



Laniarius

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BirdLife Northern Gauteng
BirdLife Gauteng-Noord



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Kennisgewing aan bydraers

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Credits

Front cover: Southern White-faced Owl, by Clive Kaplan

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

From the Editor

If variety is the spice of life, then this issue of *Laniarius* is a chai latte, Durban bunny chow of a compilation (there are probably better analogies – but I am almost on deadline here).

Between the birds and the birding there is history, photography, a few snippets of poetry, some child-rearing advice, a dash of linguistics... The locations range from islands to deserts, the sub-Antarctic to the Tropics, the birds from Hadedas to hummingbirds, and our contributors are both young and old(er), new members and vintage BLNGers (and deserve all of our heartfelt thanks and appreciation).

In what is possibly a first for *Laniarius*, we also have a word-search to help you pass the time until the migrants return (thanks to the talents of Laura Jordaan – I am in awe of how one even begins to construct one of these). It could also provide a completely inadequate way to practise finding a pitta or finfoot. (For an additional word-search, see if you can find the four articles in this issue that mention the word 'Transvaal!')

July, the dead-end of winter, is not my favourite time of year, but some very special 'special days' are celebrated in our coldest months – World Environment Day, World Oceans Day, Youth Day and Mandela Day. Mandela Day asks the question: 'can you do something selfless to make the world a better place?' – firstly with your time, and then, if necessary or possible, with your money. In the spirit of 18 July, there are no less than five opportunities presented or mentioned in this

issue to contribute to projects that can make a legacy-scale difference to the conservation of birds and their habitats: mouse-free Marion, the Nyoka Ridge vulture restaurant, the BLSA White-winged Flufftail monitoring project, Champions of the Flyway, and SABAP. Contribute in any way you can – even if only by spreading the word, via social media or even something a bit more old-school, like your next braai or dinner-party conversation.

The world (or at least the media and media-consuming public) seems to have woken up rather suddenly this year to the already well-documented perils of plastic pollution (and production). So it is also worth mentioning that we are reaching the end of Plastic-Free July (www.plasticfreejuly.org), which is not intended as a single month of plastic prohibition, but as a trial run for a new, possibly radical, more planet-friendly way of life. And, in case you didn't already know this, please note that "straws suck" (single-use, disposable drinking straws) – various companies, municipalities and even national governments around the world are starting to phase out or ban their use.

To end on a lighter note, BLNG has some really exciting outings and expeditions planned for the coming spring and summer – hopefully we will all get to experience these, if not first-hand, then via your stories and photographs in upcoming issues.

Till November then...

Tamsyn

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

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

From the Chair



Winter birding can be very exciting and rewarding. We normally think of winter as a dull time for birding because the summer migrants, like the swallows, warblers, waders, cuckoos and many raptor species, have migrated north, but we also have a number of immigrants and visitors to our area and our gardens that can only be seen during our winter months.

In many ways it is also much easier to see birds in winter, when the trees are bare and the grass is shorter – therefore less hiding places for the birds. The birds also tend to form more 'bird parties' (mixed-species foraging/feeding flocks, particularly of insectivorous birds), in which it is possible to see a variety of different species together. Some birds are also very vocal at the moment – for example, Amethyst and White-bellied Sunbirds.

The winter immigrants to our area and our gardens include Fairy Flycatcher, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Pearl-breasted Swallow, Short-toed and Sentinel Rock Thrush. In winter the Blue Cranes move into the Devon area in great numbers and Marsh Owls hunting over the grassland areas can be seen in the mornings. For this reason, a winter outing to Devon is always included on our programme.

Winter is also a great time to 'sharpen the saw' regarding our birding knowledge and BLNG members made good use of the opportunities in our winter programme to do so, with both the bird ID course and SABAP and BirdLasser training being very well attended.

In our one-day bird ID course held earlier this month, Geoff Lockwood shared his experience and expertise with us, and emphasised the importance of really getting to know our birds, their behaviour, the habitats they prefer, as well as their songs. I will never look at a cisticola in the same way again!

At the SABAP and BirdLasser training Ernst Retief from BirdLife South Africa explained and de-mystified bird atlasing and how we as individual birders can use our hobby and skills to contribute to the conservation of our birds. Henk Nel presented the newest features of the BirdLasser app and assisted members who had questions about this wonderful tool.

As a club with bird conservation as one of its goals and activities, BLNG would like to see increased numbers of members participating in atlasing and we are currently looking at ways of including atlas-specific events in our programme.

Once again, a warm welcome to all the new members of the club. We invite you to attend as many of our activities as possible, to increase your birding knowledge and also your birding friends.

Looking forward to more great birding as Spring approaches!

Louise

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.

Tiaan J van Rensburg, Menlo Park; Luricke Swanepoel, Menlo Park; Henk du Plessis, Faerie Glen; Warren Tyler, Doringkloof; Desré Brown, Menlo Park; Henk Smit, Sinoville; Hennie & Glenda Barnard, Clubview; Alet Pretorius, Elarduspark; Rose Clark, Lynnwoodridge; Madelein & Anton Bekker, Faerie Glen

BLNG camp at Camelroc, 17–20 May 2018: O, die Donkie! O, die Donkie!

Sheleph Burger

Facing the spectacular sandstone hill with the outcrop shaped as a camel's head (for which Camelroc is named) is this tranquil farm with glorious views of the Maluti Mountains. Camelroc is situated between the two Caledon Rivers and is close to the Caledonspoor border post. Camelroc is a great base from which to explore the eastern Free State as well as Lesotho.

A group of 19 eager-beaver BLNG birders set out from Pretoria on Thursday, 17 May, some early and some later, including (in alphabetical order): Gary & Amanda Boyle, Sheleph & Louis Burger, Karin & Kobus Coetzer, Liesl de Swardt, Petro Fourie, Lenie Gouws, Laura Jordaan, Elouise Kalmer, André Marx (our professional and excellent leader), Brian & Wilma Moreby, Estelle Raath, Annali Swanepoel, Cecilia van Heerden, Michelle van Niekerk and Adele van Vuuren.

The chalets at Camelroc are fully equipped for self-catering, including a braai area, patio, carport, lovely fireplace inside the unit (came in very handy during the cold evenings), gas skottel, stove with oven, fridge with freezer, microwave, kettle, toaster, cooking utensils, cutlery and crockery. All bedding and bath linen was supplied. The chalets were serviced daily; good for birders who are naturally out early and back late! There is no restaurant, pub or café on site. The nearest shopping is at Fouriesburg, 10 km from Camelroc, or Bethlehem, 60 km away.

Some background on Fouriesburg (from *Op Pad in Suid-Afrika* by BPJ Erasmus):

Die R26 vanaf Bethlehem na Fouriesburg loop eers suid tot binne 2 km van die grens met Lesotho voordat dit wes swaai om ongeveer 6 km oos van Fouriesburg oor die



BLNG Camelroc group at AfriSki

Klein-Caledonrivier te gaan. Fouriesburg word in die noordooste deur die Rooiberge en in die weste deur die Witteberge begrens. Die dorp is in 1892 op die plaas Groenfontein van Christoffel Fourie gestig na wie die dorp ver- noem is. Dit word deur tipiese Oos-Vrystaatse sandsteenheuwels omring en is slegs 10 km van die grens met Lesotho. Gemengde boerdery (koring, mielies en beeste) word in die distrik beoefen. Fouriesburg was 'n paar maande lank tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog die laaste amptelike setel van die voortvlugtige regering te velde van die Oranje-Vrystaat. In dieselfde oorlog was die dorp in een stadium 'n vesting van die gewapende magte van die Vrystaat en dit is byna geheel en al in die swaar gevegte vernietig.

- Op 5 Julie 1900 het Generaal Marthinus Prinsloo en sy 3 000 Vrystaatse burgers, wat deur die Britte in hierdie berge sonder enige hoop op ontsnapping vasgekeer was, by 'Slaapkrans', ongeveer 20 km oos van die dorp op die pad na Clarens, oorgegee. Vandag staan die krans as 'Oorgeekoppie' bekend en dit word aangedui met 'n gedenkteken vir die Britse soldate wat daar gesterf het. Die meeste van die Vrystaters is daarna as krygsgevangenes na Indië gestuur.
- Die huis waarin Pres. MT Steyn van die Vrystaat gewoon het terwyl sy regering te velde op die dorp gesetel was, staan nog op die hoek van Reitz- en Robertsonstraat.
- Die NG kerk wat in 1894 gebou is, staan op die plek waar Paul Kruger (later president van Transvaal) en sy kommando hul kamp opgeslaan het terwyl hulle in 1865 die Vrystaat in hul oorlog teen die Basoeto's gehelp het.
- Die Fouriesburg Hotel is in 1892 op die oorspronklike plaas van die Fouries gebou.
- Meiringskloof NR sluit die tweedaagse Bandwater-voetslaanpad in. Dit loop verby Salpeterkrans, die grootste sandsteen-oorhang in die suidelike halfgrond. Daar is ook 'n groot grot in Meiringskloof waar 'n groep vroue na bewering ses maande lank in die Anglo-Boereoorlog gewoon het.



Sheleph Burger

Grey Crowned Crane/Mahem

A five-car group left Camelroc on a rather cold morning (-1°C) on Friday, 18 May to explore Lesotho and to find those special birds! We travelled to AfriSki, located 3 222 m above sea-level in the Maluti Mountains, near the northern border of Lesotho. AfriSki is the only ski resort in Lesotho and one of only two ski resorts in southern Africa.

During our Lesotho excursion many of the BLNG group ticked respective 'LIFERS'! It was a wonderful day out driving through majestic and beautiful mountain passes, enjoying nature and the birding which Lesotho has to offer. And, this is where the 'O, die Donkie, O, die Donkie' part comes in. The BLNG convoy was approximately 1 km from the Lesotho border post, when a donkey connected with Louis' Toyota Hilux bakkie – from the driver's side. Shock galore! It was an unnecessary ordeal, but the BLNG group's support was just so amazing. After this episode, we realised what a special group of birders belong to BirdLife Northern Gauteng! A word of warning to all groups travelling into other countries in Africa: be careful, be aware of your surroundings, and be safe. André, Annali, Adele and Estelle were able to leave Lesotho, but the Lesotho officials/police kept us from 14:30 until 18:00. When we at last arrived quite exhausted back at Camelroc, as you can only imagine, never ever did Old Brown Sherry taste that good. Fortunately, the donkey was unhurt, and the damage to Louis' bakkie was not too severe! (Note to all: Get yourself a dashcam!)

On the Saturday (19 May), we spent a wonderful morning's birding at Meiringskloof, and in the surrounds of Fouriesburg. The group was especially impressed with the accommodation that Meiringskloof has to offer, and possibly BLNG will arrange a future camp to Meiringskloof; planning in the process!

With a lovely fire going, and an appetising spread prepared by Michelle, the bird list was called. A total of 98 species were seen, with another 'special' seen by Louis and Sheleph on the Sunday morning after leaving Fouriesburg – a Grey Crowned Crane [Mahem].

Many in the group recorded 'lifers', including: Drakensberg Siskin [Bergpietjiekanaar – *Petronella*, *Sheleph*, *Michelle*, *Amanda*, *Wilma*], Drakensberg Rock-jumper [Oranjeborsberglyster – *Petronella*, *Laura*, *Sheleph*, *Michelle*], Bearded Vulture [Baardaasvoël – *Petronella*, *Sheleph*, *Michelle*], Grey Tit [Piet-tjou-tjou-grysmees – *Petronella*, *Laura*, *Sheleph* (*Lifer #600! – getting tougher!*)], Cape Rock-Thrush, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Cape Bunting and Blue Korhaan [Kaapse Kliplyster, Langtoonkliplyster, Rooivlerkstreepkoppie, Bloukorhaan – *Petronella*], Drakensberg Prinia, Karoo Prinia, Olive Thrush [Drakensberglangstertjie, Karoolangstertjie, Olyflyster – *Laura*]. 🐦

BLNG camp to Eshowe, 14–17 June 2018

Johan Fuhri

So, you might be wondering how a group of hard-core birders (after all, we drove 1 600 km to go see a nondescript green-brown barbet) managed to see fewer than 100 birds over the course of a three-day birding excursion along the Zululand Birding Route? Well, let me explain.

It all started when we arrived at Dlinza Forest and booked into our lovely accommodation. Of course we were not here for the accommodation, so a few of us made off to the forest to go look for some of the special birds

that were rumoured to roam these forests. We had heard of Green Twinspots [Groenkolpensie] and Spotted Ground-Thrush [Natallyster] being here, but Day 1 only gave us the usual suspects: Black-bellied Starlings, White-eared Barbets, Collared and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds [Swartpensglansspreeu, Witoorhoutkapper, Kortbeksuikerbekkie, Klein-rooiband-suikerbekkie], and even the odd Purple-crested Turaco [Bloukuifloerie]. The wailing Trumpeter Hornbills [Gewone Boskraai] were making their presence known in the background, but they



Petro Fourie

Chasing the Mangrove Kingfisher/Manglietvisvanger

were not going to show themselves on Day 1. So what to do when you end Day 1 with a list of barely 20 birds (which includes the Hadeda, by the way)? You braai. Wonderful people, wonderful weather, wonderful surroundings. All we needed now was some more birds on the list...

Friday morning started at 06:00 when our guide, Sakhamuzi, decided that a quick change of plan was in order. The weather for Saturday was due to be a little gloomy, not ideal for barbet-birding, so we were to go look for those barbets today. Ngoye Forest sits on one of the higher hills in the area and is the only place in South Africa where the Green Barbet [Groenhoutkapper] can be found. We spent an hour or two trampling through the forest, and, apart from the Grey Cuckooshrike [Bloukatakeroe] and a few other usual suspects, not much else was seen. Finally, on the way back to the cars, the Green Barbets decided to make their appearance – much to the delight of the group – sitting at the top of a tree, basking in the mid-morning sunlight, and giving us beautiful views of this very special bird.

Next, we were off to Umlalazi Nature Reserve, with a quick stop to find a Striped Pipit [Gestreepte Koester]. Near the entrance to the reserve we came across the Palm-nut Vulture, some Great White Pelicans, Hamerkop and a group of Woolly-necked Storks [Witaasvoël, Witpelikaan, Hamerkop, Wolnekoovieaar]. Inside, while stopping for a quick snack (and fending off the monkeys), we met a couple who were also looking for the Mangrove Kingfisher [Manglietvisvanger], which is a winter visitor to the area. The couple were on their way out after having had no luck finding the kingfisher. But we were hard-core birders – we did after all find the elusive Green Barbet just a few hours ago – and as would be expected from hard-core birders, the Mangrove Kingfisher was soon found and photographed. (Actually, were it not for our guides, we probably would have missed it, but don't tell anyone...) A juvenile raptor sitting in a tree had the group guessing, but after a few photos and consulting the books it was identified as a Black Sparrowhawk [Swartsperwer].



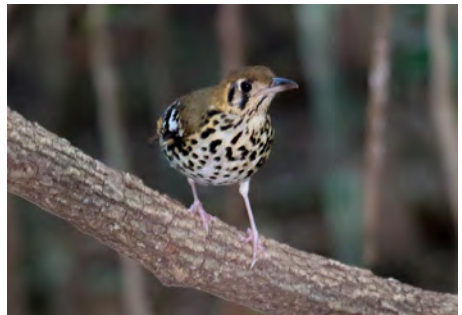
Ernest Davis

Palm-nut Vulture/Witaasvoël

Ernest Davis

Mangrove Kingfisher/Manglietvisvanger

Klaus Schmid

Green Twinspot/Groenkolpensie

Ernest Davis

Spotted Ground-Thrush/Natallyster



Petro Fourie

Flushing the Swamp Nightjar/Natalse Naguil



Ernest Davis

Swamp Nightjar/Natalse Naguil



Petro Fourie

Dlinza Forest boardwalk lookout point

On the way back to Eshowe, Sakhamuzi took us to a small dam hidden amongst the sugarcane fields, where quite a few of us had the opportunity to add the African Pygmy-goose [Dwerggans] to our life-lists. Having made quick work of the morning specials, we arrived back at Dlinza shortly after 14:00, leaving us plenty of time to do some birding on our own. The bird-hide at Dlinza certainly lived up to its reputation and Green Twinspot, Spotted Ground-Thrush, Chorister Robin-Chat [Lawaai-makerjanfrederik], Tambourine Dove [Witbors-duifie] and some Red-backed Mannikins [Rooirugfret] made it onto the list. How do you top off a wonderful day like this? You have a braai... even though our combined bird list was now hovering around a dismal count of barely 60 sightings.

