

South Africa with Birding Africa

Western South Africa (8-22 October)

KwaZulu-Natal (23-29 October)

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WESTERN SOUTH AFRICA

8 October: Cape Town - South Peninsula

I met Frank, Ian and Colin at Cape Town International Airport. Rearing to go, we transferred straight to Afton Grove Country Retreat, where Bill awaited (having arrived the previous day) everyone with news of his morning glimpses of Knysna Warbler. Once all had recovered from Bill's enthusiastic welcome (I suspect Frank still has bruised ribs!), it was off to Cape Point, winding along the scenic coastal road via Simonstown. The Cape fynbos was resplendent following the recent rains, with many proteas in flower. Soon everyone had seen the full sweep of nectarivores: the endemic Cape Sugarbird and Orange-breasted Sunbird, joined by Southern Double-collared and Malachite Sunbirds.

Lunch was enjoyed overlooking False Bay, before heading down to the Cape of Good Hope. Here a strong south-easter buffeted the coast, driving Shy Albatross, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Northern Giant Petrel close inshore, but also causing the postponement of the pelagic trip scheduled for the following day. Among the hundreds of Cape Cormorant roosting on some offshore islets, we also saw several White-breasted and Crowned Cormorant. Other species along the rocky shore included African Penguin and African Black Oystercatcher, with the first Hartlaub's and Cape Gulls making up the numbers of marine species. Landbirds kept low and out of the wind. Still, we managed to see our first handsome Bokmakierie, Common Ostrich, Grey-backed Cisticola and Cape Bulbul.

The day was ended off with a visit to Kommetjie, where a lone Bank Cormorant was located to complete the sweep of all three endemic marine

cormorants. Offshore, Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers harried various tern species.

9 October: Cape Town and surrounds, including Sir Lowry's Pass

Glorious weather greeted us at Sir Lowry's Pass. Fortunately the winds that caused the pelagic trip to be postponed had not reached the Hottentot's Holland Mountains, just to the east of Cape Town. Hardly having left the car park at the top of the pass we found a pair of confiding Cape Rockjumper, feeding a recently-fledged juvenile. Saturated with views of these fantastic birds, it was time to move on to another fynbos endemic.. As per usual, Victorin's Warbler, of notorious skulking ability, called incessantly from tall, dense scrub. After some searching, a less secretive pair, that everyone could see, was detected. On the way back to the vehicle we paused for Cape Grassbird, a large, unusual warbler, as a Martial Eagle soared low overhead.

Next was Strandfontein. En route we spotted our first handsome Jackal Buzzard perched along the roadside. Arriving at Strandfontein, Banded Martin, which appeared to be nesting in some of the grasslands along the entrance road, was a surprise sighting. At the entrance an African Fish Eagle soared in the distance. At the first settlement pond we were met by an impressive array of waterbirds that included Maccoa Duck, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveller, Southern Pochard and Black-necked Grebe. Opposite, a flock of Greater Flamingo swam awkwardly. Surrounding reedbeds produced the first Lesser Swamp Warbler and Levaillant's Cisticola.

After lunch, news that the pelagic trip has once again been postponed was soon forgotten as Malachite Kingfisher and Brimstone Canary were located at Rondevlei. The day was rounded off in a patch of fynbos on the Cape Peninsula, where excellent views of Cape Siskin and Neddicky were had.

10 October: The Overberg

Thanks to another pelagic postponement, the itinerary needed to be adjusted, which meant we had a long day ahead of us. Before sunrise we started our journey eastwards, passing Cape Rockjumper and continuing on to the farmlands of the Agulhas plains. Our first stop was for a pair of most-elegant Blue Crane, South Africa's much-celebrated National Bird. Here also we commenced our lark list with Large-billed Lark, and saw our first African Pied Starlings. Gravel roads beyond Bredasdorp took their toll on one of our tires, but a group effort ensured we were quickly watching a couple of ridiculous male Denham's Bustard, strutting about in display. Nearby three Cape fox cubs played around the entrance of their den, watched closely by their parents.

