WEST

SCARBOROUGH • SOUTH AFRICA

Cape of Good Hope Wildlife Guide



Discover the wild Cape

From mountain and fynbos to the Atlantic shore

Photography principally by Russ Weston

WEST | GREENLIFE SAFARIS

Life at West

Wildlife from our doorstep, the mountain and the Atlantic shore.





A place to begin

West is Russ and Marion Weston's owner-run coastal retreat at 108 Hilltop Street, Scarborough. Our philosophy is to live in coexistence with nature and the community, supporting the people and places that make this corner of the Cape special.

Across the ocean and towards the Cape

From our remarkable vantage point over the open Atlantic, we watch large pods of dolphins passing by and whales breaching offshore. Among our most extraordinary recent sightings are the super-pods of humpback whales gathering in these waters. Seals also pass along the coast, and an occasional elephant seal comes ashore. A wealth of marine life and a wonderful variety of seabirds make watching the ocean part of daily life at West. To the south, our views reach towards the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, where we often spot eland, bontebok and ostrich from West.

Wildlife at West

Down at the beachfront, a family of otters is part of our day-to-day encounters. A porcupine calls by in the evenings, while small mongooses and local guinea fowl frequent the property. Cape grysbok and klipspringer are sometimes spotted behind the house. We also receive visits from caracal living along the mountain range behind West, and an occasional baboon passes through the village looking for opportunities.

It is a privilege to live among such incredible wildlife. A visit to West invites you to share in this coexistence with nature.

Take this guide into the field: use the photographs to recognise wildlife and the checklists to record your sightings. These are our observations around West; every day brings different possibilities.

ABOUT THIS EDITION
Adapted from the Cape of Good Hope Wildlife Guide. Original photo plates retain species names, abundance labels and historical records; they are identification aids, not a new biodiversity survey.

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Your guide to the Peninsula

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Explore from West



West: 108 Hilltop Street, Scarborough. Orientation map; use live navigation for routes.

Imagery: Esri World Imagery / Maxar, Earthstar Geographics & GIS User Community.

Where habitats meet



Mountain, fynbos and sea

The southern Cape Peninsula brings rocky highlands, coastal thicket, fynbos, beaches and the ocean into a compact landscape. Each habitat rewards a different kind of looking, from scanning offshore for seabirds to noticing a small reptile beside the path.

Look closely, record gently

This guide brings together the original wildlife photographs and species checklists for the Cape of Good Hope area. Some species are conspicuous; others are rare, seasonal or difficult to see. A checklist records possibilities and past observations, rather than guaranteeing a sighting.

Carry binoculars, note the date and place, and photograph wildlife without disturbing it. Share interesting observations with your host.

Boulders & the African penguin



A remarkable coastal neighbour

Boulders, near Simon's Town, offers a chance to observe African penguins from designated viewing areas. Their black-and-white plumage, spotted chests and distinctive braying calls make them unmistakable. Each bird has its own pattern of chest spots.

Built for life at sea

African penguins pursue small schooling fish, including anchovies and sardines. Their flippers propel them underwater, while dark backs and pale bellies help disguise them from above and below.

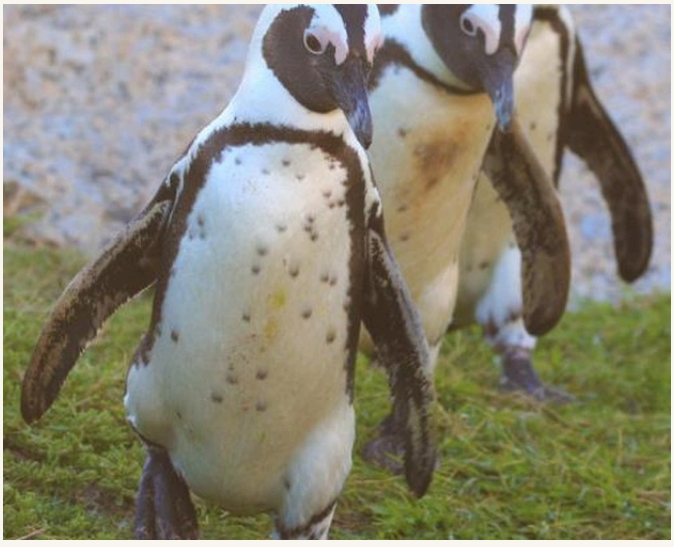
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

The African penguin was uplisted to Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List in 2024. Reduced food availability, including competition with fisheries and shifts in prey distribution, is a major threat. Habitat protection and effective protection of feeding grounds are central to recovery.

Conservation update: BirdLife International / IUCN, 2024 assessment. Sources on page 43

A penguin's early life





From nest to fledgling

Parents share incubation and chick care. Young chicks are covered in down, which is not waterproof. They remain ashore until they have developed the juvenile plumage needed for life at sea. Feeding conditions influence how quickly chicks grow.

The annual moult

Adult penguins must replace their feathers. During the moult they remain ashore and live on stored reserves while their waterproof plumage is renewed. Resting birds need space, particularly during this demanding period.



Enjoy the colony from designated paths and viewing areas; give birds room to pass.

THE MAMMALS

South Africa has over 300 mammal species. At least 36 species of land mammal occur in the Cape of Good Hope. A few species have been excluded such as the bats and some of the rodents as these are unlikely to be seen.

The vegetation called fynbos is quite low in nutrients and fairly unpalatable to mammals. The area has a low carrying capacity for large herds of game. Even in the past when herds did visit the area, they would have been nomadic, and would not have stayed for long periods. Historical records show that lions, leopards and hyenas followed the nomadic game herds. All are now extinct in the area and the largest remaining land carnivore is the caracal. A further 15 species of mammal have been recorded in the rich coastal waters. Between June and September each year the majestic Southern Right Whales visit these shores and are easily seen.



