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Notice to contributors

Laniarius is published three times annually. Deadlines for contributions are 1 March, 1 July, and 1 November. Articles should preferably be e-mailed to the Editor, but may also be posted to the club post box. Contributions and advertisements are accepted at the discretion of the Editor. Digital photographic images are always welcome.

Kennisgewing aan bydraers

Laniarius word vier keer jaarliks uitgegee. Spertye vir bydraes is 1 Maart, 1 Julie, en 1 November. Artikels moet verkieslik per e-pos aan die redakteur gestuur word, maar kan ook na die klub-adres gepos word. Aanvaarding van bydraes en advertensies word aan die diskresie van die redakteur oorgelaat. Digitale fotos is altyd welkom.

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Credits

Front cover: Double-banded Courser/Dubbelbanddrawwertjie by Dup du Plessis.

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

Cartoons from *The Crazy World of Bird Watching* by Peter Rigby.



Editorial/ Redaksioneel

The growth in interest in digital photography has been very evident in birding circles in recent years and this has been apparent in submissions to this newsletter. Many people will send a photograph to accompany their article when just a few years ago that seemed an unlikely scenario. Digital cameras have become more sophisticated and – dare I say – more affordable to many people who would not have taken up the challenge in the past. Bird photography was something for the specialists, who had long zoom lenses (and some still do) and who had infinite patience and resources to have all their film photographs developed. That is something of the past of course, now cameras have all sorts of enhancements and add-ons to make the experience simpler and more rewarding for the photographer who can take as many photographs as he or she pleases. The Internet has also played a big role in promoting digital photography as many people display their photographs on various websites. You can instantly post a photo on a website and ask for help in identifying a species, or just invite comment and bask in the glory of having taken a good photo. Anyone who is signed onto Facebook will know what I am talking about.

The top photographers speak a language that is difficult to comprehend, talking about ‘filters’ and ‘converters’ and the pros and cons of ‘superzoom’ and ‘DSLR’ (which refers to digital single-lens reflex cameras – I had to look that one up). It can be very perplexing, and is not much different to being a beginner birder, a stage we all went through at some stage when you felt slightly intimidated by all the experts around you. But where there is a will there is a way and I plan to join the legions of amateur photographers by obtaining the right equipment and trying my hand at photography at some stage. The excellent

photos that appear in this newsletter are a testament to the success that amateur photographers can enjoy.

To give our photographers a chance to showcase their skills in this newsletter we are introducing a new column called PHOTO SPOT. The intention is to tell a story through the use of photographs. If you manage to take a few action shots of an interesting encounter why not send it in for inclusion in *Laniarius*? Take a look at the two features in this edition, showcasing the feeding actions of a Saddle-billed Stork and the sequence of events of a breeding pair of Double-banded Coursers. I am sure there are many people who can contribute to this column and I look forward to their contributions.

The club has once again undertaken some interesting trips to locations far and near. The much-anticipated and very successful trip to the Okavango and beyond is reported in this edition as are other club excursions. Some of my earliest and most endearing memories come from these birding trips with the club. A great deal of effort goes into arranging them and they form an important part of the club activities. Some great trips are being planned for next year to some special locations, so be sure to check the programme and this newsletter for details.

This is a bumper edition of *Laniarius*, made possible by the many and varied submissions by members for which I am very grateful. It reaches you during spring, right at the start of the most interesting time of the year for birders. That should mean that we will have more stories about spring and early summer birding to feature for the next edition due at the end of the year and I look forward to those accounts.

André Marx



Chairman's Report/ Voorsittersverslag

Philip Calinikos

Fellow members: By the time you read this, the cold winter months should be something of the past. It appears as if temperature highs and lows this year have been one or two degrees lower than the past few years. Thinking back, there were some particularly cold spells last year as well, but then we did have the excitement of the World Cup to warm our hearts at least.

Despite the cold weather there has been quite some activity within our club and at Bird-Life South Africa. The new constitution for BLSA was adopted at the Annual General Meeting in March and, as a result, clubs such as ours are now regarded as member organisations rather than branches. This has sorted out the legal issues associated with the previous structure. In due course we will have to amend our constitution to bring it in line and BLSA has promised to assist us in this regard. BLSA has also launched a lovely new website and must be commended for the fact that more prominence is now given to information on the various clubs in the country. The website will be updated regularly, so please visit it and submit any comments you may have to BLSA.

The month of July also witnessed the launch of the BLSA Afrikaans Bird Checklist, with our club being one of two main sponsors. A complimentary copy of the checklist has been included in this newsletter. I would like to thank our co-sponsors Embryo-Plus as well as the Afrikaanse Voëlnaamgroep for their efforts in bringing this publication to fruition. The project was brought to our attention by Ernst Retief, who also put a lot of effort and energy into it, so a special word of thanks to Ernst as well. The last quarter also saw the re-launch of our Conservation sub-committee under the leadership of Rion Lerm. Rion holds a B. Tech diploma in nature conserva-

tion and is currently completing his third year studies towards a B.Sc. Zoology and Entomology at the University of Pretoria. He has also been involved as assistant manager at an environmental education project in Ndumo for the Tshwane University of Technology. Besides bird watching, Rion is an avid participant in all aspects of avifaunal activity including bird ringing, bird photography and painting. He is a registered SABAP2 observer and is also qualified in advanced snake-handling, which I am sure has stood him in good stead at times in the veld! His most treasured achievement to date, however, was when he won first prize in a bird quiz organised by Ulrich Oberprieler at Nylsvley at the age of eight! Rion has some great plans for this sub-committee going forward and welcomes any assistance that other members can provide, so please feel free to volunteer your assistance to him.

While on the conservation theme, I would like to sincerely thank one of our members, Nic Efthimiades, the Managing Director of Ocean Breeze Food Merchants, for the most generous donation to the club of R10,000. Nic's wish was that the money be donated by BLNG to BLSA's White-bellied Korhaan Conservation Project for the purchase of a tracking device. The donation has been made and acknowledgement given to BLNG by Dr Hanneline Smit, Director of Conservation at BLSA. Hopefully this will be the first of many such conservation projects that we will be able to contribute to.

Mention must also be made of another of our sub-committees that is starting to make an impact and that is our Youth Group. Their cheeky new logo, designed by Rion, was launched recently and although the young "Lani Arius" has not been christened yet, his presence has already graced *Facebook* and *Ralda* has great plans for all sorts of goodies

featuring him. Our enthusiastic Youth Group Co-ordinator, Jason Boyce, is already talking to other Gauteng clubs with a view to forming a network of younger birders across the province. Jason loves interacting with young people and is involved in assisting not only his church community in Queenswood, but is also actively involved in team sport coaching at Cornwall Hill College. He loves being able to contribute that little bit extra to enrich the life of everyone from a cute little five year old to a know-it-all teenager. He is also well on his way to being the youngest person to reach the 800 lifer milestone! If you know of any younger birders out there please let Jason know!

Our club, through many of our members, continues to make excellent contributions towards the SABAP2 project and bird ringing so now that the weather is warming up, more of you could be tempted to try your hand at one of these activities. Another area that appears to be increasing in popularity amongst members is that of bird photography. The committee has recognised this and some special activities in this sphere of activity are being planned in the near future. Watch this space!

Yours in birding

Philip

Club News/Klubnuus

Laniarius prizes

The prize winners for best article in the last two editions of *Laniarius* can be announced. Congratulations go to Johan Muller for his entertaining account entitled "Impressions of a new member" for edition no. 117, and to Ingrid van Heerden for her insightful description of the visit to the Chrissiesmeer area entitled "Chrissiesmeer Camp – A Biblical experience" for edition no. 118. They are worthy winners of the R100 prize.

Young Birders

As you may know the Young Birders group has had a logo designed especially for their portfolio. The logo appears on the Young Birders Facebook page. The bird ringers are also in the progress of having their own logo designed, and this will help define their events and activities within the club operations. These logos are designed around the club logo i.e. the Crimson-breasted

Shrike. They will not replace the well-known club logo, but give a sense of identity to individual factions of Bird-Life Northern Gauteng. Rion Lerm designed the two logos and what started out as an idea can now be incorporated onto various items



sold by the club including apparel, stationery and so on. With so many factions in our club (e.g. conservation, Young Birders, bird ringing, trading), the different groups can now enjoy a logo that relates to their specific activity! All logos are approved by the committee before use.
Rion Lerm (Chairman of Conservation).

Trading

Ralda is now taking pre-launch orders for the latest *Sasol Birds of Southern Africa* (4th Edition). Both the English and Afrikaans versions for only R190 per copy! This is a fully revised and updated edition and there are many club members who are eagerly awaiting this book release which should be towards the end of October or early November. It will make the perfect Christmas gift for that special friend or family member. If you would like to order your copy please order via e-mail only directly to ralda1@law.co.za and then send the proof of payment as soon as possible. The pre-launch offer will be closing at the evening meeting to be held on 11th October 2011.

Obituary: Graham La Grange

It is with great sadness that we must advise that Graham La Grange, who had been a long-standing club member, passed away on 20 June

after becoming ill. He was always ready to share any birding experience with fellow birders and would engage other club members in lively discussions at the evening meetings he attended. Our heartfelt condolences are extended to his wife Marie and his family.

Erratum

On page 18 of the last edition the caption underneath the photo of the odd-coloured sparrow should have read Cape Sparrow and not Southern Grey-headed Sparrow.

Birding by ear

Faansie Peacock

If given a choice between going blind or deaf, I suspect many serious birders would choose to forsake their power of sight. While all birders start their passion by *looking* at birds, the importance of *listening* to birds cannot be denied. Songs and calls are the primary way in which most birds communicate, whether with their own or other species. Logically, it thus follows that this should also be the primary way in which we understand and enjoy birds. Becoming familiar with bird sounds also makes birding simpler and more fulfilling. When it comes to the LBJs for example, identifying them by their calls is not only far easier but also much more reliable. And perhaps most importantly, few things in life come close to the sheer enjoyment of listening to a bird chorus in full swing!

Unfortunately, many birders also find this one of the most difficult and frustrating birding skills to master. So where to start? Below, I suggest ten easy, fun and helpful steps for birding by ear.

Try a B-BBD: Birding Big Day is the highlight of many birders' calendars: a 24 hour competition in which teams of three or four birders compete to see how many species they can record within a 50km radius. Teams may include species positively identified by sight or sound, but all the top teams know that the secret behind a big BBD total lies in the latter. This is the idea behind a Blind-Birding Big Day: to tick *only* species identified by sound. This fun twist requires that team members go about blindfolded or with angled hats obscuring their

vision. Remember that birds seen before they are heard do not count; totals of 100+ are fairly easy but don't expect too many raptors!

Advantageous Adjectives: One of the most challenging aspects of writing a field guide is to find a way to represent bird sounds in words. This often leads to a slew of adjectives that would put a wine connoisseur to shame. But changing the way you think about bird sound has many advantages: instead of listening to the actual notes, rather listen to the overall, superficial quality of the sound. Think about it as a foreign accent with incomprehensible words: despite not being able to understand what is being said, you can still tell whether it's French, Spanish or Japanese. A good way to train your mind to process sound in this way is through the use of adjectives. Try to write down five adjectives that describes a bird's voice and be creative about it: under 't' for example, consider *'tinny, tremulous, terrible, thin, twanging, tinkling, tense, tapping, tuneless, tight, transparent, talented, talkative, tantalizing, tenacious, tender, thankful, trilling, thrilling, timid, tiny, tortuous, twisted, tiresome, tough, tranquil, trashy* and *typical*'.

Play cricket: Distinguishing between superficially similar sounds is one of a birder's strongest weapons. I have found that listening to crickets and katydids is an excellent way to hone this skill. And because the cricket chorus is most pronounced at night, the darkness eliminates visual distractions. On a summer's evening in the bushveld it is usually possible to



Kori Bustard/Gompou: emits a deep growling bark when threatened

discern 8-10 species, while even in urban areas 3-4 species are likely. As these noisy orthopterans allow a close approach their calls can easily be recorded for future reference, even on a cellphone.

Sound the alarm: Being tuned in to birds' alarm calls will not only help develop a more acute sense of hearing, but invariably leads to something worth investigating. As soon as a bird discovers a lurking predator or some other cause for concern, it utters a special alarm call to muster its comrades. As an aside, 'spishing' to lure birds from cover is just mimicry of a typical avian alarm call. The resulting mobbing party often includes a great variety of species that are so preoccupied that they may be studied from close quarters. In addition, the focus of the birds' attention should be obvious: about 90% of the snakes I've seen have been 'shown' to me by birds. Bulbuls are particularly useful in pointing out predators. With some practice, it is possible to tell by the timbre of their calls whether they are concerned about a predator on the ground or one flying overhead.

Mimicry Matching: One of the very best hearing exercises involves mimicry: the incorporation of snatches of song of other bird species into a bird's repertoire. The conflict of *seeing* one bird but *hearing* the sound of

another really kicks one's cognitive functioning into overdrive. Because mimicry is typically delivered in short segments woven into a fuller song, a sharp ear is required to disentangle the mixture of sound; however, once your ear is tuned in to mimetic song, you will be amazed at the sheer diversity of birds that practice mimicry—warblers, shrikes, starlings, white-eyes, chats, sunbirds, larks, robin-chats, indigo-birds and drongos, amongst many others, and let's not forget parrots and mynas mimicking human speech! An excellent group to start with is the larks – in the bushveld Sabota will work; in the highveld you can't beat Melodious for mimicry practice. Warbler mimicry is for the advanced only: Marsh Warblers' songs consists almost exclusively of mimicry delivered at breakneck speed, and includes species they hear on their Eurasian breeding grounds, in their African winter range and even on passage between the two!

Sonograms: For most of us the sonograms in our old and worn copies of Roberts' are, admittedly, a little intimidating. But sonograms are undoubtedly a fantastic tool to develop an understanding of bird song. Seeing a visual representation of an audio signal assists the brain to amalgamate our two primary senses in a unique way. Steering clear of any technicalities, a sonogram is simply a plot of frequency or pitch, i.e. how high or low the sound is. This variable is plotted on the vertical y-axis of the graph and is measured in kiloHertz. The horizontal x-axis represents time in seconds. The lower the call is (think Ostrich, Ground Hornbill and Verreaux's Eagle-Owl) the closer the plot will be to the bottom of the graph. The higher the call (think sunbirds, wagtails and the almost ultrasonic Spotted Creeper) the higher up on the graph the plot will lie. As with most things in life, the best way to understand the theory is to put it to practice. To make your own sonograms an excellent introduction is the relatively small (and free) software package Raven Lite, which is available here: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/raven/RavenOverview.html>.

Keep a hearing lifelist: In addition to keeping a lifelist of birds seen, compiling a list of the birds you have heard adds another dimension to birding. In many cases hearing a bird is much easier than seeing it (one word: flufftails) but it also works the other way around: it's easy enough to see a Black-shouldered Kite sitting on a wire, but how many people have ever heard their blood-curdling screams? Ducks are another generally silent group, but actually have charming and characteristic mating calls. The bill-clapping of otherwise mute storks is such an intimate event that it is usually only witnessed at their nests. I once had the unnerving experience of accidentally cornering a Kori Bustard in a sheep camp. With the fence blocking the bird's escape, this normally silent giant very effectively stopped me in my tracks with a deep, growling bark: certainly the most intense sound I have ever heard!

A cure for insomnia: Birds move around a lot more than we realize, and a large proportion of this movement occurs at night. To appreciate this statement and simultaneously try an engaging hearing exercise, I strongly recommend one sleepless night per year. Make a flask of coffee, position yourself in a quiet spot and get comfortable. The idea of the challenge is to use only your hearing to track calling birds flying over. On a good summer's night the results can be astounding: rails, crakes, quails, ducks, herons, terns, gulls, waders, coursers, swifts and cuckoos are all possible, as is a variety of smaller passerines. In terms of timing, most movement seems to occur between sunset and about 02:00, with regular migration peaking between 23:00 and 01:00.

Helpful Hollywood: For some reason Hollywood seems to love including African birds on the background soundtracks to movies. When the action hero is running through the jungle, there's a Woodland Kingfisher calling in the background. As explosions level New York, a flock of Crowned Lapwings voice their concern. And as the serial killer stalks outside his victim's house, he's watched by a Fiery-necked Nightjar.



Martin Goretz

Black-shouldered Kite/Blouvalkie makes blood-curdling screams at times

So birders can even practice their bird calls on rainy days – by simply lounging in front of the TV.

Practice makes perfect: The bottom line is that practice makes perfect. And while commercially available bird calls are undoubtedly invaluable, there is no substitute for spending time in the field – even the most comprehensive bird call collections can never include all of a bird's vocal range. As an example, the well-known hoot of a Buff-spotted Flufftail is only one of its 119 recorded vocalizations! Paradoxically, the more bird calls you learn the easier it becomes to memorize even more (which is good news when cramming for an overseas birding trip). In addition to the suggestions listed above, there are many other fun ways to learn bird sounds with some concentrated effort and a dash of creativity. Birding friends can get together for bird sound quiz evenings; families can learn three bird calls after dinner; create your own renditions of 'what birds are saying' (e.g. a Cape Turtle-Dove can say *where's FAther* or *werk STAdig* or even *Cape TURtle*); or change your cellphone ringtone to a bird call and pick a new one once you've got the first memorized.

