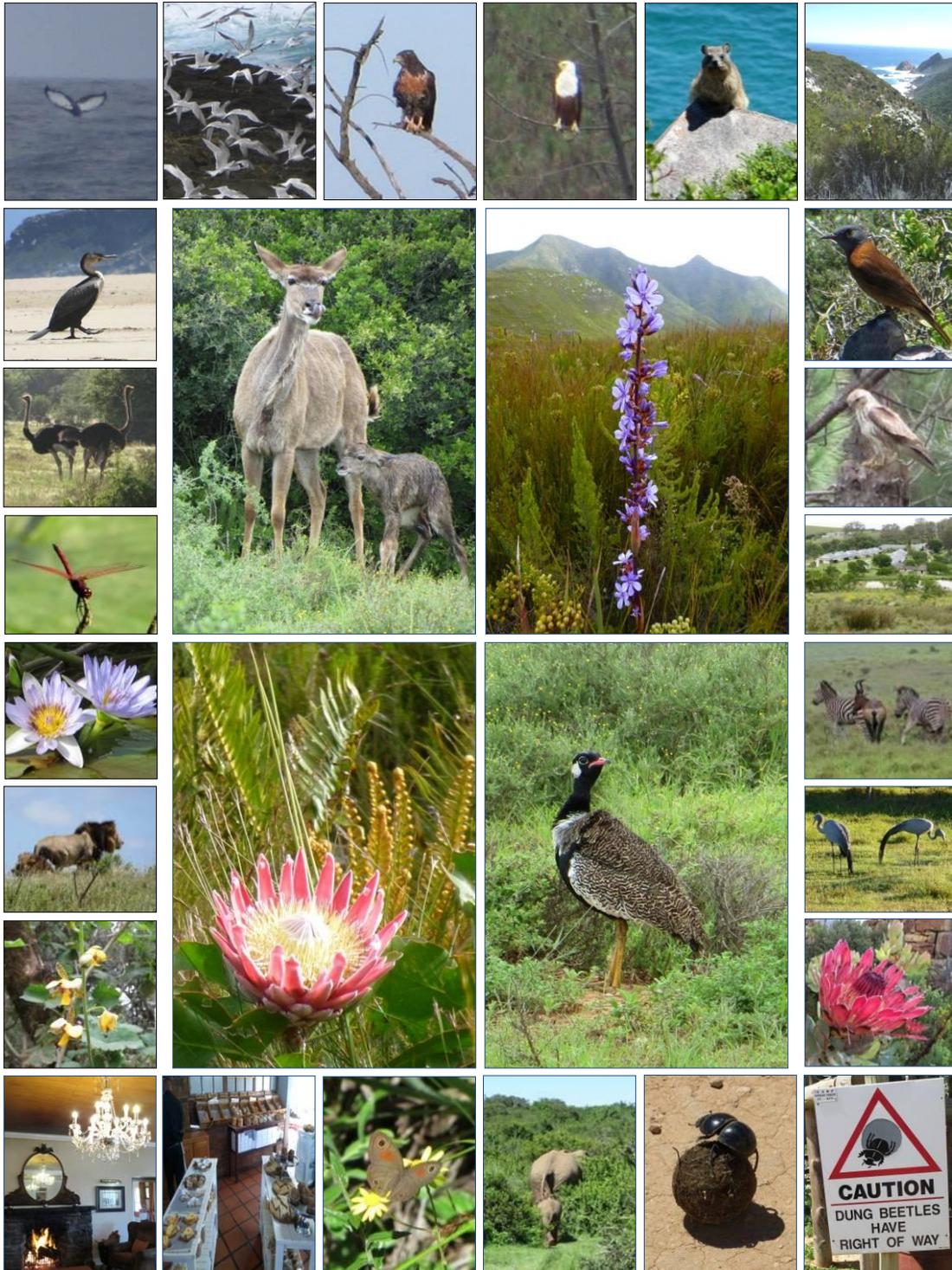


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**South Africa's Garden Route
 and Addo Elephant National Park
 15 – 28 November 2013**

Holiday participants

Brennan and Karin Aunger
Barbara Wheeler
Peter and Elonwy Crook
Marie Watt
Jenny Loring

Leader

Geoff Crane

Daily diary by Geoff Crane and Jenny Loring.

Lists by Geoff Crane.

All the photos in this report were taken during the holiday.

those edged blue by Brennan and Karin Aunger and edged green by Jenny Loring.

There are more of Brennan's photos on

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.601873166517227.1073741831.100000836465833&type=1&l=2627c2b3cd>

Cover compilation by Jenny Loring. Clockwise from top left – humpback whale fluke; terns; jackal buzzard; fish eagle; rock hyrax; Cape rock thrush; forest buzzard; Zuurberg Inn village; Burchell's zebra and red hartebeest; blue cranes; *Protea exima*; Addo right of way; flightless dung beetle; gentle giants; rainforest brown; Old Nick's bakery; Zuurberg Inn; mystery orchid; lions; blue waterlily; red damselfly; ostriches; white-chested cormorant. Centre – mother and newborn kudu; *Aristea confusa*; northern black koraan; king protea.

The group stayed at Bitou River Lodge www.bitou.co.za
and Zuurberg Mountain Village (pictured below, with pincushion protea) www.addo.co.za



As with all Honeyguide holidays, £40 of the price per person was put towards a conservation project in the host country. In this case, £350 (including Gift Aid) from the Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd. was donated to the SABAP2 project (<http://sabap2.adu.org.za/index.php>). This is updating the first Southern African Bird Atlas Project which ran from 1987-1991 and culminated in the publication in 1997 of two volumes on the distribution and relative abundance of southern African birds. Our contribution will be used to atlas areas that no-one has yet been to.

In addition, Geoff Crane has donated R2500 (= c £145) on behalf of Crane's Cape Tours & Travel and Honeyguide to MammalMap (<http://mammalmap.adu.org.za/>) which is seeking to map mammals, throughout Africa, much as SABAP2 is doing for birds in South Africa.

These donations bring the total given through Honeyguide in Africa to £4,045, and the total of all conservations contributions made through Honeyguide since 1991 to £91,365 by the end of 2013.

DAILY DIARY

Day 1, Friday 15 November 2013

Port Elizabeth to Plettenberg Bay & the forests of the Garden Route

The group, having travelled from the UK and Germany, met at the Johannesburg transfer and arrived at Port Elizabeth more or less on time ... and started birding on touchdown. Cape Wagtail, European Starling and Hadeda Ibis were seen at the airport. After loading the minibus we drove round the corner to a coffee shop for a quick but pleasant lunch of fresh local produce. Returning to the minibus we noticed an Egyptian Slit-faced Bat wedged into the front grille of the vehicle. It was a casualty of the evening drive from Cape Town and unfortunately it had died, but was celebrated in photographs by the group and local people.



Plettenberg Bay.

Heading east towards Plettenberg Bay, we stopped by a flooded field where we spotted plenty of Black-winged Stilts, Egyptian Geese, Yellow-billed Ducks with ducklings and Red-billed Teal while a Black-headed Heron gave us a fly-past. Further along we stopped to photograph a lone Blue Crane.

Approaching the Garden Route, white arum lilies *Zantedeschia aethiopica* were flowering in every ditch and pink *Watsonia pillansii* lined the road. The eastern edge of the Garden Route is marked by a deep fragmented canyon, bridged by the modern road but uncrossable by early foresters harvesting the timber. Here the plantations of eucalyptus and pine gave way to the native indigenous forests.

Passing through Tsitsikamma we took a small detour to see some orchids before the local verge teams tidied up in the next few days. Cameras snapped a beautifully-scented white orchid *Satyrium stenopetalum*, the tall bright orange spikes of *Disa chrysostachya* and the pink heather *Erica chamissonis* that was also in full flower at the same spot. Then rain stopped play so we continued on to our guest house, the Bitou River Lodge. Situated on the banks above River Bitou, the guest-room verandas overlook the small river covered with blue waterlilies *Nymphaea nouchali* and running between reeds hung with weaver bird nests. Sue, our host, provided well-stocked bird tables and nectar feeders so we had to be prised from watching Olive Thrushes, sunbirds, and Red-eyed Doves to go to our well-appointed rooms.

After 24 hours travelling, the group settled in and relaxed for a couple of hours before going out to a restaurant for dinner in nearby Plettenberg Bay ('Plett' to locals). As we had eight nights here we tried a different restaurant each night, returning to the favourite for our last evening before we moved on to Addo.

Day 2, Saturday 16 November 2013

Birdwatching on the Garden Route – Plett and Knysna

It rained all night and was still bucketing when we were at breakfast! Despite the weather, a couple of Blue Cranes were seen in the fields next to the lodge before breakfast and from the breakfast room overlooking the river we caught our first sight of Black Crake scurrying across the waterlilies, along with Common Moorhen, Yellow-billed Duck, Egyptian Goose, Fork-tailed Drongo, Cape Weaver, Cape Bulbul and Streaky-headed seedeater ... the list could go on!

Breakfast itself is well worth a mention. Sue prepared a different tempting spread every morning including homemade breads, preserves, pastries and muffins, a cooked buffet, along with cereals, fruit and a choice of teas and coffee.

Rather than walking in the rain we decided to try our luck at birdwatching from the vehicle, with some success as by the end of the day we had seen more than 75 bird species. Our first stop was overlooking the Bitou wetland, an area of shallow freshwater and islands next to the lodge. Bedraggled looking Barn Swallows, perhaps newly arrived from Europe, were perched on fence wires next to local White-throated Swallows. Yellow-billed Duck, Cape Shoveler, Little Grebe, Common Moorhen, Red-knobbed Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Cape Wagtail, African Stonechat, and a handful of waders were seen on the wetland, where great views of a lone Hottentot Teal provided a highlight.

A side road behind Plett afforded us views of new birds around every corner. Some of the highlights were an African Marsh Harrier quartering the reedbeds, a European Hobby perched in a dead gum tree, Black-crowned Night-Herons roosting in the reeds ... plus Jackal Buzzard, Speckled Mousebird, Yellow-rumped Bishop, Fiscal Shrike, Helmeted Guineafowl, Cattle and Little Egrets, Black-headed and Grey Herons. A couple of Ostriches in a field were found to be wild; typically they arrive when young and grow too tall to move on, sharing the farmland with the farmer's stock.



Brown-hooded Kingfisher.

As we drove west, the weather cleared in time for a walk at the 'Garden of Eden' forest trail. This is a reserve where the diversity of the native coastal forest can be explored from the comfort of a network of boardwalks. Yellowwood, Ironwood, Hard Pear, Wild Pomegranate and tree ferns were playing host to Knysna Warbler, Greater and Lesser Double-collared Sunbirds, Cape White-eye, Chorister Robin-chat, Narina Trogon and a small troop of Chacma Baboons.

We moved on to Knysna where we had lunch in a quayside café and spent a few Rand on souvenirs and postcards. The day had brightened and we moved on to the nearby coastal lagoon. A walk across the saltmarsh gave a taste of the flora and some birdwatching, with waders including Avocet, Greenshank, Common and Marsh Sandpiper, Kittlitz's, Three-banded and Ringed Plovers, plus Pied Kingfisher, Yellow Canary and Speckled Pigeon. Returning to our lodge we saw a Brown-hooded Kingfisher and a Red Bishop as we arrived, rounding off nicely the day's birding.

This evening's meal included a catch of the day: a large fish shared by four of the group and later admired by Marie for its multiple rows of teeth!

Day 3, Sunday 17 November 2013

Birdwatching and botanising on the Garden Route – Millwood forest and fynbos

The river in front of the lodge was getting higher and higher, and unfortunately the rain did not let up all day. We drove to Millwood, an old gold mining area near Knysna, through the forest and up to the fynbos scrub stopping here and there between rain showers to see what was flying or flowering. *Aristea pusilla*, a beautiful blue flower, carpeted patches of forest floor. In the fynbos plants identified included *Erica densifolia*, a tall heather with sticky red flowers tipped with yellow; *Bobartia robusta* a yellow rush iris, *Berzelia intermedia* a shrub with white pom-pom flowers / cones, and wild iris *Diates iridioides*, among a variety of restios. A blue dragonfly, Lakeside Dropwing, was photographed.

We picnicked at the picturesque Jubilee Creek watching the water rise. On the way back to Knysna we saw a female Bushbuck at the edge of the forest. As the weather brightened along the way we made a few stops, spotting African Olive Pigeon, Cape Turtle Dove, Black-shouldered Kite, Rock Martin, Black Saw-wing, Cape Robin-Chat, Levillant's Cisticola, Karoo Prinia, African Pipit, Red Bishop, Black-winged Lapwing and White-faced Duck.

Between Plett and our Lodge we stopped at 'Old Nick's' for a coffee and some birdwatching. This characterful complex hosts a local bakery with a tasty selection of cakes and fresh breads, a coffee shop and craft workshops. The workshops included a new textile factory being set up with vintage looms from East Lancashire (where similar machines were used by Brennan's grandmother), all amidst a garden full of birdlife including sunbirds and white-eyes.



Cape Sugarbird.

