



The superb Spotted Ground Thrush took some seeking out, but it was worth the effort! (Pete Morris)

ULTIMATE SOUTH AFRICA

4 – 28 NOVEMBER 2016

LEADER: PETE MORRIS

The 2016 Birdquest Ultimate tour to South Africa certainly lived up to its name! An outstanding birding destination and this tour delivered, with an amazingly high proportion of the targets (the hoped for endemics, regional endemics and specialities) being not only found, but seen superbly! We recorded an astonishing 530 or so species of bird, and no fewer than 60 species of mammals! Top birds included the fantastic Spotted Ground Thrush which showed so well after making us wait, Knysna, Victorin's and Barratt's Warblers that were all bold as brass, magical Blue Swallows, and the stunning Drakensburg Rockjumper, which along with its close relative the Cape Rockjumper, and the two sugarbirds (Cape and Gurney's Sugarbirds), are truly iconic species for this tour. Other memorable specials included the graceful Black Harrier, the trio of wonderful cranes and nine superb species of bustard. Colour was added by showy Cape Parrots, glorious Gorgeous Bushshrikes, a Half-collared Kingfisher and three species of splendid turacos, elegance by the Blue Cranes, and Buff-streaked Chats, comedy by African Broadbills and rarity by globally endangered species such as Botha's



Red-chested Flufftail kicked off our bonus flufftail hour!! (Pete Morris)

Lark, not to mention the rapidly disappearing vultures! Sometimes however, there's not only the bird of the tour, there's an event of the tour, and our hour of 'flufftailing' in Himeville (amazing views of Red-chested and Buff-spotted Flufftails one after the other) surely took the award this tour! To bring things down a notch, nearly five per cent of our species were members of the Alaudidae family as we saw no fewer than 24 species of lark in what has to be the lark capital of the world. The great thing was that we saw them all well enough for all in the group to appreciate their subtle differences. This of course has just scratched the surface of the wonderful and varied bird life that we encountered! But it wasn't just the birds. We also notched up an impressive 60 species of mammal, including rarities such as Aardvark and Black-footed Cat, enjoyed varied and wonderful scenery throughout, and all this whilst making the most of the excellent roads, accommodation and restaurants. Just a shame about all of those fences...

We began the tour officially at Cape Town Airport, and having all assembled, headed off for our first of many action-packed days. It wasn't long before we paused at the splendid coastal resort of Rooi Els, and were immediately set upon by numerous Cape Sugarbirds! A fairly gentle and flat stroll then took us through our first fynbos, as Cape Grassbirds and Orange-breasted Sunbirds vied for our attention. Cape Rock Thrush and a dainty Klipspringer both popped up, and before too long we were soon eyeballing our main target, the superb Cape Rockjumper! We spent some time enjoying these unique birds, though our search for Cape Siskin was less successful, with only half of the group clocking it. We then moved on to the attractive Harold Porter Botanical Gardens where we enjoyed a fine lunch and a potter. Olive Thrushes and Sweet Waxbills entertained us at the table and our walk round soon added the subtle but attractive Cape Siskin, more stunning Cape Sugarbirds, our first Cape Batises and Cape and Brimstone Canaries, and a number of other common species.

We then moved on to the next treat... The penguin colony at Stony Point, Betty's Bay, is, in my opinion, the way to see African Penguin, and we spent a lovely hour or so enjoying the antics of these quality birds. Being winter breeders, most youngsters had fledged, and large gatherings were present along the rocky shores. The cormorants were nearly through their breeding too. Indeed we only found one Crowned Cormorant and a couple of dozen Bank Cormorants amongst the hordes of Cape and White-breasted Cormorants. Our first African Oystercatchers flew by, Rock Dassies lazed on the rocks, and back in the car park, our first Southern Boubou popped up. We then embarked upon the scenic drive home, pausing around the scenic Gordon's Bay as we went. No cetaceans were on view, but we did find the most showy Victorin's Warbler in the world, and while we were trying to beat him off, we could also admire an impressive Verreaux's Eagle flying around and perching on the towering cliffs. We were back in Noordhoek in good time for a fine dinner and some rest.



Highlights from our first day: Cape Siskin, Cape Rockjumper and an insanely tame Victorin's Warbler (Pete Morris)





African Penguins in the sun at Betty's Bay (Pete Morris)

Things were looking good for an excursion on the ocean, and the following morning the decision was made to go for it. We made our way out of the bay and although it was not rough by Cape Town standards, it was pretty choppy and not particularly easy to seawatch! We passed vast swarms of Common Terns, and numerous Cape Gannets, and as we headed further from Cape Point, we were joined by plenty of White-chinned Petrels and a few Sooty and Great Shearwaters. Our first few albatrosses appeared, and after more bumping south, we eventually found a couple of long-liners. For the next few hours we cruised around the trawlers, and birding conditions got a little easier as we scanned through the throngs of birds attracted to the vessels. Good numbers of albatrosses were present with many smart Shy (White-capped) Albatrosses, several Black-browed (including smart adults) and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses and a handful of Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses. Right at the last minute, we were also lucky enough to find an adult Wandering Albatross! White-chinned Petrels were the commonest species, several with extensive white on their faces, numerous Great Shearwaters gave great views, and there were also both Northern and Southern Giant Petrels scavenging and a single late Pintado Petrel. Chunky Subantarctic Skuas drifted around from time to time, and a couple of Wilson's Storm-Petrels were also seen well. All too soon (or maybe not for some) it was time to head back for shore and get some stability in our lives! That afternoon, those that wanted took a scenic drive out to the Cape of Good Hope and back, enjoying fine views of the windswept headlands and endless sand and surf!

The following morning, we spent an excellent few hours in the spectacular Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. We entered early, before the masses, and as well as enjoying the amazing gardens, we also enjoyed some great birds including confiding Cape Francolins with young, several Cape Batises, confiding Forest Canaries and numerous sugarbirds and sunbirds taking advantage of the nectar supplies. A Red-breasted Sparrowhawk put in a brief appearance, but pride of place went to the proud Spotted Eagle Owl and her two fluffy chicks. We then moved on to a wetland where we soon found our hoped-for White-backed Ducks. Also here was a confiding Little Rush Warbler, Great White Pelicans and a good selection of common waterbirds, and our first White-backed and Red-faced Mousebirds. A fine seafood lunch followed before we made our obligatory visit



A few pelagic highlights, clockwise from top: Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Shy Albatross, Great Shearwater and Wandering Albatross (Pete Morris)



to a sewage works! Not any old sewage works though. Strandfontein is also an internationally renowned bird reserve, and here we found thousands of wildfowl including Cape Teals, Cape Shovelers and Southern Pochards, Black-necked Grebes, both Greater and Lesser Flamingos, our first of many African Fish Eagles and a couple of lovely Water Thick-knees. A fine selection of common waders included Kittlitz's and Three-banded Plovers, big flocks of Hartlaub's Gulls held a few Grey-headed Gulls, and mixed flocks of terns held our first Caspian and Sandwich Terns. Levillant's and Zitting Cisticolas flitted along the bunds, we tracked down our first Cape Longclaws but the biggest surprise came in the form of an excellent Terek Sandpiper! We again got back in good time, for an early start was planned...



The proud mother Spotted Eagle Owl in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (Pete Morris)

A drive through the Overberg is not the most exciting thing ever. Endless wheat fields, but at least there were Blue Cranes to look at. Our first stately Denham's Bustards were much appreciated, but sadly, from my previously staked-out Knysna Warbler, there was not a peep! Plan B was required, and with the reserve at Grootvadersbosch being shut for maintenance, we had fortunately gained permission to birdwatch on an adjacent property. Here, Neddickys piped away, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatchers were busy, and showy Olive Bushshrikes and Olive Woodpeckers were a bonus, but the real star was the Knysna Warbler which defied it's



A couple of images of the stunning Cape Sugarbirds around Cape Town (Pete Morris)



normally ultra-secretive nature, and posed in the open for us. A couple of Forest Buzzards displayed high overhead, and although it was possible to see how pale they were, slightly closer would have been good. During lunch, we got our wish of some closer views of the buzzards, before thanking our generous hosts and heading on our way!



Elegant Blue Cranes were common in the Overberg (Pete Morris)

That afternoon we explored the grasslands of the Overberg. Agulhas Long-billed Lark performed well, as did a few more bustards, including our first Karoo Korhaans. A scan of some distant cliffs led to decent views of good numbers of Cape Vultures, and on the drive to our accommodation, we were delighted to find another Spotted Eagle that was being mobbed by two Southern Tchagras!!

The following day we began at a lively patch of grassland where everything we were looking for seemed to be singing. Agulhas (Cape) Clapper Larks clapped and dived down, Agulhas Long-billed Larks displayed in long loops and streaky Cloud Cisticolas 'tink-tinked' from the sky. All also afforded great views on the ground, and having added endemic Grey-winged Francolins, Southern Black Korhaan and Sickle-winged Chats as well as more Karoo Korhaans and elegant Blue Cranes, we headed down into De Hoop. As we crossed the escarpment, we could see the wonderful reserve stretching out ahead of us, all the way to the wild ocean, and we had the morning to explore the vleis, pans and thickets. Passing the open grasslands, we paused to admire snazzy Bonteboks and intricately marked Mountain Zebras, whilst the thickets soon revealed their best secrets. As Bokmakieries sang, we soon found a pair of Southern Tchagras feeding their youngster and nearby, a confiding male Knysna Woodpecker performed at length. We then explored further afield, admiring a huge herd of Eland and numerous waterbirds including Maccoa Ducks, whilst offshore, a number of Common Dolphins were visible.

With a long drive ahead, and a detour up my sleeve, we were on our way again by the late morning. Pausing for lunch, we then found our way to a remote and windswept beach where we soon had a stunning Damara

Tern in our sights. A nice way to round off the birding, even if we still had a bit of a drive to get back to our favourite haunts at Nordhoek!



The cute Damara Tern at Struisbaai (Pete Morris)

The following day we set off before the Cape Town traffic and found our way to the fynbos. The hoped for nominate Cape Clapper Larks could only be heard, but our numerous stops yielded other goodies including tiny Cape Penduline Tits, sparkling Malachite Sunbirds, an amazingly confiding Southern Black Korhaan, and, at a delightful little reserve, more Cape Longclaws and Cloud Cisticolas. We then headed into the extensive West Coast National Park, doing our best to avoid the amazing crickets and Mole Snakes that decorated the road. It took a while before we found the much-wanted Black Harrier, but when we did, we got some lovely views of this most elegant of raptors. Otherwise, in fairly windy conditions, it was pretty quiet, though we did see our



A lovely and very showy Southern Black Korhaan (Pete Morris)

first Karoo Larks, take a look at the coast where large mixed gathering of flamingos and our first White-fronted Plovers obliged. We also admired the delightful White-throated Swallows that were nesting in the hide! As we ate lunch at the lovely park restaurant, the wind was really whipping up, and by the time we got to Veldruff, it was a full-on gale! Undeterred, we ticked off a smart male Chestnut-banded Plover and made our way to another area, seeing more Black Harriers as we went. Here we soon found the impressive Cape Long-billed Lark, before heading back, via some Black Swifts, for shelter!

We began the following day on the outskirts of Langebaan, watching Southern Grey Tits at point blank range whilst Karoo Larks displayed overhead and Grey-winged Francolins sang from the adjacent fields. We then made our way to near Clanwilliam where we stopped at a lovely gorge. Here, our main target was the somewhat drab but rare endemic Protea Canary, and this soon obliged. Mountain Wheatear, the pretty little Fairy Flycatcher and Layard's Warbler (formerly Tit-babbler) were also added, and we also found more vocal Southern Grey Tits and another pair of Cape Siskins.

Moving on, we found some lunch and then headed for the desert! We made a couple of strategic stops along the way, the first to add Namaqua Prinia and African Reed Warbler and the second at a spectacular pass. Here, after some searching, we managed some great looks at the elusive endemic Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, before making our way into Calvinia for the night. Other goodies seen along the way included Greater Kestrels, Karoo Chats and the delightful Rufous-eared Warbler.



A cracking endemic Cinnamon-breasted Warbler and the gorgeous Black Harrier (Pete Morris)





Two very special larks from Brandvlei: Black-eared Sparrow Lark and Red Lark (Pete Morris)

Surprisingly (!) we were up with the larks the following morning! Quite literally, as soon after dawn we were seeking out such goodies as Large-billed and Spike-heeled Larks, and, more importantly, the nomadic Black-eared Sparrow-Lark and the rare Red Lark (though here of a rather brown form!). All showed brilliantly, and whilst looking, we clocked our first of many Namaqua Sandgrouse, several Chat Flycatchers and our first of very many Lark-like Buntings. We then moved on to another area nearby where, after a little searching, we achieved some great views of the often elusive Karoo Eremomela, as well as some neat Tractrac Chats and a displaying Karoo Long-billed Lark. A stop at a lively river crossing produced several cracking Dusky Sunbirds and smart Pririt Batises as well as our first Black-chested Prinia. We then set about the tricky task of looking for Sclater's Lark in an increasingly baking hot desert! Pale Chanting Goshawks panted from the roadside telegraph poles, but unsurprisingly, our meanderings through the stony desert yielded few birds other than big-billed 'Bradfield's' Sabota Larks, and in increasing heat, we retired to Brandvlei for lunch. After lunch we headed back for Calvinia, admiring large colonies of African Cliff Swallows as we went. Back in Calvinia, we popped into a small reserve where we collected a few ungulates, more Maccoa Ducks and our first South African Shelduck before heading back to our homely accommodation and a large, traditional meal!

