



Laniarius

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Notice to contributors

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

Kennisgewing aan bydraers

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial/Redaksioneel	2
Chairman's Report/Voorsittersverslag	3
Thirty years of birding in Pretoria (Part one)	6
The tricky aspect of birding ethics	9
Voëlring by Bishop Bird Park in Centurion	10
Ringershoekie / Ringer's corner.....	12
Waterberg Atlaskamp	13
North-east China – The Beidaihe Migration and the Tibetan Plateau.....	16
Western Osprey in the Kruger National Park.....	23
Leukistiese tiptol.....	24
Ete onder die doringboom	24
Rarities and unusual sightings	25

Credits

Front cover: Great Spotted Cuckoo juvenile, photographed at Kgomo-Kgomo by Clive Kaplan.
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

We must just remind people who contribute articles that they must send the article in MS Word format not PDF format. The reason for this is that minor corrections to the articles (such as spelling or grammar mistakes) can only be done in MS Word.

In the previous two editions of *Laniarius* (numbers 129 and 130) mention was made of the horrific fate of vultures that eat flesh from animals poisoned by poachers. Perhaps the most common and dramatic way in which this poisoning takes place is by poachers poisoning waterholes used by various animals for drinking. The poison commonly used for this purpose is cyanide which is relatively easy to obtain. Cyanide causes a protracted and agonising death. Recently, however, veterinary scientists have experimented on vultures with certain types of medication used by humans and animals. It was found that Voltaren, a very popular and widely used anti-inflammatory for both humans and animals, is extremely toxic to vultures. Voltaren is used quite widely on farms to ease painful joints in cows and, if a cow receiving this medication dies in the veld for some reason, the vultures may find it and eat some of the flesh resulting in rapid deaths of the birds.

On a very different note we shall describe a manner in which vultures have brought to the attention of farmers a little known manner of the death of some of their cattle. We recently visited an estate in the Drakensberg which had a well-designed hide close to a feeding spot

where the farmer provided the carcasses of cows that had died a natural death. The vultures, as they normally would do, attacked the carcass and, eventually, there was little but skin and bone left. The interesting phenomenon in the remains of the carcass was a large and tightly wrapped ball of small and large pieces of plastic which had been picked up and swallowed by the cow over a period of time. This ball of plastic caused a total blockage of the cow's intestines which led to the death of the cow.

The cormorant is a type of bird that has long fuelled our interest both because of its effect on trout stocks in rivers where we sometimes fish and because of its curious manner of standing on a branch above the water with wings outstretched. Recent studies have shown that cormorants are exceptionally efficient at catching fish and generally spend no more than an hour each day or even as little as 18 minutes fishing. They routinely catch 200 grams of fish in a single bout and can catch up to 40% of their body weight in one day. The cormorants feathers are unique in that each feather has a completely waterproof centre, but the outer part gets instantly wet. This helps the bird to dive quickly because of the weight of the feathers and, at the same time the waterproof section creates a thin insulating layer preventing the water from reaching the skin. By standing with wings spread wide, it quickly dries the wings.

Phillip and Jill de Moor



Chairman's Report/ Voorsittersverslag

Philip Calinikos

The birding year includes some very important dates for the celebration of our birds and special birding activities. The number of dates taken up in our calendar has grown over the years and unfortunately some of the dates now have some ominous connotations to them. As we are all aware the threats to our various bird species and to the habitats that they utilise continue to grow and multiply. BirdLife South Africa recently decided to launch a campaign linked to International Vulture Awareness Day which is aimed at publicising the desperate plight that the vulture species of the world are in. It is quite conceivable that species will become extinct within our lifetime should conservation actions fail.

The campaign, which was a huge success and achieved incredible publicity was centred around the identification of a new South African species, the Tuluver. In due course, Tuluver turned into Vulture and was revealed as a doctored photo of a Lappet-faced Vulture. The publicity was world-wide and a number of overseas birders were found to be booking flights to South Africa to view the bird!

Another group of birds that is suffering from growing human predation are the migrants that visit us every year. Their migration routes are becoming increasingly precarious with hunters using the opportunity to cash in. In a recent article in the UK's Guardian newspaper it was estimated that 25 million migrants are being destroyed every year in European, Middle Eastern and North African countries. A World Migratory Bird Day has been launched and it is hoped that this will help to create awareness of the plight of migrant species as well (<http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org>)

I recently attended the launch of the updated publication of the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas of South Africa at the very impressive new premises of BirdLife South Africa. This contains a national inventory of all the sites requiring conservation attention. As an affiliated club of BirdLife South Africa it is required of us to support conservation efforts whenever we can. This was the reason why we as a committee agreed to our club becoming the Local Conservation Group for the Waterberg IBA. We have also for some years now provided in our club's budget for conservation activities and we thank you for the support that you as members have given us through donations, membership fees and participation in special events and courses.

Most of the members of the current committee have served for very long periods of time. Even though this has resulted in stability on the committee, the lack of new blood on the committee and on our sub-committees is of some concern. It is critical that we therefore call upon you as our members to consider joining us either at committee or



sub-committee level in the year to come.

Although no special expertise is required we have identified some areas that require specific attention and these include the following:

- IT experience that will help in maintaining our Website and Facebook site.
- Assisting with the annual programme of activities such as outings, camps and courses.
- Public relation activities.
- Conservation activities especially with

regard to our custodianship of the Waterberg IBA.

- Leadership of outings and camps.

Please consider putting that little bit extra into our club so that we can all benefit from a stronger and better club. If you are willing to help please do not hesitate to contact me or any of our other committee members. We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours in birding

BirdLife South Africa Press Release: The last stand for our birds Johannesburg, 12 September 2015

One-third of the 112 most important sites for nature in South Africa are facing imminent danger of irreversible damage, according to a new South African IBA Status Report published today by BirdLife South Africa.

These sites – known as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) – are threatened by invasive species, changes in habitats through incorrect burning practices, and agricultural expansion or mismanagement. Unprotected IBAs in particular are deteriorating at a concerning rate, most especially in grasslands, wetlands and fynbos, but habitats in protected IBAs are also showing signs of deterioration. Over 85% of all IBAs face high to very high levels of threats, and there is little distinction between protected and unprotected IBAs in this regard. The IBAs with the highest and most imminent threats will be included in BirdLife International’s list of IBAs in Danger, the global list of priority sites identified for urgent action.

This South African IBA Status Report is accompanied by a revised National IBA Directory, building on and up-dating the first such inventory published in 1998. It provides updated information of the most important aspect of each of these 112 IBAs, including the geography and climate of the area, the list of the bird species found at the IBA, the biggest threats to the site, and what conservation action is taking place to secure the IBA. This publication can be used by conservation practitioners and planners to prioritise their work, by developers who need to understand the sensitivity of an area, and can even be used by bird enthusiasts to plan a birding trip.

The 112 IBAs in South Africa are the last stand for bird conservation on a landscape level. Protecting these sites has benefits not only for South Africa’s birds, but also for other animals, plants and the vital ecological services these sites provide to people. These services include providing us with fresh water, managing floods, controlling disease, and providing grazing lands for livestock farming. Conserving IBAs is also important for attaining our government’s environmental commitments like the Convention

on Biological Diversity's Aichi Target 11 that calls for the expansion of terrestrial Protected Areas by at least 17%, and the Convention on Migratory Species. Therefore, their deteriorating status is a very high concern which requires immediate attention from government agencies and other stakeholders.

The main recommendations from the IBA Status Report to remedy this situation include that government needs to allocate more resources towards managing protected areas and expanding the protected areas network through biodiversity stewardship. That IBAs should be used as a first cut when identifying priority areas for conservation, including for protected area expansion. By following the published management guidelines, the agricultural sector is able to manage their lands for the parallel purposes of producing livestock, improving veld condition and conserving biodiversity. IBAs should be considered as red flags and often exclusion areas when other development options are being considered, such as mining.

While both these publications are milestones for bird conservation, they need to be seen as the spearhead which will now be used to lobby, plan and implement effective conservation for birds, their habitats and other biodiversity.

Both the revised IBA Directory and IBA Status Report can be bought in hard copy from BirdLife South Africa's IBA Programme (011 789 1122, daniel.marnewick@birdlife.org.za), or the electronic versions can be downloaded for free from <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/important-bird-areas/documents-and-downloads>

For further information please contact:

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"I suppose it had to happen one day!"