But we did not pause for too long, as we planned to reach De Hoop Nature Reserve before Agulhas Clapper Lark had stopped its morning displays. Much to everyone's delight we found our first Clappers even before reaching the

reserve, and were later treated to even better views. Having the most important bird under our belt we turned our attention to other species. Grey-winged Francolin scurried from the roadside, while Pearl-breasted Swallow skimmed low over the vegetation. A sharp Black Harrier was spotted on one of the large grazing lawns, surrounded by Bontebok, Cape mountain zebra and Grey rhebok. Bushy areas along the margin of the vlei revealed Burchell's Coucal, sunning itself after a short rain shower, a male Greater Honeyguide singing from its call post, Streaky-headed Canary, and a Southern Tchagra that only relented after much perseverance.

Finally it was on to Potberg, the farmlands on the way producing Agulhas Long-billed Lark and Cloud Cisticola. While stopped at the roadside we spotted our first Cape Vultures soaring overhead. All that was left was Knysna Woodpecker, which, thanks to Ian's sharp spotting, was rapidly located. We returned to Cape Town, very satisfied with a good day's birding behind of us and looking forward to our first South African braai (barbeque)!

11 October: Up the West Coast

It was time to start our journey northwards, but not before stopping at the Constantia Greenbelt. We hadn't even entered the forest when the deep, eerie hoots of Buff-spotted Flufftail could be heard coming from some dense stream-side thickets. I found a small opening in the forest and lined everyone up where they had a view into the vegetation. After less than a minute of tape playing, to my great surprise, a stunning male walked into view. It scurried back and forth a couple of times, making sure it had been well seen by all.

With only one peep from a Knysna Warbler we decided to cut our losses and head for the spectacular Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, where a pair of Spotted Eagle Owl peered at us from their day roost through their large yellow eyes.

Finally we heading up along the west coast, reaching the West Coast National Park in time for lunch. On our way to Geelbek, a male Southern Black Korhaan posed beside the road. Lunch was shared with Cape Francolin under, and Yellow Bishop and Cape Weaver on top of, the tables. After lunch we visited a nearby wetland, where both African Rail and Black Crake obliged, before heading back to watch waders on the falling tide. The last hour of light was spent driving to Langebaan. Searching the Strandveld vegetation en route we located our first Chestnut-vented Titbabbler, Karoo Lark, Karoo Scrub Robin and White-backed Mousebird.

12 October: West Coast

We started with a pre-breakfast outing to the farmlands north of Saldanha Bay. With Cape Long-billed Lark, Sickle-winged Chat and Cape Longclaw under the belt, breakfast tasted better than ever. From Langebaan we made our way to Velddrif, stopping for roadside views of Secretarybird. At Velddrif

the salt works once again proved reliable for Chestnut-banded Plover and Lesser Flamingo. Next stop: Kransvlei Poort, where Protea Seed-eater rudely interrupted our lunch. Other species seen here during the afternoon included Layard's Titbabbler, Fairy Flycatcher, Cape Rock Thrush and a spectacular pair of Verreux's Eagle. Finally we headed to Lambert's Bay, arriving in time to visit the impressive Cape Gannet colony, where Grey-headed Gull was also seen.

13 October: Namaqualand – day of the Red Lark

Another pre-breakfast outing proved very successful, as we quickly notched up Cape Clapper Lark, Cape Penduline-Tit, White-throated Seed-eater, Pale Chanting Goshawk and Southern Grey Tit. Soon we were headed north again, with stops for Giant Kingfisher, stone plants on the Knersvlakte and Namaqua Warbler, Fairy Flycatcher and Pirit Batis along an acacia-lined watercourse.

After lunch at Kamieskroon we wound our way through the spectacular Kamiesberg where Black-headed Canary, Ground Woodpecker and Mountain Wheatear were popular additions. Arriving at the edge of Bushmanland, it was clear the area had caught some recent rain – birds were very active. Southern Ant-eating, Karoo and Tractrac Chats fell in rapid succession, followed by Double-banded Courser, Chat Flycatcher and Greater Kestrel. Once on the plains proper we quickly located a pair of dainty Karoo Eremomela, and to round off a very successful day, a Red Lark in display. After dark, a night drive proved highly rewarding with a number of *Bat-eared foxes* and two separate *Aardvark* sightings! The sighting of this uncommon mammal was perhaps the highlight of our birding trip!

