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KGALAGADI RAPTOR BONANZA

8 DAY TRIP 11 to 18 September 2012

The Kalahari is an enchanting wilderness with its nuances of colour, its glorious sunrises and sunsets, its constant struggle for life, water and existence. It is a land that grows on one with a beauty of lights and colours, red dunes and vast spaces that seem to recharge the soul.

Our trip this year to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park combines the traditional camps of Twee Rivieren and Nossob with the Kalahari Tented Bush camp.



Besides offering remoteness and exclusivity, the bush camps give access to areas of the park which are not easily reached from the larger camps. Constructed from sandbags and canvas or reed and wood, they blend into their surroundings; the lack of fences giving visitors a feeling of remoteness not easily obtained in the confines of the older camps.

THE K GALAGADI EXPERIENCE

THE BIRDS OF THE K GALAGADI



This will be an unforgettable experience for the raptor birder. Of the 80 species of raptors recorded in South Africa, 52, or two-thirds have been seen in the Kalahari. Tawny, Martial, Bateleur and Black-chested Snake-Eagle are the common Kgalagadi eagles and

are all sure to be seen in good numbers. Secretary Birds are a dime-a-dozen and often congregate in large numbers at waterholes.

Southern Pale Chanting and Gabar Goshawk, together with Greater Kestrel are the most abundant and widespread of the smaller raptors. Lanner Falcons are frequently found near windmills, where they prey on the Sandgrouse (both Burchell's and Namaqua), doves and other small birds that come to drink.

This is one of the few places in South Africa to see the Red-necked Falcon. The beautiful Pygmy Falcon, South Africa's smallest raptor, at no more than 20 cm in length, is common in the Kgalagadi. White-backed and Lappet-faced Vultures are regularly seen, whilst White-headed and Hooded Vultures are occasionally encountered.

Seven species of owls have been recorded. The Grass Owl is a rare visitor in years of exceptionally high rainfall, but the others are all resident. Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Southern White-faced Scops-Owl, Barn Owl and Pearl-spotted Owlet are often seen, whilst the tiny African Scops-Owl is heard calling at night.

The most conspicuous bird in the Kgalagadi dunes is the Northern Black Korhaan and the Kori Bustard, the heaviest flying bird in the world, is abundant.

Larks, sparrowlarks, canaries, weavers, wattled starlings, sandgrouse and doves come and go in their thousands. Insectivores include Marico and Chat Flycatcher, the striking Crimson-breasted Shrike, Fork-tailed Drongo, Familiar and Anteating Chat and Swallow-tailed Bee-eater.

A few mixed feeders such as the Red-eyed Bulbul, Acacia Pied Barbet, Great Sparrow and Cape and Burchell's Glossy Starlings are also common residents. The plover-like Double-banded Courser is also often seen.

WHAT ABOUT THE MAMMALS OF THE KGALAGADI?

The Kgalagadi is not merely a paradise for birders. Early morning and late afternoon game drives regularly provide spectacular wildlife experiences.

The Park is the home of the world renowned Kalahari Lion. Set against the open landscape, especially if it is atop a red dune, a large male lion with its head, neck and shoulders draped with a luxuriant black mane is indeed a marvellous sight. Cheetah is regularly seen and the Auob river bed is widely considered to be one of the best places in Africa to observe this graceful feline hunting. Less common predators include Leopard, African Wild Cat and Caracal. Both Brown and Spotted Hyaena occur in the Park and are often seen at the floodlit waterhole at Nossob camp after dark. Blackbacked Jackals, Bat-eared Foxes and Cape Foxes are regular nocturnal visitors to the camps.

The herbivores are well represented, with the magnificent Gemsbok, Springbok, Blue Wildebeest and Steenbok being regularly seen. Less common species include Eland, Red Hartebeest, Giraffe and Kudu.