Saturday morning saw us exploring the Dlinza Forest's raised walk-ways. The raised platform towers about 100 m above the forest floor and allows you to see over the canopy of

the forest below. Of course we were not here to watch the sunrise; we were here to spot the Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons [Withalsbosduif] flying over, which they disappointingly did not. We did manage to add Eastern Olive and Grey Sunbirds [Olyf- en Gryssuikerbekkie] to the list though, fluttering around in the canopy high above the forest floor.

Next, we descended into the darkness of the forest floor to look for the Spotted Ground-Thrush, as many in the group had not managed to see it the previous day. Unfortunately, the ground-thrush was a no-show, but we were fortunate to find a group of four female Bronze-naped Pigeons roosting in the trees!

Next on the agenda were the truly difficult ones. It was time to gear up for some real bundu-bashing to flush out the Swamp Nightjar [Natalse Naguil] and find the elusive Green Malkoha [Groenvleioerie]. With tick-spray applied and snacks packed we headed off to Amatikulu Nature Reserve. The reserve



Ernest Davis

Green Malkoha/Groenvleiloerie

Klaus Schmid

Southern Bald Ibis/Kalkoenibis

Klaus Schmid

Lemon Dove/Kaneelduif

literally sits in Sakhamuzi's backyard and he knew exactly where to go look for the nightjar. We formed a long line and treaded through the tall grass. On our second try we finally found the Swamp Nightjar as it flew from the grass – great was our delight in seeing this very special bird.

Nightjar in hand, we again tackled the dense overgrowth of the local forest in search of the Green Malkoha. The first spot we tried came up empty, with us having only heard the bird in the distance. The next spot, closer to the river, yielded more success, at first allowing only very obscured views through

dense vegetation, before gracing us with a quick appearance on our way out, after having given up hope. The same spot also allowed us to add Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Dark-backed Weavers, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Brown-hooded Kingfishers, Brown-backed Honeybird and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds to the list [Bloukuifvlieëvanger, Bosmusikant, Geelborskleinjantjie, Bruinkopvisvanger, Skerpbekheuningvoël, Swartblestinker]. Elsewhere in the reserve we also found Yellow-throated Longclaw, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, African Dusky Flycatcher, Caspian Tern, Pied Kingfisher and African Fish-Eagle [Geelkeelkalkoentjie, Rooiblestinker, Donkervlieëvanger, Reusesterretjie, Bontvisvanger, Visarend].

Back at Dlinza, having no choice but to have another braai, we recounted our adventures, noting that we had ended up walking close to 6 km in search of the Green Malkoha. Back at the guest house, as we were getting ready for the braai, a Black Sparrowhawk swooped down from a tree to try to catch a baby monkey that was foraging barely 20 m from where we were standing! Later that evening, the bird list for the weekend was checked, and rechecked. The total added up to only 97 bird species seen, and another 11 heard, for a total of only 108 species identified. However, with specials like the Green Barbet, Swamp Nightjar and Green Malkoha on the list, and good weather, good friends and good food in a beautiful setting, we decided that we would have it no other way. 🐦

Mouse-free Marion: Conservation history in the making

There is a part of South Africa that is colder than Sutherland, windier than Cape Point, (much) wetter than Graskop, more southerly than Cape Agulhas... It is exceedingly remote – Google Maps is either unable or unwilling to offer directions to it. Electorally considered to be part of the City of Cape Town (Ward 115), this place is actually closer to Port Elizabeth, though at 1 769 km not especially close.

Marion Island, the larger of the two islands forming the Prince Edward Island archipelago, was annexed by South Africa in 1948, and a meteorological station set up soon afterward. Since 1995, both islands have enjoyed the highest form of protection offered by South African law, that of 'Special Nature Reserve', which means that biodiversity conservation and research are the only activities that are permitted to take place here. The only humans who can therefore call Marion 'home' belong to a small but intrepid (and annually changing) group of meteorological and biological researchers (though the population can swell to up to 80 in the late summer hand-over time when the *SA Agulhas II* lies anchored off Transvaal Cove).

More importantly, Marion is a home or refuge to a variety of wildlife that give it global conservation significance – as land surface is a scarce and far-flung resource in the Southern Ocean, the Prince Edward Islands are crucial sites for seals and seabirds to breed and moult. Marion harbours Southern Elephant Seals, two species of fur seals, four penguin and five albatross species, and several other Southern Ocean birds like petrels, gulls and skuas. According to Chown and Froneman's 2008 book (citing studies published in the early 2000s), the Prince Edward Islands support 44% of all Wandering Albatross [Grootalbatros], 10% of Grey-headed Albatross [Gryskopalbatros], 21% of Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross [Indiese Geelneusalbatros] and perhaps 10% of Sooty Albatross [Bruinalbatros] and 2% of

Light-mantled Albatross [Swartkopalbatros].

Many of our seabird species face a dazzling array of 21st Century threats to their continuing existence, but those nesting on Marion have a relatively new and lethal challenge – *Mus musculus* – the house mouse.

The following extracts from the Mouse Free Marion Island Restoration website (www.mousefreemarion.org.za), administered by BirdLife South Africa, explain further:

Marion Island is the jewel in South Africa's island crown – it is huge and beautiful, hosts an astonishing array of endemic species and charismatic marine megafauna, and is pristine. Or nearly pristine...

After cats were eradicated from Marion Island in the early 1990s (it remains the largest island on earth cleared of cats!), mice were left as the only introduced mammal there. At the time, no thought was given to tackling mice, even though their impacts on invertebrates such as the flightless moths and weevils, plant communities, nutrient cycles, etc., were gigantic. Little did we know that mice could become such a significant threat to seabirds. Work done at Gough Island demonstrated that mice can wreak devastation on seabird colonies, and now they're attacking seabird chicks at Marion Island, with increasing impacts each year.

In 2016, New Zealand island-eradication expert John Parkes authored a report titled: '[Eradication of House Mice *Mus musculus* from Marion Island: a review of feasibility, constraints and risks](#)'. His assessment concluded that there are no technical obstacles to eradication. After approaching the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology for collaboration and support, the date was set to undertake an eradication on Marion Island in the winter of 2020.

Operations such as these are not cheap, and this is where we need your help. To raise the necessary funds to purchase the bait

needed to cover the entire island, we are offering you the opportunity to sponsor one or more hectares of land on Marion Island (<https://mousefreemarion.org.za/about/#sponsor>). At R1000/ha, you can aid us in allowing this monumental project to be successful. Once completed, this project will be another world record for South Africa: the largest ever island from which mice have successfully been eradicated. *Be a part of history, and sponsor one (or more) hectares of this beautiful oceanic gem.*

Frequently asked questions:

How long will the operation take?

The duration of the baiting is weather dependent, and will vary in relation to the number of helicopters. The plan is to treat the entire island once, wait 10–14 days, and then do it again, to maximise the chances of reaching every mouse. Each bait treatment will take about 6–8 days of good weather, assuming three helicopters can operate at once, so with luck the total operation should be completed in 1–2 months.

How will the mice be killed?

Cereal bait pellets laced with brodifacoum poison will be dropped all over the island from bait buckets slung beneath helicopters. The bucket is linked to a GPS log, which records exactly which parts of the island have been treated, so that the entire island can be covered.

Is this humane?

The poison is a second-generation anticoagulant, similar to commercial rat poison, but more slow acting, so the mice don't learn to associate the bait with subsequent deaths. It makes them feel unwell, but they are unlikely to experience any pain or distress; they retreat to their burrows (reducing the risk of being eaten by scavenging birds), go to sleep and don't wake up. What about other wildlife/collateral damage? Birds also are affected by the poison, so scavenging species such as Lesser Sheathbills, Kelp Gulls, Brown Skuas and giant petrels are also at risk from primary and secondary poisoning. Every effort will be made to minimise the risks



Stephan Schloombeg

A doomed Wandering Albatross chick at Marion Island, showing scalp wounds from mouse attacks

to individuals. By conducting the operation in winter we will limit exposure to skuas and giant petrels, but sheathbills and gulls are resident at Marion Island, so they will be at risk. We will put plans in place (such as keeping some birds in captivity and releasing once the environment is safe) to ensure that there is zero chance that any bird species will be accidentally eradicated from Marion.

How long does the poison stay in the environment?

This depends on the temperature and the amount of rain, but it can last for weeks or even months under certain conditions. Fortunately it does not dissolve in water, and Marion winters are typically very wet, so we expect all the poison to flush out of the system into the ocean (to undetectable concentrations) within a couple of months.

How did the mice get there?

We don't know exactly – presumably either in materials landed ashore to support sealing operations, or from an early shipwreck. The first record of mice on Marion Island is from an early sealer's log written in 1818.

How can we be sure that this will work?

In the last decade, more than 95% of attempts to eradicate mice from islands have been

successful. We can't be 100% certain, because Marion will be the largest island attempted to date, but experts who have been involved in successful operations on Macquarie Island and South Georgia are confident that it should succeed on Marion Island too. The operation is over-engineered to minimise the risk of failure.

Why don't the birds protect themselves?

Albatrosses and most petrels only breed in habitats lacking terrestrial mammal predators. Because they have never experienced anything like this before, they haven't evolved appropriate responses to being attacked by fast-moving, nocturnal predators.

Why is the operation so expensive?

The operation will require about 300 tonnes of poison bait to be spread over the island; the bait alone will cost around R30 million, and then there is the cost of the helicopters, specialist pilots, ship costs to transport materials and personnel to the islands, etc.

How will you prevent mice from getting back on the island in future?

Marion Island already has strict biosecurity measures in force, limiting the amounts and types of materials that can be taken ashore, all of which are inspected before loading on the supply ship at the home port and again ashore on arrival and unpacking. Only ships that are certified rodent free before leaving port can visit the island, and there is no dock where ships can tie up, so the risk of a rodent sneaking ashore are very small. Even stricter measures will be in force during and will remain in place after the operation.

What will happen to the carcasses?

Most mice will die in their burrows, where they will decay within a few months. However, the plan currently includes a small team to scour the coastal areas for carcasses, to minimise risks to birds.

Has this ever been done before?

Yes; mice have been eradicated from more

than 70 islands worldwide, but Marion Island will be the largest island attempted to date where mice are the only introduced mammal. South Georgia is much larger, but mice only occurred in two rat-free areas with a total area less than that of Marion. Rats are easier to eradicate because they occur at lower densities than mice and have larger home ranges, so require less bait to be delivered less precisely than when targeting mice alone. At Australia's Macquarie Island, three species (rabbits, rats and mice) were successfully eradicated in 2014, so even though that island is smaller than Marion Island, it was a very complex operation; in this respect, Marion Island should be easier to achieve success than Macquarie Island.

Has anything on the island become dependent on the mice as prey?

No; Kelp Gulls and Brown Skuas are the two birds that most often prey on mice, but mice make up only a tiny proportion of their diet. And mice have greatly reduced the natural prey of both species (the gulls eat large invertebrates, and many skuas rely on burrowing petrels), so eradicating mice will actually result in more food for these birds, including for the sheathbills.

Can I be issued with an 18A Tax Certificate?

Yes! BirdLife South Africa is a registered Public Benefit Organisation (No. 930004518) and authorised to issue 18A tax certificates where applicable. Please email nini.vdmerwe@birdlife.org.za if you require a certificate. Note that these might take up to three months to be issued.

You can watch a video about this project at: <https://youtube/sZLgKCrq-OA> (warning to sensitive viewers re graphic content). To make a donation, visit: <https://mousefreemarion.org.za/#sponsor> or call BLSA on 021 419 7347.

References

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Champions of the Flyway 2018 – a success for both young birders and conservation

John Kinghorn

The Champions of the Flyway (COTF) bird race this year undertook its fifth year of making a monumental difference when it comes to the protection of migratory bird species across the Mediterranean flyways. CoTF assists BirdLife International partners across the region in collectively combatting the illegal killing of over 25 million migratory birds per annum, as they make their way to and from Africa and their breeding grounds across Europe and Asia. This year's chosen cause was combatting the illegal slaughter of over 50 000 Common Quail and other migratory birds across both Serbia and Croatia – teams participating in the 2018 race raised both crucial funds and awareness for the two chosen BirdLife International affiliates who find themselves in a constant battle to put an end to the senseless slaughter of these birds over their soil.

Each year at the world's biggest nature and wildlife expo (the British Bird Watching Fair), an event is held to celebrate the current year's race and its successes, along with the eagerly anticipated announcement and 'launch' of the next event and the chosen conservation cause/ BirdLife affiliate, who will be the recipient of all funds raised and the centre of the conservation

messages punted across the globe in various awareness-generating campaigns. Having been fortunate enough to be present at the launch in 2017 for this year's event and still tingling from the adrenal[w]ine of having led the 'Birding Ecotours Youth Africa Birders' to not only becoming the Southern Hemisphere's first-ever team to win one of the three CoTF titles up for grabs but also the first-ever youth team to win two of these titles (Guardians and Knights of the Flyway), I found myself compiling reams of mental notes and diagrams in my now much too active thought process: let's do it again!

It was in no time that our new team, the Birding Ecotours World Youth Birders, was formed, with the core purpose being generating large amounts of funds and awareness for the plight of our migratory birds – of course all in the name of conservation! Coupled with this we hoped to show the birding community at large – along with other younger budding birders – that the youth can prove to be an almighty force when it comes to fighting for a common cause that we all felt strongly about. One of the many drawcards of the COTF event



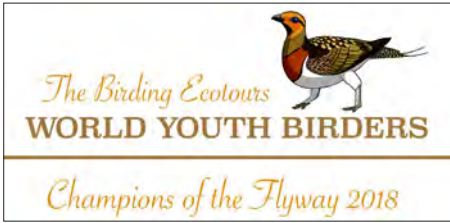
John Kinghorn

One of 100+ per minute migrating Steppe Eagles seen from the raptor-counting stations atop the Eilat Mountains



John Kinghorn

Sifting through thousands of migrating raptors can be an exhausting job!



Birding Ecotours World Youth Birders Logo



The 'feldegg' race of Western Yellow Wagtail

is its blatant non-recognition of political views, social classes, age, religion and race, with a sole focus on the protection and conservation of our birds, and we intended to incorporate this into our message as much as possible and in turn hopefully create a legacy which would inspire young conservationists for many years to come. Comprised of an Englishman (James Shergold), a Zimbabwean (Jean-Michel Blake) and two South Africans (Toni Geddes and myself), we were the first-ever international youth team of our kind and we had every intention to show the world what a combination of will-power, determination, youthful exuberance and downright raw passion could do when crammed together in a hire car and thrown into the Negev Desert of southern Israel.

We embarked on a gruelling three-month campaign where all four members of the team begged, borrowed and grovelled at the feet of friends, family, colleagues, corporates, organizations and as many fellow birders as we could possibly have thought of, in order to request donations and their support in our endeavours to make a difference. The teams this year were

already full-steam-ahead – their fundraising trains had well and truly left the station and we found ourselves playing a game of catch-up when it came to the battle of who would raise the most funds for this year's conservation cause. Fundraising in a much weaker currency during a noticeable dry period in terms of the willingness of fellow South Africans to donate to a worthy cause during times of financial hardship as a country, we found ourselves tackling a stiff uphill journey in our attempt at simply trying to reach our initial fundraising goal of £3 700 set for us by the event organizers. The day finally arrived on the 25th of February when we managed to hop over this milestone and shift our focus to now exceeding this '100%' and pushing it as far as we could in the month that remained.

Touch down Israel, and backed by the optic perfection that is Swarovski Optik, our team spent hours upon hours tirelessly scouring the demarcated 'playing field' through crystal-clear optics in the hope of coming across anything that might have vaguely resembled some sort of bird. From traipsing through seemingly desolate looking shrub-strewn wadis in the Arava and Negev Deserts to scanning through thousands of shorebirds actively feeding along the mud-clad shorelines of the local 'K20' salt works in an attempt to replenish their depleted resources after having just crossed the Red Sea, we left no bird unturned and, before we knew it, our race strategy slowly began to take shape.

