus pectoralis* Single bird seen travelling to Kimberley.  
**Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* Two birds seen in Polokwane area and Mkuze.  
**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* (NT) Two seen at Mkuze.  
**Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* Great views of one close to a nest near to Tzaneen.  
**Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* (VU) Two birds seen in Karoo.  
**Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* Several seen in the east of the country, the first around Magoebaskloof.  
**Wahlberg's Eagle** *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* Few seen in the east.  
**Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* A few along the Cape West Coast and Karoo.  
**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* Two birds seen at Marrick, solitary bird in Mkuze area.  
**Verreaux's (or Black) Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* Great views on cliffs near Clanwilliam (Kransvleiport).  
**Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* Two birds seen – north of Pretoria and in Tzaneen area.  
**Gabar Goshawk** *Micronisus gabar* One bird seen at Marrick.  
**Pale Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax canorus* Small nos. of this striking raptor seen, first near Calvinia [anderssoni].  
**African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro* A few heard, and one seen at Noordhoek and Magoebaskloof [nominate].  
**Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* One seen on the Cape Peninsula and one in east.  
**African Marsh Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* A few at wetlands in the southwest and one at the wetland at Wakkerstroom.  
**Black Harrier** ♦ *Circus maurus* (VU) Great views near Darling and further north along the Cape West Coast.  
**Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* Common and widespread [parasitus].  
**Palmnut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* A few birds seen in the east; localised species in South Africa.  
**African Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer* A good number seen, most common in the east, especially around Mkuze.  
**Common (or Steppe) Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* Common and widespread in small numbers [vulpinus].  
**Forest Buzzard** *Buteo trizonatus* One brief view over Grootvadersbosch, another near Sani Pass.  
**Jackal Buzzard** *Buteo rufofuscus* Fairly common, especially in the southwest, with many great views.  
**Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori* (NT) One seen on the drive from Brandvlei back to Calvinia [nominate].  
**Ludwig's Bustard** ♦ *Neotis ludwigii* (EN) Several seen in the Karoo; first in Akkerendam Nature Reserve, Calvinia.  
**Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* (NT) c5 around Grootvadersbosch-De Hoop and one in Himeville area [stanleyi].  
**White-bellied Bustard** ♦ *Eupodotis senegalensis* One seen near Dirkiesdoop, Wakkerstroom [barrowii].  
**Blue Korhaan** *Eupodotis caerulea* (NT) A group seen on drive to Jhb, another in Wakkerstroom area. Shy!  
**Karoo Korhaan** ♦ *Eupodotis vigorsii* Seen very well a number of times, the first in Overberg area [nominate].  
**Southern Black Korhaan** ♦ *Afrotis afra* (VU) A few seen well, with amazing views of a male in West Coast NP.  
**Northern Black Korhaan** ♦ *Afrotis afraoides* Plenty seen well in the Northern Cape and Marrick GF [nominate].  
**Black-bellied Bustard** *Lissotis melanogaster* Singles seen in Mkuze GR [notophila].  
**Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura elegans* (H) Heard only in Himeville area.  
**Striped Flufftail** *Sarothrura affinis* (H) Heard only in Himeville area.  
**African Rail** *Rallus caerulescens* (H) Heard only in Wakkerstroom area.



**African Swamphen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis* First at the wetland near Suurbraak and sev at Wakkerstroom.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Small numbers at several sites. First seen around Cape Town [*meridionalis*].

**Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* Common at several wetlands. First seen around Cape Town.

**Grey Crowned Crane** *Balearica regulorum* (EN) Plenty in the east, especially Wakkerstroom/Himeville [nominate].

**Blue Crane** ♦ *Grus paradisea* (VU) Common in the Overberg, with many great views; also c26 in Wakkerstroom area.

**Wattled Crane** ♦ *Grus carunculata* (VU) Excellent views of a family of three in Himeville district.

**Common Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* One seen at Marrick, another in Mkuze.

**Water Thick-Knee** *Burhinus vermiculatus* A pair seen at Strandfontein and a few seen at St Lucia [nominate].

**Spotted Thick-Knee** *Burhinus capensis* A total of six seen, the first in Overberg area [*damarensis*].

**African Oystercatcher** ♦ *Haematopus moquini* (NT) Several seen in the southwest, the first at False Bay.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Widespread with good numbers at many sites.

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* Seen at a number of sites, the biggest numbers at Strandfontein.

**Blacksmith Lapwing** *Vanellus armatus* Widespread with good numbers at many sites. First around Cape Town.

**Crowned Lapwing** *Vanellus coronatus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. [nominate].

**African Wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus senegallus* A pair in Polokwane Nature Reserve; others later in the trip [*lateralis*].

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* A few seen in West Coast National Park and St Lucia.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* c8 seen at Strandfontein, also in Velddrift and St Lucia. [*tundrae*]

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* Small numbers at several sites. First seen at Strandfontein.

**Three-banded Plover** *Charadrius tricollaris* Small numbers at several sites. First seen at Strandfontein [nominate].

**White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus* A few seen with best views in West Coast NP [nominate].

**Chestnut-banded Plover** *Charadrius pallidus* (NT) c14 seen well at Velddrift [nominate].

**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africanus* First seen north of Pretoria, good numbers in Mkuze.

**African (or Ethiopian) Snipe** *Gallinago nigripennis* Two at Wakkerstroom [nominate].

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* (NT) Single bird seen at St Lucia [*taymyrensis*].

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Just a few seen, the first at Strandfontein.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Good numbers seen at several sites, the first near at Strandfontein.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* Several seen, the first at De Hoop Nature Reserve.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Just a couple of sightings, the first on the Orange River.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* One at Strandfontein.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* Seen at several sites, the biggest number being c40 at Velddrift.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* (NT) Seen well, good numbers c35 at Velddrift.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Single bird in West Coast National Park.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* Highest count was c 10 at Strandfontein.

**Temminck's Courser** *Cursorius temminckii* Great views of a pair at Polokwane and c10 near St Lucia [*ruvanensis*].

**Double-banded Courser** *Rhinoptilus africanus* Several seen well at Brandvlei and Marrick Game Farm [nominate].

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* A few seen at Mkuze GR [*fuellibornii*].

**Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* One seen on the Cape Town pelagic trip.

**Grey-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* First in large flocks near Jo'burg, also St Lucia [*poiocephalus*].

**Hartlaub's Gull** *Chroicocephalus hartlaubii* Very common in the southwest. First seen on the 1st day in Cape Town.

**Kelp (or Cape) Gull** ♦ *Larus dominicanus* Very common in the southwest. First seen in Cape Town [*vetula*].

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* Just a few seen, the first at Strandfontein.

**Greater Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii* Fairly common in the southwest, first seen at Strandfontein [nominate].

**Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* Good numbers in the southwest, first seen at Strandfontein.

**Damara Tern** ♦ *Sternula balaenarum* (VU) Brilliant views of 3 birds at Struisbaai. Very localised in South Africa.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* Good numbers seen, especially on the pelagic [*tibetana*]

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* Plenty seen with biggest numbers at Mkuze [*delalandii*].

