



**SOUTH AFRICA: 3-DAY AGULHAS PLAINS AND OVERBERG  
CUSTOM TRIP REPORT**

**15 - 17 AUGUST 2019**

**By Dominic Rollinson**



*Agulhas Long-billed Lark* was one of the many endemics we found on this trip.

## Overview

This short three-day trip to the Agulhas Plains and the Overberg of the Western Cape was designed to pick up as many of the endemic and special bird species found in the area. We had a few really tricky targets that required a bit more work than usual; however, we still managed to find 160 bird species over the three days (and an additional five heard only), including such specials as **Blue Crane**, **Striped Flufftail**, **Cape Rockjumper**, **Secretarybird**, **Knysna Woodpecker**, **Denham's Bustard**, **Southern Black** and **Karoo Korhaans**, **Agulhas Long-billed**, **Large-billed**, and **Cape Clapper Larks**, **Southern Tchagra**, **Cape Rockjumper**, **Sentinel** and **Cape Rock Thrushes**, **Victorin's Warbler**, and **Olive Bushshrike**. Although not on top of the agenda we did manage to find some nice mammals too, including **Southern Right Whale**, **Bontebok**, and **Cape Mountain Zebra**.



*Denham's Bustard was seen at De Hoop Nature Reserve.*

## Detailed Report

### **Day 1, 15th August 2019. Cape Town to the De Hoop area**

The day started early when we managed to avoid most of Cape Town's rush hour traffic and made our way east to the Hottentots Holland Mountains. Our big target here was Striped Flufftail, although there were also a few fynbos specialties we wanted to find here. While walking to the flufftail spot we got visuals of one of the most obliging **Victorin's Warblers** I have yet to encounter as well as of good numbers of **Cape Sugarbird**, **Orange-breasted** and **Malachite Sunbirds**, **Karoo Prinia**, **African Black** and **Alpine Swifts**, **Yellow Bishop**, **Cape Grassbird**, and a few **White-necked Ravens**. The flufftail took some effort but eventually we had fantastic views of a male **Striped Flufftail**; it's always a great day's birding when you see a flufftail!

Our success did not end here, though. As we made our way around the corner to Rooi Els we soon bumped into a vocal male **Cape Rockjumper** that allowed some great scope views. Other specials in the area included **Cape Siskin**, **Cape** and **Sentinel Rock Thrushes**, **Fiscal Flycatcher**, **Grey-backed Cisticola**, **Neddicky**, **Cape Bunting**, **Cape Bulbul**, **Rock Kestrel**, and a magnificent pair of **Verreaux's Eagles**. On the rocky coastline below us we picked up a single **Crowned Cormorant**. A small troop of **Chacma Baboons** was seen nearby, with a really impressive male watching over them.

However, we had to get a move on as we still had quite a lot to find during the rest of the day. The next target was Hottentot Buttonquail; however, despite walking a few kilometers through its perfect habitat we could not find any – well, you have to leave some for next time! While searching for the buttonquail we did, however, come across **Secretarybird**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Bokmakierie**, **Cape, Yellow**, and **Brimstone Canaries**, **Cape Weaver**, and a trio of distant **Grey Rheboks**.

With daylight fading we continued farther east to the Potberg area of De Hoop Nature Reserve, where we were to be based for the night. Despite the dying light we still managed to find **Blue Crane**, **Cape Crow**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Jackal Buzzard**, **Pied Starling**, and our final bird of the day, an obliging **Spotted Eagle-Owl** perched on a roadside pylon.

### Day 2, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2019. De Hoop and Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserves

We were up before dawn and on the road to De Hoop Nature Reserve when we were soon greeted by our first bird of the day in the form of a **Spotted Eagle-Owl**, which posed nicely. We arrived at De Hoop Nature Reserve just after sunrise and went straight to the plains to look for a few endemic larks. **Cape Clapper Larks** were calling strongly, and we soon also found **Agulhas Long-billed**, **Large-billed**, and **Red-capped Larks**. In the area we had a flyover **Denham's Bustard**, **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, a few displaying **Cloud Cisticolas**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, and **Southern Black Korhaan**.