Back at the lodge we found Cape Sugarbird, Cape Canary and the colourful Knysna Turaco, which proved regular here, flying over the Bitou and along the trees opposite.

Day 4, Monday 18 November 2013 – Nature's Valley & Spitzkop

The Bitou was in full flood from the previous rains, the picnic tables on the lawn appearing like jetties, but this morning was all sunshine and blue skies. We saw a few new birds in the gardens before breakfast: Malachite Kingfisher, Little Rush Warbler, Sombre Greenbul, African Paradise Flycatcher and, across the river, a Booted Eagle catching a morning thermal. After another grand breakfast we set off for Nature's Valley. We stopped to look at a Malachite Sunbird on a telephone wire and a Common Duiker in the adjacent field. Just after turning off the main road we had a half-hour botanical stop in the fynbos area, where some late flowers of *Protea mundii* and *Protea eximia* were seen along with *Erica densifolia*, *Bobartia robusta*, *Aristea pusilla* ahead of the approaching verge-cutting team.

Dropping into the forests, we stopped to look down into the canopy to watch butterflies, namely both Forest Swallowtail and Green-banded Swallowtail (a very blue butterfly, despite the name) and Saw-wings (swallows, rather than swallowtails). Reaching Nature's Valley we walked through the forest to the beach, birdwatching and plant spotting. Cape Batis, Black-bellied Starling, Black-backed Puffback, Red-chested Cuckoo, Black-headed Oriole, Forest Buzzard, three sunbird species and Pied Kingfisher were some of the birds seen. Butterflies here included the creamy yellow Mocker Swallowtail, Spring Widow and a small blue. A bright red anemone stinkhorn fungus *Aserae rubra* offered a fascinating photo opportunity.

After a picnic lunch in the forest, we set off for Spitzkop Peak, off Prince Alfred Pass above the Bitou headwaters, to do some botanising. The drive there was along ridges through rising agricultural land interspersed with indigenous forests. The peak rewarded us with a fine panorama and, set in fynbos, an opportunity to explore the special flora. As we walked down the trail the local *Mimetes pauciflorus* and sunshine protea *Leucadendron salignum* were painting the hillsides yellow. We found many other flowers here, including oxalis, orchids and geraniums, *Watsonias* in different shades of pink, tall blue spikes of *Aristea confusa* and the yellow spiked lily *Wachendorfia thyrsoiflora* – all were impressive. The tiny stag's-horn clubmoss *Lycopodium cernuum* looked like miniature conifers growing along with sundews *Drosera* sp. The crowning glory was finding a population of the national flower of South Africa; the King Protea *Protea cynaroides*, which was flowering across the hillside and gave us all some great photo opportunities, before we reluctantly returned to the lodge after a good day in the sunshine.



Amethyst Sunbird.



Some of the pink *Watsonias*.

Day 5, Tuesday 19 November 2013 – Keurbooms River boat trip & canoeing on the Bitou River

After breakfast we had a walk around Bitou Lodge grounds. Bar-throated Apalis, African Pipit and Fiscal Shrike were in the fields, damselflies were on the move and a large foam grasshopper was found on the path. After the short drive to Keurbooms riverside we had a while to wait for the riverboat so we followed the call of a Sombre Greenbul, eventually getting a good view of the bird along with Chorister Robin-chat, Cape White-eye and African Olive Pigeon. The riverboat took us upstream into a mountainous gorge, with undisturbed forest on both sides of the river. Outeniqua Yellowwood, Real Yellowwood, Keurboom, Cape Beech, Cape Chestnut ... this river system has more than 300 tree species! We took a short walk ashore at the turning point where we had a fleeting view of an African Emerald Cuckoo, a passing glimpse of a Red-chested Cuckoo and great views of a pair of African Paradise Flycatchers above us in the trees.

We had a late lunch at 'Old Nick's' and then decided on some canoeing on the Bitou River in front of the lodge. The river had settled down to its original level and Cape Weavers were busy in the reeds rebuilding nests destroyed by the flood, and the *Hibiscus diversifolius*, a yellow flower with a dark centre, was flowering on either side of the river. Kingfishers, ducks and warblers were seen as well as a troop of Vervet Monkeys. A photo of me (Geoff) in the 'drink' – which is most probably on Facebook by now – has a long story behind it. Just to say it involved a Malachite Kingfisher, a camera, an unsteady canoe and a wet ending!

Day 6, Wednesday 20 November 2013 – Cango Caves & the Swartberg Pass

We had an early breakfast and then set off for Oudtshoorn and the Little Karoo via the Outeniqua Pass. We drove down through the Garden Route, passing through the towns of Plettenberg Bay, Knysna, Sedgefield, Wilderness and George. Oudtshoorn, as the centre for ostrich farming, is surrounded by enclosures of the birds in different age groups. Providing plumes for fashionable hats and costumes in 19th and 20th century the area now provides feathers for carnivals across the world. Beyond the town, the road climbed a dry limestone ridge in the Swartberg foothills where we went on a one-hour tour of the Cango Caves. Here we saw an unidentified bat near the entrance and others in the far chambers beyond the main attractions, the giant chambers with their stalagmites, stalactites, columns and organ pipe formations. Due to the dry climate in this area the regrowth of formations, broken over the years when the caverns were open for public concerts and the like, is much slower here than in typically wet limestone caves where the constant drip of water slowly builds new features.

We had our picnic lunch before heading for the Swartberg Pass, which was receiving some unseasonable rain. We saw some wet and bedraggled Baboons and in between the showers we glimpsed tantalising views of the mountains and spent a while watching the usually elusive Victorin's Warbler along with Cape Siskin, Cape Rock Bunting and Orange-breasted Sunbird. A number of impressive plants completed a rainbow of colour along the roadside with the red *Cyrtanthus angustifolius*, tall orange / red spikes of *Watsonia wilmaniae*, yellow *Bobartia robusta*, green *Gladiolus tristis*, blue *Aristea confusa*. These were with several proteas: the silver Outeniqua cone-bush *Leucadendron uliginosum*, the spinning-top cone-bush *Leucadendron rubrum*, the Waboom *Protea nitida* and the impressive red-flowered, broad-leaved sugarbush *Protea eximia* set off against the remains of a derelict stone building.

We left the pass quite late and headed back across the Little Karoo scrub down to the coast. We had a good view of an African Marsh Harrier over coastal marshes while waiting at traffic lights and stopped for dinner on the way through Plett at the end of a long and interesting day.

