

Namibia – A Photographic Tour

Naturetrek Tour Report

8th – 25th July 2022



Quiver Tree and Milky Way, Quiver Tree Camp

Tour report and images by Kevin Elsby



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk



Red-necked Falcon, Etosha



Impala, Etosha

Tour participants: Kevin Elsby (leader) with seven Naturetrek Clients

Day 1

Friday 8th July

After an uneventful overnight flight from the UK, the group of seven clients and Kevin, the leader, met up at the arrivals hall at Johannesburg airport, South Africa. Our driver met us and we drove the short distance to the pleasant Africa Sky hotel for an overnight stop before our onward flight to Windhoek, Namibia, the next day. There is no direct flight from the UK to Namibia.

After meeting one client who had flown on British Airways earlier, we settled into our rooms at the Africa Sky, and then for the rest of the day rested from our journey and we had chance to explore the grounds of the hotel. The songs of both Red-necked Dove and Ring-necked Dove filled the air, added to by the calls of Laughing Dove – all three being the very typical calls of African birds. A Cape Wagtail was searching for insects on the lawn near the swimming pool while a beautiful Cape Robin Chat gave fleeting views.

A female Large-billed Weaver perched more obligingly in the vegetation, showing its simply enormous seed-cracking beak. A group of Helmeted Guineafowl were feeding on an area of open ground next to the hotel, whilst a couple of Karoo Thrushes were flitting about the trees in the hotel grounds. A pair of White-backed Mousebirds were constructing a nest in a palm near the restaurant.

It was a gentle introduction to the bird life of Africa and we had the time to get our list under way and become familiar with these species.

Kevin welcomed the guests on the tour and outlined the plan for the rest of the trip. He discussed the potential for photography, and went over ways to ensure that everyone would be able to get the most out of the experience. This presentation included plans for photographing the wildlife – birds, mammals and macro, as well as landscapes in daytime, and the opportunities presented of photographing the stars and Milky Way in some of the darkest skies on the planet.

After a delightful dinner, we retired in readiness for our onward journey tomorrow.

Day 2

Saturday 9th July

Today we had the chance to wander around the small but bird busy gardens of our hotel before heading to the airport after breakfast, for our flight to Namibia. We saw several African Olive Pigeon – a large species, even larger than the woodpigeon we are familiar with back home. Thick-billed Weaver was present again and an African Wattled Lapwing was present on the field adjacent to the hotel. Some of the group took the last opportunity to photograph the birds before we boarded the minibus for the short ride back to the airport.

Our flight to Windhoek, via Air Link, took just under two hours, and soon we had met Neil Macleod of Safari Wise, our local guide, at Windhoek airport and boarded the Landcruiser which would be our transport for the rest of the trip, and headed to the Windhoek Country Club Resort for our overnight stay. Once checked in, most of the group went for walks around the well-appointed gardens which included an 18-hole golf course. The grounds were relatively bird rich and many of the birds, being accustomed to people, allowed close approach, leading to frame filling shots of several species, such as White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Marico Flycatcher, Cape Wagtail, Laughing Dove and Grey Go-away Bird.

We saw two Yellow Mongoose, with distinctive white tips to the tail. Our first of many mammal species we hoped.

A flock of eleven Helmeted Guineafowl were walking and feeding along one of the golf fairways, as was a single Egyptian Goose. Those of us who live in East Anglia were well familiar with this particular species.

Some birds were less confiding and more tricky to see, let alone photograph. Among these was Chestnut-vented Warbler, aka Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler. More patience and skill was needed here in trying to secure a good photo.

Perhaps the most popular species we saw though was an extremely confiding African Hoopoe, feeding unconcernedly at just a couple of meters from the camera lenses.

We met up for dinner in the hotel, after first completing the check list for the last couple of days, and Neil gave us an outline of the plan for the itinerary for the rest of the trip and instructions for our relatively early start tomorrow for the long drive north to Etosha, one of the prime game reserves in the country.

Day 3

Sunday 10th July

We left our hotel in Windhoek at 8am for the long drive north to the Etosha National Park. Once again it was a clear sky all day. It was around freezing point when we left but the temperature soon rose. We broke the journey up with a lunch stop before continuing, arriving at our lodge in the park for the next two nights at 3.15pm. We didn't have much chance to see wildlife on our way, and indeed our priority was to arrive at Etosha in time for a late afternoon game drive. We did though see several Chacma Baboons which were lining the fences at the side of the road or sitting on the central reservation of the road.

A single Tawny Eagle was also spotted, as were several Lilac-breasted Rollers, perched on telegraph wires or acacia trees.

Arriving at our lodge, the Namutoni Resort, we dropped our luggage off in our rooms before taking our first game drive in this internationally famous game reserve. We stopped at a water hole a short distance along our route. Here we were immediately able to see nine Southern Giraffes, most of whom came to the water to drink. Cameras were taking in the scene before us and all enjoyed the poses given by the giraffes. We also concentrated on getting shots of them as they stood up again from their drinking, with the water droplets falling from the animal's mouths.

