

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO SOUTH AFRICA
The Cape – Natural History Tour
5 – 17 August 2005

A Personal Diary

Friday, 5 August

The group left London Heathrow traveling on an overnight flight with South African Airways to Cape Town.

Saturday, 6 August - 18 °C

The group arrived in Cape Town with a strong north westerly wind but lovely clear skies. We drove to Clarence Drive via Gordon's Bay and Betty's Bay to Hermanus. En route we had coffee overlooking False Bay. We took the scenic route – Rotary Way, which overlooks Walker Bay, from here we saw 12 Southern Right Whales, some were breaching!

After lunch we went for a walk and saw the whales really close in. We also witnessed three Cape Fur Seals swimming and jumping around some of the whales.

Our bird list at the end of this first half day totalled 35, of which Jackal Buzzard was possibly the most exciting.

Sunday, 7 August - 17 °C

We awoke to a 35kph north westerly wind! The weather forecast predicted swells of between 4.5 and 6m high, so we decided that staying on land would be wiser. We went to Cape Agulhas and along the way we birded. Denham's Bustard and Blue Crane were among some of the specials for the day. We enjoyed our picnic lunch at the southern most tip of Africa.

The return journey home provided a spectacle never seen by me before; in a temporary "pan" (formed by the recent floods) we saw three Ostriches swimming across the pan, with tails held high!! All one could see was the neck, a bit of the back and the tail. Once safely across they shook themselves and dropped their tails. Well spotted, Karen!

Bird count for the day: 80

Monday, 8 August - 14 °C

Today we had clear skies and once again wind speed of 35 NW. After a morning walk in the Fern Kloof Nature Reserve we went to the prawn flats on the Klein River estuary, where we saw a large flock of Greater Flamingoes. After lunch we did some shopping and then spent the rest of the afternoon at Onrus Rivier where we walked along the coastline before an early supper at the Milkwood Restaurant.

Birds count for the day: 54

Tuesday, 9 August - 18 °C

Today was a clear day with no wind! By this time we had heard that the swells had subsided and we were booked to go shark diving at midday. We birded our way to Birkenhead Lighthouse and then on to Kleinbaai, from where we were taken by shuttle boat, which proved to be a rather wet affair! No sooner had we transferred onto the "shark boat", which in itself was quite an adventure, when the first Great White Shark made its appearance. We had the pleasure of seeing five Great White Sharks, with one at least 3.5m in length!!! White-chinned Petrel was circling around us.

Bird count for the day: 58.

Wednesday, 10 August - 20 °C

There was no wind and sunny skies held their promise of good weather for our walk in the Harold Porter Botanical Garden, unlike last year when we were soaked! We had lunch at Pringle Bay at Miems before we set out to find the special for this area, the Cape Rock Jumper. Just as we decided that it was going to be a 'no show' it suddenly appeared and we had fantastic views of it.

We also saw the Verreaux's Eagle on their nest with a white downed chick. All this was on the walk at Rooi Els. We followed the coast road down to Simon's Town – for our next four days stay at Boulders Beach Guest House. We were met by the locals..... African Penguins walking up the driveway.

Bird count for the day: 72

Thursday, 11 August - 15 °C

We had rain in the morning but it was dry again in the afternoon. As it was raining we went birding at Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve, where we could bird from the car. We had splendid views of Great White Pelican, and 12 Lesser Flamingoes, and lots of fly-byes of the Greater Flamingoes.

We had a late lunch at Dixies, after which we visited the gem stone factory and Jubilee Square in Simon's Town, to pay our respects to "Just Nuisance"! The Great Dane dog that adopted sailors at the Naval Base during the 2nd World War. He was promoted to the rank of Able Seaman and a life-size statue stands proud overlooking the harbour.

Bird count for the day: 72

Friday, 12 August - 18 °C

It was partly cloudy but fortunately for us tourists there was no rain. Before breakfast we visited the main African Penguin colony at Boulders Beach. We had lots of fun watching the antics of the penguins.

