



Laniarius

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BirdLife Northern Gauteng
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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 advertise-

ments 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 redak-

teur gestuur word, maar kan ook na die klub-

adres gepos word. Aanvaarding van bydraes en

advertensies word aan die diskresie van die redak-

teur oorgelaat. Digitale foto's is altyd welkom.

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Credits

Front cover: Yellow-breasted Pipit/Geelborskoester by Warren Ingram.

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

This edition of *Laniarius* (number 129) has an exceptional variety of informative, interesting and humorous articles. There are eight articles by well-known birders describing the “Wider Gauteng 100 Challenge” which offers birders the opportunity to hone their skills as well as contributing to the scientific knowledge of the distribution of the many species. The purpose of this birding activity for all the participants is to record as many different species of birds as possible within one year in a defined area. This defined area is a circle of 100 kilometres measured from Church Square in Pretoria or from the centre of Johannesburg as shown on the adjacent map. 400 species in one year is the treasured objective of everyone taking part and several birders have achieved this number in the past few years. Surprisingly, there are more than 500 species that have been recorded in the area defined as the ‘Wider Gauteng’ area. Participants are encouraged to do atlasing for SABAP2 as part of this activity and the results of the birds that have been identified are all sent to the ADU in Cape Town. In addition to honing their skills in bird identification, this activity brings to the participants knowledge about the seasonal migration patterns of different species as well as the localities that are favoured by common and rare species. In this regard the book *Birding Gauteng* by Faansie Peacock and Etienne Marais is invaluable. Furthermore, there is much friendly collaboration between the participants who come together at clubs and on Facebook, which provides birding data that is shared by all.

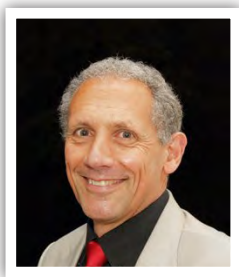
On a much lighter note, there are two hilarious articles. The first concerns “Eulalia Arana” who is visited by a British friend who insists on translating English bird names into Afrikaans using a dictionary. The Grey Tit-Flycatcher comes out as the grystietievlieëvanger! A relative of the British visitor then writes a very acid letter to “Eulalia” insisting that Afrikaans names of birds are inferior to the English ones.

The other letter describes how 200 crows are found dead on the road near Caledon in the Cape. The manner of their death was related to their use of the English language!

There are also several articles about ringing and interesting travel articles. One is about Gabon and the marvellous birds to be found there. Then there is a very detailed article about birding around Port Nolloth and then travelling through Namaqualand. Another unusual article describes a sea trip from Hout Bay in the Cape with a guide familiar with all the species of sea birds.

An interesting article that I came across in a British birding magazine described research on how birds avoid being struck by vehicles on the road. Flight Initiation Distance (FID) is the distance at which prey flees from an approaching predator. Apparently birds are able to detect the average speed of vehicles on roads they habituate and they take off from the ground at different distances from approaching vehicles. On roads with a speed limit of 20 km/h the birds took flight when the vehicle was 10 metres away. Where the speed limit was 90 km/h the distance increased to 25 metres and at the 110 limit the car was 75 metres away when they took off.

Phillip and Jill de Moor



Chairman's Report/ Voorsittersverslag

Philip Calinikos

Last year we read about a horrific incident that took place in the Caprivi in which 600 vultures died after feeding on an Elephant carcass poisoned by poachers. It just proved yet again how vulnerable Africa's large raptors are to threats such as these and how their population numbers are crashing around us.

One of the largest Cape Vulture colonies is situated in the Marakele National Park which is one of the conservation areas in the Waterberg Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas identified by BirdLife South Africa.

Our club has recently been appointed as the Local Conservation Group for this IBA and we have an important role to play in the monitoring of the IBA and its bird populations including the Cape Vulture. Another of our large birds which is a cliff nester, the African Black Stork, has also been recorded in this IBA and is also under severe pressure due to the increasing pollution of rivers and streams in which it feeds.

Our Conservation sub-committee headed up by Amanda le Roux has started planning activities within the IBA which will help us to monitor the bird species therein. It is envisaged that a number of camps will be held within the IBA over the next few years which will be primarily focused on atlassing activities using the SABAP2 protocol. This is a wonderful way in which citizen scientists can make a significant contribution towards conservation and I would like to urge you all to get involved

in whichever way you can. By doing so you will also be given priority booking status for these specific camps.

There are a number of pentads within the IBA that are still 'virgin' i.e. no cards have been submitted to date. We would like to make contact with private landowners who may own property in these areas and would be prepared to allow us to visit and traverse their properties for this purpose. Should you be aware of such people please forward their details to us so that we can make contact with them.

Should you be travelling through the area, please keep your eyes open for any possible threats that you may notice or encounter such as mining or prospecting activities and the like. These can be reported to us and we will pass on the information to the relevant authorities.

On a sad note I advise that unfortunately we have lost our beloved Secretarybird, BLiNG, who kept us so entertained with his movements into Botswana and back again. BLiNG has left a legacy of thousands of data points from his travels and we were devastated to hear that he most probably crashed into an overhead powerline that had been blanketed by smoke from a veld fire.

Another exciting birding year has drawn to a close and it only remains for me to thank you all for your support and wish you all a peaceful and safe festive season as well as a wonderful and bird-filled 2015.

Yours in birding

The Wider Gauteng 100K Challenge

Debbie van Zyl

For many years I have read about and caught snippets on the 100K challenge. It is something that started many years ago in our club as the Pretoria Challenge and at the time, I wasn't a particularly confident birder so thought that signing up for something like this would be far out of my reach. For the first time this year I decided to take up the challenge along with my local birding companion, Elouise. About a year ago we started atlasing together and found we could have a really great day out, close to home. We weren't going to get serious we said. We were just going to focus on Gauteng birding during our Saturday atlasing sessions. Well that was the end of that thought!

This year has changed my entire view about Gauteng. It might be the most densely populated province but the birding locations and the variety we have are just unbelievable. Several years ago I purchased *The Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng* through the club. I was curious about Gauteng but it was more to support Etienne and Faansie as fellow BLNGers. I didn't page through it too much but enjoyed a quick view of locations I was visiting – mostly on club outings. Today I do not go birding without it. I plan my birding sessions using it and

take it along with me. If you intend on doing any sort of Gauteng, Big Year, you must have this book in your bookshelf or preferably lying open on the dining room table. It contains vital information on where to go and what

you can expect to see. As ladies birding on our own, we also pay close attention to the safety ratings of venues.

The Challenge has enhanced my birding expertise as well as my atlasing. I am a better atlaser now because I know my local patch, I know which birds I can expect to find in a certain habitat, I know their calls, I know their habits and I know where to go to find them. An unexpected benefit from the Challenge is becoming part of a community that wants to share. In other parts of the world, locality gems are kept to one's closest group of trusted twitchers, but in this Challenge, everyone wants to share. They want to share experiences, locations, photographs of odd sightings and a lot of the time, they also want to share your car. That's of course if you aren't in theirs!

I feel so passionately about the positive effect it has had on my birding that I wanted to share it with the rest of the club members and so got a few experts together and asked them to share their thoughts with you to help you consider and prepare for a 2015 Challenge for yourself.

I asked Etienne Marais, one of the founding members of the Challenge, to give us a short history of the Challenge, where it started and how it has evolved from a Pretoria Conservation Challenge into the Wider Gauteng 100K Challenge. This also led to the publication of the *Birding Gauteng* book along with Faansie Peacock.

Faansie Peacock has been a long-standing member of our club and Rob Geddes likes to share stories of when Faansie was still young and how his passion for birding was never-ending. That passion is still there today. Due to their knowledge of the area, he teamed up with Etienne to author *The Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng*. Faansie tells us how they got together and created this marvellous



publication, essential to maximise your birding in our region.

The greatest goal for anyone attempting the Challenge is to reach the magical number of 400 different species within the Challenge area. Who better to help us with info on how to go about this, than four members who have reached that number for several years, namely Lisl van Deventer, Rob Geddes, Anneke Vincent and Jerome Ainsley. They have put together a great how-to guide to help you with your planning to focus on certain birds at certain times of the year to maximise your species list.

Someone who had tried and failed to reach the magic 400 species in previous years, is Sue Oertli. In 2014 she was determined to make it and I asked her to give us an idea of her approach and how she managed to achieve this for the first time in 2014. She also gives a practical guide to which birds were targeted at different times of the year and how many hours of active birding it took her to get to 400. What an incredible achievement Sue, and she did it all

while atlasing, as most of the challengers do!

Lastly, an unexpected bonus from this Challenge is the relationships you form and how, when passing time together in a car for hours and hours, you become more than just birding companions. Anneke Vincent keeps telling herself that she isn't a 'lister' but an active atlaser and an active participant in the Challenge, and she tells us something different. She has formed special friendships over the years with other Challengers and found out that she might just have a competitive streak after all...

One thing that each of these Challengers will tell you is just how much you learn by taking on the Challenge. You start to understand migration, breeding patterns, behaviour and habitat. If you combine that with atlasing, you get to make a contribution as a citizen scientist to one of the greatest bird monitoring projects in the world – SABAP2. As a Gautenger and a BLNGer, you live in an extraordinary place. Make the most of the birding around you by becoming a Challenger as well. 🐦

The history of the Wider Gauteng 100K Challenge

Etienne Marais

The idea of a listing birds within the Wider Gauteng 100K region has its origins in the late 1990s, as a growing group of birders within the Pretoria Bird Club, later BirdLife Northern Gauteng, started to appreciate that the wider Pretoria region had some of the greatest birding diversity in the region. Comparisons in terms of birding richness were inevitable and the large totals achieved by teams operating within the 100K region served to support the notion that it is an incredibly rich birding region. Indeed to date, the highest totals recorded by BBD (BirdLife's Big Birding Day) teams in the wider Pretoria region, exceed any achieved in better known and more famous regions such as Pafuri, Ndumu or more generally in Zululand.

In order to promote these avifaunal riches the idea was coined of developing a regional listing club. During a process of quite widespread consultation in the early 2000s there seemed to be strong support for a listing club that was not restricted by provincial boundaries or subject to the unpredictable variations of provincial boundary disputes.

The 100K concept was formally propagated and adopted by the committee of the BLNG in 2000 and in 2001 formalised into a year-long club event! The boundary of the challenge was created by using Church Square as the centre point and then drawing a circle using a 100 kilometre radius out from there. In the first year of the challenge 2 people achieved 400

various species and Johnny Wilson recorded 414 species. The account of Johnny Wilson's big year was published in *Laniarius* at the time and served to raise the profile of the area. For the first time birders in South Africa started to take Pretoria and Johannesburg seriously as a birding destination.

Those currently participating in the challenge should appreciate that at that time the *Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng* had not yet been conceived and many current birding sites were unknown. Birders in Gauteng would head for Pafuri, Ndumu or Wakkerstroom rather than birding their local area, and one could wait a month at the Kgomo-Kgomo bridge without seeing a birder! In the early days when we birded these areas locals would come and ask whether we wanted to start farming.

The 2001 affair was a wonderful pre-digital event, with an awards ceremony at which participants were presented with colourfully printed certificates. Yes, certificates for all those who participated. There were however differing opinions on the success of the 2001 challenge. A rich debate ensued, led by Pete Irons amongst others. Should the BLNG be promoting a challenge that was purely about twitching? Or should a challenge be infused

with social responsibility and aim to contribute to bird conservation?

The Pretoria 100K challenge thus morphed into the Pretoria Conservation Challenge (PCC). This was essentially bird monitoring combined with healthy competitive listing. This process was given a huge boost by the participation of Pieter van Zyl, a database specialist who lives in the well-known Buffelsdrift Conservancy. Pieter developed software tools to enable birders to record species in Grid Squares or Nature Reserve Areas. This became the first project in South Africa to collect data and capture it using electronic tools. With the support of bird clubs south of the boerewors curtain the PCC became BiG (Birds in Gauteng) and was involved in a number of exciting initiatives to count birds. In 2004, 40 birders flooded Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve and in one day completed the most complete census of the birds of this important area.

In 2005 the challengers did a one-day mega challenge and collectively recorded 353 species on a single day. The effort was repeated in winter. With the emphasis on citizen science the competitive side of the 100K challenge waned somewhat, but a number of birders continued to do big years and the concept focused far more resources on birding within the region where most South African birders live. The dialogue and awareness created around citizen science and the importance of bird monitoring ensured that participants played an important role in the formative stages of SABAP2.

Once SABAP2 (the Southern Africa Bird Atlas Project) finally saw the light of day in 2007, the 100K challenge in its more competitive form came to the fore again and many birders have maintained this tradition over a number of years. The PCC eventually morphed into the Wider Gauteng 100K Challenge when a similar circle was drawn from the centre of Johannesburg. All birds within both circles count towards the challenge for the year. During 2014, several additional challenges were formed which have added extra excitement to birders across the country. Nelspruit, Cape Town, East London, Zululand, Polokwane, Port Elizabeth, Durban &



Dinrie van Rensburg

Birding at Wolfhuiskraal, a very popular venue within the 100 km radius.

Pietermaritzburg and the Garden Route, all have their own challenge areas.

For more information on each of the challenges and how to record the species you have seen for each of the challenges, please visit <http://www.birding.co.za/challenge.htm>.