As with any 24-hour bird race, the day before the madness ensued found us enjoying some more 'relaxed' birding at the nearby bird observatory, followed by a 'gen-sharing' session where all participating teams shared last-minute details on some of the tougher species over a couple of ice-cold Gold Star beers: the where's, how's and 'near which bush again?' surrounding more recent sightings were all discussed and shared openly by teams who had struck avian gold during pre-race scouting. Finding ourselves lost in the euphoria of the event the daylight hours began to tick away, but before navigating our way back to our motel to enter our scheduled states of torpor,

a mandatory stop at the grocery store to stock up on invaluable food and liquid supplies was made, all whilst our internal equilibriums were undergoing immense strain from heightened levels of adrenaline now beginning to course through our veins. Cheap energy drinks, 2 L pineapple- and mango-flavoured ice teas on a four-for-two special, humus, pita breads and some fresh croissants from the nearby 24-hour bakery all enthusiastically accepted their mission brief and readily lined up in the trunk of our car for ongoing consumption the following day.

23:50 saw a large portion of the 19 teams who had gathered from across the globe huddled around the start line, frothing at the prospect of what lay ahead and fuelled by the overwhelming anticipation of 24 hours of untamed, high-intensity, fast-paced birding! The event's judging panellists lined the start line at the International Bird and Research Centre of Eilat (IBRCE), back-dropped by the flags of all the nations represented, and counted the clock down to 00:00 before screaming "GO CHAMPIONS!" which resulted in a mad theatrical scramble of birders sprinting, diving and jumping toward their vehicles – exit stage right! As much I would have loved to have been a part of an impromptu maul (the rugby player in me is never quite satisfied), the only mad scramble we were involved in whilst all this was going down was one centred around trying to fill up our petrol tank as quickly as possible after having dawdled somewhat in loading our car. Nevertheless, we skidded to a doors-half-open halt in the parking lot of the IBRCE, pursued only by a flurry of dust, sprinted to the start line, checked in and promptly sprinted right back to our car before James pulled-off a manoeuvre that Lewis Hamilton would have been proud of. We were officially racing... figuratively and literally.

We kicked our day off in style with a crackling Egyptian Nightjar as Species Number 1 before putting pedal to the metal and heading into the northern parts of the playing field to try our luck with some owls and any species of waterbirds which might have felt the urge



John Kinghorn

An extremely showy Citrine Wagtail focused more on stocking up its food reserves than the bearded South African crawling up on all fours beside it!



John Kinghorn

The 'gen' sharing event where teams all gathered to share the where's, how's and 'under which tree' on species recently seen

to partake in a midnight symphony. It would seem, however, that fate had other plans for our team and whilst making our way north we had a tyre blow-out. Not a problem – set the Land Rover-owning Zimbabwean safari guide onto the job and we had the spare fixed and the car ready to roll again in under 10 minutes, and by the time the sun crested the dunes we found ourselves on the border of Egypt at a place called Nitzanna in the far north-western corner of the playing field.

As with any 'birding big day' across the globe, race strategy plays a big part in this mad dash across southern Israel. A tried and tested route over the past few years, which had resulted in unbelievably high totals and four ecstatic Finnish birders taking home the title for



John Kinghorn

Israel's very own Familiar Chat, the charcoal-coloured Blackstart

three years in a row, belonged to a north–south route. We opted to make use of a similar route but with one slight change: we would try our best to twitch any reported rarities which may turn up whilst we were in any one particular area. It seemed to work extremely well and we left our dawn-chorus site in Nitzanna on 80+ species and began making our way down into the central parts of the playing field, on just over 100 species, close on midday. We were flying, but sadly not for much longer.

Disaster struck whilst pulling into the parking area of the Neot Semadar sewage ponds – our second puncture. We were now not only stranded in the middle of the desert but we didn't have another tyre or any means by which to repair the day's earlier puncture in order to carry on the race. Thankfully, another team pulled into the sewage ponds and very kindly offered James a lift to a nearby town to try to organize another tyre. Time began to precariously tick away, unlike our pens to our checklist, and soon we found ourselves far behind schedule as the air around us shifted from electric excitement to that of despondence. We decided to try our best to keep our chins held high and we grabbed our binoculars and scopes and went exploring, which saw us pick up another five species before James came careering back into the parking area after having hitched a ride with two fellow youth birders who were in Israel at the time, not to participate in the race but just to share in the great birding. Another remarkably quick tyre

change, another impressive Lewis Hamilton F1 manoeuvre and, after just over two hours of having been stuck in the same spot, we were back on track but leagues behind any of the other teams. It was now a game of catch-up and we were trying our utmost to claw our way back into the mix whilst racing against rapidly decreasing daylight.

Sitting on the banks of the 'K19' fresh-water dam on the outskirts of Eilat, we had just managed to equal the all-time-high race record of 183 species set the year prior by the reigning champs and COTF pedigree, the Arctic Redpolls. We had just enjoyed fantastic views, amidst the company of other eager teams, of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse coming down to drink at the water's edge, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and a very vocal Little Bittern which was the record equalizer. Prior to this brief break in our mad dash to add yet another species, we had raced around our scouted sites in the Arava Desert, running into wadis and racing along the shores of North Beach, and had somehow managed to persuade Lady Luck into becoming an honourable member of our team. Each one of us were in the zone, initially fixated on simply racking up a respectable total but then switching to something completely different upon the realisation that we were well and truly in the running to win the race. Whether it was the day's events which spurred us on or the fact that we wished to make history by becoming the first-ever youth team to claim the title, I'm not quite sure, but what I am deadly certain of is that I had never in my life birded alongside three more focused, passionate, driven and talented young birders, whose eyes reflected not only the hardships and exhaustion of the race but also a raging fire to achieve what was thought to be impossible.

A lone Striated Heron using a buoy as a fishing perch earned itself the spot of our last species for the day. The time was 22:46 when we collapsed in a heap at the finish line. We had given it our all, fought our own internal battles against the urge to give up when things were looking impossible, and successfully managed to break the backs of each of our individual

breaking points and replace despair with determination. We had cried, shed blood (I took a particularly bad fall whilst running around the IBRCE resulting in a healthy chunk of my big toe becoming one with a small stream), laughed and experienced levels of frustration second only to those endured whilst spending a morning at one of our Home Affairs offices. But, we had done it: 186 species was the final count for our team and the following day, after a restless night, we had our dreams realized when we were called onto the stage and announced as the 2018 Champions of the Flyway and the new race record holders. Humbled, honoured and proud, I couldn't help but allow a tear to roll down my face as we lifted that golden trophy to the heavens.

As an aside, our team managed to raise over R96 000 for this year's dedicated conservation cause and educated thousands of people through our awareness-raising social media campaigns and a road trip from Gauteng through to the Eastern Cape and back, which aimed to spread the word on the massacre of our migratory bird species to whomever we so happened to come across along the way. The event itself raised in excess of \$100 000



Champions of the Flyway 2018

(R1 million+) and went down as the most successful event yet. If you're reading this article and you donated/helped spread the word, then you are every bit as much part of this success as the teams who participated! From the Birding Ecotours World Youth Birders, we would like to thank ALL those within BLNG who supported the cause and gave us words of support and encouragement along the way. We travelled with your words in our heart and your support on our binocular straps! 🦋



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



Preserve Planet Earth Project: Rotary Club of Brits-Hartbeespoort (17306) District 9400 Nyoka Ridge Cape Vulture Restaurant

In collaboration with: Birdlife Harties, WESSA NAR and
North West Conservancy/Stewardship Association

The Cape Vultures of the majestic Magaliesberg Mountains have for a number of years now fed on carcasses provided intermittently at the Nyoka Ridge farm in the Skeerpoort area.

The owners of Nyoka Ridge Farm have committed themselves to not only continuing with the intermittent supply of food to the vultures, but also to establishing the site as an integrated state-of-the-art facility, with WESSA, Rotary, Birdlife Harties and other partners, for sustainable resource management, and vulture population research and monitoring, as well as for student education and public awareness programmes. The site will also form part of the Magaliesberg/Hartbeespoort birding route established by WESSA/Birdlife South Africa, as well as be an important project within the UNESCO-registered Magaliesberg Biosphere (one of only 8 biosphere reserves in South Africa, and part of a world network of 669 reserves in 120 countries).

Background

Vulture populations face a slew of man-made hazards that include a diminishing food source, electrocution on electricity

pylons, drowning in farm brick dams and ingesting poisons meant for problem animal control. Seven of the nine vulture species found in southern Africa are now listed in the Eskom Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

The value of vulture restaurants has been well articulated over the years and includes allowing for the monitoring of vulture populations, assisting the population by providing an intermittent source of safe food, a source of calcium (bone-chips) for bone development in growing chicks, and a venue for research, education and awareness creation.

Over the years the project has hosted



Looking towards the viewpoint

many visitors, both local and from all over the world, including school groups and individuals. An event marking International Vulture Awareness Day, celebrated annually in September, has been hosted by Nyoka Ridge for a number of years, with attendance having grown to well over 100 visitors.

This project has been carried out in phases since 2010, with the following having already been accomplished:

- The construction of a pond for fresh water and bathing, completed in June 2011
- The installation of a water-tank, taps and piping
- Erection of trees for vulture perches
- The construction of a viewing platform for watching feeding activity from a distance, completed in September 2011
- The construction of an ablution facility at the viewpoint, completed in 2013
- The purchase of camera traps for monitoring the vultures
- A custom-built trailer to transport the vulture food to the feeding site was completed and delivered by December 2013
- The construction of a walkway to the hide was completed over 2014–15



John Wesson

Tagged vultures at the restaurant

- 2017–18 saw the large-scale planting of trees around the viewpoint, 65 trees in fact, creating a mixed woodland

The final phase of the project is, however, still outstanding, and is planned for 2018/19:

Construction of a hide, and an ablution facility for the hide

Funding is still required for this final phase, which will cost R150 000, and a funding campaign was initiated in June this year.

This uniquely designed hide close to the feeding spot will give visitors a close-up view of these amazing birds as they feed and interact with each other. The proximity to the birds will also enable accurate recording of wing-tag numbers (which form part of an



John Wesson

Taking flight

ongoing monitoring project to collect data on vulture movements in southern African and thus inform species conservation plans), as well as correct identification of species by visitors, and unrivalled photographic opportunities.

The plan is to utilize a 12 m shipping container (enabling the hide to be installed very quickly, so as not to disturb the birds), fit it out with one-way glass and have it insulated and carpeted. One section will have a special photographer's area designed to accommodate up to 8 photographers.

The hide is expected to be an ecotourism 'drawcard' for the region, along with the existing viewpoint, and will also offer views of game and other birds. It has the potential to be an important site for education and awareness creation about vultures and the rest of the Magaliesberg Biosphere. A number of educational posters and informative signage will be placed inside and outside the hide.

Now that all of the facilities are up to standard and the hide is on the horizon, an

entrance fee will be charged for all visitors (excluding project partners). This will enable this project to generate the income needed to sustain it.

On 1 September 2018 (International Vulture Awareness Day), a bring-and-breakfast will be held at the site to update everyone on the project.

The display of soaring and spiralling by these endangered birds is unequalled anywhere else in this country!

Donations

If you would like to contribute to the cost of the hide, the banking details are as follows:

Account holder: Birdlife Harties

Bank: Standard Bank, Hartbeespoort

Acct number: 015 07 6555

Branch Code: 013445

Reference: 'Hide' and your name

All donations will be acknowledged on a sign in the hide and at the viewpoint.

Albatross: the film

Tamsyn Sherwill

In the heart of the great Pacific, a story is taking place that may change the way you see everything. (www.albatrossthefilm.com)

Albatross is a film by American photographer and filmmaker Chris Jordan, offered as 'a gift to the world' – the film was released for screening on Earth Day 2018 (22 April), and made available for free viewing, download and distribution on World Oceans Day, 8 June 2018. The trailer for *Albatross* begins with a quote from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, a poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) which fittingly is also about an albatross, and its untimely death at the hands of a human:

*And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.*

Albatross is entirely shot on Midway Atoll (aka Midway Island), part of the Hawaiian island chain in the vast Pacific Ocean, 2 000 miles from the nearest continent. Human occupation in the past century or so has included a trans-Pacific telegraph cable station (from 1903), an island-hopping tourist airline (1930s), and a naval base dating back to the

Second World War (the decisive Battle of Midway resulting in a Japanese defeat near here in 1942). When the navy left, Midway became a protected conservation area and military monument, and the island is (US Fish and Wildlife Service staff excepted) uninhabited but for its birds and other wildlife – including, during the nesting season, hundreds of thousands of Laysan Albatrosses [Swartwangelbatros]. The footage at Midway was filmed over 8 visits and 4 years, and the film itself was 8 years in the making. A range of donor funding and volunteers made the film possible. Jordan decided to release the film as a ‘free public artwork’ because: “...the experience of Midway had come to me as a life-changing gift that I felt should be passed along in the purest form possible. I also believe that now is the time for radically creative action by all of us on behalf of life, in whatever big or small ways we each have the power to do. One thing I can do is to give my eight-year labor of love as a gift to the world, as a gesture of trust in doing the right thing for its own sake.”

Chris Jordan is not by nature or trade a wildlife filmmaker – his bio on the film’s website describes him as an “internationally acclaimed artist whose work explores contemporary mass culture from multiple perspectives, connecting the viewer viscerally to the enormity and power of humanity’s collective unconscious”. Jordan’s treatment of the Midway story is thus not the familiar *Planet Earth* or *National Geographic* experience – and it is probably fair to say that some poetic licence is requested and taken. The final product is presented as a work of art, and the whole film is beautiful – an immersive visual and auditory experience – but still honourably fulfils the role of a conventional ‘nature documentary’ in capturing in glorious and intimate detail the life and life cycle of Laysan Albatrosses. But, as the term ‘ghastly tale’ suggests, in the end *Albatross* is not easy viewing. This is not a reason to avoid watching it. In Jordan’s words: “I want people to watch this

film and feel sadness and rage and realise that comes from a place of love. Don’t pull the plug out of the bathtub just yet; don’t let all that raw emotion drain away. Once you feel love, you can be more courageous and make more radical choices.”

You can view the film, or download it at various resolutions at: www.albatrossthefilm.com

To read about Chris Jordan’s story and approach to making the film see: [The Story of ALBATROSS](#), or [Saving the albatross: ‘The war is against plastic and they are casualties on the frontline’](#).

Postscript:

Though this takes nothing away from the film or its subject, Jordan makes no mention of another threat faced by Midway’s albatross chicks – lead poisoning from ingesting paint chips from the abandoned buildings (<https://news.ucsc.edu/2003/07/372.html>). This has been shown to be an important cause of chick mortality, causing neural problems, including a condition termed ‘droopwing’ which ultimately results in an inability to fly. Though documented by researchers as early as the 1990s, with a clean-up of a portion of the buildings taking place between 2005 and 2010, a full-scale programme to mitigate this hazard was only authorised in 2011, possibly in response to the NGO Center for Biological Diversity issuing a notice of intention to sue the US Fish and Wildlife Service and affiliated agencies for their failure to remediate the hazardous waste hurting the birds, in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Endangered Species Act and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. (For more info see: https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2011/laysan-albatross-07-13-2011.html).

This complex and expensive clean-up project was expected to take over 6 years to complete, and would still have been under way at the time *Albatross* was filmed.

Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP): The protocol explained

Introduction

The atlas protocol is a survey protocol, designed to record the presence of as many bird species as possible within a defined area. The project allows for two types of surveys (cards) to be submitted – **Full Protocol** and **Ad-hoc Protocol**.

- Full Protocol card: The atlaser fully complied with the protocol rules (set out below).
- Ad-hoc: The atlaser did not comply with all of the atlas rules.

Atlasers should always aim to submit Full Protocol cards, as they have far more value for tracking changes in bird communities than Ad-hoc Protocol cards.

Atlasers can also submit incidental records of noteworthy sightings.

The rules

1) The area

SABAP uses a grid-based system based on earth's latitudinal and longitudinal lines – each 5 minute x 5 minute area (about 9 km north–south and 7 km east–west in South Africa) is called a **pentad**.

- A map with pentads can be found here: http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage.php#menu_top
- The mobile app BirdLasser displays pentads on a map for easy reference, and gives an audible warning if you cross a boundary between pentads.

