



ORIOLE BIRDING



Male Orange-breasted Sunbird (Peter Farren)

TOUR REPORT

SOUTH AFRICA WESTERN CAPE

30TH OCTOBER – 11TH NOVEMBER 2017

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TOUR LEADERS

David Pearce (Oriole Birding) and Brian Vanderwalt.

TOUR PARTICIPANTS

Judy Farren
Peter Farren
Tessa Harrison
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MONDAY 30th OCTOBER – (U.K.) *Cloudy, sunny intervals, mild, (14 - 15°C), light SW wind.*

The group assembled at the South African Airways check-in at London Heathrow Terminal 2 from 14.00 and we departed on the overnight flight to Johannesburg at 18.30, 25 minutes late.

TUESDAY 31st OCTOBER – *Hot (35°C), sunny, light wind, cloudy and cooler later.*

After flying over the equator and into the southern hemisphere during the night we landed in Johannesburg at 07.20 local time, to blue sky and warm, sunny conditions. Clearing immigration swiftly we collected our baggage and re-checked in onto the connecting South African Airways domestic flight to Cape Town. From the departure gate in the terminal building at Johannesburg airport we recorded our first birds of the tour, with several **Rock Martins** and **Little Swifts** flying around outside, alongside familiar **House Sparrows** and **Feral Pigeons** perched on the terminal buildings. The flight down to Cape Town departed at 09.10 and we landed there at 11.05, where we collected our baggage and met our guide Brian Vanderwalt in the arrivals hall. Following lunch in Mugg & Beans restaurant in the airport we made our way to our transport for the tour, a Toyota Quantum minibus, and sorted our birding gear out in readiness for an excellent afternoons birding at Strandfontein Water Treatment Works, a short drive from the airport.

En route there we noted several **Red-winged Starlings**, **Pied Crows** and **Egyptian Geese**, plus small flocks of **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Black-winged Stilts** and **Blacksmith Lapwings** on wider drainage channels along the roadside. Arriving at Strandfontein Water Treatment Works at 13.00, we spent a very enjoyable three hours driving the tracks around the many reed-fringed ponds, birding from the vehicle and stopping regularly to check each pond and birding from the tracks. We recorded over 70 species during the afternoon, including many wetland birds, the site providing an excellent introduction to South African birds. **Levaillant's Cisticola** and **Karoo Prinia** were evident in grassland and scrub along the access road and as we reached the first ponds along the track to the Treatment Plant buildings water-birds were everywhere! **Yellow-billed Duck**, **Cape Shoveler**, **Cape Teal** and **Red-knobbed Coot** were present in good numbers, with two **Black-necked Grebes**, ten **Maccoa Ducks**, several **White-breasted Cormorants**, **Black-headed Heron** and at least 25 **Whiskered Terns** hawking over the ponds. **Glossy Ibis** and **Hadedda Ibis** were present as was a large flock of **Greater Flamingos**, over 200 **Pied Avocets** and a flock of **Hartlaub's Gulls** roosting and loafing on the edge of the track with three **Grey-headed Gulls** within the flock. **White-throated Swallows** were foraging for aerial insects over the ponds and fringing vegetation and at least two **African Marsh Harriers** were hunting over the site giving excellent views. **Red-eyed Doves** were noted alongside **Cape Canary** in the trees near the Treatment Plant buildings and **Cape Wagtails** were feeding on the grassy margin of the track. Progress was understandably slow as we stopped frequently, but moving further on we checked another pond which held **Red-billed Teal**, at least 16 **South African Shelduck** and three **Southern Pochard**. The main ponds or pans were created in the shape of a

wheel and as we reached the central intersection Brian stopped the van and pointed out two extremely close **Water Thick-knees** stood motionless within the short grass, which gave excellent views.



Water Thick-Knees (Peter Farren)

Close by, the adjacent pond held several waders including **Little Stint**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Greenshank**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Ringed Plover** and our first **Three-banded Plovers**. An **African Purple Gallinule** was seen clambering through the reeds, **Little Rush Warbler** in the fringing vegetation and a **Brown-throated Martin** was hawking over the ponds, with **Yellow-billed Kite** also quartering the extensive wetland habitat. Further on, another pond held at least 20 **Great White Pelicans**, a single **White Stork**, five **Spur-winged Geese**, seven **African Black Oystercatchers**, **White-faced Whistling Duck** and **Intermediate Egret**. The pond opposite had **Ruff**, **Cape Cormorant**, **Cattle Egret** and **Little Egret**, with obliging **Lesser Swamp Warbler** and two **Little Rush Warblers** showing well in the waterside vegetation. As we made our way back to the Treatment Plant buildings another pond held two **Caspian Terns** and several **Swift Terns**, with **Cape Spurfowl** along the track-side, **Cape Bulbul** in the adjacent scrub, **African Pipit** on the grassy margins and two **Cape Turtle Doves** flew over. As we reluctantly left this excellent and most productive wetland site we finished off with **Cape Sparrow**, **Helmeted Guineafowl**, **Speckled Pigeon** and at least four **Zitting Cisticolas**.

Leaving Strandfontein Water Treatment Works behind we drove through Cape Town, thankfully on the opposite side of the road to the rush hour traffic, and checked into Braeside B & B in Greenpoint, our well-appointed guest house accommodation for the next two nights. After freshening up, we completed the day's bird notes in the comfortable sitting room and then Brian drove us into Cape Town where we had our evening meal in the Ocean Basket fish restaurant, completing an impressive and very rewarding first day birding in the Western Cape of South Africa.

WEDNESDAY 1st NOVEMBER – Warm, (22 - 25°C), bright, sunny, light wind.

Pre-breakfast birding commenced from the balcony of the guest house, with **Olive Thrush**, **Cape White-eye** and **Laughing Dove** noted in adjacent trees and gardens. After a very good breakfast, Brian returned to pick us up and we drove through Cape Town to Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden where we spent the morning birding the trails around the gardens, most bird species showing extremely well. **Spotted Eagle Owl** was the first key bird here, with an adult sat in a hanging basket by the visitors centre giving ridiculously close views! Another bird was seen later in trees further up the hillside. **Cape White-eye** and **Red-winged Starling** were common and **Sombre Greenbul**, **Olive Thrush**, **Karoo Prinia** and **Cape Robin-chat** were all noted regularly. Sunbirds were seen frequently where flowers and flowering shrubs were present and we recorded **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**, **Malachite Sunbird** and a single male **Amethyst Sunbird**. **Cape Canary**, **Forest Canary** and **Brimstone Canary** were also present with **Common Waxbill**, **Sweet Waxbill** and a singing male **Common Chaffinch**, a familiar song but a species previously introduced from Europe. **Cape Sugarbirds** were also evident and several birds performed extremely well and at close range from patches of flowers and plants, their scratchy song quite distinctive. **Southern Boubou** were less showy, but pairs of **Cape Batis**, **Olive Woodpecker** and **African Paradise Flycatcher** all gave cracking views in trees by the trails. A single **Black Saw-wing** was seen briefly as this woodland swallow hawked for insects over the gardens. Raptors were hard to come by though, a pale morph **Booted Eagle** seen moving over the gardens and relatively distant views of **Steppe Buzzard** and **African Harrier-hawk**, with two **White-necked Ravens** observed patrolling the mountainside above the gardens.



