



South Africa: Cape to Kruger

(w/ Drakensberg Extension)

Nov 22 - Dec 14, 2024

Leader Dorian Anderson



Summary

South Africa is one of the world's premier birding/ecotourism destinations, and this 23-day departure (14-day main tour + 9-day extension) offers a wonderful sample of what the country offers. From Cape Town's offshore waters to Kruger's savannahs and the Drakensberg's peaks, we soaked in views of ostriches, penguins, albatrosses, bustards, shorebirds, kingfishers, hornbills, rollers, larks, turacos, bushshrikes, cisticolas, and sunbirds (among many other families). And when we consider the mammals — elephants, giraffes, antelope, zebras, rhinos, buffaloes, lions, cheetahs, and leopards — the diversity is almost overwhelming! The main tour tallied 360 species of birds, and the extension added another 103 for a grand total of 463; 40-some species of mammals were observed along that same arc, some at arm's length. With excellent lodging, good food, and developed infrastructure, South Africa should not be missed. Please read on for a detailed account of the 2024 installment! Also - check out owner/guide Keith Barnes's new field guide to this region! Tropical Birding knows Africa!

Cape Rockjumper



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Day 1 - Friday, November 22 - Arrivals and Introductory birding around Cape Town

With one couple (Kara and Michael) already settled into our Cape Town digs on this scheduled arrival day, the three of us headed out for some bonus birding on this morning. Our destination was Strandfontein water treatment plant, a marshy oasis amidst otherwise surrounding development. A flock of **swifts** presented on the entrance road, and we pulled **Alpine**, **African**, and **Little** from the swirling milieu before tacking on **Karoo Prinia** and **Levaillant's Cisticola** in the underlying scrub. Excellent views of **Lesser Swamp** and **Little Rush Warbler** followed; the pair can be frustratingly skulky, so it was great to nail them down so quickly. Turning towards the impoundments, we found hundreds of **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos** and a variety of waterfowl: **Spur-winged Goose**, **Cape Shoveler**, **Yellow-billed Duck**, **Cape Teal**, **Southern Pochard**, and others. **African Swamphens** stalked the reed beds, **Hautlaub's** and **Gray-hooded Gulls** floated on the water's surface, and **Whiskered Terns** hovered in search of prey. Throw in **Pied Avocet**, **Great Crested Tern**, and **Reed** (formerly Long-tailed) **Cormorant** and it was a waterbird bonanza! Raptors represented with the likes of **Black-winged Kite**, **African March Harrier**, **Black Kite**, and **Booted Eagle**. Wonderful as those were, the lone **Maccoa Duck** which Dorian spied on the far side of the largest impoundment was our best find, the portly, Ruddy relative being near-threatened throughout Africa. By the time our three-hour appointment had concluded, we'd tallied 64 species (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203243020>).

Karoo Prinia

Moving to the adjacent Rondvlei Nature Reserved, we found a largely-overlapping set of species. **Pied Kingfisher** and **Great White Pelican** were crowd-pleasers, but it was a playful group of **Little Grebes** which stole the show. It was so fun to watch them squabble as they danced about water's surface. Running up a big list is always fun, but it's also nice to slow down and appreciate interesting behavior when it presents. Exploring the scrub as we entered and exited the reserve, we had nice views of **Cape White-eye**, **Fiscal Flycatcher**, and **Southern Double-collard Sunbird**. With Marti and Ted scheduled

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to arrive early-afternoon, we closed up shop and returned to our lodging for lunch. Dorian collected the pair from the airport, and the five of us enjoyed an introductory dinner before retiring for the night.

White-capped Albatross



Day 2 - Saturday, November 23 - Pelagic trip

The seas around the Cape Town are notoriously rough and - as such - force the cancelation of a significant percentage of pelagic trips. Fortunately, blue skies and minimal wind prevailed on this morning, and we were given the official 'go' to head offshore. Heading south, the overhead cliff of Table Mountain National Park to our right/west, we ticked **Kelp Gull** and **Common Tern** before we rounded the Cape Of Good Hope. That impressive geology faded as we continued offshore, and we noted **Sooty Shearwaters**, **White-chinned Petrels**, and **Parasitic Jaegers** as we reached deeper water. While the offshore waters hold loads of birds, the trick is to find a fishing trawler, specifically when it's pulling in its nets. Our captain spent much time on the radio, and we eventually drew a bee-line for a commercial ship which was ten just a dot on the horizon. It felt like we needed hours to reach the massive craft, but the birds were thick as we approached. **Black-browed** and **White-capped Albatrosses** cut through the air with ease, and a massive **Brown Skua** harassed daintier **Sabine's Gulls** in hopes of scoring a free meal. Wait. What was that? That little tiny thing there. Low to the water, flying erratically. It's a **European Storm-Petrel**! The action peaked as the trawler pulled in the nets, and our keen-eyed guide, Graham, helped us locate **Cape Gannet**, **Cory's Shearwater**, **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**, and **Northern Giant-Petrel** from the swirling hoards. The boat was pitching about a decent amount at that stage, but seaworthy clients hardly minded. Ironically, it was Dorian, a seasoned

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pelagic birder, who got sick on this day! Nothing debilitating; just a few quick heaves over the side. The trawler eventually moved farther offshore, so we headed back towards port, a **Southern Giant-Petrel**

showing nicely on the return trip (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203381177>).

We rounded the cape a second time and took shelter in the protected False Bay. We enjoyed a basic but tasty lunch (sandwiches, fruit) before visiting a particular rocky outcropping. There we found **Great Crested** and **Sandwich Terns, African Oystercatcher**, and trifecta of **cormorants: Cape, Great, and Bank**. The last of those is Endangered and represented a great way to wrap a fantastic trip (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203383814>).

Our enthusiastic group had lots of energy after the boat trip, so we seized the opportunity to swing through Boulder's Beach en route to the hotel. The main attraction, the **African Penguin** colony, did not disappoint. It was is so much fun to watch the portly birds waddle around the beach and squabble with one another as the invaded each other's space. They certainly picked an awesome place to set up shop (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203481809>)!

African Penguin



Day 3 - Sunday, November 24 - West Coast National Park and surrounding areas

We made an early start, escaped Cape Town's clutches, and reached West Coast NP at 7am. Entering the park at the south end, we made our first stop at the Abrahamskraal hide. It was pretty quiet, but we did find **Common Ostrich, Black Harrier, and White-throated Sparrow**, the last coming and going from a nest inside the hide. We also had quick glimpses of **Eland**, the largest African antelope. Continuing towards the Geelbek Hide and the surrounding marshy shallows, we picked up a number of shorebirds: **Common Ringed Plover, Blacksmith Lapwing, Kittlitz's Plover, Terek Sandpiper** (distant), **Common Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, and Little Stint**. Birding the adjacent scrub, we found **Cape Spurfowl, Rock Kestrel, Southern Crag-Martin** (formerly Rock Martin), **Cape Sparrow**,
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and **Bokmakierie** (a bright yellow bush shrike). Our next stop was the Seeberg hide at the park's NW end. There we found an even greater abundance of waterbirds and grew our tally with the likes of **African Oystercatcher, White-fronted Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Caspian and Little Terns**. All those aside, our best bird might have been a black-and-white **Eurasian Oystercatcher**, a very rare visitor to South Africa. The gathering midday heat and wind kept land bird activity low, but we squeezed out **Karoo Scrub-Robin, Cape Bunting, Gray Tit, and Gray backed Cisticola** as we explored the surrounding fynbos. We ran one monster checklist for the whole morning at WCNP (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203437241>).

