



Drakensburg Rockjumper is one of two species of the family Chaetopidae – a family unique to Southern Africa and now thought to be most closely related to Picathartes and Rail-babblers! (Simon Mitchell)

BEST OF SOUTH AFRICA

21 SEPTEMBER – 4 OCTOBER 2017

LEADER: SIMON MITCHELL

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Although South Africa often conjures typical savannah images of mammals and Kruger National Park, it also has a fantastic variety of birds to offer, many of them endemic. Our tour took us from the spectacular fynbos-clad mountains of the Western Cape extending where snow-tipped peaks drop precipitously all the way down to rocky beaches home to nesting penguins and cormorants. We visited to the extreme dry of the Karoo desert where a wonderful selection of often tricky and nomadic lark species performed well. The spectacular forested mist-belts and gorges around the cape provided a range of endemics. High altitude passes into Lesotho contrasted with flat high-altitude plateaus and marshes around Wakkerstroom and with each location new birds abounded.

The 2016 Birdquest to South Africa continued our long run of successful trips to this classic birding destination. We saw a whole host of fantastic birds, including Southern Bald Ibis, Lammergeier, Black Harrier, Grey-winged Francolin, Blue and Wattled Cranes, six species of bustard, Cape Parrot, Knysna

Woodpecker, Knysna Turaco and no less than 18 species of lark, including all four possible species of Long-billed Lark, Blue Swallow, three endemic tits, Bush Blackcap, Orange Ground Thrushes a plethora of chats, both Rockjumpers, Namaqua Warbler, Barratt's, Knysna Victorin's and even Cinnamon-breasted Warblers, Karoo Eremomela, Yellow-tufted and Yellow-breasted Pipits, Olive Bush-shrike, Southern Tchagra, both sugarbirds, Cape and Drakensburg Siskins, Black-headed and Protea Canaries. On the mammal front highlights included excellent views of Eland and Grey Rhebok.



The spectacular view from Sir Lowry's Pass over False Bay. (Simon Mitchell)

With advanced news that weather conditions meant our pelagic trip would not be able to run for at least the first 3 days of our tour we decided upon a quickly revised itinerary which might allow us to undertake the trip on a different date. Therefore, we headed first to the Constantina mistbelts area in the hope of connecting with one of our more difficult cape endemic targets; Knysna Warbler.

A walk around the cool mist-belt forests gave us our first taste of South African birding. Forest Siskins, Olive Thrush, Cape Batis and Sweet Waxbills were among the star attractions as we picked up a good variety of typical cape woodland species. Good views of Forest Buzzard and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds were also highlights, however we didn't hear anything of the skulking Knysna Warblers we were hoping for.

After lunch we made our way to Strandfontein Sewage Works. Here we found an excellent variety of new species. Along the and grassy sides of the lagoons we located, Cape Sparrows, Cape Wagtails, Cape Francolin, Cape Longclaw and Levaillant's Cisticola as well as good views of Little Rush Warbler. On the pools an excellent variety of waterbirds were present including Cape Teal, Southern Pochard, Yellow-billed Duck, Southern Pochard and Egyptian Goose. Amongst these we also found Little, Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes and a handful Maccoa Duck - the only ones of the trip. Other waterbirds included Purple, Grey and Black-headed Heron, Sacred and Glossy Ibis, Greater Flamingo, Purple Heron, Grey Heron and Black-headed Heron. Red-knobbed Coots were present in some numbers, and along the reedy edges we picked up Common Moorhen and African Swamphens. One a shallower pool, we also noted a few

shorebirds, including Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Turnstone and Greenshank. Roosting Gulls and Terns included several Greater Crested, Sandwich and Caspian Terns and Cape, Hartlaub's and Grey-headed Gulls. Amazing views of a pair of Water Thick-knee were an excellent late-evening highlight.

]The next morning we headed early towards the Hottentot Holland mountains. We focused our efforts at Sir Lowry's Pass - a site famous for the both its spectacular scenery and very special birds. Setting off through the fynbos-covered slopes in extremely windy conditions we still managed to pick up a good selection of Excellent numbers of Cape Sugarbirds and Orange-breasted Sunbirds flitting between the flowering bushes. Not long after we spotted our first Grey-backed Cisticolas and although the bird were somewhat flighty, gained brief view of a flock of Cape Siskins as they flicked amongst the rocky outcrops.

Heading lower down the slopes we soon heard the distinctive song of one of our key target species - a Victorin's Warbler. Fortunately the bird was extremely co-operative and we soon gained sensational views down to just a few feet. Our second target was far less co-operative and in the difficult conditions we initially drew a blank in our search for Cape Rockjumper. One the way back however, we heard a brief snatch of distant song. We spent the next hour tracking this to it's source amongst the boulders, but the birds were keeping extremely low and our views were limited to glimpses and flybys. Frustrated, we decided to try a different location.

After lunch we called at a different stop en route to Betty's Bay. Almost immediately a single young male Rockjumper popped our to greet us, giving fantastic views right by the roadside. With our target of the day achieved we headed down to Betty's Bay where a wonderful parade of African Penguins waddled around at close range. As well as watching these often comic birds interact around our feet, we also systematically picked our way through the roosting Cormorants species until we were confident we'd all seen Bank, Cape and Crowned roosting together.



Cape Rockjumpers eventually provided fantastic close range views despite challenging weather conditions. (Simon Mitchell)



African Penguins need little introduction (Simon Mitchell)

The next day we again headed out from our hotel near Cape Town very early we made our way towards the Swellendam area. Shortly after passing through Bredasdorp we began birding the grasslands in earnest. Numerous Red-capped Larks, African Stonechats and Capped Wheatears flicked along the fence lines, whilst several Large-billed Larks were found in the open fields. Thicker vegetation held our first Karoo Scrub-Robins and Fiscal Flycatchers as well as large mixed flocks of Southern Masked Weavers and Southern Red Bishops.

Continuing along the dirt roads we located our first group of Karoo Korhaan in a roadside field. Soon after our first views of a close Cape Vulture were gained as a lone individual languidly flapped past us at fairly close range and we gained excellent views of several groups of roadside Blue Cranes. We spent the next few hours picking out more larks, pipits and raptors before slowly making our way back towards Cape Town. More Korhaans, Common Duiker and several groups of Yellow Mongoose required more stops. On our final pull-off we suddenly spotted a group of Denham's Bustards flying in and were able to gain wonderful scope view in the evening light.

Unsure whether we might still be able to a pelagic trip we decided to do an early start and try some seawatching from the Cape, before rejoining those who needed a lie-in for breakfast at our hotel. The continuing onshore winds meant that, although fairly distant, we did pick up a good selection of species including hundreds of White-chinned Petrels, several Shy Albatross and Sooty Shearwaters, a couple of Northern Giant Petrel and a single Pomarine Skua. A few Black Oystercatchers and a pair of Whimbrel were also notable additions.

In atrocious weather we decided to have a long breakfast, before heading back out to the Swellendam area the following day, this time for a long trip around De Hoop N.R. Here we finally gained good views of Cape Long-billed Larks as well as a good selection of other species including African Hoopoe, Black Saw-wings, Cape Francolin, Brown-throated Martins, White-throated and Pearl-breasted Swallows, Black-crowned Night-heron and Speckled Mousebird.

Continuing to the scrub around the deeper sections of the vlei we came across good numbers of swifts feeding overhead, including several African Black and Alpine Swifts amongst masses of White-rumped and Little. The star find of the afternoon however, was connecting with a single Southern Tchagra. Unfortunately the bird gave us the run around popping up for only a few seconds at a time, although most of the group managed reasonable views. Also seen were good numbers of Great Crested Grebes on the water, and a few Cape Batis, Bar throated Apalis and Common Waxbills around the fringes.

The following day, having succeeded in seeing all the key species at De Hoop and the Agulhas grasslands the previous day we decided to visit a large patch of mist-belt forest along Agulhas escarpment. This proved to be an excellent move, and during the course of the morning we encountered a number of species which were not seen anywhere else on the trip. Several Forest Canaries were on the fringes of the forest were a first sighting. Several Greater Double-collared Sunbirds showed wonderfully as we made our way further into the reserve. A number of Cape Batis and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatchers were also seen well. Olive Woodpeckers performed well close to the track and we eventually picked out a few Brown-throated Woodland Warblers amongst the large flocks of Cape White-eyes. Although we couldn't hear any song of Olive Bush-shrikes perseverance eventually allowed us to find a dowdy female clambering in the canopy. Just as we climbed in the van to leave however, a showy male flicked into a lone tree in the car park!



