



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South Africa

Kruger Park Bird & Wildlife Challenge 2019 - Western South Africa Extension

15th to 27th February 2019 (13 days)



Cape Sugarbird by Hugh Chittenden

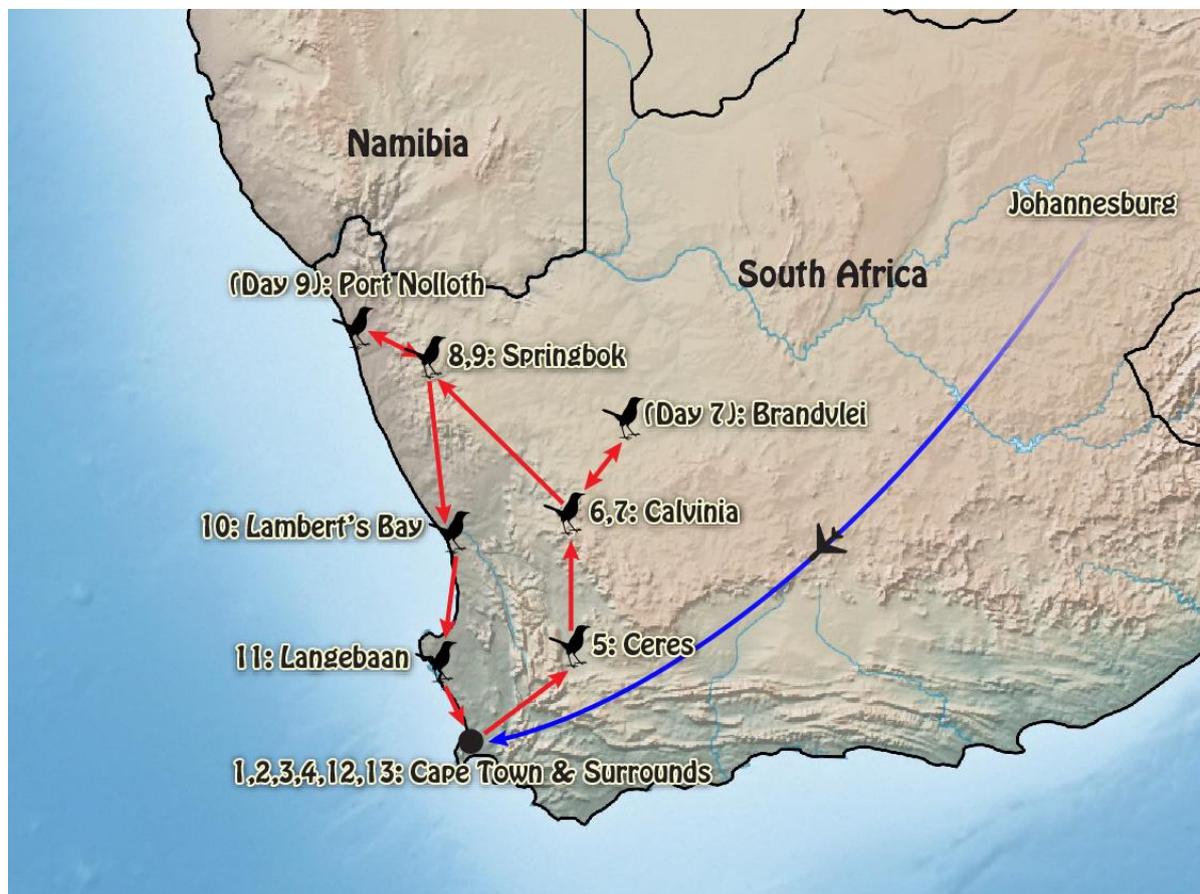
Southern Africa's dry west is a unique and fascinating, yet under-visited region. A hotbed of faunal and floral diversity, this area harbors two botanical regions found nowhere else on earth; the Cape Floristic Region and the Succulent Karoo. Our 'Budget Western SA' extension tour showcases these areas and the range of special birds endemic to them; you can expect not only great birds, but also some of the most dramatic scenery in Africa! Tour highlights include the stunning fynbos-clad slopes of the Western Cape mountains, home to the stunning Cape Rockjumper and numerous other endemics; and the arid and semi-arid areas of the Karoo, which provide another great backdrop for a variety of bustards, larks and other endemics before we head back to Cape Town, taking in an impressive Cape Gannet colony and the West Coast National Park on the way.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Drive from Kruger National Park to Johannesburg, fly to Cape Town & overnight
Day 2	Pelagic Seabird outing & Cape Point
Day 3	Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden & Strandfontein Sewage Works
Day 4	Rooi-Els & Betty's Bay
Day 5	Cape Town to Ceres
Day 6	Ceres to Calvinia
Day 7	Calvinia & Brandvlei
Day 8	Calvinia to Springbok
Day 9	Springbok & Port Nolloth
Day 10	Springbok to Lambert's Bay
Day 11	Lambert's Bay to Langebaan
Day 12	Langebaan to Cape Town, via West Coast National Park
Day 13	Depart

