



Laniarius

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BirdLife Northern Gauteng
BirdLife Gauteng-Noord



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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.

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Credits

Front cover: Cape Weaver at Kaapsehoop, Mpumalanga, by Tamsyn Sherwill.

Birding facts taken from *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Birds* by Stephen Moss.

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

From the Editor

November: Northern Gauteng's 'beautiful month' (in my humble opinion) – vivid-green trees and grass, the almost-forgotten smell of rain and sound of thunder, cuckoos and Woodland Kingfishers (the latter though, as I write this, still eagerly awaited). The aerobic displays of Little Swifts, European Bee-eaters and a colony of yet-to-be-identified bats make for magical sunsets that draw me home before dark, but which I will probably sadly soon come to take for granted again.

Welcome to the late-Spring edition of *Laniarius*. Though it may seem late, it is right on time for our new publication schedule going forward, i.e., March – July – November. At 52 pages this is a bumper issue (a record, according to Drinie) – and mostly thanks to a flurry of submissions in late September and October. It has been especially good to see more reports on club outings – please keep these coming!

We are trying a few new things in this issue:

- **'From the archive'**: There is a lot of useful, entertaining, and just plain interesting content lying forgotten (except perhaps by longstanding members with exceptional memories) in the annals of this newsletter. We hope to find and revive these articles, by republishing and where appropriate adding to or updating them. For the first entry in this series, we dust off a guide to identifying warblers.
- **'In pictures'** is intended to get BLNGers to tell a thousand words, without actually using any (or at least not very many). We'd like to showcase the highlights of your birding-related adventures, especially if these took place in the company of other club members or on an official BLNG camp or outing. A single photo with a descriptive caption (preferably of 50 words or less)

is all you need to star in the next issue of *Laniarius*. And if you have a longer or more complicated story to tell, which can be depicted in a sequence of related photos, consider submitting this as a 'photo essay' (again with accompanying descriptive captions). Please send all of your photos in their original format (not embedded in Word or another program), and at their original resolution, whatever this may be.

If the first 'In pictures' seems a bit biased toward certain places or people, that's probably because it is – due to a lack of voluntary submissions we needed to draw on what was readily available. But with all those cameras and zoom lenses out there we are hoping for a spectacular 'In pictures' for the March issue.

- **'Birder's eye view'** is a place for articles that don't necessarily report on a particular outing, destination or observation, but are just your thoughts, stories and reflections about life as a birder – in other words, you can write about anything (much like the Editor and Chair may seem to do).

Thank you to everyone whose words and pictures helped to fill the pages of this issue, and for responding to requests for photos, captions, new photos, and more new photos. Special thanks to Ingrid and André for all their hard work behind the scenes, and to Drinie for so skilfully (and swiftly) pulling it all together in an attractive and reader-friendly package.

Wishing you a restful, happy and safe festive season, and a summer filled with great birding moments (that you will hopefully feel compelled to share).

Tamsyn

From the Chair



This is our final edition of *Laniarius* for 2017 and what an exciting birding year this has been!

The club has experienced a number of changes in the committee structure, we have adopted a new logo and also launched our new website.

I would like to thank all the committee and sub-committee members for their dedication, hard work and support. This year was a steep learning curve for all of us and we are ready and looking forward to the New Year!

I also would like to say a big thank you to all the event leaders, always willing to share their birding knowledge and passion with our members.

Finally, a very big thank you to all our members. You are the people who support the club events and outings to ensure that BLNG is a great club.

The biggest issue that came to the fore during 2017 is the conservation of our birds and their habitats: The Flock at Sea made us aware of the serious challenges our seabirds are facing, especially those of the penguins and albatross breeding colonies. With John Kinghorn's presentation *Champions of the Flyway*, we were shocked by the fact that 25 million birds get killed annually during their migration over the Mediterranean. Our vultures are in serious trouble, with 7 of the 9 vulture species that regularly occur in sub-Saharan Africa classified as either 'Critically Endangered' (4 species) or 'Endangered' (3 species). The Bearded Vulture is classified as 'Near Threatened' – the only species not considered threatened at present is the Palm-nut Vulture. Similarly, the habitat of our grassland birds is shrinking on a continuous basis and 8 species are currently considered to be threatened.

Above are just a few examples of the conservation challenges that we are facing. The contributions to bird conservation that

BLNG has been making and will continue to make as a club include:

- Supporting BirdLife South Africa's conservation projects
- Giving financial support to conservation initiatives and BirdLasser
- Creating awareness through profiling conservation-related topics at our evening meetings
- Bird ringing, and other citizen science projects like atlasing, CAR and CWAC
- Structuring the activities programme around a conservation focus

How can we as individual birdwatchers help?

We can start by participating in the South African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2) and by providing data to ornithological research as citizen scientists. We can also join the various causes on BirdLasser to make our observations and birding data available to the different conservation projects. These projects include:

- Martial Eagles of Kruger National Park
- Mabula Ground Hornbill Project
- BLSA Threatened Species Cause
- Orange-breasted Waxbill Project
- Rose-ringed Parakeet Project
- Cape Parrot Project
- Heronry Map of Africa

Thirdly, we can make our gardens bird-friendly and atlas our gardens and neighbourhoods.

Finally, I want to ask our members, long-standing and new, to please provide us with some ideas and inputs. 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 in 2018!

Elouise

BLNG uitstappie: Bronkhorstspuitdam

Stephan Terblanche

Die uitstappie by die Bronkhorstspuitdam het Saterdag 10 Junie wit begin. Die grond was wit van ryp en ys, en mis het die lug van kleur ontnem. Aanvanklik het die voëls agter die wit weggekrui en net nou en dan daaragter uitgeloer. So het ons 'n groepie Teeleende [Cape Teal] gekry, maar nie noodwendig mooi gesien nie. 'n Enkele Reusereier [Goliath Heron] is naby genoeg om duidelik te wees. Maar teen 9 uur begin die son wen, en toe lê daar 'n spieël op die dam se oppervlak. Afrikaanse Oewerswaels [Brown-throated Martin] bevestig dat alle swaels nie trekvoëls is nie, en pik goggas van die spieël af op. Ons kry meeste van die algemene watervoëls, en kyk hoe Geelborsstrandkiewiet [Kittlitz Plover] en Rooikoplewerik [Red-capped Lark] saam wei. Enkele Vlei-uile [Marsh Owl] doen hulle winterding; 'n ver-af Swartspewer [Black Sparrowhawk] hou die duive wakker. Om die dam se elmboog los iemand 'n deur oop en herinner die skielike wind dis regtig winter. 'n Enkele Witkruiswindswael [White-rumped Swift] het egter nie die boodskap gekry nie. Hier is ook een Reusesterretjie [Caspian Tern] te sien, nog in nie-broeivere. Dalk sal die getalle later in die winter toeneem. Hierdie dam bly



Stephan Terblanche

BLNG lede by Bronkhorstspuitdam

die enigste plek in Gauteng wat die sterretjie amper kan waarborg. By die dam se verste punt vlieg 'n Afrikaanse Snip [African Snipe] en drie Kwartelvinkies [African Quail-Finch] oor. Op pad terug na die ingang sien ons 'n paar Vlaktelewerikke [Spike-heeled Lark], en 'n Blouvalk [Black-shouldered Kite] wat, by wyse van spreke, sy ontbytakkie uitlek. 'n Heel suksesvolle uitstappie vir die sowat 10 getroue klublede het sowat 65 spesies opgelewer. 🦅



Stephan Terblanche

Geelborsstrandkiewiet/Kittlitz Plover



Stephan Terblanche

Blouvalk/Black-shouldered Kite

BLNG Eshowe naweek

Marina Venter

Tydens die naweek van 15 – 18 Junie 2017 was ek bevoorreg om saam met 15 ander voëlliefhebbers en kenners mee te doen aan 'n wonderlike geleentheid om na 'n paar skaars voëlspesies te gaan soek.

Ek en Engela J v Rensburg, het die Isuzu gepak en met groot verwagting die pad via Newcastle na Eshowe aangepak. Ons het reeds met ons reis begin voëls tel soos ons deur die winterlandskap van Natal gery het. Iewers anderkant Melmoth het ons 'n spoedgrens effe oorgesteek maar is slegs met 'n waarskuwing toegelaat om verder te reis.

Met ons aankoms by Dlinzawoud, is ons baie gasvry ontvang en het die dag se lang sit gaan losmaak deur in die woud te gaan stap. Ons het 'ou' vriende gegroet en die atmosfeer tussen die groeiende groep voëlliefhebbers was aansteeklik.

Vrydagoggend het Karin Coetzer ons ingedeel in voertuie en ons het ons gids Zakamuzi ontmoet. Hy was een groot bron van kennis! Ons het na Mtunzini vertrek en daar het ons ons eerste skaars voëlspesie gesien, die Manglietvisvanger [Mangrove Kingfisher].

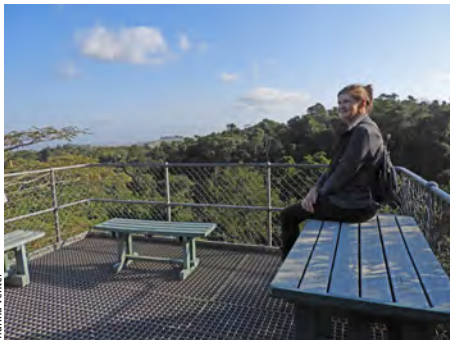
Saterdagoggend is ons na Ngoye Forest Reserve toe waar ons met ons 4x4 voertuie

op wonderskone roetes kon ry in ons soektog na die ontwykende Groenvleioerie [Green Malkoha], wat na ure se soek oor ons koppe kom vlieg het voor hy dieper die woud ingevlieg het. Maar ons is beloon deur die verskyning van die Bosloerie [Narina Trogon] en 'n pragtige Bloukuifvlieëvanger [Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher]. Gryssysies [Grey Waxbill] het ons ook kom groet en die dag het mooier en mooier geword.



Marina Venter

Manglietvisvanger/Mangrove Kingfisher



Marina Venter

Engela wat uitkyk oor die Dlinzawoud



Marina Venter

Klein-rooibandsuikerbekkie/Southern Double-collared Sunbird

Marina Venter



Rooirugfrette/Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark

Een van my persoonlike hoogtepunte was die Natalse Naguil [Swamp Nightjar] wat ons met 'n slim slenter van ons baie talentvolle gids, Zakamuzi, uitgesirkel het. Tussen my en Engela het ons 113 voëlspesies positief kon aanteken. Onder ons twee se gesamentlike 'lifers' was, o.a. Witaasvoël, Manglietvisvanger, Bloukuifloerie, Withalsbosduif, Beloogbosbontrokke, Nataljanfrederik, Bosloerie, die 'ontwykende' Groenvleiloerie, Klein-rooibandsuikerbekkie, Kortbeksuikerbekkie [Palm-nut Vulture; Mangrove Kingfisher; Purple-crested Turaco; Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon; Black-throated Wattle-eye;



Marina Venter

Die beweging waarmee ons die Natalse Naguil/Swamp Nightjar 'opgejaag' het

Red-capped Robin-Chat; Narina Trogon, Green Malkoha; Southern Double-collared Sunbird; Collared Sunbird], en nog vele meer.

Ek het die naweek diep onder die besef gekom wat die waarde is van sulke gesamentlike uitstappies. Ek was omring van ongelooflike kennis wat die kenners met entoesiasme vrylik uitgedeel het. En dat ek nou gesigte en name-op-papier bymekaar kan sit, is werklik 'n groot bonus.

My opregte dank aan 'n ieder en elk wat soveel moeite doen om hierdie ongelooflike verslawende stokperdjie van my lewendig te hou! 🐦

WELCOME TO BLNG!

Aan alle nuwe lede – baie welkom! Ons sien daarna uit om julle by ons aandvergaderings, daguitstappies of tydens 'n naweekkamp te leer ken.

We trust you will enjoy your birding with us. Please contact Rita at secretary@blng.co.za or 083 391 2327 if you have any queries or requests.

Reneé, Siegwalt, Zelia & Ewald Küsel, Derdepoort Park; Franco Furstenberg, Pierre van Ryneveld; Christa Labuschagne, Waterkloof; Anthon Heyns, Garsfontein; Michael Heyns & Lizanne Barry, Faerie Glen; Elsie Booysen, La Montagne; Gavin Hudson-Lamb, Arcadia; Nadine Gronum, Irene; Carol & Derek Stedall, Garsfontein; Dora du Plessis, Lyttelton; Helena Coetzee, Moreletapark; Ab van Alfen, Garsfontein; Robin Naude, Irene; Anton Schulz; Suzette Theron, Wonderboom-Suid; Nikki Sampson, Mountain View; Anneline Theunissen, Garsfontein Oos

Bateleur Natuurreserveaat, Waterberg, 12–14 Mei 2017

Laura Jordaan

Vandat ek gelees het hoe lekker Amanda-hulle daar gaan voëls kyk het kon ek nie wag om ook te gaan nie. Die bespreking is betaal en die reëlings neem vorm aan. Tana bied aan dat ek saam met hulle kan ry en die pakkery begin.

Vrydag na werk skarrel ek om my pakkaas by die hek te kry. Tana arriveer klokslag met haar groot 4x4, laai my goedjies en ons sit af na Cecilia se huisie. Behendig vleg sy deur die Vrydagmiddag verkeer. Vinnig pak ons haar goedjies in en kry koers op die N1 na Bela-Bela.

Ons gesels lekker en die pad word gou kort. Waar die grondpad begin skakel ek solank my Lasser aan om 'n plekkie op die lug te vind maar opvangs is swak. Eers by die huis kon ek begin Lass en die Gewone Spekvreter [Familiar Chat] vermaak ons met sy opvlieg en duik om sy aandete te kry. Die plaasdam is randvol en spieëlglad. Op die voorstoep roep die Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie [Greater Double-collared Sunbird] aanmekaar en ons bewonder hom vir 'n ruk terwyl die ander ook arriveer. 'n Kort stappie voor donker lewer Bruinsylangstertjie [Tawny-flanked Prinia], tiptolle en duiwe op. Witpensuikerbekkies [White-bellied Sunbird] roep luid onder die wolkkomers uit. 'n Groep Pylvekkatlagters [Arrow-marked Babbler] skater in die skemer in, met Tarentale wat hul koggelend agternasit. Ons voetstappe val mooi op maat van die Neddikkie [Neddicky] se eentonige herhaling. Die manne pak 'n groot vuur wat mooi weerkaats in die glasvensters. Tussen ete maak en gesels praat ons mekaar omtrent deurmekaar.

Daniël stel sy groot teleskoop op en wys vir ons die mane om Jupiter so duidelik en vertel ons nog meer van die sterre.

Vroeg Saterdag ry ons 'n draai deur die plaas en lys duiker [cormorant], Kroonkiewiet

[Crowned Lapwing], Langstertflap [Long-tailed Widowbird] en sowaar die Swempie [Coqui Francolin] en Natalse Fisant [Natal Francolin]. Dit begin saggies reën en die bosveld word mistig soos Skotland maar ons hoor die Geelblestinker [Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird] se aanhoudende roep. Op 'n oop tak sit 'n nat Blouvalk [Black-shouldered Kite]. Ons ryg die spesies in en kyk rond maar die sagte reën maak dit te moeilik vir fotografie. Die boomkenners wys baie spesies vir ons uit maar ek verstaan nie die Latynse name nie, en ons draai terug kombuis toe vir warm koffie.

Die reën klaar op en ons stap met die grondpad af na die spruitjie waar 'n groep Mikstertbyvangers [Fork-tailed Drongo] en Swartvlieëvangers [Southern Black Flycatcher] insekte oppik, gesels lekker en tik nog baie spesies af. Twee plekke koek die lawaaiers om 'n Witkoluil [Pearl-spotted Owlet] en die stompstertjies is baie ongelukkig oor sy teenwoordigheid. Ons word aangejaag na die skure toe waar ons mooi kan kyk na die Kleinbyvretertjies [Little Bee-eater], swaels en kanaries. Met nog 'n buitjie wat uitsak stap ons vinnig terug. Nou word die boeke geraadpleeg en vorige insidente waar spesies gesien was, word met genot oorvertel. Die son breek deur die wolke



Ons klink 'n glasie op al die wonderlike voëls!

