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Giving Conservation Wings



EDITORIAL/ REDAKSIONEEL

Our early summer birding seems to have started with a bang despite the stuttering start to the rainfall season in our part of the country. There has been a spate of unusual bird records from in and around Gauteng with reports of African Pygmy-Goose, Spotted Crake and Pectoral Sandpiper from Mkhombo Dam, several records of European Honey-Buzzard, and records of Black Harrier, Broad-billed Roller and more.

At the time of writing a Golden Pipit has set up a territory at the Phongola Nature Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal close to the Swaziland border and many birders have made the trip to see this magnificent bird. Several people have photographed the bird as seems to happen these days and a beautiful photo of the bird in flight by Clive Kaplan appears on the cover of this magazine. I marvel at the manner in which birding and the information about rarities has changed over the years. In 1986 a Golden Pipit stayed in the Rust De Winter area – which is less than an hour's drive for most local birders – for over a month in January and February of that year. There were no cell phones, no internet, and most people who never heard about the rarity by word of mouth only read about it in their next club magazine! Considerably fewer people saw that individual and very few photographed it, as there were no digital cameras and bird photography was not as simple as it is today.

For some time now it has increasingly been a challenge to produce four issues of *Laniarius* with sufficient content during the course of the year. It has been decided that instead of four issues of around 28-32 pages the number of issues can be reduced to three of 36-40 or more pages, so that the total content still remains more or less the same and there will be a cost saving at the same time. This will mean each issue will hopefully be a worthwhile read! I trust we will continue to receive support from regular and new contributors, as we have with this particular edition.

May I wish you a great festive season that is blessed with good birding, good health, peace, prosperity and much happiness!

André Marx

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Credits

Front cover: Golden Pipit/Goudkoester: Phongola Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, by Johann Grobbelaar

Back cover: Short-clawed Lark/Kortkloulewerik: Faan Meintjies Nature Reserve, North West Province, by Dave Deighton

Birding facts taken from *Everything you Always Wanted to Know About Birds* by Stephen Moss.



Chairman's Report/ Voorsittersverslag

Philip Calinikos

We have almost reached the end of a momentous year in South Africa's history. The successful hosting of the Soccer World Cup has truly put South Africa on the global map. This was vividly brought home to me on a recent visit to Cape Town to attend a conference at the International Conference Centre which was an absolute hive of activity. I was advised that this huge venue has been booked out until 2017. The hotels in the surrounding area were packed with visitors from all continents. Hopefully there will be a spinoff into tourist related activities such as birding for many years to come! It would be wonderful if this also translates into more funds becoming available for conservation efforts within the country.

This brings me to another issue that has grabbed the headlines this year; the extensive prospecting and mining rights being granted to mining companies by our Department of Mineral and Energy Resources. The establishment of a mine by Coal of Africa on the doorstep of one of our National Parks, Mapungubwe, resulted in a concerted and successful effort by conservation bodies including BirdLife South Africa to stop the development of the mine. On our own doorstep we are being threatened with prospecting rights being granted in areas such as the Pienaar's River floodplain at Kgomo-Kgomo, as well as areas surrounding the Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve. Our club can play an active role in combating such activities by registering as an interested and affected party and by monitoring the Environmental Impact Assessments being done on these areas. With this in mind our club committee took the decision to sponsor four members to attend an Environmental Impact Assessment Course coordinated by Ernst Retief

of Birdlife SA and presented by Chris Galliers of WESSA. We now possess knowledge within our membership base which we can use when addressing such threats in the future. I would like to thank the four participants, Elba Swart, Marie Ueckerman, Christa van Schalkwyk and Jason Boyce for sacrificing their personal time over a weekend to attend the course. I would also like to thank Ernst Retief for co-coordinating this course and we look forward to supporting other conservation efforts in the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ernst on being one of twelve recipients of an OWL Award from Birdlife South Africa this year. The OWL Awards are granted annually to twelve people who contribute significantly to Birdlife South Africa and to bird conservation in South Africa.

I know there are many of our members who are contributing very meaningfully to the SABAP2 project on behalf of our club. In particular I would like to emphasise the efforts of Lisl van Deventer and Stefan Terblanche who are both near the top of the list for the highest number of pentads covered. Keep up the good work Lisl and Stefan. Two other very keen atlasers were and are our former President, Pauline Leinberger, as well as our new President, André Marx. André has dedicated an enormous amount of time and effort to our club activities serving as Chairperson for a number of years as well as on our committees. Most recently André has been focusing most of his efforts on the editing of this publication as well as helping with the club programme while also representing our club on the Gauteng Regional Forum. André is also heavily involved in promoting the SABAP2 atlas project as well as in the conservation of Northern Farm. Thanks for all you have done for the club over the years André!

I believe André will ably fill the large gap created by the loss of Pauline.

I was very fortunate to enjoy two very special outings with Pauline just before her passing away. The first outing was the weekend camp to Lekgalameetse last year. Amanda and I had offered Pauline a lift to the camp but we had planned on a very adventurous route to the western entrance of the reserve up the Baragwanath Pass. Pauline eagerly agreed to this course of action once she had worked out that we would be passing through a couple of virgin pentads. Being novice atlasers, Pauline proceeded to instruct us on the exact protocol that needed to be followed in order to atlas these pentads. We were well rewarded however, when Pauline pulled out her famous tea basket and we enjoyed home baked scones and tea before braving the pass. The pass itself proved to be a very narrow, steep and boulder-strewn climb. The vehicle was rocking

alarmingly from side to side as we ascended. Even though Pauline must have been in quite some discomfort, especially with her troublesome limb, she showed absolutely no sign of this. It was obvious that she was thoroughly enjoying the thrill of the moment and was constantly enquiring as to what birds we were being seen en route! My last camp with Pauline was over the Easter weekend at Batsomi where I was again amazed at the passion and energy with which she tackled her atlasing duties together with Debbie as well as the evenings around the campfire. If I think back to the vast contribution that this lady made to all of our club activities over the years she will be sorely, sorely missed!

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity of wish you one and all a peaceful and blessed Festive Season. I hope 2011 will be a bird-filled, prosperous and healthy year for all of you! 🐦

Club News/ Klubnuus

Laniarius prize

The general opinion was that there were some good articles in the last edition of the newsletter, but the one that received the nod for best article by the editorial sub-committee was Andrew Pike's detailed and well researched account of plumage variation in the Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill he observed at Borakalalo NR. Congratulations Andrew!

Birding for Beginners Course: 29-30 January 2011

Well known bird guide and author, Etienne Marais, will be hosting this wonderful introductory course in the Centurion area. Beginner birding is often a little frustrating and bewildering. The bird books have so many birds, and what you see often does not match

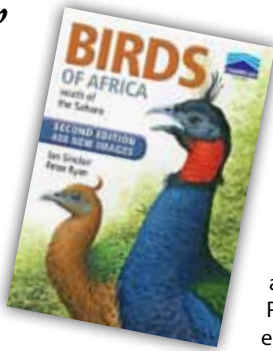
anything at all. This course is designed to get you started as a birdwatcher or if you are already birding, the course will help you identify more birds with confidence. Tell your friends and family about it and help spread the word. The course is a combination of classroom style lectures and a field outing. Please contact our club secretary, Rita to book. The cost is R320 pp.

BLNG open day 31 October 2010

The club exhibited at the Pretoria Botanical Gardens again recently in order to attract new members and introduce members of the public to the various aspects of birding. A bird ringing sessions was held and once again proved to be popular as several people were able to see a number of birds in the hand for the first time. These open days are important to the club and will be held from time to time. 🐦

Book Review: The 2nd 2010 Edition of “Birds of Africa South of the Sahara” by Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan*

Alan Kemp



When the original edition came out in 2003, it was the first field guide in the world to cover the continental landmass of an entire zoogeographical region, the Afrotropics (with an earlier Struik book already covering the marine sector of the region, the Indian Ocean islands). This meant you could travel from Cape to Cairo (almost) or Mauritania, and everywhere in-between, and hope to identify any of the ~2100 wild bird species that you encountered. Within only seven years it has been revised, again as a Struik-Chamberlain collaboration. This is partly because the original accelerated visits to, interest in and observations of Afrotropical birds (aided by a slew of new regional field guides and bird clubs since 2003), but also because backroom folk worldwide have been working hard to sort out the species limits and inter-species relationships of Africa's birds.

The 2nd edition retains the layout and design of the original, a typical field guide with maps and texts for each species on one page and illustrations opposite. Details of the layout, especially the group introductions, improve use of space and legibility, and delineation of each species on the plates is cleaner and clearer. The new additions are obvious in the more detailed and accurate distribution maps (aided by a slew of new regional atlases since 2003), the 500 new images (replacing some, adding others) and descriptions and even illustrations of several newly described or recognised species. It was also an opportunity to attend to a few errors that crept into the original, such as among the paradise whydahs. While the order of species remains much the same, the exact placement and new names (common and scientific) for some species reflect the expanding studies on what distinctive populations actually represent 'new' species, to which family particular species

belong, and the relationships between species within families. The same authors still represent the crème de la crème of birders with Africa-wide experience, Ian Sinclair ahead in the field stakes and Peter Ryan leading in the literature and phylogeny fields. Between them, they have

provided the most authoritative and compact birding resource for the Afrotropics (including near-shore seabirds and those on islands in the Gulf of Guinea, and off Tanzania and Somalia). Specialist regional guides obviously have the space to address in more detail some individual species or the various forms thereof, but if you want a single book to accompany you on your African travels and annotate with your personal discoveries, then this is the latest and best. Even if your birding remains regional, the maps and plates allow you to see how widespread your local species and their closest relatives are.

Running to 767 pages (only eight more than the original), it is thick for a field guide (36 mm), but still retains the basic field guide size (210 x 150 mm) and fits easily into your backpack or cubby-hole. It weighs in at just over a kilogram, but your best alternative, the 7-volume *Birds of Africa* handbook series, would take your whole 20 kg flight allowance. The price is also excellent, compared to the 7+ regional guides of equivalent price you would need to buy instead, especially if you managed the R100 discount at the launch for handing in your old copy for sending to local guides across Africa to enhance their and your future birding adventures. 🐦

* Available from the Club shop at R370.00

Vir ons voëls - 'n nuwe plekkie in ons tuin!

Elke Geggus

In April hierdie jaar moes ons sewe sipresse laat verwyder, want die bome was baie groot en het ons trappe na die huis toegegroeï. Die bome was ook al besig om van binne dood te gaan. Dit was vanselfsprekend dat ons hulle deur inheemse plante sou vervang.

In die middel van die bedding het ons een boomstomp laat staan, en my man het hom toe so gesaag dat ons 'n waterbak stewig op hom kon laat staan. Die waterbak was die middelpunt van hierdie nuwe bedding en ons het 3 *Euclea crispata* of Bloughwarrie boompies langs dit geplant, saam met *Leonotis leonurus* of Wildedagga, *Anisodonta scabrosa*, 'n inheemse hibiskus verwante struik met pienk blomme en 'n paar verskillende soorte grasse. Ek het ook 'n uitheemse *Salvia leucantha* geplant want ek weet die meeste voëltjies hou van sy pers en wit blomme wat baie nectar het. 'n Groot *Solanum rantonnetii* of beter bekend as die Aartappelstruik was al klaar in die bedding en ons het 'n saadvoerder in dié boom opgehang. Ek het twee van sy ses gaatjies toegeplak dat net die klein voëltjies en nie duiwie nie, daar kan eet. Ons het ook 'n wegkruipplek vir die akkedisse gemaak, deur al die klippe wat ons uit die bedding gehaal het mooi om die waterbakstomp te stapel.

Dit het ons die hele winter besig gehou, maar voordat die plante mooi in die lente begin groei het, het die voëltjies ons begin vermaak. Twee soorte mossies, Gryskop- en Gewone, Rooivinke, Swartkeelgeelvinke en Rooikeelflappe het daar kom eet asook die swerpjie frette wat in ons tuin bly. Nou en dan het ook Rooikopvinke en Bandkeelvinke 'n draai kom maak. Omdat die bedding so naby ons huis is, het dit vir my 'n goeie geleentheid gegee om die vinke en die flappe in hulle winterverkleed goed te leer ken.

