

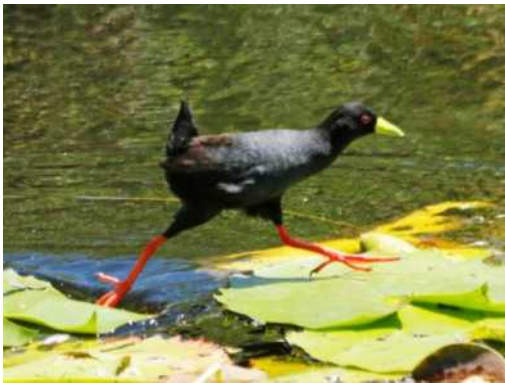
**CRANE'S CAPE TOURS
& TRAVEL**

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**South Africa's Garden Route
with Mountain Zebra and Addo Elephant National Parks
25 January – 9 February 2020**

Holiday participants

David and Steph Bennett
John and Jan Croft

Malcolm and Helen Crowder
Peter and Monica Douch

Leader Geoff Crane

www.naturalhistorytours.co.za

Holiday report by Helen Crowder and Geoff Crane.

Photos by David Bennett (DB), Geoff Crane (GC), John & Jan Croft (JC),
Malcolm & Helen Crowder (HC/MC) and Monica Douch (MD).

Cover: Top row – blue crane, South Africa's national bird; bokmakierie duet (DB).

Middle row – black crane; red hartebeests playing ring-a-ring-a-roses (JC).

Bottom row – elephants big and small; warthog (GC).

There are many more photos from the holiday on <https://photos.app.goo.gl/zRd3eSJChYpj7AcH6>

We stayed at

Bitou River Lodge www.bitou.co.za

Mountain Zebra National Park www.sanparks.org/parks/mountain_zebra

Addo Elephant National Park www.sanparks.org/parks/addo/camps/addo



The 'A' Team by the the King Edward VII tree in Diepvalle Forest (GC).

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contributions this year of £40 per person were supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust and Geoff Crane sent a matching donation giving a total of £780, about 14,500 rands, sent to the second Southern African Bird Atlas Project. SABAP2 is an intensive monitoring programme undertaken in South Africa and adjacent countries.

Up to the end of February 2020, the total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £134,842.

DAILY DIARY

Saturday 25 / Sunday 26 January

London to Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and onward to Plettenberg Bay

Our group of eight met up in the surprisingly quiet Terminal 2 at Heathrow for the overnight SAA flight to Johannesburg, which was on time and less than full so some of us had the benefit of more than one seat! We had almost four hours at Jo'burg before the onward flight to Port Elizabeth – crucial 'wriggle time' if airport procedures are running slow – so we did a little birdwatching from the empty departure lounge and noted common mynah, Cape wagtail, Cape sparrow, white-rumped swifts, Hadedra ibis, weavers and a distant Lanner falcon, possibly introduced as a deterrent for birds on the runways.

Geoff met us at Port Elizabeth and took us to a nearby coffee shop for refreshments, then we set off south towards the forests of the Garden Route. It was a long drive so we didn't stop but we did see white storks, cattle egrets, steppe buzzards and chacma baboons along the way. We also saw beautiful neon orange watsonias growing at the side of the road, *Watsonia pillansii*. As we arrived in the more forested area there were banks of *Watsonia galpinii* between the road and the forests and blue plumbago scrambled over fences. It started to drizzle so it was decided to give the Big Tree Nature Reserve a miss.

We were welcomed at the Bitou River Lodge by Sue and the family of four blue cranes in the horse paddocks. Coffee, tea and biscuits out on the decking followed, while we luxuriated in the surroundings. The sun was now shining and there were reed cormorants, yellow-billed ducks, kelp gulls and common moorhens on the grassy-banked river in front of us, and over our heads a flowering vine attracted sunbirds. A mixed flock of swifts and swallows were flying around and we had to tear ourselves away in order to unpack and settle in to our well-appointed, spacious rooms. Dinner was at the LM restaurant in Plettenberg Bay where line fish (cob) was a popular choice.

Monday 27 January – birdwatching walk, river boat trip and canoeing

The day dawned sunny and calm, and some of us had explored the immediate garden area and were gathered down by the river's edge before breakfast. We watched and listened to a sombre greenbul, a vocal species ('Willie, come out and fight, you're scared!'). Easy to see Knysna turacos definitely had the 'wow' factor and there were iridescent black-bellied starlings, African paradise flycatcher, forest canary, and on the river a fleeting little bittern and a black crane.



Knysna turaco, greater double-collared sunbird displaying a yellow shoulder patch, indicating he's in breeding condition, and African paradise flycatcher, some of the fabulous birds in the garden at Bitou River Lodge (DB).

