



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Cape Wildflowers, Birding & Big Game

20th August to 2nd September 2012 (14 days)



This comprehensive tour covers the most exciting regions of the Cape in our quest to experience both breathtaking displays of wildflowers and to track down some of the continent's most exciting birds. We begin in the vibrant city of Cape Town, where Table Mountain provides a spectacular backdrop to the immensely diverse fynbos that cloaks the cities periphery. This Fynbos constitutes the Cape Floral Kingdom – the smallest and richest of the world's 6 floral kingdoms. It is also the only floral kingdom to be confined to the boundaries of a single country. Thereafter we venture to the West Coast and Namaqualand, which boast an outrageous and world famous floral display in years of good rains, before heading out of wildflower country to Augrabies Falls and then the Kalahari “desert”, an area

offering unparalleled raptor viewing and the chance to see black-maned lions and a wide range of dry region birds and game. We conclude the journey travelling through the heart of the country's semi-desert region, focusing on the special birds endemic to this ancient landscape. We invite you on this celebration of some of the finest wildflower and endemic birding that the African continent has to offer!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

DETAILS

Tour Dates	20th August to 2nd September 2012 (14 days)
Tour Price	US\$4,130 * £2,850 * €3,230 * ZAR31,000 per person sharing (see below) (Tour price fixed in ZAR , other rates subject to exchange rate fluctuations)
Tour Size	Limited to 6 participants and 1 RBT leader

THE ITINERARY

20th August	Cape Town to Boulders Beach and Cape of Good Hope National Park
21st August	Rooi Els and Harold Porter
22nd August	Cape Town environs to Langebaan
23rd August	Langebaan and West Coast National Park
24th August	Langebaan to Nieuwoudtville
25th August	Nieuwoudtville
26th August	Nieuwoudtville to Springbok
27th August	Springbok to Augrabies Falls National Park
28th August	Augrabies Falls to Twee Rivieren (Kgalagadi Transfrontier National Park)
29th August	Twee Rivieren
30th August	Twee Rivieren to Calvinia
31st August	Calvinia
1st September	Calvinia to Ceres
2nd September	Ceres to Cape Town and Depart

THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1, 20th August: Cape Town to Boulders Beach and Cape of Good Hope National Park. This morning you will be met by your guide at Cape Town International Airport, and transferred to our comfortable accommodation in Cape Town for a two-night stay. Today we venture southwards to False Bay and the famous Jackass Penguin colony at Boulders Beach, Simonstown. Here, as many as five hundred penguins grace the beach, often in and around nearby nest burrows. We will have superb viewing and photographic opportunities of these undeniably adorable birds. Here we will also look out for the endemic African Oystercatcher along the adjacent rocky shorelines, and scan an offshore islet for breeding populations of endemic Crowned, Bank and Cape Cormorants.



In the afternoon, we continue south along the scenic Atlantic coastline to the Cape of Good Hope National Park, where Cape Point is situated. The scenery here, at the most southwesterly point of the African continent, is wild and rugged and here you will gain your first insight into the unique and wonderful flora of the Cape Floral Kingdom. The thick stands of *Proteas* support the magnificent Orange-breasted Sunbird and Cape Sugarbird. Several large mammals occur within the area and we should find Eland, Bontebok and Chacma Baboon. We conclude the day with a breathtaking coastal drive through the quaint villages of Scarborough and Kommetjie.



Day 2, 21st August: Rooi Els and Harold Porter. A diverse array of birding habitats are present around Cape Town and today we will visit a variety of sites, ranging from wetlands to *fynbos* and marine shoreline. We will make our way early to the rugged Hottentots-Holland Mountains in search of one of South Africa's finest endemics: the handsome Cape Rockjumper. Though strikingly plumaged and conspicuous by their vocalisations, these charismatic birds possess an incredible ability to disappear amongst the boulders and we may have to be patient if we wish to enjoy long sightings of these elusive creatures. Rock outcrops here

also support Ground Woodpecker, White-necked Raven, Cape Rock Thrush and Familiar Chat, whilst the thick mountain *fynbos* is the favoured habitat of Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin and the beautiful, endemic Victorin's Warbler. Chacma Baboon is fairly common here, but we will have to scan the rocky ridges carefully for the agile Klipspringer.