Day 7, Thursday 21 November 2013 – Whale watching & the Harkeville forest walk

We awoke to a glorious day and another delicious breakfast! As this was our 'free' day, some took a long walk down the main beach at Plettenberg Bay and others joined a whale-watching boat trip which was launched off Plettenburg beach by tractor. A highlight of this was a Humpback Whale with its calf alongside the boat for many minutes. The mother emerged to blow every second or third rise of her calf and every 75-80 of our own breaths [counted by Jenny]. Sooty Shearwaters skimmed the waves and terns flew out to the Robberg Peninsula, where we saw the large Cape Fur Seal colony and an unexpected Elephant Seal, a rare visitor to these shores. After the boat returned, by speeding up onto the cleared beach, our group met and we had a café lunch by the beach – giving whale-watchers time to find their land legs again!



Preparing to board the boat; and watching Humpback Whales.

After lunch we drove out to Harkeville Forest arriving at the Kranshoek viewpoint where we enjoyed the spectacular views over the coast. We took a path along the top of an inlet gorge through fynbos, with ericas, proteas, restios and geraniums lining the path. We saw a few Southern Rock Agamas, Giant African Millipede, Forest Cockroach and some Monkey Beetles burrowing into the flowers. Looking back, we spotted a couple of Southern Right Whales offshore with their distinctive 'V' shaped blows, and African Black Swifts were seen among other swifts in the gorge below. Lesser Double-collared Sunbirds and their young were flitting about everywhere. Passing into the forest we had Wild Iris *Dieties iridioides* and small blue *Aristea pusilla* lining the dirt track. Lots of bird calls emanated from the depths of the forest but many were elusive to spot; Cape Batis, Chorister Robin-chat, Forest Buzzard, Olive Thrush and Cape White-eye were seen but a very persistent but elusive Red-chested Cuckoo was not! Stopping near Plett for panoramic photos of the lagoon we spotted a flock of Greater Flamingos.

Day 8, Friday 22 November 2013 – Robberg Peninsula and Nature's Valley

Fortified for our last full day on the Garden Route by another great breakfast, we set off for the Robberg Peninsula. The day was promising to be sunny, and proved to be the hottest of our time here reaching the low 30°s (Celsius). As the terrain along Robberg is uneven, some opted to walk from the peninsula along the beach towards Plett. The others set off together around the peninsula seeing several new birds: Cape Grassbird, Neddiky, Cape Rock Thrush, Bar-throated Apalis and Southern Boubou among the scrub and rocks, Swift Tern, Grey and White-fronted Plovers and Cape Cormorants along the shoreline. We looked down on the Cape Fur Seal colony with Southern Rock Agama, Cape Skink and Rock Hyrax on the warm rocks. There were also plenty of plants in flower: Cobra Lily *Chasmanthe aethiopica*, Pig's Ears *Cotyledon orbiculata*, *Gasteria brachyphylla*, wild rosemary, wild camphor and gazanias. And we all noticed the smell of the Milkwood, colloquially known as the 'pee tree'. When we reached the middle of the peninsula, several cut directly down the dune ridge to an inlet on the north side where Karin took a swim while others walked the entire length of the peninsula.



Rock Hyrax or 'Dassie'.



Rock Agama.

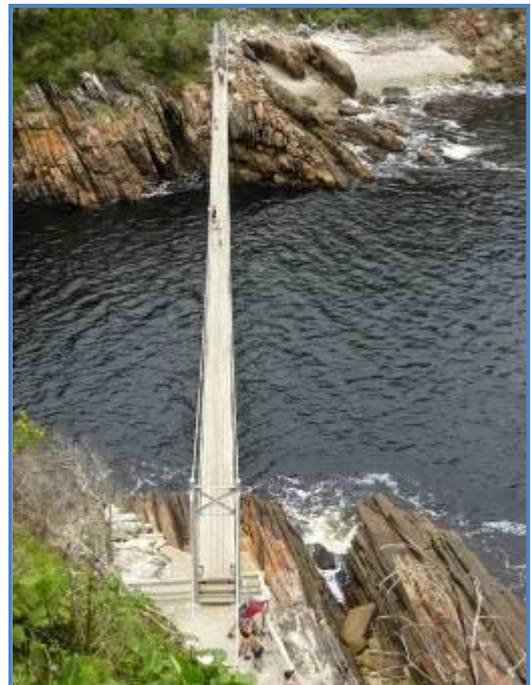
When we reached the middle of the peninsula, several cut directly down the dune ridge to an inlet on the north side where Karin took a swim while others walked the entire length of the peninsula.

After gathering for lunch at 'Bikini Beach' we returned to Bitou Lodge to drop off some to relax and for Peter to canoe through the wetlands, while the others went for a forest walk at Nature's Valley. *Harveya speciosa* – White Inkflower – was seen and Cape Sugarbirds were at the start of the walk in the fynbos area. The forest walk took longer than anticipated so we did a quick turnaround at the lodge and went out to dinner at the Lookout restaurant – voted the best restaurant out of the seven visited!

Day 9, Saturday 23 November 2013 – Tsitsikamma National Park

This morning we packed our bags and said farewell to Sue and the Bitou River Lodge. On route we took a small detour to Coldstream to look for African Jacana. There was no jacana but instead we found an impressive African Fish Eagle and a White-backed Duck. Yellow-billed Duck, Egyptian Goose, Red-knobbed Coot, Common Moorhen and a few Cape Shovelers were also seen at this farm dam. We stopped and identified a Forest Buzzard and found four different orchid species in the wide verge here along with yellow *Wachendorfia paniculata* and the blue flowers of *Agapanthus praecox*. We also saw a brownish-green gladiolus, later identified as *Gladiolus liliaceus*, with a flower which changes colour at dusk to a bluish-mauve colour and becomes fragrant to attract night flying insects. The four orchid species were a white, beautifully scented orchid *Satyrium stenopetalum*, a dainty yellow flowered *Holothrix* sp (could be *villosa*), the tall bright orange spikes of *Disa chrysostachya* and a few *Monadenia bracteata*.

Moving on to the Tsitsikamma National Park we drove down to the coast where, checking through a flock of roosting terns, we found Swift, Common and Sandwich Terns while a family of Rock Hyraxes were sunning themselves on the rocks below us. Leaving the minibus we walked the trail to the suspension bridge over the Storms River, seeing Blue-Mantled Crested Flycatcher and the misnamed Lemon Dove. We had a picnic lunch by Thunderbolt rocks, where huge waves crashed onto the shore, sending up great clouds of spray. We were entertained by Humpback Whales breaching and spouting just offshore before we departed for the drive to the Zuurberg Mountains and the Eastern Cape for the second part of the two week trip.



Storms River suspension bridge.

The Zuurberg Mountain Inn provided a warm welcome, with roaring fires in the fireplace and cold beers on tap. (Yes – we needed the fires as it was a wee bit chilly!) We were shown to our rooms, semi-detached pastel painted bungalows lining a path up the hill behind the main building with restaurant, bars, lounges and a pool in the gardens.

