



# Laniarius

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# Newsletter of BirdLife Northern Gauteng Nuusbrief van BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

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### Notice to contributors

Laniarius is published in March, June, September and December. Deadline for contributions is the 20th of the previous month. Articles should preferably be e-mailed to the secretary, but may also be posted to the club's post box. Contributions and advertisements are accepted at the discretion of the editor.

### Kennisgewing aan bydraers

Laniarius verskyn in Maart, Junie, September en Desember. Die sperdatum vir bydraes is die 20ste van die voorafgaande maand. Artikels moet verkieslik per e-pos aan die sekretaresse gestuur word, maar kan ook aan die klubadres gepos word. Bydraes en advertensies word aanvaar volgens die diskresie van die redakteur.

## EDITORIAL

This issue of *Laniarius* is the first printed on glossy paper. We hope you enjoy the quality! The ultimate would of course be a *Laniarius* in full colour, but for that we need a very good sponsor...

Dis 'n baie laat Desember-uitgawe hierdie. Met Joel wat bedank het as redakteur was dit maar 'n gesukkel om alles bymekaar geskraap te kry en meeste drukkers is ook toe oor die Kersfeesperiode. Dankie André vir al jou hulp.

Dit was weereens vir my lekker om die uitleg te doen. Dis soveel makliker deesdae om so-iets te doen met digitale foto's en Internet en e-pos en "scanners" (en natuurlik om toestemming te hê om die illustrasies uit die *Atlas* te gebruik!).

Dankie aan al die skrywers van die interessante artikels. Sommige bydraes was reeds op die Pretoria Birdnet, maar dis darem nie so 'n groot persentasie van ons lede wat daaraan behoort nie.

As usual, there is something for everyone and every taste in this issue – news of outings and sightings, a Birding Big Day report, activities of the ringers in our club, unfortunately also a death announcement, and then of course the humour.

Ek hoop daar lê vir ons almal 'n wonderlike 2006 voor – wat voëlkyk betref maar veral ook in ons persoonlike lewens.

*Dzinie*

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### Picture credits

Front cover: Dup du Plessis

All bird sketches are from the *Atlas of Southern African Birds* Vol 1 and 2

# From the Chairman

André Marx

At the time of writing this column we once again find ourselves without a newsletter editor, as Joel Avni has had to stand down due to work commitments. Thanks Joel for producing two interesting issues which had an unmistakable journalistic touch! This issue of *Laniarius* comes to you because a few dedicated people in the club, mostly committee members, were able to solicit articles. Ideally we need an editor who can coordinate that function of course and I would like to appeal to anyone who may have an interest in editing a newsletter to please come forward and give this a try. It is not onerous actually, as Drinie van Rensburg, our erstwhile dedicated and long-serving editor has graciously offered to continue with the layout and design of *Laniarius* provided someone could fulfil the editor's function. The editor will have the autonomy to select articles for publication, plan feature articles, and generally report on club events and projects. In recent years *Laniarius* has gone from strength to strength and the feedback I have had is that our newsletter is regarded as one of the best in the country. I am certain we will be able to continue with this trend, as there are regular contributors and a sub-committee of people to work with the editor. I look forward to hearing from you!

Another impending change concerns our new evening meeting venue. From February 2006 we will hold our monthly meetings at the Discovery Centre at the University of Pretoria main campus, where there are modern facilities for digital presentations and secure parking. The feedback from members was that the general environment in the part of the city where the Transvaal

Museum is situated had deteriorated over time and it was decided to look for an alternative venue. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Museum for accommodating us at a nominal cost over many years, when we arranged many evening meetings, courses and functions. Please note the directions to the new venue as they appear in the programme.

I have just returned from the excellent long weekend camp to the Wakkerstroom area in mid December, when nearly 50 members of our club attended. It is tremendous to see that there is so much interest in trips of this nature and I enjoyed the experience of being with people I have known over many years and meeting some members for the first time. As the year draws to a close and we look ahead to what is planned for 2006 I can tell you that there are some interesting excursions planned again, as organised by our hardworking programme sub-committee. Take a look at the new programme to see what has been arranged for the first quarter and what is coming up beyond that.

Next year will also see the start of the new Bird Atlas project and by the time you receive the March newsletter a national coordinator should be in place at BLSA to manage this project. Then comes the challenge for all of us to start with the process of recording birds from every square grid on the South African map, something which brought a great deal of enjoyment to many more than fifteen years ago when the first project took place.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all of the very best for the New Year, may it be filled with many happy birding moments. 🐦

*Some years ago a group of birders used aircraft and vehicles stationed at different points around the country in their attempt to break the record for the most species seen in one day. I cannot remember their exact total, but the Raiders have shown that by knowing your local area and by refining your strategy over a few years you can achieve what was thought almost impossible only a few years ago – recording 300 birds within a 24-hour period, within the confines of Birding Big Day rules. Let it be noted though that this achievement had a lot to do with the skill of the members of the team. That this was done by a group of birders from our club within a 100km radius of Pretoria is even more impressive and highlights the rich diversity of bird species we have in our region.*

*Stand back KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga! On behalf of the BirdLife Northern Gauteng committee – and I am sure the members of our club – I wish to extend our congratulations to the Raiders of the Lost Lark team.*

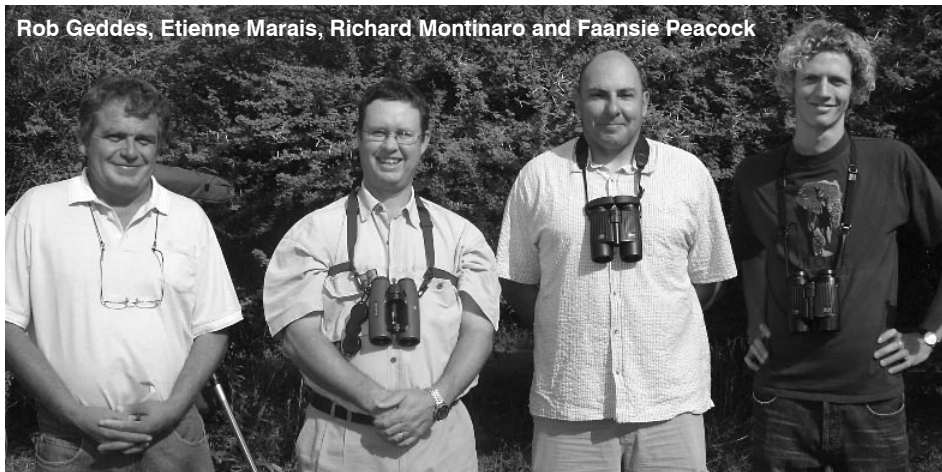
**André Marx**

Chairman, BirdLife Northern Gauteng/ Gauteng-Noord

## ***Raiders of the Lost Lark get 302 in the Dinokeng Region***

***Etienne Marais (on behalf of The Raiders of the Lost Lark)***

**Rob Geddes, Etienne Marais, Richard Montinaro and Faansie Peacock**



**T**his year the Raiders of the Lost Lark set out on 1 December with a new look team – welcoming back Faansie Peacock and being joined by Richard Montinaro – participating in his first full-scale Birding Big Day. The team was led by Etienne Marais with excellent support from Rob Geddes.

Given the total lack of moonlight on our chosen night (and as it turned out, starlight) we only started at about 02:30. Our first bird was actually a dip, when Richard realised that the Wood Owl he had heard had been calling in a completely different direction from where Rob and I were playing the tape! (And no,

## DISCOVER THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WADERS



A weekend course, presented in English, by BirdLife Northern Gauteng, to help improve your skills in identifying this challenging but fascinating group of birds.

**Presenter:** Geoff Lockwood, an acknowledged expert on the birds of our region, well known bird artist, television presenter and tour guide

**When:** Friday 17 February 18:30 – 21:30  
Saturday 18 February 09:00 – 16:00  
Sunday morning field outing.

**Where:** Waterkloof Primary School Pretoria.  
Entrance c/o Julius Jeppe and Rose Streets.  
Secure parking on premises

**Cost:** Members of BirdLife Northern Gauteng – R180 pp  
Non-members – R230 pp

**Requirements:** Sasol or Newmans field guide, notebook and your own lunch for Saturday. Tea and coffee will be served.

**Bookings:** Phone Adele van Vuuren 083 635 7358 or 012 347-7932  
Fax proof of payment to 012 804-7456. Please ensure that names and surnames of all attendees are clearly printed on the deposit slip.



**PROOF OF PAYMENT WILL CONFIRM YOUR BOOKING  
PARTICIPANTS WILL BE LIMITED TO 60**

there were no other teams in the area, which is within Gauteng!)

After recording Freckled Nightjar as our first bird, Rob's nicotine-enhanced hearing picked out the hooting of BUFF-SPOTTED FLUFFTAIL from riverine thickets. Further night birding around some big wetlands eked out African Grass and Marsh Owl and Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, as well as the usual nocturnal Red-chested Cuckoos and Spotted Thick-knees. The day dawned cool, overcast and every now and then, threatened rain. We stopped for a Freckled Nightjar in the road, and it promptly tried to hawk insects under the car, providing one of those memorable moments when we enjoyed being delayed in our intense journey to maximise our day tally. The slowly growing dawn chorus was very productive as we picked individual sounds out of the medley, including some goodies like Cape Rock-Thrush, Cape Bunting and Brown-backed Honeybird.

As we headed up the kloof, the woodland session was proving very productive, and we seemed to be getting most of the "possibles" along with virtually all the "probables". Faansie's sharp hearing led us to a calling GARDEN WARBLER, while other tricky birds like Green Pigeon and Pygmy Kingfisher were joined by new BBD birds like HONEY-BUZ-ZARD and ORANGE-RIVER FRANCOLIN – a perennial BBD bogey-bird.

We reached 100 birds just after 06:00, and headed out onto our grassland route feeling confident and excited. We quickly picked up several trickies like Blue Crane, Spike-heeled and Pink-billed Lark, along with common species like Melodious and Eastern Clapper Lark, and Greater Kestrel. We worked a bit for Dark-capped Yellow Warbler and Fawn-coloured Lark, but added lots of good bonus birds like Little Bittern, Montagu's and Pallid Harrier (the latter two males), Temminck's Courser and the usual Red-chested Flufftail/African Rail

combination. Etienne's aggressive driving did not stop him from spotting a flock of CUT-THROAT FINCH at 90 km/h, and a little later Richard first got onto a Gauteng Mega in the form of BUFF-STREAKED CHAT and shortly afterwards picked out a CUCKOO FINCH with his scope. We added Eastern Long-billed Lark to our impressive lark list (10 in all). After an excellent dawn chorus and breathtaking grassland loop our total was soaring beyond expectation and edged towards 190 at 09:40. Faansie was not alone in his amazement at our progress, but produced the quote of the day, which became the team mantra: "...we are dominating."

A second drive through the Wilge River valley produced Green-capped Eremomela, Village Weaver, Half-collared Kingfisher and Purple Indigobird, although we appeared to be dipping on Tinkling Cisticola and Mocking Cliff-Chat. The 200 went by unnoticed at about 10:40.

