

Lawson's Birding, Wildlife & Custom Safaris

# KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland and Kruger National Park

## Birding and Wildlife Safari

*5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018*



### **Daily Itinerary**

#### **Days 1 – 2: Monday – Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018 ~ Wakkerstroom**

After starting off in Johannesburg we'll make our way to Wakkerstroom, a small agricultural town in the Southern Mpumalanga highlands that is well known as one of South Africa's best birding spots. We should arrive in the mid to late afternoon and if time (and energy) allows we'll take a short drive down to the large wetland on the edge of town. This wetland and expanse of open water is easily viewable from the road bridge and we should record species such as Grey Crowned Crane, Purple Swampphen, Little Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, African Spoonbill, Hamerkop, Southern Masked Weaver and others. In the late afternoon we'll head back to our accommodation and then head into town for dinner. After dinner and completing our lists we'll retire in



anticipation of a full day birding the Wakkerstroom area, where the hilltops rise to over 2000 meters above sea level and the lack of intensive agriculture makes for superb Highveld grassland habitat. We'll head out early on an extended birding excursion, taking a packed breakfast and coffee basket with us. There are various loops in the area, and special birds we'll be looking out for include Blue Crane, Secretarybird, Blue Korhaan, Ground Woodpecker, Quail Finch, Marsh Owl, Red-throated Wryneck, Yellow-breasted Pipit and Rudd's and Botha's Larks, the two specials for the area.

Mammals we may see include Yellow Mongoose and the endearing Meerkat / Suricate. We'll return for lunch and a siesta, and will have the afternoon open for either another drive or a stroll down to the wetlands once again.

### **Days 3 – 4: Wednesday – Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018 ~ Tembe Elephant Park**

After a last morning activity in the Wakkerstroom area we'll have breakfast, pack and depart for Tembe Elephant Park in far northern KwaZulu-Natal Province. Tembe Elephant Park is a large reserve on the border of South Africa and Mozambique, and is co-owned by the people of the local Tembe tribe. Much of Tembe comprises pristine sand forest habitat, which is where we'll look for special birds such as Pink-throated Twinspot, Plain-backed Sunbird, Woodward's Batis, Grey Waxbill, Rudd's Apalis, African Broadbill, African Crowned Eagle and many others. Other habitats include grassy vleis (marshes) where we may see Black Coucal, Saddle-billed Stork, Purple Heron and Rosy-throated Longclaw, with a bit of luck. As its name implies Tembe is also home to a large number of African Elephants, many of which carry some impressive ivory (unfortunately Isilo, their biggest tusker, died of natural causes early in 2014). In addition to some wonderful Elephant encounters we'll hope to see Lion, and will no doubt see antelope species such as Impala, Nyala, Kudu, Suni and Red Duiker. Other species to see include Red Squirrel, Thick-tailed Bushbaby, Bushpig and Warthog. We should arrive at Tembe in the mid-afternoon in time for our afternoon game and birding drive in open-sided Land-Cruise game viewers. We'll return to camp for dinner and drinks under the African night sky. The following morning we'll have a morning drive, followed by breakfast and a chance to relax in the camp through the heat of the day. We'll then have another afternoon drive followed by dinner once again.



### **Day 5: Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018 ~ Maguga Dam, Swaziland**

Today we'll have time for a morning drive and a leisurely departure for the border, where we'll cross into the Kingdom of Swaziland. We'll continue on to Malolotja Nature Reserve, where we can spend a few hours birding in montane grassland habitat with a similar suite of birds to the Wakkerstroom area. Although the two special Lark species don't occur here, we'll be searching for another critically endangered species in the form of Blue Swallow, a summer visitor from the highlands of central and eastern Africa. Other species to look out for include Denham's Bustard, Ground Woodpecker, Southern Bald Ibis, Buff-streaked Chat, Cape Grassbird, Malachite Sunbird, Cape Rock Thrush, Lazy Cisticola, Broad-tailed Warbler and many others. We'll return to our lodge for the evening and dinner overlooking Maguga Dam on the Nkomati River.

