

WESTERN CAPE, NORTHERN CAPE AND
MPUMALANGA
(with a touch of Gauteng)
SOUTH AFRICA

5th – 27th September 2008

Trip Report



Lawson's Birding and Wildlife Tours
P O Box 16849
West Acres, Nelspruit
Mpumalanga, South Africa 1211
Tel : +27 13 741 2458
Email : info@lawsons.co.za
Web : www.lawsons.co.za

Tour Summary

Party List:

Charlotte and Bill Byers of Seattle, Washington, USA

Judy Roan of Mercer Island, Washington, USA

Guide:

Peter Lawson of Nelspruit, Mpumalanga

Photo acknowledgements:

Peter Lawson, Bill Byers, Judy Roan

Total Distance Travelled:

3 000 kilometres (excluding domestic flights)

Temperature Range:

5° C - 30° C

Total Birds Seen:

369

Total Birds Heard Only:

8

Total Mammals Seen:

45

Total Reptiles seen:

16

Birds of the Trip:

Blue Crane, Verreaux's Eagle with chick, Taita Falcon, African Pygmy Falcon, Southern Ground Hornbill, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Karoo Eremomela, Narina Trogon

Trip Report compiled by:

Peter Lawson

Note:

The species mentioned in the report are only some of the species seen at each locality. Please refer to detailed checklists at end of the report for all species seen on this specific tour.



TRIP REPORT

(note that not all birds seen are listed in this itinerary. A full list appears elsewhere in the report)

Day 1: Friday, 5th September 2008 ~ O R Tambo Airport, Johannesburg

The KLM flight arrived at about 9pm and I met a tired, but excited Charlotte and Bill Byers and Judy Roan. They had travelled many hours from their homes in the USA to get to South Africa, so little time was wasted and we drove straight to the nearby Town Lodge for an overnight rest.

Day 2: Saturday, 6th September 2008 ~ Noordhoek, Cape Peninsula

We were scheduled to depart from our hotel at 09h30 to return to the airport for a flight to Cape Town. Thus we could have a late wake-up to help jet-lag recovery. However, it did not work out that way as the excited group were up early on their first day in Africa. The itinerary did not include Gauteng as a fourth province, but it produced some good birds in any event as we birded in the hotel grounds. There was Karoo Thrush (a recent split), Cape Robin-Chat, the good-looking Cape Sparrow, colourful Southern Masked Weavers nest building and perfect for photography. In flight over the hotel there were formations of Glossy Ibis and African Sacred Ibis. To add to our Gauteng list there was a Black-shouldered Kite hunting for rodents along the road verge, and at the airport whilst waiting for our flight we picked up a Cape Wagtail and a lovely White-throated Swallow. Our list was off to a good start.

Arrival at Cape Town Airport was at 13h30. The weather was cool and partially cloudy and Table Mountain was only managing to show partially behind the cloud cover. Normally introduced House Crows are the first birds to be seen on arrival, but for some unexplained reason they were absent this time. However we had not driven far along the N2 highway and a pair was there to greet us, perched on a street light standard. Being on the highway we could not stop for any birds seen and birding had to be on the move. We did however manage to see Cape and Hartlaub's Gulls, Hadedea Ibis, Common Starling (the same introduced species as back in the USA), Egyptian Goose and Helmeted Guineafowl. We managed one brief stop on the N2 for Black-winged Stilts and at the same spot saw Levillant's Cisticola, the first of many species of this confusing group. Our destination, the charming Afton Grove Country Retreat in Noordhoek, was reached early afternoon and we were shown to our spacious and well-appointed rooms. After a little down time we met up in the garden and saw Common Chaffinch, another introduced species but one that has not spread and has a limited range in this part of the Cape only. Also new for us in the garden was Cape White-eye, Cape Canary and Common Waxbill. Small flocks of this lovely little bird were taking seed from a bird-feeder.

Our first bird list was updated together in the lodge sitting room and dinner this evening was at a nearby quaint restaurant, The Nags Head, where we were introduced to good quality Cape wine.

Birds of the day: (as per popular vote), Southern Masked Weaver and Helmeted Guineafowl.

Day total: 35 Trip total: 35

Day 3: Sunday, 7th September 2008 ~ Noordhoek, Cape Peninsula

We woke up to typical Cape frontal weather, overcast and chilly with a blustering wind. The only new bird in the garden before breakfast was an African Dusky Flycatcher. Our drive to Strandfontein (Cape Towns Water Treatment Works) was in a strong wind. Red-winged Starling as we drove through the town of Fish Hoek was the only new bird on the way, but at Strandfontein birding was good, in spite of the wind.

The settling ponds on both sides of the access road had dozens of Black-necked Grebes, Southern Pochard, Cape Shoveler, Red-knobbed Coot, Purple Heron and White-breasted Cormorant plus more. Other ponds had Cape and Red-billed Teal, Black-winged Stilt, Great White Pelican and a large flock of pink Greater Flamingo, huddled together to shelter from the wind. Some warbler species were heard in the reeds but they refused to come out whilst sheltering from the wind. We did catch up with them later on the trip though. Our first mammal of the trip was a Small Grey Mongoose that came running along the track towards us.

We reluctantly left Strandfontein at mid-day as we had another spot to visit on the far side of False Bay. Our destination was Rooi Els where we had a stake-out for one of the most sought-after birds in the Western Cape, Cape Rockjumper. Near Somerset West we stopped at a fuel station on the highway for a quick bite to eat and then examined a reed-lined wetland to see what was about. Four new birds were picked up here, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Fiscal Flycatcher and breeding Cape Weavers and colourful Southern Red Bishops. We continued our drive along a spectacular coastline and by now the wind had reached an alarming force. On reaching Rooi Els we walked along a rough track and at times the wind was so strong we could hardly stay on our feet and it was cold too. Good birders never give up though and we persevered and by some miracle found a stunning male Cape Rockjumper. It was moving from rock to rock, being blown about by the wind and sheltering amongst the rocks at every opportunity. As we walked back to the car, struggling against the wind, a Peregrine Falcon flew past us at speed and amazingly it too was travelling into the wind. What amazing power of flight they have. Delightful little Orange-breasted Sunbirds were evidently used to

the South Easter which blows frequently in this tip of Africa. They were feeding on nectar from an Erica species that grew close to the ground where it was easier to take shelter.

Driving back along the spectacular coastline the wind had dropped a little so we took the opportunity to take in the scenery and made some stops in convenient places. Whilst admiring the view we also saw Cape Rock-Thrush, Cape Sugarbird and Familiar Chat. As we drove through Fish Hoek we stopped to watch at least six Southern Right Whales romping in the shallows of False Bay. Fantastic to see these enormous mammals so close to humans who were once their major enemy, now turned protector. Two African Black Oystercatchers flew past us whilst we were focussed on the whales.

Back at Afton Grove we met in the lounge to update the list and dinner was at the lodge this evening. It was delicious.

Birds of the day: Cape Rockjumper and Orange-breasted Sunbird
Day total: 71 Trip total: 76

Day 4: Monday, 8th September 2008 ~ Noordhoek, Cape Peninsula

The weather certainly was not on our side. We woke up today with it raining and cold and to top it all it was windy as well. In spite of this Charlotte, Bill and Judy were still smiling and rearing to go. We left the lodge after breakfast and drove through Simon's Town to Boulders Beach where there is a breeding colony of about 3000 African Penguins. It was raining and cold but this did have an up side for us. We were the only visitors at the site and had the penguins all to ourselves. They did not mind the rain at all and neither did our group who photographed from under umbrellas. There were lots of penguins present and quite a few young ones amongst them. There was also a large flock of Cape Cormorants and a few White-breasted Cormorants amongst them as well as African Black Oystercatchers. On leaving the penguins a little Karoo Prinia was voicing its opinion from the top of a bush and this was a new bird for our list. A small store known as Van's gave us an excuse to get out of the rain and some shopping for penguin products took place. There were little penguin ornaments, T-shirts, scarves and all sorts of goodies depicting penguins.

Our next destination was the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve and the south-western most tip of Africa. It is a beautiful drive along a rocky shore to get there and stops were made on the way to admire the view and also to see some scarce Bank Cormorants on a rock. A nearby rock had some Cape Fur Seals resting up, another mammal for our list. The reserve was beautiful with flowering Fynbos comprising species of Leucospermum, Leucodendron, Mimetes, Erica and Protea. This vegetation is unique to the Western Cape and is exceedingly rich in flowering plants. In fact it is the smallest and richest plant kingdom in the world. New birds for us included Cape Grassbird, Grey-backed Cisticola, Cape Spurfowl, Common Ostrich, Spotted Thick-knee and Bokmakierie, a large colourful shrike.

Lunch was at the Two Oceans Restaurant and was served by Omar who has worked there for many years. It was good to meet up with him again and he is a really good waiter. Then after lunch we took a ride on the funicular to Cape Point, but it was cold and wet and we only stayed long enough to admire the spectacular view before walking down again. Before leaving the reserve we drove on a circular route where we came across the endemic Bontebok and the largest antelope in Africa, Eland. We missed a third new mammal for our list when a Rock Kestrel caught a mouse right in front of our car before we had a chance to identify it. The catch and fly-past was spectacular. Our return drive to Noordhoek hugged the coast on the opposite side of the Peninsula. Yet another scenic drive and before turning inland to Noordhoek we turned off to Kommetjie where there is a small, rocky bay and generally good birding. We were not disappointed either as the exposed rocks at low tide had a tern roost which included Common, Swift, Sandwich and Caspian Terns. All four marine cormorants were virtually side by side which allowed us to examine the difference between species. They were White-breasted, Cape, Crowned and the scarce Bank Cormorants. Other birds at Kommetjie included Little Egret, Greater Striped Swallow and the small White-fronted Plover.

Finally it was back to our accommodation for a bit of down time before calling the bird list and another fine dinner.

Birds of the day: Rock Kestrel, Spotted Thick-knee, African Penguin.
Day total: 46 Trip total: 98

Day 5: Tuesday, 9th September 2008 ~ Noordhoek, Cape Peninsula

Our last day at this destination and we felt we must make the best of it in spite of yet another day of bad weather. Rain, wind and cold once again and by now we were almost used to it.

The scarce and shy Knysna Warbler was a target bird so we headed for the Constantia Greenbelt where this little warbler is resident. The habitat is forest along a stream and a footpath runs parallel to the stream. The path was muddy and slippery and flooded in places but we persevered in spite of this and got soaking wet when the rain came down again. No wonder birders are considered by some to have lost it. To make things

worse there was neither sound nor site of this elusive little bird. It did not respond to call up in likely spots either and was sitting tight in these weather conditions. Wise bird!!

We gave up and moved on to the famous Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens on the lower slope of Table Mountain. Not only are these gardens a botanists paradise and very scenic, but they also attract many bird species. Needless to say it was still raining there so we sheltered at the entrance for a while. The rain soon stopped though and we walked into the Gardens, enjoying the botany, scenery and of course the birds. We made for a spot where a pair of Spotted Eagle-Owls had a nest-site last year in a large Cypress tree and sure enough they were there again, and duly photographed of course. Other good birds, and new for us too, were Olive Thrush, Sombre Greenbul, brilliant green Malachite Sunbird and a Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk in flight. The endemic Forest Canary was a good find. We tried to call up a Cape Batis without success and got soaking wet again in a rain squall instead.

