



# Laniarius

No 141 November 2019



**BirdLife Northern Gauteng**  
**BirdLife Gauteng-Noord**

# Newsletter of BirdLife Northern Gauteng Nuusbrief van BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

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## Credits

Front cover: Cape Rockjumper, Rooi Els, by Pieter Heslinga

## To order print copies / Om harde kopieë te bestel

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The cost is R75 for 3 issues.

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# From the Editor

Due to a combination of procrastination, competing deadlines, and possibly a shortage of inspiration, I only got to start writing this issue's 2-cents-worth from the editor on the last day of November – a Big Day on the SA birding calendar this year.

No, this was not written in between bouncing along dusty roads furiously ticking new species. For me, Birding Big Day is a spectator sport. Following the progress of the teams and species list on the BirdLasser BBD page is a riveting pastime (in a subtle, non-continuous sort of way, much like watching test cricket).

As with cricket and the Comrades marathon, I didn't tune in early enough to see the start, so I don't know how many teams actually began their day at midnight, but by 10 am I was amazed to see that 264 teams had already collectively logged 626 of the country's 850-odd bird species.

By midday, all five of this issue's wishbirds had been ticked: Baillon's Crake near Madiga in Limpopo (no. 149 for A Bowl of Corncrakes), Yellow Bishop in the vicinity of Sedgfield (no. 29 for Birdwatcher.co.za), Common Whitethroat near Rustenburg (no. 148 by 3 Ruffs and a Gull), Garden Warbler in the middle of Ladysmith (no. 13 for Tugela Gulls), and African Quailfinch at Rietvlei NR (no. 17 for Ruff Eastranders – who also get the prize for being one of my favourite-name teams, alongside Famous Grouses, Painted Snipers, and Bat(is)man and Robin).

Another source of fascination for the BBD online spectator is seeing how many and what birds are logged on very familiar routes, sometimes by very familiar people. For example, on BBD a few years back, a YAB team travelled a route through the Alexandria Forest and in probably just an hour or two ticked birds I have

still yet to knowingly encounter anywhere (despite having been to this very location quite a few times before).

Since I did not finish writing this piece in November, I also get to report the results of BBD 2019 here: A grand total of 663 species were logged (in 39 484 records), with congratulations due to A Bowl of Corncrakes for their record-breaking win with 325 species. Though the top 4 scores came from Limpopo and Mpumalanga, BLNGers and others did our local birding routes proud by placing 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. To put the winning total in perspective – the world's first 24-hour birding record, set in Peru in 1982, was 331 (albeit without the aid of motorized transport). The current world record, set in 2015 in Ecuador, is 431.

Though a bit of friendly competition (hopefully) never hurt anyone, the ultimate aim of BBD is to raise funds for BirdLife South Africa (around R100 000 is raised every year) while also collecting valuable atlas data. Each BBD also writes another chapter in a rather interesting multi-year story of the dedication, skill and endurance/madness of SA's birders as well as the incredible diversity of our birds.

The celebration of birdlife that is BBD also heralds the start of Summer – and the fast approaching holiday season. This year, along with three issues of *Laniarius*, has flown by. Thank you so much to everyone who sent in their stories and photos, to the sub-committee for all their contributions, and very special thanks to Drinie for making it all look so good in the end.

Wishing you a wonderful festive season and every good thing in the new year!

*Tamsyn*

# From the Chair



We have once again come to the end of another successful birding year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our members for their contributions to making BirdLife Northern Gauteng such a successful birding club.

This year has had its challenges, mainly due to the severe drought and the summer rains that have arrived very late, but also due to a steep increase in fuel prices. The birding has nonetheless been superb. The camps and outings have been well supported and most of our members has added several 'lifers' to their lists.

As a club we have been focusing our conservation activities on citizen science, specifically SABAP2 atlassing and bird ringing.

We held two atlas-focused camps where the participants atlassed the areas around Loskop Dam and Buffelsvlei Lodge near Thabazimbi. As BirdLasser is the tool that is used to log sightings, we also held two morning outings before these camps to give everyone the opportunity to get hands-on assistance in becoming skilled BirdLasser users.

The BLNG bird ringing group has continued to be a very active one, getting together at least twice a month, as well as organizing regular weekend camps.

I would like to thank all the committee and sub-committee members for their commitment, hard work and enthusiasm in bringing the club the range of activities on offer. A special thank you to all our event leaders – we are very privileged to have such excellent leaders who are always willing to share their birding knowledge and to offer up their time to run club outings.

Finally, a big 'thank you' to everyone for supporting the various club events. Please feel free to share your suggestions with the committee to help us to ensure that we continue to meet your birding expectations!

Wishing you all a wonderful festive season, and please travel safely.

Happy birding!

*Elouise*

## WELCOME TO BLNG!

Aan alle nuwe lede – baie welkom! Ons sien daarna uit om julle by ons aand-  
vergaderings, 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](mailto:secretary@blng.co.za) or 083 391 2327 if you have any queries or requests.

Karen Birkenbach (Centurion), Chris & Lynette du Toit (Highveld), Willie Victor  
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Rathgreber (Groenkloof), Wendy & David Musto (Garsfontein), Deon Oosthuizen  
(Lynnwoodrif)

# Forest birding at Mount Sheba, 9–12 August 2019

Ilse Müller

It was Women's Day – a holiday – and most of us took a leisurely drive east, dropping in at Dullstroom for breakfast or visiting Pilgrim's Rest. Some of us could just not wait – so much anticipation in the air... As we drive onto the dirt road we encounter our first bird party. Suddenly we were in the middle of the forest – beautiful tall trees all around. The lodge at Mount Sheba is a big complex, white-washed with numerous facilities, built on a slope

overlooking the forest. We are booked into three chalets, the most luxurious accommodation yet on a birding trip for me! The Knysna Turaco [Knysnaloorie] is there hopping along, welcoming us.

We all meet in the afternoon and take a slow stroll into the forest. There are numerous well-marked trails. The weather is somewhat wanting; the clouds are low and it is wet and cold.

There are 11 of us, strangers mostly, and yet the atmosphere is relaxed and friendly. We share a meal and some 'cool American music'.

On Saturday the clouds are still low, and we are late to rise. We walk along a trail north of the resort. We watch the drainage lines, listening to the Orange Ground Thrush [Oranjelyster] – only one of us is lucky enough to catch a glimpse. But soon a Sombre Greenbul [Gewone Willie] starts calling and in the distance the Narina



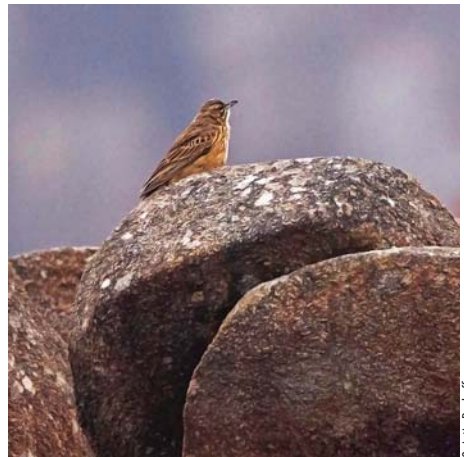
Philip Galinikos

*A grey start to Day 2*



Quintin Boshoff

*Gurney's Sugarbird /Rooborssuikervoël*



Quintin Boshoff

*Long-billed Pipit/Nicholsonse Koester*



Philip Calmicos



Philip Calmicos

Day 3

Trogon [Bosloerie]. The Bar-throated Apalis [Bandkeelkleinjantjie] is everywhere, then the Grey Cuckooshrike [Bloukatakeroe] and then the restless Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher [Bloukuifvlieëvanger]. We get to a clearing with the Southern Double-collared Sunbird [Klein-rooibandsuikerbekkie] in the proteas.

In the afternoon we drive up to the lookout point with spectacular views of the mountains around us. The Gurney's Sugarbird [Rooiborssuikervoël] is there, showing off. An African Harrier-Hawk [Kaalwangvalk] glides by. And there it is – the Long-billed Pipit



Quentin Boshoff

*Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler/  
Geelkeelsanger*

[Nicholsonse Koester]... sparking heated debates!

The next day is glorious: warm and friendly. We head again into the forest and the secret is out: Philip's favourite is the Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler [Geelkeelsanger]... There are waterfalls and amongst these magical trees the glimpse of a Chorister Robin-chat [Lawaaimakerjanfrederik], an Olive Bush-Shrike [Olyfboslaksmen] and so much more. On the way home there it is in the undergrowth – motionless – the Lemon Dove [Kaneelduifie], and high up in the tree the Terrestrial Brownbul

[Boskrapper]. In the afternoon we head to a clearing with wonderful windswept stone formations.

The Mount Sheba Nature Reserve is rightly endorsed by Birdlife South Africa as birder-friendly. We are reluctant to leave on the following day. We sneak off to look again, unsuccessfully though, for the Orange Ground Thrush. The forest and its birds have – once again – captured us!

Thank you to BLNG and to Philip Calinikos for this super event! 🐼



Philip Calinikos

*Samango Monkeys*

# Buffelsvlei atlas bash: 20–24 September 2019

Pieter Verster

**Y**ou know you have the ideal location for an atlas bash when you tell people we are going to a place 60 km northwest of Dwaalboom. Fortunately, in the modern era of GPS coordinates the 6 cars and 11 atlasers found basecamp on the Botswana border (120 km west of Thabazimbi) without too much trouble.

There were a couple of nervous smiles as people met for the first time, with most a little unsure what exactly to expect from the trip. Yes, they got numerous bits of information via e-mail and a dedicated WhatsApp group, but with D-day having arrived... will we meet the objectives and more importantly: will this be fun?

The objective of the trip was simple: Atlas as many different pentads in the 10 x 10 pentad grid created for this purpose. Henk Nel of BirdLasser kindly created the grid and all atlasers were added to the challenge area. Of these 100 pentads, 74 were accessible from the South African side. We set an objective of getting to 45 unique pentads during the trip and, as a side target, to atlas 230 unique species as

a group during this outing. The Friday evening was spent getting to know each other, sorting out housing and driving arrangements, asking questions, and learning 20 new bird sounds, of common species expected to be heard in the field over the next few days.

### Day 1: Saturday 21 September

**D**ay 2 and Day 3 of our trip had very specific pentads allocated to each car and therefore Day 1 was about getting people used to the surroundings, travelling with whoever you wanted to, and doing what atlasers do best: explore. Everybody seemed to know exactly what they wanted to do, and how they wanted to do it, and all Buffelsvlei mattresses were vacant by 05:00. Jason Boyce masterminded an A2 printout of our 74 pentads and it was with great pride that people came back after a hard day's work to put down the sticker indicating that a pentad had been done as a full-protocol card. Not even the Springboks' loss to New Zealand could dampen what had clearly become a group on a mission! The





Jason Boyce

*Caspian Plover/Asiatiese Strandkiewiet*



Jason Boyce

*Yellow-throated Sandgrouse/Geelkeelsandpatryt*

silver stickers were adding up much quicker than expected and by the end of Saturday we already had 19 of the 45 pentads done-and-dusted. Having seen how dry the conditions were out in the field and the limited water, the overall species target was reduced to what we now believed was a very challenging target of 200.

**Day 2: Sunday 22 September**

The second day's objective was the hardest, but a challenge that the six cars took in their stride. The challenge was to atlas four unique pre-allocated pentads in one day. The aim was to get as many species as possible for the four pentads together.

This presented a challenge that needed discipline as well as strategy, teamwork and a fair bit of fighting spirit as the mercury often rose into the deep 30's during the afternoon session. People quickly learnt that completing one card before going onto the next was not the best strategy as the numbers drastically reduce as the hours tick away. A strategy



*Swallow-tailed Bee-eater/Swaelstertbyvreter*

of getting one hour in at least three pentads before nine o' clock proved very fruitful. It was on this day that I realised that everybody was fully committed to the cause. In fact, when we arrived back at base camp at 17:30 and no other cars were back yet, I knew we had a very serious group of atlasers with us. Seventeen new silver stickers glittered beautifully on the battle map.

