

Orange, brown and yellow trail markers indicate junctions with the other trails which branch off of, or join, this trail.

The trail starts on the southern shore of the Heron Dam in front of the Community Centre. Walk westwards and across the bridge at the head of the dam. The Swamp Fig trees in this area show the typical growth of the *Ficus Trichopoda*, having horizontal stems about 2m above the marshy ground that are supported by strong stilt or prop roots. No other South African fig species have this banyan growth form.

The trail continues along the western shore of Heron Dam before passing in front of the Kingfisher Community Centre. You then head eastwards along the northern shoreline of Heron Dam passing a second memorial bench. At the Heron Dam wall is one of many pet waste stations that were installed for the convenience of dog-walking residents. Continue east into the riverine forest that grows along the stream that runs from the Heron to the Fish Eagle Dam. This forest has existed since the early farming days, and was protected by the farmer. The largest trees in this forest are likely to be over 100 years old. The forest is humid for most of the year, and supports a number of epiphytes including Orchids, that only survive in this type of ecosystem. Leaf litter is extensive and this keeps the soils rich in nutrients, as well as providing forage for the Red and Blue Duiker which inhabit these forests. Bushbuck are also often sighted on this trail. A memorial bench is situated close to the little stream and allows one to enjoy the sounds of both stream and forest birdsong.

For ease of identification there are about 50 species of trees labeled on this route indicating a high species density for forests of this nature. The largest of these trees are the Waterberry and Mitzeeeri trees and you will see several Umzimbeet—the tree from which the Estate takes its name. These trees have large bold inflorescences of beautiful purple flowers in summer. Wild-frangipanis, Quinine-trees, and Wild-pomegranates provide splendid fragrances in these forests at different times of the year, and their creamy white and red flowers often stand out in the green foliage.

The forest floor, or understory, is just as important as

the canopy layers. Nutrients which are collected as a result of the natural decay process, are re-cycled back through the roots and leaves of plants.

This continuous cycle allows the forest to persist without depleting the soils on which they grow. The soils become richer and richer, and more clay-like over time. Forest floors are populated by shade-loving plants which are usually ephemeral and herbaceous—their abundance varies through the year. A number of climbing plants use the taller forest plants as support in their attempts to reach light above the forest canopy.

Emerging from the forest, cross the area of lawn toward the Fish Eagle Community Centre where you can see three of the four fig species found on this trail. Turn slightly left and onto the Trimeria Walk golf-cart path. You may be tempted to detour onto the wall of Fish Eagle Dam but come back to continue the trail along Trimeria Walk. At the same point that the Tamboti trail enters from the left, the Mfuleni trail leaves the golf-cart path to the right. The trail now enters Goodies Forest with a picturesque bridge surrounded by ferns. A secluded picnic site is off to the left and you might spot the Honey Buzzard roosting high up in the surrounding older trees. You will certainly hear the Tinkerbirds calling as they are abundant in this part of the Estate. You might also hear the eerie call of the very special Buff-spotted Flufftail. Just before the picnic site the trail turns right. The forest is stunning in this area and there is a more intimate internal link to the trail marked in white on the map that is worth exploring.

The trail now runs along the southern shoreline of the Fish Eagle Dam. Note the huge trunks of the dead Eucalyptus trees. All along the trail are numerous droppings or “scats” from small mammals. Porcupine scats are predominant, and you will also see scats from the large Water Mongoose and the White-tailed Mongoose. The latter contain small bleached parts of the shells of crabs, which form a large part of their diet. The porcupines dig for bulbs and eat bark, their favourite being bark from the Natal Mahogany.

At a patch of grassland near the head of Fish Eagle Dam the Mannies Farm Trail joins this trail from the left. You then head back into the riverine forest en route to the Heron Community Centre. If you have walked in the late afternoon take time to watch the sunset from the bench on the Heron Dam Wall and watch the bats hawking insects that rise from the grass bank and water. Should you have walked when it is hot, enjoy having a refreshing swim in the pool before heading home.

# Mfuleni Trail

Follow the **BLUE** trail markers

The Mfuleni Trail is the central trail to which all other trails connect. It follows a circular route starting and ending at the Heron Community Centre but also passes both the Kingfisher and Fish Eagle Community Centres. The Mfuleni is primarily a Riverine Forest walk, fringing the two largest dams on Simbithi, the Heron and Fish Eagle Dams. You will also walk through patches of open grassland.

As it encompasses more than one ecosystem, it supports a wide variety of wildlife and birds. Forest birds are often quite secretive. However, if you are quiet and still you should see Thrushes scrubbing around amongst the leaf litter, and the Red-capped Robin-chat flash past from bush to bush with its electric blue wings. On the banks of the dams you will always see many water birds as well as Red Bishops, Weavers and other reed species.



