

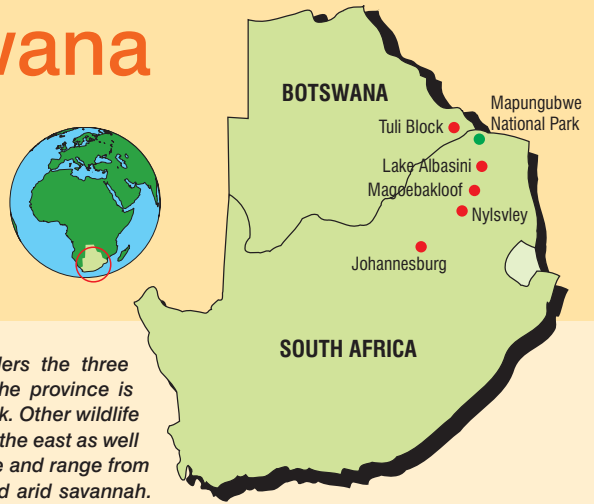
South Africa & Botswana

Limpopo & Tuli

Friday 19 November – Friday 03 December 2010

Principal Leader: Leon Marais

2010 Cost: £3,699 single room supplement £180



South Africa's Limpopo Province straddles the Tropic of Capricorn and borders the three neighbouring countries of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Much of the province is devoted to wildlife and indeed a large portion of it falls within the Kruger National Park. Other wildlife areas include Mapungubwe National Park in the north and Marakele National Park in the east as well as numerous private reserves and conservancies. Habitats are varied in the province and range from the moist forests of the Soutpansberg and Escarpment to grasslands, wetlands and arid savannah. Our tour of this province aims to make the most of these differing habitats to yield a large and varied bird and mammal list. We begin in the Nylsvley area, South Africa's most important floodplain, which holds large numbers of waterbirds when inundated. Next we head north to the Soutpansberg, where we explore Lake Albasini and some forest habitats in the Soutpansberg Foothills. Then we move north-west to Mapungubwe National Park, a region of primordial scenery and wonderful birds and big game. Our next stop is in the awesome Tuli Block across the Limpopo River in Botswana. This is a large region of privately owned game reserves providing great game viewing and a chance at spectacular birds such as Three-banded Courser, Verreaux's Eagle and Pel's Fishing Owl. Crossing back into South Africa we then head south-east to the Magoebaskloof area, where forest birds such as Black-fronted Bush-Shrike, Cape Parrot, Knysna Turaco and Bat Hawk are on the search-list. All in all this promises to be a spectacular tour, so journey with us and see why we think this 'Limpopo & Tuli' itinerary will be a big hit!



Northern Black Korhaan

ITINERARY

Days 1 to 3

We leave London on an evening flight and arrive in the morning in Johannesburg, where we meet our guide. We drive north on the Great North Road and depending on time and weather conditions on the day, we may make a deviation or two en-route, such as to Pienaars River, where some western bushveld birds such as Crimson-breasted and Magpie Shrikes, Kalahari Scrub-Robin, Scaly-feathered Finch and Swainson's Spurfowl may be found. Our first two nights are spent at Dinonyane, a wonderful lodge close to Nylsvley, the most important area of floodplain habitat in South Africa. When full, this region of meandering channels and flooded grassland is a haven for all forms of water birds such as Dwarf Bittern, Rufous-bellied Heron, Lesser Moorhen, Allen's Gallinule, Black and Squacco Herons and many others. The bushveld habitats surrounding the vlei (marsh) hold a good variety of birds such as Ashy Tit, Black-faced Waxbill, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Cape Penduline Tit and Barred Wren-Warbler.

Days 4 & 5

After some last morning birdwatching at Dinonyane we continue north towards Lake Albasini in the foothills of the Soutpansberg Range. En-route we may make a stop at the Polokwane Nature Reserve, where we can search for Short-clawed Lark, a range-restricted species that is reasonably common here. The reserve also holds a wide variety of bushveld birds, including Coqui Francolin, Northern Black Korhaan, Black Cuckoo, Greater Honeyguide, and Violet-eared Waxbill, as well as a superb variety of antelope and good numbers of White Rhino. Moving on from Polokwane we should arrive at Shiluvu Lakeside Lodge in the afternoon, where we can birdwatch in and around the lodge grounds. The next morning we make an early departure for the nearby Roodewal Forest. This is an exciting venue indeed and birds we can look out for include African Crowned Eagle, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Crested Guineafowl, Narina Trogon, Eastern Nicator, Terrestrial Brownbul and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher. African Broadbill is known to occur in the forest, though

a very early start is needed as this species normally reveals itself at dawn by its call and unusual display flight. After a session in the forest we can head back for breakfast, and then visit some other birding spots in the area. In the late afternoon we take a sundowner cruise on the lake, with hopes of spotting the elusive African Finfoot from the boat in addition to other water birds.