Stomachs grumbling as midday approached, we left the park and - after a bit of navigational and access frustration - landed at Thoban Chefs for lunch. We dined overlooking the bay and continued into the agricultural swath beyond the town of Vredenburg. Our hope was to find Cape Long-billed Lark, but it was not to be in the crushing wind. That bird conceded, we nonetheless enjoyed **Jackal Buzzard, European Bee-eater, Red-capped Lark, and White-throated Canary**. Wonderful as those were, the flocks of **Blue Cranes** stole the show, their long, wispy wing plumes dancing in the gusting wind (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203483658>).

Our final stop was at the Kliphoek Salt Pans, a waterbird haven and reliable spot for Large-billed Lark. Turning into the facility, we couldn't believe our luck when a **Spotted Eagle-Owl** flushed from right in front of the van! It landed fifty feet away and gave amazing, broad-daylight views! Navigating the skinny (and sometimes hair-raising) dikes between the various ponds after that encounter, we found **South African Shelduck, Pied Avocet, Chestnut-banded Plover** (so cute), and **Ruff**. We didn't bump into the lark, but we knew we'd have additional chances at it as the tour unfolded (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203463115>). At that point, we closed up shop and began the return drive to Cape Town. Our Italian dinner at Basilico was excellent.

Spotted Eagle-Owl



Day 4 - Monday, November 25 - Cape Town wrap-up

This morning featured a visit to the world famous Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Built into the sloping hillside of Table Mountain, the gardens host an impressive variety of birds very near downtown Cape Town. **Cape White-eye**, **Olive Thrush**, **African Ducky Flycatcher**, and **Bronze Mannikin** presented as we began our exploration, and we scored a **canary hat trick - Forest, Brimstone, and Cape** - as we reached into the gardens' higher reaches. We'd pinned much hope on **Cape Sugarbird**, so everyone was stoked when a long-tailed male materialized from the fynbos, his trademark appendage flapping in the breeze as he sipped nectar from a flower. Turning downhill after that victory, we found **Somber Greenbull**, **Southern Boubou**, and **Cape Batis** before running into **African Paradise-Flycatcher**, another elegant, long-tailed bird. Including **Speckled Mousebird**, **Fork-tailed Drongo**, and **Black Sawwing**, ours was a hefty haul (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203556691>). Our early lunch at the restaurant was excellent.

Cape Sugarbird

As we'd experienced the best of the Cape of Good Hope during yesterday's pelagic (and we'd already dealt with the penguin colony) we decided to make a bonus swing through Strandfontein WTP rather than drive what would be a long way in the opposite direction than we were ultimately headed. Marti and Ted missed yesterday's visit, so we'd be able to catch them up on some of the waterbirds — Southern Pochard, Reed Cormorant, e.g. — which they missed yesterday (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203602790>). Without going into much detail, I'll say the plan worked out well while leaving us time to execute on the most important part of the day: Roo-Els.

We reached that final birding area under light rain. Not to be deterred, we started down the appointed dirt road with hopes of **Cape Rockjumper**, a spectacular and declining endemic (lots of interesting rockjumper info in the podcast which Ted played for us on the way). The dreary weather suppressed activity, but our diligence was rewarded when a pair presented on the sloping boulder field

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above our vantage. It was super cool to watch them glide from rock to rock. But our luck didn't end there because we scraped out excellent views of two additional endemics: **Cape Siskin** and **Orange-breasted Sunbird**. Though not technically endemic because of a small population on the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border, **Cape Grassbird** was another excellent addition to our growing list. Daylight dwindling, we vacated Rooi-Els and headed towards our night's lodging (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203602337>). It was a fantastic day start to finish.

Day 5 - Tuesday, November 26 - De Hoop Nature Reserve and surrounding area

We made an early start from Boutique Villa Guesthouse and experienced several construction delays as we closed the distance to De Hoop Nature Reserve. The final 30km of our approach were made along a quiet/dirt/rural road, and that gave us the opportunity to do a bit of en route birding. A soaring **Lanner Falcon** was a trip first, and we redeemed our previous miss on **Large-billed Lark** when a confiding example landed on a roadside fencepost. Among **Capped Wheatear**, **Cape Weaver**, **Southern Masked-Weaver**, and **Southern Red Bishop**, **Yellow Bishop** was a significant as species #2000 for Marti and Ted (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203653906>).



By the time we reached De Hoop, heavy wind had complicated birding. Not to be deterred, we explored the area around the restaurant and found **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Fiscal Flycatcher**, and **White-throated Canary**. Some had quick looks as **Lesser Honeyguide**, but all enjoyed **Pearl-breasted** and **Greater Striped Swallows**. The resident Bontebok (antelope) were beautiful in their chestnut-and-white garb. There wasn't much birding to be had in the after-lunch winds, but we squeezed out great

Bar-throated Apalis



looks at **Bar-throated Apalis** while overlooking the Indian Ocean (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203692931>)

Departing DeHoop earlier than expected on account of the wind, we slow cruised nearby agricultural fields en route to Swellendam. Bustards and larks were our main quarries, but we connected with a number of interesting species while searching for those: **Cloud Cisticola**, **African Stonechat**, **Malachite Sunbird**, and **Orange-throated Longclaw** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203693552>). Two hours into our car-based undertaking, Kara pointed to shape in the long grass and asked, “Hey’s what’s this?” Closer inspection revealed a beautiful **Karoo Bustard!** Great looks were had by all. And it wasn’t a mile more before Marti spotted a more distant **Denham’s Bustard!** Boom! Double bustard! How ‘bout them apples! Those would have represented a triumphant afternoon in isolation, but we kept pressing and eventually flushed **Cape Long-billed Lark (Agulhas subspecies)** off the road (that bird was a recent lump between Cape Long-billed Lark and Agulhas Long-billed Lark). So yeah, our choice to abandon De Hoop early seemed like a good move. Racing sunset to Rotterdam Estates, we enjoyed a home-cooked dinner at the historic farmstead.

Day 6 - Wednesday, November 27 - Bontebok and Wilderness National Parks

Without much distance to reach Bontebok NP, we enjoyed a semi-leisurely breakfast at Rotterdam Estates before beginning the 20 minute commute to the reserve. Heavy overnight rain had slowed to a morning trickle, and we found the scrubby thickets quiet on this soggy morning. Unphased, we scraped out **Plain Martin**, **Common Waxbill**, **Streaky-headed Seedeater**, and **Piping Cisticola** (formerly and still sometimes ‘Neddicky’). Taking to the main driving loop and birding from the comfort

of the vehicle, we found **Common Buzzard**, **Jackal Buzzard**, and **Black Harrier** before running into our second **Denham's Bustard**. The skies were holding, so we took another short walk near the rest camp but failed to connect with Malachite Kingfisher along the river. We didn't know at that early juncture, but that bird would eventually prove our most painful miss on the entire tour. But hey - you never get them all, right? A visit to the picnic area on our exit produced an overhead **Verreaux's Eagle** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203742255>).

Cape Canary



The middle part of the day featured a three-hour drive to Wilderness, our next base of operation. Our en route lunch at Salt & Copper outside Mossel Bay was excellent, and we arrived with plenty of time for afternoon birding. Shrugging off the continued threat of rain, we explored the Malachite hide and didn't find much beyond **African Fish-Eagle** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203799496>). When construction blocked the usual route to the Rondvlei bird hide, we decided to bird a nearby rural road because the habitat looked interesting. That proved a very wise stroke as **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, **Black-collared Barbet**, **Greater Double-Collared Sunbird**, **Amethyst Sunbird**, **Oliver Woodpecker**, **African Black-headed Oriole**, and **Knysna Turaco** materialized from the roadside brush. We were drenched by passing downpour, but the abundance of birds kept spirits high throughout (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S20379957>). We did eventually make it to the Rondvlei hide, but there wasn't much happening (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203779363>). We'd had a very productive day to that point, so we returned to the hotel, got cleaned up, and enjoyed a wonderful dinner with Miss Ella at Ilali.