Laura Jordaan

en ons pak weer vir 'n stap. In die paadjie teen die rant op kry ons nog flappe, langstertjies en 'n Swartkopwielewaal [Black-headed Oriole]. Dis pragtig tussen die bome en groot klippe wat grof uitstaan. By die ou gebreekte damwal is 'n groot klomp Rooikeelbyvreters [White-fronted Bee-eater] in hul neste doenig en vlieg met 'n geruis op toe ons te naby verby kom. Daar is 'n vinnige stroom wat klinkend oor die klippe spoel en kronkel. In die somer sal die watergat 'n lekker swemplek wees. Hier raak die gemerkte voetpad onduidelik want die vleigras staan nou welig en verberg die hoeveelheid water. Om droog oor te kom, gaan net-net wees met 'n mooi spring. Mia trap op 'n los klip en plas hande eerste, kamera en verkyker tweede, in die amper kniediep water. Haar hande is geskraap en gekneus soos sy oor die klippe gegly het. Rihann se kamera het egter in die slag gebly toe hy vinnig keer en help. Ons stap terug terwyl dit vinnig skemer word. Die stilte is heerlik en die tiptolle se duet eggo teen die klippe vas. Tjagras fluit vrolik vir mekaar. Op maat van die Witliesbosbontrokkie [Chinspot Batis] se "three blind mice" stap ons terug. Die geur van nat grond en gras dryf al die stadsbesoedeling uit ons longe.

Die stoep is te oop vir buite braai en ons maak op 'n streep kos in die ou kombuis. Sydney besluit die kaggel is groot genoeg om sy handbraai te pas en braai hul vleis heerlik oor die kole. Party stap in die motreën uit op soek na uile maar net vinnig gesien.

Die Sondagoggend vroeg is ek buite om die tjagra te bekyk toe ek die eensame kameelperd gewaar. Rihann kom verby en kondig aan dat daar Rooibekrenostervoëls [Red-billed Oxpecker] oorvlieg en dat ek op die kameelperd moet kyk. Sowaar drie van hulle wei rustig in die stewige nekharre. Omdat dit mos Moedersdag is wil Tana vroeg terug ry en ons pak gou sodat sy betyds vir haar ete kan wees. In die kronkelpad merk ons nog 'n paar voëls, tot by die teerpad wat plek-plek groot plasse reënwater het. Die son gooi die kar se skaduwee groot oor die oop grasveld. Op die drade sit laksmanne en spekvreters. Die Kuifkophoutkapper [Crested

Barbert] se wekker blaas die eindfluitjie op ons naweek.

Thanks to BLNG for asking me to lead the camp to Bateleur Nature Reserve from 12 – 14 May 2017. This is part of the BLNG Waterberg Conservation initiative to obtain SABAP2 data for the Waterberg IBA.

The area covered Pentad 2440_2810. Due to the bad weather, resulting in limited birding over the weekend, only 87 bird species were observed. Some of the highlights include Black-backed Puffback [Sneeuwal], Southern Black Tit [Gewone Swartmees], Black-headed Oriole [Swartkopwielewaal], African Quailfinch [Gewone Kwartelvinkie], Pale Flycatcher [Muiskeurvlievanger], Little Bee-eater [Kleinbyvreter], Familiar Chat [Gewone Spekvreter], Pearl-breasted Swallow [Pêrlborsswael], Secretarybird [Sekretarisvoël], Streaky-headed Seedeater [Streepkopkanarie], Lazy Cisticola [Luitinkinkie], Greater Double-collared Sunbird [Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie], Village Weaver [Bontrugwewer], Bar-throated Apalis [Bandkeelkleinjantjie], Rock Martin [Kransswael], Groundscraper Thrush [Gevlekte Lyster], Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird [Geelblestinker], Coqui Francolin [Swempie], Brubru [Bontroklaksman], Red-winged Francolin [Rooivlerkpatrys], White-browed Sparrow-Weaver [Koringvoël], Black-crowned Tchagra [Swartkroontjagra], African Hoopoe [Hoepoep], Southern Black Flycatcher [Swartvlievanger], Spotted Eagle Owl [Gevlekte Ooruil], African Grey Hornbill [Grysneshoringvoël], White-throated Robin-Chat [Witkeeljanfredrik], Red-billed Oxpecker [Rooibekrenostervoël], Green-backed Heron [Groenrugreier], Chinspot Batis [Witliesbosbontrokkie], Pearl-spotted Owllet [Witkoluiltjie], Golden-breasted Bunting [Rooirugstreepkoppie], and Grey-headed Bush-Shrike [Spookvoël]. An Ashy Flycatcher [Blougrysvlievanger] was heard in dense bush south of the dam at the bird hide but could not be relocated for confirmation and was not added to the list.

Great thanks to BLNG and to all present during this weekend.

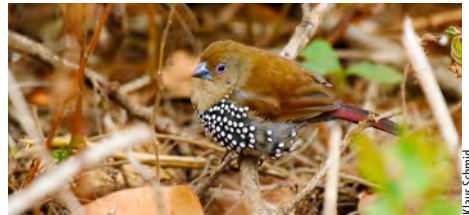
Rihann Geyser: Group Leader 🦋

BLNG Soutpansberg weekend camp, 22–25 September

Klaus Schmid

The group of 16 people, ably lead by Annali Swanepoel and Adele van Vuuren, started arriving at Time Out Lodge during the Friday afternoon. Some of the early arrivals did a quick recce of Hanglip Forest right outside Louis Trichardt (a highlight here was Grey Cuckooshrike [Bloukatakaoeroe]), with others doing a first quick trip with our guide for the weekend, Samson Mulaudzi. The lodge is ideally located for all the amazing birding sites close by, and we were pleasantly surprised by nightly visits of an African Wood-Owl [Bosuil]. On Saturday morning the outing was to Muirhead dams (highlights here were Horus Swift [Horuswindswael], Holub's Golden Weaver [Gouewewer] and Crested Guineafowl [Kuifkoptarentaal]), and Samson took the lead for the afternoon visit to Entabeni Forest (highlights: breeding Bat Hawks [Vlermuisvalk], Orange Ground-Thrush [Oranjelyster] and displaying African Broadbill [Breëbek]). On Sunday we did a quick recce at the edge of the Entabeni Forest (highlights: Scaly-throated Honeyguide [Gevlekte Heuningwyser], Narina Trogon [Bosloerie], Olive Woodpecker [Gryskopspeg] and Yellow-bellied Greenbul [Geelborswillie]), then off to Levubu (highlight: Grey-headed Parrot [Savannepapegaai]) and Thohoyandou Botanical Garden, which offered close views of Pink-throated Twinspot [Rooskeelkopsensie] (see photo of female), Little Sparrowhawk

[Kleinsperwer] collecting nesting branches, Black Cuckooshrike [Swartkatakaoeroe] and breeding Black Sparrowhawk [Swartsperwer]. After lunch Samson took us to a less well-known dam in urban Thohoyandou, which had an amazing array of waterbirds in an urban environment, despite constant human activity close by (highlights here were White-backed Duck [Witrugeend], numerous Allen's Gallinule [Kleinkoningriethaan] and African Pygmy-Goose [Dwerggans]). Some participants left early on Monday morning to avoid the long-weekend traffic rush, but the remaining participants were treated to a sighting of African Finfoot [Watertrapper] on the Levuvhu River and, to end the weekend off on a really high note, Narina Trogon, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Crested Guineafowl, Grey Tit-Flycatcher [Waaierstertvlieëvanger] and Scaly-throated Honeyguide at Roodewal Forest. 🐦



Pink-throated Twinspot/Rooskeelkopsensie



Grey-headed Parrot/Savannepapegaai



Grey Cuckooshrike/Bloukatakaoeroe

Counting crows: BLNG does CAR Route GM01

Tamsyn Sherwill

On Saturday 29 July, a team from BLNG joined a special group of slow-moving motorists across the country, in doing their bit for the winter edition of the ADU's Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcount (CAR).

CAR, which takes place on the last Saturday of July and January each year, is ultimately aimed at informing the conservation of SA's large terrestrial bird species, by using 'census' data collected by volunteers counting birds that can be seen from the road. Large terrestrial birds, like cranes, bustards, korhaans and Secretarybirds, have huge ranges and cannot be successfully conserved within protected areas alone – farmlands play a massive role in supporting healthy populations of these species, but this also makes these birds vulnerable to habitat loss due to changing land use (e.g. increasing areas of cropland or settlements), the use of pesticides, and collisions with structures like powerlines (as well as the impacts of, potentially, wind and solar farms).

The first CAR took place in July 1993, inspired by the need for data on two



threatened species, the Blue Crane [Bloukraanvoël] and Denham's/Stanley's Bustard [Veldpou], which were counted on 15 routes in the Overberg, Western Cape. CAR soon expanded to include other species and provinces, and today over 40 species are

counted along 350 fixed routes covering over 19 000 kilometres. More than 750 people take part, making this one of the largest birder-participation projects in Africa.

The target species list, which is ultimately region-specific, includes large terrestrial birds (cranes, bustards, korhaans, Secretarybird [Sekretarisvoël] and Southern Bald Ibis [Kalkoenibis]), not-as-large terrestrial birds (francolin and spurfowl), large water-associated birds (storks, two herons, and Spur-winged Goose [Wildemakou]), three corvids and six raptors (the raptor species included are ones likely to also be spotted while scanning for birds on the ground). The Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga provinces have even added an endangered mammal, the Oribi, to their CAR hitlist.



Tamsyn Sherwill

The rubbish dumps of Moloto



Tamsyn Sherwill

GM01 'habitat': recently burnt open woodland

As its name suggests, CAR uses the ‘road-count’ method: driving a set route, searching a fixed area (from the road) for a set amount of time and counting the number of individual of each species that are seen. The counting method used is important, because the idea of CAR is to generate data that enables statistically valid comparisons to be made across time (between seasons and years) and space (between CAR ‘precincts’, regions and provinces). For this reason, a consistent set of unchanging routes is used (though routes have sometimes been removed or added over the years if there is a good reason for doing so), and the protocol is designed to standardise sampling effort (to the extent that this is possible), so that different people, on different routes, in different seasons, and from year to year, are just as likely to spot any individual of the target species present on the route at the time of the count.

Taking part in CAR therefore requires some discipline: it is not like an ordinary day out birding...

- One has to follow the route given, preferably avoiding any detours or backtracking (if you do backtrack, it involves extra maths and admin – best avoided).
- Don’t leave the roadside on foot (no exploring).
- Start the route at least an hour or two after sunrise so as to allow the cranes time to disperse from their mass roosts.
- Drive slowly (max. speed of 50 km/h) and stop every 2 kilometres to scan the area with binoculars, whether you see any birds or not.
- Use spotting scopes only to confirm ID, not for scanning.
- Don’t be distracted by non-target species!
- Count all the target species seen, as in count how many individuals there are, and whether they are adults or juveniles. Write all of this down and don’t forget to record the odometer reading and the side of the road each bird was spotted.
- Record information about the weather (average for the day), and then habitat type (all species), and activity (for cranes, the large bustards, raptors and crows) for each sighting.
- Calling birds that aren’t seen don’t count (except for korhaans).
- Time your tea-break/s.

Nevertheless, the final instruction from the CAR organisers is to “have fun”, so despite all of the



Tamsyn Sherwill

Our CAR car and two observers: Elouise Kalmer and Philip Calinikos



Tamsyn Sherwill

Vandyspruit crossing: grassland, wetland and exotics



Tamsyn Sherwill

Wild seringas near the De Tweedespruit turnoff

abovementioned confinements, and for the love of science, conservation, and (in my case, anyway) roadtrips, a team from BLNG agreed to take on one of the seemingly less-loved routes in our local CAR precinct: GM01, aka The Moloto Route. Though a few others had hoped to join us, in the end they couldn't make it, and Team BLNG eventually set out with just two observers and a scribe (also protocol advisor/sheriff and occasional navigator). There is no restriction on the size of a team, but only one team, travelling together (preferably in the same vehicle), can count each route.

GM01 (partly in Gauteng and partly in Mpumalanga) is a near-circular (or, more accurately, hook-shaped), 50-kilometre journey starting on the R567 at the entrance to Leeuwfontein Nature Reserve, and passing through Moloto, De Tweedespruit and De Wagensdrift to Jakkalsdans on the R573 (the Pretoria-Moloto road). CAR routes, as dictated

by the project rationale, are mainly through farmland, but along public roads that are accessible to ordinary vehicles (2-wheel drive with low clearance). This ensures the future continuity of routes – because it is such an important part of the method that the same routes are counted each year.

As sleeping 'late' and not birding with the rising sun in their eyes was unthinkable to our two observers, we did a pre-CAR practice run through Dinokeng and part of the R567, arriving at the gates of Leeuwfontein Nature Reserve after giving our cranes exactly 1 hour and 40 minutes to disperse. GM01 used to start with a loop through Leeuwfontein, but unfortunately the reserve is no longer open to the public. Instead the route now heads straight down the R567, passing through grassland for about 5 km before the scenery changes abruptly to the dusty streets, dwellings and rubbish of the town of Moloto. Sadly, our first notable non-target species was a young Marsh Owl [Vlei-uil] lying dead in the road, the victim of a passing car.

Once through Moloto, a right turn took the route in a south-westerly direction, crossing the Hartbeesspruit. Again, we were depressed by the sight of rubbish – with piles of disposable nappies lying on the banks. Further on the rubbish abated and the vegetation changed from grassland to open woodland, with a small section of protea veld. Another right turn toward De Tweedespruit led to one of the most scenic stretches of the route, a broad-leaved savanna with an abundance of wild seringa trees, followed by a section of cropland and mixed bush along a rocky ridge, where in one of the well-treed spots our observers managed to find some satisfying non-target species.

After 4 hours on the road, mainly spent counting confusions of guinea fowl and murders of crows (for an opinion on whether birders should use these archaic collective nouns see: [No, it's not actually a murder of crows](#)), we managed to submit a scoresheet boasting a total of 2 BSKT, 4 BHH, 1 CPCW, 22 PICW and 47 HG (2 Black-shouldered Kites [Blouvalk], 4 Black-headed Herons [Swartkopreier], 1 Cape

and 22 Pied Crows [Swartkraai; Witboskraai], and 47 Helmeted Guineafowl [Gewone Taren-taal]). Some of the most distracting non-target species included: Striped Kingfisher [Gestreepte Visvanger], Pearl-breasted Swallow [Pêrelborsswael], Little Bee-eater [Kleinbyreter], Red-headed Weaver [Rooikopwewer], Lazy Cisticola [Luitinkinkie] – and giraffe (initially suspected to be an hallucination brought on by fruitless scanning for bustards and cranes, but then Elouise and I also saw it).

Though the low number of target species recorded on our CAR debut was a little disappointing, GM01 has yielded more interesting (and sadly also even less interesting) results in the past. The precinct organiser has also suggested that the route ‘has potential’, and we are hoping for a more fruitful summer count (breeding Blue Cranes have been mentioned).

But though our data and our contribution seem insignificant, they form part of a ‘big picture’ that CAR is painting across space and time for SA’s large terrestrial (and other) bird species. Everyone who takes part can rest in the knowledge that the information collected by CAR is not just potentially useful – CAR data has, is, and will be used. CAR outputs feed into a number of other avian research and conservation programmes, including the ADU/BLSA Important Bird Areas, the Endangered Wildlife Trust’s (EWT) African Crane Conservation Programme, the Eskom-EWT Strategic Partnership, the Threatened Grassland Species Programme, the Ground Hornbill Working Group (now merged into the Bird of Prey Working Group) and BLSA’s Bustard Working Group and the Southern Bald Ibis Programme.

Range and abundance data from CAR have formed the basis for environmental impact assessments for proposed developments, detailed research studies on specific species, and (so far) at least one PhD thesis and scientific paper (see: [Hofmeyr, Symes & Underhill \(2014\)](#) ‘Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* population trends and ecology: Insights from South African citizen science data’, which uses both SABAP and CAR data).



Tamsyn Sherwill

Our observers being distracted by non-target species

Though CAR does not aim to count the entire population of a species, the area covered by its 350 routes is so large that CAR is statistically capable of demonstrating trends in population size. And thanks to the location, habitat and activity data painstakingly recorded by CAR scribes, the project can also reveal how these birds are using farmland habitats, and how they may be affected by various farm management practices.

Around half of the CAR routes are, in fact, counted by farmers. In so doing the project has achieved another of its conservation goals – creating awareness and enlisting the support of the landowners on whom the survival of our large terrestrial birds depends. In 2003, the ADU published a 200-page report entitled ‘Big birds on farms: Mazda CAR Report 1993-2001’, and in 2007, funding from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) supported a project, Big Birds on Farms, focused on the Cape floristic region. This took CAR a step further in reaching its ‘big bird’ conservation goals, by enabling increased consultation with landowners, the agricultural sector and conservationists to develop practical steps that farmers can take to conserve the biodiversity on their land. These were then published in a booklet for landowners, which includes general advice on conservation-friendly land management, species accounts for eight species of large terrestrial birds, giving interesting information about each

species and specific tips on how to manage for their benefit, and a list of contacts and references to assist with sustainable farming.

