

# South Africa Journal

August 24 – September 3, 2014

In May of 2011, I travelled through Tanzania and Kenya on tour with Rockjumper Birding Tours of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The trip proved to be the adventure of a lifetime. I was so thrilled that I determined to return to Africa as soon as I possibly could do so.

I also determined that I would not hazard another pre-packaged tour if I could help it. While such tours are fun, there can be drawbacks. You have no control over your companions, who may or may not be congenial; you are frequently rushed from one place to another and you are at the mercy of the tour company's schedule. I wanted to arrange my own trip.

I also wanted to choose my companions. I thought that many of my friends who volunteer with me at the Memphis Zoo would go with me if I asked and made it easy for them. I felt the same way about some of my other friends at the Memphis chapter of the Tennessee Ornithology Society. I made contact with Indri Ultimate Mammal Tours of Capetown to arrange such a safari, this time to Botswana. The tour came off beautifully and my friends had wonderful experiences so I determined to arrange another expedition, this time a return to Tanzania.

Indri planned an excellent itinerary and I was excited about it. I announced it at docent meetings and before long, two other docents, Janet Gatewood and Mark Jones, had signed on. After announcements at TOS, my friend Chad Brown also agreed to come.

The trip was supposed to leave in May of 2014. I needed six people on board by February, 2014, to guarantee that the trip would happen. Despite the early response, no one else had joined by Christmas so I requested that the trip be delayed until November. Mark, Chad and Janet all agreed to

the postponement and the company agreed as well. This gave me until August to fill the tour.

Despite all that I could do, no one else had signed on by early June. Thinking perhaps that another tour group was having the same problems, I asked Indri if it would be possible to combine with another group. That was not the case, but I was told that Indri had reservations for a tour to South Africa in late August-early September that they were going to have to cancel because no one had signed up. Rather than cancel completely, they said that they would run the tour with only four people. I was asked if my companions would agree to the change of date and destination.

The itinerary for the South Africa tour was a few days shorter and considerably less expensive but I assured them that it would be of no less quality. I was most gratified when Chad, Janet and Mark all agreed with almost no hesitation.

When I announced the change of dates at a zoo docent meeting, Bill Crowder told me that he was now interested. Family responsibilities had precluded him from signing up for the November departure but August worked fine for him. Our expedition was now numbered five.

Not long after, I received an email from Memphis TOS member Laura Crane. She had heard me announce the Tanzania trip at a TOS meeting and wished to join. When I told her of the change of date and destination, she was okay with both. Both I and the tour company were overjoyed that our expedition was at full strength.

With everyone signed on, it was time to secure transportation. There is one flight per day from Atlanta to Johannesburg and it was a bit late to make reservations. Fortunately, my travel agent/magician Donna Nelson of Bon Voyage Travel Service arranged one of her miracles and secured seats for us all. Laura had to travel separately from the rest of us on a couple of internal flights, but we all got where we wanted to be when we needed to be there.

With our itinerary set and our tickets purchased, we were all excited about our departure, now only weeks away. Upon opening my email one morning

in May, I was thunderstruck by an announcement from Indri that they were going out of business.

Indri had been founded in the early 2000s by Adam Riley, a South African who had previously founded Rockjumper Birding Tours. Rockjumper caters to serious birdwatchers (“twitchers” to the British) and Adam had wanted a company that would attract and provide for the needs of people with broader interests, particularly those who wanted to observe large mammals. He and Simon Bellingham had started Indri for that purpose, but at some point the two had determined that it would be in both their best interests to part company.

Adam was in process of starting a new company that he would call Oryx Wildlife Safaris. It was determined that Oryx would take over Indri’s current bookings. Adam is a longtime and treasured friend, so when I knew that he would be in charge of our arrangements, I was not so concerned.

Adam communicated with me personally, assuring me that we would be taken care of, of which I now had no doubt. He even arranged an upgrade of our lodging in the Timbavati Private Reserve near Hodespruit.

Our departure date, August 24, finally arrived. I picked Bill up at his midtown home, then we all met at the Memphis airport for the first leg of our journey, the short hop to Atlanta. Once we arrived, we began to navigate the bewildering maze of tunnels, escalators, railroads and moving sidewalks that is Jackson-Hartsfield International Airport. We finally found our gate and proceeded to board. As we waited in the jetway, some guy behind me was trying very hard to impress a girl by running down just about everything about Memphis.

The flight from Atlanta to Johannesburg is fifteen hours. We alternately read, watched movies, ate bad food and tried to sleep. A very nice young lady was seated between Bill and me. It was only as we were preparing to land that I noticed that her cell phone bore the logo of Heifer International.

Heifer International, one of my favorite charities, is based in Little Rock. It provides livestock and other agricultural assistance to poor farmers

worldwide. The lady and I only had time to exchange a few words before we landed, but we found that we had mutual friends who work there.

The Oliver Tambo Airport in Johannesburg is the largest in Africa. Finding one's way around is even more baffling than in Atlanta. The tour company had sent me detailed directions on how to find the parking area for the shuttle buses that were to take us to our hotel. Indri had offered to provide us with a guide and greeter, but I had turned down the offer as too expensive.

Once again, Adam Riley came through for us. At our luggage carousel, we were met by a man with an "Oryx" sign. His name was Steven and he had been assigned to meet us, help with our luggage, guide us to the shuttle park and give us the Tshirts and hats that the company was providing. All of this was complimentary.

We had to wait nearly half an hour before the shuttle finally pulled out. Our route led onto an expressway and then off, through a middle class section of town. For some reason, I had expected the Birchwood Hotel to be a small, boutique operation. I was quite surprised when we drove through a tall gate set in a high wall that encompassed what must have been fifty acres. We checked in and repaired as quickly as possible to our rooms to rest.

I had called cocktail time an hour after check in. We all met in the bar for wine, cocktails and, for me, "Windhoek" beer, a product of Namibia. I had found it the year previous in Botswana and it became a favorite. There was no sit down restaurant at the Birchwood, but I think that we were all just as pleased with bar snacks which we enjoyed before heading off to our beds.

Breakfast next morning was in the bar. The coffee was excellent, as it is almost everywhere in Africa. We had arranged for a mid-morning shuttle to the airport, so there was time to explore the hotel grounds. I persuaded the manager to open the fitness center a bit early, allowing for at least a short post-heart surgery time on the treadmill. Janet, a fitness buff, got in some time on a Pilates ball while the others had second coffee cups. I strolled outside the lobby and found Hadada Ibis giving their raucous calls,

Egyptian Geese perched on the hotel roof, a Laughing Dove searching for seeds on the sidewalk and a pretty Cape Sparrow singing in a tree next to the parking lot.

The shuttle shuttled us the ten minute drive to the airport for our flight to Hodespruit and the Timbavati Reserve. A few Gray-hooded Gulls were scavenging scraps in the parking area as we arrived at the interior flights terminal. We worked our way through the airport labyrinth to the security checkpoint.

I always carry a roll of duct tape whenever I travel internationally. It has come in handy for emergency repairs on more than one occasion. This time, I was rather stiffly informed that it was not allowed on the airplane. I was more than a little miffed when it was confiscated.

After this unhappy brush with officialdom, we made our way to our gate. The gates are at ground level, so we watched airplanes going to and from the runways while African Black Swifts swooped under the overhang beyond the gate.

When our flight was called, we piled onto buses which conveyed us to our plane. It was a turboprop, and Laura remarked that it had been years since she had flown in anything other than a jet. The 45 minute flight took us over the rugged and beautiful Drakensberg Mountains.

The airport at Hodespruit is not only a civilian airport but a major base for the South African air force. During the 1990s and early 2000s, it was an operations center for NASA and its runways served as an emergency landing zone for the Space Shuttle.

I remembered seeing a program about the air base on Animal Planet a few years back. It was about the wildlife that lived on the base and the difficulties that it could cause for airport operations. The air force uses trained Cheetahs to keep Impala and Wart Hogs off the runways. I had hoped to see the Cheetahs but they were not in evidence.

It had been quite cold in Johannesburg when we left, so we were all in sweaters or jackets when we deplaned. We were not ready for the blast of hot, semi-desert air and the blazing sun off the tarmac that greeted us.

When Oryx Wildlife Safaris assumed responsibility for our trip, they informed me that our guide at Timbavati was to be Lee Gutteridge. I could not have been more excited. Lee had been our guide on the Botswana expedition in 2013. Everyone on the trip had become great friends with Lee and we had all come to admire his knowledge of all there is about Africa. I was thrilled when Lee was waiting at the gate to meet us.

After handshakes, introductions and hugs between Lee and me, we reclaimed luggage and were escorted to the parking area. An eight passenger van was waiting to transport us to Kings' Camp.

Warren, the manager of Kings' Camp, drove us the ten or so kilometers of paved road to the entrance of the Timbavati Reserve. This is a consortium of private estates that adjoin the great Kruger National Park. About twenty years ago, several of the estate owners and the managers of the Timbavati removed all of the fences between their properties and the park. This allows free movement of wildlife between the 500 square kilometer Timbavati and the 20,000 square kilometer Kruger. The free movement means more opportunity for genetic diversification as well as better viewing by tourists.

Even before we entered the reserve, we began to see wildlife. Wart Hogs, Greater Kudu and the ubiquitous Impala browsed unconcernedly at the roadsides while beautiful Lilac-breasted Rollers perched on the electric wires. We came upon a pair of handsome Waterbuck at a dry ravine, the only members of this relatively common species that we observed during our entire stay. I called a halt when I observed what I thought was a Martial Eagle in a tree, only to be embarrassed when Warren pointed out its dangling tail. It was a Vervet Monkey. We also saw three guys in camouflage carrying AK-47s strolling along the Reserve fence, an anti-poaching patrol.

I had stayed at Kings' Camp on my first visit to South Africa in 2003, so I thought that I knew what to expect. It is a very upscale, if not luxurious, accommodation. When Oryx took over our reservations and Adam told me that we would be staying at Kings' Camp, I was overjoyed. But he was not through. Some time in the decade between my visits, Kings' Camp had built a new set of accommodations, known as Waterbuck Lodge, a hundred meters or so from the main lodge area. This new area had separate guest rooms, its own kitchen, dining areas and staff, including chef, butler and cleaning and laundry crew. It sat directly on a bluff overlooking the dry watercourse that runs through the Timbavati. There were three dining areas; one inside the lodge, another, the *boma*, behind it and a third, a kind of concrete patio with a seating area under a jackalberry tree right on the bluff edge.

The guest rooms had no ceilings, rather they were open to the twenty-five foot high thatch roofs. They featured a free standing, claw-footed tub, a flat-screen TV that rose out of a cabinet at the foot of one of the beds, canopied beds, antelope and zebra skin rugs on the floor and indoor and outdoor showers. As we followed our luggage to our room, Bill's only comment was, "I never thought that I would ever stay in a place like this!"

With our luggage in place and a chance to freshen a bit, we all met at the overlook for lunch. It was there that we met our butler, Lodick; our lodge manager, Hailey; and our chef, Lisl. Lisl had prepared a wonderful buffet that we enjoyed in the shade of the jackalberry tree while we observed a kudu cross the dry watercourse below us. Cheeky African Tree Squirrels tried to sneak onto the buffet bar and Lodick was kept busy shooing them away. A stub-tailed Long-billed Crombec tried his luck as well.

A pair of long-tailed, crested Gray Go-away Birds perched in the shambok tree behind us, calling their usual inhospitable cries of "GoWay! GoWay!"

Everyone was enchanted when a beautiful Bushbuck ram stepped daintily from the scrub onto the lawn. When Hailey stepped out of the lodge to cross the lawn, we called to her to be careful not to frighten the animal away. She replied that the Bushbuck was a "regular", appearing at the

lodge almost every day to nibble the plants. We called him, naturally, “George”.

After our lunch, Lee announced that our first drive would begin at 3 pm. We rushed back to our rooms for cameras, binoculars and daypacks. Lee advised that we should also bring jackets or sweaters because, even though it was now hot, we would be out after dark and it can get cold quickly under a cloudless sky.

At the appointed hour, we assembled in the car park where our Land Rover safari car awaited us. The car had three rows of three seats each behind the driver’s; each a little higher than the one in front, providing a view ahead for every level. Since there were only six of us, no one was forced into a middle seat. We shifted around on each drive so that everyone could experience each row until they found a spot where they were comfortable.

Lee sat in the front seat to the driver’s left. Our driver and local guide was Grant Murphy, who was ultimately responsible for the safety of everyone in the vehicle. To that end, he kept a .458 magnum rifle across the dashboard in case of encounters with dangerous wildlife. His belt was festooned with cartridges for this formidable weapon.

