

Itinerary, Namibia Birding Essentials - Fangs and Feathers



FANGS & FEATHERS
WILDLIFE ADVENTURES

Namibia Birding Essentials – Tour Itinerary 13 days (with Caprivi Strip extension option)

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Tour Background

This 13-day tour consists of 11 full days of birding, with the 1st day being an arrival day with an afternoon's birding and the morning of the 13th day when you will fly home from Windhoek. The tour is recommended for the individual who loves wide-open spaces and arid zone birding, mixed with the opportunity to see some amazing African big game in Etosha National Park towards the end of the trip. The trip offers the majority of Namibia's special birds. A four-day tour extension into the Caprivi Strip will offer one the opportunity to see a greater number of species, which are synonymous with the sub-tropical savannahs of Southern Africa. The tour starts and finishes in the capital of Windhoek.

Some of the days will involve long drives, the travelling is enjoyable with amazing landscapes and we bird as we go. These stops can be anything from 5 to 30 minutes long, depending on what birds are about. The trip is moderately paced, and the bird activity usually slows down between 12:00 to 15:00. The coast has a very pleasant climate throughout the year, with the cold Atlantic having a moderating effect.

Winters are cold at night with temperatures dropping below 10°C and midday temperatures reaching around 30°C. The summer months (November to March) are much hotter and temperatures can exceed 40°C. Optimum months are considered to be June to October, but early winter months are well worthwhile.



Typical Namib Desert scenery

The birding is considered to be easy in terms of the physical demands. We tend to remain in fairly close proximity to our vehicles when birding from the road edges. We may walk distances up to 2km, but our walks are generally less than that. If you

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are of moderate levels of fitness, you should not have any trouble with the physical demands of the tour.

Food and accommodation are considered moderate to good, with a well-developed tourism sector. There are times when things might not go according to plan and may be out of our control, some patience will be required while we resolve the issue. Some examples could include road deviations, roadblocks, broken down trucks on roads that block our passage, and bush fires.

A valid passport is required and must be valid for at least six months past your intended stay. Visas are required for some nations and we advise that you check the visa requirements for your home country during the initial stages before we start planning your tour. Feel free to make contact with us if you require any advice.

The trip cost includes:

- Accommodation;
- Local guides;
- All Meals, from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 14;
- Bottled drinking water;
- Tour leader;
- Spotting scope and playback device (bird calls);
- Transfers to and from airport;
- Any entrance fees to birding sites;
- Checklists.

The trip cost excludes:

- Any International or domestic flights;
- Any tips for tour leaders;
- Snacks on-route;
- Additional drinks, apart from bottled water;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- Tips;
- Visa fees and travel insurance;
- Airport taxes if applicable;
- Excursions not included in the tour itinerary;
- Extras in hotels such as laundry service, minibars, room service, tips for optional luggage porters;
- Telephone calls;
- Personal items;
- Medical fees;
- Other items or services not specifically mentioned as being included.

The birds mentioned in bold in this itinerary are those species, which are endemic or near endemic and are considered arid-zone specials to Namibia and South Africa.

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Day 1 – Arrive Windhoek, Avis Dam or Daan Viljoen Nature Reserve

*Note: Species indicated in **bold** text are priority species on this tour, due to the level of endemism or rarity, or because they are simply found in Namibia more easily than other parts of the Southern African bio-region.*

You will be met at Windhoek airport by our elected guide. Once we have cleared customs, which is usually a quick process, we will travel to Avis Dam Nature Reserve on the outskirts of Windhoek to start our birding, if time allows.

We usually stay in Windhoek, at either Casa Blanca Guesthouse or Arebusch Travel Lodge, on our first and last night of the tour.

Depending on your arrival time, we plan to spend the afternoon enjoying the fantastic birding which Windhoek offers the visiting birders. Avis Dam is situated on the outskirts of Windhoek and hosts a range of special birds. The dam is surrounded by rocky grassy hillsides, vegetated with Acacia and other species. We walk the area and should see a good variety of species. One of the main targets, **Rockrunner** is found here and requires a degree of patience to track down. This large terrestrial warbler, with its striking markings and lovely call, is a bird we have a chance of encountering on a few occasions across the tour.