**White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* c10 seen at Mkuze GR.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelocheilidon nilotica* One bird seen at St Lucia. South African rarity and good find! Write-in.

**Parasitic Jaeger** *Stercorarius parasiticus* (LO) One bird on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

**Namaqua Sandgrouse** ♦ *Pterocles namaqua* Many great views; biggest numbers in the Calvinia/Brandvlei areas.

**Rock Dove (Feral)** *Columba livia* 'feral'

**Speckled Pigeon** *Columba guinea* Common and widespread. [*phaeonota*]

**African Olive Pigeon** *Columba arquatrix* Flock of c15 seen feeding in tree at Grootvadersbosch.

**Lemon Dove** *Columba larvata* Great views at Magoebaskloof [nominate].

**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**Ring-necked Dove** *Streptopelia capicola* Two forms seen: nominate, first around the Cape and *tropica* in the east.  
**Laughing Dove** *Spilopelia senegalensis* Fairly common and widespread. First in the Cape Town area [nominate].  
**Emerald-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur chalcospilos* Good numbers in Mkuze GR.  
**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Several seen well at various sites [nominate].  
**African Green Pigeon** *Treron calvus* Just three birds at Mkuze GR [*delalandii*].  
**Livingstone's Turaco** ♦ *Tauraco livingstonii* Excellent views of a few at St Lucia [*reichenowi*].  
**Knysna Turaco** ♦ *Tauraco corythaix* See note.  
**Purple-crested Turaco** *Tauraco porphyreolophus* Particularly good views in Mkuze [nominate].  
**Grey Go-away-Bird** *Corythaixoides concolor* c10 seen north of Pretoria and in Polokwane area [nominate].  
**Burchell's Coucal** ♦ *Centropus burchellii* Two seen well in the Tzaneen area [nominate].  
**Green Malkoha** *Ceuthmochares australis* One seen at Amatikulu Nature Reserve.  
**Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* Excellent views of four, including a black-phase bird.



Southern Brown-throated Weaver, Olive Woodpecker – © Martin Benadie

**Diederik Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius* A good number seen and heard, the first at Polokwane Nature Reserve.  
**Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas* A few heard and great views of one bird at Betty's Bay.  
**African Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* (H) A few heard but sadly none wanted to show.  
**Black Cuckoo** *Cuculus clamosus* A few heard and one seen really well at Augrabies [nominate].  
**Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius* Plenty heard and a few seen, the best sighting at Highover.  
**Western Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* Seen very well at Marrick and one at Wakkerstroom [*poensis*].  
**Spotted Eagle-Owl** *Bubo africanus* Three seen well, first at Kirstenbosch, another great view at Velddrift [nominate].  
**Rufous-cheeked Nightjar** ♦ *Caprimulgus rufigena* One bird at Marrick GR on night drive.  
**Fiery-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus pectoralis* One bird seen well at St Lucia on night drive [*crepusculans*].  
**Swamp Nightjar** *Caprimulgus natalensis* (H) One bird heard only at St Lucia [nominate].  
**African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* Common in the north and east after the first at Augrabies Falls NP [*celer*].  
**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Fairly common and widespread. First seen over Kirstenbosch.  
**African Black Swift** *Apus barbatus* Great views of 50+ above Kirtenbosch, also at Highover [nominate].  
**Bradfield's Swift** *Apus bradfieldi* c50 seen very well near Kimberley. [*deserticola*].  
**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [*affinis*-group].  
**White-rumped Swift** *Apus caffer* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.  
**Speckled Mousebird** *Colius striatus* Two forms: nominate first around the Cape; *minor* first at Magoebaskloof.  
**White-backed Mousebird** *Colius colius* Two forms: nominate widespread; *damarensis* around Springbok etc.  
**Red-faced Mousebird** *Urocolius indicus* Good numbers in Mkuze [*transvaalensis*].  
**Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* One seen at St Lucia [nominate].  
**Lilac-breasted Roller** *Coracias caudatus* One seen in Mkuze [nominate].  
**Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* A few seen, the first near Tzaneen [*suahelicus*].  
**Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* A handful seen, the first in the Grootvadersbosch area.



**Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti* c6 seen in Mkuze.

**Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* Two birds seen north of Pretoria, also Polokwane [*cyanoleuca*].

**African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta* Excellent views of 3 birds in Mkuze [*natalensis*].

**Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus* A total of three seen, the first at Augrabies area [nominate].

**Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* Excellent views in Swellendam area [nominate].

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* A few seen at several sites, the first at Velddrift [nominate].

**Swallow-tailed Bee-Eater** *Merops hirundineus* Several seen well, the first at Augrabies Falls NP [nominate].

**Little Bee-Eater** *Merops pusillus* Just a handful seen around the Mkuze GR and Polokwane [*meridionalis*].

**White-fronted Bee-Eater** *Merops bullockoides* Seen well north of Pretoria and at Amatikulu.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater** *Merops persicus* Good numbers of migrants at Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].

**European Bee-Eater** *Merops apiaster* Good numbers in several areas, the first north of Cape Town.

**African Hoopoe** *Upupa africana* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen in the Overberg.

**Green (or Red-billed) Wood Hoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus* A few seen well in Mkuze GR [*marwitzi*].

**Common Scimitarbill** *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* A handful seen, the first around Augrabies Falls NP.

**Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill** ♦ *Tockus leucomelas* Seen on drive to Kimberley, and near Polokwane [nominate].

**Crowned Hornbill** *Lophoceros alboterminatus* Singles seen at Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

**African Grey Hornbill** *Lophoceros nasutus* Two birds north of Johannesburg were the only ones [*epirhinus*].

**Trumpeter Hornbill** *Bycanistes bucinator* Good numbers in the eastern forests. First seen in Mkuze GR.

**White-eared Barbet** *Stactolaema leucotis* Good views of a few around St Lucia [nominate].

**Green Barbet** *Cryptolybia (Stactolaema) olivacea* Only two birds seen at Ngoye Forest [*woodwardi*].

**Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus bilineatus* A few heard and a couple seen at St Lucia [nominate].

**Red-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus pusillus* Just one seen, at Mkuze [nominate].

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* A couple seen north of Pretoria [*extoni*].

**Acacia Pied Barbet** *Tricholaema leucomelas* Several seen well, the first at De Hoop.

**Black-collared Barbet** *Lybius torquatus* A few seen well, the first north of Pretoria [nominate].

**Crested Barbet** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* A few seen, the first in Augrabies [nominate].

**Brown-backed Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* One seen well north of Pretoria [nominate].

**Lesser Honeyguide** *Indicator minor* One seen well at St Lucia [nominate].

**Greater Honeyguide** *Indicator indicator* (LO) One seen by leader only north of Pretoria.

**Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis* Excellent views in Wakkerstroom and Himeville [nominate].

**Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* Excellent views at Marrick GR and Mkuze [nominate].

**Ground Woodpecker** ♦ *Geocolaptes olivaceus* First near Wakkerstroom, but best views in Lesotho.

**Bearded Woodpecker** *Chloropicus namaquus* A pair at Mkuze GR [*coalescens*].

**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens* Two forms: nominate in the south; *intermedius* in the east.

**Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicos griseocephalus* Great views in Eshowe and Ngoye [nominate].

**Pygmy Falcon** *Polihierax semitorquatus* One seen on drive from Augrabies to Kimberley [nominate].

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* c15 in Swellendam area. 40 seen on the drive from Kimberley to Johannesburg.

