



TOUR REPORT

The Western Cape of South Africa

11th – 21st November 2025



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11th November 2025

An overnight flight saw us touch down at lunchtime in Cape Town and meet up with Wilfred our guide and Ian our birder driver. No one wanted lunch but a drink was much appreciated and as usual with any airport there were the first birds to seen while supping a smoothie!

Large Rock Martins (now split from what is now Red-throated Rock Martin) hawked around the building and ubiquitous Feral Pigeon, House Sparrow and Starling were soon found. I was surprised to see House Crow and did not realise that they had hitched a ride to the southern tip of Africa too while the hulking Pied Crows were more expected. With a bit of a gear sort we were on our way and quickly adding urban birds like Speckled Pigeons, Hadada (the South Africans say *Hadeeda* which seem far more apt) and African Sacred Ibis, White-rumped Swifts zooming under culverts, Red-winged Starlings and both Hartlaub's and Cape Gulls.

Our destination was the vast reserve that is the Strandfontein waterworks. The next few hours were a joyous introduction into the local wetland birding and although it was a little fragrant at times there were always birds to look at. Some familiar and others less so. I do not remember the last time I saw so many new ducks! Amongst the familiar ones were noisy Egyptian and towering Spur-winged Geese and Fulvous Whistling and Yellow-billed Ducks while there were mixed flocks of silvery Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler and a few Red-billed Teal.

Scanning of the deeper pits gave us good views eventually of Southern Pochards along with rafts of Black-necked and Little Grebes while Red-knobbed Coots were common and often close to the van.

Three South African Shelduck were loafing on a sand bank where dirty looking Great White Pelicans were dozing and Caspian Terns bathed amongst the two previously mentioned gull species. One lagoons held a party of Whiskered Terns that sat into the wind on a jetty and they were joined by two hefty Crested Terns.



Cape Shoveler, Cape Teal, Red-knobbed Coot

Thousands of African Sacred Ibis were breeding on one specific lagoon and there were always some flying around. Most were dirty and some of the young birds were truly filthy and I think they had been on the local landfill. There were Glossy and Hadada Ibis too as well as Western Cattle and Little Egrets and both Black-headed and Grey Herons. White-breasted Cormorants passed over and a



Black-headed Heron

single Reed Cormorant was seen.

Scanning the margins gave us Moorhens and an African Swampphen and Blacksmith Lapwings kept us on our toes with harsh calls and flashing pied wings. While watching a pair of these a Three Banded Plover moved and revealed itself on the same patch of stones. There were a few other waders with Avocets and Black-winged Stilts and dramatic gatherings of Greater Flamingos that unfortunately did not hold their Lesser cousins.

A family of Helmeted Guineafowl were drinking in a 'stream' (I use that term lightly) and even the tiny youngsters took flight when we inadvertently spooked them. Two Cape Spurfowl were seen on a culvert wall where Brown-throated (Plain) Martins skimmed down low between the concrete sides like Luke Skywalker on the Death Star valley run, avoiding the flitting attention of Cape Wagtails running along the top.

Cape Bulbul and Common Waxbills were seen in the reedbeds where Lesser Swamp Warblers showed well and Little Rush Warblers sung. There were few Barn Swallows around and a pair of White-throated Swallows were nesting under a bridge. Levallant's Cisticola and the familiar Zitting

Cisticolas were seen and Rock Kestrel and Black-winged Kite were noted amongst the low hunting Yellow-billed Kites.

The day was waning and so were we so we headed back to the Woodbridge Lodge in the suburb of Milnerton and even unloading the van added what were to become familiar birds with Southern Double Collared Sunbird, Cape Canary and the typical African triumvirate of Red-eyed Dove, Laughing Dove and Ring-necked Dove.

Dinner was taken at the rather splendid Bossa eatery at the golf club, overlooking the sandy beach, crashing surf and sun setting over Table Mountain, Devil's Peak and Lion Head. What a start.

12th November 2025

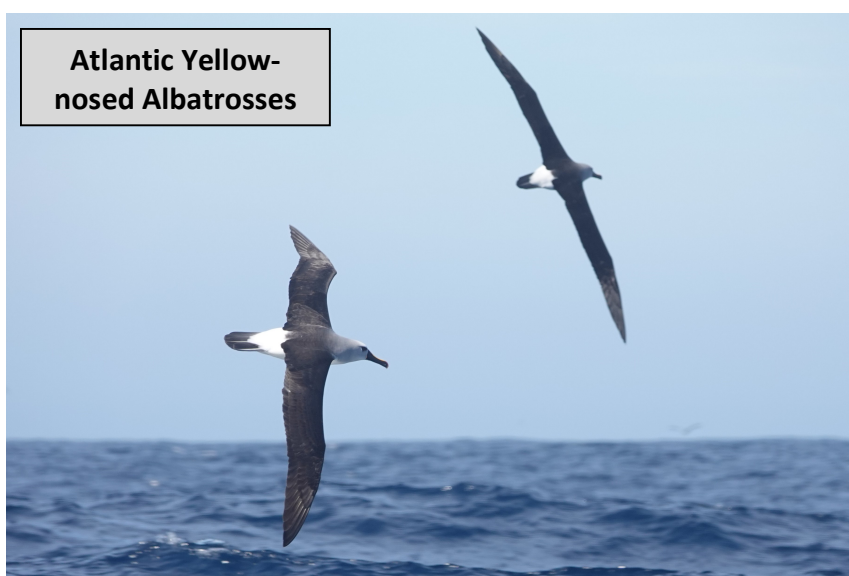
An early start felt even earlier for our first full day but the sun comes up quickly here and the trees across the road were once again hosting new birds. Pre-dawn was dominated by the sound of singing Olive Thrushes and a once the sky lightened we could see dapper Cape Sparrows as the culprit of the rather tuneful sparrowsque voices we could hear. Cape Wagtails scurried around the pavement and Cape Canaries and Red-winged Starlings were in the gardens with Common Starlings, the usual Doves and a couple of brief Speckled Mousebirds.

With breakfast in hand we headed around the coast and over the top down to Hout Bay for our pelagic to the deep offshore waters. Many of these special trips this time of year do not actually go ahead due to the strength of the summer south-easterlies but the bird gods were smiling on us and we were good to go. A scan of the harbour before we headed out gave us a Giant Kingfisher on the breakwater along with Cape Cormorants, Kelp Gulls and African Black Oystercatchers while Cape Fur Seals lounged on the boons and waved flippers but more of those later.

Two boats headed out, one with us and the other with Birdquest on board and the plan was to communicate throughout the day. I am not the best sailor and wedged myself at the back in the middle and watched the coast line until it disappeared and then the somewhat undulating horizon from then on. We passed through a bank of coastal fog where the first Cape Gannets and White-chinned Petrel were seen before an adult Sabines Gull was found bobbing around and an Arctic Skua sped by.

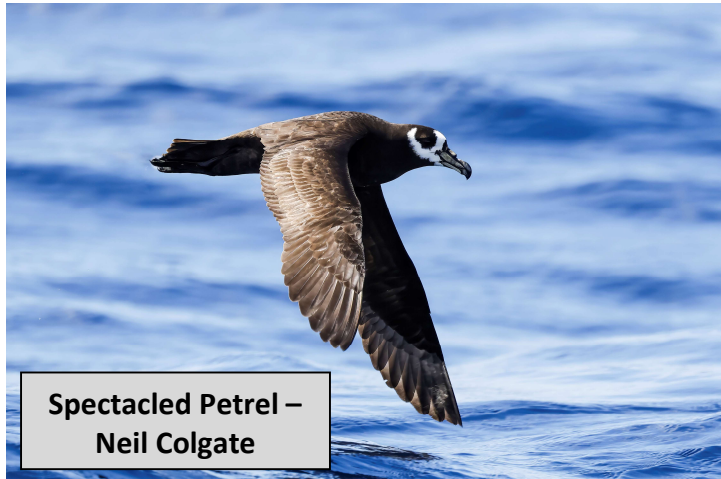
Pressing on, we still had miles to go and were aiming for 32 miles out where the trawlers were to be found but the Birdquest boat blew a gearbox in an engine and unfortunately had to limp back before we reached the first Albatrosses. I am not sure if they got back out again later in the day.

Suddenly we were amongst the birds and the next few hours were spent in rolling seas surrounded by seabirds. Our boat guide Alvin, was incredibly disappointed with what



we saw but I reassured him that we were over the moon with what we encountered and the fact that we had even managed to get out in the first place!

And so to the birds. Heavy set White-chinned Petrels were in the majority and amongst them I was lucky to find a splendid Spectacled Petrel which Neil somehow got some pics of before it headed



**Spectacled Petrel –
Neil Colgate**

away from us. A few Sooty Shearwaters were made to look small against the White-chins and there were several Greats and a single Cory's too. Amazing to think that the first two are back in their breeding waters and the later has left its natal grounds in the western Mediterranean and Macronesia and moved south.

A Pintado Petrel was one of those birds I had always wanted to see as were the two monstrous Giant Petrels

with both Northern and Southern species seen. Having seen images of these on the Falklands tearing into a seal body it was a highlight to see these powerful mega petrels close up.

