



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 foto's is altyd welkom.

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Credits

Front cover: Chestnut-banded Plover (Rooibandstrandkiewiet) photographed at Mkhombo Dam by Rion Lerm.
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

According to the Encyclopaedia a 'twitch' is a short, sudden tug or jerk and a 'twitcher' is somebody who produces this movement frequently. Consider our birding fraternity: as we walk along a path in the bushveld a member of the party will suddenly stop and his arm will fly out in the direction of that bird he spotted as, at the same time binoculars appear miraculously at his eyes. This person is known to all his birding acquaintances and friends quite appropriately as a 'twitcher' and his actions would more or less fit the definition given by the encyclopaedia. An important addition in the case of a birding 'twitcher' is the manner in which he records all his new 'twitches' for later perusal and proud demonstration to other birders.

Consider the fascinating talks given to the club during the past year by two people who must be the kings of 'twitching' in South Africa: one by Niall Perrins who recorded 826 bird species in Southern Africa in a period of one year to set a record that is unlikely ever to be surpassed, and Peter Greaves, who is on his way to 3,000 bird species seen over many years in many parts of the world.

What I am coming to is the fact that probably more than ninety percent of our club members (including myself and Jill) are 'twitchers'... whose prime objective is to record new species on every trip and outing. The balance could be bird ringers, bird atlas contributors and a few scientists such as Rion Lerm who studies conservation, and others who work at subspeciation, the effects of urbanisation and other aspects of bird biology and physiology.

But is 'twitching' the only way to pursue one's interest in birds? A few days ago I happened to look at a picture of a Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill on a calendar. I began to wonder: what on earth could be the purpose of that massive bill? Is the sole reason for the bill to give the male bird the ability to feed the female when she is confined to a nest in the hollow of a tree with one small exit hole, surrounded by congealed mud? And how about the massive bill of a South American toucan which, I was told by Rion Lerm, serves principally to regulate the body temperature of the bird which lives in extreme tropical heat. By contrast there are the delicate curved bills of sunbirds and the solid, short thick bills of woodpeckers. The woodcock has a sensitive nerve organ at the tip of a long bill that allows it to feel its prey under the mud. In other words, each bird has a bill specially adapted to the requirements of that species. And this holds true also for the feet, the wings, the colouration, the specific calls and many other features of different birds. Then, of course, there is the subspeciation of birds about which Rion Lerm wrote in the last *Laniarius*. Looking for different subspecies could greatly increase the number of successful 'twitches' on one's records.

I am beginning to think that birding could be expanded beyond the simple act of 'twitching' – although this 'sport' will always remain most important. I am going to start by trying to study how different birds use their bills. It would be most helpful if members of the club would come up with other studies that might be of interest to all of us.

Phillip and Jill de Moor



Chairman's Report/ Voorsittersverslag

Philip Calinikos

Our club has been a long standing member organisation of BirdLife South Africa for many years. BirdLife South Africa has proved itself to be the premier organisation dealing with the conservation of our wild birds, their habitats and environments. The BirdLife South Africa website clearly spells out why it is important to conserve birds:

- Birds are an important part of the world's biodiversity, providing important ecosystem services
- Birds are indicators of the state of the environment. In general, places that are rich in bird species are also rich in other forms of biodiversity. Their presence indicates a healthy environment.

Through the Important Bird Areas Programme, Seabird conservation work such as the Albatross Task Force, addressing threats to habitats such as wetlands, grasslands and biomes, BirdLife South Africa has established itself at the forefront of bird conservation. Specific programmes are running to address threatened species including the African Penguin, White-winged Flufftail, White-bellied Korhaan and Secretarybird.

As a club it is important that we devote some of our energies and resources to conservation issues as well. Over the past few years we have started a number of initiatives that have been well supported and received

by our members and this has been most rewarding for me and our committee. In this edition, Rion Lerm, the chairperson of our conservation sub-committee has written about our current conservation projects and I hope that this is just the beginning. I urge you one and all to come forward with ideas of how we as a club can play an even bigger role in helping to conserve the birds and habitats in our area, as well as to identify threats to their well-being.

As citizen scientists we can collectively make a huge contribution towards conservation be it through atlassing, bird ringing, photography projects or simply being out in the bush and observing. A perfect opportunity to improve on our knowledge about these issues will be coming up in March next year at the Flock in the Berg 2014. Included in the Flock will be a two day LAB (Learning About Birds Conference) which will be an interactive series of lectures, presentations and discussions aimed at us, the citizen scientists. Please keep your diaries open for this one and visit the BirdLife South Africa website for more details. I think the knowledge that will be imparted for our benefit will be phenomenal!

Yours in birding (and conservation).

Philip Calinikos

Bird identification course: October 12-13 at Pretoria University

Well known bird guide, Geoff Lockwood, will be hosting this wonderful introductory course in the Sci-Enza Centre at the University of Pretoria. Beginner birding can be a little frustrating and bewildering. The bird books have so many different species, and what you see often does not match anything at all. This course is designed to get you started as a bird watcher, or if you are already somewhat experienced the course will

help you identify more birds with confidence. And if you feel that you're too advanced for a beginner course then it might make a wonderful gift for a family member or friend. The course is a combination of classroom style lectures on the Saturday and a field outing on the Sunday from 07:00 to 12:00. Please contact our club secretary, Rita to book a spot. The cost is R270 pp for members and R290 for non-members. 🐦

Hardware stores, Helmet Vangas, and the Eighth Continent

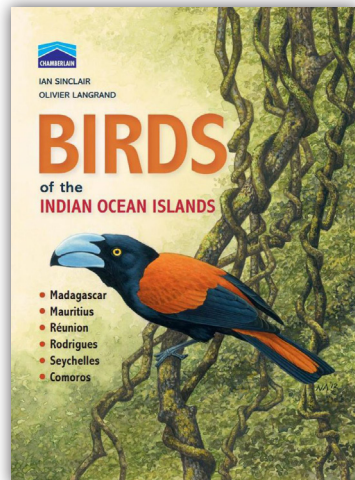
Faansie Peacock

For someone who can't hammer in a screw to save his life, I spend an inordinate amount of time in Chamberlain hardware stores. And each time I find myself in David Chamberlain's office, my eyes are drawn to a framed painting of a group of Blue Vangas flying over the rainforest canopy—the original of the image that adorned the cover of the 1998 first edition of Ian Sinclair and Oliver Langrand's *Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands* book.

Some 15 years later, Chamberlain has again teamed up with Sinclair and Langrand, under the leadership of Struik Nature publishers, to produce a fully updated and revised edition of their best-seller. This time around, the cover sports a spectacular Helmet Vanga painting by Norman Arlott. This bird is listed as one of the "100 birds every birder should see before they die"—a feat that I have yet to accomplish, but which my brother, as he frequently reminds me, has already achieved (seeing a Helmet Vanga; not dying).

This rambling article is part book review, part taxonomic update, and part just

appreciative musing on the surreal bird diversity of this unique part of the globe. While the bulk of the book represents the birds found on Madagascar, it also includes the Mascarene Islands (Mauritius, Réunion and Rodrigues),



the Comoros, and the 150-odd islands of the Seychelles. Ecology 101 states that the smaller an island, and the further it is from a large land-mass, the fewer species it will have. This principle of island biogeography certainly applies to many of the smaller islands, where birders are primarily concerned with finding a select number of so-called supertramp endemics: drongos, scops owls, brush-warblers, bulbuls, pigeons or those master world explorers and colonists, the white-eyes.

Madagascar, as the world's fourth largest island, is a different story, and boasts almost 300 bird species. Of these, more than 220 breed on the island, and amazingly, 118 are endemic and found nowhere else in the world. This also includes several endemic families. For example, taxonomists still can't agree to what the three species of bizzare, terrestrial mesites (family Mesitornithidae) are most closely related: opinions range from rails, bustards, pigeons and dippers, to New Caledonian kagus, or even South American seriemas or sunbitterns. Also unique, are the highly vocal cuckoo-rollers; the pitta-like, colourful but skulking ground-rollers; and the jewel-like asities—wattle-eyed relatives of the broadbills.

Equally noteworthy is the *absence* of many familiar African species from Madagascar: ignoring occasional vagrants, the island has no lapwings, no *Halcyon* kingfishers, no *Hirundo* swallows, no typical thrushes, no glossy starlings, no widowbirds, no pipits, no sparrows and only one lark and one cisticola.

The continued global endeavour to elucidate the true evolutionary relationships among birds, particularly based on genetic evidence, has also left its mark. One of the most significant findings is that Madagascar's vanga family is far more speciose than initially thought, and now also includes several species previously placed in other families, such as 'Crossley's Babbler' and 'Ward's Flycatcher' as well as four rotund little LBJs called newtonias. The variety of plumages, body sizes, bill shapes and dietary specialisations shown by the members of this unique family, make vangas one of the world's best examples of avian evolutionary

radiation, comparable to or even surpassing the famed Darwin's finches of the Galapagos, or the honeycreepers of Hawaii. Essentially, the respective members of the Vangidae family have evolved to fill the same niches as treecreepers, tits, nuthatches, woodhoopoes, shrikes, batises, babblers, bulbuls and warblers. At the family-level, vangas are probably most closely related to the African helmetshrikes and the Asian philentomas and woodshrikes.

Another development has been the creation of a new family of Malagasy warblers, the Bernieridae. The members of this diverse assemblage are now known as tetrakas, and include some of Madagascar's most featureless, but most fascinating LBJs. Among these is a semi-terrestrial inhabitant of dry spiny forest variably known as the Kiritika, Thamnornis, and lately, the Subdesert Tetraka. The family also includes two forest undestorey dwellers, the White-throated Oxylabes and Madagascan Yellowbrow, as well as the Wedge-tailed Jery, Rand's Warbler and Cryptic Warbler (which was only described in 1996), plus five species of 'greenbuls'.

Sadly, continued human population growth has created immense ecological pressure and resulted in detrimental modification of natural habitats. Some of the first victims were Madagascar's gigantic elephant birds, and everyone knows the distressing history of the Dodo on Mauritius. In more recent times, the Alaotra Grebe requires mention. Named after Madagascar's largest lake, this near-flightless species is now considered extinct, with the last confirmed sighting in 1982. Let us hope the prospects look brighter for another Lake Alaotra endemic, the Critically Endangered Lac Alaotra Bamboo Lemur. Species such as Madagascar Serpent Eagle, Slender-billed Flufftail, Sakalava Rail and Madagascar Red Owl remain precariously rare and localised. Also worrying is the number of introduced alien species in the region, including old standbys like the House Crow, Common Myna and House Sparrow, and newcomers like the African Laughing Dove and Asian Red-billed Leiothrix.

It is not all bad news however. There

still seems to be glimmer of hope for the Madagascar Pochard, which was feared extinct until 13 birds were rediscovered on a remote lake in 2006. Intensive conservation actions, involving incubating eggs in a tent and raising ducklings in a local hotel, have now pushed the population up to about 80 birds. Similarly commendable rescue efforts have brought other species back from the brink of extinction, just in time: from only four Mauritius Kestrels in 1974, to 400 today; 10 wild Pink Pigeons in 1990 to 500; and 16 to 250 Seychelles Magpie-Robins. One of the most exciting additions to the book is the Tsingy Wood Rail, first described in 2011 from a 125 x 5 km area of dry forest in karst (tsingy) canyons.

Increased avitourism in the region, partly thanks to the success of the previous edition of the book, has resulted in many new records and discoveries. Among these is a spectacular suite of vagrants; in particular, the Seychelles' geographical position between the African and Asian continents has resulted in several new species added to the region's list per year—a real drawcard for avid twitchers, and a motivation for the publishers to update the book every few years. Some of the incredible Palearctic migratory vagrants already recorded include Little Curlew, Pintail Snipe, Jack Snipe, Sociable Lapwing, Eurasian Scops Owl, Greater Short-toed Lark, European Rock-Thrush, Desert Wheatear, Wood Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Woodchat Shrike, Scarlet Rosefinch and Ortolan Bunting. Asian/Australasian flavour is added by Cinnamon Bittern, Indian Pond Heron, White-breasted Waterhen, Oriental Pratincole, Oriental Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler,

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Black-naped Oriole, Needle-tailed and Fork-tailed Swifts and even Brown Fish Owl.

If the above has piqued your ornithological interest, you are sure to welcome pages 24-35 which provide concise descriptions of key birding sites, list the endemics of each island, and display basic orientation maps. Now featuring an impressive 105 plates depicting 502 species (compared to 359 in the first edition), plus multiple new illustrations and fully revised species texts and distribution maps, *Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands* is essential for any birder fortunate enough to visit the Indian Ocean islands. The book is also available in French, in e-book format.

Additional good news for birders is that Frank Hawkins and Richard Ranft have published a CD of Malagasy bird sounds from the British Library Sound Archive (tauntingly featuring a Helmet Vanga on the case). Guy Eldridge's set of 4 DVDs on the Endemic Birds of Madagascar makes an excellent companion to the audio CD. More detailed site information is available in the *Southern African Birdfinder*, by Callan Cohen, Claire Spottiswoode and Jonathan Rossouw (Struik 2006). And it is only fair that "the competition" also be mentioned—in this case, Pete Morris and Frank Hawkins' *Birds of Madagascar: A Photographic Guide* (Pica Press, 1998). As its name implies this book features photographs instead of paintings, and does not cover the Comoros, Mascarene Islands or Seychelles. On the plus side, its species texts are more extensive and generally excellent. I suspect that most serious birders visiting Madagascar will end up buying both. 🐦

Big game hunters

The dubious honour of largest prey killed by a bird goes (posthumously) to various monkeys and small antelopes, all of which regularly fall victim to some of the larger eagles. The Crowned Eagle of sub-Saharan Africa has even been known to kill a sub-adult impala weighing 30kg – five times heavier than the bird itself. However while these formidable predators are fully capable of killing animals larger than themselves, they cannot carry away anything that weighs more than they do.

Marievale – The Production

Don Reid

It was October 2012 and I was starting to get used to having more time for my own pursuits, particularly birding. Mondays seemed the obvious choice for a regular day off as it extends the weekend and prevents those 'Monday blues'. The only decision to make is – where to go? That's not too difficult with the wide choice of birding venues within an hour or two from Pretoria and there's always a place to do and a new pentad to visit. On this particular morning I decided to visit Marievale, having last been there around five years previously. I wasn't sure what to expect by way of facilities and security but was pleasantly surprised to find the hides and the picnic spot in a clean and looked-after state.

It also turned out that I had the whole of Marievale to myself on that Monday morning for the entire four to five hours that I was there, which is great when you are intent on photographing the birds without being disturbed or irritating others. The various ponds and the surrounding vegetation make the perfect backdrop to the variety of waterbirds on view.

In fact, the whole scenario was so perfect and the birdlife I encountered so accommodating it seemed like a staged production in a way... It read something like this:

"OK people, ...er birds, I'm your director today and we're running late, so let's get this show on the road – it's past 8 am and I think he's got lost, but I'm sure he will be here any moment now. Right, a little bird just told me he's been doing the pentad next door to us and he's now approaching the entrance to Marievale.

