

Western Cape Custom Tour 4 – 8 December 2017

By Dominic Rollinson



Orange-breasted Sunbird – one of the five species of sunbirds seen on this trip



TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1 – Cape Town to Mudlark Riverfront Lodge

Day 2 – Overberg

Day 3 – Overberg to Tankwa Karoo

Day 4 – Tankwa Karoo

Day 5 – Tankwa Karoo to Cape Town

OVERNIGHT

Mudlark Riverfront Lodge, Infanta Mudlark Riverfront Lodge, Infanta Sothemba Lodge, Tankwa Karoo Sothemba Lodge, Tankwa Karoo N/A

HIGHLIGHTS

Bank and Crowned Cormorants, Black Stork, African Oystercatcher, Cape Gannet, Cape Vulture, Blue Crane, African Penguin, Damara Tern, Cape Spurfowl, Grey-winged Francolin, Karoo Korhaan, Karoo Long-billed, Agulhas Long-billed, and Large-billed Larks, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Grey Tit, Karoo and Tractrac Chats, Namaqua, Layard's, Rufous-eared, and Victorin's Warblers, Fairy Flycatcher, Orange-breasted, Southern Double-collared, and Greater Double-collared Sunbirds, Cape Sugarbird, Black-headed Canary, Cape Siskin, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting

OVERVIEW

This private tour for was organized to try to photograph as many species as possible throughout the Western Cape region. The tour lasted five days and included time birding the Overberg and Tankwa Karoo regions.

Day 1 – 4 December 2017. Arrival in Cape Town, birding False Bay to Infanta

I fetched Bez from the airport around mid-morning, and despite having been traveling for the last 30 hours she was rearing to go and was not suffering from jetlag. We headed east to the small town of Rooiels. Upon arrival we realized that our task of finding Cape Rockjumper may be a difficult one, as the wind was blowing incredibly strongly. We did hear both Cape Rockjumper and Ground Woodpecker higher up on the slopes but unfortunately could not see the birds. Most other birds were also seeking shelter from the wind. However, we did find Familiar Chat, Cape Bunting, and Cape Siskin, while Cape Bulbul, Malachite Sunbird, and Streaky-headed Seedeater were seen in the gardens nearby.

We moved to a patch of fynbos which was slightly more sheltered from the wind, and here we had brief glimpses of **Victorin's Warbler** as well as a number of other more common species, including **Yellow Bishop** and **Karoo Prinia**.

Our next stop was the African Penguin colony at Stony Point in Betty's Bay. Many African Penguins were seen, some of which were in their artificial breeding burrows. We also saw White-breasted, Cape, Crowned, and Bank Cormorants breeding on the nearby rocks. A single Cape Gannet was seen just offshore. African Oystercatcher was also spotted on the rocks nearby, while in the adjacent scrub we found Klaas's Cuckoo and Southern Grey-headed Sparrow. We also managed to record a single male Cape Rock Thrush while driving through Betty's Bay.

From Betty's Bay we had the long drive east to Mudlark Riverfront Lodge near Infanta along the Breede River mouth, where we would be staying the next two nights. We passed through the wheat belt, which despite the monoculture had large numbers of birds present. We saw many **Red-capped** and **Large-billed Larks**, **Cape Crow**, **Capped Wheatear**, **Pied Starling**,



Bokmakierie, Southern Red Bishop, and Yellow Canary, while the larger, scarcer birds included Denham's Bustard, Karoo Korhaan, and Blue Crane.

After checking into Mudlark in the early evening we had a quick walk around the garden, which yielded Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Sugarbird, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape Weaver, and Cape Bulbul. The adjacent scrub and fields held Crowned Lapwing, Cape Spurfowl, Grey-winged Francolin, Bokmakierie, Bar-throated Apalis, and Grey-backed Cisticola.



Grey-winged Francolin

Day 2 – 5 December 2017. Birding Infanta and De Mond and De Hoop Nature Reserves

This morning saw us rising with the sun and out looking for Knysna Woodpecker and Southern Tchagra. Unfortunately the woodpecker would not show and would end up eluding us on this trip. However, we had multiple sightings of Southern Tchagra, along with Spotted Thick-knee, Greater Striped Swallow, White-throated Canary, Namaqua Dove, Speckled Mousebird, and surprisingly Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. A fee Cape Hares were also seen on our early morning drive.