But of course it was the Albatrosses that wowed us and distracted minds from the height of the swell. There were Black-browed and both Indian and Atlantic Yellow-nosed as well as the much bigger and heavier Shy Albatrosses with various ages of each species seen. Apparently we were not seeing them at their best as it was not windy enough but trust me when I say that we were very happy with almost no breeze whatsoever and still got to see them cruising around us.



Two Shy & a Black-browed Albatross

Shy is noticeably larger than the others but I still can't comprehend how much longer winged one of the Great Albatrosses look but I will save that for another day.



**Cape
Fur
Seals**

Cape Gannets drifted by and Common Terns were around the two trawlers and several Sub-Antarctic Skuas popped in now and then to have a poke at a petrel. We waited for the trawlers to haul in but it never seemed to be getting any more likely and even the herds of Cape Fur Seals following them were looking bored. I was very surprised to see them this far out – I had no idea.

A smallish green sea turtle was watched just below the surface and a couple of Tuna breached before we opted for an early return to shore

which was still nearly two hours away. Most of the birds were left behind and just a few White-chins, Sooties and Cape Gannets were seen on the way back in although we did get a close view of a couple of huge container ships and three tugs pulling an immense mobile oil rig. Closer in Cape Cormorants passed us by and there were more Common and a couple of Sandwich Terns too while in the harbour we now had a few moments to watch the Cape Cormorants at close range and marvel at the size of the Fur Seals with their point little ears!

Back on shore I may have done a little dance for having successfully survived the vaguely high seas with my insides still inside. We stopped for a drink in the fine restaurant (but passed on food) before making our way back towards base but with a good window of opportunity to pay our first visit to the fabled Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

It was quite warm and quiet for our first visit but it was just good to have a walk in the sunshine and enjoy the wonderful plants. There were of course plenty of birds to see and everyone got a good look at the Southern DC Sunbirds at last as well as Olive Thrushes and incredibly confiding Cape

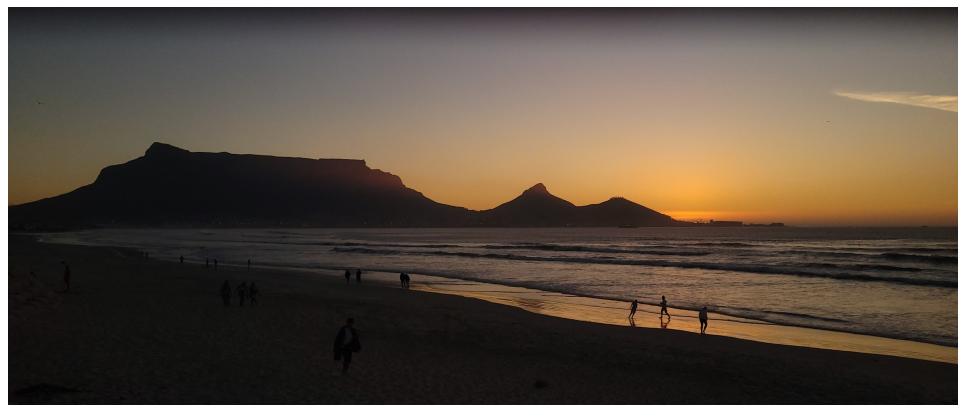


**Cape
Robin-
Chat**

Robin-chats. Sombre Greenbuls sung throughout the gardens and we were lucky enough to get a good view of a beady eyed singer in a tree top and Cape Bulbuls, Karoo Prinias, Cape Canaries and Cape White-eyes all showed well. Birds in these gardens tended to give good views and the constant stream of visitors has obviously made them accustomed to human company. A female African Paradise Flycatcher hunted in the shadowy glen and fizzy African Dusky Flycatchers took more traditional exposed out vantage points. A Cape Batis was seen very briefly and we would have to wait for some days to get views again.

Ring-necked and Red-eyed Doves were numerous and I was especially pleased to find two Lemon Doves given that my only previous one was in Uganda on the breathless climb back up from the Gorillas! Despite the blooms there were very few insects with just three Butterflies with a 'Large' White, typical Painted Lady and one of the *Acraea* species with transparent outer forewings. A strange insect was hurtling around at ridiculous speed making loud clicking noises but never landed and I had no idea what family it even belonged to.

It was soon time to head back to



Milnerton. I am not sure that any of us (even Hazel) believed that we had managed our South African pelagic and we all enjoyed another fine meal down at the Bossa.

13th November 2025

Not quite so early a start and it gave us a little time to stand outside and watch the birds in the garden opposite, through our security fence. The word 'Cape' came up a lots with Canary, White-eye and Sparrow but there was a new addition too with almost orange Cape Weavers.

A strange song kept me searching and I soon found a Pied Barbet. He was coming down to the closest fruiting tree which was also home to two White-backed Mousebirds. SDC Sunbirds zipped around and a Peregrine made two passes before we were called in to breakfast.



Pied Barbet – Neil Colgate

Our first stop was in the nearby suburb of Rondabosch where

Wilfred took us across the road to a stand of pines where we very quickly found our quarry, a male Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk which was built very much along the lines of our own Eurasian Sparrowhawk.

On again to the higher gate of Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens for a proper look round. This early in the morning there was only us and the happy ground staff around and we had a fabulous couple of hours wandering through the various biomes in cooler conditions than yesterday afternoon. Sombre Greenbulbs were singing around us and gave occasional views but a singing Cape Batis refused to show itself. Southern Boubous are easy to hear but tricky to see but seemingly not for us and one popped out just a few metres away.

There were Cape Bulbuls and White-eyes and Karoo Prinias were not bothered by us in the slightest as they collected food in the flower beds where Cape Robin-chats and Olive Thrushes foraged. Some Sweet Waxbills flew off while we were watching a group of Cape Spurfowl and in searching for them



Cape Sugarbird

we found some Bronze Mannikins on the lawns.

The views up to the mountains were magnificent and scanning around gave us Yellow-billed Kites, Steppe Buzzard, White-necked Ravens and a dark phase Booted Eagle. As we dropped down to the Protea beds we found our first Cape Sugarbird that was dragging round a preposterous tail. I did not realise that they were such a robust bird. There were several of both sexes and the views were outrageous.

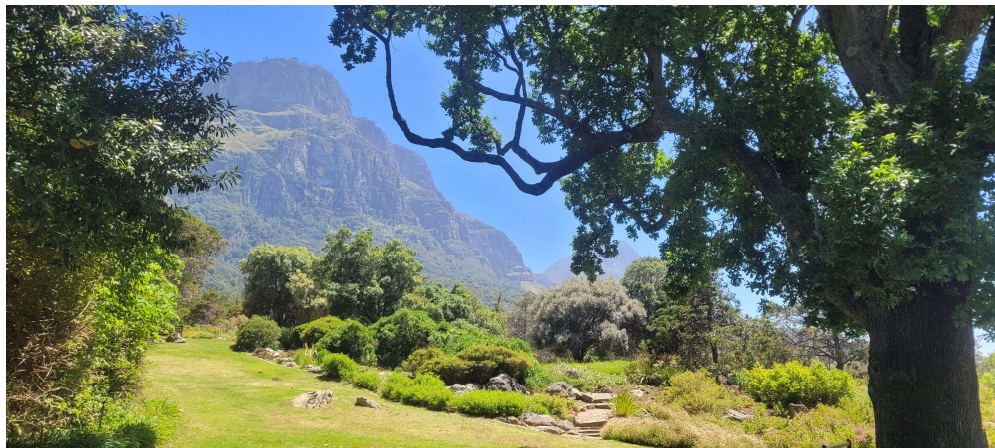
One male in particular sat there and sung within touching distance. SDC Sunbirds were common and we got our first view of a female Malachite Sunbird too and then noticed that there were Canaries feeding around our feet in the beds too with Cape and chunky Brimstone and dark faced Forest.

There were more Spurfowl wandering amongst us and two screaming American teenagers drew us, not to a coiled snake but a rather small Leopard Tortoise – go figure. Two small brown birds were flying round playing chase and making loud metallic ‘zink’ noises. Wilfred identified them as Brown Backed Honeybird which is a poor new name substitute for Wahlberg’s Honeyguide!



Down in the Dell and Olive Pigeon flew across and Red-eyed Doves were nest building and we at last got to see a male Malachite Sunbird whilst trying to relocate a swishy tailed male African Paradise Flycatcher. One of the key birds in the garden that every single visitor wants to see and we were pointed to a small tree where an adult Spotted Eagle Owl was watching us with complete disinterest.

A Weeping Boer-bean tree was attracting lots of SDC Sunbird and White-eye action and a Cape Golden Mole scuttled across the path to go with the deceased one I found yesterday. Black Saw-wings cruised the linear lawns and a Brown Backed Honeybird joined us and actually perched up to show us just how drab a little bird it is but it was certainly one we would not see again.



A drink in the shade was required before we moved on and a family of Red-winged Starlings came to join us and the red sunshades gave them some very strange hues.

