



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South Africa Trip Report

1 – 24 May 2006

Trip report compiled by tour leader Fraser Gear

Tour Summary

With highlights including Pel's Fishing Owl, African Broadbill, Swamp Nightjar, Kori Bustard, Wattled Crane, African Wild Dog, Aardvark, Serval, Black Rhino this was a tour to remember! With unbelievable regularity we scored on rare and elusive birds, mammals and experiences. A twenty-four day tour with the extra time allocated to the species rich, eastern reserves proved to be a great recipe for a diverse and rewarding trip. A dedicated group that birded, spotted and explored with boundless enthusiasm added greatly to the success of this tour.

After meeting in Cape Town and grabbing a quick lunch, we headed off for Ceres, our base for the next two nights from which to explore the arid lands of the Tanqua Karoo. Dramatic mountain scenery kept us entertained until we arrived at Karoo Poort with just enough time for a birding stop before nightfall. Namaqua Warbler – a feisty reed dwelling endemic offered superb views. Karoo Scrub-Robin, Bokmakierie, Cape Bunting and Mountain Wheatear all showed well and it was with great anticipation of the next days birding that we headed off to Ceres in the fading light.

The Tanqua Karoo offers the tours most arid habitat. Tiny succulent plants eke out an existence on an often lunar landscape, temperatures soar during the heat of the day and only the foolish would venture here without sufficient food and water. It thus came as some surprise when first light revealed an ominous bank of low cloud, a rain soaked landscape and gurgling streams. The rain held off, and we enjoyed some classic Karoo birding. Karoo Chat, Karoo Lark and Karoo Eremomela were all on our list by coffee stop. We were treated to the unexpected roar of male lions over the still Karoo Plains and the chortling of Karoo Bustard.

An extensive search at Skittery Kloof was finally rewarded with great views of Cinnamon-Breasted (Kopje) Warbler as well as superb Verreaux's Eagle, Fairy Flycatcher, Pririt Batis and Streaky-headed Seed-eater. It was on our journey out that we received our biggest surprise. Karoo streams began to flow across the roads and massive dark storms and flashes of lightning raced across the sky. Klaus was

more often wading in front of the vehicle than in it – testing the depth and consistency of the unexpected streams. Some tense moments, a pair of endemic Karoo Bustards and many stream crossings later Klaus announced that “at least they are not too deep or swift flowing” as we came over a rise to be greeted by a wide, deep and swift flowing river! A brief exploration of the crossing led to a hasty retreat – we needed to cross all the rising streams behind us again in order to take an alternative route home. Needless to say we made it out of the Karoo, quite a lot later, wetter and muddier than planned!

West Coast National Park was our next destination and a pre-dawn start in Ceres had us birding in this fantastic park shortly after first light. Ostrich are wonderfully common here and we enjoyed many roadside sightings. Southern Black Korhaan put in a welcome appearance and we were treated to fantastic views of Black Harrier quartering the valleys. The hides on the lagoon provided some great waders including Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling. African Fish-Eagle and Osprey hunted overhead. En-route to Cape Town we stopped in at the delightful Tienie Versveld Nature Reserve for great views of Jackal Buzzard, Cape Longclaw and the distinctive South Western race of Cloud Cisticola.

A day of birding the Cape Peninsula is always memorable – we started out in the breathtaking Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. An especially good morning for raptors was had as we recorded African Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Forest Buzzard, Jackal Buzzard, Verreaux’s Eagle, Eurasian (Rock) Kestrel and Spotted Eagle-Owl. A quick stop at Kommetjie produced all four target cormorants as well as great views of African Black Oystercatcher. We then travelled through Cape Point in Table Mountain National Park and onwards to the quaint seaside village of Simonstown for lunch. Strandfontein water works provided a highly entertaining afternoon with literally thousands of waterfowl, Greater Flamingo, Great White Pelican, gulls and terns.

Day five in Cape Town was our planned search for Cape Rockjumper – in hilariously windy conditions – that saw Fiona blown right over, we searched Rooi Els’s rocky slopes for these charismatic birds. After a worryingly long silence we finally had superb views of a pair as they gambolled and displayed over the boulder-strewn slopes. Travelling further East took us through Betty’s Bay and it’s delightfully tourist free African Penguin colony. Highlights at this site were undoubtedly the numerous fluffy chicks at nest sites throughout the colony. Here the trip term “Hug Bird” was coined – where a bird sighting evoked feelings of joy and happiness only aptly celebrated in a hug. Harold Porter Botanical Garden was next on our list and we were thrilled to find a large stand of flowering King Proteas that attracted a stunning Cape Sugarbird.

After the windy coastal areas, the relative peace of Paarl Mountain was most welcome, here, much to my joy and surprise we finally caught up with the elusive Protea Seedeater. Adding to the moment were some sensational views of the dazzling Malachite Sunbird. With little light to spare, we then visited the Paarl Bird sanctuary where we enjoyed whirling Hirundine flocks, African Black Duck, African Harrier-hawk and our first sighting of Water Thicknee.

Our time in the Cape was now coming to an end, after a final morning walk in Kirstenbosch we headed for the airport to fly to Durban for the main eastern sector of the tour and to collect our last two tour participants.....

The spectacular Krantzklouf was a welcome feature of our B&B for our first nights stay. A short, scenically breathtaking walk to the kloof edge in the afternoon produced a young begging Collared Sunbird being fed by its parents as well as ubiquitous flocks of Red-winged Starling arriving to roost.

Early morning had us on another exploration of the gorge – this time producing a magnificent pair of Crowned Hawk-Eagle before we began our journey to Hilton via numerous birding spots. Shongweni Dam is a great introduction to eastern birding. Here we found Cape Glossy-Starling, Lanner Falcon, Crowned Hawk-Eagle, African Black Duck, Giant Kingfisher and Cape Rock-Thrush. Exploring another dam site later in the day – Albert Falls, we were treated to cracking views of Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Green Woodhoopoe, Spectacled Weaver and Black-winged Lapwing. After dinner at our old-English-style hotel we ventured out with a spotlight to Midmar Dam in search of nocturnal creatures. Unbelievably we were treated to a sighting of an Aardvark lumbering down the track in front of us!

Day eight was dedicated to the region known as the Natal Midlands. A diverse and rewarding days birding was had with some cracking highlights. Wattled Crane was found at a wetland edge, Gray Crowned-Crane and Southern Bald Ibis shared a stubble field. The delightful Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler put in a great show as did Swee Waxbill, Forest Canary and Knysna Turaco (the last three all southern African endemics). A final spectacle for the day was at least fifty-five of the endangered Cape Parrot flying into roost at Nxumeni Forest. That night was spent in Underberg warmed by log fires and wholesome dinner in preparation for the following day up the legendary Sani Pass.

Sani is stunning in May. Frozen waterfalls glitter on the enormous rock faces. Ice lined streams gurgle last sounds before the final onset of winter. We were lucky to enjoy a brilliant blue sky with almost none of the cutting icing wind for which Sani Pass is well known. Under the expert guidance of Stuart we slowly ascended the magnificent pass getting thrilling birds all the way. Near the base of the pass we encountered Red-throated Wryneck and Gurney's Sugarbird. As we climbed we found Buff-streaked Chat, Ground Woodpecker and Yellow Bishop. Finally, just before entering Lesotho we found our remarkable namesake – the Drakensberg Rockjumper. Cape Griffon offered spectacular fly-bys as did the enormous Lammergeier. Sentinel Rock-Thrush was abundant and Sickle-winged Chat and Drakensberg Siskin rounded off a fantastic days birding.

Leaving the chilly autumn climes of the Underberg region we made our way to Zululand. Here, two great forests awaited us. Dlinza and Ongoye. We enjoyed a very successful afternoon at Dlinza – an excellent pick-up by Suzie on one of the world's most camouflaged birds – Spotted Ground Thrush – netted this desirable special and we enjoyed great views of the rather confiding individual. An early start the following morning was needed to explore the legendary Ongoye forest. Thick slippery mud, steep inclines and a 2-wheel drive vehicle prevented us from accessing the main forest. Our disappointment was short lived however as we quickly racked up some fine birds, including our major target, Green Barbet, on the forest edge. Samango Monkey provided us with a new mammal tick and we enjoyed great fly bys of Crowned Hawk-Eagle and Black Sparrowhawk.

Mtunzini is home to the most southerly breeding population of Palmnut Vulture. In a quick visit we had great views of the Vulture as well as Black-throated Wattle-eye. Continuing north we entered the town of St Lucia, our base for the next two nights. St Lucia is a fantastic site for many of the regions special birds so we started birding straight away. Red-capped Robin-Chat and Brown Scrub-Robin both showed well. After dark we had a great time finding African Wood Owl and the rare Swamp Nightjar.

A full day in Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park was next on our agenda. Richard at the Rockjumper office had given Matt a two-hundred US Dollar guarantee that I would show him a rhino on this tour. Being prone to some extreme “Murphy” in my time I was thrilled that, only minutes into the park as I spotted a beautiful White Rhinoceros and her calf on a distant hillside. With renewed confidence we continued

and found well over thirty white rhino during the day. Other mammalian highlights included Black Rhino (very lucky indeed), Elephant and some great Cape Buffalo viewing. Bush birds were abundant, Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, Green Woodhoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Burnt-necked Eremomela and some great views of Lappet-faced Vulture were among the days highlights. Just before dusk we were treated to a sensational, close and prolonged view of a pair of Lanner Falcon in flight at eye level.

A final morning in the coastal forests produced a non-stop show of great birds. The endemic Rudd's Apalis and Woodward's Batis both showed. Colour was added to the morning by African Yellow White-eye, the striking Livingstone's Turaco and Narina Trogon. An unexpected gift on a telephone pole in the village came in the form of a very rare Southern Banded Snake-Eagle that allowed us excellent and long views – much to the confusion of some of the village's non-birding residents.

With fond memories and some great birding behind us we continued north for one of South Africa's top birding sites – Mkuze Game Reserve, for a three night stay. Highlights from Mkuze included some great nocturnal excursions that produced Barn, African Scops and Spotted Eagle-Owls and Bronze-winged Courser, Square-tailed and Fiery-necked Nightjars. A morning drive became decidedly mammal orientated when we came across a pack of eleven African Wild Dog. An hour-and-a-half flashed by as we enjoyed an intimate sighting of these endangered carnivores going about their morning activities. Some dazzling sunbirds – Purple-banded, Mariqua, Collared, White-bellied and the endemic and highly sought after Neergaard's Sunbird were all found at Mkuze.

On our last morning at Mkuze we decided to head for the nearby Musi Pan in the Kwa-Jobe district in search of some of the pan's special birds. What a cracker decision! By lunchtime we had a remarkable list of stonking birds topped by a pair of the incredible Pel's Fishing-Owl in scope. Gorgeous African Pygmy-geese, Lesser Jacana, Rufous-winged Cisticola, African Firefinch, and Gray Penduline Tit all made this a most memorable morning. Only our long journey to Wakkerstroom motivated our departure from this beautiful and bird rich corner of South Africa.

Wakkerstroom is home to Birdlife South Africa's field centre, and with good reason. The wetland is an important bird area and the high altitude grasslands surrounding the town are home to some of SA's most threatened and localised birds. Birding with local bird guide Lucky, we managed to find a great diversity of the regions specials. The critically endangered Rudd's Lark put in a fine show as did a beautiful pair of Yellow-breasted Pipit. Barrow's and Blue Korhaan, Flocks of Gray Crowned-Crane, African Snipe, Secretary-bird and a cracking daylight sighting of Marsh Owl ended a fine days birding. Mammals of note included the delightful Suricate (also known as Meerkat of Lion King fame) – a family group of eighteen was seen sunning themselves at dawn, and the sneaky Yellow Mongoose. From Wakkerstroom we birded our way slowly north, picking up Eastern Clapper Lark *en route* to Kruger National Park.

