

Holiday Highlights

Namibia

30 July – 14 August 2022

The Grandeur of the Namib Desert; Flamingos and Fur Seals of Walvis Bay;
and the Wonder of Etosha. Africa Without Tears

Leader and walking African encyclopedia: Dalton Gibbs

Driver and guide: Lazarus Ganuseb

Head spotter: Tom Rafinski

Scope carrier and doorman: Darren Rees

Guests: Wendy and Tony Hayward, Jess, Alex and Tom Rafinski

Day 1: We meet up at Heathrow Terminal 2 for our big African adventure. There's quite a queue for checking-in but we are dutifully processed and through security, with plenty of time for our evening flight to Addis Ababa.

Day 2: After an uneventful and comfortable flight we land in a cool, damp Addis Ababa, passing through immigration to wait for our connecting flight to Namibia. The weather clears and there are a few birds to be seen: we manage Goliath Heron, Hadedda Ibis and Hooded Vultures!

The flight takes us across the heart of Africa, but the vast cloud system sadly obscures the view as we cross the Rift Valley. Towards the end of the flight the cloud thins and we look down on the endless scrub and semi-desert, before finally descending into Windhoek airport.

Walking to the terminal we see our first bird – a Rock Martin, followed by a Grey Hornbill while we queue for immigration. It's a bit of a wait but finally we get through and meet our Birding Africa guide Dalton Gibbs and Namibian driver Lazarus Ganuseb. They escort us to the vehicle – a purpose built 4x4 safari van with a drop down window for each passenger – this is going to be fun! It's only a forty minute drive to our first hotel, but we keep having to stop for new birds - Go-away Birds, Lilac-breasted Roller and Black-shouldered Kites – the list is up and running.

We arrive at Arebbusch Lodge, check in and notice more birds around the reception - our first Marico Sunbird, Laughing Dove, Pirit Batis, Marico Flycatcher and Cape Turtle Doves. We go to our rooms and freshen up, then wander to nearby Avis Dam, a short twenty minute drive away. We park and immediately note new birds – Familiar Chat, Helmeted Guineafowl and striking Blacksmith's Lapwings – all birds that will feature throughout our trip. Walking along a path that takes us to view the water, we see our first stunning Crimson-breasted Shrike – a postcard bird! Bushes are busy with White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Southern Masked Weaver, both

Black-faced and Blue Waxbills and a Short-toed Rock Thrush. Tom picks up our first Monteiro's Hornbill on the top of one tree – a prized Namibian endemic. It's a short walk to view the dam and there is still plenty of water, with the air above thick with masses of African Palm Swifts hawking for insects. Alex spots one with a white rump – a Little Swift. In the water are lots of waterfowl with South African Shelduck, Cape and Red-billed Teal, Egyptian Geese, Southern Pochard, Mallard, Red-knobbed Coots, Moorhen and many Maccoa Ducks. There's a Black-necked Grebe with the several Little Grebes and to the far right are some exposed mud bars with Three-banded Plover and Cape Wagtails. Retracing our steps we add Red-billed Francolin to the list. A good end to our tiring travel day and the species keep coming during our evening meal – a Yellow Mongoose scurries through the tables at the restaurant!

Day 3: Before breakfast some of us join Dalton for an early walk around the grounds of the lodge. The lamps are still on as the light gets up and around one a Marico Flycatcher, Glossy Starling and Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler work the bushes. Further on we see Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Grey-necked Camaroptera and Black-chested Prinia – great names! Walking back through the well-manacured grounds around the buildings we see White-backed Mousebirds, Red-eyed Bulbul, Cardinal Woodpecker, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Rosy-faced Lovebirds and a striking Brubru. We add Red-headed Finch as we start our breakfast!

After breakfast we get the van loaded up then hit the road south towards Rehoboth. We see our first Warthogs close to the roadside fence, then we stop when Jess spots a grey cat... it turns out to be a feral domestic moggy, but it is attracting attention from the local birds including our first Kalahari Scrub Robins. We next stop to watch our first Ostrich in the grass and Tom points out some animals in the grass beyond – they are Blesbok - large antelopes with a white blaze on their faces. South of Rehoboth we turn off the tarmaced road to a minor gravel road heading west through the highlands. New birds come thick and fast and we stop to look at a Mountain Wheatear, adding Chat Flycatcher, and a spectacular Verraux's Eagle that patrols the rocky hillside behind.

As well as driving, Lazarus is spotting things too and we stop when he sees our first Namaqua Sandgrouse close to the side of the road. We see our first Springbok and Tom's sharp eyes pick out our first mighty Lappet-faced Vulture in the skies.

We see more Blesbok, then stop at a larger group of Springbok that are to the left. Jess asks what are the bigger ones moving behind – our first Kudus, that's what!

Next we stop at a small pool of water to the right – any water in Namibia is a big attraction and we see more Cape Shelducks, Three-banded Plover and a surprise African Jacana. On some trees are large communal nests, looking like thatched roofs,

that belong to Sociable Weavers – we stop at one which is active with these charming little birds twittering and thatching!

Next, Dalton spots one of the birds of the day – a smart, diminutive Pygmy Falcon (the smallest falcon in the world) is perched in a thorny tree to the left. More Baboons are joined by Kudus at another pool at the side of the road, but they are tricky to view from the brow of a rise in the road so we don't linger.

We do stop at a larger pond to enjoy our eats with a view, knowing there will be something different to look at. Masses of Lark-like Buntings are in bushes with our first Great Sparrow; a family of Cape Shelducks are in the water with Red-knobbed Coots, Little Grebes, Cape Wagtails and Three-banded Plovers; a Black-shouldered Kite is hunting too. On the opposite side of the road are a troop of Chacma Baboons on the hillside and a glossy Scimitarbill lower down.

After eats we stop at the summit of the spectacular Spreekhoght Pass, where the escarpment drops to the desert plain below. There's a truly bewildering view across serrated mountain ridges to the north and grassy, stony plains to the west. Two Lappet-faced Vultures are soaring with a Booted Eagle and further along two Verraux's Eagles are atop one rocky peak – a black adult and a sub-adult bird.

We stop lower down where a Pale Chanting Goshawk is atop another thorn tree. Its attracting attention from smaller birds and we see Yellow and Black-throated Canaries, Sabota Lark and Cape Sparrows amongst the mix of scolding birds.

Next, we stop when three Ruppell's Korhaan's are walking in the grass alongside the road – we get great looks and just as we are thinking of leaving Jessie looks the other way and asks what's that large animal – our first Oryx that's what! There is no animal more emblematic of Namibia with its spectacular straight horns, its striking black-and-white markings and its luxurious swishing tail.

The last stops of the day are south of Solitaire where we scan the grassy plains and mountain ridges. To the west are more larger groups of Oryx and two Greater Kestrels on fence posts. Dalton points out our first Trac-trac Chat (like a big pale wheatear) and then we move on to another viewpoint looking east. Tom spots two mammals moving through the grass in the distance. We get out to investigate... they are two, difficult-to-see Aardwolves! Check out their dark faces, pointy ears and striped coats. They scurry by two Black-backed Jackals – another new mammal.

Alex then spots a large bird that flies across and lands in the grass. We get the scopes on it, noting its long black-and-white striped neck – a Ludwig's Bustard. The final drive takes us south in the fading light that colours the landscape of receding mountain ridges and plains – finally, at 6.30 pm we check in at the delightful Weltevrede Guest House, our base for the next two nights.