MAMMAL CHECKLIST









- BONTEBOK
- BRANT'S CLIMBING MOUSE
- CAPE CHACMA BABOON
- CAPE CLAWLESS OTTER
- CAPE DUNE MOLERAT
- CAPE FOX
- CAPE GENET
- CAPE GERBIL
- CAPE GOLDEN MOLE
- CAPE GRAY MONGOOSE
- CAPE GRYSBOK
- CAPE MOLERAT
- CAPE MOUNTAIN ZEBRA
- CAPE PORCUPINE
- CAPE SPINY MOUSE
- CARACAL
- COMMON DUIKER
- DASSIE
- ELAND
- FOREST SHREW
- GRAY TREE SQUIRREL
- GREY CLIMBING MOUSE
- GREY RHEBOK
- GREATER MUSK SHREW
- KLIPSPRINGER
- KREB'S FAT MOUSE
- MULTIMAMMATE MOUSE
- PYGMY MOUSE
- RED HARTEBEEST
- SAUNDERS VLEI RAT
- SMALL-SPOTTED GENET
- STEENBOK
- STRIPED MOUSE
- VLEI RAT
- VERREAUX'S MOUSE
- WATER MONGOOSE



SEA MAMMAL CHECKLIST

- BOTTLENOSED DOLPHIN
- BRYDE'S WHALE
- CAPE FUR SEAL
- DUSKY DOLPHIN
- FALSE KILLER WHALE
- HUMPBACK WHALE
- KILLER WHALE
- LONG-BEAKED COMMON DOLPHIN
- SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL
- SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE
- SPERM WHALE

Three mammal species are of particular interest from a conservation perspective, namely, the **Bontebok. Cape Mountain Zebra** and **Klipspringer** all of which have been reintroduced into the area.





BONTEBOK Common Shoulder height: 60cm Weight: 62kg (M)

One of the most special animals to be seen is the **Bontebok.** In the eighteen hundreds this antelope was on the verge of extinction due to hunting and habitat degradation. Thanks to visionary conservationists the species was saved, but they still remain one of the country's rarest antelopes. Both the males and females have horns. Males form territories which are aggressively defended.





CAPE MOUNTAIN ZEBRA Uncommon Shoulder height: 130cm Weight: 250kg (M)

Cape mountain zebras are recognised by their bold stripes and the dewlap beneath the throat. They live in small family groups. Conservation and reintroductions have helped this distinctive southern African zebra recover from a severe historical decline.

SMALL ANTELOPE



KLIPSPRINGER Uncommon

Shoulder height: 60cm Weight: 11kg (M) 13kg (F)

Klipspringers are very agile and can move quickly over steep rocky terrain. They are unique in having a coat of spiny bristles that are hollowed, flattened and springy. These bristles provide protection if they bump into rocks. This fur was highly sought after for the lining of saddles and they were hunted to extinction on the Cape Peninsula. In 1999, South African National Parks started reintroducing them into the area.







CAPE GRYSBOK Common

Shoulder height: 54cm Weight: 10kg

The **Cape Grysbok** is endemic to the fynbos of the Western Cape. Only the males have horns. They are mostly solitary and only pair off in mating season. They are browsers and can go without water for long periods of time.

SMALL ANTELOPE



COMMON DUIKER

Uncommon

Height: 50cm
Weight: 18kg (M)
21kg (F)



The **Common Duiker** is a solitary animal mostly active in the early morning and late afternoon browsing on a variety of plants. Only the males have horns. They are very secretive and seldom seen.



STEENBOK

Uncommon

Height: 50cm
Weight: 11kg



Steenbok are found singly or in pairs. They have a varied diet and obtain moisture from the plants they eat. Their big ears allow for excellent hearing and alertness. To avoid detection they cover their droppings with soil.





GREY RHEBOK Uncommon

Height: 75cm Weight: 20kg

Grey Rhebok are small to medium size antelope, grey-brown in colour with the underparts of the belly and tail being white. Only males have horns. Their alarm call is a short cough. Thirty years ago they were common on the Cape Peninsula but hunting seriously diminished their numbers.

LARGE ANTELOPE





RED HARTEBEEST Common

Height: 125cm Weight:150kg

Red Hartebeest are gregarious animals preferring to live in small herds. Both sexes have horns although the female horns are smaller. They are very fast runners. They are grazers and especially love the new green shoots that come up after fires.





ELAND Common

Height: 170cm Weight:700 - 900kg

Eland are the largest antelope in the world and can weigh 750kg. Mostly browsers, they can go without water for long periods. They form small herds and are very agile and fast runners.
In some areas in South Africa eland have been domesticated by humans.

CARACAL Uncommon

The **Caracal** is the largest predator remaining in the area. The hindquarters are noticeably higher and more developed than the forequarters. They have powerful jaws and are opportunistic feeders taking smaller prey such as birds, reptiles and rodents. They have however been known to kill small antelope such as duiker or grysbok.. They are solitary and territorial except when breeding. The mother prepares a nest, usually in a burrow lined with hair and feathers. They can have up to four kittens but two is the average. After three weeks the kittens leave the burrow and learn to hunt. Lactation lasts for four months. Caracal can be observed at any time of the day.



CAPE CLAWLESS OTTER Uncommon



The **Cape Clawless Otter** is adapted to both salt and fresh water. They are common along the coastline but seldom seen. It is more likely that the scats or droppings will be observed which consist of shells of crabs and lobster. They also eat fish, frogs and octopus. They have a massive skull and strong teeth adapted for crushing their prey. The forefeet of the otters are unwebbed and clawless and adapted for probing in crevices. The hindfeet are webbed. They are extremely inquisitive and playful. They have a clan-type social organization with a number of males sharing a range and even foraging and playing together. Gestation period is two months with two or three cubs in a litter. The cubs leave the holt (den) after one month when their eyes open.

CAPE CHACMA BABOON Common

Cape Chacma Baboons are the most adaptable of the African mammals. On the Cape Peninsula they have been recorded eating over 100 species of plants. Another unique adaptation is to forage in the rocky pools at low tide where they feed on limpets, mussels and shark egg cases. The Cape Peninsula baboon populations are isolated following the development on the Cape Flats and this has made them very vulnerable to in-breeding and potential genetic collapse. They often take food from humans. Baboon Monitors are employed in order to try to minimise any human-baboon interactions.





CAPE FOX Rare

The **Cape Fox** is a shy nocturnal animal that is seldom seen**.** They are omnivorous, eating both plants and meat.





CAPE GENET Uncommon **SMALL SPOTTED GENET** Rare

The **Cape Genet** has a black tip to the tail and the **Small-spotted Genet** a white tipped tail. Both species are nocturnal and unlikely to be seen in the daytime. They hunt mice, birds and insects.





CAPE GRAY MONGOOSE Common **WATER MONGOOSE** Uncommon

The **Small** or **Cape Gray Mongoose** is the most commonly seen predatory mammal. They are active in the day, hunting rodents and insects as well as bird and tortoise eggs.

Water mongoose are associated with freshwater habitats. They are excellent swimmers, enabling them to catch crabs .







STRIPED POLECAT Rare **CAPE MOLERAT** Common **CAPE DUNE MOLERAT**

The **Striped Polecat** is a small nocturnal animal that feeds on rodents, reptiles and insects. .

