

**SPRING IN THE CAPE  
SEPTEMBER 2025**

*Aloidendron dichotomum*



## Day 1      Arrival in Cape Town 13 September

Most of the group had arrived the day before and we only had to collect Hugh and Christine on our way east, heading across the flats and then onto rolling countryside backed by rugged sandstone hills. Much of the area had been subject to an extensive fynbos burn and much of the South African flora is geared for fire, with many species responding strongly and others utterly dependent on fires.

On arrival, the area next to the road had three species of gladiolus with, orange *G. alatus*, pink *G. hirsutus* and the deeper maroon of a hybrid *Gladiolus*. Both *Satyrium humile* and *Disa inflexa* grew among them as did the golden spires of *Lachenalia orchidoides* with spotted leaves and the yellow of *Wachendorphia paniculata*. As ever in South Africa you must look closely and there were new bulbs at every turn with blue *Moraea lugubris*, tall and slender *M. tripetala*, dainty creamy *Geissorhiza imbricata*, orangey *Romulea jugicola* and countless little reddish rosettes of the sundew, *Drosera trinervia*, some with white flowers. We spent time exploring the burn finding *Satyrium bicornuta*, *S. bracteata* and then the prize of the fried egg orchid, *Disa flexuosa*. On rockier areas the ground was frosted with countless *Geissorhiza ovata* with the odd *Aristea spiralis* poking up from the rocks. *Cyphia subtubulosa* trailed over low shrubs and there were flowers at every turn, and it was a good introduction to the richness of the geophyte flora. Even walking back, we found new species with *Geissorhiza ornithogaloides* and the fast-opening *Hesperantha falcata*. A tiny *Utricularia* was found and there were also opening *Baeometra uniflora*. We spent a short time looking at some intact fynbos where we found *Bezelia abrotanoides*, a pink *Erica* sp. and *Protea amplexicaule* with its hidden brown flowers. There was also the striking difference of the male and female forms of *Leucadendron salicifolia*(?).

Moving on a short way we made a final stop for an area with *Moraea miniata* and roadside drifts of *Ixia macrocarpa*, whilst up on the hills were new orchids, *Holothrix cernua*, *Satyrium bicallosum* and *Pterogodium platypetalum*. Of course, there was an abundance of familiar flowers including fine patches of pink *Oxalis purpurea* and many more *Lachenalia orchidoides* and a few *Bulbinella* sp. The next thing was to try and assimilate all of these new plants knowing that this was only day one! We drove back with a cloud cap on the silhouette of Table Mountain and a golden sky beyond.



## Day 2 To Nieuwoudtville

Today was mainly about getting ourselves to the drier north so we could then make a leisurely journey back south. Joan was reunited with her luggage by 9.45 and we set off taking a rather confusing route of the city and then onto the fast highway north, passing through extensive wheat fields and rolling countryside and seeing the occasional pair of blue cranes as we went. In time the rugged Cederberg hills drew closer, and we turned off along a side track flanked by diverse shrubs including the abundant yellow daisy *Euryops speciosissimus* and *Leucadendron pubescens*. Below them was plenty of pretty *Laparousia fabricii* and with a bit of searching we found a flowering *Ferraria uncinata* with remarkable bluish flowers with golden crimped margins. Then as we walked back Gary found a superb big clump of the same with many flowers. Alongside grew *Albuca suaveolens* with patent rather than nodding flowers. Various other daisies and a confusing array of shrubs filled the fynbos, and we looked at these more closely higher up where we had lunch with a grand view of the wild Cederberg nearby. There was an interesting pair of Proteaceae with the more 'standard' *Protea laurifolia* and the very different *Paranormus bracteolaris*. Indeed, this family is extremely varied in South Africa as are peas and along the track were several bushes of an attractive *Raffnia* with large bracts. Gangly stems of *Muraltia* sp were swathed in deep pink flowers and hidden in the fynbos we also found the purple of *Babiana ecklonii* and orange stars of *Ornithogalum dubium*. The more intense orange of *Crassula dichotoma* was common in places too.

A little further down the track and the roadside banks had lots of *Gladiolus venustus* together with *Moraea gawleri*, *Wurmbea spicata*, *Sparaxis metlerkampiae* and a few *Pterygodium penterianum*. Time was moving on, and we couldn't be we were going if we were still where we were, so we drove on once again past the pond with the large breeding colony of stunning red bishops, with many males displaying and posing on reed stems. A pair of blue cranes were seen well too as we reached the tarmac from where we pinned our ears back and drove. Our route took us through the extensive citrus-growing area and then into drier open karroid shrublands where there were some stunning displays of mound-forming *Ruchia* sp colouring the ground beneath the sand-coloured escarpment, whose rocks drew ever closer and more dramatic. A stop for a few *Moraea serpentina* and *Cyanella hyacinthoides* meant we had to wait half an hour at roadworks



*Laparousia fabricii*





before making the final drive up onto the escarpment with a vast sweeping view across the plains below. It wasn't far to our accommodation in the sleepy village of Nieuwoudtville with a colony of cape weavers in the trees and drifts of pink *Moraea bifida* all around.

### Day 3                      Nieuwoudtville – Part 1

The skies were blue, and the sun shone around the hotel, but heading a little way down the road the landscape was swathed in mists and a cool wind blew. We needed some time for this to disperse and let the sun encourage some of the flowers to open so we first stopped and explored an area with less fussy plants. The white of *Cyanella alba* was very common and we found a few *Gladiolus scullyi* and the large leaf rosettes of *Crossyne* and *Brunsvigia*. Moving across to a different area we found a few stunning *Sparaxis tricolor* that had opened next to some pristine *Babiana framesii*. On the adjacent rocks was *Lessertia frutescens* and then searching the extensive sandy flats was orange *Gladiolus speciosus*. An entirely different species, *G. orchidiflorum* was found nearby as were *Laperousia jacquinii*, spikes of *Pterygodium ingeanum* and many *Lachenalia suaveolens*, with similar *L. membranacea* on rockier parts. New plants continued to appear with dwarfed *Wachendorfia paniculata*, spiky bushes of *Heterorachis aculeata*, the cryptic stars of *Ferraria variabilis* and delicate *Tulbaghia dregeana*. Moving on to a different site (and seeing five Ludwig's bustards flying as we went) we found a new suite of plants including the gorgeous white form of *Sparaxis elegans* growing with the sumptuous purple blue of *Geissorhiza splendissima*, whilst the abundant orange daisy *Gorteria diffusa* was now also opening. Robust spikes of *Pterygodium hallii* also stood out in the sandy ground as clapper larks flew and displayed, various grasshoppers and an angular tortoise were found. Just before we left there was also a spike or two of slender *Holothrix villosa*.

Lunch was at a nature reserve and afterwards we took a walk finding *Drimia exuviata* and *Cyanella lutea*, but the area seemed rather dry, so we moved on to a different site where this time we were treated to an abundant display of *Sparaxis elegans* (red form). A further almost unmarked form (*non-picta*) was to be found a short distance away, but we took some time reaching them as fine tufts of *Conicosia elongata* with big yellow flowers, plentiful *Lachenalia suaveolens* and *L. nardouwsbergensis* together with drifts of *Sparaxis jacquinii*



and a few yellow *Babiana vanzijlæ* slowed us down. In time we reached the lovely *Sparaxis* and then continued to a rocky area finding *Moraea fugax* on the way. The rocks represented a shift from renosterveld to fynbos, made clear by a few *Protea*. Among the rock sheets there were fine spikes of *Satyrium erectum*, *Crassula alpestris* and then in a marshy flush was plenty of *Drosera variegata*, including two plants with outsize white flowers. There was time for a stand of *Bulbinella nutans* as we drove out too.

#### Day 4      Nieuwoudtville – Part 2

Overnight rain had passed, and the strong winds had eased, but it was still a fresh and overcast morning as we set off north stopping just a few kilometres down the road for an impressive gorge with a waterfall. The vegetation was very different and had shifted to karroid shrubland with species such as *Roopera*, sp, lots of *Euphorbia mauritanica* and the striking heavy stemmed *Tylecodon paniculatum* with tufts of fleshy glossy leaves. Smaller *T. wallichii* also grew here and there. We explored the rockier parts enjoying more views and finding a few *Holothrix secunda* in the crevices and slender grey mantises and a fantastic black-and-red grasshopper was found too. Elsewhere, interesting bulbs could be seen along the stream that fed the waterfall, with the contrasting huge leaves of *Crinum variable* and the altogether daintier white *Pauridia aquatica* floating on the calm water.

The weather had begun to improve and blue sky and sunshine threatened as we stopped for a superb flowering plant of *Gonioaloe vareigata*. Bushes of a yellow *Pteronia* sp grew with it as did *Lessertia frutescens* and a second species with trailing stems and many inflated, red-veined fruits. Another rocky roadside had the ivory spikes of *Lachenalia zebrina* emerging from exquisite marbled and striped leaves. We then reach the main event, the forests of *Aloidendron dichotoma* or quiver trees that created an other-worldly open woodland on the stony hills, their fluted trunks of golden, cracked and riven bark topped by architectural crowns. Beneath grew the spiky suhes of *Codon royenii* with white trumpet flowers as well as a few clumps of cactoid-stemmed *Hoodia gordonii* topped with brown-pink saucer flowers and higher up the slope we areas filled with the vivid pink of a *Ruschia* sp. There were some venerable and huge specimens of the *Aloidendron* as we climbed up reaching a flatter plateau with many more trees under which



*Gonioaloe vareigata*



grew a good number of crisp white *Ornithogalum thrysoides*. It was a magical place, with thousands of these iconic trees spread across several hillsides.

From here we returned to Nieuwoudtville and then on towards Vanrynsdorp. Roadworks delayed us half an hour, but there was a flowering *Protea laurifolia* and *Lachenalia membranacea* beside the road, and we photographed these until the weather, with first heavy mist and then a strong squall passing through. However, once we had descended a little the air cleared for the remainder of our journey.

## Day 5      Clanwilliam & Sevilla rock art

A fine clear sunny day and the botany began out in the flat expanses below the towering escarpment. The ground was littered with countless white quartz pebbles among which grew a fascinating selection of specialised succulent plants. Lusher *Mesembryanthemum guerichianum* stood out immediately and there were bushy plants of *Didelta spinosa* and mauve-flowered *Jamesbrittenia maxii*. A fence kept us from the main populations, a necessity sadly in these days of rampant poaching. That said there were specimens of the extraordinary *Mesembryanthemum digitata* with succulent gangly stems than more closely resembled a marine animal than a plant. Among these were many of the wonderful *Argyaderma delatii* looking like little ‘babies bottoms’ among the stones. Other plants included *Crassula columnaris*, *C. deceptor* and tufts of *C. muscosa* like a tangled fleshy fern.

From here we drove south, shifting from these karroid expanses to shrubbier Cederberg fynbos, which though it still had with lots of *Euphorbia mauritanica*, was now mixed with much larger bushes of *Didelta spinosa* as well as two species of bush daisy with orange *Arctotis laciniata* and a yellow *Berkheya* sp. *Holothrix secunda* was on the roadside rocks where we also found plenty of *Crassula tomentosa* with hairy-margined leaves and best of all colonies of green-buttoned *Conophytum obcordellum* wedged into crevices. A yellow *Albuca* sp. appeared here and there, whilst on the top of the bank was a solitary clump of *Cephalaria decurrens* and the large black and red grasshopper was seen again too. Back at the vehicle we ate lunch and then had a quick look at lovely yellow form *Moraea* sp that had just opened.



*Argyaderma delatii*



Moving further south and then into the rugged Cederberg, we entered a battered, eroded world of bizarre rockscapes that extended for miles, with ridges of weathered ancient sandstones, the valleys filled with fynbos including *Protea nitida* with red young foliage. We spent the afternoon exploring the Sevilla rock art trail where the eroded rock sheets held a wealth of flora with wonderful drifts of thousands of *Laperousia divaricata*, punctuated with the lilac of *Cyanella hyacinthoides* grew on areas with more soil, whilst other depressions had *Ornithogalum hispidum* and tiny yellow *O. rupestre*. A seep had *Utricularia bisquamata* and purple *Monopsis debilis*, whilst on the flat rocks in the thinnest of soils grew a diminutive *Anacampseros* sp. Larger *Conophytum obcordellum* was also here and there as was the much larger and lush *Massonia bifolia* too. Another standout sight was the various mesembs that were in full flower including *Oscularia deltoidea* and taller, looser shrubs of a lovely *Ruschia* sp. Large native figs grew here and there the twisted roots gripping the coarse sandstone and tall, lush stands of architectural *Melianthus major* burst from between the boulders. Further on there were patches and drifts of a soft lilac *Geissorhiza* sp and a few *Hesperantha bachmannii* had begun to open. And then there was the interesting rock art that depicted various hunting scenes and the animals that lived in the area. Big southern rock agamas basked in the sun and scuttled from rock to rock and bokmakirie whistled their distinctive calls as the rocks glowed in the afternoon sun.

