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BirdLife Northern Gauteng
BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

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Credits

Front cover: Malachite Sunbird in late-winter eclipse plumage, Kaapsehoop, by Stewart Matheson

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**Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of
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From the Editor

“...I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic, I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act, I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house was on fire, because it is.”

“...we are running out of time. We have only one choice before us: Extinction or Rebellion”

The first quote is the sound of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg addressing the 2019 World Economic Forum in Davos. In less than a year, Thunberg has managed to mobilise a generation of schoolchildren who feel that their governments have stolen their future by their failure to act on climate change.

In the most recent of Thunberg’s opportunities to speak truth to power (this time, the UN General Assembly), she focuses on accusations that her statements are ‘alarmist’, when actually the ‘opinions’ she presents are directly drawn from the latest [IPCC report](#) that gave humanity 12 years (now less than 10.5) to prevent being tipped into a climate abyss – i.e. change at a scale that could bring about societal collapse (severe but less catastrophic change already being inevitable). The report spelt out a remaining global CO₂ budget on 1 Jan 2018 of 420 gigatons – that is the maximum amount of CO₂ we can still add to the atmosphere to have a 66% chance of limiting temperature rise below 1.5°. She mentions that the problem is not a lack of science or solutions, but a lack of attention: “not one single time have I heard any politician, journalists or business leader even mention these numbers.” In Davos earlier this year she also hinted that this blind spot is not accidental: “Some people, some companies, some decision makers... have known exactly what priceless values they have been sacrificing to continue making unimaginable amounts of money.”

The second of my opening quotes is from a [statement by Extinction Rebellion](#) in response to the 6 May release of a [report by another UN Intergovernmental Panel](#), the IPBES, popularly

headlining as ‘one million species could go extinct, many within decades’. Extinction Rebellion (XR), launched in the UK on 31 Aug 2018, was inspired by the abovementioned IPCC report as well as the understanding that we have entered Earth’s 6th mass extinction event, and is “an international apolitical network using non-violent direct action to persuade governments to act on the Climate and Ecological Emergency”. One of their core strategies is ‘civil disobedience’. On 15 April XR declared a peaceful international rebellion against our failure to act decisively on the climate and biodiversity crisis. A South African chapter of XR has already been established.

Studies have shown that portraying doom and gloom is likely to make conservation campaigns ineffective – instead people need to see some hope that positive change is possible. This is probably because depression is generally not a state of mind that leads to action (anger is far more useful for this). So I feel compelled to leave you with hope (or anger). Extinction Rebellion, and Greta Thunberg and her fellow school-climate-strikers, do give me hope. The IPBES report also offers a strategy to reroute our path: transformative change (i.e. changing our entire global socio-political-economic system – given the vested interests defending business-as-usual, this currently seems like a very optimistic idea on which to pin hope). Thunberg, despite the sentiment in her opening quote, also regularly mentions hope, though maybe not in a way that will leave you feeling comforted:

And yes, we do need hope, of course we do. But the one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere. So instead of looking for hope, look for action. Then, and only then, hope will come. (Greta Thunberg on [TEDxStockholm](#))

Tamsyn

From the Chair



By the time you read this issue, Spring will be well on its way. Now is the time to review and refresh your bird-sound knowledge to be ready for the summer's birding!

One of the most recent interesting events for Gauteng birders has been the disappearance of Thulani, the Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden's male Verreaux's Eagle, just one week after their chick had hatched. This was very sad news as it was feared that the female, Makatsa, would not be able to provide both food and protection against predators all on her own. Then, after looking after the chick by herself for three weeks, Makatsa was seen flying in the area with a new male – great excitement and birders and photographers flocking to Walter Sisulu.

Makatsa has accepted the new male, based on good news that both eagles were seen at the nest feeding the chick and bringing nesting material. Fortunately the 60-year tradition of a pair of Verreaux's Eagles breeding at Walter Sisulu will continue.

The Committee is always attempting to provide members with interesting and new events and outings, especially during the winter months. This winter's highlights included the following:

Our first BLNG movie night – what a wonderful event the July evening meeting turned out to be! The beautifully constructed film *Albatross* is a powerfully moving love story offering emotional insight into the plight of our seabirds' struggle with plastic waste in our oceans. It left our members not only with sorrow but I am sure also a conviction to limit our own use of useless plastic. And of course, all enjoyed the eats and drinks! Perhaps this could become an annual event?

We also had a guided hike through Rietvlei, which was well attended despite the windy and cold conditions. Our guide, Madeleen van Schalkwyk, entertained the group with many interesting facts and stories.

The Bonamanzi camp, near Hluhluwe, was a huge success. Winter birding in northern KwaZulu-Natal with its mild winter conditions was wonderful. Themba Mthembu is an excellent guide and we managed to find most of the regional specials. The species that we had to work for the most was definitely the African Broadbill.

The SABAP atlasing events were also well supported. We have had two 'atlasing for beginners' outings, where we focused mainly on BirdLasser usage. The second atlasing weekend will be held in September at Buffelsvlei near Thabazimbi.

We want to encourage our members to continue their home-pentad atlasing, where we require you to:

- submit at least one SABAP card for your home pentad monthly
- attempt to identify all birds with a reporting rate greater than 10%
- submit reports on your progress from time to time on the BLNG Facebook page

Finally, we would like to congratulate Philip Calinikos on his appointment as the new Chairperson of BirdLife South Africa. We wish Philip well in his new endeavours and as a club we are extremely proud of him.

E Louise

BLNG camp, Pullen Nature Reserve, 1–5 May 2019

Ilse Müller

Pullen is a small bushveld (middleveld) reserve owned by the University of the Witwatersrand, just 35 km east of Nelspruit. As we drive off the main road we are greeted by rolling hills, granite kopjes, tall grasses, shrubs and an occasional giraffe peeping over one of the many trees.

Upon arrival we are met by Maleté, the housekeeper, and taken around the very spacious old farmhouse. The *stoep* commands a spectacular view south towards the blue mountains of Swaziland.

Our group of 22 is indeed a very mixed flock, but we soon settle into a very amicable atmosphere.

Phillip Calinikos leads the way, explaining procedures and skilfully demanding attention to detail – concerning our birds.

The walks around the farm are easy with stunning sightings, like the African Dusky Flycatcher, the Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Yellow-throated Longclaw, White-crested Helmet-Shrike, Golden (Holub's) Weaver, Common Scimitarbill [Donkervlieëvanger, Groenvlekduifie, Geelkeelkalkoentjie, Withelm-laksman, Goudwewer, Swartbekkakeelaar] and the call of the Purple-crested Turaco [Bloukuifloerie] all about – and then the Black Stork [Grootswartooievaar] rising silently from a



Walking the yellow trail



Yellow-throated Longclaw/Geelkeelkalkoentjie



On the edge of the Crocodile Gorge



Golden Weaver/Goudwewer

little dam by the farmhouse.

Stewart Matheson – a local birder – takes us to the Saddleback Pass, past Barberton. The Gurney’s [Rooiborsuikervoël] is everyone’s favourite. We pass a little wetland with the Cape Grassbird [Grasvoël] and the Red-faced Cisticola [Rooiwangtinkinkie] in attendance. And then there it is – the most enchanting African forest (Pedlar’s Bush). The sun filters through the canopy onto floating butterflies; the Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler [Geelkeelsanger] busy gleaning, the Knysna Turaco [Knysnaloerie] gliding by, the Grey Cuckooshrike [Bloukatakeroe] and above in the sky the Trumpeter Hornbill [Gewone Boskraai]. As we drive back towards Barberton some of us are very happy to catch sight of the Crowned Eagle [Kroonarend].

Stewart takes us to the Barberton Mountainlands Nature Reserve, which appears forlorn. But there it flies: the Tambourine Dove

[Witborsduifie]... As we drive back home, there he is again, the ‘mocking bird’ calling from the thicket along the road, ever elusive, but apparently ever so *gorgeous*.

The next day friends of Tamsyn Sherwill take us to another wonderful forest beyond the



Tamsyn Sherwill

Gurney’s Sugarbird, Saddleback Pass



Joe Huysers

Black Stork/Grootswartooievaar



Tamsyn Sherwill

Square-tailed Drongo and Grey Cuckooshrike, Pedlar’s



Ilse Müller

Sundowners



Tamsyn Sherwill

Birding Pedlar’s Bush

Seam Naude



Basking Grey Heron, Malelane Gate bridge



Seam Naude

Peregrine Falcon/Swerfvalk

sugarcane fields, where Grey-rumped Swallows [Gryskruisswael] sail the skies. The green back belongs to a Scaly-throated Honeyguide [Gevlekte Heuningwyser]. So many awesome birds – we all feel so very privileged!

On the last afternoon we spend some time on the Malelane Bridge over the Crocodile River. The Peregrine [Swerfvalk] comes swooping in and out as two African Black Ducks [Swarteend] sit motionless, bills tucked under.

Early in the morning we are woken by the rasping sound of a Barn Owl [Nonnetjie-uil]. As we slip through the gate on our way home, there he is – the sentinel – perched on a tree, surveying the ground with eagle eyes. The ‘leggings’ are white, the tarsi yellow and the crest is gently waving to us in the morning breeze...

Thank you to all of you – who made this weekend a very memorable one. 🐦

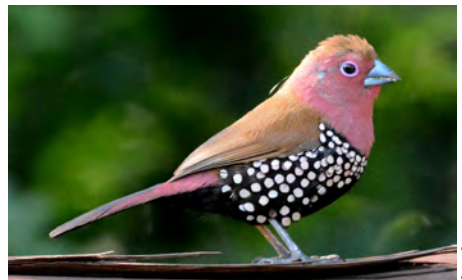
BLNG Bonamanzi trip: Operation Broadbill

Ivonne Coetzee

“There it is... about a metre behind that straight horizontal branch, in that tall green tree... at about eleven o'clock! Do you see it? ...dropping down, down... oh no, it's gone! Wait... wait, there it is! There are two, no three! Pink-throated Twinspot [Rooskeelkolpensie]! There! There! In the open! Nice!” Themba's words. A volley of heavy artillery goes off. More modest cameras click and purr. We smile from ear to ear, congratulate each other; we get that rush that only addicted birders know. Another lifer!

We are on the Hluhluwe River floodplain. It is green, green, with flocks of waterbirds as far as the eye can see, water reflecting the sun in shining patches. Binoculars sweep over terns, plovers, spoonbills, storks, pelicans,

egrets and herons, while keeping a sharp eye out for the Rosy-throated Longclaw [Rooskeelkalkoentjie]. It is only about nine in the morning of 15 June, but we've



Stere Stevenson

Pink-throated Twinspot/Rooskeelkolpensie

already ticked Rudd's Apalis, African Yellow White-eye, Grey-rumped Swallow [Ruddse Kleinjantjie, Geelglasogie, Grys kruisswael], a plethora of cisticolas – amongst others, Pale-crowned [Bleekkopkloppie] – Grey Waxbill [Grissyssie], White-eared Barbet [Witoorhoutkapper], tinkerbirds and various flycatchers. After coffee and a belated breakfast, we move on to hunt for Greater Painted-snipe [Goudsnip], and on the way are rewarded with Lizard Buzzard [Akkedisvalk], obligingly posing for photographs. A Coqui Francolin [Swempie] is flushed and demonstrates its incredible disappearing techniques in a tiny Lala Palm bush.

At our next stop, Hottentot Teal and White-backed Duck are ticked, and a pair of Woolly-necked Storks fly past [Gevlekte Eend, Witrugeend, Wolnekooievaar]. We move on and are excited to spot African Pygmy Goose [Dwerggans]. Then some real bush-whacking follows: Themba charges ahead and we follow as best we can in his footsteps as there is no path whatsoever. We find ourselves struggling through hip-high grasses, tripping over roots, hair getting entangled in Acacia-branches, all the while nervously checking for mamba and tree snake. Themba hears several specials calling and soon points out Grey Penduline-tit, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler [Gryskapokvoël, Geelsanger] sunbirds and more 'tinkers'. We return tired but satisfied to Nyala Lodge to revive ourselves with cold wine and a braai. Daleen announces that we hiked about 9.5 km – with many of us 60-plussers! Out come the laptops. Photographs are downloaded and drooled over, but soon Thea commands a nightjar expedition and out into the night we go. Her optimism is rewarded when Swamp Nightjar [Natale Naguil] circles out of a tree, lands, and then comes flying straight towards her flashlight. How did she know to drive straight to that specific spot? At 8 pm Nyala Lodge is dark and quiet, and all 18 birders are fast asleep.

The next day dawns on Operation Broadbill. We start off with a brisk 3.5 km hike through the incredibly diverse habitat of Bonamanzi. There is clear evidence of



Steve Stevenson

Engrossed



Dave Millie

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird/Swartblestinker



Honnie Coetzee

Hiking

elephant droppings and Andrew even finds a spoor. Themba spots Bearded Scrub Robin [Baardwipstert] and tries calling up the elusive African Broadbill [Breëbek]. We are going to hear its frog-like trilling call multiple times

this morning, but unfortunately only the recorded version. Afterwards we drive towards False Bay via a detour to tick Lemon-breasted Canary, African Goshawk and African Firefinch [Geelborskanarie, Afrikaanse Sperwer, Kaapse Vuurvinkie]. At False Bay, Themba leads the expedition up the Leopard Trail through the sand forest. At every likely dense spot, he tries to call up our target bird, the African Broadbill.