My personal hall of fame for huge contributions to the 100K Community goes to Roger Fieldwick, André Marx, Rob Geddes, Pete Irons, Greg Lock, Faansie Peacock, Pieter van Zyl, Lisl van Deventer, Selwyn Rautenbach and Johnny Wilson. 🐦

A personal view on the Challenge

Etienne Marais

My own excitement about the Wider Gauteng 100K region has its origins in Birding Big Days (BBD). In the mid-1990s with some varsity friends we began exploring the possibilities of recording well over 250 species in a day within our own region and based around some of our favourite birding spots. These were Vaalkop Dam, Borakolalo, the Assen area and Rustenburg Nature Reserve (now known as Kgaswane). We also explored Breedtsnek and a number of interesting back-routes. With very little experience of BBD we were able to record totals of between 220 and 240 over several attempts.

In the late 90s my emphasis shifted to Zaagkuildrift, Dinokeng and the Highveld areas around Bapsfontein. At the same time I had started running birding tours under the banner of Indicator Birding in 1998 and focused on this little known region, where day trips and short tours could produce fantastic

results in terms of both endemics and specials on offer. I remember being somewhat exasperated on reading trip reports posted on SABIRDNET where people would list a host of 'Kruger Specials' that they had seen, when all those birds could be seen within 45 minutes of my Pretoria home!

In 2002 I started working with Faansie Peacock and Rob Geddes to develop a new BBD route – a lot further east than previous routes and this bore fruit as our totals steamed past the 280s for BBDs in our first two attempts. In 2005 we became the first team in an official bird race to go past 300 species in a single 24-hour period.

This certainly helped to catapult the status of the region in birding terms, but had also laid the basis for the *Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng*, as between Faansie and I we had explored and birded virtually all the corners of the region over a period of more than 10 years. 🐦

Do birds change their diet from season to season?

Many have to, since some foods are simply not available all year round. So in spring and summer, some birds like the European Blackcap will feed on insects; but in autumn and winter, when these are scarce, they change their diet to include berries, windfall fruits and even scraps from bird tables. Migrants also change their diet: stocking up on berries in autumn to provide energy for the long journey to their wintering grounds. Many birds can also broaden their diet to take advantage of brief seasonal bonanzas: Tawny Eagles, for example, will drop everything in order to binge on termites, when these flying insects emerge onto the African savanna in their periodic millions.

The story behind the story of Birding Gauteng

Faansie Peacock

I have always held the belief that when it comes to developing one's birding prowess, there is no substitute for spending time in the field. No matter how many books you read, how many courses you attend, or how many photographs you study, if you really want to get to know birds, you have to go where the birds are! With this philosophy as motivation, and the most valuable tool in a young birder's arsenal (a driving license) newly acquired, I spent the greater part of the early 2000s in the field. This frequently resulting in me neglecting formal responsibilities, such as my university degree, to go birding.

What I soon came to realise however, is that it was not necessary to undertake major expeditions to distant and remote localities to see special birds. In fact, the more I explored, the more I found that Gauteng and surrounds offered top-class birding, despite being the country's most densely populated and most extensively transformed province. This meant that I could easily squeeze in a very effective hour's birding before class in the morning, or skive off an hour or two in the afternoon to take in a quick twitch.

Soon an informal association of like-minded explorers, including Etienne Marais, Rob Geddes, Stephan Terblanche, Pete Irons, Richard Montinaro, Dave Deighton, Roger Fieldwick, André Marx, Greg Lock, Pieter van Zyl, Johnny Wilson, Dewald Swanepoel and Selwyn Rautenbach, among many others, became established. Remember that these were the days before smartphones and Facebook, so information spread at a much slower rate. On the plus side, this was long before eTolls, and the petrol price was a manageable R6.50. The Pretoria-based pioneers' efforts increasingly proved that we lived in what is undeniably a birding hotspot.

At every conceivable opportunity we

birded, our vehicles fuelled by cheap petrol, and our hearts fuelled by the excitement of potential discovery around each corner. And discover we did! A great deal of our time was spent wondering about "apparently public" dirt roads on 1:50,000 map sheets, and sweet-talking landowners the next day. The communal wider Gauteng bird list was growing by the day, and showed no signs of slowing down. Many of the species we were seeing had been considered highly unlikely vagrants up until then, with such exciting additions as Pale-crowned Cisticola, Striped Crake, Short-tailed Pipit, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Terrestrial Brownbul, Thrush Nightingale, Sickle-winged Chat, River Warbler, Buff-spotted Flufftail, and many more. These were not vagrants, as was e.g. the 2003 Greater Frigatebird at Rust de Winter Dam, or the 2004 Asiatic Dowitcher at Leeupan. These were all species that occurred regularly at the right time of year, and were often locally common during suitable environmental conditions. Their presence had just been overlooked or undocumented in the past.

An excellent case in point is the Tinkling Cisticola – compared to the current SABAP2 map for this species, the maps in the first *Atlas of Southern African birds* (1997) or the even older *Birds of the Transvaal* (1987) seem to pertain to another bird altogether. Back in the late nineties, news filtered through the birding grapevine that Pete Irons had discovered Tinklers in a new birding area called "Seringveld Conservancy". I suspect most birders went to look more out of disbelief than anything else, but to Pete's credit, we were all pleasantly surprised. It is difficult to believe that to see a species that is now known to be common all over north-eastern Gauteng, one had to travel either to Nylsvley or Bloemhof Dam only a few years ago. Of course such changes are not due to natural or human-induced range extensions,

but are simply a reflection of more, and more knowledgeable, birders operating in the field.

Not only the birds were new. Strange as it sounds today, only a few years ago most local birders had never even heard of places like Mkhombo Dam, Mabusa National Park, Kgomo-kgomo, Devon, Wilge River Valley, Vlaklaagte or Buffelsdrif Conservancy. Many of these sites were discovered during exploratory reces for Birding Big Day, and when *The Raiders of the Lost Lark* officially became the first BBD team ever to reach 300 species, all based in and around Gauteng, there was no more doubting the rich birding potential that our area offered. Truly, this was on par with Kruger, Zululand or any other traditional birding area that got twitchers' hearts racing.

I remember a specific day, when during a late morning lull in birding, Etienne and I were standing on the bridge at Kgomo-kgomo, munching sandwiches and staring at busy Yellow-crowned Bishops imitating bumblebees. We discussed all the sought-after birds and all the accessible but virtually unknown birding sites that the Gauteng's adventurous birders had discovered in the last few years. "It's a pity there's no book in which birders can read about all of Gauteng's special birds and places" Etienne remarked. "Well, why don't we write one then?" I replied naively. I think that was the exact moment *The Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng*, was conceived.

As with any new project, taking the first step is the hardest. One of the first critical tasks was to compile a list of all the sites we wanted to include, and finding a way to structure them into chapters. We experimented with many options, until we plotted all the sites on one big map, and found that the N1 and N4 highways neatly divide the area into nearly perfect quarters. With that problem solved, it was on to drafting the first site accounts – I think the very first piece I wrote was for Moreleta Kloof Nature Reserve, the small suburban park where I spent my boyhood afternoons. One of the great challenges in writing the text was knowing which species to mention, and which to leave out; ideally, you want to discuss the most difficult

and exciting species, but only if a visiting birder has a reasonable chance of finding them. It is gratifying that birders occasionally email us even today, six years down the line, to say that they found so-and-so species *exactly* where "BG" said it would be!

As my dad is a town planner, I grew up surrounded by maps, and I was particularly looking forward to drawing all the maps for the book. In most cases a combination of Google Earth imagery and topographic map sheets made this job relatively easy. But maps of reserves with many small, informal and poorly demarcated footpaths turned out to be the biggest physical challenge of producing the book. I had to walk every single trail in its entirety while carrying a GPS, which meant that I often spent several days criss-crossing places like Faerie Glen and Wonderboom. In bigger reserves this had to be done in a vehicle, and I recall bouncing along some particularly harrowing 4x4 trails in Mdala Nature Reserve in Etienne's bakkie. After some two years of cartography, we finally felt content that *Birding Gauteng's* maps were, and still are, the most

Goliath Heron



accurate (or only) maps for many of the birding sites. One fun component of drawing maps for new localities, is that we got to invent place names. In some cases these honour our birding colleagues, e.g. Geddes Bay and Roger's Loop.

By sheer co-incidence, and not meticulous planning as most people think, we ended up with 101 sites. Probably the biggest mistake we made was naming the book *Birding Gauteng*, as it includes so much more than just Gauteng province. Indeed, including weekend trips, it effectively covers everything from Musina to Maseru.

With the generous support of David Chamberlain, for a project which most publishers would have deemed financial madness, we commissioned a rather ambitious print-run and waited for the delivery truck to arrive. For any author, opening the first box for the first time, and finally holding the finished book in your

hands, must certainly rank as one of life's highlights. For us this happened in October 2008, about two and a half years after that moment on Kgomo-kgomo bridge.

Undoubtedly the most rewarding repercussion of penning *Birding Gauteng* is the continuing positive feedback we receive from birders, and especially those just starting out and still having lots of lifers and discoveries awaiting them. We are also delighted that we were able to contribute, in a small way, to the conservation of birds and their habits, through raising awareness of the avian riches that the area offers, and simultaneously contributing to sustainable eco-tourism initiatives.

Hosting more than half of the country's species, including 80 endemics/near-endemics, we truly are privileged to have all of this right on our doorstep. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm off to explore! 🐦

Finding 400 species in the Wider Gauteng area in one calendar year

List van Deventer (assisted by Rob Geddes, Anneke Vincent and Jerome Ainsley)

Most birders have limited time and resources, and doing a 'big year' requires a bit of planning and a lot of help from fellow birders.

Perhaps first of all one should focus on finding as many migrant species as possible before mid-February such as African Crane, Allen's Gallinule, Lesser Moorhen, Dwarf Bittern, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Red-footed Falcon, Dusky Lark, Grey-headed Kingfisher, European Roller, Banded and Sand Martin, Western Yellow Wagtail, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Montagu's, Pallid and Western Marsh-Harrier and all cuckoos. Adding some of the trickier shore-birds such as Common Ringed Plover, Greater Painted-Snipe and Marsh, Common and Curlew Sandpiper would be a bonus.

The best time to search for most migrant warblers is from mid-February with some

*Europese Troupant/
European Roller,
a migrant species
in the area.*



Drinje van Rensburg

warblers e.g. Olive-tree Warbler and Thrush Nightingale leaving early and others such as River Warbler only departing from March.

Some species are easier to identify in their summer plumage, such as Fan-tailed Widowbird, Yellow Bishop, Village and Lesser-Masked Weaver, Village and Purple Indigobird and Cuckoo Finch.

A few species are quite localised and occur in a specific habitat and/or only in a few spots in the Wider Gauteng area, such as Malachite Sunbird, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Cape Canary, Pale-crowned Cisticola, Pink-billed Lark, Double-banded Courser, Rufous-eared Warbler, African Firefinch, Flappet Lark, Little Bee-eater, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler and Short-toed Rock-Thrush. Cape Teal, Lesser Flamingo, Maccoca Duck, Pied Avocet and Black-necked Grebe like brackish water or pans with low water levels.

As autumn approaches and turns to winter, species such as Capped Wheatear and Temminck's Courser start moving into our area, Pearl-breasted Swallow is more noticeable after the departure of the migrant swallows and Knob-billed Ducks flock together. We are fortunate to have winter visitors such as Fairy Flycatcher, Black Harrier, Sickle-winged Chat (although uncommon) and Sentinel Rock-Thrush to boost the Wider Gauteng list. This is also a good time to look for Purple Roller, Plain-backed, Buffy and Striped Pipit, Spike-heeled and Red-capped Lark, Blue Crane, South African Shelduck, Orange River White-eye, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater and Francolins such as Coqui, Orange River, Red-winged, Grey-winged and, with luck, Shelley's.

With the arrival of spring and the first drizzles, birds such as Eastern Clapper and Melodious Lark burst into song and display, and after the first good rains Monotonous Lark appear out of nowhere around November. And suddenly the migrants return one after the other and the race is on to find the last of the missing species on your list in order to get to that magical total of 400 species in one calendar year.

Rules for the Wider Gauteng 100K Challenge: 2014

The Wider Gauteng 100 km region is defined as an area within 100 km from both the City Centre of Pretoria (Church Square) and Johannesburg (City Hall). Although this area includes South Africa's largest two cities, an amazing 521 species have been recorded within the area. This is due to the wide diversity of habitat from grassland, wetland, bushveld and broad-leaved woodland.

Every year there is an annual challenge that birders can partake in. In 2014 you can enter in one of two categories:

1. "Twitcher" - All species listed should be actually seen by the observer.
2. "Conservation" - The participant may decide to record birds that are heard as well and some people are only listing species they have recorded on an atlas card (for SABAP2).

Contact Etienne Marais on etienne@birding.co.za to indicate which category you are participating in. If you do not indicate a category, you will automatically be listed under the conservation category.

For updates visit the 100K Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/100Kbirds/>

For more info on the various challenges across South Africa, visit <http://www.birding.co.za/challenge.htm>

The book *The Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng* (authors Faansie Peacock and Etienne Marais) is of great assistance when deciding which venues to visit to find the above species, and joining the Wider Gauteng (100K) Challenge Facebook page will greatly assist in finding more species (or to request assistance) as birders regularly post reports on this Facebook page, including about vagrants visiting the Wider Gauteng area. 📍

The 2014 Wider Gauteng (100K) Challenge and that magic 400 mark

Sue Oertli

My birding friends often refer to me as a compulsive compiler of bird lists and as all members of my immediate family are accountants, an Excel spreadsheet was soon opened to register for the 2014 Challenge by December 2013 already. Having filled in the first Challenge spreadsheet in 2008 and updating a file called 'Gauteng Challenge' on the computer every year since then, the start of the years' chase was carefully planned and the 2013 spreadsheet moved, copied, renamed and contents cleared in eager anticipation of 1 January 2014.

