

# **PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS**

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

**9 – 22 August 2013**

### **TOUR REPORT**

**LEADERS:** CHRIS DOUGHTY, JOHN DAVIES AND BERT PALTHE.

Our tour to South Africa was an outstanding success; we recorded a staggering 321 species of birds, in just two weeks, which included most of the hoped for southern African endemics and regional specialties. As with everything in life; it is quality, not quantity, that counts, and we certainly enjoyed many quality birds, which included Red-necked Spurfowl, Bat Hawk, Lammergeier, Cape Vulture, Little Sparrowhawk, Taita Falcon, Common Quail, Denham's Bustard, Wattled Crane, Knysna Turaco, Marsh Owl, Narina Trogon, Brown-backed Honeybird, Botha's Lark, Broad-tailed Warbler, Spotted Ground-Thrush, Green Twinspot and Drakensberg Siskin, to name but a few. We also saw a very impressive 45 species of mammals; which included two rarely observed species of cats, the Caracal and the Wild Cat and we also enjoyed the best roads, restaurants and accommodation in Africa; all set against some of the most stunning scenery in the world.

The tour began in Johannesburg, where we enjoyed a delightful breakfast at our hotel. Following breakfast, while loading baggage onto our two vehicles, we saw our first birds of the tour, which included Grey-headed Gull, Cape Wagtail and Southern Masked Weaver. Most of the day was taken up by the long drive to Dullstroom, in the high veld, to the northeast of Johannesburg. We punctuated the long drive by frequent roadside birding stops, where we saw a large and varied selection of birds. By far the longest and most productive birding stops were at two fairly large lakes, situated on the outskirts of Johannesburg. With great excitement, we began observing a host of wetland birds, which included Little Grebe, Great and Reed Cormorants, Sacred Ibis, Greater Flamingo, Spur-winged and Egyptian Geese, Yellow-billed and Maccoa Ducks, Southern Pochard, Cape Shoveler, Red-billed Teal, Eurasian Moorhen, Red-knobbed Coot, Blacksmith Lapwing and African Snipe. Other new birds at the lakes included Speckled Pigeon, Cape Turtle-Dove, Laughing Dove, Pied Kingfisher, Southern Fiscal, Brown-throated Martin, Cape Sparrow, Southern Red Bishop, Long-tailed Widowbird, Cape Longclaw and our only Black-throated Canaries of the tour.

Another roadside stop at a small lake close to the town of Belfast, produced Grey Heron, Cape Teal, Mallard, Black-winged Stilt, Crowned Lapwing, Three-banded and Kittlitz's Plovers, Wood Sandpiper, Ruff and Common Myna, to make up a very impressive first mornings list. We arrived at Dullstroom just in time for lunch and while enjoying our meal we watched the skies blacken and large hailstones began to fall. It was not what we had expected or wanted, unfortunately, a large cold front all the way from Antarctica had

swept through Capetown, causing considerable damage, and was heading north from the Cape! However, the hailstorm was short lived and soon passed, although it remained very cold throughout the next couple of days.

Undaunted, we then spent a very productive afternoon birding along the dirt roads above Dullstroom, on the high veld. We saw our first flock of Helmeted Guineafowl, found a few Black-headed Herons and Hadada Ibis feeding in farmland, we saw a couple of endangered Southern Bald Ibis in flight, as well as a flock of beautiful Glossy Ibis. We saw our first of many Black-shouldered Kites, observed a splendid Jackal Buzzard in flight, a Red-eyed Dove flew past, there were a few Little Swifts, we enjoyed watching the beautiful African Hoopoe and the attractive Crested Barbet. We also saw three species of pipits, African, Long-billed and Plain-backed, saw our first Dark-capped Bulbul and enjoyed watching the beautifully marked Groundscraper Thrush. We found a Levillant's Cisticola perched on a roadside fence and a Neddicky in scrub along the edge of the road. The uncommon Fiscal Flycatcher popped up along the roadside, we found several very obliging African Stonechats, a couple of Mountain Wheatears and Buff-streaked Chats, as well as the rather tame Southern Anteater-Chat. We saw one or two Bokmakieries, a flock of Cape Crows, the localised Pied Starling, a flock of Red-winged Starlings, a few House Sparrows, several stunning Cape Sparrows and a large flock of beautiful Cape Canaries. Mammals for the day included Vervet Monkey, Blesbok, Grey Rhebok and Springbok.

We spent the following morning birding once more on the high veld, above Dullstroom. The birding was very good once the mist had lifted, enabling us to see more than just a few meters ahead of us. As the morning sun burnt off the early morning mist, we enjoyed super close looks at a small covey of Red-winged Francolins, which, fortunately for us, stood stationary for a little while, allowing us the opportunity to study this uncommon species of francolin and we also found a small covey of much commoner Swainson's Francolins. A flock of three African Wattled Lapwings had been upset by something and were putting on quite a performance, we enjoyed super close looks at the elegant Eastern Long-billed Lark, both Zitting and Wing-snapping Cisticolas, one or two Sentinel Rock-Thrushes and a solitary Yellow Bishop. Heading back to Dullstroom for lunch, we saw a Purple Heron in flight, and best of all, we enjoyed a pair of stunning Grey Crowned Cranes in the scope. We also added two new species of mammals, the very attractive Yellow Mongoose and Bush Duiker, a small species of antelope.

We then drove the a short distance to Lydenburg, where we had lunch. Here we saw a small flock of Cattle Egrets, a few Feral Pigeons and a small flock of Pied Crows. Following lunch, we continued on to Mount Sheba Nature Reserve, during the drive, a stunning Caracal broke from cover and sprinted across the road, just in front of our leading vehicle. Unfortunately, it all happened so quickly, that not everyone managed to see this rarely observed species of cat. We arrived at Mount Sheba late in the afternoon. On the drive up Mt. Sheba, on the way to our lodge, Chris spotted a pair of Red-necked Spurprowl, lurking in the undergrowth of the dense forest we were driving through. Most

of us were able to enjoy good looks at the birds, which are particularly scarce, in this part of Africa. We also added one other new bird, the much easier to see Wailing Cisticola. We arrived at the lodge, just as it was getting dark.

At first light the following morning we birded along the forest edge, which adjoined the gardens of the lodge, before birding in the beautifully kept grounds of the lodge. This proved very rewarding and produced a good number of new birds for us. We found a rather tame Natal Francolin walking across one of the lawns, we greatly admired a pair of very attractive Cape Batis, a stunning Olive Bushshrike was unusually kind to us and showed well from the top of a tall shrub, as did a female Black Cuckoo-shrike. The aptly named Sombre Greenbul popped into view, we watched a particularly confiding pair of Bar-throated Apalis, as well as several Cape White-eyes, we had a quick look at the beautiful Amethyst Sunbird, before enjoying great looks at a few Greater Double-collared Sunbirds, we stumbled across a small flock of Sweet Waxbills feeding on the lawn and enjoyed a prolonged observation of the rather uncommon Forest Canary.

We then walked through the dense forest of the nature reserve searching for anything that moved, fortunately for us, a few things did move. Some species needed a little encouragement, and with the aid of judicious use of a little playback, we managed to tempt into view the two glamor birds of the reserve, the beautiful Knysna Turaco and the delightful Narina Trogon. In the leafy canopy a pair of Yellow-streaked Greenbuls were searching for food, we glimpsed the very shy White-starred Robin and a pair of Southern Double-collared Sunbirds gleaned nectar from a flowering shrub. The sweet song of the splendid Chorister Robin-Chat alerted us to its presence and then fortunately for us, one appeared in front of us on the road and we all enjoyed great looks at this very attractive species. We then headed off for a late breakfast at the lodge, but not before finding an obliging Familiar Chat and a stunning Malachite Sunbird feeding in a flowering shrub, right next to the breakfast room. As we were driving away from Mount Sheba, we watched several Rock Martins flying overhead and a very obliging Drakensberg Prinia, which perched nearby in roadside vegetation.

We then headed north towards the world famous Kruger National Park. While driving through huge areas of farmland and private game reserves, we found new birds for the tour along the roadside. We found a stately Common Ostrich, a beautiful Lizard Buzzard, one or two Eurasian Kestrels, the first of many Grey Go-away-birds and we had a quick look at an Alpine Swift. We also added two species of mammals, which were both seen in private game reserves, the first was an Oribi, which was only glimpsed by a couple of people, however, the second sighting was of three Sable Antelope, which we were able to watch in the scope. We then made a stop near the J.G. Strijdom Tunnel, part of the very impressive Blyde River Canyon, where for the past seven years, the only pair of Taita Falcons is known to have nested, in the whole of South Africa. Unfortunately, only one bird returned to the nest site this year, the other bird must have died. Now the single bird was only visiting the nest site very sporadically. So our chances of seeing this highly endangered species were now very slim, but birders are by definition optimists, so we stopped at the old nest site, to have a look. We enjoyed our time here, buying local

artifacts and keeping a watchful eye for the diminutive falcon. We were very pleased to watch several Cape Vultures flying around the vertical cliffs, this species is also quite endangered. Then the falcon suddenly appeared and perched on a small ledge near the top of the vertical cliff. Eventually, we managed to get it in the scope and we all enjoyed super looks at this small, but very aggressive falcon. While watching the falcon, we also enjoyed our first sighting of the attractive Black-backed Puffback and the very colourful Mocking Cliff Chat.