Day 7 - Thursday, November 28 - Wilderness National Park and surrounding area

The endemic **Knysna Warbler** is as shy as is it drab; the nondescript brown bird prefers tangles of low vegetation and rarely presents for decent views. Such was our experience on our pre-breakfast outing, the species joining the trip list as ‘heard-only’ despite being ten feet from us (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203830786>). We returned to the hotel, gorged at the buffet — chocolate covered waffles, woo hoo! — and returned to the field at the Woodville Big Tree, where we were the first car in the parking lot. We joined a meandering trail and basked in the serenity as we strolled the ancient forest. A group of **Terrestrial Brownbuls** bounced through the undergrowth, a frenetic **Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler** explored the mid-story, and a vocal **Red-chested Cuckoo** afforded treetop views as it belted out its piercing, three-note whistle. The parade of new birds continued with **Black-bellied Startling**, **Green-backed Camaroptera**, **Black-backed Puffback**, **Rameron Pigeon**, **Gray Cuckooshrike**, and **Chorister Robin-Chat**. We’d hoped to run into Narina Trogon, but we saw or heard nothing from that species despite its sure presence. A pair of **Forest Buzzards** were kind enough to appear as we looped back the vehicle (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203843605>).

After an early Italian lunch at Pomodoro, we returned to the Malachite Hide and found a standard slate of waterbirds, a leader-only **Little Bittern** being our only notable sighting (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203843687>). Moving to the Half-collared Kingfisher Trail, we explored stream side thickets and woodlands. Activity was low at that mid-afternoon juncture, but we managed views of **Collared Sunbird**, **White-necked Raven**, and other expected species (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203872774>). We spent the end of the day on the Brown-Hooded Kingfisher Trail. Though the walk was beautiful, the afternoon’s slow birding continued. We did glimpse two **African Black Ducks** as we flushed them from a small pond, and everyone enjoyed the trio of **Peregrine Falcons** that knifed through the air above our stream-side position (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203872926>). Dinner at The Girls was fantastic.

Cape Long-billed Lark

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Day 8 - Friday, November 29 - Wilderness Wrap-up, Swartberg Pass, and Karoo National Park

Today was mostly allocated for travel, but that didn't stop us from finding some excellent birds before, during, and after our commute. Our first victory came in the form of **Knysna Warbler**. Returning to the area where we heard the bird yesterday, we managed to secure satisfactory views of the skulker (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203927186>). We were denied Red-chested Flufftail on our return visit to the Rondvlei hide but celebrated **Black Crane**, **Spotted Thick-knee**, and **Olive Bushshrike** in its absence (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203927146>).

We'd suffered some wind and some rain to this point in the tour, but we couldn't have asked for better conditions as we departed Wilderness and gained elevation into the Swarberg Mountains to the north. A roadside stop netted us **Victorin's Warbler**, another skulky endemic, and we bettered our previous views of **Cape Rockjumper** and **Verreaux's Eagle** as we crested the pass at 1,583m/5,195' (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S203935302>, <https://ebird.org/checklist/S203937643>). The views from that vantage were spectacular! A **Sentinel Rock-Thrush** made a brief appearance as we began the twisty descent into Prince Albert, where we lunched at the Lazy Lizard - yum!

At that point, we put the pedal down and made some serious miles toward Karoo National Park. With time to spare after checking into our cottages, we made a short driving loop through the lower sections of the reserve. The karoo was different than any habitat we'd visited, and there was an avalanche of birds in the scrubby surroundings: **Common Ostrich**, **Southern Anteater-Chat**, **Karoo Chat**, **Chat Flycatcher**, **Pale-Winged Starling**, **Black-fronted Bulbul**, **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, **Southern Gray-headed Sparrow**, and **Chestnut-vented** and **Layard's Warblers**. Looking at the parched, rocky surrounding, it was amazing to know we'd started our days with ocean views. But that's the beauty of birding in South Africa; the habitats are so varied and change so quickly that there is bird diversity in every direction!

Fairy Flycatcher

Day 9 - Saturday, November 30 - Karoo National Park and surroundings

We stayed in the park last night, so we didn't need to go far to find birds on this beautiful morning. Taking to the karoo scrub on foot we found **Speckled Pigeon** and **White-backed Mousebird**. Those were familiar to us, but **Laughing Dove**, **Yellow-bellied Eremomela**, **Dideric Cuckoo**, and **Pied Barbet** were all new for the trip. So was **Rufous-eared Warbler**, the long-tailed bird coming close when enticed with a bit of audio. We also bagged **Mountain Chat** (formerly Mountain Wheatear), **Dusky Sunbird**, and **Sickle-winged Chat** on our stroll (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204027492>). Most importantly, we were rescued from the bird hide when a kind soul released us. Unbeknownst to us, the door had latched from the outside when we entered. Had the next person not shown up, we might have had to break ourselves out!



Extended captivity avoided, we hopped into the vehicle and drove the reserve's massive auto loop (the eBird checklist says we covered ~40 miles). We'd barely started into the loop when two **Black Rhinos**, mother and calf, materialized on the other side of a small ravine. We scored **Nicholson's Pipit**, **Black-headed Canary**, and **Karoo Long-billed Lark** soon thereafter, but activity dropped from there forward. We observed some nice stuff — **Ludwig's Bustard**, **Karoo Scrub Robin**, etc — but birds were generally few and far between. **Oryx** and **Springbok** were a nice distraction, but our luck changed when we Marti (or Kara) spotted a regal **Secretarybird** high-stepping through the habitat! The bird is hit-and-miss throughout its South African range, so we were ecstatic to run into it, unadvertised, during a particularly slow stretch. The bird veered away from the road as soon as we starting backing-up, but we had decent looks as it continued into the scrub (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204041787>). When we discovered the park restaurant didn't serve lunch, we ventured into Beaufort West, where 4 Sheep sorted us with heaping portions.

We returned to the park, relaxed for a bit, and took to the agricultural roads south of town around 3:30. Birds were again in frustratingly short supply, but we managed our second **Booted Eagle**, improved on our previous views of **Large-billed Lark**, and grew the trip list with **Lark-like Bunting**. The highlight, though, were the many **Karoo Bustards** that emerged as sunset approached. We'd had decent looks at the species four days earlier, but it was amazing to study them from thirty feet away on this evening. It was a nice cap on a great day (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204079182>).

Common Ostrich (female)



Day 10 - Sunday, December 1 - Mop-up and moving!

This was mostly a travel day — we had a five-plus-hour drive to Cape Town and a two-hour flight to Johannesburg — but that didn't stop us from squeezing-in some en route birding. Leaving the park early, we sped southwest before breaking from the main road and venturing into some rocky scrub. It took a bit of work, but we eventually teased the endemic **Namaqua Warbler** from a dry streambed (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204256070>). We hoped our luck would extend to Cinnamon-breasted Warbler (formerly Kopje Warbler), but we couldn't find that endemic on the rocky slopes which it prefers. We enjoyed a bit of lakeside birding, then turned tail and resumed the road towards Cape Town (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204256215>). We'd hope to visit the Paarl Bird Sanctuary with our remaining spare hour, but the reserve was closed, forcing us to exploring the adjacent sewage treatment plant instead. Among the expected birds — **Eurasian Moorhen**, **Three-banded Plover**, **African Sacred Ibis** — four **White-winged Terns** were our only notable find (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204175496>). From

Paarl, we reached the airport, caught our flight, and bedded down at the Southern Sun in anticipation of more flying tomorrow.



