



Laniarius

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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 drie 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: Bearded Vulture / Baardaasvoël by Gareth Hazell.

Back cover: White-crowned Lapwing / Witkopkiewiet by Drinie van Rensburg (taken at Sunset Dam near Lower-Sabie, KNP).

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

Spring is upon us again and is that time of year that birders are in their element, because most of us take note of what is going on around us in our environment and we use the behaviour of birds as a means to track the changes that happen over the seasons. It is the time of year when most of our migrants arrive of course and with the first swallows just putting in an appearance now it is indeed an exciting time. Not that winter birding is always dull and uninteresting, but as spring arrives and progresses into summer so you know that a bird list compiled from a walk in your local patch will include a number of species that you have not seen for a few months because they have been in central Africa or Europe, or they were subject to local movements in winter and moved away as our birds sometimes will do. You tune your antenna to their songs and calls and look for them in likely places and it is very rewarding to find them.

I was explaining this to an incredulous work colleague recently, who is very far removed from the beauty of nature and the wonders of our birdlife and has not visited the Kruger Park or any other reserve for many years. Avid birders are sometimes seen as being a bit 'odd' (or should that be a bit 'eccentric?'), because we get up at strange hours to go to unheard of places to see birds and we gain obvious enjoyment from so. However, I have also detected a note of envy in discussions with non-birders, who often profess to have an interest in our hobby but have never taken their interest further because they can't accommodate

a hobby in their hectic lifestyle. So we are part of a select group of people who have one of the most rewarding and enjoyable pastimes in the world and we must see it as such!

Careful examination of past records and events has determined that our club has been part of birding activities in the greater Pretoria area for all of 60 years. As our chairman Philip explained previously, the club did dissolve for a few years, but then came back in a different guise, and has also undergone a couple of name changes over the years, but even with those changes there were always bird outings and activities taking place continuously in our region for the past 60 years. This is a cause of celebration and is the reason why the club has arranged a gala dinner evening on Friday 26 October, when key note speakers and a number of events will be taking place. It will be a fun evening for longer standing as well as new members, so do try to be there. More details are elsewhere in this newsletter and on the club website.

This edition of *Laniarius* is late as I had to deal with personal matters that distracted me and did not allow much time to complete it on time. My apologies for that. The final edition for this year will feature articles and information relating to the last 60 years of birding events and activities in the greater Pretoria area. To make this possible I need to appeal to members to write about their experiences, about the people over the years and also about how the environment and the birds have changed. Everyone can contribute, including newer members who can share their observations. I want to have that edition out by December so please give this some thought and write to me!

André Marx



Chairman's Report/ Voorsittersverslag

Philip Calinikos

With half the year already behind us, the events surrounding our 'Celebrating 60 years of Birding in the Pretoria area' are coming thick and fast. We recently celebrated the launch of our own club wine 'Chateau Lanarius' in fine style at our July evening meeting and the 'Sold Out' signs for our first batch quickly went up! Fortunately we have a second batch of these delicious and affordable wines on order for those of you who missed out first time around.

By the time you read this report, our first club trip into 'Darkest Africa' will also be behind us. Eight intrepid BLNG birders will have braved face to face encounters with Mountain Gorillas, Chimpanzees and of course the disapproving demeanour of the Shoebill! Another highlight of the trip promises to be the search for the highly elusive Green-breasted Pitta! Johnnie Kamugisha, who will be our local bird guide in Uganda recently told me about a birding group who sat patiently and unmoving for four hours in the forest to obtain a glimpse of the beauty.

Moving closer to home, our next celebratory event will be a club camp at Kurisa Moya in the Magoebaskloof, where Lisa Martus and David Letsoalo will be welcoming us with their traditional hospitality. The beautifully appointed farmhouse with its high ceilings, long cool verandas and luxurious bedrooms will be our home away from home. The birding in the forests around the lodge is unforgettable with Black-fronted Bush-Shrike (Swartoogboslaksman), Green Twinspot (Groen Kolpensie), Gorgeous Bush-Shrike (Konkoit), Scaly-throated Honeyguide (Gevlekte Heuningwyser) and Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk (Rooiborsperwer) being almost guaranteed. Well within reach are excellent

spots for Cape Parrot (Woudpapegaai), Bat Hawk (Vlermuisvalk) and Magpie Mannikin (Dikbekfret) amongst others. So popular has this weekend proved to be that we have now organised a repeat trip to Kurisa Moya in February next year and you are urged to book as soon as possible if you wish to participate!

Another event that will feature on our list of specials is Birding Big Day Round 3 which will again take place in the Kruger National Park. This time around we will be based at the picturesque Olifants Rest Camp. The previous two BBD's have proved very popular and again you are urged to book early to confirm your participation. I for one cannot wait to share some of the special birds occurring in this region of the Park with the rest of you. Our loyal and experienced SANPARKS guides, Andrew and Raymond, will again be joining us together with Jackey who will be cooking up a storm as usual.

Interspersed with the trips are some other exciting events such as our Photographic Competition which closes on the 25th of September with some wonderful prizes for the winners. Our raffle tickets will also be available soon with fantastic prizes such as a cabin on the MSC Opera for Flock 2013 including spending money, a weekend away at Kurisa Moya and a couple of the original plates painted by Norman Arlott for the second edition of the '*Chamberlain's Birds of Africa*' field guide.

Of course the cherry, or should I say the diamond on the top, will be our celebratory Gala Dinner to be held at the Saint George Hotel and Conference Centre at the end of October. Dr Warwick Tarboton and Geoff Lockwood have agreed to be our keynote speakers on the night and there will be wonderful food and incredible entertainment for us all.

The culmination of our celebrations will be another club trip to an exotic destination late next year and by popular demand the destination will be Madagascar, which possesses fauna and flora like no other place on earth. Our hosts will be Chris Lotz's company, Birding Ecotours, and again interested parties are asked to contact me so that we can confirm a touring party of 12 to 14 as soon as possible. This is a prized birding destination and the accommodation

in the prime areas of the country fills up very quickly at the most popular times of the year.

Should any of you have any other ideas on exciting venues or destinations please do not hesitate to let me or one of the other committee members know. At the end of the day, it is our wish to make all of your birding dreams come true.

Yours in birding 🐦

Club News / Klubnuus

Sunday 7 October: Open Day – Pretoria Botanical Gardens

Another activity filled day at one of our favourite venues at the Pretoria Botanical Gardens. The day starts off really early with the ringing team and guided walks will start on the hour from 7 am. Jason Boyce will be there with his young birders (everyone welcome). There will be information about the club and the Ditsong Museum of Natural History will be joining us with their eagle display, as will the co-ordinators for the Wonderboom Urban Verreaux's Eagle Monitoring Project. Ralda will be there with all her goodies featuring books and other birding paraphernalia. Don't miss it!

Gala Dinner 26 October: Diamonds with a Splash of Red

You are invited to join us for an incredible Gala Dinner on Friday 26th of October at the St. George Hotel, near Irene, to celebrate '60 years of Birding in Pretoria'. This will be a prestigious event with a great programme of activities in order to be able to celebrate the occasion in style. Key note speakers are Warwick Tarboton and Geoff Lockwood and the prizegiving of our photographic competition and our superb raffle (see below) will take place. There will also be a presentation on some of the club's history. Tickets for the gala dinner are R200 pp and are available from our club secretary, Rita. More details are on our website – www.blng.co.za

Raffle Tickets

Purchase a raffle ticket today to celebrate 60 Years of Birding in Pretoria. We have lined up some incredible prizes and tickets are only R100 each. First prize is two tickets to Flock at Sea 2013 including spending money to get you to Cape Town and back. There are already more than 800 people booked for this 5-day birding extravaganza on the MSC Opera from Cape Town to Walvis Bay and back. Special activities and expert guides have been lined up to make your experience the best possible one. For more information on this event, check out <http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock>.

The four runner up prizes are just as special. They include one of three original plates specially revised for *Chamberlain's Birds of Africa South of the Sahara*, 2nd edition, generously donated by Dawie Chamberlain. These are not available for sale and will definitely be something special to treasure. Our friends at Kurisa Moya Nature Lodge in Magoebaskloof have donated an additional prize of two nights for two people sharing at their Forest Lodge Cabin. The prize includes a seven hour Woodbush outing with their expert guide, David Letsoalo.

These prizes are really worth the price of the ticket. There is no limit on the number of tickets you can purchase. We will be drawing the winner's names at our Gala Dinner event on Friday 26th October 2012. Tickets are available from any of the committee members and at evening meetings. For more information, please contact Rita on secretary@blng.co.za or 083 391 2327. 🐦

Personal names commemorated in the common names of southern African bird species – Part 9

John Bannon

PEL – Pel’s Fishing Owl, *Scotopelia peli* (Bonaparte 1859)

Hendrik Severinus Pel (1818 -1876) was the Dutch Governor of the Gold Coast (now known as Ghana) between 1840-50. He was an all round naturalist and collector and also being an accomplished taxidermist, he sent many specimens to the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Histoire in Leiden, Netherlands. He first described the owl in 1851, the year in which he published *Over de jagt aan de Gouldkust, volgens eene tienjarige eigener ondervinding*.

Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte (1803-1857) was a nephew of the Emperor Napoleon and an accomplished ornithologist both in Europe and particularly the United States. Quite how he named the owl after Pel, two year’s after his death in 1857 might seem to be a mystery, but it relates to Bonaparte’s obsession with cataloguing all the world’s birds, as known at that time.

The first volume of his *Conspectus Generum Avium* was published in Latin in 1850, with a second volume of this systematic masterpiece published two year’s after his death by Herman Schlegel, which listed the owl that Bonaparte had named after Pel.

Coenraad Jacob Temminck, (see later entry), was the lifelong Director of the Rijksmuseum at that time and had also referred to the owl as *Strix peli*, so perhaps Bonaparte had followed convention and this influential man’s decision when researching his *Conspectus Generum Avium*.

RETZ – Retz’s Helmet-shrike, *Prionops Retzi* (Wahlberg 1856)

Anders Jahan Retzius (1742-1821), his two sons Anders Adolph Retzius (1796 -1860) and Carl Gustav Retzius (1798-1833) are all candidates for the naming of this distinctive

Helmet-shrike by fellow Swede Johan Augustus Wahlberg (1810-1856).

They were all members of the Swedish scientific establishment, particularly The Swedish Academy of Sciences and at one time or another were all contemporaries of Wahlberg. Although it would appear that Anders Adolph Retzius is the most likely candidate, his particular interest was in human development and Wahlberg was only 11 when his father Anders Johan had died. The father was a well-known ornithologist and botanist as was his younger son Carl Gustav, so perhaps Wahlberg meant to commemorate the entire illustrious family of scientists, rather than any one individual.

ROBERTS – Roberts’ Warbler (*Prinia*), *Oreophilais robertsi* (Benson 1946)

Without doubt the most famous name in South African ornithology during the first half of the 20th century, J Austin Roberts (1883-1948), may only be commemorated by one, relatively obscure, southern African bird species, but has left a much greater legacy to African ornithology in the continuing publication of *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa* – now in its seventh edition.

In December 1935 the South African Bird Book Fund was formed to finance the publication of an up-to-date bird guide for southern Africa under the authorship of Austin Roberts, illustrated by Norman C.K. Lighton. The successful and popular first edition, entitled *The Birds of South Africa*, was first published in June 1940.

After Roberts’ untimely death in a road traffic accident in 1948, the Trustees published the second edition (1957) under the editorship of McLachan and Liversidge, who also revised the third (1970) and fourth (1978) editions, now entitled *Roberts Birds of South Africa*. The Trust became the John Voelcker Bird Book

Fund, a non-profit enterprise with funding from subscriptions and minimal profit from the sale of books.

The latest and seventh edition (2005) was entrusted to the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology and completely rewritten under the direction of Hockey, Dean & Ryan. With well over 300,000 copies sold to date, 'Roberts' as it is known, is still the bible of South African birders and is an ongoing commemoration of one of the first 'citizen' scientists. Roberts may not have had any formal scientific training, but he worked on and studied birds at the Transvaal Museum for 38 years, obtaining several academic awards and an honorary doctorate.

Constantine Walter Benson (1909-1982) was a major influence on Central African ornithology throughout his long career with the British Colonial Office. He wrote the first avifaunas of Zambia (1971) and Malawi (1977) and named the warbler - for many years considered a prinia and restricted to eastern Zimbabwe and western Mozambique - after Roberts in 1946.

RUDD – Rudd's Apalis, *Apalis ruddi* (Grant 1908); Rudd's Lark, *Mirafra ruddi* (Grant 1908)

Charles Dannel Rudd (1844-1916) was the principal business partner of Cecil Rhodes and in 1888 had managed to secure the mining concession for Matabeleland and Mashonaland, which was to form the major part of what was to become Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe.

He had founded De Beers in Kimberley with Rhodes in 1880 and later Gold Fields of South Africa in 1887 after gold had been discovered on the Witwatersrand. A peer group colleague of Rhodes and both of Harrow School, he had come out to the Cape in 1865 where he had set up various enterprises and spent time hunting and collecting animals and birds with the likes of John Robert Dunn (1834-1895). This is not Col Henry Nason Dunn after whom Dunn's Lark is named but rather the settler, hunter and diplomat, who was to become the trusted adviser of Zulu king Cetshwayo. Later changing



Dupp de Plessis

Rudd's lark/ Drakensberglerwik

sides to advise the British army and planning Cetshwayo's demise, Dunn's claim to fame is that he had 48 Zulu wives and fathered 117 children!

