

Budget Birding in South Africa

a brief trip to KwaZulu-Natal November 2009

by Jens Thalund, Denmark



View from Sani Pass

Despite, or because of, having visited South Africa on four previous occasions, when a cheap flight offer came up in the early autumn of 2009, I was quick to cash in some of my overtime, to go for a brief trip, primarily to a few sites in KwaZulu-Natal. There were a few sites and birds, that I had missed out on earlier, that would now get a second chance. As on previous trips I found the birding to be outstanding, the landscapes awesome, the people friendly and welcoming and extensive construction work at the international airport in Johannesburg was finally finished, in time for the 2010 Football World Cup.

Logistics

I booked a small car with Europcar through www.cartrawler.com and paid about 150 EUR for the 8 days, and fuel was much cheaper than in Europe, at around 0.65-0.70 EUR/liter. Most roads were surfaced, and even dirt roads were mostly graded and in good shape.

One of the very nice features of traveling in Southern Africa is the abundance of camp-sites, from backpacker-hostels to national parks, and especially camping in reserves and national parks means that you can be on-site at first light, as well as waking up during the night to the calls of nightjars and owls. The cost is usually around 60-100 ZAR. Most towns have supermarkets, where it's possible to stock up on food and water.

Weather

November is Spring in South Africa, but also the beginning of the rains, but I was fortunate during this trip to have dry weather for most of the time. On my third visit to the Drakensberg area I finally experienced a dry and sunny day, after the morning fog had lifted. Temperatures were comfortable 20 C in the highlands and around 25 C in areas like Mkhuze and Bonamanzi.

Literature

There are several bird guides to the area, and my personal favorite is the *SASOL Birds of Southern Africa*. For birding locations the excellent *Southern African Birdfinder* is indispensable, but information on some additional sites, like Marutswa Forest, was found on www.birdingroutes.co.za, which is run by BirdLife South Africa, and has lots of useful info on sites, access, accommodation and more.

For getting around and finding accommodation I used the Lonely Planet travel guide.

I downloaded the most useful calls and songs on a mp3-player from the 6 cd-set Southern African Bird Sounds by Guy Gibbon, like cisticolas, owls, francolins etc., but another useful source could be www.xeno-canto.com.

Site notes.

number in brackets refer to site number in Southern African Birdfinder.

Spioenkop Nature Reserve (#129) - only visited as I needed somewhere to stop over for the night, which could double as a birding site. A small game reserve, where I had some 75-80 species of typical bushveld and grassland birds in a morning, with Shelley's Francolin being the most noteworthy.



Grassland at Spioenkop NR and emerald hillsides near Sani Pass.

Sani Pass (#91) - a wild and beautiful place, where a dirt road winds up to reach the Lesotho border on top of the escarpment at 2874m. I was able to drive my 2WD almost all the way up to the South African border post, and hiked the remaining 8 km up to the pass. Fortunately it was dry and sunny, as the weather can be notoriously bad up here and often covered in low clouds.

Guerney's Sugarbird, Ground Woodpecker and Buff-streaked Chat were found along the lower parts of the road, and up towards the pass some of the best birds were Drakensberg Rock-jumper and Drakensberg Siskin. No Mountain Pipits could be found while walking the plains just inside Lesotho, but consolation came in the form of Southern Bald Ibisses and Verreaux's Eagles.

One of my top 5 birding days in South Africa, with stunning mountain scenery and many excellent birds.

Marutswa Forest - not far from Sani Pass, and a good spot to catch up with a few birds special to the Afromontane forest, like Cape Parrot, Orange Ground-Thrush, Bush Blackcap and Knysna Turaco. Also good grassland outside the forest, with booming Southern Ground Hornbills heard.

Darvill Resources Park (#102) - a waste water treatment plant on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg, with several settling ponds, reedbeds and fields, and as such a brilliant place to break up a long drive and see some waterbirds, swallows, warblers and more.

Dlinza Forest (#110) - the top bird here is Spotted Ground-Thrush, which is not too difficult to track down in a morning visit, but the forest has other nice birds as well like Trumpeter Hornbill and Lemon Dove. A canopy walkway and tower gives good views of the canopy, but little was seen on my visit, except a few White-eared Barbets.

Bonamanzi Game Reserve (#118) - was visited in the hope of finding Lemon-breasted Canary, but no luck. The Sand Forest, where I didn't spend much time this time around, is good for African Broadbill, Southern Banded Snake-Eagle and Pink-throated Twinspot. You're allowed to walk part of the reserve on foot, which makes a nice change from the car-based birding in most other reserves and national parks.

Muzi Pans (#121) - along the road towards the eastern entrance to Mkhuze GR this wetland provided a nice break to watch a good mixture of waterbirds.



Darvill Resources Park, Pietermaritzburg and Muzi Pans near Mkhuze GR.

