



Laniarius

No 142 March 2020



BirdLife Northern Gauteng
BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

Newsletter of BirdLife Northern Gauteng Nuusbrief van BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

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Laniarius is published three times annually. Articles should be e-mailed to laniariuseditor@blng.co.za. Contributions and advertisements are accepted at the discretion of the Editor. Digital photographic images are always welcome. Please submit images at their original resolution/size.

Kennisgewing aan bydraers

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

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Credits

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

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

From the Editor

Unity. Compassion. Patience. Simple pleasures.

It seems that even the marketing mails I receive are currently full of wisdom about how to think, feel and be in a time of Covid-19. The above set of directives is my favourite to date (all credit to faithful-to-nature.co.za), though I've also added a few of my own below:

Unity. Because our individual actions have a collective impact, and in ways that cannot always be foreseen.

Compassion. Because there is already a lot of suffering out there, and it is very, very unevenly distributed – and also completely beyond the resources of Government to address.

Self-sacrifice – the doing part of compassion. And the simplest and most important 'sacrifice' right now is whatever it takes to avoid infecting oneself and others.

Patience (and tolerance). Because some things are going to take a bit longer than usual and some aren't going to happen at all. And it's just not kind or helpful to add to anyone's stress right now.

Gratitude – to those on the frontlines of our health and other essential services.

Simple pleasures. Birding and other observations of the natural world must surely be one of these. Even if the slice of the world one can currently observe has been reduced to a sliver – this is an opportunity to enjoy some of the amazing detail in that. By their sudden absence, we are also learning to appreciate simple pleasures we may previously have taken for granted: going for a walk, visiting a nature reserve, and enjoying carefree social interaction.

What is the impact of a pandemic like this on the natural world? Aside from the romantic reports of 'animals taking back the planet' (btw those dolphins spotted in Venice were

not actually in Venice), in general, biodiversity science and conservation are negatively affected by current limitations. Activities like monitoring and research, alien plant control and endangered species protection are not happening to their full extent. Critical global meetings to address the climate and biodiversity crisis are likely to be postponed. Donations to environmental organisations and causes are probably down, as money and attention are diverted elsewhere. And people who have been convinced to base their livelihoods on the win-win economic activity of ecotourism are suddenly without an income. (On this note, please consider the opportunity that has been created by BLSA to [support our community bird guides](#) at this time.)

The clear skies over cities are real but are not going to last when reviving the economy becomes the only thing on national agendas. Yet the climate and biodiversity crisis is one that *can* threaten our water and food supplies, destroy homes, displace millions, and impact every species on the planet. If only the political will and decisive action of recent months could also be applied to addressing this looming disaster.

As the saying goes, in every crisis lies opportunity. Some have referred to a planetary reboot or tipping point, an opportunity for everyone on Earth to be inspired to use this time for some much-needed reflection – on what is essential, valuable, worth-fighting-for.

Unfortunately, a lot of people still seem to be spending their time trying to endlessly distract themselves. And all of us are probably wistfully longing for a return to 'normal' – whenever and whatever that will be. I am really hoping for something better than that.

Stay safe.

Tamsyn

From the Chair



The entire South Africa is currently caught up in a three-week total lockdown due to the worldwide Covid-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel all our events, starting with the Mapungubwe camp that was planned for the weekend of 21 March, the Pullen Easter camp as well as our April evening meeting and day outings until 17 April.

We will review all future events once the lockdown has been lifted and things have returned to normal. *Local is Lekker*, the theme chosen for the club for 2020, has suddenly become much more local than initially anticipated!

In view of the current crisis, we are requesting all our members to stay calm and healthy and to adhere to all Government regulations pertaining to health and movement issues. We suggest that you use this time wisely and spend some time improving your birding knowledge, even though we are all restricted to our gardens. You can get to know your garden birds really well – their sounds and their habits. Look for birds in flight, try to note the departure times of migrating birds, notice any new birds moving in, ID your neighbour's birds by sound, etc. Join the Birdlasser SA Lockdown Challenge and read the many interesting birding articles and stories on various Facebook and WhatsApp groups – these are all things we don't normally have time for.

The BLNG Committee started the year with our annual Bosberaad and strategy planning session at Wolphuiskraal during a very wet and rainy weekend in January. We had great plans with our *Local is Lekker* theme for the BLNG Birdlasser Challenge as well as the photography competition that we hope to use to create our very own BLNG calendar for 2021.

During the recent BLNG AGM we reflected on some of the highlights of the past year as well as the conservation strategy of our mother

organisation, Birdlife South Africa. The CEO of BirdLife South Africa (BLSA), Mark Anderson, was our guest speaker and gave us some insights into bird conservation at both local and international level.

As a club, we are very happy to report that BLNG is in a healthy state. Our membership numbers have stayed stable during the past year due to a consistent flow of new members, while on the financial side expenditure has matched our income.

BLNG continues to focus our conservation activities on citizen science, i.e., bird ringing and atlasing. Our ringing group, consisting of 29 active A-ringers and 9 C-ringers, ringed an impressive 8 754 birds during 2019. We have included a number of atlasing activities in our programme: BirdLasser training and support, and atlas-focused outings and camps. The highlight of these to date was definitely the Heuningvlei Atlas Bash in February. A total of 69 pentads were atlased with 45 pentads atlased for the first time. We are very thankful to our leader, André Marx, who worked through the 292 ORF's on behalf of the team. BLNG really made a difference to SABAP2 coverage in the area, but we would like to do a follow-up bash in the same area in the near future.

At this stage, however, our atlasing opportunities are limited to our garden birds. We are looking forward to resuming our birding activities once the virus is under control and our freedom to move around is re-instated.

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

Please keep safe and healthy.

Elouise

BIRDLIFE NORTHERN GAUTENG

**INCOME STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2019**

	2019 R	2018 R
INCOME	75,818	82,712
Subscriptions	75,818	82,712
OTHER INCOME	55,564	60,577
Donations received	8,893	10,257
Interest received	13,926	15,618
Nett proceeds from outings and camps	23,199	24,011
Nett proceeds from courses and special events	7,322	7,682
Nett proceeds from trading activities	2,224	3,009
TOTAL INCOME	131,382	143,289
LESS: EXPENDITURE	128,145	135,090
Audit fees	5,362	5,059
Bank charges	2,165	2,381
Bird ringing	10,000	10,000
Committee meeting expenses	3,520	2,640
Computer Expenses	-	1,749
Conservation expenses	6,000	23,174
Depreciation	-	-
Donations made	1,000	-
Evening meeting expenses	4,679	7,325
AGM and function expenses	4,887	5,937
Hall hire	8,250	8,250
Insurance	4,950	4,945
Leaders expenses	13,700	15,118
Marketing and promotion	1,651	1,170
Printing and stationery - General	706	1,325
Printing , envelopes and postage - Laniarius	2,031	1,413
Secretarial fees	48,000	43,560
Telephone & postage	-	270
Twoway radio expenses	11,244	774
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	3,237	8,199
ACCUMULATED FUNDS - beginning of year	231,298	223,099
ACCUMULATED FUNDS - end of year	234,535	231,298

BIRDLIFE NORTHERN GAUTENG**BALANCE SHEET AS AT
31 DECEMBER 2019**

	2019 R	2018 R
ASSETS		
Non current assets	4	4
Office and radio equipment	4	4
At costs	60,159	60,159
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	60,155	60,155
Current assets	252,166	249,035
Bank balance	44,023	52,828
Fixed deposit	199,247	185,321
Petty Cash	872	146
Prepayments and Advances made	800	5,740
Sundry Debtors	2,224	-
Advance Book Table	5,000	5,000
TOTAL ASSETS	252,170	249,039
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves	234,535	231,298
Accumulated funds	234,535	231,298
Current liabilities	17,635	17,741
Amounts received in advance	-	-
Ringers Trust Account	12,135	12,491
Creditors	5,500	5,250
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	252,170	249,039

BLNG trip to Garingboom Guest Farm and Port Alfred, November 2019

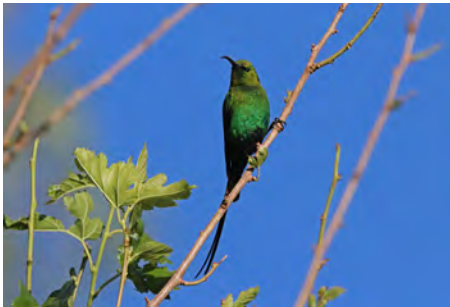
Robin Naude

Garingboom guest farm is a Merino sheep farm located on the border of the Karoo, in the southern Free State, approximately 150 km south of Bloemfontein, just off the N1. The habitats are a mixture of grassland and mixed *bossieveld*. The farm is named after the Garingboom as this plant is one of the outstanding features of the area. The Garingboom or American Aloe (Century plant, aka Karoo Christmas tree) is a very hardy, fibrous plant that grows in poor and shallow soil and thus aids in the prevention of erosion. Despite the southern Free State experiencing a drought at the time, Garingboom guest farm is a haven for birds and the birding was excellent.

