

Limosa Travelling *Holidays*

The Naturalist

NAMIBIA: NAMIB DESERT, WALVIS BAY & ETOSHA April 4th ~ 18th 2008

Tour Report

Leaders:

Callan Cohen
Mike Crewe

How do you sum up a country like Namibia? It's Africa – is it going to be a bit grubby? A bit rough at the edges? A bit make-do-and-mend? Not a bit of it! This trip saw us travelling from comfortable accommodation to comfortable accommodation, where welcoming staff and owners alike all provided a wonderful service, good wine and beer and top food, the like of which you would be hard pressed to beat anywhere in the world. We began in the rocky plateau around Windhoek with our first zebras, oryx, hartebeest and typical African birds – hornbills, rollers and endearing Familiar Chats. We passed through scenic mountain passes, crossed arid river beds and traversed the great gravel plains of the Namib Desert, where contorted, ancient rock beds were pushed up to provide an amazing backdrop of red and golden mountains. The enormous coastal sand dunes bordering Walvis Bay were truly awesome and the feeling of desolation brought about in the parched flatlands as we pondered the bizarre Welwitschia plants could have provided no greater contrast to the staggering abundance of shorebirds around the salt pans.

With the country having experienced the most rain for some 50 years, much of the desert was clothed in verdant bushman-grass and the wildlife had responded to this time of plenty by breeding in abundance. Springbok and Common Zebra herds had plenty of young and Stark's Larks literally swarmed around the Brandberg. Stunning granite inselbergs rose all around on our travel days and provided not only a dramatic backdrop, but also some great wildlife experiences with the likes of cliff-nesting Rosy-faced Lovebirds, boisterous Rockrunners and those superb Dassie Rats.

As if to really push home just how overwhelming the contrasts in Namibia are, we headed north from the deserts and grassveld and enjoyed the very best that Etosha National Park has to offer. Here and in the surrounding countryside, among a patchwork of grassy savanna and Mopane woodland, we encountered a real African experience; from stalking Lions and ponderous Elephants, through graceful herds of Springbok and Common Zebra, via chuckling flocks of Namaqua Sandgrouse at waterholes to silently watchful Lappet-faced and White-backed Vultures, pink-eyed Verreaux's Eagle Owls and endearing troupes of mongeese. So how come Namibia seems to be such a big secret? Not any more!

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 Friday April 4th 2008 Leave London Heathrow Airport, bound for Namibia – somewhat mysteriously flying on Oasis Hong Kong Airlines!!.

Day 2 Saturday April 5th 2008 We arrived early morning in Windhoek on our direct flight and were soon meeting up with Callan, having enjoyed our first Rock Martins while queuing at immigration. Immediately out of the door we added Groundscraper Thrush, Marico Sunbird and a bewildering array of swallows and swifts before making the 45km drive to Windhoek and our hotel. Before lunch we wandered the local streets which proved better than it sounds! Familiar Chat, Monteiro's Hornbill, a calling Rockrunner and our first Namibian Rock Agamas were enjoyed among many others, then we sampled our first Namibian fayre which went down a real treat.

We spent the afternoon at the Daan Viljoen Reserve which gave us our first taste of large mammals as we found Gemsbok, Red hartebeest and good views of Hartmann's Mountain Zebra. A small lake gave us our only Darter of the trip and obliging Mountain Wheatears, three male Dideric Cuckoos, our first Shaft-tailed Whydahs, Lilac-breasted Rollers and Red-billed Francolins and various flighty waxbills and bishops were all seen. It was hard work tearing ourselves away to make it out of the gate before lock down!

Day 3 Sunday April 6th 2008 Most were up for unofficial pre-breakfast walks for the likes of Monteiro's Hornbill, Pirit Batis and probably the last time anyone really looked at a White-browed Sparrow-weaver! After breakfast we began the long but exciting drive to Walvis Bay, passing through some spectacular, scenic passes before dropping down through the rocky hills to the gravel plains of the Namib Desert and into the sand deserts around Walvis Bay. Callan's knowledge ensured that we paused at all the right places for some great birding stops: a roadside Pale Chanting Goshawk devouring a snake, African Pygmy Falcons hanging out around Sociable Weaver nests, great views of some busy Cape Penduline-tits and some good sightings of Tawny Eagles and White-backed Vultures. We had good roadside views of a singing Karoo Long-billed Lark and some tame Rock Hyraxes at one of the larger river crossings – which actually had a little water in it! Our big shock came as we dropped down onto the gravel plains of the Namib – we couldn't see the desert for grass!!! It transpired that Namibia had experienced its heaviest rains for 50 years and throughout the trip we were to find vegetation everywhere – providing more than enough cover for bustards, meerkats and much much more... Passing our first Springbok herds in the Namib-Naukluft we pressed on and the sun had just set by the time we reached Walvis Bay, but it had been an amazing day full of great birds.

Day 4 Monday April 7th 2008 Despite being on the edge of one of the World's most impressive deserts, today we were spend plenty of time looking at waterbirds! Our pre-breakfast stroll started with Cape Wagtails and a party of Orange River White-eyes before we hit the waterfront and scanned the great wealth of birds on the enormous lagoon. Pelicans, flamingos and cormorants were everywhere, with a liberal scattering of Grey Plovers, Hartlaub's and Kelp Gulls, a range of terns and some very obliging White-fronted Plovers. After breakfast we headed for one of Namibia's most famous locations, the so-called Sand Sea – a stunning mountain range of unclimbable sand dunes that provided a spectacular backdrop to our birding. Callan gave us a good insight into the ecosystem as we studied endemic dune grasses and watched the famous Namibian darkling beetles and desert lizards. Perhaps the highlight here was the discovery of a wonderful Peringuey's Adder that sidwinded across the sand and hid under a desert melon bush. But our main quarry here was Dune Lark – Namibia's only true endemic bird - and, after a bit of a search, we located a pair which, after careful approach, allowed us plenty of photo opportunities. A smart calling Bokmakierie and some mysterious Zebra Finches rounded off the morning and we headed back to town.

Taking a picnic lunch, we headed off into the gravel plains of the Namib Desert, stopping for nice roadside views of the highly desert-adapted Gray's Lark. We passed spectacular sand dunes before heading across the gravel beds to an amazing viewpoint, overlooking an ancient river bed system and some spectacular rock structures (most of which Anne tried to get into the vehicles!!). Lunch was shared with a very friendly Tractrac Chat who had clearly learned that cars mean food and only allowed photo opportunities for those with close-focus lenses! After lunch we continued through an amazing, seemingly lifeless, wilderness before stopping at a colony of extraordinary plants – Namibia's famous *Welwitschia mirabilis*. Both male and female plants were bearing their peculiar cone-like structures and we took time to ponder on this most bizarre of plants which has no obvious affinities to any other species or even group of plants and is known to live for at least 1000years. The rest of our afternoon saw us back at the coast, touring the enormous salt lagoon complex and enjoying an incredible abundance of shorebirds, numbers perhaps swelled by migrants now moving north from South Africa. Smart Curlew Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones and Bar-tailed Godwits were coming into breeding plumage, but the best spectacle was provided by the sight of countless Little Stints all at high tide roost with surely in excess of 10,000 birds present. A Terek Sandpiper was an added bonus and, after much searching, we finally found a wonderful group of Chestnut-banded Plovers. This could easily be a barren and desolate place, but the flocks of shorebirds, with a backdrop of a wonderful desert sunset was truly wonderful.

Day 5 Tuesday April 8th 2008 After a pre-breakfast sortie which eventually produced some rather distant Damara Terns, we headed north towards Swakopmund, pausing to scan the guano platform and later a wooden jetty to enjoy Crowned, Cape, Great and Bank Cormorants side by side for direct comparison. With a picnic lunch from the shops we headed inland for to the 700 million year-old granite outcrop of the Spitzkoppe – the Matterhorn of Namibia. After a short guided tour of the Bushman rock art, we had a picnic lunch, then began a search for Herero Chat which was to become our nemesis species sadly. Still, the search gave us a host of nice birds, including Black-breasted Prinias, Dusky Sunbirds and a Yellow-bellied Eremomela at a nest.

