



BirdLife South Africa Avitourism Division
Self Drive Itinerary

Birding Route Name: Southern KwaZulu Natal Birding Route

Self Drive Itinerary Name: Durban and surrounds - Day Trip Option A

Habitats: Estuary, mangroves, coastal forest, sandstone cliffs, bushveld

Duration: 8 hours - Bayhead (2/3 hrs) – drive (20 mins) – Pigeon Valley (2/3 hrs) – drive (45 mins) – Shongweni (3/4 hrs) – drive to Dbn (45 mins)

Distance covered: ±100kms

Costs: N3 toll fees – R14 (return)
Fuel – R80
Shongweni Dam & Game Reserve – R30 pp, R3 per vehicle

Itinerary updated: January 2010

Itinerary

Durban Bayhead

Head out early in the morning to reach Durban Bayhead as it opens at 6:00am. To get to Durban Bayhead from the airport, take a right at the traffic lights onto the N2 and then almost immediately take the M4/Southern Highway to Durban. Travel for approx. 7km's before taking the R102/South Coast Rd off-ramp (GPS: 29°55'04.03''S, 30°58'48.32''E), turning right at the traffic lights onto the R102. Turn right off the R102 onto Bayhead Rd (GPS: 29°53'08.47''S, 30°59'26.06''E). Cross a canal and turn left into Langeberg Road. Drive through the old customs gate and follow Langeberg Road across a railway bridge. Just after the bridge turn left, then left again into the Bayhead Heritage Site parking area (GPS: 29°53'15.85''S, 31°00'49.56''E).

Early morning is the best time to look for the **Mangrove Kingfisher**, often perched in the open along the edge of the mangroves. This species is only present in the winter months (Apr to Sept). To view waders, the best time is generally 2 or 3 hours before high tide (www.satides.co.za), when feeding shorebirds are pushed towards the bird hide by the rising water. However, it is only during the summer months (Oct to Mar) that tide times become vital when large numbers of Palaearctic migrants are present. Birds to look out for in summer are **Common greenshank**, **Curlew sandpiper**, **Common Ringed plover**, **Terek sandpiper** and **Ruddy turnstone**. Less common are **Greater sand plover**, **Red knot**, **Eurasian curlew** and **Bar-tailed godwit**. Terns present during the summer period

include **Lesser crested tern**, **Sandwich tern** and **Swift tern**. **Lesser black-backed**, **Hartlaub's**, **Common black-headed**, **Franklin's** and **Slender-billed gulls** have all been recorded on occasion, so be sure to check all gulls carefully for a possible rarity. Throughout the year, any time spent at the hide should reveal **Kittlitz's plover**, **Grey plover**, **Common whimbrel**, **Kelp gull**, **Grey-headed gull**, **Caspian tern** and **Common tern**. **Pink-backed pelican**, **White-breasted cormorant**, **Woolly-necked stork**, **Osprey**, **African fish-eagle**, **Black sparrowhawk**, **Grey heron**, **Goliath heron** and **Little egret** are also year round residents in the bay. Other species to look out for include the **Purple-banded sunbird**, **Little bee-eater** and **Familiar chat**. Please note: This site should be visited with at least 2 people. Make sure your car is locked, and that any valuables are stored out of sight.

Pigeon Valley Nature Reserve

Two to three hours birding at Bayhead should be sufficient before moving on to Pigeon Valley Nature Reserve. Return along Langeberg Rd and Bayhead Rd. At the Bayhead – R102/ South Coast Rd intersection turn right into South Coast Rd, and bear left into Wisley Rd. Take the 1st left onto the M9/ Rick Turner Rd and drive for about 2km, turn right into Princess Alice Avenue. The reserve is about 1km along this road, signposted on the left (GPS: 29°51'52.75''S, 30°59'19.61''E).