Onwards and out of town and down to the coast at Melkbos Strand for a short walk along the front which very quickly gave us excellent views of several Crowded Cormorants with their little tufted crests among the rangier Cape Cormorants on the rocks. There were African Black Oystercatchers and a couple of parties of Common Terns while Kelp Gulls patrolled. The Kelp forest waving offshore looked amazing and for all the world like various forms of sealife trying to emerge from the waves. Cape Wagtails clockwork ran along the prom and there were Cape and House Sparrows in the flower beds with a few Cape Weavers while Large Rock Martins, Barn Swallows and our first Greater Striped Swallows were enjoying the onshore wind.

Lunch nearby at Ou Meul Bakery we had a fine lunch and were joined by a family of Southern Fiscals, Greater Striped Swallows, Cape Wagtails and worm hunting Hadada Ibises. It was all very convivial.

From here we took the very long straight R27 and then a couple of side roads in search of Korhaan's and Cape Penduline Tits but only found a windblown Black-winged Kites and several Fiscal Shrikes before retracing our steps but once back on the main road I spied a male Black Harrier quartering the landscape alongside. Cue a sudden stop and emergency pile out to watch this spectacular raptor as it masterfully hunted into the wind before skimming low over the main road and off into the distance. It became 'bird of the day' instantly for some.



Inland a little way now and we spent the rest of the day touring the dusty byways around Philadelphia which gave a whole slew of new birds with our very first couple of Blue Cranes requiring another van exit while a Jackal Buzzard drifted over. We were to see quite a few other Cranes by the end of the afternoon. Those elongated tertials are astonishing.



Black-headed Herons, Egyptian Geese, African Sacred Ibis and Western Cattle Egrets were encountered frequently and Helmeted Guineafowl ran around in deranged groups. A distant lake held some Great White Pelicans but it was all a bit hazy. There were plenty of small birds during our stops with an olive Bokmakerie, African Stonechats, striking Capped Wheatears, African Pied Starlings, and various Weavers that were made up Southern Red and

Yellow Bishops and both Cape and Southern masked Weavers. Our final proper stop around a farm gave us all of this along with bugling Bule Cranes, both Crowned Lapwings and Kittlitz's Plovers, proukking European Bee-eaters, Common Waxbills, striding African Pipits and boldly marked Red-capped Larks while Barn, Greater Striped and White-throated Swallows and both Brown-throated and Large Rock Martins hunted for airborne insects around the livestock.

We were soon back at Woodbridge Lodge before a final meal down at the Bossa and off course another sunset pic or two.

14th November 2025

A final Woodbridge Lodge breakfast was preceded by some 'tree watching' once again. Amazingly we managed the Mousebird Triple over our short stay and this morning's duo was smart Red-faced! This must be a tree that the local Mousebird gangs of all three species know about and regularly check out. The Pied Barbets were once again feeding in the same tree.

Soon we were on the road but only a short way for a slightly iffy roadside stop on a main road just beyond Milnerton GC to scan a lagoon for White Backed Ducks which we found very quickly.



White-backed Ducks

Strange, squashed looking birds. There were lots of Coots and a few dabblers and a Black Crake dashed back into the reedy margins.

From here it was back up the coast before pulling off onto the wonderfully named Grotto Bay Road. A stop towards the end was incredibly productive and within just a few minutes we saw bouncy Grey-backed Cisticolas, glowing Yellow Canaries, SDC and Malachite Sunbirds, flocks of Wattled and Pied Starlings, singing Bokmakerie and several

Black Winged Kites and Rock Kestrels. There were Swifts all around us with House and White-rumped Swifts around the buildings and hurtling Alpine and dark African Black Swift above. Down at the end there were Karoo Scrub-Robins and a Familiar Chat in the car park and a group of Cape Gannets moved offshore.

Time was a consideration and we soon retraced our route still searching for Grey-winged Francolins and almost immediately I found a party of seven right alongside the road and while trying to get the crew onto those Wilfred found two cryptically hidden Spotted Think-knee. And all without leaving the van. A couple of Angulate Tortoises crossed the track.

Back on the main road we continued on towards the West Coast NP but there was huge excitement and cheering on the way as a couple of groups of Common Ostriches were parading alongside although somehow Neil contrived to keep missing them. I do take great delight in seeing such familiar birds in the wild that I have grown up with at home. For some reason they seemed even bigger!

A group of White-backed Mousebirds greeted us on arrival and after checking in we drove down to the bay for a walk out to the saltmarsh. The Black-headed and Grey Heron colony in the Gums was in full swing and a Black-winged Kite kept the colour scheme going. The tide was in further than expected but it actually worked in our favour as it was so hazy that if we had been scanning mud the waders would have been even more shimmery.



Common Ostrich

We quickly clocked up a large flock of Greenshanks and several Whimbrel were floating around and making quite Curlew-esque calls at times. There were three flocks of Little Stints with a few Curlew Sandpipers amongst them but I could not find any vagrant peeps. Stilts high stepped and two Avocets tried to sleep out the high tide. A Ringed Plover called and there were a couple of pairs of breeding Kittlitz and Blacksmith Lapwings and a single Three-banded Plover.

African Marsh Harriers hunted the extensive reedbeds and Claire picked up the first Osprey of the trip as it went out over the choppy turquoise sea where Sandwich, Caspian and Swift Terns

patrolled. There were lots of hirundines around with Barn, White-throated, Greater Striped and Pearl-breasted Swallows along with Large Rock, Brown-throated and chunky Banded Martins. An African Water Rail squealed in the reedy edge but the tide was too far in for it to venture out and out on the saltmarsh there were both Yellow and White-throated Canaries feeding on tiny seedheads which Wilfred thought was unusual for this location.

From here we visited a random small pool with a hide which we entered once it had been checked for Boomslangs...The reeds were a little high but the freshwater still attracted a full breeding plumaged African Spoonbill, Western Cattle Egret and two Stilts while KH Coots, Moorhens and Little Grebes were noted. A pair of White-throated Swallows were nesting inside and I had not realised that they had a rufous forehead until then and three Namaqua Doves flew by on russet wings. Back outside a Southern Fiscal posed and better views were had of Pearl-breasted Swallows in the ever increasing wind.

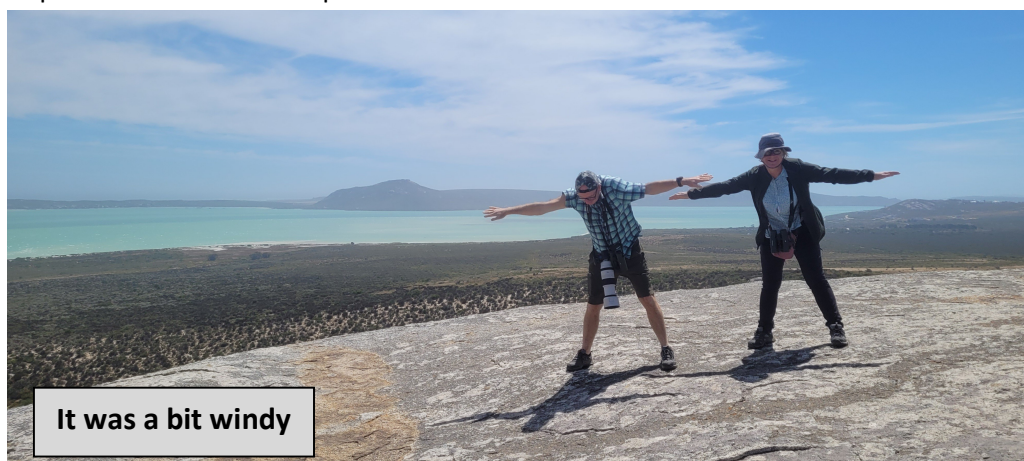
Lunch back at Geelbek was spent with the frisky Cape Spurfowl who would have been on the table with lunch if you were not paying attention while the Cape Weavers looked for missed bits. A pair of Southern Fiscals hunted from the gums and a Spotted Thick-knee was flushed by a couple of walkers.

Toasties done and fingers intact we moved

on to other areas of this national park and a track down to the Seeberg-uitsigpunt gave us point blank views of two immature type Black Korhaan that blended in so well to their surroundings. There were no birds to be seen at the skull cap view point with the scouring wind making it very difficult to stand up but the views were superb.



On again and back to the bay edge in the search of more waders. Ostriches could be seen on the bluff overlooking the sea and



watching kite surfers in the same view was somewhat surreal and scanning around gave us a similarly posed male Black Korhaan and an African Fish Eagle.

A covey of Grey Winged Francolins were found and a Bar-throated Apalais sung but refused to do more than flit. We parked up once again and walked down towards the silver sand beach noting

plenty of Terns ahead of us and a family of Ostriches casually strolling along the sand. The small tidal pools before the beach held five hunkering White-fronted Plovers (they always look big headed) and a pair of Kittlitz's.