Breakfast at Bitou, a gastronomic delight every day, included cereals, fruit, an imaginative selection of hot dishes and delicious muffins! Afterwards we went for an orientation walk around the garden. The blue cranes were in the paddock and so was an African hoopoe. Cape turtle doves urged us to 'work harder'. Sunbirds visited the thoughtfully-placed sugar feeder and the bird table attracted many other species. African monarch and meadow white butterflies flitted about the meadow and there were foam grasshoppers by the dozen. On the reeds by the river was a phantom flutterer dragonfly, surely out of its range?

We were booked for a three-hour boat trip on the Keurbooms River, and it was a leisurely affair! We just sat back and enjoyed the slow pace. A Caspian tern and a jackal buzzard flew over as we waited to take our seats on Russell's boat and a purple heron was standing at the tea-coloured water's edge as we entered the river proper. African olive-pigeon, white-breasted cormorant and half-collared kingfisher were among the birds seen from the boat and on our short walk in the indigenous forest we noted a beautiful small forest iris, a smoky orange-tip butterfly, had good views of an African dusky flycatcher, and somehow a Cape crawler scorpion had found its way into Geoff's camera bag!



The day had a watery theme, thankfully from below, not above (but, dear reader, read on...) Above: boat trip on the Keurbooms river (DB). Below: canoeing at Bitou (MC).



We had a late lunch at Old Nick's, checking out the designer boutique (too expensive) before heading back to the lodge, stopping on the way at the neighbouring wetland area where we identified ringed plover, Kittlitz's plover, three-banded plover, marsh sandpiper, black-winged stilt and blacksmith lapwing. Back at base we launched the canoes onto the river and set off, upstream and downstream, flanked by waterlilies and reeds festooned with weavers' nests. There was a very close encounter with a malachite kingfisher for some, who got to within a metre of the perched bird, and a small arum lily frog hitched a ride on their bow. 24 hours into the trip and we had seen 71 bird species!

Dinner this evening was at a new place in Plettenberg Bay, the Nguni Restaurant.

Tuesday 28 January – Nature's Valley and Robberg peninsula

Another warm and sunny day. We gathered before breakfast by the river, seeing many of the birds already noted in the lodge gardens. A calling, red-eyed dove identified itself ('I am a red-eyed dove') and the unmistakable fluty notes of a black-headed oriole announced its presence. There were passion-fruit muffins with breakfast this morning!

Our first stop was Nature's Valley and some forest birding. From the minibus on the way we spotted a jackal buzzard on a telegraph pole, giant kingfisher on the wire, sanderling at the local wetland spot, little egret, African darter, grey heron, and lastly a bushbuck grazing by the forest edge. Unfortunately, there was a woman walking her dogs off the lead, which didn't help with seeing any of the shy forest wildlife, although we did manage a few forest birds: terrestrial brownbul, Cape white-eye, fork-tailed drongo and a fleeting glimpse of a lemon dove as it shot out from under our feet. We watched dragonflies and a large raucous toad from the Groot River Bridge as well as a forest mocker swallowtail, brown-veined white and plenty of African monarch butterflies. We had a short walk on the fine white sand of the beach to gaze at the calm, blue Indian Ocean.



The diminutive Cape white-eye and *Protea longifolia* (DB). Sticky *Erica versicolor* (HC).

Moving onwards and upwards we stopped at an area of well-established fynbos, seeing three different protea species, ericas and other fynbos plants, together with orange-breasted sunbird and southern double-collard sunbird.

A coffee and late lunch at Thyme & Again was followed by a short rest at the lodge before setting off to the Robberg peninsula. Here the views were spectacular and the cobbled up-and-down path a little bit challenging – it wouldn't do to be attempting this walk in a gale! There were no whales in the bay but a southern rock agama was seen well, a southern tchagra foraged in the undergrowth on the vertiginous side and we noted red-winged starlings, rock kestrels and white-necked ravens. A boardwalk led steeply down to the beach. It would perhaps have been foolish to follow it all the way down, and anyway time was getting short. Back at the car park barbecues were being set up in the time-honoured fashion: men grouped around the grill, ladies enjoying a drink at the table!



View from the Robberg peninsula showing the boardwalk leading to the beach (DB) and a sketch by Monica who had decided not to do the walk.

We had a quick turnaround at the lodge followed by dinner at Ghillies Grill in Plettenberg Bay.

Wednesday 29 January – Garden Route forests and Knysna Lagoon

Relaxed birdwatching, coffee and tea in warm sunshine by the river before breakfast. We managed to see a few new birds; Cape bulbul, Cape robin-chat and a house sparrow looking for bird table leftovers. In the dining room Sue carried in a sparkling muffin to mark Pete's birthday, and we'd all signed a card.

