Namibia

Relaxed

30th June to 13th July 2024 (14 days)

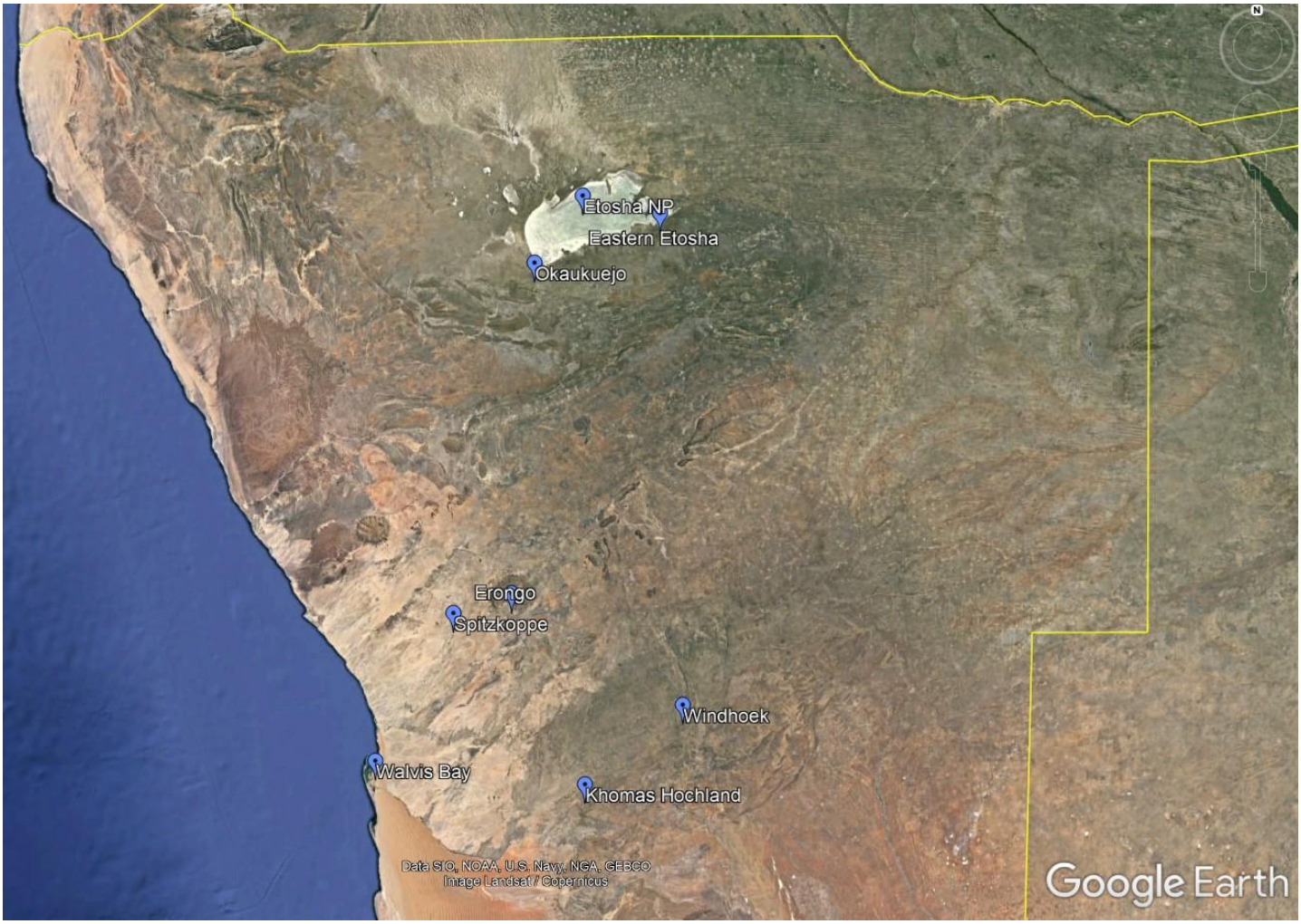


Dune Lark by Glen Valentine

Our new relaxed tour is designed to visit the best of Namibian birding sites. This enhanced safari will find not only a stunning array of birds but will also take in the world-famous Etosha National Park and the great game to be found there. We begin our journey in Windhoek, Namibia's capital and an area that offers a superb introduction to the birds of this amazing country. Thereafter, we drive through the ancient Namib Desert, a land of enormous red dunes and inhospitable rocky desert. The cold Benguela Current is responsible for the cold, rich upwelling along southern Africa's west coast. We will sample its biological wealth at Walvis Bay, an estuarine system that can hold around 100 000 waterbirds in summer! Leaving the coast, we journey inland to the scenic Spitzkoppe and endemic-rich Erongo Mountains, our lodge conveniently located right in the heart of the action. We will then travel north to sample the impressive mammalian (and avian!) delights of Etosha National Park, before completing our journey back in Windhoek.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Windhoek**
Day 2	**Windhoek to Khomas Hochland**
Day 3	**Khomas Hochland to Walvis Bay**
Days 4 & 5	**Walvis Bay area**
Day 6	**Walvis Bay to Erongo Mountains via Spitzkoppe**
Day 7	**Erongo Mountains**
Day 8	**Erongo Mountains to Okaukuejo area**
Days 9 & 10	**Okaukuejo - Etosha National Park**
Day 11	**Okaukuejo area to Eastern Etosha via Halali**
Days 12 & 13	**Namutoni – Etosha National Park**
Day 14	**Eastern Etosha to Windhoek & final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Rosy-faced Lovebird by Adam Riley

Avis Dam. Here we can look forward to an assortment of central Namibian specials such as Rosy-faced Lovebird, Short-toed Rock Thrush and the charismatic Rockrunner. Some of the other birds we will lookout for include Red-billed Spurfowl, Pearl-spotted Owlet, White-backed Mousebird, Ashy Tit, Mountain Wheatear, Pririt Batis, the gaudy Crimson-breasted Shrike, Burnt-neck Eremomela, Black-faced Waxbill and Black-throated Canary.

Windhoek Water Treatment Works. Time permitting, we'll pay a visit to scan for waterbirds, which may include Little Bittern, South African Shelduck, Hottentot Teal and Maccoa Duck.

