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Namibia
10 – 25 November 2018

Participants

Malcolm and Helen Crowder
Sue Burge
Jeremy Galton
Gill Page
David and Steph Bennett

John and Chris Durdin
Tim and Cheryl Hunt
Chris and Mary Ash
Daphne Rumball

Leaders

Geoff Crane and Darrin Baxter

Report written by Chris Durdin. It's worth noting that often we saw so much wildlife that these are selected memories and highlights. In particular, there were differing observations between the two minivans on game/wildlife drives, or according to what group members did during rest periods. Species tend to be noted when first seen, or first seen well. This account is mostly what the report writer saw. Photos are by group members, indicated by initials. Cover photos – Cape glossy starlings (CD); rosy-faced lovebirds (JG); black-backed jackals (DB); lions with a kill (CH); scarlet-breasted bush-shrike and secretarybird (JG). There are more and different photos on the Honeyguide Blog <https://honeyguidewildlife.blogspot.com/> and Facebook www.facebook.com/HoneyguideWildlifeHolidays



This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust and an additional donation, leading to a donation of £650 to the SABAP2 project that monitors bird distribution across southern Africa, including Namibia.

The South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) is based in the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at Cape Town University and its Director, Professor Peter Ryan, writes: "Great that you are able to help support SABAP and the broader African bird atlas initiative. In terms of SABAP, it has been another good year for the project – we are almost at the target set for numbers of cards for the year – just 30 or so to go, so we should make it comfortably." Atlas cards provide data about the number of different bird species recorded in specified areas throughout South Africa. SABAP2 collects an extraordinary 30,000 cards every year and has processed more than 12 million records since the project's start.

The Institute's very informative 2017 Annual Report can be read on:

http://www.fitzpatrick.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/275/About_Us/Annual_Reports/2017%20FitzPatrick%20Annual%20Report.pdf

The total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 to December 2018 was £126,120.

DAILY DIARY

Day 1, 10 and 11 November – Heathrow to Windhoek

A bright English morning turned to driving rain on the M25, but everyone made it to Heathrow Terminal 2, including David and Steph who had flown in from Manchester. A walk to the distant departure gate was followed by the long, smooth and very full overnight flight to Johannesburg, punctuated by meals and sleep as best everyone could manage while sitting. Passport control and luggage reclaim was quick, on this occasion. Observant Jeremy noticed the rock martins outside as we walked – albeit not far – from Terminal A to Terminal B to check-in for Windhoek, then walked back to Terminal A to go through security again and catch the Windhoek flight. Outside there were little swifts. The onboard meal, an early lunch, was welcome; less so the wobbles in turbulence as we descended. The pilot took us round again and then it was a smooth landing, though he said he nearly postponed it for a second time on account of baboons on the runway. There was full African heat as we walked the short distance to the terminal, with pale, long-tailed African palm swifts buzzing round the buildings and palm trees. Passport control here was very slow, but eventually we were through, meeting Geoff and Darrin who'd driven with the vehicles from Cape Town.

With cash and sim cards sorted, we noted laughing dove, fork-tailed drongo and house sparrows around the airport car park. We then drove west to Windhoek, Geoff explaining how recent rain had brought green to the scrubby acacia trees. We seemed to be earlier than expected at Klein Windhoek Guest House, but keys and rooms were found. In the meantime some of us watched a southern masked weaver on a new nest, and Geoff showed us the bird bath he'd filled earlier which drew in red-faced mousebirds. We went to rooms to freshen up. Outside my room I found blue waxbill, white-crowned sparrow weavers and acacia pied barbet, and the theme of easy birds close to home continued for everyone who gathered for a cold beer. The star species was certainly swallow-tailed bee-eater; fly-over European bee-eaters called occasionally too. A yellow mongoose wandered across the plot of land we overlooked at least three times.



In Windhoek, southern masked weaver (JG) and swallow-tailed bee-eater (CH).

After a bit of a rest, most of the group gathered at 4pm for a short drive to Avis Dam, a popular spot for dog walkers and others out on a Sunday this hot afternoon. Where there is sometimes water today it was dry, though the mixture of scrub behind the dam and dry grassland where water might have been was still productive. Aerial feeders stayed with us in good numbers the whole time: white-rumped and little swifts, rock martins and striped swallows. A plain bird in the scrub had the chestnut undertail area that is a feature of chestnut-vented tit-babbler (actually a *Sylvia* warbler); a dark bird under a bench revealed the red underside of crimson-breasted shrike. There was more: a familiar chat perched alongside more swallow-tailed bee-eaters; three African hoopoes landed on a bare tree-top; a black-headed heron and six blacksmith plovers flew into the grassy area.

We gathered at 6:20 for the short drive to the celebrated Joe's Beer House for our evening meal among its eccentric paraphernalia.

Day 2, 12 November – Windhoek Botanic Gardens and drive to Waterberg National Park

Breakfast was at 7am and we were away just after 8am, to take advantage of the relative cool of the morning. We then took the short drive to Windhoek Botanic Gardens where we were greeted by some 150 little swifts circling and calling around us. We saw their mud nests on the buildings once we were inside. After a covered area with drought-loving succulents the wide paths took us around helpfully labelled shrubs and trees, though most had little more than a few leaves showing. There was a lack of flowering plants, though narrow-leaved pink ipomoea *Ipomoea bolusiana* is one that stood out. There were two types of skinks, variegated and striped, and a low rocky outcrop had a pair of rock agamas displaying, the orange-headed and orange-tailed male doing press-ups to impress the female.

Scarlet-chested sunbird and diderick cuckoo were nice finds for some of the group, some saw rosy-faced lovebird, Gill saw a rock hyrax and red-headed finch was probably a new bird for everyone. The showiest butterfly seems to be a good match for wandering donkey acraea; an orange-tip may have been speckled sulphur tip and the underwing pattern showed well on a brown-veined white.

The rest of the morning and past noon was taken up with the long drive to Waterberg NP. The roads were good through mostly rather featureless thorn scrub, punctuated with termite mounds in the latter half. Not far from our destination we stopped under the shade of an acacia for a picnic lunch – southern yellow hornbill was new here – before we finished the last part of the journey on a dirt road. There were two marico flycatchers by the gate into the Waterberg complex and a nicely tame Burchell's glossy starling was enjoying the watered lawns near reception where Geoff collected keys. We drove to the higher part of the site to find our chalets, spread out under the long sandstone cliffs. A little sparrowhawk dashed through before we split up and Geoff gave us a warning about the house-breaking abilities of the party of baboons at home in the area.



Between the chalets at Waterberg Bush Lodge: baboons (CD), violet-eared waxbill (TH), Damara dik-dik and mongooses (CD).

After settling in and a break, most of us reconvened at 4pm for a gentle stroll in the chalet area. Red-billed spurfowls fed on the grass and an African grey hornbill was a new bird. Two Verraux's eagles drifted through towards the cliff; a buzzing song alerted Geoff to a white-bellied sunbird high on a bare tree. There were groundscraper thrushes on a different patch of grass, like a short-tailed mistle thrush. On the drier ground around the buildings and under the trees was a big group of little birds. Most were green-winged pytilias (formerly melba finch), pretty enough in their own right but among them were two stunning male violet-eared waxbills, with blue waxbills for good measure. A couple of grey go-away-birds were dust-bathing as we walked back to where we'd come from, and then banded mongooses moved to and fro in the roadside vegetation. Later they emerged, 14 of them, on the grass by the chalets where they mingled with Damara dik-diks.

