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**South Africa's Southwest Cape
7 – 22 October 2015**

Holiday participants

Malcolm and Helen Crowder
Chris Durdin, Jim Durdin
John Durdin
Jill Durdin and Keith Adamson
David Leverton, Stuart Leverton

Leader

Geoff Crane

Report by Chris Durdin

Photos by Chris Durdin, Geoff Crane, Helen and Malcolm Crowder.

Cover compilation, top row: china flower (HC), blue crane (GC), heady maiden moths (HC).

Middle row: red bishop (MC), Hermanus from Fernkloof (MC), malachite sunbird (HC).

Bottom row: speckled pigeons (HC), king protea (HC), African penguin (MC).

We stayed at

In Hout Bay: Tarragona Lodge www.tarragona.co.za

In Hermanus: Baleens Hotel www.baleens.co.za



The garden at Tarragona Lodge (CD)



Baleens Hotel on the outskirts of Hermanus (CD)

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person was combined with those from Honeyguide's group in Namibia in November 2015.

When supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust this gave a total of £710, a little over 14,700 rands, sent to the second Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2), an intensive monitoring programme undertaken in South Africa and adjacent countries.

As at early November 2015, the total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £103,643.

DAILY DIARY

7/8 October – London to Hout Bay

Nine of us gathered in the elegant Terminal 2 at Heathrow. The 9pm SAA flight departed promptly, with just about all seats taken, which probably didn't help for getting much sleep on the overnight flight to Johannesburg. We made our way through passport control (no visa needed section) to baggage reclaim, where my suitcase was the only one not to be there. We were advised to carry on with the next leg to Cape Town, which involved a long, long walk through the terminal complex or complexes. As we arrived in Cape Town after the second leg of the flight, messages via home in Norwich established that a lady had taken the suitcase home by mistake, and that it would be returned and flown on later. Geoff Crane was there to meet us and drove us past Table Mountain and to Victoria Mall in Hout Bay for a late, light lunch at La Cuccina, where plates of food were weighed for us.

At Tarragona Lodge we were settled in and looked around the garden, enjoying the Egyptian goose with a gosling on the lawn and the two hadeda ibises on the roof. Jim pointed out a large stick insect on the outside wall. After fine views of southern boubou in the garden we took a short drive to the beach, which was busy with families in the late afternoon warmth, including Geoff's wife Antoinette and their two children. Hartlaub's gull was the commonest species, similar to black-headed gull in size, plus several kelp gulls, like a large, dark lesser black-back. As well as Cape cormorants at sea, a reedy corner had reed cormorant, a darter flew through and two blacksmith lapwings fed on the mud. Two sacred ibises flew over, and there were hadeda ibises on the beach. Back at the hotel, Helen and Malcolm had discovered marbled leaf-toed geckos, one of which was small enough to come under the door and into the corridor. Our evening meal was at a Ragafellows restaurant in Hout Bay.

9 October – Cape Peninsula

After a delicious breakfast at Tarragona Lodge, Geoff collected us for a tour of many splendid spots on the Cape Peninsula on a gloriously sunny day. We headed out of Hout Bay on the toll road of Chapman's Peak Drive. A first stop was a lay-by where vegetation was regenerating after fire – which is a big benefit to many characteristic plants. It was curious that the first metre or so of the roadside was nearly all 'weeds' from Europe, such as narrow-leaved crimson clover and large quaking grass¹, with the native vegetation beyond that, including pink and white species of oxalis. Cape batis, two of them, we saw well here, with a dusky flycatcher. A little farther on against a steeper slope there were three splendid *Satyrium* orchid species: *Satyrium coriifolium* in orange, *Satyrium odorum* in green, tucked under scrub, and the pink *Satyrium carneum*, though that took quite a scramble to get up to photograph.



Satyrium carneum, worth the scramble; the Atlantic coast from Chapman's Peak Drive; immature female Tropical Bluetail (CD)

Next stop was a viewpoint with breathtaking views of the coastline. What first looked like a whale in the bay was just a rock, but there was lots to see: a particularly fine plant was the green and cream flowered *Albuca capitata*². A damselfly settled, allowing photographs, from which an ID of Tropical Bluetail was clinched. Moving along the coast the road dropped down and we joined several other people watching a southern right whale at Simonstown, very close to the Indian Ocean shore. It was an easy walk, over a railway line, and I also spent time pursuing a dragonfly that photos revealed to be a female Two-striped Skimmer.

¹ The European flora remained a curious element of the holiday – the other side of the coin to the South African flora seen around the Mediterranean, such as Hottentot fig, Cape daisy and Bermuda buttercup (= Cape sorrel). As well as the first two or three metres of roadsides, European flowers were routine on lawns (not surprising given that grass isn't native to SA) and disturbed ground, often with a bias to plants of southern Europe, such as fodder vetch, small meilott and small-flowered catchfly. Most striking of all were sheets of purple vipers bugloss, reminiscent of steppes in the Iberian peninsula.

² *Albuca* is sometimes lumped with *Ornithogalum*, star-of Bethlehems. *Albuca capitata* is a synonym of *Albuca abyssinica*.

We reached Boulders Bay just after midday. A short walk took us past some tip-top *a capella* singers and many souvenir stalls to the entrance of the nature reserve. Here boardwalks go through vegetation affording the closest of views of hundreds of African penguins, seemingly untroubled by the humans observing and photographing them. Karoo prinia and Cape wagtail showed well. Then it was back past collectors for AIDS victims, ice cream outlets and the souvenirs, by which time the *a capella* singers were now schoolgirls who also danced with great energy. A speckled pigeon was in the palm tree by the minibus when we returned.



African penguins at Boulders beach, and two of the Cape Mountain zebras on the nature reserve (HC)

We moved on to the open expanses of the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, a mix of vegetated sand dunes with rocky outcrops, where the poor soils meant no trees but plenty of scrub, including patches of proteas. Among some large boulders four Cape Mountain zebras stood stock-still: one of Africa's rarest mammals, with just seven in this area out of a total population of just 230 animals, Geoff said. With their pale bellies and brownish stripes without 'shadow' stripes they were distinctly different from the better-known Burchell's or plains zebra.

By the coast we watched black oystercatchers, white-necked ravens and distant ostriches as Geoff organised our picnic. At sea there were also common and swift terns. Everywhere under our feet there were flowers: two species of nemesia, Cape daisies, a lobelia, sand crocuses and more, and a western three-striped skink seemed to scuttle more into view than out of view. Fiscal flycatcher and Cape bulbul were among the small birds. We paused on the drive out to see Cape sugarbirds on proteas *Mimetes cucullatus* and also a fine yellow-rumped widow. The birdsong element of an app on Jim's iPad helped encourage a Cape grassbird into view. Three ostriches walked from the road into low vegetation: the male displayed vigorously and at a length to a female, clearly – as we witnessed mating – successfully.

