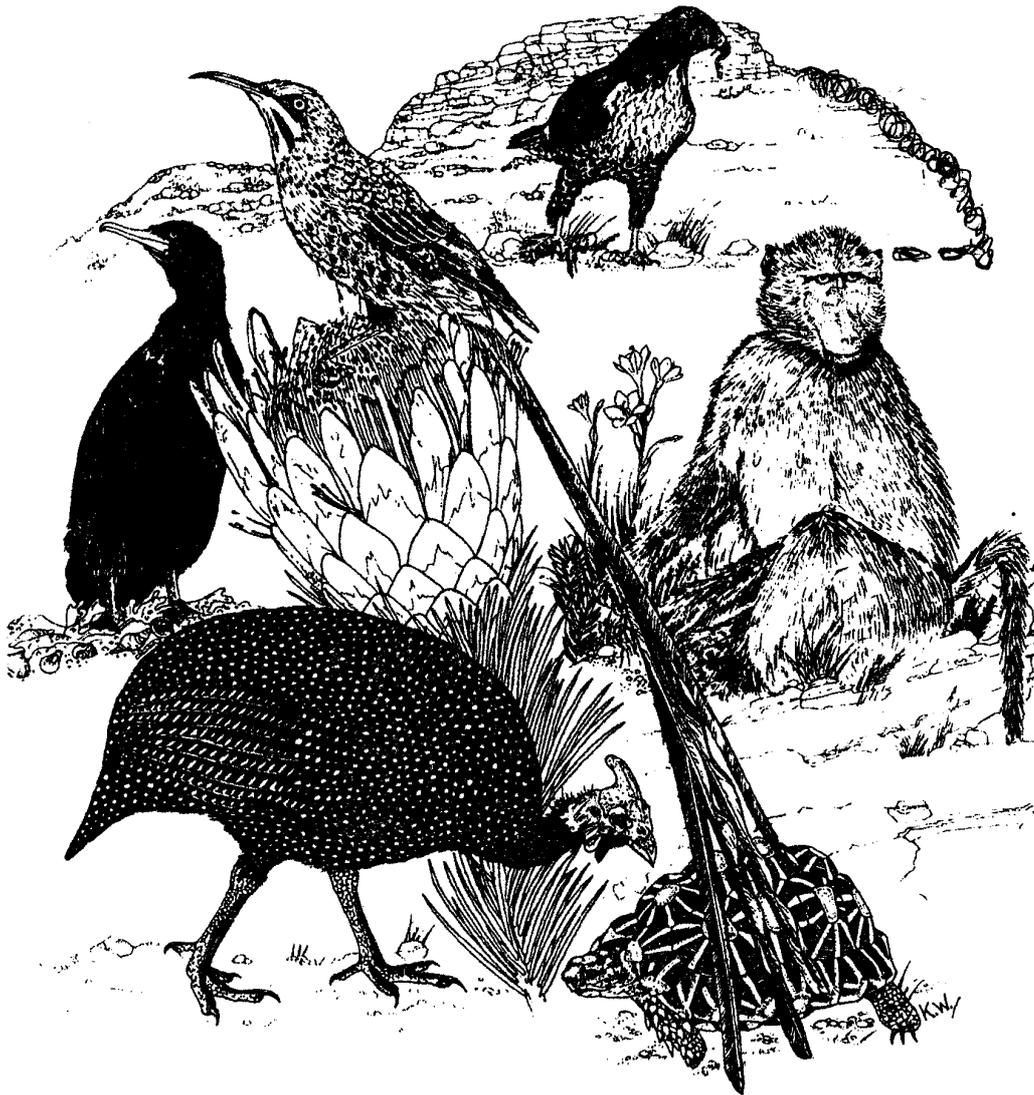


# Honeyguide

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX  
Telephone: 01603 300552 evenings & weekends  
www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: honeyguide@tesco.net



**South Africa's Western Cape  
27 September – 13 October 2005**

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**Participants**

Peter Higgleton, Colchester, Essex  
Graham Harris, Surrey  
Lesley and David Lord, Halifax  
John Durdin, Norfolk

**Leaders**

Geoff Crane, Hout Bay, Cape Peninsular  
Russell Leavett, Brantham, Suffolk, UK

Report by Russell Leavett.

Illustrations are by Kim Wright, courtesy of Crane's Cape Tours & Travel, and Cape sugarbird, African penguin, purple gallinule and black-winged stilt by Rob Hume.

Cover by Kim Wright, clockwise from top: jackal buzzard, chacma baboon, angulate tortoise, helmeted guineafowl, Cape cormorant, Cape sugarbird on protea.

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 usual conservation contribution this year of £25 per person, supplemented by gift aid through the new Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, led to a total of £160 given to BirdLife South Africa for its marine campaign, in particular safeguarding albatrosses from the impact of long-line fishing. This first donation outside Europe brings the total given to various conservation projects to £38,645 since the start of Honeyguide in 1991.

**South Africa's Western Cape  
27 September – 13 October 2005**

**Itinerary**

Tuesday 27 September – South African Airways overnight direct flight from London Heathrow to Cape Town.

Wednesday 28 September – morning arrival at Cape Town, transfer to Afton Grove Country Retreat at Noordhoek, Cape Peninsular. Lunch and afternoon walk at nearby Silvermine Nature Reserve.

Thursday 29 September – full day on the Cape Peninsula and at the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Friday 30 September – morning on Table Mountain with the afternoon at Rietvlei Nature Reserve and brief visit to Bloubergstrand. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Saturday 1 October – whole day on pelagic seabird trip to the south of Cape Point. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Sunday 2 October – whole day at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Monday 3 October – early visit to Boulders Nature Reserve, Simon's Town. Later to Darling flower meadows to the north of Cape Town. Part of group visiting the city. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Tuesday 4 October – whole day at West Coast National Park. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Wednesday 5 October – visit to Paarl Bird and Mountain Reserves via winelands and Stellenbosch. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Thursday 6 October – Strandfontein Sewage Works and Rondevlei Bird Reserve, Part of afternoon at Silvermine Nature Reserve. Overnight at Afton Grove.

Friday 7 October – transfer from Noordhoek to Hermanus via Rooi Els and the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens at Betty's Bay. Overnight at the Windsor Hotel, Hermanus.

Saturday 8 October – morning at Hermanus visiting town and whale-watching, lunch and afternoon at nearby Fernkloof Nature Reserve. Overnight at Windsor Hotel.

Sunday 9 October – whole day in western Overberg farmlands south to Cape Agulhas. Overnight at Windsor Hotel.

Monday 10 October – whole day in central Overberg farmlands and visit to Elim. Overnight at the Windsor Hotel.

Tuesday 11 October – whole day visit to Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve, near Swellendam. Overnight at Windsor Hotel.

Wednesday 12 October – part group visiting town and whale-watching, rest visit to nearby Klein River Lagoon. Lunch in Hermanus, afternoon to Cape Town via Sir Lowry's Pass. Overnight flight direct to London Heathrow, arriving Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Daily accounts**

Wednesday 28 September

Five weary overnight travellers arrived at Cape Town in glorious sunshine, to be met by Geoff and Russell, Russell having already been in South Africa for over two months and Geoff, our local leader, resident at Hout Bay near Cape Town.

Formalities over and the vehicle loaded we were soon leaving the airport and heading for Noordhoek where our accommodation was to be for the next nine nights. But not before we had ticked off Indian House Crow and Eurasian Starling at the airport, both introductions of course!

The journey to Noordhoek took us through parts of the suburbs of the city under the shadow of Table Mountain and we were soon seeing typical roadside birds of the country such as Helmeted Guineafowl (*below*) and Fiscal Shrike. More open areas produced several Sacred Ibis and Egyptian Geese, the latter often perched on house rooves or in trees. Roadside flowers included many Arum Lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*), various *Watsonia* species, all in bloom, and masses of leaves of *Agapanthus*.



Soon we arrived at the Afton Grove Country Retreat, to be met by our hosts Chris and Louise. Chris is a keener birder and ringer so had much to tell us about local birds. His garden was superb with Pin-tailed Whydahs, Common Waxbills, Cape Robins and Olive Thrushes frequent. The male Pin-tailed Whydah defended 'his' bird table very vigorously!

