



Laniarius

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Newsletter of BirdLife Northern Gauteng Nuusbrief van BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

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Notice to contributors

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

Kennisgewing aan bydraers

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

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Credits

Front cover: Rooi-tertmôrelyster / Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush by Drinie van Rensburg, photographed at Epupa Falls in Namibië.
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

WORD AND PDF FORMAT. We have to bring this technical item to the attention of authors of articles. Please write your articles in WORD format. The reason is that minor spelling or gramatical errors in articles are corrected by the editing committee and this can only be done when the article is in Word format!

An article by Don Reid – Birding and Flowers trip – takes the reader through a most interesting and beautiful part of northern and western South Africa. Anybody contemplating a trip to this area will find a lot of help in this article with regard to the best routes, roads and accommodation as well as the special birds and their habitats in this region.

Then a second article, this one by Neithard Graf von Durckheim, describes in detail a fifteen day self-drive organised trip through southern and central Mozambique in the company of several cars and a very competent and knowledgeable guide. This article contains much valuable advice about equipment that should be taken on a trip through such wild areas where accurate maps, petrol, vehicle repair items and medical attention are non-existent. And, of course, there are mouth-watering descriptions of rare birds that inhabit this region.

There is a very interesting article recently published in the “Economist” journal that Marius Blom sent us on vultures. Unfortunately we cannot print the article for copyright reasons, but we can provide you with a link to the online article which we have done later in our magazine so that you can read it yourself.

There are also two excellent descriptions of bird ringing – one at Nylsvlei and the other in the remote North-East Kaokoland in Namibia. Clearly bird ringing has a most enthusiastic following in our club.

The editors also came across a couple of interesting articles in international journals concerning factors that influence bird migrations. Birds in migration across the oceans may be caught in bad weather. Most heavy winds over the Atlantic ocean come from the west and therefore birds coming from North America will be blown eastwards away from their continent out to sea. Fog may also claim the lives of many birds which become disorientated and exhausted and fall into the sea. However, extensive research has shown that birds in general have tremendous situational awareness and may swiftly alter course to avoid a seasonal storm or to make for land. Basically, migration is finding some way to deal with changing regimes of temperature and food availability.

Another probable source of disorientation of migrating birds is a phenomenon known as “electrosmog”. The tremendous proliferation of electronics in human society may well be responsible for reducing the navigating ability of birds migrating through urban areas where electronic diffusion is most prevalent. Multiple experiments have been conducted on European Robins where the robins are exposed to electronic fields that can be switched on and off. It was shown conclusively that the robins were able to orientate correctly when the electronic field was switched off, but became disorientated when the field was on. This effect raises the possibility that man-made electromagnetic noise may be a contributing factor to recent declines in migrating populations.

Phillip and Jill de Moor



Chairman's Report/ Voorsittersverslag

Philip Calinikos

Our committee recently held its annual bosberaad at Wolphuiskraal which consisted of a strategy session on the Saturday morning followed up by our normal committee meeting in the afternoon. A little early morning and late afternoon atlassing was thrown in for good measure.

One of the matters discussed in the strategy session were the recent developments within our mother organisation, BirdLife South Africa. The revised BLSA constitution was duly adopted at the AGM held in March and the structure of the organisation has been changed as a result. BLSA is now managed by an Executive Board that will meet on a monthly basis and deal with all management related issues. The Governance of the organisation has been entrusted to a Governance Committee which will report annually to members on whether the Board is operating effectively.

Bird Clubs such as ours continue to have a meaningful input into BLSA's affairs through the newly established Regional Forums. BLNG falls into the Northern Bird Club Regional Forum which has one seat on the Executive Board. I was very honoured to have been appointed as Chairman of that Forum and to fill the seat on the Board for the forthcoming year.

There has also been a change to the membership structure of BLSA and it is no longer mandatory for new members of Clubs to also become members of BLSA, although it is hoped that they will. This is an endeavour to reach out to the less affluent people in our country and to lower the financial entry barrier for them joining our Clubs. It is also hoped that Clubs

that are already in existence outside the BLSA family will now consider becoming affiliates of BLSA. Existing members such as ourselves will also be given this choice but it is hoped that we all retain our individual membership of BLSA which is the leading Bird Conservation Organisation in our country. In this way we will not only continue to enjoy the benefits of this membership but also contribute to the powerful conservation initiatives under way at BLSA.

Another topic that was discussed at length at the bosberaad was our Club's own involvement in conservation issues within our region as well as the contribution that our members can make by adding citizen science initiatives such as SABAP2 atlassing and bird ringing to our personal birding activities. With the launch of the new atlassing apps for both Android and iPhones this opens up a very easy way for us to atlas the birds we are seeing be it on a day outing, camp or personal holiday and to submit these lists to SABAP2. The committee felt very strongly that we as a Club continue with our financial support of conservation initiatives as well as encouraging our members to contribute meaningfully to citizen science. Our budget and the structure of our programme of activities may need to be revisited in the future to align with this thinking.

I hope that we will have the support of all of you on these matters and I welcome any questions or suggestions that you may have. Please feel free to discuss these with us at future evening meetings or through our electronic communication lines.

Yours in Birding



AGM: President's Address

“Good evening ladies and gentleman, it is my pleasure to once again present this year's presidents address by saying a few words.

I would like to make some general comments about the club as it is today and how it is changing with time. Our chairman will be talking to you about the club's strong association with BirdLife SA and some changes that are on the horizon with regard to how we constitute ourselves so I will leave that to him.

As has been the custom in recent years the club has once again had a good year. Even though I am not as active in club matters, not being able to attend the number of events and outings as I would like to or did in the past, I do keep abreast of what is happening in the club and am aware of initiatives being undertaken and particularly with regard to the excellent projects taking place. I have been a member of the club for a period of 31 years now and as I address you as one of the more senior members (I never thought I would actually be saying that, but that's how it is) At least I am in the position to look back at the changes that have taken place over the years and know when we have had what can be called a good year.

It is also interesting to note that while our membership numbers are not growing spectacularly we are holding our own in that regard and not showing a downward trend in membership numbers, unlike some of the other larger clubs in the country. I recently had the opportunity to examine this data and it made for very interesting reading. It must mean we are doing something right. I put this down to the spirit that exists within this club and the efforts of the current committee under the able chairmanship of Philip Calinikos to keep this club on an even keel and to the efforts of the various people involved in arranging a full and interesting programme of activities. Recently, I attended a club event in the Kruger National Park as part of the Kruger Birding Weekend as

organised by the West Rand Honorary Rangers. We took more than 30 people to the event and could have sold more places for the event. According to the organisers we are the best club in terms of our participation and the Hon Rangers have realised the value in dealing with BirdLife SA clubs directly in an event like this because of the benefits to them and because of our of the way we organise our activities.

Excellent visits over the last year to venues as diverse as Memel, the Lowveld and bushveld areas, Wakkerstroom and elsewhere ensure that as a member you get to all the top birding venues over the course of time. This will mean that with a specialist guide from the club you stand a good chance of seeing the local specials. The club over the last year decided to incentivise the leaders of outings to ensure that we had the correct leaders at weekend outings in order to enhance the experience of members attending these trips and this seems to be paying dividends I am pleased to say. This is in contrast to earlier days when you arrived at a weekend event and either pitched your tent or checked into your accommodation and then went looking for birds. But times have changed and we have to move with the times and organise our outings differently. Participation in midweek outings for instance is well received and will continue to be a feature on our programme.

I have mentioned this before in talks to the club, but the rapid advance in technology is changing the way we carry out our birding and continues to amaze me. Apps on phones and tablets now mean we can check out an identification immediately, play the call while exercising some discretion, record sightings by participating in projects like SABAP2 and even make instant comments about birding experiences on social media. At Pafuri last week I used my phone to carry out an atlassing exercise of the pentad we were in, whilst people near me were checking out the call of a particular bird.

At the same time many of us were taking photographs of anything that was within range and that posed long enough to be photographed. One or two people even found the time to place a few photos on Facebook to show what the group was doing. Facebook follows you everywhere. Such is the face of birding today.

My thanks go to the various volunteers in the club, not always those on the committee, who help behind the scenes, either by serving on sub-committees, leading the occasional outing, helping with arrangements at events that the club arranges. We have a long history

of people showing dedicated and unbending support for the club. Your continued support is of great value and is appreciated and helps make this club what it is.

And finally, tonight we have the pleasure of being entertained by one of the top bird photographers in our community, Albert Froneman. Our chairman will introduce him a little on but I plan to enjoy the presentation this evening along with you. I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening's proceedings and I look forward to another great year with the club."

André Marx

Notice to all members: Laniarius distribution

As we did with the last version of Laniarius, from now on we will be issuing all club members with a link to the digital version of Laniarius via the BLNGAlert email. This link will take you directly to the latest Laniarius available for downloading - it will not be accessible any other way. We will not be making it generally available for the public on the website so you must be on the BLNGAlert to receive it. For members not part of this distribution list, please contact Rita on secretary@blng.co.za to join.

If you do not have access to a computer, please can you also notify Rita via her contact details in any Laniarius so that we can make sure you get a hardcopy. If you could also let her know which would be the most appropriate way for us to get your Laniarius to you. For example, collect at the evening meetings or if you are willing to risk waiting for it to be delivered through the normal postal service.

We will do a full print run for this version of Laniarius and hope to hear from you soon regarding your preference for a hardcopy magazine.

Regards
The Editors



We have all been plagued by the dreadful Post Office worker strikes and it has really impacted our ability to get the Laniarius and programme to you on time. There are even issues now with the prepaid envelopes we use for distribution. It is becoming more clear that we need to consider turning our Laniarius into a digital publication as far as possible.

**BirdLife Northern Gauteng
Income Statement for the Year Ended
31 December 2014**

	2014	2013
	R	R
INCOME	71 020	65 765
Subscriptions	71 020	67 765
OTHER INCOME	32 040	61 688
Donations received	12 555	4 968
Advertising received	875	-
Interest received	8 213	6 740
Other income	3 926	2 095
Nett proceeds from gala events	-	2 850
Nett proceeds from outings and camps	2 630	8 284
Nett proceeds from courses and special events	3 841	30 440
Net proceeds from trading activities	-	6 311
TOTAL INCOME	103 060	127 453
LESS: EXPENDITURE	122 036	120 259
Audit fees	4 486	3 814
Bank charges	2 173	2 731
Bird ringing	6 500	6 500
Conservation	9 875	15 000
Donations made	6 000	-
Evening meeting expenses	6 337	7 296
Functions	1 924	2 680
Marketing and Public Relations	3 037	3 178
Leaders expenses	9 300	8 319
Printing and Stationary - General	4 425	2 400
Printing, envelopes and postage - Lanarius	34 705	34 500
Secreterial fees	30 000	30 000
Sundry expenses	1 361	2 416
Telephone & postage	864	375
Insurance	1 050	1 050
(LOSS) / SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	(18 976)	7 194
ACCUMULATED FUNDS - beginning of the year	192 941	185 747
ACCUMULATED FUNDS - end of the year	173 965	192 941

**BirdLife Northern Gauteng
Balance Sheet as at
31 December 2014**

	2014 R	2013 R
ASSETS		
Non current assets	1	1
Office equipment	1	1
At costs	4 851	4 851
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	4 850	4 850
Current assets	317 618	246 973
Bank balance	21 456	60 505
Fixed deposit	170 658	162 501
Petty Cash	3 604	1 241
Prepayment and Advances made	121 900	19 486
Sundry Debtors	-	3 240
TOTAL ASSETS	317 619	246 974
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves	173 965	192 941
Accumulated funds	173 965	192 941
Current liabilities	143 654	54 033
Amounts received in advance	128 775	43 035
Ringers Trust Account	10 879	-
Sundry Creditors	4 000	10 998
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	317 619	246 974

Birding at Bateleur Nature Reserve

Ernst Retief

Natasja and I recently had the privilege to visit Bateleur Nature Reserve. This beautiful reserve, located in the Waterberg Mountains not far from Modimolle, is a BirdLife South Africa Birder Friendly Establishment and is located within the Waterberg System Important Bird and Biodiversity Area. We arrived on Sunday and settled into Stone Cottage. As the name indicates, this is a cottage built of stone, overlooking grasslands, a wetland and mountains in the distance. The setting is beautiful. We sat on the veranda watching Impala, Blue Wildebeest and Burchell's Zebra feeding on the lush grasses. In between the rain showers, Blue Wildebeest calves would chase each other and even the parents on occasion joined the fun.

We were however there to bird and to atlas. After an early afternoon rain shower, I went for a short walk. Amazingly, within a few hundred meters, I saw an adult Secretarybird standing on a tree stretching its wings. I investigated and found a nest in the top of the tree with one chick – I guess about 3-4 weeks old. Cape Weaver nests surrounded the Secretarybird nest. In fact, I regularly find weaver and sparrow nests near Secretarybird nests; maybe they are looking for some additional security?

While enjoying the Secretarybirds, Desert Cisticolas were displaying and calling continuously, sometimes displaying low over my head. They seemed to be "attacking" each other and then suddenly settle in the grasses, disappearing from sight. They were later joined by Zitting Cisticola. These small LBJs do not seem to have a shortage of energy.

The day ended with an African Harrier-Hawk flying past our cottage with a number of smaller birds on its tail...like Spitfires attacking a B17-Bomber. Quite comical!

The next morning it was raining and our planned hike did not materialise. I decided to

take a short walk as soon as the rain cleared. The "short" walk became quite lengthy as I saw more and more birds, another dam to visit, another piece of broadleaf woodland to investigate with the hope to find another interesting species. The cuckoos were calling and Red-chested, Black and Diderick were soon added to the atlas list. A Pearl-spotted Owlet was not happy with my rendition of its call and I apologized profusely for messing up its morning. Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike was calling its "coffee-tea-and-me" call but, despite a quick search, I was not able to see this pretty shrike. The insect like call of the Black Cuckooshrike alerted me to the presence of the female with beautiful views of this parasitic bird. A real highlight was watching the display flights over the grasslands of Eastern Clapper Lark, first the wing-clapping, then the drawn-out loud whistle, and then bird dropping to the ground. I received a Regional Rarity Form for this record as this locality is quite a bit north of its known distribution, so a very important contribution to the SABAP2 project. Another raptor seen was a Black-chested Snake-Eagle which soared over my head and settled in a nearby tree, allowing great views. I eventually walked eight kilometers; every step was pure joy.