**Rock Kestrel** *Falco rupicolus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.

**Greater Kestrel** *Falco rupicoloides* Good numbers in drier areas of the Cape. First seen north of Calvinia [nominate].

**Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* Flock of c24 seen in Himeville area.

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* Just three seen with best views on drive from Augrabies to Kimberley [nominate].

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* One seen on the Cape Peninsula [*minor*].

**Taita Falcon** ♦ *Falco fasciinucha* (VU) Good views of a perched bird at the Abel Erasmus Pass.

**Cape Parrot** ♦ *Poicephalus robustus* c3 in the fog at Magoebaskloof.

**African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis* (H) Heard only in Mkuze GR.

**Cape Batis** ♦ *Batis capensis* Two forms: nominate around Cape Town; *hollidayi* at Magoebaskloof.

**Woodward's Batis** ♦ *Batis fratum* Brilliant views of 5 birds at St Lucia.

**Chinspot Batis** *Batis molitor* A few seen at Polokwane NR and Mkuze GR [nominate].

**Pririt Batis** ♦ *Batis pririt* Several seen very well, the first north of Calvinia towards Loeriesfontein.

**White-crested Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus* A couple of entertaining flocks at Mkuze GR [*poliocephalus*-group].

**Retz's Helmetshrike** *Prionops retzii* A flock of three birds seen in Mkuze GR.

**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* Two seen well north of Pretoria.

**Black-fronted Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus nigrifrons* (H) Heard only at Magoebaskloof [*sandgroundi*].

**Olive Bushshrike** ♦ *Chlorophoneus olivaceus* Two seen well at Grootvadersbosch; also Magoebaskloof. [nominate].

**Orange-breasted Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* A few seen in the Mkuze and St Lucia areas [*similis*].

**Gorgeous Bushshrike** *Telophorus viridis* Great views of this skulking stunner in Mkuze GR [*quadricolor*].

**Bokmakierie** ♦ *Telophorus zeylonus* Two forms: nominate first at De Hoop; *thermophilus* in Port Nolloth.

**Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra australis* Seen well at Polokwane and Mkuze GR [nominate].

**Southern Tchagra** ♦ *Tchagra tchagra* At least four at De Hoop [nominate].

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus* One seen well north of Pretoria. Others heard [*orientalis*].

**Black-backed Puffback** *Dryoscopus cubla* Plenty seen well, especially at the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [*hamatus*].

**Southern Boubou** ♦ *Laniarius ferrugineus* First seen well at Kirstenbosch BG and a few others seen during the tour.

**Crimson-breasted Shrike** ♦ *Laniarius atrococcineus* Brilliant views at Marrick GF, also Polokwane.

**Brubru** *Nilaus afer* Just a few seen. The first at Augrabies.

**Grey Cuckooshrike** *Coracina caesia* One bird at Magoebaskloof [nominate].

**Black Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga flava* A male seen well in Suurbraak area, also north of Pretoria.

**Magpie Shrike** *Urolestes melanoleucus* c6 seen at Polokwane Nature Reserve.

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* Common summer migrant in the east.

**Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* Two birds seen north of Pretoria, another in the Polokwane area.

**Southern Fiscal** *Lanius collaris* See note.

**Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus* Two birds seen in Eshowe [nominate].

**Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* Several seen around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].

**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* Small numbers at a number of sites. More common in the east.

**Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher** *Trochocercus cyanomelas* See note.

**African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* Widespread, with small numbers at many sites [*granti*].

**Cape Crow** *Corvus capensis* Most common in the Overberg and Wakkerstroom. Also in Himeville area [nominate].

**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**White-necked Raven** *Corvus albicollis* Widespread; small numbers at many sites, especially in the south and west.

**Cape Rockjumper** ♦ *Chaetops frenatus* Good views of three birds at Rooi Els.

**Drakensberg Rockjumper** ♦ *Chaetops aurantius* Brilliant views of a couple of pairs along Sani Pass and in Lesotho.

**Fairy Flycatcher** ♦ *Stenostira scita* Only seen well at Kransvleiport.

**Southern Black Tit** ♦ *Melaniparus niger* First north of Pretoria, plenty more around the Mkuze and St Lucia.

**Ashy Tit** ♦ *Melaniparus cinerascens* Two seen well at Augrabies Falls NP, others in Polokwane area [nominate].

**Grey Tit** ♦ *Melaniparus afer* Two forms: brilliant views of *arens* the first just outside Langebaan; nominate at Sprinbok.

**Grey Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus caroli* A pair seen very well in Mkuze GR [*hellmayri*].

**Cape Penduline Tit** ♦ *Anthoscopus* See note.

**Eastern Nicator** *Nicator gularis* (H) Heard only in Mkuze GR.

**Spike-heeled Lark** ♦ *Chersomanes albofasciata* Quite common in suitable habitat. First seen near around Brandvlei.

**Short-clawed Lark** ♦ *Certhilauda chuana* Brilliant views of two birds in the Mamobola grasslands, near Polokwane.

**Karoo Long-billed Lark** ♦ *Certhilauda subcoronata* Several seen well. First noted near to Brandvlei.

**Eastern Long-billed Lark** ♦ *Certhilauda semitorquata* Several great looks in the Wakkerstroom area.

**Cape Long-billed Lark** ♦ *Certhilauda curvirostris* See note.

**Agulhas Long-billed Lark** ♦ *Certhilauda brevirostris* Excellent views of a few in the Overberg, near De Hoop.

**Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark** ♦ *Eremopterix verticalis* Widespread in the southwest. First near Brandvlei.

**Sabota Lark** ♦ *Calendulauda sabota* See note.

**Fawn-coloured Lark** *Calendulauda africanoides* First seen in Aggeneys area, a few thereafter [nominate].

**Karoo Lark** ♦ *Calendulauda albescens* First seen north of Langebaan and seen at few sites subsequently.

**Red Lark** ♦ *Calendulauda burra* (VU) See note.

**Barlow's Lark** *Calendulauda barlowi* See note.

**Rudd's Lark** ♦ *Heteromirafr ruddi* (VU) Superb views of one near Fickland Pan, Wakkerstroom.

**Eastern Clapper Lark** *Mirafr fasciolata* Excellent views of sev. at Marrick GF and at a few other spots [nominate].

**Cape Clapper Lark** ♦ *Mirafr apiata* Agulhas Clapper [*marjoriae*] seen well near De Hoop.

**Rufous-naped Lark** *Mirafr africana* Common in the northern half of the tour. First seen northeast of Dealesville.

**Flappet Lark** *Mirafr rufocinnamomea* Few birds seen performing aerial display in Mkuze GR.

**Melodious Lark** ♦ *Mirafr cheniana* (NT) Excellent views of several north of Dealesville on drive to Jhb.

**Sclater's Lark** ♦ *Spizocorys sclateri* (NT) Great views of several coming to drink at a small waterpoint near Brandvlei.

