



COMPREHENSIVE EASTERN SOUTH AFRICA — CUSTOM TRIP REPORT

03–15 FEBRUARY 2021

By Dylan Vasapolli



Pink-throated Twinspot is a highly desirable KwaZulu-Natal special. With some patience we were rewarded with excellent views!

Overview

This custom tour was carefully designed for a single client, Tim, following a specific target list. Tim is a well-traveled birder, having visited South Africa before, along with many other destinations around the continent. Tim is also a keen photographer. As such, almost all of the time on this tour was devoted to tracking down various birds on the wish-list, and then focusing on getting good photos of these birds, if at all possible. In many instances various common and widespread species which were present around us, were not focused on, as such several birds heard calling were not actively sought out and seen.

Taking place during February, towards the tail-end of the austral summer, this tour was timed to be at a peak for many of the subtropical waterbirds that visit the region, such as Dwarf Bittern and Lesser Moorhen, along with the many palearctic migrants that winter in the region, such as various warbler species. In addition, this is also a great time of the year to find the many endemics and resident species that were also a priority. February is still in the core of the rainy season, and while we did have a few very wet days that impacted the birding, the rain itself didn't adversely affect us eventually finding the birds we were seeking. More of a challenge was Tim testing positive for coronavirus at the start of the tour. This excluded the high mountain endemics of the Sani Pass from the equation, but we did well to work our way around as many of these as possible, finding some of them at backup places in other parts of the country. New government regulations were also on our side, as South Africa moved away from intense isolation requirements, with recent studies showing covid antibodies were widely present in the population, and shifting towards a more holistic view of 'living with coronavirus'. This basically meant we were able to continue on with our tour, at the discretion of the other service providers.



Dwarf Bittern was a big target on the route, and fortunately didn't disappoint.

Once it was determined we could indeed continue on with the tour, we certainly maximized the birding, and enjoyed a very successful tour, finding almost all of the possible targets, along with a host of tricky and unpredictable species that are scarce at the best of times. Starting off in Durban, we ventured towards the Drakensberg foothills, where we had mixed fortunes with weather, and the coronavirus hassles, but got our possible primary targets such as **Cape Parrot** and **Blue Swallow**, while enjoying many other scarce birds such as **Wattled Crane**. We then made our way slowly up the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) coast, starting off at Eshowe. Here **Buff-spotted Flufftail** was a major highlight, along with others such as **Spotted Ground Thrush**, **Green Barbet**, **Swamp Nightjar** and **Green Twinspot**, before we moved up to St Lucia. A wide range of east coast littoral specials were seen here, including **Southern Banded Snake Eagle**, **Livingstone's Turaco**, **Woodward's Batis** and **Rudd's Apalis**, while other specials seen here included **Green Malkoha**, **Brown Scrub Robin** and **Grey Waxbill**.



*Seeing any flufftail is a difficult task. We were elated with our views of **Buff-spotted Flufftail**.*

Time in and around the excellent Mkhuze Game Reserve followed, and produced many specials – most notably **Pink-throated Twinspot**, **Neergaard's Sunbird** and **Lemon-breasted Canary**. A short stay in Wakkerstroom was very successful and gave up a lovely **Red-chested Flufftail**, along with **White-bellied Bustard** and **Yellow-breasted Pipit**, before we made our way to the Zaagkuilsdrift area, where the tour came to an end. The birding was simply fantastic here, with many waterbirds including **Dwarf Bittern**, **Lesser Moorhen**, **African Crake** and **Greater Painted-snipe** all featuring, along with other highly prized species such as **River Warbler** and **Thrush Nightingale**, together with **Olive-tree** and **Icterine Warblers** and **Common Whitethroat**. Resident specials seen here included **Southern Pied Babbler**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Southern White-faced Owl**, **Great Sparrow**, **Shaft-tailed Whydah**, **Violet-eared**

Waxbill and so many more. Ultimately, just over 400 species were recorded on the trip, with just under this number being seen.

Detailed daily reports, and trip lists can be found below.

Detailed Report

Day 1, 3rd February 2022. Arrival in Durban, transfer to Underberg

Following Tim's morning arrival into Durban, we made the journey down south to Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve, where we would spend a few hours birding. With the time near midday, and the heat absolutely sweltering, we did well picking up a showy male **Knysna Woodpecker** – one of our main targets for the morning! **Knysna Turaco** was another special bird that showed exceptionally well for us, as too was **Mountain Wagtail** and **Forest Canary**. A few other widespread species such as **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, **Bar-throated Apalis**, **Terrestrial Brownbul** and **Black-bellied Starling** were also noted. The remainder of the afternoon was spent travelling to our lodge, stunningly set in the foothills of the lower Drakensberg Mountains. We picked up raptors such as **Jackal Buzzard**, **African Harrier Hawk**, **Long-crested Eagle** and **Yellow-billed Kite**, and a pair of **Cape Longclaws** as we arrived at the lodge. We settled in for the evening, with rain persisting throughout.

Day 2, 4th February 2022. Birding Sani Pass and Underberg farmlands

Today was our much-anticipated day trip up Sani Pass, with local guide Stuart, and into the Lesotho highlands, with a number of endemic and sought-after species on the cards. We had a difficult start to the day, as the rain from last night continued through the morning (and the rest of the day as it turned out) unabated. This obviously made birding difficult, and we had to maximise the patches where we only had light rain. **Bush Blackcap** obliged after a bit of a search, and gave us good views, while a flurry of exciting birds began off with lovely perched views of a pair of **Half-collared Kingfishers**, shortly followed by a group of four **Olive Woodpeckers** all chasing each other and a calling **Red-chested Cuckoo** sat in the open. **Gurney's Sugarbirds** obliged on the flowering proteas, while smaller flowering plants held the likes of **Amethyst**, **Malachite** and **Greater Double-collared Sunbirds**. Stuart had a surprise in store for us, when he released a **Rhinkhals** up on the pass. Stuart had caught this venomous cobra species in a house in the Underberg area. Eventually we arrived at the border, where we had to undergo a Covid test before being allowed across. Unfortunately, Tim tested positive for coronavirus, meaning we couldn't access Lesotho (and its birds), but much to our delight Tim was (and still is) in good health with seemingly no adverse effects. With new government regulations on our side regarding isolation periods and such, we were able to morph the rest of our day into birding the vast agricultural lands surrounding Underberg for other species we were after. **Amur Falcon** were sighted in various places, while calling **Pale-crowned Cisticolas** refused to show themselves. **Grey Crowned Cranes** were numerous, and we enjoyed a lovely sighting of a pair of **Blue Cranes** with their chick just about to fledge. **Denham's Bustard** took some searching to locate, but we eventually found a bird in the mist and enjoyed prolonged views of this scarce species. All the while, numbers of glorious **Long-tailed** and **Fan-tailed Widowbirds** displayed over the grasslands, and **Southern Red Bishops** over the reedbeds – with the rain continuing on. White-backed Duck proved elusive,

despite searching various dams, while a **Red-chested Flufftail** played hide and seek with us, only offering me the briefest of views, and unfortunately left Tim without showing itself. By the time we called it a day in the early afternoon, we had amassed a decent list of birds, despite the miserable conditions. Our afternoon was spent sorting out the remainder of the trip, with the curveball Covid had thrown us today.



***Bush Blackcap** is an exciting regional endemic which we enjoyed several times on the trip (this photo itself being taken later on at Wakkerstroom).*

Day 3, 5th February 2022. Mistbelt forest and grassland birding

Having largely come to terms with the new normal on this trip, we set off early in the morning for Marutswa Forest, outside Bulwer where Cape Parrot would be our main quarry. The rain was still present, and it was something we would continue having to deal with throughout the day. We could not have timed it any better, and not five minutes after getting out the car at Marutswa Forest, two **Cape Parrots** came screeching in through the mist and drizzle, and landed in some of the nearby dead trees. We enjoyed some good scope views of this scarce species, before they disappeared back into the gloom as quickly as they had appeared. A vocal **Cape Grassbird** was seen before we saddled up, and made our way onwards to the Hela Hela Pass, where we would try for another of our main targets – Blue Swallow. A break in the weather en route saw us stopping at a roadside wetland where we enjoyed the antics of resident **Little Rush** and **African Yellow Warblers**, while a **Diederik Cuckoo** tried its luck trying to parasitize some **Cape Weaver** nests. Colorful species such as **Southern Red Bishop** and **Long-tailed** and **Fan-tailed Widowbirds** also showed well, before we pressed onwards. A **Dusky Indigobird** greeted us at the gate to the reserve, before we headed in and made our way to one of the grassy ridges. Within in no time, we picked up a male **Blue Swallow** flying through the very heavy mist, and watched their feeding pattern. We

positioned ourselves accordingly, and enjoyed very close fly-bys of a pair of these rare and highly sought-after birds! A break in the weather also allowed us to enjoy scope views of the birds perched nearby! We couldn't believe our luck! A vocal pair of **Fan-tailed Grassbirds** were also picked up here, before we decided to head onwards and try our luck with some other birds. Xumeni Forest was our next port of call, where we had a short time to explore for some birds. **Orange Ground Thrush** was our main target, and after a bit of searching we enjoyed excellent views of both an adult and recently fledged juvenile bird. **Barratt's Warbler** frustrated us by remaining out of sight, while a massive flock of some 50-strong **African Olive Pigeons** was a welcomed sight. We had our lunch in view of a dam with sought-after **White-backed Ducks** and a pair of the rare **Wattled Cranes** in attendance, along with a wide array of other waterbirds. We struck out with Red-chested Flufftail later in the afternoon once more, and **Pale-crowned Cisticola** refused to show itself remaining heard only as well. With the rain picking up again, we called it a day, and settled in for a traditional South African braai (barbeque).