Dinner took a while to arrive.

## Day 6 To Langebaan

Today we searched for jewels. South Africa abounds with beautiful flowers and some of the most special are the peacock moraeas, so called because of their colourful patterns. Some grow predominantly on renosterveld and lowland areas, much of which has been converted to agriculture so sadly, these are now rare and have greatly reduced ranges. Luckily some islands of habitat remain, and we spent the morning exploring one such patch. On arrival the flat areas had lots of *Lachenalia pallida* and immediately we reached the slopes there were many lovely *Babiana inclinata* with arching stems of lavender flowers, mingled with plenty of *Indigofera digitata* and a bit higher up the first of many white *Geissorhiza tulbaghensis*. One of the stars of the show was close to this with a



*Ruschia* sp.



number of gorgeous *Moraea villosa*, each lilac-pink flower embellished with blue and gold. We crossed the hillside finding increasing numbers of *Babiana inclinata*, a shrubby *Hermannia*, *Cyphia bulbosa* and a second climbing species with smaller flowers. A second precious patch of habitat had not one but three *Moraea* species, including the stunning *Moraea gigandra* growing alongside more *M. villosa* and the rather restrained brownish *M. vejeta*. The rayless yellow of *Berkheya rigida*, a deep pink *Romulea* and a yellow *Geissorhiza* species all added to the mix. Drifting back the white ruffs of *Monsonia speciosa* had opened in the damp flats which also had a few *Pterygodium orobanchoides* and *Pauridia capensis*.

Lunch was in the shade and then we continued to the coast arriving at a long beach with countless red *Babiana hirsuta* peppering the dunes, mixed with the intense pink of *Senecio elegans*, cryptic *Ferraria foliosa*, trailing yellow flowered *Jordaaniella dubia* and the untidy stems of *Trachyandra revoluta*. It was a fabulous display with the blue of the Atlantic beyond and gentle waves lapping the beach. Higher on sands we also found a good population of thick, nobbly-stemmed *Euphorbia caput-medusae* and the white mesemb bush *Stoeberia utilis*. There was more to come and heading further south we reached a rare patch of limestone which held a completely different flora. Most obvious were the striking orange daisies (*Arctotis* sp.) and vivid mounds of *Ruschia/Drosanthemum* sp., but we quickly found rare endemics including our third special peacock, *Moraea calcicola*. These were with *Geissorhiza lewisii*, pink *Ixia purpureorosea*, bushes of intense red *Pelargonium fulgidum* and good specimens of salmon pink *Moraea miniata*. The knobbly stems of a *Quaqua* sp. had a few unusual starry flowers and closer searching of the area found not only flora but marauding caterpillars and a few butterflies. Many more *Moraea calcicola* were found growing in limestone rubble and scrub with the slender spikes of *Wurmbea variabilis*, *Sebaea exacoides* and a rather hidden *Babiana tubiflora*. A much better specimen of the latter was found as we wandered back also seeing several robust spikes of *Satyrium odorum* rising from the scrub. It wasn't far from here to our pleasant accommodation seeing a few springbok as we drove and then another wandering about the hotel grounds.



*Moraea villosa*



South Africa's long and beautiful coastline provided the backdrop for today as we visited West Coast national park and its extensive areas of strandveld vegetation. Much of the area was swathed on low shrubs, but in the matrix of open patches and larger sandy clearings a great many daisies and mesembs were starting to open for the day. The area also supports various large animals and as we went, we stopped handsome bontebok, groups of cape zebra as ostrich stalked across the area and a pair of African harriers were seen courting, floating gracefully in the air. Plantwise there was *Ixia purpureorosea* as we watched zebras and then superb drifts of orange *Arctotis hirsutus*, beyond which were carpets of pink *Senecio arenarius*. An area of scenic coastal rocks allowed us to explore more, quickly finding five species of *Pelargonium*, including red *P. fulgidum*, pink *P. hirtum*, white *P. longicaule* and shrubby *P. cucullatum*. In the natural rock garden below the huge granite hulks there was lots of *Moraea fugax* mixed with *Babiana tubiflora*, the pretty purple annual *Diascia diffusa* and tall plants of *Ferraria crispa*. The swollen fruits of *Gomphocarpus* sp grew in a rocky gully as did spikes of *Drimia exuviatum*. The latter were common on a different area of rocks too, where fairy shrimps danced in the shallow rock pools and architectural *Aloe* af. *perfoliata* and green spikes of *Satyrium odorum* sprouted from fissures in the exfoliating rock domes. Various lizards scuttled and sunbathed and the views from the top were off blue waters and islands that filled the deep bay. Below the rocks was *Ornithogalum maculatum* and a deep purple form of *Geissorhiza lewisii* and Veronica found a population of *Moraea gawleri* too. Hairy caterpillars were oddly abundant with almost every other bush host to one of more. However, just as we were about to leave Selene found an amazing pine emperor moth caterpillar an amazing rainbow coloured creature.

Moving towards the coast we stopped again for the sheets of colour this time with a perfectly placed bontebok lounging among them and sacred ibises probing frantically all around. The orange and pink swept down to the coast and that's where we were aiming, although another stop for a close-up view of *Arctotis hirsuta* and the lovely varied pink shades of *Cleretum bellidiforme* was needed. A pleasant breeze swept along the coast as we ate, watched keenly by scrounging Hartlaub's gulls. Behind us was a limestone knoll and