TOUR ROUTE MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Drive from Kruger National Park to Johannesburg, fly to Cape Town & overnight.

Following our final night at Mopani in the Kruger National Park, we drive to Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport to catch a flight to Cape Town where we will overnight.



Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross by Adam Riley

Day 2: Pelagic Seabird outing & Cape Point.

The cold upwelling of the Benguela current off Cape Town supports a wealth of pelagic seabirds, with vast concentrations of albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters gathering in the deeper water at the edge of the continental shelf. Birding is excellent year-round and on the pelagic trip we hope to see Shy, Black-browed and both Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, Southern and Northern Giant Petrels, White-chinned Petrels, Sooty, Great, Manx and Cory's Shearwaters,

Wilson's and European Storm Petrels, Sabine's Gull, Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers and Cape Gannet. If we manage to locate one of the commercial fishing trawlers the birding can be truly spectacular, with a cloud of seabirds following in the wake of the vessel to feed on the fish offal. Once the excitement has subsided, we will carefully search through the thousands of birds present for rarities such as Wandering Albatross and Spectacled Petrel. Cetaceans are almost always encountered and we have a good chance of seeing Bryde's Whale and Dusky Dolphin. It goes without saying that a day off the Cape is likely to be a highlight of any trip to South Africa!

After returning to Simon's Town from the pelagic trip, we travel south to Cape Point, within the greater Table Mountain National Park. *En route* we will keep a lookout for the endemic African Oystercatcher along the rocky shoreline of False Bay and scan the offshore islets for breeding populations of Crowned, Bank and Cape Cormorants. The Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve showcases the most southwestern tip of the continent and is very popular amongst birders and more general tourists alike. Here we should again find the charismatic Cape Sugarbird and the stunning Orange-breasted Sunbird - the former belonging to a family endemic to southern Africa - and perhaps the impressive Black Harrier, Grey-winged Francolin and Cape Siskin. We will explore the network of roads to less visited parts of the reserve, exploring secluded coves and searching for the elusive Mountain Zebra, beautiful sub-species of Blesbok - the Bontebok, the huge and majestic Common Eland and Chacma Baboon.



African Oystercatcher by Markus Lilje

Please note: It is not unusual for the Pelagic tour to be cancelled as a result of bad weather.



Furthermore, the weather and ocean conditions off the Cape are extremely unpredictable, so our daily schedule will thus remain flexible to optimise our birding both on land and at sea.



Orange-breasted Sunbird by Adam Riley

Day 3: Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and Strandfontein Sewage Works.

We continue our exploration of the picturesque Cape Peninsula at one of the local birding hotspots.

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden lies on the slopes of Table Mountain and is home to a plethora of endemics restricted to the Macchia-like Fynbos vegetation of the southern tip of Africa. Cape Spurfowl scurry across the lawns and the magnificent protea gardens are home to the spectacular Cape Sugarbird and Orange-breasted Sunbird, while Cape Bulbul, Olive Thrush, the attractive Cape Grassbird, Karoo Prinia,

delightful Bokmakierie, Southern Boubou and Southern Double-collared Sunbird may be found in areas of denser cover.

We will also search for African Goshawk and Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk that occasionally display above the indigenous forest that cloaks the upper slopes of the gardens. These forests are home to African Olive Pigeon, Lemon Dove, Cape Batis and Forest Canary.