Day 4, 6th February 2022. Transfer from Underberg to Eshowe, birding en route

Finally, we awoke to a morning with no rain (and even a brief period of sunshine), and headed out for a morning walk around the lodge. With a long drive ahead, we couldn't dally for too long however. **Pale-crowned Cisticola** was a target for the morning, and we enjoyed several great looks at this scarce species in the morning. The whole area was very wet, and testament to this were the many **Malachite Kingfishers** all moving about in the grasslands. **Grey Crowned Crane**, **Giant Kingfisher**, **Cape Longclaw** and **Long-tailed Widowbird** were all seen well, as was the tiny **Wing-snapping Cisticola** which is very similar to its pale-crowned cousin. Searching some of the treed areas yielded **Red-throated Wryneck** and **Bokmakierie**.

After breakfast we checked out, and began the trip to Eshowe. Our first stop would be at Bisley Valley Nature Reserve, where our big target would be **Southern Tchagra**. Despite it being midday and warm with the sun out, we heard several birds, and after some patience and careful scanning, found a bird perched up, and enjoyed good scope views of this uncommon endemic – here at the edge of its range! Some coastal forest near Umdloti followed where we would focus on trying for **Buff-spotted Flufftail**. These are notoriously difficult birds to see, and after an initial unsuccessful attempt, followed by a rain-forced break, our second attempt was mightily successful and we enjoyed stellar views of this bird at length! We eventually had to tear ourselves away, and left the area with smiles brimming from ear to ear! We arrived in Eshowe, where we would spend the next two nights, in the early evening.

Day 5, 7th February 2022. Birding Eshowe and surrounds

Our morning started off at the nearby Dlinza Forest, where we met our excellent local guide, Junior, who would join us for the day (in his own vehicle). Here we focused our efforts on trying for Spotted Ground Thrush and Green Twinspot primarily. The former took a long while, and much effort to locate, and at our last stop, on our way out, we hit the jackpot and found a cooperative **Spotted Ground Thrush** that showed well for us, perched up and hopping along the pathway! The twinspot proved elusive, and we had no joy despite waiting at a regular feeding area for them. Several **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons** could be heard calling over the forest, but none were seen, and our next most interesting sighting was of a large group of **Purple-crested Turacos**

busily feeding in a fruiting tree. Following a quick breakfast and coffee break, we set off to Ongoye Forest, where the highly localized *woodwardi* race of Green Barbet would be our main target. Some roadside birding along the way netted us an absolutely stunning male **Gorgeous Bushshrike**, which took some patience to see well, along with others such as **Wahlberg's Eagle** and **Red-breasted Swallow**. Several **Green Barbets** could be heard on our arrival in the forest, which took some time and searching several sites, before we were rewarded with prolonged (and close!) scope views of a pair of these interesting birds! We thoroughly enjoyed our time watching them feed and call. Both **Striped** and **Plain-backed Pipits** showed well on our departure from Ongoye.

Amatikulu Nature Reserve was next on the agenda, and our lunch in the shady coastal forests was constantly interrupted by the likes of **Black-throated Wattle-eye**, **Common Square-tailed Drongo** and **Grey Sunbird**, amongst others. **Swamp Nightjar** was our main target here, and the bird didn't disappoint with some good flushed views. Our last birding stop for the day was Umlalazi Nature Reserve, in Mtunzini. While trying for a calling **Rufous-winged Cisticola**, we heard the unmistakable hooting of a **Red-chested Flufftail**, and immediately switched focus and attempted to see this skulking bird. Sadly, after a decent amount of time trying to see this species, we left the bird in peace and had to go without views. A male **Purple-banded Sunbird**, **Eastern Golden (Yellow) Weaver** and a surprise **European Roller** were the most notable sightings, before we finally saw a **Rufous-winged Cisticola**, at the last possible moment. Not to be forgotten were the immense numbers of crabs and grasshoppers seen in the grasslands here. We settled in for a wonderful evening, following a great day out birding, and rounded things off with both **Spotted Eagle Owl** and **African Wood Owl** in the gardens after dinner!



Green Barbet has a curious, isolated population in South Africa.

Day 6, 8th February 2022. Birding Eshowe, and transfer to St Lucia

A quick pre-breakfast walk around the lodge grounds and surrounds yielded various widespread species such as **Purple-crested Turaco**, **Crested Barbet**, **African Dusky** and **Southern Black Flycatchers** and **Willow Warbler**, amongst others. After gathering our things, and checking out, we called in at the Dlinza Forest once more, where the pesky Green Twinspot was our main target. It took a long while, and some up-to-the-minute information, but we were eventually rewarded with excellent and prolonged views of a female **Green Twinspot**, feeding unperturbed by us. Numerous **Lemon Dove** interactions were fascinating to watch, while skulking **Olive Thrush** and **Chorister Robin-Chat** also showed. With the sun high, raptors became more obvious, and we added **European Honey Buzzard** and **Little Sparrowhawk**, while a **Crowned Eagle** was displaying from high up. We covered the relatively short distance to St Lucia during the midday period, and spent some time enjoying the **Southern Brown-throated Weaver** colony near town, along with the resident **Little Swifts**. After checking into our guesthouse, we explored some of the coastal forest near the estuary which proved productive despite the warm conditions. A pair of sought-after **Rudd's Apalis** showed well, before some careful scanning revealed a **Livingstone's Turaco** perched in the canopy. We enjoyed some good scope views of the latter, before moving on. Various other species were present, and included **White-eared Barbet**, **Green-backed Camaroptera**, **Collared Sunbird** and **Black-bellied Starling**, amongst others. An **African Pied Wagtail** patrolled the grassy lawns, while **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** foraged overhead and numbers of **Eastern Golden** (Yellow), **Thick-billed** and **Village Weavers** stuck to the reedbeds. We settled in for the evening following another good day out.

Day 7, 9th February 2022. Birding the Isimangaliso Wetland Park

We set off early bound for the Eastern Shores of the Isimangaliso Wetland Park – a World Heritage Site. This section of the park consists of coastal grasslands, various wetlands and floodplains associated with Lake St Lucia, as well as coastal dune forest. We spent some time exploring all of these regions, but focused our time on the dune forests which held the majority of the specials we were searching for. **Rudd's Apalis** and **Livingstone's Turaco** were common, while it took some careful searching to find **Woodward's Batis**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher** and **Green Malkoha**. **Southern Banded Snake Eagle** and **Brown Scrub Robin** also made us work hard to find them, but we were eventually rewarded with great views of these sought-after birds. A showy male **Green Twinspot** was another major highlight. The wetlands were perhaps of the least interest, as the whole region was covered in water, and all waterbirds were very thinly distributed. A lone **Saddle-billed Stork** was the most significant find. The grasslands however, provided some good birding as well, with a stately **Secretarybird** roaming the plains, while **Yellow-throated Longclaws** and **Croaking Cisticolas** flitted about in the grass. Open areas held the similar-looking **Senegal** and **Black-winged Lapwings** – giving great side-by-side comparative views, along with a vast flock of **Collared Pratincoles**. Numbers of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** dotted the area, with a few **European Bee-eaters** thrown in amongst them, while good numbers of **Red-breasted Swallow** were noted, on top of the more widespread hirundine species. We also added quite a few mammals to our list, with a group of three **White Rhinoceros** proving an early highlight, while two **Spotted Hyenas** loafing about in a large pond later on was a somewhat strange sighting. Herbivores were represented by **African Buffalo**, **Greater Kudu**, **Southern Reedbuck**, **Common** (Blue) **Wildebeest**, **Impala**, **Waterbuck** and **Natal Red Duiker**.

