

ANN AND ROLAND GO BIRDING IN SOUTH AFRICA

NOVEMBER 3RD – 23RD 2023

TRAVEL

We flew from Manchester to Amsterdam and then Johannesburg on the way out.

The return journey involved an internal flight from Durban to Johannesburg and then to Amsterdam and Manchester. No problems with any of the flights apart from some lengthy layovers!

LOGISTICS

All the arrangements within South Africa were handled by Cheepers Africa and our guide was Kevin Forsberg. We had birded with him round the Cape in 2016 and had found him to be excellent at his job and a very nice man. Many happy memories of this trip. 😊

ITINERARY

We started off in the Rust-De-Winter area then moved north to Magoebaskloof, Mount Sheba, Kruger NP, Wakkerstroom, Mkuze Game Reserve, St. Lucia, Mtunzini and Durban, thus covering a good range of altitudes and habitats.

ACCOMMODATION

All our accommodation was good to excellent. No complaints whatsoever except for the last place but it would have been nice to have been informed beforehand where changes had been made.

Zaagkuilsdrift Lodge replaced by Chaemeleon Lodge

Bramasole Guest House

Mount Sheba

Kruger Satara camp

Kruger Skukuza Camp,

Kruger Pretorius Camp

Wakkerstroom Country Inn

Mkhuze Game Reserve replaced with Ghost Mountain Inn

Kingfisher Lodge, St. Lucia

Birds of Paradise B&B,

Gateway Country Lodge replaced with De Charmoy Guest House

DIARY

The birds we saw each day are listed in italics below each diary entry. There is a full list of all the species we saw right at the end.

There is also a list of mammals etc seen each day below the bird list.

November 3rd.

Travel.

Overnight (4 hours!) at City Lodge Hotel.

November 4th. Day One

Up again at 4h30 for a wonderful buffet breakfast prior to meeting with Kevin at 6 and off we went in his comfortable Ford Everest. A bit cool and cloudy as we headed off to Zaagkuilsdrift Road, an

area very popular with local birders. We notched up 50 species, six of which were lifers 😊 before arriving at Kgomo-Kgoma floodplain by which time it was rather warm! Banded mongoose and Kudu were seen within a Special Breeds Farm and a Caracal later crossed in front of us 😊

There was a lot of heat haze by the time we arrived and nothing new but we spotted another 4 lifers between there and Gauteng where we almost immediately saw a group of Plains zebra and Blue wildebeest.

Malachite kingfisher posed well at the aptly named Kingfisher Restaurant and it was lovely to see (and hear) 3 different species of *Weaver* (*Lesser masked*, *Southern masked* and ***Scaly feathered***) busy at their nests. Fascinating to watch. *Arrow-marked babbler* joined the list soon after as did a couple of *Crested francolin* poking about in something tasty :0 on the road as we headed towards our accommodation where we had an hour or so to relax before heading out again around 4. We saw very little which was somewhat disappointing – the gate to the track where we were expecting to see Verreaux's eagle owl was locked. It had also gone cooler and was very overcast

Tea at the Kingfisher was delicious – so glad I plumped for the Ostrich which was amazingly tasty and tender – we didn't come across it anywhere else much to our disappointment. 😞

There were lots of Hartebeest when we got "home" and we also saw 2 Southern african springhare which was a great bonus 😊

A great day and so lovely to be out with Kevin again as he is a very enthusiastic birder and full of background information about anything and everything plus he is very obliging and just a great chap.

African Darter

African Fish Eagle

African Grey Hornbill

African Hawk-Eagle

African Palm Swift

African Pipit

African Sacred Ibis

African Wattled Lapwing

Arrow-marked Babbler

Barn Swallow

Black-chested Prinia

Black-headed Heron

Blacksmith Lapwing

Black-winged Kite

Black-winged Stilt

Blue Waxbill

Brown Snake Eagle

Brown-crowned Tchagra

Brown-hooded Kingfisher

Burchell's Starling

Burnt-necked Eremomela

Cape Starling

Cape Wagtail

Chestnut-vented Warbler

Chinspot Batis

Common Myna (Introduced)

Crested Barbet

Crested Francolin
Crimson-breasted Shrike
Crowned Lapwing
Dark-capped Bulbul
Diederik Cuckoo
Egyptian Goose
Fork-tailed Drongo
Glossy Ibis
Great Egret
Great Sparrow
Green Wood Hoopoe
Green-winged Pytilia
Grey Go-away-bird
Hadada Ibis
Hamerkop
Helmeted Guineafowl
Jacobin Cuckoo
Laughing Dove
Lesser Honeyguide
Lesser Masked Weaver
Levaillant's Cuckoo
Lilac-breasted Roller
Magpie Shrike
Malachite Kingfisher
Marico Flycatcher
Namaqua Dove
Natal Spurfowl
Neddicky
Pale Flycatcher
Pearl-spotted Owlet
Pied Crow
Pin-tailed Whydah
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Firefinch
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea
Red-billed Teal
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Mousebird
Red-knobbed Coot
Ring-necked Dove
Sabota Lark
Scaly-feathered Weaver
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Pied Babbler
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Spotted Flycatcher
Spur-winged Goose

Squacco Heron
Swainson's Spurfowl
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Village Weaver
Violet-eared Waxbill
Wattled Starling
Western Cattle Egret
Whiskered Tern
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
White-faced Whistling Duck
White-rumped Swift
White-throated Swallow
Willow Warbler
Wing-snapping Cisticola
Yellow Canary
Yellow-billed Duck
Yellow-crowned Bishop
Zitting Cisticola
95 species of which 15 were lifers

Banded Mongoose
Greater Kudu
Caracal
Impala
Plains Zebra
Blue Wildebeest
Hartebeest
Southern African Springhare

November 5th. Day Two

A much nicer start to the day with blue skies, no breeze and warm in the sun as we had a podge round the lovely gardens (all native plants) at the ungodly hour of 5h45. It was quieter than expected though we were able to see *White-bellied sunbird* properly and watch the hirundines and swifts. Good views too of *Red-bellied buffalo weaver*, *Marico flycatcher*, *Long-billed crombec* but my suspected woodpecker turned out to be an *Arrow-marked babbler* tapping on a car's wing mirror.

As we left this lodge, we stopped to watch a family of Banded mongoose frolicking on the grass.

A bit of a drive round (a respectable 20 degrees now) to see what else we could find before breakfast wasn't particularly fruitful apart from seeing *White-browed scrub robin* well along with *Sabota lark* and *Brown-crowned tchagra*. We were also pleased to see Warthog, Waterbuck, Baboon, Topi and Buffalo. Breakfast was calling so back to the Kingfisher to watch the weavers (some bonking going on) but we also saw *African darter*, *Cattle egret*, *Egyptian geese*, *Black-winged kite* and a good-sized Monitor lizard. A walk round the grounds after eating produced Nyala, Zebra, *Lesser-striped swallow*, *Crested barbet*

As we set off for pastures new, *Rufous-naped lark*, ***Black-collared barbet***, Brubru, ***Meve's starling***, ***Groundscraper thrush*** joined the list but we were saddened to see a deceased *Southern white-faced owl* on the road.

No stopping for birds on the next part of the trip and I wish I had seen the sign for “Owls for the next 5kms” sooner then I could have had a photo! We were travelling through an area with lots of silos which attract vermin which in turn attract owls.

House sparrows were seen at a petrol station plus *White-necked raven* and *Long-crested eagle* just before the turning to our next lodge.

A few stops along the track enabled us to add birds such as *Levaillant’s cisticola*, *jackal buzzard*, *Yellow bishop* and *Cape canary* to our list.

This lodge has themed rooms and we were allocated the Jade Room. We would have preferred the Loire but were just happy to have an interesting room with a balcony and no stairs!

A walk in the forest at 4 was very pleasant but didn’t live up to the hype. There were birds calling but we only managed to see *Hadada ibis*, ***Square-tailed drongo*** and a Millipede!

We adjourned to the gardens where we fared much better with ***Drakensburg prinia***, glimpses of ***Barratt’s warbler***, *Cape white-eye* and a couple of other species plus a Vervet monkey.

African Black Swift

African Darter

African Grey Hornbill

African Palm Swift

African Pied Wagtail

African Wattled Lapwing

Arrow-marked Babbler

Barn Swallow

Barratt’s Warbler

Black-backed Puffback

Black-collared Barbet

Blacksmith Lapwing

Black-winged Kite

Blue Waxbill

Brown-crowned Tchagra

Brown-hooded Kingfisher

Brubru

Burchell’s Starling

Cape Canary

Cape Starling

Cape Wagtail

Cape White-eye

Chestnut-vented Warbler

Common Myna (Introduced)

Crested Barbet

Crested Francolin

Crowned Lapwing

Dark-capped Bulbul

Drakensberg Prinia

Egyptian Goose

Fork-tailed Drongo

Greater Striped Swallow

Grey Go-away-bird

Groundscraper Thrush

Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guineafowl
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Jackal Buzzard
Laughing Dove
Lesser Masked Weaver
Lesser Striped Swallow
Levaillant's Cisticola
Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Swift
Long-billed Crombec
Long-crested Eagle
Maggie Shrike
Marico Flycatcher
Marico Sunbird
Meves's Starling
Pale Flycatcher
Pearl-breasted Swallow
Pied Crow
Purple Heron
Purple Roller
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
Red-eyed Dove
Reed Cormorant
Ring-necked Dove
Rufous-naped Lark
Sabota Lark
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Pied Babbler
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Square-tailed Drongo
Striped Kingfisher
Village Weaver
Western Cattle Egret
White-bellied Sunbird
White-browed Scrub Robin
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
White-necked Raven
White-rumped Swift
White-throated Swallow
Yellow Bishop
Yellow-fronted Canary

81 species of which 34 were new for the trip and 7 were lifers

Banded Mongoose
Chacma baboon

Monitor lizard
Common Warthog
Southern Giraffe
Vervet Monkey
Tsessebe (Topi)
Impala
Cape Buffalo
Nile Monitor
Southern Tree Agama
Nyala
Plains Zebra

November 6th. Day Three

A 5h45 start as we were picking up David, our local guide, at a different hotel. He turned out to be a very jolly and excellent guide with a good ear, fantastic eyesight and all the information you could ask for about the local birds and sites. He was also very well clued up on the trees, plants, insects etc

We had a great time with him as we birded the road leading up to the Windbush Plantation before embarking on a three-hour walk into the forest. **Cape parrot** was one of our first finds followed by *Bar-tailed apalis*, *Cape robin chat*, *African yellow warbler*, **Sombre greenbul**, *Sweet waxbill* and the list goes on!

We saw the tallest trees in Africa – eucalyptus mightn't you know planted in 1906 and probably about 90m by now. Lots of Mexican pine too.

Our first bird of the walk was *Woodland warbler* followed by **Chorister robin chat**, *Yellow-streaked greenbul*, **Orange ground thrush**, **Krynsa turacao** A Green milkweed locust on the path aroused our interest and couldn't escape as he was missing a hind leg.

