

BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LANGEBERG REGION

Dr Anton Odendal

1 November 2021

What makes the Western Cape so special for birding?

- A diverse range of sought after endemic species, such as the Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Victorin's Warbler, Protea Seed-eater and the Benguela current specials
- Several under-utilised and ecologically varied birding destinations such as De Hoop Nature Reserve, the Langebaan lagoon, Nature's Valley, Wilderness and Karoo National Parks

Several exciting birding products already exist:

- the Cape & Kleinbaai pelagic birding cruises are regarded as of the best in the world,
- the African Penguin colony at the Boulders near Simon's Town needs no introduction
- the migratory waders visiting the WCNP are legendary
- www.westerncapebirding.co.za

The economic value of birding tourism

DTI estimates: between 20,000 & 40,000 birders travelled in SA in 2009 – 40% from abroad/ They spent between R 800 million & R 1,500 million on trips, support services & equipment/ USA birding: supports 670,000 jobs, US \$36-billion in retail sales. Total industry output: US\$ 82 Billion

Other benefits of birding

Internationally, birders are the largest group of eco-tourists/ On average they are well educated, wealthy + committed/ Birders often visit areas outside peak seasons + often visit deep rural areas - they often spend money where others do not;

COMPELLING REASONS TO BIRD IN THE LANGEBERG REGION

Great infrastructure – many well known destinations and other to be discovered/ Hotbed of endemism: Common species, Fynbos specials and species usually associated with Karoo habitats/ The closest area to Cape Town and the Overstrand where this unique combination of endemic species can be enjoyed/ The Breede River offers excellent opportunities to observe birds associated with water. The Langeberg region and the rest of Route 62 is a better birding alternative than the N2 when travelling between Cape Town and the Garden Route or the Eastern Cape

THE LANGEBERG REGION IS A HOTBED OF ENDEMISM The exciting news from the statistical analysis of information is that at least 68 bird species that are endemic and near-endemic to southern Africa occur in the area with many of these being “Western Cape specials”. This implies that 44% of the endemic and near-endemic species that occur in southern Africa can be found in this relatively small area. At least 39 migratory species also visit the region during summer months. This clearly illustrates that the region can become hugely sought-after by both local and international bird-

watchers if marketed correctly. This is the main purpose of the web page being developed. (The KNP only features 22 endemics).

EXAMPLES OF BIRDS FOUND IN VARIOUS HABITAT TYPES

- 1. BIRDING ALONG THE BREEDE RIVER:** African Fish Eagle, Giant Kingfisher, African Black Duck, Western Osprey
- 2. GARDEN BIRDS:** Many endemics, Familiar Chat, African Paradise Flycatcher
- 3. SPECIES ALONG THE OPEN ROADS:** Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk, Southern Black Korhaan, various chats, larks, pipits and cisticolas
- 4. TYPICAL SPECIES IN THICKETS:** Cardinal Woodpecker, Acacia Pied Barbet, Tambourine Dove, Cape Penduline Tit, Fairy Flycatcher
- 5. SPECIES USUALLY FOUND IN THE GREAT KAROO:** Karoo Chat, Karoo Scrub-Robin, Pirit Batis, Black-headed Canary, Rufous-eared Warbler, Karoo Eremomela, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Karoo Korhaan
- 6. SPECIES IN MOUNTAINOUS HABITATS:** Peregrine Falcon, Booted Eagle, Verreaux's Eagle, Cape Rock Thrush, Cape Grassbird, Ground Woodpecker
- 7. FYNBOS ENDEMICS:** Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin, Protea Seedeater, Victorin's Warbler

SELECTED BIRDING DESTINATIONS LANGEBERG REGION

Fish Eagle trail at Van Loveren, Barry House at Riverton Stud, River Goose Cruises, Viljoensdrift Cruises and Silberstrand along the **Breede River/** Buitenstekloof, Dassieshoek NR, Rooiberg region, Pat Busch NR, Klaasvoogds area, Museum gardens: **Robertson district (NB: Concern about Dassieshoek NR)/** Vrolijkheid NR, Steenbokvlakte road, Lord's Loop, Road to Nowhere: **McGregor district /** Jan Harmgat, Leopard trail, Melozhori Private NR, the Stormsvlei Kloof: **Bonnievale district/** Kogmanskloof, Montagu Nature Garden, Fraai Uitzicht, Avalon Springs, MountEco Game Reserve, Die Leidam: **Montagu District**

COMMENTS

- Could someone please help me with the following queries: Dassieshoek NR is a most extraordinary space of natural beauty & our natural heritage in the Robertson region. / Why are the very old oak trees being ring barked & poisoned?/ Why are there no baboon proof bins provided - either outside or inside the reserve? The litter was in jarring contrast to the beauty and a threat to the wildlife in the reserve. Who do we address with regards these issues? Does anyone have a sense of urgency to preserve our natural heritage?/ We walked out of the reserve with bags full of litter, please let us be proactive and prevent this?
- Complaints about management procedures at Vrolijkheid NR are also being received
- Several requests are being received regarding information on birding in the Langeberg region. Here is an example: "Seeking advice: Good places to stay on the Breede River? Hoping for: 1 good birding 2 relatively wild 3 right on river for swimming 4 could be self-catering or not. Thank you!"