We then entered the world famous Kruger National Park, through the Orpen Gate, where we enjoyed a substantial picnic lunch, while John and Bert swapped the baggage over from our minibuses to our open top, 4 wheel drive safari vehicles. While eating our picnic lunch we also found several new species of birds, a Southern Red-billed Hornbill was perched nearby, several very large Magpie Shrikes, sat on the top of small trees, a Yellow-breasted Apalis and a Long-billed Crombec were feeding together in a small bush, there were lots of Burchell's Starlings on the ground, along with a large mixed flock of Red-billed Firefinch and Blue Waxbills. We also added two new species of mammals while having lunch, the rather tame Smith's Bush-Squirrel and the rather untame Slender Mongoose.

We then headed for Satara Lodge, for a two nights stay. Kruger is one of Africa's oldest and largest national parks. It was established in 1898, to protect the wildlife of the low veld and is home to an incredible diversity of both animal and birdlife. An afternoon drive in the park yielded a great many new birds, which included Crested Francolin, Hooded, White-backed and Lappet-faced Vultures, the magnificent Bateleur, the diminutive Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove, African Green-Pigeon, Burchell's Coucal, both Purple and Lilac-breasted Rollers, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Fork-tailed Drongo, Wire-tailed and Lesser-striped Swallows, Arrow-marked Babbler, Red-billed Oxpecker, the localised Marico Flycatcher, the stunning Marico Sunbird, Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver and the very beautiful Golden-breasted Bunting. We also enjoyed a good selection of mammals, which included African Savanna Elephant, Chacma Baboon, Dwarf Mongoose, Black-backed Jackal, Burchell's Zebra, Common Warthog, Hippopotamus, Giraffe, Bushbuck, Blue Wildebeest, Waterbuck, Steenbok and Impala. While checking in at the Satara Lodge, we enjoyed good looks in the spotlight of the diminutive African Scops-Owl.

We spent the next day driving around the many roads that dissect the park. Once again we saw a huge number of new birds; which included such interesting species as the very uncommon White-headed Vulture, the delightful Gabar Goshawk, the huge Tawny Eagle, the very uncommon African Hawk-Eagle, the stately Kori Bustard, the beautiful Namaqua Dove, the diminutive Pearl-spotted Owlet at its daytime roost, the delightful Little Bee-eater, the decidedly uncommon Retz's Helmetshrike, the very attractive Orange-breasted Bushshrike, the beautifully plumaged Black-headed Oriole, the localised Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark and the beautifully marked White-browed Scrub-Robin. Other, more common birds that were new for the trip list today, included both Woolly-

necked and Saddle-billed Storks, Striated Heron, Hamerkop, Brown Snake-Eagle, Black Crane, African Mourning Dove, Brown-headed Parrot, Green Woodhoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, African Grey Hornbill, Chin-spot Batis, both Brown-crowned and Black-crowned Tchagras, Sabota Lark, Red-breasted Swallow, Rattling and Desert Cisticolas, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Wattled, Cape Glossy and Greater Blue-eared Starlings, Southern Black Flycatcher, Collared Sunbird, Lesser Masked Weaver, Red-billed Quelea, White-winged Widowbird, Green-winged Pytilia, Jameson's Firefinch, Pin-tailed Whydah and Yellow-fronted Canary. We also saw some new mammals today, which included African Buffalo and Greater Kudu. We also watched with great delight, a Spotted Hyaena which was seen off by a Waterbuck! On arrival back at camp, we drove slowly around the camping area of the lodge, searching for a Wild Cat, which had become semi-tame. In no time at all we were enjoying great looks at this very rarely observed species of cat, in the spotlight.

Today we set off at first light for a morning game drive; new birds for the tour included an African Harrier Hawk in flight, the well camouflaged Water Thick-knee, several African Jacanas, the tiny Cardinal Woodpecker, Southern Black Tit, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Kurrichane Thrush and Yellow-throated Longclaw. We also found a pair of White Rhinoceros, which were a delight to watch. Our second new mammal during the morning drive was a beautiful Klipspringer, our only one of the tour.

Following a late breakfast, we set off for our second game drive of the day, on our way to Skukuza Lodge, in the southern part of Kruger National Park. New birds included a stunning Martial Eagle, which we saw perched and then it took off and flew right over our vehicles. We saw the uncommon Red-crested Korhaan, the beautiful White-crowned Lapwing, which is right at the southern edge of its range here, a migrant Common Sandpiper, White-rumped Swift, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Grey-headed Bush-shrike, the tiny Brubru, the rather plain Yellow-throated Petronia, Village Weaver and African Pied Wagtail. We also came across a massive herd of African Buffalo, which we had to wait for as they crossed the road ahead of us, which took 40 minutes! While checking the oxpeckers on the buffalo, we found a few Yellow-billed Oxpeckers amongst the far more common Red-billed Oxpeckers. This species is at the southern edge of its range here. We added another species of mammal during this drive, it was a lone lioness.

On arrival at Skukuza Lodge, we went for a walk along the river, where we added new birds for the tour, which included both Great and Little Egrets, the superb African Fish-Eagle, the very beautiful White-browed Robin-Chat and White-bellied Sunbird.

Early the following morning while we were gathering together, we heard an African Goshawk call, which we soon tracked down. We then drove to a nearby wetland, where we spent some time birding from a well constructed hide. New birds here included the aptly named Goliath Heron, African Darter and the diminutive African Dusky Flycatcher. Our attention was also drawn to an enormous 7 meter Nile Crocodile, which was doing his best to devour a large plastic bucket!

Later in the morning we drove to a large golf course where we did some birding. New birds here came thick and fast and included the very attractive Purple-crested Turaco, African Palm-Swift, the uncommon African Black Swift, Acacia Pied and Black-collared Barbets, Bearded Woodpecker, Southern Boubou, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Green-backed Camaroptera, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Spectacled Weaver.

An afternoon game drive produced new birds for the tour, which included Marabou Stork, Yellow-billed Kite, Spotted Thick-knee, a small flock of White-crested Helmetshrikes and Bearded Scrub-Robin. We also saw a new species of mammal, the decidedly uncommon Nyala. That evening, just as we arrived back at our cottages, we found a Greater Brown Galago, in the tree above us, which we were able to observe in the spotlight.

Following breakfast, we left our lodge and spent the rest of the day slowly birding our way to Pretoriuskop Lodge, on the southern edge of Kruger National Park. New birds for the day included the inconspicuous Squacco Heron, the majestic Crowned Eagle, the large Crowned Hornbill, a flock of Red-faced Mousebirds, the tiny Yellow-bellied Eremomela, the unobtrusive Pale Flycatcher and the uncommon Grey Tit-Flycatcher.

The following morning we drove out of Kruger National Park but not before adding Black-bellied Bustard, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and Bronze Mannikin, to our ever growing list. While the formalities for leaving the park were being concluded, we did a little birding and we were pleased to find a male Red-headed Weaver in full breeding plumage and we also admired the day-time roost of a good number of Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bats.

We then drove to the Sabie River Golf Course, at Hazey, for lunch. Following lunch, we did some birding at a small wetland at the golf course, where we added a couple of very distant White-faced Whistling- Ducks.

In the afternoon we broke the long drive to Nelspruit, with a birding stop at the small town of White River, in Mpumalanga Province. In an area of tall grassland, we hoped to find the day-time roost of the crepuscular and very uncommon Bat Hawk, in an isolated stand of Eucalypts. While searching for this very difficult bird, one flew over our heads, circled for a couple of times and then flew back to its roost site. Other new birds in the tall grass included Malachite Kingfisher, Black Saw-wing, Dark-capped Yellow-Warbler, the uncommon and difficult to find Broad-tailed Warbler, Golden Weaver, Common Waxbill, Streaky-headed Seedeater and the uncommon Cape Grassbird.

The following morning, we started the day off with a little pre-breakfast birding, in the grounds of our lodge, which worked out very well. New birds we enjoyed finding included the beautiful Red-throated Wryneck, an aberrant species of woodpecker, both

Lazy and Croaking Cisticolas, the beautiful Red-capped Robin-Chat, Thick-billed Weaver, African Firefinch, Cape Weaver and Brimstone Canary.

Following breakfast, we set off on the drive to Wakkerstroom, situated on the high windswept plains in the far south of the Transvaal. After only a short distance we found a very handsome Long-crested Eagle sat on a roadside telegraph pole, which was greatly admired. We broke the long drive, with a short birding stop close to Dirkiesdorp, here we added African Spoonbill, the stunning Denham's Bustard and two new larks, Spike-heeled and Red-capped.

An early morning start found us at the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve; where we added the delightful Hottentot Teal and one or two African Swamphens. The rest of the day was spent birding around gravel roads and marching through native grasslands in our quest for two rare and illusive species, the Botha's Lark and the Yellow-breasted Pipit. In the montane grasslands we found a family party of Grey-winged Francolins, the local race of the very difficult to observe Common Quail, we enjoyed super looks at the beautiful South African Shelduck and we enjoyed watching a female African Black Duck swimming along in a small stream, with ducklings paddling furiously behind her. We observed three Great Crested Grebes at a small wetland, observed several beautiful Blue Korhaans, we saw a couple of Blue Cranes very well, observed a migrant Common Greenshank, enjoyed good looks at a pair of Ground Woodpeckers, Eastern Clapper Lark and we also saw the Cape Bunting very well. Following a great deal of searching we found three rare and elusive Botha's Larks, as well as the elusive Yellow-breasted Pipit and best of all, we enjoyed super looks at a stunning Marsh Owl, both in flight and perched, in broad daylight. We also enjoyed our first looks at a Rock Hyrax, flushed a couple of Scrub Hares, observed a couple of Mountain Reedbuck and very much enjoyed good close looks at a family part of Suricats, now made famous by the TV program 'Meerkat Manor'.