My atlas list quickly reached 60 species but more were added after our visit to the local bird hide. The hide is located between two wetlands which are bordered with beautiful ferns. A Cape Robin-chat was not too happy about our presence in the hide, calling veraciously and flying around and over the hide. The reason for the bird's behaviour became clear when we found its nest behind one of the corner poles in the hide. It contained three beautiful eggs! After taking a few photographs we left the agitated bird in peace.

The next morning Natasja and Nico, who joined us for the last night, had to trudge after

me as I thought I had seen a Bushveld or Tree Pipit the day before and wanted to find the birds again. Honestly, I thought it was only a 500 m walk, as I told them, but I misjudged the distance by quite a bit! The pipit also did not materialise, but we could add a few new species to our list, such as Amethyst Sunbird, Spotted Flycatcher and Bar-throated Apalis.

Our list ended on a respectable 93 species, but I am sure there are many more treasures hiding in the mountains. So we will definitely have to revisit this beautiful location to enjoy the silence, beautiful grasslands, mountains

and woodland patches – and the birds. Driving around is not permitted, so pack your boots.

Wouter Schreuders is your host and I enjoyed his comments in emails and his notices in the cottage such as, in Afrikaans, "Ons klaasneusmuisies en eekhoringkies hou niks daarvan as hulle met rotte of muise verwar word nie. Ons hoop julle sal hulle net so baie geniet soos ons en nie toegee aan hulle versoeke vir lek-kernye nie".

For more information about this venue see: <http://www.kroonvlei.co.za/> 🐦

Birding and flowers trip

Part 3 - Namaqualand and the Western Cape

Don Reid

The final part of our Birding and Flowers trip through the northern and western parts of South Africa took in more of the prime flower-spotting areas of Namaqualand, from where we headed south to Cape Town for a couple of days before starting the return journey via Bontebok National Park and Mossel Bay to Pretoria, thus completing the full circle.

Niewoudtville – Flowers, Birds and Slippery Roads

We had arrived at De Lande guest farm, not far from Niewoudtville, the previous day and were nicely settled in the "Sinkhuisie" just a stone's throw from the main house. After a hearty breakfast we wondered whether to venture out into the rainy weather, but having come all the way to this part of South Africa, we did not want to waste the opportunity and so we set off for Papkuilsfontein some 10Km further down the gravel road.

By this time it had been raining heavily for 12 hours and the road, which unfortunately had just been scraped and levelled by the local authorities, had turned to slush and it became an anxious trip as my vehicle slid in

all directions on the greasy surface, despite being in 4 x 4 mode - something like a fried egg in a non-stick frying pan. Mud splatter from the unavoidable pools of water obscured the windscreen and it was a battle to see where we were heading.

Amazingly, there were still some hardy birds about to keep our list going and to make something of our atlasing efforts, with Southern Red Bishops, Yellow Bishops, Cape and Yellow Canaries carrying on their activities alongside the road.

Papkuilsfontein Farm

The rain had abated by the time we stopped at the farm and we had a chance to bird around the gardens, followed by tea and delicious cake in the restaurant where a welcome fire was blazing in the hearth.

After some consultation with the farm owners, Willem and Mariette van Wyk, we followed their suggested route, which traverses the farm down towards the river. We were rewarded with a wonderful sight of yellow "cat's tail" flowers carpeting the fields, with the backdrop of the stone cottages and the ruins of an old

homestead giving the scene a feeling of being in the middle of a beautiful landscape painting. Tearing ourselves away, we carried on for a few kms into more rocky countryside with a variety of natural flowers and plants vying for attention with their range of colours and forms.

The scenery almost made us forget to do some birding for a while but we nevertheless kept at it, the highlights being an African Harrier-Hawk and our first Cape Spurfowl of the trip. The trip back to De Lande was a bit less harrowing, having now got the hang of the road conditions - however, it was getting even colder and, once back in the warm "Sinkhuisie", we only ventured out to have dinner at the main house, which was another round of excellent "comfort cuisine" - including the best roast potatoes we've had in a long while.

Snow surprise

We were up early to pack and load the vehicles for a quick getaway after breakfast. The temperature gauge in the car showed 3°C and a watery sun was trying its best to break through the low clouds. It was just after 8h00 when we got to the breakfast table at the main house, only to be greeted by rain which quickly turned to sleet and then, magically, it started snowing heavily. This prompted everyone in the dining room to rush out, take photos and just to feel the large flakes drifting down and settling on the garden and on our clothes - a unique experience in South Africa and particularly in this part, where the 27-year-old waitress informed us she had never seen snow in her life.

Within 20 minutes the garden and our vehicles were covered in a layer of snow, which was very photogenic, but we couldn't help thinking of the 13Km of slushy gravel road we had to negotiate to get to the nearest tar road and wondered what added dimension the snow would bring to the experience.

The Road gets worse

We had breakfast a little faster than usual, stopping just short of gulping it down, then set off with some trepidation along the, by now, very slippery road with heavy snow falling and

the windscreen wipers struggling to keep the windscreen clear, while we studiously followed the ruts left by earlier vehicles as we had been advised. Snow build-up on the car's roof cascaded over the windscreen each time I braked and we took it very slowly to avoid a mishap.

In the fields, the cattle and sheep had a layer of snow on their backs and even a group of Blue Cranes were sprinkled with snow. The snow interspersed with rain continued all the way to Vanrhynsdorp and only abated as we turned back onto the N7 heading south towards Cape Town. At Clanwilliam we followed the directions given by the chef at De Lande and took the road west to get us to our planned lunch venue at Paternoster.

From Paternoster we returned to the main road for the last stretch into Cape Town and through peak hour traffic to Simon's Town for our 3 night stay at the Quayside Hotel, which we were pleased to find had large comfortable rooms and wonderful views over the harbour and the bay beyond.

Kirstenbosch – Not to be Missed

The pelagic trip we had planned and booked for the Saturday was postponed to the next day due to the stormy weather in the Cape and so we decided to brave the chilly weather and threatening rain by going to Kirstenbosch, the world-famous (and rightly so) Botanical Gardens which lie on the lower eastern slopes of Table Mountain.

After an obligatory stop at the famous tea



Near a trawler, Pelagic off Cape Point

room for tea and scones, we set off for a walk up the gardens, which were as magnificent as ever and alive with Sunbirds, (Southern Double-collared and Malachite), Cape Robin-Chats in every second bush, Canaries in song (Cape and Forest), Cape White-eyes busily flitting about in the upper branches and Karoo Prinias making themselves heard on the tops of bushes.

In the more forested areas Sombre Bulbuls were announcing their presence with their loud sharp calls while keeping hidden from view and Cape Batis appeared fleetingly among the foliage. A special sighting was a large Spotted Eagle-Owl, pointed out to us by another group. It had had taken up a position in a large tree and looked about imperiously, ignoring the excited chatter of the smaller birds which were in a mild state of frenzy.

Pelagic Trip

On Sunday we were up early for breakfast at 6am before heading to the pier just below our hotel, where we were to meet the Zest for Birds team ahead of the pelagic birding trip into the deep waters south of the Cape Peninsula. This is deserving of a separate article so I won't cover it here except to say that it was a spectacular trip with some amazing sightings. We left just after 7am and returned around 4pm, by which time we were quite exhausted from the intensity of the whole experience and the rough weather and sea conditions - we had just enough energy to drag ourselves to



© Don Reid

Cape Gannet

the nearby restaurant before collapsing in bed. There is nothing comparable in birding to this experience - a bombardment of all your senses that leaves you elated but exhausted at the end of the day.

Bontebok National Park

Time to move on to our next and final stopover - the Bontebok National Park near Swellendam, an easy 2 to 3 hours' drive from Cape Town. On the way in a Dusky Indigobird caught my eye where it sat on the roadside wire - an unusual sighting for the area which produced an "Out of Range" form when I later submitted the atlas card. Further on a Black Harrier flew low over the scrub as we approached the park reception.

The wooden chalets are set on a bend in the Breede River, which was in flood from the recent heavy rain and snow in the catchment area and it stayed that way during our stay. The partly submerged trees and pathways were an indication of just how high the river was compared to its normal state.

Once we were settled in, it was time to explore the gardens and surrounding bush, which were alive with the calls of several species as they went about their late afternoon business - Cape Robin-Chats, Fiscal Flycatchers, Cape Weavers, Speckled and Red-faced Mousebirds were all prominent as was a flock of 100 plus Common Waxbills. On the grass a turf war (literally) was happening as a Southern Boubou chased a Fiscal Flycatcher and a



© Don Reid

Shy Albatross

Speckled Pigeon bullied the Waxbills.

The early part of the following day was spent enjoying the peaceful ambiance of the chalets and surrounds and was highlighted by a Booted Eagle flying low over the chalets as he hunted for prey. Then it was time for an exploratory drive of the park, which is not extensive and can be covered in a couple of hours. The drive took us to the viewpoint further up the river and along the way we enjoyed sightings of Cape Sugarbird, Cape Canary, displaying Clapper Lark (of the Agulhas subspecies) and several Sunbirds. At the picnic spot the variety of flowers were an attraction, with one deciding to open its petals as we stood and watched! Grassbirds were prominent while a Fish Eagle

called in the distance.

Last Day

We left Bontebok National Park in beautiful calm, sunny weather with all the local species coming out to greet us, including the Pin-tailed Whydah which had spent most of the time energetically trying to impress the females with his freshly developed breeding plumage and active fluttering.

All in all, this was a trip that was chock-full of wonderful experiences, one which will provide good memories for a long time of places visited and sights seen, not to mention birds listed, lifers added and plenty of atlasings. 🐦

'n Voëlringspedisie na Noord-Oos Kaokoland 6-18 November 2014

Marië Ueckermann

Die ekspedisie was meer as 'n jaar vooruit beplan ná Wessel Swanepoel (my neef), vir my foto's gestuur het oor die Angolajanfrederik (Angola Cave Chat) se vangery en ringery in 'n poging om DNA monsters te versamel in Julie 2013. Die voël se nuwe verspreidingsgebied is die Zebraberger naby die Kunene, wes van Swartbooisdrif. Ek was laas in 2000 in daardie deel van Kaokoland en dit was onvergeetlik - ek wou bitter graag weer gaan. Gerrie se presiese woorde aan my was "moenie net brag nie, reël 'n ringekspedisie!".

Daar was dus einde 2013 al planne aan die gang vir November 2014 se ekspedisie. Frik en Wanda was van die eerstes in die klub se ringgroep wat wou gaan maar moes ongelukkig weens ere-veldwagter verpligtinge agterbly. Van die ander mederingers soos Hein en FC het hulle tande geslyp maar het net nie die tyd gehad nie. Ons was op die ou end 7 ringers wat gelukkig genoeg was om dit te kon maak; Gerrie en Marietjie Jansen van Rensburg, Elba Swart, Paula en Martin Steyn, Eben Muller (wat

eers in Augustus besluit het om saam te kom) en ek. Ons het baie vinnig lisensies vir Namibië gekry omdat ons SAFRING papierwerk reg was, maar ook omdat Holger Kolberg dit so vinnig verwerk het.

Ons het met 3 voertuie vertrek; ek saam met Martin en Paula (met 'n sleepwa met daktent), Gerrie en Marietjie met hul bakkie en daktent en Elba saam met Eben in sy AHA. Ons



Rooiwangparkiete / Rosy-faced Lovebird

het besluit om deur Botswana te ry en het by die Kalahari Rest Lodge ge-oornag. Daar is 'n oulike restaurant en ons het ook ten spyte van die hitte direk na ons aankoms begin voëls kyk.

Die volgende dag is ons verder oppad Windhoek toe via Gobabis. Ons het vreeslik baie roofvoëls oppad gesien; o.a. Swart- en Witruigaasvoëls by die baie karkasse van doodgegeryde diere. As ons so by die Bleeksingvalke, Bruin - en Swartborsslangarende, Breëkoparende en Geelbekwoue verbyry, sien ons elke keer hoe Gerrie se bakkie swenk en dan weet ons sommer Marietjie moet haarself beteel om nie uit te spring nie! Ongelukkig (of miskien gelukkig, want anders was ons nou nog nie in Windhoek nie) kon ons nie in Botswana ring nie want ons het nie lisensies vir die land gehad nie.

In Windhoek aangekom, het ons vleis en ander kruideniersware gaan koop, gaan eet by Joe's Beerhouse en baie moeg ingekruip.

Die volgende oggend net na 6 het ons Wessel buite die dorp ontmoet. Hy het verduidelik dat ons eers noord van Etosha sal kan slaap en ring in die veld wat tot daar is alles plaasgrond en het ons die grondeienaars se toestemming nodig. Verder noord in Kaokoland is dit gelukkig kommunale gebied wat beteken jy kan slaap, loop en ry waar jy wil. Ons besluit toe om te mik vir die noordwestelike hoek van die Etosha Nasionale Park en dan 'n oorslaap-plek te soek.

Noord van Windhoek is die pad eers besonder besig en is roofvoëls vang onmoontlik, maar noord van Okahandja word dit baie stiller en ons het begin stop vir Bleeksingvalke. Redelik vining was 5 gevang en gering en Marietjie het dit ook reggekry om 'n Blouvalkie te vang.

Ons het taamlik laat op die stuk pad noord van Kamanjab na Ruacana – deesdae 'n besige pad - 'n paadjie wat Wessel goed ken, gekry waar ons oos kon wegdraai. Skielik was ons in die ongerepte veld, net voëlgeluide en beeste wat bulk. Ons het sommer op 'n goeie kol van die pad afgetrek en ons tente opgeslaan. Na 'n heerlike ete wat Marietjie en Gerrie vir ons

voorberei het, is ons bed toe onder die sterre. Paula het wel eers bietjie skerpioene gaan soek met Elba se ultraviolet flitsie.

Die volgende oggend het ons net na 4 opgestaan en nette gespan in die operige Mopanieveld. Ons was nie te hoopvol nie maar het wel Geelpensbossangers (Yellow-bellied Eremomela), 'n Kalahariwipstert (Kalahari Scrub Robin) en Rooirugstreepkoppies (Golden-breasted Bunting) gekry.