**Large-billed Lark** ♦ *Galerida magnirostris* Reasonably common. First seen in Darling area.

**Red-capped Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* Common and widespread. First noted in Darling area [nominate].

**Dusky Lark** *Pinarocorys nigricans* Great find of one bird in Polokwane area. A write-in.

**African Red-eyed Bulbul** ♦ *Pycnonotus nigricans* *superior* in the Augrabies and Kimberley area.



**Cape Bulbul** ♦ *Pycnonotus capensis* Common around the Southern Cape.

**Dark-capped Bulbul** *Pycnonotus tricolor* First on the drive to Johannesburg, then common in the east [*layardi*].

**Sombre Greenbul** *Andropadus importunus* Fairly common. First at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens [nominate].

**Yellow-bellied Greenbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris* A few, mostly around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].

**Terrestrial Brownbul** *Phyllastrephus terrestris* First in Grootvadersbosch; also Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].

**Yellow-streaked Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus* A few seen at Magoebaskloof, later at Ngoye [nominate].

**Black Saw-Wing** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera* Seen at several sites. First at Kirstenbosch [*holomelas*].

**Brown-throated Martin** *Riparia paludicola* Good numbers seen at several sites, often near to water [nominate].

**Banded Martin** *Riparia cincta* Best views and biggest numbers were in the Wakkerstroom area [nominate].

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* Common and widespread.

**White-throated Swallow** *Hirundo albigularis* A cracking swallow seen very well at several sites.

**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* Just one seen in the Mkuze area [nominate].

**Blue Swallow** ♦ *Hirundo atrocaerulea* (VU) Great views of pair at Highover.

**Pearl-breasted Swallow** *Hirundo dimidiata* Plenty in the De Hoop area and a few north of Cape Town [nominate].

**Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* Two forms: nominate widespread; *pretoriae* at the Abel Erasmus Pass etc.

**Greater Striped Swallow** *Cecropis cucullata* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First near Cape Town.

**Lesser Striped Swallow** *Cecropis abyssinica* Fairly common in the east. First seen near Pretoria [*unitatis*].

**Red-breasted Swallow** *Cecropis semirufa* One near Kimberley; a few in the east, especially at Mkuze [nominate].

**South African Cliff Swallow** ♦ *Petrochelidon spilodera* Big numbers around Wakkerstroom.

**Cape Grassbird** ♦ *Sphenoeacus afer* A smart bird, one seen at Rooi Els [nominate].

**Long-billed Crombec** *Sylvietta rufescens* Small numbers at a few sites, the first between Langebaan and Calvinia.

**Victorin's Warbler** ♦ *Cryptillas victorini* Brilliant views of an outrageously showy bird in Grootvadersbosch area.

**Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus ruficapilla* Grootvadersbosch and Magoebaskloof [nominate].

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* First seen in the Polokwane area and another in Mkuze [*yakutensis*].

**Lesser Swamp Warbler** *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* First around Cape Town, another in Wakkerstroom [nominate].

**African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus* First seen at the river crossing on the drive to Calvinia [nominate].

**African Yellow Warbler** *Iduna natalensis* Seen at Wakkerstroom and Marutswa [nominate].

**Little Rush Warbler** *Bradypterus baboecala* Nominated at Strandfontein; *transvaalensis* at Wakkerstroom.

**Knysna Warbler** ♦ *Bradypterus sylvaticus* (VU) Brief views at Grootvadersbosch [nominate].

**Barratt's Warbler** ♦ *Bradypterus barratti* Excellent views at Magoebaskloof [nominate] and Sani Pass [*cathkinensis*].

**Fan-tailed Grassbird** *Schoenicola brevirostris* Brilliant views of this real skulker in Sani Pass area.

**Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythrops* Good views in Tzaneen area [*nyasa*].

**Lazy Cisticola** ♦ *Cisticola aberrans* Good views of a pair at Highover [*minor*].

**Rattling Cisticola** *Cisticola chiniana* Common in the east. First seen in Polokwane area [*campestris*].

**Grey-backed Cisticola** ♦ *Cisticola subruficapilla* Fairly common in the Cape, first at Rooi Els [*subruficapilla*-group].

**Wailing Cisticola** ♦ *Cisticola lais* A few seen well on the trip to Lesotho.

**Rufous-winged Cisticola** ♦ *Cisticola galactotes* Excellent views of one at Mkuze [nominate].

**Levaillant's Cisticola** *Cisticola tinniens* Two forms: *elegans* around the Cape; nominate largely in the east.

**Croaking Cisticola** *Cisticola natalensis* Several seen at Amatikulu [nominate].

**Neddicky** *Cisticola fulvicapilla* A few seen, the first at Grootvadersbosch.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* A few seen, the first at Strandfontein [*terrestris*].

**Desert Cisticola** *Cisticola aridulus* A few seen near to Kimberley [*kalahari*].

**Cloud Cisticola** ♦ *Cisticola textrix* See note.

**Pale-crowned Cisticola** ♦ *Cisticola cinnamomeus* Great views of one near to Wakkerstroom [*egregius*].

**Wing-snapping Cisticola** *Cisticola ayresii* Several seen near to Wakkerstroom [nominate].

**Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* Quite common in the east. First seen around Pretoria [*pondoensis*].

**Black-chested Prinia** ♦ *Prinia flavicans* Just a few seen, the first seen well at Marrick [*flavicans*].

**Karoo Prinia** ♦ *Prinia maculosa* Common in the south and west. First seen at Kirstenbosch [nominate].

**Drakensberg Prinia** ♦ *Prinia hypoxantha* A few seen well at Magoebaskloof and below the Sani Pass.

**Namaqua Warbler** ♦ *Phragmacia substriata* Great views on the drive to Calvinia. A few others heard [nominate].

**Bar-throated Apalis** *Apalis thoracica* First at Grootvadersbosch; more seen / heard at other forested sites.

**Rudd's Apalis** ♦ *Apalis ruddi* Great views of this localized speciality at Mkuze GR [*fumosa*].

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flava* A few seen well around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [*flava*-group].

**Rufous-eared Warbler** ♦ *Malcorus pectoralis* Several good views of this cracker, the first in Brandvlei area.

**Green-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brachyura* Common, by voice in the east. Best views in Mkuze GR.

