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Cape sugarbird on protea (Jenny Loring)

*South Africa's Western Cape
30 October – 14 November 2007*

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Holiday participants

Sue and Peter Burge
Malcolm and Helen Crowder
John Warner
Gill Page and Julia Maynard
Mary Wardle
Barry Hennessey
Jenny Loring

Leaders

Geoff Crane and Mike Raymaker

Report by Geoff Crane with many additions by Honeyguide Jenny Loring.
Photos by Jenny Loring.

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 £320 given to BirdLife South Africa (www.birdlife.org.za) for its marine campaign, in particular safeguarding albatrosses from the impact of long-line fishing. This brings the total given to various conservation projects to **£48,333** since the start of Honeyguide in 1991. See note below from Barry Watkins and the information on the final page of the report.

Geoff Crane has also donated an equal Rand amount to the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB – see www.sanccob.co.za) on behalf of Crane's Cape Tours & Travel and Honeyguide.

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Dear Chris

On behalf of the BirdLife South Africa Marine programme and the Albatross Task Force I would sincerely like to thank you for the funding enabling us to continue our important work. Please find attached a synopsis of what we are undertaking (*added to the end of this holiday report*).

Kind regards

Barry Watkins
Albatross Task Force, Marine Programme: BirdLife South Africa

South Africa's Western Cape

30 October – 14 November 2007

Day Zero. Tuesday 30th October 2007 and overnight flight

Malcolm and Helen, thanks to a speedy taxi driver, arrived early at Heathrow and waited in the Virgin check-in area greeting fellow Honeyguiders as we arrived from across the country. Canny booking by Chris meant that most of us were sitting together on the overnight Virgin Atlantic flight to Cape Town. Some of us kept track, from time to time, of our flight's progress with the plane's navigational satellite map on the seat back screens. We were reasonably rested when we arrived when we arrived at Cape Town about 10am local time. We gathered our luggage before heading through customs to find Geoff and Mike waiting for us.

DAY 1. Wednesday 31st October 2007

Silvermine Nature Reserve – Very hot and sunny.

It's always a relief as a tour leader to have the plane and the group arrive on time at the airport with no lost luggage and no problems. This was the case for this trip! We started birding straight away with House Crow (a recent arrival to Cape Town, via Durban, from India!), House Sparrow and European Starling (due to Cecil Rhodes and his efforts to Europeanise the Cape back in the late 1800s) and a small flock of Barn Swallows, fresh out from the UK perhaps?

Circuiting Cape Town to the east in the two vans we had our first views of Table Mountain, part of a long ridge extending the length of the Cape Peninsula. We crossed this ridge to drop down to Afton Grove, at the south end of the Chapman's Peak Drive. We were greeted by our hosts Chris and Louise and shown to our rooms. What a lovely place to stay, the original house converted to guest lounges, dining area, kitchens and two guest rooms, with a pool beyond the patio. The long lawn is edged by comfortable bungalows with their own tree shaded verandas. The group found the garden, extending to a small paddock beyond, offered interest for pre-breakfast strolls to spot the local birdlife. As the week progressed John, later joined by others, ventured along the road to the nearby wetlands adding extra species to what became impressive bird lists.

After settling into our rooms and freshening up to the group met up by the pool to have our welcome talk and picnic lunch personally prepared, as became the norm, by Geoff and Mike. Our lunch was accompanied by Cape Canaries singing from the tree tops, Cape Wagtails, Cape Turtle Doves and Laughing Doves watching from the roof tops. We discovered later that we were having our picnic lunch not more than a few metres away from the Cape Wagtails' nest.

It was still very hot when we left the lodge after lunch. The first stop was a couple of hundred yards from our front gate, where a pair of Crowned Plovers were spied on a neighbouring lawn. Sharp eyes also spotted a single chick which sank camouflaged into the short grass, to be found later on a digital photo.

We drove up to Silvermine nature reserve, where we birded and botanized for the afternoon. Silvermine nature reserve is an excellent *fynbos* reserve and a great place for Mike to introduce the group to the world of *fynbos*. Fynbos, fine leaved bush, is an extraordinary habitat. Occupying the more coastal zones of the south western Cape, it supports a most diverse range of plant species. The flora of Earth is classified into six Floral kingdoms, most spanning entire continents, but the Cape Floral Kingdom is confined to this area and is one of the richest with more than 9,000 species of which two-thirds are found nowhere else in the world. We compared this with the British Flora comprising somewhere in the region of 1,500 native species, where we carry floral guides comfortably in our pocket. The Cape Floral

Kingdom, dominated by the Fynbos, is covered by 17 Regional volumes each with 2-2¹/₂ thousand species. Volume 12 'Wild Flowers of the Table Mountain National Park' covers an area of only 57 km² with a flora of over 2,200 species! There were libraries of relevant floras for our trip in the vans and Mike recommended the 'Field Guide to Fynbos' by John Manning for covering the basics. Some of the most showy and impressive groups include the several types of proteas, ericas, the vast 'daisy' family and the ancient restios which occupy the niches held elsewhere by grasses.

It would be impossible to list all the flowers that we saw on each day (many had to be left unidentified!), so I will mention a few of the most memorable plants. On the way up to Silvermine we stopped to look at a beautiful pink orchid - Rooikappie, *Satyrium carneum*. At Silvermine we found a Golden Orchid, *Disa cornuta* and also *Disa bracteata*. The pincushions - *Leucospermum conocarpodendron* - were looking magnificent and the various Proteas and Leucadendrons were looking good. The group was surprised to find that what at first glance looked like purple azaleas were in fact giant cranesbills *Pelargonium cuculatum*. Mike told us this two metre high shrub is the parent of many of our cultivated varieties.

