

# STANFORD WANDELPAD

## Cape Clawless Otter (*Aonyx capensis*) (Kaapse Otter)

The Cape Clawless Otter occurs widely throughout Southern Africa. It can be found in most wetland types including streambeds with permanent pools, and may even be found along coastal habitats. Otters mostly feed on crabs, frogs, small mammals, birds, insects, as well as molluscs (mussels, snails).

Although otters are mostly crepuscular (most active during twilight), signs of activity can be noted throughout the day. When swimming, only the head is usually seen above water, and the coat has a black sheen when wet.

When on dry land, the Cape Clawless Otter is a dark chocolate brown colour with white extending from the upper chest region to the lower lip, and walks with an arched back.

Otters usually burrow in dense vegetation and make use of self-excavated dens (known as “holts”), and use a central area for their droppings (known as a “midden”).

These middens mostly consist of shell fragments and are a sure sign of the presence of otters. Should the opportunity present itself to observe a Cape Clawless Otter, note the finger-like paws with absent claws - as is clearly visible on the photograph below.



Photograph: Thomas P Peschak

## Spotted Eagle Owl (*Bubo africanus*) (Gevlekte Ooruil)

The Spotted Eagle Owl differs from the Cape Eagle Owls (also sometimes seen) as it has yellow eyes (compared to orange in the Cape Eagle Owl) and has a greyer colour.

Spotted Eagle Owls feed mostly on small mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds (up to the size of a nearly full-grown guinea fowl) and have a softer and less penetrating *hu-hooo* than the Cape Eagle Owl.

Spotted Eagle Owls are usually solitary or in pairs. Males have a deep 2-syllabled *Hooo-hoo*, lower on the second note. Females may use a 3-syllabled *hu-hooo-hu* - the middle note being higher-pitched.

Spotted Eagle Owls are nocturnal, but have been seen along the “wandelpad” during the day; roosting quietly in a tree. These owls hunt from a perch (fence or telephone poles) by dropping onto the prey from above.



Photographs: Annalize Mouton

## Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*) (Pofadder)

A thick heavy built snake with a large flattened triangular head and large nostrils that point slightly upwards. The scales are keeled or grooved, with a yellow to light brown body, and dark blotches on the crown of the head, as well as between the eyes. The belly is white or yellow with a few scattered blotches.

The Puff Adder is a sluggish snake, emerging at night to hunt. It lies under cover to ambush prey and feeds mainly on rodents, sometimes birds and other snakes. When disturbed, the Puff Adder will immediately adopt a strike pose and emit a deep hollow warning hiss. A Puff Adder will strike readily when threatened, for example by an inquisitive dog.

Puff Adder venom is cytotoxic (breaks down cells of the body), causing massive swelling and necrosis (breaking down of tissues). Bites are common but human fatality is minimal. However, dogs usually are not that lucky. A victim should be treated for

fluid loss (due to swelling of the tissue).

Anti-venom should be administered in serious cases. Puff Adders occur all over Southern Africa except for deserts, dense forest and mountainous areas.



Photograph: www.african-safari-journals.com

## Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) (Bontvisvanger)

The Pied Kingfisher is said to be one of the most numerous kingfishers in the world, but is locally nomadic in response to fluctuating habitat conditions and food supply.

The Pied Kingfisher occurs in pairs or family groups in most kinds of water-bodies containing fish, including marine margins. These kingfishers hover-hunt more than any of the kingfishers and feed predominantly on fish, but also eat crabs and aquatic or terrestrial invertebrates.