Thirty years of birding in Pretoria (Part one)

Philip Calinikos

Early September is a beautiful time to be in Pretoria. The Jacarandas have not bloomed yet, but with the weather warming up and the trees and flowers starting to bloom, one can see the immediate reaction in our birdlife. The dawn chorus is that much louder and varied, and the birds are inspecting nesting holes or starting to build nests. The imminent arrival of migrants adds further excitement. Some birds like the swallows and swifts are already here whereas the rest are well on their way. As I write this I am sitting under our large Weeping Boer Bean which is in full bloom and attracting a large number of birds.

Most of the birding I have done in Pretoria over the years has obviously been focussed around my home pentads surrounding the suburb of Colbyn. Colbyn is blessed in being at the cross roads of four bordering pentads which include the newly proclaimed Colbyn Wetland Nature Reserve (CWNR), The Pretoria National Botanical Gardens (PNBG), the university's LC de Villiers Sportsfields and Experimental Farm and the dams there, the Meintjies Kop Ridge that runs through in a westerly direction to the Union Buildings as well as the open grasslands of what was previously the Rietondale ARC Farms along Soutpansberg Road. As a result there are a variety of habitats within a couple of kilometres of each other. Most of the records in this report are from Pentads 2540_2810 and 2540_2815 and date back over thirty years.

Our birding in Colbyn began in 1983 when my wife and I bought our first little house in the western part of the suburb shortly after our marriage. This also coincided with us becoming members of the then Northern Transvaal Ornithological Society. In 1995 we moved to the eastern side of Colbyn to a property bordering on the southern slope of the ridge. Even though Colbyn is so close to the CBD it has managed to retain an ambience of country style living due to its well treed streets and

open spaces. As a result we have enjoyed very rich birding here with a list which currently exceeds 170 species, of which around a 140 or so have been seen from within the confines of the two properties we have owned. It has also been fascinating to witness the ebb and flow of certain species over the years with some disappearing completely and others arriving and establishing healthy populations.

In the early days there were virtually no Red-eyed Doves, Grey Go-away-birds, Thick-billed Weavers and Common Mynas. Now these are some of the most common species to be found. Other birds such as the Bokmakierie have disappeared completely from the suburb.

THE LIFERS

Amazingly enough we have been fortunate to record a number of lifers within our garden and surrounding areas. On the morning of 10 April 1989 I noticed two raptors sitting in a bare tree in our neighbour's garden. One of them proved to be a juvenile Ovambo Sparrowhawk which we had never seen before (refer *Laniarius* No 36 June 1989). Our garden in Doreen Street also attracted our first Purple Indigobird as well as our first Marsh Warbler. Both these birds visited us for a number of years with the Marsh Warbler returning to exactly the same bush every year. Garden Warbler was another lifer that we picked up while out strolling with our dogs one afternoon.

BIRDS OF PREY

It is strange that the sighting of a raptor in suburbia elicits so much excitement. My experience has been that there are a surprising number of them around if one knows what tell-tale signs to look out for. Invariably we have been alerted to the presence of a raptor by the alarm calls of other birds such as the Grey

Go-away-bird. Some of the raptors recorded were inevitably once off fly-by's such as the African Fish Eagle, Booted Eagle and Cape Vulture. Verreaux's (Black) Eagles have also been seen occasionally soaring past (most likely the pair from the Wonderboom Nature Reserve). One memorable afternoon a flock of approximately 30 Amur Falcons flew over the suburb. There is a well-known pair of Ayres's Hawk Eagles that frequent Meintjies Kop and these birds occasionally quarter along the ridge and over our property. On one memorable occasion a juvenile bird was seen together with the adults. The rest of the raptors recorded are mostly resident birds that show themselves every now and then. These include Black, Ovambo and Little Sparrowhawks as well as African Harrier Hawk which have all made use of our gardens for hunting. The CWNRR attracts species such as Long-crested Eagle (recorded regularly in the past year), Black-shouldered Kite and Common Buzzard. A Lizard Buzzard took up residence near the wetland in the late eighties and could be seen roosting on the same branch every afternoon. Unfortunately it has not been seen since but recent additions to the raptor list have been Gabar Goshawk and a swift flying Peregrine Falcon.

Of the nocturnal birds of prey three owl species have been recorded. Western Barn Owl is heard screeching occasionally and a pair of Spotted Eagle Owls frequents the large trees on our neighbour's property and is regularly seen in the early evening. Another promising rediscovery is a sighting of three Marsh Owls in the CWNRR during a bird monitoring visit. This species was last seen by me about ten years ago and it is exciting to know that they are back in the wetland. Although not birds of prey, other nocturnal species recorded have been both Fiery-necked and Freckled Nightjar.

THE MIGRANTS

The most obvious migrants are the swallow, martin and swift species that soar above the Colbyn Ridge looking for insects on the wing. These include Greater and Lesser Striped

Swallows, Barn Swallow, White-rumped, Little and African Palm Swifts. The Common House Martins intermingle with the resident Rock Martins on occasion.

European Bee-eaters are not only beautiful birds but phenomenal aerobatic experts and it is such a pleasure to watch them in the summer months. Sometimes they number over forty birds in a flock and there is a particular tree that they love roosting in close to the northern end of the CWNRR.

The summer months are also enlivened by the calls of the cuckoos that have arrived to breed. We normally have sightings of both Diederik and Klaas's Cuckoos which can sometimes be easily confused. More elusive are the Black and Red-chested Cuckoos but their calls are unmistakable and can sometimes drive you to distraction especially on moonlit nights! The other species to be recorded every year is Levaillant's Cuckoo which is obviously attracted by the family groups of Arrow-marked Babblers in the suburb.

A Woodland Kingfisher was recorded for the first time on 8 December 1985 and a pair were recorded the following season on 4 December 1986 (*Laniarius* No 30 June 1987).



Philip Galimkos

Long-crested Eagle/Langkuifarend

These stunningly beautiful birds are now regular visitors and it is so exciting to hear their call towards the end of November each year. Only one species of Stork has been recorded and that was a single Abdim's Stork that visited the LC de Villiers grounds some years ago. Spotted Flycatchers normally visit in some numbers and one is invariably able to track one down in a fairly short space of time if one knows where to look. An interesting winter migrant to our area is Fairy Flycatcher and I have recorded this bird on two occasions both in late August.

THE WETLAND BIRDS

The Colbyn Wetland is a haven for a number of resident species. In summer there are active breeding colonies of Village Weaver, Thick-billed Weaver, Southern Red Bishop and White-winged Widowbird. Southern Masked and Cape Weaver are also present. A few Red-collared Widowbirds also bounce across the flooded grasslands in their display flight. Yellow-crowned Bishops are present from time to time.

The Wetland resonates with the calls of Cape Grassbird, Levallant's Cisticola, Zitting Cisticola and Rufous-naped Lark in early spring. Family groups of Bronze Mannikin feast busily on the seed-heads of grass while a male Pin-tailed Whydah dives in to assert its dominance. The Wetland was home to a stable population of Orange-breasted Waxbill in the past and on a recent monitoring visit it was pleasing to record a small party of these beautiful little birds once again.

During the summer months, the Wetland attracts a number of warbler species. Most common are Little Rush Warbler and African

Reed Warbler which can easily be tracked down by their calls. Lesser Swamp Warbler has been recorded together with the occasional Great Reed Warbler which can be identified by its loud grating call.

The Wetland is bisected by the Hartbees-spruit which ultimately joins up with the Moreletaspruit before flowing into Rietvlei Dam. Bird species recorded along the spruit itself include African Black Duck, and a number of kingfisher species namely Giant, Half-collared and Malachite.

THE STIFFS

Besides birding, one of our other regular past times is jogging through the neighbourhood in the early mornings. It is quite normal to record over 50 birds on a forty minute run in summer and around 35 in winter. One has to rely pretty heavily on calls to get the list up to this tally. Some special sightings on these jogs have been a flock of over thirty African Olive Pigeon, smaller parties of African Green Pigeon, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike, Grey-headed Bush-shrike and African Grey Hornbill. An unfortunate aspect of these jogs however is seeing how many birds end up as roadkill on a daily basis. The usual casualties include Laughing, Cape Turtle and Red-eyed Dove, Dark-capped Bulbuls and Karoo Thrushes. Some surprisingly large birds have also ended up on the death list such as Spotted Thick-knee and Hadedah! Some of the more unusual roadkills we have encountered have been Kurrichane Buttonquail, Harlequin Quail and Violet-eared Waxbill.

To be continued... 🐦

How do birds get their colours?

