



TOP SPOT
KIMBERLEY

Rich PICKINGS

At last count, 348 bird species had been recorded around Kimberley – not bad for a dry and supposedly inhospitable part of South Africa! Mark D Anderson lists five highlights.

1 Culture vultures

Kimberley is one of the few cities in the world where you can see vultures soaring over the central business district. This is because there are at least 300 pairs of **African white-backed vultures** in the area.

They usually nest on the top of camel thorn and umbrella thorn trees, but you might also spot one

of 22 pairs breeding on electricity pylons outside the city.

A good place to see vultures is Dronfield Game Farm, where they have been studied since the 1960s – there are 75 nesting pairs.

Where? Dronfield is 8 km outside Kimberley along the N12, heading for Johannesburg, on the right-hand side of the road.



2 New birds on the block

Serious birders go to Kimberley to see two new species of pipit: the **Kimberley pipit** and the **long-tailed pipit**, both described in the relatively recent 1990s by ornithologist Richard Liversidge.

But, be warned, they are elusive and difficult to identify. You can

look for the Kimberley pipit at Benfontein Game Farm, and the long-tailed pipit can be seen at Keeley Park in the winter months.

Where? Benfontein is 5,5 km from the airport turn-off on the new Bloemfontein Road. Keeley Park is in the suburb of Beaconsfield, just off Central Road.



3 Think PINK

Look out for the magnificent pink spectacle of 20 000 flamingos – give or take a few thousand – at Kamfers Dam. This large, shallow dam is home to the largest permanent population of **lesser flamingos** in southern Africa.

Good news is they have already started building nests and laying

eggs on the large island recently built by Ekapa Mining. This is the third such artificial breeding island in the world, and hopefully will soon be the fourth place in Africa where these birds breed.

Where? On the N12 north, to the left of the road. To get closer, contact Mark ☎ 082 788 0961.

4 Where lesser is more

A summer visit to Kimberley would not be complete without a dusk visit to Galeshewe, to the north of the city, where as many as 6 500 **lesser kestrels**, with an occasional sprinkling of Amur falcons and western red-footed falcons, gather to roost.

Watching masses of these tiny raptors milling around their bluegum tree roost, amid the hustle and bustle of life in urban Galeshewe, with a spectacular sunset as a backdrop, ranks as a highlight in many birders' memories. Why they choose to overnight in town is one of the mysteries of the avian world.

Where? Turn off the Pniel Road into Galeshewe Road; the trees are opposite the police station.



5 Proudly South African

A main reason birders visit the Northern Cape is to see birds only found in the dry parts of southern Africa (arid southern African endemics). Kimberley has more than 70, such as the tiny **rufous-eared warbler**, the beautiful crimson-breasted shrike, as well as South Africa's national bird, the blue crane.



I want to know more

- Buy an informative Kimberley bird checklist for only R5 from Eddie McFarlane at the Book Bin, 78 Jones Street, Kimberley (☎ 053 832 2541).

- For information about birding, camping and chalet accommodation on De Beers' properties, visit The Diamond Birding Route website (🌐 www.diamondbirdingroute.co.za).