After breakfast we drove to the Diepvalle Forest area, passing through a vibrant area of improvised housing followed by a very bumpy forest track ('Did you have scrambled egg for breakfast? You have now!'). Arriving at the forestry station we availed ourselves of the somewhat distant facilities and then walked back down the track edged with many species of fern. We stopped to listen to the giant forest cicadas, then spotted one on a tree trunk, nicely camouflaged among the lichens. In the forest a short walk took us to the Big Tree. This ancient yellow-wood, said to be more than 600 years old and 40 metres high, was named the King Edward VII tree in 1924 by a delegation of the British Parliamentary Association. Edward VII was not the British monarch at that time, he died in 1910, so the reference was possibly a dig at his ample girth. The time exposure on Geoff's camera ensured that we were all included in the group photo taken in front of the tree.

Retracing our route along the bumpy forest track we drove through to Knysna Lagoon where we took photos at the viewpoint at the Knysna Heads. African black oystercatchers were on the rocks below and a Cape fur seal was playing in the surf. Lunch was at the Knysna Quays Waterfront where we had fun studying Brownian motion (the movement of particles in a fluid) as Monica poured espresso into Pete's latte and the layers separated. For the thirsty, this phenomenon can also be observed in rock shandy and tequila sunrise.



Recreational physics (DB).

After a little exploration of the craft shops and liberating the 'living statue' for at least half a minute, we moved a short distance on to the Garden of Eden forest. A circular boardwalk took us through the native vegetation and over streams, with trees helpfully labelled and several interpretation boards. Fungi, a rain spider nest, a kite spider in a web and an unidentified frog particularly caught our eye, and there were several species of moth in the loos!

This evening we watched the sun setting over the ocean while having a very enjoyable dinner at Enrico's beachfront restaurant in Keurboomstrand.

Thursday 30 January – local walk and the Birds of Eden

Another pleasantly hot and sunny day. After breakfast we had a thorough exploration of the Lodge's extensive grounds. We had great views of half a dozen Knysna turacos; brightly coloured green and blue with crimson wings in flight and white-lined, red-ringed eyes, they were mostly busy eating berries in the trees. A gleamingly green Klaas's cuckoo put in an appearance and was attracted to the tree by the dining room, near the sugar feeder. Klaas's is known to parasitise the nests of southern double-collared sunbirds so perhaps the tree wasn't all that caught its attention. A pair of African paradise flycatchers were feeding young and showing well. We also saw laughing dove, great egret and brimstone canary.



Malachite kingfisher (GC), foam grasshopper (JC); and jaunt dropping, *Trithemis stictica* (DB) in and around the garden at Bitou River Lodge.

Along the driveway, speckled mousebirds flitted from bush to bush. Two Amur falcons, previously known as Eastern red-footed falcons, perched on wires above the meadow while two Cape longclaws foraged in the grass below. Black-collared barbet, fiscal shrikes with young, spotted flycatcher and white-rumped swift were new for our bird count.

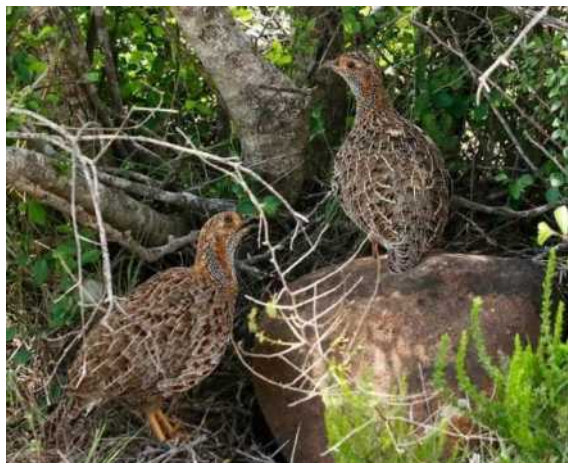
We decided to spend the afternoon at the Birds of Eden. This massive free-flight aviary is home to many native African species as well as exotics. Its mesh dome encapsulates 5.7 acres of native forest and spans a gorge. Walkways at several different levels, interspersed with feeding stations, allow visitors to see the birds very well, in naturalistic surroundings. Being 'Eden' everyone wants to be there ... There was a troop of baboons trying to get in on the ground level, a yellow-billed kite trying from above and a striped mouse which had succeeded! We had lunch in the café and then everyone strolled leisurely back to the main entrance, marvelling at non-native scarlet ibises, native crowned cranes, many species of waterfowl and others too numerous to mention. Those who had bought the identification guide had fun sorting them all out. Despite having had some initial doubts, this was way beyond the concept of 'aviary' and we agreed it had been a very worthwhile visit.

