



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South Africa
KwaZulu-Natal day trip
Karkloof Forest
2022



African Emerald Cuckoo by Hugh Chittenden

We depart Durban and head towards our primary birding destination for the day, the Karkloof - a range of forested hills in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands that is home to a number of uncommon species and some birds restricted to these afro-montane forests. En route, on the edge of Howick, we will pass by the scenic Howick Falls. Swift species here should include African Black and Alpine, whilst a pair of Peregrine usually watch on. Flocks of Red-winged Starling flit about and sometimes the rocky river below the falls can hold Giant Kingfisher. We leave the town of Howick and venture into the remote midlands and eventually leave the asphalt roads and venture into the Karkloof on gravel roads. The grassland habitat will be searched for Yellow and Southern Red Bishops, Levillant's and Pale-crowned Cisticolas, Pied Starling as well as the sought-after Black-winged Lapwing.

As we start reaching the forested areas, we should pick up on the endemic Drakensberg Prinia and Forest Canary on the road verges. Forest Buzzard and Crowned Eagle can sometimes be seen soaring up high over the forest and Long-crested Eagle and Jackal Buzzard can be seen hawking prey from the roadside. As we reach the forest interior, we will go in search of one of the star attractions of this area – Orange Ground Thrush. This usually very shy species is quite approachable here and should afford us some great looks. Other species that we will focus our attention on are Bush Blackcap, White-starred Robin, Chorister Robin-Chat, Lemon and Tambourine Doves, Cape Batis, Olive Woodpecker, Grey Cuckooshrike, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Red-backed Mannikin and Sweet Waxbill. A small stream nearby holds a pair of Mountain Wagtail and this open area is also favoured by *Accipiter* species such as Black Sparrowhawk and African Goshawk. The rare Cape Parrot is sometimes present and their loud squawks will give away their presence. Some flowering trees attract nectar feeders such as Southern Double-collared, Collared and Amethyst Sunbirds. The beautiful and large Knysna Turaco can also be seen flitting from tree to tree, showcasing its unmistakably bright crimson wings.

Further up the Karkloof range, we will visit a pristine area of upland grassland where breeding Grey Crowned and Blue Cranes and, if we are lucky, the rare Wattled Crane can sometimes be found. Monotypic Secretarybird, Denham's Bustard, Black-winged Lapwing, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Southern Bald Ibis and Cape Longclaw also occur here, and another star bird is the striking Buff-streaked Chat, an endemic wheatear that is striking both in appearance and song. Mammal possibilities today include Mountain and Southern Reedbucks, Slender and Egyptian Mongooses, Vervet, Blue Monkey and the sleek Oribi.

INCLUSIONS & EXCLUSIONS

The tour price INCLUDES:

- Lunch on the day;
- Ground transportation in a suitable vehicle, driven by a Rockjumper guide;
- All fuel as required by the itinerary & tolls;
- All entrance and conservation fees as required by the itinerary;
- Activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- Guiding services and costs of a Rockjumper leader throughout.

The tour price above EXCLUDES:

- Any bottled drinking water/ beverages/alcoholic drinks;
- Optional activities/excursions not mentioned in the itinerary outline;
- Special gratuities;
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, gift shop purchases, telephone calls, etc.
- Any item not specified above as included.