The CAR and Big Birds on Farms advice for conservation-friendly farm management can be summarised as follows:

- **Adopt mixed farming strategies.** CAR shows that large terrestrial birds do better in areas of mixed farming than where there is intensive cultivation of a single crop.
- **Use poisons responsibly.** The responsible use of agro-chemicals is absolutely essential for large terrestrial birds and other animals to flourish on farms.
- **Monitor overhead cables and other dangerous structures.** For example, those cables which kill birds regularly can be marked, it is therefore important to report collisions. A few stones placed in a drinking trough allows crane chicks or other small animals to clamber out without drowning.
- **Protect natural veld.** Large terrestrial birds roam across vast tracts of land, and there will never be enough protected areas to conserve them effectively. Landowners play a vital role in filling gaps and complementing formal nature conservation efforts. The conservation of natural veld can make a huge contribution to conserving biodiversity on farms.
- **Create ecological corridors.** The value of patches of natural veld is greatly enhanced if they are interconnected by corridors.




Tamsyn Stevill

A very unlikely (and yet likely) place to see a giraffe

Landowners can do this along watercourses and ridges and alongside roads. At least 50 m is the target width.

- **Protect wetlands.** Cranes in particular depend on shallow, vegetated wetlands that are unpolluted and not excessively disturbed by livestock or fire. Landowners should value wetlands and their fringing habitats as special assets to be carefully conserved, not only for their biodiversity, but also for their services in regulating natural drainage and improving water quality.
- **Protect breeding and roosting sites.** Places for animals to rest and breed are just as important as foraging habitats. Ground-nesting birds, especially large species, are particularly at risk while breeding. The young birds are exceptionally vulnerable in the weeks before they can fly. Try to eliminate disturbance by people, by dogs and cats, and prevent trampling by livestock.
- **Control dogs, cats and livestock.** Uncontrolled dogs and cats have a huge negative impact on birds – and many other creatures.
- **Increase awareness of farm personnel.** These are the people who most frequently encounter wildlife on farms, and who have the potential to make or break conservation effectiveness. Two examples: workers should be trained to remove all pieces of baling twine from fields, so that entanglement with the legs of cranes and other animals can be eliminated; workers should be trained in the responsible use of poisons, both for their own health and safety, and to prevent bird poisoning incidents.
- **Collaborate with others.** The good done on one farm can too easily be undone by the neighbours. CAR results demonstrate the benefits of several farmers forming a conservancy to promote sound conservation practice on a number of neighbouring farms. Collaborate with experts to improve conservation strategies.

To find out more about CAR visit:

<http://car.adu.org.za/> 

How climate change is causing pied crow numbers to soar

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Pied crow numbers are growing because of powerlines and climate change. This growth is distressing to some.

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Pied crows, or *Corvus albus*, are a natural part of the landscape of southern Africa. They are bold, common, and familiar. But over recent years, especially in South Africa, there is evidence that there are many more of these birds.

The increase is worrying some conservationists who fear it could be having a negative impact on the local biodiversity. These fears have some merit given that the species is known to predate on birds' nests and young tortoises. Farmers are also concerned about the potential damage to sheep flocks because crows pluck out the eyes of the young lambs.

The effect of changes in temperature

Our research confirms that there has been an increase in pied crows in South Africa and quite dramatic changes in their centre of abundance. These changes vary throughout the country with large increases in the southwest but declines in the north and east of the country.

Second, our results suggest that these changes are closely linked to climate change.

Using data from two bird atlases carried out 20 years apart and linking these changes with information on the changing climate, we

found that pied crows have increased mainly in the geographic areas of South Africa known as the Karoo and Fynbos shrublands which are distinctive types of vegetation of southwestern South Africa. This is where temperatures are warming. These biomes are relatively arid habitats consisting principally of short shrubs with very few natural trees.

The decline in numbers in the northwest of the country is most likely related to climate cooling in this region.

It appears that the crows are following a warming climate bubble into the southwest. Our research suggests pied crows have a preferred temperature range roughly equal to an average annual temperature of 19°C. We are approaching this in the southwest of South Africa at the moment, and the crows are loving it.

Our results also suggest that this shift has been aided by the presence of power line infrastructure. This has provided sites for crows to build their nests in what is otherwise a virtually treeless landscape.

We conclude that while power lines have facilitated the increase of pied crows in the Karoo, climate change has driven their soaring numbers in these areas. The combination of climate change and electrical infrastructure has created the "perfect storm" of conditions to favour an explosion of pied crow numbers in the shrublands of South Africa.

An unloved species

Crows are big and obvious. Pied crows in particular are easy to identify with their white tank top plumage. These birds have had a bad rap globally. This dates back to medieval times when they were reviled as carrion birds on battlefields, or to superstitious associations of large, black birds with ill-omen or death.

Their collective noun – a murder of crows – doesn't exactly do much for their public image. Given all this history, it is perhaps understandable that people react emotionally when they see crows doing what crows do best: being predators.

In South Africa pied crows are notorious, and viewed with great suspicion by urbanites and rural farmers alike. They are accused of such gory deeds as plucking the eyes from newborn lambs, destroying the eggs of ground-nesting birds and decimating populations of tortoises.

They're also vilified for harassing other much more glamorous species, notably Verreaux's eagles. Indeed these perceptions have led to calls for the control of pied crows by those who are worried about their negative impacts.

But these observations are not sufficient evidence to suggest that crows have an overwhelming negative impact on ecosystems. A recent scientific review suggests that in general, they don't.

The truth is that their role within ecosystems is not necessarily so straightforward. For example, they also eat other predators, such as small snakes which can be a major cause of nest failure in Karoo birds. Thus, increased numbers of pied crows certainly have the potential to change the balance of predator-prey interactions.

Given the situation, it may be that pied crows are an example of the relatively new phenomenon of the native invader. These are species that occur naturally in one area, but whose numbers suddenly increase out of all proportion with their surrounding ecosystems, shifting the balance of nature in unpredictable ways.

For a species to be considered a native invader in the truest sense it needs demonstrably to have a negative impact on other species. But while the pied crow clearly has such potential, we do not yet have the evidence to confirm they are causing declines of other species. Therefore, in assessing the pied crow "problem" we must be careful not to jump to conclusions.

Climate change is ongoing

Throughout the world, animals and plants are responding to the changing climate by shifting their ranges, changing their behaviour and changing their abundance.

But climate change is ongoing, and so these shifts may continue to change over time. It is likely that we are not stepping into a new stable state but rather witnessing one step in a continual transition as species adjust or fail to adjust to conditions that are in a state of flux.

What happens next is uncertain.

As warming continues, will pied crow numbers in the south west of South Africa again subside? Or will they adapt to their new conditions? Either way, it is still unclear what the legacy of the "pied crow invasion" will be. 🐦



Peter Ryan

South Africa's pied crows are moving to areas where the climate favours them more

Champions of the Flyway 2017 and the future of birding

Ingrid van Heerden

As bird lovers most members of BLNG are acquainted with Darwinian theory regarding the survival of species. Without progeny or successors, the human and all other species, or any endeavours they participate in, are doomed to die out. Birding and birders in South Africa, and BLNG in particular, are just as dependent on young enthusiastic birders to take over the baton from the 'wise old owls' who have kept BLNG going and growing, as our precious bird populations.

Luckily we do have successors who are young, energetic and totally dedicated to conserving birds throughout the world. Two of these special people are Toni Geddes and John Kinghorn. At the October evening meeting, members of BLNG were introduced to the effort that 'our young eagles' are prepared to put into making the world aware of the slaughter of 25 million migratory birds every year over the Mediterranean and neighbouring countries.

John Kinghorn has already presented excellent lectures to our club on two previous occasions: who will ever forget his marathon Big Birding Year (800 species recorded in 2014) and his quest for the elusive pitta in Mozambique?

On 10 October 2017, John recounted his experiences while participating in Champions of the Flyway 2017 – a race for conservation. Initially, the listeners were shattered as John described the devastation caused by hunting and lime-stick snaring to birds that migrate across the Med in spring and autumn on their journey to and from Africa (including the southern region). If this slaughter continues unabated, bird watching in South Africa will diminish drastically year by year. The effects are already being noted.

But all is not doom and gloom! The Champions of the Flyway race held in Israel under the auspices of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (an affiliate of BirdLife International), is helping to counteract the devastation. The race is held every year in March when migrants from Africa cross through the airspace of Israel (the Flyway) in vast numbers to return to Europe to breed. A considerable sum of money is generated by race participants (in similar fashion to Birding Big Day). These funds are used for conservation and education, anti-poaching operations and communication to combat the slaughter.

The first step for participation in this unique race was for each team to collect an amount of €3 500 prior to their arrival in Israel, as a 'fundraising goal', a princely sum considering the Rand-Euro exchange rate. Nothing daunted, John Kinghorn and his 'Birding Ecotours Youth Africa Birders' team-mates



Toni Geddes and John Kinghorn at the October evening meeting

Ingrid van Heerden

Andrew de Blocq, Werner van der Walt and Jessleena Suri, not only collected 100% of their fundraising goal, but 200%.

The Champions of the Flyway race is conducted over a period of 24 hours during which the various teams race from one birding hot-spot to another in a triangular 'playing field' covering approximately 650 kilometers in the Eilat region of Israel. The playing field also includes a large portion of the Negev Desert, active Israeli military zones, salt lakes, mountains and international borders. As with Birding Big Day, each team attempts to record a maximum number of species. Prizes are awarded to the team with the highest bird species count (Champions of the Flyway), the greatest financial contribution to the Champions of the Flyway projects (Guardians of the Flyway), and the team who saw the greatest number of species using green-friendly birding methods ('Green' Champions of the Flyway). There are also two prizes for the Israeli teams (Israeli Champions and Israeli Guardians of the Flyway).

John admitted that their team missed out on recording the greatest number of migratory birds in one day in the Eilat Triangle. There was mention of some hiccups involving their car and lots of desert sand, and possibly also a little excursion into one of the military zones (this race is not for the fainthearted)! But because of

their great efforts in raising a whopping €8 835, the members of Birding Ecotours Youth Africa Birders were named the 2017 Guardians of the Flyway.

In addition, they were also honoured as the 2017 Knights of the Flyway, as the team that did the most to promote the cause, helped others to see the most birds and got the most enjoyment out of the event. Of these attributes there is no doubt when it comes to John Kinghorn and the team! They introduced all the other participants to the South African concept of *gees* (not to be confused with 'geese').

John, Andrew, Werner and Jessleena are the first youth team to ever achieve these distinctions and the first ever Southern Hemisphere team to win a title in the event's history. We are proud of our Birding Ecotours Youth Africa Birders. Well done!

The funds collected in Champions of the Flyway 2017 will be used to strengthen the conservation efforts of BirdLife Turkey (Doğa Derneği) to tackle the illegal killing of birds in that country.

As committed birders we can also help our Youth Africa Birders to continue to achieve great things and ensure the future of birding in South Africa. John mentioned that he and Toni Geddes intend to participate in Champions of the Flyway 2018 with a team including young



Jessleena Suri

John, Andrew and Werner scanning the cliff faces for Egyptian Vultures around Ben Gurion



John Kinghorn

Little Green Bee-eater

people from other countries (James Shergold from Britain and Julian Teh from Australia), to illustrate that bird conservation knows no boundaries. Help them achieve their fundraising goal by making donations and encourage them by visiting the [Champions of the Flyway website](#). Let's join hands to stop the slaughter of 25 million birds a year and combat the loss of our migratory bird species!

For a taste of what taking part in the Champions of the Flyway race is like, see the official [COTF 2017 video](#). 🦉

Nylsvley: Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis voëluitstappie, 8–9 April 2017

Johan en Magdaleen, Frik en Wanda

Saterdag 8 April het Frik, Wanda, Johan en Magdaleen 12 kinders en twee volwassenes (Gerda en Manie van der Merwe) van die Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis by Nylsvley Natuurresewaat se hek ontmoet. Die doel van die naweek was om die kinders aan voëls bloot te stel deur voëlkyk, 'n lesing oor voëlidentifikasie en ringaktiwiteite. Die naweek is deur Philip Strauss, voorsitter van die Ereveldwagters (Pretoria Streek) geïnisieer.

Aangesien ons die fasiliteite (ons het een van die slaapsale gehuur vir die Saterdag) eers teen 14:00 kon betrek het ons eers met die kinders na die Jacana-voëlskuiling toe gery. Die watervlak by die skuiling was teleurstellend laag met net 'n poeletjie water reg voor die skuiling. Ons het darem 'n Bontkiewiet [Blacksmith Lapwing] gesien.

Terug by die lapa en slaapsaal het Gerda en Manie vir die kinders middagete gegee, waarna hulle op die terrein kon wegkruipertjie speel. Teen half drie het Johan sy lesing oor voëlidentifikasie aangebied en na 'n uur kon die kinders 'n paar kenmerke opnoem waarna hulle moes kyk as hulle voëls wil identifiseer. Teen



Johan Snyman

Witkoluil / Pearl-spotted Owlet

half vier het ons Vogelfontein toe gery, waar die watervlakke ook baie laag was, maar daar was meer voëls as by Jacana. Die aand het almal gebraai en die braaibroodjies was 'n wenner.

Half vyf die volgende oggend het Johan, Magdaleen, Frik en Wanda opgestaan en begin nette opsit – sommer naby die slaapsale. Die vangs was weer teleurstellend laag (net 9 voëls), maar 'n wye verskeidenheid van spesies is gevang wat aan die kinders gewys kon word. Spesies wat in grootte, beenlengte en kleur verskil het – spesies soos Witkoluil, Kuifkophoutkapper, Bosveldfisant,

Kleinheuningwyser en Kuifkopvisvanger [Pearl-spotted Owlet; Crested Barbet; Swainson's Spurfowl; Lesser Honeyguide; Malachite Kingfisher]. Die kinders het oor mekaar geval om net 'n voëltjie te kon vashou en te laat vlieg (onder toesig natuurlik).

Teen 10 uur het ons die nette laat sak, 'n laatontbyting geëet en toe verdaag. In terme van voëlring, was die naweek nie baie suksesvol nie, maar vir twaalf kinders wat in 'n kinderhuis groot word, het 'n nuwe wêreld oopgegaan om die ryke verskeidenheid van voëls om hulle raak te sien. 🐦

BLNG Ringgroep: Roofvoëltoer na Noord-Wes Provinsie, 13–18 April 2017

Frik en Wanda du Plooy

Op Donderdag 13 April het die Du Plooy (Chris, Julian, Frik en Wanda), Martin en Paula Steyn, Marié Ueckermann, Jan en Jeannie Beukes by Tosca Gastehuis in Noord-Wes bymekaar gekom om roofvoëls te ring. Weens werkverpligtinge het Chris en Julian al van Dinsdag af in Mahikeng se omgewing begin ring.

By Adri Marx se gastehuis op Tosca het Sara die groep ontvang met heerlike pap en sous. Met 'n braaivleisie daarby was die mae gou gevul. Die akkommodasie was skoon en netjies met billike pryse.

Die volgende twee dae is daar van Tosca af van vroeg tot laat kilometers afgelê om roofvoëls in bome en op pale te soek. Die drie bakkies het elke dag in verskillende rigtings gery.

Chris en Julian was die kampioene van die toer. Hulle het ongeveer 60% van al die voëls gering. Die rede: niemand kan Julian se skerp oë klop nie. Hy sien 'n voël op 'n paal myle voor enigiemand anders.

Saterdag het ons so ring-ring na Bray toe gery, waar Caroll Bester ons by haar gastehuis

ingewag het. Bray Gastehuis het 'n lekker lapa waar ons saans lekker gekuier het om 'n braaivleisvuur om die dag se wedervaringe te deel. Hiervandaan het ons weer in verskillende rigtings, veral na die westekant toe gering.

Hierdie was 'n baie suksesvolle roofvoëltoer: 102 voëls in total gering!



Die suksesvolle span! Van links na regs: Marie Ueckermann, Martin Steyn, Paula Steyn, Julian du Plooy and Chris du Plooy.



Jan Beukes het hierdie Bleeksingvalk/Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk gevang op die Noord-Wes ringtoer. Dit wys baie mooi die oorgangsverekleed van jong voël na volwassene.



Wanda ring 'n Bleeksingvalk/Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk



Frik du Plooy wens Jan Beukes geluk met sy vyfde roofvoël. Hiermee het hy gekwalifiseer om self roofvoëls te vang met 'n bal-chatri.

Martin Steyn

Ons het die volgende roofvoëls gering: 1 Grootjagarend [African Hawk-Eagle], 1 Bruinarend [Wahlberg's Eagle], 2 Edelvalke [Lanner Falcon], 1 Witkruissperwer (melanistiese vorm) [Gabar Goshawk], 10 Grootrooi-valke [Greater Kestrel] en 82 Bleeksingvalke [Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk]. Ons het ook 5 Bleeksingvalk-hervangste gekry: een is tien jaar gelede gering deur Stefan Steyvenberg, een 'n maand gelede deur Chris du Plooy en een Bleeksingvalk het binne vier dae weer in die slagyster getrap. 🦅



Julian du Plooy met 'n Edelvalk/Lanner Falcon

Martin Steyn

DONATIONS (April – September 2017)

Once again, a sincere thank you for your generous donations. Your contributions help us to support bird conservation projects, and are greatly appreciated.