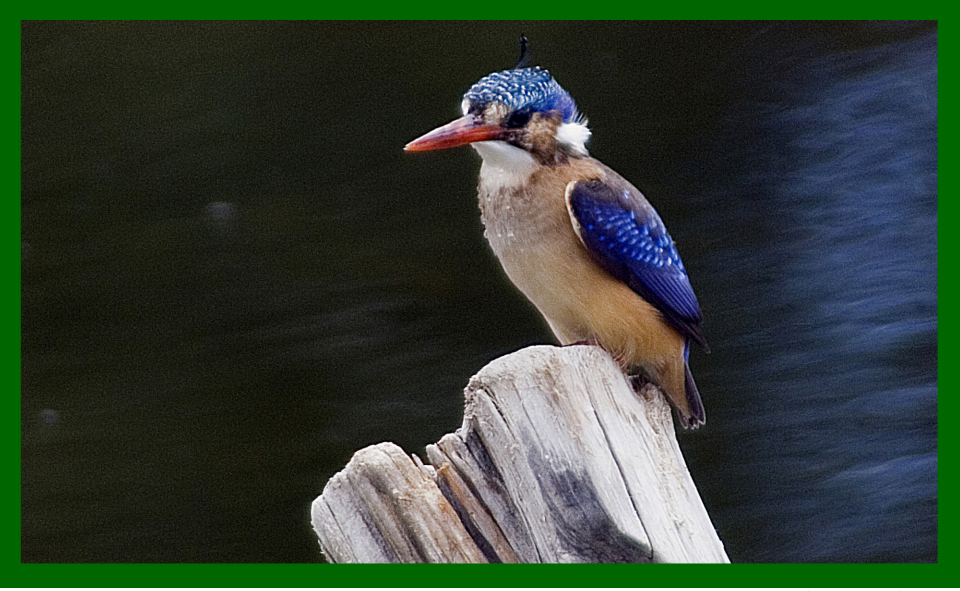
It is the only black-and-white kingfisher found in South Africa and the male is recognised by its double-breasted band, while the female has a single, incomplete breast band. They have a rattling twitter and a sharp, high-pitched *chick-chick* call.

Other kingfishers to be found along the “wandelpad” include the Brownhooded Kingfisher (Bruinkopvisvanger), the Malachite Kingfisher (Kuifkopvisvanger) and the Giant Kingfisher (Reuse Visvanger).



Photograph: Dr Anton Odendal

Pied Kingfisher



Photographs: Annalize Mouton

Malachite Kingfisher



Brownhooded Kingfisher

## Mole Snake (*Pseudaspis cana*) (Molslang)

The Mole Snake is a large and thick snake with a slightly hooked nose, and is common all over South Africa. The body scales are smooth, but keeled in the Western Cape’s black version.

The colour can vary depending on developmental stage. The young are blotched with a light brown or reddish body and four rows of dark, pale-edged spots. Adults are plain light to reddish brown but occasionally olive, grey, dark brown or black. The one you may encounter will most probably be black and is NOT to be confused with a black mamba, which does not occur in our area.

Mole Snakes are extremely useful, harmless constrictors that live underground in abandoned burrows. They feed on moles, rodents and other small mammals, and may

eat lizards and eggs. They will not harm humans or pets. **DON’T KILL THEM** - they help us keep the moles at bay!



## Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) (Grootwaterhoender)

The Common Moorhen is a medium-sized, sooty black gallinule with greenish yellow legs and a distinctive red frontal shield and a bill with a yellow tip. The white under-tail and white streaks on the flanks are clearly visible.

The Common Moorhen is a solitary bird which may be seen in small family groups. It spends most of its day swimming in open patches of water and therefore often seen on the river. It also wades in the reedbeds where it feeds on worms, insects and tadpoles and tends to run or swim for cover when disturbed, sometimes fluttering and pattering over water. They also eat water plants, seeds and berries.

Moorhens make a high-pitched croaking *krrik* sound, falling in tone, a rapid *kik-kik-kik* or a murmuring *kook*.



Photograph: Dr Anton Odendal

## Southern Red Bishop (*Euplectes orix*) (Suidelike rooivink)

The Southern Red Bishop is a common, gregarious resident. Non-breeding flocks sometimes number hundreds of birds, often causing losses to grain crops. According to avid bird-watchers, Stanford is South Africa’s “capital” of southern red bishops.

Southern Red Bishops forage on the ground, walking in short steps, but are common visitors to feeding trays. The male changes from non-descript into a striking scarlet and black plumage during breeding season (Sept–March). Nests, woven by the male from fine strips of grass and reed leaves, are attached to upright reeds or thin vertical branches of a tree.

