

SOUTH AFRICA

BIRDS OF THE WESTERN CAPE AND KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Yellow-billed Hornbill
(Geoff Crane)



Wednesday September 29th – Wednesday October 13th

Leaders: Geoff Crane and Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 280-320

South Africa is a large, modern and developing country situated at the 'bottom end' of the African continent. The country has large protected areas in the form of national parks within its boundaries, thus offering visiting birders a huge range of bird and mammal life. This unique itinerary takes in the Western Cape with its numerous regional endemics, a pelagic trip off Cape Town for seabirds and, in the east, a visit to the world famous Kruger National Park.

Day 1: A late afternoon flight from London to Cape Town where arrival is on the following morning.

Day 2: After clearing customs, we transfer to our guest house, where you have the opportunity to freshen up before visiting the beautiful Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens. There are several walks leading through the gardens, host to Black Sawing, Cape and Forest Canaries, African Paradise Flycatcher, African Olive Pigeon and Cape Sugarbird. In the cultivated gardens, Orange-breasted Southern Double-collard Sunbirds, Cape Francolin, Karoo Prinia and Cape Robin-Chat occur. Four-night stay in the Cape Peninsula.

Day 3: We spend a leisurely day experiencing the rugged beauty of the Peninsula with its spectacular coastline and diverse fauna and flora. We follow the False Bay coastline to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve which is now part of the Table Mountain National Park. The park has a variety of mammals - Chacma Baboon, Cape Mountain Zebra, Bontebok, Red Hartebeest, Eland and Cape Grysbok. Birdlife includes Cape Grassbird, Ground Woodpecker and Cape Rock Thrush. Raptors are well represented in the reserve - Verreaux's Eagle, Black Harrier, Jackal Buzzard, and Peregrine Falcon. At Cape Point we look out for African Black Oystercatcher, Hartlaub's Gull, Cape Siskin, Fiscal Flycatcher and Cape Bulbul. After a picnic lunch, we visit the African Penguin colony at Simon's Town.

Day 4: We have an early breakfast before boarding a boat for a pelagic off the Cape

of Good Hope. It is possible to observe up to thirty species of seabirds. Regularly occurring species include Shy, Black-browed, Atlantic and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, Southern Giant Petrel, Cape and White-chinned Petrels, Great and Sooty Shearwaters, Wilson's Storm and Black-bellied Storm Petrels, Subantarctic Skua and Sabine's Gull. Rarer species we hope to locate are Great-winged and Soft-plumaged Petrels and Little Shearwater.

Day 5: Our first port of call is Rondevlei Bird Reserve in the heart of Cape Town. Water birds are well represented here - Cape Shoveler, African Marsh Harrier, African Purple Swamphen, Black Crake, Cape Longclaw, Cape Weaver, Cape White-eye and Southern Boubou. After lunch, we visit Strandfontein Water Purification Plant looking out for Black-necked Grebe, Cape Teal, Southern Pochard, Maccoa and Yellow-billed Ducks and Red-billed Teal.

Day 6: This morning we take the early flight from Cape Town to Johannesburg. We head to the Kruger National Park via the Malelane Gate, stopping for lunch en route. Bergendal is one of the most attractive camps in the Kruger Park where we have a three-night stay. The buildings are set within natural bush, the gardens planted with flowering shrubs and aloes, and the restaurant looks onto a small dam. The camp is surrounded by rocky hillsides covered in mixed broad-leafed woodland known as Malelane Mountain Bushveld.

Day 7: An early morning walk through the camp looking out for Natal and Crested Francolins, African Hawk Eagle, Brown-

headed Parrot, Red-chested, African and Dideric Cuckoos, White-throated Robin-Chat, Lesser Honeyguide, Grey-headed and Orange-breasted Bush-Shrikes, Cape Glossy Starling, Scarlet-chested, Amethyst and White-bellied Sunbirds, Blue Waxbill and African Firefinch. After breakfast we embark on a game drive looking for Gorgeous Bush-Shrike, Stierling's Wren-Warbler and Grey-headed Kingfisher. Rocky hillsides attract Mocking Cliff-Chat and Red-winged Starlings. For our afternoon drive, we visit the hills and koppies of the southern area for African Wild Dog, Bushbuck, Klipspringer and Rock Hyrax.