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

Rob Sprenger de Rover; Jana Moller; Leslie Wilton; Ronel Viljoen; Anton Heyns; Michael Heyns; Ilse du Plessis; Ben Prinsloo; Con Fauconnier; Dora du Plessis; Brian Moreby; Susan Tremeer; André Marx; Philip Calinikos; Dudley Gradwell; André van der Walt; Cleo Artemides; Stephan Terblanche; Dawie Rotteveel

Voortrekkermonument ringsessie: Saterdag 22 Julie 2017

Chris du Plooy

Twaalf A-ringers, nege C-ringers en vier besoekers het om 05:15 die Saterdagoggend bymekaar gekom. Die ringers is in groepies opgedeel en die nette is voor sonsopkoms klaar opgesit. So teen 06:20 het die eerste lig begin deurbreek en die son het 06:50 opgekom.

Die hoogtepunt van die dag was beslis die Geelbekbosduif [African Olive-Pigeon] wat so teen 09:00 deur Madeleen van Loggerenberg gevang is. Verskeie fotos is geneem en nadat die duif vrygelaat is het dit vir nog meer as 'n uur by ons in 'n boom bly sit.

By die 're-traps' was daar 'n paar interessante gevalle. Die eerste een was Ringnommer L30140, Neddikkie [Neddicky] wat op 24 Julie 2010 gering is en op die dag deur Paula Steyn ge're-trap' is – op twee dae na 'n tydsverloop van sewe jaar. Die volgende was Ringnommer 4A66915, 'n Kuifkophoutkapper [Crested Barbet] wat ook op 24 Julie 2010 en dus ook amper sewe jaar terug gering is. Die derde interessante 're-trap' was 'n Rooivlerktjagra [Brown-crowned Tchagra] wat op 5 Januarie 2013 vir die eerste keer gering is, maar weer in 2014, 2015 en 2016 en nou ook op die dag gevang is deur Wanda Louwrens.

GEDURENDE die ringsessie is daar 52 nuwe voëls gering, waarvan 21 verskillende spesies



Nicole en Martin

was. 'n Verdere 17 voëls word ge're-trap' (11 spesies) – 24.6%, wat uitstekend was. 'n Totaal van 69 voëls is hanteer (25 spesies) wat baie goed was vir 'n wintersoggend. 🐦

Why do birds sing mainly at dawn?

There are several reasons why the peak of birdsong occurs so early in the day, during what is celebrated as the 'dawn chorus'. First, it is still dark, so rather than waste energy on trying to find food that is difficult to see, a bird is better off marking its territory. Second, females are often at their most fertile at dawn, so the male must make a special effort to guard against a rival male mating with 'his' female. Finally, it is much easier to hear birdsong at dawn: not only because in our towns and cities there is less interference from traffic noise, but also because weather conditions are generally better at this time of day, with less wind and air turbulence.

Dooie wielewaal gevind op Bushtrails

Wanda du Plooy

Elba Swart het op 14 Augustus vanjaar die volgende e-pos boodskap van Liz Palthé van Bushtrails ontvang (die BLNG-ringers ring gereeld by haar naby Magaliesburg):

“Ek het vanoggend hierdie Swartkop-wielewaal dood gevind. Die SAFRING-nummer op die ring is 4A47769. Op die oog af makeer hy niks nie, maar te oordeel na sy toestand, lyk dit of hy vannag dood is -- nog geen miere of reuk nie. Jammer!”

Soos ek hier sit, hoor ek die Swartkop-wielewaal [Black-headed Oriole], Grootringduif [Red-eyed Dove], Hoephoep [African Hoopoe], tiptolle of toppies [bulbuls], suikerbekkies [sunbirds], Mikstertbyvanger [Fork-tailed Drongo], Spookvoël [Grey-headed Bush-Shrike]; ek sien ook die Rooibek- en Gevlekte Lyster [Kurrichane and Groundscraper Thrush], ook sisyies [waxbills] en kwikkies [wagtails]. Groete, Liz”

Elba het op SAFRING se databasis gaan kyk. Dié Swartkopwielewaal is ’n jaar en ’n half gelede deur Kotie Opperman op die plaas gering.

Ons waardeer dit dat klublede en lede van die publiek dooie voëls rapporteer.



Liz Palthé

Swartkopwielewaal/Black-headed Oriole
Nr. 4A47769

Die inligting kan dan op SAFRING se databasis aangebring word. So ’n voël word as ’n ‘Recovery’ aangeteken. Nog nuttige inligting, behalwe die datum en plek waar die voël gevind is, is om die koördinate te verskaf, indien moontlik, en ook die oorsaak van die dood, as dit bekend is, soos deur kat gevang of vergiftig. 🐱

Ringershoekie

BLNG Ringgroep

Moreletakloof Natuureservaat, 19 Augustus 2017

Tydens ons ringsessie het Hein Bantjes ’n Rooivink-mannetjie [Southern Red Bishop] gevang met Ringno. FA68926. Dirk van Stuyvenberg het hierdie Rooivink op 22 April 2006 by dieselfde ringplek gering. C-ringer Johan de Jager het die nodige afmetings en

gewig aangeteken. Dit sê vir ons dat hierdie Rooivink al minstens 10 jaar by Moreletakloof Natuureservaat doenig is.

Limpopo roofvoëlring, 28 Augustus tot 1 September 2017

Ons het drie nagte by Stonebridge Gaste-huis, ongeveer 10 km duskant Musina,

geslaap. Lindie was die gasvrou. Dit is 'n oulike, goed toegeruste blyplek teen 'n billike prys. Ons het agtien roofvoëls gevang, waarvan vier 'retraps' was, drie Donkersingvalke [Dark Chanting Goshawk], tien Bleeksingvalke [Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk] en een Akkedisvalk [Lizard Buzzard]. Bleeksingvalk 'retraps' was soos volg: Ringno. K40361 gering op 16 Junie 2013 deur Chris du Plooy, Ringno. 7A03876 (inligting nog nie op Safring gelaai nie), Ringno. 867592 gering op 6 Februarie 2014 deur John Robson, en Ringno. K48901 gering op 6 Maart 2017 deur John Robson. Ons het ook Breëkop-, Bruinslang- en Swartborsslangarende [Martial Eagle, Brown Snake-Eagle & Black-chested Snake-Eagle], sowel as 'n Dwegarend [Booted Eagle], gesien.

Rietvlei Natuureservaat, 2 September 2017

Tamsyn Sherwill, *Laniarius* Redakteur, haar ma en 'n vriendin het besoek gebring by ons ringsessie.

Die weer het nie lekker saamgewerk nie; dit was koud en wonderig. Tien A-Ringers het die koue getrotseer en 88 voëls gevang, 17 spesies en 15 'retraps' (17%). Spesiale voëls: Grootrietsangers [Great Reed-Warbler], Kaapse Rietsangers [Lesser Swamp-Warbler], Kuifkopvisvangers [Malachite Kingfisher].

Strubendam, 16 September 2017

Die oggend was lekker warm en windstil. Almal het die oggend baie geniet, veral Jan wat om 05:30 besluit het om in die spruit te swem, nogal met sy klere aan. Ek vermoed hy was agter 'n Kolgans [Egyptian Goose] aan. Voëlring is nie vir sissies nie!

Nege A-ringers en 'n paar C-ringers (ringers in opleiding) het die geleentheid bygewoon. Christo Siebert het as leier opgetree. Hy het vir Johan Muller ingestaan, wat op die krukkelys was na 'n operasie.

Daar is altesaam 159 voëls gevang (18 spesies) waarvan 23 'retraps' was (14,4%). Al die 'retraps' is oorspronklik plaaslik by die

dam gering, behalwe een Swartkeelgeelvink [Southern Masked Weaver] wat op 21 Feb 2015 deur Vincent Ward by Faerie Glen NR gering is. Die oudste 'retrap' was 'n Geelbeklyster [Karoo Thrush] wat op 11 September 2013 (4 jaar gelede) deur Johan van Rooyen gering is. Die vangs van die dag was egter Gert Opperman se Geelbekbosduif [African Olive-Pigeon].

Feather River Gastehuis, Sabie: 29 September – 3 Oktober 2017

Op 'n besige skoolsluitnaweek het 13 BLNG Ringgroeplede (Agt A-Ringers, een C-ringer en vyf vriende) na Sappi se gastehuis by Sabie vertrek om woudvoëls te gaan ring. Rihann Geyster het ook verskeie pentads ge-atlas op BirdLasser. Dit was 'n besondere paar dae vir al die ringers. Die volgende spesiale spesies is gevang en gering: Bosloerie [Narina Trogon], Bosuil [African Wood-Owl], Afrikaanse Sperwer [African Goshawk], Groenkolpensie [Green Twinspot], Lawaaimaker- en Witkollanfrederik [Chorister Robin-Chat & White-starred Robin], Bergkwikkie [Mountain Wagtail], Groenrugkwêkwêvoël [Green-backed Cameroptera], Bandkeelkleinjantjie [Bar-throated Apalis, Klein-rooibandsuikerbekkie [Southern Double-collared Sunbird], Witborsduifie [Tambourine Dove], Geelstreepboskruiper [Yellow-streaked Greenbul], Boskrapper [Terrestrial Brownbul], Kaneelduifie [Lemon Dove], Swartsaagvlerkswael [Black Saw-wing], Oranjelyster [Orange Ground-Thrush], Langkuifarend [Long-crested Eagle], Swartblestinker [Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird], Kortbeksuikerbekkie [Collared Sunbird].

Oud-ringer Martin Johannsmeier en sy eggenote Liz

Op 4 Augustus vanjaar het Wanda en Frik vir Martin en Liz Johannsmeier besoek om die ringtoerusting en boeke wat hulle aan die klub geskenk het te gaan haal. Die betrokke toerusting sal ten goede aangewend word. Hulle welwillendheid word baie waardeer.

Martin was in die 70-erjare 'n aktiewe

ringer. Sy data is nog steeds op SAFRING se databasis.

Die boeke is aan Riana besorg vir beskikbaarstelling aan BLNG-lede en die ringtoerusting sal aan ringstudente oorhandig word.

Dorothy Hall (Nelspruit), Siegfried Wolff and John Bunning

Andrew Hall, son of the late Dorothy handed his mother's ringing equipment to Don Williams, to be passed on to anyone who can use them gainfully. Dorothy was a ringer primarily of Long-crested Eagles [Langkuifarend] in the Nelspruit area. Some of the equipment belonged to John Bunning. (He too passed away recently.) Some other equipment also belonged

to Siegfried Wolff. Many thanks from the ringing group. We will surely make good use of the equipment. Your goodwill is highly appreciated.

Riaan Marais

Die ringgroep het met hartseer verneem van die skielike heengaan van Riaan Marais. Hy was een van die klub se ou ringers en bestuurder by Rietvlei NR vanaf 1995 tot einde 2016. Hy is op 15 September in 'n noodlottige motorfietsongeluk oorlede. Riaan was 'n mentor vir baie van ons huidige ringers. Sy kennis oor die natuur en liefde vir al wat lewe sal gemis word. Hy was die ringers goedgesind en het ons toegelaat om in Rietvlei te gaan ring oor baie jare. 🐦

Warbler identification

Brenda Clarke

Originally published in Laniarius 32, March 1988. Updated to include the new names of some species. Some of the plant genus names mentioned have also since changed but have been left as is in this article. Note, however, that most South African Rhus have now been placed in Searsia; Acacia are now Vachellia or Senegalia.

Tony Harris took his audience right into his own habitat at the Transvaal Museum on Friday evening, 4 December when, with excellent illustrations, colour slides and sound he unravelled the problems of warbler identification with clues on habitat types, species distribution in the Transvaal, species presence during the year, and diagnostic features of appearance and song.

Although only a video recording could have conveyed full information on his talk, the following notes may be of assistance to those unfortunate enough to have missed the outstanding talk.

1 Distribution as an aid in warbler identification

General distribution was shown to be unimportant for most species of warbler.

This was illustrated firstly by comparing African Reed-Warbler [Kleinrietsanger] and Marsh Warblers [Europese Rietsanger] which have similar distributions – both are migrants. Secondly, two residents, Lesser Swamp-Warbler [Kaapse Rietsanger] and Little Rush-Warbler [Kaapse Vleisanger], also showed a similar distribution and, thirdly, two species which have a restricted distribution, namely Dark-capped Yellow [Geelsanger] and Barratt's Warblers [Ruigte-sanger], and one species, the Willow Warbler [Hofsanger], which is distributed throughout the Transvaal.

2 Presence/absence and arrival/departure times as an aid in warbler identification

Nine species are migrants which arrive between October and December and depart



HOW TO IDENTIFY WARBLERS

A HANDY GUIDE FOR BIRDWATCHERS



① NOTE THE OVERALL SIZE.



② NOTE THE PREFERRED HABITAT.



③ LISTEN TO THE CALL.



④ OBSERVE THE COLOUR OF THE BILL & FEET.



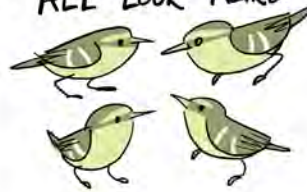
⑤ COUNT THE NUMBER OF WING BARS.



⑥ NOTE THE EXTENT OF THE SUPERCILIUM.



⑦ CONCLUDE THAT THEY ALL LOOK ALIKE.



⑧ WRITE IN AGONY.



⑨ PRETEND THAT WARBLERS DON'T EXIST.



Rohan Chakravarty,
www.greenhumour.com,
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between March and May. Each species has specific arrival and departure times. One of these, the African Reed-Warbler [Kleinrietsanger], is a breeding migrant from Central Africa – the rest are non-breeding Palearctic migrants. Five other breeding resident species were illustrated.

3 Wing formula

Wing formula; the relative length of the primaries to each other, can be used in identification, but is only applicable for birds in the hand.

4 General appearance

This is not an easy guide, but is helpful in some cases where diagnostic features are apparent, e.g., eye stripes, white throat patches or yellow, grey or brown colouration.

5 Habitat

This is species-specific and is often a good guide to identification. The following separation, although obviously not absolute, has practical usefulness.

- Reeds at water
- Rank vegetation
- Scrub, weeds
- Dry thick bush
- Dry *Acacia-Rhus* thickets
- Thick bush, trees, shrub gardens
- Long grass, bracken, rank vegetation
- Forest edge
- Dense gullies

At dams, rivers and reedbeds:

- The **Lesser Swamp-Warbler [Kaapse Riet-sanger]** is at home and is the one species that confines itself to reeds. It has a very prominent white eyebrow and has white on the throat. It is a relatively large bird, as could be seen in the display of skins of 14 species, arranged by Tony according to size, for inspection by the audience.

In **weeds, reeds and marshy vegetation** the following can be expected:



Clive Kaplan

Marsh Warbler/Europese Rietsanger

- **Little Rush-Warbler [Kaapse Vleisanger]:** No white eyebrow; rufous rump and mantle, rounded tail. The call is characteristic: all on one note increasing in speed.
- **African Reed-Warbler [Kleinrietsanger]** looks identical to the Marsh Warbler [Europese Rietsanger] but occurs in a different habitat – in thickets and gardens away from water. Skulks in low- to mid-canopy. (From the tape recording the call sounded more bubbling than that of the Marsh Warbler, but with harsh notes interspersed.) Some mimicking.
- **Sedge Warbler [Europese Vleisanger]:** also in marshy habitat. White eyebrow, mottled head, very active. Very fast call.
- **Willow Warbler [Hofsanger]** is found throughout, except in montane forests; a canopy forager, not skulking. Calls especially when just arrived or when about to depart.
- **Great Reed-Warbler [Grootrietsanger]:** Largest of the warblers. Orange-yellow mouth. Often near water. The call is unmistakable – a big bird with a gruff voice. Generally small birds have higher-pitched songs than larger birds, certainly applies to the warblers.
- **Olive-tree Warbler [Olyfboomsanger]:** Occurs in thick, dry *Acacia* bush; distinctive call, gruff, similar to Great Reed-Warbler, but faster and not so varied. The pale



Clive Kaplan

Little Rush Warbler/Kaapse Vleisanger



Clive Kaplan

Lesser Swamp Warbler/Kaapse Rietsanger

lower mandible is diagnostic. This is a grey warbler, all those previously mentioned being brown, except the Willow Warbler. The Common Whitethroat [Witkeelsanger] is the other grey warbler, and the Garden Warbler [Tuinsanger] is grey-brown.

