



# Namibia + Botswana

Sept 23 - Oct 8

Leader Dorian Anderson



## **Summary**

As the second least-densely populated country (behind only Mongolia), Namibia represents one of the wildest frontiers on Earth. It might seem impossible that life could thrive in the dry, rocky surroundings, but survive it does, an amazing array of birds and mammals on display amidst that beautiful desolation. Walvis Bay boasts thousands of flamingos, shorebirds, and terns, and a number of near-endemics (Violet Woodhoopoe, Herero Chat, Rüppell's Parrot, Hartlaub's Spurfowl) present a short distance inland, at Omaruru. Farther north, Etosha National Park hosts most of the mammals a person could hope to find on an African safari. Even on this, the driest year in a decade, we scored views of big cats, rhinos, elephants, zebras, giraffes, and a host of antelope, the stunning Oryx among them. Time in Kavango yielded another complement of birds — Black-faced Babbler, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Pale Flycatcher — and three days at the northern end of the Okavango Delta in Botswana rounded out a wonderful trip. Who could argue with Slaty Egret, Pel's Fishing-Owl, Wattled Crane, and others! A detailed day-by-day account follows, so please read on!

## **Southern Carmine Bee-eater by guide Dorian Anderson**



**Day 0 - Friday, September 22 - Early Arrivals**

Four of five clients arrived on this day, so Dorian organized an introductory dinner at the hotel restaurant. His plan was to drop-off departing clients at the airport and pick up the rental car ahead of that 6:30pm rendezvous, but sloth-like administration at the rental agency and a bad accident (other drivers, not him) on his airport return delayed him until 7:15. Clients were understanding, and the five of us enjoyed lively conversation against slow (but sufficient) service.



**Tawny Eagle by client  
David Graham**

**Day 1 - Saturday, September 23 - Arrivals and Introductory Birding**

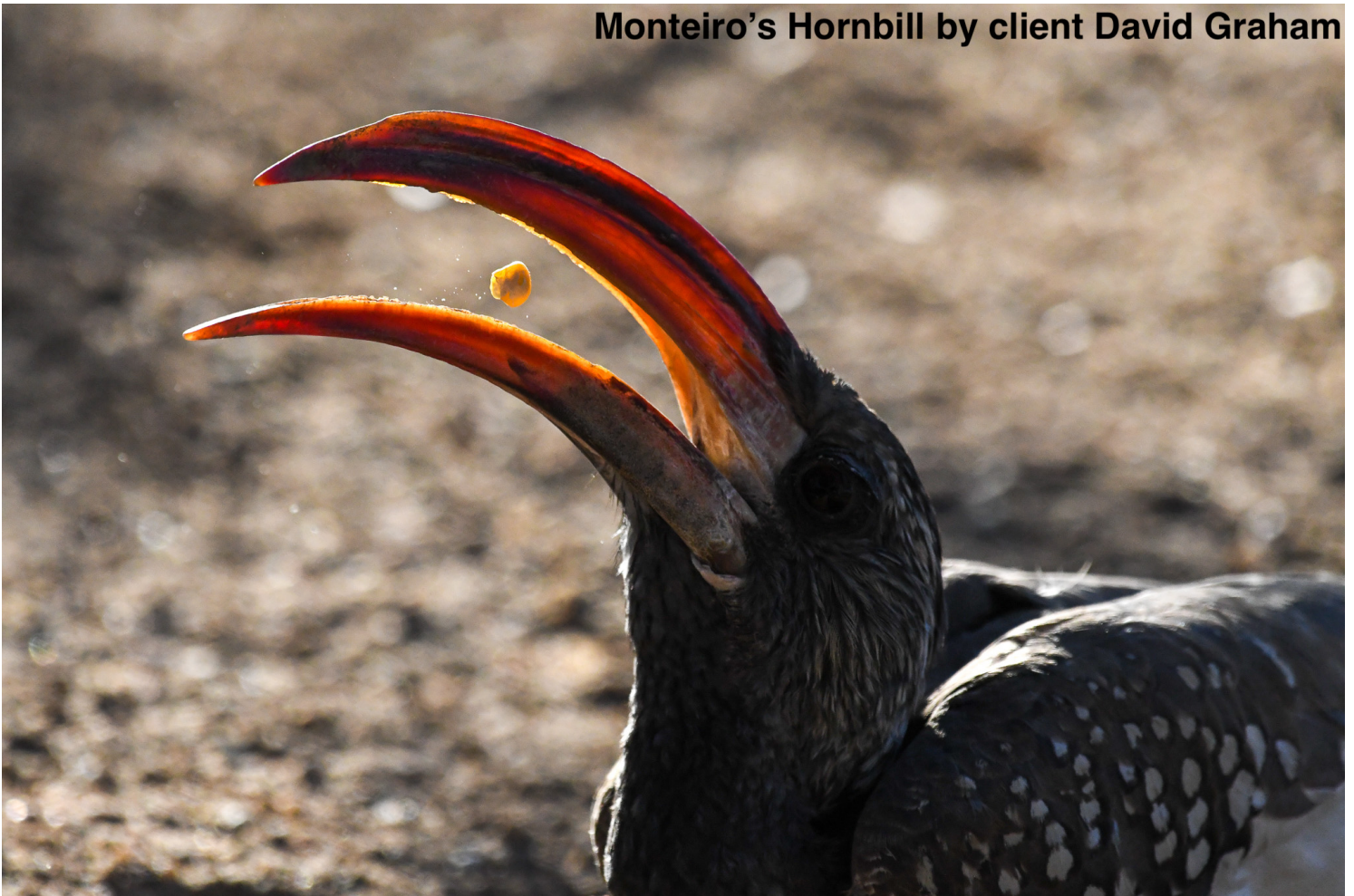
Dorian assumed that collecting the fifth and final client, Stuart, would be a straightforward exercise, but a missing bag complicated his arrival. Bad weather in Europe left him with a short connection in Germany, and his checked luggage didn't make his second flight despite the fact that he (Stuart) did. The airline assured us the bag would arrive on tomorrow morning's flight, so Dorian and Stuart returned to town to begin the day's birding activities.

Those began at the Gammam Water Treatment Works at ~11:15am. Though the signature smell was undeniable, we ignored the stench and connected with **Cape Wagtail, Laughing Dove, Pied Crow, and Wattled Starling**. A **Common Reed Warbler** darted between the phragmites, **Three-banded Plovers** explored the edges of a flooded field, and **Greater Striped** and **White-throated Swallows** floated overhead. Sightings of **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Pale Chanting-Goshawk, and Black-winged Kite** extended our hot hand, and we hit pay dirt with a trifecta of unusual waterfowl: **Blue-billed Teal, Southern Pochard, and White-backed Duck**. Beyond those, we also scored a beautiful **African**

**Swamphen** and a confiding **Short-toed Rock-Thrush**. Stomachs grumbling as 1pm approached, we departed the facility and returned to the hotel for lunch. A checklist from our outing to Gammam is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150572493>.