The BLNG members (Rita, Joey and Flip, Klaus and Ria, Quinton and Gail, Robin and Sean, Jan, Petro, Renate and Ilse) met at supper on the farm on the evening of Tuesday 12 November. By this time some had lists of more than 30 birds and had already done the shorter 'Socks' trail on the farm. Our hosts Riëtte, Jan and Albi served a fantastic supper of lamb, roast potatoes and veggies.

Our first outing on Wednesday morning was to find the Burchell's and Double-banded

Coursers [Bloukop-, Dubbelbanddrawwertjie]. While waiting for breakfast we were treated to a displaying Malachite Sunbird [Jangroentjie]. After a delicious breakfast we set off in a convoy of cars each fitted with a radio. Riëtte Griessel was our very knowledgeable guide. We drove through Bethulie and Cloetespark to get to the Gariep Dam Nature Reserve on the Free State side of the dam. With a view of Gariep Dam and the Hennie Steyn bridge (which used to be the longest bridge in South Africa) we saw our first specials, Rufous-eared Warbler and Blue Korhaan [Rooioorlangstertjie, Bloukorhaan]. Rita and Sean atlased the pentad (3630-2555), reaching a total of 26 species. Specials seen were Burchell's Courser, Double-banded Courser, Northern Black Korhaan, Blue Crane, Caspian Tern and Kittlitz's Plover, as well as Red-capped, Eastern Clapper and Spike-Heeled Lark [Bloukopdrawwertjie, Dubbelbanddrawwertjie, Witvlerkkorhaan, Bloukraanvoël, Reusesterretjie, Geelborsstrandkiewiet, Rooikoplewerik, Hoëveldklappertjie, Vlaktelewerik]. Several birds were breeding and incubating eggs; eggs of Kittlitz's Plover and Burchell's Courser were seen. En route back to



Malachite Sunbird



Sean Naude

Burchell's Courser



Pink-billed Lark



Sean Neude

Grey Sunbird

Garingboom some stopped at Kuilfontein Farm Stall just off the N1, with Ria and Klaus having recommended it as a great place to have lunch.

On Wednesday afternoon the group set off to a neighbouring farm to see the nesting site of a Black Sparrowhawk [Swartspewer], with Capped Wheatear, Cape Longclaw, Pin-tailed Whydah and Ant-eating Chats [Hoëveld-skaapwagter, Oranjekeelkalkoentjie, Koning-rooibekkie, Swartpiek] spotted en route. The group climbed into the back of the bakkie for the last bit of the trip and we were fortunate to get a great view of the Black Sparrowhawk on its nest.

On the way back we stopped to watch a Verreaux's Eagle [Witkruisarend] soaring at the edge of a kopje. Pied Crows were in abundance, and a Pale Chanting Goshawk [Bleeksingvalk] was also spotted on the way back to the farm.

Wednesday night was spent in good company, sitting around the braai sharing stories while our hosts Jan and his son Albi braaied the lamb chops and wors. It threatened to rain but only a few drops fell. That night one could hear Rufous-cheeked Nightjar [Rooiwangnaguil] calling and a few also saw it on an early morning walk.

At 7 on Thursday morning the group set off in and on the back of Jan and Riëtte's bakkies to search for larks and sandgrouse on their farm. Birding standing on the back of the bakkie was excellent. The first birds seen were a pair of Red-breasted Swallows [Rooiborsswael]. The views all-around of the beautiful and open landscape were magnificent. The Eastern Clapper Lark's

call was sounding across the fields with the odd Cloud Cisticola and Desert Cisticola [Gevlekte Klopkloppie, Woestynklopkloppie] calling as well. The first stop was the dry dam where we saw what was once called a Long-tailed Pipit (but has since been lumped with Buffy Pipit [Vaalkoester] as being the same species). Riëtte explained that two pipits, the Long-tailed Pipit and the Kimberley Pipit, have been re-classified (see: <https://faansiepeacock.com/new-birds-in-southern-africa-a-tale-of-two-lists/>). Hundreds of Grey-backed Sparrowlarks [Gysruglewerik] were flying around. We spent some time at a waterhole where we saw Pink-billed Larks, Melodious Larks, Lark-like Bunting, Sickle-winged Chat and Namaqua Sandgrouse [Pienkbeklewerik, Spotlewerik, Vaalstreepkoppie, Vlaktespekvreter, Kelkiewyn].

At our last supper at Garingboom, a debate raged over whether a bird seen was a Lesser Masked Weaver [Kleingeelvink] (white eye, out of range), a Southern Masked Weaver [Swartkeelgeelvink] (mask correct, wrong eye, in range) or a Village Weaver [Bontrugwewer] (out of range, correct mask). Fortunately Quinton had managed to get a photo that the group could inspect. It was decided to get expert advice and Etienne Marais was consulted. He confirmed that it was a Southern Masked Weaver with a white eye!

An early morning Fairy Flycatcher [Feevlieëvanger] was added to the list on Friday, bringing the total for the house pentad (3020-2545) to 65. The group had their last farm breakfast of eggs, bacon, sausage and tomato. Rita thanked



Sean Neude

Olive Bush Shrike



Knysna Warbler

Riëtte on behalf of the group for looking after us so well. We said our goodbyes and set off for our next destination, the MyPond Hotel in Port Alfred.

The suggested route was through Bethulie, over Hennie Steyn bridge, along the banks of the Gariep Dam to Venterstad and then through Steynsburg, Hofmeyr, Cradock and Makhanda (Grahamstown). This was a lovely scenic route with very little traffic and no trucks.

A lunch stop was made at Daggaboer, a restaurant and farm stall with homemade goodies. Favourites were the roosterkoek with biltong and cheese and huge slices of homemade lemon meringue pie. The homemade soup is also delicious.

On Friday night we met our guide Tim Cockcroft to discuss the birdwatching plan for the next two days. We also met Daniel who was joining the group for the Port Alfred leg.

At MyPond Hotel the group was spoilt once again with a choice of delicious suppers every night. Favourites were:

- Hot or Not chicken roulade (stuffed with spinach, peppadew, camembert cheese)
- Gremolata linefish on a board of roast vegetables
- Cape Malay lamb shank served with mash potato and seasonal vegetables
- Ribs and chips
- Medallion of beef/rump steak served with sweet potato crisps, roast vegetables with a blue cheese sauce, topped with avo

On Saturday the group set off at 5:30. We were rewarded at our first stop along the Riet River, at Umtunzi Escape, with sightings of Red-Fronted Tinkerbird, Grey Sunbird, Narina Trogon, Olive Bush-Shrike, Knysna Woodpecker, Brimstone Canary, Dark-backed Weaver and African Crowned Eagle [Rooiblestinker, Gryssuikerbekkie, Bosloerie, Olyfboslaksman, Knysnaspeg, Dikbekkanarie, Bosmusikant, Kroonarend]. The Crowned Eagle had some youngsters and we were thrilled to see one of them circling overhead with its mother.

Tim heard an African Cuckoo Hawk [Koekoekvalk] calling and we were fortunate to see it circling overhead and to get a few photos. The Cuckoo Hawk returned a full out-of-range when submitted to SABAP.

We had breakfast under a beautiful shady tree canopy and could hear the Narina Trogon calling... or could it have been Tim?

We then set off to try to find the Mountain Wagtail [Bergkwikkie] at Birbury Farm. We drove through pineapple farms and spotted a Booted Eagle [Dwergarend] (with its landing lights). Unfortunately, we were unlucky in our quest to see Mountain Wagtail as well as Scaly-Throated Honeyguide [Gevlekte Heuningwyser]. It may have been too late in the day and too hot in the midday sun.