After smartening up we enjoy a lovely meal – Oryx stew is on the menu!

Day 4: We meet up at 6am for a quick coffee, before loading the van and heading off for the day although it is still dark. The road is bumpy in parts and as the light emerges we note the rugged peaks either side of us. The final section of paved road leads to Sossus Oases and the gateway to the Namib Naukluft National Park. We stop at the closed gate and park – a good time for a coffee while we wait for the opening at 7.30am. The light is lifting and more vehicles arrive to wait in line. The local kids are waiting for their school bus which dutifully arrives. Soon we too are on the move, inside the gates and venturing into the dynamic Sossusvlei, rimmed by dynamic desert ridges and distant dunes. We stop at a couple of points where we can photograph Oryx and Ostrich with the beautiful backdrop of red dunes – a wonderful natural amphitheatre. Stony plains stretch to the base of the dunes and hillsides and birds are catching the eye. We see more Burchell's Korhaans by the side of the road and to the south several hot air balloons are lifting into the sky – what a view they must have!

Keen to track down one of the rare endemics we head to the base of our first red dune on the right of the road, marked by some grasses and other pioneer plants on its lower slope. It is classic habitat for the specialist breeder Dune Lark and we wander over to explore, checking out the tracks in the sand. Dalton informs us of some of the animals that frequent the area at night and points to some Springhare droppings and tracks. Who'd imagine they would eat their own poo for sustenance! Meanwhile, Alex and Lazarus spot the target bird and we are guided to the area where we see two clean-looking Dune Larks. They move off a short distance, but we track them down and enjoy great looks at a special bird.

Next stop is at a dry river crossing, where there is a ribbon of trees and taller vegetation – an ideal spot for breakfast. The birding continues with eats and coffee, while we watch Dusky Sunbirds, Red-eyed Bulbul and Chestnut-vented Tit Babbler amongst other, now familiar birds. It seems really quite birdy so after breakfast we walk along the river bed for further exploration. We see Pirit Batis, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Short-toed Rock Thrush and brief looks at an Acacia Pied Barbet. Alex finds a nice Ashy Tit – another new bird. Then Lazarus beckons us.....He's been investigating the river bed in the opposite direction and has come up with a treasure. A large owl was disturbed from its daytime roost and we manage to track it back down – a wonderful Spotted Eagle Owl, although one of the clinching i.d. features is the barred breast! Contender for bird-of-the-day methinks!

We continue west through the great Sossusvlei, stopping here and there for close Oryx, Springbok, Ostrich and Korhaans, as well as beautiful red dunes. Alex spots a group of small birds on the deck and we reverse to investigate. They are small, finch-like larks with dark bellies – Grey-backed Sparrow Larks no less. A new bird for the list.

As we approach the Deadvlei area we note lots of parked vehicles and people climbing some of the dunes. Before parking ourselves we notice a nice adult Pale Chanting Goshawk perched atop a tree with the backdrop of a red dune – fabulous. Then, another animal attracts our gaze – a handsome Black-backed Jackal is on the prowl and comes towards our van. It obviously enjoys titbits from the many visitors judging by its confiding manner. What views of an immaculate animal.

Lunch is at the furthest point we can drive to, where there is, surprisingly, still some water. After eats with some very confiding Cape Sparrows, Chestnut-vented Tit Babbler and an over-Familiar Chat we wander towards the water. As you'd imagine, water in the desert attracts other species and we add Pied Avocet to the species list, along with Cape Teal and common desert birds coming to drink.

We leave the area, noting again the Black-backed Jackal that crosses ahead of the vehicle. We've only driven a short distance when something different catches the eye. To the right, working along the edge of a dried up pool, at the base of another dune, is a bright White Stork – an unusual visitor to the Namib.

Returning along the main route through Sossusvlei we still keep finding new birds. Sandy, upright birds are busily working the stony plains. Burchell's Coursers are running around and stopping abruptly, their white legs and blue-grey caps standing out.

At the 45 km mark the road skirts the base of one of the huge red sand dunes – Dune 45 no less – yes they number the dunes in the National Park! It's a chance to walk on one of the dunes and some of us start climbing the steep red slope. The views are arresting with a wrap-around panorama of the ranked series of red dunes and the stony valley floor. We even see some of the fabled dune beetles that eke a living from this, one of the most hostile environments on earth. Pied Crows fly by us looking great against the blue sky and red sand. Not to be outdone, a Greater Kestrel does the same soon after and the red sand makes the belly glow orange! Most of us are content with the view half way up but Jessie and Dalton get to the summit – what a view they must have! Back at the bottom we compare notes, empty our shoes of red sand, then start the journey back, taking in some unscheduled stops.

Close to Sossus we stop to admire a mother Springbok and young calf. Close by, a dozen Lappet-faced Vultures are on ground adjacent to a water source – amongst them is a single, smaller White-backed Vulture. The drive beyond Sossus Gate is along the bumpy track heading north and we stop at a wide open vista to scan the grassy plain. It's a wonderful scene straight from Out of Africa with distant herds of Oryx, including three rich-coloured younger animals. Alex is looking the other way and spots our first Mountain Zebra in the distance. We set up scopes and enjoy looks, albeit too distant to pick out the defining features – they are stripey horses

though! Closer to, is a handsome Mountain Wheatear – as Wendy points out: 'its smart enough for dinner!'

We get back in the van but have only gone a short distance when Tom spots some small mammals in the grass. We stop, lift our binoculars... five Bat-eared Foxes, looking fab with their oversize ears and masked face. Wow! Could be animal of the day we reckon - and what a great end to the day.

Day 5: An early morning stroll before breakfast yields some birds including Pririt Batis, Masked Weavers, Helmeted Guineafowl, Black-chested Prinia, Mountain Wheatear and a new species – Karoo Thrush. We wander in for breakfast, but decide to take another look around, after we've loaded the van. Rosy-faced Lovebirds are gathering for their morning feed and soon drop to the bird table. Other birds are scrabbling around for seed too, with White-throated Canary, Cape Sparrow and Red-headed Finch. Other birds include Acacia Pied Barbet, Lark-like Bunting, Cape Turtle Dove and a Trac-trac Chat as we leave.

The route takes us north to Solitaire, where we check the tyres and refuel as well as taking a look at the local population of Cape Ground Squirrels. The road to Walvis Bay goes through more dynamic countryside, with vast panoramas sweeping before us. We stop at one spot when a Black-backed Jackal walks in the grass beside the road. Further out are groups of Mountain Zebra and this time we can check out their stripes! There are more Oryx on show and we notice a tall bird strutting through the grass – our first Secretary Bird. Tom points to a large gathering of Red-billed Quelea in the bushes and soon these are harassed by a smart Pale Chanting Goshawk. A dark form Booted Eagle soars overhead too.

We drive further along to where we can see lots of vultures, both soaring low and gathered on the ground - we stop as we suspect a carcass. Most numerous are the rare Lappet-faced Vultures, but there are also many White-backed Vultures and at least one Cape Vulture – a fine display from these soaring giants.

Moving on, we stop next when Dalton catches sight of something different by the side of the road – a large upright buffy lark with a long bill. We start examining the bird and conclude it's a Spike-heeled Lark. Next stop is at a sign that marks the crossing of the Tropic of Capricorn, where we take some photos and find our first Karoo Chat. As we approach the Kuiseb Gorge we can look down on the spectacular landscape of folded rock and cliffs - two Rock Hyraxes (or Dassies) are on show below. We drop down to the dry river-bed for lunch, where there are more Dassies, Rock Kestrel, Familiar Chat, Dusky Sunbird and Alex finds a delightful Orange River White-eye. As we leave, a Great Egret flies up the ravine and we've only just got in the van when Tom points to a small group of Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters!

