

**CRANE'S CAPE TOURS &
TRAVEL**

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WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**South Africa: South-western Cape
and Garden Route
24 January – 8 February 2026**

Holiday participants

Sue and Peter Burge
Tim and Cheryl Hunt
Everard Daniel and Sarah (Flo) Harman
Ann Greenizan

John Coish
David Collins
Chris Durdin

Leaders

Geoff Crane and Darrin Baxter

Report by Chris Durdin. Photo-credits shown by initials.

Cover, top: Knysna turaco (DC).

Cover, bottom: angulate tortoise (ED), St George's lily (AG), garden commodore (CD).



Table Mountain, photo from a minibus window (CH).

We stayed at

In Hout Bay, for the Cape Town area: Hout Bay Manor houtbaymanor.com

La Plume at Oudtshoorn (2 nights) www.laplume.co.za/

Garden Route: 4 nights at Tsitsikamma Lodge riverhotels.com/hotels/tsitsikamma-lodge-spa/

Then Gaikou Lodge, Swellendam (1 night) and Evergreen Manor, Stellenbosch (1 night).

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 contributions this year of £40 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, plus an additional donation from Helen and Malcolm Crowder. This is a total of £600, about 13,250 rands, which is earmarked to go to the honorary rangers at the West Coast National Park for walkway and hide construction.



Through a minibus window: houses in Cape Town's Malay Quarter, and ostrich products for sale, Oudtshoorn. Right: the much-admired pink powderpuff *Calliandra brevipes* at Tsitsikamma Lodge.

Daily diary

Saturday/Sunday 24/25 January – London to Hout Bay

Eight of us on Norse Atlantic Airways arrived safely after the overnight flight from Gatwick, and we soon met Sue and Peter, who'd come from Heathrow on BA, and our guides Geoff and Darrin. We went to the car park, loaded the two minibuses and they drove us to Hout Bay Manor. We had an hour to settle into lovely rooms, then we met in the garden where we helped ourselves to sandwiches and other goodies provided by Geoff. There were red-winged starlings in the trees, a tame speckled pigeon on a water feature and a citrus swallowtail flew through the hotel's garden.

We'd passed Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens on the way to Hout Bay and we then took the short drive back here for our afternoon excursion. On a Sunday in warm, dry weather there were many people enjoying Kirstenbosch, and it was noticeable that many of the birds were clearly well-used to being around people. A sombre greenbul sang in the car park area ('Willie come out and fight ... scared' – the greenbul didn't show well) and Cape turtle doves – 'work harder' – inside Kirstenbosch, mostly out of sight though they did perch on rooftops at times. In almost the first flowerbed there were Cape spurfowls scratching around, untroubled by us, plus at first a female then a male southern double-collared sunbird, especially feeding on heather flowers. Soon after there was a partly hidden but again confiding orange-breasted sunbird. Overhead there were often black sawwings, barn swallows and, on one occasion, alpine swifts.

A striped mouse ran close to some people taking a picnic, and a second mammal was a Cape mongoose seen briefly as we walked along a suspended walkway. Of course there were any number of plants: cycads especially, ancient species and individually quite aged, now electronically chipped to guard against theft. Haded ibises fed among leaf litter, again very tame, or out on the grass. There were fork-tailed drongos, a family party of Egyptian geese, a harrier hawk overhead and, perhaps best of all, two lemon doves (formerly known as cinnamon doves) on a path near where people were beginning to gather for an open-air concert later this evening.

As we made our way back to the entrance we paused by a pond where a blue emperor was hawking. A few frogs were tricky to see well and there was a freshwater crab¹ eating algae. Two bronze mannikins were feeding in some vegetation just above the water, fanning tails as they balanced. Their range is shown as farther east than here, but Darrin explained that they were now established here from some escaped cage birds, and for us they were a write-in on checklists.

Our evening meal was at the fish restaurant Mariner's Wharf, on Hout Bay's waterfront, and it was delicious, be that yellowfish, kingklip, hake or something else. There were two species of gulls outside – Hartlaub's and kelp – and a common tern, then Jupiter in the sky as we left.



Hartlaub's gull (DC); bronze mannikin (DC).

Monday 26 January – Cape Peninsula National Park

We had breakfast at the hotel, then enjoyed an incredibly tame hadeda ibis feeding in the hotel garden. Our morning activities started with a packed boat trip from Hout Bay. We saw our first Cape fur seals in the harbour (so Peter and Geoff, who didn't come on the $\frac{3}{4}$ hour trip didn't miss them). We were soon at Duiker Island where hundreds more Cape fur seals gathered, including many pups: breeding here is a relatively

¹ Best guess is *Potamonautes perlatus*, the Cape river crab.

new development, said the voice on the boat's Tannoy. A group of cormorants was of two species: bank cormorants with smaller Cape cormorants.



Hout Bay boat trip: Cape fur seals, and two cormorant species, bank and Cape (CD).

Our day in the Cape Peninsula National Park had many stops, the first of which was a viewpoint on the Chapman's Peak drive. Here we saw rock kestrel, rock martin and white-necked ravens, and it was the first of many opportunities to browse, or ignore, roadside souvenirs. The road continued, hugging the rocky coast, built onto the granite substrate that underpins the peninsula's geology.

Our next stop was a beach, primarily to look at the flock of terns that had gathered: yellow-beaked swift terns distinctly larger than wintering Sandwich and common terns. Sacred ibises were common; there were African black oystercatchers on the beach and a Cape wagtail – the first of several of both species today.

Some close bonteboks, including a calf, were the cause of our next stop, by the road. There was also an ostrich: here an escape from captivity, Geoff advised.

Our coastal lunch stop followed a drive through an extensive area of fynbos. We started by over-viewing more coastal rocks and beach with the same tern and gull species, lots of sacred ibises and single ringed and Kittlitz's plovers. Ann found a common stick grasshopper, very similar in appearance to (and the same genus as) 'nosed' grasshopper in Europe. Lunch was help-yourself goodies from the back of Geoff's bus, as yesterday. In the scrub here a bokmakierie showed and called on occasions and a malachite sunbird was a new bird. Sue found some small blue flowers near the molehill of a dune mole-rat that we realised was a lobelia, namely *Lobelia comosa*.



Ostriches in coastal fynbos (CD); bontebok (GC).

Driving on there was a pause for more ostriches and a stop for a king protea on the cusp of turning from bud into flower, and there were red Watsonias in flower. We paid a short visit to Buffelsfontein Visitor Centre, which holds a very good exhibition about early *Homo sapiens* in this area. The traffic slowed for a while on the route onwards for a gang of chacma baboons by a roadside, with their human minder.

Our final stop of the day was at Simon's Town for the famous African penguin colony. The car park and the walk to the penguin colony were both distinctly crowded: mid-afternoon is evidently a popular time to visit. Once through the entrance, Geoff led us on a right turn, a longer walk to a much quieter viewpoint than the

main one. We passed several rock hyraxes (dassies) by the boardwalk. From there, most of the penguins were grouped together on the beach, with others on rocks or starting to nest in burrows on the beach. These early nesters were young penguins; we learnt that more experienced penguins nest farther inland to avoid the risk of storm damage and a little later to help their peak feeding time coincide with maximum food supply.