As it had become rather hot we headed to Plettenberg Bay for ice-creams. In the evening we paid a second visit to Enrico's where we watched the sunset again and had another enjoyable dinner.

Friday 31 January – Garden Route to Mountain Zebra National Park via Graaff-Reinet

We savoured our last breakfast at the Lodge then loaded up the vehicle and headed over the Prince Alfred's Pass to Uniondale. It was hot and sunny and progress was slow at times as the dirt road was quite bad in places, but the indigenous forests and views over the mountains were worth it. On the way we stopped for good views of a jackal buzzard and for a leg stretch with tea, coffee and cake in Uniondale, where the only bird out in the hot sun was a rock dove - aka feral pigeon.

We then drove through the flat Karoo landscape, past the dry Nqweba Dam and through Graaff-Reinet, the fourth oldest town in South Africa, to the spookily-named Valley of Desolation in Camdeboo National Park, where we had our picnic lunch. There were two grey-winged francolins near the picnic table and a neddicky called from the mountainside. It was cooler here and we made a quick hike up to the viewpoint to see the spectacular vertical cliffs and columns of dolerite, high above the valley floor, products of erosion and volcanic forces over thousands of millions of years. Below and beyond lay the Camdeboo plains. Big rain clouds and thunder threatened to give us a soaking and pairs of white-necked ravens were enjoying the winds and thermals as we departed.



Grey-winged francolins near the picnic table and the view from the top of the Valley of Desolation (JC).

Namaqua doves and pied starlings were common on the roadside fences and on reaching Mountain Zebra National Park we started seeing African ostriches and Cape mountain zebras. We had crossed into the Eastern Cape and were now in Karoo heartland: mountains, plains and lots of space. We checked into our bungalows and enjoyed our first dinner in the camp restaurant.

Saturday 1 February – full day at Mountain Zebra NP

The National Park's main objective is to provide a sanctuary for the endangered Cape mountain zebra, a species threatened with extinction in the 1930s. Thanks to successful management the Park's herd has now increased considerably, enabling some zebras to be relocated each year.



Mountain zebra (HC). Stripes are narrow, with no shadow stripes, bellies are white and face has an orange tinge.



Burchell's zebra (from Addo, DB). Wider stripes which go right round the belly, with paler shadow stripes between.

Our day started at first light (05.30) for a pre breakfast game drive around the Ubejane Loop. It had been raining during the night, which was the signal for termites to fly, and these were being predated by birds throughout the day. We were entertained by a troupe of vervet monkeys going about their morning routine.

The alpha male with his blue 'accessories' was leading and the young ones were enjoying swinging from the branches and basically just being kids. Mongooses were also going about their business and the rain-softened ground made it easy for them to dig out grubs.



Playful young vervet monkeys and black wildebeest or gnu (DB).
The 'g' was silent, as in other 'gn' words, until that song by Flanders & Swann!

We drove out of the park and into the nearby town of Cradock for an excellent choice of breakfast dishes at The Shed, a typical Karoo style coffee shop and restaurant. Back in the park again we stopped to admire a beautiful sore-eye flower (as in 'a sight for sore eyes') *Ammocharis coranica*, also known as the Karoo lily. We did another game drive, this time up on the escarpment along the link road. Black-backed jackal, blesbok, red hartebeest, kudu, black wildebeest, Cape mountain zebra and springbok were the larger mammals seen and we spent time watching the smaller ones too; ground squirrel, yellow mongoose, suricate and small grey mongoose. A large leopard tortoise was drinking from a puddle of water by the side of the track and there was one small muddy island in a large water-filled dam that had a couple of dozen marsh terrapins on it.



Ammocharis coranica flourishing after summer rains (DB).

Lunch was at the camp restaurant followed by some 'down time' during the heat of the day. By the time we were ready for a late afternoon game drive, dark clouds were beginning to roll in, to the sound of thunder. We drove the Rooiplaat Loop road seeing many of the mammals noted this morning but in beautiful late afternoon light.



Lions raiding a porcupine den and Verreaux's eagles (DB).

In the distance, Jan's sharp eyes spotted lions! Five lions were fixated on a hole, and we could just make out an adult porcupine with young but the latter, unfortunately, was firmly in the jaws of one of the lions. They had obviously raided a porcupine den which the adult porcupine was trying its best to defend. Sadly they cannot shoot their quills like arrows, nor is prickly armour absolute protection against big cats.

