



Laniarius

No 134 June 2017



Newsletter of BirdLife Northern Gauteng Nuusbrief van BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

PO Box/Posbus 12563, Hatfield, 0028

E-mail: secretary@blng.co.za

Website: www.blng.co.za

Facebook: BirdLife Northern Gauteng

Bank account: BirdLife Northern Gauteng/Gauteng-Noord

Bank: Nedbank, Hatfield

Branch code: 160245

Account number: 1634010531

Committee 2016/17 Komitee

President

André Marx: 083 411 7674; turaco@telkomsa.net

Chairperson – Voorsitter

Elouise Kalmer: 083 626 1733; chairperson@blng.co.za

Secretary – Sekretaresse

Rita de Meillon: 012 807 4002/083 391 2327; secretary@blng.co.za

Honorary Treasurer – Tesourier

Pieter Heslinga: 082 551 0130; piheslinga@mweb.co.za

PR and Website – Skakelbeampte en Webtuiste

Annali Swanepoel: 082 789 2570; marketing@blng.co.za

Sub-committee: Rob Burnett

Conservation – Bewaring

Philip Calinikos: 012 430 2168; conservation@blng.co.za

Sub-committee: Ig Viljoen, Kagiso Mohlamme, Rihann Geysler, Ben Von Wielligh

Programme and Activities – Program en Aktiwiteite

Sheleph Burger: 082 925 4005; sheleph@blng.co.za

Sub-committee: Karin & Kobus Coetzer, Alta Fraser, Frik du Plooy, Jeanette Heuseveldt

Evening Meetings and Courses – Aandbyeenkomste en Kursusse

Michelle van Niekerk: 082 855 4928; michelle@wipe-it.co.za

Bird Ringing – Voëlberinging

Frik du Plooy: 078 524 4189; jfduplooy@vodamail.co.za

Sub-committee: Paula Steyn, Johan Snyman

Laniarius Editor – Redakteur

Tamsyn Sherwill: laniariuseditor@blng.co.za

Sub-committee: André Marx, Ingrid van Heerden, Drinie van Rensburg (design & layout)

SABAP2 Atlas Co-ordinator – Atlaskoördineerder

André Marx: 083 411 7674; turaco@telkomsa.net

Trading – Handel

Riana Botha: 082 466 5242; blackeagleprop@gmail.com

Notice to contributors

Laniarius is published three times annually. 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. 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 oorge-laai. Digitale fotos is altyd welkom.

CONTENTS

From the Editor	2
From the Chair	3
AGM 2017	
President's address	4
Chairperson's report.....	5
CLUB OUTINGS	
Dullstroom Vleikuikenfees	8
Birding 4x4: A tutorial	10
CONSERVATION	
Champions of the Flyway – a race for conservation.....	12
Seabirds are eating plastic litter in our oceans – but not only where you'd expect	16
EDUCATION & AWARENESS CREATION	
Graad Elfs sprei hulle vlerke.....	18
Birding 101 in Colbyn Valley.....	21
CITIZEN SCIENCE	
2016 SAFRING ringing statistics for Gauteng and the BLNG ring group.....	23
Paardeplaats (Lydenburg) ringnaweek: 24–26 Februarie 2017	24
Atlasing tales – east of Delmas.....	25
TRAVELOGUE	
Pilanesberg paradise.....	28
Witsand National Park (November 2016)	29
Namibia birding – follow-up visit (29 August – 21 September 2016)	31
Birding in Fiji.....	38
A lucky catch for powerful raptor.....	40
RARITIES	
'n Seldsame vonds in Lynnwoodrif	41
Rarities and unusual sightings report: 15 April 2017	43

Credits

Front cover: African Pitta from Coutada 12 in Central Mozambique by Etienne Marais.
Birding facts taken from *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Birds* by Stephen Moss.

To order print copies / Om harde kopieë te bestel

Laniarius is only distributed electronically. If you wish to receive hard copies please contact Rita (secretary@blng.co.za). The cost is R75 for 3 issues.

Laniarius word nou slegs elektronies versprei. As u die harde kopie wil ontvang, stuur asb 'n e-pos aan Rita (secretary@blng.co.za). Die koste is R75 vir 3 uitgawes.

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those
of BirdLife Northern Gauteng or BirdLife South Africa.

From the Editor

Tamsyn Sherwill

It's (definitely) not Spring, or New Year, but change is in the air of this issue of *Laniarius*: BirdLife Northern Gauteng has a new logo, and a new chairperson; a new website is currently incubating and will soon hatch; and *Laniarius* has a new look... and a new editor (that would be me).

In preparation for this slightly daunting role, and to try to get a sense of the legacy I have been entrusted with, I borrowed a set of back issues – that stretched way back, i.e. to 1985, which is still 10 years after the first issue named *Laniarius*, and 15 years after the birth of this publication as a newsletter for the then Northern Transvaal Ornithological Society.

Looking back in this way, the archival role that *Laniarius* plays in the life of the club is obvious, documenting both the history of the club and the region's bird diversity. The early issues became a repository for the observations of 'citizen scientists' long before this term was coined to describe members of the public who collect and analyse data relating to the natural world. The August 1980 issue actually refers to *Laniarius* as the club's 'scientific publication', and in reading the issues from the mid- to late-80s the influence of professional ornithologists and other biologists is evident in the contributions of all members – often containing carefully recorded observations of localities, species and behaviour, with graphs, citations and reference lists resembling that of an academic journal.

In the accounts of its authors over the years, *Laniarius* has documented the appearance and disappearance of various species in

Pretoria, the destruction of top birding spots, and the discovery of new ones. Much of this history has probably never been recorded elsewhere, and would never have had the opportunity to be recorded at all had *Laniarius* not existed. This publication also provides a forum for discussing conservation and birding 'politics', as well as the desired focus and scope of the club's interests and activities. Last, and by no means least, trip reports and warm accounts of members – their remarkable skills and amusing eccentricities, and their notable passion and commitment – knit together the social fabric of the club.

Going forward, it is my hope and intention that *Laniarius* will continue to do all these good things for BLNG and its members, contribute in its own quiet way to avian science and conservation, and be a source of pride and joy, information and inspiration.

Laniarius is a resource for the club, by the club, and relies on your contributions to fill its pages. We need your observations and trip reports, however short or long, prize-worthy bird photos, letters, comments and questions. You can also submit links to interesting birding resources you have discovered online, and your insider tips on your favourite local and national birding spots. If it's of interest to you, it could be of interest to other birders.

Thank you (!) to everyone who heeded the call to send in their stories for this issue. And thank you to all of the past editors and authors, photographers and artists on whose shoulders *Laniarius* now stands (/perches).

May all your birding be newsworthy... 🐦

From the Chair

Elouise Kalmer

Philip Calinikos has decided to step down as the BLNG chairperson after serving in this position for the past 8 years. I would like to thank Philip for the great work he has done for the club. Through his leadership, visionary guidance, support and enthusiasm for the club and birding in general, BLNG has developed into the great birding club it is today! When I think of Philip, I always think of his great passion for bird conservation and we are very grateful that Philip has agreed to continue serving on the BLNG committee looking after the Conservation portfolio.

The highlight of the 2017 birding year so far was the Flock at Sea 2017. The MSC Sinfonia departed from Cape Town on 24 April with just under 2 000 birders on board for a 4-day birding trip to the continental shelf and back. This event was organised by BirdLife South Africa to coincide with their 2017 Annual General Meeting. The birding was phenomenal with even the most experienced birders going home with several 'lifers'. The Light-mantled Albatross was considered by many as the 'bird of the trip'. The best lecture was Peter Harrison's talk, 'Albatross – the Ocean Nomads'. His passion and enthusiasm is definitely contagious. Our club was very well presented on this trip with more than 65 members joining the Flock at Sea and we all had a wonderful time.

In order to improve club birding, the Northern Regional Forum of BLSA sponsored a 'Club Leader Workshop' on 27 May. This event was facilitated by the well-known Etienne Marais. Nine clubs were represented; BLNG had more than 50% of the total attendees. A big thank you to our leaders for their ongoing contributions! At the workshop we looked at the following issues around birding outings:

- The essence of a good outing
- Typical problems experienced at club outings
- The essence of a good birding programme
- How the club can lend support to an event leader
- How to motivate members to become more active within their clubs

During the workshop, it became very clear that the bigger clubs face different challenges to those of the smaller clubs. Therefore, we will align the output of the workshop to the needs of BLNG going forward.

New club members are high on the priority list. With such a big and active club, it is sometimes difficult for the new members to feel welcome and be part of the club.

Conservation will focus on 'citizen science' this year. The BLNG ringing group is a very active group of specialised birders. They have two club sessions every month. We would like to incorporate more bird-atlas activities and therefore we encourage our members to use the BirdLasser application and to enrol for the BLNG 150 km Challenge. The 52 members who have joined the challenge have already logged a total of 50 331 records since the beginning of the year, representing 501 unique species. The top 6 challengers have all logged more than 300 species. This is a good indication of the variety of birds within the Gauteng area and the commitment of the birders.

Finally, I want to ask our members, old and new, to please provide some ideas and input. Tell us what you enjoy, what you would like to see on the programme, and what we need to improve on.

Looking forward to a great birding year! 🐦



President's address

André Marx

"Good evening all. It is my pleasure to present this year's President's report. A warm welcome to all our members and guests.

I would like to talk to you tonight about our contribution as 'citizen scientists', a term often used to describe the contributions to science by volunteer birders like ourselves. I have always had a keen eye for rarities and unusual sightings and the opportunity to document changes in bird distribution brought about by changes in our environment is a fascinating occurrence. This led to my involvement in various projects as a contributing citizen scientist and many fellow birders have followed the same route over the years.

The majority of citizen scientists do not have any formal training or a degree in any of the natural sciences yet are able to contribute to projects like SABAP2 by documenting their observations by following the project's protocol. It has become considerably easier, as many of you will know, to participate in biodiversity monitoring projects by recording your observations using a birding app called BirdLasser for SABAP2. Our club has embraced this development and this year saw the initiation of the BLNG 150 km Challenge, which is basically a competition to record as many species as you can within a 150 km radius of Pretoria, provided all your records are logged with SABAP2, following the protocol. There are other monitoring projects that have involved members of this club for years as well, not the least of which is CWAC and CAR. In recent years there has been the advent of a butterfly, frog and mammal atlas project. So the opportunities to be a research scientist and participate in monitoring projects are boundless!

Such has been the change in the way that data is utilised that today the authors of bird field guides are using the 'live' data that is being gathered to monitor the changes that are

happening and this is evident with the newest field guides that have been published.

The changes that local birders have documented over the last few years by contributing to SABAP2 are fascinating to observe just in our part of the country. We continue to see the expansion in range of raptor species such as the Long-crested Eagle [Langkuifarend], which is now being recorded in many parts of the region, and is undoubtedly becoming an established breeding species when just 15 or so years ago it was still something of a local special. More recently the African Goshawk [Afrikaanse Sperwer] has put in an appearance. It is inconceivable that the bird monitoring that took place with the Transvaal Bird Atlas in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as during the SABAP1 data collection period (late 1980s and early 1990s), could have missed this particular bird, but it has been photographed and confirmed as occurring in well-wooded areas of both Pretoria and Johannesburg.

The Yellow-bellied Greenbul [Geelborswillie] has had an amazing increase in range over the last 20 or so years. From being a species known from the Lowveld (about 200 km away) and riverine thickets about 100 km north of Pretoria, it is now being found in suburban Pretoria, first appearing in well-wooded gardens along the Magaliesberg, an impossibility in the recent past.

It is speculated that these species have naturally colonised the artificial woodland that Gauteng has become over time and that we will see more changes in the coming years. What is next? Purple-crested Turaco [Bloukuifloerie] and maybe White-browed Robin-chat [Heuglinse Janfrederik]? Time will tell but in the meantime we can continue to gather data and contribute to these biodiversity projects taking place all around us. I am sure our club will continue to play a leading role in encouraging our

members to contribute to conservation goals and initiatives by becoming citizen scientists.

My thanks go to the excellent club committee led by our long-serving and committed chairman, Philip Calinikos, who has been superb in the chair for several years. There continues to be a very good and varied programme of activities with new ideas and

outings, projects, events, and speakers. I am sure this trend will continue and the continued support of all our members is of great value and is appreciated and helps make this club what it is.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening's proceedings and I look forward to another great year with the club." 🐦

Chairperson's report for the year ended 31 December 2016

Philip Calinikos



"My report this evening will cover the following areas:

- BirdLife International
- BirdLife South Africa
- Our club
- Programme activities and member communications
- Conservation projects
- Bird ringing

are providing both practical and sustainable solutions significantly benefiting nature and people. The network in Africa is expanding significantly as can be seen below:

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation partnership. It has 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide – one per country or territory – and the network is increasing. It is widely recognised as the world leader in bird conservation. Rigorous science informed by practical feedback from projects on the ground in important sites and habitats enables its Partners, one of which is BirdLife South Africa, to implement successful conservation programmes for birds and all nature worldwide. These actions

The BirdLife Africa Partnership

 Botswana	 Burkina Faso	 Burundi	 Cameroon	 Cote d'Ivoire
 Djibouti	 Egypt	 Ethiopia	 Ghana	 Kenya
 Liberia	 Madagascar	 Malawi	 Mauritius	 Morocco
 Nigeria	 Rwanda	 Seychelles	 Sierra Leone	 South Africa
 Tanzania	 Tunisia	 Uganda	 Zambia	 Zimbabwe



Together we are BirdLife International
Partnership for nature and people

www.birdlife.org

I would like to encourage you to visit the Africa section of the BirdLife International website at www.birdlife.org/africa, where a wealth of information is available on conservation initiatives on our continent. I would especially like you to download the excellent publication, *State of Africa's Birds*, which can be found there.

Our mother organisation **BirdLife South Africa** continues from strength to strength under the leadership of CEO Mark Anderson. This year marked the launch of a young birders' conservation club

under the Fledge banner as well as the first African Bird Fair at the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden.

The Flufftail Festival, which is aimed at highlighting our wetland birds and their threatened habitats, is also gaining strength and exposure. A very successful and well attended Flock event was held in the Kruger National Park.

The sheer extent of the conservation projects being undertaken for both seabirds as well as terrestrial species is impressive. These projects are dependent on the availability of grant and donor funding and one way in which we as individual members can make a significant contribution is by registering as Conservation League members with BLSA.

Our club continues to enjoy a stable membership with 399 main members of which 50% are senior citizens. This represents 10% of the total membership of BLSA and we are now the second-largest club in terms of membership. We play a key role in the governance of BLSA through our involvement in the Northern Bird Club Regional Forum which gives us representation at Board level. This forum allows us to raise issues important to the clubs with

BLSA as well as to disseminate developments within BLSA to the individual clubs. During the year we also supported the new Youth Africa Birders initiative and we look forward to close co-operation with these enthusiastic young birders in the future.

Our **Programme and Activities** Subcommittee under the able leadership of Elouise Kalmer produced three exciting programmes during the year. One of the highlights was our first visit to the Katima Mulilo region of Namibia to look for the specials in that area. Special thanks must be extended to Karin Coetzer and Rob Geddes for arranging this highly successful special event. A number of courses were run during the year focusing on areas such as raptors (Ulrich Oberprieler); warblers, LBJ's and bird sounds (Etienne Marais); and bird photography (Thinus van Staden). An innovation this past year was the launch of our Hot Bird Hunts and these proved very popular with our twitcher members.

Notwithstanding the turbulent student situation at the University of Pretoria we could hold all but one of our monthly meetings as planned. The attendance at these meetings was most encouraging which confirms the popularity of the speakers that presented to us. Non-birding topics included a talk on bees by Koos van der Merwe.

As a committee, we are continuously trying to improve the quality of our **communications** with you our members. Our flagship publication *Laniarius* is now fully digital in line with modern trends but is still available in hard copy if members so prefer to receive it. Our BLNG Alerts are being ably distributed by Annali Swanepoel and a heavily revised website is planned soon.

