



CAPE, NAMAQUALAND AND KALAHARI 13 –DAY BIRDING ADVENTURE

15 – 27 AUGUST 2017



Secretarybird (photo John Tinkler) is one of our targets on this trip.

This is a birding adventure in which a large number of localized southern African endemics will be encountered. In addition, big mammals such as black-maned Kalahari lion will be an exciting distraction to birding.

We start with a couple of days around Cape Town, where a plethora of fynbos habitat endemics can be found amid some of Africa's most splendid scenery. We then drive to Springbok in northern Namaqualand.

From here we can bird the endemic-rich, beautiful desert mountains of one of the most famous flower areas on earth. Namaqualand has huge plant diversity, and its spring flower shows are an impressive sight. In addition, we can also access the desert coast just south of the Namibian border. Then we head inland for some extremely localized birds inhabiting the region called "Bushmanland".

Further inland, we bird the surroundings of the impressive "waterfall in the desert" (Augrabies Falls) and its associated gorge before heading for one of Africa's great game parks: the vast Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park extending into neighboring Botswana. This conservation area is on a par with Kruger and Etosha National Parks and is set in one of South Africa's most remote wilderness areas, wedged between Namibia and Botswana. Not only is this park inhabited by Africa's charismatic megafauna such as lion and gemsbok, but it also hosts many vibrant southern African endemic birds like **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, **Southern Pied Babbler**, **Kori Bustard**, and **Black-faced Waxbill**. This park is a truly phenomenal place for raptors and owls, many of which can be found at their day-time roosts.

We then add on a drive to Kimberley; this is especially rewarding during the southern winter when recently described pipits can be seen. We also have an excellent chance of seeing aardvark there.

Please note that this itinerary is still flexible, and we may opt to spend more time in Cape Town if any participants request this.

Please note that the detailed itinerary below cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Itinerary (13 days/12 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Cape Town, transfer to Agulhas

After international flights arrive in Cape Town in the morning (any time before noon is acceptable), we immediately head to the Agulhas Plains adjacent to the southern-most tip of the African continent. Agulhas is situated about a 2.5-hour drive east of Cape Town. Here we find many exciting birds, including some incredibly localized ones, such as **Agulhas Clapper Lark**, **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, etc., as well as impressive species such as **Secretarybird**, **Blue Crane**, **Denham's Bustard**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Black Harrier**, and many others.

Overnight: Potteberg Guest Farm, Bredasdorp, or similar.

Day 2. Birding the Agulhas Plains, transfer to Cape Town

After spending the morning exploring the bird-rich Agulhas Plains, we head back to the Cape Town area, where we can see more endemic birds, for example three spectacular sunbird species and **Cape Sugarbird**, and also get a feel for the real Cape Town.

Overnight: Cape Town or Tableview B&B or similar, Cape Town

Day 3. Transfer to Springbok, birding on the way

Today we drive to Springbok in the heart of Namaqualand – this is a long (5.5 hours) but very scenic drive through Namaqualand, and we will most probably see incredible carpets of blooming flowers. A plethora of exciting endemics awaits us in this very remote part of South Africa: **Karoo Eremomela** is common, **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** skulks on the rocky hillsides and sometimes gives decent views when it sits atop a rock to sing, but the birds we are really looking for are remote Northern Cape specialities not occurring close to Cape Town (or anywhere else). We'll search for the "Damara" form of **Black-headed Canary**, **Red Lark**, and all the others of the Namaqualand mountains and plains.

Overnight: Hotel in Springbok

Day 4. Birding the edge of the Namib Desert

We will bird the beautiful escarpment and the West Coast just south of the Namibian border before returning to Springbok. One of the star birds at the edge of the Namib Desert along the coast is **Barlow's Lark**, easy to find once we are within its tiny range. **Cape Long-billed Lark** is also relatively common. We will, as usual, see a lot of other birds as well, like **Lanner Falcon**, **Greater Kestrel**, **Southern Black Korhaan**, and many others.

Overnight: Hotel in Springbok

Day 5. Birding the Northern Cape

Today we look for more South African "super-endemics", i.e., birds found only in the remote Northern Cape. We traverse a wide range of scenery in our search for the elusive **Sclater's Lark**, **Stark's Lark**, **Black-eared Sparrow-Lark**, **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, and other highly sought-after species.

Overnight: Pofadder Hotel, Pofadder

Day 6. Birding for Bushmanland endemics, transfer to Augrabies Falls National Park

After further searching for any of the "Bushmanland" endemics we may have so far missed around Pofadder, we head to the spectacular Augrabies Falls National Park, where South Africa's biggest river plunges into a deep gorge in the middle of the desert. As always, this area is full of endemics, and we may also start seeing our first large mammals (interesting small mammals can be seen almost anywhere in South Africa, of course). Klipspringer is a favorite animal for most visitors and is fairly common here.

Overnight: Restcamp, Augrabies Falls National Park

Day 7. Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

Today we head into one of Africa's greatest game parks – Kgalagadi is twice the size of Kruger and is one of the best places for big and small cats. Cheetah is relatively common here, but we always need luck to see them. Black-maned Kalahari lions are reasonably common also, and even leopard may put in an appearance, along with the smaller cats. In addition to a rich assemblage of big mammals, including some that can't be found in the less remote game parks such as Kruger, like gemsbok, springbok (South Africa's national animal), and suricate (or meerkat), we of course also find a host of exciting birds. The Kgalagadi is arguably the best place in South Africa to observe owls – many of which roost during the day within the lodge grounds. From the minute **African Scops Owl** to the giant **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** these birds will entertain us day and night. The rolling red sand dunes of the Kalahari are also inhabited by many other birds, such as the magnificent **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Pygmy Falcon**, **Northern Black Korhaan**, **Kori Bustard** (common; the world's heaviest flying bird), a plethora of raptors, colorful seedeaters, **Sociable Weaver** with its massive nests, and many, many others.

Overnight: Twee Rivieren Restcamp, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

Days 8 – 9. Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

We will drive northwards into the very heart of this national park and will spend the next two nights at the South Africa/Botswana border.

Overnight: Nossob Restcamp, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

Day 10. Birding the “Green Kalahari”

We leave the national park and look for more endemic birds just north of Upington back in the “Green Kalahari” – the oasis formed by the Orange River as it flows through the desert.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, sandgrouse species, and many others await us.

Overnight: Kalahari Guest House, Upington

Day 11. Transfer to Kimberley

We will drive to Kimberley, searching for **Orange River Francolin** and other specials en route to Kimberley, famed as the world’s greatest diamond city. The Kimberley area will give us the opportunity of seeing some other species not found earlier on this tour. Kimberley is where three biomes meet – Grassland, Karoo, and Kalahari – so it has elements from all three. We also have an excellent chance of seeing aardvark and other elusive mammals here.

Overnight: Marrick Safari, Kimberley

Day 12. Birding Kimberley

A full day of birding in and around Kimberley. A visit to the “Big Hole” and the diamond museum can also be arranged.

Overnight: Marrick Safari, Kimberley

Day 13. Departure

After final birding in the Kimberley area you fly to Cape Town or Johannesburg – then fly home.

Duration: 13 days
Limit: 4 – 9
Date: 15 – 27 August 2017
Start: Cape Town
End: Kimberley

Price: R55,738
Single supplement: R7,431

Price includes:

Meals
 Accommodation
 Entrance fees
 Guiding fees
 All transport while on tour

Price excludes:

International flights
 Personal insurance
 Alcoholic beverages

Gratuities
Laundry service
Personal expenses such as gifts