Finally we arrive at Walvis Bay and the cooler coast. As we approach the town we notice our first flamingos in pools by the side of the road. We continue to the shore road and head to the south, where the road hugs the bay and runs through working salt pans to the ocean beach. The place is stuffed with both Greater and Lesser Flamingos – what a sight! Other waders, gulls and terns are on show and we soon see Cape Gull, Hartlaub's Gull, Whimbrel and Greenshank. We go through the plover species, first seeing White-fronted, then Chestnut-banded before Tom finds a Kittlitz's. He also points to a large collection of Swift Terns and two Damara Terns flying. Dalton is pleased when he spots a Red-necked Phalarope by the side of the road – a Namibian rarity!

We continue to the beach, where we can scan the rolling surf of the Atlantic Ocean. Huge groups of Cape Cormorants are fishing in the shallows and Cape Fur Seals are porpoising in the waves - there must be a lot of bait out there... Tom then spots two whales breaking the surface! We wait for them to reappear... a large bushy blow followed by the unmistakable dorsal profile of two Humpback Whales. Wow!

Retracing our steps we see even more shorebirds: Sanderling, Black-winged Stilts, Curlew Sandpipers, Bar-tailed Godwits and a Ruff amongst the many Avocets. All of these are dwarfed by the birds of the day, Greater and Lesser Flamingoes. Other birds seen include Black-necked Grebe, Cape Teal, Black-shouldered Kite, White-breasted Cormorant and Cape Gannet. Finally we check in at the Walvis Bay Iris Hotel – another grand day out!

Day 6: After breakfast we drive the short distance to the quayside, where Levo Dolphin trips are based. We have to walk the plank to get on the small boat but all manage it without falling in. Once on board we are introduced to our captain, Mark, who's been working these waters for many years and now enjoys showing folks the wildlife wonders of the bay. We move out into the misty morn passing the industrialised landscape of a busy modern port. Large ships are cradled in huge floating dry docks that tower above our small vessel. We note our first Cape Fur Seals in the water and they approach the boat as if expecting something... Mark throws fish out then lures one onto the boat with the promise of more. It works its way onto the seats in the middle, just inches away from everyone! It seems that other boats feed the wildlife too as we notice another one with a Great White Pelican aboard. It then flies over to us, yet it doesn't seem to want to land but we get fabulous looks nevertheless.

We are still near the port, passing the last of the breakwaters when Dalton spots a small cormorant on the cement blocks – a Crowned Cormorant. We move further out, then spot something different in the water. Looking like a heavier-built Great Northern Diver it is an immature African Penguin. Smiles all round!

Next, Mark takes us along parallel to the shore to where there is a large wooden platform that is carpeted with thousands of Cape Cormorants. It was constructed for

the sole purpose to accommodate cormorants in order to yield their guano – there's money in muck. Three Black Oystercatchers fly overhead before the cormorants are disturbed and we witness the spectacle of thousands milling around in the air. Awesome!

We start across the vast open bay and it's not long before we find a couple of other boats watching things in the water. A group of Bottlenose Dolphins are accompanied by smaller Cape Fur Seals and we spend a while watching them cavort, passing close to the boat so we can watch them underwater. It's always a joy to watch them twist and play in their element.

We can now see the furthest point of land that marks the southern boundary of the bay and it is covered with groups of Cape Fur Seals. Many are in the water too and we approach the shore for a better look. A Black-backed Jackal works along the shore, and further along four more jackals are walking across the sand bar after their morning sortie. The shoreline of the point is dotted with lots of birds including Flamingos, Greenshank and Hartlaub's Gulls.

We are now off the tip of Pelican Point. Mark spots things ahead – two shallow, triangular dorsal fins, not unlike Harbour Porpoises. They are the rare, endemic Heavside's Dolphins – a target species. However, they don't want to seem to play and we have to settle for tantalising glimpses of just their fins. Next, Tom spots a distant Sooty Shearwater, our first of two. Mark then brings out the table cloths and food platters for a small picnic afloat – there are only a couple of takers for the raw oysters but the champagne and canapes are welcomed by everyone (old enough to drink!). It's a great way to end the cruise and we make our way back to the quayside.

Next, we drive past the huge dune field to the east and onwards to the astonishing area referred to as the Moon Landscape – it's easy to see why, as the panorama is one of endless rock ridges with no plants in sight. Just bare rock, gravel and stone as far as the eye can see – truly bewildering.

Yet there is an oasis within the wilderness and we drop down through narrow ravines to Goanikontes. As you'd imagine there are more birds in the trees and bushes and there is even a large reedy pool. The bird list includes Southern Masked Weaver, Scarlet-chested, Dusky and Marico Sunbirds, Familiar Chat, Go-away Birds, Cape Cormorant, Moorhen, and Orange River White-eye. Tom finds a challenging African Reed Warbler and Jess finds a stunning Swallow-tailed Bee-eater!

From the oasis we venture through one of the stunning dried 'klufts', admiring the twisted layers and volcanic intrusions that have been eroded away to make some of the most inspiring desert landscapes. Birds are few, but we are content with wondering at the geological wonders. At the furthest point we get out to walk and

Dalton takes us to a stand of Welwitschia plants – primitive conifers that pre-date the dinosaurs, with the longest leaves of any plant in the world!

We return over the stony plain, seeing more Trac-trac Chats. Tom finds another one and we stop to check it out. Not for the first time, we stop for one thing and something else occurs. Lazarus spots some more target birds on the ground behind: two Gray's Larks. We set up scopes to confirm the characteristic sandy colour and clean white belly of another Namibian endemic. And so to Walvis Bay in time for the sunset and evening fly-by from the Flamingos – another great day.

Day 7: After an early breakfast there's still time for one last look over the bay, particularly as we are waiting for our boxed lunches. There are the masses of Flamingos, Avocets and Black-necked Grebes that we've got used to, with the addition of Cape Shoveler and Common Sandpiper.

We soon load up the lunches and set off north, hugging the coastline and to our first stop at the site of a tern colony. Sadly it's the wrong time of year and they are absent, but we do see three Crowned Cormorants, Kittlitz's Plover, Whimbrel and several Hartlaub's Gulls. After half-an-hour or so we reach the historic town of Swakopmund, with its mix of old and new streets – all spotless and tidy. We drive along the sea front admiring the German influence on the architecture, including the station that never was!

After getting fuel and chocolate we continue north across a wide coastal plain with very little vegetation. Finally we reach our destination for the morning, Cape Cross. We pay our fees at the entrance kiosk then drive the final mile to the point. We park and the scene (and smell) is unbelievable, grabbing all the senses: Cape Fur Seals are covering the rocks and beaches in their tens of thousands, as well as playing in the breakers and shallows. Their raucous calling is the constant backdrop, as is their pungent odour. It's a wonderful sight and must be a real highlight of the trip. We walk along the boardwalk that gives us uninterrupted view across the gathering and everyone is in their own little world taking photographs or videos or just plain smiling with a happy mix of awe and wonder. Other things are on view including Kittlitz's Plover, White-fronted Plover, Cape Gannet, Cape Crow and Pied Crow. Yet the stars of the show are the wonderful fur seals – a truly memorable visit.