Mkhuze Game Reserve (#120) - an interesting mixture of habitats, but birding is confined to the car, except at designated rest areas and viewpoints. Hides at waterholes were very quiet, as there seemed to have been recent rains, but driving around the reserve still provided a long list for the day. Palearctic migrants seemed just to be arriving with only single Willow Warbler, Red-backed Shrike and Spotted Flycatcher seen. Good birds here were Martial Eagle, Black-bellied Korhaan (giving their 'plop'-call) and Crested Guineafowl, but best of all was a pair of Lemon-breasted Canaries in palm savanna along Enxwala Road.

Wakkerstroom (#131) - the grasslands and wetlands around Wakkerstroom holds several fascinating birds, and many days can be spent driving the different dirt roads radiating from the town. Larks and Cisticolas are much in evidence in the high grasslands, and I found some nice Botha's Larks at the corner of the Amersfoort/Volksrust roads, a couple of hunting Lanner Falcons and spent some time trying to photograph the swifts and swallows at the Utaga River bridge.

Itinerary

- 1.11 - arrived in Jo'burg mid-morning and was on the road about an hour later. Drove south along N3 towards Ladysmith (toll-road approx. 100 ZAR), and took the R74 to Spioenkop Nature Reserve, where I arrived late in the afternoon, put up my tent (60 ZAR) and did a little birding until sundown.
- 2.11 - drove around and birded the reserve from sunrise (5.30 am) until midday, when I began driving towards the Sani Pass area. From the town of Nottingham Road, south of Mooi River, I took the scenic, gravel route to Sani Pass, passing through emerald green landscapes with small waterfalls and steep cliffs. I pitched my tent at Sani Lodge Backpackers (60 ZAR) and drove a little further up towards the pass and birded the roadside for a few km.
- 3.11 - because of dense fog I began the day birding the lower parts of the Sani Pass road, but as the sun came up, I headed further uphill. The 2WD car made it almost all the way up to the South African border post, but I had to abandon it at KM25, and start to hike from here. Border formalities were minimal, and I was soon on my way up towards Lesotho in bright sunshine. Bird activity was high and the weather superb, and I reached the Lesotho border post 3 hours later. Birded the plains west of the border for a few hours, had a hot cocoa at Sani Top Chalet, and then started my descend. With only a brief thunder-shower to disrupt the walk, I birded until late afternoon, when I drove towards Bulwer, along R617. Along the way I found a Eucalyptus plantation where I could park out of the way, and spent the night in the car.
- 4.11 - another morning with dense fog as I arrived at Marutswa Forest just outside Bulwer at 6 am. I walked the Contour Trail and had many birds here, as well as along the edges of the forest where several grassland birds were seen. After hearing Cape Parrot several times in the fog, it was a relief to finally find a pair inspecting a large dead tree next to the trail, and as a bonus a Orange Ground-Thrush appeared on the trail as well. The staff arrived later in the morning, and I paid my entry fee (20 ZAR), had coffee and bought a few locally made souvenirs at the shop, before driving on to my next stop. Made it to the Darvill Resources Park at Pietermaritzburg around midday, and birded around here for a couple of hours, before going to Eshowe, where I stayed at George Hotel (tent 65 ZAR).

- 5.11 - entered Dlinza Forest at 6 am (50 ZAR) and walked slowly downhill, until I found my first Spotted Ground Thrush near an obvious Strangler Fig at the bottom of the valley. Birded several different trails in the forest for a few hours, before driving to Bonamanzi Game Reserve near Lake St. Lucia. After pitching my tent (190 ZAR!) I spent the rest of the day in the Sand Forest and on the Palm savanna.
- 6.11 - after a rather dull morning at Bonamanzi I drove north to Muzi Pans, where an hour was spent primarily with different waterbirds, before heading to the 'back-entrance' to Mkhuze Game Reserve (60 ZAR), and on to the Park HQ to pay my camping fees (75 ZAR) and use the canteen. Tried sitting in the kuMasinga hide in the early afternoon, but little showed so drove around the reserve for the rest of the day.
- 7.11 - took a long drive around the reserve in the morning, before going to Wakkerstroom via Pongola and Piet Retief on the N2. Arrived here in the late afternoon, and went to the BirdLife Center west of town, where I had camped a couple of times before.
- 8.11 - the first half of the day was spent around Wakkerstroom, first at the wetland northwest of town near the Utaga River, and then in the grasslands along the road to Amersfoort on the *Botha's Lark Loop*. Drove to Jo'burg in the afternoon to catch my flight back home.



View from the top of Sani Pass.

For questions and more information please feel free to email me: jethalund@yahoo.dk

Bird List

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) - 3-4 birds seen on wetlands at Pietermaritzburg and Wakkerstroom.

White-breasted Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) - singles seen at Spioenkop NR and Wakkerstroom.

Reed Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax africanus*) - 6 birds at Muzi Pans and one at Wakkerstroom.

African Darter (*Anhinga rufa*) - up to 6 birds around Mkuze GR.

Hamerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) - a single bird at Darvill Resources Park at Pietermaritzburg.

Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) - a single bird at Muzi Pans.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) - 8 birds at Darvill Resources Park.

Black-headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*) - 1-3 birds seen at several wetland sites.

Yellow-billed Egret (*Egretta intermedia*) - 1-2 birds at wetland sites.