**Barred Wren-Warbler** *Calamonastes fasciolatus* (H) One heard only in Polokwane NR.  
**Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** ◇ *Euryptila subcinnamomea* Excellent views at Goegap Nature Reserve.  
**Yellow-bellied Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis* One seen well at Marrick [saturation].  
**Karoo Eremomela** ◇ *Eremomela gregalis* Great views of one at Goegap.  
**Burnt-necked Eremomela** *Eremomela usticollis* Nice views of at least four in Polokwane area [nominate].  
**Green-capped Eremomela** *Eremomela scotops* Excellent views of small group north of Pretoria.  
**Arrow-marked Babbler** *Turdoides jardineii* Three birds seen in Polokwane NR.  
**Bush Blackcap** ◇ *Lioptilus nigricapillus* (NT) Brilliant views of several birds along Sani Pass.  
**Chestnut-vented Warbler** *Sylvia subcoerulea* Best views were around Marrick GF [nominate].  
**Layard's Warbler** ◇ *Sylvia layardi* A bit elusive this trip but seen at Kransvleiport and at Goegap.  
**Cape White-eye** *Zosterops virens* See note.  
**Orange River White-Eye** ◇ *Zosterops pallidus* Best views of this distinctive species were at Augrabies Falls NP.  
**African Yellow White-Eye** *Zosterops senegalensis* Few birds seen in Mkuze GR.  
**Cape Sugarbird** ◇ *Promerops cafer* Many great views around the Cape; the first at Rooi Els and Harold Porter BG.  
**Gurney's Sugarbird** ◇ *Promerops gurneyi* Great views below the Sani Pass [nominate].  
**Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* Introduced vermin. Common in the east [nominate].  
**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* Introduced vermin. Common in the south [nominate].  
**Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* A few flocks, first seen near Kimberley.  
**Black-bellied Starling** *Notopholia corrusca* Fairly common in the east, especially around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.  
**Cape Starling** *Lamprotornis nitens* A good number seen after the first at Augrabies Falls NP.  
**Burchell's Starling** *Lamprotornis australis* A few seen well north of Pretoria.  
**Pied Starling** *Lamprotornis bicolor* Pretty common and widespread. First seen on the drive across the Overberg.  
**Violet-backed Starling** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Plenty. Many good looks, especially at Mkuze GR [verreauxi].  
**Red-winged Starling** *Onychognathus morio* Fairly common and widespread, first in the Cape Town area [nominate].  
**Pale-winged Starling** ◇ *Onychognathus nabouroup* Best views were around Augrabies NP.  
**Red-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* First in Polokwane with more at Mkuze GR and St Lucia.  
**Orange Ground Thrush** ◇ *Geokichla gurneyi* (H) Heard only at Magoebaskloof.  
**Spotted Ground Thrush** ◇ *Geokichla guttata* (EN) Brilliant views of one bird at Dlinza Forest [nominate].  
**Groundscraper Thrush** *Turdus litsitsirupa* One north of Pretoria [nominate].  
**Kurrichane Thrush** *Turdus libonyana* Small numbers seen in the east. First at Polokwane.  
**Olive Thrush** *Turdus olivaceus* Small numbers in the southwest and in the eastern forests. First at Kirstenbosch BG.  
**Karoo Thrush** ◇ *Turdus smithi* Great looks at Augrabies Falls NP and around Kimberley.  
**Karoo Scrub Robin** ◇ *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* Two forms: nominate inland; *cinerea* along the West Coast.  
**Bearded Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata* Great looks at two or more in Mkuze GR [nominate].  
**Kalahari Scrub Robin** ◇ *Cercotrichas paena* Several seen, best views were at Marrick GF.  
**White-browed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* A couple around Mkuze.  
**Brown Scrub Robin** ◇ *Cercotrichas signata* Great views of several birds at St Lucia [nominate].  
**Grey Tit-Flycatcher** *Myioparus plumbeus* Two birds showed well at Mkuze [orientalis].  
**Southern Black Flycatcher** *Melaenornis pammelaina* First north of Pretoria [diabolicus].  
**Chat Flycatcher** ◇ *Melaenornis infuscatus* Common in the arid Karoo. First seen on the journey to Brandvlei.  
**Marico Flycatcher** ◇ *Melaenornis mariquensis* Seen at Marrick GF and Polokwane [nominate].  
**Fiscal Flycatcher** ◇ *Melaenornis silens* Several seen, the first in De Hoop. Nominate - all this form?  
**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* Several migrants seen, the first at Augrabies Falls NP.  
**Ashy Flycatcher** *Muscicapa caerulescens* Two birds seen in Mkuze GR.  
**African Dusky Flycatcher** *Muscicapa adusta* Two forms: nominate in the south; *fuscata* in the east.  
**Cape Robin-Chat** *Cossypha caffra* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.  
**White-throated Robin-Chat** ◇ *Cossypha humeralis* Brilliant views of one at Mkuze GR.  
**White-browed Robin-Chat** *Cossypha heuglini* Just one seen in Tzaneen area [nominate].  
**Red-capped (Natal) Robin-Chat** *Cossypha natalensis* A few seen at St Lucia; some confiding individuals [nominate].  
**Chorister Robin-Chat** ◇ *Cossypha dichroa* See note.  
**White-starred Robin** *Pogonocichla stellata* Two seen at Magoebaskloof [transvaalensis].  
**Cape Rock Thrush** ◇ *Monticola rupestris* A few seen at Rooi Els, and a few below Sani Pass.  
**Sentinel Rock Thrush** ◇ *Monticola explorator* See note.  
**Short-toed Rock Thrush** ◇ *Monticola brevipes* Great views of the nominate form between Augrabies to Kimberley.  
**African Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus* Small numbers at a number of sites, the first near De Hoop.