- The **Common Whitethroat [Witkeelsanger]** occurs in the same habitat as the Olive-tree Warbler – *Acacia* thickets. Prominent white eye-ring and white throat. Frequents mid-to upper-canopy.

- **Garden Warbler [Tuinsanger]:** Occupies similar habitat to Marsh Warbler [Europese Rietsanger]. (The call heard on the tape recording sounded a continuous liquid, bubbling song with no harsh notes).
- **Icterine Warbler [Spotsanger]:** Long bill, very orange mouth; a yellowish bird, somewhat like a Willow Warbler, but larger, more skulking. The call has a nasal quality. It occurs in thick bush and wooded areas.

In grassland, bracken and streamside vegetation:

- One can expect to find the **Dark-capped Yellow Warbler [Geelsanger]**. The call is distinctive. (From the taped call it sounded like three brief notes and one long note.) This warbler has been seen and trapped at Baviaanspoort.
- **Broadtailed Warbler [Breëstertsanger]:** Habitat the same as for the Dark-capped Yellow Warbler. (The taped call sounded like a high-pitched whistle; short single notes).

In fern, sedge, streamside habitat in forests:

- **Barratt's Warbler [Ruigtesanger]:** along the escarpment in gullies and forest edge. Distinctive call (the tape recording sounded like a rapidly repeated call on one note.) The Marsh Warbler [Europese Rietsanger] is also found in this habitat.
- **River Warbler [Springkaansanger]** has been recorded at Hoedspruit. Uncommon, frequents *Grewia* thickets. Spends much time on the ground. A strident song which can be heard from a distance, cicada-like in sound.

Persons wishing to become familiar with the different warbler species are advised to record the songs and to learnt to recognize them with the assistance of commercial recordings. Warbler identification is hard work, but worthwhile!

This lecture was followed up by a bird ringing session at Baviaanspoort Sewage Farm on 6 December. Although it poured with rain,

those present were rewarded in seeing and handling the African Reed-Warbler [Kleinrietsanger] and the Little Rush-Warbler [Kaapse Vleisanger] and Sedge Warblers [Europese Vleisanger].

To hear recordings of warbler calls:

[Little Rush-Warbler \[Kaapse Vleisanger\]](#)
[Lesser Swamp-Warbler \[Kaapse Rietsanger\]](#)
[African Reed-Warbler \[Kleinrietsanger\]](#)

[Marsh Warbler \[Europese Rietsanger\]](#)
[Sedge Warbler \[Europese Vleisanger\]](#)
[Great Reed-Warbler \[Grootrietsanger\]](#)
[Willow Warbler \[Hofsanger\]](#)
[Olive-tree Warbler \[Olyfboomsanger\]](#)
[Common Whitethroat \[Witkeelsanger\]](#)
[Green Warbler \[Tuinsanger\]](#)
[Icterine Warbler \[Spotsanger\]](#)
[Barratt's Warbler \[Ruigetsanger\]](#)
[River Warbler \[Sprinkaansanger\]](#) 🐦

Bird Island, Seychelles: Paradise found

Ingrid van Heerden

One year ago, Steve and I visited the Seychelles and found our own Paradise. Surprisingly this was not on Praslin which is famous for its Garden of Eden, but on Bird Island, a tiny speck of coral 105 kilometres from Mahe, surrounded by the bluest ocean we had ever seen.

Bird Island is the ultimate destination for anyone who has a relaxed attitude to bird watching and a desire to see vast numbers of Indian Ocean Island birds. It is the northernmost island of the Seychelles Archipelago, and since 1967 when it was sold to its present owner, has to a great extent returned to its original bounty when it was described by a passing ship as "covered with birds innumerable."

Ecological stewardship

Despite the fact that it provides accommodation for small groups of tourists, researchers and necessary staff, the strict eco-friendly policies of the owners have restored much of the bird life that had been decimated by guano mining, a coconut plantation, egg harvesting and rampant rabbit and rat populations.

In addition to extermination of the rabbits and rats, uprooting the coconut palms, and clearing an adequate space for the Sooty Tern

colony to re-establish itself, no outdoor lighting is allowed at night and electricity usage is kept to a minimum. Hot water is produced by solar power and none of the chalets have fridges or television. There are no standard telephones, but thanks to the communication tower on the northern tip of the island, which also plays a role transmitting data from the Bird Island weather station, electronic communication is excellent.

The 24 chalets and the building housing the dining room, lounge and bar, which comprise the so-called 'hotel', are so cleverly designed that the use of air-conditioning is not necessary. Instead sea breezes are funnelled



Brown Noddy visiting our chalet

Ingrid van Heerden

Steve van Heerden



Common White Tern

Ingrid van Heerden



White-tailed Tropicbird chick covered in down

through the slatted louvers of the wooden doors and windows, while a spacious porch permits a constant through-draft, particularly on hot afternoons. I think that every student studying architecture in Africa should be made to study the Bird Island chalet design (imagine the KNP without all those air-conditioners!). Although the island is close to the Equator (3° South) and the climate is generally hot and humid, we were always comfortable in our accommodation and quickly learned to spend the hottest time of the day resting in our chalet or lounging on our porch.



Steve van Heerden

Red-footed Booby, a colourful vagrant

Birds innumerable

When we landed on Bird Island after a 45-minute island-hop flight from Mahe, we strolled across the bare landing strip into the verdant gardens of the 'hotel' and were immediately overwhelmed by an onslaught on our senses: our noses were assailed by the most overpowering smell of guano and our ears were deafened by the squeaking, shrieking, babbling, chattering and wheezing of thousands and thousands of birds. In late October, the most prolific species were the Brown and Lesser Noddies, who were in full breeding frenzy. Every tree and shrub and even the stones on the ground, were covered with haphazard nests, clamouring fledglings and hard-working parent Noddies ferrying fish to their demanding offspring. The cacophony never stopped, not even at night, but like the sounds of the waves breaking against the pristine beaches, our ears adapted to the constant clamour as we relaxed and became part of the rhythm of Bird Island. The human sense of smell also mercifully becomes saturated rapidly and helped us ignore the nostril-searing, eye-watering odours.

The practically silent 'close neighbours' in the 'hotel' area of the island are the Common White Terns. These are the only pure white terns in the world, but their young are brown



Ingrid van Heerden

Lesser Noddy preening

or beige. Each tree had at least one fragile, little ball of beige to light brown fluff with big eyes, balanced precariously on a fork or a bare branch. Common White Terns are either extremely trusting that no strong wind will whisk their eggs or baby birds away or are very careless parents. October is a relatively placid month in terms of wind, which is probably why the Common White Terns were breeding, but I was all for erecting a safety net for our nearest grubby snowballs.

Other oh-so-elegant and beautiful 'close neighbours' are the White-tailed Tropicbirds, who calmly nest between the roots of the large trees, often one on either side. Roby Bresson, the resident ecologist, told us on one of the ecology walks that he has started placing large rocks around the trees to make these nests safer from wandering tourists. It is just the most exciting and humbling experience to watch a little white chick lurch out of its shell to nestle under the snowy breast of its sleek and perfectly groomed parent. Tropicbirds are never ruffled and always look like royalty. We had seen them fly effortlessly over the ocean at Praslin and La Digue, with their long white tail streamers floating like banners against the blue sky, but to have them sitting at our feet caring for their nestlings was moving in the extreme.



Ingrid van Heerden

Steve befriending one of the Giant Aldabran Tortoises*Madagascar Red Fody admiring himself in our mirror*

Further afield

Bird Island only covers an area of 250 acres and is approximately 1 kilometre long. At the northern end, clearing of invasive plant species has created an ideal open area for the congregation of millions of Sooty Terns, who come here to breed from May to October every year. We set out to explore this part of the island in the late afternoon when the heat had diminished slightly, so as to make traversing the tunnels of thick tropical growth that surround the breeding ground slightly easier. By October the Sooty Tern population is small and many of the chicks we saw were probably



Greater Frigatebirds roosting



Ingrid van Heerden

White-tailed Tropicbird with a newly-hatched chick

doomed because they were hatched too late in the season to participate in the migration. Nature can be cruel, and my heart bled for these poor birds that had no future.

However, other species, such as the resident Greater Frigatebird and migrant or vagrant Red-footed Booby, cheered us up considerably. These species were all settling down for the night in large pine trees that provide safe roosting places.

The faithful residents

Bird Island is a haven for many resident bird species, such as the cheeky Common Myna, the Sanderling, Greater Crested and Bridled Tern, Barred Ground Dove, Ruddy Turnstone,

Common Moorhen, Lesser and Crab Plover, Madagascar Red Fody, the Seychelles Blue Pigeon and the relatively recently re-introduced Seychelles Sunbird. Most meals, which are served in an open dining room (weather permitting), are shared by the doves, the brilliant Madagascar Red Fodies and the ever-present Noddies. It was a treat to relax in the lounge area and to have the female Seychelles Sunbird flit around the room catching insects for her babies, that were snugly tucked into a nest made of cotton wool and grass fibres and suspended on a nearby shrub.

Our chalets were also regularly invaded by the Noddies, the scarlet Madagascar Red Fodies (who spent ages admiring themselves in the mirror in our bedroom – with good reason!), and great big, lumbering tortoises. The latter are very long-distance swimmers or floaters from the Aldabra Islands. Currently Bird Island boasts a population of 20 Giant Aldabra Tortoises that like to shelter in the shade of the chalets and are always touchingly grateful for a bucket of water. They also like to nibble the flowers of the frangipani which blooms abundantly in the 'hotel' area.

The largest Aldabra Tortoise on the island, erroneously christened Esmeralda, has the distinction that in the 1980s he (for he is in fact a male) earned a place as “the heaviest free roaming tortoise in the world” breaking the scale at 298 kilograms during an official weighing by the Royal Zoological Society.

Nowadays, the island is also a refuge for both Green and Hawksbill Turtles, which are afforded a safe place to lay their eggs each year. Hawksbill Turtles commence their laying in October through November and 58 days later in December the first hatchlings emerge to take on the perils and challenges of the ocean. Research studies to preserve all forms of wildlife are supported and encouraged on Bird Island.

The flighty migrants and vagrants

Bird Island is credited with the highest number of first-time bird records for any island

in the Seychelles Archipelago, with a total of 112 species which range from Black-winged Pratincole to Rose-coloured Starling! The influx of rare and interesting migrants starts in October and lasts until April when these foreign birds prepare to leave the tropics for their migration to the north. Avid bird watchers may find this period particularly rewarding.

I, on the other hand, revelled in the sheer abundance of life and creation on Bird Island that thrilled me to the core. I have never witnessed such glorious profligacy except at Lambert's Bay in the heyday of the Cape Gannet.

The constant tourists

When we spoke to our fellow tourists we came to realise how special and unique Bird Island really is. The majority of the guests from all over the world and of all ages admitted that they had visited the island many times and that their stays ranged from 3 days to a whole month! "Oh yes, we come back every year for a month or longer to charge the batteries!" said more than one person and some admitted that once they discovered Bird Island they had never gone anywhere else for a holiday in 20 years.

And why would anyone who has found Paradise, with snow-white beaches, crystal-clear water, perfect diving and snorkelling, millions of birds of diverse species, land tortoises and their marine cousins, and exotic flowering trees, ever want to leave? I know that I did not, and that I would love to return as often as possible to be part of all that vibrant life which was also so utterly peaceful.

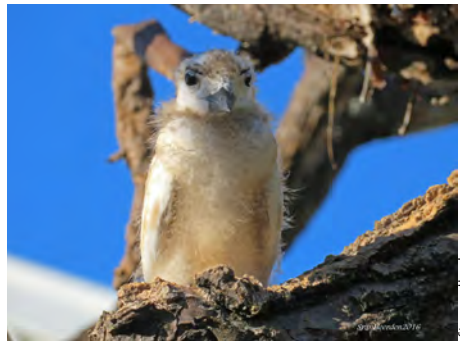
For more information regarding Bird Island visit: <https://www.birdislandseychelles.com/>.

Our visit was ably arranged at a manageable price by Seyunique (www.seyunique.co.za): + 27 (11) 453-2933 or info@seyunique.co.za. We found it most convenient to have Seyunique arrange all our accommodation (3 islands – Praslin, Mahe, Bird Island) and flights (SA–Mahe; Mahe–Praslin; Mahe–Bird Island). Avid birders would just have to arrange for bird guides on the other islands they may visit or



Ingrid van Heerden

White-tailed Tropicbird showing off its tail-streamers

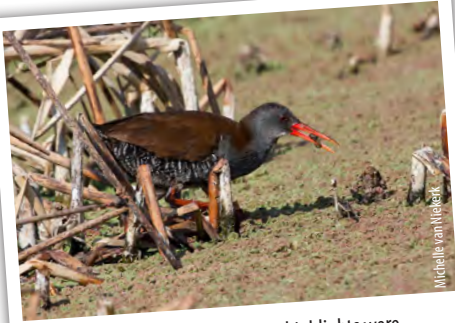


Steve van Heerden

Common White Tern chick perched precariously on a bare branch

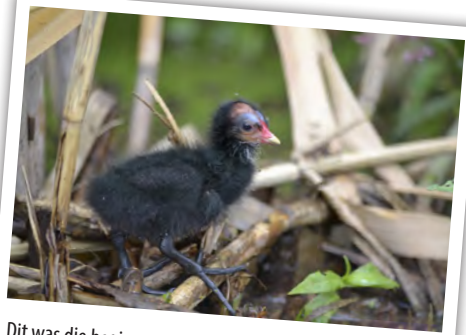
find the birds themselves.

Guidebook: *Chamberlains' Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands: Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Rodrigues, Seychelles and the Comores* by Ian Sinclair and Olivier Langrand, 3rd Edition, 2013. Random House Struik. 🐦



Michelle van Kleef

BLNG outing to Marievale, 20 Sept: highlights were wonderful views of a feeding African Rail [Grootrietiaan], Black-crowned Night Heron, Squacco Herons [Ralreier] and African Snipe [Afrikaanse Snip]. Even though the water levels were fairly high, groups of waders were present. Final count: 75 species. Marievale is indeed a very special place for birding!
 Elouise Kalmer



Dit was die begin van 'n nuwe somerseisoen en ons het Rietvlei NR besoek. Die oggend vroeg is ons al daar, nadat dit die nag lekker gereën het. Stroompies water het langs die pad afgeloop en van die waadvoëls – soos die Afrikaanse Snip [African Snipe] – was kort-kort sommer net langs die pad te sien. By een van die damme kry ons 'n donsduiken (Grootwaterhoender/Common Moorhen) wat oor die rietstoppels klouter al agter sy ma aan. Ondanks die bewolkte weer en af en toe 'n ligte reën, het ons heelwat voëls aangeteken. Ons was ook baie gelukkig om 'n Bronsvlerkdrawwertjie [Bronze-winged Courser] naby die pad te kry.
 Matthys van der Hout



Mugs, badges and other items are now available with the new BLNG logo. Visit Riana's table after the evening meetings to get re-branded.



BLNG Devon camp, 14–16 July: Henk Nel facing a freezing morning with club members. We were all astonished at the amount of birds that greeted us from telephone poles, fences and scrubbing in the grass next to the road. On our night drive we saw many African Grass-Owls [Grasuil] very close to the road – this was very exciting for all. Henk was a very entertaining and informed leader and we are all going again next year.
 Annali Swanepoel



BLNG President André Marx achieved an atlasing milestone in September: 1 000 cards – representing 444 pentads and 700 species – recorded over 10 years.



BLNG family outing, 30 September: Philip Calinikos led an outing to Colbyn Valley. Special sightings included a Black Sparrowhawk [Swartspewer] taking a dove, African Reed Warbler [Kleinrietsanger], Little Rush Warbler [Kaapse Vleisanger], a colony of Village Weavers [Bontrugwewer], and an Ayres' Hawk Eagle [Kleinjagarend] interacting with a Black-shouldered Kite [Blouvalk] and Pied Crow [Witborskraai]. The final count was 68.



Pieter Helsinga

Dis Woensdagoggend 18 Oktober en so 10 van ons senior voëlkykers daag op by Delta Park. Mens weet nooit hoe die verkeer tussen Pretoria en Johannesburg loop nie, sodoende was party van ons al sommer voor 6 uur daar. Die park is 104 ha groot en bied 'n verskeidenheid habitate. Ringnekparkiete (Rose-ringed Parakeets) het gereeld oorgevlieg of vir 'n foto sessie in 'n boom kom sit. By een van die dammetjies sien ons 'n Kuifkopvisvanger [Malachite Kingfisher] op soek na sy prooi en so bietjie verder langs die riviertjie 'n kry ons 'n Gewone Nagreier [Black-crowned Night Heron] – danksy 'n hond wat hom tussen die riete uit opgejaag het. Ons het so 60 voëls aangeteken. Dankie vir Lia Steen wat ons gids vir die oggend was.
Matthys van der Hout



Mandela Day, 18 July: BLNG members joined forces with Friends of Colbyn Valley, the ARC's Institute for Soil, Climate and Water, Department of Environmental Affairs Natural Resource Management and 35th Pretoria Sea Scouts to clean up a section of the Colbyn Wetland Nature Reserve. They also managed to spot over 40 bird species, including a Half-collared Kingfisher [Blouvisvanger].