The last member of our expedition was our tracker, Selby Mgwena. Selby is a member of the Tshanga tribe, which has a cultural tradition of tracking wildlife that they hunt. Many Tshanga now use those skills commercially to locate wildlife at tourist lodges. On the left front of the vehicle was a very small chair with only a seat and back rest. It had no arm rests, no foot rest and no seat belt. Selby perched there, hanging on as best he could to the seat bottom while the car bounced over rough terrain and up and down very steep grades. This precarious position allowed Selby to watch the ground for the tell-tale disturbances of soil and plants that indicate the passage of animals.

We left the parking lot and headed into the bush. Like most tourists we were in search of the “Big Five”. The Big Five are five species of animals that the old-time big game hunters sought especially because they are the ones that have as much chance of killing you as you have of killing them.



The five are lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo. (Interestingly, the hippopotamus kills more people in Africa each year than the other five combined, but it did not make the list. I guess that hippos don't count because it is so easy to shoot them as they lie sleeping in the water.)

We had not driven a kilometer when Grant hit the brakes. Across a shallow ravine lay a herd of about twenty African Cape Buffalo. Cape Buffalo are not closely related to the shaggy-coated bison of the American Great Plains. While they are similar in size, weighing up to a ton, African Buffalo sport very little hair. Their horns are broad and the males' curve back toward each other across their skull. The thick base of the horns meets on top of the animal's head forming the "boss". This thickened horn provides protection to the brain when the bulls fight. It will stop a small caliber rifle bullet.

In addition, Cape Buffalo are bad-tempered and aggressive. As herd animals, they protect each other from predators. A charging Cape Buffalo bull will annihilate just about anything in its path. The charge of a whole herd is irresistible.

It appeared that the herd we were viewing was mostly bulls. Many were lying peacefully, chewing their cud like Holsteins in a pasture, but one old guy gave me the meanest look I have ever seen from any hoofed animal. We left them in peace.

We found a flock of Helmeted Guineafowl, a very common species, strolling about the bush. Helmeted Guineafowl were probably first domesticated by the Romans. When I was a boy, some neighbors near our farm kept guineas as "watch birds". The guineas would roost in trees, screaming their "Potter-ack! Potter-ack!" alarm calls any time a fox or other predator came near. The birds stopped occasionally for a refreshing dust bath. Dust bathing helps to remove lice and other parasites from their feathers.

Other birds proved quite conspicuous and tame. Beautiful Lilac-breasted Rollers and sociable Magpie Shrikes perched where they had good views of their surroundings allowing them to dart out to grab their insect prey.

Very close to the trail, we found a delicate little Steenbok. These antelope do not live in large herds but rather mark individual territories that they defend against other Steenbok pairs. Lee told us that Steenbok bury their droppings, the only antelope that do so.

As darkness approached, Grant drove us to a very small waterhole where someone had built an elevated observation blind. In a nearby tree was a Hamerkop nest. These rooster-sized birds get their name from their backward/downward pointing crest and their large, flat bill that makes their heads resemble a claw hammer. They build huge nests, as large as an SUV, in trees near water. These constructions provide nests not only for them but for many other bird species as well.

A pair of noisy Blacksmith Lapwings protested our presence in their territory, so Grant pulled to the top of a small rise from where we had a lovely view of the setting sun. We enjoyed wine, beer and cocktails, a wonderful South African custom known as a “sundowner”.

With the sun gone completely, we began our return to the lodge. From his perch over the left headlight, Selby employed a 1M candlepower spotlight to search for animals in the dark. Shining the light into trees and along the ground, he searched for “eyeshine”, the telltale glow of the tapetum layer of cells in the retinas of nocturnal animals. He had no luck until he found a Flap-necked Chameleon in a bush right next to the trail.

We arrived back at Waterbuck Lodge in time to order beverages for our dinner. Lisl gave us our choice of grilled kudu or cocoanut-crusted sea bass. Almost everyone opted for a sample of both.

We were served by Lodick, Hailey and Lisl as we sat at the overlook, listening to the calls of African Scops Owls. It was hard to imagine a more exciting day.

Next morning, our wakeup calls came at 5:15 am. At 5:45, we gathered in the lodge dining room for coffee, juice and muffins. It was really cold, so everyone was in sweaters and jackets when we posed for our group photograph.

A herd of Impala scattered as we drove out of the car park, everyone bundled in blankets. At the end of the lodge driveway, an acacia tree was occupied by a troop of Chacma Baboons. Baboons sleep in trees, away from nocturnal ground predators such as hyenas and lions. The only arboreal predator that threatens them is the Leopard but a troop of baboons, whose males have three inch canine teeth, can easily defend itself even from a Leopard.

As we exited the driveway, the rising sun caught the lovely breast feathers of a Lilac-breasted Roller that was perched on a telephone wire. We found another, larger herd of buffalos, this one consisting mostly of cows and calves. They were attended by Red-billed and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers that clung to their necks, backs and even their ears. Oxpeckers work their bills scissors-like through the hair of hoofed animals searching for ticks and other parasites.

Someone looked back toward camp just in time to see a flock of beautiful Yellow-billed Storks fly overhead, their white breasts glowing pink in the rising sun.

The sun soon began to warm us up enough that we could shed our blankets. Grant drove us to a clearing where we found our first giraffes. For those of us that are used to the rich chestnut and cream of the Memphis Zoo's Reticulated Giraffes, these Southern Giraffes seemed quite pale and washed out. As we observed a small herd of these towering animals, a herd of Burchell's Zebras wandered into view. They were soon joined by a lone Wildebeest. Having observed vast herds of wildebeest in Tanzania and Kenya, I was a little surprised to see one alone. Perhaps he was an elderly bull that had been forced out of his harem by a younger, stronger challenger. At any rate, he was the only member of his species that we saw on the entire expedition.

This aggregation of prey animals was soon interrupted by the appearance of a Spotted Hyena. None of them seemed the least disconcerted by this efficient predator as it strode through their midst with hardly a sideways glance at any of them. It appeared to have some important matter of

business on its mind that concerned hunting not at all and the prey animals seemed to know it.

Lee Gutteridge probably knows more about the natural and human history of southern Africa as anybody alive. He operates his own school for nature guides and has written books on everything from pre-historic rock art to the identification of bird songs. Lee spent time in the South African army as a tracker, hunting poachers, smugglers and terrorists in the bush by following the faint signs that they can't avoid leaving behind. Selby Mgwena, like most of the Tshanga people, has grown up learning to read signs in the bush as easily as you read this account. He, Lee and Grant had been conferring among themselves while we travelers admired the wildlife. At length, Lee announced that Selby had noticed some rhino tracks. He proposed to leave us for a time to follow them in hopes of a sighting. We dropped him off and proceeded on our way.

We had not gone far when Lee called a halt. We disembarked from the car and walked a few meters off the track, preceded by Grant and his rifle. We walked up on a small acacia thorn tree which was festooned with white, wispy material. Closer inspection revealed that they were spider webs. Lee, who is writing another book, this one on invertebrates of southern Africa, informed us that they were the webs of an spider species that is endemic to southern Africa, the only species of spider that lives colonially.

We picked Selby up a half mile or so further on. The tracks that he had followed had led to a sort of rhino message center. It was a communal dung heap where rhinos leave their scents as messages for other rhinos. There were tracks all around, but none was fresh enough to warrant a pursuit. Lee assured us that we would find rhinos soon enough.

Grant knew of a spot not far away where he told us we would find Africa's rarest predator. We were certainly keen on this prospect, so we rushed off, scattering a sounder of Wart Hogs and attracting the attention of a young Nyala bull and a young Impala who were seemingly hanging out together.

We came upon a termite mound that was some dozen or so feet high. There were holes in the base which large animals were obviously using as dens. When we rounded the mound, we saw which ones. African Wild Dogs!

Wild Dogs are Africa's most efficient predators, successful on about eighty percent of their hunts. They hunt in packs, cooperating to bring down prey much larger than themselves. After the hunt, they bring meat back to the den to regurgitate to feed the pups before the adults eat. A single male was guarding the den from predators who might have designs on the pups. He stood ready to defend the mound when another dog appeared. They excitedly licked each other's faces, making a strange twittering sound, before moving a short way into the bush.

It was now mid-morning and growing warm. We had long since shed our sweaters and jackets as Grant turned our vehicle toward Waterbuck Lodge. We found a small charm of Yellow-fronted Canaries in the baboon tree just outside camp. Hailey met us on the footbridge that joined the lodge to the car park. She announced that a breakfast buffet was ready at the overlook. We found cereal, milk, a half dozen different kinds of fruit and juices, a like number of yogurts, cold meats, cheeses and pastries. Lodick was smilingly standing guard over this spread, shooing away a clownishly colored Crested Barbet, a cheeky Tree Squirrel, a Yellow-billed Hornbill and an entire pack of Dwarf Mongooses.

We pretty well had the buffet cleared when Lisl emerged from the lodge to ask what we wanted for our main breakfast course! We were shocked, but I think everyone opted for scrambled eggs, bacon, eggs benedict or some other specialty, but "only a small portion".

We had about four hours until "lunch" was to be served. Everyone asked Lisl to go easy on the food after the sumptuous breakfast. Some of us relaxed on the deck of the lodge while others remained at the overlook, enjoying the cool breezes and watching for whatever wildlife might elect to cross the dry watercourse.

A handsome bull Kudu wandered from our side to the other before stopping to browse some bamboo. The Crested Barbet that Lodick had kept away

from the breakfast line finally made it onto the serving bar where he enjoyed our leftovers. I noticed a robin-sized bird drop from a tree onto one of the boulders that form the bluff. I called Lee's attention to it, asking him, "immature Brown-hooded Kingfisher?" I was most proud of myself when he confirmed my identification.

As at most African tourist lodges, there is a fire pit at the overlook where tourists can sit at night enjoying the stars and the sounds of Africa. Lee noticed that it was prepared for the evening and remarked, "I hope that is not Tamboti wood!" He told us that this tree species' leaves and wood contain so much toxic chemical that animals will die if they eat the leaves and that just breathing a little of the smoke from the burning wood or eating meat grilled over it can make a person seriously ill. Hailey told us not to worry, that it was acacia wood.

There were other birds strolling about on the lawn in front of the lodge. They were considerably larger than robins, with all-over glossy-black, iridescent plumage and fairly long tails. They were Burchell's Starlings, very common around Kruger/Timbavati. Burchell's Starling is one of several species of beautiful starlings that grace southern Africa. They make American birders ashamed of the invasive pests that infest our country.

Probably noticing that we were looking a bit satiated after our massive breakfast, Lee suggested that we take a short nature walk around the lodge grounds. Preceded by Grant and his ever present .458 rifle, we set out single file along the dusty drive to the main road. Lee pointed out several things that casual tourists would never see, such as grasshoppers and other insects, spiders, trees, grasses and flowers, including the beautiful purple "Martha's Violet".

Flying overhead was a pair of Bateleurs, short-tailed eagles whose name means "acrobat" in French. It refers to the very long and narrow wings that they use to soar above the countryside, rocking gently like the balance pole used by a tightrope walker.

As we returned to the lodge, we heard the trumpet of an elephant in the distance. Grant remarked that elephants would be our afternoon target.

Lisl had adhered to our requests for a “light” lunch as far as she was able, given her extraordinary culinary talent and her desire to provide us with everything that we could possibly wish for. The “main course” was delicious meat balls with freshly baked bread and fruit, accompanied by a full buffet spread. Once again, Lodick was called to service to protect the buffet from the depredations of the local wildlife.

I had requested that my docent colleagues; Janet, Bill and Mark, bring along a Memphis Zoo docent uniform shirt so that we could have our photograph made in them. We all returned from our rooms so attired and on our way to the safari car we found a tiny Pearl-spotted Owlet perched just off the deck. He sat quite patiently for photographs. A Yellow-breasted Apalis and a White-browed Scrub-robin also showed up, but they skulked in the shrubbery, too shy to allow decent photos.

After our “uniform” photos were made, we climbed into the vehicle to begin our afternoon elephant expedition. As we passed the baboon tree, Grant noticed that it was quite loaded with the primates. He laconically remarked, “Looks like we will get a good crop of monkeys from that tree this year”.

In the tall grass by the trail, we found a Red-crested Korhaan. This is a small member of the bustard family and, like other bustards, it has a remarkable courtship display. The male bird flies straight up twenty or thirty feet. He hovers for a moment, then plunges straight down before righting himself and gliding off a meter or so before crashing.