After that meal and an ensuing siesta, we explored the hotel grounds. **Alpine** and **Bradfield's Swifts** knifed through the air above us, and **Yellow-bellied Eremomela**, **Southern Masked Weaver**, **Chestnut-vented Warbler**, and **White-backed Mousebird** showed as we meandered around chalets and through campsites. None among **Yellow Canary**, **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, **Marico Sunbird**, and **Crimson-breasted Gonolek** (aka Giant Painted Redstart) escaped our gaze, but **Southern (Cape) Penduline-tit** was our best find on this afternoon. As the hotel was the only place Dorian observed the tiny bird on his previous Namibia/Botswana loop, he was keen to handle the tiny target at the in-town location. That species secured, we tacked on **White-browed Sparrow-Weaver**, **Cape Crombec**, and **Black-backed Puffback** before closing up shop. All considered, it was a really nice first day, especially as we saw 3-4 species which we could easily miss on the rest of the tour. It's always great to pad the trip list, right?!?! A complete checklist of everything we observed on our walk is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150573300>.

Monteiro's Hornbill by client David Graham



### Day 2 - Sunday, September 24 - Avis Dam and Namibgreys

Beyond the continuing suitcase debacle, we also needed to confront the fact that Dorian had been sold an inoperable SIM card, a must-have for navigation. Fortunately, there is an MTC/mobile outlet at the airport, so we decided to handle the two issues at the same time. We expected the suitcase would be

delivered on the 8:00am flight, so we planned to visit Avis Dam early and continue to the airport afterwards. It meant a bit of extra van time for all involved (versus sending Stuart and Dorian on their own), but it would prove least disruptive to the day's plans. As we'd soon discover, this approach proved a wise stroke.

Lappet-faced Vulture by  
client David Graham



Reaching Avis at 7:30, we began a focused search for Rockrunner, a near-endemic which Dorian had scored on previous visits. Joining a trail to the area the birds favored, we had excellent views of **Pin-tailed Whydah, Lark-like Bunting, Black-faced Waxbill, Gabar Goshawk, and Green-backed Camaroptera**. The last bird can be very difficult to get into the open, so we were stoked when a cooperative example jumped onto an exposed perch on a fallen tree. Continuing over rockier terrain at a measured pace, we reached the **Rockrunner** area and fired-up a bit of playback. The bird responded in due course, and we had great views as it bounced between a bush and the adjacent, flat-topped rock. Riding that high, we returned to the parking lot where we encountered.....drumroll please....another Rockrunner! We couldn't help but laugh at the effort we'd put forth for the more distant bird, but that's how this game works.

We rehydrated and extended our bird search to the dam floodplain, where we found **Violet-eared Waxbill, Southern Cordonbleu, Southern Red Bishop, Mountain Wheatear**, and water birds including **Maccoa Duck**. While an extended game of cat-and-mouse was required to secure views of a skulky **Lesser Swamp Warbler**, two **Zitting Cisticolas** proved more accommodating, the birds landing fifteen feet of us in response to playback. A complete eBird checklist from our Avis outing is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150672691>.

Though nervous about the time which the bag and SIM card would require, both problems were solved within fifteen minutes of our airport arrival! We dined at the airport restaurant rather than looking for food elsewhere, and we loaded up on groceries, snacks, and water as we passed through Windhoek en route to Namibgrens. Strong wind and chilly temperatures made for slow birding when we reached that overnight, but we did squeeze out **Karoo Scrub-Robin**, a bird which would be absent from our remaining route, and **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, a pint-sized assassin which allowed close views from its eye level perch. Dinner was excellent, particularly the soup, and we bedded down for what was forecasted as a sub-freezing night! Namibgrens checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150671763>.

### Day 3 - Monday, September 25 - Spreetshootge Pass and Walvis Bay

The forecast called for a frigid morning, so we decided to sleep in ahead of a hot breakfast. Served in the old farmhouse, that meal was enjoyed by all before we packed up and hit the road. Though the wind was howling at the pass by 9am, the view was spectacular! The continued gales made birding the

downhill stretch beyond the pass a challenge, but our roadside perseverance earned us views of **Sabota**

**Lark, Southern Fiscal, Familiar Chat, Chat Flycatcher, Greater Kestrel, and Lappet-faced Vulture.** Very unexpected was **Namaqua Sandgrouse.** We hadn't observed water for miles (the Namibgrens lake was completely dry), so the overhead flock of 100-some birds was super cool. And — most importantly — we had good views of a handful of **Rüppell's Bustards,** that striking and range-restricted bird absent from our remaining route. Checklist from our descent: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150748133>.

We used the midday hours to complete the long and bumpy drive to Walvis Bay, where we hoped to chase down Dune Lark. Unfortunately, 30 MPH winds put the kibosh on that plan. Scoping was impossible, and the steadiest among us had difficulty using their binoculars in the gale-force breezes. Taking shelter in the vehicle, we explored the bottom of Walvis Bay and the adjacent salt works. Groups of **Greater and Lesser Flamingos** were visible in every direction, the pink birds numbering in the thousands, and we connected with a variety of shorebirds including **Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet,** four sorts of plovers (**Black-bellied, Common Ringed, White-fronted, and Chestnut-banded**), **Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Sanderling, Little Stint, and Common Greenshank.** **Kelp Gulls** presented in

numbers, and everyone enjoyed the comparison views of **Gray-hooded and Hartlaub's Gulls.** Ours was a very good haul given the atrocious conditions (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150741105>).

#### **Day 4 - Tuesday, September 26 - Walvis Bay**

Yesterday's blustery conditions left us with a lot of work to do on this day, Dune Lark being the biggest hole in our trip list at that moment. Setting out in the predawn hours, we raced south to Rooibank, a destination we reached as the sun cracked the horizon. Loose sand made for wobbly walking, but we pressed into the dunes. Those efforts were rewarded when we spotted a small bird scampering over the

#### **Lesser Flamingo by client David Graham**



crest of a sand drift. Creeping closer, we identified the shifty subject as **Dune Lark**, Namibia's only true endemic! Several others emerged from the vegetation across the next few minutes, and everyone enjoyed scope views of the reddish-brown birds as they darted from shrub to shrub. It was a great feeling to find the bird after yesterday's blowout! Other notable birds included **Dusky Sunbird**, **Ashy Tit**, and **Brubru**. Complete checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150781280>.

No time to waste, we jumped into the car and returned to the Walvis Bay. Though the small park across the street from The Raft isn't much, we found several **Common Waxbills** exploring a weedy edge and a responsive six-pack of **Orange River White-eyes** flitting about the trees. Heading north after acquiring those, we ticked a trifecta of **cormorants** — **Great (White-bellied)**, **Cape**, and **Crowned** — en route to Swakopmund. When we were denied access to Dorian's favorite Tractrac Chat spot, we continued to the Swako salt works. There we began our search for Gray's Lark, a nondescript ground dweller which favors sparsely-vegetated gravel plains. As few birds occupy that habitat, we expected our search would be a grind. It was, but the addition of **Tractrac Chat** (and no much else!) made those 80 minutes worthwhile. And then it happened - Dorian spotted four **Gray's Larks** at the roadside. A bit of playback brought them closer, and everyone enjoyed close views of the birds as they scampered about the bare earth.

