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**Kruger National Park
1 – 12 March 2015**

Kruger National Park, March 2015

Two 'Honeyguiders' decided on a private tour to the Kruger National Park, 1-12 March 2015. We had a great time with many birds, mammals and flowers seen and identified. We stayed at four different camps to make the most of the parks' different ecosystems and each camp made for some great memories (and photos).

It is always a gamble as to which mammal you will see first after you enter the Kruger National Park. On this occasion it was an impressive bull Elephant and a few minutes after that a young Leopard sauntered across the road and off into the bush. Small herds of Impala, a few Warthogs, a troop of Vervet Monkeys were also seen and, to top it off, a couple of White Rhinos. All this was in the ten kilometres from the Park gate at Malelane to Berg en dal Camp, our overnight camp.

Sunset Dam – at sunrise – just outside Lower Sabie Camp was a hive of activity, with Hippos, Crocodiles and terrapins in the water. Chacma Baboons, Impala, Blue Wildebeest and Waterbuck were coming in to steal a drink, always on the lookout for the large, menacing crocodiles.

Birds were also coming in from all directions, from the large Yellow-billed Stork to the diminutive Willow Warbler. There were Red-billed Oxpeckers, Red-billed Buffalo Weavers, Water Thick-knees and Grey Heron (on the back of a Hippo!) Wood and Common Sandpipers, Black-winged Stilts, Egyptian Geese, Helmeted Guineafowl and on and on....

Back at camp, while having a leisurely breakfast on the restaurant deck (great coffee!) we had the good fortune of having a Leopard walk along the sand bank, down the edge of the river.

Early one morning, while in Satara Camp, there was a huge cacophony emanating from a large Tambotie tree in the middle of Satara Camp. On closer inspection there were at least a dozen Grey Turacos mixed in with Burchell's Starlings and a few other birds. After ten minutes of watching and searching we found the cause of the great commotion – a six foot African Python. The python slithered its way through the branches until it disappeared in to a hole in the tree; only then did peace prevail!

On route to Olifants Camp in the central area of the Park we came across a large flock of White Storks numbering in their hundreds, three or four hundred at least. As if by a single command, they all took to the wing and started spiralling up to and in to the clouds in a thermal. We decided this must be the start of their long migration back to the chimney stacks of Amsterdam!

The deck at Olifants Camp is high up above the Olifants River, with an expansive view over the endless bushveld. We sat on the said deck, having our sundowner gin & tonics, watching a Peregrine Falcon attempting to catch one of the thousands of bats that were streaming out of the restaurant roof.

While in the Park we saw many mammals and a profusion of birds. This trip was in no way a 'listing' trip as we watched the wildlife interactions at a relaxed pace. We still saw some 30 species of mammals, numerous birds (close on 200) and many flowers, insects and reptiles.

*Participants: Alice Everard and Simon Cooke.
Guide: Geoff Crane. Words and photos by Geoff Crane.*

Photos, top: white rhino, carmine bee-eater. Middle: European roller, zebra, ground hornbill, white-fronted bee-eater. Bottom: elephant, lilac-breasted roller