Central Highlands. Roadside birding is always rewarding and we will watch out for Verreaux's Eagle, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Black-winged Kite, the beautiful Purple Roller, the diminutive Long-billed Crombec, Anteating Chat, Marico and Chat Flycatchers, Cape Crow, Pale-winged Starling, Great and Cape Sparrows and Lark-like Bunting. The scenery is dotted with huge, golden Social Weaver nests and we may be fortunate in locating the tiny Pygmy Falcon that utilises these nests as a convenient home.

Spreetshoogte Pass. This incredible pass affors us sweeping views of the Namib Desert below. We'll descend the pass towards the coast. The terrain becomes increasingly desolate and barren, consisting of seemingly lifeless gravel plains. We will make frequent stops in the desert to scan for Common Ostrich (these wild, desert birds represent one of the few genetically pure populations of this species in southern Africa), the endemic Rüppell's Korhaan and the almost white desert race of Tractrac Chat. However, our main target bird on these plains is the endemic and localised Gray's Lark. This diminutive and inconspicuous bird forages in small groups over the most inhospitable of terrains, a seemingly incredulous habitat for any life form!

Walvis Bay. The surrounds of Walvis (Whale) Bay are surprisingly birdy. We'll spend our time in the dune fields to the south of town as they are home to Namibia's only true endemic – the handsome Dune Lark. Like many of the desert larks, its plumage colouration perfectly matches that of its environment: the deep ochre sands of the Namib dune sea. Other birds that we may encounter whilst searching for this bird are Chestnut-vented Warbler, Black-chested Prinia, Dusky Sunbird, Orange River White-eye and Common Waxbill.



Rockrunner by Adam Riley

The marine coast, offshore guano islands, saltpans and estuaries around Walvis Bay and Swakopmund to the north typically teem with water birds. At this time of year most of the migrants have left, but some shorebirds remain in the bay, and we can



Welwitschia plant by Andre Bernon

expect some good wader watching. The large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingos that feed along the fringes of the bay area are more than sufficient to make the trip worthwhile!

Marine cormorants, especially Cape, form impressive lines as they stream out over the cold ocean in search of food. We will scan these large flocks in search of Crowned and Bank Cormorant, which occur in much lower numbers. Great White Pelican is prominent throughout the area and specialities of the pans include the localised Chestnut-banded Plover, Hartlaub's Gull and Damara Tern, the latter being a breeding endemic to southern Africa. The striking African Oystercatcher may be seen along the rocky shores.

