

The Mannies Farm trail starts and ends at the Guinea Fowl Community Centre and is the longest trail with possibly the most ups and downs, but these are short and add to the enjoyment of the trail.

Head for the outdoor gym facility where the start of the trail takes you to the left of the Guinea Fowl Dam then across the dam wall, a favourite gathering spot for the Woolly-necked Storks. Look out too for Tawny-flanked Prinias. The trail soon enters a forested section with large Fig trees, Waterberry trees, Mitzeeri trees, with an understory of Tree Fuchias and Dune Soap-berry shrubs. To the left of the trail are the large leaved Powder-puff trees and a lovely Toad-tree with its characteristic grey green fruit that is covered with raised corky dots and splits to resemble the mouth of a toad with seeds covered in bright orange pulp.

Within minutes of crossing Turkeyberry Lane you will come across Mannies Boardwalk. Take the opportunity to look for Bushbuck and Red and Blue Duikers as you traverse this inner forest with its large Wild-frangipani and other trees and beautiful ferns and Large-leaf Dragon-trees. Retrace your steps back across the boardwalk this time looking for the forest birds including Golden-tailed Woodpeckers, Purple-crested Turacos, White-browed Robin-chats, Black-throated Wattle-eyes, White-bellied Sunbirds and others.

Later as you come along the edge of the forest and then head back into the forest you pass an enormous Waterberry tree – look out for Orchids growing on the trunk. There is a memorial bench set in a sea of soft basket grass for a peaceful stop to hear the birds and hopefully spy some Bushbuck. Wherever there are patches of basket grass, which only grows in shaded areas, look out for groups of the Common Bush Brown butterflies. These butterflies are found on Simbithi throughout the year and are also shade lovers. They settle near the ground with their wings over their heads and the colouration of the underside of the wings provides a clever camouflage as they look just like dry leaves. As one approaches however, they fly slowly up and down reminiscent of children dancing in a circle. These butterflies lay their eggs in the basket grass and the nocturnal brown or green caterpillars hide in the grass during the day.

The trail continues above the western edge of Cormorant Dam with grasslands to your right that offer frequent sightings of Grey Duiker.

Soon after crossing Ladlau Drive you will come to a T-junction with the Mfuleni trail.

Turn left and you will soon enter the forest under an archway formed by a Red Spikethorn tree. You will soon come to an area of young "Acacias", Robusta, Sieberiana and Karoo and look out for the Job's tears plants (Coix lacryma-jobi), an ancient cereal plant that produces the pearly grey seeds beloved by Zulu bead makers.

Pass in front of the Heron Community Centre stopping to check the birds on the island and then once through the gate keep straight and turn left up the short steep hill on Ladlau Drive.

Cross Ladlau going right onto Umkhovothi Close. Turn almost immediately left and the trail is now an undulated red earth path through grassland with small patches of forest. The tall coarse grass that almost resembles short sugarcane is the locally indigenous species, Panicum deustum. Care is taken on Simbithi to manage this grass as it becomes dominant. Bronze and Red-backed Mannikins love eating the seed of this grass which is also the host plant for several butterflies including the gorgeous Bush Beauty butterfly. The females of this species lay their eggs in flight so that they scatter amongst the grass, giving their offspring a better chance of survival.

At one point you will have a sea-view ahead, with Cormorant Dam below to the right and a view of Fish Eagle Dam to the left. As you traverse the grassland winding higher up you will have a lovely view of the canopy of Mannies forest below.

Small flocks of Bronze and Red-backed Mannikins, Common and even Orange-breasted Waxbills will rise from the grass ahead of you, as well the occasional Burchell's Coucal. Grey Duiker are frequently sighted on the edge of this grassland and the trail is filled with Porcupine scat. Keep right at both forks as links to the trail come in from the left and the trail then winds down through open grassland south of the oval.

A link also joins the trail from the right just before you arrive back from where the trail started.

Mannie's Farm Trail

Follow the **BROWN** trail markers

The Mannie's Farm trail starts and ends at the Guinea Fowl Community Centre. This is the longest trail and is a wonderful mix of forest and grassland with additional interest being added by the Guinea Fowl, Cormorant, Fish Eagle and Heron Dams. From the Guinea Fowl Centre the trail runs along the western shore of Guinea Fowl Dam, along the perimeter of Mannies Forest with the addition of a boardwalk through the centre of this swamp forest patch. It continues above Cormorant Dam crossing Ladlau Drive to join up with the section of the Mfuleni trail heading to the Heron Community Centre. Thereafter the trail again crosses Ladlau to traverse through grasslands and small patches of trees. The trail affords great views of the canopy of Mannies Forest before winding through open grassland south of the oval to return to the Guinea Fowl Community Centre.



Bushbuck

Distance: 3.9km

Duration: +/- 2 hours

Ascent/Descent: Gentle

Start: Guinea Fowl Community Centre

Trees of the Mannie's Farm Trail

Albizia adianthifolia (Flatcrown)
Barringtonia racemosa (Powder-puff Tree)
Brachylaena discolor (Coast Silver-oak)
Bridelia micrantha (Mitzeeri)
Clerodendrum glabrum (Cats-whiskers)
Deinbollia oblongifolia (Dune Soap-berry)
Dracaena alectrifomis (Large-leaf Dragon-tree)
Ficus lutea (Giant-leaf Fig)
Ficus natalensis (Natal Fig)
Ficus polita (Heart-leaf Fig)
Grewia occidentalis (Cross-berry Raisin)
Harpephyllum caffrum (Wild-plum)
Mundulea sericea (Cork-bush)
Rauvolfia caffra (Quinine-tree)
Syzygium cordatum (Waterberry)
Tabernaemontana ventricosa (Forest Toad-tree)
Trema orientalis (Pigeonwood)
Trichilia dregeana (Forest Natal Mahogany)
Voacanga thouarsii (Wild-frangipani)

Birds of the Mannie's Farm Trail

African Crowned Eagle
African Dusky Flycatcher
African Palm Swift
African Paradise Flycatcher
African Pied Wagtail
Amethyst Sunbird
Black Saw-wing
Black-backed Puffback
Black-bellied Starling
Black-throated Wattle-eye
Bronze Mannikin
Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Burchell's Coucal
Cape Grassbird
Cape White-eye
Collared Sunbird
Common Fiscal



Birds of the Mannie's Farm Trail (cont...)

Common Moorhen
Common Waxbill
Dark-capped Bulbul
Dideric Cuckoo
Egyptian Goose
Familiar Chat
Fiscal Flycatcher
Giant Kingfisher
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Green-backed Camaroptera
Kurrichane Thrush
Lesser Striped Swallow
Little Bee-eater
Little Rush Warbler

Birds of the Mannie's Farm Trail (cont...)

Natal Spurfowl
Neddicky
Olive Sunbird
Pied Kingfisher
Purple Heron
Purple-crested Turaco
Red-capped Robin Chat
Red-eyed Dove
Red-winged Starling
White-bellied Sunbird
White-browed Robin-chat
Whitebrowed Scrub Robin
White-eared Barbet
Wire-tailed Swallow
Woolly-necked Stork
Yellow Weaver
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Yellow-billed Duck
Yellow-rumped Canary
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird
Spectacled Weaver
Spurwinged Goose
Tawny-flanked Prinia

Other Unusual Bird Species Spotted

African Crowned Eagle
African Goshawk
Green Malkoha
Green Twinspot
Orange-breasted Waxbill
Red-backed Mannikin
White-fronted Bee-eater