We saw about 30 bird species this afternoon, with our first endemics being Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Karoo Prinia, Cape Canary, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape White-eye, Cape Grassbird, Hartlaub's Gull and Cape Spurfowl or Francolin. We walked around the reservoir spotting a violet dropwing damselfly, identified by its characteristic perching pose with wings lowered, pointing forward from the shoulders. We headed back to our Lodge for an early dinner and an early night.

DAY 2. Thursday 1st November 2007

Cape Peninsula – Very hot with cloud cover and no wind.

We had a leisurely breakfast, watching sunbirds and white eyes feeding in the flowering bushes outside the windows, and then set off to the African Penguin colony at Simon's Town. En route we stopped here and there to look at some more orchids and geraniums that were flowering at the side of the road. These unscheduled flower stops always produced a few new birds and either a butterfly, insect or reptile.



African penguins (Jenny Loring)

We spent a couple of hours at the penguin colony where, in addition to African Penguins, we saw African Black Oystercatcher, Rock Martins, White-breasted Cormorants, Kelp Gulls and

a Cape Robin-chat. We learnt that although most penguins had a single black collar, a few had a second band; it was suggested this might show a link with Antarctic species. One double-collared bird certainly appeared to be isolated from the others some of whom treated it with aggression.

We continued to the Cape of Good Hope nature reserve and Cape Point, the southern end of the Table Mountain ridge, where we walked up to the old light house, our goal being a sighting of the Cape Siskin. We had a fleeting view of the Siskin before the cloud came in. We had excellent views of a Peregrine Falcon and a few Yellow-billed Kites, also Cape Cormorants and Cape Gannets. We found a quiet spot for our picnic lunch on the False Bay side of the Peninsula at Black Rock. Sooty Shearwaters and a number of Terns were spotted during lunch as well as Bokmakierie, Familiar Chat and Cape Bunting. The botanists in the group were finding no end of new flowering plants: Cancer bush - *Sutherlandia frutescens*, Pig's ear - *Cotyledon orbiculata* and Medusa's Head - *Euphorbia caput-medusae*.

By the time that we had arrived at Gifkommetjie, on the Atlantic side of the Peninsula we had seen eight mammal species: a troop of Chacma Baboons, a couple of Bontebok with a foal, a lone Eland, Rock Hyrax, Small Grey Mongoose, Common Dolphin, Cape Fur Seal and Southern Right Whale.

At Gifkommetjie we found an Angulate Tortoise and a few Cape Girdled Lizards. A few of the more special plants that we saw where: *Liparia parva* and *Cyclopia galioides*, both Cape Point endemics. A beautiful little yellow orchid, *Pterygodium catholicum* and a few Erica species: *Erica baccans*, *Erica mammosa* and *Erica plukenetii*.

We had to 'drag' the botanists back in to the vehicles with the promise of more things to come! At Olifantsbos, our last stop of the day, we found a large assortment of birds. One of the highlights was a mixed group of roosting terns: we saw Swift, Sandwich and Common Terns, plus African Sacred and Hadedda Ibises, Turnstone, Levillant's Cisticola, Kittlitz's and White-fronted Plovers. These two delightful plovers were quite a challenge, excellently camouflaged as they scurried across the white sand and amongst a colourful stretch of red and orange seaweeds deposited along the strand line. By the end of the day we had seen 64 different bird species.

A few plants that were identified on the Cape Peninsula & at Kirstenbosch:

<i>Morae ciliata</i>	<i>Pelargonium cuculatum</i>
<i>Watsonia coccinia</i>	<i>Sideroxylon inerme</i> - White milkwood
<i>Watsonia borbonica</i>	<i>Psoralea pinnata</i> - fountain bush
<i>Disa cornuta</i>	<i>Liparia parva</i>
<i>Disa bracteata</i>	<i>Aspalathus angustifolia</i>
<i>Pterygodium catholicum</i>	<i>Polygala heistera</i>
<i>Satyrium carneum</i>	<i>Lobostemom glaucifolium</i>
<i>Cotyledon orbiculata</i>	<i>Nylandtia spinosa</i> - Tortoise berry
<i>Crassula fascicularis</i>	<i>Carpobrotus acinaciformis</i> - Sour fig
<i>Crassula dicotoma</i>	<i>Nemesia versicolor</i>
<i>Tetragonia fruticosa</i>	<i>Nemesia sp</i>
<i>Hebenstrietia robusta</i>	<i>Salvia africana-lutea</i> - Sage
<i>Protea cynaroides</i>	<i>Euphorbia caput-medusa</i>
<i>Protea repens</i>	<i>Gnidia oppositifolia</i>
<i>Leucospermum conocarpodendron</i>	<i>Coleonema album</i> - Cape may
<i>Leucospermum hypophylocarpodendron</i>	<i>Metalasia muricata</i>
<i>Leucodendron coniferum</i> - Dune cone-bush	<i>Felicia fruticosa</i>
<i>Leucodendron salignum</i>	<i>Chrysanthemum monolifera</i>
<i>Leucodendron laureolum</i> - Golden cone-bush	<i>Restio sp</i> - many!
<i>Diastella divaricata</i> - Peninsula silky puff	<i>Erica sp</i> - many!
<i>Pelargonium capitatum</i>	

DAY 3. Friday 2nd November 2007

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens – Sunny, but with a strong wind.

Unfortunately we had to re organise our itinerary due to the fact that there were a few cold fronts coming in, which would bring rain, strong winds and heavy swells on the ocean. The pelagic was cancelled for tomorrow. Cold fronts are the accepted weather patterns for our winter months, but as we were now in November and what should be our late spring, these cold fronts were not welcome.

