



GO-AWAY-BIRDING

WITH MICHAEL MILLS

Karoo Mammals and Birds



Aardwolf, a small termite-eating hyaena, was seen at Marrick © Tertius Gous

*2021 Tour Report by Michael Mills
Photos by Tertius Gous and Don Macgillivray*

Tour Summary

Our second Karoo Mammals and Birds Tour was an overwhelming success with several rarely-seen nocturnal mammals observed well and a good selection of arid country birds watched at close range. The food, accommodation and company matched our time in the field.

The four night drives on the back of an open vehicle were the most memorable component of the trip and produced some terrific mammals: three Aardvark, an Aardwolf, one Brown Hyaena, more than 15 Bat-eared Fox, several African Wild Cat, three Caracal, a number of South African Porcupine and one African Pygmy Mouse.

During the day our main focus was on birds, and we enjoyed some great sightings, logging almost 150 species. Highlights included South African Shelduck, Blue Korhaan, Karoo Korhaan, Northern Black Korhaan, Namaqua Warbler, Rufous-eared Warbler, good numbers of Blue Crane, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Violet-eared Waxbill, Buffy Pipit, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Double-banded Courser, Burchell's Courser, White-backed Mousebird, Cape Penduline Tit, Greater Kestrel, Fairy Flycatcher, Eastern Clapper Lark, Spike-heeled Lark, Fawn-coloured Lark, Pink-billed Lark, Sabota Lark, Cloud Cisticola, Orange River White-eye, Sickle-winged Chat, Great Sparrow, Yellow Canary and White-throated Canary.

Aardvark was seen well at Karoo Gariep © Tertius Gous



Blue Korhaan was the birding highlight at Karoo Gariep © Tertius Gous

ITINERARY

- 6 April

Met at Karoo Gariep in the early afternoon, where we settled into our comfortable accommodations. An afternoon outing (15h30-18h30) was followed by dinner (19h00) and our first night drive (20h15-23h00). Highlights included three sightings of Aardvark and several Springhare.
- 7 Apr

Pre-breakfast outing (06h30-09h30) to Karoo plains followed by breakfast (09h30-10h45) and late morning outing for some (10h45-13h00). Highlights included Eastern Clapper Lark, Burchell's Courser and Sickle-winged Chat. Afternoon outing (15h30-18h30) with Blue Korhaan and Secretarybird, followed by dinner and night drive which produced little of interest.
- 8 Apr

Pre-breakfast outing (06h30-09h30) to plains followed by breakfast (09h30-10h45) and drive to Marrick via Orania (11h00-15h00). Dinner was followed by our third night drive with Brown Hyaena and Bat-eared Fox.
- 9 Apr

Pre-breakfast outing (06h30-09h30) followed by breakfast (09h30-10h45). Afternoon outing (15h30-18h30) was followed by dinner (18h30) and our fourth night drive (20h00-22h00) with three Caracal and Aardwolf!
- 10 Apr

Pre-breakfast outing (06h30-09h30), followed by breakfast (09h30-10h45). Afternoon outing (15h30-18h45) was followed by a relaxed dinner.
- 11 Apr

Early departure from Marrick

LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

Struthionidae

Common Ostrich *Struthio camelus* – Seen at Marrick

Numididae

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Phasianidae

Swainson’s Spurfowl *Pternistis swainsonii* – Seen briefly at Karoo Gariep

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* – Seen at Marrick

Anatidae

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* – One juvenile at Karoo Gariep

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* – Many at Karoo Gariep

South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana* – Large numbers at Karoo Gariep

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Cape Teal *Anas capensis* – Two at Karoo Gariep

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Caprimulgidae

Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufigena* – Excellent views at Marrick

Apodidae

Little Swift *Apus affinis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Otididae

Blue Korhaan *Eupodotis caerulescens* – Fantastic views at Karoo Gariep

Karoo Korhaan *Eupodotis vigorsii* – Two seen at Karoo Gariep

Northern Black Korhaan *Afrotis afraoides* – Good views at Karoo Gariep and Marrick



Rufous-cheeked Nightjar was seen at Marrick © Tertius Gous

Cuculidae

Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* – Nice views of a juvenile at Karoo Gariep

Columbidae

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* – Seen at Marrick

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Cape Turtle Dove *Streptopelia capicola* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* – Seen at Marrick