We returned to the restaurant for lunch and all tables were occupied as there could be no seating in the open as usual, due to the wet conditions. However the service was good and we did not have to wait long for a tasty meal. After lunch we discovered a marquee displaying an exact replica of the South African exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show that takes place annually in England. South Africa received the premier gold medal award and also first prize for originality. It was indeed a fantastic display and depicted the Fynbos biome ranging from moist to dry conditions with an emphasis on global warming.

Then it was back to Afton Grove for dry clothes before heading to Black Mountain for a walk on the Jonkers Dam hiking trail in search of Cape Siskin, another Cape 'special'. Of course it rained again and we only had a fleeting glimpse of our target bird. Driving back to our accommodation we found Crowned Lapwings on the sidewalk close to the premises. At least they gave us a good sighting from close quarters.

Another excellent dinner at Afton Grove and early to bed in anticipation of a long day on the morrow. We needed to dream of a day without rain.

Birds of the day: Malachite Sunbird, Spotted Eagle-Owl
Day total: 43 Trip total: 107

Day 6: Wednesday, 10th September 2008 ~ Langebaan

We were up early as we wanted to visit Black Mountain again before breakfast in the hopes of a better sighting of Cape Siskin. This was a good plan as we did find them and had good scope views too. What did help was that the weather had improved considerably too. It was overcast and cool, but no rain and no wind.

Back to Afton Grove for our final breakfast at this lovely establishment and Common Chaffinch was in the garden to greet us. This was our last sighting of this introduced species as it does not occur elsewhere in the country.

Fond farewells after breakfast as this had been our home for almost a week and we had been well looked after too. Our departure was in the tail end of the Cape Town rush hour but we soon left the M3 highway and then there was little traffic. We were heading for Langebaan on the West Coast and deviated on the way to Blaauwbergstrand where a wetland was crossed after leaving the main road. Birds here included Great Crested Grebe, Red-knobbed Coot, Common Moorhen, Cape Shoveler, Cape Teal, Great White Pelican and other usual wetland species seen previously.

Stops were made for a fabulous view of Table Mountain (complete with table cloth) across Table Bay. Then another deviation onto the gravel Darling Hills road which had excellent birding. There was Pied Starling, Spur-winged Goose, Capped Wheatear, Yellow-billed Kite, African Marsh Harrier and the stunning endemic Black Harrier, all new for the list. We quickly added Red-capped and Large-billed Larks as well and a reed bed was a fabulous site with dozens of nesting Cape Weavers and bright red Southern Red Bishops. Naturally this spectacular sight resulted in cameras sounding as if a war was taking place. This was not all though on this worthwhile deviation as we came across South Africa's national bird, Blue Crane before reaching the village of Darling. Here a lunch stop was welcome and we had an excellent buffet lunch at the quaint Marmalade Cat (complete with cat). A novel idea was that plates were weighed after dishing up and payment was by weight.

The final leg of our drive was through the West Coast National Park, which produced Common Ostrich, Southern Black Korhaan, Yellow Canary, Long-billed Crombec, Bar-throated Apalis, Chestnut-vented Titbabbler and an excellent sighting of Bokmakierie – a large and colourful bush-shrike. We finally arrived at Langebaan and our guest house, Glenfinnan, in the late afternoon, had a little down time and then updated the bird list before dinner at The Farmhouse – the original farm house before development of the town. It was built in 1890 and is a lovely old building.

Birds of the day: Blue Crane, Black Harrier.
Day total: 75 Trip total: 130

Day 7: Thursday, 11th September 2008 ~ Langebaan

Superb weather once again – no wind, blue sky and pleasantly warm. A substantial breakfast at 07h00 prepared by Kay, with the help of husband, Jim with broad Scottish accent. Then it was into the West Coast National Park again with a picnic lunch provided by Kay.

First stop was the Seeberg Bird Hide (blind). The tide was still low and birds were distant on this enormous tidal lagoon. The tide was on the way in though and feeding shorebirds were gradually getting nearer. New for us was Common Whimbrel, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and Ruddy Turnstone. Near the entrance to the hide there was Kittlitz's Plover and along the pathway to the hide we saw Grey Tit (looking so much like a Chickadee to our group). There was also a distant view of a flock of feeding Greater Flamingo with some pink Lesser Flamingo amongst them. We moved further into the Park to the Geelbek Hide to hopefully catch the incoming tide. This we did and birds were much closer but unfortunately nothing new.

Note about Langebaan Lagoon : Classified as a wetland of international importance according to the Ramsar Convention in 1975. It represents the southernmost point of the migration routes of thousands of waders and shorebirds that arrive in South Africa in spring. Some come from as far as Siberia and fly about 15000 kilometres. The lagoon is about 25 kilometres in length and is tidal.

The Postberg section of the Park is open to the public in spring only, August and September. Our timing was right so we drove around the lagoon to this section. The spring wildflowers were spectacular and there were new mammals for us such as Gemsbok (Oryx), Springbok, Cape Mountain Zebra, Blue Wildebeest and at least six Bat-eared Foxes, fascinating to watch as they listened for underground insects with their enormous ears and then dug the tasty morsels out. There were also numbers of mighty Eland and endemic Bontebok and two small mammals, being Striped Mouse and Vlei Rat.

This section of the Park produced some new birds for us too. These included Grey-winged Francolin, Great Egret and South African Shelduck at long last. We were getting worried about this endemic as we should have had it sooner and thought we had missed out. We watched a Black-shouldered Kite catch a mouse and fly into a bush with its meal, only to be robbed by a Lanner Falcon that came out of the sky like a rocket, snatched the rodent and flew off with it. Another special sighting was a large flock of Wattled Starlings, some in full breeding plumage with bright yellow wattles.

Dinner was at Froggy's this evening and from the name we imagined it would be French, but it was not. Would appear the owner likes frogs as the décor was along those lines as well. It was very good too.

Bird of the day: Lanner Falcon snatching prey from Black-shouldered Kite.
Day total: 85 Trip total: 147

Day 8: Friday, 12th September 2008 ~ Lambert's Bay

Delightful weather again, partially cloudy, no wind (unusual for the Cape) and warm. We left after another scrumptious breakfast and drove to a disused quarry in Langebaan before leaving the town. A pair of stately Verreaux's Eagles have used the man-made cliff here as a nesting site for a number of years. The nest was deserted but we soon discovered a fresh nest in a different spot. It had a large chick and one of the adult birds was perched in attendance nearby. The other flew by briefly. What a wing-span !! African Black Swifts also used this man-made site for nesting and there were numbers about. A third species making use of what humans had inadvertently provided for them was Rock Kestrel and a fourth was Rock Martin. The quarry is now deservedly protected by Cape Nature Conservation.

Then it was north to Velddrif where a salt works is a stake-out for Chestnut-banded Plovers, but water levels were too high after the exceptional rains experienced in the region and this little 'special' had vacated for more suitable habitat elsewhere. A flock of bright pink Lesser Flamingo was nice to see though and Banded Martin was new for us. Black-necked Grebes in full breeding plumage were seen for the second time on the tour and there were lots of waders and shorebirds, although nothing new for us.

As we drove further north we noted that the excessive rains had filled every little hollow with water and there were mini lakes all along the route. Our first Pale Chanting-Goshawk of the trip gave us an excellent sighting, both perched and in flight to show us its spectacular wing pattern. Another good-looking raptor seen for the first time was the endemic Jackal Buzzard, perched up nicely on a telephone pole for us. We came across another pair of Verreaux's Eagles in spectacular flight display over the mountains near Elands Bay. Blue Cranes were also seen for the second time, but much closer this time, enabling us to admire their long tail plumes. A pair of cryptic Spotted Thick-knees in a field was a good find. We eventually reached Verlorenvlei, a large natural lake. It had more water than usual, like everywhere else on our drive, but did have some birds nevertheless. Pied Kingfisher was new and there was also Great White Pelican, Purple Heron, Great Crested Grebe, White-breasted Cormorant and another new one, African Spoonbill. Our picnic lunch was eaten on a flooded track leading to a, now deserted ancient fisherman's cottage at the edge of the wetland.

The final leg of our drive was along the gravel toll road running next to the Sishen railroad which is the longest line in the country built especially to transport iron ore from a remote mine to Saldana Bay where it is bulk-loaded into specially designed ships and transported overseas. A fully loaded train came by whilst we were there and we stopped to count the number of coaches. There were 112 and it seemed to go on for ever.

Lambert's Bay was reached mid-afternoon and after checking into our rooms in the old and stately Lambert's Bay Hotel, we strolled down to the small harbour and onto Bird Island, joined to the mainland by the harbour wall. 10 000 Cape Gannets were noisily going about their breeding rituals on the island and it was fascinating to observe and photograph. The rocky shore on the far side of the island had a large number of Cape Fur Seals behind the gannet colony. The colony has been present on the island for many years and was three times its present size, but the seals have reduced it drastically. Volunteer Nature Conservation students now keep a watchful eye on the seals and keep them at bay. Not an easy task and one that requires dedication and furthermore the volunteers remain well hidden from the public to avoid friction from those who do not understand. Cape Cormorants were nesting on rocks alongside the walkway and a tern roost amongst the breeding birds had Swift, Common and Sandwich Terns, plus Hartlaub's and Cape (Kelp) Gulls. A pair of African Black Oystercatchers were nearby.

Birds of the day: Verreaux's Eagle with chick and Pale Chanting-Goshawk.

Day total: 102 Trip total: 157

Day 9: Saturday, 13th September 2008 ~ Lambert's Bay

Clear skies today but a bit windy in the morning, getting stronger in the afternoon.

Our day started with breakfast at the hotel as there was no need for an earlier start at this time of year as far west as we were. We then drove east out of town and took a rough track into the river valley. A brave Three-banded Plover brooding two perfectly cryptic eggs sat tight right next to our vehicle. Without hesitation it earned the distinguished title of 'bird of the day'. It was not long before our first African Hoopoe also received the title by popular vote. Pied Starlings were nesting in holes in a sandbank where building sand had been excavated, yet another example of a man-made habitat.

Back to the main road and we continued our drive and exploration by turning onto the gravel Vredendal road for a short distance, before circling back through empty farmland and finally onto the railroad toll road that took us back into town. At the toll stop we met a friendly security guard who gladly took the toll fee from us with a big smile. He then told us that Lambert's Bay was the best place in the world. He was born and bred there and had lived there all his life. No doubt he had not travelled much in his life and probably not very far either. In spite of the strong wind blowing, not ideal birding conditions, our drive proved to be remarkably good for larks. We picked up Karoo, Cape Long-billed, Large-billed and Red-capped Larks, plus Grey-backed Sparrowlark. Not too shabby for a single morning.

Later we drove towards Elands Bay in the hopes of finding Chestnut-banded Plover at a salt pan and known stake-out. The pan was full to the brim from the recent rains and once again this little plover eluded us. No doubt they had moved further up the coast where drier conditions would suit them better. New for us on this drive was the charming little Namaqua Dove which was appreciated by all.

