



BLUE WAXBILL BY DEREK KEATS

SOUTH AFRICA

Birding and Wildlife Safari

13 DAYS | Choose your dates

Immerse yourself in the natural wonders of South Africa, home to amazing scenery, iconic African wildlife, and more than 800 bird species. World-renowned habitats and biological diversity are the focus as you journey from the Highveld grasslands of Mpumalanga province to the cliffs and gorges of the Blyde River Canyon, and through transitional habitats before leveling out in the bush plains of Kruger National Park. For birders, this translates to a superb range of species to be seen, including many regional and country-specific endemics.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore South Africa's famed Kruger National Park, one of the continent's largest game reserves, for the chance to spot nearly 500 bird species, as well as the "Big 5" – lions, elephants, Cape buffalo, leopards, and rhinoceros.
- Seek out Highveld grassland species such as Wing-snapping Cisticola, Eastern Long-billed Lark, and Denham's Bustard at Verloren Vallei Nature Reserve.
- Hike the escarpment forest of Mount Sheba and look for area specialties like the Knysna Turaco, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, and Narina Trogon.
- View stunning landscapes as you watch the sun set over Blyde River Canyon, the third largest canyon in the world.
- Explore the grassland around Wakkerstroom and track down scarce inhabitants like Blue Korhaan, Secretarybird, and Grey Crowned Crane, plus the globally threatened Rudd's Lark and Botha's Lark.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

- Bilingual local guide
- Driver
- Accommodations
- Activities
- Private transportation
- Meals
- Beverages with meals
- Carbon offsetting



LION IN KRUGER NATIONAL PARK



BLYDE RIVER CANYON BY DR. THOMAS WAGNER

ITINERARY

BLD = BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER

DAY 1 - EN ROUTE

Depart the United States for South Africa.

DAY 2 - JOHANNESBURG

Today will be arrival day, with most participants arriving on evening flights. For those participating in the optional pre-trip extension and arriving from Cape Town, we'll spend the afternoon visiting the nearby Rietvlei Nature Reserve as an opportunity to become familiar with some of the more common species. A few of the regular birds we can expect here include Black-winged Kite, African Pipit, Rufous-naped Lark, Crowned Lapwing, Dark-capped Bulbul, Fiscal Flycatcher and White-throated Swallow. Mammals to be seen include white rhinoceros, eland, plains zebra, blesbok, and springbok, among others. Afterwards, return to the hotel with some time free before dinner. Meet the group at the hotel restaurant for dinner and orientation at 7 pm. (*Temperatures in South Africa range from high 80s to mid 50s in the summer months, with chances of afternoon thunderstorms. In the winter, you can expect low 60s to mid 30s with minimal chance of rain. Elevation is 5,600 feet above sea level. You can find predominantly open "Highveld Grassland" habitats.) *Overnight at Africa Sky Guest House. (D)*

DAY 3 - MOUNT SHEBA

After an early breakfast, check out of your hotel and head northwest. Much of today will be spent traveling, with a birding stop along the way if time allows, perhaps visiting a small pan (seasonal, rain-filled body of water) where you'll have a chance to search for species such as White-backed Duck, Yellow-billed Duck, Little Grebe, Great-crested Grebe, Purple Heron, and Common Moorhen. Continue driving through the small Highveld town of Dullstroom before birding your way through to Mount Sheba via the beautiful Verloren Vallei Nature Reserve, where you'll search for some Highveld grassland species such as Wing-snapping Cisticola, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Yellow Bishop, Denham's Bustard, and

possibly Yellow-breasted Pipit, Southern Bald Ibis, and Blue Crane. From here, finish the drive with the aim of reaching Mount Sheba late in the afternoon, with some time to relax before dinner. Elevation: 5,300 feet; Afro-montane forest and grassland habitats. *Overnight at Forever Resorts. (BD)*

DAY 4 - BLYDE RIVER CANYON

Rise early to explore the surrounding escarpment forest on foot. Although the number of species found in this habitat type is not very high, several will likely not be seen again anywhere else on the tour. Some of the specialties you'll be looking for include Knysna Turaco, Grey Cuckooshrike, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Narina Trogon, Cape Batis, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, and White-starred Robin. Return to the lodge for a relaxed breakfast before packing up and driving through to your next destination, situated on the edge of the Blyde River Canyon. Along the way, do some general birding for species such as Red-throated Wryneck, Amethyst Sunbird, Neddicky, and Streaky-headed Seedeater. Arrive to your accommodation in the early afternoon, allowing some time to relax during the hottest part of the day. Later in the afternoon, stroll up to the viewpoint overlooking the canyon while searching for Lazy