Some colours are produced by pigments present in feathers; others, such as the iridescent blues, greens and purples of hummingbirds, are created by the refraction of light within the feather structure. Our perception of a bird's colour is also affected by the quality of light: sunrise and sunset make colours appear richer and warmer; while harsh midday sun may 'burn out' a bird's plumage, making it appear paler than usual.

The tricky aspect of birding ethics

Nicky Glennie

What are your thoughts about the following prospect:

- you find a special bird within two hours of Pretoria
- the bird is very rare and therefore you know that it will be put under unnecessary pressure if people are chasing it
- you are well aware that other birders have had to travel sometimes thousands of kilometres just to try and catch a glimpse of a bird like this.

So what do you do? Do you tell only some trustworthy people? Or do you tell the general public? Or do you keep quiet about it and hope that the location doesn't get discovered and over-run by well-meaning enthusiasts, causing a stampede, possibly leading to the bird's premature demise?

I find this to be a huge ethical dilemma and would love to hear your thoughts!

My confession is that this is a real example

and the bird is a 'xanthochroic' form of the gorgeous Crimson-breasted Shrike – otherwise known as a 'yellow morph'. This bird was first observed in 2014 and is presumably the result of a recessive gene being inherited from both parents. I have yet to find a simple explanation about the genetics – it seems rather complicated. There are also reports that xanthochroism can be as a result of diet, but I am not convinced about that being the cause in this case. Regardless – from an amateur photographer's point of view, the Crimson-breasted Shrike is a difficult bird to capture because it is constantly moving around as it forages. Just as you think it is time to press the shutter, the bird hops away! I did manage to get one or two reasonable shots, though, and I am happy to share this one with you.

Ps. If anyone does want to find out about where to see this delightful bird, please feel free to contact me directly: nicky@africanaturetraining.co.za



Yellow morph of the Crimson-breasted Shrike/Rooiborslaksman

Voëlring by Bishop Bird Park in Centurion: 4 Junie 2015

Amanda le Roux

Ek ry om 5:20 by my huis na Bishop Park om die ringsessie onder leiding van Johan Snyman te gaan bywoon. My kar wat lekker warm in die motorhuis geslaap het, jok skaamteloos vir my oor die temperatuur toe ek by my hekke uitry. Die 17°C is ver van die 5° minimum voorspelling van die weerburo vir die vroeë Saterdagoggend 4 Junie 2015.

Ek woon baie naby aan die park en kry vinnig die ingang van die park aan die einde van die cul de sac Roosmaryn's Place. Die glyhek staan toe, maar ek sien darem dat dit nie gesluit is nie. As ek binne is, sien ek 'n klomp karre in die parkeerarea staan, donker verlate, misterieus.... Waar is al die mense? Ek parkeer en klim uit. Die weer is wonderlik; windloos, koud maar verduursaam. Ek stap na die klein hekkie agter die parkering wat die park se ingang is. Ek loop sonder 'n flitslig, want die volmaan is helder. Nog steeds geen teken van mense nie.... dan hoor ek yster teen yster gekap-kap-kap. Ek loop by 'n breë paadjie af en kom af op pale wat in die paadjie ingekap is en nette wat tussenin halfmas hang. Ek loop aan en begin stemme hoor. Ek bemerk bewegende kopflitse en herken Wanda en Frik se stemme, twee lede van ons voëlklub. Hulle is besig om die nette op te slaan. Ons groet en ek begin om die prosesse te volg en vind dit baie interessant. Dit word baie metodies gedoen en twee mense saam is beter om die nette wat maklik kan koek, op te slaan. Die koue vingers is maar dom en wil nie altyd saamwerk nie, maar die ervare en gesoute ringers doen dit nog steeds behendig ten spyte van die koue. Frik se seun Chris sluit ook by ons aan en ek hoor dat verskeie groepe op verskillende paadjies nette opslaan. Ek stap terug en die dan is dit 'n gewemel van mense wat tafels, stoele opslaan en hulle ringappaaraat regkry tussen die parkering en die hekkie.

Ek volg die voorbeeld, maar ek het kameras, boeke, skryfbehoeftes en versnaperings. My doel is nie om te ring nie, maar om te kom kyk hoe die ringers ring en oor hulle belangrike werk 'n artikel te skryf. Dit begin lig word en op 'n stadium roep iemand dat dit tyd is om die nette te besoek.

Ek stap saam en sien hoe versigtig word die voëls se skerp kloue uit die fyn misnette gehaal. Dit is 'n langsame proses. Die voëls moet ten alle tye so kalm gehou word as moontlik. Die voëls word in 'n toeryg materiaal sakke geplaas. Ek vra vrae so ver as wat ek saamstap: hoe lank die mense al voëls ring en hoe hulle betrokke geraak het.

Marina vertel dat hul sesjarige dogtertjie vreeslik begin belangstel het in voëls en hulle het begin om plekke te besoek spesiaal om na voëls te kyk. Hulle gaan onder andere gereed na Rietvelddam toe. Marina het toe op die internet van die ringery van die klub gehoor en so begin ring. Die gogga het haar behoorlik gebyt en sy geniet dit so dat sy die dae aftel voor elke ringsessie. Haar dogtertjie kom gewoonlik saam na die ringsessies, maar as gevolg van 'n slegte verkoue kon sy die oggend nie saamkom nie.

Die ringers is mense wat 'n passie vir voëlringwerk het en ek kom dit agter as ek sien en hoor hoe hulle die voëls hanteer. Dat die welstand van voëls voorkeur geniet by almal is baie duidelik. Daar is die gekwalifiseerde A-ringers en dan C-ringers wat elk onder toesig van 'n A-ringer werk. Bystand en raad word gedurigdeur gegee.

Daar heers ook 'n wonderlike kameradie en geselligheid tussen die mense. Daar is 'n pa, seun en oupa betrokke. Chris wat al vyftien jaar ringwerk doen, het 'n baie groot en algemene kennis van voëls wat mens agterkom met die vrae wat hy behendig antwoord en hoe

hy vinnig hulp verleen om moeilike voëls te help identifiseer. Die gesprekke brei telkens uit en verhale van ondervindinge van vorige ringsessies word telkens gedeel. Tussen die mengelmoes van ringapparate, boeke en skryfbehoeftes word ook koffie, beskuit en ontbyt genuttig. Die aankondiging word weer gemaak dat dit tyd is om die nette te besoek. Hulle spandeer baie tyd en geld aan die spesiale stokperdjie, want spesiale apparaat word gebruik om die voëls te weeg en te meet en te ring en boeke is nodig vir identifisering. Hulle is ook innoverend en kunstig met vervaardiging van hulle kassies om hulle apparaat in te hou. Sakkies is tuisgemaak en pilhouers wat oulik versier is, word gebruik om die voëls in te plaas om te weeg. Ek beplan definitief om volgende keer die interessante apparaat te fotografeer en in 'n artikel daaroor te skryf.

'n Spesiale voël wat uit die nette uitgehaal word, is 'n naguil. Dis 'n voël wat selfs in die hand baie moeilik is om te identifiseer, maar na 'n noukeurige bestudering van heelwat hulpbronne word dit as die Rooiwangnaguil geïdentifiseer. Dit is weereens Chris wat gou sy boeke te voorskyn bring wat meer inligting oor vlerk- en stertpatrone van naguile gee. Paula wat die naguil uit die nette gehaal het, kry 'n lesing van hom oor hoe om die naguil se stert- en vlerkpatroon te bestudeer om tussen die naguile te onderskei. Dat hier naguile hier voorkom is vir my 'n verrassing aangesien dit 'n klein park is in 'n stedelike gebied. Dit laat my besef hoe ringwerk belangrike data te boek stel om die verspreiding van die voëls te toon. Chris herinner Paula om die naguil op dieselfde plek te gaan neersit naby waar hy in die net gevang is, en nie soos die ander voëls net by die ringplek vry te laat nie. Dit is 'n nagvoël en hy is waarskynlik uit sy slaapplek versteur.

Die ringers word telkens deur die voëls gepik en ek hoor dat die Dikbekwewers die seerste byt. Ander seer byters is die laksman familiegroep. Op my vraag of roofvoëls seer maak, word ek vertel dat hulle nie sommer byt nie, maar hulle skerp kloue baie gevaarlik is. Die roofvoëls word in Bal-chatris gevang, 'n hok wat

ontwerp is om roofvoëls met lewendige aas te lok en te vang. Sodra die roofvoël in die hok land val die deur toe en kan hy gering word.