It was almost as windy in the hide as outside but we gave it a good go and soon added Sanderlings to the list as well as a single Bar-tailed Godwit and a vagrant European Oystercatcher that has been around for some time. It looked to be of our own race and was dwarfed by the local Black Oiks. The light was tricky on the Terns, most of which were Common but there were quite a few Sandwich, two Swift and at least six Little Terns too. We got blown back towards the van and a Neddicky (Piping Cisticola) was heard and seen briefly and Karoo Prinias were singing but it was just too windy. The variety of Euphorbias (I think) was amazing.

A loo stop on the R27 gave us a view of a distant Martial Eagle nest but no life could be detected and nothing was sat up on a pylon. Yellow-billed Kites cruised and a Lanner made easy circuits of the landscape while the first Springbok were seen out in the fields.

Our final stop of the day was at a quarry in Langebaan where a pair of Verreaux' Eagles were sat up on the low cliff face. They looked great in the scope and were another of those birds I always wanted to see but I have to admit that I did want to see them in flight. It would have to wait. We stayed in a lovely residence that night before eating out in town. It would be another early start the next morning.

15th November 2025

We crept out early and found a Fiscal Flycatcher waiting for us in the front gardens of the houses opposite and a couple of Red-faced Mousebirds fluttered through. Guineafowl strolled along the pavements... as they do.

Today was a hot and dusty one and we began around the Saldanha Steelworks and nearby Asphalt plant (which did not have an asphalt road! Larks were on the cards and we did quite well with Karoo, Large-billed, Red-capped and Cape Long-billed but there was only sporadic song.

We got excellent views of Grey Backed Cisticolas, both Weavers and two Canaries while a pair of Karoo Scrub-Robins put on a fantastically energetic show as they showed off to a third bird. There were African Stonechats dotted around and I even found a male Black Korhaan striding through the scrub but better was to come with a male



Karoo Scrub-Robins

Black Harrier silently using the wind to cover as much of the landscape as possible. It was good to watch him without the risk of being own down by traffic! A pale phase Booted Eagle was sat up on a near post eating breakfast and when it eventually flew it dropped back down and picked up a large ball of tumble weed that it took playfully high into the air before letting it drift back down.

A Cape Grey Mongoose ran across the road as we drove out and on towards Jacobspaa where a fresh coffee beckoned. We searched the front gardens here for Spotted Thick-knee with no joy but we did see the ghostly shape of Barn Owl deep within its nest box.



Black Harrier

A drive around the nearby St Helena farmland gave us fine views of Capped Wheatears and a herd of Springbok that included a leucistic buck. There were Ostriches and Blue Cranes but we could not find a Secretarybird out on patrol. However, the nest was occupied and we could just make out one of the pair sitting very tight at the top of a big domed bush. It was difficult in the wind but we could see the red face, grey back and occasionally a blowing tail feather or head plume. It would more

than do for a start. A party of Crowned Lapwings were seen on the way back out.

The Cliphoeck Saltworks alongside the Berg River were the next stop and the shimmering white surface was reflecting a wall of wavy heat and the wind was making things interesting for us. We had one main target here, the rather scarce Chestnut-banded Plover and fortunately we picked a pair up very quickly and they gave close views but like us, they could barely stand up in the wind! Some quality leaning was required by all parties! One of them was colour ringed and has been reported. We soon moved on in case they had a nest nearby and spent soe time scanning the other lagoons where a similarly ringed Kittlitz's Plover was safeguarding two button top fluffy chicks. There were a few Blacksmith Lapwings, Curlew Sandpipers and Little Stints, Stilts and Avocets and the first Common Sandpiper of the adventure which could have been breeding on a Scottish lochside just months before.

There were Black-necked and Little Grebes and a few Terns and Ibis as well as an African Darter that got blown through. European Bee-eaters were perched up on the fences where Capped Wheatears were collecting food for fledged young.

Our packed breakfast had been so vast that it qualified as lunch too so we headed for Velddrift and had a walk alongside the Berg to the Columbine café where fine coffee was ground

before your nose. There were African Spoonbills and Flamingos and several Reed- Cormorants and African Darters sitting on the jetties where Hartlaub's and a couple of Grey Hooded Gulls rested. A Common Sandpiper bobbed along and White-throated Swallows sat on the small boats and gleamed blue in the strong light. Noisy Pied Kingfishers patrolled up and down and one gave us a top hovering performance at close range, somehow keeping its head still in the wind. A male Mallard rather dodgily found its way onto the list...



Chestnut-banded Plover

A young Swift Tern was following its parents around whining in that squeaky bicycle way that Sandwich Tern kids do while an adult Caspian Tern had no visible dependents.

Coffee with the local House Sparrows was enjoyable and Little Swifts zoomed around us before entering the building next door and Large Crag Martins had clay nests on the outside of the same

wall. A Levaillant's Cisticola sung from the reed tops and a Little Rush Warbler gave a couple of bursts and crept back into cover.

It was time to hit the road and head inland on some scarily straight featureless roads through mile after mile of golden farmland. Ian did a grand job to keep going – we all might have nodded. There were many lakes along the way (they call them dams) and most had wildfowl – always Egyptian Geese but sometimes Spur-wings, Shovelers, Yellow and Red-billed Teal and the first White-faced Whistling Ducks for the trip. There were Whiskered Terns and Knob-heads and sometimes a pair of Blue Cranes in attendance. Raptors were few and far and just the odd Steppe Buzzard was noted. A short stop in Michell's Pass before dropping down to Ceres gave us eye ball views of White-necked Ravens with those oversized bills, a pair of very Familiar Chats, singing Cape Buntings and a fine Chacmha Baboon surveying his territory from an outcrop.

The leafy town of Ceres offered us a walk in the park before checking into the Riverside Lodge for a couple of nights. Southern Grey-headed Sparrows called in the Oaks and Cape and House Sparrows fed underneath with Cape Canaries while a pair of African Paradise Flycatchers sallied in and out. Down near the Dwarsrivier there were showy (at last) Common Waxbills and Malachite Sunbirds but our real target in this urban setting was African Black Duck which is a shy river specialist that seemed out of place here with kids splashing in the water and dog walkers running around but one flew past us almost immediately flashing bold speculum, white underwings and dark bill. We tracked it down and were able to watch it quietly around the reedy margins but it always seemed to have one eye on us. It was not particularly spotty.



The lodge was literally around the corner on the same river and we struggled to get in inside due to the two flowering Boer-Bean trees by the front door as they were heaving with Sunbirds with so many SDCollareds and bully boy Malachites. They were spectacular and very noisy. A short walk before dinner gave us Weavers and Southern Red Bishops breeding in the reed bed in the river where African Reed Warblers could be heard singing before everything was drowned out by the pre-roost chorus of Guinea fowl, Gypos and Hadada Ibis! A male Pin-tailed Whydah fluttered over with tail trailing behind but we would have to wait a couple of days before getting it on the group list.

Even our attempts at dinner were interrupted by the hooting of a Spotted Eagle Owl in the pine outside but we could not find it and Spotted Thick-knees wailed from the park. It had been a long but rewarding day.

16th November 2025

With another substantial packed breakfast we were ready to go good and early and a quick check of the river gave us the wonderful Bishops, Weavers and two Purple Herons while the Boer-Bean trees were already hopping with early birds.

Basically the whole day was spent on one very long, very dusty road (the R355) that crosses the Tankwa Karoo from Ceres to Cavinia – a distance of over 200km between the two towns with almost nothing in between. We trekked as far as Tankwa Padstal way station before turning back.

It was a day of many short stops and began in with a Lark hunt. Our primary target was Cape Clapper Lark and it took just a few seconds to hear the first one and watch him drop from his song flight with rattling wings that sound a bit like castanets. Red-capped and Large-billed Larks were also in song and were watched on the track and we got lucky with the Flapper and one came and perched up on the fence for us.



Grey-backed Cisticolas flicked across the road and African Stonechats and Pipits were seen while we scanned the fields where Blue Cranes danced and White-necked Ravens attended a water trough. Two Grey Rhebok were our first new antelope of the day. As we dropped down into the valley and joined the Tankwa road properly we put up a Black Stork from along the van which headed back up and over the ridge. This is a rare bird down here and only the second Ian had seen in South Africa. This short stop gave us singing Cape Buntings and Cape Grassbirds but neither were visible.

first new antelope of the day. As

we dropped down into the valley and joined the Tankwa road properly we put up a Black Stork from along the van which headed back up and over the ridge. This is a rare bird down here and only the second Ian had seen in South Africa. This short stop gave us singing Cape Buntings and Cape Grassbirds but neither were visible.

The sinuous and deeply cut stream was staked out for Namaqua Warbler and we quickly heard a couple but they did not show but find a pair of Cape Penduline Tit, Brown-throated Martins, African Reed Warbler, Long-billed Crombecs and Mountain Wheatears. The Crombecs behaved very differently to the jungle ones I have seen and hopped and scurried over the boulders and scree like miniature Rock Nuthatches. Breakfast at a shady spot revealed the ground covered in more broken glass than I have ever seen in one place but it was still a good spot with Large Rock Martins and Greater Striped Swallows hawking around us while we were bogged at by sinister looking Rock Hyraxes from the crags.