The pace was relentless and we continued to accumulate new birds steadily, picking up Jackal Buzzard on the way to Verena. No reduction in accelerator pressure was required to get the House Sparrows at the Verena four-way stop. Our "bushveld-grassveld" transition loop north-east of Verena was done at top speed as the bakkie bounced over the rocky road and we added Bushveld Pipit, Fiscal Flycatcher and Greater Double-collared Sunbird in double quick time before heading on to Mabusa, where Flappet Larks were in full song. We got to noon with the total on 222, quite a bit more than previous years, which is an excellent way to keep motivation levels high.

A dam north of KwaMhlanga added more ducks, Common Squacco and Brown-throated Martin. The only serious rain of the day came on our longish drive to Mdala, where Etienne negotiated his way out of a R1250 speeding ticket before we picked up Red-headed Weaver and headed into the thornveld around Mkhombo just after 13:30, with the total on 250! Now we were really pumping with the realisation that we had reached this milestone a good two hours earlier than previous years,

with all of the bird wealth of Mkhombo and the raptor-rich Rust de Winter area still to come.

Mkhombo waterbirds were slightly disappointing, but lifted the total upwards with a clutch of shorebirds, Goliath Heron, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater and African Fish-Eagle. The arid woodlands of Mkhombo offered some superb hotspots where the birding was excellent. Perhaps the highlight of the day was a tree-full of birds which included Green-winged Pytilia, Barred Wren-Warbler, Garden, Icterine and Willow Warbler and COMMON WHITE-THROAT! In this area we also picked up yet more tricky birds like Cape Penduline-Tit, Yellow-bellied Eremomela and European Golden Oriole. By 15:45 we had reached 280 species, but the last 2 hours of daylight were hard work indeed!

On to Rust de Winter – and a farm on the way produced an African Cuckoo in exactly the same spot as last year! The Rust de Winter area once again produced its magic with flocks of storks and raptors, although this year was a little down on other days in the area as we dipped on White Stork. Eurasian Hobby and Western Red-footed, Amur Falcon, Lesser Kestrel and Lesser Spotted Eagle obliged and we also filled in some earlier dips in the form of Hamerkop, Red-billed Firefinch, Brown-hooded Kingfisher and Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove.

With just a few birds to go, we were battling to find new birds and were working very hard to get those last few birds, as the daylight hours started to run out.

The Elands River bridges produced Bearded Woodpecker, Lesser Honeyguide and Speckled Mousebird and we headed for Rust de Winter dam, where we had a long session without birds, before an OSPREY suddenly flew past, and "Victorr" (Greater Honeyguide) performed a dusk chorus. Our 300th bird was African Scops-Owl, and after about an hour of searching, we found a hooting White-faced Scops-Owl. We headed back to Buffelsdrift with storm clouds chasing us, and the rain threatened as we quickly found a Fiery-necked Nightjar – our last and 302nd bird. We then spent a comical half hour peering into the

**The team at work**



year, building on the route we have followed and developed since 2003, with Rob concentrating mainly on the northern section while Etienne worked on the mainly grassland area in the south. We had also done mini trial runs in the week beforehand, and we were able to fine-tune and

bushes in Pieter van Zyl's garden in search of a roosting Karoo Thrush, but to no avail! Exhaustion had now started to set in, and having passed 300, the motivation to keep searching for more long-shot birds evaporated, and some of the team just could not carry on any longer. We called it quits at about 22:30, which meant that our birding day had been almost exactly 20 hours.

### **Reflections on the day**

A number of people have asked what set this year apart from previous efforts, and there is little doubt that for us, the team-work was one of the most important factors. Every team member made an indispensable contribution to the days birding, and the differing skills of each complemented the others superbly, ensuring that we recorded far more as a team, than we would have as individual birders. Team members did not waste words, but were intensely concentrated on the job of finding birds – hour after hour. Jokes and light banter were restricted to the fast drives between localities. Communication between team members was excellent and efficient.

The second major factor was preparation and route planning. Rob and Etienne were able to do a fair amount of recce work this

adjust the route – only one or two minor spots produced lulls in progress on the day.

It also helped that we have now accumulated a fair amount of data on the area as a whole, and were able to consider options and alternatives, and develop a clear focus on which were priority birds in each area. As it turned out our planning seemed to be almost spot-on – or as Richard commented, the balance of the day was perfect. Further factors in achieving the total were a healthy dose of good luck and very good birding weather.

One aspect that is particularly satisfying is that we have pioneered most of the areas we covered ourselves. Having said that, we must acknowledge the birders who explored reserves like Mdala and Mkhombo and alerted us to the potential here. Nevertheless, there are only a handful of Pretoria-based birders who know localities such as Mdala, Mkhombo and Mabusa (and possibly no one knows these areas as well as Rob Geddes). The grassland area north of Bronkhorstspuit and Wilge River Valley areas are becoming better known since we started birding this area in 2003, and many birders have started visiting these areas for the larks, bustards, francolins and cisticolas they offer.

The area is quite remarkable for the proximity of some contrasting habitats. Here



one can record Orange-River Francolin within 5 minutes of Spectacled Weaver and African Goshawk, Buff-streaked Chat within 5 minutes of Fawn-coloured Lark, and Blue Crane within 2 minutes of Bushveld Pipit. Our overall target list was 421 species – and all of those

have either been recorded by ourselves or by other birders in the areas along or close to our actual route. For those interested, about half the route is actually in Mpumalanga, with the balance in Gauteng and Limpopo Provinces.

**Specials recorded on the day (in the context of Gauteng/Western Mpumalanga):**

Little Bittern  
 Western Honey-Buzzard  
 Lesser Spotted Eagle  
 Ovambo Sparrowhawk  
 Pallid Harrier  
 Osprey  
 Orange-River Francolin  
 Buff-spotted Flufftail  
 Red-chested Flufftail  
 Blue Crane  
 Temminck's Courser  
 African Grass-Owl  
 Freckled Nightjar  
 Pygmy Kingfisher  
 Blue-cheeked Bee-eater  
 Brown-backed Honeybird  
 Melodious Lark  
 Eastern Long-billed Lark  
 Flappet Lark  
 Pink-billed Lark  
 Eurasian Golden Oriole  
 Cape Penduline-Tit  
 Buff-streaked Chat  
 Garden Warbler  
 Common Whitethroat

Icterine Warbler  
 Olive-tree Warbler  
 Dark-capped Yellow Warbler  
 Yellow-bellied Eremomela  
 Green-capped Eremomela  
 Barred Wren-Warbler  
 Wing-snapping Cisticola  
 Lazy Cisticola  
 Bushveld Pipit  
 Southern White-crowned Shrike  
 Greater Double-collared Sunbird  
 Great Sparrow  
 Red-headed Weaver  
 Lesser Masked Weaver  
 Cuckoo Finch  
 Cut-throat Finch  
 Purple Indigobird  
 Cape Bunting

**Biggest dips:**

African Hoopoe  
 Grey-headed Gull  
 Giant Kingfisher  
 Bronze Mannikin  
 Kittlitz's Plover  
 Common Quail  
 Black Kite (Yellow-billed)

Hottentot Teal  
 Comb Duck  
 Common Scimitarbill

**Birds dipped due to insufficient team presence/consensus:**

Martial Eagle  
 Shikra  
 African Goshawk  
 Wood Owl  
 Sand Martin  
 Plain-backed Pipit

**Team stats and logistics**

Vehicle: Isuzu Double Cab 4X4  
 Driver: Etienne (we did not use a non-birding driver this year)  
 Distance covered while birding: about 420 km  
 Start, Wilge River Valley, 02:30  
 Finish, Buffelsdrift, 22:30  
 Radius used = 43 km (Centre point 25° 26.44 S, 28° 42.90 E)  
 Total time birded: 20 h  
 Bird of the day: One of Buff-spotted Flufftail, Buff-streaked Chat or Common Whitethroat.

**NEW MEMBERS/NUWE LEDE**

Leon Gildenhuys, Craig & Tracy Symes, Ruby & Axel Braumann, AJ & LA Cock, Werner Haasbroek, Deon Oosthuizen, HJ Coetzee, Michael & Susan Sprott, Gerhard Ferreira

**DEATH NOTICE**

It is with great sadness that we advise of the death of Mr Rene du Plessis who passed away on 23rd October. He was a long standing member of the club and our condolences go out to his family.

# Wild Birds “Victims Not Vectors”

As the year draws to a close, millions of wild birds have flown to their wintering sites across, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas without the widely predicted outbreaks of H5N1 bird flu associated with their migration routes.

“The most obvious explanation is that migrating wild birds are not spreading the disease,” said Dr Michael Rands, Director & Chief Executive of BirdLife International.

“Migratory wild birds were blamed for spreading bird flu west from Asia, yet there’s been no spread back eastwards, nor to South Asia and Africa this autumn. The limited outbreaks in eastern Europe are on southerly migration routes but are more likely to be caused by other vectors such as the import of poultry or poultry products. The hypothesis that wild birds are to blame is simply far from proven,” said Dr Rands. “Wild birds occasionally come into contact with infected poultry and die: they are the victims not vectors of H5N1 bird flu.”

BirdLife maintains that better biosecurity is the key to halting the spread of bird flu. In particular, BirdLife is urging governments and relevant agencies to concentrate their efforts on the poultry and cage bird trades and to ban the movement of poultry and poultry products from infected areas, and restrict the international movement of captive birds in trade.

The Government of Vietnam has warned local residents against the risk of dumping tonnes of chicken faeces into rivers and lakes as fish food.

BirdLife is also strongly urging governments to ban the use of untreated poultry faeces as fertiliser and feed in fish-farms and

in agriculture. Domestic bird waste is widely used as food and fertiliser in fish farming and in agriculture, yet infected poultry are known to excrete virus particles in their faeces.

The use of untreated faeces in fish farming was recently described by the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organisation as a “high risk production practice”. Russian fish farms have begun using chicken faeces as fish farm fertiliser, and this practice is employed in Eastern Europe where poultry faeces are also spread onto agricultural land. The Government of Vietnam has warned local residents against the risk of dumping tonnes of chicken faeces into rivers and lakes as fish food; one boy has died of bird flu after swimming in a river where infected

chicken carcasses were discarded. This October, Mute Swans died at fish farms in Croatia and Romania.

“Implementing measures like these are proven to work,” says Dr Rands. “For example, Malaysia and South Korea both experienced

bird flu outbreaks through importing infected poultry products, but stamped the disease out and have remained disease free through improved biosecurity. In the mean time, hundreds of thousands of waterbirds have arrived to winter in, or migrated through South Korea, and many migrant waders have passed through Malaysia.”

“Better biosecurity is the key to controlling the disease’s spread,” said Dr Rands. “But the virus can rapidly mutate, so it’s important to monitor wild bird populations to look for evidence of new strains arising.”

(From the BirdLife website [http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2005/12/flu\\_migration.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2005/12/flu_migration.html))

**BirdLife is strongly urging governments to ban the use of untreated poultry faeces as fertiliser and feed in fish-farms and in agriculture.**

# *Swartkopalbatros (Lightmantled Sooty Albatros) in Suidelike Mosambiek*

*Berrie Ferreira*

Tydens 'n besoek van die Radio Voetslaan-klub aan Ponta Malongane in die suidelike deel van Mosambiek vanaf 23 tot 26 Junie 2005 het die groep die voorreg gehad om 'n Swartkopalbatros (Lightmantled Sooty Albatros), Roberts No 16, te sien. Die albatros het met die branders uitgespoel en was totaal uitgeput. Eers is vermoed dat die albatros beseer is. Die albatros is deur Gert en Sue van Heerden "aangeneem", opgetel en na ons kampeerplek geneem waar dit die res van die naweek versorg en gevoer is.