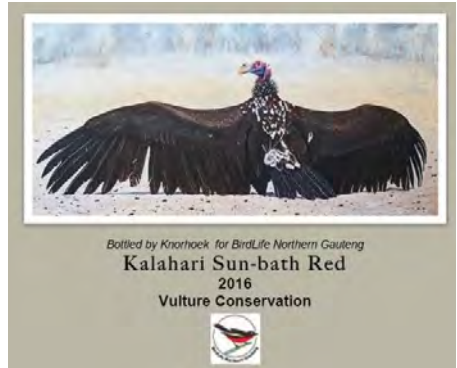
Turning to our **conservation projects**, pride of place must go to our Vulture Awareness Day campaign on 6 September where our guest speaker was André Botha of EWT. The evening included the raffle draw for the two exquisite paintings by Karin Coetzer as well as the launch of our vulture-branded wines! What better way to end the whole evening off than with a delicious cheese and wine spread. The raffle and



wine sales have raised close to R30 000 which will be allocated towards vulture conservation initiatives.

We continued with our support of the Wonderboom Verreux's Eagle Project and of the Friends groups in our region with organised bird walks. Many of our members are active supporters of the SABAP2 project and with the advent of the excellent BirdLasser app this should attract many more participants going forward. We launched our own BirdLasser South Africa Challenge and met our target of atlasing 700 species during the year. The final count was 706 species and a total of 105 676 records were logged. A new challenge has been devised for 2017 which will focus on species and pentads closer to home.

Our committee's **bird ringing** representative, Frik du Plooy, has prepared his report which is available here tonight. Our ringing section is one of the strongest in South Africa and consists of 22 qualified and active A-ringers. A total of 6 380 birds were ringed during the year and the ringers enjoyed a full and varied programme which included trips to the Long Tom Pass as well as two raptor tours to the Northern



Cape and Limpopo provinces.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for your support of the Club over the year. A special thank you to our committee and sub-committee members as well as all our enthusiastic outing and camp leaders. We are also highly appreciative of Riana and Stoffel Botha's trading activities as well as the support we have received from Johan Slabbert and Jaco Buitendag of Optilog in maintaining our email and website services." 🦅

AAN ALLE NUWE LEDE - BAIE WELKOM!

Ons sien daarna uit om julle by ons aandvergaderings, daguitstappies of tydens 'n naweek-kamp te leer ken.

Please contact the Secretary at secretary@blng.co.za or 083 391 2327 for any queries or information.

Fiona Butchart, Pinetown; Etienne Oosthuizen, Sandton; Stefan & Ydene Cremer, Centurion; Joe & Janet Huysers, Villieria; Wilma van der Merwe, Murrayfield; Philna van Tonder, Elarduspark; Kobus Erasmus, Flora Park; Les Watters, Lynnwood; Herbert Zemann, Queenswood; Lin Sztab, Menlopark; Jaco & Chanel de Wet, Pretoria; Lambert van Sittert, Theresapark; Lana Kinley, Menlopark; Willie Kruger, Moreleta Plaza; Debora Henning, Menlopark; Barbara Meyer, Faerie Glen; Linda Erasmus, Garsfontein; Sieg Eiselen, Faerie Glen; Jean & Chris Dell, Lynnwood Ridge; Bill Payne, Lynnwood Ridge; Estelle de Jong, Highveld; Yvonne Vos, Montana Park; Gawie Maritz, Centurion; Koos Davel, Wingate Park

Dullstroom Vleikuikenfees

Pieter en Joelna Heslinga

Ons was met vakansie by Kaap St Francis toe ons vir die eerste keer hoor van die Vleikuikenfees wat vir Februarie 2017 in Dullstroom beplan word. Ons was voorheen reeds twee keer by 'n 'White-winged Flufftail flush' wat by Middelpunt gehou word, en ons wou nog so 'n geleentheid nie misloop nie. Dullstroom en omgewing is ook ons geliefkoosde naweekwegbreek, wat ons altyd graag besoek, om nie te praat van die fantastiese program wat vir die Fees beplan is nie.

Uiteindelik het die naweek aangebreek en kon ons Vrydag 24 Februarie al vroeg uit Pretoria wegspring. Min het ons geweet dat ons 'n nat, baie nat, naweek sou hê, en ons het reeds op pad al ons eerste donderbuie ervaar. Ons sou saam met 'n paar ander BLNGers (Michelle van Niekerk en Alta Fraser) op 'n plaas met die naam Morgenzon tuisgaan, net so 6 km buite Dullstroom op die Kruisfonteinpad. Ons is al 5 uur op Dullstroom en besluit om gou eers plaashuis toe te gaan en nes te skrop voor ons later by die Critchley Hackle Konferensiesentrum sou registreer vir die Fees.

Michelle en Alta laat weet dat hulle vir ons in Dullstroom wag – hulle wou al deurry plaas toe maar die pad was baie nat en sleg. Ons kry hulle op die dorp en ry saam Morgenzon toe – en was die pad glad en sleg! Ons het mekaar se ondersteuning nodig gehad. Met ons Landcruiser stasiewa en hulle Honda CRV het

ons darem gelukkig reggekom. Op die plaas aangekom, vind ons plaasmense wat ons baie hartlik ontvang en kaggels wat in elke vertrek heerlik brand. Ons kry ook die raad om 'n agterpaadjie tussen plase deur terug te ry dorp toe. Die Kruisfonteinpad sou vir ons moeilikheid gee.

Ons ry dan in die skuinsdonker terug om te gaan inskryf. George Skinner ontvang ons hartlik met lekker eetgoed en wyn en verduidelik die naweek se program. Ons skryf in om Saterdagoggend die 'Verloren Vallei Wild Flowers, Grassland and Wetlands Specials' uitstappie te doen. Dan sou ons Saterdagmiddag na 'n praatjie van Faansie Peacock oor LBJ's gaan luister en ook 'n praatjie deur Albert en Marietjie Froneman oor die fotografie van voëls, en natuurlik Saterdagagaand se dinee bywoon. En dan as die hoogtepunt sou ons die 'White-winged Flufftail Flush' op Middelvlei Sondagoggend meemaak. Ondertussen sluit BLNG se Philip Calinikos met vriende van hom ook by ons aan.

Dit sou weer die nag reën, maar Saterdagoggend toe ons opstaan het dit gelukkig opgehou. Die dag ontwikkel pragtig, die son kom deur, en ons sou 'n heerlike dag hê. Ons kry mekaar by die bekende Mrs Simpson's Restaurant en onder begeleiding van ons bewame gids Frans Krige vaar ons die berge rondom Dullstroom in – almal met hulle kamearas en verkykers toegerus, want dit is mos ook voëltjiewêreld. Ons eerste bonus was egter 'n familie bosvarke, wat baie skaars is en mens nie somer raakloop nie. Ons het die plaaslike paai agtergelaat en het die Verlorenkloof Landgoed ingevaar. Frans wys ons seldsame en pragtige plante en ons ry ook na 'n klompie suikerbosse om na Rooiborssuikervoëls [Gurney's Sugarbird] te gaan soek. Noodlot tref egter vir BLNGers Ingrid en Dries de Bruyn toe hulle voertuig in die lang gras oor 'n groot klip ry, en met die reddingspoging so beskadig is dat hulle nie die uitstappie kon voortsit nie. Ag hoe jammer! Dit



Verlorenkloof veldblom

was Philip Calinikos wat agtergebly het om na hulle om te sien tot 'n sleepwa gekom het. Die res van ons vertrek verder met Frans die berge in. Die wêreld is nat en orals loop die fonteine en klein watervalletjies. Ons sien die mooiste plante en is middagete terug op die dorp. Dit was 'n fantastiese uitstappie.

Ons moes gou maak om by die Highland Gate Conference Centre uit te kom; dit is waar die res van die aktiwiteite en die dinee sou plaasvind. Dit was die eerste keer dat ons die konferensiesentrum, met 'n pragtige gholfbaan daarby, besoek het. Ons eet ietsie vir middagete en geniet Faansie Peacock en Albert Froneman se praatjies baie. Toe keer ons terug na Morgenzon om aan te trek vir die dinee en ry weer terug na die konferensiesentrum. George Skinner, voorsitter van die Escarpment Bird Club, heet ons welkom en BirdLife SA President Mark Anderson spreek ons toe. Ons eet en kuier baie lekker en geniet ook die veiling. Vir fondsinsameling word 'n mooi skildery van 'n Witvlervleikuiken opgeveel, ook besondere wyne en 'n 'midweek' by Verlorenkloof, onder andere. Ons is saam met Philip Calinikos aan tafel en die bod word op hom toegeslaan om die Verlorenkloofprys te kry. Ons klub sal later vanjaar 'n lekker klubuitstappie soontoe kan maak. Die aand word oud en ons ry laat terug na ons plaashuis. Dit was 'n baie lekker aand. Gedurende die dag en ook die aand leer ons baie nuwe vriende ken; die Fees is 'n groot sukses. Ons moet bed toe want môre gaan ons die Witvlervleikuiken soek. Op pad terug sien ons pragtige Gevlekte Ooruile [Spotted Eagle-Owl].



Vlei-uil/Marsh Owl

Dit reën weer gedurende die nag. Sondagoggend is ons vroeg op. Ons kry mekaar by die Puma Garage op Dullstroom en ry onder begeleiding van die bekende Malcolm Drummond na Middelpunt, almal met groot verwagting, want vroeër in die week het hulle die voëltjie gesien. Ons was 120 mense wat kom kyk het. Met die hulp van 'n aantal helpers is die vliee by Middelpunt gefynkam, heen en weer, maar geen Witvlervleikuiken het hierdie keer verskyn nie – wel 'n paar mooi Rooiborsvleikuikens [Red-chested Flufftail] en Vlei-uile [Marsh Owl]. Ons kon egter heelwat ander voëls sien en die oggend tog baie geniet. Volgende jaar sal ons graag die Fees weer bywoon.

Ons ry terug na Dullstroom, geniet 'n lekker pannekoek by Harrie's Pancakes en ry later die middag terug Pretoria toe.

Dit was voorwaar 'n fantastiese naweek. Hoewel al die reënweer ons planne bietjie deurmekaar gekrap het, was dit tog lekker. Ons kan nie wag dat die organiseerders van hierdie naweek dit 'n jaarlikse instelling maak nie.

Baie dankie aan almal, en veral Philip, Michelle en Alta, wat die naweek saam met ons deurgebring het. 🦉

Plumbing the depths

The deepest diving bird is the Emperor Penguin, which has been reliably recorded at a depth of 265 metres, though a depth of more than 500 metres has been claimed. Its smaller relative the King Penguin has been recorded at depths of 240 metres. Among flying birds, both Common and Brünnich's Guillemots have been recorded at depths of up to 200 metres. The longest time a bird can stay underwater is about 18 minutes, a record also held by the Emperor Penguin. However, cetaceans can easily outdo any bird when it comes to diving. Sperm Whales have been recorded 2 500 metres below the surface, and can stay underwater for over an hour.

Birding 4x4: A tutorial

Annali Swanepoel

Magazines changed my life. That is, bucket list, mud-spattered, hard-core travel magazines. They transported me to a world of random and endlessly fascinating make-believe adventure.

With no 4x4 vehicle, tent or any of the other camping paraphernalia to my name, I did the next best thing. I became a birder. That way I was sure to have a 4x4 jaunt at least once a month if I managed to double-up in another birder's 4x4.

In the way the sun insinuates itself over the horizon every morning, the idea that I should have my own 4x4 took hold. Once the thought was set in my mind, I had to rummage through every possible reason why I needed a 4x4, in order to satisfy three adult children constantly on the lookout for the feckless arrival of dementia. Unruffled I explained to them that older people become senile because they are just better at orchestrating circumstances and conditions that spare them to think and they stop challenging themselves. Sarcasm, a lot of

raised eyebrows, stunned shaking of heads and huge amounts of unsolicited advice eventually disappeared. The kicker was my quiet persistence. Ten days after my 65th birthday, and flushed with excitement, I welcomed a brand new 4x4 baby into my life.

BLNG had a camp to Memel. And this new baby was going to Memel! It is a potholed, dishevelled little place between Vrede and Newcastle, nestling among wetlands, river valleys and rocky hillsides. Going to Memel meant going to Seekoeivlei – a Ramsar wetland. A wetland meant serious 4x4 driving. As fate would have it, between the arrival of my vehicle and the departure to Memel I didn't have an opportunity to go on a 4x4 course, with the result that I piggybacked once there.

Memel is not only world renowned because of Seekoeivlei but is also known for being the best and most extensive habitat for grassland endemic bird species. I still needed the elusive Botha's Lark [Vaalrivierlewerik], the shifty Rudd's Lark [Drakensberglewerik], and the cheeky Sentinel Rock-Thrush [Langtoonkliplyster] on my Lifer List. I was also anticipating sightings of the Yellow-breasted Pipit [Geelborskoester] and the less rare but equally enchanting Denham's Bustard, Blue Crane and Ground Woodpecker [Veldpou, Bloukraanvoël & Grondspeg].

On a previous visit to Memel I had the regrettable misfortune of standing in the middle of the road without my camera, when I spotted the Yellow-breasted Pipit. It is a certainty, when spotting a bird only seen in a small, contracting and highly-fragmented range, and generally considered exquisitely scarce, that your chances of doing so are much better without a camera than with one. For one, blundering with a camera when someone shouts "Rudd's", and having fallen prey to frantic indecision, your wavering between the lens of the camera and the lens of the binoculars, will



André Marx

Elmi van Niekerk and Annali Swanepoel at Seekoeivlei

inevitably lead to you not seeing the bird. As it turned out we had the captivating experience of flushing the Rudd's and the Botha's as we scoured grassland. I didn't take a photo but have scores of other equally thrilled birders to testify to my sighting.

My driver-cum-bird-guide and his second-in-command were keenly aware that I have now moved into a whole new league of birding and took it on themselves to introduce me to the finer points of 4x4 driving. They made out a compelling argument for studying my owner's manual.

I admit with previous vehicles I had a rather lackadaisical attitude towards owner's manuals. Only a flashing red light initiated a frantic flipping open of the cubbyhole, and a grab for the manual. That night my nose was glued to the manual instead of *Robert's Birds of Southern Africa*.

One surprise was that the factory did not approve of a hitch and towing a trailer. So exactly how and where was I going to stuff all the necessities needed for protracted sojourns into the interior? What stuck, however, was never – even under threat of hunger, death or amnesia – must I touch the little knob that indicated H4, H2 or L2 if the vehicle was not in park.

I was still a little foggy on the rear differential locking system but at least what was utterly beyond me previously now made perfect sense. Rash decisions were a no-no unless I had consulted the manual. What didn't make any sense was that they devoted 5 pages to driving tips (when the average 4x4 driver spends days and copious amounts of cash on course after course to master the intricacies of his vehicle), while they devoted 35 pages to opening and closing doors? Pages 511 to 591 were also surprisingly generously devoted to using the Bluetooth system.

Absolutely nothing was said on the wheel axle configuration, which was where the crunch was. According to my birding guides cum driving instructors I needed to know the wheel axle configuration to know how to negotiate my way down a steep, unevenly terraced incline. Failing that, I was bound to break the axle on a

protruding rock or unforeseen drop and be left stranded in the middle of nowhere.

In a relentlessly good-natured way lesson was heaped upon lesson, and embellished with numerous footnotes and references made to hapless travellers left stranded in the most forbidding landscapes. My nerves frazzled. It was similar to the moment I knew a migraine was on its way. Utterly bewildered and disorientated, I started to torment myself by looking for stuff I had with me all along. A dark mist of foreboding enveloped me. In a moment of birding frenzy with Blue Korhaans croaking their consternation right next to our vehicle, to my despair I seemed to have mislaid my binocs. As we hurdled down Normandien Pass I suddenly couldn't find my cell phone to log a Pale-crowned Cisticola [Bleekkopklopploppie]. At Seekoeivlei I almost missed the pair of hippos grazing on the fringe of the river, while I tried to locate camera settings that had inexplicably disappeared.

After the torrential rains the country was blessed with, Seekoeivlei was very much in the league of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. You could start a Navy Seal boot camp in the haphazard tracks of previous vehicles. As we shunted hither and thither to extricate ourselves from the mud I quietly repeated "page 306, page 306." I didn't need to be terribly on the ball to know if I ever lost that little yellow sticker that guided me to 'Using the driving support systems'; I would be in stupendous trouble.



Annali Swanepoel

Sentinel Rock-Thrush/Langtoonklypster



Annali Svanepeel

BLNGers birding outside Memel

Never mind the binocs, the camera and the cell phone, I refuse to come up short on this one.

Let me make it categorically clear here (more for my own benefit than yours), I am not inherently more stupid than other people, so why should this new chapter in my life, living on the edge, not be the best ever, most exciting, superbly rewarding time of my life? I ask you.

*I am strong because I've been weak
I am fearless because I've been afraid
I am wise because I've been foolish.*
(Anonymous) 🐦

Champions of the Flyway – a race for conservation

John Kinghorn

It's pre-dawn in the Negev Desert. Four young birders stand atop a dirt mound, tripods set up with spotting scopes firmly fixed on top of them – at the ready, actively scanning for any movement – whilst the other two cup their hands in front of their mouths, exhaling faster than usual; not because they're out of breath but simply to keep their hands from succumbing to the numbness and losing all sense of

feeling. Three brave Crested Larks start to utter one or two melodic notes of their intricate songs as the sun's rays begin to pierce the morning's cloud formations along the horizon. The cold begins to find its way through any form of clothing that had been donned in a half-asleep daze, going beyond the padded layers and right down into the crevices of the bone; yet the eagerness of the two youngsters



John Kinghorn

John Kinghorn/Birding Ecotours

The famous Se'ifim plains in the south-western parts of the Negev

scanning the desert in front of them keeps the team going, the adrenaline warming their veins with each beat of their hearts. All of a sudden there's movement, and what seems to be a bobbing white ball at first turns into pure natural masterpiece as a male MacQueens Bustard in full display fills the scopes – Nitzana, 28 March 2017, 'race day'.

One would think that Israel's Negev Desert is a relentless, lifeless and barren expanse of sand comprised of nothing more than the occasional bush and lone tree, but this is in fact very far from the truth. The desert is teeming with all forms of biodiversity, ranging from Striped Hyenas through to Saw-scaled Vipers, but the main reason everybody flocks to this famous Israeli desert during spring each year is for a natural phenomenon which leaves even the most seasoned birder breathless and in pure awe, no matter how many times they may have been witness to it. Eilat (Israel's southernmost city), along with its surrounds, is undoubtedly one of the best places in the world to bear witness to said phenomenon.

Bird migration can be experienced all across the globe as birds follow age-old highways in the skies known as 'flyways'; battling not only the elements but also exhaustion, fatigue, guns, illegally-placed mist nets and lime-sticks. Flyways are routes used by migratory bird species on an annual basis, and at least twice a year, as they travel between their breeding and non-breeding grounds in the northern and southern hemispheres, respectively. Israel forms part of the second-biggest flyway in the world, with the Eilat mountain range creating a natural funnel for all birds having just migrated through Africa and over the Red Sea.

Exhausted, these birds land in the lush green parks of the city centre, the vegetated



John Kinghorn

Rüppell's Warbler – one of the many species of Sylvia warbler which pass through Israel in their thousands

wadis on the city's outskirts, and of course the ever-inviting salt pans north of the city, with one goal in mind – find food. These birds will spend two or three days in and around Eilat, feeding as much as they can and resting as much as possible before hitting the figurative road north again to complete their gruelling journey. It is thus understandable that each year an event is held in Eilat in order to celebrate the miracle of migration, but more importantly to generate awareness and much-needed funds toward combating the illegal killing of birds on migration across the Mediterranean, 25 million of which are slaughtered each year.

It's called the Champions of the Flyway (COTF), a gruelling 24-hour bird race held every year in March, which sees world-class teams from across the globe – all from different nationalities, ethnic groups and races – congregating together for four days in Eilat, and all for one purpose: to make a difference in the protection of our birds on migration across the Mediterranean flyway. How would one go about describing these people? Well, you would only be partly correct in calling all 150+



Champions of the Flyway is a joint initiative between SPNI (Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel) and BirdLife International

of these birders exactly that, just birders, for every single one of these people is not only a birder but a conservationist in their own right, who strives to protect our world's birds on a daily basis, no matter where in the world they may be based. Over the four years that the event has been running, these conservation-orientated birders who have participated in this world-renowned event have managed to raise close on \$250 000, with all funds going toward assisting a BirdLife International partner based in the Mediterranean in their efforts to combat the illegal killing of birds on migration in their respective countries.

A fair amount of the migrants using this Mediterranean flyway are in fact species which winter south of the Sahara, in Central Africa, whilst some even go so far south as to reach our Southern African sub-region. It was with this in mind, coupled with the horrendous statistics recently released by BirdLife International regarding exactly how many birds are being slaughtered whilst navigating this flyway, which sparked the formation of Africa's first-ever youth team to participate in this race for conservation: named 'The Birding Ecotours Youth Africa Birders'.

Our team was comprised of four young South African birders; two based in Cape Town and two based in Johannesburg and, just like all those who participate in the event,



John Kinghorn

John, Werner and Andrew looking smart in their fairy attire

we came from different backgrounds, ethnic groups and religions, yet were united by a common cause and something they use to describe passion, heart and soul back in South Africa, called 'gees'. In this case, the team had an unquenchable passion to make a difference, to show the world that young birders are capable of great things when fighting for something they believe strongly in. It was therefore decided among the team that our aim would be to 'bring the gees' to #COTF17 and share this intangible vibe with everybody else participating, going all out from the start to generate as much funds and as much awareness in support of this year's cause as humanly possible and, in so doing, assisting Doga Dernegi (BirdLife Turkey) in their efforts to combat the illegal killing of birds on migration over Turkish soil.

We knew from the start that raising funds was not going to be an easy task. A much weaker South African currency and a limited number of birders aware of the gauntlet some of our migrants have to face when departing our soil in late March/April, as well as on their journey back in August/September, were all factors concerning the team; however, we were soon to find out that these should never have been concerns in the first place. As COTF event coordinator Jonathan Meyrav put it: "The South African birding community is amazing,



John Kinghorn

Left to right: Andrew de Blocq (25), John Kinghorn (22), Jessleena Suri (25), Werner van der Walt (22)



John Kinghorn

John Kinghorn/Birding Ecotours

A stunning male Little Crane at the IBRCE (International Birding and Research Centre Eilat)

conservation-oriented and united,” and 2017 was definitely no exception! The team’s ‘gees’ touched the hearts of not only South African birders but fellow youth birders abroad, and before they knew it some Finnish, American and Swiss teams were even using the phrase ‘bring the gees!’ The team, along with other locally-based youth birders, often donned fairy costumes and other ridiculous attire whilst patrolling the streets of Johannesburg with educational signs, in an attempt to raise awareness among non-birders and general members of the public, as well as raise further funds for the cause. “Dignity? Yea, we threw that out the window when we bought the fairy outfits,” said Andrew, “but of course all worth it when we’re creating a sense of ‘gees’ and generating awareness for this crucial cause.”

The reason we took part in this year’s event was not for the birding – sure, birding Israel was always going to be a fantastic experience but we were in it for the conservation aspect from the start, the part of the event we

feel is the most important. As Chairperson of Youth Africa Birding, Africa’s biggest youth birding platform, sharing my passion for birds and birding with fellow young birders forms part of my day-to-day life. As the youth, it’s crucial that we take a stand. It’s far too often that the youth nowadays sit back and think to themselves that all will be alright; we’re still young so let those older than us handle the world’s issues. This is completely the wrong mindset to have, for today’s issues will become our tragedies tomorrow, and then we’ll sit complaining we didn’t do anything and we’ll be worse off for it. Vice-chairperson of YAB, Werner, couldn’t agree more: “It’s imperative that we get the youth involved in conservation from a young age and we hope that through our actions we will be able to set an example for young birders the world over.”

The South African birding community has most definitely done its name justice on the international birding stage with past events seeing the Birding Ecotours Bandits exceeding their fundraising target on both occasions they competed, and this year the other South African team, who competed alongside the



John Kinghorn/Birding Ecotours

John Kinghorn

The first two COTF titles to ever reach Southern Hemisphere soil

John Kinghorn



The team's logo, a stunning male MacQueens Bustard designed by young Australian birder Julian Teh

YAB'ers, likewise exceeded their fundraising goal. However, the YAB'ers most definitely went the extra mile, raising over 8 800 euros, making us the first-ever international youth team to reach and exceed their fundraising goal, and claiming both the Guardians and Knights of the Flyway titles in the process, thus also becoming

the first-ever Southern Hemisphere team to bring back a title from the event.

"This trip definitely changed me as a person. Seeing the camaraderie among birders who had previously never met, all filled with a raging fire and drive to make a difference, was incredible to say the least," Jessleena reflected. Although the event is over and the team is now firmly back on South African soil, the fire and 'gees' still rages on and we will be keeping ourselves busy by giving talks to local bird clubs and educating more and more birders back home about the massacre of birds on migration and, of course, furthering our fundraising... perhaps with just less fairy outfits... that is until #COTF18 of course!

Ed: BLNG and its members also played their part in this worthy cause by helping to send 'The Birding Ecotours Youth Africa Birders' to COTF. 🐦

Seabirds are eating plastic litter in our oceans – but not only where you'd expect

Originally published in **THE CONVERSATION**
Re-published under CC BY-ND.

Chris Wilcox, Senior Research Scientist, CSIRO

Britta Denise Hardesty, Senior Research Scientist, Oceans and Atmosphere Flagship, CSIRO

Erik van Sebille, Lecturer in oceanography and climate change, Imperial College London

Britta Denise Hardesty



Had a gutful of plastic rubbish affecting wildlife?

Many of you may have already seen the photograph above, of an albatross carcass full of undigested plastic junk. But how representative is that of the wider issue facing seabirds?

To help answer that question, we carried out the first worldwide analysis of the threat posed by plastic pollution to seabird species worldwide.

Our study, published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, found that nearly 60% of all seabird species studied so far have had plastic in their gut. This figure is based on reviewing previous reports in the scientific literature, but if we use a statistical model to infer what would be found at the current time and include unstudied species, we expect that more than 90% of seabirds have eaten plastic rubbish.

Rising tide of plastic

Our analysis of published studies shows that the amount of plastic in seabird's stomachs has been climbing over the past half-century. In 1960, plastic was found in the stomachs of less than 5% of seabirds, but by 2010 this had risen to 80%. We predict that by 2050, 99% of the world's seabird species will be accidentally eating plastic, unless we take action to clean up the oceans.

Perhaps surprisingly, we also found that the area with the worst expected impact is at the boundary of the Southern Ocean and the Tasman Sea, between Australia and New Zealand. While this region is far away from the subtropical gyres, dubbed "ocean garbage patches", that collect the highest densities of plastic, the highest threat is in areas where plastic rubbish overlaps with large numbers of different seabird species – such as the Southern Ocean off Australia.

Seabirds are excellent indicators of ecosystem health. The high estimates of plastic in seabirds we found were not so surprising, considering that members of our research team have previously found nearly 200 pieces of plastic in a single seabird. These items include a wide range of things most of us would recognise:



Britta Denise Hardesty

Plastic from a dead flesh-footed shearwater, amounting to 8% of the bird's body weight.

bags, bottle caps, bits of balloons, cigarette lighters, even toothbrushes and plastic toys.

Seabirds can have surprising amounts of plastic in their gut. Working on islands off Australia, we have found birds with plastics making up 8% of their body weight. Imagine a person weighing 62 kg having almost 5 kg of plastic in their digestive tract. And then think about how large that lump would be, given that many types of plastic are designed to be as lightweight as possible.

The more plastic a seabird encounters, the more it tends to eat, which means that one of the best predictors of the amount of plastic in a seabird's gut is the concentration of ocean plastic in the region where it lives. This finding points the way to a solution: reducing the amount of plastic that goes into the ocean would directly reduce the amount that seabirds (and other wildlife) accidentally eat.

That might sound obvious, but as we can see from the stomach contents of the birds, many of the items are things people use every day, so the link to human rubbish is clear.

Our study suggests that improving waste management would directly benefit wildlife. There are several actions we could take, such as reducing packaging, banning single-use plastic items or charging an extra fee to use them, and introducing deposits for recyclable items like drink containers.

Many of these types of policies are already proving to be locally effective in reducing waste

lost into the environment, a substantial portion of which ends up polluting the ocean.

One recent study of industrial practices in Europe found that improved management of plastic led to a clear reduction in the number of plastic items found in seabirds in the North Sea within a few decades. This is encouraging, as it suggests not only that the solutions are effective, but also that they work in a relatively short time.

Given that most of these items were in someone's hands at some point, it seems that a

simple behaviour change can reduce a global impact to our seabirds, and to other marine species as well.

This work was carried out as part of a national marine debris project supported by CSIRO and Shell's Social investment program, as well as the marine debris working group at the US National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, with support from Ocean Conservancy. 🐦

Graad Elfs sprei hulle vlerke

Janelle Verster

Vier-en-twintig sewentienjariges, een Aprilvakansie en 106 verskillende voëlspesies. Nee, dit is nie 'n kriptiese raaisel nie. Ook nie 'n geheime kode of manier om 'n pinnummer te onthou nie. Dit is die Doornkloof Familiekerk se Graad Elf-Sondagskoolklas se *Holiday Bird Challenge*. Klink dit steeds vreemd? 'n Kerk wat 'n voëlkykuitdaging hou? Vier-en-twintig kinders uit een klas wat voëls kyk? Nie as 'n mens weet hoe lief vir dié deel van die Skepping die betrokke Sondagskoolonderwyser, Pieter Verster, is nie.

Pieter is 'n ywerige voëlkyker en atlaser. Hy laat nie 'n naweek verbygaan sonder om saam

met sy vrou, en soms ook vriende, iewers te gaan voëls soek nie. Of dit nou naby die huis in Centurion, in die lieflike Waterberge, in die Kaap of die voëlparadys KwaZulu-Natal is, maak nie saak nie. En dit is vir hom net so lekker om hierdie liefde aan ander oor te dra en hulle te wys hoe opwindend dit kan wees om voëls te soek.

Dit het alles begin met 'n Hoefhoep [African Hoopoe] op die kerk se grasperk. Ja, regtig. 'n Voëlkyker kan mos nie help om te kyk as daar 'n voëltjie in die omgewing kom sit nie, al is dit deur die Sondagskoolklas se venster. Toe Pieter dit goeddink om as deel van die aand se vasvra te vra watter voëltjie dit is, was hy baie geskok toe van die kinders sê dat dit 'n houtkapper is en nog met hom stry ook daaroor. Daar en dan het hy besluit dat die kinders nie so onbewus van hierdie wonderlike skepselftjies deur die lewe kan gaan nie.

Eers het Pieter 'n Rietvlei Dam-uitstappie gereël waartydens 18 kinders, dominee Chris Swart en vyf meer ervare voëlkykers (Michal Groenewald, Eduard Teichert, Toni Geddes, asook Pieter en Janelle) vroeër in die jaar gekyk het hoeveel voëls hulle in ongeveer twee ure in die reservaat kon sien en/of hoor. Die meer ervare voëlkykers het elkeen ongeveer drie of vier kinders saam met hulle laat ry en was die kinders se gids vir die oggend. Ten minste een



Paul Wepener

Hierdie Bronsvlerkdrawwertjie het vir Paul Wepener die prys vir die skaarsste voël in die sak gebring.

van die kinders in die kar moes kon bevestig dat hulle 'n spesifieke voël kon sien of hoor op grond van die gids se beskrywing voordat die betrokke voël 'n punt kon tel. Die spanne het teen mekaar gekompeteer en dit was uiteindelik Eduard Teichert se span wat die dag gewen het met 'n totaal van nie minder nie as 80 verskillende spesies in die beperkte tyd! Die wenspan het elkeen 'n Newmanse voëlgids as prys losgeslaan waarna al die deelnemers 'n lekker ontbyt by die Rietvlei-koffiewinkel kon geniet. Pieter het 'n kort boodskappie gelewer wat daaroor gegaan het dat, al het die kinders dalk nog nooit voorheen die pragtige, verskeidenheid voëltjies raakgesien nie, het dit nie beteken dat hierdie voëltjies nie bestaan het terwyl hulle onbewus was daarvan nie. So ook is die Here nog altyd daar, al sien 'n mens Hom nie noodwendig raak nie.