**Day 3: Monday 23 September**

If I thought people were surely going to tire by Day 3, my thoughts were quickly evaporating when we had to close the gate as the last car out. Man, these people are intense! The objective of Day 3 was a little easier: 3 pentads per car, but now people were given a list of all possible species (349) with 203 of them counting for bonus points as good species for the area. Therefore the focus had shifted a little to also try to go a bit deeper into those pentads and find some quality species. A tactic that bore serious fruit, with tantalising species such as Tropical Boubou, Marabou Stork, Short-clawed Lark, Caspian Plover, Grey-backed Sparrowlark, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Long-billed Pipit, Buffy Pipit and Tawny Eagle [Tropiese Waterfiskaal, Maraboe, Kortkloulewerik, Asiatiese



Laura Jordaan

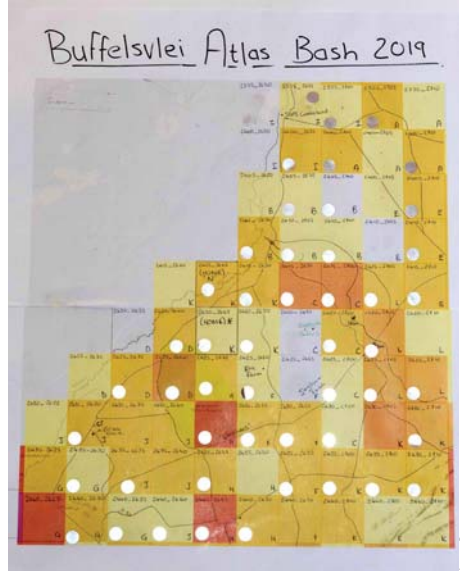
*The Buffelsvlei team*

Strandkiewiet, Grysluglewerik, Geelkeelsandpatrys, Reuse-ooruil, Nicholsonse Koester, Vaalkoester, Roofarend], to name but a few. After such a massive Day 2, I was sure people would finish Day 3 early. Thirty minutes after dark, I found myself desperately looking for cellphone reception to try to make contact with the four cars still out there. As the cars finally came back we could only give the teams a standing ovation as they made their way to the stickers. Our target of 45 pentads had been reached with a few hours on Day 4 to spare. We did however need a few more unique species to get to the group species target of 200.

**Day 4: Tuesday 24 September**

Leaving day, but unlike most trips where there are usually some sad faces, everybody was just so inspired with what had been achieved during the four days. And most cars were still planning to do one last unticked pentad en-route home.

It was a truly memorable trip, with amazing people, who worked together on a common goal, supported each other and really had an amazing time. But the true winners of this weekend were the Southern African Bird Atlas Project that with our help gathered invaluable information for an area with such limited data. A special word of thanks goes to Carien and her husband for being such kind hosts, the farmers in the area who helped us with access and then, of course, the 11 dedicated atlasers: Sheleph Burger



Jason Boyce

*The pentad map*

(with moral support from her husband Louis), Robin and Sean Naude, Andrew and Ruth Pike, Janelle and Pieter Verster, Jason Boyce, Fanie du Plessis, Laura Jordaan, and a man-of-the-match performance by Willie Victor as a last-minute replacement.

**Some interesting stats from our trip:**

- Number of unique pentads atlased: 50
- Number of unique species: 214
- Number of species recorded by all observers: 74
- Total number of records: 7 103
- Top 5 most common species: Cape Turtle Dove, Grey Go-away-bird, Fork-tailed Drongo, Cape Glossy Starling, Laughing Dove [Gewone Tortelduif, Kwévoël, Mikstertbyvanger, Kleinglansspreeu, Rooiborsduifie]
- Number of species with more than 10 recordings: 121
- Species only recorded once: 22
- Number of ORF's per observer: 10–19

# Eagle's Nest Camp: 25–27 October 2019

André Marx

The Bankenveld vegetation type in the eastern Highveld region has always fascinated me. It is a transition between highveld and lowveld, with superb higher altitude grasslands with some broadleaf woodland clumps featuring tree species such as *Burkea africana* (Wild Syringa) and *Faurea saligna* (commonly known as Transvaal Boekenhout), and spectacular cliffs and forested ravines which plunge down to the Wilge River and its tributaries. A private farm and lodge appropriately named Eagle's Nest adjoins the Ezemvelo Nature Reserve, which lies to the north-east of Bronkhorstspuit, and this was the venue for the weekend camp in late October of this year. With some trepidation I agreed to lead the camp based on what I knew from having done some birding in the surrounding area. This can be a bit tricky because you have to find interesting birds on a farm that you have never seen before, and all you can do is identify everything that crosses your path as you move around. It all worked out in the end thanks to the help of our superb hostess, Ina Narbonese, who provided useful advice about roads and habitat locations, and with the help of her farm employees such as Ben who drove us around in the lodge Landcruiser to some beautiful spots on the farm.

The birding delivered many of the specials expected for the area. Grassland areas produced Banded Martin [Gebande Oewerswael], Ant-eating Chat [Swartpiek], Cape Longclaw [Oranjekeelkalkoentjie], Long-tailed Widowbird [Langstertflap] and Cape Crow [Swartkraai], among others.

In the woodlands, thickly bushed ravines and kloofs, good sightings were enjoyed of Violet-backed Starling [Wiborsspreeu], Black-headed Oriole [Swartkopwielewaal], Streaky-headed Seedeater [Streepkopkanarie], Brown-backed Honeybird [Skerpbekheuningvoël], Bar-throated Apalis [Bandkeelkleinjantjie],

Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike [Oranjeborsboslaksman], Black Cuckooshrike [Swartkatakeroe], as well as the sought-after and beautiful Swee Waxbill [Suidelike Swie], a special bird for the Greater Gauteng area.

The rock formations around the lodge and cliff areas produced many interesting birds, including Mocking Cliff Chat [Dassievoël], Lazy Cisticola [Luitinkintkie], Cape Rock Thrush [Kaapse Kliplyster], African Black Swift [Swartwindswael] and Alpine Swift [Witpenswindswael], as well as the superb Striped Pipit [Gestreepte Koester], which could be located whenever it was making its strident call from a prominent position on a rock or ledge.

One afternoon a pair of Verreaux's Eagles [Wikruisarend] soared above the lodge at tree height; it was a wonderful sighting. In fact, raptors played a big role during the weekend, with African Harrier-Hawk [Kaalwangvalk] being observed in both juvenile and adult plumage, a good look at an Ovambo Sparrowhawk [Ovambosperwer], and a fly-past of the seldom-seen Peregrine Falcon [Swervalk]. The best sighting of the weekend for most of the group came during a descent down a



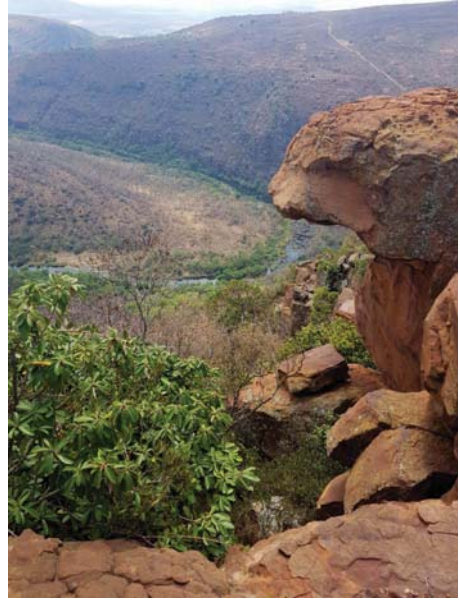
Sheleph Burger

*Eagle's Nest birders*

forested ravine (there were a few interesting and challenging walks down mountains during the weekend), when a large, dark raptor flashed out of the forest and went and sat in a tree on the side of a hill. We soon established that it was none other than a beautiful adult African Crowned Eagle [Kroonarend]! What a special sighting!

Other unexpected birds that were good for the area were Red-chested Flufftail [Rooiborsvleikuiken] and Red-faced Cisticola [Rooiwangtinkinkie], as well as Red-billed Oxpecker [Rooibekrenostervoël].

In all, nearly 120 birds were seen by the enthusiastic group of club birders – not a bad total considering there were very few water-birds encountered. This is a beautiful venue with excellent accommodation, spectacular vistas and good birding in the varied habitat that is present. Our thanks to our gracious host Ina, the supporting staff, and to Sheleph for helping with the preparation of the dinners for the group. 🐦



Sheleph Burger

Vista

# South Africa's Cape Rockjumper numbers are falling and we're not sure why

[Ben Smit](#), Senior Lecturer, Zoology and Entomology, Rhodes University

[Krista Natasha Oswald](#), PhD candidate Department of Zoology and Entomology, Rhodes University

### Disclosure statement

- *Ben Smit receives funding from National Research Foundation, Nelson Mandela University and Rhodes University.*
- *Krista Natasha Oswald receives funding from Rhodes University, BirdLife South Africa, Tygerberg Bird Club, and the Animal Behavior Society. She is a PhD student at Rhodes University.*

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The [Cape Rockjumper](#) (*Chaetops frenatus*) is a bird found only high in the mountains of south-western South Africa – and its days may be numbered.

While initial population estimates were around 90 000 individuals this has recently changed to between 30 000 and 60 000. It's listed as Near Threatened on the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#).

One reason may be that the bird's preferred habitat, [mountain fynbos](#), is dwindling as a result of a [warming climate](#). Future climate scenarios say the Cape Rockjumper's habitat may decrease by [62% by 2085](#).

But our ongoing [research](#) suggests the reasons for the decline might be more complex. Understanding this properly could be important for other species internationally too. It may be possible to slow or stop population declines.

Cape Rockjumpers live in small groups of two to five individuals defending large territories (up to 20 hectares), with only the dominant pair breeding. Both male and female in the dominant pair share parental duties.

Birders place a high value on spotting Rockjumpers, partly due to the challenge of finding them, but also because of their evident personality and entertaining social interactions. The attractiveness of the more brightly plumaged [male](#) adds to their flair.

### Climate warning

Our initial [research](#) showed that Rockjumpers need a fair bit of water to cool down during hot weather, more so than your typical songbird living in warm environments. Although they seem well equipped to handle the odd summer heatwave in their mountain habitats, they may run the risk of dehydrating if they cannot find enough water-rich food such as insects or drinking water during the dry summers that persist over the Cape mountains.

But this alone seems unlikely to be the main reason why Rockjumpers are struggling in a warming world as extreme heat is still quite rare in the high mountain peaks. Warmer climates must be affecting some other aspect of Cape Rockjumper life.

Feeding behaviour could be one. This has been seen in other bird species. Warmer temperatures mean birds become less efficient at meeting their daily food needs, leading to mass loss in [adult Southern Pied Babblers](#) and [nestling Southern Fiscals](#). These species live in hotter habitats than the Rockjumper.



Pieter Heedinga

Cape Rockjumper/Kaapse Bergglyster

Predation is another. It's known that ground-nesting birds such as the Rockjumper face [high rates of attack from ground predators](#). For example, we were shocked to find only one survivor from 20 nests during the 2017 breeding season. Given that Cape Rockjumpers lay two eggs per nest, this was a dismal 5% success rate. Previous data found Cape Rockjumpers fledged [between 19% and 67% over a three-year study](#).

Nest predation came from Honey Badgers (*Mellivora capensis*), Cape Grey Mongoose (*Galerella pulverulenta*) and, on one occasion, ants. But Boomslang (*Dispholidus typus*), a venomous, bird-eating snake native to sub-Saharan Africa, was the biggest threat. If temperatures are warmer than usual early in the Cape Rockjumpers' breeding season, snakes may become active earlier in the year, and attacks may become more common.

We are still in the process of [monitoring](#) other possible effects of warmer temperatures. For example, whether parents provide less food for their young in the surviving nests when temperatures are high.

Another relevant factor in population declines could be diminishing "sky islands". Individual mountain ranges with Cape Rockjumper populations are separated by inhospitable valleys of [semi-desert Karoo](#) of up to 30 km. These valleys are likely to get wider due to warming temperatures which is leading

to cooler Fynbos habitat retreating up the slopes of mountains.

Cape Rockjumpers are able to take short gliding flights, but seem reluctant to embark on sustained flight. This means they would have to “hop and skip” across these valleys. It’s not yet known whether Rockjumpers have the ability to trek across these valleys – which are often transformed by farms – in search of higher mountains.

The continued shrinking of suitable cool habitats for other alpine animals such as the *Pika*, a close relative of rabbits that lives in mountainous areas of North America and Asia, means that populations are becoming less able to reach each other to interbreed. Smaller populations are more at risk of inbreeding and extinction, irrespective of how they can cope directly [with hotter temperatures](#).

### Management strategy for the future

What can environmental managers do about the decline in Rockjumpers?

The main avenues for intervention are fire management and conserving possible routes the birds could use to move between mountain ranges.

For Rockjumpers, fire is a good thing, as they thrive on recently burned vegetation. The highest density of the birds at our [main study site](#) occurred three years after fire.

While most land-owners understand that fynbos requires frequent fire to [maintain its health](#), there are still some areas where fires aren’t allowed.

In the longer term the future of Cape Rockjumpers depends on doing more research, and integrating it with decision making. 🐦

## Birds, bats and wind farms

Jenny Bester

The supply of renewable energy has become an urgent necessity due to global climate change. Wind farms are a ready source of renewable energy but are a contentious issue as they are reported to be associated with a high mortality of birds and bats.

