



## 1-DAY JOHANNESBURG/PRETORIA BIRDING TOUR



*Northern Black Korhaan should be encountered in the Johannesburg/Pretoria area.*

We take birders to sites for some exciting birds that can be found on the doorstep of Johannesburg and Pretoria, if you know exactly where to go, like our guides do. We can also arrange 2-3-day Wakkerstroom trips from Gauteng.

### 1. Tough Birds of Gauteng

We take birders to sites for some tough birds, like **African Grass Owl, White-bellied Bustard, Orange River Francolin, Red-chested Flufftail**, and others that can be found on the doorstep of Johannesburg and Pretoria, if you know exactly where to go, like our guides do. Most Johannesburg birders have not seen these star birds, and yet they can be seen given less than a full day's birding. Please note: this tour includes 1-day trips on weekends.

### 2. Pilanesberg National Park

This large game park is home to some 350-odd species of birds and is particularly well known for its big game. A good array of bushveld birds occur here, and 150 species on a good summer day is quite feasible. Although we do many day trips to this area, a longer stay comes highly recommended. A lot of our birding will be done at selected spots where we are allowed out of the vehicle and can stroll around at leisure. There are several small dams and watering holes, with the latter being quite productive at times, as well as the larger Mankwe Dam, where we will look for some waterbirds. Raptors are well represented, and a regular scan of the skies usually produces some of the larger eagles as well as vultures. Specials to look out for include **Secretarybird, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Kori Bustard, African Cuckoo, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Verreaux's Eagle, Rock Kestrel, Jackal Buzzard, Black-breasted Snake Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, Martial Eagle, Pearl-spotted Owlet and Lappet-faced Vulture**.



*The massive **Kori Bustard** can be seen Pilanesberg National Park.*

### 3. Borakalalo Nature Reserve and Vaalkop Dam

Although both these localities can be visited in one day, it is far more productive to do them on separate days. Both these localities have so much to offer and one can easily spend many more days in this area. Borakalalo is a large game reserve close to Gauteng and has a wide variety of bushveld, woodland, and waterbirds. Over 300 species have been recorded, and a day trip in summer can easily produce 120 species. The large Klipvoor dam is a prominent feature of the reserve, and it is on the Moreleta River below the dam that we will be looking for **African Finfoot** and the occasional **White-backed Night Heron**. Other specials include **Red-billed Oxpecker**, **Short-toed Rock Thrush** (winter), **Grey-hooded Kingfisher**, **Meyer's Parrot**, **Purple Roller**, **Double-banded Sandgrouse**, **Bronze-winged Courser** and **Southern Pied Babbler**.



*Double-banded Sandgrouse can be seen at Borakalalo Game Reserve.*

The Vaalkop dam is a large combined gravity and earth-fill type dam on the Elands River and has an incredibly rich selection of birds, with a good representation of raptors, which include **Western Osprey** (summer), **African Fish Eagle**, **Verreaux's Eagle**, **Wahlberg's Eagle** (summer), and **African Hawk-Eagle**. Some of the larger waterbirds present include **Goliath** and **Purple Herons**, **Great Egret**, **Yellow-billed Stork**, and **African Spoonbill**. In the bushveld we will look for **Violet-eared** and **Black-cheeked Waxbills**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, and **Barred Wren-Warbler**. Some other specials include **Icterine Warbler**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** and **Woodland** and **African Pygmy Kingfisher**.

#### 4. Ezemvelo Nature Reserve and Bronkhorstspuit Dam

A very early start to the day will see us at Bronkhorstspuit dam, which is a haven for waterfowl as well as for a number of interesting grassland endemics. Over 200 species have been recorded, and we should pick up 70-odd species here. Specials to look out for include **Red-chested Flufftail** (more often heard than seen), **White-backed Duck**, **Great Crested Grebe**, **Caspian Tern**, **Zitting**, **Cloud** and **Wing-snapping Cisticola**, **Blue Korhaan**, and **Orange River Francolin**, as well as the occasional **Western Osprey**. From here we head for the 10,000+ ha Ezemvelo Nature Reserve, offering excellent grassland habitat as well as riverine bush and small areas of *Acacia* veld. This reserve boasts an impressive bird list, which can be found in the download section of their web page at [www.ezemvelo.co.za](http://www.ezemvelo.co.za). We should find birds such as **White-bellied Bustard**, **Greater Honeyguide**, **Banded Martin**, **Red-breasted Swallow** and **Striped**, **Buffy**, and **Plain-backed Pipits** with relative ease.



*White-backed Duck can be seen in Ezemvelo Nature Reserve.*

#### 5. Gauteng, Alternate Mountains and Wetlands Routes

We will start at the 95 ha Rondebult Bird Sanctuary, where we will concentrate mainly on running up a quick list of waterbirds. The sanctuary consists of a number of large ponds originally created as settlement pans for a nearby sewage treatment plant. From here we head to Kloofendal Nature Reserve, where we will find some woodland birds including the likes of **Black Cuckooshrike**, **Malachite Sunbird**, **Klaas's Cuckoo**, **Lesser** and **Greater Honeyguides**, and many more. A short distance from here we find the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens, which is an outstanding birding locality with a bird list of approximately 230 species. On arrival we will enjoy a packed picnic lunch before heading for the nesting **Verreaux's Eagle** near the waterfall. There are some pleasant and well laid-out walks, along which we will

look for **Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Mocking Cliff Chat, Rock Kestrel, African Black Duck** and **Half-collared Kingfisher**, to name a few.

**6. Short tours targeting hard-to-find (or identify) southern African birds: Flufftails, larks, crakes and warblers**

Please contact us for details



*African Crake can be numerous in certain years.*

**7. Weekend trip for River Warbler, Olive-tree Warbler, Thrush Nightingale, crakes, etc., out of Johannesburg/Pretoria**

On this trip we look for some of South Africa's most difficult warblers, all found within a stone's throw of Pretoria/Johannesburg. **River Warbler** has to be found during the couple-of-weeks period when it starts calling, just before it migrates out of South Africa. These warblers are unpredictable – please provisionally book well in advance, but note that we may have to change dates to accommodate the birds. With luck, and rain-dependent, we may also find crakes and other skulkers. The area we visit also has well over 300 other bird species, so expect a long list as a by-product of looking for the tough warblers.

The guide for day trips is allocated only after you have booked, as all of them are run as private trips. But we always use the country's top birding guides.

**Duration:** 1 day

**Group Size:** 6 – 8

**Start:** Johannesburg/Pretoria

**End:** Johannesburg/Pretoria

**Price:** On request