Rock Kestrel with prey (Peter Farren)

By late morning it had become very warm so we left Kirstenbosch and drove north from Cape Town to Malkbos, noting **Rock Kestrel** and three **African Spoonbills** along the way. We stopped at Malkbos for a well-earned lunch and also had our first **Southern Red Bishop** in the café garden. Driving inland we covered an area of farmland habitat, with extensive wheat-fields and fallow areas which gave us a different range of bird species. Our first **Blue Cranes** were seen in this habitat, five birds feeding in a large fallow field next to the road, with **Capped Wheatear** and **African Stonechat** showing well on roadside fence-lines. The first larks of the tour were also recorded on the dry farmland habitat, with **Red-capped Lark** and **Large-billed Lark** close to the road, whilst a single **Banded Martin** hawked over the fields and a **European Bee-eater** flew over calling. **Common Fiscal** was also seen close to the road and good views were had of two **Jackal Buzzards** as they moved between a row of trees and pylons. **Yellow-billed Kites** were much in evidence, searching for prey as the fields were being harvested. Returning to the coast mid-afternoon we checked Melkbos beach, which provided us with a pair of **White-fronted Plovers**, whilst on the rocks we had good comparative views of **Crowned Cormorant** and **Cape Cormorant** plus a flock of 14 **African Black Oystercatchers**. **Kelp Gull** and **Hartlaub's Gull** were also present and two **Sandwich Terns** were in flight over the bay. As we returned through the town two **Greater Striped Swallows** flew over the van briefly, eluding some of the group, but more were to follow later in the tour. Heading back towards Cape Town we stopped and spent a pleasant hour birding the coastal strandveld at Blouberg Nature Reserve where **Cape Bunting**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Yellow Canary** and **Southern Masked Weaver** all showed well for us, **Karoo Scrub Robin** eventually giving decent views after a little searching and waiting. Whilst birding here large flocks of **African Sacred Ibis** were observed moving westwards out over the sea to Robben Island offshore. From the village seafront we recorded our first **Cape Gannet**, an adult bird moving north inshore, as we all assembled for a group photo with Table Mountain visible in the distance above Cape Town and across Table Bay. Returning to Cape Town, we called in briefly at Table Bay Nature Reserve, where we had two **African Snipe** feeding in the short marshy vegetation, several other wader species including **Three-banded Plover**, **Little Grebe** and **Great Crested Grebe**, several **Yellow-billed Ducks**, **Cape Shoveler** and at least 30 **Brown-throated Martins** over the pools, whilst an **African Darter** flew over the road as we left. Brian negotiated the rush-hour traffic very well and we arrived back at the guesthouse for 17.00 where after a refreshing shower and some down-time we did the bird notes for the day. We then drove down to the Waterfront for our evening meal at the Spur Restaurant in Victoria Wharf overlooking the harbour, with Table Mountain providing an iconic backdrop.

THURSDAY 2nd NOVEMBER – *Cooler, cloudy, sunny, warm later with brief showers, light SW wind.*

After an overnight thunderstorm, which did little to alleviate the water shortage crisis in the region, we checked out of the guesthouse after breakfast and left Cape Town heading north on the coast road. We checked Table Bay Nature Reserve on the way but unfortunately couldn't manage to locate any White-backed Ducks. However, **Cape Shoveler**, **Yellow-billed Duck** and **Red-knobbed Coot** were numerous and we recorded the only **Purple Heron** of the tour when Brian located a bird eating a frog in vegetation close to the road. We also had the only **Black-crowned Night Herons** of the tour here with two birds hiding in marsh-side vegetation. Leaving Cape Town behind we drove northwards and entered an extensive area of low scrub habitat just inland from the coast, heading for West Coast National Park and our next accommodation in Langebaan village. Our journey was punctuated by occasional **Black-shouldered Kites** and **Jackal Buzzards** on roadside wires or telegraph poles, hunting **Rock Kestrels** and **Yellow-billed Kites** and many **Pied Crows**. Our target bird was **Black Harrier** and just north of Silverstroomstrand Brian saw an adult bird quartering the scrub along the roadside. It gave pretty good views as it moved north and crossed the road to continue hunting and was lost from view, what a fantastic bird! Further on we turned off along a road heading towards the coast south of Grotto Bay and the target

species continued to appear as Brian located first three **Spotted Thick-knees** and then a stunning male **Southern Black Korhaan** in the short grass along the roadside. The Korhaan performed well giving excellent close views as everyone watched it from the van, another fantastic bird! **Cape Spurfowl**, **Cape Weaver**, **Red-faced Mousebird** and **Pearl-breasted Swallow** provided a supporting cast whilst several **Common Ostrich** were also seen.

After a brief tea and coffee stop at the West Coast Padstal café, where several **Cape Canaries** were singing from the trees, we drove inland a few kilometres to Tinie Versfeld a small open grassland nature reserve managed by Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden. We arrived there at 10.30 as the weather was warming up considerably and our target bird species were evident almost immediately. As we walked across the reserve three **Cape Longclaws** were showing well and a **Cloud Cisticola** was displaying, the distinctive clicking song given in occasional song flights above the grassland habitat. **Red-capped Lark**, **Large-billed Lark**, **African Pipit** and three **Capped Wheatears** were also noted here, with a dark morph immature **Booted Eagle** circling overhead and a calling **European Bee-eater** heard. Driving a few kilometres further east past Tinie Versfeld the farmland habitat provided **Blue Crane**, **Pied Starling**, a small flock of **Wattled Starlings** and several **White-rumped Swifts** feeding over the road, with **Red-faced Mousebird** and **Cape Weaver** also noted. We returned to the West Coast Padstal café for lunch which turned out to consist of a large meal rather than a snack! Suitably replete, we left after recording **House Sparrow** there and continued north, noting three **Great White Pelicans** circling high over the road.

We arrived at West Coast National Park at 13.10 and shortly after entering the park had another **Black Harrier** hunting over the extensive scrub habitat, and also noted further small groups of **Common Ostrich**. Our first port of call was the hide at Abrahamskraal waterhole and whilst driving the track to get there we had **Karoo Lark**, **Grey-backed Cisticola** and a couple of **Karoo Scrub Robins**. **White-throated Swallows** were nesting inside the hide and an adult was feeding a juvenile along the path to the hide allowing a close approach and excellent views. An hours birding from the hide was very productive, with three very close **African Spoonbills** and an adult **African Rail** with a black downy juvenile walking through the vegetation right in front of the hide. In the surrounding wetland reed-bed habitat and vegetation we recorded **Namaqua Dove**, **African Reed Warbler**, **Lesser Swamp Warbler**, **Yellow Bishop**, **Yellow Canary** and close by the hide a single male **Black-headed Canary** alongside a male **Damara Canary**, the latter an endemic subspecies of Black-Headed Canary. It was also interesting and rather amusing watching a **Black-headed Heron** attempting to swallow a snake it had caught, a feat which took some considerable time. Two **Caspian Terns** circled the hide showing very well and several **Yellow-billed Kites** were hunting in the area. Moving north, we spent a short time birding around the visitor centre where we had **Bokmakierie**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Cape Sparrow** and **Rock Kestrel**. Unfortunately it was high tide so we didn't walk out to the Geelbeck hide which overlooks the extensive Langebaan Lagoon, but we did locate 38 **Lesser Flamingos** feeding with **Greater Flamingos** close to the shore, giving a good comparison of the two species. Continuing north through the park birding from the van we had more **Yellow-billed Kites**, one dropping down in front of us and taking a Mole Snake from the road, a female **African Marsh Harrier** and our third **Black Harrier** of the day hunting over the extensive strandveld habitat. After we attempted, and failed, to count a large flock of Eland which numbered at least 200, Brian picked up a singing male **White-throated Canary** next to the road and just a short distance further on six **Grey-winged Francolins** feeding along the roadside which showed extremely well. By now it was late afternoon and the tide had receded a little so we decided to visit the Seeberg hide on the north-east side of Langebaan Lagoon. Three **Kittlitz's Plovers**, three **White-fronted Plovers**, at least 40 **Sanderling**, **Ringed Plover**, **Whimbrel**, **Greenshank** and 28 **African Oystercatchers** were the pick of the waders, whilst around 200 **Common Terns**, 60 **Hartlaub's Gulls** and two each of **Sandwich Tern**, **Swift Tern** and **Little Tern** were loafing and roosting on an exposed sandbar close to the hide. Just north of the hide a flock of 120 **Lesser Flamingos** were also present on a shallow pool.