SECRETARYBIRD BY LOU NEWMAN

Cisticola, Brimstone Canary, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, and Green-backed Camaroptera along the way. Enjoy watching the sun set over the magnificent Blyde River Canyon before returning for dinner. Elevation: roughly 3,840 feet; Cliffs and gorges, forest, and thicket habitats. *Overnight at Forever Resorts. (BD)*

DAY 5 - SATARA, KRUGER

Start the day off with a birding walk to search for a few more species that you may not have seen yet, including White-throated Robin-Chat, Yellow-fronted Canary, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Familiar Chat, and Striped Pipit. Have breakfast back at the lodge and then depart for Kruger National Park. Along the way, search for species such as Cape Vulture, Cape Rock-Thrush, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Mountain Wagtail, and with luck, Taita Falcon. Arrive at the Kruger National Park entrance gate around mid-day. After grabbing a bite to eat, spend most of the rest of the afternoon driving through to your camp. The drive is about 30 miles away, but a multitude of new species will be there to distract you, such as Magpie Shrike, Tawny Eagle, White-backed Vulture, Brown-headed Parrot, and Green-winged Pytilia. Mammals will also be well-represented, with impala, blue wildebeest, kudu, and southern giraffe all likely to be seen on the way. You may also bump into some of the “Big Five,” with African elephant and African buffalo in particular being likely possibilities. Elevation varies from about 800 feet at Satara to 1,920 feet at Pretoriuskop. Habitats: mainly savanna, with various sub-types such as basalt sweetveld, Sabie River thickets, and Pretoriuskop sourveld. *Overnight at Satara Rest Camp. (BD)*

DAY 6 - SATARA, KRUGER

Enjoy a full day to explore the area around Satara camp. Begin birding in the area to the north of camp, where you may see Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Namaqua Dove, Kori Bustard, and Red-crested Korhaan. Species such as Gabar Goshawk, Sabota Lark, Burnt-necked Eremomela, and African Pipit should also be seen. Afterwards, return for a late breakfast in camp, followed by a short birding stroll before taking some time to relax during the hotter parts of the day. Later in the afternoon, head out once more to try and add a few species to your list, and hopefully bump into more large mammals. In particular, the Satara area offers excellent habitat for lions. *Overnight at Satara Rest Camp. (BD)*

DAY 7 - SKUKUZA, KRUGER

Start today with a short morning drive in the region to search for more species such as African Green Pigeon, African Harrier-Hawk, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Southern Red-billed Hornbill, and Southern Ground Hornbill; as always, be on the lookout for the big predators such as lion, leopard, and cheetah. Then head back to camp for breakfast and to pack up all your gear for the drive to your next camp, Skukuza, where you'll spend another two nights. The drive there will take much of the rest of the day, as you'll be spending your time birding and searching for other wildlife along the way.

This 57-mile journey often produces some incredible viewing. Break up the journey around mid-day, stopping for lunch and a chance to stretch your legs at Tshokwane picnic site, before continuing on to Skukuza. Arrive in the late afternoon for some time to relax in camp before dinner. *Overnight at Skukuza Rest Camp. (BD)*

DAY 8 - SKUKUZA, KRUGER

Explore the area around Skukuza, with the same approach as at Satara, where you'll be out during the morning and afternoon and relaxing in camp during the warmer periods around mid-day when activity typically dies down. Start off exploring the Sabie River, where you may encounter White-browed Scrub-Robin, Eastern Bearded Scrub-Robin, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Ashy Flycatcher, Golden-breasted Bunting, and White-fronted Bee-eater. On the river itself, you may find White-crowned Lapwing, Three-banded Plover, Goliath Heron, and with luck, African Finfoot. Return mid-

morning for breakfast, after which you'll bird in the camp where Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Collared Sunbird, Crowned Hornbill, White-browed Robin-Chat, and Long-billed Crombec may all be seen. After some time relaxing, take an afternoon drive in the area, hoping to find some of the usual thicket species such as Blue Waxbill, Red-billed Firefinch, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Natal Spurfowl, and Brubru, before returning just before the camp gates close and in time for a lovely dinner, possibly even adding greater galago to the list in the process. *Overnight at Skukuza Rest Camp. (BD)*