We spent the rest of the day in the Table Mountain National Park – Cape of Good Hope. We saw Southern Right Whales off Cape Point and we walked all the way to Diaz Point. On the way out we were lucky to see Cape Mountain Zebra, an endemic to the Western Cape.

Bird count for the day: 52.

Saturday, 13 August - 17 °C

Today was cloudy with a little rain. We made a quick visit to Groot Constantia wine estate, which produced a magnificent sighting of Spotted Eagle Owl, two sitting in an old oak tree. We then visited Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens. It is always great to walk through this very special place.

Later we drove via Chapman's Peak to Kommetjie and on the way we stopped in at the lake on Imhof's Gift. It was as if we were in a time warp because again, exactly as last year we saw an African Fish Eagle catch a fish and fly off to the mountains. We then continued along the coast road and over the scenic Redhill back into Simon's Town.

Birding going well, today's count was 71.

Sunday, 14 August - 15 °C

We had rain in the morning, but as we were heading up the west coast the weather started clearing up and we had a splendid day. We took the Darling Hills road where the birding was excellent and the wild flowers magnificent, a photographers dream! From here we headed off to Velddrift, the Bergriver estuary and Flamink Pan A. The waders here were trying hard to outnumber the flowers, Common Whimbrel, Chestnut-banded Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied Avocet and many more. From here we went to Falcon's Rest in Langebaan.

Bird count for the day: 103!!!

Monday, 15 August - 14 °C

A little rain caused our hope to have a great flower day sink into our boots, but it proved to be a sea mist, rather heavy but at least it cleared altogether and we had a fantastic day in the West Coast National Park and in particular the Postberg Flower Reserve. We had fantastic sightings of Eland, Bontebok, Cape Mountain Zebra, Bat-eared Foxes and Springbok as well as one Gemsbok (*Oryx*).

Total birds for the day 83.

Tuesday, 16 August - 18 °C

We woke to a clear day and visited the West Coast Fossil Park, near Langebaan. It was well worth the visit! Long-horned short-necked Giraffe roamed around here 5 million years ago, alongside the Sabre-toothed Cat, African Bear and the three-toed horse! We then headed back to Cape Town as everyone wanted to go up Table Mountain. We stopped in at Big Bay for the classic photos of Table Mountain. Lunch was enjoyed on the top of the mountain, visibility was variable as the clouds were playing hide and seek. One could say we ended the tour on a high note.

From here we left for Cape Town International Airport for our departure to London Heathrow at 19.15.

Bird count for the day: 52

Acknowledgements

We had a most successful trip and everyone went home happy. Thank you all for your enthusiasm and for making my task easy and enjoyable.

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CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

(E) – endemic to Southern Africa

(NE) – near-endemic to Southern Africa

Numbers follow Sasol Birds of Southern Africa (3rd edition)

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME
1 Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
3 African (Jackass) Penguin (E)	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>
6 Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
7 Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
8 Little Grebe (Dabchick)	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
32 White-Chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>
37 Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>
49 Great (Eastern) White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
53 Cape Gannet (E)	<i>Morus capensis</i>
55 White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>
56 Cape Cormorant (E)	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>
57 Bank Cormorant (E)	<i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>
58 Reed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>
59 Crowned Cormorant (E)	<i>Phalacrocorax coronatus</i>
60 African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
62 Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
63 Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
65 Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
66 Great (White) Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>
67 Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
71 Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
91 African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
93 Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
94 Hadedia Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
95 African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>
96 Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
97 Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>
101 White-backed Duck	<i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i>
102 Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>
103 South African Shelduck (E)	<i>Tadorna cana</i>
104 Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>
106 Cape Teal	<i>Anas capensis</i>
108 Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>
112 Cape Shoveler (E)	<i>Anas smithii</i>
113 Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>
116 Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
117 Maccoa Duck	<i>Oxyura maccoa</i>
127 Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
131 Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
148 African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
150 Forest Buzzard (E)	<i>Buteo trizonatus</i>
152 Jackal Buzzard (E)	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>
155 Rufous-chested (Redbreasted) Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter rufiventris</i>
158 Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>
165 African Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus ranivorus</i>
168 Black Harrier (E)	<i>Circus maurus</i>
171 Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
181 Rock Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicolis</i>
190 Grey-winged Francolin (E)	<i>Scleroptila africanus</i>
195 Cape Francolin (E)	<i>Pternistes capensis</i>
203 Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
208 Blue Crane (E)	<i>Anthropoides paradiseus</i>