We will then move on to the highly regarded Strandfontein Sewage Works, one of the most productive fresh water localities close to Cape Town. The network of settling ponds here usually supports large numbers of waterbirds of many different varieties and we are likely to encounter good numbers of Cape Shoveler, Cape Teal, Southern Pochard and Red-knobbed Coot, as well as Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Common Moorhen, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Black-necked and Great Crested Grebes, Hartlaub's and Kelp Gulls, Greater Crested and Whiskered Terns, Grey and Black-headed Herons, Yellow-billed Duck and Red-billed Teal. If we are fortunate enough and depending upon the water levels of the pans, we may also find small numbers of Maccoa Duck, Hottentot Teal and South African Shelduck; there is also a good chance of finding the huge Great White Pelican. The surrounding reedbeds harbour African Reed, Lesser Swamp and Little Rush Warblers as well as Levillant's Cisticola.

Day 4: Rooi-Els and Betty's Bay. A diverse array of birding habitats is present around Cape Town and today we will visit a variety of sites, ranging from wetlands to fynbos and marine shoreline. Making our way early to the rugged Hottentots-Holland Mountains, we will search at Rooi-Els for one of South Africa's finest endemics: the handsome Cape Rockjumper. Though strikingly plumaged and conspicuous by their vocalizations, these



Greater Crested Tern by Adam Riley





Cape Rockjumper by Clayton Burne

charismatic birds possess an incredible ability to disappear amongst the boulders and we may need to be patient if we wish to enjoy sightings of these elusive creatures. The dense mountain fynbos is the favoured habitat of Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin and the beautiful, endemic Victorin's Warbler, while other species including Verreaux's Eagle, Grey-backed Cisticola and Ground Woodpecker are also found in the area. Chacma Baboon is fairly common here, but we will have to scan the rocky ridges carefully for the agile Klipspringer.

Whilst in Betty's Bay we will also visit the famous African Penguin colony at Stony Point. Here we will enjoy the spectacle of hundreds of penguins waddling about on the beach and rocks at extremely close range, which makes for superb photographic opportunities. We will also keep a lookout for the endemic African Oystercatcher along the adjacent rocky shoreline, and scan through the masses of nesting cormorants for all four species of South African coastal cormorant: Crowned, Bank, Cape and White-breasted.

After enjoying this spectacle, we will pay a visit to the nearby Harold Porter National Botanical Garden in Betty's Bay. A smaller version of Kirstenbosch, these beautifully appointed gardens support a wealth of fynbos specialties like Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Sugarbird and Cape Siskin and represent a particularly good site to see the skulking, endemic Victorin's Warbler. We are also likely to encounter a range of other noteworthy and eye-catching species such as Cape and Brimstone Canaries, Karoo Prinia, Sweet Waxbill, Cape Batis, Bar-throated Apalis, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape Robin-Chat, African Dusky and Fiscal Flycatchers, Olive Thrush and Sombre Greenbul.



African Penguins by Markus Lilje

In the late afternoon we will make our way back to our now-familiar and very comfortable accommodation on the Cape Peninsula.

Day 5: Cape Town to Ceres. We will start the day off with our greatest challenge, Knysna Warbler. This secretive, drab skulker has frustrated many a birder, and any view of it is a good one! By way of relief we will occasionally focus skyward for Forest Buzzard. Forest Canary is also pleasantly common here, but we would be very fortunate to see the secretive Buff-spotted Flufftail.

Leaving Cape Town behind, we will travel to the historic town of Paarl, dominated by the huge



granite inselberg that is the source of the town's name. Here we will call in at the Wildflower Reserve where we have further chances of seeing Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird and Fiscal Flycatcher. The Paarl Mountain massif is also a reliable site for the inconspicuous, endemic Protea Canary and we shall spend some time trying to locate this species.



Protea Canary by Clayton Burne

This afternoon we will continue to the farming village of Ceres, gateway to the Tanqua Karoo; if time allows, we will search for the elusive Protea Canary – if we missed it earlier - on a nearby mountain pass overlooking the fertile valley. Other birds of interest here are White-backed Mousebird, Layard's and Chestnut-vented Warblers, dainty Fairy Flycatcher, Acacia Pied Barbet and Karoo Thrush.