There was a host of other things to photograph at this site, including a pair of Blacksmith Plovers with a very young chick. Many Helmeted Guineafowl were present. A rather unexpected sight was a single Little Grebe on the water, and a pair of beautiful South African Shelduck were resting on the water's edge. Soon the giraffe were joined at the water hole by a herd of Impala, and then a larger group of Greater Kudu, consisting of two males and several females as well as calves of varying ages – all excellent additions to our photographic libraries. The light was perfect with the sun behind us, making for wonderful images.

A single African Pipit was looking for food morsels close to our vehicle, and again was unconcerned at our presence.

When we had all secured lots of images, we carried on along a route and soon came across a pair of Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills which flew from a small acacia to feed on the ground next to us. A large number of Ring-necked Doves were flying about and we saw a latrine made by a rhinoceros at the side of the track.

We were on the lookout for Kirk's Dik Dik (aka Damara Dik Dik), a very diminutive species of antelope. Eventually we came across a party of three – a male, a female and a well grown young animal. We spent many minutes watching and photographing this species as it is not likely to be encountered anywhere else on our route, and can be difficult to find.

Then we came across a female Spotted Hyaena lying asleep at the side of the track with two young cubs who were wide awake. We took some rapid shots of these before we carried on a short way to photograph some giraffes which were walking across a wonderful setting sun. Advice was given by Kevin to first of all focus on the giraffe, and also to under expose the shot by 2 to 3 stops in order to prevent the brightness of the sun overpowering the image, as well as to create a lovely silhouette of the giraffe. This made for fantastic images.

All done, this was the last thing we photographed before returning to our lodge. Then, after the customary checklist review of all our sightings, we enjoyed a lovely dinner in the lodge restaurant.

Day 4

Monday 11th July

We started the day early with a muffin and a cup of coffee before commencing our first game drive of the day at 7.25am. It was another cloudless sky but that meant a chilly start and warm clothing was needed.

We paused to photograph a pair of Red-necked Falcons, perched in a tree near our rooms. Then, we made our way along a track and soon were enjoying close views of Springbok, Wildebeest, Impala and Southern Giraffes. The camera shutters were working overtime as we made endless images of these obliging animals.

Calling at some waterholes, we were able to photograph many of these animals coming to drink. Especially enjoyed were several Plains Zebras, and their reflections in the still water of the ponds was simply beautiful. A single Gemsbok appeared to join in. It was a male in good physical condition, but minus his horns – no doubt lost in a battle with a rival male. The loss of his horns could prove his undoing, as these were his main form of defence against attack by predators.

A wide variety of birds were seen and photographed including Ostrich, Namaqua Dove, Pale Chanting Goshawk and Tawny Eagle, the latter successfully catching a dove while we were watching it.

Lilac-breasted Rollers are probably one of the most photographed birds in Africa, and it is easy to see why. Perching on a bush in a prominent position, with beautiful plumage, and often allowing close approach, they are the stuff of dreams for wildlife photographers. During the course of the day, we were treated to wonderful views of this species and took lots of images of them.

As the morning grew hotter, we retraced our route to the lodge where after a light lunch we had some ‘down’ time.

In the early afternoon we went on a short game drive and added more bird species to our list including Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark and Black Crake. We found three bull Elephants drinking in one of the waterholes, and watched as they gave themselves a dust bath after quenching their thirst.

On returning to the lodge before an early dinner, some of the group got brief views of a Leopard. It was well-hidden in the vegetation, as is typical, and it then disappeared out of sight.

After dinner, we boarded two different vehicles for a three-hour night drive. The temperature was dropping and once again, warm clothing was the way to go.

On the drive we found several more Spotted Hyaenas, about twenty Black-backed Jackals, a couple of bull Elephants and more Wildebeest and Springbok. Most exciting of all, though was a close encounter with a single male Lion which walked close to the vehicles, and a White Rhinoceros, which was present near the waterhole.

It turned out to be an exciting addition to our already very enjoyable trip.

Day 5

Tuesday 12th July

Today we transferred from the east side of Etosha reserve to our lodge on the west side of the park at Okaukuejo Resort, another government-run lodge. However, as usual, we took an early ‘pre-breakfast’ game drive, leaving after a warming cup of coffee. The park does not allow vehicles outside of the lodge between dusk and dawn. Dawn for us at this time of the year was 7.30 am and we were the first vehicle to leave the confines of the lodge.

It was a generally slow morning as we drove along with nothing new to be seen or photographed. Then, however, we spotted a single Black Rhinoceros, the first on our trip. We all got great shots of this individual but

it took some expert driving (usually in reverse!) by our superb guide Neil, to allow all the group to get a good view through the bushes it was among.

This set the day up superbly for us and we were all raring to go again after breakfast after returning to the lodge.

It was a long drive between the lodges, all within the park and all on dirt tracks which were, in most cases, in remarkably good condition. We stopped for lunch at a restaurant en route, and the wildlife as we went along was excellent.

We stopped whenever we wanted to in order to observe and photograph either the animals and birds or, just as likely, the amazing scenery. We spent most of the day driving along the northern limit of the Etosha pan, believed to be the remnants of a long dried up massive lake.