Kruger is a highlight of any South Africa visit – no less for birders. White-headed Vulture completed our list of possible South African Vultures, gigantic Kori Bustard marched the plains and tiny Pearl-spotted Owlet blinked at us from exposed perches. Both Black-chested and Brown Snake-Eagles were seen well and the majestic Martial Eagle completed our tally of the big three killer eagles – Crowned, Verreaux's and Martial, each one a deadly habitat specialist. Verreaux's Eagle-Owl was seen at intimidatingly close quarters on a night drive – the same drive produced two sightings of the seldom seen Serval. Birding in the camps provided great study views of Bennett's Woodpecker, White-browed Robin-Chat, Little Sparrowhawk, African Green-Pigeon and Gray Tit-Flycatcher. Some fantastic elephant viewing was had, on one memorable occasion an entire breeding herd emerged from the bush to drink. Lead by a relaxed matriarch the herd drank, played and relaxed just metres from our vehicle.

Leaving Kruger we headed for the cool highlands of Dullstroom, en route ticking off Africa's rarest raptor, the fabulous Taita Falcon. We departed again long before sunrise so as to maximise our birding potential at Zaagkuilsdrift – an area that offered many new birds for the trip. Birding shortly after sunrise in the thornveld we had some great views of Black-faced Waxbill, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler, Pied Babbler, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Marico Flycatcher and the spectacular Crimson-breasted Shrike. The wetland at the end of the road produced some great views of Greater Painted-Snipe and African Crake. Capped Wheatear, African Quailfinch, Cut-throat Finch and African Pipit were all common on the surrounding grasslands.

With a great morning's birding behind us it was time to return to Johannesburg International Airport for flights home. A fantastic trip – owing much of its success to a dedicated and enthusiastic group, thanks.

BIRD SPECIES LIST

E = Endemic, **NE** = Near-endemic, **BE** = Breeding-endemic

Ostrich *Struthionidae*

Ostrich

Struthio camelus

First seen in large numbers (150) in West Coast National Park, later a fine male was viewed in Kruger.

*NOTE: some authorities regard the subspecies *S. c. molybdophanes* of dry East Africa as a distinct species: Somali Ostrich. The form we observed would remain with the nominate Common Ostrich *S. camelus*. Clements does not as yet recognise this split.*

Penguins *Spheniscidae*

Jackass (African) Penguin (NE)

Spheniscus demersus

Good numbers of at least sixty, many with delightful chicks were encountered at the Betty's Bay colony. This is one of only two mainland colonies of this species.

Grebes *Podicipedidae*

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Our first sightings were in the Western Cape, of particular note were 500 recorded at Strandfontein. We had further sightings of this rather common bird at several other wetlands on tour.

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

We had good looks of two at Strandfontein, further sightings were had at Paarl Bird sanctuary and at Wonderfontein Pans.

Eared (Black-necked) Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

After some intense scanning we finally found a single bird at Strandfontein.

Pelicans *Pelecanidae*

Great White Pelican

Pelecanus onocrotalus

Good numbers were seen in West Coast NP, at Strandfontein and at Musi Pan.

Pink-backed Pelican*Pelecanus onocrotalus*

We found a breeding colony (27) busy nest building at Nsumo Pan in Mkuze. Five were seen at Musi Pan.

Cormorants & Shags *Phalacrocoracidae***Great (White-breasted) Cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo (lucidus)*

This common species was seen at most wetland sites on tour, both at the coast and inland.

NOTE: The white-breasted African subspecies of the widely distributed Great Cormorant *P. carbo* is sometimes considered a different species: *P. lucidus*.

Cape Cormorant (BE)*Phalacrocorax capensis*

This is the common saltwater cormorant around the Cape and we encountered many hundreds of birds around the Cape Peninsula.

Bank Cormorant (E)*Phalacrocorax neglectus*

Initially encountered at Kommetjie and then again great views at Betty's Bay of twenty birds.

Long-tailed (Reed) Cormorant*Phalacrocorax africanus*

Recorded on most days at almost all wetlands sites on tour.

Crowned Cormorant (NE)*Phalacrocorax coronatus*

A single bird was observed at Kommetjie, and another singleton at Betty's Bay.

Anhinga & Darter *Anhingidae***(African) Darter***Anhinga melanogaster (rufa)*

Recorded regularly at wetland sites throughout the tour.

NOTE: The resident African form *P. rufa* is sometimes lumped with the Asian *P. melanogaster* and the enlarged species called Darter. Clements uses the latter treatment of lumping these forms.

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns *Ardeidae***Gray Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Seen at most wetland localities in Eastern and Western South Africa.

Black-headed Heron*Ardea melanocephala*

This is typically a grassland species where grasshoppers, one of its favourite foods, can be found. Commonly recorded throughout South Africa.

Goliath Heron*Ardea goliath*

Small numbers of this monstrous bird were encountered in Kruger and the Maputaland reserves.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

We enjoyed five separate sightings of this sleek heron in Eastern SA.

NOTE: The Cape Verde Islands *A. p. bournei* is sometimes split off as Cape Verde Purple Heron or Bourne's Heron.

Great (White) Egret*Ardea alba*

A total of seven recorded at Kgomo Kgomo wetlands.

NOTE: The nominate Old World Great Egret may be split from the New World *A. a. egretta* which would become American Egret. This split is as yet not recognised by Clements.

Intermediate (Yellow-billed) Egret*Egretta intermedia*

Three were seen well in the Wakkerstroom wetlands.

NOTE: This group may be split into 3 species, the Africa Yellow-billed Egret (*E. brachyrhyncha*) (the form we recorded), Plumed Egret (*E. plumifera*) and the nominate Intermediate Egret. This split is as yet not recognised by Clements.

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

We encountered small numbers at several Eastern wetlands and at various sites on the Cape Peninsula.

NOTE: Clements lumps Little, Western Reef (*E. gularis*) and Madagascar's Dimorphic (*E. dimorpha*) Egret into a single species. This treatment is not widely accepted.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

We only recorded this heron at Musi Pan where four were observed.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Commonly recorded throughout South Africa.

NOTE: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret and the Asian/Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret (*E. coromanda*). This split is as yet not recognised by Clements.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

We enjoyed two birds late in the afternoon at Wakkerstroom.

Hamerkop Scopidae

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

This unusual bird, placed in its own family, was first seen in Zululand, with subsequent regular sightings throughout Eastern SA.

Storks Ciconidae

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*

We recorded six of these fine looking storks at Nsumo Pan.

Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*

We had great views of these spectacular birds in Kruger NP.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

Recorded first in Zululand where up to four birds were seen.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

We were a little surprised to find two birds late in the season at West Coast NP.

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*

We recorded eighteen of these awesome storks around Satara in Kruger NP, an additional sighting of three was had around a carcass in Mkuze. In Southern Africa it is largely confined to large game reserves.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Commonly recorded at wetlands throughout eastern South Africa and the Western Cape.

NOTE: The Malagasy *T. e. bernieri* and Aldabran *T. e. abbotti* are sometimes split off as Madagascar White Ibis (*T. bernieri*)

Southern Bald Ibis (E) *Geronticus calvus*

We had good numbers of this bizarre looking endemic in the Midlands, up Sani Pass, Wakkerstroom and Dullstroom.

Hadada Ibis (Hadeda) *Bostrychia hagedash*

This noisy bird was recorded nearly daily at all locations throughout South Africa.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

We had fifty birds at Strandfontein.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

Regularly recorded at all major wetland sites throughout South Africa.

Flamingos *Phoenicopteridae*

Greater Flamingo

Phoenicopus ruber

We had a fantastic sighting of 180 birds at Strandfontein.

NOTE: The Greater Flamingo (*P. roseus*) and the Caribbean Flamingo (*P. ruber*) are now considered monotypic species according to Clements.

Swans, Geese & Ducks *Anatidae*

White-faced Whistling-Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Highest numbers of 100 seen at Musi Pan with additional sightings in Kruger NP.

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiacus

Commonly recorded at wetlands throughout South Africa, recorded on most days of the tour.

South African Shelduck (E)

Tadorna cana

We had six birds in the Karoo, at Strandfontein and on the West Coast. Four birds were recorded at Wakkerstroom.

Spur-winged Goose

Plectropterus gambensis

Commonly recorded at wetlands throughout South Africa, with numbers peaking at 400 at Musi Pan.

Comb Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

Two birds recorded from the Kgomo Kgomo wetland sites.

African Pygmy-goose

Nettapus auritus

We encountered four of these endearing birds on Musi Pan.

Cape Teal

Anas capensis

Encountered in good numbers in the Western Cape. Peak numbers of a thousand seen at Strandfontein.

African Black Duck

Anas sparsa

First seen at Paarl with Subsequent sightings of up to three birds in Eastern SA.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

Four of these smart little teal were found on Musi Pan.

Yellow-billed Duck

Anas undulata

Commonly recorded at wetlands throughout South Africa, with highest numbers recorded at Strandfontein.

Red-billed Duck (Teal)

Anas erythrorhyncha

Recorded at most wetlands with the above species and our highest number was of a hundred at Strandfontein.

Cape Shoveler (NE)

Anas smithii

This near endemic was encountered in good numbers at Western wetland sites.

Southern Pochard

Netta erythrophthalma

Recorded only at Strandfontein where thirty birds were estimated.

Maccoa Duck

Oxyura maccoa

Seen in small numbers at Strandfontein and Paarl Bird Sanctuary.

Osprey *Pandionidae*

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

One bird was seen in the West Coast National Park. This is an uncommon bird in South Africa and always a welcome find.

Hawks, Kites, Eagles & Vultures *Accipitridae*

Black-shouldered (-winged) Kite*Elanus caeruleus*

Recorded on many days of the tour. Our highest count was of sixteen birds seen around The West Coast.

NOTE: Clements has split the two species Black-shouldered Kite (Elanus caeruleus) of the Old World and White-tailed Kite (Elanus leucurus) of the New World. This split is not universally accepted.

African Fish-Eagle*Haliaeetus vocifer*

The call of this familiar species is the signature sound of the African wild. Birds were encountered throughout SA in suitable habitat.

Palm-nut Vulture*Gypohierax angolensis*

Dropping into Mtunzini in search of this highly localised bird in South Africa, we encountered a fine specimen.

Lammergeier*Gypaetus barbatus*

Sani Pass produced incredible viewing of a fine specimen. In South Africa this species is confined to the impressive Drakensburg range.

(African) White-backed Vulture*Gyps africanus*

This, the regions most widespread and numerous vulture, was seen frequently in the Kruger NP with further sightings in Maputaland.

Lappet-faced Vulture*Torgos tracheliotus*

This magnificent vulture was seen dominating White-backed Vulture at a carcass in Mkuze Game Reserve.

White-headed Vulture*Trigonoceps occipitalis*

A rather uncommon and striking member of its family. We had good views of two individuals in flight in Kruger NP.

Cape Griffon (Vulture) (BE)*Gyps coprotheres*

We had a singleton at the Taita Falcon site near Kruger and ten on our memorable day up Sani Pass.

Hooded Vulture*Necrosyrtes monachus*

Encountered in small numbers in the Kruger NP.

Brown Snake-Eagle*Circaetus cinereus*

We saw a single bird in Mkuze game reserve and two in Kruger NP.

Black-chested Snake-Eagle*Circaetus pectoralis*

A single individual of this striking species was found hunting of the plains of Eastern Kruger NP.

Southern Banded Snake-Eagle*Circaetus fasciolatus*

A most memorable sighting was had in St Lucia village where we found an extremely obliging individual perched on a telephone pole! This is a difficult bird to get on an SA tour.

Bateleur*Terathopius ecaudatus*

We saw good numbers during our days in the Kruger NP and had an additional sighting in Maputaland. One of the world's most beautiful raptors!

African Marsh-Harrier*Circus ranivorus*

We enjoyed sightings in Wakkerstroom, the Western Cape and Mkuze Game Reserve.

Black Harrier (E)*Circus maurus*

Our only sightings of this very smart looking harrier were in West Coast NP where we had two birds.

African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene)*Polyboroides typus*

Single birds were regularly encountered across South Africa.

Dark Chanting Goshawk*Melierax metabates*

A single bird was seen perched at the roadside in Kruger.

Pale Chanting Goshawk*Melierax canorus*

A total of ten of these smart birds were seen along the roadside during our day in the Karoo.

African Goshawk*Accipiter tachiro*

Regularly encountered in well wooded habitats throughout.

NOTE: The West African forms are sometimes separated as Red-chested Goshawk (A. tousseneli).

- Shikra** *Accipiter badius*
 Fine views of a perched individual in Kruger put this species on our list, another two were observed at Zaagkuilsdrift.
- Little Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter minullus*
 Great views of a rather bold individual were had in Satara rest camp in Kruger NP.
- Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus*
 A stunning pair were seen at Ongoye forest and an individual at Mtunzini.
- Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*
 Three birds were observed in Maputaland with a sunsequent viewing in Kruger NP.
- Mountain [Forest] Buzzard** *Buteo trizonatus*
 We had great views of a two birds in Kirstenbosch and a single bird near Karkloof.
- Jackal Buzzard (E)** *Buteo rufofuscus*
 This endemic was commonly encountered in higher lying areas in the east and occasionally in the west.
- Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax*
 Regularly encountered during our stay in Kruger.
- Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii*
 Encountered in the Karoo where we had a perched individual, later in the same day we had a spectacular fly-by of a pair.
- Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus*
 This desirable savannah eagle was encountered thrice in Kruger – a juvenile, a sub-adult and finally a stunning adult.
- Crowned Hawk-Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus*
 A truly magnificent eagle that we were lucky to see very well at a number of forested habitats in Eastern South Africa.
- Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis*
 We enjoyed many sightings of this regal bird.

Secretarybird *Sagittariidae*

- Secretary-bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius*
 We were thrilled to ten birds in the Wakkerstroom area and a single bird in Kruger.. This amazing bird is by no means a guaranteed sighting on any trip in Southern Africa and always a lucky find.

Falcons & Caracaras *Falconidae*

- Eurasian (Rock/Common) Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*
 Seen regularly in the Western Cape and on our day up Sani Pass.
*NOTE: Clements has not split the distinctive Rock Kestrel *F.t.rupicolis* we observed, which he lumps as a subspecies of the Eurasian Kestrel. Many authorities accept this split.*
- Taita Falcon** *Falco fasciinucha*
 We had wonderful scope views of this bird at the Strydom tunnel. This is an incredibly sparsely distributed falcon with a tiny global population making it a highly sought after bird.
- Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*
 This dashing raptor was seen twice in the Western Cape, once at Kirstenbosch and again at Rooi Els.
- Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus*
 Encountered at a few sites on tour, most memorably in eye-level fly-by in Hluhluwe Game Reserve.

Pheasants & Partridges *Phasianidae*

Crested Francolin

Francolinus sephaena

Although more often heard than seen we enjoyed some great sightings in open woodland in Kruger NP and Zululand.

NOTE: The subspecies F.s.rovuma of Coastal SE Africa is sometimes considered by authorities to be a separate species, Kirk's Francolin. This split is not currently accepted by Clements.

Cape Francolin (E)

Pternistes capensis

Regularly encountered on the cape peninsula with peak numbers in West Coast NP.

Natal Francolin (NE)

Francolinus natalensis

Seen well on most of our days in Kruger.

Swainson's Francolin (Spurfowl) (NE)

Francolinus swainsonii

The commonest Francolin in Kruger. We had further sightings of smaller numbers in the Wakkerstroom area.

Red-wing Francolin

Francolinus levaillantii

We had some fantastic viewing of these shy francolins during our day exploring the Karkloof.

Common Quail

Coturnix coturnix

We were lucky to flush a pair whilst searching for larks in the Wakkerstroom area.

Guineafowl *Numididae*

Helmeted Guineafowl

Numida meleagris

Recorded regularly in good numbers throughout, much to Suzie's delight.

NOTE: The nominate N. m. meleagris Helmeted Guineafowl, is sometimes regarded as distinct from the western (N. m. galeata) West African Guineafowl and the southern, which we recorded, (N. m. mitrata) Tufted Guineafowl. Clements does not as yet recognise these splits.

Crested Guineafowl

Guttera pucherani

We saw a number of flocks of these beautiful birds in Mkuze as well as in False Bay Park.

NOTE: The West African form is sometimes split off as Western Crested Guineafowl (G. edouardi).

Cranes *Gruidae*

(Southern) Gray Crowned-Crane

Balearica regulorum

This exceptionally beautiful crane is also the regions' most frequently encountered. We had good numbers in the Wakkerstroom and Karkloof areas.

NOTE: This southern form is sometimes lumped with Black Crowned Crane B. pavonina of West Africa.

Wattled Crane

Grus carunculatus

This rare and endangered crane was located in the Karkloof area. A real highlight of a great days birding.

Rails, Gallinules & Coots *Rallidae*

African Crake

Crecopsis egregia

A welcome addition to our list, seen well at Zaagkuilsdrift.

Black Crake

Porphyrio porphyrio

This very striking rail is refreshingly common and easy to see. We enjoyed several sightings in the Kruger NP.

Purple Swamphen

Porphyrio porphyrio

These striking birds were only recorded on the cape peninsula..

NOTE: This cosmopolitan species is currently in taxonomic review and several forms are expected to be recognised as distinct species. The form we recorded would then become African Swamphen (P. madagascariensis.) Other forms to be recognised may include Indian Swamphen (P. poliocephalus,) Philippine Swamphen (P. pulverulentus) and Eastern Swamphen (P. melanotus).

Common Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

A common bird, encountered at several wetland sites throughout the tour.

Red-knobbed Coot*Fulica cristata*

As with the above species, good numbers were seen throughout the tour.

Bustards *Otididae***White-bellied (Barrow's) Bustard***Eupodotis senegalensis barrowii*

We saw two of these wonderful birds and enjoyed their far carrying croaking call during our time in the Wakkerstroom area.

NOTE: This species is known as Barrow's Korhaan, (Eupodotis barrowii) in Southern Africa, a split not yet recognised by Clements.

Blue Bustard (Korhaan) (E)*Eupodotis caerulescens*

We saw good numbers of these beautiful bustards around Wakkerstroom.

Red-crested Bustard*Eupodotis ruficrista*

A pair of these striking near-endemics were seen in Kruger.

White-quilled Bustard (NE)*Eupodotis afraoides*

Due to long grass we unfortunately only heard these birds in the Zaagkuilsdrift area.

Black Bustard (E)*Eupodotis afra*

A very obliging individual put in a welcome appearance at West Coast NP.

Black-bellied Bustard*Eupodotis melanogaster*

A very brief view was had of a single individual in flight.

Karoo Bustard (E)*Eupodotis vigorsii*

A pair of these wonderful bustards were seen just before the floods closed around us in the Karoo.

Kori Bustard*Ardeotis kori*

A total of four of these enormous bustards were seen patrolling the plains of Eastern Kruger.

Jacanas *Jacanidae***African Jacana***Actophilornis africanus*

Commonly encountered gracing wetlands in the east.

Lesser Jacana*Microparra capensis*

We were thrilled to find five of these endearing little jacanas at Musi Pan.

Oystercatchers *Haematopodidae***African (Black) Oystercatcher (E)***Haematopus moquini*

With a population of only 4800 it is fortunate that this species is commonly seen in most of the Western Cape. We encountered good numbers at a variety of coastal sites on the Cape Peninsula.

Stilts & Avocets *Recurvirostridae***Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

Small numbers were encountered fairly regularly on wetlands in the east. Wetlands in the west produced larger numbers.

Pied Avocet*Recurvirostra avosetta*

We enjoyed sightings of these beautiful waders at several wetlands, peak numbers of a hundred were recorded at Strandfontein.

Thick-knees *Burhinidae*

Water Thick-knee (Dikkop) *Burhinus vermiculatus*
We encountered these birds regularly in small numbers throughout the country.

Spotted Thick-knee (Dikkop) *Burhinus capensis*
We encountered a pair at Midmar Dam during our night drive.

Coursers & Pratincoles *Glareolidae*

Collared (Red-winged) Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*
We had a pair of these sleek shorebirds in flight over the muddy edges of Musi Pan.

Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*
First sighted in Mkuze Game Reserve with subsequent sightings during night excursions in Kruger NP.

Plovers & Lapwings *Charadriidae*

Blacksmith Plover (Lapwing) *Vanellus armatus*
Recorded almost daily at nearly all wetlands throughout South Africa.

Senegal Lapwing *Vanellus lugubris*
We were lucky to have good sightings of these uncommon birds in Mkuze and Kruger NP.

Black-winged Lapwing *Vanellus melanopterus*
Albert Falls Dam produced twelve of these striking Lapwings.

Crowned Lapwing (Plover) *Vanellus coronatus*
Recorded regularly throughout South Africa.

White-headed Lapwing (Plover) *Vanellus albiceps*
A total of three recorded along the Sabie River with one particularly obliging individual feeding in elephant dung on the road.

(African) Wattled Lapwing (Plover) *Vanellus senegallus*
We encountered a flock of fourteen at Musi Pan and a singleton on Zaagkuilsdrift.

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*
Large numbers recorded in the West Coast National Park (300).

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
We found two in West Coast NP.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*
We encountered peak numbers of ten at Zaagkuilsdrift.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*
Seen regularly at a number of sites throughout South Africa.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*
Encountered in good numbers (20) in the West Coast National Park.

Painted-snipes *Rostratulidae*

Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*
We were thrilled to have absolutely phenomenal viewing of two of these beauties during our exploration of Zaagkuilsdrift.

Sandpipers & Allies *Scolopacidae*

African (Ethiopian) Snipe

Gallinago nigripennis

Found probing the muddy wetland edge at Wakkerstroom and en-route to Kruger.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

Thirty were encountered on the lagoon in West Coast NP.

Common Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

Thirty were encountered on the lagoon in West Coast NP.

Eurasian Curlew

Numenius arquata

Fourteen of these huge waders were found in West Coast NP.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Six were seen from Geelbek hide, West Coast NP, a single was recorded from Zaagkuilsdrift

Terek Sandpiper

Xenus cinereus

We were lucky to find a single bird at Geelbek hide in West Coast NP..

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Large numbers of birds were noted feeding on mudflats in West Coast NP.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

A large flock was present at Seeberg Hide in West Coast NP.

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

Six birds were seen briefly in Maputaland after being flushed by an African Marsh Harrier.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

Recorded in good numbers in West Coast NP where some birds sported colourful breeding plumage.

Skuas & Gulls *Laridae*

Kelp (Cape) Gull (NE)

Larus [dominicanus] vetula

Commonly recorded along the southern and western Coast of South Africa. We estimated conservative counts in the lower hundreds daily in that region.

NOTE: Recent work suggests that the Kelp Gull complex L. dominicanus may be split into as many as four species, the form we saw would become Cape Gull L. vetula which breeds in South Africa.

Gray-headed Gull

Larus cirrocephalus

Seen in small numbers in the East and West.

Hartlaub's Gull (E)

Larus hartlaubii

Good numbers, in the middle hundreds, were seen daily around the Cape Peninsula.