Omdat daar nou so baie klein voëltjies in ons tuin is, het 'n Kleinsperwer nou die dag 'n voëltjie in ons tuin kom vang. Ek het self nie die vangs gesien nie, maar net die Kleinsperwer waar hy met sy prooi onder een poot op die grasperk gesit

het. Hy het gou weer met sy prooi verdwyn en ook nooit weer teruggekom nie. Daar moet érens anders nog groener weivelde vir hom wees.

Ons het ook 'n groot sak doppe van sonneblomsade gekoop en ek gooi nou en dan 'n emmer vol van hierdie doppe op die bedding. Al die bogenoemde voëls en die duiwie krap die doppe uitmekaar op soek na sade. So versprei hulle die doppe en trap dit in die grond in en dit vorm 'n lekker deklaag vir die plante. Nou en dan mis hulle 'n sonneblomsaad en dié kom dan ook in die bedding op, en vier van die sterkstes het ek laat groei. Ek het ook van my eie kompos in die bedding gebruik, en baie van die plante wat al in ons tuin gegroeï het, kom ook nou hier op. Daar is baie *Rudbeckia hirta* en hulle sal in Januarie mooi blom, en as die wit skoenlappers hulle verskyning maak sal daar genoeg nectar vir hulle ook wees. Daar kom nog steeds nuwe plante op soos die *Polygala myrtifolia*, die Dwerf-bloukappie en baie andere. Waar daar in April nog 'n leë bedding was is daar nou al weer 'n oerwoud.

Ek weet dat die Bloughwarrie uiteindelik die hele bedding gaan oorneem, en ek het dit ook so beplan, maar tot dit gebeur geniet ons en die voëls die nuwe bedding in ons tuin! 🐦



My experiences and adventures as a new member of BLNG

Jason Boyce

I am a 21 year old student with a huge passion for birding. I regularly grab any member of my family or a tolerant friend, to go birding or explore a new pentad with me, preferably in some remote, out of the way place. This is where the bird club has proven invaluable to me. I have instantly made friends with fellow birders who are willing to discuss identification problems, share new discoveries and enjoy outings at some excellent birding spots. I have also found that most of my new friends speak the same language as me, "Bird Talk".

So the day dawned, my first ever club outing, I had a flask of coffee, some rusks, warm clothes and my binos. Passion drove me there – Onderstepoort NR, a small total of 31 species recorded that chilly day, but nevertheless my journey had begun. The next outing – at Roodekoppies Dam – was lead by Faansie Peacock (that's the guy on the back of my pipit book!). Woah! My mom was the victim to be towed away with me; we grabbed the usual coffee, rusks, GPS, binos. A grand total of 87 species that morning and a Fairy Flycatcher buzzing around our heads. More than that though, was the chance to learn and absorb everything I could from Faansie's unending knowledge.

On the 18th of July I met Philip Calinikos at the Kameelriver outing. I then travelled with him to Magoebaskloof for the weekend club outing, where he somehow endured a bombardment of questions all the way there and all the way back! Philip has become a fantastic inspiration to me on my birding journey. Magoebaskloof yielded great specials such as Bat Hawk, Cape Parrot, Green Twinspot, Pied Mannikin, Black-fronted Bush-Shrike and Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk!

Buffelsdrift – Rust de Winter was my next stop. This time my dad became the victim – much to his delight I found out afterwards. Here

I had the great privilege of meeting Etienne Marias. We stumbled upon a Little Bittern that happened to be a lifer for me, and ended the day looking back on an awesome outing.

Next, I attempted Mountain Sanctuary Park (attempted being the operative word), halfway up the Breedsnek Pass in my Opel Corsa I realised that this couldn't possibly be the way. After a few phone calls to my dad and André Marx I was kindly informed that my Corsa would just not do the job if I wanted to come up the "wrong" side of the Mountain. I had to admit defeat! Disappointed in missing the outing I ambled back down consoling myself by doing a pentad on the southern side of the mountain.

All in all this has been an amazing 6 months and I could not have asked for a better birding home than this club! I have been made to feel welcome and I am thankful to all who make BirdLife Northern Gauteng a success! 🐦

Welkom nuwe lede/ Welcome new members

Ludwig Roll, Pierre van Ryneveld; Jan & Lucie van Greunen, Wingate Park; Pierre Engelbrech, Kempton Park; Johan Fourie, Waverley; Cyane & Edna Murphy, Rivonia; Marc Ralph, Valhalla; Elsa Smith, Faerie Glen; Wade Melvill-Smith, Silverton; Gavin Haagner, Potchefstroom; Sean Morris, Sinoville; Eugene & Hettie Dann, Centurion; Wim & Magdel Vorster, Hatfield; Thierry & Patricia Loisel, Silver Lakes; Denise Louw, Silverlakes; Roger & Ann More O'Ferrall, Ninapark; Neithard & Kathrin Graf von Dürckheim, Lynnwood Glen; Pieter & Margaret Visser, Val de Grace; Melanie Mulder, Brooklyn; Christa Meyer, Faerie Glen.

Impressions of a new member

Johan Muller

Receiving my renewal notice for subscriptions to BLSA and BLNG reminded me of the day that I casually mentioned to Ernst Retief that my wife and I like to watch birds from our patio. His face instantly lit up and soon he was babbling away about BLNG and other birding matters. The following day he was around with the necessary form and soon proclaimed that I was the latest member of BLNG.

Some time passed before we went on our first outing to Wolfhuiskraal. The brochure stated that the outing was 'especially for our new members'. I thought that since we hadn't attended any outing before we qualified. It sounded like the perfect place to start. I knew the difference between a sparrow and a plover but not much more. It was soon evident that these birders were delighted to answer our questions that was mainly restricted to "What is that?" but not to be confused with "What was that?" and the occasional "Is that a?" but mainly "What is that?" (followed by "A what?"). We were extremely relieved that no one was getting annoyed at our continuous questions. These walking encyclopaedias with binoculars

attached to their faces proved to be more and more useful.

During the trip, I recall seeing my wife and some other birders taking photos of an uncommon fungus next to the road while the rest of us were trying to spot some LBJ which I cannot remember. We all had a great time. Later, over some sarmies and coffee, the roll call was held of the number of birds that were sighted and heard. From that trip I can remember seeing the Grey Heron. At the site where we gathered some other birders were in the process of ringing birds. What appealed to me at the time was that this looked like a magic way of seeing the birds up close and to learn more about them at a much faster rate.

We have attended a number of outings since then and had many magic moments. From our first sighting of the Jameson's Firefinch to the Cape Longclaw we felt the excitement with every new sighting that we have come to know as lifers. The first time we saw Bafana, the Verreaux's Eagle chick, through the telescope at the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens, was special. We were shocked at the injury after his ringing and followed his recuperation on Facebook. This made it clear to me; we were on our way to becoming 'fully fledged' birders. On a trip to Memel we saw the Mahem and had super displays by a Bokmakierie and a Ground Woodpecker. I don't think we'll ever forget those first sightings. Our most recent lifer is the Cardinal Woodpecker at the Botanical Gardens in Pretoria that brought our collective list to 179.

I always thought that a ringer was someone who played golf at a higher handicap than he should. I have learnt that there is another type of ringer. They can be found putting up nets before dawn. After much thought, I contacted Johan Snyman to offer my help with the bird ringing. Having purchased a portable table and a chair I was set to go. I found out how nippy



Malachite Kingfisher (Kuifkopvisvanger), showing its crown

Maretjie Jansen van Rensburg

it is at 4am in the morning. We set up the nets in the pitch dark and settled down to some breakfast and a nice chat. After first light we checked the nets. Our net was empty but Gerrie and Chris had some catches. Without any fuss we were given some of their catches. Johan proceeded showing me how to measure the wing, tail and a host of other things. I found the weighing and the checking of the plumage fascinating. Then he said: "This one's yours!" I nearly had a heart attack. I was here to observe, not to ring. My first bird was a robin for which I am very grateful as it is a lovely docile bird and I have always loved watching them hopping through the garden, bobbing their tails. Holding one in my hand was indescribable. The next one I ringed was a Southern Masked-Weaver. Not friendly and not docile. This little bugger was nasty and malicious and knew how to bite. In fact he seemed to derive great pleasure from biting me. I quickly learned the art of holding them correctly without them being able to bite me. The morning proceeded with great excitement and I ringed 10 birds in total. Part of the list included a guineafowl that made a mess of Chris's nets. The last bird came

with a warning from Johan to "be careful of this one". Once I had it in my hand I could see it was a Common Fiscal. Seeing the hook at the end of a mean looking beak, I was relieved to find it not so vicious. It can be quite intimidating when you are trying to measure a bird accurately while all it wants to do is to bite you. As I was preparing to release this threat to my health Johan asked me to hand him the shrike as he wanted to show it to someone else. As I gently handed him the bird, it bit into his finger, under his nail and drew more than a bit of blood. Who said birding is for sissies?

As with the other birding outings, these magic moments make you forget that you had to get out of bed at 3am against your body's complaints that this hour is only good for sleep. I also enjoy a bit of photography and took a particular fine shot of a Malachite Kingfisher that showed off its crown, that explains why it is called a Kuifkopvisvanger in Afrikaans. I would not have been able to get this shot if it was not for the bird ringers and my close up experiences with them.

All that remains now is to renew our subscription. 🐦

South African birds in trouble*

Of the 9 856 bird species on Earth, 1 226 are listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable. Forty of these occur in South Africa and of these 20 are endemic. Although extinction is a natural phenomenon, species are now disappearing from our planet at an alarming rate, and studies have shown that this is mostly driven by human activities.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) *Red List of Threatened Species* ranks plants and animals according to threat levels and risk of extinction, thus providing an indication of biodiversity loss. This has become a key tool used by scientists and conservationists to determine which species are most urgently in need of conservation attention, both on a regional and global scale, thus guiding the work

of governmental conservation departments and environmental NGOs.

In South Africa, a number of birds are listed on the IUCN Red List, with several heading for extinction should some of the threats continue and should the NGOs who are implementing conservation action halt their important work.

The Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* is the most severely threatened crane on the African continent. Recent surveys in Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, countries long thought to be strongholds for the Wattled Crane, show that the global population is only half of what has been reported in recent years.

* 2 November 2010; Media release by BLSA, EWT and SANCCOB.
Member of the IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature.



The Wattled Crane (Lelkraanvoël) is the most severely threatened crane on the African continent.

Some of the greatest losses have occurred in South Africa, where a 38% decline between 1980 and 2000 left the national population Critically Endangered. Only about 250 individuals remain in South Africa, mostly concentrated in isolated pockets of the KwaZulu-Natal midlands. Kerryn Morrison of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's African Crane Conservation Programme says, "Genetic diversity studies indicate that this sub-population is genetically different from populations in other regions of Africa, making Wattled Crane conservation urgent in South Africa." The programme works with local communities to protect the wetland habitat of this species. Through this work both the cranes and the communities benefit, as wetlands provide resources and services to these communities in the form of clean drinking water, reeds for crafts, medicinal plants and fertile land in which to grow crops.

The African Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* was uplisted to Endangered on the IUCN Red List earlier this year. The population has declined by 60.5% in the past 28 years, primarily due to food shortages linked to commercial

fishing and recent, large-scale changes in fish distributions. The impacts of predation and competition (especially with Cape Fur Seals) is an increasing problem as penguin colonies shrink. Catastrophic oil pollution events remain a big potential threat, while chronic oiling and toxic pollutants in the oceans are increasingly problematic for African Penguins. The impacts of climate change are unknown but are a concern. Venessa Strauss, CEO of SANCCOB says, "We administer the African Penguin Chick Bolstering project and together with international and local conservation partners we aim to increase the African penguin population by bolstering existing colonies through the artificial rearing of orphaned and abandoned wild chicks. The long-term goal of this project is to collect valuable information that will inform decision makers regarding the possibility of establishing new penguin colonies." In conjunction with this, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is investigating competition with fishing. BirdLife South Africa is supporting several research programmes towards improving our understanding of the impacts of fishing on African Penguin breeding.

Another charismatic bird in urgent need of conservation attention is the Taita Falcon *Falco taita*. This species is threatened primarily by habitat loss and fragmentation. "The usurpation of the Taita Falcon's range and nesting sites by species such as the Lanner Falcon can be directly related to habitat change and the fact that the population is very fragmented," says André Botha, Manager of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Birds of Prey Programme. This Programme is monitoring Taita Falcon populations in South Africa and raising awareness around its plight. The species is not currently listed in *The Eskom Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*, but internationally it is listed as Near Threatened. However, South African raptor conservationists will be recommending an Endangered listing for the species when the *Red Data Book* is revised next year, as the national population numbers no more than 25 adult individuals.

The Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* inhabits short, undulating, mist-belt grasslands along the eastern South African escarpment and north-western Swaziland. The South African Blue Swallow population of approximately 50 known pairs is locally classified as Critically Endangered. The global population, estimated at less than 1 500 pairs, is considered Vulnerable. In South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo Province), their numbers have declined by more than 80% over the last 100 years, mostly as a result of habitat destruction caused by afforestation. The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Ian Little, Manager of the Threatened Grassland Species Programme, says, "They occur in very few formally protected areas with the bulk of the population occurring on privately owned land. Our strategy will in future focus on identifying and addressing key threats to the species, based on monitoring data collected over the years".

Eighteen of the 22 albatross species occurring worldwide are threatened with some level of extinction. For long-lived, slow-breeding birds like the albatrosses, even apparently slow population declines can have alarming consequences over time. Dr Ross Wanless, BirdLife South Africa's Albatross Task Force Manager, says, "Each year about 1 billion longline hooks are set, which catch and drown 300 000 seabirds, of which 100 000 are albatrosses. But

we have achieved some impressive conservation gains for albatrosses. South Africa's fisheries lead the world in implementing seabird bycatch mitigation measures. The trawl industry has mandatory measures to reduce bycatch, which is now down by 60%; longliners have mandatory measures to reduce bycatch and seabird bycatch is down by 80%. Our team has also achieved international recognition in a range of fora and is conducting cutting-edge research into new and improved measures to reduce bycatch." Fifteen albatross species are recorded from South African waters.

Recent South African species uplistings include the Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum* uplisted to Vulnerable, the African Penguin from Vulnerable to Endangered and the Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri* upgraded from Vulnerable to Endangered. Only one species was downlisted, the Corncrake's *Crex crex*, from Near Threatened to Least Concern.

For meaningful reductions in biodiversity loss to be realised, the Convention on Biological Diversity's targets must be strengthened. While the 2010 target to "significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss" has not been met, this must serve as a driver for even stronger targets and more urgent action to reduce net biodiversity loss. Mainstreaming biodiversity is key, and to this end biodiversity values must be incorporated into national accounting. 🐦

World beater

The most successful introduced bird is probably the humble House Sparrow, which was originally found only in Europe and parts of Asia and North Africa. House Sparrows have been successfully (or disastrously, depending on your point of view) introduced to North America, South Africa, New Zealand, and many island groups. Today the House Sparrow occupies an area of land equivalent to about one quarter of the earth's land surface.



The thrill of discovering a new bird species!

Faansie Peacock

For any birder the ultimate birding fantasy is surely the discovery of a new bird species. A new bird species. Take a second to consider just how special that title is. Of course the bird itself is not new, having in all likelihood been in existence for millions of years. But we didn't know about its existence before. We as scientists, we as birders, we as the indifferent public, we as a species, blissfully unaware of another organism sharing our home planet.

While recently presenting a beginner's bird course, I could not help but suppress a giggle when the very first question I was asked was "when you discover a new bird, can you choose any name for it?" As budding birders, we have all reached a point where we were convinced we'd discovered a new species because "it just isn't in the book". Unfailingly these exciting discoveries always turn out to be an un-illustrated juvenile, a pigmentally challenged oddity or simply an old friend newly encrusted in pollen. And while we all quickly come to the somewhat disheartening realisation that it IS actually in the book, it is still worth asking yourself, what exactly is the chance of discovering a completely new bird species?

We all know that it gets harder and harder to add lifers to your lifelist the higher your list climbs. For the same reason (but at a significantly longer timescale) the rate at which new species are described has decreased markedly since the early 1900s. Before that time, expeditions of western ornithologists into remote areas revealed hundreds of new species per decade. True: the advent of genetic sequencing technology has given the 'discovery' of new species a welcome boost in the last few years, but the chance of John Smith discovering a new bird is still infinitesimally small. Or is it?

To bring this question into perspective, I investigated new bird species discovered since 1982 - the year of my birth. In my 28 years on this planet, no less than 93 new bird species

have been discovered! That is to say 3.3 new birds per year! Admittedly, some of these taxa are still disputed by some authorities, and a few involve so-called splits or cryptic species that were hiding under the mantle of accepted, already existing species. Nevertheless, it now seems to become more a question of being in the right time at the right place, and of course, recognising what you see!

On 18 February 1993, Simon Harrap and Tim Fisher were leading a commercial bird tour through the forests of Mindanao Island in the Philippines. Whilst walking along a forest trail with their group of clients, they flushed a woodcock (a partly nocturnal, mega-snipe that lives on the forest floor). Although rare in the Philippines, the widespread Eurasian Woodcock had been collected on the islands before and the specimens deposited in the national museum. However, these specimens were destroyed when the museum was bombed in World War II. But Harrap and Fisher immediately suspected that their Woodcock might be something different. They returned at dusk to listen for the 'roding' display flight of the bird, deepening their suspicions. A mist-netted bird and some sound recordings later, they had officially described a new species: the Bukidnon Woodcock.

Not all the recent discoveries have been of elusive and difficult-to-identify birds. In 1995, Rob Timmins was birding the low scrub and small trees growing on limestone karst in Laos, when he observed odd bulbuls with seemingly bare-skinned faces. Now a verbatim extract from the official paper describing Rob's vindication: "RJT (Rob) subsequently weathered a fair amount of good-natured ribbing on relating the sighting to sceptical colleagues." Some further explorations by a team from the University of Melbourne confirmed the new species, Bare-faced Bulbul, after more sightings, sound recordings and collection of a few specimens



The Serendib Scops-owl from Sri Lanka

(one of which was obtained by employing a local with a slingshot).

To some extent the discovery of new species is largely a matter of location, location, location. Laos' limestone karst fields delivered a second new bird, Limestone Leaf Warbler, within a year. The Orange-faced Honeyeater discovered in the remote Foja Mountains of western New Guinea is another example: Bruce Beehler, leader of the highly successful exploration trip in 2005, says the new honeyeater was "the first bird we saw at our camp". Incidentally, the same team discovered dozens of new frogs, butterflies and plants. Apart from Laos, New Guinea and the Philippines, other Asian places to go scratch around for the ultimate birding high include Indonesia (Mees's Nighthawk, Togian White-eye, Little Sumba Boobook); the Solomon Islands (Vanikoro White-eye, Solomon Islands Frogmouth, Odedi Warbler); China (Nonggang Babbler) and Sri Lanka (Serendib Scops-owl). South America is also worth a quick glance over, particularly Brazil and Peru.

Whilst there, be sure to try Colombia (Fenwick's Antpitta, Black-capped Woodnymph, Antioquia Brush-finch) and Venezuela (Rio Orinoco Spinetail) too!

On our own continent, the forests of Gabon have revealed the (somewhat debatable) Olive-backed Forest Robin, while the Willard's Sooty Boubou (a *Laniarius* to boot!) from the Albertine Rift also caused some recent excitement. The twin Rubeho Akalat and Rubeho Warbler from Tanzania are also worth mentioning, and let's not forget about our very own Long-tailed and Kimberley Pipits (although many birders remain unconvinced about the validity of these). A rumour has also been circulating for years about undescribed canaries deep in Bushmanland – so better include a shotgun in your birding gear if planning a trip to that area!

And of course you don't need to have a PhD in zoology to make a discovery. The Bugun Liocichla, a ridiculously colourful Indian babbler, was discovered by Ramana Athreya, an astronomer with a passion for birding on the side. Perhaps the key factor is just to spend a lot of time in the field looking at birds: in a similar case to the discovery of the Bukidnon Woodcock, another professional bird guide, Richard Webster, ticked the special of a lifetime on 18 June 2009 in Borneo. Whilst birding from a 35 m high canopy walkway, Webster spotted an odd greyish passerine that turned out to be a new species, Spectacled Flowerpecker.

But perhaps the most thought-provoking discovery story is the much-recounted tale of a chicken dinner that turned out to be both a culinary delight and ornithological breakthrough. On an evening in July 1991, a group of Danish birders was relaxing after a hard day's field work in the montane forests of the Udzungwa Mountains in Tanzania. For dinner that night, the local chefs had boiled up some chicken. At the bottom of the pot drifted two small chicken-like feet, that upon closer inspection, turned out to be a most intriguing ingredient. After being questioned, the local chefs sheepishly admitted that the supplement was from the kwale ndogo ('small partridge')

one of which was snared just behind the camp. The following days the Danes managed to see a few live flatties but failed to obtain a specimen in their mist-nets. So once again, they enlisted the help of the local people who quickly snared a pair of partridges. After much paperwork (imagine carrying two dead partridges through customs in a shoebox), the birds were flown

to Europe and compared to skin collections of known relatives. To make a long story short, the Udzungwa Forest Partridge turned out to be not only a new species, but a completely new genus, with its nearest relatives being the hill-partridges of South-East Asia.

Here's to keeping your eyes open, expecting the unexpected and trying the local cuisine. 🦋

The needle-quivers of South Africa

John Bannon

It has come as a great surprise to me that, apart from one or two snappers (photographers), nobody on our BLNG club outings seems to be that interested in our superb dragonflies (naaldekokers).

South Africa has around 90 species, of which 30 or more can be seen within 100 km of Pretoria and a trip down to the KZN coast will add about 30 more. We also have 666 butterfly species, so there's plenty to keep us interested if the birding is a bit quiet.

One of the commonest is the Red-veined Dropwing (Rooinerfie), found along most rivers, streams, ponds and dams. Some of the other commoner species have evocative names like the Blue Emperor, Broad Scarlet, Kirby's Dropwing and the Phantom Flutterer. Most only live for one summer season, but have a lineage that stretches back in time for around 300 million years. These prehistoric dragonflies had a wingspan of up to 70 cm – that's the height of a Yellow-billed Egret!

They are all fearsome predators of almost all flying insects smaller than themselves. Imagine them as the miniature falcons or hawks of the insect world as they chase after mosquitoes or termites, snatching them out of the air and devouring them with their well-developed mouthparts.

Dragonflies themselves are one of the favoured food items of several birds such as Bee-eaters, but especially both Eurasian and

African Hobby, Amur and Red-footed Falcon and Lesser Kestrel.

The best book to buy if you can find it is '*A Fieldguide to the Dragonflies of South Africa*', published by Warwick and Michelle Tarboton in 2002. Although now out of print, you may be able to find it in second-hand bookshops; or borrow one gathering dust on a birder's bookshelf as I did.

So next time you are out birding, look out for naaldekokers and their even smaller relatives the damselflies (waterjuffers) – they really are amazing creatures. 🦋



*Red-veined
Dropwing
(Rooinerfie)*

Personal names commemorated in the common names of southern African bird species – Part 4

John Bannon

CABANIS – Cabanis's Bunting, *Emberiza cabanisi* (Reichenow, 1875)

Jean Louis Cabanis (1816-1906), was one of the most influential German ornithologists of his day. Born in Berlin, he studied at the University and eventually became director of the Museum, replacing Martin Lichtenstein. He founded the *Journal fur Ornithologie* in 1853 and was the editor for the next forty-one years, after which his son-in-law, Anton Reichenow, replaced him. Reichenow had already named the bunting after his father-in-law in 1875.

Cabanis collected in North America in 1839-1841 and returned with many natural history specimens, but he never visited Africa himself, with various collectors sending skins to him at Berlin University Museum. Reichenow's ornithological career and influence has already been detailed, under the entry for Boehm.

CARP – Carp's Tit, *Parus carpi* (JD Macdonald & BP Hall, 1957)

Bernhard Carp (1901-1966) was a Dutch-born South African businessman and Cape Town naturalist, who sponsored many collecting expeditions, particularly to Namibia, by the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam University. The businessman and hunter bought important mammal collections in South Africa and donated them to the museum. Political considerations made it difficult but after some time the board of the university decided to accept the very important collection, which included rare Lagomorph skins and skulls. Carp wrote an autobiography entitled *Why I Chose Africa*. The tit was collected in 1951 and was originally described as a subspecies of the Southern Black Tit, *Parus niger carpi*.