As an extremely wealthy man, Rudd later financed British ornithologist and collector Captain Claude Henry Baxter Grant's (1878-1958) expeditions to South Africa, who in return described and named both species after his benefactor in 1908. Who said that money does not buy immortality?

Grant later published the *African Handbook of Birds* in 1952 and was the editor of the British Ornithologists' Club bulletin from 1935-1940.

RÜPPELL – Rüppell's Korhaan, *Eupodotis rueppelli* (Wahlberg 1856); Rüppell's Vulture, *Gyps rueppelli* (Brehm 1852); Rüppell's Parrot, *Poicephalus rueppelli* (Gray 1848)

Wilhelm Peter Eduard Simon Rüppell (1794-1884) was a famous German explorer, naturalist and collector, the son of a very wealthy banker, which allowed him to pursue his interests in natural history - particularly in NE Africa and the Middle East.

In 1822, he was the first 'modern' European to reach and map Aqaba at the head of the Red Sea. Since the end of the Crusades 500 years earlier, the waters, coastline and deserts of the Gulf of Aqaba had been under the control of the fanatical Wahhabite Bedouin, who hated all non-Muslims. This feat earned him the

prestigious Royal Geographical Society gold medal, the first non-British explorer to do so.

His explorations and collecting were concentrated on the Nile Valley, Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), Eritrea and Sinai, sending most of his collected species to the Senckenberg Natural History Society in Frankfurt, his home town.

He published various works describing his travels and discoveries, which brought him worldwide fame and recognition and a dozen or more bird, mammal and reptile species are still named in honour of Eduard Rüppell.

In his later life his strong-willed, individualistic temperament led to his alienation from mainstream scientific circles and he became something of a recluse, suspicious and difficult to deal with. Eventually all his zoological

research ceased and having expended most of his life and resources in the pursuit of science, he became dependent on a pension provided by the town of Frankfurt, where he died at the age of 90. As there is no record of him ever having travelled south of the Equator he probably never ever saw Rüppell's Parrot, except as a specimen.

Gray and Wahlberg are already featured in these articles, but Alfred Edmund Brehm (1829-1884) is featured for the first time. He was a contemporary of Rüppell and a well-known member of the German natural sciences establishment of the day. His life was full of natural history writing, expeditions and lecture tours and today the Brehm Memorial Museum is located in home town, Renthendorf, where he passed away in 1884. 🐦

Down memory lane – The birds of the Roodeplaat area in the 1950s

George Cox

My parents moved to their farm when I was five years old in 1944. It was located on the eastern side of the present day Moloto road. Its southern boundary was roughly one kilometre north of the bridge across the Pienaars River, while its northern boundary was just beyond the turn-off road to Wallmansthal. In those days we had to travel on a winding gravel road to reach the farm, with no bridge across the river. Very few motor vehicles made use of the road. There were only farms, and homesteads were normally far apart.

My interest in birds started at a very young age and I am sorry that I did not pursue it more diligently. I built up a good collection of birds' eggs (horrors!) and to my shame I have to admit that I kept wild birds in an aviary. I caught the birds with birdlime and also set traps for francolins. The latter activity probably emanated from the activities of an elderly gentleman (well elderly through the eyes of a child) and his son, who rode on bicycles from Pretoria North to catch birds next to a stream (spruit) that runs

through the farm. They would arrive early in the morning and I would invariably go along to watch and chat to them. That's where I saw my first Golden-breasted Bunting (whose call I soon got to know), Cinnamon-breasted Bunting and Violet-eared Waxbill, and also where I discovered the only African Stonechat nest that I have ever seen.

I recall watching Orange-breasted Waxbills (still one of my favourite birds), collecting feathers for their nests from the chicken run. Namaqua Doves were occasionally seen and Scaly-feathered Finches nested in bushes just beyond the garden fence. A pair of Red-billed Oxpeckers made their home in a steel pipe which served as a fence post. Cape Longclaws favoured the grassed sheep paddocks.

Not far from the house was a marshy area in summer, where the Yellow-crowned Bishops flew around like bumble bees. I once startled about four or five vultures that were feeding on a donkey carcass behind the cattle kraal. At that stage I did not know that there was more



Dup du Plessis

Golden-breasted Bunting / Rooirugstreekpoppie

than one vulture species. An Afrikaans primary school friend, whose family was in the privileged position to have been able to visit Natal, told me that a Lammergeier (Bearded Vulture) was so large that it could carry off a small child.

Occasionally Blue Cranes were heard calling as they flew high overhead, and once a pair of Common Scimitarbills got trapped in a vegetable shade cloth enclosure. I caught and released them. It was lovely to hold them in my hand and have a good look at them. I can still remember feeling their little hearts pounding away, as was the case when I unintentionally caught a Malachite Kingfisher. I was able to remove all the birdlime from its feathers so that it flew away with ease.

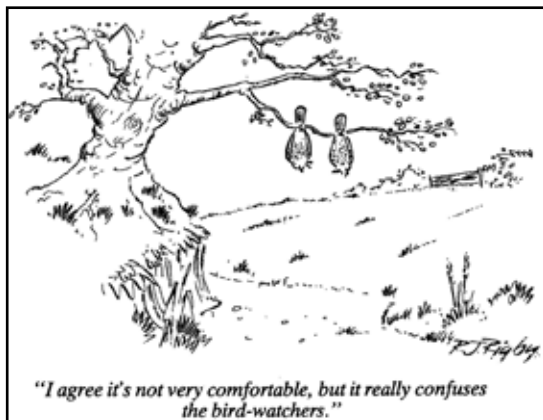
An African Grey Hornbill or two came to scrounge for broken or small peanuts that had

been discarded by the threshing machine. One winter's afternoon, while walking in the veld listening to a commentary on a rugby match on a portable transistor radio, I came across a family of four or five Little Bee-eaters, huddled together on a branch of a poplar tree.

I have only mentioned those species which no longer occur or are rarely seen on that section of the farm that is now owned by my younger brother. The greater part of the farm was subdivided into two and five hectare stands, as is so often the case with many farms in modern times. The Pebble Rock Golf Estate now borders the southern section of my brother's property. The influx of humans, the degradation of the surrounding habitat, more intensive farming methods and increased traffic seems to have taken its toll.

However, a good selection of species does still occur. New arrivals in the last two years have been African Green-Pigeons, feeding on figs in the garden and a single Rose-ringed Parakeet visiting the citrus trees.

[Trapping birds and collecting eggs were activities that a number of people engaged in many years ago George, when people were less aware of the harmful effects this could have on our bird populations and when people could do this with impunity. Today of course it is unlawful and we should always be on the lookout for this type of activity and report it immediately – Ed.]



Palaeartic Migrants in Gauteng: An ideal opportunity for South African birders to add to the international knowledge database – Part 1

John Bannon

Introduction

Fourty long-distance migrants regularly 'over-winter' in South Africa and particularly the Gauteng region in the Austral summer, the six-month period from October to March. A further seven Palaeartic waders that also regularly occur in South Africa in the Austral summer have not been included and except as extreme vagrants, seabirds are not often regularly recorded in Gauteng.

Several of these 40 regular 'wintering' visitors are subject to ongoing conservation studies, both throughout their wider Palaeartic breeding range and also within Southern Africa – the National Kestrel Count Day for example. Five species are listed by the Swiss-based International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as being of particular conservation concern and are included on their 'Red List.'

Properly known as the IUCN Red Data List, all of the world's flora and fauna is continually being assessed for their risk of extinction and their status is reviewed every five years. Each species and sub-species of the world's ± 10,000 different birds is the responsibility of BirdLife International worldwide and its many regional partners, such as BirdLife South Africa.

The five long-distance migrants to South Africa included on the most recent IUCN Red List are Black-winged Pratincole (Near threatened); European Roller (Near threatened); Lesser Kestrel (Vulnerable); Pallid Harrier (Near threatened) and the Red-footed Falcon (Near threatened). Of the remaining 35 migrant species many have suffered from alarming declines throughout their breeding range and although not (yet) considered in danger of extinction any day soon, we should all be aware of the

eventual fate of the once abundant Passenger Pigeon and Eskimo Curlew in North America.

Fieldwork for SABAP2 presents South African atlasing birders with a unique opportunity to record not just the presence of Palaeartic species, but also to record their numbers and distribution. If individual migrant counts were made per pentad – with zero being as relevant statistically as 100,000 – then a 'best guesstimate' of their overall numbers throughout South Africa, could be attempted. At the very least, any counts made would be a very valuable 'benchmark' for any future comparison surveys conducted under the same SABAP2 protocols and methodology. Any statistical difference in 'wintering' numbers year-on-year could then be compared with breeding population studies adding to the overall knowledge.

In researching this article it soon became apparent that the vast majority of South Africa's long distance Palaeartic migrants do not originate from Western Europe. In fact, apart from a few species like the Barn Swallow, the limited ringing information available shows that almost all of Gauteng's migrants come from much further east; from Eastern Europe right across the Russian Federation and well into central and eastern Asia.

Unlike Western Europe, much of this vast area has little or no coverage from professional ornithologists and/or citizen birdwatchers. So the breeding status of many of Gauteng's migrants can only be 'guesstimated', but as a benchmark their current status and population trends, throughout the western European part of their range, is given.

For example, the Icterine Warbler, which breeds from the Channel coast of France right

across Northern and Central Europe to Central Asia, has declined as a breeding species by some 37% throughout the EU part of its range. It is extremely unlikely that this statistically significant decline stops dead at the eastern borders of the EU with western parts of Russia and Central Asia. Especially as many of these areas are now also being rapidly urbanised and developed and traditional low-intensity farming practices are progressively being subjected to more intensive methods of production.

Sample species accounts and conservation status

Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*). (IUCN: Least Concern)

Breeding right across the Palearctic from Spain to Japan, the Black Kite is considered of Least Concern on the IUCN database. The global population of this ubiquitous raptor is most probably in the several millions, but a slow decrease over the last century is likely because as a scavenger and opportunist feeder, it is greatly susceptible to poisoning. The western EU population, recently estimated at +/- 200,000 individuals, crosses the Mediterranean at Gibraltar to winter in West and Central Africa.

The Black Kites that migrate as far south as South Africa are from the much larger Eastern European and Central Asian populations, which use the Bosphorus and Middle East flyways to cross the Red Sea near Eilat, or further south at the Horn of Africa. The Black Kite is considered abundant in Eilat, especially in the Boreal spring (April/May) and is described as common in Eritrea in both migration periods.

According to the latest SABAP2 distribution maps the KZN coast and north eastern South Africa including Gauteng, are about as far south as the Black Kite reaches in its migratory wanderings. However, its similarity to the much commoner pan-African breeding migrant, Yellow-billed Kite (*Milvus aegyptius*), makes its positive field identification extremely difficult for many South African birders; most of whom are unfamiliar with this very similar Palearctic

species from the northern hemisphere.

Separating full adult Yellow-billed from full adult Black Kites should not be a problem, and although juvenile/1st calendar year Yellow-billed Kites are on the wing from November just at the time when adult and immature Black Kites are arriving, and lacking the yellow bill of full adults they are also very spangled in appearance, with white edges to their feathers – very different from migrant Black Kites of any age.

From personal observations, immature usually 2cy (second calendar year of life) Black Kites in Europe also have a horn-coloured bill, but this can reflect as a very pale bill in strong sunlight, suggesting adult Yellow-billed and further adding to the ID pitfalls. Overall, the Black Kite is much more evenly coloured, with a paler head and lacking the more rufous tones of adult Yellow-billed, which has whiter, cleaner under wing patches, even suggesting Red Kite at times. If perched and viewable through a telescope, then Black Kites have pale eyes, Yellow-billed dark eyes – a feature that is apparently diagnostic.

The Black Kite also tends to have a squarer-cut, less forked tail, than the Yellow-billed, but its apparent under-recording is much more likely to be because of these potential ID pitfalls than any other factor.

Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*). (IUCN: Least Concern)

The Amur Falcon gets its name from the Amur River and Amurland in eastern Asia. This location is almost at the centre of its enormous breeding range which extends from eastern Siberia, through Amurland and Ussuriland to northeast Mongolia, Manchuria, North Korea and parts of northern and eastern China. With an estimated population of up to 1,000,000 birds the Amur Falcon is currently classified as (LC) of 'Least Concern' on the IUCN database.

Its extreme distance migration, from the shores of the Pacific Ocean in eastern Asia to South Africa, is at least a 25,000 km round trip. This staggering journey includes a gruelling 4,000 km three/four day continuous flight

Female Amur Falcon /
Oostelike Rooipootvalk wyfie



Doug du Plessis

direct across the Indian Ocean – probably using the coast of Oman and Yemen as a lead line – to make landfall on the Horn of Africa.