We then set off to the mouth of the Great Fish River and Tim had timed it perfectly – it was two hours after low tide and the waders were enjoying the sand banks that were partially covered with water. On arrival we saw

the Jacobin Cuckoo [Bontnuwejaarsvoël] and heard the Diederik Cuckoo [Diederikkie]. Two Common Greenshanks [Groenpootruiter] were wading in the shallows close by. Other wader highlights were the Terek Sandpiper, Little Stint, Common Whimbrel, Common Ringed Plover and Grey Plover [Terekruiter, Kleinstrandloper, Kleinwulp, Ringnekstrandkiewiet, Grysstrandkiewiet]. We also saw Cape Teal, Sandwich Tern, Kelp Gull, Grey Heron and Yellow-billed Duck [Teeleend, Grootsterretjie, Kelpmeeu, Blouereier, Geelbekeend] while Lesser Striped Swallows [Kleinstreepswael] and Little Swifts [Kleinwindswael] were seen flying around under the bridge.

After some great birding we stopped at the 'The Diner', just across the bridge from where we had been observing the waders, for coffee, ice-cream and toasted sandwiches. Amethyst Sunbird [Swartsuikerbekkie] was spotted in the tree outside and displayed nicely for us while we were eating lunch.

From there the group set off to the caravan park in Port Alfred. There is a small dam in the park and we observed two hadedas on a branch fighting over a female sitting close by. Other sightings were Reed Cormorant, Cape Weaver, Little Grebe, Yellow Kingfisher and



Sean Naude

Knysna Warbler

Common Starling [Rietduiker, Kaapse Wewer, Kleindobbertjie, Bontvisvanger, Europese Spreeu]. A little way from the caravan park a Knysna Warbler [Knysnaruigtesanger] was heard calling – a very loud and distinctive call. It was quite difficult to locate him in the huge bush he was calling from but the group was patient and we were rewarded with good sightings as he moved through the bush – the highlight of the day, as indicated by most in the group!

It was raining on Sunday 17 November and we set off in wet conditions to Penny's Hoek drift and the Kowie River to try again to find the



Sean Naude

At Kelly's Beach

Mountain Wagtail [Bergkwikkie]. Unfortunately, it eluded us once more but we did see Black Saw-wings [Swartsaagvlerswael] who were unperturbed by the rain. We also saw the Blue Riverjack dragonfly which occurs in the area and is a special sighting. Further along the Kowie there are some cliff faces where we had a great sighting of a Crowned Eagle in her nest and a nesting Booted Eagle [Dwergarend] pair.

From there we drove through grasslands and saw Cape Longclaw, Long-tailed and Fan-tailed Widowbirds, Pied Crows, Greater Striped Swallows, Diederik Cuckoo, Secretarybird and Denham's Bustard (the highlight) [Oranjekeelkalkoentjie, Langstertflap, Kortstertflap, Witborskraai, Grootstreepswael, Diederikkie, Sekretarisvoël, Veldpou].

We stopped in at Nature's View Farm Stall and were welcomed by the owners. The farm stall had the hugest queen pineapples for sale and home-made jams, preserves and sweets.

The stall's owners run a bed & breakfast located on the side of a cliff (Nature's View) and kindly gave us access to explore. I cannot describe the view. It was breath-taking. The group scanned the river winding below from the cliff face, and spotted African Darters and Yellow-billed Ducks [Slanghalsvoël, Geelbekeend] as well as Lanner Falcons [Edelvalk] flying below and a White-necked Raven [Withalskraai].

The final stop for the day and the trip was at Kelly's Beach in Port Alfred where we got to see African Black Oystercatcher [Swarttobie] and Sanderlings [Drietoonstrandloper] and enjoy the beach.

The group's bird count for Garingboom was 110, for Port Alfred 123, with a combined list for the trip totalling 206.

Contact details for our guides:

Riëtte Griesel: www.garingboom.co.za

Tim Cockcroft Birdwatching Tours: 072 314

0069; timwcroft@gmail.com 🐦

BLNG camp at Qôdesh: 24–26 January 2020

Philip Calinikos



Philip Calinikos

Birding Hephzibah

The weather prediction for the weekend did not augur well for the excited birders gathering for the camp. Some last-minute cancellations were on the cards as we pondered wet tents and tarpaulins. We had also been warned by the owner, Hestie van Biljon, that the shaded areas of the campsite were extremely muddy after the Wilge River had burst its banks by some 200 meters after some localized heavy rains!

Some exciting birds added flavour to the inward trip on Friday, with Lanner Falcon [Edelvalk], a colony of South African Cliff Swallows [Familieswael] and a Brown Snake Eagle [Bruinslangarend] being the highlights. Most of the caravan campers decided not to brave the mud and lined themselves up on the upper embankment. Only a couple of hardy

Philip Galimkos



The Qôdesh campers



Elouise Kalmer

European Honey Buzzard

souls were mad enough to venture down onto the soft turf soil at the river's edge!

The intended afternoon walk along the river front did not materialize. Unbeknown to us the neighbour had closed the path across his property preventing access. So we deviated to the main gravel road which dropped down to the low water bridge across the river. The river proved to be surprisingly quiet all weekend but a juvenile Black-chested Snake Eagle [Swartborsslangarend] flying overhead created some debate with its cryptically coloured plumage. Its tendency to hover frequently was a significant clue to its eventual identification.

Alternative plans were forged around the campfire that night as we were unsure as to what the skies would deliver in the morning. We awoke to heavily overcast conditions and it was decided to stick to Plan A which was a mainly car-bound outing... and thank goodness we did so.

Driving back towards the kloof we were rewarded by some superb birds in the grasslands. They were

Juvenile African Harrier-Hawk

feeding frenziedly as if they knew what weather was to come, and we enjoyed sightings of Cape Grassbird, Fan-tailed Widowbird, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler and Orange-breasted Waxbill [Grasvoël, Kortstertflap, Geelsanger, Rooiassie]. At the first wetland crossing a few lucky souls had a snapshot view of a Red-chested Flufftail [Rooiborsvleikuiken] as it fluttered over the road.

Upon entering a broad-leaved woodland section of the route we enticed a party of Green-capped Eremomelas [Donkerwangbossanger] to reveal themselves before the heavens opened! We splashed along gamely in our vehicles for the rest of the drive and our plan to climb Renosterkop was scuppered by low-hanging clouds which obscured it completely.

Fortunately, the weather cleared during lunch and we could enjoy a pleasant walk around the grounds of DealesRock (formerly Amanzimtaba) and up the forested gorge. The afternoon proved quiet with most birds recorded only by call, including one of the specials of the area, Ashy Flycatcher.

The next morning dawned spectacularly and we were rewarded with superb weather throughout the day. A visit to Hephzibah had promised to be the highlight of the trip and so it transpired.

Elouise Kalmer



The tranquility of the surroundings as we wended our way up the hiking trail towards the waterfall was suddenly pierced by the shrieks of a raptor screaming by. What was it? A juvenile Verreaux's Eagle [Witkruisarend] with weirdly shaped wings or something else? And the raptors kept on coming – giving us incredible views but proving so difficult to identify in flight. The cameramen and -lady amongst us were working overtime and shooting away. It seems that a camera is now a prerequisite in our birding equipment. Upon analysis of the evidence we discovered a most strangely coloured juvenile African

Harrier-Hawk [Kaalwangvalk], at least three different European Honey Buzzards [Wespedief], a Common Buzzard [Bruinjakksvoël] and a Brown Snake Eagle [Bruinslangarend].

After all the raptor excitement there was still a little time left for individual members to pick up a few very special birds, such as a River Warbler and Garden Warbler [Sprinkaansanger, Tuinsanger], to add to our list. Total count for the weekend was a respectable 152 species, confirming that Qôdesh Camp and the Wilge River Valley are a wonderful venue for future BLNG camps. 📷

BLNG uitstappie by Smutskoppie, 22 Februarie 2020

Jan Pretorius

In 'n amper mistige atmosfeer na die vorige nag se reën, het 27 klublede, nuwe lede en besoekers vroeg Saterdagoggend die bywoningslys ingevul, fooie betaal en opgewonde in die pragtige bome op die Smutsmuseum se werf begin rondkyk vir geveerde vriende – pette, verkykers, kameras, wandelstokke, en waterbottels in die hand.

Philip Calinikos se hartlike verwelkoming en verduideliking van die planne vir die oggend het gevolg en ons het aan die werk gesprink. Na die eerste paar treë het iemand 'n paar Gevlekte Muisvoëls [Speckled Mousebird] opgemerk en die ys was gebreek. Dit was aangenaam om deur die uitgestrekte tuin te wandel onder die bome deur.

Philip het kort-kort gestop om op sy rustige, outoritêre manier interessante inligting te deel. Hy het gesorg dat een en almal betrek is en kon hoor. Hy het selfs verduidelik wat die ooreenkoms tussen 'n koei en 'n Gevlekte Muisvoël is!