Steve Stevenson

Bonamanzi deck

Once again, more bundu-bashing when Themba charges fearlessly into bush where no foot has ever trod, in hot pursuit of the Broadbill – time is running out! We are ecstatic to tick the near-threatened Neergaard's Sunbird [Bloukruissuikerbekkie] in the company of Purple-banded, Collared and Grey Sunbird [Purperbandsuikerbekkie, Kortbeksuikerbekkie, Grys-suikerbekkie]. Themba is an expert in pishing and explains how Grey Sunbird relentlessly chases the tiny Neergaard's at this time of year. Very soon Steve gets a lifer when the Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher [Bloukuifvlieëvanger] flits around us. On the path back to the parking spot, we tick Eastern Nicator, Dark-backed Weaver, Woodward's Batis and Klaas's Cuckoo [Geelvleknikator, Bosmusikant, Woodwardse Bosbontrokkie, Meitjie]. Some of us fall back to get better photographs of the Neergaard's while others get stuck above us at the top of the trail – there are just so many incredible birds and trees, we just can't decide where to look first and where to aim our lenses. Then we hear Themba bellowing from far below and we rush down through the trees. The Broadbill! Displaying the white butterfly-like puffball on its back, all the while purring its froglike croak. At last!!! Themba is a star – he turns us to face in the right direction,



Steve Stevenson

African Broadbill/Breëbek



Steve Stevenson

Woodward's Batis/Woodwardse Bosbontrokkie



Dave Miller

Dark-backed Weaver/Bosmusikant



Steve Stevenson

Klaas's Cuckoo/Meitjie



Dave Millie

White-throated Robin-chat/Witkeeljanfrederik



Dave Millie

Yellow-breasted Apalis/Geelborskleinjantjie



Dave Millie

Yellow-bellied Greenbul/Geelborswillie

patiently explains again and again where to look, is elated with each of us when we spot our bird. *Nice!* The Broadbill must be aware that it is the pinnacle of our birding weekend, for it considerably hops around in a contained area and seems happy to bask in our admiration. Thea, being a runner, rushes far back up the sandy path again to fetch two other groups of stragglers and chases them down. Elouise and Michelle are summoned from the parking area below and come running up to tick that lifer. All 18 of our group of birders eventually get an excellent view and photo-opportunity. Themba is relieved and we trudge back to the cars for a late lunch. Unfortunately, it is too late in the day to don our rubber boots in pursuit of the Rosy-throated Longclaw. Until next time...

Thanks so much to Elouise, our great leader who organised the trip and accommodation, who turned us into a mostly disciplined group to assist Themba in his huge task, and who never tires of explaining the different habits and characteristics of birds. Thanks to Themba

Mthembu, our wonderful guide, who so patiently would point out that special sighting to our large group of birders, and who made sure that we could tick most species on our long list of target birds, repeating instructions to stragglers or the hard-of-hearing. Thanks to a great group. We forged connections, and indeed, friendships, and shared our joys about our successes over a drink on the deck at Bonamanzi. Until next year, when we will meet here again. The Painted-snipe will not skulk deep in the reeds, the Rosy-throated Longclaw will bask out in the open, the Green Malkoha will break cover at dawn, and we will be there to catch more of these special moments to last us a lifetime. Next time! 🐦

Hoogland Hydro, 26 May 2019

Philip Calinikos

There was some confusion about the starting time of the outing with some brave souls arriving at 06:30 to the pre-dawn calls of Orange River Francolin [Kalaharipatrys]. Sunrise is a particularly chilly time at Hoogland which found us inching up the first incline clutching binoculars and scopes with blue-skinned hands.

The resident Short-toed Rock Thrushes [Korttoonkliplyster] put on a wonderful display amongst the more plentiful Familiar Chats [Gewone Spekvreter]. The Long-billed Pipits [Nicholsonse Koester] were not as obliging, and a pair was only fleetingly seen in flight, but were clearly identifiable by their calls.

Sleek and shiny Pearl-breasted Swallows [Pêrelborsswael] greeted us at the top of the ridge, together with a strident Red-throated Wryneck [Draaihals]. We descended into the neat grounds of the Hydro itself and up along a hiking path. A family of nifty Lazy Cisticolas [Luitinkinkie] played havoc with our attempts to focus our binos on them.

A resplendent Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird [Geelblestinker] was a fitting finale to an interesting winter outing which yielded 51 species and lots of discussion amongst the 17 members present. 🐦



Ilse Müller

Bronkhorstspruit Dam NR, 8 Junie 2019

Stephan Terblanche

’n Klein groepie geharde lede het die vroeë oggendmis en ’n volle -5°C getrotseer om die uitstappie by hierdie gereelde bestemming by te woon. Dit was, soos gewoonlik, beslis die moeite werd.

Nadat die bome rondom die ingang besonder stil was, het ons langs die dam se oewer vinnig watervoëls begin optel. Die

uitdaging was om die uitsonderings op die letterlik duisende Bleshoenders [Red-knobbed Coot] uit te snuffel. Daar was vroeg-vroeg ’n paar Glansibisse [Glossy Ibis] te sien. Die enkele Grootlangtoon [African Jacana] het taamlik uit plek gelyk op die grasperk, verskeie meter van die waterkant af. Reiers was goed verteenwoordig, maar waadvoëls beperk tot



Deelnemers op die Hoëveld



Reuse Sterretjie/Caspian Tern



Hoëveldskaapwagter/Capped Wheatear

Geelbors- en Driebandstrandkiewiet [Kittlitz's and Three-banded Plover], asook besonder goeie getalle Gewone Kwikkie [Cape Wagtail]. Gewone Koester [African Pipit] was net so stewig aanwesig.

Dit het soms gehelp om weg van die water te kyk en so het Kenneth Gamble, 'n nuwe lid, die Swartborsslangarend [Black-chested Snake Eagle] waargeneem. 'n Vlei-uil [Marsh Owl] is ook geruime tyd waargeneem waar hy besig is om ontbyt te soek.

Een van die spesialiteite van die winter, die Reuse Sterretjie [Caspian Tern], is deur 'n enkel individu verteenwoordig. Een van die beste voëls van die dag het by die uitgang vir ons gewag – 'n groepie Swaelstertbyvreter [Swallow-tailed Bee-eater].

Selfs sonder die trekvoëls en met baie klein getalle tinkinkies, kon ons die oggend steeds met 71 spesies afsluit. Dit was lekker om meeste van hierdie spesies herhaaldelik te sien en om heeltyd iets te hê om na te kyk. 🐦

DONATIONS

Once again, a sincere thank you for your generous donations. Your contributions help us to support bird conservation projects, and are greatly appreciated.
Weereens baie dankie vir u donasie. U skenkings verseker dat ons 'n groter bydrae tot die bewaring van voëls kan lewer. Ons waardeer dit opreg.

Ian Alexander
 Klaus Rust

Margarita Krusche
 Adrian Moll

Voortrekkermonument, 6 Julie 2019

Laura Jordaan

Wat 'n pragtige wintersoggend. Om 6:45 stop ek by die hek en die wag vra "so you pay" waar ek hom sommer inlig dat die Klub vandag hier kom voëls kyk en dus nie hoef te betaal nie. Hy haal 'n ou boek uit en blaai rond en sien ja hier was die klub ook in sonder 'n fooi, en laat my deur. Ek stop net so paar tree verder en begin my Lasser oopmaak op 'n nuwe kaart.

Die Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern Boubou] laat nie op hom wag nie en roep my luid welkom toe. Die volgende beweging wat my oog vang is die Fiskaalvlieëvanger [Fiscal Flycatcher], met Gewone Mossies [Cape Sparrow] wat in pare kom sit en knibbel aan die talle saadjies onder die eerste klompie bome. Met die eerste strale van die son wat oor die randjie kom, sing die tjeriktikke bietjie verder aan in kompetisie met die tiptolle wat nou van al die kante van hul laat hoor. Die glanspreeus land in 'n groep op die top van die groter bome en krap en skrop vir 'n vale. Ons groet en ry na die parkeerterrein oorkant die Liedjietuin. So met die inklimslag vlieg twee Hoephoepe [African Hoopoe] vrolik voor ons uit. Daar drink ons gou 'n teetjie en koekies. Maar kry omtrent nie gesluk soos ek moet tik om by te hou soos nuwe spesies luid van hul laat hoor en sommer reg oor ons koppe vlieg.

Ons begin stadig, soekend deur die tuin stap en verwonder aan die groot bome, talle verskillende aalwyne in blom en die nabyheid van die imposante gebou. Ons word gou warm van kyk en tik en dis so vinnig: verkyker – foon – verkyker en wat vlieg daar? Die effense koue word darem deur die half-vinger handskoentjies afgeweer maar ons tik aanmekaar. Doer deur die mik van 'n boom, onder die volgende boom, staan 'n Dikkop [Spotted Thick-knee], en die lyster skrop net bietjie verder. Kyk mooi – dis die Rooibeklyster [Kurrichane Thrush]... merk af. Die Kwêvoëls [Grey Go-away-bird] sit die hele boom vol en koggel ons luid uit.

Ons stap met die sirkelpad om en kry kans om ook die uitsig te geniet. Hier kry ons die drawwers wat fluks hul treetjies op die armtelers aftik; daarom bekyk ons die omgewing en luister na die skietbaan se skote. Om die draai staan ons lank en kibbel oor die kleinste outjie bo in die boom – eers met sy liedjie merk ons die Streepkopkanarie [Streaky-headed Seedeater]. Dieper in die bosse giggel die klomp katlagters vrolik. Die muishonde sit in die son en ontdooi. Bo ons koppe vlieg duiwe oppad lande toe.

Die ringers is druk besig met meet en skryf. Marina kry toe net 'n Kleinglanspreeu in haar klapnet en ons kry kans om hom mooi te bekyk. Ons gesels, maar 'n beweging in die



Muishonde



Ringer meet 'n Kleinglanspreeu

Laura Jordaan

aalwyne naby ons trek my vinnig nader... jippie, 'n Swartkopwielewaal [Black-headed Oriole]. Great! Lanklaas die outjie gesien. Dit bring my lysie op 34.

So stap ons met die onderste paadjie af op soek na 'n Witkeeljanfrederik [White-throated Robin-chat] wat ons nie kry nie. Die Witpensuikerbekkies [White-bellied Sunbird] vlieg heen en weer oor ons koppe, so asof hulle nie kan besluit watter boom se nektar nou beter is nie. Nog 'n klomp Kwêvoëls sit die boomtop vol en bak in die warm son.

So is ons terug by die karre en eet eers 'n happie. Ilse wil die koraalbome van nader gaan bekyk en ons stap in die tuin al om die monument waar ons 'n kwikkie verskrik wat fluit-fluit oor die muur sweef. Ons geniet die aalwyne wat in volle blom staan en pronk so, ons vergeet amper van die voëls wat ons moet soek. Die derde blou lug is wolkloos. Net 'n ligte briesie dra die mengelmoes van vreemde tale na ons, soos die talle toeriste na mekaar roep en lag.

Ons moet darem nog 'n paar spesies gaan soek verder aan, en ek kies om reguit oor die stopstraat te ry (al is daar 'n doodloop bordjie) en moes vinnig weer stop want daar is 'n termiet-hopie met 'n Bonthoutkapper [Acacia Pied Barbet], tiptolle en weer die Fiskaalvlieëvangers. Reg langs die kar draf 'n Bontkiewiet [Blacksmith Lapwing]. Ons ry maar stop-stop tot waar die pad toegespan is en kom terug. Ons lysie groei tot by 38 toe die klompie Bandkeelvinkies [Cut-throat Finch] in die takke kom land.

Weer by die stopstraat draai ons na die fort toe. Hier is dit oper en hoër sodat ons



Laura Jordaan

Swarthkopwielewaal/Black-headed Oriole

darem die paar Pêrelborsswaels [Pearl-breasted Swallows] kon raak sien. In die parkeerterrein kry ons weer 'n paar janfrederikke. Draai en gaan na die ander monument toe. Die hekgaw lyk nie vriendelik nie en ons draai skerp links sodat ons die oop area kan bekyk. Hier moes ons eers van die pad aftrek en parkeer want die klein goedjies terg ons net met opvlieg en verdwyn in die gras. Dis toe 'n swerm frette. Maar die vuurvinkies roep orals. Dan hier, dan daar – maar ons kry hulle mooi gesien en kan weer na die skerp tril-fluit luister. Verder aan staan twee kiewiete ek kyk en kyk maar hul het geen lelle nie. Nou wat? (Ons het later vir almal gevra en Karin stel voor dis dalk jong Lelkiewiete [African Wattled Lapwing]) Hier roep ons halt want dis al tyd vir middagete en mense het ander afsprake.

Ek ry nog 'n slag om die sirkelroete maar net die muisvoëls en vinke is nog doenig. So sluit ek dan my winterdag op 47 spesies af. 🐦

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.

Joy Downie (Equestria), Aafke Mouton (Gezina), Liezl Morgenthal (Wonderboom Suid), Dennis du Plessis (Pretoria Noord), David & Marion Turner (Garsfontein), Carla Turner (Garsfontein)

The flight of the falcon

Jenny Bester

There are some birds that capture the imagination more than others. Such is the diminutive raptor, the Amur Falcon [Oostelike Rooipootvalk], *Falco amurensi*. Its size is much the same as that of a turtle dove but despite its relatively small size, it exhibits incredible endurance during its long migration between its breeding and summer feeding grounds.

The genus name *Falco* has its origins in the Latin *falc* meaning 'sickle'. This refers to the shape of the claws or, alternatively, to the shape of the curved beak. The species name *amurensi* refers to the summer breeding grounds in Amurland or Amuria in south-eastern Siberia.