223	African Purple Swampphen (Purple Gallinule)	<i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i>
226	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
228	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
231	Denham's (Stanley's) Bustard	<i>Neotis denhami</i>
239a	Southern Black Korhaan (E)	<i>Eupodotis afra</i>
244	African Black Oystercatcher (E)	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>
246	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>
247	Chestnut-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius pallidus</i>
248	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
249	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
254	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
255	Crowned Lapwing (Plover)	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
258	Blacksmith Lapwing (Plover)	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
264	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
270	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
272	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
274	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
288	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
289	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
290	Common Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
294	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
295	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
297	Spotted Thick-knee (Dikkop)	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
298	Water Thick-Knee (Dikkop)	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
310	Subantarctic Skua	<i>Catharacta antarctica</i>
312	Cape (Kelp) Gull	<i>Larus vetula</i>
315	Grey-headed Gull	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>
316	Hartlaub's Gull (E)	<i>Larus hartlaubii</i>
322	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
324	Swift Tern	<i>Sterna bergii</i>
326	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
338	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
344	Namaqua Sandgrouse (NE)	<i>Pterocles namaqua</i>
348	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>
349	Speckled (Rock) Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
350	African Olive-Pigeon (Rameron Pigeon)	<i>Columba arquatrix</i>
352	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
354	Cape Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
355	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
356	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
385	Klaas's Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>
391a	Burchell's Coucal (NE)	<i>Centropus burchelli</i>
392	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
401	Spotted Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>
412	African Black Swift	<i>Apus barbatus</i>
415	White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>
417	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
418	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>
424	Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>
425	White-backed Mousebird (E)	<i>Colius colius</i>
428	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
429	Giant Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle maxima</i>
451	African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>
465	Acacia Pied Barbet (NE)	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>
488	Olive Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos griseocephalus</i>
495a	Cape Clapper Lark (E)	<i>Mirafrapa apiata</i>
500	Cape Long-billed Lark (E)	<i>Certhilauda curvirostris</i>
507	Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
512	Large-billed Lark (E)	<i>Galerida magirostris</i>
520	White-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>
523	Pearl-breasted Swallow	<i>Hirundo dimidiata</i>
529	Rock Martin	<i>Hirundo fuligula</i>
533	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>