Na ons opgepak het, is ons verder oppad Ruacana toe. Op hierdie stuk pad het die roofvoëls ook bietjie opgedroog en ons het vining gevorder tot by die grenspos met Angola. Wessel het die wagte gevra of ons deur die grenspos kan ry om na die Ruacana-waterval te gaan kyk. Die spesiale Kaokoland voëls was sommer skielik om ons. Bloupenspapegaai (Rüppell's Parrot) en Papegaaiduiwe (African Green Pigeon) was in die eerste groot vyeboom. Ons het Monteironeushoringvoëls (Monteiro's Hornbill) gesien en die



Bloupenspapegaai / Rüppell's Parrot

Olyfbyvreter (Olive Bee-eater) gehoor.

Die Kunenerivier was baie laag omdat dit



Goudsnip

nog die droë seisoen was alhoewel dit elke kort-kort al bietjie gereën het. Die bietjie vog in die hitte (35^o+) het die temperatuur nogal ongemaklik gemaak.

Ons het vanaf Ruacana wes gery met die rivier langs opsoek na 'n lekker plek om te ring en te kamp vir twee nagte. By Hippo Pools is 'n redelike goeie kampplek (met ablusie), maar dit het bietjie te beskaafd gelyk vir ons behoeftes. Wessel is toe met ons verder wes na 'n minder bereikbare plek waar niemand nog geriewe gebou het en die ongereptheid bederf het nie. Hier kry ons 'n lieflike kampplek teen die wal van die rivier onder die lang Makalanipalms, 'n reuse Jakkalsbessie en Anabome. Daar was ongelooflik baie voëls in die rivierbosse. Ons het sommer vining besluit om 2 nagte hier te bly en gaan kyk waar kan ons ons nette opslaan. Kamp opgeslaan, het ons 'n maaltyd van braaibroodjies en vleis gemaak sodat ons kon sit en die plek geniet. Daar het so nou en dan Himbas met hul beeste verbygekom en dit was salig.

Die volgende oggend net na 4, het ons gaan nette opsit. Die hele rivierbos was tot ons beskikking en ons het baie nette opgesit. Elba het besluit om 'n Mostertbos vol bessies toe te span met kort nette en ek en sy het ook 'n lae 25m net oor 'n stukkie moeras opgeslaan. Die lae net was baie vrugbaar en ons het

verskeie Brillwewers (Spectacled Weaver) en Kleinbyvreter (Little Bee-eater) daaruit gehaal.

Ons het 'n klomp Rooistertmorelysters (Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush) gekry – genoeg vir al 7 ringers. Talle ander spesies is ook hier gevang deur die loop van die dag en die volgende oggend; o.a. Rooikeelfisant (Red-necked Spurfowl) (nog 'n subspesie wat nie in Suid-Afrika voorkom nie), Geelbekrenostervoëls (Yellow-billed Oxpecker), Gewone Ruiter (Common Sandpiper), Gysrugkwêkwêvoël (Grey-backed Camaroptera), Blougrysvlieëvanger (Ashy Flycatcher), Geelborswillie (Yellow-bellied Greenbul), Brillwewers en Langstertglanspreeu (Meve's Starling), Bloupenspagaai (Ruppell's Parrot) en Rooiwangparkiete (Rosy-faced Lovebird). Daar is massas Kleinglansspreeus (Cape Glossy Starling) en Rooioogtiptolle (African Red-eyed Bulbul) gevang en gering.

Gerrie en Marietjie was gelukkig genoeg om 'n Witkruiskatlagter (Hartlaub's Babbler) en 'n Moeraswaterfiskaal (Swamp Boubou) te kon vang. Ons het 'n paar nette verloor toe die beeste deur 'n paar van Gerrie se nette is en die ape in Elba s'n beland het.

Die middag het 'n paar van ons ook 'n entjie binneland toe waar die berge begin, gaan klouter tot by 'n standhoudende fontein in 'n rivier. Hier het ons 'n Goudwewer (Golden Weaver) gesien en gesoek vir Angola-sysies (Cinderella Waxbills), maar nie gekry nie. Ek en Paula kon ook nie wag om met klere en al in



Rooistertmorelyster / Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush



Zebraberge naby Kunene

die water te val nie, want al het ons 'n heerlike kampplek langs die Kunene gehad, kon ons ongelukkig nie in die rivier swem of bad nie, as gevolg van die krokodille!

Die volgende oggend na ons vroeg net vinig 'n paar nette opgesit het, het ons opgepak en verder wes gery in die rigting van Swartbooisdrif. Wessel het 'n plan gehad om te kyk of ons by die fonteine van Ehomba ('n groot losstaande berg) kon probeer ring. Ek was baie geskok om te sien dat daar amper heelpad tussen Ruacana en Swartbooisdrif nou mense woon (dit was nog glad nie die geval 'n paar jaar gelede nie!). Daar is baie Himba-krale al met die rivier langs maar ook baie Ovambo's wat nou tussenin kom bly het en baie van die rivierbos is vernietig. Oppad het ons Trekdrawwertjies (Temminck's Courser), Monteiro-, Rooibek- en Geelbek-neushoringvoëls (Angola subspecies) (Damara and Yellow-billed Hornbill (Angola subspecies) en Ovamboswartmeese (Carp's Tit) gesien. Ons het op 'n hele broeikolonie Olyfbyvreter (Olive Bee-eater) afgekom waar hulle in 'n 30cm hoë grondwal langs die pad nesgate gemaak het,

sommerso tussen 'n klomp mense in 'n gehugie. Ons sou graag wou stop maar daar was 'n paar aggresiewe inwoners wat ons laat besluit het om aan te beweeg.

Ons het naby Swartbooisdrif eers die Kunene River Lodge besoek. Pete Morgan aan wie die plek behoort, is 'n bekende voëlgids wat mense neem om die Angola-sysies te sien en deesdae ook die Angolajanfrederik. Wessel het gevra of ons bietjie water kan kry en ons het gou 'n klomp bottels, asook die AHA se magie, volgetap. By Swartbooisdrif het ons by die Dorslandtrek-monument gestop om lekker oor die rivier (en Angola aan die oorkant) uit te kyk. Toe kom Elba baie opgewonde aangehardloop om te vra of dit die Zebraberge is wat sy daar in die weste sien! Sy hoor al jare by my daarvan en ek het nooit vir haar gesê dat die berge se naam afkomstig is van die strepe op hul hange nie!

Ons is eers na Ehomba suid-oos van Swartbooisdrif toe maar daar aangekom, het ons besluit daar is te veel mense wat as gevolg van die droogte na die fonteine getrek het

met hul vee. Dit kan die ringery bemoeilik aangesien voëls vir hulle kos is en ons bang was dat hulle voëls uit die nette kan haal. Ons eerste prioriteit is altyd om die voëls te beskerm. Beide voëls en nette word beseer en beskadig as 'n onopgeleide persoon voëls verwyder.

Dit was nog redelik vroeg, so ons besluit toe om die vallei van die Zebraberger te gaan opsoek. Die berge is pragtig met hul strepe, kolle en patrone wat deur hellingpuin en stroke plantegroei veroorsaak word. Ten spyte daarvan dat dit so droog was, was die plante teen die hange redelik groen. As mens naby die koppe kom, sien mens dat die klippe eintlik uit groot rotsblokke (rotsvalle of hellingpuin) bestaan en die plantstroke uit ondeurdrinbare doring, Euphorbia en ander struik - baie onbegaanbaar.

Ons het na so 30km op die tweespoor paadjie 'n plek op die wal van die droë Otjintangarivier (die area se naam is Okaoraore volgens Wessel) gesoek as kampplek, weer vir 2 nagte. Behalwe vir die rivier plantegroei was ons bietjie skepties oor ons kans om veel voëls te kry in die yl Mopanieveld. Net na aandete het Marietjie gou 'n Skopsuiltjie (African Scops-Owl) gevang en gering. Eben het sy oog gehad op 'n Groottrouper (Purple Roller) wat 'n nes in 'n dooie palm gehad het naby ons kampplek.

Die volgende oggend net na 4, was ons op om nette te span. Ons het sommer gou wonderlike voëls gekry. Eben het sy trouper met 'n "flattrap" gevang, Marietjie en Gerrie het 'n Rooiborslaksman (Crimson-breasted Shrike) en Kremetartlaksmanne (Southern White-crowned Shrike) gekry en vir my en Martin elk 'n uiltjie gebring (1 Skops en 1 Witkol). Ons ander 4 het 'n klomp kleiner voëls gevang, soos Kortstertlaksmanne (White-tailed Shrike), Koringvoëls (White-browed Sparrow-Weaver), Sneeuwal (Black-backed Puffback), Grysrugkwêkwêvoël, Blousysies (Blue Waxbill), duiwe, tiptolle, ens. Ek was baie opgewonde toe ek een slag by ons nette 'n wyfie Piritbosbontrokkie (Pirit Batis) kry en het haar vir Elba gegee as 'n verrassing. Toe ons teen 7 uur die nette gaan afhaal, vang ek en Marietjie

3 Kaalwangkatlagters (Bare-cheeked Babbler) en ek, sy en Gerrie ring elk een van hulle. Ander voëls wat ons oor die 2 dae gekry het, sluit Geelbekrenostervoëls, Bloupenspapegaaie en Rooiwangparkiete in.

Wessel, wat op die oomblik eintlik besig is met studies van hierdie wêreld se plante en wou gaan rondloop, het heeldag gesukkel om



Kortstert laksman

homself los te seker van ons omdat hy bang was hy mis dalk iets. Ek, Martin en Paula het hom wel vergesel die middag toe hy 'n ent weg gaan soek het na 'n Pieringbessie (Cordia spesie) teen een van die hange. Wessel wou blommetjies by die plant versamel en het toe opgeklim na waar dit groei, met Martin, Paula en myself agterna. Dit was 'n verskriklike moeilike klim oor die reuse rotsblokke wat opmekaar gestapel is met skeure tussenin waar mens soms nie die bodem kan sien nie. In die stroke plante kan jy glad nie in nie want daars vreeslike dorings. Toe ons weer onder kom (die afklim was nog moeiliker) het Wessel klaar die Angolajanfrederik gekry om vir ons te wys.

Ons was vreeslik opgewonde, maar het ook skuldig gevoel omdat die ander 4 nie by was nie. Ons het hom egter die volgende dag weer gaan soek en gekry sodat almal in die geselskap die besondere "lifer" kon "tick".

Ons het swaar afskeid geneem van hierdie pragtige plek maar wou graag aanbeweeg na die volgende ringkamp.

Ons het om die westelike hoek van die

Zebraberge gery via Okangwati waar ons heerlike vetkoekies gekoop het. Die pad van hieraf Epupa toe is nou 'n breë gruispad en mens kan baie vining daar kom. Plek-plek wys Wessel my die ou 2-spoor paadjie waar mens vroeër jare gery het. 'n Ent oppad noord van Okangwati draai ons oos van die grootpad af. Ons ry deur lanings geel granaatbosse tot by 'n lekker kamplek op die wal van die Ombukurivier. Hier is 'n paar heerlike poele in die andersins droë rivier. Weereens is die voëlgeluide amper oorweldigend, Goudstertspieg (Golden-tailed Woodpecker), Olyfbyvreter, Glansspreeus, Swartkoekoek (Black Cuckoo) en helder oordag, 'n Reuse-ooruil (Verreaux's Eagle-Owl)!. Nie lank nie of ons hoor 'n Gebande uiltjie (African Barred Owl) ook roep!

Ons maak kamp onder 'n klomp Mopanies, Witgatbome en Mosterdbosse. Elba probeer hard om 'n Langstertglansspreeu vir my te vang met die "flattraps" omdat ek al een is wat nog nie een gering het nie. Vir aandete kry ons weer braaivleis met lekker pap wat Elba vir ons gemaak het.

Weer donsvoordag gaan sit ons nette op al langs die rivier se loop. Heel vroeg vang ons Goudsnippe (Greater Painted-Snipe)! Later vang ons nog van dieselfde voëls wat

ons op die ander plekke gekry het soos Bloupenspapegaai, Rooiwangparkiete, Klein- en Langstertglansspreeu, Blougrysvlieëvangers, maar ook ander oulike goed soos Driebandstrandkiewiete (Three-banded Plover), 'n Bontkiewiet (Blacksmith Lapwing), Mikstertbyvangers (Fork-tailed Drongo), 'n Rooikeelfsant en meer. Laatmiddag probeer ons Sandpatryse vang maar hulle is te slim vir ons. Toe dit donker word en ons nette moet afhaal kry Paula 'n Geelbekneushoringvoël – die Angola subspesie! Eben haal weer 'n Gebande Uil uit. Vir ullaas aan die einde van 'n opwindende dag vang Eben en Gerrie 'n Skopsuil.

Die volgende oggend is dit net 4 van ons wat dapper genoeg is om weereens nette op te sit en ons vang net 'n paar voëltjies voor ons oppak om aan te beweeg. Ons ry 'n ent terug soos ons gekom het deur die granaatbosse en van daar na Epupa. Die rivier is baie laag omdat dit nog droog is, maar die Epupa-waterval is mooi en die uitsig is nog steeds ongelooflik. Ongelukkig het die tyd toe aangebreek om terug te draai huiswaarts met oorslape in Windhoek en Kang. Dit was 'n ongelooflike ervaring wat ons almal vir altyd sal onthou en deel. 🐦

BLNG Ringnaweek by Nylsvley 16-18 January 2015

Wanda Louwrens

Die klub het 'n naweek by Nylsvley bespreek vir Januarie en die ringers het besluit om as groep saam te gaan. Die ringers kan nie sonder Limpopo permitte, asook toestemming van Nylsvley se bestuurder, Natasha du Plessis, in die gebied ring nie. So met die nodige dokumentasie het ons die naweek aangedurf.

Oppad die oggend het ek en Frik du Plooy

deur Nylstroom gery. Ek onthou toe dat Debbie van Zyl lank terug gesê het mens ry nie deur die dorp sonder om by Mr Munchies vis en skyfies te koop nie! (Dit is amper op die hoek daar waar mens afdraai na Nylsvley toe.) Toe hou ons maar daar stil. En ons was nie teleurgestel nie! Dit is regtig die heerlikste vis denkbaar! Die bekende visplekke kan maar gaan slaap!