Day 10, Sunday 24 November 2013– Addo Elephant National Park

We left the Zuurberg Mountain Inn early, carrying a picnic breakfast, to be at the National Park Main Gate when it opened at 7 am. At the gate we registered, driving in to pick up the day ticket at the Park centre. Once through the main camp area we entered the fenced game park noticing the 'give way to dung beetles' signs. The subject of these notices was soon spotted, the endemic Addo Flightless Dung Beetle, rolling damp elephant dung the size of tennis balls along paths and the dirt roads and intent on attracting females to lay their eggs in the spheres before they dried out. Elephants appeared, initially in singles and pairs and then family troops. Everyone was amazed at how quietly and smoothly these large animals moved in the scrub, leaving hardly a leaf moving in their wake as a mother and calf rapidly disappeared from sight (*pictured above*).



After first impressions around the Domkrag Dam loop, followed by a picnic breakfast at Jack's picnic site (named after Jack the Black Rhino, one of the first Black Rhinos to be brought to Addo), we headed south to the Colchester area of the Park visiting the Hapoor Dam, Rooidam and Gwarrie Dam loop. We stopped at a waterhole viewpoint where we were given a fleeting flypast by a Hamerkop while surrounded by colourful weaver birds. The Park was very green after all the rain in the Eastern Cape. The dense *Portulacaria afra* 'Elephant food' and the Sweet Thorn *Acacia karroo* were fresh and green, offering shade and grazing throughout the Park. We also spotted a white lily *Cyrtanthus smithiae* flowering in the grasslands, distinctive with its red stripes along the mid-line of the flowers.

A large breeding herd of Cape Buffalo was resting, accompanied by a flock of Cattle Egrets. Several groups of Burchell's Zebra looked distinguished in their black and grey shadow stripes. A single Meercat was on sentry duty while the others were busy hunting: we learned that in Afrikaans the name is *Suricate*, Meercat being the name for the Yellow Mongoose that we also saw. We enjoyed watching the many foraging Warthogs, including some skirmishing youngsters who retreated for a while when a mother elephant and calf arrived at their waterhole. The very young elephant seeming to be learning how to pick up and spray water. Other highlights were herds of Red Hartebeest, Eland and a few skittish Kudu.



Red Bishop.

On leaving the game park we saw a small herd of Sable Antelopes in a new section of the Park. On the reptile side of life, we saw a beautifully marked Cape Cobra (a yellowy-brown speckled snake) a few Angulate Tortoises, a Leopard Tortoise and a few Marsh Terrapins in the Gwarrie Dam. A Giant African Snail and Giant African Millipede were impressive invertebrates we came across. We saw plenty of birds including Lesser-striped Swallow, Karoo Scrub-Robin, Cape Francolin, Common Waxbill, Cape Glossy Starling, Karoo Thrush, a distant Secretarybird and Plain-backed Pipit. An amusing highlight was watching four Bokmakieries serenading each other from the top of small bushes – open-mouthed while stretching their yellow and black patterned throats.

We had a late lunch at the main camp restaurant, followed by visit to the shop and nearby bird hide overlooking a reedy pool – with excellent views here of Red Bishops, Village Weavers, Red-billed Quelea and White-throated Canary. We then went back to Zuurberg for a restful afternoon, following the early morning start.

As every evening here, we discovered a really fantastic buffet for dinner – soup, a large salad table, fish and a carvery with all the trimmings, a choice of traditional desserts including rice pudding, apple pie, Eton mess and trifle – followed by cheese and biscuits and coffee, often taken in the lounge in front of the roaring fire.

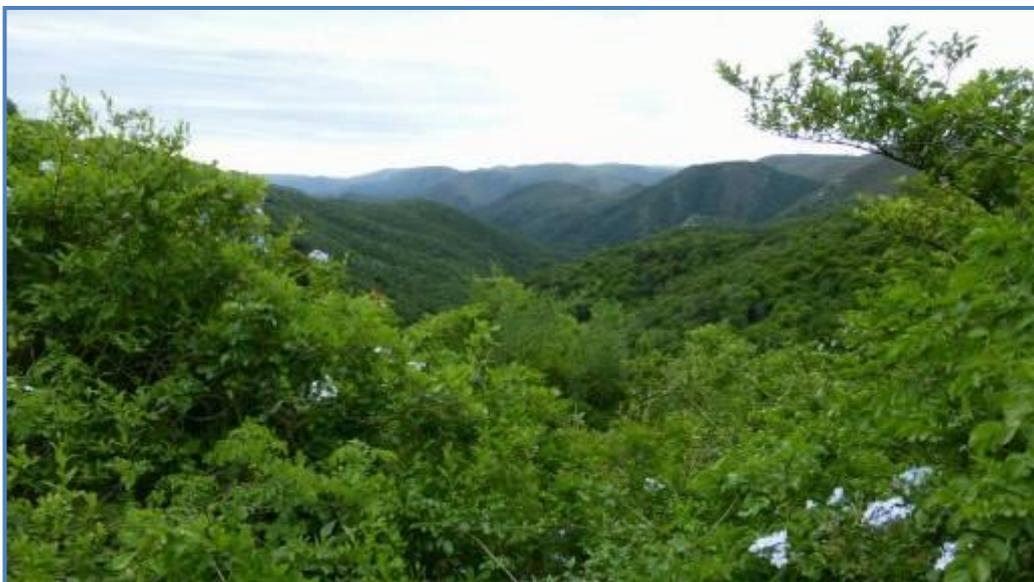
Day 11, Monday 25 November 2013 – Addo Elephant National Park

We left Zuurberg earlier this morning to take more time on route to the main gate. The rewards were plenty of birds and mammals: African Firefinch in roadside scrub when we stopped for a duiker crossing the road in front of us; Pearl-breasted Swallow on fence wires, the shimmer of early sun giving meaning to its name; Jacobin Cuckoo and African Hoopoe over the trees and close views of Brown-headed Kingfisher by a bridge. In the game park we had a similar plan as yesterday, with a mid-morning picnic breakfast at Jack's picnic site where a pair of Red-necked Spurfowl picked up crumbs. Today we explored the Gorah and Zuurkop loops, finding a family of Black-backed Jackals, spotting a Southern Ant-eating Chat on an anthill, stopping at the Zuurkop Lookout Point with great views north and west across the National Park and watching a herd of Burchell's Zebra taking an easy route along a driving trail below. With temperatures rising to the mid-30's after breakfast we enjoyed watching elephants bathing in waterholes and splashing in mud pools. We also had excellent views of a Pale-chanting Goshawk resting at our eye-level on a thorn bush.

