



Laniarius

No 139 March 2019



**BirdLife Northern Gauteng
BirdLife Gauteng-Noord**

Newsletter of BirdLife Northern Gauteng Nuusbrief van BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

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Banking: BirdLife Northern Gauteng/Gauteng-Noord, Nedbank, Hatfield, Branch Code 160245,
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Laniarius is published three times annually. Articles should be e-mailed to laniariuseditor@blng.co.za. Contributions and advertisements are accepted at the discretion of the Editor. Digital photographic images are always welcome. Please submit images at their original resolution/size.

Kennisgewing aan bydraers

Laniarius word drie keer jaarliks uitgegee. Artikels moet aan laniariuseditor@blng.co.za gestuur word. Aanvaarding van bydraes en advertensies word aan die diskresie van die Redakteur oorgelaat. Digitale foto's is altyd welkom. Stuur asseblief foto's in hulle oorspronklike resoluë/grootte.

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Credits

Front cover: African Stonechat, Rietvlei Nature Reserve, by Tamsyn Sherwill

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

To order print copies / Om harde kopieë te bestel

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

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

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

From the Editor

An eventful summer, for South Africa and its birds, is drawing to a close. Friday, 22 March was World Water Day, a day designed to focus our attention on our vulnerabilities as a water-dependent, water-polluting species. My summer has had a watery theme, with an unfortunate subtheme of waterborne sanitation. The December holidays in the Eastern Cape were marked by water shortages, with municipal water only available for about 2 hours a day, and the alternative supply – rain-water tanks – running dangerously low due to the drought. In late January news broke of the plight of the Kamfers Dam flamingos, facing dwindling water levels in part due to the failure of a municipal wastewater treatment works to deliver enough treated effluent to the dam. Then in March things got personal – a blocked main sewer line led to a massive amount of raw sewage flowing into the spruit next to my home. In the 3 weeks it took to unblock the sewer the spruit has turned black, dead fish lie on its banks, and residents have to sleep in a haze of not just unpleasant but health-hazardous ‘sewer gas’.

I have discovered that the inconveniences of power and water outages are almost unnoticeable next to a shortage of clean air. Another thing I have realised is that as a society we are not just becoming, but are already, extremely used to sewage pollution, to the extent that we are almost tolerant of it (until you are close enough that it becomes difficult

to breathe). According to a 2017 article in the *Mail & Guardian*, 50 000 litres of sewage (raw or partially treated) flows into South Africa’s rivers every second. One of our most important water sources, the Vaal, has been turned into an open sewer by dysfunctional wastewater treatment plants – now declared ‘military zones’ as the army tries to repair them in the face of ongoing theft and vandalism. In Pretoria, the Apies, which starts as water so clean you can drink it untreated, deteriorates in less than 50 km into a river that is no longer of any use to the farmers along its banks. All over the country, the pathogen load of irrigation water is becoming a threat to the export status of crops.

Addressing dysfunctional treatment works and ageing sewer networks is a complex challenge that I don’t have the insight to comment on. But I think that perhaps it starts with all of us becoming intolerant... of sewage pollution and other environmental degradation. There are organisations that make it their business to hold government and other role-players to account, on behalf of the environment and all of our futures. Some of these are national, well-funded and highly organised, but others, like Save the Vaal Environment and our local river champions, Adopt-Moreletaspruit, are just groups of volunteers who got together to address a common local concern. They deserve all of our thanks and support.

Tamsyn

DONATIONS (November 2018 – February 2019)

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.

André Marx

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Riël Franzen

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Morne de la Rey

From the Chair



At the February BLNG AGM we reflected on a number of activities that contributed to another great year of birding at BLNG. The highlight of the AGM was definitely the talk by Faansie Peacock on the weird, fascinating and downright alarming breeding strategies of birds, with some hilarious human parallels.

We had a very busy activities programme for 2018 that included monthly meetings, monthly camps, weekly day outings as well as a bird identification course by Geoff Lockwood. Despite the economic downturn and rising fuel prices, all activities were well supported by our members. Two highlights of the BLNG trips were the Lesotho Highlands trip and the Botswana & Caprivi trip. Despite the bitterly cold Lesotho winter weather we were able to locate most of the high-altitude specials, including the Bearded Vulture and Drakensberg Rockjumper. It is difficult to identify a single highlight for the Caprivi trip – between the Pel's Fishing Owl, Souza's Shrike, Sharp-tailed Starling or the large breeding colony of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters.

As a club we are focusing our conservation efforts on citizen science and are encouraging our members to become more involved in SABAP2 atlassing.

Through the annual BLNG Birdlasser Challenge we encourage our members to use Birdlasser to log all their sightings. We also had a Birdlasser/SABAP2 workshop in June attended by about 50 members.

Our birdringing group, consisting of 25 active A-ringers, as well as 12 C-ringers, who are still being trained, ringed an impressive 7 925 birds during 2018, with a 13.4% retrap rate.

Our club continues to interact with BirdLife

South Africa through the BLSA Northern Region Forum. The main focus for BLSA is bird conservation and they had a number of successful projects during 2018. The White-winged Flufftail project had another breakthrough after the initial confirmation of the breeding site at Middelpunt Wetland near Belfast last year. Their latest success is the first-ever identification and recording of the call of the White-winged Flufftail.

The declaration in 2018 of the 800 ha Ingula Nature Reserve, the product of a partnership between BLSA, Middelpunt Wetland Trust and Eskom to conserve an area of critically important high-altitude grassland and wetland habitat, will form a catalyst to encourage the adoption of conservation-based management principles by the landowners of the surrounding 30 000 ha grassland.

The project to create an African Penguin breeding colony at De Hoop Nature reserve is making good progress, where the predator-proof fencing as well as the work to attract the penguins to De Hoop has been completed.

The 5 400 Lesser Flamingo chicks at Kamfers Dam are being closely monitored by BLSA as part of the rescue operation. The monitoring includes the number of flamingos, water quality, quantity and possible disturbances.

Once again thank you to all our members, leaders, committee and sub-committee members for making BLNG such a special and exciting birding club.

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.

Antoinette Roberts, Brentwood Park; Steve Stevenson, Halfway House; Frans van Jaarsveld, Waterkloof; Estelle de Jong, Highveld; Leonie Louw, Garsfontein; Anneke Pienaar, Wingate Park; Dawn Needham, Menlo Park; Jeffrey Benson, Garsfontein; Venita Brown, Highveld; Martie van Jaarsveld, Lynnwoodrif; Hein Gerber, Waterkloof; Anneke van Heerden, Lynwoodrif



President's Address

Last year BirdLife South Africa released the document *The State of South Africa's Birds*

2018. The report is an assessment of the state of our birds and warned how the country's bird populations have never been in a worse shape, with waning waterbirds, declining raptors, seabirds under pressure and large terrestrial birds running out of space.

Reports of this nature draw on national survey and monitoring data to provide a highly visual snapshot of the conservation status of birds as well as the biomes they reside in. The 2018 report showed how the conservation status of birds has declined drastically over the past 30 years, with 132 species now classified as regionally threatened, with the number of Critically Endangered and Endangered bird species increasing significantly since the 2000 assessment.

We know BLSA is carrying out sterling work with regard to the conservation of seabirds and efforts are underway with regard to the monitoring and conservation of terrestrial birds such as the Secretarybird. But something that struck a chord with me was the report regarding the decline of several raptor species. The report shows how the Bearded Vulture, together with the Hooded Vulture, White-backed Vulture and White-headed Vulture, are "leading the headlong rush of the region's vultures towards extinction", with all four of these species classified as regionally Critically Endangered. Some, like the Southern Banded Snake Eagle, have managed to leapfrog categories all together. Loss of habitat from agriculture and tourism development have pushed this species from Vulnerable straight to Critically Endangered. I can remember visiting KwaZulu-Natal in the past 20 to 30 years when it was possible to find this species reasonably easily at localities

in woodlands along the north coast of that province. It is disturbing to note that this is no longer the case today.

The report reveals how the Cape Vulture, whose breeding distribution once covered southern Africa, is now being pushed back into its last remaining strongholds in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, as is the Lappet-faced Vulture, now largely confined to protected areas in the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal. In our district, the Cape Vulture is under severe pressure at its Magaliesberg breeding sites, with birds constantly being lost due to collisions with power lines, poisoning and other problems associated with human population pressure, and organisations like VulPro have their hands full dealing with these matters. The human population in the Hartbeespoort Dam area has increased tenfold in the past 10 to 15 years and the risks posed to the vultures have increased dramatically.

The SABAP2 atlasing project has brought into sharp focus how raptors have declined in recent years and that project has only been running for nearly 12 years now, which in the scheme of things is a relatively short time. I have noticed how certain raptor species have declined in our region. Martial Eagles could be seen within 15–20 minutes' drive from Pretoria in nearby rural areas, but today that is increasingly unlikely and the bird has now become uncommon. Even in established urban areas there is a change in the balance of the birds. I have never seen as many crows as we seem to have in Gauteng at the moment. Any large raptor, such as a Fish Eagle or Long-crested Eagle or even Black Sparrowhawks are constantly harassed by Pied Crows, which seem to be everywhere. Does this affect the breeding success of these raptors one wonders? Should we be concerning ourselves with this development or are there more important matters to concern ourselves with, such as habitat loss in grassland

and forest areas in the country?

The challenge with bird conservation in a modern world is relevance, believes Martin Taylor of BLSA. "Much like a group of chicks desperately fighting for attention, bird conservation organisations face the challenge of competing with a range of (often pressing) social and alternative environmental issues for attention. How do we ensure that the bird conservation narrative is presented in a manner that will resonate with a wider audience other than conservationists and bird club members and that will grab the attention of political decision makers?"

Action needs to be taken now to halt population declines, address threats and improve the conservation status of our birds. "This will take an extraordinary amount of cooperation between government and conservation NGOs to ensure that future generations will be able to benefit from our country's spectacular diversity of birds. The next decade will be critical if we are to halt population declines, address threats and thus improve the conservation status of our birds," says Mark Anderson.

As individuals we can and do contribute with our involvement in bird monitoring projects such as taking part in surveys in IBAs and

SABAP2 involvement. All the information is fed into a database for these projects and it helps the scientists among us carry out assessments as the changes are taking place and as the data is presented.

Our club is involved in local conservation initiatives with the various projects we undertake and this is to be commended. It goes without saying that the more people we can involve through membership of our club and participation in these projects the better it will be for our birds, as we will be talking with a greater voice and will better be able to engage local authorities.

Bird club members will understand the need to expand the conservation narrative so that we engage a wider audience other than the people already belonging to a conservation organisation. There is a need to better engage with political decision makers. BLSA calls for enforcement of environmental legislation and cooperation with a multitude of conservation stakeholders. Local clubs are becoming increasingly important because of their ability to engage local governmental stakeholders and we have to take our role in this regard seriously.

André Marx

Why do some species glide, soar or hover?

Gliding and soaring are mainly practiced by larger, heavier birds such as eagles, hawks and gulls, so they can stay airborne longer (an advantage when searching for food over a large area). Seabirds such as albatrosses and shearwaters practice 'dynamic soaring'. This is a technique that enables them to glide great distances over the ocean's surface without flapping, even in windless conditions, by using the updraft from wave slopes. Both soaring and gliding conserve energy. Hovering, by contrast, tends to use a lot of energy for a very brief period. However, it allows a bird to remain stationary in mid-air, enabling, for example, a kestrel to spot prey in the verge below or a hummingbird to sip nectar from flowers.



BIRDLIFE NORTHERN GAUTENG

**INCOME STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2018**

	2018	2017
	R	R
INCOME	82,712	79,175
Subscriptions	82,712	79,175
OTHER INCOME	60,577	61,294
Donations received	10,257	10,125
Interest received	15,618	15,414
Nett proceeds from outings and camps	24,011	17,046
Nett proceeds from courses and special events	7,682	13,409
Nett proceeds from trading activities	3,009	5,300
TOTAL INCOME	143,289	140,469
LESS: EXPENDITURE	135,090	141,673
Audit fees	5,059	5,274
Bank charges	2,381	1,884
Bird ringing	10,000	10,000
Committee meeting expenses	2,640	3,040
Computer Expenses	1,749	-
Conservation expenses	23,174	23,596
Depreciation	-	18,597
Evening meeting expenses	7,325	8,538
AGM and function expenses	5,937	4,635
Hall Hire	8,250	-
Insurance	4,945	4,549
Leaders expenses	15,118	12,600
Marketing and promotion	1,170	2,127
Printing and stationery - General	1,325	682
Printing , envelopes and postage - Lanarius	1,413	970
Secretarial fees	43,560	39,600
Telephone & postage	270	837
Twoway radio expenses	774	4,744
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	8,199	-1,204
ACCUMULATED FUNDS - beginning of year	223,099	224,303
ACCUMULATED FUNDS - end of year	231,298	223,099

BIRDLIFE NORTHERN GAUTENG

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2018

	2018 R	2017 R
ASSETS		
Non current assets	4	4
Office and radio equipment	4	4
At costs	60,159	60,159
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	60,155	60,155
Current assets	249,035	252,776
Bank balance	52,828	22,495
Fixed deposit	185,321	209,703
Petty Cash	146	3,334
Prepayments and Advances made	5,740	9,800
Advance Book Table	5,000	5,000
Wine stock on hand	-	2,444
TOTAL ASSETS	249,039	252,780
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves	231,298	223,099
Accumulated funds	231,298	223,099
Current liabilities	17,741	29,681
Amounts received in advance	-	2,000
Ringers Trust Account	12,491	22,681
Creditors	5,250	5,000
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	249,039	252,780

Bushveld birding at Bona Thaba and Marakele, November 2018

Rose Clark

Nine keen birders were privileged enough to visit a lovely farm, Bona Thaba, situated 25 km outside of Thabazimbi (where the Kwaggavlake starts). It is a large bushveld game farm (800 ha) stretching as far as the eye can see, covering steep hills with beautiful wooded kloofs and granite outcrops, as well as a substantial plain comprising sweet and sour grassveld. We were warmly welcomed on arrival on Friday by our friendly host and owner of the farm, Pierre (as well as a host of noisy Southern Pied Babblers [Witkatlagter]), and shown to the lovely old farmhouse where we would be spending the weekend. We kicked off the weekend with a leisurely stroll around the farm, collecting 30+ birds during this short outing on foot. A special find for many of us on this stroll was Yellow-throated Petronia [Geelvlakmossie].