Nylsvley is 'n gewilde natuurreservaat wat 'n IBA (Important Bird Area) op sy eie is. Dit word deur die Waterberg IBA omring. Ons was tien ringers wat die naweek meegemaak het: ek, Frik du Plooy, Eben Muller van Harties, Jan Beukes, en Gert en Kotie Opperman, was al vroeg daar, terwyl Elba Swart, Marié Ueckermann en Paula en Martin Steyn eers na donker daar aangekom het toe die vure al hoog gebrand het.

Dit was omtrent 'n bedrywigheid vir die meer as 30 klublede om elkeen 'n plekkie op 'n rooster te kry om sy of haar vleis te braai. Ons was lanklaas so 'n groot groep van BLNG-lede saam by Nylsvley. Jan de Wagenaar en Jan Beukes het sommer hulle eie braaiers uitgehaal, want die ingeboude braaier en twee los braaiers was nie genoeg vir al die klublede wat saam kom braai het nie. Stoffel Botha het 'n groot vuur in die middel van die lapa gemaak, so daar was genoeg kole vir almal. Daar is darem niks so lekker soos 'n vuurtjie wat knetter, met die Piet-my-vrou (Red-chested Cuckoo) se aanhoudende geroep in die agtergrond nie!

Saterdagoggend teen vieruur het die ringers by die 'dormatories' uitgesluit om nie die res van die groep wakker te maak nie. Die misnette is sommer op die terrein opgerig en teen sonop het ons al 'n goeie klompie voëls in die nette gehad om aan die ander klublede, wat toe opgestaan het, te wys. Patrick wat 'n leerling gids is, en Joseph wat daar werk, het ook ons bedrywighe gade geslaan en was getrig om te sien hoe ons die voëls meet en weeg. Spesies soos Dwergvisvanger (African Pygmy Kingfisher), Waaiertervlieëvanger (Grey-tit Flycatcher), en Gestreepte Wipstert (White-browed Scrub-Robin) is maar 'n paar wat ons kon ring. Teen elfuur het dit egter te warm geraak vir die voëls en het ons die nette maar eers toegemaak. Ons het ook 'n welverdiende slapie ingekry. Laat die middag het ons weer die nette opgerig, maar sonder veel sukses.

Sondagoggend vieruur is die proses herhaal, maar hierdie keer het ons na die kampterrein toe gery, waar Eben Muller en Jan Beukes

gekamp het. Kleinbooi, die 'Field Ranger' het gesorg dat die hek na die kampterrein oop was. Eben Muller se nette was al van Saterdag af op, en ons ander het ons nette in 'n geen-toegang pad opgeslaan tot teen 'n vlei. Dit was bewolk en koeliger die oggend en 'n lastige windjie het die nette sigbaar gemaak vir die voëls. Ons was nie baie suksesvol daar nie, maar het tog 'n paar mooi spesies soos Rooiruglaksman (Red-backed Shrike), Bosveldtinkinkie (Rattling Cisticola), Europese Byvreter (European Bee-eater), Bosveldtjeritik (Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler), Witliesbosbontrokkie (Chin-spot Batis), Neddikie (Neddicky) en Hofsvanger (Willow Warbler) gekry.

Ons het goed gedoen met die ringery in die algemeen: ons het 63 voëls hanteer die naweek waarvan 36 verskillende spesies was (omtrek 33% hervangste). Interessante inligting het na vore gekom toe Martin Steyn 'n voël wat reeds gering was, in sy nette gekry het. Dit was 'n Swartoogtiptol (Dark-capped Bulbul) wat elf jaar tevore vir die eerste keer deur dr P van Eeden gering is. Dit is ook ses jaar terug deur Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg vang. Dit beteken dat so 'n voël elf jaar oud kan word en nie ver uit sy gebied beweeg nie – die 2003 en 2015 vangste was albei in die kampterrein by Nylsvley. Die geslagte lyk eenders, so dit is nogal interessant dat Dr van Eeden dit as manlik geïdentifiseer het.

Soos Rita later op Facebook geskryf het, Nylsvley het nog altyd sy eie bekoring en het weereens 'n heerlike kamp opgelewer die afgelope naweek. Alhoewel daar nog nie baie water is nie, is die vlei nat en die voëls was genoeg om ons besig te hou. Met baie pare oë wat elke bossie en grashalmpie ywerig bespied het, die ringers wat die voëltjies gering het, en Patrick, die "gids in opleiding", wat nou by Nylsvley werk, is ons lysie bykans 200. Die Dwergrietreier (Dwarf Bittern), wat so lank vir ons sit en kyk het (hy vir ons), was my gunsteling.

Dankie aan almal wat die naweek so spesiaal gemaak het. 🐦

The amazing life of BLiNG – a Secretarybird

Ernst Retief

I have been taught many years ago that scientific study requires objectivity and that you must not become emotionally involved with your research subject. On reflection I think I failed the last requirement while studying and watching the movements of BLiNG. Most evenings, after I had downloaded the latest set of movement data, it was difficult not to think and feel some sympathy for the environmental and manmade threats this bird has to tolerate on a daily basis.

For those who do not know, BLiNG is a Secretarybird, who became quite famous after his endeavors were shared on television, in newspaper articles and during radio interviews.

The story begins late in 2011 when BirdLife South Africa decided to initiate a research project on Secretarybirds as their numbers were showing a constant decline over their range in Africa and there were many unanswered questions about their biology. The aim of the 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. In order to obtain the required information, we decided to fit tracking devices to chicks when they are about eight weeks old. We have now fitted tracking devices to 11 chicks, but the hero of the project so far has been BLiNG. He was fitted with a 38 g tracking device on 21 January 2013. The nest site was at Sondela Nature Reserve near Bela-Bela in the Limpopo Province. The fitment process was recorded and televised on the television programme 50/50. He was named BLiNG by BirdLife Northern Gauteng, the sponsor of the tracking device.

After BLiNG left the nest, the tracking data showed nicely how BLiNG over time expanded his foraging area. First he stayed close to his nest. By the beginning of March he ventured about 300 m from the nest, by the end of March

about 1 300 m, and by 25 April up to 1 600 m from the nest. A few weeks after he left the nest I visited Sondela to check on BLiNG's welfare. First I had no luck in finding BLiNG, even though I was walking in his preferred grassland patch. It was only after I hid under a tree for a few minutes that BLiNG walked past me and I had a good view of the tracking device sitting perfectly on his back. I also learnt why I could not see him earlier; after he saw me under the tree he immediately sat down in the grass, making it impossible to see him. Clever bird!

Downloading data on the evening of 30 April 2013, I saw that BLiNG had left his natal area and settled for the evening in a tree just to the south of Bela-Bela. For the next few days I watched with amazement as BLiNG moved westwards, passed the beautiful Waterberg Mountains, the town of Thabazimbi, and after crossing the boundary into Botswana he moved northwards as far as the Makgadikgadi Pans. After venturing for a short while into the pans, he moved south, understandably so as salt pans are not the preferred habitat of Secretarybirds. For the next seven months BLiNG settled in an area about 70 km south of the pans. The data from the tracking device are downloaded through the cellphone network and, as the area where he settled was not well covered by the cell network, data downloads were irregular. I quickly learnt not to worry too much, BLiNG was doing well and even when a week or two passed without data, the data would eventually successfully download as soon as he moved back into cell coverage. I also learnt that patience is an essential requirement when tracking Secretarybirds as you do not always have immediate access to the data and thus knowledge of the locality of the tracked bird.

In my opinion, the next major life event, from my viewpoint watching from a long

distance away, occurred on 13 December 2013 when BLiNG flew back to Gauteng and settled in an area about 30-50 km south-west of his nesting site. This pattern, moving a long distance away from the natal area and then returning after several months, has also been observed when tracking other Secretarybirds. A few days later BLiNG flew over Gauteng and settled on a farm in eastern Gauteng, east of Elandsfontein, a well-known birding spot for Gauteng birders. I decided to visit the farm to obtain views of BLiNG as I wanted to study the changes in plumage and other features that occurred since I saw him more than 7 months previously at Sondela. At 05h45 I knocked on the farmer's door. I smiled when he profusely apologised for not being up and working as all farmers should be, but I smiled even more when I saw his bemused facial expression as I explained to him that "my" Secretarybird was foraging on his farm. He was very keen to assist and I was given permission to look for BLiNG. As with my previous search at Sondela, he was not immediately found. However, just after I had conceded defeat and was walking back to the car, BLiNG walked passed me. It was really good to see him again. His bill had less black, but was not all grey as an adult bird, and the facial skin and eyes were those of an immature bird. The farmer soon joined me and for a few hours we walked and drove after BLiNG, but he never allowed us to approach him too closely.

A few days later BLiNG amazingly settled on a small patch of grassland south of the Voortrekker Monument, not too far from the Pretoria central business district. We managed to also see him here, but again only distant views.

He soon moved to better grassland near the Waterberg where he foraged on different farms, finally settled on a property which had a healthy grassland pan. I made contact with the farmer managed to see BLiNG again on 30 April 2014. The grasses were quite long and I had the feeling BLiNG would soon leave for a new area, as Secretarybirds prefer shorter grass. He did move off and settling in an area south of Shoshanguve. I could not understand why

BLiNG would settle in this area. It had very little intact grassland, many exotic trees and shrubs, lots of human activity, and even small sand excavation pits with large trucks traversing the area. Not an ideal place for a Secretarybird to forage! During the next few months BLiNG moved between five distinct foraging areas, one of them next to a drag racing site not far from Brits. I was really concerned about BLiNG's welfare for he would cross many roads, human settlements and power lines, all potential death traps, when moving between the five foraging areas.

On 8 October 2014 BLiNG flew east over the N1 highway to an area called Rynoue, not far from Roodeplaat Dam. Soon after I noticed that all the data points were from one location, usually an indication that the bird was not doing well, I became concerned that he had succumbed in this very Secretarybird-unfriendly area. It took me a few hours of driving, chatting to land owners and construction workers before I could get permission to enter the restricted property. The grassland at the last downloaded location point was burnt and I soon found BLiNG lying under one of the powerlines, burnt and covered with flies. The tracking device was also badly burnt. We later learnt from Eskom that there was a fire in the area when BLiNG passed the powerline and the most likely scenario was that the smoke of the veld fire impaired BLiNG's vision and unfortunately he flew straight into the cables.

As mentioned above, I had become emotionally attached to this bird. When I "watched" this bird for more than 21 months as it flew and walked thousands of kilometers, I soon realised that us humans have made it extremely difficult for these birds to survive. Grasslands have been transformed into plantations, human settlements and agricultural areas, reducing once large open habitats to small patches of grasslands littered in between with threats such as fences, roads and powerlines.

I have however realised that BLiNG left a valuable legacy of data. For the first time ever, the movement of a Secretarybird was tracked from 8 weeks old to death, covering a period of

21 months. During his lifetime we downloaded 6 481 location points. The source of data, combined with the more than 40 000 locations points from the study, will be analysed and will hopefully assist us to develop plans to conserve this threatened and charismatic species.

BirdLife South Africa would like to thank BirdLife Northern Gauteng for providing the funds for the purchase of the tracking device, for continued support, and for reporting back about the project to the club's members on a regular basis. 🐦

New members outing at Bronkhorstspruit Golf Club on Easter Monday 6th of April 2015

Amanda le Roux

The morning outing at Bronkhorstspruit Gold Club proved to be quite a successful trip. As it is the second time we were leading the outing and this outing being specially organized for the new members, thirty people with lots of new faces were present with expectations of a wonderful spring birding event.

We divided the people into two groups, one being led by me and the other by Pieter, my husband. We walked in different directions, with the result that some species seen by one group were recorded but not seen by the other group.

My group walked across the golf course to the Bronkhorstspruit stream running through the club grounds. Pieter's group walked to the other side crossing the road.

The usual birds were found, of which many weavers (Southern Masked Weaver and Southern Red Bishops) were not in their eclipse plumage. The Leveillants cisticolas and the Zitting cisticolas were found among the long grass at the edge of the golf course. The pipits and larks were noticeably absent, probably hiding in the long thick grass. We found quite a few Lesser Swamp Warblers being very verbal and also not shy to present themselves next to the spruit as well as a few Reed Cormorants basking in the sun. A group of five Spur-winged Geese flew over.

A lot of Blacksmith Lapwings also roamed the golf course and gave their sharp metallic sounding warnings when we approached

them. White-rumped and Little Swifts and Greater Striped Swallows assembled in big groups to sweep the sky for insects before their journey to northern and warmer Africa. The occasional White-throated Swallow making a quick turn among the other swallows was also noted. As there are many palm trees on the golf course near the club house providing nesting habitats for the African Palm Swift many of them were also found flying low over our heads on the golf course and along the spruit.

At one stage one of the members, Darrell, directed our attention to a small yellow bird and we got to identify a Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, which also sang his Lesser Swamp Warbler-like song, making it really easy to positively ID the bird. This was the special bird of the day as this bird was not recorded in this pentad or area before. A few African Stonechats were also found. We found a pair of African Black Duck that were not really disturbed by us as they usually get skulking when approached by humans as one of the members also remarked. They probably got the occasional golf ball flying over their heads that landed in the spruit.

A Black-shouldered Kite was sitting on one of the telephone lines on the golf course's border spying the area for small diurnal rodents in the grassland. Then once it hovered over the grassland before making a quick diving attack, but came up empty handed. An occasional Sacred Ibis and a Pied Crow flew over with Black

winged Lapwings noisily chasing them away.

Before finishing the walk we came to a small dam where a Black Crake and a Brown-hooded Kingfisher were found. The Brown-hooded Kingfisher, unperturbed by us, sat quietly letting the photographers get a few good shots of him.

Pieter's group also found lots of interesting birds: Pied Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, Half-collared Kingfisher (also a special bird to see), Cardinal Woodpecker, Cape Grassbird, African Paradise-flycatcher, Black-backed Puffback, Bronze Mannikin, and Streaky-headed Seedeater. They also heard a Natal Francolin which also turned out to be a rare recording.

Thick-billed Weavers, Red-headed Finches, Black-throated Canaries were also noted.