After settling in, having coffee and a wash and brush up, we set off for the nearby Silvermine Nature Reserve, where we were to have lunch and a gentle amble to introduce us to some of the birds and flowers of this lovely area of Fynbos.

After an excellent picnic lunch we were soon seeing typical Fynbos birds such as the stunning Orange-breasted, Southern Lesser Double-collared and Malachite sunbirds. Karoo (Spotted) Prinias were everywhere as were Cape Bulbuls. We soon learnt that 'Cape' could be tacked on to the names of many birds in this region! Taller scrub held Dusky Flycatchers, Cape White-eyes and Fiscal Flycatcher.

Apart from the birds Silvermine is noted for its flora with lots of Proteas including pincushions (*Leucospermum* spp), sugarbushes (true *Protea* spp) and cone-bushes (*Leucadendron* spp). *Pelargonium* species clothed the hillsides, looking very different from those we are familiar with in pots at home.

The flora was enormously varied and species-rich, with many confusing groups that Europeans are unfamiliar with. Daisy-like flowers were the norm and geophytes (bulb or corm bearing flowers) are found everywhere, especially where damp flushes occurred.

We also met one or two of the large and attractive insects associated with this habitat, especially Protea beetles and the handsome Table Mountain Cockroach. By the dam we found two dragonfly species – the Nomad and the Blue Emperor, the latter *Anax imperator*, a species we know from Britain.

The rugged hillsides overlooking the dam produced White-necked Raven, Rock Kestrel, Cape Francolin, Rock Bunting and Rock Martins. An African Fish Eagle was seen passing over too but pride of place went to the Spotted Eagle Owl that Graham found sitting on a rock. We also saw our first mammals, Rock Hyraxes (Dassies), sunning themselves on rocky outcrops. With this done we were all beginning to flag so we set off back to the Afton Grove for an early dinner and much needed sleep. Chris was interested to hear that we had seen a flock of 38 White Storks right over the house at dusk, apparently quite an unusual occurrence.

#### Thursday 29 September

Our first full day was spent entirely at Cape Point Nature Reserve, right on the southern tip of the Cape Peninsular. We approached the area via Kommetjie and Misty Cliffs, which lived up to its name well with spray filling the air for quite a stretch of the coastline. En route Geoff showed us his tame Spotted Dikkops and we began to be entranced by the stunning views at every turn.

First port of call was Cape Point itself, where we walked to the upper lighthouse – Southern Boubous were ‘duetting’ right by the path and looking over the side revealed lots of Cape and White-breasted cormorants and occasional Crowned Cormorants. Masses of Cape Gannets were at sea, along with Kelp (Cape) and Hartlaub’s gulls. Other birds seen included Red-winged Starling, Cape Bunting and Cape Siskin. The rocky promontory held Southern Rock Agama Lizard, Cape Girdled Lizard and Cape Skink, much to the delight of the photographers among us.

We then moved on to Oliphants Bay via the National Park Visitor Centre, where we took coffee and were introduced to the Koppie Foam Grasshopper – a large and formidable beast that exuded a foam that has been known to be fatal to dogs! En route to Oliphants we saw our first Cape Sugarbird, along with other typical species of Fynbos, such as sunbirds, and we heard our first Grassbird but didn’t manage to see it.

Oliphants Bay is always good value for terns and today was no exception with Swift, Sandwich and Common, all in good numbers, especially Swift, which was new to many of us. The rocky shoreline held several Black Oystercatchers, some Kittlitz’s Plovers, Glossy and Sacred Ibises and rather surprisingly a Cape Teal and a Grey-headed Sparrow, right on the drift-line. We walked through the dunes to a wreck of a ship seeing White-fronted Plovers on the beach and lots more terns. A distant Familiar Chat was spotted on some rocks and a few Grey-headed Gulls were seen. On our return to the car park we had excellent views of a Bokmakierie and as we set off back through the Fynbos saw Yellow-rumped Widows in damp areas and some Speckled Mousebirds on top of bushes.

The flora had been brilliant all day with lots of Ericas, Felicias, Senecios, Sorrels and Sages. The colours took your breath away. The dunes were covered with Sour Fig *Carpobrotus edulis* (or Hottentot fig as we know it as an alien in Europe), Gazanias and various Vygies (*Lampranthus spp*)

Time to return to Noordhoek but not before we had seen four Cape Zebra and thirty-seven Eland and the handsome Bontebok. During the day we had also had encounters with Chacma Baboons and seen masses of Red Locusts. Butterfly species were thin on the ground at this time but we did see several Painted Ladies and some Large Whites, the latter introduced into the Cape.

The coastal road back to Noordhoek via Simon’s Town produced gangs of Cape Fur Seals hauled out on the rocks and a continuous performance of Cape Gannets moving down the coast.

After refreshing ourselves we went out for dinner in Noordhoek, Russell spotting a Spotted Eagle Owl perched out in the open on the way. As no one believed him we had to retrace our footsteps to prove him right!

#### Friday 30 September

We awoke to fine and clear conditions so the decision was made to go up Table Mountain today – no point in going up there if the ‘table cloth’ is down. We approached via the Chapman’s Peak Drive, reckoned to be one of the most scenic roads in Africa and what wonderful views we had, not only of the scenery but also our first Southern Right Whales!



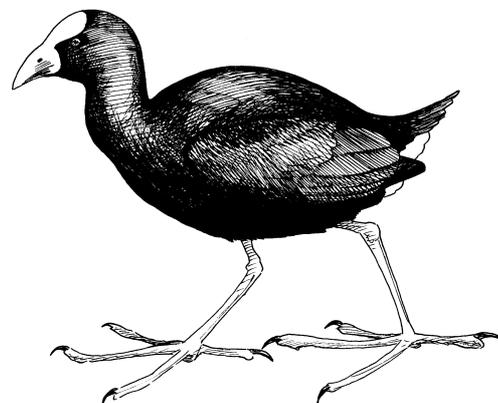
There were surprisingly few people waiting to go up the chair lift so it wasn’t long before we were bound for the top, not an experience relished by Graham who spent the entire trip up looking down at the floor! But what views we had on the way up and once we were up there. We decided to try to walk away from the crowds so set off in the general direction of Maclears Beacon. Overhead we saw Alpine and Black swifts along with the ever-present Rock Martins. Lots of Orange-breasted Sunbirds (*left*) entertained us as we became free of other folk and it wasn’t long before Lesley had spotted one of our quarry species here, the Ground Woodpecker. Several birds performed well at quite close range. Other birds at this point include Cape Canaries, plenty of Karoo (Spotted) Prinias and Cape Robins.

The top of Table Mountain doesn’t hold large numbers of birds but for those with an interest in plants there is much to see. The most noticeable

group is Restios, these attractive and often-elegant sedges occur here in a bewildering variety of species, often with the male and female plants being totally different to each other – confusing - it's a sobering thought that Table Mountain alone has more plant species than the whole of the UK!

We made our way down off the mountain via the chair lift and soon headed north of Cape Town for our lunch stop at a roadside cafe – over lunch we saw Red Bishops, Cape Weavers and some handsome male Cape Sparrows in the grounds of the cafe.

The afternoon was spent at the excellent wetlands of Rietvlei, which produced a host of bird species. Three species of grebes were there including some splendid Black-necks. We found our first White Pelican along with plenty of Flamingos, largely Greater but with a few Lessers. Both Reed Cormorant and African Darters were common, as were several species of herons including Black-headed, Purple and Black-crowned Night. Both Little and Cattle egrets were found with groups of noisy Hadeda Ibis. Ducks included Yellow-billed, Red-billed, Cape Shoveler and Southern Pochard. African Marsh Harriers hunted the reedbeds and Purple Swamphen (*Gallinule*) (*right*) worked the reed-edge with Moorhens while Red-knobbed Coots festooned the water. Waders included the ever present Blacksmith Plover and lots of Avocets and Black-winged Stilts. The first of the Caspian and White-winged terns were also seen - quite a collection of waterbirds.



