

South Africa

Birds & Beasts

October 8 - 22, 2024

14 Days / 13 Nights

October 8 – 21, 2024

14 Days / 13 Nights

Our popular “Birds & Beasts” tour has been modified to include more time in everyone’s favorite site in South Africa – the incomparable Kruger National Park.

ZAR 74,500 (\$4382 USD)

Single supplement:

ZAR 6000 (\$353 USD)



EXTENSIONS

Pre-trip Extension Western Cape

October 1 – 8, 2024

8 Days/ 7 Nights

ZAR 34,500 (\$2029 USD)

Single supplement:

ZAR 3500 (\$2063 USD)

Post-trip Extension East Coast and Drakensberg Plateau

Oct. 22 – Nov. 1, 2024

11 Days / 10 Nights

ZAR 48,300 (\$2841 USD)

Single supplement:

ZAR 5,200 (\$324 USD)

Prices are quoted in ZAR. US dollar equivalents are based on an exchange rate of 15:1. Final price in USD will depend on currency exchange rates at the time of final payment.

Eastern South Africa offers some of the best birding in all of Africa and, on this tour, we will sample some of the diversity that makes this part of the country essential to any birder's travels. The area is home to over 750 species; couple this with magnificent landscapes, modern infrastructure and the full big game experience and you have a winning recipe. Typically, we could expect a bird list in the region of 400 birds, sprinkled with a good number of endemics and unbelievable game viewing.



Where nearly 2 million hectares of unrivaled diversity of life forms fuses with historical and archaeological sites - this is the real Africa. The world-renowned Kruger National Park offers a wildlife experience that ranks with the best on the continent. Established in 1898 to protect the wildlife of the South African lowveld, this park has hosted millions of local as well as foreign visitors over the years and is a must when visiting South Africa. With well over 500 bird species and the richest diversity of mammals of any park in Africa, you will not leave disappointed.

For 2023, we've modified our normal itinerary to eliminate some long drives and include more time in Kruger National Park, which is undeniably everyone's favorite part of any South African tour. No one is ever ready to leave Kruger, so we're offering a chance to spend a lot more time there to enjoy the excellent birding and wildlife viewing Kruger is known for, as well as the outstanding photo opportunities. Spending two nights at each camp affords us the opportunity to enjoy optional sunset and night drives and also allows us enough time to enjoy what each area of the park has to offer.

If you are taking only the Birds and Beasts tour, you should consider arriving a day early to stage for the first day of the tour. This would give you a full night's sleep before starting to travel and bird with the group. If you choose to arrive a day early, you should depart from the US two days before the start date in order to arrive in Johannesburg on the day before the tour starts. Alternatively, if you can schedule your arrival for the morning of the start date, that would be all right, but you must arrive by noon. If you opt to arrive a day early, we can recommend a lodge near the airport, make reservations for you for that night, and include the cost on your final invoice.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 00, Oct. 6, 2024

If you plan to arrive a day before the tour starts, you should leave the US today so you will arrive in Johannesburg on October 11.

Day 0, Oct. 7, 2024

If you plan to arrive a day early, you will land in Johannesburg today and spend the night at a hotel near the airport. We will arrange the reservations for this extra night and add it to your invoice if you would like. Alternatively, if you plan to arrive in Johannesburg on October 12 (possible only if your flight arrives in the morning), you will depart the US today.

Day 1, Oct. 8: Arrival

Our first day of the Birds & Beasts tour starts in the City of Johannesburg, where you would have arrived either the previous day or this morning from various international destinations or around midday from the Cape pre-tour extension. After a short meet and greet, we'll head off to a local wetland reserve for your first taste of South African birding.