We take lunch near Henties Bay, then head inland along the long straight road heading north and east towards Uis. It yields very few birds for the first section that passes over a vast stony plain. As we near the hills, the grasses and bushes appear and a few birds start showing up: Trac-trac and Karoo Chat, Ruppell's Korhaan and Mountain Wheatear. Then a big group of larks alight on the ground close to the road. We park to take a better look. It's a mix of Lark-like Buntings and lark-like larks! But which larks? Dalton points to some with an eye-ring and erect crest, looking not unlike our Skylarks – these are Stark's Larks. One is a bit different, it is larger, darker

billed and has a black moustachial stripe. It's a Sclater's Lark and a bit out-of-range! More birds appear as we near Uis, including Purple Roller, Black-shouldered Kite and Namaqua Sandgrouse.

Finally, we check-in at the White Lady Guesthouse and after dumping off bags and a brief freshen-up in our new rooms we walk to the small pool in the grounds that attracts sandgrouse everynight. We wait a while, noting Palm and Bradfield's Swifts, White-backed Mousebirds and Red-eyed Bulbul amongst others. Then, if a little later than planned, beautifully marked Double-banded Sandgrouse flutter in and start drinking at the water. A great end to another full day!

Day 8: Before breakfast we stroll the dusty streets of Uis picking up some familiar birds and some new: Palm Swifts, White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Red-eyed Bulbul, Lark-like Buntings and Pale-winged Starling are joined by endearing Red-faced Mousebirds that we track down after a fly-by. Back at the gates of the camp we see Fiscal Shrike and Speckled Pigeons. A smart Mountain Wheatear joins us for breakfast!

After breakfast we leave Uis on the long, windy and dusty track north that takes us through the stony grasslands, with views to the spectacular Brandberg, the highest peak in Namibia. We stop to look at a bush full of stunning Bokmakeries, before turning off towards Brandberg. Along the way we stop for Stark's Larks, Ground Squirrels and Tom finds some endearing Round-eared Elephant Shrews. A little further on the road descends with sweeping views to the mountain – we stop and scan getting looks at our first (albeit distant) Double-banded Coursers.

We turn off the main route to follow a dry river valley marked by a corridor of taller trees and lush riverine habitat. Alex yells "ELEPHANT!" There below is the stuff of dreams... A large bull African Elephant emerges from behind a tree, slowly working along the river course. We drive nearer for a closer look and the excitement level in the van goes up several notches from Stark's Lark... We are all eyes in front as Lazarus skillfully guides us to a spot where we can stop and gaze in awe. A large male from the fabled Desert Elephants of Damaraland is doing his thing. A chance to see wild elephants outside one of the National Parks is a rare treat. Lazarus looks to the right. "Look, there are more coming this way" he says. The male disappears into the thicker vegetation and we drive to the right but are forced to stop when two Violet Wood-hoopoes fly by, followed by a White-crowned Shrike – where do we look? We take the opportunity to watch new birds, knowing the elephants are coming our way. Then, when the birds have flown we drive towards where a group of females with one small infant is working up the river bed. Lazarus parks on the bank, out of the way, and we watch the show unfold...

Getting our fill of these magnificent animals, we move away and cross the dry river bed a little further on, where two Red-billed Hornbills and two Crowned Plovers are on the ground. We use the opportunity to have a leg-stretch and investigate the tall

trees. Tom finds a Carp's Tit – a smart black bird with white wings. There's also a Grey-backed Camaroptera and a Yellow-billed Hornbill too. What is a more sobering fact is that there are Leopard tracks in the sand – blimey!

We continue the morning's drive through spectacular open scenery marked by huge sandstone rock piles or koppes. At one point we stop for a singing Karoo Long-billed Lark perched on a bush – a descending one-note whistle - another Namibian endemic. The track eventually joins the main road and we continue to Khorixas for lunch at the iGowati lodge.

After eats we resume the journey north, grabbing some great birds on the way. We stop at one rocky slope and Dalton teases out a nice Rockrunner – another endemic. It sits on the top of a bush and sings to us giving nice looks in the scope. On the other side of the road are our first Ruppell's Parrots. A little further along the road we see our first perched Black-chested Snake Eagle on a telegraph post. Finally, we arrive at our stop-over for the night, the well appointed Kaoko Bush Lodge that is nestled at the base of some rocky outcrops. We settle in our rooms and get ready for our meal.

One of the features of Kaoko Lodge is the opportunity to take a drive through the scrub after dark, so after another delicious Namibian meal we prepare for our night drive. Loading up into the van Lazarus is joined by a local guide from the lodge. We set off and immediately see Scrub Hares in front of the vehicle. As the track skirts round the foot of a rocky 'koppe' we see two Klipspringers (the antelope equivalent of mountain goat) and manage fine views of one noting its barred ears. Later we see a Steenbok and then a fabulous Red-crested Korhaan. Tony requests a stop for a photo shoot in an attempt to record the night sky – we look forward to seeing the result! At the furthest point of our drive there is a waterhole where we pause to see if there's any action. We hear a Barn Owl screeching and it alights on a solar panel on top of a pole – nice!

Day 9: Early morning at Kaoko Lodge and some of us are wandering around before breakfast. We get looks at our first Pearl-spotted Owlet that is calling nearby. Rock Hyraxes are warming up on the rocks over-looking the camp and a short walk around adds White-browed Scrub Robin to the list.

After breakfast we get ready for an unscheduled game drive from the lodge. We load into a purpose-built safari jeep and set off, we see Springbok and a few Impala close by to the sandy track that cuts through the thick bushveld. At the waterhole there are lots of small birds gathered, attracted by the idea of a morning drink. There are big groups of Red-billed Quelea, Masked Weavers and Cape Turtle Doves and these in turn have attracted a raptors. We see a Shikra and Gabar Goshawk zipping through the trees and behind the bushes a larger African Hawk Eagle flies through. Later, Lazarus spots some Eland but they quickly disappear before

we can see more than just their horns. Then, we come across our first stately Southern Giraffes – no matter how many times you see one, you can't help wonder at nature's curious design! Taller than you imagine, they loom from behind the bushes and walk into the open – their movements as if in slow-motion, Astonishing!

We leave Kaoko Lodge and drive across the bush, tracking north and east along a series of gravel tracks. Roadside birds include Black-shouldered Kites, Fork-tailed Drongos and Crimson-breasted Shrikes and roadside mammals include more Giraffes! After lunch in the shade of a large tree (with a Tree Agama Lizard) we pass Etosha Heights, before joining the main road north to the famous Etosha National Park. We stop to checkout our first Tawny Eagle, then continue to enter Etosha via the Andersson Gate.

It doesn't take long before we start seeing our first game - Burchell's Zebras are by the side of the road and we can check out their bold stripes and 'shadow' rump bands. On the other side are our first beautifully marked Black-faced Impala. At Ombika waterhole are a more Zebras, Ostrich and Impala, then we drive a little further where Tom picks up a fantastic Red-necked Falcon – we even get the scope on it perfecting the scope-in-a-van technique. Next are our first Etosha Elephants, working away through bushes on our right and the party includes two younger animals. The last section of the drive takes us across the stony plains around Okaukejo, where we see our first huge Kori Bustard and smart Black Korhaans. We then have to stop when a train of Elephants cross the road in front, still wet in patches from a recent bathe. What a welcome party as we arrive at Okaukejo Lodge!