Die een na die ander identifikasie is gedoen – visueel maar ook volgens sang. Hierin het Philip en ander lede my verstom

– van voëlgeluide sal ek nog baie moet leer. Hadedas, Kuifkophoutkappers en Kaapse Glasogies [Hadedas Ibis, Crested Barbet, Cape White-eye] is aangeteken. Ringnekparkiete [Rose-ringed Parakeet] is kort-kort gesien of gehoor. Baie interessant was die bekyk en bespreek van 'n duidelike roofvoël hoog bo in 'n droë boom. Hy het met sy rug na ons gesit en af en toe rondgekyk. Omdat die afstand taamluk ver was, is selfs 600 mm kameralense ingespan om te help. Op die ou end het die grootte, die gelerige bene en wit kolle op die stert ons laat besluit op 'n Kleinsperwer [Little Sparrowhawk].

In die pragtige Plataanboomlaning het ons Grysneushoringvoëls [African Grey Hornbill] gehoor maar nie gesien nie. In die lang, nog nat gras was daar Geeloogkanarietjies, Swartkeelgeelvinke [Yellow-fronted Canary, Southern Masked Weaver] en Landeryklopkloppies [Zitting Cisticola] met hul tipiese 'zit' roep en vliegpatroon kombinasie.

Hierna het ons braaf kortpad geneem na Smutskoppie en die gedenkteken, deur 'n bloekombos met lang, nat gras, nou noodwendig



Sheleph Burger

in enkelgelid maar die gees was goed en ons is almal verras toe Philip 'n pragtige Bruinjakkalsvoël [Common Buzzard] tussen die takke deur bespeur het. Die voël was baie rustig en het ons toegelaat om almal saam te bondel totdat elkeen mooi kon sien. Terwyl ons teen die koppie uitgeklouter het, het 'n Rooineklewerik [Rufous-naped Lark] ons lang linie nuuskierig gade geslaan.

By die gedenkteken is dorstig aan waterbottels geteug en soetgoed gekou. Op die afwaartse roete, teen 'n gemaklike pas, is ons begelei deur die melodieuse sang van die Suidelike Waterfiskaal [Southern Boubou], Swartoogtiptolle [Dark-capped Bulbul] se

geskinder, Kwêvoëls, Gewone Tortelduiwe en Rooiborsduifies [Grey Go-away-bird, Cape Turtle Dove, Laughing Dove]. Onder in die vlei was verskeie flappe doenig in die gras.

Die lug het meer betrokke geraak en fyn druppeltjies het begin val maar ons was al naby aan die restaurant. Terwyl ons heerlike koffie en eetgoed genuttig het, het Philip die finale voëllys uitgelees – 'n volle 57 spesies. Dit was 'n baie aangename en rustige staptog deur pragtige natuurskoon met goeie geselskap en vernuftige begeleiding. Baie dankie aan Philip!

Ed: Wat is die ooreenkoms tussen 'n koei en 'n Gevlekte Muisvoël? Vind uit op bl. 42. 🐘

A 3D-printed leg for Legs the Secretarybird

South African members of the team that produced the world's first 3D-printed middle ear bones have applied their skills to help a Secretarybird called Legs find her stride again. Four years ago, Legs' left foot had to be amputated after being trapped in a snare, and since then she had had to hobble around her home at Eagle Encounters rehabilitation centre. Her new carbon-fibre prosthesis is hinged at the ankle and enables Legs to now walk with only a very slight limp detectable. Read the full story on Scibraai: <https://scibraai.co.za/legs-gets-an-extra-3d-printed-leg/>

Caring for the Endangered Thunderbird

This article, originally published in the [Summer Edition 2019/2020 – Issue 07](#) of [Safari News](#), is reproduced here with their kind permission.

The Southern Ground-Hornbill [Bromvoël] is the fastest-declining bird species in South Africa. Lucy Kemp, who manages the country's ground-hornbill metapopulation, talks to Safari News about the survival of this bird beyond the borders of its protected areas

Ground-hornbills are seen so often in the Greater Kruger National Park that many people might not be aware of the plight of this iconic savannah and grassland species. Within the borders of our greatest protected areas

they are
doing
well.

The groups are at capacity, with an average density of one family group every 80–100 km². They still face a few natural threats in these areas, such as predation by leopards, caracal, Martial Eagles [Breëkoparend] or African Crowned Eagles [Kroonarend], and the trees they nest in may be lost to elephant impacts or floods, fires and strong winds, but the population remains viable.

Outside protected areas, however, the ground-hornbill population lacks this protection and faces a myriad of human-induced threats. These include electrocution from landing on a transformer box, injury from broken glass when they attack their own reflections in windows, and even lethal responses from angry landowners. Simply being a charismatic bird may lead to capture for the avifauna trade, and some farmers continue to use indiscriminate poisoned baits to target 'pest' species. Shooting with lead ammunition and leaving offal in the veld for scavengers, or injuring animals, places species like the ground-hornbill at risk. The smallest amount of lead can prove fatal for these birds.

These are only a handful of threats, but for a slow-breeding, long-lived bird, it is enough to drive them to extinction.

At this critical stage, every group counts. There is only one breeding female per group, and the males protect her, her



nest and territory, and feed her and the chicks.

Fortunately, in some regions of South Africa there is a strong cultural association with the species. It is seen as the bringer or predictor of good rain and the thunder- or rain bird, as it is known, enjoys protection. There is concern that this protected status may disappear.

Ground-hornbills are resident in their territory, so many communities have a known and locally accepted family group of them in their region. This local-level conservation will keep the species from declining further. If each ground-hornbill group can have a cohort of people who share their habitat and protect their nest, and try to remove as many of the threats as possible, ground-hornbill groups will be much safer.

One of the conservation ideas is the reintroduction of ground-hornbills into areas where they have become locally extinct. The Mabula Ground Hornbill Project harvests the second egg from wild populations. These birds are hand-reared with the goal of releasing them back into the wild. Introductions are now taking place in many parts of the Limpopo Province and northern Zululand.

One of the key focus points is growing a core population in the southern Waterberg district of the Limpopo province. This population will ultimately join up with the remaining population in Botswana. Three fully functional groups have already been established, with another two scheduled for early 2020.

Two bush schools have been established at Loskop Dam Nature Reserve where the hand-reared chicks learn their bush skills. One of them is breeding successfully. A specialised centre, called The Baobab, opened in October 2018, and will be capable of rearing up to 15 new birds per year from 2020. This will allow the reintroduction programme to grow rapidly and to release three functional groups.

These groups, released to form cores of at least 10 groups, will secure the long-term sustainability of the populations. It is a monumental task, and to safeguard the 10 000 km² of habitat required to support these cores from known threats is no mean feat. A team

Juvenile ground-hornbills have yellow facial colouring, but this changes to red as they age



A Southern Ground-Hornbill in flight



Mabula Ground Hornbill Project

Ground-hornbills lay two eggs, but will care for one baby



Mabula Ground Hornbill Project

A ground-hornbill hatched at The Baobab from a harvested egg

Ground-hornbills have powerful beaks, and are top predators in the wild



Mabula Ground Hornbill Project

Five facts

- 2 500: The estimated number of ground-hornbills in South Africa.
- 200: The estimated number of ground-hornbill family groups in Kruger National Park.
- Thunder or rain bird: Their nickname, as they are associated with the first good rains of summer.
- Social hierarchy: There is an alpha breeding pair and the remaining group members are all subordinates, much like the African wild dog.
- 90%: The success rate with raising redundant chicks (the second egg) that would naturally die.

of conservation collaborators work tirelessly to support, protect and grow ground-hornbill populations, beyond the protected areas.

For more information, visit www.ground-hornbill.org.za

Secure a future for Southern Ground-Hornbills

Part from helping to hand-rear chicks, conducting research, undertaking reintroductions and conducting a nationwide education campaign, the team at the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project also focuses on constructing artificial nest boxes due to loss of suitable

nesting trees. You can assist by adopting a ground-hornbill today! Funds raised through the Safari News virtual adoptions portal support this project. Visit www.safarinews.org/adoptions for more details.

Safari News is an online news portal and quarterly publication sharing conservation and safari news, educating and giving back. The print copy is distributed at no cost at airport lounges, Park's shops and key distribution outlets around South Africa. Subscription copies are available, either delivered to your door (similar to a newspaper delivery) or via a PO Box address at R199 (excl VAT) for 6 issues. The digital version is available at www.safarinews.org and on both Issuu and Magzter at no charge.