O/N Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg (D)

Day 2, Oct. 9: Johannesburg area birding

We will depart early this morning for Mabusa Nature Reserve to the east of Johannesburg, where we hope to see several hard-to-find species such as **Shelly's Francolin**, **Green-capped Eremomela**, and **Bushveld Pipit**; we might even have a shot at the elusive **Short-tailed Pipit**. From here, we will drive to the Rust-de-Winter area and, more specifically, Zaagkuilsdrift Road, an area very popular with local birders. We can expect a good selection of typical bushveld species, but the real draw card here is a whole host of species more



Crimson-breasted Gonolek

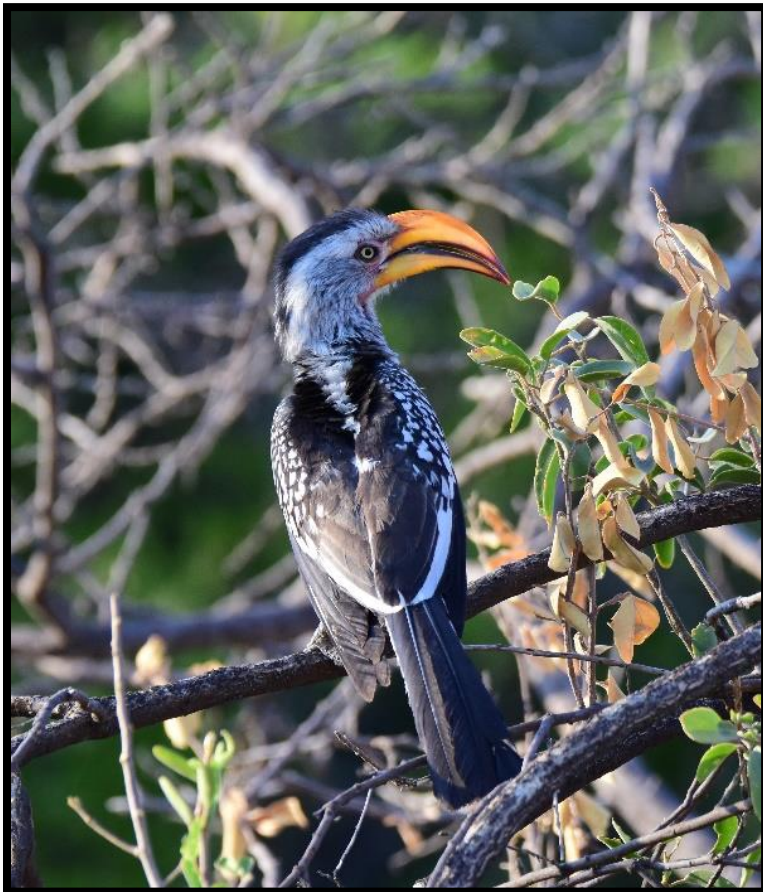
typical of the dry west, which are pretty much at the edge of their range here. Highlights to look out for include the spectacular **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, always a crowd favorite, as well as species like **Violet-eared Waxbill**, **Kalahari Scrub-Robin**, **White-throated Robin-Chat**, **Marico Flycatcher**, **Southern Pied Babbler**, **Great Sparrow**, **Ashy Tit**, and many more. Further along this road we'll come to another top birding spot, Kgomo-Kgomo Floodplain. For a couple of weeks in years of good rainfall, this place comes alive and arguably offers some of the most spectacular birding in the country. Even when there is not much water around, there is always some rewarding birding to be had. During these drier spells there is usually quite a spectacle with hundreds of **Black-winged Pratincoles** filling the sky. **Temminck's Courser** can be plentiful at times, and an added cast made up of **Chestnut-backed Sparrowlarks**, **Shaft-tailed Whydahs** and even a **Harrier** or two complete the picture
O/N Chameleon Bush Lodge or similar (BLD)

Day 3, Oct. 10: Rust-de-Winter to Magoebaskloof, Polokwane Game Reserve

After some early morning birding, we will head further north, arriving in the town of Polokwane around lunch. A short stop at the Polokwane Game Reserve should hopefully net us the Southern African endemic, **Short-clawed Lark**. From here, a quick stop in Tzaneen for **Pied Mannikin** and, time permitting, even a short visit to the nearby stakeout for **Bat Hawk**. We will continue to our destination in Magoebaskloof, where we will have our first taste of forest birding. Species to look out for include **Knysna Turaco, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, White-starred Robin, Gorgeous** and **Black-fronted Bush-Shrikes, Swee Waxbill** and, with luck, we could even find **African Wood-Owl** after dinner.