Crowned Lapwing (Peter Farren)

Leaving the National Park, we drove the short distance into Langebaan village where Brian noticed two **Crowned Lapwings** feeding on an area of grassland. Birding for the day still wasn't finished however, as we called at Langebaan Quarry en route to our next accommodation and had excellent views of **Verreaux's Eagle**, with two adult birds and a juvenile perched on the cliff face. Overhead, a flock of **African Black Swifts** were flying low and two **Rock Kestrels** were hunting, whilst in the scrub we recorded **White-backed Mousebird**, **White-throated Canary** and **Common Fiscal**, with another two **Crowned Lapwings** seen as we left the site. We checked into Glenfinnan B & B in Langebaan village at 17.30 as the weather turned cool, cloudy and windy with thunder, lightning and light rain. After completing bird notes for the day we drove down into the village and had an excellent meal in a local restaurant and discussed the days' fantastic birding.

FRIDAY 3rd NOVEMBER – *Cloudy 18°C, then sunny and warm from mid-morning, 25°C, SW breeze.*

Pre-breakfast birding close to the B & B revealed **Cape Spurfowl**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Cape Turtle Dove**, **Cape Sparrow**, **Bokmakierie** and **White-backed Mousebird**. After an excellent breakfast we checked out and drove back into West Coast National Park to make the most of the low tide conditions on Langebaan Lagoon. Walking out to the Geelbek hide along the boardwalk we noted several wader species feeding on the exposed mud close by, including **Greenshank**, **Little Stint**, **Kittlitz's Plover**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Pied Avocet**. From the hide the exposed mud on the lagoon provided us with good numbers of **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Ringed Plover**, **Grey Plover**, **Whimbrel**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Knot** and a cracking **Terek Sandpiper** fairly close to the hide. It was interesting to see **Curlew Sandpiper** and **Little Stint** in winter plumage, a relatively unfamiliar sight in Britain. **South African Shelduck** also fed on the mud, whilst both **Greater Flamingo** and **Lesser Flamingo** fed in the shallow pools, two **Caspian Terns** flew over and an **African Fish Eagle** was sat on a small island. Reluctantly leaving the hide we then spent

a short time birding around the visitor centre where Brian instantly heard a male **Dideric Cuckoo** calling from a tall tree. It was quickly located and everyone had excellent 'scope views before it flew into trees nearby and was lost to view. **Rock Martins** and **Pearl-breasted Swallows** were showing well around the buildings, and after giving us the run around briefly, an **African Hoopoe** was eventually seen by everyone. Moving on we decided to check the Seeberg hide again on the north-east side of the lagoon as the tide was still relatively low. Whilst driving there we had our fourth **Black Harrier** sighting of the tour, another adult bird, hunting over the strandveld, with a singing **Cape Grassbird** showing extremely well along the roadside, a **White-throated Canary** also singing close by and two **Little Swifts** hawking over the road. Singing **Bar-throated Apalis** and **Cape Bunting** showed well along the track to the hide, as did a Striped Mouse which scuttled through the undergrowth. From the hide, we had close views of **Kittlitz's Plover**, **White-fronted Plover**, **Whimbrel** and **African Black Oystercatcher**, but our attention was quickly diverted by an apparent orange-billed tern stood on an exposed sandbar with **Swift Terns**, **Sandwich Terns** and **Common Terns**. Frustratingly, the bird was not seen in flight to allow the colour of the rump and tail to be seen and a more straightforward identification to be made. However, subsequent research into its identity eventually concluded that it was a Swift Tern, perhaps a smaller female bird, with an unusually bright bill colour going into breeding plumage. Nevertheless, it was a very interesting and intriguing bird indeed!

We departed West Coast National Park after midday and called at the Spar supermarket in the village where we bought supplies for our lunch which was taken on the rocky beach at Jacobsbaai, a short drive away. On the way we passed the iron ore works at Saldanha where we had close views of a flock of six **European Bee-eaters** feeding over roadside bushes, with **Little Swift** and **White-rumped Swift** also in attendance. **Pied Starling** were common roadside birds and on the road down to Jacobsbaai we had **Capped Wheatear**, **Jackal Buzzard** and a pair of **Southern Black Korhaans** displaying. Over lunch we sat and scanned the high tide roost of terns perched on rocks in the bay, noting over 200 **Common Terns**, 30 **Sandwich Terns**, four **Swift Terns** and a **Caspian Tern**, with **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Kelp Gull**, **Cape Cormorant** and **African Black Oystercatcher** also present. By now it was early afternoon so we began our long journey to our next accommodation in Ceres, gradually changing from the coastal fynbos habitat to the karoo habitat inland where a range of new specialities awaited us. Not far from Jacobsbaai we had another **Southern Black Korhaan**, **Lark-like Bunting**, **Steppe Buzzard**, and **Sickle-winged Chat** in the dry roadside habitat, before picking up two distant birds in an extensive area of grassland on the Moritz Bay road which on further investigation through the 'scope turned out to be **Ludwig's Bustards**. Due to the drought conditions in many areas these birds had perhaps moved out from their usual inland karoo habitat towards the coast. Pausing only briefly at Veldriff for fuel and to check the Berg River by the town, as access to the saltworks and our only realistic chance of Chestnut-banded Plover at Veldriff was not possible, we continued on the long drive to Ceres. The river produced two **Pied Kingfishers** and several **South African Shelducks**. On the way to Ceres through open expanses of 'prairie' like agricultural land we noted several **Steppe Buzzards**, **Black-winged Kite**, **Yellow-billed Kite** and on some farm irrigation pools **African Spoonbill**, **Cape Shoveler**, **African Darter** and **Levaillant's Cisticola**. Extensive roadworks along the way slowed our progress somewhat and a tea and coffee stop taken en route was very welcome. Eventually, after traversing the Nuwekloof Pass we descended into Ceres and arrived at the Village Guesthouse at 19.00. After a quick turnaround we completed the day's bird notes and had our evening meal, before retiring for the early start in the morning and birding the Tanqua Karoo.

SATURDAY 4th NOVEMBER – *Cool early, calm, sunny and very warm later, 25-28°C.*

Collecting our packed breakfasts from the guesthouse reception we left Ceres at 06.00 and drove up to the Theronberg Pass at Droëhoek. On the way we noted **Black-shouldered Kite** and a large flock of over 70 **Egyptian Geese** and over 30 **South African Shelduck**

feeding in a stubble field as we left Ceres. Arriving at Droëhoek at 06.40 and cool, clear conditions we consumed our breakfasts while watching a male **Cape Clapper Lark** displaying, rising up whilst quickly wing clapping then descending to the ground with a clear whistled note. Also present were several **Large-billed Larks**, **Red-capped Lark** and **African Stonechat**. Moving on to Karooport we started to pick up other karoo habitat specialities, including **Mountain Wheatear**, **Namaqua Warbler** and eventually **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**. **Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler**, **Long-billed Crombec**, **Southern Masked Weaver**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **African Reed Warbler** and **Fiscal Flycatcher** were all seen within roadside scrub and vegetation, whilst **Verreaux's Eagle**, **Booted Eagle** and five **Alpine Swifts** were in flight over the adjacent mountains. Continuing on the track across the open, dry, stony semi-desert habitat we stopped regularly to check for birds, with **Karoo Chat** and **Sickle-winged Chat** located along the roadside fence-lines. In the heat of the day we stopped at the remote Tanqua Padstal café at 13.00 for a welcome break, where we had an excellent lunch and topped ourselves up with tea, coffee, soft drinks and water! Heading east along the track from the café Brian soon picked up a group of five **Spike-heeled Larks** and two **Rufous-eared Warblers** close to the track, which showed well, we also recorded **Tractrac Chat**, a rufous morph 'inland' **Karoo Lark** and several **Karoo Chats** along the way. Returning to the café 'T' junction, we drove north for a few kilometres and checked an area of track-side scrub where we found **Fairy Flycatcher** and an elusive male **Pirit Batis**. By now it was mid-afternoon, so we began our return journey to Ceres, calling first at Skitterykloof in the hills west of the track, where we located **Familiar Chat** and another two **Fairy Flycatchers**. En route we stopped at various points along the way and had a close pale morph **Booted Eagle** hunting by the roadside, **Tractrac Chat**, **Karoo Chat** and **Mountain Wheatear** then as we reached Karooport again Brian picked up another speciality, two **Layard's Tit-babblers**, which eventually showed well in the roadside scrub. We reached Ceres at 18.00 and a pool north of the town held **Cattle Egret**, **Spur-winged Goose**, **Reed Cormorant**, **Red-knobbed Coot** and a **Little Grebe** preening out of the water on the edge of the pool, quite an unusual sight. Our final port of call was Brian's drinking pool site in the hills above Ceres, where, within minutes of arriving, we had seen four **Protea Canaries**, **Cape Canary**, **Sweet Waxbill**, **Olive Thrush** and **Cape Robin-chat** all using the facility and showing very well. After an excellent and enjoyable, albeit long days birding, with some fantastic birds, we returned to the guesthouse in Ceres and freshened up, prior to completing the day's bird notes and our evening meal.