After breakfast we took a fairly long drive to De Mond Nature Reserve near Bredasdorp to target a few coastal waterbird species. En route to De Mond we found a **Secretarybird** striding through the grasslands, as well as many **Jackal Buzzards** and a pair of **Peregrine Falcons**. Our timing



was right for low tide at De Mond, and we soon racked up a bunch of wader and tern species. The diminutive **Damara Tern** was picked out among the thousands of **Common Terns**, with small numbers of **Greater Crested Terns**. **Common Ringed Plovers** were the most abundant wader around, with large numbers of **Little Stints**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Common Greenshank**, **Common Whimbrel**, and **White-fronted Plover**, as well as a single **Greater Sand Plover**.

We then made our way back east to De Hoop Nature Reserve. By this time the wind had again picked up and made things tricky. However, on the plains we managed great views of our target, **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**. Here we also saw Cape Mountain Zebra, Common Eland, and Chacma Baboon. We walked around the campsite hoping to find Knysna Woodpecker, which sadly did not play along. But we did find a pair of **Eurasian Golden Orioles** (a rare bird in the Western Cape), **Sombre Greenbul**, **Pearl-breasted Swallow**, and **Southern Boubou**. On the way back to Mudlark we stopped briefly at the Potberg section of the reserve and soon had a few **Cape Vultures** returning to their roost and, surprisingly, our first sighting of **Cape White-eye** for the trip.



Agulhas Long-billed Lark

Day 3 – 6 December 2017. Birding around Infanta, Malgas, and driving to Tankwa Karoo Up early again the next morning when we birded a large pan near Mudlark. The birding here was great and we added Cape Shoveler, Maccoa and Yellow-billed Ducks, Red-billed Teal, South African Shelduck, Black-crowned Night Heron, African Snipe, Ruff, Three-banded and Kittlitz's Plovers, and Marsh and Wood Sandpipers, as well as African Spoonbill.

After breakfast we started the long drive north into the Tankwa Karoo. We stopped briefly at the village of Malgas, where we quickly added African Paradise Flycatcher, Amethyst Sunbird, Lesser Honeyguide, and a slightly out-of-range pair of Greater Double-collared Sunbirds.

A few hours later we arrived at Karooport on the edge of the Tankwa Karoo. In the acacia scrub we found Pririt Batis, Acacia Pied Barbet, Namaqua and Rufous-vented Warblers, Fairy



Flycatcher, White-backed Mousebird, and Olive Thrush. From here we made our way into the plains and rocky gorges of the Tankwa Karoo. Mountain Wheatear, Long-billed Crombec, and Layard's Warbler were seen at one of the rocky gorges, and Karoo Chats were common in the plains. After checking into our accommodation at Sothemba Lodge we spent the rest of the afternoon at Skitteryfloof. Here we saw Levaillant's Cisticola and African Reed Warbler; however, unfortunately, Red-chested Flufftail and African Rail would go on the heard-only list.

Day 4 – 7 December 2017. Tankwa Karoo and the Tankwa Karoo National Park

Before breakfast the next morning we birded Skitterykloof again to try for Cinnamon-breasted Warbler; we managed brief views but not enough to obtain photographs. Pale-winged Starling was seen flying distantly along the edge of the cliffs. A Klipspringer was also seen here, effortlessly moving along the rocky hill slope. We then made our way north toward the Tankwa Karoo National Park, frequently stopping en route to explore the plains. We came across a few groups of Karoo Eremomela, Karoo and Spike-heeled Larks, Grey Tit, Rufous-eared Warbler, and Pale Chanting Goshawk and heard a Southern Black Korhaan calling, but unfortunately could not find the bird. We birded a few of the acacia-lined river courses and found Pririt Batis, Karoo Scrub Robin, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, and Yellow-vented Eremomela. As we got into the national park we starting seeing more and more Tractrac Chats, and at a small koppie we found a pair of Karoo Long-billed Larks. In the desolate plains of the national park we saw a few Springbok and the strikingly patterned Gemsbok. The day ended with a night drive, with the highlights being Freckled Nightjar and Giant Ground Gecko.



