



Waterberg Plateau Park

What's that? The noises around the bungalows

Strange child-like cries, clicks, shrill barks, moans, giggles and thumping in the night? You have bushbabies on your roof. These tiny nocturnal primates feed on insects, nectar and acacia gum. Extremely agile, they are capable of jumping five metres and, when on the ground, they bounce on their back feet sometimes two metres into the air as if they were on springs or pogo sticks.

The delicate click of hooves on stone indicates the presence of the dainty sloe-eyed Damara dik-dik. Common visitors to the bungalow areas, they nibble the lawns delicately and prune the surrounding undergrowth. If alarmed, they whistle. Only males have horns. These tiny antelope weigh barely five kilograms.

Demented honking? Guinea fowl. Prime honking time? Dawn and dusk, as they prepare for lumbering flight to and from their roosts in the rocks. Manic cackling (de-

scribed in *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa* as Kachakitty-Chak, Kachakittychack) means the francolins are coming! These quarrelsome ground-loving birds, noticeable for the comical dashes they make through the undergrowth, are a Waterberg icon.

"Geck, geck, geck!" That will be a gecko using its burrow (or your bathroom) as an amplifier and explaining what it is.

A sudden rustle and commotion in the undergrowth? A lot of possibilities here. If there are accompanying rattles then porcupines are squabbling and flaring their quills. Conceivably it could even be a porcupine being eaten by a python. The big snakes have learned the trick of dealing with quills. Lots of rustling accompanied by chattering means that banded, slender, dwarf or black mongoose groups are foraging for insects in the leaf litter. All four species regularly visit the tourist area.



Quacking, fluting and belching croaks signify frogs. There are 13 species here. Many spend most of their time hibernating in burrows, only becoming active after rain. Touching them is not advisable as some secrete an irritating liquid from their skin. Mongooses deal with this by scrubbing the amphibians in dust to clean them.

The patter of falling leaves and twigs are signs that a family of nocturnal tree rats is in residence above your head. Shine your torch up and you'll see them staring down at you through eyes surrounded by black 'spectacle' rims.

Gruff barking and the clang of a dustbin lid being pushed over? Baboons. The Waterberg is ideal for them; the cliffs provide security at night and there is food and water all year round.

A fed baboon is a dead baboon

Feeding any wild animal is prohibited for very good reasons. Fed baboons, for example, quickly lose their natural fear of people, become aggressive and have to be shot. Nobody wants this to happen. Prevent raids by keeping cabin windows and car doors closed at all times, ensure dustbins are properly secured and don't leave food lying around.

What's up there? Birds, birds and more birds!

Waterberg is a birding delight! Over 200 species have been recorded in the park, ranging from love birds and parrots to secretary birds.

In addition to hosting 33 species of birds of prey, including black eagles, the Waterberg has the highest density of peregrine falcons in Africa. It is also home to the last remaining population of Cape vultures in Namibia. These are the rarest birds in the country, with perhaps only ten remaining. Poisoned bait set by farmers to kill predators is the principal cause of their decline. A 'vulture restaurant' has been established where carcasses attract hundreds of vultures, including the Cape vultures. Feeding sessions are open to the public and offer excellent photo opportunities.

Of the eleven endemic bird species in the country, seven occur here.

- Rockrunner (*Achaetops pycnopygius*)
- Hartlaub's francolin (*Francolinus hartlaubi*)
- Rüppell's parrot (*Roiccephalus rueppelli*)
- Bradfield's swift (*Apus bradfieldi*)
- Monteiro's hornbill (*Fockus monteiri*)
- Short-toed rock-thrush (*Monticola brevipes*)
- Carp's tit (*Parus carpi*)

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Environmental Care Code

Please adhere to the following:

- Do not feed the animals.
- Keep your belongings in a safe place away from inquisitive baboons.
- Do not litter.
- Please follow the rules and regulations listed on your park permit.

Have fun!

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