Inverness-born James (Jim) David McDonald (1909-2002) was head of the Bird Room at the British Museum (Natural History)

from the 1930's until his retirement in 1968. With (Beryl) Patricia Hall, (1917-) who also worked in the Bird Room from 1947 until 1971, they led the five 'Harold Hall' (no relation) sponsored expeditions to Australia, to replace the museum's Australian bird collections, which had been sold off to US institutions.

MacDonald and Hall also took part in museum expeditions to South West Africa (now Namibia) in 1960/51 collecting the tit and later naming it after Bernhard Carp in 1957. Hall was awarded, the BOU's prestigious Union Medal in 1973 and has three or four Australian bird subspecies bearing her name in their scientific designation. McDonald was not so honoured, but was a Vice President of the BOU and a Fellow of the Royal Society, the Linnean Society and the Zoology Society. Upon retirement he settled in Brisbane and wrote several books on the birds of his adopted Australia.

CORY – Cory's Shearwater, *Calonextris diomedea* (Scopoli 1769)

Charles Barney Cory (1857-1921) was an American ornithologist, who donated his collection of 19,000 bird skins to the Field Museum in Chicago. He wrote several avifaunas including *The Birds of the West Indies, The*



Wikipedia

Birds of Haiti and San Domingo and the *Birds of Illinois and Wisconsin*.

Cory was the first person to separate the shearwater as a species, naming the Atlantic subspecies in 1881, after Scopoli had originally described the species in 1769, but had thought it a race of another shearwater. However since 1998, three separate Cory's-like shearwaters have been proposed, with Scopoli's Shearwater, in the Mediterranean, Cory's in the north Atlantic and Cape Verde Shearwater, endemic to those islands.

Giovanni Antonio Scopoli (1723 -1788) was an Austro-Italian doctor, who spent much of his time in the Alps collecting insects. He published a series of *Anni Historico-Naturales* between 1769-1772, which included descriptions of many birds, including the shearwater. He corresponded with Linnaeus and adopted his system of classification. The sedative drug Scopolamine, an alkaloid of the plant Henbane, is also named after him.

DELEGORGUE – Delegorgue's Pigeon, *Columba delegorguei* (Delegorgue, 1847). (Now renamed as the Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon).

Louis Adolphus Joseph Delegorgue (1814-1850) was a French hunter and naturalist, who bequeathed the collections he made in Southern Africa in the 1830s to the British Natural History Museum. He also collected with Wahlberg and published a book, *Travels in Southern Africa*, in 1847.

It was and still is, considered very bad form to name a species after oneself, especially the official scientific Latin name. The use of Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, although much less exotic sounding, has recently become preferred for common use. Perhaps it is punishment by the modern taxon naming club, for Delegorgue's transgression of the unwritten rules of naming etiquette, some 161 years ago.

DENHAM – Denham's Bustard, *Neotis denhami* (Children, 1826)
Dixon Denham FRS (1786-1828), was a

lieutenant-colonel in the British Army, who explored Africa extensively. He crossed the Sahara from Tripoli to Lake Chad and was also a fine illustrator. He became Governor-General of Sierra Leone and wrote *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa* in 1826. He fought with Wellington in the Peninsular Wars and was almost the archetypal, Boy's Own explorer.

John George Children (1777-1852), named the bustard after Denham in 1826. A mineralogist, chemist and zoologist, he succeeded William Elford Leach as Assistant Keeper of the Natural History Department of the British Museum in 1822, controversially beating the other applicant, William John Swainson for the position. He has an Australian python and a stick insect named after him and also discovered the rare hydrated phosphate mineral, Childrenite.

Denham's Bustard at one time or another has also been named after, Burchell, Jackson and Stanley.

DICKINSON – Dickinson's Kestrel, *Falco dickinsoni* (PL Sclater, 1864)

Dr John Dickinson (1832-1863) was a young English physician and missionary, who travelled with Livingstone, but he contracted Blackwater fever in Nyasaland (now Malawi) and died at the age of 31. He collected the type specimen himself and the falcon was named after him, a year after his premature death, by Sclater senior in 1864.

Dr Philip Lutley Sclater was an Oxford graduate and lawyer. His glittering ornithological career began with the founding of the BOU and he was the editor of the *Ibis* for most of the 19th-century. His son was also an ornithologist and between them they described no fewer than 913 species of which 21 species have *sclateri* in their scientific names.

PL Sclater's study of bird distribution, later also adapted for mammals, resulted in the classification of the bio-geographical regions of the world onto six major categories, which is still the standard work for bi-geographical studies worldwide. 🦅

Mkhombo Dam: 12 September, 2010

John Bannon

Sixteen club members and one non-member made their way to the rendezvous point near Mkhombo Dam for 7 am on the 12th September. Our top-birder leader was Rob Geddes, ably assisted by his young daughter, who took superb images of the prolific birdlife; much better than my feeble efforts I have to say.

The first half hour was hectic with birds being called every ten seconds or so and in Afrikaans. I now know what a Bosveldtinkinkie and a Landeryklopkloppie are, plus Miksterts and Witkatlagters.

Mkhombo Dam was full to the brim; something to do with Rust de Winter Dam being under maintenance further upstream, so my potential expertise in identifying summering Palearctic waders was thankfully not called upon.

The flooded edges though were full of Gewone Ralreirs (Squacco Herons), with at least 30 birds flying just offshore from their night-time roosts. Reusereiers (Goliath Herons) were also very obvious and Mkhombo is probably

one of the best places in South Africa for these enormous herons.

After a superb morning's birding we took our shaded lunch under an enormous Camelthorn and worked out our bird list, again in Afrikaans. Something like 115 species or so had been noted, with some excellent sightings such as Oranjeborsboslaksman (Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike), Bontroklaaksman (Brubru) and Witkoluil (Southern White-faced Scops-Owl).

The Afrikaans voël names really do give the birds character and personality and I can't wait to call out Sneeuwal (Snowball - aka Black-backed Puffback) and best of all Spookvoël (Ghostbird - aka Grey-headed Bush-Shrike) on my next club outing.

(In late November a number of interesting birds had been found at this locality including African Pygmy-Goose and Pectoral Sandpiper. Keep an eye open for the planned club visit on 12 February to this venue - Ed.) 🐦



Montle Metzi klubkamp 22-24 Oktober 2010

Frans van Vuuren

Sewentien klublede trek die naweek saam vir 'n kamp op die oewer van die Elandsrivier langs Rust De Winter dam. Die vroeë aankomelinge word Vrydagmiddag beloon met 'n Watertrapper net bokant die kamp, maar die res van die naweek is die omgewing te besig vir hierdie skaam watervoël.

Bont- en Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoëls is heel naweek te sien en te hoor, asook Swartkoekoek en Piet-my-vrou. Heelwat Hofangers in die boompies om die kamp. Vrydagaand skemer kom 'n dikkop te voorskyn en diegene wat dit sien is dit eens – dis 'n Waterdikkop – ondanks twyfel van diegene wat dit nie te siene kry nie. Saterdagoggend by die daminloop bevestig ons – hier is wel Waterdikkoppe.

Saterdagoggend spandeer ons op Kameelrivier en by die daminloop, maar die wêreld is droog en voëls is skaars. Ons kom wel 'n Europese Vlieëvanger teë wat vir die groep 'n eerste vir die seisoen is. Die hoogtepunt van die oggend is 'n groepie buffels in 'n kampie langs die grensdraad van die dam – wie het al 'n buffelbul op twee meter in die oë gekyk. Louis moet natuurlik sy voet op die grond begin skuur en toe die buffelbul opgewerk raak, lyk die wildheining skielik baie effens!

Terwyl ons in die middag op die dek sit stap 'n rooikat ewe rustig oorkant die stroom langs die wal af. Iemand sien 'n Bosveldvisvanger, maar dit roep nie oor die naweek nie en hierdie sig word dus nie bevestig nie – nog taamlik

vroeg in die seisoen. Die gebied langs die dam lewer 'n aantal watervoëls op, maar Jan Hout se vlot is stukkend en ons kan nie by die eilande uitkom waar die Kleinkoningriethaan hou nie.

Sondagoggend kry ons wel 'n Kaapse Vleisanger (Little Rush Warbler) om te vertoon vir 'n hele paar lede wat hom nog nie op hul lewenslys het nie. Later die dag verken ons die Uitkyk-pad en soos altyd is dit 'n lushof vir bosveldvoëltjies. Die naweeklys lewer 97 spesies en almal keer verfris terug stad toe. 🐦



Dinie van Rensburg

What are 'primaries', 'secondaries' and 'tertials'?

They are all types of feather found in the wings of birds. Primaries are the longest feathers at the end, secondaries are the shorter ones along the inner part of the wing and tertials are the ones close to the bird's body. Other wing feathers include scapulars and wing coverts.

Ringersverslag

Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg

Die jaar het teen so 'n geweldige tempo verby gesnel dat ek amper nie kan glo dat ons reeds in die laaste kwartaal van die jaar is nie. As ek terug kyk oor die jaar se ring-aktiwiteite dan was dit 'n baie geseënde jaar.

Met ons laaste uitstappie na Rietvlei Natuurreserveaat het ons 'n nuwe rekord opgestel t.o.v. bywoning. Toe ons 04:00 die Reserveaat binne ry het dit soos die N1 in die aand gelyk – net 'n streep ligte soos die 12 voertuie die kronkelpaadjie aandurf. Die vangste was nie waffers nie, net 57 voëls, maar dit het ons 'n geleentheid gegee om mekaar 'n bietjie beter te leer ken. Ons was vier gekwalifiseerde ringers en die ander 14 het tussen ons verdeel.

Die eerste uitdaging was die baie Johanne, drie van hulle en hulle ook sommer bymekaar gehou. Johan Snyman het gou-gou Oubaas geword, Johan van Rooyen, die jongste, het Johantjie geword en Johan Muller het net

Johan gebly. Johantjie se vrou, Adelina was die 'odd one out'.

Onder Chris du Plooy se vlerk was Wim en sy vrou Magdel. Hulle het die twee Kuifkopvisvangsters gering. Die interessantheid van die voël in die hand is die vermoë wat hulle het om hul kuiwe te laat hang en hulle koppies heen en weer te beweeg soos iemand wat nee sê. Jan van Greunen het ook sy hand aan 'n eerste voël in die net gewaag. Gou-gou het hy gevoel hoe geniepsig 'n Swartkeelgeelvink kan byt, maar dit het hom nie afgeskrik om later 'n ring aan sy voet te sit nie. Chris se seun was die eksptert om te verduidelik hoe hy die muishok moet skoonhou sodat sy Pa roofvoëls kan vang en die meelwurms moet voer vir die 'flat traps'.

Dina was in die bewame hande van Frik en Susan du Plooy, maar sy het so baie geklets dat sy net sewe voëls deur haar hande laat gaan het.

Aan my tafel was Marietjie, Louis, Ralda, en 'n dagbesoeker Susan Harmse.

Riaan Marais, die veldwagter, het net kom bevestig dat daar nie buffels en ander snaakse diere in en om ons nette kom nie. Hy het na die eerste koppie koffie vertrek.

Johan Snyman, Oubaas van bo, het 'n baie interessante e-pos van SAFRING gehad waarin hulle hom meegedeel het dat een van die Nataljanfrederikke wat hy op 5 Desember 2004 by Camroe Estates Oribi Flats gering het, hom/haar op 14 Oktober 2010 vermoedelik dood gevlieg teen 'n venster van die nuwe King Shaka Lughawe in La Lucia. Die afstand van waar die voël gering was tot waar dit dood opgetel was is 114.76 km en die tydperk 2 139 dae. Volgens SAFRING se data is dit die verste wat 'n Nataljanfrederik nog gevlieg het. Die ander geval was in 1985 toe een wat in Badplaas gering was later in Nelspruit herwin was. Dit was 38 dae later en 74 km verder. Die ander 197 geringde Nataljanfrederikke wat weer gevang of herwin is, was in die omgewing waar dit oorspronklik gering is. 🐦



Witkoluil/Pearl-spotted Owllet

Marietjie Jansen van Rensburg

Mountain Sanctuary Park: 19 September, 2010

Philip Calinikos

A number of members attending this outing were fooled by their GPS's into taking the 'shorter' route over the Breedsnek Pass. Unfortunately, safely navigating the pass required a high clearance vehicle and a couple of disappointed members missed the outing as a result.