SUNDAY 5th NOVEMBER – *Cool early, then sunny and hot (25°C), breezy and cloudy later.*

For some of the group, pre-breakfast birding from 06.00 along the river by the guesthouse in the early morning sunshine was excellent and very productive. Key species included **Malachite Kingfisher**, **African Black Duck**, **Southern Grey-headed Sparrow**, at least four **Horus Swifts** hawking for insects and a **Cape Siskin** feeding in riverside trees. **Klaas's Cuckoo** was also heard calling, but unfortunately couldn't be located. After a good breakfast we checked out, loaded the van and spent a couple of hours birding in the nearby Wittenberg Valley, just over the mountains from Ceres. The weather was fantastic, calm, hot and sunny with clear blue skies. Stopping first in the mountains before descending into the valley, we had the only **Osprey** of the tour moving through, **Booted Eagle** and **Steppe Buzzard** over and several **Cape Sugarbirds** and **Greater Striped Swallow**. In the valley we checked the farmland, well vegetated roadside drains, irrigation ponds and small wetlands and recorded many common bird species. Highlights included **Verreaux's Eagle** flying over low and giving excellent views, plus **Maccoa Duck**, **Blue Crane** and a stunning male **Orange-breasted Sunbird** feeding on roadside flowers as we drove out of the valley and back over the mountains. Calling at Brian's drinking pool in the hills on the way we had similar species to yesterday, although the **Protea Canaries** were absent today.



Pale Chanting Goshawk (Peter Farren)

We left the Ceres area just before midday for the long drive east, heading for our next accommodation in the Grootvadersbosch Forest east of Swellendam and another different habitat type. Driving through karoo habitat with a dramatic mountain backdrop east of Ceres, Brian noticed a stunning **Pale Chanting Goshawk** stood on a roadside telegraph pole. He stopped quickly and strategically positioned the van and everyone had excellent views before the bird flew off. In the extensive open valley Plains Zebra could also be seen in the distance. Lunch was taken in a Steers restaurant near Touwsriver, then we continued the journey eastwards through extensive open arid areas of karoo habitat noting roadside **African Stonechat**, **Mountain Wheatear**, **Capped Wheatear** and **White-necked Raven**, before descending into the valley and calling at the egretty in Montagu mid-afternoon. The long established egretty, around a large pool in the middle of a residential area in the town, was a hive of activity, with breeding **Sacred Ibis**, **Cattle Egret** and **Reed Cormorant** plus a colony of **Southern Masked Weavers** all showing extremely well and providing good photographic opportunities. Continuing east we drove through the Tradhouw Pass with its dramatic geological rock formations and stopped a couple of times to check for Ground Woodpecker. Unfortunately, despite extensive searching of the rocky mountain sides we didn't locate one, but did see the distinctive nest of these species, an old termite mound with a hole in the side. However, some form of compensation was to be had as we stopped at the bridge over the river south of the gorge and had a real 'purple patch' with our first **African Olive Pigeons**, a male **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Fork-tailed Drongo**, **Brimstone Canary**, **Black Saw-wing**, **Black Sparrowhawk** and three species of kingfisher in as many minutes! **Giant Kingfisher**, **Half-collared Kingfisher** and **Malachite Kingfisher** all showed very well, the latter two species exchanging the same branch over the river as a perch! Our luck and Kingfisher species continued, as shortly after leaving the river, within one kilometre, Tessa picked up a **Brown-hooded Kingfisher** in a tree by the roadside, whilst a **Cape Crow** was down feeding in a nearby field. However, our luck then ran out as we failed to see Crowned Eagle, spending time scanning the valley and prominent dead trees for the birds only managing to see the large nest in a distant tree. We arrived at our well sited rustic

accommodation at Honeywood Farm within the Grootvadersbosch Forest at 18.15, to calling **Red-chested Cuckoo** and excellent birding right on the doorstep. We sorted out the accommodation, part of the group by the farmhouse and the other in the annexe just down the track. As some of us got out of the van at the annexe Brian heard a **Black Cuckoo** calling close by, which showed well in trees next to the building. After freshening up we were treated to an excellent and very tasty evening meal in the farmhouse cooked and served up by Miranda, ably assisted by John, before completing the bird notes for the day. Later, some of the group unfortunately drew a blank on the local African Wood Owls in the woodland by the annexe, retiring afterwards in readiness for the forest birding tomorrow.



Black Cuckoo (Peter Farren)

MONDAY 6th NOVEMBER – *Overcast, cool and misty with drizzle early, becoming hot and sunny by mid-morning (22°C), breezy later.*

An early start at 06.00 saw us birding around the annexe and the farmhouse before breakfast. We recorded **Greater Double-collared Sunbird**, **Southern Boubou**, a male **Greater Honeyguide**, and for part of the group a chance to catch up with the **Black Cuckoo** and also **Southern Grey-headed Sparrow**, whilst **Cape Canary**, **Cape White-eye**, **Cape Weaver** and **Fiscal Flycatcher** were all evident in the trees and shrubs around the farmhouse. We drove down to the forest reserve entrance and had **Red-necked Spurfowl**, **African Dusky Flycatcher**, **Speckled Mousebird** and **Streaky-headed Seedeater** close to the car park. Over an hour walking the track and paths in the forest close by revealed **Olive Bush-shrike**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Cape Batis**, **Sombre Greenbul** and **Bokmakierie**, with an **African Goshawk** flying over us as we returned to the van and headed back to the farm for our breakfast at 09.00. After a filling breakfast we drove back to the reserve and in calm, sunny and warm conditions had a leisurely walk birding the forest alongside the track down into the valley, an excellent and very rewarding mornings birding. Following up on a clear tapping sound in the trees eventually gave us good views of a male **Knysna Woodpecker** searching for food in the

canopy, whilst down in the valley a male **Narina Trogon** was 'hooting'. Brian imitated the call well and it flew out of the forest, over the track and perched in full view for a couple of minutes in the forest below the track, obligingly in the sunlight penetrating the trees, giving us time to get the bird in the 'scope! **Red-chested Cuckoo** was calling frequently but wasn't seen and unfortunately we had no luck in locating Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler. We returned to the van for 13.00, very pleased with the forest birding sessions and drove south from the Grootvadersbosch Forest area, noting **Plain-backed Pipit** on a fence as we stopped to check a perched raptor, which turned out to be a **Steppe Buzzard**. Our destination was the Agulhas Plains, but before birding this area we called at a service station for lunch and consumed toasted sandwiches, tea and coffee sat outside in the sun. Driving the Malgas road across the Agulhas Plains and crossing the Breede River by hand-pulled pontoon we scored further dry-country species for the tour. Key birds were **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, with good views of two singing and displaying males, **Denham's Bustard**, two separate males displaying from hilltop stubble and **Karoo Korhaan**, two birds feeding in a cut cereal field. There was a good supporting cast of other birds too, with several **Red-capped Larks**, **Large-billed Lark**, **African Pipit**, **African Stonechat**, **Banded Martin**, **Common Fiscal**, **Cape Crow**, **Capped Wheatear**, **Cape Sparrow**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Jackal Buzzard**, **Cape Spurfowl**, **Helmeted Guineafowl**, two **Crowned Lapwings** with chicks and at least 30 **Blue Cranes**, one pair also with two juveniles. As we waited to get on the pontoon to cross the Breede River an **African Harrier-hawk** gave excellent views as it circled low overhead. We returned to Honeywood Farm, calling at Swellendam to top up water supplies on the way, and after a refreshing shower and completing the day's bird notes had another very tasty and filling meal at the farmhouse at 20.00. The brief owling session after the meal unfortunately didn't provide the goods, so we retired after what was a long but very rewarding days birding in this very productive area.