We planned to spend the whole day at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, which are rated as one of the finest Botanical Gardens in the world. The gardens are situated on the lower slopes of Table Mountain and cover 560 hectares of land, stretching up the mountain beyond the formal beds to its highest point - Maclear's Beacon. We didn't cover all 560 hectares of the gardens but we certainly covered a lot!

We started with a guided walk with myself and Mike pointing out the birds and the special or more interesting plants. We took a big circular route to the top of the cultivated gardens. Here we found the protea section in full colour. En route to the protea section we found a young Spotted Eagle Owl, all down and eyes! The adult was found in a near by tree. Forest Canary, Common Waxbill and Sweet Waxbill were seen on the lawns, while Black Saw-wing and African Black Swift were quartering the skies. The strong winds were keeping a lot of the birds down, especially the raptors. We did however see Yellow-billed Kite, Steppe Buzzard and Rock Kestrel.

The photographers in the group managed to get some great shots of the brightly coloured sunbirds feeding on the nectar of the proteas and pincushions. We had a light lunch with coffee and cake in the Garden Café followed by some free time. After lunch some of the group went to the well stocked Botanical Society bookshop. Mike took some of the group for a tour of the excellent conservatory demonstrating the many diverse aspects of the South African flora which cannot be grown outside in the gardens for climatic reasons. These included the amazing shapes and forms of succulents, including horse teeth plants, a living stone looking more like the crystallised teeth of a long departed horse lying in the sand.

I took five of the group for a walk through the indigenous forest above the gardens. From a birding perspective it was very quiet; we only managed to see Dusky Flycatcher, Cape Batis and a few other birds that we had already seen in the gardens. The one bird I was looking out for was the forest dwelling Lemon Dove, which we did not find in the forests, but down near the café where we had lunch!

DAY 4. Saturday 3rd November 2007

Duiker Island / Rondevlei Bird Reserve – Strong winds and dodging the rain!

The first of the promised cold fronts had arrived with heavy rain... so we went to plan 'C'. [Geoff is to be commended for the raft of alternative plans that ensured we missed most of the unseasonable rain which frequented the Cape area during our stay.]

Our first stop was the top of Chapman's Peak Drive, where we had some great views of the Southern Right Whales in the bay. Unfortunately, Chapman's Peak Drive a famous scenic drive through to Noordhoek, and our lodge at Afton Grove, was closed for a few months due to rock falls. We then drove to Hout Bay, where we took a 45 minute boat trip out to the Cape Fur Seal colony on Duiker Island. We saw a number of new birds for the trip, Banks Cormorant being one of them.

We drove through to Rondevlei nature reserve to have our picnic lunch. The Rondevlei nature reserve was established in 1952 to protect the very rare sand plains fynbos. Mike pointed out a number of plant species that are endemic to the reserve including the Rondevlei spiderhead,

surprisingly a protea, and the Painted Lady, an elegant gladiolus. We spent the afternoon here at Rondevlei where the rain held off most of the time with the six bird hides providing shelter as necessary and generally birding, botanising, photographing and comparing our footprints with those of the local hippopotami that make the reserve their home. We saw an impressive amount of birds including the smart African Darter. A highlight was getting very good views from one of the hides of a pair of Little Rush-warblers changing shifts at their nest.

A few plants that we identified at Rondevlei:

Albuca canadensis

Carpobrotus edulis

Eriocephalus africanus

Geranium incanum

Leucospermum leviscanus

Pelargonium myrhifolium

Gladiolus debilis

Salvia africana-lutea - Sage

Psoralea pinnata - fountain bush

Rhus laevigata

Serruria foeniculacea - Rondevlei spiderhead

Solanum guineense

Watsonia meriana

DAY 5. Sunday 4th November 2007

Paarl Bird Reserve and the Cape Winelands – Overcast and windy with the odd shower.

We first drove out to the Cape Winelands region where we visited the Water Purification Plant (sewage works!) at Paarl. Here we saw many different water birds. Great Crested, Black-necked and Little Grebe, Cape, Red-billed and Hottentot Teal, Grey, Black-headed and Purple Heron. Many of the group enjoyed views of a Pied Kingfisher flying along the reed edge and perching in a leafless tree. At the last hide, where rain caught us for a while, we had close views of a number of waders including Blacksmith Plover, named for the tapping sound of its call, and a Water Dikkop (*right* - thick head, in Afrikaans, related to the UK stone-curlew) which passed very close to join chicks behind the hide. We saw more than 90 species of birds today and the majority were at the Paarl sewage works.



As the weather threatened rain again today we decided to have a light lunch in a restaurant in Franschoek. Some of the group opted out of a dessert and took the opportunity to buy up a few Christmas presents from the many arts and crafts shops in the main street.

We drove back to Cape Town via the historical town of Stellenbosch. The dramatic backdrop of the Hottentots Holland mountains and the tree-lined streets, with the white gabled Cape Dutch homesteads, all blend in tranquil harmony to make Stellenbosch one of the most beautiful towns in South Africa.

DAY 6. Monday 5th November 2007

Free Day – Sunny with a strong wind.

We took the group through to the Castle of Good Hope in central Cape Town where we dropped them off to have their day at leisure. ‘Leisure’ was perhaps the wrong word as a lot was seen and done during the course of the day. Half the group spent the afternoon on a tour excursion to the infamous Robben Island, while others took an open top tour of Cape Town,

visited the Two Oceans Aquarium or went for a walk along the sea front finding Crowned Cormorant rested on the rocks and a pair of Kittlitz's Plovers scurried close along the upper sandy shore. We had a couple of transfers back to the lodge during the late afternoon.