Wind power has been used since time immemorial, when it filled the sails of early sailing boats. The first mechanical device recorded was in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD when a Greek engineer invented a machine to power a wind-driven wheel. By the 7<sup>th</sup> century wind wheels were to be found in Iran, where they were used to grind corn, and by the 10<sup>th</sup> century in China and Sicily. It was not until 1887 that the first wind turbine was produced by a Scotsman, James Blyth. He used the electricity to power the lights in his cottage and offered the surplus to the local village for lighting the main street. However, they turned down the offer as they thought electricity was ‘the work of the devil’.

During the previous century the production of greenhouse gases rose to such an extent that concerns were raised about global warming, and at present it seems that those concerns are being realised. This century has seen increasing temperatures and violent weather conditions, together with the melting of the polar icecaps. Renewable energy has become an imperative.

And so to wind farms, one of the cheapest alternatives for energy production. As inexpensive as they are, they come with a distinct disadvantage. They cause the deaths of birds and bats.

Early wind farms built in California’s Altamont Pass killed an estimated 1 300 birds of prey a year, including many members of the world’s largest population of Golden Eagles. Other investigations found that passerines were harmed and that there was habitat loss and fragmentation. Offshore wind farms in Europe and Asia were shown



*Pot of gold, used under CC BY 2.0 [Robert Couse-Baker]*

to decimate bird populations, particularly migrating species. Bats were killed as they were sucked into the vortexes caused by the blades of the turbines of wind farms. Bats are important pollinators and over 500 plant species rely on them to pollinate flowers found mainly in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Bats also control harmful insect populations.

Despite these negative observations, scientific studies have shown a slightly different picture. A Canadian study published in 2013 showed an average of 8.2 bird deaths per tower per year. There was a habitat loss of 1.23 hectares per turbine, which resulted in a loss of 1.9 nesting sites per turbine. The study concluded that the effect on birds was 'relatively small'. Another study in the United Kingdom conducted by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds concluded that 'available evidence suggests that appropriately positioned wind farms do not pose a significant hazard for birds'.

A comparison of the causes of bird deaths globally may cause some surprise. Table 1 shows the results of a preliminary study of the annual causes of avian mortality in the United States.

**Table 1**  
**Avian mortality in the United States**  
**(Adapted from Sovacool, BK (2013).**  
**Renewable Energy 49: 19–24)**

Source	Estimated mortality (millions)
Wind turbines	0.2–0.57
Aircraft	0.08
Nuclear power plants	0–0.33
Oil fields	0.50–1
Communication towers (cellular, radio, microwave)	4–50
Large communication towers (>180 ft.)	6.8
Fossil fuel power plants	14
Cars and trucks	50–100
Agriculture	67
Pesticides	72
Hunting	100–120
Transmission cables	174–175
Buildings and windows	365–988
Domestic and feral cats	210–3 700



Andy Miccone

### *Killing machine*

These figures show that wind power is relatively innocent and, rather shockingly, that our adored pussy cats are the major threat to our bird populations! The fossil-fuelled power stations that produce most of our electricity cause many times more deaths than wind power. Nuclear power appears relatively benign but its inherent dangers have caused Italy to close down all its stations and Germany to begin a closure programme that should be complete by 2022. Many other countries are following suit. There are records of the concentrated beams of power in solar farms causing considerable damage to bird populations but scientific data are not yet available. The smaller roof-top solar panels appear to cause less damage, and in this case, conversely, the droppings of birds damage the panels. Hydroelectric power is an additional alternative but may prove to be an unreliable source of energy at a time of climate change.

A further positive is the advances in the design of wind turbines. Initially the lattice blades used were problematic as was their height, speed and size but this has been corrected over a period of time. More important is a change in the location of the farms. Today, best practice requires that wind farms are only established where bird densities are at their lowest, away from migration routes and endangered species. There is also evidence that the birds themselves assist, as they change their migration routes to avoid the wind farms. Who said birds are not intelligent! In the case of bats,

microwave transmitters attached to the turbine help to mitigate bat collisions, as does stopping the turbines during low wind conditions when bats are most active.

But what of South Africa? This is a country ideal for wind farms with its huge land area and long coastline. The first wind farm in South Africa became operational in 2014 but further significant progress was hampered by a delay in the finalisation of government's Integrated Resource Plan and by Eskom's refusal to sign new power purchase agreements. Despite these setbacks, by 2018 there were 25 operational wind farms with 961 turbines, mostly in the Eastern Cape Province, and there are now many more in the planning stage. These advances have not come without problems. The future of the critically endangered Bearded Vulture, as well as the endangered Cape Vulture, is threatened by the proposed [Letšeng-La-Terae wind farm in Lesotho's Maloti-Drakensberg](#). In the Eastern Cape the proposal for the Inyanda/Roodeplaat wind farm was [recently returned to the Department of Environmental Affairs for re-evaluation](#) after objections from organisations such as BirdLife South Africa, the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and the Wilderness Foundation Africa. The planned situation of this wind farm lies between three portions of the Groendal Nature Reserve and the surrounding Groendal Wilderness Area protected under the National Forestry Act. Populations of birds of prey such as Verreaux's Eagles (*Aquila verreauxii*), Black Harriers (*Circus maurus*) and Martial Eagles (*Polemaetus bellicosus*) [Witkruisarend, Witkruisvleivalk, Breëkoparend] are all threatened by the presence of wind turbines. Possible political influence in the granting of the initial Environmental Authorisation for the project is suspected.

As with all technologies and developments, there are important choices to be made in their implementation and siting that effect their overall environmental risk and impact. Proposals for wind farms can only be judged on a case-by-case basis, and based on recent and reliable data. Even a low risk from poorly sited



turbines can be devastating to populations and species already in decline and facing a range of other challenges.

The South African Government's recently published Integrated Resource Plan (IRP2019) expresses the intention for wind to deliver 18% of the country's electricity by 2030, which, according to an [article by Fin24](#), equates to the construction of around 5 000 new large wind turbines in the next decade. Given that there have already been apparently irresponsible applications for the siting of wind farms,

continued vigilance on behalf of the environment, and particularly vulnerable raptor populations, is required.

Despite these problems, progress in South Africa's programme for renewable energy is welcomed. It is to be hoped that a combination of solar and wind energy can take South Africa into a low-carbon future.

Also see: BirdLife South Africa's report on the [impacts of wind energy on birds](#), and position statement on [wind energy facilities](#) (and on [feral and domestic cats](#)). 🐈

## Ringershoekie

### BLNG Ringgroep

#### Pretoria Botaniese Tuin klubring: 1 Junie 2019

**V**yf ringers het vroegoggend by die Botaniese Tuin ontmoet onder leiding van Marina Pienaar. Ons het 154 voëls gevang waarvan 27 hervangste was (17.5%). 24 spesies is gering. Oulike spesies was soos volg: Grysneushoringvoël [African Grey Hornbill], Geelblestinker [Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird], Witpensuikerbekkie [White-bellied Sunbird], Gewone Melba [Green-winged Pytilia], Bosveldstompstert [Long-billed Crombec] en Gewone Tarentaal [Helmeted Guineafowl].

#### Bushtrails ringkamp: 14–17 Junie 2019 (Leier: Elba Swart)

**O**p 14 Junie het Elba Swart, Paula en Martin Steyn, Johan de Jager en Arrie Klopper, sy vrou en twee dogters, na Bushtrails ringkamp vertrek. Hulle het 173 voëls gevang waarvan 16 hervangste was (9.2%). Oulike spesies was Afrikaanse Naguil [Fiery-necked Nightjar], Geelblestinker [Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird], Grootheuningwyser [Greater Honeyguide], Gevlekte Lyster [Groundscraper Thrush], Donker- en Vaalkoester [Plain-backed and Buffy Pipit], Oranjekeelkalkoentjie [Cape Longclaw], en Klipstreepkoppie [Cinnamon-breasted

Bunting]. Die verrassing van die naweek was 'n Zebra-vinkie (moontlik 'n ontsnapping uit 'n hok uit).

#### Voortrekkermonument: 6 Julie 2019 (Leier: Marina Pienaar)

**D**rie A-ringers – Marina Pienaar, Martin en Paula Steyn, en een C-ringer – Arrie Klopper, het die koue trotseer en om 05:15 by die Voortrekkermonument bymekaar gekom. Hulle het 58 voëls gevang waarvan



Francie O'Brien

*Ringopleiding in die winter: Chris du Plooy is aan die woord. Vlnr sit Johan Snyman, Arrie Klopper en Madeleen van Loggerenberg*

Wanda du Plooy



Arrie Klopper met 'n Kleinsingvalk. Dit is deur Stefan van Stuyvenberg in 2009 gering.

Wanda du Plooy



Madeleen met 'n lifer –'n Bloukatakeroe

8 hervangste was (13.8%). Oulike spesies was: Kwêvoël [Grey Go-away-bird], Bosveldstompstert [Long-billed Crombec], Swart-suikerbekkie [Amethyst Sunbird], Streepkopkanarie [Streaky-headed Seedeater] en 9 Kleinglanspreeus [Cape Glossy Starling].

**Ringergroep opleiding: 20 Julie 2019 (Eastside Community Church, Moreletapark)**

Twintig ringers het die opleidingsessie bygevoon, asook drie C-ringers. Die program het die volgende ingesluit:

- Vordering met die identifikasiesleutels: Johan de Jager – vuurvinkies, sangers en koesters; Lucia Lötter – rooivinke, kweleas en flappe; Martin Steyn – tinkinkies; Marie Ueckermann – vlieëvangers

- Afmetings: Johan de Jager – algemeen; Paula Steyn – suikervoëls

**Bishopvoëlpark: 3 Augustus 2019**

Marina Pienaar het hierdie ringgeleentheid met Tshwane vir ons gereël. Die voëlpark is ideaal vir voëlkyk en -ring. Daar is skoon toilette wat die Vriende van Bishoppark in stand hou en dit is veilig daar. Ons het 116 voëls in die nette gekry, waarvan 16 verskillende spesies. Mooi spesies was Grootheuningwyser [Greater Honeyguide], Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern Boubou], Jamesonse Vuurvinkie [Jameson's Firefinch] en Bergkanarie [Black-throated Canary]. Die Swartkeelgeelvinke [Southern Masked Weavers] het al hulle somer verkleed aan en ons het 41 van hulle gering.

**Honingnestkranz: 9 Augustus 2019**

Elf A-ringers en vier C-ringers het op Vrouedag 'n nuwe plek gaan ontgin. Dit is op Lente se plot net noord van Bon Accorddam naby Pyramid. Daar is 'n dam naby, waar die visvangers wat ons gekry het vandaan kom. Ons het 113 voëls hanteer, waarvan 22 verskillende spesies. FC Bothma van ons groep het al voorheen hier gering, so ons het 7 voëls gekry wat reeds gering was. Hervangspersentasie was 6.2%. Die verrassing van die oggend was 'n spesiale spesie – 'n Rooiassie [Orange-breasted Waxbill] wyfie. Ander spesies was Kuifkopvisvanger [Malachite Kingfisher], Bruinkopvisvanger [Brown-hooded Kingfisher], Gestreepte Wipstert [White-browed Scrub Robin], Grysrugkwêkwêvoël [Grey-backed Camaroptera], Rooivlerktjagra [Brown-crowned Tchagra] en Bosveldstompstert [Long-billed Crombec].