O/N Bramasole Guest House (BLD)

Day 4, Oct. 11: Kruger National Park: Punda Maria to Shingwedzi



Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill

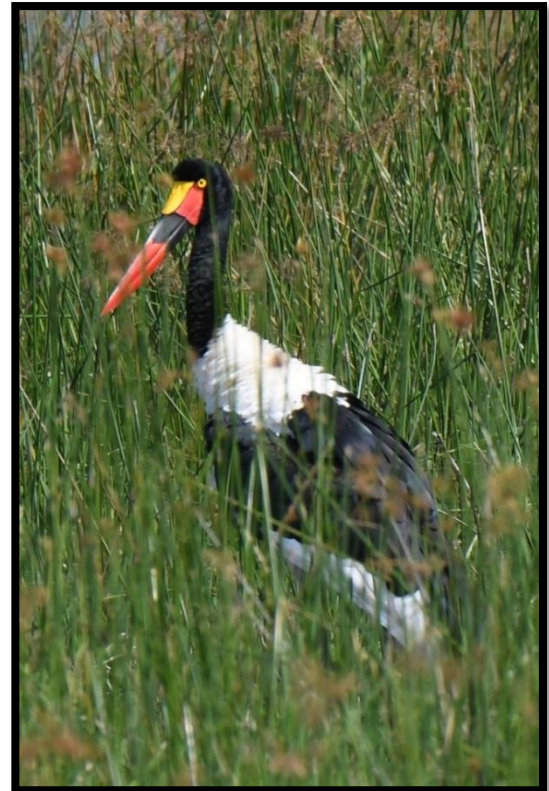
Today will be mostly a travel day as we drive to the Punda Maria Gate, from where we will enter Kruger National Park and head to our first camp, Shingwedzi. The drive from the entrance gate to our camp is likely to provide our first encounters with the megafauna of Kruger. Although it's a mere 72 kilometers from the Punda Maria gate to Shingwedzi, we will be lucky to arrive before the camp gates close at 6:00 PM because of all the stops we'll make to observe birds and other wildlife. The rich bushveld of the Kruger National Park offers very rewarding birding, and we will use every opportunity for the next 9 days to explore as much of the area as possible. The possibility of the 'Big 5' (Lion, Leopard, African Buffalo, African Elephant and Rhinoceros) is ever present; of course, we'll also encounter a whole host of other exciting

mammals, which may include the likes of Cheetah, African Wild Dog, Hippopotamus, Giraffe, Warthog, Greater Kudu and many more. Of special interest here are some of the larger terrestrial birds, as well as birds of prey that are difficult or nearly impossible to find reliably outside protected areas such as Kruger. These include **Kori Bustard, Southern Ground Hornbill, Martial Eagle, Bateleur, Lappet-faced Vulture, Secretarybird, and Saddle-billed Stork**. Other typical bushveld birds that we should encounter are **Southern Yellow-billed** and **Southern Red-billed Hornbills, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Red-billed** and **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers, Brown-headed Parrot, Purple-crested Turaco, Crested** and **Swainson's Francolins, White-crowned Lapwing, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Lilac-breasted Roller, and African Mourning Dove**, among others. At our camps, there is the possibility of an optional night drive (extra fee), and we highly recommend taking at least one of these during the trip. Several nocturnal mammals such as Serval, African Civet, Aardvark, Small and Large Spotted Genets and African Wild Cat are possible, as well as some nocturnal or crepuscular birds such as **Spotted** and **Verreaux's Eagle**

Owl, Square-tailed Nightjar, and Bronze-winged Courser. Shingwedzi Camp is good for **African Mourning Dove, Collared Palm-Thrush and Cut-throat Finch.**
O/N Kruger NP, Shingwedzi Camp (BLD)

Day 5, Oct. 12: Kruger National Park: Shingwedzi Area

We'll be up early this morning, ready for our game drive as soon as the gates open at 5:30 AM. Early morning offers our best chances of seeing nocturnal animals as they finish up their night's "work". Game is somewhat scarcer in the northern part of the park, but it's easier to observe the birds and animals you find because the area is less crowded with people. We'll take a scenic route that runs along the Shingwedzi River, where Lion, White Rhinoceros, Elephant, and Giraffe are regulars, and where we might find **Stierling's Wren-Warbler, African Green Pigeon, Sabota Lark, and Mosque Swallow.** After lunch back in camp, we'll head out to the Kanniedood dam and hide, an area teeming with birds and wildlife. This outing should produce a host of **Stork** species including **Open-billed, Yellow-billed, Saddle-billed** and **Wooly-necked.** We'll be back in camp in time for people to take an optional night drive.
O/N Kruger NP, Shingwedzi Camp (BLD)