We walked to the dining room, a converted hospital, past the swimming pool where earlier Daphne had swum and seen a snake. Checklists with a drink then dinner were followed by walking back up the hill with Darrin, armed with torches. A bat was hanging in a bare tree, then more flying around. A pearl-spotted owlet was calling and a lucky few saw some bushbabies scampering through the trees.

Day 3, 13 November – Waterberg National Park

Breakfast was at 7am, with a lift for those who wanted one down the hill, so we could make a 7:30 rendezvous with our game drive for the morning. There was room for all of us in the open-sided truck with driver and guide Nelson. The route on wide dirt tracks through the lowlands below the cliff, pausing to go through several gates, included stops to see a steenbok crossing the road, warthogs and hornbills. To our right a couple of hamerkops flew through and on the grass on the left was our first crowned lapwing. Somewhere we passed a farmstead under a flowering jacaranda tree before the route took us up the escarpment to the plateau at the top of the cliffs.

The sandy track through scrub brought us, in time, to three waterholes, at least waterholes of sorts. By an impressive stone wall to mark the spot, a sandy walkway took us to a large hide overlooking a large area of sand with a stone pond in the centre, close enough to see but far enough so visiting mammals were not disturbed by humans in the hide. At this first hide a large bull eland came from stage right, drank and exited stage left. The baboons around the water then had to make way for a family party of Cape buffalos, some of which went into the water body to drink. These are not native, we learnt, as the ear-tag on the biggest testified: the introduction of TB-free Cape buffalo is to add interest and establish a population that can then be traded to supplement other areas. It's not nature conservation as we understand it in Europe but part of the model used in southern Africa where game is behind fences and has to be justified economically. The Cape buffalo would struggle to survive without the water provided, taking advantage of Waterberg's easy to harvest supply.



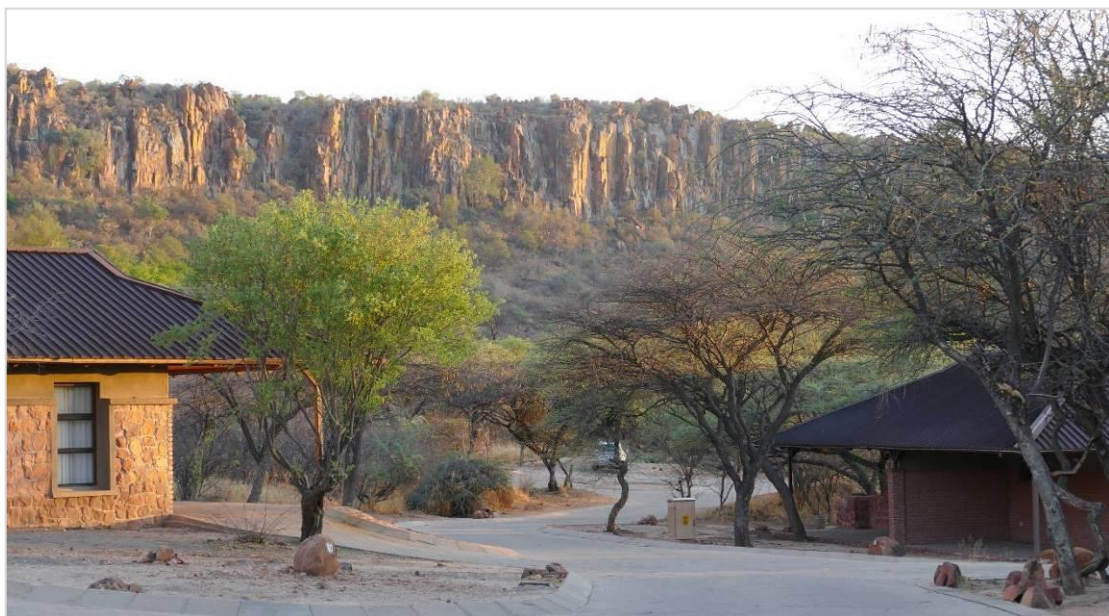
At the Bush Lodge, Jeremy found the first purple roller. On the plateau with guide Nelson (JG).

We passed a couple of giraffes (also non-native, and unlikely to be able to reach the Waterberg plateau) on the way to the second hide. The entrance and hide were much the same as before, and an elegant-looking sable antelope (again, probably non-native here) was drinking as we arrived. It limped away – a hind foot or ankle was damaged – and Nelson located three kudu in the scrub to our left. As at the first waterhole we could pick out African monarch butterflies around the water. Here, as well as these and tiny blues, there was a butterfly of a two-tailed pasha type (*Charaxes* group), on distribution and general impression maybe foxy emperor, which is actually the same species as the two-tailed pasha that can be seen in Europe. Two golden-breasted buntings on the concrete rim of the waterhole were birds to enjoy, distinctive with strong black and white head markings and white on the wings as well as the deep yellow breast of their name. Geoff called many of us back as were walking away from the hide as half a dozen elands had appeared. What elegant beasts they are. Those who didn't come back to look at the elands saw some impalas near the truck.

The third waterhole had no hide and was simply another stone pond in an open sandy area, with a rock kestrel but little else to see. Time had moved on so we headed back, pausing for panoramic photos by the cliff-edge. Leaving Nelson by camp reception, we all just about squeezed into Geoff's bus to drive up the hill to the restaurant for a cold drink and a light lunch.

After a siesta we met up, at 4pm again, for a gentle saunter through the scrub between the chalets and the cliffs. By the road at last there was a good view of rosy-faced lovebirds for everyone; a very short distance into the sandy ground under the scrub we looked at ant-lion larval pits. New birds as we progressed included grey-backed camaroptera, black-faced waxbill and black cuckoo. A wet flush had bright blue Julia skimmer dragonflies. Back on the road, the first few to arrive at the huge fig tree timed it perfectly to see a handover of food from a male grey hornbill to a female whose beak showed through the crack beyond which she was sealed into a nesting hole.

After dinner there were Ferrero Rocher chocolates to share to mark Malcolm's birthday and we admired the badge with his picture and flashing lights, Helen's handiwork of course.



Waterberg Bush Lodge in the early morning light (JG).

Day 4, 14 November – from Waterberg to Etosha National Park (Namutoni, day 1)



Green wood hoopoe (JG).

I think only Jeremy went on the 'official' pre-breakfast walk, though everyone seemed to be taking a leisurely stroll with various wildlife sightings as 7am neared. Female red-veined dropwings were soaking up some warmth on roadside stones and a party of green wood-hoopoes chased each other around tree trunks. We took our time over breakfast and had the luxury of a lift back to our chalets. It was 8:30 as we drove away from Waterberg.

Before we re-joined the main north-south road there were stops for southern white-crowned shrike, purple roller and tawny eagle. A bateleur twisted and turned as it was chased by a small bird of prey. At 9:30 we turned north towards Otjiwarongo, making steady progress until we stopped in the town for fuel and supplies from the Spar

supermarket. Heading out of Otjiwarongo we passed a sign saying 'no public urinating', not a risk with the comfort stops Geoff plans, and nearing Etosha we stopped again at a roadside picnic table for a light lunch under the shade of spreading trees, essential in the mid-day sun.

We had to dodge a couple of blesbok as we drew up to fortress Etosha National Park, two high fences with a no-man's-land between them marking the boundary. The bureaucracy and picking up keys proved straightforward here at Namutoni Camp. There was a golden oriole into the trees by the chalets as Geoff explained the lie of the land. It was time for to settle in and have a break in the heat of the afternoon.