We observed a herd of Impala grazing their way across the savanna, attended by a flock of Red-billed Oxpeckers. Impala have a sloping dark line on either side of a whitish rump patch which is split by their pendant tail. The tail has the same dark line from base to tip. The South Africans joke that the three dark lines form the letter “M”, advertising the Impala as “McDonald’s” for predators.

Selby noticed some Leopard tracks, so we dropped him off to follow them while we went on searching for elephants. After a couple of hours, we came upon a herd of perhaps two dozen cows and a few calves. They allowed us a

very close approach, so Grant drove all around the herd as they fed on grass and leaves. The sun was quite low when we broke off our observation. Selby radioed that he had not located the Leopard but with night approaching it was time to collect him.

Grant found a nice spot for our sundowners so while he and Selby found our refreshments, we tourists searched out privacy bushes. I lingered at the car to allow my colleagues first use of the non-existent facilities and I think I may have wandered a bit farther from the car than I should have.

Just as I was just finishing up, I glanced up to see a Spotted Hyena perhaps ten meters away, clearly visible in the afterglow of the setting sun. It was just then that Selby joined me. "Selby," I remarked as nonchalantly as I could but with a definite quaver. "There is a hyena here." "Oh, yeah," he replied. I decided that if the animal's presence did not bother him I would not let it bother me.

As spectacular as is Africa's wildlife by day, its night sky is breathtaking. The moon had not risen, so while we enjoyed cocktails Lee had the opportunity to show us the constellation Scorpio and we were treated to a brief shower of meteors.

Grant and Selby thought perhaps we might find some lions between our sundowner stop and camp. We searched but found none.

Upon arrival at camp, we were ushered to the "boma", a circular palisade of upright tree trunks where another buffet was piled high behind our chairs and tray tables. In the center, a fire blazed while Grant, immaculate in khakis and white dress shirt, presided over a grill where chicken, bratwursts and steaks were sizzling. Lisl provided grilled vegetables and an ostrich stew, a memorable end to a memorable day.

Another cold morning greeted us as we made our way to Waterbuck Lodge's dining room for what we now knew were merely snacks to tide us over until our "real" breakfast at mid-morning. Grant had us loaded in our car and out of camp in time to see the sun rise majestically over the thornveld. We found herds of Impala and zebra and the resident troop of



baboons. (The South Africans say “buboons” and Janet quickly adopted their usage.)

We passed very close to an acacia tree where Grant braked abruptly. Just off the track, on a pendant acacia branch, sat a family of seven Southern White-crowned Shrikes. The rising sun caused their white head and breast feathers to glow pink as they huddled wing to wing, fluffed against the cold. They were utterly charming creatures who observed us observing them for a good ten minutes.

Selby’s tracking of the Leopard on the day previous had not been the washout that we had thought. Lodge operators are not allowed to drive off of the trails and dirt roads except to find any of the Big Five. Selby directed Grant to cross the dry watercourse, then to turn into the bush. Lee ordered us to make as little noise as possible as we edged along the bluff. There was some movement ahead at the base of a tree that hung over the bank. Then we saw the carcass of an impala lying in the grass. Admonished to be extra quiet, we hardly breathed as there was movement in the hollow base of the tree. Making no sound at all, a black-spotted yellow form glided forward, grasped the deceased impala by the neck, and began to feed.

While we watched the jungle queen at her breakfast, someone noticed movement on the other side of the tree. Against the rising sun, there appeared two small ears, then the outline of a head, then a small body and a tail. Working its way along a branch was an enchanting leopard cub.

The cub was about the size of a cocker spaniel. Its eyes were still a milky sky-blue, which the guides told us meant that it was about four months old.

It took no more notice of us than did its mother. It disappeared behind the tree, but the movement of branches indicated to us that it was working its way around the trunk. Eventually, it appeared in the hollow area at the tree’s base. It then worked its way into our view, approaching the carcass upon which its mother was feeding. With a kittenish snarl, it pushed past her to the impala. The older cat jerked its head back, then retreated a step or two to allow the insistent cub to feed.

Dispossessed from its kill, the mother Leopard strode toward the rear of our car, never giving it or us the slightest attention. Something along the bluff top seemed to engage her attention, but she ultimately dismissed it and laid down. The cub soon joined her for a bout of mutual face rubbing. The mother cat then rose, stretched and moved back closer to the kill, just at the edge of the bluff with the smaller one following her. The adult cat laid down with its back towards our car and its feet towards the bluff. The cub tried to catch the twitching white tip of its mother's tail. The pair lay peaceful and relaxed for what must have been twenty minutes while all of us madly clicked the shutters of our cameras. I tried to use the video option of my camera but could not get it to work. Nevertheless, I managed some of the most exciting photographs I have ever made.

The uniqueness and rarity of what we were observing was not lost on anyone. A Leopard sighting in itself is unusual. To find one with a cub and to watch their interaction for an extended period is all but unheard of. Eventually, we heard the sound of another car approaching. Two vehicles at this scene of domesticity would have likely been too much for the animals, so we reluctantly pulled away. Someone remarked, "Well, that made the day." Mark replied, "That made the whole trip!"

Lee told us of a couple of guys that he had guided on a private tour. He had tracked a Leopard as it had followed a herd of Impala. The Leopard had charged the antelope, caught one, and was making its kill. Lee had turned excitedly to his clients only to find both of them absorbed in playing a video game on their cell phones. In other wild places, I had observed other casual tourists engaged in such self-absorbed behavior so I congratulated myself on inviting companions that I knew would appreciate the wonders that we had seen and would see on our expedition.

Having grown up in a farming/ranching community, I have always had an affinity for hooved animals. I particularly admire the large, long-horned antelopes of Africa. While it is hard to pick a favorite, I think that the most beautiful of these is the Nyala.

Nyala are about the size of a Welsh pony. Males are chocolate brown with ten or a dozen white vertical stripes on their body. They have an erect

mane, shaggy cheek hair, chestnut socks and lyre-shaped, dark horns with white tips. Females are smaller, all chestnut and have no horns. As we crossed the dry watercourse and up the far bank, we caught sight of movement a few yards into the brush. It was a handsome male Nyala who seemed somewhat curious about us. He approached quite close and only drifted away when we drove on.

By now it was near mid-morning, so Grant turned us toward Waterbuck Lodge. As we drove, Lee identified birds such as Sabota Lark, White-browed Scrub-robin, Yellow-fronted Canary and Bearded Woodpecker. I was duly impressed when Janet spotted a pack of Dwarf Mongooses searching a fallen log for insects or lizards.

Lisl had listened to our requests for a bit lighter breakfast, which we enjoyed at the overlook in the shade of the jackalberry tree. George Bushbuck and his mate appeared to browse the shrubbery while Lodick once again protected the buffet from the depredations of the mongooses, hornbills and squirrels.

The Brown-hooded Kingfisher also made an appearance, perching on a branch that overhung the sandy watercourse as if watching for a small fish below, even though there had been no water there in months. Like many other kingfishers, Brown-hooded Kingfisher is not dependent on fish for its food, rather it spends most of its time in dry forests, catching insects and small vertebrates on the ground.

Waterbuck Lodge sits a hundred meters or so apart from the main compound of Kings' Camp. At breakfast, Hailey had mentioned that we might wish to check on the camp's other accommodations and especially its gift store. Everyone agreed, so we strolled across the dusty road to do so. Much had changed since my first visit, but not the ostrich egg chandelier in the reception area.

Lunch was served at about 2 pm. It was, as requested, quite light, cheese and spinach quesadillas, along with lots of choices from the buffet. Chad, Janet and I remained at the overlook until time for our afternoon drive,

observing Wart Hogs, Impala, Bushbuck, a Tawny Eagle and the return of the Brown-hooded Kingfisher.

After such an exciting morning, we were all ready for our afternoon drive. Selby dropped a hint that our target was rhinos and that they might not be far away. He was correct. Our route took us close to the paved road that leads to Hodespruit. Not far from the reserve boundary we came upon an entire herd of Southern White Rhinos.

Unlike the solitary, bad tempered Black Rhinoceros, White Rhinos are rather social and somewhat placid unless they are disturbed. This group consisted of six members; two adult bulls, two cows and two sub-adults. Lee told us that poaching had become so bad in the Kruger National Park that 450 animals had been killed there in the first eight months of 2014 alone. In the more confined space of the Timbavati, with more frequent patrols and more tourist presence, the rhinos were probably safer than most other places.

Rhinos are said to have the keenest sense of smell of any animal besides elephants. Their hearing is also acute, but their eyesight is very poor. They certainly took little notice of us, approaching the car to within six feet.

White Rhinos are grazers, using their broad, flat lips to crop grass close to ground level. To this end, the lips of these otherwise thick-skinned beasts are as soft as velvet. We watched these critically endangered behemoths for at least a half hour before moving on. Grant said that we had now scored all but one of the Big Five, Lion, and we were now searching for them.

Our search for lions proved fruitless. Lee was not sanguine about finding them because of the presence of leopards and of leopard tracks. Had there been lions about, the leopards would have made themselves scarce.

If lions were scarce, buffalo were not. We passed a few small herds as Grant drove us to a waterhole where he thought we might find something. We were not disappointed. Two massive old buffalo bulls stood belly deep in the water, allowing themselves to be cleaned of skin parasites by Marsh Terrapins. Lee described them as “dugger boys”, elderly bulls who live alone or in small groups away from herds. They are especially bad-

tempered and dangerous, even for buffalo. As we watched, something spooked them. They left the water and stood at the edge, head to tail, alert for danger. Eventually, they walked away into the bush.

The waterhole had attracted more than buffalo. Working daintily around the edge and plucking invertebrates from the mud was a pretty Three-banded Plover. When the buffalo left, a covey of Crested Francolin skittered down to the water's edge to enjoy a cooling drink.

Our afternoon route took us back across the dry watercourse. It is a comment on how steeply the trail drops that we had no idea that a bull giraffe was standing at the bottom. I estimated him at eighteen feet. He was definitely an old-timer, from his towering height and from the many obvious bony lumps beneath the skin on his head. Bull giraffes accumulate bone in their skulls as they age. This increases the weight and power of their heads which they swing at other bulls in mating fights. The older bulls with the heaviest skulls almost always win.

As we watched, he strolled across the trail and looked back at us with all of the witless unconcern of giraffes everywhere. When we finally rolled forward and downward, he moved unhurriedly up the far bank with all of the surefootedness of an animal one-tenth his size.

There was a bit of water and a few reeds in a low spot just off the jeep trail on the far side of the dry watercourse. Making use of it was a pair of Water Dikkops, large-eyed shorebirds that are mostly nocturnal. As we approached them, Grant grew really excited. Sharing the wet accommodations with the dikkops was a pair of African Painted Snipes.

Painted Snipes are a Family of very odd shorebirds. There are only three species; one each in Africa, Asia and South America. All three species exhibit reversal of normal avian sexual roles. Females are more brightly colored, perform the courtship rituals, mate with several males and allow the males to incubate the eggs and raise the young. African Painted Snipe is a very rare species in the Timbavati and Grant was excited to have found them. He immediately radioed other guides and drivers of the sighting so that they could find the birds as well.

His radio broadcast brought a reply that there was something interesting fairly close by. We set off to find it. Before long, we observed another safari car some distance from the road. That could only mean one of the Big Five. Were we to locate lions at last?

Navigating across the thornveldt, we came very close to the other car before we noticed what had caught its attention. Lying flat on its side in the tall grass lay a Leopard, fast asleep. There was no cover around; no hollow log, windfall, dead tree or termite mound. It was as oblivious of our presence as if we had been back at Waterbuck Lodge. Of course, disturbance of the animals is strictly forbidden, but I cannot say that we or those in the other car made any special efforts to remain noiseless as we watched the somnolent cat snooze away the late afternoon.

Selby reminded Grant of another attraction as the afternoon waned. As exciting as any Leopard sighting, there is a definite limit to that of one that just lies there. Accordingly, we drove away into a gathering twilight.

The sun was low when we arrived at our destination, an abandoned termite mound. Lying relaxed at its base was a single Spotted Hyena. It seemed no more active than the Leopard but as we watched, another, smaller, darker animal peered around the mound from the side. It was a hyena cub, still in its juvenile coat of chocolate brown. It approached the snoozing adult who pretty much ignored it.

It was now well on to dark and a bit chilly. Grant steered us to the lodge's airstrip where the night sky spectacularly backed our evening's sundowner. Lee provided us with commentary on what was above us, pointing out the Southern Cross and another constellation known as the Diamond Cross. Crowned Lapwings, handsome shorebirds that inhabit dry grasslands called to one another as we enjoyed our beer, wine and cookies.