African Harrier-hawk (Peter Farren)

TUESDAY 7th NOVEMBER – *Calm, cloudy and warm with sunny periods, strong SE wind at the coast.*

The mornings alarm call was provided by a **Red-chested Cuckoo** calling from the forest just across the small valley outside the annexe before first light. However, despite much searching and another calling bird later in the morning sightings of this species eluded us on the tour. Pre-breakfast birding around the farm provided **Greater Double-collared Sunbird**, a nest located near the annexe, **Black Saw-wing**, **Greater Striped Swallow**, **Black Sparrowhawk** with prey, both **Lesser Honeyguide** and **Greater Honeyguide** by the farm and **Fiscal Flycatcher** and **Cape Robin-chat**. Judy and Peter opted for a more leisurely morning and stayed around the farm while the rest of the group birded the forest again before breakfast. The gate to the reserve was closed on arrival so we birded woodland from the track before the gate, noting an **Olive Bush-shrike** singing from the canopy of a large tree and proving rather elusive, but eventually giving good views. On entering the reserve a **Red-necked Spurfowl** walked by the car park and the **African Dusky Flycatchers** were still present nearby. Further down the track into the forest we tried a different path to yesterday and had three **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatchers**, **Terrestrial Brownbul** showed well, as did a female **African Paradise Flycatcher**, whilst a male **Narina Trogon** could be heard 'hooting' in the forest below the lookout hide. Breakfast was calling us now, and as we walked back to the van we picked up two **Grey Cuckooshrikes** in the canopy above the path, really good looking birds, then driving back we had a male **Neddicky** singing from a tall plant close to the track and showing well. Miranda and John provided us with another fine breakfast, then after a spot of successful vehicle maintenance with a can of Q20 oil by John on the tailgate of the van, which was sticking shut, we loaded up and left Honeywood Farm. Quickly checking the valley south of the farm we recorded **Cape Grassbird**, **Black Saw-wing**, **White-throated Swallow**, **Pin-tailed Whydah** and **Neddicky**.



Secretarybird (Peter Farren)

As we had done well on the Agulhas Plains yesterday we were slightly in front of the itinerary and set off for the De Mond Nature Reserve on the coast south of Bredasdorp. Roadside birding en route was largely uneventful although several **Steppe Buzzards** and **Yellow-billed kites** were noted along with a troupe of Chacma Baboons along the roadside. After a brief toilet stop at a garage east of Swellendam the journey along the road south to Bredasdorp was interrupted when Brian shouted loudly **Secretarybird!** We pulled up quickly and had good views of a pair of these very distinctive raptors walking through a roadside stubble field looking for food. We had excellent 'scope views until they were flushed by a farm vehicle and flew over the road in front of us into stubble fields on the other side, continuing their search for food. We then had further sightings of several **Blue Cranes** in the wheatland habitat along the way and the first **Feral Pigeons** for two days on grain silos at Bredasdorp. Recording of the latter species became a standing joke with the group and the Oriole Birding co-leader! We stopped at the Pick & Pay supermarket in the town to buy supplies then continued on to De Mond. Along the entrance road we had two male **Denham's Bustards** in the fields, then we sat and ate our lunch in the sunshine at the sheltered picnic area, as two each of **Common Sandpiper**, **African Black Oystercatcher**, **Greenshank** and **Water Thick-knee** flew past. After lunch we walked out along the boardwalk in the strong south-east wind noting several wader species, including at least 60 **Ringed Plover**, four **White-fronted Plovers**, **Kittlitz's Plover**, ten **Curlew Sandpipers**, six **Grey Plovers** and at least 50 **Sanderling** feeding on the exposed mud and sandbars of the estuary. At the end of the boardwalk we located two **Damara Terns**, our target species here, flying low over the estuary and sandbars, exhibiting the diagnostic grey rump and tail of this species, separating it from Little Tern which has a paler, whitish rump and tail. **Caspian Tern**, **Pied Kingfisher** and **Cape Cormorant** were seen as we walked back to the van and Kay picked up the fifth **Black Harrier** of the tour hunting over the strandveld on the other side of the estuary.

We left De Mond at 15.45 for the journey west to our next accommodation in Simonstown, calling briefly at nearby Cape Agulhas, the most southerly point of the African continent and the dividing line between the Indian Ocean to the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. **Common Tern** and **Sandwich Tern** were noted inshore over the sea and an **African Black Oystercatcher** was feeding on the rocky shore. It was very windy and the sea was quite rough, the strong south-east winds and heavy seas having prevailed since Monday, effectively curtailing tomorrow's planned pelagic trip out of Simonstown, south of Cape Town. Indeed, a call to Brian confirmed cancellation of the pelagic trip due to the weather conditions and sea state as we left Cape Agulhas for Simonstown at 17.00. **Yellow-billed Kites** were evident en route as cereal fields were being harvested and birds searched for prey and occasional **Steppe Buzzard** and **Blue Crane** were seen. We then got news that the main N2 highway into Cape Town was closed at Sir Lowry's Pass due to extensive and serious bush-fires, exacerbated by the strong south-east winds so decided to head down along the coast road after Caledon and stopped at a restaurant in Kleinmond for our evening meal as dusk fell. Resuming our journey we stopped at a police road-block further west near Pringle Bay and were informed that the coast road was also closed due to sand blown onto the road by the strong winds and as a precaution due to the bush-fires. This created a problem for us getting back to Cape Town and on to Simonstown tonight as the coast road and the N2 highway, both main routes in from the east, were closed. By now it was 21.00, so we called at a local B & B that Brian knew, but unfortunately no one was in and it was effectively closed and the proprietors couldn't be contacted by telephone. Brian knows the Cape Town area extremely well and the only feasible way to get there and then on to Simonstown was to drive inland via Franschhoek, join the N1 highway into Cape Town from the north then continue south to Simonstown, a major detour of at least three hours and 180 kilometres! Unfortunately, we had no other option, so considering it as a 'team building exercise' to ease the situation somewhat, we set off. After calling at services on the N1 highway north of Cape Town briefly at 23.30 to top up with tea, coffee and hot chocolate, we drove down into Simonstown where we could see further bush-fires on the mountainside

above the town. Eventually, Brian delivered us safe and sound to our luxury accommodation, the Avian Leisure Guesthouse in Simonstown at 00.45 and we retired to bed.