This falcon is a small 28–30 cm in length. Both male and female are predominantly grey. The chest of the male is pale while that of the female is similarly pale but with coarse, dark streaking. Both male and female have orange-red legs, ceres and eye rings. The male is more striking in flight having a markedly chestnut vent and white underwing coverts. The female has a lighter vent but her underside is conspicuously covered with dark grey spots. The malar stripe is less pronounced than in most other falcon species. In appearance the Amur Falcon can be confused with the Red-footed Falcon [Westelike Rooipootvalk] and occasionally occurs with it. In common with other falcon species, the wings are long, thin and tapered, with a span of 63–71 cm. At rest the wing tip reaches or extends just beyond the

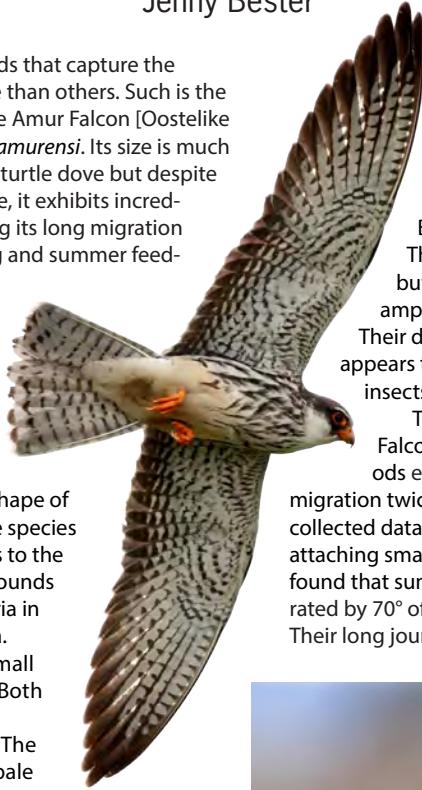
end of the tail.

The birds breed in northern Asia at the end of May in open wooded country with marshes, and nest in abandoned nests or tree hollows.

Both parents feed their chicks.

The diet consists mainly of insects, but small birds, mammals and amphibians may also be included. Their diet in the Southern Hemisphere appears to be almost entirely made up of insects.

The long wing allows the Amur Falcon to fly fast and far for long periods enabling it to make an extended migration twice a year. Researchers have collected data on these remarkable flights by attaching small transmitters to the birds. They found that summer and winter ranges are separated by 70° of both latitude and longitude. Their long journey begins in their breeding



Amur Falcon female (top) and Amur Falcon male (above) by Derek Keats (used under CC BY)

ground in Amurland in eastern Siberia, in areas of the northern Mongolian region and in parts of North Korea. From here they fly south of the Himalayas to settle for a time in north-eastern India. They sometimes fly even further east to reach Thailand and Cambodia and vagrants have been recorded as far west as Italy, Sweden, Tristan da Cunha and the United Kingdom. During this journey they are thought to fly at a height of up to 1 000 m where strong winds aid them. In India they roost for a period in open forest or grasslands, gathering strength on a diet of the winged alates of termites that emerge at that time.

From here they undertake the longest open-sea migration of any bird of prey as they fly across the Indian Ocean to Somalia, a distance of 2 400–3 150 km in 4–5 days. A further few days flight of 6 000 km takes them from the Horn of Africa to southern Africa but now with the opportunity of roosting and feeding en route. They arrive in these feeding grounds in November. Estimates of the distance the birds travel differ but it is in the region of 14 000 km. The return flight to their breeding grounds begins in May following the same route. In this

annual cycle, Amur Falcons take advantage of existing ecological and environmental conditions. Monsoons provide tailwinds for migrating birds in both directions and during their journey over the sea they are thought to subsist on migrating dragonflies.

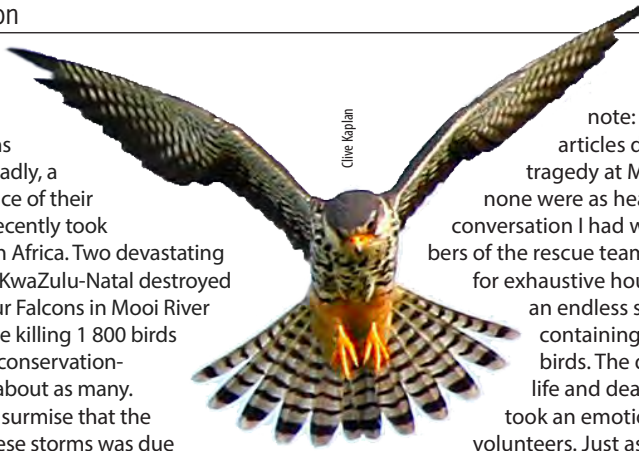
At present the status of the Amur Falcon is 'Not Threatened'. However, human intervention is in danger of reducing their numbers. Their flocking behaviour during migration exposes them to danger in north-eastern India as well as in East Africa as they are plump and are hunted for food. A remarkable conservation effort took place in the Nagaland region of India where a new dam flooded the lands of local farmers in 2000. The presence of trees full of plump Amur Falcons must have seemed like manna from heaven to farmers deprived of their livelihood. They trapped them in their thousands, this despite remaining farmers recognising that they kept the local insect population in check. In 2012 an estimated 120 000 to 140 000 birds were trapped in nets. Conservation officials, together with BirdLife International partners embarked on rigorous law enforcement together with effective education campaigns.



Amur Falcon roost, Nagaland, India (used under [CC BY](#))

By 2013, the trapping of falcons had ceased. Sadly, a further instance of their destruction recently took place in South Africa. Two devastating hailstorms in KwaZulu-Natal destroyed roosts of Amur Falcons in Mooi River and Newcastle killing 1 800 birds despite local conservationists rescuing about as many. One can only surmise that the severity of these storms was due to the effects of global warming and it is possible that changing weather patterns may cause further problems for migrating birds in the future.

On a lighter note, in the literature read in the writing of this article there was no mention of Amur Falcons' most fascinating ability. They manage to travel the length of our globe without losing their way!



On a personal note: I read many articles describing the tragedy at Mooi River but none were as heartrending as the conversation I had with one of members of the rescue team. They worked for exhaustive hours emptying an endless stream of boxes containing sodden, helpless birds. The decision between life and death for the injured took an emotional toll on the volunteers. Just as it came to an end and they had time to recover, the call from Newcastle came...

The acute danger of climate change is becoming a harsh reality.

For more about the amazing conservation turnaround at Nagaland read: [A Naga village's journey from hunting ground to safe haven for the Amur falcon](#), or watch: [The Pangti Story](#) 🦅

Getting smarter about city lights is good for us and nature too

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Ideas to enhance the liveability and [sustainability of our cities](#) have attracted a lot of interest recently. Examples include establishing or enhancing “[urban forests](#)”, or “[bringing back nature](#)” into cities to support animals and ecosystems displaced by human activity.

While these projects focus on creating space for nature and enhancing biodiversity within cities, they rarely consider the impact on nature of the artificial lighting used across the urban landscape.

Public lighting is often thought to be essential for improving safety and preventing crime. Most commercial and public structures are lit up at night, although often for purely aesthetic reasons.

A network of street lighting links these “islands of illumination”. The effects of this can, in some large cities, result in “sky glow” that interferes with star visibility at distances of more than [300 kilometres](#).

A cascade of harmful impacts

While modern life makes some artificial lighting essential, when it's overused or poorly designed it creates light pollution. It is not widely appreciated that this can have significant adverse effects, which go beyond interference with stargazing. These include serious impacts on humans, [plants and animals](#).

[Effects on humans](#) reportedly include (but are not limited to) an increased risk of breast cancer, sleep disruptions and possible links to metabolic disorders, including diabetes and obesity. Furthermore, artificial lighting uses [large amounts of energy](#) associated with

CO₂ emissions.

Adverse effects on animals include interference with reproduction, [predator and prey interactions](#), and [orientation and migration](#). These effects are potentially damaging for entire ecosystems, as well as particular species.

Ecosystems involve a complex balance of interactions between species. Disrupting this can trigger a cascade of harmful effects.

The [attraction of moths to lights](#) offers an illustration of this. In becoming disoriented and infinitely attracted to the artificial light, the local moths of a given species become an easy meal for bats and other predators, and the moth population declines. Other species that depend on the moths for their survival are now themselves at risk.

If this particular species of moth pollinates plants, then local [pollination may be reduced](#). And if this moth is the only pollinator of a plant species, then that species' rate of reproduction will fall. This can be devastating for insect and animal communities that rely on these plants for habitat and food.

A whole ecosystem can be harmed by something as apparently harmless as public lighting.

A need to rethink lighting standards

Despite [awareness of adverse effects](#), the collective ecological impact of artificial light is not well recognised beyond the sphere of ecological research.

Planning regulations and practices tend not to consider artificial lighting as a source of pollution. Rather, the focus is on minimum lighting standards, reflecting perceptions of safety and community expectations.

Questions of unwanted light are more often considered in terms of nuisance or energy wastage. The focus of light reduction tends to be on cost savings, or even CO₂ savings, and not wider environmental effects. Ironically, the introduction of energy-saving lighting, such as LED, may lead to [even greater impacts on some species](#).

Being diurnal creatures, we humans tend to have little awareness of night-time ecosystems. Given that light emissions disappear once the source is turned off, it is unsurprising that artificial light has not been identified as an important pollutant.

Global concerns about climate change and energy consumption, and the resulting trend towards greater efficiency and sustainability, create an opportunity to challenge the underlying assumptions about public lighting. For example, the notion that more lighting equates to greater safety and discourages crime [may be questionable](#).

Reconsidering our association of artificial lighting with progress and modernity allows us to reframe the “minimum lighting standards” model to one that seeks to minimise harm in all

respects. The key question then is what lighting is needed for human safety while [minimising unwanted or harmful light as well as energy consumption?](#)

Possible solutions go [beyond a debate of more versus less lighting](#). We could, for instance, use lights with [wavelengths that cause less disruption to key species](#), as well as “[adaptive street lighting](#)” that responds to pedestrian movement. There are doubtless many possible innovations that balance human and ecological needs.

Urban greening programs could play a leading role here in developing smarter lighting solutions that benefit both humans and ecosystems. Such initiatives would be natural inclusions in the emerging protocols to guide [biodiversity-sensitive urban design](#).

Ringershoekie

BLNG Ringgroep

Paardeplaats, Lydenburg: Suikervoëlprojek, 22–24 Februarie 2019

Agt ringers en twee lede van Tukkies se Genetika Departement (Arrie Klopper en Evan Haworth) het Vrydag 22 Februarie 2019 by Paardeplaats aangekom om Rooiborsuikervoëls [Gurney’s Sugarbird] te teiken. Arrie en Evan het belang gestel om bloedmonsters te trek vir hulle navorsingsprojek. Die span kon vir hulle twaalf Rooiborsuikervoëls vang oor die drie dae. Ander spesies was Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie [Greater Double-collared Sunbird], Hofsaanger [Willow Warbler], Rooivlerk-streepkoppie [Cape Bunting], Jangroentjie [Malachite Sunbird] en Vaal- en Donkerkoester [Buffy and Plain-backed Pipit]. Die Saterdagoggend was ons op Jesus-koppie besig om te ring toe twee vrouens van die omgewing by die koppie kom bid het. Die een vrou het op ’n beeshoring geblaas.



Arrie en Evan trek bloed by ’n Rooiborsuikervoël vir genetiese toetse

Wanda du Plooy

Klubring Rietvlei NR (Witkoppies), 2 Maart 2019

Tien ringers het vroegoggend by Rietvlei Dam se hoofhek ontmoet. Mads het soos gewoonlik vir ons oopgesluit. Ons het 'n alle-mintige 373 voëls hanteer waarvan 58 hervangste was. Persentasiegewys is dit 15.6% wat baie goed was. Mooi spesies is gevang, soos Groot-en Kleinrietsanger en Kaapse Rietsanger [Great Reed Warbler, African Reed Warbler and Lesser Swamp Warbler], Europese Vleisanger [Sedge Warbler], Kaapse Wewer [Cape Weaver], asook Rooiassie [Orange-breasted Waxbill], wat baie besonder was. Nie net een nie, maar somer vier!

Bushtrails, Magaliesburg, 3 Maart 2019

Na die ring by Rietvlei het vier ringers (Martin en Paula Steyn, Elba Swart en FC Bothma) die volgende dag nog kans gesien om na Magaliesburg toe te ry om die Europese Swaeltjies [Barn Swallow] se roost te teiken. Ongelukkig het die swaels toe reeds vertrek. Hulle het nogtans 53 voëls (16 spesies) gevang dié Sondag.

Pretoria Botaniese Tuin: C-Ringeropleiding, 23 Maart 2019

Op hierdie Saterdag het 7 ringers om 04:29 by die botaniese tuin bymekaar gekom. Die vangste was goed: 227 voëls vir die oggend, waarvan 22 verskillende spesies, asook 17 hervangste. Mooi spesies was: Tuinsanger [Garden Warbler], Swartkeelgeelvink [Southern Masked Weaver] (128), Europese Vlieëvanger [Spotted Flycatcher], Gewone Fret [Bronze Mannikin] (11).