THIS was the year to get to that 400 magic mark for the first time as a retirement lifestyle change was looming on the horizon and muscles and joints had started protesting the early morning birding preparations.

Here are a few ideas and suggestions to consider if you are thinking of chasing 400:

- Speak to your bank manager and arrange for sponsorship as you will need a lot of petrol to get to places like Mabusa for Shelley's Francolin, Sasolburg for Double-banded Courser and Devon for Pink-billed Lark, with multiple visits to these areas on the cards.
- Join Facebook and become a member of the group called 'Wider Gauteng (100K) Challenge'. This Facebook page often provides excellent information on locations for the tricky-to-find species. Befriend other members of the group who are happy to share information and will readily offer suggestions to maximize any spotting opportunities.
- If a difficult-to-find or rare species is reported, try and get to its location as soon as possible;
- You may consider investing in a GPS device as it will soon fill up with purple road tracks

and checkered flags as you criss-cross the region chasing our feathered friends with GPS co-ordinates bribed, cajoled and poached from other Challenge participants.

- Faansie Peacock and Etienne Marais's book *Birding Gauteng* is invaluable in the field.
- Join a local bird club and attend any of their Gauteng outings or weekend camps, especially if you are a lady birder for obvious security reasons;
- You will need to go out and bird every weekend (and during the week with other birding friends if you can) during the months of January, February and March and then again from mid-August onwards;
- Remember to take your bird list on every excursion as it will become problematic (as the list hopefully grows), to remember which birds you have seen;
- Consider joining the SABAP2 Bird Atlas project run by the Animal Demography Unit in Cape Town as it makes chasing the birds a lot more interesting whilst adding to a worthwhile science project in the process. Become a citizen scientist.

The strategy I followed for the year involved hitting 3 local urban birding patches at break neck speed on the 1st January. (January, February and March being excellent times to see the majority of migrants in the Challenge area). 88 species were added in a 6-hour visit to Northern Farm (weekend visits only), Golden Harvest Park in Randburg and the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens in Roodepoort.

94 more species were added in 12 hours on the 3rd January as fine weather and suitable water levels for the migrant waders made a visit to Kgomo Kgomo and Borakalalo with Etienne Marais a hot but rewarding chase. All

species were logged for the SABAP2 project as the car made its way across a dusty North West Province. A weekend visit to Ezemvelo and Mabusa added another 62 species to the list. I included visits to Devon, Roodeplaat Dam Nature Reserve, Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Rietvlei Dam Nature Reserve and the Hartbeespoort Dam area and the total bird list stood at 309 species at months' end. Using additional excel spreadsheets I logged the 70 hours of birding completed and the 23 cards atlased and submitted to the SABAP2 project for the month onto the computer.

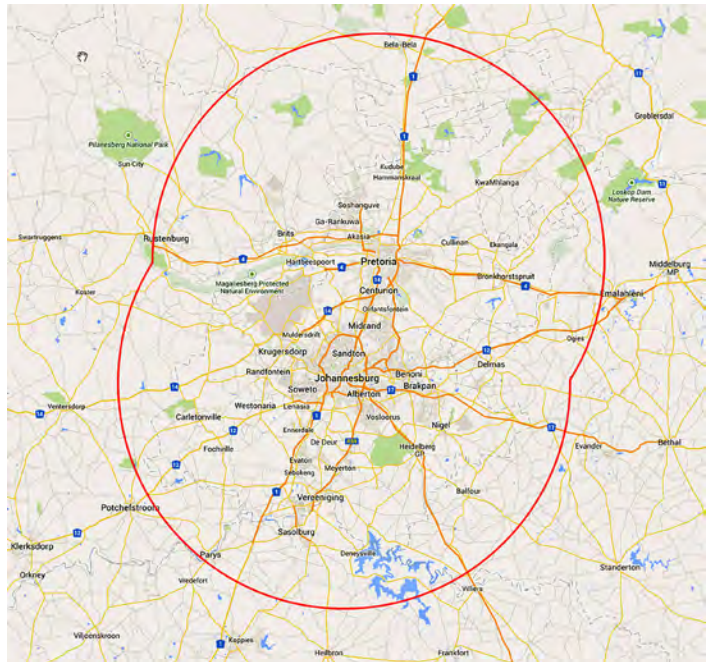
42 additional species were added in February and March. These 2 months are the best times to locate warblers as they are calling and the middle of March is excellent for River Warbler and Thrush Nightingale along the Zaagkuildrift Road with many birders getting bins and cameras onto these 'skulkers' of note; I wasn't so lucky this year as I heard both of the birds but could not get any visuals. 120 hours of birding areas like Roodekoppies Dam near Brits (it has great thornveld habitat), the Sasolburg area for Orange River White-eye and Double-banded Courser, Suikerbosrand for Cuckoo Finch and the Seringveld for African Cuckoo Hawk resulted in 351 species seen and atlased by the end of March.

The winter months are slow birding wise, although it is possible to add some real specials to the list. The beautiful Fairy Flycatcher arrives in Gauteng for the winter as does Sentinel

Rock-Thrush at Suikerbosrand. Blue Korhaan, Blue Crane, Orange River Francolin and Secretary bird can be picked up in the Devon area whilst Black Harrier makes its unpredictable appearance over the grasslands of Devon and Sasolburg. April, May and June put the tally at 380 species after another 184 hours of birding the region. 40 more cards were sent to the SABAP2 project as the real challenge got underway.

Where to find those final 20 birds?

Well, July and August produced some AMAZING sightings! 19 species were logged for the Challenge with truly awesome sightings of Sickie-winged Chat at Suikerbosrand, a far out-of-range Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk in Hekpoort and a majestic Lappet-faced Vulture cruising the thermals at



Map of the Gauteng Challenge area

De Tweedespruit.

And the 400th bird for the Challenge?

An uncommon and unobtrusive grey raptor, a Lizard Buzzard, in the Seringveld area on Sunday 14th September.

With 400 birds and 400 hours of birding logged onto 55 atlas cards for the SABAP2 project to date, there still remain some 60 or so birds to see; like Curlew Sandpiper, African

Cuckoo, Horus Swift, Tinkling Cisticola, Pale-crowned Cisticola, and Yellow Bishop. Perhaps a rare wader like Chestnut-banded Plover will also show up at Mkhombo Dam?

My Excel spreadsheets are nearly ready for the 1st of January 2015 when this 'lister' will probably start the 2015 Wider Gauteng Challenge with a visit to Zaagkuildrift and Kgomo-Kgomo. I can't wait! 🐦

To list or not to list

Anneke Vincent

I started birding around 1985 after attending a birding course by Ulrich Oberprieler at the Pretoria Zoo. I birded everywhere I went and kept trip lists in little notebooks. I was never sure how many birds I had seen in Southern Africa until driving back from Mozambique in 2007. We were on a birding trip with Etienne and just about everyone on the trip passed the 700 mark on the trip (lots of champagne flowing!). Great joy when the total came to 712 or thereabouts.

After Rynetta moved to the USA I started birding with Lisl and was always a bit snotty about all the talk about "a new bird for my Mpumalanga / Free State / SA / Northwest / etc. list". I don't list! I also started atlasing in earnest in mid-2007.

In 2012 Lisl was doing the Wider Gauteng Challenge and I decided that it might be fun to see how many birds I could see in the area. I ended with about 389 for the year, but was not bothered to chase after 11 more birds during the last 2 weeks of the year.

I retired in September 2011 and had a lot more time to go birding. With most of my birding friends still working I started going out alone during the week, at first a bit tentatively.

In 2013 I decided that it would be fun to try and get 400 birds in the Challenge area. We met Jerome at Mkhombo Dam and I still don't know how he got to bird with us, but that's now history. I have discovered a competitive edge even

as I tell myself that it does not matter if I cannot find a Fairy Flycatcher...

I have learnt so much about birds and their seasonal movements, habitats, calls, etc. from Lisl and Rob (can't get the 'pearly' call right though). We have met the most incredible dedicated birders through Facebook and later face-to-face and not one of the sharp-eyed young people has ever been anything but respectful towards their fellow birders. What stands out most is the willingness to freely share both information and expertise between all. Cell phones, e-mail and Facebook have changed the world of birding.

We drive hundreds of kilometres every weekend, get up hours before sunrise, change plans at the drop of a hat – (I know we were going to Ezemvelo, but there was a report of a Water Thick-knee at Vaalkopdam, so let's go there) – and stress when we go away on holiday or a weekend out of the region, but the team will happily go back to a spot where they have seen a species that you still need for the year. The friendships are just as important as the birding, and don't negate all the eating, drinking and chatting on the go! Atlasing is still part of every day's birding.

With all the satellite listing challenges that have now started around the country, one can now take part wherever you go on holiday. Birding is such fun and truly addictive, but I am not a lister, I am NOT a lister...! 🐦

Make the most of your day out birding

Rihann Geysler

The Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2) is going full steam ahead and atlas field data sheets are coming in fast and participation continues to grow. If you are actively taking part in the project, going bird ringing or just want to go birding for a day, and you need to be in the field at the crack of dawn, the following table will help you calculate the time you need to be in the veld at first light. It takes about one hour from first light to sunrise

and 1 hour from sunset until it's too dark to do any daytime birding. For example: If you want to go birding on 15 December you need to be in the veld at 04:10 (first light) because sunrise is at 05:10. First light on Birding Big Day *[which is traditionally the last Saturday in November – Ed.]*: you need to be in the veld at 04:08 (Sunrise 05:08) and you can bird until 19:39 (sunset 18:39) before you need to take out your spotlights, provided it is a cloudless day.

SUN RISE (SR) AND SUN SET (SS) AT:
PRETORIA LAT -25.7 LONG 28.2 E TIME 20NE 10.0 MEAN YEAR

Date	01	03	05	07	09	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29	31
J SR	05:19	05:20	05:22	05:23	05:25	05:26	05:28	05:29	05:31	05:32	05:34	05:35	05:37	05:38	05:40	05:41
J SS	19:01	19:02	19:02	19:03	19:03	19:03	19:03	19:03	19:03	19:02	19:02	19:01	19:01	19:00	18:59	18:58
F SR	05:42	05:44	05:45	05:47	05:48	05:49	05:51	05:52	05:53	05:55	05:56	05:57	05:58	05:59		
F SS	18:58	18:57	18:56	18:55	18:53	18:52	18:51	18:49	18:48	18:46	18:44	18:43	18:41	18:39		
M SR	06:00	06:02	06:03	06:04	06:05	06:06	06:07	06:08	06:09	06:10	06:11	06:12	06:13	06:14	06:14	06:15
M SS	18:37	18:35	18:33	18:11	18:29	18:27	18:25	18:23	18:21	18:19	18:17	18:15	18:13	18:11	18:09	18:07
A SR	06:16	06:17	06:18	06:19	06:19	06:20	06:21	06:22	06:23	06:24	06:25	06:26	06:27	06:28	06:29	
A SS	18:06	18:04	18:01	17:59	17:57	17:55	17:53	17:52	17:50	17:48	17:46	17:44	17:43	17:41	17:39	
M SR	06:30	06:31	06:32	06:33	06:34	06:35	06:36	06:37	06:38	06:39	06:40	06:41	06:42	06:43	06:44	06:45
M SS	17:38	17:36	17:35	17:34	17:33	17:31	17:30	17:29	17:28	17:27	17:27	17:26	17:25	17:25	17:24	17:24
J SR	06:45	06:46	06:47	06:48	06:49	06:49	06:50	06:51	06:51	06:52	06:52	06:51	06:53	06:53	06:54	
J SS	17:24	17:24	17:23	17:23	17:23	17:23	17:23	17:24	17:24	17:24	17:25	17:25	17:26	17:26	17:27	
J SR	06:54	06:54	06:54	06:54	06:53	06:53	06:51	06:52	06:52	06:51	06:50	06:50	06:49	06:48	06:47	06:46
J SS	17:27	17:28	17:29	17:30	17:30	17:31	17:32	17:33	17:34	17:35	17:36	17:37	17:38	17:39	17:40	17:41
A SR	06:45	06:44	06:43	06:41	06:40	06:38	06:37	06:35	06:33	06:32	06:30	06:28	06:26	06:24	06:22	06:20
A SS	17:41	17:42	17:43	17:44	17:45	17:46	17:47	17:47	17:48	17:49	17:50	17:51	17:52	17:53	17:53	17:54
S SR	06:19	06:17	06:15	06:13	06:11	06:09	06:06	06:04	06:02	06:00	05:58	05:55	05:54	05:52	05:49	
S SS	17:54	17:55	17:56	17:57	17:58	17:58	17:59	18:00	18:01	18:01	18:02	18:03	18:04	18:05	18:06	
O SR	05:47	05:45	05:43	05:41	05:39	05:37	05:35	05:33	05:31	05:29	05:27	05:26	05:24	05:22	05:21	05:19
O SS	18:07	18:07	18:08	18:09	18:10	18:11	18:12	18:13	18:14	18:15	18:16	18:17	18:19	18:20	18:21	18:22
N SR	05:18	05:17	05:16	05:15	05:14	05:12	05:12	05:11	05:10	05:09	05:09	05:08	05:08	05:08	05:08	
N SS	18:23	18:24	18:26	18:27	18:28	18:30	18:31	18:32	18:34	18:35	18:37	18:38	18:40	18:41	18:43	
D SR	05:08	05:08	05:08	05:08	05:08	05:09	05:09	05:10	05:11	05:12	05:13	05:14	05:15	05:16	05:17	05:18
D SS	18:44	18:46	18:47	18:48	18:50	18:51	18:52	18:54	18:55	18:56	18:57	18:58	18:59	19:00	19:00	19:01

MEDIA RELEASE

Well known Secretarybird leaves a legacy of valuable data

Johannesburg, 20 October 2014: BLiNG, a Secretarybird tracked with a sophisticated satellite tracking device for almost two years, died on 8 October 2014. Despite the unfortunate circumstances of this Secretarybird's death, valuable data were obtained during his short life. This information will be of immense value to conservationists in their work to conserve the globally threatened Secretarybird.