**Buff-streaked Chat** ♦ *Campicoloides bifasciatus* Seen at Wakkerstroom and below the Sani Pass.

**Sickle-winged Chat** ♦ *Emarginata sinuata* Two forms seen: *ensifera* north of Langebaan; *hypernephela* in Lesotho.

**Karoo Chat** ♦ *Emarginata schlegelii* Common in the arid Karoo. First seen on the journey to Calvinia [*pollux*].

**Tractrac Chat** ♦ *Emarginata tractrac* Good numbers around Calvinia, Brandvlei and near Port Nolloth [nominate].

**Ant-eating Chat** ♦ *Myrmecocichla formicivora* Common at several sites, particularly at Marrick and Wakkerstroom.

**Mountain Wheatear** ♦ *Myrmecocichla monticola* Several seen well, first at Kransvleiport [nominate].

**Capped Wheatear** *Oenanthe pileata* Common in a few areas, first around De Hoop [nominate].

**Familiar Chat** *Oenanthe familiaris* Several seen, the first at Rooi Els.

**Collared Sunbird** *Hedydipna collaris* Nominate at Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

**Orange-breasted Sunbird** ♦ *Anthobaphes violacea* Another stunner, only seen well at Harold Porter Gardens.

**Olive Sunbird** *Cyanomitra olivacea* Several seen well at St Lucia and Dlinza [nominate - Eastern].

**Grey (Mouse-coloured) Sunbird** *Cyanomitra veroxii* Great views of a few around Mkuze and St Lucia [nominate].

**Amethyst Sunbird** *Chalcomitra amethystina* Several seen well, the first at Harold Porter.

**Scarlet-chested Sunbird** *Chalcomitra senegalensis* A real cracker, seen well at Mkuze [*gutturalis*].

**Malachite Sunbird** *Nectarinia famosa* Plenty seen well. First at Kirstenbosch [nominate].

**Southern Double-collared Sunbird** *Cinnyris chalybeus* Plenty. Particularly showy in Kirstenbosch BG [nominate].

**Neergaard's Sunbird** ♦ *Cinnyris neergaardi* (NT) Brilliant views of two birds at Mkuze GR.

**Greater Double-collared Sunbird** ♦ *Cinnyris afer* Just a few seen, the first at Grootvadersbosch.

**Marico Sunbird** *Cinnyris mariquensis* At least two seen well at Polokwane NR [nominate].

**Purple-banded Sunbird** *Cinnyris bifasciatus* Many seen well at Mkuze GR [*microrhynchus*].

**White-bellied Sunbird** *Cinnyris talatala* Just a few. First at Marrick and a few around Mkuze.

**Dusky Sunbird** *Cinnyris fuscus* Some great views, especially near Springbok and at Augrabies NP [nominate].

**White-browed Sparrow-Weaver** *Plocepasser mahali* Many; first at Marrick GR, also around Polokwane [nominate].

**Sociable Weaver** ♦ *Philetairus socius* Hundreds seen well at some impressive nests, especially around Pofadder.

**House Sparrow (introduced)** *Passer domesticus* Common and widespread [nominate].

**Cape Sparrow** ♦ *Passer melanurus* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**Southern Grey-headed Sparrow** *Passer diffusus* Common in the east, but first in the Cape Town area.

**Yellow-throated Petronia** *Gymnoris supercilialis* Only seen well in Mkuze [nominate].

**Scaly-feathered Weaver** ♦ *Sporopipes squamifrons* Common in the Northern Cape. First near Aggenys [nominate].

**Thick-billed Weaver** *Amblyospiza albifrons* Several seen with best views in the St Lucia area [nominate].

**Spectacled Weaver** *Ploceus ocularis* Only two seen, best views in Tzaneen area [nominate].

**Cape Weaver** ♦ *Ploceus capensis* Seen well at many sites, first around Kirstenbosch.

**Eastern Golden Weaver** *Ploceus subaureus* Plenty around Mkuze and St Lucia [nominate].

**Holub's Golden Weaver** *Ploceus xanthops* Two birds seen around Tzaneen.

**Southern Brown-throated Weaver** ♦ *Ploceus xanthopterus* Close-up views of nesting birds at St Lucia [*marleyi*].

**Lesser Masked Weaver** *Ploceus intermedius* Seen well at a few sites in the east; nesting at Mkuze [*cabanisii*].

**Southern Masked Weaver** *Ploceus velatus* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

**Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus* Seen at a few sites in the east; large colony at hotel in Mkuze [*spilonotus*].

**Dark-backed (Forest) Weaver** *Ploceus bicolor* Small numbers at Mkuze, St Lucia and Dlinza Forest.

**Red-headed Quelea** *Quelea erythrops* A flock of around 50 at Amatikulu was a big addition to the triplist.

**Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea* Plenty seen. Most common in the east [*lathamii*].

**Yellow-crowned Bishop** *Euplectes afer* Only seen around Wakkerstroom [*taha*].

**Southern Red Bishop** *Euplectes orix* Very common and widespread on tour – west to east.

**Yellow Bishop** *Euplectes capensis* Small numbers at a few sites. First seen around Betty's Bay [*capensis*-group].

**Fan-tailed Widowbird** *Euplectes axillaris* Plenty seen in the east, the first in Pongola area [nominate].

**White-winged Widowbird** *Euplectes albonotatus* c10 in Mkuze were the only ones [nominate].

**Red-collared Widowbird** *Euplectes ardens* Few seen in the east, the first at Tzaneen [nominate].

**Long-tailed Widowbird** *Euplectes progne* Loads of great views. Stunning birds, first seen around Jhb [nominate].

**Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba* Only one bird seen in Polokwane area [nominate].

**Red-headed Finch** ♦ *Amadina erythrocephala* Best views were at a waterhole in Marrick GR.

**Cut-throat Finch** *Amadina fasciata* c14 seen just north of Pretoria.

**Pink-throated Twinspot** ♦ *Hypargos margaritatus* Brilliant views of a male of this stunner at Mkuze GR.

**Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* Good views obtained in Mkuze [*rendalli*].

**African Firefinch (Blue-billed F)** *Lagonostica rubricata* Four birds seen at Kurisa Moya, Magoebaskloof area.

**Jameson's Firefinch** *Lagonostica rhodopareia* Two birds seen north of Pretoria.

**Blue Waxbill** *Uraeginthus angolensis* Good numbers in the east. First seen near Polokwane [*niassensis*].

**Violet-eared Waxbill** ♦ *Uraeginthus granatinus* A few at Marrick GR and Polokwane NR.

**Swee Waxbill** ♦ *Coccyzygia melanotis* Great views at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

**Grey Waxbill (Lavender W)** *Estrilda perreini* Excellent sightings obtained in Mkuze GR.

**Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild* Two forms: nominate in the south; *tenebroidorsa* in the north and east.

**Black-faced Waxbill** ♦ *Estrilda erythronotos* Seen well at Marrick GR, also Polokwane [nominate].

**(African) Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza [atricollis] fuscocrissa* Seen in Wakkerstroom area and at Highover.

**Bronze Mannikin** *Lonchura cucullata* First seen in the Pretoria area [*scutata*].

**Maggie Mannikin** *Lonchura fringilloides* Great views of several birds near Tzaneen.

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* Plenty in the east, although first seen in Overberg area.

**Shaft-tailed Whydah** ♦ *Vidua regia* Great views of two males coming into breeding plumage at Marrick.

**Cuckoo-finch (Parasitic Weaver)** *Anomalospiza imberbis* Two birds seen well in Wakkerstroom area. Scarce.

**Cape Wagtail** *Motacilla capensis* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen in Cape Town [nominate].

**Mountain Wagtail (Long-tailed W)** *Motacilla clara* Pair seen well at Debengeni Falls, Magoebaskloof.

**African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* Two forms: nominate first seen at Augrabies Falls; *vidua* near Tzaneen.

**Cape Longclaw** ♦ *Macronyx capensis* Two forms: nominate in the southwest; *colletti* at Wakkerstroom.

**Yellow-throated Longclaw** *Macronyx croceus* Two seen in St Lucia area [*vulturinus*].

**African Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites [*cinnamomeus*-group].

**Mountain Pipit** ♦ *Anthus hoeschi* Great views of a few in Lesotho above the Sani Pass.

**Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* Good views at Akkerendam NR (Calvinia), also Wakkerstroom [*nicholsoni*-group].