Our evening meal was at Chapman's Peak Hotel restaurant in Hout Bay, the setting sun over the bay looking lovely if proving very bright for two of us facing in that direction, sharing in turn Ann's sunglasses. It was busy and the food and service a little slow, though the food was lovely, again mainly fish.



African penguins (DC).

Tuesday 27 January – West Coast National Park.

We had an 8:45 departure to allow a little more time for the drive through Cape Town, then headed north along the west coast. Open water areas had lots of birds, such as spur-winged geese, and there were many birds of prey by the route, especially yellow-billed kites. We passed Africa's only nuclear power station and a group of springboks on a golf course. The journey to the entrance of the West Coast National Park took an hour and three-quarters. In the loo at the entrance gate a corn cricket lurked in a corner; identification and release were our next steps. Soon after there was a rock kestrel on the road, and an osprey flew past, carrying a fish.

Our first stop was at a hide overlooking a small freshwater wetland, some open water surrounded by *Typha*. Seven African spoonbills were the most obvious birds, surrounded by a big group of yellow-billed ducks. With a little patience other ducks appeared: a blue-billed (Hottentot) teal and a pair of Cape shovelers. Red-knobbed coots, moorhen and little grebes added interest and a purple swamphen swam across the open water and disappeared into high vegetation. A black harrier flew past, as did two black-shouldered kites, and we saw a group of pied starlings and a female yellow canary. A red-veined darter perched close to the hide.

We moved on to a hide overlooking the extensive Langebaan coastal lagoon, reached by a short walk on a boardwalk across saltmarsh. A shallow lagoon had four little stints and a curlew sandpiper. However the water level outside the hide was high, so we postponed our birdwatching here and went for an early lunch, taken on picnic tables under some shady eucalyptus trees. Near here David found a cardinal woodpecker. The picnic tables were also attended by two Cape wagtails and a group of Cape weavers, plus some bonteboks not far away.

We drove to another part of the lagoon and the Seeberg bird hide, pausing for a black-headed heron in open scrub nearby. From the hide there were greater flamingos and many waders, including white-fronted plover: most of the other waders were wintering birds from the northern hemisphere, especially sanderlings,

grey plovers, whimbrels, bar-tailed godwits and a single curlew. There were plenty of black oystercatchers but no sign of the recently reported Eurasian oystercatcher, a vagrant here. A search of the many hundreds of terns revealed a single Caspian tern. On the way to the hide there was an odd-looking low bush with pink flowers: we took photos and later research revealed that was (in northern European terms) an unusual member of the gentian family: coastal chironia *Chironia tetragona*.



One of several confiding Cape weavers (CH). Corn cricket in a loo corner, and two photos of coastal chironia *Chironia tetragona* (CD).

We returned to the first hide, where the tide had gone out just the right amount for the intertidal area to support large numbers of birds. These included several South African shelducks, mixing with similarly sized Egyptian geese, and several blacksmith lapwings. Avocets and black-winged stilts were also new and there were several marsh sandpipers, which mingled with greenshanks, helping an easy comparison. Geoff pointed out a very distant African fish eagle on the other side of the water. We returned to the picnic table area where Darrin found an angulate tortoise.

On the journey back we saw a giraffe in a private nature reserve. A short detour down a track revealed three very good bird species: two crowned lapwings, a group of five grey-winged spurfowls and a southern black korhaan. Then it was time to head into Cape Town's evening traffic, then once back at base to have a quick turnaround before going out to eat at Oakhurst Barn (Quentin's) restaurant.

Wednesday 28 January – Rondevlei and Strandfontein bird reserves

The day started well for me as the optometrist across the green from the hotel replaced – free of charge – a missing screw in my prescription sunglasses that had caused one lens to keep falling out.

A more local day today after yesterday's longer drive, starting with Rondevlei nature reserve, a wetland that proudly notes that it's a Ramsar site (a wetland of international importance). A staff team meeting was about to take place, though a manager stopped to have a word and check that it was OK to take our photo, as visitors using the nature reserve. Visiting essentially meant going in and out of a series of birdwatching hides overlooking open water and wetland vegetation, those hides going from a central route, much of which is wooden boardwalk that was being painted for maintenance today. Our group was split among these small hides, coming and going, so I'll note some of what we saw in various places, not necessarily seen by everyone or at the same time. There were glossy ibises as well as the expected sacred ibises. We saw our first three-banded plovers: indeed several, often close to the hides. Two painted snipes were tucked into the base of some *Typha* but near enough to see well. Other waders included some close blacksmith lapwings. David photographed a malachite kingfisher. There were many tropical bluetail damselflies, some colourful wasps later identified as a local paper wasp species *Polistes marginalis*, and a large spider-hunting wasp, species unknown. What looked at first like a large storks-bill we later identified as

Pelargonium capitatum, and Sue photographed *Geranium incanum*, also identified over dinner with the help of Geoff and his books. At the final lagoon there were something like 300 brown-throated martins perching on vegetation on the sheltered side of the wetland, on account of today's wind. A bank had a group of white pelicans, many ducks (mostly yellow-billed), reed and white-breasted cormorants and at least two Caspian terns, mostly in the air though one with the lined-up gulls, ducks and cormorants. We had our lunch on the picnic tables by the reserve's entrance.

Strandfontein was a very short drive away. Water purification would be a positive way of describing this wetland; a huge sewage works is the other. Either way, it's a series of large lagoons adjacent to the coast that are chock-full of birds. The first stop was to look at some ducks on a bank by some flamingos. Notable here were fulvous (whistling) ducks and Cape teals; elsewhere there were hundreds of Cape teals with red beaks, not to be confused with red-billed teal, the latter just the occasional bird here. Often barn swallows gathered on tracks, and over one lagoon we estimated 500 flying around. That lagoon also had around 500 little stints – wow! Other – larger – waders were many stilts, blacksmith lapwings and avocets. Wildfowl included a lot of spur-winged geese, a single African black duck and our first southern pochard. The adjacent rubbish dump had the inevitable cloud of gulls and some yellow-billed kites plus, to our surprise, white pelicans landing, presumably to feed. A Cape longclaw on a tall grassy bank was a nice find.

On the return journey we detoured via Silvermine nature reserve in the hope that there might be a sugarbird on proteas. Though vegetation was recovering after a fire, no proteas were in flower and it was windy, so we didn't linger. Dinner was at Dunes restaurant, by the beach, where it was also windy.



Ducks at Strandfontein, including yellow-billed ducks, Cape shoveler, Cape teals and fulvous duck (CD).

Thursday 29 January – Betty's Bay and Harold Porter Botanical Gardens

We started with a scenic drive of just over an hour and a half around the coastline of False Bay, reaching our first stop – to look for Cape rockjumper. This turned out to be spectacularly successful: not far along the coastal track we found two rockjumpers, a male and a female, foraging among vegetation and rocks right by the track. Other birds here were rock martin, two white-necked ravens, a jackal buzzard, alpine swift, little swifts and greater striped swallow – all of these in flight. There were good views of orange-breasted sunbird in the low scrub, which included some flowering heathers and a lovely pink everlasting *Phaenocoma prolifera*. Rock agamas surveyed their patches from rocks, and a dung beetle rolling dung provided entertainment.

We then took a short drive to Betty's Bay African penguin colony, plus the adjacent loos. This was much lower-key than at Simon's Town with far fewer people and much less built up.