Ernst Retief, one of BirdLife South Africa's Regional Conservation Managers, reported that during the 21 months that this Secretarybird was tracked, 6 481 location points were downloaded, providing a unique opportunity to determine which habitats the Secretarybird uses.

BLiNG was killed when he flew into a powerline north of Pretoria. Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, Terrestrial Bird Conservation Manager at BirdLife South Africa, stated that "the way BLiNG died provided us with an opportunity to highlight the threat of powerlines to large raptors and other birds".

On 21 January 2013, BLiNG, then an eight week old Secretarybird chick, became a household name in South Africa. On this day BirdLife South Africa fitted a 38 g tracking device to BLiNG. The nest site was at Sondela Nature Reserve near Bela-Bela in the Limpopo Province. The fitting of the device was shown on the 50/50 television programme. BLiNG was given his name by BirdLife Northern Gauteng, the bird club which sponsored the tracking device.

Ernst Retief reported that during the subsequent period BLiNG spent a few months in the vicinity of his nest where he would have learnt to locate food, everything from grasshoppers to small mammals and snakes.

On 26 April 2013 BLiNG astounded ornithologists when left the area of his nest and moved to the Makgadikgadi Pans in Botswana! He settled there for about seven months.

During December 2013 BLiNG flew back to South Africa and for short periods was recorded within 20 to 50 km of his nest site. For

a few weeks he moved to an area south-east of Pretoria, before moving back to the Waterberg area. During the middle of 2014 he moved further south and spent time in the Soshanguve area north of Pretoria, a developed area with a large human population.

On 8 October 2014 BLiNG flew east over the N1 highway to an area called Rynoue, not far from Roodeplaat Dam. Ernst Retief, who monitored the movements of BLiNG, saw that from 13:00 on this day all the satellite location points were from one position. This raised concerns that BLiNG was not well. The next day, after four hours of searching, BLiNG was found dead under a powerline. It appeared as if he had collided with the powerline and thereafter his body had been badly burnt during a veld fire. A possible scenario is that he flew into the powerline because smoke from the veld fire reduced visibility.

"Powerlines are unfortunately responsible for large numbers of bird mortalities in South Africa, especially of large terrestrial birds, such as Secretarybirds, Blue Cranes and Ludwig's Bustards", said Mark Anderson, CEO of BirdLife South Africa. "Eskom is sponsoring the testing of powerline marking devices, but the effectiveness and the cost and practicality of marking thousands of powerlines remains to be determined" he added.

BirdLife South Africa is grateful to BirdLife Northern Gauteng for sponsoring the tracking device. BirdLife South Africa will continue to monitor the movements of the other tracked Secretarybirds. The information will assist BirdLife South Africa with the development of the necessary actions to conserve this threatened species.

For more information, images or interviews please contact:

Ernst Retief: ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za;
Tel + 27 72 223 2160

Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson: conservation@birdlife.org.za; Tel +27 11 789 1122.

About the Secretarybird project

In 2011 BirdLife South Africa launched a project to study the Secretarybird. The research project was initiated in the same year that the threatened status of the Secretarybird was changed to globally Vulnerable. In the past three years we have gained a better understanding of the biology and conservation of the Secretarybird, including the vast distances they travel after leaving the nest and the numerous and significant threats they face. The aim of our study is to determine the species' preferred habitat, the dispersal patterns of juveniles, and to identify the threats responsible for the apparent high mortality rate of Secretarybirds.

BirdLife South Africa has fitted tracking devices to nine Secretarybirds and, even though the project is still in the data collection phase, valuable discoveries have already been made.

In addition to the above, BirdLife South Africa has also initiated a project to determine the impact of fences on birds. This was done after a number of records were received of Secretarybirds that died after colliding or after becoming entangled in fences. Information for this project can be submitted to: <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/important-bird-areas/fence-mitigation-project>

How to help? To make a contribution towards the Secretarybird project, please contact Linda van den Heever at linda.vdheever@birdlife.org.za or +27 (11) 789 1122.

This work would not be possible without the support of the BirdLife International Preventing Extinctions Programme through funding from the two national Species Champions, Petra Diamonds and Airports Company South Africa. Read more on the BirdLife International Preventing Extinctions Programme at <http://www.birdlife.org/extinction/> and <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/threatened-species> 🐦

Crow Problem in Western Cape

Researchers from the Cape Bird Watchers Society and BirdLife Africa recently found over 200 dead crows near Caledon in South Africa.

There was concern that they may have died from Avian Flu. Most bird bodies recovered were near the N2 freeway route.

There has been a huge increase in the crow population in the Western Cape. A Bird Pathologist from Cape Town University examined the remains of all the crows, and, to everyone's relief, confirmed the problem was definitely NOT Avian Flu.

The cause of death appeared to be vehicular impacts.

However, during the detailed analysis it was noted that varying colours of paints appeared on the bird's beaks and claws. By

analysing these paint residues and comparing it with the SA Police Services vehicle paint data base it was determined that **98% of the crows had been killed by impact with lorries**, while only 2% were killed by an impact with a car.

Cape Nature then hired an Ornithological Behaviourist to determine if there was a cause for the disproportionate percentages of truck kills versus car kills. The Ornithological Behaviourist very quickly concluded the cause:-

When crows eat road kill, they always have a look-out crow in a nearby tree to warn of impending danger.

They discovered that while all the lookout crows could shout "Cah""Cah", not a single one could shout "Lorry""Lorry"...!!!

Absolutely amazing. 🐦

Engels-Afrikaanse voëlname

My nuwe vriend is 'n Brit wat net meer as 'n jaar gelede Suid-Afrika toe gekom het en ons kyk entoesiasties saam voëls. Hy leer gretiglik Afrikaans, veral omdat hy die voëlname so beskrywend vind. Sy gebruik van 'n woordeboek laat hom egter soms die kluts kwytraak, soos die bewering dat Janice Honeyman op die Pretoriase stasie aangeland het en met behulp van 'n woordeboek vir die portier gesê het sy het 'n 'slurp' in die goederewa i.p.v. 'n trommel ('trunk').

Jon het my aanvanklik dronkgeslaan met sy 'perregroenvalk' totdat ek besef het hy verwys na die Swerfvalk (Peregrine Falcon), en 'n Speckled Pigeon 'n spikkelpikkie was. Hy was baie in sy skik om die rye en rye moerse valke (Amur Falcons) op die telefoondrade te sien sit. Ek het lekker gelag. Daarna het hy nie die Engelse name op Afrikaanse wyse probeer uitspreek nie, maar die vertalende woordeboek byderhand gehou.

Party van sy vertalings is te prettig vir woorde. So word die Corn Crane 'n koringkraker, Cape Shoveler is 'n skroppeleend, die Grey Tit-Flycatcher is vir hom 'n grystietie-vlieëvanger en die Long-billed Crombec word 'n langbekkrombek – sonder dat hy weet die 'crombec' is uit die Hollandse 'krombek' verengels. Die blouwasbek (Blue Waxbill) en brons mannetjies (Bronze Mannikins) is vir hom tog te mooi! Van die voëls wat hy nog graag wil sien, is die Kaapse klipspringer, die Kaapse hangtietie en die swartpet (Cape Rock-jumper, Cape Penduline-tit en Blackcap).

Hy vind die Afrikaanse name veel interessanter en makliker om te onthou weens die beskrywende aard as die Engelse name soos Carp's, Sclater's of Burchell's dit of dat. Ek stem met hom saam.

So lag-lag het ons die afgelope jaar al oor die 200 voëls (baie met 'nuwe name') gesien!

Groete

Nom de plume: Eulalia Arana

Dear Sir

The above letter came to my attention when my grandson translated it for me. I would like to express my dissatisfaction at its publication. Does the writer know that the pseudonym she has chosen means, simply put, an 'eagle with verbal diarrhoea'?

I take umbrage at the implication that a visitor to our country cannot go birding without a knowledge of Afrikaans. For the last fifty years I have been involved in bird identification and never had a need for names in the 'Taal', which the writer apparently purports. The Afrikaans names of birds are infantile in the extreme and attest to the mental simplicity of the locals.

What can be more descriptive than an African Darter; why call it a 'snake-necked bird', or use 'mountain cockerel' for a Bateleur? How ridiculous to describe a Yellow-billed Stork as 'never sated', and then there is the 'chimney sweep' – do I need to provide more examples?

We need to honour our ornithologists and what better way is there than name birds after Buller, Chatham, Salvin, Whyte, Ludwig, Baillon, Diderick (?), and even as mentioned above, Sclater?

I conclude by requesting you in future not to publish such sardonic bits of nonsense.

Yours sincerely

Merle Featherstone

Boekenhoutskloof – 13 September 2014

Rihann Geysler

On 13 September 2014 Ben Fouché and I went birding to gather data for SABAP2 at Mutango Lodge which is situated on the farm Boekenhoutskloof 284 JR, situated north-west of the Roodeplaats Dam. This farm falls within the 2528CB quarter degree grid cell and within the 2530_2825 pentad. This farm is situated on the R573 (KwaMhlanga/Moloto Road) about 25.4 km from Zambezi Drive. The red cliffs on the right side of the road are a well-known landmark on the Moloto Road and an area I have always wanted to explore for birding purposes. This is a privately owned farm and consists of a variety of habitat systems ranging from mountain woodlands with cliffs, broadleaf woodland, *Acacia* savanna, alien woodland, open grassland and pastures, river and riparian vegetation and wetlands and dams with open water bordered with reeds and bulrushes.

Birding started at the lodge which consists of the lodge buildings surrounded by mainly indigenous trees and open lawn with garden vegetation. The lodge is also situated at the foothills of the red cliffs. From the lodge, birding progressed to the wetland areas and surrounding grassland and pastures.

The 1st hour of birding produced 53 species which includes such species as Groundscraper Thrush, Southern Black Flycatcher, Black-backed Puffback, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Southern Boubou, Kurrichane Thrush, Little Swift, Bar-throated Apalis, Lesser Masked-Weaver, Black-headed Oriole, Arrow-marked Babbler, Thick-billed Weaver, Amethyst Sunbird, Lesser-striped Swallow*, Lesser Honeyguide, African Hoopoe, Fork-tailed Drongo, African Green-Pigeon, Cape Grassbird, Yellow-fronted Canary, Chinspot Batis, Village Weaver, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, White-fronted Bee-eater, Pearl-spotted Owlet, African Grey Hornbill, Rock Martin, African Jacana, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, African Purple Swamphen and African Pipit.

The 2nd hour added 15 species bringing

the total to 68 species at the end of the 2nd hour. These include such species as Common Moorhen, African Reed Warbler* that had just returned from their northern migratory range, Black Crake, Cape Glossy Starling, Black-shouldered Kite, Little Rush-Warbler, African Darter, Jameson's Firefinch, White-throated Robin-Chat, Grey Heron, Common Waxbill, Little Grebe and African Fish-Eagle.

The 3rd hour added an additional 19 species bring the total to 87 species at the end of the 3rd hour. These include such species as African Black Duck with two ducklings, Red-knobbed Coot, Yellow-billed Duck, Levallant's Cisticola, African Stonechat, Squacco Heron, Pin-tailed Whydah, Lesser Swamp Warbler, South African Cliff Swallow* (also a migrant that had just returned), Striped Kingfisher, White-throated Swallow*, African Snipe, Rufous-naped Lark and Orange-breasted Waxbill. Despite carefully surveying the wetland areas no African Grass-Owls and Marsh Owls were found.

The 4th hour was used to explore the areas north of the lodge for potential future atlas-ing. During this time 6 species were added bringing the total species seen for the day to 94 species. These include Striped Pipit, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Brown-throated Martin, White-backed Duck and Magpie Shrike.

*Migratory birds 🐦



Dirnie van Rensburg

Magaliesberg walk – 31 August 2014

Rihann Geysler

On 31 August 2014 Madeleen van Loggerenberg and I covered a section of the Magaliesberg that falls within pentads 2540_2740 and 2545_2740.

During June 2011 we embarked on a challenge to walk the entire stretch of the Magaliesberg and to record avifaunal species on the mountain range and surroundings for purposes of gathering data for SABAP2. To date we have walked the mountain range from the N1 to the area south of Bopong between Brits and Mooiooi (see figure attached hereunder). The walks were not done on a regular basis and at times several months have gone past without any surveys.