Day 11 - Monday, December 2 - Kruger National Park

Our short flight to Kruger didn't leave until 10am, so we had a leisurely breakfast before catching the shuttle to the terminal and boarding the plane. An hour later we were on the ground in Skukuza. Twenty minutes after that we met Edward, our dedicated guide/driver, who loaded us into his safari vehicle and whisked us into the park. The heat was in full effect by 11:30, but that didn't stop us from enjoying some roadside birding as we closed the distance to Satara Rest Camp. The birdlife we observed was very different from what we'd experienced to that point; 20 of the 30 species on our checklist were new for the tour (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204276913>)! Among those, **Greater-Blue-eared** and **Violet-backed Starlings** were particularly well received, their iridescent colors shimmering under the midday sun. And speaking of color, the hits kept coming in the forms of **Woodland Kingfisher**, **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill**, **Saddle-billed Stork**, and **Lilac-breasted** and **European Rollers**. Raptors were well represented with **Wahlberg's Eagle**, **Bateleur**, and **Brown** and **Black-chested Snake-Eagles** soaring on midday thermals. And let's now forget about the mammals! With **impalas**, **kudus**, **zebras**, **giraffes** (adorned with **Red-** and **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers**), and **elephants** showing nicely, it was like we were on an African Safari on something! But wait there's more! Dorian spotted a **cheetah** - with

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three cubs! What was really interesting was that mom was missing her entire tail! She looked a bobcat! Anyway, you get the idea. It was awesome.

We reached Satara, lunched, and relaxed in our rondavels before returning to the park roads at 4pm. New birds were again abundant with the likes of **Montague's Harrier**, **Lesser Gray Shrike**, **Purple Roller**, and **Swainson's** and **Natal Spurfowls**. We had great views of **Black-bellied** and **Red-crested Bustards**, and we scored a prized trio of hornbills in the forms of **Southern Red-billed**, **African Gray**, and **Southern Ground-**. The last of those was mis-advertised though, the massive bird perched high in a large tree! With **Mosque Swallow**, **Gray-headed Bushshrike**, and **Bearded Woodpecker** thrown on top, it was a wonderful way to close out the day. Wait - I spoke to soon! A bit of after dinner owling yielded **Pearl Spotted Owlet** in the camp courtyard. There. Done. Finally.

Day 12 - Tuesday, December 3 - Kruger National Park

Most Kruger visitors — i.e. those more interested in mammals ('The Big 5') than birds — leave camp as early as they're permitted, but we delayed because Kruger's camps host an abundance of birds, many of which are difficult or impossible to see from the park roads. We knew that temperatures would be in excess of 100F in the afternoon, so we welcomed the opportunity to stretch our legs in those coolest, pre-breakfast hours. Exploring Satara's thickets, we encountered **Gray Go-away-bird**, **Common Scimitarbill**, **Crested Barbet**, **Golden-tailed Woodpecker**, **Chinspot Batis**, **Sulfur-breasted Bushshrike**, **Burnt-necked Eremomela**, **Yellow-breasted Apalis**, **Bearded Scrub-Robin**, **Marico Sunbird**, **Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver**, and many others in our two allotted hours (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204347527>). That time expiring, we enjoyed a hearty breakfast at the Cattle Baron, packed up the truck and trailer, and started south, towards Skukuza, where we'd spend this and the next night. Swelling heat suppressed activity along much of our route, particularly the second half. That said, we did bag **Hamerkop**, **Marabou Stork**, **Tawny Eagle**, **Giant Kingfisher**, and **Kori Bustard** from the vehicle. Mammals were present in expected abundance (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204356460>).

Bearded Scrub-Robin



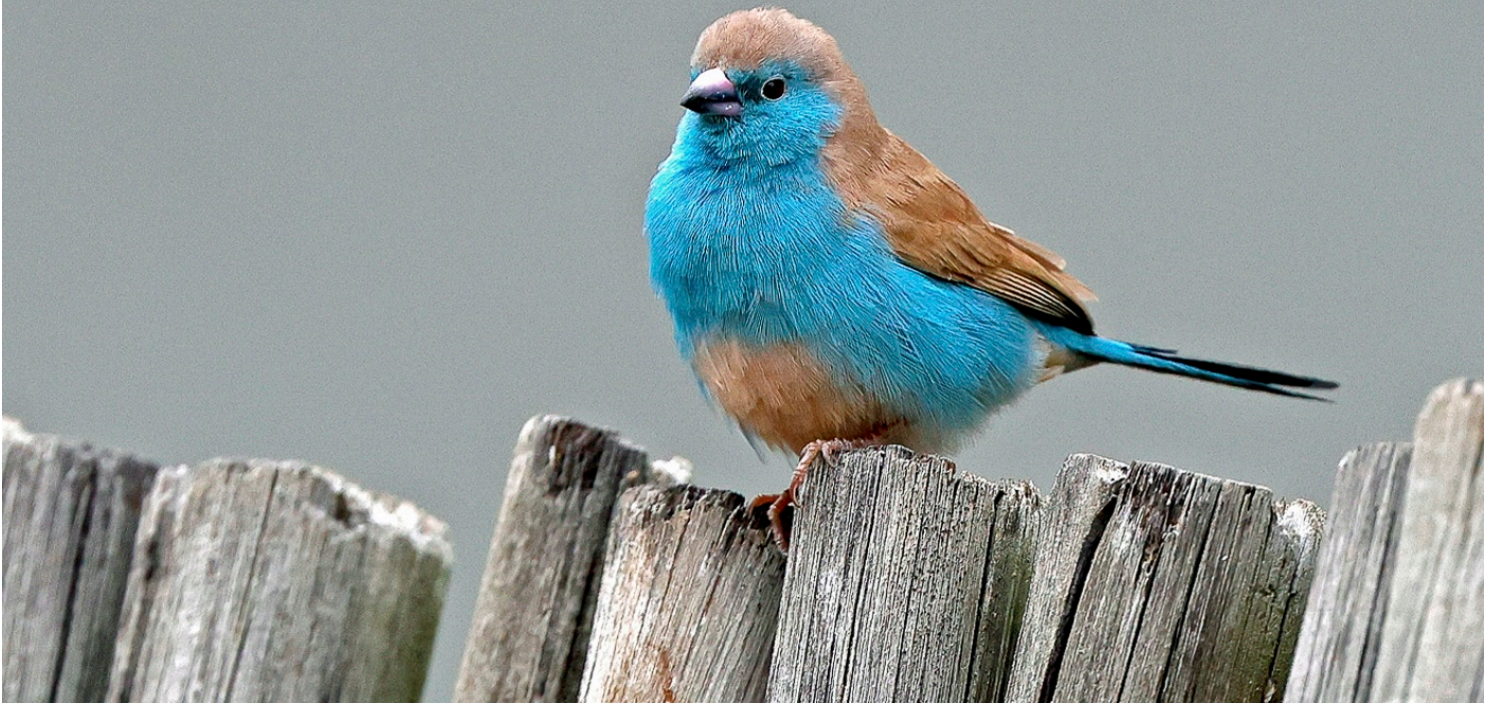
After lunch and a siesta, we visited the Lake Panic Bird hide. There wasn't much lake left, but the glorified puddle nonetheless hosted **Squacco** and **Black Herons**. An **Ashy Flycatcher** flitted around the open space in front of the blind, a **Kurrichane Thrush** stalked the woody edges, and **Hooded Vultures** soared overhead. So, yeah, it was a good stop (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204369240>). Continuing on our game drive, Edward pointed out a massive **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** on its roost! Beyond that magnificent bird, we found **Dusky Indigobird**, **Water Thick-knee**, and **Crested Francolin**. After dinner owling revealed a very cooperative pair of **African Wood-Owls** steps from our huts. Twelve days it and the hits keep coming. That's South Africa for ya!