The following day, was very much a travel day, as we drove from Wakkerstroom to Sani Pass, in the Drakensberg Mountains, the southernmost extension of the Great Rift Valley. As we were packing the bus, unfortunately, an introduced Common Starling flew by. Shortly after leaving Wakkerstroom we tried a stakeout for the very uncommon African Rock Pipit. While searching for the pipit we did enjoy good looks at another new bird, the particularly striking White-necked Raven. After an hour or so we gave up and started to drive off, then suddenly one popped into view, but unfortunately, only those in the second vehicle saw the bird. During the drive to Sani Pass, we stopped at a small wetland where we added White-throated and South African Cliff Swallows and enjoyed great looks at a Spotted-necked Otter. Later in the day, we very much enjoyed watching a pair of Secretary-birds stalking the plains.

Following breakfast at the Sani Pass Hotel, we boarded our 4 wheel drive vehicles and headed up into the clouds, to the independent African kingdom of Lesotho, with three local birding guides. A few stops en route to the border crossing produced good looks at

the endemic Gurney's Sugarbird. On crossing the border into Lesotho, we were very pleased to find that the weather gods were kind to us and we very much appreciated the bright sunny day. Our first new bird in Lesotho, was a stunning Black Stork, which we saw well in flight. One of the star birds of the day was the very impressive Lammergeier, their numbers are now very low in southern Africa. A quick stop at the 'highest pub in Africa' produced good looks at three extremely localised birds, the stunningly attractive Drakensberg Rockjumper, the rather plain Grey Tit and a small flock of Drakensberg Siskins. As we drove deeper into the kingdom, we enjoying brilliant looks at a very fine Lanner Falcon, several Large-billed Larks, a pair of Sickle-winged Chats, several Cape Rock-Thrush and a very large flock of Yellow Canaries. We continued through to our furthest point, where we enjoyed a very fine picnic lunch, before returning back down the mountain to the Sani Pass Hotel. New mammals today included a large number of splendid Sloggett's Rats, some members of the group saw a Small Grey Mongoose and we all saw Eland, Africa's largest antelope and Southern Reedbuck.

A pre-breakfast walk in the grounds of our hotel at Sani Pass, did not produce any new birds. The rest of the day was taken up with the long drive to Eshowe, in Kwazulu-Natal Province, where we would spend the night. It was this area; where the Boers, British and Zulus clashed in bloody conflict and in doing so, shaped the future of South Africa. We broke the long drive with a few birding stops along the way. The first, was at Marutswa Forest, unfortunately, there was very little moving in the forest and we failed to find any new birds. Our second birding stop was at Howick Falls, at Howick. Here we enjoyed great looks at a pair of Peregrine Falcons, which have nested at the falls for a number of years. We watched them flying around the falls and we even watched them copulating on a narrow ledge, towards the top of the falls. Our final birding stop was in the Karkloof Valley, where we enjoyed a very fine picnic lunch and did some birding at a small wetland and in the surrounding farmland. Very surprisingly, we found all three species of South African cranes, within five minutes of each other. The Wattled Crane was a new species for the tour and by far the rarest of the three species. We enjoyed good scope views of three birds together, which rounded our birding for the day off perfectly, we then drove to our lodge, on the edge of the Dlinza Forest, at Eshowe.

At first light the following morning we climbed a very tall tower, which took us up into the canopy of Dlinza Forest. Unfortunately, there was a very strong wind blowing and low cloud, making the light very poor. Somewhat disappointingly, we only added two species from the tower. We enjoyed very good looks at the diminutive Little Sparrowhawk in flight and we also saw a flock of Black-bellied Starlings, also in flight. We decided to climb down from the tower and do some birding on tracks through the forest. This proved far more productive and we enjoyed good looks at the very scarce Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Olive Woodpecker, Square-tailed Drongo, Terrestrial Brownbul and best of all, the very uncommon Spotted Ground-Thrush. We also saw our last new mammal for the tour, a Blue Duiker. We then did some birding in the grounds of our lodge, which proved even more rewarding. New birds here included Trumpeter Hornbill, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, the very scarce Brown-backed Honeybird, the very uncommon Dark-backed Weaver, the very difficult to see Green Twinspot and a small

flock of Red-backed Mannikins. We then enjoyed a wonderful late breakfast at a very fine restaurant and in the grounds of the restaurant a flowering shrub attracted an Olive Sunbird, which was the last new bird of the tour.

We then drove to Durban airport, where the tour ended and we reluctantly went our separate ways. We had traveled many kilometres together, got to know each other really well and had seen many terrific birds, mammals and plants. Both John and Bert had done a wonderful job for us and we shall all have fond memories of our time together in South Africa.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

OSTRICH *STRUTHIONIDAE*

**Common Ostrich** *Struthio camelus* We observed small numbers of wild birds in Kruger National Park, plus a single bird in a private game reserve.

GREBES *PODICIPEDIDAE*

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Small numbers present in most wetland areas.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Three birds seen together on a large lake, close to Wakkerstroom.

CORMORANTS *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Small numbers present in a few of the wetlands.

**Reed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus* This freshwater inhabiting species proved to be fairly common in most wetland habitats.

ANHINGA and DARTERS *ANHINGIDAE*

**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa* Small numbers present in a number of wetland areas.

HERONS, EGRETS and BITTERNES *ARDEIDAE*

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Commonly observed in all wetland habitats.

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* Widespread in small numbers, more often seen in dry habitats, than other species of heron.

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* Single birds present in a few of the wetlands we visited.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Our only sighting was of a single bird, flying over farmland, close to Dulstroom.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Small numbers observed in Kruger National Park.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Small numbers observed along the rivers in Kruger National Park.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* In South Africa this species only occurs in the northeast. We saw a single bird in Kruger National Park and this was followed by a second sighting at the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* We saw small flocks of this species, throughout the tour.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striatus* Small numbers present in Kruger National Park.

HAMERKOP *SCOPIDAE*

**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta* Small numbers present throughout the tour.

STORKS *CICONIIDAE*

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* An uncommon bird in South Africa, we observed a single bird in flight in Lesotho, north of Sani Pass.

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* Small numbers observed in Kruger National Park.

**Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* A few birds were observed very well in Kruger National Park.

**Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* We enjoyed a few good sightings in Kruger

National Park.

IBIS and SPOONBILLS *THRESKIORNITHIDAE*

**Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* A common bird of wetlands throughout South Africa.

**Bald Ibis** *Geronticus calvus* Several good sightings throughout the tour, we enjoyed a particularly close individual at a school sports field in Eshowe. It is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World', the total population is estimated to be 4,000 individuals and decreasing, mainly due to habitat loss.

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* One of the characteristic sounds of Africa, and seen and heard pretty well everywhere.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* We observed a small flock flying over farmland, close to Dulstroom.

**African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba* A few good looks in wetland areas, throughout the tour.

FLAMINGOS *PHOENICOPTERIDAE*

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus* We encountered a few nice flocks, on the first day of the tour, at wetlands a little to the north of Johannesburg.

DUCKS, GEESE and SWANS *ANATIDAE*

**White-faced Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* We had distant views of a pair of birds at a small wetland at the Sabie River Golf Course, this was followed by a second small flock at Eshowe.

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus* Common throughout all wetland areas.

**Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis* Widespread, in small numbers.

**South African Shelduck** *Tadorna cana* Small numbers of this breeding endemic were present in a few wetland areas.

**African Black Duck** *Anas sparsa* Great looks at a female with ducklings on a small stream, close to Wakkerstroom.

**Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* A few good sightings throughout the tour.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* Feral populations of this species have recently become established in the Dullstroom area, where we saw a single bird.

**Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata* Common in wetlands throughout the tour.

**Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythrorhynchos* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

**Hottentot Teal** *Anas hottentota* Only observed on one occasion, when a few birds were present at the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve.

**Cape Shoveler** *Anas smithii* This breeding endemic also proved to be common and widespread throughout most wetland areas.

**Southern Pochard** *Netta erythrophthalma* An uncommon bird in South Africa; we enjoyed a few good sightings throughout the tour.

**Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa* Good numbers present on a couple of the small wetlands a little to the north of Johannesburg.

HAWKS, EAGLES and KITES *ACCIPITRIDAE*

**Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* We were very fortunate that our guides knew a daytime roost of this uncommon and easily overlooked, crepuscular species, close to White River.

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus* Common and widespread throughout the whole of the tour.

**Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* Fairly common and widespread, we observed small numbers throughout the tour.

**African Fish-Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this very impressive species of raptor, but only in Kruger National Park.

**Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* This is an uncommon species in South Africa, we saw it well on a few occasions in Kruger National Park, where it is at the southern edge of its range.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* A very uncommon bird in southern Africa, small numbers still hang on in the Drakensburg Mountains. We watched an adult bird flying around the cliff tops at Sani Pass.

