

The trail starts next to the sandpit play area of the Kingfisher Community Centre and after following a short section of the easterly shore of Heron Dam, crosses Ladlau Drive. The trail then heads north along the border of an extensive wetland on your right-hand side. This wetland supports the Pickersgill's Reed Frog, a highly endangered and rare species of frog found in very few sites in KZN. This frog requires very specific habitat and is highly localised and this wetland provides the ideal habitat for them. The frogs make a call that sounds similar to that of crickets but softer, and can be heard a few hours after dark at certain times of the year. There are four very productive fresh-water dams on this trail, in addition to the three important wetlands. Continue walking up the hill in a westerly direction through open grassland and avoid the return loop on your right-hand side. Ascend the wall of the Warbler Pool, heading for the right-hand side bank. Bird life on this pool is well-established and you are likely to see African Reed Warbler, Red Bishops, Thick-billed Weavers, Common Moorhen, Little Grebe and Purple Swamp Hen. Yellow-billed Ducks, White-faced Whistling Ducks as well as Fulvous Whistling Ducks also visit this pool.

Soon after leaving the dam the trail turns right and soon crosses Honeysuckle Lane to descend past Harrier Dam. There are two benches on the southern side of this dam including one at a higher elevation and the other close to the shoreline. Ignore the short link heading south at the start of the dam wall and walk across the dam wall. The trail then runs parallel to the northern shore of the dam, where there is another bench. A pair of Blacksmith Lapwings are frequently sighted from this bench. Soon after Harrier Dam you will encounter Oriole Pond on your left-hand side. Despite its small size this is an extremely productive pond both in terms of plant and animal life. A few quiet moments of bird-watching will reward you with some very good sightings including Black Crakes and African Jacanas. The fallen Fig Tree provides excellent habitat for a variety of terrestrial birds, such as the Purple-Crested Turacos, Fork-tailed Drongos, Black-headed Orioles, and Dusky Flycatchers.

Cross over Cat's Whiskers Lane and you will then have the option of taking the right or left fork. The

left fork is the longer route and takes you parallel to Acacia Drive to the far side of the Zorai Wetland. This is a good area to spot Reedbuck especially in the late afternoon. The trail then winds through open grassland before entering a patch of developing swamp forest and onto the northern bank of Hornbill Dam.

The right hand fork is the start of a shorter, gentle descent through open grassland and alongside developing swamp forest to the southern bank of Hornbill Dam. Irrespective of whether you take the right or left fork you are likely to encounter various grassland bird species including Bronze Mannikins, Blue Waxbills, Rufous-naped Larks, Little Bee-eaters and Natal Spurfowl. This area is also inhabited by Bushbuck.

The wetland in this swamp forest plays a vital role in 'filtering' and cleaning the water flowing down to Hornbill Dam. Hornbill Dam has strong aquatic ecosystem components, including natural weed, an extensive fringe of bulrushes, and a population of fresh water invertebrates. All of this enables the dam to support excellent bird life. Red-knobbed Coots are constantly building nests, and several species of Waterfowl including Common Moorhens and Little Grebes occupy the various ecological niches provided by this dam. The fairly shy White-backed Ducks are often found here. They are not a common species for this part of the world.

If you have taken the right hand fork, cross over the dam wall to join up with the left hand fork and ascend towards Cussonia Way. Alternatively take the short internal link on the west side of the dam, leading back to the western side of this trail.

There is a further link to Cussonia Way to the left but turn right and head west parallel to the wetland below the dam. This part of the trail takes you through older, more established forest with its large Fig trees, Macarangas, Voacangas and Forest Toad trees.

Cross the little bridge and bear left below a couple of homes. This area is quite damp in summer, and there is extensive wetland in the valley to the east of the path. You will find lots of scats of the Water Mongoose and Porcupine along the trail, as well as the occasional pellets regurgitated by owls such as the Spotted Eagle Owl. Red and Grey Duiker also frequent this valley and you are likely to see the Reedbuck in the grasslands adjacent to the wetlands, along much of this trail. Return to the Kingfisher Community Centre by turning left at the T-junction on the earlier (western) part of the Nsimbi Trail.