Mammals were numerous all day and we had great entertainment photographing Elephants, Hartebeest, Impala and Giraffes. We also saw a pride of at least six lionesses resting in the shade provided by a low tree. As we watched several Impala walked almost onto the lions, completely unaware of their presence. The lions looked but took no action, presumably still digesting last night's meal.

However, pride of place must go to firstly the Zebras which were play fighting near one large waterhole, and secondly to two Springbok males which were engaged in a much more serious combat. This latter scene played out before us and lasted at least 15 minutes, and occasionally when they locked horns they became stuck for a while. Our guide, Neil, explained that locked horns can lead to the death of one or both animals.

However, we noticed a Black-backed Jackal approach the sparring animals from a distance. It proceeded to circle around the Springboks and, when the fight was over, the Jackal ran rapidly after one of the two Springboks, clearly with the intent of attacking it. We lost the Springbok and the Jackal to view as they raced off into the distance.

The bird life was also enjoyed to the full and we got more excellent shots of Kori Bustard, as well as Northern Black Korhaan. At the lunch stop we grabbed images of Cape Starling, and three species of hornbill – African Grey, Southern Yellow-billed and Southern Red-billed Hornbill. A single Damara Red-billed Hornbill proved much more elusive for the camera. Fork-tailed Drongos were everywhere and we later came across a pair of confiding Pied Crows. Several Ostriches were on the Etosha pan and we managed to get shots of male and female. At the waterholes, Blacksmith Lapwings were very much in evidence, calling loudly when an antelope approached them too closely.

The day started cool and clear but as usual it soon got much warmer. Eventually, after a full day's entertainment on the road, we arrived at our lodge in the mid to late afternoon. After checking in we relaxed by the superb waterhole, watching Eland, Giraffe, Helmeted Guineafowl and a single Little Grebe which seemed quote at home here. Our first heron of the trip, Black-headed, was another waterside sighting.

After a lovely dinner, we returned to the now floodlit waterhole where, astonishingly, we added another five Black Rhinoceros, as well as more Giraffes and a single Spotted Hyaena and Black-backed Jackal.

The trip continued to produce excellent wildlife and wildlife photography opportunities. Over dinner, Kevin discussed a plan tomorrow to photograph the 'super moon' as it rises above the horizon. The phrase 'super moon' refers to the fact that the moon appears slightly larger than usual (in this case tomorrow, 7.7% larger than average) as it is just that bit closer to the earth. The press and media get very excited about such a phenomenon. Either way, with clear skies and virtually no light pollution, Namibia should provide one of the best places on earth to see and photograph a super moon.

Day 6

Wednesday 13th July

The day began with another early morning game drive, after a warming coffee. On another cloudless sky we drove to several water holes in search of mammals.

After lunch, we decided that the action was so good at the lodge waterhole we would spend a relaxing afternoon sitting in front of the pool, watching as successions of antelope species came to drink.

The vantage point could not have been better. This, surely, has to be one of the finest places to watch wild animals of Africa at such close quarters and in safety.

We saw Wildebeest, followed by that impressive antelope, Gemsbok arrive for a drink and to cool off. Several Impala arrived, then a cohort of Plains Zebra and a continual passage of Springbok.

Perhaps unexpectedly a single Little Grebe was swimming on the water of the pool, continually having to swim away as antelope approached it. It was a superb way to spend an afternoon, and all clients came away with some memorable images.

Those interested in photographing the rise of the super moon made our way to a vantage point for photography. We got our equipment (camera, long lens, tripod, cable release) ready for the event. We needed a clean line of sight to the horizon. In a perfect world, the moon would rise over the waterhole at the lodge. However, the world isn't perfect and the direction of moon rise was in line of high electrified fences used to keep animals out of the grounds of the lodge. Kevin had scouted the area the day before and the best option was to climb the 101 steps up to the roof of the lodge water tower, and this is where we assembled in readiness for the time of moon rise which was scheduled to be 18:20 at this site.

There was some initial concern when the moon was not seen at this time, but this was due to haze from distant bush fires, and heat haze. In the end, the moon was seen rising just above the horizon and we got to work recording this event on our digital cards. After dinner, we went back to the by now floodlit waterhole to continue enjoying the wildlife spectacle in front of us. Some of the group even ventured out in the wee small hours, awoken by the roaring of Lions. Sadly, they did not show themselves.

Day 7

Thursday 14th July

Today we took a more leisurely morning game drive, leaving as usual as soon as the park gates opened, but this time fortified by a full breakfast. This meant we could return to the lodge by lunchtime.

We visited several sites including the water holes and saw a good selection of animals again. Gemsbok, Springbok, Wildebeest, Giraffe and Plains Zebra were all seen and photographed again. The best light for wildlife photography is in the early morning, as now, and late afternoon, and we took full advantage of the wonderful clear skies.

Birds were not forgotten either and we made time to see and photograph Northern Black Korhaan and a Pale Chanting Goshawk, which was being buffeted by the wind as it perched on a Water Acacia bush.