Although considered widespread throughout its breeding range with the population estimated at 1,000,000 individual birds, there are no recent verified statistics – China has yet not conducted a Bird Atlas project. The most recent maximum count at the 27 ‘winter’ roosts in South Africa only accounts for 114,320 birds. So either, there are still around 886,000 Amur Falcons to be found at roosts throughout Botswana, South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and southern Malawi, its entire wintering range, or the current population estimate needs drastic downwards revision.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). (IUCN: Least Concern)

South African Barn Swallows are overwhelmingly *Hirundo rustica rustica*, the nominate European subspecies, which breeds right across

Europe from Ireland to 91 degrees east, and as far north as the North Cape of Norway, which is some 500 km north of the Arctic Circle. There are five other subspecies and with an estimated worldwide population of 200 million plus, the Barn Swallow could not be considered of conservation concern.

From 1970-2008 the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) annual surveys have showed a long term increase of 22%, but the most recent report on the ‘*State of Europe’s Common Birds*’ 2008 contra indicates a slow reduction in numbers by some 7% from 1980-2006. This annual benchmarking of European breeding bird populations in 22 different European nations from Ireland to Romania, using common methodology and data is the most accurate indication of the breeding status and conservation of western and central European bird populations.

The first Barn Swallow ever recovered in South Africa, was in Natal on 23rd December 1912. Throughout most of the 20th century, these ringing recoveries of British-ringed birds in South Africa appeared to show that most Barn Swallows originated from Britain and Ireland, but this assumption was later shown to have been incorrect. As only the British were ringing swallows, the results were biased, as later ringing programmes from within South Africa have shown.

The most up-to-date information (*Roberts Birds of Southern Africa, 2005*) shows that of the 592 birds ringed in South Africa, 61.5% of those recovered were found in the Russian Federation, only 18.2% in Britain & Ireland and the rest through the remainder of western, central and eastern Europe. Other research indicates that Namibia hosts birds from FennoScandia; western South Africa hosts those from Britain and Ireland while those in eastern and northern SA including Gauteng, come from central and eastern Eurasia. The furthest recovery distance is an amazing 11,358km, of a bird ringed in Mossel Bay, W Cape and found in Petrovsk, Russian Federation.

Barn Swallows of the eastern subspecies *H.r.gutturalis* have a narrower central breast band and have occasionally been claimed from

north-eastern South Africa and KZN, but are very difficult to separate conclusively in the field.

Summary

The remaining 27 Palearctic migrants to be covered in future articles are: Osprey, Eurasian Marsh-Harrier, European Honey-Buzzard, Steppe Buzzard, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Booted Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, (Western) Red-footed Falcon, Eurasian Hobby,

Corncrake, Black-winged Pratincole, Common Cuckoo, European Nightjar, Common Swift, European Roller, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, European Bee-eater, Sand Martin, Common House Martin, Yellow Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Thrush Nightingale, River Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Eurasian Reed-Warbler, European Marsh-Warbler, Great Reed-Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Olive Tree Warbler, Willow Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Red-backed shrike and Lesser Grey Shrike. 🐦

Identification of Greenbuls

Raymond Schep

Tired of watching the Blue Bulls get outrun in their little pink outfits (The Pink Panters), I was wondering when the Blue Bulls were going back to wearing blue and their winning ways. The answer was soon to come; their coach was appointed Springbok coach, so yes the Bulls played their next games in green against England as the 'Greenbuls'.

Due to the amazing foresight of no less a luminary as Ian Sinclair and cohorts, there already existed a field guide to identification of Greenbuls called '*Birds of Southern Africa*'. So

without more ado, here goes...

- o Sombre Greenbul; inconspicuous but vocal - would that be Hougaard?
- o Tiny Greenbul; small size, paler underparts and grey crown - obviously Aplon.
- o Stripe-cheeked Greenbul; shy, difficult to locate - clearly Habana.
- o Yellow-streaked Greenbul; creeps about tree trunks - this must be Jantjies.
- o Yellow-bellied Greenbul; this must be Morné. 🐦

**Welkom nuwe lede, ons hoop u voel gou tuis
Welcome new members, we trust you will enjoy your birding with us**

Dewald Visser, Magalieskruin; Kathryn Pongonis, Arcadia; David, Luke and Grace Foster, Arcadia; Helga Bosch, Wapadrand; Maria Putter, Gezina; Marinda Boonzaaier, Gezina

**A huge thank you for your donation. Your contributions help us contribute towards bird conservation projects. We really appreciate it. (February – June 2012).
Baie dankie vir u donasie, u bydrae verseker dat ons 'n groter bydrae tot die bewaring van voels kan lewer. Ons waardeer dit opreg. (Februarie – Junie 2012).**

Elize Zybrands; Helen Robins; Elmi van Niekerk; Feridoom Barraghi

Besoek aan Balerno Bush Lodge – Julie 2012

Wanda Louwrens

Dit was 'n eerste vir die klub – die besoek aan Balerno Bush Lodge. Dit is naby Mapungubwe geleë – net 23 km vanaf die hoofhek en ongeveer 15 km vanaf die westelike deel. Die 455 km na Balerno het nie so ver gevoel nie en 'n ontbyt duskant Polokwane (Pietersburg) het die pad korter gemaak.

Vir Pieter en Amanda le Roux was dit ook 'n eerste – hulle twee het as leiers of koördineerders (Pieter verkies hierdie term) opgetree vir die naweek. Hulle het hulle goed van hulle taak gekwyd, en met goeie kommunikasie en diplomاسie alle probleme effektief opgelos en bewys dat hulle ware leiers kan wees! Ek glo hulle sal net van krag tot krag gaan. Hulle vuurdoop het gekom toe Mariaan en Joan “weggeraak” het. Hulle het op Musina gaan brandstof ingooi en na donker verdwaal. Na vele oproepe na Rita in die Wildtuin en Debbie in Johannesburg het ons klompie by die kamp vir Mariaan op die foon in die hande gekry en vir haar die pad beduie. Hulle was toe al oppad Alldays toe en terug! Pieter het hom na die ingang gehaas en met sy voertuig se ligte aan,

kon hulle toe maklik die ingang sien! Ons was so verlig om ons vriendinne terug te hê!

Die huisvesting was puik – in die groot outydse kombuis is alles wat oop-en-toe kan maak en genoeg pakplek in die baie ys- en vrieskaste. Die 12-sitplektafel was 'n gewilde kuierplek. Die kamers is goed toegerus – almal het met lof gepraat oor die baie kaste en hangplek – belangrik vir ons vroumense.

Die mopanieveld rondom die “lodge” het nie veel voëls opgelewer nie, maar die voerplek naby die lapa het 'n mannetjie en wyfie Dassievoël (Mocking Cliff-Chat), Gewone Blousysies (Blue Waxbill), Rooivlerkspreeus (Red-winged Starlings) en 'n Bandkeelkleinjantjie (Bar-throated Apalis) gelok.

Saterdag het die hele groep die rit na Mapungubwe aangepak en alhoewel dié tyd van die jaar die park droog en dor is, het die “Tree Top”-voëlskuiling spesies opgelewer soos die Tropiese Waterfiskaal (Tropical Boubou), Bosveldpapegaai (Meyer's Parrot), Witkoluil (Pearl-spotted Owlet), Oranjeborsboslaksman (Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike),



'n Paar lede van die groepie voor die Mapungubwe Museum

Swartkopwielewaal (Black-headed Oriole) en verskeie watervoëls soos die Reuserieer (Goliath Heron), Blouerieer (Grey Heron), Grootlangtoon (African Jacana), Driebandstrandkiewiet (Three-banded Plover), Bontkiewiet (Blacksmith Lapwing) en les bes 'n paar Hadedas (Hadedas Ibis). En oppad terug na die hek het 'n Swartborsslangarend (Black-chested Snake-Eagle) en 'n Breëkoparend (Martial Eagle) hul opwagting gemaak. Die groeple wat die dag die "World Heritage Site" besoek het, het 'n Kleinbyevreter (Little Bee-eater) en 'n Witkruisarend (Verreaux's Eagle) gesien.

Die westelike deel was minder produktief, maar het tog Witkatlagters (Southern Pied Babbler), Langstertglanspreeus (Meves's Starling), Lelspreeus (Wattled Starling) en Rooibek- en Jamesonse vuurvinkies (Red-billed and Jameson's Firefinch) opgelewer.

Sondagoggend is ons na die ou visteeldamme by Samaria. Dit is deel van die Parkeeraad se grond en Gerhard de Beer van Balerno het toegang vir ons gereël. Daar is vyf damme so groot soos rugbyvelde. Te midde van die

omgewing wat stowwerig en droog is, is die visdamme 'n oase in 'n woestyn. Die damme is vroeër gebruik om kurpers te teel. Van die 20 spesies wat ons daar gesien het, was die Gevlekte Sandpatrys (Burchell's Sandgrouse), die Kaapse Rietsanger (Lesser Swamp-Warbler), die Grootkoningriethaan (African Purple Swampphen) en die Swartriethaantjie (Black Crake) vir my die beste, waarvan twee "lifers" was.

'n Besoek die Sondagmiddag aan die grondpad vanaf Pongdrif langs die Limpopovier, het die besoek afgesluit. Met 119 spesies vir die naweek was die uitstappie die moeite werd.

Die kuiers in die aande om die kampvuur was egter vir my die hoogtepunt van die naweek. Gerhard het teenoor my opgemerk: "Ek het lanklaas 'n klomp vroumense so lekker hoor lag!" Die vrolikheid het die hele naweek geduur. Die klub het sulke oulike lede en dit is altyd lekker om saam met hulle te kuier.

Ons moet beslis in die somer weer soontoe gaan! 🦅

Outing with WUVEP – Sunday 1 July 2012

Philip Calinikos

On a balmy winter's morning, we were welcomed by Natasja and Pieter Saunders of the WUVEP (Wonderboom Urban Verreaux's Eagle Project) at the southern entrance to the Wonderboom Nature Reserve. A short drive up the concrete road brought us to the parking lot where some confiding Burchell's Zebra peered intently at us.

Pieter and Natasja led us down to the viewing point diagonally opposite the nest site. They had conveniently set up some scopes and gave us a brief overview of the breeding history of the pair of Verreaux's Eagles they have been studying and conserving for the past few years. The nest was clearly visible, approximately two thirds of the way up the opposite cliff face. The female bird, Kulinda, was perched in a protective position on a small tree slightly above the

nest. The male bird, Kuishi, was perched far in the distance on his favourite pylon. We could just make out the shape of the 45 day old youngster crouched low on the nest.

Soon after, Kulinda left her perch and swooped majestically away to land next to Kuishi on the pylon. They sat close together for some time while Pieter and Natasja regaled us with the most interesting facts that they had gleaned from their close monitoring of the eagles. Pieter showed us the detailed work sheet that they use to monitor each day's activities and it was most interesting to note that Kulinda would reward Kuishi with sexual favours after he had brought prey to the nest. It appears as if these eagles mate for pleasure as well as out of necessity!

Kulinda then rewarded our patience



Philip Calnikos

with the most spectacular fly past before she alighted on a mountain karee at the top of the ridge. An almighty battle with the tree then ensued with wings and legs thrashing, before she managed to break off a spray which she then carried to the nest. The fresh leaves are not only used to line the nest, but apparently they exude a substance or smell that acts as a deterrent to insects such as flies and keeps the nest relatively free of pests.

It was amazing to see that three hours had flashed by in the presence of the majestic birds.

In recognition of Pieter and Natasja's wonderful work in protecting and studying these birds, the club committee has agreed to assist them financially to set up a web cam which will allow even closer observation of the nest activity in the future. Should any of you wish to make a personal contribution or just obtain more detailed information please visit their website at www.blackeagleswb.com

[A very worthwhile and important project within the Pretoria city limits – Ed.] 🐦

Why do some birds leave the nest more quickly than others?

Many kinds of birds have young which are more independent after hatching. They are able to leave the nest almost straight away, and can walk or swim, and in many cases find food for themselves. These are known as 'precocial' species, and include all waterfowl, waders and gamebirds. Most of these birds nest on the ground, where being able to look after oneself is an urgent survival priority. Other groups, such as gulls, are 'semi-precocial', with the young active but remaining in the nest and still being fed by their parents; while herons and owls are less self-reliant and are known as 'semi-altricial' species. All songbirds, in contrast, are 'altricial'; they are born naked and blind, and must be fed by their parents until they are fully fledged.

Marrick Safaris Kamp - Kimberley

5-9 April 2012

Ryno Kemp

Dit was 'n groot voorreg om die langnaweek deel te wees van BLNG se uitstappie na Marrick Safaris naby Kimberley.

Oppad na Marrick het ons by Soutpan net buite Bloemhof gestop met die hoop om die flaminke te sien, maar was begroet met die mooiste Gysfraaiingpoot (Red Phalarope) en Rooibandstrandkiewiet (Chestnut-banded Plover), wat ons oppad terug weer daar gekry het. Met die Gysfraaiingpoot het ons naweek met 'n hoë noot afgeskop!

Ons het vroegeand by Marrick aangekom en die ander lede ontmoet. Die volgende oggend vroeg het die mense wat in die Guineaafowl huisie gebly het, die veld ingevaar. Koningblousysies, Bosveldtjerik, Swartwangsysie en die Priritbosbontrokkie is op die stappie rondom die kamp gesien.