Smaller birds included Burchell's Coucal, Pied Kingfisher, European and White-throated swallows and White-throated and Banded martins. Levaillant's Cisticola called from many wet places and both Cape and Southern Masked weavers were common. What an excellent site. Once again some Painted Lady butterflies were seen and also a Citrus Swallowtail.

On our way back to Noordhoek we stopped off briefly at Bloubergstrand to take that classic picture of Table Mountain from its shore. To end the day a large and impressive green Bladder Grasshopper was found on the outside wall of one of the rooms.

#### Saturday 1 October

We set off very early from Noordhoek for Simon's Town because today we were scheduled to take our pelagic trip into the oceans south of Cape Point, so had to be at Simon's Town harbour by 07.00hrs.

The trip south to Cape Point passed at a leisurely pace and in good weather, seabirds soon appeared with several species of cormorants, lots of Cape Gannets and Kelp Gulls etc. We had distant views of the African Penguin colony at Boulders and could just about make out some birds, but more of them later.

As we passed Cape Point the first of the truly oceanic birds soon appeared in the form of Sooty Shearwaters and White-chinned Petrels, both of which in turn were numerous. It wasn't long before the first of the albatrosses soared by, a Shy Albatross, soon to be followed by some Black-browed, the more common species. As we got further out to sea, seabird numbers built up, as did the variety of birds involved. Both Northern and Southern Giant petrels were seen in small numbers and the occasional Antarctic Fulmar delighted us. Further out still handsome Pintado Petrels became common, especially around the fishing boats. Numerous tiny Wilson's Petrels pattered over the surface of the sea and the observant among us spotted an odd Black-bellied Storm Petrel here and there. By now we were something like 30 nautical miles south of the Cape and in among the Line and Tuna fishing boats surrounded by thousands of seabirds! An amazing spectacle. Here new species included Yellow-nosed Albatross, Sub-Antarctic Skua and Great Shearwater. During the course of the day we clocked up 21 species of seabirds, including those commonly seen from the shore!

It was near lunch-time (sandwiches and drinks on board) and the decision was made to turn the boat around and head back to Simon's Town. Immediately all hell let loose as we ploughed north against the winds and current. Waves crashed over the boat and it wasn't long before most of us were wet through. Holding on tight took on a whole new meaning as the boat pitched and rolled and it was with a huge sigh of relief that we passed Cape Point some time later and took advantage of the shelter of the

peninsula. The remainder of the trip back to Simon's Town was, by comparison, relatively calm, so much so that we took in some Bank Cormorants as we passed their nesting rocks. Unfortunately Peter was badly affected by sea-sickness but the rest of us survived very well thanks to our magic 'patches'. So ended a hugely memorable day on the sea in among the legions of seabirds that are found just off these shores – truly magical.

### Sunday 2 October

After a hectic day yesterday, today was spent at a leisurely pace looking at the wonderful Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, below Table Mountain. Reckoned to be among the finest of gardens in the world, this place specialises in native flora so parts of it are given over to plants of the Fynbos, other parts to indigenous forest etc. The backdrop to the gardens is spectacular and because of the sheer variety of plants to be found here it attracts a good range of bird species.

We learnt that a pair of Spotted Eagle Owls were nesting in one of the trees nearby and soon had good views of a sitting bird. Apart from the usual Red-eyed, Cape Turtle and Laughing doves, Lesley and David turned up Lemon Dove and Russell saw Rameron Pigeon but unfortunately none of the Group did. Klaas's Cuckoo was heard calling away but we really didn't get to see it. However much more obliging was Cape Batis, a delightful little bird that showed well including a pair with a well camouflaged nest. Equally helpful were African Paradise Flycatchers – lovely things and not uncommon in the wooded areas. Black Saw-wing Swallows rushed around the gardens and Greater Striped Swallows were seen in several places. Noisy Sombre Bulbuls called from dense scrub and Speckled Mousebirds sunned themselves in tall bushes. There were also lots of Chaffinches, introduced into the Cape many years ago and now common around Cape Town. We saw few birds of prey but a Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk rushed past at least a part of the Group. Add to this many Cape White-eyes, Cape Bulbuls, Cape Robins, Sugarbirds and sunbirds for a nice mixture of species.

The only mammal we saw was an introduction – the grey squirrel ...

The more formal stroll around the gardens in the morning was followed by a 'do it at your own pace' afternoon, giving everyone the opportunity to look again at areas of the gardens that they enjoyed most. We finished the day with a meal at the Greek run Ocean Basket Restaurant near to our accommodation. John concluded the meal by telling us that he thought he was a churchwarden "because he knew more about sin than anyone else in his parish". What could we say except "good-night"!

### Monday 3 October

After breakfast our first stop today was at Boulders, near Simon's Town, long famous for its breeding colony of African Penguins. The birds come right up into the town at times and nest in people's gardens! We wandered along the boardwalk through the colony admiring these dapper little birds with their comic young, returning via the Visitor Centre to head north to Cape Town to drop Lesley and David off for a day looking at the city.

The rest of the group headed north of Cape Town towards the flower meadow reserves around Darling. This rich agricultural land is home to not only some of the best remaining flower meadows in the Western Cape but also an area that supports many interesting birds. As we headed north both Black-shouldered and Yellow-billed kites soon started to appear, often right by the roadside, affording excellent views. Pied Starlings are also a roadside bird here along with the very common Pied Crow, the latter often nesting on the top of telegraph poles.

Our first walk into a flower meadow revealed a startling array of flowers – we were told that they were past their best, nevertheless the sheer variety of flowering plants was extraordinary. Every colour



could be seen from the most delicate of greens through to rich reds and purples, breathtaking. Many of the flowers came from bulbs or corms, a feature of these meadows, unique now in southern Africa.

A distant raptor proved to be a Black Harrier, one of the specialities of the region and soon we had excellent views of it and later another, a fine male. Other star birds included Southern Black Korhaan, Grey-winged Francolin and later the delightful little Namaqua Dove. Several calling Quails were heard with Geoff eventually flushing them from a flower meadow. Grey-backed Cisticolas called from low bushes in the drier areas and several Red-capped Larks were seen. At one point a group of noisy European Bee-eaters passed overhead and several White-backed Mousebirds flew across in front of us.

During the course of the day we saw our first Little Swifts of the trip, especially around the small town of Darling itself where we had an excellent lunch at the Marmalade Cat Café. Our return to Cape Town passed through yet more agriculture where we saw our first Blue Crane of the trip and several Spur-winged Geese by a farm reservoir. Our journey took us past several large areas of water where Maccoa Ducks were found along with many other wetland species.

Having picked up Lesley and David we returned to Noordhoek to a splendid dinner prepared by Louise.

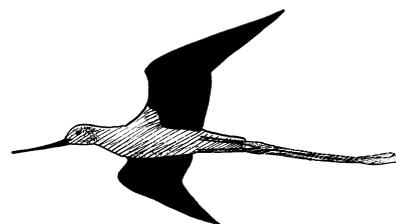
#### Tuesday 4 October

Once again we headed north of Cape Town, this time for a whole day in the West Coast National Park – a superb area of coastal lagoon, scrub and dunes.

En route we saw yet more Yellow-billed and Black-shouldered kites and a Black Harriers, much to the delight of Lesley and David who had missed them yesterday.

Our first stop was at the Geelbek bird hide, overlooking the Langebaan Lagoon; this provided us with distant views of many waders as well as White Pelicans, Greater Flamingo and a passing Fish Eagle. Later we returned to the hide, when the tide had risen and got to grips with the thousands of waders feeding on the mud and sand flats. Most common were Curlew Sandpipers with many thousands scattered over the flats in front of us. In places nice little groups of Marsh Sandpipers were mixed in with their larger relatives, Greenshank. Little Stints and Sanderling were found alongside Ringed Plovers and Bar-tailed Godwits. Here and there Whimbrel could be seen and heard and even a Common Curlew, a scarce species here. Add to this Grey Plover, Turnstone, Avocets and White-fronted Plovers among others – a wonderful place for wader enthusiasts.