Terns *Sternidae*

Caspian Tern

Sterna caspia

Three birds were recorded from West Coast NP.

Sandwich Tern

Sterna sandvicensis

Ten counted at the tern roost at Seeberg hide, West Coast NP.

Greater Crested (Swift) Tern

Sterna bergii

Commonly seen around the Cape Peninsula and St Lucia estuary mouth.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Recorded roosting in a mixed flock at St Lucia estuary mouth.

Little Tern

Sterna albifrons

Four of these dainty terns were seen at St Lucia estuary mouth.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

Recorded twice in the east with peak numbers of thirty at Musi Pan.

Sandgrouse *Pteroclididae*

Double-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles bicinctus*

A superb sighting was had of a pair on our first afternoon in Kruger NP.

Doves & Pigeons *Collumbidae*

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Common in urban centres throughout.

Speckled (Rock) Pigeon *Columba guinea*

Commonly recorded in urban centres in the Cape and Highveld and throughout. We enjoyed good sightings in Wakkerstroom and around the Cape Peninsula

Rameron Pigeon (African Olive-Pigeon) *Columba arquatrix*

Recorded regularly, especially in the East.

Lemon Dove *Columba larcata*

We had a great sighting at Kirstenbosch followed some quality viewing at Dlinza Forest.

Laughing (Palm) Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

One of the regions most commonly encountered *Streptopelia* seen at most locations on tour.

African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*

Seen in low numbers in central Kruger NP.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*

Widespread and common in South Africa.

Ring-necked Dove (Cape Turtle-Dove) *Streptopelia capicola*

Widespread and common throughout Southern Africa, found in more open and drier country than the previous species.

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*

Commonly recorded in the Kruger NP and Zululand.

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria*

Four birds were recorded in Mtunzini.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

Recorded in Kruger and Zaagkuilsdrift.

African Green-Pigeon *Treron calva*

Kruger is an excellent place to see this bird where we enjoyed numerous sightings during our time there.

Parrots & Allies *Psittacidae*

Brown-necked (Cape) Parrot (E) *Poicephalus robustus*

Wow, fifty-five birds recorded coming in to roost in noisy flocks at Nxumeni Forest.

NOTE: This nominate brown-necked Podocarpus forest form of the Cape Parrot has been split off from the more widespread grey-headed savannah form (P. suahelicus), and is now considered to be one of the most endangered birds in Africa with a declining population of less than 600 individuals.

Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*

We managed have numerous good sightings of these bushveld parrots in the Kruger NP.

Turacos *Musophagidae*

Livingstone's Turaco (Lourie)

Tauraco livingstonii

We had wonderful encounters with this lovely species in the dune forest at St Lucia.

Knysna Turaco (Lourie) (E)

Tauraco corythaix

Eight birds recorded in suitable forest in the midlands

Note: This species used to be lumped under the Green Turaco (T. persa), now split into four full species the others being Knysna Turaco T. corythaix, Livingstone's Turaco (T. livingstonii) and Schalow's Turaco (T. schalowi).

Purple-crested Turaco (Violet-crested Lourie) *Tauraco porphyreolophus*

This beautiful Turaco was seen in Kruger, Eshowe and Maputaland.

Grey Go-away-bird (Lourie)

Corythaixoides concolor

This species was frequently observed in the Kruger NP.

Cuckoos *Cuculidae*

Levaillant's Cuckoo

Oxylophus levaillantii

Two singles encountered in the eastern bushveld.

Coucals *Centropodidae*

Burchell's Coucal

Centropus burchellii

We encountered this bird regularly in the eastern region.

NOTE: Clements does not recognise the widely accepted split of the southern dark-browed Burchell's Coucal C. burchellii from the northerly White-browed Coucal C. superciliosus.

Barn and Grass Owls *Tytonidae*

Barn Owl

Tyto Alba

A single bird was seen during our night drives in Mkuze.

Typical Owls *Strigidae*

African Scops-Owl

Otus senegalensis

We had fantastic views of this very charming little owl on our night drive at Mkuze.

African Wood-Owl

Strix woodfordii

We had an exciting time finding this owl in coastal forest near St Lucia.

Marsh Owl

Asio capensis

A real treat, flying over grassland and hunting at four-o'clock in the afternoon.

Pel's Fishing-Owl

Scotopelia peli

A tour highlight! A stunning pair at their day roost on the Lower Mkuze River.

Spotted Eagle-Owl

Bubo africanus

We had two on our night drives in Mkuze and one at its day roost in Kirstenbosch BG.

NOTE: Clements splits the northern, dark-eyed form Greyish Eagle-Owl (B.cinereascens) from the more southerly yellow-eyed Spotted Eagle-Owl B. africanus. This split is not widely accepted.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl

Bubo lacteus

We had stonking views of this gigantic owl during our legendary Kruger night drive.

Pearl-spotted Owlet

Glaucidium perlatum

We had excellent views of two birds in the Kruger NP.

Nightjars & Allies *Caprimulgidae*

Fiery-necked Nightjar

Caprimulgus pectoralis

A wonderful total of five birds were seen on the night drive at Mkuze GR.

Square-tailed Nightjar

Caprimulgus fossii

Regularly encountered on night drives in Mkuze GR and Kruger NP.

Swamp Nightjar

Caprimulgus natalensis

We enjoyed a thrilling, moonlit fly-by of this rare and localised nightjar at St Lucia.

Swifts *Apodidae*

African Palm-Swift

Cypsiures parvus

Seen regularly at lowland sites throughout the east.

Alpine Swift

Tachymarptis melba

We enjoyed great views of these large and dashing swifts during our day exploring the Karoo.

African (Black) Swift

Apus barbatus

Peak numbers of a hundred-and-fifty seen at Strandfontein.

NOTE: The Fernando Po Swift (A.sladeniae) is often separated by authorities as a distinctive species from the much more widespread Black Swift (Apus barbatus) which we observed several times during our tour. Clements does not currently recognize this split.

Little Swift

Apus affinis

The commonest swift in the region seen regularly at sights in the east.

White-rumped Swift

Apus caffer

This species was seen in association with Little Swift at Mkuze Game Reserve – these birds must be overwintering.

Mousebirds *Coliidae*

Speckled Mousebird

Colius striatus

Recorded regularly on the eastern leg of the tour.

White-backed Mousebird (NE)

Colius colius

Ten of these smart Mousebirds were seen on our day in West Coast NP.

Red-faced Mousebird

Urocolius indicus

We had good sightings of this classic bushveld species in the Kruger and Mkuze areas.

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

Malachite Kingfisher

Alcedo cristata

Recorded thrice on tour, once in the Western Cape and our best views coming from Albert Falls Dam.

Woodland Kingfisher

Halcyon senegalensis

We had a single encounter with this vociferous and striking bird in the Kruger NP. This bird was extremely late in the season.

Brown-hooded Kingfisher

Halcyon albiventris

Seen at many Eastern locations. This was the most common Kingfisher, after the ubiquitous Pied, on tour.

Striped Kingfisher*Halcyon chelicuti*

Similar in appearance to the above species, we had a rather brief view of a single bird in Mkuze GR.

Pied Kingfisher*Ceryle rudis*

This, the world's most widespread kingfisher, is common throughout South Africa.

Giant Kingfisher*Megaceryle maxima*

This striking kingfisher was seen exceptionally well in Kruger NP.

Bee-eaters *Meropidae***Little Bee-eater***Merops pusillus*

Pairs and singles were regularly recorded in Kruger NP and Mkuze Game Reserve.

White-fronted Bee-eater*Merops bullockoides*

First seen in Hluhluwe-Umfolozi at their sandy embankment breeding site.

Rollers *Coraciidae***Lilac-breasted Roller***Coracias caudata*

This absolutely beautiful bird was encountered daily in the Kruger.

NOTE: The Ethiopian C. c. lorti might be split as Blue-breasted Roller.

Rufous-crowned Roller*Coracias naevia*

This is another beautiful roller with lovely deep blue wings. We found a total of six birds in our stay in Kruger.

Hoopoes *Upupidae***Eurasian (African) Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

A real hit on tour, we enjoyed many good sightings – most memorably in Satara rest camp.

*NOTE: The Hoopoe complex has had a confusing taxonomic history, with one to four species being recognised by various authorities. Clements splits the group into two forms, Madagascar (*U. marginalis*) and Eurasian *U. epops*. The white-winged African form is often split by other authorities as West African Hoopoe (*U. senegalensis*) with the fourth species, the one we observed, being African Hoopoe (*U. africana*). However, the most generally accepted treatment is that of three species, Madagascar, Eurasian and African.*

Woodhoopoes *Phoeniculidae***Green (Red-billed) Woodhoopoe***Phoeniculus purpureus*

A flock these cackling beauties was first seen at Albert Falls Dam.

Common (Greater) Scimitar-bill*Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*

Rather common in warm, well wooded habitats in the East.

Hornbills *Bucerotidae***Red-billed Hornbill***Tockus erythrorhynchus*

Recorded daily in good numbers in Kruger NP.

*NOTE: Red-billed Hornbill has recently been split into two species the nominate *T. erythrorhynchus* which occurs through most of Southern Africa and Damara Hornbill (*T. damarensis*) which occurs in far Western Namibia.*

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill (NE)*Tockus leucomelas*

Seen daily in the Kruger NP, the most numerous hornbill with daily counts around forty birds being the norm.

Crowned Hornbill*Tockus alboterminatus*

We encountered this species at Krantzkloof and in Maputaland.

African Grey Hornbill*Tockus nasutus*

Somewhat drabber than its congeners, we recorded many in the Kruger NP.

Trumpeter Hornbill*Ceratogymna bucinator*

This odd sounding Hornbill, resembling something of a wailing baby, was seen in Zululand and Maputaland.

Southern Ground-hornbill*Bucorvus leadbeateri*

This uncommon species is a fairly poor breeder and is seldom found outside protected areas. We were lucky to find several groups during our stay in Kruger NP.

Barbets *Capitonidae***White-eared Barbet***Stactolaema leucotis*

Recorded at Dlinza Forest, Mtunzini and Maputaland.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (Golden-rumped Tinker Barbet) *Pogoniulus bilineatus*

Eight of these smart birds were recorded in St Lucia.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus pusillus*

A very vocal bird of the eastern region, we had one bird in Maputaland.

(Acacia) Pied Barbet (NE)*Tricholaema leucomelas*

Although heard calling more often, we saw two birds in Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserve.

Black-collared Barbet*Lybius torquatus*

Usually the most frequently encountered Barbet in the eastern region.

Crested Barbet*Trachyphonus vaillantii*

A very brightly patterned and rather handsome Barbet, we saw many in the Kruger NP.

Green (Woodward's) Barbet*Stactolaema olivacea*

Highly localised in Southern Africa (only found in Ongoye forest) we had great scope views of a single bird.

Honeyguides *Indicatoridae***Lesser Honeyguide***Indicator minor*

A single bird was very briefly in Mkuze Game Reserve.

NOTE: The Thick-billed Honeyguide (I. conirostris) of West and Central Africa forms a superspecies with the more widespread Lesser Honeyguide (I. minor), which we observed during our tour. This taxonomic split is recognized by Clements.

Greater Honeyguide*Indicator indicator*

A single juvenile bird was seen in Kruger NP.

Scaly-throated Honeyguide*Indicator variegatus*

Recorded once by Klaus and myself during our day in the Karkloof region.

Woodpeckers & Allies *Picidae***Rufous-necked (Red-throated) Wryneck***Jynx ruficollis*

Scope views were obtained on the lower reaches of the Sani Pass.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker*Campethera abingoni*

Four birds were seen in Letaba rest camp in Kruger NP.