Other target birds could include **Monteiro's Hornbill, Red-billed Spurfowl, Orange River Francolin, Bradfield's Swift, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Bathawk, Pirit Batis, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Grey-backed Cisticola (sub species C. s. winfhoekensis), Pale-winged Starling, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Mountain Wheatear, Scaly-feathered Weaver, Black-faced & Violet-eared Waxbill, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Long-billed Pipit and Cape Bunting (sub. species E. c. bradfieldi)**

Secondary more widespread species would include the likes of Namaqua, laughing, Red-eyed and Cape Turtle Dove. African Hoopoe, African Goshawk, Rock Kestrel, White-backed Vulture, Cape Glossy Starling, Southern Fiscal, White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Southern Masked Weaver, White-rumped, Alpine and African Black Swift, African Rock Martin, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Cape White-eye, Cape Robin Chat, Cape Sparrow, Fort-tailed Drongo, Cape Teal, Black-headed Heron, South African Shelduck, Hadedda and Sacred Ibis.

Daan Viljoen Nature Reserve has a similar suite of avifauna. If your incoming flights arrive during the morning period then we may have enough time to do a combination of both locations.

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Rockrunner

Day 2 & 3 – Erongo Mountains

After an early morning sit-down breakfast, we depart the lodge for the harsh and very birdy Erongo Mountains situated approximately three hours to the north west of Windhoek. The drive is scenic and we expect to see many raptors such as Verreaux's, Martial, Booted and African Hawk Eagle. Hawks and falcons occurring include Pale Chanting Goshawk, Greater and Rock Kestrel and possibly Western Red-footed Kestrel (summer months). At times **Abdim's Stork** can be seen in flocks feeding along the road verges.

We spend two nights in the area and stay at either Erongo Wilderness Lodge or Camp Mara in the heart of the Erongo Mountain Conservancy. The main targets while here would include a host of species, the trickiest being the elusive **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**, which only occurs in Northern Namibia and Southern Angola. This bird will require an early morning start on day three, when we will hopefully hear them calling from the giant boulders from which they proclaim their territories.

We expect great views of the colourful **Rosy-faced Lovebird** and hope to obtain our first views of **Rüppell's Parrot** early in the tour.

Our full day here may include the following species **Augur Buzzard**, **Damara Red-billed Hornbill**, **Monteiro's Hornbill**, **Red-eyed Bulbul**, **Long-billed Pipit**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, **Carp's Tit**, **Pririt Batis**, **White-tailed Shrike (Ground Batis)**, **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Pearl-breasted Swallow**, **Chestnut-vented Warbler (Chestnut-vented Warbler)**, **Layard's Titbabbler (Layard's Warbler)**, **Kalahari Scrub Robin**, **Short-toed Rock Thrush**, **Shaft-tailed Whydah**, **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting**, **Pale-winged Starling**, **Short-toed Rock**

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Thrush, Dusky Sunbird, Chestnut Weaver, Great Sparrow, Violet-eared & Black-faced Waxbill and Black-throated Canary.

Some of the more widespread Southern African species occurring include Brown Snake Eagle, Martial Eagle, Booted Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Purple and Lilac-breasted Roller, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Acacia Pied Barbet, Rattling Cisticola, Black-chested Prinia, Mountain Wheatear, Green-winged Pytilia, Cape Turtle Dove and Namaqua Dove. Bearded Woodpecker, Grey Go-away Bird, Lesser Honeyguide and Cape Glossy Starlings, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Common Scimitarbill. Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Bearded Woodpecker, Black-backed Puffback, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Long-billed Crombec, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Marico Sunbird and Red-headed Finch.

During the evening we stand a chance of **Freckled Nightjar**, White-faced Scops and Verreaux's Eagle Owl. **Violet-backed Wood-hoopoe** another difficult special is found in the riparian zone of the Omaruru River. We have a couple of opportunities for this species during the tour.



Rüppell's Parrot

Day 4 - Spitzkoppe

After breakfast we make an interesting drive from the Erongo Mountains to the well-known Spitzkoppe on the edge of the Namib Desert. The trip will take us about four hours and we will bird along the way, stopping frequently to investigate bird parties along the gravel road. From here on out, we see very few tarred roads for the rest of the tour. Namibia has an intricate network of gravel roads, which provide access across this amazing country. The trips could produce species such as **Rüppell's Korhaan, Kori Bustard, Double Banded Courser, Sabota Lark (Bradfield's form).**

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Other more widely spread species include Large-billed, Red-capped and Spike-heeled Lark.