An atlaser needs to visit as many different habitats as possible in the pentad. However, if for some reason you cannot access all habitats, this **should not stop you** from submitting a Full Protocol card.

2) The time

A pentad can be atlased only once every 5-day period by the same atlaser. The protocol requires at least 2 hours of dedicated atlasing during this period. The atlaser may choose to continue atlasing whilst still in the 5-day period. Ideally, the initial 2-hour survey should happen in one continuous period, but it may be split up into multiple smaller segments.

Other timing related factors to consider:

- When taking coffee breaks and you are not actively birding, you should exclude the time from the **first part of the survey**.
- An example of a segmented intensive period would be if you spend a night out, you can do the first hour in the evening you arrive and complete the second hour the next day.

3) The observations

- All bird species need to be recorded.
- Only the first observation of a species must be logged, i.e., no duplicates on a card.
- The atlaser needs to record each species in the order observed.
- Birds seen and/or heard, may be recorded.
- Photos or sound recordings of birds for later identification can be very helpful.
- You are responsible and accountable for each record on your card (and will get an Out of Range query for rare or unusual species). When getting information from additional observers, ensure the information is accurate and correct as any queries will be sent to you and not the additional observer.
- **When in doubt, leave it out.**
- Atlasing should preferably be conducted during good birding conditions, for

example when there is little wind and no rain. If in your opinion bad weather has greatly reduced the number of species recorded, rather submit the card as an Ad-hoc Protocol card.

- It is not necessary to record the number of individual birds seen (but BirdLasser might prompt you for additional information such as numbers of individuals for some threatened species).

Independence of atlas cards

- When two or more atlasers atlas the same pentad, at the same time, it is recommended to submit the observations on a single Full Protocol card. It is up to the group to decide who will “own” the card, i.e., submit to SABAP. The other atlasers may be added as additional observers.
- Atlasers can atlas together, independently, if they can devise a system that will produce significantly different cards. As an example, if two atlasers travelling together, walk in different directions each time they stop, it would result in different species and orders on the cards.

General guidelines

- If you are new to birding and not able to identify most of the birds seen/heard whilst atlasing, please submit all cards as Ad-hoc Protocol cards, even if you followed the full protocol rules. You should only submit cards as Full Protocol cards once you can identify at least 95% of all species you encounter.
- If you bird only at one spot every day, for a combined 2 hours or more in a 5-day period, rather submit an Ad-hoc card, because your coverage of the pentad is too limited.
- For cards with only a few records, only submit a Full Protocol card if all the rules were obeyed, and there were no obvious reasons for the low species count (e.g. bad weather) – suggesting that the area really is largely devoid of birds.
- If a noteworthy species (e.g. critically endangered/rarity/unusual behaviour) is seen, then it is best to submit an Incidental record, with any additional information as notes.

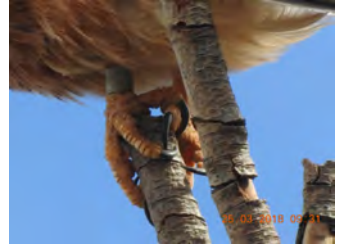
Montagu se Kransvalke

Wanda Louwrens

Op Donderdag, 29 Maart 2018 kry ek 'n SMS uit 'n onverwagte oord: “Hallo Wanda. My naam is Philip Fouche. Ek het foto's geneem van 'n Kransvalk al omtrent 6 weke gelede. Toe ek die foto op die rekenaar kyk, sien ek toe daars 'n ring om die voet. Afgelope Sondag toe zoom ek kwaai in, en ja. Ek weet Sanjo van Safring het jou 'n mail gestuur. Ek is op 'n plaas in Montagu. Ek sal nogal van jou wil hoor.” My eerste reaksie was: Maar ek het nog nooit in Montagu se

omgewing roofvoëls gering nie! En, het ek al ooit 'n Kransvalk [Rock Kestrel] gering? Ek kan nie onthou nie. Ek gaan grawe al my datalyste uit van die afgelope vier jaar en vind die bladsy. Ja, sowaar, ek het 'n Kransvalk gering op die roofvoëltoer toe ek en Frik, en Magdaleen en Johan Snyman, in Struisbaai tuis gegaan het. Dit was in 2016 op die 25ste Mei. Maar die databladsy sê dit was tussen Swellendam en Malgas – nie Montagu nie!

Philip Fouche



Montagu se Kransvalke. Op die derde foto kan mens net-net 'n paar syfers onderskei, naamlik 652, waarmee Sanjo Rose die skrywer opgespoor het.

Ek skryf terug: "Ek het nog nie Sanjo se e-pos gekry nie. Ek het 'n Kransvalk gering tussen Swellendam en Malgas op 25/5/2016. Hoe ver is dit van Montagu?" Gou kom die antwoord terug: "Die Langeberg is tussenin. Soos die kraai vlieg naby. Seker so tussen 30 en 50 km. Miskien het sy nie jou regte e-pos adres nie. Ek kon sien sy stuur vir jou. Ek het jou sel no by haar gekry." Nou baie nuuskierig skryf ek terug: "Kon jy die nommer op die ring sien? Sanjo moes 'n (ring)nommer gehad het om my op te spoor." Hy antwoord: "Kan ek jou e-pos adres kry? Dan forward ek al ons e-posse vir jou. Ek kan jou ook my foto's stuur."

Hy stuur 'n foto. Mens kan net-net iets uitmaak op die ring. 'n Gedeelte van 'n nommer – 652 (die meeste van Safring se nommers bestaan deesdae uit 'n prefiks soos FB of CA, plus vyf syfers). Ek lees gou al die e-posse.

Wat vooraf gebeur het:

26 Maart

Philip skryf aan Andrew de Blocq:

Adrius het my gevra om hierdie fotos vir jou aan te stuur. Dit is naby Witklei geneem. Ek bly in Poortjieskloof en sien die twee [Kransvalke] gereeld as ek dorp toe gaan. Laat weet as jy iets interessant uitvind asb.

27 Maart

Andrew skryf aan Safring en sluit die fotos in: *Please include [Philip Fouche] on any info? He*

found the birds but didn't know how to report. He's very excited to hear about its history!! Any info on the bird would be greatly appreciated. Andrew de Blocq, Coastal Seabird Conservation Project Officer

Hy kry dadelik 'n antwoord terug van 'n outomatiese antwoordstelsel:

Thank you so much for reporting this record to us. It will offer great insight into the secret life of birds and will make some researcher out there very excited. We will process the details as soon as possible and let you know what we discover. Even though this is an automatically generated email, you are still more than welcome to reply to it with any questions. Enjoy the rest of your evening or day and we will be in touch soon. Best Regards, The Safring Team Animal Demography Unit University Of Cape Town

28 Maart

Dear Andrew, Thank you for this sighting! I cannot make an exact match unfortunately as we only know a part of the ring number (652). These kestrels wear prefix '5' or '5H' rings and we have three that have '652' in their number. The only one that is close to this location (other are in Namibia and one is very old) is a bird ringed by Wanda Louwrens in 2016: <http://safring.edu>.

org.za/ring_info.php?ring=5H65207&project=SAFRING. *It could well be this bird?*

Best,
Sanjo

29 Maart

Philip bedank Sanjo vir die hulp:

*Baie dankie vir die inligting.
Weet jy waar ek Wanda Louwrens kan kontak?
As jy nie weet nie is dit ook goed.
Voorspoed.
Philip Fouche
NS. Hope you can understand Afrikaans.*

Sanjo Rose werk vir Safring. Dit is die organisasie by wie ons ringe koop en wat die databasis in stand hou.

Met goeie speurwerk het sy my opgespoor. Sy moes weet dat Kransvalke met 6 mm ringe gering word. So die prefiks moet 5 of 5H wees (na gelang jy óf'n harde ring óf'n sagte ring gebruik). Sy het op die databasis gaan soek na 5H652 en drie inskryfwing gekry van Kransvalke met daardie nommers.

Op die stelsel het sy die volledige ringnommer, my naam en ADU nommer en koördinate van waar die Kransvalk presies gering is, gekry.

Die Kransvalk is twee jaar gelede gering en dit gaan goed met hom!

Laaste opmerking van Andrew:

Dis baie interessant dat die valk die plaasland met die Karoo vervang het – baie verskillende ekosisteme -- en oor die Langeberge ook! 🐦

Ringershoekie

BLNG Ringgroep

Voortrekkermonument klubring, 3 Maart

Die beplande ringsessie na Renosterkopdam kon weens logistieke probleme nie plaasvind nie. Die ringsessie is toe na die Voortrekkermonument geskuif. Vroegoggend het 16 ringers bymekaargekom om nette op te sit. Ons het 184 voëls gevang waarvan 33 hervangste was. Tien belangstellendes het in die loop van die oggend kom besoek aflê. Ons het 42 verskillende spesies gevang waarvan die Diederikkie [Diederick Cuckoo] die mooiste was.

Ringkamp: Wilton Valley anderkant

Lephalale (Ellisras), 17–21 Maart

Saterdagoggend het sewe ringers en drie gades vertrek na Wilton Valley naby die Limpopo. Ons het 74 voëls gevang. Roofvoëling is altyd 'n hoogtepunt. Ons was gelukkig om die volgende op die balchatri te vang: 2 Roofarende [Tawny Eagle], 2 Grootjagarende [African Hawk-Eagle], 2 Blouvalke [Black-shouldered Kite] en een Swartborsslangarend [Black-chested Snake Eagle]. Ons het ook oulike spesies in die nette

gevang: Sabotalewerik [Sabota Lark], Witkeel-sanger [Common Whitethroat], Swartriethaan [Black Crake], Gewone Dikkop [Spotted Thick-knee], Bronsvlerkdrawwertjie [Bronze-winged Courser], Buffelwewer [Red-billed Buffalo Weaver], Bosveldlewerik [Monotonous Lark], Bosveldtinkinkie [Rattling Cisticola] en Europese Vlieëvanger [Spotted Flycatcher]. Ons het 28 verskillende spesies gering.

Botaniese Tuine, 24 Maart (C-Ringer opleiding)

Die ringsessie het ongelukkig uitgereg.

Buffelsdrif, 31 Maart (lekker ringsessie)

Elf ringers het op Saterdag 31 Maart by Buffelsdrif in Rob Geddes se kwekery bymekaar gekom. Ons het 96 voëls gevang waarvan 37 hervangste was (38.5%). Oulike spesies is gevang: Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoël [Levaillant's Cuckoo], Bosveldvisvanger [Woodland Kingfisher] en Kleingeelvink [Lesser Masked-Weaver]. Buffelsdrif is 'n gereelde ringplek; daarom die hoë hervangspersentasie. Buffelsdrif



Mantia Steyn

Voortrekkermonument: Paula Steyn met 'n jong Diederikkie/ Dideric Cuckoo



Mantia Steyn

Wilton Valley: Elba Swart met 'n Grootjagarend/African Hawk-Eagle



Kotie Opperman

Buffelsdrif: Gevlekte Nuwejaarsvoël/Levillant's Cuckoo gevang deur Gert Opperman

is een van ons beste ringplekke en ons waardeer Rob se goeie gesindheid teenoor die ring-groep. Dit is altyd 'n voorreg om daar te ring.

Moreletakloof NR klubring, 7 April

Saterdag 7 April het elf A-Ringers en twee C-Ringers vroegoggend by Moreletakloof NR byeengekom. Ons het 229 voëls gevang, waarvan 36 hervangste was. Die hoë hervangste kan toegeskryf word aan ons gereelde ringsessies oor verskeie jare by Moreletakloof NR. BLNG-lede het ook in die loop van die oggend by ons besoek afgelê. Die Vriende van Moreletakloof het in groot getalle kom kuier met baie jong kinders. Daar het ook 20 Unisa-studente kom aanklop vir hulp met hulle Natuurbewaringsmodule oor voëls. Oulike spesies wat ons gevang het is soos volg: Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern Boubou], Bontrug- en Dikbekwewer [Village and Thick-billed Weaver], Bruinsylangstertjie [Tawny-flanked Prinia], Kaapse Rietsanger en Kleinrietsanger [Lesser Swamp-Warbler and African Reed-Warbler].

Rietvlei NR, 21 April (C-ringer opleiding)

Agt A- en elf C-ringers het vroegoggend by Rietvlei NR se hoofhek bymekaar

gekom. Ons het 182 voëls gevang waarvan 10 hervangste was (5.5%). Besonders was 'n Namakwaduijie [Namaqua Dove] wat nog selde by Rietvlei gevang is. Van die 18 spesies wat ons gering het, was die volgende die beste: Kleinrietsanger en Kaapse Rietsanger [African Reed-Warbler and Lesser Swamp-Warbler], Kaapse Wewer [Cape Weaver] en Rooibeksysie [Common Waxbill]. 'n Goeie hervang was 'n Swartkeelgeelvink [Southern Masked-Weaver] wat 11 jaar gelede deur Colin de Kock gering is en nou weer deur Fransie O'Brien gevang is.

Magoebaskloof Ringkamp, 27 April – 1 Mei

Sewe ringers het die toer aangepak om Swoudvoëls te gaan ring in Magoebaskloof. Die getalle is nog nie beskikbaar nie, maar spesiale spesies was: Groenkolpensie [Green Twinspot], Reusevisvanger [Giant Kingfisher], Blougrys- en Donkervlieëvanger [Ashy and African Dusky Flycatcher] en Bergkwikkie [Mountain Wagtail].

Klubring by Bishopvoëlpark, 6 Mei

Nege ringers het by Bishopvoëlpark bymekaar gekom vir die maandelikse klubring. Heelwat BLNG-lede het in die loop van die dag



Jeanne du Plessis

Chris Bothma en 'n groep UNISA studente, Moreletakloof



Julian du Plooy

Magoebaskloof: Chris du Plooy met 'n Reusevisvanger/Giant Kingfisher



Keanu Cantu

Mistige oggend by Rietvlei NR op 21 April



Marrie Ueckermann

Werkstasie in die veld in Magoebaskloof

onder leiding van Alta Fraser by ons aangesluit op hulle voëlkykuitstappie. Ons het 190 voëls gevang waarvan 24 hervangste was (12.5%). Oulike spesies was Bruinkopvisvanger [Brownhooded Kingfisher], Bruinsylangstertjie [Tawny-flanked Prinia], Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern

Boubou], 7 Swart- en 9 Witpensuikerbekkies [Amethyst and White-bellied Sunbird], Geel-oog- en Bergkanarie [Yellow-fronted and Black-throated Canary] en Streepkopkanarie [Streaky-headed Seedeater].

African Scops Owl foraging technique

H Dieter Oschadleus

On 14 May 2018, John Schultz observed an African Scops-Owl [Skopsuil] on Breslau Game Farm, near Pontdrift, Limpopo Province, at 7.15 am. The owl flew to a group of three Red-headed Weaver [Rooikopwewer] nests near the farm house, and briefly hung from a nest entrance, before flying away.

Presumably, with an owl hanging from the nest, any birds still roosting in the nest would

have tried to fly out and potentially been caught by the owl. Being winter, there would not have been any chicks in the nest, but adults of both Red-headed Weavers and Cut-throat Finches [Bandkeelvink] could roost in the nests in winter.

If the above interpretation is correct, this would be a new (but unusual) foraging technique for this owl. It usually preys on

invertebrates on the ground but does rarely take birds (Hockey et al., 2005). There are no published records of this owl taking weavers, but Hartley (2002) heard it calling in a Red-billed Quelea [Rooibekkewelea] breeding colony, implying that it may have been feeding on quelea. The technique of hanging from weaver nests to extract chicks, or even unwary adults, is common in some other raptors, particularly Gabar Goshawks [Witkruissperwer] and African Harrier-Hawks [Kaalwangvalk], and has also been recorded in Barn Owls [Nonnetjie-uil] (e.g. Young, 2009).

Photos of the Red-headed Weaver colony may be viewed at: http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown_vm.php?vm=27369

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Grandstand view of breeding Hadedas

Evelyn Hermsen and Margarita Krusche

We live in a senior citizen apartment building. We have an atrium garden, no bigger than 600 square metres, but with two tall *Acacia sieberana* (Paperbark Thorn, renamed *Vachellia sieberana*) trees. These are favourite nesting spots for a variety of birds.

In 2016, a resident told me that he had observed a pair of Hadedas starting to build a nest in the *Acacia*

sieberana. “This is right in front of my apartment and I have chased them away, for they are so noisy.” I told him, in no uncertain terms, that he would be chased away, if he continued with chasing the Hadedas. He left grumbling unintelligibly. But he then became an ardent observer.

Once nest-building started, the Hadedas became dead quiet.

I gleaned this information from Peter Steyn’s book *Nesting Birds*: The nest is a flimsy structure of sticks. Hadedas differ from other Southern Africa Ibises in that a pair forms a long-term life bond. Because of this, the courtship behaviour is less complicated than in, for example, the Sacred Ibis. They use the same location (or tree in our case) year after year, mostly building a new nest each time.

Two eggs were laid towards the end of November, beginning of December. Incubation started as soon as the eggs were laid. Both parents did incubation duties, in two shifts, night and day duty. They would greet each



other 'tenderly' with bill rattling and preening each other.

Sometimes at 'shift change', the one bird would arrive with a beak full of soft nesting material. No greeting, but the brooding bird took off immediately, muttering: "you brought it, you place it!"

The first chick hatched on 2nd January 2017. What excitement – and it was named 'New Year'. The second chick hatched two days later. The shells, a beautiful light turquoise with mottled chocolate-brown markings, were picked up from the grass and admired.

Feeding is done by both parents. We observed that the older chick was invariably fed more often than the younger chick. Sadly after 10 days the younger chick died (of starvation?) and was pushed out. It was a tiny ball of fluff.

The remaining chick fledged during the first week of February. Initially it was reluctant to join the parents. Its plaintive begging noise was ignored until it flew down to join the parents and could be fed.

In October 2017 the Hadedas started building a new nest in the same tree, somewhat lower than the first nesting branch.

Because we had such a grandstand view from our balconies, we decided to become 'citizen scientists'.

So Evelyn noted the following:

- 31/10: First egg laid.
- 2/11: Second egg laid
- 6/11: Third egg laid



Tansyn Sherwill

Ed: A cacophony of Hadedas? (actually the collective noun for ibises or ibes is a 'congregation', 'stand', 'wedge' or 'crowd'), Riet River, Eastern Cape

- Incubation started as soon as the first egg was laid, both parents taking turns in incubation duties.
- 25/11: First hatchling
- 26/11: Second hatchling
- 29/11: Third hatchling
- On 3/12, third hatchling dies, probably through starvation.

On 12/12, another chick dies and the following day the last surviving chick dies and both are chucked out of the nest. Both chicks had all their feathers, except on their vents. This is a total mystery – can anybody offer a reason? We are eagerly awaiting this year's breeding season. 🐦

DONATIONS (February – May 2018)

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.

Ian Alexander, Matthys van der Hout, Engela J van Rensburg, Sunette van der Walt, Estelle Raath, Marie Ueckermann, Inge Joyce, Klaus Rust, Adrian Moll, Ray & Anne Shaw, Angela Kerslake, Michael Heyns, Philip Calinikos, Cleo Artemides, André Marx



Long-billed Pipit – one of the target species for a BLNG outing to Hoogland Health Hydro, 27 May: Thank you to Philip Calinikos and everyone who attended for a final tally of 66 species, which also included Short-toed Rock-Thrush, Lazy Cisticola, Chinspot Batis, a number of now v. familiar Familiar Chats and one (unfortunately camera-shy) Fairy Flycatcher.
Tamsyn Sherwill



25 March 2018: After days of heavy rain in Pretoria and surrounds, the Kgomo-Kgomo floodplain wetland lived up to its name. The photo shows the view from a vehicle attempting to use the Zaagkuilsdrift road just beyond Wolfhuiskraal.

Riana Bortha



SABAP and BirdLasser Workshop, 30 June: Over 40 people attended this event focused on assisting birders to get the most out of BirdLasser and at the same time become fully-fledged full-protocol atlasers (Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 citizen scientists). A big thank you to Ernst Retief from BLSA and BirdLasser's Henk Nel for an inspiring and informative morning.



9 June: BirdLife Rustenburg and BLNG outing to Robega sunflower fields and Rockwall Dam: At Robega, approx. 30 Yellow-throated Sandgrouse (our target) were seen flying overhead – also spotted were 2 Lanner Falcons, Capped Wheatear, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark and Yellow Canary. At Rockwall Dam we had excellent sightings of Yellow-billed Storks and Caspian Terns, and also Barbet and White-throated Robin-Chat. A great time was had by all with excellent camaraderie between BLNG and BL Rustenburg – more than 85 birds were Lassered up till 1 pm.
Shaun McGillewie (BirdLife Rustenburg)



A successful morning's birding for BLNG at Rust de Winter with Rihann Geysler, 22 April: lifers and specials like Little Bittern, African Hawk Eagle, African Fish Eagle, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Brubru, Green-winged Pytilia, Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike and many more! The list was called at 82 species.
Sheleph Burger

Sheleph Burger



BLNG bird ID course with Geoff Lockwood, 14 July: Over 60 people attended this course aimed at beginner and intermediate birders. The 'magic formula' for observing birds was shared, and the course ended with a focus on making sense of a challenging (frustrating?) LBJ group: cisticolas. Much appreciation to Geoff Lockwood for an enlightening and also entertaining day.



Conservation espionage: an image captured by a camera trap of a female juvenile White-winged Flufftail – this monitoring technique resulted in the discovery of a new breeding locality for this Critically Endangered species in January this year. To expand the study to at least 3 more wetlands, more cameras are needed – recent donations by BLNG and its members have helped BLSA towards their target of 60 new camera traps for the 2018/19 breeding season. Visit www.birdlife.org.za/support-us/donate to make a contribution.



A mammal crashes a birding outing to FGNR: On 16 June, I led a group of 10 club members on an outing through Faerie Glen Nature Reserve that proved that winter birding in the suburbs is far from boring! We quickly notched up species like Cut-throat Finch, Black-chested Prinias in their deceptive winter dress and Red-throated Wryneck. A winter bird-party yielded bushveld species like crombecks and tit-babblers and many seedeaters. As the day wore on bird activity dropped, but we managed to find another obliging wryneck, African Black Duck, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird and overwintering Klaas's Cuckoo, ending on 57 species.
Keano Canto



BLNG outing to view the nesting site of the Verreaux's Eagles near the Wonderboompoort, 20 June: Heartfelt thanks to Pieter & Natasja Saunders for sharing the morning routine of these magnificent birds. Highlights included the pair soaring over the valley in a breathtaking display, and the male perched on the communication tower for quite some time, before the female left the nest and chick to also bask in the morning sun. The photo shows the female's cautious return to the nest. Thanks once again to the Saunders couple for a life-changing experience. Please visit <http://www.blackeagleswb.org>.
Henk Smit

Birding in the HEAT: Northern Cape – Bushmanland and Namaqualand, 15–27 January 2018

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

Does it get hot in the Northern Cape? Very hot in summer and cold in winter. But the best season to find the 'specials' of that region is probably in summer. We had tried to get a booking for Augrabies in February but, alas, the entire camp had been booked out. March didn't suit Kathrin and in April we already had commitments – so January it had to be.

We took to the road on Monday 15th January at 05:30 in order to arrive at our first stop-over – 813 km to Upington. When the thermometer in the car reached a sweltering 41°C, we sensed that we would be birding in the heat. We were most grateful when we arrived to an air-conditioned room at our B&B.

The next day we drove on to Augrabies Falls National Park, slightly cooler at 39°C. The desperate drought and heat were evident whilst driving on the N14 through North West and Northern Cape: croplands were lying fallow without enough rain having fallen to warrant planting, or the maize was just shrivelled up and perishing. Spare a thought and a prayer for those poor farmers!

The scenery changed markedly when we came to the Orange River irrigation scheme: green vineyards for 80 km and more between Upington and Kakamas, carrying a heavy and delicious load of grapes. After stopping at Orange River Wine Cellars to purchase some of their award-winning Muscadel we took a journey along memory lane and visited Kanoneiland. This 'island' is wedged in between two arms of the Orange River and has an interesting history. It is a peaceful place, again mainly under cultivation of grapes.

We booked into our nice air-conditioned chalet at Augrabies Falls National Park. Our visit to the Augrabies Falls was a hot affair – the

water levels were alarmingly low, but still the falls were impressive.

Back at the chalet, which bordered on a green belt, we were able to spot some birds, drooping their wings and panting through agape bills, trying to cope with the heat – Red-eyed Bulbul, Acacia Pied Barbet, Speckled Pigeon, Brubru and the ubiquitous Pale-winged Starlings [Rooioogtiptol, Bonthoutkapper, Kransduif, Bontroklaksman, Bleekvlerkspreeu]. We had come here to enjoy the natural surroundings and to spot the Orange River White-eye [Garipegglasogie]. The park had recently built a bird-hide overlooking a pond with muddy water, where we stopped to try spot this bird, but it was just too hot. We did see Cape Wagtail, Wattled Starlings, Red-billed Quelea, and Dusky Sunbird, amongst others [Gewone Kwikkie, Lelspreeu, Rooibekkwelea, Namakwasuikerbekkie]. The next day we got up at the crack of dawn to bird the camp and surroundings in the relative cool of the early morning, but Vervet Monkeys and Small Grey Mongooses had beaten us to it and were already feeding on fallen seeds of the Buffalothorn and other trees. After some hours of birding, I got the first glimpse of one of our 'target-birds', an Orange River White-eye with its washed-out yellow throat/chest and russet-to-peach-coloured flanks. We had to determine their habits and preferred habitat before we could get to spot them more often and get some photos – the latter is not easy as this little bird is always flitting about, never sitting still. It took me three days to get some mediocre photos. There were numerous other species enjoying the cool of the morning: Cape Glossy Starling, Black-chested Prinia, Malachite Kingfisher, African Pied Wagtail,

Yellow Canary, Cape Bunting and others [Kleinglanspreeu, Swartbandlangstertjie, Kuifkopvisvanger, Bontkwikkie, Geelkanarie, Rooivlerkstreepkoppie]. Ground squirrels were standing up on their haunches keeping watch while Rock Hyraxes were hobbling about.

After a late breakfast we took a drive along the very well laid-out routes to various viewpoints and places of interest. Majestic views of the basin of the Augrabies Falls could be seen with the water far below, the scenes reminded me of the great Fish River Canyon. There were few birds about, braving the soaring heat: White-throated Canary [Witkeelkanarie], Common Waxbill [Rooibeksysie] close to some of the low-water bridges, a solitary Three-banded Plover, Karoo Long-billed Lark, Namaqua Dove, Red-faced Mousebirds [Driebandstrandkiewiet, Karoolangbeklewerik, Namakwadiuifie, Rooiwangmuisvoël]. At a waterhole we spotted giraffe and springbok. The giraffe were much lighter in colour than the ones I am used to seeing in the North West parks, possibly an adaptation to shed or repel heat. We also admired fine specimens of the Quiver Tree, *Aloe dichotoma*, which is fully adapted to this arid and hot habitat. At midday we returned to camp in need of some lunch and an air-conditioned room to take an afternoon nap.

The next day we undertook an early-morning drive and continued further from where we had left off the previous afternoon. A Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk [Bleeksingvalk] was sitting on a dried-out tree showing well, Scaly-feathered Finches [Baardmannetjie] were hopping on the ground, Sociable Weavers [Versamelvoël] were in and out of their nests. We drove to a waterhole marked as a 4x4 route, (which was very 'tame') and stopped for breakfast. We had just sat down when we first heard their particular call *Ki-ki-veee, Ki-ki-veee* (*kelkiewyn*), before we saw them flying in, in large numbers – flying over the waterhole several times before landing, going into the water, drinking and sucking up water into their chest- and belly-feathers to transport to their offspring, before flying off again in a



Augrabies Falls Gorge

Neilhard Graf von Dürckheim



Namaqua Sandgrouse/Kelkiewyn

Neilhard Graf von Dürckheim

flurry of wing-beats – Namaqua Sandgrouse [Kelkiewyn]. We sat there in awe throughout our breakfast admiring this spectacle, flocks flying in and flying out, continuously calling. This was certainly one of the highlights of this trip.

The following day we left for the metropolis of Pofadder: The town originated from a mission station in 1875 and was not named after the venomous snake, but Klaas Pofadder the Korana Khoikhoi chief. It is a tiny dusty country town, with nothing much to see or do. We stayed at 7deLaan Guest House, which providentially had air-conditioning in the flatlet, albeit not very powerful. We took a drive to the north on the road to Onseepkans, hoping for Burchell's Courser [Bloukopdrawwertjie]. The road was in an extremely poor condition and my poor SUV got shaken up severely (this

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Ground squirrel

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Port Nolloth Harbour

probably also caused the damage to the front universal joint). We saw a minimum of birds and after some 12 km of back-aching road we turned back and drove on to an unmarked farm road for quite some distance where we were treated to a very nice addition to the list: Cape Clapper Lark [Kaapse Klappertjie].

The next day we got up at 05:00 and took the N14 (very good road) in the direction of Aggeneys (Khoisan for 'place of water'). After some confusion as to where to turn off, as the roads all had no signposts (take the road turning off to the left exactly 53 km from Pofadder, and don't drive on to Aggeneys which is another 10 km down the road), we reached the road to Gamoep/Namies (also not signposted), and turning off to the right after 8.1 and 2.7 km reached the Koa Dunes. These are very peculiar

red dunes close to the dry Koa River bed. We drove up and down the target area for an hour or so, spotting various birds: Spike-heeled Lark, Northern Black Korhaan, Ant-eating Chat, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark [Vlaktelewerik, Witvlerkorhaan, Swartpiek, Grysruglewerik] as well as Karoo Eremomela [Groenbossanger] (watch out for 'geographic variations' as their colours and appearance do vary) and others. Then we saw a movement on the bare soil in between the little Karoo shrubs – we got out of the car to take a closer look – Red Lark [Rooilewerik]! We had found the target species. It was still relatively cool at 07:15 and the bird was moving about on the ground, running short bouts, feeding. Out came the camera and I got some really good pictures of this special bird.

Whilst driving very slowly we had heard a 'clacking' noise emanating from the left front of the vehicle. It was Saturday. A phone-call to our landlord confirmed that there was no mechanic in Pofadder. A call to the Nissan dealer in Springbok gave us hope. In the end a mechanic drove the 100-odd km from Pofadder to Aggeneys, diagnosed the problem as a worn front universal joint, and removed the front driveshaft which he took back to Springbok. We were mobile again, albeit only on 2-wheel-drive. Two days later, when we were in Springbok, we acquired a spare-part, and the Nissan dealer replaced it for us for a most reasonable charge. A big 'thank you' to Nissan in Springbok.

While still driving with our 2-wheel-drive-only we surveyed the area and landed up in a village called Pella. Renowned for its production of dates (date palms), it was founded as a mission station by the London Missionary Society and later taken over by the Roman Catholic Church (1878). Two priests, with the aid of only an encyclopaedia, built a cathedral-like church which is still in use, and on Sunday we observed a vast congregation of locals coming from Mass.

The next stop on our schedule was Springbok, the 'capital of Namaqualand', which owes its existence to the opening of the first copper mines in the region in the 1850s. With

the aid of my GPS we located suitable accommodation at a motel that must have been 'the in place' some time back, which was located pleasantly peacefully out of town, and had very effective air-conditioning in the room. On the way we spotted Greater Kestrel and the ever-present Pied Crows. We did some exploring of Springbok town and got ourselves some dinner at a pleasant eating place. The following day we left early for the 15 000 ha Goegap Nature Reserve, south-east of Springbok. We did not have high expectations of this reserve, after driving through hot and desolate countryside, with at least the plant-life, if not the entirety of the natural environment – all organisms and living things (and their ecology), having taken a pounding by the heat and desperate drought. We had hoped to perhaps find the Large-billed Lark (previously called Thick-billed Lark – I don't wish to enter the debate about the reasons for some name-changes, in Afrikaans it's still called Dikbeklewerik). We were pleasantly surprised. This was one of the nicest places we had seen in the Northern Cape. An excellently kept thatched office building; the Hester Malan Wild Flower Reserve, displaying a vast variety of succulent plants of the region (this alone is a good reason to come here); an excellent 13-km circular route which can be negotiated by a normal sedan vehicle; and the rare Hartmann's Mountain Zebra (quite different to the Burchell's, or Plains Zebra we know).

At the office area we immediately spotted Cape Bulbul with the diagnostic white ring around their eyes.

The early morning light and the shadows still cast by the rocky hills had a special quality and created an exceptional atmosphere. About 3 km into the circular route we had some great birding: Bokmakierie was calling, Karoo Chat [Karoospekvreter] showed, Spike-heeled Lark pairs were engaged in mating displays which were awesome to watch, Yellow Canaries were spotted as well as White-throated Canaries. Then we were lucky to find our target species: Large-billed Lark, but my camera would not focus quickly enough for a picture – and, yes, it did have a sizable bill, slightly yellow on the



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Red Lark/Weskuslangbeklewerik



Heinhard Graf von Dürckheim

Goegap Nature Reserve

lower mandible. We were very lucky. Further on Karoo Scrub-Robin showed, (Southern) Grey Tit and even Layard's Tit-babbler [Slangverklikker, Piet-tjou-tjou-grysmees, Grystjeriktik]. We spent an excellent and pleasing morning birding in Goegap. This can be recommended.

The last stop was Port Nolloth. We drove from Springbok on the N7 to Steinkopf, which also started its existence as a mission settlement, founded in 1818. Here we turned off west onto a good tar road, which led us onto the Anenous Pass (which reminded me a bit of Van Reenen's Pass) and from there we drove downhill to Port Nolloth, 92 km on. The town was named after Commander MS Nolloth who surveyed the west coast and found this bay to be most suitable for a harbour for shipment of copper ore. With the aid of my GPS we again



Reinhard Graf von Dürckheim

Koa Dunes

searched for accommodation and found a neat small chalet in McDougall Bay, some 2 km from Port Nolloth. We took a walk on the beach, observing flocks of hundreds of Sanderlings [Drietoonstrandloper] – running along the water’s edge, running after the waves, and feeding where the waves had receded, probing the sand hurriedly. There were also White-fronted Plovers [Vaalstrandkiewiet] to be seen in good numbers. On the cliff-barriers some 300–400 m into the water there were hundreds of Cape Cormorant [Trekduiker] – they were feeding in the water, roosting and drying themselves on the cliffs, or flying in long lines over the sea, often just over the breaking waves. And then there were Hartlaub’s Gulls [Harlaubse Meeu], outnumbering the Kelp Gulls [Kelpmeeu]. Spotted Thick-knee [Gewone Dikkop] were before the rocky shoreline, standing very still and observing us through half-closed eyes.

The next day was overcast, misty and moist from a drizzle. We had left before dawn and drove on the road north towards Alexander Bay, looking for larks, and more specifically Barlow’s Lark [Barlowse Lewerik], an endemic resident of this area. It was very quiet. As the tar road was carrying substantial traffic, which made birding impossible, we drove on the gravel section next to the road. We spotted the Cape Long-billed Lark [Weskuslangbeklewerik], which was a nice addition to the list, and I got to photograph it the next day, perching on a fence-post in the

early morning. A few Spike-heeled Larks were showing and the occasional Yellow Canary and Yellow-bellied Eremomela [Geelpensbossanger] (again we had to carefully observe the ‘geographic variations’). We drove up and down the road for most of the morning, then gave it up and returned to Port Nolloth to pay a visit to the local museum, which is owned and run by local retired diamond-diver George Moyes. He has assembled a treasure trove of history and artefacts over many years; he told us stories of diamond smuggling, bribery and illicit diamond-related transactions. He explained the perils of diamond diving, but also showed us pictures of great scoops of diamonds found on the seabed. His eyes were glittering as he reminisced about these experiences.

Next we went to the harbour in search of those famed crayfish. We were told that West Coast Rock Lobster season was closed and that only a few fishermen have a permit, and that all the sizeable crayfish are directly exported. We were shown some small solitary specimens at a price of R285/kg, head and all. No thank you! A survey of the local restaurants also proved fruitless – no crayfish – but what surprised us more was that we could not get fresh fish in any of the restaurants, only hake which is delivered frozen from Spar. “But this is a fishing village!” I exclaimed. “Go to the harbour and purchase directly from the boats” was the reply. “Will you cook it for us?” “Only if you supply us with an official receipt; otherwise they will close our restaurant.” End of discussion. I had to go back to the chalet and braai some *wors*.

The next day we again left at the crack of dawn to take a second try at Barlow’s Lark. We had read up all about it and how to distinguish it from Karoo Larks [Karoolewerik], the latter having streaking on the flanks whereas Barlow’s Lark has none. We drove on the gravel road next to the main tar road to Alexander Bay and probably travelled 15 km or more at walking speed to try to see the bird. A solitary Jackal Buzzard was sitting on a dry tree some distance off the road, into the forbidden diamond area. Again we observed the same species that we had seen the previous day. We made

peace with the thought that we would 'dip' on Barlow's.

We turned back towards Port Nolloth. About 2 km before we reached town, I saw a lark flying up from the ground and perching in one of the small shrubs – it was Barlow's Lark, but before I could direct Kathrin to its whereabouts it flew off. We drove on very slowly and approximately 200 m further we finally managed to spot it. We took a good look at it through the binoculars, checking all the salient features – yes, it was Barlow's Lark. When I reached for the camera it flew off. End of sighting. The next day we departed back for Pretoria, 1 360-odd km which we did over two days.

Despite the high temperatures, the heat was more bearable due to the low humidity. We had had a most interesting and rewarding birding trip. We spotted 'only' 80 species, but among them were endemics you will only or mainly find in that region. We would have been poorer if we had not experienced the Northern Cape with its vast open spaces.

Highs and lows and tips:

- We drove on the N14 from Pretoria, turning right (west) before Krugersdorp. From there until 40 km beyond Ventersdorp the road is bumpy, partially potholed and not in a good condition. As you prepare to leave North West Province and move into the Northern Cape, the road is remarkably good.



Neilhard Graf von Dürckheim

Cape Long-billed Lark/Weskuslangbeklewerik

- In the Northern Cape, but sadly missing in North West, you have picnic spots every 50 or so km; these mostly have a roof of wood and are a most welcome place to stop for lunch.
- The 'road' to Onseepkans (from Pofadder) is in a pitiful state and I would not advise driving it with a sedan vehicle.
- If you can, take a fridge along – we took our Engel fridge in the car and were happy to have cold drinks and to keep our supplies cold – and to have a cold beer on arrival!
- In all we travelled 3 360 km on the trip. Fuel is also more expensive from Upington onwards.
- Try to find accommodation equipped with air-conditioning – you will need it! Except for Port Nolloth which is cooler, the temperature range was 37–41°C. 🐾

Hummingbirds – the 'good side'

Lizet Grobbelaar

A flash of harmless lightning,

A mist of rainbow dyes,

The burnished sunbeams brightening,

From flower to flower he flies:

John Bannister Tabb, 1845–1909

In December 2014, Johann and I, with our two daughters, visited Ecuador for three weeks – specifically to see and photograph

hummingbirds. Hummingbirds are insect and nectar eaters and mostly associated with the American Tropics. It was thought that hummingbirds originated in South America; however, in 2004, two fossils were discovered in Germany, identified as primitive hummingbirds and believed to be over 30 million years old.

Of the known 334 different species of hummingbirds in the world, 129 are found in



Lizet Grobbelaar

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird – one of the noisiest hummingbirds we saw



Lizet Grobbelaar

Female Booted Racket-tail, sitting on Johann's index finger. At certain bird lodges in Ecuador the hummingbirds are very used to humans.

Ecuador. We were lucky enough to see and photograph 35 of these, all in the northern parts of Ecuador. We had to catch three different international flights from South Africa to reach Quito, which is the capital of Ecuador. From Quito we travelled by car to the province of Pichincha on the western slopes of the Andes mountain range. Here we spent two weeks in different habitats, from the upper cloud forest to the lower tropical forests, searching for and photographing all kinds of birds. For the last week we stayed on the eastern side of the Andes



Lizet Grobbelaar

Green-crowned Brilliant. The bright green forehead and blue throat is only visible if seen from the front. Sometimes you need to move camera and lens to be able to get that 'good side' you're after, but mostly the birds play along!



Lizet Grobbelaar

Green-crowned Wood-Nymph. The bird on the left, the output light source was higher and from different angles which in effect enhanced the iridescence of the reflecting colours giving a more in-depth result.

close to the Papallacta Pass and its surroundings, which is in the Napo Province. The Papallacta Pass is at an elevation of 4 000 m above sea level and this is also a good place to look out for the Andean Condor, which we saw at a disappointing distance. In the Papallacta it's always cold and rainy – in fact while we were there it rained every day, making photography difficult. Luckily the hummingbirds are not influenced by the bad weather at all, as they were active during all weather conditions, unlike the insects which disappeared when the rain started.



Male White-bellied Woodstar. Note the black throat on the right, if not seen from the front, and the wings frozen in mid-air.

Seeing a hummingbird for the very first time is an unforgettable experience and a real 'bucket list' event! To be able to really appreciate these little wonders of the birding world and to understand their tininess you need to compare them against something you are familiar with, like your index finger. Rightfully so, as the Bee Hummingbird, considered the smallest bird in the world, is only 6–7 cm from the tip of the longish bill to the tip of the tail, and can be found in Cuba. Hummingbirds are so unique and beautiful that even a non-photographer will love to photograph them.

People often talk about their 'good side' when taking a photograph. In photography terms one's 'good side' is the side of the face that appears best on a photograph, and naturally is the side you should turn towards the photographer to get the best image. For hummingbirds, getting their 'good side' can be a real challenge! The tiny iridescent feathers play a big role in showing off their 'good side'. Seen from up close the luminance of the feathers is like tiny mirrors reflecting the different colours towards you. So the angle of the hummer's iridescent feathers towards the camera and lens needs to be considered. In some species the feathers are more directional and therefore you need to see the hummer right from the front to capture their full glory. Viewed side on, only black will be visible. In other hummer species the feathers are rounded or more curved so the iridescence is scattered in all directions and visible from all angles.



Male Sword-billed Hummingbird in a back-stroke wing movement

Flash (at least two or more!) is also needed to capture these little jewels' true magical brilliance. As the natural ambient light is often insufficient to get the shiny feathers, we used several flashes on different tripods and directed the external light sources to project onto the birds from different angles. The small feathers react like mirrors reflecting the light from all angles back to the camera, resulting in a more in-depth photograph instead of a flat, two-dimensional image. If you don't want that unpleasing dark background you also need to direct a flash onto the background.

Flash also helps to freeze those fast-fluttering wings (up to 80 times per second in the smaller hummers), to capture a more pleasing photograph. Because a camera's shutter speed is not fast enough to freeze the wings at such

high speeds, you have to use external light sources with speeds as fast as 1/16 000 of a second to be able to freeze the wings in mid-air. Hummingbirds are unique in the fact that they don't flap their wings like other birds but rotate their wings in an '8' shaped movement, backwards and forwards, creating an up- and down-lift of air. This movement enables them to fly backwards, and makes hovering in mid-air or in front of a flower possible. It is also this fast wing rotation that produces the buzzing insect noise, sounding almost exactly like a bee!

I have to admit, one of the most impressive members of the hummingbird family that we photographed has to be the Sword-billed Hummingbird! Proportional to its body, this bird has the longest bill in the world! Because of its long bill, the Sword-billed has developed unusually flexible legs and feet to be able to scratch even the centre of its back, which is still considered preening, also known as

scratch-preening. The female has paler underparts with a speckled throat. These birds are only found at elevations higher than 1 700 m, in humid temperate forests. To our knowledge, the adult feeding chicks at the nest has never been photographed before. Definitely something worthwhile to go back for!

Sources and further reading:

Hummingbirds – a Guide to Every Species, by Michael Fogden, Marianne Taylor and Sheri L Williamson
Fieldbook of the Birds of Ecuador including the Galápagos Islands, by Miles Macmillan and Lelis Navarrete
Ecuador & Galapagos Islands – Adventure Travel Map, by National Geographic
The Birds of Ecuador Field Guide, by Robert S Ridgely and Paul J Greenfield
DyessCreek Photography 📷

Pretoria – the Transvaal bird mecca

Tony Harris, Dept Birds, Transvaal Museum

Originally published in Laniarius 28, March 1986

Pretoria lies on the intersection of four quarter-degree squares (2528CA, CB, CC & CD); each quarter-degree square covers an area of approximately 25 km x 28 km. This represents an area described by a radius of about 30 km around Pretoria. It stretches from Mabopane/Petronella in the north to Olifantsfontein/Tembisa in the south, and from almost Cullinan in the east to GaRankuwa and just west of Atteridgeville in the west.

Within the area there have been 427 species recorded. One of the squares (2528CA, which is NW of Pretoria situated approximately west of the Pretoria–Warmbaths road and north of the Pretoria–Hartbeespoort road) has an incredible 385 species recorded, the highest for the Transvaal. Two of the other three squares have over 300 species recorded, while one has 295. The only other square to come close to

385 is the square in which Nylsvley falls, with 365 species.

Putting these figures into perspective, the 427 species recorded in the 30 km radius around Pretoria represent almost 50% of southern African birds. Compared to the 630 species recorded for the Transvaal, almost 70% occur within this radius. Compared to that most wild of wildest places, namely Kruger National Park, there are 86% of Kruger birds recorded for the Pretoria area. Finally, for a non-African comparison, there are almost as many species in this area as have been recorded for the whole of Britain! But then that really is an impoverished birding area.

Of the 427 species occurring in this area 267 are resident, 99 are migrants (inter- and intra-African migrants), 52 are nomadic (species which are resident within the Transvaal but

	No. of species	No. of ¼° squares	Species/square	% Transvaal species	% SA species	km ² /species
Transvaal	630	462	1.4	100	71	513.3
KNP	480	40	12	76	54	58.3
Pretoria area	427	4	107	68	48	6.5

whose distribution does not include Pretoria), and finally 9 are vagrants (migrants off-course).

In this age of exorbitant fuel prices, the comparisons in the table above may be of interest, particularly for the twitchers who are trying to improve on their daily, weekly or monthly lists. The average number of square kilometres (km²) required to be covered in order to tick a new species is 513 km² for the whole of the Transvaal, 58 km² for Kruger Park and only 6.5 km² in the Pretoria area.

Conclusions

The only conclusions to be drawn from these dynamic facts is that the founder of Pretoria – one Andries Pretorius – must have been a keen

birder to site this city in so rich a bird area.

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- Maclean GL (1984). *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund.
- Newman K (1980). *Birds of Southern Africa. 1, Kruger National Park*. Macmillan, SA.

Ed: For those readers too young to know what/where the Transvaal is/was: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaal_\(province\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaal_(province)) 🐦

The Great Mini Big Year

Keanu Canto

Being a broke high school student who isn't even old enough to hold a driver's licence, most of my birding is based around where I live. But local-patch birding is by no means dull birding!

The Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2) divides South Africa into squares (called 'pentads') measuring 5 minutes of latitude by 5 minutes of longitude, and it is in these pentads that citizen scientists conduct frequent surveys of the local birdlife. Inspired by our friend John Kinghorn's bird sightings WhatsApp group for his home pentad in Randburg, a fellow youth birder, Juan van den Heever, and I decided

to set up a similar system for our own home pentad – Pentad 2545_2815 in suburban Pretoria East. The group grew quickly and members shared interesting and unusual bird sightings from our little patch of birding heaven.