Birds of the day: African Hoopoe and White-fronted Plover on nest.

Day total: 73 Trip total: 162

Day 10: Sunday, 14th September 2008 ~ Kamieskroon

We left early after collecting lunch packs the hotel had made for us and headed for Clanwilliam, passing fields of cultivated Rooibos tea on the way. It is sold in many parts of the world now and is gaining popularity. Strange to think that the total supply comes from this small valley we were driving through. It is a natural herb that grows nowhere else.

On reaching the N7 highway we turned south for a short distance as we had a stake-out for the localised and scarce endemic Protea Seedeater. There was birding before we got there though and we stopped next to the Clanwilliam Dam that was full and overflowing. Tall trees in the water had dozens of nesting Reed and White-breasted Cormorants plus a number of African Darters. There was much activity and of great interest was that birds too practice apartheid. The white-breasted ones were in their own tree, well away from the others. There was much excitement when Charlotte discovered our first Giant Kingfisher perched low down next to the water.

We pulled into a fuel station for a comfort stop and Bill discovered he could get hot coffee 'to go'. He had probably been having withdrawal symptoms, but now he was happy. A large tree in the grounds of the fuel station had some breeding Black-headed Herons and a Black-crowned Night Heron was discovered amongst them.

Soon after this we turned off on the Paleisheuvel gravel road that went through the scenic Kransvleiport, where we parked and walked up the road in search of our target bird. The weather was overcast and somewhat chilly and windy. Not ideal birding conditions but we all eventually saw what we had come to find, the elusive Protea Seedeater. For comparison there was also the similar looking Streaky-headed Seedeater in the same valley and we were able to examine the diagnostic features of both species. Before leaving this lovely spot a Verreaux's Eagle nest with a large chick was discovered on a cliff and duly photographed. An adult bird was seen in flight. Then shortly before reaching the N7 again there were five lovely European Bee-eaters perched on telephone wires. This was our first sighting of this migrant from southern Europe and they must have just arrived. Then Little Rush-Warbler finally responded to the tape and came into view for all of us. We had been hearing it in reed beds in a number of places and saw it at last.

Back on the N7 and we turned north again. Our first Cape Crows were seen along the way, some on nests built amongst insulators on telephone poles. A perched Greater Kestrel was also new and our only Sickle-winged Chat of the trip was seen on a farm fence. We were in the Northern Cape now and the landscape was far more sparse with low, stunted bushes and succulents adapted to harsh conditions and low rainfall. We turned onto a remote farm known as Dowse the Glim and ate our picnic lunch amongst flowering succulents, including the quaint little *Argyroderma* amongst quartz pebbles on the parched ground. Locally these little gems are known as 'Babies Bottoms'. They were not easy to detect and we had to be very careful not to stand on them.

Kamieskroon was reached late afternoon and after being shown to our rooms in this quaint old country hotel, there was time for a short walk along a gravel road running parallel to a normally dry watercourse lined with thorny *Acacia* karoo bushes. This habitat is usually good for birding and we were not disappointed. There was Karoo Thrush, Neddicky, Pririt Batis, a surprise out of range Southern Grey-headed Sparrow and the lovely little Orange River White-eye at the southern limit of its range. There were others too that we had seen previously.

The bird list was updated in the lounge of the hotel where there was a fire for warmth, believe it or not. We were now well into spring. Dinner was lovely home cooking and the service was good too.

Bird of the day: Orange River White-eye

Day total : 82 Trip total : 175

Day 11: Monday, 15th September 2008 ~ Kamieskroon

Our hotel gave us a picnic lunch and we left after breakfast for Skilpad Nature Reserve, which is a section of Namaqualand National Park. We had hardly left the hotel when a small raptor flew low towards us and continued past us on our left. It was an out-of-range Gabar Goshawk and of great interest was that it was the scarce melanistic form with white showing on the underwing. We were too early for wildflowers, the bulk of which open late morning when the sun warms the landscape. As the majority of visitors to Skilpad go there for the flowers we virtually had it to ourselves and we had plenty of birding stops along the way too. A nice find was a Secretarybird strutting in a field and other raptors on this day included Booted Eagle, Jackal Buzzard, Rock Kestrel, Greater Kestrel and the only African Harrier-Hawk of the trip. Grey-winged Francolin were seen for the second time and showed well.

Some time was spent in the reserve and Cape Clapper Larks were displaying by flying up, loudly clapping their wings before uttering foo-eee and dropping to the ground again. New for us was Spike-heeled Lark in drier country after exiting the reserve on the far side. It was a drier, more arid landscape here with the result that we also saw the large Ludwig's Bustard, Grey-backed Sparrowlark and a real "special", Double-banded Courser. Other new birds included our first Red-faced Mousebirds, Karoo Chat with characteristic white rump, both Black-headed Canary and its recent split, Damara Canary and Long-billed Pipit. There was also Lark-like Bunting for the first time and believe it or not but the normally common Cape Glossy Starling was the first of many, but a lovely bird all the same. Then I must not forget that exquisite little endemic, Fairy Flycatcher.

A warning sign in a field of wildflowers caused some amusement. Written in the Afrikaans language it stated that trespassers will be prosecuted, but the translation to English under that said, " Trespassers will become prostitutes ". It was duly photographed but we thought we had better stay out of that area.

Two new mammals were seen today, both small ones but delightful all the same. They were Yellow Mongoose and Suricate (Meerkat) which normally share the same burrows. Other mammals seen today included Rock Hyrax, Oryx (Gemsbok), Scrub Hare and the little Steenbok. There were some reptiles too and of course lots of wildflowers, so all in all it was a good natural history day.

Our scenic drive on the western side of Skilpad took us out of the reserve on a rough road through the small village of Soebatsfontein which appeared to be in the middle of nowhere and we wondered how anyone could survive there. We wondered what would have started the settlement in the first instance as it is in a dry inhospitable area. The few people we saw looked happy though. From there it was a circular drive back to

Kamieskroon and our little country hotel. We updated the bird list in front of the lounge fireplace again and after another splendid dinner we were treated to an audio-visual slide show of the Namaqualand region and its wonderful vista of wildflowers. This show was the work of top photographer, Colla Swart, the original owner of the hotel. As tired as we were it was well worth staying up for.

Birds of the day: Secretarybird, Fairy Flycatcher and Double-banded Courser.
Day total: 64 Trip total: 191

Day 12: Tuesday, 16th September 2008 ~ Springbok

We left after an early breakfast and drove north to the capital of Namaqualand, Springbok. We only had one night here and needed to get there without delay as most of the day was to be spent in the Goegap Nature Reserve. Our stay was at Old Mill Lodge, and very nice too. Our last Cape Bulbul of the tour was seen before leaving Kamieskroon and at Springbok we now started seeing African Red-eyed Bulbul and the first ones were in the garden of our lodge. Colourful European Bee-eaters were also here and flew over in the evening to roost in tall Eucalyptus trees behind the lodge.

Goegap Nature Reserve is large and rugged and has superb scenery. It is home to some sought-after endemic birds and these were targeted by us, so without delay after entering the reserve we made for a stake-out of the elusive and range-restricted Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. We were not disappointed as after a short note of its call from the mini-disc player, out it popped and moved about on the rocky mountain slope as they normally do. It did remain long enough for photographs though. We were lucky as it is not seen on every visit to this area. Our next important target was the little Karoo Eremomela which frequents low vegetation, almost at ground level. This one was not as easy and we methodically searched every likely bit of habitat, and then after much perseverance, out it popped. A small family party moved about from bush to bush, uttering their soft wailing song quee, quee-quee. At one stage they were very close to us but never kept still which is their way. We were lucky indeed.

There were other new endemics for us at Goegap and these included Pale-winged Starling, Dusky Sunbird and another 'special', Ground Woodpecker which frequents rocky habitat and not trees as most woodpeckers do. We had looked for this bird in all likely places on our journey and unexpectedly found it here. That is the sort of thing that makes birding so special. Rufous-eared Warbler was seen again. This is another birding 'special', but we had picked it up yesterday in the Kamieskroon area for the first time. The delightful little Fairy Flycatcher was seen again after yesterday and not again on the remainder of the tour. There were many others we had seen before as well, but it is always nice to see them again and become better acquainted.

Mammals were not prolific but of course Springbok had to be seen near the town named after this pretty little gazelle. A Black-backed Jackal was new for us and a nice one to see. Other new mammals were small ones again. There was Dassie Rat which unlike true rats has a hairy tail. It lives in cracks amongst boulders in arid areas. Another diurnal rodent of arid sandy regions is Brant's Whistling Rat which lives in burrows. It is vegetarian and with a little patience it is possible to watch them coming out of their burrows to nip off a succulent leaf to eat. Striped Mouse was another diurnal rodent seen for the second time. Large mammals were staying away from us but we did see the majestic Oryx again.

Then it was back to the lodge for some down time before updating our list in the garden whilst it was still light enough to see. Dinner this evening was at a steak house in the town. It was good but enormous portions were served and we had to ask for doggy bags.

Birds of the day: Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Karoo Eremomela, Ground Woodpecker.
Day total: 65 Trip Total: 196

Day 13: Wednesday, 17th September 2008 ~ Augrabies Falls National Park

We left Springbok early and drove north east to our next destination, Augrabies Falls National Park. It is a long drive through sparse arid country with only a few remote sheep farms to be seen along the way. After a bit more than 100 kilometres from Springbok we deviated on a gravel road near the mining settlement of Aggeneys as we had a stake-out for the localised and scarce Red Lark in the Koa Dunes, which are the same colour as the lark. Unfortunately our timing was not right as birds were not breeding and displaying, but we did see a single bird briefly. At the same site we had an excellent sighting of a pair of Yellow-bellied Eremomela that flitted about in low bushes close to us. The large Chat Flycatcher was also found here.

We moved on to the small town of Pofadder, miles from anywhere and before getting to the town we started to see enormous haystack-like nests of Sociable Weavers on telephone poles. Birds were actively present at some of the nests and this was a new species for us. Other new birds on this long leg of our drive today included Northern Black Korhaan and flocks of Namaqua Sandgrouse coming in to drink at livestock watering points. They were quite a spectacular sight. Namaqua Doves and Lark-like Buntings were also coming in to drink but they were not new for us. At Pofadder we deviated again to a known stake-out for the

tiny Sclater's Lark, but regrettably they did not come in while we were there. Perhaps because there had been rain in this normally dry desert there was no need for them to come to this particular watering point.

A really good bird we did find on our drive this day was African Pygmy Falcon. This tiny raptor, almost shrike size, shares Sociable Weaver nests, so we were on the lookout for it. We found two and the second sighting was really good when we did a u-turn to see it perched on telephone wires. Another birding tour had also stopped to look at it and it was not perturbed by our presence at all. We never saw this species again on the tour.