Na die oggend in die veld is ons saam met Mark Anderson na die Kamferdam se

kunsmatige broeiplek wat vir die Groot- en Kleinflaminke gebou was. Ongelukkig was die broeiplek onder water. Mark en sy vrou Tania doen als in hul vermoë om die flaminke weer daar te vestig. Ons kon die middag langs die dam spandeer en kon sodoende 'n verskeidenheid watervoëls identifiseer. Die Groot- en Kleinflaminke het in groepe verby ons gevlieg waar ons na die Bontelsie, Bloubekeend, en Gevlekte Eend gekyk het. Ons het ook die Afrikaanse Oewerswael daar gesien.

Ons was bevoorreg om op 'n oggend- en aandrit te gaan op Marrick. Al was dit bibberend koud die oggend het ons die Dubbelbanddrawwertjie, Vlaktelewerik en Rooiborslaksman gesien. Van die ander lede van die groep het die Kaapse Kapokvoël gesien. Die aand was ons uiters bevoorreg om die skaars Erdvark te sien kos soek. Tussen die twee ritte by Marrick het ons 'n besoek afgelê by Magersfontein en was ons gelukkig om die Korttoonkliplyster daar te sien.

Sondag was ons al langs die Vaalrivier op 'n uitstappie. Dit is 'n prentjiemooi roete en ons het onder andere die Namakwa-suikerbekkie, Kuifkopvisvanger en die Witkruismuisvoël daar gesien. Die middag laat het ons 'n interessante besoek saam met Mark gehad na 'n aasvoël-broeiplek en weereens is daar vir ons interessante inligting gegee oor die gewoontes van die aasvoëls. Maandagoggend het ons opgestaan en reggemaak vir die lang pad huis toe, maar 'n draai gery om weer na die Dubbelbanddrawwertjie te gaan kyk. Dit was vir my 'n ongelooflike ervaring gewees en ek het baie geleer! Marrick en die Kimberley omgewing gaan my beslis weer sien!

[Wel gedaan, Ryno, met die vind van die Gysfraaiingpoot! – Ed.] 🐦



Ryno Kemp

Gysfraaiingpoot / Red Phalarope

Voëlberinging in Australië

Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg

Die kinders is nou 'n jaar in Perth, Australië. Met 125,000 Suid-Afrikaners daar woonagtig kan 'n mens dit seker (klein) Suid-Afrika in Australië noem. Ons is oppad om vir hulle te gaan kuier. Die verkykers en die kamera met die langlens is saam. Daar moet bewyse wees van die voëls wat ons sien. Ons kan nie net kuier nie, moet ook onder die kinders se voete uitkom en wat is nou 'n beter verskoning as ons gaan voëls kyk.

Die eerste voël wat ons begroet het, was die Australian Magpie. Wat 'n kordaat voël met sy wit en swart tooisels en seker die mees vokale voël in Wes-Australië. Ons totaal vir Wes-Australië staan tans op 105 spesies.

Aangesien ons voëlringers is, was deel van die voorbereiding vir die beplande besoek om uit te vind hoe werk Australië se voëlberinging. Met "birdringing" op Google het ons nie ver gekom nie, maar met "banding" het ek gou-gou op die "Bird and Bat Banding Scheme" afgekrom. Hul hoofkantoor is in Canberra. Binne 'n dag of twee was ons in verbinding met William Rutherford, of beter bekend as Bill. As ons wil saam ring, of is dit nou band, moes ons weer registreer as "C-Banders". Ons het die aansoekvorms voltooi en aan Bill gestuur vir sy aanbeveling. Na die inhandiging van die dokumentasie aan hoofkantoor het hulle ons laat weet dat ons nie as C-Banders hoef te registreer nie, omdat ons as internasionale gaste hanteer sal word.

Na die ergste "jetlag" verby is en ons ons 'n bietjie met die plaaslike voëls vereenselwig het, het ons vir Bill gaan opsoek. Hy beduie hulle "band" Saterdagoggend vanaf 06:00 by Herdsman Lake by die Settlers Cottage. Ons was netso voor 6 vm daar. Die eerste "bander" wat opdaag is Euro. Hy beduie hy is die "script" en hy hanteer geen voël nie. Net na hom daag Erin met Bill kort op haar hakke met sy bakkie en sleepwa. Erin is 'n C-Bander en dit is haar finale toets die maand. Sy sal al die maand se

sessies koördineer en indien goed genoeg sal sy haar A-Bander kwalifikasie ontvang.

Gou beduie Bill dat in Australië alle ringe en ringtoerusting deur die staat voorsien word. Geen "banding" mag plaasvind sonder dat daar 'n gemotiveerde projek geregistreer is nie. Dus word die ringe per projek uitgereik en teen die projek verreken. Hulle doen "constant banding" by Herdmans Lake en hy is daar vir so ongeveer 50 Saterdag per jaar. Vinnig leer ons wat bedoel die Aussies met "constant banding". Een 18 m en twee 30 m nette word op die "mount" gespan, vier 30 m nette word in die "reed bed" opgerig en die "grove" kry drie 18 m en twee 30 m nette. Elke Saterdag word hierdie hoeveelheid nette op dieselfde plekke gespan met 'n gemiddeld van ongeveer 90 voëls wat gevang word. Die enigste groot verskil tussen ons en hulle is dat hulle "callers" gebruik. Al die trekvoëls was reeds weg en daarom het hulle so tussen 10-12 verskillende voëlroep op die iPod se speellys gelaai en wat dan met klein luidsprekers in die middel van elke ry nette geplaas. As die somerbesoekers daar is, word



Marriette Jansen van Rensburg

Gerrie met 'n Australian Magpie

daar 'n paar van hulle gesange verruil ten koste van die plaaslike voëls.

Na al die nette gespan is, kom almal voor die "cottage" se stoep bymekaar. Die getal "banders" het intussen aangegroei tot 15, ons uitgesluit. Euro neem sy posisie in bo-op die stoep met sy knipbord en biometriesedata-vorm. Die C-Banders doen die ringwerk en die A-Banders bevestig hul afmetings. Soos die ses C-Banders hul data uitroep, skryf Euro als neer, asook die A-Bander se bevestiging vir korrektheid van die data vir elke C-Bander. Hoe die man kophou tussen als deur weet net hy, maar ek moet sê hy beheer die klomp A- en C-Banders met 'n ysterhand.

Bill gee opdrag dat elke nuwe spesie vir die internasionale gaste gereserveer moet word. My eerste Australiese voël is 'n Silver Eye. So op die oogaf lyk dit vir my of daar tussen hul Silver Eye en ons Garipeglasogie nie veel verskil is nie. Hulle het dieselfde kanelerige kleur op die bors en romp. Die tweede voël was meer besonder, 'n Grey Fantail en so stadig maar seker groei my lysie tot ses vir die oggend. Die laaste vir die dag was 'n jong wyfie Australian Magpie. Haar het ek gevang toe ek my begin verkyk het aan al die hulpmiddels wat hulle gebruik en van hulle begin uittoets het. Dit is toeklapwippe wat elektronies toegemaak word as die voël daarin kom. Saad mag uitgeplaas word in so 'n wip, maar geen lewende lokaas mag gebruik

word nie. Die Magpie het 'n allemintige bek. Sy byt nie net seer nie, maar vat stukke vel saam as jy jou vinger uit die bek wil trek. Los jy dat sy byt is die rant van die bek so skerp dat die vel ook waai. Dis 'n groot voël, amper soos ons Swartkraai en nogal sterk. Man moet sy vashou ken of die voël kom weg. Die klomp Aussies het hulle behoorlik verkreukel vir die Suid-Afrikaner wat so stoei met hulle voël. Die tweede een het in die sakkie gebly en net die dele wat gemeet moes word is uitgehaal en teruggeplaas. Hierdie keer was daar geen bloed nie.

Sekelik die mooiste gesigte was die papegaai wat die wêreld volvlieg. Die Galahs, 'n Aussie woord vir "silly" (dom), is my gunsteling. 'n Grys en pienk papegaai wat orals rond gespeel het. Hul grootste tydverdrijf, veral as dit reën, was om aan die kragrade te hang en te swaai. Hul spoed en ratsheid tussen die bome deur was verstommend. Ons het weer daar besef dit is onmense wat papegaai in klein hokkies aanhou. Hulle hoort in swerms buite tussen die bome en op die grond.

Ons het drie keer saam gaan band, waarvan een keer 'n langnaweek was. Soos ons mekaar beter leer ken het, het die vriendskappe ook gegroei. Erin 'n "marine ranger", het 'n projek behartig oor die Little Penguins. Ons was saam genooi na Penguin Island toe sy 'n monitering moes doen. Daar is verskeie mensgemaakte neste vir die pikkewyne uitgeplaas. Omdat hul broeiseisoen begin het, moes elke neskas nagegaan word. Die pikkewyne se mikroskyfies is nagegaan en hulle is geweeg. Wat 'n ervaring!!! Ek het ook hier my eerste pikkewyn "gemicrochip". Die Silver Gulls wat net soos ons Gryskopmeewie lyk, was ook vol aan die broei. Orals was neste met eiers of kuikens. Terwyl ons so tussen die meewie deur koes, breek pandemonium uit. 'n Little Eagle maak sy verskyning. Al wat 'n meewie is, storm op hom af maar ten spyte van hul gebly, vloek en skop, gryp hy 'n kuiken en gaan vreet dit doodluiters bo in die boom.

Ons deelname aan voëlberinging in Wes-Australië was voorwaar 'n eenmalige ondervinding. 🐦



Marjetjie Jansen van Rensburg

Besig om die 'banding' toerusting gereed te kry

Don't Miss the Boat!




Flock

The Annual Gathering of Members of BirdLife South Africa
— AT SEA 2013 —




1-5 March 2013, 4 nights 5 days
Cape Town - Walvis Bay return on MSC Opera

 This year's Annual Gathering of Members of BirdLife South Africa "Flock" offers a spectacular opportunity on a cruise in the Atlantic Ocean as we showcase and celebrate our work, with emphasis on the Seabird Division and the Albatross Task Force. It promises to be one of the best Flocks ever and definitely should not be missed.

BirdLife South Africa has negotiated special rates for this cruise. In addition to the AGM and Gala Dinner, birders can look forward to a varied programme of talks, courses, expert bird guides on watch "dawn to dusk" to help with seabird ID and to alert everyone to any special seabirds that we might encounter. Includes 4 meals a day and all the usual onboard entertainment and activities. There will also be a selection of shore-based tours at Walvis Bay.



 A huge diversity of seabirds, including albatrosses, petrels, skuas, etc., can be expected. Who knows what 'specials' might also turn up?

Starting from R3 552 p/person sharing. An additional discount for seniors over 60 years of age. Even bring the kids... kids 17 years and under sail free.

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email Nikki McCartney marketing@birdlife.org.za or phone 011 789 1122


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Birding on a mountaineering trip: Uganda 5 - 18 July 2012

By Christa van Schalkwyk

Birding and hiking never seems to work together as birding just takes too long and in the mountains you will never reach your destination if you don't keep moving. But sometimes it pays to carry your binoculars along because some special birds only occur only in the mountains. When I was invited to do a five day trek in the Rwenzori Mountains in Uganda, I decided to combine it with three days of birding in the nearby Kibale Forest.

On a previous trip to Uganda I had the opportunity to see the Shoebill and also made friends with some of the local bird guides. I immediately contacted Harriet Kemigisha who then referred me to Saul Ampeire from Bwindi. I asked if he could do a special tour with me for three days in Kibale, but he also recommended that I should include the Rwenzori Mountains as some Albertine Rift endemics occur there.

For this reason I carried my binoculars along on the mountain and I was not disappointed.

At our first camp I spotted one of the specials – the Blue-headed Sunbird. Later on in the day, the mountain guide stopped us and showed us the Rwenzori Turaco. We stood still for a moment and had good look at this turaco which you only find at altitudes between 2,200 and 3,400 m. The second and third days on the mountain were quite hard as we had to work through the mud and bogs to a higher altitude of 4,000 m. This is where I turned around and left my three friends to go on to conquer Margerita Peak, the highest peak in Uganda. This would have meant an extra four days which I was going to use for birding instead.

Walking back down the mountain, I had more time for birding and the mountain guide also pointed out a few birds like the Scarlet-tufted Sunbird and the Brown Woodland Warbler which continuously crossed our path. Another pleasant surprise was the Rwenzori Double-collared Sunbird which we discovered on the flowering St John's Wort in the heath vegetation.

On the last day I walked very slowly and just immersed myself in the Rwenzori forest and all the sounds. On the way down we came across White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher and Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater. One bird that mesmerised me was the Yellow-whiskered Greenbul, as I learned later from Saul.

That night I slept at the Rwenzori Trekkers lodge again where I met Saul, who had travelled all the way from Bwindi. The next day I walked through the forest again, but this time with a professional bird guide. As the climb back up to the forest would be quite time consuming, we rented two local "bodabodas" (motor bikes) and had a bumpy and exhilarating drive up the steep mountain path. I sat on the back of one and held on to the driver for



The group before the climb in the Rwenzoris

dear life, but he proved to be good at his job and I did not fall off.