On Friday evening, everyone relaxed around a huge roaring fire, looking out over the bushveld. As the G&Ts and wine flowed, the group spent time talking about their experiences of the day, getting to know one another and finalising the plans for the following day.

Early the next morning, we arose to a kaleidoscope of apricot and pink skies which we enjoyed over steaming cups of coffee and

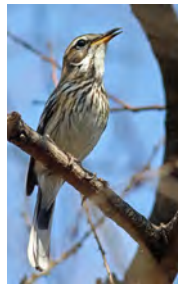
rusks. We packed our picnic baskets for the day and headed off for the Marakele National Park. After a somewhat delayed start due to slow admin at the gate, we started our drive with three cars connected by walkie-talkies. The veld was extremely dry with leafless trees and virtually no grass cover – a testimony to the drought being experienced in that part of the world. A Purple Roller, African Paradise Flycatchers, White-crested Helmet-Shrikes, Grey-headed Bush Shrikes and a stunning sighting of a Swallow-tailed Bee-eater christened the first hour or two of the day [Groottrouphant, Paradysvlieëvanger, Withelmlaksman, Spookvoël, Swaelsterbyvreter]. As the hunger pangs set in, we made a stop at a nearby picnic spot and were entertained by the melodious call and sighting of a Greater Honeyguide [Grootheuningwyser], “victorrrrr”, as we enjoyed a bush breakfast with mugs of coffee.

From there, we decided to proceed up the mountain to try to spot the Cape (Griffon) Vultures [Kransaasvoël]. Just before cautiously ascending the steep single track road to the top, we spotted the first vultures lifting off the mountain and starting to glide effortlessly on the thermals. After stopping to observe



Rose Clark

Around the fireplace



White-browed Scrub Robin/Gestreepte Wipstert



Thea Jenkins

Chinspot Batis/Witliesbosbontrokkie



Rose Clark

Mocking Cliff Chat/Dassievoël

them briefly, we continued to the top and spent several hours birding on the plateau, with many excellent sightings of the vultures. It was here that we also spotted the 'bird of the trip' – the beautiful Gurney's Sugarbird [Rooiborssuikervoël] – a lifer for many of us! We also had wonderful sightings – up-close-and-personal – with Cape Rock Thrush and Mocking Cliff Chat [Kaapse Kliplyster, Dassievoël] who were determined to share our picnic. Cinnamon-breasted Buntings [Klipstreekoppie] gathered around during our lunchtime picnic, earnestly seeking the odd discarded crumb. On our way back, we passed

a waterhole and hide within Marakele National Park and were treated to the melodious song of a White-browed Scrub Robin [Gestreepte Wipster], which sat on a twig just outside the hide and sang his little heart out. A really stunning sighting of this little bird.

We returned to Bona Thaba and recharged our batteries for a short while. Late afternoon, Pierre treated some of us to a wonderful drive up to a lookout rock above the farm. There, we spent an hour or so appreciating the magnificent view over the bushveld whilst sipping on sundowners and nibbling on snacks. Pierre challenged us to a kudu *bokdrol* spitting competition over the edge of the rock – after which we cleansed our palettes with a shot glass of his potent Marula Witblitz, which definitely took one's breath away! We returned after sunset in quite a jolly frame of mind, to enjoy a wonderful chatty braai back at the house, notwithstanding a puncture on the way home.

Early the next day, we set off for a walk to 'Koedoeskom', while Pierre repaired the Landy's tyre. He picked us up along the way and we spent a few hours birding at the waterholes at Koedoeskom. Here we had a rather spectacular sighting of a Chinspot Batis [Witliesbosbontrokkie] on her nest, well spotted by Thea! We also saw Orange-breasted Bush-Shrikes and Brown-crowned Tchagras [Oranjeborsboslaksman, Rooivlerktjagra], Levillant's Cuckoo [Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoël] and several other birds, albeit with some difficulty as they were somewhat illusive in the morning heat. We returned to the farmhouse to have a light snack and tally up our birds for the



Rose Clark



Rose Clark

At lookout rock



Thea Jenkins

Sundown

weekend before setting off for home. A total of 110 birds were counted for the trip. All in all, a most enjoyable trip with a wonderful crowd of birders! A special word of thanks to our fearless leader – Neithard Graf von Dürckheim, who was exceptionally well organised and knowledgeable. He made a lot of effort to assist us all in differentiating between different bird species, as well as pointing out many other treasures of the bush, including how to identify the footprints of certain birds. He was a fountain of knowledge and we all appreciated the wisdom he so willingly shared with us all. 🐦



Thea Jenkins

BLNG camp at Lekgalameetse, 4–17 December 2018

Sheleph Burger

We had the most amazing weekend at Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve, Limpopo, in December. A special group of 16 BLNG members ticked an amazing list of wonderful birds. For many there were 'lifers' to be seen, especially with the likes of African Pygmy Kingfisher, Red-faced Cisticola, Black Sparrowhawk, Mountain Wagtail and the Narina Trogon [Dwergvisvanger, Rooiwangtinkinkie, Swart-sperwer, Bergkwikkie, Bosloerie]! The list was called on Sunday, by which time a total of 140

species had been seen! WOW! Well done! A special word of thanks to Cameron Meyer and his wife Vanessa for all their enthusiasm and efforts in helping all to find their specials!

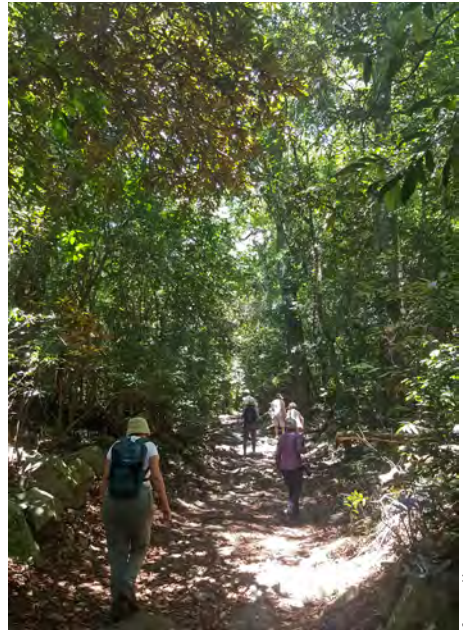
Some comments from the group:

- Thank you all very much for this great weekend. Additions to the list from our side: Cardinal Woodpecker, Terrestrial Brownbul and Wood-hoopoe. We also saw the Woodland Kingfisher that we heard yesterday – Marion Langrand

- Veilig tuis. Baie dankie almal vir die lekker naweek en voëlskyk saam met julle. Groete – Adele van Vuuren
- Baie dankie vir 'n awesome voëltjie naweek – Jimmy Spies
- Thanks, BLNG for the awesome weekend – Stewart Matheson
- Konkoit en Mooimeisie was groot spesiaal. Baie dankie almal, veral Elouise vir oplaai! – Lenie Gouws
- Just found a Forest Buzzard with Francois at Hanglip forest. Wish u were here! – Johan Slabbert

Dankie aan almal vir 'n fantastiese Lekgala-meetse BLNG naweekkamp. Sien uit na die volgende kamp saam met julle almal! Dankie ook vir Cameron en Vanessa vir al die waardevolle kennis en ondervinding wat julle met ons gedeel het, en vir die LIFERS wat julle vir ons gekry het! – Sheleph en Louis Burger

- Hi everyone. Just wanted to say thank you from my side. It is always great having an engaged, interested group who really get involved and are keen to bird. It was awesome sharing the special lifer moments



Cameron Meyer

Into the forest



Louis Burger

Stunning views driving along the Orrie Baragwanath pass



Louis Burger

Fun at the waterfall



Cameron Meyer

Rocky river crossing



Cameron Meyer

Daybreak



Steeleph Burger

Narina Trogon/Bosloerie

with those of you who did get firsts. Thanks to BLNG for approaching me for the weekend – Cameron Meyer

Natuurlik het sommige van ons hulle nie gesteur aan die padaanwysings nie... Google Maps en GPS aanwysings word geglo, en water ondervinding was dit nie gewees om op 'n amper onbegaanbare pad te ry nie! Dit was klou vir 'n vale, en erge spanning. Danksy Louise uitstekende bestuursvermoë, het ons veilig by Leggalameetse aangekom (gelukkig het ek en Adele nie te veel raas gekry nie – ha ha ha). Ons 2x4 voertuig is toe sommer ook 'n 4x4 voertuig! Geluk was aan ons kant deurdat dit nie gereën het nie. 🐾

BLNG outing to Mabusa, 19 January 2019

Keanu Canto

I had a great day guiding an outing for BLNG in the Mabusa area. The day started off in the rolling grasslands of Rhenosterkop, where we were treated to Common and Alpine Swifts [Europese Windswael, Witpenswindswael] and other aerial insectivores whizzing over our heads, whilst tens of 'cloudscrapers' called unseen from the blue above. A highlight here was a couple of White-bellied Korhaans [Witpenskorhaan] seen briefly, followed by numerous Lesser Kestrels [Kleinrooivalk] further up the mountain. A swallow with bright white underparts, rump and tail was a bit of a surprise, but we pinned it down to being a partially leucistic Barn Swallow [Europese Swael]. At the summit of the mountain, we found some typical montane specials – think Cape Bunting, Greater Double-collared Sunbird [Rooivlerkstreekoppie, Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie] and best of all – a buffy-rumped chat fluttering from rock to rock which turned out to be a female Buff-streaked Chat [Bergklipwagter]. A mammal highlight here was

Eastern Rock Sengi/Elephant Shrew.

We then headed off to Mabusa, which delivered an injection of bushveld species like Black Cuckooshrike, Violet-backed Starling, Mocking Cliff Chat and Levaillant's Cuckoo [Swartkatakoeroe, Witborsspreu, Dassievoël, Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoël]. A stunning and



Keanu Canto

Female Lesser Kestrel



Keanu Ganto

Eastern Rock Elephant Shrew

very active little Green-capped Eremomela [Donkerwangbossanger] kept us entertained for a while.

It was then off to Thembisile Dam along the Moloto Road which gave us most of our waterbirds for the day, including Great



Keanu Ganto

Black-chested Snake Eagle at Thembisile Dam

Crested Grebe, Southern Pochard and Whiskered Tern [Kuifkopdobbertjie, Bruineend, Witbaardsterretjie]. Also seen were Kalahari Scrub Robin [Kalahariwipstert] and an up-close Black-chested Snake Eagle [Swartborssslangarend] which even caught a snake! 🐍

Roofvoël identifikasie kursus, Letabakamp, 31 Jan – 3 Feb 2019

Sariza en Willie de Jager

Ons het einde-Januarie 'n 4-dag roofvoël identifikasie kursus op Letabakamp in die Krugerwildtuin bygewoon. Die kursus is deur Joe Grosel aangebied. Joe is 'n wildbewaarder wat gespesialiseer het in ornitologie, ekologie en wildbestuur. Hy is 'n roofvoëlkenner by uitstek, en is ook betrokke by ekologiese navorsing in die Krugerwildtuin, grootwild vangste, bestuur van groot privaat wildtuine, en doen ook omgewingstudies vir lokale regerings. Vir die laaste 20 jaar het hy menige voëlkyksafarities in Suidelike en Oos-Afrika gelei.

Alle dank aan Charles Hardy en sy span van die Ereveldwagters van die Limpopostreek, wat die kursusprogram oor vier dae uitstekend gereël het. Uitmuntende lesings is afgewissel met praktiese sessies en wildritte waartydens die kursusgangers die geleentheid gekry het om saam met Joe sy jare se ervaring en kennis

van roofvoëls te kon deel.

Die keuse van Letaba as basis, asook die tyd van die jaar n.l. Januarie/Februarie (lekker warm!), was die ideale tyd van die jaar om die somerbesoekers waar te neem, en het bygedra tot 'n uitsonderlike ervaring vir elkeen van ons.

Tydens die lesings is 'n fantastiese roofvoël identifikasiegids aan ons elkeen uitgedeel, wat saamgestel is deur Joe Grosel en Johan van Jaarsveld. Dit is 'n baie praktiese en gebruikersvriendelike benadering, met 15 groepe, wat ook die identifikasie van onvolwasse voëls insluit.