We pushed on to the Erongo Mountains, another area of remarkable, ancient, weather-hewn granite outcrops and arrived in perfect time to enjoy a pair of the normally elusive Hartlaub's Francolins before some top Namibian beer and wine and another superb meal – just how many good cooks can there be in one country?! Walking back to our rooms with a stunning Milky Way overhead and no light pollution was another moment to be cherished.

Day 6 Wednesday April 9th 2008 Having beaten the system and got Hartlaub's Francolin yesterday evening we had want only Callan would term a lie-in this morning! Our pre-breakfast walk certainly turned up a great range of birds, however, including Violet-backed and Pale-winged Starlings, Klaas's Cuckoo, Barred Wren-warbler, Monteiro's Hornbill and Hartlaub's Francolins – yet again! We also had fabulous views of a feisty Rockrunner which posed superbly for us. The breakfast table proved even more magical as nearby rocks functioned as a grand bird (and mammal!) table and we enjoyed a very protracted meal as we ate between photographic opportunities with Rosy-faced Lovebirds, Speckled Pigeons, Great Sparrows, Black-fronted Bulbuls, Rock Hyraxes and those amazing Dassie Rats – the latter quite definitely the

highlight of the trip for yours truly! After some lengthy travel days we had a chance for a breather today and we spent much of the day lounging at our rooms, wandering the grounds or just soaking up the ambience of the place. For those wandering around, there were White-tailed Shrikes, Black-faced Waxbills, Rockrunners and those amazing lovebirds to enjoy as well as copious reptiles, butterflies, flowers and even amazing rock formations to enjoy and all at our own leisurely pace.

Late afternoon we headed into town, to Omaruru, and drove down to the now dry Omaruru river. The huge acacia and Leadwood trees here provide a different habitat and consequently a different suite of birds, but our early searches produced little new. However, we eventually ventured along the riverbed itself and after much searching turned up a lone Violet Woodhoopoe as well as Burchell's Starling, Three-banded Plover and plenty of Fork-tailed Drongos and heard African Paradise Flycatcher and several African Scops Owls.

Day 7 Thursday April 10th 2008 Another wonderfully protracted breakfast overlooking the feeding station followed an early morning stroll in search of White-tailed Shrikes. We found them, along with the likes of Carp's Tit, Grey Go-away-bird, Short-tailed Rock-thrush, Barred Wren-warbler and some Black-throated Canaries that seemed to have fledged just that morning. A final look around at the amazing wildlife here and we headed out, to be confronted by a fabulous African Wild Cat that nipped across the road in front of us – a treat indeed. A pause in town for fuel gave an opportunity to study Bradfield's Swifts again then we got some serious mileage under our belts and we made Uis in plenty of time for an ice-cream stop! Pushing on towards the Brandberg, we had a roadside lunch stop and found a nice rocky hillside that provided us with good views of a pair of Rüppell's Bustards and a singing Benguela Long-billed Lark, while much of our time in the area saw us scouring for the infamous Herero Chat! By late afternoon we had arrived at our spectacularly scenic lodgings, overlooking the enormous granite intrusion of the Brandberg, at over 8,400ft the highest point in Namibia. At the main reception area we discovered a continual flow of Lark-like Buntings, Grey-backed Sparrow-larks, Stark's Larks, Cape Sparrows and Cape Glossy Starlings coming to drink at the pool in the garden which entertained us until room keys were sorted and we drove over to our accommodations, tucked away under secluded riverine trees. A late afternoon walk gave us a chance to stretch legs after a day in the vehicles, as well as add Pearl-spotted Owlet to the trip list.

Day 8 Friday April 11th 2008 Today's pre-breakfast sortie took place after breakfast (enough said!!) and took us around the nearby campground and before long we were enjoying the hoped-for Bare-cheeked Babblers, one of Africa's most attractive babbler species. Otherwise things were generally quiet so we were soon packed and heading across the Namib gravel plains, which were swathed in a carpet of silky-flowered bushman-grass. Despite the vegetation, we nevertheless did very well for desert birds, with Stark's Larks breeding in great profusion and providing an almost deafening background sound to our birding. Here too we had close-up views of displaying Rüppell's Bustards, a wonderful roadside White-quilled Bustard, a very personal encounter with a pair of Namaqua Sandgrouse and their fluffy chick and some rather frustrating moments with elusive Meerkats.

Our journey today was an amazing one of change, as we left behind the barren plains of the Namib Desert and eventually came across a dry river bed lined with our first Mopane Trees where we sat in the shade and had lunch. Mopanes increased in dominance as we headed further into a higher rainfall zone and we even found river with water in!! Ever northward, it was just gone sunset when we eventually made it to Kavita (there had just been too much to stop for!) and took the little dirt road to our lodgings – but even now the birding wasn't over as we located two Spotted Thick-knees and several Two-banded Sandgrouse in the headlights. Yet again we enjoyed some staggeringly good roast potatoes with our roast Oryx/beef/bean curd (delete as appropriate!).

Day 9 Saturday April 12th 2008 A very different pre-breakfast stroll today saw us following a winding path along a stony ridge amongst Mopane and acacia trees, in search of the elusive Orange River Francolin. They called but remained disinterested in us, so we made do with the likes of Golden-breasted Bunting, Black-faced Waxbill and a very close Greater Kudu – as well as those unappetising Mopane Worms! We had earned another filling scrambled egg and bacon breakfast special before we headed along the road to another lodge near Hobatere. Here, well-developed Mopane woodland gave us some great birding (as well as copious Giraffes!) and we enjoyed African Golden Oriole, Lilac-breasted Roller, Damara Red-billed Hornbill and Meves's Long-tailed Starlings among many others and took quite some time to make it through to the lodge itself. Once there, we parked up and took a bush walk along a dry river in search of owls - which decided to hide from us! No matter, there was plenty else to enjoy, including a nice encounter with a Great Spotted Cuckoo and plenty of animal tracks to try and identify – though the Lion prints almost as big as your hand were pretty clear!

Lunch was taken from a vantage point overlooking the savannah and peaked with the group enjoying first a fine African Elephant and then two majestic Lions – not a stone's throw from our morning walking route! This was Jo's real star turn as she produced pretty much all the top sightings of the morning! After a siesta we headed slowly back, allowing time to bird the Mopane woodland and find a nice pair of Rüppell's Parrots and an obliging Buffy Pipit among more expected stuff. After dinner we ventured out for a night drive and, though the nightjars were far from obliging, we were nevertheless pleased with the two super Bronze-winged Coursers and bouncing Springhares that we encountered.

Day 10 Sunday April 13th 2008 Moving on again today, we began with a second attempt at the local Orange River Francolins, but we fared little better than yesterday – though we did get close this time! Our drive took us through some fabulous lush scenery, a mixture of grasslands and mixed thornveld and we saw a nice array of birds, including good close views of an adult Black-breasted Snake Eagle. But the star attraction of the morning was to be at our feet as thousands upon thousands of butterflies were attracted to damp mud patches on the dirt roads. Painted Ladies dominated, but there was also large numbers of Diadems - the males with their flashy blue iridescent patches - as well as masses of Long-tailed Blues and an array of others that took a bit of sorting out once we got home! Thanks to Callan's local knowledge and contacts, we spent lunch with a wonderful American couple, Tim and Laurel, who enthused about things even more than we did!! Lunch was taken as an aside as the more important issues of Namibian geology, local recipes and assorted small mammals were discussed and viewed – the latter including a species of *Petromyscus* mouse that has yet to be scientifically described, so we can't tick it yet as it has no name!!

As we drew closer to Etosha, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-larks were seen along the way and a female Pygmy Falcon posed nicely for us. Having completed formalities at the gate, we were soon driving through Etosha – and wanting to stop at least three times every 10 seconds for photographs! It was a struggle getting to the first accommodation as we paused for Common Zebras, Springbok, Giraffe and – for some of us at least – a female Black Rhino with her young calf. An open pan with bare earth proved a popular spot for Temminck's Coursers and Crowned Lapwings and we enjoyed good numbers of Lilac-breasted Rollers and roadside Sabota Larks. Finally we did tear ourselves away from the windows long enough to reach reception, sort out rooms and get settled for the night, though there was still the water hole to be visited!!

