



## 1-DAY GARDEN ROUTE BIRDING TOUR



*Knysna Turaco is surprisingly common along the Garden Route.*

The Garden Route – a special gem, offering spectacular and unique bird sightings, complimented with breath-taking scenery and phenomenal landscapes, all encompassed within lush forest lands, fynbos, thicket, and water habitats (rivers, estuaries, and ocean), as well as prime localized farmlands. After collecting you from your choice of accommodation, we will embark on a promising journey to capture the absolute best of the Plettenberg Bay area and its surrounds. Using key locations and remarkable areas of the Garden Route, our primary focus will be on sighting the exquisite bird species these locations host. The most sought-after birds in this part of the world are **Knysna Turaco, Knysna Warbler\***, **Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Knysna Woodpecker, Narina Trogon, Klaas’s Cuckoo**, and **Orange-breasted Sunbird**.

Our first stop off will be at Nature’s Valley – a beautiful town situated within the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park. Nature’s Valley is renowned for its abundant forest bird species, namely **Knysna Turaco, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Knysna Woodpecker, Narina Trogon**, and **Klaas’s Cuckoo** (best seen in summer when calling). Further amazing highlights include **Grey Cuckooshrike, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Half-collared Kingfisher, African Finfoot, White-starred Robin, African Emerald Cuckoo** (summer), **Forest Buzzard, Lemon Dove, Chorister Robin-Chat, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Green-backed Camaroptera, Terrestrial Brownbul**, and **Forest Canary**. Other grand sightings are those of **Olive Woodpecker, Cape Batis, Collared Sunbird, Green Wood Hoopoe, African Olive Pigeon, Red-chested Cuckoo** (summer), **Swee Waxbill, African Paradise Flycatcher** (summer), **Olive Thrush, Grey Sunbird** and **Tambourine Dove**.



*The beautiful **Chorister Robin-Chat** is fairly common around Nature’s Valley.*

Birding in this area proceeds along the Groot River, hosting the indigenous tree species of the Outeniqua Yellowwood and the Real Yellowwood (the national tree of South Africa). These trees, extremely tall in height and ancient in age, serve as a perfect setting for excellent forest birding. The ever-shy bushbuck is also known to frequent the forest, as well as striking variants of butterfly species, such as mocker and green-banded swallowtails. We will then proceed to a fynbos reserve located in close proximity to Nature's Valley. The majestic Tsitsikamma Mountain Range poses as a delightful panoramic landscape backdrop whilst we enjoy the fynbos birds. This area boasts a small number of superb and 'must see' endemics, all sighted in and amongst proteas, cone bushes, and ericas, to name but a few. These particular endemics are **Orange-breasted Sunbird, Victorin's Warbler, Cape Grassbird and Cape Sugarbird.**

We will then drive to the stunning area of The Craggs (originally named after the craggy-like mountains which tower over The Craggs themselves). The Craggs is rippled with prolific agricultural lands and beloved vineyard terrains, and it is a region that prizes itself for a wealth of diverse habitat types, while the preservation of indigenous fauna and flora is paramount. It is within these habitats that the following bird species remain some of the most cherished finds: **Knysna Turaco, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Forest Buzzard, Cape Longclaw, African Jacana, White-backed Duck, Western Barn Owl, Malachite Sunbird, African Harrier-Hawk, Plain-backed Pipit, Jackal Buzzard and Hamerkop.**



*Greater Double-collared Sunbird can be seen in forest-edge habitat.*

The vast area of the Bitou will be our next featured stop – the term Bitou is derived from the bietou or tick berry shrub, a shrub which presents itself as radiantly yellow in colour and continues to be plentiful within the Plettenberg Bay area and its surrounds. We will begin our bird sighting along the Bitou River – the river, accompanied by its wetlands, supports a fine diversity of birdlife, including waterbirds, waders, and thicket-related species. Here the birds we

will focus on seeing are **Klaas's Cuckoo**, **Blue Crane** (the national bird of South Africa), **Giant Kingfisher**, **Black Crake**, **Pied Kingfisher**, **Wood Sandpiper** (summer), **African Stonechat**, **Southern Red Bishop**, **African Spoonbill**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Pied Avocet**, **Yellow Bishop**, **African Shelduck**, and **Greater Flamingo**. Other added 'treasures' to view here are **Black Cuckooshrike**, **Diederik Cuckoo** (summer), **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, and **African Hoopoe**. If time permits, we can then drive to the town of Wittedrift, in search of further sightings of these species.

