



BIRDING FACT SHEET FOR VERLORENKLOOF

Verlorenkloof Estate is an exciting birding destination in Mpumalanga. Due to its wonderful array of habitats, birds are both diverse and numerous. To date 186 species have been recorded on the estate, six of which are endemic to South Africa, while an additional 17 species are endemic to southern Africa (see overleaf). Seven species are listed in the South African Red Data Book – Saddle billed Stork, Bataleur, Peregrine Falcon, Southern Bald Ibis, Southern Crowned Crane, Blue Crane and Broad tailed Warbler.

The following is a summary of some of the birding highlights at Verlorenkloof Estate:

Afro-montane Forest

Walking through the numerous kloofs (e.g. Robin's Kloof, Verlorenkloof) look and listen out for the following forest species: African Goshawk, Black Cuckoo, Narina Trogon, Olive Woodpecker, Grey Cuckoo shrike, Orange Ground Thrush, Chorister Robin, Yellow throated Warbler, Cape Batis, Blue mantled Flycatcher and Collared Sunbird. These are all relatively uncommon species, which are more often heard than seen.

Montane Grassland

A climb to the top of the mountain will reveal extensive montane grasslands with rocky outcrops. Here grassland specials such as Fantailed Cisticola, Ayre's Cisticola and Wailing Cisticola are common and easily recognizable by their calls and/or display flights. Isolated clumps of Protea species will reward the birder with sightings of Gurney's Sugarbird (these birds breed exclusively in proteas); Malachite Sunbird and Cape canary. Look out for the Malachite Sunbird at Fernkloof Hut. Species to look out for clambering on the rocks and boulders are Buff streaked Chat, Sentinel Rock Thrush and Long billed Lark. Sitting on or near the edge of the cliffs, one is rewarded with excellent views of some of the aerial masters of the mountains, including species like Black Swift, Alpine Swift, Rock Martin and raptors such as Black Eagle, Jackal Buzzard, Rock Kestrel and even perhaps a Peregrine or Lanner Falcon. Southern Bald Ibis and Red winged Starling may also be seen from this vantage point.

Woodland

Interspersed between the kloof forests is woodland. This is probably the richest bird habitat on the estate and is highly recommended, especially if walked in the early morning. Noteworthy species to look and listen out for include Klaas's Cuckoo, Woodland Kingfisher, Red throated Wryneck, Black Sawwing Swallow, Olive Bush



Shrike, Plum coloured Starling and Sweet Waxbill. Raptors include the Gymnogene and Steppe Buzzard.

Wetlands

The wetlands on the estate can be divided into dams, vlei areas and the river. All play a role in the diversity and abundance of aquatic birds on the estate. Some highlights include species like Dabchick, Spur winged Goose and Half collared Kingfisher on or near the dams, Broad tailed Warbler, Croaking Cisticola, Yellow Warbler and all five widow species in the vlei areas, while African Black Duck, Yellow billed Duck and Cape Weaver (with large nesting colonies) are frequently seen on the river.

Sour Grasslands

The mid and upper slopes are dominated by sour grassveld and are home to certain species, including Redwing Francolin, Croaking Cisticola, Grass bird, Rufousnaped Lark, Bluebilled Firefinch, Black Widowfinch and Streaky headed Canary.

A COUPLE OF TIPS TO ENSURE GOOD VIEWING

- Spend most of your time in the early part of one day exploring the kloofs and woodland areas while doing the same another day for the grassland and wetland areas. This will greatly increase your chances of seeing more birds during your trip.
- Summer is definitely the best time to visit the Estate from a birding perspective, as this is when most migrants can be seen and many species are breeding.
- A weekend list of a 100 species is not impossible, while a longer visit could produce a list of close to 150 species.



BIRD LIST AT VERLORENKLOOF ESTATE

Of the 39 bird species endemic to South Africa, the following six species occur or have been spotted at Verlorenkloof

No.	English Name	Scientific Name
92	Southern Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus calvus</i>
581	Cape Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola rupestris</i>
582	Sentinel Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola explorator</i>
686b	Drakensberg Prinia	<i>Prinia hypoxantha</i>
785	Greater Double collared Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia afra</i>
813	Cape Weaver	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>

Of the 86 bird species endemic to Southern Africa (including the South African endemics listed above), the following additional 17 species occur or have been spotted at Verlorenkloof

No.	English Name	Scientific Name
152	Jackal Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>
199	Swainson's Francolin	<i>Francolinus swainsonii</i>
208	Blue Crane	<i>Anthropoides paradisea</i>
500	Longbilled Lark	<i>Certhilauda curvirostris</i>
526	Greater Striped Swallow	<i>Hirundo cucullata</i>
588	Buffstreaked Chat	<i>Oenanthe bifasciata</i>
598	Chorister Robin	<i>Cossypha dichroa</i>
661	Grassbird	<i>Sphenoeacus afer</i>
700	Cape Batis	<i>Batis capensis</i>
727	Orangethroated Longclaw	<i>Macronyx capensis</i>
736	Southern Boubou	<i>Lanius ferrugineus</i>
746	Bokmakierie	<i>Telephorus zeylonus</i>
750	Olive Bush Shrike	<i>Telephorus olivaceus</i>
774	Gurney's Sugarbird	<i>Promerops gurneyi</i>
796	Cape Whit-eye	<i>Zosterops palladus</i>
803	Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
850	Sweet Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melanotis</i>