Mountain Sanctuary Park is a very attractive venue on the northern slopes of the Magaliesberg and we arrived to find a packed camp site, very different to our visit last year, when, as a result of the terrible weather, the campsite was virtually empty. This unfortunately did have a negative impact on the bird-life and we could not find the confiding Coqui Francolin (Swempie) that often frequents this area. We were, however, fortunate to witness a Little Sparrowhawk (Kleinsperwer) hunting a Neddicky (Neddikkie) at very close quarters. Taking the footpath in a south-westerly direction, we soon realised that Neddickies were everywhere. We were also able to get good views of a pair of Lazy Cisticolas (Luitintinkie) as well. A few of the endangered Cape Vultures (Kransaasvoël) were circling right at the top of the ridge, affording us some distant views.

Upon reaching the rocky edges of one of the numerous streams in the area, we

spent an hour absorbing the beautiful scenery and were rewarded by visits from Bar-throated Apalis (Bandkeelkleinjantjie), Greater Double-collared Sunbird (Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie), Black Cuckooshrike (Swartkatakoeroe) and Streaky-headed Seedeater (Streepkopkanarie), amongst others. After a short refreshment break, we walked down to the bottom of the valley, birding along the stream leading into Tonquani Gorge. Unfortunately due to the heat of the day, birding was slow. We had to rely on bird calls to improve our bird list and both Red-chested Cuckoo (Piet-my-vrou) and Greater Honeyguide (Grootheuningwyser) were heard. A few of us also got glimpses of Cape Grassbird (Grasvoël). We retired to the swimming pool area for a picnic lunch where we were entertained by Golden-breasted Bunting (Rooirugstreepkoppie) and Familiar Chat (Gewone Spekvreter).

The highlight of the day for my wife and I was finding a pair of Yellow-throated Sandgrouse (Geelkeelsandpatrys) with a pair of tiny chicks, right next to the N4 highway close to the Sun City turnoff on our way back to Pretoria. 🐦



Yellow-throated Sandgrouse/Geelkeelsandpatrys

Cline Kaplan

Maqoebaskloof camp: 24-26 October, 2010

Philip Calinikos

The initial venue that we had chosen for the club camp was unfortunately double-booked necessitating a quick change in plan. Our resourceful Programme Co-ordinator, Amanda, managed to find a venue right next to the well known Kurisa Moya Lodge. The knowledge that we would be able to use one of Kurisa Moya's guides and that we would have access to their property added an element of extra excitement to the weekend.

Our activities started on Friday afternoon. We drove across to Kurisa Moya, where we met Lisa and Moses, our Birdlife SA accredited guide for the weekend. We also met the members of the Rand Barbet Bird Club who were using the accommodation at Kurisa Moya.

Lisa informed us that a pair of Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk (Rooiborsperrwer) had been spotted building a nest in the pine forest and as this has long been one of my bogey birds, I was looking forward to breaking my duck with a good sighting. Unfortunately, as we walked through the forest, the birds were nowhere to be seen.

Moses led us into the indigenous forest and we managed to find a few of the elusive forest species we were after. African Emerald Cuckoo (Mooimeisie), White-starred Robin (Witkoljanfrederik), Olive Woodpecker (Gryskoppeg) and Scaly-throated Honeyguide (Gevlekte Heuningwyser) were particular highlights for many of us while the Yellow-streaked Greenbul's (Geelstreepboskruiper) idiosyncratic wing flicking technique had us enthralled.

The following morning necessitated a 04:30 wake-up call in order for us to be in position early enough for another of our target species, the Cape Parrot (Woudpapegaaï). As usual, the morning was very misty and cold in Woodbush, but the parrots (as well as the Rand Barbet group) arrived on cue and we were all able to get good scope views of a pair of birds.



Martin Goetz

We continued up the road into the forest. Viewing was difficult with the mist and we had to rely on calls to identify many species. Great fun was had trying to catch the mouse-like antics of the Barratt's Warbler (Ruigtesanger) creeping through the forest undergrowth. One individual uncharacteristically hopped out onto the road verge allowing us good views of this elusive species. Other birds we identified in the mist were Square-tailed Drongo (Kleinbyvanger), Tambourine Dove (Witborsduif), African Dusky Flycatcher (Donkervlieëvanger) and African Olive Pigeon (Geelbekbosduif).

On the way down towards the Debengeni Waterfall for breakfast, we had the most amazing sight of two pairs of Knysna Turaco (Knysnaloerie) having a noisy territorial battle, chasing each other through the undergrowth and even locking claws and tumbling towards the ground. At the picnic site a pair of Mountain

Wagtails (Bergkwikkie) flitted along the water's edge in front of us.

Our next target was the pair of Bat Hawks (Vlermuisvalk) nesting at New Agatha. This necessitated a drive around the outskirts of Tzaneen but we quickly found the birds with Moses' assistance and again excellent scope views were enjoyed by all. The final target bird was Magpie Mannikin (Dikbekfret) and we headed into Tzaneen's suburbs and parked outside one of the resident's property. We felt somewhat guilty peering at his bird feeder over his garden wall, but it appeared as if the fellow was well conditioned to birders and proved to be a most accommodating host! The wetland in front of his property's complex proved to be quite productive as well with birds such as White-browed Robin-chat (Heuglinse Janfrederik) and Purple-crested Turaco (Bloukuifloerie) popping up. This had been a long day's birding but we still had time to visit the source of the small stream behind our accommodation at Creation View where Olive

Bush-shrike (Olyfboslaksman), Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher (Bloukuifvlieëvanger), Terrestrial Brownbul (Boskrapper) and Cape Batis (Kaapse Bosbontrokkie) kept us entertained.

On our final day, there were very few takers for the early morning bird walk back at Kurisa Moya. Only Dieter and Jason joined me but what a fantastic morning we had! For starters, a Gorgeous Bush-shrike (Konkoit) in full song perched at head height in the early morning sun rays. Stopping for a cup of coffee and some very tasty rusks thanks to Jason's mom, a bird party overhead contained Black-fronted Bush-Shrike (Swartoogboslaksman). We were walking slowly along the road through the pine forest when sharp-eyed Jason spotted a raptor sitting quietly near the nest site. A lifer at last in the form of Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk! And then just to top it all, a pair of Green Twinspots (Groenkolpensie) was traced by their calls at the forest edge. What a great morning to finish off a wonderful weekend! 🦅

Dial in to PHOWN!

Dieter Oschadleus¹

PHOWN (PHotos Of Weaver Nests) is a monitoring project aimed at determining the distribution of colonies or nests of all weaver species globally. Counting weaver nests and taking photos allows tracking of changes in weaver breeding effort. Many weavers are common and this project provides an easy way of monitoring them, while some weaver species are threatened and this project would help their conservation.

The software for the ADU Virtual Museum projects were written by Rene Navarro and the current software allows users to submit photos directly to the web, rather than emailing photos. PHOWN is the fourth Virtual Museum project and is being launched in time for the 2010 breeding season. In the Western Cape Southern Masked and Cape Weavers have started to build nests.

Anyone can view photos submitted to the ADU Virtual Museums (<http://vmus.adu.org.za>). You do not need to be registered. Click on the Project (e.g. Photos of Weaver Nests), and then in the menu on the left you can select "Search VM". In the Search form, you can select the "Search" button to see all photos, or scroll down to the "Search by English name:" button. In the menu on the left, click "Species maps" to see the distribution of colonies in South Africa. Colonies submitted outside SA are not viewable yet on this map, but are in the database and the map will be expanded later.

To submit photos you need to register as an ADU participant and obtain a password. Then find weaver nests and start taking photos! More

¹*Dieter Oschadleus, weavers4africa@gmail.com*



Dup du Plessis

Male Village Weaver/Bontrugwewer mannetjie

details on the project may be found at <http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php>

All weavers in the family Ploceidae are included – a species list appears on the weavers' web. All countries where weavers breed in the wild are included, even introduced

populations, but excluding captive birds. Photos taken in previous years may be submitted if you know the exact locality of the nests. Your photos need to be accepted by the Project Coordinator first before you can see them on the public web - this will typically be within one day.

The project was launched on 29 July and 42 records were submitted during the first week. There are records for 20 weaver species. Most records are from South Africa, 3 from Namibia and 3 from Rwanda. The most northerly record is of a Vieillot's Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus*, a colony of 6 nests in Rwanda, recorded by Claassen Marcell.

What is an ADU Virtual Museum? The ADU use of the term "museum" is not to be interpreted as the display part of a museum that is open to the public. The real museum consists of endless drawers full of neatly catalogued specimens (date, place, species, collector), with lots of replicates of a single species - these are the specimens used for research into distribution, taxonomy, etc. The ADU's museums are "virtual" as they contain digital images of specimens. For example, a picture of every Sociable Weaver nest on a telephone pole in the Northern Cape, together with the date and place and photographer, could be submitted to neatly catalogue in our database. 🐦

'n Voëltoer die moeite – en geld – werd

Salomi Louw

Die oggend van 21 Julie het ek, Neels en Sanette Heymans vanaf Polokwane, waar ons die vorige aand oorgeslaap het, vertrek op 'n voëlkyktoer na die ooste van Zimbabwe en sentrale Mosambiek. Joe Grosel van Eden Routes het 11 kykers meegeneem in drie 4x4-voertuie. Almal van ons was reeds vroeër saam met hom op verskeie toere in Suider-Afrika en het geweet 'n ryk ervaring wag op ons.

Deurgaans het ons kort-kort in belowende omgewings gestop om voëls te kyk, met die Knopstertroupan (Racket-tailed Roller) en

Witborsjakkalsvoël (Augur Buzzard) gou as 'lifers' vir talle van ons groep. Die eerste aand het ons in die Masvingo-omgewing oorgeslaap by 'Inn on the Great Zimbabwe' waar die Miomo-rooiband- (Miombo Double-collared) en die Geelpenssuikerbekkie (Variable Sunbird) ook vir die meeste nuuttjies was. Die volgende oggend vertrek ons na die Oostelike Hooglande waar ons drie aande naby Mutare oorbly in die verwaarloosde 'Seldomseen'-oord, langs die Vumba Botaniese Tuin wat deur 'war veterans' oorgeneem is. Die 3 dae

hier – waarvan twee sonder krag en warm water – is deurgebring in stap en rytogte deur pragtige bosse en die omgewing lewer vir talle kykers eerstes op, onder andere Gryskeleinjantjie (Chirinda Apalis), Witstertvlieëvanger (White-tailed Crested Flycatcher), Tropiese Swie (Yellow-bellied Waxbill), Streepwangwillie (Striped-cheeked Greenbul), Witkoljanfrederik (White-starred Robin), Tropiese Saagvlerkswael (Eastern Sawwing), Bosuil (African Wood-Owl), Olyfsuikerbekkie (Olive Sunbird), en Rooiwangwoudsye (Red-faced Crimsonwing). In die miombo en misbelt was die Mosambiekloerie (Livingston's Turaco) te sien terwyl die Geelkeelsanger (Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler) homself ook nie skaars gehou het nie. In bosse langs die pad waar ons gestop het, kon ons ook die Miombogrysmees (Miombo Tit) aanteken terwyl die Witborsjakkalsvoëls en ander roofvoëls, soos die Dubbelband-slangarend (Southern Banded Snake-Eagle), gereeld te siene was.

Op 25 Julie gaan ons deur die Mosambiekse grens na Rio Savane (noord van Beira) wat slegs met 'n ferrie bereik kan word tydens hooggety. Hier bly ons twee aande oor, met die branders wat voortdurend net agter die duine bruis en palmbome wat in die oord ruis. Wes van die rivier is vleilande en vloedvlaktes waar talle spesies gesien kan word, en na 'n ontbyt van garnale, tjips en koolslaai (soos die vorige aand se ete) gaan ons terug met die ferrie om te kyk wat hier te siene is. Dis egter te nat om van die opgeboude pad af te beweeg, maar ons sien darem hier en in die stukke behoue bos Langbeenkorhaan (Black-bellied Bustard) en Kopersuikerbekkie (Copper Sunbird) sowel Rooiwangstompstert (Red-faced Crombec), Rooipensreier (Rufous-bellied Heron), Geelbleshoutkapper (Whyte's Barbet), Afrikaanse Vleivalk (African Marsh-Harrier), Donkerkoester (Plain-backed Pipit), Gryskruisswael (Grey-rumped Swallow), Swartblestinker (Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird), Groenvleioerie (Green Malkoha), Kortstertflap (Fan-tailed Widowbird), Swartkopmees (Cinnamon-breasted Tit) en, by die oord self, Drietonstrandloper (Sanderling), Manglietvisanger (Mangrove Kingfisher) en

Gevlekte Speg (Green-backed Woodpecker), saam met 'n verskeidenheid sterretjies.

