



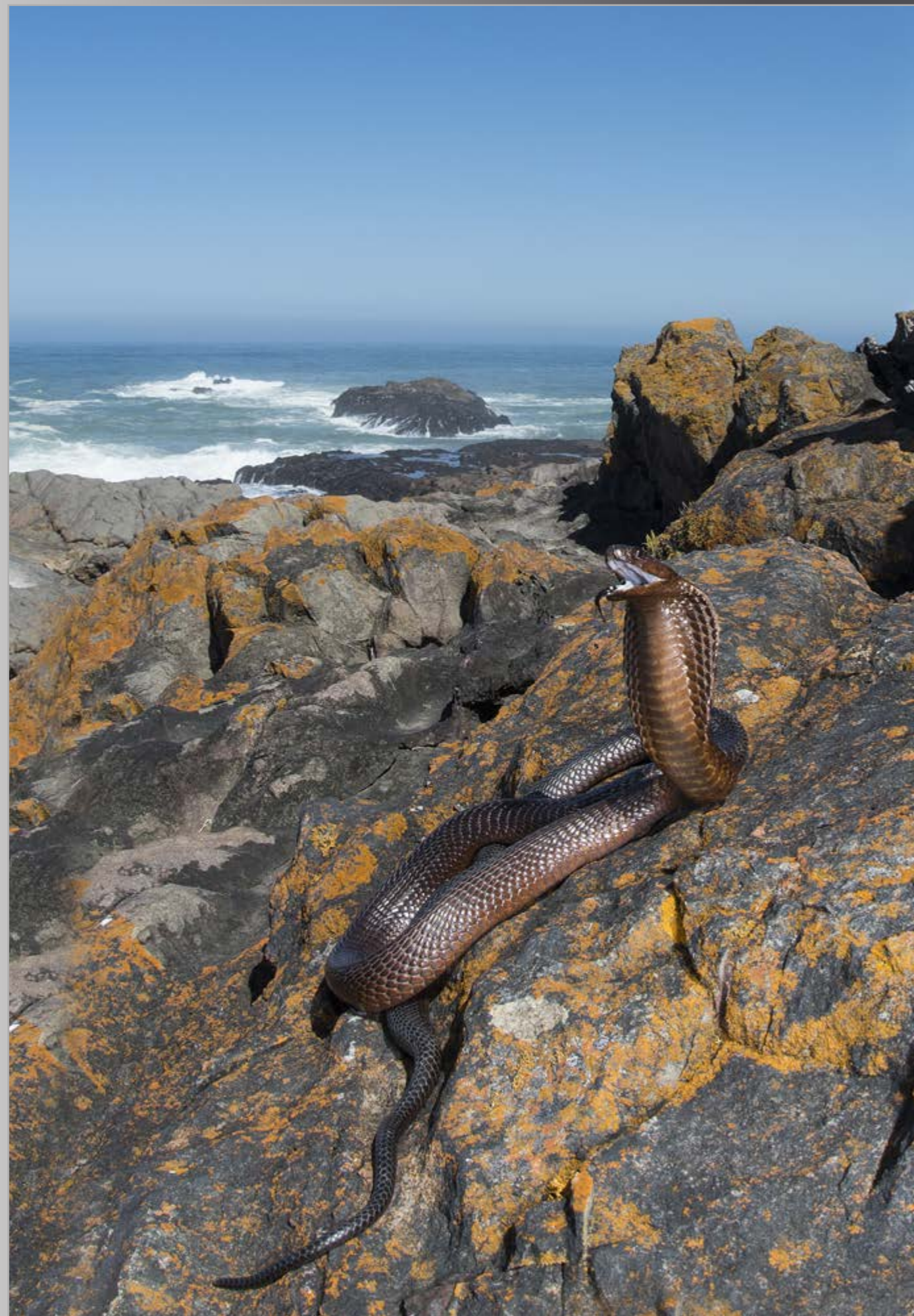
SOUTH AFRICA

THE CAPE ROUTE

A two-day drive along the Atlantic from the West Coast National Park to the Cape of Good Hope reveals a bounty of stunning panoramas and wildlife



Bontebok *Damaliscus pygargus pygargus*. This beautiful, medium-sized antelope species was hunted so severely by colonists that in 1830 only 22 remained. Today they are protected in the Bontebok National Park, which was proclaimed in 1931. In 1992 this population grew to 2000. In 1961 a second reserve near Swellendam was proclaimed, which today carries 200-300 bontebok. Historically, the distribution of the bontebok was confined to the southwestern Cape.



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During our latest trip to South Africa we decided to do something we seldom do when abroad - indulge ourselves for a couple of days, and do the tourist thing. After all, South Africa is so breathtakingly beautiful that one can't go wrong if straying from the usual bush safari routine, right? So - together with our friend and guide Phillip Conradie of African Wildlife Photo Safaries - we left the quaint little coastal town of Yzerfontein where we were staying with two beloved friends of ours and first drove north to the little-visited West Coast National Park and Protected Marine Area. We really hoped to see some bontebok there - this is a very strange and pretty uncommon antelope I'd dreamt about for almost all my life and which in the past has been brought to the brink of extinction by hunting, and we finally did sight some late in the day. Stunning animal! We also explored some spectacular and pretty wild coastal areas and we were lucky enough to find a few snakes which were basking or foraging among the dunes and the boulders facing the Atlantic Ocean. After our day-long visit to the West Coast National Park we then retraced our steps and proceeded south - first

to Cape Town and its trademark viewpoint, the very scenic (and touristy) Table Mountain, and then driving along the Atlantic coast to the Cape of Good Hope and Hout Bay. Sightings of animals large and small along the road alternated with stunning beach views and larger-than-life landscapes, all bathed in a crisp sea air and an impossibly bright sun. This is South Africa at its glorious scenic best - after all, where else in the world can one take a rocky boat trip among sea lions, walk among penguins on a sunlit beach, bump into a puff adder quietly basking by the ocean, drive by ostriches strutting in the bush, watch pink flamingos by the hundreds and see literally millions of seabirds in just two days? Beautiful, really - this is a two-day trip we can really safely suggest doing. Driving is easy and comfortable, along the coastal road there are lots of viewpoints for great landscape photography, and very pleasant seafood restaurants abound in every little holiday town and village. The local flora is also quite spectacular, with impressive Proteas (South Africa's national flower) and interesting succulents everywhere. ●

A beautiful - and very dangerous - Cape cobra *Naja nivea* in an unusual purple coloration rears up defensively by the rocky shore in the vicinity of Yzerfontein.



Cape Fur seals *Arctocephalus pusillus* can weigh up to 350kg - the largest of all fur seals. The males have a rough mane on their powerfully developed necks and are much larger than the females, which only attain a weight of around 90kg. Both males and females are covered in thick, dark-brown to olive fur. The pups are born black and moult for the first time at 4 months. When on land, fur seals are skilled climbers and may be sighted in surprisingly high places. At sea they are known to travel large distances – as much as 80km a day – and may spend months offshore where they are able to dive to over 200m in search of food.



South Africa's Atlantic coast beaches offer unsurpassed opportunities for dramatic landscape photography - the choice is endless.



Boulders Beach, on the Cape peninsula, hosts a protected and quite spectacular African penguin *Spheniscus demersus* breeding colony. Also known as the Cape penguin and South African penguin, this is a species of penguin confined to southern African waters. Like all extant penguins, it is flightless, with a streamlined body, and wings stiffened and flattened into flippers for a marine habitat. Adults weigh on average 2.2–3.5 kg (4.9–7.7 lb) and are 60–70 cm (24–28 in) tall.



Ostrich *Struthio camelus* are commonly observed along the Cape route.



Many vantage observation points along the road afford stunning views.



The Cape cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis* is endemic to the southwestern coasts of Africa. It breeds from Namibia south to southern Western Cape. In the nonbreeding season, it may be found as far north as the mouth of the Congo, and as far as Mozambique. In the 1970s, the breeding population was estimated as over 1 million. However, the IUCN now classifies it as "Endangered" due to a very rapid decline in the population over the last three generations.



Enormous numbers of mixed-species seabirds flocks - mostly terns and gulls - populate the apparently endless and unpopulated beaches of the Cape route.



The African oystercatcher or African black oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* is a large wader resident of the mainland coasts and offshore islands of southern Africa. This near-threatened but locally common bird species has a population of over 6,000 adults, which breed between November and April.



A beautiful adult Boomslang *Dispholidus typus* female. This species is a notable exception among Colubrids in that it has a highly potent venom, delivered through large fangs located in the back of the jaw. The venom of the boomslang is primarily a hemotoxin; it disables the coagulation process and the victim may die as a result of internal and external bleeding. The venom has been observed to cause hemorrhage into tissues such as muscle and brain. Other signs and symptoms include headache, nausea, sleepiness, and mental disorders.



The common eland *Taurotragus oryx*, also known as the southern eland or eland antelope, is a savanna and plains antelope found in East and Southern Africa. An adult male is around 1.6 metres (5') tall at the shoulder and can weigh up to 942 kg (2,077 lb) with an average of 500–600 kg (1,100–1,300 lb).



A stunning cream-colored Cape cobra *Naja nivea* rears up defensively by the Atlantic ocean rocky shore near Yzerfontein. This commonly observed species is regarded as one of the most dangerous species of cobra in all of Africa, by virtue of its potent venom and frequent occurrence around houses. Its venom is made up of potent postsynaptic neurotoxins and might also contain cardiotoxins that affect the respiratory system, nervous system and the heart.



The quaint little town of Yzerfontein is bathed in the moist morning mist rising from the Atlantic ocean.



Cape cormorant colonies by the Cape of Good Hope craggy, surf-pounded shores.



Other spots offer peaceful, emerald waters and more accessible beaches.



Large colonies of Lesser flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* can be observed in the salt pans nearby St.Helena and several other coastal towns along the Cape route.



The vegetation along the Cape route is nothing short of spectacular.



The Cape coral snake *Aspidelaps lubricus* is a venomous species related to cobras.



The panorama from the top of Cape Town's celebrated Table Mountain is quite spectacular. This is a significant tourist attraction, with many visitors using the cableway or hiking to the top. The mountain forms part of the Table Mountain National Park, and it is home to a large array of fauna and flora, most of which is endemic.



The craggy, surf-pounded, towering cliffs of Cape of Good Hope.



Dramatic lighting and stormy skies offer great landscape photo opportunities.



About twenty-five Fur seal *Arctocephalus pusillus* colonies are found between Algoa Bay (near Port Elizabeth) and Cape Frio (in Northern Namibia), and sightings by tourist boat trip are guaranteed the year round. These freezing, churning waters are also home to many Great White sharks *Carcharodon carcharias*, which prey on the seals.



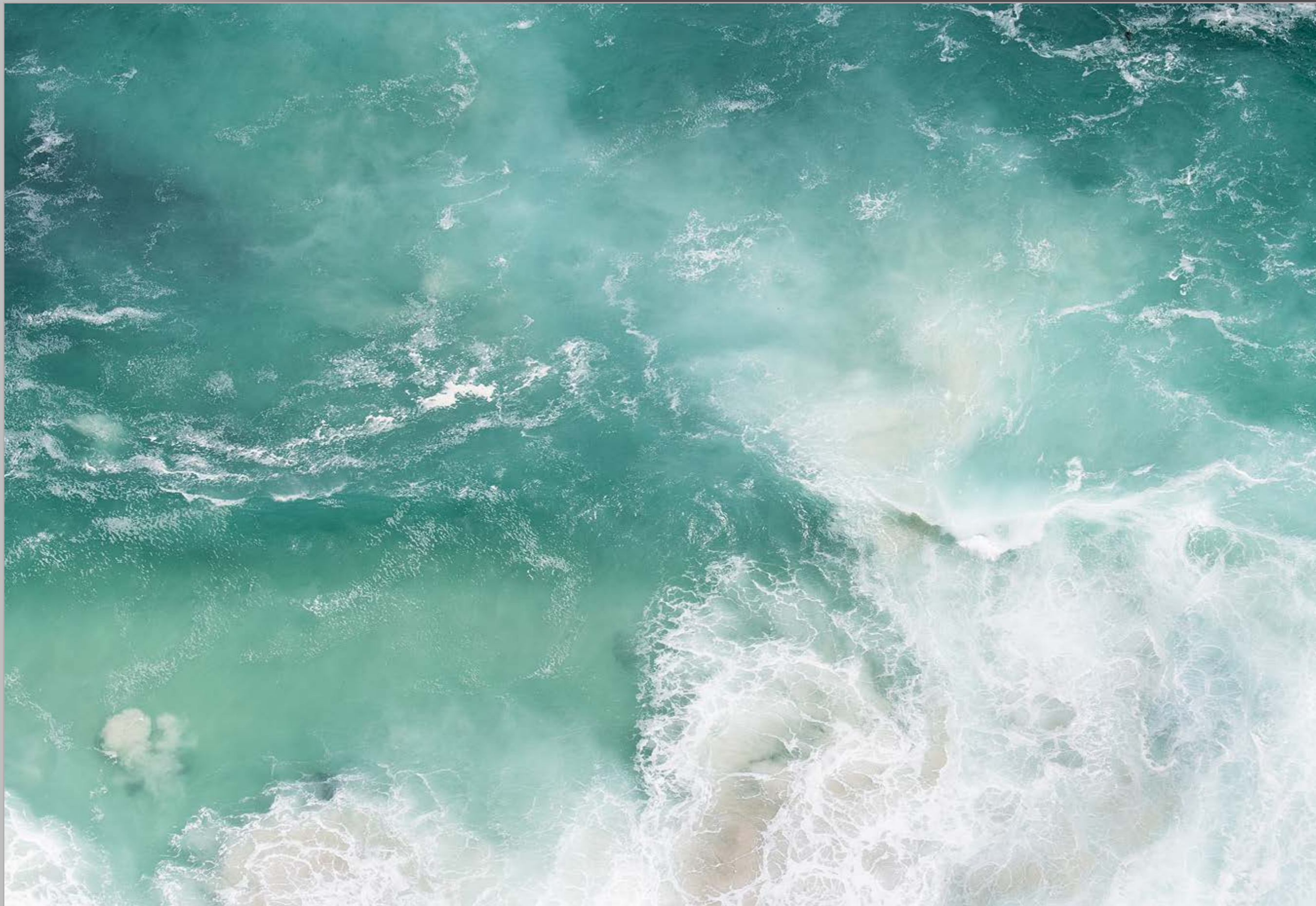
The rock kestrel *Falco rupicolus* is a bird of prey species belonging to the family *Falconidae*. This species is commonly encountered in the West Coast NP.



Fast, agile and very inquisitive - the Black mamba *Dendroaspis polylepis* is a very venomous species which can reach a size of 4 meters and move at 20 km/h.



The rock hyrax *Procavia capensis*, also called Cape hyrax, is a medium-sized terrestrial mammal native to Africa and the Middle East. Commonly referred to in South Africa as the dassie, it is one of the five living species of the order *Hyracoidea*, and the only one in the genus *Procavia*. Rock hyraxes weigh between 4 kilograms (9 lb) and 5 kilograms (11 lb), and have short ears and tail. Surprisingly related to elephants, the rock hyrax is found at elevations up to 4,200 metres (13,800 ft).



Endlessly churning and foaming in oceanic fury, the Atlantic waters in front of the Cape of Good Hope towering cliffs offer a dramatic, hypnotic view.



Dramatic skies, verdant cliffs and eye-catching vegetation along the Cape route.



African penguin *Spheniscus demersus* at the colony of Boulders near Cape Town.



The Chacma baboon *Papio ursinus*, also known as the Cape baboon, is, like all other baboons, from the Old World monkey family. It is one of the largest of all monkeys. Located primarily in southern Africa, the Chacma baboon has a wide variety of social behaviors, including a dominance hierarchy, collective foraging, adoption of young by females, and friendship pairings. These behaviors form parts of a complex evolutionary ecology. In general, the species is not threatened, but human population pressure has increased contact between humans and baboons. Hunting, trapping, and accidents kill or remove many baboons from the wild.



Cape cormorant or Cape shags *Phalacrocorax capensis* commonly forage in flocks, taking schooling fish from mid-water, such as pilchards, anchovies, and sand eels. Its prey are typically much smaller than those of the sympatric bank cormorant. Their major predators are black-backed jackals, which take the occasional adult while it is roosting, and nest-site predators such as great cormorants, eastern great white pelicans, and kelp gulls.



A basking and beautifully marked Puff adder *Bitis arietans* surprised by the shore.



Baboon spiders are a subfamily of tarantulas which are native to Africa.



A living, paperlike carpet of the stunningly beautiful Cape snow *Syncarpha vestita* (*Helichrysum vestitum*) at the Cape of Good Hope National Park. *Syncarpha* is a genus of herbaceous flowering plants in the sunflower family endemic to the fynbos environment of the Eastern and Western Cape in South Africa.