Now, let's not overdo it in the first stretch, we need to save some good ones for later – we'll just get him warmed up with a few run o' the mill birds. Coots, you can start the show followed by the Yellow-billed Ducks plus a Moorhen or two. Little Grebe, you're up next and let's get those warblers warbling. Bet you

he pulls out the birdcalls gadget to check them. Yes, I was right and he's got them sorted; African Reed, Little Rush and Lesser Swamp. Nice chorus guys!"

Right, now for the teals; Red-billed you go first then Hottentot can come in a bit later and for good measure let's have Whiskered Tern doing a flypast or two. Greater Flamingo, have you got over my "break a leg" comment yet? You know that it's just a good luck saying in our business... anyway, just stand in the shallows looking elegant. OK, fly if you must, it will make a good action photo.

This is going well so far everyone, keep it up! Now he's at the picnic spot hide so, Pied Avocets, this is your chance to show off your classic beauty close to the hide. Just stop diving for a few seconds so that he can get a decent photo.

OK, he's off into the reserve proper and you know how close to the road the water gets, which means close-up action photos, so let's do this right. That means you Southern Pochard and you Ruff. What's that, you want Wood Sandpiper to join you? Fine. This is also your chance, Black-winged Stilt and African Snipe, to



Hottentot Teal/ Gevlekte Eend

show yourselves off in the good light. And now for the grande finale which I'm sure will surprise him. As I hoped he's stopped at the "Bus-stop" hide, so I want you African Darter to do your diving and spearing act right in front of the hide and make sure you show the speared fish well, then juggle it around a bit and swallow all

in one smooth action. Yes, that's beautiful!
Well done everyone – great show!"

[It sounds almost surreal Don. There are magic days when birding, when everything works out perfectly. One will always cherish those days! – Ed.] 🐦

Christmas for the birds

Rynetta Coetzee, Jackson, Mississippi

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is an annual citizen science event that is organised by the National Audubon Society in the Americas. The count is done in Canada, the USA, the Caribbean, the Pacific Islands and most of South America. It takes place during the last two weeks of December and the first week of January and the date for your area is determined by your local organiser. The counting area lies within a circle that is further divided into sections and teams of birders record every bird they see or hear within their allotted area. The first CBC was done in 1900 which makes it the longest and biggest citizen science project in the world. During the 113th count (2012/13) 63,227 observers counted just fewer than one billion birds. In the Mississippi/Alabama region where I live, 603 observers participated. Mississippi alone reported 195 species, which I find remarkable if you take into account that so many species migrate south during the northern winter, and in our little circle around the Ross Barnett Reservoir 27 brave souls withstood really bad weather to record 100 species.

Our team consisted of our leader Pullen Watkins (he was also hosting the compilation dinner at his house), Allan Burrows and me. We met at Tommy's Trading Post at the boat ramp at 8am when it was barely light yet. The temperature hovered below zero and drizzling rain was forecasted for the day. It was a windy, icy cold and miserable day. Allan arrived with his 'birdmobile' with an orange kayak on the

roof. Pullen and I thought he had lost his mind but Allan was determined that we must record every possible species and that he was willing to brave the miserable conditions as soon as it improved. Our team usually achieves a total of ± 75 species but we knew that the weather on this day would only allow us 50 or so if we were lucky. Against all odds the numbers mounted during the morning, many heard, less seen and the total bird numbers for each species was low. Our first ever Common Snipe was found walking about in a parking lot! We headed towards an area that we named the 'pipit field' where we normally find the only pipits within the circle. There were no pipits but hundreds of Red-winged Blackbirds had descended on the field and trees. It seemed a bit soggy, but I nevertheless drove in and deftly turned my Dodge Grand Caravan around and headed out after estimating the Blackbird numbers. We decided to return again later. The sparrow field was devoid of sparrows too. An icy drizzle started coming down. It was not even close to lunchtime but we decided to let the worst pass while we warmed ourselves up at Tommy's Trading Post. We tallied the species on the list and had miraculously passed our estimate of 50 species.

By the end of lunch the drizzle had stopped and Allan announced that he was heading out in search of ducks, coots and whatever else lurked in the reeds next to the cold, grey waters. Pullen and I found some

ducks at a pond in a trailer park as well as more sparrows, wrens, woodpeckers and Cedar Waxwings. We decided to visit the pipit field on the way back to Tommy's Trading post so that Pullen can pick up his car and head back home to prepare for the dinner at his house. I turned in at the field. There were no pipits or blackbirds or for that matter any other bird in sight. I started to turn the car around as I had done earlier in the day, forgetting that Mississippi mud is a force to be reckoned with and that the field had had more rain since that morning. The car came to an abrupt stop, stuck in a mud hole! Pullen called our friend Chris King who had also completed his count. He soon arrived and announced that the only solution was to call roadside assistance and request a tow truck. At this point I'm adding a piece that Allan wrote:

"On regaining the safety of shore after two hours afloat, I elected not to kiss the ground. The chances of me returning to an upright position seemed relatively slim given the multiple layers of wetted cotton enclosing the stiffened extremities of my person. It was all I could do to get the kayak tied back on top of the birdmobile without the returning duck hunters seeing me fall to ground. The piece of orange plastic that once seemed so flighty and kinetic now seemed massive and immovable. The duck hunters seemed pretty stolid their own selves. After several attempts to punch in the number with nerveless fingers, I called my wife to tell her I would soon be arriving home and to start making something hot. I go into greater detail than necessary to lend verisimilitude to the approaching narrative.

Tooling down Highway 43 in anticipation of potato soup, ignoring anything with wings, and feeling the circulation gradually return to my fingers, I passed a car on the side of the road. It was near the pipit field, which in a pinch, will also serve as a reasonable substitute for a place to stand if you're not cold enough already. The car had its flashers on. Farther off the road was another car. It was Rynetta's car. Beside it stood Pullen and Chris. I tooted my horn and continued merrily on my way.



Common Grackle

- a. First thought: Pullen is certainly determined to get pipits on his list.
- b. Second thought: Pullen is going to be last for the compilation dinner that he is hosting at his own home.
- c. Third thought: They're stuck.
- d. Fourth thought: Maybe they didn't recognise me.
- e. Fifth thought: Hello! Kayak on the roof! Orange!
- f. Sixth, the thought that would change the nature of this document.

So I went back and found that Rynetta had tried to turn around in someone's muddy field. If I had never gotten stuck before myself, this would be an excellent place to describe the lapses in judgment that led to involuntarily parking a minivan in a muddy cornfield on a cold day as dusk approached. And someone who has just paddled a kayak through twenty mile an hour winds across the reservoir is hardly in a position to hand down such judgments.

We got Pullen on his way (30 Common Grackles, finally). Chris and I stayed and waited with Rynetta for the tow truck driver. If you are reading this and are not aware, Rynetta is from South Africa originally. Chris and I learned, or

at least heard, many new Afrikaner words while Rynetta spiritedly discussed the problem with her husband. Presumably they were technical terms that had to do with the various components that make up the suspension and the steering of Chrysler minivans and where the tow truck operator should place his cable for the best results.

The tow truck driver was polite and capable and everything finished up in a lovely flourish with no further mishap. I hope everyone else had an equally adventurous outing."

I was late for dinner at Pullen's house, but everyone waited patiently for my arrival so as to hear the full extent of my foolishness of getting stuck in Mississippi mud! Our team ended with 68 species but missed our total count of the previous year when we recorded

40,000 Common Grackles and a grand total of 72 species.

It is a great project that provides critical data on migration patterns and numbers within a species. It is the one day a year that many dedicated people do so much for science and conservation.... And it is fun, just don't get stuck in the mud!

Quotation used with kind permission from fellow birder Allan Burrows.

Christmas Bird Count information: <http://birds.audubon.org/faq/cbc>

[A Christmas bird count in freezing conditions... something very different to what we are used to of course! It is amazing to learn that bird monitoring happens on such a vast scale in places like the USA – Ed.] 🐦

Pilanesberg done by dormitory

Annali Swanepoel

Frazzled, frantic and clueless I managed to turn out as a compulsive-obsessive calamity, a co-dependent Chicken Little and the third progeny of a brutish chip-off-the-old-block kind of guy. I was by no means equipped to rear anything, least of all a child. I was in fact so bad at caring I needed a license to buy a pot plant.

Then came 'The Calling'. I can't remember hearing it. Frankly, if there was anything to listen to I think I should have marked it 'hearsay', boxed it and buried it. When I now tell people what I do, they slowly turn their heads from left to right as if to say, "You must be the delirious Mad Hatter". But instead they softly sigh: "this is a Calling", and dab a tear from the corner of an eye.

I opened a place of safety for abused girls.

When they found out what I had done, my progeny were aghast and tried their level best



to have me institutionalised. Unfortunately I tested fine on the Richter Scales and all those other rulers they use to measure one with. Plus I was at the awkward age between senile and eccentric so no old age home was interested in a sloppily dressed, grossly overweight woman who hears voices from outer space and

only wears jeans.

'Peas in a Pod' became a haven for girls chewed up and spat out by circumstances and cruelty it's nobody's business to talk about. Then amongst all the healing and dealing we discovered the delights of birding in the Pilanesberg.

Right off the mark, and devious to the bone, I knew I had to have more than loads of snacks, an extra pair of binoculars and air conditioning to lure the kids to my car, away from the kombi – the other vehicle on our little

safari. The kombi had the *Map & Guide Book of Pilanesberg*, which happens to be an excellent guidebook. However, I had five bird guides in my car, which proved to be exactly what I intended them to be - an irresistible temptation. I am going to have the proof of my popularity for decades to come - numerous sticky little fingerprints in my brand new bird guides.

The best moment of the whole six days came when I parked next to a little bird nobody could identify. The rustling of frantic page turning filled the air. Pictures and photographs were compared and the opposition was disdainfully informed: "That is not the bird". The next moment a shriek pierced my eardrum and narrowly missed shattering the windscreen. Kidson and van Niekerk's *Kitsgids Voëls van die Bosveld* connected with the inner

chambers of my sinuses. "Tannie, that bird is this one here in the book! Look here!" As I moved the book away from my eyes I saw the reason for her excitement. The bird outside was indeed the White-browed Scrub Robin she found in the book. The most precious moment was when I complimented her on her identification of the bird. In mock humility she coyly looked out of the window and said: "I don't know how I found this picture. I just turned the page and there was the outside bird inside my book."

Maybe 'The Calling' is the emotion that is buried deep inside the voice of each child I take care of.

[Great to know your 'progeny' are being introduced to birding Annali! - Ed.] 🐦

Drie kort winteruitstappies saam met die klub

Elke Geggus

It is vir my altyd 'n groot plesier om in die winter in die vrye natuur te wees, veral hier in Pretoria. Dit was dus met groot vreugde dat ek aan die winter klubuitstappies deelgeneem het.

Walter Sisulu Botaniese Tuin: 22 Mei met Bryan Groom

Die Woensdaguitstappie het in yskoue weer begin, met altesame 9 lede wat teenwoordig was. Die Walter Sisulu Botaniese Tuin is altyd pragtig, maar nou in die winter was die aalwyne vol in blom en 'n pragtige gesig. Hulle het al so vroeg in die oggend Swart- en Witpensuikerbekkies gelok. Bryan Groom is 'n gemaklike leier en op sy aanbeveling het ons eers na die skuiling gestap. Die dam se water by die skuiling was spieëlglad sonder 'n enkele voël, maar die lede met skerp oë het wel 'n Groenrugreier in die struik langs die dam gewaar. Daar was baie vinke en mossies in die omtrek en veral die vinke in hulle wintervere was 'n uitdaging.

By die uitstappies is daar altyd gewillige lede wat bereid is om te help met die uitkenning van voëls, en in my geval voëlgeluide. Amanda het verduidelik hoe fyn 'n mens moet luister om die geluide van die Rooiwangmuisvoëls en die Bruinkopvisvanger van mekaar te onderskei. Later was dit weer dieselfde met die Suidelike Waterfiskaal en die Swartkopwielewaal en Amanda het vir my die voëlgeluide gespeel om die verskil te verduidelik.

Die doel van hierdie uitstappie was om die Feevlieëvanger te soek. Ons het dit baie gou reggekry en sommer 'n hele paar van hierdie pragtige klein voëltjies opgespoor. Ons het tot by die waterval gestap en die nes van die Witkruisarend met verkykers dopgehou, maar ons kon geen beweging daar sien nie. Twee van die lede het besluit om tot bo by die waterval te klim maar die ander het besluit om lui te wees. Vir 'n verandering is luiheid toe beloon want die Witkruisarend het sy nes verlaat en 'n mooi vliegvertoning gehou. (Die twee lede wat die berg geklim het, het dit toe ongelukkig gemis.)

Terwyl ons so na die rotse en die arend wat oor hulle gevlieg het gekyk het, het 'n Kaapse Kliplyster sy verskyning bo by die rotse gemaak, --'n besondere mooi toevoeging tot die lysie.

Ons het ons oggenduitstapjie by die restaurant met 'n lekker koppie koffie afgesluit en daar ook die lysie gelees en altesame 40 voëls opgeskryf. Terwyl die meeste lede huis toe vertrek het, het Bryan, Joan en ek besluit om nog 'n bietjie langer na voëls te soek. Maar dit was middag en die voëls was besonders stil, maar ons kon tog op die ou einde nog drie nuwe voëls by ons lysie voeg – een van hulle was mooi Swarteende by die dam.

Pretoria Botaniese Tuin: 22 Junie met Amanda le Roux

Vir hierdie uitstapjie was ons 13 lede en Amanda het almal verwelkom, van 'n jong seun tot 'n ou dame vir wie haar dogter 'n stoel saamgedra het. Dit is die lekkerte van hierdie uitstapjies, oud en jonk kan dit saam geniet!

Die begin van die dag was ook baie koud, die ryp het teen agtuur nog spierwit op die tuin se grasperke gelê. Die tuin was pragtig met baie aalwyne wat geblom het. Amanda en haar man Pieter het twee weke voor die tyd die tuine verken om te kyk waar die meeste voëls te sien is. Ons het hulle roete van twee weke gelede gevolg om te kyk of ons weer die Oranjeborsboslaksman, wat hulle toe gesien het, sou vind. Maar dié en 13 ander op hulle

lysie van twee weke gelede het ons nooit opgespoor nie. Dit is vir my altyd soos 'n wonderwerk dat 'n mens so baie keer op die regte tyd op die regte plek is om 'n spesiale voël te sien. Maar miskien is dit soos Gary Player eendag gesê het: "... hoe meer jy oefen (in ons geval, om voëls op te spoor) hoe gelukkiger word jy!" Ons het toe baie uitgesien na die dag om te kyk wat ons spesiale voël sal wees.