Day 13 - Wednesday, December 4 - Kruger National Park

As yesterday, we kicked-off the day with some in-camp birding. Clients were foaming at the mouth at the prospect of **Purple-crested Turaco**, so it was great to intersect that incredible bird ten minutes into our walk. 'Turaco Fever' broken, we extended our hot hand with **White-browed Robin-Chat**, **Yellow-fronted Canary**, **Red-billed Firefinch**, **Bronze Mannikin**, **Wire-tailed Swallow**, and the stunning **Scarlet-chested Sunbird**. Great as that bird was, **Little Bee-eater** and **White-fronted Bee-eater** certainly gave it a run for its rand (as in the money, get it?). Birds were in abundance throughout our walk, so it was a really nice way to start the day (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204425292>).



Southern Cordonbleu



Red-crested Bustard



After breakfast, we piled into the truck and birded the main road en route to Lower Sabie Rest Camp, where we planned to have lunch. **Giraffes** and **Impala** dotting our riverside route, we gazed onto **African Wolly-necked Stork** and **Wattled** and **White-crowned Lapwings**. Squawks alerted us to a

Impala



Brown-headed Parrot. An African **Hawk-Eagle** soared overhead (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204438640>). Life was good. And that was before we picked up **Yellow-billed Stork**, **Red-billed Quelea**, and **Knob-billed Duck** at Sunset Dam (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204438494>, <https://ebird.org/checklist/S204438456>). And hippos. Yes hippos. Everywhere. But not in the air. Because hippos don't fly. However, **Green-winged Pytilia**, **Spectacled Weaver**, and **Southern Black-Tit** all fly. And we saw them, too (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204438374>).

Lunch on the Mugg and Bean deck at Lower Sabie was great (pro tip: you want the big chocolate chip cookie). It was sweltering during our Skukuza return, but we stayed vigilant and picked up an incidental **Brubru**. We took shelter in our air-conditioned rondavels for a few hours and resumed birding at 3:45. Though most of the afternoon's and evening's birds were familiar **Golden-breasted Bunting**, **Martial Eagle**, and a group of **Amur Falcons** elicited extended excitement from clients (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204457512>). Happy clients, happy guide.

Day 14 - Thursday, December 5 - Kruger National Park and Johannesburg return

Our flight to Johannesburg would depart Skukuza at 2:30pm, so we needed to be strategic with time on

this final morning. Leaving Skukuza early, we wheeled towards Berg-en-Dal and the good birding which

Crested Francolin



Crested Barbet



the camp usually holds. Slowing as we approached a car stopped on a bridge, we realized there was a **leopard** lounging in the underlying riverbed! The beautiful beast had eluded us to that point and was a

Bennett's Woodpecker



wonderful sight on the tour's final morning. We continued towards Berg-en-Dal after that chance meeting but soon found ourselves making a u-turn to pursue a reported pair of **male lions**. When Edward spied them moving through the scrub, we parked in the road only to have the cats emerge from the bush a moment later. Incredibly, they sauntered into the road and flopped down on the tarmac right in front of us. We'd been hoping for 'the king' for the previous four days, so our amazing encounter was sweet redemption! Plus, we added **Red-faced Mousebird, Striped Kingfisher, Eurasian Hobby, and White-crested Helmetshrike** as we continued to Berg-en-Dal (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204507960>).

Reaching camp, we took a relaxed walk around the perimeter. The birding was generally slow, but we managed to grind out **Brown-crowned Tchagra, Bennett's Woodpecker**, and — drumroll please — **Trumpeter Hornbill** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204500039>)! We brunched after that victory and started the 90 minute drive back to Skukuza, where we enjoyed milk shakes ahead of our departure. Oh, I almost forgot! It was on that drive that we finally found **White Rhino**! It was fun to watch the

massive beast stare down a group

of elephants from its muddy puddle. One last drive delivered us to the airport. There we bid Edward farewell, hopped aboard the plane, and left Kruger behind. The Southern Sun welcomed us back, and we enjoyed a hearty farewell dinner together. It was an incredible two weeks!

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Leopard



Lion



Southern/Drakensberg Extension

Day 1 - Friday, December 6 - En route birding to Wakkerstroom

With Marti and Ted heading back to the US after the main tour, Kara, Robert, and I (Dorian), drove out of Johannesburg and reached Suikerbosrand Nature reserve around 7:30. We'd hope to drive through the northern section of the park but were shooed off the road by some facilities folks. Heading towards the main gate instead, we found **White-quilled Bustard**, **South African Swallow**, **Rufous-naped Lark**, and **Black-chested Prinia** along the approach road. Once inside we enjoyed **Long-tailed** and **Red-collared Widowbirds**, their exaggerated tails flapping in the breeze as they commuted from perch to perch. The views from the auto loop were great, and we were happy to find **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** and **White-browed Sparrow-Weaver** as we progressed (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204592930>).

Moving east to Marievale bird Sanctuary when our allotted two hours at Suikerbosrand expired, we explored a series of marshy impoundments. **Blue-billed Teal** appeared right away, and we spied **Marsh Sandpiper** and **African Snipe** for our shorebird collection. Though less gaudy than its longer-tailed relatives, **Fan-tailed Widowbird** was a crowd pleaser. We tried for **Red-chested Flufftail** around Wilderness to no avail, so we were thrilled when we heard a representative calling. It would not, however, come towards our tape and so joined the trip list as 'heard-only'. With the three-hour-drive to Wakkerstroom looming, we pulled the plug on Marievale and headed east, lunch eaten en route (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204593206>).

We checked into our charming accommodations and headed straight to the town lake/marsh for some afternoon birding. While most of the birds were familiar to us — **Southern Pochard**, **Purple Heron**, **African Marsh Harrier** — we did add one new bird in **African Rail**, the skulker stalking the reedy edges on the far side of the lake (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204619485>). Driving the dirt road toward Daggakraal, we had excellent views of **Spike-Heeled Lark** and **Yellow-crowned Bishop** on the roadside fenceposts (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204621219>). Dinner at the Red Rooster hit the spot!

Day 2 - Saturday, December 7 - Wakkerstroom and surrounding area

Wakkerstroom hosts a lot of specialty species, so we enlisted the help of a local guide on this day. We met Sifiso at the post office and headed into the rolling hills to search for **Yellow-breasted Pipit**. Sifiso had us on the bird in no time, and we added **Eastern Long-billed Lark** a few minutes later. We also bettered our previous view of **Sentinel Rock-Thrush** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204668334>).

The next phase of the morning was the coincident search for Blue Bustard and Black-winged Lapwing. Fog hampered visibility, but we scraped out **Pale-crowned Cisticola**, **Southern Bald Ibis**, and **Banded Martin**. We'd heard **Wing-snapping Cisticola** early in the day, so it was nice to secure decent views of it on this leg. Despite our efforts, the lapwing remained elusive. We did, however, have distant views of a pair of **Blue Bustards** when the fog temporarily lifted (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S2046697>).

Our lunch on the Wakkerstroom Hotel porch was excellent. When finished, we took to the hills and found **Drakensberg Prinia**, **Red-throated Wryneck**, and **Buff-streaked Chat** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204669654>). Driving towards Dirkiesdrop, we scored another massive victory with **White-bellied Bustard**. Prepared for a protracted search, we were stoked when we spotted a pair exploring an open area very near our vehicle. We tried for Bush Blackcap on the return drive but struck out, **African Yellow-Warbler** added as consolation. We used the end of the day to track down **Gray Crowned-Crane** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204684952>). Alongside Blue Crane from earlier in the tour, it was the most elegant bird we'd found. Dinner at Thyme Out was great. Highly recommended.

Day 3 - Sunday, December 8 - Wakkerstroom to Mkuze

With a 3.5-hour drive between Wakkerstroom and Mkuze, we decided to use the pre-breakfast hours on the lake causeway and at the nearby blinds. This was our third visit to this area, so it wasn't surprising that they only new bird we found was a migrant **Willow Warbler** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204781991>). We had a leisurely breakfast into town, returned to our digs, packed up, and hit the road. After lunching at the Ghost Mountain Inn, we entered the park and enjoyed a brief siesta through the heat of the afternoon. Regathering at 3pm, we started into the habitat. The blinds were quiet, but we did find **Southern Crested Guineafowl**, **Burchell's Coucal**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, **Southern Black Flycatcher**, and **Yellow-throated Bush-Sparrow**.

It is worth mentioning that we spent this night and tomorrow night in the park. Why do I mention this? Well, the accommodations are basic compared to those outside the park. And with minimal foodservice, we had to cook our own dinner on this and the next night (there is a 'restaurant' of sorts, but it only serves lunch). So...why do we stay in the park? Several reasons. First, the birding in the camp is fantastic. Second, being in camp allows us to take advantage of the park's night drives. And third, it puts us in close proximity to the fig forest, where we planned to spend our final (tomorrow) morning. So, we trade a bit of luxury for better birding on these two days/nights.

Crested Guineafowl



Day 4 - Monday, December 9 - Mkuze

With a bird list approaching 500 species, Mkuze is on of the premier birding destinations in all of southern Africa. Our day started with an early-morning walk through camp. That turned up loads of interesting birds including **Gray Tit-Flycatcher**, **Mocking Cliff-Chat**, **Purple-banded Sunbird**, **African Penduline-Tit**, and **Dark-backed Weaver**, all new for the trip list. From there, we started into the park and paused at the Kumasinga Hide. We thought it would be a quick visit, but the subsequent parade of

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White Rhino



mammals kept us rapt through the next hour. It started with dozens of **Nyalas** and **Impalas** but quickly grew to include **Warthogs** and **Zebbras**. It was amazing to watch the animals drink from only thirty feet away! And if that wasn't enough, a group of six (6!) **White Rhinos** appeared in the clearing behind the pond. Only once all the other animals left did the group come forth and drink. It was an incredible encounter!

We spent the remainder of the morning looping through the eastern portion of the reserve. Heat suppressed activity, but we added **Pink-backed Pelican** and **Goliath Heron**. After lunch and a midday rest, we made another loop over the same ground and found **White-winged Widowbird**, **Pale Flycatcher**, and **African Pygmy Kingfisher**. I was lazy and ran one massive checklist for the morning and afternoon: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S204927976>.

Our night drive was fantastic. The **Dark Chanting-Goshawk** we spied at sundown was cool, but the pack of **Wild Dogs**

we encountered five minutes later was even better. The beasts are declining across their range, so it was great to see a dozen of them, pups included, bounding along the roadside. Next-up? Point blank views of **Southern White-faced Owl!** After that? **African Scops-Owl!** Add on close inspections of **Square-tailed** and **Fiery-necked Nightjars** and it was an amazing three hours. And if that avian haul

wasn't enough, we spotlighted a massive **leopard** on our return to camp (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204949820>). And that, right there, is why we stay in the park!



Southern White-faced Owl

Day 5 - Tuesday, December 10 - Mkuze to Eshowe (moving day!)

Today's featured activity was a ranger-guided walk through an ancient fig forest. We made an early start and met our guide at the trailhead. He lead us into the forest, where birds were in abundance.

Rudd's Apalis appeared immediately, and we settled for a 'heard-only' **Four-colored Bushshrike** when the shifty bird wouldn't give us even quick views. **White-eared Barbet** and **Broad-billed Roller** quickly fell in line, and we scored perhaps the tour's greatest bird with a quick, fly-away view of **Pel's Fishing-Owl**, the massive Buffy bird exploding from an overhead tree and escaping around a bend in the small river. Try as we did across the next hour, we could not relocate the bird. That said, we did bag **Green Malkoha**, **Square-tailed Drongo**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat**, and the prized **Narina Trogon**, great views had by all! A vocal African Crested Flycatcher proved recalcitrant and joined the trip list as 'heard-only'. By any measure, it was an amazing morning (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204987209>)!

We'd dragged our luggage with us to the trailhead, so we made a exited via the eastern side of the park after our walk. A few hours later we rolled into St Lucia, where we added a

trio of **weavers** — **Grosbeak**, **Southern Brown-throated**, and **African Golden** — from the town bridge (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S204986782>). We enjoyed a quick lunch in town and returned to the field at Mission Rocks in iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Exploring trails and thickets, we observed **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird**, **Yellow-bellied Greenbul**, **Brown Scrub-Robin**, **Black-tailed Waxbill**, **Olive** and **Mouse-colored Sunbirds**, and **Woodward's Batis**, a great get as the bird only reaches into South Africa (from Mozambique) in this region (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205019680>). Exiting the park

Wild Dog (with tracking color)



Red-billed Oxpecker



towards Eshowe for the night, we were thrilled to find **White-backed Duck** and **African Pygmy-Goose** in a roadside pond (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205019729>).

Day 6 - Wednesday, December 11 - Eshowe and surrounding areas

This morning was dedicated to Green Barbet. Uncommon throughout its core — but very restricted — range in southern Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, and northern Mozambique, the bird is also, for reasons we don't entirely understand, found in one specific forest near Eshowe (in South Africa). Arriving at that forest after a hearty breakfast, hopes were high that we'd be able to locate the rare bird. The habitat was quiet at our arrival. Dorian heard the sought barbet calling off the road, but we weren't able to locate it even with the use of playback. Frustrating! Unfortunately, there weren't many other birds to keep us motivated, and the next hour was mostly an uninspired slog, quick glimpses of a soaring **Crowned Eagle** the only excitement. Returning to the car, near where we'd heard the bird earlier, Dorian decided to take one last crack with the tape and BOOM! A **Green Barbet** flitted out of the forest and gave great views as it called back from an exposed branch! How close were we to leaving? We had the doors to car open when the bird finally showed! It was an amazing victory (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205067450>).



With that bird secured, we headed to Umlalazi for lunch. From there, it was onto nearby Umlalazi Nature reserve for the afternoon. The reserve proved painfully quiet under the afternoon heat, but we managed nice views of a vocal **Rufous-winged Cisticola** and a soaring **Palm-nut Vulture**. The drive back to Eshowe ate up a chunk of the late-afternoon; what remained was used mainly for rest. The evening featured several hours of torrential rain and spectacular lighting/thunder!

Day 7 - Thursday, December 12 - Dlinza Forest and drive to Underberg

Our B+B was right around the corner from Dlinza Forest, so we arrived just as it opened. With the viewing the blind quiet, we took to the trails under the watchful eyes of one of the groundskeepers. He didn't speak much English but had figured out that most who visited the reserved wanted to see Spotted Ground-Thrush, an endangered species that is effectively a South African endemic. While he searched for that bird on our behalf, we connected with **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon** from the elevated (and stunningly-beautiful) boardwalk. A few minutes later, our impromptu guide put us onto a pair of overhead **Narina Trogons** and picked out a long **Spotted Ground Thrush** on the forest floor! Good views of **Scaly-throated Honeyguide** and not-so-good views of **Lemon Dove** followed. Mix in **Rameron Pigeon**, **Purple-crested Turaco**, and **Gray Cuckooshrike** and it was a really nice morning. We thanked (and tipped!) our new friend and returned to the B+B for a late breakfast (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205139398>).

Drakensberg Rockjumper

We started the four-hour drive to Underberg after breakfast. We hoped to add Wattled Crane en route but settled for **Cape Griffon** and **White Stork**. We lunched in Howick (many great options) and continued to Underberg by late-afternoon. An early-evening drive through the Pevensy area failed to reveal Wattled Crane but did produce **Long-crested Eagle** among a large complement of more common birds (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205175862>). Dinner at the local Golf Club was fine.

