



NAMIBIA TOUR REPORT

10th July to 23rd July
2014

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

- African Penguin
- Wilson's Storm-Petrel
- Hartlaub's Spurfowl
- White-headed Vulture
- Black-chested Snake-Eagle
- Verreaux's Eagle
- Martial Eagle
- Bateleur
- Secretarybird
- Ludwig's Bustard
- Red-crested Korhaan
- Double-banded Courser
- Burchell's Sandgrouse
- Rosy-faced Lovebird
- Lilac-breasted Roller
- Monteiro's Hornbill
- Crimson-breasted Shrike
- Bokmakierie
- Dune Lark
- Rockrunner
- Cinnamon-breasted Warbler
- Rufous-eared Warbler
- Layard's Tit-babbler
- Southern Pied Babbler
- Karoo Thrush
- Violet-eared Waxbill
- Leopard
- Lion
- Aardwolf
- Bat-eared Fox
- Black Rhino
- Meerkat
- South African Porcupine
- Heaviside's Dolphin

SUMMARY:

Our second tour of the year to wonderful Namibia followed the tried and tested route from Windhoek, driving across the Namib Desert to Solitaire and then on to the coast at Walvis Bay. Continuing inland via the Erongo Hills, the highlight of any tour is the fabulous Etosha National Park. Our 4 night stay provided amazing views of numerous animals visiting the waterholes and it really was something special. We had such close-ups of a huge herd of African Elephants playing in the water right in front of us, and large numbers of Burchell's Zebras, Black-faced Impala, Springbok and Blue Wildebeast at other waterholes. However, twice we tracked down a Leopard hunting in the open grassy plains, a rare sighting indeed. This visit also provided a number of rarely seen mammals such as Porcupine, Bat-eared Fox, Cape Fox and Aardwolf. Birds were top drawer as well with a rare sighting of Karoo Thrush, several Red-crested Korhaans, great views of the endemic Dune Lark, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, several Bokmakieries, and many others. With a boat ride at Walvis Bay and jeep safaris at Etosha, superb scenery from mountains, coastal lagoons to the Namib Desert, great food, superb lodges and a relaxed pace this was a most enjoyable tour for all!

Days 1 - 2 10th – 11th July

My second Namibia tour this year began with another overnight journey, via Johannesburg and eventually arriving in Windhoek at 6.40pm where we met up with our guide and my good friend, Charly.

Day 3 Saturday 12th July

It was considerably cooler since my last visit, well it is winter here, and there was a distinct chill in the air this morning as we met for our 7am walk. It is always a nice place to start as there are plenty of lifers for everyone and I think we did very well during our 80 minutes outing, where we walked just a few hundred metres from the hotel entrance! From an aesthetic point of view the stunning **Crimson-breasted Shrike** perched on top of an acacia for several minutes was the star bird, although a **Bradfield's Swift** flying overhead was much more satisfying to my mind! As the day began to slowly warm up there was more bird activity and we saw **Familiar Chat**, **Black-chested Prinia**, **Fork-tailed Drongo**, **Cape Wagtail**, **Marico Sunbirds**, a few **Southern Masked Weavers**, several close **White-browed Sparrow-Weavers**, **Southern Grey-headed Sparrow** and lots of **Cape Glossy Starlings**. We walked around to an open area and then in a very short space of time we were watching an **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Pirit Batis**, **Burnt-necked Eremomela**, **Rufous-vented Tit-Babbler**, **Grey-Go-Away Bird**, lots of **African Red-eyed Bulbuls** and several cute **Blue (Cordon-bleu) Waxbills**.



Kalahari Scrub-Robin showed well at lunch.

Then, following a nice buffet breakfast we headed off in a southerly direction before turning off the paved road and onto the 'gravel' road we would soon become accustomed to. Along the way we stopped to admire our first **Tawny Eagles** and several **White-backed Vultures**, whilst a single **Lappet-faced Vulture** just passed by too quickly, a **Marico Flycatcher** was scoped and we saw the first of many **Burchell's Starlings** to be seen today. The scenery was getting better and better, changing from typical 'bush country' to rocky gorges as the day went on and I really don't know where the time went today, as it went way too fast for our liking. It was easy roadside birding all day and we

picked up several **Pale Chanting Goshawks**, both **Lilac-breasted** and **Purple Rollers** and **Common Fiscal** early on. We stopped to admire a huge **Social Weaver** colonial nest in a large tree and a male **Pygmy Falcon** appeared nearby, along with flocks of weavers and **Scaly-feathered Finches**. Moving on we saw our first **Helmeted Guineafowl**, before stopping on a bridge over a dry riverbed, where one small pool was inviting lots of **Lark-like Buntings** and a single **Green-winged Pytilia**. **Short-toed Rock-thrushes** were numerous today and we probably saw at least 9 throughout the day – compared to April's visit where we only had one distant view on our penultimate day.

Lunch was taken at a quaint roadside restaurant and whilst waiting for our food we walked around the gardens getting our first **Blacksmith's Lapwing**, **Sabota Lark**, **Dusky Sunbirds**, **Kalahari Scrub-Robin**, **Familiar Chat**, brief **Black-throated Canary**, **Ashy Tit** and a flyover **Namaqua Sandgrouse**. Both **Tractrac Chat** and **Chat Flycatcher** were seen shortly after leaving our lunch stop as well. The scenery became more rugged from here on and we searched for **Herero Chat** without any luck, but did get

nice views of a group of 5 **Monteiro's Hornbills**, **Mountain Wheatears**, lots of **Chacma Baboons**, **Klipspringers** and **Black-backed Jackal**. A **Bokmakierie** was perched on top of an acacia as we drove past but disappeared as we all jumped out of the minibus. As the road dropped down to the valley floor a beautiful red sunset greeted us and 3 **Ludwig's Bustards** striding sedately across the grassland was a fine way to end our birding.

