

# CRANE'S CAPE TOURS & TRAVEL

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# Honeyguide

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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## Kruger National Park Safari 10 – 23 October 2024

**Thursday 10th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 33°C**

**Johannesburg Airport to Kruger National Park.**

The flight arrived in Johannesburg with no issues and once we were all together with our bags, we left J'Burg for the drive east to the Kruger. We stopped a few times for a leg stretch and a lunch stop. At the Azur petroport we saw Red-knobbed Coot, Grey-headed Gull, Rock Dove, Speckled Pigeon,



White-fronted bee-eater

Cape Turtle-dove, Red-eyed Dove, Little Swift, Pied Crow, Pied Starling, House Sparrow, Cape Sparrow and Southern Masked Weaver. Reed Cormorant, Black-headed Heron, Great Egret, Cattle Egret, Egyptian Goose and an African Skimmer were seen from the bridge over the Crocodile River. Once in the park, via the Malelane Gate, we started to see mammals and birds even though the outside temperature was over 30°C. Impala Elephant, Warthog and Tree Squirrel. Crested Barbet, Fork-tailed Drongo, Blue Waxbill, African Pied Wagtail, Black Kite and Cape Glossy Starling were seen on route to our camp. A Small Spotted Gennet and a Bushbuck were seen in the camp.

**Friday 11th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 19°C to 34°C**

We started as we meant to continue – as the sun came up at 05:30hrs. We drove a short way from the camp to the Matjulu waterhole. As we sat at our vantage point overlooking the water, four spotted hyaenas came into drink. There was also a lot of bird activity at the waterhole, with Black-headed Oriole, Golden-breasted & Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Yellow-fronted Canary, Cape Glossy Starling, Dark-capped Bulbul, Lesser Striped Swallow, White-fronted Bee-eater, Woodland Kingfisher, Red-faced Mousebird, Grey Go-away-Bird, Emerald Spotted Wood-dove and Wattled Lapwing.



Honey Badger

We watched a Honey Badger foraging for food. Usually, Honey Badgers make a brief appearance, but this individual kept us entertained for half an hour.

At 08:30 we were back at the camp for coffee & breakfast. We went out again after breakfast for a short circular drive on the S110 drive (the Matjulu Loop). Here we saw Red-crested Korhaan, African Pipit, Magpie Shrike, Burchell's Starling, Long-billed Crombec, Rattling Cisticola, Southern Black Flycatcher, Chinspot Batis, Arrow-marked Babbler, White-browed Scrub-Robin, Red-billed & Yellow-billed Hornbill, African Hoopoe, Lilac-breasted Roller, Helmeted Guineafowl, Natal Spurfowl, Brown Eagle, Tawny Eagle and a flat tyre with a big puncture!! A quick tyre change and then back to camp for lunch. I went to the local town to fix the tyre while the group enjoyed some R&R time in the afternoon. Red-winged Starling, White-bellied & Scarlet-chested Sunbird, White-browed Robin-Chat, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Brown-headed Parrot were all seen in the camp around our chalets.

Our afternoon drive went out at 16:00, which was still too hot for most wildlife. We saw plenty of Impala, some with very impressive horns, Cape Buffalo with red-billed and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers feeding on the ticks. Chacma Baboons, Common Duiker, Elephant, Giraffe, Kudu, Slender Mongoose, Steenbok, African Wild Dogs resting under a tree, Warthog, Burchell's Zebra and Bushbuck, Tree Squirrel and Vervet Monkey in the camp.

### **Saturday 12th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 23°C to 37°C**

05:30hrs start with the birds. We chose to drive along the river road this morning. New mammals were Waterbuck, Hippopotamus and Dwarf Mongoose. We watched a Warthog that had huge tusks, grubbing up roots and the Hippo that we saw looked like it had recently been in a fight. The Red-billed Oxpeckers on the Hippo were causing more damage to the few open wounds!