After the bird list was called with a total of 65 birds (a further 5 birds were added later), we enjoyed a delicious breakfast at the Golf Club.

The day proved to be a big success with

many new club members who said that they really enjoyed the birding trip and wanted to do more trips. From the members who said that they were old members starting anew to members who were just casual birders and wanted to do more serious birding by joining the club to the professor and Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science to the Doctor who works at Wits University as Research Officer & Veterinarian to the member who is busy with his PhD in research of illnesses in lions they all made the outing a very successful and interesting birding trip. It was a delight to meet them all and have them enjoy an Easter Monday doing fantastic birding.

A big thank you to Rita, Wanda, Frik, Delien en Danie who also joined us for the day and helped making the new members feel at home. Also a huge gratitude to the Bronkhorstspuit Golf Club as well for providing this wonderful venue for this special day. 🐦

Birding Big Day 29 November 2014

Team FOURGEES (Bryan & Hilary, Stuart & Alison Groom)

Our team birded in North West, with our 50km radius centred on S & A's home in the staff village in the Letsatsing Game Park, adjoining Sun City, and we covered pentads 2520_2705; 2520_2700; 2515_2700; 2515_2705; 2710_2705; 2525_2655 and 2525_2705

A not too early start @ 04h30 was made, and we headed into Pilanesberg via the Bakubong gate, with Hilary recording in SABAP 2 format, the rest of us being additional observers and keeping the trip list going. En route to the gate, birds were added fast and furiously to the list, our first record being Natal Spurfowl, followed by Dark-capped Bulbul, White-throated Robin, Red-Chested Cuckoo and Arrow-marked Babbler. A stop at the gate before entering the park included among others the following birds: Mocking Chat, Southern Masked Weaver, Kurrichane Thrush, Lesser Masked Weaver, White-bellied Sunbird

and Grey Go-away Bird.

On Kubu drive towards Lengau Dam, we added Little Swift, Red-wing Starling, Crested Francolin, Blue Waxbill, White-browed Scrub-robin and a beautiful Shikra. While sitting at the dam, a number of birds were added to the ever-growing list, and these included Diderik Cuckoo, Rufous-naped Lark, Familiar Chat, Lesser-striped Swallow, Lesser-masked Weaver, Marabou Stork and Rattling Cisticola.

Continuing our drive along Kubu towards Mankwe Dam, some of the birds listed included Violet-backed Starling, Black Flycatcher, African Paradise-flycatcher, Southern Boubou, Brown-hooded Kingfisher and Brown-crowned Tchagra. At the end of the first hour, our tally for the day stood at 45 species.

We then turned onto Letsha, which turned out to be extremely profitable stretch of road, giving us our first Steppe Buzzard, Red-backed

Shrike, Long-billed Crombec, Spotted Flycatcher, Black-crowned Tchagra, Chestnut-vented Titbabbler, Golden-breasted Bunting, Red-billed Oxpecker, African Black Swift, Kalahari Scrub-robin, which according to Stuart seems to be more prolific than the White-browed in the park these days, as well has our club bird the beautiful Crimson-breasted Shrike, of which we saw at least 5 individuals. Before arriving at Mankwe hide, we added Neddicky, Acacia Pied Barbet, Scaly-feathered Finch as well as Magpie Shrike, which until fairly recently was recorded more outside of the park than in it.

The time spent at Mankwe and on Hippo Loop added many of the water related species to our list. These included Reed Cormorant, Wood Sandpiper, Burchell's Coucal, White-throated Swallow, Grey Heron, Giant Kingfisher, Pied Wagtail, White-breasted Cormorant, African Jacana, Great White and Little Egret.

We then moved on to Tshwene, where we ticked Ostrich, Black-shouldered Kite, and our 100th bird for the morning, the Red-breasted Swallow. Turning onto Thlare Loop, we found a lovely Spotted Eagle-owl on a shaded rock at the base of the koppie. Also on the loop, we added Green-winged Pytilia, Black-backed Puffback, Brown Snake-eagle and Yellow-fronted Petronia.

The team had now been birding for 4 hours, as we continued along Tau in the direction of Ratlhogo Hide, adding among others the Marico Flycatcher, Violet-eared Waxbill, European Bee-eater, Pearl-breasted Swallow, Emerald-spotted Wood-dove and Lesser Grey Shrike.

From Ratlhogo which had been our breakfast stop, we headed back down the track towards Bakubong Gate, with the intention of then walking through the Cascades garden and part of the golf course in the Sun City complex. This was not as profitable as it has been in past walks, due to all the activity and preparations for the Nedbank Golf Challenge. We did however add Green Wood-hoopoe, Thick-billed Weaver, Woodland Kingfisher and African Green Pigeon to our list.

Returning to base for a freshen up and a bite to eat, we added some of the regular birds in S & A's garden – Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Grey-backed Cameroptera, Greater Honeyguide, African Firefinch and African Fish-eagle.

Back on the road, and heading for the Vlaklaagte road in pentad 2525-2655. We have always enjoyed driving this road in the past, so we were anticipating some good birds. We were not disappointed, and added Willow Warbler, displaying Northern Black Korhaan, Village Weaver, White-browed Sparrow-weaver, Rock Kestrel, Black-chested Prinia, Lesser Kestrel, Wattled Starling, the always guaranteed Pearl-spotted Owlet, together with Greater Painted Snipe, Greenshank, Pied Babbler and Black-chested Snake-eagle.

Our list would not be complete without the Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, so off we went to the 'sunflower fields' in pentad 2525_2705. Whilst there, we also added African Quailfinch.

It was now getting towards sunset, and the plan was to head back into the Pilanesberg for some nocturnal birding. Back at base, we picked up a safari vehicle with one of Stuart's colleagues, Jeremy Jones, as driver and unofficial 5th team member. Regretfully the drive was not as successful as we had hoped, but we did add Rufous-cheeked Nightjar (plenty of them) and Spotted Thick-knee.

We arrived back at base a bit before 23h00 as the heavens opened up, dropping over 40mm of rain in less than 2 hours.

A long, but thoroughly enjoyable day with our final total 161 species, four short of our previous best for Birding Big Day. (Our full list for the day is available on request)

Lanner Falcon and Little Sparrow-hawk were recorded on a flypast during the day, but as the majority of the team did not get to see them, they did not make the list.

Some of our notable dips included Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Klaas's Cuckoo, Black Cuckoo, Cardinal Woodpecker, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Water Thick-knee and Goliath Heron. 🐦

Pentad 2540_2815 – An attempt to pass 100 birds on one atlas card

Ernst Retief

The last cricket test between South Africa and the West Indies featured many centuries. Hashim Amla scored a double century, AB de Villiers a century and Stiaan van Zyl a debut century. So I thought it an opportune time to try and score a century in pentad 2540_2815, a pentad with 685 full protocol atlas cards. An amazing amount of data! The highest number of species reported on one card was 93 by Rowan van Tonder. In total 253 species have been recorded in the pentad, but interesting enough only 97 species have a reporting rate of more than 10%, so it was clear, getting to 100 species would require lots of birding and patience.

The innings started on Thursday with a short walk through the streets of Waverley. Twenty species, mostly very common birds, were quickly ticked. With a reporting rate of only 2%, the highlight was two White-fronted Bee-eaters using the telephone wires as perches to hawk insects.

On Friday Natasja and I visited the Pretoria National Botanical Gardens. On the way we quickly popped into Perseus Park hoping to find some waterbirds. The dams were overgrown with reeds but we did tick Common Moorhen, Green-backed Heron, Rock Martin and Bronze Mannikin.

After entering the botanical gardens our list grew rapidly. Two Crowned Lapwings

ferociously attacked an elderly man who tried to fend them off by waving his cane at them. However, the more he waved the more agitated the plovers became. We later found the reason for their behavior; they were defending two small chicks, only a few days old. These plovers are brave parents. A number of other juvenile birds were observed during the day. One of these was a juvenile Tawny-flanked Prinia with a VERY short tail, calling passionately to his parents for food. A comical sighting it was. A few woodland species were ticked in the acacias and Zitting Cisticola displayed over a small patch of natural grassland. Bar-throated Apalis was one of the last species we ticked before leaving the gardens with 68 species on the list. Back at home, while watching the cricket, we heard Klaas's Cuckoo, called Meitjie in Afrikaans because of its characteristic call. I cannot recall when last I saw this species near my home, so it was a welcome addition to my list. In the late afternoon I found a Pied Crow sitting on the pylon of a power substation. I do not think it is very safe roosting place, leading me to reconsider all those articles and Facebook posts telling me how clever crows are.

By Friday evening the list had 76 species. Many more runs needed to reach a century, but three days of play left.

On Saturday morning at 04:45 I met up with Philip Calinikos. Philip is the chair of the

Vulture Feeding Habits

This online article contains amazing information about vulture feeding habits and the extraordinary vicious bacteria that inhabit their intestines and heads including such pathogens as anthrax which is deadly for most animals and man as well as tetanus, gangrene and others. You can read the article at this link: <http://goo.gl/MjPFUu>

Friends of Colbyn Valley and he invited me and five other birders to bird this venue. We started our walk to the north of the wetland next to the spruit running through Kilnerpark before wading through a very wet Colbyn Valley. African Reed-Warbler was heard and soon after we had beautiful views of this tiny warbler. We also observed an African Harrier-Hawk raiding Little Swift nests on a multi-story building. We were unsure, but we thought it was successful in its hunting attempt as it seemed to fly away with a small bird in its talons. Breeding Village Weavers, Common Waxbill and more Bronze Mannikins were also seen. During the few days covered by this report, numerous Bronze Mannikins were observed, at about every location we visited. Not that I am complaining, they are beautiful little birds, most often seen in small family groups. In the wetland itself we found Cape Grassbird. This species had only been recorded twice before in the pentad, most probably because the wetland, which might contain the only suitable habitat for this species in the pentad, is not atlased on a regular basis.

After entering the wetland from the scout hall we had beautiful views of Yellow-throated Petronia. Levalilant's Cuckoo settled for a while in the trees above us before flying away. We left Colbyn Valley with our atlas list on 97 species, in the nervous 90s. After saying farewell to the rest of the team, Philip and I visited the dams at LC de Villiers. I withstood the temptation to add Groundscraper Thrush and especially Greater Honeyguide to the list, as they were about 50 m outside of the pentad boundary. A bit pedantic,

but rules are rules. So we ended this visit with no species added to the list.

We then visited Skuilkrans Kopje Nature Reserve. A beautiful little reserve with broadleaf woodland. It was a bit late in the day and quite warm so not too many birds were seen, but we first added Barn Swallow, a species we had not seen in the three days. Then Black Cuckoo, which I missed earlier in the day, and then number 100, a female Amethyst Sunbird. Century reached and mission accomplished! Shortly after I received a message from my wife "Dale Steyn 6 for 34, West Indies all out". We missed the cricket... but had some great birding instead.

Natasja and I decided on Sunday to try and add a few more birds to the list. We targeted the plots in the north-eastern corner of the pentad where we hoped to find some bushveld species. We were not disappointed and quickly found Blue Waxbill, Black-throated Canary and Rattling Cisticola. Magpie Shrike was also recorded, a species only been recorded three times before in the pentad. It seems that this area of the pentad has not been birded on a regular basis for we found Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Red-breasted Swallow and Little Bee-eater, all recorded only once before in 685 atlas lists!

We decided to call it a day with the list on 116 species. Not a bad innings at all and it was great fun!

An exercise I will certainly repeat someday. 🐦

Donations, Dec 2014 - March 2015

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

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

Prof Riel Franzsen; Margarita Krusche; Anandraj Bauchoo; Nic Oosthuizen; Hannalien Meyer; Malan van Rensburg; Deon Oosthuizen; Gertrude la Chevalerie; Rob Sprenger de Rover; Anthony Botes; Lynn Walton; Margarita Krusche; Leon Lötter; CP van der Merwe; Elmi van Niekerk; Sita Rootman; Sheleph Burger; Glen Carpendale

Mozambique Birding 29 Jan – 12 Feb 2015

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

One evening in Spring 2014 I was paging through the old Sinclair birdguide, which I use to record all my (new) sightings of birds in Southern Africa. Looking at the species I had not yet seen, a pattern seemed to develop in my mind: many of the birds we had not seen yet, showed as a distribution map on the Eastern side of Southern Africa, predominantly in Mozambique. We had undertaken very productive and worthwhile (birding) trips around South Africa, Botswana and Namibia (March 2014), but never to Mozambique. We had seen magnificent natural environments, beautiful scenery, flooded rivers (Kunene – Namibia) and interesting people, and of course many birds.

We managed to book on an organized birding tour commencing 29th January 2015 lasting 15 days in all. This was a self-drive tour, so many things had to be arranged: I took my SUV for a thorough inspection service. Did we need to take our portable Engel fridge? Did Kathrin require a visa to enter Mozambique? Would we self-cater? We had to cater for at least breakfast and lunch “on-the-run”. Water, two extra jerry cans of fuel, upgrade the GPS, get reflective jackets (which we never used and never will), two warning triangles per vehicle (I wandered, which “local” Mozambique-registered vehicle has all these fineries or is this only another way to share in the “gain” from South African tourists?) our list grew and grew. But I really feel it is part of the fun to make all these arrangements.

Very early on 29th January 2015 we left home to meet the group, none of whom we had met before, at Milly’s near Machadodorp for breakfast at 06h45. We arrived earlier than expected, fuelled up and ordered breakfast, only to find out that there are two eateries and we were certainly not in the right one! We met the group nonetheless, a group of formidable birders - 9 paying guests and one guide and were briefed on the programme. We had filled

in the required list of bird species to be seen in Mozambique, and arrived at over 100 species for myself, Kathrin even more. Wow! I would have been happy with 18 new species on my list, which I required to get to the next “round” number.

We cleared the Mozambique border in good time, after exchanging Rands for Meticaís at a filling station shortly before the border. I was disenchanted: our fellow-birders exchanged R1 = MZM 2.90 whereas, at my bank I was given a “special rate” as a private-banking-client of MZM 2.74. No, banks don’t rip you off, not even special clients, they only charge you more.....