14 October: A taste of Bushmanland

A short pre-breakfast outing around our guest farm made it apparent just how dry most of Bushmanland was. There were virtually no nomadic birds present. A meagre four Larklike Buntings and perhaps 20 Grey-backed Sparrowlarks joined residents such as Karoo Korhaan, Spotted Thick-knee and Spike-heeled Lark. After breakfast we headed for the Koa River dunes, stopping en route for our only Ludwig's Bustard of the trip. By the time we reached the dunes the wind had picked up considerably, making it a real challenge to find the dune form of Red Lark. Success at last, we continued onwards to Kakamas, where we stopped to have the vehicle checked out – a vague burning smell had emanated from the back, earlier in the day. While the mechanic gave the vehicle a clear bill of health, we ticked Orange River White-eye outside. Shortly we were on our way to Augrabies, not without drama from the car's airconditioning that resulted in green smoke pouring forth!

15 October: Augrabies, to the Kalahari

The acacia thickets around Augrabies Falls campsite were the focus of our morning's birding. African Reed-Warbler skulked in the thickets, together with Acacia Pied Barbet and Ashy Tit. More conspicuous were Pale-winged Starling, which perched on the roofs of huts, Dusky Sunbird, actively feeding on the numerous aloes, and African Red-eyed Bulbul. Over breakfast we watched the activities of a pair of Golden-tailed Woodpecker at their nest.

From Augrabies we headed straight for Upington. Our lunch stop along the Molopo River produced White-browed Sparrow-weaver, Marico Sunbird, Greater Scimitarbill, Yellow-bellied Eremomela and Brubru. We arrived at Twee Rivieren in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in time for a short drive through the dunes before the gates closed. However, we hadn't even unpacked when Burnt-necked Eremomela called from trees near our huts. This was a new species for the reserve, no mean feat given the number of birders that visit! Also of interest in camp was an African Cuckoo that called incessantly. When we finally made it out of camp we were immediately greeted by a young *leopard* in a tree, and in the dunes rewarded with Fawn-coloured and Eastern Clapper Larks, Scaly-feathered Finch, Rufous-eared Warbler, Sociable Weaver and Pygmy Falcon, and our first of many striking Northern Black Korhaans.

16 October: Kalahari

With picnic breakfasts and lunches packed, we set off up the Nossob River on a large loop of the southern half of the park. Acacias along the river were home to the vivid Swallow-tailed Bee-eater and Crimson-breasted Boubou, Kalahari Robin, Marico Flycatcher, Lilac-breasted Roller and Black-chested Prinia. At around 8am sandgrouse started to come in to drink, so we focussed our attention around the waterholes, where both Namaqua and Burchell's Sandgrouse were seen in good numbers. Other birds coming for a drink included Southern Black-throated Canary and Red-headed Finch, joined by *black-back jackal*. Continuing along the riverbed we saw several Kori Bustard and Secretarybird, and a beautiful *cheetah* lying up in the shade of a Camelthorn, watching *springbok*, *gemsbok* and *blue wildebeest*. As always, raptors were a feature with Bateleur, Tawny Eagle, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Martial Eagle, Greater Kestrel and White-backed Vulture seen. After lunch we headed into the dunes soon to find our first dark-maned Kalahari *lion*. Other noteworthy sightings were Red-crested Korhaan, and, after much searching, a few groups of Pink-billed Lark. The return trip down to Auob River was less eventful, but did produce our first Bradfield's Lark, the large-billed, western form of Sabota Lark. A fitting end to the day was watching a mother *leopard* and her two large cubs stalking each other across deep orange sand dunes.

17 October: Kalahari

With one morning left, we still had not seen Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, so we headed up the Auob River, all eyes scanning dense Kamelthorn trees. A

surprise pair of Ground-scraper Thrush fed in the riverbed, but no owl was spotted, so we took the dune road across to the Nossob River. Immediately we had a pair of Lanner Falcon, and later a Desert Cisticola in the tall roadside grass. As a final resort, we travelled a short way up the Nossob River. We hadn't gone far, when Ian, in his usual calm manner, asked to stop. Verreaux's Eagle-Owl! He had done it again.

Satisfied, we turned around and headed for the Molopo River. En route we spotted a Violet-eared Waxbill, which ducked into the first bush, never to reappear. A quick dip at the lodge pool was interrupted by a Lappet-faced Vulture soaring in the distance. Once the temperature had dropped a little, we birded the grounds of the lodge, where Green-winged Pytilia, Pearl-spotted Owl and Shaft-tailed Whydah were joined by an unexpected Diederik Cuckoo. Perhaps the most memorable sighting was a massive *Cape cobra*, whose every move was followed by a flock of chattering Sociable Weavers. After dark we went for a short drive, quickly locating a Southern White-faced Owl and a couple of churring Rufous-cheeked Nightjar.

