

## Southern Kruger Park and Ngwenya Lodge

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**18 January 2008** Just back from my annual timeshare week at Ngwenya Lodge, on the Crocodile River near Komatipoort in Mpumalanga. This the 9th consecutive year that I have been at Ngwenya from the second Friday in January and I have not before seen the level of the Crocodile River so high as this year, so high in fact that Crocodile Bridge was closed for entry into the Kruger Park until Wednesday morning.

The large amount of rain in the park has left all the minor rivers flowing, especially in the south-west, with the Mlambane, Biyamiti and others flowing strongly. The vegetation, usually thick in January, is extremely lush this year and almost impenetrable, making game viewing extremely difficult as the animals do not have to go to the waterholes to drink. Even birding is quite a trial as creepers are rampant and often you can hear the birds in creeper infested trees but see absolutely nothing. Areas of usually short grass are now metre high, so looking for lapwings, larks, pipits, etc. is rather challenging. Birding at Ngwenya itself was not affected too much and most of the "usual suspects" were seen, although I dipped on the usually common Green-backed Camaroptera, which was not even heard during the week.

Nevertheless, a trip list of 183, boosting my 2008 list to 250 already!

Neil Gray