Tractrac Chat by client David Graham



We enjoyed Indian food for lunch before returning south. We added **African Oystercatcher** en route, and we spent the remainder of the afternoon searching Walvis Bay and the Walvis salt works for our last target bird, Damara Tern. We failed to connect with it, high winds and backlighting hampering our efforts, but we did have nice views of **Caspian**, **Common**, **Great Crested**, and **Sandwich Terns**. Shorebirds

were again present in huge numbers, a trio of **Marsh Sandpipers** being the highlight. The wind extinguishing enthusiasm, we returned to the hotel to rest ahead of dinner. Dorian did pick a lone **Terek Sandpiper** in front of the hotel, and that bird officially joined the trip when he dragged Stuart out of his hotel room to see it. On Sonia's recommendation, we dined at Godenfang, an upscale establishment which put The Raft to shame. We know where we'll be eating in the future!

**Gray's Lark by guide Dorian Anderson**



#### **Day 5 - Wednesday, September 27 - Spitkoppe and Omaruru**

Conceding Damara Tern to yesterday's winds, we departed Walvis under cover of darkness and rolled towards Spitzkoppe, where we'd seek another near-endemic: **Herero Chat**. Among several birds noted on the approach road, a beautiful **Bokmakierie** (a bright yellow bushshrike) was the most notable. We approached the towering rock formation, parked the van, and explored the scrubby habitat. Dorian promptly detected the chat's whistle, and all enjoyed scope views as a pair moved from bush to bush. Stuart subsequently spotted a **Verreaux's Eagle**, our second target bird, and some glimpsed a **Lanner Falcon** as it cruised overhead. **Layard's Warbler** proved stubborn, but we eventually connected with it. All targets acquired, we spent some additional time exploring the area. A flock of **Montiero's Hornbills** allowed close approach, a diminutive **White-tailed Shrike** entertained as it bounced across the rocks, and **Dusky Sunbirds** chipped in every direction. Checking the leaky pipes behind the water tanks, we found another nice bird - **White-throated Canary**! The heat was gathering, so we jumped into the van and headed towards Omaruru. Our checklist from Spitzkoppe is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150851050>.

We enjoyed lunch at Kashana and continued to The Erongo Wild. The afternoon heat was suffocating, so we relaxed for a few hours before visiting Camp Mara, a private property across the street from Erongo Wild. Though Dorian had observed Rüppell's Parrot and Violet Woodhoopoe at Camp Mara on his 2022 visit, his hopes for either weren't high as the group assumed the searing creek bed. Why? Well, this was a very, very dry year, and recent sightings of both near-endemics were few and far between. How dry/hot was it? Well, guide Ken Behrens passed through the area three weeks prior and said it was the driest and hottest he's ever seen it. And he'd run this tour at least ten times across the previous decade.

And thus the stage was set for the infamous Creek Stomp — or, as clients would affectionately refer to it after the fact — the Omaruru Death March, part 1. Birding on the sun would have been more productive. We looked, we listened, we taped. Nothing. Spirits lower than congressional approval ratings, we pressed into the desiccated creek bed, sweat stinging our eyes as it poured down our sunburned brows. Forty-seven minutes in, we'd had enough, our ordeal on par with anything any group of humans had suffered. One client noted, "Shackleton was a pansy. A year eating penguins? Navigating the southern ocean in a rebuild rowboat by sextant? What a joke. He and his crew wouldn't have survived ten minutes in the creek of doom!" Departing the sizzling and lifeless creek bed without the parrot or the woodhoopoe, we enjoyed point blank views of **Damara Red-billed** and **Montiero's Hornbills** at Camp Mara's feeders. It was a nice end to a challenging afternoon. A checklist from the ordeal is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150875992>. Otherwise, we had quick looks at **Speckled Nightjars** as they buzzed Erongo Wild porch during dinner (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150876162>).

**Green-backed Camaroptera by client David Graham**





**Day 6 - Thursday, September 28 - Omaruru**

We'd been warned that birding around Erongo/Omaruru would be slow given the dry conditions, and we experienced that again on this morning. The near-endemic Hartlaub's Spurfowl has been virtually automatic at Erongo for the past decade, but Ken and his tour were unable to find it on the property a few weeks earlier. Try as we did, we were unable to escape the same fate on this morning. **Carp's Tit** was a nice consolation, and we had nice views of **Rosy-faced Lovebird, Cape Bunting, Black-throated Canary, and Red-billed Spurfowl** on the lodge feeders. Here is a complete list from the morning: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S150911259>.

Departing Erongo Wild and moving towards town, a traditional spot for Rüppell's Parrot and Violet Woodhoopoe, we renewed our creek bed misery. The conditions were as miserable as yesterday, but we knew we had to try for the two birds. Ninety minutes later, we were done, only a few common birds to show for our efforts (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150936895>).

With heat suffocating us and the birds, we decided to take an extended drive. It didn't yield much beyond **Black-chested Snake-Eagle** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150937060>), but we did have a nice lunch at the Ai Aiba Rock Painting Lodge, where we bumped into **Common Scimitarbill, Ashy Tit, and Black-faced Waxbill** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150937116>). We folded the middle of the afternoon given the heat, but a few of us did find **Burnt-neck Eremomela** and **Southern Pied Babbler** when we ventured out in the pre-dinner hour (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150936814>). Today was really tough, and we were all wiped out by the end of the day.

**Day 7 - Friday, September 29 - To Etosha NP!**

Departing the hotel before sunrise, we headed to a rocky area where Dorian scored **Hartlaub's Spurfowl** on his previous tour loop (Sept 5 - 22). It took him the better part of an hour to connect with a pair on that turn, but we elicited a response vocalization immediately on this morning. Reeling the birds in, we had close views of two stunning examples as they scrambled over and between boulders. It was the exact jump-start we needed after the slow birding we'd suffered yesterday (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150975263>).

We returned to the hotel, ate breakfast, and started north, towards Etosha National Park. Turning onto M63 an hour north of Omaruru, we connected with **Kalahari Scrub-Robin, Southern Anteater-Chat** and **Fawn-colored Lark** to extend our gathering luck. Next up? **Secretarybird**! Sure, the heat waves made photography tough, but it was super cool to watch the lanky bird stalk prey in a roadside field. When we passed a water trough a few minutes later, we pulled over and found **Black-fronted Bulbul, Red-billed Quelea, Red-headed Finch, Cape Sparrow, Lark-like Bunting, and Violet-eared Waxbill** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150987893>). Other notable birds as we closed the distance to Etosha included **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Rufous-crowned Roller, and White-crowned Shrike** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S150987959>).