Lightning was providing a dramatic light-show, and after we left the scene of the porcupine massacre two Verreaux's eagles drifted over the ridge from behind the vehicle and off into the distance.

Sunday 2 February – full day at Mountain Zebra NP

Up even earlier this morning. At 05.00 we were all ready for our 4x4 game drive. Yesterday's thunderstorm had resulted in a fall of moths; they seemed to be everywhere, the most spectacular being a large southern marbled emperor, *Heniocha apollonia*. It was still pitch dark so Richard, our guide and driver, used a spotlight to find a few nocturnal creatures. A nightjar (probably fiery-necked) was flushed from in front of the vehicle, there were a few scrub hares, a black-backed jackal, and as the morning light brightened we saw a lone gemsbok and a large eland bull with a huge dewlap. The vehicle ground its way via a series of 4x4 trails up to the top of a koppie where we stopped to enjoy hot drinks and rusks, stretch our legs and watch the rising sun.



Southern marbled emperor (JC).

By 8 o'clock we were back at base, with time to freshen up before breakfast in the camp restaurant. Afterwards we set off in the minibus for another drive, up the valley a little bit and then back up onto the escarpment. We saw a few new birds; Karoo lark, Karoo scrub-robin, streaky-headed seedeater, Cape bunting and cinnamon-breasted bunting. The view of the surrounding landscape was huge, with bright stormy skies all the way to the far horizon. We were entertained by a displaying Cape clapper lark, wing-clapping on the upward trajectory then parachuting down while whistling an ascending note! A big rock monitor lizard hugged a tree trunk and a family of ground squirrels were at attention by their burrow.



Rock monitor and ground squirrels (JC); greater striped swallow with nest material (DB).

We were keeping one step ahead of an approaching thunderstorm, with spectacular lightning and thunder, and decided that staying on top of an exposed hillside was not a good place to be so we retreated to camp for a picnic lunch and a cold beer. After lunch we had some time to relax and during this time it poured with rain. By late afternoon the rain had stopped and we had a short walk around the camp. We watched a bar-throated apalis building a nest and also a pair of striped swallows building their mud nest. A large flock of mixed swifts and swallows, high up in the sky, were hawking flying ants and rock hyrax watched us from its cliff-top vantage point.

Monday 3 February – Mountain Zebra NP to Addo Elephant NP

With the vehicle loaded up at 07.00 we set off for the exit gate via a circuitous route. Rain had eroded the tracks quite badly in places. A yellow mongoose dug up and ate various grubs: one appeared to be a giant African millipede. A pale chanting goshawk sunned itself on a treetop and a pin-tailed whydah posed obligingly. Just before the gate a large herd of Cape buffalos made their way towards a pond, and we watched them wading and bathing for a while. We had another substantial breakfast at The Shed, marking Helen's birthday with carrot cake and a card.

The drive through to Addo, was quiet, with only a few notable distractions: a martial eagle soaring over the road and a Denham's bustard in a field. We arrived at about midday and looked through the interpretive centre and at the main waterhole, which was empty and it was very hot by now. We retreated to the restaurant for lunch before checking into our air-conditioned cottages. Later in the afternoon we had our first drive around the park, seeing elephant, warthog, Burchell's zebra and a small angulate tortoise, all new for us. We saw a herd of red hartebeest, a few large leopard tortoises, black-backed jackal and the ever-present yellow mongoose. There was a little grebe on the dam and a hamerkop on a smaller pool. Southern black korhaan, bokmakierie and red-eyed bulbul were some of the birds seen on this short drive. Dinner was in the main camp restaurant.

Tuesday 4 February – Addo Elephant NP

The park was set up in 1931 to protect the few remaining elephants in the Eastern Cape. There are now over 600 in the expanded reserve as well as many other large mammals. We started out at 06:30 into the game area. It was quite misty first thing but the air soon cleared and the day became hot. We spent an entertaining time watching a flightless dung beetle trying to roll a dungball up and over the sloping, sandy side of the road – it must have seemed like a mountain. We assumed it was the upended male doing the hard work with his back legs and the nearby female, whose egg would be inside the ball, egging him on, as it were. Time and time again the incline proved overwhelming and both ball and beetle rolled ever farther back. We had to move on before knowing if the embryonic next generation reached safety.

We heard the 'bok bok bok' call of a bokmakierie bushshrike, and then there were two of them in concert, duetting from a bush (photo on cover). A delightful sight and a composition for two voices, which gives the species its onomatopoeic name.

After breakfast we had a short drive, with temperatures now in the high 30s. We watched a small herd of red hartebeest behaving strangely, running around and around a small bush, each trying to horn the one in front! (photo on cover). We also saw elephants disappearing into the thick Addo bush and a pair of South African shelducks on a small waterhole. After a midday rest back at base we had a picnic lunch and then went out again on a game drive in the late afternoon.