We drove a very bad road to circumvent Maputo and on to Xai-Xai, our first stop, where we stayed in simple but pleasant wooden cabins. Birding commenced immediately on the road and in the camp area: Peregrine Falcon, Eurasian Hobby, African Openbill, Olive Sunbird, Yellow-billed Kite, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis, Wahlberg’s Eagle, Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater were only some of the species seen. Every evening, the routine was to call that day’s bird list, before supper.

Day 2 took us on a long circular route from Xai-Xia via the Limpopo floodplain wetlands to Panda, and from there on to Inhambane. This was a long day: the roads were reminding us, that we were now in Africa: the going was slow, the heat and the humidity was getting under our skin. However the birding began with a big bang: Senegal Lapwing (a welcome lifer), Yellow-billed Egret, Green-backed Heron, Yellow-billed Stork, both Flamingo species, Black-bellied Bustard, Great painted Snipe, and another lifer Greater Sand Plover were added. Further on we added Rufous-winged Cisticola, Collared Pratincole, Namaqua Dove, Woodland Kingfisher. The natural surroundings were gravel roads of reasonable condition, dense



Wader hunting

tree- and scrub cover interspersed with grasses, wetlands, numerous small villages with a multitude of young mothers each carrying small babies, small patches of randomly planted subsistence-crops on pieces of soil cleared from the thick surrounding tree and scrub cover, very little work was done in these fields. Mostly people were sitting under trees in the shade and making conversation.

Then mother-luck struck again and we were treated to sightings of one of the area's specials: Olive-headed Weaver, but that is not where it ended. Red-faced Crombec, Southern Hyliota, and Neergaard's Sunbird followed. The birding was superb, to put it mildly, this compensated for the heat, humidity and mosquitoes. (Kathrin and I had brought a box full of anti-mozzi devices: citronella soap, mosquito-patches, mosquito sticks, mosquito spray, mosquito candles and we slept in each of the overnight-places under mosquito nets and took Malanil tablets.)

We booked into our cabins near Inhambane on the Barra Peninsula right on the beach and sank into our chairs with a cold Cerveja (beer) as we watched a magnificent sunset over the lagoon.

The next day (the third) we were already

walking the beach by 05h30. The clothing that birders wear always fascinates me. Kathrin and I mostly wore boots and gaiters (the "recommended" attire). One of the friends, Bruce, was mostly in slip-slops or sometimes barefoot, the others were somewhere in-between). We spotted Lesser Crested Tern quite soon, and then, through his new spotting scope, Don located Crab Plovers quite far off. Swift Tern, Common Tern, Cuckoo Hawk showing off some fabulous aerial displays, Crested Francolin, Red-necked Spurfowl, Three-banded Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Curlew Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Trumpeter Hornbill, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird were spotted en route. It was late when we arrived at Morrungulo for our overnight rest. We had seen splendid white beaches, completely undeveloped and devoid of bathers, narrow roads through woodland and natural forest-thickets. We had tried to locate the extremely rare and recently newly discovered (African Birdlife May/June 2013, Volume1, Number 4 : 26) Green Tinkerbird during the afternoon, without success.

Day 4 saw us up and driving before dawn. Most members of the group, except for the guide, had not seen and were eager to see the Green Tinkerbird. West of the village of Unguana (between Maxixe/Inhambane and

Vilanculos) in-between thick natural forest and thickets we drove on small dirt roads past tiny villages carved out of the forest, we had hopes of locating this “mega-tick”. But first we connected with Livingston’s Flycatcher, a very pretty colourful little bird. We passed large patches of Baobab *Adansonia digitata* trees, which had visible large holes in the trunks, in and out of which flew large numbers of Böhm’s, and Mottled Spinetail. We stopped at a small village somewhere in the remote bush and the guide played back the recording he had made a year or two ago, and very soon thereafter, some Green Tinkerbird responded. We hunted to and fro between numbers of calling birds in opposite directions. The trees and scrub were so dense that we did not see the birds, although clearly hearing their calls. Then one flew up and settled in a tree with bare branches, not far from us. I immediately trained my spotting scope on it and was treated to a display of it’s throat bulging out and contracting in as it gave it’s pop-pop-pop sounding call. Cameras were clicking away a frantic staccato and I was amazed what sounds, grunts, whistles and whoo’s birders make when they see a mega-tick. The guide estimated that we were among the first 250 birders to be able to see the Green Tinkerbird. What a sighting! We were all ecstatic! We closed the day off with African Goshawk, Mosque Swallow, Black-bellied Starling, Yellow-breasted Apalis and another very nice sighting of Marsh Warbler.

We left for our very pleasant sea-side resort



Vegetation around Coutada

accommodation at Inhasorro, right on the beach front, lined with Casuarina trees. In the distance we could see the outlines of the island of Bazaruto. There were a few holiday-makers but the nice beach was littered with all sorts of vegetation debris.

The following day (5) we left for Beira. We made a number of stops on the way at various sites and water bodies where we saw Reed Cormorant, Purple Heron, Great Egret, White-backed Duck, Pygmy Goose, African Marsh-Harrier and numbers of waders, as well as very nice sightings of Yellow-throated Longclaw perching on a shrub and singing. At a quarry just outside of Inhasorro we had excellent sightings of Magpie Mannikin. Then in some reed beds we saw good numbers of Red-headed Queleas, which only occur on the eastern side of Southern Africa. We were also lucky to spot a Red-winged Warbler. Beira is not the place where I would wish to retire. Run-down dilapidated buildings, dirt and filth, heavily potholed roads. We booked into surprisingly pleasant accommodation (with the luxury of air conditioners).

The next day (6) saw us birding at the crack of dawn. Those of us who have a “getting-up-later” metabolism were showing signs of sleep-deprivation, but I guess birding is synonymous with getting up early. We drove past an informal market place and on to the Rio Savane area north of Beira, which is known for flood plains and grasslands. We were to try and flush Black-rumped Buttonquail (which we saw) as well as Blue Quail by walking in a line and dragging a tow-rope through the grassland. After a hot, sweaty and tiring morning, we gave up and “dipped” the Blue Quail. While trudging with our “regulation Sofiatown-Bata takkies” through soggy muddy wetlands, we flushed a Great Snipe which carried on flying for some good distance before dropping back into dense marshy vegetation, giving us ample time for a super-sighting. Some members of the group in the front had a brief sighting of a Locust Finch, but regrettably, by the time we had come up from the rear and got out of our SUV it took off,



Lesser Crested Tern

we only saw “a little bird flying” not being able to list it. We had a good sighting of a Copper Sunbird near a wetland, as well as stunning fly-by displays of African Marsh-Harrier and later on a very good sighting of a Montagu’s Harrier in flight, showing off its dark wing tips. We got good views also of Mozambique (Pale) Batis, another new bird for our list.

We returned to our accommodation for lunch and siesta. That afternoon some friends needed to rest and relax, the remainder left for Rio Savane again. We stopped at a number of sites and enjoyed the birding. Then at a water body surrounded partially by reeds in a tree with branches reaching down low just over water-level (I think it was a River bush-Willow *Combretum erythrophyllum*) we saw a warbler we were not able to identify. Some friends took photos of the bird and others made mental notes of the striking features. It turned out to be a Basra Reed-Warbler, a mega-tick. We left for our accommodation and dinner in happy spirits.

Day seven we took another unsuccessful try at the Rio Savane area for Blue Quail, then left late on the road from Beira via Inchope, a main “highway” heavily potholed, full of heavy truckers to and from Beira. From Inchope we took the longer route around Gorongosa with memorable sightings of the Gorongosa mountains en route. We stopped a number of times for birding and for lunch and enjoyed the lush vegetation, dense natural tree cover with a number of excellent palatable nutritious grass species (e.g. Guinea Grass *Panicum Maximum*) in between, but to my surprise, we saw no

cattle. Granivores were in good numbers enjoying the grass seeds, Long-tailed Paradise Whydah, Red-backed and Bronze Mannikins, Blue Waxbill and others. The road was heavily potholed and our driving speed was slow, having to navigate these unkindly roads. We arrived after dark at Mpingwe Lodge, our accommodation for the next few days, with rain coming down, a welcome cooling-off.

Some of the friends told us that from day eight/day nine onwards at Mpingwe/Coutada/Catapu the birding we saw thus far would be surpassed. Leaving before dawn, we took a circular dirt road through the 25,000 hectare Coutada 12 hunting concession. The pristine natural forest was a pleasure to drive through. Early on we spotted Black-winged (Fire-crowned) Bishops and the localized Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah, a stunningly beautiful bird. Cuckoos were just everywhere: Jacobin, Black, African and Diderik Cuckoos were very vocal and often seen. Zambezi Indigobird and Black-headed Apalis followed on our list. We were impressed about the birding in this special area. Retz’s Helmet-Shrike were followed by the rare resident Chestnut-fronted Helmet-Shrike, which I at first battled to see high up in dense foliage canopies, but eventually got a good sighting.

The guide took us into the forest on numerous occasions over the next four days, to sit down, sit still and played back the call of White-chested Alethe (which we dipped) and African Pitta which we also did not manage to see. He thought that it may be too late in the season



Böhms Bee-Eater

and that they are active in December. But what we did see was Woodward's Batis, and what was very pleasing the Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, an uncommon, localized breeding intra-Africa migrant. This responded very vocally to the played back calls, and eventually we saw it well flying overhead, a great lifer to have.

A very colourful Orange-winged (Golden-backed) *Pythilia* showed next as well as Ayers' Hawk Eagle and to my relief I was able to get the East Coast Akalat, which was a difficult bird for me to see. What a splendid day of birding in a beautiful natural environment with the "specials" of the area queuing to be seen. Kathrin and I added no less than 10 new birds to our list that day.

Saturday 7th February 2015 (day 10) will remain firmly in our memory for some time. We drove North to Caia and on along the Zambezi River in the direction of Sena/Choma. The target bird was Böhm's Bee-Eater. Two of our vehicles badly needed unleaded fuel. The only fuel station within 75 km at Caia had run out of fuel and we had been assured from one day to the next "that fuel will arrive tomorrow after 12h00". It never did. I did not want to use my 40 liter reserve in jerry cans, as the next reliable fuel station could be some 300km away. At the end we landed up in Caia with the help of a gentleman who works for Mpingwe and located a "road-side-fuel-vendor". When the local station has fuel, they fill up their 210 liter drums and wait. At some stage the fuel station will run out of fuel and thenpoor souls like us have no choice but to fork out 50% more than the going price to get a tank of fuel. They tapped the fuel with a hose pipe out of the 210 L drums into smaller containers and emptied these with funnels into our car's fuel tanks. My SUV has a tank capacity of 80 liters. At the end, a miracle must have happened because my tank took 90 liters of fuel!

On we went, North-West of Caia. We stopped at some sites and at a local grave-yard spotted a very welcome Collared Palm-Thrush, which had eluded us during all of our time of birding in SA. We also saw Blue-spotted

Wood-Dove, a species I had seen many years ago in Zimbabwe. The road was extremely bad and got worse. We passed little villages and wetlands, until the road forked, we took the right hand "road" in the direction of Tete/Tambara and continued on to Dona Maria. Later we landed up at the only one of two commercial farming operations we had seen in Mozambique (the other was TCT Dalmann/Mpingwe, where we stayed). Tractors and farming implements, well maintained barns and outbuildings were to be seen, a modest farm house with a large veranda overlooking the Zambezi River came in sight. It turned out that the farmers were South Africans. We were at the homestead of another family on the farm first and perching in trees low down as well as on a fence around the homestead we spotted and photographed Böhm's Bee-Eater, "a rare vagrant south of the Zambezi". The pictures in my bird guide did not do this beautifully-coloured bird any justice. We also spotted a small flock of Yellow Wagtails (race *Thunbergi*) wandering around on a small farm road. We were allowed to sit on the veranda of our hosts, were served coffee and were allowed to have the breakfast we had brought. The views from the veranda on and over the Zambezi were most pleasing. We did not see Böhm's Bee-Eater again. We returned in the direction of Caia.

The road was shocking, I was wondering if my SUV's shock absorbers could take the punishment; our guide in front was "putting foot", we were the last vehicle which tried to dodge the worst sections of road in the dust thrown up by the three vehicles ahead of us, and I was doing a bad job at that. My SUV was bumping and shaking and vibrating, banging into holes in the road and heaving up the other side. I have seldom driven such a bad road. I did not wish to slow down, as else, we might lose contact with the remainder of the group.

I noticed that a warning light in the vehicle came on and the temperature gauge went to maximum. I stopped the vehicle, and after investigating, the vehicle was towed by the leader of the excursion to the place we stayed

at Mpingwe lodge/TCT Dalmann 36 Km south of the town of Caia. On further investigation, it was noticed that the front engine fan had somehow come loose, and had hit the radiator and damaged this extensively. The radiator no longer held any water.

End of birding tour, 1500 km North of Nelspruit. The vehicle of another friend also sustained mechanical damage and they were stuck with us. Regrettably end of tour for them also.

The next day, Sunday 8th February (day 11) we were kindly offered a lift by the remaining two vehicles to join a further day of birding in the Coutada/Catapu concession. There was nothing we could do about the damaged vehicle on Sunday, so we gratefully accepted the offer. We saw some of the birds we had seen during the previous days and more; Western banded Snake Eagle, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-headed Weaver, Grey Sunbird, Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike. Then again sitting inside the forest, we heard and spotted Mangrove Kingfisher, Green-backed Woodpecker, Tiny Greenbul which Kathrin saw, but I could just not see the bird in time and dipped it, Stierling's Wren-Warbler showing and calling so loud that I thought it was the guide's call back. Some while later we ended with Short-winged Cisticola. We had had a lovely day of birding, thanks to our friends in the other vehicles.

The next day, Monday the other friends departed for the remainder of the tour and we were busied trying to resolve our damaged vehicles. Cellphone reception was unreliable, we were in the African bush. I managed to contact my brokers in Pretoria, they contacted our insurer, Momentum. What excellent service we got!. I have the "Explorer extension" to my policy which covers assistance and repatriation to SA. Momentum arranged everything, and they called us every day to report on progress and to support us. My SUV was collected and transported by a South African transporter and delivered to my service garage in Pretoria, Kathrin and I could not get transport to Beira airport 400 km away, so Momentum got the

tow truck to take us to the airport; we were back home again safely on Saturday afternoon. Our vehicle was repaired. Better service in the African bush you could not expect than what we received from Momentum.