Day 11 Monday April 14th 2008 We began with a pre-breakfast drive as soon as the gates opened at 06:00hrs and cruised slowly along with the backdrop of a superb African sunrise. The flat, open grassveld was littered with plains grazers of all sorts, but it was a courting pair of Black-backed Jackals that really caught our attention as we watched their playful antics, which at one point involved a small branch and a rock! Equally attractive was a female Yellow Mongoose with two button-nosed youngsters and our first good looks at endearing South African Ground Squirrels. The short turf areas were great for larks and here we had great views of a number of Pink-billed Larks and two species of sparrow-larks as well as African Pipits. We also had a really close encounter with a Kori Bustard, which certainly got all the cameras going wild! Breakfast was a very grand affair in the plush new dining room. After a final look at the Water Thick-knees at the water-hole and some nice finds around the grounds (including Cardinal Woodpecker, Brubru and African Hoopoe) we drove slowly through the reserve to the next accommodation area, taking in a number of waterholes along the way. Great views of Ostriches, drinking Gemsbok and a superb group of four Secretarybirds stole the show and we found good numbers of Marico Flycatchers and a few of the more chunky Chat Flycatcher. Andy B.'s star find of the day was a superb perched Martial Eagle – though even this wonderful bird was of no interest to the tunnel-vision 'big five' tourists who stopped in hope of something 'interesting'!!

We arrived at our next overnight stop in time for a late lunch and siesta, then late afternoon we began a quest for owls (steady Jo!). And what a success it was as we tracked down a pair of calling Verreaux's Eagle Owls in time to scope their amazing pink eyelids before they moved off for the evening and later found a wonderful African Scops Owl sat right out in full view. The water-hole did us proud too, as those who ventured there were rewarded with a Black Rhino and calf coming to drink.

Day 12 Tuesday April 15th 2008 Another day, another lodge! We were now passing through areas of thicker Mopane woodland, which allowed us to enjoy close encounters with Etosha's famous Black-faced Impalas, while one of the rocky outcrop areas provided us with a pair of smart White Helmetshrikes as well as some Southern Pied Babblers. Our route eventually brought us closer to the main pan at Etosha and we were privileged indeed to see it brimming with water, with Red-billed Ducks and Grey-headed Gulls swimming on it! Some of us found a close-up pair of Double-banded Coursers with a well-grown youngster and we had a good day for Bateleurs, including one feeding on a road-kill Spotted Thick-knee. We timed our arrival at the next lodgings perfectly for lunch by the pool and swiftly followed lunch with a great photo opportunity with a whole tribe of Banded Mongoose – including some youngsters that can't have been more than a few days old. With rooms organised (and the surprise discovery of sunken baths and twin showers!!) we went for a late afternoon drive, though didn't even get out of the camp before we encountered a gang of Warthogs! We drove around one side of Fischer's Pan which has more fresh water in it than the main Etosha Pan, and thus more wildlife. Kori Bustards strutted past groups of graceful Giraffes, we found a pair of Red-necked Falcons at their favoured Rhun Palms and we eventually tracked down a graceful Blue Crane. Kittlitz's Plovers and Blacksmith and African Wattled Lapwings posed almost too close for photos and we were treated to a magnificent sunset as moody storm clouds gathered somewhere way off to the east.

Day 13 Wednesday April 16th 2008 A last chance to enjoy the mammal spectacle of Etosha was had on our pre-breakfast drive and we found a third Black Rhino for the trip loafing under a tree. On another section of Fischer's Pan, we found three huge Saddle-billed Storks that made a nearby Grey Heron look very silly, while the open water held a number of waterfowl species, including Comb Ducks, Red-knobbed Coots and Black-necked Grebes. More Impala were too close to drive by without yet more photos being taken, then it was back for breakfast at the German fort before packing and moving out. Once out of Etosha we made good time along the main tarmac road, stopped to buy lunch at a local store and continued to find a nice place to eat it. Yet more butterflies filled the puddles and it was a first to watch Rufous-vented Warbler while eating a Cornish pasty!! Progress continued well until we got much closer to the Waterberg, when we discovered far too many birds along the dirt road! A soaring flock of White-backed and Lappet-faced Vultures had us out of the vehicles in no time, we scoped some close Scaly-fronted Weavers (for good views at last!) and scanned through dozens and dozens of Red-billed Quelea flocks. A pair of Rüppell's Parrots appeared to be nesting (or at least attempting to) in a telegraph pole and plenty of Pale Chanting Goshawks lined our route. Two Swainson's Francolins were an addition to the ever-growing trip list as we pushed on and finally made it to our accommodation, where Red-billed Francolins and Damara Dik-diks fed peacefully on the lawns and Marico Sunbirds visited the Aloe flowers. Yet more great food filled the table, good beer/wine (delete as necessary!) flowed and we dined amid a mass of amazing Cream-striped Owls which seemed to be attracted to every light they could find –luckily they are moths and not birds!!

Day 14 Thursday April 17th 2008 Our last chance for a pre-breakfast walk saw an impressive turn-out as we enjoyed a very different dawn chorus. A calling Golden-tailed Woodpecker remained hidden, as did a drumming Bearded Woodpecker, but several Rüppell's Parrots and Rosy-faced Lovebirds came out of their roosts, Grey-backed Camaropteras showed well and we finally tracked down a busy little corner which gave us good views of White-browed Scrub Robins and a Burnt-necked Eremomela. On the way to breakfast we were severely held up by a wonderfully endearing gang of Dwarf Mongoose (here of the jet black colour form) which were simply too wonderful to pass by. Breakfast overlooking the vast plain of Hereroland came and went and it was soon time for a final packing session and the discovery that certain bags were an awful lot heavier than they had been on the way out – mysterious! Some final shots of the butterflies and some Blue-breasted Cordon-bleus at the bird bath, then it was off, out the gate and a rapid run south to our lunch stop at a café in Okahandja, some quick souvenir shopping and the obligatory group photo. The necessary evil of airport formalities was endured and we were bemused to find we were returning with Air Italy – Oh well, so long as we get there!! We were a little late leaving, but had an enormous amount of memories to see us through the journey.

Day 15 Friday April 18th 2008 Arriving back in chilly England, we soon had our bags and headed off home with a promise to meet again soon – but will we find another country so spectacular?

I should like to extend thanks to everyone for making this a truly memorable trip, and special thanks to young Callan for putting together such an amazing itinerary – can you believe there are actually people out there who have never been to Namibia?!!

Systematic Species List

Common Ostrich *Struthio camelus*

A good scattering on six dates; especially common in Etosha but more impressive when seen in the wilderness of the Namib Desert!

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Noted on five dates, including some families of young chicks.

Orange River Francolin *Francolinus levaillantoides*

Always a real toughy, we all heard calling birds at Kavita but only the guide managed to see one – sorry!

Hartlaub's Francolin *Francolinus hartlaubi*

Another frustrating species, we actually got really lucky this year without even trying! A fine pair seen a couple of times at Erongo and two very close to us at Kavita.

Red-billed Francolin *Francolinus adspersus*

Widespread and seen throughout the tour except in the western desert areas. Very tame at Waterberg.

Swainson's Francolin *Francolinus swainsonii*

Two seen well along the road to the Waterberg on 16th.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Heard calling by some of the group on 6th during our travels.

Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

At least four at Fischer's Pan, Etosha on 16th.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Noted on eight dates scattered throughout in suitable habitat.

South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana*

Two at a roadside lake on 11th and a couple of singles in the Etosha area on 16th and 17th.

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*

A dozen at Walvis Bay on 7th and a scattering at Etosha on 15th.

Red-billed Duck *Anas erythrorhyncha*

A scattering at wetlands on four dates, most notably at Walvis Bay and Etosha.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Two at Etosha on 16th and another single the next day.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

A party of eight at Etosha on 16th.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Many thousands of flamingos were seen in the Walvis Bay lagoon area, while a singleton was noted at Etosha on 16th.

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*

A flock of around 20 birds flew across our path at Walvis Bay on 7th.

Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*

It has to be said that one at a waterhole at Etosha on 14th looked decidedly ill and had probably been left behind when the flock departed.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

Nine on a spit at Etosha Pan on 15th.