Baie langstertjies word die oggend gering veral Swartbandlangstertjies. Een Swartbandlangstertjie word selfs drie keer in die nette gevang. Daar is ook 'n Bosveldtjerikik, Suidelike Waterfiskaal, Gewone Laksman, Gewone Janfrederik, Gryskopmossie, Gewone Mossie, 'n Rooikopvink, Swartsuikerbekkie, Geelbeklysters, Kleinglansspreeu, Rooiboersduif, Jamesonse Vuurvinkies, Dikbekwewer, twee Rooivlekktagras, en Fiskaalvlieëvangsers wat gering word. Met die vorige ringsessie by Bishop Bird Park is 'n Oranjeborsboslaksman, Hofangers, Europese Rietsangers, Klein Heuningwyser en Fiskaalvlieëvangsers gevang. Ek neem naby foto's van meeste van die voëls.

Die oggend gaan vinnig verby, kamp word afgeslaan en die ringers gaan huis toe om bietjie verlore slaap in te haal. Ek het nog baie vrae wat ek aan die ringers wou vra, maar dit moet oortaan tot 'n volgende besoek aan 'n ringsessie. Nog 'n dag en nog 'n ringsessie wat ten einde geloop het, waar waardevolle inligting van voëls versamel is wat belangrik is vir die bewaring van ons gevleuelde vriende. 🦉



Amanda le Roux

Rooiwangnaguil/ Rufous-cheeked Nightjar

Ringershoekie/Ringers' corner

Frik du Plooy

RINGESSIE BY BUFFELSDRIF

Saterdagoggend 8 Augustus 2015 het 7 A-ringers en 6 C-ringers (ringers wat nog besig is met opleiding) om 05:00 by Buffelsdrif bymekaar gekom. Rob Geddes het voorgestel dat ons 'n nuwe ringplek naby die Krokodilrivier moet probeer. Die hoogtepunte vir die dag was die hervangs van 'n Bontkiewiet (Blacksmith Lapwing) deur Chris du Plooy. Die Safring ring nommer D52015 was 9 jaar, 11 maande en drie en twintig dae gelede deur Michal Groenewald gering. Johan van Rooyen het toe besluit om die spesiale vangs sommer ou Chappie te doop. Daar is ook twee Gewone Koesters (African Pipit) gevang en gering. Dit was vir beide Frik en Chris du Plooy die eerste ring van die spesie in die 15 jaar sedert hulle begin ring het. 'n Ander verrassing was die vang van 'n Kaapse Vleisanger (Little Rush-Warbler). Daar is al in die verlede van hulle in die Buffelsdrif omgewing gevang maar dit is spesiaal omdat hulle nog nooit voorheen so diep in die winter gevang is nie. Ander oulike spesies wat gevang is was Langstertlaksman (Magpie Shrike), Bruinkopvisvanger (Brown-hooded Kingfisher), Koningblousysie (Violet-eared Waxbill) en Kuifkopvisvanger (Malachite Kingfisher). Janine kon ongelukkig nie vir "Houdini" vang nie. Die gelukkige Gewone Vleiloerie (Burchell's Coucal) het verskeie kere in die net gevlieg maar ons kon nooit betyds daar wees om hom te vang nie! Die totaal vir die dag was meer as 'n honderd voëls, wat 'n goeie getal vir 'n ringsessie in die koue winter maande is.

A-RINGERS

Ons is gelukkig om 'n gekwalifiseerde ringer uit Engeland in ons gelede

te verwelkom, naamlik Darrell Abernethy (werksaam by Tukkie's). Ons verwelkom ook vir Janine Goosen al die pad uit Welkom in die Vrystaat wat ook onlangs by BLSA begin werk het. Johan van Rooyen van Rustenburg Voëlkлуб is nou ook weer terug in Pretoria.

ROOFVOËLTOER

Op 12 Junie het sewe A-Ringers (Chris en Frik du Plooy, Wanda Louwrens, Johan Snyman, Marie Uckermann, Paula en Martin Steyn) en C-ringer Julian du Plooy op 'n Limpopo roofvoëltoer vertrek. Die Vrydagaand het ons by Harnham House net buite Makhado (Louis Trichardt) geslaap en Saterdagoggend by Balerno (net wes van Mapungubwe). Die Sondag het ons suidwaarts begin ry en buite Tom Burke by Thorn Bush Safari's oornag. Ons laaste aand was nog verder suid 10 km vanaf Lephalale (Ellisras) by Zambiziaca (Jan Eckardt se plaas). Oor die vier dae het ons 1500 km gery en 'n total 23 roofvoëls gering: 14 Bleeksingvalke (Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk), 4 Donkersingvalke (Dark Chanting Goshawk), 2 Grootrooivalke (Greater Kestrel), een Bruinslangarend (Brown Snake-Eagle), een Blouvalk (Black-shouldered Kite) en een Gebande Sperwer (Shikra).

Ons het ook die volgende twee hervangste gekry:

- Wanda Louwrens het op 14 Junie 2015 'n Bleeksingvalk (Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk) met 'n Safringnommer K29208 gevang wat op 30 Januarie 2012 deur Chris du Plooy vir die eerste keer gering is.
- Julian du Plooy se retrap van 'n Bleeksingvalk (Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk) op 14 Junie 2015 was oorspronklik op 13 Junie 2010 deur sy oupa Frik du Plooy gering. 🐦

Waterberg Atlaskamp: Mei 2015

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 Programkoördineerder die Atlaskampe gereël. Komma-Nader en D'Nyala is as twee kamp-plekke oor agt dae bespreek. Pieter wat m.b.v. Google Maps gaan kyk het wat die afstande is om die 'virgin pentads' te bereik en omdat die hoofdoel 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.

Dinsdag: Terugslag nommer twee; verdooemende nuus: Rita skakel my 'n dag voor ons vertrek om te sê dat sy die D'Nyala 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 omdat 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 kamplek 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.



Amanda le Roux

Die Waterberg atlasgroep: Pieter, Janelle, Amanda, Pieter, Rita, Fanie, Proffie en Hannalien



Buks die renoster

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 10:14 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 13:00 by 31°C 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 reggekry. Ons kom by Bateleur aan teen laatmiddag met die temperatuur al so hoog as 34°C. 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 sonder nog nie aangekom nie en ontvangs by 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 15 km 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 rybaar. 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 atlas te voet om die voertuig. Met die terugry is Hannalien, Proffie en Rita baie gelukkig om 'n Witkruisarend te sien wat hulle in Plan B pentad kan ops kryf. Vir die res van die dag doen ons op en om die Bateleur kamp pentads. Ons hoop dat die swaarvoertuig teen die volgende dag weg sal wees. Pieter en Janelle wat Marken omry om ander virgin pentads te probeer atlas, kry ook teespoed deurdat hulle toegang geweier word by Lalalala. Hulle atlas een pentad en kom nie by die tweede virgin pentad uit nie.

Op Werkersdag word ons heerlik bederf deur die Bateleurspan wat ons op 'n Safaririt op die plaas rondneem en ons sien heelwat bokke en voëls onder andere Witkatlagters, Rooirugstreekkoppies, Klipstreekkoppies, Swartpieke, Gewone Koesters. Sabotalewerikke, Gewone Troupante, Kransasvoëls, Rooivlerktjagras, Witliesbosbontrokkies, Gewone Melbas, Swartwang-, Koningblou- en Gewone Sysies.

Die middag word ons deur die Bateleur span op 'n "Pontoon Sundowner Cruise" op die Palalarivier geneem. Leon is ons skipper. Ons sien 'n Swartkopreier en 'n Bloureier wat langs mekaar op 'n paal se dwarsstut langs



Die Palalarivier

die rivier sit, Nonnetjieseende, Kolganse, Rietduikers, Slanghalsvoëls, Groenrugreier, Bruinkopvisvangers, Bontvisvangers, Witkruiswindswaels en Kleinwindswaels en ook sien die jonger Pieter opgewonde 'n Kleinrietreier vinnig in die riete verdwyn.

Volgende oggend vroeg net na middernag ontvang ons 'n SMS dat die swaarvoertuig verwyder is en dat ons pad weer oop is. Ons verdeel 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 verduaal in die beboste dele op ongemerkte wildspaadjies kry ons die pentad ge-atlas en sit ons hom op die kaart.