Saddle-billed Stork

Day 6, Oct. 13: Kruger National Park: Shingwedzi- Letaba

After a bit of early morning birding around the camp followed by a hot breakfast, we'll load up the vans and head for our next camp, Letaba Rest Camp. The camp overlooks the river of the same name, and this provides an ideal setting for birding from the terrace at the restaurant. We often see several raptor species here including the likes of **White-headed Vulture, Hooded Vulture, and Bateleur.** We'll take our time on the 110-kilometer drive, stopping to enjoy views of birds and other wildlife along the way. We'll try to get to camp in time for a sunset game drive for the people who are interested (optional, extra fee).

O/N Kruger NP, Letaba Camp (BLD)



Woodland Kingfisher

Day 7, Oct. 14: Kruger National Park: Letaba Area

We will take an early morning walk around the camp for species such as **Red-capped Robin Chat, Woodland Kingfisher, African Green Pigeon, and Green-capped Eremomela.** **Red-headed Weaver** is another of the camp's specialties. After breakfast, we'll enjoy a full day of birding and wildlife viewing as we drive the dirt roads in the area around our camp. We'll be back in camp before the gate closes at 6:00 PM and enjoy dinner overlooking the Letaba River. This camp is especially good for owls - **Barred Owlet, Pearl-spotted Owlet** and **African Scops Owl** are resident in the camp, and we'll try to find some of them after dinner.
O/N Kruger NP, Letaba Camp (BLD)

Day 8, Oct. 15: Kruger National Park: Letaba -Olifants

We'll enjoy breakfast overlooking the Letaba River and allow a bit of time for birders to visit the Elephant Museum located inside the gate before we head out on our game drive to the next camp, Olifants. On the way, we will visit the Nshawu area to the east of Mopani Camp, which often hosts Cheetah and is probably the best area in the park for the rare Roan Antelope. Birding here can also be surprisingly good, especially for the likes of **Secretarybird** and **Kori Bustard**. The



Secretarybird

distance between the two camps is just 39 kilometers, so we'll have plenty of time to investigate all the dirt roads in the area before arriving at our destination.

O/N Kruger NP, Olifants Camp (BLD)