We were again up early the following day and headed to Brandvlei once more. We soon stumbled across a farm pool which seemed to be alive with activity, so we parked up and got the scopes out. Namaqua Sandgrouse flew around calling and came in to drink as did numerous larks. Several smart Grey-backed Sparrow-Larks were joined by a couple of male Black-eared Sparrow-Larks, and then the holy-grail of the lark world appeared: we were able to enjoy fabulous views of several Sclater's Larks drinking, and hopping around on the bare



The rare and hard-to-find Sclater's Lark (Pete Morris)



Plenty of impressive but wary Ludwig's Bustards (Pete Morris)

ground at close range. Flushed with success, we continued towards Pofadder, soon adding the much-wanted Ludwig's Bustard as we went, as well as a red, Red Lark. The journey then became somewhat interesting! The roads gradually became smaller and smaller as we passed through numerous gates. A stately Kori Bustard flushed up ahead of us, and numerous Northern Black Korhaans displayed spectacularly, and although two navigation systems agreed that we were heading the right way, it was a relief when a friendly farmer found us and confirmed the best route! We continued on our way and ended up in the small settlement of Aggeneys where we attempted lunch... I say attempted. There was ample time (an hour!!) to enjoy the Latakoo Fiscals, mousebirds and Red-eyed Bulbuls, and still lunch was nowhere near ready. We abandoned the idea, grabbed some snacks and headed to Springbok for a fine dinner and an early night.

We set off in the half light the following day and made our way towards Port Nolloth. We paused a few times on the way, including for a very cute Smith's Red Rock Rabbit, and arrived in Port Nolloth at a reasonable hour. We then began scouring the place for larks, but initially could only come up with Karoo Larks. A pair of smart Lanner Falcons and some Jackal Buzzards provided some entertainment, as did another pair of Cape



The much redder Red Lark seen on the way to Pofadder (Pete Morris)

Penduline Tits. Eventually we did stumble across a male Barlow's Lark, with a recently fledged youngster and enjoyed some very good views. The song and the clear white flanks (not to mention the colour rings) confirmed the identity, but it was not the most impressive of individuals. More rakish Cape Long-billed Larks shuffled through the dunes, and with time on our hands, we decided to venture further north towards the Namibian border, racing Common Ostriches as we went! Here, in some lovely sand dunes, we found another pair of Barlow's Larks which were far more impressive and did the job, so, in the ever increasing wind, we headed back to Port Nolloth where we found some lunch and admired a pod of playful Heaviside's Dolphins! Making our way back to Springbok, we paused at a roadside pool where several Black-headed (Damara form) Siskins came down to drink, and where we also saw our first Pale-winged Starlings and another Karoo Long-billed Lark. Back in Springbok, we found some dinner and then headed out for a short nocturnal excursion under the amazing 'Super Moon'. The hope was that we would find a Cape Eagle Owl, but with several Spotted Eagle Owls logged, we threw the towel in. As we were approaching Springbok, a Bat-eared Fox was spotted, then blue flashing lights... After a tense minute or two, the rather friendly bobbies (friendly by now at least) realized that we were not engaged in wildlife poaching or another illegal activity, and sent us on our way!



Two different Barlow's Larks and a Lanner at Port Nolloth (Pete Morris)

We headed for a pretty valley known as Aardvark Kloof the following morning. It was scenic but not overly birdy, and although we found many old favourites, we didn't really add too much new. Moving on towards Pofadder we crossed more expanses of desert, and here the huge and attractive Ludwig's Bustard was positively common but as always, very, very wary! Around Pofadder it seemed fairly hot and relatively birdless, though we did find a good lunch, and after lunch we admired the biggest Sociable Weaver colonies of the tour as our first Bradfield's Swifts zoomed overhead. We still had a way to go, and as we chewed up the tarmac, heading



Plenty of Stark's Larks performed - they can be tricky to find! (Pete Morris)

for Augrabies, a small bird flitting across the road soon saw the anchors applied, and minutes later we were admiring the somewhat nomadic Stark's Lark in the scope. We found several more during the journey, and our first Fawn-coloured Larks and arrived at the special Augrabies Falls National Park in time to see the dassies and Pale-winged Starlings scavenging around the chalets, and that 'Super Moon', rising over the escarpment.



A Peregrine on the cliffs at Augrabies Falls NP (Pete Morris)

A quick tour round the following morning was fairly quiet. A smart Pygmy Falcon posed by the road and our first Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters flashed colour, whilst around the accommodation we added the subtle Karoo Thrush, attractive Orange River White-eyes, more Dusky Sunbirds, our first Cape Starlings, and feisty Yellow and Slender Mongooses. A look at the falls themselves provided a scenic diversion as many swifts zoomed overhead and a couple of Peregrines dashed around the cliffs.

Moving on once more, we were initially distracted by the UFO above the tower near Upington (still a mystery!). We then made a couple of stops around Upington where the highlights included our first colourful Crested Barbets and the feisty Pearl Spotted Owlet. After lunch near Upington, we made the drive through to Kimberley in time for our early dinner. We were then out once more, this time to the wonderful Marrick Game Farm, where we boarded our truck for an amazing night drive. It wasn't really for the birds, though we did see a few such as Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Western Barn Owls at the nest and Spotted Eagle Owl, as well as few surprised diurnal species such as Northern Black Korhaan. However, the drive was really about the mammals: Black-footed Cat and Aardvark were the real highlights, but the numerous Springhares, Bat-eared Foxes, South African Porcupines and Striped Polecats, to name but a few, really made this a special evening!



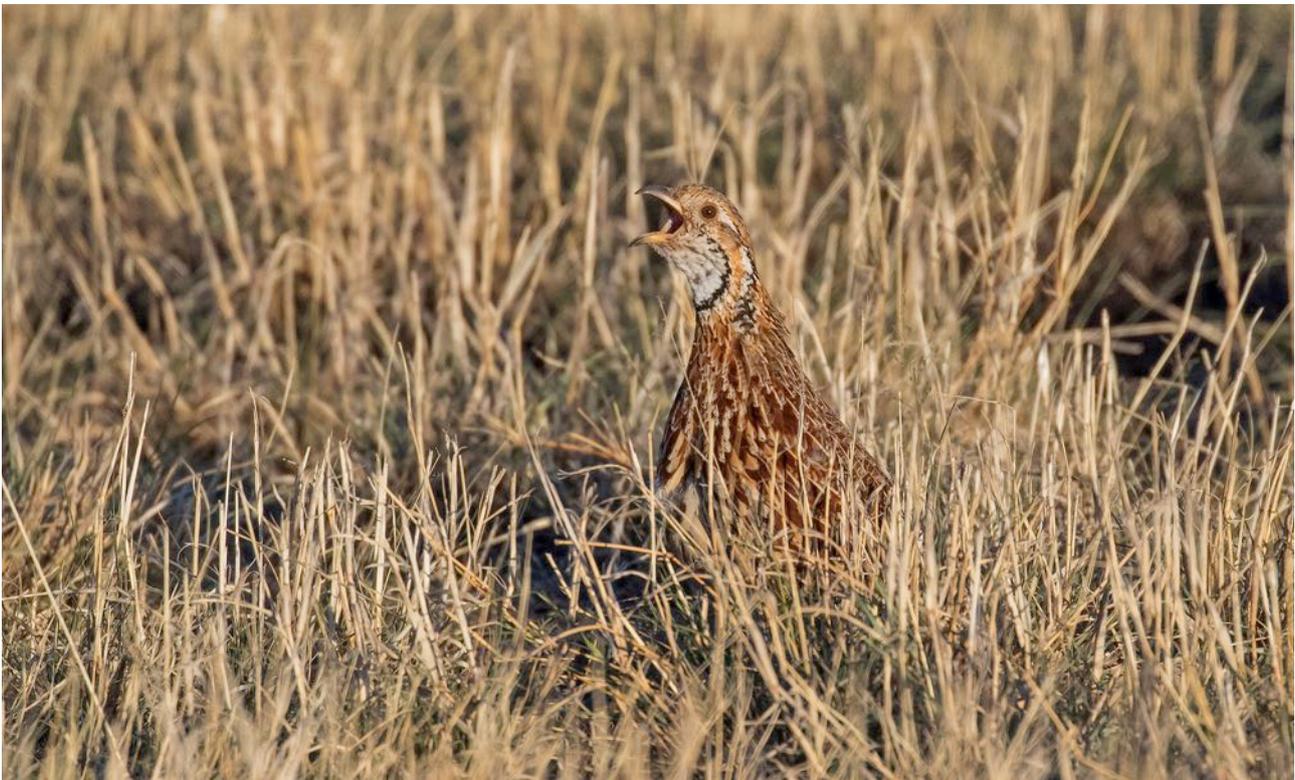
Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Black-footed Cat and Springhare... three reasons to go out at Marrick!! (Pete Morris)



A little bleary-eyed, we made our way back to Marrick the following morning, to see what the place looked like during the day! Trevor very kindly allowed us free access to his property, and during the morning we racked up some great birds. Eastern Clapper Larks displayed around us and showed superbly, lovely Double-banded Coursers scuttled across the plains and often elusive Pink-billed Larks gave great views. In the scrubbier areas

we found stunning Crimson-breasted Shrikes, Golden-tailed Woodpeckers, a much-wanted Ashy Tit, Marico Flycatchers, smart Kalahari Scrub Robins and Black-faced and Violet-eared Waxbills. Around the numerous waterholes, good numbers of Yellow Canaries and attractive Red-headed Finches were joined by other goodies including a couple of smart male Quailfinches.

After an excellent lunch, and some time off, we decided to explore to the south of Kimberley. This proved not to be too good, and indeed a second night drive at Marrick, after a lot of heavy rain, didn't add too much other than a night time Red-crested Korhaan. You can't win them all, but we did win the next one, as the following morning, we gained some amazing views of the tricky Orange River Francolin. A nearby wetland added plenty more. Great views of Bradfield's Swifts overhead, numerous waterbirds including Hottentot Teals and good numbers of African Snipes, colourful Cape Longclaws and busy Yellow-crowned Bishops all competed for our attention. It was however going to be another long journey, so we set off Joburg bound... We didn't take the direct route, instead taking a more birdy route, through fields full of Lesser Kestrels, numerous White Storks and another Secretarybird. Rufous-naped Larks sang from the roadside fences, but our main target, the subtle little Melodious Lark surprised us by simply appearing on the road in front of us while we were stopped! I like birds like that!



Orange River Francolin at Kimberley... a great way to start the day! (Pete Morris)

It was a long drive but by the late afternoon, after a rather monumental downpour (the first of several), we popped in at the pleasant Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve. Here, as well as more Melodious Larks (singing here) we marvelled at displaying Long-tailed Widowbirds and also added Fan-tailed and Red-collared Widowbirds, unstreaked Cloud Cisticolas and our first Swainson's Francolins. We then negotiated the outskirts of Johannesburg to find our rather lavish hotel.

After a fine breakfast, we headed to a huge hole in the ground... the Cullinan Diamond Mine. Here the hoped for Horus Swifts were common and right overhead. White-fronted Bee-eaters flitted around us and other goodies included a lovely Diederik Cuckoo, a smart Red-chested Cuckoo, our first Black-collared Barbets (complete with their amazing vocalizations) and an obliging Groundscraper Thrush. We then headed to another area near to Pretoria. Here we found a Lesser Honeyguide, a pair of Mocking Chats, and, after a bit of looking, the hoped for Short-toed (Transvaal) Rock Thrush. We then headed north but soon met the storm of storms! Cars dived off the road to shelter from the hail stones, and it was even difficult to get from the car to a service station without almost drowning! Unsurprisingly, by the time we got to Polokwane, the roads around the game reserve

were too wet to be driven on, so we had little choice other than to continue on to Magoebaskloof where drizzle and fog suggested an early meeting in the bar was the best idea!

We had a full day to explore the Magoebaskloof area, and with the expert local help of my friend David, it proved to be a highly successful day! We began soon after dawn with the main target... Cape Parrot. The birds were close, but it was a little foggy, but nevertheless they were in the bag. Lower down we found a number of other targets. Grey-rumped Swallows perched for us, an impressive Bat Hawk posed in the scope and a flock of chunky Magpie Manakins obliged. In the forest we switched attention to another set of birds. A perched Crowned Eagle was welcome, whilst sweet songs led us to goodies such as Brown Scrub Robin, Chorister Robin and the delightful Orange Ground Thrush. Narina Trogons and Knysna Turacos flashed their gaudy reds, Black-fronted Bushshrikes showed well as did Yellow-throated Warbler, and nervous Yellow-streaked Bulbuls crept around, flicking out their wings as they went. We even had the good fortune of seeing a pair of African Wood Owls in broad daylight. A cracking lunch followed, and having added Drakensberg Prinia in the car park, we set off for a different set of species. Our first stop soon saw us adding the stunning Gurney's Sugarbird as well as Wailing Cisticola, Long-billed Pipit and several Streaky-headed Seedeaters. Our next stop saw us wandering around an area of agriculture where our next target also showed very well. Several localized Short-clawed Larks were added to our ever-growing lark list. We also found a smart pair of Temminck's Coursers with a juvenile and some stunning male Straw-tailed Wydahs. Our final stop of the day added the promised Green Twinspot at point blank range, and we then headed back to celebrate what had been an extremely good day.