Dynamic conservation partnership drives new Protected Area declarations in KZN's mistbelt grasslands

Birdlife South Africa: Howick, November 29, 2019

Conservation Outcomes (www.conservation-outcomes.org) and BirdLife South Africa (www.birdlife.org.za) have facilitated the declaration of two new mistbelt grassland Nature Reserves in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. Trewirgie Nature Reserve (470 ha) and Tillietudlem Nature Reserve (1487 ha) contribute significantly to the conservation of KwaZulu-Natal's natural heritage and particularly to endangered mistbelt grassland and the conservation of the Critically Endangered Blue Swallow [Blouswael]. There are less than 30 pairs of Blue Swallow left in South Africa while only 2% of the grassland biome is included in formal protected areas.

The mistbelt grasslands and forests in southern KZN have been systematically destroyed and fragmented over the last hundred years, and it is therefore essential that the remaining fragments are protected and managed to ensure the survival of the threatened Blue Swallow, Cape Parrot [Woudpapegaai] and other threatened species. These sites are also extremely important water catchment areas.

Trewirgie Nature Reserve contains some of the most pristine mistbelt grassland and Eastern mistbelt forest in KZN and, along with the Blue Swallow, is home to several threatened species, such as Cape Parrot, Southern Ground-Hornbill [Bromvoël], Samango Monkey and Oribi. The reserve has populations of at least 6 Endangered and 16 endemic (i.e. found nowhere else in the world) plant species.

Tillietudlem Nature Reserve forms part of the catchment of the Elands River which is a major tributary of the Umkomaas River.

The reserve has a high diversity of important endemic and Endangered grassland-associated animals, such as the Grey Crowned Crane [Mahem], Blue Crane [Bloukraanvoël], Southern Ground-Hornbill, Oribi and Midlands Dwarf Chameleon, to name a few.

The nature reserves are also original pilot sites for South Africa's first effective biodiversity tax incentive, section 37D, which allows the value of a nature reserve to be deducted from taxable income. This globally unique incentive is providing much-needed financial sustainability to South Africa's protected areas and rewards the dedication of private and communal landowners. The landowners are congratulated for making this significant commitment to conservation. The work was funded by the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, N3 Toll Concession, Mr Price Group, Grindrod Bank, and Woolworths (Bags 4 Good).



KZN mistbelt grassland and forest



Blue Swallow chicks on nest

The Conservation Outcomes–BirdLife South Africa partnership in KZN was set up to work towards securing further mistbelt grassland and forest areas and thereby supporting Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in its endeavours to meet their conservation targets. The partnership is also providing landowner support for conservation on private and communal land and access to dedicated tax deductions in collaboration with Wilderness Foundation Africa’s Innovative Finance team. This dynamic conservation NGO duo has combined skills and resources to maximize ‘bang for your conservation buck’.

About Conservation Outcomes

Conservation Outcomes is a registered non-profit organisation created to provide support to land that is being developed and managed for conservation outside of traditional state protected areas. The focus of the organisation is on securing remnant biodiversity, ecological integrity and resilience whilst contributing to poverty alleviation and meaningful socio-economic development in rural southern Africa through the development of the conservation and wildlife sector.

About BirdLife South Africa

BirdLife South Africa is a registered non-profit and public benefit organisation whose aim is to see a country and region where nature and people live in greater harmony, more equitably and sustainably. BirdLife South Africa strives to conserve birds, their habitats and biodiversity through scientifically based programmes, through supporting the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources and by encouraging people to enjoy and value nature. 🐦

Ringershoekie

BLNG Ringgroep

Moreleta NR: 2 November 2019

Hierdie ringgeleentheid het nie plaasgevind nie weens die reën.

Bushtrails, Magaliesburg: 23–24 November 2019 (Leier: Elba Swart)

Net Elba Swart, Martin en Paula Steyn en Marié Ueckermann het hierdie naweek bygewoon. Al was hulle min, het hulle tog 24 voëls gevang oor die 2 dae, wat 12 spesies verteenwoordig. Net een hervangs is gedokumenteer. Interessante spesies was Streepkopkanarie [Streaky-headed Seedeater], Vaalkoester [Buffy

Pipit], Kardinaalspeg [Cardinal Woodpecker], Kleinheuningwyser [Lesser Honeyguide], Luitinkinkie [Lazy Cisticola] en ’n Swartkroontjagra [Black-crowned Tchagra].

Rietvlei NR: 7 Desember 2019

Hierdie ringgeleentheid het ook uitgereën.

Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Centre: 16–20 Desember 2019 (Leier: Anita Michel)

Agt A-ringers het hierdie warm kamp naby Orpenhek bygewoon. Die groep het altesaam 171 voëls hanteer in die 5 dae, waarvan

Wanda Louwrens



Johan en doringbome is nie maats nie. Dit was 'n spanpoging om sy nette weer doringvry te kry. Vlnr is Wanda, Frik, Jeannie, Jan, Anita en Johan.



Liz Peltz

Arrie Klopper (middel), Martin en Paula Steyn klink 'n glasie op Arrie se 500ste voël

Eloa Swart



Arrie besig met die hantering van die 500ste voël ten aanskoue van sy gesin – Ronell en tweeling Melissa en Elaine

22 hervangste was. Dit verteenwoordig 46 verskillende spesies. Die persentasie hervangste was 12.9%. Oulike spesies was: Spotsanger



Francie O'Brien

Paula Steyn meet die Piet-my-vrou

[Icterine Warbler], waarvan ons 2 individue gekry het, en Hofsanger [Willow Warbler], waarvan 21 voëls hanteer is. Ook Grootglansen Witpenspreeu [Burchell's and Violet-backed Starling], Europese Wielewaal [Eurasian Golden

Oriole], Witkeelsanger [Common Whitethroat]. Verskeie van ons ringers het *lifers* gekry in dié tyd. In die aande is daar heerlik gebraaie en sommige dae het ons sommer ingery Wildtuin toe en by Satara middagete geëet. Een dag het Johan de Jager se nette in die doringbome beland en dit was omtrent 'n spanpoging om die nette weer skoon te kry.

**Bishopvoëlpark, Rooihuiskraal, Pretoria:
21 Desember 2019 (Leier: Marina Pienaar)**

Net drie ringers kon in hierdie besige tyd van die jaar by die voëlpark gaan ring. Tog het hulle goed gedoen en 61 voëls hanteer, waarvan 13 spesies. Hervangste was goed. Die 12 hervangste het 'n goeie persentasie van 19.7% opgelewer. Besondere spesies was Hofsanger [Willow Warbler], Swartsuikerbekkie [Amethyst Sunbird] en Koningrooibekkie [Pin-tailed Whydah].

**Bushrails, Magaliesburg: 21 Desember 2019
(Leier: Elba Swart)**

Elba, Paula en Martin, asook 'n C-ringer, Arrie Klopper, het hierdie Saterdag voor Kersfees gou gaan ring naby Magaliesburg. Dit is hier waar Arrie sy 500ste voël gering het. Nou moet hy nog net geëvalueer word om as A-ringer te kwalifiseer. Al was die groep klein, het hulle 'n allemintige 62 voëls in die nette gekry. Daarvan was 23 van verskillende spesies soos Paradysvlieëvanger [African Paradise Flycatcher], Spookvoël [Grey-headed Bush-Shrike], Rooikeelflap [Red-collared Widowbird], Bergkanarie [Black-throated Canary] en 'n Rooirugstreepkoppie [Golden-breasted Bunting]. Die hervangspersentasie was besonder hoog, naamlik 25.8%, wat 16 individue verteenwoordig.

**Voortrekker Monument: 28 Desember 2019
(Leier: Elba Swart)**

Nou al 'n instelling ons eindjaar ringgeleentheid, en met hierdie ring het ons die 2019 ook op 'n hoogtepunt afgesluit. Tien ringers het nette op die Suikerbosrand neffens die hoofingang na hierdie historiese kompleks opgeslaan. 'n Totaal van 141 voëls is hanteer,



Francis O'Brien

Janine Goosen with Cape Glossy Starling



Wanda Louwrens

Nylsvlei: Die werkstasie is sommer in die pad opgeslaan

wat 34 spesies verteenwoordig. 'n Goeie getal van 36 voëls was hervangste, wat die persentasie opgestoot het na 25.5%, wat baie goed is. Die spesie wat uitgestaan het was die Piet-my-vrou [Red-chested Cuckoo] wat Paula Steyn gering het. Dan was daar 'n paar rekord vangste – 6 x Diederikkies [Diederik

Cuckoo], 5 x Tuinsangers [Garden Warbler] en ook 'n Kleingeelvink [Lesser Masked Weaver] mannetjie in pragtige broeikleure. Die oudste hervang was 'n Swartkeelgeelvink [Southern Masked Weaver] wat op 24 Julie 2010 die eerste keer reeds as 'n volwasse voël op presies dieselfde plek gering is, 'n merkwaardige 3444 dae later, of te wel 9 jaar 5 maande en 9 dae. Natuurlik kan geen eindjaar geleentheid sonder die gebruikelike braai wees nie en het ons heerlike worsbroodjies geniet.