We started the day by doing some birding at the park gate. Saul was immediately in control and I realised that the 60 USD I paid him per day were absolutely worth it. We saw a number of birds (which I had not noticed at same locations on the previous day); Black-crowned Waxbill, Black-and-White Mannikins, the stunning Red-headed Bluebill, Chubb's Cisticola, White-chinned Prinia, Grey-headed Negro Finch, and Mackinnon's Fiscal, to mention but a few.

We returned to the Trekkers lodge and after lunch started our journey to Kibale Forest to search for the Green-breasted Pitta. I did this tour without using any tour agencies, and just using local transport. One of the advantages of having Saul with me was that he could negotiate local prices. In Uganda you can get what is called a "private hire", i.e. a car with a driver. This was quite expensive, but Saul managed to negotiate a deal where we hired the car for three days, but Saul was the driver. Without an extra driver he costs came down considerably and we had the advantage of being able to move around as freely as we liked, stopping at places where and when we liked, in order to watch birds.

On the way we saw a number of birds such as Northern Double-collared Sunbird, African Blue Flycatcher, Cassin's Grey Flycatcher, and Purple-headed Starling.

Accommodation at Kibale National Park varies. There is the up-market Kibale Primate Lodge for which you pay 115 USD, just 5 minutes from the Park Gate. As it was high season, and I was a bit late with my booking for the moderate accommodation, I consulted Harriet. Harriet suggested that I should stay at Tinka's homestay, which I did not regret at all, as I learned more about how the local people live. In addition, I only had to pay R40 a day, for full board. This might not be everyone's cup of tea, but as I have done a lot of trekking all over the world, I found it quite comfortable and the meals were delicious and well prepared. The children also amused me with their stories in the evenings when we sat around an open fire.

Tuesday 13 July was to be the day for stalking the Green-breasted Pitta. We woke up at 5 am to be at the park gate at 6 am and started our walk in the dark. Gerald, the park guide who knows where to find this Pitta, accompanied us. On the previous day it had displayed beautifully for some birders from the UK, but only after they had waited for it very morning for a few days. We reached the place where they had spotted the bird on the previous day and then we waited. As it was dark there were no sounds in the forest. Then, like magic, the pitta was the first bird to call. We heard it call here, and then there. There must have been two. The way to see this Pitta is to find it where it makes its call while it is still sitting on a branch in the mid-canopy where it sleeps at night, because after that the bird flies down and spends the whole day on the ground. Then Saul spotted it sitting on a lateral branch. I was standing behind him and was the first to see it, but not well enough to see the colours. While Saul was trying to show the bird to the others who had joined us it flew down to the ground. We then tried to search for it on the ground, but after a long search we had to call it off. It was not the day for seeing the pitta doing its display.



Christa van Schalkwyk

Mountain hut accommodation

In the morning we found a Scaly-breasted Iliadopsis after hearing its call the whole morning. At the park gate we saw a lot of birds; Little Green Sunbird, Green Sunbird, Blue-throated Sunbird, Green-headed Sunbird, Western Nicator and Speckled Tinkerbird. Later in the afternoon we returned to search for the pitta again, as it also displays late in the afternoon, but instead we had a beautiful view of the very shy Blue-shouldered Robin Chat and the White-spotted Flufftail, which was nearby. Saul did his utmost to ensure that I had a good view of both of these birds.

On Wednesday morning we visited the Bigodi Swamp and added quite a number of birds to the list; Red-headed Malimbe, Snowy-headed Robin-Chat, Grey-winged Robin-Chat, Joyful Greenbul, Brown-eared Woodpecker; Bocage's Bush-Shrike, Red-bellied Paradise-Flycatcher, Brown-throated Wattle Eye, White-winged Warbler, a very good view of the Yellow-billed Barbet; and of course the Great Blue Turaco.

The next day I met up again with my three friends from the mountain. Hein and Helle work at the Norwegian Embassy in Kampala, and Karen Hauptfleisch was from South Africa. She was the only one who managed to summit the

peak at 5,100 m. Karen departed to continue her quest to climb all the highest peaks in each of the 53 African countries, of which she now has climbed 30. We spent our last day at the Queen Elizabeth National Park overlooking the African savannah and the next day Karen left for Rwanda and Burundi. I did not have more time and had to return to South Africa the next day.

For anyone who would like to do an off-the-beaten-track trip like me, I would recommend Saul Ampeire as your guide who is also available to fetch you in Kampala. He is a free-lance bird guide, and one of the best in Bwindi. My experience was that he would not stop until he had found the bird we were looking for. It is also useful that he can help with transport arrangements and such like. He can be contacted at saulampeire@yahoo.com; mobile: +256782438251

My bird list may not have been that long, but it was a quality list and I will definitely have to go back now to the Bwindi Forest to get more Albertine Rift ticks. 🐦

[A great adventure in one of the best birding and mountaineering countries in Africa, Christa – Ed.]

High jinks on the Limpopo

Ingrid van Heerden

In April of this year, BLNG visited Tumuga Camp on the Limpopo. The accommodation was excellent with double storey chalets, a well equipped kitchen and dining room, a luxurious lapa with observation deck, and camping facilities overlooking the river. Despite signs of drought in the veld, the vegetation on the river banks was lush and often impenetrable.

After the first morning those of us who inhabited the chalets to the right* of the lapa, heard reports that the campers who lived to the left of the lapa, had been privileged to see an African Finfoot paddling along the river. Needless to say, the right-hand birders were rather miffed to have missed this elusive bird.

Our chagrin increased on the second day,

when the left-hand birders confirmed that the "Watertrapper" with his bright orange feet had once again swum past them in the early morning. We then reached an agreement with Philip and Mandy who were camping and being entertained by the Finfoot, that they would call us the moment this furtive bird put in another appearance.

On the third morning, the right-hand birders had just completed breakfast when true to form, the Finfoot started his daily constitutional along the Limpopo. "Come quickly," called Philip and like a flock of francolins we all raced to the left. Imagine our disappointment when we arrived to scan the water with nary a sign of our Finfoot! After inspecting every single reed

along that section, I sadly made my way back to our part of the riverfront.

But Philip is a faithful leader and I was just mentally assigning the Finfoot to perdition, when he came to fetch me once more with the battle cry "Watertrapper!" Once more I scuttled round the lapa and there in all his glory was our Finfoot paddling purposefully – wait for it – downstream in the direction of our chalets! We tracked him with our binocs, ran around the lapa once more and then could sit in peace on our stoep watching this special water bird skimming all the way down the Limpopo.

So after three days and countless unsuccessful right-to-left forays on the banks of the Limpopo, the right-hand birders also got a good sighting of the African Finfoot. As someone remarked "Die Watertrapper het nou pragtig vir ons water getrap!" As it says in our 3rd Edition of Sasol, the Finfoot is really "a shy, furtive species" that inhabits "densely vegetated rivers with overgrown banks."

The second episode of high jinks on the Limpopo occurred when Charles and Saretha encountered the mamba (see elsewhere in this edition). Thankfully this second episode also had a good ending, but I do wonder why the dear birds and beasts have to be so perverse?

* Right and left in this case refer to someone facing the Limpopo.

Reference:

Sinclair I, Hockey P, Tarboton W, 2002. *Sasol Birds of Southern Africa*, Third Edition. Struik Publishers, Cape Town.

[African Finfoot is an elusive and secretive species Ingrid, and many birders, including myself, took years to get a decent view of one. There will always be some luck of course in seeing one, but it is more about a measure of stealth and patience, as the BLNG group discovered! – Ed.] 🐦

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.



A birding holiday or a holiday birding – The fun and the frustration!

Alan Whyte

The Seychelles – what a glorious place for a family holiday with sun, azure sea, snorkelling, fishing, coconut palms and... birds! That is if you have the time to watch birds when on holiday with a well balanced family who love birds, but also like to shop, drink beer and laze on a white beach.

I came away from the islands having had a wonderful holiday, but with some regrets at “dipping out” on some of the rarest birds on earth. But, then again I also saw some truly amazing birds without really trying.

To be right in the midst of such rarities as the Seychelles Scops Owl, Seychelles Black Parrot, Seychelles Warbler, Seychelles Magpie Robin and Seychelles Kestrel and not see one of these truly rare and endangered birds is a bit of a blow for someone who enjoys bird watching. But, we had to get on – there was a fishing trip planned, and the girls had things to buy!

The Seychelles main islands are granite outcrops situated in the eastern Indian Ocean, surrounded by hundreds of smaller islands, and atolls, many thousands of kilometres from any continent. Amazingly there are no indigenous mammals on these islands because they have been cut off from any mainland for 65 million years, and this was before mammals had even evolved. The granitic islands are the oldest ocean islands in the world, so for many millennia the intrepid species that managed to island hop to get to the Seychelles evolved in relative peace, and at their own pace. Of course it was easy enough for the sea birds to fly thousands of kilometres across the ocean and find these remote islands, but how on earth did the tiny endemic warblers (the ones that evolved into the rare Seychelles Warbler), flycatchers, drongos, and others manage this? Perhaps they were carried there in the eye of a fierce Indian Ocean cyclone? Or did they cross on floating

vegetation? How would they have survived such a crossing and how fortuitous to find these island specks in the vast ocean. Just one bird surviving this hazardous crossing would not ensure the survival of the species, so a few must have made it, and did migration instinct perhaps play a role?

Then came man in the 1750s bringing his machete, his rats, cats, pigs and settlers and this was the beginning of the end for many species. The Seychelles Parakeet became extinct in 1883, the Pink-backed Pelican was extinct by 1930, Seychelles Chestnut-flanked White-eye was extinct in early 20th century, and the Purple Swamp-Hen and Abbott’s Booby disappeared [Although thankfully some birds such as the pelican and the booby are found elsewhere in the world – Ed.]. The Aldabra Warbler was only discovered in 1967 and extinct by 1983, and its young were never seen! Oh, you *Homo sapiens* have a lot to answer for!

We started our holiday on the main island of Mahé where the enchanting Fairy Terns (the only pure white tern in the world) are common, and where the confiding Barred Ground Doves walk among the coffee cups at breakfast pecking up the croissant crumbs, where the small and rather drab Seychelles Sunbirds race around the flowering plants in the hotel gardens, and where our old friend (or foe?) the Common Myna is very common. I enjoyed seeing a Common Greenshank at a dam in the island interior, and the red-headed Madagascar Fody is common and reminded us of our Red-headed Weavers.

One afternoon on the beach a White-tailed Tropicbird flew low over our heads, but did not stay long enough to get the binoculars focussed.

We were amused to see Cattle Egrets at the open market in Victoria standing on the fresh fish counters amongst the fish that was for sale.

The very fishy smell attracted many flies, and the egrets were pretty good at snapping them up. My family was a bit thoughtful about the hygiene situation, and quickly went off to look at the rows of colourful dresses hanging up to attract shoppers.

From Mahé we crossed on the ferry to the next largest island called Praslin, where the bird interest picked up! As we arrived at our hotel one could not miss the very noisy Seychelles Bulbul, their calls reminding us of a flock of our Arrow-marked Babblers. We grew very fond of these bulbuls with their confiding nature and Kobus Wiese hair styles!

Perhaps the highlight of our stay on Praslin was a visit to the pristine and well cared for World Heritage site of Vallee De Mai National Park. This is the reserve of the endemic Coco de Mer palms that apparently have the rarest and largest fruit of any plant in the world. A slow walk through this lush, tropical palm forest is well worthwhile, and as this is the stronghold of the rare Black Parrot we were anticipating seeing it at any moment. However, this was not to be and we came away without this mega tick. But we did have a truly great view of a Seychelles Blue Pigeon with his rich blue colours off-set by a white head and bright red face – a really magnificent pigeon.

We spent one challenging day out at sea fishing in a brisk south-easter, with towering swells and choppy waves. Now this kind of birding is a challenge for someone who is not very familiar with pelagic birds! We were treated to

wonderful views of swirling terns as they dived in their hundreds onto the small bait fish shoals, and this is where the skipper steers the boat, as where the birds gather so do the Wahoo, Dorado and Bonito! We caught some fish, but how do you look through binoculars, hang on to the boat's superstructure, fish, take photos and still be sure whether you are looking at Brown or Lesser Noddy, Sooty or Bridled Tern, Wedge-tailed or Flesh-footed Shearwater when the boat is plunging like a badly behaved horse? I think we saw all of the above but could not be sure! Audubon's Shearwater was a definite tick, but the rest were very difficult to confirm.

One morning we saw across the bay five large Frigatebirds circling in an updraught, for all the world like our vultures. Their very long "M" shaped wings and deeply forked tails make them unmistakable, but at that distance it was not possible to tell whether they were Greater or Lesser, but to see these majestic masters of the air was a thrill. They often catch flying fish just below the surface of the sea, or may relentlessly pursue other sea birds until they disgorge the fish in their crops, and then catch the flying meal in mid air! They are unable to land on water as they do not have webbed feet or oiled feathers and would drown within minutes, yet they travel thousands of kilometres from land in their search for prey. The combination of very long wings, light bones and small bodies give these birds the lowest wing-loading of any bird in the world, and thus enables them to fly so effortlessly.