At Cape Point, some took the funicular to the old lighthouse and the rest of us walked. Right by the start of the path there was a wonderfully tame Cape bunting and the first of several Cape girdled lizards: they have a patterning and texture reminiscent of a tiny crocodile. There were several cape siskins in the natural vegetation and lots of tame red-winged starlings here and around the car park. Painted lady butterflies were numerous, and it was odd how all three butterfly species we saw today were familiar from Europe, the others being cabbage white (what we'd call large white) and geranium bronze, the last now an established alien in much of southern Europe. A huge, striped, hairy caterpillar was destined to be a Cape lappet moth. There were nesting Cape cormorants on the vertiginous cliffs around the lighthouse and a couple of distant Cape gannets offshore.



Western three-striped skink (HC)

Heading home, we had two mammal stops. The first was for a single bontebok, opposite the ostrich farm, with a group of half a dozen a little farther along. The second was a family group of chacma baboons, one of which had a radio collar and tags. Later we saw a baboon minder with a different group, prepared to intervene if the baboons caused a problem to people.

We returned along the peninsula's Atlantic coast to Hout Bay for another excellent meal, this time at Papino's restaurant.

10 October – Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens

A short drive – we were there by 9:30 – took us to the famous botanical gardens at Kirstenbosch, where we spent all day. Early on there was a brief shower of rain, but mostly it was dry and often the sun shone. The mix of cultivated plants, mostly indigenous, is impressive, beautiful and far too varied to remember or list, though the many proteas tended to steal the show. Our route included the 'Boomslang' – the relatively new tree-top level walkway. Birds were plentiful and often tame: small birds included southern double-collared sunbirds, olive thrush, Cape sugarbirds and Cape batis. On the grass, helmeted guineafowl and a Cape francolin walked close to picnickers: a guineafowl that ventured close to a brood of Egyptian geese was seen off. Up in a tree two spotted eagle owls were roosting for the day, sometimes opening eyes to look down on the people with, it felt, disapproval. A sombre greenbul sang on a red milkwood tree much of its song, 'Willy ... come out and fight ... you're scared.' An angulate tortoise moved surprisingly quickly across a lawn. A moving molehill from a Cape mole rat on a path edge didn't reveal its occupant, and the runnels of Cape golden moles were common among paths through wooded shrubberies. An African olive pigeon and forest canaries were new birds.



From Kirstenbosch: Southern double-collared sunbird (HC); the tree-top walkway (MC); sugarbird on pincushion protea (MC)

Geoff left us to move the minibus and our picnic lunch near the Ryecroft Gate, where we walked to meet up, seeing along the way striped mouse and a carpenter bee with two broad yellow stripes – a female *Xylocopa caffra*. Helen found a stick insect in the loos, which she brought out to be studied and photographed by us all, especially as it walked over David. Later study showed it to be a male Thunberg's stick insect *Macynia labiata*. After lunch we strolled through a different area, where three sweet waxbills settled on the grass. A large leopard tortoise was completely untroubled by human attention. Our route then went into a more wooded, natural area where a stream had Cape river frogs and one corner had a very tame dusky flycatcher. The path led us past strelitzias and coral trees to an area specialising in rare and threatened plants, beyond which we passed a wedding party. After taking in the specialised plants in the conservatory (e.g. desert plants and bulbs) and browsing in the shop, we had an early return for tea and a rest back at Tarragona Lodge, then wildlife checklists and eating out in Hout Bay at Massimo's.

11 October – Table Mountain and Silvermine



Telescope view of the 'morning star' (CD)

Our departure was slightly delayed as Helen's sharp eyes had noticed a light in the blue, almost cloudless sky, which a telescope view confirmed as Venus with its semi-circle shape visible.

Geoff had arrived with e-tickets for Table Mountain: the good weather meant that the 'table cloth' of cloud had lifted, making it almost ideal for a visit. 'Almost' because the same idea had occurred to many people, perhaps even more so as a run of cloudy days had ended on a Sunday. So there was a wait, though helped by having pre-bought tickets, before we ascended in the cable car. Sure, it was busy at the top, but easy to move away from the main concentrations of people and enjoy the fabulous views and a fine selection of wildlife.

The walking was easy on and off the paths and flowers included Cape snow (a *Helycrysum*), *Erica lutea* (mostly white, sometimes a creamy yellow), china flower (porcelain-like in appearance) and tiny sundews in the many damp patches, themselves at first a surprise but on account of the regular cloud cover. There were birds, too: orange-breasted sunbirds, white-necked ravens and two peregrines which came past on a couple of occasions. Lizards were fun: we spent quite a while watching southern rock agamas, including a tiny brown one, a large, dominant male that bobbed as it sat atop a rock, and a sub-dominant male with a reduced tail that was especially colourful and tame.

A Cape crag lizard disappeared under a rock, and some in our party saw another near the shop as we completed our tour. Just beyond the shop two very tame speckled pigeons were sitting on top of a rock, and a rock hyrax (dassie) dashed through.



On Table Mountain: waiting for the Cape crag lizard (above) to reappear (HC & MC)

Having descended, we headed back towards Hout Bay and stopped for lunch in a lay-by overlooking the Atlantic. I had a quite a long chat with the lady selling souvenirs there, which was quite illuminating: Irene originated from Kenya, hadn't had a sale all day, and the mammal models, masks and other gifts came from all over sub-Saharan Africa, including Malawi, Kenya and Mozambique, supplied by wholesalers. I'm afraid Irene didn't get a sale – nor did those selling zebra skins across the road – though Geoff did give the roadside traders our remaining sandwiches.

After the briefest of pauses at Tarragona Lodge, and leaving behind Jill, we took the relatively short drive to Silvermine. This is essentially some open land with a car park favoured by dog walkers; but its particular interest this year was regeneration after a recent fire. The flowers were brilliant, with patches of peach-coloured *Watsonias* on the approaches, and:

Orchids: *Disa bracteata* (small and green), *Satyrium bicornis* (bigger and green), *Holothris cernuum* (a green, hairy orchid).

Cyphia bulbosa (a lobelia).

Asphodels (*Trachyandra* sp.).

Irises: *Moraea tripetala* (blue or purple), *M. fugax* (yellow), *M. ochroleuca* (tall, yellow).

Erica cerinthoides – intense red, and only found after fire, which for photographs meant pushing through burnt protea scrub and getting charcoal on clothes and skin).

Gebera linnaea – a daisy.

Drosera triervia – the sundew on Table Mountain, but also flowering here and in damp places in thousands.

Pelargonium lobatum.

Oxalis polyphylla – which you might recognise as an *Oxalis* from the flowers but certainly not from the thin, 5-fingered leaves.



Oxalis polyphylla and *Erica cerinthoides* under burnt protea scrub at Silvermine (CD)

After an hour back at base, Geoff collected us for our evening meal at the nautically-themed seaside fish restaurant Mariner's Wharf. Very good it was too, with a killer quote from one of the waiters who discovered the family connections in the group: "You're witnessing your grandfather having a tart? It's awesome!"