At the main camp, we found Chinspot Batis and Southern Tchagra then, after a late lunch and buying postcards and souvenirs in the Park centre shop, we went back to Zuurberg for a relaxing afternoon.

During a pre-dinner walk around the grounds we watched a pair of Crowned Hornbills in the trees and feeding on palm fruits in the garden. Black-collared Barbet, Pin-tailed Whydah and Southern Grey-headed Sparrow were among the garden birds with Horus Swift and House Martin overhead.

Day 12, Tuesday 26 November 2013 – Zuurberg Mountain Pass walks



The forests around Zuurberg Pass provided a contrasting landscape to Plettenberg Bay.

Breakfast at the lodge proved to be as good as the dinners. Today we took time to explore the Zuurberg Mountain flora. The Addo Elephant National Park as a whole extends far beyond the protected main Addo game park. Former agricultural land is being purchased, boundaries removed and land allowed to re-wild, with game animals progressively re-introduced from areas with high population in Addo and other African Parks. The Park now occupies over 180,000ha, extending from coastal dunes of the Eastern Cape inland to include much of the Zuurberg Mountains extending west to the Darlington Section, although an area linking the coastal dunes and Addo Game Park is still to be secured.

We took a morning walk along the ridge behind our bungalows where beyond a grazed area we were in fynbos habitat. Here we found a couple of pincushion proteas, *Protea caffra* and *Protea cynaroides*; another blue aristeas *Aristea schizolaena*, *Heliophila subulata* with a small blue flower, *Chironia palustris* with pink flowers, *Tecoma capensis* the Cape honeysuckle with a red flower, *Lobelia tomentosa* with small blue flowers, *Monopsis unidentata* with a small brown flower, *Scabiosa buekiana* with pinky-purple flowers, *Gazania pectinata* with a large yellow flower, *Senecio macrocephalus* with a purple flower with a purple centre, and *Felica amelloides* with a blue flower with a yellow centre.

After lunch back at base we drove down the road and walked back up the pass, exploring the edge of Albany thicket, with valley bushveld habitat dominated by tall euphorbias and aloes, and passing through a road cutting to more open scrub. We saw dozens of different flowers on our walk: some of the stars included *Cressula orbicularis*, *Pelargonium capitatum*, *Pelargonium peltatum*, *Streptocarpus rexii*, *Lobelia coronopifolia*, *Cotyledon orbiculata* and star-flowered jasmine. Also here, yet to be identified, were a climber with green bracts around its small flowers and a yellow orchid. The endemic pincushion daisy *Oldenburgia paradoxa* was seen but was not flowering.

Day 13, Wednesday 27 November 2013 – Addo Elephant National Park

We left our lodge at 06:30 armed with a picnic breakfast. Overnight rain continued as we headed for the southern section of the Park in search of Lions. We had close views of a lone male Buffalo drenched by the heavy rain, a Scrub Hare was a new mammal for the trip and a large area of open grassland held mixed herds of Zebra and Red Hartebeest whose young were testing their speed among the adults with a couple of Ostriches looking on. We also saw a few pink flowers of the amaryllis *Boophone disticha*, and some more red and white striped flowers of the *Cyrtanthus smithiae* lily. The constant rain had turned the muddy tracks into a quagmire, so we slipped and slithered our way to a farm shop just outside the Park for a hot cup of coffee. The shop sold gingered honey under the brand name Honeyguide, which sadly we had to leave on the shelf due to UK import restrictions. The weather had cleared and we headed back to the game park on surfaced roads and, between the road and railway, we saw four new antelopes; a small herd of Impala, a few Springbok, a lone Steenbok and a herd of Grey Rhebok. Several flitting black streamers proved to be Red-throated Widowbirds settling on the scrub, looking like long flamboyant feathers on a cap.

After lunch at the main camp we took a last look at the nearby waterhole and bird hide, then we came across a female Kudu that had just given birth to a calf. The young calf was still wobbly on its legs and wondering what it should be doing next! The mother was busy cleaning the little guy. There was a tense moment when a Black-backed Jackal was making a bee-line to the secluded 'birthing' bush, but at the last minute it took a 90 degree turn and headed away from the calf. We also watched a Small Grey Mongoose by the side of the track being harassed by a Karoo Scrub-robin.

Moving into the open grasslands, we again heard the call of the elusive Northern Black Korhaan. Then a 'there it is!' moment as, standing not far from the road, the bird was calling and then began preening. It slowly walked some 20 metres, watched by a couple of Yellow Mongooses, before we moved on after quarter of an hour of excellent views. But still no Lions ...

We had our last dinner at the Zuurberg Mountain Inn and we each recounted our most memorable moments from the past two weeks:

- Finding a new beautiful orchid while on a walk on the Zuurberg Pass.
- Walking on the Robberg Peninsula.
- Looking at the diversity of flowers in the fynbos.
- Seeing a Kudu with its new born calf.
- Seeing Humpback Whales on the Whale-watching boat trip.
- Seeing Malachite Kingfishers while canoeing quietly up the Bitou River.
- Botanising on the walk up Zuurberg Pass.
- The overwhelming scent of honey coming from the *Metasia*.

Day 14, Thursday 28 November 2013 – Addo Elephant National Park and home

Our last morning dawned bright and clear. We had breakfast at the lodge, packed our bags and set off for a final drive through the Park on our way to Port Elizabeth. A short way down the pass we stopped to see the endemic Zuurberg cycad *Encephalartos longifolius* on a facing hillside. This endemic plant is on the verge of extinction and we learnt how our inn is helping with a project to propagate a new population to be re-established in the surrounding National Park.



In the Park, Elephants, Black-backed Jackals, Red Hartebeest, Burchell's Zebra, Kudu and Warthogs were among the favourites seen again. On a ridge in the southern section we had a clear view of the coastal dunes across the gap in the National Park. Oncoming vehicles were stopping to tell us that there were some Lions near the road ahead. Our luck was in: we soon found two Lionesses asleep under a bush and a little farther on two Lions and a Lioness on the crest of a ridge, comfortably close for excellent views as one male (*pictured left*) roused himself and slowly strolled along the ridge before heading away.

After this special finale we left the Park and made our way to Port Elizabeth, passing waders and waterbirds on the coastal salt pans along the lower Sundays River. Lunch at the coffee bar round the corner to the airport was our last meal together before check-in for the flight to Johannesburg, where a huge thunderstorm delayed final departures.