We reluctantly packed up for the drive back to the lodge and our "real" dinner. From all around, we could hear the piping calls of African Scops Owls. Lee told us that the little birds' calls last exactly 4.5 seconds. I timed them and, as always, he was correct.

From his perch on the left front fender, Selby shone his light into trees, bushes and on the ground, searching for the tell-tale eyeshine that indicates a nocturnal animal. We had had little luck previously, but he did spot a Large-spotted Genet, an attractive relative of the mongoose, as it hustled away into the darkness in search of mice and roosting birds.

When we arrived at camp, a welcoming fire was blazing in the overlook's fire pit. Hailey took care of our drink orders while Lodick and Lisl brought our main course, grilled steak and salmon. Perhaps it would have been possible to have a more perfect day somewhere else, but I cannot imagine where it could be.

At our dawn "pre-breakfast", Lee announced that our Lion drought might be over. A pair of young Lions had been seen fairly close by. Since this was our last full day, this was likely to be our last opportunity to collect all of the Big Five. We loaded the safari car in the pre-dawn darkness and started up the drive.

Just as the sun rose, we were a bit surprised to find a small herd of giraffes at the driveway entrance. I mentioned to Lee that someone had told me that wild giraffe populations had plummeted in the last few years. His reply surprised me. He said that elephant poaching, while still a serious problem, was on the decline. Increasing numbers of elephants means that savanna trees are being knocked over or stripped of their limbs by the elephants. This deprives the giraffes of their primary food source, leading to their population decline.

He also told us how acacia trees protect themselves against browsing animals, such as elephants and giraffes. When an acacia leaf is bitten or torn, it releases a chemical into the air. When surrounding trees sense the presence of the chemical, they shrivel themselves up, offering a less attractive target for the animals.

We passed a tree which held a solemn convocation of White-backed Vultures. They were waiting for the sun to warm the ground enough to produce the thermals, or rising air currents, that they need to resume their soaring watch for the dead and dying.

A Brown Snake-eagle watched the ground for signs of the reptiles that make up most of its diet. We found an African Scimitarbill, a black, robin-sized bird with a long, decurved red beak sitting upright on a tree trunk using its long, stiff tail as a brace while probing the bark for hidden insects.

I always get a special thrill when I see an animal species in the wild that is maintained at the Memphis Zoo. There is a pair of Green Woodhoopoes in the zoo's Tropical Bird House. I have observed the species, which looks very much like the scimitarbill but for its glossy, greenish-purple, iridescent plumage and red feet, in other localities in Africa, but had never taken a decent photograph of one. We found a flock of the noisy, conspicuous birds, but once again, my photographs were less than standard.

Our search for the lions took us on a trail that we had not yet travelled. It led along the edge of a very high bluff that overlooked the dry watercourse. It was here that we stopped for our morning break. A pair of Grey Duikers was browsing some bushes far below us. Grey Duikers, like most smaller antelope, live in monogamous pairs rather than large herds. This allows them to browse the more nutritious leaves of bushes and small trees than to rely on the coarse grasses for food.

Our position on the bluff placed us at the level of the treetops. While we enjoyed our cookies and tea, we observed flocks of Brown-headed Parrots, African Green Pigeons and Red-faced Mousebirds flying like windblown leaves between the trees. A pair of Black Cuckooshrikes, the male all black and the female greenish-yellow with a gray head, flew in. I was most pleased with myself at being able to identify them without assistance.

We came upon a mother elephant feeding with her calf. The adult paid us little attention, but the baby raised its trunk, spread its ears and mock-charged us.

At length, we reached the location where the lions had been reported. We found them quite a distance from the trail. They were two males, youngsters by their short, scruffy manes. They were lying up in quite thick brush, showing evidence of nervousness. Lee said that they were most likely brothers who had been driven out of their pride by their father and



were looking to establish their own territory. As nomads, they were subject to attack by any pride males into whose territory they strayed. Grant circled them with the car looking to get us some decent photo angles. They seemed unhappy with this development and kept on the move.

Grant and Lee were loathe to disturb them any more so we pulled away. Mark was seated on the rear and highest seat and as we left, his hat caught on a branch and was swept to the ground. It was not recovered.

Wherever there are top predators, there will be scavengers. As we drove away, we observed a Spotted Hyena and a White-backed Vulture patiently observing the Lions, obviously hoping for scraps from a kill.

When we returned to Waterbuck Lodge, Lisl and Lodick had the buffet stocked and ready. Lisl asked if anyone had special orders, such as pancakes or omelets. I requested a mushroom omelet, one of my favorites. It appeared momentarily and was delicious.

Not long after breakfast, Lee asked if we wished to do another walk before lunch. No one was willing to miss out on anything, so we piled into the safari car which would take us to our drop off point. Hailey surprised me by jumping onto the tracker's seat on the front fender. She was to drive the car back to the lodge after dropping us off. Lee said that she was not just the lodge manager, but a fully qualified safari guide in her own right. Nevertheless, it was a bit disconcerting to see a tiny, blonde twenty-something British girl perched on the precarious tracker's seat, bouncing over rough terrain and up and down steep declivities.

Hailey took the car from Grant as we set off through the bush. It had grown quite warm, so the jackets that some of us had brought were quickly shed. Chad placed a bandana under his cap, letting it fall down his back, French Foreign Legion style.

Lee stopped us before too long to show us a plant which had open bolls of a cottony fiber. Lee told us that it was indeed wild cotton, the ancestor of the plant upon which so much of our region's economy had once depended, which had brought so much wealth and misery to the American South.

We made no real effort to conceal ourselves from any wildlife in the vicinity; indeed, we wanted it all to know that where we were so it could avoid us. Kudu moved unhurriedly from our path and Grey Duikers scurried away at our approach.

Grant found a rhino midden, where rhinos come to deposit dung. The scent that they leave informs other rhinos of their presence, sex, state of health, breeding condition and other factors that we may not be aware of.

Elephants do not use middens, rather they scatter their dung everywhere. Elephant digestion is very inefficient. They only digest about 44 per cent of what they eat. Undigested matter in dung provides a buffet of sorts for birds and especially for insects. We found a pair of dung beetles busily rolling a ball of elephant dung toward their burrow. They will lay their egg in the dung ball, providing a readily available food source for their offspring when it hatches.

Lee heard the song of an Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, but it never showed itself.

Lunch was ready when we returned from our trek. The heat had also returned, so we especially enjoyed the light, cool vegetarian fare that Lisl provided. Chad and I lingered at the overlook after everyone else had finished, finding the Brown-hooded Kingfisher, a little finch called Green-winged Pytilla, a Chinspot Batis and a Fork-tailed Drongo. Drongos are a family of robin-sized, all-black birds with distinct attitudes. They follow large herbivores picking off insects that the animals disturb in the grass. They brook no interference from anything, no matter how large, attacking anything that they perceive as a threat.

A bit of the pressure to score all of the Big Five was now off, so Grant began our afternoon drive by taking us to a few of his favorite spots just to see what was there. A strikingly handsome bull kudu and an attractive little Steenbok were visible along the way. We arrived at a small waterhole where we found a massive bull rhino had established a territory. We had not sat watching him for more than five minutes when there was movement in the bush a few hundred meters away. A cow rhino with a half grown calf

emerged from the bush headed directly for the water. The pair was followed very closely by another rhino bull, obviously intent upon courting the cow. When the resident bull caught scent of the newcomers, he went quickly on alert. The cow and calf passed by him with hardly a glance, but the approaching bull stopped abruptly. The resident trotted out a few steps to meet him and that was enough to turn him in his tracks.

The cow went straight to the water and began to drink, ignoring the now victorious bull completely. He approached her respectfully, almost as if he were carrying her a bouquet of flowers, but the calf was having none of it. It lowered its head and charged the bull, horn first. The bull halted at once. The calf made a few false charges while its mother drank her fill. Then the youngster turned to drink while she stood off the amorous bull.

Although he was most respectful, the bull rhino was also persistent. He waited a few meters away while the cow and calf enjoyed each other's company. Finally, the calf nosed under his mother and began to nurse. This seemed less a sign of hunger than a signal to the bull that the female was not in breeding condition. The stalemate continued until another safari car arrived and we left the scene.

Grant knew of another waterhole where he thought there might be something interesting. There was. What appeared to be a floating log was actually a Nile Crocodile, the only one of these ancient reptiles that we saw on the expedition.

Giraffes had gathered around the waterhole, perhaps reluctant to drink in the presence of a crocodile. A giraffe seized by the nose by a crocodile would have no chance. It was amusing to watch a half-grown calf who wanted to nurse spread its forelegs and twist its neck to reach its mother's udder.

It seemed to be an afternoon for young animals, so Grant decided to try to find us a few more. As we rounded a bend in the trail, Bill called, "Stop!" Just past a fringe of brush were three huge bull elephants. They regarded us warily, but allowed us a few photographs before wandering silently out of sight.

After observing so much megafauna, it was a bit of a surprise to flush a Scrub Hare from the side of the trail.

Grant steered us to another termite mound where more baby animals awaited us. The mound was the den site of a pack of Wild Dogs who had a litter of puppies. The puppies romped and played around the den under the watchful gaze of the pack's guard dog, no differently than a litter of Labrador Retrievers in a suburban kennel.

It was now full dusk, time for sundowner. Lisl had hinted that our dinner was to be a bit different, especially after our vegetarian lunch, so we really weren't surprised when Grant steered us off at a pretty good rate for camp. On my previous visit to Kings' Camp, I remembered that our last meal had been a special breakfast at an outdoor barbeque area some distance from the main lodge. Sure enough, we arrived at that location just as it turned full dark. A bonfire was blazing, grills were loaded with pork ribs, impala chops and other exotic meats and special treats. Guests from the main lodge were also present at the picnic tables. There must have been fifty there altogether. Excellent South African wines were available at every table. I am not a real wine drinker but I enjoyed at least my share.

During the meal, someone shone a spotlight at the bluff behind the picnic area. A lone Spotted Hyena strolled out of the shadows, obviously drawn by the scent of grilling meat. It glanced nervously our way before hustling off as if it remembered some important business elsewhere.

A young couple at the next table engaged us in conversation. They were from New York City and on their honeymoon. I am not certain why, but the young man realized that we were from the Memphis area. He announced that he was originally from Germantown and a graduate of Houston High School. We made sure that he agreed to bring his bride to Memphis soon where she could find some real barbeque.

As the evening waned, Lisl brought out a special treat. It happened to be Chad's birthday and she had baked him a special cake. It was sinfully rich; one slice being more than I could eat.

As the evening waned, everyone separated to their safari cars to return to their own lodges. Hailey once again hopped onto the tracker's seat, operating the spotlight like a pro. Another incredible day in an incredible land.

I had mentioned to Lee that I was a little disappointed at how few aquatic animals and birds that we had seen. Since the next day was to be our last at Timbavati, he and Grant had conferred and decided upon a new strategy. Grant knew of a few waterholes where there was a good likelihood of finding hippos and more crocodiles, but it was some distance away. Accordingly, we started quite early in some pretty intense cold. Part of our route led along the paved road to Hodespruit. Along the way, the telephone and power wires were festooned with beautiful Lilac-breasted Rollers and with Lesser Striped Swallows. (A group of swallows is known as a gulp.) When we turned off the paved road, we found a little Pearl-spotted Owlet perched conspicuously, evidently caught out late from an evening's hunting.

The drive to the waterholes was quite long and very uneven, up and down some steep ravines. We stopped on one descent to observe a Burchell's Coucal, an attractive relative of cuckoos that does not parasitize other birds.

We checked several waterholes without success but after a drive of an hour or so, we reached a sizable waterhole where there was a two story watchtower. As we drove onto the dam, we noticed two objects floating just at the water's surface. When they noticed us, they silently submerged. We had found the sought-after hippos.

As we approached, Selby pointed to a large raptor flying away from a tree on the pond's far side. It was a Giant or Milky Eagle Owl that had been disturbed at its daytime roost.

A few of us climbed into the watchtower just to see what we might. There were numerous birds including Alpine Swifts, White-rumped Swifts and beautiful Red-rumped Swallows flying over the pond, hawking insects on the wing. A charm of Blue Waxbills descended upon a tree that had fallen

into the water to search for seeds. A pair of Water Dikkops stood glumly at the water's edge seemingly wondering where to roost for the day.

We were taking our morning coffee and chocolate break, watching the hippos and the birds, when Grant received a radio report that there was an interesting sighting a mile or so away. We hustled back into the car and drove away.

There was lots to see that morning; a bull giraffe, quite an elderly one from his very dark spots, stretched to his full height plus the length of his tongue, browsing an acacia and a sizable herd of zebras grazing in the thick brush.