A small herd of Elephants crossed the dry riverbed, and the family of Dwarf Mongoose were going about their business but being very skittish. We followed the Crocodile River Road where we saw Groundscraper Thrush, Bennett's Woodpecker, Hadeda Ibis, Bateleur, African Fish Eagle, Rock Kestrel, Crested Francolin, Swainson's Francolin, Black-smith Lapwing, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Golden-tailed Woodpecker and a pale morph Wahlberg's Eagle, which flew down to the road verge to eat a dead scrub hare.

A later breakfast back at our camp, while watching a number of colourful Flat Lizards with bright blue tails and an African Green Pigeon in the tree by the restaurant. We had a slow drive after breakfast seeing many new birds for our ever-growing bird list. Tawny Eagle, Cardinal Woodpecker, a family of Southern Ground Hornbills, Greater Striped Swallow, Southern Black Tit, Kurrichane Thrush, Ground-scraper Thrush, Red-capped Robin-Chat and Black-backed Puffback.



Tree Agama



During our late afternoon drive we saw a mother Giraffe trying her best to hide a very young giraffe, Elephants, Impala and plenty of other mammals that we had seen already. Some new birds to our ever-growing list were Southern White-crowned Shrike, White-fronted Bee-eater, Wattled Starling, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Village Weaver, Red-billed Quelea, White-winged Widowbird, African Firefinch, Common Waxbill and the ever comical Yellow-billed Hornbill.

**Sunday 13th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 35°C**

We decided on an early morning birdwatching walk around the camp. There was a tree in the camp carpark that was in full blossom, attracting Marico, White-bellied and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Purple-crested Turaco, Speckled Mousebird, African Black Swift, Sombre Greenbul, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Green-backed Camaroptera, African Paradise-Flycatcher and Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike. Our walk finished at the restaurant with coffee & breakfast.



Lilac-breasted Roller.

After breakfast we took a morning drive on the Timfenheni Loop. Which was particularly quiet, most probably because the temperature was already over 30°C. We stopped for a Bennett's Woodpecker, White-backed Vulture, White-headed Vulture on a nest, Martial Eagle, Sabota Lark, Plain-backed Pipit and Lark-like Bunting. On the River Road loop we saw a large herd of Elephants of over 50 individuals, which came rushing past us en route to the river. The river was attracting mammals and birds so we saw plenty of wildlife to keep us watching. We saw plenty of Waterbuck, Impala, Nyala and a few new birds; African Darter, Little Egret, Hamerkop, Yellow-billed Stork, African Spoonbill, White-faced Duck, African Jacana, Water Thick-knee, Pied Kingfisher, Little Bee-eater and a small party of White-crested Helmet-Shrike. On the way back to our camp we came across a small herd of elephants huddled together under the shade of a tree.

After a picnic lunch we had some rest time, the camp swimming pool was utilized and also the ice cream freezer in the shop was visited by a few! In the late afternoon we took a short drive to the Matjulu waterhole, where we saw many birds and mammals. No new species of birds but we did see a lone White Rhino quite close to the road.

**Monday 14th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 28°C**

**Berg en dal Camp to Satara Camp**

We had our vehicle packed with our luggage and we were ready to leave camp as the gates opened for the day. We were heading for our new camp in the central area of the park. Our first stop was a Leopard close to the road stalking a few Impala. We watched for a while and then the Impala got wind of the Leopard and ran off. The Leopard nonchalantly crossed the road and walked off in the opposite direction



We stopped at all the possible waterholes, which enabled us to see plenty of birds and mammals. The new birds seen before breakfast were Water Thick-knee, Green-backed Heron, Glossy Ibis, Black Crake, Three-banded Plover and Mosque Swallow.

Near the Renosterpan waterhole we saw three White Rhino and a troop of Chacma Baboons, a photogenic youngster was riding on the back of its mother. Steenbok and Burchell's Zebra were a few of the 22 mammal species seen today!