After our evening meal we wander to the famous waterhole where a vision greets us. A quiet crowd of people are gathered and beyond them, lit up by floodlights are two huge African Elephants, just feet away from the perimeter. We walk to the wall where we can view uninterrupted the amazing scene. As well as the first two bulls, a third is drinking at the water and as we watch two smaller animals move off – two rare Black Rhinos!

We enjoy watching the elephants sparring and making a lot of dust, before taking a closer looks at the rhinos. It's a mother and calf pairing and we get amazing views from behind the protection of the stone wall. Everyone is quiet and we can hear them scratching, rubbing and picking at vegetation along the fence. One of the rarest animals in the world!

Soon the elephants move off into the dark of the night, to the sound of scuttling stones underfoot. We can also hear Spotted Hyenas calling in the dark and sure enough, two animals emerge and walk to the water's edge – they look fabulous in the telescope! Throughout the night more Black Rhinos appear and we marvel at some playful jousting and head-butting. At one stage we have six beasts around

the water with two moving away – eight or perhaps ten individuals in total - what a night!

Day 10: Before breakfast we take our first visit to the waterhole to see if there's much morning action. There are Springbok and Oryx at the water, with Blue Wildebeeste dotted around further. A Tawny Eagle flies across, followed by a Brown Snake Eagle taking its first of the morning's flights. Other birds include Little Grebe, Black-headed Heron and Blacksmith's Lapwing.

At breakfast Dalton gets some exciting news, so after eating we head south towards the Andersson Gate. Just past the turning for the Ombika waterhole a car is stationary. As we approach the vehicle Lazarus can see why. To the right, beneath the shade of a small tree is a resting male African Lion – wow! You never forget your first sight of the king of the jungle... or desert in this case!

We return north driving towards the pan, noting that the thorny scrub starts to disappear in favour of a wide stony plain. We see four Double-banded Coursers – our best views yet. Smaller birds are checked and we see Spike-heeled Larks, Grey-backed Finch Larks, Long-billed Pipits and a lovely Yellow Mongoose.

Further along we stop at one of the few trees on the plain that is next to the road. We look up into the canopy where a young Gabar Goshawk is perched. A Greater Kestrel is also in the tree – not many places to perch in this neck-of-the-woods! Onwards, we reach the vast expanse of the Etosha salt pan at Okendeka. We see our first Secretary Birds, that always are striking to watch – tall, lanky birds with crests and heavy wings – a cross between a stork and a crested eagle! Looking out to the spreading plain, masses of game are spread across the panorama with the heathaze from the bright white salt flats making it look like many are walking on water. There are herds of Springbok, Blue Wildebeeste, Oryx and Ostrich – what a vision!

We return back to Okaukejo for a sit-down lunch, enjoying a cool drink and eats in the shade. Our afternoon route takes us east along the southern perimeter of the salt pan and we pause at the first waterhole at Nebrowni where two male elephants, caked in pale dried mud are at the water drinking. We enjoy watching them for ten minutes or so then leave, but have to stop for a Black-chest Snake Eagle on the right. It's dropping down and mobbing something... a male Lion is striding across the plain in the direction of the waterhole - back we drive to take a prime spot! There are two lions no less – a female in front with male behind. We watch them pace towards us then arrive to drink. The male has a neck collar on, only visible from side on. He's also marked with blood, either from eating recently or perhaps a scrap. They are magnificent to watch.

We continue east, stopping at the spectacular Rietfontein waterhole where lots game are gathered. More obvious than the groups of mammals are the two white

birds in the middle – one is an African Spoonbill, the other a Cattle Egret. There are assorted ducks to tempt us from watching the Springbok, Impala, Kudu and Zebra that surround the large pool.

Reaching Halali, we arrive in time for a visit to the Morengi waterhole while Dalton sorts the room allocations. It's another superb facility with a raised view from the rocks (with seats) to another waterhole surrounded by mopane woodland. People are gathered to watch the sun go down and we are treated to a Little Sparrowhawk, then another Black Rhino that emerges from the bushes, followed by a smart Spotted Hyena – all this before our evening meal!

Day 11: Our early morning walk around the camp gets us looks at the local birds, including Red-billed Francolins travelling with the gangs of Helmeted Guineafowl and two Pearl-spotted Owlets that show well. Both Damara and Red-billed Hornbills are flapping around, but a early visit to the waterhole is less productive than we hope with just masses of Cape Turtle Doves taking their first drinks. Walking back for breakfast we manage to track down the Violet Wood-hoopoes that are nesting in a tree cavity. We also see Bare-cheeked Babbler and Groundscraper Thrush. At breakfast we are joined by a Common Tree Squirrel that takes a shine to Tony's juice, as well as the bold Glossy Starlings that are tidying up left overs!

Our morning drive is west along Rhino Drive, that takes us through the woodland dominated by mopane trees. We start picking up small groups of Impala, Zebra and Kudu that are close to the road. We get nice looks at Lilac-breasted and Purple Rollers, as well as Shikra and Pearl-spotted Owlet, but our first new species are a delightful foraging group of White-crested Helmet Shrikes. As the woodland gives way to more open grassland of the Halali Plain we start seeing larger groups of game with Springbok, Wildebeeste and Zebra on show.

After a comfort stop we work the southern edge of the pan. Springboks surround one waterhole at Charitsaub, with a few Egyptian Geese and Cape Teal in the water. As we reach the pan edge the view across is remarkable with masses of game reaching far out to blurry horizon. At the furthest point, Salvadore, we park and take in the amazing vista where the open panorama is broken by a lone tree. Animals abound: the largest dark blobs are Ostrich, then Blue Wildebeeste and Burchell's Zebra, then smaller Springbok.

We head back, getting looks at a Slender Mongoose on the way. The route passes by the productive Riedfontein waterhole where we stop for a second look - even more animals are gathered than the day before. A large group of Elephants are leaving, having taken their share of the water. Masses of Zebra and Springbok are milling around and at the water with a single Wildebeeste. The African Spoonbill and Cattle Egret are present as well as the waterfowl species from yesterday. What

is new is a nice Tawny Eagle perched in the largest tree, taking in the whole scene. Time for lunch.

Our afternoon session is a drive east through the woodland. We stop briefly at Helios waterhole which is sadly dry so we push on, knowing there are more productive areas to come. We pass through woodland, adding yet more new species - Chestnut-backed Finch-larks are close to the road and we get great looks at the smart males. Then Lazarus points to the clear blue sky where a raptor soars – it's the distinctive short-tailed Bateleur showing the nice white underwings contrasting with black body of an adult bird. Its flight pattern is a tilt this way, then a tilt that way, that gives rise to its name – Bateleur in French means tight-rope walker. Soon after, we take a left turn towards the waterhole at Goas and as we approach we can see a large groups of animals gathered at another fabulous waterhole.

The nearest water has some interesting birds too, with Black-necked Stilts on the closest shore along with a Wood Sandpiper. A few Egyptian Geese are joined by Red-billed Teal and along the far shore are two further Wood Sandpipers. Alex spots something smaller and we get the scope trained on it – a wonderful Painted Snipe! The second body of water is surrounded by a group of beautiful Red Hartebeeste as well as boisterous, mane-nibbling Zebras.