European White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

A single bird at Etosha on 16th.

Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*

Very close views of three juveniles at Fischer's Pan, Etosha on 16th. So big they made a nearby Grey Heron look silly!

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Ten or so at Fishers Pan in Etosha on 16th.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Just two singletons at Etosha – a strange experience not to see this species scattered around the mammal herds.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

A good scattering of birds around both Walvis Bay and Etosha.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Small numbers seen around Walvis Bay but absent from other sites visited.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Some superb glowing pink birds enjoyed around Walvis Bay and a single youngster at Etosha.

Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*

Some managed to see one fly south off Walvis Bay on 7th.

Crowned Cormorant *Phalacrocorax coronatus*

At least three at the jetty at Swakopmund on 8th.

Bank Cormorant *Phalacrocorax neglectus*

Always the trickiest cormorant to find, we scoped one at Swakopmund on 8th.

Great (White-breasted) Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus*

Common around Walvis Bay where many white-fronted adults were enjoyed. Very different to our European birds.

Cape Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis*

Abundant along the coast where present in busy feeding flocks.

Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

One at the lake at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th.

African Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus*

What an amazing little bird! A total of at least six birds seen, including a couple of obliging pairs at Sociable Weaver nests on 6th.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Widespread in small numbers, especially in rocky or mountainous terrain. Sometimes split as Rock Kestrel *Falco rupicolus*.

Greater Kestrel *Falco rupicoloides*

One near the Spitzkoppe on 8th a roadside pair on the drive to Etosha on 13th and two in Etosha on 14th.

Red-necked Falcon *Falco chiquera*

A pair seen on territory in Rhun Palms (their favoured habitat) at Etosha on 15th.

Lanner *Falco biarmicus*

One watched mobbing a Booted Eagle near the Brandberg on 11th.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

A single bird was seen at Etosha on 14th.

Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius*

One seen during our drive to the coast on 6th then an amazing total of eight birds at Etosha on 14th, including four together at a waterhole.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Rather scarce with just three birds seen in the latter half of the tour.

Black (Yellow-billed) Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus*

Just a single roadside bird on a telegraph pole on 13th.

African White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*

Recorded in good numbers on six dates with several spiralling parties of up to 10 birds noted.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*

Small numbers noted on five dates, including six on our drive on 6th and five at the Waterberg on 16th.

Black-breasted Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis*

One to four on six dates, providing a good scattering of excellent sightings, all of smart adults.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*

Good views of a flying bird on the way to Kavita on 11th.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*

An excellent total of 11 birds, including both smart adults and brown youngsters. Perhaps best views were of an adult scavenging a dead Spotted Thick-knee on the road in Etosha.

Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus*

Widespread throughout and noted daily. The first bird we saw eating a snake on a phone pole will take some beating!

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*

A total of three singles noted on 5th, 12th and 16th with the latter bird at Etosha giving superb views as it perched right beside the road.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

A flurry of records in the north of the country with singles on four dates from 12th and an impressive total of 12 on 15th.

Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*

Super views of one on territory at the Waterberg on 17th after a brief glimpse on 16th (much to Malcolm's delight!).

Common (Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus*

Single individuals of this migratory, long-winged form were noted floating over the dunes near Walvis Bay on 7th and at Etosha on 16th.

[Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*

A leader-only noted at Erongo on 9th.]

Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus*

Again, just a single, leader-only bird at Erongo on 9th – OK, we were supposed to be on a siesta!!

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*

A scattering of two to five birds on five dates with a wide range of colour morphs seen, including some very pale birds.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*

Always a star attraction, some of the group saw one on 9th while we all saw a soaring pair during our drive to Kavita on 11th.

African Hawk-eagle *Hieraaetus spilogaster*

A total of six birds logged, all adults and all giving great views. Best of all was the pair at a nest in Etosha with the male seen bringing a snake in to the nest.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*

A nice light morph bird flew over us with a Lanner in tow near the Brandberg on 11th.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*

A nice juvenile in the hills during our drive to the coast on 6th and two in Etosha on 14th, including a close, perched adult.

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*

A good scattering in Etosha with a total of nine birds seen, including one with a chick and some very close roadside birds.

Ludwig's Bustard *Neotis ludwigii*

If only we had a picture of Callan's face!!!! One flew high overhead at the Waterberg on 17th and really wasn't acting like a bustard at all!!

Rüppell's Bustard *Eupodotis rueppellii*

An obliging pair at our roadside lunch stop on 10th and an even better, displaying pair, near the Brandberg on 11th.

Red-crested Bustard *Lophotis ruficrista*

Heard calling on three dates but almost gave us the slip. One on our night drive on 12th and another along the road to the Waterberg on 16th which hadn't read the rules and decided to fly off instead of walking out of cover like they usually do – sorry front bus!

White-quilled Bustard *Eupodotis afroaoides*

Heard or seen on four dates with some spectacular roadside males near the Brandberg on 11th and in Etosha on 14th.

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra*

One seen by some of the group at the Namutoni water hole on 15th.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Six at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th, one roadside bird on 6th and a couple of singletons in Etosha.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

Three at Fischer's Pan on 16th and a roadside bird the next day.

Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradisaeus*

After much scanning, we found one at Fischer's Pan on 15th.

Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*

A feature of the Etosha waterholes with small numbers seen at each of our overnight stops.

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*

Great views of two as we arrived at Kavita on 11th and four on our night drive there the following evening.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

A small scattering at Walvis Bay on 7th and at least two at Fischer's Pan on 15th.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

At least 14 at Walvis Bay on 7th and four at Etosha Pan on 15th.

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*

Small numbers seen on the edge of water on several days of the trip with highest numbers in Etosha.

Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus*

Widespread in open, grassy areas especially in Etosha, where up to 50 seen on one day.

African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*

Four birds seen on the roadside at Fischer's pan on 15th.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Abundant at Walvis Bay with many coming into smart breeding plumage.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Plentiful at Walvis Bay, where birds are of the Arctic breeding form, *tundrae*, which is a little smaller and darker on the mantle than UK breeding birds.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

At least four seen at Etosha on 15th, including a very obliging pair of roadside birds.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

Noted along freshwater rivers where a remnant of water was still to be found! Seen along the Omaruru and Ugab rivers and a couple at Etosha, including one with chicks on 16th.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*

Very common around Walvis Bay on both 7th and 8th, including several pairs with chicks.

Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus*

After much searching, we finally found a wonderful flock of 20 of these smart waders at Walvis bay on 7th. Also two at Etosha Pan on 15th.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africana*

Just one seen at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Large numbers out in the lagoon at Walvis Bay.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Two of the long-billed, eastern form, *orientalis* were at Walvis bay on 8th.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Strangely not seen at Walvis Bay but five at Fischer's Pan, Etosha on 15th saved the day.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

One on a roadside pool on 11th and at least seven in Etosha.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

A smart, breeding-plumaged bird was seen in good light at Walvis Bay on 11th.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Still large numbers of migrants and wintering birds at Walvis, including many in smart breeding dress.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Small numbers dotted around Walvis Bay on 7th.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

A stunning sight at Walvis Bay where a roost flock of some 10,000+ birds was watched.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Plentiful at Walvis Bay with many coming into brick-red breeding plumage.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Small parties scattered around Walvis Bay and a handful at Etosha wetlands.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Some of the group managed to get onto one or two among the wader hordes at Walvis Bay on 7th.

Burchell's Courser *Cursorius rufus*

A party of four flew close overhead but landed a bit distantly on the drive to Erongo on 8th, though sadly missed by the front bus...

Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii*

A wonderful gathering of 10 birds on a dry pan at Etosha on 13th.

Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus*

One seen in flight on 10th was surpassed by a pair with a youngster in Etosha on 15th—at least by those who saw them.

Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*

Two seen very well on our night drive at Kavita on 12th.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus vetula*

Plentiful around Walvis bay and Swakopmund. Some field guides split this subspecies as Cape Gull, though the reasons for doing so are not proven valid.

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*

A first-summer bird at Walvis Bay on 8th and at least 20 at Etosha Pan on 15th.

Hartlaub's Gull *Larus hartlaubii*

Very common in and around Walvis Bay.