SYSTEMATIC LISTS

Birds

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Common Ostrich | Sanderling | Chorister Robin-chat |
| Little Grebe | Whimbrel | Cape Robin-chat |
| Sooty Shearwater | Pied Avocet | Karoo Scrub-robin |
| White-breasted Cormorant | Black-winged Stilt | Little Rush-warbler |
| Cape Cormorant | Spotted Thick-knee | Knysna Warbler |
| Reed Cormorant | Kelp Gull | Victorin's Warbler |
| Grey Heron | Grey-headed Gull | Bar-throated Apalis |
| Black-headed Heron | Swift Tern | Green-backed Camaroptera |
| Purple Heron | Sandwich Tern | Cape Grassbird |
| Little Egret | Common Tern | Zitting Cisticola |
| Cattle Egret | Rock Dove | Grey-backed Cisticola |
| Black-crowned Night-heron | Speckled Pigeon | Levaillant's Cisticola |
| Hamerkop | African Olive-pigeon | Neddicky |
| African Sacred Ibis | Red-eyed Dove | Karoo Prinia |
| Hadedda Ibis | Cape Turtle-Dove | Fiscal Flycatcher |
| African Spoonbill | Laughing Dove | Cape Batis |
| Greater Flamingo | Lemon Dove | Pirit Batis |
| Lesser Flamingo | Green Spotted Wood-dove | Blue-mantled Flycatcher |
| White-faced Duck | Crowned Hornbill | African Paradise-flycatcher |
| White-backed Duck | Knysna Turaco | Cape Wagtail |
| Egyptian Goose | Red-chested Cuckoo | African Pipit |
| Yellow-billed Duck | Jacobin Cuckoo | Plain-backed Pipit |
| Hottentot Teal | African Emerald Cuckoo | Cape Longclaw |
| Red-billed Teal | African Black Swift | Common Fiscal |
| Cape Shoveler | White-rumped Swift | Southern Boubou |
| Spur-winged Goose | Horus Swift | Black-backed Puffback |
| Secretarybird | Little Swift | Southern Tchagra |
| Yellow-billed Kite | Speckled Mousebird | Bokmakierie |
| Black-shouldered Kite | Narina Trogon | Eurasian Starling |
| Booted Eagle | Pied Kingfisher | Pied Starling |
| African Fish Eagle | Giant Kingfisher | Cape Glossy Starling |
| Steppe Buzzard | Malachite Kingfisher | Red-winged Starling |
| Forest Buzzard | Brown-hooded Kingfisher | Black-bellied Starling |
| Jackal Buzzard | African Hoopoe | Cape Sugarbird |
| Pale Chanting Goshawk | Green Wood-hoopoe | Malachite Sunbird |
| African Marsh-Harrier | Black-collard Barbet | Orange-breasted Sunbird |
| European Hobby | Rufous-naped Lark | Lesser Double-collared Sunbird |
| Rock Kestrel | Eastern Long-billed Lark | Greater Double-collared Sunbird |
| Red-necked Spurfowl | Barn Swallow | Amethyst Sunbird |
| Cape Spurfowl | White-throated Swallow | Collared Sunbird |
| Helmeted Guineafowl | Pearl-breasted Swallow | Cape White-eye |
| Blue Crane | Greater Striped Swallow | House Sparrow |
| Black Crane | Lesser Striped Swallow | Cape Sparrow |
| Common Moorhen | Rock Martin | Grey-headed Sparrow |
| Red-knobbed Coot | House Martin | Cape Weaver |
| Denham's Bustard | Black Saw-wing | Southern Masked-weaver |
| Northern Black Korhaan | Grey Cuckooshrike | Red Bishop |
| African Black Oystercatcher | Fork-tailed Drongo | Yellow-rumped Widow |
| Ringed Plover | Black-headed Oriole | Red-throated Widow |
| White-fronted Plover | Cape Crow | African Firefinch |
| Kittlitz's Plover | Pied Crow | Common Waxbill |
| Three-banded Plover | White-necked Raven | Pin-tailed Whydah |
| Grey Plover | Cape Bulbul | Cape Canary |
| Crowned Lapwing | Dark-capped Bulbul | Forest Canary |
| Black-smith Lapwing | Sombre Greenbul | Cape Siskin |
| Black-winged Lapwing | Olive Thrush | Brimstone Canary |
| Common Sandpiper | Karoo Thrush | Yellow Canary |
| Marsh Sandpiper | Cape Rock-thrush | White-throated Canary |
| Greenshank | Ant-eating Chat | Streaky-headed Seedeater |
| Little Stint | African Stonechat | Cape Bunting |

Mammals

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Elephant | Rock Dassie (Hyrax) | Scrub Hare |
| Burchell's Zebra | Bushbuck | Common Duiker |
| Eland | Giraffe | Red Hartebeest |
| Mountain Reedbuck | Sable Antelope | Blesbok |
| Impala | Kudu | Springbok |
| Steenbok | Grey Rhebok | Burchell's Zebra |
| Scrub Hare | Warthog | Lion |
| Black-backed Jackal | Small Grey Mongoose | Yellow Mongoose |
| Suricate | Elephant Seal | Cape Fur Seal |
| Humpback Whale | Southern Right Whale | Egyptian Slit-faced Bat |
| Horseshoe Bat | Chacma Baboon | Vervet Monkey |



Vervet Monkeys.



Male Kudu.



Sable Antelopes.

Reptiles

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Southern Rock Agama | Cape Cobra | Sand Snake |
| Water Snake | Red-sided Skink | Cape Skink |
| Marsh Terrapin | Angulate Tortoise | Leopard Tortoise |

Amphibians

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Arum Lily Frog | Cape Sand Frog | Raucous Toad |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|

Butterflies

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Citrus Swallowtail | Mocker Swallowtail |
| Green-banded Swallowtail | Cape Spring Widow |
| Fynbos Blue | Painted lady |
| Cabbage White | Meadow White |
| Common Dotted Border | Rainforest Brown |

Other notable invertebrates

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Giant African Millipede | Giant African Snail | Addo Dung Beetle |
| Christmas Beetle | Monkey Beetle | Stink Bug |
| Foam Grasshopper | Forest Cockroach | Lakeside Drooping |