The sandy ground here supports rich mountain *fynbos* littered with an interesting variety of bulbs and annuals. A staggering 1600 plant species have been recorded in the area, with over 150 of these endemic to the region. After lunch we will explore the nearby Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, famous among bird and plant enthusiasts. We will amble through the cultivated and wild areas on the lookout for *Gladioli*, *Watsonias*, Everlastings and *Ericas* in flower, while birds such as the Black Saw-wing, Southern Boubou, Sweet Waxbill and Brimstone Canary are bound to entertain us as we explore these beautiful gardens. For those with diverse interests this Botanical Garden is also a local hotspot for dragonflies. In the late afternoon we will make our way back to Cape Town with a stop at the Harmony Flats Nature Reserve; this tiny reserve is the only protected area which conserves Lourensford Alluvial *Fynbos* – often considered the most threatened vegetation type in South Africa!

Day 3, 22nd August: Cape Town environs to Langebaan.

We begin the day with a visit to the immaculately landscaped Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens nestled on the slopes of Table Mountain. Here we will spend a few hours strolling around the many fascinating displays of this world-famous botanical garden. The gardens are also home to a plethora of endemic birds restricted to the Macchia-like vegetation of the southern tip of Africa and we should find Cape Spurfowl and Helmeted Guineafowl scurrying across the lawns, Cape Bulbul, the endemic Cape Grassbird and attractive Southern Double-collared Sunbird. We will search for African Goshawk and Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk that



occasionally display above the indigenous forest that cloaks the slopes above the gardens. These forests are also home to African Olive Pigeon, Lemon Dove, Cape Batis and Forest Canary.

In the mid-morning we will make our way up the West coast stopping at Tienie Versveld Wildflower Reserve. The granitic soils of the reserve can hold some very impressive spring flower displays and we hope for a variety of *Babiana*, *Ixia*, *Lachenalia* and *Drosera* to be in flower. Two birds of note include the distinctive, localised sub-species of both Clapper Lark and Cloud Cisticola.



Day 4, 23rd August: Langebaan and West Coast National Park (WCNP). We have the whole day to explore the avian and floral wonders of the West Coast National Park, including the globally important wetland site of Langebaan Lagoon. Large numbers of waders spend the northern winter here and we will scan for shorebirds including Kittlitz's Plover, the localised Chestnut-banded Plover, Terek Sandpiper and Red Knot. In addition, these areas also support large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingo, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and other waterfowl. Surrounding low, coastal vegetation (*Strandveld*) is home to Cape

Penduline Tit, Southern Black Korhaan, Karoo, Large-billed and the recently split Cape Long-billed Larks, and Fiscal Flycatcher. Furthermore, the park is the best place on earth to search for the very striking Black Harrier, a regional endemic and a highly sought after species!

If all is well and we have had a good wet year, then we can also expect the most remarkable wildflower display on the West Coast, and indeed one of the finest on earth. Here, in the Postberg section of the reserve, a combination of weather and soil conditions has created what has been described as 'Gods garden', with the normally green and rather drab hills transformed into an extravagance of colour and beauty that is sure to take your breath away.

Days 5, 24th August: Langebaan to Nieuwoudtville. After breakfast we will make our way to the nearby Berg River estuary where the rich, slow flowing waters support a great selection of shorebirds. This site is especially good for Chestnut-banded Plover and often houses South African rarities like Common Redshank and Red-necked Phalarope. Continuing north we will make a stop at Paleisheuwel, just south of Clanwilliam, arguably the best and most accessible site in the world for Protea Canary. This rather simple but very range restricted species is found alongside Fairy Warbler, Southern Boubou, Cardinal Woodpecker and Cape Batis.