Damara Tern *Sternula balaenarum*

Not at all obliging this year, with one or two fishing at a great distance over the Walvis Bay lagoon on 8th.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Some 25 birds around Walvis bay and Swakopmund.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

- At least six flying over the lagoon at Walvis bay on 7th and 8th.
- Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis***
Three flew past Swakopmund on 8th.
- Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergii***
Two on the beach near Swakopmund on 8th.
- Common Tern *Sterna hirundo***
A handful were scattered around Walvis Bay (probably *longipennis* race); most must have already departed for the northern hemisphere.
- Namaqua Sandgrouse *Pterocles namaqua***
Good numbers in the Namib Desert with 20+ on 6th and 10+ on 8th, then an impressive 50+ around the Brandberg area on 11th, including a pair with a tiny, fluffy chick right in the middle of the road which gave great photo opportunities.
- Double-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles bicinctus***
Noted daily in the north of the country from 11th to 15th and a feature of the Etosha waterholes each evening.
- Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia***
Rather scarce with a thin scattering in the larger towns.
- Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea***
Largely confined to the southern half of the tour though seen very well at some of the lodges, especially at Erongo.
- Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola***
Abundant and widespread, recorded daily.
- Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis***
Almost as common as the above species and similarly recorded throughout.
- Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis***
Widespread in small numbers and especially numerous in more open areas of Etosha.
- Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis***
Noted on six dates with some wonderful views of birds at Erongo and Waterberg. I defy anyone to keep a single parrot in a cage after watching these social creatures in the wild...
- Rüppell's Parrot *Poicephalus rueppellii***
Two at Hobatere on 12th and a good number at the Waterberg on 16th and 17th with two seemingly nesting in a telegraph pole and others roosting around our lodge.
- Grey Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides concolor***
Widespread in small numbers in suitable habitat throughout.
- Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus***
One along the dirt track at Kavita on 12th and a juvenile begging from Black-fronted Bulbuls at Namutoni on 15th.
- Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius***
A total of four birds logged with two at Hobatere on 12th, one on the drive on 13th and one in Etosha on 16th.
- Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus***
Heard calling distantly at Kavita on 12th.
- African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis***
A rather elusive bird at Hobatere on 12th skipped off through the trees.
- Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas***
A female spotted by Jo at Erongo on 9th and a very vocal male darted around there on both 9th and 10th.
- Dideric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius***
Super views of three fired-up males at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 6th.
- Barn Owl *Tyto alba***
Singles seen at Okaukuejo and Halali camps on 14th and one heard at the Waterberg on 16th.
- African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis***
What a star! After hearing three calling at Omaruru on 9th and failing to find daytime roosting birds elsewhere, we finally had superb views of one at Halali on 14th.
- Southern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis granti***
A nice bonus bird on our night drive at Kavita on 12th.
- Verreaux's Eagle Owl *Bubo lacteus***
Calm down Jo!! Those pink eyelids fluttered at us at Halali as a pair prepared to go out to hunt on 14th.
- Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum***
Heard on a total of seven dates with singles seen well at the Brandberg on 10th and Namutoni on 15th.
- Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufigena***
Kind of glimpsed as it shot over the bus roofs on 9th!!
- Freckled Nightjar *Caprimulgus tristigma***
Plenty calling at the Waterberg and some managed to see some flitting after moths around the lights. Also noted at Erongo on 8th and 9th
- Square-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus fossii***
Nightjars at the Etosha waterholes were hard to get a proper look at as they chased moths in the floodlights, but at least one of this species was identified at Halali on 14th.
- African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus***
Scarce – probably because palm trees were too!! A handful seen around Windhoek at both ends of the trip.
- Alpine Swift *Apus melba***
Odd pairs scattered throughout the tour but best views were at Waterberg where birds were breeding on the cliffs – and calling all night!
- Common Swift *Apus apus***
Small numbers noted around Windhoek and at Windhoek Airport. These strongly-contrasting, dark birds with extensive white throats appear to be of the eastern form *pekinensis* which breeds in Asia.
- Bradfield's Swift *Apus bradfieldi***
Noted on nine dates throughout the tour. Easily told from Common Swifts from their overall plain brown appearance, rather 'full' tail giving a heavier back end and less screaming call.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Widespread and seen almost daily with breeding colonies a regular feature under road bridges.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*

Small numbers seen at scattered sites throughout. Not a colonial breeder so never seen in large gatherings, pairs favour using old Greater Striped swallow nests under roadside culverts and bridges.

White-backed Mousebird *Colius colius*

Small numbers on seven dates with good views particularly around Windhoek.

Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus*

Small numbers on five dates with the first three seen at the Spitzkoppe on 8th and others north into Etosha.

Rufous-crowned Roller *Coracias naevia*

One to two on five dates around Etosha and neighbouring lands.

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudata*

Very common in the north of the country, especially Etosha.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*

Widespread in small numbers from the Spitzkoppe north with some nice views at Etosha.

Olive Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

Just two seen by Malcolm and Frances during one of our dreaded 'herero sessions' on 11th.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Just one lost and lonely bird on a roadside wire during the drive on 6th.

Common (African) Hoopoe *Upupa epops africana*

One seen by some on 5th, then a good scattering in the north of the country with some very approachable birds appreciated by the photographers at the camps. This southern form is probably worthy of a split but the situation in West Africa is not straight forward.

Violet Woodhoopoe *Phoeniculus damarensis*

A top year for this often elusive bird with one at Omaruru on 9th, one at the Brandberg on 10th and two there on 11th, then a busy party of four at Halali on 14th and 15th.

Common Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastes cyanomelas*

One to two on four dates around Etosha but not overly obliging.

African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*

Widespread and reasonably common in northern areas, especially around Etosha.

Monteiro's Hornbill *Tockus monteiri*

Some great views of this smart hornbill at a number of locations, even in the streets of Windhoek, but best seen at Erongo where one posed beautifully at breakfast time.

Damara Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus damarensis*

Four at Hobatere on 12th and a total of five in Etosha. The form *damarensis* is distinct from other forms of Red-billed Hornbill, having a dark eye and pale face. However, intermediate birds are said to occur in eastern Etosha and it seems as yet unclear whether this is a genuine hybrid zone (thus they are separate species) or if it is a clinal zone where the two forms merge from one to the other and thus don't merit a split. The only bird we saw in eastern Etosha had a dark eye but appeared to have at least some streaking on the head and was thus, presumably, a hybrid or cline.

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus leucomelas*

Single figures on five dates around Brandberg and Etosha.

Acacia Pied Barbet *Lybius leucomelas*

More often heard than seen but a good scattering of sightings on most days of the trip away from desert areas.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

One seen by some of the group on 9th at Erongo.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*

Unfortunately a heard-only with singles on 9th, 13th and 17th.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicus fuscescens*

Great views of a busy male in an acacia at Okaukuejo on 14th and another more briefly on 16th.

Bearded Woodpecker *Dendropicus namaquus*

One seen by some on 6th then a male along the Omaruru River on 9th. One drumming at the Waterberg on 17th.

Pirit Batis *Batis pririt*

This smart – and noisy! – little bird was seen regularly with sightings logged on eight dates throughout the tour.

White-tailed Shrike *Lanioturdus torquatus*

One of Namibia's star birds, these showed very well at both Erongo and Kavita.

White Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus*

A very obliging pair was seen well at Etosha on 15th. The local form has a short, curly crest, unlike the long, upright crest of other forms.

Bokmakierie *Telophorus zeylonus*

Two showed very well near Walvis Bay on 7th and another was at our lunch stop on 10th.

Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis*

Rather elusive with singles on three dates but none really putting on a good show. Perhaps best was the one at our Brandberg pre-breakfast walk on 11th.

Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*

One or two at Erongo on 9th and 10th then some great views at the Etosha lodges on 16th and 17th, including a pair with fledged young.

Crimson-breasted Gonolek *Laniarius atrococcineus*

One at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th then none until the north of the country where we had odd ones and twos daily from 12th around Hobatere, Kavita and Etosha.

Brubru *Nilaus afer*

Birds heard or seen on four dates from 12th in the north of the country with best views of the bird at Okaukuejo.

