

## Back to South Africa, Focus Lepidoptera

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Last Updated Sunday, 07 January 2018

Following on from my trip to Kruger, Kgalagadi and parts of Cape Province earlier in the year, this three-week trip from 9-30 December 2017 concentrated largely on eastern parts of the country and, after a few successful days with mammals in southern Kruger, focussed very much on butterflies.

### Introduction

Though I have travelled widely in Africa, this was my first trip dedicated to butterflies on the continent. Prior to arriving in South Africa, it quickly became apparent that detailed information to assist in the planning of butterfly trip was scant, so it was very much a speculative trip with an itinerary designed to incorporate a broad range of habitats, rather than trying to targeting individual species. Visiting upland grasslands, savannah and sub-tropical forest, I then explored widely on the ground to find good butterfly areas.

In brief, my trip included: - Kruger National Park: southern sectors of the reserve, specifically the Berg-en-dal, Skukuze and Lower Sable areas. Superb days, with two packs of Wild Dogs, four Leopards, one Cheetah, one pride of Lions and several White Rhinos among the highlights, as well as both Greater and Lesser Bushbabies . Also, a reasonable selection of butterflies, mostly assorted whites. - Swaziland: highland grasslands at Malalotja; followed by the Hlane and Mlawale reserves in the lowlands close to the Mozambique border.

- Mkuzi National Park: three days in this flagship Kwazulu reserve, Suni antelope one of the mammal highlights, a good range of butterflies encountered around the camp site and areas where walking permitted. - KwaZulu coastline, a week travelling down the coast from Kosi Bay in the north to Mtunzini in the south, concentrating on lowland forests, acacia woodland and coastal grassland. Good concentrations of butterflies encountered in many areas, best numbers on the whole trip.

- Drakensburg Mountains: a couple of days at Sani Pass, then Golden Gate National Park. Impressive landscapes on the Lesotho border, high terrain habitats offering birds such as Drakensburg Rockjumper, Gurney's Sugarbird and Ground Woodpecker, plus a range of specialised butterfly species.