Daar was baie, die Neddiekie wat so lekker in die los blare op die grond rondgeskrop het, en pragtige Blousysies wat so mak was dat die mense met die 'mik en druk' kameras goeie fotos kon neem. Daar was 'n mooi doringboom waar die Swartkeelgeelvinke en tot almal se vreugde, die Bandkeelvinke baljaar het. In die aalwyne daar naby kon ons mooi die Kaapse Wewer wyfies dophou en sien hoe 'n mens hulle aan hulle stewige snawel kan uitken. Bandkeelkleinjantjies en 'n Sneeebal was ook nog hoogtepunte vir my.

Maar almal was honger en dit was tyd vir 'n lekker piekniek onder 'n mooi groot boom naby die ingang. Hier het ons ook later die lysie gelees want daar was van die lede wat toe moes huis toe gaan.

Ses van ons, insluitend Amanda en Pieter, het besluit om nog 'n bietjie in die tuin te stap, maar die Rooivlerkspreeu, Kleinglansspreeu, Gewone Frette en die Dikkop wat gewoonlik so algemeen in die tuin is, het ons nog steeds ontwyk. Na 'n lekker koppie koffie by die teetuin was dit ook vir ons tyd om huis toe te gaan. Daar was uiteindelik 48 voëls op die lys en die *'Chamberlain Guide to Birding in Gauteng'* deur Etienne Marais en Faansie Peacock het geskryf dat die gemiddelde aantal voëls vir dié tuin in die winter op 40 staan. Dus het ons, onder Amanda se kundige leierskap, baie goed gedoen, om so baie voëls op ons lysie te kry.

Moreletakloof Natuurreserveaat: 6 Julie met Dave Sole

Hierdie was nou 'n uitstapjie met 'n verskil, haltans vir my. Daar was 20 lede, 'n paar van hulle nuwelinge tot die stokperdjie van voëlkyk, en Dave het spesiaal moeite gedoen



om vir hulle van die voëls en hulle maniere te verduidelik. Daar was ook Kate van die Amerikaanse Ambassade en 'n paar Duitsers met wie ek 'n rukkie lekker Duits kon praat.

Al die belofde voëls was daar, genoeg sodat Dave elke nou en dan moes verduidelik. Ons het by die voëlringers wat ook die Saterdag in die kloof besig was, se nette verbygestap en dit was vir my al 'n belewenis, want ek het nie geweet dat die nette so groot en van so 'n sagte materiaal gemaak is nie. Daar was twee voëls in die nette, maar die ringers het laat weet dat ons nie aan die voëls of die nette moet raak nie en dat ons net stil moes verby beweeg. Maar dit was nogal 'n uitdaging vir party van die lede want hulle kon dit nie hanteer om die voëls so in die nette te sien nie.

Daar is 'n mooi groot nuwe skuiling in die reservaat gebou, dit kyk uit oor 'n klein vlei waar daar ongelukkig hierdie tyd van die dag (laat oggend) geen voëls meer was nie. Ons het aanbeweeg deur die woudgedeelte van die reservaat waar die Kleinheuningwyser 'n besondere voël was om te sien. Naby die damwal het Dave ons die keuse gegee om tot die einde van die reservaat te stap of na die ringers te stap en te kyk hoe hulle te werk gaan om die voëltjies te ring. Die meeste van ons het toe na die ringers se tente gestap, maar 'n paar lede het verby gehou. Op pad soontoe het ons weer by die nette verbygestap en 'n parmantige Kaapse Wewer wat in die nette vasgevang was, het sommer probeer om homself te bevry.

By die voëlringers aangekom was ek verbaas om te sien hoeveel moeite gedoen moet word om alles gereed te kry om die voëls te ring. Daar was baie mense en 'n hele klein kamp met skaduafdakke, tafels, stoele, en natuurlik piekniekmandjies en flesse warm koffie, want dit was nog steeds baie koud. Op die tafels was die ringers se gereedskap en al die voëlboekie wat op die mark is, aan die stoele het die sakkies met die voëls in gehang en van die ringers was besig om met groot versigtigheid die voëltjies te identifiseer, te meet, te weeg en uiteindelik te ring. Groot was ons opgewondenheid om te sien dat een van die voëls wat in die nette gevang is, 'n Geelsanger was, 'n baie ongewone voël om

hier in Pretoria te kry. Daar was sommer twee Kuifkophoutkappers wat saam gevang en gering is en talle kanaries en vinke. Maar ongelukkig het hulle die Grasvoël en die Dikbekwewer al vroeër die oggend gering en vrygelaat.

lets wat my vir lank sal bybly, was die vreugde op 'n klein dogtertjie se gesiggie toe sy toegelaat is om 'n geringde voëltjie vry te laat. Dit was nogal opvallend hoe geduldig die ringers al die mense se vrae beantwoord het en hoe kalm hulle aanhou werk het terwyl so baie mense, lede van die klub en lede van die algemene publiek om hulle saamgedrom het. Sowaar spesiale mense wat met hulle werksaamhede ons kennis van die voëls uitbrei.

Dave het daarna gesukkel om al sy 'skapies' weer bymekaar te kry, maar uiteindelik het ons tog die lysie gelees gekry en 'n mooi 38 voëls is aangeteken. Daar was 'n onenigheid of die Geelsanger wel op die lysie mag verskyn of nie. Wel hy gaan beslis om myne wees, want hy was nie in 'n hok nie en hy is ook nie gevoer nie, en hy vlieg hopelik nog steeds in die Moreletakloof Natuurreseervaat rond. *['n Geringde voël kan definitief by 'n voëllys ingesluit word omdat die voël in sy natuurlike omgewing in die net beland het – Red.]*

So het ook hierdie derde uitstappie tot sy einde gekom en ek het hulle almal baie geniet, die heerlikste tydverdryf vir koue winterdae. Baie dankie aan al die kundige leiers wat geen moeite ontsien het nie om die uitstappies leersaam en ook genotvol te maak. 🐦



Ringgroep: Lesse geleer tydens roofvoëltoer na Limpopo Provinsie, 15-17 Junie 2013

Eben Muller

Die was 'n baie aangename ervaring. Die opgewondenheid het baie hoog geloop, veral nadat ons op die grondpaaie afgedraai het. Ons eerste Bleeksingvalk (Pale Chanting Goshawk) was daarom baie spesiaal en toe ons kort daarna ook 'n Blouvalk (Black-shouldered Kite) en Grootrooivalk (Greater Kestrel) kry het die opgewondenheid sommer hoog geloop. Vyf vir die eerste dag was wonderlik. Die tweede dag was koud en winderig en ons moes die belangrikste eerste les leer dat dit nie elke dag Kersfees is nie. Ons kon net drie roofvoëls by die vorige dag se vyf voeg. 'n Tweede les wat ons moes leer, was dat die 'Balchatri' makliker onder die bakkie se wiel beland as wat 'n mens kan dink. Ook les drie dat 'n muis 'n baie klein gaatjie nodig het om uit te kruip, en as hy uitkruip, vang 'n valk hom baie vinniger want nou tree die muis en die valk natuurlik op.

Die aande om die kampvuur in die Bosveld was baie spesiaal. Daar het ek ook baie geleer, onder andere dat as die 'Balchatri' onder die voertuig se wiel beland dit die bestuurder se skuld is. Dit was 'n groot verligting vir my baie skuldige gemoed. Ek was gelukkig die een wat



(Caption)

die Balchatri uitgegooi het.

Die ringer-gogga het my behoorlik gebyt. 'n Mens kan nie so 'n pragtige voël in jou hand hou, dit hanteer en in sy/haar oë kyk sonder om beïndruk te word nie.

Kom ons maak weer so! 🦅

Ek ring my 1ste roofvoël!

Wanda Louwrens

Ek was vir die eerste keer saam met die Ringers op 'n naweek in November 2012 by Nylsvley (sien artikel in *Laniarius* no. 123). Sedertdien het ek 'n ywerige C-ringer geword – dit is nou 'n ringer in opleiding. Ek het sedert Januarie vanjaar al reeds 82 voëls gering waarvan 25 verskillende spesies was. Ek het geleer hoe om die misnette op te slaan en

weer op te vou en hoe om 1.8 mm ringetjies aan klein voëltjies soos die Bruinsylangstertjie (Tawny-flanked Prinia) se bene te sit. En ek weet hoe dit voel as 'n Dikbekwewer (Thick-billed Weaver) jou byt. Hy byt jou dat die trane loop en jy nie kan help om 'eina' te skreeu nie. En hy los nie sommer nie!

Maar om 'n roofvoël te ring is heeltemal

'n ander storie!

Toe ek hoor Chris du Plooy reël 'n naweek vir die A-ringers om te gaan roofvoëls ring naby Musina het ek gewens om saam te kon gaan. Daar was nog 'n plek oop en ek is ingesluit by die groep van twaalf. Op Saterdagoggend 15 Junie om 04:00 het ons met drie voertuie by die Petroport noord van Pretoria bymekaar gekom. Dit beteken ons moes half drie al opstaan! Ons het noordwaarts gery en duskant Polokwane by 'n Petroport gaan ontbyt eet. Na Polokwane het ons die N1 verlaat en noord-weswaarts begin ry op grondpaaie om na roofvoëls te soek oppad na ons bestemming – Musina.

Die modus operandi was om sodra jy 'n roofvoël sien, die Balchatri uit te gooi. 'n Balchatri is 'n stewige draadhoek met vislynlusse bo-op en langs die kante van die hok (ongeveer 40 cm² en 10 cm hoog). Twee muise of 'n rot word in die Balchatri geplaas wat as lokaas dien vir die roofvoël. Die idee is dat die roofvoël die muise sal sien en in hul poging om die muise te vang sluit 'n lus of twee om die voël se poot waarna dit dan vassit. Sodra mens seker is dat dit vassit, word daar na die hok gejaag om die voël met 'n handdoek toe te gooi sodat dit nie kan wegkom nie. Die voël word in 'n sak gesit en stewig toegemaak sodat net die pote uitsteek. Dan is dit maklik om die tarsus te meet en die regte ring uit te soek. Waar die klein voëltjies 'n 1.8 mm ringetjie benodig, moes ons 10 tot 12 mm ringe vir hierdie roofvoëls aansit.

Maar dit het nie altyd so maklik gegaan nie! Dit is soos visvang. Nie elke aas wat jy in die water gooi lewer 'n vis op nie. Ons het met groot geduld die Balchatri uitgegooi en gewag! Soms het ons tot 15 minute gewag en niks het gebeur nie. Die voël was nie honger nie of was net nie geïnteresseerd genoeg nie. Op die besondere Saterdag moes ons geduldig wees tot 12:46 voordat ons die eerste Bleeksingvalk (Pale Chanting Goshawk) gering het! Groot was my vreugde toe Frik du Plooy sê ek kan maar die eerste een ring! My eerste roofvoël! Die volgende uur het ons nog twee Bleeksingvalke gekry en Julian, Chris se seun, het gesê ek



Walda met 'n Grootjagarend/ African Hawk Eagle

kan dit ook maar ring – hy het al baie van die spesie op sy kerfstok. Ek en Julian het nog twee Bleeksingvalke gering later die middag en die kersie op die koek was die Donkersingvalk (Dark Chanting Goshawk) wat ek net voor sonder kon ring. Sewe vir die dag was nie sleg nie!

Ons het by Ilala Lodge net wes van Musina tuisgegaan en Essie het ons baie vriendelik ontvang. Die toegeruste chalets is baie ruim en netjies en die aand het die groep om 'n kampvuur die stories van die dag vertel. (Dit was lekker warm daar in die noorde so ons het bietjie van Gauteng se koue ontsnap). Die A-ringers in die twee ander voertuie het ook sukses gehad en elkeen het sy of haar ervaring gedeel. Die vroeg opstaan het sy tol geëis en almal het vroeg gaan inkruip.

Sondagoggend was almal al vroeg op en gereed vir nog 'n dag se ringery. Ons voertuig het die pad oos van Musina gekies en ons het al langs die Limpoporivier gery. Ontbyt het bestaan uit toebroodjies en frikkadelle, wat ons met koffie afgesluk het. Die pad was maar stil, maar daar was groot opgewondenheid in Chris se bakkie toe ons 'n mannetjie en wyfie Grootjagarend (African Hawk Eagle) opmerk. Ons het die Balchatri versigtig uitgesit en stadig agteruit gery tot ons net-net die hok nog kon sien en die twee arende kon dophou. Die afwagting in die bakkie was voelbaar! Die twee was seker baie honger want soos jy sê 'mes' het eers die een en toe die ander een afgesweef

gekom en bo-op die Balchatri gaan sit. (Ek lees in Johann Knobel se boek *Arende in Afrika* dat hulle altyd saam jag.) Chris het so opgewonde geraak dat hy na die tyd skoon hoofpyn gehad het! Toe ons sien albei sit vas het Frik vorentoe gejaag en die bakkie het nog nie eers tot stilstand gekom nie, toe is Chris al uit die voertuig met die handdoek. Frik het vinnig groter sakke die voertuig gehaal en toe altwee arende veilig in die sakke was, kon ons weer asemhaal. Dit was 10:00! Frik en Chris was goed vir my en Julian, want ons het die eer te beurt geval om die twee Grootjagarende te ring. Wat 'n belewenis om so 'n voël vas te hou en in sy of haar geel oë te kyk. Ons is terug Musina toe en daarvandaan het ons weer die grondpaaie na Alldays toe verken.

Ons het nog 'n paar onsuksesvolle probeerslae gehad onder andere twee Roofarende (Tawny Eagle) wat by 'n dooie uil in die pad gesit het. Ons het die Balchatri uitgegooi, maar het later opgegee. Teen daardie tyd was ons al naby Alldays, waarna ons weer ooswaarts begin ry het in die rigting van Musina. Die volgende Bleeksingvalk het Frik eers teen 1 uur gering. Nog twee het gevolg en teen sonder het Chris 'n ring aan nog 'n Bleeksingvalk gesit. Teen skemer was ons weer terug by die lodge met sewe roofvoëls suksesvol gering vir

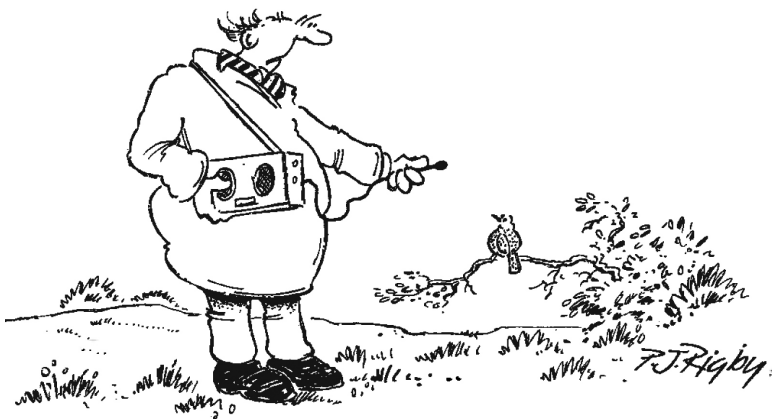
die dag! Wat 'n suksesvolle dag!