White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus anguithimens*

Three at the Brandberg on 10th were leader-onlys but small numbers were noted daily from 12th, especially around Etosha.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Most were doubtless well on their way north now, but we did see one female in Etosha at the Temminck's Courser stop on 13th.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

Surprisingly widespread in small numbers with one to six on all but two dates.

Common Fiscal *Lanius collaris*

Scattered in small numbers more or less throughout, though notably most common from 11th to 13th (Erongo to Hobatere).

African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus*

A scattering of sightings in the north with three at Hobatere on 12th and three singles in Etosha.

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*

Common and widespread, especially in the north, though absent from driest desert areas.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

One heard calling from riverine scrub at Omaruru on 9th but we were focused on other things at the time....

Cape Crow *Corvus capensis*

A scattering of pairs in the drier, western half of Etosha with maximum day count of 10+ on 14th.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

Two on the drive west to Walvis Bay on 6th then another pair noted by some of the group at Etosha on 14th.

Carp's Tit *Melaniparus carpi*

Small numbers around Erongo and north to Hobatere. Best views at Erongo where a feeding party of six birds was seen on 9th and 10th.

Ashy Tit *Melaniparus cinerascens*

Great views of three near Walvis Bay on 7th then one or two almost daily from 10th to 16th.

Cape Penduline-tit *Anthoscopus minutus*

Often a skittish and elusive species, so we particularly enjoyed the wonderful views at the pass west of Windhoek on 6th.

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta*

Two near Hobatere on 12th and six near the Etosha entrance on 13th – if you were in the right bus!

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Recorded almost every day in small numbers, often near its favoured nest sites in rocky outcrops and buildings.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

A scattering of strays wandered by with three on 7th, one on 12th and five or so on 15th.

Northern House Martin *Delichon urbica*

Six at Windhoek on 5th, 20 at Hobatere on 12th and 10 or so near Etosha on 13th.

Greater Striped Swallow *Cecropis cucullata*

Noted on all but two dates with pairs mostly seen around suitable nest sites (small bridges and culverts under the road).

Rufous-chested Swallow *Cecropis semirufa*

A bit of a bonus (which got Callan animated!) as one flew past us at Windhoek on the very first day.

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*

Two seen reasonably well at a roadside stop as we drove west to Walvis Bay on 6th and one at Etosha Pan on 15th.

Sabota Lark *Calendulauda sabota*

Seen on most days of the tour, but most common in the north where there were more bushes to sing from! The birds we saw were of the large-billed form, *naevia*, sometimes referred to as Bradfield's Lark.

Dune Lark *Calendulauda erythrochlamys*

We spent plenty of time in the company of a pair of these smart larks near Walvis Bay on 7th where they live overlooking the impressive red dune 'mountains'. Namibia's only true endemic.

Gray's Lark *Ammomanopsis grayi*

This desert species, which only occurs in the harshest of conditions, was noted on the gravel plains near Walvis Bay on 6th and 7th.

Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*

A dozen or so scattered around Etosha on 14th with best views on our pre-breakfast drive.

Karoo Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda subcoronata*

Several heard singing on our drive west to Walvis Bay on 6th with one seen very well atop a fence post. Also heard during our drive on 8th.

Benguela Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda benguelensis*

A somewhat enigmatic and little-studied bird, we saw one very well at our roadside lunch stop near Uis on 10th and heard others the following day.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix leucotis*

Small numbers scattered in and near Etosha on 13th and 14th often gave very good roadside views.

Grey-backed Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix verticalis*

Widespread and quite common with birds on eight dates scattered throughout the tour.

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*

Small numbers of this smart bird were seen on the open plains of Etosha.

Stark's Lark *Spizocorys starki*

Veritable swarms of this species were singing and breeding in the Namib Desert around the Brandberg area following the exceptionally good rains.

Pink-billed Lark *Spizocorys conirostris*

Another smart and slightly enigmatic little lark, we saw good numbers around Etosha on 14th and 15th, including some scaly-backed juveniles and some very obliging roadside individuals.

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*

Odd birds around Kavita and Hobatere on 12th then small numbers around Etosha on 15th and 16th with best views at Namutoni.

Grey-backed Cisticola *Cisticola subruficapilla*

Rather elusive with just one during the drive on 6th to Walvis Bay, one near Uis on 10th and at least three near the Brandberg on 11th.

Piping Cisticola *Cisticola fulvicapilla*

One heard by those in Callan's bus at Etosha on 16th.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Heard on a couple of occasions around Etosha – but we had bigger fish to fry!

Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus*

One or two noted on the drive west to Walvis Bay on 6th then small numbers more or less daily from 11th in dry, open country.

Rufous-eared Warbler *Malcorus pectoralis*

Sadly a heard only, at one of the small passes we stopped at on the way to Walvis Bay on 6th.

Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans*

Widespread and noted in suitable habitat throughout the tour, even at Walvis Bay.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera (brachyura) brevicaudata*

Small numbers scattered throughout the tour, even in Windhoek, but best seen around the lodges in Etosha.

Barred Wren-warbler *Calamonastes fasciolatus*

Some great views of what is often a very skulking species and noted on five dates. Best of all was the singing male at Erongo who put on a great show for us.

Black-fronted Bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans*

Widespread and common – shame about the name!!

Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*

Small numbers on seven dates with good views of one at the Spitzkoppe which eventually led us to a nest with two eggs in.

Burnt-necked Eremomela *Eremomela usticollis*

Singles at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th and the Waterberg on 17th.

Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens*

Some nice views of this busy little bird with one to two on six dates from the Brandberg to Etosha and the Waterberg.

Rufous-vented Warbler *Parisoma subcaeruleum*

Odd pairs and singles seen or heard on six dates scattered throughout the tour, though more often heard than seen.

Southern Pied Babbler *Turdoides bicolor*

At Etosha, two noted on 15th and three on 16th. A very smart bird.

Bare-checked Babbler *Turdoides gymnogenys*

After worries that they could be elusive, we ended up doing well with this species. Three seen very well on our pre-breakfast walk near the Brandberg on 11th then three sightings totalling six birds around Hobatere on 12th.

Rockrunner *Chaetops pycnopygius*

One of Namibia's mascot birds, seen superbly at Erongo on 9th with others heard at Windhoek and Kavita.

Cape (Orange River) White-eye *Zosterops pallidus*

These busy little birds were seen well at Walvis Bay on 7th where at least six flitted through the street trees – even visiting the infamous Araucarias!! South Africans split this form from Cape White-eye (which then becomes *Zosterops virens*).

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*

A poor year for this nomadic species which seems to wander freely around Africa! About 15 seen during our drive on 12th and another 40 or so the next day, but only really seen in flight.

Cape Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis nitens*

Widespread throughout in small numbers and noted daily except 7th.

Meves's Long-tailed Starling *Lamprotornis mevesii*

Some 20 or so birds seen around Hobatere on 12th.

Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*

A tad elusive and perhaps best seen at Windhoek airport on 5th. Also noted at Windhoek on 6th and Omaruru on 9th.

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

Small numbers of this gorgeous species were recorded on four dates, most notably at Erongo where birds posed beautifully for us.

Pale-winged Starling *Onychognathus naboroupp*

Common in rocky southern and central areas, especially at Erongo, Spitzkoppe and Waterberg.

Groundscraper Thrush *Psophocichla litsitsirupa*

One of the first birds of the trip as one hopped on the airport lawns! Also noted at several of our accommodations throughout the tour with one to two noted on eight dates.

White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys*

A latecomer but two eventually seen very well at the Waterberg on 17th.

Kalahari Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas paena*

Something of a roadside bird and often seen at inconvenient places, but two to three noted on five dates and perhaps best seen in Etosha.

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata*

An occasional roadside bird with scattered sightings daily from 10th to 15th. Most often on fence posts or prominent rocks in open, shortgrass country.

Mountain Wheatear *Oenanthe monticola*

Four seen very well at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th then a small scattering in rocky country daily from 8th to 11th.

Karoo Chat *Cercomela schlegelii*

Another bird which only really presented itself beside the faster highways so often not seen too well. Two to four noted on 8th, 10th and 11th as we drove between sites.

Tractrac Chat *Cercomela tractrac*

So throwing a hissy fit proved a good move for Mike as it did come back!! Great views – in fact too close for some cameras! – of a charismatic bird at our lunch stop near the Welwitschia plains on 7th. The pale desert form here is very different to birds further south.