Wilton Valley Ringkamp, 16–21 Maart 2019

Daar was 11 ringers wat hierdie heerlike week naby die Limpopo (noordwes van Ellisras) bygewoon het. In ses dae se tyd het ons 150 voëls gevang waarvan 43 verskillende spesies was en net drie hervangste. Die hoogtepunt van die week was die 10 Bronsvlerkdrawwertjies [Bronze-winged Courser], wat ons in die nag met 'n skepnet gevang en gering het. Ook 'n Boskorhaan



Wanda du Plooy

Frik du Plooy het 'n lifer by Wilton Valley gekry, 'n Boskorhaan



Wanda du Plooy

Wilton Valley: Martin Steyn met een van elf Gevlekte Sandpatryse wat ons daar in die nette gevang het



Wanda du Plooy

Wilton Valley: Elba Swart het naby die plaas 'n Swartborsslangarend met 'n bal-chatri gevang

[Red-crested Korhaan] en 'n Gewone Dikkop [Spotted Thick-knee]. Roofvoëls wat ons in die omgewing met 'n bal-chatri gevang het, is twee Blouvalkies [Black-shouldered Kite], Grootjagarend [African Hawk Eagle], Bruin- en Swartborsslangarend [Brown and Black-chested Snake Eagle], Bleeksingvalk [Pale Chanting Goshawk] (4). Nog 'n verrassing was agt Gevlekte Sandpatryse [Burchell's Sandgrouse] wat in die nette gevang is.

Roodeplaatdam, 30 Maart 2019

Sewe ringers het teen 4 uur na 'n nuwe plek langs die Roodeplaatdam gery. Daar was 'n ongeluk op die Cullinan-pad en 'n gedeelte van die roete was gesluit. Ons moes met 'n ompad deur die plotte, maar het tog die ingang na die dam in die donker te gevind. Die vangste was nie so wonderlik nie; ons het net 39 voëls gekry om te ring waarvan 19 verskillende spesies. Geen hervangste.

Tog was daar 'n paar oulike spesies wat ons nie elke dag vang nie: Gewone Tarentaal [Helmeted Guineafowl], Witkeeljanfrederik [White-throated Robin-chat], Bosveldstompstert [Long-billed Crombec], Rooivlerktjagra [Brown-crowned Tchagra] en Rooirugstreepkoppie [Golden-breasted Bunting]. Ons jongste ringer, Annica Pienaar, was ook daar saam met haar ma, Marina. Sy is net 12 jaar oud en al reeds 'n ywerige ringer.

Moreletakloof NR, 6 April 2019

Vyftien ringers, elf Unisa-studente, vyftien BLGN-lede, verskeie Vriende van Moreletakloof en besoekers het die maontlike reënweer getrotseer, maar wat toe op 'n heerlike dag uitgedraai het. Ons het 187 voëls gevang waarvan 32 hervangste was, wat 17.1% verteenwoordig. Oulike spesies was: Goudstertspieg [Golden-tailed Woodpecker], Rooibeklyster [Kurrichane Thrush], Witkeeljanfrederik [White-throated Robin-chat], Bonrugwewer [Village Weaver], Goudgeelvink [Yellow-crowned Bishop] en Vleitinkintkie [Levaillant's Cisticola]. Die Unisa-studente het onder leiding van die ringers hulle module voltooi vir hulle Natuurbewaringskursus.

Voortrekkermonument, 13 April 2019

Onder leiding van Elba Swart het 10 ringers en drie C-ringers by die Monument bymekaar gekom. Ons het 76 voëls in die nette gekry, waarvan 23 verskillende spesies. Hervangste was ook goed: 14.5%. Interessante spesies was Hoephoep [African Hoopoe], Groot- en Kleinheuningwyser [Greater and Lesser Honeyguide], Witliesbosbontrokkie [Chin-spot Batis] en Gewone Melba [Green-winged Pytilia].

Frank Struben Voëlpark, 20 April 2019

Johan de Jager, een van ons A-ringers, het Jeendag in Lynnwood by hierdie voëlpark se naambordjie verbygery en begin navraag doen. Hy het eindelik met Philip de Beer, van die Tshwane Stadsraad se Natuurbewaringsafdeling kontak gemaak. Johan, Frik

en Wanda du Plooy was saam met Philip en Madeleen van Loggerenberg (sy werk ook vir die Stadsraad en is 'n A-ringer) op die terrein en het gevind dat dit geskik sal wees om nette daar op te sit.

Met Philip se toestemming het ses van ons op Saterdag, 20 April vir die eerste keer hierdie onbekende voëlpark besoek. Die area is nie baie groot nie, en glad nie oop vir die publiek nie. Daar is 'n spruitjie wat deur die park loop en ideaal om nette oor die water en tussen die doringbome op te sit. Ons het goed gedoen met 76 voëls gevang, waarvan 13 verskillende spesies was. Oulike spesies was Hadede [Hadede Ibis], Pylvlekkatlagter [Arrow-marked Babbler], Bontrugwewer [Village Weaver], 12 Geelbeklysters [Karoo Thrush] en 6 Dikbekwewers [Thick-billed Weavers]

Magoebaskloof, 2–5 Mei 2019

Drie ringers het Magoebaskloof besoek om nette daar op te sit, maar daar is ook drie Bleeksingvalke [Pale Chanting Goshawk] in die omgewing gevang. Besondere woudvoëls was: Witborsduife [Tambourine Dove], Lawaaimakerjanfrederik [Chorister Robin-chat], Groenrugkwêkwêvoël [Green-backed Camaroptera], Bergkwikkie [Mountain Wagtail] en Kortbeksuikerbekkie [Collared Sunbird].

Rietvlei NR (Groot Lapa), 4 Mei 2019

Nege ringers het die koue getrotseer op hierdie Saterdagoggend onder leiding van Frik du Plooy. Vangste was nie baie goed nie, net 49 voëls is gevang, waarvan 14 verskillende spesies. Veertien voëls is egter weer gevang wat 28.6% verteenwoordig. 'n Interessante geval was waar Martin Steyn 'n Gewone Janfrederik [Cape Robin-chat] gekry het wat oorspronklik deur A Naven in Februarie vanjaar by Melvillekoppies, Emmarentiadam, gering is. (Hervangste is gewoonlik van voëls wat in die omgewing bly.) Mooi spesies was Grootheuningwyser [Greater Honeyguide], Pylvlekkatlagter [Arrow-marked Babbler], Gestreepte Wipstert [White-browed Scrub Robin], Rooiborslaksman [Crimson-breasted Shrike].



Wanda du Plooy

Elba Swart het in Magoebaskloof 'n net oor 'n stroom gespan

Opleidingsessie, 11 Mei 2019

Saterdagoggend het 15 van die ringers by Eastside Community Church in Moreleta-park bymekaargekom vir 'n opleidingsessie (13 lede het verskoning gemaak). Die doel van die sessie was om sleutels uit te werk om die identifikasie van moeilik-uitkenbare voëls soos naguile te vergemaklik. Sleutels vir koesters en lewerikke is ook bespreek.

Bishop Bird Park (Wierdapark), 18 Mei 2019

Marina Pienaar het hierdie uitstappie na die voëlpark in Centurion gelei. Nog drie A-ringers het haar gehelp met opleiding van vyf C-ringers, waarvan twee vir die eerste keer gekom het. Daar is op die oomblik sewe aktiewe C-ringers. Vir 'n wintersoggend was die vangste redelik – 69 voëls is gevang, waarvan 19 verskillende spesies. Hervangste was ook goed: 21.7%. Mooi spesies was Swartbandlangstertjie [Black-chested Prinia], Dikbekwewer [Thick-billed Weaver] en Rooikopvink [Red-headed Finch]. 🐦

Birding the Overberg-Agulhas region in Autumn, 1–12 May 2019

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

I cannot remember when last we were at Cape Agulhas to view the *real* meeting of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. It was long ago and we were (regrettably) not birders at that stage. Our diary unfortunately did not allow us a visit in Spring when all the birds are engaged in mating and breeding behaviour, with all the song and dance (displays) which accompany this.

We departed on 1 May for the first leg of our trip, stopping at Garingboom Guest Farm near Springfontein, of which I still had fond memories. We arrived at midday to check into our nice chalet, had a spot of lunch and went for a walk on the farm to stretch our legs. Again the birding here was just so pleasing: Reed and White-breasted Cormorants [Riet-, Witborsduiker] at the dam as well as Cattle and Little Egrets [Vee-, Kleinwitreier], ducks, Egyptian Goose [Kolgans], and of course the larks: Rufous-naped, Melodious, and Spike-heeled [Rooinek-, Spot-, Vlaktelewerik] were spotted. A Black-headed Heron [Swartkopreier]

stood in majestic waiting-pose, while an African Spoonbill [Lepelaar] was sweeping its bill to-and-fro over the water. And not to mention the ubiquitous Pied Starlings [Witgatspreeu], also hitching a ride on a sheep. A good sighting was a Pallid Harrier [Witborsvleivalk] on a telephone post on the farm. When sitting on the verandah of our cottage, we saw ewes with young lambs of differing ages, running to-and-fro in an early-life contest to establish the pecking order (or dominance hierarchy as we call it in field guiding); we were made aware again that we were staying on a 2 500 hectare working sheep farm. We were served a super dinner of Karoo lamb with all the trimmings and left for George after breakfast the next day, making a stop at the Valley of Desolation at Graaf Reinet, must-see scenery, as well as the magnificent NG church building.

We spent the day after the next hiking part of the Woodcutter Trail near Knysna, in the remaining remnants of the original Forest Biome, and what a pleasing walk it was. The weather was overcast and not good for birding. The huge old Yellowwood trees (800 years old) were just so impressive to see. For the next two days we visited old friends in Wilderness. We visited the Rondevlei bird hide, spotted some of the common birds like Common Moorhen, African Darter, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Yellow-billed Duck [Grootwaterhoender, Slanghalsvoël, Kuifkopdobbertjie, Kleindobbertjie, Geelbekeend] and the ever-present Egyptian Goose. At Victoria Bay we had a very good sighting of a Half-collared Kingfisher [Blouvisvanger], 'doing its thing' on low rocks amongst the waves. It was interesting to see 'common' birds of the area again like White-backed Mousebird [Witkruismuisvoël] and Cape Bulbul [Kaapse Tiptol] with its distinctive white ring around the eyes. We stayed at Victoria



Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

Bontebok

Heights Guest Farm in a magnificent Cape Dutch house with excellent service and tasty breakfasts. For all who seek accommodation near Wilderness, this can be recommended.

Our next stop was Swellendam where we stayed the first three nights at Bontebok National Park. Swellendam is the third-oldest town in South Africa and has much to offer. The magnificent NG church building with its four different architectural styles, the Drosdy, seat of the magistrate (now a museum) and the *Oefenhuis*, now a place where the local hospice sells second-hand goods; not to mention the majestic Langeberg in the background. Bontebok National Park was established in 1931 to give sanctuary to the few remaining Bontebok (a 'cousin' of our Blesbok), which 300 years ago roamed the plains in huge numbers, but have since been almost driven to extinction by human intervention. Only 270-odd Bontebok are found in the Park together with Red Hartebeest and very interestingly Cape Mountain Zebra (not to be confused with Hartmann's Mountain Zebra in Goegap Nature Reserve near Springbok and in Namibia).

Here we were hoping to find the Agulhas Long-billed Lark [Overberglangbeklewerik] which would hopefully also be 'the last of the long-billed larks' for us, having seen four of the five species previously. We drove the circle-routes in the park as well walking two of the hiking trails. The vegetation is Renosterveld and very picturesque with flowering plants in great numbers. On the first (very) early morning drive, the weather was overcast, damp and foggy. We had to wait until the rising sun cleared the fog before we could commence birding. We got out of the SUV and listened to the bird calls, but none of them resembled the Agulhas Long-billed Lark. We noticed that some of the protea species were flowering and almost immediately spotted Cape Sugarbird [Kaapse Suikervoël] in good numbers as well as Malachite Sunbirds [Jangroentjie] – both very pretty. But the weather was overcast and the wind was blowing, rendering photographs impossible. Kathrin took some good pictures of magnificently constructed round spider webs,



Keithard Graf von Dirckheim

Malachite Sunbird/Jangroentjie

with the spider sitting motionless in the middle of this elaborate structure. Yellow Canaries [Geelkanarie] showed in good numbers and (at last) I got pictures of both a male and female Namaqua Dove [Namakwaduifie] in one frame. Black-winged Kite [Blouvalk] was spotted as well as Rock Kestrel [Kransvalk] flying overhead, and we heard a Klaas's Cuckoo [Meitjie] calling (so late in the season?). Our target bird was nowhere to be seen or heard. We were guessing that it was too late in the season to hear the Lark calling, thereby diminishing the chances to spot it.

Following clues from *Southern African Bird Finder* by Cohen et al., we drove out of the park, back past Swellendam, turned off on to a tar road signposted Malgas, and turning off after 3.3 km onto a gravel road, searched for the lark as indicated. No luck! En route we drove off the gravel road onto a farm road, and had a quick picnic lunch and coffee. Whilst standing there, another vehicle drove up the farm road, a lady disembarked and admonished us for being on their private property. Wow! We had not harmed a soul, not broken any fence wires, not stolen sheep, not shot any of the Helmeted Guineafowl [Gewone Tarentaal] which were scurrying around. All we had done was pull off the gravel road to avoid the dust thrown up by passing traffic. We apologised and left. Bewildered! We continued driving



Neilhard Graf von Durchheim

Yellow Canary/Geelkanarie



Pont over Breede River

for some 30 km until we arrived at the settlement of Malgas, where the road ended against the Breede River. There was a ferry (or pont) mechanically operated via a steel cable which crossed the river, taking vehicles over the river at R58 a ticket. One car was already on board, a bakkie was following. The ferryman beckoned to me to take my SUV on board as the third vehicle, but I didn't trust the capacity of the pont, and also considered what I would tell my insurance company if my vehicle would have to be salvaged from the bottom of the Breede River! We took some pictures of this odd transportation mode, turned the SUV around and returned on the same route we had come, searching all the while for the Agulhas Long-billed Lark. We spotted numerous other birds, Cape Sparrow [Gewone Mossie] in good

numbers, Little Swift, Red-capped Lark and Karoo Lark [Kleinwindswael, Rooikoplewerik, Karoolewerik], Cape Turtle Dove [Gewone Tortelduif], Common Fiscal [Fiskaallaksmann] in good numbers, and Capped Wheatear [Hoëveldskaapwagter] frequently perched on fence wires, as were African Stonechat [Gewone Bontrokkie]. We returned to our chalet at Bontebok National Park, walked part of one of the hiking trails and thereafter consoled ourselves with a nice braai.