The Spitzkoppe is a series granite inselbergs rising from flat country to 1728m above sea level. It's a spectacular sight on approach and hosts some important species for us. The main one being the uncommon and difficult to find **Herero Chat**, named after the indigenous people of the region. The easily overlooked shy bird often requires bit of work to locate. The experience is rewarding however and we usually manage to track it down.



Herero Chat

Other arid-zone specials here include **Augur Buzzard, Pale-winged Starling, Bradfield's Swifts, Monteiro's Hornbill, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Dusky Sunbird, Black-throated Canary, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Ashy Tit, and Mountain Wheatear.** **Gray's Lark** is a possibility to the west of the Spitzkoppe, but we will stand a better chance of this localised plains dweller in Walvis Bay.

More widespread species found include **Verreaux's** and **Booted Eagle, Lanner** and **Red-necked Falcon, Bokmakierie, Cape Bunting, Black-chested Prinia, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater.**

The splendid **White-tailed Shrike (Ground Batis)** are common here and entertaining to watch as they move about the shrubs close to us. The interesting white-browed race of **Southern Fiscal (Fiscal Shrike)** may also be seen. Some interesting mammals occur in the area such as **Black Mongoose, Damara Ground Squirrel** and **Western Desert Elephant Shrew.**

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Day 5 – Walvis Bay

The drive from Spitzkoppe to Walvis Bay on the coast takes approximately three hours. If we have seen the **Herero Chat** the previous day, then we would make an early departure after breakfast for the Atlantic coastline. We pass through the historic town of Swakopmund on-route to Walvis Bay. We then check-in to our accommodation at Lagoon Lodge, situated close to the shoreline of the bay. The area is one of the best inter-tidal habitats for migratory shorebirds in Southern Africa and during the summer the numbers of migratory waders is staggering. Thousands of Greater and Lesser Flamingos and Great White Pelican are a regular feature and we will make some time to do some birding here.

The main two species while we are here are Namibia's only endemic, a true desert bird, the **Dune Lark** and **Gray's Lark**.

We embark on our **Dune Lark** mission by visiting the dry Kuiseb River bed, which creates the northern border of the massive Namib Desert dune sea. We should find the bird without too much trouble in true desert surroundings. **Gray's Lark** is a bird of featureless barren gravel plains and one hopes to encounter in the next two days. The pale form of the desert dwelling **Trac-trac Chat** is also found here and can be very obliging. **Damara Tern**, which makes Namibia the core of its West African distribution, may be seen along the coast between Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. This species is more likely during the Austral summer (November to March).

Secondary species found down the West Coast of Namibia and South Africa include Cape Cormorant, Crowned Cormorant, Hartlaub's Gull, Chestnut-banded Plover, White-fronted Plover, White-backed Mousebird, Greater Kestrel, Cape Crow, Chat Flycatcher, Cape Sparrow, Cape Wagtail and Pale Chanting Goshawk.



Dune Lark

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Day 6 – Walvis Bay to Brandberg (Damaraland)

After breakfast and some shore-side birding in front of the guesthouse, we make our way north along the Namib Desert coastline to Henties Bay, where we turn east across the Namib deserts gravel plains. It is here that we will search for **Gray's Lark** if we were unsuccessful in Walvis Bay. The coast of Namibia is well known for dense fog banks which roll-in from the Atlantic Ocean and can penetrate the desert for 20km. The fog may or may not burn-off on any particular day, but with luck the conditions will hopefully be favourable for birding on the morning we depart Walvis Bay.

Other larks on our hit list could include **Stark's Lark**, Grey-backed Sparrow Lark and the very widespread Red-capped Lark. The highly localised **Benguela Long-billed Lark**, a close relative of the more widespread Karoo Long-billed Lark, is found in the stonier areas around the Brandberg. Long-billed Larks have a characteristic whistle and, if active, can usually be located fairly easily. **Rüppell's Korhaan** is usually fairly common in the area and we should obtain good views of this attractive small bustard.



The Brandberg in Damaraland

We spend the night at either Brandberg Lodge in the town of Uis or White Lady Lodge closer to the Brandberg. The Brandberg is an impressive giant inselberg, which rises to 2606m above sea level. The area is truly wild and still sustains a wild population of desert dwelling lion and elephants.