We eventually found another safari car parked quite close to the edge of the bluff near the dry watercourse. It did not take long to discern what had the attention of its passengers; a gorgeous Leopard.

Sighting a Leopard at all is a red letter accomplishment for any safari. We had found four in four days. This one was like none of the others that we had seen. It was not playing gently with a cub or sleeping too soundly to be awakened by a carload of tourists; rather, it definitely had business to attend. It was travelling purposefully along the bluff top, ears perked and all senses alert. Whether it was aware of possible prey, a rival Leopard or a prospective mate was unclear. Both cars followed as best we could. The great cat stopped frequently to check its surroundings, allowing us excellent photo opportunities. Finally, it dropped off the bluff into the dry watercourse. We caught a last glimpse of it as it trotted up the far bank and out of sight.

It was now mid-morning and time to return to Waterbuck Lodge. Lisl had prepared another wonderful breakfast that we enjoyed on the overlook, perhaps taking a bit longer than was necessary for this, our last meal in this paradise. Eventually, we returned to our rooms to collect our luggage which the staff carried out to the van which had transported us from the airport. Warren was there to drive us and the entire staff came out to see us off, including Prudence and Patricia who had done such a wonderful job of cleaning our rooms and our laundry. Handshakes and hugs went all around, not unmingled with a few tears.

The brief drive to the airport allowed us a few last glimpses of baboons, giraffes and zebras. When we arrived at the terminal, we found a problem. All of us but Laura were scheduled to fly directly to Capetown but she was booked on an earlier flight to Johannesburg where she would transfer to another flight, joining us in Capetown about the time that we were to arrive there. Unfortunately, her flight was delayed so some other arrangements would be necessary.

I had been enormously pleased that Lee had been our guide, but at this point I was even more grateful. He took immediate charge, telephoning the Oryx office directly to inform them of the difficulty. It was quickly determined that Laura could take a later flight that would bring her to Capetown later in the day. They also arranged for her to be met at Johannesburg and assisted through the transfer process and for transportation to our accommodation in the Capetown area. We hated to leave her at Hodespruit, but with Lee taking care of things, I was not worried.

When I bade Lee good-bye, I thanked him profusely for all that he had done for us. I also remarked how sad I am every time I leave Africa. He answered, "You live on the wrong continent." Maybe he is right.

Our flight on South African Airways was uneventful and we arrived at Capetown in good order. When we reached the main terminal, a tall, extraordinarily handsome young man was waiting with an Oryx sign. It was Glen Valentine, our guide for the remainder of our stay.

Glen helped us with our luggage and escorted us to the rental car station where an eight passenger van was waiting. The weather was cold, rainy and blustery, not at all like the dry heat that we had been accustomed to at Kings' Camp. Glen told us that every few days cold fronts sweep north from Antarctica bringing unsettled cold weather to South Africa, much as we had experienced in Johannesburg. But he assured us that the forecast was favorable for the rest of our stay.

It was a bit of a shock to be back in a big city after our sojourn in the bush. We passed some shantytowns on the outskirts of the city, a remnant of the

days of apartheid. We also passed lots of new multi-family housing construction as well as some definitely middle class established neighborhoods. We passed the campus of the University of Capetown and entered a truly upscale residential area. Glen told us that it was known as Bishopsgate, probably the most exclusive and expensive real estate in South Africa. Almost every house was surrounded by a high wall topped with barbed wire and fronted with a massive gate. Surveillance cameras were everywhere and signs warned of “armed response to intrusion”.

Our hotel was located in the suburb of Simonstown, directly on False Bay. The highway led over a ridge which provided spectacular views of Capetown, the harbor and Table Mountain, or would have on a clear day. The roadside was covered with the many endemic plants for which the Cape area is famous, notably Proteas, Restios and Ericas, although they were not quite yet in peak blooming season.

We arrived in Simonstown with the rain and cold. Glen had the address of our hotel, but it took a bit of looking to find it. The highway from Simonstown to Cape of Good Hope National Park runs right along the shore of False Bay. Whale View Manor sits on the bluff overlooking the road and the bay. Like most upscale properties in South Africa, it is surrounded by a high wall with a security-coded gate. Glen had the security code, but it took a minute or so for it to swing open. The driveway is extraordinarily steep and the van was starting from a standing stop. The wet brickwork was especially slippery which meant that Glen had no little difficulty getting to the parking area at the top. When we finally arrived there, the area was so small and crowded that he was hard put to squeeze into a parking place.

We were met by Dominique, the manager, who had our luggage transported to our rooms. All were on the second floor offering spectacular views of the bay. I immediately noticed objects floating in the pounding surf and told everyone that they were Cape Fur Seals. They turned out to be floating seaweed.

Whale View Manor has an interesting history. It was once two separate houses that belonged to a brother and sister. The two houses were mirror



images of each other. When they died, their heirs sold the property to a developer who demolished the two adjoining garages, replacing them with the entry hall, rear patio, the tall entry staircase and two guest rooms on the second floor.

With Laura expected to have dinner at the Johannesburg airport, Glen suggested that the rest of us drive a short way down the coast highway to the Black Marlin restaurant. The Black Marlin sits right at the cliff top overlooking the bay. A converted residence, its enclosed back porch provided a wonderful view, or would have if we could have seen it through the driving rain.

Glen advised us that the fish was all fresh caught from the bay, so most of us ordered hake, the standard food fish of South Africa. He was certainly correct. While wine is not usually my drink, Mark and I agreed to share a bottle. It was another very wise decision.

After dinner, we returned to the hotel to find that Laura had arrived and settled in. Everyone had had a full day and since we had an early call the next morning, we called an early evening.

Breakfast was served next morning in the hotel's small dining room. Jackson, our chef, took orders after serving everyone a delightful dish of fruit and yogurt as a starter. The dining room had a splendid view of the bay, so while we enjoyed our eggs and bacon, we watched the spouting of whales.

Our destination for the day was the West Coast National Park, about two hours north of Capetown. We had to contend with rush hour traffic around the city, so it was quite late in the morning when we left the industrial and dock areas behind. Once past the heaviest traffic areas, Glen pulled off the highway to a petrol (gasoline) station and convenience store to fill up. As the van was being filled, a Great White Pelican flew majestically over, just a few meters over our heads. It sailed across the highway onto a marsh where impressive aggregations of water birds had gathered. There were Greater Flamingoes, White-breasted Cormorants, Egyptian Geese, African Darters, Red-knobbed Coots and Yellow-billed Ducks.

While Glen was filling the tank, some guy strolled out of the convenience store toting a .223 caliber rifle! We were all taken aback by this blatant display of firepower. Glen asked the store proprietor who he was and why he was there and was told that he had come to pick up cash for a bank deposit. Another commentary on crime or the perception of crime in South Africa.

Back on the road, we headed north through the fynbos country of Western Cape province. “Fynbos” means “fine bush” and refers to the shrubby, treeless vegetation that grows along a narrow coastal belt and nowhere else. There were lovely views on our left of the Atlantic Ocean but it must be admitted that the drive was pretty boring.

After a nearly two hour journey, we arrived at the park entrance. While Glen paid our entrance fees and checked us in, an exquisitely beautiful Malachite Sunbird, iridescent aquamarine with decurved bill and elongated central tail feathers, sat regally on a leafless shrub next to the entrance shack.

We re-embarked to begin a long drive through the park. West Coast National Park, while certainly not devoid of wildlife, is most famous for its botanical attractions. It seemed that we were perhaps a week or so early for the very peak of its wildflower blooming show. Nevertheless, the ground in many places was carpeted with blossoms of daisies in dazzling pastels of white, orange, pink and yellow.

The flower show was marred a bit by large mounds of torn up dirt. Glen told us that they were the work of mole-rats; constant excavators of the soil, searching for tubers and roots. A few unsightly dirt mounds seem like a reasonable price to pay for aeration of the soil to grow such lovely flowers.

Although the West Coast National Park is famous for its flora, the fauna impressive as well. The Big Five are certainly nowhere to be found but large animals are definitely present.

Eland are the world’s largest antelope. A big bull can weigh as much as a bull Cape Buffalo. Like Kudu, they are dusty tan with white, vertical pinstripes. Their horns spiral but are not very long. They have a short neck

mane and a pendulant dewlap under their throat. There was a small herd browsing its way through hillside covered with ericas and other shrubbery. Glen also noticed a pair of Red Hartebeest, large, narrow faced antelope with lyre-shaped horns and longer front than rear legs resting on a slab of exposed granite.

I had been disappointed at Kings' Camp that our list of bird species had not included several common species. I was most gratified when the most obvious of our misses appeared on the same hillside as the antelope. A cock Ostrich with a couple of hens and a crèche of toddling youngsters came sedately down the hill and crossed the road in front of us. Travelling to Africa and not seeing the world's largest bird is something that is simply not done.

Glen took us to an overlook where the vast panorama of sky, ocean, fynbos heathland, grassland and flowers stretched breathtakingly in all directions. As we took in the scenery, a large bird dropped into the scrub behind us. It was a Southern Black Korhaan, a turkey-sized bustard with black head and neck and a prominent white cheek patch. It strolled about in the shrubbery for a few minutes before disappearing down the hill.

The fynbos biome is scattered about with numerous granite outcrops. These provide warm up spots for cold-blooded animals like snakes and lizards. Although they are mammals, Rock Hyraxes do not regulate their body temperature well. They require the sun to warm them before they go about their daily activities. Several hyraxes were making use of the sun warmed rocks that morning.

Across the shallow lagoon that cut into the shoreline was a town that Glen told us had been a sleepy fishing village but was now a very fashionable retirement community. I could certainly see why anyone would want to live near such a paradisiacal place.

It had been a long morning, so everyone was quite prepared when lunch time arrived. Glen drove us to an Seventeenth Century farm house called Grolbeck that had been converted to a restaurant and gift shop. It was an example of Cape Dutch architecture; symmetrical with the entrance in the

center and high, rounded gables over the door and at each end. It was quite busy, but we were escorted through the house to a rear patio. Behind the patio was a line of non-native eucalyptus trees that was being used by myriads of birds.

We enjoyed an excellent lunch, but the table service was a little slow, perhaps by design. Before the table could be cleared, it was descended upon by the birds. Cape Weavers, a Cape Bulbul, a Fiscal Shrike and a Yellow Bishop hopped onto the table and began gleaning leftovers from our plates.

After our lunch, Glen took us in another direction, to the other end of the park. At a turn-off was a wetland where numerous water birds were foraging. That we were not far from the ocean was evident from the presence of a flock of Kelp Gulls. These large, dark-mantled gulls rarely venture far from salt water.

A pair of Cape Shelducks were also working their way through the shallows, searching for insects. Cape Shelducks are nearly the size of geese. The species is unusual for its reverse sexual dimorphism. Both species are mostly chestnut-brown, but the drake's head is dull gray while the female's is conspicuous white. Like other shelduck species, the female is a bit of a troublemaker. She incites her mate to engage in combat with other males before she will allow him to mate with her.

Perched on some rocks were a couple of Black-headed Herons. Herons are fishermen, but Black-headed Herons are not tied to water as much as most other species. They stalk grasslands in search of insects, reptiles, amphibians and mice and also stake out waterholes, not so much for fish, but to catch birds that come there to drink.

I helped to start the Memphis Zoo's volunteer program in 1972. At that time the Memphis Zoo was already recognized as a leader in the conservation of Bontebok. Bontebok are African antelope that are about the size of a Shetland pony. Their coats are a rich strawberry roan. Their faces, lower legs, belly and rump are white. Both sexes carry lyre-shaped horns, although the males' are larger.

The history of the Bontebok parallels that of the bison in North America. When Dutch settlers arrived in southern Africa in the Sixteenth Century, they found vast herds of Bontebok roaming the veldt and fynbos. They considered the beautiful antelope as pests and competitors for food with their livestock. They began a campaign of slaughter that rivaled that of European settlers on the bison of the American Great Plains. By the 1930s, there were fewer than twenty Bontebok left alive. An Afrikaner farmer who owned the property where these few animals remained decided something should be done. He protected the remnant herd and it began to grow. Today, the world population is estimated at about 3500.

We found a herd of Bontebok grazing and browsing their way through the fynbos heath. I and everyone else should be grateful to the courageous farmer who decided not to let such a graceful and beautiful animal go the way that the Blaaubok and Quagga had gone.

Up the slope from the Bontebok was some movement in the heath. As we watched, a half dozen or so equine shapes appeared, all in convict stripes. It was a family herd of zebras, but not the Burchell's Zebras that we had seen at Timbavati. These were Cape Mountain Zebras, one of the world's rarest hoofed animals.