Shortly before reaching our destination we made one final short detour to look for White-browed Sparrow-Weavers. A nesting site with untidy nests had been seen along a farm road previously, so we headed in that direction. What was new along this road since my last visit was a gate across the road which the farmer had put up. It was unlocked so we went through with tongue in cheek in case we met up with an irate farmer, or worse still the gate could be locked on our way out again. We found the birds and had a good look at them and all was in order. Acacia Pied Barbet was also seen here. This bird had been evading us up to now and we had it as a 'heard only' on the list. Finally we reached our destination and checked into our spacious chalets. Our accommodation was at the far end of the grounds and there was a small pond nearby worth checking out. Three-banded Plover was present and so were Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and African Pied Wagtail. African Reed-Warbler was in the reeds and showed briefly for us and some Red-billed Quelea came in to drink. The campsite was nearby too and out of range here was a lovely Crested Barbet voicing its opinion from a tree top.

There was time for a short walk to view the spectacular Augrabies Falls where the mighty Orange River is forced through a narrow gap in amongst huge granite domes. There were hundreds of Alpine Swifts, and numbers of Little Swifts wheeling about over the spray and Hamerkop was new for us too. Another new bird is a recent range-extension. African Palm Swifts have extended their range where suitable palm trees for nesting have been planted, and there are some in the camp grounds. Granite boulders at the falls had fascinating little Broadley's Flat Lizards close by. They are endemic to this region and found nowhere else. Colourful males show off to drab females by exposing their brightly coloured bellies. "Typical males" was a comment I heard. Families of Rock Hyrax, some with tiny babies, were also present on the rocks. Another plentiful mammal was Chacma Baboons and we were warned that they will enter rooms if left open to help themselves to whatever food they can find. I discovered that some big males had learnt how to open closed doors and one entered my room whilst I was taking a shower. I felt somewhat exposed when I had to chase it out without my clothes on. I am sure I could see him laughing at me. Ground Squirrel was new for us and they were plentiful and fun to watch.

Birds of the day: Namaqua Sandgrouse, African Pygmy Falcon.

Day total: 69 Trip total: 213

Day 14 : Thursday, 18th September, 2008 ~ Augrabies Falls National Park

Most of the day was spent in the Game Park area, visiting different viewsites along the Orange River gorge. We did have time for a walk in the campsite area though and a troop of Vervet Monkeys were having a wonderful time on a raid amongst the campers, where all sorts of goodies were easy to get hold of. African Hoopoe strutting around on the lawn was nice to see again. Other birds in the campsite included Chestnut-vented Titbabbler, Black-chested Prinia, Pirit Batis, Acacia Pied Barbet again and one that had been a 'heard only' up to now, Namaqua Warbler. It has a loud rattling call but generally remains hidden as many warblers are prone to do. There were others too that had been seen previously.

On our drive in the game park we came across a lovely pair of Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters and their bright colours stood out clearly in the stark landscape. Other good finds were Karoo Long-billed Lark and Sabota Lark, the northern race with a big, heavy bill that will probably be split one day. A really good find was Double-banded Sandgrouse which is scarce in this area. Rufous-eared Warbler once more made its acquaintance, always nice to see. Long-billed Pipit was new for us and the Ararat viewsite had stunning fly-pasts of Verreaux's Eagles that were nesting nearby. They presented great photography opportunities. Surprisingly African Fish-Eagle was new for us.

Mammals were good too, although they are not plentiful in this stark desert habitat. Eland and Oryx had been seen previously, but Southern Giraffe were new and so was the delightful little Klipspringer, unique in that it is the only antelope designed to live on rocky outcrops. We saw quite a few like little statues standing motionless on the boulders. Springbok were plentiful and the scarce Hartmann's Mountain Zebra was found as well. It is amazing how they blend into the landscape. Small mammals included Rock Hyrax, Small Grey Mongoose, Ground Squirrel and Scrub Hare.

Viewsites visited were stunningly beautiful along a gorge 260 metres deep and 9 kilometres in length. Some time was spent at these observation places, photographing and just absorbing the stark and spectacular

scenery. We virtually had these places to ourselves and were alone in a vast wilderness. It was breathtaking at times.

Birds of the day: Double-banded Sandgrouse, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater.

Day total: 54 Trip Total: 222

Day 15: Friday, 19th September 2008 ~ Upington

Time to move on again and we drove to the town of Upington to spend our last night in the Northern Cape at the lovely Three Gables Guest House. This was a large private home built in 1936 and now converted to a stylish guest house with a large garden frequented by birds. The personal attention we received from our hostess, Lana, was impressive too and the superbly cooked dinner was excellent.

We arrived mid-morning and after checking into our rooms and offloading our bags we left for Spitzkop Nature Reserve north of the town in typical Kalahari landscape, but first we drove to the bridge spanning the Orange River to see what birds we could find in the river, which is wide at this point. South African Cliff-Swallows, at the edge of their range, breed under the bridge and we were not disappointed as there were numbers flying below our elevated vantage point.

On checking into the Nature Reserve a tame Suricate (Meerkat) came out of the office to greet us. We had previously seen them in the wild and this little chap looked out of place amongst humans. The reserve had a long circuit to drive on and an even longer one for those wishing to spend some time in the reserve. By mistake we ended up on the longer route which was remote at times, especially as we appeared to be the only people present. My passengers seemed a little anxious about this on occasions and a couple of times I was asked if I had cell phone coverage. We made it though but birds were sparse at times. We did pick up new ones here thank goodness as I may not have been too popular if it was a wild goose chase.

A pair of Ludwig's Bustard were good to see again and there were lots of displaying Eastern Clapper Larks. Other larks in this sandy habitat were Fawn-coloured Lark, Sabota Lark, Karoo Long-billed Lark, Spike-heeled Lark and Grey-backed Sparrowlark, so it most certainly is a good place for larks. Other new birds for us were Kalahari Scrub-Robin, the delightful little Scaly-feathered Finch that always looks so grumpy, as well as Red-headed Finch. White-browed Sparrow-Weavers were breeding near the reception office so we were able to have a second look at this one. Yellow Canaries were plentiful and so were Lark-like Buntings, so all in all this was not a bad place to be 'lost'.

There were some mammals as well but the only new one was Red Hartebeest. For the second time only we saw Blue Wildebeest.

Back at the guest house we updated our lists on the deck whilst enjoying a glass of wine to relax us after a busy day. A superb and interesting meal was then dished up for us by Lana and it was early to bed after a long day.

Birds of the day: Kalahari Scrub-Robin, Scaly-feathered Finch

Day total: 66 Trip total: 225

Day 16: Saturday, 20th September 2008 ~ Nelspruit

Today was to be mainly a travelling day with little time for birding, and yet we did get a reasonable list and some new ones too. Breakfast was early, but Bill and Charlotte were even earlier and were found strolling in the spacious garden looking for birds. It was then fond farewell to Lana and we left for the small Upington Airport for a flight to Johannesburg before driving to Nelspruit in Mpumalanga province.

Much valuable birding time was lost while at airports and on the flight, but we wasted little time after landing in Johannesburg and were soon on our way with a four hour drive ahead of us. Most of the drive was on a highway where stopping for birds was not always possible, but we did manage some stops for new birds such as the bizarre Long-tailed Widowbird that appeared to have difficulty carrying its very long tail in flight. This was a highlight of the trip. We turned off the highway to a wetland on a poultry farm shortly after Johannesburg airport and the break was welcome with a selection of waterbirds to sift through to find additions to our list. There were some too such as White-winged Terns flying over the rather full lake, but the majority of birds present had been seen by us before. Grey-headed Gull had not been seen since the first day, before leaving Johannesburg. This area is many kilometres from the coast where they are found along the shores of the Indian Ocean, but they journey inland to breed on wetlands in the Highveld. Other birds we had not seen for a while were Glossy Ibis, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler and surprisingly Common Moorhen which we would have expected to be common as the name implies.

Back onto the highway and our next stop was a comfort and lunch stop at a roadside fuel station. Charlotte was quick on the draw here when someone took her credit card out of her hand whilst she was attempting to draw some cash from an ATM. As quick as a flash she grabbed it back, but it was not a nice experience. It is

not always a good idea to use cash machines on a major highway out of Johannesburg, but fortunately most of South Africa is not like that and we would soon be in a safer area again.

South African Cliff-Swallows were breeding under bridges along the highway and we were able to have another look at this endemic swallow. Dark-capped Bulbul was seen again and would now take the place of Red-eyed Bulbul which was seen for the last time at Upington airport this morning. New for us at our lunch stop was Speckled Mousebird and our last White-backed Mousebird had been seen early morning in Upington. New regions bring new birds and a lot more were to follow.

Finally we reached our destination and checked into our accommodation in the suburbs of Nelspruit, The Arches. There were birds in the garden and new for the list was Kurrichane Thrush, White-bellied Sunbird and the delightfully colourful and vocal White-browed Robin-Chat. A quick stop before reaching our guest house gave us Lesser Masked Weavers breeding in tall palm trees.

Mammals would not be expected on a travelling day but we did pick up two new ones as we drove through the Highveld, both grassland endemics – Blesbok and Black Wildebeest.

Dinner this evening was at the home of Mavoumeen and Donald Pearce of Lawson's Tours. It is always nice to visit private homes in a foreign country, and of course traditional Bobotie had been prepared, followed by Malva Pudding for dessert. It went down well. The bird list was updated over drinks before the meal.

Bird of the day: Long-tailed Widowbird
Day total: 48 Trip total: 232

Day 17: Sunday, 21st September 2008 ~ Pretoriuskop, Kruger National Park

Departure after an early breakfast for Numbi Gate, Kruger National Park. Two short deviations were made before leaving Nelspruit to see what birds may be present on the Crocodile River. The first was on a dairy farm where we found colourful White-fronted Bee-eaters, Wire-tailed and Lesser Striped Swallows. The next was at the entrance to Lowveld Botanical Gardens and a pair of African Black Duck were in the river. The riverine forest on the river bank had little Collared Sunbirds and we called up a Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird that obligingly flew into a tree in front of us for an excellent sighting. The tiny Green-backed Cameroptera that normally remains hidden came out to look at us too and a scarce bird for this area, Bearded Scrub-Robin, also showed well.

We drove through the town of White River where Village Weavers were noisily weaving their nests in a small tree on an island in a park pond. We continued through a former apartheid homeland, heavily populated and spreading for miles. Fascinating to see for visitors from abroad. Eventually we were at Numbi Gate and presented our Wild Cards to gain free entry to Kruger. There were birds to see here before driving on and these included Southern Black Flycatcher, Red-headed Weaver, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Brown-hooded Kingfisher. Our list was growing rapidly.

Once in the park it was a case of stop and start frequently as there was lots to see and there was no rush to get to Pretoriuskop. We drove on gravel roads in various directions and added White-backed Vulture, Wahlberg's Eagle, Martial Eagle and Bateleur amongst the large raptors, and Lizard Buzzard was the only new small raptor. Bush and woodland birds included African Green Pigeon, Brown-headed Parrot, Purple-crested Turaco, Grey Go-away-bird, Lilac-breasted and Purple Rollers, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, African Grey and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Bearded Woodpecker, Fork-tailed Drongo, Black-headed Oriole, Southern Black Tit, Arrow-marked Babbler, Rattling Cisticola and many more as reflected in the bird list elsewhere in this report. It was a shattering experience and Kruger Park has to be one of the world's top birding spots. One of the huge granite outcrops (koppies) which are a feature of the landscape in the Pretoriuskop area had Mocking Cliff-Chats, a really nice find, and one of the dams we visited had another nice find, Saddle-billed Stork. Then in a grassy area we came across a Black-bellied Bustard right next to the road, amusing to watch it calling, sounding like a cork being popped from a wine bottle. Small and colourful seed eaters were good to see as well and two of the popular ones were Blue Waxbill and Golden-breasted Bunting. A number of the new additions today were seen in the rest camp area at Pretoriuskop. These areas are always good for birds and always worth exploring.