Cape rockjumper (DC)

The beach was protected by a low fence beyond which the penguins had gathered. Mixed in with the penguins were Egyptian geese, plus a sizeable flock standing on kelp, then swimming and feeding in the shallowest part of the sea. Egyptian geese as a maritime species was quite a surprise.



Group members (and others) at Betty's Bay; the surprising sight of seaside Egyptian geese (CD).

Another short drive and we were at Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens, where we had lunch in the café and spent the afternoon. Right by the centre there is a large pond and more throughout the gardens, which were excellent for dragonflies, often perching on rocks next to the water. Red-veined dropwings were the most numerous, obviously much smaller and slimmer than the broad scarlets with them. A blue emperor flew around and there were many blue, male skimmers. The adult males –there was a lack of females or immatures – are tricky to separate (two-striped, epaulet and Cape skimmers were the options here), though the single shoulder stripe of epaulet skimmer could be discerned on one close-up photo. Ponds also had a few frogs.

The formal gardens were alive with birds. A fiscal flycatcher appeared and disappeared. We had excellent views of Cape sugarbird on a flowering protea, and nearby a Cape canary and streaky-headed seed-eaters came to drink in a narrow irrigation channel. A ridiculously tame African dusky flycatcher entertained us on a prominent perch. We found swee and common waxbills. In irrigated flower beds many plants were in flower, especially ericas and pelargoniums. Geoff talked about the healing qualities of orange-flowered *Bulbine frutescens*. We continued beyond the formal gardens into woodland, as far as a waterfall. On damp walls here there were two orchids in flower: *Disa uniflora*. In the wood we found African paradise-flycatchers, then joined by a blue-mantled crested flycatcher.



African dusky flycatcher, Harold Porter botanical gardens (CD)

It was time to return, a journey of a little under two hours (the Cape Town rush hour didn't help). This evening, we walked across the green to the Woodcutters Arms for our evening meal.

Friday 30 January – 'free day'

Two small groups headed out this morning, with others opting for a quiet day in and around the hotel, in some cases because of a tummy bug going round. Ann, John and I went with Darrin for a tour of central Cape Town, stopping on the way beyond the busy entrance to the cable car that goes up Table Mountain. In Cape Town we parked near the natural history museum and walked from there, enjoying the Company's Garden park, and many fine and important buildings. Various statues prompted explanations from Darrin of historical incidents and personalities. Wildlife included orange-winged dropwings around a pond and African monarch butterfly (*photo in wildlife lists*). Everard and David went with Geoff to Intaka Island nature reserve, an island in the sense of being surrounded by buildings, where they saw a good selection of wetland and other birds, including malachite kingfisher, black crane and red-eyed dove.

For lunch we walked to Dario's Café. Most had a quiet afternoon in the hotel's garden. Ann and I walked to the beach and along the front, then perused some shops. Common opal and common dotted border butterflies nectared on a seaside shrub. We returned to Oakhurst Barn (Quentin's) for dinner.

Saturday 31 January – Karoo

After breakfast at Hout Bay Manor we loaded up, ready to move on. As we headed east and inland it grew hotter, so it was a good day to be in air-conditioned minibuses. Our mid-morning stop was Karoo National Botanical Gardens, which showcases the peculiar vegetation of the dry Karoo ecosystem. We parked in the shade, then everyone walked past tortoises to the loos. Beds of aloes and euphorbias, drought adapted species, made for an attractive setting, though mostly we were birdwatching. Fairy flycatcher was an excellent start, then both common fiscal shrike and fiscal flycatcher in the same area. We spent a long time watching sunbirds on a flowering Karoo boerbeen (*Schotia afra*, pea family), most of which were southern double-collared sunbirds being bossed around by bigger malachite sunbirds. Geoff also saw dusky sunbird, but it eluded the rest of us despite our best efforts. Two other good birds here were bar-throated apalis and acacia pied barbet. We picnicked in the shade, noting ant-lion larval pits in the dry soil, accompanied by a Cape spurfowl that was plainly used to getting titbits from people.



Aloes in the Karoo National Botanical Gardens (CD); malachite sunbird on a Karoo boerbeen (DC).

Most of the afternoon was spent driving east, though we stopped at the Country Pumpkin in Barrydale for drinks and loos. From here we saw a pale phase booted eagle. Much further along our route we had an excellent view of a pale chanting goshawk on a roadside post. We reached La Plume at Oudtshoorn at 5pm.

After settling into rooms there was time to watch birds in the garden. There were several greater striped swallows dipping over the swimming pool, and twice a pearl-breasted swallow flew through. One corner seemed to attract a lot of small birds, which appeared to be coming for water dripping from an air conditioning unit. These included several red-billed queleas, Karoo thrush, Cape robin-chat and house sparrows. Red bishop and familiar chat were elsewhere in the garden. David walked farther afield and found various birds, including African hoopoe. Another booted eagle appeared. Then Geoff took us to something he'd found earlier, by his accommodation: a roosting spotted eagle owl. Dinner was at La Plume, ostrich for most of the group, plus a vegan option.

Sunday 1 February – Swartberg Pass



Blister bee (CD).

Today's outing was a drive on a long circular route, firstly through old Oudtshoorn with its attractive period properties, plus a stop for fuel. Then we went up and over the Swartberg Pass, partly (and on the descent) on dirt roads, down to Prince Alfred and back through the Meiringspoort Pass. It was a day of impressive scenery, distinctive geology such as twisted rock strata, and dry Karoo vegetation, punctuated in places by large aloes. It reached 38°C in the afternoon, so time in air-conditioned buses was an escape from that. Along the way had various stops for natural history. The first of these, on the way up, looked down one way into a mountain stream and pool. Cape siskins failed to stay still enough to be seen well; an orange-breasted sunbird bathed in the stream. I noticed a damselfly with spread wings and a pale abdomen tip: conspicuous malachite.

At Swartberg Pass we found several large beetles with red patches, likely to be blister beetles. Research suggested a firm ID wasn't possible as this was one of some 400 similar species, and it wasn't the beetle in either of our books, these described as small (to 11cm)

whereas those we saw were more like 30cm. Geoff warned us about their propensity to spray a seriously stinging substance; Sue explained that this was males, and the same substances were collected by females during mating as a 'copulatory gift' to protect themselves and their eggs.

On the descent we paused for two klipspringers by the roadside before continuing to Swartberg Hotel in Prince Albert for a nice lunch.

There were occasional irrigation ponds on route with a few birds, and we failed to find the hoped-for



Spotted eagle owl, roosting by Geoff and Darrin's accommodation (CH).

hamerkop: just a little grebe, Egyptian geese, a grey heron and some blacksmith lapwings. Another pull-off / car park was for a waterfall, reported to be dry today, though we did have excellent views of a tame Cape bunting here. There were dragonflies on the rocky river: navy dropwing and two-striped skimmer.

We drove straight back to La Plume, leaving plenty of time to swim or otherwise relax. At 6pm we gathered at the gazebo to watch birds, mostly from there, apart from those who'd missed the spotted eagle owl yesterday who took the short walk to see it today. Among the birds we looked at while enjoying pre-dinner drinks were a flock of about 40 red-billed queleas, laughing and red-eyed doves, fiscal flycatcher, common waxbills, black-headed herons flying past and pearl-breasted swallow among the many greater striped swallows.

After dinner we looked at Jupiter, with four clear moons and visible bands on the planet. The nearby full moon was a 'snow moon' in the northern hemisphere, a name spectacularly inapt here. At the same time, three of us tried bat detectors and recorded Cape serotine.

Monday 2 February – travel to Garden Route

There was lots to see around La Plume, as always. David had his usual early start and found brown-hooded kingfisher and cardinal woodpecker, among many other birds. Looking from the gardens some of us could pick out an African marsh harrier quartering fields, and a somewhat distant peregrine through the scope. After breakfast, a smiling trio of La Plume's staff waved us off.

The route took us past three captive emus and into Oudtshoorn, past a corner where local women were selling a colourful range of products made from ostrich feathers. Five white storks were with a host of sacred ibises under a field irrigator. Twenty blue cranes, South Africa's national bird, caused us to stop to



Jackal buzzard (DC).

overlook a dry field, next to a rapidly drying farm reservoir with a good number of spur-winged geese. It may have been the passing jackal buzzard that spooked the cranes to fly slowly around, calling as they went. A patch of bristle-fruited silkweed (a milkweed) here didn't have any monarch caterpillars.

Heading south across the Outeniqua Mountain Pass, the vegetation suddenly flipped from dry Karoo to less dry fynbos, with heathers in flower and the occasional *Watsonia*. At a layby with a view, Geoff heard Victorin's warbler singing from tall fynbos scrub. It was very persistent, mostly out of view though offering fleeting views to several of the group. A small vegetated strip between fynbos and road held a familiar mix of ruderal plants, the commonest of which was scarlet pimpernel, plus black

nightshade, spear thistle, shaggy soldier and Cape marigold.

We reached the coast and headed east, stopping at Old Nick's complex of craft shops for lunch. A sombre greenbul sang in the tree by us and mocker swallowtails flew overhead.

We had a stop in the forest, a very short stretch of the Tsitsikamma hiking trail on a boardwalk past numerous impressive yellowwood trees. It was generally quiet, being mid-afternoon, though a bar-throated apalis in a bush was confiding. A rainforest brown butterfly landed briefly in a sunlit patch of woodland floor. Back on the road, we were lucky to find an amethyst sunbird singing high in a yellowwood tree, staying in the same place long enough for us all to study it through the telescope to try to get the right light so that colour would show around the head on an essentially black bird. As we left, baboons arrived.

We arrived at Tsitsikamma Lodge in good time to settle into our lodges and watch birds around them. Most of us spent much of this time watching sunbirds on a large hibiscus, the sunbirds breaking into the back of flowers for nectar. Greater double-collared and collared sunbirds were new species, and there was another amethyst sunbird. Other nice birds seen included black-headed oriole and Knysna turaco. Dinner, buffet-style, was at Tsitsikamma Lodge.

Tuesday 3 February – Garden Route: Storms River Mouth, Nature's Valley and Keurbooms River

A surprise at breakfast time: rain! Contrary to the forecast, it came to little during the day, just some occasional light drizzle that wasn't a problem. For Sue and Peter, who didn't come out today, it rained for much of the day.

There was a brief stop for African stonechat on the way to our first site of the morning, part of the coast called Storms River Mouth, though we didn't go to the river mouth as it was like a building site restoring the wood visitor centre, which had burned down a while ago. So we looked along an adjacent coastal area: a craggy foreshore, with a steep and vegetated slope inland and behind us. There were three unconcerned water thick-knees on a mix of gravel and short turf below us. At sea, a trickle of Cape gannets flew past, and David saw an Arctic skua. Black oystercatchers moved to and fro and there were several cormorants. Ann found a smart lunate ladybird. The best birds, perhaps, were at the end of our stay, both around an area set up for barbeques: a confiding white-necked raven and red-necked spurfowls.



Water thick-knee (or stone-curlew or dikkop) (CD); red-necked spurfowl or francolin (DC).

We stopped on coming away from the beach area for photos of some gorgeous, red St George's lily (*photo on cover*). In the trees above the lilies there were two black-headed orioles and black sawwings flew overhead.

We returned to Nature's Valley, the same place as yesterday, though this time a different (though equally short) walk into the coastal forest. This time we encountered many more birds, some of which were in a loose mixed-species flock. The biggest and most impressive bird was a Knysna turaco. It seemed to be eating yellowwood berries, and its impressive appearance was boosted when it flapped wings with a flash of red. (*photo on cover*). There was an olive thrush rooting around in leaf litter like a blackbird in a flower bed; an elegant grey cuckoo-shrike; a blue-mantled paradise flycatcher and both male and female Cape batis. We also noted some bracket fungi and the spikey trunk of forest knobwood trees. Opposite the minibuses David was alert to – and photographed – a starred robin chat (or white-starred robin). Quite a find and it perched for a while on the same low branch, so several saw it well.



Starred robin chat – a really good find, and photo (DC). African fish-eagle (DC).

We had lunch at the Pepperpot café, which had mohair goats, a mohair wool shop and craft shops in the same small complex.

We drove alongside the Bitou River. The best bird here was by some distance an African fish-eagle perching on a large tree stump. There were a few waders near the eagle, including blacksmith lapwing, stilts and greenshank. Moving into drier country, we watched a Denham's bustard walking through long grass. There was also a pin-tailed whydah, zitting cisticola, two blue cranes and hundreds of swallows (barn and greater striped) on a fence. On the other side of the road to the bustard there was a small collection of mammals for private safaris to see: white rhino, waterbuck, nyala and Burchell's zebra.



Watsonia collage (CD).

Geoff's minibus went to find the fish-eagle that Darrin's group had seen, finding not only that but also European roller, then a second roller, and pied kingfisher. The final stop was for a long-crested eagle perching on a dead tree, a bird at the south-west edge of its range here. African palm swifts with distinctive long tails flew around, and there was a big patch of Watsonia flowers in orange and varying shades of pink.

Wednesday 4 February – Garden Route: Featherbed Nature Reserve

Another wet morning, which continued until the point we got out of the truck at the top of Featherbed Nature Reserve, but I'll come onto that in a moment. It was a long drive west, though before our boat trip we had time to drive alongside part of the Knysna estuary, where there was an African spoonbill, Cape teals and other birds we'd previously seen. We reached the dock in good time, allowing for a coffee for some before we boarded the 11 o'clock boat that took us onto Knysna 'lagoon', really an estuary, still under cover so out of the rain. There were white-breasted cormorants dwarfing adjacent Cape cormorants and two pied kingfishers before we docked at the private island nature reserve of Featherbed. From here a covered truck drove us up a track through scrubby fynbos to the island's top, where the rain stopped with impeccable timing.

Some chose to descend in the truck, and the walkers – mostly armed with poles handed out below – descended on steps and slopes through the scrub. There were several small blue butterflies on the wing, later identified as fynbos blue. The downward path joined a flat coastal path that led from the building where we'd arrived, and along here we met up with those who'd descended in the truck – and seen a bushbuck. Along here there were helpful labels that helped us name plants such as *Mesembryanthemum aitonis* and strand gazania *Gazania rigens*. We admired and photographed an orb web spider. Most of the birds were around the buildings, such as a southern boubou and a fine African paradise flycatcher. We had a good buffet lunch at the reserve's centre, during which a young couple approached Everard to confirm that he was a well-known celebrity. Curiously they couldn't quite pin down *which* celebrity they had in mind.