18 October: Bushmanland

Rain over the previous couple of days between Upington and the Molopo River had already made a difference to the bird activity. As we drove southwards, massive flocks of Grey-backed Sparrowlark flushed from the road, one of which was joined also by a pair of Black-eared Sparrowlark, that unfortunately could not be relocated after they had flushed off the road. Once across the dunes and onto the gravel plains, we located several other larks, including our first Karoo Long-billed Lark and only Sclater's Larks of the trip. Soon afterwards, among a flock of Sparrowlarks, several very pale Stark's Lark were found, allowing for good comparison with the Sclater's we had seen only half an hour previously. From Upington we continued southwards to Brandvlei, across dry and desolate plains with very few birds. Dedicated scanning for Burchell's Courser went without reward.

19 October: Tanqua Karoo

Given that Bushmanland was so parched and we had seen virtually all the possible birds, we decided to head immediately southwards and spend more time looking for Burchell's Courser in the Tanqua Karoo. A couple of stops were made en route, first for flocks of South African Cliff Swallow milling around one of the bridges and a single Booted Eagle perched in a cultivated field. We arrived in the Tanqua around midday, with the harsh sun beating down. Still, ever-focussed, we went straight to work, walking in a spread out line over barren gravel plains, scanning for any movement that could reveal a courser. Still without luck, we decided to drive deeper into the Tanqua, and take one of the small side roads. Slowly driving along, we scanned the area, until an ever-familiar call was made by Ian. "There is one!". Much relieved, and perhaps most to Frank's joy, there were at least four Burchell's Courser, including youngsters. After watching these beauties for a while, we had to

leave for our guesthouse. En route we stopped briefly at Skitterykloof, where calling Cinnamon-breasted Warbler remained out of view, despite our best efforts.

20 October: Day of the Cinnamon-breasted Warbler

After a tasty omelette to kick off the day, we were soon back at Skitterykloof. Before even locking the vehicle, we could hear a Cinnamon-breasted Warbler calling from the steep cliffs above us. But, to be true to its reputation, the bird did not relent readily. We focussed for some time on irregular bouts of calls that indicated that the bird was on the move, until, finally, it was spotted sitting, tail cocked and head thrown back, right at the top of a rocky ridge. Persistence paid off, as it repeated the dose a few minutes later, this time watched through the scopes.

With nothing else to be gained here, we headed for the moister, forested valley of Grootvadersbosch. As we approached Tradouw Pass, dark clouds loomed overhead, and soon it was pouring down in heavy sheets of rain. Quite a contrast to where we had started in the morning! The rain flushed an impressive *puffadder* from its hideout, which battled across the road, cold and sluggish. Between bursts of rain we managed a bit of birding, although most of the afternoon was a write-off. Still, we located a number of forest and forest edge species, including Amethyst and Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Sweet Waxbill, African Olive Pigeon and an excited Red-chested Cuckoo that perched on some telephone wires. One of the many ponds in the area held a pair of African Black Duck.

21 October: Grootvadersbosch

Fortunately the heavy rain that fell through most of the night had abated by the morning, and we entered the forest proper. En route, a colossal African Crowned Eagle soared low overhead. Soon we found a foraging flock with Olive Woodpecker, Forest Canary, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Grey Cuckooshrike, Olive Bush Shrike and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher. However, the rain seemed to have silenced Knysna Warbler and Narina Trogon, which hardly made a peep all morning. Perhaps the highlight was a pair of Forest Buzzard displaying over the forest, and later a bird perched at eye level, no more than 15 m from the road. It was then time to head back to Cape Town, where we hoped, finally, to get out into the open ocean.

22 October: The Pelagic, at last!

Much relieved, we boarded the little fishing boat at Simonstown and headed out into a calm False Bay. With no more than a gentle breeze, few birds were flying, until finally we found a trawler raising its net. Thousands of seabirds milled around in a chaotic frenzy. Single Black-browed and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses were spotted among the more common Atlantic Yellow-

nosed and most common Shy Albatrosses. Several Northern Giant Petrels joined in, together with good numbers of Great and Sooty Shearwater, White-chinned and Pintado Petrel, and Wilson's Storm Petrel. Finally, and to round off our list, two Sabine's Gulls made a pass overhead. It was then back to Cape Town and time to bid Frank and Ian farewell. Colin, Bill and I spent the night in Cape Town before flying to Durban the following day.