How do birds sing?

They produce sounds through an organ in the throat called the syrinx, which is unique to birds. Air is inhaled from the lungs through the syrinx, where it passes across membranes, which vibrate and produce sound. Using various pairs of muscles attached to the syrinx, the bird can then vary its song in four different ways: pitch, tone, rhythm and volume. By doing so birds as a whole are able to produce an incredible variety of sounds, ranging from a simple monosyllabic call to an avian aria of amazing complexity.

We then crossed to the small island of La Digue (only 1000 hectares in size) which is a short ferry ride from Praslin. As with the other granitic islands, it has a high central mountainous ridge covered with lush vegetation and large trees, and transport was mainly by bicycles or charming ox carts.

On our first evening we sat on the beach with cold, local Seybrew beers, watching the sunset. We were entertained by a Green-backed Heron crouching, stalking and occasionally capturing the tiny ghost crabs that come out of their holes at dusk. The heron was adept at cutting the crabs off from their burrows, and even chasing them into the sea to catch them. The fact that we were only a few paces away did not deter him. Green-backed Herons were quite common, and we regularly saw them patrolling their stretch of beach.

From a birding point of view the definite highlight was to find the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher, an endemic of La Digue. There is nothing quite like seeing one of the rarest birds in the world and knowing that there are only about 200 left on earth! They are very like our Paradise Flycatchers but show greater sexual dimorphism in that the males are all black with a deep purple sheen and very long

tail streamers, while the female has chestnut brown upperparts, a black head and creamy white underparts. Their call is very like the call of our bird, and the female bird's colouration quite similar except for the black head. There is an eight hectare reserve set aside on the island for the protection of these critically endangered birds, and by all accounts they are now slowly recovering in spite of the presence of cats and rats and it is speculated that the reason is because people are no longer killing them. Their eggs are eaten by other birds, and the Seychelles Bulbul is one known culprit, and then there is always the risk of a cyclone destroying their nests. I saw five of these birds over the five days we were on La Digue so I saw 2.5% of the world's total population!

An interesting endemic bird that was quite commonly seen on La Digue was the Seychelles Swiftlet, another bird that ranks as critically endangered with an estimated population of only 1,000 birds. It nests in caves and its cave nesting sites urgently need conserving and protection if it is to survive.

A few other species that we got on the list was Common Waxbills, Madagascar Turtle Doves, five Ruddy Turnstones in a group on a slipway, Common Moorhen, and House Sparrows.

So I came away from the Seychelles having enjoyed the holiday immensely without seeing a fraction of the possible 250 birds on the checklist, but it is a fascinating place to visit with fabulous snorkelling, tropical fish, coral reefs, huge fruit bats that emerge at dusk, bright emerald green geckos that click away to each other at night, giant 90 year old tortoises and lovely friendly people.

But I would like to see all those other rare endemics, the nesting birds on Bird Island, and the coral atolls (but beware of Somali pirates!), but that will have to be a dedicated birding holiday with no shopping to distract!

Until then I will hang on to that great book *Birds of Seychelles* (a Helm Field Guide) by Adrian Skerrett, Ian Bullock and Tony Disley. 🐦

Spectacled weaver



Birding Finland & Norway – Part One

John Bannon

A group of birders from BirdLife Northern Gauteng go birding from Helsinki to Varangerfjord in Northern Norway – Friday June 8th to Tuesday June 19th 2012.

Five SA members of BirdLife Northern Gauteng, namely André Marx, Verona Veltman, Tana Coetzer, Betsie Lategan and Anneke Vincent plus Sandy Mason and trip organiser, John Bannon, met up at Helsinki Airport on the early afternoon of Friday June 8. The BLNG contingent had flown in from Joburg on Lufthansa via Frankfurt.

Our 11 nights, 12 days itinerary gave us the first two nights to 'acclimatise' in the Helsinki area, before flying to Oulu in central Finland, Then eastwards by road to Kuusamo for three nights, before heading north and crossing the Arctic Circle to Vestre Jakobselv, on the southern shores of Norway's fabled Varangerfjord.

Our 4,500 km quest for the mythical Cinnamon Bun (see later) produced an excellent trip list of no less than 197 species - not all seen or even heard by all team members of course - but with some exceptional sightings.

Our 'official photographer' Sandy Mason, was quite unlike the somewhat obsessive,

never satisfied, bird photographers that we all know and love, and instead was very much part of our small, friendly team.

Finland has 5,4 million people, less than the Joburg-Pretoria metropolis, but they are thinly spread across 338,000 square km, with around 50% living in the Helsinki area and along the south coast. In the far north, Lapland has around 20,000 inhabitants, which is less than two people per square kilometre. It also has 188,000 lakes and literally billions of trees.

Birding 'Highlights'

Friday June 8

After checking in at our hotel near Helsinki, we set off for a late afternoon's birding at Suomenoja, a very productive, reedy lagoon, overlooked by the chimneys of a power station. Thrush Nightingales sang incessantly and dozens of immaculate Slavonian Grebes attended to their nests on the edges of the vast reed beds. Accompanied by the deafening chorus of thousands of nesting Black-headed Gulls, the waterfowl species came thick and fast and we



Scoping for birds in Helsinki harbour

soon added Eurasian Coot, Common Moorhen, Eurasian Shoveler, Northern Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Gadwall, Eurasian Teal and real Mallard.

A male Pied Flycatcher gave us excellent views and singing warblers included numerous Sedge, plus European Reed, Great Reed, Common Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap and Willow Warbler. Other gulls included the enormous Great Black-backed, plus fuscus Lesser Black-backed, Herring and Common Gulls. To finish, a superb rosy-breasted Common Rosefinch gave his distinctive 'pleased to meet you' song from the willows.

Saturday June 9

At 05:45 the next morning, we were standing on the banks of a river in suburban Helsinki with Tuomas Seimola, our guide, trying to listen to a whole host of warblers over the loud songs of Thrush Nightingales.

Blyth's Reed, Marsh and a just arrived River Warbler competed with the vociferous Sedge Warblers, Common Whitethroats, Garden Warblers and Blackcaps. Other 'ticks' included Northern Lapwing, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Tree Sparrow and Stock Dove. Eventually we all managed to get brilliant 'scope' views of a

singing Blyth's Reed Warbler, perched up in a nearby bush.

We then moved on to Vanhankaupunginselka NR – thankfully also better known as 'Vikki' – where through the scope we got onto the very distant, but just about tickable, Citrine Wagtails plus Yellow and White Wagtails, Grey Heron, Jackdaws, Mute Swan and several Eurasian Marsh Harriers.

Returning to the car park through the mature woodlands, we stopped to admire a pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers at their nest hole, right next to the track as Icterine Warblers and Stock Doves sang from the canopy around us. Then Tuomas told us all to follow him ... quietly, as he had just heard the quiet 'chip' contact calls of White-backed Woodpecker and after a few minutes we all had fantastic views of this very scarce and elusive species. Nearby, we also added Linnet, Ortolan Bunting, Yellowhammer, Spotted Flycatcher and both Barnacle and Greylag Geese to our growing trip list, most of which were lifers for our group.

Next on the list were woodland species and where mature forests produced our first singing Greenish and Wood Warblers, and a Sparrowhawk flashed by. Goldcrests, Robins and Dunnocks sang, but best of all, a male Red-breasted Flycatcher gave his lilting song from the very top of a spruce tree.

We ate our lunch overlooking some coastal meadows where a Common Snipe 'chipped' from the very top of an oak tree. Eurasian Cuckoo and Tree Pipits called continuously, a Hobby swept through and noisy Common Redshank and Little Ringed Plovers displayed all around us. Our first handsome male Shoveler was seen well and some of us even managed a brief glimpse of an Osprey.

We took in some of the tourist stops of downtown Helsinki on the way back. The harbour area was bustling with cars, trams, small ferries, enormous cruise liners, sailing ships, market stalls, people ... and birds. We added Feral Pigeon, Common Eider, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Great Cormorants, both Common and Arctic Terns and Shelducks, with



John Bannan

Checking a Tengmalm's Owl nest

lots more nesting Barnacles and Greylags. The world's most delicious Italian ice-cream stall was selling an amazing kaleidoscope of different colours and flavours, which despite the cool, grey, weather we just couldn't resist.

Our final stop was at a tall lintutornio (birdwatching tower) overlooking another bay, where more new species made it onto our list, including two wonderful 'dusky' Spotted Redshanks, an equally striking male Garganey, several Wigeon and Common Teal, a huge Caspian Tern, three dainty Little Gulls plus Yellow Wagtails, Ringed Plovers and our first Canada Geese which all added to the interest, at this very productive site.

However, Tuomas had saved the best for last, when he showed us a pair of amazing Penduline Tits, busily constructing their intricate new home for the summer. As we said farewell to Tuomas, we rewarded him with a tip of no less than 50 trillion dollars – in Zimbabwean currency of course.

Sunday June 10

We decided on another early morning at the nearby Nuuskio National Park. We stopped at a large boggy clearing with lots of dead tree stumps and bushes. As Green Sandpipers and Common Snipe displayed overhead, Red-backed Shrikes chased each other from bush to bush and a Black Woodpecker was even heard, but unfortunately not seen. Close views of Siskins, Northern Bullfinches, Fieldfares, Redwings and Bramblings followed, but only Great Spotted Woodpecker put in an appearance.

The flight to Oulu was less than an hour and we were soon picking up another white, 4WD, nine-seater VW Transporter and heading for our overnight accommodation at the world-renowned Liminganlahti Nature Reserve. There, we met up with our next Finnature guide, Matti Sillanpaa, who was a veritable mine of local birding knowledge.

Before long we were watching an adult female Pygmy Owl at her nest box full of baby owls, but dipped again on Black Woodpecker, but as some consolation we watched a female

Goldeneye leaving her nest hole in a road-side aspen. A large jarvi (lake) held a pair of Black-throated Divers, while calling Common Greenshank and a Common Sandpiper were on the lake edge.

Monday June 11

At 4:15 am we were 'ticking' some very northerly Collared Doves plus Lesser Whitethroat in the centre of the nearby village. Another big birding day was on the cards as we saw our first Pintails in roadside fields and several Woodcocks were 'roding' overhead.

Our first Common Buzzard was sat up in a roadside clearing and a Black Woodpecker was seen briefly in flight by some. We eventually reached a small car park where very Common Redstarts and Chiffchaffs sang and millions of mozzies buzzed – so we all OFFed-up and followed Matti's tracks into the forest. [OFF is an anti-mosquito repellent obtainable everywhere in Finland – Ed.]. After only 10 minutes he beckoned to us to be quiet and ushered us forward - sat on a low branch very close to us was a baby Great Grey Owl. As Matti approached closer the enormous female swept in and perched up to keep a careful eye on proceedings. Matti then produced two recently deceased, fat



Annie Marx

Great Grey Owl adult female

juicy rodents and carefully fed them whole to the chick. Mum occasionally 'bill clapped' in warning, but like her young one she also readily accepted Matti as a surrogate parent and showed no real concern at all as he continued to feed her youngster. She was probably very grateful for the extra help. The vole situation in southern and central Finland is disastrous this year, so supplementary feeding by volunteers like Matti is helping to support the few pairs that have bred and it was extremely satisfying to see the trusting bond between 'his' owls and himself. What an amazing experience!

A European Honey-Buzzard soared over the road, giving us excellent views and some time later we pulled off into yet another forest track - but this time we needed our portable ladder. Some four metres up in a nest box was a female Tengmalm's Owl and her brood of youngsters. She was not inclined to pop her head out as these owls usually do, so we all went to see her. Nearby a male Crested Tit was singing loudly and we all had excellent close views of him and also the tiny jewel of a male Goldcrest, which had a nest close by.

By now it was already mid-morning and we had been birding solidly for six hours, but we also had more birds to find. A large clearing with some open fields eventually gave us distant views of a 'northern' Great Grey Shrike and

as we were clambering back into the van, Matti shouted "Pallid Harrier!" as a fine male flew right overhead. Our last target bird was Three-toed Woodpecker and as luck would have it, en-route to the nest site, two birds flew alongside our van. However, we still decided to visit the nest hole, which was a very bad decision! Every mosquito this side of the Urals descended upon us and even the OFF spray was swamped by the hordes from hell!

Our next stopover was in Kuusamo, close to the Russian border and one of my favourite birding places in the world. Several scarce species of eastern distribution are found there including the beautiful Red-flanked Bluetail, Little Bunting and Rustic Bunting and the four grouse species, such as Willow Grouse, the enormous Capercaillie, Black Grouse and Hazelhen, plus Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit, Red-necked Grebe, Smew and many other gems. On the drive to our hotel we stopped at a large bog overlooked by another lintutorno, which gave us distant views of Common Cranes, nesting Whooper Swans, displaying Green Sandpipers and Eurasian Hobby.

At our hotel in Kuusamo, nother early start was arranged with Antti Peunna, our next, very young, Finnature guide, but not before a quick look around the local area. We searched the local back roads for Hazelhen, some of us seeing a male's tail disappear into the forest, but they were just not responding to their 'whistle' call. More Woodcock 'roding', Little Gulls, nesting Red-necked Grebes, displaying Wood Sandpipers and a Short-eared Owl right over our heads was a perfect finish to the day, in the bright midnight sunlight!