We stopped at the Afsaal picnic stop for a cup of coffee and breakfast and then continued north on the main 'H3' road towards Skukuza. A group of Male Kudus with large horns was seen, a red 'Blood Lily' flower caught our eye *Scadoxus puniceus*, Burchell's Zebra, Slender Mongoose, Elephants,



Giraffe, White-headed Vulture on a nest and a pride of Lions and a small herd of Elephants at the Kwaggaspan Waterhole. The Lions were resting in the shade of a tree by the waterhole and had to move as the Elephants arrived. As we crossed the Sabie River we saw a few large Nile Crocodiles on a mudflat. A Klipspringer on a rocky koppie was a new mammal for us to see and a bit further down the road we saw a Lioness by the side of the road.

We stopped for a toilet break at the Tshokwane picnic stop and then we drove straight through to Satara Camp

for lunch. We will be staying at Satara for the next four nights. We stopped once or twice for birds; Tawny-flanked Prinia, Southern Tchagra, White-crested Helmet-shrike, Long-billed Crombec and



African Grey Hornbill, Bateleur, White-backed & White-headed Vulture, Tawny Eagle, Brown Eagle and African Fish Eagle were also seen on the drive.

After our late lunch we relaxed in the camp for the rest of the afternoon. The camp has a nice swimming pool and large grounds to walk in. Black-backed Jackals were at the camp waterhole and an African Wild Cat was seen in the camp after dinner.



**Tuesday 15th October 2024 – Interesting clouds / sunshine with 21°C to 33°C**

We set off at dawn on the S100 road – The N'wanetsi Loop. This is most probably the most popular loop road in the Kruger! The dirt road runs adjacent to a small stream that always seems to have water in it. There are lots of side loops that take you to the water pools, which always produces excitement. We saw many mammals on this drive. A Large bull Elephant with big tusks was keeping a respectable distance from a breeding herd of Elephants, Waterbuck, Bushbuck, Cape Buffalo, Kudu and small herds of Impala were everywhere. African Jacana, African Openbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Marabou Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Crowned Lapwing, Giant Kingfisher, Brown-crowned Tchagra and Spectacled Weaver were our new birds for the morning. We spent some time watching a Leopard resting in the grass and a large pride of Lions were already sleeping off a hard night. On the way back to our camp for breakfast, we saw a Red-crested Korhaan and a Black-backed Jackal.



Black-headed Oriole

Our late morning drive was quiet. It was already a warm day with cloud cover that seemed to keep the heat in! We watched a family of Green Wood-hoopoes searching a dead tree for grubs, a Lilac-breasted Roller was doing the rolling part of a display flight. We came across a drying up waterhole that had a mass of squirming catfish in the mud.

After lunch and some down time, some of the group went out again on a short drive. We watched a herd of Elephants in the riverbed, lots of Impala and from a vantage point on a bridge we watched two Saddle-billed Storks. We watched an area that was alive with different bird species, which is usually an indication that there is a snake somewhere.

Golden-breasted Bunting, Blue Waxbill, Black-backed Puffback, Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike,

Burchell's Starling, Rattling Cisticola, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Fork-tailed Drongo, Black-headed Oriole, Grey Go-Away-Bird, Bennett's Woodpecker, Southern Black Tit, Dark-capped Bulbul and Crested Barbet were all present – we never saw the snake!

**Wednesday 16th October 2024 – Cloud & sunshine with 21°C to 33°C**

Cardinal Woodpecker, Purple-breasted Roller, Southern Ground Hornbills, Red-crested Korhaan, Yellow-billed Hornbill, Sabota Lark and Marabou Stork were seen on the H7 road towards Orpen. Woolly-necked Stork, Yellow-billed Kite, Little Sparrow Hawk, Harrier-Hawk, Barn Swallow, Melba Finch (Green-winged Pytilia) and European Bee-eaters were new on our ever-growing bird list.