Ons volgende verblyf is in Mphingwe Lodge midde-in miombowoude naby Caia aan die Zambesi, vanwaar ons ook die omgewing verken en op die oewer van die Zambesi 'n besoek bring aan die graf van Mary Moffat, vrou van David Livingstone. In die begraafplaas sien ons die Afrikaanse naguil (Fiery-necked Nightjar) rustig sit en die van ons met goeie kameras kon helder oordag mooi foto's neem. In die omgewing kry ons Breëbek (African Broadbill), weer die Rooiwangstompstert, die Kleinboskruiper (Tiny Greenbul), Gewone Boskraai (Trumpeter Hornbill), Stekelkop-helmlaksman (Chestnut-fronted Helmet-shrike), Dickinsonse Valk (Dickinson's Kestrel), Swartsaagvlerkswael (Black Sawwing), beide Gevlekte en Witpensstekelstert (Mottled and Böhm's Spinetail), die Witborskatakoeroe (White-breasted Cuckooshrike) en Rooistertvlieëvanger (Livingstone's Flycatcher), om net enkele te noem.

Twee aande word hierna deurgebring in die Gorongosa-distrik, nie ver van die ingangshek van die Gorongosa Nasionale Park nie. Hier verwelkom Piet van Zyl, sy vrou Ria en hul drie dogters ons by hul huis wat bestaan uit halflyf rietskerms, 'n dak van palms, en grasmatte op die barre grond. Ons bly egter in tente onder palm-afdakke. Die Mosambiekse president was



Geelpenssuikerbekkie / Variable Sunbird

terselfdertyd hier op besoek en die oudste dogter, Pietje (17), moes hom en sy gesante op 'n toer deur die Nasionale Park neem. Die jongste dogter, Janie, het ons die eerste mid-dag op 'n wandeling vergesel wat onder meer Swartkopkleinjantjie (Black-headed Apalis) en Streepwangwillie (Striped-cheeked Greenbul) opgelewer het. Die middelste dogter, Gerbie (15) – vergesel van 'n plaaslike gids – het ons donker voordag die volgende oggend opgelaai in 'n veldvoertuig wat sy met groot vaardigheid deur strome, oor rotse en teen steil, uitgewaste hellings berg-op bestuur het terwyl sy aanhoudend gelag en gesels het in Afrikaans met 'n merkbare Portugese aksent. Parkering was by 'n paar modderhuisies teen die berghelling vanwaar ons sowat ander-half uur verder teen die hang van die Berg Gorongosa moes op om in die bosstrook te kom waar die Groenkopwielewaal (Green-headed Oriole) gevind kan word. Die wêreld was oortrek van die mis en flarde reën het kort-kort uitgesak. In die beboste kloof het die geharde voëlkykers, wat nie hul verkykers of kameras kon gebruik nie, bykans twee uur lank gewag om dié voël wat om hulle roep, te sien. Al die moeite, koue en deurdrenking was egter vrugtelos en daar is terugbe-weeg na die parkeerplek. (Dis net geharde

voëlkykers wat sulke omstandighede sal trotseer om één spesifieke voël te sien!). Die terugtog het gelukkig troos gebring met 'n Vleitjagra (Anchieta's Tchagra), Vuurkopvink (Black-winged Bishop), Blouvlakduifie (Blue-spotted Wood-Dove) en Breëstertgrasvoël (Moustached Grass-Warbler). Later die dag was Bontpiek (Arnot's Chat) en die Mashonahyliota (Southern Hyliota) ook 'n 'lifer' vir talle van die togangers.

Ons het vir ullaas weer gaan oorslaap in die 'Inn on Greater Zimbabwe', waar die Swartoorkanarie (Black-eared Seedeater) gevind is voor vertrek terug na Suid-Afrika. Die finale toegif was toe ons langs die pad stop vir 'n ligte middagete, na 'n rotskoppie daar naby stap en drie Swartberglysters (Boulder Chat) duidelik te siene kry.

Van die 100 "Eastern Zimbabwe & Central Mozambique (Winter) Specials" kon ons 64 afmerk, plus die Kopersuikerbekkie wat nie op dié lys was nie. Die feit dat ons (net) 237 voëlsoorte kon tik, beteken nie dat daar so min te siene was nie, maar dat ons op besonderheid gekonsentreer het. Geen van die reisgenote het nie 'n nuwe voël op hul lys kon afmerk nie, en party kon meer as 40 nuwes aftik. Dit was voorwaar 'n lonende en gesellige twaalf dae! 🐦

Lake Cargellio, Australia – June 2010

Clive Kaplan

I visited Australia recently and was afforded an opportunity to go birding for a few days at Lake Cargellio with Nevil Lazarus, a friend of mine.

We drove 600 km west of Sydney to our destination, passing through many small towns and extensive farmland. A detour to a particular stakeout for Superb Parrot did not produce this sought after species (and neither did we find it on our return). The long drive there however produced great birds, with the highlight being Spotted Harrier and Blue Bonnet, both lifers for me. We also saw

a high flying Wedge-tailed Eagle, Galahs, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Australian Kestrel, and a Brown Falcon among others. Good views were enjoyed of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, a target bird for the trip.

Although our route went through what is normally arid country there was water lying everywhere. Arriving in the cold late evening at Lake Cargellio, a small town with a population of some 1 300, we took up residence in some cabins in the caravan park.

The next morning we were up and away

at 6 a.m. although it only became light at 7.30 a.m! After proceeding about 60 km to Round Hill and Nombinnie we found flocks of White-winged Chough and Apostlebird on the way there as well as Sacred Kingfisher at a creek we crossed. We eventually arrived at our destination for the day in an area of beautiful bush but all seemed quiet. We listened for calls and were rewarded by the appearance of a Chestnut Quail-Thrush which gave good photo opportunities. A nearby track allowed us to connect with Red-capped Robin, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and a flock of Australian Ring-neck Parrots. A walk around the hill produced Yellow-rumped, Buff-rumped Thornbill and Southern White-face Thornbill. We found three babblers, Grey-crowned, White-browed and – a lifer for me – the shy and elusive Chestnut-crowned Babbler. After seeing a few more honeyeaters we were to find Rufous Whistler, but Red-lored Whistler, a special for the area, eluded us.

An overcast morning greeted us the next day and we decided to explore farmlands around the lake. A Pied Butcherbird was a welcome find and an unusual blob on a clump of reeds turned out to be an Australian Bittern, another new bird for me. Nevil arranged for me to go out in a boat with a local friend of his to see if I could manage a few pictures of the bittern. The bird was much too skittish but I managed a few shots of the bird flying, a great achievement considering that this species is becoming quite difficult to find.

A late evening drive to the local sewage ponds produced Baillon's Crane which looks



Superb Fairy-wren

identical to our bird, however the Crimson, Orange and White-fronted Chats which are normally easily found were nowhere to be seen.

A visit to Nombinnie the next morning yielded a White-winged Fairy Wren on the way there, a really beautiful bird. A walk along the local railway line resulted in an unexpected view of a Red-lored Whistler which darted into the road to drink from a puddle and provided fleeting views. Here a Splendid Fairy Wren was a great bird to see. On our return a large flock of birds may have been a group of Flock Bronzewings but we neglected to take a photo to prove our sighting but a flock of Ground Cuckooshrike made up for that disappointment.

On our way home a large flock of Cockatiels was another new bird for me. It rained much of the way home but this area warrants another visit as the drier summer would probably attract many other species. My heartfelt thanks to Nevil Lazarus for showing me his patch. 🐦

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A huge thank you for your donation, we really appreciate it.
Baie dankie vir u donasie, ons waardeer dit baie.
(June - October 2010)

Dr Morne de la Rey, Elsa Smith, Kurt Zsilavec, Dr Ryno Scribante, André Marx

SASOL Marakele Birding Breakaway 2010

Salomi Louw

The Honorary Rangers of Marakele National Park were the first to present a birding week-end (about 16 years ago) with the sponsorship of SASOL. This event was celebrated during the weekend of 15-17 October when 35 birders converged at the Bontle Camping Site to tick as many birds as possible during the annual birding week-end.

Die voorafgaande week het 'n groot brand in die Vaalwater/Thabazimbi/Alma-omgewing geroed en, volgens berigte, het tot 50% van Marakele afgebrand. Dit het entoesiaste egter nie afgeskrik nie. Van beginners tot gesoute voëlkykers het die naweek bygewoon, met sterk verteenwoordiging van die Johannesburgse en Oos-Randse voëlklubs. Daar was selfs 'n voëlkyker uit Zambië wat spesiaal moeite gedoen het om na Marakele te kom en uiteinde-lik drie 'lifers' gekry het.

Almal het kampeer in die Tsessebe-sirkel en goeie vriendskapsbande is gou gesmee, veral tydens Vrydagaand se kaas-en-wyn. Saterdag is daar teen ligdag begin met soektogte en teen die tyd dat die aandvuur gebrand het vir braaivleis, het die talle spanne reeds oor die 70 voëls afgetik.

Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg from BirdLife Northern Gauteng (Chairperson: Bird Ringing)



Voëls op die berg is so mak dat Gerrie hierdie Bergklipwagter (Buff-streaked Chat) kon optel en ring

acted as our bird specialist and was available to answer questions and adjudicate rarities. Two new sightings were added to the Marakele bird list: the Black-fronted Bush Shrike* and Yellow-bellied Greenbul. When Gerrie called the list during brunch on Sunday morning 162 birds were ticked, with one team having achieved a total of 97 for the weekend – and this without leaving the camp on Sunday morning! Prizes, sponsored by the Chamberlain group, Random House/Struik and Briza Publishers were handed out for rarities and the highest totals. A lucky draw ensured that numerous birders received the Africa Geographic calendar of 'Southern African Birds 2011' and various other items, all sponsored by SASOL.

On Saturday evening the well-known vulture specialist, Pat Benson, gave an instructive talk on vultures around the world, where he had been involved in studies, but concentrated on the Kransberg vultures. He rents a house below the Marakele breeding colony and is still monitoring this colony.

Gerrie het ook Saterdagagaand met die teenwoordiges gesels en wenke gegee oor hoe om voëls op te spoor. Insiggewend was sy inligting oor die verbod op die gebruik van 'reuk en klank' om diere te steur of op te spoor in natuurreservate, veral Nasionale Parke. Dit het voëlkykers se oë laat rek, want bykans almal wou (of het reeds) gebruik gemaak van PDA's.

Na die bedrywighede gereël deur die Ereveldwagters was talle mense traag om die Nasionale Park te verlaat en het nog vir oulaas deur Kwaggasvlakte gery om te kyk of hulle nog voëls kon opspoor. Die naweek was so genotvol dat almal aangetoon het hulle wil die volgende SASOL Birding Breakaway bywoon in 2011.

(* Black-fronted Bush-Shrike is a bird of montane forest areas in the escarpment region of north-eastern South Africa; any record away from this area will be very significant and will have to be verified with photographic evidence – Ed.)

'Low carbon atlassing' – Pentad 2535-2745 in Brits: 10/10/2010

Jannie Jansen

Wel, hoe begin 'n mens so 'n geskiedkundige gebeurtenis? Toe Etienne Marais 'n oproep doen dat daar 'n anderse atlas versoek deurkom, het ek dadelik besluit ek gaan deelneem, nie twee keer gedink of ek wil of nie, ek sal deelneem, maak nie saak hoe vreemd nie. Die atlassers sal weet om 'n pentad te doen met 'n voertuig is nogal 'n ding, wat nou gemaak? Jy moet jou tuis pentad doen deur dit of te voet of enige ander manier solank daar net nie koolsurgas in die lug opgaan nie. Planne is beraam, daar is sprake van reën in Brits omgewing, maar die beplanning gaan voort.