The Abrahamskraal area of freshwater provided a complete contrast to the vast open flats of the Lagoon and its own distant range of species. On our first visit we found a group of students from the University of Plymouth on a field trip – it seemed a long way to come for a week or so! So we returned later when all was quiet – a Black Crake performed well and we saw our first South African Shelduck, along with other waterbirds such as Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler and Black-winged Stilts (*right*). Several Namaqua Doves were flushed from open areas and Cape Reed Warblers and African Marsh Warblers called from the reeds.



We had a picnic lunch at the Geelbek Visitor Centre, turning up Southern Grey Tits in the gardens, as well as Cardinal Woodpecker and Karoo Thrush. A large colony of Cape Weavers nesting right over the restaurant tables kept us amused. There were also lots of Red-winged Starlings nipping in to grab tasty morsels from the diners!

A stop at a view point overlooking the Lagoon on one side and the sea on the other turned up a fine male Southern Black Korhaan – for many the bird of the day. Scrubby areas held White-backed Mousebird and several Bar-throated Apalis and Karoo Scrub-robins. Best of all though was a Chestnut-vented Titbabbler, a new bird for Russell!

Later we moved to the by now very wind-swept Seeberg bird hide which overlooked a largish tern roost which included our first Little Terns of the trip, looking decidedly tiny against the nearby Caspian

Terns. Wandering down to the hide through the coastal scrub provided brief views of the always skulking Neddicky and Yellow Canary was seen well.

One of the really nice things about the West Coast N.P. was how frequently we saw Angulate Tortoise – they varied a great deal in size from tiny ones up to those the size of a tea-plate. Mammals included Red Hartebeest and Steenbok. We had also seen Ostrich during the day but no doubt like the Hartebeest these were reintroductions too.

By now all were very tired as we had breakfasted early today to give us as full a day as possible at the Park and most slept their way back to Noordhoek!

### Wednesday 5 October

A Sewage Treatment Works might not seem the best place to visit on holiday but the one at Paarl has much to recommend it. On our way to Paarl Geoff took us on a detour via Stellenbosch, the wine capital of the Western Cape and told us something of the interesting history of the town and the winelands.

Paarl sewage works has a wonderful backdrop of mountains so birding there was set against this lovely scenery. The place crawled with waterbirds including many species that we had already seen at the various other wetlands we had visited. But new birds were soon found – a Malachite Kingfisher performed well for some of us and good views were had of Little Bittern in flight. Lesley pointed out a large heron standing on the edge of a pool – this proved to be a Goliath Heron, something of a rarity according to Geoff.

There were quite a range of breeding Ibises and herons etc in some bushes including African Spoonbill, the first we had seen. Ducks included White-faced and Maccua among the usual numerous common species such as Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler and Yellow-billed. Although not especially good for waders we got to grips with our first Three-banded Plovers, nice delicate little things to be found along ditch edges. Spotted Dikkops flew around noisily among the settling beds. There were lots of Grey-headed Gulls, the most handsome of birds in their breeding plumage. Marsh Terrapins were hauled out in one place but soon slipped under the water when we appeared.

The flower that stuck out most here was Chinchinchee (*Ornithogalum thyrsoides*); masses of its white blooms lined the banks of the ditches and individual pans.

Smaller birds included Cardinal Woodpeckers, a small gang of Sweet Waxbills and overhead lots of White-rumped Swifts, our first.

After lunch in town we headed up country to the Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve, dominated by large granite outcrops and a memorial to the Afrikaans language. As we wound our way uphill Jackal Buzzards were seen soaring in several places and among small trackside birds we saw some Cape Siskins and a few Streaky-headed Seedeaters.

We arrived at some formal gardens near the summit of the hill and were able to spend a little time wandering ambling around looking at the Cape Sugarbirds (*right, on protea*) and Malachite and Lesser Double-collared Sunbirds. Other delights included Black Saw-wing Swallows and yet more Sweet Waxbills. With time pressing we left to return to Noordhoek, via a different route through the winelands. We could easily have spent more time here.



### Thursday 6 October

This, our last full day in the Cape Town area was split between visiting Rondevlei Nature Reserve and the nearby Strandfontein Sewage Treatment Works; we were getting hooked on these!!

Rondevlei was delightful with continuous comings and goings by a range of waterbirds; Purple Herons were common, Glossy Ibis likewise and areas of scrub held lots of breeding herons and egrets,

spoonbills and Sacred Ibis. We even heard a Hippo roaring away out in the reeds, we were told that two were reintroduced into the site several years ago. Pied and Malachite Kingfishers were seen from the many hides and on one island we found some Water Dikkops and a Great White Egret flew over, the only one we saw on the trip. A Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk entertained us as we walked from one hide to another and Hoopoes were heard calling in the distance.

A picnic lunch was taken in the grounds of the reserve affording us excellent views of Small Grey Mongoose as we ate.

Next we moved to Strandfontein – a large complex of pools reached by a road system similar in shape to a bicycle wheel – the roads radiating out from central ‘hub’. Almost immediately we found ourselves among large numbers of ducks, especially Cape Teal and Yellow-billed Duck but also with lots of Southern Pochard and a host of other species. There were flocks of Black-necked Grebes on many of the pans, while others had Greater Flamingos or lots of Red-knobbed Coot. Distant views of Ruff proved to be our first and as always Blacksmith Plovers’ calls filled the air in these wet places. Very nice views were had of Cape Longclaw.

Finally we retraced our steps back to Silvermine Nature Reserve for a brief walk as it seemed a fitting place to end our stay here as this was the first place we visited after arriving in the Cape. Nine days later we found an even better show of Pelargoniums and lots of the large pink orchid *Satyrium corifolium*, commonly know as ewwa-trewwa.

Maria from Birdlife South Africa joined us before dinner at the Afton Grove and told us about their efforts to reduce the loss of seabirds, especially albatrosses, from harmful fishing methods. She gave us an interesting account of research that is going into finding ways to cut down these losses, by adopting marked fishing lines for example, so that birds can see the lines and that they are hooked. Having spent the most wonderful day on the sea among these birds we felt that the conservation contribution from this holiday was going to a most worthy cause.

#### Friday 7 October

After a final breakfast at the Afton Grove we said goodbye to our excellent hosts Chris and Louise and their staff – they really had looked after us so well. Our route to Hermanus, where we were staying for the remainder of the holiday, took us right around the very scenic False Bay affording views of whales in places. But more of these later.

A brief stop on the Cape Flats to observe a fishing net being hauled ashore was most interesting. Among a variety of fish, some prized, others thrown back into the sea, was a small shark - this too was returned, alive, to the sea. These coastal waters hold many sharks, sometimes presenting problems for surfers, a popular pastime here.

We broke the journey first at Rooi Els and walked along a hilly coastal path to an area known to hold some interesting birds. In wasn't long before we were having excellent views of Black (Verreaux's) Eagle (*right*) and we learnt from a local that they had a nest site on a nearby cliff. This we duly located and we were treated to wonderful views of both birds in due course. Next we saw a real 'special' of this area – the delightful Cape Rockjumper. Although we didn't get startling views we did see both adults and a youngster, so were happy with the outcome.

Other nice birds included our first sighting of a Cape Rock Thrush, although we had heard them in the past and yet more Ground Woodpeckers. More familiar were the Stonechats sitting on roadside wires and the ever present Fiscal Shrikes. During the course of the journey we saw several groups of Chacma Baboons, Cape Fur Seals out on the rocks and Rock Hyraxes in hilly places.



By now it was rapidly heading towards lunch, which we took at the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens near Betty's Bay, being joined at this point by Russell's wife Margaret. Harold Porter is rather like a small version of the Kirstenbosch Gardens and like those gardens set against the backdrop of hillsides with steep gullies carrying water. After lunch we strolled through the gardens and soon added Fork-

tailed Drongo to our list of sightings. Familiar woodlands birds included Cape Batis, African Paradise Flycatcher and Sombre Bulbul. Black Saw-wing Swallows were frequent and we saw yet more Sweet Waxbills. We also got a good look at a Klaas's Cuckoo and two more Black Eagles were seen. A very large and beautifully marked Leopard Tortoise amused us, as did the large and busy colony of Carpenter Bees that had their home in a huge log by the entrance gate. Although we heard Victorin's Warbler, a speciality of the area, we failed to see it. Spotted Flycatcher reminded us of home although seeming oddly out of place with noisy baboons in the background!