In the next instalment of this three-part series, Faansie Peacock shares some novel ways of seeing birds with new eyes. 🐦

The evolution of birds and feathers

Lisl van Deventer

The origin of feathers and flight is one of evolution's most durable mechanisms. For more than a century, scientists searched for answers as to where today's birds fit in the history of earth and animals, and how flight has evolved.

In 1861, just 2 years after Darwin published the "*Origin of species*", a crow-sized bird fossil was excavated from Jurassic limestone in southern Germany. Later named "Archaeopteryx" by John Ostrom, it had feathers and other traits of living birds but also traits of reptiles such as jaws with sharp teeth, claws on its wings and a long, bony tail. The wrist bone was wedge-shaped to enable it to fold its arms to its sides. Stripped of its feathers, it looked like a true dinosaur.

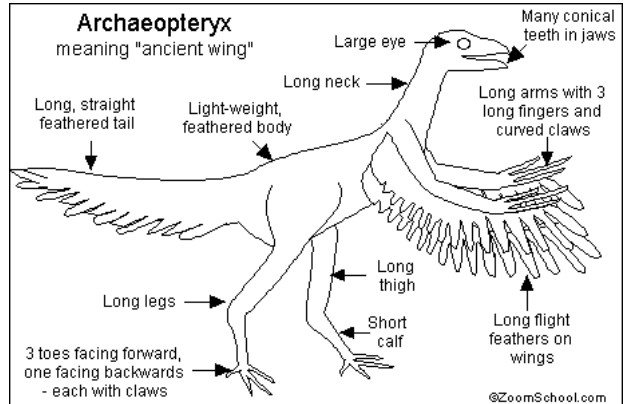
Archaeopteryx lived about 150 million years ago and is currently placed first on the evolution line, followed by the *Vegavis* of the Cretaceous (e.g. *Deinonychosaurs* and *Confuciusornis*), then the *Neornithines* (modern-day birds).

A poor flyer, Archaeopteryx would be able to have taken off from the ground similar to some modern birds.

Two theories for the origin of flight currently exist:

- Proto-birds would flap their feathered arms as they ran;
- The feathered legs could be too clumsy for running, and proto-birds would leap from trees, then glide and finally fly.

Both methods are used today to take wing and fly. Over time, muscles used for gliding and flying evolved to become stronger, bodies became smaller and lighter and feathers longer and more aerodynamic – the flapping of



feathery arms evolved into the repetitive strokes of wings and in strong flying.

To withstand the force of oncoming air, a modern-day flight feather is shaped asymmetrically, the leading edge thin and stiff, the trailing edge long and flexible. To generate lift, a bird has merely to tilt its wings, adjusting the flow of air below and above them. The fine feathers sprouting from the central feather shaft, each lined with tiny hooks, create a network that is featherlight but remarkably strong.

And then, after millions of years of evolution of feathers and flight, even this durable mechanism has been rendered useless in the absence of enemies and some birds lost the ability to fly like the extinct Dodo, the Ostrich, penguins and various species in New Zealand and Australia such as kiwis and cassowaries. Nature remains fascinating and interesting!

Sources:

National Geographic, February 2011, pp. 32- 57;
The story of earth and life. McCarthy & Rubidge. 2005. pp. 240-241;
Evolution of birds. Wikipedia. 🐦

Personal names commemorated in the common names of southern African bird species – Part 6

John Bannon

GURNEY – Gurney's Sugarbird, *Promerops gurneyi* (Verreaux, 1871)

John Henry Gurney (1819-1890) was a wealthy amateur ornithologist and collector and was born into a well-to-do family of bankers in Norfolk. Amongst his school friends was Henry Doubleday, the English entomologist, the author of the first catalogue of *British Butterflies and Moths*. He went on to the Friends School at Tottenham, the old school of William Yarrell (1784-1856), who first discovered that the Bewick's Swan was a different species to the Whooper Swan.

Gurney published a number of articles in the *Ibis* and the *Zoologist* and corresponded with many overseas explorers and collectors, such as Thomas Ayres and particularly his friend Charles John Andersson, the Swedish hunter, explorer and naturalist. He was very much a member of the Victorian ornithological establishment, with a particular interest in birds of prey. For example, Gurney was one of the original exclusive group of twenty members who formed the British Ornithological Union (BOU) and personally paid for the coloured plates in the first series of *Ibis*, stipulating that they should depict his favourite subject matter, birds of prey.

His son, with the same name, was also an ornithologist and the great British-Indian ornithologist Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912) named a very beautiful Pitta after the father in 1875. Gurney's Pitta is considered one of the world's rarest birds and after not being seen for 72 years was considered extinct. The species was re-discovered at a Bangkok bird trapper's premises in 1986 and further small populations have now been found in Myanmar and Thailand, but it remains seriously threatened by the almost total clearance of lowland forest by loggers, throughout its range. (*Rare Birds Yearbook, Birdlife International, 2008*).

The sugarbird was named after him in 1871 by Jules Pierre Verreaux (1807-1873), one of the well-known Verreaux family; French taxidermists, collectors and dealers, who traded throughout China and the Cape Colony. They had a huge emporium in Paris, called the Maison Verreaux, full of stuffed birds and animals and attained great notoriety when they disinterred the body of a tribal chieftain and stuffed it at their premises in Cape Town. This example of extremely bad taste was exhibited in Barcelona until the late 1890s, until the poor man's descendants demanded that it should be returned to them for burial.

HARTLAUB – Hartlaub's Babbler, *Turdoides hartlaubi* (Bocage, 1868); Hartlaub's Spur-fowl, *Pternistis hartlaubi* (Bocage, 1870); Hartlaub's Gull, *Larus hartlaubi* (Bruch, 1853)

Karel Johan Gustav Hartlaub (1814-1900) was a German academic, doctor and zoologist whose hobby was 'exotic' ornithology, particularly with regard to tropical birds. As the Curator of the Bremen Museum, he collected together species from other collectors and wrote the first descriptions of over thirty southern African birds, later donating them to what is known today as the *Bremen Ueberseemuseum*, which was originally established in 1783 as the *Gesellschaft Museum*.

He founded the *Journal fur Ornithologie* with Cabanis and was like him very much a pillar of the German birding establishment. Besides those listed above Hartlaub has nine other bird species named after him, which indicates the professional esteem and influence in which he was held. He collaborated with Friedrich Hemann Otto Finsch (1839-1917) on a book about the birds of Polynesia and produced major ornithological works on the birds of East Africa, West Africa and Madagascar.

Bocage was a fellow curator at the museum of Natural History in Lisbon (see under Anchieta) and regularly receiving specimens from Angola and South West Africa, he was well placed to honour his scientific colleague, by naming species after him; the babbler in 1868 and the spurfowl (then francolin) in 1870. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find out any further details on Bruch, who named the gull after Hartlaub in 1853. But I suggest he was probably a professional colleague, either at Bremen or perhaps at Berlin University, where Cabanis was director.

HEUGLIN – Heuglin’s Gull, *Larus heuglini* (Bree, 1876)

Martin Theodor von Heuglin (1824-1876) was a German mining engineer, explorer and ornithologist. His father was a protestant pastor and like him, Heuglin was a vocal opponent of the new theories of evolution as expounded by Darwin and other scientists.

In 1850 he went to Egypt and then accompanied Christian Reitz, Austrian consul in Khartoum, on a journey to Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). After Reitz died, Heuglin was appointed in his place and travelled widely through the Red Sea region collecting many valuable natural history specimens on the way. In 1860 he led an expedition to Khartoum and the White Nile, before returning to Europe in 1864.

He managed to get to Spitsbergen and Novaya Zemlya before again returning to Abyssinia in 1875. He published many publications on the birds of eastern and northern Africa and was preparing for yet another expedition, this time to the island of Socotra, when he died of pneumonia in Stuttgart.

Like Bruch, I have been unable to find out information on Herr Bree, but he was quite likely to have been a museum assistant keeper

or bird curator in one of the well established German museums of the day. He named the gull after Heuglin in 1876, presumably to honour his passing.

Interestingly, the shores of the Red Sea, Heuglin’s old stamping ground, are on the regular migration route of these Arctic breeding gulls, to their wintering grounds in East Africa. He may well have ‘obtained’ the species himself on one of his expeditions.

[Because of the state of flux that gull taxonomy generally is in this species is not officially on the SA list as a good species, but may be again in future – Ed.]

HORUS – Horus Swift, *Apus horus* (Heuglin, 1869)

Horus was the son of Ra, also known as Osiris, one of the most powerful gods of ancient Egypt. Horus had a man’s body and a falcon’s head and represents the god of the sky, the sun and war. In Egyptian, *Heru* (Horus) means the distant one and the Eye of Horus is likewise, an important Egyptian symbol of power.

Quite why Heuglin chose to name the swift after Horus is not clear, but he had wandered extensively in Egypt and perhaps at the age of 45 he had decided it was appropriate to commemorate the culture and ancient gods of a land, he had so clearly enjoyed travelling through many times. 🦅



Which was the first bird to be protected by law?

Arguably the Sacred Ibis. The Ancient Egyptians worshipped many gods, including Thoth, who was often represented as an ibis. Ibises would appear at the time the River Nile rose, and were therefore seen as bringing good fortune, preserving the country from plagues and serpents. Mummified remains of ibises have been found in tombs at Thebes and Memphis. Because of this association with the gods, it was considered a terrible crime to kill an ibis, punishable by death.

Die Pyn en Plesier van Ringsessies: Botaniese Tuine en Southdowns

Ralda Heyns

Die ringsessie op Saterdag 26 Maart by die Botaniese Tuine was 'n absoluut wonderlike, maar effens pynlike belewenis! 'n Hele klomp nuwe belangstellendes het die ringsessie bygewoon. Ons het baie interessante voëls gering, o.a. 'n Afrikaanse Naguil (Fiery-necked Nightjar) en 'n Oranjeborsboslaksman (Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike). Kyk gerus na die pragtige foto wat Johan Muller van dié voël geneem het.

Rihann Geyser het later die oggend opgedaag met lede van die Lion-groep vir Blindes. Ai, ek sê vir jou, dis darem 'n plesier om te kan sien, al raak ons ouer en het ons brilletjies en pilletjies nodig! Rihann het ons blinde gaste laat vat aan die voëls en verduidelik hoe hulle lyk, sodat elkeen die wondere van die natuur kon ervaar. Ek het die dag as groentjie saam met Johan Snyman gering en die ondervinding baie geniet. Maar net toe ons die laaste voëltjie vir die dag wil ring, het dié Fiskaallaksman (Common Fiscal) die ROOK uit my gebyt. Rihann het tot hulp gesnel en die ou van my vinger afgekry – dankie tog!

Ek het sommer daar en dan besluit om op te hou met die ringery, maar Louis, my dierbare man, het getroos en aangespoor.

Dit bring ons toe by Sondagoggend 3 April se ringsessie by Southdowns. Hierdie was net so 'n spesiale dag. Ons het 'n Europese Byvreter gevang en dis ongelooflik hoe die kleure inmeekaar vloei om hierdie pragtige besoeker aan ons land te vervolmaak. Gerrie het die uitstappie gelei en die voëlkykers gebring om te kyk na die pragvoëltjies wat ons gevang en gering het. Toe het Jason vir my 'n Diederikkie gegee om te ring. Hoe het hy geweet dat ek so 'n belewenis nodig gehad het om my moed as ringer te herstel? Ten spyte van daardie geniepsige laksman kan ek nou met trots erken dat ek as leerlingringer alreeds 'n totaal van 50 spesies en 200 geringde

voëls, bereik het. Jason, jy is sommer 'n wonderlike aanwinst vir ons klub en ons gaan nog baie put uit jou inspirasie en idees.

Ringsessies kan dus soms effe verrassend wees, maar die plesier daarvan maak op vir al die pyn. 🐦



Johan Muller

Oranjeborsboslaksman/Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike

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Ringersnuus

Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg

April en Mei was twee besige maande vir ons. Nie net het Louis Heyns gekwalifiseer as A-ringer nie, maar Rihann Geyster het ons versoek om hom behulpsaam te wees met die Rotariërs se jaarlikse uitstappie vir blindes na die Botaniese Tuin. Ons het soos gewoonlik vroeg ons nette met behulp van 'n hele klomp C-ringers en ander belangstellendes opgeslaan gehad. So teen 8:00 vm het die groep daar opgedaag. Aanvanklik was hulle maar versigtig om aan die voëls te vat, maar heel gou was die nutjie verby en almal wou net vashou en laat los. Dit was vir ons 'n belewenis om te sien hoe hulle "sien" met hulle vingers. Een van die klomp was aanvanklik nie baie beïndruk met ons doen en late nie (soos oorvertel) totdat ons hom laat voel het aan die ringtang. Skielik het daar lewe gekom! Hoe werk dit? Hoe kry jul die ring aan die voël se voet (tarsus). Toe vat hy aan die voël se dun beentjie en knyp die ringetjie daarom toe. Nodeloos om te sê die groep moes hom amper daar wegsleep. Het agterna eers gehoor die man is 'n meubelmaker van beroep.

Saam met die ander belangstellendes was die neefs Herman en Manie Barnard van die plaas Rooibokkraal in die Thabazimbi distrik. Laasgenoemde is een van Chamberlain se manne. Pieter en Nicol, Herman se kinders, is tans C-ringers wat van Thabazimbi kom om saam te ring. Heel gou het daar 'n gesprek ontstaan oor die beringing van Rooibekrenostervoëls op Rooibokkraal. 'n Uitnodiging is deur Manie gerig. Hoe waar en wanneer sal met verloop van tyd uitgewerk word.

Johan Snyman (Oubaas) het oudergewoonte Magoebaskloof vir ons bespreek vir 'n ringsessie wat sou strek oor die langnaweek van 27 April tot 1 Mei. Die belangstelling was oorweldigend en die akkommodasie is vol bespreek.

Die naweek was maar reënerig en kouerig. Daar was nie veel voëls gevang nie maar die hoogtepunt was seker die Bloukuifvlieëvanger

wat in die nette beland het. Ek het gedink die voël is net in veldgidse en daar vang en ring hulle hom. Daar is ook 'n paar Groenkolpensies, 'n Reusevisvanger en Bergkwikkies gering.

Omdat Woodbush vol was moes die Jansen van Rensburgs ander planne maak. Hul beplan om koers te kies na Rooiberg. Pieter en Nicol sou dan ook weer 'n geleentheid kry om 'n paar voëls op hul lys te voeg sonder om honderde kilometers te ry. Rooiberg word op die einde verruil vir Rooibokkraal en Johantjie en sy vrou Adelina van Rooyen word vanaf Rustenburg opkommandeer om saam te kom ring.

Rooibokkraal is die ou familieplaas. Dit was aanvanklik opgedeel tussen die kinders en nou is die neefs aan bewind elkeen op sy eie stukkie grond. Neefs Manie en Herman is bure as hulle op die plaas is. Met die aanbreek van die langnaweek het Manie en gesin en sy Pa (Oom Herman), kom help op hul deel van Rooibokkraal. Saterdagoggend word die hoe waar en wanneer somaar uitgevoer sonder dat daar veel beplanning gedoen was.

Geen moeite word ontsien nie. Manie ken sy renostervoëls. Hulle sit op die beeste en as hulle opvlieg vlieg hulle na die droë boom net buite die kraal, dus word drie nette tussen die boom en die kraal gespan. Manie laat toe 'n goeie 60 beeste vanuit die veld kraal toe aanjaag. Die beeste was skaars in die kraal toe is die Rooibekrenostervoëls daar. Sommer so met die invliegslag is daar drie voëls in die net.

By die ringstasie is Oom alias Pa alias Oupa Herman by. Nadat die hele beringingsproses verduidelik is, kry hy en Manie die eerste geleentheid om 'n ring om die tarsus te plaas. Opsluit besluit Oom Herman dat die voëls nie net nommers kan kry nie, maar moet ook 'n naam kry. So kry die eerste Rooibekrenostervoël van Rooibokkraal die ring nommer 4A66982 en die naam Buphagus, heel gepas die wetenskaplike naam. So in die loop van die

oggend het ons 13 Rooibekrenostervoëls gering en benoem.

Toe word ons genooi vir pap en wors. So tussen die eet en kuier deur word ons ingelig oor die gebruike van hierdie deel van Rooibokkraal se bewoners. Na ete moet ons na die muur in die gang gaan kyk, alle nuwe besoekers kry 'n baksteen en hulle moet 'n ietsie op die baksteen skryf. So het BLNG se ringgroep nou ook 'n baksteen op Rooibokkraal.

Na 'n heerlike ringsessie het ons teruggery na Rooibokkraal (Herman se deel). 'n Totaal van 93 voëls het die naweek ringe gekry. Pieter en Johantjie het die naweek hul 50 spesie mylpaal bereik. Vir Johantjie was dit nogal met 'n Goudsnip.

Die 15de Mei was ons weer terug by die Botaniese Tuine, die keer as deel van BLNG se opedag. Colin de Kock was die leier vir die dag. Ek vermoed dat al die Glasogies van die Botaniese Tuin nou ringe het. Ons het 'n total van 22 gering die oggend.



Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg

'n Groep blinde mense van die Rotariërs geniet die voëlring-ondervinding

Junie en Julie was dit te koud vir beringing. Met die minus grade so vroeg in die oggende wou ons dit nie waag om die voëls se lewens in gevaar te stel nie. Ons sien uit na warmer weer in Augustus sodat ons weer volstoom kan begin ring. 🐦

BirdLife Northern Gauteng trip to Okavango, Botswana and Namibia (Mahango Game Reserve and Popa Falls): 18-27 March 2011

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

Having only joined BirdLife Northern Gauteng at the end of last year, my wife Kathrin and I were thrilled to be accepted for this "trip of a lifetime", albeit with varying emotions. We wondered if we would "go under" in a large bird club, having done all our previous birding on our own. But, we were pleasantly surprised.

The twenty tour participants were briefed on Tuesday 8th March by our leaders and guides Amanda Hagggett-Haagner and Adrian Haagner.

The group was to meet at Ghanzi, Botswana, on Friday 18th March, for an in-between stop *en route* to Shakawe, and to have a get-to-know-you dinner. This was well organized and great fun; we were given stickers of

special birds to wear on our foreheads which we then had to identify, with hilarious results. We did some good birding at Ghanzi (sightings included Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Burchell's Starling, Grey- and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, and a host of other birds) and purchased some fresh meat, keeping the receipt. North of Ghanzi at Kuke, we reached the first Foot-and-Mouth-Disease checkpoint. Having proof of our purchase of fresh meat at Ghanzi, we were issued a permit to transport the meat. (Friends had told us that all their meat had been confiscated a few weeks before). Three further checkpoints followed on the 485 km from Ghanzi to Shakawe. The roads were excel-



Michelle van Niekerk

Pel's Fishing-Owl/Visuil – much sought after species

lent up to Sehitwa (in better condition than the last stretch of the N4) and also good, albeit narrower up to Shakawe.

We reached our destination at Drotskys just south of Shakawe and set up camp in our off-road trailer. Twelve participants stayed in chalets and 8 of us camped. After a long trip and having refuelled at Etsha 6 (yes, that is the name of this “frontier town”, with its one fuel station and two bottle stores) Kathrin made sandwiches for late lunch, while unpacking. The pleasure was not to last: Vervet Monkeys relieved me of my hard-earned sandwich and Johan and Jeanette Heuseveldt lost a packet of chips. The monkeys were unimpressed by Johan’s catapult... We did some birding in and around Drotskys, and the “lifers” started rolling in. Adrian Haagner proved to be an extremely good guide and his knowledge of birds is exceptional; his field guide experience being very evident. We saw Swamp Boubou, Brown-throated and Golden Weaver, and Hartlaub’s Babbler, White-browed (Heuglin’s) Robin-Chat,

as well as swarms of Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, plus Squacco Heron, Pied- and Giant Kingfisher, and Wire-tailed Swallow, to name but a few.

The next day, Sunday 20th March started with an (early) morning boat birding outing on the Okavango. Not only did we find the ecology and natural surroundings very beautiful and pleasing, but the morning started sensationally. We saw our first Coppery-tailed Coucal, Green-backed Heron, Western Banded Snake-Eagle, Chirping Cisticola (it did chirp) and Lesser Swamp-Warbler in the papyrus. As the boats came around a curve in the river a commotion broke out; we were treated to our first glimpse of Pel’s Fishing-Owl taking off and landing in a tree. When the boats docked and we all tumbled out chaos ensued. The adrenalin pumped, binoculars shook and cameras clicked steadily. Then we were alerted to the fact that there were actually two Pel’s Fishing-Owls, the second somewhat lower and partially obscured by the foliage of the tree. After a period of time which felt like hours, we returned to the nearby boats with stiff necks and many photos. We were loath to leave behind the Pel’s looking down at us with their large, dark thoughtful eyes. This was indeed a memorable sighting!

The lifers did not end there, Luapula Cisticola, (European) Sedge Warbler, Brown Firefinch, White-backed Night-Heron were added as well as numerous others like Pygmy Goose, Malachite Kingfishers, Lesser Jacana, Yellow White-eye, and Little Bittern. What a day! That afternoon we went on a forest walk. It was hot and sticky, but our guides Amanda and Adrian were an example to all. Terrestrial Brownbuls, a Steppe Buzzard, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Red-billed Francolin and many other birds crossed our path. A small group decided to continue braving the heat and were rewarded with a splendid sighting of an African Golden Oriole. Decidedly exhausted we sank into our camp chairs for a drink and some supper.

The next day, Monday 21st March started with morning birding in Shakawe and surroundings from our vehicles. We saw Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Brown-crowned Tchagra, White-

browed Scrub-Robin as well as Meyer's Parrot screeching overhead and settling in some *Combretum* trees to feed on the seeds. The birding continued with Double-banded Sandgrouse, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike, and White-crowned Shrike. Driving further towards Shakawe, we were rewarded with a sighting of Sharp-tailed Starling (a special of this region), as well as Mosque Swallow and my special for that afternoon, some Yellow-billed Oxpeckers, doing their trick of removing ecto-parasites on domestic cattle. The moral of the story: closely observe all animals, even underfed cattle. That afternoon the heavens opened and we fled into our tents. Later on, we sat under the roof on the deck of Drotskys, drinking coffee, watching the rain and reflecting on the wonderful sights we had seen.

On Tuesday, we left early for our day outing to Tsodilo Hills which was just as well. We kept on stopping to view a variety of birding parties. The star of the show was a Wood Pipit, further good sightings included Purple Roller, Black Kite, Bateleur, Rattling Cisticola, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Tinkling Cisticola, Striped Kingfisher, Fawn-coloured Lark, Eurasian Hobby, Brubru, Yellow Canary and Fan-tailed Widowbird. We had a fleeting glimpse of Bradfield's Hornbill but in flight it was quite difficult to make a positive ID. Tsodilo Hills consist of Inselbergs in the middle of the flat sandy Botswana landscape. They are best known as an archaeological site of significance, displaying San rock art from the latter period of the Middle Stone Age and into the Later Stone Age (25,000 years ago to more recent times) and were declared a World Heritage Site in 2001. Van der Post's panel, was of particular interest. It depicts well preserved paintings of Eland¹. But our admiration of the San rock art was cut short when we were inundated by an African thunderstorm, which ended our archaeological excursion – a great pity. The "main road" which had been a rough surface most of the time turned into a series of small dams. We had to engage 4-wheel drive and slid back to camp, with our vehicles looking as though we had participated in the Dakar Rally.



Neilhard Graf von Dürckheim

The boat trips were most enjoyable



Neilhard Graf von Dürckheim

A picnic lunch in true BLNG style

Wednesday saw another early start when we left at 06:00 for the Caprivi in Namibia, whilst it was still dark, dodging the donkeys on the road, who stubbornly remain standing even if you hoot at them. Our first surprise of the day was a sighting of three Bradfield's Hornbills at the border post. Heavy rains in the catchment area of the Kavango/Okavango in Angola had led to extensive flooding and the Popa Falls were an impressive torrent. Unfortunately, the rocks where we had hoped to see the Rock Pratincole were inundated. Faced by a similar situation in the Mahango Game Reserve, we visited the Buffalo Game Section instead. After struggling through a free 4x4 obstacle course and crossing a flooded drift, the next drift proved too deep and we were forced to turn back, settling down

in the middle of the track in the shade of some trees for our lunch. We did have one very good sighting of a group of Long-toed Lapwing noisily feeding in the shallow water of a drift (a “special” tick for our list), plus Wattled Lapwing, Comb Duck, Abdim’s Stork, Pale Flycatcher and Gabar Goshawk. In the late afternoon we relaxed on a double-decker boat which took us for an evening booze and Pel’s Fishing-owl cruise; we enjoyed the peace and tranquility while sipping sundowners in style and admiring the landscape, vegetation and birds.

The next day, we were treated to a full day boat trip. Our rather late wake-up call saved us from meeting the large resident hippo that had ambled down the path linking our campsite with the ablution block, on his way back to his watery habitat. During our boat trip we saw a great number of special birds, such as Purple Heron, Willow Warbler, Banded Martin, Lesser Jacana, and Allen’s Gallinule. During lunch on Xaro Island, a conglomeration of reeds forming a little “island” came floating past on the current with an African Jacana perched on top. One of the group remarked: “A Jacana on a taxi!”

After lunch, we went for a walk to explore Xaro, which netted Lesser Honeyguide clinging to the trunk of a baobab tree, as well as White-faced Duck, Goliath Heron, and Great Reed-Warbler.

Friday was reserved as a “return to hot-spots/free day”. Some birders drove off in various directions, while others stayed in camp, took a walk and saw Narina Trogon. Late that afternoon we had our second booze and Pel’s Fishing-Owl cruise. It was a splendid ending to a fantastic birding trip. We saw a great number of birds we had seen previously, such as Copper-tailed Coucal, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters in

great numbers, Water Dikkop (somehow, I can’t relate to Thick-knee, please forgive me).

Saturday saw us break camp at 04:30 by torch light and head for Lake Ngami, *en route* back to Ghanzi, again doing the “donkey-slamom” before daybreak. We expected to board mokoros (dugout canoes, which proved to be fibre-glass replicas) to get through the dense vegetation and shallow waters to more open waters, hoping to see rarities such as the African Skimmer. The skippers however did not manage to find the correct channels into open water and after a number of abortive attempts, we returned two hours later with stiff limbs and sore behinds. Despite these frustrations, we did see quite a few birds including Comb Duck, Moorhen, Lesser Jacana and a number of sandpipers.

We met again at Ghanzi for a communal braai in the boma near the camping site, where the total bird list was discussed; our grand total came to 296 birds! Amanda had also reached her coveted 700! All this was accompanied by lively conversation, exchanging of addresses and the impromptu one-man-band, Ben Huddle, entertaining us to guitar-led songs.

The next day we left for home, taking along a camera full of photographs, a list of new “lif-ers” and a host of good memories. Thank you Amanda and Adrian! Nicer and more knowledgeable guides would be hard to find. They acted with professionalism, engaging kindness and great enthusiasm, combined with exceptional knowledge and skill. Amanda and Adrian, you allowed us to experience the wonders of the Okavango in a special, unforgettable way.

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(March – May 2011)

Mr AM Roxburgh; Willie Grabow

Easter Magic

Ingrid van Heerden

Part 1 – Visit to Ratho Camp on the Limpopo River

The BLNG 2011 Easter Camp included visits to Ratho on the Limpopo and Bergpan in the Soutpansberg. The first leg, or should one say ‘wing’, of our adventure was a magical experience. Just the idea of visiting the “great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever-trees” as Rudyard Kipling described it in his Just So story about ‘The Elephant’s Child’, always fills me with a keen sense of anticipation.

But, before we could revel in the delights of this ancient waterway, we had to complete the journey from Pretoria via Polokwane to Pont Drift. Under normal circumstances, such a trip should take about 5 hours at a leisurely pace with the odd stop for refreshments or birding, but alas when we set out on Good Friday nothing had prepared us for the tidal wave of humanity moving North to attend the annual Easter gathering of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) at Moria near Polokwane. The traffic was unbelievable and every tollgate an insurmountable hurdle. Thousands and thousands of cars, taxis and buses chugged and lurched along in all the lanes of the highway. Needless to say, it took us nearly 5 hours to just reach Polokwane and nerves and tempers were decidedly frayed by the time we could turn off towards Pont Drift.

The wise old hands in our club had made provision for this mighty exodus, by leaving a day early and staying over in one of the many B&B’s in and around Alldays. They were already happily ensconced under the vast shady Nyalaberry tree at Ratho when the hot and bothered Van Heerdens arrived at this tropical oasis. What a joy to unpack and settle into our comfortable tent with its en-suite bathroom and a wooden deck that makes relaxing compulsory. We greeted our fellow birders, swapped horror stories about the trip, and were regaled with the

report of a naughty African Harrier-Hawk that had been marauding nests near the camp. After making tea at the communal kitchen, we collapsed in our camping chairs on the deck of our tent to scan the surrounding bush.

What luxury – after less than half an hour we had already spotted Marabou (they perch in neighbouring trees looking like washing hung out to dry), White-backed Vultures and even one Cape Vulture, Southern and Tropical Boubou, Hamerkop, Arrow-marked Babblers, Woodland Kingfisher, Crested Barbet, Terrestrial Brownbul, Grey Go-away-Bird, African Grey Hornbill, Meve’s Starling, Egyptian Goose, Crested Francolin, and most of the dove species. To our delight we were also serenaded by the White-browed Robin-chat. Shy bushbuck and cheeky warthogs foraging in the undergrowth, added to the pleasure of relaxing at Ratho.

Ratho Camp has 5 luxurious tents with all the mod cons for those, like us, who are not into camping, as well as electricity, hot water and an ablution block for the hardier souls who prefer to bring their own tents. The communal kitchen is equipped with cutlery and crockery for 20 guests, more than adequate fridge and freezer facilities, as well as cooking utensils and a microwave oven, a kettle, and a toaster. The lovely thatched lapa provides ample space for dining and even has 4 beds for adventurous visitors who like to sleep in the open. With a splash pool for the hot months (and I believe that it can get extremely hot in this part of the world), a braai area and a central wooden deck where one can spend the entire day watching birds and beasts or reading a book or chatting, Ratho is akin to lotus land and one does not need to leave the comfort of the camp to have good sightings and an enjoyable, restful holiday.

On Saturday morning, the birders set out on foot to explore the 4x4 camp (scene of the memorable elephant incident during a previous BLNG outing to Ratho!) and the banks of



Philip Galinikos

Group photo on the banks of the Limpopo

the Limpopo. Among other activities, Ratho is a crocodile breeding farm and the primary food for these reptiles is chicken. The remains of the hapless chickens are gathered and dumped at the Vulture Restaurant, which accounted for the large Marabou and vulture populations in this area. We also explored the floodplain, as well as some of the backwaters of the Limpopo River, which yielded excellent sightings of a very vocal flock of Retz's Helmet-Shrikes, and a juvenile African Hawk-Eagle perched on the far bank of the river. The smaller birds also did us proud, with plenty of African, Red-billed and Jameson's Firefinch, Village Indigobird and Spectacled Weavers darting through the undergrowth.

In the afternoon, Sandra Boshoff, our hostess, took us to the Breslow Dam on a neighbouring farm. We were treated to close-up views of Burnt-necked Eremomelas feeding in the acacia trees surrounding the dam. This outing also produced lots of waterbirds, such as African Spoonbill, Comb and White-faced Duck, Great White Egret, Spur-winged Goose, African Darter, Goliath Heron and a small party of Ruff in their striking eclipse plumage. The return drive yielded excellent views of Meyer's Parrot and a large flock of African Green Pigeons.

We had of course all asked Sandra where the Pel's were hiding, only to be told as has happened so often in the past, that these elusive



Sitting on the sundowner rock sipping wine

mega-ticks had moved on and had not been seen for 8 months. I am convinced that there are no Pel's in southern Africa, and that they, like the Phoenix, are just used to create a feeling of mystery and anticipation to lure unsuspecting birders to far-flung corners of our country and the continent. But despite the umpteenth Pel's letdown, we saw such special sightings and had so much fun at Ratho, that all was forgiven.

Easter Sunday dawned warm and sunny as we set off to explore a section of the Mapungubwe National Park. The drive from Ratho to Mapungubwe passes through some of the most interesting rock formations, rugged outcrops tinged red and ochre, which made a wonderful contrast to the deep blue sky and yielded sightings of Rock Kestrel and African Hawk Eagle.

After visiting the Mapungubwe camping site, where the BLNGs stayed in November 2010, we drove to a nearby bird hide. I have visited many a bird hide in many a game park and am usually greatly disappointed with the sightings. Instead of seeing flocks of birds and teeming game, one often gazes out on an expanse of muddy water and the odd dove or starling. So I dawdled along the seemingly endless wooden walkway that leads up to this hide, thinking to myself, "Just another long walk for nothing." As I got closer to the end of the walkway I noticed that my companions were all either waving at me or had their fingers to their lips to prevent me from making any noise. What could they be

looking at? I speeded up and there within touching distance were three Elephant's Children, just as promised in the story. A mother, a teenager and a tiny baby elephant were all drinking at the waterhole. I clutched my middle where my trusty camera is always to be found to take a photo of these three wonderful animals, only to discover that I had left it behind in the car, which was about a kilometre away. Enchanted at the sight of the elephants, but horrified at my lack of photographic equipment, I had just decided to fetch my camera, when a movement in the bush caught my eye. As we peered through the window in the hide, a procession of elephants emerged from the trees. Fellow photographers will understand how I felt. Here was an experience of a lifetime and I did not have my camera. As the Elephant's Children of all sizes, shapes and ages moved swiftly past the waterhole, I asked Elise to take some shots for me to put me out of my misery. We counted over eighty pachyderms as they moved past our refuge – this was a sight to take one's breath away.