Atlasing started at 06:25 in pentad 2540_2740 which covers the pentad leading up to the summit of the mountain range. 33 species were seen in the first hour of atlasing including such species as Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Bar-throated Apalis, Arrow-marked Babbler, Blue Waxbill, African Grey Hornbill, White-throated Robin-chat, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Golden-breasted Bunting, Southern Black Flycatcher, Lesser-striped Swallow and African Green Pigeon. The 2nd hour added another 10 species which include Natal Spurfowl, Black-crowned

Tchagra, Familiar Chat, Striped Pipit, Cape Vulture and Lazy Cisticola.

Atlasing in pentad 2545_2740 started at 08:50 on its eastern border just before reaching the summit of the Magaliesberg. Birding on top of the mountain range is as always slow and only 18 species was recorded in the first hour which such species as Lazy Cisticola, Chinspot Batis, Bar-throated Apalis, Rock Kestrel, Cape Vulture, Streaky-headed Seedeater, Wailing Cisticola, Rock Martin, Black-crowned Tchagra, Cape Bunting and African Palm Swift. The 2nd hour added only 4 species and the 3rd 14 species, with species such as African Scops-Owl recorded in 2 kloofs at the top of the mountain range. Also seen were Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Long-billed Pipit, Natal Spurfowl, Cape Grassbird, Burchell's Coucal, Short-toed Rock-Thrush, Striped Pipit, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Cape Rock-Thrush, Familiar Chat and Pied Crow.

The 4th pentad did not add any new species and the 5th and 6th hour added 6 species such as Mountain Wheatear, Freckled Nightjar, and Eastern Long-billed Lark. The next 3 hours added another 15 species which include such species as Brown-crowned Tchagra, Yellow-fronted Canary and Black-chested Prinia. The pentad coverage ended at its north-western border.



Aerial photo of the area

Vivo and Groot Marico: From the North-west to the North-east

Dudley Gradwell

It is not often that the chance arises to visit such opposite areas of our country in the space of a few days, with the abundance of birds and wildlife, new blossoms and flowers and a few migrant species beginning to return to our borders. The middle of October is a wonderful time to be out in the bush as the long, cold, dry winter suddenly turns to spring.

The trip started with a short walk in the mountains north of Machado (Louis Trichardt) at the Mashovehla Lodge – an ideal place for a weekend's birding with the club – hidden away in a valley with permanent natural springs feeding small and cool waterfalls that will ease away any stress that may be present from the hustle and bustle of the metropolitan areas. The normal, but still exciting sparrows, swallows, doves, hornbills, starlings, kites, herons, lapwings and guinea fowl were everywhere, but on the krantzes on the N1 just before the tunnel to Musina (Messina), the Verreaux's Eagle gave a wonderful display for us.

The journey continued to a cattle and fruit farm near Vivo where the next morning we were greeted by some Red-headed Weavers making nests in an enormous *Acacia* tree, and by the Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike and the 'spooky' sounds of the Grey-headed Bush-Shrike calling. This 'spook' then flew and sat on the very top of a Maroela tree for us to see in the farmhouse garden. Marico Sunbirds were also performing, together with many other birds. A pair of African Hawk Eagles posing on a power line close to the road was a wonderful way to start the day. This was followed, after a leisurely breakfast, with a visit to the Blouberg Nature Reserve, which belongs to the Limpopo Provincial Administration, to visit the Cape Vulture colony that is flourishing there as well as their vulture restaurant. The highlight of this thickly wooded park was the amazing numbers

of Crested Guineafowl that were seen at regular intervals, as well as the enormous baobabs and the fig tree forest. The other notable sightings were Grey-headed, Crimson-breasted and Red-backed Shrikes, rollers and Dark Chanting Goshawks.

A very long drive to the Botswana border near Gaborone and into the very dry but exciting Madikwe Park was worth every kilometre. The birdlife there is truly magnificent, and is only equalled by the superb accommodation and food supplied by the lodges. The guides are well acquainted with the bird species present and are willing to stop for many of the LBJs on view. This, unfortunately, is only for a short time during the early morning, late afternoon and evening drives as the non-birders on the vehicles tend to get a little impatient for the repeated stops and discussions, and want to rush off to find predators. A wonderful view of a Lizard Buzzard was experienced and a good view of the melanistic Gabar Goshawk added to the experience. Gabars are plentiful as well as the Pale Chanting Goshawk;

Red-breasted Swallow/ Rooiborsswael



Dudley Gradwell

it was great to see both the dark and pale forms within a day of each other. Waxbills are all over the place – Blue, Black-faced and Violet-eared – as well as the Red-billed Firefinches, which also drink at the rock swimming pool in the camp in large numbers during the hotter parts of the day. They, and the Blue Waxbills were unfortunately regularly disturbed by us plunging into the cool clear water at regular intervals.

A wonderful viewing of the African Finfoot was also experienced from the verandah of the chalet in the early afternoon as it swam from one clump of overhanging branches, via open water, to some more overhanging vegetation. The mating 'kamikaze' display of the Red-crested Korhaan was regularly seen as it plunged to the earth, as if someone had thrown a hat in the air. As usual in these dryer northern areas the Crimson-breasted Shrikes and Pied Babblers were seldom out of view and the few times when no birds were visible good sightings of Rhino, Elephant, Buffalo, Giraffe, Zebra, Wildebeest, Waterbuck, Red Hartebeest,

Springbuck, Klipspringer, Steenbuck, Jackal, Wild Dogs, Lion and a very sleepy Leopard were able to fill in the non bird-viewing moments.

In a few weeks time when all the summer migrants return an amazing number of birds will be on display. The count for the trip was 144 for this amateur birder, which excludes many LBJs and most of the waterbirds. Regarding the waterbirds, only a couple of Wood Sandpipers were seen at one waterhole and the Finfoot, of course, as well as Reed Cormorant, Little Egret, Green-backed Heron and Pied and Giant Kingfishers on the Marico River. The chalets are all built on the river with each one having a private romantic viewing area of the river.

The stars at night are brilliantly bright and appear to float just above the tree tops. (The Night Sky app. is recommended to identify all the stars and constellations so clearly visible every night). Overall we think Madikwe is brilliant, maybe sometimes a little expensive, and the only criticism we have of the park is that bird viewing in your own vehicle is not allowed. 🐾

Birding and flowers trip

Part 2 – Port Nolloth & Namaqualand

Don Reid

This is the follow-on to Part 1, which covered our road trip from Pretoria to Port Nolloth. In this Part 2, we (Don and Gerda Reid and Koos and Rianda Pauw) continue the next 5 days of our Birding and Flowers trip, taking in the prime flower-spotting areas of Namaqualand and adding to the growing 'trip list' of birds seen along the way.

Exploring Port Nolloth

Day 6: Still in Port Nolloth, we woke up to a beautiful scene, with the lagoon in front of the beach house as smooth as a mirror, reflecting the small groups of Greater Flamingos

(Grootflamink) as they showed themselves off to great effect. Mingling with the flamingos were Little Egret (Kleinwitreier), Kelp and Hartlaub's Gulls (Kelp- en Hartlaubse meeu), Cape and Bank Cormorants (Trek- en Bankduiker) and a charming family of South African Shelduck (Kopereend) – Mom and Dad + 2 youngsters following eagerly.

On the sand in front of the house, Common Starlings (Europese spreek) and Cape Wagtails (Gewone Kwikkie) were busy feeding while Swift Terns (Geelbeksterretjie) flew overhead in small flocks and an African Black Oystercatcher (Swarttobie) worked the shoreline for a tasty morsel or two. Not far from them a lone

White-fronted Plover (Vaalstrandkiewiet) trotted about after unseen prey and offshore, at a distance, I was able to pick up a Cape Gannet (Witmalgas) with the help of my newly acquired spotting scope.

Walking along the beach and across the flat rocks, we found ourselves on another beach with a larger lagoon/bay, which held a single Pied Avocet (Bontelsie) and the largest flock of Black-necked Grebes (Swartnekdoobertjie) we have ever seen – probably 60 or more.

Koos and I then set off on a drive to complete the minimum 2 hour atlasing period and to see if we could find the sought-after Barlow's Lark (Barlowse Lewerik) which is a Port Nolloth 'special' and said to be found not far from town on the road to Alexander Bay. Well, we followed the lead given by Birdfinder and tried hard for a sighting, but eventually decided we would have a better chance in the early morning, when they were more likely to show themselves and perhaps call. We had some compensation by way of Cape Long-billed Lark (Weskuslangbeklewerik), which we found in the scrub-covered dunes after hearing its typical descending whistle, a sound we were to hear a number of times in the following days.

We discovered a small wetland closer to town, signposted Port Nolloth Bird Sanctuary, that held a variety of bird life, dominated by

Lesser and Greater Flamingos – possibly the same ones seen earlier feeding in the lagoon - but also holding Cape Teal (Teeleend), Avocets, Cape Shoveler (Kaapse Slopeend) and large numbers of Hartlaub's Gulls. From there we followed the map to the large, mostly bone-dry, pan further north which was home to more Hartlaub's Gulls (100+) but not much else.

Having done our Citizen Scientist duties for the day, we spent the rest of the day relaxing and enjoying the beach view, ever-changing with the tides and winds. Later we tried the local Italian restaurant 'Vespettis' which served up a decent meal after which Koos called up the daily bird list to add to our growing trip list.

Day 7: We were due to vacate the beach house by 10am, but first we had an important mission to accomplish – find the Barlow's Lark. A chilly dawn saw Koos and me in the same area as the day before, stopping frequently and searching for any signs of the lark amongst the low scrub clinging to the dunes. A rather intimidating sign on the fence reminded us that we were skirting a restricted mining area! We drove slowly for a few kms northwards but kept coming up with Tractrac Chats and Cape Long-billed Larks whenever movement was spotted, not that these were birds to dismiss, as they were both lifers for me in the preceding days, but we were hoping desperately for a Barlow's



The road to Soebatsfontein

Don Reid

Lark, which was our main reason for choosing Port Nolloth as a stopover in the first place. After an hour or more of searching we decided to turn around and as we did so we heard a different-sounding call and leapt out of the car to find the source, yes, you guessed it, there was a Barlow's Lark on the telephone wire and he obliged by flying up above our heads and commencing a display flight, which involves a lot of hovering in the air while calling continuously, then descending rapidly to a low bush for a minute or so before repeating the sequence several times, while we watched enthralled. It reminded me of the Melodious Lark's display that I had seen earlier in the year in the grasslands of Mpumalanga, but without the variety of mimicked calls. Apart from the thrill of adding another lifer, the whole display was a bit of birding magic and we both agreed this was one of those special moments to be treasured.

Next Stop: Namaqua National Park

A little later we left Port Nolloth and headed back to Springbok with a good feeling about our short visit to this small coastal town. Before reaching Springbok we branched off to the town with the unusual name – Nababeep ('Rhinoceros place' in the old Khoi language) and stopped to view the spectacular displays of yellow and orange daisies which carpet the roadside and extend up the hillsides.

From there it was a short drive to Kamieskroon where we found the road to Namaqua National Park for our next night's stop. Rock and Greater Kestrels (Kransvalk en Grootrooivalk) and Pale Chanting Goshawks (Bleeksingvalk) are regular occupants of the roadside poles in these parts, in addition to the ubiquitous crows. Approaching the park we could see the flowers blanketing the landscape from a long way off and as we got closer the beauty of the flower display was almost overwhelming. We tore ourselves away from the scene to check in and let the ladies explore the 'padstal' after which we made our way slowly to the chalet in the 'Skilpad' section of the park, admiring the variety of flowers and birding along the way, with sunbirds and larks being most prominent.

On arrival at the chalet a Grey Tit (Piet-tjoutjou-grysmees) immediately made his presence known with his loud and distinctive call – another lifer added! A short walk produced a busy pair of Layard's Titbblers (Grystjeriktk), several Malachite Sunbirds (Jangroentjie) and Karoo Scrub-Robin (Slangverklikker). In no time it was dusk and time to braai, re-live the special day and get some rest.

Day 8: Early morning mist had cleared by the time we left and we enjoyed the circular route through the flowering landscape back to the office to hand in our keys before venturing further. At the office I spotted a Ludwig's Bustard (Ludwigse pou) doing a fly past allowing me the pleasure of clocking up lifer No 700 for Southern Africa, which earned a few 'high-fives'.

Having made the most of our short stay we had decided to head further into Namaqua Park, along the road to Soebatsfontein, marked as 4 X 4 only but by no means a rough road and well worth doing, as we were to find out. The road winds its way through the mountain ridges, and the wonderful scenery makes it one of the best roads I have driven. Along the way Cape Clapper Larks (Kaapse Klappertjie) did their distinctive display flight as did the Karoo Larks (Karoolewerik). Cape Buntings (Roovierkstreepkoppie) were plentiful with a



Don Reid

Rufous-eared Warbler/Rooioorlangstertjie

few Black-headed Canaries (Swartkopkanarie) adding to the mix. While we were enjoying roadside coffee and the delicious melktert (custard tart) from the park's shop we were entertained by yet another displaying Lark, this time Red-capped Lark (Rooikoplewerik), flying up from a termite mound while calling, then plummeting rapidly before repeating a few minutes later.

Our lunchtime stop was about halfway along the road near the ruins of an old farmstead, which was probably built with mud bricks, which by now had partly dissolved giving it a 'Timbuktu-like' appearance. During the drive we had seen a good selection of raptors including Jackal Buzzard (Rooiborsjakkalsvoel), Verreaux's Eagle (Witkruisarend), Booted Eagle (Dwergarend) and a Black-chested Snake-Eagle (Swartborsslangarend).