We took a quick break over the sweltering midday period, before setting off to explore the St Lucia Estuary area. The changes made here in recent times have certainly played a part in the fewer bird species present here, but the tern roost held large numbers of **Little Terns**, along with smaller numbers of **Lesser Crested**, **Greater Crested**, **Sandwich**, **Common** and **Caspian Terns**, while shorebirds such as **Sanderling**, **Common Ringed Plover**, **Grey Plover** and **Whimbrel** all showed well nearby too. We had an unsuccessful attempt to find a Sooty Falcon nearby, before settling in for the evening.

Day 8, 10th February 2022. Birding St Lucia, and transfer to Hluhluwe

We found ourselves starting the Igwalagwala trail, which runs around the outskirts of town, where we would focus our early morning efforts. We had done well the previous day with our targets, and only had a few outstanding birds. **Grey Waxbill** was an early highlight as we found a pair of birds slowly feeding and flitting around, which gave us great and extended views! **Eastern Nicator** was another of our targets, and it took some scanning and patience, but we were rewarded with excellent views of this shy and retiring species as well. Many of the other region's specials were also evident, including **Livingstone's Turaco**, **Green Malkoha**, **Woodward's Batis**, **Rudd's Apalis**, along with more widespread species such as **Tambourine Dove**, **Cardinal Woodpecker**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat**, **Southern Boubou**, **Grey** and **Collared Sunbirds** and **Dark-backed Weaver**.



*We had to work hard for **Lemon-breasted Canary** – another localized special!*

After gathering our belongings and checking out, we set off for Hluhluwe, via the Western Shores of the Isimangaliso Wetland Park. It was another scorcher of a day, and by mid-morning the temperature was sweltering and the birds were largely inactive – as such, our drive through the

park was on the slow side, with the likes of **Red-billed Oxpecker** (adorning **African Buffalo**), **African Wattled Lapwing** and **European Roller** being the most interesting species seen. We also notched up new mammals in the form of **African Elephant** and **Giraffe**.

After a great lunch, we checked into our comfortable lodge, and after a short siesta, set off for an afternoon birding the nearby Mpempe Pan. Here, Lemon-breasted Canary would be our primary target, but with the wind having picked up massively, we knew we were in for a tough search. We did have to grind it out for over an hour of searching, before we struck gold and found a confiding pair of **Lemon-breasted Canaries** that allowed some great views! With the pressure off, we could enjoy some of the fine birding this area has on offer, and we revelled in the large mixed flocks of **Senegal, Black-winged, Blacksmith** and **Crowned Lapwings** – all giving us good comparative views. Tiny but colorful **Western Yellow Wagtails** foraged with a herd of cows, waiting for insects to be disturbed, before we found a flock of several hundred (and probably close on 1000) **Collared Pratincoles**. We spent some time with these birds, enjoying how they went about things, before eventually having to call it a day and return to our lodge. A lovely traditional braai (barbeque) rounded the day off in style!

Day 9, 11th February 2022. Birding Mkhuze Game Reserve

Today is always one of the more exciting birding days on this route, as we set off for the nearby Mkhuze Game Reserve, one of South Africa's premier birding destinations. We had done pretty well with our main targets for the area, and only had a handful still remaining, chief amongst those were Neergaard's Sunbird and Pink-throated Twinspot. Following an early start, we stopped off at the overflowing Muzi Pan, where we enjoyed some sublime wetland birding. As a result of the heavy rains throughout South Africa this season, and the massive Lake St Lucia being closed up (resulting in the water being pushed back up the system quite far), the entire Lake St Lucia floodplain system was totally inundated. Small groups of **African Pygmy Geese** and **Pink-backed Pelicans** dotted the open water, while numbers of the regionally scarce **Allen's Gallinule** stuck to the denser reed vegetation, together with **Black Crakes**. Masses of **Squacco Herons** were present, and in amongst those were also **Purple** and **Black-crowned Night Herons**. A large variety of other widespread species were seen.

After entering Mkhuze Game Reserve, we made a beeline for the best sand forest habitat, where we would concentrate on our targets. As if on cue, a male **Pink-throated Twinspot** popped up as soon as we got out the car, but soon disappeared. Some careful searching and patience produced the goods, and we relocated the bird and found a female as well, foraging in the open nearby. We spent some time watching these stunning birds, before a **Neergaard's Sunbird** called and had us shifting our focus. Almost immediately we located it, and enjoyed sublime views of a male of this scarce bird. We couldn't have asked for any better views for either of these two species! The birds weren't done and it seemed we were in the midst of a massive bird party, with **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Common Scimitarbill**, **Bearded Woodpecker**, **Black-headed Oriole**, **White-crested Helmetshrike**, **Black Cuckooshrike**, **Grey Tit-Flycatcher**, **Orange-breasted Bushshrike**, **Green-winged Pytilia** and so many more. As the day progressed the temperatures soared, even briefly touching 40 °C (104 °F), and the bird activity dropped. We pressed on for a little while still, spending some time in several of the well-appointed hides, and added various other species such as **African Cuckoo-Hawk**, **Red-fronted Tinkerbird**, **Bearded Scrub Robin**, and **Jameson's Firefinch**, before eventually calling it a day in the early afternoon. We tried once more for a Sooty

Falcon on our return trip, but were unsuccessful. A night walk was enjoyable, yielding many scorpions, and a stunning show from a **Fiery-necked Nightjar**.



Neergaard's Sunbird is one of the trickiest South African specials.

Day 10, 12th February 2022. Transfer to Wakkerstroom

A busy day lay ahead, as we tried to squeeze in as much birding as possible, before transferring up to the quaint high-altitude village of Wakkerstroom. With only a single night in Wakkerstroom, and a few tricky target birds, we had to time our day well. To maximise the best of the early morning, we began the day with a walk around the sand forest surrounding our excellent lodge, which was superb. A confiding pair of **Pink-throated Twinspots** showed exceptionally well early on, before we enjoyed extended views of two male **Gorgeous Bushshrikes** calling and moving about. **Narina Trogon**, a species that had somewhat surprisingly eluded us until now, was finally heard, and in no time, we revelled in the excellent views of this stunning bird, while nearby, a small group of **Grey Waxbills** were extremely confiding! A wide variety of other species were well seen, totalling over 60 on our short walk – some of which included comical **Crested Guineafowl**, **African Green Pigeon**, **Red-fronted Tinkerbird**, **Black-crowned Tchagra**, **Rudd's Apalis**, **Black-bellied Starling**, **Ashy Flycatcher**, **White-throated Robin-Chat**, and a plethora of sunbirds, including **Grey** and **Purple-banded Sunbirds**.

Soon after breakfast, we were on our way, and following a lunch stop en route, arrived in the Wakkerstroom area in the early-afternoon. It was another warm day, and our first target, **White-bellied Bustard** was nowhere to be found, at a usually reliable stakeout. Instead, we got acquainted with the likes of **South African Cliff Swallow** and **Spike-heeled Lark**. We pressed on, and eventually found some calling **White-bellied Bustards**, but the long grass prevented any views sadly. With time running out, we had to call it here, and soon arrived at some ouhout thickets,

where a lovely pair of **Bush Blackcaps** put on a wonderful show for us (giving us far better views than we had had earlier on in the trip). **Barratt's Warbler** was far more skulking, but with some patience and careful positioning, we enjoyed some great, and prolonged looks at this shy species! With only a bit of light left, we quickly headed off to a wetland to try our hand at **Red-chested Flufftail**. We heard several birds, but sadly couldn't lay our eyes on any of them. Eventually we had to call it a day, and checked into our well-appointed guesthouse before settling in for the evening. A mixed afternoon with some of our targets showing well, and others frustratingly remaining heard only. Nevertheless, other exciting birds seen included **South African Shelduck**, **Southern Bald Ibis**, **Secretarybird**, **Black Sparrowhawk**, **Rock Kestrel**, **Red-capped Lark**, **Banded Martin**, **Lazy Cisticola**, **Drakensberg Prinia** and **Cape Longclaw**.

