

South Africa: Birding & Wildlife Safari Species List | Sept. 24 – Oct. 8, 2024 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Mason Flint with Guides Dalton Gibbs and Nick Fordyce. Our guests included Cathy, Jim W, Deb M, Jim A, Lucinda, Richard, Deb J, Stewart, Peggy and Randy

Summary:

This journey, organized by Naturalist Journeys and our partner in South Africa, began with a week on the Western Cape, followed by a week split between the highlands east of Johannesburg and Kruger National Park. The group collectively saw or heard 344 species of birds spanning dozens of families. Highlights included nearly 30 species endemic or near-endemic to South Africa such as Knysa Turaco, Karoo & Black Bustard, Blue Crane, Jackal Buzzard, African Penguin, Cape Rockjumper, Drakensburg Prinia, Sabota & Karoo Lark, Cape Sugarbird, and Forest Canary. During our pelagic trip off Cape Point, we 13 species of tubenoses including three South Africa rarities – Northern and Southern Royal Albatross, and Southern Fulmar.

We also saw 43 species of mammals, including three species of primates, fifteen antelope, four cats, and two marine mammals. Highlights included a rarely seen Caracal on our first day in West Coast National Park, an African Wildcat in Satara Rest Camp, a large pride of Lion and a Leopard along the Sabie River, a female Black-backed Jackal nursing pups just outside the gate at Satara, and a Honey Badger inside Satara Camp.

Reptiles and amphibians were hard to find given unseasonably cold temperatures, but we still managed 13 species including nice looks at Nile Crocodile and Nile Water Monitor in Kruger.

The eBird link below includes all of the birds recorded during the tour with dates and locations. If you're new to eBird, click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds was seen and how many. Photos uploaded to eBird by guides and other tour participants will appear in the report.

[South Africa: Birding & Wildlife Safari | September 24 - October 8, 2024 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

MAMMALS (43 species recorded)

HYRAXES: PROCAVIIDAE (1)

Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis* — We saw these cousins of elephants and manatees at the Stony Point Penguin Colony and during our drive back to Cape Town from De Hoop.

ELEPHANTS: ELEPHANTIDAE (1)

African Bush (Savanna) Elephant *Loxodonta africana* — Seen every day in Kruger, often near water. Evidence of these amazing animals in the form of toppled trees were everywhere.

OLD WORLD MONKEYS: CERCOPITHECIDAE (3)

Chacma Baboon *Papio ursinus* — Our first primate, first seen during the drive to Simonstown for the pelagic trip and daily while in Kruger.

Vervet Monkey *Chlorocebus pygerythrus* — Common in the rest camps but also along the roads in Kruger.

Blue (Samango) Monkey *Cercopithecus mitis albobularis* — Only seen in the highlands including Dullstroom and Mount Sheba.

SQUIRRELS: SCIURIDAE (2)

Smith's Bush Squirrel *Paraxerus cepapi* — Seen several times in Kruger.

Eastern Gray Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* — We saw this invasive species introduced from North America around Cape Town.

OLD WORLD RATS AND MICE: MURIDAE (1)

Four-striped Grass Mouse *Rhabdomys pumilio* — See by the sharp-eyed people in the group around Cape Town.

PIGS AND HOGS: SUIDAE (1)

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* — Seen every day in Kruger.

WHALES, DOLPHINS, PORPOISES: CETACEA (2)

Southern Right Whale *Balaena glacialis* — We saw a few during our windy afternoon visit to Koppie Alleen at De Hoop.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaengliae* — Surprisingly, we only saw one near the small boat harbor at Simonstown after the pelagic trip.

HIPPOS: HIPPOPOTAMIDAE (1)

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* — Limited water in Kruger reduced the number of Hippo but most large ponds and major rivers had some.

GIRAFFE: GIRAFFIDAE (1)

Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis* — Seen daily in Kruger, starting before we passed through Orpen Gate, including many very close looks.

YAKS, BISON, BUFFALO, ANTELOPES, SHEEP AND GOATS: BOVIDAE (15)

African Buffalo *Syncerus caffer* — We saw our first during our drive from Satara to Skukuza including a memorable “dagga boy” that Andrew described as an ornery old male that no longer lives in the herd. A few days later we saw a giant herd feeding along the shore of the Sabie River.

Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus* — This medium-sized antelope that resembles some North American deer was seen most days in Kruger.

Nyala *Tragelaphus angasii* — The spiral horned males, a group favorite, sometimes with very differently looking tan and white-striped females were common in Kruger.

Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros* — Another spiral-horned antelope, seen daily in Kruger.

Common Eland *Taurotragus oryx* — We first saw this giant antelope on our first full day in West Coast National Park and every day in De Hoop.

Common Duiker *Sylvicapra grimmia* — We saw this small antelope, also known as Bush or Gray Duiker, on our first two days in Kruger.

Steenbok *Raphicerus campestris* — We first saw this small antelope (usually reaching less than 24" at the shoulder) in West Coast National Park and again at De Hoop and Kruger.

Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus* — This rocky habitat specialist was first seen at Du Toits Kloof Lookout during our drive back to Cape Town from De Hoop and again on the big rocks between Satara and Skukuza.

Gray Rhebok *Pelea capreolus* — Seen twice, first at De Hoop and again at Verloren Valei.

Mountain Reedbuck *Redunca fulvorufula* — We saw this mountain specialist during our drive through Verloren Valei.

(Common) Waterbuck *Kobus [e.] ellipsiprymnus* — Another sexually dimorphic species seen in Kruger, we saw heavier males with curved horns and smaller shaggy females two days in Kruger.

Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis* — We saw a few of these slender, long-legged antelopes in West Coast National Park.

Impala *Aepyceros melampus* — Numbering in the hundreds of thousands in Kruger, we saw them in large numbers every day.

Bontebok *Damaliscus pygargus pygargu* & **Blesbok** *Damaliscus pygargus phillipsi* — Bontebok, the nominate sub-species, only occurs naturally in the fynbos and renosterveld habitats in the Western Cape Province where we saw them. We saw Blesbok, the other sub-species, in their preferred highveld habitat during our drive through Verloren Valei. Both sub-species are large with white faces, but Blesbok are typically lighter brown and have a brown patch on their face dividing the white.

Blue Wildebeest *Connochaetes taurinus* — Also known as Gnu, we saw these shaggy antelope with characteristic long black tails were widespread in Kruger.

HORSES AND ZEBRAS: EQUIDAE (2)

Plains (Common) Zebra *Equus quagga* — Seen daily in Kruger, we learned to differentiate them from Mountain (Cape) Zebra by their slightly lighter "shadow stripes" between the prominent dark stripes reaching the belly.

Mountain (Cape) Zebra *Equus zebra* — We saw the "Cape" sub-species, the smallest of all extant zebra species in WCNP and at De Hoop where they were often feeding very close. Their stripes don't flow all the way to the belly, leaving a white patch.

CATS: FELIDAE (4)

African Wildcat *Felis lybica* — A few in the group were very lucky to see this ancestor to modern housecats in Satara Camp near their Rondeval.

Caracal *Felis caracal* — We were treated to incredible looks at this rarely seen cat on our first day in West Coast National Park. It may have been stalking a pair of Gray-winged Francolin we were admiring close to the road and then walked across the field before stopping to rest, allowing us to observe this beautiful creature until we had to continue our drive back toward Cape Town.

Leopard *Panthera pardus* — Jim W spotted this beautiful cat from the N'watimhiri Bridge over the Sabie River on our last full day in Kruger. Amazingly, particularly given the high temperatures, the cat walked slowly across the dry riverbed before pausing in grass within eyesight.

Lion *Panthera leo* — During our drive along the Sabie River on our last full day, Andrew got tips about lions along the river heading in our direction. We found spots with views of the river and were treated to several females, cubs, and at least two males walking slowly upstream. Incredible!

CIVETS AND GENETS: VIVERRIDAE (1)

Cape (Large-spotted) Genet *Genetta genetta* — We had glimpses of this small carnivore during our night drive out of Satara Camp.

MONGOOSES: HERPESTIDAE (4)

Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo* — Seen at least twice while in Kruger.

Common Dwarf Mongoose *Helogale parvula* — Seen at least twice including good looks while at the Golf Course near Skukuza Camp.

Cape Grey (Small) Mongoose *Herpestes pulverulenta* — First seen in West Coast National Park and again at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens and at de Hoop.

Yellow Mongoose *Cynictis penicillata* — Some in the group caught sight of one during our drive from Cape Town to De Hoop.

HYENAS: HYAENIDAE (1)

Spotted Hyaena *Crocuta Crocuta* — First seen during our drive from Orpen Gate to Satara Camp not long after loading into the safari vehicles. We saw another sleeping peacefully just feet away from us during our lunch stop at Tshokwane between Satara and Skukuza.

WOLVES, COYOTES, FOXES AND JACKALS: CANIDAE (1)

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas* — One of the non-bird highlights of the trip was watching pups playing near their burrow just outside the Satara Camp gate. During one drive back to the camp we watched the female walking inside the camp and re-appearing at the burrow to nurse the pups a minute or two later.

BADGERS, OTTERS, AND MARTENS: MUSTELIDAE (1)

Honey Badger *Mellivora capensis* — We were envious after Andrew showed photos of one searching for treats in an outdoor kitchen early on our last morning. Then, less than an hour later, some in the group lucked out and saw presumably the same animal exiting the camp by drawing under a low spot in the fence.

PINNIPEDS: PINNIPEDIA (1)

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal *Arctocephalus pusillus* — We saw many of the “Cape” sub-species far offshore during the pelagic trip and swimming from shore after returning to False Bay.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (13 species recorded)

TORTOISES: TESTUDINIDAE (2)

Angulate Tortoise *Chersina angulata* — We saw a few in West Coast National Park.

Marsh Terrapin (Helmeted Turtle) *Pelomedusa subrufa* — Spotted during our last full day driving along the Sabie River.

CROCODILES: CROCODYLIDAE (1)

Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus* — Seen most days in Kruger where there was water, they provided another reason to stay in the safari vehicle.

SNAKES AND LIZARDS: [SQAMATA] (4)

Mole Snake *Pseudaspis cana* — We saw this large snake disappear into the grass in WCNP.

Nile (Water) Monitor *Varanus niloticus* — Seen on at least three days while in Kruger.

Southern Rock Agama *Agama atra* — Seen by some in the group during our second day in the Cape Town area.

Rainbow Skink *Trachylepis margaritifera* — Spotted

FROGS: [ANURA] (5)

Cape River Frog *Amietia fuscigula* — Spotted at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens.

De Villier's Moss Frog *Arthroleptella villiersi* — Heard at Harold Porter. Dalton noted that virtually every

mountain region in South Africa has its own moss frog species.

CHAMELEONS: [CHAMAELEONIDAE] (1)

Cape Dwarf Chameleon *Bradypodion pumilum* — Spotted at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.