Ons beweeg aan na waar Rita, Hannalien en Proffie heen is om nog 'virgin pentads' te gaan atlas. Dit is wonderlik stil en ongereg en orals waar ons stop vir voëls verwonder ons ons aan die grootsheid en skoonheid van die natuur. Ons kry twee Papegaaiduifies te sien wat baie spesiaal is. Ons sien ook 'n hele paar Kaalwangvalke. 'n Reusevisvanger 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 Swartvlieëvanger word opgemerk, so ook die Rooikeelbyvreters en Kleinbyvreters.

Ons word die aand op 'n safaririt geneem op die wildsplaa en sien besonderse diere onder andere 'n aardvark wat pienkerig lyk in die skerp kolligte. Die volgende verrassing is die klein wilde kat ('n Vaalboskat) wat met sy opgepofte stert swart gepunt vinnig weglug onder die ligte uit. 'n Oulike klein Bakoorkalkalsie maak ook sy verskyning. 'n naguiltjie wat vinnig wegvlieg bly ongeïdentifiseerd. Ons kry ook 'n muskejaatkat 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 weglieg.

Ons kan net sê dat ons met die klein groepie atlassers soveel genot ervaar het en gedeel het dat ons dit net as 'n hoogtepunt vir die jaar kan beskouw met moeilik geklop gaan word. Ons waardeer dat die span 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.

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.

The Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET) 

Is the plumage of birds waterproof?

In many cases, yes. And water does not just flow off a duck's back, but also off the backs of grebes, coots, geese and swans. These birds regularly anoint their plumage with oil from a preen gland, enabling them to spend long periods on the surface of the water. However, several families that spend much of their time at sea or swimming cannot fully waterproof their plumage. These include frigatebirds, which are in the air when they are away from their nest, and cormorants, which are obliged to stretch their wings after feeding in order to dry them.

North-east China – The Beidaihe Migration and the Tibetan Plateau

Ken Logan – www.birdphotography-kenlogan.co.za

We spent 26 days in China. That is a long time to be eating Chinese food every day, though we did manage one pizza (well sort of) and one steak. This was our first visit to China and we found it to be a very different place, and in many respects a very impressive one. It is amazing what a decade of economic growth at 8% or 9% will do for your economy. China is very much a first world economy, many times more so than South Africa with really impressive motorways, high speed railways, modern airports and Beijing looks very much a first world capital city with that incredible “birds’ nest” Olympic stadium.

Chinese cities are not pretty as all Chinese seem to live in 30-story apartment blocks and there are literally thousands of them for as far as the eye can see, but they are all going green. I could not believe how every street

in Beijing was lined with trees and every motorway off-ramp had been turned into a mini garden and the centre reservations were filled with roses, for kilometre after kilometre. There are nurseries in the rural areas which stretch for hectares all growing trees which are then sold to the government for planting on hillside after hillside; small scale is something the Chinese do not understand.

We spend the first two days in Beijing playing tourist, doing Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the next day the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall. An interesting look into China’s history. Then we were off to Beidaihe, 300 kilometres away on the east coast, timing our arrival when the migration is at its peak in the second week of May. Well it was supposed to be at its peak - it was in fact quite light - the only significant flocks we



All photos by Ken Logan

The Great Wall of China



Buddhist prayer flags on hilltop

saw were of Japanese White-eyes coming through in their hundreds. Most birds we saw were in two and threes but we did see something new every day. One day the Oriental Cuckoos were not there, the next day we saw five different birds. After birding around Beidahe for three days, including a trip up into the hills for Ibisbill and Long-billed Plover, we moved on to Happy Island for another 3 night stop. Happy Island was once a great migration stopover point and birders had to sleep in a long dormitory shed. Today it is a Buddhist resort with excellent accommodation, lots of wooden boardwalks and Christmas lights in many of the trees – and of course less birds.

We were unfortunate in that our scheduled guide due to fly in from Hong Kong had Visa problems and never made it and our last minute replacement, while speaking good English, simply did not cut it as a bird guide. We were lucky to find some Dutch birders on the same circuit as us who had a brilliant guide and we tagged along with them for most of our Beidaihe and Happy Island stay.

Beidaihe is one of China's main seaside resorts 300 km to the east of Beijing. Another impressive town with a European feel to it, big wide streets and many hotels, many of which seem to close for the off season giving something of a ghost town impression. We birded here in several of the hotel gardens, in a large wetland area and along the sea front.



The city of Xining

The birds in China were skittish, particularly the waders and wildfowl, and it was practically impossible to get close enough for a reasonable photograph, yet strangely some birds like the Red-billed Blue Magpie which I had found impossible to photograph in India were easier here.

We spent a day up in the hills which gave us good views of Ibisbill and Long-billed Plover and the first of many Buntings; Little, Godlewski's and Meadow.

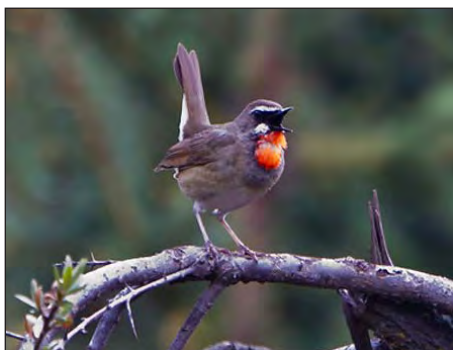
The wetlands gave us Swan Goose, Falcated Duck, Vinous-throated Parrotbill and Chinese Penduline Tit while the gardens produced Rubythroats, Thrushes, Starlings and even an Oriental Scops Owl. The sea front was good for many waders including great views



Blue-fronted Redstart



Little Curlew



Siberian Rubythroat



Far-Eastern Curlew

from a bridge of Long-toed Stints and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and along a river estuary great views of Little Curlew which I originally dismissed as just another Whimbrel, until I saw a Whimbrel and realised I had been looking at something very different just a couple of minutes ago. Luckily they were still out on the grassland and I managed a few shots. There were plenty of Brown Shrikes, Leaf Warblers, and buntings passing through and we had Chestnut flanked White-eye each morning in the hotel grounds.

Then we were off to Happy Island, not an Island as such, more a peninsula with 2 km of beach and beyond all the development there were open fields where the thrushes and buntings foraged and woodland areas where we found Rufous-tailed Robin, Oriental

Cuckoo, White-throated Rock Thrush, Yellow billed Grosbeaks, Japanese Sparrowhawk, and several flycatchers; Mugimaki, Asian Brown, Grey-streaked and Yellow-vented. The shoreline gave us Japanese Quail, Saunders, Relict and Black-tailed Gulls and Bar-tailed Godwits looking stunning in full breeding plumage. We even managed to crack a Chinese Egret, an out of range bird.

We walked our feet off on Happy Island, for 10 solid hours a day. It was hard work, the birds were not easy and they all took some tracking down. So we slept well particularly as it was a 20 minute walk back from the restaurant in the evening.

We saw over 60 new birds on this leg of the trip, a pleasing number given the limitations of our guide and we were feeling ready for the altitude of the Tibetan Plateau.

Returning to Beidaihe, we had another afternoon around the town before returning to Beijing, and flying the next morning to Xining for a 10 night stay on the Tibetan Plateau all above 3 000 m, reaching 4 500 on Erlashan Pass.

The city of Xining lies at 3 000 m in a valley deep in the barren Tibetan hills and we were to explore it later in the trip. We met our guide Kevin and our Land cruiser at the airport and departed immediately for the Beishan National Forest which lies to the north-east about three hour's drive away.

Here we spent two days birding some very



Red-flanked Bluetail

cold and chilly valleys up in the hills. All the hilltops were decorated with Buddhist prayer flags, all looking incredibly tatty. Mini rubbish dumps on the hilltops and as usual where there is rubbish there are birds. We fortunate to pick up a pair of Blue-eared pheasants from one of these hill top look outs where we had good but distant views. We were quick to spot the endemic Elliot's Laughing Thrush and the first of many Redstarts; we saw Black, Daurian, Hodgson's, White-throated, Blue-fronted, Ala Shan, White-winged and on our last day stunning views of White-bellied, 8 Redstarts in total. We had great views of Siberian Rubythroat and Red-flanked Bluetail and six Snow finches; Small, Plain-backed, Tibetan, Rufous-necked, White-rumped and White-winged during the trip.

The snowfinches were not too difficult to photograph, and the robins were far more confiding than in India. We managed to get close to some of the redstarts but not others, so despite the miserable grey weather we had to endure for most of our stay on the plateau, on some days we managed some semi decent shots.