Cape Mountain Zebras and their near relatives, Hartmann's Mountain Zebras, are endemic to South Africa. Never numerous, they have been isolated in a few small national parks and reserves. More delicate appearing than the Plains Zebra (of which Burchell's Zebra is a subspecies) and the much larger, mule-like Grevy's Zebra, the Mountain Zebra sports an unhorse-like dewlap under its neck. I had never before seen this interesting creature in the wild, so this was my first "Life" mammal of the trip.

Further down the slope, some smaller antelope were browsing. They were tan above and white below with a broad brown stripe between. The rams had lyre-shaped, forward facing horns while the ewes had none. They were Springboks, South Africa's national symbol. A trip to the country without seeing them would have been quite a loss.

When we arrived at the car park for the grand overlook, Glen swerved quickly to avoid something in the road. When we had all climbed out of the van, we saw that it was a tortoise. Glen was even more excited when another tortoise ambled after the first one. “These are Angulate Tortoises!” Glen exclaimed. “They are very rare! One must be a female and the other a male who wants to mate with her. Seeing one is a treat, seeing two is unheard of!”

There were other reptiles around as well. The granite outcrops at the overlook held several Cape Girdled Lizards. Their black skins allowed them to warm up more quickly than other reptiles so that they could catch more beetles on the rocks.

As we enjoyed the vistas of sky, sea and flowery landscape, we found birds. A Grey-backed Cisticola sang from an elevated perch. A Karoo Scrub-robin hopped about through the low shrubbery. Cape Francolins scurried across the road and under bushes, searching for insects. A Rock Kestrel hovered in the onshore wind, searching the ground for insects or mice.

In a little patch of heath sat three shrike-like birds that were unfamiliar to me. They were green and yellow with grey heads and black masks and breastbands. Glen identified them as Bokmakierie. They derive their name from their “bok-bok-bok” calls.

We had a long drive back to Simonstown, so we loaded into the van about mid-afternoon. As we passed the wetland we had seen earlier. Glen hit the brakes. “Look!” he cried. “A Blue Crane!”

The Blue Crane is South Africa’s national bird. It is fairly common in most of South Africa, but I had never seen one before. Of all bird species that I had wished to see on this expedition, it was at the top of the list.

Glen said that despite its being common over most of the country, it is not supposed to be present on the Atlantic coast. It was not even on our checklist of prospective bird sightings. Finding this majestic species here after missing it at Timbavati was a near miracle.

While we watched and photographed it from the van, a small bird flew into a bush right next to our car windows. It was all grey with a crest, very long, slender tail, white bill and red feet. It was a White-backed Mousebird or Colie. Mousebirds have the unusual ability to turn all four of their toes forward, giving them an excellent grip on upright surfaces where they cling, supported by their stiff tail.

Leaving the serene beauty of the West Coast National Park was difficult and not made easier by all of the wildlife that seemed to converge on our van. A Cape Mountain Zebra trotted quite close to the van with pricked ears and high-held head, seemingly most curious about these visitors to his home. Bontebok came right up to the park fence to graze, perhaps just as its ancestors had done to the farmer's fence so many years ago, aware somehow that it was safe where it was. The Eland and Ostriches made late appearances, as if to see us off.

The drive back to Whale View Manor was uneventful. We were caught in Capetown's rush hour traffic, but the views on all sides of mountains and sea made it almost enjoyable. Glen had wisely notified Dominique that we would not likely wish to pile back into the van to drive to someplace for dinner. She and Jackson, the cook, had dinner ready for us soon after we arrived and had freshened. The view of the bay made for another lovely evening.

Our next day's activity allowed a late start so we lingered over breakfast in Whale View Manor's dining room. Once again, whales were spouting in the bay as we enjoyed coffee, juice, fruit, yogurt, eggs, bacon and toast. Since we were not expected at the dock at Simonstown until 10 am, we lingered on the patio, watching the sun burn away the mist over the bay.

The late start permitted some leisurely birding from lounge chairs. An Orange-breasted Sunbird dropped in to one of the trees next to the manor's tiny parking area. Like most sunbirds, the male is gorgeously colored, rivaling a hummingbird, with iridescent dark green head, bright orange belly and breast and purple breast band. Like hummingbirds, sunbirds feed mostly on the nectar of flowers but rather than hovering, they perch on the flower stem and probe the blossom with their long, decurved bills.

Some tiny, all-greenish birds dropped into the flowering shrubs next to the parking lot. The broad white bands that ringed their eyes revealed them to be Cape White-eyes, members of a large Eastern Hemisphere Family known for its small size and eye rings and not much else.

On my first visit to South Africa in 2003, I was impressed by the Red-winged Starlings that are common everywhere around the south coast and not present anywhere else. This species is about the size of a robin and all black except for a patch of rufous on the wings. A flock of these birds descended upon Whale View Manor, then flew across the highway to perch on the granite boulders at the bayside.

With some time to kill, Chad and I gingerly descended the steep brick driveway to the highway, crossed the road and proceeded to a small park on the other side. Chad continued on to the boulder enclosed beach while I waited on a park bench. Bill and Janet joined me there as Chad removed his shoes to wade into False Bay. He stood there ankle deep taking photographs while I photographed a Cape Wagtail that came bobbing up to our bench.

We loaded the van and made the ten minute drive through Simonstown to the harbor. There we met Captain Dave, the skipper of the vessel for our day's adventure. Joining us on the boat were a couple from Boston and a pair of honeymooners from Germany.

Captain Dave told us that there had been whale sightings in the bay on the day previous. The most frequently encountered whale species in False Bay is the Southern Right Whale, named by the old time whalers because it was the "right" whale to hunt; easily killed and easily recovered. There had also been sightings of Humpbacked Whales on the day previous, but they might be hard to find.

As we cleared the harbor, to our starboard was a British naval vessel. It was a reminder that Simonstown was once the largest British naval base in the Southern Hemisphere.

Glen is an outstanding guide for any purpose, but his specialty is birds. As we left the harbor, he pointed out three species of cormorant perched on



rocks; the White-breasted, the smaller Cape and the diminutive Bank Cormorant. Bank Cormorant would have been another “Life” species for me, but I did not get a good enough look to make it “countable”.

Captain Dave and his crew were experienced whale spotters, so before long, someone noticed the telltale column of spray that indicated a whale’s breathing. He turned to port to allow us a better view. It was not long before a massive shape appeared in the water about fifty meters off our starboard side. The massive head was encrusted with barnacles, the larvae of which attach themselves to the slow-swimming Right Whales. Captain Dave paced the giant for about five hundred meters before it sounded with a last wave of its flukes.

The radio crackled with another message, an even more exciting one. A Humpbacked Whale with a calf had been sighted fairly close to Simonstown. Captain Dave revved his inboards in pursuit. We soon came upon them, but in accordance with the strict regulations governing whale watching boats, we kept a respectful distance. We followed the pair for some little distance before they also sounded and disappeared under the waves.

And there were definitely waves. Although the sky was cloudless, a stiff wind was blowing straight from the Antarctic. All of our party seemed to be pretty good sailors, but the German bride spent the last part of the voyage hanging over the rail making her sacrifice to King Neptune. On the way back to port, she sat miserably in the stern glaring at her cluelessly unsympathetic groom. The marriage seemed to not be off to a good start.

As midday approached, we returned to port. On rocks near the jetty, we found African Oystercatchers probing the seaweed for invertebrates and Kelp and Hartlaub’s Gulls scavenging around the boats for edible scraps.

At the base of the jetty is the two-story rear of a restaurant known as Bertha’s. We adjourned there for lunch on the deck overlooking the harbor. A jazz band played on the waterfront, energetically if not terribly well, while we enjoyed our lunch.

After lunch and a bit of shopping, we reboarded the van for the short journey to a place I had been especially anxious to see, the Cape of Good Hope National Park. I had visited there on my first visit to South Africa and had been awestruck at its stark, majestic beauty. Of all of the places that I have visited in the world, the Cape of Good Hope, the very southwestern tip of Africa, has to rank in the top five most beautiful. The only place that remotely compares with it is the Big Sur coast of central California.

The Cape of Good Hope is the dividing point between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. In the late Fifteenth Century, when Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal sent exploratory voyagers south along the African coast, they brought back reports of terrifying weather at Africa's southern extremity. They referred to it as the Cape of Storms. Prince Henry, with a marketer's ear for a well-turned phrase, rejected their descriptions, saying, "Oh no, this is a Cape of Good Hope."

It was as windy at the park as it had been on False Bay, a not unusual occurrence there. Sea birds, including Kelp Gulls and Swift Terns, huddled on offshore rocks, reluctant to fly into the whistling breeze. We took turns being photographed standing behind the sign which marks the official southwestern corner of the African continent.

Glen herded us into the van for the short drive to park headquarters. The constricted nature of the Cape makes for reduced parking opportunities, especially on a Saturday, so he had to park quite a good distance from the headquarters building. The trek was actually quite pleasant with dramatic views of False Bay on one side and the open Atlantic, stretching away to Argentina, on the other.

There were numerous signs along the way warning visitors to be aware of the baboons. The signs were unnecessary because the baboons made themselves most conspicuous. Male Chacma Baboons can be very dangerous. They are very strong, have huge canine teeth and are bold and aggressive. On my previous visit, I recalled seeing one snatch an ice cream cone out of a girl's hand. Although they followed us quite attentively, none came really near.

The tip of the Cape of Good Hope, known as Cape Point, points like an accusatory finger at Antarctica. From the park headquarters, it is necessary to climb a long, high ridge to get to an overlook where the point is visible. A walking path leads up the ridge, but most people, including Janet, Laura, Bill and myself, took the funicular; a cable car that runs up an inclined railway. At the highest point is a lighthouse, which must be visible for miles at sea in any direction. It is possible to walk all the way to the point but none of us attempted it because it was; first, too late and second, too dangerous.

After taking in the spectacular views of sky, sea and mountains, we all hustled to catch the last car going down because it appeared that the descent of the walking path might be just as strenuous as the ascent. At the bottom, we found Glen, Chad and Mark patronizing the gift shop, photographing the incredible scenery and avoiding the baboons. Glen found me photographing the incredible view of False Bay and pointed out a flock of Cape Gannets flying home to their roosts on the inaccessible cliffs.

At the restaurant, a baboon tried to gain entry by opening the front door, but the doorman chased him away. I guess he did not have a reservation.

I enjoyed close up photographs of the many Red-winged Starlings. As I tried for a close-up, I fell into conversation with a man in a park uniform sitting on a stone wall. I complimented him on the beauty of the park but he pointed out to me a sign behind him. It read "Beware of Cobras!" I would have loved to see a cobra, but thanked him and drew back several steps.

The Red-winged Starlings were lovely, but my attention was drawn to a pretty little gray bird that hopped out of the shrubbery and across the restaurant patio. Glen identified it as a Cape Bunting.

I hated to leave such spectacularly beautiful place, but the sun was setting over False Bay. When Glen unlocked the van, a baboon tried to open the passenger's side door!

Other than baboons, we had not seen much wildlife at the park, even though I knew that Mountain Zebra and Bontebok were both present. The only large animal that we observed was an Ostrich.

As Glen turned the van for Simonstown, a small creature with a long tail scurried across the road. Glen said that it was a Small Grey Mongoose, another “Life” mammal for me.

On each side of the road were head-high bushes of proteas of many species and colors. We stopped for a photograph or two and as we did, a robin-sized bird with a wispy, trailing long tail flew in to settle on one of the blossoms. Glen excitedly told me that it was a Cape Sugarbird, endemic to the protea scrubland, come to feed on protea nectar. Next to the Blue Crane, Cape Sugarbird was the bird species that I had most wanted to find in South Africa.

A stop at Whale View Manor allowed us to drop cameras, binoculars and other gear before re-embarking for dinner at the nearby town of Fishoek. The restaurant was called the Barracuda, not surprisingly it specialized in seafood. Our dinners were excellent, accompanied by South African wine, also excellent. A football team was celebrating a bachelor party for one of its members at the next table, so the place was eminently cheerful, if not exactly rowdy.

We walked back to the car park in excellent spirits but as we arrived at the van, we were accosted by a native African woman with a small child in her arms, begging for money to feed the baby. It reminded us that we were privileged visitors to Africa, a continent of enormous disparity of economic circumstance where abject poverty exists alongside incredible wealth.

Jackson had our breakfast ready very early on Sunday morning. We had to hurry back to the dock to catch our boat, the Shark Witch. We were to search for the Great White Shark.

The Shark Witch was about ten meters long by three meters wide with an observation deck above the wheelhouse. It was propelled by a pair of inboard marine motors. It carried a four person shark protection cage suspended over the stern.