Olive Bush-shrike at Grootvadersbosch. (Simon Mitchell)

Continuing deeper into the thickly vegetated valleys we heard our first of several Knysna Warblers. For the next hours or so we tried to gain views of three different birds. With the bird refusing to break cover we began to think this ace ultra-skulker had defeated us. We decided on one last attempt at a different location.

At our second stop we wondered whether the heat of the day might work against us, but it wasn't long before a Knysna Warbler suddenly burst into song. After a couple of attempts to tempt the bird into the open we realized there was only one thing for it – to have any chance of seeing the bird we would have to get *inside* the thick bank of scrub which it was singing from! Scuttling through to a slightly more open area under the

hedge we all crouched down and tried again to lure the bird in. Keeping track of it in such dark conditions where our movement was restricted proved challenging, but eventually the whole group gained views of the bird.

A very civilized lunchtime stop provided the opportunity to do some more birding while our food was being prepared. Amazingly this short session produced a wealth of species including Brown-hood Kingfisher, African Crowned Eagle and even Knysna Woodpecker all from the garden of the café where we had stopped!



Knysna Woodpecker showed incredibly well near Grootvadersbosch (Simon Mitchell)

With news that we would finally be able to undertake the planned pelagic the following day we decided we ought to head to our accommodation a little earlier and than on previous days and were able to arrive around 6pm for a short rest before dinner.

We assembled very early the next morning to head out on our pelagic from Simonstown Quay. With the winds having eased we were pleased to find we would be going at all - since the previous forecasts had meant we wouldn't be guaranteed a departure. As we passed Cape Point we began to not our first White-chinned Petrels and Shy Albatross of the trip and noted a few Southern Giant Petrel. Continuing South we headed to the area we hoped to encounter trawlers pulling in their catch. For South African pelagic this can be a 'make or break' as often thousands of seabirds gather around trawlers whilst they may be at relatively low densities on the open sea. After an hour or so of powering across the waves we breathed a sigh of relief as our first trawler appear as a speck on the horizon.



The seabird spectacular to the trawling grounds of Cape Town is always a highlight!. (Simon Mitchell)

As we pulled adjacent the trawler a mass of birds greeted us. We counted at least a thousand Great Shearwaters and 2000 White-chinned Petrels, swarmed all around us, together with around 200 Shy Albatross, 300 Black-browed Albatross, 4 Northern Giant and 2 Southern Giant Petrels (as well as another 15 or so unidentified Giant Petrel sp.). Amongst the melee we also managed to pick up a few more species, with singles of Sooty Shearwater, 3 Pintado (Cape) Petrels, 2 Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross and best of all 5 Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross!

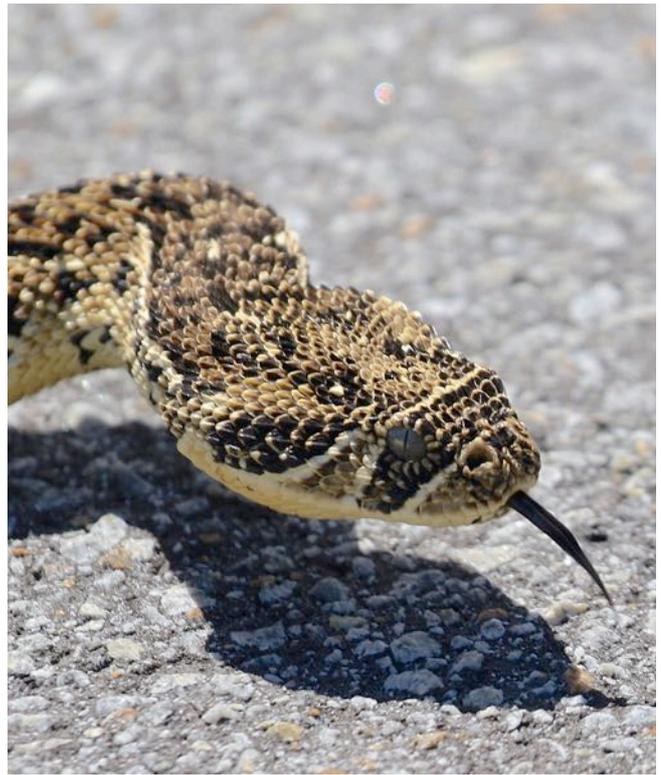
Upon returning to land we headed immediately towards our next locations on towards Langebaan. Our first port of call was around the wildflower meadows around Darling. A wonderful still evening in this area produced some excellent species. In quick succession we located our first displaying Cape Clapper Lark a displaying Southern Black Korhaans a close flyby Black Harrier (previous birds having been glimpses from bust highways) and a single Grey-winged Partridge. A second stop just further up the road produced Thick-billed Larks and our first Cape Longclaws as well as 'on-the-deck' views of Cloud Cisticola.



Grey-winged Francolin can be a tricky species to connect with at West Coast N.P (Simon Mitchell)

The following morning we spent the day in West Coast N.P where a wonderful array of species greeted us. As well as tougher coastal scrub species like Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler and Cape Penduline-tit we also encountered good numbers of common species such as Cape Bunting, African Hoopoe, Cape Wagtail, White-throated Swallow. The mud flats also held good numbers of Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Curlew, Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover and Curlew Sandpiper as well as a few Marsh Sandpiper and Greenshank.

Other wildlife was also a highlight, with wonderful displays of wildflowers as well as sightings of Eland, at least 10 Angulate Tortoise and bet of all a showy Puff Adder which we found crossing the road and were able to jump out of the vehicle to get up close personal with. After checking in out of our hotel we called we called in at a site near Langebaan where a pair of breeding Verreaux's Eagles showed well. Soon after we made a stop off in at another area of fields north of Langebaan. Here we soon found the key staked-out species we were hoping for. Several Sickle-winged Chats competed for our attention and after a brief search we located at least two Agulhas Long-billed Larks.



West Coast N. P. held Southern Black-bellied Korhaans, Puff Adders and supremely elegant Blue Cranes. (Simon Mitchell)

Next we moved to an area of salt pans in search of Chestnut-banded Plover. Although we couldn't find any several other species of both African and newly arrived Palearctic waders were present. Most numerous among these were Curlew Sandpipers, but we also found good numbers of Little Stint and Greenshank. Additionally good numbers of Grey, Ringed, Kittlitz's, White-fronted and Three-banded Plover were seen.

Heading north towards Clanwilliam we made a couple of final stops. The first was a rather abrupt stop en route when we glimpsed a large Bustard flying in and landing in open fields adjacent the road. Jumping out of the vehicle and setting our scopes up we were elated to find a group of Ludwig's Bustards showing well. Our second stop was at mountain pass just South of Clanwilliam where a pair of Verreaux's Eagles displayed overhead and we just before dusk we were able to locate a singing Protea Canary. We arrived at our accommodation in Calvinia in time for a late dinner and a few well-earned hours of sleep before another early start the following morning.

Heading out with packed breakfasts we made through the desert we soon started picking up our first specialist of the Karoo specialist species. Spike-healed and Karoo Long-billed Larks performed and showed well and during breakfast at a river washout we picked up a whole sweet of excellent birds including Fairy Flycatcher, Pirit Batis, Namaqua Warbler. The most unexpected sighting however, was the first of several small groups of Orange River White-eyes.

Continuing further north towards Brandvlei we continued to accrue new species. Lark-like Bunting, Black-headed Canary, and Streaky-headed Seedeaters proved to be common and we stopped to enjoy good views of Namaqua Sandgrouse. A clear highlight was locating a pair of showy Red Larks in one of the areas of thicker vegetation. Heading North towards Kenhardt we gained more views of Karoo Korhaans as well as small groups of Red-billed Quelea. Systematically checking the most open areas of stony pebbles we were unfortunately unable to find any Sclater's Larks, although we did spot a group of Double-banded Coursers. We also gained good views of both Bradfield's (Thick-billed) Lark and were surprised to find a single Stark's Lark.



Karoo Korhaans were seen regularly around the Agulhas grasslands and Karoo. (Simon Mitchell)

For our second morning in the Karoo we headed South before dawn through the Tanqua Karoo National Park. In the cool of the day there we found roosting raptors still sat on the telegraph. Since Brown Snake-eagles and Greater Kestrel were both new birds for the trip. Continuing further South we soon picked up a small flock of Karoo Eremomelas picking along sparsely vegetated drainage lines.



