



ESSENTIAL NAMIBIA: CUSTOM TRIP REPORT
10 - 19 OCTOBER 2019



Overview

Namibia is a must-visit African country since it is so very unique, with the world's oldest desert including the highest sand dunes in the world of a spectacular red color, rugged desert mountains along the bird-rich Namibian Escarpment, and one of the world's greatest game parks, the vast Etosha National Park. And, last but not least, Namibia hosts a number of birds that are only found there or in adjacent Angola. This tour was a uniquely crafted departure searching for as many bird species as possible in central Namibia with limited time at our disposal. In terms of finding key species we did very well – locating basically all of the desired targets. A total of 218 bird species were seen (plus eight species heard only). A full bird list can be found at the end of this report.

After some initial, productive birding around Windhoek and a wonderful evening in the capital the clients set off to Sossusvlei via a highly scenic charter flight over awe-inspiring dunes and rugged topography. After spending the day at the red sand sea of Sossusvlei they took another incredible flight along the Atlantic coastline, taking in **Cape Fur Seal** colonies and more dune scenery, to Walvis Bay, where we continued our trip.

What follows in an annotated report of the key birding and wildlife localities visited as well as some of the respective highlights enjoyed at each.

Report

Birding in and around Walvis Bay and Swakopmund got our list going nicely. One morning we enjoyed a boat cruise in the Walvis Bay harbor and lagoon. Pelican Point with its landmark lighthouse is also home to 60,000 resident **Cape Fur Seals**. **Heaviside Dolphin** was also an exciting find, as was **Ocean Sunfish**. **Kelp Gull**, **Hartlaub's Gull**, **Great White Pelican**, **Cape Cormorant**, **Crowned Cormorant**, **Cape Gannet**, **Sooty Shearwater**, **African Oystercatcher**, and huge numbers of **Terns** such as **Sandwich**, **Greater Crested**, and **Black** were also seen. The Walvis Bay Salt Works and Lagoon are home to some of the largest concentrations of **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos**, a real spectacle. Healthy numbers of migratory shorebirds were also found, such as **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Little Stint**, and **Whimbrel**. In the dune fields inland from Walvis Bay we managed to see Namibia's only endemic, **Dune Lark**, and the gravel plains and salt works north of Swakopmund produced the goods in form of **Gray's Lark**, **Tractrac Chat**, **Damara Tern**, and **Red-capped Lark**.

This unique itinerary also visited the spectacular inselberg of the mighty Spitzkoppe. It was here that we were lucky enough to find the likes of **Herero Chat**, **Layard's Warbler**, **Pale-winged Starling**, and **Shaft-tailed Whydah**. The surrounding plains held **Rüppell's Korhaan** among others.

The dramatic Erongo Mountains rise like mighty whalebacks over the otherwise flat landscape, and we also stayed here for one night. This area has many interesting species, and we added sought-after birds like **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, **Carp's Tit**, **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**, **Rockrunner**, and **White-tailed Shrike**, as well as **Green-winged Pytilia** and **Freckled Nightjar**.

We also traveled to the mighty Brandberg – Namibia’s highest mountain. Apart from being able to enjoy the dramatic Damaraland scenery, this proved to be a great decision, and many tricky targets were added on that day, like **Violet Wood Hoopoe**, **Damara Red-billed Hornbill**, **Southern Pied Babbler**, **Benguela Long-billed Lark**, **Stark’s Lark**, and **Karoo Chat**.

One night was also spent at the Hobatere Lodge, situated in the Khoadi Hoas Conservancy west of Etosha National Park, which offers great birding in dramatic landscapes for the likes of **Bare-cheeked Babbler**, **Verreaux’s Eagle-Owl**, and **Meves’s Starling**. We had some pleasant mammal encounters here too, including **Lion** and **African Elephant** at the lodge waterhole and **Hartmann’s Mountain Zebra** on the drive in.

Three nights were also spent in the incredible Etosha National Park. Here we birded woodland interspersed with open plains and a vast, clay-white pan that covers almost 5000 square kilometers. Apart from the opportunity of spotting predators and plains game, the park’s birdlife is staggering. Great birds we found here included **Burchell’s Sandgrouse**, **Kori Bustard**, **Northern Black Korhaan**, **Burchell’s Courser**, **Sociable Weaver**, **Eastern Clapper Lark**, **Double-banded Courser**, **Hartlaub’s Spurfowl**, **South African Shelduck**, and **Pink-billed Lark**. Etosha also afforded some great mammal viewing with **Lion** and large numbers of herbivores such as **Blue Wildebeest**, **Plains Zebra**, **Giraffe**, **Greater Kudu**, and **Springbok**.