DAY 7. Tuesday 6th November 2007

West Coast National Park / Langebaan Lagoon – Sunny with a strong wind.

We set off up the West Coast to the West Coast National Park and the Langebaan Lagoon. On arrival in the park we went straight to the Seeberg bird hide on the lagoon, where we found a host of coastal strandveld birds, which kept us busy for a while.

The beach in front of the hide was full of waders and terns. We had a nice size comparison with a Little Tern at 22cm roosting next to a Caspian Tern at 54cm. The Caspian was obviously making a good wind block for the Little Tern! We also saw Swift, Sandwich and Common Terns in the same roost. Waders were plentiful with Bar-tailed Godwits, Grey, Ringed, Kittlitz's and White-fronted Plovers, Sanderling, Wood and Curlew Sandpiper, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Greenshank and Ruddy Turnstone. We had a chance to study the flora of the area as the walk that took us to the hide was through coastal strandveld. Here we saw a number of *Euphorbia* species as well as *Asteraceae*, *Rhus* and plenty of the Sour Fig – *Carpobrotus edulis* (Hottentot fig to European botanists. Ed).

Due to the unusually late rains that we had been having, there was a large flying ant eruption, which was attracting Kelp Gulls, Yellow-billed Kites, Rock Martins, White-throated Swallows and Pied Starlings.

We also saw White-backed Mousebird, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Malachite Sunbird, Cape Bunting, Namaqua Dove, Karoo Scrub-Robin and Yellow Canary. We also found an old nest of the Cape Penduline Tit, where we were able to show the secret entrance to the nest. Raptors overhead were Black-shouldered and Yellow-billed Kites, Rock Kestrel and Steppe Buzzard.

We had our picnic at the Geelbek Manor House in the company of Cape Francolins, House Sparrow, Cape Weavers, Yellow-rumped Widow, Laughing Dove, Common Fiscal and Hartlaub's Gulls with Cardinal Woodpeckers by the car park.

After lunch we visited Abrahamskraal Water Hole. This waterhole is the only fresh water in the park that the public have access to, so we had a constant stream of birds coming in to drink. The reedbeds were alive with Lesser Swamp Warblers and Little Rush Warblers, though we were only able to see the Lesser Swamp Warbler. Other clicking sounds were from the Clicking Stream Frogs (*Strongylopus greyii*). African Spoonbills were feeding in the shallows while Cape, Yellow and White-throated Canaries were coming and going. Pied Starlings, Cape Wagtail and Levillant's Cisticola, as well as Red Bishops and Yellow Bishops were all making use of the fresh water. The birding highlights for the day were Southern Black Korhaan, Greater Kestrel, Black Harrier, Blue Crane, Jackal Buzzard and close views of a Red Bishop weaving a nest in reeds by the path. At the end of the long day we had seen 103 bird species and no end of new flowers....

A few of the plant highlights at the West Coast National Park:

Lobelia comosa

Zygophyllum morgsana

Pharnaceum lineare

Pelargonium senecioides

Stoibrax capense

Balata africana

Geissorhiza tenella

Cyanella hyacithoides

Lycium tetrandrum

Limonium peregrinum

Salvia africana-lutea - Sage

Eriocephalus africanus

Carpobrotus edulis

DAY 8. Wednesday 7th November 2007

Strandfontein / Tokia Arboretum - Overcast and windy with the odd shower.

Our first port of call was Strandfontein Water Purification Plant (sewage works!) This large area was originally a naturally occurring wetland which was (and still is) rich in bird diversity and played host to a large amount of endemic plants. The pressure from housing projects, road developments, Cape Town's rubbish tip and the introduction of chemically cleaned waste water were evident all around us, which makes this area a priority for conservation.

Waterbirds were obviously well represented here with Hottentot, Red-billed and Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, Southern Pochard, Maccos Duck and Spur-winged Goose seen almost immediately. African Purple Swamphen (Purple Gallinule), Black Crake, and the African Black Oystercatcher were also seen. We also had excellent views of a variety of swallows and martins roosting in the scrub on the banks.

The plan was to have a picnic lunch at the Tokai Arboretum. At this point the heavens decided to open – full time! We had our picnic nonetheless, from the boot of our minibuses, under a big old oak tree, which gave us sufficient shelter. We all piled into the local café for a hot chocolate and coffee. After lunch the rain was not letting up so the group split into two, with Mike taking half the group to the Two Oceans Aquarium at the Waterfront. This offers an excellent opportunity to observe the undersea life of the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans around the cape. Massive tanks, linked to the natural tides outside, holding kelp forests and a variety of fish are patrolled by sharks! Smaller aquaria hosted pregnant sea horses, crustaceans and a myriad of variously coloured and shaped marine life. I took the other half of the group on a wet walk through the arboretum. We did manage to see a few birds like the Cape Batis and Dusky Flycatcher, but the majority of birds were obviously taking cover. Before heading home for the day we stopped at Kommetjie to see if we could pick up any new birds.

Barry Watkins from BirdLife South Africa joined us when we gathered for pre-dinner drinks and talked to the group about the BirdLife partnership's work to save albatrosses from their present catastrophic decline, caused by line fishing and ingesting the vast amounts of plastic jetsam in the world's oceans. Following the thought-provoking talk and our questions, Malcolm, as one of the Trustees of the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, presented the traditional Honeyguide donation to support the work of a local wildlife charity. In this case this was £320 to support the Global Seabird programme managed here by BirdLife South Africa. Chris, our host at Afton Grove, then gathered us for another excellent evening meal prepared by Louise, for which Barry joined us.