Booted Eagle and both Raven and Crow spiralled and Mountain Wheatears and Familiar Chats were collecting food. A sylvia type warbler flew across in front of me – feeling like a chunky Lesser White-throat and when it reappeared it was just that – a Layard's Warbler which fed unconcerned in front of us.



Cape Buntings and Cape Scrub-Robins were in song and Bokmarerie were heard but were still only giving flight views. Three White-winged Starlings flew along the river below and Pied Starlings were noted too. We crossed the road and tried a cliff face for Cinnamon-breasted Warbler and I picked one up way up on the top singing and flicking its

tail. It came down a little lower and amazingly stayed around long enough to get everyone onto it in the scope. A subtle bird that bounded around like the Crombec and was obviously at home on bare rock. A Cardinal Woodpecker called and Mandy saw it briefly in the acacias and we were watched by another Mountain Wheatear. There were young SDC Sunbirds everywhere and they seem to adapt to almost any habitat we have visited.

The landscape became even dryer and the vegetation more spartan but a green oasis to the east apparently had Hippos and we could see duck and Ostriches around the margins and an Osprey circling.

On cue, Karoo Chats started to appear on the fences looking like greyer Mountain Wheatears and another stop at a line of tired acacias quickly saw us finding two more new species with delicate Fairy Flycatchers and feisty Rufous-eared Warblers looking like a cross between a Prinia and an Apalis. They became one of my favourites this day. A couple of Pale Chanting Goshawks were found perched up prominently and while watching one of these impressive raptors we saw a Steenbok in the grasses.



Karoo Chat

A little further on a herd of Gemsbok gracefully strode alongside but were skittish and kept in the haze zone. These were my first Oryx in the wild and those horns were so impressive. We check out a rocky mount for Eremomelas but there was not a sound and just some Canaries and Sunbirds and a couple of Rufous-eared Warblers in the low scrub.

Lunch at Katbakkies 'picnic site' felt like it should have given us plenty of birds to find but it was hot and hard work in the thorny scrub and although we got good views of a Bokmakerie, Southern Grey-headed Sparrows, Karoo Scrub-Robins and White-backed Mousebirds there was actually nothing new here at all. The giant Aloes were amazing though.



Gemsbok

We retraced to the main road and continued onwards and after some more roadside chats made it to the Tankwa Padstal shop, café and mechanic workshop. What a wonderfully quirky place with carefully paced dead cars looking like they have dropped out of the sky and, well, a crashed Flying Saucer poking out of the desert.

Cape and House Sparrows and Familiar Chats joined us for a drink and ice-

cream and there were some Ostriches out back! We drove down the side track onto a vast shimmering stony plane in the hope of finding Spur-heeled Lark but other than an immature Pale Chanting Goshawk it was almost birdless so we soon turned round and came back but this time I did pick up a rather non-descript Sickle-winged Chat.

From this point we began the long journey back down the R355 with a few little stops giving us Jackal Buzzards and another listen to Namaqua Warblers which again eluded our eyes. Suddenly the track ended and we were back on tarmac but we did not head straight back to Ceres but wiggled up onto the Witzenberg Valley Road but Protea Canaries did not appear and we had to be content with White-rumped and Alpine Swifts, White-necked Ravens and two rock bouncing Klipspringers – the most agile of dainty antelopes.

Back in Ceres we still had a little time before dinner and a walk along the river gave flying views of the Giant Kingfisher once again but the Black Duck was still wary and kept swimming out of view. The Brown-throated Martins were excavating in the sandy bank and below them a group of Streaky-headed Seed-eaters were feasting on grassheads with the Cape Sparrows. With the light going the evening chorus of shouty birds got going and could still be heard as we dined.

17th November 2025

The hotel Boer-bean trees got pre-breakfast off to a shiny start with gleaming argumentative Malachite Sunbirds ruling the show over the SBC Sunbirds and Sugarbirds. There were Southern Fiscals and Fiscal Flycatchers in the gardens and down at the river the Southern Masked Weavers were dangling under fresh green nests and African Reed Warblers were seen well as the foraged in the lush vegetation. It was soon to eat, pack and hit the road. The day began back up on the Witzenberg Valley Road for another attempt at Protea Canary and although they again refused to appear we had a blinding little session with a male Cape Rock Thrush gleaming in the sunshine, spiralling Sacred Ibis and White-necked Ravens, a Cape Bunting that actually sat on a pinnacle close by and sung and to cap it all off a Ground Woodpecker came in and perched up for us all to see in the scope. It was shaped like a Green Woodpecker but with a slate grey head, equally beady white eyes and pinky blood coloured underparts. Ian was hopping with delight that we had seen this enigmatic and unpredictable bird.



Malachite Sunbird



Ground Woodpecker

underparts. Ian was hopping with delight that we had seen this enigmatic and unpredictable bird.

We tried the little wet gully down the road and stood in the shade and watched birds come and go. Still no Protea Canaries but we did see so much more with a family of Fiscal Flycatchers, an out of place Speckled Mousebird, Streak-headed Seedeaters, Bokmakerie, Cape Sugarbirds, canaries, Bulbuls and White-eyes, and SBD Sunbirds.

The plan was to head back up to the start of the Tankwa Karoo to have another go at the riverine area. As hoped the Namaqua Warblers started calling immediately and this time a couple of us got a good view of this Prinia like species.

We got lucky and found a pair of Yellow-bellied Eremomelas feeding in the bushes and they were joined by both Layard's Warbler, Karoo Prinia and a rock jumping Long-billed Crombec. Back on the road I saw a large shadow over and looked up to find a Verreaux's Eagle circling overhead. It was soon joined by its partner and after deciding which way to go they glided off along the ridge. I was beaming. Seeing this raptor had always been one of my hoped for birds since I was a kid. I even remember painting one when perched on a cliff when I was at school. That wing shape and flashes of white within coal blackness. Simply awesome.

A troop of Chacmha Baboons were in the river bottom loosely feeding with some goats and a couple sat up to let the wind flow through their long hair while a big fluffy Cape Grey Mongoose trotted across in front. It in no way resembled the sleek brown one of yesterday! A party of Red-faced Mousebirds stopped long enough for Hazel to see them and a Jackal Buzzard circled.



Verreaux's Eagle

We had a long day on the road after this but there were stops and roadside goodies such as Cape Crows, Pale Chanting Goshawks, Steppe Buzzards, Booted Eagles and plenty of water birds on the 'dams'. A wee stop even gave us a mixed party of Sparrows and Southern Red Bishops coming down to drink at a leaky pipe, breeding Blacksmith Lapwings and Cape Wagtail and zooming Little Swifts.



Southern Red Bishop

We stopped at Capedry in Montagu for lunch. I may have purchased some dried fruity things and bottle of Cab Sav to take home. Others may have bought enough to see them through the next few days! The town also held a small pond with a large African Sacred Ibis and Cattle Egret colony with a few Reed Cormorants mixed in. The smell was somewhat pungent. White-breasted Cormorants and Egyptian Geese were on the lake platform but we could not find a Malachite Kingfisher.

From Montagu we followed the mountains and stopped at an acacia filled river valley to look for Southern Tchagra with no joy but there were a host of small birds getting very agitated about what was probably a Boomslang moving through the trees but although we could not see the snake we were able to get fantastic views of the attacking gang which included a family of angry Pirit Batis, Red-faced Mousebirds, Namaqua Warblers and Cape Weavers. Pale Chanting Goshawks hunted from the telegraph poles and another pale Booted Eagle circled overhead.



Namaqua Warbler

From here we cut through the Tradouw Pass which was quite spectacular. A roadside stop gave us a singing but hiding Victorin's Warbler and there were Cape Canaries, Streaky-headed Seed eaters and Yellow Bishops feeding in the verge. We got lucky and a Knysna Woodpecker called and appeared in the closest tree. A smart 'typical' African woodpecker but with big spotting instead of barring

underneath. This is a local speciality and it was good to see one so well. The same tree also held a pair of Cape Batis and a Giant Kingfisher called from the hidden river while up slope there were Red-winged Starlings and floaty tailed Cape Sugarbirds.



Klaas's Cuckoo – Neil Colagte

On again and at the other end of the valley we spent some time at the bridge over the Grootvaderbos. Lesser Swamp Warblers sung and amongst the nix of hirundines there were several Black Sawwings. A male Pin-tailed Whydah sat up long enough for most to see but the best bird here was a male Klaas's Cuckoo that put on quite a show.

We passed several large Jersey Cow dairy farms before turning

off to Honeywood Farm, our delightful home for the next two nights. The lodges were wonderful and ours overlooked the valley and mountains and a circling Forest Buzzard became the last new bird of the day before we walked up in the dark for a fine homecooked dinner. There were no owls or nightjars on the walk back but I did find a Leopard Toad. Sleep came easy.

18th November 2025

It was a glorious start to the day at Honeywood Farm with Cape Canaries twittering everywhere and the mewing of Forest Buzzards in the gums opposite. A pair of Olive Woodpeckers were playing chase and the Fork-tailed Drongos were hawking from the snags.

