

## Trip Report – Northern Cape, South Africa, August 2010

We toured across the Northern Cape province visiting four wildlife destinations: Marrick Safari in the Karoo, Kgalagadi NP in the Kalahari, Augrabies Falls NP on the Orange River and Namaqua NP in Namaqualand.

Marrick Safari is an independent wildlife and hunting lodge near Kimberley. Trevor is much more interested in eco-tourism and wildlife watching, but regrettably hunting currently brings in a lot more money – it must be hard to pull more eco-tourists in when none of the “Big Five” are present.

We had great viewing of a wide range of antelope species; **oryx, springbok, steenbok, bontebok, red haartebeest, blue wildebeest, waterbuck, greater kudu, grey duiker, giraffes, plains zebras** and the less widespread **black wildebeest**. The best viewing were the two night drives, which is the real reason to come to Marrick. We had one good sighting of an **aardvark**, four **aardwolves**, three **African porcupines** and best of all a really good sighting of the **small spotted cat** – good enough for decent photos in the spotlight. Also **spring hares, cape hares** and **scrub hares**.

People we spoke to seemed to think Kgalagadi NP was very quiet for wildlife while we were there. Certainly you can drive a long way viewing only **oryx, springbok** and **black wildebeest** before sighting something more interesting. We saw a lot of **black-backed jackals**, there was a **spotted hyena** hanging around Mata Mata camp, and near Twee Rivieren we had a good viewing of three **cheetahs** hunting (unsuccessfully) along the riverbed, and sightings of two male **lions** and a male/female pair. There were **suricates, yellow mongoose, slender mongoose** and **ground squirrels** in plenty. Our favourite sighting was forty minutes watching a **honey badger** foraging in the middle of the day. The only target animal we didn't get to see was the brown hyena. Worth noting that Kgalagadi was also very good for raptors: verreaux's giant eagle owl, the martial eagle and a lanner falcon on its prey were the highlights.

Augrabies Falls NP isn't so much of a specialised place for mammals, but it's a spectacular place to visit for the falls and for the colourful Augrabies flat lizards that cover the rocks. It did give us an opportunity to see **klipspringer** as well as **eland, rock dassies, chacma baboons** and **vervet monkeys**. We had a slim hope of seeing cape clawless otters, and although we found some very fresh spraints on a morning walk there was no likelihood of the animal emerging from the thick reedbeds for us.

We didn't get any new mammals in Namaqua NP, but were there in time to see the start of the spring flowering, when the desert landscape is transformed into a carpet of flowers. It was indeed splendid.

Photos from this trip at [www.otteradrift.com](http://www.otteradrift.com) – the blog for our year-long round the world trip. The next trip report will be the Western and Eastern Cape.