Mammals were also plentiful on our first day in Kruger and it was fascinating to see Red-billed Oxpeckers clambering about on Impala. Other mammals today were Common Duiker, Elephant, Hippopotamus, Klipspringer on the same koppie as the Mocking Cliff-Chats and also Greater Kudu, White Rhino, Common Waterbuck, Warthog, Burchell's Zebra and some small mammals. Most certainly our best day of the tour so far.

Our bird list was updated over pre-dinner drinks outside the camp cafeteria and it took a while to complete. There was also great difficulty in deciding on the 'bird of the day'.

Birds of the day: Saddle-billed Stork, Bateleur, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Black-bellied Bustard.
Day total: 84 Trip Total: 285

Day 18: Monday, 22nd September 2009 ~ Pretoriuskop, Kruger National Park

A full day in the Pretoriuskop region today, so lots of time to explore the many roads and circular drives close to the camp. There was no necessity for a long drive today and plenty more to see. A walk in the camp grounds was also a must and as we walked past the camping area a troop of Chacma Baboons were having the time of their lives. What was previously a neat and well set up camp was being demolished while the occupants were out on a game drive. They had foolishly left their caravan trailer windows open and baboons kept popping out clutching tasty morsels. What a surprise was in store for the owners.

We whistled up a Tinkerbird and what a surprise when it came to us. It had a bright red forehead and must surely be Red-fronted Tinkerbird which does not occur in this region at all. Bill and Judy photographed it for evidence and a really good picture was sent to me later. On examination it turned out to be Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird that for some reason had a red and not yellow forehead. The picture showed the absence of a broad golden wing patch which only the red-fronted has. Red or yellow on the head is not the only diagnostic feature. Perhaps our bird had overdone its make-up that morning.

Natal Francolin was new for us on our morning walk and Crested Francolin was seen on our drive later. African Green Pigeons, Brown-headed Parrots and Purple-crested Turacos were colourful birds seen yesterday but it was good to see them again whist on foot this time. Black-collared Barbets calling their duets were great to see and we also found the tiny Cardinal Woodpecker and its slightly larger cousin, Golden-tailed Woodpecker on our walk. Groundscraper Thrush and Yellow-breasted Apalis were also found and Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike was stunning. The similar, but larger Grey-headed Bush-Shrike was also present.

We drove down the Voortrekker Road, originally used by ox-wagons carrying supplies from the coast to the gold mines inland. A good account of this period is in the well-known classic "Jock of the Bushveld", which at least one of our group purchased whilst in the Park. We drove past the rugged landmark known as Ship Mountain due to its shape and headed for the Afsaal picnic area where we had planned to have lunch. Before getting there we came across a number of White-backed Vultures in trees and on the ground. They were feeding on the remains of a buffalo that had been a lion kill. A couple of smaller Hooded Vultures were further back in trees waiting patiently for their turn should there be any scraps left. While watching the activity we noticed a single larger and paler vulture on the carcass. It was a Cape Vulture and this species is scarce in the park as they breed on the Drakensberg Mountains to the north of where we were. We were to pass the colony in a few days time after leaving Kruger. Then someone noted that there were bright yellow wing tags on this vulture, and with the aid of a scope we could read the tag number. Later this was reported and we discovered it had been tagged as a nestling some two years prior to this sighting but had not been seen again. The distance from where it was tagged was only about 150 kilometres, but who knows how far it had wandered in between.

Interesting birds on our drive included a Striped Kingfisher, the only one on the tour, a pair of enormous Verreaux's Eagle-Owls, peering at us with pink eye-lids from the canopy of a tall tree, two Woolly-necked Storks in a small stream, a Lesser Honeyguide that told us where it was by calling from a tree top, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Magpie Shrike, Black-crowned Tchagra and Jameson's Firefinch amongst others. At Afsaal we were entertained by Red-billed and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills at our feet looking for handouts while we ate our sandwiches. Burchell's Starlings and Greater Blue-eared Starlings were doing likewise.

The only new mammal today was a little Tree Squirrel at Pretoriuskop, but we did see a number of species seen previously, such as African Elephant (we had a huge bull in the road right in front of us), White Rhino and others. A colony of little Dwarf Mongoose were fun to watch.

Once again our checklists were updated before dinner and it was another good one. Our total was now exceeding 300.

Bird of the day: Verreaux's Eagle-Owl
Day total: 90 Trip total: 306

Day 19: Tuesday, 23rd September 2008 ~ Satara, Kruger National Park

We had a long but interesting drive today as we were moving to Satara in the central area of Kruger. The habitat at Satara is dominated by open thornveld/savanna and we could once again expect new species. We were not disappointed either.

Our drive took us past Skukuza, the largest rest camp and the Park headquarters. Of interest here were hundreds of roosting Epauletted Fruit Bats under the thatch roof of a shelter outside the cafeteria. We called in at Transport Dam on the way to Skukuza and Goliath Heron, the world's biggest heron, was in the water. Water Thick-knee was also present and a big surprise was the charming little Cut-throat Finch which is seldom seen in Kruger. Red-billed Buffalo-Weavers were building their large and untidy nests out of thorn

twigs here as well. A great bird seen further on was Southern Ground Hornbill and a family group were in the road to greet us. This is a really scarce bird away from large protected reserves and it was lovely seeing them.

We were heading towards the Tshokwane picnic area for lunch and a comfort stop and made an exciting discovery. We had stopped to view a Wahlberg's Eagle perched next to its nest, almost over the road. We then noted that on the opposite side of the road a large Jackal Berry Tree had a number of birds of various species in it. We sat and watched, fascinated, for quite a while as birds moved about at different levels. Amongst the many there was Black-headed Oriole, Black-backed Puffback, Marico Sunbird, Village Weaver, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Crested Barbet, African Hoopoe, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike, Long-billed Crombec, Chinspot Batis, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Greater Honeyguide and a whole host of others. The more we looked the more we saw. Low bushes at the base of the tree also had their share of birds such as White-browed Scrub-Robin, Rattling Cisticola, Blue Waxbill and Green-winged Pytilia. In total we counted 26 species at that one spot and perhaps would have seen even more if we could have stayed longer. That is the sort of thing that makes Kruger such a special place. Sadly the majority of visitors to Kruger are only interested in the 'Big 5' and passers-by were convinced we had found a leopard in the tree. They probably did not even notice the activity we were excited about.

At Tshokwane picnic area there were hangers on begging for tasty morsels in the form of Greater Blue-eared and Cape Glossy Starlings. Feeding the birds is not allowed but some people are messy eaters and 'accidentally' feed them. It was good to see these two similar starlings together and learn their distinguishing features.

White-headed Vulture was new for us on our drive today which made our vulture score 4 out of 5. Brown Snake-Eagle was also new and so was Dark Chanting Goshawk. Its pale cousin had been seen on numerous occasions in the Northern Cape but we were now out of range. Other new birds included Swainson's Spurfowl and the big and ugly of the bird world, Marabou Stork. Small birds not yet mentioned were Little Bee-eater, Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove, Bushveld Pipit, Pin-tailed Whydah and the exquisite Long-tailed Paradise Whydah. Then at Satara there were Red-billed Buffalo-Weavers and African Mourning Dove which gets no further south than Satara.

Dinner this evening took the form of a barbeque (braai in South Africa). It went down well and so did the wine consumed whilst cooking. African Scops-Owl was calling in the night so we knew it was in the camp. A mental note was made to find it next day.

Today was pretty good for mammals as well as birds. We saw 19 species and added some new ones to the list, including Lions which are always nice to see. Others included Cape Buffalo, Bushbuck and Common Waterbuck.

Bird of the day: Southern Ground Hornbill.

Day total: 99 Trip total: 323

Day 20: Wednesday, 24th September 2008 ~ Satara, Kruger National Park

Full day in the Satara area and we start with an early drive and pick up Common Ostrich which we had not seen for about ten days. We also had Lions and Cape Buffalo again today for the second time. Back to the birds and a search was made for the African Scops-Owl heard last night. We found the little chap fast asleep, low down in a Euphorbia. It was duly photographed at very close range and just sat there totally unconcerned. It opened one eye to look at us as if to say, "what is all the fuss about?"

We drove to Gudzani Dam close to the eastern boundary and found African Openbill to add to our stork collection. White-faced Ducks were also there as well as Black Crake and African Jacana. These were all new for us, and our vulture collection was completed today when we added the largest of all, Lappet-faced Vulture. There was more to come as the world's heaviest flying land bird, Kori Bustard was seen on our morning drive. His smaller cousin, Red-crested Korhaan, was also located. The other end of the size-scale this morning produced Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark, a nomadic species not often seen. Tiny Red-billed Firefinches were present too. Then at an almost dry stream we found a tiny but stunning Malachite Kingfisher, like a jewel in the harsh environment.

Today was a pleasant and relaxing day with plenty to see and no long distance to drive. It is always worthwhile having more than one night in a good location.

Bird of the day: Kori Bustard

Day total: 74 Trip total: 335

Day 21: Thursday, 25th September 2008 ~ Blyde River Canyon

We leave early and have a slow drive to Orpen where we exit Kruger National Park. Our only Tawny Eagle of the trip was seen before leaving the Park and Common Ostrich was seen again for the last time. Sadly we have to leave this fascinating and wonderful national park with its wealth of birds and other wildlife. There was a lot to see on this final drive in Kruger this morning but not much new for us. Still enjoyable though and it is always good to become better acquainted with birds and mammals seen before.

On leaving Kruger we drove west to the northern extremity of the Drakensberg Mountains we could see ahead of us. Our drive took us up a pass where we could see distant Cape Vultures circling above a high cliff to our left. This was the breeding colony where the tagged vulture we found near Afsaal in Kruger a while back had come from. Not much further up the pass we drove through the Strijdom Tunnel and met up with a local curio seller, Michael, who has become the guardian and guide for a pair of Taita Falcons nesting annually on a high cliff near Michaels roadside curio stall. This is the only place where this tiny falcon occurs in South Africa and it is a rarity elsewhere in its range. The birds blend in with the red cliff and are difficult to locate, but Michael pointed a bird out to us. This had to be our 'bird of the day'.

We continued along Abel Erasmus Pass to the escarpment and drove into the Blydepoort Aventura Resort where we were to spend the night. After checking in and leaving our luggage we drove a short distance to a viewsite where we could look down into the impressive Blyde River Canyon, third largest and oldest canyon in the world. Rufous-naped Lark was new for us before getting there and so was Fan-tailed Widowbird. We caught up with Jackal Buzzard once more as they do not occur in Kruger. The same applied to White-necked Raven, which was also present.

The extensive grounds at the Aventura Resort where we were staying have some good birding so in the limited time at our disposal we took advantage of this and saw the endemic White-throated Robin-Chat, a really good-looking bird. We also had, for the second time only and not since leaving the Cape, a Cape Rock-Thrush perched on a chalet roof. Mocking Cliff-Chat was perched on the restaurant roof and it was our second sighting. New for us was Lazy Cisticola (and no I do not know how it got that name). African Dusky Flycatcher was another catch up and the migrant Willow Warbler was a first and so was Greater Double-collared Sunbird and the delightful little Sweet Waxbill.

Our final mammal big day was today and mainly before leaving Kruger. Nothing new was seen but we did get 19 species.

Bird of the day: Taita Falcon
Day total: 100 Trip total: 346

Day 22: Friday, 26th September 2008 ~ Dullstroom

We had a long drive today but through interesting new country with the promise of a lot to see. Thus we made an early start and the restaurant had provided breakfast packs which we would have along the way.

Our first port of call was Bourke's Luck Potholes at the start of the canyon. Here two rivers meet, the Treur and Blyde Rivers and over millions of years huge and spectacular potholes have been gauged out of the hard rock by flood waters. As we were passing by this spectacle we took the opportunity for a walk to the start of the narrow gorge and it was well worth the effort. The endemic Drakensberg Prinia was seen next to the footpath as well.

We turned off on the gravel Vaalhoek road that is a short cut to the historical mining village of Pilgrim's Rest, now a national monument. We had only been on this road for a short while when we stopped while waiting for dust to clear from a truck that passed us at speed. As the dust started to clear there was a Red-throated Wryneck perched on a fence post. What a surprise and what a fortunate stop. We said a silent thank you to the truck driver and forgave his bad manners. Another surprise was seeing the normally very common Barn Swallow for the first time on this trip. It is a migrant to South Africa from Europe and they had not arrived until now.

The road traverses the meandering Blyde River in several places over low-level bridges, and at these spots we stopped to search for some of the special birds that frequent mountain streams. At one such place we found African Black Duck which is the only true river duck in South Africa. Dark-capped Yellow Warbler was found at one of the river crossings too and so was Giant Kingfisher plus Thick-billed and Cape Weavers, but the 'specials' we were wanting were playing hard-to-get. Close to Pilgrim's Rest we ate our picnic breakfast by the side of the river and one of our sought after birds showed itself for us, although briefly. This was the lovely, but shy, Half-collared Kingfisher. Whilst tucking into our substantial picnic breakfast there were Greater Double-collared and Amethyst Sunbirds nearby and Cape Canary and Streaky-headed Seedeater made their acquaintance once more.

A quick deviation was made for a comfort stop in Pilgrim's Rest and the remains of a really old Austin car at a filling station had an amusing sign on it saying, "Rust in Peace". We drove up Robbers Pass (so named because

of ambush by thieves in the Gold Rush period in the early 1900's), and deviated again on a rough track winding down the mountain to Mount Sheba Nature Reserve. Plain-backed Pipit was discovered in a recently burnt field on this section of the drive. We had lunch at the lovely hotel here in the middle of nowhere and walked on a track through indigenous mist-belt forest, hoping to pick up some forest 'specials'. Our timing was not the best as it was not possible to be there at first light, but we did manage to pick up some of our target birds, such as a stunning Narina Trogon that showed well in the dark forest, Orange Ground-Thrush, normally shy and secretive, Chorister Robin-Chat, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler and Cape Batis.

The final leg of our drive took us past a farm with herds of elephant, rhino, giraffe and other large animals as if we were back in Kruger. The difference though is that these animals were life-size statues made from concrete, and pretty good they were too. Then it was through the town of Lydenburg and finally Dullstroom, where we checked into the old Dullstroom Inn for our final night of the tour. After a bit of down time we met in the hotel lounge to update the list and then strolled down the road to a delightful restaurant, 'Fibs', for our final dinner together.

Bird of the day: Narina Trogon
Day total: 77 Trip total: 359

Day 23: Saturday, 27th September 2008 ~ Departure

Our final day but as we only had to get to the airport by early evening there was time for birding in the Dullstroom area and on our drive to Johannesburg. We met at the car shortly before first light and headed for the gravel De Berg road, a farm road leading to the Steenkampsberg mountains, the highest point in Mpumalanga province reaching over 2000 meters. This is a good birding area and we were hoping to pick up some final additions to our already extensive list. Eastern Long-billed Lark was a notable find and was located by hearing its distinctive whistle before we saw it. African Wattled Lapwing and Yellow-billed Egret were seen for the first time as well and two nice endemics were Buff-streaked Chat and Sentinel Rock-Thrush and we finally had sightings of Zitting Cisticola. Also new were Red-winged Francolins which we encountered on a hillside. There were lots of other birds seen previously as well, including the stately Blue Crane, a fitting bird for the last day, being the national bird of South Africa. Another good find was Secretarybird for the second time on the tour. The previous pair was in the Northern Cape which seemed ages ago. A new mammal on our last day was Grey Rhebok. A small herd was on a grassy hillside along the De Berg road north of Dullstroom.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast, packed our bags and left Dullstroom but there was more birding in store for us on our drive to the airport. We deviated off the N4 highway at Wonderfontein and drove towards Carolina, which appeared to interest our visitors from USA. Long-tailed Widowbirds were nice to see on the last day and by now some were in full breeding garb with incredibly long tails. We caught up with South African Cliff-Swallows again and parked next to a bridge to watch them where they were breeding.

Some shallow natural pans on farmland are where we made for and they were full of waterbirds, many of which we had not seen since the start of the trip in the Western Cape. That seemed so far distant by now. There were some new ones too and one of these was the seldom seen White-backed Duck that stays motionless amongst floating vegetation and sits low in the water, making it difficult to spot. There were numbers of them in one pan and some close up too. Maccoa Duck with a bright blue bill was also new. A new shorebird was Ruff and there were numbers of Whiskered Terns, some in breeding plumage. On the shore of one pan there were some alien Mallard and sad to see there were hybrids too, with Yellow-billed Duck which were also on the shore. A larger pan was a bit distant from the road but we could see some Greater Flamingo in the shallow water.

We continued our drive, noting some birds along the way, although nothing extra for the overall list. A stop was made for lunch and we arrived at the airport with plenty of time to spare. After fond, but sad farewells we parted company and went our separate ways. It had been a really great tour.

Birds of the day: White-backed Duck, Sentinel Rock-Thrush.
Day total: 78 Trip total: 369

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks for your wonderful enthusiasm at all times and for really great company. This made my task an easy one and I found it necessary to keep on reminding myself that I was actually working and not on vacation. Also thanks to Judy and Bill for some super photographs. Some appear in this report but there were so many good ones that it was difficult to decide on what to leave out.

Hopefully we can have the opportunity to plan another trip for you in the not too distant future and I can have the honour of showing you some more of what South Africa has to offer.

Peter Lawson

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN

	COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
1	Common Ostrich	9	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
3	African Penguin (E)	1	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>
6	Great Crested Grebe	4	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
7	Black-necked Grebe	3	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
8	Little Grebe	10	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
49	Great White Pelican	5	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
53	Cape Gannet (E)	4	<i>Morus capensis</i>
55	White-breasted Cormorant	12	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>
56	Cape Cormorant (E)	4	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>
57	Bank Cormorant (E)	1	<i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>
58	Reed Cormorant	9	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>
59	Crowned Cormorant (E)	2	<i>Phalacrocorax coronatus</i>
60	African Darter	6	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
62	Grey Heron	9	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
63	Black-headed Heron	10	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
64	Goliath Heron	1	<i>Ardea goliath</i>
65	Purple Heron	3	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
66	Great Egret	1	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
67	Little Egret	6	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
68	Yellow-billed Egret	1	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>
71	Cattle Egret	12	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
76	Black-crowned Night-Heron	2	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
81	Hamerkop	5	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
83	White Stork	1	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
86	Woolly-necked Stork	1	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
87	African Openbill	1	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>
88	Saddle-billed Stork	4	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>
89	Marabou Stork	2	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>
91	African Sacred Ibis	14	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
93	Glossy Ibis	4	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
94	Hadeda Ibis	20	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
95	African Spoonbill	3	<i>Platalea alba</i>
96	Greater Flamingo	5	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
97	Lesser Flamingo	2	<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>
99	White-faced Duck	1	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>
101	White-backed Duck	1	<i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i>
102	Egyptian Goose	16	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>
103	South African Shelduck (E)	5	<i>Tadorna cana</i>
104	Yellow-billed Duck	8	<i>Anas undulata</i>
105	African Black Duck	2	<i>Anas sparsa</i>
923	Mallard	2	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
106	Cape Teal	6	<i>Anas capensis</i>
108	Red-billed Teal	4	<i>Anas erythrorhynchos</i>
112	Cape Shoveler (E)	8	<i>Anas smithii</i>
113	Southern Pochard	2	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>
116	Spur-winged Goose	4	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
117	Maccoa Duck	1	<i>Oxyura maccoa</i>
118	Secretarybird	2	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>
121	Hooded Vulture	3	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
122	Cape Vulture (E)	2	<i>Gyps coprotheres</i>
123	White-backed Vulture	5	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
124	Lappet-faced Vulture	2	<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>
125	White-headed Vulture	2	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>
126b	Yellow-billed Kite	8	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>

	COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
127	Black-shouldered Kite	11	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
131	Verreaux's Eagle	6	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
132	Tawny Eagle	1	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
135	Wahlberg's Eagle	4	<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>
136	Booted Eagle	7	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>
140	Martial Eagle	4	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
142	Brown Snake-Eagle	2	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
146	Bateleur	5	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
148	African Fish Eagle	7	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
149	Steppe Buzzard	2	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
152	Jackal Buzzard (E)	6	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>
154	Lizard Buzzard	2	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>
155	Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk	1	<i>Accipiter rufiventris</i>
161	Gabar Goshawk	3	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>
162	Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk (NE)	6	<i>Melierax canorus</i>
163	Dark Chanting Goshawk	1	<i>Melierax metabates</i>
165	African Marsh-Harrier	1	<i>Circus ranivorus</i>
168	Black Harrier (E)	4	<i>Circus maurus</i>
169	African Harrier-Hawk	1	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
171	Peregrine Falcon	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
172	Lanner Falcon	2	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
176	Taita Falcon	1	<i>Falco fasciinucha</i>
181	Rock Kestrel	13	<i>Falco rupicolis</i>
182	Greater Kestrel	3	<i>Falco rupicoloides</i>
186	African Pygmy Falcon	1	<i>Polihierax semitorquatus</i>
189	Crested Francolin	4	<i>Peliperdix sephaena</i>
190	Grey-winged Francolin (E)	2	<i>Scleroptila africana</i>
192	Red-winged Francolin	1	<i>Scleroptila levaillantii</i>
195	Cape Francolin (E)	7	<i>Pternistes capensis</i>
196	Natal Francolin (NE)	5	<i>Pternistes natalensis</i>
199	Swainson's Spurfowl (NE)	3	<i>Pternistes swainsonii</i>
200	Common Quail	H	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
203	Helmeted Guinea fowl	20	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
208	Blue Crane (E)	4	<i>Anthropoides paradiseus</i>
210	African Rail	H	<i>Rallus caerulescens</i>
213	Black Crake	1	<i>Amaurornis flavirostris</i>
223	African Purple Swamp hen	1	<i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i>
226	Common Moorhen	3	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
228	Red-knobbed Coot	10	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
230	Kori Bustard	1	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>
232	Ludwig's Bustard (NE)	2	<i>Neotis ludwigii</i>
237	Red-crested Korhaan	1	<i>Eupodotis ruficrista</i>
238	Black-bellied Bustard	2	<i>Eupodotis melanogaster</i>
239a	Southern Black Korhaan (E)	3	<i>Eupodotis afra</i>
239b	Northern Black Korhaan (E)	2	<i>Eupodotis afraoides</i>
240	African Jacana	1	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
244	African Black Oystercatcher (E)	5	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>
246	White-fronted Plover	4	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>
248	Kittlitz's Plover	3	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
249	Three-banded Plover	6	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
254	Grey Plover	1	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
255	Crowned Lapwing	7	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
258	Blacksmith Lapwing	16	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
260	African Wattled Lapwing	1	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>
262	Ruddy Turnstone	1	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
264	Common Sandpiper	1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>

	COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
266	Wood Sandpiper	4	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
269	Marsh Sandpiper	2	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
270	Common Greenshank	6	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
272	Curlew Sandpiper	2	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
274	Little Stint	3	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
284	Ruff	1	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
288	Bar-tailed Godwit	1	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
290	Common Whimbrel	3	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
294	Pied Avocet	3	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
295	Black-winged Stilt	11	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
297	Spotted Thick-knee	2	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
298	Water Thick-Knee	3	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
301	Double-banded Courser	1	<i>Smutsornis africanus</i>
312	Cape Gull	9	<i>Larus vetula</i>
315	Grey-headed Gull	3	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>
316	Hartlaub's Gull (E)	7	<i>Larus hartlaubii</i>
322	Caspian Tern	3	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
324	Swift Tern	4	<i>Sterna bergii</i>
326	Sandwich Tern	3	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
327	Common Tern	4	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
338	Whiskered Tern	1	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
339	White-winged Tern	2	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
344	Namaqua Sandgrouse (NE)	1	<i>Pterocles namaqua</i>
347	Double-banded Sandgrouse (NE)	1	<i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>
348	Rock Dove	7	<i>Columba livia</i>
349	Speckled Pigeon	18	<i>Columba guinea</i>
352	Red-eyed Dove	12	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
353	African Mourning Dove	3	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>
354	Cape Turtle-Dove	19	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
355	Laughing Dove	20	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
356	Namaqua Dove	5	<i>Oena capensis</i>
358	Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove	1	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
359	Tambourine Dove	H	<i>Turtur tympanistris</i>
361	African Green-Pigeon	2	<i>Treron calva</i>
363	Brown-headed Parrot	5	<i>Poicephalus cryptoxanthus</i>
371	Purple-crested Turaco	3	<i>Tauraco porphyreolophus</i>
373	Grey Go-away-bird	5	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>
385	Klaas's Cuckoo	H	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>
396	African Scops-Owl	1	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>
398	Pearl-spotted Owlet	H	<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>
401	Spotted Eagle-Owl	1	<i>Bubo africanus</i>
402	Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	1	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>
412	African Black Swift	4	<i>Apus barbatus</i>
415	White-rumped Swift	6	<i>Apus caffer</i>
417	Little Swift	15	<i>Apus affinis</i>
418	Alpine Swift	8	<i>Apus melba</i>
421	African Palm Swift	7	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
424	Speckled Mousebird	5	<i>Colius striatus</i>
425	White-backed Mousebird (E)	10	<i>Colius colius</i>
426	Red-faced Mousebird	6	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>
427	Narina Trogon	1	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>
428	Pied Kingfisher	3	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
429	Giant Kingfisher	4	<i>Ceryle maxima</i>
430	Half-collared Kingfisher	1	<i>Alcedo semitorquata</i>
431	Malachite Kingfisher	1	<i>Alcedo cristata</i>
435	Brown-hooded Kingfisher	5	<i>Halcyon albiventris</i>

	COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
437	Striped Kingfisher	1	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
438	European Bee-eater	4	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
443	White-fronted Bee-eater	1	<i>Merops bullockoides</i>
444	Little Bee-eater	1	<i>Merops pusillus</i>
445	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	1	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>
447	Lilac-breasted Roller	5	<i>Coracias caudata</i>
449	Purple Roller	4	<i>Coracias naevia</i>
451	African Hoopoe	10	<i>Upupa africana</i>
452	Green Wood-Hoopoe	4	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
454	Common Scimitarbill	3	<i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>
457	African Grey Hornbill	4	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>
458	Red-billed Hornbill	4	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>
459	Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill	5	<i>Tockus leucomelas</i>
463	Southern Ground-Hornbill	1	<i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>
464	Black-collared Barbet	4	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>
465	Acacia Pied Barbet (NE)	3	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>
470	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	2	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>
473	Crested Barbet	4	<i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>
474	Greater Honeyguide	1	<i>Indicator indicator</i>
476	Lesser Honeyguide	1	<i>Indicator minor</i>
480	Ground Woodpecker (E)	1	<i>Geocolaptes olivaceus</i>
483	Golden-tailed Woodpecker	2	<i>Campethera abingoni</i>
486	Cardinal Woodpecker	3	<i>Dendropicus fuscescens</i>
487	Bearded Woodpecker	3	<i>Dendropicus namaquus</i>
489	Red-throated Wryneck	1	<i>Jynx ruficollis</i>
494	Rufous-naped Lark	1	<i>Mirafra africana</i>
495a	Cape Clapper Lark (E)	1	<i>Mirafra apitata</i>
495c	Eastern Clapper Lark (E)	1	<i>Mirafra fasciolata</i>
497	Fawn-coloured Lark	1	<i>Mirafra africanoides</i>
498	Sabota Lark (NE)	3	<i>Mirafra sabota</i>
500	Cape Long-billed Lark (E)	2	<i>Certhilauda curvirostris</i>
500	Eastern Long-billed Lark (E)	1	<i>Certhilauda semitorquata</i>
500	Karoo Long-billed Lark (E)	2	<i>Certhilauda subcoronata</i>
502	Karoo Lark (E)	5	<i>Certhilauda albescens</i>
504	Red Lark (E)	1	<i>Certhilauda burra</i>
506	Spike-heeled Lark	4	<i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i>
507	Red-capped Lark	5	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
512	Large-billed Lark (E)	7	<i>Galerida magnirostris</i>
515	Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark	1	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>
516	Grey-backed Sparrowlark (NE)	5	<i>Eremopterix verticalis</i>
518	Barn Swallow	1	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
520	White-throated Swallow	10	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>
522	Wire-tailed Swallow	2	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
526	Greater Striped Swallow (E)	8	<i>Hirundo cucullata</i>
527	Lesser Striped Swallow	5	<i>Hirundo abyssinica</i>
528	South African Cliff-Swallow (E)	3	<i>Hirundo spilodera</i>
529	Rock Martin	11	<i>Hirundo fuligula</i>
533	Brown-throated Martin	4	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
534	Banded Martin	1	<i>Riparia cincta</i>
541	Fork-tailed Drongo	6	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
545	Black-headed Oriole	6	<i>Oriolus larvatus</i>
547	Cape Crow	5	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
548	Pied Crow	14	<i>Corvus albus</i>
549	House Crow	2	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
550	White-necked Raven	6	<i>Corvus albicollis</i>
551	Grey Tit (E)	5	<i>Parus afer</i>

	COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
554	Southern Black Tit	4	<i>Parus niger</i>
560	Arrow-marked Babbler	6	<i>Turdoidea jardinei</i>
566	Cape Bulbul (E)	8	<i>Pycnonotus capensis</i>
567	African Red-eyed Bulbul (NE)	5	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>
568	Dark-capped Bulbul	8	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
570	Yellow-streaked Greenbul	1	<i>Phyllastrephus flavostriatus</i>
572	Sombre Greenbul	3	<i>Andropadus importunus</i>
576	Kurrichane Thrush	6	<i>Turdus libonyana</i>
577	Olive Thrush	4	<i>Turdus olivaceus</i>
577	Karoo Thrush (E)	7	<i>Turdus smithi</i>
579	Orange Ground-Thrush	1	<i>Zoothera gurneyi</i>
580	Groundscraper Thrush	3	<i>Turdus litsitsirupa</i>
581	Cape Rock-Thrush (E)	3	<i>Monticola rupestris</i>
582	Sentinel Rock-Thrush (E)	1	<i>Monticola explorator</i>
586	Mountain Wheatear (NE)	8	<i>Oenanthe monticola</i>
587	Capped Wheatear	5	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>
588	Buff-streaked Chat (E)	1	<i>Oenanthe bifasciata</i>
589	Familiar Chat	9	<i>Cercomela familiaris</i>
591	Sickle-winged Chat (E)	1	<i>Cercomela sinuata</i>
592	Karoo Chat (NE)	2	<i>Cercomela schlegelii</i>
593	Mocking Cliff-Chat	2	<i>Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris</i>
595	Ant-eating Chat (E)	6	<i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i>
596	African Stonechat	5	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
598	Chorister Robin-Chat (E)	1	<i>Cossypha dichroa</i>
599	White-browed Robin-Chat	2	<i>Cossypha heuglini</i>
601	Cape Robin-Chat	16	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>
602	White-throated Robin-Chat (E)	2	<i>Cossypha humeralis</i>
611	Cape Rock-Jumper (E)	1	<i>Chaetops frenatus</i>
613	White-browed Scrub-Robin	3	<i>Erythropgia leucophrys</i>
614	Karoo Scrub-Robin (E)	9	<i>Erythropgia coryphoeus</i>
615	Kalahari Scrub-Robin (NE)	1	<i>Erythropgia paena</i>
617	Bearded Scrub-Robin	1	<i>Erythropgia quadrivirgata</i>
621	Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler (NE)	3	<i>Parisoma subcaeruleum</i>
622	Layard's Tit-babbler (E)	1	<i>Parisoma layardi</i>
631	African Reed-Warbler	2	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>
635	Lesser Swamp-Warbler	1	<i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i>
637	Dark-capped Yellow Warbler	1	<i>Chloropeta natalensis</i>
638	Little Rush-Warbler	1	<i>Bradypterus baboecala</i>
643	Willow Warbler	1	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
644	Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler	1	<i>Phylloscopus ruficapillus</i>
645	Bar-throated Apalis	3	<i>Apalis thoracica</i>
648	Yellow-breasted Apalis	4	<i>Apalis flavida</i>
651	Long-billed Crombec	6	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
653	Yellow-bellied Eremomela	4	<i>Eremomela icteropygialis</i>
654	Karoo Eremomela (NE)	1	<i>Eremomela gregalis</i>
657a	Green-backed Camaroptera	2	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>
660	Cinnamon-breasted Warbler (E)	1	<i>Euryptila subcinnamea</i>
661	Cape Grassbird (E)	3	<i>Sphenoeacus afer</i>
664	Zitting Cisticola	1	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
666	Cloud Cisticola	H	<i>Cisticola textrix</i>
669	Grey-backed Cisticola (NE)	8	<i>Cisticola subruficapillus</i>
670	Wailing Cisticola	H	<i>Cisticola lais</i>
672	Rattling Cisticola	5	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>
677	Levaillant's Cisticola	7	<i>Cisticola tinniens</i>
678	Croaking Cisticola	1	<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>
679	Lazy Cisticola	2	<i>Cisticola aberrans</i>

	COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
681	Neddicky	7	<i>Cisticola fulvicapillus</i>
683	Tawny-flanked Prinia	4	<i>Prinia subflava</i>
685	Black-chested Prinia (NE)	2	<i>Prinia flavicans</i>
686a	Karoo Prinia (E)	9	<i>Prinia maculosa</i>
686b	Drakensberg Prinia (E)	2	<i>Prinia hypoxantha</i>
687	Namaqua Warbler (E)	1	<i>Phragmacia substriata</i>
688	Rufous-eared Warbler (E)	4	<i>Malcorus pectoralis</i>
690	African Dusky Flycatcher	4	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>
693	Grey Tit-Flycatcher	2	<i>Myioparus plumbeus</i>
694	Southern Black Flycatcher	3	<i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i>
696	Pale Flycatcher	1	<i>Melaenornis pallidus</i>
697	Chat Flycatcher	3	<i>Melaenornis infuscatus</i>
698	Fiscal Flycatcher (E)	4	<i>Sigelus silens</i>
700	Cape Batis (E)	1	<i>Batis capensis</i>
701	Chin-spot Batis	6	<i>Batis molitor</i>
703	Pirit Batis (NE)	4	<i>Batis pirit</i>
706	Fairy Flycatcher (E)	2	<i>Stenostira scita</i>
711	African Pied Wagtail	5	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>
713	Cape Wagtail	17	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
716	African Pipit	8	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
717	Long-billed Pipit	4	<i>Anthus similis</i>
718	Plain-backed Pipit	1	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>
723	Bushveld Pipit	1	<i>Anthus caffer</i>
727	Cape Longclaw (E)	2	<i>Macronyx capensis</i>
728	Yellow-throated Longclaw	2	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>
732	Common Fiscal	15	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
735	Magpie Shrike	3	<i>Lanius souzae</i>
736	Southern Boubou (E)	3	<i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>
740	Black-backed Puffback	4	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>
741	Brubru	3	<i>Nilaus afer</i>
743	Brown-crowned Tchagra	2	<i>Tchagra australis</i>
744	Black-crowned Tchagra	2	<i>Tchagra senegala</i>
746	Bokmakierie (E)	10	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>
748	Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike	1	<i>Telophorus sulfureopectus</i>
750	Olive Bush-Shrike	H	<i>Telophorus olivaceus</i>
751	Grey-headed Bush-Shrike	2	<i>Malacotus blanchoti</i>
753	White-crested Helmet-Shrike	4	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>
754	Retz's Helmet-Shrike	2	<i>Prionops retzii</i>
757	Common Starling	9	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
758	Common Myna	3	<i>Acrideres tristis</i>
759	Pied Starling (E)	7	<i>Spreo bicolor</i>
760	Wattled Starling	1	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>
762	Burchell's Starling (NE)	4	<i>Lamprotornis australis</i>
764	Cape Glossy Starling	7	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>
765	Greater Blue-eared Starling	5	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
769	Red-winged Starling	7	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>
770	Pale-winged Starling (NE)	4	<i>Onychognathus nabouroup</i>
772	Red-billed Oxpecker	5	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>
773	Cape Sugarbird (E)	1	<i>Promerops cafer</i>
775	Malachite Sunbird	8	<i>Nectarinia famosa</i>
777	Orange-breasted Sunbird (E)	3	<i>Nectarinia violacea</i>
779	Marico Sunbird	4	<i>Nectarinia mariquensis</i>
783	Southern Double-collared Sunbird (E)	10	<i>Nectarinia chalybea</i>
785	Greater Double-collared Sunbird (E)	2	<i>Nectarinia afra</i>
787	White-bellied Sunbird	5	<i>Nectarinia talatala</i>
788	Dusky Sunbird (NE)	4	<i>Nectarinia fusca</i>

	COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
791	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	3	<i>Nectarinia senegalensis</i>
792	Amethyst Sunbird	1	<i>Nectarinia amethystina</i>
793	Collared Sunbird	2	<i>Anthreptes collaris</i>
796	Cape White-eye (E)	12	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>
796	Orange River White-eye (E)	6	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>
798	Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver	3	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
799	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	2	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
800	Sociable Weaver (E)	2	<i>Philetaurus socius</i>
801	House Sparrow	19	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
803	Cape Sparrow (NE)	13	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
804	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	6	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
805	Yellow-throated Petronia	2	<i>Petronia superciliaris</i>
806	Scaly-feathered Finch (NE)	1	<i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i>
807	Thick-billed Weaver	3	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>
810	Spectacled Weaver	2	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>
811	Village Weaver	5	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
813	Cape Weaver (E)	12	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>
814	Southern Masked-Weaver	11	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
815	Lesser Masked-Weaver	2	<i>Ploceus intermedius</i>
819	Red-headed Weaver	2	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>
821	Red-billed Quelea	3	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
824	Southern Red Bishop	9	<i>Euplectes orix</i>
827	Yellow Bishop	9	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>
828	Fan-tailed Widowbird	1	<i>Euplectes axilaris</i>
829	White-winged Widowbird	1	<i>Euplectes albonotatus</i>
831	Red-collared Widowbird	1	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>
832	Long-tailed Widowbird	2	<i>Euplectes progne</i>
834	Green-winged Pytilia	1	<i>Pytilia melba</i>
841	Jameson's Firefinch	1	<i>Lagonosticta rhodopareia</i>
842	Red-billed Firefinch	2	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
844	Blue Waxbill	5	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>
846	Common Waxbill	8	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
850	Sweet Waxbill (E)	2	<i>Estrilda melanotis</i>
855	Cut-throat Finch	1	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>
856	Red-headed Finch (NE)	1	<i>Amadina erythrocephala</i>
860	Pin-tailed Whydah	2	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
862	Long-tailed Paradise-Whydah	2	<i>Vidua paradisaea</i>
868	Common Chaffinch	2	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
869	Yellow-fronted Canary	5	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>
872	Cape Canary	10	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>
873	Forest Canary (E)	1	<i>Serinus scotops</i>
874	Cape Siskin (E)	1	<i>Pseudochloroptila totta</i>
876	Black-headed Canary (E)	3	<i>Serinus alario</i>
876	Damara Canary	2	<i>Alario leucolaema</i>
878	Yellow Canary (NE)	7	<i>Serinus flaviventris</i>
879	White-throated Canary (NE)	6	<i>Serinus albogularis</i>
880	Protea Seed-Eater (E)	1	<i>Serinus leucopterus</i>
881	Streaky-headed Seed-Eater	3	<i>Serinus gularis</i>
884	Golden-breasted Bunting	5	<i>Emberiza flaviventris</i>
885	Cape Bunting (NE)	8	<i>Emberiza capensis</i>
887	Lark-like Bunting (NE)	5	<i>Emberiza impetuani</i>

MAMMALS CHECKLIST

COMMON NAME	Days Seen	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Baboon, Chacma	10	<i>Papio ursinus</i>
Bat, Fruit (Peter's Epauletted)	1	<i>Epomophorus crypturus</i>
Blesbok	3	<i>Damaliscus dorcas phillipsi</i>
Bontebok	2	<i>Damaliscus dorcas dorcas</i>
Buffalo	3	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>
Bushbuck	2	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>
Dassie, Rock (Hyrax)	6	<i>Procavia capensis</i>
Duiker, Common	6	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
Eland	4	<i>Taurotragus oryx</i>
Elephant, African	5	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>
Fox, Bat-eared	1	<i>Otocyon megalotis</i>
Gemsbok (Oryx)	5	<i>Oryx gazella</i>
Giraffe, Southern	4	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i>
Hare, Scrub	3	<i>Lepus saxatilis</i>
Hartebeest, Red	1	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>
Hippopotamus	4	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>
Impala	5	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>
Jackal, Black-backed	1	<i>Canis mesomelas</i>
Klipspringer	4	<i>Oreotragus oreotragus</i>
Kudu, Greater	5	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>
Lion	2	<i>Panthera leo</i>
Mongoose, Dwarf	5	<i>Helogale parvula</i>
Mongoose, Slender	3	<i>Galerella sanguinea</i>
Mongoose, Small Grey	4	<i>Galerella pulverulenta</i>
Mongoose, Yellow	3	<i>Cynictis penicillata</i>
Monkey, Vervet	8	<i>Cercopithecus aethiops</i>
Mouse, Striped	2	<i>Rhabdomys pumilio</i>
Rat, Brant's Whistling	1	<i>Parotomys brantsii</i>
Rat, Dassie	1	<i>Petromys typicus</i>
Rat, Vlei	1	<i>Otomys irroratus</i>
Rhebok, Grey	1	<i>Pala capreolus</i>
Rhinoceros, White	3	<i>Ceratotherium simum</i>
Seal, Cape Fur	4	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>
Springbok	8	<i>Antidorcas marsupialis</i>
Squirrel, Ground	2	<i>Xerus inauris</i>
Squirrel, Tree	4	<i>Paraxerus cepapi</i>
Steenbok	11	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>
Suricate (Meerkat)	1	<i>Suricata suricatta</i>
Warthog	5	<i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i>
Waterbuck, Common	3	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>
Whale, Southern Right	2	<i>Balaena glacialis</i>
Wildebeest, Black	1	<i>Connochaetes gnou</i>
Wildebeest, Blue	5	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>
Zebra, Burchell's	5	<i>Equus burchelli</i>
Zebra, Cape Mountain	1	<i>Equus zebra zebra</i>
Zebra, Hartmann's Mountain	1	<i>Equus zebra hartmannae</i>

REPTILES SEEN

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Large-scaled Girdled Lizard	<i>Cordylus macropholis</i>
Karoo Gridled Lizard	<i>Cordylus polyzonus</i>
Broadley's Flat Lizard	<i>Platysaurus broadleyi</i>
Sekukuhne Flat Lizard	<i>Platysaurus orientalis</i>
Ground Agama	<i>Agama aculeata</i>
Tree Agama	<i>Acanthocercus atricollis</i>
Rock Agama	<i>Agama atra</i>
Rainbow Skink	<i>Mabuya quinquetaeniata</i>
Common Striped Skink	<i>Mabuya striata</i>
Nile Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus niloticus</i>
Angulate Tortoise	<i>Chersina angulata</i>
Leopard Tortoise	<i>Geochelone pardalis</i>
Tent Tortoise	<i>Psammobates tentorius</i>
Serrated Hinged Terrapin	<i>Pelusios sinuatus</i>
Marsh Terrapin	<i>Pelomedusa subrufa</i>
Water Monitor	<i>Varanus niloticus</i>