Rufous-eared Warbler

Day 5 – 8 December 2017. Tankwa Karoo, Mitchell's Pass, Strandfontein Sewage Works



The morning was spent birding around the lodge, and we were lucky enough to find a female Black-headed Canary before breakfast. Straight after breakfast we left the Tankwa Karoo and spent some time birding Mitchell's Pass near Ceres. We didn't find Protea Canary but did see Swee Waxbill, Orange-breasted Sunbird, and Black Stork and Booted Eagle flying overhead. After the long drive back toward Cape Town we decided to have a couple of hours around Strandfontein Sewage Works before dropping Bez off in town to end the tour. Just outside of Strandfontein we found the invasive House Crow, which was busy building a nest. New birds at Strandfontein included Cape Teal, Pied Avocet, Water Thick-knee, Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Great White Pelican, Glossy Ibis, Grey-headed Gull, Zitting Cisticola, and an African Marsh Harrier quartering low above the reedbeds.

This ended an enjoyable five days photographing the Western Cape's bird life. The trip total ended with 186 bird species, plus five heard only.

WESTERN CAPE CUSTOM TOUR BIRD LIST DECEMBER 2017 Bold = country endemic Status: NT = Near-threatened, VU = Vulnerable, EN = Endangered			
	STRUTHIONIFORMES		
<u>Ostriches</u>	Struthionidae		
Common Ostrich	Struthio camelus	1	
	ANSERIFORMES		
Ducks, Geese and Swans	Anatidae		
Spur-winged Goose	Plectropterus gambensis	1	
Egyptian Goose	Alopochen aegyptiaca	1	
South African Shelduck	Tadorna cana	1	
Cape Shoveler	Spatula smithii	1	
African Black Duck	Anas sparsa	1	
Yellow-billed Duck	Anas undulata	1	
Cape Teal	Anas capensis	1	
Red-billed Teal	Anas erythrorhyncha	1	
Southern Pochard	Netta erythrophthalma	1	
Maccoa Duck - NT	Oxyura maccoa	1	
	GALLIFORMES		
Guineafowl	<u>Numididae</u>		
Helmeted Guineafowl	Numida meleagris	1	
Pheasants and allies	Phasianidae		
Grey-winged Francolin	Scleroptila afra	1	
Cape Spurfowl	Pternistis capensis	1	
	SPHENISCIFORMES		



Penguins	Spheniscidae	
African Penguin - EN	Spheniscus demersus	1
	PODICIPEDIFORMES	
Grebes	<u>Podicipedidae</u>	
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	1
	PHOENICOPTERIFORMES	
<u>Flamingos</u>	Phoenicopteridae	
Greater Flamingo	Phoenicopterus roseus	1
Lesser Flamingo - NT	Phoeniconaias minor	1
-	CICONIIFORMES	
<u>Storks</u>	<u>Ciconiidae</u>	
Black Stork	Ciconia nigra	1
White Stork	Ciconia ciconia	1
	PELECANIFORMES	
Ibises, Spoonbills	Threskiornithidae	
African Sacred Ibis	Threskiornis aethiopicus	1
Hadada Ibis	Bostrychia hagedash	1
Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus	1
African Spoonbill	Platalea alba	1
Herons, Bitterns	<u>Ardeidae</u>	
Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax	1
Western Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	1
Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	1
Black-headed Heron	Ardea melanocephala	1
Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	1
Pelicans	<u>Pelecanidae</u>	
Great White Pelican	Pelecanus onocrotalus	1
	SULIFORMES	
Gannets, Boobies	<u>Sulidae</u>	
Cape Gannet - VU	Morus capensis	1
Cormorants, Shags	Phalacrocoracidae	
Reed Cormorant	Microcarbo africanus	1
Crowned Cormorant - NT	Microcarbo coronatus	1
Bank Cormorant - EN	Phalacrocorax neglectus	1
White-breasted Cormorant	Phalacrocorax lucidus	1
Cape Cormorant - EN	Phalacrocorax capensis	1
	ACCIPITRIFORMES	
Secretarybird	<u>Sagittariidae</u>	
Secretarybird - VU	Sagittarius serpentarius	1