DAY 9. Thursday 8th November 2007

Cape Pelagic boat trip – Overcast with rain & a swell on the Ocean.

The pelagic trip finally got off! The trip had been postponed six times because either the swell out on the continental shelf was too big (6m+) or there were no boats available. As it was, a rewarding day was had by seven of the group who were joined on the trip by Ian Barthorpe, from RSPB Minsmere, and known to some of the group. Ian was also staying at the Afton Grove with his new wife on a honeymoon trip in South Africa.

This is an account by Vince Ward, the guide on board:

“The Cape weather has been rough out at sea and several recent Pelagic trips had to be cancelled. Fortunately on Thursday 8th November there was a one day window and a trip went out on the Blue Pointer 2. The trip left an overcast Simon's Town in pleasant flat seas. The trip out of False Bay was dominated by masses of foraging Cape Cormorants and Cape Gannets, presumably taking advantage of the good conditions to make up for the rough seas that have characterized the past few days. The first few miles past Cape Point delivered some

White-chinned Petrels and Sooty Shearwaters. As we entered the open ocean, the first of the day's Shy Albatrosses were seen.

Very brief sightings were made of a trio of Dusky Dolphin and a possible Southern Right Whale, but the day's sea conditions were not conducive to watching cetaceans. Shortly after the dolphins, we were then rewarded with one of the trips highlights, a single Sabine's Gull, which was promptly followed by a flock of a further eight gulls in the next wave trough.



Unfortunately, the trawlers were operating well beyond the 25 nautical miles limit, so chumming was the only option left to us. A chum line of smelly Anchovy oil was put out and it drew in a fantastic variety of pelagic seabirds. The attracted seabirds included a Great Shearwater, Black-browed Albatrosses, Wilson's Storm-petrels, Northern Giant Petrel and Arctic Terns. Another of the trip's highlights was a single Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, which have been very scarce on previous pelagics. Interestingly, two African Penguins were seen close to the boat.

The trip back to Cape Point delivered an additional Black-browed Albatross and two Parasitic Jaegers (Arctic Skuas) harassing flocks of Swift, Common and Sandwich Terns. We visited the Bank Cormorant breeding colony at Smitswinkel Rocks before returning to Simon's Town."

African Penguin - coastal, 2 pelagic
 Shy Albatross - 30
 Black-browed Albatross - 3
 Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross - 1
 Northern Giant Petrel - 2
 White-chinned Petrel - 100
 Great-winged Petrel - 1
 Sooty Shearwater - 20
 Great Shearwater - 20
 Wilson's Storm Petrel - 2

Cape Gannet - coastal
 White-breasted Cormorant - coastal, breeding
 Cape Cormorant - coastal, breeding
 Bank Cormorant - coastal, breeding
 Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) - 2
 Sabine's Gull - 9
 Kelp Gull - coastal
 Swift Tern - coastal
 Sandwich Tern - coastal
 Arctic Tern - 5

Returning to Simon's Town, the group on the pelagic trip enjoyed a late lunch of Cape Hake at Bertha's restaurant on the quayside, joined by Mike who ran them back to Afton Grove.

The land lubbers went back to the Tokai Arboretum where we decided to set up our scopes and watch the air space for raptors. We saw a Forest Buzzard, Rock Kestrel and a fleeting glimpse of what could have been an African Harrier Hawk and another fleeting glimpse of a Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk. After an hour we moved on to the wetlands at Rietvlei Nature Reserve.

We walked out to the bird hide, armed with our picnic, where we sat for a couple of hours. The saying goes... how time flies when you are having fun. We watched over the wetlands, picking up new birds. The big surprise of the afternoon was a Goliath Heron, this individual way out of its regular distribution. We also saw Cape Long-claw, Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint, Caspian Tern and African Fish Eagle. We left the hide with the wind picking up and decided to spend an hour back at Silvermine Nature Reserve before returning to our lodge.

This evening we said goodbye to Barry who had to return to the UK. He was particularly pleased that the weather had lifted to allow us to make the pelagic trip.

DAY 10. Friday 9th November 2007

Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens / Hermanus – Overcast with rain.

We left Cape Town in the rain and followed the spectacular coastline out of False Bay to the Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens. We stopped en route at Rooiels to see if we could find the endemic Cape Rockjumpers. We dodged the rain squalls that were coming in from the South Atlantic and followed the track around behind the Klein Hangberg to a likely looking spot.... We waited for about ten minutes before the Cape Rockjumpers came very close to us, affording us great views. We botanised our way back up the track identifying *Erica patersonia*, *Erica cruenta*, *Leucospermum reflexum*, *Mimetes cuculatus*, *Protea nitida* and *Virgilia oroboides* and spotted a Cape Gecko. We had to run the last twenty metres to the vehicles to avoid getting soaked.

We arrived at the Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens, with its wealth of indigenous flora in time for a picnic lunch. Luckily the rain held off. This area of the Cape has one of the densest concentrations of fynbos in the Western Cape, with many beautiful ericas, true proteas and pincushions. We spent the afternoon here, first walking up through the forested *kloofs* to a waterfall and then over a small *koppie* and back to the gardens. We looked at many plants and saw a number of new birds for the trip. Some of the birds that we saw were: Ground Woodpecker, Spotted Thick-Knee, African Paradise-Flycatcher, African Dusky Flycatcher, Cape Batis, and Cape Siskin.

We arrived at Hermanus in the late afternoon and checked in to our hotel, impressively well placed at the top of the cliffs offering excellent views of the bay and conveniently located for early morning walks along the cliff top paths. The Southern Right Whales were in the bay so we all went straight out to watch them. We had dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 11. Saturday 10th November 2007

Whale watching / Fernkloof Nature Reserve – Hot, still and sunny (at last!)