Nsimbi Trail

Follow the **ORANGE** trail markers

The Nsimbi Trail starts and ends at the Kingfisher Community Centre. It has numerous links to and from surrounding roads, as well as within the circular route allowing one to take alternate routes. The trail takes its name from the Iron Age dwelling that was discovered here and is primarily an open grassland, dam and wetland walk. This is the best route for Waterfowl enthusiasts. The critically endangered Pickersgill's Reed Frog is found in the wetlands which occur at the start of this trail.



Pickersgill's Reed Frog

Distance: 3.6km

Duration: +/- 1,5 hours

Ascent/Descent: Modest +/- 65m

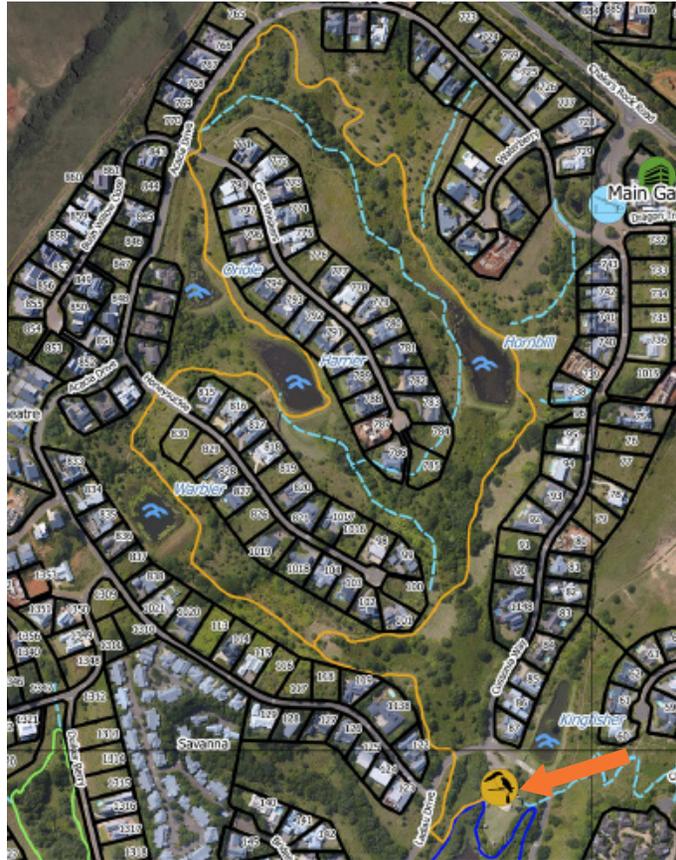
Start: Kingfisher Community Centre

Trees of the Nsimbi 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 Nsimbi Trail

African Dusky Flycatcher
African Firefinch
African Jacana
African Reed Warbler
Ashy Flycatcher
Black Crake
Black Cuckooshrike
Black Sparrowhawk
Black-bellied Starling
Black-headed Oriole
Blacksmith Lapwing
Black-throated Wattle-eye
Blue Waxbill
Bronze Mannikin



Birds of Nsimbi Trail (cont...)

Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Cape White-eye
Collared Sunbird
Crested Barbet
African Purple Swamphen
Common Moorhen
Dark-capped Bulbul
Dusky Flycatcher
Egyptian Goose
Fork-tailed Drongo
Fulvous Whistling Ducks
Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Green-backed Camaroptera
Hadeda Ibis

Birds of Nsimbi Trail (cont...)

Kurrichane Thrush
Lesser Honeyguide
Little Bee-eaters
Little Grebe
Long-crested Eagle
Natal Spurfowl
Olive Sunbird
Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike
Purple-crested Turaco
Red Bishop
Red-capped Robin-Chat
Red-eyed Dove
Red-knobbed Coot
Red-throated Wryneck
Red-winged Starling
Rufous-naped Lark
Sombre Greenbul
Southern Black Tit
Spotted Eagle-Owl
Tambourine Dove
Terrestrial Bulbul
Thick-billed Weaver
Violet-backed Starling
White-backed Duck
White-eared Barbet
White-faced Whistling Duck
Woolly-necked Stork
Yellow Weaver
Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Yellow-billed Duck
Yellow-billed Kite
Yellow-fronted Canary
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird