



SOUTH AFRICA: FLOCK TO MARION – CAPE PRE-TOURS

JANUARY 2022



*South Africa's national bird, the **Blue Crane***

Flock to Marion 2022

Flock to Marion is an incredible opportunity. Please book this amazing value trip to a remote sub-Antarctic Island directly with BirdLife South Africa [here](#). Please also see our blog about Flock to Marion [here](#). This cruise starts in Cape Town on 24 January 2022 and ends in Durban on 31 January 2022. Birding Ecotours is offering a series of pre-trips to this cruise in the Western Cape, detailed below, two post-tours in KwaZulu-Natal, detailed [here](#) as well as our Highveld/Johannesburg post-tours, detailed [here](#).

Cape Pre-trips

Birding Ecotours is offering a series of 1-day and 3-day pre-Flock terrestrial birding trips targeting Cape endemics and specials. If you join all the trips you'll basically have birded the whole of the Western Cape Province comprehensively, but you can also join them as stand-alone day trips or 3-day trips. We donate five percent of the tour prices quoted to BirdLife South Africa for their conservation work.

Once any trip in question is guaranteed we'll advise you at what time we'll fetch you from wherever you're staying. We plan to drop you back a bit before dark/in time for dinner at the end of the day, or at the end of three days in the case of the longer tours.

The 1-day trips cost R950 per person including transport, fuel, tolls, guiding fees, and entrance fees. We advise arranging breakfast wherever you're staying. This is based on a group size of four to ten people, and there will be a surcharge in the unlikely case that three or fewer people book. We'll e-mail you the plan once the trip is fully subscribed and we know all the participants' details. In general we encourage you to bring a packed lunch to maximize birding time, but we plan to advise you by e-mail about the exact plan for each trip a few weeks before the trip.

The tour price for the 3 days/2 nights trips is basically all-inclusive (except for drinks, laundry, gifts, and other items of a personal nature) and is R13,200 per person sharing plus R2,200 single supplement (if you want a single room or if we can't find a room-sharer for you). This price is based on a group size of six to eight, and there will be a surcharge for smaller groups if we don't get the full quota.

Details of each Cape pre-Flock trip are shown below:

21 January 2022: Cape Peninsula and False Bay day trip

On this trip we'll be targeting **Cape Rockjumper**, **Cape Siskin**, **Victorin's Warbler**, **Cape Sugarbird**, **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, and many others around Rooi Els and Betty's Bay. While birding in the Cape Fold Mountains we may also come across **Verreaux's Eagle**, **Jackal Buzzard**, **Ground Woodpecker**, **Cape and Sentinel Rock Thrushes**, **Cape Grassbird** and

Grey-backed Cisticola while nearby patches of forest hold **Swee Waxbill**, **Fiscal Flycatcher**, **Cape Batis**, **Olive Woodpecker** and many other delights. We will also visit the nearby **African Penguin** colony at Stony Point where we normally find **Bank**, **Crowned** and **Cape Cormorants** too.



Orange-breasted Sunbird is one of the more colorful fynbos endemics.

22 January 2022: West Coast day trip

Today we'll visit the West Coast National Park and perhaps Velddrif and other nearby sites if there are rarities such as **Red-necked** or **Wilson's Phalaropes**, **Common Redshank**, etc. around, which we'll be sure to try and find. Some of the main targets apart from these rarities will be **Black Harrier**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Karoo Lark**, **Cape Long-billed Lark**, **Sickle-winged Chat**, **Chestnut-banded Plover** and a lot of other waders.



Red-necked Phalarope can be seen at the salt works at Velddrif.

23 January 2022: Fynbos (Hottentot) Buttonquail and other tough species

Today, we'll try and clean up on any birds not seen during the 21-22 January trips. These are likely to include **Fynbos (Hottentot) Buttonquail** (the most elusive fynbos endemic) and, while in the Agulhas Plains, we will keep a lookout for **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Cloud Cisticola** and **Southern Tchagra**. Do send us your wish lists and we'll bear them in mind. Please note, it's a roughly 2.5 hour drive each way from Cape Town to the small private nature reserve where we target **Fynbos Buttonquail**.



Striped Flufftail is always tricky to find.

18-20 January 2022 and 21-23 January (two departures): Tanqua Karoo and tough fynbos birds tour

The Karoo must be Africa's greatest birding hotspot! In addition, on this trip we also hope to see Protea Canary and other desirables. We leave Cape Town after breakfast, look for **Protea Canary** and other scarcer fynbos species en route, and also stop for raptors and waterbirds such as **South African Shelduck** and others before eventually reaching Karooport, the gateway to the endemic-rich Karoo. Our first target in this area will be **Namaqua Warbler**, which favors a mixture of *Phragmites* reeds and *Acacia karoo* (Sweet Thorn), to use the previous but more familiar generic name of this tree. The trilling song of this quite elusive, rather uncommon, strange warbler is a joy to behold, as will be visuals of the bird. A little farther we'll try a couple of our stakeouts for **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**, but we stay two nights at a comfortable guest farm where this species occurs, maximizing the chances of seeing one of the Karoo's more enigmatic endemics.

Entering the vast plains of the Karoo we'll look for **Rufous-eared Warbler**, **Karoo Eremomela**, **Karoo Chat**, **Tractrac Chat**, **Sickle-winged Chat**, various localized lark species such as **Karoo Lark**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Double-banded Courser**, with lots of luck perhaps **Burchell's Courser** (they occur quite regularly in the southern reaches of the Tanqua Karoo National Park, where we're likely to go on the second day of the tour), with some luck **Ludwig's Bustard**, and many other great birds. **Booted Eagle** is very often seen in these parts, and we might encounter **Namaqua Sandgrouse** in the more northern areas. Hilly areas are usually good for **Black-headed Canary**, but this is a nomadic, unpredictable species. Other canary species such as **White-throated Canary** usually abound. We'll also be practically sure to find **Fairy Flycatcher** and **Layard's Warbler**.



Karoo Korhaan can be seen in the Tankwa Karoo.

We'll enjoy two nights far away from the hustle and bustle of Cape Town in a remote but comfortable guest farm right in the middle of where a lot of the Karoo's endemics lurk, just where the vast plains meet the hills.

15-17 January 2022: Agulhas Plains endemics and specials tour

We drive three hours eastward from Cape Town to an amazing area near Africa's southernmost tip, where two oceans meet at Cape Agulhas. Here **Secretarybird** and **Denham's Bustard** are quite common, and we can also enjoy a **Cape Vulture** colony along with lots of migrant **White Storks**. But the real targets are all the **Blue Cranes** (nowhere is this South African near-endemic more abundant), **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, and **Cape Clapper Lark**. **Southern Tchagra**, **Knysna Woodpecker**, and other desirables will also be sought. **Grey-wing Francolin** is usually easy to find, along with its extremely common cousin, **Cape Spurfowl**. We should also see great mammals at de Hoop Nature Reserve, including **Cape Mountain Zebra** and the beautiful **Bontebok**, together with some exciting small mammal species. We sometimes go to a site where getting visuals of **Red-chested Flufftail** is relatively easy.

We also plan to take a look at some of the amazing plants of the highly threatened lowland fynbos, far less of which is protected than mountain fynbos. We should find some of the more common fynbos endemics here, such as **Cape Sugarbird** and **Orange-breasted Sunbird**. This is one of the best areas for the most enigmatic fynbos endemic, **Fynbos (Hottentot) Buttonquail**, and we plan to spend quite a fair chunk of time trying to get visuals of this species.



Southern Tchagra can be seen in De Hoop Nature Reserve.

12-14 January 2022: The Garden Route

For those who joined the Agulhas Plains trip we have a further three hours to drive eastward before spending two night in one of South Africa's most beautiful towns, Wilderness. You also have the option of flying into George, and we'll fetch you from the airport. Or we can transfer you by road from Cape Town to George to start this trip (it's a six-hour drive). At the end of this tour you can either fly back to Cape Town or home from George, or you can travel back to Cape Town with our guide (about six hours).

Targets of this tour are **Knysna Warbler, Knysna Woodpecker, Knysna Turaco, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Forest Buzzard, Red-chested Flufftail, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Forest Canary, Grey Cuckooshrike, Narina Trogon, Half-collared Kingfisher, African Emerald Cuckoo, African Finfoot**, and fynbos endemics. We should also see a lot of water- and reed-associated birds which should hopefully include some less common or obvious species like **Blue-billed (Hottentot) Teal, African Rail**, etc.



*The brightly colored and noisy **Knysna Turaco**.*

If there is enough demand, we can also continue one of our Tanqua Karoo trips to Springbok and Pofadder (needs 4 extra days/3 extra nights) in search of **Red Lark, Barlow's Lark, Sclater's Lark, Stark's Lark, Karoo Long-billed Lark, Cape Long-billed Lark** and other desirables. **Aardvark** and other great mammals are also possible.

In addition, if you send us your target bird (and mammal, etc.) list, we can also run custom or clean-up trips for you anywhere in the Cape region and beyond. We will be happy to run private trips for you, but at a higher cost than shown for the above.

Birding Ecotours is also offering a series of Flock to Marion – KwaZulu-Natal and Highveld/Johannesburg post-tours.

Duration: 1 or 3 days
Group Size: 1-day trips 4-10
3-day trips 6-8
Dates: January 2022
Start: Cape Town
End: Cape Town
Prices: 1-day trips R1,050
3-day trips R13,200 per person sharing
Single supplements: 3-day trips R2,200

Price includes:

1-day trips

Transport
Fuel
Tolls
Guiding fees
Entrance fees

3-day trips

Meals
Accommodation
Transport
Fuel
Tolls
Guiding fees
Entrance fees

Price excludes:

1-day trips

Meals

3-day trips

Drinks
Laundry service
Personal expenses such as gifts