At least we had a new competent guide, but he had never birded the Plateau in May and the truth be told we were still a couple of weeks too early for some of the altitudinal migrants and missed 3 or 4 birds as a result. One day was wiped out as a result of a snow blizzard. We nearly got stuck in our



Eurasian Skylark



Groundpecker

Land cruiser and the birding was so quiet on Erlashan Pass we returned to Xining a day early to do some more birding at lower altitudes.

Leaving Beishan we headed for Qinghai Lake, the third largest fresh water lake in the world I was told (not sure that is true though), a forbidding place with monotonous high altitude grasslands leading down to a barren shoreline with only gulls, Great Cormorants and several Bar-headed Geese for company. The grasslands held Tibetan Lark, our first ever Groundpecker, a charming little bird and the first of many Horned Larks, the most common bird on the plateau. We saw our first snowfinches here, White-rumped who co-habit with the Pika, sharing their burrows, and Plain-backed our one and only sighting of this bird.



Black-necked Crane

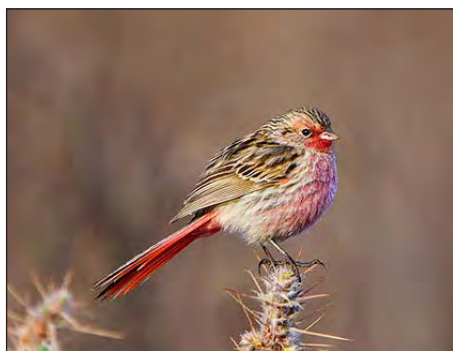
Now the lake is a great Chinese tourist attraction – why I do not know. I would love to know what they do there!! Maybe they become pilgrims because we saw plenty of those walking the several hundred kilometre long circumference of the lake, sleeping rough with just their bedrolls and a small rucksack on their backs. There is little accommodation along the lake so many camping sites have grown up with highly coloured pitched tents awaiting the summer influx. The latrine arrangements looked pretty horrendous but the Chinese seem to live with that.

We drove to a marshy area along the lake and got our first views of some distant Black-necked Cranes. Luckily a flock of ten or so birds flew past us a little later on. The Citrine Wagtails looked great in full breeding plumage as did the Common Redshank and Lesser Sand Plovers. They just would not allow a close enough approach for a really good shot. Nor would the single Pacific Golden Plover we found looking splendid in his black, white and gold. Brown-headed Gulls, Common Mergansers (Goosanders) and Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes sheltered in the small inlets. We even had a pair of Tibetan foxes chasing each other and diving through fences as though they did not exist.

We overnighted at Hiemahe along the lake in another very respectable hotel. All the accommodation had been excellent so far but we knew Erlashan Pass still awaited us.



Citrine Wagtail



Przevalskis Rosefinch

From Heimahe we left the lake and headed inland for the higher altitude grasslands and Rubber Mountain, home to Przevalski's Rosefinch, for me the most important bird of the trip. We arrived late afternoon and spent the last two hours of daylight searching an amazingly steep slope for the bird which we could hear calling above us. In fact it seemed to be calling all around us but we finally admitted defeat and staggered down the slope to find a new guesthouse/hotel in Chaka which once again was more than presentable.

Out on a new slope at 6:30 the following morning it took us half an hour to find a pair of Przevalski's and they entertained us for 15 minutes giving us really great views—whew!!



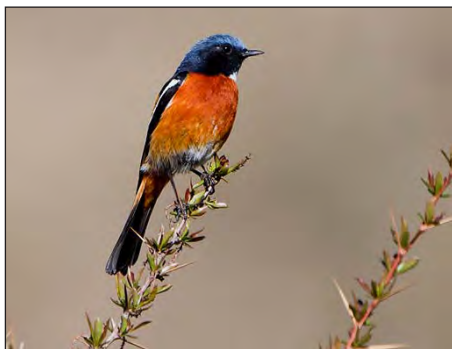
Pink-rumped Rosefinch



Daurian Partridge

This was to be the best morning's birding for some time and we quickly picked up Rosy and Water Pipits, Great Rosefinch, Brown and Robin Accentors, Plain Mountain Finch and even a Chinese Bush Warbler. It quickly became apparent that we were a couple of weeks too early for some of the altitudinal migrants which spend the summer months up here. Birds which are generally common like Mongolian Ground Jay, Mongolian Lark and Mongolian Finch were just not to be found. The next day was largely wiped out by snow blizzards. Having battled through snow three feet deep to reach the head of the valley there was no let-up in the weather and we had to fight our way out and just avoided being snowed in. The next day was desperately cold and windy and we fought long and hard to find a solitary Pallas's Sandgrouse, a pair of Ala Shan Redstarts and even a Tibetan Bunting. If the weather was like this at 4 000 m what would Er Lashan Pass have in store at over 4 500 m?

We were told that the accommodation at Wenquan on the other side of the pass would be the worst of the trip. As long as they have a western toilet I said; you will be sharing a knee trembler I was told. We were supposed to spend 2 nights there; time for a new plan I thought. After the pass we were supposed to overnight in a town called Gonghe on the way back to Xining. Gonghe was just a hundred kilometres from Er Lashan so why shouldn't we spend a night there on the way through



White-throated Redstart

and get up early to head for the Pass? Plan approved we spent the night in Gonghe (in a 5* hotel no!g) and headed out early for Erlashan on the new dual carriageway which now carves its way through the hills of the plateau. The weather once again was desperately cold with a strong wind blowing. At the pass I spent half an hour climbing higher into the teeth of the gale looking in vain for a Snowcock or Tibetan Sandgrouse. There were simply no birds around at all, so numbed to the bone we returned to the Land cruiser and decided to cut short our time here. We would return to Gonghe and spend an extra day birding around Xining at lower altitudes. This sort of flexibility is one of the major advantages when you have a customised tour just for you.



White-cheeked Nuthatch

It is actually cheaper than travelling with the big companies and well worth doing if you make the effort.

We left Gonghe the next morning on the old road which followed the Yellow River and spent a relaxed day birding our way back to Xining. Black-face Buntings, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes, Pale Rosefinch, Lesser White-throat, Grey Bushchat, Daurian Partridge and others made us feel we were on a birding trip again and not a polar expedition.

Back in Xining we had two and a half days left before our flights back to Beijing, a fill in really having cancelled the trip to Lhasa following the earthquakes in Nepal and Tibet.

We had an excellent morning in the Yaozi Forest Park, more tits, nuthatches, redstarts and to Stephanie's delight!! - plenty of Leaf Warblers. We had great views of Siberian Rubythroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, the endemic Gansu Leaf Warbler, White-cheeked Nuthatch, Crested Tit Warbler, Goldcrests, Grey-headed Bullfinches, and on our last day the stunning little White-bellied Redstart lifting our haul to eight redstarts.

So a difficult trip in some ways as the weather was not kind to us, but the accommodation was excellent and our guides did everything possible for us to smooth our way through some strange Chinese customs and

make sure we had everything we needed. Not the greatest trip for Stephanie – too many leaf warblers – but I enjoy Palearctic birding and we managed to see some really difficult birds both down at the coast and up on the plateau. It is a shame that you cannot quite get the timing right for the peak week of the migration and the return of the summer breeders on the high plateau.

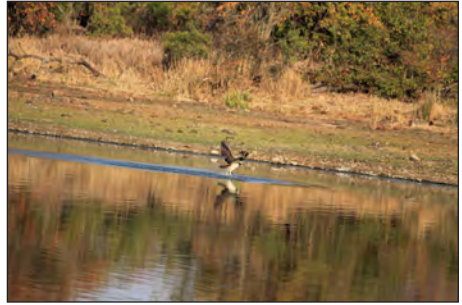
They say the Chinese eat everything on legs except a table, and everything that flies except a plane and for once my 400mm lens simply was not long enough as many birds were just a stretch too far away. Still all in all we did well I was hoping for about 135 birds (lifers) and finished with just over 120. Bird of the trip was undoubtedly Przevalski's Rosefinch (some call it Pink-tailed Bunting, another monotypic bird in its own family) but we had other special birds; Blue-eared Pheasant, Black-necked Crane, Little Curlew, Long-billed Plover, Daurian Partridge, all the snow finches, many of the rosefinches, 9 different buntings, Relict and Saunders Gulls, and a pocket full of redstarts and another highlight for me – all the waders in full breeding plumage. The Lesser Sand Plovers and Citrine Wagtails were simply stunning and my first Long-toed Stint was the cherry on top. This was thoroughly enjoyable as a Northern Palearctic birding trip. 🐦

Western Osprey in the Kruger National Park

John Sparrow

August the 23rd, Pioneer Dam bird hide, Mopane, Kruger National Park. It was a clear and windless day at the hide, the water of the dam was beautiful and still and it was such a tranquil setting. There were four of us in the hide drinking tea and coffee and watching the bird and reptile life on the dam. We were excited by a flock of White-faced Whistling Ducks that would periodically take off as a group and do a circuit of the small basin around the hide making their evocative calls, and on one occasion the circuit was initiated by an unsuccessful attempt on one of the flock members by a young and apparently inexperienced crocodile.