Die lesings was uitstekend, met veral klem op die belangrikste morfologiese eienskappe en grootte van die voëls (wat vergelyk is met 'n wynbottel waarmee ons almal vertrou is!), asook die vliegpatrone. Joe se interessante persoonlike ervarings met roofvoëls was 'n ekstra bonus. Hy het ook pragtige foto's van



elke spesie gewys, insluitende geslagsverskille, kleurvariasies en voëls in vlug, en het dit ook gekombineer met klankopnames. Hy het ook 'n fantastiese lesing gegee oor migrasie van voëls, wat ons weereens in verwondering gelaat het oor die Skepper.

Tydens 'n vroegoggend uitstappie in die kamp het hy 'n Olyfboomsanger [Olive-tree

Warbler] uitgewys, wat 'n somerbesoekertjie al die pad van Eurasië is, en wat 'n skamele 18 g weeg! So van 18 gepraat... Ons het die naweek 18 roofvoëls identifiseer!

Na 4 dae van intense lesings, wildritte, *sun-downers* saam met die seekoeie en saamkuier om die braaivleisvure, was al 17 kursusgangers dit eens: dit was absoluut die moeite werd! 🐦

BLSA Bird of the Year 2019: The Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius*

Jenny Bester

This statuesque bird holds pride of place in the heraldic crest of our country, as it sits in a prominent position in the centre of the South African coat of arms. Its uplifted wings are an emblem of the ascendance of our nation while its legs, depicted as a spear and knobkierie, symbolise protection of the nation against its enemies.

It was first described by Vosmaer as long ago as 1769 but it was John Frederick Miller who first gave it its name 'Secretarybird' [Sekretarisvoël] in 1779. The origin of its name is not completely clear but it is thought that the feathers jutting out behind the bird's head were reminiscent of 19th-century goose quill pens that secretaries tucked behind their ears, its grey and black body of their tailcoats, and the

black feathers midway down the legs of their short pants. Alternatively the name has its origins in the Arabic 'saqr-et-tair', or 'hunter bird'. The taxonomic name *Sagittarius serpentarius* means 'the archer of snakes' due to its famous snake-hunting abilities.

The Secretarybird is large, with an eagle-like body on stork-like legs. The plumage of the upper body is generally grey with some white feathers. They have black flight feathers on the wings and a crest of black-tipped feathers on the back of the head. The feathers of the belly and upper leg are black and it has a large wedge-shaped tail with white and black banding. Its facial skin is a bright orange with large, hazel eyes surrounded by long eyelashes of modified feathers. The thick scales on the

legs protect the bird from snakebites. The long elongated central tail feathers, the long legs and barred tail are visible in flight. The birds are usually silent but, when alarmed or mating, they can give a deep, low croaking wail. They live 10 to 15 years in the wild but can survive up to 19 years in captivity.

Secretarybirds are distantly related to buzzards, vultures, harriers, and kites. They are distributed throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and are non-migratory, though they may follow food sources. They are found in all nine provinces of South Africa from sea level to 3 000 metres but prefer open grasslands and savannas rather than forests and dense shrubbery. They are territorial and occupy areas up to 50 square kilometres, spending much of the day on the ground and roosting in *Acacia* (*Vachellia/Senegalia*) trees at night.

Hunting is mainly terrestrial and the hunting technique, legend. It strides through the veld stamping periodically to flush out prey and also patrols the edges of fires to catch fleeing victims. Contrary to popular belief, the main ingredient of their diet is not snakes but insects. Other prey include mice, tortoises, hares, mongooses, crabs, lizards, tortoises, small birds and bird eggs. Food is either swallowed whole or stunned and killed by vicious kicks. Snakes are

stunned and then killed by snapping the back. Although perfectly capable of flying they walk distances of up to 20–30 kilometres daily in search of food.

Secretarybirds are monogamous. Courtship takes place at any time of year, depending on how much food is available. The display is either aerial or terrestrial. In the air they soar high on thermals while performing an undulating flight. On the ground they

chase each other with wings held high and with a bowing movement of the neck and head. Courtship is one of the few times that the birds are vocal. Nests are an untidy bundle of sticks lined with grass and, sometimes, pieces of dung. It is large, round, about 2.5 metres wide and is usually built on the top of an *Acacia* tree. One to three pale-blue eggs are laid that hatch at about 7 weeks and fledge at about 12 weeks. Although the adults do not have a natural predator the chicks are predated on by crows, ravens, hornbills, large owls and kites due to their exposure on top of the *Acacia* trees.

The IUCN recently moved the status of the species from Near-threatened to Vulnerable as their numbers have rapidly declined across their entire range. This is due to a loss of habitat caused by factors such as agriculture, forestry and housing development. There is also a



Strider the BLSA BoTY 2019

BLSA



Clive Kaplan



Secretarybird

significant degradation of grasslands as rising CO₂ levels stimulate bush encroachment. Power line collisions are also taking their toll. BirdLife South Africa has begun a research project to investigate the biology of the bird by initiating a programme of satellite tracking and involving citizen scientists in the recording of data. Updates from this programme can be found on Facebook.

On a lighter note – some interesting facts about the Bird of the Year:

- This bird of prey is dissimilar to most others as its hunting is mainly terrestrial.
- They have the longest legs of any bird of prey.
- An adult male trained to strike at a rubber snake was found to hit with a force equal to five times its body weight.

- It is one of the three South African bird species with eyelashes, the others being the Common Ostrich [Volstruis] (*Struthio camelus*) and the Southern Ground-Hornbill [Bromvoël] (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*).
- The Secretarybird can be seen on as many as 100 stamps on 36 issues of African stamps including some countries where the bird is not resident.
- Fledglings do not fly immediately. Their first attempts are more like falling out of the nest with an enthusiastic flapping of the wings.

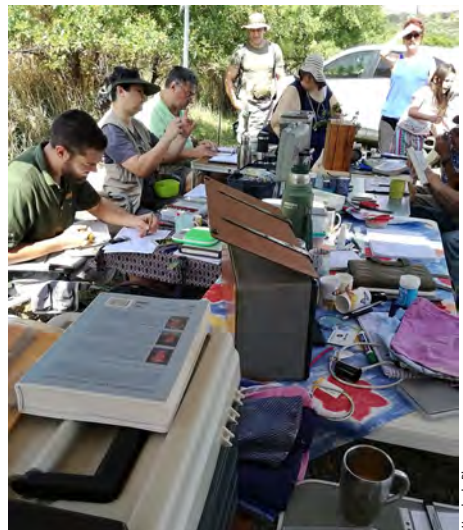
For educational resources (fact sheets, lesson plans, colouring pages, infographics) on BoTY 2019 see: <https://www.birdlife.org.za/events/bird-of-the-year> 🐦

Ringershoekie

BLNG Ringgroep

Klubring: Buffelsdrif, 6 Oktober 2018

Sewe ringers het om 04:00 op die Kwa-Mahlanga-pad bymekaar gekom. Ons het 109 voëls gevang waarvan 30 hervangste was (27.5%). Oulike voëlspesies wat ons gevang het is soos volg: Gewone Vleiloerie [Burchell's Coucal], Gewone Fret [Bronze Mannikin], Bosveldtjerik [Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler], Kleinrietsanger [African Reed Warbler], Bonthoutkapper [Acacia Pied Barbet], Kleinheuningwyser [Lesser Honeyguide] en Pylvlekkatlagter [Arrow-marked Babbler]. 'n Kleinheuningwyser met Ringnommer Y18206, is 7 jaar gelede op 10 September 2011 deur Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg gering. Intussen is dit drie keer weer gevang, eers deur Christo Siebert op 3 Oktober 2015 en toe weer deur Chris Bothma op 15 November 2016. By hierdie ringsessie het Janine Goosen dit weer in haar hande gehad. Kan 'n klein voëltjie soos 'n Kaapse Glasogie [Cape White-eye] 5 jaar oud word? Die volgende data staaf dit! Johan



Wanda du Plooy

Moreletakloof NR, 1 Des, besoekers by die ringtafels



Wanda du Plooy

Rietvlei NR, 24 Nov, Leon Lötter hou 'n sakkie vas met sy 500ste voël



Rietvlei NR, 24 Nov, Johan de Jager en Elba Swart elkeen met 'n Rooiborslaksman — 'n 'lifer' vir albei

Snyman het op 12 Januarie 2013 die voëltjie gering. Dit is 8 maande later weer deur Hein Bantjes gevang en by hierdie sessie het Janine Goosen dit weer in haar nette gekry.

C-ringeropleiding: Pretoria Botaniese Tuin, 20 Oktober 2018

Dertien A- en ses C-ringers het om 3:50 by die Botaniese Tuin bymekaar gekom. Ons het 234 (56 hervangste) spesies gevang. Oulike spesies is soos volg: Piet-my-vrou

[Red-chested Cuckoo], Rooiwangnaguil [Rufous-cheeked Nightjar], Bosveldtjeriktik [Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler], Paradys- en Fiskaalvlieëvanger [African Paradise and Fiscal Flycatcher] en Bontrugwewer [Village Weaver]. Verskeie besoekers het gedurende die oggend by ons kom kuier waaronder twee besoekers van Lund in Swede, Bengt Haneson en Hanna Sigeman. Hulle kuier in SA by Michael (C-ringer) en Susan (A-ringer) Cunningham.



Rietvlei NR, 3 Nov, Martin Steyn wys vir die Voortrekkers van Kemptonpark hoe hy 'n voël hanteer.



Wanda du Plooy

Pretoria Botaniese Tuin, 20 Okt, twee Swede, Bengt Haneson en Hanna Sigeman kyk hoe Michael Cunningham 'n voël ring



Wanda du Plooy



Wanda du Plooy



Pretoria Botaniese Tuin, 20 Okt, Christo Siebert hou 'n Piet-my-vrou vas wat hy gering het

Moreletakloof NR, 1 Des, Jeannie du Plessis (links) van Vriende van Moreletakloof laat Nickey en Collette Roos 'n voëltjie bevoel

Pretoria Botaniese Tuin, 20 Okt, Bengt Haneson met 'n Rooiwangmuisvoël – 'n "ekso-tiese" voël volgens hom

Ringvergadering: 27 Oktober 2018

Negentien A-ringers het die vergadering by Chris en Sonja du Plooy se huis in Wierdapark bygewoon. Ses ringers het verskoning gemaak. Die Ringsubkomitee is eenparig herkies nl Frik, Wanda en Johan Snyman. Die Opleidingskomitee bestaan uit Hein, Martin, Chris en Madeleen. Drie nuwe A-ringers se ringserifikate is oorhandig: Julian du Plooy, Johan de Jager en Leon Croucamp. Ons het lekker gesels oor al ons ringsake. Die vergadering is afgesluit met 'n gesellige bring-en-braai.

Klubring: Rietvlei NR, 3 November 2018

Twaalf ringers het om 3:30 by die hoofhek ontmoet en die koel weer getrotseer. Ons het 108 voëls gevang (28 hervangste). Die volgende oulike spesies is gevang: Klein-, Kaapse Riet- en Vleisanger [African Reed, Lesser Swamp and Little Rush Warbler], Vleitinkinkie [Levaillant's Cisticola], Witkeelswael [White-throated Swallow], Kleinheuningwyser [Lesser Honeyguide], Dikbekwewer [Thick-billed Weaver] (die ringers se bynaam vir hulle is 'vleipapegaaie', omdat hulle so seer byt). Besoekers was Annatjie Smit en haar kleinseun, Jandré Verster, asook 'n Voortrekkerspan van Kemptonpark met 13 kinders en 3 offisiere – die Gemsbokke van die Impala-kommando. Madeleen van Schalkwyk, een van ons A-ringers, het die Natuurkenniskentekens vir hulle aangebied.

Ringkamp: Bushtrails, 9–11 November 2018

Sewe ringers het Vrydag 9 November onder Sleiding van Elba Swart vertrek na Bushtrails naby Magaliesburg vir 'n ringnaweek. Hulle het 162 voëls gevang (34 hervangste). Oulike spesies wat gevang is: Pylvlekkatlagter [Arrow-marked Babbler], Swartoogtiptol [Dark-capped Bulbul] (46, wat uitsonderlik was), Luitinkinkie [Lazy Cisticola], Swartvlieëvanger [Southern Black Flycatcher], Koningrooibekkie [Pin-tailed Whydah], Streepkop- en Geelooiganarie [Streaky-headed Seedeater, Yellow-fronted Canary].

C-ringer opleiding: Bishoppark, 17 November 2018

Sewe ringers het die hitte getrotseer en nette opgeslaan in bewolkte weer. Teen 10:00 het die wolke gewyk en toe was dit vreeslik warm. Ons het nette afgeslaan aangesien dit te warm was vir mens en voëls. Ons het 86 voëls gevang (12 hervangste). Ons het 'n Gewone Janfrederik [Cape Robin-chat] gevang wat op 21 Maart 2012 deur Gerrie Jansen van Rensburg gering is – meer as 6 jaar en 8 maande gelede. Ander spesies was: Diederikkie [Diderick Cuckoo], Bruinkopvisvanger [Brown-hooded Kingfisher], Tuinsanger [Garden Warbler] en Witpensuikerbekkie [White-bellied Sunbird].