Bennet's Woodpecker*Campethera bennettii*

Four birds were seen exceptionally well in Satara rest camp in Kruger NP.

Ground Woodpecker (E)*Geocolaptes olivaceus*

Ten birds were seen during our Sani Pass excursion.

Cardinal Woodpecker*Dendropicos fuscescens*

Recorded in Kruger National Park and Mkuze GR.

Bearded Woodpecker*Dendropicos namaquus*

This chunky woodpecker was heard knocking and seen in Kruger National Park and Mkuze GR.

Olive Woodpecker*Mesopicus griseocephlus*

Ten birds were recorded at various sites during our midland exploration.

Broadbills *Eurylaimidae***African Broadbill***Smithornis capensis*

After a worryingly silent search, we were treated to incredible views of an individual in sand forest at False Bay.

Larks *Alaudidae***Rufous-naped Lark***Mirafra africana*

Recorded from the grasslands around the Lower Mkuze floodplain.

*NOTE: The Rufous-naped Lark is divided by Clements into twenty-three subspecies throughout most of Africa. We observed both M.a.africana in S. Natal and in the E. Cape, and M.a.transvaalensis in northern South Africa. Several of the northern forms have been proposed as full species including Sharpe's Lark M. sharpii of Somalia and Malbrant's Lark M.malbranti of Central Africa***Eastern Clapper Lark (E)***Mirafra fasciolata*

This Lark was once on our way out of the Wakkerstroom district.

Flappet Lark*Mirafra rufocinnamomea*

Four birds were seen in total in the KZNWildlife reserves.

Sabota Lark (NE)*Mirafra sabota*

First seen in Hluhluwe Umfolozi where three were counted, another two were recorded in Kruger NP.

*NOTE: Some authorities consider the thickbilled form, Bradfield's Lark M. bradfieldi of Western Southern Africa a separate species. This is not widely accepted.***Eastern Long-billed Lark (E)***Certhilauda semitorquata*

A single bird was observed whilst searching high altitude, rocky grassland in the Wakkerstroom district.

Rudd's Lark (E)*Heteromirafra ruddi*

Three of these endangered and localised endemics were seen in Wakkerstroom.

Spike-heeled Lark (NE)*Chersomanes albofasciata*

A total of six birds were seen on two days in the Wakkerstroom district

*NOTE: The Tanzanian isolate C. a. beesleyi is considered a separate species by some authorities, Beesley's Lark***Red-capped Lark***Calandrella cinerea*

Ten of these good looking larks were recorded at Tienie Versveld Nature Reserve.

*NOTE: The African Red-capped Lark complex (C. cinerea) was lumped within the Greater Short-toed Lark complex (C. brachydactyla) but is now considered distinct by most authorities. Several distinctive groupings have now been split off from Red-capped Lark, including Blanford's Lark of Ethiopia (C. blanfordi).***Long-billed (Southern Thick-billed) Lark (E)***Galerida magnirostris*

We found four birds in the Western Cape and a single bird atop the chilly Lesotho Plateau.

Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark*Eremopterix leucotis*

This colourful species was observed in central Kruger NP (8) and during our visit to Zaagkuilsdrift (8).

Swallows *Hirundinidae***Plain (Brown-throated) Martin***Riparia paludicola*

Peak numbers of thirty recorded on the Cape Peninsula with singles sighted in the East..

Rock Martin

Hirundo fuligula

The bulk of our sightings came from the Cape where good numbers were observed in rocky habitats.

NOTE: This confusing polytypic complex is being reviewed for multi-species splitting. Within the African populations, three potential species exist. The southern African nominate form H. f. fuligula would remain as Rock Martin and the more northern populations would become Red-throated Rock Martin (H. pusilla). Palearctic birds would become Pale Crag Martin (H. obsoleta). Clements does not as yet recognise any of these splits.

Common House Martin

Delichon urbicum

Five birds, part of a resident population, were found in the Western Cape.

Gray-rumped Swallow

Pseudhirundo griseopyga

Five birds were seen in the grasslands surrounding Ongoye and four birds were seen in Maputaland.

Greater Striped-Swallow (BE)

Hirundo cucullata

Six birds were seen feeding over grassland at Albert Falls Dam.

Pearl-breasted Swallow

Hirundo dimidiata

A pair of these beautiful swallows were recorded at Zaagkuilsdrift.

Wire-tailed Swallow

Hirundo smithii

Regularly recorded over water, especially at bridges in Kruger NP.

Mosque Swallow

Hirundo senegalensis

A small flock of these handsome swallows were seen over mature riverine woodland in Kruger NP.

Black Saw-wing (Swallow)

Psalidoprocne holomelas

Ten birds seen flying over coastal forest in Maputaland.

NOTE: The saw-wing complex, which occurs throughout Africa, has recently been lumped into a single species by Clements. The exception is the Fanti Saw-wing (P.obscura), which occurs from Senegambia to E Nigeria and SW Cameroon.

Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae*

African Pied Wagtail

Motacilla aguimp

Seen in small numbers throughout the east.

Cape Wagtail

Motacilla capensis

Regularly recorded at most wetland locations throughout South Africa with large numbers in the Western Cape

Yellow-throated Longclaw

Macronyx croceus

Seen at a number of suitable sites in KZN, our first sighting coming from Shongweni Dam.

Orange-throated (Cape) Longclaw (E)

Macronyx capensis

First recorded at Tienie Versveld in the Western Cape. In the east recorded at several higher altitude grassland sites.

Yellow-breasted Pipit (E)

Hemimacronyx chloris

We saw a beautiful pair in flight over the grasslands of Wakkerstroom.

NOTE: This bird and its sister species in the highlands of Kenya (Sharpe's Longclaw) form a link between Longclaws and Pipits.

African (Grassveld) Pipit

Anthus cinnamomeus

Encountered once at 5 Tienie Versveld in the West and reasonable regularly at low elevations in the East.

NOTE: African pipit taxonomy is in disarray and much further research is required in the phylogeny of this grouping. Several forms which are considered subspecies are likely to become full species in their own right and several new forms are surely still to be described. The identification of two new species of pipits from an urban hockey field in Kimberley, South Africa, provides an excellent illustration regarding how little is known about African pipits and how little attention has been paid to them.

Long-billed Pipit

Anthus similis

Five birds were recorded in the Dullstroom district.

Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae*

Black Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga flava*

Recorded three times on tour, only the distinctive females were seen.

Gray Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga caesia*

Great views were had of this gorgeous bird at Ongoye Forest.

Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

Common (Dark-capped, Black-eyed) Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus (tricolor)*

Recorded almost daily, at most locations visited in Eastern Southern Africa. Daily counts occasionally in excess of twenty birds.

NOTE: Another very confusing polytypic species complex. Several Asian and African forms have already been recognised as distinct species within the super-species Common Bulbul P. barbatus. The form that we saw in South Africa, P. tricolor has been split as Dark-capped Bulbul by some authorities. Clements does not recognize this split.

Cape Bulbul (E) *Pycnonotus capensis*

We saw this bird most days in the Western Cape.

Sombre Greenbul (Bulbul) *Andropadus importunus*

A bird that is far more often heard than seen, encountered over much of the country. Our first birds were seen in the Western Cape.

Yellow-bellied Greenbul (Bulbul) *Chlorocichla flaviventris*

A fairly common species in Zululand and Maputaland.

Terrestrial Brownbul (Bulbul) *Phyllastrephus terrestris*

These thicket dwelling birds were seen well at Mkuze Game Reserve.

Yellow-streaked Greenbul *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*

Three birds were seen on our memorable excursion to Ongoye Forest..

Eastern (White-throated/Yellow-spotted) Nicator *Nicator gularis*

Much easier to see in winter, we enjoyed four separate sightings of this smart bird.

Thrushes & Allies *Turdidae*

Cape Rock-Thrush (E) *Monticola rupestris*

Recorded at Shongweni where we had five birds including memorable views of an obliging pair.

Sentinel Rock-Thrush (E) *Monticola explorator*

Superb views were had of many birds (35) during our Sani Pass adventure.

Groundscraper Thrush *Psophocichla litsipsirupa*

In Kruger we found a total of eight birds.

Spotted Ground-Thrush *Zoothera guttata*

Sensational views were obtained after a great spot by Suzie, this obliging bird foraged in the leaf litter just metres from the boardwalk at Dlinza.

(Southern) Olive Thrush *Turdus olivaceus*

Seen in the Western Cape and the KZN midlands.

NOTE: This polytypic species complex may be split into many as ten different species, and several are already generally accepted eg Taita Thrush (T. helleri). The main north/south split is likely to be in Tanzania with the northern birds becoming Northern Olive Thrush (T. abyssinicus) and the nominate form being called Southern Olive Thrush. Karoo Thrush (T. smithi) occurring in Western South Africa has recently been split from the nominate group. Clements does not as yet recognise this split.

Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyanus*

Recorded in Hluhluwe Umfolozi, Mkuze and Kruger NP.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Red-faced Cisticola

Cisticola erythrops

This species was heard several times in the Kruger NP, unfortunately we never managed a view.

NOTE: *Lepe Cisticola (C.e.lepe)* found in Angola is often regarded as a separate species from Red-faced Cisticola. This split is not accepted by Clements.

Rock-loving (Lazy) Cisticola

Cisticola aberrans

Two birds were seen at Albert Falls Dam.

Rattling Cisticola

Cisticola chinianus

Recorded daily at bushveld locations in the east.

Red-headed (Gray-backed) Cisticola (NE)

Cisticola subruficapillus

The common cisticola in the Western Cape, we had five birds on our day on the peninsula.

Wailing Cisticola

Cisticola lais

A denizen of rocky hillsides, we found a total of ten birds, eight on the Sani Pass.

NOTE: This species is often split from Lynes Cisticola *C. l. distincta*, which occurs in East Africa.

Rufous-winged (Winding) Cisticola

Cisticola galactotes

This localised Cisticola was found in the reed beds at Musi Pan.

Tinkling (Levaillant's) Cisticola

Cisticola tinniens

A common cisticola recorded at most wetland locations in the Western Cape.

Zitting (Fan-tailed) Cisticola

Cisticola juncidis

We enjoyed views of this tiny cisticola in the Western Cape and KZN midlands.

Cloud Cisticola

Cisticola textrix

Two of these tiny cisticolas were viewed at Tienie Versveld Nature Reserve.

Wing-snapping (Ayres') Cisticola

Cisticola ayresii

We managed to see a single bird during our explorations of the Wakkerstroom area.

Tawny-flanked Prinia

Prinia subflava

This feisty little warbler was recorded regularly in scrubby habitat in the east.

Black-chested Prinia (NE)

Prinia flavicans

Two birds were seen in the Zaagkuilsdrift area.

Karoo Prinia (E)

Prinia maculosa

This replaces the above species in the Western Cape and good numbers were noted on all days in that region.

NOTE: This species used to be lumped with Drakensberg Prinia (*P hypoxantha*) as Spotted Prinia but is now considered a separate species by most authorities including Clements.

Drakensberg Prinia (E)

Prinia hypoxantha

Seen in the KZN midlands.

NOTE: Refer above Karoo Prinia.

Namaqua Prinia (Warbler) (E)

Phragmacia substriata

Another very feisty little bird. We had wonderful views of a pair in a dry riverbed on our sojourn into the Karoo.

Rufous-eared Warbler (E)

Malcorus pectoralis

We had fleeting views and heard these warblers calling during our day in the Karoo.

Bar-throated Apalis

Apalis thoracica

A single bird was seen in the Western Cape and the KZN midlands.

NOTE: Forms of Bar-throated Apalis are split by some African authorities as Namuli Apalis (*A. lynesi*), which is endemic to Mt. Namuli in N. Mozambique, Taita Apalis (*A. fuscigularis*) found only in the Taita Hills of SE Kenya, and Yellow-throated Apalis (*A. flavigularis*), which is endemic to S. Malawi. There is likely to be further splitting of this group.