Die Rietvlei-uitstappie het 'n paar kinders se belangstelling geprikkel en Rievan Lombard was die eerste Graad Elf om kort daarna weer voëls in die reservaat te gaan soek. Rievan en 23 ander kinders het toe ook ywerig deelgeneem aan die volgende kompetisie: die *Holiday Bird Challenge*.

Hoe die *Holiday Bird Challenge* gewerk het

Die Graad Elfs kon gedurende die 2017-Aprilvakansie (1–17 April) fotos van enige voëls wat hulle sien neem en op die Whatsapp-groepie wat vir dié doel geskep is laai. Dit moes hulle eie fotos wees wat in die vakansie geneem is en die fotos kon óf met 'n selfoon, óf met 'n kamera, geneem word. Hulle moes dan ook raai watter voël dit is wat hulle instuur (ongeaag of dit reg of verkeerd is).

Die eerste 20 unieke voëlspesies wat ingestuur is het elkeen vir die fotograaf 'n sjokolade verdien, tot 'n maksimum van vier pakkies per persoon. Twaalf verskillende kinders het lekkergoed hiervoor gewen, maar uiteindelik het die 24 'n indrukwekkende totaal van 106 verskillende spesies gedurende die uitdagingsperiode gesien! Pieter het elkeen van dié fotos op Whatsapp beantwoord met interessante inligting oor die betrokke voëlspesie, wat deur

Top 25 voëls gesien	
1	Bronsvlerkdrawwertjie [Bronze-winged Courser] (Paul Wepener)
2	Blouvisvanger [Blue Kingfisher] (Zander Louw)
3	Swaelstertyvreter [Swallow-tailed Bee-eater] (Rievan Lombard)
4	Bosveldpapegaai [Meyer's Parrot] (Jenna Fraser)
5	Dubbelbandsandpatrys [Double-banded Sandgrouse] (Rievan Lombard)
6	Berghaan [Bateleur] (Franco Groenewald)
7	Waterdikkop [Water Thick-knee] (Miné Louw)
8	Afrikaanse Naguil [Fiery-necked Nightjar] (Jenna Fraser)
9	Gevlekte-ooruil [Spotted Eagle-Owl] (Hudson Janse van Rensburg)
10	Withelmakslman [White-crested Helmet-Shrike] (Paul Wepener)
11	Papegaaiduif [African Green-Pigeon] (Paul Wepener)
12	Swartwangsysie [Black-faced Waxbill] (Paul Wepener)
13	Kremetartlakslman [Southern White-crowned Shrike] (Paul Wepener)
14	Pylsterrooibekkie [Shaft-tailed Wydah] (Paul Wepener)
15	Koningblousysie [Violet-eared Waxbill] (Rievan Lombard)
16	Rooiwangnaguil [Rufous-cheeked Nightjar] (Paul Wepener)
17	Rooibekrenostervoël [Red-billed Oxpecker] (Jenna Fraser)
18	Bennettse Speg [Bennett's Woodpecker] (Franco Groenewald)
19	Grootjagarend [African Hawk-Eagle] (Franco Groenewald)
20	Kleinsperwer [Little Sparrowhawk] (Franco Groenewald)
21	Gariepglasogie [Orange River White-eye] (Fanie Fourie)
22	Witkruismuisvoël [White-backed Mousebird] (Fanie Fourie)
23	Rooiwangtinkinkie [Red-faced Cisticola] (Franco Groenewald)
24	Rooioogtiptol [African Red-eyed Bulbul] (Fanie Fourie)
25	Groottroupan [Purple Roller] (Jenna Fraser)

al die kinders wat deelneem gesien kon word.

Dit het egter nie net daaroor gegaan om bloot die eerste een te wees wat 'n sekere



David Botes

Links: Van die prysweners: Fanie Fourie, Rievan Lombard, Paul Wepener and Jenna Fraser.

Regs: Pieter Verster wens Zander Louw geluk met sy tweede plek.



David Botes

soort voël afneem nie: die vyf beste fotos is met kontantpryse beloon. Die topfoto is deur Franco Groenewald geneem en was van 'n Bruinkopvisvanger [Brown-hooded Kingfisher] wat 'n Gespikkelde Bosslang gevang het.

Die grootste stryd was egter om die skaarsste voël te probeer sien en afneem. Kontantpryse is aan die top 10 skaarsste voëls toegeken en 15 ander voëls het eervolle vermelding ('silwerstatus') gekry. Die beoordelaar en lid van BLNG, Eduard Teichert, het 'n moeilike taak gehad om tussen die vele goeie vondste te kies. Sommer vroeg in die vakansie het voëls soos die Papegaaiduif [African Green-Pigeon], die Bleeksingvalk [Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk] en die Swartwangsysie [Black-faced Waxbill] al op die toneel verskyn.

Dit was egter uiteindelik die Bronsvlerkdrawwertjie [Bronze-winged Courser] wat Paul Wepener in Alldays afgeneem het, wat met die louere weggestap het tydens die prysuitdeling wat op 7 Mei gehou is. Zander Louw (tweede plek) se Blouvisvanger [Half-collared Kingfisher] – nogal op die rotse van 'n KwaZulu-Nataalse strand – het glad nie by die drawwertjie afgesteek nie, en Rievan Lombard se Swaeltertyvreter [Swallow-tailed Bee-eater] en Jenna Fraser se Bosveldpapegaai [Meyer's Parrot] was slegs 'n kortkoppie agter,

onderskeidelik in die derde en vierde plek.

Daar was verder ook pryse vir die snaaksste foto, die snaaksste voëlkyker, 'n *mystery bird*, die beste kommentaar op Whatsapp en ook vir deelname. Spesiale pryse is aan Miné Louw (Hart van 'n *True Birder*), Jenna Fraser (die beste vordering vanaf Week 1 na Week 2), Fanie Fourie (Veelsydigste *Birder*), Rievan Lombard (*Inspire Award* en Bittereinde-toekenning), Paul Wepener (*Inspire Award*) en Zander Louw (*Continued Energy Award*) toegeken.

Die *Holiday Bird Challenge* is met 'n Whatsapp-vasvra afgesluit wat deur Neil Geysler gewen is. Op die afgespreekte tyd het Pieter vraag-vir-vraag op die Whatsapp-groepie gepos, met die kinders wat elke keer blitsig geantwoord het: partykeer met die regte antwoord; partykeer met 'n raaiskoot. Soms was die tydsverloop tussen die eerste twee korrekte antwoorde minder as 'n sekonde, maar net die kind wat die vinnigste kon dink én tik, kon telkens 'n punt kry.

Maar uiteindelik was dit nie net oor punte en pryse nie: die hoofdoel van die *Holiday Bird Challenge* was dat die kinders dit moes geniet en in die proses ook iets leer, en dit wil voorkom of daar in dié doel geslaag is. Hopelik sal 'n paar van die kinders ook in die toekoms by BLNG aansluit en hopelik sal ál die kinders met nuwe oë na die wonder van voëls kyk. 🐦

Birding 101 in Colbyn Valley

Tamsyn Sherwill

Wetlands are important sites for supporting bird diversity, especially in towns and cities where waterlogged areas can end up as islands in a sea of development. The Colbyn Wetland plays just such a role in Pretoria, with over 140 species recorded in the wetland and surrounds. In celebration of World Wetlands Day in February, Friends of Colbyn Valley teamed up with the Agricultural Research Council, Working for Wetlands and Tshwane University of Technology, to raise awareness about the value of wetlands by targeting the city's most impressionable, curious and energetic citizens. Over 100 children, from various schools, Scout, Guide and Voortrekker groups attended the event, which started with an optional 'curtain raiser', in the form of an early morning bird walk led by BLNG's Philip Calinikos.

Walking around the Colbyn Wetland Nature Reserve can be challenging in most seasons, and especially in February, with no paths or walkways, and an abundance of long grass and stabbing wildflowers (*Berkheya radula*, the Sun Daisy/Boesmanrietjie). Dense reedbeds block easy access to the rest of the reserve from the Scout Hall, where the main event was

held – and the walk was thus restricted to the area between the access road and the west bank of the Hartbeesspruit. Though the size of the group (over 50 birders, mostly without binoculars) also made for difficult birding, a number of common wetland and other species were seen. Participants were also able to pick up one of various back issues of *African BirdLife* donated by BLSA, which proved to be extremely popular.

Activities later in the day included a visit to the rehabilitation project being undertaken by Working for Wetlands, a 'catena' (sequence of soil and associated indicators down a slope) walk to point out the different soil types and plants that indicate wetland conditions, and a simple model-building activity to show how wetlands change the way water moves in a landscape.

Growing interest in this annual event (with many more children wanting to attend this year than could be accommodated) suggests that there is a huge need and demand for these kinds of activities in Pretoria. Introducing children to birding is a valuable investment in the future of birds and their habitats – the city's WESSA Friends groups, school eco-clubs, Scout,



Tamsyn Sherwill

Colbyn Valley bird walk



Tamsyn Sherwill

Waiting one's turn at the spotting scope

A TUT student helping his group with their wetland model



Iambyn Sherwill

Guide and Voortrekker groups, as well as eco-NGOs like SoapKidz, among others, offer many opportunities for birders to volunteer their time and expertise to this cause.

ARC-SCW published a video based on this event: *Wetland Conservation as Risk Mitigation.*



(Rohan Chakravarty, www.greenhumour.com, used with permission)

2016 SAFRING ringing statistics for Gauteng and the BLNG ring group

Dane Paijmans, SAFRING (safring@adu.org.za)

SAFRING have received a total of 9 470 ring records (initial ringing, re-trap, re-sighting and recovery) from qualified ringers and the public (reported recoveries) in Gauteng from the start of January 2016 until the end of December 2016. This total makes up 15.5% of the total ring records of 61 097 received by SAFRING over this period, and includes 8 286 initial ring records, 1 141 recaptures/re-sightings and 43 recoveries from 194 species. The most common species ringed in the province over this period was the Southern Masked-Weaver [Swartkeelgeelvink] (1 677 records), followed by the Southern Red Bishop [Roovink] (1 092 records), Red-headed Finch [Rooikopvink] (917 records) and Dark-capped Bulbul [Swartoogtiptol] (470 records). Most recaptures and re-sightings were identified by registered ringers while trapping, with only 28 records coming in from un-registered birders identifying metal or colour rings in the field. The most common species recaptured was the Southern Masked-Weaver (182 records), followed by Red-headed Finch (174 records), Southern Red Bishop (136 records) and Cape Robin-chat [Gewone Janfrederik] (79 records).

Of the recoveries received most did not have identifiable causes of death, with many being found around residences. The main recorded causes of fatalities were: killed by pets (4 records – Red-headed Finch, Village Weaver [Bontrugwewer] and 2 Southern Masked-Weavers), weather (3 records – Crested Barbet [Kuifkop-houtkapper], Karoo Thrush [Geelbeklyster],

Red-headed Finch) and collisions (2 records – Black-chested Prinia [Swartbandlangstertjie], Southern Red Bishop), with one bird being electrocuted (Cape Vulture [Kransaasvoël]) and one being shot (Southern Red Bishop). The recoveries were predominantly made up of Southern Masked-Weavers (7 records), Laughing Doves [Rooiborsduifie] (4 records) and Karoo Thrushes (4 records).

The only foreign recapture for this period was a Barn Swallow [Europese Swael] (Ring: Z483999) initially ringed in Cairnbowie UK (5458N 0508W) on 15 August 2016 and re-trapped by Hein Bantjes in Witkoppies Vlei in Rietvlei Nature Reserve on 3 December 2016. That is a distance of 9 512 km and 123 days between the locations and dates of ring and re-trap.

In Gauteng, 54 registered ringers aided in this collection. Mr Jim Mcluskie was the top Gauteng citizen ringer with an overall of 1 268 birds ringed in this province over this period. The BLNG ring group (20 active members) handled a total of 7 183 birds or 75.8% of the birds ringed in Gauteng. The top three ringers in the BLNG ringing group were Marina Pienaar (1 117 records), FC Bothma (583 records) and Hein Bantjes (556 records). The three ringers with the most species for the year were Gert and Kotie Opperman with 118 and 111 species and Hein Bantjes with 99 species.

Please be aware that the statistics presented here may vary slightly in future as outstanding records continue to be submitted. 🐦

Paardeplaats (Lydenburg) ringnaweek: 24–26 Februarie 2017

Gerda Whitehorn

BirdLife Gauteng-Noord se span beringers het op 'n reën-naweek in Februarie gekies om op die Longtom te kom voëltjies ring. Elba Swart en elf gesoute beringers het Paardeplaats Nature Retreat betrek, en wind en weer in die naam van navorsing trotseer.

Hulle is nie gewone natuurliefhebbers nie. In wind en weer is die nette vroegoggend oopgespan en al om die kwartier geïnspekteer, sodat voëls vinnig in die vangsak kon kom om gemeet, geweeg en gering te word vir die rekords.

Een van die groot trekpleisters is die skaars Rooiborssuikervoël [Gurney's Sugarbird] wat spesifiek op Paardeplaats en in die Lydenburg-omgewing voorkom. Die span kon vyf Gurneys ring, waarvan twee laasjaar dieselfde tyd deur Dawie de Swardt en sy uitgelese groep gering is.

Die Hofsanger [Willow Warbler] het ook vir opwinding gesorg. Dié voël kom uit die noorde-lyke halfronde en broei van Ierland tot Rusland.

Die jongste lid van die span, Julian du Plooy, bygestaan deur sy pa Chris en oupa Frik, het die skaars Blouvisvanger [Half-collared Kingfisher] gering. Ander spesiale spesies het ingesluit die Kleinste Klopkloppie [Wing-snapping Cisticola], die Huil- en Luitinkinkies [Wailing & Lazy Cisticola], die Drakensberg-langstertjie [Drakensberg Prinia], die Rooivlerk-streepkoppie [Cape Bunting] en die skaarser



Gerda Whitehorn

FC Bothma, Wanda Louwrens en Martin Steyn

Klein-rooibandsuikerbekkie [Southern Double-collared Sunbird].

Volgens Elba was dit 'n goeie oes van spesie-verskeidenheid en 'n opvolgkuier is beslis in die pyplyn. Voordat 'n mens kan aansoek doen om as beringer te kwalifiseer, moet jy 500 voëls onder toesig van 'n gekwalifiseerde beringer hanteer, met 'n minimum van 50 verskillende spesies. Sy en haar spanlede het reeds letterlik duisende voëls deur hulle hande laat gaan. Dis ernstiger as 'n gogga wat jou byt; dis 'n liefde wat jou myle laat ry en wind en weer laat trotseer.

Voëlliefhebbers wat graag wil aansluit by 'n plaaslike tak van die Escarpment Bird Club, kan met Gerda Whitehorn skakel by 079 515 7799 of gerda@whitehorn.co.za. 🐦

How do birds drink?

Most birds have to tip their heads back to allow water down their throat, as they lack the ability to swallow. However, a few groups of birds, including pigeons and doves, the African mousebirds, and some species of finch, are able to drink without lifting their heads, using their tongue to create a sucking action. Other species such as swallows and martins fly low over water, dipping their bill just below the surface to grab a beakful of liquid as they pass. In the Antarctic, penguins will drink by eating snow.