Day 4 Sunday 13th July

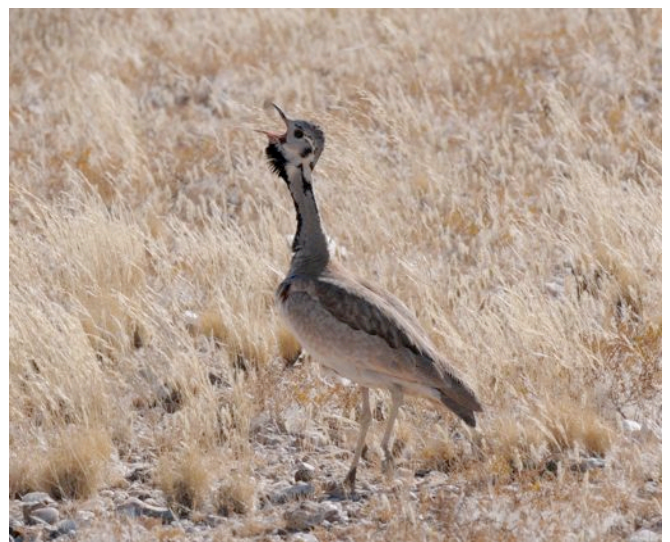


This Karoo Thrush was a big surprise at Solitaire.

Got woken up at 1.30am by a howling gale outside and I feared the worst for the rest of the day, but as I stepped out of my room at 6.30am I was confronted with the remarkable sighting of a **Karoo Thrush** sitting on a rock beside the pool right in front of me. I couldn't believe my eyes and rushed around to get everyone. Once we were all assembled and seen the thrush, a short walk despite the high winds turned up a few goodies, such as **Cape Wagtail**, **Helmeted Guineafowl**, **Red-billed Spurfowl** and a **Common Scimitarbill** seeking shelter in a dense acacia right next to us. After breakfast a few **Black-throated Canaries** joined numerous **Lark-like Buntings** at the drinking pool, and then we left this wonderful lodge and drove out into the wilderness.

Continuing our run of good luck, the first of 20+ **Ruppell's Korhaans** to be seen today was spotted close to the road. Then at our secret location, in the space of ten minutes, we quickly nailed the scarce **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** that was creeping around a rocky hillside with a **Cape Bunting**. When a **Bokmakierie** began calling I couldn't believe it when a quick scan produced a stunning pair calling back at us from the top of a large boulder. They came in a little closer to inspect us but never too close for a photo but boy the scope views were awesome! Then Dave spotted some movement in a close tree and just to show, when your luck is in – it really is in, as it proved to be a **Layard's Tit-babbler**. Wow!

So with that done we set off on the 250km drive to Walvis Bay, notching several **Chat Flycatchers** and **Tractrac Chats** as the scenery became more arid. A very productive drive towards the coast turned up many new birds for us, with **Ostriches**, **Black-chested Snake-eagle**, **Lanner**, **Greater Kestrel**, **Three-banded Plover**, **Northern Black Korhaan**, **Cape Sparrow** and both **Cape & Pied Crows**. We got stuck into the larks as well today with **Spike-heeled**, **Stark's** and **Gray's** showing well, but best of all were at least 4 **Dune Larks** – Namibia's only true endemic.



We saw several Ruppell's Korhaans today.

A good run of mammals included **Steenbok**, **Beisa Oryx**, **Springbok**, **Mountain Zebra** and along a 'side road' at Charleys' special site we had our first

Giraffes. Now if you've never been to Africa it is a very special moment when you see some of this continent's larger mammals and we soaked up the views in the scope of ten animals feeding below some tall acacias. However the best sighting of all was the family group of really cool Meerkats that we observed beside the road and watched them running across the desert landscape quite close beside us.



One of the tour highlights was this family group of Meerkats en-route to Walvis Bay

As we reached the coast our first **Cape** and **Hartlaub's Gulls** were nice, and in the distance **Greater Flamingo's** and **White Pelicans** were seen. Then we spent the evening in the bar watching the world cup final. What a day!

Day 5 Monday 14th July

A quick check of the gardens near the hotel gave us a pair of **Orange River White-eyes**, along with some **Common Waxbills**. So with time on our hands we walked along the seafront and enjoyed nice views of Pied Avocet, both **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos** and some common waders, as well as scoping some distant **African Black Oystercatchers** before going for breakfast. Afterwards we walked around the corner to the small harbour and set out on our morning's boat excursion across the bay. We were soon joined by a **Cape Fur Seal** that jumped aboard and demanded some fish, but he wasn't that friendly and was soon 'shown the door'. We cruised by hundreds more seals loafing on the beach, as well as getting a couple of **Heaviside's Dolphins**. But it was very quiet for seabirds with just a few **Cape Gannets**, some **Swift** and **Common Terns**, and a **Wilson's Storm-petrel** to show for our efforts, so we returned to calmer waters and were extremely fortunate to get decent views of a pair of **African Penguins**. There were lots of **Cape Cormorants** and a single **Crowned Cormorant**, and some very familiar waders on the shoreline such as **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Sanderling**. We finished with a nice little buffet, some fresh oysters and sparkling wine before returning to shore, getting a visit from a more friendly **Fur Seal** who posed for photos and selfies! Around the restaurants on the quay we managed to see the reported **House Crow** – a vagrant and one of only a few records for Namibia!

After some time off to relax we drove along Walvis Bay and spent a very enjoyable couple of hours sifting through the wader flocks. It didn't take us very long to find our first **Chestnut-banded Plover**, and they turned out to be extremely common with a rough estimate of 200+ present. We also had **White-fronted** and **Three-banded Plovers**, **Whimbrel**, **Common Greenshank**, **Black-winged Stilt**, plus **Grey-headed Gull**, **Cape Teal** and **Cape Shovelers**, and thousands of **Lesser** and **Greater Flamingo's**.

Day 6 Tuesday 15th July

Unlike my previous trip in April we nailed **Bank Cormorant** early this morning, along with **White-breasted Cormorants** and nice views of **South African Shelduck**, which meant we could leave the mist enshrouded coastline and head inland where it was much warmer. Driving through Swakopmund we picked up **Red-knobbed Coot** standing on the banks of the sewage works before driving towards the impressive Spitzkoppe. Our first good bird here was **Karoo Long-billed Lark** perched on a large boulder and nice views in the scope they were too! Then we headed closer to the impressive cliffs and unbelievably at our second location called in a pair of **Herero Chats** – probably Namibia’s toughest speciality to find. Oh boy! One bird came in very close and sang back at us for a while before flying from bush to bush around us. Must admit I was particularly pleased with this bird! As we celebrated, some movement in a tree caught our attention and we had a mad five minutes with a female **Cardinal**



The hardest Namibian speciality to find is Herero Chat

Woodpecker digging out a nest hole and a pair of **Brown-crowned Tchagras** in the same tree. A pair of **Bokmakierie** then joined them and sang back at my ipod, followed by a cracking pair of **White-tailed Shrikes** flying around us, perching on the treetops and circling us a couple of times. And a couple of **White-throated Canaries** nearby were also our first ones of the tour so far. Wow!