**Moreletakloof NR: 17 Augustus 2019**

Dertien A-ringers en sewe C-ringers het die lente weer geniet op hierdie lieflike dag. Hein Bantjes het die groep gelei. Die totaal vir die oggend was 291 voëls gehanteer, waarvan 41 reeds vroeër gevang is. Die groot getal is opgemaak deur 133 Swartkeelgeelvinke [Southern Masked Weavers]. Oulike spesies vir die dag was: Grasvoël [Cape Grassbird],

Kleinheuningwyser [Lesser Honeyguide], Bontrugwewer [Village Weaver], Bergkanarie [Black-throated Canary], Bosveldfisant [Swainson's Spurfowl]. Daar was 'n paar BAIE interessante hervasgste, berig Hein:

- Ons het drie Dikbekwewers [Thick-billed Weavers] gekry en dit is interessant om te sien dat hulle almal met 4H-ringe (harde ringe) gering was, wat my vermoede bevestig dat dit op dié stadium heel moontlik die enigste een van die ringe is wat die Dikbekwewers se aanslag kan weerstaan. Jammer dat die 4H-ring in baie gevalle te groot is vir die wyfies en aangesien ons nie enige hervasgste kry nie, die ander ringe heel moontlik dit nie maak nie.
- Een van die Dikbekwewers verdien volgens my spesiale vermelding aangesien sy die eerste keer deur Janine Goosen by Strubendam gering is en nou deur Elba Swart by Moreletakloof NR hervasg is. Ek weet dit is nie noodwendig ver soos die kraai vlieg nie, maar is een van die twee hervasgste wat nie oorspronklik by Moreletakloof NR gering is nie.
- Die ander hervasg wat by 'n ander lokaliteit die eerste keer gering was, is 'n Swartkeelgeelvink [Southern Masked Weaver] wat oorspronklik deur Marié gering is by die Pretoria Botaniese Tuin en nou deur Wanda by Moreletakloof NR hervasg is.
- Daar is 'n hele paar voëls gevang wat al 'n hele paar jaar gelede vir die eerste keer gering is:
  - Oudste voël was 'n Swartoogtiptol [Dark-capped Bulbul] wat die eerste keer in 2010 deur K van Stuyvenberg gering is (2010/03/20) en deur Wanda hervasg is. Hierdie voël is al vier keer by Moreletakloof NR hervasg, wat dit ten minste 9 jaar oud maak, maar aangesien die ouderdom reeds as 'n volwasse aangeteken is, kan ons aanneem dat hierdie tiptol al ouer as dit is.
  - Die tweede oudste voël was 'n Swartkeelgeelvink-mannetjie [Southern Masked Weaver] wat ook die eerste keer in 2010 deur K van Stuyvenberg gering is



Elba Swart

*Paula Steyn is baie ingenome met haar Bloukuifvlieëvanger*



Johan van Loggerenberg

*Eina, skreeu Frik du Plooy toe die jong Olyf-boslaksman hom byt*

- (2010/11/27) en ook deur Wanda hervasg is, die eerste keer wat hy weer gevang is.
- 'n Gewone Janfrederik [Cape Robin-chat] wat ook die eerste keer deur K van Stuyvenberg gering is (2011/04/02) en deur myself hervasg is, die tweede keer wat hy weer gevang is.



Paula Steyn

*Marina Pienaar staan trots by die bakke braai-broodjies wat sy en haar span gemaak het vir aandete by Feather River*

- Nog 'n Gewone Janfrederik [Cape Robin-chat] wat ook die eerste keer deur K van Stuyvenberg gering is (2012/02/11) en nou deur Leon Lötter hervang is. Hierdie outjie word gereeld gevang en het al deur Hein, (2013/06), Janine (2017/03), Jan (2018/04), Marié (2018/09) en nou Leon se hande gegaan.
- Daar was ook 'n paar 2013-voëls: 'n Swartkeelgeelvink wyfie [Southern Masked Weaver] wat die eerste keer in 2013 deur Marietjie Jansen van Rensburg as 'n juvenile gering is (2013/07/06) en deur Wanda hervang is, die tweede keer wat sy weer gevang is, en 'n Bruinsylangstertjie [Tawny-flanked Prinia] wat



Elisa Swart

*Johan en Magdaleen Snyman sit rustig en kyk hoe die jong mense by die waterval baljaar*

deur Gert Opperman (Snr) (2013/11/02) gering is en deur Wanda hervang is, die eerste keer wat hy/sy weer gevang is.

**Wolfskruaal: 30 Augustus – 1 September 2019**

**V**yf A-ringers en vier klublede wat nog in opleiding is, het hierdie naweek meegemaak. Dit was vreeslik warm en die wind het 'n hond uit 'n bos gewaai. Die wind het die nette aanmekaar in die doringbome ingewaaai – soveel so dat menige ringer met dorings in die vingers na die werk teruggekeer het. Johan kon die Maandagoggend nie by sy werk se sekuriteitshek inkom nie – sy vingerafdruk wou nie werk nie, dit was net te vol doringgate! Die groep het 210 voëls gevang oor die drie dae, waarvan 56 hervangste was. 'n Goeie hervangspersentasie van 26,7% – 'n kwart van die voëls – is aangeteken.

Die verrassing van die naweek was 'n Kleinsingvalk [Gabar Goshawk] wat Stefan van Stuyvenberg in 2009, 10 jaar gelede, gering het, en wat Arrie nou weer gevang het. Ander spesies was: Witkoluil [Pearl-spotted Owllet], Bonthoutkapper [Acacia Pied Barbet], Grysokopkvoël [Cape Penduline-tit], Bruinkeelbossanger [Burnt-necked Eremomela] en Bontrokklaxman [Brubru].

**Pretoria Botaniese Tuin: 7 September 2019**

**O**p hierdie Saterdagoggend het sewe A-ringers en een C-ringer by die Tuin byeengekom. Die vangste was goed en die groep het met 128 voëls geëindig. Hervangspersentasie was 31.3% met die 40 voëls wat weer gevang is. Goeie spesies was Kroonkiewiet [Crowned Lapwing], Geelblestinker [Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird], Draaihals [Red-throated Wryneck] en Pylvlekkatlagter [Arrow-marked Babbler].

**Jan Cilliers-park, Groenkloof: 14 September 2019**

**S**legs vyf A-ringers het hierdie park in Groenkloof besoek. Dit was jare gelede 'n gesogte ringplek vir suikerbekkies, veral in die winter. Daar is baie aalwyne waarop

die suikerbekkies kan voer. Daar is darem 78 voëls gevang en gering, waarvan 31 Kaapse Wewers [Cape Weaver] was. Die twee hervangste was 'n verrassing: een van 2013 – 'n Kaapse Wewer wat oorspronklik deur Martin Steyn in Moreletakloof NR gering is, en een van 2015 – 'n Swartoogtiptol [Dark-capped Bulbul] wat Ryno Kemp gering het. Ander spesies was Geelbeklyster [Karoo Thrush], Swartkopwielewaal [Black-headed Oriole] en Rooivlerkspreu [Red-winged Starling].

### Feather River ringkamp, Sabie: 21–24 September 2019

Twaalf A-ringers en een C-ringer het hierdie langnaweek in die Sabie-woude, gereël deur Madeleen van Loggerenberg, deurgebring. Dit was 'n suksesvolle tyd met 515 voëls, wat 48 spesies verteenwoordig het. Die 44 hervangste het bygedrae tot 'n persentasie van 8.5%. Die woude buite Sabie bied die interessantste verskeidenheid van voëlspesies, en in groot getalle, soos Kaneelduifie [Lemon Dove] (13), Witborsduifie [Tambourine Dove] (7), Blouvisvanger [Half-collared Kingfisher] (2), Gevlekte Heuningwyser [Scaly-throated Honeyguide] (2), Swartsaagvlerkswaal [Black Saw-wing] (6), Blou- en Swartkatakoeroe [Grey and Black Cuckooshrike] (1 elk), Boskrapper [Terrestrial Brownbul] (19), Geelstreepboskruiper [Yellow-streaked Greenbul] (10), Oranjelyster [Orange Ground Thrush] (4), Lawaaimakerjanfrederik [Chorister Robin-chat] (36), Witkoljanfrederik [White-starred Robin] (39), Ruigtesanger [Barratt's Warbler] (1), Geelkeelsanger [Yellow-throated Warbler] (4), Bloukuifvlieëvanger [Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher] (7), Olyfboslaksman [Olive Bush-Shrike] (5), Kleinrooibandsuikerbekkie [Southern Double-collared Sunbird] (59), Suidelike Swie [Swee Waxbill] (4), Groenkolpensie [Green Twinspot] (3) en Olyflyster [Olive Thrush] (7).

### Rietvlei NR: 28 September 2019

Agt A-ringers het op hierdie lieflike lentedaggend by Rietvlei bymekaar gekom. Dit was baie droog in die vlei waar ons nette



Wanda du Plooy

*Nog 'n lifer vir Johan de Jager – 'n Blouvalkie wat hy op 'n bal-chatri gevang het*

opgesit het, en die voëls was maar skaars. Ons het slegs 44 voëls hanteer, waarvan 14 hervangste was (31.8%). Johan de Jager het sy bal-chatri saamgeneem en muise uitgesit vir 'n Blouvalkie wat daar naby op 'n kragdraad gesit het. Bo verwagting het hy afgekom vir die muise en kon Johan hom vang en ring. Ander spesies was Langstertflap [Long-tailed Widowbird], Koningrooibekkie [Pin-tailed Whydah], Kleinrietsanger [African Reed Warbler] en Langstertflap [Long-tailed Widowbird].

### Groenkloof NR: 5 Oktober 2019

Hierdie natuurreservaat was vir 'n geruime tyd nie beskikbaar vir ring nie. Nou het ons weer toegang gekry dmv Philip de Beer as tussenganger. Alhoewel dit baie droog is in die reservaat, het die groep tog met 84 voëls gespog, waarvan omtrent die helfte Swartoogtiptolle [Dark-capped Bulbul] was. Daar was geen hervangste nie. Lekker spesies was Goudstertspeg [Golden-tailed



Wanda du Plooy

*Frik du Plooy oorhandig sertifkate aan Lucia and Leon Lötter nadat hulle aan die vereistes voldoen het om as A-ringers by SAFRING te registreer*

Woodpecker], Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern Boubou] en Rooivlerktjagra [Brown-crowned Tchagra].

**Ringvergadering: 19 Oktober 2019**

**V**eertien A-ringers het die Saterdagoggend 09:00 by Madeleen en Johan van Loggerenberg se huis in Pretoria-Noord bymekaar gekom. Nege ringers het verskoning gemaak. Die besprekings was lewendig en

opbouend en teen een-uur het ons onder die koeltebome gaan sit vir 'n lekker bring-en-braai.

**Wonderboom NR: 26 Oktober 2019**

**V**yf A-ringers en twee C-ringers het op hierdie reënigerige oggend by hierdie bekende natuurreservaat gaan ring. Hulle het verskeie kere papnat gereën. Ten spyte van die reën het hulle tog 117 voëls gevang. Net 9 voëls is weer gevang (7.7%). Mooi spesies was: Hoep-hoep [African Hoopoe], Goudstertspieg [Golden-tailed Woodpecker], Witkeelswael [White-throated Swallow], Bruinsylangstertjie [Tawny-flanked Prinia], Witliesbosbontrokkie [Chin-spot Batis] en Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern Boubou].

**Frank Struben Voëlpark, Lynnwood: 9 November 2019**

**S**es A-ringers (Lucia en Leon Lötter, Marina Pienaar, Marié Ueckermann, Johan van Rooyen en Johan de Jager) en een C-ringer (Arrie Klopper) het hierdie weggesteekte voëlpark naby Tukkies se koshuise op dié Saterdag besoek. Dit was maar die tweede keer wat ons daar gering het. Hulle het goed gedoen met 114 voëls gevang, waarvan 11 hervangste was (9.6%). 'n Verrassing was die Spookvoël [Grey-headed Bush-Shrike] wat Johan van Rooyen gering het, en toe kry hy nog 'n Gewone Tarentaal [Helmeted Guinea-fowl] ook. Ander spesies was: Hadeda, Indiese Spreeu [Common Myna], Bruinkopvisvanger [Brown-hooded Kingfisher], Goudstertspieg [Golden-tailed Woodpecker], Hofsanger [Willow Warbler] en Gewone Fret [Bronze Mannikin].

**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.*

Con Fauconnier, Jenny Smulders, Dries du Plessis, Vera Schmidt, Martie Malan, Ronel Viljoen, Michael Heyns, Antony Cooper

# The ring-bound book owls

Johan de Jager



Erik Bergh

It all began with a very observant young upcoming birder, Reece Vermaak, who noticed an owl when he visited the Glenstantia Library at the end of September 2019. He informed the library staff and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October they noticed the owl on the building. Great was the excitement when they discovered three little owlets in the wide concrete gutter a few days later.

Watching them growing up and seeing dark clouds starting to build up with possible



Therese Els



Erik Bergh



Therese Els

deadly consequences, the staff started worrying about the little ones. As the nest is in a gutter they could see the massive amounts of water drowning these small little creatures. Therese Els, the librarian, contacted City of Tshwane Nature Conservation asking for help and advice. They wanted to know whether it was possible to lift the nest onto a dedicated platform so that water could flow underneath it. They were also worried that the owlets may



Erik Bergh



Erik Bergh



Carin Grant



Therese Etk

be harmed by the public.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, I visited the library and found the little owls stretching their wings and very alert. One was slightly smaller but all three looked healthy. We decided against any intrusion as they were showing signs of fledging. The next day, I took Martin and Paula Steyn to try to catch, weigh and ring them. We used two ladders and gently placed a mist net over

them. We also managed to catch the mother in the process.

All four birds were ringed, weighed and replaced in the nest.

Over the next few days, they were closely monitored and one morning the staff arrived to find an owlet on the ground. Thinking that maybe it had fallen, they placed it back into its nest. Later in the day, they found two owlets on the ground. The young owls started flying short distances and after a few anxious days in which they seemed to have disappeared, all three were found in a nearby tree.