Tiny Karoo Eremomelas were seemingly always moving. (Simon Mitchell)

Continuing South through we continued to find more Karoo species. Dusky Sunbirds and Namaqua Sandgrouse showed well around a large washout, whilst Karoo Larks, Tractrac Chats and Familiar Chats also entertained. Continuing further south we spent an extending period searching a rocky pass for Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. At first we heard no response from these increasing shy birds, but someone spotted one creeping along a small crevice at the top of the cliff almost 500m away. Getting closer we managed reasonable scope views of the birds as they crept along the top of the ridge. Heading back to Cape Town, the airport hotel held one new bird in the form of a Spotted Thick-knee sat nonchalantly in the small garden near the airport!

After a morning flight to Durban we headed into the highlands towards the town of Creighton. A brief setback due to problems with our rental vehicle meant we lost a few minutes and decided to stop for lunch a little earlier in Howick. Here, the spectacular waterfall held a few nice new species including Mountain Wagtail and Bronze Manikins. The real star however was a quartering Peregrine that provided wonderful views with an amazing backdrop and even tried to stoop on a pair of Southern Bald Ibis!



A Peregrine flashes past the spectacular cascade at Howick Falls. (Simon Mitchell)

We spent the afternoon at a small botanical garden along the Karkloof. Here we found a good range of forest species, with Orange Thrush and representing the undoubted highlights. Other good species that afternoon included our first Long-crested Eagle, African Harrier-hawk and Black-winged Lapwing. Several Olive Pigeons, Southern Black Tit and Dark-capped Bulbul were also seen, but we could manage to get views of the Chorister Robin-chat we heard singing. Losing the light we headed for dinner at our accommodation near Creighton.

The 23rd saw us make our way up towards Lesotho through the winding roads of Sani Pass. The day started well a roadside Red-throated Wryneck right outside our accommodation. Calm, still conditions made for a fantastic day in the field. We began on the lower stretches of the pass where stops for Bush Blackcap and Brown-backed Honeybirds both performed brilliantly, the former singing in the open and the latter zipping. Continuing further up the pass we gained good views of our first Buff-streaked Chats, as well as our first Sentinel Rock-thrush. A skulky Barratt's Warbler showed briefly, but closely along the road and Gurney's Sugarbird zipped between flowering Proteas - this species favoured nectar-source.



Once again, the views heading up Sani Pass were spectacular!. (Simon Mitchell)

Winding further up the pass we soon located a group of terrific performing Drakensburg Rockjumpers, with both a male and female giving phenomenal views down to just a few meters. Heading over the pass we were soon greeted by our first Drakensburg Siskins and cute, Pika-like Slogett's Ice Rats. Stopping for lunch, the wind continued to blow, but we were still able to admire an adult flying in an landing Lammergeier on it's cliff-side nest. A Yellow-tufted Pipit performed astonishingly well in song. Walking a section of mountainside sagebrush we had little trouble finding several Mountain Pipit, which also showed well. Although we couldn't pick up and Layard's Tit-babblers we were hopeful we might find them elsewhere.

A few more enjoyable stops on the way back down included a very showy Sentinel Rock-thrush near the Top Chalet. With enough light to continue around Creighton we visited some wet grassland areas. Here several Pale-crowned Cisticolas were singing in full breeding plumage in the evening light; perhaps the most

distinctive and attractive species in the whole genus! The undoubted highlight was watching a pair of Wattled Cranes picking around the edges of a small vlei, feeding their soon-to-fledge juvenile.



Our day trip into Lesotho produced Bush Blackcap (top), Drakensburg Siskin (left) and Sentinel Rock-thrush (right). (Simon Mitchell)

The next morning a group of took a walk around the accommodation before breakfast. We found a good selection of grassland species here, including Kurrichane Thrush, several singing Wing-snapping Cisticola, and even better, both Plain-backed and Short-tailed Pipits!

After breakfast we headed to an area of remnant highland forest. This proved to be an excellent move and, despite the wind and at times heavy rain, we accrued a good number of difficult forest species, including African Crowned Eagle, Bush Blackcap, Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Thick-billed Weaver, White-starred Robin, Olive Woodpecker, Forest Canary, an all-too-brief Narina Trogon and two showy Orange Ground-thrushes, which sang at eye level!

A search for Blue Swallows around Creighton drew a blank, although we enjoyed more good views of various Widowbirds and Cisticolas. With the day drawing on we decided to make our way to another area forest where we hoping to encounter another key target species before dusk. We arrived in plenty of time Marusa Indigenous Forest, where wonderful calm conditions prevailed and we were able to watch squadrons of Cape Parrots squawking back and forth - an extremely hard-to-find species in the area.

The next morning we headed back to the mist forest. A few new species included Green-backed Camaroptera and a brief Chorister Robin-chat. By mid-morning we felt we had accrued most of the species possible in the area, and headed to an zone of high-altitude grasslands. Not long after our arrival we glimpsed a pair of all-dark hirundines hawking over a distant ridge. Following the road around to where the birds had been we suddenly gained our first views of a Blue Swallow streaking past the van. We waited for a couple of hours over lunch and eventually gained great views of several repeat fly-bys.

After lunch we made our way towards Wakkerstroom and with a few stops on the way, most notably for a colony of African Cliff Swallow, we arrived at our accommodation in time for a short break before our evening meal.



Olive Woodpeckers showed well at Xumeni Forest and a pair of superb Blue Swallows were at Hela-hela Pass. (Simon Mitchell)

The next morning a pre-breakfast trip from Wakkerstroom yielded an excellent selection of new species including Banded Martin, Barrow's Korhaan, Black-bellied Bustard and Croaking Cisticola. After breakfast we picked up several Southern Bald Ibises and African Cliff Swallows, before a group of Blue Korhaans were found chasing one another around a roadside field. Next we headed further on for a number of target larks and, through a combination of persistence and the knowledge of our local guide, we gradually gained good views of all our target species. One-by-one our stops produced Rufous-naped, Eastern Long-billed, Botha's, Eastern Clapper Rudd's Larks and finally a brief pair of Pink-billed Lark, each species favouring small

patches of specific habitat seemingly endless plains. Heading back towards town that evening we managed to pick out a single Yellow-breasted Pipit skulking in an area of short grass.

Having seen almost all the specialists of Wakkerstroom's high-altitude grasslands our final morning was an opportunity to explore the marshes immediately adjacent town at a relaxed pace. As dawn broke we found our first African Water Rail amongst a variety of waterbirds; African Gallinule, Red-knobbed Coot, Squacco Heron, Black-crowned Night-heron, African Snipe. Duck included a good raft of Southern Pochard as well as our first Hottentot Teal. A group of otters played in the water right below us, before heading out through the culvert under the road.



Two Critically Endangered larks (Botha's, left; Rudd's, right) showed amazingly well around Wakkerstroom where we found also several Barrow's (White-bellied) Bustard. (Simon Mitchell)

After breakfast we began heading for the airport. Having made good time there we were able to squeeze in a quick call at Suikersbosrand Nature Reserve where we gained views of Black-chested Prinia and our only Crested Barbet and Karoo Thrushes of the trip! Highlights however, were a Sunbird and several Northern Black Korhaans. Heading on to the OR Tambo International we all agreed it had been a fantastically productive trip and we'd done incredibly well in seeing almost all of South Africa's endemic birdlife as well as its spectacular scenery and friendly people.



Cape Spurfowl are actually seriously beautiful up close (Simon Mitchell)



Gurney's Sugarbirds were present in good numbers at Sani Pass. (Simon Mitchell)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species). Species marked ++ have a taxonomic or status note in the latter section. Species seen only on the coastal section of the trip are marked with a numeral (I) and those seen only on the second section are marked with numerals (II), species bearing neither symbol were seen on both legs of the trip.

Common Ostrich ++ *Struthio camelus* Wild birds were seen at De Hoop NR and West Coast National Park.

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* Several around Creighton.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Absent from the Karoo, but good numbers elsewhere; 40 at De Hoop.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* Common throughout damp grassland areas.

South African Shelduck ◊ *Tadorna cana* Small numbers encountered throughout. Five at Strandfontein.

Cape Teal *Anas capensis* Over 800 at Strandfontein Sewage Works, smaller numbers elsewhere.

African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* One on the river at Sani Pass

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* Common on wetlands throughout, 200 at Strandfontien the maximum.

Cape Shoveler ◊ *Anas smithii* Small numbers at several wetland sites, including 150 at Strandfontein.