Spitzkoppe held some confiding White-tailed Shrikes

So we were done here! A quick check of the rock drawings, followed by a very nice picnic lunch and a confiding **Rufous-vented Tit-babbler** plus some **Rock Hyraxes**, and we were off towards Omaruru. A flock of **Crowned Lapwings** and an **African Pipit** were spotted just as we left. A group of 3 **Ruppell’s Korhaans** showed very well beside the road and even began calling back to Charly’s imitation!

It was another 150+ kms so we didn’t hang around at all until closer to Omaruru where we stopped along the roadside to look at a **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill**. As usually happens there were other birds around and we also called in a **Brubru**, and also saw **Yellow-bellied Eremomela**,

Little Swift, **Black-chested Prinia**, **Common Scimitarbill**, **Pirit Batis**, **Marico Flycatcher**, **Burchell’s Starling** and a few other common birds.

Day 7 Wednesday 16th July

We headed to the Erongo Hills at dawn and walked up onto an open area where we could scan the surrounding rocky hills. It was very quiet and rather cool here which may have been the reason we saw very little to start with and only had a very brief view of a **White-browed Scrub-robin** to show for

our efforts. So we walked back down to the minibus and drove further along the road, playing the call of **Hartlaub's Francolin** as we drove along. Sure enough we got a response a short while later and were then treated to a male, found by Jenny, calling back at us from the top of a large boulder. All of a sudden it flew down towards us and landed maybe 8 metres away from us, looked up at us and then flew away. A few minutes later we saw the same pair and a small juvenile working their way across the rocky slopes, and then they began calling back at us giving marvellous looks through the scope. At the same spot some **Rosy-faced Lovebirds** flew over, then a **Rockrunner** appeared, and a pair of **White-tailed Shrikes** perched on top of a nearby acacia. Plenty of **Rock Hyraxes** were here and a **Slender Mongoose** was also a nice find.



Namaqua Sandgrouse

After a superb breakfast we set out on the drive towards Etosha National Park. It was quite a long drive to our lunch stop at Outjo, but was enlivened by views of **Common Ostrich**, **Damara Red-billed Hornbill**, a party of **Southern Pied Babblers**, **Fawn-coloured Lark**, **Southern Ant-eating Chat**, **Wattled Starling**, **Black-faced Waxbill**, **Shaft-tailed Whydah** and many **Common Warthogs**.



Kori Bustard in typical habitat

At lunch we had a lively time with a number of birds responding to the owl tape, including **Lesser Masked Weaver**, **White-bellied Sunbird**, **Violet-eared Waxbill** and **Rattling Cisticola** being new. There was also **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, more **Black-faced Waxbills**, **Marico Sunbird**, **Pirit Batis**, **Grey-backed Cameroptera**, **Burnt-necked** and **Yellow-bellied Eremomelas**, **Blue (Cordonbleu) Waxbill**, and many **Red-eyed Bulbuls** – all this in one tree! In the garden, **Groundscraper Thrush**, **Red-faced Mousebird** and **Striped Tree Squirrel** were also new additions to our lists. Driving on we had **Shikra**, **Southern White-crowned Shrikes**, and a gang of **Banded Mongoose**.

Once we reached Etosha the excitement duly kicked in as the first waterhole held 30 **African Elephants**, some **Plains Zebra** and **Black-faced Impalas**. Not a bad start huh? Then we took a loop circuit towards Okaukeujo, and around the first bend was a flock of **Namaqua Sandgrouse** that allowed us to drive up next to them. But the next section was very quiet apart from a perched **Greater Kestrel**, until a huge **Kori Bustard** appeared, and then the first of many **Northern Black Korhaans** was seen. Continuing on

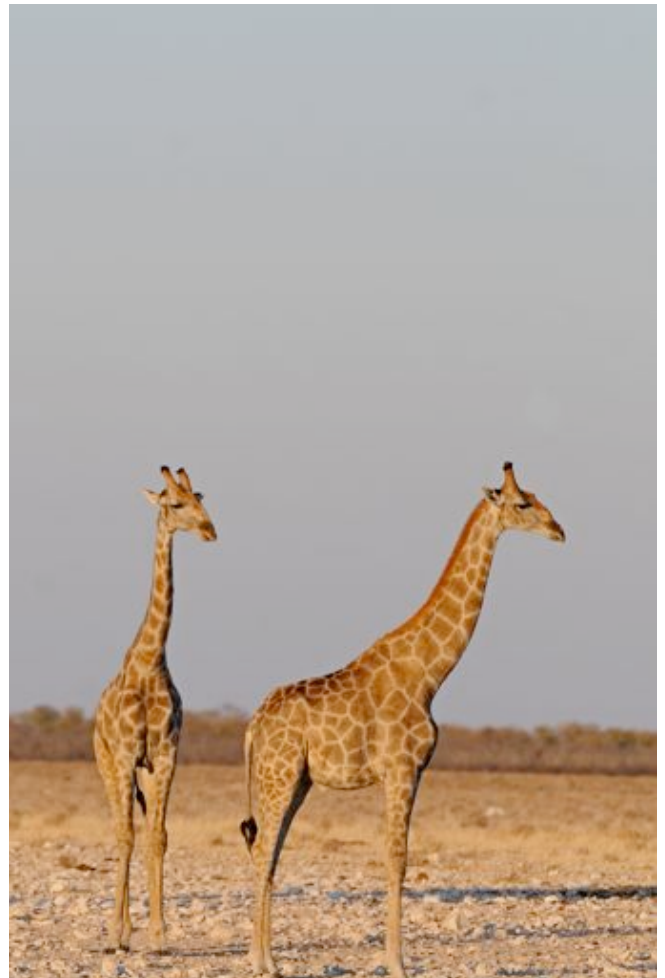


To see a pair of Bat-eared Foxes in the daytime was special.

we came across more **Zebra**, **Springbok** and **Impala**, but then a pair of **Secretarybirds** was seen. We stopped to admire them and what we thought initially was a Spotted Hyena walking behind them. But the stripes on its back were a bit of a giveaway, as it was an **Aardwolf**! Holy cow! I just couldn't believe it, but there it was and we had very nice scope views of it walking across the grassland. One of my most wanted mammals – BANG!! Obviously everyone was elated with this and we continued driving towards our destination, but further on a pair of **Bat-eared Foxes** were spotted and we spent a magical 10 minutes watching them.