*Large-billed Lark posed beautifully for us at De Hoop.*



We then made our way to the campsite, which was alive with birds. In the scrubby areas we found **Southern Boubou**, **Bar-throated Apalis**, **African Hoopoe**, **Cardinal Woodpecker**, **White-throated Canary**, and our main target, **Southern Tchagra**. Below us in the wetland we picked up **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos**, **Great Crested Grebe**, flocks into the hundreds of **Black-crowned Night Herons**, **Water Thick-knee**, **African Spoonbill**, and a few waterfowl species including **Cape Shoveler**, **Cape Teal**, and **Yellow-billed Duck**. In the open areas nearby we found **Cape Mountain Zebra** and **Bontebok** as well as large numbers of **Common Ostrich**. After a quick breakfast we carried on farther into the reserve to Koppie Alleen, where we enjoyed at least five **Southern Right Whales** fairly close inshore. Here we also came across a soaring **Black Harrier**.



*Southern Boubou came to investigate us during our breakfast stop.*

We had a brief swing by the Potberg section of the reserve to enjoy decent views of **Cape Vulture** before we made our way back north (after finding **Karoo Korhaan** in the wheat fields) to Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve, where we were based for the night.

We arrived in the Grootvadersbosch area in the late afternoon and had a couple of hours birding the forest edge, which proved extremely productive. **Knysna Woodpecker** showed really well as well as **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, **Sweet Waxbill**, **Black Cuckooshrike**, **Brown-hooded Kingfisher**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Streaky-headed Seedeater**, **Cape Batis**, **African Olive Pigeon**, and **Black Saw-wing**. Just before calling it a day we managed amazing views of **Fiery-necked Nightjar**!

### **Day 3, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2019. Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve to Muizenberg**

After two days of brilliant weather we woke up this morning to find that the mist had rolled into Grootvadersbosch and the birds were taking a little longer to get active. We visited the grasslands around Honeywood Farm in the hope of finding Red-winged Francolin; however,

they weren't even calling this morning. But we did manage to find a new bird in form of a pair of **Plain-backed Pipits**.

We then entered the forest, where we found **Forest Canary, Olive Bushshrike, Cape Batis, Olive Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, African Dusky Flycatcher, African Olive Pigeon, Sombre Greenbul, and the endemic Forest Buzzard** on the edge of the forest.



*Olive Bushshrike showed well at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve.*

After the morning in the forest it was time to hit the road and make our way back west to Cape Town. We made sure we had time for a couple of hours' birding at Strandfontein Sewage Works to target a few waterbird species. As usual Strandfontein were alive with waterbirds, including **Cape and Red-billed Teals, Cape Shoveler, Maccoa Duck, Southern Pochard, White Stork, Great White Pelican, Greater and Lesser Flamingos, African Swamphen, and Great Crested, Little, and Black-necked Grebes**, as well as a few birds in the nearby reedbeds and scrub such as **Little Rush and Lesser Swamp Warblers, Levillant's and Zitting Cisticolas**, and a pair of roosting **Spotted Thick-knees**. We also took a drive around the neighborhood to find **House Crow**. We ended the trip with a total of 160 species (and an additional five species heard only), which included many Cape endemics and target species.

**Bird List - Following IOC (9.1)**

The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened. South African endemics are bolded.

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
<b>Ostriches (Struthionidae)</b>	
Common Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
<b>Ducks, Geese and Swans (Anatidae)</b>	
Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
Cape Shoveler	<i>Spatula smithii</i>
Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>
Cape Teal	<i>Anas capensis</i>
Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>
Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>
Maccoa Duck - VU	<i>Oxyura maccoa</i>
<b>Guineafowl (Numididae)</b>	
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
<b>Pheasants and allies (Phasianidae)</b>	
<b>Grey-winged Francolin</b>	<b><i>Scleroptila afra</i></b>
<b>Cape Spurfowl</b>	<b><i>Pternistis capensis</i></b>
Common Quail (H)	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
<b>Grebes (Podicipedidae)</b>	
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
<b>Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae)</b>	
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
Lesser Flamingo - NT	<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>
<b>Storks (Ciconiidae)</b>	
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
<b>Ibises, Spoonbills (Threskiornithidae)</b>	
African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>