Swakopmund. This quaint seaside village has a decidedly German atmosphere. Freshwater pans at the edge of town are home to other wetland inhabitants such as Black-necked Grebe, Cape and Red-billed Teals and Cape Shoveler. Thereafter we will explore the famed Welwitschia Plains where we will seek out one of the world's most bizarre plants: Welwitschia mirabilis is a coniferous plant that, despite its immense age, grows to just a few feet tall and has only two leaves. They survive in the bone-dry gravel plains of the Namib and we will also look for two species of colourful beetles that only survive around these unique plants.

Spitzkoppe. This area has a series of impressive granite inselbergs rising out of the desert plains. It is also a good site for Herero Chat, Namibia's most elusive near-endemic, but we will require luck and patience to find this localized bird. Whilst searching the base of this incredible geological formation, we may also find Augur Buzzard, the attractive Rosy-faced Love bird, the near-endemic Bradfield's Swift, Acacia Pied Barbet, Sabota and Karoo Long-billed Larks, Layard's Warbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Bokmakierie (a near-endemic bushshrike), White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-throated Canary and Cinnamon-breasted and Cape Buntings. White-tailed Shrike, arguably Namibia's most striking near-endemic, should also entertain us here. The agile Klipspringer and Rock Hyrax may also be seen, whilst brilliantly coloured Namib Rock Agamas are common. Other possible reptiles in this area are the impressive Boulton's Namib Day Gecko, Bibron's Thick-toed Gecko, Bradfield's Dwarf Gecko and Namaqua Sand Lizard. The surrounding gravel plains occasionally produce Ludwig's Bustard, whilst Namaqua Sandgrouse, Stark's Lark and Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark are more regular.

Spitzkoppe to Erongo. Leaving the coastal plains behind us, we will be scanning suitable habitat for Burchell's Courser. Luck and patience are needed to find this species as it is nomadic and hence unpredictable; however, the beautiful Double-banded Courser and flocks of Spike-heeled Lark should entertain us while we search. Further to the north, we will look for the endemic Rüppell's Parrot, localized Violet Wood Hoopoe and the handsome Southern Pied Babbler.



Rüppell's Korhaan by Daniel Danckwerts



Bare-cheeked Babbler by Adam Riley

Erongo Mountains. For the early risers, we'll take a pre-dawn walk to a near vantage point. En route, we may find the rock-loving Freckled Nightjar, but the bird we're really after is the near endemic Hartlaub's Spurfowl, which is only likely to be seen at first light when coveys emerge to vocalise atop prominent boulders.

Birding around the lodge should yield Gabar Goshawk, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Damara Red-billed Hornbill, Barred Wren-Warbler, Kalahari Scrub Robin, the wing-flicking Familiar Chat, White-tailed Shrike (particularly approachable individuals reside around the lodge) and Black-faced Waxbill. The strange Dassie Rat (belonging to a monotypic family) may also be seen poking its whiskered nose from a rock crevice, whilst a variety of interesting reptiles scurry over the rocks.

Erongo Mountains to Okaukuejo area. We'll makes stops en route for two of Namibia's scarce and sought-after near-endemics - Bare-cheeked Babbler and Rüppell's Parrot.

Okaukuejo area. Birds are abundant in and around our lodge, and we may see Grey Go-away-bird, African Hoopoe, Southern Yellow-billed and Southern Red-billed Hornbills, Cardinal Woodpecker, Wattled and the ubiquitous Cape Starlings, Brubru, Marico, White-bellied and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Green-winged Pytilia and Pygmy Falcon.

Okaukuejo - Etosha National Park. The word "Etosha" means "Great White Place" in the local Herero language and nowhere else is the "great whiteness" of the enormous pan more evident than around Okaukuejo. Etosha is one of Africa's premier big game destinations and medium and large mammals teem around the huge pan. Waterholes are dotted around the park, and these will often be the focus of our attention as it is here that streams of thousands of mammals come to drink daily. On occasion, up to a dozen species of mammal can be seen at once as they mill around the saline water. Commonly encountered species are the regal Gemsbok, Greater Kudu, Springbok, Giraffe, Elephant, Hartebeest, Blue Wildebeest, Plain's Zebra and 'Black-faced' Impala.