Sondagaand se kampvuur was heerlik en daar was nie 'n gebrek aan kos nie. Almal het 'n bydrae gemaak. Julian het vuur aangesteek; Marietjie Jansen van Rensburg en Lynette van den Heever het versnaperings bedien en Johan Muller het die braaibroodjies gebraai wat Danel, sy vrou, verskaf het. Elkeen het iets saamgebring en dit met die ander gedeel – of dit nou 'n sak hout was of 'n koue slaai. Dit is iets wat die voëlkykers by die ringers kan leer – hulle deel met mekaar!

Maandagoggend op die vakansiedag is twee voertuie direk terug Pretoria toe, terwyl Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg, sy vrou, Marietjie, Hein Bantjes en Eben Muller van Harties Voëlklub, weer in die rigting van Alldays gery het. Hulle het oppad huis toe nog drie roofvoëls by hulle lysie gevoeg.

Ons het altesaam 37 roofvoëls vang en gering – 1 Edelvalk (Lanner Falcon), 4 Grootrooivalke (Greater Kestrel), 4 Grootjagarende (African Hawk Eagle), 1 Bruinslangarend (Brown Snake Eagle), 5 Donkersingvalke (Dark Chanting Goshawk), 1 Blouvalkie (Black-shouldered Kite), 21 Bleeksingvalke (Pale Chanting Goshawk) waarvan 2 hervangste was.

Wat 'n naweek! Die beste van my lewe! 🦅



"Is that it, not much of a dawn chorus was it?"

Hoedspruit birding weekend - A GeM of the Lowveld

Ingrid van Heerden

Birthdays are special occasions and none more so than the big ones. Steve was privileged to celebrate his 60th in a very special setting together with a group of enthusiastic members of BLNG at the GeM Bateleur Lodge in Hoedspruit. But he was not the only one, because Michelle also commemorated a considerably more youthful birthday with us in the Lowveld.

This long weekend in June was wonderful, but not for the faint hearted. It is rather a long and tiring trip to drive from Pretoria to Hoedspruit because it takes at least 5 hours (429 km) and once one leaves the highway, the roads are shockingly bad with potholes for most of the way. The traffic is also chaotic because there is an endless procession of enormous trucks that inevitably slows other drivers down to a crawl (while chewing up the roads even further) and makes motorists get mad so that they do irresponsible, reckless things like passing such trucks while careering down a mountain pass or going round blind corners or up blind rises – nerve-wracking to say the least. The return journey was a repeat performance, which is not particularly soothing if one only has two days of relaxation in between these pilgrimages.

One of the wonderful aspects of the weekend was the accommodation at the GeM Bateleur Lodge in the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate, which is elegant without being ostentatious and accommodated the 10 adults in our group very comfortably. The lodge also features a pleasant courtyard with a bird bath and little waterfall, plenty of bird feeders, lots of camping chairs arranged around a circular fireplace for making braais, and a tiny paddling pool which we did not use because despite the wonderfully balmy days, the nights got quite nippy and we also did not have a moment to spare once



Steve's special Bateleur Birthday Cake

the birding got going in earnest. It was actually a pity that we did not have more time to just relax in this lapa area because on that first afternoon we sat outside and were treated to a wonderful parade of Bushveld birds such as Grey, Southern Yellow- and Red-billed Hornbill, Common and Blue Waxbill, Red-headed Weaver, Swainson's Spurfowl, Natal and Crested Francolin, plus families of warthog and pygmy mongoose to my delight as the mammal enthusiast. I suspect that one could see a lot of birds and animals (according to Casper, our guide, there was even a lioness roaming around the Estate and leopards are seen regularly), by just sitting in that lapa quietly and going for drives or even walks (for the brave) through the bush and down to the various waterholes in this lovely estate.

Then there were the cheerful and very helpful Tsonga couple Johannes and Zodwa who act as majordomo and housekeeper for the owners of the lodge who live in Johannesburg. The kitchens are fitted out with every gadget known to man, but without Johannes and Zodwa we would never have

found half the items we were looking for every time we prepared a meal.

On arrival, Johannes greeted us and then proudly led us into the open-plan area encompassing the kitchen, dining room and lounge. With a flourish he presented us to the vast and beautiful chocolate cake reposing on the dining room table. It was a marvel to behold: A large square cake (enough to feed at least 30 people), covered in chocolate icing and decorated with bright red cherries and the most beautiful picture of a Bateleur in full glorious colour. The cake also featured porcupine quills and guinea fowl feathers, a 'Happy Birthday' in edible lettering, a big 60 and 'Steve' (see photo). We were touched and amazed that someone had gone to so much effort to help us commemorate Steve's 60th birthday and everyone had ample servings of this most delicious cake for afternoon tea and dessert after supper on all the days of our visit. I am still not quite sure who was so good and kind as to arrange this treat, but according to Rita, our BLNG Secretary who had organised our outing, it was probably Mattie one of the owners of the lodge and the 'M' in GeM which stands for 'George' and 'Mattie', and not a glittering stone, although this haven in the Lowveld is indeed precious.

Our guide, Casper Badenhorst of Limpopo Birding, was also a gem. He was most efficient, highly knowledgeable about birds and animals, plants and geology, which coupled with a friendly and cheerful character made the two days of our outing such a success. Casper was the one who 'saw' the white lioness of the Timbavati in the dark before the sun rose on the Sunday morning when we were driving towards Orpen Gate. This beautiful cat was like a wraith slinking through the night providing us first with a thrill to see such a rare beast and then with a reason to worry because Casper pointed out that she had 'escaped' from a private game farm and was heading towards non-conservation-minded areas belonging to local inhabitants, something that often proves fatal. Why the Big Cats always have to sneak out of protected areas into forbidden, dangerous, even fatal realms, defies logic. Luckily for my

peace of mind, a couple waiting in the queue at Orpen Gate who heard us speculating what would happen to our snowy beauty, informed us that she had escaped from the Sandringham Estate and that they were well aware of her defection and had already sent out rescue teams to bring her back.

On Saturday the 15th, the day of Steve's birthday, we rose early, had a bit of breakfast, packed our cars with picnic baskets, cameras and binocs, and departed for Mariepskop at the relatively humane hour of 07:00 - practically mid-morning for birders!

Mariepskop is the highest peak of the surrounding mountain range which according to a geologist we met on another memorable Limpopo Birding tour, has erroneously been called 'The Eastern Escarpment of the Drakensberg Mountains'. According to the geologist this classification is wrong because the mountains in this region have a totally different geological composition and were formed in a different period and also look totally different to the peaks and mountains of the Drakensberg proper in KwaZulu-Natal.

No matter what mistakes have been made when it comes to names, Mariepskop Mountain is spectacular in every way: The vegetation is amazing with the base of the mountain situated in a Savannah which acts as the source of the Klaserie River, higher up the kloofs and crags are filled with Afro-montane forests that tower over the ugly man-made pine and wattle plantations that deface all our watersheds, to be followed by grassland on the upper slopes of the mountain and finally on the peak by a combination of mist belt forest and wonder of wonders, a fynbos region that rivals, if not surpasses, the fynbos in the Western Cape. Needless to say, these varied habitats ensured that the birders had a field day with bushveld, forest and fynbos birding opportunities as we gradually wound our way up the awe-inspiring narrow gravel, tar and eventually concrete track that leads up to the peak at an altitude of 1,945 m above sea level.

The views as we progressed up Mariepskop were spectacular and although there was haze

which prevented us from seeing the Indian Ocean and Maputo, we could make out the back of the Three Rondavels at Blyde Poort and the entire Lowveld stretched out at our feet. This is truly a magic place where 'on a clear day one can see forever'. Thanks to its height, Mariepskop was utilised by the old SA Air Force as the then leading satellite tracking station which today is still in use, although it has ceded its position to the tracking station at the AFB Hoedspruit Airport. So although the pinnacle of the mountain is decorated with a weird assortment of masts and satellite dishes, 'coat hangers' and antennas, this technological usefulness has preserved most of the rest of the mountain for posterity.

Mariepskop is a paradise for birders and botanists. There are alleged to be more than 2,000 plant species including 1,400 floral ones, some of which, such as the plentiful and varied aloes, were putting on a glorious show for us. Forest birding takes great determination and one often hears more species than are actually seen. But we were satisfied with sightings of Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler, Cape White-eye, Long-crested Eagle, Brown-headed Parrot, Knysna Turaco, and Grey Cuckooshrike. It took two visits to the forest to find the Knysna Turaco for Alta and Michelle. Unfortunately two specials, namely Narina Trogon which is usually found in the forests and Gurney's Sugarbird which inhabits the fynbos on the peak, remained elusive. The brightly coloured sunbirds, including Southern Double-collared, Amethyst, and White-bellied Sunbirds flitted like jewels through the forests and out in the open of the aloe-rich fynbos.

Mariepskop is a worthwhile and exciting place to visit for anyone who loves plants, birds, nature and beauty. *Omnia Videmus* - We See Everywhere - is the motto of the Lowveld Airspace Monitoring Sector and this mountain is indeed all-seeing and all-encompassing.

As mentioned above, we spent Sunday visiting the Kruger Park and managed to see not only about 80 bird species, but also the Big 5 – our white lady lion, some ancient daggaboy



Intrepid Mariepskop birders

buffaloes, lots of elephants with cute babies, two rhinos (may they escape the slaughter) and a nonchalant leopard draped over the branch of a tree having an afternoon nap (he was just too far for my modest camera, but I am sure Alta and Michelle who were toting lenses the size of bazookas managed to get a good shot of this cat). It was the thrill of the trip for Glynnis who together with Imme travelled with us for the two days. Glynnis admitted that she had never before seen a leopard in the wild in all the years of living in and visiting many parts of Africa.

Time spent in Kruger usually provides a good haul of raptors and our visit was no exception. Bateleur, Tawny, Brown Snake Eagle, Fish Eagle and a glorious Martial Eagle, were greatly rewarding. Probably the most exciting raptor of the day was an African Cuckoo Hawk which caused a great deal of discussion and provided a new mega-tick for the Van Heerdens.

Thus Father's Day was both satisfying and rewarding. We only managed to leave the park at 17:30 as the gates were closing and then still had a 45 min drive ahead of us in the pitch dark with wild animals lurking on the sides of the road to scare me witless. Luckily none of the warthogs, buck or baboons we had seen grazing on the verges the day before scampered across the road on Sunday evening.

Our return journey on Monday was relatively incident-free despite the potholes and the heavy traffic resulting from the long weekend, with thousands of people trying to escape the rat race in Gauteng by visiting the surrounding countryside or visiting friends and family in far-flung parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo or even Mocambique.

There is no greater treat than to escape the winter cold of the Highveld in a sunnier, gentler clime such as Hoedspruit. I can certainly understand why the Boer farmers used to live up on the Highveld in summer and trek down to the Lowveld in winter - total bliss to escape the bitter cold. If one is afforded the pleasure of

watching birds and animals and exploring new regions in convivial company, then it makes such a break even more enjoyable.

This weekend really was one long celebration, with Steve and Michelle's respective birthdays, and Father's Day falling on the Sunday. Alta Fraser earned her 'wings' as a most capable and considerate leader, the birders managed to tick 125 species over two days and Glynnis achieved her lifelong ambition to see a leopard. BLNG can certainly keep this area in mind for future outings particularly over a longer period as the brochures we received listed many other tempting avian, floral and mammalian adventures that can be enjoyed in the Hoedspruit region. 🦁

Conservation portfolio report

Rion Lerm

Since I started as chair of the conservation portfolio I had the privilege of driving many of our club's conservation projects. The committee felt that now was a good time to provide the members with an update and I am excited to do so. No less than eight projects enjoy the club's involvement, with club members in turn enjoying the new outing venues and being part of these conservation efforts.

Our most prestigious project must be BLiNG, and concerns a Secretarybird that hatched at Sondela Nature Reserve at the start of 2013. It is rated as an important project by ourselves because the club sponsored the cost of the biotelemetry tracking device (GPS/GSM) that BirdLife SA fitted to the bird. BLiNG is currently spending time between cell phone towers in eastern Botswana, approximately 400 km from its nest, rendering the bird invisible to us. However, once he/she enters cell reception, the tracking device will download the GPS locations it stored and we can see what the bird is up to. Members can see *Laniarius* 124 for more information on BirdLife SA's Secretarybird projects.

A second 'BLNG bird' is in the pipeline, but many of us know by now that catching a White-bellied Korhaan is easier said than done... The BirdLife SA/Wits University team will be making another attempt in November 2013 to catch this elusive species. This bird will also be fitted with a tracking device, however a special thank you must be extended to one of our club members who donated the funds for this device.

The Wonderboom Urban Verreaux's Eagle project led by Pieter and Natasja Saunders has provided members over the past two years with personal sightings of eagle chicks. BLNG is also proud to have contributed financially towards the installation of a trap camera at the nest site, providing us with some rarelyseen footage of eagle behaviour at the nest. Please visit their website or join the Facebook group to see up to date photos of the current chick's (M'lilwane) progress.

Golf courses have become part of our conservation efforts, and surprisingly these ventures are driven by the golfers themselves or the governing bodies overseeing course management. Nonetheless, it is always great to

see that someone wants to make a difference. Like many people I have seen golf courses in a negative light for years but scientific publications show that golf courses can host more bird species than surrounding urban and rural areas. This might be partly due to the artificial water supply in the form of both terrestrial - on the fairways and greens - and aquatic habitats. My involvement with golf courses started through collaboration with Tshwane University of Technology, BLNG, East Rand Bird Club and Bronkhorstspuit Golf Course. It led to various outings and a whopping 100+ species listed by the two bird club visits and golf course management. Together with the golf course management we sat down and designed posters for their club house which featured common and uncommon birds as well as their first bird list. So do yourself a favour and join the next club outing to a golf course. Whilst I was working hard on poster compilation another golf course/country club approached BLNG. Pretoria Country Club (PCC; since 1910) came onto the BLNG programme with no less than three very successful outings led by Bryan Groom and our club chairman. PCC has approximately 2,000 members and have enthusiastically embraced the club's efforts. The latest activity for county club members was a bird identification workshop relating to

the birds seen on the golf course. It was well attended by bird enthusiasts and management alike. Keep an eye on the programme as more outings are planned before the end of this year.