Great White Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) - a single at Muzi Pans.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) - a single at Muzi Pans.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) - common with up to 35 at both Darvill Resources Park and Muzi Pans.

Black Heron (*Egretta ardesiaca*) - one bird found at Muzi Pans.

Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*) - one bird flushed at Muzi Pans.

Hadedda Ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*) - commonly seen and heard in low numbers throughout.

Southern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus calvus*) - a flock of 13 were feeding on the plains in Lesotho at the top of Sani pass.



Southern Bald Ibis, Sani Pass top and Long-crested Eagle, Sani Pass bottom.

African Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) - a single at Spioenkop NR 1 and 18 at Darvill Resources Park.

Pink-backed Pelican (*Pelecanus rufescens*) - 3 birds at Muzi Pans.

Yellow-billed Stork (*Mycteria ibis*) - a single at Muzi Pans.

White-faced Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*) - common (25+) at Darvill Resources Park and Muzi Pans.

Spur-winged Goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*) - small numbers at most wetland sites.

Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiacus*) - small numbers at most, if not all, wetlands.

Yellow-billed Duck (*Anas undulata*) - 15-20 seen at several wetlands.

Cape Shoveler (*Anas smithii*) - a single bird at Darvill Resources Park.

Hottentot Teal (*Anas hottentota*) - very common (75+) at Darvill Resources Park.

Southern Pochard (*Netta erythrophthalma*) - two at Darvill Resources Park and 3 at Wakkerstroom.

Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) - one at Sani Pass and 2 at Wakkerstroom.

Yellow-billed Kite (*Milvus aegyptius*) - 2-4 birds at Pietermaritzburg, Bonamanzi and Muzi Pans.

Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) - 2-3 birds seen around Sani Pass.

Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) - a single bird seen briefly at great distance flying along the cliffs at Sani Pass.

Wahlberg's Eagle (*Aquila wahlbergi*) - singles seen at Bonamanzi, Muzi Pans and Mkhuze GR.

Verreaux's Eagle (*Aquila verreauxii*) - a pair was seen several times at Sani Pass.

Martial Eagle (*Polemaetus bellicosus*) - one adult bird seen in flight at Mkhuze GR.

Long-crested Eagle (*Lophaetus occipitalis*) - a single bird at the lower part of Sani Pass, and another near Bulwer.

Jackal Buzzard (*Buteo rufofuscus*) - 3-4 birds around Sani Pass and one at Wakkerstroom.

Steppe Buzzard (*Buteo vulpinus*) - a few scattered birds seen.

African Harrier Hawk (*Polyboroides typus*) - two birds seen at Darvill Resources Park.

Lizard Buzzard (*Kaupifalco monogrammicus*) - a single bird in Mkhuze GR.

African Marsh Harrier (*Circus ranivorus*) - 2-3 birds seen around the wetland at Wakkerstroom.

Rock Kestrel (*Falco rupicolis*) - a single bird at Sani Pass.

Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus*) - what looked like an adult female with a young male, was seen at Wakkerstroom, at the place marked D on the map in Southern African Birdfinder.

Helmeted Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris*) - a flock of about 10 seen at Wakkerstroom.

Crested Guineafowl (*Guttera pucherani*) - up to 7 at Bonamanzi GR and 3 at Mkhuze GR.



Crested Guineafowl and Black-bellied Korhaan, both Mkhuze GR.

Red-winged Francolin (*Scleroptila levaillantii*) - heard at Sani Pass.

Swainson's Francolin (*Francolinus swainsonii*) - a few seen at Spioenkop NR and at Wakkerstroom.

Shelley's Francolin (*Francolinus shelleyi*) - one was heard at Spioenkop NR.

Crested Francolin (*Francolinus sephaena*) - a few seen at Mkhuze GR.

Red-necked Spurfowl (*Pternistes afer*) - a bird was heard in the fog at Marutswa Forest.

Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) - two birds were heard at Wakkerstroom.

African Rail (*Rallus caerulescens*) - one bird was heard at the wetland at Wakkerstroom.

Black Crake (*Amaurornis flavirostris*) - one bird was seen at Darvill Resources Park.

Red-knobbed Coot (*Fulica cristata*) - seen at most larger wetlands, with most (75+) at Darvill Resources Park.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) - common at most wetlands.

Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) - two birds at Darvill Resources Park.

Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*) - a single bird at KM10 on the Sani Pass Rd, one at Darvill Resources Park, and two at Wakkerstroom.

Black-bellied Korhaan (*Eupodotis melanogaster*) - a single male was seen in Mkhuze GR, but more were heard.

African Jacana (*Actophilornis africanus*) - seen at Darvill Resources Park, Bonamanzi GR and most commonly at Muzi Pans (20).

Water Thick-knee (*Burhinus vermiculatus*) - a pair with a nest next to the road at Mkhuze GR.

Red-winged Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) - a single fly-over bird at Bonamanzi GR.

Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticus*) - one bird at Muzi Pans.

Three-banded Plover (*Charadrius tricollaris*) - a few in the Sani Pass area, and common at Darvill Resources Park.