The next day, 8 May, was national election day. Well... what is more important, a new bird (lifer) or the elections? We left on an early morning drive again, albeit later to avoid the early morning mist. We spotted Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape White-eye, Cape Weaver, Cape Canary and Streaky-headed Seedeater [Klein-rooibandsuikerbekkie, Kaapse Glasogie, Kaapse Wewer, Kaapse Kanarie, Streepkopkanarie] amongst others. No long-billed lark. We decided to go back onto the Malgas road and try once more to find the lark there.

We consulted various bird books again about the Agulhas Long-billed Lark: *Roberts VII* gave us a further clue: "HABITAT: Fallow and recently ploughed fields, sparse shrubland dominated by Renosterbos *Dicerotheramnus rhinocerotis*, and dwarf Karoo shrubland on clay soils in foothills of Breede R valley." AHA! The fields on either side of the gravel road were fallow, sparsely vegetated and contained stony soil. Again we spotted Capped Wheatear and African Stonechat, and the other species we had seen the day before. At a farm dam we spotted a flock of Blue Crane [Bloukraanvoël] and nearby some African Sacred Ibis [Skoorsteenveër]. Karoo Prinia [Karoolangstertjie] were in the scrub next to the gravel road. Further on we saw four large green Jo-Jo water tanks, and stopped because I saw a Southern Double-collared Sunbird perched on a fence wire, on the other side of which was a fallow field. What on earth was this sunbird doing here? I got out and tried to get a picture of the sunbird, but it flew off only to perch again some distance further on. I followed.

I pre-emptively got out my PDA and for a short while played the call of the Agulhas Long-billed Lark. No response. I continued on foot after the sunbird. After possibly 15 minutes and without having been able to photograph the sunbird, I heard the lark calling briefly, further down on the ground in the fallow field. We just could not spot the bird – it was so well camouflaged on the almost bare soil in amongst the stones and sparse vegetation. We turned to the fallow field on the opposite side. We spotted numerous birds feeding, many of which were Cape Sparrows and Red-capped Lark and various species of doves. All of a sudden, a bird flew up and perched on a fence post. *VOILA!* Agulhas Long-billed Lark! Lifer! And it started singing the exact sound as recorded on *Roberts* on my PDA, but the wind was so strong that I could not get a decent picture. Then a bakkie came charging past with a huge cloud of dust following, and the Lark flew down into the field. I got some nice pictures there but one has to look carefully as the bird blends in so well with the surroundings. On looking at the pictures and comparing it with pictures I took of Cape Long-billed Lark [Weskuslangbeklewerik] at Port Nolloth last year, the Agulhas Long-billed Lark did not have as long a bill as Cape Long-billed Lark, and I thought that Agulhas Long-billed Lark had more prominent streaking on the lower-flanks. But as their ranges don't overlap, this observation may be academic. At last we had 'the last of the long-billed larks' on our list and happiness reigned. We returned to our chalet at Bontebok National Park and had a celebratory braai closely watched over by a Small-spotted Genet, a most pretty animal but a formidable hunter.

And yes, I did go to vote, en route back to Swellendam at a small farm-school I saw some election posters. There were four people ahead of me in the queue. I was done and dusted in 15 minutes.

The next day we left Bontebok National Park and found ourselves a lovely flatlet on a berry farm (Wildebraam Guest Farm), 2 km outside Swellendam. Not only was the accommodation pleasing, but they make the finest



Capped Wheatear/ Hoëveldskaapwagter



Agulhas Long-billed Lark/ Overberglangbeklewerik

array of jams and preserves you can think of and produce ten different kinds of liqueur, mainly berry liqueurs. We visited their tasting-room and thereafter purchased some of their delicious youngberry liqueur.

The day after, we left very early for Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve. We hoped to connect with Victorin's Warbler [Rooiborsruigtesanger] there. It was a pleasant drive through the countryside and Grootvadersbosch is a lovely reserve. It has excellent hiking trails and the scenery is so beautiful. We spotted Cape Batis [Kaapse Bosbontrokkie] which were very vocal with their somewhat croaking call, Fork-tailed Drongo, Sombre Greenbul, Bar-throated Apalis, White-throated Canary, Protea Seedeater [Mikstertbyvanger, Gewone Willie, Bandkeelkleinjantjie, Witkeelkanarie,



Agulhas Long-billed Lark/ Overberglangbeklewerik

Witvlerkkanarie] and numerous others. The warbler eluded us and it was possibly the wrong season to look for it. We will have to return in Spring to take another try at it.

Regrettably, every pleasant trip comes to an end; we departed for the long-haul trip of some 860 km to Garingboom at Springfontein, where we arrived to be greeted like old friends

and sat down to another sumptuous Karoo-lamb dinner. The next day after a hearty farm-breakfast we took to the home journey.

Swellendam alone and Graaf Reinet are worth making the trip. The birding, even considering that May is not the best birding month, was very good and productive. Birding there in springtime must be excellent. For those who are knowledgeable about plants and particularly Renosterveld, Bontebok National Park may be rewarding. But the chalets were disappointing, the beds hollow and uncomfortable, and the birding was just okay. Victoria Bay Guest Farm close to Wilderness and Wildebraam Guest Farm at Swellendam can both be warmly recommended. Garingboom Guest Farm at Springfontein is 'halfway' between Pretoria and Wilderness; this makes such a pleasant overnight stop, tranquil and peaceful with good food and comfortable cottages and excellent birding. We will have to return. 🐦

The Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

Peter Sullivan

My trip to the Bekaa Valley started disastrously. Could not sleep the night before with a tummy that had gone to water and awoke — if that's the word after not sleeping — feeling horrible. Seriously contemplated cancelling the day while I showered, thought about it again as I dressed, mulled over it in my muddled and sick mind as I sipped hot tea, all I could keep down.

Trudged downstairs to meet my daughter, Helen, who had agreed to accompany me.

Warned her of my mood, gloomily adding that driving on the 'wrong' side of the road through murderous traffic out of Beirut in a car we were about to hire did not fill me with glee but with an awful sense of impending disaster.

We Ubered to 'Advanced Car Hire' and I anxiously navigated through the traffic to the road out of town under Google Maps instructions from Helen.

Let's go a step back. BirdLife South Africa's CEO Mark Anderson had put me in touch with

Julius Arinaitwe of BirdLife Africa who put me in touch with Assad.

It was my first non-familial appointment in the city, and I met the charming, tall, urbane, handsome head of SPNL, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon, at his fourth-floor office in the city's business district. Grey-haired and bearded, Assad Serhal rises from his chair with an instantly friendly greeting, and a broad smile as if we have known each other forever.

SPNL is BirdLife International's Lebanese partner, and he heads it. Assad entertains and educates me for an hour, presses five books on me, refusing payment, even for the hardcover splendidly illustrated guide to all the mammals of the Middle East (including Lebanon) which he co-authored.

We chat about our favourite princess, Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado of Japan, BirdLife's Honorary President.

"Ah, an interesting story ..." Assad says, then tells me it. On his way to give a speech to accept the prestigious Mindoro prize (for creating 40 protected areas in Lebanon, a country where citizens love shooting birds for fun) he noticed a swan in the garden was in trouble. Torn between continuing on his way and helping the swan he alerted hotel staff, telling them to rescue it.

"I sat feeling troubled, but before I spoke, my translator told me not to worry, an ambulance had arrived to take the swan to hospital."

It was one of a pair in the Imperial Garden that belonged to the Emperor, so Assad was hailed as a hero in Tokyo's newspapers the next day. The Lebanese Ambassador threw a party for him because of what he had done for his country's image in Japan.

"Amazing, no?" he chuckles.

With little fuss Assad works out an itinerary for me to visit the country's top birding destination, telling me I'm lucky as this month is right in the middle of the great flyway migration which will fly over where I'll be staying. A few days later an email arrives:

It will be our pleasure and honoured hosting Peter at West Bekaa Country Club on full board basis, and will guarantee a unique experience at the West Bekaa region, covering the wet lands and related birds watching, butterflies garden, Qaraoun lake and Litani river surroundings and of course the Himas from Ammiq towards Aitanit.

Jean Mayne, General Manager, West Bekaa Country Club.

And one from Assad:

Dear Peter,

Enjoyed our meeting, and felt that we knew each other in some other life! Thanks for Your kind words, and for taking the time & effort to visit me at SPNL. Now that You got a plan to Shouf Cedar Reserve on Wednesday with a Lebanese driver, I know that You will be enjoying a memorable day among the ancient cedars, where I spent 6 full years of my lucky life establishing this reserve (1996-2001). Make sure to introduce Yourself & mention my name to the reserve entrance guides.

This is where we are now headed, daughter dictating, me driving, brand new hire car, through the madness of Beirut to the Cedars of Lebanon. You may recall the phrase as the cedars are mentioned 103 times in the Bible.

Al Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve is the largest reserve in Lebanon. It goes from Dahr Al Baidar in the north to Niha Mountain in the south. It encloses three cedar forests which constitute 25% of the remaining cedars in Lebanon. This reserve is home to 200 birds that include ones that are rare.

That is where we headed, and arrived, without serious mishap. Up to the entrance, that is. Then I slowly moved the car to the left to avoid a bus coming out.

I've always believed disaster happens when three, not two or one, unfortunate events



As you enter the Valley reserve, this delightful small dam makes you want to sit down and meditate. But a long two-hour walk through the reserve awaits, with its own special viewpoints.



Water buffalo having a dip in the river



Peter Sullivan

There were little green frogs everywhere, chirping away, sounding like birds



In the Valley with snow on the surrounding mountains



My daughter Helen at the Cedars of Lebanon forest

concatenate. The truck was coming for me (1), there was a man standing on the right obscuring a wooden pole jutting out (2) and as he moved away I watched the bus on the right, and drove a little left (3) knowing the man would move aside to make room as I was going very slowly. Did not see the pole hiding behind him. “Dad!” My daughter shouted.

The pole gently nudged her side door. She opened it to look. “Yep, it is dented and will need panel beating,” she said, with a hint of satisfaction.

Already feeling awful, this did not improve my mood. We forgot to tell the people we were

Assad’s friends, desultorily trudged through the snow atop the reserve to see the famous cedars, smelt the fresh melting snow with a hint of notes of cedar wood, drove through the reserve, admired the mountainside forest a bit, and headed off to the West Bekaa Country Club, where I met Jean in a haze of exhaustion, agreed to meet again at breakfast the next day as I confessed I was too tired and sick to do anything and collapsed into a deep sleep. Half woke up for dinner, met fellow birder Martin Kaech from Switzerland, back to sleep again and woke up on Friday feeling refreshed and happy. Lebanon has two Easter Fridays, the Catholic and Maronite one, and a week later, the Orthodox one, which was this day.

After breakfast Jean, our generous host, drove us in his spotless Range Rover to the Ammiq Wetland. What a wonderful place.

The Bekaa Valley was once the most dangerous spot on the planet with various Middle East jets screaming overhead, dropping bombs and firing rockets. Now it is beautiful, about 100 km long and 20 km wide, growing green produce to feed the Lebanese population of six million. Always was beautiful, I suppose, the jets were the ugly ones. Apple trees are everywhere in white pinkish blossom, and lovely lines of poplars frame the roads, acting as windbreaks. It is Spring – yellow, purple and white flowers colour the overall green with a sprinkling of distinctive red poppies. There is an aroma of fresh herbs wafting into us on the Spring breeze, and



Tiny white flowers look like snow on the lake in the Valley

even the weather is splendid, blue skies with a few soft white clouds for contrast. As we walk into the wetland, Helen spots a bright green frog, then a herd of water buffalo arrive with calves who gambol in the water – delightful to see, warms the cockles of the heart, makes you feel cuddly. A large dog with the shepherd nuzzles the smallest buffalo calf as if to say “don’t worry, I’m here.”

Martin, a much better birder than me, points out some interesting single birds (and some ‘lifers’ for me) when suddenly he spots 52 Glossy Ibis flying lazy circles in the sky, getting higher and higher, then we see a flock of 50 night herons settle in a tree. 50 of them! Night herons!

Best sighting of the day comes later with 38 Common Cranes flying magnificently, slow and stately, *andante maestoso* my music teacher would have said, choreographed crane circles in a bunch for about 20 minutes of incrementally gaining altitude until they line up in single file, in a ‘V,’ to fly north at great height. Then finally we see about 120 White Storks, more muddled in their flying and much more difficult to count. Eventually the storks break into three groups and head off north, after each group decides it has gained its required height. A minute or two separates each newly-formed flock of storks before their collective decision to take direction instead of continuing circling to get higher.

All these large birds are flying from Africa to summer in Europe. Following food, not the weather. The flocks first make an appearance



Peter Sullivan

In Shouf Cedar Reserve, next to one of the oldest Cedars of Lebanon, where Christ is said to have walked

quite low, yet these are all soaring birds, so they then slowly curve around a thermal which takes them higher and higher, and when they get higher than the mountains which are snow covered on both sides of the valley, they head off north to Europe. Awesome to observe. A privilege.

The valley’s mountains form a bottleneck funnelling them through from Africa in their hundreds of thousands during April, and back in October–November. Every year. Since before history.