In the late afternoon we will make our way up the dramatic Van Rhyns Pass to the small town of Nieuwoudtville, gateway to the spring flower displays of Namaqualand.



Days 6, 25th August: Nieuwoudtville. This lonely but beautiful corner of South Africa is a visual joy in spring, and the day will be spent exploring farms and reserves in the area for the best spring displays and birds. Of particular interest to us here is the diversity of bulbs (no-where else in the world are bulbs as diverse as they are here!) in addition to the numerous plants endemic to the area. In this relatively



small region we find as many as four different plant biomes converging, creating one of the richest areas for plants in the world. Today is bound to be a very memorable day for us all as we uncover the area's fascinating plant life.



Whilst in the area we may visit the Nieuwoudtville Falls, where we will look for Pale-winged Starling and the highly sought after Ground Woodpecker, and the Nieuwoudtville Wildflower Reserve, where we are sure to find numerous flowering geophytes, including representatives of the famous genera, *Gladiolus*, *Bulbinella*, *Romulea*, *Ixia* and the amazingly decorative *Geissorhiza*. In this area we may also find Namaqua Sandgrouse, Spike-heeled Lark and the delightful little Pririt Batis.

Day 7, 26th August: Nieuwoudtville to Springbok. After a spell of birding around our chalets we will commence the drive north. Almost immediately we enter the Knersvlakte, a desolate and barren looking land with a gently undulating topography. The barren appearance

belies the treasure chest of stone plants (*Vygies* of the family Aizoaceae – previously Mesembryanthemaceae) that litter these quartz plains. We are now in the heart of the succulent capital of the world and will leave the confines of the car to amble this wild garden of miniature, fleshy-leaved plants. By way of birds these plains are home to the wondrous Secretarybird, the endemic Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk, Ant-eating Chat and Cape Crow, among many others.

Farther north the landscape turns more rugged as we pass through tiny and ever lonely farming settlements. In the flat areas we will look for Karoo Lark and Karoo Chat. If time permits, we will then head for the Skilpad (Tortoise) Wildflower Reserve, which is made up mostly of old farmland that showcases a wonderful selection of spring flowers, including a variety of Daisies, bulbs and geraniums. The ghostly *Aloe dichotoma* will become evident as we approach the town of Springbok. In the late afternoon we will explore gravel roads in the area for some of the more difficult species like Black-headed Canary, Black-eared Sparrow-Lark and Ludwig's Bustard.

Day 8, 27th August: Springbok to Au-grabies Falls National Park. This morning we will visit the famed Goegap Nature Reserve, notable for its superb birding, great displays of wildflowers, and interesting selection of mammals, including Klipspringer, Mountain Zebra and Chacma Baboon. Birds of interest to us in this parched wilderness include Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Dusky Sunbird, White-throated Canary, Booted Eagle (which are often seen circling overhead) and Mountain Wheatear.

Leaving Namaqualand behind us, we then enter the stark beauty of Bushmanland. The wildflower heartland is now behind us and tracking down the exciting birdlife in the area will require all our efforts. The massive nests of the Sociable Weaver will become apparent and we will keep our eyes open for the associated Pygmy Falcon that often uses the big nests as a roost site. In the early afternoon we arrive at the impressive Au-grabies Falls where we will have time to take a short walk around the chalets and view the marvellous falls. Only metres away from our cabins we can marvel at the Orange River as it thunders through a tiny gap in the rocks and pours into the gorge below. In wet years this makes for a very impressive spectacle



indeed! In the Camelthorn *Acacia* trees in the camp we will look out for Black-chested Prinia, Ashy Tit, Brubru, Orange River White-eye (this species has recently been split from the more widespread Cape White Eye) and Golden-tailed Woodpecker. In the early evening we will take a short night drive into the park in attempt to find Cape Eagle-Owl, Cape Porcupine, Small Spotted Genet, Cape Hare, the rather bizarre-looking Springhare and Bat-eared Fox.

