



**1-3-DAY NORTHEASTERN
JOHANNESBURG/PRETORIA BIRDING TOUR**



*Small groups of **White-crested Helmetshrike** are often seen in Acacia woodland northeast of Johannesburg.*

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1-day Trip – Northeastern Johannesburg/Pretoria area

The one-day trip to the northeastern parts of ‘wider’ Johannesburg/Pretoria offers both species richness and species diversity. A day list of 150 in the summer and 120 in the winter is not an uncommon achievement. An early start is always a recommendation in order to maximize the special sightings and greatly increase our chances for endemics and a higher species total, but a leisurely start to this area, especially in the winter, can also be very productive. The birding sites will include the likes of the Verena grasslands, Mabusa Nature Reserve, and the Wilge River Valley. Each of these three sites has a different ‘main habitat’, and therefore the species differ greatly from site to site. Some of the main target species that we find in the beautiful Verena grassland area include **White-bellied Bustard**, the endemic **Melodious Lark**, **Red-winged Francolin** and **Secretarybird**, as well as **Long-tailed** and **Red-collared Widowbirds**.



Secretarybird can be seen in the open areas north of Pretoria.

In the summer we look for **Banded Martin** and the rare **Short-tailed Pipit**. Mabusa Nature Reserve is an incredible destination with rolling grassy hills and broad-leafed and riverine woodland – a true gem, and really underrated in the South African birding scene. Our guides know this reserve very well and can find the likes of **Green-capped Eremomela**, **Flappet** and **Fawn-colored Larks**, **Mocking Cliff Chat**, **Lazy Cisticola**, **Shelley’s** and **Coqui Francolins**, **Half-collared** and **Woodland Kingfisher**, **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** and sometimes the rare **White-backed Night Heron**! The Wilge River dissects the area and forms the spectacular

Wilge River Valley, where we have a good chance of finding many riverine woodland species, including **Greater Double-collared Sunbird**, **White-crested Helmetshrike**, **Grey-headed Bushshrike**, **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, **Grey Tit-Flycatcher**, **Rock Kestrel**, **Green Wood Hoopoe** and **White-fronted Bee-eater**, and sometimes we find **Verreaux's Eagle** as well as **Little Sparrowhawk**.



Little Sparrowhawk can be seen in the Wilge River valley area.

As mentioned before, this day trip can really give you a balanced day list with species from indigenous grassland areas, riverine woodland, and broad-leaved and acacia woodland to rocky ridges and outcrops. The scenery is also fantastic, and there is always a chance of bumping into a few mammals on the day; some of them include **Black-backed Jackal**, **Black Wildebeest**, and **Yellow Mongoose**.

Extension: 2-3-day Trip (Overnight Wilge River Valley/Rust de Winter)

As an extension to this brilliant one-day trip to the northeastern parts of Johannesburg/Pretoria we can stay over in the Wilge River Valley and/or the Rust de Winter area. We are then able to extend our birding hours by waking up to the morning chorus and enjoying a cup of coffee while keeping an eye out for cuckoo's, robin-chats, and other fantastic woodland species. Of course, there are even more benefits to staying the night in these areas; one can be sure to bird the important sites more thoroughly, and we then have the opportunity to visit the fantastic Mkhombo Dam Nature Reserve – one of the absolute local hotspots among Johannesburg and Pretoria-based birders. A full day's birding accessing a few key sites and Mkhombo Dam can

produce over 200 species! The dam and surrounding woodlands offer a multitude of waterfowl as well as some excellent dry acacia specials for the area. Some examples include **Goliath and Black Herons, Red-billed and Hottentot Teals, Yellow-billed Stork, Western Osprey, and African Fish-Eagle**. The summer months often deliver specials such as **Black-winged Pratincole, Greater Painted-snipe, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Allen's Gallinule, Harlequin Quail, and Lesser Moorhen**. The drier Acacia bush offers **Marico Flycatcher, Chinspot Batis, Scaly-feathered Weaver, Southern Pied Babbler, Black-faced Waxbill, Barred Wren-Warbler, Chestnut-vented Warbler** and the uncommon **Cape Penduline Tit**. We are able to make an excellent two-day and even three-day trip out of these fantastic birding areas mentioned here and in the one-day northeastern itinerary.



The cute Scaly-feathered Weaver can be seen in the Rust de Winter area.

Please get in touch with us for more detailed information and about how we can make this trip a success filled with lifers!

Duration: 1 day

Group Size: 6 – 8

Start: Johannesburg/Pretoria

End: Johannesburg/Pretoria

Price: On request