Day 11, 13th February 2022. Birding Wakkerstroom, and transfer to Zaagkuilsdrift

We had a short, but focused morning of birding, which began off at the wetland early on. Red-chested Flufftail was our main quarry here, and after a short wait, all our patience on this trip was rewarded in a single stroke as a male **Red-chested Flufftail** showed beautifully to us. We even managed to get some photos of this shy and difficult-to-see species, such were our views! Following our success, we made our way up the hill behind the town, where we enjoyed a confiding pair of **Eastern Long-billed Larks** almost immediately. **Yellow-breasted Pipit** was our next target to fall, and we spent some time with several of these birds as they flew up and down over their favoured areas. Getting views on the ground was tricky with the long grass, and the best views came of birds in flight. Our morning wasn't done yet, as we latched onto a male **White-bellied Bustard** nearby, which gave us exceptional views as well. Not only did we get all our targets for the morning, but we got all of them well!



White-bellied Bustard proved tough to find, but our persistence was rewarded with great views!

Following a hearty breakfast, we checked out and made our way to our next destination – Zaagkuilsdrift, which lies north of Pretoria. This is a long drive, and was punctuated with several birding stops. A large flock of **Black-winged Pratincoles** feeding low over the grass, and flying all around us, was a sight to behold, while a pan on the outskirts of Johannesburg buzzed with life, with vast numbers of various waterbirds. **South African Shelduck** and **Cape Shoveler** made up the bulk of the birds, but we also found **Cape, Blue-billed** and **Red-billed Teals**, **Southern Pochard** and **African Black Duck**, while groups of **Ruff** and a **Common Greenshank** were seen moving about. Vast numbers of **White-winged Terns** loafed over the water, while the surrounding areas held **Glossy Ibis** and a scarce **Sedge Warbler**. A **Booted Eagle** that came flying by overhead was a welcome surprise from all the many waterbirds. Some nearby grasslands yielded the likes of **Amur Falcon**, **Orange-breasted Waxbill** and large numbers of various bishops and widowbirds, well represented by **Yellow-crowned** and **Southern Red Bishops**, and **Red-collared, White-winged, Fan-tailed** and **Long-tailed Widowbirds**.

We eventually found ourselves on the famous (in birding terms) Zaagkuilsdrift Road, where we made our way to our well-suited lodge on the floodplain edge in the early evening. Some bird sightings enjoyed on our arrival were brief sightings of **Dwarf Bittern** and **African Crake**, along with repeat views of **Black-winged Pratincole** and some glorious **Crimson-breasted Shrikes**. We settled in for the evening, looking forward to a full day of exploring this birdy region.

Day 12, 14th February 2022. Birding Zaagkuilsdrift and surrounds

The penultimate day of the tour had arrived, and we set off in the early morning to bird this exciting region. Dry acacia thornveld scrub dominates the area, but a rich river and floodplain system also exists, which in wet years, like this year, hosts a wide array of exciting tropical species. Together, these habitats combine to make some of the most exciting birding possible in southern Africa. We slowly made our way to the inundated Kgomo-Kgomo floodplain, where we spent some time, before slowly working our way back through the acacia scrub, eventually returning at midday. We had an exceptional morning racking up over 130 species by the time we returned. A shy **Dwarf Bittern** perched up for us early on, giving us far more satisfactory views than yesterday with a wide supporting cast of many different waterbirds – the most exciting of which were **Knob-billed Duck**, **Fulvous Whistling Duck**, **Yellow-billed Stork**, **African Spoonbill**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, and **Squacco** and **Black Herons**. Two pairs of **African Crakes** were seen crossing the road in front of us, while a pair of **Greater Painted-snipes** also gave us some views, as did an **African Rail**. **Lesser Moorhens** frustrated us for a short while, calling from the grassy floodplains, but eventually showed, and we enjoyed some excellent views of these scarce birds. After having had our fill of exciting wetland birding, and with the mercury rising, we focused our attention on the acacia scrub for the remainder of the morning.

Several palearctic warblers that winter in this area were our main focus with **Common Whitethroat** and the scarce **Icterine** and **Olive-tree Warblers** all showing well, before we focused on the resident specials. Tiny **Cape Penduline Tits** were a major target, and we enjoyed good looks at these miniscule birds, while mobile and noisy **Burnt-necked Eremomelas** were also seen nearby as groups of **Scaly-feathered Weavers** moved through the area. **Kalahari Scrub Robins** perched on the tops of the bushes, while **Marico Flycatchers** stuck to the lower strata, and the few flowers in the area held **Marico** and **White-bellied Sunbirds**. Several colorful parasitic seedeaters were also evident, with the stunning **Shaft-tailed** and **Long-tailed Paradise**

Whydahs showing well. The tiny **Pearl-spotted Owlet** was also seen during the morning, and we also added other birds moving about overhead such as **Cape Vulture** and **Marabou Stork** (the latter a scarce bird in the area).



*We enjoyed several great looks at **African Crakes** whilst on the Zaagkuilsdrift Road.*

Following a midday break, we resumed our birding in the afternoon, exploring a different area along the Zaagkuilsdrift Road. We enjoyed another mightily productive spell of birding focusing on more of the acacia specials. Early highlights went to a noisy group of **Southern Pied Babblers** we found feeding close to the road, and watching them turned up other birds such as **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Lesser Honeyguide**, the delightful **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Long-billed Crombec**, **Burnt-necked Eremomela**, **Chestnut-vented Warbler** and **White-browed Sparrow-Weaver**, amongst others. A stop for a group of **Southern White-crowned Shrikes** yielded a very confiding **Levaillant's Cuckoo**, before we heard the distinct contact calls of a **River Warbler**. We tried our best to see this bird, but couldn't obtain any visuals, and pressed on slightly further. On hopping out at our next stop, our jaws dropped when we picked up on a further two **River Warblers** calling from the dense thickets. We set ourselves up, and after a lot of patience, we managed to get a few brief looks at one of these master skulkers, moving about at the base of one of the thickets. Rare birds at the best of times, we couldn't believe our good fortune, as we called it a day, enjoying the sunset over the floodplains in the area.

Following dinner, we enjoyed a long and very productive night drive that was chock-full of birds. **Southern White-faced Owls** were one of our main targets, and we enjoyed many birds at regular intervals throughout the night. Good numbers of **Marsh Owls** were also seen, as were a few **Spotted Eagle-Owls**. Other nocturnal birds were a bit scarce, but we did find a pair of **Square-tailed Nightjars**, and a lone **European Nightjar** – both of which are rare birds in the area. Several

Scrub Hares were the only mammal sighting of interest, and so ended a truly phenomenal days birding yielding over 150 species!



*Seeing multiple **Southern White-faced Owls** was a great way to end our penultimate day.*

Day 13, 15th February 2022. Birding Zaagkuilsdrift and Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve, and departure

Today was the last day of the trip, and fortunately for us, Tim's international departure from Johannesburg was late in the evening meaning we had effectively a full day at our disposal. We had an early start once more, heading out to the floodplain reaches and in the acacia scrub, where we focused on some of our missing targets. An incredible **Dwarf Bittern** sighting started the morning off, before we enjoyed more looks a pair of **African Crakes** fiddling around the roadside edge. **Greater Painted-snipes** and **Lesser Moorhens** were also in evidence once more. One of our main targets was another scarce palearctic migrant, **Thrush Nightingale**. Like River Warbler, this is a shy bird that rarely comes out from the dark and dense thickets. We picked up on two vocal birds early on, and had to walk a little way through partly inundated grassland to get to the best area. We set ourselves up as the birds called around us, and over the course of the next hour or so, we enjoyed several looks, though all of them a bit brief. Nevertheless, we were thrilled to get another very scarce bird. Moving into the acacia woodlands, we quickly picked up on a **Great Sparrow**, one of our outstanding targets, as a group of **White-backed Mousebirds** fiddled around, before trying yet again for another of our missing birds – **Barred Wren Warbler**. We had heard the warbler several times over the last couple days, but had yet to lay eyes on one, and finally, we managed to get some great looks at this bird. Another skulker, **Marsh Warbler**, also made its way onto our seen list, after only hearing up until this point, and we enjoyed repeat views of specials such as **Black-winged Pratincole**, **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Common**

Whitethroat, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Marico Sunbird and Green-winged Pytilia amongst others.

