

Wings

OVER AFRICA

For professional ornithologist and conservationist **Mark D. Anderson**, bird photography is both a hobby and a passion. Armed with a Canon 1D Mark III camera and a variety of lenses, he travels southern Africa making use of small, portable hides. This allows him to get close to his subjects and capture their natural behaviour.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK D. ANDERSON/www.andersonafrica.co.za



ABOVE During visits to the Kruger National Park, I am usually more intrigued by the smaller animals and can spend many hours watching little bee-eaters going about their daily business. These two juveniles huddled together in the cool morning air, but did not hesitate to dart from their perch to catch a flying insect.

PREVIOUS SPREAD The greater kestrel is not a fussy eater and will prey on reptiles, birds and small mammals, although invertebrates make up the bulk of its diet. I came across this kestrel on a game farm in the western Free State, just as it had finished its grasshopper breakfast.

Visits to waterholes in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park are always rewarding, and one of my favourite times of day is between two and three hours after sunrise, when flocks of Namaqua and Burchell's sandgrouse come to drink. These birds are not easy to photograph as they are fast flying and descend rapidly to the water's edge. After a challenging few hours, I was finally rewarded with this image of a male Burchell's sandgrouse.





ABOVE Early one morning, I spent several hours at a waterhole in Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, near the Kruger, waiting for lions. They never arrived, but I was treated instead to a close observation of a foraging hamerkop. Its ability to find small food items and the agility with which it threw them into its mouth was especially impressive.

OPPOSITE Some of my most memorable times have been spent watching and photographing lesser flamingos from a small hide at Kamfers Dam, near Kimberley. This wetland is home to South Africa's only breeding colony of lesser flamingos, and it is one of just four African breeding sites for the species.

With the hide on a large rock in the middle of the Klaserie River, a crocodile not three metres away and a herd of elephants feeding noisily nearby, it was this pied kingfisher that most intrigued me, especially as it slapped its catfish prey to death against a stone.



ABOVE Strandfontein Sewerage Works in Cape Town is well known for its large number and diversity of waterbirds. I was able to get close to a few African sacred ibises as they moved from their roost to a nearby foraging area.

RIGHT The swallow-tailed bee-eater is one of the jewels of the Kalahari Desert, and its colourful plumage stands out against the otherwise dull vegetation. Picnic sites in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park are good places to photograph these and a variety of other Kalahari birds.