We spent the morning watching the prolific Southern Right Whales from the cliff tops. Photographing these mammals is much harder than one thinks! They kept us busy with their different behaviour traits like ‘breaching’ (a dramatic leap out of the water); ‘spy hopping’ (head out of the water); ‘deep diving’ (diving down so the tail stands vertically out of the water; ‘sailing’ (rolling on the side with one fin out of the water and ‘blowing’ (releasing air through its blow hole at the top of its head.

A few of the group enjoyed the local Saturday craft market and a few others went for a long walk along the cliff path.

We had a picnic lunch at Fernkloof nature reserve before going for a long walk in the reserve. We took a circular route up around ‘Mond se Kop’ stopping here and there to see what was flying or flowering. We came across a troop of Chacma Baboons and also some Rock Hyraxes. Most of the group, birdwatching on the facing hillside, noticed the troop approaching around a spur toward Jenny and Mike, who were botanising along the path and unaware. As they came into sight of each other, all quietly sat down waiting to see what evolved. Unfortunately, before closer encounters developed, the local baboon monitoring team moved in and scared the troop away to avoid any confrontation.

Cape Sugarbirds and Orange-breasted Sunbirds were



posing very nicely on the proteas and pincushions. As a group we must have taken some excellent photographs of these beautiful birds. We also saw many basking Rock Agamas, with their blue heads and cocky stance and we also saw an Angulate Tortoise 'quickly' crossing the road.

A few of the many plants seen at Fernkloof:

Phaenocoma prolifera

Psoralea pinnata

Podalyria calypttrata

Pelargonium cucullatum

Berzelia lanuginosa

Drosera cistiflorus

Drosera trinervia

Erica sessiliflora

Liparia splendens

Protea cynaroides

Protea nitida

Protea cordata

Leucospermum gracile

Leucospermum conocarpodendron

Mimetes cucullatus

Cassythia ciliolata

Arctopus echinatus

Hyobanche sanguinea

A small hut where the paths left the car park held neatly labelled jars with a selection of the many plants in flower at the moment. It is illegal in South Africa to collect wildlife samples, including picking flowers, so this display was useful to check those we had identified in the field or taken photos of – digital cameras with viewing screens were a great boon. A chart on the wall contrasted the flora of the Fernkloof reserve with the rest of the world: 1,600 species in only fifteen, yes fifteen, square kilometres!

DAY 12. Sunday 11th November 2007

Birding in the Overberg area to Cape Agulhas - Hot, still / windy and sunny.

We drove through the craggy mountain scenery of the Klein Riviersberg Mountains to the wheat fields of the Overberg. The stately Blue Crane, Spur-winged Goose, Jackal and Steppe Buzzard, Yellow-billed Kite and Black-shouldered Kite, Malachite Sunbird, Yellow Bishop, Red Bishop and Cape Sparrows. Ostrich, White-necked Raven, Cape Bulbul, African Pipit, Crowned Plover, White-throated Swallow, Brown-throated Martin, Fiscal Flycatcher and Cape White-eye were a few of the many birds seen in the Overberg area.

We visited the lighthouse at Cape Agulhas where the many in the group enjoyed coffee and cake in the café, and the brave scaled the stairway to the top of the tower. We then moved on to the southern tip of Africa at Cape Agulhas where commemorative photos were taken. The wind had picked up so we had a windy picnic just east along the coast from the Cape. The remains of the Meisho Maru shipwreck gave the group some idea of the hundreds of shipwrecks along this stretch of coastline. The wreck now plays host to Cormorants, Gulls and Terns.

After lunch we cut through the Agulhas National Park, which took us through undulating farmland, locally referred to as the 'bread basket of South Africa'. This gave us excellent sightings of Steppe Buzzard, Rock Kestrel and Jackal Buzzard. The highlight of this stretch was getting a sighting of Denham's Bustard and excellent views of two Secretary Birds. We also saw Fork-tailed Drongo, Red-capped Lark and Large-billed Larks. We stopped briefly in Elim, established as a mission station, and enjoyed the picturesque homes and church before heading back to Hermanus.

DAY 13. Monday 12th November 2007

Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve - Hot, still and sunny.

We spent today at the Grootvadersbosch Forest, which is situated in the Boosmansbos Wilderness Area. We had quite a long drive to get to the Forest, so we decided to drive straight there enjoying the views of the mountains to the north of the N2 national road. We

did however see Cape Vulture, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, African Stonechat and White-faced Duck en route. Once we had arrived we started to see new birds: Red-necked Spurfowl, Forest Canary and Greater Double-collared Sunbird. Then an early picnic lunch, with Fiscal Flycatcher, African Black Swift, Little Swift, Alpine Swift, Greater Striped Swallow and Rock Martin as hosts.

We went for an afternoon walk through the forest. We were looking out for (and seeing) Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Bar-throated Apalis, Dusky Flycatcher and African Paradise-Flycatcher. We had been trying to locate a Red-chested Cuckoo that was calling all around us and we were rewarded with a fleeting view of it as it flew off over a field. We also had great views of a Lesser Honeyguide collecting nesting material. We eventually found its nest high up in a Gum tree.

DAY 14. Tuesday 13th November 2007

Birding in the Overberg area to Elim and return to Fernkloof - Hot, still and sunny.

We started the day with a leisurely breakfast, watching the whales in the bay. We decided to split up into two parties this morning. Mike took one group back to Fernkloof Nature Reserve to do some more botanising and walking. I took a group back into the Overberg to see if we could find ourselves some new birds, particularly the larks!



