

WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

17th to 26th January 2003



Photo Richard Andrews

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INTRODUCTION

Participants:

Rick Andrews, Whitchurch, Bristol
Phil Bristow, Cyncoed, Cardiff
Julian Hunt, Fairwater, Cardiff
Mike Powell, Llanishen, Cardiff

Flights:

We booked our overnight British Airways flight from London Heathrow to Cape Town with Wildwings (0117 9658 333 or wildinfo@wildwings.co.uk at a cost of £606.60 each including airport taxes. The outward flight departed at a relatively convenient 16.50pm with us arriving in Cape Town at around 7.00am ready for a full day in the field. The homeward flight was at 20.30pm arriving in London at 06.30am the next day.

Ground arrangements:

Nearly all of our ground arrangements were made through Eve Holloway at Birding Africa (info@birding-africa.com) with the exception of carhire. Eve was excellent and dealt with our questions & enquiries promptly & efficiently. See also www.birding-africa.com
The cost per person of our package with Birding Africa was R1760 (£127.30) and covered the following:

3 nights accommodation at Windy Ridge, Simon's Town.

1 night bed & breakfast at Undulata Lodge, Springbok.

Anne Albatross Cape Pelagic trip out of Simon's Town.

Eve also made reservations for us with Buchu Bush Camp & Diepvlei Guest House and arranged for Dave Winter to guide us on the last day.

Car hire:

We booked our Europcar 10-day rental through Wildwings at a total cost of £224 fully inclusive & unlimited mileage plus a further £10 on arrival for two additional drivers.

We were provided with a 5-door air-conditioned Nissan Sentra which proved very satisfactory even on the gravel tracks of Namaqualand.

Accommodation:

Windy Ridge, Froggy Farm, Simon's Town (3 nights).

First class self-catering accommodation with a verandah that overlooked False Bay and had an excellent semi-natural fynbos garden.

Buchu Bush Camp, De Hoop NR (1 night) bushcamp@sdm.dorea.co.za

Dinner, bed & breakfast at the recently built two bedroom thatched chalets next to the De Hoop NR main entrance.

Harbour View Guest House, Yzerfontein (1 night).

Bed & breakfast at a superb guesthouse that overlooked the harbour at Yzerfontein.

Undulata Guest House, Springbok (1 night).

Good quality bed & breakfast with an Afrikaans family on the western side of Springbok.

Diepvlei Guest House near Pofadder (1 night) diepvlei@netactive.co.za

Dinner, bed & breakfast. A most entertaining evening with Vernon Miller at his farm in the middle of nowhere where, over several beers, he gave us an Afrikaans view on why South Africa could go the way of Zimbabwe.

Croeso Guest House, Langebaan (1 night).

Standard quality bed & breakfast with an ex-pat Welsh couple on the north side of West Coast NP.

Holiday Inn Express, Century City, Cape Town (1 night).

Standard Holiday Inn Express bed & continental breakfast.

Insurance:

Previous experience with insurance companies led us back to Viking Travelsafe on 0870 6060 522. The required cover worked out at £25 each.

Pelagic:

We booked our Anne Albatross Cape Pelagic trip on the Zest II out of Simon's Town through Birding Africa at a cost of US\$85.00 each. You can also contact the company on www.annealbatross.org or anne@annealbatross.org.

Our trip was arranged around the one planned January trip so it pays to check well in advance if a pelagic is running during your visit. They run every month ranging from one trip in December to March then twice monthly April to November. You will need to keep two days free as if the weather is poor on the Saturday the boat will then run on the Sunday. Several seabird experts will be on board to help with id, which in the main is done naked eye, as binoculars become useless in the inevitable swell. You will need two hands to hold on!!

Immunisations:

For the most up to date information on jabs required contact your own GP or MASTA (Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad) on 09068 224 100 or www.masta.org who offer an excellent postal service. For South Africa we were advised that no additional immunisation against Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid or Hepatitis "A" was necessary and malaria would not be a problem in the Western Cape area. Birders world-wide however are likely to become more exposed to TB and immunisation should be considered.