We made a comfort break, giving us time to stretch our legs, in a toilet compound set in the middle of the bush, with a wire fence around to protect from animals. While there we enjoyed a warming coffee, prepared by Neil, and also photographed a passing Tawny Eagle and Brown Snake Eagle.

Returning to the lodge for lunch we again spent some time at the water hole, while some of the group had a siesta. In the afternoon our game drive gave us time to take some landscape images, using wide angle lenses, and the scenery was impressive. We came across three Southern Giraffes, drinking at a small stream and though far away, this was actually helpful as it enabled us to emphasise the space in this park.

The final part of the drive was spent watching two Black Rhinoceros, a mother and a well-grown calf, make their way to one of the waterholes. It was touch and go if they would get to the water hole in time, before we had to leave to get back to the lodge at dusk. In the end we (and they!) just made it and many more images were recorded.

Day 8

Friday 15th July

This was our last morning at the Okaukuejo Resort lodge, and we had our usual pre-breakfast game drive. During the hour or so of our trip, we saw many of the birds and mammals we had already seen. We spent some time photographing a very obliging Kori Bustard, the world's heaviest flying bird, as it stalked insect prey in the short vegetation just next to our vehicle. We also came across a couple of Spotted Hyaenas which also posed well for the cameras. Truth is, they looked rather sleepy and no doubt were replete with their meal overnight last night.

Other notable sightings were another Tawny Eagle perched in a tree; two Spike-heeled Larks (which had to move out of the way of the legs of the approaching Kori Bustard), and a pair of Crowned Plovers which were performing their morning ablutions in the early morning sun.

With a last look over the lodge waterhole, which had Wildebeest and Plains Zebra at it, we set off on our long journey to the Hansa Hotel at Swakopmund, on the Atlantic coast.

It was getting hotter as the day wore on, and we broke the journey for lunch at a restaurant on the way.

Arriving in the late afternoon, we soon settled into our new accommodation in readiness for the next stage of our Namibian adventure.

Day 9

Saturday 16th July

This morning was a 'free time' for the clients, three of whom took a 2-hour flight in a small aircraft along the coast, viewing the incredible landscape and dune systems, famous shipwreck sites and numerous Cape Fur Seals at their colonies all along the coast. They were also able to view numerous flamingos from the air. The predicted sandstorm mercifully did not materialise, and good conditions prevailed throughout the day. The rest of the group either went shopping for souvenirs in the town or walked to the coast and pier to do a spot of bird watching. Cape Wagtail, Cape Sparrow, a couple of Hartlaub's Gulls and a single Kelp Gull were seen.

In the afternoon we went on a journey by four-wheel drive into the dune system to the south of the town. This was a Living Desert Adventure. Our driver / guide, Arnold, spared no effort in trying to find desert animals for us to see. It was hard work, mainly due to the prevailing strong breeze, and it was also very hot.

However, with his expert eyes, we were able to see and photograph the Shovel-snouted Lizard, even watching as it raised its feet alternately, off the hot sand surface in order to stay cool.

We saw many tracks of others of this species where they had walked or run up or down the impressive dunes here. We then photographed a Fogstand Beetle. These insects get their name from their habit of climbing to the top of the dunes in foggy conditions, then tipping themselves head down towards the sand, allowing the water vapour in the fog to condense on their body and drain downwards to their mouth.

We enjoyed getting close and personal with a couple of Bicoloured beetles which can be found here. They are startlingly black and white. It meant getting down on all fours or even on our abdomens to get the best shots with this insect but it was worth it.

While we waited for Arnold who was looking for animals, a pair of Tractrac Chats entertained us close to the vehicle and later came to morsels given out by Arnold.

Everyone was keen to see and photograph a snake, and at the end of the trip, Arnold at last succeeded in finding a beautiful Horned Adder in the shade of some vegetation. He carefully moved this venomous snake into a position where all in the group could safely get excellent shots in perfect light.

It had been a great experience to visit this dune system which differs especially in colour from the other dunes we have yet to explore.

Day 10

Sunday 17th July

Today we transferred to the wonderful Dead Valley Lodge at the entrance of the main road to Deadvlei. It was another long drive and a hot day. We stopped for a packed lunch at a picnic site in the bush and enjoyed a splendid picnic. We were driving through a desert and the landscape reflected that – it was very dramatic. The road initially was dead straight for mile after mile and wildlife was, to say the least, thin on the ground.

Later we suffered a puncture, one of the risks associated with driving on the road surface we had been doing. Shortly after replacing the punctured tyre with a new one, we called at a café in a place called Solitaire. Here we had a cup of coffee and most clients bought the famous apple strudel sold here. Both the coffee and the cake

were welcome and helped to break the journey. Remarkably, Neil managed to get the punctured tyre repaired in a total of 20 minutes, by the mechanics on site!! Most of us voiced the thought “If only that sort of service was the norm in the UK.” No doubt the garage was well-practiced in repairing tyre punctures which must be an everyday occurrence on the gravel roads.