Time now for our packed breakfast. I thought Kevin was joking when he said it would be lunch too – 2 hard-boiled eggs and 2 small bananas was a very meagre portion indeed.

We now carried on to various spots known to David for target birds and mainly by the roadside.

By a bridge, Kevin and I disturbed an *African finfoot* which we had failed to find by the river. I don't know who was more surprised, the bird or us! It was very hot by now. But we were still spotting birds: *Paradise flycatcher*, *Spectacled* and *Thick billed weaver*, *Violet-backed starlings*, *Yellow-fronted tinkerbird* et al plus a few arguments between Kevin and David about IDs 😊. We spent a considerable amount of time looking for *Blue wood dove* which Kevin wanted to photograph.

An excellent day so far with 12 new lifers and when Kevin dropped David off by the pot 'n Plow Café we bobbed in for a snack.

Back at the lodge Roland and I went to sit by the lake and enjoyed watching *Giant kingfisher*. When Roland went back to our room I stayed on writing my notes then having a bit of a walk. I was able to add *Little grebe*, *Pied wagtail*, *Reed cormorant* and *Purple heron* to the list.

We had seen a couple of signs saying "Beware of hippos" by the roadside today and David commented that 2 people had been killed recently when their car hit one crossing the road. Don't know what happened to the poor hippo though.

African Emerald Cuckoo
African Finfoot

African Green Pigeon
African Hoopoe
African Palm Swift
African Paradise Flycatcher
African Pied Wagtail
African Stonechat
African Woolly-necked Stork
African Yellow Warbler
Amethyst Sunbird
Barn Swallow
Bar-throated Apalis
Bat Hawk
Black Saw-wing
Black-and-white Mannikin
Black-collared Barbet
Black-fronted Bushshrike
Black-headed Heron
Blue Waxbill
Blue-spotted Wood Dove
Bronze Mannikin
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Cape Batis
Cape Canary
Cape Parrot (Endemic) - VU
Cape Robin-Chat
Cape Starling
Cape Wagtail
Cape Weaver
Cape White-eye
Chorister Robin-Chat
Collared Sunbird
Common Buzzard
Common Myna (Introduced)
Crowned Eagle
Dark-capped Bulbul
Drakensberg Prinia
Egyptian Goose
Forest Buzzard
Forest Canary
Giant Kingfisher
Grey Cuckooshrike
Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guineafowl
Horus Swift
Jackal Buzzard
Klaas's Cuckoo
Knob-billed Duck
Knysna Turaco
Kurrichane Thrush
Lesser Honeyguide
Lesser Striped Swallow

Little Bee-eater
Little Grebe
Little Swift
Magpie Mannikin
Marabou Stork
Mountain Wagtail
Narina Trogon
Natal Spurfowl
Olive Bushshrike
Olive Thrush
Olive Woodpecker
Orange Ground Thrush
Pied Crow
Purple Heron
Purple Indigobird
Purple-crested Turaco
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Quelea
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Cisticola
Red-winged Starling
Reed Cormorant
Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Boubou
Southern Double-collared Sunbird
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Speckled Mousebird
Spectacled Weaver
Square-tailed Drongo
Swee Waxbill
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Thick-billed Weaver
Violet-backed Starling
White-browed Robin-Chat
White-fronted Bee-eater
White-rumped Swift
White-starred Robin
Yellow Bishop
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Yellow-breasted Apalis
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird
Yellow-streaked Greenbul
Yellow-throated Longclaw
Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler

100 species of which 65 were new for the trip and 12 were lifers

Vervet Monkey
Chacma Baboon

November 7th. Day Four

It had been raining when we went out at 5h30 with Kevin. Lovely views of *Northern double-collared sunbird* and we also saw *Dusky flycatcher* at last. *Black-headed puffback*, *Chorister* and *Cape robin chat* were showing and singing well. We got rained on a little but as it had fined up we walked up into the forest. We only saw *Orange ground thrush*, *Knysna turacao* (partially), *Jackal buzzard*, and *Barratt's warbler* which led us on a right old dance but I did have very good views of him albeit in the undergrowth. 😊 We missed seeing a couple of other birds as our guide was otherwise occupied with his camera.

Breakfast was late but at least we got what we ordered and were away by 9h30.

Amethyst sunbird, *Egyptian goose* and *Yellow bishop* were seen on the entrance road but we had no time to stop and look around.

It took us about 4 hours to get to Mount Sheba which was apparently a brilliant birding destination. We only stopped twice, firstly for fuel where we added *House sparrow* and *Village weavers* to the list and secondly in the mountains to enquire about and look for *Taiga falcon*. Fantastic cliffs and geology, an enterprising roadside lady vendor but no falcon. 😞

The weather was worsening and it was getting very windy. Pretty grim-looking by the time we started along the 10km track to our hotel but we managed to see a solitary ***Gurney's sugarbird*** along it.

Checked in, had lunch, rested and supposed to be out at 4 but the best laid plans.... Gale force winds, chucking it down. Ha, ha! It was so cold they brought us hot water bottles and a chocolate each around 3.30!

Ate at hotel. Worst T-bone ever but cracking log fire. Then the electricity went off. All night.

African Dusky Flycatcher

African Olive Pigeon

African Palm Swift

African Pied Wagtail

Amethyst Sunbird

Barratt's Warbler

Black-backed Puffback

Cape Canary

Cape Parrot (Endemic) - VU

Cape Robin-Chat

Cape Starling

Cape Vulture - VU

Cape Wagtail

Cape White-eye

Chorister Robin-Chat

Common Myna (Introduced)

Dark-capped Bulbul

Egyptian Goose

Familiar Chat

Giant Kingfisher

Gurney's Sugarbird

Hadada Ibis

Helmeted Guineafowl

House Sparrow (Introduced)

Jackal Buzzard

Knysna Turaco
Laughing Dove
Lesser Striped Swallow
Little Rush Warbler
Little Swift
Olive Thrush
Orange Ground Thrush
Pied Crow
Red-eyed Dove
Red-necked Spurfowl
Red-winged Starling
Reed Cormorant
Rock Martin
Southern Double-collared Sunbird
Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Square-tailed Drongo
Village Weaver
Wahlberg's Eagle
Western Cattle Egret
White-rumped Swift
Yellow Bishop
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler

49 species of which 9 were new for the trip and 1 was a lifer

November 8th. Day Five

Out at 6 to walk the extensive grounds with Kevin and fortunately the wind had dropped. Blue skies and sunshine galore but I still needed a jacket, especially in the shade. Again, the birding did not live up to expectation and we didn't go into the forest because it was so dark, dense and decidedly damp. We did, however see a Sykes's monkey near Reception and had much better views of *Olive bushshrike* than when out with David.

Breakfast at 7h30 was a cold buffet but then they brought out a hot breakfast menu too so we all had yummy omelettes and toast.

We left at 8h30 by which time it was clouding over and getting grimmer by the second. We stopped for ***Striped pipit*** 😊 on the track before it was enveloped in the mist, noting only a few other species before we hit the road proper heading off through some lovely scenery to Kruger NP, a place I had dreamt of visiting since my childhood thanks to David Attenborough et al. It was a much more acceptable 28 when we arrived at Orton Gate at midday. It was another 40kms to Satara camp and we drove there slowly spotting birds and beasts particularly my beloved elephants. ***Southern white-crowned shrike*** was a lifer and we added a few "new" birds to our trip list too.

At lunch there were several *House sparrows* looking for crumbs along with *Greater blue-eared* and ***Burchell's starlings***. A *Crested barbet* landed on the table across from us and there were *Brown-headed parrots* in the tree close by. On our way out, Kevin pointed out some Epauvette bats roosting in a tree near the restaurant.

Our late afternoon game drive was quieter, as expected, but we had great views of *Wattled starlings*, *Lesser grey shrike*, lots of *Swainson's francolins*, *Malachite kingfisher*, ***Orange-breasted waxbill*** and a perched *Tawny eagle* 😊.

Roland and I tried the special meat platter at dinner with sausages. Tasty enough but we wouldn't have it again.

Kevin had heard an *African scops owl* on his way to the restaurant but there was no sign of it after dinner or any other night.

African Dusky Flycatcher

African Grey Hornbill

African Olive Pigeon

African Palm Swift

African Stonechat

Arrow-marked Babbler

Barn Swallow

Bateleur - EN

Black-backed Puffback

Blacksmith Lapwing

Black-winged Stilt

Brown-crowned Tchagra

Brown-headed Parrot

Brubru

Burchell's Coucal

Burchell's Starling

Cape Batis

Cape Canary

Cape Crow

Cape Robin-Chat

Cape Starling

Cape Wagtail

Cape White-eye

Chorister Robin-Chat

Common Myna (Introduced)

Crested Barbet

Crowned Lapwing

Dark-capped Bulbul

Drakensberg Prinia

Egyptian Goose

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove

European Bee-eater

Familiar Chat

Fork-tailed Drongo

Giant Kingfisher

Greater Blue-eared Starling

Greater Double-collared Sunbird

Greater Striped Swallow

Grey Go-away-bird

Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark

Hadada Ibis

House Sparrow (Introduced)

Jackal Buzzard

Laughing Dove

Lesser Grey Shrike

Lesser Striped Swallow

Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Swift
Magpie Shrike
Malachite Kingfisher
Marabou Stork
Marico Sunbird
Namaqua Dove
Natal Spurfowl
Olive Bushshrike
Orange-breasted Waxbill
Pied Crow
Purple Roller
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Mousebird
Red-winged Starling
Ring-necked Dove
Rufous-naped Lark
Sabota Lark
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern White-crowned Shrike
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Speckled Pigeon
Striped Pipit
Swainson's Spurfowl
Swee Waxbill
Tawny Eagle - VU
Terrestrial Brownbul
Three-banded Plover
Wahlberg's Eagle
Wattled Starling
Western Cattle Egret
White-rumped Swift
Wing-snapping Cisticola
Wood Sandpiper
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-billed Stork
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-throated Longclaw
Zitting Cisticola

90 species of which 19 were new for the trip and 4 were lifers

Chacma Baboon
Leopard Tortoise
Impala
Common Warthog
African Savanna Elephant

Blue Wildebeest
Impala
Southern Giraffe
Steenbok
Greater Kudu
African Savanna Elephant
Steenbok
Common Hippopotamus
Waterbuck
Plains Zebra
Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat

November 9th. Day Six

Up at 4 and out at 5. A Wild cat was lying in wait for the swifts nesting near our huts.

No electricity in the camp.

Beautiful sunrise.

Excellent views of a *Bateleur* looking resplendent in the early sun but, unfortunately, I couldn't see him 😞 There are times when I hate birding from the car mostly when I can't get out or the guide/driver is blocking the view with his camera/phone 😊 Not so bad when it's chucking it down though!

A *Leucistic hornbill* flew in front of us but didn't land so Roland missed him.

No lions but we did see our first Cape buffalo cooling off in the water and a yawning Hippo with 2 young albeit at a distance. We passed a spot where people were watching playful baboons, mostly young, but there was no room for another vehicle and on our way back later on, the same people were still in prime position.