During the days we were stuck at Mpingwe, we undertook some walks and did some birding. Thick-billed Cuckoo was added to our list. At night we often heard, and then briefly spotted African Wood Owl next to our chalet. We saw Kirk's Francolin, the not yet split subspecies of Crested Francolin (not tickable) and lastly White-breasted Cuckooshrike.

We ended our list for the trip at 306 species seen, a host of lifers (Kathrin got 44, I a few less)

PS. Highs and lows & tips:

1. The Mozambique map we obtained from the AA was most inaccurate and proved to be a useless part of our equipment. Rather use an up-to-date GPS. Many places the map should show are not recorded, the distances are sometimes very inaccurate.

2. We were lucky to drive in a group of 4 vehicles. This reduced the prevalence of official corruption. When we were alone in the tow-truck, the Beira area was rife with corruption, forcing us to spend hours to "negotiate" and costing us 250 USD and 1.500 Meticais in unnecessary "fines" and "road tax" (Carry colour-photocopies of your car registration papers – the officials can't see the difference to the originals and this saves you 1.500 Meticais in fines)

3. Fuel-up wherever there is a reliable fuel station. We were caught without petrol at Caia – nobody was able to predict, when the fuel truck would arrive. In the end we had to fuel-up from "road-side-fuel-vendors" at 50% higher than the normal price (R27.40 per liter). When the fuel truck did arrive, it burnt out 30 km from Caia.

4. Some large portions of the main roads, the EN1 from Maputo northwards are heavily potholed and extremely dangerous to drive after dark. The roads get worse the further North you go.

5. Coming from the kind climate of the Highveld, one needs to make allowance for the heat and extremely high humidity in Mozambique. At 10h00 in the morning, my shirt was wet as if I had dipped it in water.

6. The birding was excellent. Forty – something lifers on one trip is superb.

7. Get used to the (harmless but large) Whip Scorpions in the chalets. Some of the lady-friends solicited help more than once. 🦗

Noord-Gauteng Atlasnaweek: Uit 'n ander hoek van die pentad

Janelle Verster

Dis omstreeks 17:00 op Sondag, 3 Mei 2015. Ek pak my sak uit. Die dorinkies wat ek een-vir-een van my klere afhaal en die bosveldsand wat ek uit my sokkies skud, laat my met 'n sug terugverlang na die mense, diere en dinge van die naweek.

Ek en Pieter Verster (my man, van nou af na verwys as "Pieter 1") het pas van 'n wonderlike atlasnaweek naby Lephalale (Ellisras), wat deur die Noord-Gauteng-Voëlklub aangebied is, teruggekom. Die kamp, wat deur Amanda en Pieter le Roux gekoördineer is en die Klub se eerste amptelike atskamp was, het al my verwagtinge oortref. Alhoewel die hoofdoel van die kamp was om soveel moontlik van die tien "virgin pentads" in die betrokke gedeelte van die Waterberg-IBA te atlas, het die kamp soveel meer ingehou as "net voëls tel".



Waterberg Atlasgroep - Pieter, Janelle, Amanda, Pieter, Rita, Fanie, Proffie, Hannalien

Ek moet erken dat ek met ons vertrek uit Pretoria Woensdagmiddag, 29 April, redelik skepties was oor die naweek wat sou voorlê. Ek was moeg gewerk en gestres oor sake wat baie minder belangrik as voëls is. Boonop was ek bang dat die kamp 'n formele aangeleentheid met tonne administratiewe take, vaste tye en rigiede reëls sou wees. En dat ek dalk vir 'n klomp mense sou moes kosmaak – beslis nie een van my sterk punte nie... Net buitekant Pretoria het my stresvlakke darem effens begin afneem, maar ek het steeds nie die mense ontmoet in wie se geselskap ek vier dae sou moes bestee nie en ook nog nie geweet of die naweek lekker sou wees nie.

Die afsetpunt van die atlaswerk sou aanvanklik by D'Nyala, sowat 15 kilometer vanaf Lephalale, wees, maar instandhoudingswerk aan die huisies in hierdie reservaat het onverwags die fokus verskuif na Bateleur Tented Safari Lodge, sowat 65 kilometer padlans en Oos daarvandaan.

Met my en Pieter 1 se aankoms by Bateleur is ons deur Pieter le Roux ("Pieter 2") verwelkom en aan sy vrou, Amanda, sowel as aan Proffie en Hannalien Meyer voorgestel. Hulle het almal reeds vroeër die dag 'n bydrae tot die wetenskap gelewer deur voëls in die "virgin pentads" op pad Ellisras toe te tel. Rita en Fanie de Meillon het weens motorprobleme eers die aand twaalfuur by ons aangesluit nadat hulle reeds die middag uit Pretoria vertrek het. Hul motor het op 'n baie rowwe grondpad besluit



Phalalarivier

om van twee van sy bonte afskeid te neem en gevolglik moes Rita en Fanie teen so 15 na 20 kilometer per uur aansukkel tot by Bateleur. Ek en my man het slegs 'n sedanmotor en gelukkig het ons die "lang pad" deur Ellisras geneem, want ek dink nie ons sou so kalm soos Rita en Fanie kon bly onder die omstandighede nie...

Die agt van ons het in die vier dae gesamentlik 168 voëls in die Ellisras-omgewing gesien en/of gehoor. Ons het sewe van die tien "virgin pentads" ge-atlas met 'n gemiddeld van 50,7 spesies per pentad – party van hulle met min en ander met heelwat meer uitdagings... Ek vertel slegs gedeeltes van die storie en dit uit my eie oogpunt – daar is nog baie meer verhale wat oor die naweek vertel kan word, soveel dat 'n mens sekerlik 'n boek daaroor sou kon skryf.

Phillip Bronkhorst, eienaar van Bateleur, het ons in talle opsigte baie tegemoetgekom. Die tentkamp is luuks – een van daardie pragtige plekke wat 'n mens gewoonlik net in advertensies sien – maar Phillip is nie deur ons begroting of kort kennisgewing afgeskrik nie. Hy wou graag help. Ons het heerlike akkommodasie gehad en elke aand lekker gebraa. En ek hoef

toe nie vir enigiemand kos te gemaak het nie...

Dag een is ons al vroegoggend 'n hele paar verskillende rigtings in. Pieter 2 het baie moeite gedoen om vooraf op Google Maps op te soek watter pentads maklik bereikbaar, minder bereikbaar of moontlik glad nie bereikbaar sou wees nie – party van die pentads was agt by agt kilometer waarvoor absoluut geen paaie op 'n kaart aangedui is nie. Ek en Pieter 1 het soos Bartholomias Dias en Vasco da Gama of Josua en Kaleb gevoel – ware verkenner.

Ek en Pieter 1 het met ons sedan na een van die "bereikbare" pentads vertrek omdat die grondpadgedeeltes na hierdie plek na verwagting minder rof sou wees as Rita en Fanie se pad van die vorige aand. Min het ons geweet wat op ons sou wag... Opgewonde het ons na 'n lang rit die betrokke pentad binnegery, net om na eenhonderd meter deur 'n hek begroet te word! Optimisties het ons die hekwag genader vir toestemming tot die gronde, maar ongelukkig wou die man aan die ander kant van die tweerigtingradio dit nie toelaat sonder 'n afspraak nie en het deur middel van die hekwag gesê dat ons hom later kon bel vir 'n

afspraak wanneer hy weer in 'n omgewing met selfoonopvangs sou wees. Ons moed het in ons skoene gesak, want daar was absoluut niks wat ons kon doen nie en "later" was onbepaald en in elk geval te laat – ons het min tyd en baie werk gehad om te doen. Ons het egter die beste van die saak gemaak en die vereiste twee ure in die sowat honderd-by-twintig meter-area wat tot ons beskikking was, deurgebring op soek na voëls. Gelukkig was dit redelik voëlrkry en kon ons 35 spesies identifiseer in hierdie klein hoekie van die pentad.

Pieter 1 en ek het die res van die dag elders geatlas, behalwe vir 'n kort middagslapie (Pieter) en 'n 7,5km-draffie vir my. Eintlik moet ek erken dat wat as 'n draffie op die grondpad buite Bateleur begin het, uiteindelik in 'n voluit naelloop ontaard het weens my vrees vir luiperds...



Bateleur Tented Safari Lodge

Ook het die ander lede van die atlasspan teëspoed gehad deurdat 'n vragmotor in die middel van 'n nou grondpad op pad na van die dag se geïdentifiseerde pentads geknipmes het, met die gevolg dat hierdie pentads tot dag drie onbereikbaar gebly het. Gevolglik het die grootste gedeelte van die span op dag twee op Phillip se plaas geatlas met 'n safarivoertuig en personeellid (Leon, 'n regte staatmaker) wat die gawe man aan ons beskikbaar gestel het. Dag twee was egter my verjaardag en ek en Pieter 1 is vroeg na Ellisras self toe. Ek het 'n lekker rondte gholfs gespeel by Mogol-gholfklub en Pieter

en ek het die hoofdorp se pentad geatlas. Dit is ongelooflik om te sien hoeveel en watter voëls 'n mens op party gholfbane kan sien – dit is hier wat ons die spookvoël en die kleinsperwer van naby af kon sien. Ons het 'n lekker Panarotti-s-ontbyt gehad en toe ook pentad 2335_2745 net buitekant die dorp geatlas.

Alhoewel hierdie pentad slegs drie keer vantevore geatlas is, het ek en my man gevind dat dit die opwindendste pentad is wat ons nog ooit geatlas het. Ons het in enkele besoeke aan hierdie pentad die naweek 'n volle 79 voëlspesies gevind, insluitende die bedreigde saalbekooievaar, ons eerste feevlieëvanger ooit en nog vele meer. Ons het dit só geniet dat ons amper laat was vir die bootrit wat Phillip Bronkhorst vir ons gereël het vir die laatmiddag!

Die bootrit op die Phalalarivier was 'n belewenis. Leon het ons agt ver op die rivier uitgeneem en behalwe vir die pragtige voëls wat ons tydens die rit teëgekome het, was die rit uit 'n sosiale oogpunt ook groot pret. Dit was die perfekte afsluiting van een van my lekkerste verjaardae ooit.

Teen dag drie was die vragmotor uit die pad en kon die hele span die area anderkant die bekende wêreld aandurf. Phillip het vir ons toegang gereël tot die plaas waarop een van die pentads waarskynlik sou val. Die boer, Robert Kruger, is self 'n voëlliefhebber en het ons op die plaaspad gelei na so naby as moontlik aan die gedeelte wat ons moes wees. Met stok en hoed is Amanda, Pieter 2, Pieter 1 en ek toe die veld in met die hoop dat die kolletjie op Birdlasser na 'n paar honderd meter se "bundubashing" wel in die regte pentad sou uitkom. Groot was ons teleurstelling toe ons ons later teen die grensraad vasloop – sowat 200 meter heeltemal buite bereik van die regte pentad! Langsaan was 'n plaas waarop hulle besig was om te jag en die klank van skote in die omgewing het dit ingevryf dat ons dalk saam met die wildsvleis op die spyskaart kon beland indien ons dit na die ander kant toe sou waag...

Teen hierdie tyd het ons al gedink: "Geen wonder al hierdie pentads waarvoor ons gekom

Coverage Map - Waterberg (10 Virgin Pentads)

						Alkantrant	
					1 2345_2810	2 2345_2815	3 2345_2820
	7 2350_2750		4 2350_2800	5 2350_2805	6 2350_2810	Lapala Wilderness	
8 2355_2745	Grootwater		9 2355_2800				
	10 Mokolo Dam 2400_2750					Madikela GR	

het, is nog nooit geatlas nie!" Ons het nie 'n ander keuse gehad as om terug te keer na die voertuig toe nie. Pieter 2 se positiewe gesindheid het ons egter padlangs om 'n koppie laat ry om net te kyk of die grensdraad nie dálk in 'n ander rigting uitdraai en ons toelaat om in die pentad te kom nie – al ons het geweet dat dit hoogs, hoogs onwaarskynlik sou wees dat ons enigins daar sou inkom. Pieter 1 se goeie navigasievermoë en Amanda se wye voëlkennis het verder gehelp om die onmoontlike moontlik te maak en uiteindelik kon ons (ná verdere boskrap te voet) 'n klein stukkie van die pentad bereik. Gelukkig was daar 'n klein stroompie wat 'n paar voëltjies na hierdie gedeelte gelok het, maar ons kon nie meer as 28 voëls opspoor in amper drie ure nie. Ons was egter baie bly dat ons, ten spyte van al die hindernisse, wel 'n hoekie van die pentad kon bereik.

Proffie, Hanneline en Rita het tydens die kamp 'n hele paar van die "virgin pentads" geatlas en die vier van ons het hulle na pentad 2350_2805 gevolg om daar ook kaarte te gaan ingee. Ek het ook vir die eerste keer ooit 'n otter gesien. Ná ons almal vir 'n volle twaalf ure op dag drie geatlas het, is die dag afgesluit met die lys van alles wat tydens die kamp gesien is, asook 'n wonderlike aandwildrit waarop dié wat saamgegaan het, 'n wildekat, bakoorkakkels, dikkop, dubbelbandsandpatrys, boskorhaan,

erdvark en kleinkolmuskeljaatkat op Bateleur gesien het!

Op pad terug die Sondag het my man geatlas uit die motor uit en met gereelde uitklimme geatlas terwyl ek heerlik die eerste 8

Top tien voëls van die toer (neem asseblief kennis dat die lys op grond van persoonlike voorkeur van die Versterre saamgestel is en nie op grond van die relatiewe skaarheid of algemene gewildheid van die voëls nie...)

1. Feevlieëvanger ('n "lifer" vir ons)
2. Saalbekooievaar
3. Witkruissperwer (melanitiese tipe)
4. Swartwangsysie (ook 'n eerste vir ons)
5. Spookvoël
6. Nimmersat
7. Rooiassie
8. Kleinrietreier
9. Kleinsperwer
10. Bonthoutkapper
11. Grootwitreier
12. Withelmlaksman
13. Geelplekmossie

Goed, ek weet dit is nie net tien nie, maar ons het gesukkel om enige van die bog-enoemde uit te los...

km van die pad kon draf (hierdie keer was ek nie bang nie, want Pieter 1 was ook daar – ek het wel rye en rye spore, insluitende katspore in die grondpad gesien...) Ons het nog 'n paar ure in ons gunsteling pentad geatlas en toe die pad Pretoria toe aangedurf met 'n weemoedige knop in die keel. Die langnaweek was een van die lekkerstes wat ons in jare beleef het. Ons het ontsaglik baie geleer by ons medevoëlliefhebbers en hulle geselskap net so geniet.