Day 6: Ceres to Calvinia. Just a short drive from the village of Ceres is the semi-arid, central plateau of South Africa known as the Karoo; a land of endless vistas and spectacular sunsets renowned for its endemic larks, chats and canaries. After leaving the famous fruit-

growing valley of Ceres we will reach our first stop at Karooport, a narrow canyon that forms the gateway to the Succulent Karoo. Birds inhabiting the arid, rocky slopes and acacia-filled watercourses of this area include White-backed Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Mountain Wheatear, Layard's and Chestnut-vented Warblers, Pirit Batis and the dainty Fairy Flycatcher. One of the area's most charismatic birds is the highly localised Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. Although fairly vocal, this species is highly elusive and seeing it in its habitat of jumbled boulders and rocky scree will require a combination of patience and perseverance.

Continuing northwards onto the open flats of the Karoo, we will carefully scan the roadsides for Karoo and Spike-heeled Larks, Tractrac, Sickle-winged and Karoo Chats, the elusive Karoo Eremomela, Rufous-eared Warbler and Yellow and White-throated Canaries. Pale Chanting Goshawk and Rock Kestrel perch conspicuously on any vantage points and we may also find Verreaux's and Booted Eagles. We will also stop to listen for the distinctive flight calls of Namaqua Sandgrouse and the strange, croaking of the Karoo Korhaan, which may help us to locate these cryptically coloured birds. If we are very fortunate, we may even see the nomadic Ludwig's Bustard striding across the desolate plains or come across a group of highly nomadic Burchell's Coursers on the barren gravel.



Ludwig's Bustard by Adam Riley

In the mid- to late afternoon we will arrive in the Calvinia area, and here we will be in the Karoo proper. The usually dry river system that passes through the town, as well as the reedbeds here, are home to the



endemic Namaqua Warbler (recently assigned to a monotypic genus, *Phragmacia*).



Karoo Korhaan by Glen Valentine

Day 7: Calvinia & Brandvlei. Today we have a full day to search for some of the scarce inhabitants of this unique botanical region. On leaving Calvinia we will search for flocks of Pale-winged Starling and we have further chances for Fairy Flycatcher. Three species of lark will be at the top of our hit list, namely Red Lark, a striking and very range-restricted endemic, and the highly nomadic Sclater's Lark and Black-eared Sparrow-Lark. Some of the other star birds here include a number of nomadic species such as Burchell's Courser, while Rufous-eared Warbler, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Grey Tit, White-backed Mousebird, Bokmakierie and Pirit Batis should be less of a challenge to find. We will also listen for

the distinctive flight calls of Namaqua Sandgrouse and keep our eyes peeled for the cryptically coloured Karoo Korhaan. Some wonderful non-endemic species bound to capture our attention include the magnificent Martial Eagle, Lanner Falcon, Kori's Bustard and Double-banded Courser. Today is also our first chance at finding Dusky Sunbird and we will make a concerted effort to locate a party of elusive Karoo Eremomelas.

Day 8: Calvinia to Springbok. This morning we have a fairly long drive on some of the Karoo's typical gravel roads. Our journey will give us further chances for a number of the unique Karoo species we may still be missing. In the afternoon we will stop at Goegap Nature Reserve and while searching the rocky slopes and acacia-lined watercourses, we have great opportunities of finding many of the difficult Karoo endemics that we should be getting to grips with by now. These include the vocal yet highly localised Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Layard's and Chestnut-vented Warblers and Black-headed Canary.

Day 9: Springbok to Port Nolloth and return. We have an early start today from Springbok as we strike out for the diamond-mining town of Port Nolloth, a small town nestled near the Namibian border on South Africa's west coast. This area is famous for a single species of lark, found only here and in the extreme south of Namibia; namely Barlow's Lark. Another species that occurs in this low coastal scrub is the endemic Cape Long-billed Lark, an outrageous bird with the longest bill of any southern African lark. Small groups of Cape Penduline Tit can also be found feeding as they move from bush to bush. In the afternoon we will make our way back inland to Springbok and, if time permits, we will visit the Goegap Nature



Sclater's Lark by Adam Riley



Reserve once again in an attempt to track anything down that we may have missed previously.



Cape Gannet colony by Markus Lilje

Day 10: Springbok to Lambert's Bay.