Highlights of Magoebaskloof: Orange Ground Thrush, Narina Trogon and the endangered Cape Parrot (Pete Morris)





Short-clawed Lark, Shaft-tailed Wydah and Temminck's Courser in the Magoebaskloof area (Pete Morris)

We had unfinished business the following morning, and so went back to the parrots. Although initially misty, patience paid off and we secured some great views of many of these rare birds, noisily squawking from the eucalypts. Nearby some very obliging Barratt's Warblers entertained, and at breakfast, the hotel's lawns came alive with dozens of Banded Mongooses!!

A long journey then followed, though we made numerous stops adding goodies such as Brown Snake Eagle, Grey Go-away-bird, Purple-crested Turaco, Grey-headed Bushshrike and even obliging Levillant's Cuckoos. We made an extended stop around the J G Strijdom Tunnel. Here we scoured the skies, seeing numerous Cape Vultures, but the Taita Falcon only obliged for two lucky group members. We then made our way further south towards Dullstroom. A trio of Abdim's Storks were a bonus, a group of White-winged Widowbirds our only ones of the trip, and, fortuitously, we found a pair of the hard-to-find Red-winged Francolin in the middle of the road!! We then spent sometime searching for non-existent eagle owls before completing the long drive to Wakkerstroom.

The following day we spent a productive day exploring the grasslands and wetlands surrounding Wakkerstroom with a specific list of targets. With our lucky guide, or should I say our guide Lucky, we explored various areas in just about every direction from this strategically placed town. It was a long day, but a successful one as we tracked down all of our targets. We began with amazing Southern Bald Ibises prowling across the fields

followed by both Ground Woodpecker and Buff-streaked Chat. Our quest for White-bellied Bustard took a while, but was ultimately successful, and, having added the unusual Bush Blackcap, we then made a detour to look for the rare and localized Yellow-breasted Pipit which showed superbly alongside Eastern Long-billed Lark and a male Sentinel Rock Thrush. Having bought supplies to see us through the afternoon, we headed north to seek out further species. After much searching, we found the hoped for Blue Korhaans (and indeed returned for more views later), and then found a fine male Amur Falcon. Our next stop yielded a Red-throated Wryneck and the endangered Botha's Lark, which showed very well, and we then moved on to another area where we found the unusual and endangered Rudd's Lark. Once again, with perseverance we gained some great views of this unusual lark as it collected food for its young in the nest. Nearby we found a singing Pale-crowned Cisticola, and ended the day at the rather quiet (by now) wetland.



Three Wakkerstroom specials: the cracking Yellow-breasted Pipit, the rare Rudd's Lark (left) and the endangered Botha's Lark (Pete Morris)



The following morning the wetland had come to life, and we enjoyed watching Grey Crowned Cranes, Little Bitterns, Squacco Herons and a couple of African Rails amongst others. After breakfast, we made our way to the Pongola Nature Reserve for a quick look around. The landscape was changing and so was the megafauna as numerous ungulates, giraffes and even several White Rhinos caught our eye. Bird wise we were now in East Africa. Marabous floated overhead, Magpie Shrikes posed atop bushes and we also found a couple



The fabulous African Bald Ibis entertained us on a few occasions (Pete Morris)

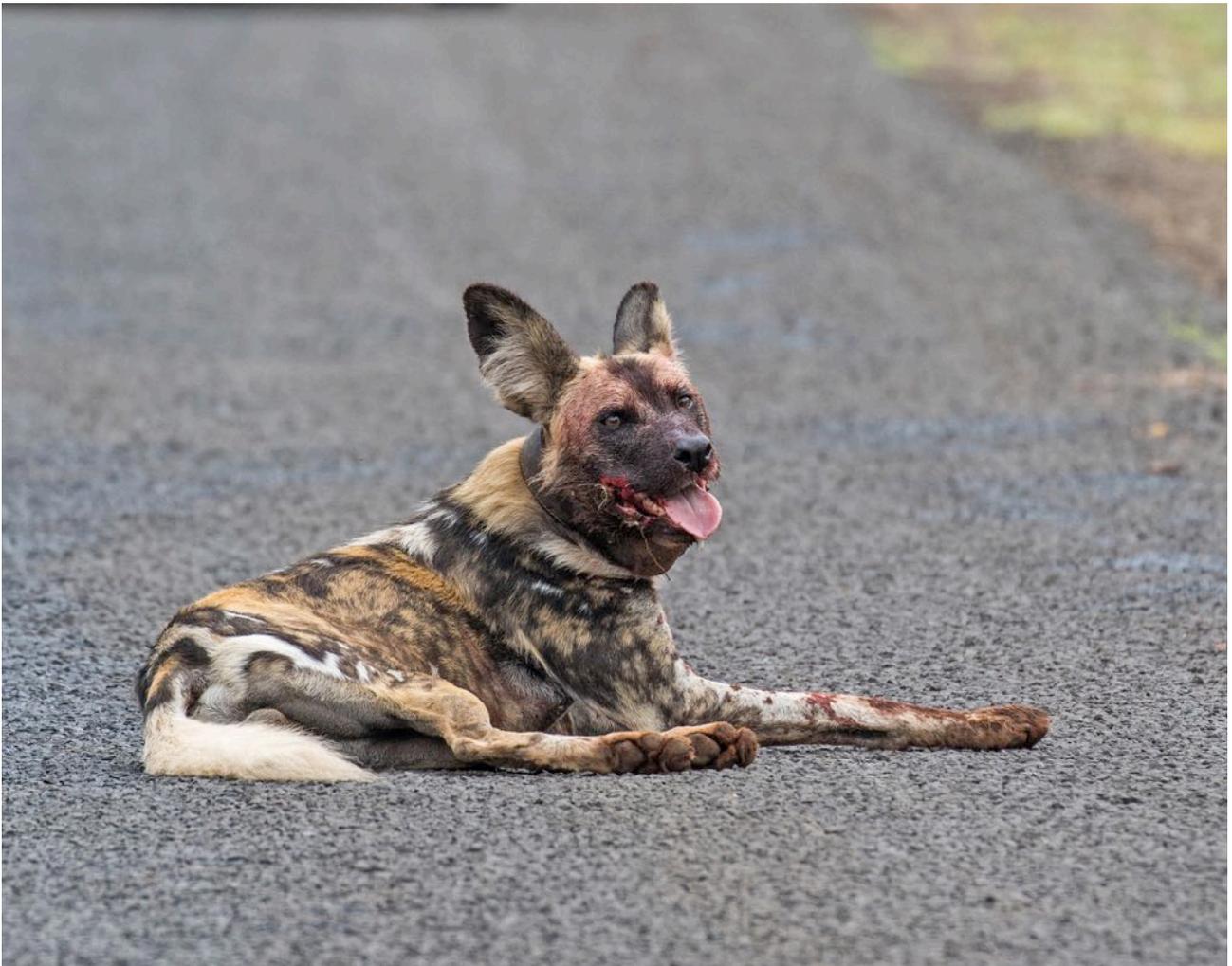
of Burchell's Starlings. Moving on we headed to Mkuze, with just enough time to start exploring the area, but without adding too much.

Our full day in Mkuze Game Reserve proved to be very successful. It has a real East African feel about it but at the same time has a number of good specialities. It wasn't all easy, and took some effort, but we were all very pleased indeed to see fine African Broadbills displaying and get some great views of Pink-throated Twinspot and Neergaard's Sunbird. The number of good birds seen were almost too many to list but other highlights included entertaining Crested Guinea-fowls, Bearded Woodpecker, fabulous White-throated Robin Chats, Eastern Bearded Scrub Robin, fantastic Gorgeous and Orange-breasted Bush-shrikes, White Helmet-shrike, Eastern Nicator, the localized Rudd's Apalis and Stierling's Wren-Warbler. The pans held a good variety of waterbirds such as Collared Pratincole and Yellow-billed and African Open-billed Storks and raptors were in evidence with our only Bateleur and Martial Eagle of the tour. Nyalas were the pick of the mammals. We also spent much time unsuccessfully searching for Pel's Fishing Owl in what seemed to be a very good location. That evening, we stayed on at the park until dusk, and were rewarded with great views of both Square-tailed and Fiery-necked Nightjars in the spotlight.

We decided upon another look in Mkuze the following morning, beginning with Black-crowned Tchagras, diminutive African Penduline Tits and a Striped Pipit near the gate. Being confronted with blood-stained African Wild Dogs on the road was not in the script, but nevertheless an interesting diversion (the individuals in question were reintroduced to the park six months previously), and a drive round added some great views of Black-bellied Bustard and Burnt-necked Eremomela. We tried again unsuccessfully for owls, and then made our way towards St Lucia. With stops, this took most of the rest of the day, but we did finally find both Giant Kingfisher and Goliath Heron. We also studied numerous localized Lemon-breasted Canaries, and found some dark-phase Jacobin Cuckoos. Once in St Lucia, we soon added Southern Brown-headed Weaver and a surprise flock of Red-headed Queleas. The rare and localized Woodward's Batis was added just before dusk, and at dusk we found Swamp Nightjar and more Fiery-necked Nightjars. Another action-packed day!



A fine Pink-throated Twinspot and an African Wild Dog at Mkuze (Pete Morris)





Two St Lucia specials: Rudd's Apalis and Woodward's Batis (Pete Morris)

The estuary and coastal forests at St Lucia are always productive. We began in a small patch of forest early doors. It took a little work before we finally got great looks at the spiky crested Livingstone's Turacos, and here we also found obliging Red-capped Robin Chats and a few other forest species before it became apparent that half of the world was now birding in the woods with us. We left! At another spot, we got some more great looks at Woodward's Batis and Rudd's Apalis as well as Narina Trogon, Dark-backed Weaver and Terrestrial Brownbul, and we then made our way out to Cape Vidal. Mammals were much in evidence with Black Rhinoceros, Cape Buffalo, Greater Kudu, Waterbuck and Blue Monkeys all being noted. A few new birds were added too, including the subtle Rufous-winged Cisticola, but it was generally quiet, and, time to move on.



Greater Kudu - one of many impressive mammals in the east (Pete Morris)

After lunch, we headed for Eshowe. Now I'd like to say it was an uneventful journey, but due to the lack of yellow stripes and 100km stickers on our vehicle, it wasn't. Thanks Mr Thrifty!! Anyway, all was resolved in the customary way, and we made our way on to Eshowe in increasingly unpleasant weather. Needless to say, the results of our first foray into the woodlands there were somewhat underwhelming. With complicated lodging arrangements and complicated roadworks, it took a while to get going the following morning. With rain still falling, this was no bad thing! We walked round and round the woods, with little to show for our efforts. A few Olive Thrushes, some smart Chorister Robins and the odd Olive Sunbird. After three wet hours a movement caught my eye and finally, there in front of us, was the special Spotted Ground Thrush. It was confiding, gathering worms in front of us as we all smiled in admiration and relief!!

The rest of the day would have been easy if it was simply a case of driving to Himeville. It wasn't! We began at the Albert Falls reserve where we had a quick but unsuccessful attempt to find Natal Francolin. We then embarked upon the long drive through rural Natal to a special little area known as Highover. And even then we had to work, but it was worth it. We crossed some grassland, kicking up Common Quails as we went, and arrived at a valley where we were delighted to enjoy some brilliant views of Blue Swallows at close range. What birds and what a tail! Content with a real mega, we headed for Himeville and an early bath (a cold one though!!).



Blue Swallow was a big highlight! (Pete Morris)

The following day was our day to explore the high Drakensberg and enter the Kingdom of Lesotho. The rough road still (currently) necessitates four wheel drive, and so we were picked up by our knowledgeable guides and led from one bird to the next. We began with a hunt for Wattled Cranes which ultimately proved successful as we found a pair of these stately birds with their offspring. Moving on, we paused for raucous Red-necked Spurfowl, and a little higher added Brown-backed Honeybird and admired numerous Gurney's Sugarbirds and confiding Ground Woodpeckers and Bush Blackcaps, as well as some gorgeous Buff-streaked Chats. Continuing on up, we climbed the sinuous and rocky road up towards the pass and here we found the absolutely delightful Drakensberg Rockjumper and Drakensberg Siskin as well as another very obliging African Rock(or Yellow-tufted) Pipit. We continued on into Lesotho, where the road suddenly turned into a perfectly smooth tarmac road. Sloggett's Rats dived in and out of their holes at the border post, and pretty soon we found the other birds we were after, enjoying great views of specialities such as Mountain Pipit, Sickle-winged Chat and Sentinel Rock Thrush. More African Bald Ibises plodded across the grassland, and the only Lammergeier of the tour drifted overhead. After a fine lunch we headed back down again, and more strategic stops added a



A few highlights from our Sani Pass excursion: Mountain Pipit, the gorgeous Buff-streaked Chat and Ground Woodpecker (Pete Morris)



few more birds, the best being a fabulous Half-collared Kingfishers. We arrived back in the late afternoon and bade farewell to our excellent guides. With an hour or two to spare, we had choices to make. We could relax and chill before the final day, or we could do something easy, like go and look for a couple of flufftails! Most of us opted for the latter, and with low expectations headed out around Himeville. Well, an hour later, we'd had simply amazing views of both Red-chested and Buff-spotted Flufftails, and settled down to our final dinner that night somewhat shell-shocked!

Anything after that was going to be a bit of an anti-climax. We began the final day with a Wattled Crane and followed it up with a visit to Marutsa Forest. Here a variety of forest birds showed well, including some spectacular Knysna Turacos, and we also added Lazy Cisticola and Red-fronted Tinkerbirds to our lists and, just as we were leaving, a pair of Southern Ground Hornbills flying over were a bit of a surprise! We then headed on towards Durban, once again detouring into Albert Falls, where this time we managed to find the hoped-for Natal Francolin. From here we took the back roads to King Shaka Airport, avoiding yellow-stripe spotting policeman and bringing the tour to its conclusion! We had covered a total of 8,635 kilometres (plus 100+ on our journey to Lesotho and back), and it has to be said it had been a pretty spectacular and successful journey through what is an amazing country, especially for anyone interested in wildlife. Great roads, pleasant accommodation, some great food and wine and brilliant birds and mammals: just a shame about all those fences!