Carol's Rest, a viewpoint that overlooks the park, was our destination this time. We stopped to photograph an impressive bull elephant and at the top we came across a big old bull Cape buffalo. An approaching thunderstorm was setting everything off! The Burchell's zebras were fighting and kicking, two big warthogs were having a go at each other, even the spotted thick-knees were squabbling! We had just left the waterhole when we got a tip-off about some lions approaching... We reversed all the way back to the open area by the waterhole and just as we arrived a lion, followed by a lioness with a collar (to allow tracking, so she was probably a relatively recent introduction) came out of the bushes into the open. We spent the next half hour watching them drink. We would have loved to stay longer but needed to get back to camp before the gates closed – we made it by two minutes!



There was lots of activity at the waterhole, and then the lions arrived! (JC)

Wednesday 5 February – Addo Elephant NP

It was hot yesterday morning so we decided to go out at 05:30 today for our pre-breakfast game drive. The plan was to drive up to the Zuurkop lookout point and then to continue through the park all the way past the Marion Barea Waterhole and then south to the Colchester section. We had some great sightings of



Trying to keep cool (DB).

elephants along the way. At one waterhole the herd was tightly packed together to afford some shade and protection to a very young individual. At another waterhole the entire elephant herd had been rolling and spraying mud to such an extent that there was not a single square inch of dry skin to be seen! Rain had wiped yesterday's imprints off the dirt road, so it was like a new canvas: we were on the trail of a black rhino. We could see footprints in the damp earth and there were a few piles of steaming poo ... so we couldn't have been too far behind. We also saw leopard footprints and at one point a large tortoise had made a run across the road. There were many other tracks and trails, all telling of nocturnal adventures!

We left the park and had a hearty breakfast at the Nyanga Farmstall, stocking up on provisions in the shop. On the drive back there were hundreds of meadow white butterflies fluttering across the road on their short migration, it looked like it was snowing!

After an afternoon rest we went for a birdwatching walk around the camp until the rain set in, making us run for the restaurant where staff were hastily unfurling the side awnings. Thunder and lightning provided a touch of drama to our meal.

Thursday 6 February – Addo Elephant NP

We started out at 06.00 in overcast and wet weather and drove to the Carol's Rest area where we'd seen the lions, more in hope than expectation, conditions were hardly favourable. When the rain did abate it was a sign for termites to emerge, and these were being predated by a flock of pied starlings which all at once took flight and gave us a mini murmuration. A large spotted hyena came out of the bushes and strolled nonchalantly between half a dozen Denham's bustards, which were probably aware of the danger but didn't seem unduly concerned. We were very aware of the hyena as it padded right past our vehicle!



Denham's bustard, showing the striped crown and pale grey foreneck that separates it from Ludwig's (DB); the prowling hyena (JC); and an African olive-pigeon, or rameron, in the rain (GC).

Breakfast back at camp and then out into the park again, where we watched two large herds of wet elephants, there must have been close on 60 altogether. Two young males were having a tussle, with no obvious outcome. A red hartebeest with a newborn calf made off into cover, hopefully to safety.

At lunchtime it was still raining so Geoff made us a picnic and hot soup, a blend of various flavours, very tasty and just what was required. We then had some time to relax. At 4:30 we drove up to the Zuurkop lookout spot and then slowly around the Mbabala Loop, still on the lookout for lions. Alas, it was a wild lion chase! The rain had brought out many panther agate snails, as big as your hand, and giant African millipedes were everywhere. Some rather erratic steering was required to prevent carnage. Dinner tonight was in the cosier part of the restaurant.

Friday 7 February – Addo Elephant NP

Our last full day, starting at 05:30. By common consent we headed for Carol's Rest again, seeing a couple of old male Cape buffalos, a few Denham's bustards and a perched black-shouldered kite. We backed-up to photograph a sleepy black-backed jackal curled up under some bushes. It had obviously had a hard night and was too tired to take much notice of us. We made a small detour towards Gwarrie Pan and from a rise in the road could make out a black rhino and then a calf, standing in a small clearing surrounded by the thick Addo bush, and the calf was actually suckling. Geoff said it was three years since he had seen a black rhino in the park, so this was a very rewarding sighting.

Just before arriving back for breakfast we had very good views of a red-legged francolin pecking at low-growing vegetation from the damp ground.



Black rhino (GC).