At the beginning of 2017, Henk Nel of BirdLasser kindly agreed to set up a BirdLasser pentad challenge for us. Participants could log the birds they saw, on their phones, and these would automatically appear under their name on the online challenge webpage. Here I give a brief, patchy account of my year-long quest to see how many species I could find in my local pentad:

BIRDsearch

Laura Jordaan

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
1	T	S	E	T	O	O	F	N	I	F	H	N	B	L	N	G	N	S	I	T
2	A	R	N	E	T	Y	I	A	N	R	O	L	L	E	R	O	E	L	Z	E
3	L	E	S	I	S	S	N	O	T	R	O	G	O	N	C	S	D	W	P	R
4	A	D	A	O	P	T	C	L	E	A	P	O	O	L	O	P	D	O	I	G
5	K	B	I	R	O	E	H	H	R	I	O	C	A	B	O	R	I	N	E	E
6	A	I	N	E	H	R	O	O	M	L	E	F	Z	A	T	E	C	R	D	Y
7	L	L	I	D	O	C	A	P	E	T	E	A	L	T	I	Y	K	A	A	T
8	P	L	R	L	C	A	P	E	D	N	L	R	A	E	P	G	Y	B	V	A
9	I	E	P	A	E	T	I	P	I	P	D	E	L	L	I	B	G	N	O	L
10	N	D	U	R	R	C	D	R	A	Z	Z	U	B	E	P	P	E	T	C	S
11	E	Q	C	K	E	H	G	O	T	R	S	E	L	U	Y	I	T	T	E	H
12	S	U	H	I	T	E	M	C	E	O	R	I	A	R	F	B	T	I	T	I
13	W	E	A	T	R	R	A	K	E	O	O	O	T	S	F	S	B	T	T	K
14	I	L	T	E	A	R	R	M	G	S	A	B	T	A	U	I	C	O	A	R
15	F	E	P	S	D	D	S	A	R	K	R	O	T	S	B	B	I	L	H	A
16	T	A	D	O	V	E	H	R	E	V	O	L	P	N	A	I	P	S	A	C
17	B	U	F	F	S	P	O	T	T	E	D	F	L	U	F	F	T	A	I	L
18	R	U	F	F	U	I	W	I	L	I	T	T	L	E	G	R	E	B	E	S
19	B	R	U	B	R	U	L	N	I	U	G	N	E	P	O	O	T	N	E	G
20	O	G	R	E	Y	G	O	A	W	A	Y	B	I	R	D	R	O	N	G	O

AKALAT
ALPINESWIFT
BARNOWL
BATELEUR
BATIS
BLNG
BRUBRU
BUFFSPOTTEDFLUFFTAIL
BUFFYPIBIT
BUZZARD
CAPETEAL
CASPIANPLOVER
CHAT
COOT
DARTER
DOVE
DRONGO

FINCH
FINFOOT
GENTOOPENGUIN
GREYGOAWAYBIRD
HOBBY
HOOPOE
IBIS
INTERMEDIATEEGRET
KITE
LITTLEGREBE
LONGBILLEDPIBIT
MARSHOWL
MOORHEN
NEDDICKY
OSPREY
OYSTERCATCHER
PARROT

PEREGRINEFALCON
PIEDAVOCET
PITTA
PRINIA
RAIL
REDBILLEDQUELEA
REDLARK
ROCKMARTIN
ROLLER
RUFF (x2)
SHIKRA
SLATYEGRET
SNIPE
SQUACCOHERON
STORK
TIT (x3)
TROGON

1 January 2017 – slow start to the year

Pentad 2545_2815 is primarily covered with suburban residential areas, but dotted amongst these are a number of green gems hosting all sorts of mouthwatering species just waiting to be discovered. This is one aspect that makes local pentad birding so exciting! On the first day of the year I set out with my family to hike Faerie Glen Nature Reserve, the largest of these green gems. Highlights on the day included a Glossy Ibis flyover, Grey-backed Camaroptera, White-winged Widowbird and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird [Glansibis, Gysrugkwêkwêvoël, Witvlerkflap, Geelblestinker]. (Accumulated total: 53)

6 April 2017 – 2 birdies and an 'eagle'

Armed with precious 'gen'¹ from my friend, Cameron Meyer, I birded Kimiad Golf Course – a spot in the pentad that I had never before visited. I managed to add a few more to my list – notable birds were Orange-breasted Waxbills, Red-knobbed Coots with tiny chicks, and stunning Little Sparrowhawks [Rooiassie, Bleshoender, Kleinsperwer]. (Accumulated total: 124)

26 May 2017 – shopping centre birding

On the 23rd of May, Rowan van Tonder, a prominent SABAP2 atlaser of our pentad, reported a Freckled Nightjar [Donkernaguil] hunting from the roof of a local Spar. While I had heard this species before in the pentad, I

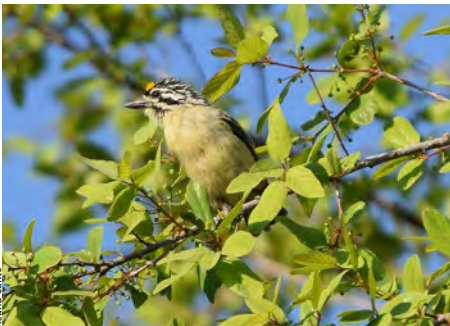
was yet to see one here, and so later that week I joined a throng of twitchers to see this bird. As local shoppers watched us with curiosity, we watched a stunner of a bird flit in and out of the light. (Accumulated total: 128)

20 July 2017 – pipit twitch

On the way to visiting the dermatologist at the Pretoria East Hospital (one of the joys of being a teenager), I spotted a bird that was unmistakably a pipit running around on the traffic circle in front of the hospital. Although it was almost certainly an African Pipit [Gewone Koester] (rare in our heavily-developed urban jungle) I refused to tick it on those views and so, returning with binoculars and armed with pepper spray, managed to get better views that confirmed my thoughts. This set in motion a small twitch that was attended by at least three other local birders – there is just something great about starting a twitch, no matter how small! (Accumulated total: 133)

December 2017 – mad dash

A helpful boost to my list arrived during the December holidays. Setting out with my friend, Jean-Pierre de la Rey, we atlased the pentad extensively, and I managed to scratch up 120 species on a full protocol card. New additions to my list included Klaas's, Red-chested and Levillant's Cuckoo, Half-collared



Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird/Geelblestinker



Cattle Egret/Veereier



Keanu Cantio

Little Sparrowhawk/Kleinsperwer

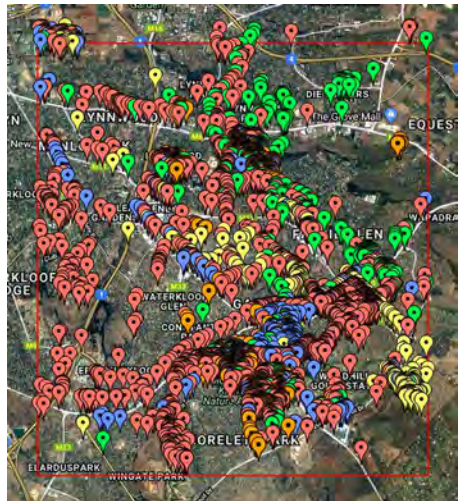


Keanu Cantio

Klaas's Cuckoo/Meitjie

Kingfisher, Familiar Chat and Greater Honeyguide [Meitjie, Piet-my-vrou, Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoël, Blouvisvanger, Gewone Spekvreter, Grootheuningwyser]. A Namaqua Dove [Namakwadiuife], rare in Pretoria, was my 150th bird and my last bird of the year for the pentad was a flock of more than 100 White Storks [Witooievaar] over the eastern portion of the pentad. Bird Number 153 and a fitting end to an awesome year! (Accumulated total: 153)

Thank you to all who helped me to achieve this – my family and friends – and well done to all the participants in last year's 2545_2815 Pentad Challenge. The challenge map and all the participant's tallies can be seen at www.birdlasser.com/private/events/25452815. 208 species was the combined total that was recorded. If you are interested in joining this year's challenge or joining the sightings WhatsApp group, feel free to email keanumrc@gmail.com.



Pentad 2545_2815 Challenge map

'gen': information. UK twitcher term for information on a birding spot or sighting; originally British military slang based on the word 'genuine' – gen can be 'pukka' (good) or 'duff' (bad).

What is a 'bird party' (and are there 'party birds')?

What birders term a 'bird party' is known by ecologists as a mixed-species foraging flock (MSFF - see <https://koedoe.co.za/index.php/koedoe/article/view/1314/1866>), defined as an aggregation of more than two species that actively initiate and continue an association with each other while foraging, and not as a result of being attracted to a specific resource (a fruiting tree, for example). MSFFs are usually led by a particular (nucleus) species, typically one with a tendency toward both flocking (within species) and conspicuous behaviour (vocalising, movement).

The city of Kurrichane

Christo Siebert

During the course of the Club's ringing session at the Pretoria Botanical Garden on 19 May 2018, we were fortunate to ring, amongst others, five Kurrichane Thrushes or Rooibeklyster (*Turdus libonyanus*). The Kurrichane Thrush is distinguished from both the Olive- and Karoo Thrushes [Olyflyster, Karoolyster] by having broad malar stripes along the throat as well as a yellow eye-ring.

The ringing session brought back happy memories from approximately 30 years ago, when in my capacity as a geologist I was doing prospecting on the farm Kleinfontein 62 JP (2521 S 2609 E), situated in the Marico district some 20 km north of Zeerust. During the course of my investigations, the farmer took me up a prominent quartzite hill (an extension of the Magaliesberg), to get a better view of the geology. Imagine my amazement when amongst the thick bushveld vegetation, the farmer pointed out the extensive ruins of a large Hurutse settlement known by two names, Kuditchwane or, more popularly, as Kurrichane.

According to the history of the area, missionary John Campbell arrived at Kurrichane on 4 May 1820 to spread the Christian message. Under the leadership of the legendary Hurutse chief, he found an extensive settlement of approximately 20 000 inhabitants. The city itself was built on the highest hill in the area as a form of defence against enemies. Vast herds of cattle were kept by the inhabitants, and in Africa cattle means wealth. The plains below and especially the area adjoining the Marico River to the east were smothered with game, including buffalo, wildebeest, impala, zebra, giraffe, ostrich, eland, lion and rhinoceros. The vibrant economy of Kurrichane was based on cattle, grain and metal production, as well as extensive trade linking them to the east coast with Portuguese merchants.

Just a few years later, in 1833, an 18-month long expedition of explorers from Cape Town,

including Moffat and Doctor Andrew Smith, a Scottish surgeon and explorer (who was then first Superintendent of the South African Museum and considered the father of zoology in South Africa), visited the newly established headquarters of Mzilikazi who had recently settled at Mosga just south of present-day Zeerust. From here, Smith and his fellow explorers travelled eastwards along the slopes of the Magaliesberg. However, (in the words of Sian Hall and Rob Marsh) when the wagons rattled up to Kurrichane "over the same paths as Campbell's, all they found was a wasteland". The area was deserted except for a few "straggling groups, pitiful and deserted, who wandered around the landscape barely finding enough to keep them alive. The once powerful and prosperous town lay in ruins."

There is no doubt that some tragedy befell the area and that Kurrichane was destroyed by some force. Many scholars believe that the capital had been obliterated by Mzilikazi and his Ndebele forces as they razed a trail of devastation on their way north from Natal to escape the wrath of the great chief Shaka.

It was here during their stay that Smith identified approximately 15 new bird species,



Christo Siebert

Kurrichane Thrush/Rooibeklyster, Pretoria Botanical Garden

including the Kurrichane Thrush, Kurrichane Buttonquail, Burchell's Starling, Rattling Cisticola, both White-bellied and Marico Sunbirds, Bennetts Woodpecker, Swainson's Spurfowl, Crested and Coqui Francolins, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse and Threestreaked Tchagra [Rooibeklyster, Bosveldkwarteltjie, Grootglanspreeu, Bosveldtinkinkie, Witpens- en Maricosuikerbekkie, Bennettse Speg, Bosveldfisant, Bospatrys, Swempie]. The expedition returned to Cape Town in February 1836 with a huge collection of specimens and drawings.

Smith returned to England in 1837 where he became a Fellow of the Royal Society (proposed by Charles Darwin). In recognition for his work in South Africa, which included the identification of approximately 70 new bird species, he received a knighthood from Queen Victoria in 1858.

Ironically Hendrik Potgieter and a party of 150 fellow trekkers attacked Mzilikazi on 17 January 1837 at the battle of Mosega, with the view to retrieving cattle and sheep stolen from Sarel Cilliers' group of Voortrekkers at Vegkop in the Orange Free State a few months earlier. Taken completely by surprise, hundreds of Mzilikazi's men were mown down, with the rest slipping away in the bush. To the north, on the Kurrichane hill, the "ghosts of innumerable Hurutse tribesmen must have watched and laughed." As a consequence of this defeat, Mzilikazi and his followers were forced to trek further northwards, through Botswana and into Zimbabwe (Matabeleland), where they ultimately settled.

Given this fascinating history, one cannot be blamed for having a 'soft spot' for those birds that were first documented by Smith at Kurrichane and surrounds. A future visit to the area with the view to identifying or even ringing some of those species, may not be a bad idea!

References

Wikipedia: Andrew Smith (Zoologist)
Beyond Belief Murders and Mysteries of Southern Africa, by S Hall & R Mars, 1996
Lost Trails of the Transvaal, by TV Bulpin, 1969
Pictorial History of South Africa, by Oldhams Press Ltd, 1953
Roberts Birds of South Africa, revised by McLachlan & Liversidge, 1978
2526AC Blairbeth, 1:50 000 Topographical Map, 1968

Ed: For further information on the history of the name 'Kurrichane' see: '[Kaditshwene: What's in a name](#)', by Jan CA Boeyens and Desmond T Cole (1999). Boeyens and Cole conclude that the correct rendering of the name of the original Bahurutshu settlement – which Campbell presented/corrupted in English as Kurreechane (and other spellings), Moffat gave as 'Kurichuene' and which lives on through bird names as 'Kurrichane' (Smith himself apparently used various spellings, including Kurrichaine, Kurrichani, Cuddy chain) – is 'Kaditshwene' (probably named for the mountain it was sited on, which was probably named for its abundance of baboons, *tshwene*), rather than other proposed versions of Gaditshwene or Karechunya: The issue is one of spelling rather than pronunciation (p. 257):

In each case the author tried to record the Setswana name Kaditshwene, using and adapting the English sound-spelling "system". Thus, all three versions contain the same number of syllables as the original Setswana *Ka-di-tshwe-ne*: Kur-ree-cha-ne, Kur-ri-cha-ne, Ku-ri-chue-ne. Most troublesome for modern readers are perhaps the first two syllables of the word which



Christo Siebert

Rescued Kurrichane Buttonquail/
Bosveldkwarteltjie

superficially look very different from the current Setswana equivalent. Taking Campbell's rendering of the name as example, the *u* in *ku* was meant to be pronounced something like the *u* in *curry*, the *ee* or *e* as in *meet* (not as *i* in *bite*), the *ch* as in *chin*, and the *a* as in *dare*. The occurrence of the *r* instead of the *d* can also be easily explained. In Setswana the *d* used to be pronounced as a "soft sound between *l* and *r*."

They go on to suggest that ornithologists should adopt this uncorrupted spelling of 'Kaditshwene' by renaming the thrush and buttonquail. Perhaps birders could instead

just start pronouncing Kurrichane better... (as many seem to use 'curry-cane' or 'coori-chain').

Interestingly, Boeyens and Cole also mention that the scientific name of the Rattling Cisticola – *Cisticola chinianus*, originally named by Smith as *Drymoica chiniana*, probably takes its species epithet from the very same place, as it was near here that he collected a single type specimen of the bird.

Reference

Boeyens JCA and Cole DT (1999) Kaditshwene: What's in a name. In: Finlayson R (ed.) *African Mosaic: Festschrift for JA Louw*. Unisa Press, Pretoria. 📖

'n Lessie uit die nessie

Johan Fuhri

Ek onthou nog die angstigheid en opgewondenheid wat ek ervaar het toe my vrou die eerste keer swanger geword het. 'n Mens maak soveel planne en droom sulke groot drome van hoe wonderlik dit gaan wees, min wetende dat 'n mens se lewe nooit weer dieselfde gaan wees nie.

Ek onthou nog hoe ons oor en oor gekyk het na die drie-minute-en-sewe-en-twintig-sekonde video van ons seuntjie se eerste sonar. Die wonderwerk van 'n klein lewetjie wat in mamma se magie groei los 'n mens in verwondering.

Tien jaar later bevind ek myself een oggend in die bos waar ek voëltjies kyk. Terwyl ek deur my verkyker soek na iets in 'n boom, vlieg daar 'n voeltjie uit die gras, somer net so tree of twee agter my. Dis veilig om te sê dat dit beter is dat daar niemand anders in die omgewing was om te sien hoe so groot man vir so klein voëltjie kan skrik nie... maar daar in die gras ontdek ek toe 'n klein nessie met drie eiertjies. Oor die volgende twee weke het ek die voorreg gehad om te sien hoe die eiertjies uitbroei en groter word totdat hulle die nes verlaat.