At 4:30 we headed off on our first Etosha game drive. With the back seats down, everyone had a window seat and we had the benefit of our vehicles' air conditioning. Being the dry season, essentially we went from waterhole to waterhole, via a mix of open scrub and grassland plus dry salt pans. Darrin's bus, which I was in, took a brief detour to see a party of elephants, but there were several vehicles there so we didn't linger. There was a fine selection of small birds at the first stop, with scaly-feathered finch especially numerous, though you had to see them in the right direction to see the black malar stripes. Great sparrow was much more striking than the picture in the book, and I was struck by the angular shape and large size of the beak of a female red-headed finch. There were pale chanting goshawks at the first two waterholes, but the small birds carried on feeding regardless.



Kori bustard, pale chanting goshawk which has just caught a gecko, and black korhaan, all seen well on the first game drive (DB).

We paused on the road through the grasslands by the salt pans as a steady stream of perhaps 60 zebras came through, large and small. Then both buses left the camp gate to find the final waterhole. Our group paused as a slender mongoose ran across, long tail waving in the air and settled in the shade behind a bush.

The final waterhole had a fine selection of waders including greenshank, wood sandpipers, black-winged stilt, three-banded plover and a flock of ruffs. Our bus added marsh sandpiper to that list and Geoff's group Kittlitz's plovers, a distant group. Three giraffes grabbed our attention, naturally. On the way back, Geoff's group saw kori bustard, ours Swainson's spurfowl. We all saw a close black korhaan. A straw poll in my bus gave slender mongoose, zebras, great sparrow and pale chanting goshawk as highlights of the outing.

The water supply was back on in the chalets when we returned and it was soon time for our buffet dinner taken in the open air outside the restaurant. A fork-tailed drongo hunted moths by a large light on the roof. Many called briefly at the waterhole after dinner where two rufous-cheeked nightjars were illuminated as they hunted over the marsh.

Day 5, 15 November – Etosha National Park (Namutoni, day 2)

Meet at 06:05 as the gates open at 06:15, was the instruction, and actually the gate was open already a little before that as the two buses went in separate directions around a large salt pan area called Fischer's Pan. I was in Geoff's bus and we soon saw several kori bustards walking close to or across the road: the heaviest flying bird in the world, says Geoff, though in Extremadura (Spain) that's also claimed for great bustard. Other bustards were a single red-crested korhaan (the crest is rarely seen, only when a male is displaying) and several northern black korhaans including a male with a fine black face and neck with a large white cheek spot vaguely reminiscent of a goldeneye, as Malcolm observed, and a smart vermiculated pattern on the back, as Mary described. We agreed counts of 36 wildebeest and 54 elands. The eland group clearly had a big age mix and was joined by three others, probably bachelor males, and spent a long time at a waterhole. Black-backed jackal, early on in the drive, and a group of banded mongooses were among other mammals out in the relative cool of the early morning. New birds for the holiday included ostriches, red-breasted swallows, black-shouldered kite, a party of Burchell's sandgrouse and two elegant secretary birds. Darrin's bus returned with tales of honey badger and Namibian scrub-robin on a nest. Breakfast was back at Namutoni Camp, with Doctor Sue's regular anti-malarial reminder.



White-backed vultures, tawny eagle (JG) blue cranes and blacksmith plovers (CH) on one side of the waterhole, springboks, wildebeests and zebras on the other (CH).



A morning drive took us to two waterholes, first Koinachas, then Chudop. At Koinachas, as we arrived, a tawny eagle was perching out in the open, allowing first class views, before it dropped out of view behind the island of reed-mace in the centre of the large pond. Several white-backed vultures dropped into the same area, plus one Cape griffon vulture. There were two blue cranes on view the whole time, one of which had a turquoise colour ring with the letters NBZ¹. Wildebeest, southern oryx (locally and hereafter called gemsbok), impalas and springboks all came into drink.

¹. This bird was ringed in April 2008 east of the causeway near Namutoni. There have been frequent sightings, usually in the area near Chudop where it has tried to breed for several years. The pair raised two chicks successfully in the 2016-2017 breeding season although not in 2017-2018. NBZ was also spotted at Koinachas on 21 and 23 November 2018. More information here www.the-eis.com/data/literature/Blue_Crane.pdf about the tiny and apparently isolated population of blue cranes in Etosha National Park.



Different horn shapes

Top row – springboks (CD), kudus (CH).

Middle row – blue wildebeest (CH), impala (DB), common eland (CH).

Bottom row – gemsboks (CD), red hartebeest (DB).

Two bull elephants were enjoying the second waterhole, Chudop. One left the area having urinated and defecated and could have been mistaken for having five legs; you can imagine some of the commentary from onlookers. Again there was a succession of mammals coming to drink, including some fine, twisted-horned kudus. Emerald-spotted wood-doves outnumbered Namaqua and Cape turtle doves. Waves of red-billed queleas moved between the reeds and the water's edge. We (in Darrin's bus) paused on the return drive for a very close and clear red-capped lark with two smaller brown, streaky birds in the same dry bush for which desert cisticola was the best fit for ID.

After lunch, Geoff and Darrin went out in search of diesel during the usual afternoon break in the heat. That included time for me at the Namutoni waterhole where Daphne, Jeremy and Gill were watching marabou storks. Jeremy had also found a pair of painted snipe, definitely a five-star bird, which we shared though telescopes with others waiting there. Red-necked falcon, banded martin and red-breasted swallow were other good finds, and finally Gill found a golden oriole which moved from the rushes to a perch beside a fork-tailed drongo.

The afternoon drive took us back to Koinachas and other waterholes with many birds and mammals to see, including a scrub hare. A stream of impalas was close to the buses at one waterhole so you could admire not only their general beauty but also the black blaze on the nose, which might be just a colour form or might be a subspecies. Injuries were also talking points: a zebra with a scar on the rump and a giraffe with just a stump of a tail, both presumably 'ones-that-got-away' from a lion.

After our return several visited the old German fort at sunset, and from there we saw our first lions. Apparently a male came and went and when I reached the viewing area on top of the fort there were two large lionesses and eight cubs of two sizes. Red-necked falcons moved to and fro, especially into a large fan palm.

Nightfall, dinner and a catch-up of wildlife checklists included comparing notes on geckos: for example, there were four Cape geckos outside my chalet, helped by the outside light bringing in insects. The reptilian theme continued as I removed a striped skink from Gill's bath. Over at the waterhole, rufous-cheeked nightjars churred and flew around.

Day 6, 16 November – Etosha National Park (Namutoni to Okaukuejo)

We were out at sunrise again, pausing to look at two red-necked falcons near Namutoni. There were lots of plains mammals around, all looking relaxed so last night's lions must have been elsewhere. A superb male kori bustard with neck feathers fluffed out gave an impression of haughty arrogance as he walked slowly into the bush. Two capped wheatears were new for some and buffy pipit for all. There was a small, loose flock of sparrowlarks on the ground but by the time we'd grasped that there are two species, black-eared and chestnut-backed, and that finchlark = sparrowlark, they'd gone. More straightforward was the large, tight flock of red-billed queleas perching on small acacias before massing on the ground.