We enjoyed a siesta after lunching at Okaukuejo and returned to the park roads late in the afternoon. It was unbelievably slow for the first 30 minutes, but we pressed on and eventually squeezed out a grand slam of larks: **Sabota, Spike-heeled, Stark's, and Pink-billed**! It was great to study the individual field marks at close proximity. **Spotted Thick-Knee** and **Common Ostrich** checked in shortly thereafter, and we had nice views of **Ludwig's, Kori, and White-quilled Bustards** as we approached Okondeka. And that's where we found several **Lions** lounging near the natural spring! It seemed like we couldn't miss at the moment. And that sentiment strengthened with the additions of **Crowned Lapwing, Double-banded Courser, and Red-necked Falcon** as we returned to camp (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151010711>). Despite the ever-present heat, it was an amazing day of birding, one we all needed after the slow spell around Omaruru. And if that wasn't enough, a couple of us observed **Black-headed Heron, Little Grebe, Egyptian Goose** and — wait for it — **Rufous-**

**cheeked Nightjar** at the waterhole after dark (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151027272>). Woot woot!

**Day 8 - Saturday, September 30 - First full day at Etosha NP**

We ate breakfast and made a quick loop through camp, that walk yielding **Tawny Eagle, Barred Wren-Warbler, Rufous-chested Swallow, Marico Flycatcher, White-breasted Sunbird, and Southern Gray-headed Sparrow** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151047811>).

Those birds secured, we piled into the van and again took to the park roads. Moving from one waterhole to the next as we closed to the distance to Halali, we found a variety of mammals including **Springbok, Wildebeest, Giraffe, Oryx, and Zebra**. We increased our bustard haul with the inclusion of **Red-crested**, and we grew our cisticola collection with **Desert**. Though we found large numbers of **Gray-backed Sparrow-Larks**, lighting and proximity prevented us from pulling a Chestnut-backed from the swirling hoards. **Red-capped Lark** also made a long-overdue appearance (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151056395>).

**Pied Kingfisher by client David Graham**



Reaching Halali, we headed straight for the dining area. Before we sat down, Dorian waved everyone outside onto the lawn to enjoy four **Violet Woodhoopoes**, one of the most valuable/prized birds on the tour. The previous tour missed the bird despite investing several hours in-camp, so it was a huge relief to score the near-endemic without an ounce of dedicated effort. Everyone was really pumped up by the time we sat down to lunch. And that's before **African Gray Hornbill** and **Bare-cheeked Babbler** came into view (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151104325>)!

The heat inescapable, we rested through the early part of the afternoon and regrouped around 4pm. We hadn't encountered any palearctic migrants to this point in the tour, so **European Bee-eater** was a nice addition, the quartet soaring and looping high over the van. Looping through Rietfontein, we found a large group of **Elephants** plus an immature **Martial Eagle**. Perched on a low log and backed by **Oryx** and **Springbok**, the raptor was an amazing site! Heat suppressed activity throughout the remainder of afternoon, but we connected with two **Lions** at Goas waterhole towards day's end. We were so focused on shorebirds — **Black-winged Stilt**, **Ruff**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Common Greenshank**, **Three-banded Plover**, etc — that we didn't notice the pair of magnificent males walk right behind our vehicle. It was only when we turned around that we saw them standing in the road, exactly where we'd been parked! It was a really amazing encounter! Racing back to camp ahead of gate-closing, we enjoyed a large group of **Elephants**, several **Oryx** and **Kudus**, and a lone **Black Rhino** at the waterhole. The massive group of **Double-banded Sandgrouse** which assembled to drink was the perfect cap on an incredible day (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151104426>).

**Violet Woodhoopoe by client David Graham**



**Day 9 - Sunday, October 1 - Second full day at Etosha NP**

This day started with predawn owling in Halali, where we managed a heard-only **African Scops-Owl** (kinda shocking given how strongly this species usually responds). After eating breakfast, we took a short walk around camp. It seemed we couldn't escape **Violet Woodhoopoe**, two picking at a discarded bone feet in front of us, and we were stoked to score **Swainson's Spurfowl** a few moments later. Usually common, the species has been very difficult to find given the extended drought/heat. Ken

missed it on his tour for the first time in a decade! Continuing through camp, we added **Shikra**, **Golden-tailed Woodpecker**, **White Helmetshrike**, **Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver**, **Golden-breasted Bunting**, and **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting**, all new for the trip list! Throw in bonus views of **Bradfield's Swift** and **Bare-cheeked Babbler** and it was a very productive outing (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151140645>).



**White-quilled Bustard by client David Graham**

The drive between Halali and Namutoni was idyllic, especially with the AC blowing throughout! Mammals seemed in greater abundance at the eastern end of the park than at the western, and we had additional views of many of the birds we'd encountered across the previous two days: **Double-banded Courser**, **Kori Bustard**, **Lappet-faced Vulture**, and **Southern Pied Babbler**. Among the various larks, a lone **Rufous-crested** was welcome; Ken missed the usually-common bird on his tour and I failed to find it on my first loop. Also notable was the lack of Lilac-breasted Roller to this point. That bird is usually abundant in Etosha, so the drought was really causing havoc on bird populations/distributions. The most unexpected bird of the morning, however, was **Ruddy Turnstone** at Goas! That bird shoulda been on the coast, hundreds of miles away! Full list from the drive: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151148336>.

We lunched under soaring **White-backed Vultures** at Namutoni (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151181139>) and continued north to the Andoni Plains. There we connected with **Blue Crane**, a stunning and mostly South African species which has established a satellite population at Etosha. The waterhole featured the highest concentration

of **Oryx** we'd encountered, and we picked two **Caspian Plovers** on the edge of the surrounding mud. **Kittlitz's Plover** was also new for the trip. And if those weren't enough, a juvenile **White-headed Vulture** came down to drink, the bird posing for pics as we inched the car forward (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151181305>). A stop at Groot Oktevi on our return yielded a dark phase **Gabar Goshawk**, our second **Barred Wren-Warbler**, our first **Green-winged Pytilia**, and what ultimately proved our only **Shaft-tailed Whydah** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151181465>). We'd planned to gas up in Etosha before leaving the park, but ended up coasting into Tsumeb/Kupferquelle on fumes when the Namutoni station was out of diesel! No harm, no foul, right?