Unbelievable! At the nearby waterhole a bunch of **Giraffes** were present but we had to leave as the sun was setting and we wanted to get to Okaukuejo waterhole in time for some Sandgrouse action. So we hot-footed it and made it with a few minutes to spare, watching the sun set behind the horizon and within minutes the first **Double-banded Sandgrouse** arrived. And then more and more came in, until there must have been up to 300 present. It was just a shame some of them were hidden and then disturbed by a couple of **Elephants** at the waterhole! Anyway, as the light faded the Sandgrouse flew off and we headed for a shower and then dinner.

Probably *THE* most magical experience of any Etosha visit, is the floodlit waterholes you can find at the main lodges. In my opinion Okaukuejo is the best of the lot, as the viewing area is quite large and you usually get a good variety of mammals. This evening was superb, as after dinner and checklist we walked over and upon arrival there were 4 **Elephants** and a couple **Black Rhinos**. Shortly after another 2 **Rhinos**, a mother and well grown youngster, came in and it was simply wonderful to watch the **Elephants** huddled up together with the **Rhinos** drinking behind, and their reflections in the water were crystal clear. As time went on, **Black-backed Jackals** and a few **Springbok** appeared. But the appearance of a mature male **Lion** and a large **Lioness** really put the icing on the cake. They walked slowly across the scene in front of us, and at one point the Lioness began stalking a **Springbok**, making a short dash for it that came to nothing. As the **Lions** continued walking away a solitary **Giraffe** came in, and then a herd of 14 **African Elephants** all came in to the waterhole in a line. Absolutely magic!



Giraffes are numerous at Etosha

Day 8 Thursday 17th July

Headed out at sunrise, which was at 6.30am, and drove across wide open plains to an area favoured by numerous larks. In pretty quick time we had seen **Pink-billed, Spike-heeled, Red-capped, and Eastern Clapper Lark**, plus stunning views of **Double-banded Courser** and **Northern Black Korhaan** – not a bad haul really. Following a delicious breakfast, and very close views of **Long-billed Crombec** in a tree beside our table, we loaded the luggage into the trailer and then walked to the waterhole for one last look.



Waterholes at Etosha are a great place to watch mammals.

Upon arrival we were greeted with a huge mass of animals all gathered close to the water: **Springbok, Black-faced Impala, Burchell's Zebra**, and our first **Greater Kudu**. Flocks of **Namaqua Sandgrouse** were flying in to drink, and both **African Palm** and **Little Swifts** flew overhead. We literally had to tear ourselves away and set out on the drive towards Halali, spending the next three hours driving across Etosha. Birds of note on the drive were headlined by **Rufous-eared Warbler**, with other species such as **Ostrich, Kori Bustard, Martial Eagle, Rufous-naped Lark**, and our first **Red Hartebeest** being seen.



There were just so many mammals congregating at the waterholes.

We primarily checked out the waterholes en-route and at one there were herds of **Burchell's Zebra, Springbok, Blue Wildebeast** and **Black-faced Impala**. At another we saw **Red-billed Teal, Egyptian Goose** and flocks of **African Quailfinch** flying in to drink.

Upon reaching Halali we were a bit late so dived straight in for lunch, and got interrupted by a flock of **White-crested helmetsrikes**. Then after

getting our rooms sorted headed straight out on a drive through the Mopane woodland, where our first stop was teeming with birds responding to the owl tape. Of course, a real **Pearl-spotted Owlet**

flew in and this helped us out a lot as in came a superb **Carp's Black Tit**, as well as numerous **Grey-headed Sparrows** and **Red-eyed Bulbuls**. Slowly, more species appeared such as Yellow-bellied Eremomela, several **Violet-eared Waxbills**, and a pair of stunning **Golden-breasted Buntings**. The rest of the drive around the woodland was quiet apart from a **Bateleur** that Sorrell spotted, until Jenny spotted a **Leopard** walking through the grassland – unfortunately no-one else could get on it!



Stunning views of a Leopard chasing Impala in the Etosha grasslands.

Then we drove back out to the open plains, finding our first **Red-crested Korhaan**, and carried on to where a Leopard had previously been reported earlier in the day. With the temperature dropping we had high hopes of seeing it, maybe a foolish thing as I've twitched mammals on these tours before and they usually end up in disappointment. But this afternoon was different and as we pulled up at the spot there was just one other vehicle there. Within a few minutes we had located the **Leopard**, a large female, sitting behind a small bush in the grassland. How bizarre to see a **Leopard** in this environment and not a Cheetah, but apparently the herds of **Springbok** and **Impala** had left the dry bush and woodlands for the richer harvest of the open plains. And the Leopard had followed them. We spent a while watching the bulky shape of the beast through the bush before all of a sudden, it began walking off to our right. Then it went into a crouch and began stalking some **Springbok** that were stupidly walking right towards it. The **Leopard** crouched down and became invisible and 4 **Springbok** kept on walking straight towards it. The first one walked right past the hidden predator, but the second one got too close and the **Leopard** gave a short chase, which proved unsuccessful. But boy what an experience to witness nature in the raw! We kept on watching the beast until the sun was just above the horizon before driving quickly back to Halali.

After dinner we spent a pleasant time at the lodge's waterhole where we saw 2 **Black Rhinos**, 2 **Black-backed Jackals**, an **African Elephant**, and best of all, 2 **Cape Foxes**.

Day 9 Friday 18th July

Some people say that lightning doesn't strike twice, well this morning proved the exception as once again Etosha delivered some true magic. We decided against a pre-breakfast bird walk around the grounds in favour of returning to the spot where we saw the **Leopard** yesterday evening, in the hope it had made a kill and was still in the area. Well, we left at 6.30am as soon as the gates opened and drove straight there, and were surprised to find that we were totally alone with no other vehicles in

sight. Unfortunately there was no sign of the **Leopard**, so drove on to a nearby waterhole where an **African Fish-Eagle** was perched in a large tree – a nice addition to our list. Then Charly took us on a new track and amazingly the same female **Leopard** was walking through the grass and bushes and heading towards the track we had just driven along. So we turned around and drove back a little way before killing the engine and watched in awe as it walked out right in front of us and stopped in the middle of the track. It had seen some **Springbok** out on the open grassland off to our right and crouched right down and crawled across the track with its belly almost touching the floor.