Today we start the long journey back to Cape Town, and in the late afternoon we will cross the coastal plain to the Atlantic Ocean at Lambert's Bay. If time allows, we will spend part of the evening at the immense Cape Gannet colony here, appreciating the spectacle of thousands of birds engaged in their deafening courtship rituals. The area also supports all three species of marine cormorants (Cape, Bank and Crowned), Kelp and Hartlaub's Gulls and the smart African Oystercatcher.

Day 11: Lambert's Bay to Langebaan.

We will enjoy a pre-breakfast visit to the

Cape Gannet colony on Bird Island within the borders of the town itself. After breakfast we will head south towards the town of Langebaan, and the nearby West Coast National Park and Langebaan Lagoon, a globally important wetland site. *En route* we will stop at a rocky valley near the town of Clanwilliam and attempt to track down the highly elusive Protea Canary, in case we missed this difficult bird earlier. Though fairly drab, this endemic has a delightful tri-syllabic call that we will listen out for as we meander the track through the valley.

Located just south of Langebaan town, Langebaan Lagoon in the West Coast National Park is world-renowned for large numbers of migrant Palearctic waders that spend the northern winter here. We will check the exposed shorelines and mudflats of Langebaan Lagoon for Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Grey Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover and Eurasian Curlew, as well as Kittlitz's and the localised Chestnut-banded Plovers. These areas also support large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingos, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and numerous other waterfowl. Surrounding low, coastal Strandveld vegetation is home to numerous species, including Pearl-breasted Swallow, Cape Penduline Tit, Karoo and Large-billed Larks and Fiscal Flycatcher.



Black Harrier by Adam Riley

Day 12: Langebaan to Cape Town.

On this final day of our tour of South Africa's Western and Northern Cape Provinces, we will return to the West Coast National Park in search of more of the local specialities. The park harbours the highest density of Black Harrier anywhere within its range, and we have great chances to encounter this splendid species as well as Grey-winged Francolin, Cape Penduline Tit and Southern Black Korhaan, amongst many others. The park is also well-known for its Common Eland, Hartebeest and even the tiny and often elusive Cape Grysbok. Today gives us a final chance to target any birds we



would like to get better views of before we head south, back to the mother city of Cape Town.

Day 13: Depart. After a final breakfast together this morning, our tour will conclude at the Cape Town International Airport.

GROUP SIZE:

This tour is limited to a maximum of 6 participants.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

The prices for the Western South Africa Extension are as follows:

- 1 participant = **ZAR 104 000** per person
- 2 participants = **ZAR 62 500** per person
- 3 participants = **ZAR 51 500** per person
- 4 participants = **ZAR 47 500** per person
- 5 participants = **ZAR 44 500** per person
- 6 participants = **ZAR 44 500** per person

Single Supplement: ZAR 2 250

NOTE ON DOMESTIC FLIGHT: The tour price does NOT include the cost of the one-way domestic flight from OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg to Cape Town International Airport. We are however able to make these flight reservations on your behalf but please budget approximately ZAR 1,500 per person for this flight (approx. USD 115 per person).

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 13;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Pelagic off Cape Town;
- All gratuities for local guides, hotel staff etc.;
- Any activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including local guides and tour leaders).

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** international and domestic flights (see above);
- Visa fees;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement:

The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBT cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights 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.



IMPORTANT NOTES:

- a) The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold (ZAR), and the actual cost in any other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
- c) 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 and / or the designated Rockjumper leader 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:

- 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 yourself and your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+18lb) for hand luggage.
- Exiting the vehicle is prohibited in all areas and parks that contain dangerous animals other than at designated sites (These parks include Kruger, St. Lucia & Isimangaliso)
- 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. For those guests participating in the Kruger Challenge, the tour will depart from Mopani, Kruger National Park, South Africa, after breakfast on day 1, and continue to O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, before participants fly to Cape Town International Airport and overnight in Cape Town. For those guests not participating in the Kruger Challenge, the tour will start at dinner on the evening of day 1 at Lakeside Lodge in Cape Town. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 13 at Cape Town International Airport.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg (IATA: JNB) is the main port of entry for international flights into and out of South Africa and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. Cape Town International Airport (IATA: CPT) is equally well serviced by many 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. We can, however, book the domestic flight from Johannesburg to Cape Town. 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.

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