Ek het besluit om deel te neem, reën of nie. Alles word voorberei en die volgende oggend om 05:30 vertrek ek met my bergfiets om te gaan atlas. Dis nie die eerste keer dat ek dit (voëlkyk) per fiets doen nie, maar dit het makliker geword met die jare om in my '4 x 4' Opel Corsa Elite te klim en te gaan atlas. Wel, die eerste uur het dit goed gegaan, ek het 53 spesies aangeteken, maar nou moet ek ook byvoeg as 'n mens se sitvlak nie gebrei is vir die lang ritte nie kan dit nogal seer word. Ek het basies my gewone atlasroete gedoen wat ek sou gedoen het indien ek met 'n voertuig sou ry. Hoe later, hoe kwater en hoe moeër word ek. Ek besluit

toe om om die berg te ry en dit van agter af terug Brits dorp toe aan te pak, met 'n redelike opdraande en dan 'n baie stewige afdraande. Hulle sê met die jare kry 'n mens wysheid, so ek het dit rus-rus gedoen, want onthou ek moet intussen nog luister en kyk vir voëls. Daar moet ook nie uit die oog uit verloor word dat die groot doel agter alles is om iets uitsonderliks te doen en was dit nie anders nie! Op my pad terug by skoonma aangery om 'n bietjie 'petrol' aan te vul, want teen die tyd was my gô behoorlik uit, die dors groot en my sitvlak baie sensitief. Vir 5 minute ernstig gerus en weer verder gery. Net voor ek my 2de uur voltooi het, moes ek 'n lekker sinkplaatpad aandurf voor ek weer by die huis kon uitkom. Aan die einde van my rit het ek 78 spesies gedoen, wat nie ver agter my spesietelling is as ek met die kar sou atlas nie.

Aan die einde van my roete en baie moeg, het ek my deel van 10/10/10 gedoen en voel goed daarvoor. Besondere voëls wat gesien is in die 2 ure, Rooiborslaksman, 4 duiwe-spesies, 3 spesies kiewiete en 5 spesies swaels. As ek moet opsom: dit was 'n heerlike ervaring om die omgewing per fiets te sien en te beleef.

Dankie aan Etienne weereens vir 'n geslaagde projek vir 10/10/10. 🐦

Hero to zero

The most numerous bird that ever existed was probably the Passenger Pigeon, whose population (confined to North America) may have reached ten billion individuals, though a figure of three billion is more likely. This sociable bird travelled in vast flocks, sometimes containing many millions of birds, which blocked out the sun for hours on end. At its peak, the Passenger Pigeon population may have accounted for between one quarter and one half of all North American birds. Yet by 1899 the species was extinct in the wild, probably as a result of persecution and habitat loss. The last captive bird, a female named Martha, died in Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. She is now on display at the US National Museum in Washington, testament to the destructive folly of humankind.



Capertee Valley, New South Wales, Australia: October 2010

Bryan Groom

Hilary and I have just returned from five weeks in Australia, visiting family, and of course to get as much birding as possible under the belt.

We spent two days in the Capertee Valley, which despite its reputation in birding circles in Australia, does as far as I am aware appear on any tourist map or road atlas of the area in New South Wales. Lying on the western edge of the vast and mysterious Wollemi National Park you find two tiny hamlets called Glen Alice and Glen Davis, within an immense canyon rimmed by cliffs towering 600 metres above the valley floor and punctuated here and there by the occasional mesa-like mountains. The valley is said to be the largest enclosed valley in the southern hemisphere, being more than 30 km wide in its upper reaches, narrowing like a bottleneck to barely 1 km wide near Glen Davis. The valley floor is a mosaic of grassy fields and eucalypt woodland where cattle and mobs of kangaroos graze in a very peaceful rural setting. All this is only 3 hours drive from the centre of Sydney.

The valley was one of the first places in NSW nominated as an IBA in the registers of Birdlife International. It is a birders' paradise, blessed with a remarkable diversity of birds, where more than 230 species have been recorded. The birdlife is generally quite different to what can be seen closer to Sydney and its coast. Being both on the eastern limit for a number of inland species, and near the western limit of some of the more typically eastern species, means the diversity is very high for an area of its size.

We were both still relatively raw, and our observation skills were tested to the limit, with the camera being used as much as the binoculars to record for later confirmation some of the species we were looking at. Our two days spent birding in the valley was a fantastic experience and we were able to add in



excess of 30 new species to our ever-growing Australian list. Some of the birds seen in the valley included the following: Rufous Whistler, New Holland Honeyeater, Superb Fairy-wren, Red-browed Finch, Satin Bowerbird, White-plumed Honeyeater, Eastern Whipbird, White-throated Treecreeper, Richards Pipit, Fairy Martin, Galah, Double-barred Finch, Grey-crowned Babbler, Eastern Spinebill, European Goldfinch, Noisy Friarbird, Little Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Grey Butcherbird, Jacky Winter and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike.

Unfortunately, very few of the nectar-rich eucalypts and mistletoes were flowering, so conditions were not ideal, and we dipped on one of our main target birds, the Regent Honeyeater, a beautiful and endangered species with only about 1000 individuals remaining.

A visit to the Capertee Valley is a must for any South African birder with a few days to spare when visiting Sydney. Accommodation is readily available in a number of 'farm stays' in the valley and a boutique hotel in Glen Davis.

(Bryan's personal blog at <http://bryangroomatlassing.blogspot.com/> can be viewed for photos about the trip – Ed.) 📷

Atlassing for 350.org

Sue Oertli & Amanda Walden

350.org was established to raise awareness of global climate change and the alarming increase in green house gas emissions. SABAP2 decided to get involved in this initiative with various atlasing events planned for Sunday 10 October. Atlasers were encouraged to atlas their home pentad on foot or bicycle on this particular day.

The 'Atlasing Aunties' (Amanda Walden and Sue Oertli) arranged to atlas two pentads at Kurisa Moya in the Magoebaskloof area with the help of resident bird guide Paul Nkhumane. Kurisa Moya suited the 350.org initiative in that the facilities there rely on solar and gas power. However, bicycles were left at home as atlasing there is strenuous!

Sunday's atlasing in 2345_2955 started off at the Cape Parrot lookout point where this endangered bird provided wonderful photographic opportunities. The forest

was alive with the calls of Black-fronted Bush-Shrike, Chorister Robin-Chat, Orange Ground-Thrush, Grey Cuckooshrike, Square-tailed Drongo and African Emerald Cuckoo. A further two hours was spent atlasing pentad 2345_3000 (the Woodbush Forest Drive) and here we had great sightings of Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Olive Woodpecker, Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher and Knysna Turaco.

The day included a trip to Debengeni Falls for Mountain Wagtail, to Tzaneen for Magpie Mannikin and to Agatha Forest for the Bat Hawk pair that breed there. A final stop to admire the pair of Rufous-chested Sparrowhawks breeding near the farmhouse at Kurisa Moya and a quiet stake-out to see the resident Green Twinspots completed a 'lifer' rich birding day.

Oh, and we took all our recycling home with us to help the initiative! 🐦

Undeserved Atlassing

John Bannon

Over the weekend of Friday September 3rd to Sunday September 5th, André Marx, Bets Lategan and I travelled up to north of Zeerust, to atlas 10 virgin pentads in the Nietverdiend area near Madikwe National Park.

We had no great expectations, but as the area is continually bypassed, being on the main road north to Madikwe and Botswana, we decided that unlike its name, the area did deserve to be atlased. (The newly invented verb - 'to atlas' does scan better with two ss' when used in the past tense).

160 species were seen or heard and some very good birds were 'winkled out' including Tinkling Cisticola, Meyer's Parrot, Red-crested Korhaan, at least three beautiful 'melanistic'

Gabars, African Hawk-Eagles, a solitary Yellow-throated Sandgrouse and even a pair of Lappet-faced Vultures sitting on a low acacia.

However, one of the surprises of weekend was the unrecorded population of Short-clawed Larks we were to come across on the Saturday in pentads 2555_2610, 2455_2615 and 2455_2620. They are likely to have been resident there, and possibly also in other surrounding pentads for many years, but as we were probably the first people ever to have seriously birded the area, their existence was unknown – until now.

Another major 'discovery' came on the Sunday in the shape of the extensive Molatedi Dam, opened by Lucas Mangope



in 1986. Extending over pentads 2455_2625 and 2450_2625, thus unatlassed water body and surrounding veld was not on any SABAP2 maps, but gave us an excellent list, including Common Scimitarbill, my bogey bird. It also

gave André a real headache in the number of ORFs (out of range forms) he had to complete, particularly for relatively common waterbirds and waders, none of which had been recorded in SABAP1 as Molatedi Dam didn't exist then.

Herman Charles Bosman used to teach at a local farm primary school in Nietverdiend and the area provided the background for some of his best known stories; Oom Schalk Lourens and Voorkamer – a Bosman weekend is held in nearby Groot Marico in mid-October each year.

So, ten new pentads knocked off the list; superb birding; superb company; superb weather – definitely niet verdiend.

Atlassing is megalekker! 🐦

Birding in Entebbe

Philip Calinikos

Until very recently, the name Entebbe elicited a sense of foreboding and bloodshed in my mind; the spectre of Idi Amin Dada still being my overriding memory of the place name. Once you step off the aeroplane however, the only thing that smites you is the humidity, not unlike Durban at Christmas time. The welcome is all broad, flashing smiles, well wishes and offers to help. Being well after dark we enquire for a safe place to eat. Oh, “the Golf Clubhouse is a kilometre or so away”, we are told. “But how do we get there?” we enquire. “You walk, everyone walks in Entebbe, it is the safest place in Uganda”, we are advised. So we walk... and it is very safe with a visible police presence, especially around the hilltop presidential mansion which dominates the town.

Our birding starts with a big bang, the following morning. Our guide, Johnny Kamugisha, arrives early and nonchalantly points out a pair of African Hobbies nesting above the parking grounds of our Hotel. The first bird of the day is a lifer... what a start! Entebbe lies on the northern shores of Lake Victoria which gives it a laid back coastal feel. The town is spaciouly

laid out with a profusion of tropical vegetation. As we drive through the suburbs, we stop and peer into private gardens. The birdlife is prolific. Our destination is the Entebbe Botanical Gardens which stretch down to the very edge of the lake. The gardens, established in 1902, are a very attractive mix of indigenous forest and cultivation and offer an excellent introduction to Uganda's exciting birdlife. It is still early and the gates are closed, but Johnny knows the ropes and eases the unlocked gate open so that we can drive through. We will pay the modest entrance fee and not so modest camera fee later!

The air is filled with a host of intriguing calls. As we step from the vehicle, we start notching up amazing birds...a very vocal Lizard Buzzard, Western Banded Snake-Eagle, Palm-nut Vulture, African Emerald Cuckoo, Broad-billed Roller, African Pied Hornbill, Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill, Grey-throated Barbet, Double-toothed Barbet, Ross's Turaco, Great Blue Turaco, and flocks of noisy Splendid Starlings all make good use of the plentiful perches in the magnificent trees surrounding

*Spur-winged
Lapwing*



us. We spend a good hour rooted to the spot taking in all these riches. The gardens are well maintained and we start down one of the attractive paths through thicker vegetation. Here we find birds such as Grey-headed Nigrita, Grey-capped Warbler, African Thrush, Snowy-crowned Robin-chat, Yellow-throated Leaf-love and Blue-spotted Wood-Dove. Nearing the shoreline, some fruiting palms have attracted a pair of African Grey Parrots and we watch as they peel the husk off the fruits to feed. Sunbirds are also plentiful in the gardens and we manage to get excellent views of Olive-bellied, Red-chested, Scarlet-chested and Superb Sunbird.

The day is hotting up and there is some relief as we reach the open shoreline. Gull-billed Terns waft passed on the cooling breeze. Spur-winged Lapwings and Swamp Flycatchers forage at the water's edge. A variety of weavers utilise the overhanging vegetation and Johnny is very excited as he points out an Orange Weaver building a nest. He thought they had abandoned the area after the lake's waters had risen suddenly and killed off their preferred nesting trees. A strange monkey-like chattering behind us alerts us to the arrival of a small flock of Eastern Grey Plain-tain-Eaters. Apparently their calls were used in early Tarzan movies to substitute for the call of chimpanzees.