After a relaxed cooked breakfast, we packed and headed west towards Okaukuejo (pronounced Ok-a-koo-yoo). There were quickly interesting sightings: a black morph Gabar goshawk, chestnut-bellied sparrowlark seen well this time and purple roller. These were merely appetisers for the full Africa experience. We reached a point where we were surrounded by zebras, with good numbers of impala, wildebeest and springboks, a sprinkling of giraffes and a herd of our first red hartebeest. This was near a waterhole that none of the plains mammals were approaching, so it's likely that there was a lion there. The zebras milled around us and cameras clicked. To be in the middle of so many mammals was an extraordinary experience and was a holiday highlight for many.



[In among the plains mammals \(TH\).](#)

We enjoyed this for a good while, and when it was time to move our next stop was another waterhole after driving through mopane shrub, leaves coloured like beech leaves in spring and with a distinctive split shape like a camel's hoof or a Montpellier maple seedpod. A black-chested snake-eagle was perching prominently and a second eagle appeared. A male painted snipe was a surprise – the male being the duller gender – and there was a marsh sandpiper next to a wood sandpiper for easy comparison.

We had lunch at Halali, accompanied by scores of super-tame Cape glossy starlings looking out for bits of toasted sandwich (photo on cover). Gill was alert to a southern white-crowned shrike in the trees and there was a tree squirrel. We were then driven a short distance to the Halali waterhole, with a short walk to a tiered seating area. It was hot, very hot, as we watched elephants, cinnamon-breasted buntings and a group of yellow-rumped yellow canaries.

Heading west again on the dirt road, the occupants of two vehicles were plainly looking at something. It turned out that a sleepy young leopard was sheltering from the sun in the cavity beneath a concrete waymark. What a stroke of luck to add to today's star sightings!



A sleepy young leopard sheltering from the sun (CD, HC).

A final waterhole had a male lion lying down in vegetation in the middle. A drinking giraffe had the perspective of height to see him there. A black rhinoceros came in from the right and proceeded to roll on its side to get caked in mud. Meanwhile, a young impala, on its own at first, came to drink. The lion stayed low and the impala seemed unaware of it. Inevitably thoughts turned to whether a kill was coming, but it didn't. The impala, now with others, moved on. A secretary bird was also in the same binocular view as the giraffe and the rhino; also there were tawny eagles and our first Cape crows and Cape teals.

Then on to Okaukuejo and to our chalets, very close to the waterhole. There was no electricity when we arrived but it came on later that afternoon. Having twice lost water at Namutoni, being patient with this kind of glitch is all part of being in Africa. There was time to settle in and spend time looking at wildlife around the waterhole, with flashes of lightning with accompanying thunder producing just a few drops of rain that evaporated in an instant. Most returned to the waterhole again after dinner when the floodlit area had three black rhinos, two giraffes, at least three jackals and five barn owls. Skimming nightjars gave the 'tuk tuk' call of freckled nightjar and a large scorpion played dead on the path.

Day 7, 17 November – Etosha National Park (Okaukuejo, day 1)

A simple pre-breakfast event: meet at the waterhole and stroll through the camp to breakfast (John and Gill joining us at the restaurant). Geoff picked up – literally – three sociable weavers tangled together by string. Happily Darrin had his penknife and they were freed to join the throng. Their huge nests were all inside the camp, perhaps as there is plenty of grass for nest building, unlike the grazed land outside.

Our first stop on the morning's drive on Etosha's dirt roads was to see two male lions in the shade under a small tree. One of the lions, perhaps brothers, had a collar for radio tracking. In that tree was one then three greater kestrels, complete with white eye-ring (not eye as the book said), on or near a nest.



Sociable weavers' nest (CD), and sociable weavers taking advantage of a temporary 'waterhole' (JG). Research into the colonial behaviour of these birds has been carried out by the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology – see the link on page 2.

Another drive, another waterhole, the next with a small and obviously artificial pond nearest to our parked vehicles. Zebras squabbled, biting and kicking, both outside and inside the pond. Grey-backed sparrowlark, seen well at last and two Namaqua sandgrouse were added as we moved to a second artificial concreted pond, this one with ostriches and a Kittlitz's plover. A third waterhole, Olifantsbad, had attracted an ostrich crèche with 20 chicks of two sizes and a steppe buzzard. Geoff's bus reported icterine warblers, brown-chested snake-eagle and ground agamas.

Lunch was sandwiches made and collected on Geoff's stoop. In the meantime Jeremy was finding shaft-tailed whydahs in a tree. During our siesta we kept an eye on these and other birds, encouraged by water provided by Helen in plastic containers reused from the recycling bin. Over by the park's shop was the best place to find butterflies, albeit a limited range. As well as the inevitable monarchs, Jeremy photographed hintza blue on a patch of heliotrope, there were many sooty blues here and in grassy areas and a white was probably African migrant.

The afternoon drive was south on tarmac towards the National Park's exit, before turning into an area of dry grassland and open scrub. There were good views of perched birds of prey, black-shouldered kite and greater kestrels especially, any number of northern black korhaans and our first spotted thick-knees. The final stretch was past where the lions were this morning. Two females were lying on the edge of the road and a cub was nearby. That's how it was as Geoff's bus left. For Darrin's bus, shortly afterwards, there was a moment of drama. The two male lions seen this morning had sprung into the scene and were contesting a springbok just caught (photo on cover). And there was a sighting of caracal as the sun was setting. Both buses and various other vehicles made into Okaukuejo Camp just before the gates were shut for the night.

I went back to my room during dinner and had to sweep out a scorpion that I saw slip inside under the door. At the waterhole there was a family party of elephants and the three black rhinos included a youngster that seemed to be suckling while it and mother were in the water. The five barn owls were there again and both nightjar species called.

Day 8, 18 November – Etosha National Park (Okaukuejo, day 2)

Guineafowl swarmed into the Okaukuejo waterhole first thing; it was like looking at a free range Norfolk turkey farm. An elephant shrew appeared – not the first sighting behind the perimeter wall – and it watched as a crimson-breasted shrike dealt with a large moth. The camp's fuel station forecourt was alive with birds, perhaps picking up insects attracted to lights left on overnight. Purple roller, Cape glossy starling, a single ruff, crowned lapwing, red-headed buffalo weaver, white-browed sparrow-weaver, laughing dove, white-crowned shrike: easy birdwatching.

Our drive took us north to the huge expanse of the Etosha saltpan. Geoff's bus paused for at least 23 banded mongooses scampering along, and a perched lanner. Darrin's contingent saw a laughing dove land among seven red-necked falcons. The outcome was, well, that it wasn't laughing.

The low, dry vegetation faded into the huge expanse of the saltpan, which appeared to stretch forever and be barren and desolate. But desolation was wide of the mark as we stopped by a fresh spring in the pan's edge. Mammals were scattered everywhere, but the main focus was on lions, four lionesses with two cubs closest, two males farther over. One female with a collar walked right alongside the bus. Farther along there were more close lions, in particular a scruffy-looking young male. Cameras whirled again. Back by the spring, a lion dropped out of sight in the dune vegetation. A springbok approached, oblivious. The outcome: nothing happened as the springbok walked on, perhaps not close enough to the lion. For the lion, another would be along in a minute, no doubt.



Lions in the early morning light (TH).

Scanning over the spring, the scene was alive with wildlife. Hundreds of Namaqua sandgrouse were coming and going from the water's edge, calling continuously. Behind them were medium-sized springboks, behind them again on the vegetation's edge larger gemsboks. On the saltpan were yet more mammals, in the haze impossible to identify. Sublime. Then the ridiculous: a lion cub decided to lie down in the road, surrounded by nine vehicles of various shapes and sizes. Ours, the tenth, headed back for breakfast.