541	Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
547	Cape (Black) Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
548	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
549	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
550	White-necked Raven	<i>Corvus albicollis</i>
566	Cape Bulbul (E)	<i>Pycnonotus capensis</i>
572	Sombre Greenbul (Bulbul)	<i>Andropadus importunus</i>
577	Olive Thrush	<i>Turdus olivaceus</i>
581	Cape Rock-Thrush (E)	<i>Monticola rupestris</i>
582	Sentinel Rock-Thrush (E)	<i>Monticola explorator</i>
587	Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>
589	Familiar Chat	<i>Cercomela familiaris</i>
596	African (Common) Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
601	Cape Robin-Chat (Robin)	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>
611	Cape Rock-Jumper (E)	<i>Chaetops frenatus</i>
614	Karoo Scrub-Robin (Robin) (E)	<i>Cercotrichas coryphoeus</i>
631	African (Marsh) Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>
638	(African Sedge) Little Rush-Warbler	<i>Bradypterus baboecala</i>
645	Bar-throated Apalis	<i>Apalis thoracica</i>
651	Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
661	Cape Grassbird (E)	<i>Sphenoecus afer</i>
666	Cloud Cisticola	<i>Cisticola textrix</i>
669	Grey-backed Cisticola (NE)	<i>Cisticola subruficapillus</i>
681	Neddicky	<i>Cisticola fulvicapillus</i>
686a	Karoo (Spotted) Prinia (E)	<i>Prinia maculosa</i>
690	African Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>
698	Fiscal Flycatcher (E)	<i>Sigelus silens</i>
700	Cape Batis (E)	<i>Batis capensis</i>
713	Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
716	African (Grassveld) Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
718	Plain-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>
727	Cape (Orangethroated) Longclaw (E)	<i>Macronyx capensis</i>
732	Common Fiscal (Fiscal Shrike)	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
736	Southern Boubou (E)	<i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>
746	Bokmakierie (E)	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>
757	Common (European) Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
759	(African) Pied Starling (E)	<i>Spreo bicolor</i>
760	Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>
769	Red-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>
773	Cape Sugarbird (E)	<i>Promerops cafer</i>
775	Malachite Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia famosa</i>
777	Orange-breasted Sunbird (E)	<i>Nectarinia violacea</i>
783	Southern ('Lesser) Double-collared Sunbird (E)	<i>Nectarinia chalybea</i>
796	Cape White-eye (E)	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>
801	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
803	Cape Sparrow (NE)	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
813	Cape Weaver (E)	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>
814	Southern Masked-Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
824	Southern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>
827	Yellow Bishop (Yellowrumped Widow)	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>
846	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
850	Sweet Waxbill (E)	<i>Estrilda melanotis</i>
860	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
872	Cape Canary	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>
874	Cape Siskin (E)	<i>Pseudochloroptila totta</i>
877	Brimstone (Bully) Canary	<i>Serinus sulphuratus</i>
878	Yellow Canary (NE)	<i>Serinus flaviventris</i>
879	White-throated Canary (NE)	<i>Serinus albogularis</i>
881	Streaky-headed Seed-Eater (Canary)	<i>Serinus gularis</i>
885	Cape Bunting (NE)	<i>Emberiza capensis</i>

Total birds seen by the group: 175

Total endemics and near-endemics included in this list: 41

MAMMAL LIST

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Baboon, Chacma	<i>Papio ursinus</i>
Bontebok	<i>Damaliscus dorcas dorcas</i>
Dassie, Rock (Hyrax)	<i>Procavia capensis</i>
Duiker, Common	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
Eland	<i>Taurotragus oryx</i>
Fox, Bat-eared	<i>Otocyon megalotis</i>
Gemsbok (Oryx)	<i>Oryx gazella</i>
Hartebeest, Red	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus</i>
Mongoose, Small Grey	<i>Galerella purverulenta</i>
Mongoose, Yellow	<i>Cynictis penicillata</i>
Mouse, Striped	<i>Rhabdomys pumilio</i>
Rhebok, Grey	<i>Palea capreolus</i>
Seal, Cape Fur	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus</i>
Springbok	<i>Antidorcas marsupialis</i>
Steenbok	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>
Whale, Southern Right	<i>Balaena glacialis</i>
Zebra, Burchell's	<i>Equus burchelli</i>
Zebra, Cape Mountain	<i>Equus zebra zebra</i>

OTHER SIGHTINGS

Shark, Great White	<i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>
Lizard, Cape Girdled	<i>Cordylus cordylus</i>
Frog, Cape Sand	<i>Tomopterna delalandii</i>
Grasshopper, Koppie Foam	<i>Dictyophous spumans</i>
Spider, Rain	<i>Palystes sp.</i>
Bee, Carpenter	<i>Xylocopa caffra</i>
Wasp, Spider-hunting	<i>Batozonellus fuliginosus</i>
Tortoise, Angulated	<i>Chersina angulata</i>
(Butterfly) African Monarch	<i>Damaus chrysippus</i>
(Butterfly) Painted lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>

The botany was stunning. The fynbos had numerous flowering *Protea*, *leucospermum*, *Leucodendron*, *Mimetes* and many others too numerous to mention. The Potberg section of West Coast National park had fields of *Arctotis*, *Ursinia* and other members of the daisy family.

These lists represent those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour .