

STING IN THE TAIL

I was in Kommetjie, outside Cape Town, when I noticed this Swift Tern with something attached to it. I managed to photograph it and subsequently realised that it had become entangled in a bluebottle tentacle. I know how sore this can be to a human and wondered how seriously the bird would be affected?

GRAHAM RUSSELL

HOGSBACK, EASTERN CAPE

Seabird researcher Prof. Peter Ryan comments: Interesting! I've never seen a bluebottle trailing from a bird in this way. I can't imagine it would have much effect unless it got the bird in the eye – feathers are dead, and the mouth parts, legs and bills are pretty well sheathed. If you look carefully at the image, you can see the tentacle is wrapped from the beak around the tern's back and wings – the bird presumably became entangled during a plunge dive after a fish. There's no evidence of the bluebottle's tentacle touching anywhere sensitive on the bird and, unlike man-made objects that ensnare seabirds, it will eventually fall off. I'm surprised this doesn't happen more often (maybe it does, but the tentacles seldom stick).



GRAHAM RUSSELL

Matobos Hills, and then went again in January this year, doing some wetland and miombo birding in the Harare area. On all these trips we invariably had the lodge and birding spots to ourselves, apart from at Victoria Falls. At all times and in all places the people (police included) were the friendliest I've ever come across. Indeed, the only down side was the return to South Africa via Beit Bridge (always avoid if possible) and the surly welcome home. Zimbabwe is mostly stunning and full of friendly people and wonderful birding spots with virtually no one else to spoil the fun. Go, go, go!

PETER ROSEWARNE

CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE

with their presence but didn't hold out much hope.

On the morning of our departure, however, a party of five or six of these stunning birds appeared seemingly from nowhere and began feeding on the seeds of a coastal coral tree in the lodge's parking lot. I was fortunate to get close enough to take a few photographs of them. I have always loved parrots and have watched many species in Australia, but seeing Cape Parrots in this way easily ranks as one of my greatest birding moments.

I had always imagined that if I got to see these birds some day it would



Cape Parrot

MAGS PILLAY

ZIMBABWE – GOOD TO GO

Rob Little's letter, 'Go Eastern Highlands', in the February/March 2012 issue, refers.

In October 2009 I did a road trip of more than 4 000 kilometres from Cape Town to Mount Gorongosa, much of it over poor roads in Mozambique. For the return trip, my colleague and I couldn't face more of the same and so decided to take our lives into our hands (as we imagined) and come back via Zimbabwe, entering through the border post at Mutare and into South Africa at Beit Bridge. What an unexpectedly wonderful, albeit short, time we had! We saw about 12 lifers at Seldomseen and the Vumba Botanical Gardens in two days and had the place to ourselves.

We returned in March 2011, going to Victoria Falls via Botswana and the

PONDOLAND PARROTS

We stayed at Mbotyi River Lodge on the Pondoland/Transkei Wild Coast at the end of last year. On two mornings we went out with a local bird guide and I managed to find a very vocal pair of Mangrove Kingfishers in the coastal forest and had a great view of a Knysna Woodpecker within the lodge grounds. When the guide mentioned that they had seen a flock of Cape Parrots flying overhead a few days previously, I wondered whether the birds would grace us