Southern Ground Hornbill

After a good breakfast back at camp we set off on the N'wanetsi River road. We watched a large herd of Waterbuck going about their business in the reedbeds next to the river. On the S100 N'wanetsi road we had to wait for well over a thousand Cape Buffalos to cross the road to the river. Burchell's Zebra, Chacma Baboons, Elephants, Waterbuck, Bushbuck, Steenbok, Impala, Kudu and a large pride of Lions resting in the shade were also seen.

We had some rest time in the camp after lunch as the group was going out on a sunset drive in an open top Parks vehicle. A side-striped Jackal was seen, which was

new for us. Lions were close to the vehicle and plenty of other plains game mammals were seen.

**Thursday 17th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 33°C**

Our plan for today was to drive north on the main H1-4 road to Olifants Camp for breakfast. We would then continue north via the Letaba River system to the Letaba Camp for lunch. Returning to Satara Camp during the hottest (and quietest) time of day.

On the grassy plains we found our first African Ostrich and then a few Kori Bustards one of which was displaying, Black-bellied Bustard, Wire-tailed Swallow, Brubru, Black-crowned Tchagra and the colourful Marico Sunbird. Quite a few small herds of Burchell's Zebra and Blue Wildebeest were grazing on the dry grass. A Honey Badger was seen hunting through an area that had been recently burnt from a bushfire. Just before we stopped for our breakfast at Olifants Camp we watched the river from the safe vantage point of the bridge. Goliath Heron, Green-backed Heron, Yellow-billed Stork, Great Egret, African Sacred Ibis, African Spoonbill, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, African Skimmer and the ever-present Egyptian Goose were seen. European Bee-eaters, White-throated Bee-eaters and Little Bee-eaters were seen closer to the camp.

After breakfast we stopped at the Olifants River viewpoint overlooking the river; African Fish Eagle, Hippos and crocs and a few pied Kingfishers were seen. We watched a family of Southern Ground Hornbills on the road around our vehicle and on the other side of the river we saw a few Giraffes with young, trying to avoid a hunting Lioness. We couldn't see if the



Crested Barbet



hunt was a success (for the Lioness) but we didn't see the young giraffe again!

We had a nice lunch on the terrace at Letaba Camp. Crested Barbet, Cape Glossy Starling, Greater Blue-eared Starling and Red-winged Starling were looking for easy pickings in the restaurant and just outside the restaurant we found a roosting African Scops Owl in a palm tree.

On the way back to Satara Camp we saw 16 mammal species which included; Kudu, Steenbok, Slender Mongoose, a Leopard in a tree, Elephants, Black-backed Jackal and Dwarf Mongoose.

### **Friday 18th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 33°C**

Before breakfast this morning, we took a circular route towards the N'wanetsi picnic spot. Malachite Kingfisher, African Jacana, Reed Cormorant, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Purple Heron, Great Egret, Cattle Egret, Hadedda Ibis and Black Crake were seen on the small river pools. A Pride of Lions were already getting ready to sleep all day by a water tank and we had the usual mammals coming to the river to drink.



European Bee-eater

After breakfast we packed the vehicle and set off to our last camp of the trip, Lower Sabie Camp. Brown Snake Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Saddle-billed Storks in the river and White-backed Vultures on a nest, were a few of the 93 bird species that we saw today! Just before we stopped for a coffee at the Tshokwane Picnic spot, we saw two Cheetah cubs feeding on an Impala by the side of the road. We couldn't see the mother so presumed she was resting further back in the long grass. At the Tshokwane Picnic spot we enjoyed our coffee while we watched stupid humans being outsmarted by Vervet Monkeys.

Chacma Baboons, Cape Buffalo, Elephant, Bushbuck, Giraffe, Impala, Lion, Slender Mongoose, Tree Squirrels, Steenbok, Warthog, Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildebeest, Waterbuck and Kudu were seen on the drive south.