Other interesting projects are the 'Friendsgroups'. No less than three groups, all registered with WESSA (Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa) approached BLNG requesting assistance with anything to do with birds. This initiative usually starts with an outing, or as was the case of Colbyn Valley, a cleanup on Mandela Day. Friends of Colbyn Valley, Waterkloofspruit and Brookside Meander are all groups who are willing to conserve their local 'green' area, mostly inside suburbia. Colbyn Valley is a unique ecosystem with its rare peat land and wetland where River Warbler was recorded years back and more recently, Longcrested Eagle. Fortunately, Tshwane Nature Conservation in collaboration with the local 'Friends group' and Gauteng Department of Agriculture, is in the progress of declaring the area a nature reserve. Waterkloofspruit delivered interesting birds on recent outings e.g. Ovambo Sparrowhawk, Lesser Honeyguide, and at least three warbler species. Friends of Brookside Meander will host an outing in 2014, so keep your eyes peeled for that one. 🐦



Marula Cottage

Marula Cottage is a new fresh guest house set on the mountains overlooking the bushveld and Marakele and Kransberg ranges. We are just 4 km from Thabazimbi and 7 km from Marakele NP with its renowned Cape Vulture colony, fynbos specials, as well as being big game country. We are also within easy reaching distance of good sightings of Yellow-throated Sandgrouse.

For those who would like to relax, why not spend time in our garden and add to our ever growing, bird and nest list. Enjoy a dip in the pool with the kingfishers, or listen to owls and nightjars from the braai place.

We are a registered Birder Friendly Establishment with BLSA.

For more information contact: Dave 083 319 9350, Monika 078 053 3493 or visit our website www.marula-cottage.com

Om te reis: Oor berge en deur dale

Stephan Terblanche

Dis bly eenvoudig waar dat reis in of na nuwe plekke mens oor hoogtes en deur dieptes neem, of die landskap nou plat is of nie. Vertwyfeling bring die laagtes: wanneer mens vir watter rede ookal onseker is wat om te doen, of waarheen om te gaan; as mens later nie weet, volgens die ou klanknabootsende spreekwoord, of dit Dinsdag of Dingaansdag is nie. Die hoogtes gaan saam met sukses: 'n plan wat werk, 'n nuwe insig, 'n vars belewenis.

So is my huidige reis ook. Die opdraende pad van groue duisternis, tot die wolke net so effe lig en die reën bedaar, en in daardie paar minute 'n *Savi's Warbler* op 'n riet gaan sit, sy hoek doer ver in die water uitgooi en die katrol sing en sing en sing. Op daardie oomblik vang die reis 'n kruin en bied 'n mens se gemoed die plesier van die afdraende, in die beste sin van die woord. Ek het die sangertjie al voorheen aangeteken, in Spanje in 2004. My geheue huisves egter geen herinnering aan die gebeurtenis nie. 'n *Savi's Warbler* is weliswaar nie 'n uitstaande model nie – nie groot of kleurvol of imposant nie. Net 'n bruin dingetjie, soos tientalle ander rietsangers. En tog beïndruk dit my mateloos dat hy na ure se reën en koue winde die energie het om aan die riet te klou, sy snawel in die lug te druk, keel wit uit te pof



en 'n geluid voort te bring wat nes 'n singende katrol klink.

Die langnaweek uit Freiburg uit begin al hier by 18:00, met sorgvuldige uitsorteer van wat moet saam en wat nie. Dis amper soos daardie Mr Bean skets, waar hy alles in 'n klein tassie probeer inkry; selfs die tandeborsel in twee breek. Ek het self net 'n dagstapruksak. Die nagtrein vertrek om 22:00, en ek moet onderhandel om in daardie deel van die trein te kom wat Berlyn toe gaan, in plaas van Praag toe. Die redes is 'n lang vervelige storie. Daar was wel 'n prikkel van interesse toe die man agter die toonbank in die restaurantwa sê ek moet net vir die "chef" wag, hy sal my help met 'n reëling. Ek vermoed daar was 'n flikkering van misverstand in my oog, maar ek onthou toe darem hy verwys na die baas van die kondukteurs.

Die kruin is dus die suksesvolle onderhandel. Die dal is 'n lang nag in 'n sitkompartement. Om 01:00 kry ek 'n medereisiger – 'n fisioterapeut. Sy is so laat want haar vlug van Majorka af was vertraag. Was al in Namibië in 'n



werkende hoedanigheid, en in Suid Afrika, en verras my selfs met 'n bietjie Afrikaans. Gelukkig het hierdie inligting eers later die oggend gekom, naby Berlyn.

Die 2 ure per trein na Stralsund is gelykpad, ook letterlik, omdat die landskap gekenmerk word deur ... wel, niks. Dis wel gekleur: oorwegend groen, maar groot lappe geel canola blomme ook. En elke nou en dan 'n dorpie, of 'n stand windkragmeulens. Amper al die dorpies se name eindig op "ow", dalk omdat ons so naby die Poolse grens is. Die hotel waarby ek bespreek is, is juis in Züssow.

In Stralsund vind ek Avis net buite die stasie, maar aan die ander kant as wat Google Maps beweer het. Ek kry 'n Renault Twingo, amper splinternuut en met allerlei interessante gédjits. Ek het van die bestes ontdek net nadat ek brandstof ingegooi het om die kar terug te gee. Die teruggee was bietjie van 'n dal. Ek het nie mooi gekyk toe ek vertrek nie en kom toe eers na 'n ent agter die petroltenk was nie vol nie. Nou moet dit mos verduidelik word. Gelukkig stry Avis se outjie nie – hulle sal die geld net van die vorige klant eis, sê hy. So dís dan hoe hulle werk.

Duitse naweke het 'n baie spesifieke karakter. Winkels is almal toe en mens kry net hier en daar 'n eetplekkie, as jy weet waar om te soek. Vulstasies is merkwaardig skaars. In vergelyking is daar in SA massas. Ek moes lang draaie ry, en kon per geleentheid niks meer as 'n pak tjips te ete kry nie. Vroeg aandete op die eerste dag is ek op aanbeveling van 'n jong blondine by die hotel na die Fishershütte in Greifswald. Ek bestel die spesialiteit van die dag: Hornfisch. Dis een van die gesondste visse wat ek nog geëet het. Mens kry net so een happie elke 5 minute in. Die res van die tyd is jy besig met die grate. Turkoois grate. Ek weet nou waar die woord "seegroen" vandaan kom. Gelukkig is daar 'n sentrale "rugstring", met die helfte van die grate daaraan vas. Met oefening kom die hele rugstring met sy aanhangsels in een stuk uit. Na die oefen met vis nr 1 was nr 2 dus heelwat makliker. Steeds nie regtig maklik nie, want die ander helfte van die grate sit elders in die vis. My slotsom oor die vissie: moenie



bodder met Hornfisch, behalwe dalk uit 'n blik uit. Almal stem natuurlik nie saam nie, want ek sien op die internet hoe spesiaal sommige eters dit beoordeel.

Danksy iemand wat die moeite gedoen het met 'n stel boeke oor waar mens in Duitsland kan voëlskyk kan ek doelgerig van plek tot plek ry. Die weer is die eerste dag perfek: lekker koel, maar sonnig. Die tweede dag breek pragtig aan, maar teen 12 begin die wolke saampak. Na 'n ruk se gedreig, bars daar uiteindelik 'n bui reën los wat later selfs klein haelkorrels gooi. Ek het kort tevore by die Johannisdorfervlei aangekom, en nog 'n voëlkyker ontmoet. Die jong man het 'n teleskoop en al, en 'n fiets. Hy kom per trein tot by Anklam en toe te fiets die laaste 10 km. Oor sy drarak hang twee tasse, met "Greenpeace" op. Ek sou wou noem my Twingo gebruik skaars 5 liter/100 km, maar ek het toe nog nie geweet nie. Ewenwel, toe die hael begin val is ek so ver van die kar as wat ek kon wees, by 'n tipe skuiling waarvan die dak al lankal af is. My baadjie hou my bolyf droog, maar my broek is hoogstens waterwerend in 'n verbygaande misreëntjie. Terug by die kar kon ek darem die verwarmers aansit om my nat stewels te begin droogblaas. En met leedwese dink aan die Greenpeace outjie wat nou 10 km te fiets het om af te lê, en sy broek is nie eers waterwerend nie.

Ek het wonderlike voëls gesien: 'n goeie klompie tot my Duitse lys gevoeg, en drie nuwe spesies gekry. Dit raak my ook op 'n vreemde manier wanneer ek die migreerders



Geelkwickkie/ Yellow Wagtail

hier teëkom: daardie voëls wat in die suidelike somer suidwaarts trek en nou hier kom broei. Die Hofsangetjie pas in my handpalm en tog maak hulle hierdie 11000 km vlug, twee keer 'n jaar. Hulle kom hier aan in die oortuiging dat hier genoeg kos en metgeselle sal wees, en begin onmiddellik om te sing en te vertoon. Daar is skaars tyd om lank genoeg tot stilstand te kom dat 'n voëlkyker 'n foto kan neem. Omtrent al die swaels wat hier te siene is

onderneem dieselfde reis. Die Rooiruglaksman doen ook so, en is een van die nuwes op my Duitse (en Europese) lys. Daar moet 'n storie wees agter die Duitse naam: *Neuntöter*, oftewel, doodmaker van 9! In SA sit hulle gewoonlik opvallend bo-op 'n bos, maar hier word hulle 'n geheimsinnige dingetjie wat eers mens se aandag trek met 'n gekweel vanuit 'n bos. Soos 'n sanger, nie 'n laksman nie.

Om 12:30 met die terugreis, op spoor na Berlyn, val my gemoed oor 'n ligte afgrond wanneer aangekondig word daar is in Berlyn 'n versperring van 'n aard. Ons trein volg 'n ander roete om die stad, en doen net by een stasie aan. Hoe nou gemaak, wonder ek onder uit die dal uit. Die wondere van moderne kommunikasie help. Danksy my Deutsche Bahn app kry ek 'n alternatief, en met die volgende trein is ek net met 'n uur vertraag. Dis wel basies 2,500 km vandat ek uit Freiburg vertrek het, maar daarvan was ek net persoonlik vir 300 km verantwoordelik – die res van die tyd kon ek agteroor sit, kyk waar ek wil, doen wat ek wil, oorgegee aan die Duitse vervoerowerhede. Mens kan 'n slegter oorgawe doen.

Ek sluit af met 'n Geelkwickkie. 🐦

Besoek aan Namibië April/Mei 2013

Frans van Vuuren

In April 2007 besoek ons Namibië vir 4 weke – 3 persone in Pajero, koste R4,500 elk – en ek skryf Namibië is die plek vir 'n heerlike, bekostigbare voëlkykvakansie. Wel dis nog net so heerlik, maar nie meer so bekostigbaar nie! April vanjaar weer in die Pajero vir 5 weke in Namibië en die slag kos dit vir my en Adele R24,000, al is petrol daar 'n Rand goedkoper per liter as in RSA.

Dis die enigste slegte nuus – die goeie nuus is dit is steeds veilig, het onbeskryflik unieke visitas en die SPESIALE voëls is nog steeds net waar hulle was en selfs bietjie makliker om te kry!

Ons beplan die reis om vir Brian en Wilma die maksimum LIFERS te kry en slaag bykans

100% – net die Donkergrysvalk het dié slag weggekrom.

Ons slaap in Upington oor en gaan so 9:00 blitsvinnig deur die grenspos by Nakop. Daardie dag maak ons 'n groot fout om te beplan vir 750 km na Helmeringhausen en nog tussen-in te wil voëlkyk – na 14:00 beseft ons, ons is nog nie halfpad nie, ry te vinnig op die grondpad en Brian se agterband ontplof. Dis 'n les wat ons die res van die reis bybly, maar ons is tog uiteindelik voor donker kamp opgeslaan en rustig met 'n bier in die hand en 'n tjop op die vuur – aangehelp deur die feit dat die Namibiese tyd 'n uur teruggeskuif is (dit kom ons eers 2 dae later agter toe ons

Sondagoggend 6:00 almal wakker raas, denkende dis 07:00). Nietemin ons het toe reeds **Woestynkorhaan (Rüppell's Korhaan)** en **Rooiwangparkiet (Rosy-faced Lovebird)** op die lys. Ook baie **Woestynlewerike (Stark's Lark)** langs die pad.

Ons het voorheen altyd **Bloukop-drawwertjies (Burchell's Courser)** op die pad verby Sossusvlei gekry, maar dié slag mis ons hulle op pad na Namib Naukluft Lodge, so die volgende oggend ry ons terug na Sossus en kry hierdie teikenspesies amper aan die einde van die teerpad in die park (sommer ook 'n **Ludwigpou (Ludwig's Bustard)** ook raak-geloop, asook **Witborsjakkalsvoël (Augur Buzzard)** in sy suidelikste gebied. Daar was verskeie **Swartoorlewerike (Black-eared Sparrow-Larks)** langs die pad op ons eerste dag in Namibië, maar nooit mooi stil en naby nie, so groot was die vreugde toe een verdwaalde Swartoorlewerik in Sossusvlei vir ons mooi stil langs die pad sit.

Vier dae in Swakopmund/Walvisbaai lewer die gewone teikens op: **Namiblewerik (Gray's Lark)** by Swakop Soutwerke; **Duinlewerik (Dune Lark)** anderkant die rivier by Rooibank; asook die **Rooihalsfraaijngpoot (Red-necked Phalarope)** en **Asiatiese Goue Strandkiewiet (Pacific Golden Plover)** wat Trevor rapporteer het, maar geen **Amerikaanse Strandkiewiet (American Golden Plover)** nie. Dis te laat vir **Damarasterretjie (Damara Tern)** en ook geen **Griete (Godwits)** nie, maar 'n verdwaalde **Knopsterroofmeew (Pomarine Jaeger)** is 'n verrassing.

Ons ry vanaf die westekant (Hentiesbaai) by Spitzkoppe in en kry verskeie **Kaoko-langbeklewerik (Benguela Long-billed Lark)**, (nie so ver suid bevestig nie, maar ons het goeie foto's om ons identifikasie te staaf!). Ons slaan teen die Spitzkoppe kamp op, en die **Monteironeushoringvoël (Monteiro's Hornbill)** kamp saam. (*Dis beslis 'n moenie-misloop kampterrein*). Ons soek die volgende oggend na die **Hererospekvreter (Herero Chat)** net oos van die nekkie deur die koppe waar hulle laas was, maar eers na ons 'n kilometer langs die koppe afstap, hoor

ons hulle baie veraf en na 'n gesukkel deur die dorings en slote kry ons 'n drietal wat hul harte uitsing en poseer vir naby fotokote. Die **Swartwangsysies (Black-faced Waxbill)** en **Muiskeurwindswael (Bradfield's Swift)** kry ons ook hier.

Ons was nog nooit in die Erongoberge nie en dis ons groot begeerte om die area te sien – die Lodge is nogal baie duur, dus kies ons die 'Erongo Plateau Camp' vir verblyf. Die grondpad is baie sleg en ons ry 'n uur aan die 40 km deur die Erongo bewaararea, maar die kamplek is afgesonderd en ons bly heerlik. Die verskeie **Kortstertlaksmanne (White-tailed Shrike)** wat ons langs die pad sien, help natuurlik om die pad draaglik te maak.

