



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South Africa

KwaZulu-Natal

2022 (8 days)



Drakensberg Rockjumper by Adam Riley

The province of KwaZulu-Natal on South Africa's eastern seaboard boasts some of the country's finest birding as well as exceptional mammal viewing. An impressive 550+ bird species occur within the region, reflecting the incredible natural diversity of the area; and this, coupled with a modern infrastructure well suited to the needs of the modern traveller, makes birding here an absolute delight. From the classic African savanna of the world-renowned Zululand game reserves, to the endemic-rich mist-belt forests of the Natal Midlands and the lofty peaks of the magnificent Drakensberg, this tour of KwaZulu Natal offers some of the very best of southern African birding and game viewing!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...**THE ITINERARY**

Day 1	Arrival in Durban, transfer to Hilton
Day 2	Hilton to Himeville
Day 3	Day trip up Sani Pass, Lesotho
Day 4	Himeville to St Lucia via Dlinza Forest
Day 5	St Lucia and Isimangaliso Wetland Park
Day 6	St Lucia to Mkuze
Day 7	Mkuze
Day 8	Mkuze to Durban and depart

THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival in Durban, transfer to Hilton. After arriving at King Shaka International Airport near the bustling metropolis of Durban, you will transfer to our conveniently located guest lodge in Hilton. As today is set aside as an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time you wish. This evening we will then all get together over a delicious dinner to discuss our forthcoming plans and adventures.

Day 2: Hilton to Himeville. We commence our birding this morning in the Karkloof, a range of forested hills near Howick that is home to a number of uncommon and local birds restricted to Afro-montane forests. We will be searching for southern African endemics such as Forest Buzzard, Knysna Turaco, the highly endangered Cape Parrot, elusive Bush Blackcap, Barratt's Warbler, Olive Bushshrike, Sweet Waxbill and Forest Canary, as well as many more widespread yet no less desirable birds including Long-crested Eagle, African Olive Pigeon, Olive Woodpecker, African Emerald Cuckoo, Black-headed Oriole, the uncommon Orange Ground Thrush, Cape Batis, White-starred Robin, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Red-backed Mannikin, Red-collared Widowbird and Brimstone Canary.

Further up the Karkloof range, we visit a pristine area of upland grassland where breeding Grey Crowned and Blue Cranes and, if we are lucky, Wattled Crane can sometimes be found. Black-winged Lapwing, Fan-tailed Grassbird and Cape Longclaw also occur here, but the star bird is undoubtedly the striking Buff-streaked Chat, an endemic wheatear that is striking both in appearance and song. Mammal possibilities include Mountain Reedbuck and the sleek Oribi antelope.

Next we will head for the Richmond area where we will attempt to track down the stunning Blue Swallow, undoubtedly our most elegant and severely threatened swallow. The birds regularly breed here in the summer months and our chances of finding this rare species are very good.

Continuing on we will pass through the dramatic Umkomaas River valley before arriving at a wonderfully lush patch of Mistbelt forest in the late afternoon. Here we will listen for the high-



Buff-streaked Chat by Adam Riley





Malachite Sunbird by Adam Riley

pitched screech of the similarly rare Cape Parrot and attempt to locate flocks as they make their way into the forest to roost. Other species to keep a look-out for include Black Saw-wing and Southern Double-collared Sunbird, with further chances for Knysna Turaco, Grey Cuckooshrike, White-starred Robin, Swee Waxbill and Forest Canary. We will then wind our way along a scenic country road to the small town of Himeville at the base of the majestic Drakensberg Mountains.

Day 3: Day trip up Sani Pass, Lesotho. Today we travel up into the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho in search of a handful of highly localised highland endemics. In order to do this we will transfer to 4 x 4 vehicles and make our way up the rugged and spectacular Sani Pass, birding en route. The grassy slopes and rocky outcrops on the ascent are home to the bizarre Ground Woodpecker, Drakensberg Prinia, African Yellow Warbler, Cape Grassbird, Cape Rock Thrush and Yellow Bishop, whilst

stands of protea bushes support the impressive Gurney's Sugarbird (belonging to a family endemic to southern Africa) and Malachite and Greater Double-collared Sunbirds. As we approach the crest of the escarpment we will be scanning the rocky scree at the roadside for the stunning Drakensberg Rockjumper, African Rock Pipit, Sentinel Rock Thrush and Drakensberg Siskin.