12 October – Hout Bay boat trip, Cape Town, Rietvlei

The morning started with a packed boat trip from Hout Bay: it seems the routine for all tours is to start the day with this before going off elsewhere. There was quite a swell but we were soon at the island where hundreds of Cape fur seals gathered, with many swimming and diving around the boat. Some saw bank cormorants with the usual smaller Cape cormorants, and there was a pair of mating black oystercatchers.



From the boat trip: Cape fur seals (CD) and a pair of black oystercatchers (HC)

At Hout Bay Coffee, several of us tried Geoff's favourite of Ethiopian yirgacheffe flat white, and very good it was too. David nipped into the Mainstream Shopping Centre for various purchases. We then drove to Cape Town, dropping Jim and Stuart at the art gallery and museum, and David, Jill and Keith at the V&A Waterfront to browse, shop and take a spin on a big wheel.

David writes: "The Waterfront was a busy modernisation of the old wharfside district, with the typical chain stores alongside more boutique arcades, places to eat overlooking the harbour and plenty of souvenir shopping potential amid miscellaneous crafts and curios from South Africa and all over the continent. The Cape Wheel offered good aerial views over the downtown, out to Robben Island one way and Table Mountain the other, taking four complete spins over quarter of an hour or so. Wherever we went we were followed by the sounds of a group of local singers and musicians who played enthusiastically and enjoyably at various locations."

That left four of us to carry on to the marshes of Rietvlei Nature Reserve, overlooked by Table Mountain. The lagoons had white pelicans, flamingos of two species (greater and lesser), glossy ibises, African spoonbills, hundreds of red-knobbed coots, black-winged stilts and various herons, including yellow-billed egret. Nesting underneath both hides were white-throated swallows. The most numerous small bird was the sparky Levaillant's cisticola, and others included red bishops and two weaver species. There was a chilly breeze over the water around the two hides but much warmer as we made our way back through the vegetated dunes. In an open bush a pin-tailed whydah sat in good view, tail and all; two black-shouldered kites hovered over open areas and two African fish eagles drifted through. Butterflies were silver-bottom browns and other notable insects were scores of syntamid moths called the heady maiden *Amata carbera* (or possibly the very similar *A. alicia*).



Looking over Rietvlei Nature Reserve (GC)

The Cape Town contingent was safely gathered at the rendezvous point outside the V&A Hotel at 4:30 and we returned to base. Our evening meal was at the Dune Restaurant, close to where we'd visited the beach on the first day.

13 October – West Coast National Park

It's a long drive through Cape Town, past Rietvlei Nature Reserve (where there were lots of flamingos, several black-shouldered kites and an African goshawk that flew parallel with the minibus) then north up the coast, the last stretch though many miles of *strandveldt* – vegetated coastal dunes. It was 10:45 when we reached the West Coast National Park's entrance gate and loos. From then on it was a day packed with activity and interesting sightings. In bushes by the entrance were the first of many big caterpillars. Most were large, hairy, lappet-moth types, but there was also another huge individual with iridescent yellow and turquoise spots between strong red-brown stripes, destined to be a pine emperor moth.

A little farther on, Geoff was alert to a delicate antelope in the bush, a male steenbok, little bigger than a muntjac. From the smallest to the biggest: the next mammals were three elands with magnificent horns and prominent dewlaps, and ostriches again. We were soon by a freshwater wetland with a hide, which turned into a social occasion, meeting old friends. Gwyn and Audrey Williams from the RSPB were with another birdwatching tour group. Brian Valderwalk was birding with a couple of clients: Brian was co-leader when my father and I were previously in South Africa, in 2009, in the Garden Route. Bird-wise the wetland had many colourful small birds: Cape and southern masked weavers, yellow-rumped widows, yellow canaries and three Namaqua doves, to name a few. White-throated swallows were nesting inside the hide, carefully built with a permanent gap over the door so that they can get in and out when the viewing flaps are shut. On the water was a group of African ruddy shelducks, Cape shoveler and little grebe; an African marsh harrier hunted over the *typha* beds. There was also drama overhead as a yellow-billed kite hassled a rock kestrel, with a black-shouldered kite joining the melee to mob the kite.



From the West Coast National Park: Silver arrowhead butterfly; white-throated swallow with a nest in the hide; and a caterpillar of the pine emperor moth (HC)

Moving on, a different harrier hunted over the scrub, the striking-looking black and white of a black harrier. The picnic tables by the National Park's main building were being used so we drove on, pausing to watch southern black koorhaan (a bustard), the second of what Geoff had suggested were our target species, the first being the black harrier. Lunch was at a hilltop viewpoint over the extensive Langebaan coastal lagoon. Growing here were the knee-high white spikes of a chinchinchee, the star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum thyrsoides*, and a charming little iris *Babiana tubiflora*. A colourful find was lunate ladybird and there were repeat sightings of several bird of prey species.



Terns and two white-fronted plovers on the shore of Langebaan lagoon, West Coast National Park (HC)

Our final extended stop was for the boardwalk and hide at the vast Langebaan lagoon. There was nice burst of butterflies on daisies, namely silver arrowhead, dark opal and sand-dune opal. From the hide – this one also had nesting white-throated swallows – was a terrific selection of coastal birds. Alongside a group of black oystercatchers was a line-up of terns. Most were common terns, there was swift tern too and a Caspian tern dwarfed the adjacent little tern. Other waders here were white-fronted plovers, a whimbrel and a grey plover. On a drying-up lagoon behind us there were several

Kittlitz's plovers alongside ringed plovers. There was a group of greenshanks and a little searching revealed curlew sandpipers and little stints. Looking left from the hide, there was a large group of lesser flamingos; to the right a party of African spoonbills dropped in. It was a tough place to leave – even more so as we had good views of a male Cape sparrow on leaving. We paused briefly to look at the patterns on the road made by an ostrich and its fanned feathers, then at the entrance/loos where we saw our first karoo scrub-robin alongside a couple of Cape bulbuls.

There was a bit of rain on the return journey, but that changed to some dramatic clouds over Table Mountain as we moved south. We watched the sun set over the ocean from the Col'Cacchio Pizzeria in Camps Bay.

14 October – Rondevlei bird reserve and Strandfontein



Cape dwarf chameleon, about 6" long, half of which is the tail (HC)

After dropping Jill and Keith in Cape Town, the rest of us carried on to Rondevlei bird reserve. Over the car park there was a jackal buzzard and right by the centre were several Cape dwarf chameleons: the man there suggested that close to where there were people they were safer from predators such as mongooses, and lights at night attracting insects may play a part.

We looked out over the wetland from a tower hide from where we all saw a small grey mongoose walking on one of the paths by a building. We dipped in and out of the six hides in all of which, near the water, there was a chilly breeze. The hides are connected by good paths, strewn over which in several places was hippopotamus dung, and though we saw footprints we didn't see the reintroduced mammals. The open water had huge numbers of red-

knobbed coots, several duck species, flamingos, pelicans and various herons and ibises. Little swift, greater striped swallow and brown-throated martin flew around. One of the reserve's staff pointed out a poisonous boomslang snake in the bamboo roof of one hide. Jim and Malcolm found a delightful arum lily frog nestling in the curl of an arum lily leaf. We took a short look at the diorama and stuffed birds in the museum. During our picnic lunch on the tables at the centre a fiscal flycatcher kept us company, and Helen and David found more chameleons in the bushes by the loo. As we left, an African fish eagle called and flew over us.