Day 8: This morning we start the day with a drive searching for Swainson's and Shelley's Francolins, Dark Chanting Goshawk, African Finfoot, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-lark, Red-capped Robin-Chat, Southern White-crowned and Magpie Shrikes and Red-billed Oxpeckers. Breakfast is taken at the Afsaal picnic area before continuing on to the Gardenia Hide, overlooking the Mhlambane River. Return to base for a late afternoon's birding. After dinner we take a night drive for African Scops-Owl, Southern White-faced Scops-Owl, African Barred Owllet, Spotted and Verreaux's Eagle Owls, Fiery-necked, Square-tailed and Freckled Nightjars and Bronze-winged Courser.

Day 9: We start the day by visiting savanna plains, host to Kori Bustard, Secretarybird, Black-bellied Bustard, Sabota Lark, African Pipit and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-lark. Other ground-dwelling species of interest



Blue Cranes (Geoff Crane)

that are regularly found are Senegal Lapwing, Bronze-winged and Temminck's Coursers. After good rains, Common and Harlequin Quails and Small Buttonquail call from the long grass, and Monotonous Larks call incessantly from any available perch. We have the afternoon at leisure in the Lower Sabie Camp our base for the next two nights.

Day 10: An early morning game and birdwatching drive around the eastern area of the park. The open savanna habitat with large trees, high population density of herbivores and attendant predators, is prime habitat for large raptors - Martial, Tawny, Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles. Kills attract White-headed, Lappet-faced, African White-backed, Hooded and sometimes Cape Vultures. We return to camp for a late breakfast and then go out for another short drive following the river system. The afternoon is spent birdwatching through the camp and enjoying the view across the river. White-crowned Lapwing, Lesser Jacana and Goliath Heron feed and roost on the sand banks of the river whilst Mosque, Red-breasted and Grey-rumped Swallows feed over the camp. Head back to

Johannesburg Airport for our flight back to Cape Town and transfer to Stellenbosch.

Day 11: Langebaan Lagoon is our first birding stop, followed by a visit to the Postberg Flower Reserve. The reserve is dominated by coastal strandveld which hosts a large number of bush birds - Long-billed Crombec, Bar-throated Apalis, Grey-backed Cisticola, Layard's Tit-babbler, Karoo Lark, Cape Penduline Tit, Namaqua Dove, Karoo Scrub-Robin, Yellow Canary and Grey-wing Francolin. Raptors may include Black Harrier. We head inland, traversing the agricultural lands of the Swartland searching for Blue Crane, Large-billed, Red-capped and Cape Clapper Larks, Capped Wheatear, Cloud Cisticola, Red Bishop, Lark, Cape Sparrow, Pied Starling and Pin-tailed Whydah. Overnight at Ceres.

Day 12: We have an early start to visit Tankwa Karoo where vantage spots may produce Cinnamon-breasted and Namaqua Warblers, Pirit Batis, Fairy Flycatcher, Mountain Chat, Protea and White-throated Canaries and Karoo Eremomela. At Worcester we take a leisurely walk around the Karoo National

Botanical Gardens. These gardens have the hardy plants of the Karoo, attracting White-backed Mousebird, Malachite Sunbird, Pale-winged Starling, Bar-throated Apalis and Acacia Pied Barbet. Transfer to Hermanus for two nights.

Day 13: After breakfast we walk along the coastal path, watching whales and sea birds from the cliff tops. The wheat fields of Overberg are next on the agenda, home to Blue Crane, Jackal and Steppe Buzzards, Southern Black and Denham's Bustards and Secretarybird.

Day 14: From Hermanus we follow the spectacular coastline to the Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens. The gardens attract African Black Duck, Olive Woodpecker, Brimstone Canary and Sweet Waxbill. After a farewell lunch in the gardens, we have a short walk at Rooiels where, with luck, Cape Rockjumper, Victorin's Warbler, Yellow-rumped Widow and Orange-breasted Sunbird will be present. Transfer to Cape Town for the flight home to Europe with arrival on the following morning.

Tour Price London/London: £3995

Tour Price Cape Town/Cape Town: £3390

Single room: £250

Deposit: £400

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport, boat trips, entrance and permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature and any relevant fuel surcharges,

Good quality accommodation throughout in hotels, guest houses and bungalows within Kruger National Park.

Food is of an international standard based on meat and fish (latter in the Cape area).

Transport by minibus throughout. Short to medium walks over undulating terrain.