Red Duiker

**Distance:** 2.8km

**Duration:** +/- 1,5 hours

**Ascent/Descent:** Gentle

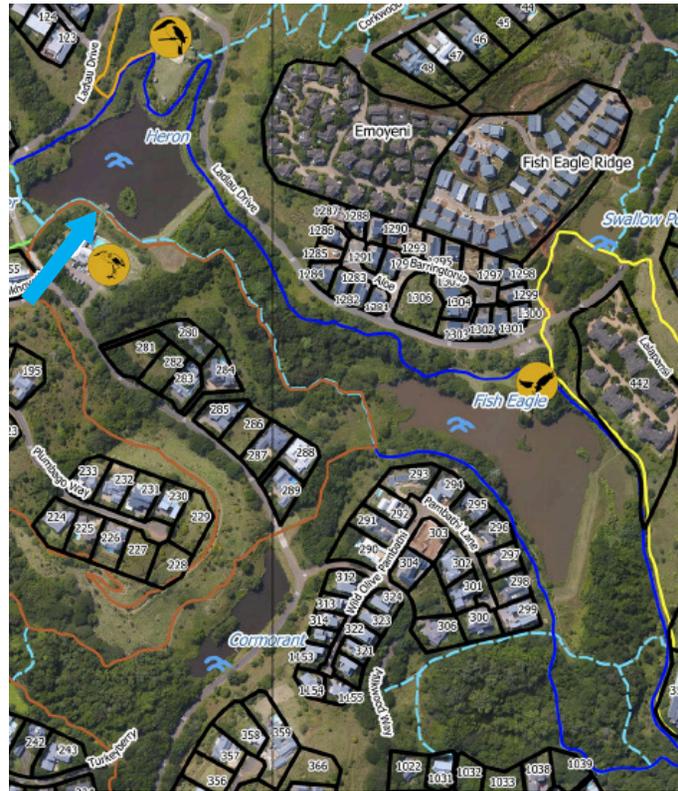
**Start:** Heron Community Centre

## Trees of the Mfuleni Trail

Albizia adianthifolia (Flatcrown)  
Apodytes dimidiata (White-pear)  
Bridelia micrantha (Mitzeeri)  
Burchellia bubalina (Wild-pomegranate)  
Erythrina lysistemon (Coral-tree)  
Ficus lutea (Giant-leaf Fig)  
Ficus natalensis (Natal Fig)  
Ficus sur (Broom-cluster Fig)  
Ficus trichopoda (Swamp Fig)  
Grewia occidentalis (Cross-berry Raisin)  
Halleria lucida (Tree-fuschia)  
Harpephyllum caffrum (Wild-plum)  
Macaranga capensis (River Macaranga)  
Millettia grandis (Umzimbeet)  
Psychotria capensis (Black Bird-berry)  
Rauvolfia caffra (Quinine-tree)  
Schotia brachypetala (Weeping Boer-bean)  
Syzygium cordatum (Waterberry)  
Tabernaemontana ventricosa (Forest Toad-tree)  
Trema orientalis (Pigeonwood)  
Voacanga thouarsii (Wild-frangipani)

## Birds of the Mfuleni Trail

African Dusky Flycatcher  
African Firefinch  
Ashy Flycatcher  
Black Cuckooshrike  
Black Sparrowhawk  
Black-bellied Starling  
Black-headed Oriole  
Black-throated Wattle-eye  
Brown-hooded Kingfisher  
Buff-spotted Flufftail  
Cape White-eye  
Collared Sunbird  
Crested Barbet  
Dark-capped Bulbul



## Birds of the Mfuleni Trail (cont...)

Egyptian Goose  
Fork-tailed Drongo  
Golden-tailed Woodpecker  
Green-backed Camaroptera  
Hadeda Ibis  
Honey Buzzard  
Kurrichane Thrush  
Lesser Honeyguide  
Long-crested Eagle  
Olive Sunbird  
Orange-breasted Bush-shrike  
Purple-crested Turaco  
Red-capped Robin-chat  
Red-eyed Dove

## Birds of the Mfuleni Trail (cont...)

Redth-roated Wryneck  
Red-winged Starling  
Sombre Greenbul  
Southern Black Tit  
Tambourine Dove  
Tinkerbird  
Terrestrial Bulbul  
Thick-billed Weaver  
Violet-backed Starling  
White-eared Barbet  
Woolly-necked Stork  
Yellow Weaver  
Yellow-bellied Greenbul  
Yellow-billed Kite  
Yellow-fronted Canary  
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird



Red Capped Robin Chat