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha* Fifty were at Strandfontien sewage works and one at Wakkerstroom.

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota* At least two were present on the marshes at Wakkerstroom.

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* Decent numbers at Strandfontien sewage works and at Wakkerstroom.

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa* A few seen well at Strandfontien sewage works.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Common throughout, except in the driest parts of the Karoo.

Grey-winged Francolin ♦ *Scleroptila afra* One showed well near West Coast N.P.



Cape Shoveler – a rather underrated duck. (Simon Mitchell)

Cape Spurfowl ♦ *Pternistis capensis* Relatively common and seen daily in the Western Cape.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* A few heard in the Western Cape, and one seen by one lucky tour member.

African Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* A few seen outside the main colony at Simonstown and 500+ at Betty's Bay.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* At least 300 were seen on the pre-tour pelagic extension.

Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta* Over 200 were seen on the pelagic.

Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross ♦ ++ *Thalassarche chlororhychos* Five on the pelagic trip.

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross ♦ ++ *Thalassarche carteri* Two birds on the pelagic trip performed very well.



Excellent views of all four Albatrosses and several other seabirds were had on the pelagic trip.

Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* Two seen well on the pelagic.

Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli* At least 4 birds were around the trawling grounds during the pelagic.

Cape Petrel (Pintado P) *Daption capense* Only 3 were present around the trawlers during our pelagic.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* Over 3000 seen during the pelagic.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* One present around the trawling grounds, 15 past

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* A single bird seen during our pelagic.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Good numbers on wetland areas, including at least 40 at Strandfontein.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* A single a Strandfontien and several on the vlei at De Hoop NR.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* A total of 26 at Strandfontien Sewage Works.

Greater Flamingo ++ *Phoenicopterus roses* Several large flocks recorded, including 200+ at Strandfontien.



Greater Flamingos always look pretty odd in flight (Simon Mitchell)

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* Smaller numbers than the former, although at least 200 at West Coast NP.

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Common in all except the driest and high-altitude areas.

Southern Bald Ibis ◊ *Geronticus calvus* Four at Howick Falls, and a total of about 10 around Wakkerstroom.

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash* Double figures were recorded almost every day.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Thirty at Strandfontien, smaller numbers at Veldruff and Wakkerstroom.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* A total of four scattered singletons.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Two at De Hoop N.R.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* At least one at Strandfontien.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* At least three were noted around the marshes at Wakkerstroom.

Western Cattle Egret ++ *Bubulcus ibis* Flocks of 10 - 30 at a number of locations, mostly whilst driving.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Small numbers throughout the Western Cape.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* One at Strandfontien.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* At total of about 30 or so recorded from grasslands across the country.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Six individuals recorded from widely scattered sites.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Eight seen at Strandfontien.

Cape Gannet ◊ *Morus capensis* Hundreds recorded during our pelagic trip and a few offshore near West Coast NP

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* At wetlands throughout, including over 50 near Veldruff.

Crowned Cormorant ◊ *Microcarbo coronatus* Thirty or more at Betty's Bay. Also seen on the Pelagic trip.

Bank Cormorant ◊ *Phalacrocorax neglectus* About 25 near Simonstown and 35 at Betty's Bay.

White-breasted Cormorant ++ *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Good numbers along the Western Cape and a few inland.

Cape Cormorant ◊ *Phalacrocorax capensis* About 200 around Simonstown and 500+ past Kommetjie.

African Darter ++ *Anhinga rufa* One en route in the Western Cape and another at Wakkerstroom.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* A total of about 20 birds recorded from widely scattered locations.

African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus* One near Benvie Farm.

Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus* One at Sani Pass on flying in to it's nesting crag.

Cape Vulture ◊ *Gyps coprotheres* Two West of Bredasdorp and three at Sani Pass.

Black-chested Snake Eagle ++ (B-breasted S E) *Circaetus pectoralis* One was in the South of Calvinia.

Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* One at briefly Xumeni Forest.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis* A total of 10 seen; 3 in the fields around Creighton.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* One at Constantina Mistbelts and three around Grootvadersbosch
Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* Two near Langebaan. Another showed well near Clanwilliam
Pale Chanting Goshawk ++ (Southern C G) *Melierax canorus* A total of 8 recorded in the Karoo.
African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* One at Constantina Mistbelts.
African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus* One in West Coast NP and four around Wakkerstroom.
Black Harrier ◊ ***Circus maurus*** Eight, including six at West Coast N.P.
Yellow-billed Kite ++ *Milvus aegyptius* Single figures almost every day. Fifty or more around Creighton.
African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocoder* Five singles, including a pair at Strandfontein.
Common Buzzard ++ *Buteo buteo* Six between Sani Pass, Xumeni Forest and Wakkerstroom.
Forest Buzzard ◊ ++ ***Buteo trizonatus*** Two showed well in Constantina Mistbelts and one at Grootvadersbosch.
Jackal Buzzard ◊ ***Buteo rufufuscus*** Common in grassland areas, with over 35 seen in total.
Denham's Bustard (Stanley's B) *Neotis denhami* A total of 6 were seen between Bredasdorp and De Hoop NR.
Ludwig's Bustard *Neotis ludwigii* Three in the usual spot between Calvinia and Brandvlei.



Denham's Bustard and Blue Korhaan were among a total of 6 Bustard species on the trip! (Simon Mitchell)

Barrow's Bustard ◊ ++ (B Korhaan) ***Eupodotis [senegalensis] barrowii*** Three around Amersfoot.
Blue Korhaan ◊ ***Eupodotis caerulescens*** Three seen well near Wakkerstroom.
Karoo Korhaan ◊ ***Eupodotis vigorsii*** Four near De Hoop and groups of three near Kenhardt and on the P2250.
Southern Black Korhaan ◊ ***Afrotis afra*** A total of 4 around West Coast N.P and a single bird in the Karoo.
Northern Black Korhaan *Afrotis afraoides* At least 4 seen well at Suikersbosrand N. R.
Buff-spotted Flufftail (HO) *Sarothrura elegans* Heard distantly at Xumeni Forest.
African Rail (African W Rail) *Rallus caerulescens* Heard only at Wakkerstroom.
Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* Two showed well at the marshes at Wakkerstroom.
African Swamphen ++ (A P Gall.) *Porphyrio madagascariensis* Two at Strandfontien, several at Wakkerstroom.
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Twelve at Strandfontein, a few at De Hoop NR, several at Wakkerstroom.
Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C) *Fulica cristata* Fairy common around the Cape, 50+ at Strandfontein.
Grey Crowned Crane ◊ ***Balearica regulorum*** Small numbers around the Pevensy Road and Wakkerstroom.
Blue Crane ◊ ***Grus paradisea*** About 60 at the Aghulas grasslands and small numbers elsewhere.
Wattled Crane ◊ ***Grus carunculata*** A showy pair at the Karkloof, not far from Himeville.
Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus* A group of four found just North of Brandvlei were a nice surprise.
Water Thick-knee (Water Dikkop) *Burhinus vermiculatus* Two at Strandfontien and two at De Hoop.
Spotted Thick-knee (Spotted Dikkop) *Burhinus capensis* One in the grounds of our hotel near Cape Town airport.
African Oystercatcher ◊ (African Black O) ***Haematopus moquini*** Several groups on Western Cape coast, max 5.
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Fairly common around wetland habitats throughout.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avoetia* Scarcer than the former, recorded from five sites, max 50 at Veldriff.

Blacksmith Lapwing (B Plover) *Vanellus armatus* Common in all except the driest and high-altitude areas.

Black-winged Lapwing (B-w Plover) *Vanellus melanopterus* Around 50 near Hela-hela pass.

Crowned Lapwing (C Plover) *Vanellus coronatus* Ones and twos throughout, but 25+ at De Hoop NR.

African Wattled Lapwing (A W Plover) *Vanellus senegallus* A total of 3 at Wakkerstroom.

Grey Plover (Black-b Plover) *Pluvialis squatarola* Thirty or more at West Coast N.P.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Fifty at Veldriff and 30 at West Coast N.P.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* Around 25 at Veldriff, scattered pairs elsewhere.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* Two near De Hoop NR and one at Veldriff.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* At least 20 at Veldriff and 3 or more on the high tide at West Coast.

African Snipe (Ethiopian S) *Gallinago nigripennis* A total of about 5 singletons in the Wakkerstroom area.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* Heard at West Coast N.P.