Kittlitz's Plover (*Charadrius pecuarius*) - fairly common at Darvill Resources Park and Muzi Pans.

Crowned Plover (*Vanellus coronatus*) - two birds at Bonamanzi GR and 4 at Wakkerstroom.

Blacksmith Plover (*Vanellus armatus*) - common at Darvill Resources Park and a few at Muzi Pans.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) - 70 birds at Darvill Resources Park and 25 at Muzi Pans.

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) - common at Darvill Resources Park and Muzi Pans.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) - 6 birds seen at Muzi Pans.

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) - 4 birds at Darvill Resources Park and 1 at Muzi Pans.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) - common at Darvill Resources Park with 50 birds and 4 at Muzi Pans.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) - singles at Darvill Resources Park and Muzi Pans.

Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*) - 10 birds at Muzi Pans and 6 at Mkhuze GR.

Speckled Pigeon (*Columba guinea*) - 4 birds at the Sani Pass Chalet, Lesotho and one at Wakkerstroom.

Lemon Dove (*Aplopelia larvata*) - two birds were seen at Dlinza Forest.

African Olive Pigeon (*Columba arquatrix*) - 8 birds at Spioenkop NR and one at Marutswa Forest.

Red-eyed Dove (*Streptopelia semitorquata*) - 3-5 birds seen, or more commonly heard, at most sites.

Cape Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia capicola*) - common, especially at Spioenkop NR and Mkhuze GR.

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove (*Turtur chalcospilos*) - common at Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuze GR.

Tambourine Dove (*Turtur tympanistria*) - two birds at Bonamanzi GR.

Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*) - at least 3 birds were found at Marutswa Forest, with a few more heard in the fog. Eventually a pair was seen well, while inspecting a large dead tree next to the trail. Sadly, only around 1200 birds remain in the wild, not only threatened by habitat destruction but also by disease (PFBD – psittacine beak and feather disease).



Water Thick-knee, Mkuze GR and Cape Parrot, Marutswa Forest.

Purple-crested Turaco (*Gallirex porphyreolopha*) - fairly common, but mostly heard, with 3-6 birds at Dlinza Forest, Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuzi GR.

Knysna Turaco (*Tauraco corythaix*) - a single bird was seen well at Marutswa Forest.

Diderick Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx caprius*) - up to 3 birds Spioenkop GR, Darvill Resources Park, Bonamanzi GR and Muzi Pans.

Klaas's Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx klaas*) - singles at Spioenkop NR and Bonamanzi GR.

African Emerald Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx cupreus*) - singles heard at Dlinza Forest and Bonamanzi GR.

Jacobin Cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*) - singles at Spioenkop NR and Muzi Pans.

Levaillant's Cuckoo (*Clamator levaillantii*) - one bird seen at Muzi Pans.

Red-chested Cuckoo (*Cuculus solitarius*) - 1-5 birds were mostly heard at all sites, except Wakkerstroom.

Black Cuckoo (*Cuculus clamosus*) - 2 birds were calling at Marutswa Forest, with one also being seen.

Burchell's Coucal (*Centropus burchelli*) - 4 birds at Darvill Resources Park, and one at Muzi Pans.

African Scops-Owl (*Otus senegalensis*) - two birds were heard at the camp site at Bonamanzi GR.

Fiery-necked Nightjar (*Caprimulgus pectoralis*) - singles were heard at Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuzi GR.

African Palm Swift (*Cypsiurus parvus*) - one bird at Darvill Resources Park, and two at Bonamanzi GR.

Little Swift (*Apus affinis*) - small number (2-15) seen at Darvill Resources Park, Bonamanzi GR and Wakkerstroom.

White-rumped Swift (*Apus caffer*) - seen at several sites, but most common at Spioenkop NR (25) and Wakkerstroom (50+)

Alpine Swift (*Tachymarptis melba*) - 10 birds seen at Spioenkop NR on a cloudy morning and one bird at Sani Pass.

African (Black) Swift (*Apus barbatus*) - 25 at Spioenkop NR, 10+ at Sani Pass and 40 at Marutsw Forest.

Speckled Mousebird (*Colius striatus*) - a few seen at Sani Pass, Marutswa Forest and Bonamanzi GR.

Red-faced Mousebird (*Urocolius indicus*) - a flock of 4 seen at Mkhuze GR.

African Hoopoe (*Upupa africana*) - 1-4 birds seen at Spioenkop NR, Marutswa Forest and Mkhuze GR.

Green Wood-Hoopoe (*Phoeniculus purpureus*) - up to 6 birds seen around Mkhuze GR.

Common Scimitarbill (*Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*) - a single bird at Spioenkop NR and 3 at Mkhuze GR.

African Pygmy-Kingfisher (*Ispidina picta*) - one bird at Spioenkop NR, two at Bonamanzi GR and one bird at Mkhuze GR, were all seen in open woodland.

Brown-hooded Kingfisher (*Halcyon albiventris*) - 3 birds seen at Bonamanzi GR and one at Mkhuze GR.

Striped Kingfisher (*Halcyon chelicuti*) - two birds were around the campsite at Mkhuze GR.

Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) - singles seen at Muzi Pans and Wakkerstroom.

Little Bee-eater (*Merops pusillus*) - just one bird seen at Mkhuze GR was fewer than expected.

European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) - 10+ over-flying birds at Bonamanzi GR and 4 at Mkhuze GR.

Southern Ground-Hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) - the deep booming call of one or two birds could be heard from the grasslands outside the Marutswa Forest, but nothing could be seen in the dense fog.

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill (*Tockus leucomelas*) - 3 seen at Mkhuze GR.

Trumpeter Hornbill (*Bycanistes bucinator*) - 2 birds were heard at Dlinza Forest and 2 were seen at Mkhuze GR.

White-eared Barbet (*Stactolaema leucotis*) - two birds could be seen from the look-out tower in Dlinza Forest.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus pusillus*) - singles heard at Marutswa Forest, Dlinza Forest and Mkhuze GR.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus bilineatus*) - common at Bonamanzi GR with 5+ heard and seen.

Black-collared Barbet (*Lybius torquatus*) - two birds seen at both Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuze GR.

Crested Barbet (*Trachyphonus vaillantii*) - at least 4 birds seen around Mkhuze GR.

Scaly-throated Honeyguide (*Indicator variegatus*) - singles heard at Dlinza Forest and seen at Bonamanzi GR.

Greater Honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*) - one of the first African bird calls I was able to memorize, along with Red-chested Cuckoo, the 'vic-tor'-call was heard from 1-2 birds at Spioenkop NR, Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuze GR.

Lesser Honeyguide (*Indicator minor*) - a single bird was seen at the campsite in Mkhuze GR.

Rufous-breasted Wryneck (*Jynx ruficollis*) - along the Sani Pass road 2 were seen at Mkomazana bridge and one near a large rock 3 km further on.

Ground Woodpecker (*Geocolaptes olivaceus*) - along the Sani Pass road two birds were seen at Point B, on the map in the Birdfinder guide, and one was seen below the Lesotho border post.

Cardinal Woodpecker (*Dendropicos fuscescens*) - one bird at Spioenkop NR and 4 at Mkhuze GR.

Rufous-naped Lark (*Mirafraga africana*) - common at Spioenkop NR.

Botha's Lark (*Spizocorys fringillaris*) - 3 birds were found by the roadside at the turn off for Volksrust road along the road towards Amersfoort, marked A on the map in the Birdfinder guide.



Ground Woodpecker, Sani Pass and Botha's Lark, Wakkerstroom.

Sabota Lark (*Calendulauda sabota*) - 3 birds seen at Spioenkop NR and 2 at Mkhuze GR.

Spike-heeled Lark (*Chersomanes albofasciata*) - one bird found on the plains near the Lesotho border post at Sani Pass and 4 birds at Wakkerstroom.

Large-billed Lark (*Galerida magnirostris*) - at Sani Pass two birds were found on the plains west of the Lesotho border post.

Red-capped Lark (*Calandrella cinerea*) - common on the plains just inside Lesotho at Sani Pass and at Wakkerstroom, with newly-fledged birds seen at both places.

Brown-throated Martin (*Riparia paludicola*) - two birds at Sani Pass and 25+ at Darvill Resources Park.

Banded Martin (*Riparia cincta*) - at least 10 birds in the grasslands at Wakkerstroom.

Rock Martin (*Hirundo fuligula*) - 1-2 birds seen at Spioenkop NR, Darvill Resources Park and Wakkerstroom, but most common at Sani Pass (15+).

South African Cliff-Swallow (*Hirundo spilodera*) - a few birds seen at Spioenkop NR and around 25 at Wakkerstroom.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) - seen at most sites, but most abundant at Darvill Resources Park, with 5000+ birds feeding low over the wetlands and fields.

White-throated Swallow (*Hirundo albigularis*) - 8 birds at Darvill Resources Park and 10 at Wakkerstroom.

Greater Striped Swallow (*Hirundo cucullata*) - common (10-20) at Spioenkop NR, Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom.

Lesser Striped Swallow (*Hirundo abyssinica*) - less common than **Greater**, but seen at more sites, including Bonamanzi GR, Muzi Pans and Mkhuze GR.

Red-breasted Swallow (*Hirundo semirufa*) - 5-6 birds at Mkhuze GR.

Common House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*) - a single bird was seen at Sani Pass.

African Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla aguimp*) - a few birds at Darvill Resources Park and Bonamanzi GR.

Cape Wagtail (*Motacilla capensis*) - 2-4 birds seen at most wetlands.

Yellow-throated Longclaw (*Macronyx croceus*) - singles seen at Darvill Resources Park, Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuze GR.

Cape Longclaw (*Macronyx capensis*) - common in the grasslands at Wakkerstroom with 10+ seen.

African Rock Pipit (*Anthus crenatus*) - two distant birds could be heard singing along the Sani Pass road, approx. 8 km from Sani Pass Hotel.

African Pipit (*Anthus cinnamomeus*) - common at Spioenkop GR, Muzi Pans and Wakkerstroom.