Tuesday June 12

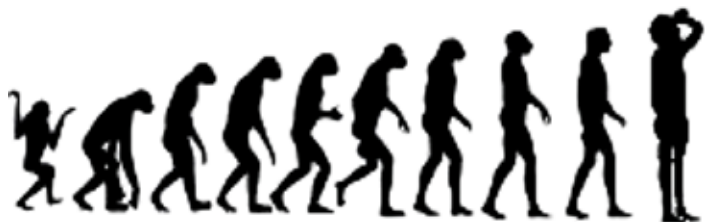
Another 5am start with Antti meant that we quickly had Willow Grouse and Little Bunting on our list, more Red-necked Grebes and Velvet Scoter. Little Gulls and Arctic Terns were everywhere and an Osprey and Black-throated Diver were 'scoped' sitting on their nests. Near a Black Grouse lekking ground, we watched in amazement as a very fierce cock Merlin pursued a



Bets Lategan

Mosquito gimp masks – to save the group from mozzie hell!

Evolution of man!



Contributed by Susan Velthuisen

Skylark right into the ditch alongside us. Willow Tits carried food to their nest and a splendid male Brambling sang from the very top of a pine. Another search for Capercaillie was unsuccessful, but we did manage brief views of the very common Common Redstart.

By impersonating their calls, Matti then called in a family party of four Siberian Jays before we had even reached the world famous Valtavvara car park. As we set off up the hill we heard the Red-flanked Bluetail's distinctive song almost immediately and eventually we all had superb scope views of this marvellous bird. Several Common Crossbills flew over and then a Two-barred Crossbill was seen flying over giving its distinctive flight call.

Nearby a Greenish Warbler was heard and then a mega bird appeared right at the top of the nearby trees. "Pine Grosbeak!" shouted Antii and we all got onto a superb male in the 'scope, savouring its absolutely stunning pinkish/red plumage. Next up were Siberian Tits visiting their nestbox in some dry, sandy pine woodland and a very handsome male Whinchat proclaiming his territory by the roadside.

We had virtually cleared up on Kuusamo's birds, but after dinner some of us took a quick trip out to see if we could add Dipper to our list. It was under the very same bridge where I had seen it in 2009, but Bets seemed even more delighted by the Highland 'coos' [cows] in the fields near the joki (river).

Wednesday June 13

My other team members left me in my pit and set off for the delights of the Kuusamo

tip. It wasn't very productive but a quiet road nearby gave them a female Capercaillie – a big lifer, albeit not the striking male bird.

Today was earmarked for Oulanka National Park, where hopefully my pilgrimage to purchase Cinnamon buns would be over. On my only previous visit to the excellent Naturkeskusta, the Cinnamon buns had been superb and I was eager to introduce my compatriots to their delights – if only I could find anywhere that sold them!

Antti had given us the location of another Black Woodpecker nest and with the exact tree being pointed out to us, we all sat on the convenient steps of the nearby timber yard office to await their arrival. What an arrival! First the male, making his strange 'klaaar' contact calls, then the female and then both birds together.

Unfortunately, the cafe had sold out of Cinnamon buns, so as we slowly made our way back towards Kuusamo, coming across a huge immature Goshawk being mobbed by Fieldfares, also seeing two Eurasian Jays, and superb views of a Common Cuckoo on the railings of a dam wall. We finished off at a nearby lake which had five immaculate drake Smews, 10 Velvet Scoter, several Muskrats and hundreds of Little Gulls feeding on midges.

It was time to head back to the Sokos Hotel and enjoy our last evening in Kuusamo, for tomorrow we would be heading well north beyond the Arctic Circle to Norway's fabled Varangerfjord!

[Part 2 will appear in the next edition – Ed.] 🐦

Notes on the birds of New Zealand

George Cox

From 8 to 15 April 2012 I visited the South Island of New Zealand together with Elsie and our daughter Wendy, who lives in Sydney. We were struck by the beauty of the country, so different to Australia! From Christchurch airport, we made our way to Invercargill and then by ferry to Stewart and Ulva Islands off the southern tip of New Zealand. Thereafter, we went via Te Anau and Queenstown to Nelson in the north. Here I include a few notes on some of the birds we saw.

New Zealand has 68 endemic species of birds and some of them are restricted to one or more of the surrounding islands. Since 1900 five endemic species have become extinct and it is quite possible there were more species present before the first inhabitants arrived. The reasons for this assumption are, and I quote from *DK Eyewitness Travel, New Zealand*:

“New Zealand is famed for its unusual birds. Evolving without significant predators, such as rats, cats or dogs, to menace them, they lost any reason to fly. Some not only became flightless, but also developed into some of the largest birds ever to have lived. When Maori arrived, they discovered the huge moa, which stood more than 2 m (7 ft) tall. As a result of being hunted, the moa became extinct 300-500 years ago.”Some scientists, however, believe that Maori arrived as long ago as 2,000 years, but these early settlers did not survive for long. Nonetheless, the rats that they brought with them went on to devastate the native bird, lizard and frog populations.”

Although we did not visit some of the important birding spots, we did manage to tick off the following endemic species: Bellbird, Black-billed Gull, Brown Creeper, Brown Kiwi, Buller's Mollymawk (Albatross), Grey Warbler, Kaka (a parrot), Kea (the only alpine parrot in the world), New Zealand Pigeon, New Zealand Falcon, New Zealand Robin, New Zealand Scaup, Paradise Shelduck, Rifleman

(New Zealand's smallest bird), Rock Wren, Saddleback, Tomtit, Tui, Stewart Island Shag (similar to a cormorant), Variable Oystercatcher and the Weka (flightless type of rail).

The New Zealand Robin is an inquisitive and confiding dark slaty-grey forest bird. Those found in the South Island have a yellowish-white lower chest and belly. If you scratch amongst the leaf litter on the forest floor, it will approach to within 30 cm to see if any food has been exposed.

To see the Brown Kiwi, Phillip Smith, a bird guide from Stewart Island, took a group of us by boat to Ocean Beach. As we first had to walk through a forest we were each given a torch, but once we reached the beach only Phillip used his, in order to avoid the risk of shining it directly at any bird. We saw two adult females feeding at ease some distance apart. The female has a long decurved ivory bill, which she uses in a similar manner as the Hadedra. The male has a shorter bill. We also saw a juvenile, but it scurried for cover. 🐣



Rifleman – New Zealand's smallest bird

George Cox

Communal roosting of Dark-capped Bulbul (*Pycnonotus tricolor*)?

R Fieldwick and PD Tattersall



Dinica van Rensburg

We visited Rietvlei Nature Reserve, a few kilometres south of Pretoria, on Saturday 11 August, 2012. At about 07:00, just after sunrise, we observed 70 Dark-capped Bulebuls in the upper branches of a single tree. This tree was sited within a clump of about five trees located in a large area of rolling grassland. The birds were well distributed and stationary (not foraging) within the tree and we gained the impression that they had roosted there. Whilst we were watching them, the birds started leaving the tree, a few at a time. After 10 minutes or so, the birds had all left and they had all flown westwards towards nearby agricultural holdings and, further on, towards suburbia.

Although the Seventh Edition of *Robert's Birds of Southern Africa* records that Dark-capped Bulebuls have been observed foraging in mixed bird-feeding parties of 100 birds or so, it reports that this species is normally found singly, in pairs or in small parties. There is no mention of communal roosting. 🐦

Encounter with a Mamba at Tumuga Lodge

Charles Gilfillan

On Sunday 29th April 2012, Saretha and I decided to go for a drive to find one of the largest single stem Baobab trees in the Southern Hemisphere which grows near Swartwater. While we were still travelling on Tumuga farm, a small bird that we identified as a Barred Wren-Warbler flew across the road in front of the bakkie from left to right. I stopped and opened my door to get myself into the best position to see the bird. As a result my right leg was outside the vehicle and my foot was hanging about 30cm off the ground.

While looking at the bird something caught my eye in front of my foot and under the door. When I looked down, I discovered a Black

Mamba was staring at my foot and that its head was moving back and forth in unison with the movements of my foot. I uttered a few choice words (which will not be repeated in a reputable magazine like *Laniarius*), pulled my foot into the vehicle and slammed the door. The snake reared about a meter up in the air, spun around and vanished into the tree which contained the Barred Wren-Warbler.

Needless to say Saretha and I subsequently observed the bird from the confines of the bakkie. We were not prepared to get out to have a closer look at the warbler after our meeting with the mamba. We observed the bird for a while and then continued on our way to the Baobab. 🐍

'n Nessie op die Stoep

Elke Geggus

Toe ons einde Mei vir 'n paar dae in die Karoo Nasionale Park gaan kuier het, het ons dadelik gesien dat daar by ons chalet 'n nes onder die stoep se dak was. Kort voor lank het die ouers opgedaag om die kleintjies te voer, en ons kon sien dat dit Rooivlerkspreeus was. Hulle het die stoep redelik bemors, maar dit was in elke geval al te koud om buite te wees, en die voëls het ons nie gepla nie.

Tot ons verbasing het een babavoëltjie die volgende oggend op die vloer van die stoep gesit. Alhoewel dit gelyk het asof sy verekleed al mooi volledig was, kon hy nog nie vlieg nie, en het hy net nou en dan sy vlerke geklap en heen en weer gehop. Gelukkig het al twee ouers hom gereeld kom voer. Die 'geen skoonmaakdienste benodig' papier wat ons teen die voordeur geplak het, het die werkers ook van die stoep af weggehou.

Toe ons seun die middag van Kaapstad by ons aangesluit het, is die voëltjie opnuut bewonder. Ons het almal besef hoe weerloos hy was, en dat dit eintlik 'n wonderwerk sou wees as hy dit sou oorleef. Ek het ook gesien dat die ouers op 'n keer 'n kraai wat daar naby sy draaie gevlieg het, probeer verjaag het.



Elke Geggus

Ons het gekom en gegaan sonder dat dit die voëltjie of sy ouers baie gepla het, maar later het die ysig wind al hoe sterker gewaai en Rudi het gesê dat ek 'n nes moes maak vir die voëltjie, want op daardie stadium het hy net agter 'n besem op die stoep geskuil. Toe dit voel asof die wind die hortjies (hulle het wonderbaarlik nie geraas nie) van die chalet wou afwaai, het ek maar besluit om die mans tevrede te stel en vir die voëltjie 'n nessie te maak. Baie teen die reëls het ek 'n graspol uitgetrek en dit agter die besem gesit en dit met een van die mooi swart klippe vasgedruk. Ek het stadig om die voëltjie beweeg terwyl ek dit gedoen het om hom nie te verjaag nie. Die ouers het alles baie fyn dopgehou en snaaks genoeg nie geskree nie, soos hulle dit hier by ons sou doen nie, maar net die heelyd saggies vir hulle baba gefluit.

Later het ons gesien dat die spreetjie bo-op die klip gaan sit het, maar toe ons laat in die aand van die restaurant terug gekom het, het hy snoesig onder die grassies geslaap. Ma en pa was nêrens te sien nie.

Die Karoo NP het onlangs sewe leeus gekry, en die hele kamp moes dus met 'n elektriese heining voorsien word. Dit het tot gevolg gehad dat 'n mens nie eens meer na die voël-skuijing kon gaan sonder om in jou kar te klim nie. Selfs die Bossie en die 'Pointer' staproetes moes 'n mens nou met 'n gids op spesifieke tye doen. Maar op navraag het die bestuur gesê dat hulle wel die heining verder van die kamp sou bou, sodra hulle geldsake dit sou toelaat. In die geval sal die skuijing weer binne in die kamp wees.

'n Baie groot trekpleister by hierdie besoek was vir ons die 'Interpretive Centre'. Behalwe dat dit interessant was, ook met die ou plaas-implimente wat in die tuin uitgestal is, het daar 'n pragtige jong rooikat rondgehoop. Ons het verneem dat een van die wildbewaarders hom van 'n klein babakatjie grootgemaak het. Die

bewaarder het ons later vertel dat die rooikat se sussie onlangs deur 'n besoeker gesteel is. Ons weet almal wat die uiteinde van daardie gesteelde rooikat sal wees.

Intussen het ons voëltjie die volgende oggend van die stoep verdwyn, maar ons het hom gou weer opgespoor waar hy, nie te ver van die stoep af, op 'n klip gesit het. Sy ouers was soos altyd besig om kos aan te dra, en gelukkig was daar geen teken van kraaie nie.

Ons het die dag verder die park verken

maar ongelukkig die Witkruisarende nie by die Rooivalle, waar hulle baie gesien, word opgespoor nie. Maar daar was baie ander voëls om my besig te hou, die mooiste van almal die Bergpatryse wat by die Potlekkertjie roete se hoogste punt uit die Karoo bossies uitgelooer het, eers twee en toe 'n hele klompie.