*Gazania maritima*

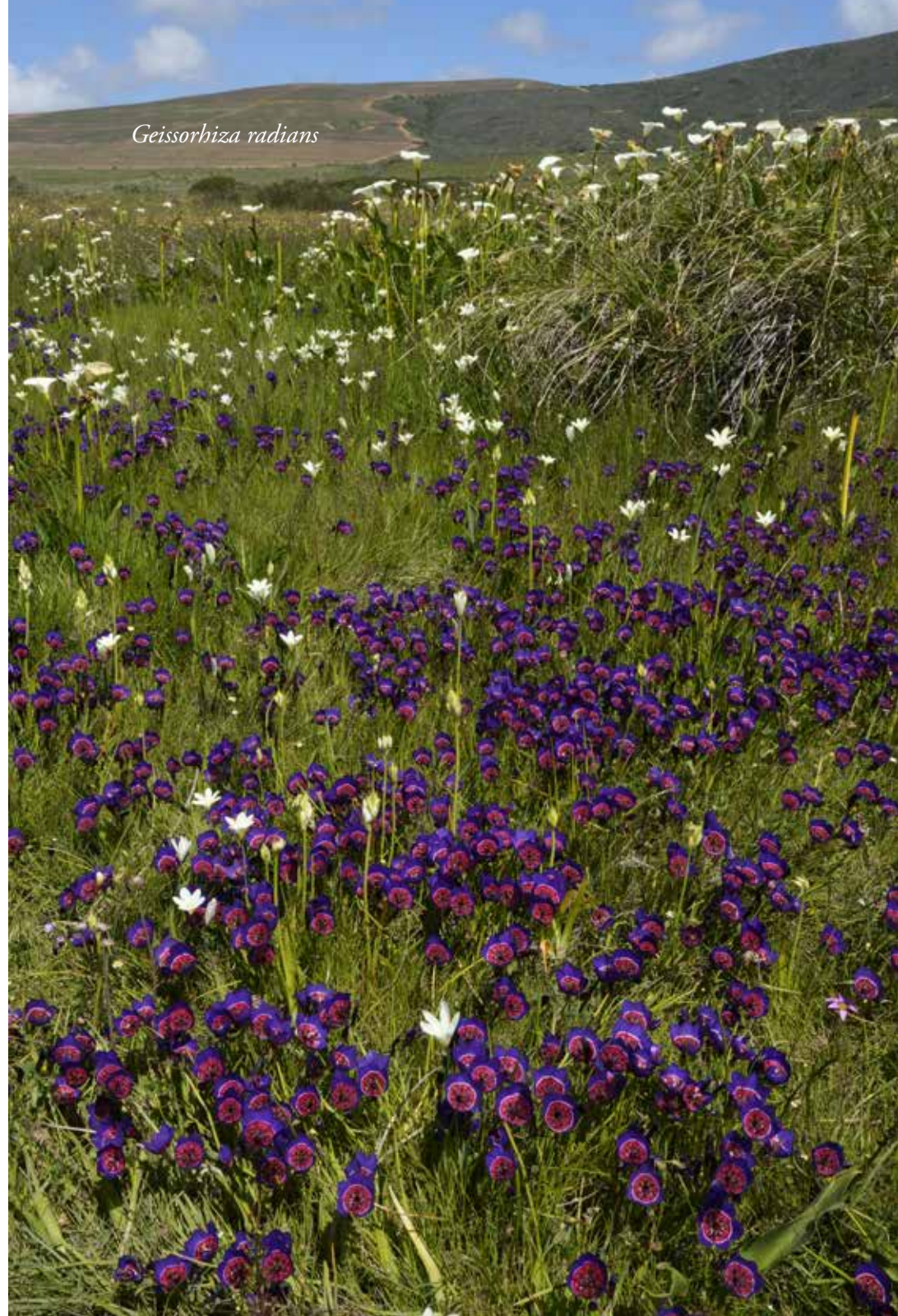


the western slope was smothered in hundreds of stunning *Gazania maritima*, each orange flower beset with blue jewels in the centre. Up on the cliff top were many of attractive succulent, *Crassula hirsuta*, various daisies and the deep cerise of *Silene ornata*. A flowering plant of *Limonium peregrinum* was found as were a couple of dazzling little lycaenids and a cryptic grasshopper.

Our penultimate stop was on a completely different sandy clifftop with a rich community of plants including the scrambling vines of *Cynanchum africanum*, yellow stars of *Crassula dichotoma*, the big pale-yellow funnels of *Grielum grandiflorum*, dense heads of white flowers on trailing *Limeum africanum*, flowering *Euphorbia caput-medusae* and dainty *Zaluzianskyia villosa*. There was also a trio of parasites with two hemiparasites on shrubs, *Septulina glauca* and *Viscum capense* and the remarkable holoparasite *Hyobanche sanguinea* that burst from the sand. A final stop was at a second area of granite with a little house perched on top. Here we found more *Ferraria crispa*, *Ornithogalum rupestre*, *Stachys aethiopica* and a stand of *Pterygodium volucris*. My vehicle also enjoyed prolonged and excellent views of a handsome male southern black korhaan as we left to put a cherry on top of the day.

## Day 8      Darling

A complex of floriferous renosterveld locations that surround the small town of Darling provided constant interest during the day. The first area had clearings in the scrub filled with *Geissorhiza monanthos*, *Ixia scillaris*, *I. abbreviata*, *Moraea bellendenii*, *M. gawleri* in various colour variants, plenty of *Babiana tubulosa*, the dark spikes of *Wurmbea marginata*, intense blue *Aristea africana* and *Pterygodium catholicum* in some attractive pink forms. A black-shouldered kite hovered over the site as we looked around and various insects were seen including a striking black-and-red longhorn beetle. The next location was even better with two large flowered sundews; *Drosera pauciflora* and *D. cistiflora* vying for attention, both species with large showy flowers. Tucked among the grass was purple and red *Geissorhiza eurystigma*, a species rather like the stunning *G. radians* which filled wetter areas in glorious drifts often mixing with white *Sparaxis bulbifera* with *Romulea eximia* along the edges. The colouration of *Geissorhiza radians* is



*Geissorhiza radians*



mimicked by *Babiana rubrocyanea*, and we found a few of these in the drier areas, where there were also airy stands of *Heliophila* sp, the white ruffs of *Monsonia speciosa*, various daisies and big flower encrusted hummocks of *Lampranthus aurea*. Moving on after lunch other marshes were choked with hundreds of *Zantedeschia aethiopica*, the surrounding damp flats filled with golden *Ixia maculata*, yellow *Moraea bituminosa*, blue *M. amabilis*, *Pterygodium alatum* and many more lovely *Romulea eximia*.

The latter were numerous at our third stop too, where they mingled at times with their similar cousin *R. obscura*. This area of damp grassland also had a population of intense crimson *Drosera cistiflora*, deep violet *Babiana angustifolia*, the subtle shades of *Pelargonium triste* and both *Lachenalia pallida* and bluish *L. unifolia*. A final stop in an area of strandveld found the remarkable *Babiana ringens*, a species specialising in bird pollination with a bird perch in the centre ringed by scarlet flowers. *Leucospermum tomentosum*, various mesembs, restios and *Moraea neglecta* were also seen.