WEDNESDAY 8th NOVEMBER – *Sunny, warm, hot later (22°C), strong SE wind.*

Pre breakfast sea-watching and checking the local gardens on the hillside from the guesthouse balcony revealed **Caspian Tern, Sandwich Tern, Kelp Gull, Cape Gannet, 200+ Cape Cormorants** over the sea and **Karoo Prinia, Cape Bulbul, Cape Sugarbird** and **Red-winged Starling** in the gardens. After a fantastic breakfast from 08.00 we completed the bird notes for yesterday in the comfort of the sitting room and discussed yesterday's events. As the pelagic boat trip for today was cancelled, and pencilled in now for tomorrow, our plan was to head east and cover Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, Stony Point at Bettys Bay and Rooi Els on the coast east of False Bay. We left at 09.15 and reached Gordons Bay on the north-east side of False Bay by 11.15 but the coast road was still closed so had to detour up and over the hills north of the town via Houwhoek Pass and Klienmond. We arrived at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens at 12.15 and had a couple of hours birding the gardens and checking the mountainsides behind them. Birding was good and we noted **Cape Canary, Cape Weaver, Cape Turtle Dove, Cape White-eye, Cape Robin-chat, Cape Bulbul, Cape Sugarbird, Cape Rock Thrush** and **Cape Batis**, including two nests of the latter species close to the path. Also, several **Rock Martins**, excellent views of **Black Saw-wing, Alpine Swift, African Dusky Flycatcher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Malachite Sunbird** and **Neddicky**. We had lunch outside at the Red Disa restaurant in the gardens which was very good. Suitably re-fuelled we left and drove the relatively short distance west along the coast to Stony Point. Our target species here was very easy to locate and we saw at least 700 **African Penguins** along the rocky coastal section. We also had four species of Cormorant here, in order of abundance – **Cape Cormorant, Crested Cormorant, White-breasted Cormorant** and **Bank Cormorant**. Excellent views were had of the penguins and the cormorants, whilst small flocks of **Hartlaub's Gulls** and **Kelp Gulls** showed well in the bay. It was very windy and quickly scanning the sea revealed a single **Sooty Shearwater** heading west. Leaving Stony Point behind we continued westwards to Rooi Els to locate our next key target species. The very strong and turbulent wind against the mountainside here hampered us somewhat, but after some intensive searching Brian picked up a female **Cape Rockjumper** on the stony hillside above the track. Shortly after a male appeared and both gave good views as they worked their way through the rocks and low scrubby vegetation. **Cape Rock Thrush, Familiar Chat** and **Rock Kestrel** were also present and three **Cape Siskins** were on the bushes by the entrance gate, ensuring that those who had missed them in Ceres caught up with this species. We drove back to Simonstown along the coast road, which thankfully was now open, noting a pod of at least 12 whales which were surfacing briefly in Koeel Bay, but unfortunately remained unidentified. The surfacing whales attracted a group of 20 **Sandwich Terns** and two **Swift Terns**. Passing along the coast on Baden Powell Drive, south of Strandfontein Water Treatment Works, there were over 350 **Kelp Gulls** assembled on the beach and flying overhead from the local breeding colony. We arrived back in Simonstown at 20.00 after another fantastic days birding and ate in a very good restaurant in town on the way back to the guesthouse. Whilst eating our evening meal, news came through that the pelagic trip was cancelled again for tomorrow, but thankfully was looking good for Friday.

THURSDAY 9th NOVEMBER – *Sunny, warm, then hot later (30°C), light SW wind.*

Pre breakfast birding checking False Bay from the guesthouse balcony provided at least 90 **Sandwich Terns** roosting on the rocks below, with seven **Swift Terns** and **Hartlaub's Gulls, Kelp Gulls** and a single **Cape Gannet** passing. **Cape Sugarbirds** showed extremely well in the gardens below the balcony, as did a male **Pin-tailed Whydah**. After another excellent breakfast, we completed the bird notes for yesterday in the sitting room, loaded up the van and left the guesthouse at 09.00, driving up over the mountains into Cape Town.

The Table Mountain cableway trip was cancelled due to the surrounding area being covered in a blanket of residual smoke from the recent bush-fires, but ever resourceful, Brian had arranged to pick up a birding friend, Margaret McIver, who knew of a local breeding site for **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk** where she had been studying this species.



Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk (Peter Farren)

We drove to the Tokai Forest where after a short search Margaret showed us the nest and shortly after we eventually located the female bird with prey, interestingly a female Chaffinch. The male **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk** was calling close by and soon flew in and we had excellent views of the birds perched in the coniferous woodland. In addition, we noted at least four singing male **Chaffinches**, **African Dusky Flycatcher**, **Fiscal Flycatcher**, **Fork-tailed Drongo**, **Common Fiscal**, **Sweet Waxbill** and **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**. We left after midday, dropped Margaret off and drove to Meerendal Winery north of Cape Town for lunch. Arriving there Brian heard a male **Klaas's Cuckoo** calling from a small group of trees, but it was rather elusive and only gave brief flight views. We had a pleasant lunch overlooking the winery grounds and a small wetland, noting three **Maccoa Ducks**, **Cape Teal**, **Yellow-billed Duck**, **Three-banded Plover** and **Blacksmith Lapwing** on the wetland and **Cape Wagtail**, **Yellow Bishop**, **Southern Red Bishop**, **Greater Striped Swallow** and an adult and a juvenile **Fiscal Flycatcher** around the trees and grassland. Heading back into Cape Town, we called at Intaka Island, a small wetland surrounded by developments, showing well that the creation of habitat and conservation of wildlife is possible alongside modern development. **Red-knobbed Coot** were common, several pairs of **African Darter** were breeding and we also noted **African Purple Gallinule**, **Cape Batis**, **Lesser Swamp Warbler**, **Cape Weaver** and **Southern Masked Weaver** among other common bird species. Leaving Intaka Island, we drove through the Cape Town traffic to our final night's accommodation back at Braeside B & B in Greenpoint. The pelagic out of Simonstown was on for tomorrow so we freshened up and packed our bags ready for an early departure tomorrow. Unfortunately due to the pelagic being cancelled on the planned day, Wednesday 8th, and the tour accommodation all pre-booked, we were back in Cape

Town rather than in Simonstown, which meant an early departure to drive over to Simonstown harbour for the boat trip tomorrow morning. We did the day's notes outside on the patio overlooking the Cape Town football stadium in the distance below, then drove down to the Waterfront and had our last evening meal of the tour in the Spur restaurant in Victoria Wharf. We returned to the guesthouse for an early night in preparation for tomorrow's pelagic.



Southern Masked Weaver (Peter Farren)

FRIDAY 10th NOVEMBER – *Sunny, warm, clear, then hot later, light SE wind, SW later.*

After a light early breakfast at 05.30, we checked out of the guesthouse and drove over the mountains to Simonstown, arriving at the harbour in good time at 06.55. Alvin, our seabird guide for the day arrived shortly after and we boarded the Nkwaza and left the harbour for the pelagic trip at 07.15. We had **Grey-headed Gull** and **Cape Cormorant** in the harbour, then sailed southwards along the western side of False Bay, noting **Kelp Gull**, **Swift Tern** and four **African Penguins** on the sea south of Simonstown. The wind was south-easterly and it was quite 'bumpy' in the bay, and off Cape Point which we reached at 08.30. We had several **Cape Gannets** passing close by the boat and a **Bank Cormorant** in a flock of passing **Cape Cormorants**, plus close views of **Swift Tern**, **Sandwich Tern** and numerous **Common Terns**. As we left Cape Point behind and sailed out into the open sea off the Cape of Good Hope, we began to record true pelagic seabirds, although few and far between. A **European Storm Petrel** was briefly in a deep wave trough near the boat, then the first of about 30 **White-chinned Petrels** on the trip appeared behind the boat, giving excellent close views as they weaved across the wake over the ocean. An **Arctic Tern** passed close by, a single **Sooty Shearwater** was seen, then a shout of 'albatross' went up as a **Shy Albatross** flew past the boat, showing the diagnostic dark 'thumb-print' near the body at the leading edge of the wing. Harry, the skipper, couldn't locate any trawlers so we turned and sailed eastwards at 20 nautical miles out.



White-chinned Petrel (Peter Farren)



Shy Albatross (Peter Farren)

Another **Arctic Tern** passed the boat, further **Common Terns** and groups of **Cape Gannets** passed by and an immature **Arctic Skua** with its boldly barred underwing sneaked past, low over the sea. Another **Shy Albatross** appeared south of the boat and the **White-chinned Petrels** continued to show occasionally, but few seabirds were evident as we continued to sail east then turned northwards to head back in to False Bay. The wind had changed to south westerly and the swell became less heavy and as we sailed up the western side of the bay we had a single Humpback Whale which surfaced briefly. **Swift Terns** and **Kelp Gulls** became frequent again and we sailed close to a large exposed rock with nesting **Bank Cormorants** and numerous **Cape Cormorants**. As we arrived back at Simonstown harbour at 14.00 there were good numbers of **Hartlaub's Gulls** present and a single **Crested Cormorant** sat on a buoy.