The area holds a plethora of arid-zone species. Pale Chanting Goshawk is the common large hawk of the west, with Greater and Rock Kestrel also being common. Red-necked Falcon is widespread, but uncommon and we would be lucky to see one. The king of the African vultures, the Lapped-faced Vulture, make the Namib Desert it's home and we hope to spot this impressive creature.

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Bradfield's Swift is surprisingly common around the town of Uis, but can be a difficult bird to see well. Augur Buzzard also occurs in the area and we will keep our eyes on the rocky ridgelines for this handsome looking buzzard.

Some of the more common species found in the area include Bokmakierie, Cape Turtle Dove (Ring-neck), Namaqua Dove, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Pale-winged Starling, Karoo Chat, Familiar Chat, Sickle-winged Chat, White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Red-headed Finch, Bearded Woodpecker, Scaly-feathered Finch.



Benguela Long-billed Lark

Day 7 – Hobatere

After breakfast we bird the area around our accommodation before taking the road north to our next overnight, Hobatere Lodge, situated to the west of Etosha National Park. The drive will take approximately four hours and we will bird as we go.

Arriving at Hobatere in the early afternoon we will check-in to our comfortable accommodation. Once the day has cooled down, we will bird the area. The avifauna is diverse in this area and we should see a host of new species for the trip.

Special birds, some of which we may have already seen, include Monteiro's and **Damara Red-billed Hornbill**, **Violet Wood-hoopoe**, **Rüppell's Parrot**, **White-tailed Shrike**, **Short-toed Rock Thrush**, **Carp's tit**, **Rockrunner**, **Madagascar Olive Bee-eater** (summer) and **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**.

The area hosts the near-endemic **Bare-cheeked Babbler**, which has a restricted home range in this region and southern Angola. The bird occupies semi-arid woodlands with Mopani trees.

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The lodge grounds are irrigated and attract a great variety of species, which makes for relaxed birding. **Rosy-faced Lovebird, Black-cheeked Waxbill**, Black-throated Canary, Red-headed Finch, Lark-like Bunting, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting and Red-billed Quelea. **Chestnut Weaver** is common in this area and in summer the striking males are exciting to see. Eagles could include Batleur, Tawny Eagle, Martial Eagle, Brown, Black-chested Snake Eagle and African Hawk Eagle.

Owls include African Scops Owl, Southern White-faced Scops Owl, Pearl-spotted Owlet and Verreaux's Eagle Owl (Giant) some of which we may encounter during the evening while at Hobatere Lodge. Rufous-cheeked Nightjar is the regular nightjar in the area, while Bronze-winged Courser is known to occur too.

Mammals in the conservancy include **African Lion, African Elephant, Gemsbok (Southern Oryx) Cape Eland, Hartmann's Mountain Zebra, Southern Kudu, Porcupine, Spotted Hyaena, Caracal, African Wild Cat, Small-spotted Genet** and **Honey Badger**. We will most likely see a range of different antelope during our short stay here and predators are also possible.



White-tailed Shrike (Ground Batis)

Day 8 – Hobatere Lodge to Kunene River Lodge (Koakoland)

We do an early morning spot of birding before breakfast, followed by the road trip to the Kunene River, situated on the Angolan border, where we will spend the following days. The drive takes us approximately four hours and the first part of the drive will be on a tar road. Reaching the escarpment, the road drops down to the Kunene River with the views stretching into Angola. It is this area where we will stop and look for specials such as the sought-after **Grey Kestrel**. **Cinderella Waxbill** is a highly

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localised and sought-after species and is a “bogey bird” for many a Southern African lister. We have had good success on previous trips for this species and therefore have a good sense of what we need to do to find this species.

The road to the lodge takes us along approximately 60km of gravel road. Time dependent, we will stop and bird along this stretch. If possible we will bird at some of the creek crossings, which drain off the escarpment into the Kunene River.

Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush is another localised species more commonly found in Angola. This species is common within the riparian zone of the river and we should see a number of this skulky species.