After a hearty breakfast, we gathered our things, and made our way towards Johannesburg, getting Covid tests done along the way to ensure Tim's departure. With formalities out of the way, we could enjoy the remainder of the day, and made our way to the lovely Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve, on the outskirts of Johannesburg. We enjoyed a birdy afternoon with the likes of **Speckled Mousebird, White-fronted Bee-eater, Crested Barbet, Black Cuckooshrike, Willow Warbler, Black-chested Prinia, Red-winged Starling, Fiscal Flycatcher, Red-headed Finch** and both **Black-throated** and **Yellow Canaries** all showing early on. A large raptor that briefly popped up had us running for a gap in the trees, and we were rewarded with a lovely **African Hawk-Eagle** flyby – a rare bird in this region. One of our main targets, **Brown-backed Honeybird**, was proving elusive, and we finally struck gold while watching a **Red-throated Wryneck**, as a honeybird flew in. Though the views were a bit distant, we enjoyed good looks through the scope. Our attention soon turned to a **Purple Indigobird** that popped up nearby before we had to start making our way back out of the reserve. Fine **Red-collared Widowbirds** were our last sighting of interest before calling it a day, and bringing the trip to a close.



*Glorious **Red-collared Widowbirds** were one of many colorful seedeaters seen on this tour.*

I would like to thank Tim for being amenable to the changes that were forced on us, during this trip, and for ultimately wanting to continue with the trip – as it turned out to be a truly incredible birding adventure, scoring a vast number of scarce and downright difficult-to-see species! From watching flufftails at close quarters, to crakes crossing the road, and a seemingly never-ending spree of owls on our night drive, this was certainly a trip to behold!

Bird List - Following IOC (11.2)

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: EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable.