A pretty English girl met us at the jetty to brief us on the day's activity. Once we cleared the harbor, anyone who wished to enter the shark cage was to change into a wet suit. We would head for Seal Island, a known hunting area for sharks, while the captain monitored the radio for shark sightings by other boats.

Seal Island is the only rock in False Bay which is not submerged by normal high tides. It is a resting, courting and birthing haulout for thousands of Cape Fur Seals. It also attracts myriads of loafing seabirds; cormorants, gulls, even a few penguins.

Swimming is not instinctive for young seals, they have to be taught. Inexperienced seal pups are especially vulnerable to predation by Great White Sharks, who congregate annually in False Bay for the birthing season. How they know just when birthing season occurs is not known.

The Shark Witch circled Seal Island to allow us to view and photograph the seals and birds. To attract any nearby sharks, the crew tossed a decoy attached to a long line over the stern. The decoy looked exactly like a seal pup and when pulled by the boat, its action mimicking a seal pup struggling to swim. They also tossed the heads of large fish, bloody and oily, into the water attached to long lines. The sight of the struggling "seal pup" and the smell of the fish heads should attract the sharks.

Of our party, only Bill was courageous enough to enter the shark cage. He and three others emerged from below decks in their wet suits as the cage was lowered halfway into the water. There was a seat in the cage where they rested with the water up to their chins. Each had a mask and a breathing tube that ran to an air compressor on the deck. When a shark was sighted, they were to place the tubes in their mouths, put on their masks and wait for the cage to be completely submerged. A crew member then would close the top frame of the cage and lock it in place.

Glen and I scanned for sea birds from the port side. I added two "life" species inside a minute when a White-chinned Petrel and a South Polar Skua flew past.

Another boat, the Shark Explorer, was drifting around Seal Island a hundred meters or so from ours. Right away, they began to attract sharks. We on the Shark Witch were not so fortunate. Despite the efforts of our crew, no sharks came near us. For about thirty minutes, the decoy was tossed out and reeled in as were the fish heads. One of the crew on the starboard side brought in a fish head to prepare another toss. I had just lowered my binoculars and turned around to starboard when something white flashed above the starboard rail. All that I could see was a pointed snout, a finned tail and jagged, triangular TEETH! The apparition snatched at the fish head, did a complete somersault, missing the side of the boat by inches, and vanished below the waves in less than ten seconds. Glen and I looked at each other with eyes the size of saucers and the same unspoken exclamation, “Did that just happen?!?”

Everyone on the boat, including the crew and captain stood for a moment in shock. Mark had been standing with his camera directly next to the crew member with the fish head. The splash from the shark drenched him and his clothes completely. It took a few moments for everyone to recover enough to carry on with our search. Despite the now certain presence of Great White Sharks, our luck at attracting them was not much better. The shark cage went down a few times when sharks were spotted nearby, but only a few came close enough to attack the baits.

Bill was especially disappointed because the water was so murky that he never saw a shark, even when they came within a few feet of him.

Eventually, the captain called a halt, ordered the cage brought back aboard and we turned for the harbor.

We returned to Bertha’s deck for lunch, just ahead of the Sunday church crowd rush. I decided that an ostrich burger would be an acceptable compromise with my “one red meat meal per week” limit. It was quite tasty.

There were no activities scheduled for the afternoon, so we decided to stroll through Simonstown’s quaint business district. There were no true tourist traps, so we enjoyed the late Nineteenth Century British colonial

architecture alongside the Cape Dutch high decorated gables. The perfect weather allowed us to cover several blocks, ending up at an antique store that had some most interesting items. We worked our way back to the van, re-embarked and started back towards Whale View Manor. Glen turned off the highway and down a small side street. He worked his way toward the bay, eventually stopping at a car park which was surrounded by what appeared to be a craft fair. Several vendors of some really well made items were lined along the boundary of the beach.

But we had not come for shopping. Leaving the van, we walked about five blocks to the entrance of a park. This was one of the homes of Simonstown's famous Black-footed Penguins.

It has always seemed a bit incongruous to find penguins in Africa, but Black-footed or Jackass Penguins once nested along South Africa's southern coasts in the millions. Overfishing, pollution and especially spills from oil tankers too large to navigate the Suez Canal decimated their numbers by the 1990s. In the early 2000s, they began a bit of a comeback. Some began to nest at Boulders Beach, a public beach at Simonstown, and even in some private yards and gardens. They were rigorously protected, soon becoming a tourist attraction. Glen told us that their numbers had slowly but steadily increased over the last few years, enough that they had colonized this new area, Foxy Beach.

The South African National Park system had taken over management of the penguin beaches, charging a small fee for entrance. When Glen attempted to use his Oryx credit card to pay our entrance fee, the card reader would not work. The cashier had to wave the reader in the air for a few minutes before she could pick up a signal that would allow it to process the card. Another example of how far South Africa, a developed country, needs to go to fully join the technological world.

The penguins' beach and nesting areas were accessible only by a boardwalk. Stepping off it was strictly prohibited. The penguins were most accommodating, though, going about their regular activities while paying their visitors very little attention.

Some had nested in burrows from which all dark chicks emerged to beg them for food. Others preened to maintain the dense feathers that insulate them in the icy Benguela Current that brings their food from Antarctica. To encourage nesting, the park management had installed artificial nesting burrows. These were made of plastic and looked like milk cans lying half buried in the sand. I did not observe any that were occupied.

Glen said that since it was now late afternoon, parent birds would be arriving from fishing expeditions into the bay and even the open ocean. The end of the boardwalk that overlooked the beach was very crowded with Sunday afternoon tourists but we managed to elbow our way to the rail for a few decent photographs. We stayed perhaps a bit longer than necessary with these most enchanting creatures, so that when we returned to the van, most of the craft vendors had packed up and gone. Glen said that we should have a bit of time to stop back on our way to the airport on Tuesday.

The bar at Whale View Manor was quite unique. It was located in a large room on the ground floor with a superb view of the bay. There were chairs and couches in the bar proper and lounge chairs on the veranda. There was no bartender, rather, there was a drink cooler, an ice machine, glasses and mixers. Everything was on the honor system, with a notebook to write down room numbers and drink items. We adjourned there for a pleasant cocktail hour, discussing the day's adventures before setting off for the Black Marlin for another excellent dinner.

Next morning, after a leisurely breakfast, we set off for perhaps South Africa's most iconic location, Table Mountain. Table Mountain, a huge flat-topped mesa, rises almost vertically from the coast. Its massive presence looms forebodingly over Table Bay and Capetown. A cable car connects the summit with the base, allowing travelers to enjoy a hardly believable view while rising alongside the near vertical walls, nearly unclimbable but by hyrax or klipspringer.

Instead of our usual route over the mountain pass into Capetown, Glen took us through the town of Hout Bay, and onto Chapman's Peak Highway, which must be one of the world's most spectacular scenic drives. Glen told



us that it was normally closed during the rainy season due to the threat of landslides but had recently reopened with the cliffs now better stabilized.

A few houses clung to the cliffside as the road rose from Hout Bay. Before long, it became impossible as the two lane blacktop snaked its way along the cliff face, with a precipitate dropoff to the ocean on one side and a near vertical rise for hundreds of feet on the other. Proteas, restios and ericas clung to the cliff, providing gorgeous color whose peak we were perhaps a week or so too early to catch. There were numerous pulloffs where Glen allowed us to disembark for photographs of the breathtaking ocean and mountain scenery. I don't usually agree that the journey is half the pleasure of travel, but the Chapman's Peak Highway is an exception.

We arrived at the base of Table Mountain about mid-morning. Glen secured our tickets for the cable car. The ride up was spectacular as the floor of the car rotates, giving everyone incredible views of Capetown, Table Bay and the sheer rock side of the mountain.

If the cable car views were spectacular, the views from Table Mountain's summit were amazing. Everyone scattered to the barriers at the edges of the summit for photographs. Capetown lay at the mountain's base with Table Bay beyond. A few kilometers out into the bay lies the deceptively gentle green of once notorious Robben Island. On one side, rugged mountain ridges stretched long fingers of rock toward the sea. On another, a sheer drop overlooked the pleasant green of our afternoon's destination, the Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden. Our party agreed to split up for an hour, then re-group at the cable car terminal for the ride back down.

Paths and walkways spread over the mountain's flat summit, leaving the natural vegetation protected behind low barriers. Even at this altitude, wildlife was present. Speckled Pigeons scoured the ground for spilled popcorn while Southern Rock Agama Lizards scurried about searching for insects. The flowers at the summit; proteas, ericas, birds-of-paradise and red-hot poker lured Orange-breasted Sunbirds to their nectar as a way of transporting their pollen. Seemingly just as active were hordes of Chinese tourists who seemed determined to have their photograph taken standing in front of every beautiful example of Nature in South Africa.

The most visible of the native wildlife were the Rock Hyraxes. These furry, miniature creatures look like rodents, but are actually most closely related to the elephant. Their peculiar feet have much the same structure. The pads of their feet are sticky, permitting them to run across cliff faces and up and down sheer rocks like mountain goats. I photographed a family sitting comfortably on a rock right on the edge of a sheer cliff with the roofs of houses clearly visible hundreds of feet below.

The presence of so many Rock Hyraxes made me ask Glen if there was a chance that we might see a Verreaux's Eagle. Verreaux's Eagle is one of the most impressive of all raptorial birds. It is all black but for a white back and rump. It preys almost exclusively on Rock Hyraxes that it snatches from high rocks. It was a species that I was especially keen to find. Glen replied that Verreaux's Eagle was a possibility, but they were not common around Capetown. Moments later, I was excited when a large raptor flew swiftly over the mountain's flat top, but Glen identified it as a Peregrine Falcon.

We regrouped at the cable car terminal for the precipitous ride down the mountain. Once at the base, discussion began regarding lunch. Capetown is a beautiful city, very much like San Francisco or Sydney. Its harbor and waterfront are busy and vibrant. The decision was reached to drive there for lunch, shopping and some needed free time.

Glen steered us through the busy city. As we approached the downtown area, someone noticed a life-sized fiberglass sculpture of a Quagga in front of some business. The Quagga was a species of zebra that was endemic to South Africa until it was hunted to extinction in the 1870s. DNA analysis of the Quagga has determined that it was so closely related to the Burchell's Zebra that it may be possible to selectively breed some Burchell's Zebras that have similar DNA to the Quagga that an animal that resembles the Quagga may be restored to existence.

Finding a parking place near the waterfront proved difficult and finding our way there was also. We finally decided to cut through the lobby of an expensive hotel to get there. We found a restaurant with sidewalk dining and a view of the harbor, were escorted to a table, had our lunch orders

taken, then were seemingly forgotten for nearly an hour. When our food finally came, it was delivered personally by the manager, all except Janet's whose order had been completely lost. There were effusive apologies but we had lost more time than we should have. We decided to split up and meet at the restaurant in an hour and a half.

Our meal finished, we scattered to the various shops and stores around the waterfront. Under a jackalberry tree, some elderly guys were entertaining with a guitar, banjo and saxophone.

Janet found some jewelry and Laura found some sculpture that she liked but could not figure how to get home. On the Botswana expedition of 2013, our local guide, Shedreck Tshanga, had worn a leather hat that bore the label "ROUGE" on the crown. I was intensely envious of it, so I was overjoyed when I found the same hat in one of the stores. I found one that fit, so, although it was a bit pricey, I purchased it. I consider it one of my proudest possessions.

Chad, Janet, Laura and I met Glen at the restaurant at the appointed time. Bill and Mark arrived a bit late, having gotten lost in the giant shopping mall. We regained the car and departed for our last activity, the Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden.

Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden was founded in 1913 by a biology professor at the University of Capetown on land left to the nation by the legendary Cecil Rhodes, the entrepreneur, politician and visionary who made much of southern Africa what it is today. Kirstenbosch lies on the landward side and at the base of Table Mountain. It was the world's first botanic garden whose mission was to conserve flora, not just to display it.

Almost all of Kirstenbosch's plant collection consists of indigenous species. Fynbos, Karoo (desert), savanna and woodland species are grown throughout the garden. I don't know much about plants, but I enjoyed the riot of color that they produced. The star of the garden was certainly the planting of King Proteas, South Africa's national flower.

The garden was certainly not without birds. An Olive Thrush hopped across the lawn, looking almost identical to an American Robin in a similar

location. Helmeted Guineafowl and Cape Francolin scurried among the shrubbery and through the beds of daisies and other flowers. I photographed a small grey bird hopping through a flower bed. When I showed the photo to Glen, he identified it as a Karoo Prinia, another “Life” species for me.