Ons het Saterdag 10 Junie 'n wonderlike oggend saam met Philip Calinikos en die Vriende van die Colbynvallei deurgebring. Op 'n stadium besluit ek om so dwarsoor die vleg gebied deur die lang gras koers te kry. Die volgende oomblik blaas iets voor my op die grond met uitgestrekte vlerke. Ek het reg op 'n Vlei-uil [Marsh Owl] nes afgeloop en daar was 'n opgeskote kuiken in die nes! Gou 'n foto geneem en padgegee. Gelukkig het die kuiken nie probeer uitvlieg nie.

Pieter Helsinga



On Saturday 1 July, a former chairman of BirdLife South Africa, Peter Sullivan, invited the Japanese ambassador, Mr Amb Hiroki, and his doctor, Dr Makada, to join him at a BLNG ringing session at the Pretoria National Botanical Garden. In the photo they are watching A ringer Ig Wiljoen ringing a bird.

South America: Pantanal/Cerrado

Ron Searle

Following my six-day visit to Iguazu Falls in the extreme north-east of Argentina (see *Laniarius 133*), my next birding/mammal-watching destination was the world-famous Pantanal, one of the largest wetlands in the Americas, and then the adjacent Cerrado (savanna), both in the state of Mato Grosso in west-central Brazil.

Birdwatchers the world over know of the Pantanal, called 'terra de ninguém' (no-mans-land) by the locals. This vast, seasonally-flooded alluvial plain, is only 100 metres above sea-level and is home to just a few thousand people, mostly farmers, and has been the subject of numerous wildlife documentaries. My visit, at the very end of the dry season, was timed to ensure a concentration of wildlife at the scattered remaining small pools of water, where wriggling fish desperately do their best to avoid the attentions of piscivores and fierce-looking caimans. The bird that epitomises the Pantanal, more than any other, is not amongst the myriad of waterbird species to be found there, but is the unique and gorgeous Hyacinth Macaw (1 metre in length), the largest and easily the most impressive member of the parrot family. Small numbers

of this resplendent violet-blue marvel of the avian world live in semi-deciduous woodland and nut-rich palm groves of the Pantanal, and seeing a pair flap lazily across an azure sky was certainly a highlight of my trip.

But the Pantanal is also renowned for its variety of mammals. That holy grail of Neotropical animals, the powerful Jaguar, can still be found here, probably the finest area in the Americas to not only see this near-mythical cat, but experience views at very close quarters. The Pantanal also however holds an impressive selection of other large mammals including Brazilian Tapir, Giant River Otter, Collared and Giant Anteater, Crab-eating Fox and Raccoon, as well as Marsh Deer and many species of primates.

Our flight from Iguazu via São Paulo touched down in the city of Cuiabá at 18:00 and we immediately commence a 4-hour bus drive over a half-paved, half-dirt, badly corrugated road to our overnight lodge in the Pousada Curicaca Wildlife Refuge. On the drive in to the lodge we spotted a Crab-eating Raccoon, followed by a Crab-eating Fox and then, best of all, a very impressive and boldly-marked Collared Anteater.



Ron Searle

Jaguar



Ron Searle

Rhea

The following morning, long before sunrise, I was awakened by a cacophony of sound, akin to the lowing of cattle, or bath-water disappearing down a plughole. The sound was continuous, increasing and then diminishing in volume, lasting for perhaps 15 minutes or more. Enquiries at breakfast revealed the source of this weird noise as a troop of Howler Monkeys. A walk around our lodge before breakfast produced a pair of beautiful Hyacinth Macaws and a Red-billed Scythebill (25 cm in length), one of the birds listed in *100 Birds To See Before You Die*, written by David Chandler and Dominic Couzens.

Named for its remarkable curved bill, two-thirds of its body length, the Scythebill probes the holes and crevices of the trees and bamboo of tropical South American forests for a multitude of soft-bodied invertebrates such as spiders and beetle larvae. It forages by climbing up vertical stems and branches in a series of vertical hops, possessing extremely strong thigh muscles to propel itself upwards, and long claws for gripping.

An afternoon visit to a neighbouring lodge on the Rio Clara produced a number of Sun Grebes, kingfishers and hundreds of migrant Snail Kites.

Along the Transpantaneira Road itself, which includes 118 narrow wooden bridges, an overhead King Vulture, Cinereous-breasted Spinetail in the scrub, Golden Collared Macaw, Great Rufous Woodcreeper, delightful Southern Screamer, White-wedged Piculet, Rusty-fronted Tody-Flycatcher, Buff-breasted and Moustached Wrens, Mato Grosso Antbird and Golden-green Woodpecker were spotted. The waterbird spectacle was no less rewarding with large numbers of heron, egret and ibis species, Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Black-capped Donacobius, the endemic Chestnut-bellied Guan, Large-billed Tern and Pied Plover all putting in an appearance.

We then moved on to our next overnight stop, a houseboat (Jacaré) at Porto Jofre on the Rio Cuiabá. En-route birding stops kept the adrenaline flowing with fly-by sightings of a Least Bittern, a Jabiru Stork nest containing



Sandy Sutherland

Horned Sungem

Sandy Sutherland

Band-tailed Manakin

two almost fully-fledged juveniles plus an adult feeding the youngsters and, last but not least, a roosting Great Horned Owl.

A full day and a half was allocated to tracking down a Jaguar. This entailed splitting our group into three and then, using small motorised boats, moving up and down the river searching for the presence of this amazing predator. The boat drivers are in constant radio contact with each other ensuring that



Ron Searle

Rufous-tailed Jacamar

any Jaguar sighting is instantly communicated to the other dozen or so boats on the river containing eager tourists hungry for a sighting. Although we eventually tracked down a Jaguar, the beast was lying on its side, facing away from us and well concealed in riverine vegetation exhibiting very small fragments of spotted hide – a rather poor and disappointing sighting for us.

The following day we awoke undaunted by the events of the previous day and soon after breakfast one boat, occupied by yours truly and three companions, departed upstream in a second quest for a Jaguar sighting. Not 10 minutes later, we discovered two other boats anchored in the river with the occupants gazing in awe at a Jaguar which was in the water out in front of a reed-bed which lined the river bank. It was a male apparently hunting for fish, caiman or anaconda. Gradually it worked its way along the reed-bed for perhaps a hundred metres or more. At this stage a flotilla of 11 boats was present, all with cameras sporting huge zoom lenses trained on the very relaxed and unperurbed Jaguar. It then entered the reed-bed and remained invisible for another hundred metres, although its progress was easily monitored by the significant movement of the reeds through

which it was moving, before being confronted by a small inlet requiring that it swim across a few metres to reeds on the other side. We watched, mesmerised, for over an hour before it tired of our presence and its lack of hunting success and headed inland. What an incredible experience! We were extremely lucky – our companions in the other two boats which headed downstream were not as fortunate and failed to improve on their sighting.

Our next stop-over in the Piuval area of the Pantanal was a large working cattle ranch offering a number of bird attractions, such as Rhea, Red-legged Seriema, Bare-faced Curassow and Undulated Tinamou, plus the bizarre-looking mammal, the Giant Anteater, plus tiny offspring, all of which we were successful in seeing although not without some considerable patience and perseverance. A night-drive produced a Spot-tailed Nightjar, Common Potoo and a number of Pauragues (type of nightjar) to conclude our Pantanal visit.

Our final port of call in the area was Chapada dos Guimarães, a national park offering spectacular canyons, whose eroded rock formations, lofty waterfalls, and deeply-carved ravines with slivers of forest break the monotony of the endless cerrado (savanna) and campo (rolling hills). Ash-throated Crake, Burrowing Owls, Striped Owl and Little Nightjar were located in the surrounds of our lodge, whilst visits to scenic Véu de Noiva Waterfall (86 metres) and viewsite Geodifice produced Blue Finch and Grey Monjita. An area of scrub cerrado yielded a very sought-after hummer, the Horned Sungem, whilst Band-tailed and Fiery-capped Manakins in nearby Jamota Forest completed our haul.

But the highlight of this national park was not a bird sighting at all but the very fortunate appearance one evening over dinner of an extremely rare, long-legged Maned Wolf, one of the mammals for which the park was proclaimed. Sheer magic!

On this, the second leg of my trip, I recorded an additional 199 bird species of which 95 were lifers, resulting in cumulative totals of 378 and 179 species, respectively. 🐾

Namib-Naukluft, Damaraland, Etosha-toer, Augustus 2017

Pieter Heslinga

Ons jaarlikse 4x4 toer het uiteindelik aangebreek en ons kon op Woensdag 2 Augustus 2017 vanaf Pretoria in die pad val. Dit was maar weer ons ou groep, maar hierdie keer moes ons en Danie en Eleanor du Plessis agterna kom omdat ons nog die vorige week werksverpligtinge gehad het. Johan en Annanien Pretorius en drie ander gesinne kon reeds die vorige week vertrek om in die Kgalagadi 'n draai te maak en ons moes hulle op Kang kry die aand van 2 Augustus. Ons mik om in Windhoek te kom.

Ons het veilig gery en vroeegaand by Kang aangekom. Ons slaap by Ultrastop Chalets oor. Dit was lekker om die res van die groep daar te ontmoet en al hulle stories van die vorige week te hoor. Hoe die hiënas by Khidingpan groot skade aan hulle voertuie, waentjies en tente aangerig het en nog meer. Ons eet lekker saam en gaan vroeg bed toe om uitgerus te wees vir die volgende skof Windhoek toe.

Donderdag 3 Augustus: Vroeg op vir die langpad Windhoek toe. 'n Skopsuil [African Scops-Owl] en sy maat roep die hele nag – te mooi. Ons rit was voorspoedig, vinnig deur die grensposte en vroegmiddag al in Windhoek.

Ons slaap oor by Arebush Lodge.

Dis Vrydag 4 Augustus en vandag ry ons met die C26 na die Khomashooglandberge toe om te kamp by Hakos Gasteplaas, net 130 km vanaf Windhoek. Voëlkyk is hoog op die agenda en ons ry stadig deur die landskap. Was ons nie gelukkig nie toe ons net by die pad 'n pragtige Dwergvalkie [Pygmy Falcon] sien sit en kon afneem. Hakos is baie bekend vir sy Vehrenberg Sterrewag en fantastiese sterrenagte. Die eienaar, Waltraud Eppelman, dogter van oorlede Johan-Walter Straube wat baie jare terug in daardie omgewing gaan vestig het en 'n boerdery begin het, was in vervoering oor die fantastiese sterrehemel en het die sterrewag daar gevestig. Hulle het reuse teleskope en mense kom van oor die wêreld om daar te kom sterre kyk. Ongelukkig was dit vir ons volmaan en was sterrekyk nie op die agenda nie. Daarby het ons bietjie skade gehad op die pad. Die 'bearings' van een van Johan Pretorius se Echo sleepwawiele het kennis gegee en ons baie tyd verloor om dit langs die pad te herstel. Gelukkig het hulle al die onderdele en kundigheid gehad. Ons het donker op Hakos aangekom. Ons sou 'n ekstra dag daar deurbring, wat



Karoolangbeklewerik/Karoo Long-billed Lark



Woestynspekvreter/Tractrac Chat

Pieter Heslinga



Pieter Heeslinga



Groepfoto met Welwitschia

Die pragtige berge en kontoere

goed uitgewerk het, want ek en Johan kon die volgende oggend vroeg terugry Windhoek toe om vervangende spaaronderdele aan te koop.

Sondag 6 Augustus: kamp afgeslaan en vertrek vroeg Gamsberge toe, ry die pragtige Gamsbergpas en daarna Kuiseb toe. Ons stop by 'n mooi uitkykpunt en eet middagkosies. Die Kuisebrivier het plek-plek nog water. Hiervandaan mik ons Blutkoppe toe – ons sou daar slaap. 'n Fantastiese oornagplek – dis woestyn, die wêreld is plat – baie klippe, min plante, hier en daar Gamsbokke, Springbokke, Volstruise [Ostrich], Gompoue [Kori Bustard] en Woestynkorhane [Rüppell's Korhaan].

Met ons vertrek die volgende oggend kon ek ons eerste Karoolangbeklewerik [Karoo Long-billed Lark] mooi afneem. Vandag mik ons Hentiesbaai toe, maar moet eers by Walvisbaai aandoen om by Paaltjies na 'n verdwaalde Fraaiingpoot te soek. Ons was ongelukkig, dit nie gekry nie, maar wel pragtige pelikane, flaminke en selfs Damarasterretjies [Damara Tern], Swartnekdoobertjies [Black-necked Grebe] en 'n paar Steenlopers [Ruddy Turnstone]. Ons vul ons kruideniersware aan op Swakopmund, eet gou 'n laat middagete en kom donker op Henties aan. Dis koud en triestig.

Dis Dinsdag 8 Augustus en vandag begin ons 4x4 trippie in alle êrens. Vanaand wil ons by die Rhino Camp in die Ugabrivier slaap. Vroeg aan die gang, ons ry Noord. Gou eers by die 'Dooie See' en 'n ou Rooskwartsmyn

aanry. Hier kry ons besoek van 'n pragtige Woestynspekvreter [Tractrac Chat], en oppad Kaapkruis toe kry ons twee pragtige Namibewerike [Gray's Lark]. As hulle nie weggehardloop het nie sou ons hulle nie gesien het nie, perfek gekamoufleer. Ons loer gou by Kaapkruis in om na die derduisende robbe te kyk en vertrek dan na die inloep van die Ugabrivier by die see, die begin van die Skedelkuspark. Volgens beplanning wil ons al met die rivierbedding op tot by die Rhino Gemeenskapskamp ry. Dit gaan stadig en gou begin die berge nader kruip en word die rivierloop al smaller. Ja, tot dit so nat word dat ons nie verder kon nie. Die dag stap ook aan en ons besef ons moet hier uit, buite-om Rhino Camp toe. Ons ry deur pragtige vlaktes met die mooiste *Welwitschia* plante – stop om bietjie te kyk en sommer 'n groepfoto te neem. Dit was ook maar die regte besluit gewees want ons kom net voor donker by die kamp aan.

Ons bly nog 'n dag by Rhino Camp en besluit om die omgewing te verken; dalk kan ons olifante of renosters raakloop. Ons kry orals hulle mis, meeste maar oud. Ons ry weer met die rivierbedding in 'n oostelike rigting. Die berge en kontoere is pragtig. Hier en daar pragtige Maringabome. Ons ry tot by die bekende Divorce Pass maar besluit om dit nie uit te ry nie – ons toer lê nog voor en ons kan nie nou groot skades bekostig nie. Ons stap bietjie daar rond, 'n lekker uitdaging vir die avontuurlustige, iets soos Van Zylspas in die



Kaalwangkatlagters/Bare-cheeked Babblers

Kaokoland. Jare gelede het ons dit wel saam met ons vriend Willem Boshoff met twee VV Syncros uitgery. Ons ry verder, die berge word weer nou en die rivierbedding word nat – weer kon ons nie verder nie. Klim uit, rus 'n bietjie en stap rond. Daar is digte riete en ons kry vars olifantspore, ons kon hulle ruik. Net jammer ons kon nie verder ry nie – miskien maar beter. In die riete sing Kleinrietsangers [African Reed-Warbler] hulle longe uit – te pragtig. Ons draai om en vertrek terug na ons Ugabkamp toe. By mooi Anabome stop ons vir middagete. Ons kry weer 'n besoeker, hierdie keer mannetjie en wyfie Bergwagters [Mountain Wheatear], ook te pragtig. Terug by die kamp ontspan ons; dis lekker warm. Die kampopsigter het met 'n 'donkie' lekker warm water gemaak en ons kon vroegoand gaan stort en kampvuur maak. Daar kamp ook ander mense wat hulle kom voorstel. Hulle is Belgiërs en op vakansie; hulle wil Palmwag toe, maar hoe daargekom? Ons besef hulle moet saam met ons ry anders gaan hulle vir dood opgegee word. Sonder 'n GPS en T4A se kaarte het hulle nie 'n kans nie. Daar is net te veel tracks en jy moet weet watter een om te ry – en niemand op die roete om pad te vra nie.