We had been at the hide for some two or three hours and were in the process of trying to distinguish a small wader at great distance, was it a Common Greenshank, or one of the sandpipers? A raptor floated into the immediate view at a height of about 50 m above the ground. What was it? It was definitely trolling the waters; was it an immature Fish Eagle? Suddenly the raptor plunged right into the water, going deep. It soon reappeared on the surface looking all bedraggled and bemused, and as it took off it was apparent that it had been successful as a 20 to 30 cm tiger fish was firmly clutched in the raptors talons. As it gradually gained height it flew past the hide as if expecting some applause. We very soon



Western Osprey making the catch



Western Osprey flying away with a tigerfish

realised from the replay that we had witnessed the very exciting hunt of a Western Osprey. As a corollary about half an hour later, our Osprey, now nicknamed 'Ozzy', was hunting again. 🦅

How did migration come about for birds in the first place?

It is often said that migrating birds head south from areas like Europe and North America for the winter – but this puts the cart before the horse. In fact it is thought that many migratory birds evolved in equatorial regions, and first headed north to avoid competition with other species there. By doing so, they could also take advantage of the long daylight hours and plentiful food supply of the northern summer. But they still had to return south again every winter, when the weather closed in. Thus migration was the key that opened up new lands for birds. It soon became a viable way of life for many species.

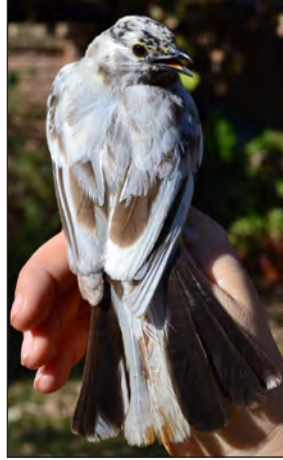
Leukistiese tiptol

Martin en Paula Steyn

Ons het die leukistiese (leucistic) Swartoog-tiptol die eerste keer in Mei in ons tuin gesien. Sedertdien is sy 'n gereelde besoeker aan ons voerplek. Hulle is gewoonlik twee saam en kom baie ongemaklik voor. Hulle is baie waaksaam en is die eerstes wat wegvlieg as die honde verbyloop. Die normale kleur maat kom baie beskermend voor en dit laat ons dink sy is 'n wyfie.

Ons het haar in Julie gevang en gering, maar kon nie verseker die geslag bepaal nie. Al die afmetings en gewig is baie dieselfde as die van die ander tiptolle in ons omgewing. Haar vere is ook in 'n goeie toestand.

Ons sal graag wil hoor of ander mense hulle ook opmerk in die Lyttelton omgewing. Laat gerus weet: steynpaula@gmail.com 🐦



Die leukistiese Swartoogtiptol

Paula Steyn

Ete onder die doringboom

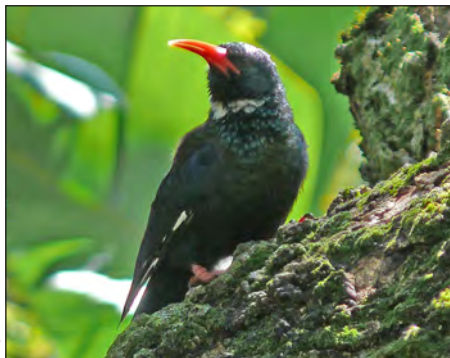
Jacques en Elzine Smuts

Ons ondervind nogal baie plesier met die voermandjies wat tydens die verjaardag-dinee van enkele jare gelede uitgedeel is. Ons het die mandjies onder die papierbasdoringboom (*Acacia sieberiana* var. *woodii*) voor ons sitkamer opgehang vanwaar hulle sigbaar is terwyl ons programme op die TV kyk. Die mandjies word gereeld met vleiskaafsels van die slaghuis gevul en het mettertyd op die GPS databasisse van 'n aantal voëls gekom. Die papierbasdoringboom is op sigself 'n gewilde besoekplek vir allerhande voëls wat insekte onder die los bas kom uitsnuffel.

Natuurlik het 'n paar ongewenste gaste, nl. rotte, ook van die vleiskos kennis geneem en spesiale maatreëls moes getref word om hulle weg te hou – hulle is uitstekende draadlopers en ons moes X-straalplate as diefwering gebruik om die drade waaraan die mandjies hang teen hulle

te bewapen. Behalwe die Kuifkophoutkappers wat soms in 'n sisalstomp in die boom broei en dikwels die nes besoek vir tussentydse inspeksie wanneer hulle nie broei nie, kry die mandjies ook gereeld besoek van Janfrederik, Kokkewiet (Suidelike Waterfiskaal), Karoolyster, Kleinglansspreeu, Kakelaar, Swartoogtiptol, Bandkeelkleinjantjie, Kaapse Mossie, Gryskopmossie, Pylvlekkatlagters en selfs Swartkeelgeelvink. Glasogies (as plaaskinders in die Kleinkaroo het ons hulle geken as Kersogies) het ook al kom kyk maar hulle is skynbaar nie so gek na slaghuis-proteïen nie. Alhoewel ons die Spookvoël dikwels in die omgewing sien, het ons hulle nog nie by die mandjies gewaar nie. Ons sou graag wou sien dat hulle ook bewus word van die gratis proteïendisse.

Die Kakelaars is vraatsige eters en die mandjies is gewoonlik leeg nadat hulle vir



Rooibekkekelaar/ Green Wood-Hoopoe

aandete ingekom het, veral die groter groepe. Ons weet nie hoeveel groepe Kakelaars by ons besoek aflê nie maar ons is bewus van ten minste twee groepe waarvan een klein groep, bestaande uit twee volwassenes en een jeugdige, met 'n swart bek en korter stert, ons besondere belangstelling gewek het. Behalwe dat ons die driemanskap gereeld kan uitken, het ons ook opgemerk dat een van die

volwassenes anders gemerk is as enige ander volwassene wat ons al gesien het. Hierdie een het twee wit kolle onder die keel en lyk nogal soos 'n Nieu-Seelandse Tui. In ons onkunde het ons skertsend gespekuleer dat dit die mannetjie moet wees wat 'n strikdassie moet dra as hy na 'n formele ete moet kom. Ons kyk gereeld uit vir hierdie groepie en het nog onlangs weer gesien dat hy nog steeds sy "strikdassie" dra.

Ons het al probeer vasstel of daar 'n aansitreël ("pecking order") tussen die verskillende spesies bestaan maar kon nog nie so iets vasstel nie. Die voëls is almal maar versigtig en kan verjaag word deur enige nuwe kandidaat wat met die nodige aggressie wil kom aansit. Grootte tel natuurlik altyd sodat die Kleinjantjie sy plek onder in die tou aanvaar en nie sal probeer aansit as enige van die ander groteres reeds daar is nie. Witpenssuikerbekkies stel nie belang in die mandjies nie en is tevrede om hulle proteïene in die lug te vang en nagereg te geniet in die *Strelitzia reginae* wat ook onder die doringboom groei. 🐦

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 30 September 2015

Compiled by André Marx

This is a larger than usual report that covers the last 10 months as the previous report could not be completed on time. There have been many interesting records during this period, not the least of which are records of River Warbler in Sandton, a long-staying Lesser Black-backed Gull and Black-tailed Godwit at Mkhombo Dam – a locality that really produces many good records for the region – and a Bush Blackcap and Lappet-faced Vulture to name just two more for the region. The current drought conditions will undoubtedly lead to several more interesting records in the coming months as bushveld birds enter suburban areas in search of better foraging. Please be on the lookout for these out of range birds.

National rarities/ Nasionale rareiteite

Egret, Slaty. Reier, Rooikeel:- The bird seen at Walkhaven, north-west of Johannesburg, on 14 Dec 2014 was still showing in the following weeks when it was recorded by many birders, and was present until 21 Feb 2015 (Gbird).

Godwit, Black-tailed. Griet, Swartstert:- one bird was located at Mkhombo Dam on 29 Mar 2015, (EdB, DV, TH), with one bird, presumably the same one, still being reported in early Oct 2015.

Gull, Lesser Black-backed. Meeu, Kleinswart-rug:- an immature bird was sighted at

**Slaty Egret/Rooikeelreier****Green Sandpiper/Witgatruiter**

Mkhombo Dam on 1 Aug 2015 (M&AK) and remained at the same locality for several weeks and was still present in mid-October 2015.

Sandpiper, Green. Ruiter, Witgat-: up to 3 birds were present at Rietvlei NR over a period of several weeks when several birders reported the species 6 Dec 2014 (Gbird); records were still received until 15 March 2015 at this locality. *A species that is being seen with more regularity each summer and which in all probability should no longer be considered a national rarity.*

Skimmer, African. Waterploëer. A single bird was present at Vaalkop Dam 30 Apr 2015 (LR, FP).

Warbler, Eurasian Reed. Sanger, Hermanriet-: during a ringing session at Moreletakloof NR, Pretoria, one bird was found in the nets and determined to be this species after measurements were taken and other factors such as moult, plumage and bare part characteristics were taken into account (BLNG Ringing). *This is a rarely recorded species in the region owing to the difficulty in separating it from the more regular African Reed Warbler.*

**African Pygmy Goose/Dwerggans**

Regional rarities/ Streeksrariteite

Blackcap, Bush. Tiptol, Rooibek-: one bird was observed at Suikerbosrand NR, 1 Aug 2015 (HN).

Goose, African Pygmy. Gans, Dwerg-: 2 birds were at Mkhombo Dam, 20 Dec, 2014 (MJ); one bird was located at a farm dam along the R573 road to Moloto, about 20km north-east of Pretoria, 1 Apr 2015 (EM).

Goshawk, African. Sperwer, Afrikaanse: a sighting of one bird in the Wilge River valley on the eastern edge of Gauteng is a rare sighting for the province, 15 Mar 2015 (MA).

Owl, Pel's Fishing. Visuil: a remarkable sighting of one bird on the Crocodile River in pentad 2505_2730, situated between Brits and Thabazimbi, came on 19 Jul 2015 (MT). *This record is a few hundred kilometres from its known distribution, but the Crocodile is a tributary of the Limpopo River where the species is known to occur, so it is feasible that this bird found its way to where it was seen.*

Jacana, Lesser. Langtoon, Dwerg-: one bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 31 Mar 2015 (RG, TG, EM).

Plover, Caspian. Strandkiewiet, Asiatiese: 2 birds were at Mkhombo Dam, 26 Sep 2015 (RG & TG), with the numbers growing at this locality until by mid-October 2015 9 birds were reported to be present.

Plover, Grey. Strandkiewiet, Grys-: 1 bird was at Mkhombo Dam on 26 Sep 2015 (RG & TG), where it remained for several weeks.

Sandpiper, Green. Ruiter, Witgat-: one bird was at Rietvlei NR, 29 Dec 2015 (NJ), where this bird has been recorded almost annually during summer.



Pel's Fishing Owl/Visuil



Lappet-faced Vulture/Swartaasvoël

Sandpiper, Pectoral. Strandloper, Geelpoot-:

a single bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 24 Feb 2015 (JvR).

Stork, Saddle-billed. Ooievaar, Saalbek-: a single bird was at Kgomo-Kgomo on 29 Mar 2015 (MN, JJ, WJ).

Turnstone, Ruddy. Steenloper: one bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 26 Sep 2015 (RG & TG); 2 birds were at this locality on 4 Oct 2015 (AM, GL).

Vulture, Lappet-faced. Aasvoël, Swart-: one bird was sighted near Hekpoort, 9 Feb 2015 (AK).

Other interesting observations/ Ander interessante waarnemings

Bee-eater, Swallow-tailed. Byvreter, Swaelstert-: at least 7 birds were at Moreletakloof NR in Pretoria, 23 May 2015 (DH).

Bustard, Black-bellied. Korhaan, Langbeen-: a female bird was photographed at Rietvlei Dam NR, an unusual bird to find in Gauteng, 7 May 2015 (DD).

Buzzard, European Honey. Wespedief: One bird was seen near Muldersdrift, 19 Jan 2015 (AP); one bird was at Rietvlei Dam NR, 17 Mar 2015 (DH).

Buzzard, Lizard. Valk, Akkedis-: one bird was at Delta Park, Johannesburg, in pentad 2605_2800, a bird that is very seldom seen in this part of the city, 25 May 2015 (GLD).

Camaropectera, Grey-backed. Kwêkwêvoël, Grysrug-: one bird was recorded at Suikerbosrand NR in pentad in pentad 2630_2810 on 1 Aug 2015, an unusual bird in this part of Gauteng (HP).



Black-bellied Bustard/Langbeenkorhaan

Crane, Grey Crowned. Mahem: one bird was found in pentad 2540_2850 east of Pretoria, 31 Jan 2015 (ST); one bird was an unusual find in the grasslands of Devon amongst a group of Blue Cranes, 30 May 2015 (EM, S&OO).

Eagle, Martial. Arend, Breëkop-: a juvenile bird was observed in an Edenglen, Edenvale garden, a very unusual sighting for the area, 29 May 2015 (AR).

Finch, Cut-throat. Vink, Bandkeel-: a garden record in Florida, Roodepoort, is very unusual for the area, 29 Aug 2015 (LS).

Harrier, Montagu's. Vleivalk, Blou-: a single male was in pentad 2555_2835 north of Pretoria, 25 Jan 2015 (JB); one bird was at Ezemvelo NR, 21 Feb 2015 (ST).

Ibis, Southern Bald. Ibis, Kalkoen-: a record of 23 birds at Luiperdskloof on the far eastern edge of Gauteng was an unusual number of this birds in the province, 25 May 2015 (EM).

Kingfisher, Grey-headed. Visvanger, Gryskop-: one bird was a surprise find in a Germiston garden, 23 Feb 2015 (PL).

*Grey Crowned Crane/Mahem**Cut-throat Finch /Bandkeelvink**Montagu's Harrier/Blouvlivalk**River Warbler/ Sprinkaaansanger*

Nightjar, Rufous-cheeked. Naguil, Rooiwang: a record of one bird at Delta Park, Johannesburg, was a first ever record at this locality and is very unusual for the city, 25 May 2015 (GLd).

Osprey, Western. Valk, Vis-: one bird was observed occasionally at Mkhombo Dam, 18 Oct 2015 (DH).

Owl, Verreaux's Eagle-. Ooruil, Reuse-: one bird was seen on a TV aerial in Groenkloof, Pretoria, an unusual visitor to the city, 27 Mar 2015, (via MK).

Roller, Purple. Troupant, Groot-: one bird was at Suikerbosrand NR, considerably south of its known distribution, 29 Jul 2015 (DV).

Warbler, River. Sanger, Sprinkaan-: one bird ringed in a Morningside, Sandton, garden during a ringing exercise was a major surprise, 5 Jan 2015 (M&AK).

Waxbill, Violet-eared. Sysie, Koningblou-: one bird was ringed at Waterfall Estate, Midrand, an unusual bird in this part of Gauteng, 25 Apr 2015 (RS).

Observers/ Waarnemers:

Alex Rae (AR)	André Marx (AM)
Andrew Keys (AK)	Anthony Paton (AP)
BirdLife N Gauteng Bird Ringing Group (BLNG Ringing)	Dirk Human (DH)
Dave Deighton (DD)	Errol de Beer (EdB)
Dylan Vasapolli (DV)	Faansie Peacock (FP)
Etienne Marais (EM)	Geoff Lockwood (GLd)
Gauteng birders (Gbird)	Henk Nel (HN)
Greg Lock (GL)	Jannie Jansen (JJ)
Hennie Peters (HP)	Johan van Rensburg (JvR)
Jason Boyce (JB)	Lia Steen (LS)
Lance Robinson (LR)	Mark & Alisha Kirk (M&AK)
Margarita Krusche (MK)	Matthew Axelrod (MA)
Mark Tittley (MT)	Michael Nyenes (MN)
Michael Johnson (MJ)	Rob Geddes (RG)
Pieter Lotter (PL)	Sue & Owen Oertli (S&OO)
Stephan Terblanche (ST)	Toni Geddes (TG)
Thomas Hohls (TH)	
Wesley Jarvis (WJ)	

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