### Day 10 - Monday, October 2 - Kupferquelle and Long Drive to Kayova

TB tours hadn't stayed at Kupferquelle Resort previously, but we decided we'd bird the grounds in the morning because 1) Dorian thought it might be productive and 2) we didn't want to spend what would be the only cool hours of the day in the van. And that was the right decision! A migrant **Spotted Flycatcher**

**Lion by guide Dorian Anderson**



**Oryx by guide Dorian Anderson**



showed at the top of a tree, and a **Senegal Coucal** gave us an unexpected flyby. But things really



Rüppell's Parrot by client  
David Graham

heated up when David spotted what he thought was a parrot, Dorian confirming the bird as **Rüppell's** a second later. We'd conceded the bird after our creek bed death marches, so it was unbridled bedlam when we realized what we'd stumbled into. And that's before four more appeared over the next few minutes. It was the luckiest of encounters, but Kupferquelle kept giving with **Southern Red-billed Hornbills** (all pure bred), **Lesser Honeyguide**, **Carp's Tit**, and **Brown-crowned Tchagra**. We were so glad we didn't rush out of there on this morning! So yeah, Kupferquelle should be birded if we use it as lodging on future tours (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151239588>).

We ate a late-ish (8am) breakfast and began the long drive towards the Kavango Region in the northeastern part of the country. Our Debonaire's/Steers lunch in Rundu consumed more time than we imagined it would, and we arrived at Kayova River Lodge late in the afternoon. Perched above the Okavango River and looking into Angola, it would be the perfect base of operations for the next two days. Rallying for some birding towards 5pm, we experienced an explosion of new birds with the likes of **Mourning Collared-Dove**, **African Openbill**, **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, **African Fish-Eagle**, **African Jacana**, **African Barred Owlet**, **Red-faced Mousebird**, **Bradfield's Hornbill**, **Gabon Boubou**, **Magpie Shrike**, **Burchell's Starling**, **Common Bulbul**, **Holub's Golden-Weaver**,

**Red-billed Firefinch**, and — FINALLY! — **Lilac-breasted Roller** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151361221>). Dorian also kept track of which of those birds we observed on the Angola side of the river: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151361058>.

Sadly, a massive windstorm shut birding down towards 6pm. Worse, it knocked out the power. Dinner was a bit of an adventure without electricity, and we knew sleep would be a challenge without the comfort of air conditioning.

### **Day 11 - Tuesday, October 3 - Broadleaf forest and river boat trip**

This day started harmlessly, with an early morning stroll in the broadleaf forest to the east of Kayova. Returning to the car after a ninety-minute walk on which we found **Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird**, **Southern Black-Tit**, **Violet-backed Starling**, **Chin-spot Batis**, **Yellow-fronted Canary**, and **African Penduline-Tit**, we were approached by three men, who claimed that we were trespassing on their land. They were relatively friendly and generally believed our defense that we hadn't seen the 'No

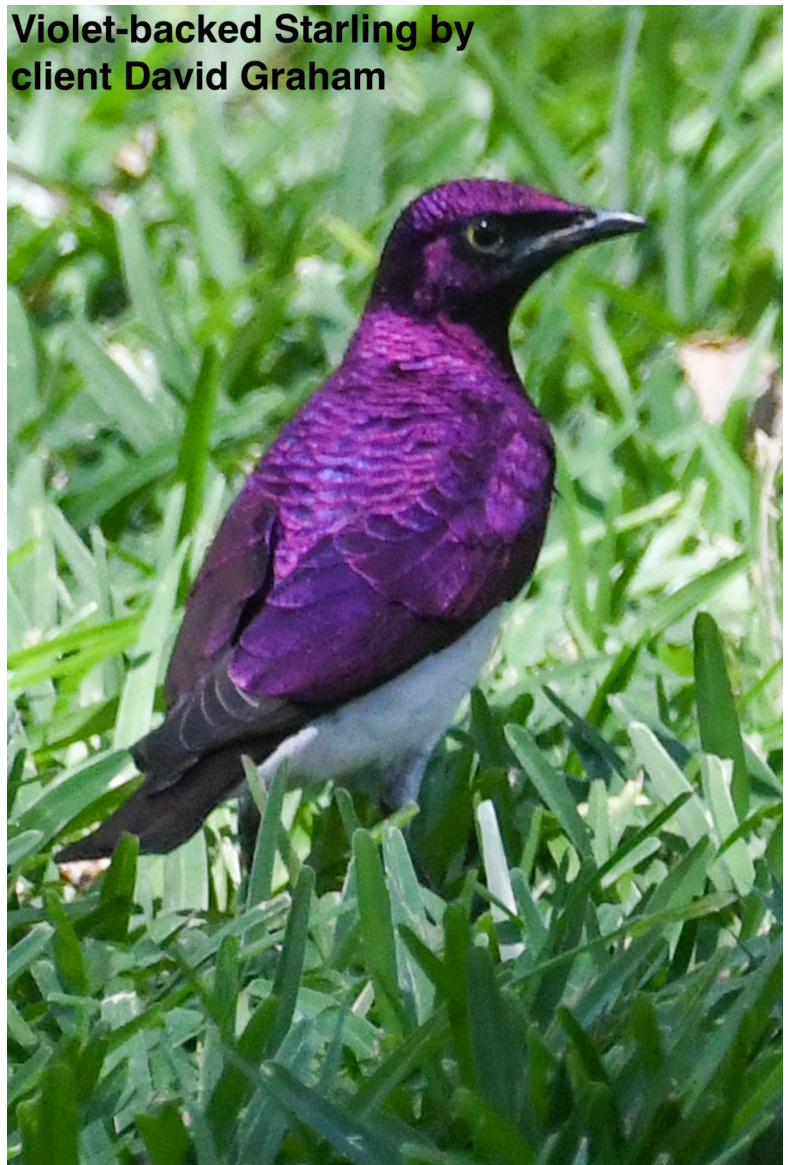
Trespassing' sign which they subsequently pointed out to us. We were very contrite, and the men granted us permission to continuing birding after we paid them \$150 NAD per person. At that moment, we thought we were in the clear. Checklist from that part of the morning is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151322662>.

It was then that Dorian noticed that the front right tire of the van was flat. Going around to the rear of the vehicle to fetch the spare, he saw that the left rear wheel was also flat. And it appeared both tires had been deflated because the caps of those tires (and only those tires) had been removed. Worse, he couldn't fix either flat because the spare refused to budge from the underside of the vehicle. Out of options, we decided to drive slowly back to Kayova on two flat tires. Fortunately, we found a trucker pulled over at the roadside two miles into our return. He used his air compressor to inflate our tires, and we made it back to Kayova without incident.

Here, the plot thickens. It turns out both Kayova and Tropical Birding have 'history' with a disgruntled local bird guide. When we recounted our ordeal to the folks at Kayova, they suggested the rival had deflated our tires because he's protective of the area we visited. And he knew we'd be there because the folks at Kayova had communicated our intention to his wife the night before. So, all signs suggested the guy deflated our tires and then called/instructed the landowner to come and give us a hard time (even though no TB tour had been given a hard time in previous years). Regardless, it was a jerk move and cost us half a morning of birding. The folks at Kayova helped us remove the spare after we returned — it was stuck because a screw was both stripped and bent — and the van was no worse for wear at the end of it all.