Atlasing tales – east of Delmas

Don Reid

Atlasing? For those not familiar with the term, atlasing is the regular mapping of bird species in a specific area called a 'pentad'. Each pentad has a unique number based on its geographical position according to a 5-minute x 5-minute grid of co-ordinates of latitude and longitude, which translates into a square of our planet roughly 8 x 8 kilometres in extent. The data collected is transmitted to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project database at the ADU (Animal Demography Unit) based at the University of Cape Town, a task made very simple by the developers of the BirdLasser app.

Delmas and surrounds

Delmas is a busy town, known for many years as a centre of large farming operations and now also on the fringe of the coal-mining belt that stretches across a large part of the Mpumalanga Province and feeds the several large coal-fired power stations in the area. The habitat varies between stretches of prime grassland – lush and long when I atlasted in the area after the recent good summer rains, large farming operations with tall green mielies bordering the gravel road for kilometres at a

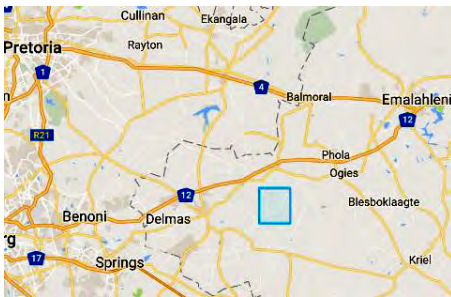
time and, sadly for the environment, areas that have been substantially altered by extensive strip coal-mining activities.

The trip reminded me once again why atlasing is such a joy – this one had all the elements that make for a memorable morning – interesting birding, a handful of 'wow' birds, pleasant weather conditions, mostly quiet roads and a surprise sighting.

Pentad 2605_2850

I was on my way before sunrise on 10 February and made Delmas in good time before traffic had built up too much. Right on 6.30 am I was into Pentad 2605_2850 east of Delmas and my list grew apace with all the usual grassland species on view. Orange River Francolin [Kalaharipatrys] and Swainson's Spurfowl [Bosveldfisant] were particularly vocal, as they often are early in the morning.

The long grass, stretching as far as the eye could see in places, was dotted with Widowbirds – Long-tailed Widowbirds [Langstertflap] displaying in their trademark undulating fashion with long tails floating



Location of Pentad 2605_2850



Long-tailed Widowbird/Langstertflap



Don Reid
© Don Reid

Coal mining area



Don Reid

Brown-throated Martin/Afrikaanse Oewerswael

behind them, White-winged Widowbirds [Witvlerkflap] fluttering about and Fantailed Widowbirds [Kortstertflap] perched elegantly on longer stalks. Here and there Yellow-crowned Bishops [Goudgeelvink] provided a further splash of colour in the waving grass.

The road itself was full of action – doves and sparrows in abundance and numbers of Red-capped Larks [Rooikoplewerik] foraging for goodness knows what in the middle of the gravel road. I always wonder why they spend so much time in the road – there can't be much for them to feed on.

A Marsh Owl [Vlei-uil] over the grassland was cause for the first 'wow' of the day, followed shortly after by a pipit which caught my eye at the roadside – it took much deliberation and studying of my photos later that day at home, plus consultation of the wonderful LBJ's book

of Faansie Peacock, before I could confidently ID it as a Buffy Pipit [Vaalkoester].

A stop at the Wilgespruit added African Reed Warbler [Kleinrietsanger] calling vigorously and from the many swallows overhead I could ID White-throated and SA Cliff Swallows [Witkeel- & Familieswael]. A long stretch of mielies followed, the stalks towering above my tall vehicle – so pleasing to the eye and soul, but not particularly good for birding.

Shortly after, I was into coal-mining area where a Black-chested Snake Eagle [Swartborsslangarend] surveyed the altered landscape with what I imagined was disdain, but a group of a hundred or so Brown-throated Martins [Afrikaanse Oewerswael] didn't seem to mind, as they were foraging actively amongst the spoil heaps in between stints on the telephone wires.

With my total on a pleasing 55 species, I turned around and drove back along the same road towards Delmas and the second target pentad for the day.

Pentad 2605_2845

This turned out to be a rather trying pentad, as it largely covered landscape seriously altered by extensive coal-mining activities and I struggled to find an accessible side road to escape from the incessant string of coal trucks rumbling by every time I stopped.

After 40 minutes of less than happy birding, I abandoned the pentad – nevertheless with 21 species logged, including one 'wow' bird in the form of a soaring Booted Eagle [Dwergarend], for which I received an ORF (Out of Range form to be completed and submitted whenever a species outside of its normal known range is recorded). Fortunately, I had photographed the Eagle.

With some time in hand and wanting to make the most of the morning's atlasng I took the longer way home via the R42 to Bronkhorstspuit. As I passed the signpost indicating the entrance to Bronkhorstspuit Dam, I decided to explore it and turned off onto a pleasantly quiet stretch of road through

grassland. Not far down the road was a bridge over a stream which was just the spot I was hoping for, to enjoy some refreshments and view the bird life.

And the birds were plentiful – several Amur Falcons [Oostelike Rooipootvalk] perched on the fence, White-throated Swallows and Brown-throated Martins swooping under and over the bridge, calling African Reed and Lesser Swamp Warblers [Kaaapse Rietsanger], a Giant Kingfisher [Reusevisvanger] and a Common Sandpiper [Gewone Ruiter] bobbing its head on a brick retaining wall while it watched the rushing water below.

Bird of the day was a Half-collared Kingfisher [Blouvisvanger] which unfortunately did not hang around long enough for me to get a photo. But a very pleasant conclusion to a mixed day of atlasing.

Surprise sighting

The surprise of the day was not a bird – travelling along a stretch of gravel road, I spotted a mongoose in the middle of the road, not too unusual when birding in the country areas, but as I got closer I realized it was tackling a snake. The metre-long Mole Snake had coiled itself up for protection, while the Slender Mongoose looked for a vulnerable spot to attack.

My approach disturbed it enough to abandon the snake, which uncoiled itself and promptly headed towards my vehicle. I reversed out of the way and, as luck would have it, at that moment a car approached from the opposite direction, forcing me to move further away to avoid having the snake run over. However, the other driver did not appear to see the snake and probably just caught it with a wheel – immediately after the car had passed, the mongoose dashed from its cover, grabbed the injured snake and dragged it into the roadside bush, where it eyed me for a moment before disappearing. A real natural drama on a small scale! Now I believe those stories of mongoose taking on snakes larger than themselves!

The atlasing statistics

Pentad 2605_2850: 14th Full Protocol card for the pentad; 3 new species added to the pentad list (Little Egret, Palm Swift, Buffy Pipit); total species for the pentad now 138; personal total for the pentad 82 from 3 FP cards

Pentad 2605_2845: 1st Ad Hoc card for the pentad (18 FP cards done); 1 new species added to the pentad list (Booted Eagle); total species for the pentad now 145; personal total for the pentad 61 from 2 FP cards. 🦉



Common Sandpiper/Gewone Ruiter



Slender Mongoose with snake prey

Pilanesberg paradise

Keanu Canto

In December 2016, my family and I headed off for a weekend in the Pilanesberg National Park in the North West Province – for a much-needed bushveld escape with some great birding to boot. Despite not being that well-known as a birding destination, the Pilanesberg has never failed to surprise me with some of the stunning birds that I have found there. This trip was no exception.

We entered the park at Bakubung Gate and the trip list increased rapidly as I added birds like White-browed Scrub-Robin [Gestreepte Wipstert], Yellow-billed Kite [Geelbekwou] and Marabou, White and Yellow-billed Storks [Maraboe, Witooeivaar, Nimmersat]. The

highlight driving to Manyane Camp (our base for the weekend) was probably the adult Jackal Buzzard [Rooiborsjakkalsvoël] that soared gracefully over Tshwene Drive. After settling in at camp, a late afternoon walk within Manyane turned up Cinnamon-breasted Bunting [Klipstreekoppie], Black Cuckoo [Swartkoekoek], and the highlight, a Monotonous Lark [Bosveldlewerik] displaying beautifully in front of me – my first lifer of the trip!

I rose early the next morning and headed off to explore the camp. Bearded Woodpeckers [Baard-Speg] tapped noisily at dead branches, Marico Flycatchers [Maricovlieëvanger] hawked insects from their perches and I spotted an Icterine Warbler [Spotsanger] skulking within a small thicket. Parties of Burnt-necked Eremomelas [Bruinkeelbossanger] moved through the camp while Black Cuckooshrikes [Swartkatakoeroe] and Great Spotted Cuckoos [Gevlekte Koekoek] made their presence known as they chased their mates around. A game drive later in the day turned up Namaqua Dove [Namakwaduif], Sabota Lark [Sabotalewerik], Acacia Pied Barbet [Bonthoutkapper] and a pride of lions, amongst many others.

On our second day we were up at the crack



Keanu Canto

Monotonous Lark /Bosveldlewerik calling



Keanu Canto

Sabota Lark/Sabotalewerik nest in Manyane



Keanu Canto

Violet-backed Starling/Witborsspreu taking a bath

of dawn to explore the park. Notable sightings included Brown Snake Eagle [Bruinslangarend] and three cheetah brothers in the grasslands near Mankwe. We then headed up to Lenong View. Here, Lazy Cisticolas [Luitinkinkie] called from the slopes, a stunning male Short-toed Rock Thrush [Korttoonkliplyster] sat out in the open, and at the small lookout shelter a Yellow-throated Petronia [Geelvlekmosie] foraged on the rocky ground in front of us while the calls of cuckoos, doves, apalises and warblers emanated from the forest below.

On our final day in the park I once again set off to explore the walking trails section of Manyane. The highlight was surely when I flushed not one but two Bushveld Pipits

[Bosveldkoester] in a small clearing! They perched obligingly on open branches and afforded good views! After checking out, we slowly drove through the park on the way out. Near the Mankwe Dam wall we encountered a handsome Western Osprey [Visvalk] – my second and last lifer of the trip. The great birding wasn't over yet, however, and we also managed to find a Western Barn Owl [Nonnetjie-uil] roosting at Fish Eagle Picnic Site.

After a drink at Kwa Maritane we unfortunately had to head back home to the hustle and bustle of the city. A Freckled Nightjar [Donkernaguil] – hawking insects over a suburban swimming pool back in Pretoria – was a fitting end to a great weekend! 🐦

Witsand National Park (November 2016)

Liesl de Swardt

Nestled on the edge of the Kalahari, Witsand is a beautiful and very well-run little park. The chalets are built under lovely old trees and the campsite hides under their canopies. You are far enough away from the other park visitors that you can feel almost alone. The park

shop isn't that well stocked, and the cell-phone reception is scratchy, but personally I find that a bonus. The park boasts a wonderful marriage between thorn/bushveld, and the Kalahari. It is also a place where you can hear the sand dunes roar (*brulsand*), if you are willing to traipse up



Liesl de Swardt

View from the look-out point on top of the dune, showing the different biomes (Kalahari Sand and Bushveld)

Liesl de Swardt



Sociable Weaver/Versamelvoël nest

a steep dune in the afternoon sun and then meander back down. But the main reason to visit is the smorgasbord of birdlife on offer. There are not many places where you can see the Kalahari and bushveld birds in one spot. It is the only place I know of where you have a very reliable shot at seeing three sandgrouse species. The bird hide was designed especially for these birds, being sunken in, and you are on eye-level with the birds. The Double-banded Sandgrouse [Dubbelbandsandpatrys] comes to drink just as the sun dips beneath the horizon. You hear them before you see them, as they do a reconnaissance fly-by before they come in to land. These silly, fat, pigeon-like birds are very easily spooked so you have to keep exceedingly still. They start arriving in nervous ones and twos, and then, as you hold your breath, dozens arrive. Initially they just sit, calling nervously, but first one and then the others approach the water. It is a special spectacle that will have you camped there at sunset every night. Spend some time there during the day, and you will see Namaqua [Kelkiewyn] and Burchell's [Gevlekte Sandpatrys] also making an appearance, again calling before they come in.

Keep a sharp eye out for the Pygmy Falcon [Dwergvalk] around Sociable Weaver



Liesl de Swardt

Sandgrouse Bird-Hide

[Versamelvoël] nests. They are very abundant and easily spotted – look for them hiding in the adjacent tree or lamppost. Very aptly named, you could be forgiven for mistaking the Pygmy Falcon for a small dove.

At our chalet, there was a parent pair of Familiar Chats [Gewone Spekvreter] with an almost fully-grown youngster. We were privileged enough to witness a bit of the weaning process. The one adult (we assumed it was the female) would succumb to the insistent begging and pestering of the youngster and feed it, but immediately regret it and then proceed to peck and beat him. The youngster would cry piteously but resume his begging almost immediately when the mom subsided. The other adult (we assumed it was the father) would pretend to pick something up from the ground and then feed the youngster the imagined food. The youngster would wait a bit – perplexed – cry, and then resume his begging. Neither of these two strategies (feed-and-beat/*voer-en-foeter* or fake-feeding/*fop-voer*) seemed to work very well. We had to leave Witsand before we got to see the youngster feeding himself. I wonder how long this had been going on, and how long it continued for afterwards?

Members of BLNG will feel a special affinity for this park as we share the *Laniarius atrococcineus* as a logo. 🦅

Namibia birding – follow-up visit (29 August – 21 September 2016)

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

We had really enjoyed birding Namibia two years ago (*Laniarius* No. 128: 25), but there were still new places to be discovered in Namibia and still a list of some 22 new birds to be hunted for.

Planning commenced in March 2016 and various books and friends were consulted on where to go to see those hidden rarities. Also, during the 2014 Namibia trip, we had 'dipped' on some of our target birds and planned to make a second attempt to find these beauties. I always find that planning a (birding) trip is the start of the fun. One contemplates the natural surroundings, the old and new places to be seen and enjoyed, and all this with an air of expectation. Our envisaged route was as follows: Pretoria to Windhoek via Kang and the Trans-Kalahari Highway, bird in Windhoek, Waterberg Plateau, Kunene West of Ruacana (Swartbooisdrift), Grootfontein (Roy's Camp), Rundu, Katima Mulilo and further east of that, back west to Popa Falls (at Divundu) and return via Botswana (Shakawe – Ghanzi – Lobatse – Zeerust – Pretoria)

Early on I was informed that September was high season and that I should rather book accommodation than risk leaving it to chance, and then find that there was no place for us. So I booked. We had also tried to interest friends in joining the trip, but we had planned a long trip and not always cheap, so in the end Kathrin and I travelled alone. We packed the fully built-up off-road trailer with the new Howling Moon Deluxe Trailer Tent the day before departure. We also filled the 60-litre water-tank in the trailer, after hearing that the water in the northern parts was not always healthy to drink.

On Monday 29 August 2016, we departed at 06:00 in order to reach the Botswana border by 10:00. The N4, past Zeerust was still in a

pitifully bad condition, as it had been two years ago, with some roadworks and long delays. We fuelled up at Kang. (First rule in Botswana: fuel-up wherever you get petrol, even if your tank is still half full, you might come to the next filling station to find there is no fuel. Second rule in Botswana: don't drive at night, there are no fences, and cattle, goats and particularly donkeys just stubbornly stand on the highway and refuse to move off.) We slept over at Kalahari Rest 21 km west of Kang and hit the road early next morning after breakfast.

We birded on the way in Botswana and in Namibia, ticking plenty of Red-crested Korhaan, Yellow-billed Hornbills, White-crowned Shrikes and Ostriches everywhere next to the highway. There were also Steenbok aplenty next to the road. The Botswana–Namibia border crossing (Buitepos) went smoothly and by late afternoon we were in Daan Viljoen Game Park outside Windhoek, after having stopped to purchase a supply of Windhoek Draft!

Surprise No. 1: the very nice camping site we had used in 2014 was no longer available. Surprise No. 2: they had established new



Rockrunner – Daan Viljoen Game Park



Cinderella Waxbill – Zebra Mountain (Kunene River Lodge)

campsites, each with a private luxury kitchen, shower and separate toilet per campsite. Sheer bliss!