**White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* Small numbers present in Kruger National Park.

**Cape Vulture** *Gyps coprotheres* We saw good numbers at their breeding cliffs, at the Blyde River Canyon, while searching for the Taita Falcon. We then saw a couple of birds later in the tour, in the Karkloof Valley. Listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The world population is estimated to be around 8,000 individuals and unfortunately, rapidly declining. Major conservation efforts are now underway to preserve and protect the birds cliff-nesting sites and there is a more determined effort to eradicate the illegal shooting of birds.

**Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* We observed a couple of these scarce vultures, at a carcass in Kruger National Park. Listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The world population is estimated to be around 8,500 and unfortunately, declining. The main threat to this species are widespread accidental poisoning, largely due to strychnine used by many farmers for predator control. Nest disturbance, to which this species is extremely sensitive is a growing problem with the increasing recreational use of 4 wheel drive vehicles.

**White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* Seen well on a couple of occasions in Kruger National Park. This species is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The world population is estimated to be between 7000 – 12,500 individuals and unfortunately, declining. The reduction in populations of medium-sized mammals and wild ungulates, as well as habitat conversion throughout its range, are the main causes of this birds decline.

**Brown Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this uncommon species, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* Once again, we enjoyed many good sightings of this beautiful bird, but only in Kruger National Park.

**African Harrier-Hawk** *Polyboroides typus* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings of

- this unique bird-of-prey, both sightings occurred in Kruger National Park.
- Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* A single bird observed in flight, by some members of the group, a little to the north of the Blyde River Canyon.
- Gabar Goshawk** *Micronisus gabar* Some members of the group were fortunate to enjoy super close looks at a perched, pale morph bird, in Kruger National Park.
- African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro* We were fortunate to find one of these birds perched on top of a small tree, at Skukuzza Lodge, in Kruger National Park.
- Little Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter minullus* We were extremely fortunate to watch a bird in flight, from the top of the canopy tower, in the Dlinza Forest, at Eshowe. It is a scarce and secretive species, which is seldom observed.
- Jackal Buzzard** *Buteo rufofuscus* Common, especially in the Dulstroom area, Wakkerstroom area and in the Drakensberg Mountains.
- Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* Two or three, including a perched bird, seen very well in Kruger National Park,
- African Hawk-Eagle** *Aquila spilogaster* Surprisingly, we enjoyed three separate sightings of this uncommon raptor, but once again, only in Kruger National Park.
- Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* We were enjoying super looks at a perched bird in Kruger National Park, when it suddenly took flight and flew directly over our two vehicles, much to our delight.
- Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings of this handsome and very distinctive raptor, the first sighting occurred near Nelspruit and the second, in the Karkloof Valley.
- Crowned Eagle** *Harpyhaliaetus coronatus* We enjoyed great views of a bird in flight in Kruger National Park. This is one of the largest birds of prey in the world and feeds exclusively on monkeys.

#### SECRETARY-BIRD *SAGITTARIIDAE*

- Secretary-bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius* We enjoyed two good sightings of this very unique bird-of-prey, which feeds exclusively on snakes. Both sightings occurred in the Wakkerstroom area.

#### CARACARAS and FALCONS *FALCONIDAE*

- Eurasian Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* Commonly encountered throughout the whole tour.
- Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* Observed on two occasions, we enjoyed particularly good views of one, close to the Sani Pass, in Lesotho and some members of the group observed a second bird close to Eshowe.
- Taita Falcon** *Falco fasciinucha* We enjoyed good scope views of a single bird sitting on a steep cliff at the J.G. Strijdom tunnel, part of the very grand Blyde River Canyon. It is one of the rarest bird in southern Africa. Only this one breeding

pair is known. Hopefully there are more; there are areas of suitable steep rock-face habitat in inaccessible areas of the Blyde River Canyon. It is listed as Near Threatened in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It is estimated that the world population is 1,000 mature birds and stable. This species has always been a rare bird throughout its entire range; this may be due to competition for suitable nesting sites, with the larger and more dominant Lanner and Peregrine Falcons.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* Superb looks at a pair of birds flying around their nesting cliffs at Howick Falls, at Howick.

#### PHEASANTS and PARTRIDGES PHASIANIDAE

**Crested Francolin** *Francolinus sephaena* Many good sightings in Kruger National Park.

**Red-winged Francolin** *Francolinus levaillantii* An uncommon bird, we were fortunate to enjoy super close looks at a small covey at Dullstroom, as well as a second small covey at Wakkerstroom.

**Grey-winged Francolin** *Francolinus africanus* We enjoyed great looks at this uncommon species at Wakkerstroom and again, a little to the north of Sani Pass, in Lesotho.

**Natal Francolin** *Francolinus natalensis* Proved to be fairly common in Kruger National Park.

**Red-necked Spurfowl** *Francolinus afer* Although widespread and common in East Africa, it is an uncommon and rarely observed bird in South Africa. We saw a very close pair of birds in dense roadside vegetation during our drive up to the Mount Sheba Nature Reserve.

**Swainson's Spurfowl** *Francolinus swainsoni* Common in Kruger National Park and in the Wakkerstroom area.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* Some members of the group were very fortunate to observe a pair of local breeding birds, in short grass, close to Wakkerstroom.

#### GUINEAFOWL NUMIDIDAE

**Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* A common bird throughout the whole of South Africa.

#### CRANES GRUIDAE

**Grey Crowned-Crane** *Balearica regulorum* We enjoyed some very fine looks at this particularly attractive species of crane.

**Blue Crane** *Grus paradisea* We also enjoyed a few good looks at this very beautiful bird, which is the national bird of South Africa. It is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It has an estimated world population of 25,000

birds and unfortunately, is decreasing. It has declined rapidly in the last 30 years, largely due to direct poisoning and afforestation of its grassland breeding grounds. Now conservation measures have been implemented to protect its breeding grounds. We saw many signs on farmer's property indicating that their farming practices were beneficial for the cranes.

**Wattled Crane** *Bugeranus carunculatus* We enjoyed great scope views of three birds in the Karkloof Valley, it is a particularly beautiful species of crane. It is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World', it has an estimated world population of between 10,000 – 15,000 and is unfortunately declining in population. The main threat to this species is the loss and degradation of wetlands, as a result of intensified agriculture.

#### RAILS, GALLINULES and COOTS *RALLIDAE*

**Black Crake** *Amaurornis flavirostris* We enjoyed some good sightings in Kruger National Park.

**African Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis* Only observed in the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve, where we saw it very well.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Small numbers scattered throughout a number of wetland areas.

**Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* This is a common species throughout South Africa; we saw large numbers at several sites.

#### BUSTARDS *OTIDIDAE*

**Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori* A couple of birds were observed very well in Kruger National Park, it is a very large and impressive species of bustard.

**Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* We saw this species very well on two separate occasions; the first was in farmland close to Dirkiesdorp, with a second sighting in farmland in the Karkloof Valley. It is a particularly handsome species of bustard. Unfortunately, it is listed as Near Threatened in 'Threatened Birds of the World' and sadly, it is declining rapidly. Dixon Denham FRS (1786 – 1826) was an English soldier, a lieutenant-colonel, who explored very extensively in many parts of Africa. His exploits included a crossing of the Sahara from Tripoli to Lake Chad with Clapperton. He was also a fine illustrator. Denham became Governor-General of Sierra Leone, where he died of fever. The tree *Mewryia denhami* in New Caledonia is named in his honour. He wrote 'Native of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa' in 1826.

**Blue Korhaan** *Eupodotis caerulescens* Yet another rapidly declining species of bustard; we saw a small number very well in the Wakkerstroom area.

**Red-crested Korhaan** *Eupodotis ruficrista* We enjoyed a handful of good sightings of this particular species, in Kruger National Park.

**Black-bellied Bustard** *Lissotis melanogaster* Super looks at this very beautiful species of bustard in Kruger National Park and again close to Dirkiesdorp.

#### JACANAS *JACANIDAE*

**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africanus* Small numbers present in Kruger National Park.

STILTS and AVOCETS *RECURVIROSTRIDAE*

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Small numbers present at the large lake, near Belfast, north of Johannesburg and small numbers were also present in the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve.

THICK-KNEES *BURHINIDAE*

**Water Thick-knee** *Burhinus vermiculatus* Seen well on a few occasions in Kruger National Park.

**Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis* This far less common species of thick-knee, was seen well on one occasion in Kruger National Park.

LAPWINGS and PLOVERS *CHARADRIIDAE*

**Blacksmith Lapwing** *Vanellus armatus* Widespread and common, observed on almost every day of the tour.

**White-crowned Lapwing** *Vanellus albiceps* This very beautiful species of lapwing, is at the extreme southern edge of its range in Kruger National Park. Therefore we were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at a single bird along the Sabie River.

**Crowned Lapwing** *Vanellus coronatus* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

**African Wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus senegallus* We enjoyed several good sightings throughout the tour.

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* This species of plover is endemic to Africa. We saw one bird well at the large lake close to Belfast, north of Johannesburg. Friedrich Heninrich Freiherr von Kittlitz (1799-1874) was a Polish-born German artist, naval officer, explorer and ornithologist. He was a friend of Edward Ruppell, who encouraged his interest in natural history and he went with him to North Africa in 1831. Although he was not responsible for either collecting or describing this plover, his illustrations made from specimens that he shot in Egypt established the link between them.