We arrived at our new camp in time for lunch on the deck that overlooks the Sabie River. After lunch we checked in to our cottages and then rested for a few hours before going out to the causeway across the river and Sunset Dam, which is just outside the camp. We started seeing some new birds as we were now in a totally new habitat; Spotted Thick-Knee, Village Weaver, Collared Barbet, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Kittlitz's Plover, Wood Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt, Burchell's Coucal, Common Scimitarbill, Bearded Woodpecker, Red-breasted Swallow, Bearded Scrub-Robin, Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver, Jameson's Firefinch and plenty of enormous Crocodiles at Sunset Dam. Rather surprisingly, after dark we saw a number of huge Cane Rats in the Camp.

### **Saturday 19th October 2024 – Cloudy sunshine with 21°C to 33°C**

We started our day with the red sun rising over the Sabie River. Elephants were in the reeds in front of the camp, with the Bushbuck, Waterbuck and Impala. First, we visited the causeway bridge where we saw Great Reed-Warbler and Lesser Swamp Warblers, Three-banded Plovers, Black Crakes, African Fish Eagle, Red-billed Oxpecker on a Kudu, Green-backed Heron and Goliath Heron. We watched a Black Heron doing its 'hooding' behaviour and a family group of Banded Mongooses foraging through the undergrowth. A large 'sausage tree' had two Nyala rams in residence and there were dozens of White-backed Vulture circling in the early morning thermals. A lone Lappet-faced Vulture, which was new for us was also catching the thermals.



Impala

While we were having breakfast on the deck, we watched a mixed flock of swifts, martins and swallows. African Palm Swift was new and also the Brown-throated Martin. Peter's Epauletted Fruit Bats were roosting under the eaves of the restaurant building. The grounds within the camp had an assortment of reptiles. We saw a Cross-marked Sand Snake, some huge male Tree Agamas, with their bright blue heads, Striped Skinks and Platted Lizards.

After breakfast we drove up to the Mlondozi Dam picnic spot. We saw many birds from the viewpoint including the Mocking Cliff-Chat, White-browed Robin-Chat, Bennett's Woodpecker, Long-billed Crombec, Tawny-flanked Prinia, African Pied Wagtail and a Bataleur perched in a tree. We had seen many Bataleurs during the trip but mostly flying so it was nice to see one perched. We could also see a small waterhole, which was slowly drying up, There were about twelve Hamerkops in the shallows catching the frogs.

We had lunch back at camp on our cottage stoep, while keeping an eye on the mischievous Vervet Monkeys.

Bearded Scrub Robin and Violet-backed Starling were seen in the camp before we went out for an hour to the Sunset Dam. Crocodiles, Hippos and a constant stream of cautious mammals coming to the waterhole to drink kept us entertained. The Yellow-billed Storks, African Openbills, Water Thick-knees, Giant Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Black-winged Stilt, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover, Cattle Egret and Blue waxbills were just some of the many birds attracted to the waterhole.



African Jacana

### **Sunday 20th October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 33°C**

We first took a turn past the Sunset Dam to see what was there. A Great White Egret was cruising around the dam on the back of a Hippo and a Crocodile tried and failed to snatch a Helmeted Guineafowl that was too close to the water's edge. We counted over 20 Water Thick-Knees and there



was a Giant Kingfisher and a few Pied Kingfishers on the dam. Further down the road we came across a Spotted Hyaena den with young ones sitting at the entrance.

We were given a tip-off by a passing tourist regarding a Leopard in a tree with a recently caught young impala. We followed his directions and there it was - a Leopard in a tree with a recently caught young impala! We watched for a while and then decided to go and find our own breakfast.



Greater Blue-eared Starling

After breakfast our drive took us back along the river where we saw Goliath Heron, Hammerkop, African Fish Eagle from the causeway bridge by the camp, Glossy Ibis, White-faced Duck, Lilac-breasted Roller, Crowned Lapwing and Burchell's Coucal.

The Levillant's Cuckoo that was seen in the camp was only one of the 104 bird species for the day! We went for a late afternoon birdwatching walk around the camp and then had an early dinner as after dinner the group went out on a night drive, seeing an assortment of mammals including a Small-spotted Genet and a Scrub Hare.

