

# Birds of the Western Cape and Garden Route

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

**Day 1:** Flight from London to Cape Town where arrival is on the following morning.

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

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

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

## Dates

**Saturday March 9th – Saturday March 23rd 2024**

Leaders: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 220-250

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

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

**Day 6:** Travel north to Langebaan Lagoon followed by a visit to the Postberg Flower Reserve. The reserve is dominated by coastal strandveld which hosts a large number of bush birds - Long-billed Crombec, Bar-throated Apalis, Grey-



**Lilac-breasted Roller**

backed Cisticola, Layard's Tit-babbler, Karoo Lark, Cape Penduline Tit, Namaqua Dove, Karoo Scrub-Robin, Yellow Canary and Grey-wing Francolin. Raptors may include Black Harrier. We head inland, traversing the agricultural lands of the Swartland searching for Blue Crane, Large-billed, Red-capped and Cape Clapper Larks, Capped Wheatear, Cloud Cisticola, Red Bishop, Lark, Cape Sparrow, Pied Starling and Pin-tailed Whydah. Overnight at Langebaan.

**Day 7:** From Langebaan we head towards Darling with a stop for Cloud Cisticola, Large-billed and Red-capped Lark. On the outskirts of Darling we should find several species of interest including Cape Clapper Lark, Cape Longclaw, African Pipit and Yellow Canary. The road runs towards the coast where we may find Southern Black Korhaan, White-throated Swallow, Fiscal Flycatcher, all three mousebirds and Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler. Transfer to Ceres for two nights.

**Day 8:** We have an early start to visit Tanqua Karoo where vantage spots may produce Cinnamon-breasted and Namaqua Warblers, Pirit Batis, Fairy Flycatcher, Mountain Chat, Protea and White-throated Canaries and Karoo Eremomela. At Worcester we take a leisurely walk around the Karoo National Botanical Gardens. These gardens have the hardy plants of the Karoo, attracting White-backed Mousebird, Malachite Sunbird, Pale-winged Starling, Bar-throated Apalis and Acacia Pied Barbet.

**Day 9:** This morning we head towards George situated near the southern coast. Our route takes us through the Swartberg Pass where we should locate Protea Seedeater, Cape Sugarbird and Victorin's Scrub Warbler. At the summit of the pass Ground Woodpecker, Cape Rockjumper, Sentinel and Cape Rock Thrushes are all possible. Transfer to Knysa for a three night stay.

**Days 10-11:** The Wilderness Region is on the edge of the garden route where an exploration of the national park is possible. A walk into the forest may reveal Bar-throated Apalis, Chorister Robin-chat, Cape Batis, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher and Olive Bush-shrike. Species in the canopy include Eastern Black-headed Oriole, Narina Trogon, Grey Cuckooshrike, Knysa Turaco and Black-bellied Starling. Raptors include African Crowned Eagle and African Goshawk. There are hides at two lakes giving access to open water species and those inhabiting the reedbeds. A little bit of luck is required to see African Rail and Red-chested Flufftail two skulking species. Woodville Forest offers us more forest birds with Knysa Woodpecker, White-starred Robin and Knysa Warbler being possible. During our stay in Knysa we will visit several areas nearby including Knysa itself, Robberg and the Keurbooms Estuary the latter attracting many shorebirds and a possibility of Half-collared Kingfisher and African Finfoot.

**Day 12:** Today we travel towards Port Elizabeth which is our final base of the tour. En route we visit the Baviaanskloof wilderness area which attracts Black Harrier, Verreaux's Eagle, Yellow-throated Petronia and Knysa Woodpecker. Later in the day we travel on remote roads near Hankey where a search is made for the scarce Barrow's Korhaan reside. Other species of note here include the spectacular Blue Crane. Port Elizabeth is close by where we stop for three nights.

**Days 13-14:** Port Elizabeth has several interesting areas for birds including Settlers Park and Island Forest. The parks attract an array of sunbirds including Greater Double-collared, Malachite, Grey and Amethyst as well as African Firefinch, Southern Tchagra and Terrestrial Brownbul. Island Forest is famous for its birdbath which attracts Lemon and Tambourine Doves. Knysa Touraco and Forest Canary, come down to drink. Cape Recife juts out into the ocean where we should locate a good range of gulls, terns and waders including African Black Oystercatcher and

Cape Gannet. A water treatment works with a bird hide offers us views of African Purple Gallinule, Black Crake and another chance of African Rail. Swartkops Estuary is to the north of Port Elizabeth one of the best wader areas on the coast with a wide range of summering waders. Species of interest include Terek Sandpiper, Caspian Tern, Goliath Heron, South African Shelduck, Cape Teal and Grey-backed Cisticola.

**Day 15:** Internal flight to Johannesburg for connections back to Europe with arrival on the following morning.

## Prices

Ground Price: £3,800

Single room: £350

Deposit: £400

\*Air Fare: £1,200

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

**Not included:** drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature.

\*please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights