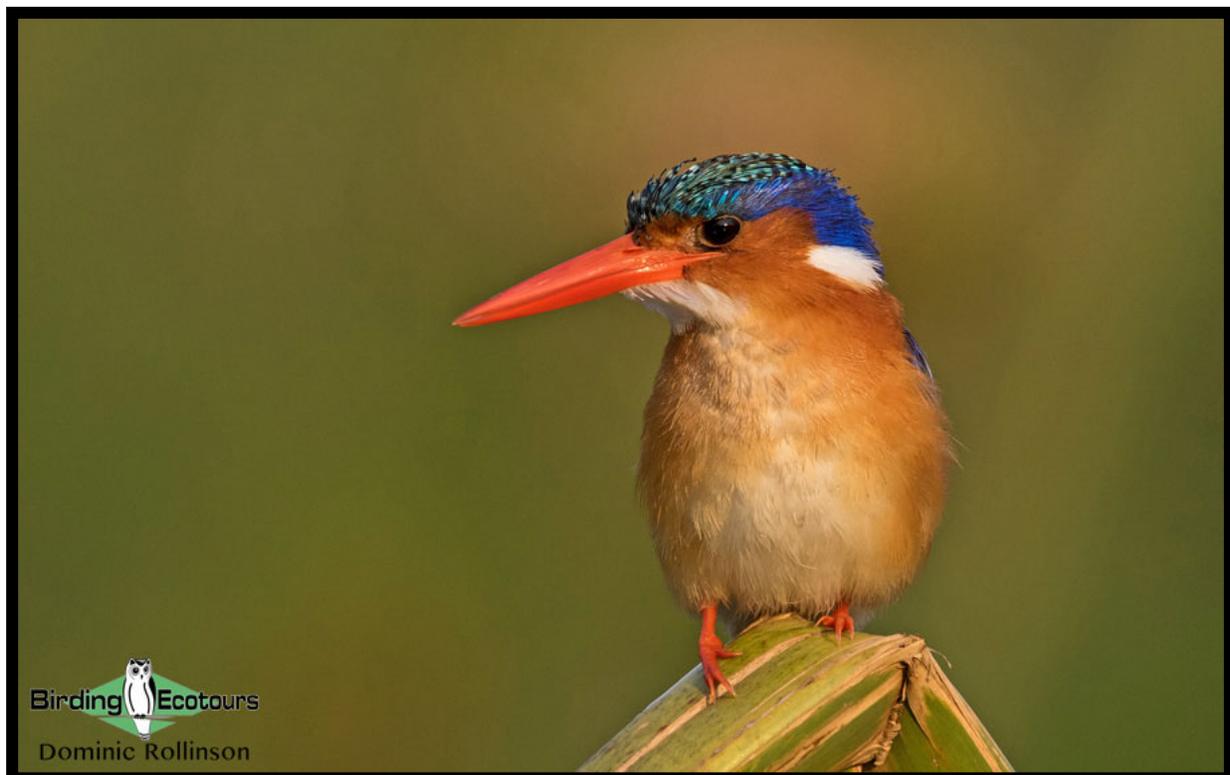


# Birding Ecotours

A stylized white owl with large eyes and a black mask-like pattern around its eyes, perched on a horizontal line. The owl is centered within a green diamond shape that is part of the main logo.

## NAMIBIA AND BOTSWANA BIRDING AND PHOTO TOUR – FROM DESERT TO DELTA

19 SEPTEMBER – 01 OCTOBER 2023



*The vividly colored Malachite Kingfisher will be a major photographic target on this tour!*

This is a photographic birding tour that gives you time in some of Africa's greatest (no exaggeration!) wildlife havens. We begin the trip with three days in the rugged Erongo Mountains where, at the magical lodge we use, some localized and striking birds can be seen and photographed, truly up-close and personal, among the amazing rock formations. The middle part of the tour finds us in one of the continent's finest game parks, Etosha. Here **Lion** and other big cats, **African Elephant**, rhino, **Giraffe**, and a plethora of other big and small mammals roam freely among some spectacular birds, such as **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Secretarybird**, **Kori Bustard**, various owls (some of them at their daytime roosts), and many others. Floodlit waterholes at the park's camps provide awesome and rather easy photographic opportunities. Finally, we bird the panhandle of the Okavango Delta in Botswana – this inland delta is of course world-famous and needs no introduction. All in all, this tour is less than two weeks, and gives you an African dream experience, all the while allowing ample time for photography.