However, the story doesn't stop there because the owls have become a major feature of the library. Reece was given the opportunity to name the parents, as the library plans to build a story around the family to educate young readers about owls. And a competition has been rolled out to name the offspring of Bastion and Betty (only children aged 3–13 can enter). The results will be announced, and the owlets named, at 10 am on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December, at the library's Christmas market. 🦉



## A vetted life list!

For most birders building a life list is part and parcel of their birding hobby. For some, that is what their hobby is all about – chase new species to grow their life list. Others have a more casual approach: they will add new species if they see them, but will not be too bothered if the list remains dormant. However, experienced birders will also know that, on occasion, the validity of a person's life list will be questioned, sometimes with reason, but, in my opinion, mostly unreasonably so. However, that is a debate best left for another time! But did you know that as a SABAP2 atlaser you can also build a life list: an atlas life list! And, what is even better, it is a vetted list, so people will not be able to criticise your list that easily...

I recently received a nice email from Dr Alan Lee on this topic. He writes:

When I was 12 years old and just getting into birding our family did an overland safari to the Okavango Swamps. After 2 weeks I came back with a species list of >300. That was with *Robert's 5*, and no playback, and no apps with calls. So MAYBE it was possible to get that many species, but should all those (over-enthusiastic) identifications be counted towards my life list? Today I am not so sure about all those IDs, so most probably not. That is one of the great benefits to me of using BirdLasser to submit my data to SABAP2. There are some checks and balances in BirdLasser to make sure that I do not enter birds incorrectly and then there is also the out-of-range (ORF) system to make sure that the records I entered are valid. I vaguely remember a 'lifelist' of >600 by the time I hit university. But what I can be sure of is that the 454 species I've seen so far in SA, according to the BirdLasser life list function, since I started using the app 2–3 years ago to submit my data to SABAP2, is a far better indication of what I've really seen.

How does a SABAP2 life list work? Atlasers will know that all records submitted to SABAP2 go through a vetting process. For unusual records you are required to submit motivations via the out-of-range forms process. All accepted records are assigned to your atlas profile and therefore contribute to your atlas life list. Where can you check your atlas life list? Easy. Follow these steps:

- Go to <http://sabap2.adu.org.za/>
- Click on 'Log in' at the top menu and on the next page enter your login details (if you do not know your login details, email us at [sabap2@birdlife.org.za](mailto:sabap2@birdlife.org.za)).
- Next step is to click on your name which will now appear in yellow on the top menu and then select 'My Data'.
- The next page will show a map of Southern Africa and all the pentads you have atlased. To view pentads atlased in the rest of Africa, you simply zoom out using the '+/-' symbols in the bottom right corner. There is also additional information about the number of cards you have submitted and for how many pentads.
- Below the map are more menu items to help you explore your data. For your atlas life list, select the 'Species' tab. A page with a table will load. This table contains all the species which you have seen since participating in SABAP2. In other words, your SABAP2 life list! So, as indicated above, only species which have been vetted and adjudicated will appear here. To see the total number of species recorded, scroll down and check the number of the last species in the 'Spn column'.
- Have a look at the other columns where you can view the species recorded on Full Protocol cards or on Ad Hoc cards as well as the number of times you have recorded them – see the 'FP Records' column. Clicking on the column header will quickly sort the

column making it easy to find a specific species. For example, my data list shows that I have recorded Laughing Dove 786 times while the Cape Turtle Dove is a close second at 776. Scrolling down you can also see which species you have only recorded once. The same can be done for species recorded on Ad Hoc cards.

- Clicking on the 'Latest FP' header will sort the birds in the order according to when you have last seen them.

Summary All Cards Species Species by year Pentads ORFs						
Species list (Verified records only)						
Spp	Common_group	Common_species	Genus	Species	FP records	Latest FP
1	317 Dove	Laughing	Streptopelia	senegalensis	786	2019-08-17
2	316 Turtle-dove	Cape	Streptopelia	capicola	776	2019-08-17
3	803 Masked-weaver	Southern	Ploceus	velatus	756	2019-08-17
4	84 Ibis	Habdesia	Botrychia	hagedash	744	2019-08-17
5	314 Dove	Red-eyed	Streptopelia	semitorquata	697	2019-08-17
6	245 Lapwing	Blacksmith	Vanelus	armatus	685	2019-08-17
7	545 Bulbul	Dark-capped	Pycnonotus	tricolor	678	2019-08-17
8	192 Gnatcatcher	Helmeted	Numida	melagris	644	2019-08-17
9	242 Lapwing	Crowned	Vanelus	coronatus	628	2019-08-17
10	707 Fiscal	Common (Southern)	Lanius	collaris	588	2019-08-17

**Table of species seen during SABAP2 with the species seen the most at the top**

However, many birders not only keep a life list, but also a year list – a list of all the species seen in a year. You can also get such a list off the SABAP2 website.

- Click on the 'Species by year' menu item under the map.
- The first row shows you how many species you have recorded in each calendar year since the project started. Note that these records are only for species recorded on Full Protocol cards.
- If you click on a column header of a year, for example '2019', it will sort the species according to the number of times you have seen the species in the calendar year. An easy way to find which species you have not seen is to have a look at the species with a zero against them. However, this only compares the sightings against your previous years, so be careful how you use the data.

Summary All Cards Species Species by year Pentads ORFs									
Species sightings by year ( Full Protocol, verified records only)									
Spp	Common_group	Common_species	Genus	Species	2019	2018	2017	2016	
1	0 Total	Species	Pir	Year	378	464	406	506	
2	317 Dove	Laughing	Streptopelia	senegalensis	61	86	45	68	
3	316 Turtle-dove	Cape	Streptopelia	capicola	55	97	57	74	
4	245 Lapwing	Blacksmith	Vanelus	armatus	51	72	50	67	
5	545 Bulbul	Dark-capped	Pycnonotus	tricolor	51	75	38	75	
6	84 Ibis	Habdesia	Botrychia	hagedash	50	68	55	82	
7	803 Masked-weaver	Southern	Ploceus	velatus	49	83	47	60	

**Table of species seen per year. Only the columns for 2016-2019 is shown, but you can get this data from 2007 when the project started**

So, while the atlas project is first and foremost about collecting quality bird distribution data which can be used for conservation purposes, you can also use your data profile to keep track of your own life list!

Enjoy your atlasng!  
 Ernst Retief  
 BirdLife South Africa

## More sightings of leucistic birds

Henk Smit submitted these photos of a leucistic Magpie Shrike [Langstertlaksman] taken at Cynthiavale smallholdings, Pretoria, on 27 July.

Pieter Heslinga photographed a leucistic Greater Blue-eared Starling [Groot-blouoorglansspreeu] at Skukuza on 25 September. 🐦



Henk Smit

Magpie Shrike/  
Langstertlaksman



Pieter Heslinga

Greater Blue-eared Starling/  
Groot-blouoorglansspreeu



Henk Smit



Pieter Heslinga

### Hoe oud word 'n kleinerige voëltjie?

Twee jaar? Of vyf jaar? Nee, NEGE JAAR! Ek het 'n Swartoogtiptol vanjaar by Moreletakloof NR gevang, wat vir die eerste keer in 2010 gering is deur Mnr D van Stuyvenberg. Daarna is dit vier keer weer gevang – 2013, weer 'n keer in 2013, 2015 en nou weer in 2019. Dit gaan goed met hierdie Swartoogtiptol en dit is nog gesond!

Volgens 'n artikel wat ek nou net ontvang het, word die Swartoogtiptol baie ouer as die nege jaar wat ek aangeteken het: 14 jaar, 10 maande en 15 dae. Dit kom uit die joernaal *Bothalia* (Paijmans, DM, Rose S & Oschadleus HD (2019) Using large-scale citizen science ringing data as a means of calculating maximum longevity in birds. *Bothalia* 49 (1) a3489. <https://doi.org/10.4102/abc.v49i1.2389>)

**Wanda du Plooy**

# A morning bird-walk on the Waterfall estates (Saturday, 3 August)

Ron Searle

A 6:45 start was not particularly early or bitterly cold so I was not surprised to receive a greeting in the form of the repetitive call of a couple of Orange River Francolins [Kalaharipatrys] shortly after leaving the Valley Clubhouse as I made my way down towards the Jukskei River. This 'game-bird' is a grassveld 'special' that has managed to adjust to the enormous development that has occurred in



Ron Searle

Orange River Francolin/Kalaharipatrys



Ron Searle

Giant Kingfisher/Reusevisvanger

this area over the past 7 years that we have lived here, lingering on in the few remaining greenbelts of the estates.

An hour or so later I had birded the river path upstream to the concrete weir across the river at the tea boma, and was well on my way back downstream on the other side when I decided to call in to the bird hide 100 m or so before the pedestrian bridge, which is still in the process of rehabilitation. The excited loud, harsh, nasal call of the Giant Kingfisher [Reusevisvanger] caught my attention as I scanned the river from the hide and I was surprised to see an Ovambo Sparrowhawk [Ovambosperwer] in hot but optimistic pursuit of the kingfisher. I use the term 'optimistic' as the kingfisher is the larger, by weight and length, of the two and, armed with a formidable bill, would almost certainly have defended itself successfully from the futile attentions of the sparrowhawk, which then quickly abandoned its quest and settled in the tall trees opposite the hide. I was able to photograph and identify it as an immature, probably male, specimen.

The next relatively rare (for the estates) species spotted was a pair of African Hoopoes [Hoepoep], no doubt attracted by the possibility of sizzled insects lurking in the newly burnt section of the greenbelt in the Country North Estate, just short of the Waterfall Drive road bridge over the Jukskei. The hoopoes seldom (once or twice every second year) visit our estates but I do predict that their occurrence in estate gardens is likely to increase in the future as the trees and accordingly the gardens mature.

Visiting the Village Dam further downstream I was not surprised to find virtually no birdlife, as a result of the deliberate removal of



Ron Searle

*Ovambo Sparrowhawk/Ovambosperwer**African Hoopoe/Hoephoepe*

all of the larger fish to safety elsewhere before draining the dam, as well as the subsequent feeding bonanza experienced by the kingfishers, cormorants and darters as they happily scoured the remaining small isolated pools of water for the smaller fish.

I then decided to cross the little pedestrian bridge at the inlet to the dam and visit the small quartzite kopje located upstream and covered in indigenous bush, largely Buffalo Thorn (*Ziziphus mucronata*), which attracts many of the fruit-eating bird species as well as sunbirds to the flowering aloes. Gazing up at the treetops for the inevitable barbets or Grey-Go-away-birds [Kwêvoël], I was very pleasantly surprised to find, perched, a single bright

yellow small bird, which I immediately recognised as a male Yellow Canary [Geelkanarie], a new species for the estate bird list – Number 243. It fortunately sat there for quite a while enabling a photograph or two, an essential requisite for bird list qualification.

It remained for me to make my way home via the bottom pedestrian bridge over the Jukskei, and as I progressed along the river upstream my thoughts wandered to the approaching Spring and the imminent arrival of the swallows, traditionally in the middle of August. Possibly the presence of the resident Brown-throated Martins [Afrikaanse Oewerswael], of the swallow family, made me lift my binoculars to focus on a very fast



Ron Searle

*Yellow Canary/Geelkanarie**Lesser-striped Swallow/Kleinstreepswael*

Ron Searle



White-throated Swallow/Witkeelswael

approaching flying bird and – ‘glory be!’ – a Lesser Striped Swallow [Kleinstreepswael]. And then, as if this was not enough, 100 m further up the path to the Valley Clubhouse, a White-throated Swallow [Witkeelswael] was spotted hawking insects as it followed the course of the river. This is a full-week earlier arrival of these migrant species than last year and heralds the fast approaching and very welcome commencement of Spring. Climate change at work? 🐦

## Witmalgas fotoverhaal

Pieter Heslinga

Ons was laat-Augustus Weskus toe en ek wou baie graag die Witmalgasse [Cape Gannet] sien. Ons was gelukkig want hulle was net besig om terug te keer Bird Island toe om te broei en daar was alreeds ongeveer 7 000 (uit so 14 000) voëls. Ek sien toe die hofmakery van

hierdie paartjie, wat my so aangedaan het. Hier volg ‘n paar fotos in volgorde wat ek afgeneem het. Toe vlieg die mannetjie op en weg see toe. Die wat nog nie Lambertsbaai toe was om die skouspel te sien nie, dis ‘n moet! 🐦





## Chasing rarities: Part 2

Neithard Graf von Dürckheim

In *Laniarius* 135 of November 2017 I dwelt on 'chasing rarities' and the stressful or alternatively pleasurable experiences which come with this pastime.