Die publiek raak betrokke by die SAFRING Ringprojek

Saterdagoggend, 17 November, het iemand van die publiek, ene Marietjie Venter, 'n dooie Rooiborsduifie [Laughing Dove], met Ringnommer D88778, op die hoek van Booyensstraat en Agste Laan in Les Marais opgetel. Honde het die duifie dood gebyt. Marietjie het die ringnommer vir Lucia Lötter, een van BLNG se C-ringers gegee. Ons kon op SAFRING se webwerf die data opspoor. Dr FC Bothma, een van ons A-ringers, het die duifie op 16 April 2016 by sy huis in Mayville gering.

Ringsessie: Groot Lapa, Rietvlei NR, 24 November 2018

Saterdag 24 November 2018 het 15 ringers om 3:30 by Rietvlei NR se hoofhek ontmoet. Ons het 261 voëls gevang (23 hervangste). Oulike spesies was: Diederikkie [Diderick Cuckoo], Rooiwangnaguil [Rufous-cheeked Nightjar], Europese Byvreter [European Bee-eater], Draaihals [Red-throated Wryneck], Tuin-, Hof-, Grootriet-, Kleinriet- en Europese Rietsanger [Garden, Willow, Great Reed, African Reed and Marsh Warbler].

Klubring: Moreleta NR, 1 Desember 2018

Ons het 480 voëls gevang (46 hervangste). Besondere voëls was soos volg: Geelkanarie [Yellow Canary], Spookvoël [Grey-headed Bush-Shrike], Diederikkie [Diderick Cuckoo], Tuin- en Hofsanger [Garden and Willow Warbler], Kaapse Riet-, Kaapse Vlei- en Kleinrietsanger [Lesser Swamp, African Sedge and African Reed Warbler], Rooivlerktjagra [Brown-crowned Tchagra], Bontrugwevers [Village Weavers] and 57 Dikbekwevers [Thick-billed Weavers]. Met die Dikbekwevers en Spookvoël het die bloed geloop. Nicky en Collette Roos (ma en dogter) wat albei gesiggestremd is, het dit baie geniet om die voëltjies te hanteer met behulp van die A-ringers. Die baie entoesiastiese Vriende van Moreleta NR het die ringers baie besig gehou met vrae en sommer net geselsies.

Ringkamp: Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Centre, Orpenhek, 15–22 Desember 2018



Philip Galimkos

Wêreld Vleilande Dag, Colbyn Wetland NR

Nege ringers het op 15 Desember 2018 die langpad en die versengende hitte aangedurf vir 'n ringkamp by Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station net buite Orpenhek. Ons het 127 voëls gevang (23 hervangste). Verskeie oulike spesies is gevang: Afrikaanse Naguil [Fiery-necked Nightjar], Dwergrivsvanger [African Pygmy Kingfisher], Witkeel-, Tuin- en Hofsanger [Common Whitethroat, Garden and Willow Warbler], Blougrys- en Europese Vlieëvanger [Ashy and Spotted Flycatcher] en Bosveldtinkinkie [Rattling Cisticola].

Roodeplaatdam NR, 5 Januarie 2019

Es ringers het die eerste nuwejaarsring bygewoon onder leiding van Madeleen van Loggerenberg. Ons het 32 voëls gevang (4 hervangste). Mooi spesies was: Piet-my-vrou [Red-chested Cuckoo], Afrikaanse Naguil [Fiery-necked Nightjar], Dwergr- en Bruinkopvisvanger [African Pygmy and Brown-hooded Kingfisher], Hofsanger [Willow Warbler], Oranjesorsboslaksman [Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike] en Kleinheuningwyser [Lesser Honeyguide].

Wonderboom NR, 12 Januarie 2019

Agtien ringers het ons eerste ringsessie bygewoon. Madeleen het ook hierdie ringsessie gelei. Ons het 191 voëls hanteer waarvan net een 'n hervang was. Dit is in Februarie 2016 deur Madeleen in hierdie reservaat gering. Buiten die krimparkie het ons die volgende



Tamsyn Steyn

Europese Byvreter, Wêreld Vleilande Dag, Colbyn Wetland NR

voëlspesies gekry: Kleinsperwer [Little Sparrowhawk], Hoephoep [African Hoopoe], Gestreepte Wipstert [White-browed Scrub Robin] en 'n Witkeelswael [White-throated Swallow]. Die getal van 191 voëls is volgemaak met 69 Swartkeelgeelvinke [Southern Masked Weavers]. Die lysters was ook volop: 19 Rooibeklysters [Kurrichane Thrush] en 27 Geelbeklysters [Karoo Thrush].

Bishoppark, 26 Januarie 2019

Dertien ringers het vroegoggend by Bishoppark bymekaar gekom. Ons het 290

voëls gevang (27 hervangste). Oulike spesies: Bosveldfisant [Swainson's Spurfowl], Europese Swael [Barn Swallow], Witkeel-, Tuin-, Hof en Europese Rietsangers [Common Whitethroat, Garden, Willow and Marsh Warbler], Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern Boubou].

Colbyn Wetland NR (Wêreld Vleilande Dag), 2 Februarie 2019

Tien ringers (Paula en Martin Steyn, Elba Swart, FC Bothma, Christo Siebert, Johan de Jager, Johan van Rooyen, Marië Uckermann en Marina Pienaar), onder leiding van Ig Viljoen, het om 04:00 by Colbyn Vleiland begin nette opsit. Tussen 06:00 en 07:00 het meer as 200 kinders belangstellend geluister hoekom dit belangrik is om vleilande te beskerm en dat dit 'n belangrike voëlhabitat is. Daar is 82 voëls gevang, waarvan net een 'n hervang was. Die volgende spesies is gevang: Hof-, Kleinriet-, en Europese Rietsangers [Willow, African Reed and Marsh Warbler], Hadeda [Hadeda Ibis], Europese Byvreter [European Bee-eater], Bruinsylangstertjie [Tawny-flanked Prinia], Fiskaallaksmen [Fiscal Flycatcher], Witpensuikerbekkie [White-bellied Sunbird], Witvlerkflap [White-winged Widowbird] en Geeloogkanarie [Yellow-fronted Canary].

Montagu se Lepelaartjie – Lepeltjie

Wanda Louwrens

Donderdag, 22 November 2018 kry ek 'n SMS van Philip Fouche uit Montagu.

"More. Goed hier ... hoop by julle ook? Hier broei Lepelaars [African Spoonbill] in 'n groot boom naby iemand se huis hier op 'n plaas. 'n Kleintjie het uitgeval. Hy het 2 dae daar rondgeeloop. Ek voer hom nou vir so 8 dae maalvleis en nou ook tuinslakke."

Ek antwoord dadelik: "Lekker om weer van jou te hoor. Wou net vra of hy/sy dit oorleef het!"

Na 'n minuut kry ek die antwoord en hy stuur 'n video saam: "Hy gaan een van die dae

kan vlieg. Ek wil by jou hoor of daar 'n manier is om hom te merk?"

Ek antwoord weer: "Ek sal op ons landsweye ringers app vra of iemand in die Kaap Montagu toe kan ry. Wens ek was naby. Sou graag een wil ring."

Ek stuur dadelik vir Safring 'n boodskap en vra dat hulle dit op I-ringers adverteer. Hulle doen dit sommer dieselfde dag, want die volgende dag laat weet Philip vir my: "Loutjie Steenberg van Wellington wil graag die lepelaartjie kom ring, maar hy gaan nou eers Joburg toe."



Philip Fouché

Norfolk denneboom voor die plaashuis op die plaas Talana in die Montagu distrik

Ek skryf terug: "Ek hoop julle kan dit ring voor dit moet vlieg. Hoe oud is die kuiken nou al?"

Hy antwoord: "Ek weet glad nie. Hy kom darem al as ek roep. En vreet al amper alleen."

24 November

Philip skryf: Hy raak nou oulik! Hy/sy weet al om die kop heen en weer te beweeg!"

26 November

Ek skryf: "Ek sou graag 'n foto wil hê van jou en die ringer en die lepelaartjie vir publikasie in ons tydskrif."

Philip se antwoord kom gou terug: "Dis goed. Hy of sy is nou baie mak vir my. Hy jaag my omtrent. Wil net heelyd vreet ... loop in die tuin rond en mis ons stoep wit. Ek gaan ook reël dat Loutjie sommer twee skoorsteenveërs ook kom ring ... hier is 'n vrou wat elke jaar een grootmaak ... hulle broei oorkant haar huis in Montagu, in die dorp se ou leiwatervdam ... dis 'n toeriste attraksie ... die dam met honderde Veereiers [Cattle Egrets] en ibisse wat elke jaar daar broei. Ek sal vir jou 'n foto neem van dit."

"Baie dankie."

10 Desember

"Hoe gaan dit met die lepelaartjie? En met jou?" vra ek.

Philip antwoord: "Middag. Goed met albei. Hy is baie gulsig. Vlieg al bietjie rond, maar ek



Loutjie Steenberg besig om 'n ring om 'n klein Veereier se been te sit



Philip Fouché

Lepeltjie is gemeet



dink nie hy eet al self iets nie. As daar 'n stuk vleis lê sal hy dit gryp. Loutjie van Wellington het hom of haar gering. Die 4de Des al. Loutjie het ook 'n skoorsteenveër en 'n veereiertjie gering, asook 'n jong ibis."

Philip stuur 'n rits foto's en gee meer inligting:



Philip Fouche

Loutjie besig om Lepeltjie se ring om te sit

“Die Lepelaars broei op droë grond in ‘n groot denneboom (‘n Norfolk Pine) in die tuin op die plaas Talana buite Montagu. Daar broei ook Rietduikers en Bloureiers [Reed Cormorant, Grey Heron] in dieselfde boom. Die eienaar, Abraham Burger, het vir Philip gevra of hy belangstel om Lepeltjie te probeer grootmaak, want hy of sy loop al 2 dae in die tuin rond. Die wind het die nag vreeslik gewaai en die kuiken uit die boom gewaai. Hy het Lepeltjie gaan haal en moes hom agter sy kop vashou en voer vir omtrent 10 dae voor hy self begin eet het. Hy hou meeste van maaltvleis wat hy koop of vleissaagsels wat hy by Sentrale Slaghuis in Montagu kry. Hy en sy vrou vang ook tuinslakke vir hom. Hulle haal die doppe af en dan eet hy sommer so 25 op ‘n slag. Hy is baie snoep en kry nooit genoeg nie. Hy vlieg al bietjie rond. Partykeer loop hy/sy saam



Lepeltjie kom aangevlieg as Philip hom roep, maar hy is baie bang vir ander mense

met die skape en dan weer saam met die kapokkies.

Ek skryf terug: “Dit klink of hy homself al tuis gemaak het daar by julle op die plaas. Maar hy sal self koers kry as hy eers volwasse is.”

Carolyn Metcalfe en haar suster maak elke jaar ‘n hele paar wesies groot. Sy bly oorkant die bekende leiwatervdam in Montagu wat ‘n toeriste aantreklikheid is. Daar broei baie Skoorsteenveërs, Veereiers en Kleinwitreiers [Sacred Ibis, Cattle Egret, Little Egret]. Jong voëls beland in die straat en dan maak sy hulle groot. Sy maak op die oomblik ‘n Ibis en Veereier groot. Loutjie het hul albei ook gering. Daar loop ook nog ‘n Ibis van verlede seisoen. Die voëls vlieg net oor die straat en dan is hulle by die ander. Sy is ‘n kunstenaar en eienaar van die bekende Ibis Gallery. Die gallery is net oorkant die leiwatervdam.



Philip Fouche

Toe Lepeltjie kon vlieg het hy op priede se pale reg voor die voordeur begin slaap



Lepeltjie het saam met die plaas se kapokkies begin loop en ook later naby hulle begin slaap

15 Desember

Philip stuur 'n foto van Lepeltjie wat op die dak sit! Hy vlieg al lekker rond.

18 Januarie 2019

Ek skryf weer: "Is Lepeltjie nog op die plaas?" Philip stuur 'n stemboodschap. Lepeltjie het 'n besering aan sy bek opgedoen daardie dag toe hy uit die boom geval het. Sy/haar bobek is meer as 2 cm korter as die onderbek. Sy/hy weet darem sy/hy is 'n Lepelaar. As sy/hy in 'n modderpoel loop, beweeg die bek heen en weer. Hy loop nog bedags saam met die kapokkies, maar Philip moet hom nog voer. Dit is 'n ope vraag of hy/sy ooit in die natuur sal oorleef.

13 Maart 2019

'n Opvolg van Philip Fouche:

Met uitval uit boom het sy bobek seergekry en die het baie stadiger as onderste lepel gegroei... sy bek was later heel misvorm en het al moeiliker geëet.

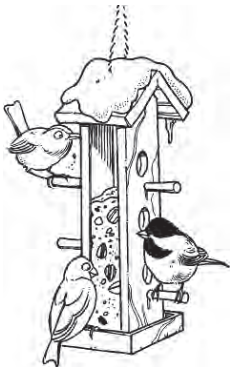
Ons was al weg van die huis vir drie dae en as ons terugkom is Lepeltjie kwaai honger.

Toe ons nou twee weke gelede terugkom... ook drie dae weggewees, kon ek hom nie kry nie. Later het ek hom dood aangetref... iemand moes hom doodgery het.

Baie jammer... maar ek dink hy sou moeilik in die natuur kon oorleef met boonste lepel omtrent 4 cm korter as onderste. 🐦



Skewe bek! Later nog meer skeef



Can feeding birds do any harm?