Eurasian Whimbrel ++ *Numenius phaeopus* Six or more around West Coast N.P and Veldriff.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Small numbers at Strandfontien, Veldriff and West Coast N.P.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Three at Strandfontien, two at West Coast N.P.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Three or four on the fresh marshes at Wakkerstroom.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One was heard at Strandfontien.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Two at Strandfontien and a further 2 at Betty's Bay.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax* At least 25 were at Veldriff.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* The commonest wader, with 300 at West Coast N.P on 26th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* A single bird amongst other waders on the mudflats at West Coast N.P.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* A few at Strandfontien and De Hoop, double figures each day at West Coast N.P.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* One on the marsh at Wakkerstroom on the final morning.

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* At least 5 at Strandfontien and 10 at Kommetjie

Hartlaub's Gull *Chroicocephalus hartlaubii* Common along the Western Cape coast, 2000+ at Strandfontien.

Cape Gull *Larus [dominicanus] vetula* Common along the Cape coast; 500+ breeding around Strandfontien

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* Small numbers in the Western Cape.

Greater Crested Tern (Swift T) *Thalasseus bergii* Perhaps the commonest of the coastal terns, 40+ Strandfontien.



Water Thick-knees gave a wonderful performance at Strandfontien. (Simon Mitchell).

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* One from the pelagic and others at Strandfontien and West Coast N.P.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Two thousand or more at Kommetjie.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* A few during the pelagic.

Namaqua Sandgrouse ◊ *Pterocles namaqua* Twenty or so around Brandvlei; 60+ along the P2250.

Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral P) *Columba livia* Available.



Namaqua Sandgrouse showed well again in the Karoo this year (Simon Mitchell)

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Common throughout.

African Olive Pigeon (Rameron P) *Columba arquatrix* At least 30 at Xumeni; 12 at Benvie Farm.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* Heard on several occasions but only seen around De Hoop N. R.

Ring-necked Dove (Cape Turtle D) *Streptopelia capicola* Common throughout, 200+ near Calvinia.

Laughing Dove (Palm D) *Spilopelia senegalensis* Odd birds scattered throughout, mainly around towns.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Two at Paternoster.

Lemon Dove *Columba larvata* One at Grootvadersbosch.

Knysna Turaco ◊ ++ *Tauraco corythaix* Seen well at Benvie Farm and Xumeni Forest.

Burchell's Coucal ◊ (H) *Centropus burchellii* Heard at Sani Pass and Xumeni Forest.

Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* One showed well near Hela-hela Pass; another at Wakkerstroom

Klaas's Cuckoo (H) *Chrysococcyx klaas* Heard at Constantina Mistbelts.

Black Cuckoo (H) *Cuculus clamosus* One calling at Volkruist

Red-chested Cuckoo (H) *Cuculus solitarius* Seen en route to Howick Falls and heard in a couple of other spots.

Spotted Eagle-Owl *Bubo africanus* One seen briefly near West Coast N.P.

African Black Swift *Apus barbatus* Small numbers throughout including a dozen or more at Wakkerstroom.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* The commonest swift species, with double figures most days and 60+ at De Hoop N.R.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* Double figures at several locations, though consistently scarcer than *A. affinis*

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Single figures at Sir Lowry's Pass, Skitterykloof and Himeville.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Several around Sani Pass Hotel, and a few others elsewhere.

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* The most widespread mousebird, with a maximum of c8 around De Hoop N.R.

White-backed Mousebird ◊ *Colius colius* A total of 50 birds recorded from drier and Karoo habitats.

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* Heard at Umgeni Valley, seen briefly at Xumeni Forest.

Malachite Kingfisher (NL) *Corythornis cristatus* One briefly near Malagas.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima* One along the river at Hela-hela Pass.

Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris* Two at Suurbraken.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Four or more at Veldriff with a few scattered singles elsewhere.

European Bee-Eater *Merops apiaster* Ten along the P2250, a few ones and twos elsewhere.

African Hoopoe ++ *Upupa africana* Seven singles; with the best views coming on our final day at Wakkerstroom.



Bokmakierie was common throughout, often providing a welcome sideshow during slow periods. (Simon Mitchell)

- Crowned Hornbill** *Tockus alboterminatus* One at Xumeni Forest.
- Acacia Pied Barbet (Pied B)** *Tricholaema leucomelas* A couple of singles in the Karoo.
- Crested Barbet** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* One showed well at Suikersbosrand Nature Reserve.
- Brown-backed Honeybird** ♦ *Prodotiscus regulus* Two showed well at Sani Pass.
- Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis* Three in the Sani Pass / Himeville area.
- Knysna Woodpecker** ♦ *Campethera notata* One showed extremely well at Suurbraken.
- Ground Woodpecker** ♦ *Geocolaptes olivaceus* A total of 8 at Sani Pass and one near Wakkerstroom
- Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicus griseocephalus* Four seen well in Grootvadersbosch.
- Rock Kestrel ++** *Falco rupicolus* Common along the Western Cape, with at least 19 individuals seen.
- Greater Kestrel (White-eyed K)** *Falco rupicoloides* One seen well in the Tanqua Karoo.
- Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* At Howick Falls and near Brandvlei.
- Cape Parrot** ♦ *Poicephalus robustus* Excellent view of 20+ Marujtsa Forest in the evening.
- Cape Batis** ♦ *Batis capensis* Twenty at Constantina Mistbelts and 15 at De Hoop N.R.
- Pririt Batis** ♦ *Batis pririt* A total of 6 seen between Brandvlei and Kenhardt.
- Olive Bushshrike** ♦ *Chlorophoneus olivaceus* Several heard and two seen at Grootvadersbosch.
- Bokmakierie** ♦ *Telophorus zeylonus* Small numbers throughout.
- Southern Tchagra** ♦ *Tchagra tchagra* One showed well, albeit briefly, at De Hoop N.R.
- Southern Boubou** ♦ *Laniarius ferrugineus* A total of more than ten, seen as scattered birds throughout
- Grey Cuckooshrike** *Coracina caesia* Five seen between Xumeni and Marutswa Forests.
- Southern Fiscal ++** *Lanius collaris* Small numbers throughout; at least 15 at De Hoop N.R.
- Black-headed Oriole (Eastern B-h O)** *Oriolus larvatus* Five between Xumeni and Marutswa Forest and one at Sani.
- Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* Small numbers throughout, though particularly common round Wakkerstroom.
- African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* Ten at Constantina Mistbelts and a few scattered singles.
- Cape Crow (Cape R)** *Corvus capensis* Common around farmland in the Western Cape.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Seen daily, particularly common around Wakkerstroom.
White-necked Raven *Corvus albicollis* Common in highland areas; 50+ in the Darling area.
Cape Rockjumper ◊ *Chaetops frenatus* One briefly at Sir Lowry's Pass and a showy bird en route to Betty's Bay.
Drakensberg Rockjumper ◊ *Chaetops aurantius* Superb views of 5 at Sani Pass.
Fairy Flycatcher ◊ *Stenostira scita* Three near Kendhardt; 5 around Sani Pass.
Southern Black Tit ◊ *Melaniparus niger* Four totalled between visits to Benvie Farm and Xumeni Forests.
Grey Tit ◊ ++ (Southern G T) *Melaniparus afer* Seen at Clanwilliam, Skitterykloof and Sani Pass.
Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albobfasciata* Common in the Karoo and around Wakkerstroom.
Karoo Long-billed Lark ◊ ++ *Certhilauda subcoronata* Common in the Karoo with at least 10 seen.
Eastern Long-billed Lark ◊ ++ *Certhilauda semitorquata* Two eventually found north of Wakkerstroom.
Cape Long-billed Lark ◊ ++ *Certhilauda curvirostris* Two showed well near Paternost.
Agulhas Long-billed Lark ◊ ++ *Certhilauda brevirostris* Ten in total on the Agulhas grasslands near De Hoop N.R.
Black-eared Sparrowlark ◊ *Eremopterix australis* A very brief pair near Brandvlei.
Karoo Lark ◊ *Calendulauda albescens* Several around the P2250.
Red Lark ◊ *Calendulauda burra* Two showed well at a stakeout near Brandvlei.



Karoo (top-left), Agulhas (top right) Cape (bottom left) and Eastern (bottom right) Long-billed are all subtly but distinctly different (all SM)

Rudd's Lark ◊ *Heteromirafra ruddi* Two birds seen at well our stake out near Wakkerstroom.

Pink-billed Lark ◊ *Spizocorys conirostris* Four or five north of Wakkerstroom, unfortunately only seen briefly.