We drive back to Halali, as we want to spend the last hour of light at the waterhole. As before, people are gathered to watch the sun go down. A Pearl-spotted Owlet surveys the scene too, as groups of Cape Turtle Doves drink. After the sun drops below the wooded horizon the first sandgrouse lands at the water's edge. Then more small groups arrive.. then more and more. Each time a party arrives the volume of their bubbling calls increases and it is a spectacular scene as we watch them scurry around, making their way to the water to drink. All the while Alex is keeping count – he estimates nearly 580 birds. It is a popular end to the day, but it's not quite finished for Tom – he spots a snake on the track as we walk back to the car park. A fabulous Spitting Cobra! Thankfully not in the spitting mood - what an end to another great day in Etosha.

Day 12: A few of us do a pre-breakfast walk watching the usual suspects, including Grey Hornbills and Grey-backed Camaropteras. The waterhole is taken over by Guineafowl and two nice Golden-breasted Buntings are on show. We add Southern Black Tit to the species list, as well as getting better looks at the Violet Wood-hoopoes at the nest site.

After breakfast we load our bags on the van and say goodbye to Halali Lodge for our last day in Etosha. We drive north towards the pan and as the woodland peters out we see a swallow zipping about. It has a buffy red rump and a square tail pointing to South African Cliff Swallow. A Kalahari Scrub Robin is singing on its perch below. We continue picking up our first (of many) Pale Chanting Goshawks, then

stop when we see a distant bird of prey on a bush - the telescope reveals the chestnut nape of a Red-necked Falcon. Secretary Birds are strutting around close by and all the while there are groups of Springbok and Giraffes around.

We continue, adding our daily Black Korhaans, Chat Flycatcher, Ostriches, Kori Bustards and close Double-banded Coursers. The scrub gives way to grassland with masses of Zebra and some more Red Hartebeeste. Overhead we see something different – a striking black-and-white raptor – a White-headed Vulture – new for the list.

We break the morning route at the Etosha Pan Viewpoint that takes us out onto the salt flats where a few Springbok and two Ostriches are our only company in the empty terrain – time for a leg stretch and obligatory photo. Resuming the route east we see more Tawny Eagles and Bateleurs soaring, then note another different swallow – with a red rump and long streamers it looks a lot like a Red-rumped Swallow, but the underside is richer coloured and with a distinctive underwing – it's a Red-breasted Swallow.

Towards Namutoni we reach the Chudop waterhole, where we are greeted by a wonderful sight of ten Elephants bathing and drinking, some resorting to water wars! It's fun watching their antics accompanied by loud bursts of trumpet calls. In the middle of the pool is a stand of tall green reeds, busy with birds. Four Go-away Birds are top right and a Gabar Goshawk is clambering about the reeds hunting the many Red-billed Quelea within - Tom sees it catch one and take it deeper into the reeds. At one point the Quelea pour out to drink, in a blurr of wings, right alongside the feet of the Elephants. Star birds are the Black Crakes that Alex points out – a small young bird with its yellow-billed and pink-footed parent. The bird list is completed with Emerald Spotted Doves that also come to drink at the water's edge.

We take a late lunch at Namutoni, then walk around the grounds of the fort adding Cape Vulture, White-headed Vulture, Red-billed Hornbills, Drongo and more. At the waterhole are Zebra, Giraffe, Red-billed Teal, Moorhen, Blacksmith's Lapwings and Egyptian Goose.

As we wait for Dalton and Lazarus we see Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters and our first Meyer's Parrot. Dalton then tells us that he's heard a Puffback near the filling station so we'd better take a look – within minutes we are watching a family group of striking black-and-white parents and a browner juvenile.

We leave Namutoni and start the last cruise around one of the gravel tracks, tantalisingly named Dik-Dik Drive. It begins with another waterhole and the Giraffes are in town. We watch them do the splits and drink, their reflection in the water making everyone grab for their cameras. Birds include a surprise Lappet-faced Vulture on the deck (our closest look), two Three-banded Plovers and a young Pale Chanting

Goshawk walking around. We carry on along the drive and Lazarus spots something small on the right. Looking like a small toy deer, a diminutive Damara Dik-Dik peers out at us. An exquisite antelope (the smallest) with big dark eyes and a delicate flexible snout with the smallest black tip. A second animal is a little further back. It's time to leave Etosha – what a special place. It's a straight forward drive for an hour through the acacia and mopane scrub until we arrive at Tsumeb and the Hotel Minen where we check in for the night.

Day 13: Morning at the Minen Hotel is a relaxed affair, with an easy breakfast at 8am. Afterwards, we load the van, take in a visit to the bank and supermarket in town, then head northeast to pastures new. Dalton has a surprise addition to the itinerary, so we are including a loop drive through the bush to see one of the famed giant Baobab trees.

The first section of the route goes past some agricultural fields and on a post we see a now familiar Black-shouldered Kite. A different raptor is resting on the top of another telegraph pole a little further on and we stop to take a look. It's a neat grey colour with black-and-white barring on the chest recalling an accipiter, but it's a different shape. It has a neat red cere and legs, and a streak on its throat – a Lizard Buzzard. Other roadside birds include Purple and Lilac-breasted Rollers, Red-breasted Swallows and Go-away birds. We stop at one point to watch a Bateleur flying with a snake in its beak followed by high soaring African Hawk Eagles and White-backed Vulture. A gang of Banded Mongooses (or is that Mongeese?) cross the road in front and scurry into the bush.

We arrive at the site of the giant tree, marked by a stone kiosk-cum-visitor centre which is sadly closed. However, the gate is open so we park and start our walk. It takes us across an open area marked by laala palms and there in the distance is the huge Baobab tree. We walk to its base and are humbled by its size and character. The bark is hard, like concrete, its swollen trunks and limbs reaching skywards. Tony measures its circumference and he estimates 17 spans – that's 34 metres, over 100 ft round!

From the Baobab we head south and are soon stopping for two large eagles on the left. We are hoping for Martial Eagles, a bird high on the wishlist, but when they bank they show the neat black-and-white markings of Black-chested Snake Eagles. Onwards to Grootfontein, we grab some food for lunch. There's plenty to choose from at the well stocked modern supermarket and we take our booty to a shady tree a short drive south of the town.

The road to Waterberg takes us cross-country. Our first stop is when an African Hoopoe sits on top of a tree calling. There are also Rosy-faced Lovebirds, Wattled Starlings, White-browed Scrub Robin and White-crowned Shrike nearby. Further along we see a Warthog running beside the road with its tails erect, like the antennae

of radio controlled toy. Next, we pause at a water tank where there are lots of birds in trees – mostly Southern Masked Weavers and Quelea, but we add Groundscraper Thrush, Golden-breasted Bunting and Crimson-breasted Shrike to the day's list. A short distance further along the way Lazarus spots two sandgrouse by the road – they have yellow and pastel pink shades with white spots! Burchell's Sandgrouse – a new species! Tom is as sharp as ever and spots some hornbills on the wires – red-billed and dark bodies. These are Bradfield's Hornbills – another new species.

As we approach the Waterberg Plateau the landscape becomes more impressive. The steep escarpment walls and wooded slopes offers a stark difference from the Etosha panoramas. We start seeing mammals as we approach the National Park with Kudu, Steenbok, Warthog and a large troop of Chacma Baboons. We eventually arrive at Waterberg Rest Camp, where Dalton checks-in while some of us enjoy the walk along the road to the rooms, enjoying the natural amphitheatre of steep cliffs in the setting sun.