We started on a good note with a Great White Egret on the Kleinriviers Vlei, followed by a Grey-backed Cisticola at a river crossing near the village of Elim, a Plain-backed Pipit and a Chestnut-vented Titbabbler in a thicket by the side of the road.

We had assorted views of various larks during the course of the morning, but just outside the village of Elim we found one patch where the Larks would fly on to the dirt road in front of our vehicle. With this we could make good comparisons between the species. We had the Agulhas Long-billed Lark, a recent localised split from the Long-billed Lark, as well as Agulhas Clapper Lark, Karoo Lark (a wee bit out of its range), Red-capped Lark, Large-billed Lark and Grey-backed Sparrowlark.

When we arrived back at the Fernkloof nature reserve at our allotted time for our picnic lunch we found out that the group that spent the morning at Fernkloof saw a Verreaux's Eagle riding the thermals along the ridge. They had started the day at the highpoint of the ridge with spectacular views over the Hermanus and the Bay. Most of the morning passed in finding hidden plants and poring over the floras to identify them. Star finds included *Harveya purpurea* a pink and yellow broomrape, *Roella incurva* an attractive bellflower and a wild gentian *Chironia sp*; these are a deep pink showing their relationship to our centauray. Arriving at the rendezvous area in advance of meeting the birders, the formal garden provided an interesting diversion. Mary came across a house snake in the nursery. Along a new found path, sunbirds, sugarbirds and mousebirds frequented the trees and shrubs only a few yards away, the Verreaux's Eagle glided in overhead and the path was lined with a spectacular display of flowering plants including a diversity of everlasting flowers with one single maroon centred white flower providing feeding for maybe a dozen varied bugs and beetles.

The whole group spent the afternoon at Fernkloof nature reserve, finding a Cape Batis on its nest in the formal garden before returning to the cliffs in front of our hotel for 4 o'clock afternoon tea and some more whale watching.

DAY 15. Wednesday 14th November 2007
Hermanus & Stellenbosch - Hot, windy and sunny.

We left Hermanus at 10 o'clock and headed for Stellenbosch via the Houwhoek and Sir Lowry's Passes, which traverse the Hottentots Holland mountains. We stopped at the Houwhoek Farmstall, where we were greeted by a spectacular lenticular (lens-shaped) cloud catching the sun as we returned to the vans, en route to Stellenbosch.



Once in Stellenbosch most of the group enjoyed exploring 'Oom Samie se Winkle' a traditional general and hardware store set out in colonial style of the 19th Century and offering a variety of trinkets excellent as stocking fillers, before we had a light lunch at the Blue Orange Café. Some of the group went for a walk up the river in Stellenbosch seeing African Black Duck and a few other birds. Others in the group explored Stellenbosch and the Village Museum. Towards the end of the afternoon we headed off to Cape Town's International Airport for the group's evening departure for the overnight flight home.

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BIRDS

Common Ostrich	Forest Buzzard	Sandwich Tern
African (Jackass)	Jackal Buzzard	Common Tern
Penguin	Rufous-chested	Arctic Tern
Great Crested Grebe	Sparrowhawk	Little Tern
Black-necked Grebe	African Marsh-Harrier	Rock Dove (Feral
Little Grebe (Dabchick)	Black Harrier	Pigeon)
Shy Albatross	Peregrine Falcon	Speckled (Rock) Pigeon
Black-browed Albatross	Rock Kestrel	African Olive-Pigeon
Yellow-nosed Albatross	Greater Kestrel	(Rameron Pigeon)
Northern Giant Petrel	Cape Spurfowl	Red-eyed Dove
Great Winged Petrel	(Francolin)	Cape Turtle-Dove
White-chinned Petrel	Red-necked Francolin	Laughing Dove
Great Shearwater	Helmeted Guineafowl	Namaqua Dove
Sooty Shearwater	Blue Crane	Lemon (Cinnamon) Dove
Wilson's Storm-petrel	Black Crake	Red-chested Cuckoo
Great White Pelican	Purple Swamphen	Burchell's Coucal
Cape Gannet	(Gallinule)	Spotted Eagle-Owl
White-breasted	Common Moorhen	White-rumped Swift
Cormorant	Red-knobbed Coot	Horus Swift
Cape Cormorant	Denham's (Stanley's)	Little Swift
Bank Cormorant	Bustard	Alpine Swift
Reed Cormorant	Southern Black Korhaan	Speckled Mousebird
Crowned Cormorant	African Black	White-backed Mousebird
African Darter	Oystercatcher	Red-faced Mousebird
Goliath Heron	Ringed Plover	Pied Kingfisher
Grey Heron	White-fronted Plover	Malachite Kingfisher
Black-headed Heron	Kittlitz's Plover	Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Purple Heron	Three-banded Plover	African Hoopoe
Great (White) Egret	Grey Plover	Lesser Honeyguide
Little Egret	Crowned Lapwing	Ground Woodpecker
Cattle Egret	(Plover)	Cardinal Woodpecker
Black-crowned Night-	Black-smith Lapwing	Agulhas Clapper Lark
Heron	(Plover)	Agulhas Long-billed Lark
Little Bittern	Ruddy Turnstone	Karoo Lark
African Sacred Ibis	Common Sandpiper	Red-capped Lark
Glossy Ibis	Green Sandpiper	Large-billed (Thick-billed)
Hadedda Ibis	Wood Sandpiper	Lark
African Spoonbill	Marsh Sandpiper	Grey-backed Sparrowlark
Greater Flamingo	Greenshank	(Finchlark)
White-faced Duck	Curlew Sandpiper	Barn (European) Swallow
Egyptian Goose	Little Stint	White-throated Swallow
South African Shelduck	Sanderling	Greater Striped Swallow
Yellow-billed Duck	Bar-tailed Godwit	Rock Martin
African Black Duck	Eurasian Curlew	Brown-throated Martin
Cape Teal	Whimbrel	Sand Martin
Hottentot Teal	Pied (Old World) Avocet	Banded Martin
Red-billed Teal	Black-winged Stilt	Black Saw-wing
Cape Shoveler	Spotted Thick-knee	(Swallow)
Southern Pochard	(Dikkop)	Fork-tailed Drongo
Spur-winged Goose	Water Thick-knee	Cape (Black) Crow
Maccoa Duck	(Dikkop)	Pied Crow
Secretarybird	Arctic Skua	House Crow
Cape Vulture	Kelp Gull	White-necked Raven
Yellow-billed Kite	Grey-headed Gull	Cape Bulbul
Black-shouldered Kite	Hartlaub's Gull	Sombre Greenbul
Verreaux's (Black) Eagle	Sabine's Gull	(Bulbul)
African Fish Eagle	Caspian Tern	Olive Thrush
Steppe Buzzard	Swift Tern	Karoo Thrush