At Featherbed nature reserve: *Mesembryanthemum aitonis* and strand gazania *Gazania rigens* (CD).

As we waited to board the ferry, a Cape fur seal could be seen throwing around a fish, eating it bit by bit. In better weather, the return journey was more enjoyable and we were able to watch black oystercatchers and other estuary birds.

We arrived back at Tsitsikamma Lodge at ten to five and met up at five o'clock by the pink hibiscus. From there we had a pleasing hour's birdwatching, walking along the ride by the pine plantation that abuts the lodge ground. We had good views of a black-headed oriole, a forest buzzard, African stonechat and karoo prinia, and more fleeting views of neddicky and African olive-pigeons.

Thursday 5 February – Garden Route: Birds of Eden

A small group of vervet monkeys moved through the trees behind some of the chalets at Tsitsikamma Lodge. Then we watched a very large butterfly – a green-banded swallowtail – fly around and land by the swimming pool. Turquoise-banded would be a better description, closer to blue than green.

Though it was dry as we were leaving, a plan to take into account more rain was in order, and the decision was to visit 'Birds of Eden', a huge free-flight aviary featuring birds from South Africa and around the world. It was a good choice for a wet morning for most of the group. Meanwhile, Geoff took David for some more forest birding at Nature's Valley. The 'Birds of Eden' group descended on sometimes slippery wooden walkways – soon staff spread sand to help the walking – to start with, mostly moving from shelter to shelter, be that trees or structures. Happily, it did brighten up during the morning, and we saw many of the birds pictured in the Birds of Eden booklet. Opinions will vary, though for highlights I would mention a Knysna turaco rain-bathing, the fulvous duck duckling ('bright as a button' was Darrin's description), scarlet ibises and very close views of South African birds such as the turaco, fulvous ducks and red-eyed doves. Diminutive blue duikers – secretive in the wild – were a bonus. There was time for a relaxed circuit of the extensive aviary and for coffee before meeting up at 12:30. Given the weather, David had added just one bird to our trip list while away: common sandpiper, though they did see two good birds in the trees outside Birds of Eden, namely dark-capped bulbul and olive woodpecker.

We had lunch at Old Nick's – it was dry again now – and Geoff went off to get a puncture repaired, caused by a thorn.

We then went looking for birds on roadside ponds. One pond had a black crane and a white-faced duck. Much of what we saw was a reminder of how much native forest has been replaced by pine plantations. The best of the ponds was by the old road that first linked Cape Town to Port Elizabeth. Here were eight white-faced ducks and two African jacanas, somewhat dwarfed by adjacent spur-winged geese. As group members got into minibuses to dodge the imminent rain, David and I seized the opportunity to see a

grassbird moving in bracken by the road. We returned to Tsitsikamma Lodge, the rain now set in for the evening.

At dinner, Geoff brought in a Cape docile scorpion, shaken out of a pile of clothes on his cabin floor. The sky cleared and bat detectors came out after dinner. Ann's Echo meter recorded the following nine bat species as likely: **Cape serotine**, **Hildebrandt's horseshoe**, **Natal long-fingered**, Schrieber's yellow, **Robert's flat-headed**, Egyptian free-tailed, **little free-tailed** and Swinney's horseshoe. I tried a little later and recorded the five species in bold in the list. A stream clicking frog called all night between my cabin and David's.

Friday 6 February – travel day, botanical gardens at George and Swellendam

A fine morning as we said goodbye to Tsitsikamma Lodge at 8:30, an earlier start than our usual 09:00 to give extra time for today's journey and halfway stop. The drive took us west along the busy coast road, reaching the large town of George at about 11:00. Here we had a lovely hour and half strolling and birdwatching in George's attractive botanical gardens. Its centrepiece is a lake, on which there was a new species of diving duck for the holiday: four white-backed ducks, though with no white backs showing. Black crane is often distant or elusive, but here there was an adult walking along a path, then another adult and a chick from a hide overlooking a small patch of water and a lot of wetland vegetation. Here, at last, a malachite kingfisher for everyone to see on the edge of the *Typha*, plus a striped mouse. In a wooded area, an olive thrush took material to a nest in an open small tree. Returning along the other side of the waterlily covered lake, three long-tailed Levaillant's cisticolas perched where they could be easily seen. Our usual invertebrate finder was alert to a new damselfly species: a common citril.



Black crane at George (DC).



We saw malachite kingfisher from the hide (ED), though this one was photographed at Intaka Island nature reserve; white-backed duck on the lake (ED).

We gathered for lunch in the shady garden of the Italian-themed restaurant, a nice place to wait while drinks, panini and pizzas were arranged. A Cape dwarf gecko clambered up a pole and a large butterfly allowed photos so that later with a field guide it was easy to pin it down as garden inspector (or garden commodore).

Then more driving, to our accommodation at Gaikou Lodge, Swellendam, with Geoff, Darrin and me in an overspill group at a b&b down the road called Aquaelberg Place. Geoff's group had a stop in arable land and saw red-capped lark and capped wheatear, and a rumour reached all of us, which surely cannot be true, that Sue misidentified a spur-winged goose as an ostrich. There was time for group photos before a very good meal featuring bobotie – spiced mince baked with an egg topping – at Gaikou Lodge.

Saturday 7 February – travel day, Bontebok National Park and Stellenbosch

After breakfasts at our two accommodations, we set off on the short journey to Bontebok National Park, with helpfully no queue of people so the entrance administration process of collecting names, telephone

numbers and dates of birth didn't create much of a delay. There was a confiding karoo scrub robin by the main park building, perching red-veined darters and a mystery low-growing flower with a centre like a mallow. A leopard tortoise crossed the track and half-hid in dead vegetation. Some also saw Cape grey mongooses (no, *not* mongeese) run across our track. On a low hill, the top two-thirds of two Cape mountain zebras were visible, white bellies out of sight among the low fynbos. We soon saw several bonteboks, which the reserve was established to protect, along with Cape mountain zebras. After pottering round an open area by a river, we drove a circuit of this compact national park. A group of three red hartebeests looked at us looking at them. We were then lucky enough to come across four Cape mountain zebras in an open area, so the distinctive features of this scarce subspecies – a white belly and no 'shadow' stripes – were clear. One of the males had a large red growth on its penis, presumably surviving here where there are no lions to pick off less fit animals. Later, Geoff reported this to park staff, who were unaware. Geoff explained that the zebras are struggling with poor productivity, which is in contract to the bonteboks which were once rare and are now off the endangered list, thanks to careful management of their limited gene pool.



Cape mountain zebras (ED).

We then drove for a while, passing several blue cranes in fields, reaching Riviersonderend for lunch and ices in a roadside bakery/café. We then set off for the remainder of the journey, arriving at Evergreen Manor, Stellenbosch in the late afternoon. Most of us had a walk around the university town of Stellenbosch, helped by Tim obtaining a street map. The town was busy in the sunshine as freshers' week at the university was just starting. Our rectangular route along the town's two parallel main streets ended with us cutting through Stellenbosch botanical gardens. Dinner was a short walk to De Warenmarkt restaurant, meeting John who had made his way there ahead of the group.

Sunday 8 February – back to the UK

After breakfast – when we collected the holiday highlights noted below – it was time to pack and depart, apart from Sue and Peter who had a free day ahead of them in Stellenbosch before an evening flight to Heathrow. There were more blue cranes among the usual assortment of wetland birds on lakes by the half-hour drive to the airport. The Norse flight left Cape Town and arrived at Gatwick on time, with a smooth if long flight in between.