*Photographic opportunities abound in Etosha National Park.*

This birding and photo tour forms part of our set of African birding and photo tours, and can be combined with, firstly, our **Kenya Birding and Photo Tour**. This is an excellent complimentary option, and takes in a wide part of this incredible wildlife mecca, offering almost unbeatable bird and mammal photographic opportunities. Secondly, our **Quintessential Namibia - Birding and Photo Tour** that runs directly prior to this tour. Although it takes in some similar sites, this tour also includes parts of Namibia we don't venture to, and is an upmarket and exclusive offering – ensuring excellent wildlife encounters while making sure your every comfort is met. Finally, our **South African Birding and Photo Tour** – which combines two of the most popular areas of the country – Cape Town and surrounds, and the Kruger National Park. This tour combines excellently with this current Namibia and Botswana tour, and offers you a complementary suite of birds and wildlife.

## Itinerary (13 days/12 nights)

### Days 1 – 3. Erongo Mountains

After our international flight arrives in Windhoek, we head west for the Erongo Mountains (three hours' drive with no stops) on the edge of the Namib Desert. At our comfortable lodge, where we spend three nights, noisy flocks of **Rosy-faced Lovebird** are commonly encountered, with small coveys of the localized, bizarre and highly secretive **Hartlaub's Spurfowl** occurring nearby. A host of other exciting and colorful birds may also be encountered around the lodge grounds, providing for some great photographic opportunities. The fabulous **White-tailed Shrike** is common in the general area too. This species – like several of the birds here in the Erongo Mountains – is restricted to northern Namibia and southern Angola. **Cape Porcupine** is also sometimes seen on night drives in the area. Other mammals, such as **Greater Kudu** and **Kirk's Dik-dik**, are fairly common in the bushier landscape. The secretive but striking **Kaokoveld Slender Mongoose** often gives fleeting views (if seen at all!), and rarely poses long enough for photographs. At dusk **Freckled Nightjar** usually appears and makes its dog-like “bow-wow” call. A morning walk usually easily generates **Rockrunner**, another strikingly marked, characterful, and localized bird. A drive from the lodge to nearby dry riverbeds lined with tall Camel Thorn trees can be good for **Rüppell's Parrot** and **Violet Wood Hoopoe**. Time-permitting, a walk to some nearby caves with stone-age rock paintings is worthwhile.

Overnight: Ai-Aiba – The Rock Painting Lodge, Omaruru



*Delightful Rosy-faced Lovebirds are a regular feature in the Erongo Mountains.*



*The strange **White-tailed Shrike** is an important target bird in the area.*

#### **Days 4 – 5. Etosha National Park**

We have a half day's drive to Etosha National Park, where we spend two nights at Okaukuejo Camp in comfortable chalets. The floodlit waterhole here must be one of the world's best places to see the rare **Black Rhinoceros**. Loads of other animals and birds come here to drink day and night, including **African Elephant**, **Plains Zebra**, **Springbok**, **Double-banded Sandgrouse**, and a host of others. **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**, **Western Barn Owl**, **Grey-hooded Kingfisher**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike** (Namibia's absolutely brilliantly colored national bird), and **Sociable Weaver** (with its humungous nests) also frequent the camp. Venturing out of the camp in our vehicle (due to the presence of dangerous animals, it is illegal to alight from the vehicle) on birding/game drives, we will look for **Pygmy Falcon**, larks, **Double-banded Courser**, **Secretarybird**, **Ant-eating Chat**, **Lion**, **Cheetah** (this cat is rare, but Etosha provides a fair chance at it), and a host of others.

Overnight: Okaukuejo Camp, Etosha National Park

#### **Days 6 – 7. Etosha National Park**

After some final wildlife photography at Okaukuejo we head into the heart of Etosha and spend two nights at Halali Camp – which is in a completely different habitat (mopane woodland, instead of open plains and savanna). The floodlit waterhole at this camp is at least as good as the one at Okaukuejo; in fact it provides a better chance at **Leopard** (especially if you are willing to spend hours there at night with a bottle of wine – it can be a tough life in Africa!). We sometimes find a number of different owl species at Halali – **Southern White-faced Owl**, **African Scops Owl**, and **Western Barn Owl** at their daytime roosts, in addition to **Pearl-spotted Owlet** – this is a pygmy

owl species that is active both day and night. **Honey Badger** is known to lurk around the camp at night.