There were massive matriarchs, skittish teenagers, including one who made a mock charge at us, small elephants and tiny waddling babies, all heading purposefully towards the south. Philip pointed out in a whisper that all the adults had a high-water line on their bellies, which seemed to indicate that this herd had swum the Limpopo from the Tuli Block and were headed for greener pastures in South Africa. Perhaps they were having an Easter picnic! Before we knew, the great herd had disappeared into the bush like grey phantoms. What an adrenaline rush and what a bird hide! The BLNGs and the rest of the visitors in the hide were all electrified by this totally unexpected treat. With happy smiles and excited whispers we returned to the vehicles and this time, we did not even notice how long the walkway was. In future, I will never, ever underestimate a bird hide again and I will never, ever so much as move without my camera!

On returning to Ratho Camp for lunch and a rest, we met Ralda and Louis Heyns, who had spent the morning down at the 4 x 4 camp ringing birds. They were pleased with their haul



Elise Venter

'Ellies' at Mapungubwe

of 12 species, which included White-fronted Bee-eater (the special of the day!), Jameson's, African and Red-billed Firefinch, Woodland Kingfisher, and Grey-backed Camaroptera.

Later Sandra took the trouble to guide us to a gate leading to another part of the Boschoff farm which abuts the Limpopo to look for Verreaux's Eagle and possibly some coursers. We scanned the towering red cliffs above the road to no avail and André repeatedly disappeared into the mopane forest to search for the coursers and Pennant-winged Nightjar, but the birds remained elusive. On our return journey, Wilhemine earned her wings by pointing out that there was a black blob sitting on the rock face close to the untidy eagle's nest we had spotted earlier. Philip set up his scope and there in full glory was the female Verreaux Eagle, perched on a crag – what a sight to see with her proud stance and yellow eye. Not to be outdone, her slightly smaller mate flew in a few minutes later and we were once again privileged to see just how handsome these eagles are in their sleek black feathers with a dramatic white cross on their backs. We all gasped at the size of their talons and could well imagine that the fat dassies that inhabit the mountainous terrain don't stand a chance when the eagles snatch them off the rocks.

We were on a total high induced by seeing these two beautiful raptors and set out for a sundowner on the highest peak of the escarpment that drops down to the Limpopo so precipitously. The trusty 4x4s made it to the top and we clambered on to a large rock with our drinks to watch the sun set in fiery splendour. This is the life, sipping chilled white wine on a sun-warmed rock while looking out over two

countries divided by the shimmering “great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River”.

Later after doing the bird count which came to a respectable 158 species, we enjoyed the Easter eggs kindly provided by Philip and Amanda. This was indeed an Easter treat to remember for many a year. First the Elephant’s Children who gave us such a thrilling show, then the majestic Verreaux’s Eagles, the glimpse of the endless space of Africa from our sundowner rock and finally the fun and companionship of a typical BLNG braai under the sparkling stars with an African Scops-Owl chirping in the Nyalaberry tree.

Ratho Camp is well worth a visit and although it is probably dauntingly hot in summer, the migrants should boost sightings to exciting totals, and you may just be lucky to catch a glimpse of those mythical Pel’s.

Part II – Visit to Bergpan in the Soutpansberg

When the 20 BLNGs who attended the Easter 2011 outing bade Sandra and Ratho Camp a sad farewell, we still had two magic days to look forward to at Bergpan in the Soutpansberg.

Bergpan has a fascinating history which stretches back to the dawn of time. The natural saline spring which bubbles out of the Blouberg, has been used for centuries by San hunters, the local tribes and later by Voortrekkers and farmers as a source of salt. The name ‘Zoutpansberg’ (or Soutpansberg) is derived from the salt pans that are used to this day to produce shimmering white heaps of salt.

After a stop at Alldays for refreshments we drove to Bergpan, which nestles in the lee of the Blouberg, an isolated inselberg of the Soutpansberg range, which really looks blue at a distance despite the fact that it consists of red sandstone covered with green vegetation. The erstwhile homes of the staff have been tastefully converted into self-catering guest houses, which can accommodate up to 24 guests. The

old mine houses were surrounded by lush, tropical gardens which provided lovely camping sites for those members of our group, who had not booked rooms.

Elise, Henna, Steve and I arrived early at Bergpan and once we had unpacked, sat under the spreading flame tree with Lettie, our hostess, and the largest dog I have ever seen. The latter was a grizzled black Great Dane with a head as big as a suitcase. This dog, who was invisible at night, gave many of us a frisson when he appeared like the Hound of the Baskervilles at our braais or when we were walking in the gardens after sunset.

When we recounted our Good Friday travelling woes, Lettie informed us that 8,2 million people had purportedly made the pilgrimage to Moria this year. Evidently the ZCC purchases their supplies of salt for the festivities from Bergpan and required 8 large trucks just to transport this one commodity for the event. The mind boggles and we were awed by the fact that we had actually managed to navigate this tsunami of the faithful to reach our destination on Good Friday.

We were also amazed by Lettie’s account of what the salt is used for. The good pastor who orchestrates the entire ZCC Easter gathering, sells small quantities of salt diluted with holy water to his followers. This must be the prime example of evangelical business acumen. Even at R10 per jar, the distribution of sanctified saline solution must generate an awesome income – you do the maths!

Bergpan has a variety of interesting walks up the mountain and a visit to the broadleaf woodland is a must. Once our entire group had arrived and the campers had erected their tents under the shady trees, we set off to explore the nearby Waterberry forest. Our sightings were not as prolific as we had hoped, but we did see a pair of African Hawk-Eagles perched on the mountain slopes. The sight of the Blouberg in the late afternoon light was unforgettable. It really looks blue and so mysterious.

When Steve and I tried to make lunch on the first day at Bergpan, we realised that we had left half of our equipment, including our picnic basket, behind at Ratho. All the BLNGs



Steve and Philip at the Bergpan braai



Veronica and Walter

know how important a picnic basket, with or without cheese scones, is to successful birding. (I hope Pauline is reading this up in Heaven). Well, the Van Heerden picnic basket episode took umpteen phone calls to Sandra at Ratho to arrange for some of her other guests to drop this important culinary comfort off on their way home to Polokwane. To our great relief, we were eventually reunited with our picnic basket the next day. A big thank you to Lettie, Sandra and her obliging guests.

The one compensation for losing our picnic basket was that we stayed behind at Bergpan and were privileged to have an exclusive sighting of an immature Little Sparrowhawk that perched in the trees behind our guest house. With its bright yellow eyes and black-blotched creamy chest and the distinctive black marking on its tail, he was a perfect example of these fierce little raptors.

Because the roads in the Blouberg Reserve are so abysmal (no one without a 4x4 is allowed to even attempt a visit), the rest of the group went off on a morning drive to explore the eastern side of the farm, while Ralda and Louis once again went ringing. According to Philip they stopped at a small dam and watched birds coming in to drink, including African Black Swift and Common House Martin. Marico Flycatcher and White-browed Sparrow-Weaver were plentiful and the surrounding trees were full of their nests.

When the group returned from their outing our hostess Lettie seized the chance of having all the BLNGs available, to open her curio shop and what a delight this turned out to be. Small,

beautifully carved wooden birds and animals painted in bright colours, printed tablecloths and runners, some of the glittering white salt produced at Bergpan and snazzy T-shirts, were snapped up in an instant. What a pleasure to buy artefacts that are hand-made by South African people and can contribute to the local economy, instead of being imported from China and the East.

Ralda and Louis reported a haul of 10 species when they returned from their ringing including White-browed and White-throated Robin-chat, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Brown-hooded Kingfisher and the favourite for this day, a Yellow-bellied Greenbul.

Bergpan in the autumn is relatively quiet bird-wise, although our total count of 84 for two days was not bad, but it is such a lovely, restful oasis to replenish the soul and make contact with nature. Elise, for example, spent hours sitting quietly next to the little stream that meanders past the property watching many different species of dragonfly flit and dart over the crystal clear water. Other members of our group went for walks and some of us just sat amidst the colourful plants meditating or reading a good book. We particularly enjoyed getting to know the four members of the Wits Bird Club, who contributed a lot to our weekend. Thank you Diane (who is also a member of BLNG), John, Felicia and Rose, for all the fun and laughs. We hope that you and members of other BirdLife branches will join BLNG for future camps and outings, and *vice versa*.

On our last evening we helped Walter and Veronica Reissner celebrate their wedding anniversary. As we sat around the braai in the balmy night, with our Baskerville Hound appearing and disappearing into the dark, we all raised a glass to the jolly couple wishing them many more years together and many more happy birding adventures with the BLNG.

Part III – Visit to Blouberg

After the rest of us departed for home, Philip, Amanda, Walter and Veronica took on the Blouberg Reserve with their sturdy 4x4s. According to Philip this was a bittersweet experience. They saw plenty of Cape Vultures, which are among the prime attractions of the Blouberg. However, finding a Three-banded Courser which had been run over on one of the ghastly roads, was a sobering experience which illustrates that the reserve rules regarding night driving are not being properly policed. Philip has reported this matter to BirdLife SA, as well as Limpopo Parks, and hopefully this will result in corrective action being taken.



Ingrid van Heerden

The Blouberg

Highlights of the visit were a large group of Little Bee-eaters that kept the BLNGs entertained with their antics and the Small Button-quail that were flushed off the road a number of times. An African Goshawk displaying in the sky above the Blouberg, also helped to make this visit worthwhile and Philip feels that this is a reserve we should visit more often.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Philip Calinikos, our able leader, who not only helped me with the main articles, but also provided the information about the visit to Blouberg. 🐦

Weaver colonies in Gauteng

*H. Dieter Oschadleus**

PHOWN (Photos of Weaver Nests) already has over 800 records of 33 weaver species globally, and most of the records include colony size. In Gauteng there are PHOWN records for five species: White-browed Sparrow-Weaver (1), Southern Masked Weaver (28), Thick-billed Weaver (2) and Southern Red Bishop (3).

The two Thick-billed Weaver records are from Centurion and Pretoria. This species is becoming more common in Gauteng and even spreading further out. It would be particularly interesting to monitor as many colonies of this species as possible in Pretoria (and Gauteng) to

see if breeding sites increase or stay stable in the future.

No species has enough data yet - more records are needed to study variation in colony size geographically and in different years. Records from long ago can be submitted if you have a photo, GPS location, and date. (Nest count and other data is preferable but if you don't have this, still submit the record). To browse records and find out about submitting records, read <http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php>

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WUVEP – Wonderboom Urban Verreaux's Eagle Project

**Pieter and Natasja Saunders (WUVEP team)
and Rion Lerm (BLNG chair of Conservation)**

The Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* is one of the most majestic birds of prey roaming our African skies. These master hunters are only frequently observed as a silhouette soaring effortlessly over mountainous terrain hunting their most preferred prey, the Rock Hyrax (or Dassie). However, this is becoming a scarce sight indeed. Human development and encroachment has directly contributed to reduced prey sources.

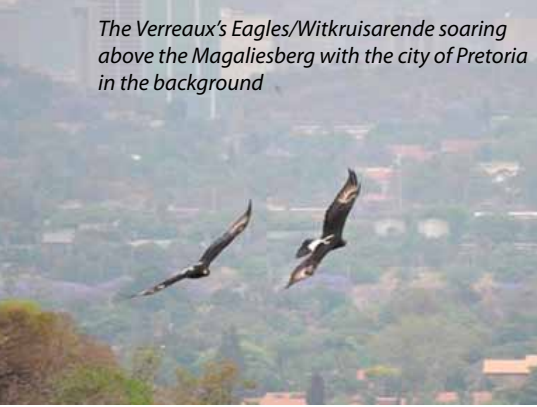
The 'Wonderboom Verreaux's Eagle pair' is fighting for coexistence against all odds to sustain themselves within what has become a hostile environment. Neither endangered nor a rare species as people are lead to believe, Verreaux's Eagles are habitat-specific. They are predominantly associated with rocky, mountainous terrain. These highly territorial and monogamous breeders require reliable prey sources not only to sustain themselves, but in order to raise chicks successfully through the fledgling stage. Average territorial boundaries cover approx. 30-50 km². However, the current Wonderboom pair occupy a range of about 70-100 km².

Pieter and Natasja have been observing this pair since the year 2000 and several breeding attempts failed due to direct human interference. Out of sheer desperation the pair vacated their disturbed nest site in Mountain View and built an entirely new nest on the eastern side of Wonderboom Nature Reserve. From 2005 until 2009 no successful breeding was recorded. During October 2010 one of our volunteers contacted us with news that a juvenile eagle was observed in the gorge. Rushing out there, the team discovered the young protégé much to everyone's delight! They continued to successfully raise this eaglet to fledgling stage. During November 2010 Pieter and Natasja wrote a let-

ter to the BoPP (Endangered Wildlife Trust-EWT) informing them about the Wonderboom Verreaux's Eagle pair's predicament. André Botha and the EWT were delighted with news that the Wonderboom pair remained in existence and that the pair was breeding successfully. With the establishment of a monitoring project with the help of Tshwane Nature Conservation and BoPP (EWT) Pieter and Natasja hope to ensure the survival of these eagles and educate the local public regarding this eagle pair. After deliberations with Phildette Heunis, Tshwane Nature Conservator for the Wonderboom Nature Reserve, it was agreed that members of WUVEP may monitor on a weekly basis.

Spotting scopes (also to be provided by the WUVEP team) and binoculars are necessities for a pleasant view of eagle behaviour whether soaring at eye-level or feeding their chicks. The next step in this project is to erect a web camera system where the public can sign into our web page and remotely observe these magnificent eagles building their nest, laying eggs, incubating, hatching, feeding and fledging. The WUVEP team are of the opinion that this will be the best conservation route to follow. These eagles and their chicks have been harassed by humans in Mountain View to the point where they are suspicious and nervous even at the slightest hint of movement in the vicinity of the nest. It took weeks of deliberation and combing the southern side of the nature reserve to establish a low interference monitoring site and thus it was subsequently decided to monitor these birds from a site which is 280 metres on the opposite slope. The eagles show minimal signs of disturbance from this monitoring point, even plucking leafy sprays from as close as 80 metres with observers staring in awe. After deliberations with Sean West and Craig

The Verreaux's Eagles/Witkruisarende soaring above the Magaliesberg with the city of Pretoria in the background



Pieter & Natasja Saunders

Whittington-Jones from Gauteng Department of Agriculture, it was confirmed that no permits or special permission except for the approval of Tshwane Nature Conservation, would be required to install a web camera in close vicinity of the nest, this not being an invasive procedure. The possible ringing of a chick whilst erecting the web camera would be a 'two birds with one shot' (in this case probably only one bird) event, but permits are needed to conduct such an operation.

The erection of a notice board at the reserve entrance is just one of the ways in which the public could get into contact with WUVEP in the future. Interested parties would be taken to the eagles' monitoring site by arrangement. The team believe this is the best way in which to supervise and educate visitors whilst they enjoy walks up to the site. At the same time, the project will receive funds to continue its work and most importantly, the eagles will receive the exposure they deserve, and this will possibly enhance their chances of survival inside this reserve and bring Wonderboom Nature Reserve back onto the map.

Website: <http://blackeagleswb.com> or become a member and follow the eagles on the Facebook page.

WUVEP e-mails: pieter@blackeagleswb.com and natasja@blackeagleswb.com

For more information contact Rion Lerm (BLNG chair of Conservation at austriungerever@yahoo.co.uk). Also, keep a lookout for the WUVEP team at one of the club's evening meetings, early 2012. The club is in the progress of organising outings to the eagle-monitoring locality inside Wonderboom Nature Reserve, hosted by Pieter and Natasja Saunders. 🦅

Breëbekke, suikerbekkies en horingbekke

Jacques en Elzine Smuts

Dit was vir ons 'n teleurstelling om nie aan die onlangse waarneming van 'n Gryskwikkie in die WS Botaniese tuin te kon deelhê nie en ons het toe maar besluit om dié voëltye in sy tuishabitat te gaan opsoek terwyl ons gaan SKI* in die trope. Dit klink seker snaaks, en dit is inderdaad ook nie heeltemal waar nie, want ons uittog na die wêreld van die trogons, pittas en breëbekke is eintlik geïnspireer deur 'n verslaggie in Beeld van Morné du Plessis na sy besoek aan Borneo in 2010. Op sy aanbeveling (in Beeld) het ons navraag gedoen by Rockjumper Birding Tours en het besluit op 'n toer saam

met hulle na Maleisië, insluitende die provinsie Sabah in die Noordooste van Borneo, in Maart 2011. (* SKI= Spending Kid's Inheritance).

Behalwe vir 'n bietjie kushabitat en landelike gebied op pad na bestemmings is daar in die toer hoofsaaklik gekonsentreer op die tropiese reënwoude by Frasers Hill en Taman Nagara NP in die Maleisiese skiereiland, en drie gebiede in Sabah nl. Danum Valley, Kinabatangan-rivier by Sukau, en die laer hange van die 4000-m hoë berg Kinabalu. En reënwoude was dit inderdaad want ons moes heelwat leer van die frustrasies van voëlkyk in reën-

erige toestande, dan nog in woude met bome wat tot 50 m hoog kan wees. Voëlkyk is soms vanaf bospaadjies gedoen maar meestal vanaf infrastruktuur-paaië. In Maleisië sluit dit stilvloeiende bevaarbare riviere in. Hier het mens die voordeel dat voëls langs die oevers nie deur lastige struikgewas afgeskerf word nie terwyl voëls wat bo-oor verbyvlieg langer in sig bly. Gelukkig is daar in sommige parke “canopy board walkways” waar voëls uit die hoogte en in die hoër strata gesoek kan word.