KWAZULU-NATAL

23 October: An introduction to the KwaZulu-Natal midlands

Touching down at Durban International Airport, we immediately picked up our rental car before heading southwards along the coast, and finally inland to Creighton and Smithfield Guest House. Roadside birds included showy Long-tailed, Red-collared and Red-shouldered Widowbirds, a couple of peculiar Long-crested Eagle and White-backed Duck. After a welcome cup of tea, we talk a walk around the back of the guesthouse. A stand of nearby trees produced a shimmering Violet-backed Starling, Red-throated Wryneck and family of Black Sparrowhawk. A striking male Black-bellied Bustard quacked in display, while a flock of bright Orange-breasted Waxbill fed in some recently burnt fields. The find of the afternoon, however, was at least two pairs of Short-tailed Pipit, a new record for Malcolm, our birder-host, and an exceptionally rare bird in South Africa. Some late afternoon birding nearby, with Malcolm, produced Croaking, Ayre's and Pale-crowned Cisticolas, and Rufous-naped Lark, but no hoped-for Black-rumped Buttonquail. After dark we watched Fiery-necked Nightjar flutter in the spotlight beam.

24 October: Sani Pass

An early start saw us reach Himeville by 6:30. Here we met with Robin Guy, and jumped into his Toyota Hilux to head up Sani Pass. Not far out of town, a pair of Southern Crowned Crane brought us to a screeching halt. As we neared the bottom of the pass, we slowed down, spotting African Golden-breasted Bunting, Blue-billed Firefinch and Drakensberg Prinia on the roadside. With more patience we added the smart Bush Blackcap and African Yellow Warbler to our list. Just beyond the border post, an out-of-character Barratt's Warbler sat and called out in the open for at least five minutes! Next was a suite of species associated with Protea stands, sandstone outcrops and short grasslands: Wailing Cisticola, the snappy Buff-streaked Chat, Cape Rock-Thrush, Gurney's Sugarbird and Long-billed Pipit. Upwards we continued, until we found our first Sani specials in the form of Orange-breasted Rock-jumper and Drakensberg Siskin, both feeding on the verge of the road. Reaching the top of the pass, we headed straight for the nearby pub, where a flock of Southern Bald Ibis foraged on some nearby field. A little

further, Sentinel Rock-Thrush and Mountain Pipit obliged, and lastly African Rock Pipit and an impressive Bearded Vulture on the nest.

With some time to spare, we headed back down the pass in the early afternoon, arriving at Xumeni Forest in time to watch several pair of Cape Parrot fly in to roost, one of which perched conspicuously in a tree top. A fine ending to a fine day.

25 October: Forests – Xumeni and Entumeni

Heavy mist made early morning birding slow, but we managed to track down Black-backed Puffback, Chorister Robin-Chat, Orange Ground Thrush, Black and African Emerald Cuckoo and Knysna Turaco at Xumeni Forest, before heading back to the guest house for breakfast. Soon, we were again on the road, this time heading to Eshowe, and on to a nearby forest. The last two hours of light proved very rewarding, with Dark-backed Weaver, Black-bellied Starling, a noisy pair of Square-tailed Drongo, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, shrieking White-eared Barbets, Trumpeter Hornbill, Purple-crested Turaco and a stunning male Narina Trogon added to the list. Several Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon were calling, but, as usual, proved very skittish and were seen only in flight.

26 October: Eshowe to Mkhuze

A pre-dawn start allowed us to track down successfully African Wood-Owl on the edge of Dlinza Forest. The dawn chorus was very productive, the highlight being exceptional views of a Lemon Dove. Also spotted were Olive Sunbird and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird. By this time the weather had turned dark and rainy, with light drizzle and strong winds making birding from the canopy platform unproductive and unpleasant. So we cut our losses and headed for the forest floor once again, tracking down a Spotted Ground-Thrush in short time. We then continued our journey northwards, up the coast, stopping in at Mtunzini to search for Palmnut Vulture. One flew lower over our heads, but Colin was engrossed with taking photographs and missed it. Fortunately, patience was rewarded with excellent views of at least another two adults.

Next was Richards Bay, where a mosaic of wetlands makes for productive birding. Unfortunately the weather had deteriorated even further, with strong winds driving all but the boldest African Jacana into cover. Still, we found our first Hottentot Teal and Pink-backed Pelican. In the swaying reed beds Yellow and Grosbeak Weavers, and Winding Cisticola clung on tightly.