After having made enquiries, we set off at dawn the next morning. Target birds were Rockrunner and Hartlaub's Spurfowl. We went down the western escarpment and followed the dry river bed. Somewhere there, Rockrunners had been seen... But despite investigating the area that had been described to us, no Rockrunner could be seen or heard. We spotted Red-billed Francolin, Groundscraper Thrush, Carp's Tit, Mountain Wheatear, Chinspot Batis and a number of other birds. After much walking in the dry, sandy and rock-strewn river-bed (we had brought our hiking boots) I saw a movement on the ground behind some vegetation, close to the rock-face. I decided to play the call of the Rockrunner. After some time, we heard a response high up on the rocky slope. We left the river-bed and climbed halfway up the rocky slope. And there it sat on a dead tree protruding from between some huge boulders! Voilà! We first had a good look through the binoculars, and then I got out my new camera (early Christmas gift which I was playing with a few months too early) and took a series of pictures.

All the way the Rockrunner was singing melodiously and sweetly and another bird was responding from the opposite side of the river, high up on the rocks. What a stunning sighting! But Hartlaub's Spurfowl again eluded us. That's birding, I guess.

The next day the search continued, no Hartlaub's Spurfowl, but a nice sighting was a covey of Orange River Francolin, some magnificent Eland and Gemsbok (*Oryx*). We also again spotted Monteiro's and Bradfield's Hornbills. Daan Viljoen Game Park can really be recommended for good birding, with some sought-after specials and very nice camping sites.

Next stop: Waterberg Plateau. The rough beauty of the sheer cliffs rising onto the Plateau alone are a reason to come here. Historically, this was the site of the last epic battle between the German Schutztruppe and the Hereros under Chief Samuel Maharero in 1904. The trip to the Waterberg Plateau from Windhoek was just over 300 km and we arrived at midday. It was hot in comparison to Windhoek which was surprisingly cold at night, but also very dry. We began birding that afternoon in and around the camp: Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Rüppel's Parrot, Green-backed Cameroptera, Black-backed Puffback, African Hawk-Eagle, Pririt Batis, Rosy-faced Lovebird and various other birds were spotted. The next morning we got up with the first cockerel calling and traversed the western side of the steep rock-faces, where a hiking path runs west-east at the foot of the rocks. Our target was again Hartlaub's Spurfowl, but despite our best attempts and listening carefully for its calls we neither saw nor heard any. We saw Verreaux's Eagle gliding along majestically. We went for our obligatory breakfast at the restaurant, which was a German police station in earlier years. Some *Albizia* trees (Worm-bark False-thorn) were flowering, and I took some fine pictures of Rüppel's Parrot and Rosy-faced Lovebirds feeding on the fresh flowers. That afternoon we continued birding the surrounds: Greater Blue-eared Starlings, Rock Martin, and Chestnut-vented Tit-babblers were spotted.

The next day we left after breakfast for

Kunene River lodge (via Opuwo), where we slept over before making the trip to Swartbooisdrift, only a 135 km drive on a gravel road, via the metropolis of Epembe, a little village with a school and no less than six shebeens. The people seem to be thirsty in that hot, dry land!

We pitched camp on the banks of the Kunene River to the sound of Swamp Boubou vocalising non-stop in the huge riverine trees overhead. Meve's Starlings were so abundant that we heard and saw them all day long. It was hot and dry, the veld beyond the great river almost devoid of grass, with only dry trees. On the other side we saw the cattle in Angola coming to the river to drink. We birded in and around the camp area: White-browed Coucal, Chestnut Weavers, Red-eyed Bulbuls, and Double-banded Sandgrouse were very confiding. The next day we left at 05:00 with Pete Morgan to try for Angola Cave-Chat and Cinderella Waxbill. We arrived just as dawn was breaking. Zebra Mountain looked as though some extra-terrestrial super-giant had angrily strewn piles of huge black megaton rocks into a very high pile. We were told to follow Pete up the steep rock-strewn side. He was fit as an Olympic athlete; I followed panting and Kathrin said she would not make it and turned back. Some hundred or more metres up we sat down and Pete cautioned me to sit still and observe. We sat there for possibly 2 hours, seeing various birds like Augur Buzzard, Acacia Pied Barbet, and Red-eyed Bulbuls, but very few others. It was rocky and dry and getting hot. My bum was sore. Just then a single Angola Cave-Chat appeared on a rock some 60 m away. I had a good look through the binoculars – it almost looked like the Swamp Boubou (same colours, but different markings, and different habitat I guess); when I reached for the camera, it disappeared for keeps. No pictures but a good sighting. A Mega-Tick! Poor Kathrin had to 'dip' it. We clambered down the 'pile of black rocks' to a breakfast which Hillary had prepared for us. We tried to get another glimpse of the Cave-Chat through my spotting scope, but no luck. We got back into the car and drove to some dry



Black-faced Babbler – Roy's Camp

river-beds where the local Himba people dug for water for themselves and their goats, the water slowly seeping up. There was some green vegetation close by and there we were privileged to spot a number of Cinderella Waxbills. We took some pictures, but I was shaking so much that I could not fully zoom in – nonetheless, a super sighting and another stunning lifer. Later that day we (again) spotted Bare-cheeked Babbler in the camp and Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush.

The following day will be engraved in our minds and in my bank account for some time. We decided to take a day-trip to much marvelled-about Epupa Falls, some 100 km to the west. We were told that the 'road' had been upgraded and that it took 'only' 3 – 4 hours to get there. We left early morning and the scenery along the Kunene was indeed very pleasing. But the 'road' was 4x4 driving much of the way, either sand or rocks and rough roads. We got to Epupa Falls, but were disappointed. The 'falls' are actually more like rapids with a small waterfall in between. The Namibian side of the falls is blocked up by camp sites and sloppy buildings, hindering access, with only a small footpath from the west, used primarily by goats coming to drink, available to get to the falls. There is a viewpoint higher up that charges N\$20 per person, in aid of a 'community project'. The Grey Kestrel and Angola Swallow we had hoped for were nowhere. After a late lunch we headed back to Kunene River Lodge. I drove slowly over the rocky and stony surface. Some



Rosy-faced Lovebirds – Roy's Camp

15 km outside Epupa, I felt my rear-left tyre going flat. A sharp stone had slit the entire side-wall of the tyre open. The tyre was a write-off. I changed tyres, putting on my spare. But with no cellphone reception and very few cars passing this inhospitable route, should I have the misfortune to lose a further tyre we would be marooned. Some friends we met at Kunene came past and undertook kindly enough to call Pete at Kunene on their sat-phone and forewarn him that should we not arrive by nightfall, he should search for us. We limped home at 20 km/h and arrived around 18:30, tired, hungry and very annoyed. Now where to get a new tyre? None at Ruacana, and the 'road' there is as bad as the one to Epupa. We were to depart the following day in any event. We got up at dawn, broke camp and limped on to Opuwo on 135 km of gravel road, this time with the off-road trailer in tow. At least we had a roof tent, food and water if we got stuck! My prayers were answered and we arrived safely at Kunene Fitment Centre in Opuwo, who had confirmed to Pete by phone that they still had **one 17"** tyre left – a brand unknown to me (Pace) – and at R3200. "Take it or leave it, that's what we have." I took it gratefully. Epupa was at best disappointing and not worth traveling there on the bad road. I shall not return there. Kunene River Lodge can be warmly recommended. The birding is excellent, Pete Morgan is a first-class guide – very knowledgeable, kind and soft-spoken, and he 'produces' the lifers; Hillary is a

kind and gracious host.

We had to push on as we had lost some valuable time. And we were off our planned route: we had planned to drive from Kunene River Lodge to Ruacana and on to Grootfontein. We were now in Opuwo. The AA maps proved time and again that they were embarrassingly inaccurate or downright wrong. Rotten wrong!! The road from Opuwo to Oshakati is shown as a 'minor road or track' on the AA maps – all wrong (!!)

– there is a perfectly good and many-years-old tar road via the town of Okahoa, and on to Oshakati; Okahoa is not even on the map. My advice: don't bother to ask the AA for maps; they are misleading in the extreme. Get yourself a decent GPS – I used a Garmin Nüvi 2589 with much success.

We drove on and slept over at Ondangwa Airport Lodge in a pleasant thatch-roof room/chalet at a very reasonable price. The next day we drove to Grootfontein (which, as Oshakati and Ondangwa, brought back some memories of old of a young lieutenant, later captain, doing 'border duty'). We visited the world-renowned Hoba Meteorite which collided with Mother-Earth 80 000 years ago: 3 m long, 82% iron, 16% nickel – all 50 tons of it. This was a very interesting excursion and they have a lovely picnic area where there is some good birding to be done: Violet-eared Waxbills, Red-eyed Bulbuls, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-headed Finch and various weavers were all visiting the bird-bath and Brubru were calling.

After lunch, we drove on to Roy's Camp, some 52 km north of Grootfontein on the B8 to Rundu. According to literature, Roy's Camp is one of the more reliable spots to see Black-faced Babblers. We had booked a chalet for the night and sat down to a sumptuous dinner of four different fresh salads (after a few weeks you crave fresh salads), sweet potato cooked with orange and kudu schnitzel in batter – very *lekker!* Although Pieter, the manager there, is not a birder he gave us some good advice on where to find the Babblers: get up EARLY and look for them around a dripping tap in the camping area. We were out and about when it was still dark, dawn breaking with absolute

splendour. All guests, including the campers, were still sleeping. We walked around the hide facing a waterhole. No babblers. We walked in between the chalets and afterwards sat down in the camping area. I had an inkling of hearing a faint babbler-like sound and we quickly moved over – YES, there they were, a family-grouping of Black-faced Babblers hopping and turning over vegetation on the ground, flying short bouts low into trees and back onto the ground. Typical babbler behaviour. After breakfast they were not to be seen any longer. The moral of the story: get up early!

At the breakfast table, which was on an outside patio, we could see many good birds: Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver, Black-headed Oriole, White-crowned Shrike with its characteristic ‘yeeep-yeeep’ call and some birds competing for water-drops at a dripping tap; weavers, finches and Rosy-faced Lovebirds in really good numbers, including some juveniles. Sheer bliss, having a lovely breakfast with such an accompaniment! Roy’s Camp can be freely recommended for good birding and good food and is a pleasant and productive stop-over en route to the Caprivi.

We departed for Shamvura Camp, some 120 km east of Rundu. We had booked for three nights’ camping and pre-paid for a guided birding excursion, enticed by the reports on their website, looking for Souza’s Shrike and Green-backed Honeybird. The guided birding outing was a total disappointment. Both Souza’s Shrike and the honeybird were not located. We had also expressed the desire to see Shelley’s Sunbird and African Barred Owlet, which according to Shamvura’s information was to be found on their property, but no assistance was offered in finding these birds, and we eventually found them ourselves. Guiding fees for Shamvura were amongst the highest of all those we paid; Shamvura was the absolute low-light of our entire birding tour.

We left for Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge, 4 km east of Katima Mulilo (again one of those memories of yesteryear), where we had booked camping for four nights. We were received like old friends and even allowed to move to a



Rock Pratincoles – Zambezi at Katima Mulilo (Caprivi Houseboat)

larger campsite to fit in our large trailer-tent. Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge is situated right on the banks of the Zambezi with stunning views over the river. Curt, the owner, professing not to be a bird-guide was nonetheless most helpful with engaging friendliness. We got a very nice lifer, Schalow’s Turaco, immediately on the first day and on every day thereafter. The next day was reserved to try to spot the Yellow-throated Leaf-Love (apparently so-called for its habit of rubbing against leaves). We spent the day combing the gardens and surroundings, also sitting by the sprinkler in the hot afternoons, where the bird was reported to cool itself on wet leaves. No luck. The next day some sprinklers were put on-and-off at different locations in the larger garden area. Many birds, mostly weavers and Dark-capped Bulbuls, were bathing noisily in the spray. When the sprinklers went off, I again scanned various grasses and other vegetation. And there, for a short moment, I saw the Yellow-throated Leaf-Love rubbing its side on the wet leaves of the grasses and vegetation, before flying off, never to be seen again. There had been only enough time to look at the bird through the binoculars, but no time for a photo. A mega-tick!

That afternoon, Curt kindly took us out on a boat tour (at a very reasonable rate) to show us Rock Pratincole, on the Zambezi west towards Katima Mulilo. We got very close to the Pratincoles on the rocks, between 10 and 20 metres, and were able not only to get a super sighting of the Rock Pratincoles, but also some



Schalow's Turaco – Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge

really good pictures. Thanks to Curt!

The Sycamore Figs were fruiting in the gardens and birds were feeding here all day long. We also had some really good sightings: White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin's) were very vocal and confiding, both Swamp- and Tropical Boubou were both spotted and heard, as well as Little Bee-Eater, Grey-headed Bush-Shrike, Red-billed Firefinch, White-crowned Lapwing, Ashy Flycatcher, Green-backed Heron and a host of others.

The next day, Rachele, one of Curt's friendly staff, had arranged with someone she knew at Kalizo for us to attend a guided birding excursion there. This turned out to be another highlight of our tour. We left at 05:00 to be at Kalizo by 06:00. We were met by our guide, Ovens (yes, that's correct) – a local Subia, he had received bird-guide training in Botswana and Namibia through BLSA. We went onto a boat and cruised for quite a while, ticking some really good birds: Sand Martin, Little Egret, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Glossy Ibis, in large flocks. Ovens parked the boat and we walked to some large marshy wetlands, which were extremely productive: Wattled Lapwing, Greenshank and then our first 'special', a Black Coucal, flew past with the typically 'heavy' flight-pattern, dropping into the vegetation a short distance off. We tried to flush it again, but without success. A lovely lifer! On it went: Greater Painted-snipe, Pygmy Goose, African

Openbill, Lesser Jacana, Saddle-billed Stork, Malachite Kingfisher, Half-collared Kingfisher, Black Heron, the list just went on and on. Then mother-luck smiled on us again and we got some beautiful views of an 'unplanned' lifer, a Rufous-bellied Heron – a bit far off, and the pictures were not good. We went back to the boat and birded from the boat on the river-banks, reed-beds and sandbanks: Purple Swampphen, Black-winged Pratincole, African Skimmer in flight as well as perched on sandbanks, Yellow-billed Stork, Black-crowned Night Heron... the list of excellent sightings just went on. After some four hours of superlative birding we returned. Kathrin and I resolved to change our plans and forego one night at Popa Falls, our next booked stop, and spend one night at Kalizo, in order to take further advantage of this productive area. We were in luck; they had a chalet for the following night, allowed us a late departure on the morning thereafter and booked Ovens again for us.

We returned to Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge for our final night, broke camp the next morning and set off to Kalizo. The reception by Cherie and her husband as owners of Kalizo was welcomingly friendly and professional. They instructed staff to put a water sprayer into a flowering shrub to attract Shelley's Sunbird, which can also be found here. We had a splendid view of the Zambezi River from our chalet right on the banks of the great river. That afternoon we drove in our vehicle to a site some 1.5 km away on the banks of the Zambezi, where Carmine Bee-eaters were congregating, sitting on the steep sandbanks, flying around in flocks of what must have been hundreds if not thousands of birds, perching in trees in such large numbers that there seemed no space for a single bird, and perching on the ground on a large roundish bare patch of sand. We stood there in absolute awe for an hour, until it was getting dark, admiring the spectacle of Carmine Bee-eaters flying – landing – flying again, either as individuals or in huge flocks, all the while calling. This certainly was a highlight of our entire trip!

The next day, Ovens collected us from our

chalet at 06:00, as dawn was just breaking. This must have been one of the most precious moments: the calm water of the Zambezi, the dark water and sky and the sun later rising like a red fire-ball reflecting in the water – how can I with words describe such scenery and atmosphere? The birding continued to be excellent. After a short boat-ride we walked again and this time got better pictures of the Rufous-bellied Herons (three in total), as well as Hamerkop, Sacred Ibis, Hartlaub's Babbler, African Spoonbill and many more. We returned to the boat and went looking for the Greater Swamp Warbler, a 'special' that only occurs in the Caprivi and Northern Botswana. We 'parked' close to some dense vegetation and I played the call on my PDA. After a while, two Warblers responded from two different directions, which ended with one Greater Swamp Warbler perching on top of the vegetation and displaying well. My binoculars were shaking somewhat. When I reached for the camera, it hopped back into the vegetation – no pictures but a very good sighting of a super-lifer!