**Three-banded Plover** *Charadrius tricollaris* A number of good sightings throughout the tour.

SANDPIPERS and ALLIES *SCOLOPACIDAE*

**African Snipe** *Gallinago nigripennis* Winter is the time to see African Snipe, before the grass grows long. We enjoyed many fantastic looks at many individuals throughout the tour.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* A single bird was observed at a small lake in the Wakkerstroom area. This species is a winter visitor to Africa, from breeding grounds in Europe and Asia.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* Small numbers of this winter visitor from a few wetland areas.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* A single individual of this winter visitor was observed in Kruger National Park.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* A few individuals of this winter visitor were observed at the large lake, close to Belfast, north of Johannesburg.

#### GULLS *LARIDAE*

**Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* Only observed in the grounds of our hotel at Johannesburg and again at a small wetland, on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

#### PIGEONS and DOVES *COLUMBIDAE*

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* Small numbers of this introduced bird, scattered here and there.

**Speckled Pigeon** *Columba guinea* Widespread and common.

**African Mourning Dove** *Streptopelia decipiens* In South Africa, this species only occurs in Kruger National Park, where we saw a few birds very well.

**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* Proved to be a common bird, apart from in Kruger National Park.

**Cape Turtle-Dove** *Streptopelia capicola* Seen almost daily, throughout the tour.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* A very common bird, seen throughout the whole tour.

**Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove** *Turtur chalcopilos* A few scattered sightings throughout the tour.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* A handful of birds were observed in the more arid areas of Kruger National Park.

**African Green-Pigeon** *Treron calva* Small numbers observed on a daily basis, but only in Kruger National Park.

#### PARROTS *PSITTACIDAE*

**Brown-headed Parrot** *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus* In South Africa, this uncommon species of parrot only occurs in Kruger National Park, where we saw it very well on a number of occasions.

#### TURACOS *MUSOPHAGIDAE*

**Knysna Turaco** *Tauraco corythaix* A single bird was observed very well in the Mount Sheba Nature Reserve.

**Purple-crested Turaco** *Tauraco porphyreolophus* We enjoyed great looks at this attractive and colourful turaco in Kruger National Park and in the grounds of our lodge at Nelspruit.

**Grey Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides concolor* We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

#### CUCKOOS *CUCULIDAE*

**Burchell's Coucal** *Centropus burchelli* We enjoyed many fine sightings of this very large species of cuckoo. William John Burchell (1781-1863) was an English

explorer-naturalist who went to the Cape of Good Hope in 1810 and undertook a major exploration of interior South Africa between 1811 - 1815, during which he traveled more than 7,000 kilometres through largely unexplored country. He published his two-volume work, 'Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa', in 1822 and 1824. Burchell was the first person to describe the White Rhinoceros. He was renowned as a meticulous collector, botanist and artist. Among the species named in his honour are Burchell's Zebra and a small forest tree *Burchellia bubalina*. He returned to London in 1815 to work on his collections. In 1825 he spent two months in Lisbon and then proceeded to Brazil where he collected extensively, not returning again to England until 1830. He became increasingly reclusive and in the last two years of his life became seriously ill, eventually taking his own life.

#### OWLS *TRIGIDAE*

**African Scops-Owl** *Otus senegalensis* In South Africa, this species only occurs in the northeast. It was very fortunate that we found a bird at its daytime roost, in Kruger National Park.

**Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium Perlatum* Seen well at its daytime roost, in Kruger National Park.

**Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* Undoubtedly, one of the great highlights of the tour was watching this bird quartering the farmland, not far from Wakkerstroom.

#### SWIFTS *APODIDAE*

**African Palm-Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* A few small flocks observed, in Kruger National Park.

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymartia melba* Seen well on a few occasions, the low flying flock at the golf course, on the edge of Kruger National Park, was particularly impressive.

**African Black Swift** *Apus barbatus* Good numbers observed, with the above species at the golf course on the edge of Kruger National Park and we saw a second, smaller flock, in the Dirkiesdorp area.

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Commonly encountered throughout the whole tour.

**White-rumped Swift** *Apus caffer* Observed on two occasions in Kruger National Park, the second sighting with the above two species, at the golf course on the edge of Kruger National Park, was particularly enjoyable.

#### MOUSEBIRDS *COLIIDAE*

**Speckled Mousebird** *Colius striatus* We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

**Red-faced Mousebird** *Urocolius indicus* Two small flocks in flight, were observed during our time in Kruger National Park.

#### TROGONS and QUETZALS *TROGONIDAE*

**Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* We enjoyed very good looks at a bird in the Mount Sheba Nature Reserve. The species was described by James Stephens in 1815 and

was named by Levaillant for his beautiful Hottentot mistress and the word means 'flower'. Klaas, of Klaas's Cuckoo fame, was Levaillant's servant and Narina's husband!

#### KINGFISHERS *ALCEDINIDAE*

**Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* Seen well on a number of occasions.

**Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristata* A single bird was observed well at a small stream, close to White River.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Small numbers scattered throughout the tour.

#### BEE-EATERS *MEROPIDAE*

**Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus* Small numbers observed on a few occasions in Kruger National Park.

#### ROLLERS *CORACIIDAE*

**Lilac-breasted Roller** *Coracias caudata* Once again, in South Africa this common but delightful species only occurs in the northeast, we saw it well on numerous occasions in Kruger National Park.

**Purple Roller** *Coracias naevia* This less common and less attractive species of roller, only occurs in the northeast of South Africa, where we enjoyed a few good sightings in Kruger National Park.

#### HOOPOES *UPUPIDAE*

**African Hoopoe** *Upupa africana* A gem amongst birds, which we saw very well on many occasions.

#### WOODHOOPOES and SCIMITAR-BILLS *PHOENICULIDAE*

**Green Woodhoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this attractive species, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Common Scimitar-bill** *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* Seen well on a couple of occasions in Kruger National Park.

#### HORNBILLS *BUCEROTIDAE*

**Southern Red-billed Hornbill** *Tockus rufirostris* In South Africa, this species only occurs in the northeast; we enjoyed many good sightings in Kruger National Park.

**Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill** *Tockus leucomelas* We enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive species, in Kruger National Park.

**African Grey Hornbill** *Tockus nasutus* Only occurs in the northeast corner of South Africa, we enjoyed a few good sightings in Kruger National Park.

**Crowned Hornbill** *Tockus alboterminatus* Observed on a couple of occasions in Kruger National Park.

**Trumpeter Hornbill** *Bycanistes bucinator* We had two quick observations of this

species in the Dlinza Forest.

#### BARBETS *CAPITONIDAE*

**Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus bilineatus* Observed very well on one occasion in the grounds of our lodge at Eshowe.

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* Super close looks at this diminutive species of barbet, in the grounds of Pretoriuskop Lodge in Kruger National Park and this was followed by a second sighting in the lodge grounds at Nelspruit.

**Acacia Pied Barbet** *Tricholaema leucomelas* Seen well on one occasion, at the golf course, on the edge of Kruger National Park.

**Black-collared Barbet** *Lybius torquatus* We enjoyed a few good sightings throughout the tour.

**Crested Barbet** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* We enjoyed a few very good views of this most unusual looking species of barbet.

#### HONEYGUIDES *INDICATORIDAE*

**Scaly-throated Honeyguide** *Indicator variiegatus* We were extremely fortunate that this scarce species responded well to tape playback in Dlinza Forest, enabling us to see it very well. This species of honeyguide mostly parasitizes Black-collared Barbets and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds.

**Brown-backed Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* We enjoyed a prolonged and close sighting of this very scarce species on honeyguide, in the grounds of our lodge at Eshowe. This species of honeyguide mostly parasitizes Grey-backed Camaroptera and Neddicky.

#### WOODPECKERS *PICIDAE*

**Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis* Our only sighting of this beautiful bird occurred just outside the grounds of our lodge at Nelspruit, where we were able to see it well in the scope.

**Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* We also observed this more common species of woodpecker, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Ground Woodpecker** *Geocolaptes olivaceus* Great looks at this aberrant woodpecker in the Wakkerstroom area and again at Sani Pass.

**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens* We encountered this common species on a couple of occasions, in Kruger National Park.

**Bearded Woodpecker** *Dendropicos namaquus* We observed this large species of woodpecker on a couple of occasions, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicos griseocephalus* We played hide-and-seek with a single individual in Dlinza Forest.

#### LARKS *ALAUDIDAE*

**Sabota Lark** *Mirafra sabota* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this species in Kruger National Park.

**Eastern Long-billed Lark** *Certhilauda semitorquata* Seen well close to Dulstroom and again close to Wakkerstroom.

**Spike-heeled Lark** *Chersomanes albofasciata* This distinctive and attractive species of lark was observed in the Dirkiesdorp area and proved to be particularly common around Wakkerstroom.

**Red-capped Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* A widespread species of lark, which we saw well on many occasions.

**Botha's Lark** *Spizocorys fringillaris* Following a great deal of marching around in farmland close to Wakkerstroom, we enjoyed super looks at three birds in the scope. This species is endemic to South Africa and is listed as Endangered, in 'Threatened Birds of the World' and it is estimated that the total population is between 1,000 – 3,300 individuals and decreasing. In the last 30 years arable agriculture and, to a lesser extent, forestry have transformed nearly 80% of the suitable habitat of this species. Predation by mongooses, rodents and snakes is also an additional threat. General Louis Botha (1862-1919) was a soldier, who was the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, from 1910 until 1919, having previously been the Prime Minister of the Transvaal in 1907, Shelley named the lark in his honour.