Familiar Chat *Cercomela familiaris*

As its name suggests, the most common chat in the region and seen on all but three dates scattered throughout the tour. Some very tame individuals were seen around accommodations, most notably at Windhoek.

Short-toed Rock-thrush *Monticola brevipes*

A total of six birds seen during our drive west to Walvis Bay through rocky country on 6th. Also a female at Erongo on 10th.

Chat Flycatcher *Melaenornis infuscatus*

Two seen rather briefly during the drive west on 6th, one at Kavita on 12th and two seen very well at Etosha on 13th.

Marico Flycatcher *Melaenornis mariquensis*

- Quite common in Etosha with pairs and little family groups a regular roadside sight.
- Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*
One at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th, two at the Spitzkoppe on 8th and one at the Brandberg on 11th.
- Marico Sunbird** *Cinnyris marioquensis*
One at Windhoek airport on 5th then small numbers in eastern Etosha and the Waterberg, often feeding at flowering Aloes.
- Dusky Sunbird** *Cinnyris fusca*
Common and widespread, though absent from Etosha.
- White-browed Sparrow-weaver** *Plocepasser mahali*
“Wih-bih-sws” were abundant throughout!
- Sociable Weaver** *Philetairus socius*
This endearing species and its giant nests were noted on four dates, especially on the drives to and from Walvis Bay. A real feature of the Namibian wilderness – though they are very grateful for telegraph poles!
- House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*
Common in towns in the south and central areas, such as Windhoek and Walvis Bay.
- Great Sparrow** *Passer motitensis*
Widespread and noted almost daily with particularly good views at the Erongo feeding station.
- Cape Sparrow** *Passer melanurus*
A scattering of sightings of this very smart sparrow with best views at the pool at our Brandenberg accommodation and also noted around Walvis Bay.
- Southern Grey-headed Sparrow** *Passer diffusus*
Quite common and seen throughout the tour.
- Red-billed Buffalo Weaver** *Bubalornis niger*
Seemingly not breeding at this time of year as we saw far more nests than birds! Reasonably common around Etosha however.
- Scaly-fronted Weaver** *Sporopipes squamifrons*
Very small and easily overlooked! Noted on our drive west on 6th and at the Spitzkoppe on 8th but best seen in and around Etosha on 13th and 14th and along the road to the Waterberg on 16th.
- Southern Masked Weaver** *Ploceus velatus*
Common and breeding birds seen at nests throughout the tour.
- Chestnut Weaver** *Ploceus rubiginosus*
Not breeding and seemingly elusive, we logged just a couple of brief sightings on 10th and 13th.
- Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea*
Three seen on 6th then plentiful, if not abundant, in the north with flocks spread along many roadsides in and around Etosha and the Waterberg areas.
- Southern Red Bishop** *Euplectes orix*
Just a single male seen at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th.
- Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba*
Great views of a male at Erongo on 9th.
- Red-headed Finch** *Amadina erythrocephala*
Nowhere common but a nice scattering of sightings of this smart bird on six dates, most notably at Daan Viljoen, Brandberg and Kavita.
- Blue-breasted Cordon-bleu** *Uraeginthus angolensis*
Noted at our Windhoek hotel on 5th and 6th and at the Etosha lodges at the Waterberg on 15th to 17th.
- Violet-eared Waxbill** *Uraeginthus granatinus*
A real corker but often elusive. Ones and twos on six dates scattered throughout the tour from Windhoek to Etosha.
- Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild*
Small parties seen early in the trip with birds noted on 5th, 7th and 8th around Windhoek and Walvis Bay.
- Black-faced Waxbill** *Estrilda erythronotos*
Again, a little flighty, but small numbers on six dates with the first for some of us pre-breakfast at Windhoek on 6th, but perhaps best seen around Erongo on 9th and 10th.
- African Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza fusco-crissa*
Plentiful in the arid short-grass pans at Etosha and we finally pinned a couple down for some good views on the ground on 14th.
- Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura*
Two juveniles seen very well by some of us at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th.
- Shaft-tailed Whydah** *Vidua regia*
What a bird – duly voted top bird of the tour by a wide margin! Seen throughout the tour except in the driest desert areas around Walvis Bay with full breeding plumaged males a feature of many a roadside.
- Long-tailed Paradise Whydah** *Vidua paradisaea*
Our first showy male was seen at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th then small numbers were seen in the north around Etosha and neighbouring areas from 12th.
- Cape Wagtail** *Motacilla capensis*
A small scattering of individuals on seven dates and particularly vocal and evident around Walvis Bay.
- African Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus*
Quite common in grassy areas of Etosha and seen daily from 14th to 16th with some roadside birds showing very well.
- Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis*
Two seen and heard along a rocky pass on our drive from Windhoek to Walvis Bay on 6th.
- Buffy Pipit** *Anthus vaalensis*
Good and very educational views of a perched bird at Hobatere on 12th which was photographed. Southern African pipits remain little-understood but this bird, with its rich buffy underparts, plain back and pink bill base was straight forward. Calls are likely to be very important in identifying these birds, but seem little-known at present.
- Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys*
One seen very well on 12th showed all the classic features of this species and was in stark contrast to the Buffy Pipit seen the same day – though not all individuals are likely to be so easy!

Black-throated Canary *Serinus atrogularis*

Small numbers seen almost every day of the tour, including a couple of just-fledged youngsters at Erongo – aaaahhh!

White-throated Canary *Serinus albogularis*

Pretty much eluded us this year with Andy B. seeing a couple on 8th at the Spitzkoppe and a ‘heard-only’ at our lunch stop on 10th.

Lark-like Bunting *Emberiza impetuani*

Common to abundant in open, arid areas throughout the Namib Desert region with good numbers coming to drink at our Brandberg accommodation. Common but not exactly inspiring!

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*

Small numbers almost daily in rocky locations from 5th to 12th with some nice singing males logged.

Cape Bunting *Emberiza capensis*

Just a single noted at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th.

Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris*

One at Erongo on 9th and some great views of birds around Kavita and Etosha on 12th and 13th.

Zebra Finch *Taenopygia guttata*

Just for the record it is worth noting here the sightings of this species near Walvis Bay on 7th, where a minimum of five individuals was seen in suitable breeding habitat. This Australian species is a prolific breeder and is common in captivity and these birds no doubt originated as escapes from a local owner. It is not clear however, whether these are recent escapes or represent the beginnings of a feral population – thus they are not included in the trip total, but nonetheless are an interesting find.

MAMMALS

Bushveld Elephant-shrew *Elephantulus intufi*

One seen trotting along the side of the road near the Waterberg on 16th.

Smith’s Rock Elephant-shrew *Elephantulus rupestris*

One visited Andy and Jane at Erongo on 9th!

Cape Hare *Lepus capensis*

One near Walvis Bay on 7th.

Scrub Hare *Lepus saxatilis*

One to two on four dates from Omaruru north to Etosha.

Rock Dormouse *Graphiurus platyops*

One proudly shown to us by Tim at lunchtime on 11th.

South African Ground Squirrel *Xerus inauris*

Common around Etosha and a regular feature in open, short-grass areas.

Damara Ground Squirrel *Xerus princeps*

Almost impossible to tell from the above species in the field, but one near the Brandberg on 10th was most likely this species, based on habitat and range.

Smith’s Bush Squirrel *Paraxerus cepapi*

One at Etosha on the morning of 15th.

Congo Rope Squirrel *Funisciurus congicus*

One seen by some of us at Hobatere on 12th.

Springhare *Pedetes capensis*

At least three seen on the night drive at Kavita on 12th.

Dassie Rat *Petromys typicus*

Seen very well around rock crevices at Erongo and a star feature of breakfast times. A real highlight for the mammal connoisseur, as it is the only member of its family.

African Wild Cat *Felis sylvestris lybicus*

Amazing views, if a little brief for some, as one crossed the road in front of us in broad daylight near Erongo on 10th.

Lion *Panthera leo*

The group topped the guides here with two seen at Hobatere while the bill was being paid!

Common Slender Mongoose *Herpestes sanguineus*

One seen on our drive on 6th then two in the Waterberg area on 16th!