No-Heep – Strange name, Beautiful Place

Once we reached the small village of Soebatsfontein we took the dirt road to Kamieskroon, then via the N7 to the turn-off to No-Heep farm where we had booked accommodation for the next 2 nights. On arrival the owners showed us to the charming old farmhouse nearby, with solar-powered lights and gas for cooking, fridge and hot water. There was time for a short walk to explore the surroundings before dusk descended; in the fading light a Verreaux's Eagle and a Booted Eagle were still vying for prime patrolling spot along the nearby mountain ridge.

Day 9: After a relaxed breakfast I set off for a lengthy late-morning walk up towards the mountain where the eagles had been patrolling the previous evening. The morning shift now comprised a handsome Jackal Buzzard and a Rock Kestrel doing patrol duty along the same stretch of mountain ridge, the former coming in quite low to show off his rich rufous and black and white colouring as he cruised past. At ground level, Karoo Larks were displaying energetically, while Cape Buntings and Grey Tits carried on with their daily routines. Common Quail (Afrikaanse Kwartel) stuck to the rule "be heard

and not seen" as they crept unseen through the grass, given away only by their pip-pip-pip call. Up on the lower slopes of the rocky hillside, a Grey Tit played hide and seek with me, responding to my playing his call but remaining wary and partly hidden in the branches of a tree, making photography difficult.

A small lizard with a very long tail attracted my attention and I waited patiently for it to come out into the open – my reference book later confirmed it to be a Sand Lizard. A Karoo Prinia (Karoo langstertjie) on top of a handsome Quiver tree, a feature of the area, made a memorable picture in my mind but he didn't hang around long enough to turn it into a digital image. Further on, a Rufous-eared Warbler (Rooioorlangstertjie) popped up on a bush nearby and eyed me carefully, then disappeared into the bushes. Our only other activity for the day was a late afternoon drive along the farm roads leading north of No-Heep, with more spectacular scenery to enjoy along the winding road through beautiful mountain landscape.

And on to Niewoudtville

Day 10: Another travelling day – this time we were headed to a guest farm near Niewoudtville, which is famous for its variety of bulb flowers at this time of year. The route took us back to Kamieskroon where we stopped to



Cape Long-billed Lark/ Weskuslangbeklewerik

Don Reid

find the War monument – as it turned out it was in the church grounds. From there we continued south on the N7 to Vanrhynsdorp where we turned east and drove through the flat, almost barren plains known as the ‘Knervslakte’, so named by the pioneers of this part of South Africa because of the sound of the wagon wheels grinding on the stony, gritty surface.

The plains ended in an intimidating mountain escarpment with a diagonal gash up the side which, as we got closer, turned into a steeply angled road with dramatic views back over the Knervslakte. As we reached the top we found ourselves in quite different countryside at a substantially higher altitude and soon passed through Niewoudtville, with a quick stop to admire the roadside flowers, on our way to De Lande farm some 13 km further along a dirt road. At this stage the road was still dry and comfortable to drive on, but this was to change over the next couple of days.

Once settled at De Lande in the ‘Sinkhuisie’, we took a walk to stretch the legs and do some

initial birding in this new locality. Immediately the presence of Mountain Wheatears was noticeable as they hopped about around and under the car, almost seeming to want to say “hello”. A Black Harrier (Witkruisvleivalk) glided past in his customary low flight over the scrub and disappeared into the distance. Down at the farm dam dusk was approaching and a row of tall blue gums was being populated by growing numbers of Black-headed Herons (Swartkopreier), African Sacred Ibises (Skoorsteenveër) and Cape Crows (Swartkraai) as they came in to roost – the trees were altogether quite crowded. The weather had turned and it was by now completely overcast and decidedly cold but this was more than compensated for by the heaters in the house and the warm welcome and superb dinner we enjoyed that evening, served in the main house a stone’s throw away.

The next couple of days were to be a test of the vehicles and our tenacity, but more of that in Part 3. 🐦

Birding Gabon

Jason Boyce

Birding in different parts of Africa has always been a dream of mine! Ever since I was small I can remember looking in the African Field guide thinking: “am I only ever going to see these birds in this book, or will I one day be fortunate enough to see them in real life.” Well as it turns out, “I was fortunate enough.”

Sometime in the winter of 2014 I got an email from my boss, Chris Lotz, offering me the opportunity to lead a scouting trip to Gabon. Even though this trip was going to be last minute and stressful, I jumped at the opportunity and couldn’t believe that I was finally going to be somewhere in Africa where every second bird I laid my eyes on was a lifer! So the time came and I landed in Gabon’s Capital City Libreville. The first bit of birding was done from the hotel and some of the



African Grey Parrot

common African Birds like African Thrush and Common Bulbul were seen first. A great surprise was seeing wild Red-headed Lovebirds flying around the hotel area. This is my first wild lovebird sighting, so different from seeing them in cages of even feral populations. Gabon is a country with only 1.5 million people and around 900 000 of them live in Libreville, so it was great to get out of the main city and into the abyss of nothingness!

There is so much natural, pristine forest in Gabon and this was something that took me by surprise. One would see so much litter along the road but 20 metres off the road is beautiful mature, montane forest. We soon latched onto some forest edge and gallery forest birds, these included; Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Grey-headed Nigrita, Splendid Glossy Starling and Brown-eared Woodpecker.

One of the highlights of the trip was being able to travel down some of the river systems by boat. We were able to do some great birding from the boat and saw some incredible birds. Two distinct memories I have from the boat birding was seeing a mixed flock of spinetails above the forest, this included both Black and Cassin's Spinetail and Rosy Bee-eaters just for the fun of it. The other memory was spotlighting Pel's Fishing Owl from the boat one night. It had just caught a fish and was busy eating when we arrived – an incredible sight.

The dense forest of Lope National Park was something to behold; canopies as high as 30 metres, sounds all over but no movement and of course the incredible variety of monkeys! In Lope they have populations of Mandrill, Chimps and Gorilla's but they are all very hard to come by. We managed to see, Red-capped and White-cheeked Mangabeys, Black Colobus and Putty-nosed Monkeys. These are all Forest species that stay high up in the canopies and are very shy. Makes a change from naughty little Vervet Monkeys stealing my peanuts in Skukuza.

I left Gabon with more good memories than I can count, including seeing African Grey Parrots wild and free, experiencing walking



White-crested Tiger Heron

into African Forest Elephant in a dense forest, finding the sought after White-crested Tiger Heron, seeing my first malimbe's, alethes and River Martins as well as some breathtaking scenery and beautiful forests. Central Africa was an amazing place for me to start my African birding journey and I hope to be back soon! 🦉

**CANON EF 100-400 mm
lens for sale
– price R14 000 ono**

I am selling my lens as I require a lens that has longer zoom capabilities. The lens is brand new. Purchased it at ODP in November 2013. Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 L IS USM with Kenko Pro 1 Digital UV filter as well as lens hood together worth R1250 new. Immaculate condition, used only once. No scratches or marks on body, lens, hood, pouch or filter. Original box, pouch and software included. Contact Pieter Heslinga at piheslinga@mweb.co.za or telephone 0825510130.

Pelaagiese voëlkyk-uitstappie naweek van 6 September 2014

Pieter Heslinga

Ons het vir baie jare al gedroom om 'n see-voëlkyk uitstappie te doen. 'n Vriend van ons, Erhard Kruger, wat 'n hele aantal soortgelyke uitstappies in die verlede gedoen het, bied toe aan om saam met ons te gaan. Hy doen vir ons 'n bespreking by Anne Albatross Cape Pelagics vir die naweek van 6 September 2014. Hulle doen die trippies vanuit Houtbaai, en ons bespreek vir die naweek by 'n oord met die naam Houtkapperspoort in Constantia Kloof – Erhard Kruger, Johan Pretorius my swaer, Joelna my vrou en ek.

Natuurlik sou die weer die bepalende faktor wees. As ons nie die Saterdag sou kon uitgaan see toe nie, dan die Sondag en indien nie Sondag nie, dan huistoel! (met al die vrugtelose kostes wat daarmee sou gepaardgaan).

Met ons inboek by Houtkapperspoort die Vrydagmiddag kry ons ons eerste verrassing. 'n Voëltjie pik-pik teen die besprekingskantoortjie se ruit en wat sal dit wees, 'n Gryskoppie, ons eerste. Erhard het hulle al gesien en was gou om dit te identifiseer en het te vertel dat hierdie voëltjies net in daardie gebied se denneplantasies voorkom en oorspronklik deur Rhodes ingevoer is ongeveer 1898. Tog interessant dat oor al die jare hierdie voëltjie nie verder in SA

versprei het nie en dus nie 'n groot bedreiging geword het soos die Indiese Mynas nie!

Erhard maak kontak met Anne Gray wat die see-uitstappies reël en hoor dat Barrie Rose ons gids vir die dag gaan wees – maar dat ons as gevolg van swakkerige Saterdagweer eers Sondag sal uitgaan.

Ons aanvaar dit so en besluit om die Saterdag by Geelbek, Weskus Nasionale Park, te gaan voëls kyk. Ons was baie gelukkig, 7 uur die oggend sou laagwater wees en die water ver teruggetrek. Dit was 'n wonderlike koel dag, nie gereën nie en Johan, ek en Joelna kon 'n paar eerstes / lifers afmerk – Grootwulp, Kleinwulp en Bandstertgriet. Dan het ons ook mooi Steenlopers, Groenpootruiters, Krombekstrandlopers, Geelbors -, Vaal- en Grysstrandkiewiete, Rooipoot- en Bontelsies, Groot- en Kleinflaminke, en nog talle ander voëls gesien. Ons ry via Darling terug en sien die pragtigste Oranjekeelkalkoentjies en 'n Hoëveldse Skaapwagter, Gewone Bontrokkie, Sekretarisvoël, Wildemakou en nog baie andere langs die pad. 'n Wonderlike uitstappie en 'n fees van voëls.

Toe breek die groot dag aan, Sondag. Ons staan vroeg op, die lug is blou, nie 'n windjie



Erhard Kruger

Bloubekalbatros/ Shy Albatross



Erhard Kruger

Bassiaan/ White-chinned Petrel

nie – ons gaan see (pelagiese) voëls kyk. By die Houtbaaihawe ontmoet ons ons gids en skipper, ons kry 'n paar instruksies – het almal julle see-siekpille gedrink? Het julle warm en waterdigte klere aan? En daar gaan ons. Met 'n ongelooflike uitsig oor die berge rondom Houtbaai, soos wat ons die see invaar, met die son se strale wat wil-wil oor die berge begin skyn. Die doelwit is om ongeveer 27 seemyl die see in te vaar en by vissersbote/ treilers aan te sluit. Want daar sou 'n menigte voëls wees. En ons was gelukkig. Ons tref 2 treilers aan en sou 'n see van voëls sien. Ons voëlgids Barrie Rose was uitstekend. Natuurlik die Witmalgasse, Bassiane en Kelpmeeue – honderde!

Maar dan 6 van die Albatros soorte (Swartvlerkkoning, Groot, Bloubek, Swartrug, Atlantiese Geelneus, en Indiese Geelneus), die Reuse- en Grootnellies (ons sien selfs die wit morf tipe van die Reusenellie), Malbaatjies, 'n Bruinroofmeeu, 'n Grootpylstormvoël, en dan baie Seeduifstormvoëls en Gewone Stormswaels. Ons sien 14 "lifers". Wat 'n fees! Skoon vergeet van seesiek word!

Vir my, Joelna en Johan wat vir die eerste keer op die see kom voëlskyk het was dit nogal 'n aanpassing. In die bosveld sien 'n mens 'n voël vlieg en op 'n tak gaan sit, gryp die verkyker en kyk wat dit is. Aan die anderkant, op die see agter die treilers aan, kry mens die honderde voëls wat maal en krioel in die lug, en moet mens die enkele skaars voël tussen



Reuse Nellie/ Southern Giant-Petrel

die massas identifiseer. Watwou van verkyker gebruik, als te vinnig. En fotos neem – ons het probeer. Erhard Kruger saam met ons, ken al die 'trick' en neem pragtige fotos. Ek heg 'n paar van sy fotos hierby aan.

Die dag skuif verby sonder dat ons dit agter kom, en voor ons ons kom kry is dit al middag en moet ons terugkeer hawe toe. Ons skipper wys ons gou die robkolonie net buite Houtbaai en ongeveer half 4 is ons terug in die hawe.

Wat 'n wonderlike ervaring – en kan mens dit so gelukkig tref! Een ding is seker, ons moet weer gaan – maar sal dalkies nie weer so gelukkig wees nie. Vir die van julle wat nog nie 'n seevoëltrippie gedoen het nie, dis 'n moet, kontak my vir besonderhede. Dankie aan Erhard, Johan en Joelna, dat ons dit kon saamdoen. 🐦

New Members / Nuwe Lede: August-November 2014

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.