Die **Klipfisante (Hartlaub's Spurfowl)** is nog altyd waar ons hulle in 2003 gekry het – met sonop kruis hulle die pad net buite die bewaararea se hek en 'n mannetjie sowel as 'n wyfie poseer mooi op die rotse. Ons draai net noord van die dorp Omaruru af op die grondpad waar ons voorheen die **Damararooibekneushoringvoël (Damara Hornbill)** gekry het, en na 'n halfuur is die een ook in die sakkie. Toe ons in 2003 hier was het ons nêrens anders die spesie gesien nie, maar dié slag is hulle algemeen van hier na die Waterberg en noord tot by Epupavalle. Ook kry ons **Bruinkeelwewers (Southern Brown-throated Weaver)** hier.

Ons kamplek in Erongo kry daaglik besoek van 'n **Korttoonkliplyster (Short-toed Rock-Thrush)**, maar ons stres oor waar ons die **Rotsvoël (Rockrunner)** gaan kry. Ons sit die laaste middag hier rustig en niksdoen, toe ek sommer sê: "Speel bietjie die **Rotsvoël** se roep laat ons hoor hoe dit klink" en daar verskyn twee uit die niet en kom sit op die muurtjie langs ons vir foto's.

Die volgende bestemming is Waterberg-park – Brandberge was 'n opsie vir die **Kaoko-langbeklewerik** (by die orrelpype), maar hy is reeds in die sakkie. Die kamplek met parkgelde by Waterberg is duur, maar die voëllewe is puik. Ons kamp onder 'n boom met gate in die stam en sommer gou kom kruip die **Bloupenspagaie**

(**Rüppell's Parrot**) daar rond. Vroeg volgende oggend is die **Perskakelaars (Violet Wood-Hoopoe)** in die bome om ons en 'n kort stappie langs die kampdraad lewer die **Rooi Tinktinkie (Tinkling Cisticola)** en **Gebande Sanger (Barréd Wren-Warbler)** op. Daarna teen die bult op na die ou huise, waar **Ovamboswartmees (Carp's Tit)** volop is (reeds in Spitzkoppe gesien, maar nou kry ons fotos!). Ons sien talle ander voëls by die huise, waaronder **Kleinheuningwyser (Lesser Honeyguide)** en **Kremetartlaksman (Southern White-crowned Shrike)**. Terloops die Dikdikkees boer in die kampplek, asook volop **Damararooibekneushoringvoëls**).

Ons het Tandala Ridge net suid van Etosha se Anderson hek (Okaukuejo) in die toer ingesluit weens die **Kaalwangkatlagters (Bare-cheeked Babblers)** wat daar volop is. (Het nog altyd met hulle gesukkel buite die park en ook omdat Wilma die **Kalaharipatryse (Orange River Francolin)** soek wat hier om die Lodge se woonhuis rondloop. Geen probleem met die doelwitte nie en by die wildwatertrog sien ons sommer 'n paar **Bruinwewers (Chestnut Weaver)** – mannetjies in broeikleed – waarna ek al die laaste paar dae soek, maar met min hoop vir broeikleed! Terloops, dit wemel van **Koningblousysies (Violet-eared Waxbill)** – een van die mees algemene voëls in Namibië!

Ons pak die lang tog na Epupa-valle oor Opuwo aan en sommer gou-gou kom ons **Gompoue (Kori Bustard)** teë, asook

Dubbelband Drawwertjies (Double-banded Courser) en **Vaalbruin Lewerikke (Fawn-coloured Lark)**. Die hele toer bekommer ek my oor die sandbed-rivieroorgang by Omuhonga en die klippad na die valle, met die karavaan, maar watwou; die Namibiërs het 'n betonpad oor die sand gebou en die res van die pad is nou C-graad, dws 2x per maand geskraap en in puik toestand! Ons kom dus by die valle aan met die son nog hoog en slaan kamp op. Pas sit ek met die eerste bier in die hand, of 'n voël kom pik teen die karavaan se wiel – **Rooistert-morelyster! (Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush)** Laatmiddag kom sit die **Olyfbyvreters (Olive Bee-eater)** in die boom langs ons kamp en ons is klaar met Epupa – bel gou vir Kunene River Lodge en ry 'n dag vroeër.

Kunene River Lodge was nog altyd my geliefkoosde verblyf – ek gaan telkens vir drie dae daarheen en bly 'n week! Ons kamp heerlik langs die rivier, sien die **Gestreepte Vleילוerie (White-browed Coucal)** agter die kantoor (en langs ons kampplek), **Reuse-ooruil (Verreaux's Eagle Owl)** by die badkamers en les bes die **Angolasygies (Cinderella Waxbill)** net oorkant die pad, agter die kamp. Dis te maklik!

Ons het vanaf die huis met Peter Morgan gereë om na die Zebraberge te ry vir die **Angola Cave-Chat** en Dinsdagoggend is die groot dag. Ons ry so 3 ure deur die bosse en kom vroeglig teen die berg aan, maar dis doodstil. Peter sê die voëls het nog 10 dae gelede geroep, maar dis amper winter. Later

What are feathers made from?

Feathers are made from a horny substance called keratin: a light, strong and very flexible form of protein. Keratin is also found in a bird's beak and claws – and indeed in human hair and fingernails. Feathers have several component parts: the central shaft which is hollow at the base and attaches to the bird's skin; the barbs, or sidebranches, which are attached to the shaft; and tiny barbules, which branch off the barbs and mesh with each other, giving the feather its unique combination of strength and lightness. Different types of feathers have different uses: such as the large wing feathers which enable a bird to fly; the 'contour' feathers which cover and streamline its body; and the soft downy ones which keep it warm.

stap ons om die rotpunt, maar dit bly doodstil. Die benoude vraag word gevra en Peter sê “So 80-90% sukses” – dit beteken 1-2 uit 10 keer word die voëls gemis!!! Na so ‘n paar vals alarme vir **Bergwagters (Mountain Wheatear)**, sien ons weer ‘n beweging en Peter dink dit HY!! Ons soek tussen die rotse rond, ek loer deur die teleskoop en skielik is die **Cave Chat** in fokus! Ek rek die toegelate 3 sekondes na 5, staan opsy vir Adele en dan kom Wilma, maar nou is die blikskottel weg. Nog 10 minute voor Brian twee op die rotse sien rondskarrel soos muise en ‘n rukkie later kom sit een net ‘n entjie van ons af. Als en als drie tot vyf verskillende individue en dit was reusagtig!

Die volgende twee dae soek ons die **Donkergrysvalk (Grey Kestrel)** en ook die **Bennettspeg (Bennett’s Woodpecker)** sonder spikkels maar tevergeefs. Ons kry wel ‘n mooi **Gryskopvisvanger (Grey-headed Kingfisher)** en weer ‘n **Kaokolangbeklewerik**.

Nou het ons die draaipunt bereik en ons keer huiswaarts. Een nag in Roy’s Camp by Grootfontein vir die **Swartwangkatlagter (Black-faced Babbler)**; twee dae in Rundu vir die **Witkruiskatlagter (Hartlaub’s Babbler)**, **Rooipensmees (Rufous-bellied Tit)** en onverwags die **Grootvleiloerie (Coppery-tailed Coucal)**, **Senegalvleiloerie (Senegal Coucal)** en **Rooibruinrietsanger (Greater Swamp Warbler)** by die rioolwerke. Ook ‘n klomp **Dwerggans (African Pygmy Goose)** op die Kavango.

Shamvuru by Mark en Charlie Paxton is altyd ‘n wenner en ons kry die **Witwanguil (Southern White-faced Owl)**; die **Rooiwangstompstert (Red-faced Crombec)**; **Spitsstertglanspreeu (Sharp-tailed Starling)**; **Swartpensuikerbekkie (Shelley’s Sunbird)** en les bes **Souzalaksman (Souza’s Shrike)** in een dag! Volgende môre op ‘n bootrit vir nog ‘n **Rooibruinrietsanger**, **Goudwewers (African Golden Weaver)** en **Luapulatinkinkies (Luapula Cisticola)**.

Die plan was om na Katima Mulilo te ry vir die Swartpensuikerbekkie en Langkuifloerie, (Schalow’s Turaco) maar Mark vertel ons lg. is by Kongola op die Kwandorivier gesien en ons

ry na Dan Stevens se Mavunje Boskamp. Dis topklas vir kamp en bootritte – net BAIE seekoeie! Ons kry eindelijk die **Bruinvuurvinkies (Brown Firefinch)** in die kamp, ‘n bootrit op die Linyante gee ons die **Piepende Tinkinkie (Chirping Cisticola)** en, op die oggend wat ons moet ry, kon die loerie besoek aflê. (Ons het al moed opgegeë om die loerie te sien en Wilma was in die stort en ek, Brian en Adele het rustig ontbyt geëet toe die loerie 3 m voor ons op ‘n lae bos kom sit. Die storie gaan nog aan, maar laat ek liewer niks sê nie!

Laaste stop in Namibië by Nunda Kamp langs die Popa-valle, by Mduma Nasionale Park.

Ons soek vergeefs vir die **Enkelband-slangarend (Western Banded Snake Eagle)**, maar kry dit twee dae later op ‘n bootrit vanaf Drotsky’s, maar kry wel na ‘n gesoek die **Lelkraanvoëls (Wattled Crane)**, **Gryskruisswaels (Grey-rumped Swallow)** en half onverwags ‘n **Boskoester (Wood Pipit)**.

Die laaste middag by Nunda ry ons by Kavango Safari Lodge net 15 km suid van Nunda in. Ons het in 2007 met Reynetta, Jeanette, die Van Wyks en Elzine en Jacques daar gebly – en is verstom hoe die plek gegroei het. Ons stap deur die kamplek en sien **Goudwewers (Golden Weaver)**, **Dunbekheuningvoël (Green-backed Honeybird)**, **Kleinglanspreeu (Cape Glossy Starling)** en die **Groot-, en Miombo-blouoorglanspreeu (Greater and Miombo Blue-eared Starling)** sommer gou-gou – eintlik het ons net ‘n bier kom soek!!

Laaste gesang is gesing en ons ry via Drotsky’s huis toe. Ons sien nog vir oulaas op die Drotsky’s boot die **Dwerglangtoon (Lesser Jacana)** en **Kleinwaterhoender (Lesser Moorhen)**, maar dan is die tog verby.

Namibië sal vir meeste toeriste en voëlkykers ‘n baie spesiale ondervinding wees. Ons is nogal hartseer as ons dink dat ons seker nie weer die land sal besoek nie. Klublede wat beplan om Namibië te besoek, is welkom om my te kontak met enige vrae as ons miskien kan help, by frans_v_vuuren@absamail.co.za 🐦

An exhilarating Namibian experience!

Louise Geyser

Despite many previous visits, only enough to wet our appetites, my husband, Piet, and I remain totally intrigued with the endless natural beauty of Namibia. This insatiable passion about the fascinating geology and unique fauna and flora drove us towards dreaming of a following opportunity to self-drive and discover the scenic secrets of this vast, entrancing country. Being enthusiastic birders, our dream was inspired by the *Photographic Journey – Birds of Namibia* of Pompe Burger, to follow a route that would bring us into contact with the many endemic and rare species of this magical destination. This dream materialised sooner than we envisaged, thanks to the special invitation of one of our very special friends in Namibia, who invited us to her 50th birthday celebration at the end of June. After flying to Windhoek and spending a wonderful weekend at a lodge outside Windhoek during which we celebrated this special occasion, these exceptional friends placed their wonderful Jeep Cherokee at our disposal to pursue any route of our choice.

It is impossible to do justice to the amazing experience that we embarked upon within the limited space of this article. I can only attempt to share some of the birding highlights that we experienced during our 3,500 km journey – as far north as the Caprivi (recently renamed the Zambezi region) and as far south as Sossusvlei and Sesriem – and during which we were elated about adding 24 lifers to our life list! Kaokoland could unfortunately not feature in this route, neither the southern part of Namibia, which have been reserved for a following dream to take place sometime in the future.

As our trip took place in the heart of the Namibian winter, we focused predominantly on the Namibian endemics and a couple of other rare resident species. All the summer avian visitors, the migrants – African and Palaearctic – had returned home. This also eliminated our chances of seeing the sought-after Damara

Tern, an intra-African migrant that migrates northwards to the bulge of Africa returning south to breed, as well as the Red-necked Phalarope (a rare summer visitor, found mostly at the Walvis Bay Salt works), a justifying reason to motivate a follow-up visit in summer when all the summer visitors are prolific!

Based on our realistic approach we were extremely happy to identify thirteen of Namibia's fourteen endearing endemics, listed by Steve Braine, well-known Namibian bird expert. According to Steve the sandy-coloured **Dune Lark** is the only bird species in Namibia considered to be a *true endemic*, indicating that this species only occurs within Namibia. It is found in the vegetated coastal sandy dune belt, stretching from Lüderitz (recently renamed Naminüs) up to the Kuiseb River, just south of Walvis Bay. These birds are sedentary, with no recorded history of drinking (a very non-Namibian characteristic!). There are another 13 species that are often referred to as endemics, although they are essentially *near-endemics*, insofar as their distribution extends into another area, in this case Angola, because the largest populations of the species are found in Namibia. These near-endemics are **Monteiro's Hornbill, Damara Hornbill, White-tailed Shrike, Carp's Tit, Hartlaub's Spurfowl, Herero Chat, Rüppell's Korhaan, Rockrunner, Bare-cheeked Babbler, Benguela Long-billed Lark, Gray's Lark, Violet Wood-Hoopoe and Rüppell's Parrot**. Of these near-endemics, the one that eluded us, was **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**.

Our morning tour with Steve Braine was undoubtedly one of the highlights of our expedition. Steve hails from a birding fraternity and has spent his entire life with birds. His grandfather was an aviculturist and his father was also a keen birder. The avian interest has been passed down through the generations to Steve's sons, Sean and Dayne, who continue the tradition. They join Steve and co-founder,

John Lötter, as knowledgeable guides in Batis Birding Safaris, specialising in tours in Namibia, Angola and Antarctica. Steve first escorted us to the Kuiseb River Delta where we were thrilled to see quite a number of Dune Larks in their preferred habitat skeddaddling between the low 'Nara shrubs and perennial grass tufts on the sandy dunes. The hardy, indigenous, prickly green 'Nara bush is a desert plant which is harvested annually by the local Topnaar people who live along the lower Kuiseb River. Along the road leading to the Kuiseb River Delta we were also very fortunate to see a beautiful Black-chested Snake-Eagle and a pair of Tractrac Chats, another lifer for us.

From here we proceeded with Steve to the Walvis Bay Lagoon and Saltworks. We could never have anticipated the spectacle of birds awaiting us: thousands of Lesser and Greater

Flamingos, Great White Pelican, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, Pied Avocet and Black-winged Stilt, Caspian, Common and Swift Tern, Grey-headed and Hartlaub's Gull, Common Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Three-banded Plover and to our absolute delight, a host of Chestnut-banded Plovers – a first for us. At Walvis Bay jetty we were furthermore rewarded with a sighting of three Crowned Cormorants, another lifer for our list! A winter experience of The Walvis Bay Lagoon is so impressive that I cannot imagine how congested the scene is in summer when all the migrant birds move in from the northern hemisphere in their thousands.