Day 9, 28th August: Augrabies Falls National Park to Twee Rivieren (Kgalagadi Transfrontier National Park). We have the full morning to explore the variety of dramatic landscapes within Augrabies Falls National Park. The lunar-like, rocky outcrops and steep cliff faces not far from camp



hold Black Stork, Pale-winged Starling, Peregrine Falcon, Short-toed Rock Thrush and White-backed Vulture. Gracing the reed beds that flank the Orange River are Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Malachite Kingfisher and Black Crake, while African Fish Eagle may be seen searching the swirling waters for prey. Furthermore, we will have the opportunity for some wonderful mammal viewing. Eland, the striking Gemsbok (or Southern Oryx), Klipspringer, Rock Hyrax and Springbok may all be seen today with good fortune.

During the heat of the day we will make the journey north in order to arrive at the spectacular Kgalagadi Transfrontier National Park by mid afternoon. Here the rockiness of Bushmanland gives way to the broad sandy beds and striking red sands so typical of the Kalahari Desert. Our camp, Twee Rivieren or 'Two Rivers', is so named as it lies at the confluence of two broad, sandy fossilized riverbeds that, in most years, remain completely dry. For the afternoon we will embark on a short drive up one of the riverbeds to search for game and birds.

Day 10, 29th August: Twee Rivieren. Today we will explore the two ancient riverbeds and can expect some exciting birding and a variety of game sightings. Along the riverbeds is where life out here finds food, water and indeed fellow life. We should see good numbers of regal Gemsbok, Springbok and Blue Wildebeest and have a reasonable chance of seeing the huge, black-maned Kalahari Lions that the park is famous for. These river beds are also excellent for Cheetah, while we stand a good chance of seeing Black-backed Jackal, Yellow Mongoose, South African Ground Squirrel, Honey Badger and both Cape and the Bat-eared Foxes. Large birds, a conspicuous feature of the landscape, include White-

backed, Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures and Secretarybird. Further highlights may include the likes of Burchell's Sandgrouse, Double-banded Courser and Striped Kingfisher. The park is well known for its diversity of raptors, with around forty species having been recorded. We will be on the lookout for Tawny Eagle, Bateleur, Brown Snake Eagle and Gabar Goshawk. It is also along the dry riverbeds that we will be looking for some of the scarcer residents such as Red-necked Falcon, African Harrier-Hawk, Green Woodhoopoe, Green-winged Pytilia, Black-faced Waxbill and Great Sparrow. Larks are a particular feature of the park and with luck we may see Fawn-colored, Sabota, Red-capped, Spike-heeled, Pink-billed



and Eastern Clapper Larks and Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark. A night-drive will give us a chance for finding Southern White-faced Owl, Verreaux's and Spotted Eagle-Owls, and also a variety of nocturnal animals.

Day 11, 30th August: Twee Rivieren to Calvinia. After a final morning birding and game viewing we will make our way out of the park. Today is essentially a travel day and the first of our day drives south towards Cape Town. In the late afternoon we will arrive in the small town of Calvinia for a two-night stay.



Day 12, 31st August: Calvinia. Today we will have the day to explore the wonderful areas around Calvinia and the northern part of the Bushmanland region. Here we find ourselves in an endemic-rich and dramatic landscape with many exciting birding and wildflower moments to be had. The birds that we will be on the lookout for include Black-headed Canary, Black-eared Sparrow-Lark and the regal Blue Crane. Other exciting but perhaps more common birds to look out for today are Karoo Long-billed Lark and Chat Flycatcher on roadside fence-posts and, if we are lucky, we may observe Secretarybirds hunting over the dry grasslands. We will

be sure to not ignore the interesting flora of the region as we are once again back in the succulent rich part of South Africa. Occasional flashes of colour reveal the presence of wonderful plants, especially *Aloe* and *Moraea* species.