Na identifikasie is besef dat dit 'n besondere seldsame spesie is om is daardie omgewing te sien. Sondag is die voël saam teruggebring na Gauteng. Maandag het ek navraag gedoen na rehabilitasiesentrums waar die voël ondersoek en versorg kan word en Etienne Marais het vir my die telefoonnommer van "Free me" in Johannesburg gegee. Die voël is Dinsdag 28 Junie soontoe geneem.

Na 'n ondersoek is vasgestel dat daar niks met die voël skort nie, maar dat dit

net totaal uitgeput was. Die voël het intussen mooi herstel en die beplanning is om die albatros na Kaapstad te stuur en daarna op 'n boot wat in 'n suidelike rigting sal vaar, te laai waar dit vrygelaat sal word.

Kort nadat Etienne Marais vir my die telefoonnommer van "Free me" gegee het, het Trevor Hardaker uit Kaapstad geskakel en navraag gedoen oor die albatros. Hy het ook bevestig dat dit 'n uiters seldsame swerwer is vir daardie area. Volgens Trevor is daar al 'n paar Swartkopalbatrosse in die suide van Mosambiek aangeteken (die laaste een ongeveer 18 maande gelede), en hulle was oor die algemeen almal "totally exhausted", soortgelyk aan wat die geval met hierdie een was.

Gelukkig het hierdie storie 'n gelukkige einde. Die albatros sal hopelik binnekort weer in sy natuurlike habitat vrygelaat word.

As dit nie was vir Gert en Sue van Heerden se onselfsugtige optrede, wat hulle oor die albatros ontferm het nie, het dit dalk al in iemand se kookpot beland.

## **News Highlights on BirdLife's Website <http://www.birdlife.org.za/>**

Welcome to BirdLife  
Cape Agulhas

Birding Big Day 2005  
- Results

SUMMER BIRDING  
WEEKEND at Pongola Game Reserve

BFS population  
has reached the  
historical record!

CleanMarine  
comes alive

Vietnam government  
stops wild bird culls

UK proposes slashing funds  
for nature

A Big Bird Year for  
BirdLife South Africa

New study pinpoints  
epicenters of Earth's  
imminent extinctions

EU must  
ensure  
bioenergy is  
really  
'green'

# What Is Important About Birds Part 5 Uses and Abuses

*Pauline Leinberger*

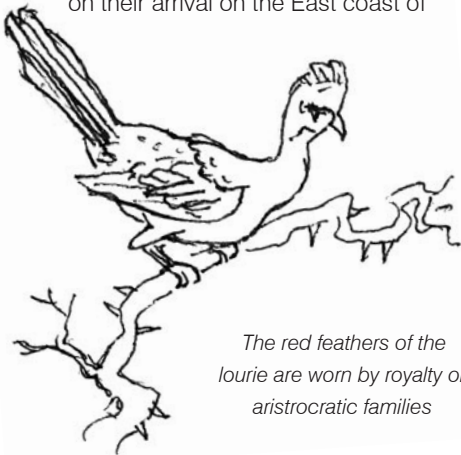
Birds have extraordinary attributes and skills which have been exploited by man for many centuries sometimes to their near-extinction, and mostly to their disadvantage. We have eaten their flesh which has become one of the major and most affordable sources of animal protein in the world today. We use their skills for fishing, their song, their powers of flight for communication and sport and their feathers for decoration and warmth. We even use the guano produced by the Cape Gannet and the Peruvian Booby as a natural fertilizer.

Most of the birds whose flesh we enjoy belong to the Order Galliformes which is made up of 6 families of which 4 are highly valued as edible or game birds. Our domesticated turkey, which in its original form as *Meleagris gallopavo* gave the Pilgrim Fathers such cause for thanksgiving on their arrival on the East coast of

North America belongs to one of these and was already being hunted by the American Indian in North America and Mexico many centuries prior to this.

Another of these families, the Phasianidae, is made up of birds ranging in size from the tiny quail about 15 cm long to peafowl up to nearly 2 m long. It is a family considered to be of significant importance to man as it includes the domestic fowl which is descended from the Jungle Fowl, *Gallus gallus*. Evidence exists that this bird was domesticated in China about 1 500 BC and in India around 3 000 BC. This family is most common in Southern Asia where a good collection of pheasants, francolins and partridges occur and in the wild, in tropical Asia, two species of peacock. The latter were soon exported to all corners of the world. It is said that Alexander the Great forbade his subjects to eat peacocks. Grouse and our own Guinea fowl also belong to this order of edible birds.

Ducks, geese and swans of the order Anseriformes provide our hungry sportsmen with further amusement, particularly in the northern states of America where migrating birds provide hunting for many. The art of decoy making is highly competitive and the lakes echo to the sound of duck callers at migration time when American hunters take to the lakes and in fact any body of water where the waterbirds are



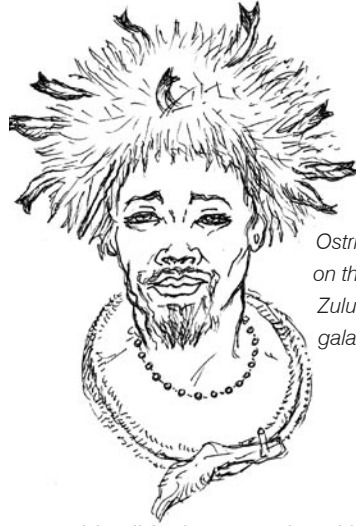
*The red feathers of the  
lourie are worn by royalty or  
aristocratic families*

likely to come down on their long journey. Muscovy ducks originated in South America and the rest of the domesticated duck species seem to have originated some 2000 years ago in China with the Mallard which has such a bad reputation among birders today for its prowess at seducing females of indigenous species. The Christmas goose descended from the Greylag Goose *Anser anser* in Europe some 4 000 years ago. Geese go through a period of flightlessness when their wing feathers are moulted simultaneously. This makes it a relatively easy job to hunt them.

A further much-prized delicacy from the East is birds-nest soup which is made from the nests of a species of swiftlet, *Collocalia fuciphaga*. These nests are built almost entirely from saliva and cemented to the rocky walls of the caves in which these swiftlets make their homes.

Oil was a further valuable commodity to primitive people and even in Victorian times was much sought after. Shearwaters, Storm Petrels and Oil-birds were killed in their thousands. Well-grown chicks of Short-tailed and Sooty Shearwaters (Mutton birds) were taken for their stomach oil and Storm Petrels were often so fat that wicks were passed through their bodies which could then be burnt like candles.

The Oil-bird is another bird to have suffered human predation. It is a bird, closely related to nightjars which comes from South America. The explorer Humboldt discovered these birds resident in the Cariepe cave in Venezuela in 1799. The young had been traditionally boiled down



*Ostrich feathers on the head of a Zulu warrior for gala occasions*

to provide oil for lamps and cooking. The species is now protected and the cave is a national monument; threat now comes from destruction of the surrounding forest.

Feathers, the possession of a bird that makes him unique in the evolutionary process, are remarkable for their uses. There are long straight flight feathers and there are soft downy feathers to trap air close to the skin to retain heat. There are feathers to keep him dry and there are those that advertise species and the readiness to mate. These evolutionary trends have not always been to the advantage of the birds as their feathers have been heavily exploited by man. The town of Oudtshoorn was founded in 1850 on the strength of the Ostrich industry. In the early part of the 20th Century there were said to be 700 000 captive birds.



*A Zulu man with two Blue Crane feathers – a chief's prerogative*



*The red feathers of the lourie were used to adorn Swazi aristocracy*

The market for Ostrich feathers failed at the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War but the industry seems to have recovered somewhat today as we have discovered that the Ostrich is quite good to eat and his skin makes fine leather goods.

Feathers have been used traditionally to adorn ourselves for many centuries: Zulu men wore Ostrich feathers for gala occasions; Zulu warriors wore Blue Crane feathers to show their status; Long-tailed Widow feathers adorned a Zulu or Swazi woman; A Swazi doctor wore a varied collection of feathers probably to show his status; The red feathers of the lourie were used to adorn Swazi aristocracy.

Somehow things seem to have got out of hand during the Victorian times. In trying to attract the attention of his chosen mate the male Bird of Paradise also attracted his greatest admirer and at the same time, his greatest enemy. From 1880 to 1890 about 50 000 skins were exported from New Guinea to Paris for the fashion trade. Fortunately this practice was prohibited in 1920.

Personal adornment continued however. Osprey feathers were highly fashionable worn in the hair and for decorating hats. John Gould was a highly respected ornithologist at the British Museum between 1804 and 1836. He was a highly ambitious explorer and scientific collector and was, together with his wife who illustrated his specimens, the first collector to visit Australia and Tasmania. His greatest fascination was, however, for the tiny jewel-like Hummingbird of the New World. He made a comprehensive collection of these birds but at the same time the brilliance of colour caught the fancy of the rich and fashionable of Europe. It became the thing to decorate your home or your hat with these bright little bodies. Many species were brought to the verge of extinction by 1846 when the fashion industry realised the value of these birds as accessories. Thousands of skins were sent annually from South America to London and Paris as ornaments. By mid-century some "hummers" were



*Two bunches of Long-tailed Widow feathers adorned a Zulu or Swazi bride*

as prized as precious stones. Millions were slaughtered in the name of fashion and 40 years later as the trade peaked in 1888, in a week 400 000 were sold at auction, 12 000 in a single public sale. Some 3 000 skins of Ruby and Topaz humming-birds were shipped from Brazil in a single consignment.

John Gould, during his years of collecting in Australia and Tasmania, mentions heavy exploitation of some of the bird species. The Cape Barren Goose was so tame for instance that it could be captured by hand or knocked down with sticks to use for its downy feathers. The Black Swan was run down in boats while moulting, usually for its soft downy breast feathers. Mutton birds which were hunted for oil were also slaughtered for their feathers. These were sold, some two and a half tons of feathers from 112 000 birds at 6 pence per pound in Launceston. Albatrosses were hunted and left plucked and dying by the thousands on Albatross island.

A unique method of exploitation occurs in the instance of the Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*). The down with which the female lines its nest is collected before and after incubation as its insulation properties are known to be unsurpassed by man-made fibres.

Birds skills have also been used by man to make his life easier. Cormorants have been used for centuries in China and Japan to catch fish. The birds are fitted with rings round their necks to prevent them swallowing their catch and attached to the boats with string.

A Swazi doctor wore a varied collection of feathers, possibly vulture feathers



Honeyguides are used by honey-hungry people of Africa to guide them to a supply of honey which they have to share with the bird by tradition.

Carrier pigeons were used to carry messages during the First World War and one mustn't forget the humble canary that was used in the mines to detect the presence of gas underground.

Birds' ability to sing and entertain has encouraged man to keep them in cages. This topic in itself causes a great deal of controversy as do many of the sporting activities to which we subject our feathered friends.

I plan to discuss birds in sport and the revenge of birds in future issues of *Laniarius*. Please feel free to comment on this and past articles. Just think of me as a sitting duck just waiting to be blown out of the water.

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# Sangers Oor Die See – En My Eerste “Sooty”

*Frans van Vuuren*

Die voëlkyk-seereis na Europa Eiland (tussen Vilancoulos in Mosambiek en Madagaskar) het vir meer as net 'n fees van seevoëls vir ons lewenslyste gesorg – ek het ook my eerste “Sooty” of Roetvalk te siene gekry!