Sarie Strijdom, Menlo Park; Phillip & Adele Cronje, Silverlakes; Stephanie Roberts, Makhado; Sariza & Willie de Jager, Suzelle, Waterkloofrif; Daniel Haywood & Jessica, Elardus Park; Thys & Lydia du Preez, Faerie Glen; Verna Misselhorn, Zwartkops; Chris Wickee, La Montagne; Piet & Lorraine Groenewald, Pretoria-Noord; Louis & Ronel van Niekerk, Doringkloof; Laura Jordaan, Moreletarif; Daniel de Waal, Rietfontein; Justin & Diana Hobday, Highveld; Johan de Jager & Louis, Nicole, Montanapark; Neels & Wena Klopper, Faerie Glen; Lynne Heydenrych & Gerdus, Garsfontein-East; Joe & Meryl-Lynne Harwood, Kilner Park; Anna Haw, Menlo Park

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 15 December 2014

Compiled by André Marx

There were a few cracking rarities to start off the summer months, none more noteworthy than two species that have not been seen in our region for a number of years; Pacific Golden Plover and Slaty Egret. A number of local birders were able to see both these species as they remained at their respective localities for a few weeks. Other interesting birds that wandered into Gauteng was a Broad-billed Roller at Emmarentia of all places and a lost Parasitic Jaeger, a pelagic species that cannot be expected to survive at an inland locality. This report was compiled in mid-December when local rarities were still being reported. There are certain to be more this summer! My thanks to all who submit sightings and photos to me or via SABAP2 and the various Internet forums.

National rarities/ Nasionale rareiteite

Egret, Slaty. Reier, Rooikeel-: a remarkable sighting of one bird at Walkhaven, north-west of Johannesburg in pentad 2555_2750, is the first record of this rare species in the region for at least 10 years, 11 Dec 2014 (RM).

Harrier, Western Marsh. Vleivalk, Europese: one bird was present at Marievale Bird

Sanctuary, 8 Nov 2014 (Gbird). In the following weeks at least two birds were present, when photographs showed that one was probably an adult female and the other an immature male, (Gbird).

Plover, Pacific Golden. Strandkiewiet, Asiatiese Goue: a single bird was present on the shoreline at Borakalalo GR for at least 2 weeks when many birders were able to see it, 19 Oct 2014 (EM). This species is seldom recorded at inland localities and this is the first record for the greater Gauteng region for a number of years.



Broad-billed Roller/ Geelbektrouphant

Warren Ingram



Tom Archer

Tom Archer

Pacific Golden Plover/ Asiatiese Goue Strandkiewiet



Niall Perrins

Parasitic Jaeger/ Arktiese Roofmeeu

Regional Rarities/ Streeksrariteite

Blackcap, Bush. Tiptol, Rooibek-: one bird was observed on a few occasions in a garden in Melville, Johannesburg, 15 Aug 2014 (SC). *This is the third record for Gauteng in recent years of this uncommon bird. It should be looked for in areas of dense forest cover and in well-treed gardens.*

Buzzard, European Honey. Wespedief: one bird was in Waverley, Pretoria, 2 Nov 2014 (FdP). Another sighting was of one bird at Leeufontein Estate, near Roodeplaat Dam, 8 Nov 2014 (LG).

Crane, Wattled. Kraanvoël, Lel-: 16 Aug 2014 one bird was again found in the company of a group of Blue Cranes in the Devon area, 16 Aug 2014 (Gbird)

Jaeger, Parasitic (Arctic Skua). Roofmeeu, Arktiese: a wandering bird was found at Borakalalo GR on 30 Nov 2014 (NP), before unfortunately being found dead on 2 Dec.

Roller, Broad-billed. Troupant, Geelbek-: a surprise sighting was of one bird at Emmarentia Dam in Johannesburg on 22 Nov 2014 (CT); in the ensuing weeks many local birders managed to view the bird at this locality. *This is only the third record of this species in the greater Gauteng area in the last 10 years.*

Sanderling. Strandloper, Drietoon-: one bird was at Leeupan in the East Rand in pentad 2610_2815, 22 Nov 2014 (GL).

Sandpiper, Green. Ruiter, Witgat-: at least one bird was at Rietvlei NR, south of Pretoria, 4 Nov 2014 (JdW).

Sandpiper, Pectoral. Strandloper, Geelpoot-: one bird was at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 26 Oct 2014 (DH).

Wagtail, Mountain. Kwikkie, Berg-: the bird at Groenkloof NR was still on show in the general area of the stream in the reserve 5 Oct 2014 (Gbird).

Other interesting observations/ Ander interessante waarnemings

Bee-eater, Blue-cheeked. Byvreter, Blou-wang-: two immature birds were an unusual sighting for Rietvlei NR on 2 Nov 2014,

considerably south of this species' usual range (MvS).

Eagle, Ayres' Hawk. Arend, Kleinjag-: a sighting of one bird at the Union Buildings in Pretoria once again is further evidence of the species' presence at this locality in summer, 27 Nov 2014 (DH).

Eagle, Lesser Spotted. Arend, Gevlekte: a sighting of one bird at Marievale, that was subsequently photographed, is somewhat out of range for this species, 26 Oct 2014 (DH).

Eagle, Wahlberg's. Arend, Bruin-: a record of one bird in the Klipriviersberg NR in pentad 2615_2800, south of Johannesburg, is an unusual sighting for that locality, as this is a species normally associated with bush country north of Gauteng, 29 Nov 2014 (LR & PT).

Owl, Southern White-faced. Uil, Witwang-: one bird was a surprise find in a garden in Atholl in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, 21 Aug 2014 (HS). *These birds are known to occasionally wander into suburbia.*



Pectoral Sandpiper/ Geelpootstrandloper

Dirk Human



Bush Blackcap/ Rooibektiptol

Shashi Grok

Snipe, Greater Painted. Snip, Goud-: a single bird was at Glen Austin Pan in Midrand, 5 Oct 2014 (DH).

Turnstone, Ruddy. Steenloper: one bird was located at Borakalalo GR, 24 Oct 2014 (Gbird).

Observers/ Waarnemers

Dirk Human (DH)	Etienne Marais (EM)
Francois du Plessis (FdP)	Gauteng birders (GBird)
Geoff Lockwood (GL)	Hayley Steinberg (HS)
Jan de Wagenaar (JdW)	Lance Robinson (LR)
Lizet Grobbelaar (LG)	Madeleen van Schalkwyk (MvS)
Niall Perrins (NP)	Philip Tarboton (PT)
Russell Munro (RM)	Shashi Cook (SC)

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



Mark Tilleey

Western Marsh-Harrier/ Europese Vleivalk

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 and from SABAP2 records. Members are invited to submit details of sightings to André Marx at e-mail turaco@telkomsa.net or 083 4117674. 🐦

Rare bird at Borakalalo Nature Reserve

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

The **Pacific Golden Plover** is a rarity in South Africa, and particularly at inland localities, with most of the recorded sightings being along the coastline. Only one sighting is mentioned inland, viz. a sighting in Marievale, Nigel, in December 1999. Hockey, PAR, *et al.* 2006. *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa VII Edition*, describe it as a rare summer vagrant to South Africa.

DISTRIBUTION: Breeds in Siberian tundra from Yamal Peninsula east to w Alaska; non-br range s Asia and Indonesia to Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Ocean islands. Regular vagrant to California, Europe and ne Africa. Rare summer vagrant to s Africa, but apparently more common than American Golden Plover; most records of 'Lesser' Golden Plover probably refer to this sp (incl specimens collected near Cape Town, W Cape, 1950 and Swakopmund, Namibia, 1964). Since split from 'Lesser' Golden Plover, recorded W Cape (Wadrif saltpan, Mar 1994;

Ultra saltpans, Paternoster, Mar 1994; Velddrif, Nov 2001, West Coast NP, Mar 2002), E Cape (3 at Kromme R estuary, Jan 1997; 1 St Francis Bay, Feb 2002, Swartkops R, Jan 1994), KwaZulu-Natal (RichardsBay, Dec 2001 to Mar 2002), Gauteng (Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Dec 1999), and Zimbabwe (Bulawayo, Feb 1993). Only 1 record of 'Lesser' Golden Plover in partial br plumage in Sept; 2 recorded as juvs, remainder not aged.

HABITAT: Non-br areas primarily coastal, incl tidal sand- and mudflats, reefs, lagoons, beaches and adjacent open areas incl dunes; Occasional at inland wetlands. (Hockey, *et. al.*, 2006).

It is understandable that the Southern African Rare Bird News Report (SARBN) on Sunday 19th October 2014 caused a major stir amongst the birding community, when a single Pacific Golden Plover was reported at Borakalalo Nature Reserve. Serious and not so serious

birders, 'twitchers' and beginners all streamed to Borakalalo in droves to get a glimpse of this rarity and to be able to add this sought-after bird as a 'tick' on their life-list of bird species seen.

Below is a quote from Trevor Hardaker, Chairman of the BirdLife South Africa Rareities Committee, and author of the SARBN, on 20th October 2014:

"For a change, let's start in the North West Province where the best bird of the last few days, a **PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER**, was located in Borakalalo Game Reserve yesterday afternoon. With news being circulated at just after 2 pm, it gave birders enough time to react immediately and still make the drive out there and a number of twitchers managed to connect with the bird yesterday still whilst there has been a continuous movement of birders through the reserve today, all of which have enjoyed good views of the bird too. Judging by the number of updates I received today, it was not the most productive day workwise in Gauteng and many of the province's finest had to suddenly leave the office for emergency meetings..."

Trevor Hardaker further commented:

"Please also show restraint in terms of approaching the bird too close so as not to spoil things for other twitchers who are still hoping to get a chance to go and look for it. I have also been informed that there are several pairs of Kittlitz's Plovers nesting in the immediate area, so please do take care when moving around there not to disturb them."

I decided to take some time out and join the 'emergency meetings' and see if I could get

a sighting of the bird. I left home at 06:00 on Thursday 23rd October 2014 and arrived at the site opposite the 'Bus Terminus' signboard at Borakalalo, around 07:30 and there were already a number of vehicles and birders with an array of optical devices from rather small binoculars to cameras which vaguely resembled mini-rocket-launchers, looking very professional.

The water level of Klipvoor Dam had receded substantially, leaving an open shoreline of probably 50-60 metres and more exposed. To my delight many other waders were on the shoreline or in the shallow water. There were large concentrations of aquatic invertebrates and insects on the shore line and in the initial water line. Many waders were actively feeding. Goliath Heron, Grey Heron, Glossy Ibis, Black-winged Stilt, Marsh Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover, Blacksmith Lapwing, Little Egret and a number more were seen. Kittlitz's Plover were there in good numbers and some of them breeding in little scrapes in the soil of the exposed shoreline.

One of the birders present eagerly showed me the Pacific Golden Plover. I was delighted. A 'lifer' for my list and a 'mega-tick' at that. Shortly thereafter one of the over-eager photographers got too close and the bird flew up and landed some 300 metres further on. I rigged up my spotting scope and followed the bird, always at a safe distance. The birders left and I was alone. The bird relaxed, squatted down, or stood up on one leg. Other birders arrived. They scanned with their binoculars, not seeing the bird. I should have charged a fee for the use of my spotting-scope... but was happy to help others get a 'lifer'.



After clearing the actions with the duty officer at Borakalalo, I very politely requested the drivers of the vehicles to move these off the shoreline, which they very happily and understandingly did. Thereafter, and I could not believe my eyes, when a vehicle with a number of occupants came driving down the shoreline for probably 300 metres. I went to the vehicle and very politely asked, if they had seen the appeal from Trevor Hardaker, not to drive on the shoreline. Yes they said, they had seen it. I politely requested them to please move their vehicle from the shoreline...

I wrote a quick SMS to Trevor Hardaker, confirming that the rare bird was still showing and explaining that members of the public were still driving on the shoreline. He sent out the following alert:

"With respect to the **PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER** at Borakalalo Game Reserve, I have been informed that there were a couple of vehicles driving along the shoreline of the lake this morning again to look for the bird. Just to be **ABSOLUTELY** clear, please only use the formal track which ends at the parking area and then leave your vehicle there. Do not follow the tracks of people who have now driven along the shoreline. I have already received

photos of some of the people and vehicles that did this on Tuesday, so I would encourage you all that if you see others doing this to also take photos and forward them on to me. I'm not really into the whole naming and shaming thing and would prefer to avoid this if possible, so let's see if we can all be responsible about this. Think about the other local birds in the area before you drive on to the shoreline. Sorry if I sound like a moaner here (and you are welcome to turn your nose up at my comments), but I really hope that this will be the last time I have to post anything about this... I should also just say thank you to all the birders that have acted responsibly as there are also plenty of those."

I left Borakalalo at around 12:30, a happy man. No more birders were present. I arrived back home only to download the many pictures from my camera and delete the unusable ones. Then I emailed a few of the better ones to Trevor Hardaker. My one picture was published on the Southern African Rare Bird News Report (SARBAN) on 23rd October 2014.

I am certain that this will create good publicity for Borakalalo Nature Reserve and I hope that it adds many birders to the numbers of visitors to Borakalalo. 🐦

African Wood Owls nesting in a Soutpansberg garden

Alan Whyte

We have farmed along the southern foothills of the Soutpansberg, 20 kms east of Louis Trichardt for nearly forty years, and in all that time Wood Owls have been part of our lives. There has always been a pair of these wonderful owls in our garden, and their call "whu - hu -whu-hu-hu-hu" often followed by a single high pitched "weoow" is a nightly sound we have grown to love. Some evenings when we sit outside with the floodlights on, they fly

down onto the lawn to pick up insects, and will sometimes sit on a branch over our heads if we play or mimic their calls.

They have nested occasionally in our garden starting in August, and have usually raised two or three chicks. For a couple of years they nested in the fork of a silky oak tree, but this was not an ideal site as the birds abandoned the nest with eggs on at least one occasion in sustained wet weather.