Dis Woensdag 9 Augustus. Ons koers – Etosha, maar ons sou eers deur Damaraland ry en by Hoadakamp duskant Kamanjab oor-slaap – die Belgiërs saam met ons. Die dag sou lank word en ons wikkel vroeg. Tot my groot verbasing kom 'n Witooievaar [White Stork]



Pieter Hellinga

Klipfisante/Hartlaub's Spurfowl

op die bergtop oorkant ons kampterrein sit. Waar sou dit vandaan kom? Ek neem 'n foto. Vandag gaan ons baie noord ry. Ons kruis die Ugabrivierbedding en vertrek met 'n kloof tussen die berge uit. Nie ver gekom nie gly ons met die Cruiser en sleepwa in 'n moerasigheid, en daar sit ons. Fanie draai om en 'winch' ons gou-gou uit. Uit by die kloof word die pad verskriklik sinkplaat; ons tande skud los, maar die wêreld is pragtig. Later kruis ons die Hoabrivier. Ons ry deur pragtige landskappe, die berge styl op en styl af, verkleur van rooi na pers na geel na swart. By ou klipkrale word daar gestop. Hier het mense jare gelede gewoon en oorleef. 'n Ent verder kom ons by Gai-Ais, 'n standhoudende fontein. Ongelooflik. In die dorre wêreld 'n fontein en naaldekokers wat daar rondvlieg. 'n Woestynspekvreter wat weer kom dagsê. Baie spore van diere wat kilometers elke dag loop om te kom water drink. Ons het nie baie vër gery nie of Johan Pretorius, my swaer, gewaar 'n langbeklewerik [long-billed lark]. Dit verdwyn soos niks tussen die klippe maar gelukkig tel ek en Joelna dit op en neem 'n foto. Dit is sowaar 'n Kaokolangbeklewerik [Benguela Long-billed Lark]. Daar is min wild, hier en daar 'n Gemsbok wat vir ons weghardloop, ook Volstruise en Woestynkorhane en die pragtige Kelkiewyne [Namaqua Sandgrouse]. Op 'n plek maak ons papwiel reg, en arme Fanie se Fronrunner dakrak se dakstutte begin breek en ons moet planmaak. Ons voertuie en waentjies skud uitmekaar – dis klippe en nog maar klippe, maar pragtige wêreld. Ongeskonde. Antonette

van ons groep merk op: "Die Here se sakkie klippe het hier uitgeloop." Ons glimlag en stem saam. Langs die twee-spoor paadjie kry ons 'n pragtige boom, wat deur die jare die droogte en harde landskap deurstaan het.

Net voor sonder bereik ons die afdraai Palmwag toe. Die Belgiërs is baie dankbaar dat hulle kon saamry en groet ons hartlik. Nou nog 80 km verder sinkplaat pad Hoadakamp toe, in die Grootberge. Ons kom donker daaraan, slaan kamp op, maak vuur en eet lekker. Wat 'n dag, onvergeetlik!

Vrydag 11 Augustus en ons staan rustig op – Kamanjab en dan Etosha is nie vër nie. Elkeen werskaf by sy voertuig: 'n bracket' wat afgebreek het, pap wiele, bedrading van yskassies wat ingegee het, Fanie se dakrak moes herstel word, ens. Ons vertrek so 10 uur en gaan by Kamanjab aan vir brandstof en kruideniersware. Vannag slaap ons by die Roadside Gemeenskapskamp net by die westelike Galtonhek van die Etosha Wildtuin. Ons is vroeg daar en slaan kamp op tussen die rotse. 'n Klompie Kaalwangkatlagters [Bare-cheeked Babbler] kom groet ons. Later die middag roep die kampopsigter ons – daar is leeus by 'n watergat. Te mooi. Hou lekker kampvuur en gaan vroeg inkrui. Dis nie koud nie.

Die volgende oggend pak ons op; ons sien baie uit na die Etosha deel van ons toer. Op 'n stadium roep Fanie: "Johan kyk daardie duiwe op die rotse!" Johan kyk en roep my:

dis nie duiwe nie, dis Klipfisante [Hartlaub's Spurfwal], 'lifers' vir ons. Ons volg hulle en sien dat hulle gaan water drink by 'n drinkplek net agter die rotse. Later kom Bloupenspapegaai [Rüppell's Parrot], Rooiwangparkiete [Rosy-faced Lovebirds] en Rooirugstreepkoppies [Golden-breasted Bunting] ook water drink; ons neem mooi foto's en vertrek later. By die Galton ingangshek boek ons in: ons sou ses dae in die park deurbring; slaap drie nagte in Okaukuejo en drie nagte in Namutoni. Dis maar stil, hier en daar 'n bok, ook min voëls. Ons was gelukkig om te sien hoe 'n Gebande Sperwer [Shikra] Koringvoëlneeste [White-browed Sparrow-Weaver] plunder. By Olifantsrus stop ons en peusel aan 'n middagete; dis warm. Daar is 'n watergat met 'n pragtige 'boardwalk' en 'hide'. Blouwildebeeste, koedoes en sebras kom een na die ander water drink. En kan jy nou meer, daar's ook 'n Grootlangtoon [African Jacana] by die water, maar nie eers 'n grassie of 'n plantjie nie. Ons wou hier kamp maar dit was reeds vol toe Johan bespreek het. Dit was nie laat nie toe ons in Okaukuejo aankom – genoeg tyd om kamp op te slaan. Pieter en Marietjie van Driel is al daar. Hulle het tot dusver hulle eie ding gedoen en sou net die Etosha deel van ons vakansie met ons saamdoen en dan ook saam terugry huistoe. Lekker kampplekke. Daar is goeie ablusiefasiliteite en ons kon warm stort en kampvuur hou. 'n Hele aantal Overlander trokke stoom ook in. Die nag hoor ons hiënas



Bloupenspapegaai/Rüppell's Parrots



Pieter Hestlinga

Dubbelbanddrawwertjies/Double-banded Coursers

en jakkalse, sommer naby, keer die asblikke om om iets te aas.

Sondag 13 Augustus: ons is rustig, party bly in die kamp en ander ry 'n paar draaie. Daar is allerhande paadjies om te ry. Watergate, lees, bokke, en vöels. Ons kry pragtige Kelkiewyne, Witvlerkkorhane [Northern Black Korhaan], Dubbelbanddrawwertjies [Double-banded Courser], Gompoue, selfs 'n Roofarend [Tawny Eagle], op die pad. En verskeie bruin voëltjies, onder andere Grysruglewerikke [Grey-backed Sparrowlark], Rooikoplewerikke [Red-capped Lark], Pienkbeklewerikke [Pink-billed Lark], Sabotalewerikke [Sabota Lark], Hoëveldklappertjies [Eastern Clapper Lark], Grootmossies [Great Sparrow] en Maricovlieëvangers [Marico Flycatcher] en die mooiste Grootrooivalk [Greater Kestrel]. Okaukuejo het 'n wonderlike watergat en mens kan maar net daar gaan sit om die wild te sien water drink, een na die ander. Mooi troppe olifante kom verby, kameelperde, gemsbokke, sebras, maar ook vlakvarke en honderde duiwe. Dwergvalkies kom sit in 'n boom by ons tent. Ag, ons vakansie is lekker maar besig om stil-tetjies verby te glip. Ons het nog 'n dag vir ontspanning en ons neem meer tyd om die bruin voëltjies op te soek en te identifiseer en dan moet ons weer begin oppak. Môre vertrek ons Namutoni toe, maar ons wil eers by Halali aangaan. Daar is Damara-rooibekneushoringvoëls [Damara Hornbill] en Perskakelaars [Violet

Wood-Hoopoe] wat ons nog nie gesien het nie.

Dinsdag 15 Augustus: kamp opslaan en ry. Dis lekker, die pad maar grof hier en daar maar dan weer beter. By Halali aangekom, is party van ons dadelik eers watergat toe om te sien wat daar te sien is. En kan jy glo, terwyl ons nog soontoe loop, sien Marina die gesogte Damara-rooibekneushoringvoël. Is dit hy of die gewone Rooibek [Red-billed Hornbill]. Nee, dis hy – kyk sy donker oog, die gewone Rooibekneushoring het 'n geel oog – fantasties, ons is baie bly, nog 'n 'lifer'. Daar is sproeiers wat 'n grasperk mooi groen hou, en sommer net daar kry ons die Perskakelaars wat in die bome goggas soek. Nog 'n 'lifer', ons doel bereik. Die watergat het nie baie opgelewer nie, maar dit was reeds middagete en goed warm. Ons eet heerlik by die restaurant en ry verder Namutoni toe. Kamp opslaan, ons laaste keer, darem drie nagte hier. Die kampterrein is mooi, lekker bome en grasperke hier en daar. 'n Hele paar Overlanders stroom ook in. Ons gaan gou stort om nog warm water te kry en hou lekker kampvuur. Die mense is maar moeg en gaan gou inkruip.

Woensdag 16 Augustus: nou moet ons alles inpas wat ons nog wil sien en doen. Party bly in die kamp. Ons en Johan hulle gaan ry 'n draai, eers noord na Andoni toe en dan via Fischerspan terug kamp toe – die hele dag uit. Dit was lekker. Ons kry Dubbelbandsandpatryse [Double-banded Sandgrouse] langs die pad en ook Swaelstertbyvreters [Swallow-tailed



Grootrooivalk/Greater Kestrel



Pieter Hellinga

Damara Rooibekneushoringvoel/Damara Hornbill



Pieter Hellinga

Dubbelsbandsandpatryse/Double-banded Sandgrouse

Bee-eater], Bloukraanvoëls [Blue Crane] – kan jy glo – en later mooi Blouvalke [Black-shouldered Kite] en 'n Bateleur in die lug. By Twee Palms aan die kant van Fisher's Pan vertel mense ons van 'n paar jagluipeerds wat besig is om aan 'n vangs te eet. Ons sien hulle maar dis baie vër en ons ry maar terug kamp toe. Die volgende dag is ons laaste, en elkeen wil maar sy eie ding doen. Sommige gaan weer na die jagluipeerds soek. Ons, Johan en Marina-hulle wil na Swartwangkatlagters [Black-faced Babbler] gaan soek wat by die Dikdik omrit te siene is. Ons ry twee keer om en om. Johan dink hy sien een vlieg, maar ons het niks om te wys nie. Maar daar is pragtige Dikdikbökkies, somer 'n hele paar – alles die moeite werd. Die middag ry ek en Joelna weer om na die katlagters te soek, maar puur verniet... dan is dit maar so ☺. Ons kampvuur brand vroeg en ons kuier lekker die aand met jakkalse en hiënas wat in die donker huil.

So breek die dag aan dat ons moet terugdraai huistoe: Vrydag 18 Augustus. Ons vertrek via Tsumeb, Otavi, Otjiwarongo, na Windhoek toe. Slaap weer by Arresbush Lodge. Vanaand gaan ons by Joe's Beer House eet en bier drink. 'n Taxi kom haal ons en bring ons terug. Johan en Annanien bly agter om bietjie by sy kinders wat in Windhoek woon te kuier en verder aan sy waentjie herstelwerk te doen. Sy waentjie het gelukkig tot hier gehou. Dis Saterdag en ons eet ontbyt en vertrek. Weer oor Gobabis, dan deur die grense en dan tot by Kang. Slaap weer by die Kang Ultrastop Chalets. Dit word donker



Dikdikbökkie

voor ons by Kang aankom. Ons bespreek vir aandete by die restaurant en eet lekker. Bedtoe, môre die laaste skof.

Sondag 20 Augustus: ons is vroeg op en ry al skuins voor dit lig word. Vorder goed en gooi brandstof in op Jwaneng. Langs die pad baie Witbors- en Swartkraaie [Pied & Cape Crow] en selfs 'n Bleeksingvalk [Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk] te sien. Teen middagete deur die grens by Skilpadnek, Zeerust en teen 4 uur terug in Pretoria. Sommige van ons eet gou iets saam by die Petroport, naby Zambezi, en ander stoot maar aan huistoe. Wat 'n wonderlike vakansie. 'n Vakansie wat mens nie alleen kan aandurf op die wyse wat ons dit gedoen het nie. Baie gesien: die natuur, diere, ongeveer 170 spesies voëls. Nie sonder mekaar se lekker geselskap en wonderlike ondersteuning nie. Baie dankie Johan en Annanien Pretorius vir al hulle reëlings en beplanning, en dan Fanie en Antonette Griesel – daar is niks wat Fanie nie kan regmaak nie, Marina Venter wat die toer sonder haar geliefde man Jan wat haar pas ontval het deurgesien het, en Johanna wat saam gery het, ons lewensmaatjies Danie en Eleanor du Plessis, ook Pieter en Marietjie van Driel wat al baie jare saamry en, laaste maar nie die minste nie, my vrou Joelna vir al jou ondersteuning en harde werk, en bo alles jou entoesiasme om saam voëltjies te kyk en te identifiseer. Ons het sewe 'lifers' om op te skryf en raak-raak nou aan ons 650 doelwit – nog vër om te gaan. 🐾

Chasing rarities

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

I remember many years ago, when Kathrin and I went birding in Mkuze for the first time. We arrived sometime toward the second or third week of September, had booked into a chalet the evening before and had arranged for a guide to take us on a walk. It turned out that this was one of the more knowledgeable guides who had excellent birding skills. We experienced a most enjoyable guided early-morning walk, through damp grass, breathing the crisp fresh early-morning air, and spotting a great variety of mammals in the form of various antelope, jackals, white rhino in the distance and giraffe; but also a sizeable list of birds.

When returning to camp, we were confronted by a group of very professional-looking people: large and pricey SUVs in the background and around their necks the most expensive binoculars – that made us look like bare amateurs with our modest Bushnell 10x50 – and cameras that resembled mini-rocket launchers. These people interrogated our guide as to whether this-and-that bird had already arrived. “Not yet,” answered the guide, soliciting moans of despair from the group. The next four or five bird names were rattled off in succession, with the same response from our guide: regrettably these birds had not yet been spotted. The moans increased in intensity and volume: “we’ve come here from the Alberton Bird Club, ESPECIALLY TO SEE THESE BIRDS!” Sigh! The spokesperson turned condescendingly to us: “are you members of a bird club?” “No,” I replied, “and if I see you, stressed out of your mind because you can’t tick the birds on your wish-list, frankly, I don’t want to be a member of your bird club – we’re here for the fun and relaxation of taking a guided bird-walk, not to stress ourselves out to HAVE to see certain birds.” By a sheer miracle, we survived the looks they gave us.

Many years have passed since. We still derive enormous pleasure and contentment from watching birds, just ordinary birds, on a walk, or the numerous birds that come to the water feature cum bird-bath in our garden. We have in the past years planned many a vacation around exploring new sites and areas in our country, because they meant new birding destinations for us, and thereby also included the promise of seeing birds we had not yet spotted. Building a bird-list forces one to travel, and that in itself can be a pleasurable experience. We would never have seen such wonderful new places – quaint villages and such beautiful natural surroundings and environments – had we not been looking for some new birds. Still, this can be relaxing and add to resting spirit and soul, away from the hustle and bustle.

Chasing rarities may be somewhat different. The SA Rare Bird Net explodes with bold headlines: a rare vagrant, a national rarity never spotted before and new for the sub-region. Facebook is filled with reports of meetings which had to be cancelled at short notice “because a sudden emergency cropped up...” The airlines and car-rental companies



Spotted Crane/Gevlekte Riethaan at Marievale

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

rub their hands with delight. After some frantic travelling, some reports of new 'lifers' are splashed over social media. "Is that synonymous with a pleasurable relaxing hobby?" I ask myself. I leave the answer to that to my learned readership.

Yes, I have made myself guilty on a few occasions of this 'delinquent' behaviour. I remember Marievale at the beginning of 2016: Spotted-Crake-fever [Gevlekte Riethaan] reverberated throughout Southern Africa. I also jumped into the car with Dieter Lilje, a good friend and fellow-birder, and after not spotting the bird mid-week, we returned on Saturday to find an enormous crowd of people with similar intentions. It was really great to spot the bird 'second-time-round' and to add it to the list of lifers. *Roberts VII* names the status as "rare vagrant" and "uncommon to rare Palaearctic migrant". And how can I forget the comments and photos on facebook! But was this a nice relaxing bird-outing? We 'chased' after this rarity.

Different was the BLNG-arranged camp by the West Rand SANParks Honorary Rangers to Pafuri in the Kruger National Park. Although we got up extremely early on some days and went out at dusk to get a good sighting of the Pennant-winged Nightjar [Wimpelvlernaguil], we enjoyed the evening meals with their chatter and relaxation. We also spotted

Arnott's Chat [Bontpiek] with some help from our leader. But the memory of the Pennant-winged Nightjar sighting will be with us for a long time – how at dusk the male bird came slowly flying down, almost rhythmically, with its long pennants flowing behind its wings in the darkening sky, until it landed with much ado next to the female on the ground. A fantastic sighting, although not a 'rarity' as such.