DAY 9 - PRETORIUSKOP

Early this morning, drive to a nearby bird hide, where you'll not only hope to add some

species to your list in the form of African Darter, Malachite Kingfisher, African Pied Kingfisher, Water Thick-knee, and African Jacana, but also hopefully get some excellent photographic opportunities, as the hippos often come fairly close to the front of the hide. Spend some time here before perhaps birding around the Skukuza plant nursery for a little while. After breakfast, make your way to the oldest camp, Pretoriuskop, situated in the southwest corner, for your last night in Kruger, likely arriving in the early afternoon. After settling in and relaxing for a while, head out on an afternoon drive for a few target species such as Green-capped Eremomela, Grey Penduline-Tit, Brown-headed Parrot, Little Bee-eater, Yellow-throated Petronia, and Bushveld Pipit. Return to camp and have some time to get ready for dinner. *Overnight at Pretoriuskop Rest Camp. (BD)*

DAY 10 - WAKKERSTROOM

After a short morning outing around camp, return for breakfast and then start to make your way to Wakkerstroom, where you'll spend the last two nights. The drive there will not involve a great deal of birding, although on the way, you may stop in an area of grassland to try and track down White-bellied Bustard, with this sub-species, formerly known as Barrow's Korhaan, sometimes being treated as a distinct



LILAC-BREASTED ROLLER BY ROGER CULOS

species. Arrive in Wakkerstroom late in the afternoon, with some time to relax and get settled in before dinner. Elevation: 5,700 feet; habitat: mainly high altitude grassland. *Overnight at Wetlands Country Lodge. (BD)*

DAY 11 - WAKKERSTROOM

Today have a morning outing with a packed breakfast to explore the area around Wakkerstroom, and in particular to track down a few of the scarcer inhabitants of the grassland areas to the north, where you'll search for Blue Korhaan, Secretarybird, Grey-winged Francolin, Red-capped Lark, Eastern Clapper Lark, Pink-billed Lark, Blue Crane, Grey Crowned Crane, and Southern Bald Ibis. Undoubtedly the most important species, though, are Rudd's Lark and Botha's Lark, both globally threatened with populations of fewer than 5,000 each, and for both, possibly as few as 1,500. Another species you may be lucky enough to observe is the Yellow-breasted Pipit, although this species can be tough to track down during the winter months. Return to town around lunch time, after which you'll have some time to relax. Spend the afternoon birding the wetland alongside town to track down Cape Shoveller, Red-billed Teal, Hottentot Teal, Spur-winged Goose, African Snipe, African Marsh-Harrier, Little Rush Warbler, and Black-crowned Night-Heron. *Overnight at Wetlands Country Lodge. (BD)*

DAY 12 - DEPARTURE

On your final morning, take an early birding drive in the region to search for any outstanding species and to perhaps find one of the local meerkat troops before heading back to the lodge for breakfast and departure for Johannesburg. All morning activities on this day will depend on departure flight times, as it's a four-hour drive from Wakkerstroom to the airport. *(B)*

DAY 13 - ARRIVAL HOME

Overnight flight and arrival home.



LAND PRICING

\$4,020 (11 participants + 1 leader)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, private transportation unless otherwise noted in itinerary, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, local guides in each region for duration of program, and carbon offset.

International airfare, gratuities, meals not indicated, and items of a personal nature are not included.

Valid for travel in 2020.

TRAVEL PROTECTION

Holbrook Travel purchases Travel Protection on behalf of all participants. These plans help provide coverage once the trip has departed and offer benefits for Baggage/Personal Effects, Accident & Sickness Medical Expenses, Emergency Evacuation and more. Refer to the Plan Document for more details.

Optional additional coverage is available in the form of the Group Deluxe Plan, which offers benefits for Trip Cancellation/Interruption, in addition to many other insurance benefits and non-insurance assistance services. If interested in this optional plan, we can provide you with rates and plan details.

THE FINE PRINT

A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to secure your reservation. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$100 cancellation fee. Final payments are due no later than 95 days prior to departure. Non-refundable final payment is due at 95 days prior to departure.

MORE FROM HOLBROOK

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