The reason for the lack of seabirds on the pelagic trip was due to the strong south-easterly winds over the previous four or five days which created heavy seas and prevented the local trawlers and fishing boats from going out, the boats, particularly those hauling nets and processing the catch, a key factor in attracting seabirds when out on the pelagic trips. Although relatively disappointing on this occasion, it simply is the luck of the draw and safety is obviously paramount. Nevertheless, it was an exhilarating and exciting experience.

Brian, who didn't travel on the pelagic trip with the group, was waiting for us in the car park, so after saying our thanks to Alvin and Harry we disembarked and Brian drove us to Cape Town International Airport for our flight home. We said our farewells and thanks to Brian who had been an outstanding tour leader throughout, his expert birding skills and knowledge of South African birds, coupled with his sound driving skills and humour, had without doubt provided us with the 'best of the Western Cape'.

As the group came straight off the pelagic trip to the airport, we sorted our baggage out in the departure hall, checked in onto the evening South African Airways flight from Cape Town to Johannesburg and had a meal in Mugg & Beans restaurant. The flight departed at 18.20, 15 minutes late, arriving in Johannesburg at 19.55. With baggage checked through to London Heathrow no re-check in was required on the return journey and transit in Johannesburg was straightforward. We boarded the overnight South African Airways flight back to London at 21.10 and departed Johannesburg at 22.40, 45 minutes late. With good in-flight service and everyone in the group managing to sleep reasonably well, we landed at London Heathrow Terminal 2 at 08.10, 50 minutes late, to cold, wet and overcast conditions! Everyone agreed that the tour had been a resounding success and a thoroughly enjoyable trip with good company, and after retrieving our baggage and saying our farewells we departed for home, all returning safely.

Finally, the vote by the group for bird species of the tour eventually favoured **Secretarybird**, with Narina Trogon, Cape Batis, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Red-breasted Sparrowhawk, Cape Longclaw and White-backed Mousebird all in the running. A total of 242 bird species were recorded on the tour, including 48 Southern African endemic species and 20 Southern African near-endemic species.

Thank you to tour participant Peter Farren for supplying the excellent bird photographs and also to Brian Vanderwalt for the group photograph which illustrate this tour report.

Oriole Birding Tour - SOUTH AFRICA October-November 2017												
Southern African Endemic Species			Southern African Near Endemic Species						● H = heard only			
No.	Common Name	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
1	Common Ostrich			●	●							
2	African Penguin									●		●
3	Great Crested Grebe		●				●					
4	Black-necked Grebe	●										
5	Little Grebe	●	●	●		●	●					
6	Shy Albatross											●
7	White-chinned Petrel											●
8	Sooty Shearwater									●		●
9	European Storm Petrel											●
10	Great White Pelican	●		●								
11	Cape Gannet		●							●		●
12	White-breasted Cormorant	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	
13	Bank Cormorant									●		●
14	Cape Cormorant	●	●		●					●		●
15	Reed Cormorant		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	
16	Crowned Cormorant		●		●					●		●
17	African Darter		●	●	●						●	
18	Grey Heron	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	
19	Black-headed Heron	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
20	Purple Heron			●								
21	Little Egret			●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
22	Yellow-billed Egret (Intermediate)	●					●					
23	Cattle Egret	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	
24	Black-crowned Night Heron			●								
25	White Stork	●										
26	African Sacred Ibis	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
27	Glossy Ibis	●		●	●	●	●					
28	Hadeda Ibis	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
29	African Spoonbill		●	●	●	●	●					
30	Greater Flamingo	●		●	●							
31	Lesser Flamingo			●	●							
32	White-faced Whistling Duck	●			●							
33	Egyptian Goose	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
34	South African Shelduck	●			●	●	●					
35	Yellow-billed Duck	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●	
36	African Black Duck						●					
37	Mallard	●										
38	Cape Teal	●			●						●	
39	Red-billed Teal	●		●	●	●	●		●			
40	Cape Shoveler	●	●	●	●		●					
41	Southern Pochard	●										
42	Spur-winged Goose	●			●	●	●	●	●			
43	Maccoa Duck	●					●				●	
44	Secretarybird								●			
45	Yellow-billed Kite	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		
46	Black-shouldered Kite	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			
47	Verraux's Eagle			●		●	●					
48	Booted Eagle		●	●		●	●					
49	African Fish Eagle				●							

No.	Common Name	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
50	Steppe Buzzard		●	●	●		●	●	●	●		
51	Jackal Buzzard		●	●	●		●	●	●	●		
52	Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk										●	
53	Black Sparrowhawk						●		●			
54	African Goshawk							●	●			
55	Pale Chanting Goshawk						●					
56	African Marsh Harrier	●		●								
57	Black Harrier			●	●				●			
58	African Harrier-hawk		●					●				
59	Osprey						●					
60	Rock Kestrel		●	●	●	●	●		●	●		
61	Grey-winged Francolin			●	●			●				
62	Cape Spurfowl	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
63	Red-necked Spurfowl							●	●			
64	Helmeted Guinea fowl	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
65	Blue Crane		●	●	●	●	●	●	●			
66	African Rail		●	●								
67	African Purple Swamp-hen	●	●	●							●	
68	Common Moorhen	●	●	●		●	●				●	
69	Red-knobbed Coot	●	●	●	●	●	●				●	
70	Ludwig's Bustard				●							
71	Denham's Bustard							●	●			
72	Karoo Korhaan							●				
73	Southern Black Korhaan			●	●							
74	African Black Oystercatcher	●	●	●	●				●	●		
75	Ringed Plover	●		●	●				●			
76	White-fronted Plover		●	●	●				●			
77	Kittlitz's Plover			●	●				●			
78	Three-banded Plover	●	●	●	●				●		●	
79	Grey Plover				●				●			
80	Crowned Lapwing			●			●	●				
81	Blacksmith Plover	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
82	Terek Sandpiper				●							
83	Common Sandpiper								●			
84	Wood Sandpiper	●	●									
85	Marsh Sandpiper	●			●							
86	Common Greenshank	●	●	●	●				●			
87	Red Knot				●							
88	Curlew Sandpiper				●				●			
89	Little Stint	●	●	●	●				●			
90	Sanderling			●	●				●			
91	Ruff	●			●							
92	African Snipe		●									
93	Bar-tailed Godwit	●			●							
94	Eurasian Curlew				●							
95	Whimbrel			●	●				●			
96	Pied Avocet	●	●	●	●							
97	Black-winged Stilt	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			
98	Spotted Thick-knee			●								
99	Water Thick-knee	●							●			
100	Arctic Skua											●