Die vreemde ondervinding het almal op die boot verbaas. Reeds op oggend twee, so 150 km reg oos van Sodwanabaai volgens Pieter en Lucas se GPS, het 'n Hofsvanger (Willow Warbler) so 2 meter bo my kop op die handreling kom sit en homself doodluiters tuisgemaak. Moenie vra waarvandaan hy kom nie, maar die voëltjie was so moeg dat hy dalk nog aan migreer was. 'n Rukkie later, terwyl ek ontbyt afsluk (en met moeite ook gister se middagete terugsluk) in die eetkamer, hoor ek van 'n Rooiruglaksman buite – seker 'n verkeerde ID dink ek, maar 'n rukkie later is ek self buite toe 'n tweede een verskyn.

Nog is dit die einde niet: 'n Spotvoël (Icterine Warbler) kom te voorskyn en land uiteindelik op die net oor die swembad aan dek, meters van die paar honderd opgewonde voëlkykers – ook hierdie voël was baie moeg en het sommer so sit-sit 'n mot gevang, wat ongelukkig vir hom weer weggekrom het toe hy dit probeer afsluk het.

Swaels was 'n redelike algemene gesig, met baie Europese Swaels en selfs 'n Huisswael

*Some of the people from BLNG  
that were on the trip*

met sy wit kruis, maar die eenaardigste besoeker was seker die Paradysvlieëvanger – hoe op aarde kom die voëltjie so ver oor die see?



Frans van Vuuren



Toe die Roetvalk van agter af aangevlieg kom en langs ons op ooghoogte saamvlieg, het die opgewondenheid oorgekook. Dit was 'n onvolwasse voël met 'n swaar gestreepte bors en meeste van ons het dit as 'n Eleonora-valk geëien, maar Ian Sinclair het ons reggehelp – die donker kroon asook minder donker, gestreepte ondervlerke, het tot die Roetvalk ID gelei.

Enigiemand wat nog 'n Kleinwulp vir sy lewenslys gesoek het, het 'n halfdag tyd gehad om die voël goed deur te kyk terwyl dit saam met ons en al om die boot vlieg.

Nadat ons op die derde dag by Europa-eiland gedraai het, het 'n Hoephoep verbete met die boot probeer tred hou en kort-kort aan boord probeer kom, maar die baie mense of die hoogte van die boot bo die watervlak het hom laat misluk.

Ek wil my verstout om te sê dat elkeen van die groep voëlkenners wat ons aan boord gehad het, verstom was oor hierdie dis van wat ons as landvoëls ken. Dit laat jou wonder oor hoeveel voëls deur wind verwaai word oor die see, of selfs net tydens migrasie verdwaal en nooit weer land sien nie.

# *Mega Indian Ocean Pelagic Trip Report: 21-27 November 2005*

*Peter Wilgenbus*

*“.....Are you keen on improving your Southern African or World life list?  
Do you still need Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbird?  
How about Greater and Lesser Frigatebird?  
Is Red-footed Booby a 'bogief bird' for you?*

*If so, then come and join us on a mega-pelagic into the Mozambique Channel in late  
November 2005, where we will be visiting a series of under-seamounts and these birds'  
breeding island – Europa Island.*

*There will be some awesome birding with hopefully many brilliant birds being added to all of your lists.  
It should be one of the best birding social events in South African birding history...”*

**D**id I need any further convincing? No way! And, early afternoon, Monday, 21 November, two hundred passengers departed on MV Madagascar.

On board were ornithologists, scientists, bird-watchers, birders, twitchers, tickers (listers), stringers, tour (bird) guides, non-birders, and spouses of the above-mentioned.

The vessel turned northeastwards out of the Durban harbor and sailed in choppy waters towards Almirante Leite Bank, Hall Tablemount and Jaguar Seamount, a series

of under-seamounts within the Mozambique Channel, some of which break the surface as the islands of Europa, Bassas da India and Juan de Nova.

In high spirit and with great anticipation all passengers stood on the upper deck, waiving good-byes to their relatives standing on the shore and starting ticking off the first birds of the trip, being Rock Dove, Common Myna, Kelp and Grey-headed Gull.

With the high-rise apartments of Umhlanga Rocks disappearing over the horizon, we admired our first sea birds being, Cape



*Immature Greater Frigatebird  
in the wake of the ship.*

Gannet, Subantarctic Skua, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, Swift and Common Tern.

Within the Richards Bay waters, we sailed into a mild thunderstorm. The waters became very rough and the vessel rolled from side to side, providing many opportunities for all in learning various new dance steps. The storm continued throughout the night. At dawn, the next morning a few brave bird-watchers stood on the deck scanning the rough waters for birds.

**“And what did you do? We got seasick.  
And for fun? We slept.”**

By Wednesday morning, we were almost entirely entertained by various passerines, probably blown off-course by the previous days' storms. We had Red-backed Shrike, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, African Paradise Flycatcher, Willow and Icterine Warbler, which some bird-watchers had great pleasure in adding to their life lists.

A pair of Barn Swallow followed the ship for quite some time, hawking insects.

Poor Trevor got flak from all directions and

was reprimanded for sending the incorrect bird list to all passengers. We might just as well birded along Zaagkuil drift and seen all the bushveld birds.

MV Madagascar crossed the calm seas at Almirante Leite Bank and sailed towards the 200 nautical mile boundary line. Some distant Sooty Tern and Great-winged Petrel created great excitement among all of us. With each bird sighting call, everyone stampeded from starboard to port side and the long queues of people standing at the coffee tables, restaurant and bar vanished within seconds in the hope of twitching a new lifer. By now, our land-bird lists exceeded the sea-bird lists, as close sightings of Amur and Sooty Falcon were had.

Two hundred bird-watchers eagerly scanned every inch of the now calm seas and clear skies and we had our first sighting of distant Frigatebird and Tropicbird. By late afternoon, a juvenile Red-footed Booby settled on the electrical wiring and in full view of all commenced in preening itself.

Getting closer to Europa Island, an increasing number of tropical seabirds were seen. Initially at a distance only, but when Greater and Lesser Frigatebird soared low over the upper deck and Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbird displayed within a close range, all the emotions broke loose. In between all the Oohs and Aahs, smiles appeared on all the faces and some tears of joy were shed. High fives were given and within seconds, expensive cameras and awesome tele-lenses appeared from no-where bringing the best out of some birds.

I found myself lying flat on my back on a deckchair, watching in awe overhead the majestic soaring, diving and gliding of the Frigatebirds. I recalled my first sighting of a Greater Frigatebird one month and four years ago, an experience that dramatically changed my bird-watching hobby.

We sailed around Europa Island and returned to Durban. Back in South African waters, bird-life sightings decreased allowing us to partake in other non-birding

*Red-footed  
Booby on the  
ship's rigging.*



Peter and Gina Wilgenbus

activities. Reading a book was like taking a sleeping tablet and many dosed off in their chairs. In between, seeing dolphins, whales and sharks, Great-winged Petrel, the odd few White-chinned Petrel and single Storm-petrels kept us busy in playing musical chairs.

A Common Whimbrel appeared, spent the next hour circling the vessel and responded frequently to the almost perfect Ian Sinclair's Whimbrel call. I could not detect any Irish accent, but maybe the Whimbrel could, as it was actively seeking its relative.

Unlike all other mornings, on Saturday morning, I decided to stay in bed a little while longer and only went up deck at 05:30. With no one waiting at the coffee table, I headed straight towards the urn and poured a cup of coffee, when I noticed the excitement on the deck and people looking at each other's photographs. I rushed to the back and dipped by seconds on The Bird of the Trip, a B.A.R.A.U.'s Petrel. The second recorded sighting of a Barau's Petrel within South African waters and only the fourth within Southern Africa.

I was devastated. The dipping feeling rapidly worsened with floods of sympathy pouring in. I appreciated the good advice given by so many of the happy Barau's twitchers, especially the following: Selwyn Rautenbach suggested that a consultation with the psy-

chologist was immediately required.

Dave Allen kindly offered assisting me in jumping overboard. Lia Steen reminded me of my previous morning's comment, when she dipped on the Jouanin's Petrel, repeating my words: "If you snooze, you loose". How dearly these words now backfired on me. Frans van Vuuren: "I know the feeling."

My depression was short-lived, when I noticed that the Barau's Petrel was not documented in my Sasol's field guide and accordingly, decided it was no big deal. However, Selwyn Rautenbach mentioned that the Barau's Petrel is now documented in the new Roberts' VII and kindly offered to either take over my Robert's VII, delivered only minutes before I left on the KZN trip, or me tearing out the relevant pages. Eventually, with a numb acceptance that this mega-dip did not cause any permanent damage to my inner feelings, I continued birding looking for the next megatwitch, which this time I would not loose while snoozing.

After the sumptuous dinner, some of the birders entertained us with an awesome display of pictures taken during the trip.

Early Sunday morning, we watched the vessel turning into the Durban harbour and with some sadness, we realised that our mega-pelagic journey was close to its end. With the vessel docking, we saw some Pink-backed Pelican on an island and scanned

all the Grey-headed Gull for a last change of seeing an odd Common Black-headed Gull.

### **My lifers of the trip**

Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbird, Lesser Frigatebird, Red-footed Booby, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaeger, Great-winged, Jouanin's and Bulwer's Petrel, Sooty Tern, Wedge-tailed Shearwater and Black-bellied Storm-petrel.

In addition to the lifers, I added Greater Frigatebird and Pink-backed Pelican to my Challenge Bird List.

### **My dips of the trip**

Tropical Shearwater, Bridled Tern and Barau's Petrel, the latter of whom Selwyn Rauten-

bach kindly promised, he would with regular intervals remind me of for the remainder of my bird-watching life. With a friend like this, who needs any enemies?

### **Conclusion**

I could summarise this trip as an emotional, eventful, fun-filled experience of a lifetime. Many new friends were made. It was great to meet at last those people one so often reads about on the various bird nets. There were tears of joy and tears of sadness. There were many chum makers. There were many hours of great fun and many hours of boredom and most importantly there were only a very few dips and many lifers.

## ***How to Create a Birder***

*Every birder wants to grow the bird-watcher specie. Most of the bird-watchers I know have a passion for their hobby and will pursue it relentlessly. To get non-birdwatchers to change over, here are some golden rules:*

- 👉 Force the person to go on birding trips with you. Just do it in such a way so that they think it is about their wonderful company and adorable personality.
- 👉 Allow them to do all the "ticking" and administration, because they are so good at administration and you are so useless. It makes them feel good.
- 👉 Take them to all the grey dusty birding spots and convince them it is healthy to breath dusty air, eat sand infested braaivleis, sweat all the impurities out of their bodies and walk till there are blisters on both their feet and holes in their shoes. Buying them a pair of new hiking shoes can be a bonus.
- 👉 Do not forget to do an all inclusive luxury trip at least once every 10 years. This is just to strengthen the "good" side of birding and your own generosity and gratitude.
- 👉 Buy good video and photo equipment. Toys make every hobby more fun.
- 👉 Tell them about all the "mega birds" you see when they did not accompany you on a trip.
- 👉 Tell them in particular about all those trips on which you see the Honey Badgers and the Crested Guineafowl; you know they so desperately want to see themselves.
- 👉 Go "twitching" on your own without bringing home a photo or video clip.
- 👉 Make Birding Big Day sound like a not-to-be-missed outdoor adventure and experience.
- 👉 Always tickle their curiosity by not giving all the information on what you have done or seen. This will make them go there and see for themselves.
- 👉 Install Roberts's Multimedia onto their computers and replace the screen saver with beautiful birds that pops up on their screen regularly.