After breakfast we went for a walk around the nature trail within the perimeter fence of the main camp. We had good views of several birds and quite a few insects: fast-moving ground beetles, tok-tokkies (Tenebrionid beetles), endemic Addo flightless dung beetles, spider-hunting wasps and a rain spider nest. On this trail a lot of the bushes and plants were labelled, which made identification easy.



Sleepy black-backed jackal (GC) and red-legged francolin (JC).

At lunchtime the restaurant and camp shop were full of cruise-ship tourists buying springbok-skin handbags and drinking coffee, so we had a picnic lunch back on Geoff's stoep again, with a particularly bold, broken-legged Cape weaver enjoying a few crumbs. There were extensive views over the perimeter fence and across the park to the main waterhole. As we fed on our side of the fence, kudu and warthog fed on theirs.

After lunch, with threatening skies, we went out on a drive with the intention of returning when it started raining, which held off until 16:30. We headed towards the main Hapoor waterhole via Lendlovu Pan, Rooidam, and Gwarrie Pan and came across a herd of Cape buffalos, some of which were having a mud wallow, and a group of young kudus which were leaping and tearing around after each other just below a ridge and demonstrating just how sure-footed they are. A spotted hyena skulked its way through the thicker vegetation and black-backed jackals, suricates and yellow mongooses were seen. There were lots of birds at the waterhole but none were new to us.



Male kudu (JC), gemsbok with attendant red-billed oxpecker, and red hartebeest with newborn calf (DB). Both sexes of gemsbok and hartebeests have horns.

Back at base we started packing. We had our final dinner in the restaurant, at the same table as last night, during which everyone was asked for some of their holiday highlights (on reflection there are probably many more) and these were as follows:-

Canoeing, with malachite kingfisher so close; the gardens, river and wildlife at Bitou and especially the hospitality there; Knysna turacos; Birds of Eden; seeing the Big Tree and all the ferns; fynbos; zebras as we entered Mountain Zebra NP and buffalos in the pond as we left; bokmakierie duet; two lions drinking and zebras and warthogs playing up at Carol's Rest, baby elephant being booted back into the circle of adults; elephants in the rain; lions with porcupine; black rhino; Cape clapper lark displaying, dung beetles dismaying! And there were special thanks to Geoff for making sure everyone had a good angle for photographs.

Saturday 8 February – homeward bound

We had breakfast at 07.00, packed up the vehicle and headed out all the way past the Marion Barea waterhole and then south to the Colchester section, with some great views of elephants enjoying a muddy waterhole. The grassy plains in the southern section of the park were alive with game. Eland, ostrich, warthogs and kudu were seen and there were good numbers of red hartebeest and Burchell's zebra. Also plenty of elephants, including a couple of bull elephants with obvious intentions of their own!

It was an uneventful drive to Port Elizabeth but we did see greater flamingos and grey-headed gulls on the way, final additions to the bird list. We had a café lunch just around the corner from the airport and soon afterwards group and leader had to part company.

On arriving back at Heathrow the next morning we met with the full force of storm Ciara!