No.	Common Name	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
101	Kelp Gull	●	●	●	●				●	●	●	●
102	Grey-headed Gull	●										●
103	Hartlaub's Gull	●	●	●	●					●	●	●
104	Caspian Tern	●		●	●				●	●		
105	Swift Tern	●		●	●					●	●	●
106	Sandwich Tern	●	●	●	●					●	●	●
107	Common Tern			●	●				●			●
108	Arctic Tern											●
109	Damara Tern								●			
110	Little Tern			●								
111	Whiskered Tern	●										
112	Speckled Pigeon	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
113	African Olive Pigeon						●	●	●			
114	Red-eyed Dove	●	●			●	●	●	●	●		
115	Cape Turtle Dove	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
116	Laughing Dove		●	●	●	●	●				●	
117	Namaqua Dove			●	●		●	●	●			
118	Rock Dove	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●
119	Red-chested Cuckoo						●H	●H	●H			
120	Black Cuckoo						●	●				
121	Klass's Cuckoo						●H				●	
122	Dideric Cuckoo				●							
123	Spotted Eagle Owl		●									
124	African Black Swift			●								
125	White-rumped Swift			●	●	●	●	●	●			
126	Horus Swift						●					
127	Little Swift	●	●	●	●	●	●					
128	Alpine Swift					●				●		
129	Speckled Mousebird							●	●	●		
130	White-backed Mousebird		●	●	●	●	●		●			
131	Red-faced Mousebird			●			●					
132	Narina Trogon							●	●H			
133	Pied Kingfisher				●				●			
134	Giant Kingfisher						●					
135	Half-collared Kingfisher						●					
136	Malachite Kingfisher						●					
137	Brown-hooded Kingfisher						●					
138	European Bee-eater		●	●	●	●						
139	African Hoopoe				●				●			
140	Greater Honeyguide							●	●			
141	Lesser Honeyguide								●			
142	Knysna Woodpecker							●				
143	Olive Woodpecker		●					●				
144	Cape Clapper Lark					●						
145	Karoo Lark			●		●						
146	Spike-heeled Lark					●						
147	Agulhas Long-billed Lark							●				
148	Red-capped Lark		●	●	●	●		●	●			
149	Large-billed Lark		●	●	●	●		●	●			
150	Barn Swallow	●	●	●		●		●	●			
151	White-throated Swallow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			

No.	Common Name	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
152	Pearl-breasted Swallow			●	●			●				
153	Greater Striped Swallow		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
154	Rock Martin	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
155	Brown-throated Martin	●	●	●	●	●	●				●	
156	Banded Martin		●					●				
157	Black Saw-wing		●				●		●	●		
158	Grey Cuckoo-shrike								●			
159	Fork-tailed Drongo						●	●	●		●	
160	Cape Crow						●	●	●			
161	Pied Crow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
162	White-necked Raven		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
163	Cape Bulbul	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
164	Terrestrial Brownbul							●	●			
165	Sombre Greenbul		●					●	●	●		
166	Olive Thrush		●			●	●	●	●	●	●	
167	Cape Rock Thrush						●			●		
168	Mountain Wheatear					●	●					
169	Capped Wheatear		●	●	●		●	●	●			
170	Familiar Chat					●	●			●		
171	Tractrac Chat					●						
172	Sickle-winged Chat				●	●						
173	Karoo Chat					●	●					
174	African Stonechat		●	●	●	●	●	●	●			
175	Cape Robin-chat		●			●	●	●	●	●	●	
176	Cape Rock Jumper									●		
177	Karoo Scrub Robin		●	●	●	●						
178	Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler					●						
179	Layard's Tit-babbler					●						
180	Lesser Swamp Warbler	●	●	●	●						●	
181	Little Rush Warbler	●			●							
182	African Reed Warbler			●		●	●					
183	Bar-throated Apalis				●		●	●	●	●		
184	Long-billed Crombec					●						
185	Cinnamon-breasted Warbler					●						
186	Cape Grassbird				●				●	●		
187	Zitting Cisticola	●										
188	Cloud Cisticola			●								
189	Grey-backed Cisticola			●	●							
190	Levaillant's Cisticola	●			●		●					
191	Neddicky								●	●		
192	Karoo Prinia	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	
193	Namaqua Warbler					●						
194	Rufous-eared Warbler					●						
195	African Dusky Flycatcher							●	●	●	●	
196	Fiscal Flycatcher					●	●	●	●	●	●	
197	Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher							●	●			
198	African Paradise Flycatcher		●				●	●	●	●		
199	Cape Batis		●					●	●	●	●	
200	Pririt Batis					●						
201	Fairy Flycatcher					●						
202	Cape Wagtail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

No.	Common Name	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
203	African Pipit	●	●	●	●			●				
204	Plain-backed Pipit							●				
205	Cape Longclaw			●								
206	Common Fiscal		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
207	Southern Boubou		●					●				
208	Bokmakierie			●		●	●	●	●			
209	Olive Bush-shrike							●	●			
210	Common Starling	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
211	Pied Starling			●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
212	Wattled Starling			●								
213	Red-winged Starling	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
214	Cape Sugarbird		●				●			●	●	
215	Malachite Sunbird		●	●	●					●		
216	Orange-breasted Sunbird						●					
217	Southern Double-collared Sunbird		●	●		●	●	●		●	●	
218	Greater Double-collared Sunbird							●	●			
219	Amethyst Sunbird		●							●		
220	Cape White-eye		●			●	●	●	●	●	●	
221	House Sparrow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
222	Cape Sparrow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
223	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow						●	●				
224	Cape Weaver			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
225	Southern Masked Weaver		●	●		●	●	●	●		●	
226	Southern Red Bishop		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
227	Yellow Bishop	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	
228	Common Waxbill		●				●		●		●	
229	Sweet Waxbill		●			●	●	●	●			
230	Pin-tailed Wydah	●	●				●	●	●		●	
231	Chaffinch		●								●	
232	Cape Canary	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	
233	Forest Canary		●						●			
234	Cape Siskin						●			●		
235	Black-headed Canary			●		●	●					
	<i>Damara Canary (ssp. of B-h Canary)</i>			●								
236	Brimstone Canary		●					●	●	●		
237	Yellow Canary		●	●	●	●		●	●			
238	White-throated canary			●	●	●	●					
239	Protea Canary					●						
240	Streaky-headed Seed-eater							●				
241	Cape Bunting		●	●	●	●	●			●		
242	Lark-like Bunting				●	●						
TOTAL NUMBER OF SPECIES RECORDED												242
Southern African Endemic Species												48
Southern African Near Endemic Species												20

No.	Sites Visited	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
1	Strandfontein Water Treatment Wks	●										
2	Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden		●									
3	Malkbos Area		●									
4	Melkbos Beach		●									
5	Blouberg - coastal scrub		●									
6	Table Bay Nature Reserve		●	●								
7	Tinie Versfeld			●								
8	West Coast National Park			●	●							
9	Langebaan Quarry			●								
10	Jacobsbaai				●							
11	Jacobsbaai - Ceres (via Veldriff)				●							
12	Ceres					●	●					
13	Theronberg Pass					●						
14	Karooport					●						
15	Tankqua Karoo					●						
16	Skitterykloof					●						
17	Witzenberg Valley						●					
18	Montagu Egrettry						●					
19	Tradhouw Pass						●					
20	Grootvadersbosch Forest						●	●	●			
21	Agulhas Plains							●				
22	De Mond Nature Reserve								●			
23	Cape Agulhas								●			
24	Simonstown									●	●	●
25	Harold Porter Botanical Garden									●		
26	Stony Point									●		
27	Rooi Els									●		
28	Tokai Forest - Cape Town										●	
29	Meerendal Winery										●	
30	Intaka Island Wetland - Cape Town										●	
31	Pelagic Boat Trip from Simonstown											●



Jackal Buzzard (Peter Farren)

No.	Other Wildlife	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
1	Little Grey Mongoose	●			●					●		
2	Striped Mouse		●		●							
3	Cape Dwarf Chameleon		●									
4	Steenbok			●	●				●			
5	Eland			●	●							
6	Mole Snake			●								
7	Angulate Tortoise			●	●				●	●		
8	Yellow Mongoose				●			●	●			
9	Grysbok					●		●				
10	Rock Hyrax					●				●		
11	Springbok					●			●			
12	Velvet Mite					●						
13	Namaqua Sand Lizard					●						
14	Plains Zebra						●					
15	Vervet Monkey						●					
16	Common Terrapin						●					
17	Bushbuck							●	●			
18	Rheebuck							●				
19	Bontebok							●				
20	Rain Spider						●					
21	Toad sp.						●					
22	Chacma Baboon							●	●			
23	Skaapstecker								●			
24	Klipspringer									●		
25	Cape Fur Seal									●		●
26	Humpback Whale											●
27	Whale sp.									●		
28	Dolphin sp.									●		●



Oriole Birding tour group, Blouberg, with Table Mountain in the distance (Brian Vanderwalt)