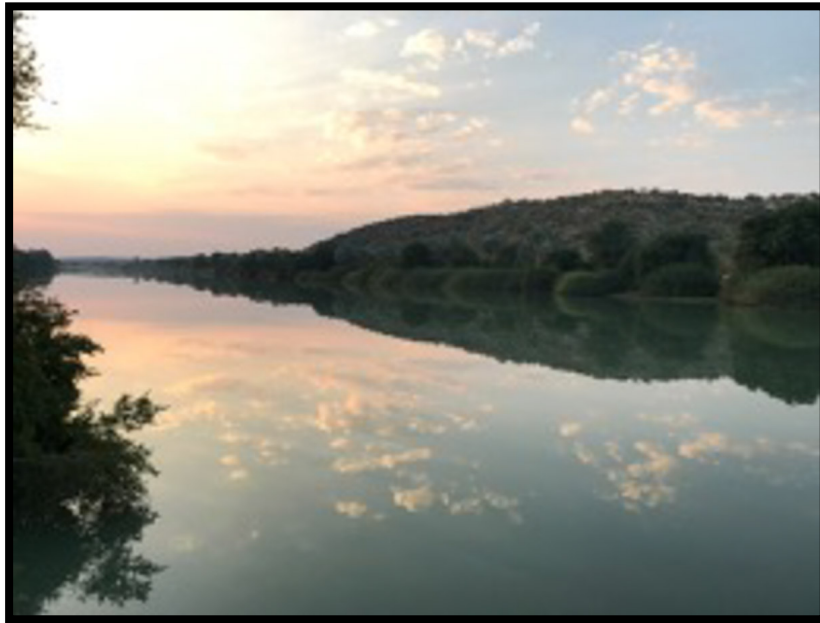
The area also offers some interesting forms of more wide-spread species which have been considered as unique species. The **Meve’s Long-tailed Starling** occurring here is being considered for separate species status (Kunene River Starling) and is a bird we will look at. These striking glossy purple and bronzy-blue birds sport long tails and are common in the fruiting trees around the lodge. The **Bennett’s Woodpecker** occurs in the stunted mopani in the area. The interesting sub-species found here is sometimes called Buys’s Woodpecker (*Campethera bennetti capricorni*) and displays clear yellow buff underparts, giving it a very different appearance to *C. b. bennetti*, which has a spotted under carriage.



Meve’s Long-tailed Starling (Kunene River Starling)

The **Orange River Francolin** (*Scleroptila lewalliantoides jugularis*) in the area, a scarce residence, has been considered in many circles to be a separate species and may become known as the Kunene River Francolin. The **Red-necked Spurfowl** (*Pternistis afer afer*) occurring along the river is quite different in appearance to the other sub-species and is also worth seeing.

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The Kunene River

The lodge is a beautiful place to relax and unwind and the lush green river margins offer a stark contrast to the harsh arid environment, which surrounds it.

Other specials include **Bradfield's Swift, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Monteiro's Hornbill, Rosy-faced Lovebird, White-tailed Shrike, Carp's Tit, Short-toed Rock Thrush**. Summer birds include **Chestnut Weaver, Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eater** and **Grey-headed Kingfisher** all are striking looking birds with great colour combinations.

Owls in the area include Verreaux's Eagle Owl and African Barred Owlet. Unexpected species, which find their way this far west, includes the skulky **White-browed Coucal** which can be heard around the lodge grounds. Other lodge ground birds we should see include **African Morning Dove, African Golden Oriole** and **Swamp Boubou** whose powerful call carries along the river.

Other birds we may encounter include Red-billed Teal, Striated Heron, Reed Cormorant, Golden Weaver, Water Thick-knee, African Green Pigeon, Red-faced Mousebird, Purple Roller, Pied Kingfisher, African Grey & Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Greater Kestrel, Bokmakierie, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Wire-tailed Swallow, Violet-eared Waxbill.

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Cinderella Waxbill

Day 9 – Kunene River

We plan to do a day trip to the Zebra Mountains to the west of the lodge, if this is possible at the time. We have made this trip on two consecutive tours, but the feasibility of doing this depends on the good will of the Himba tribes whose land one must cross to reach this remote and impressive place. Assuming we will be able to visit the area, our big target here would be the **Angolan Cave Chat**. This near-endemic known from a few sites on the Angolan Escarpment, was discovered in Namibia by a botanist surveying the area in 2013. The site is an hour and a half drive from the lodge and requires a very early morning start with packed breakfasts. Despite our 100% strike rate on this beautiful bird previously, it remains a difficult customer and there remains a fair chance that we might not hear or see this species.

The trip however offers us a good chance to search for **Cinderella Waxbill** since we cross multiple drainage lines, some with permanent water where the Himba tribes people water their Nguni cattle. It is these small waterholes that the Cinderellas often use, along with Blue Waxbill and other seedeaters. Other species we could encounter while out here include **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**, **White-tailed Shrike**, **Monteiro's Hornbill**, **Rüppell's Parrot**, **Short-toed Rock Thrush**, **Carp's Tit** and **Bare-cheeked Babbler**.