Characteristic of the endless coastal gravel plains are the many desert birds, such as Rüppell's Korhaan, and Stark's and Gray's Lark – the last three all lifers, which we saw en route

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Photo Spot of Namibia Endemic and Near-endemic Species

Contributed by Louise Geysler

During their Namibian tour Louise and Piet Geysler saw most of Namibia's special birds. The photos of several of these birds are shown here with credit to the various photographers.



Piet Geysler

White-tailed Shrike/ Kortstertlaksman



Sean Braine

Hartlaub's Spurfowl/ Klipfisant



Dayne Braine

Rüppell's Parrot/ Bloupenspapegaaï



Louise Braine

Souza's Shrike/ Souzalaksman



Dayne Braine

Rockrunner/ Rotsvoël



Sean Braine

Monteiro's Hornbill/ Monteironeushoringvoël



Dayne Braine

Bare-cheeked Babbler/ Kaalwangkatlagter



Dayne Braine

Dune Lark/ Duinlewerik



Sean Braine

Herero Chat/ Hererospekvreter

from Walvis Bay via the Kuiseb River Pass to Solitaire. At Sossusvlei we had wonderful close by views of Ludwig's Bustard, Cape Penduline-Tit, Scaly-feathered Finch and a multitude of Sociable Weavers, whilst a wonderful variety of species awaited us at Namib Desert Lodge (part of the Gondwana Collection, which we can thoroughly recommend), amongst others: Dusky Sunbird, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Short-toed Rock-thrush, Mountains Wheatear and Pririt Batis.

In the unknown little town of Uis (previously a mining town) we had the wonderful privilege of being hosted by very special friends, whose very authentic home has unrestricted views of the Brandberg. In their indigenous garden Dusky and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds jealously indulged in the flowering aloe and quiver trees and every morning and evening we were entertained by the frog-like duet of pairs of Rüppell's Korhaan. From this magical base on the road to Twyfelfontein we saw several Benguela Long-billed Larks, Carp's Tit as well as a Herero Chat, which is the prime attraction in this area. In the vicinity of Kamanjab we were thrilled to see two additional near-endemics, namely the attractive Violet Wood-Hoopoe and a group of chattering Bare-cheeked Babblers.

Another highlight was our visit to Roy's Camp, 50 km north of Grootfontein. Whilst enjoying a well-deserved gin and tonic we were welcomed by a noisy group of Black-faced Babblers and during a stroll through the camp we were quickly alerted to the shrieking calls of beautiful Rüppell's Parrots. Pieter's delicious home-made food is also to be recommended! On departure we were greeted by a busy little group of Black-faced Waxbills, enjoying the nectar of a flowering Knob thorn.

Also part of the Gondwana Collection is Hakusembe Lodge, situated on the Kavango River, 19 km west of Rundu. Our sunset river cruise was a delightful experience, when many species were visible on both banks of the river, amongst others African Fish Eagle, Black-crowned Night Heron and a pair of breeding Rufous-bellied Herons. Early morning we were

awakened by the magical call of the Swamp Boubou and noisy Hartlaub's Babblers and in the reed beds in front of the restaurant we saw – a first for us. On departure from Hakusembe, African Wattled and Crowned Lapwing, as well as Temminck's Coursers featured between the scrub bordering the gravel road.

Perhaps the greatest find was **Souza's Shrike** during a remarkable bird tour with the knowledgeable Mark Paxton of Shamvura Lodge, situated 200 km east of Rundu on the banks of the Kavango River. Mark has incredible knowledge of the breeding sites of these rare birds and currently focuses on three areas. After walking for over an hour at the first breeding site without any luck, and with the wind definitely not blowing in our favour, our hopes of finding any Souza's were not very high. At the second breeding site we followed Mark silently, with our eyes tense and focused to pick up any movement. Suddenly Mark stopped dead ahead, lifted his binoculars to his eyes and with a grin on his face and an "Aha" sound of satisfaction he pointed to a female Souza in a bare Kiaat tree (*Pterocarpus Angolensis*). There she was sitting, motionless, an absolute beauty, not at all perturbed by our presence! And then on our left in a second tree a sudden movement attracted our attention to the male! Mission accomplished and words insufficient to express our absolute joy and exhilaration! On our return to our vehicle Mark also drew our attention to a Tinkling Cisticola, beautifully positioned on the branch of a tree and as a bonus he also showed us a new variation of a wagtail, similar to the Cape Wagtail, but with a white spot under the chin and most probably to become known as the Swamp Wagtail! The garden at Shamvura also has its own specialities, where we were elated about seeing Shelley's Sunbird and Bradfield's Hornbill.

At Mark's recommendation we also visited the Buffalo Game Reserve, which forms part of the greater Bwabwata National Park in the Caprivi. The drive from Shamvura to Divundu is approximately 90 km, where the bridge over the Kavango River is crossed to enter the Zambezi Region. Shortly after entering the park

we were greeted on the main road by large flocks of starlings, consisting of Cape Glossy, Greater Blue-eared, Meve's, and as a special surprise, Sharp-tailed Glossy Starlings. A little further on we encountered Swallow-tailed and White-fronted Bee-eaters. An overwhelming avian feast for the eyes awaited us at the Kavango floodplain. Thousands of Spur-winged Geese intermingled with a mind-boggling variety of waders, including rarer species, such as Wattled Crane, Slaty Egret and Long-toed Lapwing. An additional bonus was our sighting of a pack of Wild Dog and a herd of magnificent Sable, a speciality of the region.

During our return journey to Windhoek further excitement unfolded. 20 km from Rundu on the right a 1,5 track leads to a radio mast. This is essentially a woodland birding site and one of the best sites in southern Africa to view the inconspicuous Rufous-bellied Tit. After exercising much patience we were rewarded with a special sighting of three of these difficult to find birds. Passing through the beautiful mountain pass close to Otavi we enjoyed a stunning view of an Augur Buzzard, another first for us. In Outjo our friends took us to the special cactus garden at their church, where we were welcomed by the resident White-tailed Shrike, hopping around in

his harlequin outfit in his favourite garden! At the same time the short high-pitched shrieks of Rosy-faced Lovebirds in a nearby tree gave away their presence. At another friend's home in Otjiwarongo we were very fortunate to see Damara Hornbills feasting on the seeds of a tree in the neighbouring garden.

As a grand finale two remaining near-endemics were waiting for us at Avis Dam in Windhoek. Escorted by our special friend and amazing naturalist, Wessel Swanepoel, our enjoyable morning walk yielded exciting views of the unique Rockrunner, preceded by its beautiful call, and thereafter Monteiro's Hornbill, the largest of the hornbills. Wessel is a well-respected arborist and a specialist in the field of Namibia's rich heritage of *Commiphoras*. He is also a passionate birder and was the first to discover and identify the Angola Cave Chat in the Zebra Mountains in Kaokoland. It is always a privilege to be in his company!

To conclude: Words can never do justice to this unforgettable, enriching experience and we will remain passionate about Namibia's birds, wildlife, trees, landscape and people!

[An enviable trip Louise. Well done on managing to see nearly all the special birds! – Ed.] 🐦

Namibië, stof en voëls

Salomi Louw

Voor ek te oud, kranklik of bankrot raak, het ek gedink, wil ek Namibië met al sy besienswaardighede verken. Kaarte, storie, en artikels in *Weg* het my laat besluit om die noorde en weste van dié buurland te verken; 4-6 weke, het ek gedink, toe vat ek begin Mei 2013 die pad met my VW Transporter TDI sonder om vooraf te bepaal presies waar en hoe ek gaan ry of bly.

Die eerste aand het ek by vriende op 'n wildplaas noord van Thabazimbi geslaap en die volgende oggend daarvandaan deur Martin's Drift Botswana ingegaan op pad na Nata. By Francistown het 'n padpredikant by 'n sirkel aangetoon jy ry links na Maun – maar ek wou

nie weer Maun toe gaan nie, dus ry ek reguit op 'n varsgeteerde pad en beland later op die grens met Zimbabwe. Dit begin al laterig word, en die brandstof raak min. Ek moet noodgedwonge op grondpaaië deur gehuggies teen hoë spoed my wend tot 'n aansluiting met die Nata-pad, waar daar gelukkig ook diesel beskikbaar is. Teen skemer arriveer ek by Nata Lodge en kry vir twee nagte 'n lekker kampeerplek met krag vir my koelkis – nie dat ek dit gewaag het om vleis saam te neem nie: voorafbereide etes sal my vir vyf dae aan die gang hou.

Die volgende oggend ry ek na die Sowa-panne: so vol en oorstrom dat die flaminke

in die kleiner panne moet sif vir kos. Heelwat water- en waadvoëls, en pelikane op die groot pan, maar ook korhane, lewerike (veral die Gysruglewerik opvallend) en koesters in die droë veld.

My derde aand in Botswana, na ek telkens moes stop vir olifante op en langs die pad, bring ek deur by Chobe Safari Lodge waar die kampeertrein verwaarloos is, stink van riool, afgeskeep word én ek in 'n poging om by die klein kampeerplek aan my toegewys in te kom, my wa skraap. Ek is kwaad, stap rond met 'n dikbek, maar sien 'n groot verskeidenheid voëls en die treffer: 'n Palmôrelyster wat gereedlik in die laatlig poseer vir foto's terwyl die bob-bejane chaos saai rondom my.

Op pad na die Ngomagrenspos sien ek 'n lugtige argument tussen 'n Gewone en 'n Knopsterttroupan. Ook Bromvoëls (en olifante) is nie skaars op die pragtige stuk pad nie. Om een of ander simpel rede – soos onoplettendheid na aanwysings terwyl ek konsentreer op voëls wat verbyvlieg – mis ek kampeerplekke in die omgewing van Katima Molilo en stoot deur na Kwando (oorlopens toe vol van Bruinvuurvinkies en Witkruisatlagters) en die volgende dag daarvandaan na Popavalle. Dis egter weer – soos toe ek laas daar wou oorslaap – gesluit; hierdie keer nie weens oorstroming nie, maar vir opknapping. Ek stoot aan na Ngepi-kamp. Water wonderlike oorstaan!



Vriendelik; groen grasperke; 'n bewapende swemplek in die rivier; uitgebreide kampeerplekke met dus ook baie stapmoontlikhede. Hier kry ek my eerste Bloupenspapegaai – 'n eerste ('lifer'). Hier is ook baie ander van ons noordelike voëls te sien soos die Grootvleiloerie en Tropiese Waterfiskaal.

Hierna neem die pad my na Rundu (met 'n redelike mak Senegalvleiloerie), suid via Grootfontein, en oor Tsumeb na Etosha: weer eens 'n teleurstelling met onversorgde kampeertrein in Namutoni, maar ek sien binne 'n dag 29 Gompoue, en nie een van hulle is twee keer getel nie! Dan gaan ek oor Ruacana na die Kunene River Lodge. Ek het nie geweet dis sowat 67 km grondpad tot daar nie, maar wat 'n indrukwekkende roete! My wa het my gevat oor bulte wat sekerlik steiltes van 45° het (ek oordryf miskien, maar dit het so gevoel!), deur diep driewe met water, modder en klippe, verby lieflike mopanisavanna en, al glo niemand my nie, 'n paar Bontpieke wat in die mopaniveld bedrywig was. By dié plek aan die Kunene staan ek twee nagte oor en word beloon met die sien van die Witgesig Rooikeelfstant (*Pternistis afer*), Damararooibek- en Monteironeushoringvoël en Angolasyie (laasgenoemde 3 nuwes op my lys). Goudwewers is ook volop. Op 'n skemervaart sien ons ook die Witrugnagreier wat 'n nes het in die plantegroei op 'n eiland, en ons geniet skemerdrankies in Angola terwyl ons kyk hoe die son ondergaan oor Namibië. Ten spyte van alle pogings vir die Rooistertmôrelyster – wat glo hier rond gesien word – kry ek hom nie in die oog nie. Die Wikruiskatlagters en Boskrappers krabbel onder jou voete, maar sodra jy die kamera lig, woerts hulle weg. Die Souzalaksman wat homself gereeld op pad gewys het, wou egter nie poseer vir foto's nie: sodra jy stilhou, verdwyn hy en 'n mens kan ongelukkig nie elke keer wat jy op pad 'n voël sien, stilhou nie.

Hiervandaan ry ek verby Swartbooisdrif en die Dorslandtrekgedenkteken na die Epupawatervalle. Langs die pad sit Rooiwangparkiete ('lifer') op 'n boomtop soos kersies op 'n Kersboom.

Té veel stories by Kunene en later is vertel deur mense wat tot 1½ dag op die roete langs die rivierpad gesukkel het, en van talle bande wat verloor is. Ek probeer dus veilig bly en steek deur na Opuwo en daarvandaan die 197 km grondpad na die watervalle. Alles bly mooi: vlaktes met Lalapalms; koppies of heuwels of berge altyd in die agtergrond; Ruacanakanale wat meestal drooggeloopt het; maar alles is interessant. Op pad na Epupa sien ek skielik 'n eskader Rooiwangparkiete wat langs die pad opstyg. Byna rol ek my wa in 'n poging om stil te hou en hulle in die lens te kry, maar dis te laat: hulle is veld-in. Telkens stop ek ook vir die Kortstertlaksmanne ('lifer') wat dié wêreld bevolk, maar die foto's vang hulle net skrams en uit fokus.

Die Epupawatervalle is indrukwekkend, selfs al is die Ruacanasluise nie oop nie – Victoriawaterval kan nie kers opsteek by hierdie gesig nie! En heel onverwags, na ek moed opgegee het, kom vertoon die Rooistertmôrelyster homself hier met sy tipiese lystergerwoontes van krap en soek. Die Rooiwangparkiet sit in die Makalanipalms bo my kampplek. Hier, waar ek twee nagte wou oorbly, vang die hitte my egter: dit voel of my brein kook. Ek drink een koeldrank met ys na die ander, maar weet uiteindelik ek moet verder. Oor Opuwo – met 'n versameling Grootjagarende – ry ek na Kamanjab en by OppiKoppi kry ek die Ovamboswartmees ('n nuwe een vir my lys) en sien onverwags en vir die eerste keer skrams die Rotsvoël ('lifer'), maar hy is skugter en verdwyn in die bossies voor ek hom kan kiek. By die kampplek kom die Kortstertlaksman ewe kontant homself aanmeld vir foto's, na al my vorige pogings was dit hierdie keer maklik om hom af te neem. Die Klipfisant wat voor my opvlieg toe ek om die wa loop, was te vlugtig vir besliste identifikasie en ek sal hom maar volgende keer moet gaan soek vir my lys.

Hierna vat ek die pad na die Waterbergplato. My plan is om daarna nog Spitzkoppe en die suidelike wesgebiede soos Naukluft, Sesriem en Sossusvlei te doen.