We arrived at our lodge in the late afternoon. There was time to freshen up before making our way to the alfresco dining area and restaurant. After enjoying a lovely dinner Kevin helped interested clients get some preliminary shots of the Milky Way. Although not at the best astrophotography site on the tour, it was a welcome opportunity to get to know the camera settings which would deliver the best possible images later on. After all, practice makes perfect and there’s no substitute for this, especially as most clients had not done this form of photography previously. There was a lot to learn and instructions to get across, and most of the clients were happy to partake in these practice sessions. This would minimise the help required when shooting the stars for real in a few days time.

Day 11

Monday 18th July

We made an early start today (06.45am departure) for the 50km drive to where we started our walk to the Deadvlei, an area of a dried-up lake, with dead trees in, completely surrounded by the most magnificent sand dunes, some of which are nearly 300m high. There were many dead trees, still standing in the hardened crust. These trees, which died after a change of river flow direction, have been dated by radio-carbon to over 900 hundred years old. The scene makes for some truly wonderful landscape photography.

The walk was about half a mile and in sand, so the going was a bit slow. We arrived before sun rise in time for the first rays of that orb to gradually illuminate the dried up ‘pan’. All the group had a great time deciding on composition, exposure, shutter speed and aperture. As usual, Kevin was on hand to give advice as needed, and help all the group to achieve the sort of images which would be proudly hung on the wall at home. We then had a brief look at Sossusvlei, where there was still standing water from rain in March of this year – a very rare event in these parts.

After three and a half hours it was time for breakfast. We had brought our breakfast with us, in the form of an excellent packed breakfast from the lodge, and with Neil doing the organising, it was lovely to sit in the shade of a camel thorn tree and enjoy our meal while continuing to observe the effect of the play of the light on the huge dunes which surrounded us on every side.

We then drove back to our lodge for some ‘down time’ and lunch a little while later. The middle of the day is the hottest and we chilled out in our air-conditioned accommodation before heading out again for the afternoon light. We did not go as far as Deadvlei this time and instead concentrated our attentions on other dunes as the sun dropped to the horizon. We had this scene to ourselves and each one of us chose our particular dunes to shoot photograph.

Retracing our steps, we returned to the lodge in time to refresh before another delightful evening meal, al fresco.

Animals were, perhaps not surprisingly, few but a very brief view was had by some of the group of a Bat-eared Fox which crossed the road in the early light of morning. Otherwise it was Gemsbok and a couple of Springbok.

One surprising bird find, though, was a single White Stork which was walking along the barren landscape. It seemed to be a very lost individual indeed!

Day 12

Tuesday 19th July

By now we were not only familiar with the unbroken sunshine on our trip, but also the early morning starts. We again left base at 5.45 am, in order to take full advantage of the golden hour of light at and just before sunrise.

We stopped just before the Deadvlei parking area, and spent a couple of hours getting images of the dunes as the light illuminated them in turn. Kevin suggested it would be good to include a subject in the foreground of our images, in order to introduce a feeling of scale, and all clients did this.

There were many camel thorn trees growing in the area – a very good photographic subject in themselves, but with the dunes behind, bathed in the golden glow of the morning, images were lifted to new heights. While we were photographing, the presumed White Stork we had seen yesterday, flew past.

After a couple of hours of this, we then drove further to the water at Sossusvlei, in order to try and capture some reflections in the water. Initially we were the only people there, and were able to see and photograph a single Lesser Flamingo which had found the lake, as well as three Pied Avocets. A couple of Cape Teal and, almost incredibly, a pair of Egyptian Geese were also in residence.

Soon, more human visitors arrived, making it more difficult to get images without people in them, so we cut our losses, retreated to the shade of a nearby tree, and enjoyed another splendid al fresco breakfast with copious coffee.

On our way back to the lodge for lunch we spotted a group of five Rüppell's Coursers, walking on the bare ground at the side of the road.

Our last afternoon at the Dead Valley Lodge was spent photographing the changing colours on the distant hills and mountains from a nearby sand dune. Those interested in wildlife photography, took the time to photograph the amazing communal nest of Sociable Weaver in a nearby tree. It was a remarkable construction, and we enjoyed the antics of the residents of this multi occupancy nest as they came and went. It was also a scene suited to video, which we took advantage of.

Later the sun set, and we obtained lovely images of the mountains in the distance to the west as they bathed in the glow of the fading sun.

Day 13

Wednesday 20th July

Today was transfer day to our next accommodation, the wonderfully named Nest Hotel in Luderitz. To get there meant an early start and a long drive, interspersed with stops along the way for wildlife, refreshment and comfort. Before we left the lodge, however, one client spotted a Brown Hyaena, sauntering across the plain, from the lodge restaurant.

Our route took us through some spectacular scenery and over the Namibian plateau at over 5,000 feet. Birds we saw en route included a pair of Ludwig's Bustards, four Black-winged Kites, many Pale Chanting Goshawks (perched on telegraph posts), a single Lappet-face Vulture and, in the same area, a pair of delightful, diminutive Pygmy Falcons which performed their greeting display right next to the vehicle! A memorable experience for all. A couple of Kalahari Scrub Robins, several Karoo Chats, Marico Flycatcher, Southern Fiscal and Red-headed Finches were among the supporting cast.