Days 6 to 8

After the forest of the Lake Albasini area we head north and then west into the arid mopane savannah of the Mapungubwe National Park region. This is a relatively new national park, with an interesting natural and cultural heritage. We stay just outside the park at Mopane Bush Lodge, a private reserve just to the south of the park. We are conveniently situated to explore the park and still be able to do some birding on foot on the Mopane Bush Lodge property. Birds we will be on the lookout for in both localities include Meyer's Parrot, Tropical Boubou, Meve's Starling, Grey-backed Cameroptera, Monotonous Lark, Kori Bustard, Temminck's and Three-banded Coursers, Freckled Nightjar and White-faced Scops-Owl. Mammals in the national park include Elephant, White Rhino and African Wild Dog. Several points in the reserve provide stunning views of the scenery as well as the neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe and Botswana across the Limpopo River. The landscape here is very interesting, with a prehistoric feel due to the rugged rock outcrops, massive baobab trees and towering Ilala Palms. Mopane Bush Lodge offers very comfortable rooms and a tranquil setting, and as there are no big mammals on the property we are able to walk around and do some birding on foot.

Days 9 to 11

After a last morning activity at Mopane we have breakfast and depart, heading for the border post for the crossing into Botswana's Tuli Block, a collection of private reserves on the other side

of the Limpopo River. Depending on the water levels of the river we may cross at Pontdrift via a cable car system. We are picked up on the other side and driven to Musth Camp, a tented camp set in the woodland a little way back from the river. We have three nights here, which adds up to a relaxed but species-rich birding experience. We partake in open-vehicle game drives which take us along the river, where the elusive Pel's Fishing Owl is known to occur, as well as into the arid hinterland away from the river. Other birds we can look for include Three-banded and Bronze-winged Coursers, Bateleur, Kori Bustard, Pearl-spotted Owllet, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Verreaux's Eagle, Yellow-bellied Eremomela and Swallow-tailed Bee-Eater. The mammal component is equally interesting and we can look out for Elephant, Lion, Leopard, Spotted Hyaena, Bat-eared Fox, African Wild Cat, plus small mammals such as Lesser Bushbaby, Banded Mongoose and Large-spotted Genet.

Days 12 & 13

After a final drive before breakfast we head back over the river into South Africa and drive in a south-easterly direction. We make our way into the foothills of the escarpment, where we stay at the charming Magoebaskloof Hotel for two nights. The main thrust of our birding efforts will be in the forests of the region, especially the Woodbush Forest. Black-fronted Bush-Shrike is the top bird for this region, and others we can look for include Cape Parrot, Bat Hawk, Chorister Robin-Chat, Knysna Turaco, African Emerald Cuckoo, Square-tailed Drongo and Orange Ground Thrush. The list of birds here is truly exceptional and this region will make for a final highlight of a wonderful tour.

Days 14 & 15

After a final outing in the Magoebaskloof area we depart for Johannesburg after breakfast. If time permits we can make a few stops en-route to the airport before catching our evening flight to London where we arrive the following morning.



Crimson-breasted Shrike

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Days 2-3	Nylsvley
Days 4-5	Lake Albasini
Days 6-8	Mapungubwe National Park
Days 9-11	Tuli Block, Botswana
Days 12-13	Magoebaskloof
Day 14	Depart Johannesburg
Day 15	Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 11 clients (two leaders with more than six clients).

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities.


Transport

By minibus.

Includes


All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.


Gradings

 Good/Tented

 300

 Warm


 Moderate

 Special

 Moderate

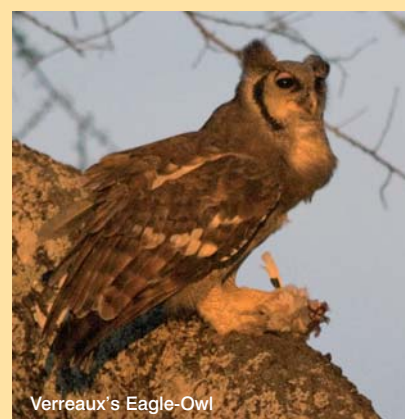
 Good

 Easy

 Scheduled



Kori Bustard



Verreaux's Eagle-Owl