Continuing further along the coast and passing into the beginning of the Overberg farmlands turned up yet more Blue Cranes as we headed into Hermanus. The Windsor Hotel overlooks the sea and within minutes we were watching Southern Right Whales from the lounge window, promising...

#### Saturday 8 October

Hermanus is reckoned to be one of the best places in the world to watch whales from land so it wasn't long before we were all having excellent views of these vast mammals. Many were 'breaching' further out, others pottering about around the base of cliffs right inshore. One came so close that with a run and a jump you could have landed on its back! Much of the morning was spent in this way, simply enjoying these wonderful beasts from the maze of coastal paths. Some of us went shopping at the craft market.

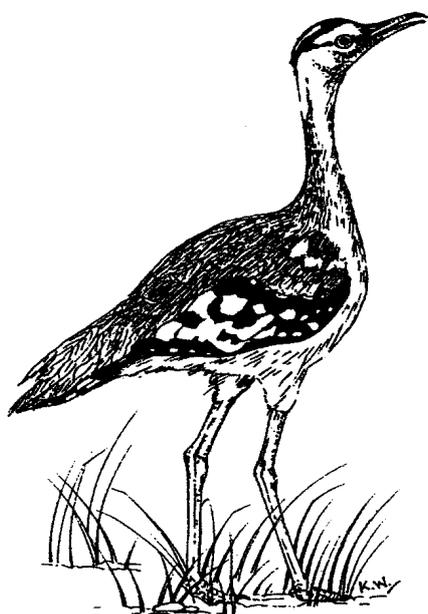
For lunch we had a picnic at the nearby Fernkloof Nature Reserve – one of the best areas of Fynbos we visited with an excellent display of flowers. I especially remember the tall blue spikes of *Aristea capitata*, the maagbossie and *Protea nitida*, Waboom. Geoff pointed out the low-growing *Protea cordata*, the heart-leaf sugarbush, that may be pollinated by rodents? Other nice plants included *Mimetes* spp, the so-called Pagoda Proteas and a number of Aloe spp.

It proved to be rather windy at Fernkloof with the result that birds kept their heads down but nonetheless we saw several species of sunbirds, Cape Sugarbird and Bokmakiere. Once again Victorin's Warbler was heard but we never did see this species. We did see Bar-throated Apalis and both Alpine and Little swifts were overhead, Karoo Prinias announced their presence at every turn and Cape Canaries showed themselves. A dead Slug-eater Snake was found on the roadside.

We took ourselves to a local restaurant for dinner – one of the nice features of this holiday has been largely eating at local restaurants, usually a different one each evening and we have eaten well. On our return from dinner we had to restrain John from visiting one of the nightclubs pounding out music into the night air!

#### Sunday 9 October

Today's trip took us through the western Overberg farmlands and south to Cape Agulhas, the true southern tip of Africa.



This area proved to be very different from any of the areas we had visited earlier, with intensive agriculture of one sort or another, interspersed with flooded areas and permanent water in the form of farm dams, both potentially rich bird-wise. Cattle, sheep and goats were widespread here with scattered Ostrich farms among the cereal fields. Ostriches escape but we considered some of those seen today as sort of honorary 'wild' birds. It was against this backdrop of rich agriculture that we found our first true bustards, a group of six Stanley's, or Denham's Bustards (*left*), depending on which book you are using! Either way these large and handsome birds enthralled us all and we had excellent views of them, both foraging on the ground and in flight. Later we were to see several Karoo Korhaans (small bustards) in similar habitat.

Cereal fields often held Blue Cranes, our largest flock numbering over a hundred birds – noisy groups flying over delighted us and we even saw a few 'dancing'. A single White Stork amounted to only our third sighting of this species.

The agricultural land also proved to be very productive for larks with nice views of Red-capped once again as well as Sabota Lark, Cape Clapper Lark and Large-billed Lark – all classic birds of the area. The only pipit of the trip was seen today, a Grassveld (African) Pipit but another Cape Longclaw was spotted, a pipit-like species.

Here too Pied Starlings were once again common and we found our first Cape Crows and the delightful Capped Wheatear, soon a frequent roadside bird. Raptors included many Jackal Buzzards, yet more Yellow-billed and Black-shouldered kites, and African Marsh Harriers by areas of water.

Wet places held many birds including a good range of wader species, lots of ducks including some White-faced, not a species we had seen much of. The dams were particularly notable for Spur-winged Geese and the always present Egyptian Geese. Flooded areas often held several species of waders including Curlew Sandpiper, Greenshank and Little Stints.

Cape Agulhas itself is an odd collection of houses around a lighthouse but the shoreline had a wonderful show of Cape Daisies and the Sour Fig.

We wandered along the shore combing the tideline and keeping a watch on the sea, where masses of Cape Gannets and terns were seen. A few White-chinned Petrels passed quite close in, as did some Subantarctic Skuas, reminders of our day on the oceans. Peter preferred seeing them this way! The shoreline held plenty of Black Oystercatchers, both Kittlitz's and White-fronted Plovers and Whimbrel. All very pleasant on a lovely day. By the end of our walk John was proudly carrying a dead Puffer Fish for all to see, a strange box-shaped creature.

Scrub birds included Brimstone (Bully) Canary and White-throated Canary, both new to us. New mammals seen during the course of the day included Yellow Mongoose, Rhebok and Springbok, all within the farmlands.

On our return from dinner we listened fascinated by the varied noises that whales make as they blow air through their blowholes. A nice way to end the day.

#### Monday 10 October

Today we travelled into the central Overberg farmlands but not until the first hour of the day had been spent whale-watching from Hermanus; once again we weren't disappointed.

Our drive through the farmlands took us via the village of Elim, founded by Moravian missionaries in 1824. This fascinating community remains intact and is noted for producing the thatchers who maintain many of the thatched rooves in the Western Cape. We were taken around the very active Moravian church and told that it had a congregation of near on 2000 worshippers each Sunday, so had to have two separate services. The lady who made us tea at the café also opened the museum up so we could visit it and told Russell that she also operated the village petrol pumps! The village stop gave some good views of Horus Swift among the Little Swifts.

Once again we were delighted to see yet more Blue Cranes and Stanley's Bustards in the farmland and a visit to a flooded area produced lots of South African Shelduck, some Ruff and a Common Sandpiper, our only one. Our first Steppe Buzzard was flushed from a telegraph pole, this species only just arriving in the Cape, where it is a summer visitor. Once again a good selection of lark species were seen and Capped Wheatear was again much in evidence, as was Namaqua Dove, with some lovely males; what a delightful species this is.

Lunch was taken in an area of the distinct Elim Fynbos, noted for its unique species of low-growing proteas etc.

Bonteboks were seen in the farmlands, where they are reared alongside cattle and Ostriches. We returned to Hermanus via the coast at Pearly Beach, where we walked a short stretch of beach and Gans Bay, but nothing new to report from either venue. By now it was very windy.

### Tuesday 11 October

After an early breakfast we set off to drive through the northern Overberg to the Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve near Swellendam – an area of indigenous forest holding a number of bird species right at the southern edge of their range in South Africa. Ironwood is the dominant tree species but many others occur including the handsome Yellowwood.

A short comfort stop en route, by an area of water, enabled us to see a lovely group of White-faced Ducks along with plenty of Yellow-billed Ducks, Pied Kingfishers and even a few Mallard, introduced of course!

At Grootvadersbosch we wandered along a pleasant forest path, which enabled us to start to get to grips with some new forest birds such as Forest Canary and White-throated Canary. But like all African forests much was heard that wasn't seen, such as Rameron Pigeon, Lemon Dove, Red-chested Cuckoo and Olive Bush-shrike. But part of the group did see an Acacia Pied Barbet and everyone saw the lovely Blue-mantled Crested Flycatchers and the Olive Woodpeckers, shortly followed by Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler.

Most appropriate of all though was the first sighting ever of a honeyguide on a Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays trip – a sort of coming of age for the company. Two Brown-backed (Sharp-billed) Honeyguides (Honeybirds) entertained us briefly in the canopy.