Mammals included several Gemsbok, a few Springbok, and a single Yellow Mongoose.

We stopped for a coffee break at a hotel which advertised the best apple cake in Namibia. Most of the group had some with their drink and most of them felt the claim was totally justified!

Moving on we came to the town of Aus where we had an excellent lunch stop. Then it was on to the last leg of the journey, a 100km leg to Luderitz, where we arrived in the late afternoon. The weather had become increasingly windy as we approached the coast and was almost gale force when we finally arrived at our hotel. Undeterred, most clients went for a bracing walk along the coast, and some managed to see and photograph more birds, including several African Black Oystercatchers, new additions for the list.

Day 14

Thursday 21st July

Today was spent mainly photographing the site of a disused and decaying diamond mine, Kolmanskopp, approximately 10km from our hotel. We went for our morning session early, then had a guided tour of part of the site, during which the guide regaled us with a profusion of information about the history of diamond activity in the area. This was very informative. After this the group members were free to explore the buildings and choose their own angles, compositions and perspectives most appealing to them. The buildings were in a varying state of decay and outside or inside lent themselves brilliantly for capturing the passage of time since the mine was last active. Many buildings had accumulated sand, blown by the almost ever-present wind, inside.

Once we had spent a few hours here, we took a drive along the coast in search of birds. We eventually arrived at a spot overlooking Halifax Island and were able to get good but distant views of African Penguins at their breeding colony on the island. There were several South African Fur Seals in the same area, and numerous Greater Flamingos were also present, making for good wildlife shots.

After lunch we returned to the disused mine, to take advantage of the changed light conditions, and stayed photographing the structures until another wonderful sunset.

Day 15

Friday 22nd July

We started the day with another visit to the abandoned diamond mine, and we were able to take more images of the buildings we had not been able to take the day before. It was misty when we arrived, giving an ethereal feel to the surroundings, but the mist soon dispersed as the sun rose.

The light was excellent, and we all benefitted from the early start, and the golden hour. After a warming coffee (it was cold at this early hour) in the visitor centre café, we returned to the hotel to collect our belongings before

departing for our next accommodation at the Quiver Tree Camp near Keetmanshoop. This was another long drive, interspersed with a lunch stop at the same restaurant we had visited a couple of days earlier at Aus, and then at the Fish River, where we enjoyed a refreshing coffee.

We only saw a few birds as we went along, and Greater Kestrel, Pale-winged Starling, single Moorhen and African Sacred Ibis were among the species recorded.

Arriving at the Quiver Tree Camp just before dusk, it was a quick trip to the forest area to check out potential compositions for the night sky over the next two nights.

Day 16

Saturday 23rd July

We started the day at the Quiver Tree forest for a pre-breakfast shoot of the trees at dawn. Conditions were perfect – calm, still and with just enough cloud in the sky for perfect photographic conditions.

We spent a very enjoyable hour or so there, before returning the short walking distance to the lodge for breakfast and a coffee.

Later we drove the 30km to the Mesosaurus Fossil site just north east of Keetmanshoop. Here we were met by the owner of the land who gave a most colourful and enthusiastic presentation of the fossils he had discovered on his land. We were able to see and photograph the fossils in close-up. He then proceeded to play music with some stones from the area. As he pointed out, it was not rock music, but we could identify the ‘tunes’ he played!

While this was going on we got good views of one of Africa’s most magnificent birds of prey, a stunning Verreaux’s Eagle, and some of the group managed to get photos of it before it passed over the vehicle and flew into the distance.

We proceeded to view the large number of Quiver Trees on his land and soon identified that it would be an ideal photo venue for astrophotography – flat, wide-open spaces and with trees above us which made for easier photography and less risk of tripping over rocks or having other photographers about. We determined to return this evening, after gaining permission from the landowner, and the co-operation of Neil, who would have to drive us there and back again in the evening, from our base.

After visiting the fossil site, we drove to the town of Keetmanshoop for lunch, while a couple of clients were dropped off at the quiver tree camp for some birding / photography. A male Pygmy Falcon, Kalahari Scrub-robin, several Acacia Pied Barbets and many Pale-winged Starlings made up some of the photographic subjects.

Later, others of the group returned from lunch and more birds were added to the ever-expanding list for the trip.

After an early dinner, we then drove back to the Mesosaur site for access to photograph the night sky with quiver trees. Thanks to the advice given by Kevin, both before and during the trip, and the ‘training’ sessions in the field earlier in the trip, all clients were able to record outstanding images of the Milky Way and core, against the trees and numerous boulders to be found at this site. This was one of the major highlights of the trip for

most clients. The combination of clear sky, no light pollution and mild weather made for exemplary conditions – and we again took full advantage of them!

We returned to base in the late evening, ready for an early start tomorrow for the last lodge on our trip.