Dwarf Mongoose *Helogale parvula*

A busy family group of these velvet black animals were approached closely at the Waterberg.

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo*

A group of about 25 descended on us at Namutoni, complete with some tiny youngsters. A pleasure to watch their social antics!

Yellow Mongoose *Cynictis penicillata*

One seen by some of the group on 8th, then a female with two kits watched at close range at Etosha on 14th.

Meerkat *Suricata suricatta*

A little difficult this year due to the long grass, but we had three sightings totalling six animals during our drive on 11th.

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas*

Two seen by some of the group on 8th then small numbers daily from 12th to 16th in and around the Etosha area.

Cape Fur Seal *Arctocephalus pusillus*

Just one seen feeding in the lagoon at Walvis Bay on 8th.

South African Galago *Galago moholi*

Those of us in the furthest rooms were lucky enough to see three of these in the acacias as we came out for dinner at the Waterberg on 16th.

Chacma Baboon *Papio ursinus*

Widespread with family groups seen on seven dates, most notably around rocky outcrops.

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus*

Seen in Daan Viljoen on the first evening, then noted on a further six dates with best views – of course! – in Etosha.

Southern Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis giraffa*

Wonderful - always enigmatic and slightly aloof! We enjoyed great views daily from 12th to 16th in the north of the country.

Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis*

Common and widespread across the country: especially abundant in Etosha.

Steenbok *Raphicerus campestris*

One or two noted daily from 11th to 14th, though often a brief roadside encounter.

Damara [Kirk's] Dik-dik *Madoqua kirkii damarensis*

A real feature of our Waterberg accommodation where they function as lawnmowers!

Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus*

Great spotting by Steve as we scoped two at a craggy pass on the way to Walvis Bay on 6th. Also noted by some at Erongo on 10th.

Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*

Widespread in small numbers throughout, excluding the Namib Desert. Remember those enormous ears!

Southern Oryx (Gemsbok) *Oryx gazella*

Very widespread and iconic; especially numerous from Hobatere northwards.

Blue Wildebeest (Gnu) *Connochaetes taurinus*

Common in the Etosha on all days, seen for the first time at Daan Viljoen.

Red Hartebeest *Damaliscus lunatus*

Seen at Daan Viljoen for the first time, larger numbers around Etosha.

(Black-faced) Impala *Aepyceeros melampus petersi*

Fair numbers of this endangered antelope seen in Etosha in Mopane areas.

Common Zebra *Equus burchelli*

Abundant in the Etosha National Park.

Hartmann's Mountain Zebra *Equus zebra hartmannae*

Six at Daan Viljoen Reserve on 5th, four during our drive on 6th and two at Hobatere on 12th.

Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis*

Single females with calves were seen in Etosha on 13th and 14th and one was loafing under a tree on 16th.

Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis*

Common around many rocky areas and a feature of the night at Erongo and Waterberg!

African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*

Not a good year this year as we only managed one at Hobatere and two in Etosha – but always amazing!

Reptiles and Amphibians

Much work still needs to be done on this group and the current field guide is far from adequate to identify everything we saw. However, based on current known distributions and a magnifying glass on the photos taken (!) the following seem likely:

Marbled Rubber Frog <i>Phrynomantis annectens</i>	Kavita
Giant Bull Frog <i>Pyxicephalus adspersus</i>	several locations
Tremolo Sand Frog <i>Tomopterna cryptotus</i>	Waterberg
Hoesch's Pygmy Toad <i>Bufo fenoulheti hoeschi</i>	Erongo
Marsh Terrapin <i>Pelomedusa subrufa</i>	Etosha
Peringuey's Adder <i>Bitis peringueyi</i>	Walvis Bay
Viperine Bark Snake <i>Hemirhagerrhis viperinus</i>	Erongo
Variable Skink <i>Mabuya varia</i>	Spitzkoppe
Wedge-snouted Skink <i>Mabuya acutilabris</i>	Namib areas
Kalahari Tree Skink <i>Mabuya spilogaster</i>	Windhoek
Ovambo Tree Skink <i>Mabuya binotata</i>	Etosha area
Reticulated Desert Lizard <i>Meroles reticulatus</i>	Namib areas
Spotted Desert Lizard <i>Meroles suborbitalis</i>	Namib areas
Bushveld Lizard <i>Heliobolus lugubris</i>	Erongo
Namaqua Sand Lizard <i>Pedioplanis namaquensis</i>	Namib areas
Rock Monitor <i>Varanus albigularis</i>	Etosha
Black-lined Plated Lizard <i>Gerrhosaurus nigrolineatus</i>	Etosha
Namibian Rock Agama <i>Agama planiceps</i>	widespread
Ground Agama <i>Agama aculeata</i>	Etosha
Cape Thick-toed Gecko <i>Pachydactylus capensis</i>	Etosha
Velvety Thick-toed Gecko <i>Pachydactylus bicolor</i>	Erongo
Bradfield's Dwarf Gecko <i>Lygodactylus bradfieldi</i>	Hobatere
Barnard's Namib Day Gecko <i>Rhoptropus barnardi</i>	Hobatere
Flap-neck Chameleon <i>Chamaeleo dilepis</i>	Hobatere

Butterflies

As there is no readily available book to the butterflies of Namibia, one or two species seen must remain unresolved, but the following could be identified from other sources:

African Monarch *Danaus chrysippus*
Wandering Donkey Acraea *Acraea neobule*
Suffused Acraea *Acraea stenobea*
Green-veined Emperor *Charaxes candiope*
Foxy Emperor *Charaxes jasius*
Demon Emperor *Charaxes phaeus*
Spotted Joker *Byblia ilithyia*
Diadem *Hypolimnas misippus*
Darker Commodore *Precis antilope*
Yellow Pansy *Junonia hierta*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
Bowker's Sapphire *Iolaus bowkeri*
Purple-brown Hairstreak *Hypolycaena philippus*
Common Fig-tree Blue *Myrina silenus*
Black-striped Hairtail *Anthene amarah*
Cupreous Hairtail *Anthene princeps*
Hintza Blue *Zintha hintza*
Babault's Blue *Leptotes babaulti*
Long-tailed Blue *Lampides boeticus*
Dotted Blue *Tarucus sybaris*
African Grass Blue *Zizeeria knysna*
Topaz-spotted Blue *Azonus jesous*
Thorn-tree Blue *Azonus moriqua*
Grass Jewel *Chilades trochylus*
Gaika Blue *Zizula hylax*
Zebra White *Pinacopteryx eriphia*
Veined Orange *Azonus jesous*
Small Salmon Arab *Colotis amata*
Smoky Orange-tip *Colotis euipe*
Banded Gold-tip *Colotis eris*
Lemon-tip *Colotis subfasciatus*
Brown-veined White *Belenois aurota*
African Migrant *Catopsilia florella*
Broad-bordered Grass Yellow *Eurema brigitta*
Citrus Swallowtail *Papilio demodocus*
Striped Policeman *Coeliades forestan*
Two-pip Policeman *Coeliades pisistratus*
Small Elfin *Sarangesa phidyle*
Green-marbled Sandman *Gomalia elma*
False Swift *Borbo fallax*

Odds and ends

Much will remain mysterious, but I know that at least some of you will be interested in the following:

Armoured Ground-cricket *Acanthopplus discoidalis*
Red-winged Rock Grasshopper *Conistica saucia*
Spotted Milkweed Locust *Phymateus leprosus*
Winged Predatory Katydid *Clonia wahlbergi*

Abundant and eating everything!!
Commonly seen in clicking distraction flight
The poisonous species seen several places
The awesome beast at the lights near the waterhole at Halali.

Green Hooktail *Paragomphus genei*
Julia Skimmer *Orthetrum Julia*
Kirby's Dropwing *Trithemis kirbyi*

Large dragonfly at Ugab River bridge
Blue dragonfly at Erongo
Orange-red dragonfly seen at a number of locations

Mopane Moth *Gonimbrasia belina*
Cream-striped Owl *Cylogramma latona*
Convolvulus Hawkmoth *Agrius convolvuli*

No moths but plenty of caterpillars (Mopane Worm) for anyone feeling peckish!!
Abundant in the north.
One at breakfast at Halali.