The forest proved to be a delightful place to be and lunch at the reserve picnic site was very pleasant indeed. Both Black and Greater Double-collared sunbirds were seen on the Coral Trees and once again Black Saw-wing Swallows hawked for insects around us. Fork-tailed Drongos were common and some Sweet Waxbills took advantage of a leaking water tank from which to drink.

Forest Buzzard was sighted and our journeys through the farmlands turned up yet more Blue Cranes and Stanley's Bustards. A nice male Black Harrier was seen and a Water Dikkop by a wet patch. A dead fox was lying by the roadside and Klipspringer was seen near the forest. All in all a most productive day, if a lot of driving for Geoff.

Our final evening meal of the holiday, at a local restaurant in Hermanus, was notable for the celebration of Lesley's birthday!

### Wednesday 12 October

We awoke to a howling gale so part of the group decided that final shopping was the order of the day, while the rest of us headed along the coast to brave a hide overlooking the Klein River Lagoon. Although difficult to walk to, once we were inside the hide it was bearable. A good sized flock of Greater Flamingos were sheltering under the bank of the far shore but much nearer was a nice group of African Spoonbills and a large mixed tern roost including Caspians and a number of wader species, all very windswept. Ducks included Red-billed and Yellow-billed and a waders Curlew Sandpiper and Whimbrel. The rattling and shaking of the hide meant that our stay wasn't too long but, as Graham said, "One hundred times better than Christmas shopping!"

Readers may have noted that the weather rarely gets a mention in this holiday report. This is simply because this, the first visit to the Western Cape by Honeyguide was blessed with amazing weather. True it was cool at times but then late September – early October is spring there with temperatures similar to those in the Northern Hemisphere in late spring. What was surprising was that no cold fronts brought mucky conditions ashore for our entire stay – they are often a strong feature of spring weather here.

We all met together for a final lunch at Hermanus before most of the group departed for Cape Town Airport for an early evening flight home. Russell and his wife Margaret stayed on in Hermanus, to visit friends there, before returning to the UK a week later.

Russell and Geoff would like to say how much they enjoyed leading the trip and to 'thank you' all for the kind gift of local wine, it was much appreciated.

Russell Leavett

## Systematic list - Birds

(E) = Endemic species, found in southern Africa and nowhere else  
 (NE) = Near Endemic species, whose distribution extends just beyond southern Africa



Common Ostrich                      Occasional birds, especially in the Overberg farmlands, all as a result of reintroductions or escapes from captivity. They are widely reared for food in the area.

African (Jackass)  
 (E)



Penguin      Excellent views on our visit to the breeding colony at Boulders, Simon's Town, where the colony has peaked at around 3,000 pairs in recent years.

Great Crested Grebe                      Occasional on some of the larger water bodies, such as at Rietvlei.

Black-necked Grebe                      Occasional on larger water bodies, especially numerous at the Strandfontein Sewage Works where in flocks!

Little Grebe (Dabchick)                      Frequent on all water bodies including small pools in the Fynbos.

Shy Albatross                      The first of the albatross species seen on the pelagic trip and then frequent among the masses of seabirds.

Black-browed Albatross                      The most numerous albatross, often around us in dozens!

Yellow-nosed Albatross                      A few sightings of the 'atlantic' race of this species.

Southern Giant Petrel                      Occasional around boats and among other seabirds.

Northern Giant Petrel                      Ditto

White-chinned Petrel                      The most numerous petrel species on the pelagic trip, often around us in large numbers. One or two seen at sea from Cape Agulhas.

Sooty Shearwater                      Numerous soon after we left Cape Point, disappearing as we got farther out to sea.

Antarctic Fulmar                      One or two individuals only.

Pintado Petrel                      This handsome bird was numerous around the fishing boats.

Great Shearwater                      A few among the masses of seabirds close to fishing boats.

Wilson's Storm Petrel                      Good numbers of these tiny seabirds among their larger cousins.

Black-bellied Storm Petrel                      One or two with the more common Wilson's.

Great White Pelican                      Small flocks at a number of larger areas of water, such as at Rietvlei and the West Coast National Park.

Cape Gannet                      Always visible at sea from any point around the coast and often in large numbers.

White-breasted Cormorant                      Numerous around the coast and on larger areas of fresh water.

Cape Cormorant (E)	Frequent around the coast with good colonies at Cape Point and elsewhere.
Bank Cormorant (E)	Occasional individuals seen from the boat between Simon's Town and Cape Point.
Reed Cormorant	The common cormorant of inland freshwater areas and rivers.
Crowned Cormorant (E)	A few at Cape Point only.
African Darter	Frequent in small numbers at many of the freshwater sites.
Grey Heron	Common both by freshwater as well as around the coast.
Black-headed Heron	Common in many situations; often in ditches by highways, by large and small areas of water and on the strandline by the coast.
Purple Heron	In small numbers at a number of wetlands, including a breeding colony at Rondevlei.
Goliath Heron	A single at Paarl Nature Reserve was very unexpected.
Great White Egret (Heron)	A single at Rondevlei was the only sighting.
Little Egret	Regular in small numbers at both coastal and freshwater sites.
Cattle Egret	Frequent in farmland, where often associated with cattle or sheep, and at many wet places.
Black-crowned Night Heron	Occasional at wetland sites, such as Rietvlei and Rondevlei.
Little Bittern	Several sightings at Paarl Nature Reserve.
White Stork	Thirty-eight over our accommodation at Noordhoek and a few singles elsewhere.
African Sacred Ibis	Very frequent sightings, often of flocks, and in a range of habitats, including among habitation.
Glossy Ibis	Not uncommon in wetlands, occasionally by the shore, such as at Oliphants Bay, Cape Point.
Hadedda Ibis	These birds were around us on many occasions and nosily greeted the start and end of almost every day!
African Spoonbill	Recorded at several wetlands including Rondevlei, where they were breeding.
Greater Flamingo	Good sized flocks at a number of the larger wetland sites including Rietvlei and the West Coast National Park.
Lesser Flamingo	Only recorded at Rietvlei where there were a few among the more common Greater.
White-faced Duck	Small numbers at Paarl and on pools in the Overberg farmlands.
Egyptian Goose	Numerous in many habitats, including around habitation.
South African Shelduck (E)	Couples and individuals at several wetlands, especially in the Overberg farmlands and at the West Coast National Park.

Yellow-billed Duck	The common duck at many wetlands, be they large or small pools or coastal lagoons.
Mallard	An introduced species. Occasional in small numbers.
Cape Teal	Frequent at many of the wetland sites that we visited.
Red-billed Teal	Less common than Cape Teal but often in similar situations.
Cape Shoveler (E)	Common at many wetlands.
Southern Pochard	Frequent in small numbers at deeper wetland sites.
Spur-winged Goose	Frequent small groups, often by agricultural dams, especially in the Overberg farmlands.
Maccoa Duck	Scarce, at a few wetland sites only.
Yellow-billed Kite	Frequent sightings – the commonest roadside raptor.
Black-shouldered Kite	Another frequent roadside bird of prey.
Verreaux's (Black) Eagle	Brilliant sightings of a pair at Rooi Els and others at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens.
African Fish Eagle	A number of sightings of ones and twos over wetlands.
Steppe Buzzard	A single sighting of this 'summer visitor', in the Overberg farmlands, was the only one we saw.
Forest Buzzard (E)	A single on our visit to the Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve was the only sighting, a species right at the south end of its range here.
Jackal Buzzard (E)	A frequent roadside raptor in the Overberg, less common elsewhere.
Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk	Sightings on two days only – an easily overlooked species.
African Marsh Harrier	Not uncommon at wetlands, both large and small and within farmland where dams are found.
Black Harrier (E)	A number of sightings of this handsome harrier, at the West Coast National Park, close to Darling and in the Overberg.
Rock Kestrel	The small falcon of the region, found in similar situations to our own kestrel.
Grey-winged Francolin (E)	A few sightings, at the West Coast N.P. and near Darling.
Cape Spurfowl (Francolin) (E)	A very common bird, in a range of habitats including around habitation.
Common Quail	Several calling and a couple flushed in the Darling area.
Helmeted Guineafowl	A very common bird, often in family groups and found just about everywhere.
Blue Crane (E)	One of the 'special' birds of any visit to the Western Cape. We saw several good sized groups as well as many 'couples'.