Day 9, Oct. 16: Kruger National Park: Olifants - Satara

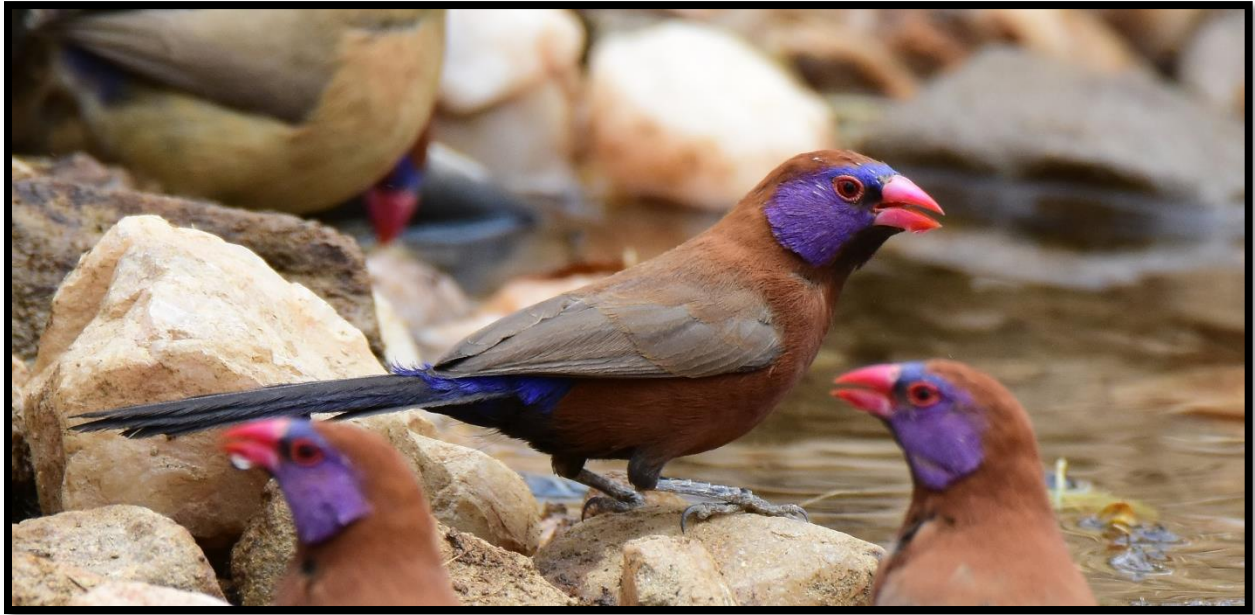
We'll enjoy some pre-breakfast birding around Olifants Camp. After breakfast, we'll depart for Satara, a region renowned for its cat sightings and abundance of game, in general. Because of this reputation, this camp can be quite crowded, but vegetation in this area is sparse, allowing for excellent viewing. Lion, leopard, and cheetah have all been spotted along the S100 N'wanseti River Road, and we'll be on the lookout for them and other animals as we cruise along this road. We'll return to camp in time for either an optional sunset or night drive (extra fee), depending on the preferences of the group.

O/N Kruger NP, Satara Camp (BLD)



Day 10, Oct. 17: Kruger National Park: Satara Area

Birding in the Kruger camps can be highly rewarding, and Satara is no exception, so we'll make sure to spend some time before breakfast exploring the grounds in search of the likes of **Green Wood-hoopoe**, **Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike**, **Black-backed Puffback**, **Golden-tailed Woodpecker**, and **Arrow-marked Babbler**. Satara offers some good bushveld birds that like the drier and more open areas that are common in this part of the park, so we should come away with birds such as **Violet-eared Waxbill**, **Shaft-tailed Whydah** and **Mocking Cliff-Chat** during our



Violet-eared Waxbill

game drive. Another highlight in the camp is the resident African Wild Cat that can often be seen at dusk and has become quite tame, so keep an eye out for this one. Night drives from Satara (optional, extra fee) are highly recommended.

O/N Kruger NP, Satara Camp (BLD)

Day 11, Oct. 18: Kruger National Park: Satara - Skukuza

From Satara, we head to the oldest camp in the Kruger Park, Skukuza, which is also the largest camp in the park, idyllically set on the bank of the Sabie River. Birding in and around the camp is exceptionally good with **African Green Pigeon**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, and **Kurichane Trush** in attendance. **Bat Hawk** is frequently recorded here, and we might be lucky enough to see one of these spectacular crepuscular hawks from the deck overlooking the river at dusk. The area between Skukuza, Lower Sabie and Pretoriuskop Camps is renowned for fantastic big cat sightings, and we hope that it will live up to its reputation.

O/N Kruger NP, Skukuza Camp (BLD)

Day 12, Oct. 19: Kruger National Park: Skukuza Area

Our final full day in Kruger would have arrived all too soon for some, but we intend to make the best of the time we have left and will concentrate on slightly different habitats today with the focus on areas of open grassland, waterholes and broad-leaved woodland hosting species such as **African Cuckoo-Hawk**, **Dark Chanting Goshawk**, **Green-capped Eremomela**, **Bennet's Woodpecker**, and even **Bushveld Pipit**. The damp depressions around streams sometimes yield **Black Coucal** and, in season, the odd **Corncrake**. This area is particularly good for the elusive Black Rhino and Lichtenstein's Hartebeest.