A small herd of elephants crossed the road in front of us – some very small ones – but my video through the windscreen was rubbish. We saw an absolutely massive herd all strung out across the savannah in the afternoon but looking into the sun meant no video for my very elderly mother-in-law who lives our trips vicariously through the photos and videos I send her whilst away.

There was still no electricity at lunchtime but the generator kicked back in as we were leaving, having seen *Violet-backed starling*, *Common scimitarbill*, *Crested* and *collared barbets* et al but we dipped on the *Bearded* woodpecker we had heard calling. There were plenty of starlings and sparrows around too.

Our afternoon drive was very quiet indeed. ***Monotonous lark*** was a lifer and we enjoyed great views of *Black-bellied bustard*.

A massive and very battle-scarred Giraffe had crossed slowly in front of us today and there were Vervet monkeys in the camp when we returned for dinner and delicious steaks were available now the electricity had been restored.

African Dusky Flycatcher
African Green Pigeon
African Grey Hornbill
African Openbill
Arrow-marked Babbler
Barn Swallow
Bateleur - EN
Black-backed Puffback

Black-bellied Bustard
Black-collared Barbet
Black-crowned Night Heron
Black-crowned Tchagra
Black-headed Oriole
Blacksmith Lapwing
Black-winged Kite
Black-winged Stilt
Blue Waxbill
Burchell's Coucal
Burchell's Starling
Cape Starling
Cardinal Woodpecker
Chinspot Batis
Common Myna (Introduced)
Common Scimitarbill
Crested Barbet
Crested Francolin
Crowned Lapwing
Dark-capped Bulbul
Egyptian Goose
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
European Bee-eater
Flappet Lark
Fork-tailed Drongo
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Green Wood Hoopoe
Green-winged Pytilia
Grey Go-away-bird
Hadada Ibis
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Jacobin Cuckoo
Jameson's Firefinch
Knob-billed Duck
Laughing Dove
Lesser Masked Weaver
Lesser Striped Swallow
Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Swift
Long-billed Crombec
Magpie Shrike
Marabou Stork
Marico Sunbird
Monotonous Lark
Namaqua Dove
Natal Spurfowl
Neddicky
Orange-breasted Bushshrike
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea

Red-breasted Swallow
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Cisticola
Red-faced Mousebird
Ring-necked Dove
Rufous-naped Lark
Sabota Lark
Senegal Lapwing
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Black Tit
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Ground Hornbill - VU
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Spectacled Weaver
Striated Heron
Swainson's Spurfowl
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Three-banded Plover
Violet-backed Starling
Wahlberg's Eagle
Wattled Starling
Western Cattle Egret
White-backed Vulture - CR
White-browed Scrub Robin
White-rumped Swift
White-throated Robin-Chat
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-billed Oxpecker
Yellow-billed Stork
Zitting Cisticola

92 species of which 19 were new for the trip and 3 were lifers

African Wildcat
Plains Zebra
Blue Wildebeest
Greater Kudu
African Savanna Elephant
Chacma Baboon
Northern Bushbuck
Southern Giraffe
Waterbuck
Impala
Common Hippopotamus
Chacma Baboon
Southern Giraffe
Cape Buffalo
Smith's Bush Squirrel

November 10th. Day Seven

A lie-in this morning as we weren't meeting up until 5h45 but as it was raining Kevin called the action off. Rats – we could have had more of a lie-in!

We did venture out though when the rain had slackened off and we had views of bedraggled *Golden-tailed woodpecker*, *Grey-headed bushshrike* et al and after breakfast I spotted a *Green wood hoopoe* inspecting a tree stump near our hut. It transpired that the female was in there with a couple of chicks.

It was very grey but warm when we set off for Skukuza, arriving at around 13h00. Several stops were made along the way at water holes, near the river etc for both birds and animals. Just before stopping at Tshokwane Trading Post and Picnic Site, we had seen *Saddleback stork* and as we were leaving the Post, we saw 3 of his young walking about. 😊 Other highlights along the way included a White rhino walking close to the road (VERY happy with that 😊 😊), Dwarf mongooses, a big Leopard tortoise, baby Spotted hyenas, a bathing Jackal, *Grey-headed gulls*, *Greater honeyguide* and *Woodland kingfisher*.

We were lucky enough to secure a table overlooking the river at Skukuza at lunch from where we saw *Black crane*, *Little and Great egrets*, a very big Nile crocodile, *African black duck*, *Pied kingfisher* and *Pied wagtail*.

Later on we drove down to the hide and added *Water thick-knee* to the day's list plus enjoyed watching the *Village weavers* displaying and tweeking their nests. *African cuckoo*, spotted by Roland flew across the road shortly after leaving but was chased from its landing spot by an irate *Fork-tailed drongo*!

During our short drive around under blue sunny skies, we were pleased to see *Golden breasted bunting*, *Hulab's weaver* and 3 more cuckoos – Roland spotted *Great spotted cuckoo* (ha, ha) and *both Levallants'* and *Jacobin* were close by with more landing as we watched. Quite a treat. An exciting finish to an excellent day. 😊

No lifers today.

African Black Duck

African Cuckoo

African Fish Eagle

African Green Pigeon

African Grey Hornbill

African Jacana

African Palm Swift

African Pied Wagtail

Ashy Flycatcher

Barn Swallow

Bateleur - EN

Black Crane

Black-backed Puffback

Black-bellied Bustard

Black-collared Barbet

Black-headed Heron

Blacksmith Lapwing

Black-winged Kite

Black-winged Stilt

Blue Waxbill

Brown Snake Eagle

Brown-headed Parrot
Burchell's Coucal
Burchell's Starling
Cape Starling
Cape White-eye
Chinspot Batis
Common Greenshank
Common Myna (Introduced)
Crested Barbet
Crested Francolin
Crowned Lapwing
Dark-capped Bulbul
Diederik Cuckoo
Egyptian Goose
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
European Bee-eater
Flappet Lark
Fork-tailed Drongo
Golden-breasted Bunting
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Great Egret
Great Spotted Cuckoo
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Greater Honeyguide
Green Wood Hoopoe
Grey Go-away-bird
Grey Heron
Grey-headed Bushshrike
Grey-headed Gull
Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guineafowl
Holub's Golden Weaver
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Jacobin Cuckoo
Knob-billed Duck
Laughing Dove
Levaillant's Cuckoo
Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Egret
Little Swift
Long-billed Crombec
Long-tailed Paradise Whydah
Maggie Shrike
Mourning Collared Dove
Namaqua Dove
Natal Spurfowl
Pied Kingfisher
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
Red-billed Firefinch
Red-billed Oxpecker

Red-billed Quelea
Red-breasted Swallow
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Cisticola
Red-faced Mousebird
Ring-necked Dove
Sabota Lark
Saddle-billed Stork
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Spectacled Weaver
Striated Heron
Swainson's Spurfowl
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Three-banded Plover
Village Weaver
Violet-backed Starling
Wahlberg's Eagle
Water Thick-knee
Wattled Starling
Western Cattle Egret
White-backed Vulture - CR
White-browed Scrub Robin
White-rumped Swift
Woodland Kingfisher
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-fronted Canary
103 species of which 21 were new for the trip and 0 were lifers

Vervet Monkey
White Rhinoceros
Southern Giraffe
Plains Zebra
African Savanna Elephant
Chacma Baboon
Blue Wildebeest
Common Dwarf Mongoose
Common Hippopotamus
Leopard Tortoise
Nile Crocodile
Spotted Hyena
Steenbok
Common Warthog
Smith's Bush Squirrel
Impala
Nile Crocodile
Bluetail Scrub Lizard

Greater Kudu
Impala
Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat

November 11th. Day Eight

Out at 5h45 for some pre-breakfast birding. I thought it was to be in the grounds but we had a short drive in glorious sunshine. Our first birds were a pair of *African hawk eagles* perched at the top of a tree and whilst we didn't score any lifers whilst out we had splendid views of various birds culminating with an *African goshawk* just behind our huts.

After breakfast we drove to Sabie stopping off at Nkhuhla for a quick shuftie – *Scarlet-chested sunbird* was stunning!

Other highlights of the morning included a Spotted hyena walking alongside us, a Flap-necked chameleon on the road saved from certain death by Kevin doing an emergency stop and by Roland moving him to a safer place, some baby Impalas still wobbly on their feet and good close views of *Water thick-knee*. A Hippo crossed the road further ahead of us but had disappeared by the time we got up there.

An early lunch was called for at Sabie and the usual slow service gave me plenty of time to watch the hippos in the river plus the low-flying swifts and swallows. There was also plenty of bird activity in the fig tree next to the restaurant and our table! A *Steppe eagle* and an *African fish eagle* also showed well across the river.

There was time for a quick shop after lunch and to look at the roosting bats before returning to our lodge.

Giant kingfisher was sitting up close and personal on the fence as we crossed the bridge over the Sabie River and we also saw one ***White crowned lapwing***. *Goliath heron* was new for the list. I was very pleased with my spot of a *Black-bellied bustard* sitting in the middle of a bush. 😊 It was really hot by now – 37 – and, not surprisingly, there wasn't much about. We arrived back at camp at 14h30 and Kevin had no plans to go out again until dusk around the Kruger Station Restaurant here which was a bit of a dead loss to say the least with nothing much about. The train experience was a bit of a let down too as we weren't actually eating in one of the carriages and the service was horrendously slow – it wasn't that busy and it took a good hour for the food to arrive. All very reminiscent of Gambia maybe time!

African Black Duck
African Fish Eagle
African Goshawk
African Green Pigeon
African Grey Hornbill
African Hawk-Eagle
African Hoopoe
African Jacana
African Palm Swift
African Pied Wagtail
African Spoonbill
African Wattled Lapwing
Arrow-marked Babbler
Ashy Flycatcher
Barn Swallow
Bateleur - EN
Bearded Woodpecker

Black-backed Puffback
Black-bellied Bustard
Black-collared Barbet
Black-crowned Tchagra
Black-headed Heron
Blacksmith Lapwing
Black-winged Stilt
Blue Waxbill
Brown Snake Eagle
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Burchell's Coucal
Burchell's Starling
Cape Starling
Cardinal Woodpecker
Chinspot Batis
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting
Common Greenshank
Common Myna (Introduced)
Common Sandpiper
Common Scimitarbill
Crested Barbet
Crested Francolin
Crowned Lapwing
Dark-capped Bulbul
Egyptian Goose
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
European Bee-eater
Fork-tailed Drongo
Giant Kingfisher
Golden-breasted Bunting
Goliath Heron
Great Egret
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Green Wood Hoopoe
Green-backed Camaroptera
Grey Go-away-bird
Grey Heron
Hadada Ibis
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Jacobin Cuckoo
Lappet-faced Vulture - EN
Laughing Dove
Lesser Masked Weaver
Lesser Striped Swallow
Levaillant's Cuckoo
Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Egret
Little Swift
Long-billed Crombec
Magpie Shrike
Marabou Stork

Mocking Cliff Chat
Mourning Collared Dove
Natal Spurfowl
Orange-breasted Bushshrike
Pearl-breasted Swallow
Pied Kingfisher
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Cisticola
Red-faced Mousebird
Red-winged Starling
Ring-necked Dove
Sabota Lark
Saddle-billed Stork
Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Black Tit
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Yellow White-eye
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Spectacled Weaver
Spotted Flycatcher
Steppe Eagle - EN
Striped Kingfisher
Swainson's Spurfowl
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Three-banded Plover
Village Indigobird
Village Weaver
Violet-backed Starling
Wahlberg's Eagle
Water Thick-knee
Wattled Starling
Western Cattle Egret
White-backed Vulture - CR
White-bellied Sunbird
White-breasted Cormorant
White-browed Scrub Robin
White-crowned Lapwing
White-fronted Bee-eater
White-rumped Swift
Woodland Kingfisher
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-billed Stork
Yellow-fronted Canar

118 species of which 14 were new for the trip and 2 were lifers

Chacma Baboon
Spotted Hyena
Steenbok
Southern Giraffe
Impala
Vervet Monkey
Greater Kudu
Flap-neck Chameleon
Common Warthog
Northern Bushbuck
Cape Buffalo
Common Hippopotamus
East African Serrated Mud Turtle
Banded Mongoose
Nile Crocodile
Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat

November 12th Day Nine

Another lovely morning when we met up for our pre-breakfast walk in the grounds at 5h30. I had put a shirt on over my t-shirt but didn't really need it. Just grand. 😊 It was very pleasant indeed wandering round in the sunshine and we added 2 more lifers to our list: the lovely **Bearded scrub robin** and **Lazy cisticola**! Cisticolas have such evocative names!! *White-fronted bee-eaters* were flying down by the river and we came across a rather confiding *White-browed robin chat*. A beautiful male Black-necked agami caught my attention and we later saw a female at breakfast. A birding group sitting next to us reminded us of why we don't do groups and the loud American leader would have done my head in in no time at all. He sure had a high opinion of himself and I wondered if he ever stopped talking.

We left at 8h30 for the drive to our last lodge here – Pretoriuskop, the oldest lodge in the park A Warthog boasting an *oxpecker* clinging to him proved to be very photogenic as did a few other mammals and by the time we spotted **Steirings wren-warbler** around 9h30 it was already 29 degrees.

There was much excitement further on with no less than 5 adult and 1 juvenile *Southern ground hornbills* seen close to the road. The juvenile had a yellow face and was being preened by an adult. Kevin explained that he would be about 2 years old and would stay with the adults until he was about 4 or 5. This was obviously a family feeding party. 😊

We added 3 more lifers to our list before lunch – **Yellow-throated bush sparrow**, **Bushveld pipit** and **Bennett's Woodpecker** but the most stunning bird of the morning had to be the *Red-headed weaver*! 😊

36 now and lunch at the Wimpy was better than expected. I had a nice salad with a lot more chicken in it than expected. They even had Stoney's ginger beer on draught! 😊

Roland went to sleep as soon as we got back to the hut but I chose to have a wander round outside, watching the monkeys and guineafowl mostly! Had I known there was a walking trail round the camp beforehand, I would have walked that. Annoying. However, the wind suddenly got up, it clouded over and the temperature dropped too. Quite a change – it was 24 when we went out for a drive at 4. No Black rhino unfortunately but we did see Klipspringer and a massive herd of around 250 Cape buffalo blocking the road and spreading

out either side of it. Fortunately they made way for us but Kevin still drove through rather gingerly. Very sensible!

No more lifers this afternoon but *Eurasian hobby*, a *Lizard buzzard* on its nest and a flock of *Red-collared widowbirds* were good to see as were more Dwarf mongoose just before the Lodge gates.

Red-billed oxpeckers and *Common scimitarbill* were nesting in one of the trees by our huts and a *Red-chested cuckoo* (heard almost constantly) was finally seen nearby at dusk.

I managed to dodge the burgers again at tea choosing Chicken fillets and veggies.

It had been lightning since about 6 and it looked like we were in for a storm.

Acacia Pied Barbet

African Black Duck

African Black Swift

African Goshawk

African Green Pigeon

African Hoopoe

African Palm Swift

African Pied Wagtail

Barn Swallow

Bateleur - EN

Bearded Scrub Robin

Bennett's Woodpecker

Black Crake

Black Cuckooshrike

Black-backed Puffback

Black-collared Barbet

Blacksmith Lapwing

Black-winged Kite

Blue Waxbill

Brown Snake Eagle

Brown-headed Parrot

Burchell's Coucal

Burchell's Starling

Bushveld Pipit

Cape Starling

Cape White-eye

Cardinal Woodpecker

Chinspot Batis

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting

Collared Sunbird

Common Myna (Introduced)

Common Sandpiper

Common Scimitarbill

Crested Barbet

Crowned Lapwing

Dark-capped Bulbul

Egyptian Goose

Eurasian Hobby

European Bee-eater

Fork-tailed Drongo

Great Egret

Greater Blue-eared Starling
Green Wood Hoopoe
Grey Go-away-bird
Grey Heron
Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guineafowl
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Jacobin Cuckoo
Laughing Dove
Lazy Cisticola
Lesser Masked Weaver
Lesser Striped Swallow
Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Swift
Lizard Buzzard
Natal Spurfowl
Pale Flycatcher
Pied Kingfisher
Pin-tailed Whydah
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea
Red-chested Cuckoo
Red-collared Widowbird
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Cisticola
Red-headed Weaver
Ring-necked Dove
Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Black Tit
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Ground Hornbill - VU
Speckled Mousebird
Spectacled Weaver
Spotted Flycatcher
Stierling's Wren-Warbler
Swainson's Spurfowl
Tambourine Dove
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Terrestrial Brownbul
Violet-backed Starling
Wahlberg's Eagle
Water Thick-knee
White-backed Vulture - CR
White-bellied Sunbird
White-browed Robin-Chat
White-browed Scrub Robin
White-faced Whistling Duck

White-fronted Bee-eater
White-rumped Swift
White-throated Robin-Chat
Willow Warbler
Woodland Kingfisher
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-breasted Apalis
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow

101 species of which 14 were new for the trip and 6 were lifers

Northern Bushbuck
Chacma Baboon
Southern Tree Agama
Cape Buffalo
Common Hippopotamus
Common Warthog
Smith's Bush Squirrel
Impala
Plains Zebra
Nile Crocodile
Waterbuck
Scrub Hare
African Savanna Elephant
Greater Kudu
Common Hippopotamus
Smith's Bush Squirrel
Klipspringer
Greater Kudu
Common Dwarf Mongoose

Monday, November 13th. Day 10.

I was right! We had a terrific storm with wall-to-wall thunder. Very impressive and quite scary! Plenty of puddles when we went out for our early morning stroll and it was a little cool too. The *Red-chested cuckoo* was still calling of course and we spotted him again albeit in poor light. We saw quite a few *Hoopoes* again – this is obviously a good area for them. Lots of *Helmeted guineafowl* too one of which startled me when he suddenly dropped down from his perch in a tree. I just love these two species. 😊

We had another lifer by the swimming pool – ***Wailing cisticola***. It was a glimpse rather than a good view as this one is a right skulker! A few “new” birds joined the list before we went for a drive round. It was very quiet everywhere – the birds were probably waiting for it to warm up a little before venturing out. 16 degrees felt decidedly cool after yesterday. We did, however, have our first sighting of Sharps friesbok, Dwarf mongoose again and 2 massive bull elephants walking towards us through the scrub. The front one wasn't looking very happy and was flapping his ears at us so no photo or video as we quickly moved on.

Our 7h00 breakfast was delayed slightly because of the power cut but we just used the time to repark the car then returned for some delicious food. 😊

We had a quick look at the Royal Huts before leaving here. They were specially built for the British Royal Family when they visited the Kruger Park in 1947...

Just before leaving the park we were delighted to see 3 Spotted hyenas lying on the road. The people in front of us took ages looking at them and wouldn't move up even just a little so I was afraid they would go before it was our turn to look but 2 of them stayed and as I was videoing them an inconsiderate man in a game drive vehicle sped down the road driving between us and the hyenas. So rude, thoughtless and downright dangerous. 🙄 He even had the cheek to wave as he went past. We noticed on arrival at Numbi Gate that he was being given a hard time and had been pulled to one side. "More haste, less speed" as the saying goes.

So, goodbye to Kruger and I have to say we were both rather disappointed with it. Yes, it's beautiful with lots of different habitats and some great birds but we felt the game experience was far superior in Kenya where there were waterholes at the lodges for close-up viewing of beasts and birds. The roads, however, were much quieter here and you could just drive round in your car – no need to be in an official vehicle though you do, of course, have limited views when you are in a car. We found that very frustrating and it was worse for Roland in the back. We were impressed, however, by the way drivers generally queued up to see an animal or bird. Very polite. The game drive vehicle drivers were nowhere near as considerate though!

It was quite a long drive to Wakkerstroom and it was mid-afternoon when we arrived having stopped for lunch in Chrissiemeer at the quirky Billiard Room and John Jack Inn which have a very interesting history.

The weather so far had been mostly overcast, cool, with some rain and very low cloud. We had stopped to look at a few birds when we could see a *Black-winged kite* mobbing a *Crested eagle* and adding such birds as *Crowned eagle*, *Southern fiscal*, *Lanner falcon*, *Long tailed* and ***Long-tailed widowbirds*** to our list. Lovely to see these in flight and/or displaying. Kevin decided we wouldn't go out again after we had checked in because it was looking a bit grim. Indeed it was and it got much worse culminating in another thunderstorm. Fortunately, Roland and I had had a quick look round this fascinating hamlet before then! Most places were closed but we managed to buy some apples and some locally produced cheese before then.

Our hotel was a strange place but had everything we needed. Strangely, we were offered a room in the main building with wifi but no shower or one in a converted outbuilding with a shower and no wifi! We opted for the one with a shower.

There was another terrific storm just after we got into bed which thankfully had an electric blanket on it. There was also a small heater in the room for which we were also grateful. I had asked Errol about clothing before leaving England and he had said to bring a fleece because some places could be a little cool in the evening. I am so glad I packed some warmer clothes and a good waterproof as well as a woolly hat and gloves as a precaution!