### **Day 6: Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018 ~ Berg-en-Dal, Kruger National Park**

Today we'll do some casual birding in the lodge grounds before we have breakfast and depart. We'll exit Swaziland in the north and then make our way to the Kruger National Park. Our destination here is Berg-en-Dal Rest Camp, or 'Hill-and-Dale', is situated in the hilly country of the south-western corner of the park. The camp is relatively new, built in the 1980's and is nestled in a large bowl in between the hills, where the vegetation is fairly lush, even in the dry season. The camp overlooks a waterhole, which is floodlit by night, and there's a self-guided walking trail around the perimeter of the camp (not to be done between sunset and sunrise). Some of the hills in the region reach up to 850 meters-above-sea-level, and indeed this part of the park is radically different to much of the rest of the park. The Crocodile River is the main water source in the area, and forms the southern boundary of the Kruger National Park, and is a vital water source for animals in the dry season. This part of the park is particularly good for White Rhinoceros, and we'll hope to have a few encounters with these endangered beasts as well as a host of other fantastic game species, with Lion, Leopard, Cheetah and Wild Dog high on the wish-list. Birds we may see include Golden-tailed, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Hamerkop, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-crested Helmet-Shrike, Red-billed Firefinch, Bateleur, Tawny Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, African Goshawk and many others.



### **Day 7: Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018 ~ Departure for Skukuza**

Today we'll have time for a morning drive in the area before breakfast and departure for Skukuza, where participants can settle in ahead of the conference.

**Note:** *The exact itinerary will depend on availability of accommodation at time of booking.*

## **Tour in Brief**

**Group size:** maximum of 12 participants, 1 guide per 6 participants.

**Areas visited:** Wakkerstroom, Tembe Elephant Park, Maguga Dam (Swaziland), Kruger National Park

**Expected weather conditions:** the coastal regions will be hot and humid, whereas the interior at Wakkerstroom should be warm but pleasant, possibly cool during the evenings. Kruger will be warm to hot, even very hot. Rain is a possibility this time of year.

**Tour tempo:** medium to medium-plus, optional mid-day breaks (advisable considering on hot days), no serious walking.

**Accommodation standards:** medium to medium plus; guest houses and lodges.

**Birding in brief:** excellent variety of habitats; a mix of coastal dune forest, bushveld savanna, high altitude grassland and mountains.

**Top birds:** Rudd's and Botha's Lark, White-bellied and Blue Korhaans, Jackal Buzzard, Blue Crane, Ground Woodpecker, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Secretarybird, Pink-throated Twinspot, African Broadbill, African Crowned Eagle, Woodward's Batis and Livingstone's Turaco.

**Mammal viewing:** good in Tembe especially, species to be seen include Suni, Samango Monkey, Meerkat, Yellow Mongoose, Nyala, African Elephant, Lion, African Buffalo and Wild Dog (with a bit of luck).

## **Tour Costs**

**R 20 490** per person sharing

**R 2 400** single supplement

Price is based on a group size of 6 participants. Small group surcharge will be levied for groups smaller than 6 participants. Price subject to change based on external factors. Please contact us for more details.

### **Includes**

- Accommodation
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Ground transport in Toyota Quantums / VW Kombis / Ford Everest & Open safari vehicles in Kruger
- Bottled water in the Lawson's vehicle whilst travelling
- Entrance fees
- Personalised checklists
- Specialist guide fees

### **Excludes**

- All airfares and associated airport costs
- Travel and medical insurance
- Lunches
- All drinks
- Optional excursions where applicable
- Gratuities
- Items of a personal nature

### **Note**

- This itinerary is subject to change due to weather conditions at the time and other factors beyond our control.
- Vehicle used will depend on size of group.
- Birds and mammals mentioned on this itinerary do not represent all that can be seen. A full list of possibles appears on your checklist.

## **Terms & Conditions**

### Payment / Acceptance of Booking

A non refundable deposit of 10% of the tour price is payable on confirmation of the booking. Any variance to the deposit amount or payment date will be advised at the time of booking. Acceptance of the booking will be confirmed in writing at which time a contract comes into existence. The balance of the tour price is due 8 weeks prior to departure date. Should the final payment fail to reach us by the date specified, we reserve the right to treat the booking as cancelled. If a booking is made 8 weeks or less prior to the departure date the full amount is then payable on booking.

Due to the revised South African National Parks (hereafter referred to as "SANParks") Terms & Conditions the exact deposit requirement will vary according to booking time frame and the proportion of the tour spent in SANParks accommodation.

### Cancellation after Payment of the Full Tour Price

Any cancellation must be in writing. The date on which the correspondence is received by us will determine the cancellation charges applicable. The cancellation charges are expressed as a percentage of the total tour price and are as follows:

#### *Tours excluding SANParks accommodation*

Less than 6 weeks before departure	30 %
Less than 4 weeks before departure	50 %
Less than 3 weeks before departure	60 %
Less than 2 weeks before departure	100 %

#### *Tours including SANParks accommodation*

Less than 6 weeks before departure	50 %
Less than 4 weeks before departure	80 %
Less than 2 weeks before departure	100 %

However, in the event of a cancellation we will endeavour to recover as much of the payment as possible on behalf of the client, subject to the cancellation policies of all the accommodation establishments used in the itinerary.