After breakfast the camp waterhole was a sea of springboks, and a lanner swooped around, scattering small birds. There was so much activity that we stayed put rather than going for another drive. A steady stream of zebras came in to drink in waves, and others walked. A cluster of about 200 springboks stayed in the shade the whole time, while a similar number were in and around the waterhole, regularly getting spooked by something and all bolting away from the water. A few kudu and gemsbok came to drink. Then the elephants arrived, a count of 22+ which included a range of sizes, and we saw or heard dust bathing, splashing around and occasional trumpeting. Lunch was again Geoff making sandwiches on his stoop before we settled down for the afternoon siesta.



Here come the elephants! (HC)

During the afternoon, Daphne came with a description and a photo of a red-headed woodpecker. Cardinal woodpecker, said Darrin, and Jeremy and I returned with Daphne to the trees near the swimming pool where it was still tapping away and with the help of a telescope agreed with Darrin's ID.

Ten of us went on the optional night drive in an open-sided vehicle with three tiers of seats and into the hot evening air. Driver Gabriel took us north to the Etosha pan, where we'd been this morning. Two spotted hyenas were an early find. Scrub hares were the most numerous mammals, far more than by day, but also there were many springhares, bounding on large hind legs like a giant gerbil and balanced by a long, black-tipped tail. Everything else picked out by Gabriel's red searchlight was like by day, only worse views, such as many springboks that seem to 'pronk' (spring) more than in the day, plenty of jackals active by night and lions by the pan. Soft drinks were handed out as we stopped by the lions: "Surreal", said David. The star sighting was on the return: an aardwolf, running away but showing its hooped patterning. Blink and you'd miss it, but the rarity of the sighting was illustrated by Gabriel saying he hadn't seen one for two or three months and he's out most nights. The book says that their diet is almost exclusively termites, which struck me as odd as there were no termite mounds in this area. That puzzle was explained later, while we were in the Erongo Mountains. We'd started the drive at 8pm and we were back just after 11pm.

Day 9, 19 November – Etosha National Park (Okaukuejo, day 3)



Burchell's and double-banded coursers (JG).

There was no pre-breakfast programme on account of last night's outing, so at 8:30 we drove roughly westwards. Shortly after the common fiscal (shrike) we arrived at an area of scrub with trees laden with sociable weaver nests. Two Kalahari scrub-robins cocked tails as they fed on the ground and there was a spotted thick-knee tucked under a bush.



Martial eagle with prey (DB).

We turned left at a sign for Galton Gate (which pleased Jeremy of the same name), soon finding a magnificent martial eagle standing on a prey item. It soon became apparent that the prey was a ground squirrel, which the eagle ripped apart and ate. Beyond there were double-banded coursers and farther along, a Burchell's courser.

The route took us through mopane scrub sprinkled with the distinctive shape of moringa trees, like an upturned root vegetable, reminiscent of a baobab. The first flush of oval leaves was just appearing. Farther on we studied a Stark's lark. The return route went north via Etosha Pan, including safely fenced-off loos. There were many wildebeest in the line-up of mammals similar to yesterday's visit, plus

two secretary birds tucked in behind a dense crowd of springboks. Under every sparsely scattered tree was a cluster of mammals; one group in a shadow was a pair of gemsboks with a very young calf. Back at base, the Geoff Crane sandwich-making service went into action again.

We returned to various waterholes on the afternoon drive. Initially they were quiet with lions asleep, apart from the one that got up to – it's hard to put this delicately – have a crap and lie down again. But as the evening light kicked in the three bachelor lions started to move. We also enjoyed excellent views of delicate Burchell's sandgrouse and several perched birds of prey on the return journey. After dinner and checklists, rhinos were back at the camp waterhole along with at least ten flying nightjars. From the sociable weavers' nest, there was a constant squeaky sound – like 'Sooty & Sweep', as Helen observed.



Just trying to find some shade: gemsboks with a calf (CD), lion (CH) and springboks (TH).

Day 10, 20 November – Etosha to Erongo Mountains

The only new bird on the pre-breakfast walk was a willow warbler; it was more a chance to remind ourselves of what a superb place Okaukuejo is for its wealth of birds, let alone the mammals beyond the perimeter fence. Cheryl photographed a pied crow eating a mouse; white-crowned and red-breasted shrikes were as tame as ever here. At the waterhole, watched over by one large elephant, the mammals came and went: zebras in a procession going out, a line of kudus coming in. Namaqua sandgrouse burbled as they flew around and a single cattle egret fed on the pool's edge along with the usual wood sandpiper and a bunch of Cape turtle doves.

It was mostly a day of travel, though punctuated with various breaks. The first of these was just off the tarmac road south out of Etosha National Park at Ombika waterhole, though it was more of a sunken spring, the water out of sight. Here four ostriches stood surrounded by impalas, zebras, gemsboks and springboks, and one warthog walked away.

Leaving Etosha we carried onto Outjo where there was a delightful coffee shop. Some in the group went into the Spar supermarket and several came away with purchases from the souvenir shop. Lunch at Omaruru was at a restaurant with a large garden that had various eccentric sculptures, wood-hoopoes flew through and a fine citrus swallowtail was nectaring on flowers. On the last stretch towards our new base in the Erongo Mountains we were back onto dirt roads. Apart from a brief pause for two Verreaux's eagles, we kept going until 15:45, where at Ai Aiba Lodge we were greeted with smiles and orange juice and settled into our rooms overlooking the granite hills. There was time to potter, swim or watch white-winged starlings and mountain wheatears before gathering for drinks and a delicious four-course meal.

Day 11, 21 November – Erongo Mountains

After a seven o'clock breakfast, the party split. Gill and John were driven in an open-sided vehicle. The rest of us were on foot led through the bush by guide Immanuel. It was proper bushcraft stuff. Tracks of aardvark and giraffe, and aardvark holes where we were advised not to stand in front of the entrance as they get taken over by all sorts, including warthogs that are prone to dashing out and sending you flying. There were piles of droppings, small to large, of springbok, gemsbok and giraffe, and leopard droppings like dog poo but containing lots of fur. Immanuel extracted an ant-lion larva from one of big patch of larval traps. There were many dead giant millipedes, not a popular prey item as they contain strychnine.

Ant trails led to holes surrounded by drying seeds, waiting to be taken underground. There were also the wiggly surface tunnels of harvest termites, which explained what the aardwolf seen on the Etosha night drive must have fed on in an area devoid of termite mounds. Trees included worm cure Albizia and a blue pea flower called cone or fish-poisoning bush *Mundulea sericea*.

Cool at first, the morning was heating up as we arrived at a series of granite outcrops. This was where we were shown rock art, mostly iron oxide red paintings by an unknown local tribe (though loosely linked to the San or bushmen) at least 2,000 years ago, possibly much older. Many depicted figures, elegant-looking stick people, though whether other colours have faded or washed away from more complex originals is unknown. Mammals were clearly antelopes, springboks we were told, and less clear eland and rhino.

Sand lizards with orange feet dashed around. A white-tailed shrike gave a plaintive whistle; with its rather short tail and black, white and grey appearance perhaps pied shrike would be a better name. There were orange-headed rock agamas, especially on the big boulders behind our chalets on our return.



In the Erongo mountains: Monteiro's hornbill, lark-like and cinnamon buntings, Namaqua doves and mountain wheatear (JG).

