

Walk west from the Heron Community Centre down the steps and the trail starts at the meeting point of the Mannies Farm, Mfuleni and the Mngeni trails. Head towards and cross Ladlau Drive to meander along the eastern shore of Weaver Dam.

Look out for the Long-toed African Jacana walking across the lily pads and other waterbirds that frequent this beautiful dam as well as Red Bishops in the reeds. Along the shore line are the heart shaped leaves of the yellow Waterlily with its dainty star-shaped yellow flowers no bigger than a 50c coin as well as the larger blue Waterlilies.

On several of the trees you will notice what look like nests made of mud and there is a lovely example at eye level on a young Broom-cluster Fig. They are in fact the nests of the Red-Cocktail or Crematogaster ants and are made of chewed vegetable matter. When disturbed, the ants aggressively swarm out of the nests typically raising their heart-shaped tails or abdomens, which gives rise to their common name. As you pass the end of the dam do not take the split to the right as you will return via this route.

At the split is a lovely example of the False-assegai tree.

The trail's prime feature is coastal swamp forest including huge Swamp Figs, Natal Figs, River Macaranga, Waterberry trees and Wild-frangipani trees and all of these are clearly visible as you walk toward the secluded and picturesque Wagtail Pool. As you enter the swamp forest having traversed the dam wall you will see stunning ferns and be sure to look out for the indigenous Bird's Nest ferns on trees in the forest. You will soon come across a giant Waterberry tree. Look for an owl box placed there for the African Wood Owl. There are lots of Brides-bushes in the understory of the forest with their sweetly-scented white flowers and round black berries, much loved by the birds.

Look out for these unusual species that have been recorded in the Mngeni swamp forest, the Lemon Dove, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Narina Trogon, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, and during winter months, the Spotted Ground-thrush.

The Terrestrial Bulbul, Sombre and Yellow-bellied Greenbuls as well as Red-capped Robin-chats and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds are frequently spotted. Toward the bridge that runs along the southern boundary fence you will spot the architectural Large-leaf Dragon-trees, with their long strappy leaves and perfumed sprays of greenish yellow flowers that are followed by beautiful orange berries.

As you walk across the bridge that runs parallel to the security fence look up high to see a waterfall of aerial roots of a giant Swamp Fig tree. Turning north the trail passes under several Flatcrown trees and you will notice that Nephrolepis ferns have colonised the trunks of the Eucalyptus trees that were felled with the establishment of Simbithi. The Bristle grass and Basket grass on the forest floor attract the seed eaters including the stunning African Firefinches and Green-backed Twinspots. Many of the Waterberry trees in this section have indigenous orchids growing on them. The swamp forest ends in the Llongwe wetland where the rare Pickersgill Reed frogs have been found.

Be sure to take the route back through the forest along the boardwalk and to spend some time quietly sitting on the bench as this is one of the best places to spot Bushbuck and, if you are really fortunate, the endangered Blue Duck. Their ideal habitat is dense forest with as many shrubs as large trees. Interestingly both male and female are territorial and they do not browse but forage, eating freshly fallen leaves and berries from the forest floor. Just past the bench is an area where there are several Katherine Wheel Lilies growing. They are absolutely stunning when in flower between December and March with their large flower heads consisting of up to 200 flowers.

Also attractive are the fruit, large green berries that turn scarlet when ripe and are much loved by birds. Beautiful, but potentially lethal as they are strongly toxic plants.

As you come out from the forest, turn left at the T-junction to rejoin the trail at the head of Weaver Dam. This trail will leave you feeling rejuvenated.

Mngeni Trail

Follow the **GREEN** trail markers

The Mngeni Trail starts and ends at the Heron Community Centre. This is the shortest trail and one of the most tranquil as it primarily meanders through the Mngeni Swamp forest and associated wetland.

The trail starts at the Heron Community Centre, almost immediately crosses Ladlau Drive and then hugs the eastern shore of Weaver Dam. It then skirts the eastern edge of the Mngeni Forest before traversing the dam wall of the Wagtail Pool providing good views across this picturesque dam. It then enters the Mngeni Forest taking you along a boardwalk parallel to the perimeter fence and then through the western section of the forest to the Llongwe wetland – a location for our endangered Pickersgill Reed Frog. The best way back to the start is via the boardwalk with a lovely seat to watch the Bushbuck deep in the forest and you emerge from the forest at the head of Weaver Dam to return to your starting point at Heron Dam. Alternative links are from Silver Oak Way or from Frangipani Lane.



African Wood Owl

Distance: 1.8km

Duration: +/- 1 hour

Ascent/Descent: Gentle

Start: Heron Community Centre

Trees of the Mngeni Trail

Albizia adianthifolia (Flatcrown)
Apodytes dimidiata (White-pear)
Bridelia micrantha (Mitzeeri)
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)
Hibiscus tiliaceus (Lagoon Hibiscus)
Macaranga capensis (River Macaranga)
Millettia grandis (Umzimbeet)
Rauvolfia caffra (Quinine-tree)
Schotia brachypetala (Weeping Boer-bean)
Syzygium cordatum (Waterberry)
Tabernaemontana ventricosa (Forest Toad-tree)
Trema orientalis (Pigeonwood)
Vachellia karoo (Sweet Thorn)
Vachellia robusta (Narrow-pod Robust Thorn)
Voacanga thouarsii (Wild-frangipani)

Birds of the Mngeni 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
Cape White-eye
Collared Sunbird
Crested Barbet
African Jacana
Dark-capped Bulbul



Birds of the Mngeni Trail (cont...)

Egyptian Goose
Fork-tailed Drongo
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Green-backed Camaroptera
Green-backed Twinspot
Hadedda Ibis
Kurrichane Thrush
Lesser Honeyguide
Long-crested Eagle
Olive Sunbird
Orange-breasted Bush-shrike
Purple-crested Turaco
Red Bishop
Red-capped Robin-Chat

Birds of the Mngeni Trail (cont...)

Red-eyed Dove
Red-throated Wryneck
Red-winged Starling
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Black Tit
Tambourine Dove
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

Other Unusual Bird Species Spotted

African Wood Owl
Buff-spotted Flufftail
Lemon Dove
Nirina Trogon
Scaley-throated Honeyguide
Spotted Ground-thrush



Blue Duiker