**Large-billed Lark** *Galerida magnirostris* We enjoyed very close looks of this particular species of lark, during our time at Sani Pass.

**Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix leucotis* We enjoyed a few small flocks of this species, during our time in Kruger National Park.

#### SWALLOWS *HIRUNDINIDAE*

**Brown-throated Martin** *Riparia paludicola* We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

**Rock Martin** *Hirundo fuligula* We observed this species on two occasions; the first sighting occurred at Mount Sheba and the second, at Sani Pass.

**White-throated Swallow** *Hirundo albogularis* This attractive intra-African migrant was observed well on the high veld, close to Wakkerstroom and again, at a small wetland in the Karkloof Valley.

**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* We observed small numbers in a few locations.

**Lesser Striped-Swallow** *Hirundo abyssinica* We observed small numbers of this attractive species throughout much of the tour.

**Red-breasted Swallow** *Hirundo semirufa* Another attractive species, which we saw in small numbers in Kruger National Park.

**South African Cliff-Swallow** *Hirundo spilodera* A single individual was observed by myself, when it flew over a small wetland, while we were watching the Spotted-necked Otter, near Wakkerstroom. It is an intra-African migrant.

**Black Sawwing** *Psalidoprocne holomelas* Seen briefly on two occasions; the first occurred at White River and the second, in the Karkloof Valley.

#### PIPITS and WAGTAILS *MOTACILLIDAE*

**African Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

**Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* Seen well but only at Dulstroom and Wakkerstroom.

**Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* Seen well at Dulstroom and again at Nelspruit.

**Yellow-breasted Pipit** *Anthus chloris* We were extremely fortunate to observe a single bird in non-breeding plumage, while searching for Botha's Lark, at Wakkerstroom. This species is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World', its world population is estimated to be between 1,700 – 4,300 individuals and decreasing. The main threat to this species is habitat loss due to overgrazing, burning, rapid afforestation of long term grasslands and agricultural intensification.

**African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* Seen very well on a couple of occasions in Kruger National Park.

**Cape Wagtail** *Motacilla capensis* A common bird throughout South Africa, which we saw on many days of the tour.

**Cape Longclaw** *Macronyx capensis* This attractive species was seen well on a number of occasions.

**Yellow-throated Longclaw** *Macronyx croceus* This species which looks remarkably like a meadowlark from North America, was observed on two occasions, during our time in Kruger National Park.

#### CUCKOO-SHRIKES *CAMPEPHAGIDAE*

**Black Cuckoo-shrike** *Campephaga flava* A single female showed very well, in the grounds of our lodge, at Mount Sheba.

#### BULBULS *PYCNONOTIDAE*

**Dark-capped Bulbul** *Pycnonotus tricolor* A common bird, which we saw on all but one day of the tour.

**Sombre Greenbul** *Andropadus importunus* Seen well on several occasions throughout the tour.

**Yellow-bellied Greenbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris* A single bird was seen very well, on the golf course, adjacent to Kruger National Park.

**Terrestrial Brownbul** *Phyllastrephus terrestris* Glimpsed on a couple of occasions in the Dlinza Forest.

**Yellow-streaked Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus* Seen well on one occasion, in the Mount Sheba Nature Reserve.

#### THRUSHES and ALLIES *TURDIDAE*

**Cape Rock-Thrush** *Monticola rupestris* We saw this species very well during our time birding at Sani Pass.

**Sentinel Rock-Thrush** *Monticola explorator* Once again, we enjoyed several good sightings of this localised and uncommon species.

**Spotted Ground-Thrush** *Zoothera guttata* We were indeed very fortunate to see this very skulking bird particularly well, while birding in the Dlinza Forest. This

species is listed as Endangered, in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It is estimated that the total population is between 600 – 1,700 individuals and sadly, declining. In South Africa, mining has destroyed much wintering habitat and may affect more forest in the near future and habitat disturbance is increasing in many protected areas. The species's recovery is limited by its low breeding success, which is largely due to vulnerability of nests and resultant high rates of predation, perhaps exacerbated by domestic cats where they are present. This species occasionally suffers mortality from collisions with skyscrapers, probably due to the disorientating effect of city lights during nocturnal migration.

**Groundscraper Thrush** *Psophocichla litsipsirupa* We observed small numbers of this species in the Dulstroom area and again in Kruger National Park.

**Olive Thrush** *Turdus olivaceus* We encountered this species in the Dulstroom area and in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains.

**Karoo Thrush** *Turdus smithi* A pair was observed very well in one of the gardens, at Dulstroom.

**Kurrichane Thrush** *Turdus libonyanus* A few pairs seen well in Kruger National Park and at Nelspruit.

#### CISTICOLAS and ALLIES *CISTICOLIDAE*

**Lazy Cisticola** *Cisticola aberrans* Observed on one occasion during our pre-breakfast bird walk, at our lodge at Nelspruit.

**Rattling Cisticola** *Cisticola chiniana* This particular cisticola proved to be common in Kruger National Park.

**Wailing Cisticola** *Cisticola lais* Seen well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

**Levaillant's Cisticola** *Cisticola tinniens* The common cisticola of wetland areas, we saw this species particularly well around Wakkerstroom. Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1824) was a French traveler, explorer, collector and naturalist. He was born in Dutch Guiana (Suriname), the son of the French consul there. Birds attracted his interest from an early age and he spent a lot of his time collecting specimens. As a result, he became acquainted with many of Europe's private collectors. He went to the Cape Province of South Africa, in 1781, in the employ of the Dutch East India Company, the first real ornithologist to visit the area. There he both explored and collected specimens, eventually publishing, a six volume book, *Historie Naturelle des Oiseaux d'Africa*, which is a classic of African ornithology. This work was published between the years 1801 and 1806, in Paris, and contained 144 colour-printed engravings. Le Vaillant sent over 2,000 skins of birds to Jacob Temminck, who financed his expeditions.

**Croaking Cisticola** *Cisticola natalensis* A very large, distinctive species of cisticola, which we saw on one occasion during our pre-breakfast bird walk, at our lodge at Nelspruit.

**Neddicky** *Cisticola fulvicapillus* A fairly common, very plain species of cisticola, which we saw well on several occasions.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* This very widespread species of cisticola was seen very well in grassland at Dulstroom.

**Desert Cisticola** *Cisticola aridulus* A couple seen fairly well during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Wing-snapping Cisticola** *Cisticola ayresii* Particularly common around Dullstroom and Wakkerstroom, where we enjoyed some good looks at them.

**Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* Seen regularly in small numbers in Kruger National Park.

**Drakensberg Prinia** *Prinia hypoxantha* This extremely localised species, was seen well on a number of occasions.

**Bar-throated Apalis** *Apalis thoracica* Seen at a number of sites but our first sighting in the grounds of our lodge at Mount Sheba, was the most memorable.

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* Seen well on a few occasions in Kruger National Park and again in the grounds of our lodge at Eshowe.

**Green-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brachyura* We observed this distinctive species on only two occasions; the first occurred in Kruger National Park and the second sighting, took place in the grounds of our lodge at Nelspruit.

#### OLD WORLD WARBLERS *SYLVIIDAE*

**Cape Grassbird** *Sphenoeacus afer* We observed this uncommon bird on only two occasions, the first sighting took place in tall grass at White River and the second sighting occurred at Sani Pass.

**Dark-capped Yellow Warbler** *Chloropeta natalensis* Seen particularly well on one occasion, in tall grassland at White River.

**Yellow-bellied Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis* We observed two small flocks during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Burnt-neck Eremomela** *Eremomela usticollis* Once again, we enjoyed a couple of good sightings of this small warbler, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Long-billed Crombec** *Sylvietta rufescens* A common species which we saw well on a number of occasions, in Kruger National Park.

#### OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS *MUSCICAPIDAE*

**Pale Flycatcher** *Bradornis pallidus* Seen very well on one occasion, in Kruger National Park.

**Marico Flycatcher** *Bradornis mariquensis* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings of this species in Kruger National Park.

**Southern Black-Flycatcher** *Melaenornis pammelaina* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Fiscal Flycatcher** *Sigelus silens* We observed this uncommon species on two separate occasions; the first sighting occurred on the high veld above Dulstroom and the second one, occurred near Nelspruit.

**African Dusky Flycatcher** *Muscicapa adusta* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings of this unobtrusive species; the first sighting took place in Kruger National Park and the second sighting occurred in the grounds of our lodge at Nelspruit.