Cape Dune Molerats and **Cape Molerats** are abundant on the sandy coastal plains and are responsible for the small sand heaps. They are plant eaters specialising in bulbs. Mole-rats burrow tunnels about 30cm below the surface and these tunnels can run for a couple of hundred meters. In these burrows they have a nest which is lined with grass and leaves.



CAPE PORCUPINE Common

The **Cape Porcupine** is a close relative of the mole-rats. Bulbs are their favourite food, in particular the bulbs of the Arum Lily plant. They also eat fruit, bark and leaves. They have strong teeth and sharp quills which they rattle to present a formidable defense.



DASSIE/ROCK HYRAX Common

Rock Hyraxes or **Dassies** have short legs with rubbery soles to their feet, which sweat to give them a good grip, allowing them to clamber over rocks with ease. They have long sensitive coat hairs allowing them to hide from predators in dark rocky crevices.





CAPE GOLDEN MOLE Common

Cape Golden Moles are small, blind, insectivorous mammals. The long-clawed toes are used for burrowing. These burrows are just below the surface and leave a distinct humped trail.

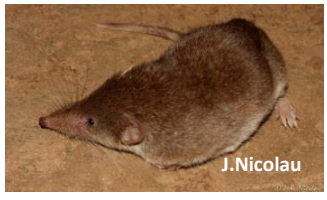


GRAY TREE SQUIRREL Uncommon

The **Gray Tree Squirrel** is an invasive species native to the Americas. They can be seen in the exotic trees on the edge of the reserve.



VLEI RAT



GREATER MUSK SHREW



CAPE SPINY MOUSE

Other rodents which have been recorded but are not depicted are **Forest Shrew, Saunders Vlei Rat, Pygmy Mouse, Verreaux's Mouse, Kreb's Fat Mouse** both **Brant's** and **Grey Climbing Mouse. Cape Gerbil** and **Multimammate Mouse possibly occur.**

STRIPED MOUSE Common

The **Striped Mouse** is diurnal and is the most common rodent in the natural vegetation. They are typically seen in pairs foraging for seeds which are relatively nutrient-rich.

At least three different species of bat have been recorded.

THE BIRDS

The density and diversity of birds in the fynbos is relatively low compared to other regions in South Africa. Nonetheless over 250 different species of bird have been recorded. This includes the vagrant and pelagic species. Despite the low diversity there are a number of species endemic to the fynbos which can easily be seen.

FYNBOS ENDEMICS



CAPE SUGARBIRD C A



ORANGE-BREASTED SUNBIRD C A

The **Orange-breasted Sunbird** and the **Cape Sugarbird** are two fynbos endemics that are most conspicuous at flowering plants. In particular yellow pincushions, which bloom in spring and summer, and at ericas in mid-summer.



CAPE SISKIN C A



CAPE BULBUL C A

The other two fynbos endemics to be seen are the **Cape Siskin** and **Cape Bulbul** both of which are common. The area between Cape Point and the cliffs at Cape of Good Hope are a good spot to see the Siskins, whilst the Bulbuls prefer the coastal thickets.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN ENDEMICS

South Africa has 98 endemic species of bird. The endemic species that can be seen in the Cape of Good Hope are included in this section and are highlighted in green. To help with identification a seasonal and abundance key is included.

KEY

SEASONALITY	ABUNDANCE
S – summer	C – common
W – winter	U – uncommon
A – any time of year	R – rare





SOUTHERN DOUBLE-COLLARED SUNBIRD C A

CAPE WEAVER C A

Olifantsbos is a great spot for **Southern Double-collared Sunbird** especially where flowers are blooming. **Cape Weaver** are known to breed at the estuary at De Mond.





BOKMAKIERIE C A

CAPE GRASSBIRD C A

The **Cape Grassbird** and **Bokmakieirie** are two of the more vocal species and are often seen calling from the top of bushes. They can be seen throughout the area.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN ENDEMICS



CAPE CANARY

C A



FISCAL FLYCATCHER

C A



SOUTHERN BOUBOU

C A



CAPE WHITE EYE

C A



KAROO PRINIA

C A



CAPE CLAPPER LARK

C A



CAPE BATIS

C A



KAROO SCRUB ROBIN

R A



SENTINEL ROCK THRUSH

R A



WHITE-BACKED MOUSEBIRD

C A



CAPE ROCK THRUSH

U A



GROUND WOODPECKER

U A

The **Sentinel Rock Thrush** prefers the higher mountain areas and shift their territories according to the age of the vegetation. Pairs of **Cape Rock Thrush** occupy territories in rocky areas along coast and inland. Small parties of **Ground Woodpecker** occur in rocky areas, particularly in recently burnt areas.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN ENDEMICS



CAPE LONGCLAW

U A



HOTTENTOT BUTTONQUAIL

U A



GREYWING FRANCOLIN

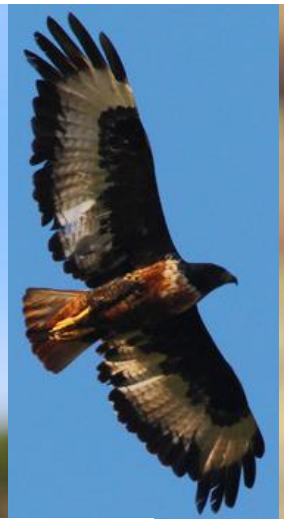
C A



CAPE SPURFOWL

C A





JACKAL BUZZARD

U A



AFRICAN BLACK OYSTERCATCHER

C A

The **African Black Oystercatcher** is a threatened species. At least 100 Oystercatchers are present - all on the western coastline. The densest concentrations are to be found between De Mond and Olifantsbos. The Oystercatchers feed mostly on limpets and mussels. The males have bills that are shorter and blunter.

At least two pairs of **Jackal Buzzards** occur, and the best place to view them is along the east coast cliffs. They prey on smaller birds as well as rodents.



AFRICAN PENGUIN

U A



HARTLAUB'S GULL

C A



BANK CORMORANT

U A



CROWNED CORMORANT

C A

Bank and **Crowned Cormorant** can be seen on the rocks by the Cape of Good Hope car park, along with Whitebreasted and Cape Cormorants. **Hartlaub's Gulls** often occur in large flocks along with other gulls. See Boulders section (pages 2 and 3) for **African Penguin** information.

COMMON SMALL BIRDS



MALACHITE SUNBIRD

C A



YELLOW BISHOP

C A



COMMON WAXBILL

C A



BRIMSTONE CANARY

C A



CLOUD CISTICOLA

C A



GREYBACKED CISTICOLA

C A



ZITTING CISTICOLA

C A



LEVAILLANT'S CISTICOLA

C A



CAPE BUNTING

C A



GREATER STRIPED SWALLOW

C S



CAPE SPARROW

U A



BARN SWALLOW

C S



ROCK MARTIN

C A



ALPINE SWIFT

C S



LITTLE SWIFT

U S



WHITE-RUMPED SWIFT

U S



BLACK SWIFT

C A

Black Swifts are the most abundant swift, with parties up to 200 frequently being seen.
The largest flock (numbering over 1000) was seen at Olifantsbos coinciding with a hatch of flying ants.

LESS COMMON SMALL BIRDS



YELLOW CANARY

U A



RED BISHOP

R A



PIN-TAILED WHYDAH

R A



KLAAS'S CUCKOO

R S



SOUTHERN MASKED WEAVER

R A



AFRICAN STONECHAT

U A



HOUSE SPARROW

R A



BAR-THROATED APALIS

C A



ACACIA PIED BARBET

R A



LONGBILLED PIPIT

R A



PLAINBACKED PIPIT

U A



AFRICAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER

U S



LONGBILLED CROMBEC

R A



AMETHYST SUNBIRD

R A



LESSER SWAMP WARBLER

R A



LITTLE RUSH WARBLER

R A



DUSKY FLYCATCHER

U S



NEDDICKY

U A

COMMON MEDIUM-SIZED BIRDS



CAPE ROBIN-CHAT

C A



COMMON FISCAL

C A



REDWINGED STARLING

C A



COMMON STARLING

C A



LAUGHING DOVE

C A



CAPE TURTLE DOVE

C A



SPECKLED PIGEON

C A



FAMILIAR CHAT

C A



SPECKLED MOUSEBIRD

C A



OLIVE THRUSH

C A



SPOTTED THICK-KNEE

C A



CROWNED LAPWING

C A



FIERY-NECKED NIGHTJAR

C A



CAPE WAGTAIL

C A

LESS COMMON MEDIUM-SIZED BIRDS



LESSER HONEYGUIDE

R | A |



RED-CHESTED CUCKOO

R | S |



NAMAQUA DOVE

R | S |



WATTLED STARLING

R | A |



AFRICAN OLIVE PIGEON

U | A |



RED-EYED DOVE

U | A |



FORK-TAILED DRONGO

R | A |



RED-FACED MOUSEBIRD

R | A |



BURCHELLS COUCAL

R | A |



AFRICAN HOOPOE

R | A |



COMMON QUAIL

R | S |

COMMON LARGER BIRDS

AFRICAN OSTRICH

C A

Ostrich occurred naturally in the area but where wiped out in the seventeenth century. Three males and one female were reintroduced in 1947, and two males and three females in 1966. They are most commonly seen in grassy vegetation around homesteads and in the relatively nutritious coastal strip.









EGYPTIAN GOOSE

C A

Egyptian Goose are abundant throughout the reserve. Of interest is that up until the early 1970s, no records existed here. They are vegetarian and feed on both the land and along the coastline.

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL

C A

Helmeted Guineafowl were introduced to the western Cape in the early 1900s. The species would however have found there way to the reserve even without being introduced.





BLACKCROWNED NIGHT HERON

C A

These are nocturnal birds that roost in the trees along Plateau road during the daytime.

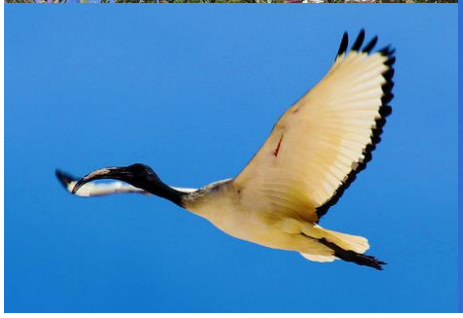
HADEDA IBIS

C A

The **Hadeda Ibis** is a species that has spread rapidly in response to mans modification of the environment. First recorded here in 1988.

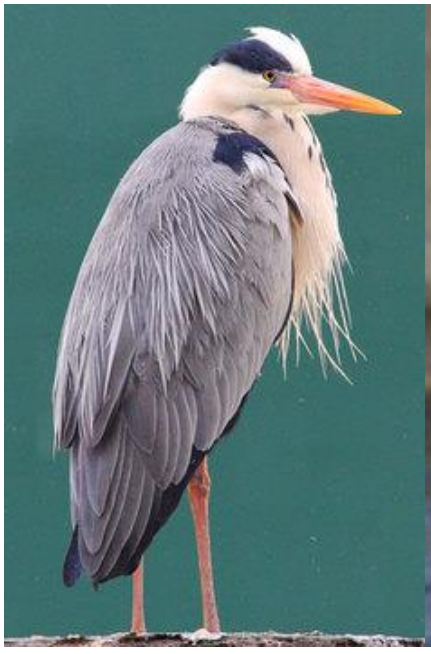
COMMON LARGER BIRDS







SACRED IBIS C A





GREY HERON C A





BLACKHEADED HERON C A

21

UNCOMMON LARGE BIRDS



GREATER FLAMINGO R A



SPUR-WINGED GOOSE R A

The **Greater Flamingo** is only an occasional visitor, but the first records date back to 1938. In October 1984 a flock of 86 birds was seen on Skaife Beach. Most recent sightings are in 2014.



GREATE WHITE PELICAN R A



WHITE STORK R S

White Stork have been recorded flying overhead in September and October, probably newly arrived from their northern breeding grounds and moving through to the wintering areas in the southern Cape wheat lands. On some occasions the birds have been known to stop over for a couple of days.

Great White Pelicans have been observed flying overhead on the odd occasion.

OWLS



AFRICAN WOOD OWL R A



SPOTTED EAGLE OWL U A



MARSH OWL R A



BARN OWL R A

BIRDS OF PREY



VERREAUX'S EAGLE

U A



ROCK KESTREL

U A



AFRICAN FISH EAGLE

R A



AFRICAN HARRIER-HAWK

U A

A pair of **Verreaux's Eagles** has nested on the east-coast cliff since the early 1900's. Favoured prey items are tortoises and dassies.

The **African Fish Eagles** have been seen catching mole-rats and yellowbilled ducks, but normally they feed on small fish at the De Mond estuary.