Op die laaste oggend van ons verblyf kon die jong Rooivlerkspreu nog steeds nie vlieg nie maar het baie ywerig rond gehop. Met baie vertroue dat hy uiteindelik tog sal groot word, het ons die park vaarwel toegeroep. 🐦

Crested Barbets nesting in our garden

Ken Hattingh

I erected a new sisal nesting log (the type bought at the local nurseries) in a tree next to our house, with a small infrared CCTV camera installed in the top of the log, and wired to the TV set in the house. Shortly thereafter, my wife Alfreda and I were able to observe the barbets hollowing out the log to a depth of about 300mm before taking up residence and starting their breeding. We made notes about their breeding attempts which are summarised here.

First breeding attempt

On 6th September 2011, they laid the first of 4 eggs, each one day apart. Then on 24th September, three of these eggs hatched and the fourth egg was discarded the next day. On 28th September two chicks disappeared from the nest. The third chick died two days later and was removed by the parents. The barbets then cleaned out the nest and deepened the hollow in the log slightly. This housekeeping occurred after each breeding attempt.

Second breeding attempt

The barbets laid the first of a second batch of four eggs on 8th October. We were then away for a few days and returned on the day

that we expected the eggs to hatch, only to find that the nest was empty.

Third breeding attempt

On 1st November the first of a third batch of four eggs was laid. Three of these eggs hatched on 17th November and the fourth hatched the next night. Then on 19th November, while Alfreda and I were both watching the TV screen, two Lesser Honeyguides entered



Crested Barbet / Kuifkophoutkapper

the nest. The one attacked the adult barbet in the nest by violently pecking it on the head while the other honeyguide forced its way underneath the barbet and attacked the chicks. I would normally have allowed nature to take its course, but considering the mishaps that they had already experienced, I ran outside to try and save the situation. When I got to below the nest, the two honeyguides flew out with the barbet in hot pursuit, chasing them until they were well out of the garden. On returning to the TV, it appeared as if three of the chicks were dead. However, after the parent bird had nurtured them for a while, we found that one was dead and one obviously weakened. The weakened chick died that night. Based on this observation, we surmise that similar attacks by honeyguides were the cause of the failure of the previous two breeding attempts.

The remaining two chicks were 26 days old and almost ready to leave the nest when we again went away for a few days, during which time we assume that they had successfully fledged.

Fourth breeding attempt

The last egg of a fourth batch of four eggs was laid on 29th December, and on 12th January two of these eggs disappeared from the nest. On the morning of 14th January, when the remaining eggs were expected to hatch, they also disappeared. It is not known what happened to these eggs.

Fifth breeding attempt

The next breeding attempt commenced on 17th January when the first egg of a fifth batch of eggs was laid. On 4th February, again on the day that the eggs were expected to hatch, the nest was found to be empty. This was the last attempt at breeding, after which the nest was abandoned by the barbets.

From these observations we were able to record several interesting facts that I think will be of interest to most people.

- During the breeding season there were five

breeding attempts. A total of 20 eggs were laid but only two fledged. Other research has recorded a breeding success rate of 10% which is in line with these findings.

- All the duties of hollowing out the nest, incubating the eggs, feeding the chicks and housekeeping were shared equally by both sexes.
- The sisal chips were dumped in the same place at a tree across the road, approximately 50 m from the nesting log.
- The eggs were laid during the night and all one day apart.
- Although both sexes shared the incubating duties it was only the female who incubated at night. She also brooded the chicks until they were ready to fledge. When not breeding, neither bird roosted in the nest at night.
- Throughout the incubating and fledging process both sexes constantly pecked at the sides of the excavation to provide a layer of loose fiber at the bottom of the nest for fresh bedding.
- After each breeding attempt all bedding was removed and the nest was deepened by several centimeters before the next eggs were laid.
- Each time one bird approached the nest to take over incubation duty a series of grunting calls was made to alert the partner in the nest. These grunting calls were also made to alert the chicks when food was arriving.
- While there were chicks in the nest soiled bedding together with droppings was removed several times a day by both sexes. This soiled bedding was always dumped in the same place, where the initial excavated chips were dumped. By carefully bisecting these droppings I got a good idea of what the chicks were being fed.
- At first small soft items such as ant and termite eggs and other insect larvae was being fed to the chicks, but as they grew stronger larger items such as grasshoppers, crickets and moths were fed to them. Still later the remains of hard shell beetles such

as chafer beetles and the like were found. At a stage when the chicks were near to fledging and a high protein diet obviously not so essential, fruit was introduced into the diet. As I don't make use of artificial fruit feeding, fruit that was growing in the garden at the time was fed to the chicks. Some of the items that could be identified from bits of peel and pips were berries from the holy bamboo, the soft flesh around the seed of a cycad, alderberry berries and Jerusalem cherry, a small bush with fruit-like tomatoes, a favourite with most birds in the garden.

- It is commonly known that the Lesser Honeyguide is a brood parasite of the

Crested Barbet and that there is constant conflict between these two species, but this is one of the first ever eye witness accounts of honeyguides actually attacking adult birds and chicks in the nest. This account has been sent to OO (ADU - Ornithological Observations) for publication.

At the moment there is no activity at the nest as we wait for the next breeding season, hoping to gather more information.

[This is a very interesting account of the trials and tribulations faced by breeding barbets Ken. Well done for monitoring these birds over the course of a breeding season! – Ed.] 🐦

Rarities and Unusual Sightings Report: 31 August 2012

Compiled by André Marx

The late summer and winter period for 2012 was notable due to the number of 'dry country' species that were seen in our region, with African Red-eyed Bulbul, Grey-backed Sparrowlark, White-crested Helmet-shrike and Sickle-winged Chat being notable, although the chat may be a scarce but regular winter visitor to the region.

Regional Rarities/ Streksrariteite

Sickle-winged Chat. Vlaktespekvreter: one bird was sighted in the same locality where one was seen last winter, south of Devon, 14 Apr 2012 (NP); a bird found near the Klipriviersberg NR, south of Johannesburg, 2 June 2012, was an unusual record for the Johannesburg region (DV); another bird was located near Brackendowns, Alberton, 5 Aug 2012 (DV); another bird was located near Greylingstad, south-east of Johannesburg, 11 Aug 2012 (NP). *This is an uncommon bird in the greater Gauteng region.*

Grey-backed Sparrowlark. Grysruglewerik: a single bird was at the Kgomo-Kgomo floodplain, north of Pretoria, 6 May 2012 (LvD); a record of a bird in the Klipriviersberg NR area, south of Johannesburg in pentad 2615_2800, is a very unusual record for the city, 9 June 2012 (DV). *Several people reported the birds south of Johannesburg in the weeks following the initial sighting, with up to 3 birds being reported.*

Other Interesting Observations/ Ander Interessante Waarnemings

Black-necked Grebe. Swartnekdoobbertjie: approximately 500 birds were on a pan near Sharpeville, southern Gauteng, 30 Aug 2012 (EM).

White Stork. Witooievaar: a sighting of 5 birds near Delmas probably involves over-wintering birds, 14 Jul 2012 (AF).

Marabou Stork. Maraboe: a single bird was at Derdepoot, Pretoria, 18 Jul 2012 (GK).



Dylan Vespagnoli

Grey-backed Sparrowlark / Grysruglewerik

Cape Vulture. Kransasvoël: 5 birds were seen circling around Northcliff Hill, Johannesburg, 4 July 2012 (R&HB).

European Honey-Buzzard. Wespedief: one bird was observed in Kyalami, 27 Mar 2012, (MJ).

African Harrier-Hawk. Kaalwangvalk: one bird was seen in Rietfontein, Pretoria, 15 May 2012 (BL); another bird was seen over the Lynnwood Road bridge at the Moreleta Spruit in eastern Pretoria, 18 May 2012 (NPr).

Long-crested Eagle. Langkuifarend: one bird was seen flying over Hans Strijdom Road in Wapadrand, Pretoria, 18 May 2012 (SP); another bird in Waterkloof, Pretoria, is an unusual record for that part of the city, 3 June 2012 (AK).

Lizard Buzzard. Koekoekvalk: a bird seen at Golden Harvest, Randburg, is an unusual sighting for the area, 19 May 2012 (BWS).

Gabar Goshawk. Witkruissperwer: one bird was seen at Redhill School, Morningside in Johannesburg, 22 Aug 2012 (JA).

African Finfoot. Watertrapper: a juvenile bird was at the inlet to Mankwe Dam at Pilanesberg NP, 30 Apr 2012 (NGvD) - *It is interesting to note that this species has not been recorded at this locality after five years of the SABAP2 project;* a female bird was recorded on the Magalies River, near Hekpoort West in pentad 2555_2735, 1 Jul 2012 (AP); one bird, a female, was present near

Hartbeespoort Dam, 8 July 2012 (DR); one bird was at the Little Eden resort, north of Cullinan, 21 Jul 2012 (EM).

White-bellied Korhaan. Witpenskorhaan: a record of this species at Borakalalo NR is unusual for the reserve, 14 July 2012 (NGvD).

African Olive-Pigeon. Geelbekbosduif: 3 birds in Fochville in pentad 2625_2725 represent a first sighting in 20 years of birding in the area, 21 Jun 2012 (JR).

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater. Swaelstertbyvreter: this species was recorded in pentad 2630_2740 south-west of Johannesburg, 13 Apr 2012 (JR); a single bird was at the Modderfontein NR, Edenvale, 1 June 2012 (PA); 3 birds were at Kuilfontein Farm in the Balfour district, 4 Aug 2012 (DV).

Acacia Pied Barbet. Bonthoutkapper: two birds were inspecting a nesting cavity in a tree in a Monument Park, Pretoria, garden, an unusual bird in the city, 21 May 2012 (F&AvV).

Pink-billed Lark. Pienkbeklewerik: several birds were observed in cultivated land on black clay soils at Mantsole, north-west of Piensaarsrivier, 12 May 2012 (EM).

Orange-breasted Bush-shrike. Oranjesboslaksman: an immature bird seen in a garden in Carlswald, Midrand, is an unusual



Giel Kotze

Marabou Stork / Maraboe

bird for the area, 6 Jul 2012 (Npu).

White-crested Helmet-shrike. Withelm-laksman: 7 birds were seen in pentad 2555_2800 at Helderfontein on the northern outskirts of Johannesburg, 13 May 2012 (AM); another group of birds was recorded just east of Bronkhorstspuit Dam, 22 May 2012 (ER); a flock of birds were at Inanda Country Base, Midrand, 3 Jun 2012 (Npu); 7 birds were present on the margins of the Magalies River in pentad 2555_2735 north-west of Johannesburg, 19 Jun 2012 (AP); 6 birds were in the vicinity of Losberg Mountain in pentad 2630_2725, south-west of Johannesburg, 19 Jun 2012 (EM); a group of 8 birds was at Pollak Park Golf Course, Springs, 24 Jun 2012 (OK); 7 birds were in Wespark, Pretoria, 13 Jul 2012 (GK). *It appears there was a significant incursion of birds into areas south of the bushveld during the winter months, probably as a result of very dry conditions and poor foraging opportunities in their normal area of occurrence.*

African Red-eyed Bulbul. Rooioogtiptol: a record in the Klipriviersberg NR in southern Johannesburg, is an unusual record for the reserve, 7 Apr 2012 (LR); this species was present in 3 pentads in the Settlers-Rust De Winter area, north of Pretoria, 30 June 2012 (ER, ST),



Anthony Paton

White-crested Helmet-shrike / Withelm-laksman

suggesting an incursion into the area because of the dry conditions.

Superb Starling. 5 birds, including a juvenile, were seen at Buffelsdrift, north-east of Pretoria, 18 May 2012 (PvZ). *An interesting record; this is a species that has the potential to establish a breeding population in South Africa.*

Observers/ Waarnemers

André Marx (AM)
Andy Featherstone (AF)
Anthony Paton (AP)
Anton Kruger (AK)
Bets Lategan (BL)
Bruce Ward-Smith (BWS)
Denni Raubenheimer (DR)
Dylan Vasapolli (DV)
Ernst Retief (ER)
Etienne Marais (EM)
Frans & Adele van Vuuren (F&AvV)
Giel Kotze (GK)
Jerome Ainsley (JA)



Anthony Paton

African Finfoot / Watertrapper

John Randell (JR)
Lance Robinson (LR)
Lisl van Deventer (LvD)
Marco Josi (MJ)
Neil Puntis (NPu)
Neitherd Graf von Dürckheim (NGvD)
Niall Perrins (NP)
Noel Pretorius (NPr)
Orna Kemp (OK)
Pat Ayling (PA)
Pieter van Zyl (PvZ)
Ray & Helen Biram (R&HB)
Sonja Pretorius (SP)
Stephan Terblanche (ST)

This column is mainly concerned with observations of rarities and interesting sightings made in the greater Gauteng region, defined as 100 km from the centre of both Johannesburg and Pretoria, however observations made further afield are also welcome. While the majority of records are included it is sometimes necessary to exclude some depending on whether the subject matter has already been well reported. Occasionally records are sourced from the Internet. Members are invited to submit details of sightings to André Marx at e-mail turaco@telkomsa.net or 083 4117674. 📧



Mark Anderson

BirdLife Northern Gauteng group at Kamfers Dam, Kimberley, at the Lesser Flamingo site, April 2012

BirdLife Northern Gauteng**Laniarius advertising costs (cost shown in Rands)**

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