Possibly, yes. Concentrating birds in one area can help spread diseases. Also, it may tip the balance in favour of predators such as sparrowhawks or cats, by concentrating birds in one area, where the attacker can claim a 'free lunch'. A more subtle argument against feeding is that by artificially helping birds we are acting against nature, and supporting individuals which otherwise would have died. As a whole, it is argued, the population as a whole becomes less healthy. However, it might also be argued that we have destroyed so much natural habitat that we have a moral duty to lend the birds a helping hand. Overall, the benefits of feeding appear to outweigh the drawbacks.

The Southern African Bird Atlas Project, a tool to monitor changes in bird distribution

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), BirdLife South Africa, as well as many other NGOs, academics and conservationists, continue to benefit from the 12 million records submitted by committed citizen scientists for the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (<http://sabap2.adu.org.za/>). These data are used by various programmes within BirdLife South Africa, for example, the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas Programme to identify the most important areas in the country for the conservation of birds as well as the Terrestrial Bird Conservation Programme for research projects focusing on specific species such as Secretarybirds and the many threatened lark species occurring in South Africa.

More than 82% of the atlas blocks, called pentads, in South Africa have at least one atlas card, that is 13 743 of the nearly 17 000 atlas blocks. Although many of these atlas blocks have multiple atlas cards, we need even more atlas cards per atlas block to build the foundation blocks on which species maps are built.

However, SABAP2 is not only a project to map the static or once-off distribution of species. It is a long-term project that can be used to detect ongoing changes in species distributions over time. For example, we can detect recent changes in species' ranges by comparing their distributions from 2007 to 2011 with data from 2012 to 2019. Such information is of great value to conservation planners, and can be used to help to determine the conservation status of a species. It can also help to assess the impacts of climate change on birds and conservation planners can then plan accordingly.

It is therefore worrying that we have noticed a decline in the number of pentads atlased during the last few years. The number of pentads for which atlas cards were submitted peaked in 2011, when 5 298 pentads were atlased. This decreased to 4 955 pentads in 2016, 4 829 in 2017 and only 4 517 in 2018. There might be very valid reasons for this decline, such as, for example, the increase in the price of fuel. However, in order to continue monitoring changes in bird distributions we need to atlas as many pentads as possible each year; the more pentads atlased, the more accurately we can infer changes in bird populations.

We therefore appeal to atlasers to target as many pentads as possible in 2019. With a more co-ordinated approach, the 2011 record of 5 298 pentads covered in a year can easily be broken. We encourage bird clubs and individuals to target the pentads around the town where they are based, and to each year aim to atlas the same block of pentads. For example, the USA Stilbaai Bird Group atlas 75 pentads each year, all within easy reach of Stilbaai. It is a relatively easy project to manage. First, identify a project co-ordinator, then find willing atlasers and through regular communication allocate pentads to be atlased. A large number of pentads can be atlased this way. For example, if a club has 10 atlasers and each atlas one pentad a month, the club can atlas 120 pentads each year! Larger clubs should be able to atlas even more pentads each year, especially if the effort is well co-ordinated.

How do you know which pentads have been atlased in a year? It is very easy. On the SABAP2 website (<http://sabap2.adu.org.za/>) click on the menu item 'Coverage Maps' and on the next page select 2019 above the map. You can zoom into the page and also view the map in full screen mode. The direct link is: http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage.php?DG=&year=2019#content_90perc

If you travel, always look for pentads with low overall coverage or which have not been atlased in 2019 and atlas as many of these pentads as you can.

Let's set a target of 5 300 pentads atlased in South Africa this year; it would be great if we can smash the previous record!

If you need more information about how to start or manage a regional project, please feel free to contact Ernst Retief (ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za). Johan van Rooyen (rooyenvanrooyen@gmail.com) manages the Stilbaai project and is willing to share his experience with clubs who are keen to start a regional project.

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Migrating birds use a magnetic map to travel long distances

[Richard Holland](#), Senior Lecturer in Animal Cognition, Bangor University

Disclosure statement

Richard Holland receives funding from the Leverhulme Trust and BBSRC

Partners

Bangor University provides funding as a member of The Conversation UK.

Originally published on 17 August 2017 in

THE CONVERSATION

Re-published under [CC BY-ND](#).

Birds have an impressive ability to navigate. They can fly long distances, to places that they may never have visited before, sometimes returning home after months away.

Though there has been a lot of research in this area, scientists are still trying to understand exactly how they manage to find their intended destinations.

Much of the research has focused on homing pigeons, which are famous for their ability to return to their lofts after long distance displacements. Evidence suggests that pigeons use a combination of olfactory cues to locate their position, and then the sun as a compass to head in the right direction.

We call this “map and compass navigation”, as it mirrors human orienteering strategies: we locate our position on a map, then use a compass to head in the right direction.

But pigeons navigate over relatively short distances, in the region of tens to hundreds of kilometres. Migratory birds, on the other hand, face a much bigger challenge. Every year, billions of small songbirds travel thousands of kilometres between their breeding areas in Europe and winter refuges in Africa.

This journey is one of the most dangerous things the birds will do, and if they cannot pinpoint the right habitat, they will not survive. We know from displacement experiments that these birds can also correct their path from places they have never been to, sometimes

from across continents, such as in a study on white crowned sparrows in the US.

Over these vast distances, the cues that pigeons use may not work for migrating birds, and so scientists think they may require a more global mapping mechanism.

Navigation and location

To locate our position, we humans calculate latitude and longitude, that is our position on the north-south and east-west axes of the earth. Human navigators have been able to calculate latitude from the height of the sun at midday for millennia, but it took us much longer to work out how to calculate longitude.

Eventually it was solved by having a highly accurate clock that could be used to tell the difference between local sunrise time and Greenwich meantime. Initially, scientists thought birds might use a similar mechanism, but so far no evidence suggests that shifting a migratory bird’s body clock effects its navigation ability.

There is another possibility, however, which has been proposed for some time, but never tested – until now.

The earth’s magnetic pole and the geographical north pole (true north) are not in the same place. This means that when using a magnetic compass, there is some angular difference between magnetic and true north, which varies depending on where you are on the earth. In Europe, this difference, known as declination, is consistent on an east west axis, and so can possibly be a clue to longitude.

To find out whether declination is used by migrating birds, we tested the orientation of migratory reed warblers. Migrating birds that are kept in a cage will show increased activity, and they tend to hop in the direction they migrate. We used this technique to measure their orientation after we had changed the declination of the magnetic field by eight degrees.

First, the birds were tested at the Courish spit in Russia, but the changed declination – in combination with unchanged magnetic intensity – indicated a location near Aberdeen in Scotland. All other cues were available and still told them they were in Russia.

If the birds were simply responding to the change in declination – like a magnetic compass would – they would have only shifted eight degrees. But we saw a dramatic reorientation: instead of facing their normal south-west, they turned to face south-east.

This was not consistent with a magnetic compass response, but was consistent with the birds thinking they had been displaced to Scotland, and correcting to return to their normal path. That is to say they were hopping towards the start of their migratory path as if they were near Aberdeen, not in Russia.

This means that it seems that declination is a cue to longitudinal position in these birds.

There are still some questions that need answering, however. We still don't know for certain how birds detect the magnetic field, for example. And while declination varies consistently in Europe and the US, if you go east, it does not give such a clear picture of where the bird is, with many values potentially indicating more than one location.

There is definitely still more to learn about how birds navigate, but our findings could open up a whole new world of research. 🐦

Leucism in birds

Tamsyn Sherwill

Four different sightings of leucistic birds were submitted in the months leading up to this issue of Laniarius, so a short article on leucism seemed appropriate... Henk Smit reported seeing a leucistic Dark-capped Bulbul [Swarthoogtiptol] at Roodeplaat Dam, Pieter Heslinga spotted a leucistic Blue Korhaan [Bloukorhaan] in the Karoo near Colesberg, Keanu Canto photographed a leucistic Barn Swallow [Europese Swael] on the BLNG outing to Mabusa, and Sariza de Jager sent in a photo of a leucistic Grey Go-away-bird [Kwêvoël] taken in Kruger earlier this year.

Leucism is an abnormal plumage condition, which can seriously confound identification of these unusual-looking individuals, especially as birders often rely heavily on plumage colouration in their IDs. The affected feathers lack melanin, due to a genetic mutation which results in the cells responsible for melanin production being absent, and are thus white, unless the normal plumage colour is also caused by carotenoids. The production of carotenoid pigments is not affected by leucism – an absence of melanin and presence



Leucistic Barn Swallow/Europese Swael

Keanu Canto



Henk Smit



Leucistic Dark-capped Bulbul/Swartoogtiptol. Note the areas of normal yellow colouration.

of carotenoids then results in yellow feathers (this can be seen in the unaffected yellow plumage on the vent of the leucistic bulbul photographed by Henk). Leucistic birds may also have areas of plumage in which melanin production is unaffected (e.g. the Barn Swallow photographed by Keanu).

What impact does leucism have on affected birds? As melanin is an important structural component of feathers, the reduction in melanin can cause feathers to weaken, which then wear more quickly. This can hinder flight in some situations. Being white or pale can cause a bird to be more conspicuous and thus easier for predators to spot. Having white feathers can be fatal for birds in cold climates that rely on solar radiation for heat. Leucistic birds might also have lower breeding success – some studies have found that leucistic individuals are sometimes not recognized or accepted

by potential mates (the Blue Korhaan spotted by Pieter appeared to have secured a 'normal' mate though).

Leucism is inherited, but the exact pattern of the white colouration can vary between adults and their offspring, and if the gene is recessive it can also skip a generation.

Though leucism is generally used as an umbrella term for all abnormally pale colouration that isn't due to albinism, pure leucism by definition refers to an absence of melanin in certain feathers, whereas there are conditions other than a lack of melanin production which can cause birds to have pale plumage, e.g. 'dilution' refers to plumage that looks 'washed out' (melanin is still produced but at lower levels), and 'progressive greying' refers to feathers that lighten with age.

Albinism may superficially resemble leucism but albinism is caused by a mutation



Pieter Heslinga



Leucistic Blue Korhaan/Bloukorhaan and a 'normal' Blue Korhaan photographed nearby



Sarina de Jager

Leucistic Grey Go-away-bird/Kwêvoël, or is it 'diluted'?

resulting in a complete absence of melanin in all cells, and not only in certain feathers. The best way to identify albinism is by the bird's pale pink or reddish eyes, legs and feet, and pale bill. Due to their poor eyesight, albino birds usually do not survive long in the wild. Leucistic birds usually have normal-coloured eyes, legs, feet and bills.

Reference

British Trust for Ornithology (2019). Leucism & albinism. URL: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/gardens-wildlife/garden-birds/behaviour/plumage/leucism> 🐦

Harsh paradise and prime birding destination – southern and central Namibia, 22 Aug – 12 Sep 2018

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

After birding the northern parts of Namibia quite extensively over several trips, it was time to re-look at southern and central Namibia.

We left at 05:00 on 22 August 2018 with my new SUV for the first long-haul of 813 km to Upington. Arriving at Upington in good time, we paid Orange River Cellars a visit to stock up on liquid refreshments for the trip and purchase some of the award-winning Muscadel. The following day we did the border-crossing at Ariamsvlei and pushed on to Grünau, a dry and dusty little town; one can sense that one is in a harsh environment. We had found ourselves a self-catering chalet and did some birding on the way and within Grünau. Rock Martin [Kransswael] and Little Swift [Kleinwindswael] flew overhead, a Pale Chanting Goshawk [Bleeksingvalk] perched on a telephone post, Ant-eating Chats [Swartpiek] were active, and of course how could we forget

the Sociable Weavers [Versamelvoël] with their multi-chambered apartment-blocks on every conceivable spot, including both trees and telephone posts. After unpacking superficially, we took the 100-odd km trip to the Fish River Canyon on a very good gravel road (C12). The natural surroundings were sandy and dry, and the vegetation cover was sparse with much low scrub. Despite this, the harsh southern Namibia has a charming attraction, with weird rock formations and scarred trees. On the way we came across Karoo Korhaan, Fawn-coloured Lark, Sabota Lark, Pale-winged Starling, Pygmy Falcon, Chat Flycatcher, Capped Wheatear, Namaqua Sandgrouse and Karoo Long-billed Lark [Vaalkorhaan, Vaalbruinlewerik, Sabotalewerik, Bleekvlerkspreu, Dwergvalk, Grootvlieëvanger, Hoëveldskaapwagter, Kelkiewyn, Karoolangbeklewerik], to mention just a few. The Fish River Canyon was most impressive. In Namibia there is a friendly

debate whether it is the largest canyon in the world or whether it is second to America's Grand Canyon. The canyon did not form by water erosion alone, but was first formed by a geological fault-line and plate tectonics which caused a split or tear in the Earth's crust, within which the Fish River found its course. We resolved to return the following day to get better pictures as the setting sun shone right into the camera. The following day, en route again to the canyon, with various stops, Karoo Long-billed Lark, Familiar Chat [Gewone Spekvreter], Black-throated Canary [Bergkanarie] and Grey-backed Sparrow-Larks [Grysruglewerik] as well as Acacia Pied Barbet [Bonthoutkapper] and White-backed Mousebird [Witkruisuisvoël] (within Grünau) were spotted. On our return to Grünau, we spotted a pair of Rock Kestrels [Kransvalk] which had made themselves at home under a thatched roof of a partially-finished structure.