Nylsvlei Ringkamp: 3–5 Januarie 2020 (Leier: Madeleen van Loggerenberg)

Op Vrydag het 20 ringers by Nylsvlei bymekaar gekom vir 'n lekker ringkamp. Ons het een van die huise met nege kamers, wat ons vol gepak het, asook 'n paar kampplekke bespreek. Ons het toestemming gekry om in die reservaat nette op te sit. Saterdagoggend was baie wonderig en ons het ongeveer 'n kilometer oos van Jacana-voëlskuiling gering. Sondagoggend het ons naby die droë Jacana nette opgesit. Ons het 192 voëls gevang waarvan 4 hervangste was. Oulike spesies was soos volg: Piet-my-vrou, Rooiwangnaguil, Kleinbyvreter, Geelborswillie, Rooibekneushoringvoël, Grootrietsanger, Grootglanspreeu [Red-cheested Cuckoo, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Little Bee-eater, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Red-billed Hornbill, Great Reed Warbler, Burchell's Starling].

Wonderboom NR: 11 Januarie 2020 (Leier: Madeleen van Loggerenberg)

Om 4:00 ontmoet 13 ringers by die hek van Wonderboom NR. Ons het 129 voëls gevang waarvan 17 hervangste was. Om 08:00 het Malindi Nelson en haar seun Duncan, albei lede van BLNG, by ons aangesluit vir 'n baie interessante oggend. Ons het ook Arrie Klopper se finale Safring evaluering gedoen wat hy met vlieënde vaandels geslaag het. Hy is nou as 'n volwaardige A-Ringer geregistreer by Safring. Oulike spesies wat die groep in die Reservaat gering het, was: Bruinkopvisvanger, Kleinheuningwyser, Tuinsanger, Streepkopkanarie, Rooibeksysie, Bandkeelkleinjantjie [Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Lesser Honeyguide, Garden Warbler, Streaky-headed Seedeater, Common Waxbill, Bar-throated Apalis].

Rietvlei NR: 18 Januarie 2020 (Leier: Chris du Plooy)

Twaalf A-ringers en twee C-ringers het hierdie reënigerige oggend naby die Groot Lapa in Rietvlei Natuurreervaat getrotseer. Die vangste was besonder goed, met 314 voëls wat gehanteer is. Dit het 26 spesies gereflekteer. Die 34 hervangste het 'n persentasie van 10.8% opgelewer. Die getalle is opgemaak deur 124 Swartkeelgeelvinke [Southern Masked Weaver] en 77 Rooivinke [Southern Red Bishop] en 19 Kleinrietsangers [African Reed Warbler]. Ander spesies was Diederikkie [Diederik Cuckoo], Neddekkie [Neddicky] en Vleitinkinkie. 🐦

Grootsterretjie

Christo Siebert

Die Lookout strand by Plettenbergbaai, naby die monding van die Keurboomsrivier, is bekend vir die groot hoeveelhede seevoëls en veral die Kelpmeeu [Kelp Gull], Bruinroofmeeu [Subantarctic Skua] en Swarttobie [African Black Oystercatcher]. Daar word deur die plaaslike voëlklub baie moeite gedoen om veral die voëls wat broei te beskerm, via die gebruik van

kenningsgewingborde en om broeigebiede af te sper.

Terwyl ek op 2 Januarie vanjaar langs die strand geloop het, het ek op die oorskot van 'n sterretjie [tern] afgekom. Ek was veral beïndruk deur die lengte van die primêre vere, wat bewys het dat die voël 'n baie ver afstand moes gevlieg het. Nadere ondersoek het getoon

dat daar 'n ring op die poot is. Groot was my verbasing toe ek sien dat die ring afkomstig is van 'n museum in Denemarke.

Ek het Safring met die besonderhede gekontak. Binne 'n kwessie van twee dae kry ek terugvoer dat die voël, 'n Grootsterretjie [Sandwich Tern], deur die 'Copenhagen Scheme, Denmark' op 27 Mei 2017 op die klein eiland Sprogø naby die kUSDorp Korsør, in Sjælland, 105 km suid-wes van Kopenhagen, gering is.

Die voël is 'n nie-broeinde migrant wat die Kaapse strande vanaf Oktober elke jaar bereik om weer in Maart/April na die Noordelike Halfrond se somer terug te keer. Sodoende vlieg hierdie spesie jaarliks ongeveer 20 000 km. Hulle kos bestaan hoofsaaklik uit klein vis wat verkry word wanneer die voël vanaf 'n relatiewe hoë hoogte, en teen 'n asemrowende spoed, binne die see duik.

Ek het intussen ook kontak gemaak met



Michèle Lambert

Grootsterretjie/Sandwich Tern

Jacop Sterup, die persoon wat die voël op Sprogø gering het. Volgens hom is dit hulle derde geringde Grootsterretjie wat by ons Kaapse kus gekry is.

Hierdie vonds is beslis 'n hoogtepunt van my voëlring ervarings en bewys weereens die wonders van die natuur. 🐦

Linking SABAP2 reporting rates to bird density estimates

Dr Alan Lee (Research Associate @ FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town)

Ernst Retief (BirdLife South Africa)

Sanjo Rose (Southern African Bird Atlas Project)

Introduction

Bird conservationists regularly face the following two questions, how many *species* do you have in an area, such as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA), and how many *individuals of a species*? The first question can be answered relatively easily using data from the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2). However, answering the second question is a bit more problematic as we do not count the number of birds seen when atlasing. The theory is that we can use reporting rates to answer

this question in part, but it still needs work. This is precisely what Dr Alan Lee recently did and he shared some of his thoughts in a blog post (see <https://bluehillescape.blogspot.com>). He agreed that we can share the post with our bird club members; although a bit technical, the overall message is a simple one, the SABAP2 data are extremely valuable for so many reasons, so please consider becoming an atlaser! If you need more information about the project please visit the SABAP2 website (<http://sabap2.adu.org.za/>) or email Sanjo Rose at sabap2@birdlife.org.za.

Blog Post by Dr Alan Lee

Reporting rate is the most commonly used abundance measure derived from SABAP2 data and reflects how many times a species appears per pentad; or set of pentads. Intuitively, species with high reporting rates should be more abundant, i.e. have a higher density, measured as the number of individuals per unit area. But reporting rate might also be influenced by differences in the ease with which species are detected. Factors that might affect detection rate in addition to abundance include bird size, sentinel and vocal behaviour, as well as the habitat in which a species occurs.

For example, density estimates of Cape Rockjumper are between 1 and 5 individuals per km² across their range, Cape White-eye occur at a density of 40–50 individuals/km² in Fynbos, while Lark-like Bunting occurs at a density of 20–500 individuals/km². By comparison, SABAP2 reporting rates are 5–15% for

Cape Rockjumper, 50–60% for Cape White-eyes and 15–25% Lark-like Buntings. Larger, louder birds also tend to have higher reporting rates compared to their densities: Karoo Korhaan for instance has a reporting rate of 35–40%, despite occurring at a density of 1–2/km². So, while reporting rates broadly reflect densities, these relationships are confounded by habitat, size and life-history traits. This means we can't just compare reporting rates between species to say one species is more common. But what about within one species range? Does higher reporting rate in some locations mean the species is more common there?