We were left speechless by these views of Leopard.

It waited for a while, peering through the grass and out onto the **Springbok** herd. Then it crept ever so slowly into the taller grass and out of sight, so we drove forward and watched this amazing animal as it sat gazing intently at its intended prey. It was maybe 8 - 10 metres away at any one time, oblivious to us and we spent a magical half an hour as it crept parallel to our position and inside the cover of some taller grass and acacias, and more importantly out of sight of the other animals. She had obviously not made a kill during the night and was so intent on watching the herd of animals out on the savannah that we had a very personal and close encounter without disturbing her at all.



Groundscraper Thrush

When she had crept into taller grass we were about to leave but a **Lion** roared from nearby, so we drove back only to find a male walking along the track towards us. Wow! He had a radio collar on which was a bit of a shame but still an impressive animal, and he just walked right by us without taking any notice of us at all. Ok well how can you better this? So we drove back for breakfast, seeing an **African Scops-owl** at a day roost and a nice **Groundscraper Thrush**, before heading out towards Namutoni (where we would spend 2 nights) in a jeep, and our bags and minibus following on later. It took several hours to travel the 75 or so kilometres as we checked out several waterholes and meandered around

a series of tracks through 'the bush'. At the first a family of **Swainson's Francolins** were seen and the male became very inquisitive as he walked in front of us and hopped up on a dead tree right beside us – much too close to photograph!

The last waterhole we checked before reaching Namutoni had **Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove** and **Long-tailed Paradise-Whydah** – both new for us. It was wonderful to watch a group of **Giraffes** drinking at the pool and a young **Spotted Hyena** also came in as well. This morning was good for birds again and we also saw our first **Marabou Storks**, **African Jacana** and **Western Cattle Egrets**. Other birds and animals seen included **Ostrich**, **Lappet-faced Vulture**, **Martial Eagle**, **Black-backed Jackal**, **Red Hartebeest** and plenty of others.

After lunch we drove to a couple of nearby waterholes where we had more **Giraffes** coming down to drink, another **Spotted Hyena**, a herd of **African Elephants**, **Greater Kudu**, and other animals. We also had nice views of **Gabar Goshawk**, **Kittlitz's** and **Chestnut-banded Plovers**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Grey-headed Gull**, **African Grey Hornbill**, a gang of **Grey Go-Away-Birds**, **Red-billed Spurfowl** and **Helmeted Guineafowl**. Another male **Lion** was seen striding across an open area, and he seemed to be following a distant Lioness.

The Namutoni waterhole was not producing anything this evening, however there were a couple of **Elephants** in the tall grasses along the boundary fence which caused us a bit of a panic as they were very close indeed and prompted a hasty retreat to the relative safety of our luxurious cabins!

So that was our day, another incredible action-packed Etosha adventure.

Day 10 Saturday 19th July

Began the day with an out-of-range **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** in the gardens showing nicely in the early morning sunshine, whilst a few **Black-backed Puffbacks** in the same tree were also new and there was also a couple of **Red-billed Buffalo-Weavers**. A nice way to start the day. Then we set off on our morning safari, driving along Fischer's Pan and boy it was chilly! Before the day warmed up we had good views of a pair of **Red-necked Falcons**, **Black-shouldered Kite**, **Secretarybirds**, **Black-chested Snake-eagle** and a pair of **Gabar Goshawks** perched in an acacia, one of which was a melanistic bird. We continued along the edge of a huge wide-open plain and then into more typical 'bush country' until we reached a small waterhole where a few **Burchell's Sandgrouse** were coming in to drink. One male was very obliging as he sat in the water gathering moisture on his belly feathers to take to his chicks somewhere out in the vast expanse of Etosha.



Bateleur is always an impressive bird to see.

Continuing on we had a close flyover from a stunningly superb **Bateleur** that circled right above us several times, and then later a **Martial Eagle** was seen in flight, although the close views of a fine adult perched on top of a bush later on were much better. A **White-headed Vulture** was also seen a couple of times and is a rather scarce bird here, and we also saw **Rufous-crowned Roller**, **Red-billed Quelea**, **Long-tailed Paradise-Whydah**, our only **Red-breasted Swallow** of the tour, **Long-billed Crombec**, and both **Desert** and **Rattling Cisticolas**.

Undoubtedly the highlight of the day was at the last waterhole we checked as there were two separate herds of **African Elephants** present, with numbers estimated at around 150 animals. They came quite close to us and were maybe just 10 metres away at one stage, with some animals very close behind us which made me a little nervous. But they seemed quite calm and we enjoyed watching them for a good half an hour as they sprayed water over themselves. Several very small youngsters were also revelling in the mud and water, rolling around and scraping their very small trunks in the dirt. They seemed to be having a lot of fun and again, it was a privilege to share this little insight into these highly gregarious animals lives.

In the afternoon we spent some time at a couple waterholes, and it was really nice just to enjoy the animals coming and going. Again we had **Giraffes, Elephants, Greater Kudu** and others drinking, whilst **Kittlitz's** and **Three-banded Plovers** skittered along the water's edge. We drove the Dik-Dik Trail but it was quiet apart from some **Damara Dik-Dik's**, a few **Green-winged Pytilia's**, and a pair of **Pearl-spotted Owlets** in a tree. We reached Namutoni Fort just as the sun was setting and as I am writing this diary I can hear **Black-backed Jackals** howling and a **Lion** roaring. That's Africa!

The evening session at the waterhole produced a **South African Porcupine, Small Spotted Genet** and a **Verreaux's Eagle-owl** for the persistent lucky few.

Day 11 Sunday 20th July

We had to say goodbye to Etosha, but not before one quick check of the Klein Namutoni waterhole as we still needed **Southern Red-billed Hornbill**. Sure enough we nailed the hornbill and also saw a **Red-**



Rosy-faced Lovebirds were numerous around Waterberg

crested Korhaan and our last **Giraffes** and **Oryx** as well before heading out of the park. Another quick stop eventually produced nice looks at **Black-faced Babbler** and **White-browed Scrub-robin** before we drove to Otjikoto Lake where the only real bird of note was **Black-backed Puffback**. Next up was a fragrant hours birding at Otjiwarongo sewage pools where we saw several **Black Crakes, African Swamphen, Reed Cormorant, Black-crowned Night-Heron, African Jacana,** and **Lesser Swamp Warbler** before heading to a nice little restaurant for lunch in the nearby town.