If you have done all of this, you are pretty close to a successful birder conversion.

# Hamerkoppe Besoek 7de Laan

Ernst Retief

Ek is jaloers. Baie jaloers.

Ek het nie op my laat wag toe ek in Oktober uitgenooi is om na 'n Hamerkopnes te gaan kyk nie. Ek het al voorheen Hamerkopneste gesien, maar hierdie een is anders. Die tuin is in een van Pretoria se voorstede geleë – Wonderboom-suid. Die adres – 7de Laan. Dit het my laat wonder of dramas soortgelyk aan die TV-sepie met dieselfde naam, ook in die tuin afspeel.

Dit is sommer gou duidelik dat Nancy en Peter Reilly baie besondere mense is. Hulle liefde vir elke plant en boom duidelik sigbaar – elkeen met groot liefde aangeplant. Die resultaat is 'n tuin wat wemel van die voëls. In die uur wat ek daar deurgebring het, is onder andere Karoolysters, Rooiwangmuisvoëls, 'n Gewone Janfrederik, twee Grysneushoringvoëls, Rooikeelbyvreters en nog vele ander tuinvoëls gesien. Karoolysters het fyn droë plantmateriaal van 'n palmboomstam gestroop en groot hompe in hulle bekke aangedra na hulle nes iewers in die omgewing.

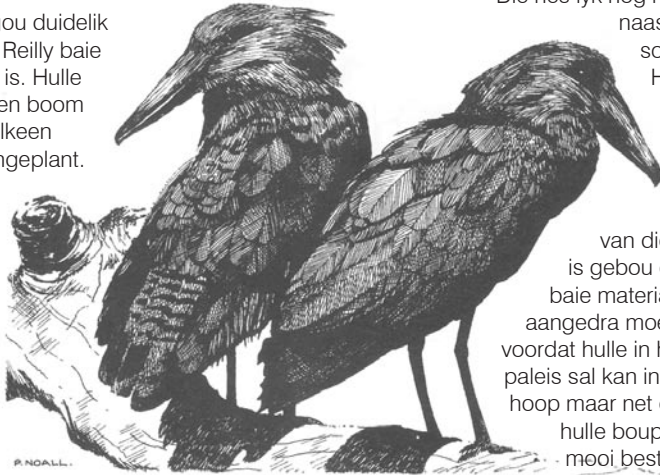
Maar die Hamerkoppe, die rede vir my besoek, het besluit dat hulle nie die tuin met my wil deel nie. Volgens Nancy was hulle vroeër die oggend daar, hard gewerskaf aan hulle nes. Sy het hulle mooi gevra om te bly – sy wou met hulle spog. Maar helaas het hulle ander planne gehad.

Die nes in die mik van die papierbas-doringboom het egter hulle vroeëre teenwoordigheid verlap. Hulle het seker al die moontlike eiendomme in die omgewing verken voor hulle op die een besluit het. Nogal 'n goeie keuse sou ek sê. 'n Pragtige groot boom wat verseker al baie jare daar staan. Die pragtige uitgespreide blaredak soos 'n sambreel. Dit sal beslis help om die meeste aanslae van moeder natuur te tem.

Die nes lyk nog nie naastenby soos 'n Hamerkopnes nie. Net die basis van die nes is gebou en nog baie materiaal sal aangedra moet word voordat hulle in hulle paleis sal kan intrek. Ek hoop maar net dat hulle hulle bouplanne mooi bestudeer het. Vir my menslike oog lyk die mik

maar ietwat aan die klein kant vir so 'n groot paleis. Maar wat weer ek nou.

Volgens Nancy en Peter bou althwe ouers aan die nes. Maar hulle is seker dat die een Hamerkop dalk so bietjie meer arbeidsaam as die ander is. Die bouery vind vroeg in die oggend plaas – so van 06:00 to 10:00 en dan weer laatmiddag. Takke en ander plantmateriaal word aangedra en iewers in die omgewing is daar 'n hartseer seuntjie want sy plastiek watergeweer het ook op die nes beland! Volgens die boeke is dit nogal algemeen vir



Hamerkoppe om mensgemaakte artikels na hulle neste aan te dra. Modernisasie....

Nou hoekom is ek jaloers? Nadat ons die nes bestudeer en van elke kant gefotografeer het, is ek vir 'n lekker koppie koffie genooi. Nou wie van julle sal nie jaloers wees op die volgende prentjie nie. Jy sit rustig op die stoep. Koppie stomende koffie in die hand. Lekker koekies. En reg voor jou, oop en bloot is die Hamerkopnes. Geen takke wat jou uitsig versper nie. Elke beweging van die kodige voëls kan dopgehou word. Selfs sonder jou verkyk sal jy elke stukkie materiaal wat aangedra word mooi kan behoer. Notas van hulle doen en late sal jy na hartelus kan maak. Nou ja, ek het dit natuurlik nie so beleef nie, maar Nancy en Peter kan ... so ja, ek is jaloers!

'n Paar interessante feite oor Hamerkopneste. Volgens *Roberts Birds of Southern*

*Africa VII* bou Hamerkoppe soms hulle neste in stedelike gebiede. Die nes kan uit 8 000 individuele items bestaan. Dit is 0.7 m in deursnit, 1,1 m hoog en neem tussen 4 en 6 weke om te voltooi. So harde en intensiewe werk is dit voorwaar. Die ergste is dat 'n Hamerkoppaar nooit seker is of hulle eien-dom in hul naam geregistreer is nie. Ander voëls ('skurke' is dalk 'n beter beskrywing) neem gereeld die nes oor voor dit voltooi is. Hamerkoppe het reeds Nonnetjiesuile, Kolganse, Knobbeleende en selfs verskeie valke aangekla dat hulle hulle hieraan skuldig maak. Maar helaas stel die owerhede nie daarin belang om hulle saak te ondersoek nie. 'n Tekort aan fondse....

Anders as die TV-sepie 7de Laan, is dit die werklikheid hierdie. 'n Harde werklikheid. En ek sal eerder hierdie sepie in 7de Laan wil dophou as die een oor TV. Ek bly jaloers.

## Is dit die moeite werd?

*Ernst Retief*

Dit is Vrydagaand. Moeg gewerk. Sosaties op die braaier. En die eerste groot krieket van die seisoen om na uit te sien. Die Retiefs is reg daarvoor.

Die opwinding van die krieket word versteur deur die lui van die foon. My seun lig my in dit is oom Rihann. Nou vir 'n mede *bird-watcher* moet die krieket maar terugstaan. As ek maar geweet het. 'n Noodkreet. 'n Bekommerde inwoner van Queenswood het gebel. 'n Hadededa hang in 'n boom en hulle kan hom nie daar uit kry nie. Ek bel om te hoor hoe en waar. Nou ja – daar gaan die krieket en ek hoop maar die familie sal die sosaties nie verbrand nie.

By die gegewe adres gekom, is die eienaar hard besig om sy swembadnet se paal te verleng. Dit maak my dadelik bekommerd. Dit is darem 'n lang paal – dit beteken net

een ding – die Hadededa sit nie sommer hier onder die boom nie. Dit is toe ook so. Hoog bo in die top van die boom hang die Hadededa kop-onderstebo aan 'n stuk tou. Die tou het om sy pote gehaak en die het weer aan die takke vasgehaak. Hulpeloos spartel hy in die kwynende hoop dat sy pote sal losgaan – maar daardie sterk vlerke is van geen nut in hierdie situasie nie.

By hom sit sy maat. Ek ken natuurlik, soos baie ander, die geluid van die Hadededa goed. Maar die geluid van die besorgde maat was anders. Nie die normale dubbele geluid nie maar een lang haaaa. Ek is seker dit het treurig geklink, miskien verward of dan selfs moedeloos. Dalk is dit maar net soos ek gevoel het.

My leer was nie naastenby lank genoeg om by die hulpelose Hadededa uit te kom

nie. Buurvrou kom toe met haar leer daar aan. Heelwat langer. Ek sukkel vir meer as twee ure – hierdie kant toe, daardie kant toe. Probeer die paal nog langer maak. Niks wil werk nie. Ons flitsligte se batterye word al hoe flouer en word met nuwe en sterker flitsligte vervang. Die tannie besluit die brandweer moet gebel word. Maar die antwoord nie die foon nie. Nogal jammer – sou graag wou sien of hulle sou uitkom vir so 'n “onbenulligheid”. Die buurvrou verklaar ek moet die wankelrige stam en ietwat dun tak uitklim – maar ek herinner haar daaraan dat ek 'n vrou en kind het. Uit haar reaksie lei ek af dat sy dink ek is maar 'n skrikkerige ou. My spiere is later so seer van die rondgeklouter dat ek voel asof ek in 'n bokseveg was.

Intussen het die Hadede se beskermheer maar die pad gevat. Sy maat se welsyn in ons hande gelaat. Sy vertrouwe in ons het egter beskaam. Helaas is 'n Hadede nie gemaak om 'n paar uur onderstebo aan 'n tak te hang nie en ek kon sien hoe die lewe uit hom vloei. Uiteindelik het ons hom los – hoe weet ek nie mooi nie – dit was al donker en dit was seker maar 'n geluk-skoot. Maar ons Hadede was reeds dood. Vir oulaas probeer ons hom met water lawe – mens moet bly hoop. Ons vier volwassenes staan verslae en kyk na ons mislukking. Ek probeer om die stuk wol van die bene af te haal – so asof ek die klok kan terug draai en die Hadede weer tot lewe bring. Om verskoning te vra namens die mens wat die stuk wol iewers laat rondlê het.

Met die terugry na my huis en die dooie Hadede op die sitplek langs my, is ek tog



### **Helaas is 'n Hadede nie gemaak om 'n paar uur onderstebo aan 'n tak te hang nie.....**

ietwat gelukkig. Natuurlik nie oor die dooie Hadede nie, maar dat die oom en sy vrou soveel moeite wou doen om tog die *common* voël te wou red. Baie pragmatiste sou dit as 'n vermorsing van geld, tyd en energie beskou.

'n Paar weke na die gebeure stuur 'n luisteraar van my radiopraatjie 'n e-pos aan my. Hy het die veearts besoek om hondekos te koop. By die toonbank staan 'n vrou met 'n beseerde Gewone Tortelduif – besig om R110.00 te betaal vir die behandeling van die duif! Die luisteraar se vraag van bewondering in sy e-pos: “Is daar nog rêrig sulke mense in ons wêreld?”.

Ek is bly as daar is. Al sê die pragmatiste wat. In 'n tyd waar respek vir lewe, mens of dier, al hoe minder word, is voorbeelde soos die boonste vir my 'n liggpunt. Dit kan nie in die waarde van geld gemeet word nie.

Maar die lewe gaan aan. Terug by die huis na my ervaring met die Hadede, vind ek my sosaties behoorlik gaar gemaak en is ek net betyds om te sien hoe die New Zealanders vir Graham Smith vir 17 lopies in een broubeurt moker.....