**Buffy Pipit** *Anthus vaalensis* One bird seen on drive from Augrabies to Kimberley.

**Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* One bird seen on Marrick GF.

**Striped Pipit** *Anthus lineiventris* One seen well in Magoebaskloof area.

**African Rock Pipit** ♦ *Anthus crenatus* Great views near to Wakkerstroom.

**Bushveld Pipit** *Anthus caffer* (LO) One bird seen north of Pretoria.

**Yellow-breasted Pipit** ♦ *Anthus chloris* (VU) Brilliant views of a couple near to Wakkerstroom after some patience.

**Common Chaffinch (introduced)** *Fringilla coelebs* A few around Cape Town.

**Forest Canary** ♦ *Crithagra scotops* Particularly good views in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

**Black-throated Canary** *Crithagra atrogularis* First seen in Polokwane area, also Wakkerstroom.

**Lemon-breasted Canary** ♦ *Crithagra citrinipectus* Great views of at least 11 along eastern shores of iSimangaliso.

**Yellow-fronted Canary** *Crithagra mozambica* Common in the east. First seen in the Pretoria area.

**Cape Siskin** ♦ *Crithagra totta* Seen very well at Rooi Els.

**Drakensberg Siskin** ♦ *Crithagra symonsi* Great views of at least 10 in Lesotho above the Sani Pass.

**Yellow Canary** ♦ *Crithagra flaviventris* Quite common in the southwest. First seen in the De Hoop area.

**Brimstone Canary** *Crithagra sulphurata* Nominat seen in the south at several sites.

**Streaky-headed Seedeater** ♦ *Crithagra gularis* Good views of several sites, the first at Grootvadersbosch .

**White-throated Canary** ♦ *Crithagra albogularis* Quite a few seen well, the first at West Coast NP.

**Protea Canary** ♦ *Crithagra leucoptera* Great views of a couple at Kransvleiport.

**Cape Canary** *Serinus canicollis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen at Kirstenbosch [nominate].

**Black-headed (or Damara) Canary** *Serinus [alaris] leucolaemus* Great views at West Coast NP.

**Lark-like Bunting** ♦ *Emberiza impetuanii* V ery common in the Northern Cape. First seen in the Brandvlei area.

**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi* Several seen, especially around Polokwane [nominate].

**Cape Bunting** ♦ *Emberiza capensis* Good numbers at several sites. First seen at Rooi Els.

**Golden-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza flaviventris* Just a couple seen near Polokwane and Mkuze.





Long-tailed Widowbird, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Lemon-breasted Canary, Livingstone's Turaco  
© **Martin Benadie**





Aardvark, Suricate, Lion, Rock Hyrax – © **Martin Benadie**

## MAMMALS

With most of the country fenced off as large farms or wildlife ranches/conservancies, the seasonal migration of larger mammal species is no longer possible as it would have been in earlier times. In many areas, game species have also been reintroduced (although they would have occurred in these areas historically) for ecotourism or stocked for commercial (hunting) reasons. The list below represents the more likely wild mammals seen on the tour:

**Striped Mouse (Four-striped Grass Mouse) *Rhabdomys pumilio*** A few seen.

**Bush Vlei Rat (Karoo Bush Rat) *Otomys unisulcatus*** One seen north of Calvinia.

**Brant's Whistling Rat *Parotomys brantsii*** One seen well outside Port Nolloth.

**Sloggett's Rat (Ice Rat) *Otomys sloggetti*** A few 'ice rats' in Lesotho.

**Ground Squirrel (Cape Ground S) *Xerus inauris*** Several seen.

**Red Squirrel (Red Bush S) *Paraxerus palliatus*** One seen at St Lucia.

**Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*** A few around Cape Town.

**South African Porcupine *Hystrix africaeaustralis*** Two seen in De Hoop area, also on the night drives at Marrick GF.

**Springhare *Pedetes capensis*** Numerous seen at Marrick GF.



**Cape Hare** *Lepus capensis* A few seen, especially around Marrick GR.

**Scrub Hare** *Lepus saxatilis* Prefers scrubbier areas to the previous species. Widespread.

**Rock Dassie (Cape D, Cape R Hyrax)** *Procavia capensis* Very confiding at Betty's Bay and Augrabies Falls NP.

**African Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* Solitary adult male seen in Mkuze.

**Cape Mountain Zebra** *Equus zebra* Fantastic views at De Hoop and Goegap.

**Burchell's (Plains) Zebra** *Equus [quagga] burchelli* Plenty seen around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

**Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaeangliae* One seen on pelagic trip.

**Hippopotamus** *Hippopotamus amphibious* Small numbers seen around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