WILDLIFE LISTS – BIRDS

Little grebe	Cape gannet	Cape cormorant
White-breasted cormorant	Reed cormorant	African darter
Purple heron	Grey heron	Black-headed heron
Great egret	Little egret	Cattle egret
Little bittern	White stork	Greater flamingo
African spoonbill	Hamerkop	Haded ibis
African sacred ibis	Spur-winged goose	Egyptian goose
South African shelduck	Yellow-billed duck	African black duck
Cape teal	Red-billed teal	Verreaux's eagle
Martial eagle	Booted eagle	Jackal buzzard
Steppe buzzard	Forest buzzard	Pale chanting goshawk
Yellow-billed kite	Black-shouldered kite	Amur falcon
Rock kestrel	Red-necked spurfowl	Grey-winged francolin
Helmeted guineafowl	Common ostrich	Red-knobbed coot
Common moorhen	Black crane	Blue crane
Denham's bustard	Southern black korhaan	African black oystercatcher
Black-winged stilt	Ringed plover	Three-banded plover
Kittlitz's plover	Crowned lapwing	Blacksmith plover
Grey plover	Sanderling	Common sandpiper
Marsh sandpiper	Whimbrel	Spotted thick-knee
Kelp gull	Common tern	Caspian tern
Grey-headed gull	Speckled pigeon	African olive-pigeon (Rameron)
Lemon dove	Rock dove (feral pigeon)	Red-eyed dove
Cape turtle-dove	Laughing dove	Namaqua dove
Knysna turaco	Klaas's cuckoo	Fiery-necked nightjar (probably)
African black swift	Horus swift	Little swift
White-rumped swift	Red-faced mousebird	Speckled mousebird
Giant kingfisher	Half-collared kingfisher	Pied kingfisher
Malachite kingfisher	African hoopoe	Black-collared barbet
Olive woodpecker	Cape clapper lark	Karoo lark
Rufous-naped lark	Red-capped lark	Eastern long-billed lark
Greater striped swallow	Lesser striped swallow	Barn swallow
White-throated swallow	Pearl-breasted swallow	Brown-throated martin
Rock martin	Black saw-wing	Fork-tailed drongo
Black-headed oriole	White-necked raven	Pied crow
Cape (black) crow	Cape bulbul	African red-eyed bulbul
Terrestrial brownbul	Sombre greenbul	Dark-capped bulbul
Olive thrush	Familiar chat	Ant-eating chat
Cape robin-chat	Karoo scrub-robin	Chestnut-vented titbabbler
Yellow-throated woodland-warbler	Little rush-warbler	Bar-throated apalis
Neddicky	Karoo prinia	African dusky flycatcher
Spotted flycatcher	Fiscal flycatcher	African paradise flycatcher
Cape white-eye	Cape batis	Cape wagtail
African pipit	Plain-backed pipit	Buffy pipit
Cape longclaw	Common fiscal	Southern boubou
Southern tchagra	Bokmakierie	Black-backed puffback
Cape glossy starling	Black-bellied starling	Red-winged starling
Common (European) starling	African pied starling	Red-billed oxpecker
Malachite sunbird	Orange-breasted sunbird	Amethyst sunbird
Greater double-collared sunbird	Southern (lesser) double-collared sunbird	House sparrow
Cape sparrow	Southern grey-headed sparrow	White-browed sparrow-weaver
Southern masked weaver	Village weaver	Cape weaver
Red-billed quelea	Southern red bishop	Pin-tailed whydah
Scaly-feathered finch	Brimstone canary	Streaky-headed seedeater
Forest canary	Cinnamon-breasted bunting	Cape bunting

MAMMALS

Chacma baboon	Bat sp.	Blesbok	Cape buffalo
Bushbuck	Rock hyrax	Eland	Elephant
Gemsbok	Scrub hare	Red hartebeest	Lion
Spotted hyena	Black-backed jackal	Kudu	Striped mouse
Small grey mongoose	Yellow mongoose	Vervet monkey	Springbok
Porcupine	Karoo rat	Black rhinoceros	Warthog
Ground squirrel	Steenbok	Suricate	Cape fur seal
Black wildebeest	Burchell's zebra	Cape mountain zebra	

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Southern rock agama	Ground agama	Gecko sp.	Arum lily frog
Cape girdled lizard	Rock monitor	Western three-striped skink	Raucous toad
Marsh terrapin	Angulate tortoise	Leopard tortoise	

INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES

BUTTERFLIES	ODONATA	OTHERS
African monarch	Phantom flutterer	Foam grasshopper
Garden acraea	Highland spreadwing	Flightless dung beetle
Common dotted border	Tropical bluetail	Ground beetle
Citrus swallowtail	Jaunty dropwing	Rain spider (nest)
Mocker swallowtail	Red-veined dropwing	Kite spider
Smoky orange-tip	Julia skimmer	Spider-hunting wasp
Brown-veined white		
Meadow white		

PLANTS

(This list is very incomplete and a work in progress.)

In the fynbos

Sugarbush protea *Protea repens*
 Sunshine conebrush *Leucadendron salignum*
 Elegant restio *Elegia racemosa*
 Sticky erica *Erica versicolor*
 Common heath *Erica sparsa*
 Black bearded protea *Protea neriifolia*

Blombos *Metalsia muricata*
 Dune salvia *Salvia aurea*
 White sugarbush *Protea mundii*
 Blombiesie *Bobartia robusta*
 Wild lobelia *Lobelia linearis*

On Robberg peninsula

Pigs ear *Cotyledon orbiculata*
 Sour fig *Carpobrotus deliciosus*
 Seeplakkie *Scaevola plumieri*
 Krantz aloe *Aloe arborescens*
 Dune guarri *Euclea racemosa*

Kudukos *Haworthia viscosa*
 Blur lily *Agapanthus praecox*
 Klipblom *Crassula orbicularis*
 Kanniedood *Gasteria brachyphylla*

BELOW ARE SOME OF THE OTHER PLANTS IDENTIFIED



Small forest iris
Dietes iridoides
in the forest on 27/1.
(MD)



Paintbrush lily
Haemanthus sanguineus
in the forest on 27/1 and
at Addo. (MD)



Strap-leaved bulbine
Bulbine narcissifolia
abundant in light soils
at Addo. (HC)



Karoo boer-bean
Schotia afra
a legume, this one was
bearing big pods,
at Addo. (GC)