We will then visit Uplands, located slightly north of the Bitou River and situated along the Prince Alfred Pass – this area is a haven for grassland birding and for birds that have adapted to farmland habitats. Superb sightings here are **Amur Falcon**(summer), **Denham's Bustard**, **Cloud Cisticola**, **European Roller** (summer), **African Pipit**, **Zitting Cisticola**, **Black-headed Heron** and **Black-winged Kite**.



*Denham's Bustards are frequently seen striding through the grasslands near Prince Alfred Pass.*

Then we will stop off at Keurbooms Estuary to focus primarily on waders: **Grey Plover**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Common Ringed Plover** (summer), **Curlew Sandpiper** (summer), **Common Greenshank**, **White-fronted Plover**, **Common Sandpiper** (summer), **Bar-tailed Godwit** (summer) and **Terek Sandpiper** (summer). The Keurbooms Estuary also serves as an important breeding ground for **Kelp Gull** and **African Oystercatcher**. Further magical sightings we will encounter are **African Fish Eagle**, **African Marsh Harrier**, **Western Osprey** (winter), **Cape Canary**, **Greater Crested (Swift) Tern**, **Purple Heron**, **Kittlitz's Plover**, **Grey Heron**, **Greater Striped Swallow** (summer), **Levaillant's Cisticola**, **Lesser Flamingo**, and **Reed Cormorant**. The Keurbooms Estuary is tide-dependent, and as a result, to ensure we maximize

the birding within nature's conditions, a slight reshuffle of the itinerary order may occur on the given day.

We will then journey to the nearby Plettenberg Bay sewerage works, an ever popular vicinity, enriched with and notorious for an abundance of ducks – the impressive collection of **Hottentot Teal**, **Cape Teal**, and **Red-billed Teal**, along with the distinguished **Cape Shoveler**, **Yellow-billed Duck**, and **White-faced Whistling Duck**, forms an imperative part of the dynamic variety on offer here, further validating this site as a key spot to explore. Other birds to be sighted here are **Little Grebe**, **Common Moorhen**, **Three-banded Plover**, **Blacksmith Lapwing**, **Streaky-headed Seed eater**, **White-throated Swallow** (summer) and **Brimstone Canary**.

We will then embark on an exquisite drive to Robberg Nature Reserve. Robberg (otherwise known as 'Seal Mountain') is not only a Nature Reserve but also a National Monument. Robberg is home to 5,000 **Cape Fur Seals**, and we have the opportunity to witness miraculous sightings of **Southern Right Whales**, **Humpback Whales**, **Indian Ocean Bottlenose Dolphins**, and **Common Dolphins**. Within this awe-inspiring, untainted spot, our main focus will be on fynbos birds, involving sightings of **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Cape Grassbird**, **African Oystercatcher**, **Cape Siskin**, **Neddicky**, **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**, **Karoo Prinia**, **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Southern Tchagra**, and **Rock Kestrel**.



*African Oystercatcher can be seen feeding along the rocky coastline at Robberg Nature Reserve.*

We will then move on to the area of Kranshoek (accessible through the Harkerville Forest). This area is comprised of forest and fynbos habitats and proves to be a reliable spot to view: **Knysna Turaco**, **Greater Double-collared Sunbird**, **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Victorin's Warbler**, **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler**, **Peregrine Falcon**, and **African Dusky Flycatcher**.



*Orange-breasted Sunbird can be remarkably numerous in fynbos habitat.*

We will then head to the Rietvlei dam, which serves as a prime viewing point for four heron species as well as **Pin-tailed Whydah**, **Speckled Mousebird**, **Brown-throated Martin**, **Little Rush Warbler**, **African Marsh Harrier**, and **Lesser Swamp Warbler**. **Sooty Falcon**, an extremely rare bird of prey for this area, continues to be an exhilarating find and appears to have taken up residence at a local hotel establishment – the bird has been seen in this area in 2012, 2013, and 2014 (only in the months of February, March, and April). After the Rietvlei dam, we will return to your initial collection point, and this will be the end of our day.

\*The **Knysna Warbler** is best seen in early summer, when it is calling. It can be seen in Plettenberg Bay at a privately-owned estate. If this sighting is highly requested, access will be arranged, and visiting this location can take preference over another previously arranged birding spot.

**Duration:** 1 day

**Start:** Plettenberg Bay

**End:** Plettenberg Bay

**Price:** On request