We all headed out pre breakfast to the Grootvadersbosch Forest Park and there were so many birds on the roadside that you almost had to close your eyes to avoid being distracted too much but we did stop for a magnificent Olive Pigeon that was perched up absorbing the early sunshine!

After parking up we were greeted by a male Cape Batis getting seriously stropky at his own reflection in every car

mirror available but at least this gave us the chance to get more excellent views.

Unlike out on the West Coast Park, the Bar-throated Apalis here showed very well and were to become a feature of our stay here. There were African Dusky Flycatchers, Fiscal Flycatchers, Cape Robin-Chats and Olive Thrushes around the car park and Red-winged Starling overhead.



Cape Batis – Steve Cullum

The first big flowering tree gave us all excellent views of the beefy Greater Double Collared Sunbirds along with the regular SDCSs too. A Forest Buzzard perched up long enough to be scoped and a



**Greater Double
Collared Sunbird**

troop of Chacmha Baboons moved across the road. Two Swee Waxbills flew through and frustratingly we still had not had a good look at them.

A wide track took up down into the remnant forest and we could hear many Sombre Greenbuls and picked up Fork-tailed Drongos and African Paradise Flycatchers, Southern Boubou and three Rufous-chested Cuckoos and with some stealthy creeping we located one sitting above

us in a canopy opening. A Bushbuck appeared on the path and a Red Duiker was seen bounding off ahead of us.

We turned off onto a steeper path and immediately heard a party of vociferous Terrestrial Brownbuls and we predicted where they would cross the path and got some good views as they crashed through the tangles. At the same time the first African Blue-Mantled Crested Flycatcher was heard and with some patience some excellent views were had of this flamboyant species as moved around the full height of the forest making it quite difficult to track. A Knysna Woodpecker appeared briefly and was in the same trees as more Drongos but we had to press on to the regular spot for our main target – the Narina Trogon.

We stood patiently and waited but it was unresponsive but it was time well spent for we could hear Yellow-throated Woodland Warblers singing and picked up a Grey Cuckoo-shrike and heard a Red-necked Francolin off in the trees.

As we started to walk back out the Trogon called and we quickly tracked it down as it fed in a small er tree. Ridiculously close views were had and it even did that odd, head-cocked to one side

contemptuous stare down at us we looked up! Down below an Olive Bush-shrike sung but we needed more time to find it while a pair of Olive Woodpeckers performed almost alongside the Trogon. With stomachs rumbling we climbed back up adding a Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk on the way and were pleased to see Ian waiting for us with the bus. Cape White-eyes foraged around us and Black-Sawwings swooped up and down the grassy paths.



Narina Trogon

We sat enjoying our breakfast overlooking the rolling fields and even then added singing Greater Honeyguide somewhere below us, a Plain-backed Pipit, Brimstone canaries and a Speckled Mousebird.



Southern Masked Weaver

The bridge at the start of the Tradouw Valley was our first stop once we were back on the road and once again offered us some great birding. It was quite different from our first look with Brown-hooded Kingfishers breeding in the river bank while Giant Kingfishers patrolled up and down. Namaqua Warblers and Neddicky showed very well with the former seeing off a female Pin-tailed Whydah. Lesser Swamp Warblers paused

in the open in the reeds below us and groups of both Bishops and Common Waxbills were coming down to feast on grass seedheads in the riverbed where Bar-fronted Apalis and Karoo Prinias were added to the small bird tally.

A male African Paradise Flycatcher with a very long tail flopped across the road and the same selection of hirundines as last night were still hawking around while Yellow-billed Kites and a Booted Eagle were up above.

The rest of the day was spent driving the long and dusty roads between Surrbraak (and delightful old missionary town) towards Malagas and the Buffelsjagrivier. It was hard work from the bus and the amount of traffic meant that spending time outside was fraught with dusty trauma but there were avian rewards. There were Cape Clapper, Large-billed and Red-capped Larks and African Pipits along with Cape Sparrows and the four Weavers and Bishops along the roadsides where Capped Wheatears and African Stonechats perched. An African Hoopoe flew across the road and was the only one of the trip and a stop at a bridge for Southern Tchagra once again drew a blank but it was good to be out of the van for a while and it did give us a gleaming male Dideric Cuckoo that flew around us before alighting on the fence.

We got some better views of Cape Crows and White-necked Ravens and we found Crowned Lapwings and regular pairs of elegant Blue Cranes including one pair with a youngster that they were tending



Blue Crane family

with delicate care. Our scanning of the fields gave us so many large feeding flocks of Guinea fowl along with mustard Yellow Mongooses, Grey Rhebok and Grey Duiker. A comfort stop gave us the chance to watch the Southern Masked Weavers displaying around their pendulous nests.

Back near Honeywood Farm our constant scanning of the rolling landscape gave us our reward with a fine male Denham's Bustards which generously flew across the road before striding around in a field with some more Grey Rhebok. A look round revealed another male on the next hill top and an incongruous African Spoonbill on a tiny pool where some Spur-winged Geese lounged. Back for another fine homecooked meal – John cooked on the braai and Miranda and here team prepared everything else inside. It was a fine way to spend our last evening here and was topped off by a pair of duetting African Wood Owls somewhere off in the Gums.

19th November 2025

A pre-breakfast stroll up to the main road at Honeywood Farm started with the most astonishing noises coming from the Gum trees above my head and I quickly found a pair of Cape Crows making the most of the valley's acoustics. Close up there are a striking species with bright glossy plumage and an incredibly long and pointed bill. The dawn light was illuminating the low scrub by the road and it was alive with birds and we very quickly found Cape and Brimstone Canaries, showy Bar-throated Apalis, Speckled Mousebirds, a pair of stropky Southern Boubou, bouncy Neddicky and Karoo Prinias. A male Pin-tailed Whydah displayed from a prominent twig with that outrageous tail and a commotion in the nearest Gum gave me a female Greater Honeyguide who had outraged the local pairs of both Fiscal Flycatcher and Fork-tailed Drongos and they soon sent her packing.



Bar-throated Apalis

Everyone else staying closer to the farmhouse had seen a pair of Long-crested Eagles before coming down to meet me and news from Ian that they were back had us returning that way for some more quality pre-breakfast birds. One of the Eagles was still sat on a post in the meadow below with its crest bouncing around and it diligently stared at the ground around it waiting for some snack to foolishly appear. Despite their fierce countenance, I always think that raptors look a little on the slow side.



Pin-tailed Whydah

Red-chested and Klaas's Cuckoos sung down in the woods and a similar song to the right was in fact from a Black Cuckoo which put on a fine fly past for us. There was lots of sunbird action with the two Double Collareds and a new one with a pair of Amethyst Sunbirds the male of which looked coal black with little flashes of green and pinky-purple as it danced around the

stripy female.

Steppe and Jackal Buzzards circled and the Greater Striped Swallows and Plain-backed pipits were still around the meadow where the Cape Batis shouted at us from the big Plane Tree.

A leisurely repast and then we bid farewell to our wonderful hosts, packed up and once again hit the tracks. If you ever have the chance to visit the Moodies on their wonderful farm please do so.

The De Hoop dirt road was where we spent the next few hours, scouring the landscape for wildlife.

We encountered the now expected Geese, Ibis, Guinea fowl and birds of prey while the Blue Cranes once again did not disappoint.

A riverside stop was very productive and for the first time on coming vehicles actually slowed down to crawl past us rather than enveloping us in dust. A pair of Three-banded Plovers were getting agitated by our presence as they had two tiny fluffball chicks running around below and we soon moved to the opposite side of the road to allow them to return to their young.



Crowned Lapwings saw off

of Yellow-billed Kite and down in the acacia scrub we found our first Red-billed Queleas with the other Weavers and Sparrows as well as Fiscal Flycatchers and Shrikes. Levallant's Cisticolas showed very well in the gully below us and while looking at them we found some Ciclids stuck in an isolated pool with two heavily armed freshwater crabs for company!

Back at the bus lan and found a Lesser Honeyguide which soon gave excellent views on one of the giant Allos. Like all the family it had obvious white tail sides. From here we passed many African Stonechat and Capped Wheatears on the wires along with another Pale Chanting Goshawk and a few Larks before taking the road to Potberg and the De Hoop reserve.

There was excitement on the way and I may just have shouted 'SECRETARY BIRD!!!' about 57 times before the dust from the sudden breaking settled. It was striding around a field about 200m away



looking like some prehistoric crane with impossibly long pink legs with black socks, a long balancing tail and elegant head topped with an eagle's head. It would stalk along and then stop and stare at something before a calculated bend, tilt and grab and I can only think that it was catching Grasshoppers. It was hazy but it was still magnificent and there were smiles all round. I was pleased to see the bird sitting tight on the nest earlier in the trip but this was so much more satisfying.