A great ending to this itinerary was one night at the Waterberg Plateau National Park. A wonderful early morning walk was taken to the top of the sandstone plateau, and we enjoyed varied birdlife in the wooded slopes and above, including the likes of **Bradfield’s Hornbill**, **Alpine Swift**, **Rockrunner**, **Bradfield’s Swift**, and **Rüppell’s Parrot** before an uneventful drive back to Windhoek.

Bird List - Following IOC (9.2)

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

The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: CE = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened. The Namibian endemic is bolded.

Common name	Scientific name
Ostriches (Struthionidae)	
Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
Guineafowl (Numididae)	
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
Pheasants & Allies (Phasianidae)	

Common name	Scientific name
Crested Francolin (H)	<i>Dendroperdix sephaena</i>
Hartlaub's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis hartlaubi</i>
Red-billed Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis adspersus</i>
Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)	
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
South African Shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>
Cape Teal	<i>Anas capensis</i>
Cape Shoveler	<i>Spatula smithii</i>
Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>
Nightjars (Caprimulgidae)	
Rufous-cheeked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus rufigena</i>
Freckled Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus tristigma</i>
Swifts (Apodidae)	
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Bradfield's Swift	<i>Apus bradfieldi</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>
Turacos (Musophagidae)	
Grey Go-away-bird	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>
Bustards (Otididae)	
Kori Bustard - NT	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>
Ludwig's Bustard - EN	<i>Neotis ludwigii</i>
Rüppell's Korhaan	<i>Eupodotis rueppellii</i>
Red-crested Korhaan	<i>Lophotis ruficrista</i>
Northern Black Korhaan	<i>Afrotis afraoides</i>
Cuckoos (Cuculidae)	
African Cuckoo (H)	<i>Cuculus gularis</i>
Sandgrouse (Pteroclididae)	
Namaqua Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles namaqua</i>
Double-banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>
Burchell's Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles burchelli</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
Rails, Crakes & Coots (Rallidae)	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
Grebes (Podicipedidae)	
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae)	
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
Lesser Flamingo - NT	<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>
Stone-curlews, Thick-knees (Burhinidae)	
Spotted Thick-knee (H)	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)	
African Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>
Stilts, Avocets (Recurvirostridae)	
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Plovers (Charadriidae)	
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>
Chestnut-banded Plover - NT	<i>Charadrius pallidus</i>
Caspian Plover	<i>Charadrius asiaticus</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)	
Bar-tailed Godwit - NT	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Curlew Sandpiper - NT	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Couriers, Pratincoles (Glareolidae)	
Burchell's Courser	<i>Cursorius rufus</i>
Double-banded Courser	<i>Rhinoptilus africanus</i>
Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae)	
Grey-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i>
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Damara Tern - VU	<i>Sternula balaenarum</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Albatrosses (Diomedeidae)	
Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>
Petrels, Shearwaters (Procellariidae)	
Sooty Shearwater - NT	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>
Gannets, Boobies (Sulidae)	
Cape Gannet - EN	<i>Morus capensis</i>
Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)	

Common name	Scientific name
Crowned Cormorant - NT	<i>Microcarbo coronatus</i>
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>
Cape Cormorant - EN	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>
Hérons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)	
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Hamerkop (Scopidae)	
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
Pelicans (Pelecanidae)	
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)	
White-backed Vulture - CE	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
Lappet-faced Vulture - EN	<i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>
Black-chested Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>
Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
Bateleur - NT	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
Martial Eagle - VU	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>
Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus wahlbergi</i>
Tawny Eagle - VU	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
African Hawk-Eagle	<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>
Pale Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax canorus</i>
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>
African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
Augur Buzzard	<i>Buteo augur</i>
Barn Owls (Tytonidae)	
Western Barn Owl (H)	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Owls (Strigidae)	