We also saw 13 honey buzzards flying in a flock, trying to gain height on a thermal, when we returned to the Country Club. After the wetland we visited the large Qaraoun Lake and the Litani River which winds through the valley. We saw quaint villages and smart ones, inhabited only during summer by the rich. We heard how three bird hunters had been jailed for illegal shooting, which might herald a change in Lebanon’s bird-hunting culture.

“I reported some hunters this morning,” Jean says with satisfaction. “The police came.” Wonderful!

I leave promising I will try to get all my friends in South Africa to visit his lovely, eco-active not just eco-friendly, WBCC.

All-in-all, a wonder-filled day. I returned the vehicle to the hire company with a song in my heart. Cost of damages: \$66. A pleasure, negligible payment for fabulous memories. 🐾

Peru – Machu Picchu and its birdlife

Don Searle

Having booked a 2-week birding tour to Chile, a slight detour to Peru to satisfy a lifelong ambition to visit Machu Picchu, the world-famous archaeological site, was irresistible and of course the extension of the detour by a day or two to sample the amazing birdlife was for me just as natural as day follows night.

Considered to be the best-preserved archaeological site in the world, symbol of the Incan empire, UNESCO World Heritage Site (1983) and voted one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, Machu Picchu is located 80 km north-west of the city of Cusco, itself of significant Incan archaeological interest. Machu Picchu is situated 2 400 m above sea-level in an environment of tremendous scenic beauty – a citadel of mysterious origin and purpose, given that the Incas possessed no written language, and attracting researchers and tourists alike, from the world over.

Built roughly in 1450 AD in the High Andes Mountains and invisible from the Urubamba River 700 m below (hence its preservation from the marauding Spanish Conquistadores), it was abandoned a mere 120 years later in 1572, again for reasons unknown. It comprises of 150 buildings of sophisticated dry-stone walls including three temples, houses and

baths, and a compound containing numerous flights of steps, most staircases carved out of a single huge slab of granite. Apparently 400–500 people occupied the site. No wheels were used in its construction, the method of which is termed the ashlar technique, in which massive granite blocks were polished and fashioned to fit together (fused) without mortar – not a knife-blade can fit between the blocks. Re-discovered in 1911 by Yale professor, Hiram Bingham, Machu Picchu is often described as an astronomical observatory with panoramic views, and whose sacred Intihuatana Stone accurately indicates two equinoxes. Twice each year the directly overhead sun casts no shadow whatsoever. Surrounded by stepped agricultural terraces formerly watered by an aqueduct system, walkways and thousands of steps connect the plazas and residential areas with the terraces (some of which were still in use by the local Quechua Indians when rediscovered), a cemetery and other major buildings.

The Eastern slopes of the Andes and adjacent forestlands in which Machu Picchu is located, are recognised as being the ornithologically richest area in the world, with the highest number of bird species found at the equator, although an almost equal number



Cusco Fortress – Sacsaybamba



Andean Goose family

are found in nearby Cusco and in northern Bolivia. The Cusco and Machu Picchu areas have fortunately been protected because of their archaeological interest and have become an ornithological safe-haven where many other elements of biodiversity have been conserved as well. Over the centuries the patterns of human settlement in Machu Picchu and the Vilcanota Valley may also have been conditioned by the predictable, benign climate of the area, further contributing to the presence of the many rare and endemic birds found there.

Despite a delayed departure from OR Tambo Airport for my 15-hour flight via São Paulo in Brazil to Lima (1 550 m), capital of Peru, I arrived on time, i.e., almost midnight on 13 November 2018, for an overnight stay in the Manhattan Inn Airport Hotel offering the very basics, a clean room with a comfortable, essential bed.

Early the following morning before breakfast, I used my bedroom window, which overlooked a tiny city park with scattered trees, to do some birding – with Pacific Dove and Scrub Blackbirds spotted as lifers, an unexpected flock of a dozen or so Black Vultures circling overhead and a fly-by Harris's Hawk.

My mid-morning flight to Cusco (3 300 m) was not however incident-free, with my luggage missing upon arrival. Frantic enquiries resulted in my suitcase luckily arriving an hour or so later, having been sent to some other conveniently close-by destination.

Meeting my guide, José (birding and archaeological) and driver, Wilbur, I was whisked off for a delicious lunch of rainbow trout, rice and vegetables and then on to the Cusco Incan Fortress, Sacsayhuaman, which was fantastic. As in the case of Machu Picchu, but using limestone instead of granite, the fortress is constructed of massive (3–4 m x 2 m) boulders which have been shaped to perfection to fit in with the natural geography of the site – no mortar with absolutely minimal spacing between blocks, ensuring maximum stability and preservation for many centuries to come. Again, however the purpose of the



Mist-enshrouded Machu Picchu

Ron Scarle



Machu Picchu Gateway

fortress is unknown.

Then, for some birding, we visited a nearby farm dam recording a number of specials including a family of Andean Geese, Andean Duck and Andean Coot, followed by a visit to a small patch of *Polylepis* woodland for endemics (not found in any other country) – Chestnut-breasted Mountain-Finch, Creamy-crested Spinetail and Black-throated Flowerpiercer.

An hour's drive to Ollantaytambo (2 790 m) for dinner was next on the agenda followed by a 2-hour train journey to Aguas Calientes, arriving at midnight at the Waman Hotel for an overnight stay prior to my visit early the following morning to the archaeological wonder that is Machu Picchu – a long but very eventful day with 15 lifers!



Ron Searle

Juvenile Fasciated Tiger-Heron



Andean Motmot

Despite the inclement weather – an incessant drizzle interspersed with periods of torrential downpour – and clad in poncho with overhead broly, my spirits were in no way dampened or diminished, permitting me to spend most of the next morning excitedly exploring and totally absorbing the running commentary of José. Even the iconic post-card image of the ruins shrouded in mist and drizzle, was for me infinitely more memorable than would a sunny, clear day have produced – an above-expectation, highly enjoyable experience of a lifetime!

Later, a walk in the rain in search of the endemic Inca Wren, in the bamboo thickets growing along the margins of the world-famous Inca Trail, was successful and the rest of the day was devoted to birding the Aguas

Calientes area including the Urubamba River within the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Another endemic, Green and White Hummingbird, and uncommon Oleaginous Hemispingus, Thick-billed Euphonia and Silver-beaked Tanager were next on my growing lifelist. Sightings along the Urubamba, considered not uncommon but worthy of mention in my view, included the national bird of Peru, the Andean Cock-of-the-rock (this scarlet-coloured dandy is one of the birds listed in the publication *100 Birds to See Before You Die* by Chandler and Couzens) in a mud cup-nest somehow attached to a large slab of rock overhanging the river, a striking female Torrent Duck, juvenile Fasciated Tiger-Heron, colourful Andean Motmot, prolonged views of a highly active White-capped Dipper (a small passerine equipped to dive for its aquatic diet of invertebrates, swim underwater using its wings for propulsion and even walk on the river/stream bottom) and an Andean Guan fly-by. The daylight return train journey to Ollantaytambo produced plentiful sightings of both male and female Torrent Ducks (one of the most attractive members of the duck family and confined to the rivers of South America) and a few White-capped Dippers – 21 lifers on this day!

An early departure the following morning for an hour's drive to the incredible Abra Malaga Pass (4 316 m) was achieved on time but, because of time constraints, I had not followed recommended and prudent acclimatisation procedures. Immediately after arrival, we set off uphill on a barely discernible track to a visible grove of gnarled and twisted *Polylepis* trees silhouetted against the skyline. The Peruvian authorities have fortunately recognised the precarious nature of this endangered woodland type in which a fair number of consequentially endangered bird species have also evolved, and in conjunction with the local Quechua community have established conservation and regeneration procedures to protect the remnant patches of it.

Exhibiting a number of symptoms of altitude sickness, including breathlessness, rubbery legs and loss of balance, I battled my

way up the incline to the Royal Cinclodes Path, named after a particularly rare (less than 200 individuals) and thus critically endangered endemic bird species of the *Polylepis* woodlands. Although we were successful in locating two *Polylepis* endemics, White-browed Tit-Spintail and White-tufted Sunbeam, as well as the rarely recorded and colourful Giant Conebill, I very reluctantly, because of the altitude sickness, aborted the search for the Royal Cinclodes and accepted that the species would not be appearing on my world-list.

We then continued over the Pass through puna grassland (Andean Lapwing) to Canchailloc (3 708 m), birding our way downhill towards San Luis. Special attention was given to the areas of *Chusquea* bamboo found near the tree-line where another dozen or so habitat-specific bird species, including endemic Parodi's Hemispingus, were identified on our descent through outstanding scenery overlooked by the dominant glacier-ridden, snow-clad peak of Mt. Veronica. Domesticated dogs were surprisingly prolific as were the many human graves alongside the road, a sad reminder of the necessity for caution in negotiating the numerous and treacherous hairpin bends associated with car travel in the foothills of the Andes Mountains.

And we finally visited the garden of a resort in Ollantaytambo for a feast of hummingbirds amongst others. Close-up photographic opportunities abounded with the following more interesting species recorded, namely Giant Hummingbird, Band-tailed Seedeater, Greenish Yellow-Finch, Green-tailed Trainbearer, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Andean Swift, Bare-faced Ground-Dove and, last but certainly not least, bird of the entire Chile/Peru trip, the stunning Bearded Mountaineer, an endemic hummingbird. I subsequently discovered that this day yielded the highest number of lifers by far of the entire 19-day Chile/Peru trip – 37 in all.

My final day in Peru, with 10 lifers, got off to an early start with a visit to a couple of deep, blue lakes in the Cusco area



Snow-clad Mt. Veronica



Andean Lapwing



Female Giant Hummingbird

for Puna Teal and the Many-colored Rush Tyrant, followed by a rather longish drive to Soraypampa, the start of a tourist walk to the stunning blue-green Salkantay glacier lake



Bearded Mountaineer

overlooked by spectacular snow-clad Andean peaks. Shortly after turning on to the road to Soraypampa, we were blessed with the overhead appearance of what is often referred to as the 'world's biggest bird of prey' the magnificent Andean Condor (with a wingspan in excess of 3 m, yet another of the 100 birds to see before you die), the bird that epitomizes the high Andes. The habitat at our destination was puna grassland punctuated with patches of *Polylepis* woodland which quickly yielded three endemics – diminutive and secretive Vilcabamba Tapaculo, localised and striking Apurimac Brushfinch and Marcapata Spinetail.

It was then back to Cusco for a final night at the Llipimpac Hotel after an action-packed, most enjoyable and unforgettable 5-day visit to Peru for spectacular Machu Picchu and 83 lifers. 🐦

FROM THE ARCHIVE Wishbirds: Part 3

This set of want-to-see birds is taken from wishlists originally published in Laniarius 88 (March 2003) and Laniarius 89 (June 2003), in which bird-finding advice was offered by Faansie Peacock, André Marx, Mostert Kriek and Etienne Marais

Gevlekte Vleikuiken/Buff-spotted Flufftail

Soos alle vleikuikens is die Gevlekte Vleikuiken 'n grondlewende voël wat meestal in digte plantegroei skuil. Die tipiese habitat is woude en hulle kan in enige klein, geïsoleerde woud voorkom, asook op die rand van die woud en in die woud self, veral naby stroompies, alhoewel hulle nie afhanklik van water is nie. 'n Belangrike faktor is die teenwoordigheid van sagte grond en 'n ryk humuslaag asook heelwat lae, digte plante om in weg te kruip. Hulle bewegings is egter nie goed bekend nie, want daar is gereeld berigte van enkelinge wat in digte tuine in Pretoria opdaag en dan geruime tyd oorby.

En onthou, vleikuikens is altyd kleiner as wat mens hulle voorstel!

Die opvallendste aanduiding van die teenwoordigheid van die voël is die lae, uit-gerekte fluit vanuit een of ander digte boskassie, gewoonlik in die nag of met skemer, of tydens mistige of reënerige omstandighede. Hulle klim dikwels in 'n boom of struik om te roep. Voëls wat besig is om te roep is gewoonlik baie kalmer as voëls doenig op die woudfloer, en veral snags kan hulle redelik maklik met behulp van 'n flitslig gesien word.

'n Ander metode om hulle op te spoor is om stadig en stil deur die woud te loop en te luister vir enige krap- of skarrelgeluid. Nege kere uit tien is dit net 'n Boskrapper [Terrestrial

Brownbul], maar as jy gelukkig is kan jy beloon word met 'n paartjie van hierdie vet vleikuikens wat versigtig deur die plante werk.

Mens het waarskynlik 'n beter kans om die voëls op te spoor langs die platorand (Sabie, Graskop, Barberton, Magoebaskloof, woude naby Wakkerstroom, ens.) of in KwaZulu-Natal, waar hulle dwarsdeur die provinsie voorkom – daar is selfs 'n paar beroemde plekke in Durban!

Om na opnames van die voël te luister: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Sarothrura-elegans>

Rooiborssuikervoël/Gurney's Sugarbird

Die Rooiborssuikervoël is maklik om te identifiseer, en is gewoonlik opvallend in die gebiede waar hulle voorkom.

In die somer is die suikervoëls in suikerbosse [proteas] te vind langs die oostelike platorand. Een so 'n plek is die Long Tompas. Wanneer die kruin van die pas van die Lydenburgse kant genader word is daar 'n groepie wabome aan die linkerkant van die pad. 'n Paar suikervoëls kan gereeld hier gesien word. Nog 'n goeie plek is die Steenkampsbergpas, tussen Roosenekal en Lydenburg, waar die voëls ook in goeie stande suikerbos gekry kan word.