These waterholes don't only attract the attention of thirsty grazers and photographers but also predators: Black-backed Jackal, African Wild Cat, prides of lazing Lion, Spotted Hyena and even Cheetah and Leopard are included in the possible suite of carnivores. We will search the open grasslands and sparse Acacia savanna for birds such as the huge Martial and Tawny Eagles, the elegant Red-necked Falcon, Greater Kestrel, the magnificent Kori Bustard (the world's heaviest flying bird), Spotted Thick-knee, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark, Red-capped and Pink-billed Larks, Capped Wheatear, flocks of angry-looking Scaly-feathered Finch, Red-crested Korhaan, Crowned Lapwing, Burchell's Sandgrouse, Namaqua Dove, Burnt-neck Eremomela, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver,



Thirsty Lions by Adam Riley



Honey Badger by Daniel Danckwerts

Chestnut Weaver, flocks of Red-billed Quelea (sometimes numbering many thousands) and Blue Waxbill are all possible. Vultures are often numerous in this area and may include Lappet-faced, White-headed and wheeling flocks of White-backed, and we'll also look for Rufous-eared Warbler (this area of the park holding an isolated population).

Halali - Etosha National Park. The Halali region is famous amongst birders as a site for Violet Wood Hoopoe and Bare-cheeked Babbler, both denizens of the taller mopane woodland in this central part of the park, though these sought-after birds can prove challenging to find on occasion! Other species in this area include the spectacular Bateleur, Shikra, Helmeted Guineafowl, Fawn-coloured Lark, flocks of quizzical White-crested Helmetshrike, Southern White-crowned Shrike and Yellow-throated Petronia. The camp itself is an excellent location for finding roosting owls and we hope to locate Southern White-faced and African Scops Owls, and possibly even Western Barn Owl.

Namutoni – Etosha National Park. The shallow Fischer's Pan, an eastern extension of the main Etosha Pan, is a notable natural feature of this area and lies to the north of Namutoni. Water levels vary tremendously and the pan is most often completely dry, but if water is present, we may find flamingos, huge Saddle-billed and Yellow-billed Storks, Red-billed Teal, South African Shelduck and large numbers of migratory waders. Further to the north of Namutoni lie extensive grassy plains that are sometimes home to large herds of Gemsbok, Springbok and Common Wildebeest. The unique Secretarybird and elegant Blue Crane are possible here and we may find Eastern Clapper Lark and the diminutive Desert Cisticola. Mammals are plentiful in the dense woodland south of camp and include Spotted Hyena, African Elephant, Giraffe, 'Black-faced' Impala and two antelope largely restricted to this part of the park: the huge Common Eland and the diminutive Damara Dik-dik. Here we will also search for the most elusive of the five babbler species occurring in Namibia, the Black-faced Babbler.



Black-faced Babbler by Daniel Danckwerts

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most key species offer good visuals in open conditions. Birding is from roadside, forest edge & open habitats.
Accommodation		Good to very comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Moderate walking, mostly on flat ground, roads, wide trails and around lodge gardens.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable safari style stretch Toyota Landcruiser. Travel is on both sealed and unsealed roads with limited traffic.
Photography		Good to excellent.
Annoyances		Hot, with harsh sun at times. Some locations can be dusty.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 14;
- Drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services;
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels) not noted above;
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes made need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- Much of our time is spent in specially converted Toyota Landcruisers, as we have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The vehicle is comfortable, but has fairly limited space. For the comfort of your fellow travellers and yourself, please do not over-pack. Stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- During the tour, we visit several national parks and game reserves which contain potentially dangerous animals and therefore you are confined to the vehicle and are, quite understandably, not allowed to exit.
- Temperatures in Namibia at this time of year can be warm during the day but are far milder than during the height of summer. At night and in the early mornings it can, however, be very cold.
- Due to the quality of service and accommodation facilities, we do not stay at the government lodges within Etosha National Park. Rather, we use private lodge on the outskirts of the park. We day trip into the park from here.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts with an optional birding activity in the afternoon of day 1. Should you wish to participate, please do arrive in advance of 11:00, or the previous day. The tour will conclude in the late morning of day 14 at Hosea Kutako International Airport, Windhoek.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Hosea Kutako International Airport, Windhoek (IATA: WDH) is the main port of arrival and departure for international flights for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications options where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.