	Predominately a bird of the farmlands, often in with grazing animals.
Black Crake	A brief sighting at the West Coast National Park and others at Paarl Nature Reserve.
Purple Swamphen (Gallinule)	Frequent at a number of wetland sites, often climbing around in reeds in full view.
Moorhen	A widespread and common species.
Red-knobbed Coot	Present on many water bodies, often in large numbers.
Denham's (Stanley's) Bustard (E)	Several groups seen well within the Overberg farmlands.
Karoo Korhaan (E)	A few, in the Overberg only.
Southern Black Korhaan (E)	A sighting of a fine male at the West Coast National Park, others in the flower meadows close to Darling.
African Black Oystercatcher (E)	Frequent around the coast throughout the Western Cape.
Ringed Plover	Occasional sightings of small numbers at the West Coast N.P. and in flooded areas in the Overberg.
White-fronted Plover	Frequent in small numbers around the coast.
Kittlitz's Plover	Ditto
Three-banded Plover	Often by larger freshwater pools, by rivers and around the coast.
Grey Plover	Several among the flocks of mixed waders at the West Coast N.P.
Crowned Lapwing (Plover)	Occasional on roadside verges, in agricultural land and even on playing fields within habitation.
Blacksmith Plover	Widespread and common, found in all types of wet places, on the seashore and even among habitation where water occurs.
Turnstone (Ruddy Turnstone)	A few at the West Coast National Park only.
Common Sandpiper	A single bird in the Overberg farmlands only.
Marsh Sandpiper	Frequent at the West Coast N.P., not seen elsewhere.
Greenshank	Recorded at many wetland sites including lagoons, rivers and vleis.
Knot (Red Knot)	A few at the West Coast N.P. only.
Curlew Sandpiper	Abundant at the West Coast N.P. and frequent at other coastal wetland sites.
Little Stint	Common at the West Coast N.P. and occasional at other coastal wetland sites.
Sanderling	Only seen at the West Coast N.P. where present in good numbers.
Ruff	Scarce, small numbers in the Overberg and a few at Rondevlei.
Bar-tailed Godwit	Groups at the West Coast N.P. and occasional birds elsewhere.

Eurasian Curlew	Singles at the West Coast N.P and in a flooded area in the Overberg.
Whimbrel	Occasional sightings, especially in the Overberg and around the coast.
Avocet	Groups at a number of wetlands including Strandfontein Sewage Works where good numbers.
Black-winged Stilt	Frequent by wetlands throughout the Western Cape
Spotted Thick-knee	Small numbers, often right in habitation and very confiding.
Water Thick-knee	Scarce, recorded in small numbers at Rondevlei and in the northern Overberg.
Subantarctic Skua	A few seen on the pelagic seabird trip south of the Cape and one or two passing Cape Agulhas.
Kelp (Cape) Gull	Widespread and common around the coast. The only large but common gull on the coast.
Grey-headed Gull	Common and widespread, especially on freshwater but also found on the coast.
Hartlaub's Gull (E)	Widespread and common around the coast. Especially north and west of Cape Town. The common smaller gull of the coast.
Caspian Tern	Occasional in small numbers, vleis and coastal lagoons.
Swift Tern	Widespread and common, largely confined to the coast.
Sandwich Tern	Frequent on the coast, often in mixed flocks with swift and common terns.
Common Tern	Frequent in mixed tern flocks, around the coast especially.
Little Tern	Scarce, only seen at the West Coast N.P., then in small numbers.
White-winged (black) Tern	Only seen at Rietvlei, where a number 'hawking' over the water.
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	Introduced. Widespread and abundant.
Speckled (Rock) Pigeon	Widespread and common, especially around habitation.
African Olive-pigeon (Rameron)	Heard at Grootvadersbosch only.
Red-eyed Dove	A widespread and common species.
Cape Turtle-dove	Ditto, its urging us to "work harder" often filling the air!
Laughing Dove	Another common species, especially around habitation.
Namaqua Dove	Scarce, only seen in the West Coast National Park, south of Darling and in the Overberg, and then in small numbers.
Lemon (Cinnamon) Dove	Very scarce, only sighted at the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and heard at Grootvadersbosch N.R.

Red-chested Cuckoo	Seen briefly at Kirstenbosch and heard at the Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve. Essentially a yet to arrive summer visitor.
Klaas's Cuckoo	Very scarce, heard at Kirstenbosch and seen at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens.
Burchell's Coucal (Rain-bird)	Occasional sightings, more often heard than seen.
Spotted Eagle Owl	Singles at Silvermine and Noordhoek and a pair with a nest at Kirstenbosch.
White-rumped swift	Frequently encountered, especially east of Hermanus.
Horus Swift	Very scarce, only positively seen in the Elim area of the Overberg.
Little Swift	A widespread and common species.
Alpine Swift	Seen above Table Mountain, Cape Town, and widely over hills along the coast both east and west of Hermanus.
African Black Swift	Occasional throughout the area, easily overlooked among the many other swifts.
Speckled Mousebird	Frequent in the Fynbos and among scrub.
White-backed Mousebird (E)	Scarce, only recorded from the Darling area and the West Coast National Park.
Pied Kingfisher	Regularly seen at wetland sites throughout the area.
Malachite Kingfisher	Occasional sightings, Paarl and Rondevlei.
Eurasian Bee-eater	Occasional, Darling and West Coast National Park.
African Hoopoe	More often heard than seen, scattered throughout the area.
Acacia Pied Barbet (NE)	A single sighting at Grootvadersbosch only.
Brown-backed (Sharp-billed) Honeyguide	Brief sightings at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve.
Ground Woodpecker (E)	Excellent views of birds on Table Mountain, Cape Town and at Rooi Els en route to Hermanus.
Cardinal Woodpecker	Occasional sightings at the West Coast N.P. and Paarl Nature Reserve.
Olive Woodpecker	Only seen at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve.
Cape Clapper Lark (NE)	Sightings within the Overberg farmlands only.
Sabota Lark (NE)	Ditto
Red-capped Lark	First seen in Darling flower meadows, then commonly throughout the Overberg.
Large (thick) -billed Lark (E)	Sightings within the Overberg farmlands only.
European Swallow	Occasional sightings throughout the area.
White-throated Swallow	Common and widely distributed.

Greater Striped Swallow	Frequent throughout the area.
Rock Martin	A widespread and common species, especially of the more hilly places.
Brown-throated Martin	More of a wetland species than the last, frequent.
Banded Martin	Rare, only seen at Rietvlei.
Black Saw-wing Swallow (E)	Occasional sightings, coastal scrub, botanical gardens.
Fork-tailed Drongo	Occasional at the Harold Porter Botanical gardens, Betty's Bay and east into the Overberg.
Cape (Black) Crow	Only recorded in the Overberg, where frequent at times.
Pied Crow	Widespread and common throughout the area.
Indian House Crow	Introduced. Only recorded at Cape Town International Airport and nearby.
White-necked Raven	Frequent in the higher parts of the area.
Southern Grey Tit (E)	A pair, apparently with a nest, at the Geelbek visitor centre in the West Coast National Park.
Cape Bulbul (E)	A widespread and common species in most habitat, recorded on all days.
Sombre Greenbul (Bulbul)	Occasional sightings in wooded areas such as Kirstenbosch, Harold Porter and Grootvadersbosch. More often heard.
Olive Thrush	Well distributed in small numbers, daily sightings in the garden at Noordhoek.
Karoo Thrush (E)	A single at the West Coast National Park was the only sighting. Some still regard this species as a race of the Olive Thrush.
Cape Rock Thrush (E)	Excellent sightings of a pair at Rooi Els.
Capped Wheatear	Many splendid views of this handsome wheatear in the Overberg farmlands.
Familiar Chat	Only seen at Cape Point.
African Stonechat	Occasional sightings of birds on overhead wires or roadside fences, mainly in the Overberg.
Cape Robin-chat (Robin)	Widespread and common in many habitats.
Cape Rock-jumper (E)	A much sought after endemic which afforded us fair views at Rooi Els, both adults and a juvenile.
Karoo Scrub-Robin (Robin) (E)	Recorded at both the West Coast National Park and Paarl Nature Reserve in small numbers.
Chestnut-vented Titbabbler (NE)	A pair deep in scrub at the West Coast National Park.
African Reed (Marsh) Warbler	Occasional sightings, but more often heard, at the West Coast National Park, Paarl Sewage Works and in wet areas in the Overberg.