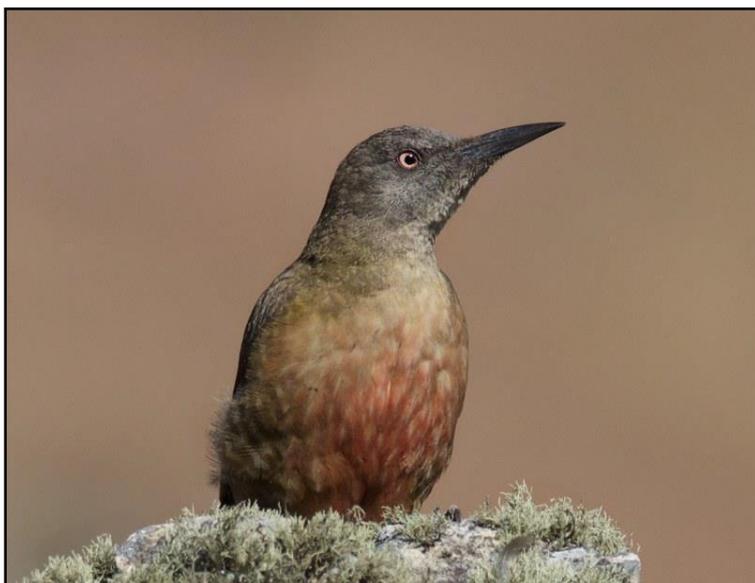
Atop the plateau, the steep slopes and rugged cliffs are replaced by gently undulating terrain and endless vistas of distant, blue mountains. Black Stork, African Black Duck and Southern Bald Ibis may be found alongside the mountain streams, whilst Grey-winged Francolin, Red-capped Lark, Sickie-winged Chat, Yellow Canary and Cape Bunting prefer adjacent meadows. A number of birds more typical of the Karoo, such as Grey Tit, Layard's Warbler and Fairy Flycatcher, Large-billed Lark and Karoo Prinia reach the eastern limits of their range here in the Lesotho highlands. We will also keep a careful watch skywards as the endangered Cape Vulture, magnificent Bearded Vulture, Verreaux's Eagle, Jackal Buzzard, Lanner Falcon and White-necked Raven are regularly seen overhead. Other animals of particular interest atop the "Roof of Africa" are the approachable Sloggett's Vlei Rat, endemic Drakensberg Crag Lizard and the colourful Southern Rock Agama.

Day 4: Himeville to St Lucia via Dlinza Forest. Today we will depart early for Dlinza Forest near Eshowe. The beautiful forest reserve of Dlinza supports an avifauna combining both coastal and mistbelt bird species, and here we will search for African Goshawk, Crowned Eagle, the rare Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Narina Trogon, Purple-crested Turaco, Crowned and noisy Trumpeter



Southern Bald Ibis by Adam Riley





Ground Woodpecker by Clayton Burne

Hornbills, Square-tailed Drongo, Chorister Robin-Chat, Grey Cuckooshrike and the highly endangered Spotted Ground Thrush. We are likely to also be entertained by the diminutive and at times surprisingly confiding Blue Duiker, a tiny antelope species that feeds almost exclusively on fallen leaves. South Africa's only forest canopy walkway is situated here and we will spend most of our morning birding from this superb viewpoint.

If time allows we will make a quick stop in at the coastal town of Mtunzini where we hope to find Palm-nut Vulture and Black-throated Wattle-eye.

Journeying north along the coastal road

we will make our way down to the village of St. Lucia, nestled on the shores of a lake of the same name and part of a world heritage site and the largest estuarine system in Africa!

If time allows, upon arrival in St Lucia we will take a drive to the nearby river mouth where we can obtain great views of Hippopotamus and Nile Crocodile lazing on the exposed sandbanks. We may also encounter several species of tern and waders here such as Caspian and Greater Crested Terns, Common Ringed and White-fronted Plovers, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Water Thick-knee. The surrounding reedbeds often harbour reasonable numbers of nesting weavers that could include Southern Brown-throated, Eastern Golden, Lesser Masked and Thick-billed Weavers.

Day 5: St Lucia and Isimangaliso Wetland Park. This morning we will make our way into the dune forest on the edge of St.Lucia town – the dunes here are the world's second highest vegetated dunes! This rich forest supports an exciting variety of endemics and specials, including the beautiful (but tricky) Livingstone's Turaco, Green Malkoha, Woodward's Batis, Brown Scrub Robin, Dark-backed Weaver, Green Twinspot, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Red-backed Mannikin and shy Lemon Dove. Blue Monkey, Natal Red Duiker, Banded Mongoose and Red Bush Squirrel are possible mammal species that we may encounter. Other more widespread birds to keep our eyes peeled for are Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, White-eared Barbet, Lesser Honeyguide and Collared and Olive Sunbirds.

We will also take some time to drive the road through the Eastern Shores section of Isimangaliso Wetland Park to Cape Vidal. The habitats we traverse include moist coastal grassland, wetlands and coastal forest, and this translates to a



Blue Crane by Greg de Klerk





Spotted Ground Thrush by Glen Valentine

large number of potential new species! Some of the top birds we will search for in the grassland and forest mosaic include the scarce Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Crowned Eagle, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Collared Pratincole, Rufous-winged and Croaking Cisticolas and Yellow-throated Longclaw, while in the tall coastal forest at Cape Vidal itself we will look for Green Twinspot, Woodward's Batis, Brown Scrub Robin, Livingstone's Turaco and Grey Waxbill. The grasslands en route support populations of African Buffalo, White and Black Rhinoceroses, Southern Reedbuck, Warthog, Greater Kudu and Plains

Zebra, while forested areas hold Natal Red Duiker and Blue Monkey. After our day exploring the park we will make our way back to St Lucia.