# Draft Species Texts from the PCC

*Etienne Marais*

In 2006 the second Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP II) will be starting, and it is likely that data collection on a national basis will begin next year. This will be an important contribution to our knowledge of bird distribution and particularly changes in bird distribution since the first.

A number of BLNG members attended the first Atlas workshop on 1 October, and a number of interesting points emerged. Among these were the following:

- There is consensus that the grid squares utilised in the first atlas (quarter degree squares) are too large for good analysis, and it almost certain that the standard for the next atlas will be a 3x3 minute grid square – which covers an area of about 25 km<sup>2</sup>, as opposed to about 675 km<sup>2</sup>.
- It was agreed that it was a mistake to “stop atlassing” at the end of SABAP 1. Instead, atlassing should be encouraged as a way of birding, which is ongoing in future. This is because of the enormous value of comparative data with tracks changes in bird distribution and abundance over time. This provides an indicator for wider environmental changes, and may for example, help us understand the effects of global warming.

In the meantime the Pretoria Conservation Challenge (PCC) (closely associated with BLNG, but also open to non-members) has continued to collect data, based at present mainly on a dedicated group of atlasers. Of course the data that has already been collected is irreplaceable and may be the only substantial atlas data from the years 2002 to 2005.

The PCC project has been running since 2002 and aims to collect bird data mainly within our region (within 100 km from Pretoria). Since its inception some 4 000 lists have been collected, including over 500 lists for 3x3 grid squares. In total about 160 000 records have been collected for the “Pretoria area”.

In order to continue to provide focus and meaning to the atlassing activity, participants in the PCC have started to compile draft texts on species which are of particular interest. These texts draw from the PCC data, but also rely heavily on the collective “oral history” of birding in the region, which is shared among the experienced birders of the region.

The intention is that the PCC, within the framework of SABAP II, will continue to build on this knowledge base in 2006. We encourage members of the BLNG to get involved in this project, which can add meaning and focus to your day to day birding. Visit <http://www.birding.co.za/challenge> for more information, or to register.

Examples of draft text for 2 species:

## *Thick-billed Weaver*

**Dikbekwewer**

***Amblyospiza albifrons***

**Records:** 249 records and 29 reports

**Red Data Book:** ???

Drafted by **Roger Fieldwick**

3rd draft: 8 Nov 2005

Send comments/inputs to: [fieldwickr@telkomsa.net](mailto:fieldwickr@telkomsa.net)

**Distribution:** Originally found in South Africa in the Lowveld from Kruger Park in the north to Port Elizabeth in the south. In 1961 an isolated breeding population was discovered at Melrose Bird Sanctuary in Johannesburg.

It was initially believed that these were



escapees but it is now thought that they entered the area via the Olifants River and its tributaries. *The Atlas of Southern African Birds* illustrates very clearly such a corridor. A report of Thick-billed Weavers having been seen regularly since about 2000 in Middelburg, Mpumalanga (outside the region) further supports this hypothesis; it is quite likely that they travelled along the Olifants River to Middelburg.

The Johannesburg population increased and by 1987 it had expanded its range to Pretoria in the north, Benoni in the east, Klip River in the south, and Krugersdorp in the west. It is not known whether all these records are of descendants of the original Melrose birds or whether they were supplemented by new arrivals to the area via the Olifants River.

Since 2002, there have been 249 sightings recorded in the PCC database and its range has continued to expand to Rust de Winter area in the north (May 2002), Mdala NR in the north (May 2004), Verena area in the north-east (Jan 2005), Ezemvelo PGP in the north-east (Jun 2002), Balmoral area in the north-east (Nov 2005), Pollak Park, Springs in the east (Aug 2004), Suikerbosrand NR in the south (Sep 2002), Magaliespark Country Estate in the west (Sep 2003), and Vaalkop Dam NR in the north-west (Apr 2004).

In addition there are reports of sightings in Boksburg in the east (2004), Sasolburg in the south (Feb 2003) (where it was reported in Sep 2005 that its numbers are increasing), Potchefstroom (just outside the area) in the south-west (2003), Abe Bailey NR in the south-west (2004), Northern Farm (Diepsloot) (1998), Brits (Nov 2003) and north-west of Brits (Dec 2003) in the west, and Buffelspoort Dam in the Magaliesberg in the west (Mar 2005).

Breeding has been recorded at the National Botanical Gardens, Pretoria and reported at Suikerbosrand NR, Rondebult Bird Sanctuary in Germiston, Northcliffe, Johannesburg, Marievale BS, Boksburg East, Austin Roberts BS in Pretoria, National Parks head office at Groenkloof, Pretoria, CSIR and Woodhill golf estate in Pretoria, Moreleta Spruit in eastern Pretoria and near Olifantsfontein in

Midrand. There are also several reports of birds nest building but not breeding in suburban gardens in eastern Pretoria. Old nests were seen on a farm dam north of Cullinan. A colony was reported nest building at Henley-on-Klip in September 2005.

It seems that the expansion of the Thick-billed Weaver's range is not confined to the Gauteng region. A report has been received of the bird being sighted for the first time in the Schoemanskloof valley 50 km west of Nelspruit (about 1995) and a breeding colony is established there. It has also been suggested that the population of this bird is increasing in the Kruger National Park.



**Gaps in knowledge:** Factors responsible for the westward expansion of its range from the Lowveld.

**Habitat:** Originally coastal and evergreen forests. In the Gauteng region has adapted to the Bushveld and Highveld, favouring mixed and broadleaved woodland in preference to thornveld (it is particularly fond of the fruits of White Stinkwood *Celtis africana* and to exotic trees and shrubs in suburban gardens. Breeds in reedbeds and papyrus.

**Status and movement:** Fairly common breeding resident whose range is continuing to expand.

**Population: ???**

**Conservation:** This bird is thriving in the region and no conservation measures are necessary.

## References

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# Melodious Lark

## Spotlewerik

### *Mirafra cheniana*

**Records:** 65

**Red Data Book:** Near-threatened.

Drafted by **Faansie Peacock**

1st draft: 27 December 2004

Reviewed on 9 May 2005 by Etienne Marais

Send comments/inputs to the .....

**Distribution:** This species occurs widely, albeit sparsely in the grassland areas of the region. Apparently most common in the grasslands to the north-east of the region (north and north-east of Bronkhorstspuit. But also Bapsfontein, Rayton and Verena/ Mabusa areas. Also occurs in the Brandbacht conservancy, Rietvlei Dam NR and in Suikerbosrand NR. Significant numbers in localities east of Pretoria and between Midrand and Centurion.

A few records from grassland in the bushveld regions to the north (Buffelsdrift, Pienaarsrivier).

**Gaps in knowledge:** Extent of distribution in the South of the area (south of Heidelberg, Vaaldam area, winter records, numbers.

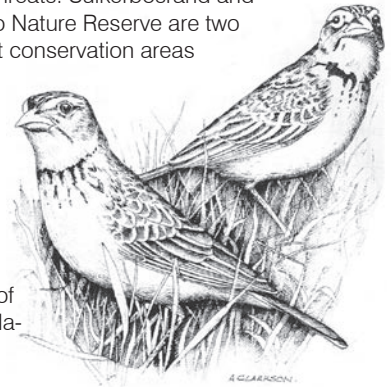
**Habitat:** Grassland, in rather flat to slightly undulating terrain is favoured. Tolerant of mild disturbance and often occurs on the edge of suburbia, sandworks and agricultural areas, where it is particularly attracted to *Eragrostis* pastures.

**Status and movements:** Breeding resident. Locally abundant at breeding sites. Movements in winter not well understood. May remain in breeding areas for some time afterwards, but often displaced due to veldt fires at the end of winter, after which time only returns if grass cover once again becomes suitable. Somewhat nomadic, with local movements. Winter records at Mabusa, Cullinan.

**Population:** During the summer display flights of males population estimates were made of 1.3 - 5.1 (av: 2.0) pairs/ha (Peacock (1997).

**Conservation:** Most records were obtained from outside protected areas, with relatively low impact agricultural practises. Overgrazing and veld management practises may be primary threats. Suikerbosrand and Ezemvelo Nature Reserve are two important conservation areas where

this bird occurs, although numbers here may be less than 5% of the population.



**Note that these texts are © The Gauteng Bird Atlas Project and are not to be quoted or published elsewhere, in any form.**

# Tuinvoëls

Rynetta Coetzee

*Onlangs het 'n swermpie Rooibekkweleas vir die eerste keer hulle opwagting in my tuin gemaak. Ek het hulle aangeteken as spesie nr. 86. Hulle het hulle sit gekry in die groot akasia agter in die tuin, gekwetter, gebad, gemors en toe net so vinnig weer vertrek. Skielik het die spulletjie my baie aan Homo sapiens laat dink. Hulle was tipiese besoekers, ongenooi en net so effe ongeskik het hulle die vuil water vir die inwoners gelos. Toe kry ek die gedagte om die 86 spesies wat oor die afgelepe paar jaar my tuin besoek het te herklassifiseer.*

Die **inwoners** is die klompie wat in die tuin broei, kos soek en feitlik op enige gegewe tydstip van die dag daar gesien kan word: Gewone- en Gryskopmossie; Rooiborsduifie; Swartoogtiptol; Kwêvoël; Gewone Janfrederik; Gewone Kwikkie; Witpenssuikerbekkie; Suidelike Waterfiskaal; Fiskaallaksmen; Fiskaalvlieëvanger; Gevlekte Muisvoël; Kaapse Glasogie; Swartkeelgeelvink en Bruinlyster.

Die **gaste** is gewoonlik goedgemanierd, woon in van die bure se tuine en deel ewe ordentlik die kos wat vir hulle voorgesit word: Gewone Tortelduif; Grootringduif; Pylvlekkatlagter; Mikstertbyvanger; Rooibekkelelaar; Hoephoep; Hadedad; Kuifkop- en Rooikop-houtkapper; Swartkopwielewaal; Kleinglanspreeu; Bruinsylangstertjie; Gewone Fret; Jamesonse Vuurvinkie; Swartkroontjagra en Berg- en Geelooigkanarie.

**Boewe en skelms** sal daar altyd wees en die inwoners en gaste span gewoonlik gou saam om mekaar te waarsku en hulle te verjaag: Geelbekwou; Koekoekvalk en Kleinsperwer. Die grootste skelms is egter die Gewone Vleilorie wat met sy soet stem almal mislei en die Witborskraai met sy gekras.

Dan is daar die **onwettige immigrante** wat so lank in die land is dat hulle hulleself regte toe-eien wat hulle nooit behoort te hê nie o.a. die Indiese Spreeu wat 'n vraat is, eerste wil eet en die kleiner inwoners terroriseer.

Die **besoekers** is die grootste groep en kom soms elke jaar as die kos elders

min raak of net 'n enkele keer as hulle op pad is na elders. Hulle eet, bad, mors en vertrek vinnig: Rooibekkwelea; Witverklap; Kaapse Wewer en Rooivink. Party is darem meer ordentlik soos die Rooiwangmuisvoël; Rooikopvink; Gewone Blouvinkie; Dassievoël; Swartkopwielewaal en Bokmakierie met sy mooi roep. Die Swartsuikerbekkie kom elke winter om die aalwyne te stroop en word soms deur sy Witpensneef verjaag maar steur hom nie te veel aan die bravade nie.