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* – Seen at Marrick

Rallidae

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Gruidae

Blue Crane *Grus paradisea* – Many at Karoo Gariep and a few at Marrick

Podicipedidae

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* – One at Karoo Gariep

Burhinidae

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Charadriidae

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Kittlitz’s Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* – Seen in good numbers at Karoo Gariep

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Karoo Korhaan was seen alongside Blue Korhaan at Karoo Gariep © Tertius Gous





The diminutive Cape Penduline Tit was seen well at Marrick © Tertius Gous

Scolopacidae

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* – Several seen at Karoo Gariep

Glareolidae

Burchell’s Courser *Cursorius rufus* – Fantastic views of three at Karoo Gariep

Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus* – Several sightings at Karoo Gariep and many at Marrick

Phalacrocoracidae

Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Anhingidae

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Threskiornithidae

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Ardeidae

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Sagittariidae

Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Accipitridae

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Tytonidae

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba* – Great view at Marrick

Strigidae

Spotted Eagle-Owl *Bubo africanus* – Great view at Marrick

Coliidae

White-backed Mousebird *Colius colius* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Upupidae

African Hoopoe *Upupa africana* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Phoeniculidae

Common Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* – Seen at Marrick

Alcedinidae

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus* – Two juvenile birds seen well at Karoo Gariep

Meropidae

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus* – Good views at Marrick

Lybiidae

Acacia Pied Barbet *Tricholaema leucomelas* – Great view at Marrick

Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii* – Seen at Marrick

Picidae

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* – Good views at Marrick

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* – Seen well at Marrick

Falconidae

Greater Kestrel *Falco rupicoloides* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Eastern Clapper Lark was seen well at Karoo Gariep © Tertius Gous





Orange River White-eye was seen well at Marrick © Don Macgillivray

Platysteiridae

Pririt Batis *Batis pririt* – Good views at Marrick

Malaconotidae

Bokmakierie *Telophorus zeylonus* – Seen poorly at Karoo Gariep

Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis* – Heard at Marrick

Crimson-breasted Shrike *Laniarius atrococcineus* – Seen at Marrick

Brubru *Nilaus afer* – Nice views at Marrick

Laniidae

Southern Fiscal *Lanius collaris* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Dicruridae

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* – Seen at Marrick

Corvidae

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Stenostiridae

Fairy Flycatcher *Stenostira scita* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and heard at Marrick

Paridae

Ashy Tit *Melaniparus cinerascens* – Brief views at Marrick

Remizidae

Cape Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus minutus* – Excellent views at Marrick

Alaudidae

Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix verticalis* – A few seen in flight at Marrick

Sabota Lark *Calendulauda sabota* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Fawn-coloured Lark *Calendulauda africanoides* – Nice views at Marrick

Eastern Clapper Lark *Mirafra fasciolata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and briefly at Marrick

Melodious Lark *Mirafra cheniana* – Flight views at Marrick

Pink-billed Lark *Spizocorys conirostris* – Everyone saw it in flight at Marrick, and a few saw it very well on the ground too

Large-billed Lark *Galerida magnirostris* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Pycnonotidae

African Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus nigricans* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Hirundinidae

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

White-throated Swallow *Hirundo albigularis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Pearl-breasted Swallow *Hirundo dimidiata* – Brief views at Marrick

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* – Seen at Marrick

Greater Striped Swallow *Cecropis cucullata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Spike-heeled Lark was seen every day © Tertius Gous





Kalahari Scrub Robin was one of the most conspicuous birds at Marrick © Tertius Gous

Macrosphenidae

Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens* – Heard at Marrick

Acrocephalidae

Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* – Seen well at Karoo Gariep

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Cisticolidae

Grey-backed Cisticola *Cisticola subruficapilla* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Levaillant’s Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Neddicky *Cisticola fulvicapilla* – Seen at Marrick

Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Cloud Cisticola *Cisticola textrix* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans* – Many at Marrick

Karoo Prinia *Prinia maculosa* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Namaqua Warbler *Phragmacia substriata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Rufous-eared Warbler *Malcorus pectoralis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Sylviidae

Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler *Curruca subcoerulea* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Zosteropidae

Orange River White-eye *Zosterops pallidus* – Great views at Marrick

Sturnidae

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Cape Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis nitens* – Seen briefly at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Pied Starling *Lamprotornis bicolor* – Seen at Karoo Gariep



