



## TRIP REPORT

Michael Riffel and friends

Kogelberg Biosphere - Western Cape

13<sup>th</sup> June 2021

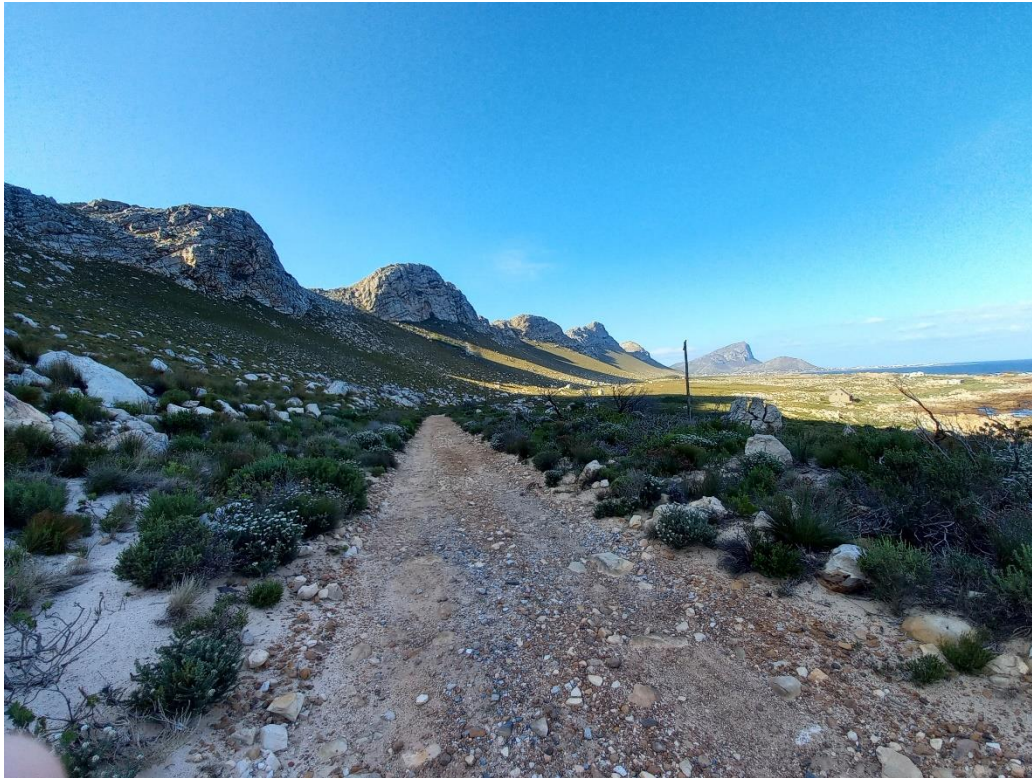
### Birding Highlights

Cape Rockjumper, Ground Woodpecker, Verreaux's Eagle, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Amethyst Sunbird, Cape Batis, African Olive Pigeon, Jackal Buzzard, Bank Cormorant, Black-browed Albatross

**Species total:** 54 seen

After meeting up with Michael, Tom and Beatrix in Muizenberg, we drove out the city and headed along the eastern shoreline of False Bay. The views of the bay from Clarence Drive were spectacular and we quickly picked up a pair of **Humpback Whales**. They were only a few hundred metres offshore of the Steenbras River mouth and we watched them performing several large breaches, with some intermittent lunging. After this exciting start to the morning, we continued onto the quiet town of Rooi Els.





*Unpaved road from Rooi Els – looking towards Pringle Bay*

Immediately after parking the vehicle, a pair of **Verreaux's Eagles** flew over the adjacent Klein Hangberg mountain peak. After this encouraging beginning, the birding along the gravel track was



*Cape Rockjumper*



*Familiar Chat*



*Sentinel Rock Thrush*

initially comparatively quiet, and it was not surprising, given the cold, gusty conditions. We did however pick up **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Cape Bunting**, **Red-winged Starling** and **Familiar Chat**. The highlight was a very close male **Sentinel Rock-thrush**, a seasonal altitudinal migrant; which only visits Rooi Els in winter.

We passed a pair of local birders who had just heard but not seen **Cape Rockjumpers** further down the track. A few hundred metres further

on, the distinctive contact call of a male Rockjumper came from just upslope of us. We quickly got onto a pair slowly working their way along the mountain side. They were very confiding and we got excellent and prolonged views of this highly sought-after Cape endemic. We were able to get some good close-up record shots despite the slope still being in deep shadow.

While enjoying the Rockjumpers, the alarm call of **Ground Woodpecker** echoed across the mountainside. We took our last photos of the Cape Rockjumpers before making our back along the road to search for these specials. We found a group of four woodpeckers fairly close to the path, and their large size and rosy breasts were very evident at this distance. They were already active, flying from rock to rock, before moving upslope. Our focus then switched to a second, very close pair of **Cape Rockjumpers**. These birds were especially photogenic, actively searching for prey while we enjoyed them at close range.



*Cape Rockjumper*

With a successful and varied start to the trip, we continued to Bettys Bay and the Harold Porter National Botanical Garden. Here we picked up a good variety of local specials. The sunbirds were especially active and we had excellent views of **Orange-breasted, Southern Double-collared, Malachite** and **Amethyst Sunbirds**. The patches of forest turned up a pair of **Cape Batis**, as well as species like **Cape Robin-chat, Swee Waxbill, Cape White-eye, Fiscal Flycatcher, Sombre Greenbul**, and a very well-hidden **African Olive Pigeon**.

We then headed to the nearby Stony Point Nature Reserve, with a quick stop for lunch on the way. The seabird colony was very busy with breeding activity. Most of the **African Penguins** had large downy chicks, while all four of the marine cormorant species were nesting. **Bank** and **White-breasted Cormorants** were the most numerous with a scattering of **Crowned** and **Cape Cormorant** nests. The shoreline was also home to a variety of other species including both **Hartlaub's** and **Kelp Gulls, African Oystercatcher, Cape Wagtail, Egyptian Goose** and **Water Thick-knee**.

The seabird action offshore was especially exciting. The prevailing offshore wind brought in a host of usually pelagic species with the highlights being several **Black-browed Albatrosses**, a **Brown (Subantarctic) Skua** and hundreds of **Sooty Shearwaters** and **White-chinned Petrels**.

After a very productive day of birding, we retraced our route along Clarence Drive and into the city.

A Birding Africa Trip Report by Tour Leader Vincent Ward

[http://www.birdingafrica.com/aboutus\\_team.htm#Vincent](http://www.birdingafrica.com/aboutus_team.htm#Vincent)