We spent the remainder of the morning and the early part of the afternoon exploring the lodge grounds. It was warm, but we managed trip-firsts in **Black Kite, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Meyer's Parrot, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Yellow-bellied Greenbull, Hartlaub's Babbler, Black-faced Babbler, Kurrichane Thrush, and Ashy Flycatcher**. The pre- and post-lunch checklists are here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151322487> and <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151360637>.

The later part of the afternoon featured a river boat float to visit a colony of **Southern Carmine Bee-eaters**. Those beautiful birds did not disappoint, and we also spied **Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove, Black Crake, Water Thick-knee, Wattled Lapwing, Black-bellied Plover, Collared Pratincole, African Skimmer, Marabou Stork, Pied Kingfisher, Wire-tailed Swallow, African Stonechat, African**



**Violet-backed Starling by client David Graham**

**Pied Wagtail**, and **Osprey** (Angola side only!) as we floated along the river. A checklist of birds on the Namibian side is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151360167>. A checklist of birds on the Angolan side is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151360175>. It was a really relaxing way to end the day given the drama we suffered earlier!

### African Skimmer by client David Graham



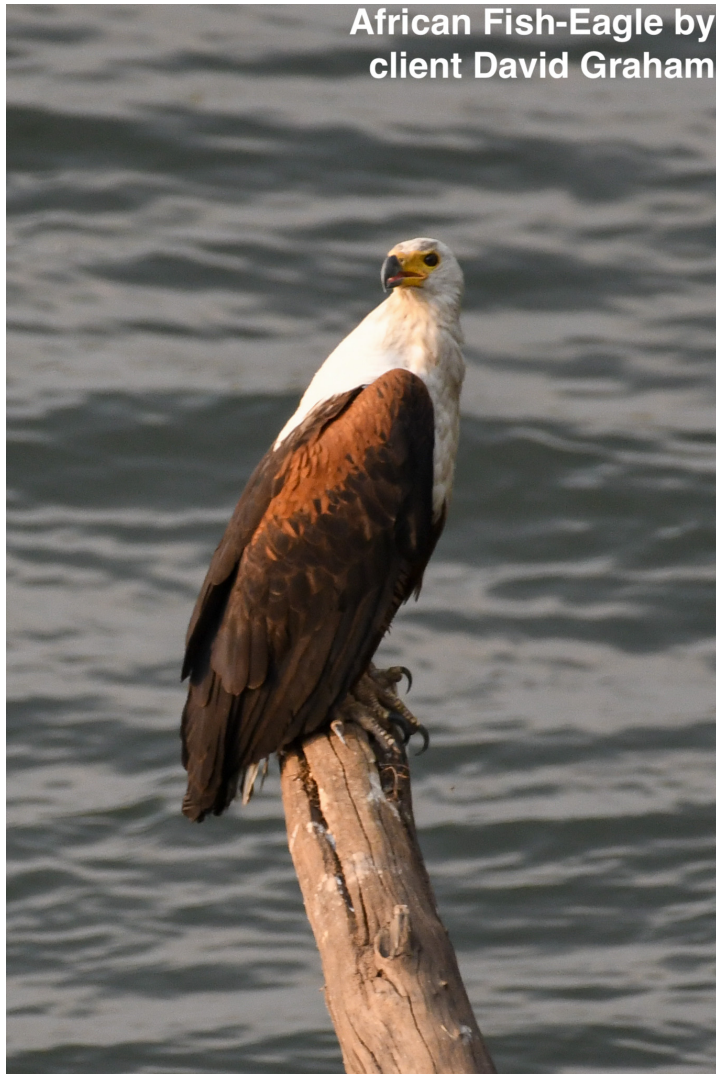
### Day 12 - Wednesday, October 4 - Broadleaf Forest, Mahango, Drotsky's (Botswana)

Hoping for broadleaf redemption, we visited a different patch of forest on this morning. We parked the van, sauntered down the dirt road, and found ourselves surrounded by birdsong. We scored our first coup in the form of **Striped Kingfisher**, a pair calling vigorously from the top of a roadside tree. A group of **Cut-throats** was a nice surprise, and we soaked in views of a brilliant **African Black-headed Oriole** as it flew from one side of the road to the other. **Southern Black-Flycatcher** and **Pale Flycatcher** were cause for particular celebration; Dorian had recently intersected multiples of each bird at yesterday's location, and he'd feared that the flat tire debacle would cost this tour those two species. That fate avoided, we added **Tawny-flanked Prinia** and **Piping Cisticola** to our broadleaf haul. And if that wasn't enough, we had two unexpected flyovers as we returned to the van: **Black-chested Snake-Eagle** and **Red-billed Oxpecker**! Throw in bonus views of **Brubru**, **Green-backed Camaroptera**, **Red-eyed Dove**, and **Southern Cordonbleu** and it was a really productive outing (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151414553>).

Continuing through Divundu and south to Mahango, we followed dirt tracks along the side of the river flood plain. **Temminck's Courser** was a solid find and a new bird for all clients. **Meve's Starlings**



lurked in the understory, **Rattling Cisticolas** bounced about the brush, and **Lappet-faced** and **White-backed Vultures** took flight from trees as we progressed. We found more marshes and flooded fields as we moved south, and it was in those where we observed four **Wattled Cranes**, the massive birds beautiful and elegant even through the swirling heat waves. **White-faced Whistling-Duck**, **Spur-winged Goose**, and **Long-toed Lapwing** appeared in due course, and everyone watched agape as **Great Egret**, **African Spoonbill**, **Yellow-billed Stork**, and **Goliath Heron** picked their way through the shallows. Though less imposing, **Glossy Ibis** and **Squacco Heron** were worthy of attention as well (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151388269>).



African Fish-Eagle by client David Graham

We departed Mahango, crossed the border into Botswana, and continued to Drotsky's Cabins, our base of operations for the next two nights. Clients relaxed while Dorian birded/scouted the grounds, and we rendezvoused at 3:30pm for our first of two scheduled boat trips. We found **White-fronted Bee-eater**, **Black-collared Barbet**, and **Giant Kingfisher** within moments of leaving the dock, and we ticked **Lesser Striped Swallow**, **Plain Martin**, and **Malachite** and **Pied Kingfishers** as we moved upriver. We got very lucky with **White-backed Night-Heron** when Dorian noticed a suspicious blob in riverside bush. KB skillfully maneuvered the boat towards the shore, and everyone enjoyed close (albeit somewhat obstructed) views of the reclusive bird once we disembarked the boat and scaled the adjacent embankment. That bird and **Pel's Fishing Owl** are the two most important targets on this leg of the tour, so it was great to secure one of them straight out of the gate. And speaking of **Pel's**, that giant bird showed in a riverside tree twenty minutes later, its dark eyes peering down at us from above. Playing with house money for the rest of the boat trip, we added **African Marsh-Harrier**, **Chirping Cisticola**, and **Gray-rumped Swallow** to round out the trip. With temperatures dropping throughout our float, it was a perfect end to the day (<https://>

[ebird.org/checklist/S151414624](https://ebird.org/checklist/S151414624)).