Kites, Hawks and Eagles	<u>Accipitridae</u>	
Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus	1
Cape Vulture - EN	Gyps coprotheres	1
Booted Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus	1
Pale Chanting Goshawk	Melierax canorus	1
African Marsh Harrier	Circus ranivorus	1
Yellow-billed Kite	Milvus aegyptius	1
Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo	1
Jackal Buzzard	Buteo rufofuscus	1
	OTIDIFORMES	
<u>Bustards</u>	<u>Otididae</u>	
Denham's Bustard - NT	Neotis denhami	1
Karoo Korhaan	Eupodotis vigorsii	1
Southern Black Korhaan	Afrotis afra	Н
	GRUIFORMES	
<u>Flufftails</u>	<u>Sarothruridae</u>	
Red-chested Flufftail	Sarothrura rufa	Н
Rails, Crakes and Coots	Rallidae	
African Rail	Rallus caerulescens	Н
Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	1
Red-knobbed Coot	Fulica cristata	1
Cranes	Gruidae	
Blue Crane - VU	Grus paradisea	1
	CHARADRIIFORMES	
Stone-curlews, Thick-knees	Burhinidae	
Water Thick-knee	Burhinus vermiculatus	1
Spotted Thick-knee	Burhinus capensis	1
<u>Oystercatchers</u>	Haematopodidae	
African Oystercatcher - NT	Haematopus moquini	1
Stilts, Avocets	<u>Recurvirostridae</u>	
Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	1
Pied Avocet	Recurvirostra avosetta	1
<u>Plovers</u>	<u>Charadriidae</u>	
Blacksmith Lapwing	Vanellus armatus	1
Crowned Lapwing	Vanellus coronatus	1
Grey Plover	Pluvialis squatarola	1
Common Ringed Plover	Charadrius hiaticula	1
Kittlitz's Plover	Charadrius pecuarius	1
Three-banded Plover	Charadrius tricollaris	1





White-rumped Swift	Apus caffer	1
	COLIIFORMES	
<u>Mousebirds</u>	<u>Coliidae</u>	
Speckled Mousebird	Colius striatus	1
White-backed Mousebird	Colius colius	1
	CORACIIFORMES	
Kingfishers	Alcedinidae	
Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis	1
	BUCEROTIFORMES	
Hoopoes	Upupidae	
African Hoopoe	Upupa africana	1
•	PICIFORMES	
African Barbets	<u>Lybiidae</u>	
Acacia Pied Barbet	Tricholaema leucomelas	1
<u>Honeyguides</u>	<u>Indicatoridae</u>	
Lesser Honeyguide	Indicator minor	1
Woodpeckers	Picidae	
Ground Woodpecker	Geocolaptes olivaceus	Н
-	FALCONIFORMES	
Caracaras, Falcons	Falconidae	
Rock Kestrel	Falco rupicolus	1
Greater Kestrel	Falco rupicoloides	1
Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus	1
	PASSERIFORMES	
Wattle-eyes, Batises	Platysteiridae	
Pririt Batis	Batis pririt	1
Bushshrikes	Malaconotidae	
Bokmakierie	Telophorus zeylonus	1
Southern Tchagra	Tchagra tchagra	1
Southern Boubou	Laniarius ferrugineus	1
Shrikes	Laniidae	
Southern Fiscal	Lanius collaris	1
Figbirds, Orioles	<u>Oriolidae</u>	
Eurasian Golden Oriole	Oriolus oriolus	1
<u>Drongos</u>	<u>Dicruridae</u>	
Square-tailed Drongo	Dicrurus ludwigii	1
Monarchs	Monarchidae	
African Paradise Flycatcher	Terpsiphone viridis	1
Crows, Jays	Corvidae	







Weavers, Widowbirds	Ploceidae	
Cape Weaver	Ploceus capensis	1
Southern Masked Weaver	Ploceus velatus	1
Southern Red Bishop	Euplectes orix	1
Yellow Bishop	Euplectes capensis	1
Waxbills, Munias and allies	Estrildidae	
Swee Waxbill	Coccopygia melanotis	1
Common Waxbill	Estrilda astrild	1
Indigobirds, Whydahs	<u>Viduidae</u>	
Pin-tailed Whydah	Vidua macroura	1
Wagtails, Pipits	Motacillidae	
Cape Wagtail	Motacilla capensis	1
African Pipit	Anthus cinnamomeus	1
<u>Finches</u>	<u>Fringillidae</u>	
Cape Siskin	Crithagra totta	1
Yellow Canary	Crithagra flaviventris	1
Brimstone Canary	Crithagra sulphurata	1
Streaky-headed Seedeater	Crithagra gularis	1
White-throated Canary	Crithagra albogularis	1
Cape Canary	Serinus canicollis	1
Black-headed Canary	Serinus alario	1
Buntings, New World Sparrows	Emberizidae	
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	Emberiza tahapisi	1
Cape Bunting	Emberiza capensis	1
TOTAL		186