It was a short drive to the extensive water purification lagoons at Strandfontein, which was mostly stop-start birdwatching using the minibus as a mobile hide as there were huge numbers of birds, often very close. Greater flamingos were in thousands and there were many hundreds of sacred ibises, which were also with gulls feeding on the adjacent rubbish tip. There were several purple swamp-hens, mostly on vast sheets of water hyacinth, and a black crane walked in the open at one point. Black-necked grebes in various plumages swam with little grebes and we found the first three-banded plover for the holiday. Bigger waders were more obvious: avocets, greenshanks, blacksmith lapwings and scores of black-winged stilts. Particularly notable among the wildfowl were maccoa ducks (a stiff-tail) and spur-winged geese.



Flamingos, pelicans, ibises and more at Strandfontein (CD)

Meanwhile Jill and Keith had been in Cape Town, visiting the acclaimed aquarium and enjoying a boat trip, from which they saw a sunfish and dolphins.

Geoff's children were in a school play so he dropped us at Papino's restaurant before joining his family, returning to collect us later.

15 October – the winelands

African goshawks were displaying over Tarragona Lodge just before breakfast, one low over the pine trees and one much higher. This involved an unbirdlike 'chip' call, lots of soaring then a powerful dive out of sight.

The drive towards Stellenbosch was quite a change of scene, and we parked in this pretty university town – by a very tame red-eyed dove nesting in a small street tree – and made a rendezvous at the Java café. Most of us shopped for souvenirs or looked in galleries for an hour or so, and I also walked to a riverside where I watched a party of sweet waxbills and noted both grey squirrel (introduced) and a small grey mongoose.

We then drove on to Tokara Winery and Olive Shed where there was an enjoyable opportunity to taste wines or olive oils and to make purchases. And what a magnificent setting it was, too. Lunch was at Le Pommier, a winelands equivalent of a gastro-pub, though there was an odd conclusion to the excellent food when the smell of domestos-style cleaning spread from the kitchen area just before we left. The mountain backdrop to the vineyards and fruit trees was very beautiful, though that couldn't be said for much of the rather long drive after lunch, all around the more industrial/commercial town of Paarl, partly on account of the wetland Paarl Bird Reserve being unexpectedly shut on week days due to recent security issues.

Plan B was to proceed to Paarl Mountain Reserve. We strolled through the pretty, formal gardens grading up the hillside into natural fynbos (pronounced *faynbos*) vegetation. Orange *Satyrium coriifolium* orchids were especially prominent plus the scented *Satyrium odorum* among the many proteas. There were wonderful views of a bright male malachite sunbird and the less obvious female, plus very good views of a bar-throated apalis. More obscure was the distinctly underwhelming call of protea seed-eater, but it didn't show. Geoff warned Jim and me to keep our distance from a bombardier beetle that scurried over the path and up a bank as it has a toxic spray it can shoot from its abdomen. I managed to get a photo and remain unscathed. Though sunny it seemed that it was too chilly for dragonflies or damselflies to show, but with some thorough searching at the pond by the car park we found a male Tropical Bluetail. A puzzling feature was a patch of red under the thorax but close examination of photos showed that the colouration was a patch of parasitic mites. We were running quite late so we went straight to dinner, a return visit to Ragafellows restaurant in Hout Bay.

16 October – transfer to Hermanus, including Harold Porter Gardens

We packed ready to leave Tarragona Lodge, with hugs for manager Carole Ann and cook Delia (she hadn't heard of *the* cook Delia, incidentally) before leaving. The journey took us along the motorway and past built-up areas around False Bay before going into attractive coastal country, here and there sprinkled with summer homes, including where we stopped at Rooi Els. This was to walk a short way along the coast to

search for the Cape rockjumper, which was more successful than we dared hoped with close views of a pair of this unusual endemic bird around some large rocks close to the path. Before that we'd also seen Cape rock thrush, including one close on a wire, had good views of two jackal buzzards and met some other birdwatchers, all in glorious sunshine.



Cape rockjumper at Rooi Els (CD) and orange-breasted sunbird at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens (HC)

Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, where we had lunch outside, was just 10 minutes away. Quick to come to the table for scraps were Cape robin-chats. One of several iron-stained ponds had frogs and bright red dragonflies that proved to be Broad Scarlets. The gardens were beautiful, like a little Kirstenbosch, with lots of wildlife, the most dramatic being a close encounter with a boomslang snake – loud and agitated bird alarm calls from one of the island beds alerted us to its presence, and we had good views of it on the ground and twice climbing shrubs, presumably searching for bird nests. A Cape robin-chat was especially energetic in chasing the snake, making repeated dives at the reptile. Close by there were good views of both male and female orange-breasted sunbirds and a sugarbird fed on the nectar of proteas. Up the hill, the gardens turned to woodland adjacent to natural fynbos, and here we saw African black duck on the river and black saw-wing swallows up with the rock martins and greater striped swallows. There were two migrant spotted flycatchers in the garden as we went down the hill through the gardens and back to the bus.



Cape robin-chat mobs a boomslang (GC).

Entering Hermanus we had a quick drive around the town, noting one whale close to shore, and then to our guesthouse in the leafy suburbs. It wasn't the smoothest of welcomes at the Baleens Hotel: they'd failed to distinguish between twin and double rooms, so for some of us that meant separating double beds and remaking them as twins. The decor of African art and sculpture was an immediately striking feature, and a view from the higher rooms over sandy beaches to the sea and towards the adjacent estuary a great bonus.

Later we drove the five kilometres into town, where there was a tame rock hyrax by where we parked. Dinner was at Ocean Basket, which had very good food (so long as you like seafood) but difficult acoustics. To our surprise – though not completely so, as the salads were Greek salads – the restaurant staff performed a Zorba the Greek dance, complete with fire and plate-smashing. We returned to Baleens Hotel and several played table tennis, pool or table football in the hotel's games room.

17 October – Hermanus and Fernkloof



Whale-watching (HC)

After breakfast at Baleens, we spent a 'free morning' in Hermanus. Inevitably this involved some shopping and coffee, but mostly for all of us it meant walking along the seafront and looking for, or at, whales. The best of these were around midday when two southern right whales, probably a mother and calf, were close to shore and the bigger one was regularly breaching. There was quite a crowd of appreciative onlookers. Elsewhere there were gulls, including our first definite grey-headed gulls, and terns, notably Sandwich and swift. The coastal path had an easy walk with information about the wildlife and vegetation plus incredibly tame rock hyraxes. We split up after our 12:30 rendezvous, leaving three behind to continue enjoying Hermanus, and the rest of us took a very short drive to Fernkloof nature reserve where we ate our picnics. For the now quite hot afternoon, we walked through the fynbos vegetation at Fernkloof. Almost immediately there was an orange-breasted sunbird and amazing views of a very tame sugarbird. But the fine show of fynbos flowers was the main attraction. Listing these was helped by a display of labelled, picked flowers behind a door kept locked to keep out the local baboons (which didn't show).



Lachenalia peersii (CD)

Aristea capitata
Drosera cistiflora – sundew
Lachenalia peersii – a hyacinth that looks rather like a grape hyacinth
Erica imbricata – salt and pepper heather
Erica viscaria subsp. *macrosepala*
Crassula fascicularis
Pelargonium capitatum
Pelargonium cucullatum 'wilde malva'³ or tree geranium
China flower *Adenandra uniflora*
Berlizia lanuginosa
Leucospermum prostratum
Leucospermum cordifolium
Asteraceae (daisies)
Edmondia pinifolia – 'pink everlasting' though actually lemon-yellow
Phaenocoma prolifera – the red-flowered *rooisewejaartjie*
Syncarpha vestita

We walked as far as a waterfall and then completed a loop. Some invertebrate highlights included a huge carpenter bee, a large bee-fly feeding on *Pelargonium cucullatum* and two dragonfly species, Red-veined Darter (Nomad) and Two-striped Skimmer – the latter a male, which was welcome as we had seen a female on the first day of the holiday more than a week ago.

After collecting the others we had a quiet time back at base, during which Jim and I took the very short walk to the adjacent estuary. In the meantime the rugby world cup quarter-final had started, and there was a good crowd in the TV lounge who saw South Africa get a narrow victory over Wales, to the disappointment of our own Welsh contingent of David and Stuart. Dinner was at the Cattle Baron in Hermanus.

18 October – Cape Agulhas

The first stop heading east was for a group of 12 blue cranes, South Africa's national bird, which grew to 14 as we watched them graze then interact, with some display and low-key dancing. Later we saw a bigger flock farther from the road, and ones and twos elsewhere. Beyond the cranes there was a crowned lapwing and on the other side of the road Helen found a Denham's bustard, then two more. There was also a black-shouldered kite and a distant thick-billed lark.

Our arrival at 11 o'clock at the shipwreck museum in Bredasdorp was perfectly timed for Sunday opening. The collection of curios was a reminder of the hazards of navigation around the southern tip of Africa over the years, including HMS Birkenhead where the idea of saving women and children first was originally applied. There was also an old Dennis fire engine like the one in the children's TV programme Trumpton, horse-drawn hearses and various other odds and ends, which made a diverting but brief break (and loo stop.) Continuing on, we passed wet areas, including a channel with an African spoonbill alongside a grey heron with several red bishops in the reeds, then into limestone fynbos. That meant different protea species, albeit with the overall structure of the scrub not so very different. In one area, where we stopped, there were scores of the pinky-red orchid *Satyrium carneum*.

³ We learned that the malva cake on some pudding lists is not made with a mallow – *Malvaceae* – but with wild pelargonium, known in Afrikaans as *wilde malva*.



Satyrion carneum on limestone fynbos; Cape Agulhas (HC)

Lunch was at Cape Agulhas, opposite a wreck. I expected the southernmost point of Africa to be bracing, but actually there was a gentle, warm wind today. Well offshore we found two humpback whales breaching, showing pale undersides to tails and flippers and a blow going straight up. Geoff took the bus back to the lighthouse while the rest of us walked along the coast. The low-growing flowers were pretty, notably sheets of the

everlasting *Syncarpha gnaphaloides*. Birds included white-fronted and Kittlitz's plovers and I spent a while watching bokmakieries and yellow canaries. After the inevitable group photo at the plinth marking the Cape, we scanned a group of terns, mostly royal terns with some Sandwich and common terns but none of the hoped for damara tern. There was also a new lizard species: the spiny girdled lizard.

A break for air on the return journey included our first capped wheatear and African stonechat, and on the way into Hermanus, to eat at Burgundy restaurant, we paused by a lawn on which in the half-light were four spotted thick-knees, two adults and two chicks.

19 October – Overberg area to Elim

The spotted thick-knees were there again this morning, curiously among heath sorrel, much as stone-curlews might be at Weeting Heath in Norfolk. We were on our way for David to see a doctor, an appointment rapidly arranged by the hotel's proprietor Nato, and Geoff, establishing that David had an infection and his nausea was more than sunstroke. The rest of us watched whales and birds in central Hermanus until the return from the doctor and pharmacist. We left David to rest at the hotel and set out.

Just down the road, there was a bright green Klaas's cuckoo, and we briefly overlooked the estuary at Prawn Flats where there were flamingos and other previously seen birds, but we didn't stay. We headed towards Elim, around which there is a subtly distinctive habitat called Elim dwarf fynbos. Roadside stops including a pale chanting goshawk on a telegraph pole with a snake – a *rhombe skAAPsteeker*. A small wetland was alive with red bishops and dragonflies in blue (Two-striped Skimmer) and red (Red-veined Darter). Elsewhere there were the very local Bot River protea, two pipit species and five long-eared grey rheboks, one of which was a lamb.



Klaas's cuckoo (HC); Napier Farmstead and Restaurant; *Watsonia coccinea* (CD)

Elim itself is a distinctive town where the buildings of the Moravian community are mostly the same simple style with roofs thatched with restios. However nowhere was open for lunch, so we needed a rather unwelcome drive along an unmade road to Napier, passing long-horned *nguni* cattle near to Elim. But the journey was well worth it: the Napier Farmstead and Restaurant was a delight with a menu including homemade butternut squash soup, pies and quiche, and with various local speciality foods for sale. After that we took a longer but metalled road back to Elim, passing and giving a chance to scan several roadside wetlands. Highlights here included two very close blue cranes, white-backed ducks, a harrier hawk and adjacent three-banded and Kittlitz's plover.

In the perfect light of late afternoon we walked into a recently burnt patch of fynbos. Notable flowers here were the woolly *Lanaria lanata*, *Wachendorfia paniculata*, yellow *Bobartia orientalis*, red *Watsonia coccinea* and *Erica cerinthoides*, orange *Satyrion coriifolium* and a mauve milkwort *Polygala* species, perhaps *bracteolata*. Our evening meal was at the Col'Cacchio Pizzeria, helped by knowing our way round the menu from our visit to the same chain in Camps Bay.