The final note of the day was the spotted eagle owl perched on a wall as we returned from dinner.

## Day 9 Tulbagh

We set off from the lowlands of the coastal strandveld and turned inland through extensive areas of wheat with the hazy outline of the mountains in the distance. Precious renosterveld patches were the target for the morning and we began in a flat rather grassy area that nonetheless still had plenty of *Monsonia speciosa* as well as *Ixia abbreviata*, *Codonorhiza elandsmontana* and a small pink *Babiana* sp. we had hope to see *Moraea tulbaghensis* here but no luck this season. However, as we drove out, we noticed a damp area with many spikes of *Wurmbea stricta* and these grew with *Pauridia aquatica*. Gary also produced a chunky skink that posed for some photos. The next stop had entirely different plants including hundreds of rich cerise *Babiana villosa* and above these was a big swathe of *Cyanella lutea*. Searching the renosterveld further we found *Satyrium erectum* and then the gorgeous velvety purple flowers of *Sparaxis grandiflora*. Another area had many more of these together with the gorgeous cherry-red *Geissorhiza erosa* and a smattering of salmon pink *Moraea papilionacea*.



*Wurmbea stricta*



Lunch was near series of waterfalls and looking around these afterwards there were hefty stands of *Prionium serratum* below them and the first of many *Ornithogalum maculatum* on the rocks. Climbing the adjacent slope we saw *Dianthus albens*, two or three different species of *Crassula*, a few *Holothrix villosa* and another striking red-and-black grasshopper was seen too. Tall stems of *Selago corymbosa* grew on tall straight stems in the burn above and there was the lemon-yellow of *Moraea neglecta* too, but the main event involved a further scramble up a rock knoll through the tangled burnt stems. Here we found a population of the wonderfully and highly distinctive *Kumara plicatilis*, a succulent that is grown worldwide for its ornamental value, but in nature is confined to a small area of the Western Cape mountains. One prize plant was bedecked in spikes of scarlet flowers, a perfect architectural specimen with the rugged battered hills beyond. Retracing our steps we found plenty of *Pterygodium catholicum*, *P. alatum* was also seen as was a *Roopera* sp. and a *Pelargonium* sp. There was a final stop to explore a flat burn, which although not fresh still had many interesting plants including lots of *Lachenalia suaveolens*, *Gladiolus alatus*, *Disa bracteata*, various colour forms of *Babiana villosa*(?), a delightful dainty asclepiad *Eustegia minuta*, together with a lovely *Cyphia* with large white flowers shaped like gangly men.

The hills now looked decidedly moody with grey clouds and strong gusts, and it was as well we were headed to our hotel. And the rain did arrive but not until we had arrived back from dinner.

## Day 10      Ceres

The town of Ceres is ringed by sandstone mountains, and we spent time looking around various slopes and passes, first stopping in an area swathed in abundant *Muraltia spinosa* bushes where we found a wealth of orchids with plentiful *Satyrium bicornis* growing with its showier cousins pink *S. erectum* and *S. corrifolia*, the latter coming in lemon peel or orange peel colour forms. Clambering up a bit higher we found a numbers of very fresh and vivid *Hyobanche sanguinea*, followed by *Gladiolus quadrangularis* and showy strands of red *Microloma tenuifolium* with the odd *Erica plukenetii*



*Kumara plicatilis*



and *Protea laurifolia* nearby. Walking down we then saw a *Gladiolus hyalinus* we had somehow missed in the way up. Driving higher we explored a recent burn among the dramatic sandstone boulders where we found plenty of pretty *Gladiolus inflatus*, many *Pterygodium platypetalum*, pink *Disa bifida* the pretty dwarf bulb *Codonorhiza falcata*, *Moraea variabilis* and various *Oxalis* sp.

The second area we spent time was on the other side of town in an older burn which was fast regenerating. Despite the regrowth there was still a lot of *Babiana lineolata*, *Ixia latifolia* and *Satyrium erectum*. Bushes of grey-mauve or white *Aspalathus nigra* formed part of the dense fynbos that was developing and making our own progress rather slow at times. A plant of the unusual *Satyrium pumilum* was found and shortly after Veronica showed me a photo of one, she had found earlier in the previous stop – it was much nicer! On an adjacent slope we found the delicate *Gladiolus ceresianus* and after some searching a decent *Disa biflora*. Various mesembs and oxalis were scattered throughout. A second site of rocky grassland had many more *Gladiolus inflatus*, a couple of brownish-green *G. recurva* and a few *Babiana sambucina*. There was then a final stop beside and area of lakeside scrub, with the lake itself home to coots, great crested and little grebes and red bishops. Searching the scrub we finally found several of the extraordinary spider orchid, *Batholina burmanniana* as well as a scattering of *Disperis villosa* and lots of *Holothrix villosa*.

Veronica's find from earlier had preyed on the mind of some of us and half the group took a return excursion back to the mountain burn where we relocated this remarkable little orchid *Satyrium pumilum* and enjoyed the last hours of afternoon light playing across the cliff faces and contorted rocks.

## Day 11      Karro BG & Montague

A change of floral scene today with more than a hint of the Karoo, the vast tract of steppe and semi-desert that occupies a big part of the country inland. The morning was spent at the interesting Karoo desert botanic garden, and although it had a well laid out garden with many South African plants, the more interesting part was the walk up the rocky path into the native bush land beyond. We sent a party of rock hyrax scuttling away as we started our walk into a fascinating tract full of succulents and drought resistant shrubs, punctuated by the architectural



*Satyrium pumilum*





forms of *Aloe microstigma*. The warm colours of *Crassula rupestris* were common, some plants with pinkish flowers and popping up between shrubs with the white flowers of *Haworthia herbacea*, fleshy leaved *Crassula cotyledonis* and wedged in the crevices of the rocks were delightful clusters of green buttons belonging to *Conophyton ficiforme*. Loose bushes of *Lampranthus haworthii* were decorated with big pink flowers and related *Drosanthemum speciosum* glared with bright orange. There was even a spike of the orchid, *Holothrix secunda* as we neared the end.