Cape Rock-Thrush
 Capped Wheatear
 Familiar Chat
 African Stonechat
 Cape Robin-Chat (Robin)
 Cape Rock-jumper
 Karoo Scrub-Robin
 (Robin)
 Chestnut-vented
 Titbabbler
 African (Marsh) Reed-
 Warbler
 Lesser Swamp-Warbler
 (Cape Reed)
 Little Rush-Warbler
 (African Sedge)
 Yellow-throated
 Woodland-Warbler
 Bar-throated Apalis
 Cape Grassbird
 Zitting (Fantailed)
 Cisticola
 Grey-backed Cisticola

Levillant's Cisticola
 Neddicky
 Karoo (Spotted) Prinia
 Dusky Flycatcher
 Fiscal Flycatcher
 Cape Batis
 African Paradise-
 Flycatcher
 Cape Wagtail
 African (Grassveld) Pipit
 Plain-backed Pipit
 Cape (Orangethroated)
 Longclaw
 Common Fiscal (Shrike)
 Southern Boubou
 Bokmakierie
 Eurasian Starling
 Pied Starling
 Wattled Starling
 Red-winged Starling
 Cape Sugarbird
 Malachite Sunbird
 Orange-breasted Sunbird

Southern Double-collared
 Sunbird
 Greater Double-collared
 Sunbird
 Cape White-eye
 House Sparrow
 Cape Sparrow
 Cape Weaver
 Southern Masked-
 Weaver
 Red Bishop
 Yellow Bishop
 Common Waxbill
 Swee Waxbill
 Pin-tailed Whydah
 Chaffinch
 Cape Canary
 Forest Canary
 Cape Siskin
 Brimstone (Bully) Canary
 Yellow Canary
 White-throated Canary
 Cape Bunting

MAMMALS

Baboon, Chacma
 Bat *sp*
 Bontebok
 Dassie, Rock (Hyrax)
 Dolphin, Common
 Duiker, Common
 Eland
 Mongoose, Small Grey
 Mongoose, Yellow
 Mouse, Striped
 Rhebok, Grey
 Seal, Cape Fur
 Squirrel, Grey
 Steenbok
 Whale, Southern Right

REPTILES

Agama, Southern Rock (*right*)
 Chamaeleon, Cape Dwarf
 Gecko, Cape
 Lizard, Cape Girdled
 Skink, Cape
 Snake, House
 Snake, Mole
 Tortoise, Angulate
 Tortoise, Leopard





BirdLife South Africa: Marine Programme and Albatross Task Force 2008
Barry Watkins and Meidad Goren

The Albatross Task Force, South Africa was formed in 2006 and is based in Cape Town. Worldwide, 100,000 albatrosses die each year on fishing hooks or every five minutes an albatross is killed. Seabirds are also killed in other fisheries. We are working primarily with fishermen and inspectors to reduce the incidental mortality of albatrosses and other seabirds in our waters.

The demersal longline (hake) fishery became commercial in 1998 and bird kills are 0.0004 birds/1000 hooks, which is an acceptable international rate. In the tuna pelagic longline fishery 0.34 birds/1000 hooks are being killed and the main species killed are White-capped and Black-browed albatrosses and White-chinned petrels but a total of 200 birds/annum. Our work focuses on line weighting trials and this season experimenting with *tori* line designs.

Of particular concern last year was the unacceptable high level of bird mortalities in the foreign-flagged tuna pelagic fishery. ATF, and often with the help of CapFish the observer company, collected dead seabirds returned to port by observers. Basic analysis undertaken indicated that 1059 seabirds were killed between June-December 2007 with catch a rate of 0.36 birds/1000 hooks. New and stricter permit conditions are in place for 2008 and ATF will be involved with the briefing of observers on these vessels.

The deep-sea hake trawl fishery was estimated to be killing a maximum of 18,000 birds per year, primarily White-capped (43%) and Black-browed (37%) albatrosses prior to August 2006 when the deployment of *tori* lines became mandatory. Experimental data with the use and non-use of *tori* lines indicates that flying these bird streamers reduces mortality in the order of 90%.

We are also involved with training fishermen on mitigation methods as well as the inspectors. Public talks and a display in the Cape Town Aquarium helps raise awareness outside the fishing environment. The critically endangered leatherback and loggerhead turtles are also caught on longlines and we have cutting tools for the fishermen to release these animals alive at sea. Over 20,000 pelagic sharks are killed in our waters and a shark vessel will be chartered this year to do gear modification trials.