While enjoying the Stalker we found a fine male Yellow Canary on the wires and the Capped Wheatears came to see us. They are a very smart member of the tribe. Closer to the reserve we started to see Ostriches again along with Grey Rhebok, Grey Duiker, Steenbok and the most impressive Bontebok. I have to admit to having never heard of this imposing and very rare antelope. We stopped just by the reserve gate as this gave us the best chance to see the localised Cape Vultures and sure enough we soon picked out several birds cruising overhead looking like very pale Griffons. From here it was a very long drive (for Ian) back to Cape Town for our last couple of days and once near the coast we could see a huge wildfire working its way along the mountain escarpment before we dropped down to Strand and the sweep around the bay through the traffic and back into the city.



Bontebok

20th November 2025

That evening in Cape Town the wind got up and by morning it was absolutely howling as we made our way back around the coast to Rooi Els (adding drive past singing Chaffinch in a park on the way!). It was a very frustrating few hours working the coastal path at the bottom of a vast scree slope and we failed to find the fabled Rockjumper (despite two other crews getting lucky). It was just too windy and at times you could barely stand up.



The scenery was amazing and we did get some bird rewards with Neddicky, Karoo Prinias, showy Cape Buntings and incredibly tame Cape Siskins grovelling around our feet. I suspect they would have ended up miles away if they had got more than a few inches off the ground!

The gardens had flowering Proteas and we found several Sugarbirds and the hoped for Orange-breasted Sunbird with a male did sitting up for a while as it sheltered from the wind. The flora was amazing but the lack of a Rockjumper did smart.

The lure of African Penguins was enough to keep everyone going though and before too long we were pulling into the car park at Betty's Bay where dumpy pied waddlers could be seen immediately on the beach.

We all headed out to Stony Point passing more groups of Penguins on the way and made out way to the smelly Cormorant colony. Cape Cormorants were in the majority but amongst them were White-breasted and Crowned and the hoped for Bank Cormorants. The latter are incredibly rare and it was good to see them displaying on their own rocky pinnacles.

Rock Hyraxes lounged like over stuffed sunbathers and a couple of smart Girdled Lizards were noted (the first Lizards of any type on this trip).

Back down on the sandy beach there were more adorable African Penguins and the ones down here looked more 'wild' in the camera's eye than the ones up on the rocks. They

splashed in the clear pools and paddled in the surf while they shared the beach with Kelp and Hartlaub's Gulls. Kittlitz's Plovers merged into the sand and African Black Oystercatchers were commanding the most attention with their vociferous piping and strutting. They are magnificent. The only slight incongruity was the dozing Egyptian Geese amongst the Penguins!



African Penguin



African Black Oystercatchers

From here we headed to the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens (affectionally mis-called Harry Potter) for lunch once we had navigated the Chacmha Baboons. The subsequent amble around the grounds was excellent and as well as the marshalled Baboon troops, we found some familiar friends with Fiscal and African Dusky Flycatchers, Bar-throated Apalis and Cape Batis, Karoo Prinia, Brimstone and Cape Canaries and clucking Cape

Spurfowl.

There were Cape Sugarbirds flouncing around but they were outdone by the flamboyance of the displaying Yellow Bishops who, for the first time showed their true colour with expandable yellow rump and wing coverts when they flutter flew between display perches. Proper exhibitionists. We could hear Cape Grassbirds (again) but this time one decided that we were not too scary and put on a great show looking like a Prinia that had been down the gym.

While watching the Grassbird two Sweet Waxbills flew in started feeding on the grass seeds where they dangled like they weight almost nothing. They were stunning close up and very quickly became one of the birds of the trip for some of the crew.

Up slope we could hear Ground Woodpecker but were glad of our earlier stunning views giving how far away these invisible calling birds were. Up above there were Alpine and White-rumped Swifts and Black Sawwings swooshed low over the lawns.

The day was winding down and we still had the long drive back to our hotel and I may have nodded a little. Once back some of us walked down to the local Keurboom Park which heaving with families, dog walkers and vaguely sporty people. The local Black Goshawks seemed to have deserted their nest but as a bonus family of Spotted Eagle Owls kept us entertained within their double fenced off enclosure around the nest tree.



Sweet Waxbill

Two big fluffy young crashed around the base while a watchful parent kept an eye on the crowd below. An urban wildlife spectacle with the public taking an interest in it with no official people there to engage with them and no signage. Quality.

A final lovely meal at the Wild Olive guest house and a raised glass to our wonderful guides and drivers for the week.

There was still most of the final day to enjoy but the winds had already precluded an ascent of Table Mountain. I was sure we would find something else to do!

21st November 2025

It may have been the final day but there was still time for some serious birding before we all had to head for home and after breakfast we made our way to the False Bay NR. This vast wetland of pools and reedbeds gave us a good leg stretch in the still blowing gale and we reacquainted ourselves with many of the waterfowl including Cape Shovelers, Great White Pelican, Cormorants and Ibis – oh and of course Knobheads!

A group of White-faced Whistling Ducks were the only second we had seen and while watching them, a tiny rocket of blue and orange whizzed by and briefly perched up – a Malachite Kingfisher. It did not linger and was soon off into the reedbeds. Lesser Swamp Warblers were vocal but stayed hidden while the Levillant's Cisticolas were happy hanging on and singing from the top of the bushes.



Huge Carpenter Bee

There were many active Cape Dune Mole-rat hills and Ian even saw one briefly pop its head out! There were a few insects too and hopefully I can try to work out the dragonflies in due course. A huge yellow Carpenter-type Bee entertained with its precision hovering and I also found several

Dragonflies that I hope to be able to put names too. There were even a couple of Eristalinus hoverflies species that appear to be familiar European species!

On to Kirstenbosch for a last and very pleasant walk around. Each visit has been different and although we saw nothing new it was a delight to be back amongst the Canaries and Sunbirds and to see hello to the tame male Cape Sugarbird once again. He really did not care about us in the slightest.

Southern Boubous were very vocal and we got a couple of views once again and even a couple of Sombre Greenbuls sat in the shaded open long enough to be watched. The African Paradise Flycatchers were again in the Dell where an Olive Woodpecker called and while watching some feeding malachite Sunbirds we found a Four Striped Field Mouse up amongst the blooms licking up



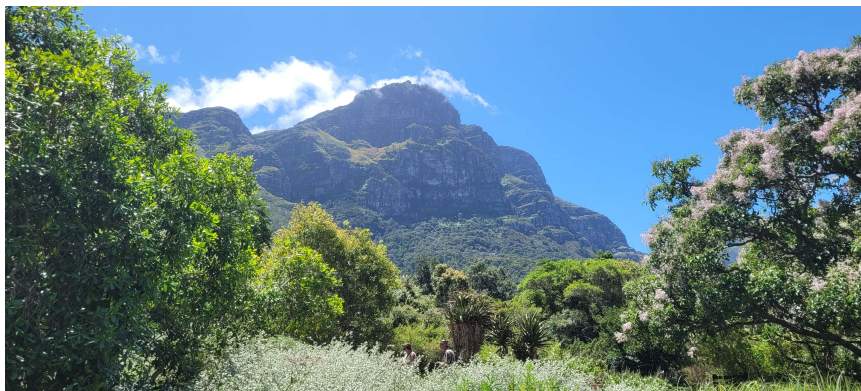
**Spotted Eagle
Owl chick**

nectar too! One of the drinking fountains attracted several Cape Bulbuls, Brimstone Canaries and a Cape Robin Chat and we stood for a while and watched them quench their thirst. A couple in front of us paused by a tree and pointed before walking on. Interest piqued, I too stopped and there was one of the adult Spotted Eagle Owls sat on a bough perfectly framed by the tree and overlooking the

Cape Town city scape below. As before he was not in the slightest bothered by us. We showed a young German couple the Owl and then noticed that they paused at the next tree along. Amazingly the other adult and one of the well grown youngsters were sitting quite low down and watching the world go by. Just how many pictures of Owls can you take?

The only bird to take any interest in them was the Brown-backed Honeybird that came into the canopy and shouted before moving on. Steppe Buzzard, Booted Eagle and Yellow-billed Kites cruised over and Alpine Swifts scythed through the blue before we retired for an ice-cream before the final drive back to the airport.

We bid our farewells to our wonderful hosts and chaperones, Wilfred and Ian, and prepared for a relaxing snoozy overnight journey back home.