Long-billed Pipit (*Anthus similis*) - one bird was seen along the Sani Pass road, around 7 km from Sani Pass Hotel.

Black Cuckooshrike (*Campephaga flava*) - two birds were seen at Bonamanzi GR.

Grey Cuckooshrike (*Coracina caesia*) - singles were seen at Marutswa Forest and Dlinza Forest.

Square-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus ludwigii*) - two birds were seen at both Dlinza Forest and Bonamanzi GR.

Fork-tailed Drongo (*Dicurus adsimilis*) - fairly common at most sites.

Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus larvatus*) - two birds were found at Marutswa Forest and one at Mkhuze GR.

Cape Crow (*Corvus capensis*) - 3 birds at Spioenkop GR and 2 at Wakkerstroom.

Pied Crow (*Corvus albus*) - 5+ birds seen at Spioenkop NR.

White-necked Raven (*Corvus albicollis*) - 2 birds (a pair) were seen several times along the escarpment at Sani Pass, even harassing Verreaux's Eagle a few times.

Southern Black Tit (*Parus niger*) - two birds at Marutswa Forest and 10+ at Mkhuze GR.

Drakenberg Rock-jumper (*Chaetops aurantius*) - on the Sani Pass road a group of 4 was seen around the switchbacks below the top of the pass.

Arrow-marked Babbler (*Turdoides jardineii*) - at least two birds were seen at Spioenkop NR.

Dark-capped Bulbul (*Pycnonotus tricolor*) - fairly common to common at most sites.

Bush Blackcap (*Lioptilus nigricapilla*) - a single bird was seen well at Marutswa Forest.

Terrestrial Brownbul (*Phyllastrephus terrestris*) - 2-3 birds found at Marutswa and Dlinza Forests as well as Bonamanzi GR.

Sombre Greenbul (*Andropadus importunus*) - a few seen at most forest sites.



Drakensberg Rock-jumper, Sani Pass and Spotted Ground-Thrush, Dlinza Forest.

Cape Rock-Thrush (*Monticola rupestris*) - 5-6 birds along the Sani Pass road, including a newly fledged juvenile.

Sentinel Rock-Thrush (*Monticola explorer*) - two male birds seen just inside Lesotho at Sani Pass.

Orange Ground-Thrush (*Zoothera gurneyi*) - at Marutswa Forest a single bird was watched for several minutes feeding along the trail.

Spotted Ground-Thrush (*Zoothera guttata*) - two pairs were seen in Dlinza Forest, the first of which was found at the bottom of the trail down into the valley, near a large strangler fig on the left.

Groundscraper Thrush (*Psophocichla litsipsirupa*) - one bird seen at Spioenkop NR.

Kurrichane Thrush (*Turdus libonyanus*) - two birds at Bonamanzi GR.

Olive Thrush (*Turdus olivaceus*) - fairly common at forest sites in the highlands.

White-browed Robin-Chat (*Cossypha heuglini*) - two birds at Spioenkop NR and 3 at Bonamanzi GR.

Cape Robin-Chat (*Cossypha caffra*) - singles at Spioenkop GR and Marutswa Forest, common (20+) at Sani Pass.

Chorister Robin-Chat (*Cossypha dichroa*) - one bird seen at Marutswa Forest and at least 5 at Dlinza Forest.

Bearded Scrub-Robin (*Cercotrichas quadrivirgata*) - 3 birds seen at Bonamanzi GR and one at Mkhuze GR.

African Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) - common at Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom.

Buff-streaked Chat (*Oenanthe bifasciata*) - a single bird was found along the Sani Pass road, some 7 km from Sani Pass Hotel.

Familiar Chat (*Cercomela familiaris*) - 7 birds seen at Spioenkop GR and 3 at Sani Pass.

Sickle-winged Chat (*Cercomela sinuata*) - at least 6 birds were seen inside Lesotho at the Sani Pass.

Ant-eating Chat (*Myrmecocichla formicivora*) - a few seen in the grasslands at Wakkerstroom.

Mountain Wheatear (*Oenanthe monticola*) - two birds were seen at Wakkerstroom.

Cape Grassbird (*Sphenoeacus afer*) - along the Sani Pass road, at least 7 birds were heard/seen.

Barratt's Warbler (*Bradypterus barrattii*) - 3+ birds were heard singing along the Sani Pass road, above the South African border post.

Little Rush Warbler (*Bradypterus baboecala*) - common at Darvill Resources Park (15+) and also a few at Wakkerstroom.

Broad-tailed Warbler (*Schoenicola brevirostris*) - one bird was heard and seen approx. 4 km above Sani Pas Hotel, on the Sani Pass road.

African Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus baeticatus*) - 5+ birds at Darvill Resources Park.

Lesser Swamp Warbler (*Acrocephalus gracilirostris*) - a single bird at both Darvill Resources Park and Wakkerstroom.

Dark-capped Yellow Warbler (*Chloropeta natalensis*) - one bird near the South African border post on Sani Pass road, and one at Marutswa Forest.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) - a single bird was heard at Mkhuze GR.

Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler (*Phylloscopus ruficapillus*) - 3 birds noted at Marutswa Forest.

Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler (*Parisoma subcaeruleum*) - one bird seen at Spioenkop NR.

Red-faced Cisticola (*Cisticola erythrops*) - two birds heard and seen at Muzi Pans.

Lazy Cisticola (*Cisticola aberrans*) - two birds singing from the slopes just outside Marutswa Forest.

Neddicky (*Cisticola fulvicapilla*) - a single bird singing at Spioenkop NR.

Rattling Cisticola (*Cisticola chiniana*) - common at both Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuze GR.

Wailing Cisticola (*Cisticola lais*) - common along the upper part of Sani Pass road, and one bird at Marutswa Forest.

Levaillant's Cisticola (*Cisticola tinniens*) - a few seen at moist areas at Spioenkop NR, Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom, but common (15+) at Darvill Resources Park.

Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis*) - fairly common at Spioenkop NR and one bird at Wakkerstroom.

Wing-snapping Cisticola (*Cisticola ayresii*) - one bird heard near Marutswa Forest and fairly common in the high grasslands at Wakkerstroom.

Cloud Cisticola (*Cisticola textrix*) - several birds heard at Wakkerstroom.

Bar-throated Apalis (*Apalis thoracica*) - two birds seen along Sani Pass road, and 6 at Marutswa Forest.

Tawny-flanked Prinia (*Prinia subflava*) - 3 birds at both Spioenkop NR and Darvill Resources Park.

Drakensberg Prinia (*Prinia hypoxantha*) - at least 8 birds noted along the Sani Pass road, above the South African border post, and also 4 birds at Marutswa Forest.



Buff-streaked Chat, Sani Pass and Yellow-throated Longclaw, Mkhuze GR.

Green-backed Camaroptera (*Camaroptera brachyura*) - common at Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuze GR.

Pale Flycatcher (*Bradornis pallidus*) - two birds seen at Mkhuze GR.

Fiscal Flycatcher (*Sigelus silens*) - 4 birds seen at Spioenkop NR.

Ashy Flycatcher (*Muscicapa caerulescens*) - a single bird was noted at Bonamanzi GR.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) - one bird at Mkhuze GR.

African Dusky Flycatcher (*Muscicapa adusta*) - one bird at Marutswa Forest.

Grey Tit-Flycatcher (*Myioparus plumbeus*) - two birds seen at Mkhuze GR.

African Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone viridis*) - a few birds seen at Spioenkop NR, Marutswa Forest, Dlinza Forest and Mkhuze GR.

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher (*Trochocercus cyanomelas*) - two very active birds at Marutswa Forest.

Fairy Flycatcher (*Stenostira scita*) - two birds seen towards the top of Sani Pass road.

Cape Batis (*Batis capensis*) - a few seen at both Marutswa and Dlinza Forest.

Chinspot Batis (*Batis molitor*) - two birds seen at both Spioenkop NR and Mkhuze GR.

Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) - one male was found at Mkhuze GR.

Common Fiscal (*Lanius collaris*) - fairly common (5-10) at Spioenkop NR, Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom.

Black-backed Puffback (*Dryoscopus cubla*) - 2-3 birds seen at Marutswa and Dlinza Forest, Bonamanzi GR and Mkhuze GR.

Black-crowned Tchagra (*Tchagra senegalus*) - one bird seen at Mkhuze GR.

Southern Boubou (*Laniarius ferrugineus*) - 1-2 birds seen at Spioenkop NR, Sani Pass, Marutswa and Dlinza Forest.

Olive Bush-Shrike (*Telophorus olivaceus*) - at least 3 birds seen/heard at Marutswa Forest.

Bokmakierie (*Telophorus zeylonus*) - 3 birds seen along the lower part of Sani Pass road.

White Helmet-Shrike (*Prionops plumatus*) - a group of 4 in Mkhuze GR.

Cape Glossy Starling (*Lamprotornis nitens*) - small numbers at Spioenkop NR, Bonamanzi and Mkhuze GR.

Violet-backed Starling (*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*) - 10 birds feeding in a fruiting tree at Mkhuze GR.



Malachite Sunbird and Cape Grassbird, both Sani Pass.

African Pied Starling (*Spreo bicolor*) - two birds at Sani Pass and 15+ at Wakkerstroom.

Red-winged Starling (*Onychognathus morio*) - 4 birds at Sani Pass and 2 at Wakkerstroom.

Red-billed Oxpecker (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) - two birds at Mkhuze GR feeding on Impalas.

Gurney's Sugarbird (*Promerops cafer*) - two birds seen briefly in proteas approx. 4 km above Sani Pass Hotel on Sani Pass road.

Malachite Sunbird (*Nectarina famosa*) - common (10-15) along Sani Pass road.

Amethyst Sunbird (*Chalcomitra amethystina*) - two birds at Spioenkop NR.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird (*Chalcomitra senegalensis*) - one bird at Bonamanzi GR and 3 at Mkhuze GR.

Olive Sunbird (*Cyanomitra olivacea*) - 3 birds found at Dlinza Forest.