Another 90kms drive saw us at Waterberg Plateau Park and along the approach road we passed several **Swainson's Spurfowl** and many **Red-billed Spurfowl**. At the

campsite flocks of **Rosy-faced Lovebirds** were perching on the treetops in the late afternoon sunshine, making for a lovely picture against the deep blue sky. There were also some **Burchell's Starlings** and a pair of **African Grey Hornbills** present as well. We then drove up to our cabins below the picturesque escarpment, seeing a **Ruppell's Parrot** beside the road, and enjoyed a little time to relax before dinner.

Day 12 Monday 21st July

Well you cant get much better than a party of **Violet Wood-Hoopoes** being the first birds you see outside your front door and that's exactly what happened to us this morning. There were at least 9 birds foraging amongst the acacia trees and flying over our cabins on several occasions, giving great



Violet Wood-Hoopoe at Waterberg

views. So after breakfast we packed up and drove down to the reception, where a **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** showed nicely, and there were some more **Rosy-faced Lovebirds** flying over as well. Driving back towards the main road we connected with a few **Crested Francolins**, one of which ran across the road and stayed out in the open for a while. Then we hit a purple patch with a bunch of raptors showing nicely above an escarpment with **White-backed** and **Lappet-faced Vultures**, **African Hawk-eagle**, **Brown Snake-eagle**, **Booted Eagle** and a superb **Verreaux's Eagle** as well – many of them spotted by eagle-eyed Sorrell.

After lunch in our hotel in Windhoek we visited the local sewage pools where several **Hottentot Teal**, **African Darter**, **Lesser Swamp** and **African**

Reed Warblers were the highlights. We also enjoyed scope views of **Red-knobbed Coot**, **African Swamphen**, **Cape Shoveler**, **Three-banded Plover** and others before returning for our last dinner together.

Day 14 Tuesday 22nd July

Before breakfast we paid a visit to Avis Dam on the outskirts of Windhoek and managed to pick up a few new trip birds: **Great White Egret**, **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** and **Red-billed Firefinch**. We also had views of **White-breasted Cormorant**, **Great White Pelican**, **Hamerkop**, 2 **Pearl-spotted Owlets**, **Black-faced**, **Common** and **Violet-eared Waxbills**, **Green-winged Pytilia**, **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Familiar Chat** and **White-backed Mousebird**. But all too soon it was time to leave and head back to the hotel, have breakfast, load the luggage and set off to the airport where we said our goodbyes to my good friend Charly. He had been a phenomenal guide, had looked after us extremely well and is about as good a guide as I have had the fortune to meet over the years. I look forward to many, many tours over the coming years with him. Thanks Charly.

Nick Bray

SYSTEMATIC LIST – NAMIBIA TOUR JULY 2014

STRUTHIONIFORMES: Struthionidae

Common Ostrich

Struthio camelus

ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiaca

South African Shelduck

Tadorna cana

Cape Teal

Anas capensis

Cape Shoveler

Anas smithii

Red-billed Teal

Anas erythrorhyncha

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

GALLIFORMES: Numididae

Helmeted Guineafowl

Numida meleagris

GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae

Crested Francolin

Dendroperdix sephaena

Hartlaub's Spurfowl

Pternistis hartlaubi

Red-billed Spurfowl

Pternistis adspersus

Swainson's Spurfowl

Pternistis swainsonii

SPHENISCIFORMES: Spheniscidae

African Penguin

Spheniscus demersus

PROCELLARIIFORMES: Hydrobatidae

Wilson's Storm Petrel

Oceanites oceanicus

PODICIPEDIFORMES: Podicipedidae

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

PHOENICOPTERIFORMES: Phoenicopteridae

Greater Flamingo

Phoenicopterus roseus

Lesser Flamingo

Phoeniconaias minor

CICONIIFORMES: Ciconiidae

Black Stork

Ciconia nigra

Marabou Stork

Leptoptilos crumenifer

PELECANIFORMES: Threskiornithidae

African Sacred Ibis

Threskiornis aethiopicus

PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae

Black-crowned Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Western Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Great Egret
Little Egret

Ardea alba
Egretta garzetta

PELECANIFORMES: Scopidae

Hamerkop

Scopus umbretta

PELECANIFORMES: Pelecanidae

Great White Pelican

Pelecanus onocrotalus

SULIFORMES: Sulidae

Cape Gannet

Morus capensis

SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae

Reed Cormorant
Crowned Cormorant
Bank Cormorant
White-breasted Cormorant
Cape Cormorant

Microcarbo africanus
Microcarbo coronatus
Phalacrocorax neglectus
Phalacrocorax lucidis
Phalacrocorax capensis

SULIFORMES: Anhingidae

African Darter

Anhinga rufa

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Sagittariidae

Secretarybird

Sagittarius serpentarius

ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae

Black-winged Kite
White-backed Vulture
White-headed Vulture
Lappet-faced Vulture
Black-chested Snake Eagle
Brown Snake Eagle
Bateleur
Martial Eagle
Booted Eagle
Tawny Eagle
Verreaux's Eagle
African Hawk-Eagle
Gabar Goshawk
Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk
Shikra
African Fish Eagle

Elanus caeruleus
Gyps africanus
Trigonoceps occipitalis
Torgos tracheliotos
Circaetus pectoralis
Circaetus cinereus
Terathopius ecaudatus
Polemaetus bellicosus
Hieraetus pennatus
Aquila rapax
Aquila verreauxii
Aquila spilogaster
Micronisus gabar
Melierax canorus
Accipiter badius
Haliaeetus vocifer

OTIDIFORMES: Otididae

Kori Bustard
Ludwig's Bustard
Rüppell's Korhaan
Red-crested Korhaan

Ardeotis kori
Neotis ludwigii
Eupodotis rueppellii
Lophotis ruficrista

Northern Black Korhaan

Afrotis afraoides

GRUIFORMES: Rallidae

Black Crake
African Swamphen
Common Moorhen
Red-knobbed Coot

Amaurornis flavirostra
Porphyrio madagascariensis
Gallinula chloropus
Fulica cristata