Recently I explored the relationship between density and reporting rate in pentads for several species in the southern Karoo region. Our team calculated pentad specific density estimates for 49 species and compared these to reporting rates, finding

Karoo Chat range and density

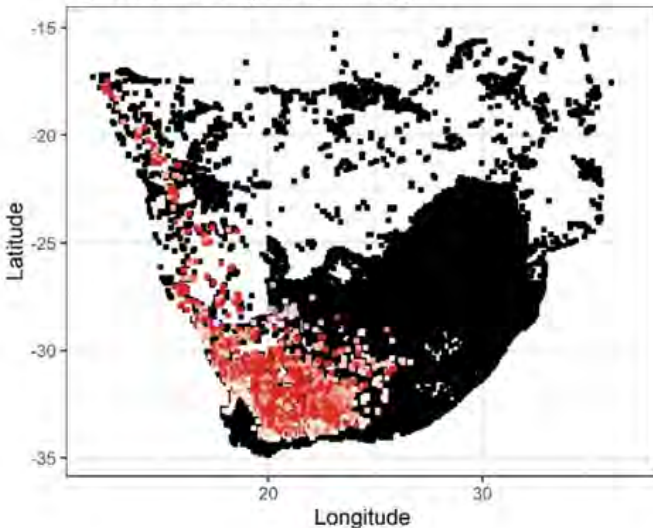


Figure 1: SABAP2 website now displays reporting rate as a gradient, which allows one to get an idea of abundance within a range: in this case red indicates high abundance, while pink indicates low abundance.

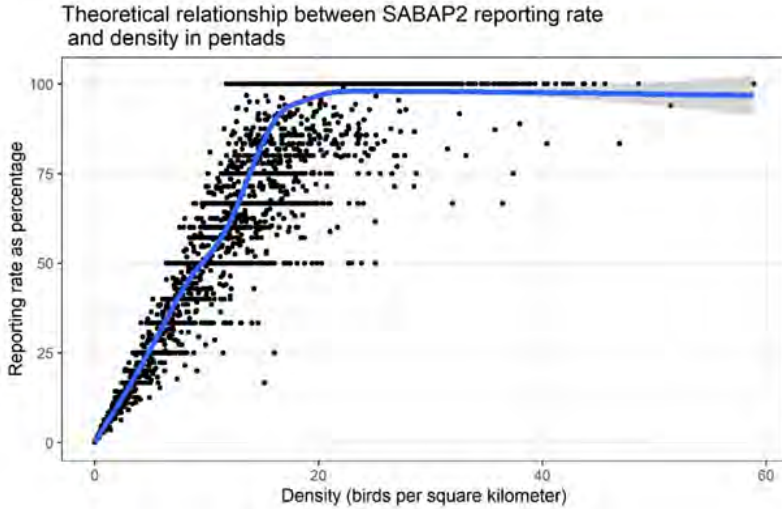


Figure 2: This chart illustrates the theoretical relationship for a hypothetical species, where increasing reporting rate is correlated with increasing real abundance in pentads across the species range. However, the species reaches an upper density threshold where this relationship fails to provide more information on abundance: when reporting rates reach levels close to 100% then density estimates in this case could be ANY figure upwards of 20 birds per km².

a good match for 75% of these. That means for a given species, as a general rule higher reporting rate generally means the species is more common.

But what about the exceptions to the rule? The species for which there was no clear link between reporting rate and abundance were generally the most common species. This is because they have high reporting rates, and reporting rate has an upper threshold of 100%. However, density estimates have no upper limit: for Cape Sparrow a reporting rate of 100% can mean a density estimate of 2, 10 or 50. The only way to get around this is to have many, many, cards for a set of pentads (a hundred or more), where the required detail then becomes apparent. A repercussion of this is that for common species with high reporting rates we may not be able to detect declines using SABAP2 data.

Generally, though, the implications for this are that we can have greater confidence in the information derived from the SABAP2 in terms of what reporting rates are telling us for a species. For instance, consistent declines in reporting rate over time are likely due to local declines in density: as long as we are consistent in our atlasing efforts.

With SABAP2 rolling forward, it also means that nearly all information required to make decisions regarding a species conservation status using IUCN criteria can now be acquired from SABAP2 data: range sizes and population trends, and for some species, population sizes. That is a great achievement, which anyone who has ever submitted a list to SABAP2 can be proud of, although there are certainly species for which field work will be required: Hottentot Buttonquail being a case in point.

A record-breaking pentad

Jason Boyce

Originally published by the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2, as Number 11 in the SABAP2 Reports Series (you can read other atlasing tales here:

<http://sabap2.birdmap.africa/media/stories#pgcontent>)

Wow, like most bird species, time truly does fly! When one puts a four- or five-day effort into a single pentad and atlas card, there must surely be a story behind it. Here is our story on trying to break the national atlas card record... again.

Some time back, in the winter of 2019, a message comes through on my cell from Pieter Verster about how Pentad 2520_3150 (http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage/pentad/2520_3150) is delivering 'big time' – in winter! An atlas card of 200 in winter got the ball rolling for an attempt to once again break the national atlas card record of 231 set in the Rooiwal Pentad back in November of 2018.

The pentad we set our sights on is one that over 150 atlasers have done and to date has 437 Full Protocol Cards and a species list of well over 350 – it is most well-known for including Crocodile Bridge rest camp as well as Ngwenya Lodge! If you set out to try a big card you know that there are two things you need to do, spend time (what will feel like a lifetime) and explore every habitat possible (leave no stone unturned as they say... or is it no tern un... never mind!).

In a nutshell the reasons that we targeted this pentad were that we could access a decent portion of Kruger itself, much of the Crocodile River through various farm accesses, and of course the farmland in the south with many productive farm dams.

Mpumalanga once held the atlas card record with an Mkhombo Dam card of 217 but perhaps it was time for the Lowveld proper to hold the record.

Our team, consisting of myself, Pieter and Janelle Verster and Eduard Teichardt, set off on the 26th of November 2019 and planned

to start the bash the next morning before the sparrows started farting. We actually stayed outside the pentad (which was not ideal) and to our frustration flushed a Common Buttonquail [Bosveldkwarteltjie] about 200 m outside the pentad. The first bird I



One of three pairs of African Pygmy Goose



You need some luck in a big card: a single Lesser Jacana

logged was a Burchell's Coucal [Vleiloerie] at 04:00:46 – the challenge had begun. In our scouting time (including many a phone call to various farmers and landowners in the vicinity) we arranged very good access to various sites. This is crucial. A private woodland in the south-west of the pentad proved to be one of our most productive spots; here we added nocturnal species such as Spotted Thick-knee, African Barred Owllet, Southern White-faced Owl and Western Barn Owl [Gewone Dikkop, Gebande Uil, Witwanguil, Nonnetjie-uil] (the latter two species we only added on Day 4), as well as diurnal species such as Eurasian Golden Oriole, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Black-bellied Starling, Eastern Nicator, Black Cuckooshrike, Bearded Scrub Robin and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting [Europese Wielewaal, Stierlingse Sanger, Swartpensglansspreeu, Geelvlleknikator, Swartkakoeroe, Baardwipstert, Klipstreepkoppie]. All these species have a less than 5% reporting rate (RR) in the pentad. We shot off to bird some farmland and dams in the south and were richly rewarded: African Swampphen, African Pygmy Goose (3 pairs), White-backed Duck and a single Lesser Jacana [Grootkoningriethaan, Dwerggans, Witrugeend, Dwergrangtoon] – all, of course, a less than 2% RR. Bird Number 100, Bronze Mannikin [Gewone Fret], came in at 06:41 and Bird 150, Burchell's Starling [Grootglansspreeu], the same morning at 10:05.

Crazy birders that we are, we actually left the pentad on Day 1 (I repeat, WE LEFT THE PENTAD) for exactly 25 hours to twitch the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Maputo! A couple of Rosy-throated Longclaws [Rooskeelkalkoentjie], a few awesome waders and a 95-species Full Protocol Card were all we had to show for our efforts though – we dipped the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Entering back into the pentad felt like a serious relief – what did we miss, we wondered? In the heat of the afternoon and after many efforts scouring all the large *Ficus* trees along the Crocodile River we finally managed to find the only Black-throated Wattle-eye [Beloogbosbontrokkie] pair in the pentad – the elation was awesome! We entered Kruger once again and added a decent number of the



A male Black-throated Wattle-eye



Regional rarity: Red-headed Finch

All 3 photos: Jason Boyce



A magical sighting of a serval outside Kruger

more common Kruger Park species as well as a few specials. A small family of Red-headed Finch [Rooikopvink] were sighted along the



A nice comparison (left to right) of Sand Martin, Barn Swallow and Grey-rumped Swallow



All 3 photos: Jason Boyce

No. 231: Southern White-faced Owl



Southern Ground-Hornbill

main road and a Eurasian Hobby [Europese Boomvalk] took us to 200 on the evening of Day 3. We also thoroughly enjoyed a serval busy hunting in the long grass alongside a main road near Marloth Park – atlasing always brings about great surprises.