Overnight: Halali Camp, Etosha National Park



*We will look for **Double-banded Courser** in Etosha.*



*The waterholes in Etosha are action-packed! Here a **Black-backed Jackal** hunts drinking doves.*

### Days 8 – 9. Etosha National Park

We spend our last two Namibian nights (before proceeding to Botswana) at Mushara Lodge on the far eastern side of Etosha just outside the park. Once again, the eastern side of Etosha presents a very different habitat compared to the two camps we will have been to. Gangs of **Banded Mongooses** are very tame around here, and this gregarious, gorgeously cute, and well-marked animal provides much entertainment and seems to love being photographed. Many *Acacia* birds are found in this area, and with luck we might even see **Red-necked Falcon**. A drive to the interesting plains to the north of the camp often generates beautiful **Blue Crane** (near-endemic to South Africa except for an isolated population here in Etosha), **Eastern Clapper Lark**, herds of game, and much more. An extension of the massive Etosha Pan or “the Great White Place” itself, Fischer’s Pan, sometimes holds large amounts of water, unlike most of the rest of this ancient “wetland” (now dry in modern times!).

Overnight: Mushara Lodge, Tsumeb



*The huge Common Ostrich is commonly seen in the plains of Etosha.*

### Days 10 – 12. Okavango Panhandle

We have a long drive (at least half a day) to the Okavango. We head northeast from eastern Etosha, eventually reaching more tropical areas, soon finding ourselves in Namibia’s Caprivi Strip. Eventually we meet the Kavango River, which we then follow southward into Botswana. Here in Botswana this large river spreads out into the panhandle of the incredible Okavango Delta – eventually the thirsty Kalahari sands absorb the entire river, preventing it from ever getting to the sea. The Okavango Delta is a humongous oasis, consisting of papyrus-lined channels, riverine forest-covered islands, and quiet backwaters. **Nile Crocodiles** and **Hippopotamuses** are common in these swamps, as are a plethora of herons (including some quite rare ones, such as **White-**

backed **Night Heron**, **Rufous-bellied Heron**, the very localized **Slaty Egret**, etc.), and kingfishers (from the minute **Malachite Kingfisher** to the huge **Giant Kingfisher** – and everything in between). Several different bee-eaters add an awesome splash of almost unbelievable rainbow colors, and one of the most remarkable sights is arguably the most spectacular species, **Southern Carmine Bee-eater**, breeding on sandbanks along the river. Many of these birds mentioned can be approached very closely by boat – which is how we spend much of our time birding here in the delta. One of the great prizes of the Okavango is **Pel's Fishing Owl**, which we usually find without many problems, along with **African Wood Owl** and **African Barred Owlet**. **Brown Firefinch**, **African Pygmy Goose**, various hornbills, and a rich diversity of other birds will also be sought here.

Overnight: Xaro Lodge or Drotsky's Cabins, Shakawe



*The panhandle of the Okavango Delta is one of the best sites anywhere for the sought-after **Pel's Fishing Owl!***

### Day 13. Departure

We have a four-hour-long drive to Maun for our flights home.

Alternatively, you can continue onwards to South Africa, where our **Western Cape and Kruger Birding and Photo Tour** follows, directly after this tour.



*White-browed Robin-Chat is another colorful species we should encounter on this tour.*

*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*

<b>Duration:</b>	13 days
<b>Group Size:</b>	4 – 6
<b>Dates:</b>	19 September – 01 October 2023
<b>Start:</b>	Windhoek, Namibia
<b>End:</b>	Maun, Botswana
<b>Prices:</b>	R130,789 per person sharing (2023)
<b>Single supplements:</b>	R24,749 (2023)

**Price includes:**

All accommodation  
Meals (from lunch on day 1 until breakfast on Day 13)  
Unlimited bottled water  
Expert tour leader  
All entrance & conservation fees  
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off  
Boat outings in the Okavango Delta

**Price excludes:**

International/domestic flights (to Windhoek/from Maun)  
Visas  
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.  
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding excursions  
Soft/alcoholic drinks  
Personal travel insurance  
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))