Botha's Lark ◊ *Spizocorys fringillaris* One found at a stakeout North of Wakkerstroom.

Sabota Lark ◊ ++ *Mirafra sabota* One or two birds of the form *naevia* (Bradfield's Lark) in the Karoo.

Stark's Lark ◊ *Spizocorys starki* Three seen just North of Brandvlei was a surprise.

Eastern Clapper Lark ++ *Mirafra fasciolata* Two showed well to the North of Wakkerstroom

Cape Clapper Lark ◊ ++ *Mirafra apiata* One over the grasslands near Darling.

Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana* Several in the areas around Amersfoot.

Large-billed Lark ◊ (Southern Thick-b Lark) *Galerida magnirostris* Common throughout the grassland of the Cape.

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea* Common in grasslands throughout.

Cape Bulbul ◊ *Pycnonotus capensis* Common throughout the Western Cape.

Dark-capped Bulbul ++ (Black-eyed B) *Pycnonotus tricolor* Fairly common at sites nr Durban and Johannesburg.

Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunus* A few at Constantina mistbelts and other forests in the Western Cape.

White-throated Swallow *Hirundo albigularis* The commonest swallow, seen almost daily. Ten at West Coast N.P

Blue Swallow ◊ *Hirundo atrocaerulea* At least two showed well at Hela-hela Pass.

Pearl-breasted Swallow *Hirundo dimidiata* Small numbers in the Western Cape.

Greater Striped Swallow *Cecropis cucullata* Small numbers throughout, 15 at De Hoop N.R



Greater Striped Swallows were common throughout (Simon Mitchell).

Lesser Striped Swallow *Hirundo abyssinica* Forty or more nesting on the river bridge at Hela-hela Pass.

South African Cliff Swallow ◊ *Hirundo spilodera* Common in the Karoo and in most high-altitude grassland.

Rock Martin (African R M) *Hirundo fuligula* Sighted on several days. Ten or more at West Coast N.P and Sani Pass.

Brown-throated Martin (Plain M) *Riparia paludicola* Small numbers most days.

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta* A dozen or so around Wakkerstroom.

Black Saw-wing (B S-w Swallow) ++ *Psalidoprocne holomelaena* Forty individuals scattered across several sites.

Cape Grassbird ◊ (African G) *Sphenoeacus afer* A total of 6, including 2 at Sir Lowry's Pass.

Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens* One at Skitterykloof.

Victorin's Warbler ◊ *Cryptillas victorini* One showed well and a couple more heard at Sir Lowry's Pass.

Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus ruficapilla* A dozen or so at Xumeni Forest.

Lesser Swamp Warbler (Cape R Warbler) *Acrocephalus gracillirostris* Seen at Strandfontein and West Coast N.P

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus* A migrant at Brandvlei and 3 breeding birds at Skitterykloof.

African Yellow Warbler (Dark-capped Y W) *Iduna natalensis* Two at the base of Sani Pass.

Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* Seen well at Strandfontein. Several heard.

Knysna Warbler ◊ *Bradypterus sylvaticus* With persistence one was eventually seen near Grootvadersbosch.

Barratt's Warbler ◊ *Bradypterus barratti* One seen and a couple of others heard at Sani Pass.

Grey-backed Cisticola ◊ (Red-headed C) *Cisticola subruficapilla* Small numbers throughout the Western Cape.

Wailing Cisticola *Cisticola lais* Four seen around Sani Pass.

Levaillant's Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens* Thirty or so noted from wetlands across the country.

Neddicky (Piping C) *Cisticola fulvicapilla* Five recorded in grassland areas.

Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed W) *Cisticola juncidis* Three recorded from the Aghulas grasslands.

Cloud Cisticola ◊ (Tink-tink C) *Cisticola textrix* Seen well at our stakeout near Darling.

Pale-crowned Cisticola ◊ ++ *Cisticola cinnamomeus* Two in breeding plumage a Pevensy. Also at Wakkerstroom.

Wing-snapping Cisticola (Ayre's C) *Cisticola ayresii* Several around grasslands at Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom.

Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans* Four seen in the Karoo.

Karoo Prinia ◊ (Spotted P) *Prinia maculosa* Common around the Western Cape and Karoo.

Drakensberg Prinia ◊ ++ *Prinia hypoxantha* At least two at the base of Sani Pass.

Namaqua Warbler ◊ (N Prinia) *Phragmacia substriata* Three birds in dried out washes around Brandvlei.

Bar-throated Apalis *Apalis thoracic* Small numbers throughout, including ten or more at West Coast N.P.



Bar-throated Apalis were common in several habitats and came in a number of sub-specific varieties (Simon Mitchell).

Rufous-eared Warbler ◊ *Malcorus pectoralis* A total of 4 recorded in the Karoo.

Green-backed Camaroptera ++ (G-b Bleating Warbler) *Camaroptera brachyura* One briefly at Xumeni Forest.

Yellow-bellied Eremomela (NL) *Eremomela icteropygialis* One at Skitterykloof.

Karoo Eremomela ◊ *Eremomela gregalis* Two showed superbly in the Tanqua Karoo.

Bush Blackcap ◊ *Lioptilus nigricapillus* Excellent views at Sani Pass and Xumeni Forest.

Chestnut-vented Warbler (Common Tit babbler) *Sylvia subcaerulea* Six in West Coast N. P.

Layard's Warbler ◊ (L Tit-babbler) *Sylvia layardi* Two found at our last possible site at Sani Pass.

Cape White-eye ◊ *Zosterops virens* Common around the Cape.

Orange River White-eye ◊ *Zosterops pallidus* Several unexpected flocks found between Brandvlei and Kenhardt.
Cape Sugarbird ◊ *Promerops cafer* Common in fynbos habitats around the Western Cape, 60+ at Sir Lowry's Pass.
Gurney's Sugarbird ◊ *Promerops gurneyi* Excellent views of 15 at Sani Pass.
Common Myna (Indian M) *Acridotheres tristis* Double figures around Durban and urban areas in the East.
Common Starling (European S) *Sturnus vulgaris* Common.
Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* One at De Hoop N.R
Black-bellied Starling (B-b Glossy S) *Notopholia corrusca* Ten at Oribi Gorge N.R.
Cape Starling (Cape G S) *Lamprotornis nitens* Two at Constantina Mistbelts.
Pied Starling ◊ (African P S) *Lamprotornis bicolor* Fairly common throughout, 50 at De Hoop N.R.
Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio* Common throughout.
Orange Thrush *Zoothera gurneyi* Two at Xumeni Forest showed well and another seen at Umgeni.
Olive Thrush *Turdus olivaceus* Common throughout extending as far north as Wakkerstroom.
Kurrichane Thrush ++ *Turdus smithi* One showed well with Olive Thrushes for comparison at Sani Pass Hotel.



Karoo Robin-chats may yet be elevated to their own genus, as they are basal to all other Tychaedon robins and exhibit several unique characteristics (Simon Mitchell).