Yellow-breasted Apalis

Apalis flavida

We enjoyed several sightings in the Kruger NP and reserves in Zululand.

NOTE: This widespread polytypic African species is likely to be split into three or more species. Clements does not as yet recognise any split. The form we recorded would remain in the nominate grouping.

Rudd's Apalis (E)*Apalis ruddi*

This range-restricted endemic is fairly common in Maputaland. We had great views of six in this region.

Green-backed Camaroptera (Bleating Warbler) *Camaroptera brachyura*

A dweller of thick undergrowth, we had sightings of these birds at Shongweni Dam.

NOTE: Most authorities now recognise the nominate green-backed forms of this widespread African warbler as distinct from the grey-backed forms C. brevicaudata. We encountered the green-backed form in South Africa. Clements still lumps these two groups.

Kopjie (Cinnamon-breasted) Warbler (E)*Euryptila subcinnamomea*

This elusive and shy bird was first heard and then great views were had at our picnic stop in the Tanqua Karoo.

Old World Warblers *Sylviidae***Cape Grassbird (E)***Sphenoeacus afer*

A single bird was seen briefly in West Coast NP with subsequent good views on Sani Pass.

Dark-capped Yellow Warbler*Chloropeta natalensis*

This attractive warbler was seen on two occasions, once at Albert Falls and once at Hluhluwe Umfolozi.

Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler*Phylloscopus ruficapillus*

Three birds were observed in mist-belt forest in the KZN midlands.

Lesser Swamp (Cape Reed) Warbler*Acrocephalus gracilirostris*

Sightings were had on three days at eastern wetlands and once in the Western Cape.

Fairy Warbler (Flycatcher) (E)*Stenostira scita*

A pair of these delightful birds were seen very well in the Karoo.

Yellow-bellied Eremomela*Eremomela icteropygialis*

We had one bird in a mixed flock in Mkuze Game Reserve.

Yellow-rumped Eremomela (E)*Eremomela gregalis*

We found three of these illusive birds in the Karoo.

Burnt-neck Eremomela*Eremolela usticollis*

We had seven at Hluhluwe Umfolozi and a single at Zaagkuilsdrift.

Cape (Long-billed) Crombec (Sylvietta)*Sylvietta rufescens*

We found this tailless bird in Kruger NP and the reserves of Zululand.

Layard's Warbler (Tit-babbler) (E)*Parisoma layardi*

Three birds seen in the Karoo as well as a pair on Sani Pass.

Rufous-vented Warbler (Tit-babbler) (NE)*Parisoma subcaeruleum*

Three birds were seen in West Coast NP and we had an additional single at Zaagkuilsdrift.

Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae***Pale Flycatcher***Bradornis pallidus*

Encountered several times in Zululand and a single sighting in Kruger NP.

Marico Flycatcher*Bradornis mariquensis*

Eight birds were found during our exploration of Zaagkuilsdrift.

Southern Black-Flycatcher*Melaenornis pammelaina*

Commonly recorded at most wooded sites in the East.

Fiscal Flycatcher*Sigelis silens*

Encountered regularly on tour, peak numbers of twelve recorded in the Western Cape.

African Dusky Flycatcher*Muscicapa adusta*

A flycatcher of forest and woodland, we had sightings in suitable habitat throughout the tour.

Ashy (Blue-grey) Flycatcher*Muscicapa caerulescens*

We found this attractive species in Mkuze Game Reserve and Kruger NP.

Gray Tit-Flycatcher (Fan-tailed/Lead-coloured) *Myioparus plumbeus*

We had a singleton in the Kruger NP. This rather endearing species is often observed actively fanning its tail.

Cape Robin-Chat *Cossypha caffra*

A fairly common garden species; we had sightings in Wakkerstroom, the KZN Midlands and in the Western Cape.

Chorister Robin-Chat (E) *Cossypha dichroa*

A beautiful bird, seen well in the KZN Midlands and in Ongoye Forest in Zululand.

White-throated Robin-Chat (E) *Cossypha humeralis*

This is a very good-looking robin indeed; our best sighting was had on our first day in Mkuze Game Reserve.

White-browed (Heuglin's) Robin-Chat *Cossypha heuglini*

A single bird was recorded in Skukuza Camp.

Red-capped Robin-Chat *Cossypha natalensis*

Recorded in small numbers in Maputaland.

(Eastern) Bearded Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata*

Seen in the Maputaland area and once in Kruger NP.

Brown Scrub-Robin (E) *Cercotrichas signata*

Two birds were seen foraging in a camp site in St Lucia at dusk.

Red-backed (White-browed) Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys*

Seen most regularly in the Mkuze Game Reserve.

NOTE: This widespread African complex is being reviewed for a 3-way split, the Southern African C. l. leucophrys group would remain as White-browed Scrub-Robin, the Central African (C. l. zambesiana) would become Red-backed Scrub-Robin and the Northern African (C. l. leucoptera) would become White-winged Scrub-Robin. Clements does not as yet recognise these splits.

Karoo Scrub-Robin (E) *Cercotrichas coryphoeus*

We had sightings in the West Coast NP and in the Tanqua Karoo.

African Stonechat *Saxicola axillaris*

We had good numbers throughout the eastern half of the country.

NOTE: Clements recognises the split of African (S. torquata) and Common (S. rubicola) Stonechats (the latter a Palearctic species), which is not followed by all authorities. Further splitting may occur in both groups including the highland Ethiopian form (S. t. albofasciata) that may become Ethiopian Stonechat.

Mocking Cliff-Chat *Thamnodia cinnamomeiventris*

A single bird was recorded from Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserve.

Buff-streaked Chat (Wheatear) (E) *Oenanthe bifasciata*

We enjoyed good views of a total of twelve birds in KZN Midlands and on Sani Pass.

Mountain Wheatear (Chat) (NE) *Oenanthe monticola*

Six birds were seen in the Western Cape with additional sightings in the Wakkerstroom area.

Capped Wheatear (Chat) (NE) *Oenanthe pileata*

A single bird was encountered in the Western Cape and two on Zaagkuilsdrift.

Sicklewing Chat (E) *Cercomela sinuata*

We had two on the chilly plains of Lesotho between the Sani border post and Black Mountain.

Karoo Chat (E) *Cercomela schlegelii*

We enjoyed good views of twenty-five birds in the Karoo.

Familiar Chat *Cercomela familiaris*

This rather common species was encountered regularly in the Western Cape.

Southern Anteater-Chat (E) *Myrmecocichla formicivora*

First encountered near Underberg (1) and later we enjoyed good views of twenty plus in Wakkerstroom

Wattle-eyes and Batises *Platysteiridae*

Cape Batis (E) *Batis capensis*

Seen in the Western Cape and in mist-belt forest in KZN.

NOTE: Cape Batis is divided by Clements into seven subspecies, two of which are regarded by African authorities as separate species, Malawi Batis *B.dimorpha* and Reichenow's Batis *B.reichenowi*.

Woodward's Batis *Batis fratrum*

A pair of these delightful endemics were seen in coastal forest at St Lucia.

Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*

Seen well and often in the Kruger NP, Mkuze and Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserves.

Pirit Batis (NE) *Batis pririt*

This dry country batis was seen a total of four times on our day in the Karoo.

Monarch Flycatchers *Monarchidae*

African Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

This striking bird was encountered in small numbers from the reserves in the Zululand area.

NOTE: The northern races of this widespread African species which includes the nominate form are likely to be separated from the southern races which would become Grey-headed Paradise-Flycatcher (*T. plumbeiceps*). Beside plumage and distributional differences, only the northern forms display polymorphism in males. Clements does not as yet recognise this split.

African Crested-Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelus*

A pair was recorded from thick undergrowth at Ongoye Forest.

Babblers *Timaliidae*

Cape Rockjumper (E) *Chaetops frenatus*

A gale force wind nearly ended our chances until we were finally rewarded with great views of two birds at Rooi Els.

Orange-breasted (Drakensberg) Rock-jumper (E) *Chaetops aurantius*

This is a remarkably attractive bird! We had an incredible twenty birds on that wonderful day up Sani.

Arrow-marked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*

A fairly common bird in Kruger NP, recorded daily during our stay there.

Southern Pied Babbler (NE) *Turdoides bicolor*

This smart bird was seen in two flocks, totally ten birds at Zaagkuilsdrift.

Bush Blackcap (E) *Lioptilis nigricapillus*

We had three encounters with this good looking endemic in mist-belt forest.

Tits *Paridae*

Southern Black-Tit (NE) *Parus niger*

A bird we encountered regularly in Kruger NP and the Maputaland reserves.

(Southern) Gray Tit (E) *Parus afer*

Encountered in the Karoo and on Sani Pass.

Penduline-Tits *Remizidae*

African (Gray) Penduline-Tit *Anthoscopus caroli*

One of the smallest birds on the continent, we found four at Musi Pan.

Sunbirds & Spiderhunters *Nectariniidae*

Collared Sunbird*Anthreptes collaris*

We had many sightings of this tiny gem on the Eastern leg of the tour.

Orange-breasted Sunbird (E)*Anthobaphes violacea*

These beautiful sunbirds were seen in good numbers in the Western Cape.

Eastern Olive-Sunbird*Cyanomitra olivacea*

Two birds were seen in part of an enormous feeding flock at Phiva in St Lucia.

*NOTE: The Olive Sunbird species complex has been split into two full species by Clements and some other authorities, namely the nominate Eastern Olive-Sunbird *C. olivacea* and the form in East and West Africa, Western Olive Sunbird (*C. obscura*). There has been a review of this split and several authorities are in doubt of the validity, which is based upon the presence, or lack there-of, of pectoral tufts in the females of the various subspecies within the complex.*

Amethyst (African Black) Sunbird*Chalcomitra amethystina*

This stunning sunbird was seen in the gardens of our Hotel in Krantzklouf.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird*Chalcomitra senegalensis*

We had great sightings of this breathtaking beauty in the Kruger NP and Mkuze GR.

Malachite Sunbird*Nectarinia famosa*

Our first bird was seen in the Karoo with excellent sightings at Paarl Mountain.

Southern Double-collared Sunbird (E)*Cinnyris chalybea*

Seen daily in good numbers in the Western Cape.

Greater Double-collared Sunbird (E)*Cinnyris afra*

Seen in good numbers on the Sani Pass.

Neergard's Sunbird (E)*Cinnyris neergardii*

We managed to locate a total of two of these spectacular endemics.

Mariqua (Marico) Sunbird*Cinnyris mariquensis*

We had sightings of two birds in the Kruger NP and two birds in Mkuze Game Reserve..

*NOTE: Some authorities split this complex into 2 full species. The *C. m. suahelicus* which occurs in East Africa would become Swahili Sunbird as opposed to the nominate form which would remain as Mariqua Sunbird. Clements does not as yet recognise this split.*

Purple-banded Sunbird*Cinnyris bifasciatus*

We had three birds in Mkuze GR.

*NOTE: The form *N. e. tsavoensis* of Kenya is sometimes split off as Tsavo Purple-banded Sunbird.*

Mouse-colored Sunbird*Cinnyris veroxii*

We had spectacular views in St Lucia with subsequent sightings in Mkuze Game Reserve.

White-breasted (White-bellied) Sunbird*Cinnyris talatala*

We enjoyed a sightings in Kruger NP, Hluhluwe Umfolozi and Mkuze Game Reserve.

White-eyes *Zosteropidae***Cape (Pale) White-eye (E)***Zosterops virens*

We had had many encounters in the east and in the Western Cape.