Everyone pottered, chatted or rested before and after lunch. The concrete pond edge with stones attracted Namaqua doves, lark-like buntings and bright orange-winged dropwings, at least five males of the last also much in evidence around the edge of the swimming pool.

For our afternoon walk, Geoff led us through a simple trail, marked by white arrows, up and along the ridge of rocks behind the chalets. This took us to yet more rock paintings, including people, eland, giraffe and elephant, and into discussion about what they might mean and the treatment of the San people in recent centuries.

Day 12, 22 November – Erongo Mountains to Walvis Bay

The stone-edged pond and adjacent trees were alive with birds at breakfast time, including at least 22 rosy-faced lovebirds. The morning was spent travelling south and west towards the coast, with stops for fuel/coffee and to photograph wayside wild flowers near Omaruru: there must have been some rain in that area recently. These kept Sue and me puzzling over IDs (listed at the report's end) as we travelled to the next stop, a collection of stalls selling gemstones and curios, former roadside stalls brought under one roof. Purchases were compared as we crossed the Namib Desert, the road part of a corridor of services including a railway line, water pipe and numerous wires, with several turns for the mines that are big business here.



Some roadside wild flowers: *Aptosimum arenarium*, *Crotalaria argyrea*, *Hibiscus elliotiae* (CD).

We had lunch outside a nice café in Swakopmund, a cool sea breeze here quite a contrast with the hot interior. Our first Cape wagtail was easy to see as it walked around: there were more dozens more later. A brief drive around the town showed it to be prosperous, and hints of the Germanic influence remaining here. It was a short way south then to Walvis Bay, where we were settled into two hotels within walking distance of each other opposite the strand that runs along the vast coastal lagoon.



White-fronted and chestnut-banded plovers (JG) and lesser flamingos in Walvis Bay lagoon (TH).





The Raft fish restaurant (DB).

The tide was in but on the turn as we crossed the road and strip of grass: here Cape sparrows fed with the many Cape wagtails. White-fronted plovers were alongside familiar ringed plovers. A strange mammalian shape in the lagoon led to various suggestions: in fact it was a Cape fur seal. Distant greater flamingos flew across to close where we strolled as the tide receded and flocks of waders followed them in. The most numerous waders were bar-tailed godwits, plus grey plovers, sanderlings, turnstones and a few avocets. A count of 54 greenshanks was big by European standards.

Dinner was on the other side of the lagoon in The Raft, a super fish restaurant on stilts, like an end-of-pier establishment. There was one grey-headed gull with the numerous Hartlaub's gulls; half a dozen white pelicans glided past the windows and settled on the adjacent mudflats. It felt like there was an end of holiday atmosphere as we ate, in a very positive sense.

Day 13, 23 November – Walvis Bay and Namib-Naukluft National Park

Pre-breakfast birdwatching was along the strand again, alongside early morning keep fit enthusiasts. Chestnut-banded plover was a new bird and there was a Caspian tern that many of us had missed yesterday. After breakfast we went farther along Walvis Bay in the minibuses. The large numbers of lesser flamingos in this area was quite a sight. Waders included thousands of avocets mixed with black-winged stilts, little stints alongside hundreds of curlew sandpipers and many chestnut-banded plovers, as well as those mentioned in yesterday's account.

We then drove into the Namib-Naukluft National Park: after nearly a fortnight in Namibia, in the Namib desert at last. It was hotter than the relative cool of the coast, but much less so than inland. We stopped to look at a range of flowering plants adapted to the harsh conditions, then tucked into the shade of small copse with a convenient picnic tables for the lunch Geoff had bought first thing.



Welwitschias, ringed to protect surface roots, and *Helicrysum roseo-niveum*, desert edelweiss (CD).

The group split at this point with six going with Darrin to Swakopmund. On the edge of town, a wheel on the minibus came off. As vehicle issues go, solutions were close: a Toyota garage with a tow-truck was a few hundred metres away and a ride was quickly arranged to take the group into Swakopmund. A close harmony quartet was a highlight there. The rest explored the desert some more, in particular to see the celebrated Welwitschias. These are odd, near-prostrate conifers that grow in the harshest of conditions with long tap roots and two odd, trailing leaves, almost solid to the touch. Their age is often measured in centuries, though there is some dispute about the oldest, perhaps 1500 years old. Visitors are directed to one area in particular, especially the biggest Welwitschia that's behind a fence, and many are marked with a circle of stones to prevent trampling in the surface root area. Nearby we logged a range of specialist plants, including Namib hoodia and desert edelweiss; more are noted in this report's lists.

We drove on to desert near Swakopmund with low, compact bushes. It took a while but we found Gray's larks here, six in one area by the road with a tracrac shrike at the same place. We then met Darrin's gang and somehow squeezed everyone in one minibus to return to Walvis Bay. The Lagoon Loge contingent joined the others for dinner along the road at Flamingo Villas. The acoustics and busy dining room didn't lend themselves to collecting holiday highlights out loud, so during the long wait for food to arrive they were written instead, and summarised on the next page.

Day 14, 24 November – Walvis Bay to Johannesburg and home

With our flight at one o'clock there was time for a leisurely breakfast, packing and a final stroll along the strand alongside flamingos and large numbers of chestnut-banded plovers, or to look at common waxbills in local gardens. Having only one minibus available wasn't a problem for the group as Walvis Bay airport was such a short distance away. Geoff ferried up those staying at Flamingo Villas first and was soon back at Lagoon Lodge for the rest of us. We paused briefly for thousands of lesser flamingos at a former water treatment plant, a dense flock of them in the water behind a single black-necked grebe and many in the air as some people approached.

Walvis Bay International is very much an airport in the desert. We had an uneventful wait there before walking to the plane for the flight to Johannesburg. In the meantime Geoff and Darrin went back to the garage in Swakopmund: repairs would take time so they returned to Cape Town in one minibus, leaving the other for the vehicle hire company to collect later. The group had a long wait at Johannesburg with plenty of time to walk between check-in and security areas and for shopping. The overnight flight back to the UK passed without incident and we arrived at Heathrow early on Sunday morning, 25 November.

Holiday highlights, mostly written around the table before and during the final evening meal.