In die wintertyd trek hierdie voëls na laer lokaliteite, en word dan maklik by aalwyne gesien. Een so plek is die klein dorpie Kaapsehoop, wat sowat 30 km suidwes van Nelspruit geleë is. Net 'n paar meter van die huise af is daar geërodeerde sandsteenriwwe waarop daar heelwat kransaalwyne groei. Hier kan die voëls maklik besigtig word.

Om na opnames van die voël te luister: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/explore?query=gurney%27s+sugarbird>

Kaapse Kapokvoël/Cape Penduline-tit

Hierdie spesie is veral bekend vir die unieke ontwerp van hulle neste. Hulle kom wydverspreid deur die droër dele van Suid-Afrika voor, maar kan taamlik onopvallend wees. Dit is ons naaskleinste spesie, en die klein



Tamsyn Sherwill

Gurney's Sugarbird/Rooiborssuikervoël

grootte en hulle gewoonte om energiek rond te beweeg maak dit maklik om hulle te mis, of vir 'n ander spesie aan te sien. Al het hulle nie 'n luide roep nie, blyk juis die roep tog om die beste leidraad van hulle aanwesigheid te wees. Dit klink na "tslik", en daar is nie werklik enige soortgelyke roep in die bosveld nie.

In ons omgewing verkies hulle dikwels die droogste doringboombosveld, alhoewel hulle nie hiertoe beperk is nie. Inderdaad kan hulle dan ook deur die soetdoringveld van die hele Karoo gevind word, waar hulle makliker is om op te spoor as in ons omgewing. Hulle is ook ietwat nomadies, want mens kry hulle partymaal vir weke sonder probleme in dieselfde area, en dan verdwyn hulle skielik vir maande. Wanneer hulle nie broei nie kom hulle in klein groepies voor.



Wilfred Doucette

Cape Penduline-tit/Kaapse Kapokvoël (used under CC BY)



*Black-winged Lapwing/Grootswartvlerkkiewiet
(used under [CC BY](#))*

Iemand wat deur die droë doringveld van die Rust de Winter reservaat sou voetslaan, waar die geraas van 'motor jou nie hinder nie, sal hulle kort voor lank teëkom. In Oktober 2002, tydens die Klub se 50-jarige bestaansvieringe, is 'n paar nesboudendes opgespoor in die Buffelsdrif Bewarea. Weens hulle gedeeltelike nomadiese aard is dit egter moeilik om hulle in 'n spesifieke area te gaan vind. Behalwe die plekke wat reeds genoem is word hulle redelik gereeld aangeteken op plekke soos Ditholo, Tswaing en langs die Zaagkuildrifpad.

Lees verder oor die Kaapse Kapokvoël se besondere nes: <https://namibiaoutdoor.com/a-false-entrance-to-the-cape-penduline-tits-nest/>

Om na opnames van die voël te luister: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/explore?query=cape+penduline+tit>

Black-winged Lapwing/ Grootswartvlerkkiewiet

The first thing about finding this bird is to be in its habitat, in the area of its distribution. North of the Vaal River it occurs in high-lying areas in the east, in short and burnt grassland. Further south they can be found down to the coast, especially the Eastern Cape coast. They are known to move away from some high-lying areas during winter (especially in KZN) down to grasslands on the coast. In its typical habitat it can be remarkably inconspicuous, and can also

easily be brushed aside as yet another Crowned Lapwing [Kroonkiewiet].

It generally occurs in small numbers, is never common, and is unpredictably nomadic within its range. But they can form loose flocks out of the spring breeding season and up to 60 birds have been seen in a flock near Wakkerstroom, together with Crowned Lapwing. Therefore, all large groups of Crowned Lapwing should be checked!

The bird shows substantial amounts of white around the face, especially on the forehead, although this is not necessarily a very good identification feature. It also has red legs like Crowned Lapwing and the plumage looks dark from a distance. It is rather similar to the Senegal Lapwing [Kleinswartvlerkkiewiet], but the habitat and distribution do not overlap.

The call is fairly high-pitched when compared to the familiar calls of Crowned and African Wattled Lapwing [Lelkiewiet].

The best areas to look for this bird in our region are in the Wakkerstroom district and near Dullstroom, where they can be looked for in the Verloren Vallei Nature Reserve. It has also been seen in the Sheepmoor district, near the border with Swaziland.

To hear recordings of this bird: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/explore?query=black-winged+lapwing>

Corn Crane/Kwartelkoning

Crakes are notoriously tricky to identify, painstakingly tricky to find and devilishly tricky to see! Corn Crakes are no exception! Perhaps the only compensation to birders is that this variety prefers dry or only slightly moist habitats, sparing us the customary waist-deep wading in pungent swamps normally necessary to see crakes. What complicates the matter is that one is normally presented with only a few seconds of observation as the bird unexpectedly flushes from underfoot with an explosive, low and erratic flight before disappearing into denser cover, where it is almost impossible to flush a second time. Also they are silent on the non-breeding grounds in

Africa (although recent observations from our area suggest that nocturnal calling does occur on completion of moult, prior to migration). The scientific name (*Crex crex*) describes their strange, rasping calls.

Arrival is mostly in midsummer and departure around the beginning of April. During this period, the birds occupy a variety of moist grassland types, which includes upland grasslands, old agricultural fields, *Eragrostis* meadows, edges of wetlands and other waters. Although not always the case, they are often attracted to areas within the grassland habitat that are shallowly flooded – i.e., a temporary rainwater puddle or muddy drainage ditch.

When put to flight, rich rusty-orange wings are revealed which are diagnostic and conspicuous. The colouring of the upperparts is a pale sandy brown, with a variety of dark blotches and spots. A thin, white margin on the leading edge of the wing is sometimes visible. The bird has a very scrawny, elongated appearance in flight, accentuated by the dangling legs – one observer accurately remarked that it looks like a severely squashed francolin! Instead of flying to safety, two other strategies that are employed are to run swiftly away from danger or to remain motionless, relying on its excellent camouflage.



Corn Crane/Kwartelkoning (used under [CC BY](#))

Unfortunately, the nomadism of this species makes it very hard to predict a specific locality to visit in search of Corn Crakes. They can appear in very unusual places and be absent from areas with seemingly excellent habitat. Apart from this, this species seems to be prone to irruptions, being more abundant in some years (e.g. summer 2002/03). Present records suggest that it occurs most regularly in the southern Drakensberg foothills, central Lowveld and around Gauteng. Remember that this species is classified as 'Vulnerable' and disturbance should be kept to a minimum.

To hear recordings of this bird: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/explore?query=corn+crake> 🐦

Unexpected birding benefits of camping

Ivonne Coetzee

We both retired at the end of 2015 and have been enjoying our new life. We joined BLNG, went on some enjoyable and informative excursions with the club (These BLNG people know so much! Can ID birds by song and flight!) and I added several lifers to my list, due to the outstanding patience of the senior club members who took me under their wing, so to speak.

A highly anticipated benefit was to be able to book holidays out of season. I was in teaching before and we had always seemed to be on the roads and on costly holidays right

in the midst of the maddening crowds. But no more. We visited the Wild Coast parks twice, drove exciting mountain passes in the Karoo and visited the Western Cape and northern KZN several times. But the cost of accommodation was still a serious drain on our holiday budget, even out of season. This is why we decided to dust off our long-forgotten camping gear, as the cost of camping comes to about 10–25% of booking a chalet.

Our first camping trip in 20 years, in February 2018, was to the far north, an



Our camp in Mazhou

All photos: Ivonne Coetzee



Grey-headed Kingfisher /Gryskopvisvanger



Southern Carmine Bee-eater /Rooiborsbyvreter

area where before we had never ventured. We started off with a week in Mazhou in Mapungubwe National Park. Mazhou is situated amongst the riverine forest on the banks of the Limpopo. The campsite was lush and green after lots of rain, and while we were prepared to brave high temperatures to get my target birds, it never went above 30°. We were the only campers there for 4 days (sheer bliss!),

were woken up by lions about 200 m from the tent (there is no proper fence, just an electrified strand of wire against elephant), and we saw leopard there as well. But the birdlife was fascinating – because of the quiet all sorts of wonderful birds came to visit the camp area at our tent. Camp-chair birding – our new hobby! Both Levillant's and Jacobin Cuckoo [Gestreepte- en Bontnuwejaarsvoël] came to visit, Great Spotted Cuckoo [Gevlekte Koekoek] and Kori Bustard [Gompou] were on the road close to camp, and I could also add Grey-headed Kingfisher [Gryskopvisvanger] and Southern Carmine Bee-eater [Rooiborsbyvreter] to my list. An African Barred Owllet [Gebande Uil] screeched and flew to another perch when the Venter's lid slammed too loudly, and I could locate it sitting, miffed, up in a Mahonie tree. Another tick! Meve's Starling [Langstertglanspreeu] and all sorts of shrikes and raptors abounded, and I was happy to add Dark Chanting Goshawk [Donkersingvalk] to my list.

We usually celebrate my husband's birthday, end of May, in the Kruger and far prefer the north to the south, Punda Maria being our favourite. The birdlife is unsurpassable and while game might not be as abundant (though we saw four of the Big Five and all other game you might think of during each visit there), cars and people also are scarce. The waterhole next to the camp draws both big game and small, and is a spectacle night and day, being floodlit at night.

This year we decided to camp in Punda Maria instead of again booking a chalet. I carefully studied the Kruger National Park section of 'Southern African Birding – Birding Resources for Southern Africa' (<http://wiki.sabirding.co.za/Kruger.ashx>) to see where we should look for our target birds. But almost no need – the birdlife right at our tent was spectacular! We did not see a fraction of these birds in the past when staying in Punda's chalets, compared to the exciting species that visited our camping spot this year. We did pick a quiet spot without electricity as far as possible from the busy waterhole, and there was a gully with some water close by where birds loved to take a bath. Bearded Scrub

Robin [Baardwipstert], "Secretive and seldom seen... keeping to dense cover" (according to *Roberts Birds of South Africa*, 1985) and Yellow-streaked Greenbul [Geelstreepboskruiper] were daily visitors, metres from my camp chair. Yellow-bellied Greenbul [Geelborswillie] came to clean our braai grill every morning, while both Grey-headed and Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike [Spookvoël, Oranjeborsboslaksman] also came to visit. Two tiny species, Green-capped Eremomela [Donkerwangbossanger] high up in the trees and Chinspot Batis [Witliesbosbontrokkie] were always welcome. Natal Spurfowl [Natale Fisant] and Crested Guineafowl [Kuifkoptarentaal] came in the mornings to look for breakfast crumbs, and both White-browed and White-throated Robin-chat [Heuglin- en Witkeeljanfrederik] investigated the activities. Retz's and White-crested Helmet-Shrikes [Swart- en Withelmakslaksman] would chase through the camp in groups, often close on each other's heels. Meve's Starling [Langstertglansspreeu] was a regular. I was ecstatic to spot an Eastern Nicator [Geelvlaknikator] in a bird party early one morning, in the trees next to the swimming pool and near the ladies' ablutions. Next time I will carry my camera with me even when I go to shower. The waterhole next to the camp fence with its bird hide too was productive, with its resident Marabou Stork and Grey-headed Parrots [Savannepapegaaï] that came daily to drink at about 6:30. I was lucky enough to notice some Yellow-billed Oxpeckers [Geelbekrenostervoëls] riding on a buffalo's back. Needless to say, when I alerted the guys with the big lenses in the bird hide to this, a volley of shots went off... We did the beautiful Mahonie Loop twice and came upon both Blue-spotted and Emerald-spotted Wood Doves [Blou- en Groenvlekduifies] in the same tree, with the elusive Gorgeous Bush-Shrike [Konkoit] attending a bird party of Blue Waxbills [Blousysies], Green-winged Pytilia [Gewone Melba], Brown-crowned Tchagra [Roovlerktjagra], Golden-breasted Bunting [Rooirugstreepkoppie] and Jameson's Firefinches [Jamesonvuurvinkie] along the road.



Bearded Scrub Robin /Baardwipstert



Yellow-Bellied Greenbul/Geelborswillie

All photos: Ivonne Coetzee



Great Spotted Cuckoo /Gevlekte Koekoek

With so much saved on accommodation, we booked the superb bird guide, Samson Mulaudzi, for a day, with high hopes to see the Racket-tailed Roller [Knopsterttroupan], amongst others. Samson lives close to the Punda Maria Gate and we organised a date and time when he would accompany us to the Pafuri area. We picked him up there at dawn



Arnett's Chat/Bontpiek



Blue-Spotted Wood Dove /Blouvlakduifie



All photos: Ikonne Goetz

Three-banded Courser /Driebanddrawwertjie



Yellow-billed Oxpecker /Geelbekrenostervoël

one morning right after seeing a pack of Wild Dog close to the gate.

Lifers added in the Pafuri area were Double-banded Sandgrouse, Tropical

Boubou, Grey-headed Parrot, and White-crowned Lapwing [Dubbelbandsandpatrys, Tropiese Waterfiskaal, Savannepapegaai en Witkopkiewiet]. Special ticks were Arnett's Chat [Bontpiek] and though we did not see the Racket-tailed Roller (of course it was seen both on the days before and after!) or Pel's Fishing Owl [Visuil] (sat in a tree right next to the Levuvhu River bridge on the previous day), I know where to look for my elusive roller next time – close to the Pafuri Gate in the tall Mopani woodlands there.