Lesser Swamp (Cape Reed) Warbler	Frequent at Rondevlei, Rietvlei, Paarl and Strandfontein. Again more often heard than seen.
Little Rush (African Sedge) Warbler	Heard at Paarl and seen at Rondevlei, much less common than the previous two species.
Victorins Warbler (E)	Always an extremely difficult species to see, so only heard at Harold Porter and Fernkloof
Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler	Excellent views at the Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve.
Bar-throated Apalis	Occasional sightings in scrubby areas or woodland, often heard but not seen.
Cape Grassbird (E)	Although a typical species of the Fynbos we struggled to see birds but heard them from time to time.
Grey-backed Cisticola (NE)	A not uncommon LBJ of drier areas and the Fynbos.
Levaillant's Cisticola	The common cisticola, especially in wetter places.
Neddicky	Only seen at the West Coast National Park – a shy LBJ of scrubby places.
Karoo (Spotted) Prinia (E)	A widespread and very common species and a noisy one.
Spotted Flycatcher	Occasional sightings at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens and Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve.
African Dusky Flycatcher	The common flycatcher of most wooded places including gardens.
Fiscal Flycatcher (E)	Another common flycatcher but one of more open areas, often seen on roadside wires, where the unwary might identify it as a Fiscal Shrike.
Cape Batis (E)	An attractive little bird of wooded botanical gardens and nature reserves.
Blue-mantled (Crested) Flycatcher	Excellent sightings of a pair at Grootvadersbosch.
African Paradise Flycatcher	Excellent views of this most handsome species at a number of wooded sites including Kirstenbosch.
Cape Wagtail	A widespread and very common species.
African (Grassveld) Pipit	Only seen in the Overberg.
Cape (orange-throated) Longclaw (E)	Occasional at Strandfontein and in the Overberg.
Common Fiscal Shrike	A widespread and very common bird of all habitats including among habitation.
Southern Boubou (E)	More often heard than seen, nevertheless a frequent bird of scrubby places and gardens.
Bokmakiere (NE)	Occasional sightings in open areas of scrub or Fynbos.
Olive Bush Shrike (NE)	Heard at Grootvadersbosch only.

Eurasian Starling	Introduced. Widespread and common.
African Pied Starling (E)	Frequent at the West Coast N.P., around Darling and in the Overberg.
Red-winged Starling	A widespread and very common species in most habitats including around habitation.
Cape Sugarbird (E)	One of the 'special' birds of the Fynbos, especially where Proteas are common and one we saw well.
Malachite Sunbird	A stunning sunbird of the Fynbos as well as in gardens and open wooded areas.
Orange-breasted Sunbird (E)	Another handsome sunbird of the Fynbos and not uncommon.
Southern (Lesser) Double-collared Sunbird (E)	A widespread and common small sunbird including in gardens.
Greater Double-collared Sunbird (E)	Only seen at Grootvadersboasch where more or less at the southern edge of its range.
Black (Amethyst) Sunbird	Only seen at Grootvadersbosch where again on the edge of its range.
Cape White-eye (E)	A very common bird in many habitats including gardens.
House Sparrow	Introduced. Widespread and often abundant.
Cape Sparrow (NE)	A frequent bird of open farmland and around habitation.
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	A single bird on the foreshore at Oliphants Bay, Cape Point was very unexpected.
Cape Weaver (E)	A very common and widespread species, the common weaver, especially near water.
Southern Masked Weaver	Not uncommon in a range of habitats.
Red (Southern) Bishop	Widespread, often common in farmland, especially near wet places.
Yellow-rumped (Bishop) Widow	Much as for Red Bishop.
Common Waxbill	Frequent in small flocks in a range of habitats including gardens.
Swee Waxbill (NE)	Much less common than the last species but seen well at Paarl, Harold Porter and Grootvadersbosch.
Pin-tailed Whydah	Occasional in farmland. Regularly in the garden at Noordhoek.
Chaffinch	Introduced. Frequent and common in wooded places including gardens.
Cape Canary	Widespread and common, the common canary.
Forest Canary (E)	Uncommon. Only seen at Grootvadersbosch where on the southern edge of its range.
Cape Siskin (E)	A few at Cape Point and Paarl – a scarce bird.
Bully (Brimstone) Canary	Only seen in the Overberg, at Fernkloof and at Grootvadersbosch.

Yellow Canary (NE)	Seen in small numbers at the West Coast National Park and at Fernkloof and Grootvadersbosch.
White-throated Canary (NE)	A few seen in the Overberg and at Grootvadersbosch.
Streaky-headed Seed-eater (Canary)	Only recorded at Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve.
Cape Bunting (NE)	Occasional at Silvermine, Cape Point, West Coast N.P. and Harold Porter.

### **Systematic List – mammals**

Chacma Baboon	Groups seen at Cape Point and en route to and at Harold Porter Botanicals Gardens.
Bontebok	Seen at Cape Point and en route to Grootvadersbosch.
Dassie or Rock Hyrax	Seen at Silvermine, on Table Mountain and at several places around the Hermanus area, including in the town!
Eland	A herd of 37 seen at Cape Point, like many of the antelope in the Western Cape, reintroductions.
Cape Fox	A dead one on the roadside near Hermanus.
Red Hartebeest	Several in the West Coast National Park.
Hippopotamus	Heard at Rondevlei, where reintroduced some years ago.
Klipspringer	Only seen at Grootvadersbosch.
Small Grey Mongoose	Several sightings in a range of habitats.
Yellow Mongoose	Sightings in the Overberg farmlands only.
Grey Rhebok	Only seen in the Overberg.
Cape Fur Seal	Common around the coast including on the pelagic trip.
Springbok	Only seen in the Overberg.
Grey Squirrel	Introduced. Not uncommon in wooded areas and botanical gardens.
Steenbok	Only seen at the West Coast National Park.
Southern Right Whale	The 'special' mammal of the trip with amazing sightings, especially at Hermanus.
Cape Mountain Zebra	A small herd of this reintroduced species seen at Cape Point.

### **Systematic List – Reptiles**

Southern Rock Agama	Not uncommon on rocks at Cape Point, on Table Mountain and elsewhere.
Cape Girdled Lizard	Seen at Silvermine and at Cape Point.
Cape Crag Lizard	Seen on Table Mountain only.

Cape Skink	Seen at Silvermine and at Cape Point.
Marsh Terrapin	Seen at Paarl and Rondevlei.
Angulate Tortoise	Seen at the West Coast National Park, near to Fernkloof and in the Overberg.
Leopard Tortoise	Seen at the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens.
Slug-eater Snake	Several seen in the Overberg.
Skapseeker (a snake)	A single one seen in the Overberg.

### **Amphibians**

Leopard Toad	This fine toad was seen at Noordhoek and at Silvermine.
Cape Puddle Frog	Seen at Cape Point

### **Butterflies/moths**

Painted Lady	The most common butterfly in a poor time of the year for this group of insects.
Large (cabbage) White	Occasional in a range of habitats.
Citrus Swallowtail	Only seen at Rietvlei.
Thysbe Copper	Seen in the Overberg.
African Hummingbird Hawk-Moth	One or two sightings through the trip.

### **Other Invertebrates (casual sightings)**

Common Milkweed Locust	Frequent in a number of places.
Koppie Foam Grasshopper	Several seen on Cape Point and elsewhere.
Table Mountain Cockroach	Several in Protea flowers at Silvermine.
Carpenter Bee	Very active colony at entrance to Harold Porter Botanical Gardens.
Bladder Grasshopper	A fine example of this handsome insect seen at Noordhoek.