Maleisië het natuurlik heelwat voëlsoorte wat aan ons onbekend is, waaronder die “specials” wat deur die internasionale “twitchers” gesoek word. Ons het veral belanggestel in die spesies wat raakpunte met die SA voëlbevolking het. Ons kyk hier veral na die binnelandse spesies soos die neushoringvoëls, visvangers, houtkappers, spegte, suikerbekkies, tiptolle, katakaeroes, koekoek, byevreters, byevangers (drongos), duiwe, wiewale, laksmanne, glasogies, frette en die hoenders. Die groot lokaas was natuurlik die trogons, pittas, breëbekke en die Renoster-neushoringvoël. Ons was ook gretig om die kleurvolle juweeltjies soos die Mesia en die “blommemeisies” (Flowerpeckers) te sien.

Die neushoringvoëls (hornbills) het ons nie teleurgestel nie en van die nege moontlike spesies het sewe hulle aan ons vertoon, insluitende die vlagskip met die renoster-omkrulhoring (Rhinoceros Hornbill). Al die ander is ook indrukwekkend met groot horingbekke.

Swaeltjies en kleinerige windswaels (swiftlets) is oral gesien. Die spesies wat ons die meeste geïnteresseer het, is die Whiskered Treeswift en die Edible-nest Swiftlet wat ons op hulle nessies, wat nie alreeds in die sop beland het nie, kon sien .

Duifspesies is ook volop en nege is gesien, waaronder vier van die groenerige soort wat ooreenkomste toon met ons Papegaaiduif.

Van die nege verskillende kingfishers wat op ons pad gekom het, het veral die grote met die ooevaarbek (Storkbilled Kingfisher), die alles-rooi Ruddy Kingfisher en die klein pigmee (Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher) die meeste ons aandag getrek, eersgenoemde twee vanweë

hulle andersheid en die pigmee vanweë sy pragtige kleure.

Meeste van die houtkappers (barbets) is groenerig en nogal moeilik om te sien in die groen blare. Ons was gelukkig om vier groen spesies te sien asook een Brown Barbet.

Daar is heelwat spegte (woodpeckers) in die reënwoude maar dit is ’n moeilike groep om te sien te kry as hulle nie hulle teenwoordigheid met hulle geluide verklap nie. Die kenmerkende tik-tik-tik wat ons dikwels in SA hoor, is in die reënwoude nie so opvallend nie, moontlik omdat daar nie eintlik sulke droë dooie takke is nie. Baie van hulle beweeg ook in die hoër strata ver van die woudvloer. Onder die dosyn spesies wat ons afgemerkt het was daar ook die mooi kleurvolle en dwerggrootte (9 cm) Rufous Piculet met sy kort stertjie.

Soos in SA, is die suikerbekkies (sunbirds) in Maleisië baie kleurvol. Tussen die tiental wat ons met hulle teenwoordigheid vergas het, het veral die skarlakenrooi Temminck’s Sunbird en die Brown-throated Sunbird hulle kleure die mooiste vir ons gewys.

Ook die glasogies (3 spesies) en laksmanne (3 spesies) was vir ons maklik herkenbaar en het ons half tuis laat voel. Van die byevangers (drongos) het die knopsterte (Greater- and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo) die meeste aandag getrek, veral wanneer hulle vlieg.

Twee van die wiewale (orioles) wat gesien is, het geel as basiese kleur, maar ’n derde een, die Black-and-Crimson Oriole, se mannetjie is hoofsaaklik glansswart met ’n rooi



Indigo Flycatcher



Golden-naped Barbet

bors. Die byvreters is ook kleurvol en van die drie spesies wat gesien was die Red-bearded Bee-eater iets besonder met sy pragtige groot rooi baard.

Waar in SA een tiptolspesie in 'n streek die toneel feitlik oorheers, word mens in Maleisië oorval met 23 bulbul-spesies waarvan ons net twee nie te siene gekry het nie. Meeste van die ander is ook nie juis skugter voëls nie en is dikwels gesien. 'n Hele paar van hulle het die tipiese geel gat van 'n tiptol.

Vlieëvangers is, t.o.v. aantal spesies, ook volop in Maleisië en twaalf spesies is opgespoor waaronder die Asian Paradise-flycatcher, waarvan ook die wit kleurmorf gesien is. Van die kleurvolle juweeltjies in hierdie familie het veral die Indigo Flycatcher met sy helder kleur en vriendelikheid beïndruk.

Baie roofvoëls (17 spesies) is op die toer gesien waarvan die klein Falconets vir ons aan die dwergvalkies van die Kalahari laat dink het. Dit was vir ons interessant om ook die bekende Blouvalkie (*Elanus caeruleus*, Black-shouldered Kite, daar ook genoem Black-winged Kite) in Maleisië raak te loop. Veral die Crested Serpent Eagle is dikwels gesien. Min uile is gesien. Die Buffy Fish Owl is wel gesien, asook 'n Collared Owlet. Ander uile is net gehoor. Ook twee

soorte naguide kon afgemerkt word.

Omdat ons meestal in die reënwoude rond-bewoog het, het ons min saadvreters gesien. Die Munias, wat waarskynlik verwant is aan SA se frette, is in voorstedelike tuine en langs paaië opgemerk. Vyf spesies is opgeteken.

Verskeie hoenderagtige voëls is teëgekrom, waaronder drie soorte patryse (partridges), asook die gesogte Great Argus, Crested Fireback en Red Junglefowl. Die haan van hierdie spesie het met sy hanekraai bevestig waarom hy as een van die voorouers van ons huishoenders beskou word.

Ons kan ook nie nalaat om te rapporteer dat ons voorliefde vir kleurvolle voëls ook in 'n groot mate bevredig is deur ons ontmoetings met Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker, Black-sided Flowerpecker, Scarlet Minivet, die pragtige diepblou Asian Fairy Bluebird en verskeie groen Leafbirds, om maar 'n paar van die juwele uit te sonder, en dan veral die asemrowend-mooie Silver-eared Mesia. Ook sommige van die Laughing Thrushes vertoon mooi kleure.

Met die hoofdisse op ons voëlkyk-spyskaart het ons gemengde welslae gehad. Van die pittas het ons net twee te siene gekry nl. Blue-winged Pitta en Garnet Pitta, terwyl twee ander net gehoor is. Die Bluewinged Pitta het egter vir 'n hoogtepunt gesorg met 'n uitstekende besigtiging deurdat hy oop en bloot op sy slaapplek gesit het waar hy vir 'n lang tyd van naby besigtig kon word met behulp van flitse.

Met die trogons was ons gelukkiger en kon vier van die sewe spesies te siene kry nl. Orange-breasted, Scarlet-rumped, Red-naped en Diard's. Twee van die ander drie is wel deur ander lede van die groep gesien.

Van ons ander "teikenvoëls" het die breëbekke vir die meeste sukses gesorg. Vyf van die agt moontlike spesies van hierdie kleurvolle voëls is gesien, sommige op kort afstand en by verskeie geleenthede. Veral die Black-and-Yellow Broadbills het ons toegelaat om hulle van naby te besigtig, onder andere op 'n plek waar ons besig was om na 'n orangutan te kyk. Ook 'n paar wat besig was om nes te bou kon dopgehou word. Die "spotting" van 'n Black-and-Red Broadbill wat deur Elzine

'opgetel' is, is deur die groep as een van die "Top Ten" geëvalueer.

Van die ander voëlspecies wat nie in SA voorkom nie, het die Malkohas en Laughing Thrushes ook vir opgewondenheid gesorg. En dan, natuurlik, was daar van die "specials" soos die Malaysian Rail Babbler waaraan baie tyd gespandeer is om hom oor te haal om onder sy skuilplek uit te kom .

Opsommend kan ons Maleisië aanbeveel as 'n bestemming vir voëlkikers, en noem dat ons persoonlik self 325 voëlspecies gesien het, soms nogal onder moeilike omstandighede. Ander lede van die groep het nog 18 meer gesien ter-

wyl 20 net gehoor is. Behalwe vir die reën, hoë humiditeit en hoë bome het "ongediertes" ons ook getakel, sodanig dat ons sertifikate gekry het om ons as bloedskenkers aan die Maleisiese bloedsuiers (leeches) te bedank.

En, ja, ons het toe wel die Gryskwikkie sommer aan die begin van ons toer op die Maleisiese skiereiland te siene gekry.

Literatuur wat bestudeer is:

Allen Jeyarajasingam and Alan Pearson – *A Field Guide to the Birds of West Malaysia and Singapore* en

Susan Myers – *Birds of Borneo* 🐦



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All courses are presented by Etienne Marais and accompanied by a printed guide to the subject matter covered. Field courses may or may not include catering. For more information visit www.birding.co.za To book, contact Etienne Marais: etienne@birding.co.za or 082-898-6998

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Ndumo Game Reserve

Neels Roos

Even in winter a visit to Ndumo is a memorable experience. Getting there can be frustrating due to stop/go interruptions caused by ongoing upgrading and resurfacing of the N2 between Ermelo and Pongola, as well as the badly pot-holed road leading to it from Jozini. The first part of the final 19 km dirt road leading to the reserve is being tarred and it is planned to do the whole distance to the entrance of the reserve. Once you arrive at Ndumo however all that is forgotten and you can relax and enjoy the coastal climate, the bush, the well-maintained wooded camp and lots of birding. A cook is also available for preparing your suppers provided you are staying in one of the huts. What more can one wish for?

The main attraction in the reserve is undoubtedly the large **Ezulwini hide** from which you have a most beautiful view of the extensive Nyamithi pan against the backdrop of many large Fever trees and other Acacias, as well as crocodiles and hippos lazily basking in the sun on the sandbanks. We were overwhelmed by the sheer number of birds present on our first morning visit. The breeding season for **Pink-backed Pelicans** and **Yellow-billed Storks** was in full swing or drawing to a close in the Acacias to the right on the other side of the pan and a countless number of them were arriving, departing, swimming, wading, flying around or clamouring for food and being fed at the nests. It provided an ideal opportunity for distinguishing the juveniles from the mature birds. The large number of **Spur-winged-** and **Egyptian Geese** mingling with them in the water added to the general din. **Great Egrets, Glossy Ibises, and Reed – and White-breasted Cormorants** were also present but not numerous. Completely outnumbered were a forlorn-looking **Marabou Stork**, a single **African Openbill**, as well as a few **Black-winged Stilts**, immature **Greater Flamingos**, **African Spoonbills**, **African Fish-Eagles** and **Squacco**

Hérons. Surprisingly, a small group of **White-faced Ducks** were the only ducks seen during our entire stay.

Most of the swimming and wading activity took place in the shallower parts of the pan some distance away on the opposite side and a telescope proved very helpful in the identification of puzzling individuals. Even with the telescope I could not initially satisfactorily identify the pelicans because I persisted in trying to see the pattern in which the feathering ended on their foreheads! Eventually the facts that they, unlike **Great White Pelicans**, were nesting in trees and lacked black and white contrast of their underwings in flight provided the simple solution to my problem. A hippo with her tiny calf diverted the attention of the ladies present for a while from the more serious business of birdwatching. During lulls, when there was nothing new to identify, we were entertained in the hide by a pair of very tame and accommodating resident **Wire-tailed Swallows** who had built a nest “indoors” above the entrance. Parks officials have strung a few wires underneath the ceiling across the width of the hide and these little fellows made frequent use of them to perch and quietly watch our activities from close-up thereby allowing good views of their two very thin tail streamers. They utter amazingly piercing screeches when communicating with one another.

On subsequent visits to the hide we added a number of common bird species associated with water to our list but the spotting of a male **Greater Painted-snipe** foraging daily in the shallow water right in front of the hide where there is a gap in the reeds caused the greatest excitement. What a spectacular bird it is when watched through a scope in full sunlight. Its Afrikaans name **Goudsnp** says it all. When not foraging he frequently lurked unobtrusively amongst the fringing reeds to the left of the gap. On our last early morning visit to the hide

he was nowhere to be seen but the female at last showed herself and foraged in the same place for a long time before finally disappearing behind the reeds to the right of the gap. A beautiful bird in her own right but not as spectacular as the male.

A magnificent pair of **Saddle-billed Storks** foraging up and down in front of the hide allowed easy comparison of the eye differences of the sexes but we had to look closely through the scope to spot the tiny yellow wattles below the red base of the male's bill. The large, yellow, saddle-shaped frontal shield from which it derives its name could also be seen clearly for the first time. A juvenile **Black-crowned Night-Heron** stalking insects in the short grass, and an **Eastern Nicator** leisurely inspecting the low shrubs and plant debris for the same, directly in front of the hide were also highlights.

The **Nyamithi hide** is located a bit further on beyond the parking area and can be reached by vehicle despite a no-entry sign. Care has to be taken however in one spot if your vehicle does not have enough ground clearance. A visit to this obviously older hide is a bit disappointing in that it is small and, together with the boardwalk leading to it, somewhat neglected. The view from it is also extremely limited. **African Darters** were observed there but the **Southern Brown-throated Weavers** reputed to be found in that area were not seen. The only rhino we spotted during our entire stay was a young calf crossing the open space on the other side of the sunken-in bridge just beyond this hide.

Driving around in the reserve creates opportunities for spotting birds that one may not otherwise see but also has its limitations, especially in the densely wooded areas which predominate in the reserve. Most birds have the exasperating habit of zipping into the dense cover the moment they spot your vehicle coming, and staying there motionless until you drive off again. Open savannah areas are more productive and most of the bushbirds observed were seen when stopping and turning off the engine for as long as was necessary once a birding party was encountered. Special

birds observed were an adult **African Cuckoo Hawk** (even the little crest was clearly visible), a female **Black-bellied Bustard** slowly moving away in the tall dry grass pretending to be invisible to us despite being exposed on those long legs, **Crowned Hornbills**, **Black-bellied Starlings**, and a **Southern Banded Snake-Eagle** which soared past overhead. In my opinion the latter's easily observable uniformly brown neck and upper breast, which is not sharply demarcated from the rufous barring on the belly when seen from below in flight, rates equally as a diagnostic characteristic to the 3 dark tail bars and the heavily barred underwings. It was actually the first characteristic that I noticed and paging through the books afterwards did not provide any other raptor showing this. Very little is known about this species and it was very special for us to see it at last.

Seeing **Crested Guineafowl** always provides a thrill but, although fairly common at Ndumo, they tend to prefer the cover provided by dense bush. We had the privilege of watching a whole flock on the road right in front of the bakkie in bright sunshine from behind us. Their necks and upper breast areas were of an iridescent dark-brown colour and not black as illustrated, but the difference was obviously due to the direction of the sun's rays reaching



Crested Guineafowl/ Kuifkoptentaal

Dupudu Plessis



Dug-out Press

Pink-backed Pelican/Kleinpelikaan

them at the time. They are magnificent birds with their tufts, ruby red irides and bluish spots on the dark feathers.

A drive up to the **Red Cliffs picnic site** overlooking the currently widely flowing Usuthu River is definitely worthwhile. There we added **Black Saw-wings**, with their permanently forked longish tails, to our list. The open 'toilet with a view' across the river to the well-wooded opposite bank is an amusing bush experience. Unfortunately the **Shokwe pan** in the vicinity is not visible from the road and can only be visited when accompanied by an armed guide. The **Mtikini 4x4 track** from this picnic site is also worthwhile but the ridge between the tracks has a fairly high grass cover presently and a high ground clearance is definitely required. We did it comfortably in our 2x4 bakkie without engaging the diff-lock. Near the end of the track several **Purple-crested Turacos** were seen feasting on the fruits of large Sycamore Fig trees. **Brown-headed Parrots**, the only parrot species present in the reserve, were also heard there but not seen.

From the viewing tower marked E on the groundplan one gets a wide-angled overview of the densely wooded reserve, currently dressed in its variety of autumnal colours, the pans and floodplains, and into Mozambique beyond. There are not many birds around at the

tower but the view is fantastic.

Early mornings and late afternoons are the best times for birding in the camp itself. A **Bearded Scrub-Robin** was seen foraging on the ground below the thickets between hut 1 and the communal kitchen several times. The abundant mistletoe flowering in the Natal Mahogany trees (*Trichilia emetica*) attracted **Red-fronted Tinkerbirds**, as well as **Collared-, Scarlet-chested-, Olive- and Grey Sunbirds**. The latter constantly showed off their red pectoral tufts and are truly beautiful little birds. Numerous birdbaths placed at ground level are spread around in the hutted and camping areas. **Dark-backed Weavers, Yellow-throated Petronias, African Yellow White-eyes, and Yellow-fronted Canaries**, amongst others, were seen bathing in them. Unfortunately there were no **Lemon-breasted Canaries** amongst the Yellow-fronteds with whom they apparently may flock together in winter. Both male and juvenile **Greater Honeyguides** were observed on separate occasions basking in the late afternoon sunshine high up in a bare tree near the ablution building. The juvenile has a dark cap, dark bill and a yellowish wash on the throat and breast areas in comparison to the red bill, black throat and whitish ear coverts of the adult male. In the vicinity of the camp we also saw and heard **Striped Kingfishers** and a **Giant Kingfisher**.