AFRICAN GOSHAWK

U A



BLACK SPARROWHAWK

R A



STEPPE BUZZARD

C S



RUFOUS-CHESTED SPARROWHAWK

U A



AFRICAN MARSH HARRIER

U A



BLACKSHOULDERED KITE

R A



WHITENECKED RAVEN

U A



PIED CROW

C A



PEREGRINE FALCON

U A

The **Black-shouldered Kite** may be seen throughout, but prefer the coastal thicket. At least six pairs are known to breed

The **Peregrine Falcon** is seen as often as any other bird of prey, especially at the Cape Point car park.

ASSOCIATED WITH WATER



GIANT KINGFISHER

U A



PIED KINGFISHER

U A



MALACHITE KINGFISHER

R A



YELLOWBILLED DUCK

U A



HAMERKOP

U A



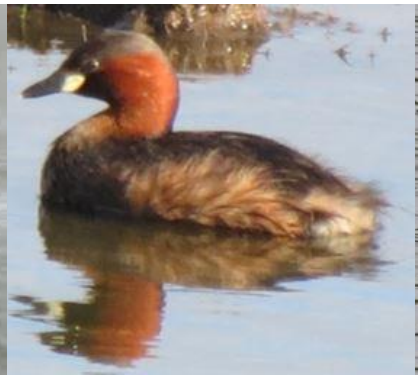
AFRICAN BLACK DUCK

U A



CAPE TEAL

R A



LITTLE GREBE

R A



REDBILLED TEAL

U A



CATTLE EGRET

C A



LITTLE EGRET

C A



BLACKSMITH LAPWING C A



REDKNOBBED COOT R A

COMMON MOORHEN R A



REED CORMORANT U A

BLACKWINGED STILT U A

GLOSSY IBIS R A



THREE-BANDED PLOVER U A

KITTLITZ'S PLOVER C A

GREY PLOVER U A

RINGED PLOVER C S

WADERS





PIED AVOCET C A



BARTAILED GODWIT

C S



CURLEW SANDPIPER

R A



WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER

C A



WHIMBREL

U S



GREENSHANK

R S



SANDERLING

C S



CURLEW

C S



COMMON SANDPIPER

C S



ETHIOPIAN SNIPE R A



RUDDY TURNSTONE C S



LITTLE STINT R S

COASTAL BIRDS







WHITE-BREASTED CORMORANT C A

CAPE CORMORANT C A







SABINE'S GULL C S

KELP GULL C A

GREYHEADED GULL U A

Kelp and **Hartlaubs Gull** (page 19) are very common and often congregate in huge flocks. **Greyheaded Gulls** are recorded in small numbers throughout the year, usually in flocks of Hartlaubs Gull. **Sabine's Gull** are common summer and passage migrants from the northern hemisphere. Parties of up to 150 seen on west coast under any weather conditions.







CASPIAN TERN C A

SWIFT TERN C A

SANDWICH TERN C S







COMMON TERN C A

ARCTIC TERN R S

ANTARCTIC TERN C W

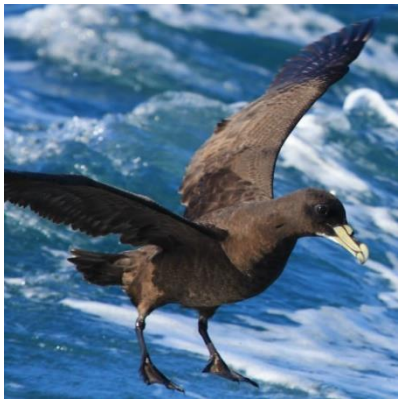
Two other tern species have been recorded as vagrants, the **Damara Tern** and the **Lesser Crested Tern**

PELAGIC AND VAGRANT BIRDS

Sea watching for birds from the Cape of Good Hope during winter northwesterly winds probably ranks amongst the best in the world. **Shy, Blackbrowed** and **Yellow-nosed Albatrosses** and **Broad-billed Prion** are common. **Sooty Shearwaters** and **White-chinned Petrels** are abundant. Less abundant, but still reliable are **Pintado, Softplumaged** and **Greatwinged Petrels, Northern** and **Southern Giant Petrels** and **Wilson's Storm Petrels.** Summer sees **Cory's Shearwater** and **Sabine's Gull** flying past. **Great Shearwaters** are numerous in autumn and spring. The best place to sea watch is from the cliffs above the Cape of Good Hope car park.

Common pelagic species

ALBATROSS Atlantic Yellow-nosed
ALBATROSS Black-browed
ALBATROSS Indian Yellow-nosed
ALBATROSS Shy
GANNET Cape
JAEGER Parasitic
PETREL Great-winged
PETREL Northern Giant
PETREL Pintado
PETREL Soft-plumaged
PETREL Southern Giant
PETREL White-chinned
PRION Broad-billed
PRION Slender-billed
SHEARWATER Cory's
SHEARWATER Flesh-footed
SHEARWATER Great
SHEARWATER Sooty
SKUA Pomarine
SKUA Sub-antarctic
STORM-PETREL Wilson's



White-chinned Petrel

Vagrant pelagic species

ALBATROSS Light-mantled
ALBATROSS Sooty
ALBATROSS Wandering
FULMAR Antarctic
JAEGER Long-tailed
PENGUIN Macaroni
PENGUIN Rock-hopper
PETREL Blue
SHEARWATER Little
SHEARWATER Manx
SHEATHBILL Snowy
TROPICBIRD Red-tailed



Rockhopper Penguin



Yellow-nosed Albatross



Pintado Petrel



Cape Gannet



Shy Albatross

Vagrant species / Rarities

The Cape of Good Hope is a great place to see rarities. Many of these are migrants blown off track or sub-continental birds that overshoot in travelling down from the north. These birds are often called vagrants and the list at Cape of Good Hope has an impressive 65 vagrants recorded. Thus the chances seeing a rarity here are very good, in particular look out for waders.