Day 8 - Friday, December 13 - Sani Pass and Lesotho

Today we ventured into one of the most unique and spectacular landscapes in all of Africa, the Drakensberg Mountains. The drive to the plateau at 10,000 feet would be a challenge for our SUV, so we'd hired a local driver/guide to assure a safe arrival. We were unable to find **Bush Blackcap** around Wakkerstroom, so it was a relief to redeem that miss before we initiated ascent (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205235100>). Gaining elevation through rocky grasslands we ticked **Wailing Cisticola**, **Ground Woodpecker** (quick views, sadly), and **Gurney's Sugarbird** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205235150>). Birding the South African border post while we waited for administrator to stamp us out of the country, we enjoyed **Cape Rock-Thrush** and **Barratt's Warbler** (another skulker). The road deteriorated and steepened above the border post, but our experienced guide steered us through hairpins with ease. Despite unanticipated and increasingly-howling wind, we managed good views of two very key birds: **Drakensberg Rockjumper** and **Drakensberg Siskin** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205235323>). Those victories propelled us over the plateau rim, through the Lesotho border post, and into the expansive open habitat beyond it. Sadly, 30 MPH winds (gusting to 50) made birding difficult to impossible. The drive was nonetheless very pretty, and everyone enjoyed the culture interlude (history, food, dancing) which we experienced in one of the shepherd villages (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205235230>). Lunch at the highest pub in Africa was a fun experience. After descending, we took another drive through Pevensy to look for cranes but failed to find them, again. Dinner at Moorcroft Manor was excellent.

Orange Ground-Thrush

Day 9 - Saturday, December 14 - Underberg wrap-up and drive to Durban airport

Overnight rain lingered into morning and temporarily dampened our spirits. With conditions improving through breakfast, we took an extended drive to clean-up missing species or better our views of already seen species. Very unexpected were three **Red-necked Spurfowl** running across the main road. We missed that species around Wilderness, so it was great to redeem it on this final morning. Armed with a better sense of where to find cranes, we took our third drive through Pevensy. Reaching a lake to which a local birder had directed us, we finally found **Wattled Crane** when Dorian picked a pair pushing through a marshy edge. It was a long-fought victory and a great way to close out our time around Underberg. Otherwise, the morning produced **Southern Pochard, Blue Crane, Gray Crowned-Crane, African Harrier-Hawk, Long-tailed Widowbird**, and a host of others (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205327672>).

We made a final birding stop at Marutswa forest as we closed the distance to Durban. The place has fallen into severe disrepair, but we found a small trail and walked in to the forest. That proved a wise stroke as we had killer views of **Orange Ground-Thrush, African Emerald Cuckoo, and Black Cuckoo** during our hour-long walk (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205326433>). With time becoming a consideration, we closed the book on birding and headed for Durban. Lunch at The Treatery at Yard 41 was amazing. Lots of sweets! Note this isn't open beyond ~2pm.

We made it to the airport, returned to Johannesburg, and enjoyed a final dinner before the tour officially concluded. The following morning, Dorian headed to India for 18 days of personal birding with his wife. Kara and Robert returned to the US. It was quite the adventure! We hope to see everyone on another Tropical Birding tour in the future!

Lilac-breasted Roller



[Click here for Full eBird trip Report!](#)

COMPLETE BIRDLIST (hint - the eBird trip report above is much more useful!)

Common Ostrich
White-faced Whistling-Duck
White-backed Duck
Knob-billed Duck
Egyptian Goose
South African Shelduck
Spur-winged Goose
African Pygmy-Goose
Blue-billed Teal
Cape Shoveler
African Black Duck
Yellow-billed Duck
Cape Teal
Red-billed Duck
Southern Pochard
Maccoa Duck
Helmeted Guineafowl
Southern Crested Guineafowl
Crested Francolin
Common Quail
Cape Spurfowl
Natal Spurfowl
Swainson's Spurfowl
Red-necked Spurfowl
Rock Pigeon
Speckled Pigeon
Rameron Pigeon
Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon
Lemon Dove
Mourning Collared-Dove
Red-eyed Dove
Ring-necked Dove
Laughing Dove
Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove
Namaqua Dove
African Green-Pigeon
Namaqua Sandgrouse
Kori Bustard
Ludwig's Bustard
Denham's Bustard
White-bellied Bustard
Blue Bustard
Karoo Bustard

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Red-crested Bustard
White-quilled Bustard
Black-bellied Bustard
Gray Go-away-bird
Purple-crested Turaco
Knysna Turaco
Burchell's Coucal
Green Malkoha
Pied Cuckoo
Dideric Cuckoo
African Emerald Cuckoo
Black Cuckoo
Red-chested Cuckoo
Fiery-necked Nightjar
Square-tailed Nightjar
Alpine Swift
African Swift
Little Swift
White-rumped Swift
African Palm Swift
Red-chested Flufftail
African Rail
Eurasian Moorhen
Red-knobbed Coot
African Swamphen
Black Crake
Gray Crowned-Crane
Blue Crane
Wattled Crane
Spotted Thick-knee
Water Thick-knee
Black-winged Stilt
Pied Avocet
Eurasian Oystercatcher
African Oystercatcher
Black-bellied Plover
Common Ringed Plover
Three-banded Plover
Blacksmith Lapwing
White-crowned Lapwing
Crowned Lapwing
Wattled Lapwing
Kittlitz's Plover
Chestnut-banded Plover
White-fronted Plover
African Jacana
Whimbrel

Bar-tailed Godwit
African Snipe
Terek Sandpiper
Common Sandpiper
Marsh Sandpiper
Wood Sandpiper
Common Greenshank
Ruff
Curlew Sandpiper
Sanderling
Little Stint
Parasitic Jaeger
Brown Skua
Sabine's Gull
Gray-hooded Gull
Hartlaub's Gull
Kelp Gull
Little Tern
Caspian Tern
Whiskered Tern
White-winged Tern
Common Tern
Sandwich Tern
Great Crested Tern
Greater Flamingo
Lesser Flamingo
Little Grebe
Great Crested Grebe
Eared Grebe
African Penguin
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross
White-capped Albatross
Black-browed Albatross
European Storm-Petrel
Southern Giant-Petrel
Northern Giant-Petrel
White-chinned Petrel
Cory's Shearwater
Sooty Shearwater
African Openbill
African Woolly-necked Stork
White Stork
Saddle-billed Stork
Marabou Stork
Yellow-billed Stork
Cape Gannet
African Darter

Reed Cormorant
Crowned Cormorant
Bank Cormorant
Cape Cormorant
Great Cormorant
Glossy Ibis
African Sacred Ibis
Southern Bald Ibis
Hadada Ibis
African Spoonbill
Little Bittern
Black-crowned Night Heron
Black Heron
Little Egret
Striated Heron
Squacco Heron
Western Cattle-Egret
Great Egret
Yellow-billed Egret
Gray Heron
Purple Heron
Black-headed Heron
Goliath Heron
Hamerkop
Great White Pelican
Pink-backed Pelican
Secretarybird
Osprey
Black-winged Kite
African Harrier-Hawk
Palm-nut Vulture
Lappet-faced Vulture
Hooded Vulture
White-backed Vulture
Cape Griffon
Bateleur
Black-chested Snake-Eagle
Brown Snake-Eagle
Crowned Eagle
Martial Eagle
Long-crested Eagle
Wahlberg's Eagle
Booted Eagle
Tawny Eagle
Verreaux's Eagle
African Hawk-Eagle
Gabar Goshawk