Birds heard but not seen included the **Southern White-faced Scops-Owl, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Flappet Lark, Trumpeter Hornbill** and **Livingstone's Turaco**.

During our 6 night stay at the beginning of June we listed 101 birds. The last one was added when we left the camp while it was still dark at 6am on our way home and a nightjar flew up from the road ahead. It had numerous very obvious white markings in the wings and this pointed to it probably being a **Square-tailed Nightjar**. There are still several specials like Neergaard's Sunbird, Rudd's Apalis, Woodward's Batis and Long-toed Lapwing recorded for the area which we still have not seen. So we will most certainly be going back there sooner or later. 🦉

Aloe Creek

Pristine Gauteng Bushveld, Birding and Fishing



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ACCOMMODATION:
Self-catering accommodation is offered in
two units: Labeo Cottage and Kudu View House.



Situated close to Rust de Winter within the Dinokeng area, 100km from Johannesburg, with good roads leading up to the venue.
A high clearance vehicle is recommended for the latter part of the road to the venue.

R180 per person per night for Labeo for adults, children are free.
There is a minimum charge of R360 per night.

R150 per person per night for Kudu View for adults, children are free.
There is a minimum charge of R750 per night.



Alleen deur Botswana

Salomi Louw

My naam was op die lys vir die beplande BLNG-besoek aan die pypsteel in Botswana. Intussen het ek reëlings getref met 'n vriendin uit die Nederlande om in Maart hier te kom kuier. Die BLNG-uitstappie is egter ook verskuif na Maart vanjaar en ek moes dit dus noodgedwonge misloop. Ek verneem dat van dié toggers tot 35 nuwe voëls kon afmerk en hieroor sal ons seker nog interessante artikels in *Laniarius* te lese kry.

Omdat ek bitter graag die Okavango en Caprivi wou besoek, het ek dit in Mei op my eie aangepak. Om die aanvang van my reis makliker te maak, het ek die eerste nag op 'n plaas by vriende noord van Thabazimbi geslaap en is die volgende oggend deur die

Groblersbrug grenspos rigting Serowe om in die Khama Rhino Sanctuary te oornag. Opvalend in Botswana was dadelik die voortdurende teenwoordigheid van Berghane. 'n Vreugde op hierdie trajek was twee Grootrooivalke wat op die padreserwe aan 'n vangs sit en vreet het.

Khama Rhino se kampeerplekke is groot, redelik afgesonder en baie sanderig – tipies van Botswana. Die voëls het geen mensevrees nie en veral die Witkatlagter en Grootglansspreeu was baie kontant by die kampeerterrein, en het saam met die Rooiborslaksman, Geelneushoringvoëls en Vlieëvangers die terrein beset. Bosveldpapegaai het in die bome gekrys en die Vaalkoester het my – in die voertuig – heel naby laat kom. By 'n suiping het twee Rooibek-



Oopbekoovieaar /African Openbill

eende gedurig omgedop om net hul sterte te wys terwyl hulle kos soek. Naby die pan was daar 'n onsigbare dooie ding, want die aasvoëls – hoofsaaklik Witrug- en Swartaasvoëls – was baie bedrywig. Khama Rhino was 'n heerlike ondervinding, en dis naby genoeg om maklik weer vir 'n paar dae daarheen te gaan, wat ek oorweeg.

My voorneme om na Makgadikgadi te gaan, is gefnuik toe ek by die pont kom en besef hoe diep die sand is. Ek was immers van voorneme om op die teerpad te bly aangesien ek alleen reis en nie wil vasval nie. Ek druk dus deur na Maun. By Mopipi is daar flaminke in die pan, maar dis te ver om te identifiseer, alhoewel ek vermoed dis Grootflaminke omdat hulle baie lig vermoed.

Die padreserwes in Botswana is vir sowat 20-30 meter skoonmaak en uitsig is wyd: met baie Gewone Troupante en Kremetartlaksmanne op die telefoondrade, en 'n enkele Geelbektroupant wat seker sy vlug verpas het om tot nou aan die begin van Mei steeds hier te wees. In die ruigtes anderkant 'n grensdraad is weer aasvoëls in 'n onderonsie betrokke. Hier stop ook ander voëlkykers (van Botswana) wat hulle in dié toneel verkneukel. Benewens die Swart- en die Witrug-aasvoëls was die Witkop-aasvoël ook maklik identifiseerbaar.

My plan was om by Sitatungakamp oor te bly, maar die plek het my nie aangestaan

nie. Toe is ek na Maun Rest Camp (geen kampeerders, of ontvangs nie) waar die tuinier my aanbeveel het om na Okavango River Lodge te gaan. Daar het ek twee nagte kampeer, met Grootlangtone die wêreld vol, Hamerkoppe en Oopbekoovieaars op die oewer, en waar ek die eerste geleentheid kry om die Witkruskatlagter te fotografeer.

Hierdie Lodge doen egter nie riviervaarte of tref reëlins vir vlugte oor die Delta nie en verwys my na Old Bridge Backpackers hiervoor. Laasgenoemde is geleë op die oewer van die Okavangorivier, onder groot wildeveye, het riet-skerm om tente, kampeerterreine en ablusie, en welige rankplante met groot rooi blomme wat 'n horde suikerbekkies lok. Bontvisvangers is inwonend en mak, Grootvleiloeie en Tropiese Waterfiskaal boer in die ruigtes en vyebome en die sprees klim omtrent oor jou voete om by kos uit te kom.

Ek gaan die middag op 'n vlug oor die delta en bespreek by die Backpackers 'n 3-dag-kamp op 'n eiland in Moremi. Die volgende oggend verskuif ek om by hulle te kampeer vir 'n onbeplande twee dae: die Moremi-uittoeg sou eers dán plaasvind. Die middag gaan ek saam op 'n boot wat kampeerders moet gaan haal en verstorm my aan die aantal Oopbekoovieaars wat op pale en droë takke sit, en ook die Visarende – meestal jonges – wat elke beskikbare boomtop beset. Senegalvleiloeie, reiers en Heuglinse Janfrederik poseer vir foto's asof hulle al geoefen is in die kuns. Op dié rit is ook my eerste ordentlike foto's van 'n seekoei geneem; as hulle gesteur word, gaap hul die bekke oop vir lug en duik dan onder die water in om onder die boot te kom, dit om te dop of vol gate te by! Dan moet die boot teen meer as 16 km/h ('n seekoei se rekordspoed) beweeg en vinniger wegvaar.

Verder stap en ry ek dié twee dae elke moontlike paadjie en voetpad. Tot my skok het dit my 'n rukkie geneem om die Rooibekfisant uit te ken omdat ek dit soveel jare laas gesien het. Sysies en Melbas, Grysneushoringvoëls en Buffelwewers is ook volop en, ten spyte van wat al die verspreidingskaarte aantoon, kom ek die Gewone Blouvinkie 'n hele paar keer teë (met

foto's om dit te bewys!). Marico-, Rooibors-, Swart- en Witpensuikerbekkies kuier en baklei gedurig in die rankplante terwyl die Kortbek-suikerbekkie homself effens eenkant hou.

Op 'n oggend vertrek ek saam met twee ander toeriste, 'n gids/bootbestuurder ("C Company" – dis werklik sy naam) en chef/organiseerder ("Snowflake") na 'n deel van Chief's Island (90 km die Moremi-reservaat in) waar hulle klein koepeltente vir ons opslaan, 'n gat in die grond grawe met 'n ring daaroor as toilet, en 5 kampstoele uitsit. Tydens die opstel van die kamp stap ek versigtig in die omgewing rond om voëls te kyk en foto's te neem: veral die Rooibekweleas, wewers, Rooien Kuifkophoutkappers en Rooibeklysters was hier volop; die Dwerggans was te ver weg op die water vir duidelike foto's – en hulle is baie versigtig vir beweging – en dit was lekker om 'n ordentlike foto van 'n Geelborskleinjantjie te kon afneem.

Agtermiddag gaan ons stap en kom tot sowat 50 meter van 'n trop olifante. Ons moes later agter 'n termietnes skuil vir veiligheid. Die volgende oggend is ons met 2 makoro's na 'n ander deel van die eiland – en so 'n makorovaart is nie op dié dag die hemelse ondervinding waarvan mense praat nie: ons vaar in die agterwater weg van die oop roetes waar motorbote verbykom, dus deur biesies, watergras en riete. Uitsig is beperk. Sade en insekte van die plante af is gedurig in jou gesig! Ek het 2 dae lank hierna sinusitis gehad. Aan land het ons met die makoro-gidse – sonder enige wapens – gaan stap; hiervoor was hulle knap: weens die reaksie van die impalas het hulle besef daar is leeus in die omgewing en volg toe die aanduiders. Ten einde was ons 30 meter van 'n leeu af wat aan 'n vlakvark smul. Toe my kamera klik, spring hy op en hardloop, met 7 ander agterna. Weens tipiese bewerasie is my twee foto's nie iets om vir ander mense te wys nie – slegs herinnering vir my. Op dié gedeelte van Chief's Eiland kon ek heel naby 'n Withelmakslman kom vir 'n goeie foto.

Die middag is ons verder in Moremi in op 'n bootvaart, verby die Dwerggans en Witrug-eende en met my eerste kans om 'n Grootvlei-



Rooikeelbyvreters/ White-fronted Bee-eater

loerie af te neem. Vir die eerste keer sien ek ook 'n Grootlangtoonpappa met 'n kroos van drie kuikens op die blare drentel.

Die oggend van ons vertrek terug na Maun het die gids nét vir my geneem na 'n ander eiland waar hy gedink het om die Visuil te vind – sonder sukses. 'n Foto van dié spesie sal moet wag vir 'n ander geleentheid. Ons is later langsaam terug na die Backpackers waar ek nog 'n aand oorgebly het. Die mense het vir my gelag toe ek sê: "I have just been in heaven for 3 days, and you can send me back any time!"

Ek moes my voertuig goed was omdat ek onder een van die wilde vyebome gestaan het en die vrugte verluise nie net oorryp vye op die wa laat val het nie, maar ook al hul poe het die wa bevuil.

Na my tweede verblyf in Maun, het ek die pad gevat na die Pypsteel. Langs die pad kry ek 'n enkele Bromvoël wat saam met beeste wei op die padreserwe: 'n ongewone gesig. Eers doen ek aan by Shakawa (Fishing) Lodge, waar ek gedink het ons voëlklub in Maart gekuier het. Nee, dit was blykbaar by Drotsky's Cabins, maar ek belowe Elaine ek kom by hulle oortaan met my terugkeer. By Drotsky's kampeer ek vir 2 aande tussen Pylvlek- en Witkruiskatlagters en sien hier die eerste en enigste Swartwankatlagter. Vriendelike eienaars: Eileen laat my die volgende oggend (sonder koste vir my)



Kuifkopvisvanger/ Malachite Kingfisher

'n boot kry om na haar seun se eiland (Xaro Lodge) te gaan sodat ek kan soek na die Visuil, wat ek wil fotografeer. Ek spandeer die dag op die eiland (met my eie piekniek, soos deur Eileen aanbeveel) met net enkele skoonmakers wat hulle nie aan my steur nie; ek loop rond; verken alles; neem foto's; verras 'n moewiese groot mamba wat net so groot skrik soos ek, en 2 krokodille. Van die Visuil was daar geen teken nie, maar Swarthelmlaksman, Rooibekakelaar, Kuifkopvisvanger, Bont- en Gewone Kwikkies, Bruinuurvinkies, Groenrugreier en Kleinstreepswaels het die besoek die moeite werd gemaak, en dan natuurlik die Luapulatinkinkie wat deur die gids op die boot aan my uitgewys is.

Belangrik, het ek gedink, is 'n besoek aan die Tsodiloheuwels met sy Boesmantekeninge wat 3000 jaar terugdateer. Die pad was sleg, die gids onbeholpe, die weer warm, en die rotskuns wat ek te siene gekry het (net 2 uur lank) nie juis imponerend nie. Die enkele korhaan wat ek hier gesien het, was die Langbeen.

Toe volg die 'beplande' toer deur Namibië se Caprivi: Popavalle se kampeerterrin is egter onder water (groot waters stroom uit Angola), soos ook Ngepikamp; beide kampeerterrine is gesluit – en ek wou ten minste vier nagte in hierdie omgewing deurbring. Ek ry dus deur na Kongola om by die Kwandorivier te kampeer.

'n Glimlag is ontlok omdat daar op die Caprivi-pad tekens is wat waarsku teen olifante en dus ook spoedbeperking voorstel. Dis pragtige miombowêreld, groen en ongerep, soms 50 km sonder 'n enkele afdraaipad of gehuggie. Toe ek egter die eerste olifante reg langs die pad teenkom, het ek nie net geglimlag nie, maar hardop gelag. Kan jy nou meer?! 'n Gebied sonder heinings, tussen statte en krale, met geen bewaringsheinings nie. Selfs so na as 5 km vanaf Kongola was daar olifante op die pad. Mooi goed!

Weens 'n artikel in *Weg* was my plan om na Malyokamp in die Kwandogebied te gaan. Eers moes ek oor 'n bruggetjie van los houtstompe – stadig en versigtig – en toe ontdek ek dat van die omgewing se kinders wat by die water gespeel het, agter op die wa geklouter het. Toe ek rem trap, val hulle soos los velle af. Hulle moes seker seergekry het toe ek so skielik remtrap. Sodat 200 meter verder val ek vas in die sand; is steeds ontsteld oor die kinders en dink dat as hulle hoor die wa is stil, kan hulle kom skade aanrig. Ek vergeet skoon daarvan dat ek die bande moet afblaas. Net na 13:00 vat ek met my sonhoed en waterbottel die pad en stap tussen vars olifantmis deur op die sandpad na die kampeerterrin. Hier is egter geen ontvangs of kantoor nie; net 'n gesin uit Katima Mulilo wat die naweek hier kom visvang het en besig is om op te pak. Francois en Jeanine is baie behulpsaam; hy neem my terug na die wa, help my, sorg dat ek op harde grondpad kom en sê ek moet liever na Kwandokamp gaan, wat ek toe doen: lieflike kamp en terrein. Ek sou graag langer hier wou oorbly, maar my kos ontvries sonder elektrisiteit! By die brug oor die Kwandorivier loop 'n Grootkoningrietthaan in die riete, maar ek kan dit nie behoortlik waardeer nie omdat die polisie kom verneem of ek motorprobleme het. Later, tydens 'n koffiepouse langs die pad is ek veld in agter voëls aan, soos die Bosveldstompstert, Bosveldtjerketik en Kaapse Kapokvoël, en besef weer watter ryk voëllewe daar skuil in die bosse waarby ons so vinnig verbyjaag.

Twee verdere dae (en nagte) by Drotsky's in Botswana bied die geleentheid om in die

agterbosse rond te stap, met 'n foto van 'n Oranjeborsoslaksman (klein maar duidelik in beeld) en een van vier Lelkraanvoëls wat verbyvlieg as resultaat, maar die Kardinaalkwelea wat presies lyk soos sy illustrasie in my heel eerste voëlboek, is te diep in die bos vir 'n foto en vlieg ook gou weg terwyl ek 'n opening in die takke probeer vind vir 'n merkwaardige foto – wat nie geneem is nie! Dié middag gaan ek op 'n bootvaart met twee mense van Kleinmond en kry na sondergang die Visuil, só dat ek darem 'n herkenbare foto kan neem.

Die volgende dag reën dit. Ek ry terug na Shakawe en die grens op soek na vloedvlaktes (egter oorstrom) en voëls (maar die weer speel nie saam nie). By die ferrie vind ek onverwags 'n Spoorvlerkkiewiet. Hy was redelik ver en versigtig en weens die reën wou ek nie uitklim nie. Een of twee foto's is darem herkenbaar as sodanig. Dieselfde kan gesê word van die Spitsstertglansspreeu. Die dag se skemervaart is basies dieselfde roete as die vorige dag (die reën het opgehou, maar dis koud op die water) en ons sien weer die broeigate waar die Rooikeelbyvreters en Bontvisvangers kuier; naby aan ons is 'n Grootvleiloerie en 'n Kaalwangvalk; Kleinbyvreters sit op riete aan die waterkant en Ralreiers wys hulself.

Omdat ek tyd gewen het weens die sluiting van Popavalle en Ngepikamp wou ek nou tyd deurbring by Shakawe Lodge, maar hoor die plek is intussen verkoop en die nuwe eienaar wil eers veranderinge aanbring voor hy besoekers ontvang. Ek ry dus deur na Sepopa – maar hier kan jy die pad nie eens sien nie! Alles is onder water en die telefoondrade verdwyn in die golfies. Nou moet ek deurstoot na Ghanzi en kry vyf Bromvoëls, 'n Sekretarisvoël, Swartkraaie en twee Bleeksingvalke langs die pad, 'n enkele Rooibekrenostervoël op 'n koei, asook 'n jong Breëkoparend by 'n nes op kragpale.