This evening we will head out on an exciting night drive, traversing the rarely driven tracks deep into the Eastern Shores section of Isimangaliso Wetland Park. An array of birds, mammals and reptiles await us, with previous tours finding the elusive Leopard, Serval, African Buffalo, secretive Bushpig, Spotted Hyena, Cape Porcupine, Side-striped Jackal, Thick-tailed Greater Galago, endemic Setaro's Dwarf and Flap-necked Chameleon, Peter's Epaulleted Fruit Bat and Hippopotamus.

Nocturnal birding can be excellent, with very good chances of seeing the scarce Swamp Nightjar as well as Fiery-necked and Square-tailed while both Spotted Eagle-Owl and African Wood Owl are readily found.

Day 6: Mkuze to St Lucia. After a final early morning's birding in the coastal forests of St Lucia we return to the coastal road to Mkuze. Mkuze, an area in northern KwaZulu-Natal, is home to a host of exciting specials and a handful of endemics. We will arrive in the mid to late afternoon for a two-night stay.

The Mkuze area is one of the most productive birding hotspots in southern Africa and, with its wide variety of savanna, forest and wetland habitats, we can expect an excellent diversity of bird and mammal species in our days here. While we will obviously take time to appreciate the overwhelming number of birds, we will concentrate particularly on finding the localised specials, including Eastern Nicator, Bearded Scrub Robin, Gorgeous Bushshrike, Lemon-breasted Canary and the stunning Pink-throated Twinspot. More widespread but none-the-less spectacular species we will look for are Black-bellied Bustard, with its strange, "cork-popping" display, the nomadic Senegal Lapwing, beautiful Narina Trogon,



Narina Trogon by Adam Riley





Livingstone's Turaco by Clayton Burne

Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Terrestrial Brownbul, stunning Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Red-capped Robin-Chat and Golden-breasted Bunting.

Day 7: Mkuze area. We will spend the whole day exploring the wonders of this area, searching the great diversity of habitats for its numerous species. One of the more exciting habitats for us here is sand forest, a rare and localized dry forest biome severely threatened by development. This habitat is home to Neergaard's Sunbird, Rudd's Apalis, funky Crested Guineafowl and the strange African Broadbill.

The ephemeral wetlands in the area can be very productive after good rains;

depending on the local conditions we may opt for some time at one of these 'pans', where we will search for Black Heron, Lesser Jacana, African Pygmy Goose and White-backed Duck, among many other commoner species.

While in Mkuze we will be sure to enjoy some 'bushveld' birding – an excellent habitat for raptors and 'flock' birding. Here we will be ever-vigilant for the huge Crowned and Martial Eagles, Little Sparrowhawk, Striped Kingfisher, Grey Penduline Tit, Bushveld Pipit, White-fronted and Little Bee-eaters, Black Cuckooshrike, White-crested Helmetshrike, Grey-headed and Orange-breasted Bushshrikes, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Black-bellied Starling, Purple-banded and Marico Sunbirds and Green-winged Pytilia. If conditions permit, we will do a nightwalk or short drive this evening to look for owls, nightjars and small mammals. Thick-tailed Greater Galago and White-tailed Mongoose are often seen.

Day 8: Mkuze to Wakkerstroom. We'll enjoy an early morning birding session in Mkuze before our departure back to Durban. En route we may pop in to False Bay Park to search for any species we have missed in the Mkuze area. The verdant sand forest here affords us additional opportunities for Narina Trogon, Gorgeous Bushshrike, Neergaard's Sunbird, Rudd's Apalis and Pink-throated Twinspot, with other possibilities including Tambourine Dove, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, African Yellow White-eye and Grey Sunbird.



Pink-throated Twinspot by Adam Riley



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under **IMPORTANTNOTES** below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 8;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY flights** (see above);
- Optional Night drive in Kruger National Park;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBT cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold (ZAR), and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
- b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.
- c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
- d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Notes:

- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of yourself and your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Exiting the vehicle is prohibited in all areas and parks that contain dangerous animals.
- Crime is problematic in certain areas of South Africa. Exercise caution as you would for any big city where crime exists. Do not unnecessarily flaunt cash and valuables and do not leave valuables exposed in the vehicle.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will commence with a group transfer from Durban to our lodgings in Hilton at around mid-day on day 1. Please ensure that you arrive in advance of this time. The tour will conclude by mid-afternoon at King Shaka International Airport, Durban (IATA: DUR) on day 8.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.



FLIGHTS:

O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg (IATA: JNB) is the main port of entry for international flights in South Africa and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. King Shaka International Airport, Durban (IATA: DUR) and Cape Town International Airport, Cape Town (IATA: CPT) are easily reached by many direct international flights or via an internal flight via Johannesburg. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