Day 14: It's our last full day in Namibia and after an early breakfast at 7.30am we are keen to explore the new surroundings at Waterberg. The cliffs behind the chalets are catching the early morning sun and we can see small groups of Chacma Baboons enjoying the view from their elevated seats on the skyline. Pale-winged Starlings are hopping around the rocks too and high above Alpine and Common Swifts charge around. A Pearl-spotted Owlet is calling and we track it down in a tree behind chalet 63 – it's being mobbed by a White-bellied Sunbird.

We start our walk, noting Grey Hornbill and Grey-backed Camaroptera, then bump into a busy group of birds in a tree. These are mostly Southern Masked Weavers but the melee attracts a Crimson-breasted Shrike and a Puffback. Alex spots two star birds on the skyline – a pair of magnificent Verraux's Eagles are perched aloft. After watching for a while they take to the air for a great display showing their white dorsal blazes.

The trail continues through the thickets that now cover the series of terraces that the German settlers fashioned into the landscape. Water from the foot of the escarpment (hence the name of the place) could be diverted through canals to newly formed orchards. Now the place is overgrown, but the stone gutters or canal sides are still strewn about. At a few places we can scan the view down across the plain and Tom points to two African Hawk Eagles soaring below.

We start our walk at the lower section close to the reception, planning a route that will take us through the camp site, that at this time of day is empty. We walk across and immediately notice two Ruppell's Parrots in a tree. More obvious are the Green Wood-hoopoes that are flying around with their bold black-and-white wings. We watch one with a beak full and notice it returning to its nest cavity in another tree. We set up scope and enjoy looks at birds going to and fro. Further on we hear

tapping from a woodpecker and soon Alex spots the culprit. It's an adult male Cardinal Woodpecker sporting a red cap, white cheek and ladder back. Within minutes a female joins the male – she sports a black cap – nice watching the pair. Also around the same dead tree are two Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters flycatching from the bare snags. One acacia tree is in flower and is attracting lots of attention from both birds and insects. We find a shady spot to view the busy group of Marico, White-bellied and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, the sun catching their iridescent plumage wonderfully. The tree is also alive with Common Dotted Border butterflies making for a memorable scene, a fitting end to the morning.

We wander up the road to the restaurant for lunch, then have some time off to prepare for our last game drive. We meet at 2.40pm for our afternoon trip on a 4x4 safari jeep that will take us into the Waterberg Wilderness Area, now designated as Namibia's newest National Park. Stanley is our driver and we load up driving east to where we can ascend to the plateau top where a Klipspringer awaits!

We stop at the escarpment to take in the view south, over endless thornveld. From there we start working the sandy tracks that criss-cross the plateau. Its pristine thick acacia scrub with sandstone outcrops here and there. We arrive at a waterhole hide that is accessed via a long screened walkway. Entering the hide we see we are not alone – some students are looking out too. In front is a wide open sandy clearing with a water pool and a smaller salt lick. A few birds flick around the edge: Familiar Chat, Groundscraper Thrush, Crimson-breasted Shrike and Red-eyed Bulbul. Coming to drink are a handful of Golden-breasted Buntings. After some time we spot Giraffes making their way through the trees. First, two venture to the water, then a third, and eventually seven. We watch them doing the splits for both water and salt lick and see some interesting behaviour – did you know that they can lick their own nostrils? Then three Cape Buffalos make a grand entrance, even doing a short charge to claim the waterhole - the Giraffes dutifully clear a path.

From the waterhole Stanley takes us around the area that he suspects the White Rhinos frequent – we see large footprints in the sand, but sadly no rhinos. We continue the loop around catching up with Sable Antelope and as the light fades we see a prize bull Kudu. Stanley has timed his route to perfection as we reach the gate at precisley 7pm, closing time. From there it's a drive back to the Waterberg Rest Camp.

At the restaurant, our last dinner together, there are lots of discussions of best bird, best mammal and magic moments. There's been so many highlights to choose from and its still not over for Tom. He, Alex and Jess see a Lesser Bushbaby around their cabin when they return!

Day 15: We have an early breakfast at 7am and are on our way soon afterwards, for the long journey home. We leave the Waterberg escarpment that is looking fine in the

morning light. There are some familiar species along the sandy exit route, then we hit the tarmac and pick up speed. Yet still Namibia keeps giving and Tom keeps spotting! He yells 'there's a new mammal!' Lazarus reverses and there on our left is the biggest antelope of them all – Eland. Surely that will be our last new species...

Further along we see our first of several Tawny Eagles that are still roosting, waiting for the thermals to start. Then Lazarus spots another animal on the left – this time it's a Common (or Grey) Duiker – one of the smaller antelope species. Other roadside species include Black-shouldered Kite and Lilac-breasted Roller, all before our rest stop at Okahandja.

The last leg sees us slowly climb into the more hilly terrain of the central highlands as we get nearer Windhoek. Then the van comes to a halt as Dalton sees a big bird of prey soaring... a really big bird of prey with a white body and dark wings. It's the one bird that Tom has wished for – a magnificent Martial Eagle. We get out and get great looks of it soaring low overhead, with the blue sky above. What a way to end the holiday!

Finally we arrive at Windhoek airport and the winner of the mileage sweepstakes is Tom, who guesses 3276 kilometres – he's just 4 kilometres out at 3272.

We say our last goodbyes to Dalton and Lazarus who have shown us so many things and have seamlessly made sure we have had a trouble-free Namibian adventure. Our sincere thanks to a great team who have delivered Africa without tears.

Day 16: Arrive at Heathrow for last goodbyes.

Birdy Top Five

- 1 Secretary Bird
- 2 Bateleur
- 3 Lilac-breasted Roller
- 4 Crimson-breasted Shrike
- 5 Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters

Mammal Top Five

- 1 Oryx
- 2= Elephant
- 2= Giraffe
- 4= Black Rhino
- 4= Zebra
- 4= Spotted Hyena
- 4= Black-backed Jackal

(Adjudication note: Tom demands a recount as Lesser Bushbaby and Martial Eagle were entered after the judging date!)

Place of the Trip

The choice reflects the diversity of Namibia: from the red dunes of the Namib around Sossusvlei to the riches of Walvis Bay. Every place has its own magic but one above others captivated us all – Etosha, in particular the waterholes and especially Chudop.

Magic Moment

So many to choose from with the raucous spectacle of Cape Cross and the Lions at Newbrowni waterhole. Yet a clear favourite emerged: who will ever forget the parade of rare Desert Elephants, our first looks at these gentle giants.