Dark Chanting-Goshawk
Pale Chanting-Goshawk
African Marsh Harrier
Black Harrier
Montagu's Harrier
Black Kite
African Fish-Eagle
Jackal Buzzard
Common Buzzard
Forest Buzzard
African Scops-Owl
Southern White-faced Owl
Spotted Eagle-Owl
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl
Pel's Fishing-Owl
Pearl-spotted Owlet
African Wood-Owl
Speckled Mousebird
White-backed Mousebird
Red-faced Mousebird
Narina Trogon
Eurasian Hoopoe
Green Woodhoopoe
Common Scimitarbill
Southern Ground-Hornbill
Crowned Hornbill
African Gray Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Trumpeter Hornbill
White-fronted Bee-eater
Little Bee-eater
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater
European Bee-eater
African Pygmy Kingfisher
Woodland Kingfisher
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Striped Kingfisher
Giant Kingfisher
Pied Kingfisher
European Roller
Lilac-breasted Roller
Purple Roller
Broad-billed Roller
Crested Barbet
Green Barbet
White-eared Barbet

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird
Pied Barbet
Black-collared Barbet
Lesser Honeyguide
Scaly-throated Honeyguide
Red-throated Wryneck
Bearded Woodpecker
Cardinal Woodpecker
Olive Woodpecker
Ground Woodpecker
Bennett's Woodpecker
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Rock Kestrel
Amur Falcon
Eurasian Hobby
Lanner Falcon
Peregrine Falcon
Brown-headed Parrot
Gray Cuckooshrike
African Black-headed Oriole
Cape Batis
Woodwards' Batis
Chinspot Batis
Pirit Batis
White-crested Helmetshrike
Brubru
Black-backed Puffback
Black-crowned Tchagra
Brown-crowned Tchagra
Southern Boubou
Bokmakierie
Four-colored Bushshrike
Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike
Olive Bushshrike
Gray-headed Bushshrike
Square-tailed Drongo
Fork-tailed Drongo
African Crested Flycatcher
African Paradise-Flycatcher
Magpie Shrike
Red-backed Shrike
Lesser Gray Shrike
Southern Fiscal
Cape Crow
Pied Crow
White-necked Raven
Cape Rockjumper

Drakensberg Rockjumper
Fairy Flycatcher
Southern Black-Tit
Gray Tit
African Penduline-Tit
Spike-heeled Lark
Karoo Long-billed Lark
Eastern Long-billed Lark
Cape Long-billed Lark
Sabota Lark
Rufous-naped Lark
Large-billed Lark
Red-capped Lark
Long-billed Crombec
Cape Grassbird
Victorin's Warbler
Yellow-bellied Eremomela
Burnt-neck Eremomela
Namaqua Warbler
Green-backed Camaroptera
Bar-throated Apalis
Yellow-breasted Apalis
Rudd's Apalis
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Black-chested Prinia
Karoo Prinia
Drakensberg Prinia
Rufous-eared Warbler
Rattling Cisticola
Gray-backed Cisticola
Wailing Cisticola
Rufous-winged Cisticola
Levaillant's Cisticola
Piping Cisticola
Zitting Cisticola
Cloud Cisticola
Pale-crowned Cisticola
Wing-snapping Cisticola
African Yellow-Warbler
Common Reed Warbler
Lesser Swamp Warbler
Knysna Warbler
Barratt's Warbler
Little Rush Warbler
Black Sawwing
Banded Martin
Plain Martin

Bank Swallow
Southern Crag-Martin
Pearl-breasted Swallow
Barn Swallow
White-throated Swallow
Wire-tailed Swallow
Greater Striped Swallow
Lesser Striped Swallow
Rufous-chested Swallow
Mosque Swallow
South African Swallow
Sombre Greenbul
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Terrestrial Brownbul
Common Bulbul
Black-fronted Bulbul
Cape Bulbul
Willow Warbler
Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler
Bush Blackcap
Layard's Warbler
Chestnut-vented Warbler
Cape White-eye
Arrow-marked Babbler
Red-billed Oxpecker
Yellow-billed Oxpecker
European Starling
Wattled Starling
Common Myna
Violet-backed Starling
Pale-winged Starling
Red-winged Starling
Black-bellied Starling
Burchell's Starling
African Pied Starling
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Cape Starling
Spotted Ground-Thrush
Orange Ground-Thrush
Kurrichane Thrush
Olive Thrush
African Dusky Flycatcher
Spotted Flycatcher
Pale Flycatcher
Chat Flycatcher
Gray Tit-Flycatcher
Ashy Flycatcher

Fiscal Flycatcher
Southern Black-Flycatcher
Karoo Scrub-Robin
Brown Scrub-Robin
Bearded Scrub-Robin
White-browed Scrub-Robin
Cape Robin-Chat
White-throated Robin-Chat
White-browed Robin-Chat
Red-capped Robin-Chat
Chorister Robin-Chat
Sentinel Rock-Thrush
Cape Rock-Thrush
African Stonechat
Buff-streaked Chat
Sickle-winged Chat
Karoo Chat
Mocking Cliff-Chat
Southern Anteater-Chat
Mountain Chat
Capped Wheatear
Familiar Chat
Gurney's Sugarbird
Cape Sugarbird
Collared Sunbird
Orange-breasted Sunbird
Olive Sunbird
Mouse-colored Sunbird
Amethyst Sunbird
Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Malachite Sunbird
Southern Double-collared Sunbird
Greater Double-collared Sunbird
Marico Sunbird
Purple-banded Sunbird
White-bellied Sunbird
Dusky Sunbird
Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Spectacled Weaver
Cape Weaver
African Golden-Weaver
Southern Brown-throated Weaver
Lesser Masked-Weaver
Southern Masked-Weaver
Village Weaver
Dark-backed Weaver

Red-billed Quelea
Southern Red Bishop
Yellow-crowned Bishop
Yellow Bishop
White-winged Widowbird
Red-collared Widowbird
Fan-tailed Widowbird
Long-tailed Widowbird
Grosbeak Weaver
Bronze Mannikin
Swee Waxbill
Black-tailed Waxbill
Common Waxbill
Southern Cordonbleu
Green-winged Pytilia
Red-billed Firefinch
Pin-tailed Whydah
Dusky Indigobird
House Sparrow
Cape Sparrow
Southern Gray-headed Sparrow
Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow
Cape Wagtail
African Pied Wagtail
African Pipit
Nicholson's Pipit
Yellow-breasted Pipit
Orange-throated Longclaw
Yellow-throated Longclaw
Yellow-fronted Canary
Forest Canary
Black-throated Canary
Brimstone Canary
Yellow Canary
White-throated Canary
Streaky-headed Seedeater
Cape Siskin
Drakensberg Siskin
Cape Canary
Black-headed Canary
Golden-breasted Bunting
Cape Bunting
Lark-like Bunting
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting

Mammals (to the best of my memory, this was not a mammal-obsessed group)

Chacma Baboon

Vervet Monkey
Syke's Monkey
African Wild Dog
Black-backed Jackal
Suricate/Meerkat
Yellow Mongoose
Slender Mongoose
Cape Grey Mongoose
Dwarf Mongoose
Spotted Hyena
Cheetah
Leopard
Lion
Rock Hyrax
Black Rhino
White Rhino
African Elephant
Hippopotamus
Giraffe
Common Warthog
Plains Zebra
Mountain Zebra
Blue Wildebeest
Bontebok
Red Duiker
Kilpspringer
Steenbok
Cape Grysbok
Springbok
Impala
Grey Rhebok
Orxy/Gemsbok
Cape buffalo
Eland
Greater Kudu
Nyala
Bushbuck
Waterbuck
Scrub Hare
Tree Squirrel
Ground Squirrel
Sloggett's Ice Rat