African Green Pigeon

African Hoopoe

African Sacred Ibis

African Spoonbill

Ant-eating Chat

Barn Swallow

Bateleur - EN

Black Cuckoo

Black Cuckooshrike

Black-backed Puffback

Black-collared Barbet
Blacksmith Lapwing
Black-winged Kite
Blue Waxbill
Brown Snake Eagle
Brown-headed Parrot
Burchell's Starling
Cape Starling
Cape Wagtail
Cape Weaver
Cape White-eye
Common Buzzard
Common Myna (Introduced)
Common Waxbill
Crested Barbet
Crowned Lapwing
Dark-capped Bulbul
Egyptian Goose
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
European Bee-eater
Fan-tailed Widowbird
Fork-tailed Drongo
Golden-breasted Bunting
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Greater Striped Swallow
Green Wood Hoopoe
Grey Go-away-bird
Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guineafowl
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Karoo Thrush
Kurrichane Thrush
Lanner Falcon
Laughing Dove
Lesser Striped Swallow
Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Swift
Long-crested Eagle
Long-tailed Widowbird
Natal Spurfowl
Pied Crow
Pied Starling
Purple-crested Turaco
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea
Red-chested Cuckoo
Red-collared Widowbird
Red-eyed Dove
Red-winged Starling

Ring-necked Dove
Rock Kestrel
Scarlet-chested Sunbird
South African Cliff Swallow
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Black Tit
Southern Fiscal
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Red Bishop
Speckled Pigeon
Spur-winged Goose
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Violet-backed Starling
Wailing Cisticola
Western Cattle Egret
White-bellied Sunbird
White-rumped Swift
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow

81 species of which 13 were new for the trip and 3 were lifers

Sharpe's Grysbok
Chacma Baboon
Smith's Bush Squirrel
Common Dwarf Mongoose
Spotted Hyena

Tuesday, November 14th. Day 11

5h45 start. Very grey and overcast. And COLD. 8 degrees in fact.

Off we went to collect our local guide, David. Such a lovely man and a brilliant guide. 😊 He took us round all his birding spots – it was like being on a speedy treasure trail but it was an uphill struggle fighting with the bitter, strong winds and mizzle which was extremely dense at times. Really hard work but we did see a lot of birds.

Our packed breakfast was pretty good. At least we got what we asked for!

I loved all the *widowbirds* – almost impossible to photograph them though when you are shivering and buffeted by the wind!

Kevin called it a day at 13h00 and suggested lunch in town. The plan was to drop David off and go out again later but he wanted to show us a few more birds as a thank you for lunch and a big tip so we went out into the mist again. Gluttons for punishment but thanks to David's perseverance and sheer determination (man with a bone) we had distant views of 2 **Blue korhaan**. **Ground woodpecker** and **Bush blackcap** before taking us to his Snipe spot where he walked out and demonstrated his flushing technique which proved very successful. What a guide and what a character. 😊

It was around 4 when we dropped him off and Roland and I went out for another walk round this fascinating place.

- Seven lifers today!! 😊
- Lovely to see *Bokmakerie* again
- *Red-throated wryneck* right in front of me but my camera jammed

- *Malachite sunbird* – I was surprised to see it up here
- *Secretary bird* raiding lapwing nest and eating its chicks
- So many *Blue cranes*!
- First wild Meercats (Lifer!)
- Game farm with weird species
- A family of 4 *Lanner falcons* flying together
- Totally unprepared for this cold spell allegedly sweeping the country – we should have known better it being 1971 metres up but 2 days previously it had been 28 degrees here

African Harrier-Hawk

African Hoopoe

African Jacana

African Marsh Harrier

African Pipit

African Rock Pipit

African Sacred Ibis

African Snipe

African Spoonbill

African Stonechat

African Swamphen

African Wattled Lapwing

Ant-eating Chat

Banded Martin

Barn Swallow

Black-crowned Night Heron

Black-headed Heron

Blacksmith Lapwing

Black-winged Kite

Black-winged Lapwing

Blue Crane - VU

Blue Korhaan

Bokmakierie

Buff-streaked Chat

Bush Blackcap - VU

Cape Canary

Cape Crow

Cape Longclaw

Cape Robin-Chat

Cape Rock Thrush

Cape Shoveler

Cape Sparrow

Cape Starling

Cape Wagtail

Cape Weaver

Common Moorhen

Common Myna (Introduced)

Common Sandpiper

Common Starling (Introduced)

Common Waxbill

Crowned Lapwing
Cuckoo-finch
Dark-capped Bulbul
Diederik Cuckoo
Eastern Long-billed Lark
Egyptian Goose
Fan-tailed Widowbird
Fulvous Whistling Duck
Glossy Ibis
Greater Striped Swallow
Grey Crowned Crane - EN
Ground Woodpecker
Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guineafowl
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Intermediate Egret
Jackal Buzzard
Knob-billed Duck
Lanner Falcon
Laughing Dove
Lesser Striped Swallow
Levaillant's Cisticola
Little Grebe
Little Swift
Long-tailed Widowbird
Malachite Sunbird
Mocking Cliff Chat
Mountain Wheatear
Pale-crowned Cisticola
Pied Crow
Pied Starling
Purple Heron
Red-billed Quelea
Red-billed Teal
Red-capped Lark
Red-collared Widowbird
Red-eyed Dove
Red-knobbed Coot
Red-throated Wryneck
Red-winged Starling
Reed Cormorant
Ring-necked Dove
Secretarybird - EN
Sentinel Rock Thrush
South African Cliff Swallow
South African Shelduck
Southern Bald Ibis - VU
Southern Fiscal
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Red Bishop

Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Spike-heeled Lark
Spur-winged Goose
Swainson's Spurfowl
Three-banded Plover
Western Cattle Egret
Whiskered Tern
White-rumped Swift
White-throated Swallow
Wing-snapping Cisticola
Yellow-billed Duck
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-breasted Pipit - VU
Yellow-crowned Bishop
Zitting Cisticola

107 species of which 35 were new for the trip and 9 were lifers

Bontebok
Yellow Mongoose
Mountain Reedbuck
Rock Hyrax
Meerkat
Steenbok

Wednesday, November 15th. Day 11

A sad day today. My lovely friend and neighbour died. I will miss him so much. 😞

It was 8 degrees when we went off to the wetlands first thing but not quite as windy as yesterday and with the odd ray of sunshine but still very low cloud over the mountains.

I got absolutely frozen waiting for a **Red-chested flufftail** to appear – I had spotted a couple of other birders who looked frozen to the spot and it transpired they had heard him and were waiting patiently to see him. They were ok for us to join them. Our patience was finally rewarded and we had one really good view when he broke cover and a briefer on a bit later. 😊 😊 No photo except in our heads. The only other new birds this morning were *African rail*, *Little swamp warbler* and *Little bittern*. It was too early for the *Widowbirds* to be out so no photos but after a fairly good breakfast we set off for Mkuze only stopping twice. Once for fuel and toilets the other because one of the hundreds if not thousands of coal transporters had demolished a metal barrier as it drove down into a big ditch area. Oops. The rescue vehicle had just arrived so the road was completely blocked. It took them quite a while to manoeuvre the vehicle so that it was lined up straight in the ditch. They were presumably going to drive it along the ditch then up the embankment where the metal barrier came to an end. At least it meant they could reopen the road and we could continue on our merry way with no traffic in front of us. 😊 We saw quite a few accidents involving these transporters – the roads aren't really suitable for them and they drive way too fast and frequently without care.

It was around 13h00 when we arrived at our lovely posh hotel and it was a more respectable 23 degrees.

After lunch we set off for Mkuze Game Reserve, stopping on the way at a couple of likely looking spots where we added **Rudd's apalis**, **Eastern golden weaver**, **White-crested helmet shrike** 😊 **Black-bellied starlings** et al to our list but when we got to the reserve Kevin said it was too late to go in so we turned round and drove back again.

Our hotel is lovely but staying here messed up our plans somewhat because it is an hour away from the Reserve on bad roads so we will have less time there. We thought we were staying IN the reserve but Kevin had asked Errol to change that because he didn't want to stay there.

African Hoopoe
African Marsh Harrier
African Pipit
African Rail
African Sacred Ibis
African Snipe
African Spoonbill
African Stonechat
African Swampphen
Ant-eating Chat
Barn Swallow
Black Saw-wing
Black-bellied Starling
Black-crowned Night Heron
Black-headed Heron
Black-winged Kite
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Cape Crow
Cape Robin-Chat
Cape Shoveler
Cape Starling
Cape Wagtail
Common Buzzard
Common Moorhen
Common Myna (Introduced)
Common Reed Warbler
Crowned Lapwing
Dark-capped Bulbul
Diederik Cuckoo
Eastern Golden Weaver
Egyptian Goose
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
European Bee-eater
Fan-tailed Widowbird
Fork-tailed Drongo
Fulvous Whistling Duck
Glossy Ibis
Golden-breasted Bunting
Greater Striped Swallow
Grey Heron
Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guinea fowl

House Sparrow (Introduced)
Intermediate Egret
Jackal Buzzard
Laughing Dove
Lesser Swamp Warbler
Levaillant's Cisticola
Lilac-breasted Roller
Little Bittern
Little Grebe
Little Swift
Long-tailed Widowbird
Pale Flycatcher
Pied Crow
Pied Kingfisher
Pied Starling
Purple-banded Sunbird
Rattling Cisticola
Red-billed Quelea
Red-billed Teal
Red-chested Flufftail
Red-collared Widowbird
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Mousebird
Red-knobbed Coot
Red-winged Starling
Reed Cormorant
Ring-necked Dove
Rudd's Apalis
Sombre Greenbul
South African Shelduck
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Fiscal
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Red Bishop
Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Spur-winged Goose
Squacco Heron
Swainson's Spurfowl
Verreaux's Eagle
Village Weaver
Western Cattle Egret
Whiskered Tern
White-crested Helmetshrike
White-necked Raven
White-rumped Swift
White-throated Swallow
Yellow-billed Duck
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-fronted Canary

93 species of which 11 were new for the trip and 3 were lifers

Common Slender Mongoose

Thursday, November 16th. Day 12

Out at 5h15 to get to the reserve early. 20 degrees but didn't feel like it because it was very windy.

Kevin was not right chuffed that they wanted him to pay cash when we got there. So unusual these days. He did find a way round it though.

The birding overall was very disappointing but we did have a really good packed breakfast.

We tried the cordon bleu cafe at lunchtime but they had very little available and no power. I was really glad I still had half of my breakfast left! We could understand now why Kevin hadn't wanted to stay here as this was the only food point in the park!

We had a walk in the Fig Forest booked for 2 p.m. Luckily, there were only the 3 of us and our armed guide, Patrick, who had to accompany us because of the threat of wild animals.

The circular walk took us along some aerial walkways and a short forest trail all accessed by a right wobbly bridge. 😊 The highlight was the AMAZING *Crowned eagle*!! :0 😊

It had got very hot this afternoon but it was much cooler in there.

We saw some lovely elephants as we drove out later. A fitting end to the day.

- Sacs of Frogs' eggs hanging from plants by the small hide 😊
- A mass of writhing caterpillars on a tree trunk by the "restaurant" 😊
- Wasp nest near the washroom
- Great views of 3 *Trumpeter hornbill* 😊
- 89 birds seen today of which 12 were new for the trip
- Our experience in the reserve bore little resemblance to the delights described in our itinerary. We certainly didn't miss much by not staying within the reserve.