If we are unable to visit the Zebra Mountains, then we would spend the day birding in the vicinity of Kunene River lodge to search for **Cinderella Waxbill** in the creek lines which drain out of the hills. All the other specials discussed would be possible without a trip to the Zebra Mountains, if we are unable to do that on the day of the tour.

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Angolan Cave Chat

Day 10 & 11– Etosha National Park

After breakfast and some birding around the lodge grounds, we embark on the approximately six-hour trip to the iconic Etosha National Park. The Park is situated to the south east of the Kunene River and we will spend the following two nights here.

Etosha is very well known for its Lion, Cheetah, Leopard and African Elephants. The vast pan which is the centrepiece of this 20 000km² park, only floods after exceptional rains every 10 years or so. We will either stay at Namatoni or Halali Rest Camp or just outside the park at Makuti Lodge or other, depending on availability at the time of booking.

On the birding front we build a visit to Etosha into the program because apart from being a truly spectacular place, there are a diverse array of savannah species on the menu for us. The specials include birds such as **Black-faced Babbler, African Pygmy Falcon, Southern Pied Babbler, Burchell's Sandgrouse, Double Banded Sandgrouse, Violet-backed Wood-hoopoe, Tinkling Cisticola, Monteiro's Hornbill, Damara Red-billed Hornbill, Carp's Tit, Blue Crane** and **Pink-billed Lark**.

The raptors are diverse and we may see Tawny Eagle, Martial Eagle, Brown Snake Eagle, Black-chested Snake Eagle and Batleur. Vulture include Lapped-faced, White-backed and the scarce **White-headed Vulture**. Owls can be sought in the large predator proof rest camps at night. At Halali we often take a walk with our torches after dinner, which can turn up African Scops Owl, Southern White-faced Scops Owl and Western Barn Owl. Pearl Spotted Owlet is also found in the park, along with Verreaux's Eagle Owl and Spotted Eagle Owl.

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Hawks and falcons are diverse and include the following **Red-necked Falcon**, Lanner Falcon, **African Pygmy Falcon**, Greater Kestrel, African Rock Kestrel, Black-winged Kite, Yellow-billed Kite (summer), Pale Chanting Goshawk, Gabar Goshawk, **Owambo Sparrowhawk**, Little Sparrowhawk, **Bat Hawk (rare)**, **Red-footed Falcon (summer)**.

The vast grassy plains adjacent to the pan produce a variety of different lark species that include Red-capped Lark, Spike-heeled Lark and Grey-backed Sparrowlark. The sought after **Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark** and **Pink-billed Lark** also occur in loose flocks. The many waterholes are a good place to see the former species when they come to drink during the morning. Dusky Lark is known to frequent the park during the summer months, when the area is transformed to a vivid green landscape.

Secretary Bird is a bird many first timers to Africa want to experience. The magnificent snake-eating raptors are one of the most stately looking birds in Africa and we often encounter them in the act of stomping on, killing and then devouring a snake. It is an unsettling act to witness and adds interest surrounding this great species.



Monteiro's Hornbill

The World's heaviest flying bird, the **Kori Bustard** is another species which can be regarded as common in Etosha and we expect to obtain sightings of the avian giant with male birds standing up to 1.3m in height and reaching 12kgs. Other smaller bustards include **Northern Black Korhaan** on the open plains and **Red-crested Korhaan** in the woodlands.

Double-banded Coursers are common in the open areas and on occasion the rare nomadic **Burchell's Courser** is also seen.

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The following list is not comprehensive, but gives one a feel for the diversity of birds here: Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Lesser Masked Weaver, Barred Wren Warbler, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Chinspot Batis, Kurrichane Thrush, Groundscraper Thrush, Greater Blue-eared Starling, White-crowned Shrike, Desert Cisticola, Red-billed Spurfowl.

Being one of the most impressive conservation areas on the continent, you are bound to add many species to your mammals lists. Antelope species may include specials such as the diminutive browsing **Damara Dik-Dik** and **Black-faced Impala**, both having small distribution ranges and best seen here. **Greater Kudu**, **Blue Wildebeest**, **Plains (Burchell's Zebra)**, **Springbuck**, **Gemsbok (Southern Oryx)** are all prolific here. In the winter, which is the dry season here, game concentrates around the many limestone waterholes to drink.