Gill	Wonderful company, fabulous views, springhares, sociable weavers squeaking in the dark, the double-banded courser.
Steph	The waterhole at Okaukeujo when we watched elephants marching in from around the corner and were unable to see how many more were going to appear. The bushbabies at Waterberg.
Cheryl	Leaving Namutoni as dawn broke, the quelea making patterns in the sky, their wings sounding like waves surging on the shore. The tenderness of the lioness feeding her cub and the exhilaration of photographing the lion approaching the open van window. A wonderful – wow – holiday.
Tim	The honey badger, and watching all the wildlife at 'Etosha 2' (Okaukeujo) waterhole.
Helen	The birds at Waterberg – crimson-breasted shrike etc, all colourful and new. The closeness of various and changing animals at the Okaukeujo waterhole. The incredible luck of coming across a martial eagle on a kill.
Malcolm	Elephants at the Okaukeujo waterhole with hundreds of zebras, antelopes and birds with periodic 'panic surges'. Helen's local supplement of 'waterholes' which attracted many birds.
Jeremy	Discovering the painted snipe and a red-necked falcon at the Namutoni waterhole. The most incredible sighting was the martial eagle and its kill.
John	The waterhole at Okaukeujo; Welwitschia.
Sue	The martial eagle eating a ground squirrel; crimson-breasted shrikes; the leopard under a concrete signpost; the huge numbers of animals at waterholes especially outside our rooms at Okaukeujo, and pronking – what fun! Welwitschia, the best plant ever.
Chris A	For strength and brutality, the killing of the springbok by the male lions. For beauty, the underrated impala. For majesty, the martial eagle. For overall impression, the vast herds of zebras and springboks. For amusement, the detailed Socratic discussions between Chris and Jeremy. Overall, the vastness and emptiness of this part of Africa I have never seen before. However I shall always remember the vast array of cameras and telescopes at the waterhole completely missing the elephant shrew.
Mary	I loved the ordinary things – the delightful sociable weavers chirping over our heads at the waterhole, the pied crow rubbing its head against the branches as he produced the most pig-like snorts – and of course the wonderful springhares springing over the velt under the moonlight.
David	The endless photographic opportunities, aided tremendously by the patience of Geoff and Darrin, who always ensured an angle with the right lighting. The micro-kangaroo (springhare) was the most unusual animal. The waterhole at Okaukeujo, just 10 paces from our front door, with an endlessly changing parade of animals and birds. Best bird was the secretarybird, strutting about like a Dickensian clerk. And of course, the wonderful company.
Daphne	The Erongo Mountains resort and its rocky environment. Having a swimming pool at each hot venue! Vistas and herds of zebras and other animals as far as one could see – to be among them was more than I could ever have imagined. The leopard in the road sign. The richness of huge groups of animals 'on our doorstep' at such close quarters at Etosha resorts. Perfect!
Chris D	Favourite bird was swallowtail bee-eater in Windhoek. Orange-winged dropwing at Erongo Mountains. First ever leopard. Wildlife 'close to home' everywhere. Massed movement of mammals, zebras, red hartebeest etc mid-way between Etosha bases.
Geoff	The large gathering of game on the way to Halali from Namutoni, at the Springbokfontein waterhole.

WILDLIFE LISTS

MAMMALS

Aardwolf	Night drive, Etosha.
Baboon, chacma	Troops of baboons around the chalet at Waterberg.
Badger, honey	15/11, seen from one minibus, while at Namutoni Camp.
Bat, fruit	Unidentified species at Waterberg.
Bushbaby, lesser	Night-time sightings in Waterberg NP.
Cape buffalo	Introduced group at Waterberg.
Caracal	Seen by one group in Etosha.
Damara dik-dik	Especially tame at Waterberg.
Dassie, rock	Windhoek Botanic Gardens and Erongo Mountains.
Eland	Waterberg and Etosha, two days only.
Elephant	Family herds seen daily in Etosha.
Elephant-shrew	Several sightings by the wall at Okaukeujo waterhole.
Gemsbok - southern oryx	Daily in Waterberg and Etosha.
Giraffe	Waterberg and Etosha, daily.
Hare, scrub	Regularly in Etosha.
Hartebeest, red	Two days in Etosha.
Hyena, brown	Seen on three days.
Hyena, spotted	Seen on two days.
Impala	Daily in Waterberg and Etosha.
Jackal, black-backed	Daily in Etosha.
Jackal, side-striped	Once noted at Okaukeujo waterhole.
Kudu	Daily in Waterberg and Etosha.
Leopard	One hidden in a road sign, Etosha.
Lion	Many sightings in Etosha, some very close to the vehicle.
Mongoose, banded	Family groups, Waterberg and Etosha.
Mongoose, slender	Seen on three successive days in Etosha.
Mongoose, yellow	At our Windhoek accommodation, and 2 later days.
Mouse, striped	Okaukeujo, 19/11.
Rat, acacia tree	Okaukeujo, 19/11.
Rhinoceros, black	Seen well at Etosha waterholes.
Sable antelope	Waterberg, 13/11.
Seal, Cape fur	Walvis Bay.
Springbok	Huge numbers in and around Etosha waterholes.
Springhare	Seen on the Etosha night drive.
Squirrel, ground	Daily in Etosha, also Windhoek.
Squirrel, tree	Halali lunch stop in Etosha.
Steenbok	Several times in Waterberg and Etosha.
Warthog	Common at Waterberg, several times in Etosha.
Wildebeest, blue	Daily in Etosha.
Zebra, Burchell's	Daily in Etosha, including some large herds.



Slender mongoose (TH) and scrub hare (DB).

BIRDS

Ostrich
Black-necked grebe
Little grebe
Cape cormorant
Grey heron
Black-headed heron
Little egret
Cattle egret
Hamerkop
Marabou stork
Yellow-billed stork
Greater flamingo
Lesser flamingo
Egyptian goose
Cape teal
Red-billed teal
Secretarybird
Cape vulture
White-backed vulture
Yellow-billed kite
Black-shouldered kite
Verreaux's eagle
Tawny eagle
African hawk eagle
Martial eagle
Brown snake eagle
Black-chested snake eagle
Bateleur
Little sparrowhawk
Shikra (little banded goshawk)
Gabar goshawk
Pale chanting goshawk
Lanner falcon
Red-necked falcon
Rock kestrel
Greater kestrel
Orange River francolin
Red-billed spurfowl
Swainson's spurfowl
Helmeted guineafowl
Blue crane
Black crane
Common moorhen
Kori bustard
Rüppell's korhaan
Red-crested korhaan
Northern black korhaan
Old world painted snipe
Ringed plover
White-fronted plover
Chestnut-banded plover
Kittlitz's plover
Three-banded plover
Grey plover
Crowned lapwing
Blacksmith lapwing
Ruddy turnstone
Wood sandpiper
Marsh sandpiper
Greenshank
Curlew sandpiper
Little stint
Sanderling
Ruff
Bar-tailed godwit
Pied avocet
Black-winged stilt
Spotted thick-knee

Burchell's courser
Double-banded courser
Kelp gull
Grey-headed gull
Hartlaub's gull
Caspian tern
Swift tern
Sandwich tern
Common tern
Namaqua sandgrouse
Feral pigeon
Speckled pigeon
Cape turtle dove
Laughing dove
Namaqua dove
Emerald-spotted dove
Rosy-faced lovebird
Grey go-away-bird
Black cuckoo
Diderick cuckoo
Barn owl
African scops-owl (heard)
Pearl-spotted owl
Spotted eagle-owl
Rufous-cheeked nightjar
Freckled nightjar
Common swift
Bradfield's swift
White-rumped swift
Little swift
Alpine swift
Palm swift
White-backed mousebird
Red-faced mousebird
Eurasian bee-eater
Swallow-tailed bee-eater
Lilac-breasted roller
Purple roller
African hoopoe
Green wood-hoopoe
Common scimitarbill
Grey hornbill
Red-billed hornbill
Yellow-billed hornbill
Monteiro's hornbill
Acacia pied barbet
Cardinal woodpecker
Rufous-naped lark
Sabota lark
Spike-heeled lark
Red-capped lark
Stark's lark
Gray's lark
Chestnut-backed finchlark
Grey-backed finchlark
Barn swallow
Red-breasted swallow
Greater striped swallow
Lesser striped swallow
Rock martin
Banded martin
Fork-tailed drongo
Eurasian golden oriole
Cape crow
Pied crow
Pied babbler
Red-eyed bulbul
Groundscraper thrush
Mountain wheatear