Common name	Scientific name
African Scops Owl (H)	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>
Spotted Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>
Pearl-spotted Owlet	<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>
Mousebirds (Coliidae)	
White-backed Mousebird	<i>Colius colius</i>
Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>
Hoopoes (Upupidae)	
African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>
Wood Hoopoes (Phoeniculidae)	
Violet Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus damarensis</i>
Common Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>
Hornbills (Bucerotidae)	
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>
Monteiro's Hornbill	<i>Tockus monteiri</i>
Damara Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus damarensis</i>
Southern Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus rufirostris</i>
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus leucomelas</i>
Bradfield's Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros bradfieldi</i>
Rollers (Coraciidae)	
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>
Bee-eaters (Meropidae)	
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
African Barbets (Lybiidae)	
Acacia Pied Barbet	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>
Honeyguides (Indicatoridae)	
Lesser Honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>
Woodpeckers (Picidae)	
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicops fuscescens</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)	
Pygmy Falcon	<i>Polihierax semitorquatus</i>
Rock Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicolus</i>
Greater Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicoloides</i>
Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
African & New World Parrots (Psittacidae)	
Rüppell's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus rueppellii</i>
Old World Parrots (Psittaculidae)	
Rosy-faced Lovebird	<i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>
Wattle-eyes, Batises (Platysteiridae)	
Pirit Batis	<i>Batis pririt</i>
White-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanioturdus torquatus</i>
Bushshrikes (Malaconotidae)	
Bokmakierie (H)	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>
Brown-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>
Black-backed Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>
Crimson-breasted Shrike	<i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i>
Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>
Shrikes (Laniidae)	
Southern White-crowned Shrike	<i>Eurocephalus anguitimens</i>
Southern Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
Drongos (Dicruridae)	
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Crows, Jays (Corvidae)	
Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
Tits, Chickadees (Paridae)	
Carp's Tit	<i>Melaniparus carpi</i>
Ashy Tit	<i>Melaniparus cinerascens</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Penduline Tits (Remizidae)	
Cape Penduline Tit	<i>Anthoscopus minutus</i>
Larks (Alaudidae)	
Eastern Clapper Lark	<i>Mirafra fasciolata</i>
Fawn-colored Lark	<i>Calendulauda africanoides</i>
Sabota Lark	<i>Calendulauda sabota</i>
Dune Lark	<i>Calendulauda erythrochlamys</i>
Benguela Long-billed Lark	<i>Certhilauda benguelensis</i>
Spike-heeled Lark	<i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i>
Gray's Lark	<i>Ammomanopsis grayi</i>
Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
Pink-billed Lark	<i>Spizocorys conirostris</i>
Stark's Lark	<i>Spizocorys starki</i>
Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>
Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix verticalis</i>
Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)	
African Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>
Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)	
Banded Martin	<i>Riparia cincta</i>
Pearl-breasted Swallow	<i>Hirundo dimidiata</i>
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Greater Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis cucullata</i>
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>
Red-breasted Swallow	<i>Cecropis semirufa</i>
Crombecs, African Warblers (Macrosphenidae)	
Rockrunner	<i>Achaetops pycnopygius</i>
Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
Reed Warblers & Allies (Acrocephalidae)	
African Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>
Cisticolas & Allies (Cisticolidae)	
Black-chested Prinia	<i>Prinia flavicans</i>
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Barred Wren-Warbler (H)	<i>Calamonastes fasciolatus</i>
Yellow-bellied Eremomela	<i>Eremomela icteropygialis</i>
Burnt-necked Eremomela	<i>Eremomela usticollis</i>
Laughingthrushes & Allies (Leiothrichidae)	
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Southern Pied Babbler	<i>Turdoides bicolor</i>
Bare-cheeked Babbler	<i>Turdoides gymnogenys</i>
Sylviid Babblers (Sylviidae)	
Chestnut-vented Warbler	<i>Sylvia subcoerulea</i>
Layard's Warbler	<i>Sylvia layardi</i>
White-eyes (Zosteropidae)	
Orange River White-eye	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>
Starlings, Rhabdornis (Sturnidae)	
Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>
Cape Starling	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>
Meves's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis mevesii</i>
Burchell's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis australis</i>
Pale-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus nabouroup</i>
Thrushes (Turdidae)	
Groundscraper Thrush	<i>Turdus litsitsirupa</i>
Chats, Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)	
White-browed Scrub Robin (H)	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>
Kalahari Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas paena</i>
Herero Chat	<i>Namibornis herero</i>
Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>
Mountain Wheatear	<i>Myrmecocichla monticola</i>
Familiar Chat	<i>Oenanthe familiaris</i>
Karoo Chat	<i>Emarginata schlegelii</i>
Tractrac Chat	<i>Emarginata tractrac</i>
Ant-eating Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i>
Short-toed Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola brevipes</i>
Chat Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis infuscatus</i>
Marico Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis mariquensis</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Sunbirds (Nectariniidae)	
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>
Marico Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris mariquensis</i>
White-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris talatala</i>
Dusky Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris fuscus</i>
Old World Sparrows (Passeridae)	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Great Sparrow	<i>Passer motitensis</i>
Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
Weavers, Widowbirds (Ploceidae)	
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
Sociable Weaver	<i>Philetairus socius</i>
Scaly-feathered Weaver	<i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i>
Lesser Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus intermedius</i>
Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
Chestnut Weaver	<i>Ploceus rubiginosus</i>
Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
Waxbills, Munias & Allies (Estrildidae)	
Green-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia melba</i>
Red-headed Finch	<i>Amadina erythrocephala</i>
Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>
Violet-eared Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus granatinus</i>
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Black-faced Waxbill	<i>Estrilda erythronotos</i>
Indigobirds, Whydahs (Viduidae)	
Shaft-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua regia</i>
Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae)	
Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae)	
Black-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra atrogularis</i>
Yellow Canary	<i>Crithagra flaviventris</i>
White-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra albogularis</i>
Buntings (Emberizidae)	
Lark-like Bunting	<i>Emberiza impetuani</i>
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>
Cape Bunting	<i>Emberiza capensis</i>
Total seen	218
Total heard only	8
Total recorded	226