Drakensberg Rockjumper, another of our highlights! (Pete Morris)



A male Knysna Woodpecker at De Hoop - sometimes a tricky bird to find (Pete Morris)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

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

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

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

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

(EW) = Extinct in the wild, **(CR)** = Critically Endangered, **(EN)** = Endangered, **(VU)** = Vulnerable, **(NT)** = Near Threatened, **(DD)** = Data Deficient.

For polytypic species, the subspecies seen on the tour, where known, is placed in parentheses at the end of the species comment. Generally, species listed with trinomials are not currently split by the IOC.

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **2017. IOC World Bird List (v 7.1)**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Please note, this was the current version when the report checklist was created. Some alternative names are given in parentheses.

All of our checklists are powered by our partner iGoTerra (www.igoterra.com) who provide web and mobile applications for bird and wildlife enthusiasts and businesses. Their suite of services cover observations, rankings, lists, photos and trip management tools.



'The Super Moon' (Pete Morris)

- Common Ostrich** *Struthio camelus* Seen at widespread sites, but many of dubious origin. Perhaps best in De Hoop [*australis*].
- White-faced Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* Six at Strandfontein were the first, largest numbers around Kimberley.
- White-backed Duck** *Thalassornis leuconotus* A few seen well on the small wetland near to Table View [nominate].
- Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis* Quite a few seen, especially in the fields in the Overberg [*niger*].
- Knob-billed Duck** *Sarkidiornis melanotos* A few in the east, especially in the Mkuze/St Lucia area.
- Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Fairly common and widespread. First seen around Cape Town.
- South African Shelduck** ◇ *Tadorna cana* Surprisingly few seen. First seen well at Akkerendam Nature Reserve, Calvinia.
- Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.
- Mallard (introduced)** *Anas platyrhynchos* A feral bird on a pond near Dullstroom.
- Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [nominate].
- Cape Shoveler** ◇ *Anas smithii* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.
- Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythrorhynchos* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.
- Hottentot Teal** *Anas hottentota* Just a handful seen, the first at the wetland outside Kimberley.
- Southern Pochard** *Netta erythrophthalma* Seen a few times, the first at Strandfontein, Cape Town [*brunnea*].
- Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa* (NT) Several seen on the lake at De Hoop. Also seen at Akkerendam Nature Reserve, Calvinia.
- Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [*coronatus*].
- Crested Guineafowl** ◇ *Guttera pucherani* A few seen well in Mkuze Game Reserve [*edouardi*].
- Grey-winged Francolin** ◇ *Scleroptila afra* Several great views. Seen near de Hoop, in West Coast NP and near Langebaan.
- Red-winged Francolin** ◇ *Scleroptila levaillantii* Brilliant views of a pair on the road on the drive to Dullstroom [nominate].
- Orange River Francolin** ◇ *Scleroptila gutturalis* Stunning views of at least three near to Kimberley [*levalliantoides*].
- Crested Francolin** *Dendroperdix sephaena* A few seen, the first at Pongola Nature Reserve, Pongola [nominate].
- Cape Spurfowl** ◇ *Pternistis capensis* Common and widespread around the Southern Cape. First seen at Betty's Bay.
- Natal Spurfowl** ◇ *Pternistis natalensis* After much searching, one seen well at Albert Falls [nominate].
- Red-necked Spurfowl** *Pternistis afer* A pair near the Sani Pass Hotel, and also seen at Marutsa Forest [*castaneiventris*].
- Swainson's Spurfowl** ◇ *Pternistis swainsonii* A few seen, the first at Suikerbosrand NR [nominate].
- Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* A few heard and then seen well in flight at Highover, where a 2 were flushed [*africana*].
- African Penguin** ◇ *Spheniscus demersus* (EN) Great views of the colony at Stony Point, Betty's Bay. Nearly all had fledged.



Red-winged Francolin (above) can be a tricky customer. Cape Francolin is somewhat easier!! (Pete Morris)



- Wilson's Storm Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* A couple seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town [*oceanicus/exasperatus*].
- Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (VU) An adult seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.
- Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* (NT) A few, including adults, on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.
- Shy Albatross** *Thalassarche cauta* (NT) Good numbers seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town [*stedi?*].
- Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** ♦ *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* (EN) Good numbers on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.
- Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** ♦ *Thalassarche carteri* (EN) One or two seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town. White heads!
- Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* A few seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.
- Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli* A few seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

Cape (or Pintado) Petrel *Daption capense* One seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town [nominate].

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* (VU) Plenty on the pelagic, some with extra white on their throat area.

Sooty Shearwater *Ardena grisea* Small numbers seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

Great Shearwater *Ardena gravis* Quite a few seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [*capensis*].

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* A couple near Cape Town then very good numbers at De Hoop [*infuscatus*].

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Seen a few times, the first at Strandfontein, Cape Town [*gurneyi*].

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* Common with good numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.



Plenty of Greater Flamingos were present around the Cape (Pete Morris)

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* (NT) Seen well at several sites. First seen in the West Coast National Park.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* A few seen in the Mkuze Game Reserve area.

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus* A few seen in the Mkuze Game Reserve area [nominate].

Abdim's Stork ◊ *Ciconia abdimii* A small group of 3 seen circling then dropping on the drive to Dullstroom.

Woolly-necked Stork (African Woollyneck) *Ciconia [episcopus] microscelis* Just a few in the east; first at Mkuze GR.

European White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* c10 on the drive from Kimberley to Johannesburg, and a few more in the east [nominate].

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* Two seen at the Pongola Nature Reserve, Pongola.

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

Southern Bald Ibis ◊ *Geronticus calvus* (VU) Great views of good numbers around Wakkerstroom and again in Lesotho.

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash* Common, noisy and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [nominate].

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Seen at several wetland sites, the first around Cape Town.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* A couple near to De Hoop and plenty more in the east of the country.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Brilliant views of several at the wetland at Wakkerstroom [*payesii*].

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* 3 at the small wetland near Table View, and a few more in the east.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Reasonable numbers in the east, the first at the wetland at Wakkerstroom.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town [nominate].

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* A smart grassland species first seen on the drive to Swellendam.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* Just a couple seen on the journey from Mkuze GR to St Lucia.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* A few at several wetlands, the first at the small wetland near Table View [nominate].

Great Egret *Ardea alba* Just a few in the east, the first on the drive to Wakkerstroom.

Intermediate (or Yellow-Billed) Egret *Ardea [intermedia] brachyrhyncha* Just one at the wetland at Wakkerstroom.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Surprisingly scarce with just a few seen, the first around Cape Town [nominate].

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* About ten seen with the first good views around Dullstroom [nominate].

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Just a handful seen in the Cape Town area.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* Just a handful seen around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

Cape Gannet ◊ *Morus capensis* (VU) A few off the coast and at least 30 on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus* Widespread with small numbers at many wetland, first around Cape Town [nominate].

Crowned Cormorant ◊ *Microcarbo coronatus* (NT) One at Betty's Bay, a couple in Simon's Town and a few at Kommetjie.

Bank Cormorant ◊ *Phalacrocorax neglectus* (EN) c20 seen at the colony at Stony Point, Betty's Bay.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

Cape Cormorant ◊ *Phalacrocorax capensis* (EN) 1000s seen on the Cape coast with great looks at the colony at Stony Point.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* Small numbers at several sites, a majority in the east [nominate].

Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* (VU) A total of three seen, with some great views. First seen near to De Hoop.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Just one seen in West Coast NP.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites [nominate].

African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus* Just a handful seen with a total of around 10 [nominate].

Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus* (NT) One seen high over Lesotho, above the Sani Pass [*meridionalis*].

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* A single on the way to St Lucia and about 8 over at St Lucia.

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* (CR) A few seen around Mkuze.

Cape Vulture ◊ *Gyps coprotheres* (EN) c20 seen at Potberg, about 12 around the J G Strijdom Tunnel, and a few others.

Black-chested Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis* A few seen including 3 on between Brandvlei and Springbok.



A fine Black-chested Snake Eagle (Pete Morris)

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* Good views of one perched up on the drive to Wakkerstroom.

Southern Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus* (H) (NT) Heard at St Lucia but sadly we could not see it.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* (NT) A poor showing with just one seen at Mkuze.

Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus* Great views of one close to a nest near to Tzaneen.

Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (NT) One scoped perched at Magoebaskloof.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* (VU) Just one seen in flight at Mkuze GR.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis* Several seen in the east of the country, the first around Magoebaskloof.
Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* Good numbers in the east after the first couple on the way to Wakkerstroom.
Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* A few along the west coast, with best views in the Springbok area.
Verreaux's (or Black) Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* Great views of one on roadside cliffs at Gordon's Bay.
Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus* Small numbers of this striking raptor seen, the first near to Potberg [andersoni].



Pale Chanting Goshawk and Jackal Buzzard were both seen with some regularity (Pete Morris)

African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* A few heard, and one seen at Magoebaskloof [nominate].
Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris* One seen well but briefly in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.
African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus* A few at wetlands in the southwest and 3 at the wetland at Wakkerstroom.
Black Harrier ◊ *Circus maurus* (VU) Great views in West Coast National Park and further north along the west coast.
Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* A single juvenile seen near to Wakkerstroom.
Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Common and widespread [parasitus].
African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* A good number seen, most common in the east, especially around Mkuze.
Common (or Steppe) Buzzard *Buteo buteo* Common and widespread in small numbers [vulpinus].
Forest Buzzard *Buteo trizonatus* Two or three gave reasonable views over Grootvadersbosch.
Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus* Fairly common, especially in the southwest, with many great views.
Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori* (NT) One seen on the drive from Brandvlei to Aggeneys [nominate].
Ludwig's Bustard ◊ *Neotis ludwigii* (EN) Several on the drive to Aggeneys, and 16+ between Aardvark Kloof and Pofadder.
Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami* (NT) c7 seen around Grootvadersbosch/De Hoop and 3 near to Wakkerstroom [stanleyi].
White-bellied Bustard ◊ *Eupodotis senegalensis* Four seen near to Dirkie'sdoop, northeast of Wakkerstroom [barrowii].
Blue Korhaan *Eupodotis caerulea* (NT) A pair and a juv seen well north of Wakkerstroom. Shy!
Karoo Korhaan ◊ *Eupodotis vigorsii* Seen very well a number of times, the first near to Potberg [nominate].
Red-crested Korhaan *Lophotis ruficrista* One seen well during the night drive at Marrick Game Farm.
Southern Black Korhaan ◊ *Afrotis afra* (VU) A few seen well, with amazing views of a male near the Darling Wildflower loop.
Northern Black Korhaan ◊ *Afrotis afroides* Plenty seen well in the Northern Cape, including close by at Marrick GF [nominate].
Black-bellied Bustard *Lissotis melanogaster* Singles seen on the journey to Mkuze and very well in Mkuze GR [notophila].
Buff-spotted Flufftail ◊ *Sarothrura elegans* Brilliant views of a male in a garden in Himeville. Right in the open [nominate]!
Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa* Brilliant views of 3 (2 males) at the small reserve at Himeville. Mega [nominate]!
African Rail *Rallus caeruleus* Excellent views of a few at the wetland at Wakkerstroom.
Black Crane *Amaurornis flavirostris* A few seen, the first at the small wetland at Table View.
African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis* A few, first at the small wetland at Table View and several at Wakkerstroom.



A superb Black-bellied Bustard at Mkuze and a Northern Black Korhaan at night at Marrick Game Farm (Pete Morris)



Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Small numbers at several sites. First seen around Cape Town [*meridionalis*].

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* Common at several wetlands. First seen around Cape Town.

Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum* (EN) Plenty in the east, especially around Wakkerstroom and Himeville [nominate].

Blue Crane ♦ *Grus paradisea* (VU) Particularly common in the Overberg, with many great views; smaller numbers elsewhere.

Wattled Crane ♦ *Grus carunculata* (VU) Excellent views of a family of three near to Himeville and another on the last day.

Water Thick-Knee *Burhinus vermiculatus* A pair with a youngster seen at Strandfontein and a few seen at St Lucia [nominate].

Spotted Thick-Knee *Burhinus capensis* A total of five seen, the first near to De Hoop [*damarensis*].

African Oystercatcher ♦ *Haematopus moquini* (NT) Several seen in the southwest, the first of which was at Betty's Bay.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Seen at a number of sites, the biggest numbers at Strandfontein.

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.

Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around De Hoop [nominate].

African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus* A pair seen near to Suikerbosrand NR, and a few later in the trip [*lateralis*].

Tundra Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* c5 seen at Strandfontein [*tundrae*].

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* Small numbers at several sites. First seen at Strandfontein.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* Small numbers at several sites. First seen near Table View [nominate].

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* A few seen with best views in West Coast NP [nominate].

Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus* (NT) A male seen well in the gale at the salt pans near to Veldrufft [nominate].

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Small numbers at wetlands in the east, the first at the wetland at Wakkerstroom.

African (or Ethiopian) Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis* 25+ counted at the wetland near Kimberley; 2 at Wakkerstroom [nominate].

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* (NT) c15 on the beach near Cape Town and 10 near De Hoop [*taymyrensis*].