Lunch was in a pleasant spot with shade, bird song and the odd guineafowl of tortoise moving through. The weather in the distance was looking moody and by the time we reached the next stop on a pass with *Babiana cuneifolia* and the spiny shrub *Cliffortia ruscifolia* a cool breeze was blowing. Just beyond this found the interesting *Protea sulphurea* with large pendant flowers hanging from a bank. Our final location was in an area of boulder strewn slopes with plenty of flowering *Aloe comptonii*. The rocks all around were buckled and folded in dramatic fashion and we hiked up between the ruptured strata to an old fort where we also found the diminutive *Holothrix parviflora* and some good flowers on *Protea nitida* that were proving attractive to a sugarbird. The weather wasn't improving as we drove the final stretch rain arrived and all was wrapped in grey by the time we reached our pleasant accommodation...with electric blankets.

## Day 12 Tradouw Pass & the Karoo

A day of contrasts that began on the Tradouw Pass in a landscape swathed in fresh, flowery fynbos. Following a track uphill, we could see the slopes blanketed in a pink *Erica* sp., among stands of *Leucadendron* sp. and the distinctive *Bezelia abrotanoides* with crowns of white. The first lovely *Gladiolus rogersii* was seen and more of these pretty bulbs followed as we continued slowly up also seeing *Aristea juncea*, *Satyrium acuminatum*, clumps of slowly opening straw coloured *Syncarpha speciosissima* and a peculiar lanky yellow daisy *Osteospermum corymbosum*. Shrubs of *Mimetes cucullatus* became more common and we found a number of these in good flower followed by tall pink spikes of *Watsonia borbonica* and the unusual, red-budded daisy *Helichrysum felinum*. Reaching the end of the track Mayur then spotted a gorgeous *Gladiolus carneus* hidden among



the shrubs. This seemed to be the icing on the cake, but as we descended a detour onto a different slope revealed a colony of *Leucospermum mundii*, a very lovely Proteaceae covered in yellow flowers that aged to red. They were also attracting orange-breasted sunbirds for a birding bonus.

Moving on the landscape changed dramatically and very quickly, shifting from fynbos to karroid scrub in a short distance. We now drove through drier hills; indeed, the rains appeared to have been sporadic, and our lunch time stop was in rather drier hills than expected. Nonetheless we found an array of succulent flora including *Monsonia crassicaulis*, the bronzy-brown twisted stems of *Haworthiopsis viscosa*, a solitary *Hoodia pilifera* (the rest appeared to have been poached, a serious problem for some plants in South Africa), many *Crassula rupestris* and then the unusual red flowered *Cadaba aphylla*. There were a couple of stops as we made our return journey the first found the knobbly stems of *Quaqua mammillaris* and *Euphorbia multiceps* together with slender *Dipcadi brevifolium*, then with flowering *Cotyledon orbicularis* forms, were a small *Moraea* sp, white *Tritonia pallida*, *Holothrix secunda* and a delightful little *Crassula pyramidalis* in flower. *Tritonia pallida* was even more common further along, growing with the tall stems of *Albuca canadensis*. Soon we had returned to the lush fynbos finding a flowering population of *Erica plukenetii* growing with the abundant *Leucadendron eucalyptifolia*. Another red heath, *Erica discolor* was also nearby. Next were flowering *Protea repens* with copious nectar that dripped from the flowers when bent over. Multi-stemmed plants of *Aloe arborescens* clung to the rocks as we continued stopping one last time for a view up and down the valley.

Sunbeams burst across the mountains as we neared town, grateful that the rain had held off after all.

### Day 13      Fernkloof

Just to the north of town an open grassy area had a collection of bulbs to get the day going with *Babiana nervosa*, the tall stems of *Gladiolus liliaceus* with peculiar brownish



*Leucospermum mundii*





daisy *Oedera imbricata*, the pink 'everlasting' daisy *Phaenocoma prolifera* and *Protea longifolia* in flower. The path branched to a waterfall and then up high on a winding path past *Lobelia pinifolia*, creamy *Erica lutea*, the yellow flowers of *Protea nitida*, *Polygala myrtifolia* and one or two lovely *Gladiolus debilis*. There was a splendid view at the top and we could just make out Gary and Mayur who had set off on a mission to (successfully) find *Disa pilansii* in a high seep. As for the rest of us though we found little else except *Drosera xerophila*, a few *Disa bracteata* and the slender stems of *Gnidia* sp the wide stretch of untrammelled fynbos and coastal sweep were worth the hike up. Returning we took a different path for part of the way where we found a few more *Phaenocoma prolifera* and the beautiful complex heads of *Leucospermum cordifolia*.

The hotel was very close by, and dinner was by the sea with various whale inspired sculptures spread along the sea front.

flowers (that apparently change colour to mauve at night), a few *Disa bracteata* and plenty of *Watsonia laccata*. From here we drove on for a while across country through extensive areas of wheat and oilseed rape that filled the space between the rocky hills either side. a cape weaver colony crowded the leaves of a palm when we stopped for fuel and then taking a side road there was a population of *Watsonia aletroides*. Reaching the coast, we took a road up above Hermanus to a large burn where we found the wonderful *Geissorhiza schinzii* with large pink flowers. Alongside this was *Satyrium lupulinum*, the red tubes of *Erica cerinthoides*, tufts of the fern *Schizea pectinata*, the big yellow daisies of *Berkheya barbata* and round mauve heads of *Dilatrix viscosa*.

Lunch was here and then we moved a short distance to a rocky headland where we walked down past *Crassula fascicularis* to a flowering bush of the local endemic, *Pennaea speciosus*. There was also a pristine *Gladiolus debilis* and a bush of and green flowered *Erica sessiliflora* on the walk back. The rest of the afternoon was spent at Fernkloof and large area of fynbos swathed hills where abundant yellowish *Leucadendron gandogerii* coloured the landscape. In the stream valleys were large shrubs of graceful *Psoralea pinnata/arborea* laden with mauve-blue flowers and the trackside had a succession of new plants with *Saltera sarcocolla*, *Struthiola tomentosa*, the yellow



## Day 14 Harold Porter BG

After an excellent breakfast in the garden, we reluctantly left our very pleasant guest house and began our journey east to Howard Porter botanic gardens. The rest of the morning was spent exploring the trails that led up the flanks of the coastal mountains, the while area swathed in diverse fynbos. A sugarbird was perched on a tall stem as we set off up the slope where choice plants included the lovely *Leucospermum cordifolium*, *Pelargonium cucullatum*, big flowered *Drosera cistiflora* (along with both *D. glabripes* and the abundant small rosettes of *D. trinervia*), slender spikes of *Microdon dubius* and many *Leucadendron*, with *L. xanthocoma*, *L. salignus* and *L. gandogerri*. *Leucospermum oleifolium* was also seen in good flower, but the prize was surely the wonderful flower of *Protea cynaroides* we found just below the ridge. We had been seeing also *Mimetes cucullatus* as we climbed and there was a very good specimen at the top with a commanding view of the coast and mountains. The rocky headland in front of us had a few lovely *Gladiolus debilis* too.