The greatest reward of all was to be shown the Bronze-winged Courser [Bronsvlerkdrawwertjie] and the very scarce (for South Africa) Three-banded Courser [Driebanddrawwertjie] on a nest, just north of the Levuvhu river. Both these species are mostly nocturnal and/or crepuscular. Samson also shared his professional secret with me on where to find Temminck's Courser [Trekdrawwertjie] – at the scrubby, bare area just to the south of the Babalala Picnic Spot en route to Shingwedzi, which we tried the next day – but it seems to me we need his expert eyes or to be there earlier in the morning.

All in all, this was the richest birding week ever in the Kruger. I could tick 136 species in the week we were there (even though it was winter!), several lifers, but the best of all was the rich birdlife right next to our tent in the bush there, undisturbed by their human visitors. I would have given a lot to be able to stay longer. Maybe next year... 🐦

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 30 June 2019

Compiled by André Marx

This report covers the eight months ending 30 June 2019 and is a double report as time constraints meant I was not able to produce one earlier this year. It contains many sightings from around the region with several very interesting National and Regional Rarity records. Marievale Bird Sanctuary produced some cracking rarities this past summer and it is interesting to see that atlas-ing efforts are still turning up some very interesting sightings; read about the Short-clawed Lark record below. The National and Regional Rarity lists have been updated and any person interested in a copy can contact me directly; my e-mail address appears below. Due to space constraints the entire list cannot be published here. Thank you for the reports received. Please send any interesting and out-of-range records together with a photo where possible to the address given below.

National rarities / Nationale rareiteite

Crake, Spotted [Gevlekte Riethaan]

A single bird was seen at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 1 Feb 2019 (KO).

Eagle, Lesser Spotted [Gevlekte Arend]

Several birders reported one being present at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 24 Dec 2018 (GBird), with reports still received up to 30 Jan 2019. A somewhat out-of-range record for this species as it is seldom seen on the highveld in our region.

Egret, Slaty [Rooikeelreier]

One bird was found at Doghaven in the Muldersdrift area of Johannesburg, 2 Dec 2018 (T&RvW), reported until at least 5 Feb 2019. Interestingly, this species has been found at this locality on a few occasions in recent years.

Godwit, Black-tailed [Swartstertgriet]

After a long absence, one bird was recorded at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 15 Dec 2018 (WS), (photo DB). In the late 1980s and early 1990s this species was recorded almost annually at Marievale.

Harrier, Western Marsh [Europese Vleivalk]

At least one bird was at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 20 Dec 2018 (JD), and at least two, a male and female, were present in the following days when a number of observers reported seeing the birds, with occasional reports until at least 3 Mar 2019 (photo ES). Marievale is the only locality in our region where this species is recorded on an annual basis.

Wagtail, Grey [Gryskwikkie]

A single bird was found at Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden, 22 Nov 2018 (JR, DH). In the following weeks the bird remained at the site and was reported by a number of observers, erratically being presented until at least 20 Apr 2019 (photo AP). This is the third occasion in the last 25 years that this species has been reported at this locality.



Black-tailed Godwit, Marievale



Western Marsh Harrier, Marievale



Anthony Paton

Grey Wagtail, Walter Sisulu Bot Garden



John Randall

African Crane, Fochville area



Richard Hack

Corn Crane, Marievale

Regional rarities / Streeksrariteite

Brownbul, Terrestrial [Boskrapper]

A sighting of one bird in Moreletakloof NR in Pretoria is a new locality for this species, 11 Mar 2019 (RvT, PL). *This species is not known to occur within the city limits of Pretoria so this is a significant record.*

Crake, African [Afrikaanse Riethaan]

One bird was flushed from a patch of grassland adjacent to a wetland at Abe Bailey NR near Carletonville, in Pentad 2615_2720, 7 Dec 2018 (CWT).

Two birds were at a wetland south of Fochville in Pentad 2630_2725 on 31 Jan 2019 (JR), a new locality for this species.

Crake, Baillon's [Kleinriethaan]

One bird was present at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 21 Feb 2019 (MJ).

Crake, Corn [Kwartelkoning]

One bird was in an area of grassland at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 12 Feb 2019 (RF).

Curlew, Eurasian [Grootwulp]

A solitary bird at Bullfrog Pan on the East Rand in Pentad 2605_2815 was a surprise find, 1 Apr 2019 (FK).

Eagle, African Crowned [Kroonarend]

A pair of adult birds were observed in the Wilge River valley, north-east of Bronkhorstspuit, 15 Jun 2019 (MJ).

Gallinule, Allen's [Kleinkoningriethaan]

An adult female bird was ringed at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 19 Jan 2019 (AvZ). *This is a locality where this species is seldom recorded.*

Goose, African Pygmy [Dwerggans]

A small number of birds were observed at Rust de Winter Dam, 15 Dec 2018 (AH).

A pair of birds were at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, 11 May 2019 (RM). *This is a very unusual locality for this species.*

Hawk Eagle, Ayres's [Kleinjagarend]

One bird was photographed over Northcliff in Johannesburg, 3 Dec 2018 (LR).

Lark, Short-clawed [Kortklouelewerk]

A significant record came from Pentad 2525_2715, which lies south-east of Sun City near Tsitsing, on 9 Jan 2019 when a singing bird was discovered and photographed in typical habitat for this species, (PdC). *This is a new and isolated locality for the species, about 100 km east of the known distribution on the Botswana border and south of the population occurring in the Polokwane region, and may represent a relict population that occurs in the area. It also falls within the Greater Gauteng 100 km radius and is an important discovery.*

Moorhen, Lesser [Kleinwaterhoender]

A single bird was at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 1 Jan 2019 (MJ).

4 birds were at a small dam on the Sun City road in Pentad 2525_2715, 12 Jan 2019 (PH).

Two birds were at the Kgomo-Kgomo bridge, 16 Jan 2019 (TvS).

Two birds were at a farm dam in the Fochville area in Pentad 2630_2730, 21 Feb 2019 (JR).

Nightingale, Thrush [Lysternagtegaal]

One bird was singing along the Zaagkuil drift road, north of Pretoria, 12 Jan 2019 (EM); in the following days some observers managed to



Ariën van Zwiëden

Allen's Gallinule, Marievale



Lance Robinson

Ayres's Hawk Eagle, Northcliff



Pieter Hestlinga

Thrush Nightingale, Zaagkuil-drift road

obtain satisfactory views of the bird (photo PH).

Osprey [Visvalk]

A brief sighting was enjoyed of one bird at Korsmans Pan on the East Rand on 11 Nov 2018 (CVW).

Oxpecker Yellow-billed [Geelbekrenostervoël]

A single bird was at Utopia NR near Rustenburg, 10 Mar 2019 (JB). *This the first confirmed record, of a photographed bird, for the Greater Gauteng region.*

Pelican, Pink-backed [Kleinpelikaan]

One bird was at Borakalalo NR, 21 Jan 2019 (SM).

Plover, Chestnut-banded

[Rooibandstrandkiewiet]

During a CWAC count at Mkhombo Dam, one bird was found on the dam shoreline, 8 Jun 2019 (LvD).

Plover, Grey [Grysstrandkiewiet]

One bird was at Borakalalo NR on 10 Nov 2018 (LvD).

Roller, Broad-billed [Geelbektropant]

A single bird was a surprise find at Rietvlei NR, 7 Dec 2018 (GF, IL).

Sandpiper, Green [Witgatruiter]

One bird was at Waterfall Estate, Midrand, on 9 Nov 2019 (RS), where it stayed for several weeks, being reported by other birders in that time. Another bird was found at Rietvlei NR on 20 Nov 2018 where it has reliably occurred for a number of years now, (CB). *This bird was still being reported from this site in mid-January 2019.*

Swallow, Wire-tailed [Draadstertswaël]

3 birds, 2 adults and an immature, were at

Rooiwal, north of Pretoria, 25 Nov 2018 (PV). *This is an uncommon species in the region.*

Wagtail, Mountain [Bergkwikkie]

A single bird was a surprise find on the Jukskei River in Waterfall Estate, Midrand, 9 Feb 2019 (RS).

One bird was at Qôdesh, north-east of Bronkhorstspuit on the Wilge River, 6 Apr 2019 (MJ).

A pair of birds was at Hephzibah in the Wilge River valley, 15 Jun 2019 (MJ).

Waxbill, Sweet [Suidelike Swie]

A small group of birds was at Hephzibah in the Wilge River valley, north-east of Bronkhorstspuit, 15 Jun 2019 (MJ). *An uncommon and localised species in the Greater Gauteng region, found only at a few localities in the western Magaliesberg and at the locality described with this sighting.*

Woodpecker, Olive [Gryskopspeg]

One bird was in the Wilge River valley, 15 June 2019 (MJ). *A very good record for the region.*

Other interesting observations / Ander interessante waarnemings

Bustard, Denham's [Veldpou]

A sighting of one bird in the Devon area in Pentad 2625_2845 is very unusual as it represents the first SABAP2 record for the grasslands in that region, 16 Feb 2019 (CM).

Cuckoo, Great Spotted [Gevlekte Koekoek]

An interesting sighting was of one bird at the entrance to the Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden in



Sedge Warbler, Rooiwal

Roodepoort, 12 Dec 2018 (HB).

Eagle, African Hawk [Grootjagarend]

A pair of birds in Pentad 2625_2725 in the Fochville area represents a new record for the area during SABAP2, 24 Apr 2019 (JR).

Eagle, Martial [Breëkoparend]

A young bird was at the Rhino and Lion Reserve, north-west of Johannesburg, 2 Feb 2019 (JS). *This species has become increasingly scarce in the Greater Gauteng region in recent times, and can probably now be reclassified as a Regional Rarity.*

Falcon, Red-footed [Westelike Rooipootvalk]

A female bird was found near Suikerbosrand, 13 Jan 2019 (MvW), with a further sighting at this locality on 28 Jan 2019 (WS).

Another bird was seen next to the N17 highway, near Springs, 13 Jan 2019 (MJ).

One bird was at Leeukop Prison, Johannesburg, 31 Jan 2019 (AH).

Wagtail, African Pied [Bontkwikkie]

A single bird was at Emmarentia Dam, Johannesburg, 17 Apr 2019 (SC).

Wagtail, Western Yellow [Geelkwikkie]

As many as five birds were present at various times at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, first reported on 18 Nov 2018 (GBird) and seen again several times in the following weeks.

A single bird was in the fields to the north of Rooiwal Wastewater Treatment Works, north of Pretoria, 22 Nov 2018 (PV).

Warbler, Dark-capped Yellow [Geelsanger]

A sighting of one bird at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, in Pentad 2620_2830 near the

entrance of the reserve, represents another new locality for this species during SABAP2, 16 Feb 2019 (CM).

Warbler, Sedge [Europese Vleisanger]

During the club visit to Northern Farm, north-west of Johannesburg, good views were had of one bird, 16 Jan 2019 (BLNG).

One bird was well seen during another club visit, to Rooiwal Wastewater Treatment Works, north of Pretoria, 9 Feb 2019 (ND).

Observers / Waarnemers

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Andrew Hester (AH) | Anthony Paton (AP) |
| Arjen van Zwieten (AvZ) | BirdLife NG birders (BLNG) |
| Cameron Meyer (CM) | Corrie Barnard (CB) |
| Corrie Van Wyk (CVW) | Craig Whittington-Jones (CWT) |
| Dave Bentley (DB) | Dion Hobcroft (DH) |
| Estelle Smalberger (ES) | Etienne Marais (EM) |
| Felicity Kanichowsky (FK) | Gauteng Birders (GBird) |
| Gary Freeman (GF) | Helen Biram (HB) |
| Ian Louw (IL) | John Drowley (JD) |
| Jonathan Breytenbach (JB) | John Randall (JR) |
| Jonathan Sykes (JS) | Jordan Ralph (JR) |
| Krista Oswald (KO) | Lance Robinson (LR) |
| Lisl van Deventer (LvD) | Michael Johnson (MJ) |
| Myrna van Wyk (MvW) | Neithard Graf von Dürckheim (ND) |
| Paul da Cruz (PdC) | Peter Verster (PV) |
| Pieter Heslinga (PH) | Richard Flack (RF) |
| Roger Machin (RM) | Rolf Wiesler (RW) |
| Ron Searle (RS) | Rowan van Tonder (RvT) |
| Shaun Chamberlain (SC) | Shaun McGillewie (SM) |
| Thinus van Staden (TvS) | Tjaart and Rena van Wyk (T&RvW) |
| Wouter Spijker (WS) | |

This column is mainly concerned with observations of rarities and interesting sightings made in the Greater Gauteng region, defined as being 100 km from the centre of both Johannesburg and Pretoria. While the majority of records are included it is sometimes necessary to exclude some depending on whether the subject matter has already been well reported. Occasionally records are sourced from Internet reports and from SABAP2 records. Members are invited to submit details of sightings to André Marx at turaco@telkomsa.net or on 083 411-7674. 🐦

BirdLife Northern Gauteng					
<i>Laniarius</i> advertising costs (cost shown in Rands)					
Print ads	1 insert	2 inserts	3 inserts	4 inserts	
Back page	600	1000	1300	1500	full colour
Full page	400	700	950	1150	
Half page	250	400	500	675	
Quarter page	125	200	250	275	
Loose insert	300	500	650	750	
Smalls	50	90	120	140	5 lines/ad
Notes					
1. Advertiser to supply print-ready artwork					
2. Ads can be placed in alternate issues					
3. Ads must be paid in advance					
4. Ads are in black & white except back page which is in full colour					
5. For loose inserts advertiser to supply insert					
6. The committee reserves the right not to accept an advertisement					

BUFFELSDRIFT

Rust de Winter

ACCOMMODATION

R500/adult/night;

R250/child 12 years and younger/night;

Day visitors R100/person/day



BOOKINGS
Please call Donald
on 082 885 5577;

or e-mail

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