Etosha must have the best array and densities of wildlife around waterholes of any park anywhere in the world, which makes it a brilliant location for the wildlife enthusiast. In addition to this, the population of **Black (Hooked-lipped) Rhino** remains the most intact in the world at this stage. The African Elephant, which occur here normally, are a light grey, almost ghostly appearance from the limestone derived dust, which collects on their hides. They are relatively short tusked compared to other **African Elephant** on the continent, and this is attributed to mineral deficiencies in their diets. They are however some of the biggest "ellies" in Africa, and one can expect phenomenal view and experiences with them.



A typical Etosha waterhole scene

There is also a healthy population of **African Lion** and **Cheetah** in the park. We usually see lion on a daily basis, even two or three times per day. **Cheetah** on the other-hand is trickier to locate here, but if we are lucky we may find them. **Leopard**

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occur too, and experiencing an encounter just requires some luck and being in the right place at the right time. If our stars are aligned we might find one on the Dik-Dik drive in the early morning or just prior to sunset while looking for **Black-faced Babbler** and **Tinkling Cisticola**.

Spotted Hyaena also occur and as does the rarer **Brown Hyaena** which we would be very lucky to see. Smaller predators include **Honey Badger (Ratel)**, **African Wild Cat**, **Caracal (Rooikat)**, **Cape Fox** and the ever-present **Black-backed Jackal**.

The mongooses are diverse and include **Banded Mongoose** at Namatoni Rest Camp, which is always a highlight. The tiny **Dwarf Mongoose** frequent the termite mounds. The rusty coloured **Slender Mongoose** with black tail tip is seen in scrubby areas and in the woodlands and **Yellow Mongoose** frequents the open plains. We may also come across a band of the ever-alert **Meerkat (Surricat)**.



Violet-backed Wood-hoopoe

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Damara Red-Billed Hornbill

Days 12 – Etosha National Park to Windhoek

We recommend spending the last evening in Windhoek and then catching your homebound flight the following day (day 13). This will liberate time during the morning s drive in Etosha.

Note: For the serious mammal enthusiast we recommend spending three nights in Etosha on this tour. This will give you better odds of seeing some of the predators and exploring more of the wonderland. We also conduct wildlife safaris to Etosha National Park, which are usually seven nights long.

Day 13 – Depart Windhoek

Depending on your departure flights we may have some time in the morning for a birding session, before making the forty-minute drive to the airport. If we do, then we would most likely visit Avis Dam Nature Reserve, which always has something good in store for us. This tour will be a special one, and you will discover for yourself that this is indeed a very special part of the World.

End of 13-day tour. Fly from Windhoek to your home country

Extension Option

We offer a five-night extension into the Caprivi Strip. This is the long 450km strip of Namibia, which stretches eastwards separating Botswana from Angola and meeting

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Zimbabwe. The region offers an entirely different suite of savannah species found on our eastern South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe tours. We will visit the Okavango River, Muhango Game Reserve and the Kuando River, to name some of the birding areas. The target species would include some scarce and difficult to find Miombo Woodland species only located in this part of Southern Africa, such as the rare resident **Sousa's Shrike**, one of the toughest species in Southern Africa to see. The tricky **Sharp-tailed Starling**, whose core range occurs through Angola and western Zambia. **Rufous-bellied Tit** is a miombo woodland special and Angola Swallow occasionally drifts south of the Angola border into extreme northern Namibia. Other special birds include the scarce and desired **Pel's Fishing Owl** and **White-backed Night Heron**. Others include the localised **Brown Fire Finch**, **Hartlaub's Babbler**, **Bradfield's Hornbill** and **Chirping Cisticola**. The Okavango River produces specials **Rock Practincole** (summer), **African Skimmer**, **Racket-tailed Roller** and **Western-banded Snake Eagle** to name some of them.



Racket-tailed Roller

Day 13 – Etosha to Rundu

The drive from Namatoni to Etosha takes approximately six hours since we bird on-route. There are a couple of options we use for our overnight accommodation. After check-in we then do some birding in the woodlands in the area and search for scarce species such as **Rufous-bellied Tit**, **Sharp-tailed Starling** and **Racket-tailed Roller**. **Bradfield's Hornbill** also occurs, along with **Green-capped Eremomela**, **Hartlaub's Babbler**, **Wood Pipit** (summer).