Die Gautengse verkeer, winter en veral die gedurende gejaagdheid laat my wonder hoekom ek nou weer hier moet wees en nie langer in Lephalale kon bly nie. Ek verbeel my elke nou en dan nog ek hoor die witliesbosbontrokkie en die blousysie. Maar die swartoogtiptol in my tuin sing dat ek welkom is by die huis.

Die volgende plekke het ons in die Waterberg se gebied gekry: (sien aangehegte kaart wat Pieter van Sabap2 se webtuiste vry-hand geteken het)

- 1) Doordraai dam NR
- 2) Entabeni NR
- 3) 24 Riviere GR
- 4) Grootwater NR
- 5) D’Nyala NR
- 6) Thiane Wildlife Sanctuary
- 7) Alkantrand NR
- 8) Lebolobolo Game Farm
- 9) Mabelingwe NR

- 10) Bateleur NR
- 11) Phala Phala Wildlife
- 12) Dombeya Conservancy
- 13) Lalapala Wilderness
- 14) Madikele GR
- 15) Waterberg Game Park
- 16) Welgevonden GR
- 17) Kamonade Game Park

Ons het op SABAP 2 en Google Maps die virgin pentads opgesoek en die volgende gevind:

Pentad	
1. 2350_2750	Oppad na D’Nyala (R55)
2. 2345_2820	Bereikbaar op grondpaaie
3. 2350_2805	
4. 2350_2810	Baie beperkte toegang
5. 2350_2800	
6. 2355_2745	
7. 2355_2800	Kon geen toegang sien nie.
8. 2345_2810	
9. 2345_2815	
10. 2400_2750	

Daar moet gelet word dat van die Pentads nogal vër vanaf D’Nyala kamp se ingangshek lê. So is byvoorbeeld 2345_2820 Virgin Pentad Nr. 3 ongeveer 101km weg vanaf D’Nyala. 🐦

New Members / Nuwe Lede: December 2014 – March 2015

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

Darrell Abernethy, Wonderboom; Isabel & Herman Swart, Sunnyside; Lynette van den Heever, Elarduspark; Johannes Basson, Irene; Antonette Geldenhuis, Irene; Nicola Glennie, Paulshof; Jeanne Joubert, Menlopark; Maria Steyn, Pierre van Ryneveld; Eduard & Ormé Teichert, Queenswood; Engela J van Rensburg; Anne-Marie Gerretsen, Lynnwood Ridge; Elizabeth Stewart, Lynnwood Ridge; Chris & Gertjie Theyse, Wierda Park; Ignatius Viljoen, Colbyn; Sheleph & Louis Burger, Garsfontein; Craig & Sunika, Corin, Shara Natrass, Bryanston; Marina Venter, Wingatepark

Waterberg Atlas Kamp: Gedoem van die begin af.....of nie?

Amanda le Roux

Omdat ons klub die LCG (Local Conservation Group) vir die Waterberg IBA (Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas) is, het die programkomitee onder leiding van Wanda as Program koördineerder die Atlaskampe gereël. Komma Nader en D’Nyala is as twee kamp-plekke bespreek oor agt dae. Pieter wat m.b.v. Google Maps gaan kyk het wat die afstande is om die Virgin Pentads te bereik en omdat die hoofsaak van die kamp sou wees om die Virgin Pentads te atlas, het gesien dat die Kampe te ver is en ons moes die Komma Nader Kamp vir eers kanselleer. Dit was ons eerste terugslag. Maar met agt mense wat ingeskryf het om die atlaskamp aan te durf, het ons darem nog ’n probeerslag gehad met D’Nyala.

Donderdag: terugslag nommer twee; verdoemende nuus: Rita skakel my ’n dag voor ons vertrek om te sê dat sy die D’Nyala Kamp geskakel het om te bevestig dat ons deurkom vir die vier dae kamp. Hulle het haar so ewe laat weet dat die plek nie beskikbaar is nie deurdat hulle besig is met instandhouding. Die voorstel was dat ons na Nylsvley toe kon gaan vir die naweek. Dit is ongelukkig nie deel van die Waterberg IBA nie.

Gelukkig kom Pieter tot ons redding. Hy het die vorige Vrydag Huntex skou bygewoon en Phillip Bronkhorst van Bateleur Lodge van die Waterbergdistrik ontmoet. Hy het hom dadelik geskakel om te hoor of ons op kort kennisgewing by sy kamp-plek kan kom kamp en ons ’klein budget’ verduidelik. Hy het bo alle verwagting ingestem om ons te huisves. Ons het amper uit ons velle gesprong van blydskap. Die reëlings is inderhaas aan almal betrokke deurgegee. Dankie Pieter: jy is my ’Shining Knight in Armour’. Ook baie dankie aan Phillip van Bateleur wat sy Lodge aan ons op so ’n

kort kennisgewing en so bekostigbaar vir ons beskikbaar gestel het.

Ek en Pieter het vroegoggend vanaf Centurion vertrek om op pad twee van die Virgin Pentads te atlas. Ons het goed gery en teen ongeveer 10h14 die eerste Virgin Pentad betree. Die grondpad was by tye baie rof en die voëls skaars langs die pad. Die temperatuur was ook hoog en het by 13h00 by 31° Celcius gedraai. Nie ’n baie goeie tyd om voëls te soek nie. Maar ons was positief omdat ons twee Virgin Pentads wou afhandel. So gesê, so gedaan. Na vier ure het ons dit vervolmaak.

Ons kom by Bateleur aan teen laatmiddag met die temperatuur al so hoog as 34° Celcius. Ek begin vermoed dat ek te veel warm klere ingepak het.

Hannalien en Proffie het reeds aangekom en sit rustig op die stoep en hou vir Buks die renoster dop wat in die kamp wag vir sy voer.

Nog ’n verdere terugslag: Rita en Fanie het teen sononder nog nie aangekom nie en ontvangs op die kamp is swak en ons kry haar nie in die hande nie. Ons gaan slaap bekommerd, maar hulle daag net na middernag op. Hulle kar het probleme gegee en hulle moes teen 15km al die pad gery tot by die kamp. ’n Uitmergelende rit. Met behulp van ’n baie meganiese en talentvolle Proffie kry hulle darem die voertuig die dag weer reg en vaarbaar.

Maar die teenspoed en min slaap ten spyte is Rita Vrydag vroegoggend reg vir die groep se eerste ’Atlas Bash’. Ons vertrek om nog Virgin Pentads te atlas.

Maar.....nog ’n terugslag: ons ry op ’n enkel grondpaadjie, waar ons tot stilstand kom voor ’n stilstaande swaar voertuig met geen pad om verby te kan kom. Die voertuig wat

'n paar ton teëls vir 'n Duitse boer op een van die plase vervoer het, het vasgeval net voor 'n opdraande. Ons kan nie by ons Pentads uitkom nie wat nog 'n hele paar kilometers verder is. Na beraadslaging met mekaar besluit ons op plan B; ons doen die Pentad te voet om die voertuig en ry terug om die Pentads op en om die Bateleur kamp te doen. Ons hoop dat die swaarvoertuig teen die volgende dag weg sal wees. Pieter en Janelle wat by Marken omry om ander Virgin Pentads te atlas, kry ook teespoed deurdat hulle toegang geweier word by Lapalala waar daar getoi-toi word. Hulle atlas een Pentad en kom nie by die tweede Virgin Pentad uit nie.

Op Werkersdag word ons heerlik bederf deur die Bateleur span wat ons op 'n Safari rit op die plaas vat en ons sien heelwat bokke en voëls onder andere wit katlagters, rooivlerk-streepkoppies, klipstreepkoppies, swart pieke, gewone koesters. Sabota lewerikke, gewone troupante, kransaaivoëls, rooivlerktjagras witlesbosbontrokkies, gewone melbas, verskeie sysies, ens.

Die middag word ons deur die Bateleur span op 'n "Pontoon Sundowner Cruise" op die Palala Rivier geneem. Leon is ons skipper. Ons sien 'n swartkoperier en 'n bloureier wat langs mekaar op 'n paal se dwarsstut langs die rivier sit, Nonnetjies eende, kolganse, rietduikers, slanghalsvoëls, groenrugreier, bruinkopvisvangers, bontvisvangers, witkruiswindswaels en kleinwindswaels en nog meer.

Volgende oggend vroeg net na middernag ontvang ons 'n SMS dat die swaarvoertuig verwyder is en dat ons pad weer oop is. Ons verdeel weer in twee spanne en vertrek die oggend vroeg. Die baie energieke en jong paartjie Pieter en Janelle ry saam met ons. Ons kry met behulp van Phillip 'n kontak op 'n plaas wat ons toegang tot een van die Virgin Pentads gee. Die vriendelike boer Robert help ons om toegang te kry, hy lei ons na 'n grondpad waar ons verder op ons eie aangewese is. Ons moet verder te voet gaan om tot by die Virgin Pentad te kom. Met groot moeite en groot kans om te verdwaal in die beboste dele op ongemerkte

wildspaadjies kry ons die Pentad ge-atlas en sit ons hom op die 'map'.

Ons beweeg aan na waar Rita, Hannalien en Proffie heen is om nog Virgin Pentads te gaan atlas. Dit is wonderlik stil en ongerep en orals waar ons stop vir voëls verwonder ons ons aan die grootsheid en skoonheid van die natuur. Ons kry twee papegaai duifies te sien wat baie spesiaal is. Ons sien ook 'n hele paar Kaalwangvalke. 'n Reuse visvanger dra ook by tot die spesiale dag. Ook die geelvlekmossie word 'n paar keer opgemerk teenoor die groot afwesigheid van al die ander mossies. Die swart vlieëvanger word ook opgemerk.

Ons word op die aand op 'n Safari rit geneem op die wildsplas en sien besonderse diere onder andere 'n aardvark wat pienkerig lyk in die skerplig van die kolligte. Die volgende verrassing is die klein wilde kat ('n vaalboskat) wat met sy opgepofte stert swart gepunt vinnig wegvlug onder die ligte uit. 'n Oulike klein bakoor jakkalsie maak ook sy verskyning. 'n Naguiltjie wat vinnig wegvlieg bly ongeïdentifiseerd. Ons kry ook 'n muskeljaatkat te sien met sy lang gestrepte stert. Ons vind 'n boskorhaan wyfie op die grond waar sy doodstil sit en ons net aanstaar terwyl dit my kans gee om 'n paar foto's te neem met behulp van die kolligte. Daar is ook 'n hele paar boksoorte te siene. Ook kry ons dubbelsandpatryse en gewone dikkoppe wat in die donker nag wegvlieg.

Ons kan net sê dat ons in die klein groepie soveel genot ervaar het en gedeel het dat ons dit net as 'n hoogtepunt vir die jaar kan beskou wat moeilik geklop gaan word. Ook wil ek net vir almal van die span baie dankie sê dat hulle soveel gegee het vir die bewaring van die Waterberge se voëls. Met almal se hulp het ons vier van die 10 Virgin Pentads geel tot oranje gekleur met een Ad hoc kaart op 'n vyfde Pentad wat ook moontlik vol protokol kan kry.

Note: *BirdLife Northern Gauteng became the Local Conservation Group for this IBA. It will assist with bird-monitoring projects in the IBA, such as SABAP2, CWAC and ringing.*

Report Card – Waterberg IBA Atlas Camp

Pentad nr.		Pieter L	Pieter V	Rita	Status Now
2350_2750	7	16(F)	---	---	Yellow
2350_2805	5	40(F)	49(F)	39(F)	Orange
2345_2805		17(F)	---	22(F)	
2345_2810	1	23(F)	28(F)	---	Orange
2340_2800		14(A)	51(F)	37(F)	
2340_2810		45(F)	59(F)	40(F)	
2335_2805		29(F)	48(F)	31(F)	
2335_2810		16(A)	50(F)	---	
2355_2745	8	09(A)	---	---	
2335_2800		23(A)	---	---	
2340_2805		40(F)	36(F)	35(F)	
2345_2820	3	---	35(F)	---	Yellow
2340_2740		---	67(F)	---	
2335_2745		---	79(F)	---	
		Virgin Pentads 1, 3, 5, 7 & 8			TOTAL
	Cards	11	10	6	27
	Full	7	10	6	23
	Adhoc	4	0	0	4
	Total Birds Listed	272	502	204	978

Virgin Pentads in Grey

- (A) - Adhoc
- (F) - Full Protocol

Summary:

- 4 Days
- 206 Hours
- 7 Persons attased - 4 Registered
- 27 Cards Completed (23 Full & 4 Adhoc)
- 4 Virgin Pentads now full protocol cards
- 1 Virgin Pentad now Adhoc Card
- Total of 978 Birds were listed
- 168 Individual Species were listed

Virgin Pentads:

1. 2345_2810
2. 2345_2815
3. 2345_2820
4. 2350_2800
5. 2350_2805
6. 2350_2810
7. 2350_2750
8. 2355_2745
9. 2355_2800
10. 2400_2750

What is a 'passerine'?

A passerine is a member of the order Passeriformes. Because this order is so large, it has been divided into two 'sub-orders', the oscine and sub-oscine passerines, split according to the structure of their vocal parts. The vast majority of passerines, such as sparrows, finches, warblers, tits and larks, are oscine passerines; the sub-oscine passerines include the antbirds and cotingas, and are mainly confined to South America.

Which is the most important sense for birds?

In all but a very few cases, their sight. Birds tend to have proportionately larger eyes and more acute vision than other vertebrates, with most species depending on this to find food and/or avoid predators. Hearing is also important, especially for some songbirds and nocturnal species such as owls and nightjars. Some birds, including seabirds, scavengers and nocturnal hunters, also have a pretty powerful sense of smell.



“Fascinating! Now he’s ringing her for identification.”

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!

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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