



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South Africa

Wakkerstroom

2022 (3 days)



Yellow-breasted Pipit by Daniel Danckwerts

South Africa has the highest number of endemic and near-endemic bird species of any country on the African continent. Some of these special birds – such as Blue Crane – are beautiful and charismatic; while others, including the endangered Rudd’s and Botha’s Larks, are less striking but highly range-restricted.

The focus of this 3-day tour is to see these, and as many as possible of the other South African endemic and near-endemic species (listed in bold in the itinerary below) in the Wakkerstroom area. We will also however seek out a number of other special species; the area’s stunning scenery will serve as a wonderful backdrop to some great sightings. This short tour should also produce some interesting mammals, together with a diverse array of reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife. We invite you to join us in celebrating some of the endemic treasures that this

important high-altitude area has to offer!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Johannesburg & transfer to Wakkerstroom
Day 2	Wakkerstroom area
Day 3	Return to Johannesburg

THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival in Johannesburg & transfer to Wakkerstroom. After arriving at O.R. Tambo International Airport near the bustling metropolis of Johannesburg, we then move inland to the country village of Wakkerstroom for a two-night stay. This quaint village is surrounded by pristine upland grasslands rich in endemic birds, many of which are currently threatened by the ongoing destruction of their grassland habitat.

We will arrive in time to spend the afternoon birding the highly productive Wakkerstroom marsh at the edge of town. This is a haven for waterbirds and offers the chance of a number of uncommon or localised species. Purple Heron, Little Bittern, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler, African Marsh Harrier, African Swamphen, South African Cliff Swallow, Levillant's Cisticola, Lesser Swamp and African Yellow Warblers, and Cape Weaver are all regular and, with a bit of luck, we may find African Snipe and African Rail. Rarely recorded species seen here on our previous trips include the elusive Baillon's Crane, Western Marsh Harrier and Red-chested Flufftail.

Day 2: Wakkerstroom area. Driving along the network of dirt roads radiating out from Wakkerstroom, we will explore the grasslands, rocky outcrops and gorges of this unique area in search of numerous

specials and endemics such as Southern Bald Ibis, Blue Crane, Blue Korhaan and White-bellied Bustard (the latter is sometimes treated as a separate species - Barrow's Korhaan), Ground Woodpecker, vocal Bokmakierie, the rare and localised Botha's and Rudd's Larks (the latter considered one of the world's most endangered larks), Pink-billed, Eastern Long-billed and Eastern Clapper Larks, Mountain Wheatear, Sentinel Rock Thrush, African Rock and Yellow-breasted Pipits, Pied Starling, Long-tailed and Fan-tailed Widowbirds, Yellow-crowned Bishop, Quailfinch and Cape Canary. Both Red-winged and Grey-winged Francolins occur in the moist



Blue Crane by Glen Valentine



grasslands and we may find coveys feeding at the roadside or sunning themselves at dawn, while we also stand further chances for the stately Secretarybird.

Some of the farms in the area around Wakkerstroom support populations of the peculiar Black Wildebeest (also known by its less-used English name of White-tailed Gnu) and Blesbok, whilst smaller mammals occurring in the grasslands include Yellow Mongoose and the rare Cape Fox. One of the interesting denizens of these grasslands is the curious Suricate, or Meerkat, immortalised in Walt Disney's 'Lion King'. We have a good chance of finding family groups of these unusual animals.



Botha's Lark by Clayton Burne

Wakkerstroom is justly famous as one of the best places in the world to see Amur Falcon on their wintering grounds. Having safely navigated their way from eastern Russia and northern China, the majority of the world's population ends up in south-eastern Africa. We can expect hundreds, if not



Amur Falcon by Clayton Burne

thousands of these small falcons hawking over fields throughout the high-altitude grassland area. It is at dusk though, that the few tall trees in and around Wakkerstroom come alive, with up to 10 000 Amur Falcons and roughly 1000 Lesser Kestrels heading in to roost for the night.

Day 3: Return to Johannesburg. This morning there may be time for some birding before breakfast at the marsh for any species that we may have missed on the previous days. It may also allow us to connect with the resident family of Spotted-necked Otter that are frequently seen here. After a hearty breakfast we will drive back to Johannesburg to connect with our flights onwards to Durban and the start of the conference.



INCLUSIONS & EXCLUSIONS

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to lunch on 3;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees (as applicable); and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- ANY flights;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and 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) **The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold (ZAR), and the actual cost in any 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.**

c) **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.**

Tiping: 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:

- The focus of this tour is to see as many of the endemics and area specials as possible in our given time.
- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we have to cover long distances 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 your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg for check in luggage and 8kg for hand luggage.
- For much of this tour you will be some distance from medical facilities. It is essential that you let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour if you have any physical limitations or medical conditions.
- 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.

FLIGHTS:

O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg (IATA: JNB) is the main port of entry for international flights into and out of South Africa and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