Vir die kampeerterrin by die Waterbergplato (Namibian Wildlife Resorts) betaal jy die helfte van wat in Namutoni gevra word;

die geriewe is 100% beter; die kampplekke beter uitgelê en daar is lekker staproetes.

Terwyl ek die roete berg-op gevolg het, het die Perskakelaar homself kom aanmeld. Die Langkuifarend het verby gevlieg met takke vir sy/haar nes. Laer af – nadat ek moed opgegee het – kom kuier die Rotsvoël nie ver van my nie tussen die klippe. Dié keer kon ek darem 'n – ook net een – foto neem. Die Rooiwangparkiete vreet saad van die bossies by jou kampplek en die Bloupensapegaai sit in die boom waaronder jy parkeer.

Op pad terug na die weste is ek oor Khorixas en slaap by Aba Huab waar ek uitsonderlike foto's van die Kaalwangkatlagter kry en die vars spore van 'n woestynolifant naby my kampplek sien. Dan volg die versteende woud en die rotsgravure by Twyelfontein. 'n Gids hier vertel my die Woestynkorhaan woon in die omgewing van die Twyelfontein Lodge. Ek pak dié pad aan: die slegste sinkplaat wat ek in die hele Namibië sou ry en geen teken van die korhane nie; wel vars olifantspore en takkies op die pad.

Terug op die hoofroete na Brandberg. Die verbindingspaaie is in goeie toestand en word op daaglikse basis, selfs op Sondae, geskraap, maar dis grys wit kalkpoeierstof wat alles deurdring – en my wa is beslis nie stofdig nie. Naby die ontvangskantoor is daar twee Woestynkorhane ('lifer') langs die pad: nadat



ek al moed opgegee het om hulle te sien, doem hulle skielik sommer langs my op.

Nou volg Spitzkoppe – met wonderlike geleenthede vir landskapfotografie. Hier sien ek die Hererospekvreter, maar dié voël is so aan die gang dat 'n foto bykans onmoontlik is. Nadat ek myself die volgende oggend vir die tweede keer met 'n spons uit 'n klein skotteltjie water gewas het (hier is net 'longdrops'), is ek weer op pad. Terug kry ek die teerpad wat Windhoek met Swakopund verbind – watter seën om op 'n teerpad te wees! Na bykans 4,000 km (ek raai!) grondpad op my reis, ver-lang ek huis toe. Genoeg is seker genoeg. Die suidelike deel van Namibië moet maar wag. In Usakos geniet ek filterkoffie en kaaskoek en bekyk die Korttoonkliplysters wat op die heining sit, maar die koffie kry voorrang. Teen die tyd dat ek my kamera gaan haal, het busse vol toeriste aangekom en daar is geen teken meer van dié voëls nie.

By Gobabis slaap ek twee nagte oor en vat dan die Trans-Kalahari omdat ek nog in Botswana koesters en lewerikke wou soek. In Botswana word oornagplekke soos by ons nie vooruit geadverteer langs die pad nie. My reis hou dus aan en aan op pad na 'n oornag-plek wat ek nie kry nie. Op buitelandse reise

is ek veral bedag op snelperke. Toe ek na 'n gehuggie dink die snelperk is opgehef, word ek voorgekeer deur 'n verkeersbeampte en aangeslaan vir 580 Pula. Ek verduidelik dat my wa spoedbeheer het, wat ek gereeld aanskakel, en vra na oorblyplekke; sê sy die grens is nie ver nie, en skeld my weens mooipraterij vry van die boete. Met die verwagting dat ek darem pas in die RSA 'n oornagplek sal kry, ry ek voort, die nag in. Miskien omdat daar vir sowat 100 km (of meer!) aan die sogenaamde – en duur! – 'tolpad' gewerk word, is daar geen tekens te siene van verblyfplekke nie. Sowat 1,400 km aaneen dié dag bring my laataand tuis.

My beplande roete van 4-6 weke deur Namibië is kortgeknip vanweë stof en nog-maals stof; maar elke dag was die moeite en geld werd. Ek het wonderlike landskappe gesien, vriendelike mense teëgekom, en 14 nuwe voëls beslis kon aanteken op my Suider-Afrikaanse lys, met foto's om dit te staaf.

My toer deur Namibië het toe net 3 weke geduur, 6,905 km behels, geen pap band opgelewer nie en darem 'n klompie nuwe voëls bygedra tot my Suider-Afrikaanse lys, en ek het wondermooie plekke gesien. Ek sal so 'n rit enige tyd weer doen. Dan vra mense my hoekom ek (alleen) reis! 🐦

Welkome gevleuelde winterbesoekers aan ons tuin

Bobby Erasmus, Rietfontein, Pretoria

T een die einde van Julie vanjaar het ons vreemde voëlgeluide vanuit ons buurman se boomryke tuin in Rietfontein gehoor en het my vrou, Ina, onmiddelik geweet dat dit nuwe besoekers moet wees. Die probleem was egter dat ons hulle nie in die hoë en blaaryke luiperdbome kon gewaar het nie. Maar ons nuuskierigheid was geprikkel en was Ina bedags wanneer ek by die werk was, voortdurend op die uitkyk wanneer die tuin natgespuit is.

Na 'n paar dae het sy vertel van die groen voëls met blou-groen lang sterte wat sy tussen die kiepersolboom se blomme met vruggies



opgemerk het. Die volgende dag na werk was ons albei verras deur een groen parkiet of papagaai in die luiperdboom wat sy stem dik gemaak het. Ek het dadelik my kamera (Nikon D3000 met Tamron 70-300 mm lens) gaan haal en het die voël geduldig gewag om gefotografeer te word. Dit het baie soos die Ringnekkparakiet wat ons gereeld in Dubai in die tuin gesien het, gelyk, maar sonder die duidelike rooi ring om die nek.

In 'Newman se Voëls van Suider-Afrika' 2002 uitgawe word geskryf dat die Ringnekkparakiet (*Psittacula krameri*) uit Asië ingevoer is en die enigste langstert appelgroen papegaai in ons gebied is. Die vier voëls kom nog gereeld vir

ons kuier en verlustig hulle aan die appels wat daagliks op die voëltafel geplaas word.

Ons wonder nou net of hulle in die gebied sal vestig en waar hulle broei. Ons het twee sisalnestes teen die kiepersol se stam wat voorheen onsuksesvol deur die Rooikop Houkkappers betrek is en vermoed ek dat die Ringnekkparkiete dit later mag betrek.

[In die laaste 10 jaar of so het Ringnekkparkiete hulle oral in nuwe gebiede in Johannesburg en Pretoria gevestig. Dit is definitief 'n spesie waarvan die verspreiding plaaslik uitbrei soos hulle getalle toeneem en die voëls nuwe gebiede soek. – Red.] 🐦

'n Waarneming van 'n albino Mikstertbyvanger

Annatjie Barkhuizen

Met ons vakansie in Desember 2012 het ons 'n paar dae in Etosha deurgebring. Ons het heerlijk, maar ten duurste, gekamp in Namutoni. Op 28 Desember 2012 het ons opgepak om na ons volgende bestemming te vertrek. Ek het toe besluit om 'n laaste draai deur die kamp te stap terwyl Andre stort. Agter 'n gebou waar van die werkers gebly het kom ek toe af op 'n groep voëls, en in die groep was daar 'n wit



voël wat duidelik uitgestaan het. Na nadere ondersoek besef ek toe dit is 'n albino Mikstertbyvanger (Fork-tailed Drongo). Gelukkig was die voëls nog druk besig om insekte te vang nadat ek my kamera gaan haal het en ek was gelukkig om so paar fotos te neem.

['n Fassinerende waarneming, Annatjie. Dankie dat jy dit met ons gedeel het! – Red.] 🐦

DONATIONS/ DONASIES (Jan – July 2013)

A huge thank you for your donation. Your contributions help us reach our goal towards supporting bird conservation projects and is much appreciated.

Baie dankie vir u donasie, u bydrae verseker dat ons 'n groter bydrae tot die bewaring van voëls kan lewer. Ons waardeer dit opreg.

Marié Ueckermann, Athol Emmett, C Feridoon Baraghi, Neil Dittrich, Lynn Walton, Andre Labuschagne, Jana Moller, Tina Wieser-Troelicher, Dorette de Jager

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 20 August 2013

Compiled by André Marx

National Rarities/ Nasionale rareiteite

African Skimmer. Waterploëer: one bird was at Rust de Winter Dam, 5 May 2013, (BF). *Together with the Mkhombo Dam and Vaalkop Dam sightings, this is the third sighting of this species in the region for this year.*

Regional Rarities/ Streeksrareiteite

Wattled Crane. Lelkraanvoël: a sighting of one bird in pentad 2625_2850 near Devon may be the same bird that was first recorded in 2010; the bird was always in the company of a large flock of Blue Cranes, 15 Jun 2013, (EM) and was still present during July 2013 when a number of people reported it in the same area.

Chestnut-banded Plover. Rooibandstrandkiewiet: one bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 9 June 2013, (RG, MG). *In the following weeks until at least early August the bird was still present when it was reported by a number of birders.*

Terek Sandpiper. Terekrutter: a single bird was at Bronkhorstspuit Dam in pentad

2555_2840, 25 July 2013 (CWJ).

Black Saw-wing. Swartsaagvlerkswael: a solitary bird was photographed at Roodekoppies Dam, north of Brits in pentad 2525_2735, 17 Aug 2013, (DV, LS).

White-breasted Cuckooshrike. Witborskatakoeeroe: a remarkable sighting came to light of one bird that was photographed at the Groenkloof Nature Reserve at Fountains Valley, Pretoria, (RTE). *This record is considerably out of range and could be the first confirmed record for Gauteng.*

Yellow-breasted Pipit. Geelborskoester: birds in non-breeding plumage continued to be recorded in the Suikerbosrand area into June and July, with a few birds present here, 17 Jun 2013 (NP). *In the following weeks a number of records of this species were received from the same general locality, where this species is a likely winter visitor to the area.*

Other Interesting Observations/ Ander Interessante Waarnemings

Cape Vulture. Kransaasvoël: a single bird was seen at Waterfall Estate, Midrand, when it was being mobbed by a group of Pied Crows, 8 June 2013, (DS).

African Cuckoo Hawk. Koekoekvalk: one bird was found at Northern Farm, north-west of Joburg in pentad 2550_2755, 12 May 2013, (EM).

Peregrine Falcon. Swerfvalk: a perched bird could be viewed through a scope at Waterfall Estate, Midrand, where this bird is seldom recorded, 18 Aug 2013, (RS).

Southern White-faced Scops-Owl. Witwanguil: a sighting of one bird at Damhoek, just south of the Magaliesberg near Hekpoort in pentad 2545_2735, is a first at this locality, 8 June 2013, (BLNG).



Yellow-breasted Pipit. Geelborskoester



Kurrichane Buttonquail/Bosveldkwarteltjie

Kurrichane Buttonquail. Bosveldkwarteltjie: this species was a surprise find in a backyard garden in Morningside, Sandton, where it spent a few minutes before flying off, 11 Jun 2013 (VdC).

Black-collared Barbet. Rooikophoutkapper: the very interesting and seldom seen *xanthocroica* (yellow morph) of this species was seen in Roodepoort, 31 May 2013, when it was reported by a number of local birders, (Gbird).

Grey-backed Sparrowlark. Grysruglewerik: a small group of birds was at Mkhombo Dam, 23 Jun 2013 (GH); with a number of birds recorded again at this locality in pentad 2505_2845, 29 Jun 2013, (AV, JA).

Southern Pied Babbler. Witkatlagter: a sighting of one bird in Fochville in pentad 2625_2725 is somewhat out of range for this species, 3 Aug 2013, (JN).

Dark-capped Yellow Warbler. Geelsanger: during a club ringing session and outing one bird was a surprise find in the nets, 6 Jul 2013, (BLNG).

African Rock Pipit. Klipkoester: this species was recorded at Suikerbosrand on 4 May 2013, where there are very few records, (DvZ, EK); another record within 100 km of Johannesburg was near Greylingstad, 11 May 2013, (JB, MA and others).

Swee Waxbill. Suidelike Swie: a sighting of this species in pentad 2550_2730 in a well wooded kloof in the southern slopes of the



Yellow morph (left) of the Black-collared Barbet/Rooikophoutkapper

Magaliesberg is a first confirmed record for Gauteng for the atlas project, 15 May 2013, CWJ); a group of birds in the same pentad were found on 16 Jul 2013, when a male was observed carrying nesting material, suggesting breeding activity at this site (JB, DV, EdB).

Observers/ Waarnemers

Anneke Vincent (AV)
 Ben Fouché (BF)
 BirdLife Northern Gauteng birders (BLNG)
 Craig Whittington-Jones (CWJ)
 Debbie van Zyl (DvZ)
 Desmond Searle (DS)
 Dylan Vasapolli (DV)
 Elouise Kalmer (EK)
 Errol de Beer (EdB)
 Etienne Marais (EM)
 Gareth Hazell (GH)
 Gauteng birders (Gbird)
 Jason Boyce (JB)
 Jerome Ainsley (JA)
 John Randell (JN)
 Leon Spies (LS)
 Mathew Axelrod (MA)
 Michal Groenewald (MG)
 Rob Geddes (RG)
 Robert Tibbitt-Eggleton (RTE)
 Ron Searle (RS)
 Viv de Chalain (VdC)

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. 🐦



Red Lark/ Rooilewerik

Nuwe lede/New members

Ons verwelkom die volgende nuwe lede en hoop dat julle gou tuis sal voel. Ons sien uit daarna om julle by ons aandvergaderings, daguitstappies of tydens 'n naweekkamp te leer ken. A warm welcome to all our new members. We trust you will enjoy your birding with us and look forward to seeing you at our evening meetings, day outings or weekend trips.

Johan Oosthuizen, Birchleigh; Ben & Lizette Fouche, Doornpoort; Georg Feldberg, Centurion; Patrick & Sonja Mann, Highveld; Emma Burnett & Andrew McCabe, Glenstantia; Terry Rheeder, Rietondale; Andre Labuschagne, Strubenvale; Jana Moller, Fontainebleau; Paula vd Riet, Bryanston; Josias & Gesina de Kock, Faerie Glen; Yvonne Delport, Wierdapark; Tina Wieser-Froelicher & Reto, Silver Lakes; Chris Bothma, Gezina; William Hall, Garsfontein Oos; Michelle Louw, Lynnwood Manor; Elsabe & Attie van Gelderen, Lynnwood Ridge; Christilla Fleischhauer, Waterkloof; Yolandie Venter, Faerie Glen; Kobus, Salome & Estee Liebenberg, Newlands; Klaus Schmid, Newlands; Rowan Jordaan, Tzaneen; David Bower, Paulshof; Nick Pattinson, Harris Smith; Michael Voysey, Paulshof; Jan & Liezl Cromhout, Lynnwood Ridge; Beverley McCormick & Robin Greaves, Hatfield.

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