Turdidae

Karoo Thrush *Turdus smithi* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Muscicapidae

Karoo Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Kalahari Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas paena* – Many seen at Marrick

Chat Flycatcher *Melaenornis infuscatus* – Seen at Marrick

Marico Flycatcher *Melaenornis mariquensis* – Seen at Marrick

Fiscal Flycatcher *Melaenornis silens* – Seen at Marrick

Cape Robin-Chat *Cossypha caffra* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Sickle-winged Chat *Emarginata sinuata* – Seen well at Karoo Gariep

Ant-eating Chat *Myrmecocichla formicivora* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Familiar Chat *Oenanthe familiaris* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Nectariniidae

White-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala* – Good views at Marrick

Passeridae

Great Sparrow *Passer motitensis* – Good views of a pair drinking at Marrick

Cape Sparrow *Passer melanurus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus* – Seen at Marrick

Ploceidae

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali* – Seen at Marrick

Scaly-feathered Finch *Sporopipes squamifrons* – Many at Marrick

Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* – Seen in non-breeding plumage at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix* – Seen at Karoo Gariep; a couple of males showed the last remnants of breeding plumage

Estrildidae

Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba* – Seen at Marrick

Red-headed Finch *Amadina erythrocephala* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* – Good views at Marrick

Violet-eared Waxbill *Granatina granatinus* – Nice looks at Marrick

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Black-faced Waxbill *Brunhilda erythronotos* – Several sightings at Marrick

African Quailfinch *Ortygospiza fuscocrissa* – Flight views at Marrick and Karoo Gariep

Viduidae

Shaft-tailed Whydah *Vidua regia* – Terrific views at Marrick

Motacillidae

Cape Wagtail *Motacilla capensis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Cape Longclaw *Macronyx capensis* – Seen distantly in flight at Karoo Gariep

African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus* – Seen at Karoo Gariep and Marrick

Buffy Pipit *Anthus vaalensis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Fringillidae

Black-throated Canary *Crithagra atrogularis* – Seen at Marrick

Yellow Canary *Crithagra flaviventris* – Seen at Marrick

White-throated Canary *Crithagra albogularis* – Seen at Karoo Gariep

Emberizidae

Lark-like Bunting *Emberiza impetuani* – Seen at Karoo Gariep



Rufous-eared Warbler is one of the top Karoo birds seen © Tertius Gous

LIST OF MAMMALS RECORDED

Aardvark *Orycteropus afer* – three good sightings at Karoo Gariep

South African Ground Squirrel *Xerus inauris* – common at Marrick and Karoo Gariep

Pygmy Mouse *Mus sp.* – seen at Marrick. Based on range it was most likely Orange Pygmy Mouse *M. orangiae*

Southern African Multimammate Mouse *Mastomys coucha* – seen at Marrick during the day

South African Springhare *Pedetes capensis* – many seen at both Karoo Gariep and Marrick

South African Porcupine *Hystrix africaeaustralis* – many seen at Karoo Gariep and a few at Marrick

Cape Hare *Lepus capensis* and/or **African Savanna Hare** *Lepus victoriae/microtis* and/or **Scrub Hare** *Lepus saxatilis* – hares seen on night drives at Marrick and Karoo Gariep could not be identified

Wild Cat *Felis silvestris* – very good views at at Marrick and Karoo Gariep

Caracal *Caracal caracal* - three seen fantastically well at Marrick

Brown Hyaena *Hyaena brunnea* – one seen at night at Marrick kept its distance

Aardwolf *Proteles cristata* – one seen quite well at Marrick

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas* – seen at Marrick

Bat-eared Fox *Otocyon megalotis* – seen in good umbers at Marrick and Karoo Gariep

Yellow Mongoose *Cynictis penicillata* – many seen

Bush Duiker *Sylvicapra grimmia* - seen at Marrick

Steenbok *Raphicerus campestris* - many at Karoo Gariep

We also saw a wide range of introduced and bred game, including Roan, Mountain Reedbuck, Red Hartebeest, Sable, Black Wildebeest, Plains Zebra, Impala, Blesbok, Bontebok, Springbok, Gemsbok, Hippopotamus, etc.

Southern African Multimammate Mouse was seen during the day at Marrick © Tertius Gous



Namaqua Warbler was seen at Karoo Gariep © Tertius Gous



Double-banded Courser showed well at Karoo Gariep and Marrick © Tertius Gous