Waders

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER
AMERICAN PURPLE GALLINULE
CHESTNUT-BANDED PLOVER
GREATER PAINTED SNIPE
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER
MARSH SANDPIPER
PECTORAL SANDPIPER
RED KNOT
RED PHALAROPE
RUFF
WATER THICK-KNEE
WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER
WOOD SANDPIPER



Ruff



Pectoral sandpiper



Chestnut Banded Plover

Non-waders

AFRICAN DARTER
AFRICAN PIPIT
BLACK HARRIER
BLACK SAW-WING
BLACK STORK
BLUE CRANE
BOOTED EAGLE
CAPE CROW
CAPE VULTURE
CHAFFINCH
COMMON HOUSE MARTIN
COMMON SCIMITAR-BILL
EUROPEAN BEE-EATER
EUROPEAN ROLLER
FOREST BUZZARD
GREATER KESTREL
GREY WAGTAIL
GREY-BACKED SPARROWLARK
GREY-HOODED KINGFISHER
HOBBY FALCON
ICTERINE WARBLER
LANNER FALCON
LESSER GREY SHRIKE
LESSER KESTREL
MARSH WARBLER
MARTIAL EAGLE
MOUNTAIN WHEAT-EAR
OSPREY
REDBACKED SHRIKE
SECRETARY BIRD
SOMBRE BULBUL
SOUTH AFRICAN SHELDUCK
SOUTHERN MASKED WEAVER
SOUTHERN POCHARD
SPOTTED FLYCATCHER
STRIPED FLUFFTAIL
TEMMINCK'S COURSER
WHITE-THROATED CANARY
WHITE-THROATED SWALLOW
YELLOW WAGTAIL
YELLOW-BILLED EGRET
YELLOW-BILLED KITE

BIRD LIST

253 species

Green = Southern African Endemics

- ☐ ACACIA PIED BARBET
- ☐ AFRICAN BLACK DUCK
- ☐ AFRICAN BLACK OYSTERCATCHER
- ☐ AFRICAN FISH EAGLE
- ☐ AFRICAN GOSHAWK
- ☐ AFRICAN HARRIER-HAWK
- ☐ AFRICAN HOOPOE
- ☐ AFRICAN MARSH HARRIER
- ☐ AFRICAN OLIVE PIGEON
- ☐ AFRICAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER
- ☐ AFRICAN PENGUIN
- ☐ AFRICAN SACRED IBIS
- ☐ AFRICAN SEDGE WARBLER
- ☐ AFRICAN STONECHAT
- ☐ AFRICAN WOOD OWL
- ☐ ALPINE SWIFT
- ☐ AMETHYST SUNBIRD
- ☐ ANTARCTIC TERN
- ☐ ARCTIC TERN
- ☐ BANK CORMORANT
- ☐ BARN OWL
- ☐ BARN SWALLOW
- ☐ BAR-TAILED GODWIT
- ☐ BAR-THROATED APALIS
- ☐ BLACK SPARROWHAWK
- ☐ BLACK SWIFT
- ☐ BLACK-HEADED HERON
- ☐ BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON
- ☐ BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE
- ☐ BLACKSMITH LAPWING
- ☐ BLACK-WINGED STILT
- ☐ BOKMAKIERIE
- ☐ BRIMSTONE CANARY
- ☐ BURCHELL'S COUCAL
- ☐ CAPE BATIS
- ☐ CAPE BULBUL
- ☐ CAPE BUNTING
- ☐ CAPE CANARY
- ☐ CAPE CLAPPER LARK
- ☐ CAPE CORMORANT
- ☐ CAPE GANNET
- ☐ CAPE GRASSBIRD
- ☐ CAPE LONGCLAW
- ☐ CAPE REED WARBLER
- ☐ CAPE ROBIN-CHAT
- ☐ CAPE ROCK-THRUSH
- ☐ CAPE SISKIN
- ☐ CAPE SPARROW
- ☐ CAPE SPURFOWL
- ☐ CAPE SUGARBIRD
- ☐ CAPE TEAL
- ☐ CAPE TURTLE DOVE
- ☐ CAPE WAGTAIL
- ☐ CAPE WEAVER
- ☐ CAPE WHITE-EYE
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐ CASPIAN TERN
- ☐ CATTLE EGRET
- ☐ CLOUD CISTICOLA
- ☐ COMMON FISCAL
- ☐ COMMON GREENSHANK
- ☐ COMMON MOORHEN
- ☐ COMMON OSTRICH
- ☐ COMMON QUAIL
- ☐ COMMON RINGED PLOVER
- ☐ COMMON SANDPIPER
- ☐ COMMON STARLING
- ☐ COMMON TERN
- ☐ COMMON WAXBILL
- ☐ CROWNED CORMORANT
- ☐ CROWNED LAPWING
- ☐ CURLEW
- ☐ CURLEW SANDPIPER
- ☐ DUSKY FLYCATCHER
- ☐ EGYPTIAN GOOSE
- ☐ ETHIOPIAN SNIPE
- ☐ FAMILIAR CHAT
- ☐ FIERY-NECKED NIGHTJAR
- ☐ FISCAL FLYCATCHER
- ☐ FORK-TAILED DRONGO
- ☐ GIANT KINGFISHER
- ☐ GLOSSY IBIS
- ☐ GREATER STRIPED SWALLOW
- ☐ GREATER FLAMINGO
- ☐ GREY HERON
- ☐ GREY PLOVER
- ☐ GREY-BACKED CISTICOLA
- ☐ GREY-HEADED GULL
- ☐ GREY-WINGED FRANCOLIN
- ☐ GROUND WOODPECKER
- ☐ HADEDA IBIS
- ☐ HAMERKOP
- ☐ HARTLAUB'S GULL
- ☐ HELMETED GUINEAFOWL
- ☐ HOTTENTOT BUTTONQUAIL
- ☐ HOUSE SPARROW
- ☐ JACKAL BUZZARD
- ☐ KAROO SCRUB ROBIN
- ☐ KAROO PRINIA
- ☐ KELP GULL
- ☐ KITTLITZ'S PLOVER
- ☐ KLAAS'S CUCKOO
- ☐ LAUGHING DOVE
- ☐ LESSER HONEYGUIDE
- ☐ LESSER SWAMP WARBLER
- ☐ LEVAILLANT'S CISTICOLA
- ☐ LITTLE EGRET
- ☐ LITTLE GREBE
- ☐ LITTLE RUSH WARBLER
- ☐ LITTLE STINT
- ☐ LITTLE SWIFT
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐ LONG-BILLED CROMBEC
- ☐ LONG-BILLED PIPIT
- ☐ MALACHITE KINGFISHER
- ☐ MALACHITE SUNBIRD
- ☐ MARSH OWL
- ☐ NAMAQUA DOVE
- ☐ NEDDICKY
- ☐ OLIVE THRUSH
- ☐ ORANGE-BREASTED SUNBIRD
- ☐ PEREGRINE FALCON
- ☐ PIED AVOCET
- ☐ PIED CROW
- ☐ PIED KINGFISHER
- ☐ PIN-TAILED WHYDAH
- ☐ PLAIN-BACKED PIPIT
- ☐ RED-BILLED TEAL
- ☐ RED-BREASTED SPARROWHAWK
- ☐ RED-CHESTED CUCKOO
- ☐ RED-EYED DOVE
- ☐ RED-FACED MOUSEBIRD
- ☐ RED-KNOBBED COOT
- ☐ RED-WINGED STARLING
- ☐ REED CORMORANT
- ☐ RINGED PLOVER
- ☐ ROCK KESTREL
- ☐ ROCK MARTIN
- ☐ RUDDY TURNSTONE
- ☐ SABINE'S GULL
- ☐ SANDERLING
- ☐ SANDWICH TERN
- ☐ SENTINEL ROCK-THRUSH
- ☐ SOUTHERN BOUBOU
- ☐ SOUTHERN DOUBLE-COLLARED SUNBIRD
- ☐ SOUTHERN RED BISHOP
- ☐ SPECKLED MOUSEBIRD
- ☐ SPECKLED PIGEON
- ☐ SPOTTED EAGLE-OWL
- ☐ SPOTTED THICK-KNEE
- ☐ SPUR-WINGED GOOSE
- ☐ STEPPE BUZZARD
- ☐ SWIFT TERN
- ☐ THREE-BANDED PLOVER
- ☐ VERREAUX'S EAGLE
- ☐ WATTLED STARLING
- ☐ WHIMBREL
- ☐ WHITE STORK
- ☐ WHITE-BACKED MOUSEBIRD
- ☐ WHITE-BREASTED CORMORANT
- ☐ WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER
- ☐ WHITE-NECKED RAVEN
- ☐ WHITE-RUMPED SWIFT
- ☐ YELLOW BISHOP
- ☐ YELLOW CANARY
- ☐ YELLOW-BILLED DUCK
- ☐ ZITTING CISTICOLA
- ☐
- ☐