Die meeste **buitelandse besoekers** word welkom geheet en verleen opwinding aan die somer soos die klein Hofsanger; Europese Byvreter en Europese Vlieëvanger maar die ongeskiktes wat misbruik maak van die inwoners se gasvryheid sal daar immer wees: Piet-my-vrou; Diederikkie en Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoël is die groot sondaars en word met 'n lawaai dadelik deur almal uit die tuin verwilder.





Dup du Plessis

Maar hier hou die ooreenkoms nie op nie want die tiptolle, bygestaan deur die houtkappers, is die **sekuriteitswagte** en maak luidkeels, en soms onnodiglik, alarm. Die Kwêvoëls is die **groot-bekke** wat van hulle eie stemme hou en die vinke en suikerbekkies is die **skinderbekke**. Die vleioeries en Indiese Spreeus is die **rugstekers**. Die Kwikkies, Glasogies, Mossies en Lysters is minder gepla deur al die bedrywigheid en gaan hulle gewone alledaagse gang terwyl die Klein Glansspreeus daarvan hou om in die son met hulle mooi klere te spog.

Die Katlagters en Kakelaars is die **grappasse** wat die ander probeer vermaak en vir hulle eie grappe lag en die Bokmakeries,



Dup du Plessis

Waterfiskale en Kanaries is die kunstenaars wat almal in vervoering het met hulle mooi sang.

Die voëls in my tuin is elke dag vir my 'n bron van groot vreugde veral as daar net soms 'n **ontsnapte gevangene** opdaag wat met groot geraas simpatie afdwing en die aandag op sy lot wil vestig soos die Rooiwang- en Swartwangparkiet wat ek nog hoop om stilletjies op my lewenslys af te merk.....

## DONATIONS RECEIVED

The following leaders of outings are thanked for donating their time and sharing their expertise with club members. Some have donated their gratuities back to the club and this is much appreciated.

Rihann Geyster; Ernst Retief; André Marx; Pauline Leinberger; Philip Calinikos; Mike and Irene Birch; Greg Lock; André van der Walt; Charl Viljoen and Erik de Villiers.

Funds generated from donations are used for conservation-related projects as well as the ringers funding/Gelde geskenk vir donasies word vir natuurbewaringsdoeleindes gebruik asook om voëlberinging te ondersteun.

The following leaders of ringer's outings are thanked for their gratuities that are donated specifically for ringing activities:

Neels Jackson; Johan Snyman; Chris du Plooy.

The following club members have made generous donations and are thanked/Die volgende lede word hartlik bedank vir donasies ontvang:

PJA Moolman; J Steyn; I du Plessis; C van Heerden; Rynetta Coetzee; E van Duuren; CT Viljoen; S Visser; Philip Calinikos; Deon Coetzee.

A special word of thanks too to non-members Jean & Denise Léveillé for their donation.

## NGOYA FOREST WEEKEND 10-12 MARCH 2006

**Self-catering accommodation – 5 units**

**Friday evening: Slide show and talk by Hugh Chittenden.**

**Saturday morning: Outing to the forest to look for the Green Barbet. Breakfast included.**

**Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning free to do own birding. Visit Dlinza forest and boardwalk.**

**NB: Three 4x4 vehicles are needed to go to Ngoya.**

**’n Selsorg naweek – 5 aparte eenhede.**

**Vrydagaand: Skyfievertoning en praatjie deur Hugh Chittenden.**

**Saterdagoggend: Begeleide uitstappie na Ngoya woud, ontbyt ingesluit.**

**Saterdagmiddag en Sondag oggend – besoek Dlinza bos en 'boardwalk'.**

**NB: Drie 4x4 voertuie is nodig om Ngoya te besoek.**



**For bookings, call Adele van Vuuren 012 3477932 or 0836357358**

# *Klubuitstappie na Tswaing Sondag 4 Desember*

*Adele van Vuuren*

**N**a 'n uitputtende "Birding Small Day" – soos ons die dag herdoop het na 'n teleurstellende totaal op Saterdag – het ons half min verwag van Sondagoggend, veral omdat die begin vir 7:30 geskeduleer was – die parkbestuur het ons nou verseker met die nodige vooraf reëling kon ons 6:00 begin het.

Ons was baie aangenaam verras met die baie voëls wat ons daar gekry het en is weg met nuwe entoesiasme! Die reservaat is goed groen en die rivier vloei mooi.

Met die intrapslag by die hek het 'n paar Bosveldpapegaaië ons verwelkom met hul kras geskree en 'n verbyvlug. 'n Swartkopwielewaal het hul plek gevul en van daar moes ons net vinnig kyk en opskryf!

Ons het toestemming van die owerhede gehad om rond te ry, en na 'n uur se stap het ons met die motors op na die kraterlip gery en daarna met die agterpaaie na die stroom. Ons was eers 12:00 terug by die pieknieplek vir die lys en iets te drink en ete. Die paaie is goed vir enige voertuig met hoë grondvryhoogte, maar moet asb. nie sonder toestemming in die park rondry nie.

Vir my was die hoogtepunt toe ons vyf Gewone Nagreiers opgejaag het en hulle laag oor ons gesirkel het. Dit het by die bruggie oor die stroom gebeur, nadat ons 'n Watertrapper gehoor en probeer sien het.

Die groep BLNG lede wat gekom het was klein – 7 lede en 2 gaste – maar dit het gemaak dat ons lekker saam voëls gekyk en gekuier het. Ons totaal was 135 voëls, waaronder 'n ligte-vorm Bruinarend en Afrikaanse Jagarende. Met 'n vroeë begin en meer stap pleks van ry, sou 'n lys van 200 nie buite bereik gewees het nie. Probeer gerus!

# Vultures SMS Their Positions

## Media Release: The De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust's Vulture Unit

Vultures SMS their positions to scientists in a technological first for the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust's Vulture Unit and South Africa

On 4 December 2005, one Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus*) and three African White-backed Vultures (*Gyps africanus*), fitted with the latest technology telemetry and tracking devices, were released at the Lichtenberg Game Breeding Centre of the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa in a first for the De Wildt Vulture Unit.

The tiny backpack, a specialised tracking device built by leading South African tracking experts, Africa Wildlife Tracking, combining GSM technology with SMS and GPS (Global Positioning System) is attached onto the vultures' back like a tiny backpack with a Teflon ribbon harness. Over its expected 7-month lifespan the device will

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS – A REMINDER FROM YOUR SECRETARY

Membership of BLNG and BirdLife South Africa is on a "rolling basis" which means that approximately 10 months after joining you will receive an invoice for the following year. This first reminder is sent out TWO MONTHS in advance and if payment is not received another reminder is sent out ONE MONTH in advance. Thereafter, if payment hasn't been received, BLSA will send your Club Chairman or Secretary the third reminder, and they will in turn contact you with a final reminder.

As there are various methods of payment a lot of unnecessary admin work can be avoided:

- Direct electronic transfer into BLSA's account
- Credit card – just contact Sadie Wollheim on tel. 011 789-1122 at BLSA in Randburg and personally give her your credit card details
- Post cheque with copy of account to BLSA  
or
- Pay cash to either our treasurer Elmien, or secretary Jeanette – this can be done at outings or evening meetings.

Please remember that when your payment is late your subscription to *Africa Birds and Birding* is cancelled as BLSA cannot be held responsible for payments for the magazine if your subscription has been allowed to lapse. This also means that your club correspondence and in particular the *Laniarius* will also not be posted to you as all address labels are processed via BLSA.

In short the best policy would be to ensure that your membership subscription does not lapse. For those members who do not intend renewing their membership please advise us in writing and in so doing save us a lot of unnecessary admin work.

**Jeanette Rens**

send some 1 000 readings of its activities, including position, direction of travel, speed as well as height above sea level, all of which will assist scientists in understanding more about the birds and ultimately assisting in the future plans for their continued conservation as well as the conservation and monitoring of other species. Extensive tests have been undertaken to ensure that the device does not negatively impact on the vulture's daily life and its ability to interact with others of its kind. This project has been made possible with the generous support of Sasol, Eskom and Computer Facilities, who sponsored the devices.

The mission of the De Wildt Vulture Unit is to collect injured, poisoned and disabled vultures and to rehabilitate them to a point where they can either be released back into the wild or appropriately accommodated for conservation purposes. Furthermore, the mission aims to educate the general public about the important roles vultures play in the ecosystem and to contribute to vulture conservation through research, education and public awareness campaigns.

For more detailed documentation and information on this event and other sustainable vulture projects as well as photographs

please contact Kerri Wolter, Manager, the De Wildt Vulture Unit  
Tel: 012 504-1921  
E-mail: [vulture@dewildt.org.za](mailto:vulture@dewildt.org.za)



Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus*)

### MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

- Welcome back to South Africa Joey and Flip Botha, who have had a two and a half year stay in Australia.
- ☞ Rynetta and Johan Coetzee are comfortably settled in Jackson, USA, they send good wishes to everybody.
- ☞ Adriana Barrett has moved to Paul Roux, we wish her happy birding in her new environment – Adriana we will miss you on outings!
- ☞ Johan Trumpelman has moved to Cape Town and resigned as a member.
- ☞ Bob Zylstra and his wife are happily settled in Hermanus – we wish them happy birding in that beautiful part of the world.

# Ringers' Corner

*Ernst Retief*

A number of factors such as adverse weather and ringers having had other commitments have conspired to limit the number of ringing outings and participants during the last quarter.

Ernst Retief visited Little Eden on 8 October. Little Eden had suffered from fire damage and even some of the huts in the resort burnt down. The picnic site, however, was saved and as it was the only green area in the resort, it was hoped that many birds would move to the picnic site, ready to be ringed!

It was only the second time that the ringing group ringed at Little Eden. As was the case with the first effort, a number of Kingfishers were caught including Half-collared, Brown-hooded and Malachite. It is interesting to note that all except one were retraps. This clearly confirms the territorial loyalty of these kingfishers. It also indicated that the fire did not affect them too much, which was really great news. In particular, the Half-collared Kingfishers have been in the area for years and it would have been tragic if they left the area because of the fire.

Other birds ringed were Forktailed Drongo, Red-eyed Dove, Arrowmarked Babbler, Cape Wagtail, Spotted-backed Weaver and Cape White-eye. Except for the already

mentioned Kingfishers the following birds were also retrapped: Kurrichane Thrush, Cape Wagtail, Masked Weaver and Cape White-eye.

Little Eden is also well known for its Striped Pipits and Familiar Chats. It is worrying that none of these birds were seen during the morning. Hopefully, as the veld recovers, these species will show up again.

Graham Grieve spent some time ringing at Ntsinini – a farm on the N4 near Waterval Onder. On this occasion he caught two nightjar species, namely Freckled and Rufous-cheeked. Together with an earlier record of Fiery-naped, this confirms the regular presence of three nightjar species.

Colin de Kock had an exciting long weekend recently at a farm called Olifantskop in the Ellisras area. As there was a power failure for about 30 hours, the result was that there was also no water available from the borehole. Then on the way home he had to use 4-wheel drive in an intense electrical storm and was shocked on a number of occasions as he tried to open and close the several gates in the electrified fences between the farm and the main road. All this for 35 birds with 2 retraps! Amongst the new birds were two migrants, a Willow Warbler and a Barn Swallow.



(Photographs copied from the website <http://myweb.absa.co.za/efretief/>)



# Rarities and Unusual Sightings

Compiled by André Marx

The early summer months are a good time to record unexpected migrants and rarities and this report features several such records. I would still like to see more records of unusual birds in gardens, so I look forward to your reports. Thanks once again to those who regularly contribute to this column.