Different again was the Gull-billed Tern [Oostelike Sterretjie] sighting at Borakalalo National Park on 16 December 2016. The excitement on SA Rare Bird Net (SARBN) when the Gull-billed Tern was reported was obvious. I am led to believe that this was the first time that this bird had been seen at Borakalalo and for South Africa it was a rarity. The level of the Klipvoor Dam in Borakalalo had dropped due to the drought and this rarity was reportedly roosting on an island which had developed as a result.

Dave Sole and I decided to do the modest 2-hour drive to try to spot this rarity. When we arrived at the gate of the national park, we were told by some birders leaving that it had left the roost and was nowhere to be seen. Dave and I nonetheless went to the spot, walked down the 120 meters of shoreline which the retreating water had exposed, and found several groups of hopeful birders. There were White-winged Terns [Witvlernsterretjie]



Spotted Crake twitchers at Marievale

Neilhard Graf von Dürdheim

by the hundreds but no Gull-billed Tern. We agreed with one of the other groups that they would travel along the shoreline and if they found the bird would phone us; we would stay and if it arrived we would phone them. Thirty minutes later my phone went... We dashed into the vehicle and drove towards the dam wall. The friendly group pointed out a whitish bird standing on the shoreline across the water on the other side of the dam, probably 1.5 km away. We set up the spotting scopes but all we could see was a 'whitish bird' very far away. We could not get a positive ID. We stood and waited for some considerable time. I was still bent over the spotting scope, when I saw the bird taking off and flying with slow wing-beats along the shoreline. I shouted to Dave who reached for his binoculars. The Gull-billed Tern was a lot larger than the White-winged Terns, and was bulkier and had a much slower wing-beat; it also did not dip-dip on the water as frequently as the White-winged Terns did, and it looked almost completely white at a distance. It ended up flying along the shoreline, after some 15 minutes passing us at no more than 20 metres. What a stunning sighting! According to *Roberts VII* its status is "uncommon vagrant". All the way, I was too scared to let go of the scope for fear of losing it out of sight – needless to say, I never reached for the camera so no pictures were taken. In the end, Dave named it 'The Gullible Tern'. The modest two-hour drive did not stop us from getting out there quickly to 'chase' after this rarity.

Next were the Striped Crake and River Warbler, on 17 March 2017. Again, SARBN informed us of yet another rarity – this time Striped Crake [Gestreepte Riethaan] on the Zaagkuildrift Road. Reports of a single bird as well as a pair reached us. Again Dave and I jumped in the car – this time very early-morning, as we also wanted to try for River Warbler [Sprinkaansanger] and Thrush Nightingale [Lysternagtegaal]. The week before we had gotten a very brief glimpse of the Thrush Nightingale, but we wanted to get a better sighting.

First stop: River Warbler. We got to the correct spot and heard a number of these birds calling their characteristic insect-like 'zzzzz' call, but did not get to see them, even though we stuck our heads virtually into the trees/shrubs/vegetation they were calling from. Very frustrating. I took out my PDA and played the call. No success either. When walking back to the road, we observed other birders, who admonished me for having played the call. In the end one of them also played a call, albeit a different one, and one River Warbler popped up in the shrubbery. I got a very quick look at it through the binoculars, observing its features and also the very prominent tail, somewhat rounded at the tip. Bingo!

After breakfast sandwiches and coffee, we drove on in the direction of Kgomo-Kgomo. There is a road branching off to the left, which some birders refer to as 'Crake Road'. We turned onto that road. It was filled with sizeable water-puddles covering the width of the road. Next to this road there is a wetland, covered with grasses and scrub vegetation. We proceeded slowly and in the end our patience paid off and we got to see a single Striped Crake. According to *Roberts VII* it is a "rare vagrant" and "intra-Africa migrant". Again we



Heinhard Graf von Dürckheim

Malagasy Pond-Heron/Madagaskar-ralreier, Mziki, inside Phinda Reserve

rejoiced (except that Dave this time omitted to 'name' this bird). Did we again 'chase' after a rarity? But again it was not too far from home.

SA Rare Bird Net again increased our heartbeats and stress levels: "South Africa's first photographically confirmed MALAGASY POND-HERON" [Madagaskar-ralreier] had been sighted at Mziki within the Phinda Reserve. Hmm. This was a considerably longer trip than before. After talking to some of my 'birding-buddies' (Dave had already seen it in Mozambique), Theuns Botha and I decided to 'take a shot at it'. But there were some obstacles: Phinda is a private reserve and one is not allowed to drive there in your own vehicle. You have to book a game-drive at R600 per person. Trevor Hardaker kindly supplied some birders' details who had already booked a game-drive and who still had space on the vehicle. After some phone calls and emails, some extremely kind birders shuffled some of their guests around and freed two spaces for us on Sunday 16 July, on the game-drive booked by Penny de Vries, a very kind birder hailing from Durban.

Theuns and I left Pretoria at 04:30 on Sunday morning and with Theuns's Formula 1 driving skills (and speed); we reached Phinda at 11:00. We produced the permit Penny had emailed us, and were allowed in for the 12 kilometre drive to Mziki. We did some birding on the way and ticked a number of species. Getting to Mziki, we found signboards outside: "No entry, birders please park here" (meaning outside). We had lunch and met the other five birders, including the kind Penny de Vries.

At 14:30 our game-drive vehicle departed with one of the guides, as well as Francois, one of the owners of that section, as game drives may only enter an area when an owner is present and grants access. After a short game drive spotting some of the common game (blue wildebeest, giraffe, impala), we reached a dam and stopped on the wall. Eight pairs of binoculars were shaking slightly as we scanned the dam's shoreline. Nothing.

The guide drove on, off the dam wall and down towards a section of the dam which is covered in reed-beds and other vegetation. After some considerable time of scanning the entire shoreline, Francois spotted the Malagasy Pond-Heron, which, after the game-drive vehicle moved closer, flew off and landed not too far away. Now that we knew where it was, the guide carefully drove there and we were treated to a good sighting of this magnificent rarity. Binoculars were shaking and cameras were clicking out a staccato. At first, I had slight difficulties keeping my camera still, but as the bird looked at ease, I relaxed. The bird flew off again to the other side of the dam and this time the vehicle could park on the dam wall, closer than the first sighting. We all got some good pictures of the bird, which was still there when we departed about half an hour later. Wow! What a magnificent sighting of such a Mega-Tick!

We then went on a game-drive ticking some common birds, viewing some mammals and thereafter stopping for the obligatory drinks and snacks. Penny had a well-deserved gin and tonic. Without her kindness in making space for us on 'her' game-drive vehicle, we might have missed out on this mega-sighting.

At 17:15 Theuns and I departed for our guesthouse in Hluhluwe, some 25 km down the road, to enjoy a home-cooked dinner and a celebratory bottle of really good red wine (which I had brought for 'just in case').

The next day we departed for Pretoria, which we reached in the afternoon, after driving 1 128 km, being 'half-broke', but happy.

The Malagasy Pond-Heron is probably one of the rarest birds I have seen, next to some special birds and rarities we have seen over the years. Did we 'chase' after this rarity? Most certainly! Was it enjoyable? Yes! Was it relaxing? I believe not! But I don't plan to become depressed if I 'dip' on a rarity I was chasing. As a registered field-guide I realise: in nature, there is no guarantee what you will see. 🦋

Voëls in die Bybel

Wanda du Plooy

Die mense van die ou tyd was goeie waarnemers! (of was hulle nie?) Kom ons kyk bietjie wat het hulle alles oor die arend gesê: Deut 32:11-12 lui: "Soos 'n arend wat sy kleintjies uit die nes uitskop, oor hulle fladder en hulle vang op sy vlerke wat hy oopsprei, soos 'n arend wat sy kuikens op sy vlerke dra, so het die Here net Hy alleen sy volk gelei;"

Die Here was die eerste natuurbewaarder! Hy het deur Moses en Aäron die volk verbied om sekere voëls te eet. Dit is somer 'n lang lys! Lev 11:13-18 (ook Deut 14:12-18) sê: "In die geval van diere met vlerke is die volgende soorte verbode en hulle mag dus nie geëet word nie: arende, lammervangers en visarende; aasvoëls en valksorte; al die kraaisoorte; volstruise, nagvalke, seemeeue en alle soorte roofvoëls; uile, visvangers, ibisse, flaminke, pelikane, swane, ooievaars, al die reiersoorte, hoep-hoepe en vlermuise (al het dit nie vere nie!)"

Daar is 'n aanhaling in Jeremia 17:11 oor die fisant (hier was Jeremia nie reg nie! Of was hy?): "n Fisant wat broei op eiers wat hy nie gelê het nie, dit is die mens wat op oneerlike wyse ryk word." (Parasitering?)

Job vra 'n vraag oor die ibis in Job 38:36,

"Wie gee verstand aan die ibis om teen die vloed te waarsku..." (geldige vraag?) En dan die kraai: Job 39:3 "Wie gee vir 'n kraai die kos wat hy nodig het wanneer sy kleintjies om hulp roep na God."

Job se waarnemings oor die gedrag van die volstruis: "Die vlerke van die volstruis klap vrolik net soos die van die ooievaar en die valk, maar sy lê haar eiers op die grond en broei hulle uit op die sand. Sy dink nie daaraan dat hulle stukkend getrap kan word nie, dat wilde diere haar eiers kan breek nie. Sy maak haar kuikens hard groot, asof hulle nie haar eie is nie; as haar moeite dan tevergeefs was, skrik dit haar nie af nie. God het nie vir haar wysheid gegee nie, sy het geen verstand nie, maar wanneer sy met vlerk omhoog hardloop, lag sy die perd en sy ruiters uit." (Job 39:16-21) Vraag: kan 'n volstruis vinniger as 'n perd hardloop?

In Job 39:30-33 beskryf hy die aasvoël se gedrag: "Is dit op jou bevel dat 'n aasvoël hoog vlieg en sy nes in die hoogte gaan bou? Hy woon op die rotse, by bly daar, op die spits en die kranse. Van daar af soek sy oë na kos, van ver af sien hy dit. Sy kuikens vreet bloederige vleis, en waar iets doodgaan, is hy."

Goeie waarnemings? Ek dink so! 🦋



Dronie van Rensburg

Volgens Ou Testamentiese wette mag die volstruis nie geëet word nie!

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 30 September 2017

Compiled by André Marx

The winter period is generally a quieter time for rarity reports; however, a few good records surfaced over the last few months. Slaty Egrets always attract a great deal of interest and one bird showed up at Marievale again, where it is seen from time to time. This is a species that is being seen with reduced frequency compared to years gone by when it was seen almost annually. It is interesting to note that species such as Wire-tailed Swallow and Dark-capped Yellow Warbler continue to be recorded at new localities and may slowly be colonising the region. Spring brought the first few migrants and wader records to the fore. Thank you to all the regular contributors of reports. Please send any interesting and out-of-range records together with a photo if possible to the address given below. Members should note that these regional reports are referenced and used in publications such as Roberts Birds of Southern Africa, which is currently being revised, so all properly documented records are valuable.

National rarities / Nasionale rariteite

Egret, Slaty / Reier, Rooikeel-

One bird was at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 9 Aug 2017 (PS), and was still being seen here a month later. *This is one of the few localities in the region where this species can occasionally be seen.*

Another bird was found once again at Walkhaven Dog Park in Muldersdrift, 5 Sep 2017 (GE).

Regional rarities / Streeksrariteite

Pratincole, Collared / Sprinkaanvoël, Rooivlerk-

A single bird was at Mkhombo Dam, 5 Jul 2017 (TG).

Swallow, Wire-tailed / Swael, Draadstert-

A pair of birds were at Rooiwal Wastewater Treatment Plant, north of Pretoria, 11 Jun 2017 (RG), and were still occasionally being reported at this locality in late Sep 2017. *A very uncommon species in the region and considerably further south and closer to the Highveld than other known records.*

Vulture, Lappet-faced / Aasvoël, Swart-

One bird was seen at the vulture restaurant at VulPro near Hartbeespoort Dam, 21 Jun 2017 (KW).

Another bird was found near Boons, just off the N14 alongside a cow carcass, in Pentad 2610_2715, 29 Jul 2017 (MJ). *This species is a vagrant to the region.*



KerniWalter

Lappet-faced Vulture/Swartaasvoël, VulPro

Elienne Marais



Wire-tailed Swallow/Draadstertswaal at Rooiwal

**Other interesting observations /
Ander interessante waarnemings**

Bunting, Lark-like / Streepkoppie, Vaal-

One bird was in Pentad 2530_2720, northeast of Rustenburg, 3 Jun 2017 (MB, AF).

Cuckoo, Red-chested / Piet-my-vrou

A bird photographed at Moreleta Kloof, Pretoria, showed the features of an adult female and in all probability was an over-wintering bird, 27 Jul 2017 (RSt).

Grebe, Black-necked / Dobbertjie, Swartnek-

Two birds were at a dam at Waterfall Estate in Midrand, a first record at this locality, 5 Aug 2017 (RSe).

Kingfisher, Grey-headed / Visvanger, Gryskop-

One bird was seen near Brits, 15 Apr 2017,

Ron Searle



Black-necked Grebe/Swartnekdobbertjie, Waterfall Estate, Midrand

where it is seldom observed (JJ).

Lark, Pink-billed / Lewerik, Pienkbek-

During a Wits Bird Club outing west of Johannesburg, in Pentad 2530_2720 to the north-east of Rustenburg, several adult birds numbering 20+ in total were found, 17 Jun 2017 (MB).

Osprey / Visvalk

An over-wintering bird was at Rietvlei Dam in Pentad 2545_2820 on 11 Jun 2017 (BvdM).

One bird was at Roodeplaat Dam, 7 Sep 2017 (AP).

Pipit, Yellow-breasted / Koester, Geelbors-

At least two birds were found on a koppie near Greylingstad, 17 Jun 2017 (MJ, NP).

Plover, White-fronted / Strandkiewiet, Vaal-

A single bird was found at the western end of Mkhombo Dam, 16 Sep 2017 (LvD).

Sandgrouse, Namaqua / Kelkiewyn

A single bird was seen in the company of several Yellow-throated Sandgrouse in Pentad 2530_2720 near Lekgalong, north-east of Rustenburg on 3 Jun 2017 (MB, AF).



Anthony Paton

Osprey/Visvalk, Roodeplaat Dam

Pieter Heslinga



Dark-capped Yellow Warbler/Geelsanger, Moreleta Kloof, Pretoria

Lia Steen



Lesser Masked Weaver/Kleingeelvink, Florida

A few birds were heard and then seen in Pentads 2605_2710 and 2605_2705, south of Boons, 10 Jul 2017 (BP). *This species appears to be a winter visitor to the west of the greater Gauteng region.*

Thick-knee, Water / Dikkop, Water-

Two birds were heard at Buffelsdrift Conservancy, north-east of Pretoria, 22 Sep 2017 (JK, TG). *This is an uncommon bird in the region.*

Vulture, White-backed / Aasvoël, Witrug-

A record of one bird at Vaalpark in Sasolburg, northern Free State, is very unusual so far south in the region, 30 May 2017 (JP).

Wagtails, Western Yellow / Kwikkie, Geel-

Two birds were at Vaalkop Dam on 18 Jul 2017 (SvdW). *This is an unusual record for mid-winter.*

Warbler, Dark-capped Yellow / Sanger, Geel-

One bird was seen and photographed at Moreleta Kloof, Pretoria, 26 Jun 2017 (PH).

Another sighting was of one bird at Rooiwal in Pentad 2530_2810, north of Pretoria, 2 Jul 2017 (DT).

Weaver, Lesser Masked / Vink, Kleingeel-

At least two male birds in breeding plumage were seen and photographed in a Florida garden, 31 Aug 2017 (LS). *This is a very unusual sighting as this species is generally not known in the Johannesburg region.*

Observers / Waarnemers

- Andy Featherstone (AF)
- Anthony Paton (AP)
- Bennie van der Merwe (BvdM)
- Bruce Paterson (BP)
- Duard Teichert (DT)
- Geoff Lockwood (GL)
- Grant Egen (GE)
- Jan Putter (JP)
- Jannie Jansen (JJ)
- John Kinghorn (JK)
- Kerri Wolter (KW)
- Lia Steen (LS)
- Lisl van Deventer (LvD)
- Martin Benade (MB)
- Michael Johnson (MJ)
- Niall Perrins (NP)
- Paulo Slaviero (PS)
- Pieter Heslinga (PH)
- Riana Steenekamp (RSt)
- Rihann Geysler (RG)
- Ron Searle (RSe)
- Sarel van der Westhuizen (SvdW)
- 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 083 411-7674. 🐦

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					
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
(R400/p/night)**



PHOTOGRAPHY



BIRDING



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

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

BIRDERS