Males are polygamous, with up to 7 females each.

PEAK BREEDING PLUMAGE

MOULTING INTO BREEDING PLUMAGE



Photographs: Annalize Mouton and www.african-safari-journals.com





# STANFORD WANDELPAD

## White Milkwood (*Sideroxylon inerme*) (Witmelkhout)

The White Milkwood is a shrubby tree (usually with a gnarled and twisted stem and branches) that can grow up to 10m tall. It has a dense billowing crown with a milky sap. The leaves are dark green and glossy.

The bisexual flowers of this tree are a greenish white and emit an unpleasant smell. The fruits are purple to blackish, fleshy and eaten by birds.

White Milkwoods play an important role in coastal ecosystems from the Cape Peninsula all the way to tropical Africa. They occur

mainly in coastal dune thicket and forest. Three of these trees, including the *Post Office Tree* in Mossel Bay and the *Treaty Tree* in Woodstock, Cape Town, have been declared national monuments.



Photographs: Bea Whittaker

## Grey Poplar (*Populus X canescens*) (Vaalpopulier)

The Grey Poplar is a deciduous / semi-evergreen tree which grows approximately 10 - 20m high. The leaves are dark green above, and have a smooth, shiny and woolly coating beneath. The bark of this species of poplar is a white or grey colour with horizontal dark lines, becoming darker and rougher with age. Twigs and new shoots are thin and downy.

The male Grey Poplar bears reddish flowers known as catkins. Catkins are flower clusters, lacking petals and often stalkless, surrounded by scale-like bracts.

These trees were originally cultivated for timber, shelter, donga reclamation and as an ornamental tree, but are now a category two invader, as well as a potential transformer. They invade riverbanks, wetlands and dongas and may not be

planted. Although some large trees have been left along the “wandelpad”; the spreading thereof is controlled by Stanford Conservation.



Photograph: Bea Whittaker

## White-breasted (Great) Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) (Witborsduiker)

The White-breasted Cormorant is a large gregarious (social) bird and a common resident in most of Southern Africa. The large size and white breast of this bird eliminates any confusion with other cormorants in the area. Non-breeding individuals are a duller brown, and the eyes remain green throughout the year.

White-breasted Cormorants are mostly found along freshwater bodies but can also inhabit marine environments. They are mostly permanent residents but are known to have nomadic tendencies in period of

unfavourable conditions. They often fly low over water at speeds of up to 60 km/hour.

These birds feed mostly on fish but are also known to take crabs and frogs. Pairs are monogamous and congregate in colonies during breeding.



Photographs: Nico Myburgh

## Wild Olive (*Olea europaea, ssp Africana*) (Olienhout)

The Wild Olive is a small to medium-sized evergreen tree with a dense rounded crown and greyish green foliage. Leaves are shiny green above (often with minute whitish scales) and greyish below due to a dense cover of silvery or brown scales.

Flowers are very small, white or cream, and sweetly scented. Fruits are fleshy with seeds surrounded by a stony layer that turn purplish black when ripe.

The tree has brown, richly figured heartwood and yellowish brown sapwood. It is very attractive, hard and heavy and extensively used for furniture and ornaments, although only available in limited quantities due to the relatively short, gnarled and twisted trunks.



Photographs: Bea Whittaker

## Cape River Crab (*Potamonautus perlatus*) (Kaapse Rivierkrap)

Freshwater crabs are common in inland streams, rivers and dams throughout South Africa. They are omnivores and consume both plant and animal material (found in the water and on land) and thus play an important role in nutrient recycling. In turn, freshwater crabs are consumed by birds, otters and a number of fish species.

The Cape River Crab is common in most freshwater systems in the Western Cape. There are five endemic freshwater species in the Western Cape, of which the Cape River Crab has the broadest distribution. These

crabs can leave the water for short foraging excursions in the terrestrial environment by filling the lung chambers with water.

High mountain streams normally harbour additional highly endemic species.



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a village green  
ESTABLISHED 1857