## National Rarities/Nasionale Rariteite

**Slaty Egret. Rooikeeleier (70):** at least two birds were at Marievale, 04 Dec 05 (DD).

**European Honey-Buzzard. Wespedief (130):** one bird flew over a garden in Wierda Park, Centurion, 14 Oct 05 (PW); a dark form adult bird was observed at Blesbokfontein, north of Bronkhorst-spruit, 23 Nov 05 (EM); another was seen at Trichardtspoort, in the Wilge River valley, 23 Nov 05 (EM, RGd, FP, RM); during an organised club visit to Rietlei Dam one bird was seen, 10 Dec 05 (BLNG). Increased records of this migrant continue to come to light and it is likely that when the SA national rarities list is revised in the coming months this species will be removed.

**Western Marsh-Harrier. Europese Vleivalk (164):** an adult male was at Marievale, 03 Dec 05 (DD); and was still present, 08 Dec 05 (AM, DS).

**Common Redshank. Rooipoortruiter (268):** one bird was observed at an isolated farm dam in the Groblersdal district, 30 Oct 05 (DS).

**Black-tailed Godwit. Swartstertgriet (287):** one bird appeared at Marievale, 04 Dec 05 (DD); and was still present, 10 Dec 05 (AM, MP). A fairly regular visitor to this locality, arriving in most years.

**Sooty Tern. Roetsterretjie (332):** a single bird was found near Brits and was handed to the Transvaal Museum where the specimen was preserved, 10 Nov 05 (FS, per TC). This is a bird of tropical waters, occurring within our region off Mozambique with occasional records from Kwa-Zulu-Natal; periodically storm blown individuals are found inland.

## Regional Rarities/Streeksrariteite

**Southern Bald Ibis. Kalkoenibis (92):** two birds were observed at a farm in the Balmoral

district, 20 km east of Bronkhorstspuit, 06 Nov 05 (PT, RF).

**Lesser Spotted Eagle. Gevlekte Arend (134):** three birds were at Rust de Winter village, 23 Nov 05 (EM, FP, RM, RGd).

**Corn Crane. Kwartelkoning (211):** in Buffelsdrift Conservancy, northeast of Pretoria, a single bird was found, 7 Dec 05 (RGd).

**Red Phalarope. Grysfraaingpoot (291):** this distinctive species was discovered at Marievale, remaining for only a couple of days when a few people managed to get to see and photograph it, 06 Dec 05 (AT). There are inland records of this pelagic species, presumably from birds wandering when on migration; it is bright rufous in breeding plumage in the northern hemisphere hence the revised common name, changing to a duller grey plumage in winter, which is when it appears in our region.

**Buff-streaked Chat. Bergklipwagter (588):** this species was found again at Rhenosterkop, north of Bronkhorstspuit, 23 Nov 05 (EM, FP, RM, RGd).

## Garden Bird Records/Tuinvoëls

**Hamerkop. Hamerkop (81):** a pair of birds started building a nest in a suburban garden in Wonderboom South, Pretoria, over a period of a few weeks, seemingly unperturbed by the presence of people and animals in the vicinity, 15 Oct 05 (NR).

**Grey-headed Gull. Gryskopmeeu (315):** a group of 20 birds was seen flying over Irene, an area from where this species is seldom recorded, 11 Oct 05 (LK).

**African Olive-Pigeon. Geelbekbosduif (350):** a first observation in an Irene garden was noted, 20 Nov 05 (AL).

**Garden Warbler. Tuinsanger (619):** one bird was calling in a Wierda Park, Centurion, garden, 23 Oct 05 (EM).

**Bokmakierie. Bokmakierie (746):** a first record from a garden in Garsfontein, 01 Dec 05 (JM).

**Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike. Oranjeborsboslaksman (748):** one bird was seen in Colbyn, Pretoria, the first record here in 22 years of records by the observers, 05 Oct 05 (P&AC).

**Purple Indigobird. Witpootblouvinkie (865):** a group of birds with at least one male and female were in an Irene garden, 13 Dec 05 (EC).

**Violet Turaco.** One bird has been recorded in an Equestria, Pretoria, garden since at least April 2005 and was still present on 13 Dec 05 (RF). A West-African species, popular in the cagebird trade, that has been known to breed in both Pretoria and Johannesburg.

**Hartlaub's Turaco.** One bird was noted in Irene during Nov 2005 (EC), with another sighting of two birds taking place in Elardus Park, Pretoria on 28 Nov 05 (MB). An East African turaco, also probably an escaped cagebird.

### Other Interesting Observations/Ander Interessante Waarnemings

**African Pygmy-Goose. Dwerggans (114):** two birds were at Matla Mamba near Marakele, 27 Nov 05 (H&RB). This species is not regular in a line west of the N1 going north from Pretoria and this is an interesting record; the *SA Bird Atlas* (1997) showed no records from this district.

**Osprey. Visvalk (170):** during Birding Big Day one bird was at Rust de Winter Dam, 23 Nov 05 (EM, FP, RM, RGd).

**Striped Flufftail. Gestreepte Vleikuiken (221):** one bird was briefly seen at Kaapsehoop, one of the few localities where this species is occasionally found, 16 Oct 05 (DS).

**Ruddy Turnstone. Steenloper (262):** three birds were at Bronkhorstspuit Dam, 30 Oct 05 (AM).

**Bronze-winged Courser. Bronsvlerkdrawertjie (303):** during the club visit to Ditholo NR two birds were noted, 30 Oct 05 (N&IR). An uncommon species in our region, being more regular in the bushveld further north.

**Common Cuckoo. Europese Koekoek (374):** a rufous form bird was collected at Buffelsdrift Game Farm, in the Elands River district, 20 Nov 05 (DH).

**Great Spotted Cuckoo. Gevlekte Koekoek (380):** two birds were observed mating at Rust de Winter NR, 10 Dec 05 (EM).

**Pennant-winged Nightjar. Wimpelvlernaguil (410):** a single male in breeding plumage was present in woodland adjacent to a dam in Makhado, Limpopo Province, for a short period, 10 Oct 05 (MdR). This species is only regularly recorded in small numbers in the Punda Maria area in the far northeast of the country, with oc-

casional records from woodland in the Limpopo River valley.

**Pink-billed Lark. Pienkbekelewerik (508):** a group of birds were at Blesbokfontein, north of Bronkhorstspuit, 23 Nov 05 (EM, FPRM, RGd).

**Dark-capped Yellow Warbler. Geelsanger (637):** this species is recorded from time time at Rietlei NR and one bird was heard and then seen, 06 Nov 05 (RG, RL).


**Yellow Wagtail. Geelkwikkie (714):** a single bird was at Rooiwal, north of Pretoria, a relatively early record, 17 Oct 05 (DS).

**Maggie Shrike. Langstertlaksman (735):** one bird was seen in the vicinity of Waterkloof Airbase in Pretoria, further south than it generally occurs, 08 Nov 05 (FvV).

**Cuckoo Finch. Koekoekvink (820):** a pair were at Rhenosterkop, north of Bronkhorstspuit, 23 Nov 05 (EM, FPRM, RGd); one bird was at Blesbokfontein, 04 Dec 05 (EM).

### Observers/Waarnemers:

Allon Traub (AT)	Alyson Lea-Cox (AL)
André Marx (AM)	BirdLife Northern Gauteng members (BLNG)
Dave Deighton (DD)	Déwald Swanepoel (DS)
Dave Howcroft (DH)	Etienne Marais (EM)
Eddie Cassani (EC)	Francois Swanepoel (FS)
Faansie Peacock (FP)	Helen & Ray Biram (H&RB)
Frans van Vuuren (FvV)	Leon Kay (LK)
Jenny Moser (JM)	Mike Pope (MP)
Marleen Brink (MB)	Nancy Reilly (NR)
Morné de la Rey (MdR)	Pat Tattersall (PT)
Neels & Ingrid Roos (N&IR)	Philip & Amanda Calinikos (P&AC)
Peter Wilgenbus (PW)	Rob Geddes (RGd)
Richard Montinaro (RM)	Rudo Lotter (RL)
Rihann Geysler (RG)	
Roger Fieldwick (RF)	
Tamar Cassidy (TC)	

This column is mainly concerned with observations of rarities and unusual sightings made within a 100 km radius of Pretoria, however observations made further afield are also welcome. While the majority of reports are included it is sometimes necessary to exclude some depending on space availability and whether the subject matter has already been well reported. Occasionally reports are sourced from the Internet. Members are invited to submit details of sightings to Pauline Leinberger at 083 326-9152, or to André Marx at 083 411-7674, e-mail [turaco@telkomsa.net](mailto:turaco@telkomsa.net) 

**The following books are available.  
Prices could change depending on BirdLife SA.**

SASOL Eng/Afr – PVC cover	R178	Field Guide to Trees	R177
SASOL Eng/Afr – Soft cover	R142	Birds of Africa South of the Sahara	R285
NEWMANS Eng/Afr – PVC cover	R178	Red Data Book	R110
SASOL Eng/Afr – Soft cover	R142	IBA Directory	R149
NEWMANS Birds by Colour	R150		
Wildlife of Southern Africa Eng/Afr	R150	Posters ranging from	R48 – R65
Chamberlains Birds of the Indian Ocean	R50	Plain, fold out, laminated	
SASOL Owls and Owling			
– Tarburton & Erasmus	R85	<b>Videos &amp; Tapes</b>	
Birds of East Africa	R71	Set of six Tapes – Gibbon	R310
Bring Nature back to your Garden	R66	Birds of SA 1 – video	R133
Birding with Sappi and Geoff Lockwood	R85	Birds of SA 2 – video	R115
Important Birding Areas in Africa		Birds of SA 3 – video	R115
& Islands	R529		
Frogs and Frogging in SA		<b>CDs &amp; CD Roms</b>	
– V Carruthers	R115	Calls of the LBJs CD	R97
Gardening with Indigenous Plants		6 CDs – Birds sounds – Gibbon	R310
– Pienaar	R116	300 Common bird calls – double CD	R147
Scorpions of SA – Leeming	R98	Roberts Multimedia Version 3	R600
Booklet Soutpansberg Birding Route	R25	Roberts Multimedia PDA Version	R600
Robins of Africa	R165	Roberts Multimedia PDA Version	
Cooking for Birds	R70	preloaded	R935
Official Checklist Birds of SA BLSA	R14	Sasol E.Bird Software 128 MD SD Card	R999
Eco-Schools Tool Kit	R54	HP IPAQ 171–	R2 020
Birdwatch Zimbabwe	R35		
Spiders of SA	R95	Roberts Bird Games – Gibbon	R270
Birds of SWC & where to watch them	R50	Bird Whiz Card Game	R152
Birds of Greater Durban	R27	Notelets – Bee-Eater, Barberts etc.	R5
Guide to Nests and Eggs SA Birds		Various clothing items, shirts, hats, T shirts etc.	
– Tarbortan	R180		
Field Guide to Insects of SA	R178	Birdlife have binoculars ranging from	R300 – R1 590
Field Guide to Dragonflies of SA	R110		
Raptor Identification Guide Afr/Eng	R169	Binocular harnesses	R65

**Contact Thalia Barnes at 012 3337731 or at evening meetings**

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