Three species of coucal occur in the area, namely **Senegal**, **White-browed** and **Coppery-tailed Coucal**. Waterbirds in summer include **Lesser Moorhen**, **Allen's**

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Gallinule, African Pygmy Goose, Greater Painted Snipe, Rufous-bellied Heron and Slaty Egret and Little Bittern on the flood plains.

Day 14- Rundu to Divundu Area (overnight Shamvura Lodge or other)

The following morning after breakfast, we make the two-hour drive to Shamvura lodge on the banks of the Kavango River. This long-standing birding establishment is well-known for the special birds which occur on it's door step. These include the illusive and sought-after **Souza's Shrike**, and just as tricky **Sharp-tailed Starling**, which has the potential to show-up throughout this extension.

We will spend the late morning and afternoon birding the vicinity of the lodge and gravel roads in the general area looing for bird parties. If we are lucky we may obtain views of either of the aforementioned species. The wooded areas can hold sought after species and difficult species such, **Racket-tailed Roller, Arnot's Chat, Grey-headed Parrot** and **Tinkling Cisticola**. Other classy birds include **Dickinson Kestrel, White-breasted Cuckoo Shrike, Stierling's Wren Warbler, African Barred Owlet, Coqui Francolin**.

Day 15 – Muhango Game Reserve day trip (overnight Shamvura Lodge or other)

Today we drive to the very productive Muhango Game Reserve on the banks of the Okavango River. The birding here is very diverse, as are the mammals. The reserve is home to **African Lion, African Buffalo, African Elephant, Hippo, Nile Crocodile** and a diverse suite of antelope. There is a healthy population of **Sable** and **Roan Antelope**, which occur here. The swamps hold two specials, the **Red Lechwe** and very shy, rarely seen **Sitatunga**.

The birding is varied and the following is a shortlist of the specials which occur **Wattled Crane, Long-toed lapwing, African Pygmy Goose, African Skimmer, Western-banded Snake Eagle, African Hobby, Slaty Egret, Dwarf Bittern, Swamp Boubou, Rufous-bellied Tit, Tinkling, Luapula and Chirping Cisticola, Greater Swamp Warbler, Green-capped Eremomela, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Hartlaub's** and **Black-faced Babbler** and **Brown Firefinch**.

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African Barred Owlet

Other species more widespread in Southern Africa include Brown Snake Eagle, Martial Eagle, Saddle-billed Stork, African Openbill, Goliath Heron, and Dwarf Bittern. The reed beds along the river hold both Brown-throated and Holub's Golden Weaver. The woodlands are home to colourful Meve's and Burchell's Starlings. Bee-eaters include Southern Carmine and White-fronted Bee-eater. Collared Pratincole can be seen on the floodplains. Smaller raptors include Little Sparrowhawk, Dark Chanting Goshawk, and Little-banded Goshawk. The colourful rollers include Lilac-breasted, Purple and Broad-billed. Hornbills also occur and we should see Monteiro's and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill. This list is by no means complete and we expect to see additional species to this.



Wattled Crane

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Day 16 – Divundu area (overnight Shamvura or other)

We spend the morning in an effort to locate the difficult **Souza's Shrike**, most likely unseen till this point in the trip, since mornings are the best time to search for it. We walk the woodlands where it usually perches a few metres from the ground and will require a group effort to locate. If we are successful in finding it, we will divert our efforts to **Sharp-tailed Starling**, if not seen already in the preceding days. Other specials could include **Rufous-bellied Tit** as well as the scarce and beautiful **Racket-tailed Roller**.



Souza's Shrike

Day 17 – Caprivi Strip to Windhoek

Today requires a full days drive, which will take us approximately 9 hours to reach Windhoek. We will stop along the way to bird if possible and will have lunch on-route. We check-in to our comfortable guesthouse in Windhoek and enjoy dinner together.

Day 18 Depart Windhoek

We may have time for some last birding around Windhoek before your return flights home.

This tour will be like none other you have ever experienced and will prove to be a truly memorable one. Please note we organise similar format tours within South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. If you would like to enquire, please email Matt at fangsfeathers@gmail.com, alternately matt@fangsandfeathers.co.za Mobile phone: +27 60 983 8513. Whatsapp text or call is also a very good way to contact me.