It was such a time again – SA Rare Bird News (SARBN) was exploding with headlines in capital letters about a Golden Pipit [Goudkoester] sighting at Mavela, a luxury lodge close to Mkuze. Also, Sooty Falcon [Roetvalk] had been reported from Mbazwana and there was Eurasian Oystercatcher [Bonttobie] at St. Lucia. Hmmm, this opportunity was too good to let go – but the birds were all over KZN, meaning plenty of driving to chase these rarities.

A few phone calls later it was again my birding buddy Theuns Botha and I who would take a 'quick trip down south' to try to get a sighting

of some of these rarities. Only this time, it was my turn to drive as we had agreed to alternate vehicles. By sheer providence, Theuns had not picked up any speeding fines the previous time. I set the cruise control at exactly 120 km/h and that way we would be safe from any overly diligent traffic cop.

We left early on 29 January to miss the morning traffic and arrived at a civil time at Mavela, a luxury lodge, where we shared a luxury tent which was really very nice. The Golden Pipit had been seen for some days before in the broader area surrounding the lodge. Also, the managers had advertised a special discounted rate for SARBN-birders, obviously counting on a higher turnover due to greater numbers of twitchers wishing to spot the bird. After our arrival we were off to try find

the bird, but at midday it was just too hot. We spotted a European Roller [Europese Troupant], which perched right in the open, Croaking Cisticola [Groottinkinkie], Yellow-fronted Canary [Geeloogkanarie] and Black-winged Kite [Blouvalk] (I still have to get used to this name, preferring Black-shouldered Kite), and returned to the lodge for a light lunch. Around 15:30 we continued the search, accompanied by the lodge's local guide. We walked slowly in a long loose line scanning the area where the bird had been spotted on the previous days, but without luck. After some time without success, some of the birders got impatient and decided to walk in different directions to try their luck on their own. At about 16:40 the guide managed to get a glimpse of the bird. I tried to alert Theuns, who had wandered off, and after a while he came rushing up. The Golden Pipit was on the ground, feeding in between tufts of grass, and it was difficult to get decent pictures as it was never quite in the open. We did see it well through the binoculars though. After a while, a wind came up and the pipit flew up and perched approximately 2.5 m high on a sweet-thorn (*Vachellia/Acacia karroo*). This was a great sighting of the rarity and there were smiles all over from happy birders who had just ticked a special lifer.

We now had time to take the game-drive which was included in the price, and spotted some impala, nyala, kudu and other antelope, as well as Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills [Geelbekneushoringvoël] and a number

of more common birds such as Cardinal Woodpecker [Kardinaalspeg] and numerous Red-backed Shrike [Rooiruglaksman]. During the obligatory sundowner-stop at a small lake we had some very interesting sightings of nests of foam nest frogs suspended on branches overhanging the water. The female frog churns up a white foam with her hindlegs from a fluid she secretes, the male grabs her from behind with his front legs around her waist in a movement called amplexus and fertilises the eggs externally whilst the female lays them in strings into the foam nest. Over time, in sunlight, the foam nest hardens somewhat (almost like soft styrofoam). This protects the eggs until the tiny tadpoles hatch and, when ready, they leave the nest and drop into the water below, where they start the first part of their dual life cycle.

On returning after darkness had set in, we had some excellent sightings of European Nightjar [Europese Naguil], Spotted Eagle Owl [Gevlekte Ooruil] and a much-debated-over nightjar, which was identified later as a Fiery-necked [Afrikaanse Naguil] after some lively debate and comparing of pictures we had taken of the bird. I find nightjars quite difficult to identify in the darkness if they don't happen to call. It is easier to try to identify them later from pictures.

We sat down to a tasty three-course dinner at the lodge and the drinks and conversation flowed freely after our success. Bonhomie was in the air, and everybody made friends quickly.

Theuns and I resolved to forgo the



European Roller/Europese Troupant



Nest of Foam Nest Frog

Neilhard Graf von Durchheim

Neilhard Graf von Durchheim



early-morning game drive the following day, but to leave after an early breakfast to try to chase some more rarities in the greater KZN area. I was still keen to set my eyes on the Sooty Falcon, which had made an appearance at a village called Mbazwana pretty high up in KZN, in the direction of Sodwana, but first we had to drive down to Hluhluwe to join up with the tarred road that leads to Mbazwana. Except for numerous speed-humps, which were possibly constructed to slow down over-eager taxi drivers, the road was good and we managed to get there by 09:30. The description I had from a guide was: 'enter Mbazwana from Hluhluwe side, there are three large traffic circles, stop at the third traffic circle and look in the dead and dry eucalyptus trees.' We stopped at the third circle. The weather was overcast – grey sky, darkish lighting. There was a single 'darkish' bird perched on a dry branch of a eucalyptus tree. It looked like a large dove in the bad light. Theuns shook his head and muttered 'it's a dove.' I got out, and – *voilà* – there was my Sooty Falcon! I took numerous pictures but with the bad light, they didn't come out great. Who cares – it's a lifer!

Jeremy, one of the other birders who had been at Mavela (and a fellow professional field guide from Pilanesberg), had decided to take the early-morning game drive and was rewarded with great pictures of a Black Coucal [Swartvleiloerie]. He was now on the phone enquiring about the Sooty Falcon. We gave him directions for where to spot the bird, but also shared with him Theuns's desire to try for the Eurasian Oystercatcher which had been spotted at St. Lucia. Jeremy asked if he could join us, so we motored down to St Lucia at the best speed I could make. We met up with Jeremy at the bridge, entering St. Lucia town and driving straight to the estuary. As I had already ticked the Eurasian Oystercatcher some years ago, I wanted to give Theuns and Jeremy the best possible chance to get on site as quickly as possible. The plan was to drop Theuns and Jeremy off, to let them get onto the beach and the mudflats and try to spot the Eurasian Oystercatcher as soon as possible, while I went



*Golden Pipit/Goudkoester*



Heinhard Graf von Dürckheim

back into town to find ourselves B&B accommodation for the night.

After inspecting a few B&Bs I settled for one in a quiet street, offloaded our luggage and equipment in the rooms, had a quick sandwich for lunch and drove back to the estuary to meet up with Theuns and Jeremy.

I stopped at the parking area opposite Sugarloaf Campsite, walked the wooden boardwalk to the beach, turned right over the dunes and walked until I saw the open sea on my left and the mudflats on my right. I spotted Theuns and Jeremy with a few other birders in attendance. They had been successful in finding the Eurasian Oystercatcher, although it was far off. Theuns had taken some pictures with my Canon SX60 camera, which I had given him just-for-in-case. Both friends were as happy as can be. They had each ticked a lifer. We stayed a little longer until the oystercatcher flew off in the direction of the sea, and spotted various birds: Swift, Little and Sandwich Terns, Caspian

Neilhard Graf von Durchheim



Sooty Falcon/Roetvalk

Theuns Botha



Eurasian Oystercatcher/Bonttobie

Tern, Yellow-billed Stork, Greater Flamingo, Great White Pelican, Ruff, Sanderling, Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, and White-fronted Plover [Geelbek-, Klein- Groot- en

Reusesterretjie, Nimmersat, Grootflamink, Witpelikaan, Kemphaan, Drietoonstrandloper, Kleinstrandloper, Bosruiter, Vaalstrandkiewiet] amongst others. We then returned to the parking area where, in the lush vegetation, we spotted Yellow Weaver, Bronze Mannikin, Purple-crested Turaco, and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird [Geelwewer, Gewone Fret, Bloukuifloerie, Swartblestinker] to mention but a few. St. Lucia is such a productive birding destination.

Jeremy insisted in buying us a celebratory drink at the Yacht Club, after which we left for our B&B for a short 'power nap'. We visited one of the many restaurants in St. Lucia for a pleasant dinner.

The following day we departed for Pretoria after breakfast, which we reached in the afternoon, after driving some 2 000-odd km on the 2-day trip, being 'half-broke', but happy. We had each ticked two new lifers. Did we 'chase' after these rarities? Most certainly! Was it enjoyable? Yes! Was this a relaxing birding trip? I believe not!

PS: A few days after our safe return to Pretoria, I received an ominous-looking letter in the post. It was a speeding fine where I had inadvertently driven at 79 km/h in a 60 zone... Although I managed to appeal the fine successfully as the traffic signs were most inaccurate, how can I fault Theuns's driving skills ever again? 🐢

## FROM THE ARCHIVE Wishbirds: Part 4

*The following advice on how to go about ticking some fairly elusive species was first published in either Laniarius 88 (Mar 2003), 89 (June 2003), 90 (Sept 2003) or 91 (Dec 2003), with contributions by Faansie Peacock, André Marx, Mostert Kriek, Etienne Marais and Peter Irons.*

### Garden Warbler / Tuinsanger

Being unobtrusive and generally remaining inside the leafy canopy, these small and monotonous Palaearctic migrants are very widely overlooked and are generally fairly

common and widespread in most years. They also have the habit of returning to the same patch of trees (one permanent non-breeding territory in Pretoria was 150 x 80 m in extent) if good habitat persists there. One of the earliest migrants to arrive, their characteristic bubbling

warble can be heard from mid-September to early April in our area.

Undoubtedly the best indication of its presence is the characteristic song, which can be described as a soft and subdued, sustained, even warbling which includes very sweet, fluty and bubbly notes in between the rapid mixture of whistles, scratches, twitterings and chirps. Warbler songs can be hard to distinguish, and in this species the key feature to listen for is the mellow, bubbly quality of the song. In the Garden Warbler the song has no set pattern. The song is easily missed, due to its unobtrusive quality. Spring is probably the best time of year to listen out for the call. Another problem with the call is that some other species, notably sunbirds and white-eyes, also sit in a leafy tree at times, doing a quiet warble.

Finding this species is generally easier than actually identifying it, due to its lack of obvious fieldmarks – this is in itself a good characteristic to keep in mind. They can often be spotted by following their voice until you have a general idea where the sound is coming from and then peering deep inside the thickets. In order to notice any movement in the tangles, it is best to do this with the naked eye to give you a wider field of view, before you use binoculars. They often sing from a fixed position for long periods, but also sing while foraging. If seen well, the dumpy shape, rounded head, stubby bill and large black (staring) eyes give it a soft and innocent appearance. They are greyer looking than most warblers and appear slightly two-toned, being paler below than above. From close range a thin white eye-ring, indistinct paler eyebrow stripe and patch of bluish-grey on the side of the neck can be seen.

Garden Warblers typically stay a fair height above the ground, at least a few metres up, and are not particularly shy. A warbler seen near the ground in weeds and shrubs would invariably be the similar Marsh Warbler.

The habitat of this species is varied but usually includes at least some stands of thickets such as those found on termite mounds, and they often frequent riverine woodlands where the plant growth is lush and dense (although

they are not directly associated with water like many other warblers). They reach their highest densities in well-watered suburban gardens (as their name implies). Areas with considerable stands of *Acacia* and White Stinkwood are suitable. In Moreleta, Constantia and Elardus Parks in south-eastern Pretoria, for example, good numbers of these skulkers were recorded during the past few years. Good places to look for them include Faerie Glen Nature Reserve, Moreletakloof, Pretoria National Botanical Garden, and Tswaing Crater Reserve (near the river).

Other localities include Anderson Street with its avenue of White Stinkwood, and the *Acacia* on the campus of the University of Pretoria, the Fountains Valley, and Smuts House in Irene. The Zaagkuildrift road is also a fairly good area to look for it, especially from January to March.

Keep in mind that one could easily visit your garden, especially if you have trees and shrubs with small, soft berries and fruits. Garden Warblers are strongly attracted to *Lantana*, smaller figs, karee trees (*Rhus/Searsia* spp.) and mulberry trees, for example.

You can listen to recordings of this bird at: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Sylvia-borin>

### Baillon's Crake / Kleinriethaan

This is a relatively widespread species in South Africa. However, it is seldom recorded by observers because of its habit of favouring fairly dense wetland habitat and because, like many crake species, it is a highly secretive bird. It probably occurs at most wetland localities where suitable habitat exists but it is almost certainly overlooked most of the time.

Many people may be surprised by the diminutive size of this species when they first see it, but if you can imagine a bird slightly smaller than the familiar Black Crake then you are on the right track. The brown back, which is spotted with black and white markings, is striking when the bird is well seen in good light, as are the grey underparts. The adult bird

has a red eye set in a grey face and together with the yellow-green bill this is very obvious when only the head is seen. The juvenile bird is barred below but also shows white speckling on brown upperparts.

The call is not particularly notable and is not really a field identification feature for the observer who is looking for the bird for the first time, but it is described as soft and frog-like in quality.