Arriving at the reserve relatively early (opening time is 7:30am) is the best time to see the elusive **Buff-spotted flufftail**. The flufftail prefers areas with dense undergrowth, particularly around the dam near the entrance gate. Listen for its distinctive mournful foghorn-like call. This species responds to playback, particularly at the start of the breeding season (early summer). Find an area with suitable undergrowth, sit quietly and play the call sparingly, waiting for this beautiful and secretive bird to make an appearance. The rare and localised **Spotted ground-thrush** (winter only) is however the special bird of this reserve! Often found on the lawns near the office at the entrance, or along the upper (northern) reaches of the main path, this bird is extremely confiding. The top (northern) end of the path is also a good place for **Green twispot**. This small, unobtrusive species is best located by its call, or by sitting quietly on the bench along the path. A pair of **Black sparrowhawk** nest in the reserve and are seen frequently. The **Orange-breasted bush-shrike** is easy to locate when calling, and usually frequents bird parties, in the mid to upper stratum. **Narina trogon** are occasionally seen from the main path. Species occurring regularly in the reserve include **Red-capped robin-chat**, **Chorister robin-chat** (southern Africa endemic), **White-starred robin** (winter), **Olive thrush**, **Kurrichane thrush**, **White-eared barbet**, **Golden-rumped tinkerbird**, **Golden-tailed woodpecker**, **Cardinal woodpecker**, **Olive woodpecker**, **Klaas's cuckoo** (summer), **Diederik cuckoo** (summer), **Bar-throated apalis**, **Sombre greenbul**, **Terrestrial brownbul**, **African paradise flycatcher**, **Dark-backed weaver**, **Southern boubou**, **Purple-crested turaco**, **Collared sunbird**, **Olive sunbird**, **White-bellied sunbird**, **Grey sunbird** and **Red-backed mannikin**.

Lunch

An option at this stage is to stop at the KZNSA Gallery for a coffee and bite to eat before heading up to Shongweni Dam & Game Reserve. The Gallery opening times are from 9:00am 'til 4:00pm, Tuesday to Sunday. To get to the KZNSA Gallery, continue north along Princess Alice Avenue, turn right at the T-junction into McDonald Rd. and take your 3rd/4th left into Bulwer Rd. The Gallery is about ½ km along on the left, 166 Bulwer Rd, just before the Davenport Rd intersection (GPS: 29°51'36.89''S, 30°59'49.24''E).

Shongweni Nature Reserve

To continue on to Shongweni, carry on along Bulwer Rd to the M13/ King Dinizulu Rd intersection and turn left. Follow the road and take the glide-on onto the N3 to Pietermaritzburg. Follow the N3 for approx. 30km's and take the Shongweni / Assagay off-ramp (GPS: 29°48'28.37''S, 30°45'13.63''E). Turn left at the stop sign and follow the signs to Shongweni Dam & Game Reserve (approx. 7 km's). Birding is good year-round at Shongweni and you can spend the rest of the afternoon (please note gate closing times) birding around the reserve. On average expect to see 50 - 100 species.

Stopping at the entrance gate to pay reserve entry fees, watch for **Red-throated wryneck** here (GPS: 29°51'33.83''S, 30°43'48.40''E). From the entrance gate keep left and follow the road down to the dam wall, keeping a lookout for **Speckled pigeon, Cape rock-thrush, Mocking cliff-chat** and **Striped pipit** on the rock cliffs alongside. Park at the dam wall and look for **African fish eagle, African black duck** on the dam itself, and **Mountain wagtail** and **Hamerkop** along the stream below the dam wall. Scan the opposite sandstone cliffs for **Black stork, Lanner falcon, African black swift, Rock martin** and **Verreaux's eagle**. Follow the road back up the hill to the northern picnic sites, where a walking trail loops up the hill through a well-wooded watercourse and provides good bushveld and forest birding. Birds that could be seen in the forests include **African crowned eagle, Crowned** and **Trumpeter hornbills, Narina trogon, Gorgeous bush-shrike, Ashy flycatcher, Black cuckoo** (summer), **Swee waxbill** and **Grey waxbill** (uncommon). **African broadbill** has been recorded on occasion. Bushveld birds common in the reserve are Emerald-spotted wood-dove, African pygmy kingfisher (summer - uncommon), Southern tchagra (southern Africa endemic), Chinspot batis, African firefinch and Golden-breasted bunting.