Howard Vaughan

	Common Name	Scientific name
1	Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
2	Fulvous Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>
3	White-faced Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>
4	White-backed Duck	<i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i>
5	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
6	South African Shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>
7	Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
8	Cape Shoveler	<i>Spatula smithii</i>
9	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
10	African Black Duck	<i>Anas sparsa</i>
11	Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>
12	Cape Teal	<i>Anas capensis</i>
13	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>
14	Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>
15	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
16	Cape Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis capensis</i>
17	Grey-winged Francolin	<i>Scleroptila afra</i>
18	Red-necked Francolin	<i>Francolinus afer</i>
19	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
20	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
21	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
22	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
23	Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
24	African Olive Pigeon	<i>Columba arquatrix</i>
25	Lemon Dove	<i>Columba larvata</i>
26	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
27	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
28	Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
29	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
30	Denham's Bustard	<i>Neotis denhami</i>
31	Black Korhaan	<i>Eupodotis afra</i>
32	Dideric Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>
33	Klaas's Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>
34	Black Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus clamosus</i>
35	Red-chested Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>
36	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>
37	African Swift	<i>Apus barbatus</i>
38	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
39	White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>
40	African Rail	<i>Rallus caerulescens</i>
41	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
42	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
43	African Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i>
44	Black Crake	<i>Zapornia flavirostra</i>
45	Blue Crane	<i>Anthropoides paradiseus</i>

46	Spotted Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
47	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
48	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
49	European Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
50	African Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>
51	Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
52	Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
53	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
54	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
55	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
56	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>
57	Chestnut-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius pallidus</i>
58	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
59	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
60	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>
61	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
62	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
63	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
64	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
65	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
66	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
67	Brown Skua	<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>
68	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
69	Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>
70	Grey-hooded Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i>
71	Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>
72	Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
73	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
74	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
75	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
76	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
77	Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
78	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
79	African Penguin	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>
80	Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>
81	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>
82	Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>
83	Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>
84	Southern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>
85	Northern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>
86	Cape Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>
87	White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>
88	Spectacled Petrel	<i>Procellaria conspicillata</i>
89	Great Shearwater	<i>Ardenna gravis</i>
90	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>
91	Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris borealis</i>

92	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
93	Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>
94	African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
95	Long-tailed (Reed) Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>
96	Crowned Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo coronatus</i>
97	Cape Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>
98	White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>
99	Bank Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>
100	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
101	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
102	Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
103	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
104	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
105	Yellow-billed Egret	<i>Ardea brachyrhyncha</i>
106	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
107	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
108	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
109	African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
110	Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
111	African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>
112	Secretarybird	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>
113	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
114	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
115	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus parasitus</i>
116	Cape Griffon	<i>Gyps coprotheres</i>
117	Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaelagus occipitalis</i>
118	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
119	Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
120	Pale Chanting-Goshawk	<i>Melierax canorus</i>
121	African Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus ranivorus</i>
122	Black Harrier	<i>Circus maurus</i>
123	Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter rufiventris</i>
124	Black Goshawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>
125	African Fish-Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
126	Steppe Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>
127	Forest Buzzard	<i>Buteo trizonatus</i>
128	Jackal Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>
129	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
130	Spotted Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>
131	African Wood Owl	<i>Strix woodfordii</i>
132	Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>
133	White-backed Mousebird	<i>Colius colius</i>
134	Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>
135	Narina Trogon	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>
136	African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>
137	Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>

138	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon albiventris</i>
139	Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>
140	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
141	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
142	Pied Barbet	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>
143	Brown-backed Honeybird	<i>Prodotiscus regulus</i>
144	Lesser Honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>
145	Greater Honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>
146	Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Chloropicus fuscescens</i>
147	Olive Woodpecker	<i>Chloropicus griseocephalus</i>
148	Ground Woodpecker	<i>Geocolaptes olivaceus</i>
149	Knysna Woodpecker	<i>Campethera notata</i>
150	Rock Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicolus</i>
151	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
152	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
153	Grey Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina caesia</i>
154	Cape Batis	<i>Batis capensis</i>
155	Pririt Batis	<i>Batis pririt</i>
156	Southern Boubou	<i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>
157	Bokmakierie	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>
158	Olive Bushshrike	<i>Telophorus olivaceus</i>
159	Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
160	African Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher	<i>Trochocercus cyanomelas</i>
161	African Paradise-Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
162	Southern Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
163	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
164	Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
165	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
166	White-necked Raven	<i>Corvus albicollis</i>
167	Fairy Flycatcher	<i>Stenostira scita</i>
168	Southern Penduline Tit	<i>Anthoscopus minutus</i>
169	Karoo Long-billed Lark	<i>Certhilauda subcoronata</i>
170	Karoo Lark	<i>Calendulauda albescens</i>
171	Cape Clapper Lark	<i>Mirafrapa apiata</i>
172	Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
173	Large-billed Lark	<i>Galerida magnirostris</i>
174	Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
175	Cape Grassbird	<i>Sphenoeacus afer</i>
176	Victorin's Warbler	<i>Cryptillas victorini</i>
177	Yellow-bellied Eremomela	<i>Eremomela icteropygialis</i>
178	Namaqua Warbler	<i>Phragmacia substriata</i>
179	Bar-throated Apalis	<i>Apalis thoracica</i>
180	Karoo Prinia	<i>Prinia maculosa</i>
181	Cinnamon-breasted Warbler	<i>Euryptila subcinnamomea</i>
182	Rufous-eared Warbler	<i>Malcorus pectoralis</i>
183	Grey-backed Cisticola	<i>Cisticola subruficapilla</i>

184	Neddicky (Piping Cisticola)	<i>Cisticola fulvicapilla</i>
185	Levaillant's Cisticola	<i>Cisticola tinniens</i>
186	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
187	African Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>
188	Lesser Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i>
189	Little Rush-Warbler	<i>Bradypterus baboecala</i>
190	Plain (Brown-throated) Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
191	Banded Martin	<i>Riparia cincta</i>
192	Large Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>
193	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
194	White-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>
195	Pearl-breasted Swallow	<i>Hirundo dimidiata</i>
196	Greater Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis cucullata</i>
197	Black Sawwing	<i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i>
198	Sombre Greenbul	<i>Andropadus importunus</i>
199	Terrestrial Brownbul	<i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i>
200	Cape Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus capensis</i>
201	Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus ruficapilla</i>
202	Layard's Warbler	<i>Sylvia layardi</i>
203	Cape White-eye	<i>Zosterops virens</i>
204	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
205	Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>
206	Pale-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus nabouroup</i>
207	Red-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>
208	African Pied Starling	<i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i>
209	Olive Thrush	<i>Turdus olivaceus</i>
210	African Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>
211	Fiscal Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis silens</i>
212	Karoo Scrub-Robin	<i>Cercotrichas coryphoeus</i>
213	Cape Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>
214	Cape Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola rupestris</i>
215	African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
216	Sickle-winged Chat	<i>Emarginata sinuata</i>
217	Karoo Chat	<i>Emarginata schlegelii</i>
218	Mountain Wheatear	<i>Myrmecocichla monticola</i>
219	Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>
220	Familiar Chat	<i>Oenanthe familiaris</i>
221	Cape Sugarbird	<i>Promerops cafer</i>
222	Orange-breasted Sunbird	<i>Anthobaphes violacea</i>
223	Amethyst Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra amethystina</i>
224	Malachite Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia famosa</i>
225	Southern Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chalybeus</i>
226	Greater Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris afer</i>
227	Cape Weaver	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>
228	Southern Masked-Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
229	Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>

230	Southern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>
231	Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>
232	Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullata</i>
233	Swee Waxbill	<i>Coccopygia melanotis</i>
234	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
235	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
236	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
237	Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
238	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
239	Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
240	African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
241	Plain-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>
242	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
243	Forest Canary	<i>Crithagra scotops</i>
244	Brimstone Canary	<i>Crithagra sulphurata</i>
245	Yellow Canary	<i>Crithagra flaviventris</i>
246	White-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra albogularis</i>
247	Streaky-headed Seedeater	<i>Crithagra gularis</i>
248	Cape Siskin	<i>Crithagra totta</i>
249	Cape Canary	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>
250	Cape Bunting	<i>Emberiza capensis</i>

Mammals	
Chacmha Baboon	<i>Papio ursinus</i>
Cape Grey Mongoose	<i>Galerella pulverulenta</i>
Yellow Mongoose	<i>Cynictis penicillata</i>
Four-striped Field Mouse	<i>Rhabdomys pumilio</i>
Cape Golden Mole	<i>Chrysochloris asiatica</i>
Cape Dune Mole-Rat (hills)	<i>Bathyergus suillus</i>
Steenbok	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>
Springbok	<i>Antidorcas marsupialis</i>
Gemsbok	<i>Oryx gazella</i>
Klipspringer	<i>Oreotragus oreotragus</i>
Vaal Rhebok	<i>Pelea capreolus</i>
Red Forest Duiker	<i>Cephalophus natalensis</i>
Grey Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus sylvaticus</i>
Bontebok	<i>Damaliscus pygargus</i>
Cape Fur Seal	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>
Rock Hyrax	<i>Procavia capensis</i>

Odonata	
Tropical Bluetail	<i>Ischnura senegalensis</i>
Cape Julia Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum julia capicola</i>
Orange-Winged	<i>Trithemis kirbyi</i>

Dropwing	
Little Scarlet	<i>Crocothemis sanguinolenta</i>
Nomad	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>
Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>

Herps	
Mole Snake	<i>Pseudaspis cana</i>
Spotted Grass Snake	<i>Psammophylax rhombeatus</i>
Angulate Tortoise	<i>Chersina angulata</i>
Leopard Toad	<i>Amietophrynus pardalis</i>
Gutteral Toad	<i>Amietophrynus gutturalis</i>
Tree Frogs sp	<i>two species heard</i>
Cape Girdled Lizard	<i>Cordylus cordylus</i>
Southern Marsh Terrapin	<i>Pelomedusa galeata</i>
Butterflies	
Geranium Brinze sp	
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Garden Acraea	<i>Acraea horta</i>