(European) Whimbrel *Numenius [phaeopus] phaeopus* Small numbers seen at a few sites, the first near Table View.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Just a few seen, the first at the wetland near to Table View.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Small numbers seen at several sites, the first near to Table View.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Just a few seen, the first at the wetland near to Table View.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* One showed very well at Strandfontein. A pleasant surprise!



This Terek Sandpiper at Strandfontein was a welcome bonus (Pete Morris)

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Just a couple of sightings, the first near to Table View.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Three at Strandfontein were the only ones.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Seen at several sites, the biggest number being c50 at Strandfontein.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (NT) Just a few seen, the first at Strandfontein.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Highest count was c 30 at the wetland near Kimberley.

Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii* Great views of a pair and a juvenile near to Magoebaskloof [*ruvanensis*].

Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus* Several seen well at Marrick Game Farm [nominate].

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* A few seen at Mkuze GR [*fuelleborni*].

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* First in the large flocks of Hartlaub's Gulls at Strandfontein [*poiocephalus*].

Hartlaub's Gull *Chroicocephalus hartlaubii* Very common in the southwest. First seen on the first day in Cape Town.

Kelp (or Cape) Gull ◇ *Larus dominicanus* Very common in the southwest. First seen in Cape Town [*vetula*].

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* Just a few seen, the first at Strandfontein.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Fairly common in the southwest, first seen at Betty's Bay [nominate].

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* Small numbers in the southwest, first seen at Betty's Bay.

Damara Tern ◇ *Sternula balaenarum* (VU) Brilliant views of one on a nest at Struisbaai. Great bird!

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Good numbers seen, especially on the pelagic where there were 1000s [*tibetana*]!

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Plenty seen with biggest numbers at Strandfontein [*delalandii*].

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* c10 seen at Mkuze GR.

Brown Skua *Stercorarius antarcticus* Two seen on the pelagic out of Simon's Town.

Namaqua Sandgrouse ◇ *Pterocles namaqua* Many great views; biggest numbers were in the Calvinia/Brandvlei areas.



Namaqua Sandgrouse gave us plenty of opportunities to study them (Pete Morris)

Rock Dove (Feral) *Columba livia* 'feral'

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Common and widespread. Actually seem to outcompete Feral Pigeons [*phaeonota*]!

African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix* Small numbers at several sites, the first at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon *Columba delegorguei* (H) One heard at Dlinza Forest, Eshowe [nominate].

Lemon Dove *Columba larvata* A couple of brief sightings at Magoebaskloof [nominate].

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola* Two forms seen: nominate, first around the Cape and *tropica* in the east.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [nominate].

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos* A few seen in the east, the first on the journey to Mkuze.

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistris* A couple seen at Mkuze GR and another at Marutsa Forest.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Plenty seen well with great views at the waterhole at Marrick GR [nominate].

African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus* Just a handful seen with most of those seen at Mkuze GR [*delalandii*].

Livingstone's Turaco ◇ *Tauraco livingstonii* Excellent views of a few at St Lucia [*reichenowii*].



Two crackers! Knysna Turaco above and Purple-crested Turaco (Pete Morris)



Knysna Turaco ♦ *Tauraco corythaix* See note.

Purple-crested Turaco *Tauraco porphyreolophus* Particularly good views in the hotel garden at St Lucia [nominate].

Grey Go-away-Bird *Corythaixoides concolor* Just three seen, the first around the hotel at Birchwood [nominate].
Burchell's Coucal ◊ *Centropus burchellii* Several seen in the east, the first in the Magoebaskloof area [nominate].
Levaillant's (or Striped) Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii* Brilliant views on the drive from Magoebaskloof to Wakkerstroom.
Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* Excellent views of two, including a black-phase bird, near to Bonamanzi.
Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* A good number seen and heard, the first at De Hoop. Many great views.



Diederik Cuckoo, Levaillant's (or Striped) Cuckoo and Jacobin Cuckoo (Pete Morris)

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* A few heard and singles seen at St Lucia and Marutsa Forest.
African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus* (H) A few heard but sadly none wanted to show.
Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* A few heard and a couple seen well at Mkuze GR [nominate].
Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* Plenty heard and a few seen, the first at Cullinan Diamond Mine.
Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba* Seen very well at Marrick GF, including a pair at the nest [*poensis*].
Spotted Eagle-Owl *Bubo africanus* 12+ seen well, including a few with chicks, the first at Kirstenbosch BG [nominate].
African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* Great views of a pair in broad daylight at Magoebaskloof [nominate].
Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* Three seen including great views in Upington [*licua*].
Rufous-cheeked Nightjar ◊ *Caprimulgus rufigena* Brilliant spotlight views of a couple at Marrick GR.
Fiery-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus pectoralis* One seen at Mkuze GR and a couple of others at St Lucia [*crepusculans*].
Swamp Nightjar *Caprimulgus natalensis* Decent views of one or two at St Lucia [nominate].
Square-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus fossii* Excellent views of a male at Mkuze GR [*welwitschii*].



A feisty little Pearl Spotted Owlet at Upington and a Western Barn Owl at Marrick Game Farm (Pete Morris)

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Common in the north and east after the first at Augrabies Falls NP [*celer*].

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Fairly common and widespread. First seen at Betty's Bay.

Common Swift *Apus apus* A migrant flock seen on the journey from Kimberley to Birchwood.

African Black Swift *Apus barbatus* Several at Langebaan and a few later with great views of 50+ above Sani Pass [nominate].

Bradfield's Swift *Apus bradfieldi* Seen a few times, first near Pofadder. Great views at the wetland near Kimberley [*deserticola*].

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area [*affinis-group*].

Horus Swift *Apus horus* One at De Hoop then great views of good numbers at Cullinan Diamond Mine [nominate].

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.



White-rumped Swift (left) and the superficially similar Horus Swift (Pete Morris)



White-backed Mousebirds and African Hoopoes were fairly widespread: Half-collared Kingfisher a definite bonus! (Pete Morris)

- Speckled Mousebird** *Colius striatus* Two forms: nominate first around the Cape; *minor* first at Magoebaskloof.
- White-backed Mousebird** *Colius colius* Two forms: nominate widespread; *damarensis* around Springbok etc.
- Red-faced Mousebird** *Urocolius indicus* Two forms: nominate first near Cape Town; *transvaalensis* on the journey to Kimberley.
- Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* A smart bird seen well at Magoebaskloof Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].
- Lilac-breasted Roller** *Coracias caudatus* Just a few seen, the first near to Cullinan [nominate].
- Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* A few seen, the first near to Tzaneen [*suahelicus*].
- Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* A handful seen, the first near to Tzaneen.
- Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* A pair at Mkuze GR were surprisingly a write-in [*cyanoleuca*].
- African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta* Singles at Magoebaskloof and St Lucia were the only two seen [*natalensis*].
- Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus* A total of six seen, the first at the small wetland near Table View [nominate].
- Half-collared Kingfisher** ◇ *Alcedo semitorquata* Brilliant views of one near to Himeville.
- Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* Excellent views of a female at Bonamanzi. Surprisingly the only one [nominate]!
- Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* A few seen at several sites, at the small wetland near to Table View [nominate].
- Swallow-tailed Bee-Eater** *Merops hirundineus* Several seen well, the first at Augrabies Falls NP [nominate].
- Little Bee-Eater** *Merops pusillus* Just a handful seen around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [*meridionalis*].
- White-fronted Bee-Eater** *Merops bullockoides* c20 seen well at the Cullinan Diamond Mine.
- Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater** *Merops persicus* Good numbers of migrants at Mkuze GR. Many were very dull [nominate]!
- European Bee-Eater** *Merops apiaster* Good numbers in several areas, the first the day we moved north from Cape Town.
- African Hoopoe** *Upupa africana* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen near Grootvadersbosch.
- Green (or Red-billed) Wood Hoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus* A few seen well in Mkuze GR [*marwitzi*].
- Common Scimitarbill** *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* A handful seen, the first around Augrabies Falls NP.
- Southern Ground Hornbill** *Bucorvus leadbeateri* (VU) Two flew over us at Marutsa Forest.
- Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill** ◇ *Tockus leucomelas* Just one seen at Mkuze GR [nominate].
- Crowned Hornbill** *Lophoceros alboterminatus* Singles seen at Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

African Grey Hornbill *Lophoceros nasutus* A single north of Johannesburg was the only one [*epirhinus*].

Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator* Good numbers in the eastern forests. First seen in Mkuze GR.

White-eared Barbet *Stactolaema leucotis* Good views of a few around St Lucia [nominate].

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus* A few heard and a couple seen at St Lucia [nominate].

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus* Just one seen, at Marutsa Forest [nominate].

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* A couple heard and one seen on the drive to Wakkerstroom [*extoni*].

Acacia Pied Barbet *Tricholaema leucomelas* Several seen well, the first at De Hoop.

Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus* A few seen well, the first by Cullinan Diamond Mine. Impressive birds [nominate].

Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii* A few seen, the first in Upington [nominate].

Brown-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* One seen well below the Sani Pass and another at Marutsa Forest [nominate].

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* Three seen, the first at Hoogland Health Hydro Spa [nominate].

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* (H) One heard at Grootvadersbosch was our only encounter.

Red-throated Wryneck *Jynx ruficollis* Excellent views of one on a fence near Daggakraal, Wakkerstroom [nominate].

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni* Excellent views at Marrick GR; a few others heard [nominate group].

Knysna Woodpecker ◊ *Campethera notata* (NT) Stunning views of a male at De Hoop.

Ground Woodpecker ◊ *Geocolaptes olivaceus* First near to Wakkerstroom, but best views below the Sani Pass.

Bearded Woodpecker *Chloropicus namaquus* Excellent views of a pair at Mkuze GR [*coalescens*].

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Two forms: nominate in the south; *intermedius* in the east.

Olive Woodpecker *Dendropicos griseocephalus* Great views of a pair at Grootvadersbosch [nominate].

Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus* Three seen, all close to Sociable Weaver colonies of course [nominate].

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* At least 50 seen in the Dealesville area, on the drive from Kimberley to Johannesburg.

Rock Kestrel *Falco rupicolus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.

Greater Kestrel *Falco rupicoloides* Good numbers in drier areas of the Cape. First seen on the drive to Calvinia [nominate].

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* Decent views of a smart male near to Wakkerstroom.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Singles seen near to Brandvlei and at Tzaneen [nominate].

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Just five seen with best views at Port Nolloth [nominate].

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Six seen, with best views at Augrabies Falls [*minor*].

Taita Falcon ◊ *Falco fasciinucha* (VU) (NL) Good flight views for a lucky couple of the group at the J G Strijdom tunnel.

Cape Parrot ◊ *Poicephalus robustus* c10 in the fog at Magoebaskloof, then much better views of c16 the following day.

Rose-ringed Parakeet (introduced) *Psittacula krameri* A feral bird seen in Pretoria.



Red-throated Wryneck was found near to Wakkerstroom, whilst Acacia Pied Barbet popped up at several sites (Pete Morris)



This brilliant African Broadbill was busy displaying in Mkuze National Park (Pete Morris)

- African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis* Brilliant views of a couple of displaying birds at Mkuze GR [nominate].
- Cape Batis** ◇ *Batis capensis* Two forms: nominate around Cape Town; *hollidayi* at Magoebaskloof. Great bird.
- Woodward's Batis** ◇ *Batis fratrum* Brilliant views of a pair on two days at St Lucia.
- Chin-spot Batis** *Batis molitor* A few seen at Mkuze GR [nominate].
- Pririt Batis** ◇ *Batis pririt* Several seen very well, the first in the creek near to Brandvlei.
- White-crested Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus* A couple of entertaining flocks seen at Mkuze GR [*poliocephalus*-group].
- Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* One seen well on the drive to Wakkerstroom; a couple of others heard.
- Black-fronted Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus nigrifrons* Great views of three at Magoebaskloof. Smart birds [*sandgroundi*].
- Olive Bushshrike** ◇ *Chlorophoneus olivaceus* At least 4 seen well at Grootvadersbosch; a few others heard. [nominate].
- Orange-breasted Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* A few seen in the Mkuze area [*similis*].
- Gorgeous Bushshrike** *Telophorus viridis* Great views of this skulking stunner in Mkuze GR [*quadricolor*].
- Bokmakierie** ◇ *Telophorus zeylonus* Two forms: nominate first at Potberg; *thermophilus* in Port Nolloth for etc. Great bird.
- Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra australis* One at Marrick GR, then seen well at Mkuze GR [nominate].
- Southern Tchagra** ◇ *Tchagra tchagra* Great views of a couple near to Potberg, then at least four at De Hoop [nominate].
- Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus* A couple seen well near to Mkuze. Others heard [*orientalis*].
- Black-backed Puffback** *Dryoscopus cubla* Plenty seen well, especially around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [*hamatus*].
- Southern Boubou** ◇ *Laniarius ferrugineus* First seen well at Betty's Bay and a few others seen during the tour.
- Crimson-breasted Shrike** ◇ *Laniarius atrococcineus* Brilliant views of a stunning pair at Marrick GF.
- Brubru** *Nilaus afer* Just a few seen. The first at Marrick GF.
- Grey Cuckooshrike** *Coracina caesia* A couple at Magoebaskloof were the only ones of the tour [nominate].
- Black Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga flava* A male seen well on the journey to Wakkerstroom was the only one.
- Maggie Shrike** *Urolestes melanoleucus* c6 seen at Pongola Nature Reserve.
- Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* A few seen, the first just south of Kimberley.
- Southern Fiscal** *Lanius collaris* See note.
- Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* A female was seen on the way to St Lucia.
- Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus* Best views were around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].
- Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* Several seen around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].
- Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* Small numbers at a number of sites. More common in the east.