We travelled on to our next stop-over: Lüderitz, hoping to find Burchell's Courser [Bloukopdrawwertjie] somewhere on the way, but despite our best efforts we could not spot this elusive (and nomadic) bird. En route we stopped at the peculiar disused lime kiln at Holog 'Station'. Lüderitz is situated on the Atlantic Ocean, within the Namib Desert with its harsh beauty. The weather was cold and windy. We noticed that we had packed too few warm clothes. (We always have this debate ahead of a trip: what clothes must we pack?) We

booked a 2-hour catamaran trip of the bay and around to Halifax Island for the next day. This commenced at 08:00 and we wore all the warm clothes we had brought. It was desperately cold and unpleasant. But the trip was very interesting. We spotted Cape Gannet, Cape-, White-breasted and Bank Cormorants, African Black Oystercatchers, Kelp- and Hartlaub's Gulls, Pied Avocet, Common Whimbrel, Greater Flamingo, Swift- and Sandwich Terns [Witmalgas, Trek-, Witbors- & Bankduiker, Swarttobie, Kelpmeeu, Hartlaubse Meeu, Bontelsie, Kleinwulp, Grootflamink, Geelbek- & Grootsterretjie] and stopping close to Halifax Islands we saw a large colony of African Penguins [Brilpikkewyn]. This was certainly most fascinating to watch, viewing these birds both in the water and on land. We also saw Cape Fur Seals and Heavyside's Dolphins close to the boat. The next day we drove to Grosse Bucht and Surmvoegel Bucht. We were hoping to connect with Damara Tern [Damarasterretjie] on their breeding grounds at Grosse Bucht, but it was too early in the season. We travelled to Diaz Point and climbed up to the Diaz Cross (a replica thereof) and were almost blown off the cliff by the strong wind.

A trip to Kolmanskop 10 km outside of Lüderitz is 'mandatory'; this is a ghost town dating back more than 100 years, where diamonds had been found, blown inland by wind power, and where an entire town shot up in the desert. After the rich finds of diamonds were depleted everybody left, leaving the town to



Fish River Canyon



African Penguin/Brilpikkewyn



N Graf von Dürckheim

Red Dunes between Sesriem and Sossusvlei



N Graf von Dürckheim

Rüppell's Korhaan/Woestynkorhaan

the elements, in this case desert sand and wind. Beautiful houses, a hospital, a kegelbahn (bowling alley) with everything still intact, a store and other buildings were in varying stages of preservation or decay. Some buildings which had been kept closed were still in a reasonable condition inside. Where doors and windows had been left open, however, the desert sand blew in, covering the floors up to half-way up the walls. Outside one can see bricks and plaster showed varying signs of sand-blasting, in places to half the width of the bricks – quite amazing.

After three days we departed for nearby Aus. This is a little village 100-odd km inland from Lüderitz and is known as an 'oasis in the desert' – for the splendid Bahnhof Hotel with its fantastic cuisine (we had delicious cordon

bleu gemsbok schnitzel filled with camembert cheese, cranberries and bacon...) and for the wild horses approximately 25 km to the west of the village. Uncertainty exists as to where the horses originate from. One theory is that German troops freed the horses after being beaten by the Allied/South African military in 1915 during WW1. The horses have adapted completely to desert life, although a waterhole has been established for them and they are fed in times of drought. We took some nice pictures and I counted up to 63 horses in the distance. Their colour has also adapted and they all show darker brown colours with more melanin pigment. On the way to the waterhole there are sandy stretches with patches of vegetation (partially Ink Bush) where we saw numerous larks, and specifically Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark. The females were mostly on the ground or flying low, whereas the males were flying higher up and singing and displaying. We were lucky enough to get our first lifer, a Black-eared Sparrow-Lark [Swartoorlewerik], close by on the following day.

Our next destination was Sesriem and Sossusvlei along the C13, C14 and C19 gravel roads. Heavily corrugated, with much loose sand, we and my SUV were subjected to a lengthy 368 km back-aching shake-up. We booked into a very nice chalet at Taleni Desert Camp, close to the entrance to the Park at Sesriem, and ordered some marinated gemsbok steak for a braai. The next two days we traversed the 70-odd km to Sossusvlei, hoping to find Burchell's Courser and Dune Lark [Duinlewerik]. We followed the leads from Southern African Bird Finder, by Cohen et al., and looked for Dune Lark at Elim Dune. But not a single bird was found, possibly because Elim has now been turned into a dune-climbing venue and many overseas tourists visit it.

Despite our very best efforts, travelling no faster than 20 km/h, we failed to locate Burchell's Courser. We will have to find it elsewhere.

Mention has to be made of the unforgettable scenery and views from Desert Camp to the far-away rocky hills across seemingly endless

plains of dry grassveld and low scrub with our peaceful braai fire burning in front of the chalet, the fantastic sunsets, the barking geckos with their tak-tak-tak-tak vocalisations at sunset and into the starlit night. How can I with mere words describe this atmosphere? The bliss of desert life.

Sossusvlei also needs to be mentioned: the flat pans with clay and salt floors, surrounded by large red sand dunes, were dry and the climb up the dunes to Death Valley was quite strenuous, but the scenery was great. You need a 4x4 to get from the parking area to the vlei because of thick sand. The massive dunes on the road from Sesriem to Sossusvlei, and particularly Dune 45 (or Big Daddy) at 325 m high are a spectacle to see and experience. I climbed halfway up Dune 45 – two steps forward, one step sliding back. And the birds. We spotted Sclater's Lark [Namakwalewerik], Rüppell's Korhaan [Woestynkorhaan] (on various occasions), Pied Crow [Witborskraai], and Greater Kestrel [Grootrooivalk] at a nest in a Camelthorn tree with two fully-feathered chicks right in front of Dune 45 in the middle of nowhere; Ashy Tit and Mountain Wheatear [Akasiagrismees, Bergwagter] at Desert Camp; Ostrich, Springbok and Gemsbok in the lone rocky desert in surprisingly good condition and Northern Black Korhaan [Witvlerkkorhaan] (I thought it was too dry for these here in the desert). This is a harsh but most fascinating environment.

Sesriem Canyon is also very worthwhile to visit. Approximately 30 m deep, it is full of stunning views and we felt as though we had been transported into a different world, expecting little men with bows-and-arrows to appear around the next corner.

After three interesting days we reluctantly bid farewell to Desert Camp to tackle the next stretch of road to Walvis Bay some 300 km onward, via Solitaire on the C19 and thereafter C14 roads. The road conditions were extremely bad, bumpy corrugations and sandy stretches which can be quite treacherous. My SUV had to pass the rough-riding test, with me driving in 4-wheel-drive high ratio to gain more stability.



N Graf von Dürckheim

Greater Kestrel/Grootrooivalk chicks in Camelthorn in front of Dune 45



N Graf von Dürckheim

Flamingos (Greater & Lesser) on Walvis Bay Lagoon

We got shaken up severely. We navigated two passes, the Gaub Pass and the Kuiseb Pass, which both showed interesting scenery but were not difficult to drive. On the way we stopped at a mixed flock of vultures some 60 to 120 m beyond a farm fence. The farmer told us that he would return to investigate later and that he also had spotted Rüppell's Vultures [Rüppellse Aasvoël] on his farm. Out came the spotting scope. There were some 60 vultures close to a carcass which we could not identify, sitting on the ground and perching in trees – White-backed Vultures and Lappet-faced Vultures [Witruugaasvoël, Swartaasvoël] with a rarity perching slightly separate from the rest and looking 'out-of-range': a White-headed



N Graf von Dürckheim

Chestnut-banded Plover/Rooibandstrandkiewiet



N Graf von Dürckheim

Sandwich Harbour

Vulture [Witkopaasvoël], a fantastic addition to our list.

We arrived at Walvis Bay, after driving through Kamas Hochland, part of the Namib-Naukluft Park, also harsh desert environment, and found ourselves a self-catering flatlet close to the lagoon. It was cold and windy. There had been many changes since I was last stationed at Walvis Bay as a young infantry officer many years ago. The military camp is no more. A beautiful promenade has been constructed all along the lagoon, and where the military camp used to be there are now large and expensive-looking houses opposite the promenade where people strolled along marvelling at the 50 to 70 thousand Greater and Lesser Flamingos which cover the vast lagoon. Amazing! The harbour

had also undergone major changes and is now much larger with different quays and container terminals.

We took a drive along the lagoon to the mudflats opposite the salt pans of the salt works which apparently cover 4 500 ha. Our first lifer, which had eluded us for a long time, immediately showed: Chestnut-banded Plover [Rooibandstrandkiewiet]. There were hundreds of these little birds scurrying around on the mudflats sometimes in small groups and also in mixed flocks with White-fronted Plovers [Vaalstrandkiewiet] and Little Stints [Kleinstrandloper]. (The Little Stints showed much darker and browner plumage than I had seen before, the band around the neck being broad and darkish brown – was this possibly intermediate plumage?) This was one of the ‘easiest’ lifers we had ever gotten. We were most happy.

The following day we had booked a self-drive trip to Sandwich Harbour, some 60 km through the desert, along with a guide. I first had to obtain training and learn (again) how to do sand and dune driving. After deflating the tyres to 1 bar, and ‘passing the test’ on some moderate dunes, we departed on the 60-odd km drive. The dune driving really gave me a thrill, specifically driving down dunes at an angle of 35°. We had to start the journey shortly before low tide, as there is a narrow stretch, one lane wide, where the track runs right next to the sea on one side and steep dunes that cannot be navigated on the other. This stretch is inundated at high tide. Hundreds of Bank- and Cape Cormorants settled on the bank immediately next to the water or were hunting in the water or flying over the sea. Not only was Sandwich Harbour most interesting to see (again) but we were also able to observe the wonders on the living desert: massive red sand dunes, coloured by garnet dust, sparse vegetation and thorny (!) Nara shrubs, which bear hand-size roundish melon-type fruit in a thorny shell, freshwater at 1 m below ground, bogs and little lakes of freshwater with lush vegetation, where water seeps to the surface of the desert from

ancient subterranean rivers. In the case of the Kuiseb, many of these bogs had waterbirds en masse: South African Shelduck, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Cape Teal, and Cape Shoveler [Kopereend, Bontelsie, Rooipootelsie, Teeleend, Kaapse Slopeend] – and all of that right in the desert, surrounded by dunes. I was amazed. We saw Springbok which had adapted to desert life, their hooves leaving drag-marks from their pointed protrusions which had grown longer through not being worn off while walking on hard surfaces. We also saw graves of the Topnaar people, a clan of the Nama.

Our guide, JP Koch of Red Dune Safaris, indicated to me on the way back where the 'nursery' was, where we were hoping to find Dune Lark the next day. We had had a splendid, unforgettable day in the Namib Desert, with unexpected birding opportunities.

The next day we were up at the crack of dawn, wishing to try for Dune Lark. As we got out, there was low-lying fog with poor visibility. Oh NO! We drove towards the salt works, turned off left and had our 'practice dune' in front of us. Well, I was not going to navigate this dune in thick fog with only 15-m visibility. I searched for and found a track around the dune and continued, following my GPS where I had saved the co-ordinates of the 'Nursery' the previous day. We found it and continued on a track with thick sand, scouting around for bird movements, but none were seen. The topography was flat with only little mounds with some vegetation, mainly scrub, on top. After a while, I pulled the SUV off the road and we decided to walk to higher dunes we could see in the distance. We had probably walked for 800 – 1 000 m. No bird movement. Walking about and scanning the area, Kathrin observed small bird (passerine) tracks on the dunes between the scrub (Ink Bush). But we could not see any bird movement. At a spot on top of a dune with scrub cover I took out my PDA and played the Dune Lark call. Within a few minutes, Dune Larks responded from three different directions, but despite our best efforts, we could not spot them. We were getting desperate. At



N Graf von Dürckheim

Bank Cormorants/Bankduiker

that stage I played the call again. The result was that a male Dune Lark came flying right above us, singing the exact same vocalisation as in the Roberts sounds on my PDA and also displaying. Later on, two were displaying above us in the air and singing. We had some good sightings through the binoculars, but photos were not possible. Happiness took the place of despair, we had a fantastic sighting of this lifer, but we never got to see it on the ground; possibly because the birds are well camouflaged and their colour blends in with the dunes. The question arose again as to how these birds can survive in this harsh, inhospitable environment.

The next day we continued birding on the Walvis Bay Lagoon, a birding wonderland. Again we marvelled at the masses of flamingos, and also spotted Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Damara Tern, Curlew Sandpiper, Kelp Gull and Hartlaub's Gull [Bosruiter, Groenpootruiter, Reusesterretjie, Damarasterretjie, Krombekstrandloper]. We were also very lucky to spot Dunlin [Bontstrandloper], which looks dumpier than Curlew Sandpiper, with a less conspicuous 'eyebrow' (supercilium). Our quest to find Terek Sandpiper [Terekruter] proved fruitless. That will also have to 'stand over' for another day. But our birding continued: Ruddy Turnstone [Steenloper] showed well, also Great White Pelicans [Witpelikaan], Grey Heron [Blouerieer], Black-necked Grebe [Swartnekdoobbertjie] and the first few Ruff [Kemphaan] to arrive from



Curlew Sandpiper/Krombekstrandloper



N Graf von Dürckheim

Common Redshank/Rooipootruiter

their migration. Back at our flatlet we spotted Speckled Pigeon and Common Waxbill [Kransduif, Rooibeksysie] in the garden amongst the weavers and sparrows. We had a superlative birding day and were justifiably over the moon. The next day we drove out on the Paaltjies Road and stopped at a sandy picnic spot, walked the short distance to the waves' edge, set up the spotting scope and scanned the sea for birds. Cape Cormorants flew in the long lines just above the waves and we were lucky to spot Sooty Shearwater [Malbaartjie] (not a new bird for us but nice to see). On the return trip we saw Common Whimbrel and Pied Avocet.