O/N Kruger NP, Skukuza Camp (BLD)

Day 13, Oct. 20: Kruger National Park: Skukuza - Wakkerstroom

We will bird our way out of Kruger National Park, budgeting our time to stop only for new sightings or outstanding photo ops to allow time for a fairly long but scenic drive from the Kruger National Park to the small hamlet of Wakkerstroom. This quaint little town, which stands in stark contrast to the habitats we've visited thus far, is situated on the Highveld plateau dominated by rolling hills and upland grassland. Several special birds occur here, with a good number of them being endemic and difficult to find elsewhere. We should arrive in time for some afternoon birding, and usually our first port of call is the marsh just on the outskirts of town, where we have a good chance of finding skulkers like **Little Rush Warbler**, **African Rail**, and even a **Red-chested Flufftail** if we are very lucky. More common species include **African Purple Swamphen**, **Purple Heron**, **Cape Shoveller**, **Cape Weaver**, and **Little Bittern**. We often find **Grey-crowned Cranes** roosting here in the late afternoons.

O/N Wakkerstroom Country Inn (BLD)

Day 14, Oct. 21: Wakkerstroom

After an early morning coffee, we head out in search of Wakkerstroom's two very special and endemic Larks, **Rudd's** and **Botha's Larks**, the former critically endangered. In our search for these two dowdy denizens of the grasslands, we'll also be on the lookout for their more common cousins, **Eastern Clapper**, **Eastern Long-billed**, **Pink-billed**, and **Red-capped Larks**.



Red-throated Wryneck

Wakkerstroom isn't just about LBJ's, though - **Yellow-breasted Pipit**, **Blue Korhaan**, and **Cape Canary** will add a subtle touch of color and, in the village, the striking **Bokmakierie** is usually an easy find alongside the peculiar **Red-throated Wryneck**. We'll also visit a local site in search of **White-bellied Korhaan**, **Denham's Bustard**, and, at another spot, we'll look for the enigmatic **African Rock Pipit** and **Buff-streaked Chat**. Some of the other birds that we might encounter include **Bald Ibis**, **Jackal Buzzard**, **African Pied Starling**, **Cape Crow**, **Sentinel Rock-Thrush**, **Grey-winged** and **Red-winged Francolins**, and the 'often-heard-but-rarely-seen' **African Quail-Finch**. Tonight will be our farewell dinner for those not continuing on to the Coastal and Drakensberg Plateau Extension.

O/N Wakkerstroom Country Inn (BLD)

Day 15, Oct. 22: Wakkerstroom - Johannesburg

After a bit of early morning birding for birds we might have missed yesterday, we'll enjoy a hot breakfast at our lodge. We'll load up the vans and head back to Johannesburg, birding our way back to the city with a stop for lunch. Please note that, depending on how many people are heading back to Johannesburg or onwards onto the extension, we might arrange a separate vehicle to shuttle those who end their tour here to OR Tambo International Airport for their International flights out.

End of main tour (BL)

For people who are going on the Coastal and Drakensberg Plateau Extension, we will pack the vans and continue our journey south, this time to one of Kwazulu-Natal's premier birding spots, Mkuze Game Reserve.

Price includes:

- All meals as indicated.
- Bottled water throughout the trip
- All ground transportation
- All accommodation
- Tips for drivers and local guides
- Expert birding guide throughout tour
- Services of two ***Cheepers!*** Tour leaders (Jim and Cindy Beckman)
- Post-trip electronic copy of final checklist
- Post-trip photo collection on flash drive
- Pre-trip gift package, including customized checklist and tour book

Price does NOT include:

- International flights
- Drinks other than bottled water (this includes soft drinks and coffee)
- Tips for birding guides
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, souvenirs, alcoholic beverages, etc.

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity. Lodging is subject to change based on availability.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- ~ Deposit of \$700 is required for the main (Birds & Beasts) tour. Additional deposits are required for the extensions (\$300 for Cape, \$500 for East Coast and Drakensberg).
- ~ Balance is due 4 months prior to the start date.
- ~ Checks should be made payable to *Cheepers! Birding on a Budget* and mailed with the registration form to:

**Cheepers! Birding on a Budget
Post Office Box 385
Spring Valley, OH 45370**

CANCELLATION POLICY:

Cancellation must be made in writing (email or snail mail)

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.

Trip insurance is highly recommended.

You can compare prices offered by various trip insurance companies at these websites:

<http://www.insuremytrip.com>

http://www.quotewright.com/?sub_id=6056

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

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