Site Guide, Field Guide & Map

We extensively used the Essential Birding Guide to Western South Africa (Key routes from Cape Town to the Kalahari) by Callan Cohen & Claire Spottiswoode (ISBN 1 86872 524 3). This publication proved invaluable and contains many useful maps, tips & diagrams. The excellent Sasol field guide, Birds of Southern Africa by Sinclair, Hockey & Tarboton was used throughout (ISBN 1 86872 721 1). We also used the Insight Maps to South Africa and Cape Town available from Waterstone's at £4.99 each.

Bird Guide:

We decided to use a local guide on our last day only when we returned to Cape Town in order to pick up any species at the Cape that we had missed.

Through Birding Africa we secured the services of Dave Winter who met us close to his home at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. His fee for the day was £90. During the preceding few days we had kept Dave advised of species were still missing. The night before we met up we gave him a list of around 15 species we had still not seen. On our last day he helped us find no fewer than 9 of these. 082 545 8000 or DWinter@kanteys.co.za

We also bumped into Callan Cohen several times as he guided other visitors and he was helpful in putting us onto a few species.

Photographs:

Photos by Rich Andrews can be viewed at <http://www.cvlbirding.co.uk/southafricagallery.html>

References:

The following 4 reports were used with the first two consulted widely and available on www.Surfbirds.com.

South Africa – Cape Region, 21st November to 5th December 1998 by Mark Sutton.

Report on birds & other wildlife, South Africa, 6th August to 2nd September 2001 by Dave & Penny Smallshire DaveSmalls@aol.com

South African nine-day wonder, 24th August to 1st September 2001 by Andrew Duff & Ann Lawson andrew.duff@virgin.net

Cape Town area, South Africa, 8th to 20th September 2002 by Richard Smith
rgsmith@birdpix.freerve.co.uk

Detailed itinerary:

Day 1: Arrived at Cape Town International Airport from London, clearing customs at around 07.30. Picked up the car from the Europcar desk and drove straight to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens for the rest of the morning. After lunch we drove to Simon's Town to collect the keys to our Windy Ridge accommodation via the pools at Zandvlei near Muizenberg on the way. Spent the afternoon at Millers Point, south of Simon's Town & at Boulders Beach.

Overnight at Windy Ridge, Froggy Farm, Simon's Town.

Birding highlights:

Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens: European Honey Buzzard, African Olive Pigeon (10), Burchell's Coucal (2), Spotted Eagle Owl (3), Sombre Greenbul (6), Olive Thrush (6), Cape Batis (2), Cape Sugarbird (15), Orange-breasted Sunbird (20).

Zandvlei: Little Bittern (2), Red-knobbed Coot (100), White-rumped Swift (20), Malachite Kingfisher (2).

Simon's Town area: African Penguin (500+), Bank Cormorant (6), African Black Oystercatcher (5), Familiar Chat, Cape Sugarbird (20), Malachite Sunbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird (40).

Day 2: On the dock at Simon's Town harbour before 7.00am to meet up with the Zest II and the other birders & guides for the pelagic trip south of Cape Point. Returned at 15.00pm then drove to Kommetjie for the rest of the afternoon.

Overnight at Windy Ridge.

Birding highlights:

Pelagic: Shy Albatross (150), Black-browed Albatross (100), Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross (8), Great-winged Petrel (10), Southern Giant Petrel (2), Spectacled Petrel (2), White-chinned Petrel (400), Wilson's Storm Petrel (12), Subantarctic Skua (3), Sabine's Gull (5),

Kommetjie: Crowned Cormorant (3), African Black Oystercatcher (10), White-fronted Plover.

Day 3: Drove to Cape of Good Hope NR via Partridge Point. Spent the afternoon at Strandfontein Sewage Works & Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary.

Overnight at Windy Ridge.

Birding highlights:

Cape of Good Hope NR: Ground Woodpecker (6), White-necked Raven (4), Plain-backed Pipit (6), Cape Siskin (2), Cape Bunting (2).

Strandfontein/Rondevlei: Reed Cormorant (30), African Spoonbill (4), Cape Teal (500), Red-billed Teal (20), Cape Shoveler (150), Southern Pochard (15), Maccua Duck (20), African Marsh Harrier (3), Three-banded Plover (5), African Reed Warbler (6), Lesser Swamp-warbler (3), Cape Grassbird, Levallant's Cisticola (10), Southern Masked Weaver (6), Pin-tailed Whydah (3).

Day 4: Headed to Sir Lowry's Pass with stops at Partridge Point (south of Simon's Town), Scarborough, Kommetjie & Constantia Greenbelts on the way. Mid afternoon drove through the Overberg before taking the gravel road from Swellendam to De Hoop NR via Malgas. Overnight at Buchu Bush Camp.

Birding highlights:

Partridge Point: Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk.

Scarborough: White-chinned Petrel (3), African Black Oystercatcher (24).

Constantia Greenbelts: African Olive Pigeon (5), Knysna Warbler (2), African Dusky Flycatcher (6), African Paradise Flycatcher (2).

Sir Lowry's Pass: African Black Duck (2), Cape Rock-thrush, Cape Rock-jumper (4), Victorin's Warbler, Grey-backed Cisticola (2), Neddicky (10), Cape Siskin (12).

N2 through the Overberg: Jackal Buzzard (2), Blue Crane (25).

Swellendam to De Hoop: Lesser Kestrel (100), Denham's Bustard (12), Karoo Korhaan (6), Olive Woodpecker, Algulhas Long-billed Lark (2).

Day 5: Worked De Hoop NR and Potberg Mountain until lunchtime before heading to Struisbaai Plaat via Bredasdorp. Then drove back towards Cape Town with an evening stop at roadside pools at Milnerton.

Overnight at Harbour View Guesthouse, Yzerfontein.

Birding highlights:

De Hoop NR: Secretarybird, Black Harrier (2), Spotted Dikkop (2), Horus Swift (2), Speckled Mousebird (15), Red-faced Mousebird (5), African Hoopoe (5), Cape Penduline Tit (6), Sombre Greenbul (2), Southern Tchagra, Bokmakierie (10), White-throated Canary (6).

Potberg Mountain: Cape Vulture (14), Martial Eagle, Blue Crane (20), Knysna Woodpecker (2), Amethyst Sunbird.

Struisbaai Plaat: African Fish Eagle, African Black Oystercatcher (5), Damara Tern (8).

Milnerton: White-backed Duck (6), Cape Eagle Owl.

Day 6: Visited the Yzerfontein Gypsum mine then spent the rest of the morning and early afternoon at West Coast NP. Short visit to the Darling area then a long drive from Malmesbury to Springbok on the N7.

Overnight at the Undulata Guest House, Springbok.

Birding highlights:

Yzerfontein Gypsum Mine: Chestnut-banded Plover (7).

West Coast NP: Yellow-billed Egret, South African Shelduck (24), Black Harrier (2), White-backed Mousebird (7), Banded Martin (6), Wattled Starling (30).

Malmesbury to Springbok: Verreaux's Eagle, Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk, Southern Black Korhaan (6), Cape Eagle Owl, Karoo Chat (2).

Day 7: Spent the whole morning at Geogap NR before driving to Augrabies Falls NP in the heat of the day. Late afternoon spent at Augrabies before returning to Poffader then driving down gravel tracks towards Gamoep in the dark. Take plenty of water with you & keep the petrol tank topped up when in this area, the distances between stops are quite large.

Overnight at the Diepvlei Guest House.

Birding highlights:

Springbok: Black-headed Canary (2).

Geogap NR: Verreaux's Eagle (2), Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk (5), Namaqua Sandgrouse (30+), White-backed Mousebird (20), Mountain Wheatear (20), Tractrac Chat, Karoo Chat (3), Sthn. Ant-eating Chat (20), Layard's Tit-babbler (4), Karoo Eremomela (20), Cinnamon-breasted Warbler (2), Namaqua Warbler (3), Fairy Flycatcher (3), Long-billed Pipit, Cape Glossy Starling (2), Pale-winged Starling (5), Dusky Sunbird (6).

Springbok to Augrabies: Martial Eagle, Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk (5), Greater Kestrel (11), Spike-heeled Lark (4), Stark's Lark (2), Grey-backed Sparrowlark (20), Black-eared Sparrowlark, Sociable Weaver (40).

Augrabies Falls NP: White-backed Mousebird (30), Swallow-tailed Bee-eater (2), African red-eyed Bulbul (40), Ashy Tit (3), Karoo Thrush, Black-chested Prinia (2), Pale-winged Starling (5), Orange River White-eye (25), Southern Grey-headed Sparrow (4).

Day 8: From early morning we worked the track between Diepvllei & Koa Dunes stopping at various roadside water troughs. Spent a few hours at Koa Dunes area until mid morning before the long drive south from Pofadder to Langebaan. Evening visit to Tienie Versveld NR.

Overnight at the Croeso Guest House, Langebaan.

Birding highlights:

Diepvllei to Koa Dunes: Karoo Korhaan (4), Burchell's Courser (4), Namaqua Sandgrouse (30), Karoo Long-billed Lark (4), Grey-backed Sparrowlark (100), Blk-eared Sparrowlark (6), Fairy Flycatcher, Scaly-feathered Finch (9).

Koa Dunes area: Pygmy Falcon (3), Namaqua Sandgrouse (20), Fawn-coloured Lark (2), Red Lark (2), Rufous-eared Warbler (3).

Tienie Versveld NR: Cloud Cisticola (3), Orange-throated Longclaw (7).

Day 9: After breakfast, we drove into the West Coast NP from the Langebaan (northern) entrance. We made a short stop at Yzerfontein to look for cetaceans before driving to Paarl where we visited the Bird Sanctuary/Sewage Works & the Mountain Wildflower Garden.

Overnight at the Holiday Inn Express, Century City.

Birding highlights:

Langebaan: Southern Black Korhaan (5), Grey Tit (2).

West Coast NP: African Fish Eagle, African Marsh Harrier (3), Grey-winged Francolin (30), African Rail (2), Black Crake (2), Chestnut-banded Plover (8), Kittlitz's Plover (20), Cape Penduline Tit (21), Karoo Lark (5), Lesser Swamp-warbler (4), Little Rush-warbler (3), Wattled Starling (60).

Yzerfontein Harbour: Crowned Cormorant (2), Bank Cormorant (8), African Black Oystercatcher (11).

Paarl Sewage Works African Spoonbill (6), Greater Painted Snipe (3), Water Dikkop (2), White-winged Tern (500).

Paarl Mountain: Black Saw-wing (2), Orange-breasted Sunbird.

Day 10: Met Dave Winter at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens after which we visited several sites in the Constantia Greenbelts. Re-visited Paarl Mountain, close to the Afrikaans Language Monument, before driving to a site for Cape Clapper Lark in the Darling area. Finally drove to Vredenburg/Paternoster before returning to Cape Town for our evening flight home.

Birding highlights:

Kirstenbosch: Forest Buzzard, Sombre Greenbul (6).

Constantia Greenbelts: African Olive Pigeon (5), Lemon Dove, Knysna Warbler, Bar-throated Apalis (3), Forest Canary (2).

Paarl Mountain: Verreaux's Eagle, Black Saw-wing (4), Sweet Waxbill (2), Protea Seed-eater (3), Streaky-headed Seed-eater (2).

Darling: Black Sparrowhawk, Cape Clapper Lark (2).

Paternoster: Cape Long-billed Lark, Large-billed Lark (3), Sickle-winged Chat (2).