Holiday highlights, as nominated by group members.

Peter	southern pale chanting goshawk; striped mouse; leopard tortoise.
Sue	blue-tinged mountains; Knysna woodpecker (I heard it, I found it, I saw it ...) green-banded swallowtail.
Flo	African penguins; African fish-eagle; landscape at Swellendam.
Everard	penguins; waterfowl, especially ducks; the lovely places we stayed.
John	mountains; Geoff's lunches; sunbirds at Tsitsikamma Lodge.
Ann	vistas, mountains ranges and clouds; invertebrates, especially dragonflies, butterflies and spider-hunting wasps; birds of prey seen well e.g. African fish-eagle
David	Denham's bustard, cape cobra; cape rockjumper.
Cheryl	spotted eagle owl; blue cranes.
Tim	flight of the blue cranes; West Coast wetland day.
Chris	20 blue cranes; birdwatching at La Plume; green-banded swallowtail.
Darrin	Cape cobra with hood.
Geoff	starred robin.

WILDLIFE LISTS

Birds

Ostrich: feral birds in several places, farmed birds around Oudtshoorn.

Emu: as ostriches aren't truly wild, two sightings of emus are also noted, the first 3 were close to La Plume.

African Penguin: big colonies at Simon's Town (Boulders) and Betty's Bay.

Little grebe: seen on five days.

Great white pelican: seen on two days, especially at Rietvlei and Strandfontein.

Cape gannet: offshore on two days, seen best from Storms River Mouth.

White-breasted cormorant: widespread on inland wetlands, estuaries and the coast.

Cape cormorant: the commonest cormorant on the coast, seen on four days, including Hout Bay boat trip.

Bank cormorant: on the island on Hout Bay boat trip, also Betty's Bay.

Reed (long-tailed) cormorant: on most inland freshwater wetlands, recorded on eight days.

African darter: singles seen on four days.

Grey heron: widespread, seen on eight days.

Black-headed heron: seen on nine days, with many good views in dry areas.

Purple heron: freshwater wetlands on 28/1 and 30/1.

Little egret: recorded on seven days.

Cattle egret: recorded on 11 days. A large colony in George, 6/2.

Black-crowned night heron: recorded on 30/1

Little bittern: recorded on 24/1 and 30/1.

White stork: five in a field on 2/2.

African sacred ibis: seen almost every day, often in large numbers. Several hundred with gulls at the rubbish tip next to Strandfontein.

Glossy ibis: seen well at Rietvlei on 28/1.

Hadeda ibis: seen every day, a great feature of lawns and the hotel garden in Hout Bay.

African spoonbill: recorded at various wetlands on three days.

Greater flamingo: recorded at freshwater wetlands on 27/1 and 28/1, large numbers at Strandfontein.

Spur-winged goose: seen on six days.

Egyptian goose: seen almost every day, including the seashore at Betty's Bay.

South African shelduck: on two days in the Cape part of the holiday, and 31/1 in the Karoo.

White-faced (whistling) duck: roadside ponds in the Garden Route, 5/2.

White-backed duck: on the lake at the botanical gardens at George, 6/2.

Fulvous duck: several at Strandfontein, 28/1.

Yellow-billed duck: the most widespread duck species, seen on six days.

African black duck: 1 at Strandfontein, 28/1, also 4/2.

Cape teal: seen on three days.

Blue-billed (Hottentot) teal: West Coast National Park, 27/1

Red-billed teal: Strandfontein, 28/1.

Cape shoveler: 27/1, West Coast National Park, and 28/1 at both Rietvlei and Strandfontein.

Southern pochard: Strandfontein, 28/1.

Yellow-billed kite: on six days in a range of places.

Black-shouldered kite: on seven days.

Booted eagle: 2 pale phase birds in the Karoo, 31/1, the first was over Country Pumpkin in Barrydale.

African crowned eagle: a single bird flew through, in the Garden Route, 3/2.

Long-crested eagle: super views at a roadside stop in the Garden Route, 3/2.

African fish eagle: excellent view at Bitou River 3/2, a distant bird 27/1, West Coast National Park.

Steppe buzzard: sightings of this palearctic migrant on 7 days, usually in open country.

Forest buzzard: seen on three days.

Jackal buzzard: seen on five days. including at Rooi Els near the rockjumpers.

African goshawk: 1 reported flying past a minibus, 5/2.

Southern pale chanting goshawk: memorable view perched on a telegraph pole, 31/1, then again on 1/2 and 2/2.

Rufous-chested sparrowhawk: noted on checklist for 6/2.
 Little sparrowhawk: seen by David at La Plume, 1/2.
 Black sparrowhawk: reported on 1/2.
 African marsh harrier: first seen at the W Coast National Park, then two other days.
 Black harrier: a flying bird at W Coast National Park, 27/1.
 Harrier hawk: a flying bird on our arrival day, 24/1, at Kirstenbosch.
 Osprey: 27/1, West Coast National Park.
 Peregrine: 2/2 at La Plume, a distant perched bird.
 Rock kestrel: seen on four days.
 Cape spurfowl (francolin): seen on five days, very tame at Kirstenbosch and Karoo gardens.
 Grey-winged spurfowl: 7, W Coast National Park, 27/1.
 Red-faced spurfowl: excellent views at Storms River Mouth, 3/2.
 Helmeted guineafowl: almost daily, including tame birds at Kirstenbosch.
 Blue crane: a fine flock of 20 on 2/2, then on 3 days when driving, including on the way to the airport.
 Black crane: seen on three days, best views at George, 6/2.
 Purple swamp-hen: seen on three days at freshwater wetlands in the Western Cape.
 Common moorhen: seen on three days at freshwater wetlands in the Western Cape.
 Red-knobbed coot: common on freshwater wetlands.
 Denham's bustard: excellent views on 3/2 near Bitou River.
 Southern black korhaan: dry land near the W Coast National Park on 27/1.
 African jacana: 2 on a roadside pond in the Garden Route, 5/2.
 Old World painted snipe: 2 at Rondevlei, 28/1, also recorded 29/1 and 30/1.
 African black oystercatcher: on four days, various coastal stops in both SW Cape and Garden Route.
 Ringed plover: 26/1 and 27/1, Cape Peninsula and W Coast National Parks, also 3/2.
 White-fronted plover: W Coast National Park on 27/1.
 Kittlitz's plover: 26/1 and 27/1, Cape Peninsula and W Coast National Parks.
 Three-banded plover: Rondevlei nature reserve, 28/2.
 Grey plover: W Coast National Park on 27/1 and at Strandfontein.
 Crowned lapwing: 27/1, W Coast National Park.
 Blacksmith lapwing: the most widespread wader, on various wetlands and sports fields.
 Ruddy turnstone: 1 at W Coast National Park on 27/1.
 Common sandpiper: 5/2, Garden Route.
 Marsh sandpiper: W Coast National Park on 27/1, also recorded 28/1.
 Greenshank: W Coast National Park 27/1, also two coastal locations in the Garden Route, 3/2 and 4/2.
 Curlew sandpiper: W Coast National Park on 27/1.
 Little stint: W Coast National Park on 27/1; an astonishing flock of c.500 at Strandfontein, 28/1.
 Sanderling: W Coast National Park on 27/1.
 Bar-tailed godwit: W Coast National Park on 27/1.
 Curlew: W Coast National Park on 27/1.
 Whimbrel: 26/1 and 27/1, Cape Peninsula and W Coast National Parks; two coastal locations in the Garden Route, 3/2 and 4/2.
 Pied avocet: seen on two days, the biggest flocks were at Strandfontein.
 Black-winged stilt: W Coast National Park; Rondevlei and Strandfontein; 2 coastal locations in the Garden Route, 3/2 and 4/2.
 Spotted thick-knee: seen by those on the birdwatching trip on the free day in the Cape Town area, 30/1.
 Water thick-knee (Water dikkop): close views at Storms River Mouth.
 Kelp gull: almost daily.
 Hartlaub's gull: the common small gull of the coast in the SW Cape.
 Caspian tern: seen on three days, including W Coast National Park.
 Swift tern: fairly common on the coast, seen on 4 days.
 Sandwich tern: seen on five days, all coastal locations.7/2.
 Common tern: seen on three days, all coastal location in the SW Cape.
 Arctic skua: seen by David at sea on 3/2 at Storms River Mouth.
 Rock dove: feral pigeons only, on ten days.
 Speckled pigeon: seen daily, including several quite tame birds.
 African olive-pigeon: seen on four days, including at Tsitsikamma Lodge.
 Red-eyed dove: seen almost daily.
 African turtle-dove: seen and heard daily.
 Laughing dove: seen on nine days, including in La Plume's garden.
 Tambourine dove: seen by David at Swellendam,
 Namaqua dove: fleeting views of birds flying away, 27/1 and in Bontebok NP.
 Lemon dove: a stroke of luck with two on a path at Kirstenbosch, 25/1; recorded by David, 3/2.
 Knysna turaco: recorded in the Garden Route, 2/2, 3/2 (very good views) and 5/2/
 Burchell's coucal: recorded as heard on 6/2.
 Spotted eagle-owl: a roosting bird at La Plume.
 African swift: recorded on two days, 27/1 and 2/2.
 White-rumped swift: recorded on 4 days.
 Little swift: recorded on five days.
 Alpine swift: recorded on seven days, mostly in SW Cape.
 African palm swift: recorded on five days, mostly in the Garden Route, including going into *Washingtonia* palms.