BIRDS (223)

African Penguin	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	African Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricoloris</i>
Cape Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	Chestnut-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius pallidu</i>
Crowned Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax coronatus</i>	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochenaegyptiaca</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
South African Shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>
Cape Teal	<i>Anas capensis</i>	Spotted Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhynchos</i>	Double-banded Courser	<i>Rhinoptilus africanus</i>
Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>	Burchell's Courser	<i>Cursorius rufus</i>
Maccoa Duck	<i>Oxyura maccoa</i>	Kelp (Cape) Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Larus hartlaubii</i>
Cape Vulture	<i>Gyps coprotheres</i>	Grey-headed Gull	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>
Lappet-faced Vulture	<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>	Swift Tern	<i>Sterna bergii</i>
White-headed Vulture	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
African Fish-Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius caudatus</i>	Damara Tern	<i>Sterna balaenarum</i>
Black-chested Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>	Namaqua Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles namaqua</i>
Brown Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	Double-banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	Burchell's Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles burchelli</i>
Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>	Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
African Hawk-Eagle	<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>	Cape Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax canorus</i>	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Melierax gabar</i>	Rüppell's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus rueppellii</i>
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Meyer's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	Rosy-faced Lovebird	<i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	Grey Go-away-bird	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>
Rock Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicollis</i>	African Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Greater Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicoloides</i>	African Scops-Owl (H)	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>
Red-necked Falcon	<i>Falco chicquera</i>	Spotted Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Pearl-spotted Owlet	<i>Glaucidium perlatus</i>
Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>	African Palm-Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Red-billed Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis adspersus</i>	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarpis melba</i>
Crested Francolin	<i>Peliperdix sephaena</i>	Bradfield's Swift	<i>Apus bradfieldi</i>
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Black Crake	<i>Amaurornis flavirostris</i>	White-backed Mousebird	<i>Colius colius</i>
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>
Secretarybird	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>
Kori Bustard	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>	Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>
Ludwig's Bustard	<i>Neotis ludwigii</i>	Purple Roller	<i>Coracias naevius</i>
Northern Black Korhaan	<i>Afrotisa fraoides</i>	Monteiro's Hornbill	<i>Tockus monteiri</i>
Red-crested Korhaan	<i>Eupodotis ruficrista</i>	Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>
Rüppell's Korhaan	<i>Eupodotis rueppellii</i>	Damara Hornbill	<i>Tockus damarensis</i>

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus leucomelas</i>	Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler	<i>Parisoma subcaeruleum</i>
Bradfield's Hornbill	<i>Tockus bradfieldi</i>	Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	Rattling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>
Violet Wood-hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus damarensis</i>	Desert Cisticola	<i>Cisticola aridulus</i>
Green Wood-hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	Black-chested Prinia	<i>Prinia flavicans</i>
Common Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>	Chat Flycatcher	<i>Bradornis infuscatus</i>
Acacia Pied Barbet	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>	Marico Flycatcher	<i>Bradornis mariquensis</i>
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicus fuscescens</i>	Pirrit Batis	<i>Batis pririt</i>
Sabota Lark	<i>Calendulauda sabota</i>	Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
Dune Lark	<i>Calendulauda erythrochlamys</i>	African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
Gray's Lark	<i>Ammomanopsis grayi</i>	Long-billed Pipit	<i>Anthus similis</i>
Spike-heeled Lark	<i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i>	Crimson-breasted Shrike	<i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i>
Karoo Long-billed Lark	<i>Certhilauda subcoronata</i>	Bokmakierie	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>
Grey-backed Finchlark	<i>Eremopterix verticalis</i>	White-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanioturdus torquatus</i>
Chestnut-backed Finchlark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>	Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>
Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>	Black-backed Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>
Stark's Lark	<i>Spizocorys starki</i>	White-crested Helmet-Shrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>
Sclater's Lark	<i>Spizocorys sclateri</i>	Common Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
Rock Martin	<i>Hirundo fuligula</i>	Southern White-crowned Shrike	<i>Eurocephalus anguitimens</i>
Pearl-breasted Swallow	<i>Hirundo dimidiata</i>	Pale-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus nabouroup</i>
South African Cliff Swallow	<i>Hirundo spilodera</i>	Cape Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>
Red-breasted Swallow	<i>Hirundo semirufa</i>	Burchell's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis australis</i>
White-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	Dusky Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris fuscus</i>
Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>	Marico Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris mariquensis</i>
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	White-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris talatala</i>
Cape Penduline-Tit	<i>Anthoscopus minutus</i>	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Carp's Tit	<i>Parus carpi</i>	Great Sparrow	<i>Passer motitensis</i>
Southern Black Tit	<i>Parus niger</i>	Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
Ashy Tit	<i>Parus cinerascens</i>	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
Southern Pied Babbler	<i>Turdoides bicolor</i>	Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
Bare-cheeked Babbler	<i>Turdoides melanops</i>	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahal</i>
African Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>	Sociable Weaver	<i>Philetairus socius</i>
Karoo Thrush	<i>Turdus smithi</i>	Southern Masked-Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
Short-toed Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola brevipes</i>	Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
Groundscraper Thrush	<i>Psophocichla litsipsirupa</i>	Black-faced Waxbill	<i>Estrilda erythronotos</i>
Familiar Chat	<i>Cercomela familiaris</i>	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Karoo Chat	<i>Cercomela schlegelii</i>	Violet-eared Waxbill	<i>Granatina granatina</i>
Tractrac Chat	<i>Cercomela tractrac</i>	Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>
Mountain Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe monticola</i>	Red-headed Finch	<i>Amadinae rythrocephala</i>
Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>	Scaly-feathered Finch	<i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i>
Ant-eating Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i>	Green-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia melba</i>
White-browed Scrub-Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>	Black-throated Canary	<i>Serinus atrogularis</i>
Kalahari Scrub-Robin	<i>Cercotrichas paeon</i>	Yellow Canary	<i>Serinus flaviventris</i>
Yellow-bellied Eremomela	<i>Eremome laicteropygialis</i>	White-throated Canary	<i>Serinus albogularis</i>
African Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>	Lark-like Bunting	<i>Emberiza impetuani</i>
Rockrunner	<i>Achaetops pycnopygius</i>	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevipdata</i>	Golden-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza flaviventris</i>

MAMMALS (37)

Damara Dik-Dik
Common (Grey) Duiker
Gemsbok (Southern Oryx)
Red Hartebeest
Blue Wildebeest
Black-faced Impala
Klipspringer
Greater Kudu
Eland
Springbok
Steenbok
Sable Antelope
Cape Buffalo
Burchell's Zebra
Hartmann's Mountain Zebra
African Lion
African Elephant
Black Rhinoceros
Black-backed Jackal
Bat-eared Fox
Aardwolf
Giraffe
Scrub Hare
Spotted Hyena
Rock Hyrax
Banded Mongoose
Slender Mongoose
Yellow Mongoose
Chacma Baboon
Cape Fur Seal
Striped Tree Squirrel
Common Tree Squirrel
Cape Ground Squirrel
Bushveld Elephant Shrew
Striped Mouse
Warthog

CETACEANS

Heaviside's (Benguela) Dolphin
Bottlenose Dolphin
Humpback Whale

Madoqua damarensis
Sylviacapra grimmia
Oryx gazella
Alcelaphus buselaphus
Connochaetes taurinus
Aepyceros melampus petersi
Oreotragus oreotragus
Tragelaphus strepsiceros
Taurotragus oryx
Antidorcas marsupialis
Raphicerus campestris
Hippotragus niger
Syncerus caffer
Equus burchellii
Equus zebra hartmannae
Panthera Leo
Loxodonta Africana
Diceros bicornis
Canis mesomelas
Otocyon megalotis
Protelus cristatus
Giraffa camelopardalis
Lepus saxatilis
Crocuta crocuta
Procavia capensis
Mungos mungo
Galerella sanguinea
Cynictis penicillata
Papio ursinus
Arctocephalus pusillus
Funisciurus congicus
Sciurus carolinensis
Xerus inauris
Elephantulus intufi
Rhabdomys pumilio
Phacochoerus africanus

BUTTERFLIES

Queen Purple-tip
Bushveld Purple-tip
Zebra White
Foxy Emperor
Doubleday's Orange-tip
Small Orange-tip
Yellow Pansy
African Monarch
Speckled Sulphur-tip
Topaz Arab
Guineafowl Butterfly
Painted Lady
Common Dotted Border

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Burchell's Gecko
Namib Day Gecko
Variable Skink
Southern Ground Agama
Tree Agama
Zebra Spitting Cobra