| Common name | Scientific name |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae) | |
| White-faced Whistling Duck | <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i> |
| Fulvous Whistling Duck | <i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i> |
| White-backed Duck | <i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i> |
| Spur-winged Goose | <i>Plectropterus gambensis</i> |
| Knob-billed Duck | <i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i> |
| Egyptian Goose | <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i> |
| South African Shelduck | <i>Tadorna cana</i> |
| African Pygmy Goose | <i>Nettapus auritus</i> |
| Blue-billed Teal | <i>Spatula hottentota</i> |
| Cape Shoveler | <i>Spatula smithii</i> |
| African Black Duck | <i>Anas sparsa</i> |
| Yellow-billed Duck | <i>Anas undulata</i> |
| Cape Teal | <i>Anas capensis</i> |
| Red-billed Teal | <i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i> |
| Southern Pochard | <i>Netta erythrophthalma</i> |
| | |
| Guineafowl (Numididae) | |
| Helmeted Guineafowl | <i>Numida meleagris</i> |
| Crested Guineafowl | <i>Guttera pucherani</i> |
| | |
| Pheasants & Allies (Phasianidae) | |
| Crested Francolin | <i>Ortygornis sephaena</i> |
| Red-winged Francolin (H) | <i>Scleroptila levaillantii</i> |
| Natal Spurfowl | <i>Pternistis natalensis</i> |
| Swainson's Spurfowl | <i>Pternistis swainsonii</i> |
| | |
| Nightjars (Caprimulgidae) | |
| European Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> |
| Fiery-necked Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus pectoralis</i> |
| Swamp Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus natalensis</i> |
| Square-tailed Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus fossii</i> |
| | |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Swifts (Apodidae) | |
| African Palm Swift | <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i> |
| African Black Swift | <i>Apus barbatus</i> |
| Little Swift | <i>Apus affinis</i> |
| White-rumped Swift | <i>Apus caffer</i> |
| | |
| Turacos (Musophagidae) | |
| Grey Go-away-bird | <i>Crinifer concolor</i> |
| Purple-crested Turaco | <i>Gallirex porphyreolophus</i> |
| Livingstone's Turaco | <i>Tauraco livingstonii</i> |
| Knysna Turaco | <i>Tauraco corythaix</i> |
| | |
| Bustards (Otididae) | |
| Denham's Bustard | <i>Neotis denhami</i> |
| White-bellied Bustard | <i>Eupodotis senegalensis</i> |
| | |
| Cuckoos (Cuculidae) | |
| Burchell's Coucal | <i>Centropus burchellii</i> |
| Green Malkoha | <i>Ceuthmochares australis</i> |
| Levaillant's Cuckoo | <i>Clamator levaillantii</i> |
| Jacobin Cuckoo | <i>Clamator jacobinus</i> |
| Diederik Cuckoo | <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i> |
| African Emerald Cuckoo (H) | <i>Chrysococcyx cupreus</i> |
| Red-chested Cuckoo | <i>Cuculus solitarius</i> |
| | |
| Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae) | |
| Rock Dove | <i>Columba livia</i> |
| Speckled Pigeon | <i>Columba guinea</i> |
| African Olive Pigeon | <i>Columba arquatrix</i> |
| Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon (H) | <i>Columba delegorguei</i> |
| Lemon Dove | <i>Columba larvata</i> |
| Red-eyed Dove | <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i> |
| Ring-necked Dove | <i>Streptopelia capicola</i> |
| Laughing Dove | <i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i> |
| Emerald-spotted Wood Dove | <i>Turtur chalcospilos</i> |
| Tambourine Dove | <i>Turtur tympanistria</i> |
| Namaqua Dove | <i>Oena capensis</i> |
| African Green Pigeon | <i>Treron calvus</i> |
| | |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Flufftails (Sarothruridae) | |
| Buff-spotted Flufftail | <i>Sarothrura elegans</i> |
| Red-chested Flufftail | <i>Sarothrura rufa</i> |
| | |
| Rails, Crakes & Coots (Rallidae) | |
| African Rail | <i>Rallus caerulescens</i> |
| African Crake | <i>Crecopsis egregia</i> |
| Lesser Moorhen | <i>Paragallinula angulata</i> |
| Common Moorhen | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> |
| Red-knobbed Coot | <i>Fulica cristata</i> |
| Allen's Gallinule | <i>Porphyrio alleni</i> |
| African Swamphen | <i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i> |
| Black Crake | <i>Zapornia flavirostra</i> |
| | |
| Cranes (Gruidae) | |
| Grey Crowned Crane - EN | <i>Balearica regulorum</i> |
| Wattled Crane - VU | <i>Grus carunculata</i> |
| Blue Crane - VU | <i>Grus paradisea</i> |
| | |
| Grebes (Podicipedidae) | |
| Little Grebe | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> |
| | |
| Stone-curlews, Thick-knees (Burhinidae) | |
| Water Thick-knee | <i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i> |
| Spotted Thick-knee | <i>Burhinus capensis</i> |
| | |
| Stilts, Avocets (Recurvirostridae) | |
| Black-winged Stilt | <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> |
| | |
| Plovers (Charadriidae) | |
| Blacksmith Lapwing | <i>Vanellus armatus</i> |
| Senegal Lapwing | <i>Vanellus lugubris</i> |
| Black-winged Lapwing | <i>Vanellus melanopterus</i> |
| Crowned Lapwing | <i>Vanellus coronatus</i> |
| African Wattled Lapwing | <i>Vanellus senegallus</i> |
| 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> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| White-fronted Plover | <i>Charadrius marginatus</i> |
| | |
| Painted-snipes (Rostratulidae) | |
| Greater Painted-snipe | <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i> |
| | |
| Jacanas (Jacanidae) | |
| African Jacana | <i>Actophilornis africanus</i> |
| | |
| Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae) | |
| Eurasian Whimbrel | <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> |
| Ruff | <i>Calidris pugnax</i> |
| Sanderling | <i>Calidris alba</i> |
| Little Stint | <i>Calidris minuta</i> |
| African Snipe | <i>Gallinago nigripennis</i> |
| Common Sandpiper | <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> |
| Wood Sandpiper | <i>Tringa glareola</i> |
| Common Greenshank | <i>Tringa nebularia</i> |
| | |
| Coursers, Pratincoles (Glareolidae) | |
| Collared Pratincole | <i>Glareola pratincola</i> |
| Black-winged Pratincole | <i>Glareola nordmanni</i> |
| | |
| Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae) | |
| Grey-headed Gull | <i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i> |
| Caspian Tern | <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i> |
| Greater Crested Tern | <i>Thalasseus bergii</i> |
| Lesser Crested Tern | <i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i> |
| Sandwich Tern | <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i> |
| Little Tern | <i>Sternula albifrons</i> |
| Common Tern | <i>Sterna hirundo</i> |
| Whiskered Tern | <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i> |
| White-winged Tern | <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> |
| | |
| Storks (Ciconiidae) | |
| Yellow-billed Stork | <i>Mycteria ibis</i> |
| Woolly-necked Stork | <i>Ciconia episcopus</i> |
| White Stork | <i>Ciconia ciconia</i> |
| Saddle-billed Stork | <i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i> |
| Marabou Stork | <i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Anhingas, Darters (Anhingidae) | |
| African Darter | <i>Anhinga rufa</i> |
| Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae) | |
| Reed Cormorant | <i>Microcarbo africanus</i> |
| White-breasted Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i> |
| Ibises, Spoonbills (Threskiornithidae) | |
| African Sacred Ibis | <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i> |
| Southern Bald Ibis - VU | <i>Geronticus calvus</i> |
| Hadada Ibis | <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i> |
| Glossy Ibis | <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> |
| African Spoonbill | <i>Platalea alba</i> |
| Hérons, Bitterns (Ardeidae) | |
| Little Bittern (H) | <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i> |
| Dwarf Bittern | <i>Ixobrychus sturmii</i> |
| Black-crowned Night Heron | <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> |
| Striated Heron | <i>Butorides striata</i> |
| Squacco Heron | <i>Ardeola ralloides</i> |
| Western Cattle Egret | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> |
| Grey Heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> |
| Black-headed Heron | <i>Ardea melanocephala</i> |
| Purple Heron | <i>Ardea purpurea</i> |
| Great Egret | <i>Ardea alba</i> |
| Black Heron | <i>Egretta ardesiaca</i> |
| Little Egret | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> |
| Hamerkop (Scopidae) | |
| Hamerkop | <i>Scopus umbretta</i> |
| Pelicans (Pelecanidae) | |
| Pink-backed Pelican | <i>Pelecanus rufescens</i> |
| Secretarybird (Sagittariidae) | |
| Secretarybird - EN | <i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i> |
| Ospreys (Pandionidae) | |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Western Osprey | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> |
| | |
| Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae) | |
| Black-winged Kite | <i>Elanus caeruleus</i> |
| African Harrier-Hawk | <i>Polyboroides typus</i> |
| European Honey Buzzard | <i>Pernis apivorus</i> |
| African Cuckoo-Hawk | <i>Aviceda cuculoides</i> |
| Cape Vulture - EN | <i>Gyps coprotheres</i> |
| Black-chested Snake Eagle | <i>Circaetus pectoralis</i> |
| Brown Snake Eagle | <i>Circaetus cinereus</i> |
| Southern Banded Snake Eagle | <i>Circaetus fasciolatus</i> |
| Bateleur - EN | <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i> |
| Crowned Eagle (H) | <i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i> |
| Long-crested Eagle | <i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i> |
| Wahlberg's Eagle | <i>Hieraaetus wahlbergi</i> |
| Booted Eagle | <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i> |
| African Hawk-Eagle | <i>Aquila spilogaster</i> |
| Gabar Goshawk | <i>Micronisus gabar</i> |
| Little Sparrowhawk | <i>Accipiter minullus</i> |
| Black Sparrowhawk | <i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i> |
| African Marsh Harrier | <i>Circus ranivorus</i> |
| Yellow-billed Kite | <i>Milvus aegyptius</i> |
| African Fish Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i> |
| Common Buzzard | <i>Buteo buteo</i> |
| Jackal Buzzard | <i>Buteo rufofuscus</i> |
| | |
| Barn Owls (Tytonidae) | |
| Western Barn Owl (H) | <i>Tyto alba</i> |
| | |
| Owls (Strigidae) | |
| Pearl-spotted Owlet | <i>Glaucidium perlatum</i> |
| Southern White-faced Owl | <i>Ptilopsis granti</i> |
| Marsh Owl | <i>Asio capensis</i> |
| Spotted Eagle-Owl | <i>Bubo africanus</i> |
| African Wood Owl | <i>Strix woodfordii</i> |
| | |
| Mousebirds (Coliidae) | |
| Speckled Mousebird | <i>Colius striatus</i> |
| White-backed Mousebird | <i>Colius colius</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Red-faced Mousebird | <i>Urocolius indicus</i> |
| | |
| Trogons (Trogonidae) | |
| Narina Trogon | <i>Apaloderma narina</i> |
| | |
| Hoopoes (Upupidae) | |
| African Hoopoe | <i>Upupa africana</i> |
| | |
| Wood Hoopoes (Phoeniculidae) | |
| Green Wood Hoopoe | <i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i> |
| Common Scimitarbill | <i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i> |
| | |
| Hornbills (Bucerotidae) | |
| Southern Red-billed Hornbill | <i>Tockus rufirostris</i> |
| Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill | <i>Tockus leucomelas</i> |
| Crowned Hornbill | <i>Lophoceros alboterminatus</i> |
| African Grey Hornbill | <i>Lophoceros nasutus</i> |
| Trumpeter Hornbill | <i>Bycanistes bucinator</i> |
| | |
| Rollers (Coraciidae) | |
| Lilac-breasted Roller | <i>Coracias caudatus</i> |
| European Roller | <i>Coracias garrulus</i> |
| Broad-billed Roller | <i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i> |
| | |
| Kingfishers (Alcedinidae) | |
| Brown-hooded Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon albiventris</i> |
| Striped Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon chelicuti</i> |
| African Pygmy Kingfisher | <i>Ispidina picta</i> |
| Malachite Kingfisher | <i>Corythornis cristatus</i> |
| Half-collared Kingfisher | <i>Alcedo semitorquata</i> |
| Giant Kingfisher | <i>Megaceryle maxima</i> |
| Pied Kingfisher | <i>Ceryle rudis</i> |
| | |
| Bee-eaters (Meropidae) | |
| White-fronted Bee-eater | <i>Merops bullockoides</i> |
| Blue-cheeked Bee-eater | <i>Merops persicus</i> |
| European Bee-eater | <i>Merops apiaster</i> |
| | |
| African Barbets (Lybiidae) | |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| White-eared Barbet | <i>Stactolaema leucotis</i> |
| Green Barbet | <i>Stactolaema olivacea</i> |
| Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird | <i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i> |
| Red-fronted Tinkerbird | <i>Pogoniulus pusillus</i> |
| Acacia Pied Barbet | <i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i> |
| Black-collared Barbet | <i>Lybius torquatus</i> |
| Crested Barbet | <i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i> |
| | |
| Honeyguides (Indicatoridae) | |
| Brown-backed Honeybird | <i>Prodotiscus regulus</i> |
| Lesser Honeyguide | <i>Indicator minor</i> |
| | |
| Woodpeckers (Picidae) | |
| Red-throated Wryneck | <i>Jynx ruficollis</i> |
| Golden-tailed Woodpecker | <i>Campethera abingoni</i> |
| Knysna Woodpecker | <i>Campethera notata</i> |
| Bearded Woodpecker | <i>Chloropicus namaquus</i> |
| Cardinal Woodpecker | <i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i> |
| Olive Woodpecker | <i>Dendropicos griseocephalus</i> |
| | |
| Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae) | |
| Rock Kestrel | <i>Falco rupicolus</i> |
| Amur Falcon | <i>Falco amurensis</i> |
| Lanner Falcon | <i>Falco biarmicus</i> |
| | |
| African & New World Parrots (Psittacidae) | |
| Cape Parrot - VU | <i>Poicephalus robustus</i> |
| | |
| Wattle-eyes, Batises (Platysteiridae) | |
| Woodward's Batis | <i>Batis fratum</i> |
| Chinspot Batis | <i>Batis molitor</i> |
| Black-throated Wattle-eye | <i>Platysteira peltata</i> |
| | |
| Bushshrikes (Malaconotidae) | |
| Grey-headed Bushshrike (H) | <i>Malaconotus blanchoti</i> |
| Orange-breasted Bushshrike | <i>Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus</i> |
| Gorgeous Bushshrike | <i>Telophorus viridis</i> |
| Bokmakierie | <i>Telophorus zeylonus</i> |
| Brown-crowned Tchagra | <i>Tchagra australis</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Southern Tchagra | <i>Tchagra tchagra</i> |
| Black-crowned Tchagra | <i>Tchagra senegalus</i> |
| Black-backed Puffback | <i>Dryoscopus cubla</i> |
| Southern Boubou | <i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i> |
| Crimson-breasted Shrike | <i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i> |
| | |
| Vangas & Allies (Vangidae) | |
| White-crested Helmetshrike | <i>Prionops plumatus</i> |
| | |
| Cuckooshrikes (Campephagidae) | |
| Black Cuckooshrike | <i>Campephaga flava</i> |
| | |
| Shrikes (Laniidae) | |
| Magpie Shrike | <i>Urolestes melanoleucus</i> |
| Southern White-crowned Shrike | <i>Eurocephalus anguitimens</i> |
| Red-backed Shrike | <i>Lanius collurio</i> |
| Lesser Grey Shrike | <i>Lanius minor</i> |
| Southern Fiscal | <i>Lanius collaris</i> |
| | |
| Figbirds, Orioles, Turnagra (Oriolidae) | |
| Black-headed Oriole | <i>Oriolus larvatus</i> |
| | |
| Drongos (Dicruridae) | |
| Fork-tailed Drongo | <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i> |
| Common Square-tailed Drongo | <i>Dicrurus ludwigii</i> |
| | |
| Monarchs (Monarchidae) | |
| Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher | <i>Trochocercus cyanomelas</i> |
| African Paradise Flycatcher | <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i> |
| | |
| Crows, Jays (Corvidae) | |
| Cape Crow | <i>Corvus capensis</i> |
| Pied Crow | <i>Corvus albus</i> |
| | |
| Tits, Chickadees (Paridae) | |
| Southern Black Tit | <i>Melaniparus niger</i> |
| | |
| Penduline Tits (Remizidae) | |
| Cape Penduline Tit | <i>Anthoscopus minutus</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Nicator (Nicatoridae) | |
| Eastern Nicator | <i>Nicator gularis</i> |
| Larks (Alaudidae) | |
| Spike-heeled Lark | <i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i> |
| Eastern Long-billed Lark | <i>Certhilauda semitorquata</i> |
| Sabota Lark | <i>Calendulauda sabota</i> |
| Rufous-naped Lark | <i>Mirafra africana</i> |
| Red-capped Lark | <i>Calandrella cinerea</i> |
| Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae) | |
| Sombre Greenbul | <i>Andropadus importunus</i> |
| Yellow-bellied Greenbul | <i>Chlorocichla flaviventris</i> |
| Terrestrial Brownbul | <i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i> |
| Yellow-streaked Greenbul | <i>Phyllastrephus flavostriatus</i> |
| Dark-capped Bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i> |
| Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae) | |
| Black Saw-wing | <i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i> |
| Banded Martin | <i>Neophedina cincta</i> |
| Brown-throated Martin | <i>Riparia paludicola</i> |
| Grey-rumped Swallow | <i>Pseudhirundo griseopyga</i> |
| Blue Swallow - VU | <i>Hirundo atrocaerulea</i> |
| Pearl-breasted Swallow | <i>Hirundo dimidiata</i> |
| White-throated Swallow | <i>Hirundo albigularis</i> |
| Wire-tailed Swallow | <i>Hirundo smithii</i> |
| Barn Swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> |
| Common House Martin | <i>Delichon urbicum</i> |
| Red-breasted Swallow | <i>Cecropis semirufa</i> |
| Lesser Striped Swallow | <i>Cecropis abyssinica</i> |
| Greater Striped Swallow | <i>Cecropis cucullata</i> |
| South African Cliff Swallow | <i>Petrochelidon spilodera</i> |
| Crombecs, African Warblers (Macrosphenidae) | |
| Cape Grassbird | <i>Sphenoeacus afer</i> |
| Long-billed Crombec | <i>Sylvietta rufescens</i> |
| Leaf Warblers & Allies (Phylloscopidae) | |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Willow Warbler | <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> |
| Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler | <i>Phylloscopus ruficapilla</i> |
| | |
| Reed Warblers & Allies (Acrocephalidae) | |
| Lesser Swamp Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i> |
| Great Reed Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i> |
| Sedge Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> |
| African Reed Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i> |
| Marsh Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i> |
| African Yellow Warbler | <i>Iduna natalensis</i> |
| Olive-tree Warbler | <i>Hippolais olivetorum</i> |
| Icterine Warbler | <i>Hippolais icterina</i> |
| | |
| Grassbirds & Allies (Locustellidae) | |
| River Warbler | <i>Locustella fluviatilis</i> |
| Fan-tailed Grassbird | <i>Catriscus brevirostris</i> |
| Barratt's Warbler | <i>Bradypterus barratti</i> |
| Little Rush Warbler | <i>Bradypterus baboecala</i> |
| | |
| Cisticolas & Allies (Cisticolidae) | |
| Red-faced Cisticola (H) | <i>Cisticola erythrops</i> |
| Lazy Cisticola | <i>Cisticola aberrans</i> |
| Rattling Cisticola | <i>Cisticola chiniana</i> |
| Wailing Cisticola | <i>Cisticola lais</i> |
| Rufous-winged Cisticola | <i>Cisticola galactotes</i> |
| Levaillant's Cisticola | <i>Cisticola tinniens</i> |
| Croaking Cisticola | <i>Cisticola natalensis</i> |
| Neddicky | <i>Cisticola fulvicapilla</i> |
| Zitting Cisticola | <i>Cisticola juncidis</i> |
| Pale-crowned Cisticola | <i>Cisticola cinnamomeus</i> |
| Wing-snapping Cisticola | <i>Cisticola ayresii</i> |
| Tawny-flanked Prinia | <i>Prinia subflava</i> |
| Black-chested Prinia | <i>Prinia flavicans</i> |
| Drakensberg Prinia | <i>Prinia hypoxantha</i> |
| Bar-throated Apalis | <i>Apalis thoracica</i> |
| Rudd's Apalis | <i>Apalis ruddi</i> |
| Yellow-breasted Apalis | <i>Apalis flava</i> |
| Green-backed Camaroptera | <i>Camaroptera brachyura</i> |
| Barred Wren-Warbler | <i>Calamonastes fasciolatus</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Burnt-necked Eremomela | <i>Eremomela usticollis</i> |
| | |
| Sylviid Babblers (Sylviidae) | |
| Bush Blackcap - VU | <i>Sylvia nigricapillus</i> |
| Chestnut-vented Warbler | <i>Curruca subcoerulea</i> |
| Common Whitethroat | <i>Curruca communis</i> |
| | |
| White-eyes (Zosteropidae) | |
| Cape White-eye | <i>Zosterops virens</i> |
| | |
| Laughingthrushes & Allies (Leiothrichidae) | |
| Arrow-marked Babbler | <i>Turdoides jardineii</i> |
| Southern Pied Babbler | <i>Turdoides bicolor</i> |
| | |
| Sugarbirds (Promeropidae) | |
| Gurney's Sugarbird | <i>Promerops gurneyi</i> |
| | |
| Starlings, Rhabdornis (Sturnidae) | |
| Common Myna | <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> |
| Black-bellied Starling | <i>Notopholia corusca</i> |
| Cape Starling | <i>Lamprotornis nitens</i> |
| Burchell's Starling | <i>Lamprotornis australis</i> |
| Pied Starling | <i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i> |
| Violet-backed Starling | <i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i> |
| Red-winged Starling | <i>Onychognathus morio</i> |
| | |
| Oxpeckers (Buphagidae) | |
| Red-billed Oxpecker | <i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i> |
| | |
| Thrushes (Turdidae) | |
| Spotted Ground Thrush - EN | <i>Geokichla guttata</i> |
| Orange Ground Thrush | <i>Geokichla gurneyi</i> |
| Olive Thrush | <i>Turdus olivaceus</i> |
| | |
| Chats, Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae) | |
| Bearded Scrub Robin | <i>Cercotrichas quadrivirgata</i> |
| Kalahari Scrub Robin | <i>Cercotrichas paena</i> |
| White-browed Scrub Robin | <i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i> |
| Brown Scrub Robin | <i>Cercotrichas signata</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Grey Tit-Flycatcher | <i>Myioparus plumbeus</i> |
| Southern Black Flycatcher | <i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i> |
| Marico Flycatcher | <i>Melaenornis mariquensis</i> |
| Fiscal Flycatcher | <i>Melaenornis silens</i> |
| Spotted Flycatcher | <i>Muscicapa striata</i> |
| Ashy Flycatcher | <i>Muscicapa caerulescens</i> |
| African Dusky Flycatcher | <i>Muscicapa adusta</i> |
| Cape Robin-Chat | <i>Cossypha caffra</i> |
| White-throated Robin-Chat | <i>Cossypha humeralis</i> |
| Red-capped Robin-Chat | <i>Cossypha natalensis</i> |
| Chorister Robin-Chat | <i>Cossypha dichroa</i> |
| Thrush Nightingale | <i>Luscinia luscinia</i> |
| Cape Rock Thrush | <i>Monticola rupestris</i> |
| African Stonechat | <i>Saxicola torquatus</i> |
| Buff-streaked Chat | <i>Campicoloides bifasciatus</i> |
| Ant-eating Chat | <i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i> |
| Sunbirds (Nectariniidae) | |
| Collared Sunbird | <i>Hedydipna collaris</i> |
| Olive Sunbird | <i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i> |
| Grey Sunbird | <i>Cyanomitra veroxii</i> |
| Amethyst Sunbird | <i>Chalcomitra amethystina</i> |
| Scarlet-chested Sunbird | <i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i> |
| Malachite Sunbird | <i>Nectarinia famosa</i> |
| Neergaard's Sunbird | <i>Cinnyris neergaardi</i> |
| Greater Double-collared Sunbird | <i>Cinnyris afer</i> |
| Marico Sunbird | <i>Cinnyris mariquensis</i> |
| Purple-banded Sunbird | <i>Cinnyris bifasciatus</i> |
| White-bellied Sunbird | <i>Cinnyris talatala</i> |
| Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passeridae) | |
| Cape Sparrow | <i>Passer melanurus</i> |
| Great Sparrow | <i>Passer motitensis</i> |
| Southern Grey-headed Sparrow | <i>Passer diffusus</i> |
| House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> |
| Weavers, Widowbirds (Ploceidae) | |
| White-browed Sparrow-Weaver | <i>Plocepasser mahali</i> |
| Scaly-feathered Weaver | <i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Thick-billed Weaver | <i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i> |
| Spectacled Weaver | <i>Ploceus ocularis</i> |
| Cape Weaver | <i>Ploceus capensis</i> |
| Eastern Golden Weaver | <i>Ploceus subaureus</i> |
| Southern Brown-throated Weaver | <i>Ploceus xanthopterus</i> |
| Lesser Masked Weaver | <i>Ploceus intermedius</i> |
| Southern Masked Weaver | <i>Ploceus velatus</i> |
| Village Weaver | <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i> |
| Dark-backed Weaver | <i>Ploceus bicolor</i> |
| Red-billed Quelea | <i>Quelea quelea</i> |
| Yellow-crowned Bishop | <i>Euplectes afer</i> |
| Southern Red Bishop | <i>Euplectes orix</i> |
| Yellow Bishop | <i>Euplectes capensis</i> |
| Fan-tailed Widowbird | <i>Euplectes axillaris</i> |
| White-winged Widowbird | <i>Euplectes albonotatus</i> |
| Red-collared Widowbird | <i>Euplectes ardens</i> |
| Long-tailed Widowbird | <i>Euplectes progne</i> |
| | |
| Waxbills, Munias & Allies (Estrildidae) | |
| Bronze Mannikin | <i>Spermestes cucullata</i> |
| Green Twinspot | <i>Mandingoa nitidula</i> |
| Grey Waxbill | <i>Glaucostrelda perreini</i> |
| Common Waxbill | <i>Estrilda astrild</i> |
| Red-headed Finch | <i>Amadina erythrocephala</i> |
| Orange-breasted Waxbill | <i>Amandava subflava</i> |
| Violet-eared Waxbill | <i>Granatina granatina</i> |
| Blue Waxbill | <i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i> |
| Green-winged Pytilia | <i>Pytilia melba</i> |
| Pink-throated Twinspot | <i>Hypargos margaritatus</i> |
| Red-billed Firefinch | <i>Lagonosticta senegala</i> |
| African Firefinch (H) | <i>Lagonosticta rubricata</i> |
| Jameson's Firefinch | <i>Lagonosticta rhodopareia</i> |
| | |
| Indigobirds, Whydahs (Viduidae) | |
| Village Indigobird | <i>Vidua chalybeata</i> |
| Purple Indigobird | <i>Vidua purpurascens</i> |
| Dusky Indigobird | <i>Vidua funerea</i> |
| Pin-tailed Whydah | <i>Vidua macroura</i> |
| Shaft-tailed Whydah | <i>Vidua regia</i> |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Long-tailed Paradise Whydah | <i>Vidua paradisaea</i> |
| Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae) | |
| Western Yellow Wagtail | <i>Motacilla flava</i> |
| Cape Wagtail | <i>Motacilla capensis</i> |
| Mountain Wagtail | <i>Motacilla clara</i> |
| African Pied Wagtail | <i>Motacilla aguimp</i> |
| Cape Longclaw | <i>Macronyx capensis</i> |
| Yellow-throated Longclaw | <i>Macronyx croceus</i> |
| African Pipit | <i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i> |
| Plain-backed Pipit | <i>Anthus leucophrys</i> |
| Striped Pipit | <i>Anthus lineiventris</i> |
| Yellow-breasted Pipit - VU | <i>Anthus chloris</i> |
| Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae) | |
| Forest Canary | <i>Crithagra scotops</i> |
| Black-throated Canary | <i>Crithagra atrogularis</i> |
| Lemon-breasted Canary | <i>Crithagra citrinpectus</i> |
| Yellow-fronted Canary | <i>Crithagra mozambica</i> |
| Yellow Canary | <i>Crithagra flaviventris</i> |
| Brimstone Canary | <i>Crithagra sulphurata</i> |
| Streaky-headed Seedeater | <i>Crithagra gularis</i> |
| Cape Canary | <i>Serinus canicollis</i> |
| Buntings (Emberizidae) | |
| Golden-breasted Bunting | <i>Emberiza flaviventris</i> |

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Species Seen | 393 |
| Species heard only | 9 |
| Total species recorded | 402 |

Mammal List

Mammals '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 IUCN Red List: VU = Vulnerable.

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Elephants (Elephantidae) | |
| African Elephant - VU | <i>Loxodonta africana</i> |
| | |
| Squirrels and Relatives (Sciuridae) | |
| Red Bush Squirrel | <i>Paraxerus palliatus</i> |
| | |
| Bushbabies (Galagidae) | |
| Thick-tailed Greater Galago (H) | <i>Otolemur crassicaudatus</i> |
| | |
| Old World Monkeys (Cercopithecidae) | |
| Chacma Baboon | <i>Papio ursinus</i> |
| Vervet | <i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i> |
| Blue Monkey | <i>Cercopithecus mitis</i> |
| | |
| Bats (Chiroptera) | |
| Mauritian Tomb Bat | <i>Taphozous mauritanus</i> |
| Large-eared Slit-faced Bat | <i>Nycteris macrotis</i> |
| | |
| Hyenas and Aardwolf (Hyaenidae) | |
| Spotted Hyena | <i>Crocuta crocuta</i> |
| | |
| Mongoose and Fossa (Herpestidae) | |
| Yellow Mongoose | <i>Cynictis penicillata</i> |
| Common Dwarf Mongoose | <i>Helogale parvula</i> |
| | |
| Horses, Asses and Zebras (Equidae) | |
| Plains Zebra | <i>Equus quagga</i> |
| | |
| Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae) | |
| White Rhinoceros | <i>Ceratotherium simum</i> |
| | |
| Hogs and Pigs (Suidae) | |

| Common name | Scientific name |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Common Warthog | <i>Phacochoerus africanus</i> |
| | |
| Hippopotamuses (Hippopotamidae) | |
| Hippopotamus - VU | <i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i> |
| | |
| Bovids (Bovidae) | |
| African Buffalo | <i>Syncerus caffer</i> |
| Nyala | <i>Tragelaphus angasii</i> |
| Western Bushbuck | <i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i> |
| Greater Kudu | <i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i> |
| Common Eland | <i>Tragelaphus oryx</i> |
| Impala | <i>Aepyceros melampus</i> |
| Springbok | <i>Antidorcas marsupialis</i> |
| Southern Reedbuck | <i>Redunca arundinum</i> |
| Waterbuck | <i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i> |
| Grey Rhebok | <i>Pelea capreolus</i> |
| Hartebeest | <i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i> |
| Blesbok | <i>Damaliscus pygargus</i> |
| Common Wildebeest | <i>Connochaetes taurinus</i> |
| Common Duiker | <i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i> |
| Natal Red Duiker | <i>Cephalophus natalensis</i> |
| | |
| Giraffes and Okapis (Giraffidae) | |
| Giraffe - VU | <i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i> |
| | |
| Species Seen | 30 |
| Species heard | 1 |
| Total species recorded | 31 |

Reptile List

| Common name | Scientific name |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Crocodiles (Crocodylidae) | |
| Nile Crocodile | <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> |
| | |
| Tortoises (Testudinidae) | |
| Leopard Tortoise | <i>Stigmochelys pardalis</i> |
| | |
| African Side-necked Turtles (Pelomedusidae) | |
| South African Marsh Terrapin | <i>Pelomedusa galeata</i> |
| | |
| Monitor Lizards (Varanidae) | |
| Rock Monitor | <i>Varanus albigularis</i> |
| Nile Monitor | <i>Varanus niloticus</i> |
| | |
| Elapid Snakes (Elapidae) | |
| Rinkhals | <i>Hemachatus haemachatus</i> |

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| Species Seen | 6 |
| Total species recorded | 6 |