CHARADRIIFORMES: Haematopodidae

African Black Oystercatcher

Haematopus moquini

CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt
Pied Avocet

Himantopus himantopus
Recurvirostra avosetta

CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae

Blacksmith Lapwing
Crowned Lapwing
Grey Plover
Kittlitz's Plover
Three-banded Plover
White-fronted Plover
Chestnut-banded Plover

Vanellus armatus
Vanellus coronatus
Pluvialis squatarola
Charadrius pecuarius
Charadrius tricollaris
Charadrius marginatus
Charadrius pallidus

CHARADRIIFORMES: Jacanidae

African Jacana

Actophilornis africanus

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae

Bar-tailed Godwit
Whimbrel
Common Greenshank
Wood Sandpiper
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Curlew Sandpiper

Limosa lapponica
Numenius phaeopus
Tringa nebularia
Tringa glareola
Arenaria interpres
Calidris alba
Calidris ferruginea

CHARADRIIFORMES: Glareolidae

Double-banded Courser

Rhinoptilus africanus

CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae

Grey-headed Gull
Hartlaub's Gull
Kelp (Cape) Gull
Caspian Tern
Greater Crested (Swift) Tern
Sandwich Tern
Common Tern

Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus
Chroicocephalus hartlaubii
Larus dominicanus vetula
Hydroprogne caspia
Thalasseus bergii
Thalasseus sandvicensis
Sterna hirundo

PTEROCLIFORMES: Pteroclididae

Namaqua Sandgrouse

Double-banded Sandgrouse

Burchell's Sandgrouse

*Pterocles namaqua**Pterocles bicinctus**Pterocles burchelli***COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae**

Rock Dove

Speckled Pigeon

Ring-necked Dove

Laughing Dove

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove

Namaqua Dove

*Columba livia**Columba guinea**Streptopelia capicola**Spilopelia senegalensis**Turtur chalcospilos**Oena capensis***MUSOPHAGIFORMES: Musophagidae**

Grey Go-away-bird

*Corythaixoides concolor***STRIGIFORMES: Tytonidae**

Western Barn Owl

*Tyto alba***STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae**

African Scops Owl

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl

Pearl-spotted Owlet

*Otus senegalensis**Bubo lacteus**Glaucidium perlatum***CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Caprimulgidae**

Freckled Nightjar (H)

*Caprimulgus tristigma***APODIFORMES: Apodidae**

African Palm Swift

Alpine Swift

Bradfield's Swift

Little Swift

*Cypsiurus parvus**Tachymarptis melba**Apus bradfieldi**Apus affinis***COLIIFORMES: Coliidae**

White-backed Mousebird

Red-faced Mousebird

*Colius colius**Urocolius indicus***CORACIIFORMES: Coraciidae**

Purple (Rufous-crowned) Roller

Lilac-breasted Roller

*Coracias naevius**Coracias caudatus***CORACIIFORMES: Meropidae**

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater

*Merops hirundineus***BUCEROTIFORMES: Phoeniculidae**

Violet Wood Hoopoe

Common Scimitarbill

*Phoeniculus damarensis**Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*

BUCEROTIFORMES: Bucerotidae

African Grey Hornbill
Monteiro's Hornbill
Damara Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill

Tockus nasutus
Tockus monteiri
Tockus damarensis
Tockus rufirostris
Tockus leucomelas

PICIFORMES: Lybiidae

Acacia Pied Barbet

Tricholaema leucomelas

PICIFORMES: Picidae

Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Cardinal Woodpecker

Campethera abingoni
Dendropicos fuscescens

FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae

Pygmy Falcon
Rock Kestrel
Greater Kestrel
Red-necked Falcon
Lanner Falcon

Polihierax semitorquatus
Falco rupicolus
Falco rupicoloides
Falco chicquera
Falco biarmicus

PSITTACIFORMES: Psittacidae

Rosy-faced Lovebird
Rüppell's Parrot

Agapornis roseicollis
Poicephalus rueppellii

PASSERIFORMES: Platysteiridae

Pirit Batis
White-tailed Shrike

Batis pririt
Lanioturdus torquatus

PASSERIFORMES: Prionopidae

White-crested Helmetshrike

Prionops plumatus

PASSERIFORMES: Malaconotidae

Bokmakierie
Brown-crowned Tchagra
Black-backed Puffback
Crimson-breasted Shrike
Brubru

Telophorus zeylonus
Tchagra australis
Dryoscopus cubla
Laniarius atrococcineus
Nilaus afer

PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae

Southern White-crowned Shrike
Southern (Common) Fiscal

Eurocephalus anguitimens
Lanius collaris

PASSERIFORMES: Oriolidae

African Golden Oriole (L)

Oriolus auratus

PASSERIFORMES: Dicruridae

Fork-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus adsimilis

PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae

Cape Crow
Pied Crow
House Crow

Corvus capensis
Corvus albus
Corvus splendens

PASSERIFORMES: Paridae

Carp's Tit
Ashy Tit

Melaniparus carpi
Melaniparus cinerascens

PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae

Spike-heeled Lark
Gray's Lark
Karoo Long-billed Lark
Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark
Sabota Lark
Fawn-colored Lark
Dune Lark
Eastern Clapper Lark
Rufous-naped Lark
Stark's Lark
Pink-billed Lark
Red-capped Lark

Chersomanes albofasciata
Ammomanopsis grayi
Certhilauda subcoronata
Eremopterix verticalis
Calendulauda sabota
Calendulauda africanoides
Calendulauda erythrochlamys
Mirafra fasciolata
Mirafra africana
Spizocorys starki
Spizocorys conirostris
Calandrella cinerea

PASSERIFORMES: Pycnonotidae

African Red-eyed Bulbul
Yellow-bellied Greenbul

Pycnonotus nigricans
Chlorocichla flaviventris

PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae

Rock Martin
Red-breasted Swallow

Ptyonoprogne fuligula
Cecropis semirufa

PASSERIFORMES: Macrosphenidae

Rockrunner
Long-billed Crombec

Achaetops pycnopygius
Sylvietta rufescens

PASSERIFORMES: Acrocephalidae

Lesser Swamp Warbler
African Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus gracilirostris
Acrocephalus baeticatus

PASSERIFORMES: Cisticolidae

Rattling Cisticola
Desert Cisticola
Rufous-eared Warbler
Grey-backed Camaroptera
Cinnamon-breasted Warbler
Yellow-bellied Eremomela
Burnt-necked Eremomela

Cisticola chiniana
Cisticola aridulus
Malcorus pectoralis
Camaroptera brevicaudata
Euryptila subcinnamomea
Eremomela icteropygialis
Eremomela usticollis

PASSERIFORMES: Leiothrichidae

Black-faced Babbler
Southern Pied Babbler

Turdoides melanops
Turdoides bicolor

PASSERIFORMES: Sylviidae

Chestnut-vented (tit-babbler) Warbler
Layard's (tit-babbler) Warbler

Sylvia subcaerulea
Sylvia layardi

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae

Orange River White-eye
African Yellow White-eye

Zosterops pallidus
Zosterops senegalensis

PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae

Wattled Starling
Cape (Glossy) Starling
Burchell's (Glossy) Starling
Pale-winged Starling

Creatophora cinerea
Lamprotornis nitens
Lamprotornis australis
Onychognathus naboroupp

PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae

Groundscraper Thrush
Karoo Thrush

Turdus litsitsirupa
Turdus smithi

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae

Kalahari Scrub Robin
White-browed Scrub Robin
Chat Flycatcher
Marico Flycatcher
Short-toed Rock Thrush
Tractrac Chat
Ant-eating Chat
Mountain Wheatear
Capped Wheatear
Familiar Chat
Herero Chat

Cercotrichas paena
Cercotrichas leucophrys
Melaenornis infuscatus
Melaenornis mariquensis
Monticola brevipes
Emarginata tractrac
Myrmecocichla formicivora
Myrmecocichla monticola
Oenanthe pileata
Oenanthe familiaris
Namibornis herero

PASSERIFORMES: Nectariniidae

Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Marico Sunbird
White-bellied Sunbird
Dusky Sunbird

Chalcomitra senegalensis
Cinnyris mariquensis
Cinnyris talatala
Cinnyris fuscus

PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Sociable Weaver
House Sparrow
Great (Rufous) Sparrow
Cape Sparrow
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow

Plocepasser mahali
Philetairus socius
Passer domesticus
Passer motitensis
Passer melanurus
Passer diffusus

PASSERIFORMES: Ploceidae

Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
Scaly-feathered (Finch) Weaver
Lesser Masked Weaver
Southern Masked Weaver
Red-billed Quelea
Southern Red Bishop

Bubalornis niger
Sporopipes squamifrons
Ploceus intermedius
Ploceus velatus
Quelea quelea
Euplectes orix

PASSERIFORMES: Estrildidae

Green-winged Pytilia
Red-headed Finch
Red-billed Firefinch
Blue (Cordonbleu) Waxbill
Violet-eared Waxbill
Common Waxbill
Black-faced Waxbill
Quailfinch

Pytilia melba
Amadina erythrocephala
Lagonosticta senegala
Uraeginthus angolensis
Uraeginthus granatinus
Estrilda astrild
Estrilda erythronotos
Ortygospiza atricollis

PASSERIFORMES: Viduidae

Pin-tailed Whydah
Shaft-tailed Whydah
Long-tailed (Eastern) Paradise Whydah

Vidua macroura
Vidua regia
Vidua paradisaea

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae

Cape Wagtail
African Pipit

Motacilla capensis
Anthus cinnamomeus

PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae

Black-throated Canary
Yellow Canary
White-throated Canary

Crithagra atrogularis
Crithagra flaviventris
Crithagra albogularis

PASSERIFORMES: Emberizidae

Lark-like Bunting
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting
Cape Bunting
Golden-breasted Bunting

Emberiza impetuani
Emberiza tahapisi
Emberiza capensis
Emberiza flaviventris

MAMMALS

MURIDAE (Rats & Mice)

Black-tailed Tree Rat

Thallomys nigricauda

DENDROMURINAE

Tree Climbing Mouse

Dendromus sp.

OTARIIDAE (Eared Seals)

Cape or South African Fur Seal

Arctocephalus pusillus

DELPHINIDAE (Oceanic Dolphins)

Heaviside's Dolphin

Cephalorhynchus heavisidii

CERCOPITHECIDAE (Old World Monkeys)

Chacma Baboon

Papio ursinus

GALAGIDAE (Galagos)

South African Galago

Galago moholi

SCLURIDAE (Squirrels)

South African Ground Squirrel

Striped Tree Squirrel

(Unstriped) Tree Squirrel

Geosciurus inauris

Funisciurus congicus

Paraxerus cepapi

HYSTRICIDAE (Porcupines)

South African Porcupine

Hystrix africaeaustralis

LEPORIDAE (Rabbits & Hares)

Southern Scrub Hare

Lepus saxatilis

CANIDAE (Canids)

Black-backed Jackal

Bat-eared Fox

Cape Fox

Canis mesomelas

Otocyon megalotis

Vulpes chama

HYAENIDAE (Hyaenas)

Spotted Hyaena

Crocuta crocuta

PROTELINAE (Aardwolves)

Aardwolf

Proteles cristatus

VIVERRIDAE (Genets & Civets)

Small Spotted (Common) Genet

Genetta genetta

FELIDAE (Cats)

Leopard
Lion

Panthera pardus
Panthera leo

HERPESTIDAE (Mongooses)

Slender Mongoose
Yellow Mongoose
Banded Mongoose
Meerkat

Herpestes sanguineus
Herpestes ochracea
Mungos mungo
Suricate suricatta

PROCAVIIDAE (Hyraxes)

Cape Rock Hyrax

Procavia capensis

ELEPHANTIDAE (Elephants)

African Elephant

Loxodonta Africana

GIRAFFIDAE (Giraffes)

Giraffe

Giraffa camelopardalis

EQUIDAE (Horses)

Burchell's Common Zebra
Hartmann's Mountain Zebra

Equus burchelli/quagga
Equus hartmannae

RHINOCEROTIDAE (Rhinoceroses)

Black Rhinoceros

Diceros bicornis

SUIDAE (Pigs)

Common Warthog

Phacochoerus aethiopicus

BOVIDAE (Bovids)

Greater Kudu
Gemsbok (Oryx)
Springbok
Klipspringer
Steenbok
Damara Dik-dik
Impala
Black-faced Impala
Red Hartebeest
Blue Wildebeest

Tragelaphus strepsiceros
Oryx gazella
Antidorcas marsupialis
Oreotragus oreotragus
Raphicerus campestris
Rhynchotragus kirki damarensis
Aepyceros melampus
Aepyceros melampus petersi
Alcelaphus buselaphus
Connochaetes taurinus