Collared Sunbird (*Hedydipna collaris*) - singles seen at Dlinza Forest, Bonamanzi and Mkhuze GR.

White-bellied Sunbird (*Cinnyris talatala*) - two birds at Mkhuze GR.

Purple-banded Sunbird (*Cinnyris bifasciatus*) - fairly common (6-10) at Bonamanzi and Mkhuze GR.

Greater Double-collared Sunbird (*Cinnyris afrea*) - 5 birds along Sani Pass road and 3 at Marutswa Forest.

Cape White-eye (*Zosterops capensis*) - fairly common at Spioenkop NR, Sani Pass, Marutswa and Dlinza Forest.

Cape Sparrow (*Passer melanurus*) - a single bird at Spioenkop NR and common around the Lesotho border post (Sani Pass) and Wakkerstroom.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow (*Passer diffusus*) - 6 birds at Spioenkop NR and 2 at Mkhuze GR.

Yellow-throated Petronia (*Petronia superciliaris*) - 5-10 birds at Spioenkop NR and Mkhuze GR.

Yellow Weaver (*Ploceus subaureus*) - a small colony behind the office building at Bonamanzi GR (25+) and also 10+ at Mkhuze GR.

Cape Weaver (*Ploceus capensis*) - small numbers around Sani Pass, Darvill Resources Park and Wakkerstroom.

Spectacled Weaver (*Ploceus ocularis*) - 2-4 birds at Darvill Resources Park and Bonamanzi GR.

Village Weaver (*Ploceus cucullatus*) - birds noted at Spioenkop NR, Darvill Resources Park, Bonamanzi and Mkhuze GR.

Southern Masked Weaver (*Ploceus velatus*) - birds noted at Spioenkop NR, Darvill Resources Park, Mkhuze GR and Wakkerstroom.

Lesser Masked Weaver (*Ploceus intermedius*) - 10-15 seen at Bonamanzi and Mkhuze GR.

Dark-backed Weaver (*Ploceus bicolor*) - a single bird found at Bonamanzi GR.

Thick-billed Weaver (*Amblyospiza albifrons*) - 3-7 birds noted around wetlands at Darvill Resources Park, Bonamanzi and Mkhuze GR.

Red-billed Quelea (*Quelea quelea*) - common (50+) at Spioenkop NNR, Mkhuze and Wakkerstroom.

Southern Red Bishop (*Euplectes orix*) - seen at several sites, but most abundant at Darvill Resources Park and Wakkerstroom.

Yellow Bishop (*Euplectes capensis*) - fairly common in higher altitude grassland at Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom.

Long-tailed Widowbird (*Euplectes progne*) - males in display flight were a common sight at Spioenkop NR and Wakkerstroom.

Red-collared Widowbird (*Euplectes ardens*) - 10 birds at Spioenkop NR and 20 at Darvill Resources Park.

Fan-tailed Widowbird (*Euplectes axillaris*) - 15+ seen at Darvill Resources Park and one bird at Wakkerstroom.

White-winged Widowbird (*Euplectes albonotatus*) - fairly common at Spioenkop NR and Darvill Resources Park and also a single bird at Mkhuze GR.

Green-winged Pytilia (*Pytilia melba*) - one bird found at Mkhuze GR.

African Firefinch (*Lagonosticta rubricata*) - two birds at the staff quarters at Spioenkop NR.



Long-tailed Widowbird, Wakkerstroom and Drakensberg Siskin, Sani Pass.

Bronze Mannikin (*Spermestes cucullata*) - a single bird at Muzi Pans.

Blue Waxbill (*Uraeginthus angolensis*) - fairly common at Spioenkop NR and Mkhuze GR.

Common Waxbill (*Estrilda astrild*) - 4 bird at Spioenkop NR and 2 at Marutswa Forest.

Pin-tailed Whydah (*Vidua macroura*) - 1-3 birds at Spioenkop NR, Darvill Resources Park and Wakkerstroom.

Eastern Paradise-Whydah (*Vidua paradisaea*) - a group of 6 birds at Mkhuze GR.

Yellow-fronted Canary (*Serinus mozambicus*) - common at Spioenkop NR, Darvill Resources Park and Mkhuze.

Brimstone Canary (*Serinus sulphuratus*) - two birds seen near the camp-site at Spioenkop NR.

Cape Canary (*Serinus canicollis*) - common along the Sani Pass road.

Lemon-breasted Canary (*Serinus citripectus*) - a pair was seen in palm savanna north of EnxwalaViex Point in Mkhuze GR.

Drakensberg Siskin (*Pseudochloroptila symonsi*) - 3 birds were found at the switchbacks on the Sani Pass road below the Lesotho border post, and 2 were seen along the escarpment behind the Sani Top Chalet in Lesotho.

Forest Canary (*Serinus scotops*) - at least 7 birds in Marutswa Forest.

Streaky-headed Canary (*Serinus gularis*) - two birds at both Spioenkop NR and Sani Pass.

Cape Bunting (*Emberiza capensis*) - common along the higher part of the Sani Pass road.