Some plants seen on the Garden Route and in Addo Elephant Park, 15-28 November 2013

| Date and location GR = Garden Route | Botanical name | Common name | Description / Comment |
|--|--|-----------------------------|--|
| 24 Addo | <i>Acacia karroo</i> | sweet thorn | looking very good all about the Park |
| 23 GR Coldstream | <i>Agapanthus praecox</i> | common agapanthus | with blue flowers |
| 20 GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Aristea confusa</i> | | beautiful blue spikes |
| 17 GR Millwood | <i>Aristea pusilla</i> | small aristeia | a beautiful blue small flower, in woodlands |
| 21 GR Harkeville | | | |
| 26 Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Aristea schizolaena</i> | | blue flowers on a spike. |
| 17 GR Millwood | <i>Berzelia intermedia</i> | | white pom-pom flowers/cones |
| 17 GR Millwood | <i>Bobartia robusta</i> | a yellow-flowered rush iris | a yellow flower on a tall reed-like stem |
| 20 GR Swartberg Pass | | | |
| 27 Addo | <i>Boophane disticha</i> | sore-eye flower | |
| 22 GR Robberg | <i>Chasmanthe aethiopica</i> | cobra lily | |
| 26 Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Chironia palustris</i> | marsh bitter root | pink flowers |
| 18 GR Spitzkop | <i>Chironia sp</i> | | brilliant pink-flowered loose cushions c .5m – with the king proteas |
| 22 GR Robberg | <i>Cotyledon orbiculata</i> | pig's ears | |
| 26 Zuurberg – Pass road | | | |
| 26 Zuurberg – Pass road | <i>Crassula orbicularis</i> | | |
| 20 GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Cyrtanthus angustifolius</i> | fire lily | red |
| 24 Addo | <i>Cyrtanthus smithiae</i> | a caffer lily | pictured below – was flowering in the grasslands |
| 27 | | | |
| 17 GR Millwood | <i>Dietes iridioides</i> | wild iris | |
| 21 GR Harkeville | | | |
| 23 GR Coldstream | <i>Disa (previously Monadenia) bracteata</i> | bract disa | |
| 15 GR Coldstream | <i>Disa chrysostachya</i> | red torch orchid | tall bright orange spikes |
| 23 | | | |



Bobartia robusta.



Cyrtanthus smithiae.



Disa chrysostachya.

| | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 26 Addo | <i>Encephalartos longifolius</i> | Zuurberg cycad | |
| 15 GR Tsitsikamma | <i>Erica chamissonis</i> | heather | the pink was also in full flower at the same spot |
| 17 GR Millwood | <i>Erica densifolia</i> | heather | a tall heather with red sticky flowers tipped with yellow |
| 26 Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Felica amelloides</i> | | blue aster-type flower with a yellow centre |
| 22 GR Robberg | <i>Gasteria brachyphylla</i> | ? mother-in-law's tongue | |
| 26 Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Gazania pectinata</i> | gazania | a large yellow flower |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 23 | GR Coldstream | <i>Gladiolus liliaceus</i> | large brown afrikaner | brownish-green flower, changing colour at dusk to bluish-mauve and becoming fragrant to attract night-flying insects |
| 20 | GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Gladiolus tristis</i> | marsh afrikaner | green |
| 22 | GR Nature's Valley | <i>Harveya speciosa</i> | white inkflower | |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Heliophila subulata</i> | sun-lover | brassica with small blue flowers |
| 19 | GR | <i>Hibiscus diversifolius</i> | | a yellow flower with a dark centre, flowering on either side of the river |
| 23 | GR Coldstream | <i>Holothrix sp (could be villosa)</i> | a thread orchid | dainty yellow-flowered orchid |
| 20 | GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Leucadendron rubrum</i> | spinningtop conebush | |
| 18 | GR Spitzkop | <i>Leucadendron salignum</i> | a cone bush - sunshine protea | was painting the hillsides yellow |
| 20 | GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Leucadendron uliginosum</i> | Outeniqua cone bush | silver-leaved |
| 26 | Zuurberg – pass road | <i>Lobelia coronopifolia</i> | wild lobelia | |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Lobelia tomentosa</i> | smooth lobelia | small blue flowers |
| 18 | GR Spitzkop | <i>Lycopodium cernuum</i> | stag's-horn clubmoss | looking like miniature conifers |
| 18 | GR Spitzkop | <i>Mimetes pauciflorus</i> | three-flowered pagoda bush | the much localised yellow-flowered was showing well |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Monopsis unidentata</i> | wild violet | small pale brown flower with a dark centre |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Oldenburgia paradoxa</i> | pincushion daisy | the small shrubby endemic was seen but was not flowering |
| 26 | Zuurberg – pass road | <i>Pelargonium capitatum</i> | rose-scented pelargonium | |
| 26 | Zuurberg – pass road | <i>Pelargonium peltatum</i> | ivy-leaved pelargonium | |
| 24 | Addo | <i>Portulacaria afra</i> | 'elephant food' | |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Protea caffra</i> | common sugarbush | |
| 18 | GR Spitzkop | <i>Protea cynaroides</i> | king protea | flowering beautifully |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | | | |
| 20 | GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Protea eximia</i> | broad-leaved sugarbush | flowering |
| 20 | GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Protea nitida</i> | the waboom | flowering nicely |
| 15 | GR Tsitsikamma | <i>Satyrium stenopetalum</i> | a white satyr orchid | beautifully-scented orchid |
| 23 | GR Coldstream | | | |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Scabiosa buekiana</i> | | with pinky purple flowers |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Senecio macrocephalus</i> | a purple flowered groundsel | a purple flower with a purple centre |
| 26 | Zuurberg – pass road | <i>Streptocarpus rexii</i> | Cape primrose | |
| 26 | Zuurberg – ridge | <i>Tecoma capensis</i> | Cape honeysuckle | with a red flower |
| 23 | GR Coldstream | <i>Wachendorfia paniculata</i> | a butterfly lily | yellow |
| 18 | GR Spitzkop | <i>Wachendorfia thyrsoiflora</i> | a yellow butterfly lily | was looking good |
| 15 | GR | <i>Watsonia pillansii</i> | | pink |
| 20 | GR Swartberg Pass | <i>Watsonia wilmaniae</i> | | tall red |
| 18 | GR Spitzkop | <i>Watsonias</i> | watsonias | these were all along the road verges in varying shades of pink |
| 15 | GR | <i>Zantedeschia aethiopica</i> | white arum lilies | flowering in every ditch |
| 16 | 'Garden of Eden' forest walk | yellowwood , ironwood, hard pear, wild pomegranate, tree ferns | | |
| 18 | GR Spitzkop | many flowers here, from oxalis to orchids, geraniums to watsonias | | |
| 19 | GR Keurboom forest | Outeniqua yellowwood , real yellowwood, Keurboom, Cape beech, Cape chestnut | | |
| 21 | GR Harkeville | fynbos, with ericas, proteas, restios and geraniums lining the path | | |
| 22 | GR Robberg | wild rosemary, wild camphor, milkwood, gazanias | | |
| 26 | Zuurberg pass road | plenty of flowers and another yet to be identified yellow orchid species!!! | | |
| 18 | GR Nature's Valley | the fungus <i>Aserae rubra</i> , Anemone stinkhorn, was found | | |