Johnny has some business to do in town, so we hire two Boda-bodas for the short ride to the Wildlife Education Centre. Apparently

the name for these bicycle taxis was derived from their use ferrying customers between two border posts! The centre has three Shoebills in captivity and one can get close up views of these impressive birds. I suspect that many of the close up photographs in circulation have been taken here and not in the wild! The centre also acts as a rehabilitation centre for chimpanzees and if your visit coincides with their feeding time, you can enjoy a highly entertaining hour with these primates.

We return to the botanical gardens with Johnny in the cool late afternoon. He guides us to a different part of the gardens which has thick vegetation crisscrossed by a number of small streams. Johnny's keen ears pick up a faint call and we spend the next hour quietly stalking the owner. Our reward is a flash of movement across the path in front of us as a White-spotted Flufftail scurries across. On the way back to our vehicle, we stop to watch a family of Black-and-white Colobus feeding. These very attractive monkeys are plentiful in the Gardens and very photogenic. Our final reward of the day is a Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher which we find foraging for insects together with an African Paradise Flycatcher. Our total count for the day amounts to 95 species, many of which are lifers for us. Entebbe is a highly rewarding, easily accessible and safe birding destination and one should plan to spend a couple of nights here on arrival in Uganda, before venturing elsewhere. 🐦

Luiperd en Breëkoparend

Banie Penzhorn

Op bladsy 82-83 van Africa Birds & Birding vol 15 no 5 (Oktober/November 2010) is daar foto's van 'n luiperd wat 'n Witrugaaivoël nes bo in 'n groot jakkalsbessieboom beroof. Hierdie drama het hom in die Okavangodelta afgespeel.

Dit herinner my aan 'n gebeurtenis wat ons tydens die Julievakansie enkele jare gelede suid van Shingwedzi in die Krugerwildtuin beleef het. Ons het stadig deur 'n stand groot hardekoorbome gery toe die hoë gekrys van 'n groot voël ons aandag getrek het. Die voël, 'n Breëkoparend, het opgewonde heen en weer gevlieg. Sy maat het binne

sekondes by hom aangesluit. Dit is toe dat ons hul nes bo in een van die groot hardekoorbome gewaar, met die kop van 'n luiperd wat bo die nes uitsteek. Ons kon maar net aanvaar dat die luiperd die neskuiken opgevrete het. Die luiperd het hom glad nie aan die arende gesteur nie, en het seker nog sowat 15 minute in die nes gebly, waar hy lekker in die laatnamiddagsonnetjie gesit het. Hy het 'n paar keer behaaglik gegaap. Eensklaps was hy met 'n spring uit die nes en het hy soos blits teen die regop boomstam (seker so hoog soos 'n 3-4-verdiepinggebou) afgeseil en in die bos verdwyn. 🐾

Rooibekkekelaars wat eiers steel?

Banie Penzhorn

Toe ons in Oktober by 'n niggie in Irene kuier, wys hulle ons 'n nesstomp, maar sowat 2 m bokant die grond, wat deur Ringnekparkiete gebruik word. Daar was minstens vier neskuikens: twee groot koppe en twee kleintjies kon gesien word. Dit lyk dus of Ringnekparkiete begin broei sodra die eerste eier gelê is, en nie wag totdat die broeisel voltooi is nie.

Die nesgat is deur Kuifkophoutkappers uitgehol, wat dit aanvanklik gebruik het. Verlede jaar het Ringnekparkiete die nes oorgeneem en die opening

effens vergroot. Ons niggie-hulle was verbaas om eendag te sien hoe twee Rooibekkekelaars een na die ander met 'n eier in die snawel uit die nes te voorskyn kom en wegvlieg. Die parkiete het nie weer probeer nesmaak nie en die kakelaars het ook nie verder in die nesgat belang gestel nie.

Ek het nageslaan en gelees dat kakelaars ou nesgate skoonmaak voordat hulle self daar nesmaak. Het iemand al gesien dat hulle aktiewe neste op hierdie wyse saboteer? Sou hulle moontlik selfs jong neskuikens uitsmyt? 🐾

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As always, you are most welcome to contact me if you encounter any problems - **Rita**

Rarities and unusual sightings

Compiled by André Marx

This summer has started off with a spate of rarity records in the region with excellent reports coming in from interesting localities like Mkhombo Dam. Several regional rarities have been recorded during SABAP2 atlassing efforts, an indication of how going deep in a pentad can turn up some special birds.

National Rarities / Nasionale rareiteite

Pectoral Sandpiper. Geelpootstrandloper: at first one and then a second bird was present at Mkhombo Dam, north-east of Pretoria, 27 Nov 10 (MG and others).

Regional Rarities / Streeksrareiteite

Pink-backed Pelican. Kleinpelikaan: two birds were at Elandsvlei, near Bapsfontein, an uncommon bird for Gauteng, 27 Oct 10 (PC).

Southern Bald Ibis. Kalkoenibis: this species was confirmed to be breeding at Rhenosterpoort Private Reserve which is adjacent to Ezemvelo NR in eastern Gauteng, when at least 6 nest sites were found, 16 Nov 10 (EM).

African Pygmy-Goose. Dwerggans: one bird was found at Mkhombo Dam, approx 100km north-east of Pretoria in Mpumalanga, 20 Nov 10 (NJ).

European Honey-Buzzard. Wespedief: one bird was present in the Kyalami area, 10 Nov 10 (RS); this species was present at Roodeplaat NR in pentad 2535_2820, 13 Dec 10 (MT).

Black Harrier. Witkruisvleivalk: one bird was observed in pentad 2620_2850 in the Eendrag area on the eastern edge of Gauteng, 03 Aug 10 (CG).

Corn Crake. Kwartelkoning: one bird was flushed at Bullfrog Pan, Benoni, 24 Nov 10 (GLd).

Spotted Crake. Gevlekte Riethaan: this species was located at Mkhombo Dam, north-east of Pretoria, and was seen by several people during the course of the next 2 weeks, 02 Dec 10 (BLNG).



Clive Kaplan

Namaqua Sandgrouse/Kelkiewyn near Carletonville

Ruddy Turnstone. Steenloper: a single bird was at Mkhombo Dam, an uncommon bird in the greater Gauteng region, 27 Nov 10 (BLNG).

Double-banded Courser. Dubbelbanddrawwertjie: an interesting record is of one bird in a field near Carletonville just beyond the western boundary of Gauteng in pentad 2615_2710, 31 Jul 10 (BP).

Namaqua Sandgrouse. Kelkiewyn: a group of birds - at times numbering over 10 - was observed over a period of a couple of weeks in the vicinity of pentad 2605_2720 which lies on



Bruce Paterson

Double-banded Courser/Dubbelbanddrawwertjie west of Gauteng



Broad-billed Roller/Geelbektroupan near Roodeploaat Dam

the very western boundary of Gauteng near Carletonville, 11 Jul 10 (BP). *In the ensuing weeks up to 50 birds were seen in the same area by other birders.*

Broad-billed Roller. Geelbektroupan: this species was a surprise find at Mutango Lodge just north of Roodeploaat Dam, 22 Nov 10 (MT).

Sickle-winged Chat. Vlaktespekvrer: a bird observed in pentad 2615_2710 on the western edge of Gauteng is most unusual as this is an arid country species normally associated with areas further west, 07 Aug 10 (EM).

Other Interesting Observations / Ander Interessante Waarnemings

Black Stork. Grootswartooievaar: a single bird was seen in area of highveld grassland east of Pretoria in pentad 2600_2840, 13 Dec 10 (PT,RF).

African Cuckoo Hawk. Koekoekvalk: this bird was found in the Vlaklaagte area east of Pretoria in pentad 2520_2850, 11 Sep 10 (PT,RF).

Booted Eagle. Dwergarend: one bird was seen soaring above Arcadia, Pretoria, and is an uncommon sighting for the city, 11 Nov 10 (RGy).

Long-crested Eagle. Langkuifarend: one bird was seen just south of Rayton, eastern Gauteng, 21 Nov 10 (LvD).

Martial Eagle. Breëkoparend: a juvenile bird was photographed at Rietvlei NR, 12 Sep 10 (CK).

Black-chested Snake-Eagle.

Swartborsslangarend: a sighting of one bird in the grasslands north of Devon, east of Gauteng, is somewhat unusual, 18 Jul 10 (CG); with another record from this area of an immature bird in pentad 2625_2835 on the R550 between Nigel and Devon, 20 Nov 10 (CG).

Pallid Harrier. Witborsvleivalk: a male bird was observed in an area of grassland in pentad 2515_2850 on the north-eastern edge of Gauteng, 21 Nov 10 (PT,RF).

Common Quail. Afrikaanse Kwartel: a surprise sighting of an adult and juvenile bird in a garden in Clubview, Centurion, was made, 06 Oct 10 (TWe).

Yellow-throated Sandgrouse.

Geelkeelsandpatrys: an interesting observation is of two adult birds with two chicks right next to the N4 in the vicinity of the turn off to Sun City, 19 Sep 10 (P&MC).

Purple-crested Turaco. Bloukuifloerie:

another report of this species has been received from the Pretoria North area, this time of a successful breeding event, 01 Aug 10 (JHe).

African Grass-Owl. Grasuil: one bird was well seen at Elandsvlei in the Bapsfontein area, 03 Sep 10 (G&EC).

Southern White-faced Scops-Owl.

Witwanguil: one bird was at a homestead at Elandsvlei, near Bapsfontein, an unusual locality for this species, 03 Sep 10 (G&EC).



Verreaux's Eagle-Owl/Reuse Ooruil at Buffelsdrift near Rust De Winter

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl. Reuse-ooruil: great views were had of a bird on a nest at Buffelsdrift in the Rust De Winter area, 31 Jul 10 (BLNG).

Brown-hooded Kingfisher.

Bruinkopvisvanger: one bird in the Henley-on-Klip area of southern Gauteng is unusual for this species as it is not known from this region, 15 Aug 10 (LRo).

Brown-backed Honeybird.

Skerpbekheuningvoël: during a bird walk at Faerie Glen NR in Pretoria this bird was a welcome find, 14 Aug 10 (BLNG).

Banded Martin. Gebande Oewerswael: a record of this species at Delta Park, Johannesburg, is most unusual and a first for SABAP2 in pentad 2605_2800, 28 Oct 10 (GLd); 2 birds recorded at Leeukop Prison, northern Johannesburg in pentad 2600_2800, is a first record for the area and somewhat out of range for the species, 27 Nov 10 (AM,RS).

Dark-capped Yellow Warbler. Geelsanger: one bird was ringed on a farm approximately 25km north of Pretoria and represents another new locality for this species, 27 Nov 10 (MK).

Cuckoo Finch. Koekoekvink: at least 7 birds, 3 males and 4 females, were observed feeding on the ground at Holhoek picnic site at Suikerbosrand NR, 11 Nov 10 (AM).

Yellow Canary. Geelkanarie : several birds seen in pentad 2515_2815 in the Hammanskraal area north of Pretoria represents another of several records of this species in the region, and appears to be showing a sustained eastern expansion of this species range, 24 Oct 10 (ST).

Observers / Waarnemers

André Marx (AM)
BirdLife Northern Gauteng members (BLNG)
Bruce Paterson (BP)
Clive Kaplan (CK)
Colin Gerrans (CG)
Etienne Marais (EM)
Geoff Lockwood (GLd)
George & Elsie Cox (G&EC)
Jan Herbst (JHe)



Alta Fraser

Brown-backed Honeybird/Skerpbekheuningvoël at Faerie Glen NR

Lance Robinson (LRo)
Lisl van Deventer (LvD)
Mark Kirk (MK)
Mark Tittley (MT)
Michal Groenewald (MG)
Neels Jackson (NJ)
Pat Tattersal (PT)
Philip & Mandy Calinikos (P&MC)
Philip Coetzee (PC)
Rihann Geyser (RGy)
Roger Fieldwick (RF)
Ron Searle (RS)
Stephan Terblanche (ST)
Tony Wentzel (TWe)

This column is mainly concerned with observations of rarities and interesting sightings made within a 100 km radius of Gauteng, however observations made further afield are also welcome. While the majority of reports are included it is sometimes necessary to exclude some depending on whether the subject matter has already been well reported. Occasionally records are sourced from the Internet. All are encouraged to complete rarities documentation for regional and national rarities. Members are invited to submit details of sightings to André Marx at 083 411 7674, e-mail turaco@telkomsa.net

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