Speckled mousebird: seen on seven days, including in La Plume's garden.
 White-backed mousebird: recorded on four days, generally fleeting views and not seen by many.
 Red-faced mousebird: recorded on three days, generally fleeting views and not seen by many.
 Pied kingfisher: on three days in the Garden Route.
 Giant kingfisher: a call and a fleeting view for Geoff (mostly) on 6/2.
 Malachite kingfisher: sightings on three days; best seen from the hide in the gardens at George, 6/2.
 Brown-hooded kingfisher: found by David at La Plume, 2/2, also recorded 5/2 in the Garden Route
 European roller: 3/2, 2 roadside sightings in the Garden Route.
 African hoopoe: around La Plume, with sightings on 31/1, 1/2 and 2/2.
 Green wood-hoopoe: seen by some on 2/2, 4/2 and 5/2.
 Acacia pied barbet: Karoo botanical gardens 31/1 and heard by Geoff on 1/2.
 Collared barbet: recorded on 4/2 and 5/2.
 Knysna woodpecker: 29/1
 Cardinal woodpecker: 27/1, West Coast NP, and seen by David on 2/2 at La Plume.
 Olive woodpecker: recorded 29/1 and 5/2, the latter outside Birds of Eden.
 Red-capped lark: seen on 6/2 by those in Geoff 's bus.
 Barn swallow: seen every day.
 White-throated swallow: seen on seven days.
 Wire-tailed swallow: recorded on 31/1.
 Pearl-breasted swallow: 31/1, 1/2 and 2/2, notably dipping into the swimming pool at La Plume.
 Greater striped swallow: seen on eight days, mostly in the second half of the holiday. Nest at La Plume.
 Rock martin: seen on eight days.
 Brown-throated sand martin: big flocks at Rondevlei, 28/2, also recorded 30/2
 Black saw-wing: Kirstenbosch 25/1 and 5 days in the Garden Route.



Pale chanting goshawk (DC); orange-breasted sunbird (GC); southern boubou (DC)

Grey cuckoo-shrike: recorded on 2/2 though best seen on 3/2 in Nature's Valley.
 Fork-tailed drongo: recorded on eight days.
 Cape crow: none until the second half of the holiday, when seen daily 31/1 to 6/2.
 Pied crow: seen on nine days.
 White-necked raven: seen on nine days, with close views at Storms River Mouth.
 Cape bulbul: seen almost every day, including in hotel gardens.
 Red-capped bulbul: seen by David on 6/2, outside Birds of Eden.
 Terrestrial brownbul: recorded on 5/2.
 Sombre greenbul: seen or heard (often heard only) on eight days.
 Olive thrush: seen on six days, including on a nest in the gardens at George..
 Karoo thrush: recent 'split' from Olive thrush, 29/1 at Harold Porter botanical gardens, 1/2 in Karoo garden.
 Cape rock-thrush: at Rooi Els on 29/1 (rockjumper site) and Swartberg Pass on 1/2.
 Capped wheatear: seen on 6/2 by those in Geoff 's bus.
 Familiar chat: seen on five days, many views of wing-flapping in La Plume's gardens.
 African stonechat: on four days in the Garden Route, 3/2 to 6/2.
 Cape robin-chat: almost every day.
 Starred robin-chat: in forest in the Garden Route, 3/2.
 Cape rock-jumper: outstanding views at Rooi Els, 29/1.
 Karoo scrub-robin: recorded on four days, 31/1, 1/2 and 2/2; good views in Bontebok NP on 7/2.
 Chestnut vented titbabbler: recorded on 1/2 in the Karoo.
 Lesser swamp-warbler: heard or seen briefly on two days at wetlands.
 Little rush-warbler: heard or briefly seen on four days at various wetlands.
 Victorin's warbler: in fynbos scrub close to the road south of Outeniqua Mountain Pass on 2/2.
 Yellow-throated woodland warbler: a bird of Afromontane forest, seen on 2/2 and 2/3, including with sunbirds in the hibiscus at Tsitsikamma Lodge.
 Bar-throated apalis: seen on five days, in the Garden Route.

Long-billed crombec: recorded on 27/1, 31/1 and 1/2.
 Cape grassbird: 5/2 in the Garden Route, a roadside stop.
 Zitting cisticola: recorded on two days, 3/2 and 6/2.
 Levallant's cisticola: 29/2 at Rietvlei Nature Reserve and three on 6/2 by a road in the Garden Route.
 Neddicky: seen on four days in the Garden Route.
 Karoo prinia: widespread and seen almost daily.
 Dusky flycatcher: seen on six days, especially tame in Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens, 29/2.
 Fiscal flycatcher: on four days, including Karoo gardens.
 Cape batis: seen on six days by various group members.
 Pirit batis: 1/2 in the Karoo.
 Fairy flycatcher: seen best on 31/1 in Karoo National Botanical Gardens, also recorded 2/2 and 3/2.
 Blue-mantled crested flycatcher: at Harold Porter botanical gardens, 29/1, and recorded on 3/2 and 6/2.
 African paradise-flycatcher: at Harold Porter botanical gardens on 29/1 and Featherbed reserve 4/2.
 Cape wagtail: seen many times every day.
 Cape longclaw: 28/1, Strandfontein.
 African pipit: noted on four days.
 Common fiscal (shrike): seen on seven days, often on roadside wires.
 Southern boubou: 25/1 at Kirstenbosch, 3/2 Garden Route.
 Bokmakerie: seen on four days.
 Eurasian starling: seen almost every day.
 Pied starling: seen on four days, especially around La Plume.
 Wattled starling: noted on the checklist as seen on 27/1.
 Cape glossy starling: noted on the checklist as seen on 1/2.
 Red-winged starling: every day and common, including around Hout Bay Manor hotel.
 Cape sugarbird: good views feeding on proteas at Harold Porter gardens, 29/1, and three other days.
 Malachite sunbird: seen on seven days.
 Orange-breasted sunbird: seen on six days, including at Kirstenbosch on 25/1.
 Southern double-collared sunbird: the commonest sunbird, seen on 10 days.
 Greater double-collared sunbird: only in the Garden Route, seen on five days.
 Amethyst sunbird: only in the Garden Route, seen on four days.
 Variable sunbird: only in the Garden Route, seen on four days, reliably so with other sunbird species on the hibiscus at Tsitsikamma Lodge.
 Dusky sunbird: Geoff saw one on 31/1 in the Karoo gardens, but we waited and it didn't show again.
 Cape white-eye: seen every day.
 House sparrow: seen on six days, La Plume and the Garden Route.
 Cape sparrow: seen on four days, especially at La Plume.
 Southern grey-headed sparrow: recorded on five days, was in the garden at La Plume.
 Cape weaver: recorded on eight days, especially confiding in the West Coast NP.
 Southern masked-weaver: recorded on four days.
 Red-billed quelea: flocks (up to 40) coming to drink from an air conditioning unit at La Plume.
 Red bishop: recorded on five days, especially at La Plume.
 Yellow-rumped widow (yellow bishop): 27/1 in West Coast NP, also seen by David on 8/2.
 Common waxbill: on six days, including at La Plume.
 Sweet waxbill: recorded on four days, usually brief views.
 Bronze mannikin: Kirstenbosch on 25/1.
 Pin-tailed whydah: seen on five days, usually brief views in flight.
 Cape canary: 29/1 only.
 Forest canary: seen on four days.
 Brimstone canary: 27/1 and 3/2.
 Yellow canary: 27/1 only.
 White-throated canary: reported on 1/2.
 Streaky-headed seed-eater: 29/1 and 30/1 only.
 Cape bunting: a tame bird on our Karoo day, 1/2.
 Cinnamon-breasted bunting: 1/2

Mammals

The mammal list below includes some that are in managed populations in national parks, such as bontebok, red hartebeest and Cape mountain zebra, and established non-natives (grey squirrel, as in the UK). It *excludes* mammals we saw on private reservations, which included Cape giraffe, white rhino, nyala, waterbuck and Burchell's zebra – but it's a 'grey area'. For bats, there is a list in the daily diary of 5 February that gives the species that showed as first choice on Echo meters. Cape serotine was also 'heard' on two other days.

Chacma baboon	seen in family group on nine days.
Vervet monkey	Tsitsikamma Lodge
Cape grey mongoose	Recorded on five days
Cape fur seal	Hout Bay
Rock hyrax (dassie)	Simon's Town (<i>right</i>)



Cape mountain zebra	Bontebok National Park
Bontebok	Cape Peninsula National Park and Bontebok National Park
Red Hartebeest	Bontebok National Park
Bushbuck	Nature's Valley (David and Geoff, in the rain)
Common duiker	Seen from a bus
Klipspringer	Swartberg Pass, Karoo
Grey rhebok	In a field of stubble in the Overberg
Springbok	On a golf course on the way to the West Coast National Park
Dune mole-rat – hills	Cape Peninsula National Park
Striped mouse	Recorded on 5 days, best views in gardens at Kirstenbosch and George
Grey squirrel	Hout Bay Manor garden
Karoo bush rat	La Plume

Reptiles

Angulate tortoise	W Coast National Park	Southern rock agama	Several places, best seen near the rockjumpers
Leopard tortoise	Bontebok National Park	Striped skink	La Plume
Cape cobra	Harold Porter Botanical Gardens	Red-sided skink	Cape Town
Slug eater snake	Storms River Mouth	Cape dwarf gecko	George botanical gardens
Cape girdled lizard	SW Cape		

Amphibians

Banded stream frog	Cape river frog
Clicking stream frog	

Fish Harder (South African mullet), from a river bridge at Nature's Valley



Red-sided skink, Cape Town (AG). Cape girdled lizard, Cape nature reserve (DC).

Butterflies

African monarch	Cabbage white (=large white)	Green-banded swallowtail
Garden acraea	Rainforest brown	Common opal
Blue pansy	Common dotted border	Geranium bronze
Garden commodore (=garden inspector)	Citrus swallowtail	Common hairtail
	Mocker swallowtail	Fynbos blue



Common hairtail (ED) & geranium bronze (CD), both widespread. African monarch in Cape Town, with statue of Cecil Rhodes behind (CD).

Moths

African hummingbird hawkmoth	Bar maiden moth <i>Thyretes caffra</i> (found dead)
Tri-coloured moth <i>Rhodogastria amass</i>	

Odonata

Tropical bluetail *Ishnura senegalensis*
 Conspicuous malachite *Chlorolestes conspicuus*
 Common citril *Ceriatron glabrum*
 Blue emperor *Anax imperator*
 Red-veined darter (=Nomad) *Sympetrum fonscolombi*
 Broad scarlet *Crocothemis erythraea*

Red-veined dropwing *Trithemis arteriosa*
 Orange-winged dropwing *Trithemis kirbyi*
 Navy dropwing *Trithemis furva*
 Two-striped skimmer *Orthetrum caffrum*
 Epaulet skimmer *Orthetrum chryostigma*
 Long skimmer *Orthetrum trinacria*



Odonata, top: broad scarlet, widespread (AG). navy dropwing, Karoo (CD). epaulet skimmer (CD); adult blue skimmers are difficult to separate in the field, but on this immature male its epaulet (single shoulder-stripe) can be seen.
 Odonata, bottom: female tropical bluetail, orange form (CD), red-veined dropwing (CD), both widespread.

Other notable invertebrates – many cannot be easily identified to species level

Dung beetle sp
 Blister beetle sp
 Lunate ladybird *Cheilomenes lunata*
 Harlequin ladybird
 Common dotted fruit chafer *Oxythyrea marginalis*
 American cockroach *Periplaneta americana*
 Carpenter bee *Xylocopa caffra*
 Paper wasp *Polistes marginalis*
 Spider-hunting wasp sp *Pompilidae*

Corn cricket (=armoured bush cricket) *Acanthoplus discoidalis*
 A red-winged grasshopper *Acrotyles sp*
 Common stick grasshopper *Acrida acuminata*
 Panther agate snail
 Cape docile scorpion *Opisthacanthus capensis* (found dead, George)
 Black-legged golden orb web spider *Trichonephila fenestrata*
 Freshwater crab *Potamonautes sp*



Common stick grasshopper (AG); tri-coloured moth, Hout Bay (AG), black-legged golden orb web spider, Featherbed NR (AG).