



**THE DIAMOND
BIRDING ROUTE**

**Venetia-Limpopo and
Mapungubwe Weekend**

8 – 11 February 2007

Mapungubwe is a superb new park in the Limpopo Valley. It offers a host of specials such as Tropical Boubou, Meve's Starling, Senegal Coucal, Three-banded Courser, Square-tailed Nightjar, Southern Hylia and Pel's Fishing Owl. February is normally peak season for this fabulous area and we will expect a host of migrants to be present.

The February 2007 trip will be based at Little Muck Lodge, which is situated within the Limpopo-Venetia Nature Reserve, which includes a concession area within the boundary of Mapungubwe, which is managed by de Beers. This lodge offers superb birding itself, but is very well placed to explore eastern Mapungubwe, Den Staat and Western Mapungubwe (the latter includes the Maloutswa pan area.)

The weekend includes a guided tour of the Mapungubwe archeological site itself.

For more on the birding in the area, please take a look at our trip report which is appended to the end of this document.

The weekend will be led by Etienne Marais. Numbers are limited to a maximum of 13 people, and two local guides will assist Etienne in showing you the birds of the area.

Cost

**The cost is R 1600.00 per person sharing for the weekend.
Single price is R 1800.00 per person**

This includes:

Accommodation on a self-catering basis at Little Muck Lodge. Little Muck is a superb spot and is well equipped with kitchen, wonderful braai area etc. You will need to bring your own food for the weekend, and most days this will take the form of picnic lunches in the various areas we visit. We will return each night to Little Muck lodge for a braai.

It also includes your entrance fee to Mapungubwe National Park (South Africans).

Transport is not included. Please contact us if you are interested in doing the tour on a full-service basis, in which case you will travel with Etienne Marais in either a 4x4 double cab or VW microbus, depending on numbers.

Provisional Itinerary

Thursday 8 February

Meet at Little Muck Lodge (5 hours from Gauteng) for a braai.

Night birding in Little Muck area.

Friday 9 February

Eastern Mapungubwe (Leokwe). Birding here will include the Limpopo forest Boardwalk and Limpopo Confluence look-out areas. In the mid-morning we will meet our guides to be taken on a conducted tour of the Mapungubwe Heritage site. Afternoon drive to Schroda dam area, followed by pre-sunset birding walk around Little Muck.

Saturday 10 February

Morning drive to Den Staat wetlands and farm area. This is a private farm enclosed within the national park which offers superb wetland and bush birding. We spend the full morning birding in the Den Staat area. In the afternoon visit Western Mapungubwe and Maloutswa Pan Hide. Return late to Little Muck (Night drive en-route)

Sunday 11 February

Early morning departure from Little Muck – birding along the Limpopo in Western Mapungubwe National Park.

Late morning departure from Mapungubwe and proceed to Ratho, further up the Limpopo, where we we look for Pel's fishing Owl and other birds.

Departure home via Alldays.

We will send you more details, maps and directions once you have confirmed your booking.

Catered Options:

There is the option of doing the weekend on a fully catered basis. Please indicate if you are interested in this option, which will cost approximately R150-00 per day, depending on numbers.

Bookings

Booking of places on this weekend is on a first-paid first served basis and a 50% deposit is required to confirm your booking.

When you make your payment please use your initials followed by map07 as the reference, and fax or e-mail your payment advice/deposit slip to us at fax: 0866 187 252 or send proof of payment to etienne@birding.co.za.

Our banking account details are as follows:

Bank :Nedbank, Branch Business Pretoria, Account type: Cheque account. Account Name: Indicator Birding CC Branch Code: 149-745 ACCOUNT NUMBER: 1497 068 738

*Indicator Birding
October 2007*

May Mahem in Mapungubwe – a short report from our May 2006 trip.

This is a summary report of a 3 night birding trip to Mapungubwe with 7 birders, lead and organized by Etienne Marais of Indicator Birding from 4-7 May 2006.

In summary the birding was spectacular to say the least. Top birds included Bronze-winged and Three-banded Coursers, Dusky Lark, cracking views of Collared Palm-thrush, African Golden Oriole, Square-tailed Nightjar, Allen's Gallinule, Grey-hooded Kingfisher, Burchell's Sandgrouse, Kori Bustard and Greater Painted Snipe. Many summer migrants were still around including 2 juvenile Lesser Spotted-eagle at a Quelea colony, Barn Swallow, Banded Martin, Red-breasted Swallow, Great Spotted, Klaas's (male and female) and Le Vaillant's Cuckoos. Woodland Kingfishers not vocal, but still present on the Limpopo on 6 May. Grey-hooded Kingfisher also seen several times from the Maloutswa Pan Hide, where a cracking male Painted Snipe showed itself nicely.

On the plains near the Maloutswa pan hide, there were many Kurrichane Button-quail and a few (apparently all male) Harlequin Quails as well.

Other good birds included Saddle-billed Stork, several Black Storks, near Ratho, at Mapungubwe (east) and near their nest site which is visible from the main road between Alldays and Pontdrift. One of the group saw a Southern Hylia in riverine woodland along the limpopo, but no-one else managed to pick up the bird. We saw Great Sparrow, Cut-throat Finch, many Eastern Paradise-whydah in full breeding plumage, Grey Tit-flycatcher, Retz Helmet-Shrike, and Barred Owl along with common Limpopo birds such as Meve's Starling, Tropical Boubou and Yellow-bellied Greenbul

In the Den Staat Wetland, we saw what may have been a Eurasian Reed Warbler - which was very well seen and appeared to show classic fuscus features including gizz, behaviour, shape, wing extension and coloration. We were able to compare the bird with numerous African Reed Warbler, which are all over the wetland. In this area we also saw numerous waders, herons and ducks.

Another major highlight of the trip was that the area between Limpopo Tented Camp and Maloutswa had a quelea colony in full swing. About 15 ha of dense thornveld was absolutely packed with the little blighters and I must say that experiencing this exhibition of the full power and glory of nature is an absolute must for any birder! Not only does the sound of millions of begging mouths overwhelm one as you get close, but the smell is reminiscent of a chicken farms. The ground under the trees is covered with egg-shells and the quelea air-control tower somehow arranged that the outgoing stream of parents flew just below the returning stream – a remarkable sight to behold! The quelea colony was in it's final days of breeding, with most young already clambering out of their nests and around

the upper branches of the trees. The colony had attracted a couple of raptors and we saw Lesser Spotted Eagle, Shikra and Bateleur in the area.

Little Muck is a superb locality, privately owned by De Beers, this old style private lodge is very comfortable, superbly situated on the top of a hill overlooking the Limpopo valley and a great place for a group to stay.

As always we also had some good birds en-route, including cracking views of a pair of African Hawk-eagle, many Pale-chanting Goshawk in the area near Langjan NR and a nice Lanner near Dendron. A quick search along the Dendron road near Polokwane also produced a very nice singing Short-clawed Lark.

Overall 222 species were recorded, which for a May long weekend, is very respectable indeed.