We pressed on northwards for our first taste of savanna bushveld birding. At the turnoff to Mkhuze a pair of Striped Kingfisher kicked off our list. On the way to the entrance a Walhberg's Eagle soared low over the road and flocks of Blue Waxbill flushed off the road. After checking in, we headed straight for the sand forest, and immediately hit the jackpot, finding a mixed flock containing both Pink-throated Twinspot and Rudd's Apalis. To round off the

day, we found several pairs of comical Crested Guinea-fowl and a dainty *Suni* antelope.

27 October: Mkhuze Big Day

Today the weather favoured birding: high cloud cover and windless situations made conditions near-perfect. Back in the sand forest we quickly found the remaining endemic, Neergaard's Sunbird, and over the rest of the day a plethora of others nectarivores concentrated around the scarlet blossoms of weeping-boer-bean trees: Grey, Purple-banded, Marico, White-bellied, Collared and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds. Bushveld birds were exceptionally active, and our list grew rapidly, with highlights including an impressive number of Bush Shrikes (Grey-headed, Orange-breasted and Gorgeous Bush Shrikes, and Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagras), turdids (White-browed, African White-throated and Red-capped Robin-Chats, White-browed and Eastern Bearded Scrub Robins, and Kurrichane Thrush) and Flycatchers (Spotted, Lead-coloured, Ashy and Pallid). Other birds seen in the bushveld, worthy of mention, included Crested Francolin, a single Cuckoo Hawk, Lizard Buzzard, Red-billed Oxpecker, Black-collared and Crested Barbets, Cardinal and Bearded Woodpeckers, Grey Penduline-Tit, Bushveld Pipit, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Eastern Nicator, Black Cuckooshrike and Dusky Indigobird. In the riverine forest were Little and White-fronted Bee-eaters, a pair of smart Broad-billed Rollers, Lesser Honeyguide, African Goshawk, Brown-headed Parrot and African Yellow White-eye. Nsumo Pan's water levels had improved due to some recent rains, with African Wattled Lapwing, Water Thicknee, Yellow-billed and Openbilled Storks, and Goliath Heron found along with an array of other species. Finally, African Quailfinch was seen foraging on the track in front of the vehicle and, at dusk, a couple of churring Square-tailed Nightjar seen at close range. Quite a day – it brought 177 species, plus *Nile crocodile*, *nyala*, *greater kudu*, *giraffe*, *Burchell's zebra*, *hippopotamus* and *white rhinoceros*!

28 October: To St Lucia

An early morning outing to track down African Broadbill almost succeeded, but the displaying bird kept just beyond our gaze. Back to camp to join our fig forest walk, we were disappointed to find that we had been requested to report at the wrong time, and that the rest of the party had left an hour earlier. So we quickly reorganised our day and headed for Muzi Pan. En route Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Eastern Paradise Whydah and Arrow-marked Babbler were new. At Muzi we were joined by Bheki, who took us to his reliable Pel's Fishing Owl roost site. We were soon peering through the thick riverine growth at two sets of large, dark eyes, surrounded by large marmalade-coloured bodies. As if this were not enough, we added a string of other new species to our list. Red-faced Cisticola, Black-throated Wattle-eye and Green Malkoha were outshone only by South Africa's most recently described species, Lemon-breasted Canary. In the vicinity of the lake, large

flocks of swallows hunted over the floodplain, among them Wire-tailed, Rufous-chested and Grey-rumped. Black Egret fed on the water's edge.

After a very successful two hours at Muzi we continued to St Lucia, heading straight for some nearby coastal dune forests, where the two main targets, Woodward's Batis and Brown Scrub-Robin, were tracked down in rapid succession, and Livingstone's Turaco obliged soon after. *Red duiker* darted across the lawn. After dusk we added the last possible nightjar to our list: the decidedly local Swamp Nightjar.

29 October: St Lucia to Durban

With just a couple of hours of birding left, we set straight to work, tracking down a flock of Green Twinspot feeding in the treetops. Driving north towards Cape Vidal, we kept a careful watch for eagles, which produced, in order, and in decreasing rarity, Southern Banded, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagle! A Tambourine Dove perched next to the road rounded matters off on a high note. We headed back to Durban, where we all bade each other a warm farewell and headed our different ways.