Janet and I were watching a Double-collared Sunbird , iridescent green, red, white and blue, flitting about in a bush when we overheard someone passing by referring to an “owl roost”. We followed them, catching up with Chad, to a tree next to the concrete pathway. The base of the tree was surrounded by people with cameras and binoculars looking into the tree. Sitting on a branch that overhung the path was a Spotted Eagle Owl. It was the size of our Great Horned Owl and looked very similar. It gazed down at all those beneath it with an expression of exasperation at having been rudely awakened from a well deserved sleep.

With the afternoon sun rapidly setting behind the mass of Table Mountain, everyone reluctantly headed toward the sculpture garden at Kirstenbosch’s gate. We rejoined Glen who guided us to our trusty van. We all realized that our adventure was nearly over.

When we returned to Whale View Manor, we enjoyed our cocktail hour on the veranda before going into the dining room where Dominique and Jackson had prepared an excellent filet dinner. Some of us lingered on the veranda for a final drink before retiring to our rooms to pack for the next day’s journey home.

Our flights were not until early afternoon, so we lingered over breakfast in the dining room. Laura and I had both seen some items we liked at the craft vendors near the penguin park, so prevailed on the others to leave at mid-morning. Glen drove us back to the car park where we agreed to regroup in a half hour. Laura found some jewelry, Mark bought a South African national team soccer jersey while I purchased some ceremonial masks for my “mask wall” and for friends.

We all hated to leave, but the time came for us to head for the airport. Our route led through some shanty towns that Glen told us had been built by squatters who had moved in from the countryside to look for work.

Glen returned the van to the rental agency where we unloaded onto a luggage carrier. Glen helped us navigate it to check-in. We had to say good-bye to him there. He told us that he was to stay overnight with his brother before returning home to Pietermaritzberg. I believe that he never exactly knew what to make of us “non-birders”, but he was unfailingly cordial, cheerful, knowledgeable and helpful. It was a great privilege to have met him.

Laura’s flight to Johannesburg was earlier than the rest of us, but we had time for lunch. Our only dining option in the airport was a restaurant called “Spur”. It had a North American Indian theme that seemed terribly incongruous in such a culturally rich location.

Laura left us right after lunch for her flight to Johannesburg. The rest of us soon followed, boarding our flight at mid-afternoon. We all met up in Johannesburg airport where we took turns guarding our luggage while squeezing in last minute shopping. After a brief layover, we all boarded our aircraft for Atlanta. I was fortunate enough to sleep through much of the fifteen hour flight which arrived in early morning. Laura had to rush to catch her early flight to Memphis, but the rest of us made ours with no difficulty. We arrived home at 10 am.

I am not a compulsive list keeper, but I did determine that during the expedition I observed 35 mammal species, three of which were “Life” species, 145 bird species, of which 14 were “Lifers” and six reptile species, including three “Life” species. I also saw my first Great White Shark, the observation perhaps being a bit too close to be comfortable.

South African novelist Alan Paton once remarked that when he would talk to foreigners about the terrible political and social conditions in his country in the 1960s, they would reply, “Yes, but your land is so beautiful”.

South Africa is indeed beautiful, for me, breathtakingly so. I left it sadly, but I am proud that I was able to bring friends there that I knew would

appreciate it as much as I do. I thank them all for being cheerful, stalwart companions. I appreciate those who made our visit so memorable; Lee, Glen, Selby, Grant, Lisl, Dominique, Jackson, Hailey, Lodick and others whose names I never knew.

The writer Karen Blixen spent seventeen years in Africa and reportedly spent the remainder of her life trying to return. This was my fourth visit. I am already planning my fifth.

## SOUTH AFRICA SPECIES LIST

---

August 24 – September 2, 2014

---

- \* - Denotes Life Species for VH
- +- Species observed by party, not by VH

### Mammals

Chacma Baboon – Kings' Camp & Cape of Good Hope

Scrub Hare – Kings' Camp

Tree Squirrel – Kings' Camp

African Wild Dog – Kings' Camp

Slender Mongoose - Kings' Camp

Dwarf Mongoose – Kings' Camp

Small Grey Mongoose – Cape of Good Hope \*

Banded Mongoose – Kings' Camp

Spotted Hyena – Kings' Camp

Large-spotted Genet – Kings' Camp

Lion – Kings' Camp

Leopard – Kings' Camp

Rock Hyrax – West Coast National Park & Table Mountain

African Elephant – Kings' Camp

Plains Zebra – Kings' Camp

Mountain Zebra – West Coast National Park \*

White Rhinoceros – Kings' Camp

River Hippopotamus – Kings' Camp

Wart Hog – Kings' Camp

Southern Giraffe – Kings' Camp

Cape Buffalo – Kings' Camp

Eland – West Coast National Park

Greater Kudu – Kings' Camp

Nyala – Kings' Camp

Bushbuck – Kings' Camp

Common Waterbuck – Kings' Camp

Springbok – West Coast National Park

Blue Wildebeest – Kings' Camp

Red Hartebeest – West Coast National Park

Bontebok – West Coast National Park

Impala – Kings' Camp

Steenbok – Kings' Camp & West Coast National Park

Grey Duiker – Kings’ Camp

Cape Fur Seal – False Bay

Humpbacked Whale – False Bay

S Right Whale – False Bay \*

Com Dolphin – False Bay +

## Birds

Com Ostrich – West Coast National Park & Cape of Good Hope

Helmeted Guineafowl – Kings’ Camp & Capetown area

Grey-winged Francolin – Kings’ Camp & West Coast National Park \*

Cape Francolin – Capetown area

Swainson’s Francolin – Kings’ Camp

Egyptian Goose – Johannesburg, Kings’ Camp & Capetown area

Cape Shelduck- West Coast National Park

Yellow-billed Duck – Capetown area

Black-footed Penguin – Simonstown

S Giant Petrel – False Bay \*

White-chinned Petrel – False Bay \*

Greater Flamingo – Capetown area & West Coast National Park

Yellow-billed Stork – Kings’ Camp

Marabou Stork – Kings’ Camp

Sacred Ibis – Johannesburg, Kings’ Camp & Capetown area

Hadada Ibis – Johannesburg, Kings’s Camp & Capetown area



Cattle Egret – Capetown area

Grey Heron - Capetown area

Black-headed Heron – West Coast National Park

Little Egret – Capetown area

Hamerkop – Kings’ Camp & Capetown area

Great White Pelican – Capetown area

Cape Gannet – Cape of Good Hope and False Bay

Crowned Cormorant – False Bay

Bank Cormorant – False Bay +

White-breasted Cormorant – False Bay

African Darter – Capetown area

Blue Crane – West Coast National Park \*

Black-winged Kite – Kings’ Camp

White-backed Vulture – Kings’ Camp

Brown Snake Eagle – Kings’ Camp

Martial Eagle – Kings’ Camp

Bataleur – Kings’ Camp

Tawny Eagle – Kings’ Camp

African Hawk-eagle – Kings’ Camp +

African Marsh Harrier – West Coast National Park

Yellow-billed Kite – West Coast National Park +

African Fish Eagle – Kings’ Camp

Jackal Buzzard – West Coast National Park & Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden

Peregrine Falcon – Table Mountain

Rock Kestrel – West Coast National Park

Red-crested Korhaan – Kings' Camp

S Black Korhaan – West Coast National Park \*

Red-knobbed Coot – Capetown area

Water Thick-knee – Kings' Camp

African Oystercatcher – Simonstown

Blacksmith Lapwing – Kings' Camp

Crowned Lapwing – Kings' Camp & West Coast National Park

Three-banded Plover – Kings' Camp

Greater Painted-snipe – Kings' Camp

Grey-headed Gull – Johannesburg & Capetown area

Hartlaub's Gull – Capetown area & West Coast National Park

Kelp Gull – Capetown area & Cape of Good Hope

Swift Tern – Cape of Good Hope

Brown Skua – False Bay \*

Rock Pigeon – Johannesburg, Capetown area

Speckled Pigeon – Kings' Camp, Table Mountain & Capetown area

Ring-necked Dove – Kings' Camp

Laughing Dove – Johannesburg

African Green Pigeon – Kings' Camp

Brown-headed Parrot – Kings' Camp

Grey Go-away-bird – Kings' Camp

Burchell's Coucal – Kings' Camp  
African Scops Owl – Kings' Camp (heard only)  
Spotted Eagle Owl – Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden  
Verreaux's Eagle Owl – Kings' Camp  
Pearl-spotted Owlet – Kings' Camp  
Alpine Swift – Kings' Camp  
African Black Swift – Johannesburg  
White-rumped Swift – Kings' Camp  
White-backed Mousebird – West Coast National Park, Kings' Camp \*  
Red-faced Mousebird – Kings' Camp  
Lilac-breasted Roller – Kings' Camp  
Purple Roller – Kings' Camp  
Brown-hooded Kingfisher – Kings' Camp  
Green Wood-hoopoe – Kings' Camp  
Com Scimitarbill – Kings' Camp  
African Grey Hornbill – Kings' Camp  
Red-billed Hornbill – Kings' Camp  
Yellow-billed Hornbill – Kings' Camp  
S Ground Hornbill – Kings' Camp  
Crested Barbet – Kings' Camp  
Greater Honeyguide – Kings' Camp (heard only)  
Bearded Woodpecker – Kings' Camp  
Orange-breasted Bushshrike – Kings' Camp

Bokmakierie – West Coast National Park \*

Brown-crowned Tchagra – Kings' Camp (heard only)

Black-backed Puffback – Kings' Camp

Brubru – Kings' Camp

Black Cuckooshrike – Kings' Camp

Magpie Shrike – Kings' Camp

S White-crowned Shrike – Kings' Camp

S Fiscal – Kings' Camp

Black-headed Oriole – Kings' Camp

Fork-tailed Drongo – Kings' Camp

Cape Crow – Johannesburg

Pied Crow – Capetown area

White-necked Raven – West Coast National Park

S Black Tit – Kings' Camp

Sabota Lark – Kings' Camp

Karoo Lark – West Coast National Park \*

Cape Bulbul – West Coast National Park

Dark-capped Bulbul – Kings' Camp

Banded Martin – West Coast National Park

Rock Martin – Cape of Good Hope

Lesser Striped Swallow – Kings' Camp

Red-breasted Swallow – Kings' Camp

Long-billed Crombec – Kings' Camp

Rattling Cisticola – Kings' Camp

Grey-backed Cisticola – Capetown area & West Coast National Park \*

Karoo Prinia – Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden

Yellow-breasted Apalis – Kings' Camp

Arrow-marked Babbler – Kings' Camp

Cape White-eye – Simonstown, Table Mountain & Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden

Cape Sugarbird – Cape of Good Hope \*

Com Myna – Johannesburg & Capetown area

Eur Starling – Capetown area & Simonstown

Wattled Starling – West Coast National Park

Pied Starling – West Coast National Park

Cape Blue-eared Glossy Starling – Kings' Camp

Burchell's Glossy Starling – Kings' Camp

Red-winged Starling – Simonstown, Table Mountain & Capetown area

Red-billed Oxpecker – Kings' Camp

Yellow-billed Oxpecker – Kings Camp

Olive Thrush – Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden

Cape Robin-chat – Simonstown & Capetown area

White-throated Robin-chat – Kings Camp

Karoo Scrub-robin – West Coast National Park

Capped Wheatear – West Coast National Park

Malachite Sunbird – West Coast National Park

Orange-breasted Sunbird – Simonstown & Table Mountain \*

Scarlet-chested Sunbird – Kings' Camp

S Double-collared Sunbird – West Coast National Park, Capetown area,  
Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden

House Sparrow – Johannesburg & Capetown area

Cape Sparrow – Johannesburg, West Coast National Park, Capetown area

Red-billed Buffalo Weaver – Kings' Camp

Cape Weaver – West Coast National Park

S Red Bishop – Capetown area

Yellow Bishop – West Coast National Park

Green-winged Pytilia – Kings' Camp

Blue Waxbill – Kings' Camp

Bronze Manakin – Kings' Camp

Cape Wagtail – Johannesburg, West Coast National Park, Cape of Good  
Hope & Capetown area

Yellow-fronted Canary – Kings' Camp \*

Yellow Canary – West Coast National Park

Cape Bunting – Cape of Good Hope

## Reptiles

Nile Crocodile – Kings' Camp

Angulate Tortoise – West Coast National Park \*

Marsh Terrapin – Kings’ Camp

Cape Girdled Lizard – West Coast National Park \*

S Rock Agama – Table Mountain \*

Flap-necked Chameleon – Kings’ Camp

## GREAT WHITE SHARK

Mammals – 35 species, 3 life species

Birds – 146 species, 13 life species

Reptiles – 6 species, 3 life species