Back down in the gardens we had lunch, visited the bookshop and then continued east, taking a side road along which was lots of showy *Gladiolus carneus* (pink form) as well as a couple of impressive *Satyrion carneum*. The fiery red of *Gladiolus cunonius* was also seen and these were common in an area right by the coast where breakers were smashing on the rocks. There was time for a search of the rock pools and photos of the scenic sweep of coast, and this only got more dramatic as we moved on following a winding road with views across the white-capped waters and up to the rugged sandstone tops.

From here we completed our journey to Cape Town with the dominant silhouette of Table Mountain ahead of us, following around its flanks and on the other side reaching the coastal strip and onto Simonstown.

## Day 15 Cape Point

We had nearly run out of land with only the mounts and cliffs on Cape Point between us and the open ocean. Entering the national park, we stopped a short way in to search a stretch of blustery clifftop for the scarce *Lachenalia patentica* finding them among the rocks with orange-yellow tubular flowers. Moving on to Cape Point it was already becoming quite busy here, but we knew a quieter spot



*Drosera cistiflora*





and walked down seeing *Orobanche* sp, *Gladiolus cunonius*, *Zaluzianskyia villosa*, *Nemesia affinis* and low bushes of *Cullumia squarrosa* with yellow daisy flowers. A side track led across the cliff top to where we had the area to ourselves, finding several fresh *Ferraria crispa* before reaching the sweeping and magnificent views along the coast. It was great to just sit and feel the breeze and enjoy the fresh air. Walking back up there was a collection of striped hairy caterpillars.

From the heights of the cliffs a couple of ostriches were seen close as we descended to the flat lowlying areas that were blanketed in fynbos, punctuated by rocky ridges. A roadside area had the prostrate *Leucospermum hypophyllocarpodendron*, green to black *Lyperia triste*, an unknown violet-coloured *Moraea* sp. and bushes of *Serruria villosa*. Reaching the coast a bontebok was seen very well before we ate lunch. Working off that lunch we set off for a flat-topped hill, climbing the rocky steps to where we found *Stovia doddii* (a narrow endemic from a couple of hills in the park), huge bushes of *Mimetes fimbriifolius*, plentiful *Adenandra villosa* with shiny white flowers and a succession of lovely *Lachenalia luteola* some sprouting from crevices in the rocks. There were more grand views along the coast where the rare *Serruria decumbens* grew in the rock crevices, confined to just this one ridge. Turning inland past the deeply eroded rocks and big floriferous bushes of *Mimetes fimbriifolius*, seeing *Erica imbricata* (white) and larger flowered *E. coriiflora* (pink) as well as *Moraea neglecta* and large clumps of *Syncarpha speciosissima*. There was a final plant stop for a big colony of *Mimetes hirsutus*, arriving as a sugarbird perched on top of one spike. And birds were had the final say of the day when we stopped at the local African penguin colony and enjoyed many close-up views of these

distinctive and somewhat comical birds along with several rock hyraxes which scuttled about and engaged in various antics along the way.

## Day 16 Silvermine & Kirstenbosch

It was a sunny breakfast, but with gusty winds this changed fast and soon the hills we were heading to were engulfed in thick mists. By the time we reached Silvermine it was decided inclement but undaunted we went for our walk soon seeing many flowers in the big burn that had swept through earlier in the year. Fortunately, things improved, the rain stopped, and we were able to enjoy some multi-flower specimens of *Gladiolus debilis*, flowery clumps of *Aristea spiralis* with large, blue-tinged white flowers and rocky knolls with lots of tall *Moraea ochroleuca* in a variety of colour forms from pure yellow, orange-centred yellow or even entirely orange. Growing with these were *Nemesia affinis*, a dwarf *Pelargonium*, scarlet *Erica cerinthoides* and four orchids with *Satyrium odorum*, *S. bicorne*,



tiny *S. bicallosum* and *Disa bracteata*. A rocky slope near a waterfall also had *Moraea papilionacea* (yellow form), the unusual green flowered *Knowltonia vesicatoria* and the first of several stunning tall spikes of *Watsonia meriana* with intense orange-red flowers that shone out among the blackened stems. They rather summed up the fynbos cycle with vibrant colour appearing among the devastated landscape of a fire, which in this case stretched over a huge area with a forest of charcoaled stems topped with exploded seedcases. Here and there they gave colour to the large stands of a big fast emerging fern, *Toddea barbara*. The sun eventually came out and by the time we had turned around in an area with quite a lot of *Drosera cistiflora* the many *Moraea neglecta* that had been closed were now open. There was also quite a few pretty *Gladiolus* hybrids near the car park.

From here we moved on to Kirstenbosch botanic garden, ate lunch and then spent some time looking around the extensive South African flora collection with everything from fynbos to tree ferns, cycads and a fascinating succulent assortment. There was time for one last foray into a small patch of renosterveld that is surrounded by city. The drifts of *Sparaxis bulbifera* had closed, but *Gladiolus alatus* was there and walking across the open area we reached a small partially enclosed area with some bushes of *Protea scolymocephala* and the rare *Serruria aemula*.

Dinner was in a local Asian food restaurant and was very tasty.

## Day 17      Mont Rochelle

Leaving the city behind we drove towards the hills, their battered and irregular outline now a familiar sight to us all. The views were very clear, but that was a product of the strong gusty wind that had and persisted for the last few days. Reaching the Mont Rochelle fynbos reserve we first had a breezy look around the flat areas surrounding the car park where there was plenty of *Podalyria biflora* in flower, mainly growing as dwarf almost prostrate shrubs. Next to these was a large shrub of *Protea nerifolia* with good fresh flowers too. This morning was mainly about the woody plant flora and a rocky trail led higher into the fynbos and with at least three species of *Leucadendron* seen, *Bezelia abrotanoides*, a gangly *Euryops* sp and species of *Erica* including *E. imbricata*,



*Moraea ochroleuca*





*Wachendorfia thyrsiflora*

prostrate *E. totta*, whilst the hefty forms of *Protea* were scattered across the slopes. As we progressed *Gladiolus hirsutus* became much more common, there was a solitary *Tritoniopsis* sp. and lots of *Oxalis purpurea*. A flowering plant of the dwarf mouse-pollinated *Protea acaulos*, untidy bushes of *P. amplexicaulis* were common and all had showy red fresh growth, and both *P. neriifolia* and white *P. repens* were common with good flowers found. The views along the valley and out across the flatlands beyond were wonderful as white-necked ravens played in the wind and hung in the air around us. By the time we saw these birds we were higher and among a flatter stretch with lots of fiery-orange *Erica grandiflora* and a smattering of *Muraltia* sp. It seemed a good point to stop and return.