Wood owl tree (left); adult (above); and chick (below).



And now they are back nesting in a hole in an old tipuana tree in the garden only twenty metres from our bedroom window! They have a much more suitable nesting site and in a position that is difficult to see from the ground. It was the persistent alarm chatter of the Dark-capped Bulbuls that drew our attention to the tree, and eventually the owls' white face peering down.

Last Saturday morning my son discovered a chick sitting on the lawn below the nest. I had seen it from a distance earlier and thought it was a bit of material from the dog's bed that had found its way onto the grass. Luckily our dogs had shown no interest in the little bird, and it sat on the grass seemingly quite unconcerned looking up at us.

But, how to get the little bird back into the nest 8 metres above the ground! Luckily the farm provided a long ladder, and we carefully

wrapped the chick in a paper towel so as not to impart human scent to the bird, and my son Graeme climbed up so as to be able to see into the nest. The adult that was sitting in the nest flew off, chased by the ever present bulbuls and he could see one other healthy chick and a smaller chick that was dead in the nest.

He replaced the truant carefully back in its hole, and we retreated to await developments. Within ten minutes the adult flew back into the tipuana tree and an hour or so later she was back on the nest.

Is this the end of the story with a happy ending? We hope so, but with experience of other Wood Owl nests in the garden these babies seem quite prone to falling out and onto the ground, and we have had previous nerve wracking experiences of getting chicks to reunite with their parents. Hold thumbs! 🍀

The cunning Sparrowhawk

Chris Siebert

On 21 July 2014 I received an urgent call from my friend Les Weyer, who lives in Elardus Park, Pretoria. He had just caught a 'hawk'! Les is a well-known South African aviculturist who breeds exotic birds. Apart from his many breeding cages he has a large walk-in aviary containing many trees and shrubs. From sunrise to sunset his garden is characterised by the constant sound of singing birds.

On numerous occasions over the past two weeks however, the aviary has experienced an abrupt eerie silence to be followed a few minutes later by normal bird sounds. After experiencing this phenomenon for the umpteenth time Les decided to investigate. To his initial horror there were no birds to be seen in the aviary! His initial response was that someone had left the gate open and everything had escaped. But on closer investigation and to his utter relief he found that the birds were in fact 'hiding' away in nesting boxes and underneath the shrubs. On an ominous note he also found the remains of a few freshly killed quails on the floor. What could it be... a rat or a snake! After a thorough search during which a small hole in the roof of the aviary was revealed, a guilty 'hawk' was found perched in the uppermost corner of the aviary. A normal response would be to get a shotgun and get rid of this pest, but being a bird lover however, Les did not have the heart to do that and contacted me to identify and release the intruder.

The bird which was ultimately caught with a net, proved to be a sparrowhawk. Although inconspicuous they are relatively common in the eastern suburbs of Pretoria. Perched on a high vantage point, this specific specimen was obviously aware of the delightful 'meals' to be had in the aviary below. After scrutinising the roof of the aviary with those sharp eyes, a small hole was found and the daily intake of protein began. Once its belly was full it would fly out of

the very same hole it had entered, assured of tomorrow's easy meal.

Apart from my fingers being spiked by those razor sharp talons (notwithstanding the gloves I had on), I found the measuring and ringing of the sparrowhawk an experience I will remember for the rest of my life. Those bright eyes staring at me almost appeared hypnotic. Imagine what a terrifying effect such eyes will have on a Cape Sparrow or Laughing Dove, to mention just some. If one takes into consideration the small size of the bird (weighing only 73 grams), and the size of some of the doves it attacks, pound for pound, then the sparrowhawk must rate as one of the best of the best amongst our raptors in southern Africa.

Ps. the hole in Les's aviary has subsequently been repaired and reinforced.

[Your photo shows an immature Little Sparrowhawk, Chris. An interesting experience! – Ed.] 🦅



Climate Change

Marius Blom

I am no writer but I have something I would like to share something with those who like gardening and nature like me.

Up until now there were many articles and theories about climate change, some scary and others something that we can manage by making a few changes to our lifestyle. The most sought after birds (for birders) are those who you battle to find, beautiful and usually something different than the average LBJ. The same applies to gardening, those plants that are difficult to grow, nice to look at and only found in a few gardens are the ones any keen gardener wants in his/her garden.

I am the same and have a special shady spot under a Fishtail Palm that doesn't get direct sun, well protected against cold and the soil holds enough moisture close to my Koi pond so there should be some moisture in the air. I also had to install lighting in the garden due to crime in SA. I am not going to mention and try and impress readers with all fancy plant names, or bird names, but I can assure you that I had many compliments for that part of the garden... until one day when I noticed some of the plants do not like me or the area anymore, so I tried to increase my TLC but could still see they were not happy. I then realized that I had to make changes to my lifestyle and transplant the plants because due to me creating a great climate for the plants I also created a nice neighbourhood for the Southern Masked Weaver who also for security reasons prefers prickly cycad leaves below his nests with good light at night. Also thin yet strong stems to hold the nests so snakes cannot bother while he gets rid of all the leaves on the branch he likes. This arrangement changed the climate of my plants, which don't like direct sun!

With the lifestyle changes I made we are all happy gardeners and birders, even with climate change.

See the happy weaver and happy plants in photo attached.

[They can be a nuisance to some people, Marius, but Southern Masked Weavers are very much a part of our garden environments, as you have accepted – Ed.] 🐦



KZN ring uitstappie

Wanda Louwrens

Ek en Frik du Plooy het op 19 September 2014 saam met Johan en Magdaleen Snyman 'n weeklange wegbreek geneem na St Michaels-on-Sea aan die Suidkus van KZN. Die Sondag het ons om drie-uur opgestaan om saam met Andrew en Ivan Pickles (lede van 'n voëlklub in KZN) in Gwala Gwala Forest, 'n woud in privaat besit by Umzumbe (naby Hibberdene) te gaan voëltjies ring. Dit het ons 'n halfuur geneem om die afstand van St Michaels na Hibberdene af te lê. In die donker het ons in 'n paadjie deur die woud die nette opgeslaan. Gelukkig is daar nie bome met doringe in die woud nie.



Frik du Plooy

Knysnaruigtesanger/ Knysna Warbler

Ons het 25 kuswoudvoëls gevang, waarvan vyf hervangste was. Die spesiale spesies was Bloukuifvlieëvanger (Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher), Bruinwipstert (Brown Scrub-Robin), Boskrapper (Terrestrial Brownbull) – 'n lifer vir my, Natal Janfrederik (Red-capped Robin-Chat), Paradysvlieëvanger (African Paradise-Flycatcher), Groenrugkwê-kwêvoël (Green-backed Camaroptera), terwyl Johan spesies soos die Knysnaruigtesanger (Knysna Warbler) gekry het. Ons het ook 'n Kroonarend (Crowned Eagle) gesien wat by 'n nes gesit het.

Woensdagoggend het ons die wekkers weer vir drie-uur gestel, net om 10 oor drie te verneem dat die seewind so erg waai dat die uitstappie afgestel moes word. Teleurgesteld het ons maar teruggeklim in die bed. Ons is darem vir 'n bring en braai genooi by Andrew en sy pa se huis in Lorraine Estate, ook in Umzumbe. Ons was nie lank daar nie of Johan se vingers het gejeuk om nette op te sit. Die wind het hom nie afgesit nie. Gou-gou was daar drie nette opgeslaan naby die huis wat bietjie beskutting teen die wind gebied het. Dit was nie ideale toestande vir ring nie, maar al drie fretspesies was teenwoordig, maar net die Dikbekfret (Magpie Mannikin) en Rooirugfret (Red-backed Mannikin) het in die net beland. Ons het 'n totaal van 17 voëls die dag gering.

Do birds migrate by night as well as day?

Yes, very much so. More species – and many more individuals – are night fliers, and for several reasons. First, the air is cooler at night, which is especially important as the bird goes further south. Cool air allows a bird to fly faster, with less dehydration and loss of energy. Second, there are fewer predators around, most of which are daytime migrants. Finally, migrating by night and stopping by day allows birds to feed and rest during daylight hours. Nocturnal migrants include most songbirds, wildfowl and waders.

Limpopo ringweek

Wanda Louwrens

Op Sondagoggend die 5de Oktober het ek, Frik, Chris en sy gesin en oupa Sampie in die pad geval na Theuniskloof naby Zanzibar, op die walle van die Limpoporivier, vir 'n lekker wegbreek in die vakansie. Die doel van die vakansie was om lekker te gaan rus, maar die nette en 'balchatri' het saamgegaan. Die eerste dag is daar net visgevang en geswem.

Dinsdagoggend het ek, Frik, Chris en Julian (Frik se kleinseun) beskuit en koffie ingepak en die stofpaaie in die omgewing gaan verken. Die roofvoëls was teleurstellend min en die dag het net 'n Swartborslangarend (Black-chested Snake Eagle) opgelewer wat Julian (nou dertien jaar oud) gering het. Die aand het ons die nette gaan opslaan maar nie oopgemaak nie. Net reg vir die Woensdagoggend se ring. Die volgende oggend is die nette oopgemaak terwyl die koffiewater gekook het. Teen sonop het die spesiale voëls een vir een in die nette beland. Ons het spesies soos Boskrapper (Terrestrial Brownbul), Heuglinse Janfrederik (White-browed Robin-Chat), Langstertglanspreeu (Meves's Starling), Geelborswillie (Yellow-bellied Greenbul), Grysrugkwêkwêvoel (Grey-backed Camaroptera) en Gewone Ralreier (Squacco Heron) –'n ring-lifer vir Chris – gering.

Die laaste aand het ons op Julian se aandrang deur die plaas gaan ry met 'n 'spot light' en op 'n Rooiwagnaguil (Rufous-cheeked Nightjar) afgekom wat hy toe kon ring. 'n Wonderlike ondervinding om so 'n voël van nader te beskou. Die grootste verrassing was die grootte van sy bek. Dit maak oop tot onder sy oë!

Terwyl ons gering het, het Sonja, Danielle en oupa Sampie gemaai onder die kurpers, makriële, onderbekke, barbers en dwerg-tiervis. Al die visse is darem weer veilig teruggeplaas in die rivier. Een aand het 'n krokodil kom loer wat aangaan op sy rivier se walle. Dit het die vissersmanne en -vroue groot laat skrik maar nie lank daarna nie was die lyne weer in die water.

Ons het darem voëls ook gelys en het aan die einde van die week met 'n lys van 88 geëindig. Ons het mooi spesies gesien soos Grootjagarend (African Hawk-Eagle), Kaalwangvalk (African Harrier-Hawk), Afrikaanse Snip (African Snipe), Reuse Ooruil (Verreaux's Eagle-Owl) en die Visvalk (Osprey) en Waterdikkop (Water Dikkop).

Al was die temperatuur soms so hoog as 42°C in die skaduwee, was dit nogtans 'n baie lekker week in die Bosveld. 🦅

Chris du Plooy
met 'n Ralreier/
Squacco Heron



Frik du Plooy

Ringsessie – Pretoria Botaniese Tuin: 11 Oktober, 2014

Paula Steyn

Ons het 200 voëls gevang waarvan 18 (9%) hervangste was. Daar was net twee uitstaande rekords ten opsigte van die ouderdom van voëls:

Ring nommer: AM64435. Cape White-eye (Kaapse Glasogie) 2006 tot 2014. Ten minste 8 jaar en 3 maande oud.
Oorspronklik gering deur C de Kock 2006/07/01.

Eerste 'retrap' Johan Snyman 2011/07/30.
Tweede 'retrap' Mrs M Jansen van Rensburg 2012/10/07.
Derde 'retrap' Dr FC Bothma 2014/10/11.

Ring nommer: FA52150. Cape Sparrow (Gewone Mossie)
Op 2005/04/02 gering deur Dr G Grieve.
Weer gevang op 2014/10/11.
Ten minste 9 jaar en 6 maande oud!

At what age do birds begin to breed?

This varies considerably. In general, the longer the normal lifespan of the bird, the longer it will take to reach maturity. So most passerines breed the year after they are born, while the larger gulls take up to four years to reach maturity. At the farthest extremes, long-lived species such as albatrosses may not breed until they reach six or seven years old. While some members of the quail family have been known to breed after just six weeks!

Donations / Donasies: July–October 2014

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

Tana Coetzer, Elba Swart, Feridoon Barraghi, Rita de Meillon, Antony Cooper, BC du Toit, Sue Visser, Gary Boyle, Johan Pretorius, Mimi Geysler, Brian Moreby, Andre Gildenhuys, Laura Jordaan, André Marx, Kurt Zsilavec, Ryno Scribante, Louis van Niekerk.

BirdLife Northern Gauteng					
Laniarius advertising costs (cost shown in Rands)					
Print ads	1 insert	2 inserts	3 inserts	4 inserts	
Back page	600	1000	1300	1500	full colour
Full page	400	700	950	1150	
Half page	250	400	500	675	
Quarter page	125	200	250	275	
Loose insert	300	500	650	750	
Smalls	50	90	120	140	5 lines/ad
Notes					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertiser to supply print-ready artwork 2. Ads can be placed in alternate issues 3. Ads must be paid in advance 4. Ads are in black & white except back page which is in full colour 5. For loose inserts advertiser to supply insert 6. The committee maintains the right to accept any advertisements 					

BUFFELSDRIFT Rust de Winter

**ACCOMMODATION
(R350/p/night)**



PHOTOGRAPHY



BIRDING



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