Baillon's Crake has been recorded from a number of localities in Gauteng. Marievale is a known haunt and here there is plenty of suitable habitat in the form of short, flooded grass and sedges adjacent to open mud patches, which the bird favours for foraging. To see the bird here you need to be looking down, and you may just be rewarded with a quick look at a bird dashing between patches of vegetation or, if you are really lucky, you may see it foraging for a while. There have also been good sightings at Nylsvley Nature reserve, particularly at Vogelfontein, where the alert observer can pick up this species in the large areas of suitable habitat that exist there. On one memorable day in August, this bird was seen at about 11 am by all the people on a club outing to the Diepsloot Nature Reserve, which lies to the southwest of Pretoria. The bird was first noticed when it was flushed from an open area alongside some reeds and showed a flash of brown and grey as it scurried away. Later on it was seen for more than half an hour feeding in the open when all the diagnostic features were well noted. That is

a chance that does not present itself very often though! Further afield the species is found at several localities in KwaZulu-Natal and there are a few very good viewing hides in the Swartvlei/Groenvlei area, near Knysna, where it is regularly observed.

Sightings have taken place throughout the year and may even be easier in winter when breeding is not taking place and when the vegetation is sparser. In summer breeding birds are more secretive and spend more time in dense habitat.

Perhaps the best tip to be given to the person seeking this bird is to remember that it is nearly always observed very early in the morning or at dusk, and if the observer goes into 'crake mode' and looks for a small bird furtively moving about in the habitat described above you have made a good start. But be patient, as it has taken some birders with impressive life lists many years to finally catch up with this species!

You can listen to recordings of this bird at: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Porzana-pusilla>

### Yellow Bishop / Kaapse Flap

In summer male Yellow Bishops are conspicuous in their smart black and yellow breeding plumage, when they will actively fly about with their bright yellow rumps puffed up while making their distinctive buzzing call. Then they are relatively easy to identify, especially in relation to other bishops and widowbirds, as there is no other bird in this group with a distinctive yellow rump and a relatively short tail. In winter the much more dull-plumaged males retain the yellow rump and also show a yellow shoulder patch. Females are always dull-plumaged, but always show some yellow on the rump, and it is this yellow colouration in the rump that can be used to separate both sexes from all other *Euplectes* species throughout the year.

The Yellow Bishop likes wet grassland on the edge of streams, particularly in mountainous areas in the northern part of South Africa. One of the best places to see this bird in Gauteng is at the Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve



Clive Kaplan

Baillon's Crake/Kleinriethaan



*Yellow Bishop/Kaapse Flap, used under [CC BY 2.0](#) [Brian Ralphs]*

where the birds are quite obvious in summer. Elsewhere the species is present in the escarpment region of Mpumalanga and Limpopo Province, and in the Drakensberg. It is fairly common in parts of the Western Cape where it is often found at lower altitudes. In some parts of the country it will be found alongside forest and even exotic plantations, in fairly degraded damp grassland.

These birds tend to be amongst the latest bishops/widowbirds to turn into breeding mode, and often one has to wait until December before they will be around in good numbers. Once good rains have fallen, and the grass has become well-established, they can be found in good numbers almost anywhere in our region.

You can listen to recordings of this bird at: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Euplectes-capensis>

### Witkeelsanger / Common Whitethroat

Dis is belangrik om te besef dat vele Witkeelsangers geensins so veelkleurig is as wat die manlike voëls in sommige veldgidse

geïllustreer word nie. Die wyfies is veel valer en selfs mannetjies kan só deur die son gebleik word dat hulle bloot lyk soos 'n gryserige voëltjie met 'n wit keel. Die buitekant van die stert is wit, en dit kan baie nuttig wees indien die voël net vinnig gesien word (die Bosveldtjeritiek [Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler] is duideliker grys met 'n wit stertpunt).

Soos alle sangers spandeer Witkeelsangers baie van hulle tyd uit behoorlike sig binne-in die doringstruik waar hulle voorkom. Die lied is kenmerkend en kan met herhaling redelik maklik onthou word. Een bron beskryf dit soos volg: "... a short, fast verse of scratchy, hoarse, gruff voice, delivered in jerky and jolting rhythm, roughly '**Take it today, take it too?**'" Hulle reageer besonder sterk op die speel of nabootsing van die Witkoluil [Pearl-spotted Owllet] se fluitroep.

Die sanger verkies droë bosveld, maar dan verkieslik op 'n sanderige substraat, soos waar die Huilboom of Kameeldoring in gemengde bosveld gesien kan word. Soms is hulle maklik te vinde in struikerige Pendoringveld. *Combretum* word vermy.

Die omgewing van die Rust de Winter Reservaat kan aanbeveel word. Hulle is die afgelope somer ook in die Buffelsdrif Bewarea aangeteken. Witkeelsangers is oor die algemeen egter taamlik skaars, en hulle getalle wissel van jaar tot jaar.



*Common Whitethroat/Witkeelsanger, used under [CC BY 2.0](#) [Pete Beard]*

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

### Gewone Kwartelvinkie / African Quailfinch

Hierdie voëltjies, met hulle vet lyfies en kort stertjies, word gewoonlik eers opgemerk wanneer hulle uit die gras of langs die waterkant opvlieg en dan met 'n kenmerkende rukkerige vlugpatroon en skril alarmroep verdwyn. Hulle is eintlik baie algemeen, maar besorg vir baie voëlkykers vir jare hoofbrekens, veral omdat meer ervare voëlkykers dikwels na hulle verwys. As gevolg van hulle besondere gewoontes sien min mense hulle op 'n gereelde basis, en hoor hulle die voël eerder om dit te sien.

As gevolg hiervan is dit van kardinale belang om hulle roepe goed te leer ken. Die roep is werklik kenmerkend en is al beskryf as 'n metaalagtige *tirrieliensk* of *tjirie-ienk*.

Kwartelvinkies kan in ons area met die Rooiassie [Orange-breasted Waxbill] verwar word, maar die Rooiassie se pens is helderder



*African Quailfinch*/Gewone Kwartelvinkie, used under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/) [Derek Keats]

geel, kruis is helder rooi en dit het 'n unieke gesigspatroon. Met bietjie oefening is die roep ook redelik maklik om te onderskei.

Wanneer mens die voël en sy gewoontes beter leer ken sal jy dit uiteindelik te sien kry. Die voorkeurhabitat is gewoonlik 'n grasveld naby een of ander vleiërige area, hetsy 'n vlei, pan, dam of selfs 'n tydelike poel wat na reën gevorm het. Dit word ook soms gevind in oop grasveld ver van water af.

Gedurende die broeiseisoen voer mannetjies pronkvlugte uit waarin hulle hoog bo die gras rondvlieg en dan afwaarts tuimel met 'n aanhoudende variasie van die alarmroep. In die winter en vroeë somer is dit 'n groep-lewende voël, en is klein swerpies te vinde. Die uitdaging is om 'n voël te vind wat lank genoeg stilsit dat mens dit deur jou verkyker kan bekyk! Die kuns lê daarin om 'n pan of vleiland te kies waar daar taamlik baie ontblote modder en gras is, omdat die voël daarvan hou om by sulke plekke te drink. Hou die beweging van die voëls en waar hulle gewoonlik land dop. Indien u so 'n plek dan versigtig nader behoort 'n goeie waarneming, waar een op die modder rondwip, uiteindelik moontlik te wees. 'n Goeie hoeveelheid aanhou en uithou sal nodig wees omdat dit 'n tydjie neem om aan die bewegings van die spesie gewoon te raak.

'n Kwartelvinkie is besonder aantreklik wanneer mens dit van naby sien. Dit het 'n oranje-rooi snawel en 'n swart en wit gesigspatroon (wit 'bril') en gebande bors en flanke.

Omdat die Kwartelvinkie algemeen is en baie wyd in ons area voorkom, is dit moeilik om spesifieke plekke uit te lig om dit waar te neem. Marievale is 'n goeie beginpunt, maar plekke soos Rietvleidam, Bronkhorstspuitdam, Vaalkopdam en Rust de Winter huisves goeie getalle. Hulle was algemeen by Barberspan tydens die klub se besoek in April 2003.

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

# Daardie besonderste, heel spesiaalste ene...

Ivonne Coetzee

Soms vra iemand in 'n geselskap: Wat was jou wonderlikste ervaring nóg in die Wildtuin? Dan hoor mens baie verskillende antwoorde wat wissel van leeus wat 'n luiperd aanval tot iemand wat die salige rus en vrede en gloed van 'n knetterende kampvuurtjie beskryf.

Net so vra iemand my onlangs: Wat was vir jou daardie mees spesiale voëlspesie wat jy kon afmerk, of wonderlikste voëlkykervaring tot dusver? Ek moes 'n bietjie dink, want daar is 'n hele paar wat uitstaan. Byna almal het saam met daardie verrukking gepaard gegaan wat alle entoesiastiese voëlkykers sal herken, die sogenaamde Stendhal-sindroom van hartkloppings en asemnood as mens 'n nuwe spesie sien – 'n *lifer*. Asemrowende mooi voëls wat met hul kleure en sang in die oggendson gespog het. Ekstatische voëlkykervaringe in pragtige, afgeleë dele van ons land se mooiste natuurskoon wat die lewe verryk. Want dit is nou maar eenmaal sò: die wonderlikste van hierdie passie van ons is dat dit meesal in die stilte en die mooiste dele van die natuur plaasvind. En hoewel ek sowaar al buitengewone, skaars en selfs ikoniese voëlspesies op uitstappies saam met bekende voëlgidse kon aftik, is nie een van daardies nou wat ek as my geliefkoosde voël of spesiale oomblik sou uitsonder nie. Al wou ek hul ook hóé graag sien en afmerk, daardie sogenaamde *specials* – ikoniese voëls soos die Swartoogboslaksman [Black-fronted Bush-Shrike] saam met David Letsoalo, 'n broeipaer Vlermuisvalke [Bat Hawk] saam met Samson Muluadzi, die Groenhoutkapper [Green Barbet] in Ongoyewoud en Natallyster [Spotted Ground Thrush] in Dlinzawoud saam met Sakhamusi. Nee! Die besondere, die onvergeetlike voëls wat vir my uitstaan was waar ek stokalleen was, of dalk saam met manlief of my nuut-ingewyde suster teen dagbreek gaan voëls

soek het. Om die waarheid te sê: ek dink ek het 'n paar spesiale voëlkykoomblikke wat ek vir altyd sal koester.

Kom ek begin met die spesie waar die voëlkyk-gogga my die eerste keer gebyt het: die Bontnuwejaarsvoël [Jacobin Cuckoo], in Oktober 2009, naby Krokodilbrug. Ons was met vriende in die wildtuin en ek het met hul voëlboek op my skoot gesit. Toe ek die groot, swart-en-wit voël in 'n boom langs die pad maklik kon identifiseer en boonop 'n kompliment daarvoor kry, was dit onweerstaanbaar om by Onder-Sabie nie al die byvreters en spreus op te soek en te identifiseer nie. Ek was 'n verslaafde, van daardie oomblik af.

'n Paar maande daarna sit ek stokalleen en byna bewegingloos op 'n kampstoel in 'n afgesonderde hoek van 'n tentkamp in 'n woud by Sodwana. Net buite die agterste kampheining, so 3 meter voor my, borrel water uit die grond uit – óf 'n gebarste ondergrondse pyp, óf 'n fontein. Leef en beef in die kamp het gaan duik en dis tjoepstil. Behalwe hier: 'n swetterjoel voëls, klein en groot, kleurvol, skaam en astrant, kom drink en baljaar in of naby die water. Ek identifiseer Rooirugfrette, kleinjantjies, Gryssuikerbekkies [Red-backed Mannikin, apalises, Grey Sunbird] en ander



Clive Kaplan

Saam met David Letsoalo in Magoebaskloof

Ivonne Coetzee



*Knysnaoerie/Knysna Turaco*

maklik met my *Sakgids tot Suider-Afrikaanse Voëls*. Skielik sit daar teen rankplante aan 'n boom daar naby 'n groot, grysgroen voël met 'n geel bek wat my aan 'n Vleילוerie laat dink. Net maerder. Die voël is sowaar nie in my *Sakgids* nie, ook nie op die kampbestuurder se groot plakkaat met alle moontlike voëls nie, en hyself, glo voëlkenner van formaat, weet niks van so 'n voël af nie. Tuis in Pretoria, met my dik splinternuwe *Volledige Fotografiese Veldgids, Voëls van Suider Afrika*, herken ek die raaisel dadelik op sy foto: Groenvleילוerie [Green Malkoha]!