In Ghanzi se Spar, waar ek aanwysings vra, word ek aanbeveel na Thakadu. Dis 'n wildspaa en ek bereik dit deur plaashekke oop en toe te maak en deur sandvlaktes en oor kalkrotsriwwe te ry. By ontvangs is 'n watergat waar ek verwag die sandpatryse en Kelkiewyne sal kom waterdrink, maar mag nie nader gaan nie,



Moeraswaterfiskaal/ Swamp Boubou

want 'dan sal die voëls nie kom nie'. Die ablusieblok is so swak dat ek nie eens kans sien om te stort nie, maar die voëllewe hier is buitengewoon. Dis doringbossiesveld, met wonderlike droëveldvoëls, 'n troppie Rooibekfisanter, en die volgende oggend ontdek ek 'n lekkende waterpyp wat wolke Gevlekte Sandpatryse lok. Hier sit ek doodstil – later met 'n nat broek – om foto's te neem, maar dié voëls is vreeslik sku: met die geringste beweging vlieg swerms die lug in – tog 'n mooi gesig! (Ten spyte van die ablusiegeriewe sou ek graag hierheen wou teruggaan vir 'n dag of 5!).

Nou is ek op pad huis toe. My laaste oornagplek in Botswana is die Kalahari Rest Game Farm naby Khan. Soos by Drotsky's, lekker privaat kampeerterreine en die voëls is mak! Die Koringvoëls kom sit amper op my hand terwyl ek brood eet, die Grys- en Rooibekneushoringvoëls poseer voor my in die sand en die Mikstertbyvanger, Kalahariwipstert en Gevlekte Lyster boer rondom die braaiplek. Ook heelwat voëls van die dor streke, maar hulle is wild en genoodsaak bekruiping, wat nie altyd werk nie. Hierdie is ook 'n plek wat met vrug langer besoek kan word.

Meestal alleen, maar soms met 'n gids, ander kere saam met voëlkykers, het ek in Botswana/Capriivi oor die 200 voëls kon identifiseer: óór die tweehonderd omdat daar nog voëls is wat volgens foto's geïdentifiseer moet word. Dié rit het in 'n mate vergoed vir die BLNG-besoek wat ek misgeloop het. 🐦

BACK FROM AFRICA:

The arrival of Palaearctic migrants into Lancashire, NW England, in Spring 2011

John Bannon

This year I made a special effort to record as many spring migrants as I could and was out at dawn (04:30 in mid-May), on as many days as I could manage. This unusual behaviour was brought on by a severe case of 'Nobirding-southafricanitis' and the painful withdrawal symptoms I have been experiencing.

With some exceptions, the UK's spring migrants do not return from as far south as South Africa and some do not even cross the Sahara desert. However, the following annotated list does show the general trend for earlier arrival of our summer breeding migrants.

Pied Flycatchers for example have been arriving back too late to take advantage of early caterpillars and insects, so are currently out of sync with their optimum breeding cycle. As a result their UK population has declined by some 50% since 1995 but their mean egg-laying date has advanced by 11 days (now May 10 as against May 21 in 1985). So they are trying

hard to catch up by arriving back earlier.

(Eurasian) Cuckoos have also declined by 65% since the early 1980s and it has been suggested that one of the key factors is the earlier breeding (average advance by 5/6 days) of their main resident host species; Dunnock, Meadow Pipit and Pied Wagtail. This means that the Cuckoo has been arriving back too late to lay its egg in their nests, although earlier nesting Reed Warblers, its main migrant host species, continues to expand and spread northwards which should be a positive factor.

The following list, although not comprehensive, is based mostly on my own observations on the Lancashire coast and countryside around Southport in northwest England.

Fine, anti-cyclonic weather throughout most of late March and April with southerly winds will have assisted earlier migration, but unsettled adverse weather over the Mediterranean basin in late April and early May, will have delayed many later migrants, such as the Spotted Flycatcher.

Species such as Pied Avocet, (Eurasian) Hobby and Honey Buzzard could never have appeared on a Spring Arrivals list in the 1990s. But, along with other essentially southern European species, such as Mediterranean Gull, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Cattle Egret and Cetti's Warbler and others, they are slowly expanding their breeding range northwards and colonising parts of the UK.

Winter 2010/11 was the coldest for many years, with record lows of minus 20°C and the heaviest snowfalls in living memory, but paradoxically, this continuing trend of colonisation by essentially southern European species in Spring, indicates a gradual overall



Willow Warbler/Hofsanger: arriving earlier at its northern hemisphere breeding grounds

warming of the climate.

Of the 33 spring migrants recorded in 2011, thirteen (indicated in the table below with *) were my earliest ever records in 45 years of birding.

By recording both Lancashire's earliest-ever Pied Flycatcher and Lesser Whitethroat, the well-known country saying/proverb can be suitably amended to 'the early **worm** catches the **bird**'.

SPECIES	FIRST LOCAL RECORD	WINTERING AREAS
(Variation in days from Lancashire mean arrival date 1965-2009)		
Pied Avocet	Feb 20 (n/a)	SW England/N. France
Mediterranean Gull	Feb 21 (n/a)	SW England/N. France
Sand Martin	March 13(+2)	West Africa
Wheatear	March 13(+1)	Central Africa
Barn Swallow*	March 15(-10)	West/Southern Africa
(many thousands now over-winter in S Spain/N Africa in 'normal' winters)		
White Wagtail	March 16(n/a)	North Africa/S. Spain
(en-route to Iceland/Scandinavia)		
Chiffchaff*	March 18(n/a)	Mediterranean Basin
(over-winters in increasing numbers in normal winters)		
House Martin*	March 23(-11)	West Africa
Willow Warbler*	March 24(-9)	Central/Southern Africa
Blackcap	March 29(n/a)	Mediterranean Basin
(birds ringed in Germany in the breeding season found to regularly over-winter)		
Ring Ouzel	April 6(+12)	North Africa/S. Spain
Tree Pipit*	April 6(=)	West/Central/S. Africa
Pied Flycatcher*	April 7(-10)	West/Central Africa
(Lancashire's earliest ever by 5 days)		
Lesser Whitethroat*	April 8(-15)	Ethiopia/Sudan
(Lancashire's earliest ever by 3 days)		
Sedge Warbler*	April 8(-7)	Central/Southern Africa
Redstart	April 10(-1)	Central Africa
Reed Warbler*	April 10(-7)	Central Africa
Little Ringed Plover	April 10(+14)	Central Africa
Common Sandpiper	April 14(+8)	Central Africa
Grasshopper Warbler*	April 14(-4)	West Africa
Garden Warbler	April 14(-7)	Central/Southern Africa
Yellow Wagtail*	April 15(+6)	Central/Southern Africa
Common Whitethroat	April 15(-5)	C. Africa (Sahel zone)
Whinchat*	April 19(+1)	West/ Central/S. Africa
Wood Warbler*	April 19(-5)	West/Central Africa
Dotterel	April 20(-4)	North Africa/S.Spain
(Common) Cuckoo	April 20(+3)	Central/Southern Africa
Garganey	April 21(+21)	West/Central Africa
Whimbrel	April 23(+16)	West/Central/S. Africa
(Common) Swift	April 28(+8)	Southern Africa
Spotted Flycatcher	May 6(+7)	West/Southern Africa
(Eurasian) Hobby	May 7(n/a)	Southern Africa
(Euro) Honey-Buzzard	May 11(n/a)	Southern Africa

Kolganse in Nederland!

Banie Penzhorn

Ek was in April vanjaar op 'n kort besoek aan Europa, om 'n referaat by 'n kongres in Nice, Frankryk, aan te bied en het sommer die geleentheid benut om by my kleinneef-hulle in Nederland te gaan kuier. Op die snelweg op pad van Arnhem na my kleinneef-hulle se tuisdorp, was ek stomverbaas toe daar, onmiskenbaar, twee kolganse voor ons oor die

pad vlieg. Europese spreekus was die enigste ander voëls wat ek tot op daardie stadium gesien het.

Dit blyk dat kolganse eeue gelede reeds na Engeland geneem is, waar vrylewende bevolkings nou goed gevestig is. Die afgelope dekadende van twee maak vrylewende kolganse ook nes in Nederland. 🐦

My lucky day

John Bannon

It was my last full day of a marvellous week's holiday on the island of Mull, in the Inner Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland. I had already seen many good birds including White-tailed and Golden Eagles, Hen Harriers, Corn-crakes, Whinchats, Crossbills and Red-throated, Black-throated and Great Northern Divers; even having lunch with thousands of Puffins on the Treshnish Islands.

The weather conditions were perfect for overshooting migrants, with strong south easterly winds overnight and hopeful of perhaps finding a classic late spring migrant (cf Common Rosefinch, Marsh Warbler or Red-backed Shrike), I was up and out early at 04:00 as I was also conducting fairly intensive BTO 'Roving Record' atlasing around my 'home patch' in Glenbuie and elsewhere on Mull.

A dog Otter eating a crab delayed me for a while on Loch Spelve and then I wandered slowly through Loch Don, listening out for the sibilant 'pleased to meet you' song of Rosefinch – no luck. It was then that I realised that I hadn't yet recorded Dipper or Grey Wagtail and remembered that the river in Glen Aros looked ideal for them. So Glen Aros it was.

I arrived at the bridge at the road junction for the minor road to Dersaig around 05:00, and parked up to look for them – but without success. So I headed up the Glen Aros river valley,

stopping at potentially suitable sites and managed to find Grey Wagtail but not Dipper.

Driving slowly up the valley, I was disappointed that the river was now much further away from the road, but just before the Forestry Commission lay-by I chanced upon a distinctive silhouette on the powerlines ahead of me, to the left side of the road.

My heart skipped a beat as thinking 'why does this Jackdaw/Jay (both rarities on Mull) look just like a Roller' I lifted my bins to my eyes and there it was – a European Roller in all its glory! Like most birders I imagine/dream about finding a real mega and there was mine, not 100 metres away from me. Panic ensued!

Obviously, ID presents few problems, but thinking this was a first for Mull, I realised that if I was to be the only one ever to see it, photographic confirmation would be vital. My damned camera was in my rucksack in the bloody boot, so I quickly snapped off a very poor record shot on my mobile through a rain-splattered windscreen. You can just about make out the size, jizz and colours.

Not good enough, got to get my camera out, but as I opened the door very quietly, it flew about 200 metres further along the powerlines. I jumped back in and drove slowly towards the bird and damn it flew again, why is it so flighty? Most of the other many hundreds

of Rollers I have seen previously would almost take mealworms from your hand!

So I hung back as the bird then flew across the road revealing its distinctive wing pattern and disappeared into the river valley to my right with my view now obscured by bushes and trees. Got to get a better view, so I parked in the Forestry layby and got my scope up.

A parallel set of telephone wires revealed the Roller, now about 150 metres away and slightly below me. As I focused on it with the green of the valley as a backdrop, this beautiful creature revealed itself properly to me. But only for about a few minutes, because, as I struggled to jam my camera against my scope eyepiece, off it went again!

I followed a farm track down to the river, but couldn't relocate it, but I was certain it was still around somewhere. Adding Redstart and Tree Pipit was perhaps some compensation - but not much.

What to do. There was no cellphone coverage in Glen Aros, so I 'sped' back to my accom-



European Roller/ Europese Troupant

modation in Lochbuie and put the word out to the local bird recorder and Birdline Scotland.

I desperately wanted to return to find the bird again, but as all married birders know, a promise of a trip to Iona to one's beloved cannot be taken lightly and so it was off to that holy island for the day. It wasn't until late afternoon that I was advised that a dozen or more local birders had connected with it and decent photos taken, Thank God!

So 'dipped' on a Dipper but 'jammed in' on a Roller - not a bad result, all said and done. 🐦

Voëlkyk in Siyabuswa

Stephan Terblanche

Die altaprojek (SABAP2) bring mens op plekke waar amper geen voëlkyker normaalweg vir voëls sal gaan soek nie.

Neem nou maar Siyabuswa. Meeste Pretorianers weet nie eers waar dit is nie. Wikipedia meld slegs die volgende:

“Siyabuswa is 'n dorp in Mpumalanga, Suid-Afrika. Volgens die 2001-sensus het die nedersetting 'n bevolking van 26 201 gehad, waarvan [99.73%] Swartes was.”

Die Engelse weergawe meld darem ook dat Siyabuswa tydens die apartheid-era die hoofstad van KwaNdele was en dat dit 20 km suidwes van die Marble Hall lughawe geleë is. Hoe vernederend, dat die enigste verwysing na die ligging van Siyabuswa aan Marble Hall se lughawe gekoppel word! Geen inligting word voorsien wat normaalweg oor dorpe gegee

word nie, soos wanneer dit gestig is, na wie of wat dit vernoem is of wat daar aangaan nie.

Kom ons probeer om nuttige addisionele inligting, uit 'n voëlkykoogpunt, by te voeg. Siyabuswa is uitgelê suid van die Elandsrivier, net so 10 km oos van die Mkhombodam. Dit is dus so 125 km noordoos van Pretoria af. Meeste ander dorpe in die voormalige KwaNdebele, soos Vlakraagte, Kwaggafontein en KwaMhlanga, lê amper net so hoog as Cullinan en Bronkhorstpruit. Siyabuswa is heelwat laer, naamlik 920 m bo seespieël, en die middagweer is lekker warm, soos in Groblersdal. Die maksimum temperatuur op Sondag, 3 Julie 2011, was 26°C – 'n volle 4°C warmer as in Pretoria. Siyabuswa is ook netjies uitgelê, met 'n aansienlike infrastruktuur, insluitende rioolwerke en 'n hele aantal skole, kolleges, vulstasies en winkels.

Kalahariwipstert/
Kalahari Scrub-
Robin: oral te sien



Dup du Plessis

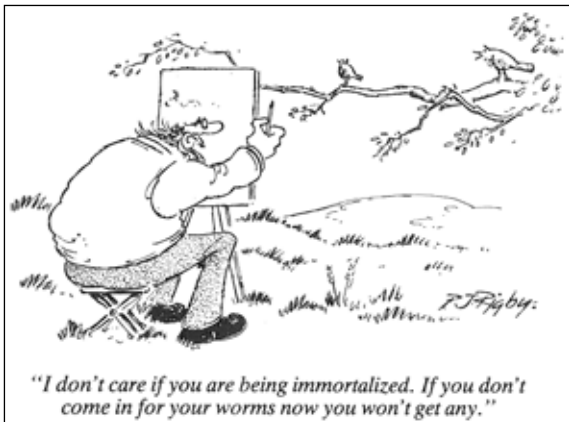
Die kernvraag is egter: is hier enige voëls? Selfs wanneer mens in stede atlas mik jy natuurlik altyd na die mees natuurlike en op gebiede in die betrokke atlasblok (in hierdie geval 2505_2900). Net suid van Siyabuswa is daar 'n stuk gemengde bosveld, met 'n sytak van die Elandsrivier wat heelwat water in het. Die bosveld is taamlik yl en die boompies aan die klein kant, en menslike tekens is maar opvallend. Ons kom onder andere op 'n kopermyn af: net die plastiek wat die koperkabels isoleer het lê nog in die veld. Daar is darem voëls ook. Swartbandlangstertjies en Witpensuikerbekkies is algemeen, Witborskraaie vlieg verby en Geelbekneushoringvoëls maak elke nou en dan 'n verrassende draai. Kalahariwipsterte is oral te sien. By die loop van die Meetse-Madibaspruit klink 'n interessante fluit uit die riete uit. Hier is vaal goedjies soos Bruinsylangstertjie en

Bosveldtinkinkie, maar dit neem 'n ruk vir die ou databasis (in my kop) om by Rooiwangtinkinkie uit te kom. Ernst gebruik tegnologie om die voëltjie uit te lok, want ons moet darem seker maak dis hy. Hy stel nie teleur nie.

Uiteindelik moet mens maar die dorpsgebiede self ook trotseer. Eintlik is hier baie meer voëls as in die veld. Baardmannetjies wei soos matte op die grond, Koringvoëls broei in die Kollege vir Voortgesette Opleiding se gronde, daar is Kroonkiewiete oral. Ons sien baie Pêrelborsswaels en ek kan sweer daar is baie meer Bosluisvoëls in die omgewing as in vorige winters. Ons moet nogal werk om 'n Huismossie te kry, maar Indiese Spreeus en Tuinduiwe lewer nie dieselfde probleem op nie.

Die hoogtepunt van die oggend verskyn in die middel van die dorp, toe 'n paar lang slap vlerke my aandag trek. En daar, op 'n telefoonpaal in iemand se agterplaas, sien ons 'n jong Kaalwangvalk, kompleet met klein koppie, 'n verwarde, "mean" uitdrukking op die gesig en verwarrende bruin gevlekte verekleed. Na 'n kort ruspouse vat hy sy vlerke en gooi 'n paar draaie laag oor die huise. Mens hoop maar net hy het nie sy oog op Siyabuswa se hoenderkuikens gehad het nie.

Tuis voel ek bietjie om, net soos een van die dag se baie Kalahariwipsterte, my stert orent trek en aandagtrekkend heen-en-weer te bewe: hierdie atlaslys was my 400ste sedert die begin van die projek. 🐦



"I don't care if you are being immortalized. If you don't come in for your worms now you won't get any."