Karoo Scrub Robin ◊ (Karoo R) ++ *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* Common throughout the Karoo and in West Coast N.P
Chat Flycatcher ◊ *Melaenornis infuscatus* At least 10 seen during our time in the Karoo.
Fiscal Flycatcher ◊ *Melaenornis silens* Ten across from other scattered localities in the Western Cape.
African Dusky Flycatcher (Dusky F) *Muscicapa adusta* Common in forested areas including 4 at Grootvadersbosch
Cape Robin-Chat (Cape Robin) *Cossypha caffra* Abundant in all but the Karoo and high altitudes at Sani Pass.
Red-capped Robin-Chat (Natal R) *Cossypha natalensis* One briefly at Oribi Gorge N.R.
Chorister Robin-Chat ◊ (C Robin) *Cossypha dichroa* One at Xumeni briefly.
White-starred Robin *Pogonocichla stellata* A total of three, including one seen well, at Xumeni Forest.
Cape Rock Thrush ◊ *Monticola rupestris* Only one; at Sir Lowry's Pass.
Sentinel Rock Thrush ◊ *Monticola explorator* Three at Sani Pass.
African Stonechat ++ *Saxicola torquatus* Double figures daily around Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom.
Buff-streaked Chat ◊ *Campicoloides bifasciatus* Two at Sani Pass; one near Volkrust.
Sickle-winged Chat ◊ *Emarginata sinuata* Some at Paternoster and at least 10 around Sani Pass.
Karoo Chat ◊ *Emarginata schlegelii* One near Brandvlei and several along the P2250.
Tractrac Chat ◊ *Emarginata tractrac* Fifteen or more north of Brandvlei.
Ant-eating Chat ◊ ++ (Southern Anteater Chat) *Myrmecocichla formicivora* First seen in Karoo; 50 Wakkerstroom.
Mountain Wheatear (Mountain C) *Myrmecocichla monticola* Two at Sani Pass and 2 at Wakkerstroom.
Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata* Fairly common in the Western Cape.
Familiar Chat (Red-tailed C) *Oenanthe familiaris* Common around the Karoo and Wakkerstroom.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* Three in Xumeni Forest
Orange-breasted Sunbird ◊ *Anthobaphes violacea* Plenty in fynbos habitats, including 30 at Sir Lowry's Pass.
Eastern Olive Sunbird ++ *Cyanomitra olivacea* One at Xumeni Forest.
Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystine* Small numbers in several spots including 8 at Xumeni Forest.
Malachite Sunbird *Nectarinia famosa* Common in upland areas, including 15 or more at Sani Pass.
Southern Double-collared Sunbird ◊ (Lesser D-c S) *Cinnyris chalybeus* Common around the Western Cape.
Greater Double-collared Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris afer* Eight at Grootvadersbosch and 2 at Xumeni.
Dusky Sunbird *Cinnyris fuscus* Four at the end of the P2250.
White-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala* One showed well at Suikersbosrand.
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali* A couple on the fringes of Brandvlei.
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Present around several areas of development sometimes in double figures.
Cape Sparrow ◊ *Passer melanurus* Fairly common in open habitats throughout, 30 near in fields near Wakkerstroom.
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow ++ *Passer diffuses* Small numbers in scrubby and grassland areas throughout.
Cape Weaver ◊ *Ploceus capensis* Common except in the Karoo, 40 totalled during our morning around Darling.
Southern Masked Weaver (Masked W) *Ploceus velatus* A few around Wakkerstroom.
Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* About 25 totalled around Wakkerstroom.
Sociable Weaver *Philetairus socius* Forty or so a few kilometres south of Kenhardt.
Scaly-feathered Finch *Sporopipes squamifrons* Two came in to drink near Kenhardt.
Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* A few flocks of fifty or so birds around Creighton and Wakkerstroom.
Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix* Small flocks or colonies seen on several occasions in the Western Cape.
Yellow Bishop (Yellow-rumped Widow) *Euplectes capensis* Forty or fifty seen in total, common around Darling.
Fan-tailed Widowbird (Red-shouldered W) *Euplectes axillaris* Several in grassland around the Karkloof.
Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens* Two seen in grassland near Wakkerstroom.
Long-tailed Widowbird *Euplectes progne* Several double figure groups around Wakkerstroom and Suikersbosrand.
African Firefinch (Blue-billed F) *Lagonosticta rubricata* One briefly on the fringes of Marjutsa Forest.
Sweet Waxbill ◊ *Coccyzygia melanotis* A total of 40 or so in small flocks across most forest patches.
Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* Small flocks in several locations and 40 at the base of Sani Pass.
Quailfinch (African Q) *Ortygospiza atricollis* A total of 20 or so around Wakkerstroom were all fly-overs.
Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata* Fifteen or more at Wakkerstroom and a few others elsewhere..
Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* Two near Grootvadersbosch and 50+ at Suikersbosrand.
Cape Wagtail *Motacilla capensis* Seen daily in single figures except in the Karoo.
Mountain Wagtail (Long-tailed W) *Motacilla clara* Two were on the falls at Howick.
Cape Longclaw ◊ *Macronyx capensis* Common around Wakkerstroom and a few other scattered pairs elsewhere.
African Pipit ++ (Grassveld P) *Anthus cinnamomeus* Small numbers from several grassland areas.
Mountain Pipit ◊ *Anthus hoeschi* Eight found at Sani Pass.
Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* One seen on the Aghulas grasslands.
African Rock Pipit ◊ (Yellow-tufted P) *Anthus crenatus* One was located and showed well at Sani Pass.
Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* One near the Sani Pass Hotel
Short-tailed Pipit *Anthus brachyurus* Several holding territories above the Sani Pass Hotel.
Yellow-breasted Pipit ◊ *Hemimacronyx chloris* Singles seen well near Wakkerstroom.
Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* Three at Constantina and a single bird at Betty's Bay.
Forest Canary ◊ *Crithagra scotops* Recorded in small numbers at Grootvadersbosch and Marjutsa Forests.
Cape Siskin ◊ *Crithagra totta* At least four briefly at Sir Lowry's Pass.
Drakensberg Siskin ◊ *Crithagra symonsi* At least 25 recorded at Sani Pass.
Yellow Canary ◊ *Crithagra flaviventris* Common in the Western Cape and Karoo.
Brimstone Canary (Bully C) *Crithagra sulphurata* Small numbers between West Coast N.P and Clanwilliam.
Streaky-headed Seedeater ◊ (S-h Canary) *Crithagra gularis* Six at Sani Pass several elsewhere.
White-throated Canary ◊ *Crithagra albogularis* Fairly common in the Karoo with double figures at several spots.
Protea Canary ◊ (P Seedeater) *Crithagra leucoptera* One seen well at a site near Clanwilliam.
Cape Canary *Serinus canicollis* Small numbers throughout.
Black-headed Canary ◊ *Serinus alario* Three in West Coast N.P was a surprising location.
Lark-like Bunting ◊ *Emberiza impetuani* Common north of Calvinia, with over 30 recorded.
Cape Bunting ◊ *Emberiza capensis* Small numbers around the Western Cape, Sani Pass and Wakkerstroom.



Although common, Cape Weavers are one of the smarter, more unique looking species of the family. (Simon Mitchell).



Singing Cape Buntings were a prominent feature of West Coast N.P. (Simon Mitchell).



Flowers and rain in the Karoo. (Simon Mitchell)

Mammals:

- Sloggett's Rat (Ice Rat) *Otomys sloggetti*** A few in the higher reaches of Sani Pass.
- Striped Mouse *Rhabdomys pumilio*** A couple in West Coast N.P
- Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*** Small numbers at Constantina.
- Scrub Hare *Lepus saxatilis*** At least a couple at De Hoop N.R
- Rock Dassie (Cape D, Cape R Hyrax) *Procavia capensis*** Not uncommon in rocky areas and kopjes.
- Bontebok ++ (Blesbok) *Damaliscus dorcas*** A few around De Hoop and others around Wakkerstroom.
- Common Duiker (Grey Duiker) *Sylvicapra grimmia*** Scatter singles from several locations.
- Grysbok (Cape G) *Raphicerus melanotis*** One near De Hoop N.R.
- Grey Rhebok (Vaal R) *Pelea capreolus*** Two or three seen at Sani Pass.
- Common Reedbuck *Redunca arundinum*** Several around Creighton and Sani Pass
- Eland *Taurotragus oryx*** One in West Coast N. P.
- Cape Clawless Otter (African C O) *Aonyx capensis*** Two or three at Wakkerstroom showed very well.
- Yellow Mongoose (Bushy-tailed Meerkat) *Cynictis penicillata*** Several around De Hoop and Bredasdorp.
- Suricate (Meerkat) *Suricata suricatta*** Twenty or more near Wakkerstroom.
- Chacma Baboon ++ *Papio ursinus*** A few groups around the Western Cape and Wakkerstroom.
- Vervet Monkey (Vervet) *Cercopithecus aethiops*** Twenty at Oribi Gorge N.R.
- Samango Monkey (Diademed Guenon) *Cercopithecus mitis*** Ten or so at Benvie Farm.
- Cape Fur Seal (Afro-Australian F S) *Arctocephalus pusillus*** A few on the coast.
- Southern Right Whale ++ *Balaena australis*** One distantly blowing off Simonstown.



Cape Clawless Otter at Wakkerstroom. (Simon Mitchell)

Other:

- Angulate Tortoise *Chersina angulate*** Twenty or so in West Coast National Park.
- Puff Adder *Bitis arietans*** Wonderful views of one crossing the road in West Coast N. P.

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. Gill, F and Donsker, D (Eds). 2012. IOC World Bird Names (v2.11). Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

BIRDS

Common Ostrich *Struthio camelus*

Formerly, the name Ostrich was used for this species, but it has been re-named following the splitting off of the northeast African form *molybdophanes* under the name Somali Ostrich.

Wandering (or Snowy) Albatross *Diomedea exulans*

The Wandering Albatross superspecies comprises four or five closely related allospecies which are difficult and sometimes impossible to identify at sea.

Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*

The Shy Albatross superspecies comprises three or four closely related allospecies: Chatham Albatross *T. eremita* (an exceptionally rare vagrant to South African waters); Salvin's Albatross *T. salvini* (a rare visitor to South African waters) and Shy Albatross *T. cauta*. The latter comprises two similar forms, the nominate *cauta* which breeds in Tasmania and ; White-capped Albatross *D. [c.] steadi* which breeds in New Zealand. Some authors have treated these forms as separate species, though they are extremely difficult to identify at sea. Recoveries suggest that most if not all White-capped/Shy Albatrosses occurring off the Cape are White-capped Albatrosses.

Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*

and **Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** *Thalassarche carteri*

Some authors lump Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross in Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross using the name Yellow-nosed Albatross for the enlarged species.

Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata*

Some authors lump this distinctive form in White-chinned Petrel *P. aequinoctialis*.

Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

The IOC lump Cory's Shearwater *C. borealis* in this species using the name Cory's Shearwater for the enlarged species. A proposed split of the two forms is currently under consideration by the IOC.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Some authors lump this species in American (or Caribbean) Flamingo *P. ruber* of the New World using the name Greater Flamingo for the enlarged species.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Some authors use the name Cattle Egret for this species, but it has been renamed following the splitting off of the eastern (Asian) form *coromandus* under the name Eastern Cattle Egret.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*

The form concerned is often lumped in Great Cormorant *P. carbo*.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*

This form is sometimes lumped in Oriental Darter *A. melanogaster*, with the name Darter being used for the enlarged species.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Some authors lump Eastern Osprey *P. crsitatus* in this species using the name Osprey for the enlarged species.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*

This form is often lumped in Black Kite *Milvus migrans*. The latter could occur on the tour and may have been overlooked in the past.

Black-chested (-breasted) Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis*

This species was formerly sometimes lumped in Short-toed Eagle *C. gallicus*.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Some authors split off the form concerned as a separate species: Steppe Buzzard *B. vulpinus*.

Forest Buzzard *Buteo trizonatus*

Some authors lump this species in Mountain Buzzard *B. oreophilus* (of East Africa) with either the name Mountain Buzzard (in East Africa) or Forest Buzzard (in Southern Africa) being used for the enlarged species.

(Southern) Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus*

Eastern (Pale) Chanting Goshawk *M. poliopterus* of East Africa (which does not occur in southern Africa) is sometimes lumped in this species, with the name Pale Chanting Goshawk being used for the enlarged species.

Barrow's Bustard (or Korhaan) *Eupodotis [senegalensis] barrowii*

The IOC treat this form as a subspecies of White-bellied Bustard *E. senegalensis*. However, the phylogeny of *Eupodotis* bustards remains uncertain and further work is needed. We have treated it as an allospecies as it is a likely future split.

African (Purple) Swamphen (Gallinule) *Porphyrio madagascariensis*

Some authors lump this species in Purple Swamphen *P. porphyrio*.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

The IOC lump Hudsonian Whimbrel *P. hudsonius* in this species, using the name Whimbrel for the enlarged species, though Hudsonian Whimbrel is a proposed IOC split.

Cape Gull *Larus [dominicanus] vetula*

The IOC treat this form as a subspecies of Kelp Gull *L. dominicanus*.

Knysna Turaco (Lourie) *Tauraco corythaix*

This species is sometimes lumped in Green Turaco *T. persa*.

Rock Kestrel *Falco rupicolis*

The form concerned is treated as a separate species: Rock Kestrel *F. rupicolis* by the IOC. Sinclair et al. Do not commit themselves to the exact taxonomic status of this form.

African Hoopoe *Upupa africana*

This form is often lumped in Eurasian Hoopoe *U. epops*, with the name Hoopoe being used for the enlarged species.

Cape Clapper Lark *Mirafra apiata*

Formerly many authors lumped this species with Eastern Clapper Lark *M. fasciolata* and Agulhas Clapper Lark *M. marjoriae*, using the name Clapper Lark *M. fasciolata* for the enlarged species. However, the IOC now consider the two forms *M. apiata* and *M. marjoriae* a separate species *M. apiata*

Agulhas Clapper Lark *Mirafra [apiata] marjoriae*

The IOC currently consider this taxa part of Cape Clapper Lark *M. apiata*

Sabota Lark *Mirafra sabota*

The thick-billed form occurring in western Cape Province and western Namibia is sometimes split off as a separate species: Bradfield's Lark *M. naevia*.

Cape Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda curvirostris*

This species (which is found in western Cape Province) was formerly known as Long-billed Lark but has been renamed following the splitting off of Aghulas Long-billed Lark *C. brevirostris* (in southern Cape Province), Eastern Long-billed Lark *C. semitorquata* (in eastern South Africa - KwaZulu Natal and Transvaal), Benguela Long-billed Lark *C. benguelensis* (not possible on this tour, occurs in Namibia and Angola) and Karoo Long-billed Lark *C. subcoronata* (in the karoo).

Aghulas Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda brevirostris*

See the note for Cape Lark.

Eastern Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda semitorquata*

See the note for Cape Lark.

Black Saw-wing (Swallow) *Psalidoprocne holomelaena*

This form is sometimes lumped in Blue Saw-wing Swallow, *P. pristoptera*, with the name Black Saw-wing being for the enlarged species.

(Southern) Grey Tit *Parus afer*

The Grey Tit of East Africa (*P. thruppi*, also known as Somali Tit) is sometimes lumped in this species, with the name Grey Tit being used for the enlarged species.

Dark-capped (or Black-eyed) Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor*

This form is often lumped in Common Bulbul *P. barbatus*.

Karoo Thrush *Turdus smithi*

Most authors lump this form in Olive thrush *T. olivaceus*.

Southern Anteating Chat *Myrmecocichla formicivora*

The name Anteating Chat is sometimes used for this species but it is better known as Southern Anteating Chat to differentiate it from Northern Anteating Chat *M. aethiops*.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Common Stonechat *M. rubicola* and Siberian Stonechat *S. maura* are often lumped in this species with the name Common Stonechat being used for the enlarged species.

Karoo Scrub Robin ◊ (Karoo R) ++ *Cercotrichas coryphoeus*

It has recently been suggested that, due to behavioural difference and the young being born covered in down, that this species may better be treated as a separate genus to *Cercotrichas*.

Green-backed Camaroptera (or Bleating Warbler) *Camaroptera brachyura*

Grey-backed Camaroptera (or Bleating Warbler) *C. brevicaudata*, is sometimes lumped in this form with the name Bleating Warbler being used for the enlarged species.

Pale-crowned Cisticola *Cisticola cinnamomeus*

The form concerned is sometimes lumped in Pectoral-patch Cisticola *C. brunnescens* with either the name Pale-crowned (in Southern Africa) or Pectoral-patch (in Eastern Africa) Cisticola being used for the enlarged species.

Drakensberg Prinia *Prinia hypoxantha*

This form is sometimes lumped in Karoo Prinia *P. maculosa*, with the name Spotted Prinia being used for the enlarged species.

African (or Grassveld) Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*

This form (along with various other forms) was formerly sometimes lumped in Australasian Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*,

with the name Richard's Pipit then being used for the enlarged species.

Common Fiscal (Shrike) *Lanius collaris*

The north-western form (which shows a whitish supercilium) may in future be split off as a separate species: Latakoo Fiscal *L. subcoronatus*.

Cape White-eye *Zosterops virens*

This form is often lumped in Orange River White-eye *Z. pallidus*, with the name Cape White-eye being used for the enlarged species.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus*

This form was formerly lumped in Grey-headed Sparrow *P. griseus*.

Red-backed (Rufous-b or Brown-b M) Mannikin *Lonchura nigriceps*

This form is often lumped in Black-and-white Mannikin *L. bicolor* with either the name Red-backed (in Southern Africa) or Black-and-white (in Eastern Africa) Mannikin being used for the enlarged species.

MAMMALS

Bontebok *Damaliscus dorcus*

The two forms concerned, Blesbok and Bontebok, are sometimes split off as separate species.

Chacma Baboon *Papio cynocephalus*

The form concerned, *ursinus*, is sometimes split off as a separate species using the same English name, Chacma Baboon. The name Yellow Baboon is then used for the residual *P. cynocephalus*.

Southern Right Whale *Balaena australis*

The form concerned is sometimes lumped in Northern Right Whale *B. glacialis* with the name Black Right Whale being used for the enlarged species.