### **Day 13 - Thursday, October 5 - Drotsky's (Botswana)**

Today started with a wonderful breakfast on the porch, where we had extended study of **Common Waxbill**, **Fan-tailed Widowbird**, **Southern Brown-throated Weaver**, and **Crested Francolin** (under the platform feeder). The meal concluded, we walked to the dock, boarded the low skiff, and started south along the river. We pushed a fair bit of time into **Luapula Cisticola** and **Little Rush Warbler** but were unable to pull either from the reedy cover; both joined the trip list as 'heard-only'. An **African Green-Pigeon** showed high in a tree, and we scored **Little Bittern**, **Purple Heron**, **African Sacred Ibis**, and **Hamerkop** (abundant) along the reedy banks. A migrant **Barn Swallow** was a nice bonus as we

search pastures for Slaty Egret, that bird proving elusive through 10:30. Extending our trip to reach into an area where Dorian had recently seen the prized bird, we disembarked the boat and walked into a field, where we connected with three **Slaty Egrets**. One was close enough to examine the yellow legs and rufous throat - woo hoo! It was sizzling hot by that stage of the morning, so we headed back to camp. Close-range, comparison views of **Yellow-** and **Red-billed Oxpeckers** were had on that return as the



**White-fronted Bee-eater by guide Dorian Anderson**

birds jumped from cow to cow (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151457808>).

We rested through the midday heat and returned to the field at 4:30. A **Hadada Ibis** shuffled across the lawn, a **White-browed Coucal** lurked in a low bush, and a **Willow Warbler** picked its way through the treetops. We also scored **Terrestrial Brownbul** and **Collared Sunbird**, and we had super close views of a pair of **Cardinal Woodpeckers** as they came and went from their nest. It also was cool to watch a variety of birds — **Violet-backed Starling**, **Greater Blue-eared Starling**, **Gray Go-away-bird** — drink from the leaky hoses around the property. And we had quick views of a flock of **Green Woodhoopoes** as the raucous octet streaked overhead. Otherwise, everyone appreciated **Black-collared Barbet**, **Gabon Boubou**, **White-browed Robin-Chat**, and **Grosbeak Weaver**. Full list here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151478859>. After dinner owling yielded incredible views of **African Wood-Owl** in the camping area. We also heard

**Fiery-necked Nightjar** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151492228>).

#### **Day 14 - Friday, October 6 - Namibia return**

With the bulk of our birding business handled, we took it easy on this morning, clients mostly doing their own thing ahead of our Drotsky's departure. Most of the usual suspects were present — **White-fronted Bee-eater**, **Giant Kingfisher**, **Lesser Striped Swallow**, **Yellow-bellied Greenbul**, **Hartlaub's Babbler**,

**Ashy Flycatcher, Southern Cordonbleu** — and we were stoked when a **Brown Firefinch** appeared on the feeder during breakfast (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151521719>). We also scored a single **African Penduline-Tit**, notable as it was new for our Botswana list.

We crossed the border and made a second swing through Mahango. Heat suppressed activity, but we squeezed out bonus views of **Common Ostrich, Black Crake, Yellow-billed Stork, Squacco Heron**, and others. From there we put the pedal down and overcame the remaining four hours to Roy's Rest Camp, a fun and funky stopover. It was super cool to watch the local Bushbaby chow down on an apple after dark!

**Day 15 - Saturday, October 7 - Roy's Rest Camp and Windhoek return**

This was another low key morning, clients stepping in and out of birding as we readied to depart Roy's. We didn't find anything new for the trip list but we did enjoy **Pearl-Spotted Owlet, Bradfield's Hornbill, Black-backed Puffback, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Carp's Tit, Spotted Flycatcher, Black-faced Waxbill, Golden-breasted Bunting**, and **Lark-like Bunting**. The resident **Helmeted Guineafowl** were a hoot; they followed us everywhere we went! It's worth noting the presence of **Black-faced Babblers** at this spot. We had them at Kayova, but Roy's is a traditional spot for this irregular species. Dorian saw them well on our arrival yesterday, and the group had quick glimpses of them this morning. Though long and relatively boring, the drive to Windhoek allowed us to add a few birds to the trip list: **Dark Chanting-Goshawk** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151593554>), **Wahlberg's Eagle** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151594757>), and **White-rumped Swift** (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151595226>). Dinner at Joe's Beerhouse put a nice bow on this fine trip!



Cardinal Woodpecker by guide Dorian Anderson

**Day 16 - Sunday, October 8 - Departures!**

It's sad to see everyone go, but our memories will last a lifetime. We hope to see everyone on another Tropical Birding tour in the future!

Here is the link to the electronic, eBird trip report:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/162220>

Its shows every bird we saw at every location we visited.

Total = 331 species

Common Ostrich  
White-faced Whistling-Duck  
White-backed Duck  
Egyptian Goose  
South African Shelduck  
Spur-winged Goose  
Blue-billed Teal  
Cape Shoveler  
Cape Teal  
Red-billed Duck  
Southern Pochard  
Maccoa Duck  
Helmeted Guineafowl  
Crested Francolin  
Hartlaub's Spurfowl  
Red-billed Spurfowl  
Swainson's Spurfowl  
Greater Flamingo  
Lesser Flamingo  
Little Grebe  
Rock Pigeon  
Speckled Pigeon  
Mourning Collared-Dove  
Red-eyed Dove  
Ring-necked Dove  
Laughing Dove  
Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove  
Namaqua Dove  
African Green-Pigeon  
Namaqua Sandgrouse  
Double-banded Sandgrouse  
Kori Bustard  
Ludwig's Bustard  
Rüppell's Bustard

p.20

Red-crested Bustard  
White-quilled Bustard  
Gray Go-away-bird  
Senegal Coucal  
Coppery-tailed Coucal  
White-browed Coucal  
Rufous-cheeked Nightjar  
Fiery-necked Nightjar  
Freckled Nightjar  
Alpine Swift  
Bradfield's Swift  
Little Swift  
White-rumped Swift  
African Palm Swift  
Eurasian Moorhen  
Red-knobbed Coot  
African Swamphe  
Black Crake  
Blue Crane  
Wattled Crane  
Spotted Thick-knee  
Water Thick-knee  
Black-winged Stilt  
Pied Avocet  
African Oystercatcher  
Black-bellied Plover  
Common Ringed Plover  
Three-banded Plover  
Long-toed Lapwing  
Blacksmith Lapwing  
Crowned Lapwing  
Wattled Lapwing  
Caspian Plover  
Kittlitz's Plover  
Chestnut-banded Plover  
White-fronted Plover  
African Jacana  
Whimbrel  
Bar-tailed Godwit  
Terek Sandpiper  
Common Sandpiper  
Marsh Sandpiper  
Wood Sandpiper  
Common Greenshank  
Ruddy Turnstone  
Ruff  
Curlew Sandpiper