African Darter

African Fish Eagle

African Hoopoe

African Marsh Harrier

African Openbill

African Pied Wagtail

African Pipit

African Wattled Lapwing

Barn Swallow

Bateleur - EN

Black Crake

Black Saw-wing

Black-backed Puffback

Black-bellied Starling

Black-winged Lapwing

Blue Waxbill

Brimstone Canary

Broad-billed Roller

Brown-hooded Kingfisher

Cape Starling

Common Buzzard

Common Myna (Introduced)

Common Waxbill
Crested Francolin
Crowned Eagle
Crowned Hornbill
Dark-capped Bulbul
Diederik Cuckoo
Eastern Golden Weaver
Egyptian Goose
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
European Bee-eater
Fork-tailed Drongo
Giant Kingfisher
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Gorgeous Bushshrike
Great Egret
Great White Pelican
Greater Striped Swallow
Green Wood Hoopoe
Green-winged Pytilia
Grey Heron
Hadada Ibis
Helmeted Guineafowl
Jacobin Cuckoo
Jameson's Firefinch
Lesser Masked Weaver
Lesser Striped Swallow
Little Egret
Mocking Cliff Chat
Neergaard's Sunbird
Orange-breasted Bushshrike
Purple Heron
Purple-banded Sunbird
Purple-crested Turaco
Rattling Cisticola
Red-backed Shrike
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea
Red-breasted Swallow
Red-chested Cuckoo
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Mousebird
Reed Cormorant
Ring-necked Dove
Rudd's Apalis
Rufous-naped Lark
Sabota Lark
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Banded Snake Eagle
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Crested Guineafowl
Southern Fiscal

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Speckled Mousebird
Spectacled Weaver
Squacco Heron
Swainson's Spurfowl
Three-banded Plover
Trumpeter Hornbill
White-backed Vulture - CR
White-bellied Sunbird
White-browed Scrub Robin
White-eared Barbet
White-faced Whistling Duck
White-fronted Bee-eater
Wire-tailed Swallow
Yellow-fronted Canary
89 species of which 12 were new for the trip and 5 were lifers

Impala
Plains Zebra
Southern Giraffe
Nyala
Greater Kudu
Blue Wildebeest
Leopard Tortoise
Smith's Bush Squirrel
Vervet Monkey
East African Serrated Mud Turtle
African Savanna Elephant

Friday, November 17th. Day 13

An early morning walk round the grounds was very pleasant indeed and was followed by a delicious buffet breakfast. 😊 Sunny when we left.

Another accident involving a coal transporter looked pretty grim. They take coal to the coast from where it is shipped to China. A little further on, we had to stop for road works. The sign said we would typically have to wait for 20 minutes. Some people ahead were obviously taking advantage of the wait to turn up the volume and enjoy a bit of a boogie as their vehicles were fair bouncing around! Good for them. I'm sure they enjoyed the delay 😊

Loads of pineapple fields ahead and lots of stalls of course but we didn't stop to buy any.

It was really hot by the time we stopped at a bridge over the estuary just before arriving in Saint Lucia from where we had excellent views of ***Southern brown-throated weaver*** but again it was hard to take photos because the wind was so strong!

Next stop was at a boardwalk on the other side of town where we were supposed to be walking to a lagoon but Kevin missed the fact that it had completely dried up and was full of reeds so we had a fruitless trek including climbing a steep sandhill which only led to a deserted beach

There were a few people selling crafts near where we had parked – they had some lovely hanging tea-light holders and bird feeders made out of Monkey orange which was a new fruit to us. It is round and has a very hard exterior. Not something you could eat but we did

see some nice ones for sale by the roadside. There were plenty for free in the woods though!

We tried to get views of the estuary/lagoons to see what was there but could only find a few small spots with gaps in the vegetation. A scope was required and the heat haze was terrible.

Early lunch next at the Sailing Club then we went to our digs at the Kingfisher Lodge. What a lovely place with a most welcoming owner. Quite a history to the main house which had been in the family forever. There was even a good possibility of encountering a hippo in the grounds because the garden at the back sloped down to an overgrown lagoon. It was wonderful to have a few hours to ourselves out there just enjoying the peace and quiet before going out together for a walk in the woods. We bumped into Themba who would be our guide the next day. He was with 2 other birders and together we saw *the Pink-throated twinspot*. Unfortunately I was too short to see the *Narina trogon* but we did see a few other good birds.

I went back into the garden when we returned waiting for that hippo. Much to my surprise, he did not appear but the *Crested guineafowl* a Red duiker and a beautiful sunset sort of made up for it.

Tea was at El Greco. Exceptionally slow service again – over an hour this time. How unusual.

African Green Pigeon

African Hoopoe

African Jacana

African Openbill

African Palm Swift

African Paradise Flycatcher

African Pied Wagtail

African Spoonbill

African Swampphen

Barn Swallow

Black Heron

Black Saw-wing

Black-backed Puffback

Black-bellied Starling

Brown-hooded Kingfisher

Cape Starling

Chinspot Batis

Common Greenshank

Common Myna (Introduced)

Crowned Eagle

Crowned Hornbill

Dark-capped Bulbul

Eastern Golden Weaver

Egyptian Goose

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove

Eurasian Whimbrel

Fork-tailed Drongo

Goliath Heron

Green Wood Hoopoe

Grey Heron

Grey Sunbird

Grey Waxbill

Hadada Ibis

Hamerkop

House Sparrow (Introduced)

Little Egret

Little Swift

Narina Trogon

Pink-throated Twinspot

Purple-banded Sunbird

Red-capped Robin-Chat

Red-chested Cuckoo

Red-eyed Dove

Ring-necked Dove

Sombre Greenbul

Southern Black Flycatcher

Southern Black Tit

Southern Brown-throated Weaver

Southern Crested Guineafowl

Southern Fiscal

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow

Spectacled Weaver

Square-tailed Drongo

Tambourine Dove

Tawny-flanked Prinia

Trumpeter Hornbill

White-faced Whistling Duck

White-fronted Plover

Yellow-billed Kite

Yellow-billed Stork

Yellow-fronted Canary

61 species of which 8 were new for the trip and 4 were lifers

Impala

Plains Zebra

Southern Giraffe

Nyala

Greater Kudu

Blue Wildebeest

Leopard Tortoise

Smith's Bush Squirrel

Vervet Monkey

East African Serrated Mud Turtle

African Savanna Elephant

Saturday, November 18th. Day 14

Out at 5h25 with a packed breakfast.

We collected Themba then went off into the woods for a few hours. Still windy. We had a very exciting walk when Themba plunged into the undergrowth which was way taller than me. 0) Not a clue where we were and we managed to "lose" Kevin. We were led to a spot where we had wonderful views of *Emerald cuckoo* in the sun, a female *Pink breasted twinspot* and ***Green malkoha***.

We had breakfast when we caught up with an annoyed Kevin then set off driving stopping at various wetlands – again, they were a little disappointing but one area sported some luxury underwater dwellings! When will people learn???

Kevin wanted to go to the Eastern Shores next in the Isimangaliso Wetlands. Even more disappointing with hardly any mammals either – just distant herds of Cape buffalo and zebra then a Red duiker and Banded mongoose quite close.

We next went along a very busy road to Cape Vidal – so many people going down to the beaches and for a fishing competition it being the weekend. I was struggling to stay awake now. Embarrassing but I was so very tired!

Time now to drop Themba off, arrange a night trip for tonight and go for lunch followed by souvenir shopping for a monkey orange thingy. A bargain at 50 rand.

After a relax back at the excellent lodge we went out for another walk following the same route as last night. There's not a lot of choice! *Livingstone's turacao* was seen out in the open at last 😊 but not close. There were a couple of Warthog trotting along the roadside and I dipped on the *Blue mantled crested flycatcher* again.

We may not have seen all the birds we were looking for but it wasn't for lack of trying and we saw 89 species today of which 17 were new for the trip and 4 were lifers. Some lovely scenery too.

Themba brought a guide in training on the night ride. We didn't see a lot but it was ok and they tried really hard. We saw 3 Genet, a baby Chameleon, 2 *Water thick knee* (or maybe the same one twice) Marsh mongoose, Zebras and Wildebeest. And so to bed.....

African Cuckoo-Hawk

African Hoopoe

African Jacana

African Palm Swift

African Pipit

African Pygmy Goose

African Swampphen

Ashy Flycatcher

Barn Swallow

Black Saw-wing

Black-backed Puffback

Black-bellied Starling

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher

Bronze Mannikin

Brown-hooded Kingfisher

Burchell's Coucal

Cape Starling

Cardinal Woodpecker

Collared Sunbird

Common Greenshank

Common Moorhen

Common Myna (Introduced)

Common Ringed Plover

Common Waxbill

Crested Barbet

Croaking Cisticola

Curlew Sandpiper
Dark-backed Weaver
Dark-capped Bulbul
Eastern Golden Weaver
Egyptian Goose
Eurasian Whimbrel
European Bee-eater
Fan-tailed Widowbird
Fork-tailed Drongo
Goliath Heron
Great Egret
Green Malkoha
Green Wood Hoopoe
Green-backed Camaroptera
Grey Heron
Grey Plover
Grey Sunbird
Grey Waxbill
Hadada Ibis
House Crow (Introduced)
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Intermediate Egret
Klaas's Cuckoo
Lemon Dove
Lesser Honeyguide
Lesser Masked Weaver
Lesser Striped Swallow
Little Egret
Little Grebe
Little Swift
Livingstone's Turaco
Olive Sunbird
Pink-throated Twinspot
Purple-banded Sunbird
Purple-crested Turaco
Rattling Cisticola
Red-breasted Swallow
Red-capped Robin-Chat
Red-eyed Dove
Reed Cormorant
Rudd's Apalis
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Banded Snake Eagle
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Crested Guinea fowl
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Speckled Mousebird
Spectacled Weaver
Square-tailed Drongo
Tambourine Dove
Tawny-flanked Prinia

Terrestrial Brownbul
Thick-billed Weaver
Trumpeter Hornbill
Violet-backed Starling
Water Thick-knee
Western Cattle Egret
White-backed Duck
White-bellied Sunbird
White-eared Barbet
White-faced Whistling Duck
White-fronted Plover
White-rumped Swift
Woodwards' Batis
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Yellow-billed Duck
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-billed Stork
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird - DD
Zitting Cisticola

97 species of which 17 were new for the trip and 4 were lifers

Impala
Plains Zebra
Southern Giraffe
Nyala
Greater Kudu
Blue Wildebeest
Leopard Tortoise
Smith's Bush Squirrel
Vervet Monkey
Impala
East African Serrated Mud Turtle
Southern Giraffe
African Savanna Elephant
Chameleon
Genet
Marsh mongoose

Sunday, November 19th. Day 15

A 6am start today for the highly anticipated walk along the famous Gwala trail. Another disappointing experience as we had already unknowingly walked part of it yesterday. It was very short too. We had good views of a female *Pink-throated twinspot* and a *Grey sunbird* at its nest.

Breakfast and packing next and off we went again.

We didn't see much on our way to collect Junior, our next local guide, but we saw another coal truck that had gone off the road and was upside down. There was a huge tailback of trucks heading to the port at Richard's Bay. One section alone was 2.3 kms of stationary traffic and then we came across another one stretching way way into the distance.