20 October – Harold Porter botanical gardens

Looking up outside the hotel there were four species of swifts, namely the usual little swifts plus alpine, white-rumped and African black swifts. We drove west today: the first stop was at the Rooisand bird hide on the marshes at the mouth of the Bot River, where on this now hot day there was a selection of waders, herons and ducks, plus an African marsh harrier, Blue Emperor dragonfly and a red-capped lark with a gloriously chestnut crown and shoulders. After a brief pharmacy stop we moved to Stony Point in Betty's Bay Marine Protected Area. This has one of the three mainland colonies of African penguins, complete with a slipway where penguins have priority over boats. It was much less crowded and commercial than Boulders beach, though still with a good walkway (*plankpod* in Afrikaans) overlooking both penguins and a busy, low-rise cormorant colony. The latter is remarkable for having four species of cormorants, of which Cape cormorant was the commonest, followed by white-necked, but also several larger bank cormorants that were easy to pick out by the absence of yellow face patches (Cape cormorant) or white necks/bellies (white-necked cormorant) but also by their angular heads. The fourth, crested cormorant, took some finding, but Geoff spotted one that came off the sea and we could complete the set.

Harold Porter botanical gardens was just across the road and having been so well-liked as a stop on the way to Hermanus it was a pleasure to return, starting with lunch. In the meantime we'd been checking the wildlife on the adjacent pond. The frogs here were clicking stream frogs and remarkably there were three species of red dragonflies, perched alongside each other: Red-veined Darter, Broad Scarlet and the smallest of the three was a new species, Red-veined Dropwing. It may have been partly as it was a new discovery, but the red wings and deep blood-red colour of the body of the dropwing made it arguably the most striking of the group. Two-banded Skimmer and (on another pond) a mystery sprite damselfly made this the best place and day for odonata of the holiday. From photos taken today and on the previous visit on 16 October, the best fit for the ID seems to be a male Palmiet Sprite and a blue form female Slate Sprite. An African goshawk dashed through, with its ID confirmed when Stuart found it perched in a tree in the nursery.

It was a chance to recap on many birds seen in the past fortnight, including a group of at least seven Cape sugarbirds, several saw-wing swallows, an African rock thrush on a wire and a family party of orange-breasted sunbirds. Up on the hill beyond the gardens we failed to find the Victorin's warbler that was singing very close to us. Descending again, those speedy enough to be at the bridge saw a female African paradise flycatcher and a hunting giant kingfisher.

Our final meal at Harbour Rock included balloons, fizz and chocolate brownies with a candle in honour of Keith's birthday. We also collected holiday highlights (see below) and many more were quoted after the notebook was closed. Returning to base, Geoff picked out with the minibus headlights a spotted thick-knee on the lawn opposite the hotel.

21/22 October – return to Cape Town and home

Magdalena at Baleens Hotel kindly printed out boarding passes for us, though having checked in online we could have collected them at the airport. We walked a new (for us) short stretch of the coastal path at Hermanus and watched whales and other wildlife for a while, such as white-rumped swifts nesting in one of the shore-side buildings, and a group of Cape sugarbirds. After about an hour's drive, an early lunch was at Houw Hoek farm stall, there was a brief view down to False Bay from Sir Lowry's Pass (450m) then on to the airport and farewells to Geoff. This time we were able to check through the luggage and it (and us) travelled without further hitch via Johannesburg and the overnight flight back to Heathrow.

Holiday highlights, as nominated during the final evening.

- David: carpenter bees; lizards; stick insect; spotted eagle owls; Delia's breakfasts at Tarragona Lodge.
Jim: Cape robin-chats mobbing the snake at Harold Porter gardens; pelican in flight; the kite harrying a kestrel then hassled by a black-winged kite.
Keith: mating ostriches; Klaas's cuckoo; hovering jackal buzzard.
Jill: sunfish on the boat trip in Cape Town; the picnic spot at Seeberg in the West Coast National Park.
John: thousands of fur seals; "Getting Helen into my bedroom!"
Stuart: proteas, with their brightly coloured birds; Wachendorfias.
Helen: caterpillars of lappet and pine emperor moths; Klaas's cuckoo; Cape mountain zebras; chameleons.
Malcolm: snake and the robin-chats; two white-fronted swallows in the hide with us; the green Klaas's cuckoo; giant kingfisher – all of these in a wonderful landscape.
Chris: Red-veined Dropwing dragonfly; birds equal between the rockjumper (unusual), Cape sugarbirds (a very close encounter) and hadeda ibises (everywhere); the tour of the Cape Peninsula on our first day when everything was new and exciting.
Geoff: chameleon corner at Rondevlei; rockjumpers; the close blue crane.

WILDLIFE LISTS

MAMMALS

Chacma baboon, Cape Point	Dune molerat – hills
Bontebok, Cape Point	Small grey mongoose, Rondevlei, Stellenbosch
Grey rhebok, Elim	Striped mouse
Steenbok, West Coast NP	Cape fur seal, Hout Bay, Stony Point
Rock hyrax (dassie) Table Mountain, Hermanus	Grey squirrel, Kirstenbosch, Stellenbosch
Eland, West Coast NP	Southern right whale, Simonstown, daily at Hermanus
Cape golden mole – runnels	Humpback whale, Cape Agulhas
Cape molerat – hills	Dolphin sp., Cape Town

REPTILES

Southern rock agama, Table Mountain and several other places	Black girdled lizard, Cape Point and several other places
Boomslang (tree snake), Rondevlei, Harold Porter gardens	Karoo girdled lizard, West Coast NP
Cape dwarf chameleon, Rondevlei	Spiny (=Cape?) girdled lizard, Cape Agulhas
Marbled leaf-toed gecko, Tarragona Lodge	Cape skink, Cape Point, West Coast NP
Cape crag lizard, Table Mountain	Western three-striped skink, Simonstown

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cordylus> lists 47 species of “spiny lizards from Africa, collectively called girdle-tailed or girdled lizards.” Girdle refers to rings of scales on the tail.

AMPHIBIANS

Cape chirping frog, heard, Harold Porter gardens	Stream clicking frog, Harold Porter gardens
Cape river frog, Stellenbosch	Arum lily frog, Rondevlei

BUTTERFLIES

Cape spring widow	Sand-dune widow	Silver-bottom brown	Boland brown
Silver arrowhead	Garden acraea	Painted lady	Cabbage white (=large white)
Common dotter border	Citrus swallowtail	Geranium bronze	Dark opal
Sand dune opal			

MOTHS

Heady maiden, a syntomid moth	Pine emperor, caterpillar	Cape lappet moth, caterpillar
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ODONATA

Tropical bluetail <i>Ishnura senegalensis</i>	Broad Scarlet <i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>
Slate Sprite <i>Pseudagrion salisburyense</i> female (Harold Porter both visits) and/or Palmiet Sprite <i>Pseudagrion furcigerum</i> (Harold Porter 2 nd visit)	Two-striped Skimmer <i>Orthemtrum caffrum</i>
Blue Emperor <i>Anax imperator</i>	Red-veined Dropwing <i>Trithemis arteriosa</i>
Red-veined Darter (=Nomad) <i>Sympetrum fonscolombi</i>	

OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

Bombardier beetle <i>Brachinus</i> sp.	Carpenter bee <i>Xylocopa caffra</i> , and other carpenter bees <i>Xylocopa</i> sp.
Lunate ladybird <i>Cheilomenes lunata</i>	Thunberg's stick insect <i>Macynia labiata</i>
Protea chafer sp.	Koppie foam grasshopper <i>Dictyophorus spumans</i>
CMR bean beetle <i>Mylabris oculata</i> , a blister beetle. CMR refers to the similarity of colours to the uniform of the Cape Mountain Rifle Corps	A hairy field spider <i>Neoscona</i> sp. at Silvermine
A long-nosed bee fly, possibly meganosed fly <i>Moegistorhynchus longirostris</i>	



Arum lily frog (CD); Southern rock agama (HC); lunate ladybird (CD)

BIRDS

Ostrich	wild birds at Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, farmed or feral birds elsewhere.
African Penguin	big colonies at Boulders and Stony Point.
Great crested grebe	seen on three days.
Black-necked grebe	several on the lagoons at Strandfontein.
Little grebe	seen on three days.
Great white pelican	seen on three days, at Rietvlei and Strandfontein.
Cape gannet	offshore on two days, first seen from Cape Point.
White-breasted cormorant	widespread on inland wetlands, estuaries and the coast.
Cape cormorant	the commonest cormorant on the coast, seen on 10 days. Close views of nesting birds at Cape Point and Stony Point.
Bank cormorant	on the island in Hout Bay but best seen at Stony Point.
Reed (long-tailed) cormorant	on most inland freshwater wetlands, also at Hout Bay on our first day.
Crowned cormorant	2 at Stony Point.
African darter	seen on four days, in small numbers.
Grey heron	widespread, seen on seven days.
Black-headed heron	seen on five days, and good views on the coast at Hermanus.
Purple heron	Rietvlei and Rondevlei.
Little egret	recorded on five days.
Yellow-billed egret	recorded on three days.
Cattle egret	recorded on five days.
White stork	just one, on a wetland on route to Cape Agulhas.
African sacred ibis	seen almost every day, including from our hotels. Several hundred with gulls at the rubbish tip next to Strandfontein.
Glossy ibis	recorded on two days, Rietvlei and Rondevlei.
Hadeda ibis	seen every day, and a great feature of lawns, the hotel roof at Tarrogonia Lodge and in suburban areas.
African spoonbill	recorded at various wetlands on five days.
Greater flamingo	recorded at various wetlands six days, including the estuary by Baleens Hotel.
Lesser flamingo	at three freshwater wetlands in the Cape part of the holiday.
White-backed duck	on a wetland on route to Cape Agulhas, 19/10.
Egyptian goose	seen almost every day, including a family at Tarrogonia Lodge.
South African shelduck	on two days in the Cape part of the holiday.
Yellow-billed duck	the most widespread duck species, seen on eight days.
African duck	only seen on and over the river at Harold Porter botanical gardens, 16/10 and 20/10.
Cape teal	seen on three days.
Red-billed teal	seen on three days.
Cape shoveler	seen on five days, including well-grown young.
Southern pochard	Rondevlei / Strandfontein
Spur-winged goose	at Strandfontein then on three days out of Hermanus.
Maccoa duck	at Strandfontein only.
Yellow-billed kite	on six days in a range of places.
Black-shouldered kite	our first were at Rietvlei Nature Reserve, then on four subsequent days.
African fish eagle	2 overhead at Rietvlei 12/10 and 1 at Rondevlei on 14/10.
Steppe buzzard	sightings of this palearctic migrant on seven days.
Jackal buzzard	seen five days, including at Rooi Els near the rockjumpers.
African goshawk	seen four days, inc. flying parallel to the minibus N of Cape Town, displaying over Tarrogonia Lodge & dashing through then perching at Harold Porter gardens on 20/10.
Southern pale chanting goshawk	memorable view perched on a telegraph pole with a snake near Elim, 19/10.
African marsh harrier	first seen at the W Coast National Park, then two other days.
Black harrier	good views of a flying bird at W Coast National Park.
Harrier hawk	a flying bird near Elim, 19/10.
Peregrine	2 around Table Mountain 11/10, also seen on 16/10.
Rock kestrel	seen fairly regularly, recorded on seven days.
Cape francolin (spurfowl)	daily, including in gardens and very tame at Kirstenbosch.
Common quail	heard near Elim, 19/10.
Helmeted guineafowl	daily, including very tame birds at Kirstenbosch.
Blue crane	seen on two days out of Hermanus, 18/10 and 19/10, in pairs and small groups.
Black crane	1 at Strandfontein on 14/10.
Purple swamp-hen	at Rietvlei Nature Reserve, 12/10 and at Strandfontein on 14/10.
Common moorhen	seen on four days.
Red-knobbed coot	common on freshwater wetlands.
Denham's bustard	some excellent views on two days out of Hermanus, 18/10 and 19/10.
Southern black koorhaan	at the W Coast National Park on 13/10.
African black oystercatcher	at almost all coastal stops.
Ringed plover	1 at the W Coast National Park on 13/10.
White-fronted plover	W Coast National Park on 13/10, at Cape Agulhas 18/10 and near Elim, 19/10.
Kittlitz's plover	first seen at the W Coast National Park on 13/10 and on four subsequent days.