*NOTE: This species has recently been split into a further species, Orange River White-eye *Z. pallidus*, which occurs in Western Southern Africa, and further splitting may still occur.*

African Yellow White-eye (E)*Zosterops senegalensis*

Good views were had of this tropical species in Maputaland.

Sugarbirds *Promeropidae***Gurney's Sugarbird (E)***Promerops gurneyi*

We enjoyed stunning close views of several of these magnificent and unique nectivores on *Proteas* at Sani Pass.

Cape Sugarbird (E)*Promerops cafer*

This beauty was finally seen well at Harold Porter Botanical Garden feeding on King Proteas.

Old World Orioles *Oriolidae***African (Eastern) Black-headed Oriole***Oriolus larvatus*

Recorded in low numbers at varied location in the East.

Shrikes *Laniidae***Common Fiscal (Shrike)***Lanius collaris*

This is a common bird throughout South Africa and was seen most days of the tour.

NOTE: The form L. marwitzi is sometimes split off as Uhehe Fiscal occurring in East Africa.

Magpie (Long-tailed) Shrike*Corvinella melanoleuca*

This wonderfully clad bird sports an elegant tail and is refreshingly vocal and common in the Kruger NP.

(Southern) White-crowned Shrike (NE)*Eurocephalus anguitimens*

Three birds recorded in Kruger NP.

Bushshrikes & Allies *Malaconotidae***Brubru***Nilaus afer*

Our first sighting was in Hluhluwe Umfolozi, further sightings were had in Maputaland and Kruger NP.

NOTE: This previously monotypic genus might be split 4 ways: Northern Brubru N. afer, Black-browed Brubru (N. nigritemporalis), Angola Brubru (N. affinis) and Southern Brubru (N. brubru). Only the Southern Brubru occurs in South Africa. Clements does not as yet recognise these splits.

Black-backed Puffback*Dryoscopus cubla*

This is a fairly common shrike and we had bountiful sightings in wooded habitat throughout the east.

Black-crowned Tchagra*Tchagra senegala*

We had a several encounters in Zululand and Maputaland Reserves.

NOTE: Moroccan Tchagra T. s. cucullata of northwest Africa may be split from the nominate form which we recorded in South Africa. Clements does not as yet recognise this split.

Brown-crowned (Three-streaked) Tchagra*Tchagra australis*

Encountered regularly in Game Reserves in the East.

Southern Boubou (E)*Laniarius ferrugineus*

Regularly heard but seen only twice on tour, our best sighting being a calling individual in Kruger NP.

Crimson-breasted Shrike (NE)*Laniarius atrococcineus*

This mid-bending species was seen on Zaagkuilsdrift (6).

Bokmakierie (NE)*Telophorus zeylonus*

This very beautiful Bush Shrike was seen in Wakkerstroom, Sani and at several sites in the Western Cape.

Sulphur-breasted (Orange-breasted) Bushshrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus*

This critter is a regular inhabitant of the bushveld biome. We had sightings of small numbers in the Kruger NP and Mkuze GR.

Four-colored (Gorgeous) Bushshrike*Telophorus quadricolor*

Very brief views were had of an unhelpful bird in Mkuze Game Reserve.

NOTE: This species is currently lumped by Clements with Perrin's Bush-Shrike (T.q.viridis) of N Angola to S Congo and NW Zambia. Most authorities regard these birds as separate species.

Gray-headed Bushshrike*Malaconotus blanchoti*

Great views of two birds were had in Kruger NP.

Helmetshrikes & Allies *Prionopidae*

White (-crested) Helmetshrike

Prionops plumatus

Good views were had in Mkuze Game Reserve and Kruger NP.

NOTE: This species is being considered for a 3-way split. P. p. cristatus would become Curly-crested Helmetshrike, P. p. poliocephalus would become Southern Helmetshrike (the form we recorded) and the nominate P. p. plumatus would become Straight-crested Helmetshrike. Clements does not as yet recognise these splits.

Drongos *Dicruridae*

Square-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus ludwigii

We saw our first birds in the forested habitats of coastal Zululand.

Fork-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus adsimilis

Recorded almost daily at most sites visited in eastern South Africa. Occasionally we saw the bird in association with grazing mammals snapping up insects fleeing animal's hooves.

*NOTE: Older versions of Clements lump the forest dwelling Velvet-mantled Drongo (*D. modestus*) of East and West Africa within Fork-tailed Drongo *D. adsimilis* but the split has been recognized in recent Clements updates as well as by most other authorities.*

Crows, Jays & Magpies *Corvidae*

House Crow

Corvus splendens

Several of these introduced birds were seen at Cape Town International Airport.

Cape (Black) Crow

Corvus capensis

We enjoyed our sightings in the Wakkerstroom and Underburg areas.

Pied Crow

Corvus albus

Seen regularly but with peak numbers around the West Coast.

White-necked Raven

Corvus albicollis

First encountered in the Western Cape with additional sightings in mountainous habitat in the East.

Starlings *Sturnidae*

Common (Indian) Myna

Acridotheres tristis

Common in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal around urban centres. Introduced to Durban in 1900.

European (Common) Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Another attractive but none the less unwanted alien. Our first birds were seen in the Western Cape where it is very common. It was introduced in the late 1800s.

Wattled Starling

Creatophora cinerea

We had fifty plus birds in the Kruger NP and an additional of a flock (50) on the West Coast.

Cape (Red-shouldered) Glossy-Starling (NE)

Lamprotornis nitens

Recorded regularly in the east with the largest numbers seen in the Kruger NP and Mkuze GR.

Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling

Lamprotornis chalybaeus

Restricted to the Lowveld in South Africa where we recorded numerous sightings in the Kruger NP.

Burchell's Glossy-Starling (NE)

Lamprotornis australis

This monster starling was only observed in the Kruger NP where we had in excess of twenty birds.

Violet-backed (Plum-coloured) Starling

Cinnyricinclus leucogaster

Recorded only once on tour – a female at Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserve.

Black-bellied Glossy-Starling

Lamprotornis corruscus

This species seldom strays far inland; we had sightings in reserves in Maputaland and Zululand. Largest flock recorded was 300 birds at Mtunzini.

African Pied Starling (E) *Spreo bicolor*

Good numbers of this common endemic were seen, in the Western Cape, Wakkerstroom, KZN and in the Tanqua Karoo.

Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio*

This beautiful Starling was first encountered in Cape Town.

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*

These birds were fairly common on game in both Kruger and Mkuze.

Old World Sparrows *Passeridae*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Widespread and common in urban areas throughout South Africa.

Mossie (Cape Sparrow) (NE) *Passer melanurus*

Certainly our smartest sparrow and a near endemic to boot. Peak numbers of 200 were recorded in the Western Cape.

Southern Gray-headed Sparrow (NE) *Passer diffusus*

This sparrow was commonly encountered in the Kruger National Park.

NOTE: The Gray-headed Sparrow complex P. griseus has been split into five full species with the South African form being given the name P. diffusus.

Yellow-throated Petronia (Sparrow) *Petronia superciliaris*

Seen in Kruger and in Maputaland in good numbers.

Weavers & Allies *Ploceidae*

Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver *Bubalornis niger*

We had eight birds in the Satara area. Kruger is an excellent site for this untidy social nester.

Scaly Weaver (NE) *Sporopipes squamifrons*

A day total of a hundred birds was recorded from the Zaagkuilsdrift area.

White-browed Sparrow-weaver *Plocepasser mahali*

Ten of these smart and vocal birds were recorded from the Zaagkuilsdrift area.

Lesser Masked-Weaver *Ploceus intermedius*

We had good numbers in the Kruger NP and Mkuze Game Reserve.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*

Encountered in small numbers in KZN game reserves and Kruger NP.

Cape Weaver (E) *Ploceus capensis*

Common in numbers in the Western Cape with fewer sightings in KZN.

African Golden (Yellow) Weaver *Ploceus subaureus*

This bird is confined to the east coast littoral on this tour, three birds were seen in St Lucia.

Southern Masked-Weaver *Ploceus velatus*

Commonly recorded in the East.

NOTE: African Masked Weaver P. velatus is sometimes split into the nominate Southern Masked Weaver which we recorded and the more northerly occurring Vitelline Masked-Weaver P. vitellinus.

Village (Spotted-backed) Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*

Recorded at Shongweni Dam.

Forest (Dark-backed) Weaver *Ploceus bicolor*

We had sightings in mist-belt and coastal forest in KZN.

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*

Recorded in Kruger where up to ten, non-breeding birds were seen.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*

Recorded in small in grassland habitats and then more commonly in Kruger NP.

Yellow-crowned Bishop *Euplectes afer*

These bumblebee like birds were recorded in Wakkerstroom and at Zaagkuilsdrift.

(Southern) Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*

The dull, non-breeding birds were recorded regularly in the East.

Yellow Bishop (Yellow-rumped Widow) *Euplectes capensis*

Recorded on our day in the Sani Pass area.

Fan-tailed (Red-shouldered) Widowbird *Euplectes axillaris*

This *Euplectes* is regularly encountered in the grasslands of the east.

White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus*

This delightful widow was observed in the Kruger NP.

Long-tailed Widowbird *Euplectes progne*

Recorded in large numbers (180) in the Wakkerstroom district.

Grosbeak (Thick-billed) Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*

Recorded in large, non-breeding flocks. Highest count of 50 coming from Maputaland.

Waxbills & Allies *Estrildidae*

Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba*

We marveled at three of these brightly colored critters on tour.

Pink-throated Twinspot (E) *Hypargos margaritatus*

After being alerted by their trilling call we had a total of eight birds in Mkuze Game Reserve.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonostica senegala*

Seen in Mkuze Game Reserve and Kruger NP.

African Firefinch *Lagonostica rubricata*

Our best sighting came from the Lower Mkuze area where a striking male was viewed by some of the group.

Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonostica rhodopareia*

Six of these delightful birds were seen at Zaagkuilsdrift.

Blue-breasted Cordonbleu (Blue Waxbill) *Uraeginthus angolensis*

Flocks of this common species were seen in the Kruger NP and Mkuze GR.

Swee Waxbill (Black-faced Swee) (E) *Estrilda melanotis*

These are absolutely gorgeous little waxbills, we had six in Karkloof and four at Strydom Tunnel.

NOTE: Yellow-bellied Waxbill (East African Swee) Estrilda quartinia is sometimes lumped with the South African Swee Waxbill E. melanotis.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

Recorded commonly on tour with peak numbers of seventy coming from the Karoo Poort area.

Black-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda erythronotos*

Stonking views of many birds was had at Zaagkuilsdrift.

African Quailfinch *Ortygospiza atricollis*

Heard at several sites, finally seen well at Zaagkuilsdrift.

NOTE: This species complex might be split into two, the South African form would remain African Quailfinch and the highland Ethiopian isolate would become Ethiopian Quailfinch (O. fuscocrissa.)

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*

These delightful and striking finches were seen at Letaba rest camp and on Zaagkuilsdrift.

Bronze Mannikin (Munia) *Lonchura cucullata*

Recorded only once on tour, thirty birds at Shongweni Dam.

Red-backed Mannikin (Munia) *Lonchura bicolor*

Recorded regularly at forest edge in the East.

Indigobirds *Viduidae*

- Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura*
Only encountered out of breeding plumage at Zaagkuilsdrift.
- Eastern Paradise-Whydah** *Vidua paradisaea*
These stunning birds were seen well in Kruger NP.