Bokmakerie (top) and the equally vocal *Southern Boubou* (left) were always good to see. 'Latakoo' *Southern Fiscal* was seen at a few sites (*Pete Morris*)

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas* See note.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Widespread but impressive, with small numbers at many sites [*granti*].

Cape Crow *Corvus capensis* Most common in the Overberg and around Wakkerstroom [nominate].

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

White-necked Raven *Corvus albicollis* Widespread with small numbers at many sites, especially in the south and west.

Cape Rockjumper ◊ *Chaetops frenatus* Superb views of up to five birds at Rooi Els.
Drakensberg Rockjumper ◊ *Chaetops aurantius* Brilliant views of a couple of pairs along the road to the Sani Pass.
Fairy Flycatcher ◊ *Stenostira scita* Only seen well at Kransvleiport. Others heard.
Southern Black Tit ◊ *Melaniparus niger* First on the drive to Wakkerstroom, plenty more around the Mkuze and St Lucia.
Ashy Tit ◊ *Melaniparus cinerascens* One seen well after some searching at Marrick GF [nominate].
Grey Tit ◊ *Melaniparus afer* Two forms: brilliant views of *arens* the first just outside Langebaan; nominate seen at Port Nolloth.
Grey Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus caroli* A pair seen very well on the drive in to Mkuze GR [hellmayri].
Cape Penduline Tit ◊ *Anthoscopus* See note.



Some great tits too: Grey Tit at the top, Ashy Tit and the tiny little Cape Penduline Tit (Pete Morris)

Eastern (or Yellow-spotted) Nicator *Nicator gularis* A few good sightings at Mkuze GR.
Spike-heeled Lark ◊ *Chersomanes albofasciata* Quite common in suitable habitat. First seen near to Brandvlei.
Short-clawed Lark ◊ *Certhilauda chuana* Brilliant views of several near to Mohlatsweng, near to Magoebaskloof.
Karoo Long-billed Lark ◊ *Certhilauda subcoronata* Several seen well. First noted near to Brandvlei.
Eastern Long-billed Lark ◊ *Certhilauda semitorquata* Several great looks in the Wakkerstroom area.
Cape Long-billed Lark ◊ *Certhilauda curvirostris* See note.



The Long-billed Larks were all formerly treated as one species and were only split around 15 years ago. It's easy to see why they were though!
 Clockwise from top left: Cape, Agulhas, Karoo and Eastern Long-billed Larks (Pete Morris)



- Agulhas Long-billed Lark** ♦ *Certhilauda brevirostris* Excellent views of a few in the Overberg, near De Hoop.
- Black-eared Sparrow-Lark** ♦ *Eremopterix australis* Brilliant views of a pair south of Brandvlei.
- Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark** ♦ *Eremopterix verticalis* Fairly common and widespread in the southwest. First near Brandvlei.
- Sabota Lark** ♦ *Calendulauda sabota* See note.
- Fawn-coloured Lark** *Calendulauda africanoides* A few seen on the drive in to Augrabies Falls National Park [nominate].
- Karoo Lark** ♦ *Calendulauda albescens* First seen in West Coast National Park and seen at several sites subsequently.
- Red Lark** ♦ *Calendulauda burra* (VU) See note.
- Barlow's Lark** *Calendulauda barlowi* See note.
- Rudd's Lark** ♦ *Heteromirafra ruddi* (VU) Superb views of one or two near Fickland Pan, Wakkerstroom.



What, more larks?! Clockwise from top left: Cape (Agulhas form) Clapper Lark, Karoo Lark, Pink-billed Lark and Melodious Lark (Pete Morris)

- Eastern Clapper Lark** *Mirafra fasciolata* Excellent views of several at Marrick GF and at a few other spots {nominate}.
- Cape Clapper Lark** ◇ *Mirafra apiata* Agulhas Clapper [*marjoriae*] seen well near De Hoop. Nominate only heard.
- Rufous-naped Lark** *Mirafra africana* Common in the northern half of the tour. First seen northeast of Dealesville.
- Melodious Lark** ◇ *Mirafra cheniana* (NT) Excellent views of one near Dealesville, and also seen at the Suikerbosrand NR.
- Sclater's Lark** ◇ *Spizocorys sclateri* (NT) Great views of several coming to drink at a small dam near Brandvlei.
- Stark's Lark** ◇ *Spizocorys starki* Great views of good numbers between Pofadder and Augrabies Falls NP.
- Botha's Lark** ◇ *Spizocorys fringillaris* (EN) Superb views of one near Wakkerstroom. Collecting food to feed young.
- Pink-billed Lark** ◇ *Spizocorys conirostris* Great views of several at Marrick Game Farm.
- Large-billed Lark** ◇ *Galerida magnirostris* Reasonably common. First seen in the Overberg.
- Red-capped Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* Common and widespread. First noted at Strandfontein [nominate].
- African Red-eyed Bulbul** ◇ *Pycnonotus nigricans* Nominate at Aggeneys, *superior* in the Kimberley area etc.
- Cape Bulbul** ◇ *Pycnonotus capensis* Quite common around the Southern Cape.
- Dark-capped Bulbul** *Pycnonotus tricolor* First on the drive to Johannesburg, then common in the east [*layardi*].
- Sombre Greenbul** *Andropadus importunus* Fairly common. First seen at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens [nominate].
- Yellow-bellied Greenbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris* A few seen, mostly around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [nominate].
- Terrestrial Brownbul** *Phyllastrephus terrestris* A few at Mkuze GR, St Lucia and Dlinza Forest, but quite skulking [nominate].
- Yellow-streaked Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus* At least six seen at Magoebaskloof [nominate].
- Black Saw-Wing** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera* Seen at several sites. First at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens [*holomelas*].
- Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* Several seen very well at the Reservoir at Tzaneen [nominate].
- Brown-throated Martin** *Riparia paludicola* Good numbers seen at several sites, often near to water [nominate].



Who needs an excuse to post another picture of a Blue Swallow?! Above, Southern Tchagra showed well at De Hoop (Pete Morris)

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* A few seen near to Kimberley Airport [nominate].

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta* Best views and biggest numbers were in the Wakkerstroom area [nominate].

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common and widespread.

White-throated Swallow *Hirundo albigularis* A cracking swallow seen very well at several sites.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* Just a few seen in the Mkuze area [nominate].

Blue Swallow ◊ *Hirundo atrocaerulea* (VU) Brilliant views at Highover. A real cracker!

Pearl-breasted Swallow *Hirundo dimidiata* Plenty in the Potberg/De Hoop area and a few north of Cape Town [nominate].

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* Two forms: nominate widespread; *pretoriae* at the J G Strijdom tunnel for example.

Greater Striped Swallow *Cecropis cucullata* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First near Cape Town.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* Fairly common in the east. First seen near to Cullinan [*unitatis*].

Red-breasted Swallow *Cecropis semirufa* A single near to Kimberley and a few in the east, especially at St Lucia [nominate].

South African Cliff Swallow ◊ *Petrochelidon spilodera* Great colonies near Calvinia and big numbers around Wakkerstroom.

Cape Grassbird ◊ *Sphenoeacus afer* Two forms: nominate in the south; *intermedius* in the east. A smart bird.

Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens* Small numbers seen at a few sites, the first between Langebaan and Calvinia.



This fine Cape Grassbird showed up on our very first day (Pete Morris)

Victorin's Warbler ◇ *Cryptillas victorini* Brilliant views of an outrageously showy bird at Gordon's Bay.

Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus ruficapilla* Seen well at Magoebaskloof and Marutsa Forest [nominate].

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* First seen in the garden at Calvinia and a few others in the east [*yakutensis*].

Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* First seen around Cape Town, plenty more in the east [nominate].

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus* First seen at the river crossing on the drive to Calvinia [nominate].

African Yellow Warbler *Iduna natalensis* First seen around Dullstroom. Also at Wakkerstroom and the Sani Pass [nominate].

Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* Brilliant views of the nominate at Table View; *transvaalensis* heard in the east.

Knysna Warbler ◇ *Bradypterus sylvaticus* (VU) After a bit of searching, some stunning views at Grootvadersbosch [nominate].

Barratt's Warbler ◇ *Bradypterus barratti* Excellent views at Magoebaskloof [nominate] and heard at the Sani Pass [*cathkinensis*].

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythropus* Good views of a pair in the hotel garden at Mkuze [*nyasa*].

Lazy Cisticola ◇ *Cisticola aberrans* Good views of a pair at Marutsa Forest in the end [*minor*].

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana* Common in the east. First seen on the journey to Wakkerstroom [*campestris*].

Grey-backed Cisticola ◇ *Cisticola subruficapilla* Fairly common in the Cape, first around Gordon's Bay [*subruficapilla*-group].

Wailing Cisticola ◇ *Cisticola lais* A few seen well, the first near to Magoebaskloof. Also common on the trip to Lesotho.

Rufous-winged Cisticola ◇ *Cisticola galactotes* Excellent views of a few around St Lucia [nominate].

Levaillant's Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens* Two forms: *elegans* around the Cape; nominate largely in the east.

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis* Several seen at St Lucia [nominate].

Neddicky Cisticola *Cisticola fulvicapilla* A few seen, the first at Grootvadersbosch.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* A few seen, the first at Strandfontein [*terrestris*].

Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus* A few seen near to Kimberley [*kalahari*].

Cloud Cisticola ◇ *Cisticola textrix* See note.

Pale-crowned Cisticola ◇ *Cisticola cinnamomeus* Great views of one near to Wakkerstroom [*egregius*].

Wing-snapping Cisticola *Cisticola ayresii* Several seen near to Wakkerstroom but not easy to see well [nominate].



The two arch skulkers, Knysna (left) and Barratt's Warblers, and below, (Cape) Cloud Cisticola and Pale-crowned Cisticola (Pete Morris)



Tawny-flanked *Prinia subflava* Quite common in the east. First seen at Magoebaskloof [*pondoensis*].
Black-chested Prinia ◇ *Prinia flavicans* Just a few seen, the first seen well near to Brandvlei [*flavicans*].
Karoo Prinia ◇ *Prinia maculosa* Common in the south and west. First seen at Rooi Els [nominate].
Drakensberg Prinia ◇ *Prinia hypoxantha* A few seen well at Magoebaskloof and below the Sani Pass.
Namaqua Warbler ◇ *Phragmacia substriata* Great views on the drive to Calvinia. A few others heard [nominate].



Aaah, prinias... not the most exciting! Drakensberg Prinia (left) and Namaqua Warbler (formerly prinia). Rufous-eared Warbler's a bit nicer though! (Pete Morris)



Bar-throated Apalis *Apalis thoracica* First at Grootvadersbosch, and several more seen / heard at other forested sites.
Rudd's Apalis ◇ *Apalis ruddi* Great views of this localized speciality at both Mkuze GR and at St Lucia [*fumosa*].
Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida* A few seen well around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia [*flavida*-group].
Rufous-eared Warbler ◇ *Malcorus pectoralis* Several good views of this cracker, the first on the way to Calvinia.
Green-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura* Common, by voice in the east. Best views by request at Mkuze GR.
Stierling's Wren-Warbler ◇ *Calamonastes stierlingi* One showed well at Mkuze GR and then vanished [*pintoii*].
Cinnamon-breasted Warbler ◇ *Euryptila subcinnamomea* Excellent views at Botterkloof on the way to Calvinia.
Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* Just three pallid birds seen, the first near to Brandvlei [*saturator*].
Karoo Eremomela ◇ *Eremomela gregalis* Great views of one near to Brandvlei.
Burnt-necked Eremomela *Eremomela usticollis* Nice views of at least three in Mkuze GR [nominate].