### Monday 21st October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 33°C

A Civet, which was a great sighting for the Kruger, was seen from the restaurant deck before breakfast. Two old Cape Buffalos, Waterbuck, Bushbuck, Impala and a small herd of Elephants were also seen from the restaurant deck.

We decided to drive to Skukuza for lunch along the H4-1 road. We saw lots of birds and mammals on this route. White-crowned Shrike, Burchell's Coucal, White-crowned Lapwing, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Purple-crested Turaco, Hamerkops, Lesser-striped Swallow, Southern Ground Hornbill, Little Bee-eater, Green Pigeon feeding on figs in a fig tree and many vultures feeding on an old elephant carcass.



Hamerkop

Just outside Skukuza camp we saw some epiphyte yellow orchids growing high up in the fork of a tree, unfortunately too high to identify.

We found a pair of African Black Ducks on the river in front of the restaurant at Skukuza, where we had lunch. Brightly coloured Platted Lizards were around the restaurant.

We took a different route back to our camp on the S30 road north of the river. Our new bird sightings were Hooded Vulture, Klaas's Cuckoo, Yellow-streaked Greenbul and a small flock of Ret'z Helmet Shrike. We saw a beautiful Nyala ram and also a half-eaten Nyala! We looked in all the local trees, but we could not locate the Leopard. We did find another Leopard that was well covered & camouflaged in a large Natal Mahogany tree. A magnificent male Sable Antelope was seen close to the road

### Tuesday 22nd October 2024 – Full sunshine with 21°C to 33°C

First, we took a turn past the Sunset Dam (or in our case 'sunrise' dam) The surfing Great Egret was present, on the back of a Hippo, Black-eared Starlings were very close to our parked car and a Crocodile was also close to the vehicle.

At the Nhlanguzani Bird hide we watched a Water Monitor Lizard and a Marsh Terrapin. A Striped Skink was also in the hide. We saw Wire-tailed Swallow, Collard Barbet, Red-breasted Swallow, Black Sawwing, Marico Sunbird, Lesser Masked Weaver, Common Waxbill, Green Pigeon, Fork-tailed Drongo and Black Crake. As we were leaving the hide we came across a Secretarybird. The Secretarybird had been on our 'want' list for a few days so it was met with cheers! Rufous-naped Lark, African Pipit, Wattled Starling, Crowned Lapwing and Burchell's Starling were also seen.

We decided to see if we could find a Cheetah that had been seen earlier. We didn't see the Cheetah, but we saw a mongoose at a distance that looked like a Meller's Mongoose and also a Boomslang (Tree snake) in a small tree. On the way back to camp we saw Ruff, Purple Roller, White-throated Robin-Chat, African Pipit, Southern Boubou and many familiar birds that we have been seeing just about every day.



Secretarybird

We stopped to watch a large male Lion crossing the river, or I should say, trying to cross the river! There was a large bull Elephant on the other side that was not allowing the Lion to cross. After a short stand off the Elephant relented, and the Lion went on his way. Later on we saw another couple of Lions relaxing on a big rock on the far side of the river.



**Wednesday 23rd October 2024 – Overcast and raining with 21°C to 33°C**

Our last day and the heavens decided it was time for the seasonal rains. Heavy rain had fallen during the night and there were now puddles of water everywhere. We stopped to watch a Spotted Hyaena at the entrance to her den and further down the road we saw a Lion walking adjacent to our road. Just about our last mammal sighting before leaving the park was a Lioness with cubs drinking water from a puddle in the road in front of us.

We stopped in Nelspruit for a late breakfast and then again at Lilly's Café for a stop. We continued slowly towards Johannesburg Airport stopping for lunch at the Azur Petroport.

**Holiday participants**  
George and Sue Battle  
John and Jan Croft  
Ken Leggett

**Leader**  
Geoff Crane

Report and photos by Geoff Crane