Three-banded plover	W Coast National Park on 13/10 and near Elim, 19/10.
Grey plover	W Coast National Park on 13/10 and the estuary by Baleens Hotel.
Crowned lapwing	on two days out of Hermanus.
Blacksmith lapwing	the most widespread wader, on various wetlands and sports fields.
Ruddy turnstone	1 at W Coast National Park on 13/10.
Greenshank	W Coast National Park, Strandfontein and the estuary by Baleens Hotel.
Curlew sandpiper	3 at W Coast National Park on 13/10.
Little stint	c.3 at W Coast National Park on 13/10.
Whimbrel	1 at W Coast National Park on 13/10, also on the estuary by Baleens Hotel.
Pied avocet	seen on three days, the biggest flocks at Strandfontein.
Black-winged stilt	seen on five days, the biggest flocks at Strandfontein.
Spotted thick-knee	seen on three successive days in suburban Hermanus.
Water thick-knee (Water dikkop)	rather oystercatcher-like call heard after dark from Baleens Hotel.
Kelp gull	almost daily.
Grey-headed gull	the only convincing sightings were at Hermanus.
Hartlaub's gull	the common small gull of the coast, seen almost daily.
Caspian tern	seen on five days, including W Coast National Park.
Swift tern	fairly common on the coast, including at Hermanus.
Sandwich tern	seen on four days, all coastal locations in the Hermanus part of the holiday.
Common tern	seen on six days, including on the rocks at Hermanus and many hundreds on the estuary by Baleens Hotel.
Little tern	at W Coast National Park only, dwarfed by the adjacent Caspian tern.
Whiskered tern	distant sightings at W Coast NP and Rondevlei days.
White-winged tern	seen by Geoff at Rooisand on 20/10, but didn't reappear.
Rock dove	feral pigeons only, on six days.
Speckled pigeon	seen daily, including several quite tame birds.
African olive-pigeon	Kirstenbosch on 10/10 only.
Red-eyed dove	seen almost daily, including around the hotels.
African turtle-dove	seen and heard regularly especially during the later days of the holiday.
Laughing dove	though seen on six days, rather scarce.
Namaqua dove	3 at W Coast NP on 13/10.
Klaas's cuckoo	brilliant views close to Baleens Hotel on 19/10.
Spotted eagle-owl	two close, roosting birds in Kirstenbosch, 10/10.
African swift	one of four swift species above Baleens Hotel on 20/10.
White-rumped swift	one of four swift species above Baleens Hotel on 20/10 and nesting in buildings on the seafront at Hermanus. Perhaps overlooked among little swifts elsewhere.
Little swift	the commonest swift, recorded on seven days.
Alpine swift	one of four swift species above Baleens Hotel on 20/10.
Speckled mousebird	seen on four days, first noted at Rondevlei.
Pied kingfisher	on two days out of Hermanus.
Giant kingfisher	flew down river at Harold Porter botanical gardens on 20/10 and some saw it fishing there.
Malachite kingfisher	brief sightings on two days.
African hoopoe	heard only, including outside the Napier Farmstead & Restaurant.
Acacia pied barbet	heard by Geoff and a distant glimpse in the Elim area.
Red-capped lark	recorded on three days towards the end of the holiday, with good views at Rooisand.
Large-billed lark	distant bird on a post on 18/10.
White-throated swallow	nesting <u>under</u> hides at Rietvlei Nature Reserve and <u>in</u> both hides in W Coast NP.
Greater striped swallow	seen on the majority of days.
Rock martin	seen on most days, including at Johannesburg airport.
Brown-throated sand martin	seen on four days, always at wetlands.
Black saw-wing	this elegant swallow was noted on three days, best seen on the two visits to Harold Porter botanical gardens.
Fork-tailed drongo	recorded on five days, including outside Baleens Hotel.
Cape crow	none until the end of the holiday, when seen on 18/10 and 19/10.
Pied crow	seen every day except one until 17/10.
White-necked raven	seen almost every day.
Cape bulbul	seen almost every day, including at both hotels.
Sombre greenbul	only seen on 10/10 at Kirstenbosch, heard on the transfer day.
Olive thrush	seen on seven days, including a fairly tame bird at Harold Porter botanical gardens.
Karoo thrush	recently 'split' from Olive thrush, Geoff noted one at Harold Porter botanical gardens.
Cape rock-thrush	at Rooi Els on 16/10 and Harold Porter botanical gardens on 20/10.
Capped wheatear	on the return journey from Cape Agulhas on 18/10.
Familiar chat	at Rooi Els on 16/10.
African stonechat	on 18/10 and 19/10 during trips from Hermanus.
Cape robin-chat	almost every day, including at the hotels, around the lunch tables at Harold Porter botanical gardens and 1 mobbing a boomslang snake there on 16/10.
Rockjumper	outstanding views at Rooi Els, 16/10.
Karoo scrub-robin	by the exit gate to the W Coast NP, 13/10.
Lesser swamp-warbler	heard on five days at various wetlands, but not seen properly.
Little rush-warbler	heard on three days at various wetlands, but not seen properly.
Victorin's warbler	heard close by but not seen at Harold Porter botanical gardens on 20/10.
Bar-throated apalis	seen on three days, spread through the fortnight.
Cape grassbird	seen on the first full day at Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve and three later dates.

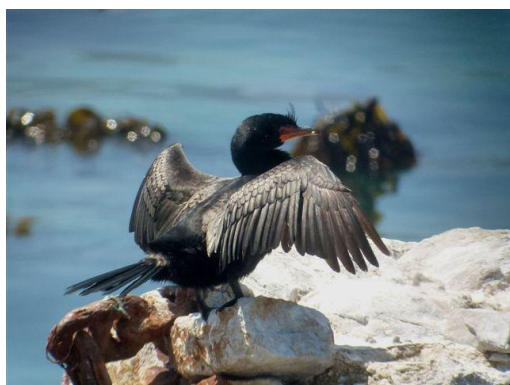
Levaillant's cisticola	very much in evidence at Rietvlei Nature Reserve on 12/10, and on three other days.
Karoo prinia	widespread and seen almost daily.
Spotted flycatcher	2 of these winter visitors from Europe at Harold Porter botanical gardens on 16/10.
Dusky flycatcher	seen on 9/10 and 10/10, especially at Kirstenbosch.
Fiscal flycatcher	on eight days, including daily from Baleens Hotel.
African paradise-flycatcher	at Harold Porter botanical gardens on 20/10.
Cape wagtail	seen many times every day.
African pipit	on the final two days, 19/10 and 20/10, best seen at Rooisand.
Long-billed pipit	same as African pipit, only on the final two days, 19/10 and 20/10, best seen at Rooisand.
Cape (orange-throated) longclaw	on 12/10 and 14/10.
Common fiscal	seen on ten days, often on roadside wires.
Southern boubou	only in the first half of the holiday, but including a bird on the verandas at Tarragona Lodge.
Bokmakerie	though heard at W Coast NP and from Baleens Hotel, only seen well by Chris, a pair at Cape Agulhas.
Eurasian starling	on the arrival day, then not for three days, then every day thereafter.
Pied starling	it wasn't until the day around Elim on 19/10 that we had good views.
Red-winged starling	every day and common.
Cape sugarbird	many fine views, often feeding on proteas, on several days.
Malachite sunbird	fine views at Paarl Mountain Reserve on 15/10 and two subsequent days.
Orange-breasted sunbird	seen on five days, including a family group in Harold Porter botanical gardens on 20/10.
Southern double-collared sunbird	the commonest sunbird, including in the garden at Tarragona Lodge.
Cape white-eye	seen most days.
House sparrow	daily around Baleens Hotel.
Cape sparrow	a spread of sighting on five days.
Cape weaver	recorded on four days and perhaps not noted on some others as it was fairly common.
Southern masked-weaver	recorded on three days.
Red bishop	often in little groups on wetlands, recorded on five days.
Yellow-rumped widow (yellow bishop)	also on five days, sometimes (like red bishop) mixed with other weavers.
Common waxbill	on five days, including at Kirstenbosch and near Baleens Hotel.
Swee waxbill	on four days, at Kirstenbosch, Stellenbosch and Harold Porter botanical gardens.
Pin-tailed whydah	seen well at Rietvlei Nature Reserve, 12/10.
Chaffinch	heard at Tarragona Lodge, 8/10.
Cape canary	seen almost every day.
Forest canary	Kirstenbosch, 10/10 and Harold Porter botanical gardens, 16/10.
Cape siskin	recorded on three days, again in botanical gardens.
Yellow canary	W Coast NP 13/10, Cape Agulhas 18/10 and Elim area, 19/10.
Protea seed-eater	heard, Paarl Mountain Reserve, 15/10.
Cape bunting	a remarkably tame bird at Cape Point on 9/10, W Coast NP 13/10, Rooi Els 16/10.



Cape sparrow (CD)



Helmeted guineafowl (CD)



Crested cormorant (CD)



Yellow-billed egret (CD)