**Grey Tit-Flycatcher** *Myioparus plumbeus* Seen very well on one occasion in Kruger National Park.

- Cape Robin-Chat** *Cossypha caffra* A common and conspicuous bird throughout the whole tour.
- White-browed Robin-Chat** *Cossypha heuglini* We enjoyed several good observations in Kruger National Park and these were followed by a further sighting, at Nelspruit.
- Red-capped Robin-Chat** *Cossypha natalensis* We were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at this uncommon species on our pre-breakfast bird walk, in the grounds of our lodge at Nelspruit.
- Chorister Robin-Chat** *Cossypha dichroa* We saw this beautiful bird on two separate occasions; the first occurred in the Mount Sheba Nature Reserve and the second sighting took place in the Dlinza Forest.
- Bearded Scrub-Robin** *Erythropygia quadrivirgata* This fairly common but secretive bird, was observed well on one occasion in Kruger National Park, which is at the extreme southern edge of this birds range.
- White-browed Scrub-Robin** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* This species proved to be fairly common in Kruger National Park, where we enjoyed a few good sightings of this attractive species.
- African Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* Commonly encountered throughout the whole tour.
- Buff-streaked Chat** *Saxicola bifasciata* One of the prettiest of the wheatears, we enjoyed several good sightings.
- Mountain Wheatear** *Oenanthe monticola* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this attractive species.
- Sickle-winged Chat** *Cercomela sinuate* We enjoyed good looks at this uncommon species at Sani Pass.
- Familiar Chat** *Cercomela familiaris* Scattered sightings throughout the tour, usually in rocky areas.
- Southern Anteater-Chat** *Myrmecocichla formicivora* We enjoyed many good sightings of this confiding species.

#### WATTLE-EYES *PLATYSTEIRIDAE*

- Cape Batis** *Batis capensis* Several good sightings throughout the tour.
- Chinspot Batis** *Batis molitor* This species was seen well on several occasions during our time in Kruger National Park.

#### BABBLERS *TIMALIIDAE*

- Drakensberg Rockjumper** *Chaetops aurantius* We enjoyed point blank looks at this stunning species of bird from the verandah of the 'highest pub in Africa', at Sani Pass. This bird was voted 'bird of the tour', by tour participants.
- Arrow-marked Babbler** *Turdoides jardineii* We enjoyed sightings of a few flocks, during our time in Kruger National Park.

#### TITS and CHICKADEES *PARIDAE*

- Southern Black-Tit** *Melaniparus niger* Seen on a daily basis during our time in Kruger

National Park.

**Grey Tit** *Melaniparus afer* Only observed on one occasion; however, we saw it very well, once again, from the verandah of the 'highest pub in Africa', at Sani Pass.

#### SUNBIRDS and SPIDERHUNTERS *NECTARINIIDAE*

**Collared Sunbird** *Hedydipna collaris* We enjoyed several good sightings of this species, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Olive Sunbird** *Cyanomitra olivacea* Seen very well on one occasion, in the grounds of the restaurant where we ate our meals, while staying at Eshowe.

**Amethyst Sunbird** *Chalcomitra amethystina* We enjoyed many good sightings of this common species.

**Scarlet-chested Sunbird** *Chalcomitra senegalensis* Once again, we enjoyed many good sightings of this stunning species of sunbird, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Malachite Sunbird** *Nectarinia famosa* Seen well on two separate occasions; the first took place in the grounds of our lodge at Mount Sheba and the second sighting occurred at Sani Pass.

**Southern Double-collared Sunbird** *Cinnyris chalybeus* Observed very well in the Mount Sheba Nature Reserve and again in the grounds of our lodge at Eshowe.

**Greater Double-collared Sunbird** *Cinnyris afer* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

**Marico Sunbird** *Cinnyris mariquensis* Small numbers present in Kruger National Park.

**White-bellied Sunbird** *Cinnyris talatala* Once again, we enjoyed many good sightings in Kruger National Park.

#### WHITE-EYES *ZOSTEROPIDAE*

**Cape White-eye** *Zosterops pallidus* This very variable species is common and widespread throughout South Africa.

#### SUGARBIRDS *PROMEROPIDAE*

**Gurney's Sugarbird** *Promerops gurneyi* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings along the road up to Sani Pass.

#### OLD WORLD ORIOLES *ORIOLIDAE*

**Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus* Seen well on many occasions throughout the tour.

#### SHRIKES *LANIIDAE*

**Southern Fiscal** *Lanius predator* A recent split from Common Fiscal, it proved to be common and widespread throughout the whole tour, with the exception of Kruger National Park, where it does not occur.

**Magpie Shrike** *Corvinella melanoleuca* We enjoyed many good sightings of this very large species of shrike, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Southern White-crowned Shrike** *Eurocephalus anguitimens* We observed small numbers of birds during our time in Kruger National Park.

BUSHSHRIKES and ALLIES *MALACONOTIDAE*

**Brubru** *Nilaus afer* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Black-backed Puffback** *Dryoscopus cubla* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra australis* Seen well on a few occasions in Kruger National Park.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegala* Seen very well on a few occasions in Kruger National Park.

**Southern Boubou** *Laniarius ferrugineus* Commonly encountered throughout the whole tour.

**Bokmakierie** *Telophorus zeylonus* This very attractive species of shrike was seen very well on a number of occasions.

**Olive Bushshrike** *Telophorus olivaceus* Observed very well on one occasion, in the grounds of our lodge at Mount Sheba.

**Orange-breasted Bushshrike** *Telophorus sulfureopectus* Another beautiful bird, which we saw well on one occasion, in Kruger National Park.

**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* Some members of the group observed this species on one occasion, in Kruger National Park.

HELMETSHRIKES and ALLIES *PRIONOPIDAE*

**White-crested Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus* Seen very well on a few occasions, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Retz's Helmetshrike** *Prionops retzii* We were very fortunate to observe a small flock of this uncommon species, on one occasion, in Kruger National Park. Anders Johan Retzius (1742-1821) was a Swedish naturalist and Professor of Natural History, Economy and Chemistry in Lund. The shrike may have been named after one of his sons; Anders Adolph Retzius (1796-1860), who was Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at the Karolinska Institute, or Carl Gustaf Retzius (1798-1833), who was a veterinary professor in Stockholm. Other sources say it was named after A.J. Retzius himself.

DRONGOS *DICRURIDAE*

**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* This proved to be a very common bird throughout the tour.

**Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* Seen well on a couple of occasions, while birding in the Dlinza Forest.

CROWS, JAYS and MAGPIES *CORVIDAE*

**Cape Crow** *Corvus capensis* Many good sightings throughout the whole tour.

**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* Common and widespread throughout much of South Africa.

**White-necked Raven** *Corvus albicollis* We enjoyed several good sightings of this

attractive species of corvid.

#### STARLINGS *STURNIDAE*

**Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* This introduced species is now unfortunately, all too common.

**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* This introduced species is spreading northwards from Cape Town. Unfortunately, a single bird was observed in the grounds of our hotel at Wakkerstroom.

**Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* A few small flocks were observed during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Black-bellied Starling** *Lamprotornis corruscus* A small flock of this species flew past us while we were on the canopy tower, in the Dlinza Forest.

**Cape Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis nitens* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

**Greater Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* In South Africa this species only occurs in Kruger National Park, where it is very common.

**Burchell's Starling** *Lamprotornis australis* We only saw this species in Kruger National Park, where it is also very common.

**Pied Starling** *Spreo bicolor* This large species of starling was common and conspicuous throughout most of the tour.

**Red-winged Starling** *Onychognathus morio* Seen on almost every day of the tour, with the exception of Kruger National Park.

**Red-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Small numbers of this aberrant starling were seen on various mammals in Kruger National Park.

**Yellow-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus africanus* While waiting for a massive herd of African Buffalo to walk across the road in front of us, we managed to pick out a few birds of this species, amongst the many Red-billed Oxpeckers.

#### OLD WORLD SPARROWS *PASSERIDAE*

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* This introduced species is unfortunately, widespread and common.

**Southern Grey-headed Sparrow** *Passer diffusus* Small numbers present throughout much of the tour.

**Cape Sparrow** *Passer diffusus* We observed this attractive species of sparrow, on many occasions throughout the tour.

**Yellow-throated Petronia** *Petronia superciliaris* An uncommon species in South Africa, which we saw well on a couple of occasions, during our time in Kruger National Park.

#### WEAVERS and ALLIES *PLOCEIDAE*

**Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver** *Bubalornis niger* Proved to be fairly common in Kruger National Park.

**Lesser Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus intermedius* Only seen on one occasion, in Kruger National Park.

- Spectacled Weaver** *Ploceus ocularis* A few birds present in Kruger National Park.
- Cape Weaver** *Ploceus capensis* This attractive species was seen well on a couple of occasions; firstly, in the grounds at our lodge at Nelspruit, and secondly, in the high veld above Wakkerstroom.
- Golden-Weaver** *Ploceus xanthops* Small numbers were observed in tall grassland at White River and we also saw a handful of birds, close to Nelspruit.
- Southern Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus velatus* Common and widespread, seen well on a number of occasions.
- Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus* Small numbers scattered throughout the tour.
- Dark-backed Weaver** *Ploceus bicolor* We enjoyed super looks at this very attractive but uncommon species of weaver in the Dlinza Forest and in the grounds of our lodge at Eshowe.
- Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps* We only saw one individual of this uncommon species. This sighting occurred as we were leaving Kruger National Park, fortunately, it was a male in full breeding plumage.
- Thick-billed Weaver** *Amblyospiza albifrons* Only seen on one occasion, we enjoyed good looks at an adult bird in the grounds of our lodge at Nelspruit.
- Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea* A few large flocks, scattered throughout the tour.
- Southern Red Bishop** *Euplectes orix* We observed countless flocks during our time on the high veld.
- Yellow Bishop** *Euplectes capensis* We saw this species on one occasion in the high veld above Dulstroom and also on one occasion, close to our lodge at Sani Pass.
- White-winged Widowbird** *Euplectes albonotatus* Only seen on one occasion, in Kruger National Park.
- Long-tailed Widowbird** *Euplectes progne* Small flocks of this species were observed on many occasions.

#### WAXBILLS and ALLIES *ESTRILDIDAE*

- Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba* We saw this species very well on a couple of occasions in Kruger National Park.
- Green Twinspot** *Mandingoa nitidula* An uncommon and very shy species, which we observed on one occasion in the grounds of our lodge at Eshowe.
- Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* A few birds were present in Kruger National Park.
- African Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rubricata* A single bird of this species was observed on our pre-breakfast bird walk, at our lodge at Nelspruit.

- Jameson's Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rhodopareia* A pair of these very pink firefinches,

showed well in Kruger National Park. James Sligo Jameson (1856-1888) was an Irish hunter, explorer and naturalist. He collected in Borneo, South Africa, Spain, Algeria, the Rocky Mountains and, finally, in the Belgian Congo, where he died of hemorrhagic fever, at Bangala, whilst on an expedition with Stanley to rescue Emin Pasha. According to his obituary in The Times of 8 November 1890, he witnessed a cannibal banquet in the Upper Congo and was accused by Stanley of instigating it. He wrote 'Story of the Rear Column of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition', which was published posthumously in 1890.

**Blue Waxbill** *Uraeginthus angolensis* Proved to be very common in Kruger National Park.

**Sweet Waxbill** *Estrilda melanotis* A small flock was feeding on the lawn, at our lodge, at Mount Sheba.

**Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild* Small flocks observed throughout the tour.

**Bronze Mannikin** *Lonchura cucullata* Small flocks observed on a few occasions throughout the tour.

**Red-backed Mannikin** *Lonchura nigriceps* A few of these uncommon birds were mixed in amongst one of the flocks of Bronze Mannikins, in the grounds of our lodge at Eshowe.

#### INDIGOBIRDS *VIDUIDAE*

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* Another brood parasite, which is obviously very successful, as we saw good numbers throughout the tour.

#### SISKINS, CROSSBILLS and ALLIES *FRINGILLIDAE*

**Cape Canary** *Serinus canicollis* A very common and widespread but nonetheless attractive species.

**Forest Canary** *Serinus scotops* A pair showed very well in the grounds of our lodge at Mount Sheba and we saw a second pair on the high veld above Wakkerstroom.

**Black-throated Canary** *Serinus atrogularis* A small flock was observed in flight at a small wetland, a little to the north of Johannesburg.

**Yellow-fronted Canary** *Serinus mozambicus* We observed good numbers of this species during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Yellow Canary** *Serinus flaviventris* We enjoyed watching a large flock at Sani Pass.

**Brimstone Canary** *Serinus sulphuratus* We enjoyed a few sightings of this rather chunky species of canary.

**Streaky-headed Seedeater** *Serinus gularis* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

**Drakensberg Siskin** *Serinus symonsi* We saw this extremely localised species, very well, during our time at Sani Pass.

#### BUNTINGS, SPARROWS, SEEDEATERS and ALLIES *EMBERIZIDAE*

**Cape Bunting** *Emberiza capensis* Seen on two occasions; the first was on the high veld above Wakkerstroom and then again at Sani Pass.

**Golden-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza flaviventris* We enjoyed a great many sightings of

this very beautiful bird, during our time in Kruger National Park.

MAMMALS

- Chacma Baboon** *Papio ursinus* Seen well on many occasions.
- Vervet Monkey** *Cercopithecus aethiops* Fairly common in small numbers throughout the tour.
- Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat** *Epomophorus wahlbergi* We saw a large colony roosting in a group of trees, as we were leaving Kruger National Park.
- Spotted Hyena** *Crocuta crocuta* Our first sighting was of an adult, who had a great deal of interaction with a Waterbuck, who finally saw it off. Our second sighting, was of a large family group and it was very interesting to see how tender the mother was with one of the cubs. Both sightings occurred in Kruger National Park.
- Scrub Hare** *Lepus saxatilis* While searching for Botha's Lark in the high veld above Wakkerstroom, we flushed a couple of this species.
- Smith's Bush-Squirrel** *Paraxerus cepapi* Proved to be common in Kruger National Park.
- Greater Brown Galago** *Otolemur crassicaudatus* We enjoyed great looks at one of these mammals in the spotlight, in the grounds of Skukuza Lodge, in Kruger National Park.
- Sloggett's Rat** *Otomys sloggetti* Seen very well at Sani Pass, where they were very common.
- Slender Mongoose** *Herpestes sanguinea* We enjoyed a few good sightings during our time in Kruger National Park.
- Small Grey Mongoose** *Herpestes pulverulenta* Some members of the group observed one of these, close to Sani Pass.
- Yellow Mongoose** *Cynictis penicillata* Common in the high veld above Dulstroom and Wakkerstroom, where we enjoyed many good sightings.
- Dwarf Mongoose** *Helogale parvula* We observed up to four small groups of this small species of mongoose, during our time in Kruger National Park.
- Suricate** *Suricate suricate* We were very fortunate to enjoy good close looks at a group of this charismatic species, in the high veld above Wakkerstroom.
- Black-backed Jackal** *Canis mesomelas* We enjoyed three separate, good close looks at individuals, during our time in Kruger National Park.
- Spotted-necked Otter** *Lutra maculicollis* We were very fortunate to observe one of these swimming around at the edge of a small lake in the high veld, above Wakkerstroom.
- White Rhinoceros** *Ceratotherium simum* We enjoyed two sightings of a pair of these animals, in Kruger National Park. John our local guide, believes that they will be extinct in as little as 10 years, unless the poaching can be stopped.
- Lion** *Pantera leo* We observed a somewhat distant lioness, during our time in Kruger National Park.
- Caracal** *Caracal caracal* One of these rarely observed cats broke from cover and ran across the road directly in front of our two vehicles during the drive from Lydenburg to Mount Sheba.
- Wild Cat** *Felis silvestris* We enjoyed super looks at a single individual, which had

become semi-tame, at Skukuza Lodge in Kruger National Park.

**Rock Hyrax** *Procavia capensis* Our first sighting was of a single animal in a stone wall on the high veld above Wakkerstroom. This was followed by a second sighting of a family group at Sani Pass.

**African Savanna Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* We enjoyed many encounters with these huge creatures during our time in Kruger National Park. The recently born baby elephants were particularly endearing.

**Burchell's Zebra** *Equus burchelli* Many good sightings throughout the tour. The most memorable ones were those in Kruger National Park.

**Hippopotamus** *Hippopotamus amphibius* Good numbers of these impressive beasts were seen at close quarters in Kruger National Park.

**Common Warthog** *Phacochoerus africanus* Small numbers showed very well in Kruger National Park.

**Giraffe** *Giraffa camelopardalis* Good numbers of these wonderful creatures were seen at incredibly close quarters in Kruger National Park.

**African Buffalo** *Syncerus caffer* We enjoyed many good sightings at this, the most dangerous animal in Africa, during our stay in Kruger National Park.

**Greater Kudu** *Tragelaphus strepsiceros* Good numbers of these magnificent antelopes were seen in Kruger National Park.

**Nyala** *Tragelaphus angasii* A single Nyala, an uncommon species of antelope, was observed very well on one occasion, in Kruger National Park.

**Bushbuck** *Tragelaphus scriptus* Small numbers present in Kruger National Park.

**Eland** *Taurotragus oryx* The largest of all the antelopes; a couple of these huge animal were observed at Sani Pass.

**Blue Wildebeest** *Connochaetes taurimus* Good numbers present in Kruger National Park.

**Black Wildebeest** *Connochaetes gnou* This far less common species of wildebeest, was observed by some members of the group in the Karkloof Valley.

**Blesbok** *Damaliscus pygargus* Blesbok were seen very well on the high veld above Dulstroom and Wakkerstroom.

**Sable Antelope** *Hippotragues niger* We observed a group of three animals, in a private game reserve, not far from Mount Sheba. Unfortunately, this magnificent animal has now become extremely uncommon in the wild.

**Blue Duiker** *Philantomba monticola* A single individual was seen particularly well, in Dlinza Forest.

**Bush Duiker** *Sylvicapra grimmia* This species proved to be common in Kruger National Park.

**Southern Reedbuck** *Redunca arundinum* Only seen twice, at Sani Pass and again in the Karkloof Valley.

**Mountain Reedbuck** *Redunca fulvorufula* A group of three animals were observed on one occasion, on the high veld, above Wakkerstroom.

**Waterbuck** *Kobus ellipsiprymmus* This large and attractive species of antelope, was seen very well on many occasions, in Kruger National Park.

**Grey Rhebok** *Palea capreolus* A few of these small antelope were observed during the

tour. They are often hard to find, so we were very lucky. A well known brand of running shoes, takes its name from this animal.

**Springbok** *Antidorcas marsupialis* Observed on a game farm, near Dulstroom.

**Oribi** *Ourebia ourebi* We had very distant views of a single individual, which was on a private game reserve, not far from Mount Sheba.

**Steenbok** *Raphicerus campestris* We enjoyed many good sightings of this tiny species of antelope, during our time in Kruger National Park.

**Impala** *Aepyceros melampus* Large numbers present in Kruger National Park.

**Klipspringer** *Oreotragus oreotragus* A single individual was observed particularly well, at a rocky outcrop, in Kruger National Park.