33 when we collected an anxious Junior at 10h30 – there had been some confusion as to where and when we would be meeting

We went straight off to Amitikulu NR stopping at various spots for such birds as *Swamp nightjar*, *Black-throated wattle-eye*, and *Blue-crested flycatcher*. It was very windy (just for a change) and the birds just weren't responding so we moved on to other spots Junior knew. ***Rufous winged cisticola*** was eventually found within a small wetland and *Forest falcon* obligingly flew out of a large plantation of eucalyptus tree. *Swamp flycatcher* was flushed by the men in a bumpy field and shortly after we dropped Junior off and headed for lunch before checking in at the Birds of Paradise Guest House. Kevin declared it was too hot birding (which it probably was) so we were left to our own devices. There were extensive gardens to look round with strategically placed feeders and bird baths but little birding activity. Very relaxing sitting out watching the *Bronze mannikins* though. This Guest House is currently for sale at a bargain price – what a lovely place it would be to live!

African Dusky Flycatcher
African Jacana
African Palm Swift
Barn Swallow
Black Saw-wing
Black-backed Puffback
Black-bellied Starling
Black-headed Heron
Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher
Brimstone Canary
Bronze Mannikin
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Burchell's Coucal
Cape Starling
Cape Wagtail
Cape White-eye
Collared Sunbird
Common Myna (Introduced)
Common Waxbill
Dark-capped Bulbul
Eastern Golden Weaver
Egyptian Goose
Fan-tailed Widowbird
Forest Buzzard
Fork-tailed Drongo
Green-backed Camaroptera
Grey Sunbird
Grey Waxbill
Hadada Ibis
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Lesser Masked Weaver
Little Swift
Livingstone's Turaco
Pied Crow
Pink-throated Twinspot
Purple-banded Sunbird

Purple-crested Turaco
Red-breasted Swallow
Red-capped Robin-Chat
Red-eyed Dove
Red-headed Quelea
Red-winged Starling
Rudd's Apalis
Rufous-winged Cisticola
Scaly-throated Honeyguide
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Banded Snake Eagle
Southern Boubou
Southern Crested Guineafowl
Southern Red Bishop
Speckled Mousebird
Spectacled Weaver
Square-tailed Drongo
Swamp Nightjar
Tambourine Dove
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Terrestrial Brownbul
Trumpeter Hornbill
Village Weaver
Western Cattle Egret
White-eared Barbet
White-faced Whistling Duck
White-rumped Swift
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-throated Longclaw
Zitting Cisticola

67 species of which 4 were new for the trip and 1 was a lifer

Vervet Monkey
Natal Red Duiker
Plains Zebra

Monday, November 20th. Day 14.

20 degrees when we set off at 5h30. Cloudy and overcast. Straight to the Dlinza Forest. Quick look in the hide then went to the boardwalk and up the tower. Niceish view. Three there already then a Lawson's group arrived. All hoping to see the ***Eastern bronze-naped pigeon***. We waited for about an hour (boring) then went to look for the *Spotted ground thrush* in the forest accompanied by a minder who stopped on the way to point out the *Cape batis* sitting on her nest 😊 We found the thrush and oh my goodness, what a stunning bird it is! No photo because just as I had him lined up, Kevin said we had to go NOW! Roland went on ahead because I'm so slow but stupidly waited for us on the boardwalk instead of racing to the tower. Of course, we missed the pigeon though Roland said he saw it disappearing. Back down to the hide where there was nothing doing but we did at least manage a peep at the *Batis* chicks before leaving!

Off next to Ongoye Forest, the best place to see *Green barbet*. We didn't take the shortest route as Kevin missed the turning and had to ring Junior more than once for directions. Interesting Zululand scenery etc but we failed miserably in our quest though not for lack of effort. So frustrating when you can hear a bird calling but he won't show himself. Same thing with the *Southern tchagra* and *Gorgeous cuckoo shrike*. We did, however, come across *Palm nut vulture* whilst having a drive round. Certainly not a new bird for us but rather special here so we were all pleased about that. 😊

We called into the Free Living Restaurant and Cocktail Bar on the way back and it was a brilliant find with a small shop too and lovely views from the balcony. My Lychee and prawn salad was to die for and so prettily arranged. 😊

I was looking forward to returning to the hide this afternoon but Kevin dropped us off at the B&B. There was no room for him at the Inn tonight and he had to dash off because his hotel wasn't finished and had no power or electricity and he had to find somewhere else before it went dark, which he did.

We retired to the gardens again.

African Black Swift

African Dusky Flycatcher

African Goshawk

African Olive Pigeon

African Palm Swift

African Woolly-necked Stork

Barn Swallow

Black Saw-wing

Black-bellied Starling

Black-collared Barbet

Bronze Mannikin

Cape Batis

Cape Starling

Cape White-eye

Collared Sunbird

Common Myna (Introduced)

Crowned Hornbill

Dark-capped Bulbul

Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon

Eastern Golden Weaver

Fork-tailed Drongo

Grey Cuckooshrike

Grey Sunbird

Hadada Ibis

House Sparrow (Introduced)

Lemon Dove

Lesser Masked Weaver

Lesser Striped Swallow

Olive Sunbird

Palm-nut Vulture

Pied Crow

Purple-crested Turaco

Rattling Cisticola

Red-capped Robin-Chat

Red-chested Cuckoo
Red-eyed Dove
Scaly-throated Honeyguide
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Crested Guineafowl
Southern Double-collared Sunbird
Southern Fiscal
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Speckled Mousebird
Spotted Ground Thrush - VU
Square-tailed Drongo
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Trumpeter Hornbill
Village Weaver
Violet-backed Starling
White-bellied Sunbird
White-eared Barbet
White-rumped Swift
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-throated Longclaw
56 species of which 3 were new for the trip and 2 were lifers

Blue Monkey

Tuesday, November 21st. Day 15

Out at 6 and straight to the hide but not for long. Back up the tower and the dark shape flying towards us was apparently THE bird so no need to stay any longer. Underwhelmed.

Took another peek at the *Cape batis* then off to the hide for a while and we were able to watch *Tambourine doves* pottering about plus *Red-capped robin chat* and *Olive thrush* bathing. A very pleasant interlude. 😊 Heaven only knows who/what was walking about on the roof! I couldn't see anything when I went out to look but I am rather short after all.

Buffet breakfast back at the lodge but the big group had scooped most of the fruit salad and Roland took the rest. Then a German woman nicked my toast removing it from the toaster before it had even finished toasting! 😡 The cheek of it!

Before leaving Ushawe we tried to find, Samarand, the oldest house in Zululand built in 1883 but concluded it must have been behind trees or a wall. A nearby dirt road was calling Kevin to look for *Southern tchagra* and this time we had greater success. Not a lifer – we just wanted it for the list.

Time to head towards Durban in the 35 degree heat where our first stop was at Umhlanga NR where we were hoping to see Mingoos, waders etc but the entrance to the boardwalk was closed. We did find another way into the reserve but the boardwalk across the lagoon was closed because it was damaged. We didn't see as many birds as we were hoping for but it was a pleasant walk where we gained another lifer, ***Black-throated wattle-eye***, found *Chorister robin chat* which was a bit of a surprise and saw quite a few Red duiker. We had lunch at the café there – one of the worst meals and drinks ever – but it was a *Southern booboo* mecca!

Our last hotel, the De Charmoy Estate Guest House, was certainly different and not where we had been expecting to stay. We had a fantastic room away from the others with 2 bathrooms! That was a first!

We were supposed to be meeting Kevin at 4 to walk the grounds but he had obviously forgotten and as he kept saying “We’ve run out of birds to see”! There wasn’t much to see anyway and no feeders or bird baths. The small swimming pool was very dirty and a magnet for the MANY cats who obviously didn’t mind drinking from it. Trying to watch birds with one of the afore-mentioned cats wrapped round my legs was certainly not my idea of fun.

When we were going to the restaurant for tea, Kevin pointed out the number of *Barn swallows* flying overhead to the roost near the airport. We were so annoyed not to have been told earlier about this or for it not to have been included in the itinerary as it was something we would have loved to have seen. 😞

Tea was rubbish. We had to order it on arrival and the fillet steaks had been replaced with chewy “tenderised steak” plus they brought Kevin a curry he didn’t want! Roland was presented with rice instead of rotis and when he complained, they brought him a dollop of curry on top of 2 tortilla wraps!! The most annoying thing for Kevin was that he thought the evening meal was included but it wasn’t so we could have chosen to eat elsewhere.

African Green Pigeon

African Olive Pigeon

African Palm Swift

African Paradise Flycatcher

African Pied Wagtail

Barn Swallow

Black-bellied Starling

Black-collared Barbet

Black-headed Heron

Black-throated Wattle-eye

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher

Bronze Mannikin

Burchell's Coucal

Cape Batis

Cape Starling

Cape White-eye

Chorister Robin-Chat

Collared Sunbird

Common Myna (Introduced)

Crested Barbet

Dark-backed Weaver

Dark-capped Bulbul

Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon

Egyptian Goose

Familiar Chat

Fan-tailed Widowbird

Fork-tailed Drongo

Greater Crested Tern

Greater Double-collared Sunbird

Grey Cuckooshrike

Grey Sunbird

Hadada Ibis

House Sparrow (Introduced)
Laughing Dove
Lemon Dove
Lesser Striped Swallow
Olive Sunbird
Olive Thrush
Pied Crow
Purple-crested Turaco
Rattling Cisticola
Red-capped Robin-Chat
Red-eyed Dove
Red-winged Starling
Reed Cormorant
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Boubou
Southern Fiscal
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Red Bishop
Southern Tchagra
Speckled Mousebird
Spectacled Weaver
Tambourine Dove
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Thick-billed Weaver
Trumpeter Hornbill
White-bellied Sunbird
White-eared Barbet
White-rumped Swift
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-throated Longclaw
65 species of which 3 were new for the trip and 1 was a lifer

Blue Monkey

Wednesday, November 22nd. Day 15.

Our last day.

Car loading at 6h15, breakfast and off to see if we could achieve 400 species on our list. We thought we were going to a wetlands but we went down to the estuary of the Umgnai River. Well, the main road running alongside it, parking in bays and trying to peer through the undergrowth. Not very satisfactory but we found a track running through the mangroves and walked a couple of kilometres along it. Unfortunately, my stick was in the car so I was even slower than usual which didn't go down well. Slim pickings and no new birds. Where to go next? Kevin seemed to be at a loss but Roland saved the day by directing him to the Blue Lagoon. We thought it was a nice spot with the beach, the sea and finally some gulls and terns AND we saw three "new" birds which took us up to a round 400. Well done, Roland, though Kevin called it "scraping the barrel".

Where to next? Roland said he wanted to go for a nice ice-cream so Kevin took us to the Country Club. We passed a photographable *Pied crow* close by which Kevin would have liked to photograph but there wasn't a safe parking spot.

After that, we went off to the airport for an extra long sit in the lounge. I availed myself of the opportunity for a bit of a wander and a shop. Woolworths (no relation to ours) and local craft items were the object of my desires. Amazingly they were no more expensive than on the outside.