'n Jaar of wat later sluip ek, op my eie, douvoordag in die kronkelpaadjies van iGwala-gwalawoud by St Lucia rond – sekerlik die heel rykste en maklik-bereikbare voëlparadys waarvan ek weet. Ek luister senuagtig of ek seekoëie kan hoor, en ek en 'n roesbruin-erige, gevlekte voël met dwarsstrepies, wat

Ivonne Coetzee



*Baardwipstert/Bearded Scrub Robin*

kniehoogte op 'n tak skarrel, skrik ewe groot vir mekaar. Jare het ek maar moes wonder wat dit was, totdat ek met die soekfunksie op my Sasol eBirds-toep onmiskenbaar op haar afkom: Gevlekte Vleikuiken [Buff-spotted Flufftail]! Toe ek die sang speel, hoor ek die kenmerkende dowwe mishoringagtige geluid wat ons daardie week aanmekeer in die bos gehoor het. Dat so 'n relatiewe klein voëltjie so 'n groot geluid kan maak! Boonop, dieselfde oggend, sien ek sowaar 'n Konkoit [Gorgeous Bush-Shrike] – meneer sit 'n hele rukkie breë-bors op 'n struik en sing sy lewensvreugde oor die vroeë oggendsonnetjie uit. Daardie kleure wat so skitter in die son – onuitwisbaar op my geheue ingeprent, veral omdat ek dit oomblikke later met my suster kon deel wat pas by my aangesluit het. Nou het ons nie net gehoor nie, maar gesien!

En wat van die twee pragtige Mooimeisie-koekoekie [African Emerald Cuckoo] met hul glansgroen en mosterdgeel wat suutjies op 'n takkie bokant my en manlië se koppe op 'n staproete in Wildernis kom sit het? Of die misterieuse Manglietvisvanger [Mangrove Kingfisher] wat só lank doodstil op 'n tak in die rivierwoud by Hluleka in die Oos-Kaap bly sit het dat ons susters maar later verder gestap het? Die Saalbekoëivaar [Saddle-billed Stork] wat majestueus aangevlieg gekom het en vlak voor ons in die Levuvhu-rivierbedding geland het? Of die ikoniese Bosloerie [Narina Trogon] wat houtgerus by Mt. Sheba eers van voor, en toe van agter, vir my en sus seker twintig minute lank vermaak het? Of daardie heel eerste Knysnaoerie [Knysna Turaco] van Silaka? Die Oranjelyster en Witkoljanfrederik [Orange Ground Thrush, White-starred Robin] wat saam dagbreek by 'n watervalletjie in Magoebaskloof was? Die Baardwipstert [Bearded Scrub Robin] by Swadini een skemeroggend – enigste ooit tot ek tien jaar later eers weer ene sien?

Miskien moet ek tog maar eindig by 'n werklik onvergeetlike, uitsonderlike ervaring. Waarskynlik is dít daardie spesiaalste, besonderste voël wat ek lewenslank sal bly koester. Ek wou sielsgraag, jare lank al, die



Dwergvisvanger [African Pygmy Kingfisher] sien. Ek het reeds die ander nege visvanger-spesies op my lewenslysie kon aftik, maar net daardie kleinste enetjie het my bly ontwyk. Toe, op my verjaardag in Hluleka vanjaar, besluit ek en manlief om 'n ent te gaan stap. Skielik vlieg 'n Laeveldnaguil [Square-tailed Nightjar] reg voor ons voete op, net om so 'n paar meter verder weer in die pad te gaan sit. My eerste! Ons kon hom so mooi bekyk. Baie opgewonde het ons tot oor die rivier gestap, omgedraai en teruggestap, heeltyd op die uitkyk of die Manglietvisvanger van drie jaar tevore nie dalk weer min of meer op dieselfde plek sit nie, en of ons naguil van sopas miskien nog daar rond is. 'n Vroeë herfsblaar, goud-oranje tussen die groen, op 'n afstand van ongeveer 5 meter in die veld in, trek my aandag... en sowaar! My verjaardagpresent



Clive Kaplan

Dwergvisvanger/African Pygmy Kingfisher

so reg uit die Hemel uit! Die Dwergvisvanger! Hy het toegelaat dat ons hom ongeveer vir 20 minute rustig kon bewonder. So, ja, miskien is dít my heel spesialeste voëltjie.

Wat is joune? 🐦

## Vink residensie

Karel van Niekerk

Langs my sitkamertjie het ek 'n papierbas-doringboom wat my broer Fritz vir my gegee het; hy het destyds n klompie van sade af gegroei.

Hier het ek voerplek en drinkplek gemaak vir my vinkies wat in my boom bly. Dis een groot *happy family*; dit kwetter en rinkink en jaag mekaar en bad en kuier. Nou voer ek hulle driegangmaaltyd meeste van die tyd – dis voëltjekos en broodkrummels en koekkrummels elke dag.

Nou, Piet Vink bou 'n nuwe nessesie.

Gistermiddag is ek besig om die brood te breek in die voerplek in, nou hang Piet Vink hier bo onderstebo, bekkie vol groen gras. Hy bou dat die biesies bewe, en met sy bekkie so vol gras skree hy daai uitbundige vinkieskree; ek kon nie dink 'n mannetjiesvink kan so *multitask* nie. En... hier steek sy bruid koppie uit die halfgeboude

nessie uit, en sy vlieg so bietjie pragtig, so bietjie koketterig uit die nessesie uit en kom sit so bietjie naby my en beloer my, koppie skeef... 'Pragtige girl, Piet! Jy is 'n yster!', dink ek nog. Piet Vink is self nogals *handsome*, goudgeel en pikswart, met 'n Freddie Mercury stem aan hom!

So gesels ons met mekaar, hulle loer-loer my so en sy kom selfs bietjie nader nog (mense, hierdie is alles binne drie meter van my af).

Piet Vink se boumateriaal is vir eers op, hy skree nog een keer uitbundig, en wee jy... hy vlieg met so 'n sierlike boog hier na Sannietjie toe... gee haar so 'n vinnige rapsie, sy skree iets soos 'n vinkie vloekwoord, met 'n tikseltye aanmoediging, so klink dit vir my, en sy vlieg so skamerig weg... nee wat, een van die dae is daar kindertjies in die nuwe Piet en Sannie Vink Residensie... 🐦

# IN PICTURES:



Erik Bergh

*Spotted Eagle Owl*



Stewart Matheson

*Saddle-billed Stork*



Dirk Human

*Black Sparrowhawk*



Pieter Hestlinga



Pieter Hestlinga



Pieter Hestlinga

*Green-backed Heron (sibling rivalry)*



Tamsyn Sherwill

*Common Moorhen*



Tamsyn Sherwill

*Egyptian Goose*



Drinie van Rensburg

*Verreaux's Eagle Owl*

# the family edition



*Cardinal Woodpecker*



*African Finfoot*



*Laughing Dove*



*Laughing Dove*



*Wattled Lapwing*



*Blacksmith Lapwing*



*African Paradise Flycatcher*



*Little Sparrowhawk*



*Lesser Striped Swallow*

# Rarities and unusual sightings report: 31 October 2019

Compiled by André Marx

*This report covers the months of July–October 2019. The Slaty Egret is considered to be a very uncommon National Rarity species in South Africa and it is interesting that it continues to surface in the Greater Gauteng region with new records appearing almost annually. Some very unusual records of out-of-range birds were noted; see the report of Greater Sand Plover (normally a shorebird that does not occur at inland locations); the Rufous-bellied Heron in Centurion; and Terrestrial Brownbul at Walter Sisulu BG (this bird has not been reliably reported in the Johannesburg region before to my knowledge). These records are the result of diligent observations and of atlassing efforts around the region. 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 / Nasionale rareiteite

### Egret, Slaty [Rooikeelreier]

One bird was seen at Finfoot Lake Reserve at Vaalkop Dam, 20 Aug 2019 (EM). *This is an uncommon bird in the region and is recorded at very few localities.*

Another record of one bird at Gnu Valley / Walkhaven Dog Park in the Muldersdrift area came to light on 13 Sep 2019 (AP), remaining at this locality until at least the end of Oct 2019. *This species has been present at this site on at least three occasions in recent years and it is speculated that it may be the same bird that reappears from time to time.*

## Regional Rarities/ Streeksrareiteite

### Brownbul, Terrestrial [Boskrapper]

A record of two birds at Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden in Johannesburg was a major surprise



Anthony Paton

*Slaty Egret, Walkhaven*

and a completely new locality for this species, 25 Aug 2019 (JN). *There are no known previous records of this species in Johannesburg, so this may represent a range expansion; new records in the Pretoria area also surfaced in recent months.*

### Cisticola, Red-faced [Rooiwangtinkinkie]

This species was found during the BLNG club visit to Eagle's Nest adjacent to Ezemvelo NR in Pentad 2535\_2900, 29 Oct 2019 (BLNG).

### Eagle, African Crowned [Kroonarend]

One bird flew out of a patch of forest at Eagle's Nest, a farm adjacent to Ezemvelo NR, in Pentad 2535\_2900, 29 Oct 2019 (BLNG). The bird sat up and called, allowing good views (photo LJ). *An uncommon species occurring only in forested kloofs and valleys of the Wilge River in the north-east within the Greater Gauteng region.*

Laura Jordaan



*Crowned Eagle, Eagle's Nest (Ezemevelo)*

**Heron, Rufous-bellied [Rooipensreier]**

A surprise sighting was of one bird at a wetland near Candlewoods Estate in the Centurion area, in Pentad 2550\_2810 (P&JV), (photo SB). In the weeks following this sighting the bird was still being seen by many different observers, until at least 20 Nov 2019. *This is an uncommon species with very few records for the region.*

**Lark, Short-clawed [Kortkloulewerik]**

There were more reports of this species in Pentad 2520\_2715, south-east of the Pilanesberg, on 8 Aug 2019 (EM), on 17 Aug 2019 (SO), and on 24 Aug 2019 (MJ), confirming that birds have been present in the area since first being reported in Jan 2019 and are probably resident.

**Openbill, African [Oopbekooievaar]**

One bird was at Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden in Johannesburg on 21 Sep 2019 (AP).

**Plover, Greater Sand [Grootstrandkiewiet]**

A single bird at Rust de Winter Dam was a surprise find, 8 Sep 2019 (EM), where it remained for a few days during which time a number of observers reported the bird, (photo RG). *This is the first record of this species in the region and is unusual as it is seldom observed at inland localities.*

**Plover, Grey [Grysstrandkiewiet]**

One bird was present at Rust de Winter Dam on 14 Sep 2019 (JvR).



Sheleph Burger

*Rufous-bellied Heron, Centurion*



Sue Oertli

*Short-clawed Lark, near Pilanesberg [Sue Oertli]*



Anthony Paton

*African Openbill, WSNBG [Anthony Paton]*

**Plover, White-fronted [Vaalstrandkiewiet]**

One bird was found at Rockwall Dam near Rustenburg, 3 Aug 2019 (HB).

A single bird was at Bronkhorstspruit Dam on 29 Oct 2019 (JvdW).



Rihann Geyser

Greater Sand Plover, Rust de Winter



Andy Featherstone

Sanderling, Marievale

**Sanderling [Drietonstrandloper]**

A single bird was at Marievale, 13 Oct 2019 (JM) (photo AF).

Two birds were found at Bronkhorstspuit Dam on 29 Oct 2019 (JvdW).

**Sandpiper, Green [Witgatruiter]**

On 20 Nov 2019 one bird was reported from the Vlei Bridge at Rietvlei NR (JR). *This species occurs annually at this locality.*

**Waxbill, Swee [Suidelike Swie]**

During the BLNG club camp at Eagle's Nest, situated adjacent to Ezemvelo NR and centred on Pentad 2535\_2900, this species was

encountered on a few occasions, 29 Oct 2019 (BLNG). *A highly localised species that is found regularly in the Wilge River valley in the north-east of the Greater Gauteng region.*

**Other interesting observations / Ander interessante waarnemings**

**Bee-eater, Swallow-tailed [Swaelsterbyvreter]**

11 birds were present in the blue gums at the entrance to Bronkhorstspuit Dam Nature Reserve, 10 Jul 2019 (JvdW).

**Owl, Southern White-faced [Witwanguil]**

One bird was again seen at the Sandton Field and Study Centre, 30 Sep 2019 (RM).

**Observers/ Waarnemers**

- Andy Featherstone (AF)
- Anthony Paton (AP)
- BirdLife Northern Gauteng members (BLNG)
- Etienne Marais (EM)
- Helen Badenhorst (HB)
- Jean van Rooyen (JvR)
- Jo Morrison (JM)
- Johan van der Walt (JvdW)
- Justin Nicolau (JN)
- Laura Jordaan (LJ)
- Michael Johnson (MJ)
- Pieter & Janelle Verster (P&JV)
- Richard Montinaro (RM)
- Rihann Geyser (RG)
- Sheleph Burger (SB)
- Sue Oertli (SO)

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

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# **BUFFELSDRIFT**

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