The amazing Bush Blackcap one of several seen well, and the pretty Orange River White-eye (Pete Morris)

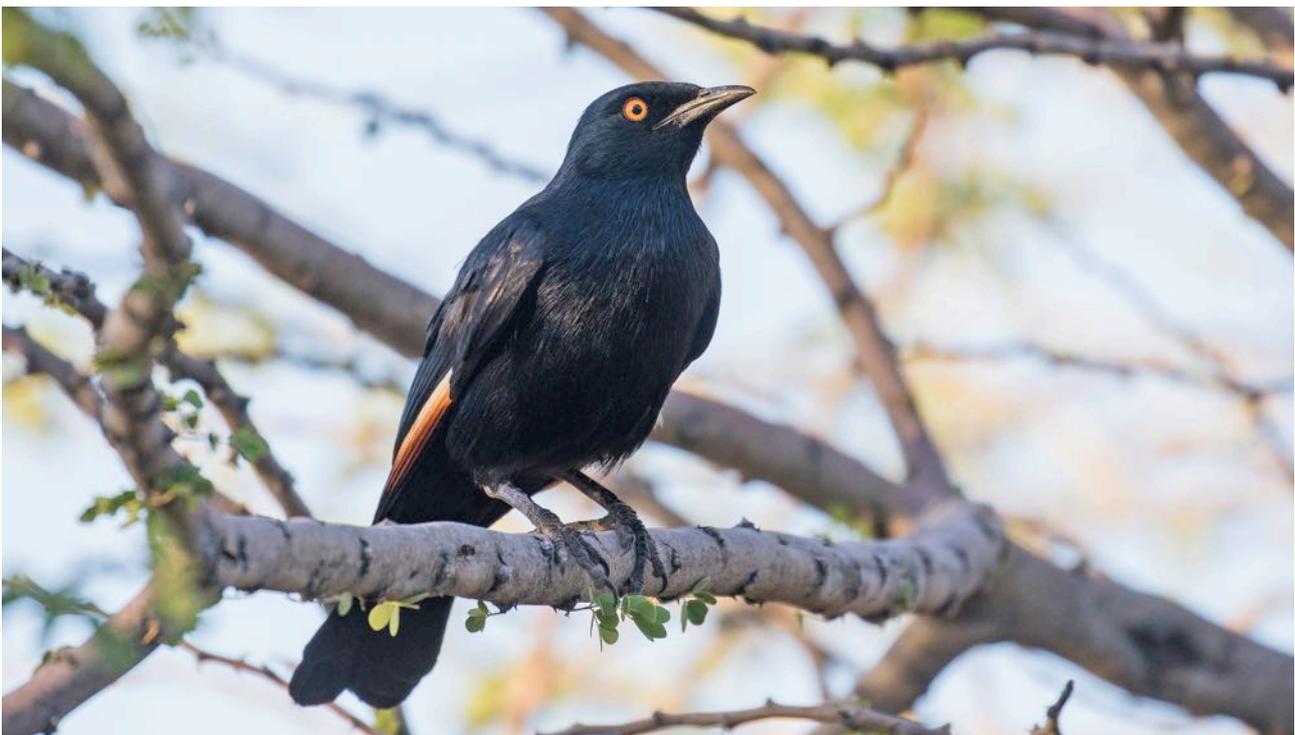


- Bush Blackcap** ♦ *Lioptilus nigricapillus* (NT) One seen well near Wakkerstroom and brilliant views of 3 below the Sani Pass.
Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* A couple for some near to Magoebaskloof.
Chestnut-vented Warbler *Sylvia subcoerulea* Best views were around Marrick GF [nominat].
Layard's Warbler ♦ *Sylvia layardi* A bit elusive this trip but seen at Kransvleiport and at Aardvark Kloof.
Cape White-eye *Zosterops virens* See note.
Orange River White-Eye ♦ *Zosterops pallidus* Best views of this distinctive species were at Augrabies Falls NP.



Gurney's Sugarbirds were relatively common at the Sani Pass (Pete Morris)

- Cape Sugarbird** ◇ *Promerops cafer* Many brilliant views around the Cape after the first at Rooi Els and Harold Porter BG.
- Gurney's Sugarbird** ◇ *Promerops gurneyi* Great views near to Magoebaskloof, and below the Sani Pass [nominate].
- Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* Introduced vermin. Common in the east [nominate].
- Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* Introduced vermin. Common in the south [nominate].
- Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* A few flocks, mostly in the east but first seen near to Kimberley.
- Black-bellied Starling** *Notopholia corrusca* Fairly common in the east, especially around the Mkuze GR and St Lucia.
- Cape Starling** *Lamprotornis nitens* A good number seen after the first at Augrabies Falls NP.
- Burchell's Starling** *Lamprotornis australis* A few seen well at Pongola Nature Reserve.
- Pied Starling** *Lamprotornis bicolor* Pretty common and widespread. First seen on the drive across the Overberg.
- Violet-backed Starling** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Plenty with many good looks, especially at Mkuze GR [verreaux].
- Red-winged Starling** *Onychognathus morio* Fairly common and widespread, first in the Cape Town area [nominate].
- Pale-winged Starling** ◇ *Onychognathus nabouroup* First seen near to Steinkopf, but best views were around Augrabies NP.



Pale-winged Starlings were confiding at Augrabies Falls NP (Pete Morris)

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* First on the drive to Wakkerstroom with more at Mkuze GR and St Lucia.
Orange Ground Thrush ◊ *Geokichla gurneyi* Excellent views of one at Magoebaskloof and others heard there.
Spotted Ground Thrush ◊ *Geokichla guttata* (EN) After many hours of searching, brilliant views of 1 at Dlinza Forest [nominate].
Groundscraper Thrush *Turdus litsitsirupa* Brilliant views of one collecting food in Cullinan [nominate].
Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyana* Small numbers seen in the east. First seen at Hoogland Health Hydro Spa.
Olive Thrush *Turdus olivaceus* Small numbers in the southwest and in the eastern forests. First at Harold Porter BG.
Karoo Thrush ◊ *Turdus smithi* Great looks at Augrabies Falls NP and around Kimberley. Very plain.



Sentinel Rock Thrush - what a beauty! The differences between Karoo (left) and Olive Thrushes were plain for all to see! (Pete Morris)

Karoo Scrub Robin ◊ *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* Two forms: nominate common inland; *cinerea* along the West Coast.
Bearded Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata* Great looks at three or more in Mkuze GR [nominate].
Kalahari Scrub Robin ◊ *Cercotrichas paena* Several seen, best views were at Marrick GF.
White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys* A couple near Tzaneen and more around Mkuze and St Lucia.
Brown Scrub Robin ◊ *Cercotrichas signata* Great views of *tongensis* at Magoebaskloof. Nominate heard/glimpsed at St Lucia.
Grey Tit-Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus* Seen three times, the first at Augrabies Falls NP [*orientalis*].
Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* First near to Magoebaskloof. Surprisingly drongo-like [*diabolicus*].
Pale Flycatcher *Melaenornis pallidus* A pair at Mkuze GR were the only ones [*pallidus*-group].
Chat Flycatcher ◊ *Melaenornis infuscatus* Common in the Cape's deserts. First seen on the journey to Calvinia.
Marico Flycatcher ◊ *Melaenornis mariquensis* Only seen at Marrick GF where c4 were seen [nominate].
Fiscal Flycatcher ◊ *Melaenornis silens* Several seen, the first near to Potberg. Nominate - all this form?
Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* Just six migrants seen, the first at Augrabies Falls NP.
African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* Two forms: nominate in the south; *fuscula* in the east.
Cape Robin-Chat *Cossypha caffra* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen around Cape Town.
White-throated Robin-Chat ◊ *Cossypha humeralis* Brilliant views of a few at Mkuze GR. Stunners.



The gorgeous White-throated Robin-Chat delighted us at Mkuze (Pete Morris)

White-browed Robin-Chat *Cossypha heuglini* Just one seen near to Tzaneen [nominate].
Red-capped (or Natal) Robin-Chat *Cossypha natalensis* A few seen at St Lucia; some very confiding individuals [nominate].
Chorister Robin-Chat ◊ *Cossypha dichroa* See note.
White-starred Robin *Pogonocichla stellata* Two elusive forms: *transvaalensis* at Magoebaskloof; nominate at Marutsa Forest.
Cape Rock Thrush ◊ *Monticola rupestris* A few seen at Rooi Els, 1 at the J G Strijdom Tunnel and a few below the Sani Pass.
Sentinel Rock Thrush ◊ *Monticola explorator* See note.
Short-toed Rock Thrush ◊ *Monticola brevipes* Great views of a male of the nominate form at Hoogland Health Hydro Spa.
African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* Small numbers at a number of sites, the first near to Potberg.
Buff-streaked Chat ◊ *Campicoloides bifasciatus* Seen at Wakkerstroom and great views below the Sani Pass. Another stunner.
Sickle-winged Chat ◊ *Emarginata sinuata* Two forms seen: *ensifera* near to De Hoop; *hypernephela* in Lesotho.
Karoo Chat ◊ *Emarginata schlegelii* Common in the Cape's deserts. First seen on the journey to Calvinia [*pollux*].
Tractrac Chat ◊ *Emarginata tractrac* Good numbers seen around Calvinia, Brandvlei and several near Port Nolloth [nominate].
Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* Just three seen, the first pair at Hoogland Health Hydro Spa.

Ant-eating Chat ◊ *Myrmecocichla formicivora* Common at several sites, particularly at Marrick GF and Wakkerstroom.

Mountain Wheatear ◊ *Myrmecocichla monticola* Plenty of this S. African endemic seen well, first at Kransvleiport [nominate].

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata* Common in a few areas, first around Potberg and De Hoop [nominate].

Familiar Chat *Oenanthe familiaris* Just a handful seen, the first at Kransvleiport.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* Thought to be *zuluensis* at Magoebaskloof; nominate at Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

Orange-breasted Sunbird ◊ *Anthobaphes violacea* Another stunner, seen particularly well at Rooi Els on the first day.

Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* A few seen well at Dlinza Forest, Eshowe [nominate - Eastern].

Grey (or Mouse-coloured) Sunbird *Cyanomitra veroxii* Great views of a few around St Lucia [nominate].

Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina* Only seen well around Magoebaskloof.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* A real cracker, seen well at Magoebaskloof and St Lucia [*gutturalis*].

Malachite Sunbird *Nectarinia famosa* Plenty seen well. First seen around Betty's Bay [nominate].

Southern Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris chalybeus* Plenty seen and particularly showy in Kirstenbosch BG [nominate].

Neergaard's Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris neergaardi* (NT) Brilliant views of a pair of this stunner at Mkuze GR.

Greater Double-collared Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris afer* Just a few seen, the first at Magoebaskloof.

Marico Sunbird *Cinnyris mariquensis* At least three seen well at the Pongola NR [nominate].

Purple-banded Sunbird *Cinnyris bifasciatus* Many seen well at Mkuze GR [*microrhynchus*].

White-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala* Just a few. First at the J G Strijdom Tunnel and a few around Mkuze.

Dusky Sunbird *Cinnyris fuscus* Some great views, especially near to Brandvlei and at Augrabies NP [nominate].



Snazzy sunbirds! Orange-breasted Sunbird, Neergaard's Sunbird and Dusky Sunbird (Pete Morris)

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali* Just a few seen, the first at Marrick GR [nominate].

Sociable Weaver ◊ *Philetairus socius* Hundreds seen well at some impressive nests, especially in the Pofadder area.

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Common and widespread [nominate].

Cape Sparrow ◊ *Passer melanurus* A cracking sparrow. Common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus* Common in the east, but first in the Cape Town area where it's increasing.

Yellow-throated Petronia *Gymnoris superciliaris* Small numbers in the east. First on the drive to Wakkerstroom [nominate].

Scaly-feathered Weaver ◊ *Sporopipes squamifrons* Common in dry areas in the Northern Cape. First near Pofadder [nominate].

Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons* A few seen with best views in the Magoebaskloof area [nominate].

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis* Several seen in the Magoebaskloof area, and others heard [nominate].

Cape Weaver ◊ *Ploceus capensis* Seen well at many sites, first around Potberg.

Eastern Golden Weaver *Ploceus subaureus* Plenty around Mkuze, including a great colony at the hotel [nominate].

Southern Brown-throated Weaver ◊ *Ploceus xanthopterus* Brilliant views of a couple of crackers at St Lucia [marleyi].



The scarce Brown-throated Weaver showed very well at St Lucia (Pete Morris)

Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius* Seen well at a few sites in the east [cabanisii].

Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* Fairly common and widespread. First seen in the Cape Town area.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* Seen at a few sites in the east [spilonotus].

Dark-backed (or Forest) Weaver *Ploceus bicolor* Small numbers at Mkuze, St Lucia and Dlinza Forest.

Red-headed Quelea *Quelea erythrops* A flock of around 10 at St Lucia were a nice bonus!

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* Plenty seen. Most common in the east but first seen at Aardvark Kloof [lathamii].

Yellow-crowned Bishop *Euplectes afer* Many seen well at the wetland near Kimberley and around Wakkerstroom [taha].

Southern Red Bishop *Euplectes orix* Very common and widespread with many cracking males.

Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis* Small numbers at a few sites. First seen around Betty's Bay [capensis-group].

Fan-tailed Widowbird *Euplectes axillaris* Plenty seen in the east, the first at Suikerbosrand NR [nominate].

White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus* c10 on the journey to Wakkerstroom were the only ones [nominate].

Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens* Plenty seen in the east, the first at Suikerbosrand NR [nominate].

Long-tailed Widowbird *Euplectes progne* Loads of great views. Stunning birds, first seen at Suikerbosrand NR [nominate].

Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba* A few seen at several sites, first at a waterhole on the drive to Kimberley [nominate].

Red-headed Finch ◊ *Amadina erythrocephala* Best views were at the drinking pool at Marrick GR.

Green Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula* Great views of a male coming down to drink near to Magoebaskloof [nominate].



Our only Green Twinspot of the tour, and one of many fireball Southern Red Bishops (Pete Morris)



- Pink-throated Twinspot** ◇ *Hypargos margaritatus* Brilliant views of a male of this stunner at Mkuze GR.
- Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* Just one seen at Tzaneen, near to Magoebaskloof [*rendalli*].
- Blue Waxbill** *Uraeginthus angolensis* Small numbers in the east. First seen near to Magoebaskloof [*niassensis*].
- Violet-eared Waxbill** ◇ *Uraeginthus granatinus* A few at a waterhole on the drive to Kimberley and a few at Marrick GR.
- Swee Waxbill** ◇ *Coccothraupis melanotis* Great views at Harold Porter and Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.
- Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild* Two forms: nominate in the south; *tenebridorsa* in the north and east.
- Black-faced Waxbill** ◇ *Estrilda erythronotos* Several seen well at Marrick GR [nominate].
- (African) Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza [atricollis] fuscocrissa* Best views were of the two males drinking at Marrick GR.
- Bronze Mannikin** *Lonchura cucullata* First seen in the Pretoria area [*scutata*].
- Magpie Mannikin** *Lonchura fringilloides* Great views of a flock near to Tzaneen.
- Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* Plenty in the east, though first seen at Marrick GR.
- Shaft-tailed Whydah** ◇ *Vidua regia* Great views of some smart males near Mohlatsweng, near to Magoebaskloof.
- Long-tailed Paradise Whydah** *Vidua paradisaea* A couple of males seen well near to Marrick GR.
- Cape Wagtail** *Motacilla capensis* Widespread with small numbers at many sites. First seen in Cape Town [nominate].