Capped wheatear
Familiar chat
Tractrac chat
Ant-eating chat
White-browed scrub-robin
Kalahari scrub-robin
Chestnut-vented titbabbler
Icterine warbler
Willow warbler
Long-billed crombec
Yellow-billed eremomela
Grey-backed camaroptera
Desert cisticola
Black-chested prinia
Spotted flycatcher
Marico flycatcher
Chat flycatcher
Chinspot batis
Pirit batis
Paradise flycatcher
Cape wagtail
African pipit
Buffy pipit
Lesser grey shrike
Fiscal shrike
Red-backed shrike
Crimson-breasted shrike
Puffback
Brown-crowned tchagra
White-tailed shrike
White-crested helmet shrike
White-crowned shrike
Wattled starling
Burchell's starling
Cape glossy starling
Greater blue-eared starling
Pale-winged starling
Marico sunbird
White-bellied sunbird
Dusky sunbird
Scarlet-chested sunbird
Red-billed buffalo-weaver
White-browed sparrow-weaver
Sociable weaver
House sparrow
Great sparrow
Cape sparrow
Grey-headed sparrow
Yellow-throated sparrow
Scaly-feathered finch
Southern masked-weaver
Lesser masked-weaver
Red-billed quelea
Green-winged pytilia
Blue waxbill
Violet-eared waxbill
Common waxbill
Orange River white-eye,
Black-faced waxbill
Red-headed finch
Shaft-tailed whydah
Long-tailed paradise whydah
Black-throated canary
Yellow canary
Golden-breasted bunting
Cape bunting
Cinnamon-breasted bunting
Lark-like bunting

REPTILES

Striped skink <i>Trachylepis striata</i> complex
Variegated skink <i>Trachylepis variegata</i>
Cape gecko <i>Pachydactylus capensis</i>
Sand lizard <i>Pedioplanis</i> sp

Ground agama <i>Agama aculate</i>
Namibian rock agama <i>Agama planiceps</i>
Sand snake <i>Psammophis</i> sp
Marsh terrapin <i>Pelomedusa subrufa</i>



Ground agama and Namibian rock agama (JG).

BUTTERFLIES

African monarch <i>Danaus chrysippus</i> Widespread
Painted lady <i>Cynthia cardui</i> Windhoek, Okaukeujo
Brown-veined white <i>Belenois aurota</i> Windhoek Botanic Garden
Wandering donkey acraea <i>Acraea neobule</i> Windhoek Botanic Garden
Common dotted border <i>Mylothris agathina</i> Waterberg
Bush scarlet <i>Axiocerses amanga</i> Waterberg
Guinea fowl butterfly <i>Hamanumida daedalus</i> Halali

Veined orange (or veined tip) <i>Colotis vesta</i> Okaukeujo
African migrant = Common vagrant <i>Catopsilia florella</i> Okaukeujo
Sooty blue <i>Zizeeria knysna</i> Okaukeujo
Hintza blue <i>Zintha hintza</i> Okaukeujo
Citrus swallowtail <i>Papilio demodocus</i> Omaruru
Large white <i>Pieris brassicae</i> Walvis Bay
Queen purple tip <i>Colotis regina</i> , Omaruru



African monarch (JG)



Brown-veined white (JG)



Common dotted border (CD)



Bush scarlet (JG)



Guinea fowl butterfly (CD)



Queen purple-tip (JG)

There was also a distant two-tailed pasha type at Waterberg. Best guess (on appearance and distribution) is Foxy emperor – in Africa the English name for the two-tailed pasha *Charaxes jasius* that we can also find in Europe.

DRAGONFLIES

Red-veined darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii*
common in flight, Waterberg
Red-veined dropwing *Trithemis arteriosa* Waterberg

Julia skimmer *Orthetrum julia* Waterberg
Orange-winged dropwing *Trithemis kirbyi*
Erongo Mountains



[Red-veined dropwings](#)

Left – male

Right – female



OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

Spider wasp *Pompilidae*, Okaukeujo.
The spines on the legs are distinctive feature.
Long-legged ground beetle *Stenocara* sp.
Erongo Mountains.

Garden fruit chafer *Pachnoda sinuata*.
Walvis Bay
Scorpions, cicada and red-winged grasshopper noted
but species unknown.

SELECTED FLOWERS

Scientific name	Family	English name and/or description
Windhoek		
<i>Ipomoea bolusiana</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Narrow-leaved pink ipomoea, Windhoek Botanic Gardens.
<i>Argemone ochroleuca</i>	<i>Papaveraceae</i>	Mexican or prickly poppy. Non-native.
<i>Gomphocarpus fruticosus</i>	<i>Asclepiadaceae</i>	Bristle-fruited silkweed, a milkweed. Widespread.
<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	<i>Solanaceae</i>	Tree or shrub tobacco. Windhoek.
<i>Albuca</i> (= <i>Ornithogalum</i>) <i>seineri</i>	<i>Asparagaceae</i>	Roadsides north of Windhoek.
<i>Ricinus communis</i>	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	Castor oil plant. Various ruderal locations.
Roadside wild flowers near Omaruru, 22 November		
<i>Alternanthera pungens</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	Also common in irrigated grass in Etosha. From Central & South America.
<i>Tripteris microcarpa</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Yellow composite outside gem shop.
<i>Cleome angustifolia</i>	<i>Brassicaceae</i>	Spider flower. Previously classified as a caper, <i>Capparaceae</i> .
<i>Ipomoea obscura</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Yellow morning glory.
<i>Merremia palmata</i>	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	A pale yellow convolvulus, dark centre in the flower.
<i>Crotalaria argyraea</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	A lupin-like yellow pea.
<i>Indigofera alternans</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	A prostrate, deep pink pea.
<i>Ptychobolus biflorum</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Not in flower, but distinctive flat pods almost forming a circle
<i>Hibiscus elliotiae</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Small red flowers.
<i>Hibiscus palmatus</i>	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Pale yellow flower with a red centre.
<i>Aptosimum arenarium</i>	<i>Scrophulariaceae</i>	Intense blue.
<i>Aptosimum lineare</i>	<i>Scrophulariaceae</i>	
<i>Solanum burchellii</i>	<i>Solanaceae</i>	Translates as Cape nightshade. Growing by the gem shop.
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	<i>Zygophyllaceae</i>	Caltrop family, yellow flower, prostrate.
Flowers in the Namib desert, 23 November		
<i>Blepharis obmitrata</i>	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Mountain thistle
<i>Mesembryanthemum guerichianum</i>	<i>Aizoaceae</i>	
<i>Callicorema capita</i>	<i>Amaranthaceae</i>	Grey desert brush
<i>Hoodia currorii</i>	<i>Apocynaceae</i>	Namib hoodia
<i>Aloe namibensis</i>	<i>Asphodelaceae</i>	
<i>Helicrysum roseo-niveum</i>	<i>Asteraceae</i>	Desert edelweiss
<i>Citrullus ecirrhosus</i>	<i>Cucurbitaceae</i>	Namib tsamma
<i>Adenolobus pechuelii</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	Namib neat's-foot
<i>Indigofera auricoma</i>	<i>Fabaceae</i>	true indigo
<i>Sarcocaulon marlothii</i>	<i>Geraniaceae</i>	bushman's candle; Geoff described how you could light a piece of stem.
<i>Jamesbrittenia maxii</i>	<i>Scrophulariaceae</i>	Formerly <i>Sutera maxii</i>
<i>Welwitschia mirabilis</i>	<i>Welwitschiaceae</i>	Welwitschia
<i>Zygophyllum simplex</i>	<i>Zygophyllaceae</i>	Caper family
<i>Zygophyllum stapfii</i>	<i>Zygophyllaceae</i>	Dollar-bush