Common name	Scientific name
<b>Herons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)</b>	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
<b>Pelicans (Pelecanidae)</b>	
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
<b>Gannets, Boobies (Sulidae)</b>	
Cape Gannet - EN	<i>Morus capensis</i>
<b>Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)</b>	
Reed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>
Crowned Cormorant - NT	<i>Microcarbo coronatus</i>
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>
<b>Cape Cormorant - EN</b>	<b><i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i></b>
<b>Anhingas, Darters (Anhingidae)</b>	
African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
<b>Secretarybird (Sagittariidae)</b>	
Secretarybird - VU	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>
<b>Kites, Hawks and Eagles (Accipitridae)</b>	
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Cape Vulture - EN	<i>Gyps coprotheres</i>
African Goshawk (H)	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>
Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk (H)	<i>Accipiter rufiventris</i>
Black Harrier - EN	<i>Circus maurus</i>
African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
<b>Forest Buzzard - NT</b>	<b><i>Buteo trizonatus</i></b>
Jackal Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufofuscus</i>
<b>Bustards (Otididae)</b>	
Denham's Bustard - NT	<i>Neotis denhami</i>
Karoo Korhaan	<i>Eupodotis vigorsii</i>
<b>Southern Black Korhaan - VU</b>	<b><i>Afrotis afra</i></b>
<b>Flufftails (Sarothruridae)</b>	
Striped Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura affinis</i>
<b>Rails, Crakes and Coots (Rallidae)</b>	
African Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i>

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
<b>Cranes (Gruidae)</b>	
Blue Crane - VU	<i>Grus paradisea</i>
<b>Stone-curlews, Thick-knees (Burhinidae)</b>	
Water Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
Spotted Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>
<b>Stilts, Avocets (Recurvirostridae)</b>	
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
<b>Plovers (Charadriidae)</b>	
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
<b>Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)</b>	
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
<b>Gulls, Terns and Skimmers (Laridae)</b>	
Grey-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i>
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus hartlaubii</i>
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
<b>Sandgrouse (Pteroclididae)</b>	
Namaqua Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles namaqua</i>
<b>Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)</b>	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
African Olive Pigeon	<i>Columba arquatrix</i>
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
<b>Owls (Strigidae)</b>	
Spotted Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>
<b>Nightjars (Caprimulgidae)</b>	
Fiery-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus pectoralis</i>



Common name	Scientific name
<b>Swifts (Apodidae)</b>	
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
African Black Swift	<i>Apus barbatus</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
<b>Mousebirds (Coliidae)</b>	
Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>
Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>
<b>Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)</b>	
Brown-hooded Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon albiventris</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
<b>Hoopoes (Upupidae)</b>	
African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>
<b>Woodpeckers (Picidae)</b>	
<b>Knysna Woodpecker - NT</b>	<b><i>Campethera notata</i></b>
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicus fuscescens</i>
Olive Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicus griseocephalus</i>
<b>Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)</b>	
Rock Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicolus</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
<b>Wattle-eyes, Batises (Platysteiridae)</b>	
Cape Batis	<i>Batis capensis</i>
<b>Bushshrikes (Malaconotidae)</b>	
Olive Bushshrike	<i>Chlorophoneus olivaceus</i>
Bokmakierie	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>
Southern Tchagra	<i>Tchagra tchagra</i>
Southern Boubou	<i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>
<b>Shrikes (Laniidae)</b>	
Southern Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
<b>Drongos (Dicruridae)</b>	
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
<b>Monarchs (Monarchidae)</b>	
Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher	<i>Trochocercus cyanomelas</i>
<b>Crows, Jays (Corvidae)</b>	
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
White-necked Raven	<i>Corvus albicollis</i>
<b>Rockjumpers (Chaetopidae)</b>	
<b>Cape Rockjumper - NT</b>	<i>Chaetops frenatus</i>
<b>Larks (Alaudidae)</b>	
<b>Agulhas Long-billed Lark</b>	<i>Certhilauda brevirostris</i>
Cape Clapper Lark	<i>Mirafra apiata</i>
Large-billed Lark	<i>Galerida magnirostris</i>
Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
<b>Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)</b>	
<b>Cape Bulbul</b>	<i>Pycnonotus capensis</i>
Sombre Greenbul	<i>Andropadus importunus</i>
Terrestrial Brownbul	<i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i>
<b>Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)</b>	
Black Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i>
Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
White-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>
Greater Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis cucullata</i>
<b>Crombecs, African Warblers (Macrosphenidae)</b>	
Cape Grassbird	<i>Sphenoeacus afer</i>
Long-billed Crombec (H)	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
<b>Victorin's Warbler</b>	<i>Cryptillas victorini</i>
<b>Leaf Warblers and allies (Phylloscopidae)</b>	
Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus ruficapilla</i>
<b>Reed Warblers and allies (Acrocephalidae)</b>	
Lesser Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i>
<b>Grassbirds and allies (Locustellidae)</b>	
Little Rush Warbler	<i>Bradypterus baboecala</i>
<b>Cisticolas and allies (Cisticolidae)</b>	
Grey-backed Cisticola	<i>Cisticola subruficapilla</i>
Levaillant's Cisticola	<i>Cisticola tinniens</i>
Neddicky	<i>Cisticola fulvicapilla</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>