Day 17

Sunday 24th July

We left early on our route to the Kalahari Anib Lodge. Arriving in the late morning we enjoyed an al fresco lunch before embarking on a game drive using the lodge vehicles and guide, Moses.

We saw a Kori Bustard, Northern Black Korhaan, several Ostrich, a confiding pair of Namaqua Sandgrouse and Gemsbok, Springbok and a couple of Kudu.

As the afternoon wore on, it got quite chilly, and most of us took advantage of the blankets provided by Moses.

It was exciting to see another aspect of the landscape which makes up Namibia and the dark red sand was also very impressive.

As the sun was setting, we came across a herd (or ‘tower’) of five Southern Giraffe, and we were able to get some shots of them as they walked against the sky on the horizon.

Our final wildlife encounter of the drive was with three Cape Hares, running across our tracks, and picked out in our vehicle headlights.

Day 18

Monday 25th July

Today we drove back to Windhoek, to catch our mid-morning flight back to Johannesburg. Once there, we then flew back overnight to the UK, most of us on the Virgin Atlantic flight, and one client on British Airways.

It had been an excellent trip with many highlights and all clients were very pleased with the images they returned with. Great local guide, great camaraderie, great food, drink and accommodation, and most of all great photography. What’s not to like?



Water hole, Etosha



Lion, Etosha

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		July 2022																
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25
Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓				
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓					
South African Shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>			✓														
Cape Teal	<i>Anas capensis</i>										✓		✓					
Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>										✓							
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓
Red-billed Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis adspersus</i>			✓	✓	✓		✓										
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>				✓	✓	✓											
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>					✓												✓
Grey Go-Away Bird	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓												
Kori Bustard	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
Ludwig's Bustard	<i>Neotis ludwigii</i>													✓		✓		
Rüppell's Korhaan - N	<i>Eupodotis rueppelii</i>										✓							
Northern Black Korhaan	<i>Afrotis afraoides</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓					✓				
Namaqua Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles namaqua</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓				✓
Double-banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>						✓											
Burchell's Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles burchelli</i>				✓		✓	✓										
Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>								✓									
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>								✓								✓	
African Olive Pigeon	<i>Columba arquatrix</i>	✓	✓															
Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓			
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	✓	✓											✓				
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>			✓	✓	✓												
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓	✓
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓						✓					✓		
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>										✓							

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		July 2022																
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25
African Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i>										✓							
Black Crane	<i>Zapornia flavirostra</i>				✓													
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>										✓							
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>										✓				✓			
Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>										✓		✓					
Spotted Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>				✓													
African Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>													✓	✓			
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>										✓		✓		✓			
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓				✓	
Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓							
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>			✓	✓	✓												
White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>										✓				✓			
Burchell's Courser	<i>Cursorius rufus</i>												✓					
Double-banded Courser	<i>Rhinoptilus africanus</i>							✓										
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>															✓		
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>															✓		
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>															✓		
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>										✓							
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>									✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>									✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>										✓			✓				
Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>															✓		
African Penguin	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>															✓		
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>												✓					
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	✓																
African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	✓															✓	
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓									
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>										✓				✓			
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>										✓							
Secretarybird	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>																	✓

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		July 2022																
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓					✓				✓
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>			✓	✓	✓												
Lappet-faced Vulture	<i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>			✓	✓				✓					✓				
Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>							✓										
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>				✓	✓	✓											
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓									
Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>			✓													✓	
African Hawk-Eagle	<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>			✓														
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>										✓							
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>				✓			✓										
Pale Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax canorus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓
Jackal Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>													✓				
Pearl-spotted Owlet	<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>				✓			✓										
Spotted Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>																	✓
Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>	✓																
White-backed Mousebird	<i>Colius colius</i>	✓	✓	✓										✓		✓	✓	✓
African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>		✓															
Violet Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus damarensis</i>																	✓
Damara Red-billed Hornbill - N	<i>Tockus damarensis</i>					✓												
Southern Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus rufirostris</i>			✓		✓												
Monteiro's Hornbill - N	<i>Tockus monteiri</i>			✓														
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus leucomelas</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>					✓												
Purple Roller	<i>Coracias naevius</i>			✓					✓									
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>															✓		
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>			✓													✓	
Acacia Pied Barbet	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>				✓	✓					✓						✓	
Pygmy Falcon	<i>Polihierax semitorquatus</i>																✓	

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		July 2022																
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25
Rock Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicolus</i>												✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Greater Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicoloides</i>													✓		✓		
Red-necked Falcon	<i>Falco chicquera</i>				✓	✓	✓											
Rüppell's Parrot - N	<i>Poicephalus rueppellii</i>				✓													
Rosy-faced Lovebird	<i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>		✓								✓							✓
Pririt Batis	<i>Batis pririt</i>					✓											✓	
Bokmakierie	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>													✓		✓		
Brown-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>					✓												
Crimson-breasted Shrike	<i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i>			✓														
Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>																✓	✓
Southern White-crowned Shrike	<i>Eurocephalus anguimans</i>					✓	✓											
Southern Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>	✓												✓		✓	✓	✓
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓				
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Spike-heeled Lark	<i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i>							✓	✓									
Gray's Lark - N	<i>Ammomanopsis grayi</i>															✓		
Karoo Long-billed Lark - N	<i>Certhilauda subcoronata</i>													✓				
Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>				✓	✓		✓	✓									
Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix verticalis</i>						✓		✓		✓					✓		
Sabota Lark	<i>Calendulauda sabota</i>				✓			✓										
Fawn-colored Lark	<i>Calendulauda africanoides</i>																	✓
Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>			✓				✓										
African Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>	✓	✓						✓			✓		✓			✓	✓
Dark-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>	✓																
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>				✓													
Yellow-bellied Eremomela	<i>Eremomela icteropygialis</i>		✓		✓													

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		July 2022																
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25
Karoo Eremomela - N	<i>Eremomela gregalis</i>																	✓
Chestnut-vented Warbler	<i>Curruca subcoerulea</i>		✓			✓						✓						✓
Cape White-eye	<i>Zosterops virens</i>	✓																
Orange River White-eye	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>								✓									
Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>					✓												
Cape Starling	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓							
Burchell's Starling	<i>Lamprotornis australis</i>			✓	✓													
Pale-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus nabouroup</i>											✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓															
Karoo Thrush	<i>Turdus smithi</i>	✓	✓											✓	✓			
Kalahari Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas paena</i>													✓			✓	
Chat Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis infuscatus</i>						✓	✓						✓				
Marico Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis mariquensis</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓			✓				
Short-toed Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola brevipes</i>																	✓
Karoo Chat	<i>Emarginata schlegelii</i>													✓				
Tractrac Chat	<i>Emarginata tractrac</i>									✓	✓							
Cape Robin-chat	<i>Cossypha capra</i>	✓																
Ant-eating Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i>							✓										
Mountain Wheatear	<i>Myrmecocichla monticola</i>										✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>														✓			
Familiar Chat	<i>Oenanthe familiaris</i>											✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>		✓															
Marico Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris mariquensis</i>			✓	✓		✓											
Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>				✓	✓												
House Sparrow - I	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>				✓	✓												
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>		✓	✓														✓

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		July 2022																	
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25	
Sociable Weaver	<i>Philetairus socius</i>										✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Scaly-feathered Weaver	<i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i>												✓	✓					
Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>	✓	✓	✓															
Thick-billed Weaver	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>	✓																	
Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>								✓										
Red-headed Finch	<i>Amadina erythrocephala</i>										✓			✓					
Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>		✓		✓														
Green-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia melba</i>					✓	✓												
Shaft-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua regia</i>				✓														
Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>	✓	✓							✓	✓			✓				✓	
African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>			✓														✓	
Black-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra atrogularis</i>			✓															
Yellow Canary	<i>Crithagra flaviventris</i>																	✓	
White-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra albogularis</i>															✓			
Golden-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza flaviventris</i>								✓										

Mammals

		July 2022																	
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Common Rock Hyrax	<i>Procapra capensis</i>															✓		✓	
African Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓											
Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>				✓	✓		✓											
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>				✓														
Spotted Hyaena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓										
Brown Hyena	<i>Parahyaena brunnea</i>													✓			✓		
Yellow Mongoose	<i>Cynictis penicillata</i>		✓			✓		✓						✓					
Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>			✓															

		July 2022																
Common name	Scientific name	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>			✓	✓	✓												
Black-backed Jackal	<i>Lupulella mesomelas</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓								
Bat-eared Fox	<i>Otocyon megalotis</i>											✓						
South African Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>	✓								✓	✓							
[Burchell's] Plains Zebra	<i>Equus quagga burchellii</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Black Rhinoceros	<i>Diceros bicornis occidentalis</i>					✓	✓	✓										
White Rhinoceros	<i>Ceratotherium simum</i>				✓													
Southern Giraffe	<i>Giraffa giraffa</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓				
Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Hartebeest	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓										
Springbok	<i>Antidorcas marsupialis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Common Wildebeest	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
Kirk's [Damara] Dik-dik	<i>Madoqua kirkii damarensis</i>			✓														
Gemsbok	<i>Oryx gazella</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Steenbok	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>					✓												
Common Eland	<i>Tragelaphus oryx</i>			✓														
Greater Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓								✓		
Chacma Baboon	<i>Papio ursinus</i>			✓														✓
Cape Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>																	✓
Smith's Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus cepapi</i>				✓	✓												
South African Ground Squirrel	<i>Xerus inauris</i>							✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Three-striped Mouse	<i>Hybomys trivirgatus</i>											✓		✓				

		July 2022															
Other taxa		9	10	11	12	13	14	16	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24

Cicada					✓												
Guineafowl Butterfly					✓												
Orange Tip butterfly								✓									
Citus Swallowtail								✓									
Horned Adder									✓								
Fogstand Beetle									✓								
Bicoloured Beetle									✓								
Shovel-snouted Lizard									✓								
Quiver tree										✓							
Poison tree										✓							
African Monarch										✓							
Gecko											✓						
Bitter Hoodia											✓						
Quiver Tree											✓						



Lilac-breasted Roller, Etosha