The Fynbos Specials



Cape Sugarbird



Cape Siskin



Cape Bulbul



Orange-breasted Sunbird

OCEANS OF LIFE





The Atlantic Ocean delivers endless surprises and some great animal sightings. Each year the Southern Right Whales are regular visitors to the bay and dolphins are seen all year round. On the odd occasion really special events occur, such as in February 2013 when a sardine run took place. The first signs of something unique taking place were the huge flocks of birds following and feeding on the bait fish. The many different bird species were joined by large pods of Dolphins and dozens of Cape Fur Seals. Even the odd shark joined in the feeding frenzy.





SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE

Common

COMMON DOLPHIN

Common

CAPE FUR SEAL

Common

In June each year the **Southern Right Whales** reach these waters, having migrated from their icy feeding grounds off Antarctica. They visit to mate, calve and rear their young. They can be easily identified by the distinctive V-shaped water spout.





SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL

BRYDE'S WHALE

Please see page 8 for the full list of sea mammals that can be seen offshore.

AMPHIBIANS

115 Species of frog occur in southern Africa with 14 species recorded at the Cape of Good Hope.

ARUM LILY FROG
BANDED STREAM FROG
CAPE MOUNTAIN RAIN FROG
CAPE PENINSULA MOSS FROG
CAPE PLATANNA
CAPE RIVER FROG
CAPE SAND FROG
CAPE SAND TOAD
CLICKING STREAM FROG
COMMON PLATANNA
FLAT CACO
ROSE'S MOUNTAIN TOADLET
SAND RAIN FROG
WESTERN LEOPARD TOAD



CAPE PLATANNA

The **Cape Platanna** is one of the rarest frogs in the world. They occur in backwater lagoons with high acidic content. They are threatened by habitat destruction and cross-hybridization with the Common Platanna.



WESTERN LEOPARD TOAD



ARUM LILY FROG



CAPE PENINSULA MOSS FROG



CLICKING STREAM FROG



CAPE SAND FROG



BANDED STREAM FROG



CAPE RIVER FROG



SAND RAIN FROG



CAPE MOUNTAIN RAIN FROG



CAPE SAND TOAD



ROSE'S MOUNTAIN TOADLET



FLAT CACO



COMMON PLATANNA

The amphibians are a fascinating group with many unique characteristics. **Rose's Mountain Toadlet** is completely voiceless. Each **Western Leopard Toad** has unique back markings and can be individually identified. The **Rain Frogs** lay eggs in underground chambers. Many of South Africa's amphibians are now endangered or threatened, mostly due to habitat destruction.

REPTILES

LIZARDS

South Africa has the highest reptile diversity in Africa with over 480 recorded species.

CAPE DWARF CHAMELEON
CAPE CRAG LIZARD
CAPE GIRDLED LIZARD
CAPE GRASS LIZARD
CAPE LEGLESS SKINK
CAPE SKINK

KNOXS DESERT LIZARD
MARBLED LEAF -TOED GECKO
OCELLATED THICK-TOED GECKO
RED –STRIPED SKINK
SHORTLEGGED SEPS
SILVERY DWARF BURROWING SKINK
SOUTHERN ROCK AGAMA



CAPE GIRDLED LIZARD



SOUTHERN ROCK AGAMA



CAPE SKINK



RED-SIDED SKINK

All of the lizards depicted above are common and can be easily seen on the walk from the Cape Point Car Park up to the lighthouse.



SHORT LEGGED SEPS



CAPE GRASS LIZARD



CAPE LEGLESS SKINK



CAPE DWARF CHAMELEON



KNOX'S DESERT LIZARD



CAPE CRAG LIZARD



MARBLED LEAF-TOED GECKO



OCELLATED LEAF-TOED GECKO



SILVERY DWARF BURROWING SKINK

TERRAPINS

CAPE TERRAPIN



TORTOISES



ANGULATE TORTOISE



LEOPARD TORTOISE



PARROT-BEAKED TORTOISE

South Africa has the world's richest diversity of land tortoises with 14 species. Three species are found in the reserve although the Leopard Tortoise does not occur naturally in this area.

SNAKES

AURORA HOUSE SNAKE
BERG ADDER
BOOMSLANG
COMMON BROWN WATER SNAKE
CAPE COBRA
COMMON EGGEATER
COMMON SLUGEATER
CROSS-MARKED SAND SNAKE
DELELANDE'S BEAKED BLIND SNAKE
HERALD SNAKE
KAROO SAND SNAKE
MANY SPOTTED SNAKE
MOLE SNAKE
OLIVE HOUSE SNAKE
PUFF ADDER
RHOMBIC/SPOTTED SKAAPSTEKER
SPOTTED HARLEQUIN SNAKE

Several local snake species are venomous. Observe all snakes from a distance and never handle or corner them. Watch where you step and allow any snake crossing the road to move away undisturbed.



PUFF ADDER



CROSSMARKED SAND SNAKE



COMMON SLUGEATER



BROWN WATER SNAKE



BOOMSLANG



CAPE COBRA



KAROO SAND SNAKE



COMMON EGGEATER



MOLE SNAKE



OLIVE HOUSE SNAKE



HERALD SNAKE



BERG ADDER



MANY SPOTTED SNAKE



AURORA HOUSE SNAKE



DELALANDES BEAKED BLIND SNAKE



RHOMBIC SKAAPSTEKER



SPOTTED HARLEQUIN SNAKE

THE FLORA

The Cape Floral Kingdom

The plants of the world are divided into six floral kingdoms. The smallest of these is the Cape Floral Kingdom covering less than 1% of the total land surface of the world. This remarkable kingdom contains over 8 500 species of plant, 6 000 of which are endemic – only occurring in this area. The Cape Peninsula has 2 500 species of plant and the Cape of Good Hope area has over 1 100 species of plant.



Fynbos

Most of the vegetation in the kingdom is referred to as fynbos. Fynbos describes a large group of evergreen plants most of which have small hardy leaves. It occurs mostly in winter rainfall areas and has to cope with wet winters as well as with hot dry summers. Fynbos communities are found from the coastal plains to the mountain tops and the soils in which they grow are usually poor and infertile. Rainfall patterns within the area vary greatly and this coupled to differing soil conditions has led to some of the fynbos plants having extremely limited distribution.

The main fynbos families

Certain groups of plants are dominant and the 3 major families are the Restios, the Ericas and the Proteas.



Proteas - This is a very diverse family filled with many strange and wonderful species. The King Protea has a flowerhead that is over 30 centimeters wide. Proteas have the largest leaves of the dominant fynbos plants and they are hard and woody. Proteas are very deep rooted with a long tap root that reaches down to the water table.

Restios - Also known as Cape Reeds, the Restios have largely replaced the grass component in fynbos. They are wonderfully adapted to the climate, being able to grow well in very wet areas and also cope with the baking summer heat. Unlike grasses the leaves are small, dry and brown. The green stems have taken over the function of the leaves. Restios have separate male and female plants with a variety of different shaped cones. The male flowerheads of restios produce lots of light pollen that is dispersed by the wind and then settles on the female flowerheads.

Ericas - Have very fine leaves with an upper surface which is waxy and leaves that curl, this helps to prevent water loss. The flower petals have fused to form a tube or a cup. Over 100 species of erica occur on the Cape Peninsula alone. Ericas are more like shrubs than trees, and they seldom exceed 50 cm in height. Many ericas are bright and colourful and have sweet nectar to attract birds and insects to pollinate them.



Ericas and sunbirds

PLANT – ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

Plants are static and have to rely on wind or insects, birds or animals to carry pollen from one flower to another. The shape and colour of the flowers is important in attracting the pollinators. Tubular flowers such as the ericas are designed so that sunbirds can reach the sugary nectar with their long curved beaks. .



Proteas and sugarbirds

Proteas have lots of nectar and are associated with birds such as the Cape Sugarbird which actually move from area to area following flowering proteas. The sugarbird even makes its cup-shaped nest in the protea bush and it lines the nest with fluff from protea seeds.

West to East

From the Atlantic shore to the African bush.

West to East brings together our home above Scarborough and our personal connection to Djuma in the Sabi Sands. Through Greenlife Safaris, Russ shapes a journey for private families and small groups, with time to settle in, explore and share the experience.



Shared moments on safari

West: a home on the wild Cape coast

Begin at West, Russ and Marion Weston's owner-run retreat on the mountain above Scarborough. Sea views, shared meals and unhurried mornings set the pace. Our approach is personal: we help you discover the places we love, while leaving space to enjoy simply being here.

Explore by land and ocean

Use Scarborough as your base for the southern Peninsula: the open landscapes of Cape Point, the penguins at Boulders, Simon's Town and Kalk Bay. Choose a guided fynbos walk, a surf lesson or a kelp-forest snorkelling experience when conditions allow. Local specialists bring their own knowledge of the coast, its wildlife and its changing moods.

Make room for Cape life

Balance outdoor days with village cafes, local food and an evening around the table at West. Private-chef meals can be arranged, and day excursions can introduce Cape Town, its mountain and gardens, or the Cape Winelands. The pleasure is in choosing your own balance of discovery, activity and rest.

greenlife.co.za | safariruss@gmail.com

East: into the bush

A change of landscape. The same personal approach.

Our safari connection

Greenlife Safaris curates journeys across Africa. For West to East, Russ's connection to Djuma in the Sabi Sands provides a personal link to the Greater Kruger region. Accommodation, guiding and hosting are selected around your party, with the safari stay shaped to suit your interests and preferred level of comfort.

Time to notice more

Early starts, changing light and the sounds of the bush invite a different rhythm. Enjoy wildlife viewing with experienced guides, then take time to watch birds, notice tracks and learn how the landscape fits together. A memorable safari can be a quiet encounter as much as a dramatic sighting; every day unfolds differently.

Beyond the lodge

Where practical, the journey can include a day exploring Manyeleti, a full-day excursion into Kruger National Park through the Orpen area, or a locally hosted community visit arranged with participating hosts. These experiences are planned around distances, access and your interests, with time to listen and learn from the people who live here.

Imagine two unhurried weeks

Spend roughly a week at West, mixing Peninsula adventures with a Cape Town or Winelands day and time at home. Then fly to the Lowveld for approximately a week in the bush. This is a starting idea: shorter stays, different lodges and other safari regions can be woven into a journey that suits you.

Designed around your people

A shared interest in wildlife, photography, food or simply being together can guide the whole trip. Tell Russ your dates, group size, ages, interests and budget. Flights, road transfers, accommodation, activities and any personal hosting are agreed in your individual proposal; excursions depend on availability, access and conditions.



A closer look at the wild - image from Greenlife Safaris

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Explore with care

Share the landscape

Keep wildlife wild: never feed or approach baboons, and close doors and windows when leaving West. Keep food out of sight. Stay on permitted paths, leave plants and animals undisturbed, and take your litter home.

Plan for the coast

Conditions change quickly. Check weather, access and park notices before setting out. Scarborough's sea can have strong rip currents; seek local advice before swimming. Arrange guided activities through your hosts.

PHOTOGRAPHY & ORIGINAL PUBLICATION

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SOURCES & MAP NOTES

African penguin conservation: BirdLife International / IUCN assessment (2024)

Visitor information and notices: SANParks, Table Mountain National Park

Map: Esri World Imagery. West marker uses coordinates published in west.capetown website metadata; address supplied by the owner. Cape entrance: BirdLife South Africa GoBirding. Other destination markers indicate their general visitor locations. Imagery is not live.