It was only a short drive down to the burn we had visited on day one and it seemed worth a second look to see if new plants had come up. Following the winding road down we came upon a large troop of baboons feeding in the road and moved slowly to get a better look and then turned onto a side track where we had excellent views of them in a tree and posing with youngsters. Our next stop was for a colony *Wachendorphia thyrsiflora* in a roadside seep, with tall spikes of yellow flowers. Various ferns and a sundew also grew in the seep, which was home to cape river frogs. Arriving at the burn site, there was still an abundance of *Moraea tripetala*, *Satyrium* spp. and a fresh *Disa flexuosa* was found, but there was unfortunately little new to see, except a very slender *Babiana* sp. and the lax spikes of *Satyrium stenopetalum* in wetter places.

The final leg to Napier brought blue cranes, patches of *Watsonia aletroides* and plenty of a pink mesemb that was plastered along the road cuttings.

## Day 17 Hartwegskloof & Hueningberg

A combination of the two main habitat types in the Western Cape began with a drive out through the vast undulating wheat fields. On steeper slopes and rises precious patches of renosterveld remain, but there are few if any extensive areas of this threatened habitat left (unlike fynbos). Nonetheless plants and animals continue to live in these patches and as we drove there was a gathering of Cape vultures in a field and then excellent views of a lovely Cape grysbok beside the road. Reaching the first part of the Haarwegskloof reserve we entered a recently burned area where we quickly found the first of many glowing orange



*Ornithogalum dubium* that lit up the bare ground. With these grew spikes of *Bulbinella cauda-felis* and the small *Gladiolus permeabilis* as well as a stand of *Leonotis leonurus*. Time was spent exploring the area including isolated outcrops with the tall reddish spikes of *Gasteria carinata* drawing attention to the tough warty leaves tucked in rock crevices and then best of all a wonderful population of *Gibbaeum hartmannianum* on a patch of quartzite. *Holothrix burchellii* also grew here, each spike with a flimsy hairy tip. Other areas had more of the same as well as robust clumps of *Berkheya armata* and another quartzite flat with spreading mats of a white *Mesembryanthemum* sp. A chunky lizard, wedged itself into a rock crevice and there were a few butterflies on the wing.

Moving onto to a different part of the reserve for lunch our walk afterwards was not productive. The area was very dry and there was little of interest except a tiny *Moraea* sp. Instead, we returned to a different area of the burn and found an array of new things including the pretty pink spikes of *Watsonia dubia*, it's fiery cousin *W. aletroides*, plenty of pinkish *Wachendorphia multiflora*, lots more *Ornithogalum dubium*, *Berkheya armata* and some superb tufts of resprouting *Erica cerinthioides* bearing heads of scarlet flowers, which especially attractive among the quartz boulders.

It was warm by the time we set off again across the open landscape seeing a herd of springbok on the way. There was a stop for much needed cold drinks and then we drove the short distance to the nearby Hueningberg nature reserve where two angular tortoises 'sprinted' across an open grassy area as we set off along the trail into the fynbos. It was all change flora wise, with a lot more of interest in terms of woody plants with lots of *Erica discolor* and then higher up a pink form of *Protea repens* and the gangly stems of *Leucospermum cuneifolium* bore lovely heads of golden flowers that lit up the fynbos. A white form of *Erica plukenetii* was also common and heading off piste onto the slopes we found many *Phaeonocoma prolifera* in good flower together with the light mauve heads of *Dilatriss pillansii* and tufts of *Protea aspera*. A large spider was seen just before we made our way back down, with sunbirds attending the erica flowers.

**Day 17      Napier & Sandberg**



*Erica cerinthioides*





Our final day to was spent in two areas of fynbos and began just above the town where the hills were clothed in vegetation of various stages of recovery from fires. It was still quite windy, and this made photographing *Leucospermum truncata*, mauve *Erica viscosa* and a fine bush of *Protea compacta* with several flowers a bit tricky. Moving up to the top of the hill we looked around a couple of areas the first with plenty of the unusual *Erica grisbrookii*, with stout upright stems and (old) white flowers. Following the track uphill there was the pretty pea *Amphithalea biovulata*, tufts of *Lobelia jasionoides* and a flowery bush of *Brachysiphon acutus* too. The second track produced what was arguably the plant of the day with a couple of gorgeous *Gladiolus bullatus* in flower. The wind was quite strong, and it was good to descend to a somewhat calmer location where we stopped for *Tritoniopsis sp.*, gangly *Aspalathus ciliaris* and some interesting everlasting daisies with slender *Edmontia sp* and the beautiful *Syncaprrha variegata*. Joan then spotted a couple of low-growing *Protea aspera* in flower, the large inflorescence bursting straight from the ground and looking quite disproportionate.

Lunch was back at the hotel and after saying farewell to Veronica and Dave we went to our afternoon location. The sunny morning then gave way to a different weather experience. Rain had seemed unlikely, but we arrived as a fierce squall set in. Undaunted, we set off for our walk with the highlight being a spitting cobra that was fortunately too lethargic to do much other than raise up and spread its hood. The poor reptile had probably been caught out by the sudden onset of the cold weather and now had no energy to move. It was pretty rough, but we kept and this was helped immensely by our engaging guide Gerhard who explained many interesting aspects of fynbos and his ongoing battle with invasive alien plants (though they provided welcome windbreaks for us from time to time). In the conditions didn't see that much plant wise except some different heaths and *Leucadendron*. We warmed ourselves in Gerhard's house where a welcome fire had been lit and by the time we reached our hotel another roaring blaze was warming the living room.

## Day 17      Flights

We left in good time to reach the airport, the weather had improved with more sunshine, but still some brooding grey clouds in the distance. It was spring after all.



*Ornithogalum dubium*

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