**Warthog** *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* Plenty seen around Marrick, Polokwane and Mkuze GR.

**Giraffe** *Giraffa camelopardalis* Plenty seen in Polokwane NR and Mkuze GR.

**Black Wildebeest (White-tailed Gnu)** *Conochaetes gnou* A herd at Marrick GF.

**Blue Wildebeest (Brindled Gnu)** *Connochaetes taurinus* Plenty seen around Polokwane NR and Mkuze GR.

**Bontebok** *Damaliscus [pygargus] pygargus* This attractive antelope was seen well at De Hoop.

**Blesbok** *Damaliscus [pygargus] phillipsi* Herd seen on Marrick.

**Natal Red Duiker** *Cephalophus natalensis* Seen well at St Lucia.

**Common Duiker (Grey Duiker)** *Sylvicapra grimmia* Several seen.

**Springbok** *Antidorcas marsupialis* Seen at many sites. Some stocked, some wild.

**Klipspringer** *Oreotragus oreotragus* A few seen, first at Kransvleiport.

**Steenbok (Steinbok)** *Raphicerus campestris* Several seen at many sites.

**Impala** *Aepyceros melampus* Most seen were around Polokwane NR, Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

**Hartebeest** *Alcelaphus buselaphus* Small herd seen travelling between Augrabies and Marrick.

**Grey Rhebok (Vaal R)** *Pelea capreolus* A few seen, especially in the large fields in the Overberg.

**Gemsbok (Oryx)** *Oryx gazella* Several seen near Springbok.

**Kudu (Greater Kudu)** *Tragelaphus strepsiceros* Four seen on Marrick.

**Nyala** *Tragelaphus angasii* Many of these attractive antelopes seen well in Mkuze.

**Bushbuck** *Tragelaphus scriptus* Single seen at St Lucia.

**Eland** *Taurotragus oryx* Good numbers at at De Hoop, also Himeville area.

**Reedbuck (Common R)** *Redunca arundinum* A few seen in Himeville district.

**Lion** *Panthera leo* One male seen in Mkuze. Big surprise on the tour!

**Striped Polecat (Zorilla)** *Ictonyx striatus* One on the night drive at Marrick GF.

**African Clawless Otter** *Aonyx capensis* One seen well in Wakkerstroom area.

**Aardwolf** *Proteles cristata* One seen incredibly well on night drive in Marrick GF.

**Bat-eared Fox** *Otocyon megalotis* A few on the night drives at Marrick GF.

**Black-backed Jackal** *Canis mesomelas* A couple seen at Marrick and Himeville area.

**Small-spotted Genet (Common G, Rusty-spotted G)** *Genetta genetta* One seen on the night drive at Marrick GF.

**Suricate (Meerkat)** *Suricata suricatta* Seen in Goegap NR and at Wakkerstroom.

**Yellow Mongoose (Bushy-tailed Meerkat)** *Cynictis penicillata* Quite a few seen, the first around Langebaan.

**Slender Mongoose** *Galerella sanguinea* One at Marrick and a couple at Mkuze.

**Small Grey (Cape Grey) Mongoose** *Galerella (Herpestes) pulverulenta* Several seen, the first in Betty's Bay.

**Banded Mongoose** *Mungos mungo* A large gang at Polokwane NR were very entertaining!

**Chacma Baboon** *Papio ursinus* Plenty seen, the first on the way to Rooi Els.

**Vervet Monkey (Vervet)** *Cercopithecus aethiops* Good numbers seen, the first at Augrabies Falls.

**Samango Monkey (Diademed Guenon)** *Cercopithecus mitis* Several seen at Magoebaskloof

**Aardvark** *Orycteropus afer* Great views of three on two respective night drives at Marrick GF.

**Cape Fur Seal (Afro-Australian F S)** *Arctocephalus pusillus* Good numbers, especially during the pelagic.



Blue Wildebeest (Brindled Gnu), Klipspringer – © Martin Benadie

#### NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. (Gill, F and Donsker, D Eds). 2017. IOC World Bird Names v7.1. Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

#### **Knysna Turaco** *Tauraco corythaix*

In the north, several of the form *phoebus* were seen around Magoebaskloof.

#### **Southern Fiscal** *Lanius collaris*

The nominate form was common in the south and was first seen in the Cape Town area whilst the form *pyrrhostictus* was the form found in the east.

#### **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher** *Trochocercus cyanomelas*

We saw two forms of this distinctive flycatcher. The form *cyanomelas* was seen well at Grootvadersbosch, whilst in the east, the form *megalolophus* was noted at Magoebaskloof.

#### **Cape Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus minutus*

The form *gigi* was seen very well in West Coast National Park, whilst the nominate form was seen well at Marrick Game Farm.

#### **Cape Long-billed Lark** *Certhilauda curvirostris*

The form *falcirostris* was reasonably common in the Port Nolloth area.

#### **Sabota Lark** *Calendulauda sabota*

We saw two distinctive forms. The large-billed form, *bradfieldi* that was first seen near to Brandvlei, is sometimes split off as a different species, Bradfield's Lark. Others from the nominate *sabota* group were seen elsewhere, such as at Polokwane.

#### **Red Lark** *Calendulauda burra*

Splendid red form seen in the Aggenys area.

#### **Barlow's Lark** *Calendulauda barlowi*

Few birds seen north of Port Nolloth.

#### **Cloud Cisticola** *Cisticola textrix*

We saw two forms of this tiny species. They look quite different but sound pretty similar. In the Cape, we saw the streaky nominate form very well near to De Hoop and again at the Tiene Versveld Wildflower Reserve. In the east, the unstreaked (on the underparts) form *major* was seen.

#### **Cape White-eye** *Zosterops virens*

The form *capensis* was common for much of the tour and was first seen at Noordhoek. In the east, the much brighter nominate form was quite common.



**Chorister Robin-Chat** *Cossypha dichroa*

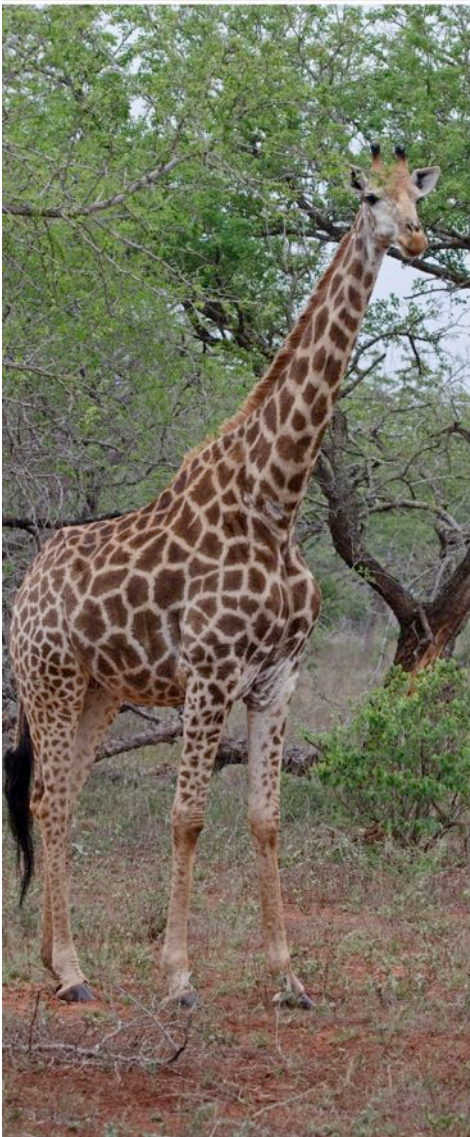
Two forms: Good views of a few of the form *mimica* in the end at Magoebaskloof and then the nominate form *dichroa* was seen well at Dlinza Forest, Eshowe.

**Sentinel Rock Thrush** *Monticola explorator*

Two forms: At Wakkerstroom we saw a male of the nominate form whilst in Lesotho we had great views of several of *tenebriformis*.



Gurney's Sugarbird, Red-necked Spurfowl – © Martin Benadie



Hippopotamus, Red-headed Quelea, Southern Giraffe, Grey-backed Sparrow-lark, Black Wildebeest (White-tailed Gnu)  
© **Martin Benadie**



Some of the more conspicuous reptiles and amphibians from the ULTIMATE SOUTH AFRICA 2017 tour.

#### APPENDIX A: REPTILES



Angulate Tortoise *Chersina angulata* (West Coast NP), Cape Crag Lizard *Pseudocordylus microlepidotus* (Goegap NR), Southern Rock Agama *Agama atra* (Stony Point Nature Reserve), Drakensberg Crag Lizard *Pseudocordylus melanotus subviridus* (Lesotho), Southern Rock Agama *Agama atra* (Very colourful male photographed in Goegap Nature Reserve). Images © Martin Benadie





Sand Lizard *Pedioplanus* sp. (Aggenys area), Common Barking Gecko *Ptenopus garrulus* (Augrabies), Puffadder *Bitis arietans* (Sani Pass). Images © Martin Benadie



## APPENDIX B: AMPHIBIANS



Bushveld Rain Frog *Breviceps adpersus* (Polokwane area), Strawberry Rain Frog *Breviceps acutirostris* (Grootvadersbosch), Clicking (Gray's) Stream Frog *Strongylopus grayii* (Grootvadersbosch). Images © Martin Benadie