African Fish Eagle
African Green Pigeon
African Oystercatcher
African Paradise Flycatcher
African Sacred Ibis
Banded Martin
Barn Swallow
Black-collared Barbet
Black-headed Heron
Blacksmith Lapwing
Bronze Mannikin
Cape Starling
Cape Wagtail
Cape Weaver
Cape White-eye
Collared Sunbird
Common Greenshank
Common Myna (Introduced)
Common Sandpiper
Common Tern
Dark-capped Bulbul
Egyptian Goose
Familiar Chat
Fork-tailed Drongo
Goliath Heron
Great Egret
Greater Crested Tern
Grey Heron
Grey-headed Gull
Hadada Ibis
House Crow (Introduced)
House Sparrow (Introduced)
Kelp Gull
Laughing Dove
Lesser Striped Swallow
Little Egret
Little Swift
Olive Thrush
Pied Crow
Purple-crested Turaco
Red-capped Robin-Chat
Red-eyed Dove
Red-winged Starling

Reed Cormorant
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Fiscal
Speckled Mousebird
Spectacled Weaver
Village Weaver
Water Thick-knee
White-breasted Cormorant
White-throated Swallow
Yellow-billed Duck
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-fronted Canary
52 species of which 3 were new for the trip and 0 were lifers
Total: 400 species with 82 Lifers 😊

Vervet Monkey
Natal Red Duiker

COMPLETE BIRD LIST
400 Species
Lifers 82 😊 highlighted in bold

Acacia Pied Barbet
African Black Duck
African Black Swift
African Cuckoo
African Cuckoo-Hawk
African Darter
African Dusky Flycatcher
African Emerald Cuckoo
African Finfoot
African Fish Eagle
African Goshawk
African Green Pigeon
African Grey Hornbill
African Harrier-Hawk
African Hawk-Eagle
African Hoopoe
African Jacana
African Marsh Harrier
African Olive Pigeon
African Openbill
African Oystercatcher
African Palm Swift
African Paradise Flycatcher
African Pied Wagtail
African Pipit
African Pygmy Goose
African Rail
African Rock Pipit

African Sacred Ibis
African Snipe
African Spoonbill
African Stonechat
African Swampphen
African Wattled Lapwing
African Woolly-necked Stork
African Yellow Warbler
Amethyst Sunbird
Ant-eating Chat
Arrow-marked Babbler
Ashy Flycatcher
Banded Martin
Barn Swallow
Barratt's Warbler
Bar-throated Apalis
Bat Hawk
Bateleur - EN
Bearded Scrub Robin
Bearded Woodpecker
Bennett's Woodpecker
Black Crake
Black Cuckoo
Black Cuckooshrike
Black Heron
Black Saw-wing
Black-and-white Mannikin
Black-backed Puffback
Black-bellied Bustard
Black-bellied Starling
Black-chested Prinia
Black-collared Barbet
Black-crowned Night Heron
Black-crowned Tchagra
Black-fronted Bushshrike
Black-headed Heron
Black-headed Oriole
Blacksmith Lapwing
Black-throated Wattle-eye
Black-winged Kite
Black-winged Lapwing
Black-winged Stilt
Blue Crane - VU
Blue Korhaan
Blue Waxbill
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater
Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher
Blue-spotted Wood Dove
Bokmakierie
Brimstone Canary
Broad-billed Roller

Bronze Mannikin
Brown Snake Eagle
Brown-crowned Tchagra
Brown-headed Parrot
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Brubru
Buff-streaked Chat
Burchell's Coucal
Burchell's Starling
Burnt-necked Eremomela
Bush Blackcap - VU
Bushveld Pipit
Cape Batis
Cape Canary
Cape Crow
Cape Longclaw
Cape Parrot (Endemic) - VU
Cape Robin-Chat
Cape Rock Thrush
Cape Shoveler
Cape Sparrow
Cape Starling
Cape Vulture - VU
Cape Wagtail
Cape Weaver
Cape White-eye
Cardinal Woodpecker
Chestnut-vented Warbler
Chinspot Batis
Chorister Robin-Chat
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting
Collared Sunbird
Common Buzzard
Common Greenshank
Common Moorhen
Common Myna (Introduced)
Common Reed Warbler
Common Ringed Plover
Common Sandpiper
Common Scimitarbill
Common Starling (Introduced)
Common Tern
Common Waxbill
Crested Barbet
Crested Francolin
Crimson-breasted Shrike
Croaking Cisticola
Crowned Eagle
Crowned Hornbill
Crowned Lapwing
Cuckoo-finch

Curlew Sandpiper
Dark-backed Weaver
Dark-capped Bulbul
Diederik Cuckoo
Drakensberg Prinia
Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon
Eastern Golden Weaver
Eastern Long-billed Lark
Egyptian Goose
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
Eurasian Hobby
Eurasian Whimbrel
European Bee-eater
Familiar Chat
Fan-tailed Widowbird
Flappet Lark
Forest Buzzard
Forest Canary
Fork-tailed Drongo
Fulvous Whistling Duck
Giant Kingfisher
Glossy Ibis
Golden-breasted Bunting
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Goliath Heron
Gorgeous Bushshrike
Great Egret
Great Sparrow
Great Spotted Cuckoo
Great White Pelican
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Greater Crested Tern
Greater Double-collared Sunbird
Greater Honeyguide
Greater Striped Swallow
Green Malkoha
Green Wood Hoopoe
Green-backed Camaroptera
Green-winged Pytilia
Grey Crowned Crane - EN
Grey Cuckooshrike
Grey Go-away-bird
Grey Heron
Grey Plover
Grey Sunbird
Grey Waxbill
Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark
Grey-headed Bushshrike
Grey-headed Gull
Ground Woodpecker
Groundscraper Thrush

Gurney's Sugarbird

Hadada Ibis

Hamerkop

Helmeted Guineafowl

Holub's Golden Weaver

Horus Swift

House Crow (Introduced)

House Sparrow (Introduced)

Intermediate Egret

Jackal Buzzard

Jacobin Cuckoo

Jameson's Firefinch

Karoo Thrush

Kelp Gull

Klaas's Cuckoo

Knob-billed Duck

Knysna Turaco

Kurrichane Thrush

Lanner Falcon

Lappet-faced Vulture - EN

Laughing Dove

Lazy Cisticola

Lemon Dove

Lesser Grey Shrike

Lesser Honeyguide

Lesser Masked Weaver

Lesser Striped Swallow

Lesser Swamp Warbler

Levaillant's Cisticola

Levaillant's Cuckoo

Lilac-breasted Roller

Little Bee-eater

Little Bittern

Little Egret

Little Grebe

Little Rush Warbler

Little Swift

Livingstone's Turaco

Lizard Buzzard

Long-billed Crombec

Long-crested Eagle

Long-tailed Paradise Whydah

Long-tailed Widowbird

Magpie Mannikin

Magpie Shrike

Malachite Kingfisher

Malachite Sunbird

Marabou Stork

Marico Flycatcher

Marico Sunbird

Meves's Starling

Mocking Cliff Chat
Monotonous Lark
Mountain Wagtail
Mountain Wheatear
Mourning Collared Dove
Namaqua Dove
Narina Trogon
Natal Spurfowl
Neddicky
Neergaard's Sunbird
Olive Bushshrike
Olive Sunbird
Olive Thrush
Olive Woodpecker
Orange Ground Thrush
Orange-breasted Bushshrike
Orange-breasted Waxbill
Pale Flycatcher
Pale-crowned Cisticola
Palm-nut Vulture
Pearl-breasted Swallow
Pearl-spotted Owlet
Pied Crow
Pied Kingfisher
Pied Starling
Pink-throated Twinspot
Pin-tailed Whydah
Purple Heron
Purple Indigobird
Purple Roller
Purple-banded Sunbird
Purple-crested Turaco
Rattling Cisticola
Red-backed Shrike
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
Red-billed Firefinch
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Quelea
Red-billed Teal
Red-breasted Swallow
Red-capped Lark
Red-capped Robin-Chat
Red-chested Cuckoo
Red-chested Flufftail
Red-collared Widowbird
Red-eyed Dove
Red-faced Cisticola
Red-faced Mousebird
Red-headed Quelea
Red-headed Weaver
Red-knobbed Coot

Red-necked Spurfowl
Red-throated Wryneck
Red-winged Starling
Reed Cormorant
Ring-necked Dove
Rock Kestrel
Rock Martin
Rudd's Apalis
Rufous-naped Lark
Rufous-winged Cisticola
Sabota Lark
Saddle-billed Stork
Scaly-feathered Weaver
Scaly-throated Honeyguide
Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Secretarybird - EN
Senegal Lapwing
Sentinel Rock Thrush
Sombre Greenbul
South African Cliff Swallow
South African Shelduck
Southern Bald Ibis - VU
Southern Banded Snake Eagle
Southern Black Flycatcher
Southern Black Tit
Southern Boubou
Southern Brown-throated Weaver
Southern Crested Guineafowl
Southern Double-collared Sunbird
Southern Fiscal
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Ground Hornbill - VU
Southern Masked Weaver
Southern Pied Babbler
Southern Red Bishop
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Tchagra
Southern White-crowned Shrike
Southern Yellow White-eye
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Speckled Mousebird
Speckled Pigeon
Spectacled Weaver
Spike-heeled Lark
Spotted Flycatcher
Spotted Ground Thrush - VU
Spur-winged Goose
Squacco Heron
Square-tailed Drongo
Steppe Eagle - EN
Stierling's Wren-Warbler

Striated Heron
Striped Kingfisher
Striped Pipit
Swainson's Spurfowl
Swamp Nightjar
Swee Waxbill
Tambourine Dove
Tawny Eagle - VU
Tawny-flanked Prinia
Terrestrial Brownbul
Thick-billed Weaver
Three-banded Plover
Trumpeter Hornbill
Verreaux's Eagle
Village Indigobird
Village Weaver
Violet-backed Starling
Violet-eared Waxbill
Wahlberg's Eagle
Wailing Cisticola
Water Thick-knee
Wattled Starling
Western Cattle Egret
Whiskered Tern
White-backed Duck
White-backed Vulture - CR
White-bellied Sunbird
White-breasted Cormorant
White-browed Robin-Chat
White-browed Scrub Robin
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
White-crested Helmetshrike
White-crowned Lapwing
White-eared Barbet
White-faced Whistling Duck
White-fronted Bee-eater
White-fronted Plover
White-necked Raven
White-rumped Swift
White-starred Robin
White-throated Robin-Chat
White-throated Swallow
Willow Warbler
Wing-snapping Cisticola
Wire-tailed Swallow
Wood Sandpiper
Woodland Kingfisher
Woodwards' Batis
Yellow Bishop
Yellow Canary
Yellow-bellied Greenbul

Yellow-billed Duck

Yellow-billed Kite

Yellow-billed Oxpecker

Yellow-billed Stork

Yellow-breasted Apalis

Yellow-breasted Pipit - VU

Yellow-crowned Bishop

Yellow-fronted Canary

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird - DD

Yellow-streaked Greenbul

Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow

Yellow-throated Longclaw

Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler

Zitting Cisticola