A 'not-so-sacred' Ibis

Rion Lerm

At the opposite end of the colour (and auditory) spectrum compared to the Hadedda Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*, is the less well known African Sacred Ibis (aka sacred ibis) *Threskiornis aethiopicus*. Often found probing around refuge dumps, sewage works and the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria, this species is not much of a 'looker' with its long, bare neck and off-white plumage colouration. However, ancient Egyptians did give it a godly status namely Thoth. In sub-Saharan Africa though, it seems like any area with a reasonable low degree of hygiene attracts sacred ibises.

The experimental farm of the University of Pretoria is no exception in its presence of these so-called 'sacred' birds. Flocks of exotic Rock Doves *Columba livia* and Laughing Doves *Streptopelia senegalensis* are a common sight throughout the day when they move between the cattle feeding lots. Among the scurry of Columbids, close inspection will reveal the large white bodies of sacred ibises wandering about the feeding troughs looking for unpicked morsels.

Upon arriving at the farm one afternoon, lending assistance to post-graduate students, we saw bizarre sacred ibis behaviour. A single bird was approaching us with a Laughing Dove secured in the end of the bird's long, curved bill. More interestingly, the prey was still alive with wings flapping vainly. The prey was held around the neck suggesting that this particular ibis caught a live, adult dove and it was going to do something horrific with it. After staring at the spectacle in awe, I called a famous bird photographer and suggested we make this occasion memorable by photographing such odd behaviour. Whilst the camera was 'snapping away', the impervious ibis was tenacious to quiet its prey. This did not take long and the ibis was picking the entrails, swallowing bits at a time. Eventually the bird decided to take the leftovers elsewhere, flying off with the limp body.

I could find no evidence in local bird guides or in Roberts VII regarding African sacred ibises taking adult birds as prey. With an omnivorous diet consisting of invertebrates, amphibians, seeds and other interesting things, these birds are also known for taking chicks and eggs from the nests of other birds. Phenomena such as preying on other birds (i.e. chicks and eggs) probably occur at an irregular basis when large waterbird breeding colonies provide easy pickings (those of cormorants, penguins and at heronries).

Maybe the Laughing Dove was sick or injured and the ibis recognised it as easy pickings or the not-so-sacred ibis is a predator of note! Hence, this bird provided insight into the fascinating nature of birds and such odd behaviour is worth sharing.

References

Hockey, P.A.R., Dean, W.R.J., Ryan, P.G. (Eds) (2005) *Roberts Birds of Southern African* 7th edition. The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town. 🐦



African Sacred Ibis/ Skoorsteenveër

Rarities and unusual sightings

Compiled by André Marx

Regional Rarities / Streeksrareiteite

Collared Pratincole. Rooivlerksprinkaanvoël: a solitary bird seen amongst many Black-winged Pratincoles was still present in late March and early April at the Kgomo-Kgomo wetland north of Pretoria, when it was reported by a number of people, 04 Apr 2011 – see photo (Gbird).

Burchell's Sandgrouse. Gevlekte Sandpatrys: several birds in association with Double-banded Sandgrouse were observed just west of Kgomo-Kgomo in North West Province, a locality within the 100km range of the greater Pretoria-Joburg area, 22 May 2011 (RGd).

Yellow-bellied Greenbul. Geelborswillie: a record at Damhoek NR in the Magaliesberg in pentad 2545_2735 is a new record for the area and further evidence of the spread of this species into parts of Gauteng, 05 Jun 2011 (LRo).

Sickle-winged Chat. Vlaktespekvreter: one bird was found on the Rietkuil Road near Nigel in the same vicinity to where this species was seen last winter, 10 Jul 2011 (RM).

Red-faced Cisticola. Rooiwangtinkinkie: this species was found in two different pen-

tads in the Siyabuswa area (2500_2905 and 2505_2900), north-east of Pretoria, and are very interesting records considering that this is generally a species associated with the Lowveld, 03 Jul 2011 (ER,ST).

Ashy Flycatcher. Blougrysvlieëvanger: this species was found in an area of riverine forest near Amanzimtaba, north-east of Bronkhorstspruit in pentad 2535_2900 and is a good record for Gauteng, 25 Jun 2011 (LVD).

Other Interesting Observations / Ander Interessante Waarnemings

White Stork. Witooievaar: about 40 birds were feeding on burnt ground at Marievale, and this constitutes a large over-wintering group, 02 Jul 2011 (DN).

African Cuckoo Hawk. Koekoekvalk: a sighting of one bird near Fochville in pentad 2635_2730 in south-western Gauteng is unusual, 07 May 2011 (CWJ).

Verreaux's Eagle. Witkruisarend: a very interesting record is of an immature bird at the Lonehill koppie in Johannesburg where it stayed for a few days during which time it fed on a dassie, 04 Apr 2011 (DB) – see photo; with another record of an immature bird (the same one?) at nearby Norscot Koppies, 12 Jun 2011 (AF,HR).

Long-crested Eagle. Langkuifarend: one bird was in the Suikerbosrand area in 2635_2810, 03 Jul 2011 (CG).

Jackal Buzzard. Rooiborsjakkalsvoël: a record in the Wolwekraal area near Brits is unusual for this species, 14 Jun 2011 (JJ).

Black Sparrowhawk. Swartspewer: two birds were photographed at Kuilfontein Farm near Nigel (pentad 2630_2830), 09 May 2011 (MT); one bird was photographed in a Lynnwood Glen, Pretoria, garden after it had caught and devoured a pigeon, 23 Jul 2011 (R&LS, via lvH) – see photo; one bird was in pentad 2625_2735 near Fochville, 31 Jul 2011



Doug Black

Immature Verreaux's Eagle/ Onvolwasse Witkruisarend: surprise find in Lonehill, Johannesburg



Rob Scott

Black Sparrowhawk (Swartsperwer) photographed in a Lynwood garden

(CWJ); a pair bred once again in Rust de Winter town north of Pretoria, 15 Jul 2011 (RGd).

Black Harrier. Witkruisvleivalk: one bird was observed at Suikerbosrand in pentad 2630_2810, 26 Apr 2011 (RvdB).

Osprey. Visvalk: an over-wintering bird was at Abe Bailey NR near Carletonville, 24 Jun 2011 (J&MR).

Peregrine Falcon. Swerfvalk: one bird was at the Premier Mine quarry near Cullinan in pentad 2540_2830, 02 Apr 2011 (LvD); a bird was seen at the cliffs at Trichardtspoort, north-east of Bronkhorstspuit, 09 Apr 2011 (LvD).

Natal Spurfowl. Natalse Fisant: this species was heard and seen at Modderfontein, an unusual sighting for Johannesburg, 07 May 2011 (LRo).

African Finfoot. Watertrapper: this species was observed in the Skeerpoort area near Hartbeespoort Dam in pentad 2545_2740, 22 Apr 2011 (JJ); one bird was found on a quiet stretch of the Hennops River near Erasmia, Pretoria, in pentad 2545_2800, 29 May 2011 (PT,RF).

African Green-Pigeon. Papegaaiduif: one bird in a Fochville garden, south-west of Joburg, was a surprise and a first record there in 25 years, 24 May 2011 (J&MR).

African Scops-Owl. Skopsuil: during a walk at the Pretoria Botanical Gardens this species was first found roosting during the day and was seen in subsequent visits in the weeks that followed, 07 Jul 2011 (MvL).



Gareth Hazell

Collared Pratincole/Rooivlerksprinkaanvoël seen at Kgomo-Kgomo again

Lilac-breasted Roller. Gewone Troupant: a record of this species in Glen Austen, Midrand, is somewhat out of range, 19 May 2011 (TMe).

Red-billed Hornbill. Rooibekneushoringvoël: a record of one bird in the Kyalami area is considerably south of where this species is normally found, 19 Jun 2011 (RG).

Southern Pied Babbler. Witkatlagter: two birds were present at Buffelsdrift, north-east of Pretoria, for a period of a few weeks from July 2011, a locality where they do not normally occur, 1 July 2011 (RGd).

Pink-billed Lark. Pienkbeklewerik: several birds were seen in pentads south of Devon, 01 Jul 2011 (RLm).

Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler. Bosveldtjeriktik: a record of this species at Northern Farm north-west of Johannesburg is considered to be a good record for the area, 12 Jun 2011 (AM,BLNG).

Yellow Canary. Geelkanarie: a record of this species at Bishop Bird Park, Centurion, is somewhat out of range, 22 May 2011 (EM).

Observers / Waarnemers:

André Marx (AM)	Andy Featherstone (AF)
BirdLife Northern Gauteng members (BLNG)	
Colin Gerrans (CG)	Craig Whittington-Jones (CWJ)
Doug Black (DB)	Doug Newman (DN)
Ernst Retief (ER)	Etienne Marais (EM)
Gauteng birders (Gbird)	Howard Rayner (HR)
Ingrid van Heerden (lvH)	Jannie Jansen (JJ)

John & Moira Randall (J&MR)	Lance Robinson (LRo)
Lia Steen (LS)	Lisl van Deventer (LvD)
Madeleen v Loggerenberg (MvL)	Mark Tittley (MT)
Pat Tattersall (PT)	Richard Montinaro (RM)
Rion Lerm (RLm)	Rob & Lindsay Scott (R&LS)
Rob Geddes (RGd)	Roelof van der Breggen (RvdB)
Roger Fieldwick (RF)	Rowan Goeller (RG)
Stephan Terblanche (ST)	Theo Meyer (TMe)

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. The majority of reports are included according to their local rarity status and 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 🐦

Erecting an owl box for a pair of Spotted Eagle-Owls

John Fourie

A pair of Spotted Eagle-Owls were frequently seen in the Linden, Johannesburg, residence of my son Jon-Pierre, and they often roosted on the roof of the house. I asked André Marx for a nest box design and then set about making an owl box for them in the hope that they would move in and breed. I also consulted people at the BirdLife Fair held at the Johannesburg Zoo and they maintained that the birds sometimes breed in Barn Owl-type boxes, but it was decided to proceed with the Spotted Eagle-Owl box design. The box was constructed from wood and painted a camouflage brown with sawdust placed inside so that the eggs would not roll around. The attached photo shows the result of my handiwork. Now we wait for the owls to take up residence!



Jon-Pierre Fourie

Geoff Lockwood has had a pair of Spotted Eagle-Owls breeding on the roof of the Delta Park Centre for a number of years now and added this comment:

While Spotted Eagle Owls can (and do) nest very low – even on the ground, I would normally advise everyone to place the nest box as high as possible off the ground. It should be attached securely to a major branch or branches and still have enough vegetation above and around the box to provide cover and protection from the weather (and also help hide the box from crows that can be a problem). This aspect

can be a bit of a balancing act however as the owls still need to be able to find the box! In this case, the siting of the box appears to be OK – but there are no guarantees that any owls will move in however! With respect to the box design, I prefer a deeper recess – typically 30cm deep, and then line the box with a 10cm layer of clean river sand. This allows the female to ‘shape’ the contours of the lining to suit her requirements.

An update will be provided about any developments such that there may be.

[An excellent initiative John. I hope you have good news in future, but keep in mind that these birds often defy logic and breed in some unlikely places! – Ed.] 🐦

PHOTO SPOT: Saddle-billed Stork

Lesley Henderson

In March this year I was at a private nature reserve in the Lowveld where I saw a most amazing scene. A Saddle-billed Stork was hunting for anything to eat in a shallow dam when it caught sight of a Mozambican Spit-

ting Cobra coming for a drink. It managed to catch, kill and swallow the snake. It then caught a terrapin, and pulled pieces off the poor creature. The following photos show the events.



Saddle-billed Stork with the cobra



Saddle-billed Stork feeding on a terrapin

WELKOM NUWE LEDE/ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (April-July 2011)

Louis Dedekind, Southdowns;
Estelle Prinsloo, Clubview; Sarie
Smith, Pretoria Noord; Dolly
Ernst, Garsfontein; Amanda
le Roux, Raslouw; Liesl de
Swardt, Faerie Glen; M-Giovanna
Cibotto, Rynfield; Nic & Gill
Oosthuysen, Wierda Park; Joey
Harmse, Moreleta; Theuns
Botha, Lynnwood Ridge; Danie &
Bella du Toit, Weltevredenpark;
Sieg Eiselen, Faerie Glen; Craig &
Caroline Kerr, Menlo Park; Chris
Siebert, Glenstantia

Pied Kingfisher

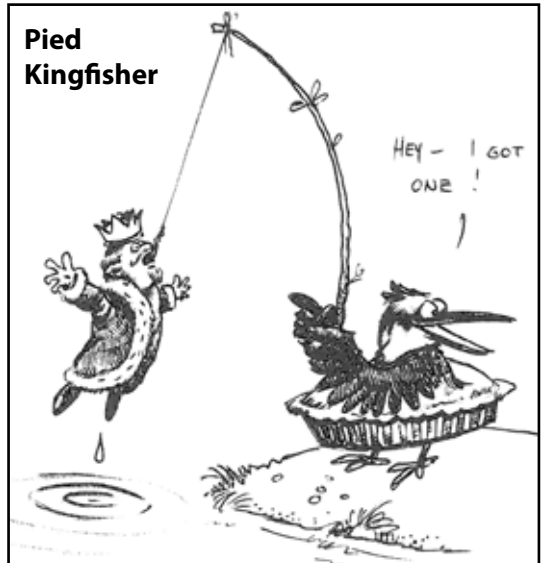


PHOTO SPOT:

Ontwikkeling van die Dubbelbanddrawwertjie

Dup du Plessis

Net buite Parys is 'n afgeleë en verwaarloosde stuk munisipale grond waar ek die afgelope drie jaar gereeld tyd spandeer het met 'n klompie interessante en onverwagse

voëlspesies, onder andere 'n klompie Dubbelbanddrawwertjies, wat seker hier aan die rand van hul oostelike verspreidingsgebied voorkom.



1) Op die oggend van 2 Oktober 2010 het ek 'n wyfie gekry wat op 'n eiertjie sit.



2) Ek het hulle op bykans daaglikse basis gemonitor, en gevind dat die ouers mekaar gereeld aflos tydens die broeiproses.



3) Wanneer dit baie warm was het die ouer soms die eiertjie beskerm deur bloot net daaroor te hurk.



4) Vroeg die oggend van 28 Oktober, dus 26 dae na die eerste waarneming, is my moeite beloon en het die nuwe aankomeling daar gelê. Dit was ongeveer 7 uur die oggend en die eierdoppe was reeds verwyder.



5) Die ouers het die kuiken dadelik begin voer.



6) Op dag 8 het die kuiken reeds sterk agter die ouers aangedraf en hoofsaaklik op kamoeflering staatgemaak vir beskerming.



7) Op 28 November, dus op 1 maand ouderdom, het die kuiken reeds onafhanklik, maar in teenwoordigheid van die ouers rondgehardloop en gevreet, en reeds sterk ooreenkomste met die volwassenes getoon.



8) Op die ouderdom van 2 maande was daar weinig verskil tussen die volwassenes en die jong voël.

You might be a birder if...

- ☛ you would fly across the country to see a gull – the right gull.
- ☛ the word “trash bird” means something to you.
- ☛ you breakfast with your bins on standby.
- ☛ for you the “tele” is silent in telescope, despite what your dictionary says.
- ☛ a raging thunderstorm accompanied by thunder can’t wake you up in the morning, but the song of a new garden bird does!
- ☛ you have more money invested in optics than automobiles.
- ☛ you look forward to summer cyclones and big winter storms because you think they will blow some unusual birds your way.
- ☛ you pay good money to throw up on fishing boats, but you don’t care to fish.
- ☛ you insist on correcting people who say “sea-gull”.
- ☛ you raise mealworms just to feed birds!
- ☛ your most significant relationships are with people you unexpectedly yet repeatedly encounter along otherwise deserted roads.
- ☛ your non-birding spouse could probably fill this thread with hundreds of comments!

Answering “yes” to any of these questions qualifies you as a birder.

Source: various websites on the web

Speed freaks

The world’s fastest flying bird is probably the Peregrine Falcon, whose speed during its ‘stooping’ dive has been claimed at over 300 km/h, though more accurate measurements suggest that it is closer to 180 km/h. The White-throated Needletail (a type of swift from Asia) has been recorded at 170 km/h. In level flight, the record is held by the Eider Duck, which has been reliably measured at 76.5 km/h, though another duck, the Red-breasted Merganser, has been reported to reach speeds of 129 km/h when in escape flight.

Laniarius advertising rates (cost shown in rands)

Print ads:					Notes
	1 insert	2 inserts	3 inserts	4 inserts	
Back page	600	1 000	1 300	1 500	For printed ads: 1. advertiser to supply print-ready artwork 2. ads can be placed in alternate issues 3. must be paid in advance
Full page	400	700	950	1 150	
Half page	250	400	500	675	
Quarter page	125	200	250	275	
Loose insert	300	500	650	750	
Smalls	50	90	120	140	5 lines/ad
The committee maintains the right not to accept any advertisements					

BUFFELSDRIFT Rust de Winter

ACCOMMODATION



PHOTOGRAPHY



BIRDING



BIRDERS

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