Johan Fuhri

Die nessie met drie eiertjies, wat net die volgende dag sou uitbroei

Gedurende die twee weke het ek ook baie teruggedink aan iets wat ek iewers gelees het in die tyd toe my eersteling nog veilig in sy mamma se magie was. Die skrywer het gesê dat, van die dag dat 'n eiertjie bevrug word, hy 'n proses begin om weg te breek van sy ma en pa af. Soos ek die kuikens sien grootword het,

het ek gedink aan die verskillende fases van 'n kind se ontwikkeling in hierdie proses.

Baba-fase

Die dag na die foto van die eiertjies geneem is, het die kuikentjies uitgebroei. In hierdie foto is hulle minder as 24 uur oud. Op hierdie ouderdom is hulle meestal bek, en 'n bekkie wat altyd gereed is om kos te kry. Enige geluid word gesien as 'n geleentheid om te eet en maak hulle hul bekkies wyd oop.



Johan Fährri

Die baba-fase kuikens, afhanklik van Mamma en Pappa, sien elke geluid as 'n geleentheid om iets te eet

Gedurende die eerste fase van 'n mens se lewe is hy net so afhanklik van iemand anders. 'n Baba kan nie op sy eie oorleef sonder die intensiewe sorg van sy ouers nie. Vir ons as ouers is dit nogal senutgerend, want ons weet almal dat 'n baba met groot vertroue enige ding sal drink wat ons in sy bottel gooi. Hy is min gepla of ons die bottel mooi gesteriliseer het, of seker gemaak het dat die melk nie al oor sy vervaldatum is nie. Hierdie is dikwels een van die moeilikste tye – min slaap, min tyd vir jouself of vir mekaar en baie gehuil (jy en die baba). Maar dit word beter, en elke baba-glimlag maak die min slaap tóg die moeite werd.

Kleuter-fase

Dan een oggend word jy wakker, en Baba het uiteindelik deurgeslaap. Jy skrik jouself boeglam en gaan kyk dadelik of hy nog asemhaal, en dan besef jy dat jou kleinding besig is om 'n kleuter te word.



Johan Fährri

Kleuter-fase, en jou mense-kuiken glo nog alles wat Mamma en Pappa vir hulle vertel

Teen dag nommer vyf is die kuikens se ogies nog toe, maar hulle het nou al geleer dat dit nie so slim is om jou mond oop te maak vir kos elke keer as die gras ritsel nie. 'n Mens kan nou begin sien waar die eerste vere eendag hulle verskyning gaan maak.

In ons kleuters sien ons ook vir die eerste keer tekens van hulle eie persoonlikheid deurslaan, hulle eie stel vere begin groei. In hierdie fase is ons kinders nog uiters afhanklik van ons as ouers, nie net vir kos en klere nie, maar ook vir hoe hulle dink en na die wêreld kyk. Hulle leer by ons wat aanvaarbare gedrag is, hoe om ander mense te hanteer, dat 'n mens vir jou *chocolate* moet betaal voor jy hom kan eet, en dat jy nie vir die oom in die rolstoel kan staaaaaar nie. In hierdie stadium, net soos die kuikens met toe ogies, glo jou kinders alles wat jy hulle vertel. Hulle sien jou as die slimste mens wat hulle al ooit ontmoet het – en geniet dit, want dit gaan nie lank hou nie. Oormôre is hulle tieners...

Tiener-fase

Saterdagoggend, en dis nou al 10 uur, maar jou kleuter van eergister is nog in die bed. Jy jaag hom uit die bed uit, maar skielik, anders as die laaste 13 jaar, is die antwoord nie "Ja Ma" nie. Die gemoppel uit die kamer is iets meer soos: "Hoekom kan ek nie slaap tot 10 nie?"



Johan Fuhri

Tiener-fase, met oop ogies begin jou tiener nou self kyk en idees kry oor die wêreld rondom hom of haar

Op dag nommer sewe is die kuikentjies se ogies wawyd oop. Die veerstokkies begin nou hulle ware kleure wys. Op hierdie stadium kan ons hulle begin onderskei van meeste ander voëlspesies op die kleur van hulle veertjies.

Jou tiener begin nou ook deur sy eie oë na die wereld om hom kyk. Dit is gedurende hierdie fase van hulle lewe wat hulle alles gaan begin bevraagteken en wil hulle weet of dit wat hulle ouers hulle geleer het, in die regte lewe gaan werk. Hoekom kán ek nie tot 11 uur elke dag slaap nie? Hoekom móét ek elke Saterdag die gras sny? Is God regtig? Hulle begin ook in hierdie fase van hulle lewe kyk en luister na al die ander alternatiewe wat vir hulle aangebied word. Eersgister was jou woord wet, vandag is jou opinie net nóg 'n opinie waaruit hy kan kies. Sy vriende, onderwysers, pop-stars en TV-helde se opinies trek nou net so hard aan hulle hartsnare as joune.

Ons as ouers moet egter nie hier opgee nie. Ons invloed op hulle opvoeding is nog lank nie verby nie, maar verstaan baie mooi dat jy nie gaan wegkom met skeinheiligheid nie. Jou tiener-kuiken so oë is oop en jy gaan hom nie 'n rat voor die oë kan draai nie. As jou wêreld-siening nie werk in jou daaglikse lewe nie, GAAN hy vir jou uitvang, en moenie verbaas wees as jou tiener dan vir 'n beter een gaan soek nie. Tieners soek egtheid, al is dit nie perfek nie. Wat hulle broodnodig het, is nie 'cool' ouers nie, maar ouers wat in 'n morsige en deurmekaar wêreld regte antwoorde kan gee op regte vrae.

As ons as ouers vir ons tieners 'n lewe kan wys wat geanker is in iets wat ons deur die lewe se storms kan dra, dan gaan daar wel eendag veertjies begin deurslaan wat geweldig baie soos Mamma en Pappa s'n lyk.

Die volwasse kuiken

EK was weg vir die naweek, en teen die tyd dat ek drie dae later weer 'n kans kon kry om die nessie te besoek, was hy leeg. Ons kuikens is nou groot en het die nes verlaat. Alhoewel hierdie nie eers my kuikens was nie, los dit 'n mens met 'n nostalgiese mengsel van trots en hartseer. Ons noem dit die 'empty nest syndrome'.



Johan Fuhri

'n Leë nes, hulle word so vinnig groot!

Clive Kaplan



Volwasse Rooineklewerik/Rufous-naped Lark

'n Langnaweek later is jou tiener skielik groot en reg om met sy eie lewe te begin. Hy is nou op universiteit, in die koshuis. Jy hoef hom nie meer elke oggend met die dood te dreig om op te staan, of om te begin leer vir

wiskunde nie. Hy staan nou self op, doen sy eie *calculus* huiswerk, en gaan kuier elke aand by sy meisie eerder as by sy ma.

My eie kindertjies is nog klein, maar ek kan klaar sien dat hierdie seker die grootste van aanpassings gaan wees. Hoe laat 'n mens jou kinders gaan om op hulle eie die grootmenswêreld aan te durf? Wat as hulle seerkry? Kan hulle nie maar nog so bietjie langer by my bly nie?

En ek kan al klaar die nostalgiese trane van trots en hartseer voel kom wanneer ek dink aan die dag wat ek my dogtertjie aan 'n ander man moet afstaan, pragtig in haar wit trourok.

Maar tussen al die trane deur, kyk mooi – die pragtige jongman en -dame wat daar staan dra tóg Mamma en Pappa se vere... 🐦

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 30 June 2018

Compiled by André Marx

This report covers the three months ending 30 June 2018. This period brings fewer rarity reports; however, it was interesting to note the occurrence of species such as Wire-tailed Swallow and Spectacled Weaver during the winter months. SABAP2 records also are an important source of information and contribute greatly to this column; note the localised record of Sweet Waxbill and Natal Spurfowl for the region. 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.

National rarities / Nasionale rariteite

Harrier, Western Marsh / Vleivalk, Europese

One bird was observed at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 22 Mar 2018 (WS).

Skimmer, African / Waterploëër

Seven birds were still present at Finfoot Lake Reserve, Vaalkop Dam, 8 Apr 2018 (AB); six were

still at this locality, 21 Apr 2018 (CL); with four present on 12 May 2018 (EP).

Regional rarities / Streeksrariteite

Crane, Wattled / Kraanvoël, Lel-

The lone bird that has been present in the Devon area for at least 8 years now was sighted again in the company of approximately 100 Blue Cranes, 23 May 2018 (EM, AB et al.).

Swallow, Wire-tailed / Swael, Draadstert-

Two birds were back at Rooiwal Sewage Works, north of Pretoria, 9 Jun 2018 (RG). *Recorded in winter for the second year running at this locality; this is a rare species in the region.*

Pratincole, Collared / Sprinkaanvoël, Rooivlerk-

One bird was at Kgomo-Kgomo on 24 Mar 2018 (DW).

Vulture, Lappet-faced / Aasvoël, Swart-

One bird was observed at Kgomo-Kgomo in the company of a group of Cape Vultures, 13 Mar 2018 (DV). *This is a very rare species in the region*



Cecilia Louw

African Skimmer/Waterploëër, Vaalkop Dam

with few records during the course of a year.

Weaver, Spectacled / Wewer, Brill-

An adult female bird was a surprise find in the nets during a ringing session at Buffelsdrift, north-east of Pretoria in Pentad 2535_2815, 2 Jun 2018 (ES). *An interesting record; this is a species to watch on the eastern edge of our region as records of out-of-range birds are becoming more frequent.*

**Other interesting observations /
Ander interessante waarnemings**

Buzzard, European Honey / Wespedief

During an atlasing trip west of Devon one bird was found in Pentad 2620_2840, 2 Apr 2018 (ST, AM).

One bird was at Wierda Park, Centurion, 9 Apr 2018 (NC).

Another bird was observed in Raceview, Alberton, 19 Apr 2018 (WM).

Eagle, Long-crested / Arend, Langkuif-

One bird was on the corner of Garsfontein and Rubenstein Road in Garsfontein, Pretoria, 7 Apr 2018 (JB).

Goose, African Pygmy / Gans, Dwer-

One bird was at Mongena Game Lodge in the Dinokeng area, north-east of Pretoria, 5 Apr 2018 (WT).

Osprey / Visvalk

During a period of high water after heavy rains one bird was noted at the Kgomo-Kgomo bridge, 25 Mar 2018 (J&CH).

Owl, Southern White-faced / Uil, Witwang-

After a period of no reports the bird at the Sandton Field and Study Centre was seen again,



Rilham Geysler

Wire-tailed Swallow/Draadstertswael, Rooiwal

Elba Swart

Spectacled Weaver/Brilwewer, Buffelsdrift

25 May 2018 (SB).

Spurfowl Natal / Fisant, Natalse-

One bird was at Marievale, an out-of-range locality where it has not been recorded during the atlas period, 6 May 2018 (MB).

Stork, Yellow-billed / Nimmersat

A record of one bird in Pentad 2550_2800, west of Centurion, is somewhat unusual, 7 Jun 2018 (EM).

Thick-knee, Water / Dikkop, Water-

One bird was in the Dinokeng area north-east of Pretoria, 31 Mar 2018 (AB).

Another bird was recorded at Vaalkop Dam in Pentad 2520_2720, 22 Apr 2018 (CL).

Martin Benadie



Natal Spurfowl/Natalse Fisant, Marievale

Etienne Marais



Yellow-billed Stork/Nimmersat, just off R114

Waxbill, Swee / Swie, Suidelike

A record of a male bird in Pentad 2550_2725 at the top of Breedsnek Pass in the Magaliesberg is unusual, 16 Mar 2018 (EM). *An uncommon and localised resident species that appears to be present in small numbers only in the western Magaliesberg mountains in our region.*

Weaver, Red-headed / Wewer, Rooikop-

A bird in non-breeding plumage was observed near Kgaswane Nature Reserve in Pentad 2540_2710, near Rustenburg, somewhat out of range for this species, 16 Apr 2018 (JJ).

Observers / Waarnemers:

- Andrew Buitendach (AB) John and Celia Human (J&CH)
- André Marx (AM) Martin Benadie (MB)
- Cecilia Louw (CL) Naomi Coetzee (NC)
- Danie Welman (DW) Rihann Geysler (RG)
- Dylan Vasapolli (DV) Samantha Bradley (SB)
- Elba Swart (ES) Stephan Terblanche (ST)
- Etienne Marais (EM) Waldo Toerien (WT)
- Ewan Potgieter (EW) Warren McKay (WM)
- Jannie Jansen (JJ) Wouter Spijker (WS)
- Joey Botha (JB)

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. 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 Internet reports and from SABAP2 records. Members are invited to submit details of sightings to André Marx at: turaco@telkomsa.net or 083 411 7674. 🦜

BIRDsearch clues

A6	AKALAT	G1	FINCH	C15	PEREGRINEFALCON
A6	ALPINESWIFT	J1	FINFOOT	S3	PIEDAVOCET
R8	BARNOWL	T19	GENTOOPENGUIN	O10	PITTA
N5	BATELEUR	B20	GREYGOAWAYBIRD	C9	PRINIA
O15	BATIS	S15	HOBBY	J3	RAIL
M1	BLNG	K1	HOOPOE	B2	REDBILLEDQUELEA
A19	BRUBRU	P16	IBIS	D5	REDLARK
A17	BUFFSPOTTEDFLUFFTAIL	I1	INTERMEDIATEEGRET	H10	ROCKMARTIN
O15	BUFFYPIBIT	D11	KITE	J2	ROLLER
M10	BUZZARD	I18	LITTLEGREBE	A18,C20	RUFF (x2)
F7	CAPETEAL	T9	LONGBILLEDPIBIT	T10	SHIKRA
T16	CASPIANPLOVER	G12	MARSHOWL	T10	SLATYEGRET
C11	CHAT	I6	MOORHEN	B1	SHIPE
O3	COOT	Q1	NEDDICKY	A12	SQUACCOHERON
E15	DARTER	P2	OSPREY	N15	STORK
16C	DOVE	F1	OYSTERCATCHER	Q11,R11,S12	TIT (x3)
O20	DRONGO	H9	PARROT	I3	TROGON

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<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	
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Quarter page	125	200	250	275	
Loose insert	300	500	650	750	
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Notes					
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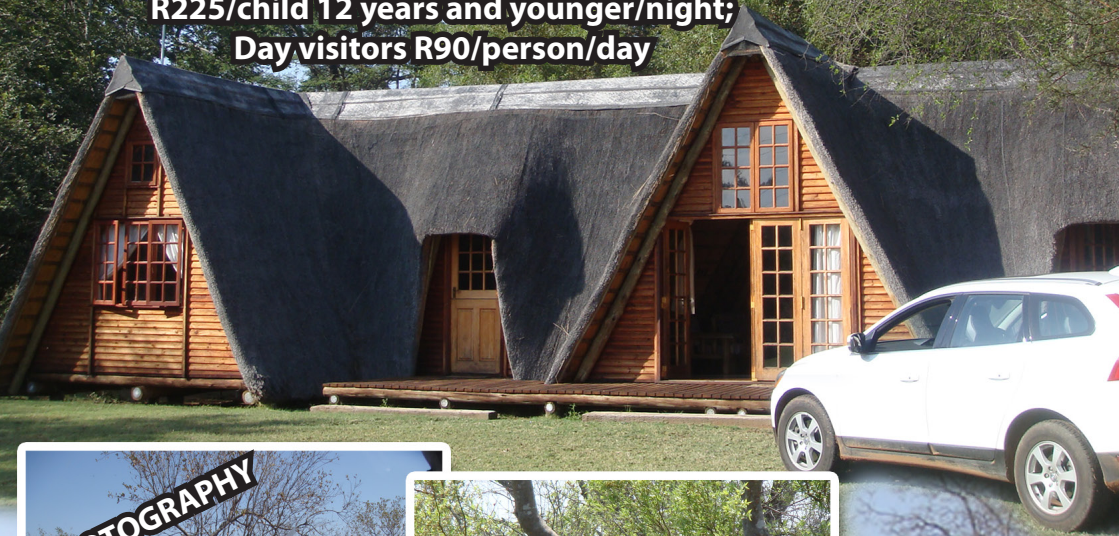
BUFFELSDRIFT Rust de Winter

ACCOMMODATION

R450/adult/night;

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