The following day we left for Swakopmund and were surprised to the new residential area that had shot up between Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. On the way we saw Black Harrier, and other more common city-dwellers. We spent one day exploring the historical centre of Swakopmund on foot while my SUV underwent its very first service. It was most pleasant to see how well all the historical buildings had been kept and that the jetty had undergone major renovations and now also sports a restaurant. We purchased a permit at the Ministry of Environment and Tourism offices for the 160-km Welwitschia Plains Scenic Drive which we tackled the next day. This was a very interesting drive through the Namib-Naukluft Park, with 13 different beacons supplying interesting information

about the varying topics, from lichens in the desert to the *Welwitschia mirabilis* pre-historic plant being 1 500 years old. Around varying vegetation, including a picnic spot inside the dry Swakop riverbed, we spotted Grey Go-away-bird, Karoo Scrub-Robin, Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler [Kwêvoël, Slangverklikker, Bosveldtjeriktik], and, close to the sight of the largest welwitschia, a Tractrac Chat [Woestynspekvreter] which looked very pale in colour, as well as Karoo Korhaan.

We also visited the surrounds of the Swakopmund Mile 4 Saltworks. This is a good birding destination and we spotted many of the birds we had seen in Walvis Bay, along with others like African Black Oystercatcher, and I got some good pictures of a Common Redshank [Rooipootruiter]. We continued on to Henties Bay which was disappointing as there was thick fog, even at midday, and one could hardly see anything.

After five days in Swakopmund we undertook a pleasant drive to Windhoek, only 363 km on a good tar road. En route we spotted Lilac-breasted Roller, Cape Crow, Burchell's Starling, Red-billed and Yellow-billed Hornbills and Groundscraper Thrush [Gewone Troupant, Swartkraai, Grootglanspreeu, Rooibek- & Geelbekneushoringvoël, Gevlekte Lyster]. We walked part of the historical centre of Windhoek doing sightseeing.

The following two days were spent driving home from Windhoek, via Kang in

Botswana where we slept over. We had lovely sightings of Ostrich calmly walking over the road on the Trans-Kalahari Highway, many Red-created Korhaan, plenty of Steenbok (yes that it is also called in English), and at one stage I thought we had at last found Burchell's Courser [Bloukopdrawwertjie] which turned out to be Double-banded Courser [Dubbelbanddrawwertjie]. We had travelled 5 772 km, spotted 116 bird species, amongst them some red-hot specials, and spent just over 3 weeks in the harsh paradise/prime birding destination.

P.S.

- Fuel, in my case now diesel, is a lot cheaper in Namibia and Botswana than in South Africa, not being so heavily taxed.
- Don't attempt to do dune driving and sand driving without a full 4-wheel-drive vehicle. I towed a Hyundai SUV out of the sand at Paaltjies Road picnic site, the driver of which had overestimated his vehicle's capabilities.
- Many gravel main-roads (C13, C14 and C19) have not been well maintained and you will have to reduce speed for safety's sake. The C12 from Grünau to Seeheim is in good condition.
- Fresh fruit: At the border posts from Namibia to Botswana and again Botswana to South Africa they wanted to confiscate our apples, necessitating us eating them there and then. All fresh agricultural products are to be confiscated at these border posts. 🍏

Birding the Southern Free State, 23–25 October 2018

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

Where on earth is Springfontein? Never heard of it before. I was looking at pictures on the Roberts VII DVD of Burchell's Courser [Bloukopdrawwertjie]. Most of the pictures of Burchell's Courser were taken at Springfontein, Free State, or at Etosha in Namibia. As it sometimes happens, shortly thereafter there was a report from a friend (Sue Oertli) on Facebook about Burchell's Courser at Springfontein. I contacted Sue and she kindly gave me all the information I required. I contacted Riëtte at Garingboom Guest Farm and a few days later she sent me pictures she had taken of Burchell's Coursers, but not only that, she also sent a picture of a small chick with the caption: 'meet Baby Burchell'. I could not let this chance go by, after having searched unsuccessfully for Burchell's Courser in Namibia in September 2018, and long before that elsewhere.



Rufous-eared Warbler/ Rooioorlangstertjie

N Graf von Dürckheim

N Graf von Dürckheim



Blue Korhaan/Bloukorhaan

After a few quick phone calls to some of my 'birding-buddies', Dieter Lilje was eager to join the trip. We left early on 23 October 2018 to miss most of the traffic through Johannesburg. It took us about 7 hours of travelling and 600 km, passing Bloemfontein and turning off after Springfontein some 160 km on to reach Garingboom Guest Farm. Garingboom/Cyferfontein is a 2 500 hectare working sheep farm and is situated in a transitional zone between the Grassveld and Nama Karoo Biomes. Riëtte and Jan Griesel also have a number of guest cottages on the property and

N Graf von Dürckheim



Melodious Lark/Spotlewerik

Riëtte is an excellent birder. It was in part on their farm that the late Dr Richard Liversidge collected specimens of the 'new' species of Kimberley Pipit and Long-tailed Pipit, which were however 'removed from the Southern African Bird List' in 2014. The farm is also stocked with game and Springbok, Blesbok and Black Wildebeest can be spotted. They also have two hiking trails, on which a variety of birds can be seen.

On arrival at the entrance gate to the farm we started birding before we booked into our nice chalet, had a spot of lunch and thereafter met Riëtte at her Willy's Jeep to take us on a drive around the farm. Dieter had discovered that he had already seen Burchell's Courser, but he was keen to connect with Melodious Lark [Spotlewerik], which also occurs in the area. We started birding in earnest: at one of the farm dams we spotted White-breasted Cormorant, Cattle Egret, Orange River White-eye, Intermediate Egret, Grey Heron, African Spoonbill, Sacred Ibis, South African Shelduck, Spur-winged Goose and numerous others [Witborsduiker, Veereier, Gariëpglasogie, Geelbekwitreier, Bloureier, Lepelaar, Skoorsteenevêr, Kopereend, Wildemakou]. We moved over to another area on the farm: Rock Martin, Rufous-eared Warbler, Blue Crane, Blue Korhaan [Kransswael, Rooioorlangstertjie, Bloukraanvoël, Bloukorhaan] and Bokmakierie spotted, amongst many other species. We drove to a patch of vegetation, where Red Grass *Themeda triandra* was dominant and stopped. After watching and listening for some time, I took out the PDA and played the Roberts call of Melodious Lark for a short while. Almost immediately Melodious Larks answered and came flying above us, singing and displaying. Later on I was able to get some pictures of a Melodious Lark perched on a fence-wire. It looked somewhat similar to Monotonous Lark [Bosveldlewerik], but the Melodious Lark has a very prominent white eyebrow, with the Monotonous Lark having only an indistinct supercilium. Dieter was 'on cloud nine' with his new lifer. Despite the dry conditions and high and dry grass, excellent birding continued:

Eastern Clapper Lark [Hoëveldklappertjie] was followed by Red-capped Lark [Rooikoplewerik] and, to our delight, Large-billed Lark [Dikbeklewerik]. I had only seen this recently as a lifer at Goegap Nature Reserve south of Springbok in January 2018. Spike-heeled Larks were quite abundant and were calling frequently. At one of the other dams on the farm we spotted Pink-billed Lark [Pienkbeklewerik], drinking water from the dam's overflow. Plain-backed Pipit [Donkerkoester] followed as well as African Pipit [Gewone Koester]. We could not believe our luck, picking up so many excellent bird sightings in such a 'dry and drab' area. Sickie-winged Chat [Vlaktespekvreter] was followed by Ant-eating Chat [Swartpiek] and we collected no less than four cisticola species: Desert, Cloud, Zitting and Levillant's [Woestynkloppie, Gevlekte Kloppie, Landerykloppie, Vleitinkintkie]. We returned from our 'game-drive' to sit down to a sumptuous three-course dinner with very tasty Karoo lamb with all the trimmings you could hope for.

After dinner we retired to our cottage, sitting on the veranda in the full moon and overlooking the pastures, hearing the bleating of the ewes and their young lambs and listening to the haunting call of Spotted Thick-knee [Gewone Dikkop] and the Rufous-cheeked Nightjar's [Rooiwangnaguil] 'call like an old truck engine' close by. Sheer bliss for birders.

The next day was booked out to find Burchell's Courser. This bird is found in dry habitats with very short and patchy vegetation. It was present on the farm until some years ago, but after Jan had spent much time rehabilitating the grass cover from a previously overgrazed state, they no longer appeared. We drove to Bethulie, which is situated on the banks of the mighty Gariep Dam. We drove through the town and past some informal settlements and on to where the water-level of the dam had receded some 200 metres during the dry season, leaving exposed a shoreline with very short grasses and forbs, with patches of bare soil in between. We had hardly driven 2 kilometres, when Riëtte smiled and said:



N Graf von Dürckheim

Large-billed Lark/Dikbeklewerik

"The pressure is off, there they are." I still could not spot them so we drove closer very slowly and after some 400 metres we spotted three Burchell's Coursers. We stayed in the area for the next one-and-a-half hours, spotting various other Burchell's Coursers, all the way driving carefully on the receded shoreline of the Gariep Dam. I must have taken 100 or so pictures of this lifer which by now had become almost an obsession. We also spotted Double-banded Courser [Dubbelbanddrawwertjie] and the 'de-registered Kimberley Pipit' amongst others.

After returning to Garingboom Guest Farm, we had some lunch and departed on our own, with the kind permission of the owners to bird on the farm. Again we spotted Blue Korhaan near one of the farm dams,



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Burchell's Courser/Bloukopdrawwertjie

N Graf von Dürckheim



African Quail-finch/Gewone Kwartelvinkie

and further on we had further sightings of Melodious Lark. At yet another of the farm dams I got some good pictures of African Quail-finch [Gewone Kwartelvinkie], a species which I found difficult to photograph. Lark-like

Bunting [Vaalstreepkoppie] was located and photographed next to Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, Pink-billed Lark, Sickle-winged Chat and Spike-heeled Lark [Grysruglewerik, Pienkbeklewerik, Vlaktespekvreter, Vlaklewerik]. Further species spotted were Greater Honeyguide, Secretarybird, Fiscal Flycatcher, Yellow Canary and Long-tailed Widowbird [Grootheuningwyser, Sekretarisvoël, Fiskaalvlieëvanger, Geelkanarie, Langsterflap]. We spotted over 100 species in the space of those 2 days, with a host of excellent and special bird sightings.

We were asked if we preferred something else for dinner, instead of Karoo lamb – our unanimous answer was very clear: “Let’s please have some more of that tasty lamb.”

Garingboom Guest Farm and Riëtte Griesel as a guide can be highly recommended. This would be an interesting venue for a club camp. 🐦

Black Cuckoo is calling!

Sheleph Burger

During the last week of November 2018, a particular bird was calling to heart’s delight in my neighbourhood! In a hurry, I quickly grabbed my bird guide, and particularly paged to the calling bird, i.e. Black Cuckoo [Swartkoekoek]. Hence, the following interesting facts were noted! The Black Cuckoo,

suddenly brought me into contact with the following word... Laniarius!

The Black Cuckoo brood parasitizes four different bird species: Southern Boubou [Suidelike Waterfiskaal], *Laniarius ferrugineus* (ferru: iron, ferruginus: colour of iron rust, dusky); Tropical Boubou [Tropiese Waterfiskaal],

Tamsyn Sherwill



Southern Boubou feeding juvenile

Laniarius major (major: larger); Swamp Boubou [Moeraswaterfiskaal], *Laniarius bicolor* (having two colours); Crimson-breasted Shrike [Rooiborslaksman], *Laniarius atrococcineus* (atrox: fierce, coccineus: scarlet).

You did notice that all four of these birds have the same first half to their scientific name – *Laniarius*! *Laniarius* is a genus of brightly-coloured birds known as boubous or gonoleks – once considered to be part of the shrike family (true shrikes, genus *Lanius*) but now classified as bush shrikes (*Lanius*: butcher; *Laniare*: tear, mangle, mutilate). Interestingly, the Crimson-breasted Shrike is the only one of the 22 species in the genus *Laniarius* that bears the common name of 'shrike' and not 'boubou', 'gonolek', or 'bush shrike'.

The Crimson-breasted Shrike is also of particular interest to all of us, as the official logo of BirdLife Northern Gauteng, and of course the name of our monthly newsletter is *Laniarius*. The club we now know as BLNG, then named the Northern Transvaal Ornithological Society, officially christened its newsletter 'Laniarius' in 1975. This publication of which we are exceptionally proud has continued to be issued to BLNG members to date.