Day 13, 1st September: Calvinia to Ceres. Today is the last day we will have to explore the flora and fauna of the Cape's semi-deserts. Gravel plains in this area occasionally hold the nomadic and highly sought-after Burchell's Courser and the stately Ludwig's Bustard. Moving south from Calvinia we will see the rock-strewn landscapes of Bushmanland gradually open up to the endless vistas and dry scrublands of the Tanqua-Karoo Region (Tanqua referring to the place of the 'San' or 'Tan' people, the original inhabitants of this area). Birds inhabiting the arid, rocky slopes and *Acacia*-lined watercourses of this area include White-backed Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Mountain Wheatear, Layard's and Chestnut-vented Tit-babblers, the dainty Fairy Warbler, Pririt Batis and Pale-winged Starling, whilst the adjacent reedbeds are home to the endemic Namaqua Warbler (recently assigned to a monotypic genus, *Phragmacia*). We will watch the roadsides carefully for Spike-heeled Lark, Tractrac and Sickle-winged Chats, Rufous-eared Warbler and Yellow Canary. Pale Chanting Goshawk and Common Kestrel are often encountered perching on conspicuous vantage points. We will also stop to listen for the strange croaking of the Karoo Korhaan, which may help us to locate these cryptically coloured endemics. From here we continue south making our way to the small farming town of Ceres.



Day 14, 2nd September: Ceres to Cape Town and Depart. After breakfast we will make our way to Cape Town in time for your flights home.



GROUP SIZE:

This tour is limited to 6 participants & 1 Rockjumper leader

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

The fee for **The Cape Wildflowers, Birding & Big Game** tour is US\$4,130 * £2,850 * €3,230 * **ZAR31,000** per person sharing. The single supplement cost for this tour is **US\$540** and will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBT cannot provide you with a rooming partner although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 14;
- A soft drink/beer/glass of wine at meals;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** flights;
- Visa fees;
- Additional drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we now quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold (South African Rands), and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 3 months before the tour.) Single supplement rates have been converted to US\$ but are also subject to exchange rate movements.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration (a minimum of 6 paying participants) a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping:

As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc) are included on this tour. However, this does not include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.



Special Notes:

- The intensity and quality of Wildflower displays is influenced dramatically by rain and heat and their impressiveness can vary from one year to the next. 2003, for example, was a very dry year resulting in a poor spring display while in 2004, sufficient rains fell which produced a riot of spring flowers as it did in 2006, 2007 and 2008. This tour is designed to visit the regions best locations at the best possible times under normal circumstances. The tour will run regardless as conditions can change very quickly and even in poor years there is still a great deal to experience botanically.
- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg for check in luggage and 8kg for hand luggage.
- A related issue is that in all areas that contain potentially dangerous animals you are confined to the vehicle and are, quite understandably, not allowed to exit.
- Crime is problematic in certain areas of South Africa. Exercise caution as you would for any big city where crime exists. Do not unnecessarily flaunt cash and valuables and do not leave valuables exposed in the vehicle.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include any airfares. The tour will depart from Cape Town International by **10am** on day 1, kindly arrive in advance of this time on this day or arrive the day before. Further meeting details in this regard will be forwarded to you in due course. The tour will conclude by **12 noon** on day 14 at Cape Town International. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Johannesburg is the main port of entry for international flights in South Africa and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. We have the capacity to advise you on the best route according to your preferences, but your local travel agent will best be able to book these flights for you. If you would like further assistance kindly contact the Rockjumper office and we will happily help you plan your route. **However, please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

Photo Credits (in order of appearance): Namaqualand Wildflowers (R. White), Orange-breasted Sunbird (J. Wakelin), Cape Sugarbird (G. Valentine), *Sparaxis elegans*, vulnerable to extinction (R. White), Black Harrier (M. Lilje), *Geissorhiza splendidissima* or Blue Pride-of-Nieuwoudtville (R. White), Pirit Batis (A. Riley), Cape Porcupine (M. Lilje), Lioness stalking (R. White), Southern White-faced owl (A. Riley), Blue Crane (S. Davis) & Tanqua-Karoo scenery (J. Pienaar).

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