<b>Common name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
Cloud Cisticola	<i>Cisticola textrix</i>
Karoo Prinia	<i>Prinia maculosa</i>
Bar-throated Apalis	<i>Apalis thoracica</i>
<b>White-eyes (Zosteropidae)</b>	
Cape White-eye	<i>Zosterops virens</i>
<b>Sugarbirds (Promeropidae)</b>	
<b>Cape Sugarbird</b>	<b><i>Promerops cafer</i></b>
<b>Starlings, Rhabdornis (Sturnidae)</b>	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Pied Starling	<i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i>
Red-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>
<b>Thrushes (Turdidae)</b>	
Olive Thrush	<i>Turdus olivaceus</i>
<b>Chats, Old World Flycatchers (Muscicapidae)</b>	
Karoo Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas coryphoeus</i>
Fiscal Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis silens</i>
African Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>
Cape Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>
<b>Cape Rock Thrush</b>	<b><i>Monticola rupestris</i></b>
Sentinel Rock Thrush - NT	<i>Monticola explorator</i>
African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>
Familiar Chat	<i>Oenanthe familiaris</i>
<b>Sunbirds (Nectariniidae)</b>	
<b>Orange-breasted Sunbird</b>	<b><i>Anthobaphes violacea</i></b>
Amethyst Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra amethystina</i>
Malachite Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia famosa</i>
Southern Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chalybeus</i>
Greater Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris afer</i>
<b>Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passeridae)</b>	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>
<b>Weavers, Widowbirds (Ploceidae)</b>	
<b>Cape Weaver</b>	<b><i>Ploceus capensis</i></b>
Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>

Common name	Scientific name
Southern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>
Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>
<b>Waxbills, Munias and allies (Estrildidae)</b>	
Sweet Waxbill	<i>Coccyzygia melanotis</i>
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
<b>Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae)</b>	
Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
Cape Longclaw (H)	<i>Macronyx capensis</i>
African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
Plain-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>
<b>Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae)</b>	
Forest Canary	<i>Crithagra scotops</i>
Cape Siskin	<i>Crithagra totta</i>
Yellow Canary	<i>Crithagra flaviventris</i>
Brimstone Canary	<i>Crithagra sulphurata</i>
Streaky-headed Seedeater	<i>Crithagra gularis</i>
White-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra albogularis</i>
Cape Canary	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>
<b>Buntings (Emberizidae)</b>	
Cape Bunting	<i>Emberiza capensis</i>

<b>Total seen</b>	<b>160</b>
Total heard only	5
Total recorded	165

### Mammal List

Common name	Scientific name
<b>Mongoose (Herpestidae)</b>	
Cape Grey Mongoose	<i>Herpestes pulverulentus</i>
<b>Rorqual Whales (Balaenopteridae)</b>	
Southern Right Whale	<i>Eubalaena australis</i>
<b>Bovids (Bovidae)</b>	
Bontebok	<i>Damaliscus pygargus pygargus</i>
Common Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
Steenbok	<i>Raphicerus campestris</i>



<b>Horses, Asses, Zebras (Equidae)</b>	
Cape Mountain Zebra	<i>Equus zebra zebra</i>
<b>Old World Monkeys (Cercopithecidae)</b>	
Chacma Baboon	<i>Papio ursinus</i>
<b>Total seen</b>	<b>7</b>