The Black Cuckoo is a summer-breeding visitor to Southern Africa, with a largely tropical distribution (to about 26°S in Gauteng, but extends further south through KwaZulu-Natal to the southwestern Cape, as well as in the dry woodlands of the Northern Cape Province; however, its distribution only reaches to about 24°S in central Namibia). The habitat preference of the Black Cuckoo varies by region (mainly in plantations in the south-western Cape; in forest, valley bushveld and habitation in the Eastern Cape; and in *Acacia* (now *Vachellia/Senegalia*) woodland, riparian thickets and mixed thornveld further north).

The main period of arrival (indicated by a steep increase in reporting rates) is during October, though arrival is later in the dry interior. The primary hosts of this brood parasite are the bush shrikes of the genus *Laniarius*, and the distribution of the Black Cuckoo within Southern Africa superficially matches the



Clive Kaplan

Tropical Boubou



Brian Relphs

Swamp Boubou (used under [CC BY](#))



Clive Kaplan

Crimson-breasted Shrike

combined distribution of these four species. There is an area for each of these *Laniarius* (but less convincingly for Swamp Boubou) where it is the only *Laniarius* species whose distribution overlaps with that of the cuckoo (which suggest that the Black Cuckoo does parasitise all four *Laniarius* species occurring in Southern Africa, but particularly Crimson-breasted Shrike and the Southern and Tropical Boubou). The Southern Boubou has a much larger range than the Black Cuckoo, whereas the Tropical

Boubou's range overlaps completely with that of its brood parasite.

Reference

Vernon CJ and Herremans M (1997) Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus*. In: Harrison JA, Allan DG, Underhill LG, Herremans M, Tree AJ, Parker V, Brown CJ (Eds) *The Atlas of Southern African Birds. Vol 1: Non-passerines*. BirdLife South Africa, Johannesburg. 🐦

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Wishbirds: Part 2

We continue our series based on 'wishlists' of species-spotting advice requested by readers and published in various issues of Laniarius from long, long ago (the early 2000s). Again, please note that locality info may no longer be applicable. The following were taken from wishlists originally published in Laniarius 88 (March 2003) and Laniarius 89 (June 2003) and Laniarius 90 (September 2003).

African Rock Pipit/Klipkoester

As far as pipits go, this species is one of the easier ones to identify if seen well. It is rather plain, with very indistinct mottling on the upperparts (may appear uniform in the field) as well as light smudges on the breast. The belly and flanks usually show a dull, brownish wash and a creamy eyebrow stripe is easily visible. The best plumage identification feature, however, is the yellowish edging to the feathers on the end of the wing, the secondary coverts and the edges of the tail-feathers. The only other Southern African pipit species which has these yellowish feathers is the Striped Pipit [Gestreepte Koester], with which the African Rock Pipit is unlikely to be confused. As its name implies, it is a bird of rocky hillsides in the south and east, arid mountains and kopjes in the Karoo and broken ground at high altitude.

It does need some cover in the form of grasses and stunted shrubs. All feeding is done on the ground, but it often calls from a low shrub, boulders or (very rarely) the lower branches of a small tree.

While singing, the African Rock Pipit adopts an upright posture, with the stout bill pointing skywards. They are often first spotted against the skyline while singing in this posture from a favoured song post. The characteristic call is a pretty, two-syllable song: "Tseeee-tjerruuuu": with the first note rising slightly in pitch, while the second (trilling) note descends in pitch. Variations of this song are also given. Once the area where the birds are calling has been reached, a good method to see them is to sit quietly on a rock from where a good view of the hillside below is possible. Although they may disappear when feeling threatened, they are generally not secretive, and will allow a close

approach if the observer is quiet and moves slowly. They are inquisitive birds and will often be noticed peering around corners and glancing over their shoulders at you.

In the Lesotho highlands, this is one of the commonest terrestrial passerines, and their songs fill the air throughout the summer months. Outside this stronghold, they are widely distributed throughout the Karoo and Eastern Cape, with isolated populations in the Northern Cape. The northernmost birds occur along the Transvaal Drakensberg, as well as in a small area around Heidelberg, which is the closest to Pretoria that they are likely to be encountered. Good areas to visit with the intent of locating this interesting endemic include:

- Wakkerstroom
- Memel
- Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve
- Kuilfontein farm near Nigel
- Further afield, e.g. Karoo National Park

Outside Lesotho only one other species of pipit is likely to be found in its favoured habitat, and this is the Long-billed Pipit, which is reasonably easily distinguished through the streaked back and breast.

To hear recordings of this bird: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Anthus-crenatus>

Cape Canary/Kaapse Kanarie

This species is highly gregarious, particularly out of the breeding season when flocks of birds can be found.

The flight call is diagnostic and consists of a three-syllable trill that can often be heard when a group is flying by and settling into an area. The greyish nape of adult birds is very noticeable and is a useful field identification feature. This species also does not show any obvious facial markings as most of the other 'yellow' canaries do. Care should be taken when there are juvenile birds around as young Cape Canaries are heavily streaked, as are most other juvenile canaries, but have yellow-green underparts and would normally be in the company of adult birds.



Stewart Matheson

Cape Canary/Kaapse Kanarie

It is not unusual to find Cape Canaries in what may appear to be most un-canary-like habitat some distance away from the nearest trees. As such it can be found in grassy terrain where there may be no more than a few shrubs and some rocks. It is frequently observed in hilly or mountainous terrain, although this is not a general rule, as the bird has even been found at localities such as the East Rand pans, particularly Marievale. It is not particularly common in Gauteng and can best be viewed in the escarpment area of Mpumalanga or in mountainous terrain in other parts of the country. In the Western Cape, Cape Canaries can even be found in coastal areas.

To hear recordings of this bird: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Serinus-canicollis>

Sedge Warbler/Europese Vleisanger

Occurring virtually exclusively near or over water, this species (a summer migrant) is well christened. Where perfect habitat exists, they can be locally abundant and their calls and songs may fill the air between mid- and late-summer. Optimum habitat consists of rather short (sometimes even quite sparse plants) growing in the water, such as inundated grasslands, sedgebeds and aquatic weeds. Since the sedges do not provide so much cover, the birds are reasonably easily observed. In our area (during the non-breeding season), it also moves into shrubbery and thickets away from

(continued on p 44)



Tamsyn Sherwill

Chrysococcyx X (aka Tweety Pie), my Christmas gift in the form of a bird ID challenge. Seen and photographed repeatedly at close range, in a garden in Kenton-on-Sea in Dec/Jan. It can only be a juvenile of one of two cuckoo species. But which? All suggestions (with accompanying reasoning) welcome... Ed.



Tamsyn Sherwill

1 Dec 2018: BLNG year-end braai at Die Liedjietuin, Voortrekker Monument. Those attending were also entertained by an African Paradise Flycatcher pair busily feeding their chicks in a nest above our heads.



Stoffel Botha

BLNG committee bosberaad, Jan 2019: The committee spent a weekend at Wolfhuiskraal Farm to discuss and re-discuss the plans for the club in the year ahead. A few of us also managed to tick a few lifers: African Crane, Dusky Lark, Harlequin Quail and Dwarf Bittern.

Back: Riana Botha, Philip Calinikos, Rita de Meillon, Elouise Kalmer, Michelle van Niekerk, Frik du Plooy

Front: Wanda du Plooy, Sheleph Burger, Tamsyn Sherwill, Pieter Heslinga



Andrius Hoeseh

BLNG's outing to Northern Farm on 16 Jan 2019 delivered a total of 113 species, including Sedge Warbler. Other highlights included Common Swift, Long-crested Eagle, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Wood Duck, Great Reed Warbler and Fish Eagle.



A very well-attended AGM was held on 12 Feb 2019, with guest speaker Faansie Peacock providing post-AGM entertainment with his Valentine's-themed talk on the courtship behaviour of birds. Some long-standing but long-last-seen BLNG members were even spotted. The talk was followed by snacks and drinks.



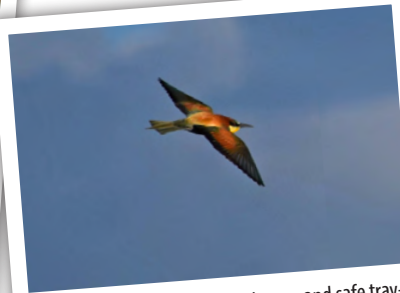
Sheleph Burger

Op Sondag, 18 Nov 2018, onderneem 'n groepie BLNG voelkykers (13) 'n mees ongelooflike uitstap na Ukutula Lodge. 'n Totaal van 77 voëlspecies word vir die dag aangeteken, en ons kon ook die begin van 'n kunsmatige insiminasie prosedure dophou reg langs 'n leeuwyfie. Voël van die dag was die Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoel. Ons opregte waardering vir die ongelooflike traktering en behandeling van die Ukutula Lodge bestuur en personeel - Sheleph Burger



Derek Keats

A pair of Yellow-bellied Greenbuls have set up home in a well-wooded garden in Pretoria North (out-of-range for their historic distribution, which is the warmer subtropical areas starting about 200 km to the north and east of Pretoria). They were first sighted in November and at last update (Jan) were still present. No photo of this specific pair is available. This photo ([Yellow-bellied Greenbul](#), [Chlorocichla flaviventris](#)) taken by [Derek Keats](#) is used under a [CC-BY](#) licence



Jansyn Shervill

Farewell to all our summer visitors – and safe travels! See <https://flightforsurvival.org/> to learn more about the plight of the world's migratory birds. You can also follow the journeys from Africa to Europe of 7 migrant species: White Stork, Common Quail, European Honey Buzzard, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, European Turtle-Dove, Eurasian Blackcap

water, including shoots of poplars at the edge of dams or vleis.

Also uncharacteristically for a warbler, it is easy to identify owing to the well-marked back, dark cap, obvious pale supercilium and striped crown. Furthermore, it is rather dumpy and short-tailed with an eye-catching gingery rump. It is a smaller bird than most other reed warblers.

This warbler is not as shy as some of the other reed-dwelling warblers and will occasionally perch in the open or fly high over the habitat in the area, not necessarily darting about at low level from shrub to shrub. It also reacts well to spishing.

The song is somewhat scratchy and dry, but extremely excited and rapid and includes harsh staccato trills interspersed with an endless variety of musical and cheerful notes as well as squeaks. Call notes consist of harsh, loud "Tuk!" sounds, while scolding alarm notes can be compared to the creaking of a wooden door: "krrrrrrrr".

In Gauteng there are two localities in particular where the birds are easily found in summer. The first is at Zonderwater (the prison grounds near Cullinan). A stand of young poplars at the edge of the first dam houses a regular late-summer Sedge Warbler. Another ideal site is Marievale, because there are plenty of ideal sedges and grasses. Other localities are Rooiwal, Diepsloot NR, Nylsvley, Rietvlei NR and Mkhombo Dam.

To hear recordings of this bird:

<https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Acrocephalus-schoenobaenus>

Rooibektiptol/Bush Blackcap

Hierdie voël klink wel baie soos 'n tiptol, maar is so enigmaties dat dit steeds grootliks onbekend is waar sy werklike verwantskap lê. Dit is nie maklik om hulle te sien te kry nie, omdat hulle taamlik skaam kan wees, en 'n beperkte verspreiding het.

Hulle tipiese habitat word sterk met ouhout (*Leucosidea sericea*) verbind. Hulle kom veral



Clive Kaplan

Rooibektiptol/Bush Blackcap

voor in geïsoleerde kolle woud en ruigtes langs die Drakensbergeskarp, vanaf KwaZulu-Natal tot in die oostelike dele van Mpumalanga. Sodanige habitat rondom Wakkerstroom behoort die spesie op te lewer, maar hulle word taamlik versteur deur gereelde speel van bandopnames.

Gewoonlik is 'n bandmasjien nodig om hierdie spesie uit te roep. Die voëls sal egter hoofsaaklik in die somer daarop reageer, en die bandopname in die winter meesal ignoreer. Indien een van die tiptolle wel sou reageer, word voorgestel dat die bandspelery dadelik gestaak word om onnodige versteuring te voorkom. Indien die voëls in die omgewing is, reageer hulle normaalweg vinnig op die bandmasjien, en behoort die opvallende kenmerke, veral die donker kroon en pienk snawel en bene, geredelik waargeneem te kan word.

Naas Wakkerstroom kan die voël ook by Kaapschehoop, Amersfoort, Giant's Castle en die ander Drakensbergoorde gevind word. Meeste van die klublede wat toere teen Sanipas op onderneem het, het op pad na bo ook Rooibektiptolle te sien gekry.

To hear recordings of this bird:

<https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Lioptilus-nigricapillus>

Contributors: Mostert Kriek, Faansie Peacock, André Marx and Etienne Marais 🐦

BirdLife Northern Gauteng					
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Half page	250	400	500	675	
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Loose insert	300	500	650	750	
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Notes					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertiser to supply print-ready artwork 2. Ads can be placed in alternate issues 3. Ads must be paid in advance 4. Ads are in black & white except back page which is in full colour 5. For loose inserts advertiser to supply insert 6. The committee maintains the right to accept any advertisements 					

BUFFELSDRIFT

Rust de Winter

ACCOMMODATION

R450/adult/night;

R225/child 12 years and younger/night;

Day visitors R90/person/day



BOOKINGS

Please call Donald

on 082 885 5577;

or e-mail

bookings@birdhiking.co.za

Website: www.birdhiking.co.za