



TRIP REPORT

Oleg Nabrovenkov

Kogelberg Biosphere and West Coast Day Trips - Western Cape

9th and 10th May 2021

Highlights:

Cape Rockjumper, Ground Woodpecker, African Black Duck, Southern Black Korhaan, Black Harrier, Grey-winged Francolin.

Species Total: 122

Day1: Kogelberg Biosphere Day Trip

I met Oleg at his guest house in Green Point at 07:00 before setting off to the Kogelberg Biosphere area. It was still dark, but an **Olive Thrush** and a few **Hadeda Ibises** were already welcoming the day quite vocally. According to the weather report, we were in for a sunny day after the black southeaster conditions of the preceding days. The day, however, turned out to be mostly cloudy with a few sunny breaks in between.

As we made our way out onto the highway, we already started picking up some of the regular city birds, namely **Common Starlings**, **Rock Dove**, **Red-winged Starlings** and **Speckled Pigeons**.

Rooiels seemed quiet at first, but soon after we started walking down the gravel road, we started picking up some of the local specials – first a pair of **Fiscal Flycatchers** and then **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Rock Martin** and **Familiar Chat**. A pair of **White-necked Ravens** were foraging along the mountain slope, **Cape Buntings** were zipping back-and-forth across the path and the distinctive call of **Grey-backed Cisticola** alerted us to its presence. As we scanned along the rocky slope, a distant slightly larger bird perched on a boulder turned out to be a **Sentinel Rock Thrush**. We finally spotted a small group of our main Rooiels targets - **Cape Rockjumpers** - foraging amongst the restios high up on the slope and a couple of hundred metres further on, we found a family of **Ground Woodpeckers**.



Ground Woodpecker



African Penguin

From Rooiels we made our way to the Stony Point penguin colony in Betty's Bay where we were welcomed at the gate by the resident **African Penguin**-on-guard. Along the walkway we also picked up all four species of coastal **cormorants**, including **Bank**, **Crowned**, **White-breasted (Great)** and **Cape**. A group **Water Thick-knees** were a lovely addition to the day list, as were the **Cape Wagtails** darting around the colony while a **Little Egret** was hunting in the shallows. **Hartlaub's-** and **Kelp Gulls** were both present, as well as **Swift (Great Crested) Tern** and an **African Oystercatcher**.



African (Black) Oystercatcher



Little Egret

From Stony Point, we made our way to Harold Porter Botanical Gardens. By now, the wind had picked up and the gardens were relatively quiet. However, the lower part of the garden delivered four species of **sunbird**, namely **Southern Double-Collared**, **Malachite**, **Orange-breasted** and **Amethyst**. Both **Cape Robin-Chat** and **Fiscal Flycatcher** were present and the pathway along the river produced **Cape Canary**, **Sombre Greenbul** (heard only) and **Common Waxbills**. A special surprise addition was a single **African Black Duck** on the dam. As we walked back towards the entrance gate a female **Giant Kingfisher** came flying up above the river while a **Streaky-headed Seedeater** put in an appearance on the other side of the river.

It was still relatively early, so we decided to make a quick stop in town for lunch before heading off to our last stop of the day, Strandfontein Sewage Works (an Important Birding Area within the False Bay Nature Reserve). The decision to work in this last stop turned out to be a good one, since the Sewage Works really delivered the goods. Both **Little-** and **Black-necked Grebes** were present alongside a whole suite of ducks including **Yellow-billed Duck, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, Southern Pochard, Red-billed Teal, Maccoa Duck, Egyptian Goose, Spur-winged Goose** and **South African Shelduck**. **Glossy Ibis** and **Sacred Ibis** completed the suite of ibises we saw during the day and **Cattle Egret** and **Black-headed Herons** both put in appearances. The pans also produced **Black-Winged Stilts, Pied Avocets** and **Greater Flamingos**.



African Black Duck



Pied Avocet

Day 2: West Coast Day Trip

We again started out bright and early, just before 07: 00 on our second day of birding. A thick fog had set in during the night and at times along our trip up the West Coast we could barely see more than 50 to 100 metres ahead of us.

Before entering the West Coast National Park, we took a slight detour off the West Coast Road to visit Tienie Versfeld Wildflower Reserve. Despite the very heavy mist, we managed to pick up a few target birds such as the **Cape Longclaw, African Pipit, Large-billed Lark, Red-capped Lark** and the lovely south-western form of **Cloud Cisticola**.

We then moved onto the coastal scrub of the West Coast National Park where we soon saw and heard some of the regulars including **Cape Bulbul, Karoo Prinia, White-backed Mousebird** and **Common Ostrich**. A **Bokmakierie** flew across the road and into the dense shrubbery but refused to show itself again.

Along the entrance road to Abrahamskraal we found a mixed covey of **Cape Spurfowl** and **Grey-winged Francolins**. A couple of **Common Ostriches** were foraging just beyond the Abrahamskraal Hide and, in front of the hide itself, we could see a large group of **Yellow-billed Ducks**, a **Little Grebe**, **Red-knobbed Coot**, **African Swamphen**, **Eurasian (Common) Moorhen**, and **Cape Shoveler**. A large flock of **Pied Starlings** flying noisily back-and-forth above the reeds captured our attention,



while an immature **Blacksmith Lapwing** foraged on the mudflats and a couple of **Black Crakes** were darting in and out of the reedbeds while an **African Swamphen** watched quietly from a distant corner. A movement behind the reeds drew our attention and turned out to be one of the top birds of the day, namely **African Rail**. Perhaps because of the coolness and the cover that the fog provided, the Rail foraged out in the open for a few minutes and allowed good views.

Along the road up to Tsaarsbank we found a **Booted Eagle** surveying the plains from its vantage point on top of a dune and we saw the first of several **Karoo Scrub-Robins**. The beach at Tsaarsbank gave us a few **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Kelp Gulls**, **Black Oystercatchers**, **Crowned Cormorants**, **Cape Cormorants**, a few distant **Terns** and a **White-Throated Canary**.

Although most of the Palearctic migrants had left, the hide and surrounding salt marsh produced **Common Whimbrel**, **Common Greenshank**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Grey Plover**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Greater Flamingo** and a few **Kittlitz's Plovers**. The restaurant was closed but a quick walk around the grounds produced a **Cape Robin-Chat**, **Cape Sparrows**, **Cape Weaver** and yet another elusive



Bokmakierie, while a **Southern Fiscal** posed beautifully for a photo along the entrance road towards the manor house.

Our last stop for the day was the Seeberg hide. Here we were treated to lovely views of **Greater Flamingo**, **African Black Oystercatcher**, **Kittlitz's Plovers**, **Cape Teal**, **White-fronted Plovers** and **Grey Heron**. A **Black Harrier** came flying past the area where our vehicle was parked. We then decided to retrace our way back past Geelbek to the West Coast road gate. This again turned out to be a good

decision as we were treated to close-up views of two female **Southern Black Korhaans**. A final quick stop-off at Tienie Versfeld produced our final bird for the day, namely **African Stonechat** after which we returned to the guest house in Green Point, slightly tired but satisfied after another good day of birding. Our final tally for the two days was 122 species, mostly seen but a few heard only.

Trip Report written and photographs taken by David Swanepoel, Birding Africa guide.