We returned to our chalet for a late breakfast and departed reluctantly. Kalizo is an excellent birding destination – the chalets are nice, they also have a lovely pool which we gratefully used during the afternoon's 38°C, and Cherie, her husband and staff are friendly and professional. I can highly recommend Kalizo. I don't think you should attempt to get there in a sedan vehicle though, but require a high-clearance vehicle and 4x4 will help on the sandy stretches.

The last planned stop was Popa Falls Resort. The resort had been recently upgraded and the River Chalet we had booked and paid for was not available, so they upgraded us to an Executive Chalet on the 'island', accessible via a foot-bridge. The chalet was built on poles with views of the rapids. Sheer 5-star luxury! There are no real falls but rather rapids at Popa Falls. The birding was just OK and the Rock Pratincoles were far away – they can best be seen when driving back onto the B8 and spotting them from the other side of the rapids from the Nilbaoca campsite.



Carmine Bee-eaters – Kalizo Lodge, Katima Mulilo

The next day we departed for the long journey home: through Mahango Reserve, spotting Ostrich with a brood of very small chicks, crossing the border at Muhembo, and passing Shakawe where we fuelled up; slept over at Ghanzi; crossed the border to SA at Lobatse; and slept the final night at Zeerust.

We ended the trip after some 3½ weeks, 6 200 km travelled, 226 bird species spotted and 14 lifers. We saw some really interesting new places, the great Kunene and Zambezi Rivers with stunning scenery; we did some excellent birding. Namibia is truly an excellent destination.

PS. Highs and lows & tips:

- If you can, carry a spare tyre in addition to your spare wheel. Many places can put a tyre onto a rim but you may not be able to get your tyre size.
- AA maps for Namibia are inaccurate and misleading. You can't trust them.
- Take water for drinking purposes – most places pump their water straight out of the Zambezi, some filtering it superficially, some not; you don't want to drink that water! We filled the 60 L water tank of our off-road trailer at home and we were grateful.
- Take anti-malaria prophylaxis; on the Zambezi we were heavily attacked by



Rufous-bellied Heron – Kalizo Lodge

mozzies. Mosquito Citronella soap proved useless, but Peaceful Sleep spray worked very well; at dawn we sprayed and after having a shower.

- Namibia road quality: the tar roads in Namibia are surprisingly good, even the long haul into the Caprivi. The 'main' gravel roads are also fairly drivable (such as the road from Opuwo to Swartbooisdrift). The road from Ruacana to Kunene River Lodge (Swartbooisdrift) is 4x4 much of the way

and is a 4x4 track at places. On the Zambezi there is much sand and 4x4 is also required.

- Botswana road quality: The Trans-Kalahari highway is excellent, better than the N4 on the South African side; The tar road from Shakawe for 170 km down to Sehithwa is in a terrible state, heavily potholed and dangerous to drive.
- Driving at night in Botswana is a no-no; there are no fences and the donkeys just don't move off the road, whether you hoot or not. Their colour blends in with the tar-road colour, so you don't see them until it's too late. Many a donkey carcass at the roadside bears testimony.
- From Shakawe to Ghanzi we passed three foot-and-mouth disease checkpoints. They search your vehicle and fridge. At the last checkpoint we had to drive the vehicle through a dip, step with our shoes in another dip and even remove our bags from the car and dip other shoes or boots from our bags.
- Always fuel up in Botswana if you come to a filling station. Even if your tank is still half full. 🐘

Birding in Fiji

Annette van der Merwe

I was fortunate to be invited to Suva, Fiji, during the first two weeks of April 2017. Since it was a work trip I had very limited time for birding. However, I decided to make the best of where I would be and made contact with Ivereime, whom I had discovered on Birding Pal. Public transport by bus is cheap and reliable and I met him on the weekend at the Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park (which is the only national park in Fiji), where he happened to be employed as a conservation officer and bird guide. It is a diverse habitat with unstable and stable sand dunes, the latter consisting of grassland, shrubbery and patches of forest. The Diordrio forest is

special in that it means 'darkness' because the ancestors of the neighbouring village believed that it was a gateway to the spirit world. When observing a falling star over the forest the death of one of the villagers was foretold!

Over 30 bird species are resident in the Sand Dunes Park, 8 of which are endemic. Notwithstanding it being a rather windy day, we managed to see the following birds: the Fiji Woodswallow (a common endemic black-and-white bird of open habitats, often seen on conspicuous perches gently rotating their tails); the White-rumped Swiftlet (a wide-spread native aerial bird); the Orange-breasted Myzomela (a common endemic and active

little honeyeater frantically moving between flowers for nectar); the White-throated Pigeon (a large-size native pigeon with a distinguishing overall black colour); the Red Avadavat (an introduced bird of open country, agricultural land and gardens or forest edge, where we found it); the Fiji Parrotfinch (a small green finch with a striking scarlet rump and tail, and a crimson head); the Silver-eye (a very common native which can be distinguished from the endemic Fiji White-eye, by the grey belt encircling its body); and the Vanikoro Broadbill (a common native forest bird with a very characteristic 'tzweet-tzweet' call). Apart from the above birds I saw the large impressive fruit bats hanging from a tree in the forest and learnt that they and the rodents have become fierce enemies in the battle for food. For the first time, I encountered the life-size tree-hugging wooden dolls that visiting school children had made as part of ongoing education towards appreciating and preserving the Mahogany trees.

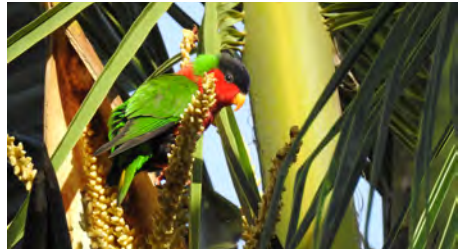
The next day, at Pacific Harbour, where I stayed on the banks of a dark and mysterious river, fringed by mangroves as it makes its way from the rainforest, I discovered the beautiful White-collared Kingfisher (a native striking blue 'land' bird found in almost any habitat). Inspecting the gardens quickly revealed the very colourful Collared Lory in a coconut tree (a common endemic parrot found in all habitats); as well as the Greater and Wattled Honeyeaters (the latter a common native and conspicuous bird with a strong and loud call). Other birds I found on different occasions included the Red-vented Bulbul (self-introduced in the wild across many of the islands), the Spotted Turtle-dove (one of several varieties of dove in Fiji, but introduced and the most common, and also among the most destructive vis-à-vis fruit crops); the Reef Heron (the largest bird found in Fiji, which feeds on small fish and other marine animals) and hundreds of aggressive and noisy Common Mynas (occurring throughout Fiji after having been introduced in the late 19th century to feed on sugarcane pests). On the



Orange-breasted Myzomela



White-collared Kingfisher



Collared Lory

last day, during a snorkelling outing to Kuata Island (in the Yasawa group), two different kinds of terns were spotted, as well as an immature Brown Booby following our ferry boat.

Though Fiji, compared to other South Pacific destinations, lacks a diversity of bird life, I found the birding interesting, exciting and sometimes spectacular. In all, there are 81 species of terrestrial and freshwater birds of which about 10 have been introduced. They are distributed throughout the different islands, with Viti Levu (where I was) hosting 56



Fiji Woodswallow

of the total known species found in the group. Should I be lucky enough to be invited back, I will certainly plan to visit Kadavu Island, where

four endemic species can be seen only there, such as the Musk Parrot and Peale's Pigeon (known as the barking pigeon), and the Garden Island of Taveuni, in the hope of seeing the very rare Orange Dove.

Sources:

- Bird Guide (Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park)
- Fiji Guide at <http://fijiguide.com/page/bird-watching>
- Avian Web: Beauty of Birds at <https://www.beautyofbirds.com/fijibirddistributionmap.html> 🐦

A lucky catch for powerful raptor

Sheleph Burger

The Tawny Eagle [Roofarend] is a powerful raptor with a wide-ranging opportunistic diet. I visited the Kgalagadi Transfrontier park in October 2016 and managed to photograph a Tawny Eagle that had caught an African Darter [Slanghalsvoël] near the park's Auctherlonie waterhole.

"The Tawny Eagle's foraging behaviour is best defined by extracts from *Birds of Southern Africa*, which describes it as 'predator, pirate and scavenger'" says Rob Little, manager of the Centre of Excellence (CoE) at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute. Although they mostly eat mammals, and are able to kill individuals weighing up to 4 kg, including small warthogs and springbok, much of the Tawny Eagle's diet includes birds. "They have even been known to take flamingos in flight, so the capture of an African Darter is not altogether unexpected," says Little.

Witnessing the presence of an African Darter in the Kgalagadi is unusual. "The closest population is along the Orange River some 300 km or so to the south of this sighting," says Trevor Hardaker of South African Rare Bird Alert. "This was a rather lost, out-of-range bird

that was probably exhausted and had stopped to rest in the park and, sadly, met a rather unfortunate fate."

Ed: Sheleph's sighting and photos were noteworthy enough to be reported in the December 2016 issue of SANParks Times. 🐦



Tawny Eagle/Roofarend with kill (African Darter/ Slanghalsvoël)

Sheleph Burger

‘n Seldsame vonds in Lynnwoodrif

Louise Geysler

Dinsdagoggend 3 Januarie 2017 het ‘n seldsame vonds in ons buurt opgelewer. Ons woon op die hoek van Fremontia- en Jacobsonstraat in Lynnwoodrif, ‘n klipgooi van die Moreletaspruit. My man, Piet, neem elke oggend vroeg ons klein Jack Russeltjie vir ‘n wandeling. Met hulle terugkeer daardie oggend het hy ‘n dooie voëltjie by die inrit van ons bure bemerk. Aanvanklik het hy gedink dat dit ‘n dikkop was. Hulle word gereeld doodgery omdat hulle saans dikwels insekte op die teerpaaië soek en deur die ligte van motors verblind word en nie vinnig genoeg kan weghardloop nie. Maar toe hy nader stap het hy besef dat dit ‘n vreemde voëlspesie is – iets wat ons nooit vantevore gesien het nie. Hy besluit toe om die voëltjie op te tel en huis toe te bring.

Terug by die huis het die dooie voëltjie ‘n baie interessante bespreking uitgelok. Ek het aanvanklik gedink dat dit ‘n vleikuiken (*flufftail*) is, veral op grond van sy lang tone. Maar ons het in Ulrich Oberprieler se voëlgids gelees dat vleikuikens baie klein riethane is, effens groter as mossies, 14 – 17 cm groot. Hierdie voëltjie was bietjie groter en sy kleurskakeringe het nie by die vleikuikens gepas nie. Ons sien toe dat Ulrich Oberprieler ‘n onderskeid tussen vleikuikens en riethane maak. Hy beskryf riethane (crakes) soos volg: “Klein tot redelik groot, stewige voëls, 18 – 23 cm, wat geassosieer word met waterareas waar daar heelwat plantegroei is, maar kan ook in vogtige grasveld voorkom. Hulle neig om geheimsinnig te wees en word daarom moeilik raakgesien. Hulle bene is relatief lank en hul langerige tone help hulle om op plante of oor modder te loop.”

Dit help natuurlik geweldig om die voël doodstil te kan besigtig en betas, en met fotos en sketse uit verskillende voëlgidse te kan vergelyk. En nadat ons al die diagnostiese eienskappe mooi bekyk het, het ons ewe opgewonde tot die besluit gekom dat dit ‘n



Louise Geysler

Bo en onder: Die Lynnwoodrif Kwartelkoning/
Corn Crake



Louise Geysler

Kwartelkoning [Corn Crake] is. Hierdie een het soos ‘n mannetjie gelyk met sy grysgesig en nek, teenoor die wyfie wat oorwegend ligbruin is. Verder lyk die geslagte amper eenders.

Louise Gejser



Ulrich Oberprieler beskryf 'n Kwartelkoning soos volg: "Groter as 'n tortelduif, ongeveer 25 – 30 cm groot. Hierdie ligbruin riethaan word aan sy opvallende kastaiingkleurige bo- en ondervlerkdekvere uitgeken, wat in vlug en in rus sigbaar is. Sy bene en kort snawel is bleek. Sy rugkant het donker vlekke en op sy flanke is rooibruin bande. Kom in verskeie habitats met welige gras voor, beide droog en vogtig, ook in bewerkte landerye, soos lusern. Dit is 'n nie-algemene somerbesoeker wat van einde November tot vroeg April aan Suider-Afrika besoek aflê en gewoonlik stil is. Dit word as kwesbaar beskou en selde gesien, buiten wanneer dit opgejaag word en wegvlieg met bene wat ver agter die stert ahang. Kenneth Newman voeg ook by dat die Kwartelkoning soms naby spruite voorkom, wat vir ons laat dink dat dit dalk by die Moreletaspruit gekuier het en toe daar moontlik deur honde of mense opgejaag is. Ons weet egter glad nie wat die voël tjie se dood veroorsaak het nie. Dit is definitief nie doodgery nie en ons weet ook glad nie hoe dit by ons bure se inrit beland het nie.

Ons het die keuse gehad om die voël tjie te begrawe of te vries om later vir 'n voëlkenner te gee. Omdat dit so 'n seldsame vonds was, het ek het besluit om dit in 'n roomysbak te plaas en langs die skaapboud in ons vrieskas te plaas.

Op 7 Januarie het ek 'n e-pos aan Faansie Peacock gestuur om te verneem of hy in die voël tjie geïnteresseerd is. Op 13 Januarie het ek die volgende antwoord van hom ontvang: "Dit is inderdaad 'n besondere vonds. 'n Seldsame voël en dit is 'n baie waardevolle



Justin Rhys-Nicola

'n Lewendige Kwartelkoning/Corn Crane

geleentheid om hom van nader af te bekyk. Ek het persoonlik nog net so 'n handjievol kere die spesies gesien en elke keer was dit net vinnig in vlug vir 'n paar sekondes. Dus sal ek baie graag hierdie outjie wil bestudeer. Miskien sal ek selfs 'n artikel skryf vir my website www.faansiepeacock.com wanneer ek 'n tydjie kry."

Vir die van julle wat dit nie weet nie, woon Faansie tans in Langebaan en daarom moes die gevriesde Kwartelkoning vir Faansie se eerste besoek aan Pretoria wag. Dit het eers op Saterdag 4 Maart plaasgevind toe Faansie sy kursus oor waadvoëls na aanleiding van sy nuwe boek oor 'waders' aangebied het. Ek het na afloop van die kursus die gevriesde Kwartelkoning in die roomysbak vir hom gegee en toe hy die bak oopmaak en die kosbare inhoud in sy hande geneem het, kon ek sien dat hy in vervoering was.

Die Kwartelkoning is nou in Faansie se besit en hy het verskillende planne daarmee. Dalk gaan hy dit opstop en dalk gaan hy 'n artikel oor die voël tjie se veerpatrone en skakerings op sy webwerf plaas. Kyk gerus uit daarvoor! Ons voel net so gelukkig dat ons kosbare vonds by die regte persoon is en dat baie voëlkykers by Faansie se bestudering van die Kwartelkoning wat in Lynnwoodrif ontdek is gaan baat. 🐦

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 15 April 2017

Compiled by André Marx

This period covers the last 7 months and is a larger than the usual report. Migrant waders appeared at a few local localities in the early part of spring and summer last year when several interesting birds surfaced. Bar-tailed Godwit is a notable and uncommon bird seen on passage to its wintering grounds on the coast. Two species that never feature in this report appear here for the first time; namely, African Crowned Eagle and Bat Hawk, the latter a very interesting record from Delta Park in Johannesburg.

A range of good reports surfaced during what was a bumper rainfall season for most parts, the best rains we have had in a few years. Striped Crake is a rare species that is only seen in exceptional years and this sought-after bird was seen with chicks at Kgomo-Kgomo by a few fortunate birders. One of the top sightings was of two Gull-billed Terns in the region and for once one of the birds stayed at Borakalalo NR for a couple of weeks allowing people the chance to see this elusive species! Mkhombo Dam, Kgomo-Kgomo and Borakalalo turned up great birds last summer but there were several good sightings closer to home in Gauteng as well, such as the very obliging Yellow-throated Sandgrouse in Centurion. Atlasing once again contributed a number of out-of-range records.

National rarities/ Nasionale rareiteite

Crake, Striped / Riethaan, Gestrepte

Several sightings took place at Kgomo-Kgomo: First heard on 6 Feb 2017 (DV); then heard again and seen on 12 Feb 2017 (M&AK); with a male bird with 4 small chicks seen from the Kgomo-Kgomo bridge, 24 Feb 2017 (MBo). In the following 2 weeks there were a number of further reports of birds being seen with chicks at

this and nearby localities.

Harrier, Western Marsh / Vleivalk, Europese
An adult female was observed at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, a reliable site for this species, in Pentad 2620_2830, 2 Dec 2016 (CWJ).

Sandpiper, Green / Ruiter, Witgat-
One bird was once again located at Rietvlei NR near Pretoria on 7 Oct 2016 (RW) and was still present on 20 Nov 2016. *This is likely to be the same returning individual that has been seen the past few seasons.*

Another bird was reported from Roodeplaat Dam, 22 Oct 2016 (BdT).

One bird was seen along the Jukskei River in Waterfall Estate in Midrand, 12 Nov 2016 (RS). One bird was at Northern Farm in Pentad 2555_2755 on 18 Nov 2016 (AM, RS).

A single bird was seen at 'Crake Road' (Zaagkuildrift) on 19 Dec 2016 (ED).

Tern, Gull-billed / Sterretjie, Oostelike

A single bird was located at Mkhombo Dam on 20 Nov 2016 (NP).

Another bird was reported at Borakalalo NR on 23 Nov 2016 (NP). *This bird was present for several weeks when several birders reported it as being present. This is a very rare bird in the region.*



Gull-billed Tern/ Oostelike Sterretjie, Borakalalo

Ian Grant



Michael Johnson

African Crowned Eagle/ Kroonarend - Wilge River Valley



Cameron Meyer

Square-tailed Nightjar/ Laeveldnaguil, Zaagkuildrift Road

Regional rarities/ Streeksrariteite

Crake, Corn / Kwartelkoning

One bird was flushed from an area of damp grassland at Northern Farm in Pentad 2555_2755 on 7 Dec 2016 (RG).

One bird was flushed from an area of long grass at Delta Park, Johannesburg in Pentad 2605_2800 on 7 Jan 2017 (GL).

During an atlasing trip to an area east of Potchefstroom in Pentad 2640_2715 a single bird was seen and photographed on 19 Feb 2017 (AF, FK).

Eagle, Crowned / Arend, Kroon-

A single bird was photographed in the Wilge River valley in north-eastern Gauteng, a very unusual record for the province, 20 Aug 2016 (MJ). *An excellent record of a species that has not been recorded with certainty in the region.*

Godwit, Bar-tailed / Griet, Bandstert-

Two birds were at Mkhombo Dam on 2 Oct 2016, a very uncommon bird for the region (LJ).



Michael Johnson

Common Wimbrel/ Kleinwulp, Roodeplaat Dam

Two more birds were reported from the northern end of the Blesbokspruit at Marievale, 14 Oct 2016 (SM & RC), and at least one bird was still present 25 Oct 2016. *These are likely to be birds stopping over while passing on their way south to their coastal wintering grounds.*

Goshawk, African / Sperwer, Afrikaanse

One bird was seen displaying over Fairland, Johannesburg, again, on 5 Aug 2016 (LR), with a further record in this area on 25 Oct 2016 (LR). Another bird was seen at Delta Park, Johannesburg on 2 Sep 2016 (ARi).

This is still a very rare species in Gauteng and any records should be carefully documented and reported.

Hawk, Bat / Valk, Vlermuis-

One bird seen flying over Delta Park, Johannesburg was a surprise sighting on 13 Sep 2016 (GL), and in the weeks following what was presumably the same bird was seen on two more occasions. *This is not a species that has been confirmed as occurring in Gauteng with any certainty and so this represents a very important record.*

Nightjar, Square-tailed / Naguil, Laeveld-

A single bird was a surprise find and was photographed on the Zaagkuildrift Road on 11 Mar 2017 (CM).

Openbill, African / Ooievaar, Oopbek-

A single bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 19 Nov 2016 (LvD).

Plover, Caspian / Strandkiewiet, Asiatiese

One bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 10 Oct 2016 (CvW & MJ); with another bird still reported to be present at this locality, 21 Nov 2016 (TG). One bird was at Rietvlei NR on 2 Dec 2016 (PG).



Michael Hyenes

European Honey Buzzard/ Wespedief, near Brits

**Pratincole, Collared / Sprinkaanvoël,
Roovlerk-**

A solitary bird was observed at Mkhombo Dam, 16 Oct 2016 (IW).

Sanderling / Strandloper, Drietoon-

At least 3 birds were at Mkhombo Dam, 20 Nov 2016 (NP).

Skimmer, African / Waterploëër

A single bird was present at Vaalkop Dam, 1 Nov 2016 (SvdW). *This is an uncommon vagrant, with birds turning up occasionally at large dams in the region.*

Vulture, Palm-nut / Aasvoël, Wit-

An immature bird was observed at VulPro, Hartbeespoort, on 18 Nov 2016 (KW). *This is probably the same individual seen there a few months ago.*

Whimbrel, Common / Wulp, Klein-

One bird was at Roodeplaat Dam NR, 14 Oct 2016 (CvW, MJ). At least one bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 16 Oct 2016 (IW).

**Other interesting observations /
Ander interessante waarnemings**

Bunting, Lark-like / Streepkoppie, Vaal-

One bird was found in Pentad 2550_2800 in the Centurion area, 20 Dec 2016 (EM).

Buzzard, European Honey / Wespedief

One bird was reported from Klipriviersberg NR, south of Johannesburg, 20 Nov 2016 (LR). A bird was photographed in a garden in



Andrew Keys

Pallid Harrier/ Witborsvleivalk, Zaagkuilsdrift



Dave Deighton

Dusky Lark/ Donkerlewerik, Rietvlei NR



Etienne Marais

Lark-like Bunting/ Vaalstreepkoppie, Pentad 2550_2800 Centurion

Sandhurst, Sandton, where it was observed on a few occasions over several weeks, 10 Dec 2016 (AR).

A superb individual was seen and photographed on 10 Jan 2017 in Pentad 2545_2750 in the Broederstroom area, 10 Jan 2017 (AK). One bird was observed in Pentad 2540_2745 near Brits, 03 March 2017 (MN).

Another bird was observed in the Brits district on 27 Mar 2017 in Pentad 2535_2745 (JJ). One bird was at Delta Park, Johannesburg, 1 Apr 2017 (GL).

This was another good year for this species by all accounts.

Cuckoo, Great Spotted / Koekoek, Gevlekte

A juvenile bird was found at The Wilds in Johannesburg in Pentad 2610_2800, 8 Dec 2016 (IGu).



Karin Greizer

Pink-backed Pelican/ Kleinpelikaan, Bronkhorst-spruit Dam



Ian Grant

Great White Pelican/Witpelikaan, Borakalalo

Eagle, Ayres's Hawk / Arend, Kleinjag-

One bird was observed in a garden in Rustenburg where it caught and consumed a racing pigeon, 17 Sep 2016 (GF).

An immature bird was seen flying over Delta Park, Johannesburg, 20 Mar 2017 (GL).

A single bird was observed in Pentad 2535_2745 near Brits on 27 Mar 2017 (JJ).

Eagle, Brown Snake / Arend, Bruinslang- Krugersdorp NR produced a sighting of one bird in Pentad 2605_2740 on 18 Nov 2016 (CV).

Eagle, Martial / Arend, Breëkop

One bird was seen in Pentad 2630_2810 at Suikerbosrand NR, 6 Jan 2017 (D&KvS). *This species has become very uncommon in the greater Gauteng area.*

Greenbul, Yellow-bellied / Willie, Geelbors-

A sighting of one bird in a garden in Wonderboom in Pretoria in Pentad 2540_2810 on 20 Aug 2016 is most unusual; the record was also confirmed with an audio recording (MBu).

This is a very interesting find as this is not a species known from suburban gardens in the city.

One bird was located in Pentad 2555_2730 in the area known as Kruitfontein near the village of Magaliesburg, on 2 Jan 2017 (RvT). *This species has not been recorded in this particular region.*

Harrier, Pallid / Vleivalk, Witbors-

A female bird was photographed at Zaagkuilsdrift road in Pentad 2505_2810 on 26 Nov 2016 (AK).

A male bird was observed at Borakalalo NR in Pentad 2510_2750, 30 Dec 2016 (BE), with another sighting at this locality on 2 Jan 2017 (S&OO).

Ibis, Southern Bald / Ibis, Kalkoen-

An interesting sighting for the Johannesburg area was the occurrence of one bird at Northern Farm on 27 Aug 2016 (J&CH). *This is a new record for the locality and somewhat out of range for this species.*

Kingfisher, Grey-headed / Visvanger, Gryskop-

One bird was located in Pentad 2530_2745 in a rural area near Brits, 15 Apr 2017 (JJ).

Lark, Dusky / Lewerik, Donker-

Rietvlei NR produced one bird on 21 Dec 2016, an unusual bird for the area (DD).

Owl, Southern White-faced / Uil, Witwang-

One bird was found at the Sandton Field and Study Centre on 3 Sep 2016, at the same locality that it was seen at last year (KT). *Several birders reported this bird at this site in the weeks following and it is possible that it is the same bird returning to the site one year later.*

Pelican, Great White / Pelikaan, Wit-

One bird was found at Borakalalo NR in Pentad 2510_2750, 24 Nov 2016 (IG).

A single bird was at a waste dump site west of Heidelberg in Pentad 2630_2815, 29 Jan 2017 (DV).

An immature bird was observed at some small dams at the N3/R550 Suikerbosrand turnoff, 9 Mar 2017 (RG).

Pelican, Pink-backed / Pelikaan, Klein-

A single bird was at Roodeplaat Dam NR, 14 Oct 2016 (MJ).

During a visit to Bronkhorstpruit Dam on 5 Jan 2017 one bird was found in Pentad 2550_2840 (KC).

Duane Fischer



Southern Bald Ibis/ Kalkoenibis - Northern Farm

Plover, Grey / Strandkiewiet, Grys-

One bird was still at Mkhombo Dam, 21 Nov 2016 (TG).

One bird was reported from Borakalalo NR in Pentad 2510_2750, 4 Dec 2016 (GH).

Sandgrouse, Yellow-throated / Sandpatrys, Geelkeel-

A major surprise was finding one bird in western Centurion just off the M26 which runs to Erasmia on 9 Jan 2017 (EM). *While this species is not a regional rarity as it does occur fairly regularly in the north-west of the region, it has never been confirmed within the borders of Gauteng, and this is a very noteworthy record. Several birders subsequently observed the bird as it remained in the same locality for several days.*

Turnstone, Ruddy / Steenloper

One bird was located at Roodeplaat Dam NR in Pentad 2535_2820, 9 Oct 2016 (PV).

A single bird was at Mkhombo Dam on 16 Oct 2016 (IW), with more individuals reported in the following weeks at this locality; one bird present here on 21 Nov 2016 (TG).

A single bird was also present at Borakalalo NR on 2 Dec 2016 (LN).

Vulture, White-backed / Aasvoël, Witrug-

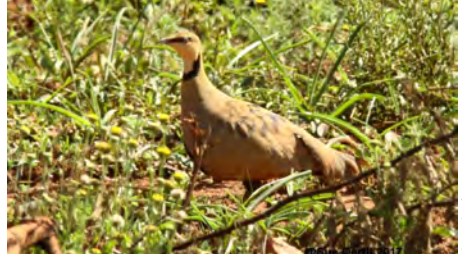
A first-year juvenile bird was observed at Waterfall Estate, Midrand, in Pentad 2600_2805 on 18 Dec 2016 (RS).

Wagtail, Yellow / Kwikkie, Geel-

A single bird was at Borakalalo NR in Pentad 2505_2745, 23 Dec 2016 (RT).

Warbler, Dark-capped Yellow / Sanger, Geel-

One bird was a surprise find in an area of rank growth at the edge of a river in Pentad 2635_2810, located south of Suikerbosrand NR, 29 Jan 2017 (DV). *This is another new locality and a further range expansion for this species.*



Owen Oerth

Yellow-throated Sandgrouse/ Geelkeelsandpatrys, pentad 2550_2800 Centurion



Duane Fischer

Ruddy Turnstone/ Steenloper - Roodeplaat Dam

Observers / Waarnemers:

Alan Reid (ARE)
 Allan Ridley (ARi)
 André Marx (AM)
 Andrew Keys (AK)
 Andy Featherstone (AF)
 Barend Esterhuizen (BE)
 Ben du Toit (BdT)
 Cameron Meyer (CM)
 Christo Venter (CV)
 Corrie van Wyk (CvW)
 Craig Whittington-Jones (CWJ)
 Dave Deighton (DD)
 Dirk & Karen van Stuyvenberg (D&KvS)
 Dylan Vasapolli (DV)
 Elmarie Dekker (ED)
 Etienne Marais (EM)
 Felicity Kanichowsky (FK)
 Gareth Hazell (GH)
 Geoff Finney (GF)
 Geoff Lockwood (GL)
 Ian Grant (IG)
 Iain Guthrie (IGu)
 Ian White (IW)

Jannie Jansen (JJ)
John & Celia Human (J&CH)
Karin Coetzer (KC)
Kerri Wolter (KW)
Kevin Trinder-Smith (KT)
Lance Robinson (LR)
Lisl van Deventer (LvD)
Lukas Niemand (LN)
Luke Johnson (LJ)
Maans Booysen (MBo)
Mark & Alisha Kirk (M&AK)
Marna Buys (MBu)
Michael Johnson (MJ)
Michael Nyenes (MN)
Niall Perrins (NP)
Paul Gerber (PG)
Pieter Verster (PV)
Rihann Geyser (RG)
Rob Crosby (RC)
Robert Thomson (RT)
Rolf Wiesler (RW)

Ron Searle (RS)
Rowan van Tonder (RvT)
Sarel van der Westhuizen (SvdW)
Stan Madden (SM)
Sue & Owen Oertli (S&OO)
Toni Geddes (TG)

This column is mainly concerned with observations of rarities and interesting sightings made in the Greater Gauteng region, defined as being 100 km from the centre of both Johannesburg and Pretoria; however, observations made further afield are also welcome. While the majority of records are included it is sometimes necessary to exclude some, depending on whether the subject matter has already been well reported. Occasionally records are sourced from the Internet and from SABAP2 records. Members are invited to submit details of sightings to André Marx at turaco@telkomsa.net or 083 4117674. 🐦

DONATIONS (August 2016 – March 2017)

Once again a sincere thank you for your generous donations. Your contributions help us to support bird conservation projects. We greatly appreciate it.

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

Brian & Wilma Moreby, Ian Alexander, Andre Marx, Proffie & Hannalien Meyer, Stephan Terblanche, Anand Bauchoo, Nichola Wood, Chris Kriel, Riel Franzsen, Tertia Horne, Kurt Zsilavec, John Bethune-Williams, Sue Visser, Susan Tremeer, Sariza de Jager, Laura Jordaan, Malan van Rensburg, Alta Fraser, Anton Ackermann, Diana Callear, Adrian Moll, Leon Lotter

BirdLife Northern Gauteng					
<i>Laniarius</i> 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



BIRDERS

BOOKINGS
Please call Donald
on 082 885 5577;
or e-mail

bookings@birdhiking.co.za
Website: www.birdhiking.co.za