Siskins, Crossbills & Allies *Fringillidae*

- Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*
A single specimen of this introduced bird was seen at Kirstenbosch.
- Cape Canary (E)** *Serinus canicollis*
Typically encountered at higher elevation sites in the east and on Paarl Mountain.
NOTE: This species complex might be split into two, the nominate southern group would remain as Cape Canary and the form which occurs in East Africa would become Yellow-crowned Canary (S. flavivertex.) Clements does not as yet recognise this split.
- Forest Canary (E)** *Serinus scotops*
This uncommon endemic was seen in Kirstenbosch and Karkloof.
- Yellow-fronted (Yellow-eyed) Canary** *Serinus mozambicus*
This is a common bird at lower elevations in both urban and wild areas in the east.
- Yellow Canary (NE)** *Serinus flaviventris*
We encountered this Canary only in the Western Cape.
- Brimstone Canary** *Serinus sulphuratus*
We had a sightings of this striking canary at Paarl Mountain and St Lucia.
- White-throated Canary (NE)** *Serinus albogularis*
We had three of these rather large seedeaters in the Karoo.
- Streaky-headed Seedeater (NE)** *Serinus gularis*
We had four birds in the Karoo.
- Protea Seedeater (E)** *Serinus leucopterus*
Aha! Finally a very obliging individual for my list was found at Paarl Mountain.
- Drakensberg Siskin (E)** *Pseudochloroptila symonsi*
We had at least a hundred birds on our explorations at the top of Sani Pass in the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho.

Buntings *Emberizidae*

- Cinnamon-breasted (Rock) Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi*
Our encounter was of two birds at the roadside in Kruger NP.
- Cape Bunting** *Emberiza capensis*
Regular in the Western Cape with an additional twenty recorded on Sani Pass.
NOTE: Clements has recently elevated the former Cape Bunting subspecies E.c.vincenti of central Malawi to E Zambia to full species status, Vincent's Bunting (E.vincenti).
- Golden-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza flaviventris*
Small numbers of this brilliantly plumaged bird were seen in Kruger and the reserves in Zululand.

MAMMAL SPECIES LIST

Note: Names and taxonomical order of the land mammals follow that of 'The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals'; additional names are given in parenthesis and are likely to appear other popular field guides.

Fruit Bats Pteropodidae

Peter's Epauletted Fruit Bat

Epomophorus crypturus

These endearing bats were seen at their day roost in Skukuza.

Wahlberg's Epauletted Fruit Bat

Epomophorus wahlbergi

Impossible to distinguish in the field from the previous species, however, distribution suggests that the epauletted fruit bats seen in Maputaland are this species.

Slit-faced Bats Nycteridae

Egyptian Slit-faced Bat

Nycteris thebaica

A single specimen was found roosting in a hide at Mkuze Game Reserve.

Free-tailed Bats Molossidae

Free-tailed Bat

Tadarida spp

A single specimen was found roosting in the restaurant at Satara rest camp.

Galagos Lorisidae

Greater Galago (Thick-tailed Bushbaby)

Otolemur crassicaudatus

Encountered in Maputaland – St Lucia and Mkuze Game Reserve.

Cheek-Pouch Monkeys Cercopithecidae

Chacma Baboon

Papio ursinus

This species is fairly common in wilder parts of Southern Africa, occasionally encountered close to human habitation. We saw our first group in the Kruger NP with further sightings in Zululand and in the Western Cape.

Vervet Monkey

Cercopithecus aethiops

Common and seen at most localities in eastern South Africa with good numbers in all game reserves.

Samango (Blue/Gentle) Monkey

Cercopithecus mitis

This forest dwelling monkey was found and viewed well at Ongoye Forest.

Hares & Rabbits Leporidae

Scrub Hare

Lepus saxatilis

Common on night drives in Kruger and Mkuze.

Cape Hare

Lepus capensis

This open country species was first encountered at Midmar dam.

Squirrels *Sciuridae*

Smith's Bush Squirrel (Tree Squirrel)

Paraxerus cepapi

We enjoyed great views of several in the Kruger NP.

Gray Squirrel

Sciurus carolinensis

This exotic species was viewed in the Western Cape.

Groove-Toothed Rats *Otomyinae*

Striped Mouse

Rhabdomys pumillo

We had fantastic scope views of an individual in the Karoo.

Grooved Toothed Rats (Sloggett's/ Ice Rat)

Otomys sloggetti

We had many of these engaging rodents around Sani Top Hotel and on the barren plains in Lesotho.

Porcupines *Hystricidae*

Southern Porcupine

Hystrix africaeaustralis

A young animal was observed in Mkuze Game Reserve and an adult in Kruger NP.

Dogs and Allies *Canidae*

Black-backed Jackal

Canis mesomelas

A pair were found at a waterhole in Kruger NP and another pair in Dullstroom area.

African Wild Dog

Lycaon pictus

Two thrilling encounter were had with this species, a pack of eleven in Mkuze Game Reserve and a pack of twelve in Kruger NP.

Mustelids *Mustelidae*

Cape Clawless Otter

Aonyx capensis

We were very lucky to have great views of a single individual in and out of water in the Underberg district.

Mongoose *Herpestidae*

Banded Mongoose

Mungos mungo

A large group was seen foraging through Skukuza rest camp.

Dwarf Mongoose

Helogale parvula

Africa's smallest carnivore – several groups were seen in Kruger NP.

Slender Mongoose

Galerella sanguinea

We had regular sighting of this endearing species.

Small Grey Mongoose

Herpestes pulverulenta

Seen well and often on the Cape Peninsula.

White-tailed Mongoose

Ichneumia albicauda

A solitary animal was viewed on our night-drive from Mkuze game Reserve.

Yellow Mongoose

Cynictis penicillata

Rather common in the grasslands around Wakkerstroom.

Suricate (Meerkat)

Suricata suricatta

Our most memorable sighting came from the Wakkerstroom area where we had a family of eighteen sunbathing.

Hyaenas *Hyaenidae*

Spotted Hyaena

Crocuta crocuta

We enjoyed great viewing of this awesome species in Mkuze and Kruger NP.

Genets and Civets *Viverridae*

Blotched (Large-spotted) Genet

Genetta tigrina

Viewed well in Mkuze and Kruger NP on night drives.

Small-spotted Genet

Genetta genetta

This species was found on a night drive from Satara rest camp, Kruger NP.

Cats *Felidae*

Serval

Felis serval

An unbelievable two sightings of these difficult to see cats were had on a single night drive from Satara. A mega mammal highlight.

African Wild Cat

Felis sylvestrus

These beautiful cats were seen on two night drives from Satara rest camp.

Aardvark *Orycteropodidae*

Aardvark

Orycteropus afer

Another mega mammal – this time viewed at Midmar Dam on a night drive.

Hyraxes *Procavidae*

Rock Hyrax (Dassie)

Procavia capensis

We had encounters with these odd beasts in Wakkerstroom, Sani Pass and the Western Cape

Elephants *Elephantidae*

African Elephant

Loxodonta africana

Seen in good numbers in Kruger National Park.

Zebras *Equidae*

Common (Burchell's/Plains) Zebra

Equus quagga

The unmistakable striped horse of the African savannah, we enjoyed sightings of good numbers in all the game reserves in the east.

Rhinoceroses *Rhinocerotidae*

Black Rhinoceros

Diceros bicornis

This legendary storm cloud of the Zululand thickets was found in Hluhluwe Umfolozi.

White Rhinoceros

Ceratotherium simum

We enjoyed fantastic viewing in Hluhluwe Umfolozi, Mkuze and Kruger NP.

Hippopotamuses Hippopotamidae

Hippopotamus

Hippopotamus amphibius

We had good hippo viewing at all suitable sites in the east.

Pigs Suidae

Common Warthog

Phacochoerus africanus

We enjoyed sightings of these in Kruger and Mkuze.

Bush Pig

Potamochoerus larvatus

A sounder was encountered on a night drive in Mkuze Game Reserve.

Giraffes Giraffidae

Giraffe

Giraffa camelopardalis

Many were seen in the Kruger NP with further encounters in Mkuze Game Reserve.

Bovids & Horned Ungulates Bovidae

African (Cape) Buffalo

Syncerus caffer

Seen well in Kruger NP and Hluhluwe Umfolozi.

Eland

Taurotragus oryx

This enormous antelope was seen in West Coast NP and Underberg district.

Greater Kudu

Tragelaphus strepsiceros

These magnificent antelope were seen in Kruger and Mkuze.

Nyala

Tragelaphus angasii

This striking antelope is endemic to this part of Kwazulu Natal and Southern Mozambique. We had plentiful sightings in the game reserves in Zululand.

Bushbuck

Tragelaphus scriptus

Encountered in Kruger NP and St Lucia.

Waterbuck

Kobus ellipsiprymnus

This large and oddly marked antelope was seen well on several occasions in Kruger NP and Hluhluwe Umfolozi.

Mountain Reedbuck

Redunca fulvorufula

This striking antelope was seen in the Wakkerstroom area and on Sani Pass.

Brindled Gnu (Blue Wildebeest)

Connochaetes taurinus

This mammal was frequently encountered in all game reserves in the east.

Black Wildebeest

Connochaetes gnou

This spectacular beast was found at Midmar dam and in the Underberg district.

Red Hartebeest

Alcelaphus buselaphus

We were lucky to see a good herd in the Underberg district.

Sable Antelope

Hippotragus niger

One of Africa's most spectacular antelope. We observed several fine males in the Kruger NP.

Impala*Aepyceros melampus melampus*

Arguably the commonest antelope in the game reserves of the east, it goes without saying then that we enjoyed plentiful sightings.

Springbok*Antidorcas marsupialis*

Herds of these dainty antelope were seen in Underberg and Wakkerstroom districts.

Klipspringer*Oreotragus oreotragus*

A pair of these delightful antelope were seen on the rocks of Southern Kruger NP.

Steinbuck (Steenbok)*Raphicerus campestris*

These dainty antelope, famed for their habit of burying their dung, were observed in the Kruger NP and Mkuze GR.

Bush (Common/Grey) Duiker*Sylvicapra grimmia*

This, the commonest duiker in South Africa, was seen on occasions in the east and in the west.

Red Duiker*Cephalophus natalensis*

This colourful species was observed regularly in Mkuze Game Reserve.

Blue Duiker*Philantomba monticola*

This tiny antelope offered unforgettable views at Dlinza Forest.

Fur Seals Otariidae**Cape Fur Seal***Arctocephalus pusillus*

This cold-water dweller was seen in the icy waters of Hout Bay.

REPTILE SPECIES LIST**Typical Snakes Colubridae****Natal Purple-glossed Snake***Amblyodipsas concolor***Spotted Bush Snake***Philothamnus semivariatus***Boomslang***Dispholidus typus***Twig Snake***Thelotornis capensis***Adders Viperidae****Puff Adder***Bitis arietans***Skinks Scincidae****Striped Skink***Mabuya striata***Girdled Lizards Cordylidae****Graceful Crag Lizard***Pseudocordylus capensis***Drakensberg Crag Lizard***Pseudocordylus malanotus***Monitors Varanidae**

Nile Monitor

Varanus niloticus

Agamas Agamidae

Southern Rock Agama

Agama atra

Southern Tree Agama

Acanthocercus atricollis

Chameleons Chamaeleonidae

Flap-necked Chameleon

Chameleo dilepsis

Geckos Gekkonidae

Tropical House Gecko

Hemidactylus mabouia

Cape Dwarf Day Gecko

Lygodactylus capensis

Crocodiles Crocodylia

Nile Crocodile

Crocodylus niloticus

Side-necked Terrapins Pelomedusidae

Serrated Hinged Terrapin

Pelusios sinuatus

Marsh Terrapin

Pelomedusa subrufa

Land Tortoises Testudinidae

Angulate Tortoise

Chersina angulata

AMPHIBIANS

Red Toad

Schismaderma carens

Plain Grass Frog

Ptychadena anchietae

Gray Tree Frog

Chiromantis xerampelina

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