The attractive Cape Longclaw was seen very well around Wakkerstroom (Pete Morris)

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Two forms: nominate first seen at Augrabies Falls; *vidua* near Magoebaskloof.

Cape Longclaw ◊ *Macronyx capensis* Two forms of this cracker: nominate in the southwest; *colletti* at Wakkerstroom.

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus* Quite common around Mkuze and St Lucia [*vulturinus*].

African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus* Widespread with small numbers at many sites [*cinnamomeus*-group].

Mountain Pipit ◊ *Anthus hoeschi* Great views of a few in Lesotho above the Sani Pass.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Good views of several near to Magoebaskloof [*nicholsoni*-group].

Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventris* Took some searching but eventually one seen well at Mkuze GR.

African Rock Pipit ◊ *Anthus crenatus* Great views near to Wakkerstroom and again below the Sani Pass.

Yellow-breasted Pipit ◊ *Anthus chloris* (VU) Brilliant views of a couple near to Wakkerstroom. Superb bird!

Common Chaffinch (introduced) *Fringilla coelebs* A few around Cape Town.

Forest Canary ◊ *Crithagra scotops* Particularly good views in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

Black-throated Canary *Crithagra atrogularis* First seen at Augrabies Falls and good numbers drinking at Marrick GR.

Lemon-breasted Canary ◊ *Crithagra citrinipectus* Great views of at least 10 at Bonamanzi.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica* Common in the east. First seen in the Magoebaskloof area.

Cape Siskin ◊ *Crithagra totta* Seen very well in Harold Porter Botanical Gardens and also at Kransvleiport.

Drakensberg Siskin ◊ *Crithagra symonsi* Great views of at least six in Lesotho above the Sani Pass.
Yellow Canary ◊ *Crithagra flaviventris* Quite common in the southwest. First seen in the Potberg area.
Brimstone Canary *Crithagra sulphurata* Two forms: nominate in the south; *wilsoni* in the north and east.
Streaky-headed Seedeater ◊ *Crithagra gularis* Good views of several near to Magoebaskloof.
White-throated Canary ◊ *Crithagra albogularis* Quite a few seen well, the first at Kransvleiport.
Protea Canary ◊ *Crithagra leucoptera* Great views of a couple at Kransvleiport.
Cape Canary *Serinus canicollis* Fairly common and widespread. First seen at Harold Porter BGs [nominate].
Black-headed (or Damara) Canary *Serinus [alario] leucolaemus* Great views near Steinkopf and at Aardvark Kloof.
Lark-like Bunting ◊ *Emberiza impetuani* Very common in the Northern Cape. First seen in the Brandvlei area.
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi* Several seen, especially around Kimberley: first at Marrick GR [nominate].
Cape Bunting ◊ *Emberiza capensis* Good numbers at several sites. First seen at Rooi Els.
Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris* Just a couple seen near Kimberley.



Eastern Golden Weaver at St Lucia, Forest Canary at Kirstenbosch, and the subtle Drakensberg Siskin in Lesotho (Pete Morris)



A very cute family of Banded Mongooses at Magoebaskloof (Pete Morris)

MAMMALS

A general note: many game in South Africa are stocked and/or introduced/reintroduced, to the point where it is difficult or impossible to know what is and isn't 'wild'. With most of the country fenced off, free movement of larger mammals is no longer possible in most of the country. The list below represents the more plausible mammals seen.

Striped Mouse (Four-striped Grass Mouse) *Rhabdomys pumilio* A few seen. Good views in Kirstenbosch.

Sloggett's Rat (Ice Rat) *Otomys sloggetti* A few 'ice rats' in Lesotho.

Highveld Gerbil *Tatera brantsii* Several on the night drives at Marrick GF.

Ground Squirrel (Cape Ground S) *Xerus inauris* Plenty, especially around Marrick GF.

Red Squirrel (Red Bush S) *Paraxerus palliatus* One seen at St Lucia.

Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* A few around Cape Town.

South African Porcupine *Hystrix africaeaustralis* Several seen on the night drives at Marrick GF.

Springhare *Pedetes capensis* Loads seen at Marrick GF. Great creatures.

Cape Hare *Lepus capensis* A few seen, especially around Marrick GR.

Scrub Hare *Lepus saxatilis* Prefers scrubbier areas to the previous species.

Smith's Red Rock Rabbit *Pronolagus rupestris* Cracking creature seen on the way to Port Nolloth and at Marrick GF.

Rock Dassie (Cape D, Cape R Hyrax) *Procavia capensis* Very confiding at Betty's Bay and Augrabies Falls NP.

Cape Mountain Zebra *Equus zebra* Fantastic views at De Hoop.

Burchell's Zebra *Equus burchelli* Plenty seen around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

White Rhinoceros (Square-lipped Rhinoceros) *Ceratotherium simum* Seen well at Pongola NR and a couple of others.

Black Rhinoceros (Hook-lipped Rhinoceros) *Diceros bicornis* One seen at St Lucia.

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibious* Small numbers seen around Mkuze GR and St Lucia. Always great to see!

Warthog *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* Plenty seen around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis* Plenty seen, especially around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.

Black Wildebeest (White-tailed Gnu) *Conochaetes gnou* A herd at Marrick GF (fenced in though!).

Blue Wildebeest (Brindled Gnu) *Connochaetes taurinus* Plenty seen around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.



A family of Bontebok at De Hoop (Pete Morris)

- Bontebok (Blesbok) *Damaliscus dorcas*** This attractive antelope was seen well at De Hoop.
- Red Duiker *Cephalophus natalensis*** Seen well at St Lucia.
- Common Duiker (Grey Duiker) *Sylvicapra grimmia*** Just two seen.
- Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis*** Seen at many sites. Some stocked, some wild I hope!
- Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus*** A few seen, first at Rooi Els. No doubting their credentials!!
- Steenbok (Steinbok) *Raphicerus campestris*** Small enough to fence-hop so plenty of wild ones!!
- Grysbok (Cape G) *Raphicerus melanotis*** Just two noted in the southwest.
- Suni *Neotragus moschatus*** Just one identified in Mkuze GR.
- Impala *Aepyceros melampus*** Most seen were around Mkuze GR and St Lucia.
- Grey Rhebok (Vaal R) *Pelea capreolus*** A few seen, especially in the large fields in the Overberg.
- Gemsbok (Oryx) *Oryx gazella*** Several seen near to Springbok.
- African Buffalo (Cape Buffalo) *Syncerus caffer*** A dozen or more of these impressive species seen at St Lucia.
- Kudu (Greater Kudu) *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*** A couple at Mkuze and a dozen or so at St Lucia.
- Nyala *Tragelaphus angasii*** Many of these attractive antelopes seen well, first at Mkuze.
- Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus*** Singles at Grootvadersbosch and St Lucia.
- Eland *Taurotragus oryx*** Huge numbers at the pan at De Hoop.
- Reedbuck (Common R) *Redunca arundinum*** A few seen at Mkuze and St Lucia.
- Waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*** A few seen at Mkuze and St Lucia.
- African Wild Cat *Felis lybica*** Seen on the night drive at Marrick GF.
- Striped Polecat (Zorilla) *Ictonyx striatus*** A couple on the night drives at Marrick GF.
- Small Spotted (or Black-footed) Cat *Felis nigripes*** Brilliant views of three on the night drive at Marrick GF.
- Bat-eared Fox *Otocyon megalotis*** One near to Springbok and then a few on the night drives at Marrick GF.
- Wild Dog *Lycaon pictus*** Three recently re-introduced animals seen well at Mkuze. They'd just made a kill!
- Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas*** A couple seen at Suikerbosrand.
- Small-spotted Genet (Common G, Rusty-spotted G) *Genetta genetta*** One seen on the night drive at Marrick GF.
- Suricate (Meerkat) *Suricata suricatta*** A few seen near to Port Nolloth and at Wakkerstroom.



Cape Mountain Zebra and Common Ostrich at De Hoop, and a White Rhinoceros at the Pongola Nature Reserve (Pete Morris)



Yellow Mongoose (Bushy-tailed Meerkat) *Cynictis penicillata* Quite a few seen, the first around De Hoop.

Slender Mongoose *Galerella sanguinea* One at Augrabies Falls and a couple at Mkuze.

Small Grey Mongoose *Galerella pulverulenta* Mostly seen in the Overberg.

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo* A huge gang at Magoebaskloof were very entertaining!

Thick-tailed Bushbaby (Large-eared Greater Galago) *Otolemur crassicaudatus* One in the lodge garden at Mkuze.

Chacma Baboon *Papio ursinus* Plenty seen, the first on the way to the Cape of Good Hope.

Vervet Monkey (Vervet) *Cercopithecus aethiops* Good numbers seen, the first at Augrabies Falls.

Samango Monkey (Diademed Guenon) *Cercopithecus mitis* Several seen at Magoebaskloof

Aardvark *Orycteropus afer* Great views of one on the night drive at Marrick GF. A real mega!!

Cape Fur Seal (Afro-Australian F S) *Arctocephalus pusillus* Good numbers, especially during the pelagic.

Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* c50 seen off De Hoop.

Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* c6 seen playing in the surf off Struisbaai.

Heaviside's Dolphin *Cephalorynchus heavisidii* Great views of a small pod off of Port Nolloth.



A young Giraffe at Mkuze Game Reserve (Pete Morris)



One of the amazing crickets in West Coast National Park and an inquisitive Yellow Mongoose (Pete Morris)





The scarce African Rock (or Yellow-tufted) Pipit was seen well at a couple of sites (Pete Morris)

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). 2017. IOC World Bird Names v7.1. Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

Knysna Turaco *Tauraco corythaix*

We saw two forms of this smart species. In the north, several of the form *phoebus* were seen around Magoebaskloof, whilst the southern nominate form, was seen very well at Marutsa Forest.

Southern Fiscal *Lanius collaris*

We saw three forms of this widespread species. The nominate form was common in the south and was first seen in the Cape Town area whilst the form *pyrrhostictus* was the form found in the east. Perhaps of more interest was the form *subcoronatus* the Latakoo Fiscal, in the Northern Cape. This form is quite distinctive, sporting a white supercilium. We first saw this form at Aggeneys.

Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas*

We saw two forms of this distinctive flycatcher. The form *cyanomelas* was seen well at Grootvadersbosch, whilst in the east, the form *megalolophus* was noted at Magoebaskloof.

Cape Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus minutus*

We saw two forms of this tiny little critter! The form *gigi* was seen very well along the Silverstroom Road, whilst the nominate form was seen well at Port Nolloth and again at Marrick GF.

Cape Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda curvirostris*

We saw two forms of this somewhat ungainly lark. The nominate form was seen well in very strong wind near to Vredenburg, north of Langebaan, whilst the somewhat similar *falcirostris* was reasonably common in the Port Nolloth area

Sabota Lark *Calendulauda sabota*

We saw two distinctive forms. The large-billed form, *bradfieldi* that was first seen near to Brandvlei, is sometimes split off as a different species, Bradfield's Lark. Others from the nominate *sabota* group were seen elsewhere, such as at Magoebaskloof for example.

Red Lark *Calendulauda burra*

Great views near Brandvlei, though the birds in this area are not very red and are actually quite dull. We made up for this with a splendid red bird on the journey from Brandvlei to Pofadder.

Barlow's Lark *Calendulauda barlowi*

A male and a youngster seen very well in the abandoned Eco Park, north of Port Nolloth. The male was quite a dull individual but was colour-ringed, and subsequent research by Ian reveals this bird was ringed as a Barlow's Lark in the same area. Much better was a pair seen in the dunes east of Alexander Bay later that day.

Cloud Cisticola *Cisticola tetrax*

We saw two forms of this tiny species. They look quite different but sound pretty similar. In the Cape, we saw the streaky nominate form very well near to De Hoop and again at the Tiene Versveld Wildflower Reserve. In the east, the unstreaked (on the underparts) form *major* was seen well at Suikerbosrand NR.

Cape White-eye *Zosterops virens*

We saw two quite different forms of this species. The form *capensis* was common for much of the tour and was first seen at Betty's Bay. In the east, the much brighter nominate form was quite common and was first seen at Hoogland Health Hydro Spa.

Chorister Robin-Chat *Cossypha dichroa*

We saw two forms. Good views of a few of the form *mimica* in the end at Magoebaskloof and then the nominate form *dichroa* was seen well at Dlinza Forest, Eshowe.

Sentinel Rock Thrush *Monticola explorator*

Another cracking endemic that we saw two forms of. At Wakkerstroom we saw a male of the nominate form whilst in Lesotho we had great views of several of the form *tenebriformis*.



A fine Crested Barbet (Pete Morris)



Our bird of the trip, the magnificent Buff-spotted Flufftail at Himeville (Pete Morris)

APPENDIX 1

TOP 6 BIRDS OF THE TOUR

- 1st BUFF-SPOTTED FLUFFTAIL**
- 2nd SPOTTED GROUND THRUSH**
- 3rd BLUE SWALLOW**
- 4th Orange-breasted Rockjumper**
- 5th Red-chested Flufftail**
- 6th Cape Parrot**
- 7th Pink-throated Twinspot**
- 8th Blue Crane**
- 9th= Northern Black Korhaan**
- 9th= African Broadbill**
- 9th= Barlow's Lark**

A total of 41 species received at least one vote!



Desert scenery, Sociable Weaver nest and its occupants! (Pete Morris)





Table Mountain from Table View and some of the group at Alexander Bay (Pete Morris)