Sanderling  
Little Stint  
Double-banded Courser  
Temminck's Courser  
Collared Pratincole  
Gray-hooded Gull  
Hartlaub's Gull  
Kelp Gull  
African Skimmer  
Caspian Tern  
Common Tern  
Sandwich Tern  
Great Crested Tern  
African Openbill  
Marabou Stork  
Yellow-billed Stork  
African Darter  
Long-tailed Cormorant  
Crowned Cormorant  
Cape Cormorant  
Great Cormorant  
Great White Pelican  
Hamerkop  
Little Bittern  
Black-crowned Night Heron  
Slaty Egret  
Little Egret  
White-backed Night Heron  
Striated Heron  
Squacco Heron  
Western Cattle Egret  
Great Egret  
Yellow-billed Egret  
Gray Heron  
Purple Heron  
Black-headed Heron  
Goliath Heron  
Glossy Ibis  
African Sacred Ibis  
Hadada Ibis  
African Spoonbill  
Secretarybird  
Osprey  
Black-winged Kite  
African Harrier-Hawk  
White-headed Vulture  
Lappet-faced Vulture

White-backed Vulture  
Bateleur  
Black-chested Snake-Eagle  
Martial Eagle  
Wahlberg's Eagle  
Tawny Eagle  
Verreaux's Eagle  
Dark Chanting-Goshawk  
Pale Chanting-Goshawk  
Gabar Goshawk  
African Marsh Harrier  
Shikra  
Black Kite  
African Fish-Eagle  
African Scops-Owl  
Pel's Fishing-Owl  
Pearl-spotted Owlet  
African Barred Owlet  
African Wood-Owl  
White-backed Mousebird  
Red-faced Mousebird  
Eurasian Hoopoe  
Green Woodhoopoe  
Violet Woodhoopoe  
Common Scimitarbill  
Bradfield's Hornbill  
African Gray Hornbill  
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill  
Monteiro's Hornbill  
Southern Red-billed Hornbill  
Damara Red-billed Hornbill  
Malachite Kingfisher  
Striped Kingfisher  
Giant Kingfisher  
Pied Kingfisher  
White-fronted Bee-eater  
Little Bee-eater  
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater  
European Bee-eater  
Southern Carmine Bee-eater  
Lilac-breasted Roller  
Rufous-crowned Roller  
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird  
Pied Barbet  
Black-collared Barbet  
Lesser Honeyguide  
Bearded Woodpecker

Cardinal Woodpecker  
Golden-tailed Woodpecker  
Rock Kestrel  
Greater Kestrel  
Red-necked Falcon  
Lanner Falcon  
Rosy-faced Lovebird  
Meyer's Parrot  
Rüppell's Parrot  
African Black-headed Oriole  
White-tailed Shrike  
Chinspot Batis  
Pirit Batis  
White Helmetshrike  
Brubru  
Black-backed Puffback  
Brown-crowned Tchagra  
Gabon Boubou  
Crimson-breasted Gonolek  
Bokmakierie  
Fork-tailed Drongo  
African Paradise-Flycatcher  
Magpie Shrike  
Southern Fiscal  
White-crowned Shrike  
Cape Crow  
Pied Crow  
Southern Black-Tit  
Carp's Tit  
Ashy Tit  
African Penduline-Tit  
Southern Penduline-Tit  
Spike-heeled Lark  
Gray's Lark  
Gray-backed Sparrow-Lark  
Sabota Lark  
Fawn-colored Lark  
Dune Lark  
Rufous-naped Lark  
Red-capped Lark  
Stark's Lark  
Pink-billed Lark  
Cape Crombec  
Rockrunner  
Yellow-bellied Eremomela  
Burnt-neck Eremomela  
Barred Wren-Warbler



Green-backed Camaroptera  
Yellow-breasted Apalis  
Tawny-flanked Prinia  
Black-chested Prinia  
Rattling Cisticola  
Luapula Cisticola  
Chirping Cisticola  
Piping Cisticola  
Zitting Cisticola  
Desert Cisticola  
Common Reed Warbler  
Lesser Swamp Warbler  
Little Rush Warbler  
Gray-rumped Swallow  
Banded Martin  
Plain Martin  
Rock Martin  
Pearl-breasted Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
White-throated Swallow  
Wire-tailed Swallow  
Greater Striped Swallow  
Lesser Striped Swallow  
Rufous-chested Swallow  
Yellow-bellied Greenbul  
Terrestrial Brownbul  
Common Bulbul  
Black-fronted Bulbul  
Willow Warbler  
Layard's Warbler  
Chestnut-vented Warbler  
Orange River White-eye  
Southern Yellow White-eye  
Arrow-marked Babbler  
Bare-cheeked Babbler  
Southern Pied-Babbler  
Hartlaub's Babbler  
Black-faced Babbler  
Red-billed Oxpecker  
Yellow-billed Oxpecker  
Wattled Starling  
Violet-backed Starling  
Pale-winged Starling  
Burchell's Starling  
Meves's Starling  
Greater Blue-eared Starling  
Cape Starling

Groundscraper Thrush  
Kurrichane Thrush  
Spotted Flycatcher  
Marico Flycatcher  
Pale Flycatcher  
Chat Flycatcher  
Ashy Flycatcher  
Herero Chat  
Southern Black-Flycatcher  
Karoo Scrub-Robin  
Kalahari Scrub-Robin  
Red-backed Scrub-Robin  
White-browed Robin-Chat  
Short-toed Rock-Thrush  
African Stonechat  
Tractrac Chat  
Southern Anteater-Chat  
Mountain Wheatear  
Familiar Chat  
Collared Sunbird  
Scarlet-chested Sunbird  
Marico Sunbird  
White-breasted Sunbird  
Dusky Sunbird  
Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver  
Scaly Weaver  
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver  
Sociable Weaver  
Holub's Golden-Weaver  
Lesser Masked-Weaver  
Southern Masked-Weaver  
Red-billed Quelea  
Southern Red Bishop  
Fan-tailed Widowbird  
Grosbeak Weaver  
Black-faced Waxbill  
Common Waxbill  
Cut-throat  
Red-headed Finch  
Violet-eared Waxbill  
Southern Cordonbleu  
Green-winged Pytilia  
Red-billed Firefinch  
Brown Firefinch  
Pin-tailed Whydah  
Shaft-tailed Whydah  
House Sparrow

Great Rufous Sparrow  
Cape Sparrow  
Southern Gray-headed Sparrow  
Cape Wagtail  
African Pied Wagtail  
African Pipit  
Yellow-fronted Canary  
Black-throated Canary  
Yellow Canary  
White-throated Canary  
Golden-breasted Bunting  
Cape Bunting  
Lark-like Bunting  
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting

**THE END - CHEERS!**



**African Wood-Owl by  
client David Graham**