The morning of Day 4 was excellent: we picked up Harlequin Quail [Bontkwartel] (a

strange sighting of a bird on the brick road in Ngwenya lodge), Black Heron, African Mourning Dove, Croaking Cisticola, Ruff, Holub's Golden Weaver and Greater Striped Swallow [Swartreier, Rooioogtortelduif, Groottinkinkie, Kempphaan, Goudwewer, Grootstreepswael]. In the afternoon we had our only sighting for the card of Temminck's Courser, Woolly-necked Stork, Marsh Sandpiper and Yellow-billed Kite [Trekdrawwertjie, Wolnekkooievaar, Moerasruiter, Geelbekwou]. We equalled the previous atlas card record that evening with Southern White-faced Owl [Witwanguil] and broke the record at 19:01 that evening with a Western Barn Owl [Nonnetjie-uil] screeching overhead. We ended the card on a pretty massive 247 species after finally adding Marabou Stork, Cape Vulture and Southern Ground-Hornbill [Marabou, Kransaasvoël, Bromvoël] in Kruger and Brown Snake Eagle and Western Osprey [Bruinslangarend, Visvalk] just outside Kruger.

Just as with previous big card efforts, half the battle is won before you set foot in the pentad. Well done to Pieter and the team on the hard work acquiring access to private farms, bringing a strong conservation message across to lodges and landowners. We also did a lot of work to find out exactly where we needed to target which species – knowing a pentad's potential species is a great help too. We put in an amazing 58 hours of birding time and drove around 500 km in the 9.23 x 8.39 km block over 4 days.

Our biggest dips by RR were African Openbill, Amethyst Sunbird, African Stonechat, Cape Wagtail, Fiery-necked Nightjar, White-headed Vulture, Yellow-bellied Greenbul and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird [Oopbekooievaar, Swartsuikerbekkie, Gewone Bontrokkie, Gewone Kwikkie, Afrikaanse Naguil, Witkop-aasvoël, Geelborswillie, Geelblestinker]. Some of these we know to have a winter movement into the region and some we suspect to be mostly misidentified species. A big atlas card always produces a few Ouma rusk!

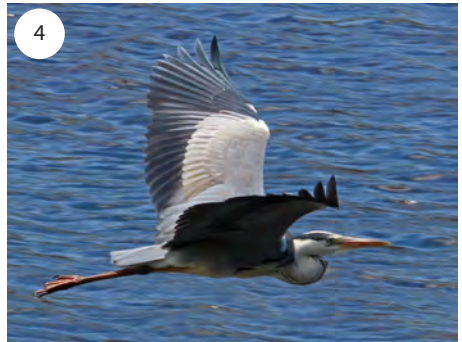
Thanks for taking the time to read our story. There are always more birds! 🐦

Bloureier fotoverhaal

Matthys van der Hout

Tydens die Desember 2019 vakansie was ons in die Grootbrak omgewing. Terwyl ek vanuit my motor langs die Grootbrakrivier die watervoëls dophou, kom daar 'n Bloureier [Grey Heron] aangevlieg. Hy duik skielik af tussen die riete en pik 'n eend kuiken uit sy nes uit, terwyl

die ma-eend droewig kwakend toekyk. Die reier vlieg na die waterkant, met die kuiken agter die kop beet, waarna hy die kleinding verorber. Die reier sluk maar ongemaklik aan die maal. En dit alles gebeur net binne 'n paar oomblikke. Na so minuut of wat het die reier volpens weggevlieg.



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.*

Riël Franzsen, Kurt Zsilavec, André Marx, Anand Bauchoo, Ian Alexander

Kuifkopdobbertjie hofmakery

Matthys van der Hout

Tydens die Desember 2019 vakansie in die Wildernis omgewing, is ons een oggend vroeg na die Malachite voëlskuiling langs een van die vleie. Daar is altyd 'n verskeidenheid

van watervoëls te sien. Hierdie keer was ons gelukkig om die hofmakery van 'n paar Kuifkopdobbertjies [Great Crested Grebe] waar te neem. 🦢



Toe die mannetjie nader kom, lê die wyfie haar kop plat op die water



Om sy bedoelings te bevestig dra die mannetjie nesmateriaal aan



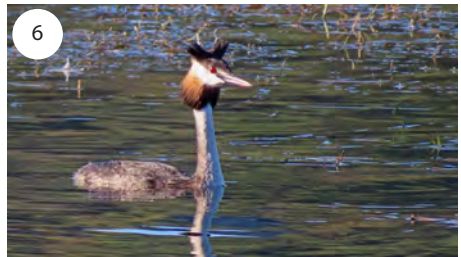
Die mannetjie 'praat' met haar



Die wyfie aanvaar die mannetjie



In onderdanigheid buig die wyfie haar kop



Die mannetjie swem trots en pronkend weg

Yellow-bellied Greenbuls breeding in Pretoria North

Neels Roos

Over the 56 years of our stay here at the foot of the Magaliesberg in Pretoria North my wife has created a wild well-wooded garden with many food-providing bushes and trees and numerous water baths. This setup ensures that one is bound to see, in addition to the regular local garden birds, the arrival of a totally unexpected species once in a while, provided you spend time outdoors and are not glued to the TV or your laptop. This has happened quite a few times, with brief arrivals of, amongst others, a little Grey-backed

Camaroptera [Grysrugkwêkwêvoël], a Klaas's Cuckoo [Meitjie], an African Harrier-Hawk [Kaalwangvalk], a group of White-crested Helmet-Shrikes [Witelmaksman] and even a Collared Flycatcher [Withalsvlieëvanger] pair that stayed for nearly a week (illustrated on p. 371 of Sasol Birds of Southern Africa, 4th ed.)

The latest totally unexpected newcomer which, contrary to those mentioned above, found the location to their liking and elected to stay on, is a pair of Yellow-bellied Greenbuls [Geelborswillie]. Having seen them elsewhere a few times previously gave me the advantage of recognizing one immediately the moment it perched in a Chinese Maple tree underneath which I was braaiing the *choppies* on 1st November 2018. It soon became evident that there were two of them around, obviously a pair. Reporting this to Philip Calinikos I was informed that the species was apparently migrating southward and was already quite common in the Waterberg region further north. To cut a long story short, they are still around in our garden at least 16 months later. We regularly see mostly one at a time at one of the water baths and very occasionally the two of them flitting around amongst the shrubs and feasting on a variety of seeds-in-season. They tend to be unobtrusive and usually keep to the dense shrubbery.

Philip urged me to be on the lookout for their nest because that would be a first nesting report for Pretoria. Although I did look for a nest a few times my enthusiasm eventually dissipated. Imagine my surprise and delight when, on 13th February, my wife spotted a parent feeding a juvenile and immediately informed me. It was already late afternoon, but I located them again and could confirm that it was being fed by a parent several times. It was



Ingrid Roos

One of the many birdbaths in the garden

no longer newly fledged and once flew past me, not escorted by a parent, to the ground next to a birdbath where it pecked at things on the ground briefly before flying up to the birdbath where it took a few sips before returning to the shrub where it had been fed previously. We only spotted the one, but I suppose there may have been more youngsters hidden in the dense vegetation. This bird resembled the adults except that the lower mandible was yellowish, and a slight suggestion of a yellow gape was still evident. The colour of the eyes was no longer grey as reported in the books but appeared to be quite dark and almost black instead of reddish, but that may have been due to the inclination of the sun's rays at the time. Some filoplumes were evident on its hindneck and the secondary coverts also appeared to not be fully developed. My wife saw the youngster again close-up 2 days later but unfortunately did not have her cell phone with her to

photograph it. The only conclusion one can come to is that they have definitely bred here in Pretoria North.

Finally, I must mention the peculiar and very distinctive way in which the adults take a bath. Other birds normally enter the water and splash around flicking their wings rapidly before exiting and preening themselves. The YBG would sit on the edge of the bath, fly in a short distance to do just a belly-flop and in the process immediately turn around and fly back to the edge again. This they do several times before preening themselves. They are normally not at all aggressive to other species at the birdbath. That is the prerogative of the Karoo Thrushes [Geelbeklyster]! But recently I once noticed that the adult was aggressive to a Dark-capped Bulbul and a Cape White-eye [Swartoogtiptol, Kaapse Glasogie]. I assume this is due to their current role of parenthood! 🐦

Zimbabwe en Mosambiek toer, 7–22 December 2019

Pieter Heslinga

Twee jaar gelede het ek en Joël na die voorreg gehad om saam met Rob Geddes, Toni Geddes, John Kinghorn en ander in Mosambiek te gaan voëls kyk. Dit was ons eerste keer en ons het dit verskriklik geniet. Die weer het saamgespeel en ons het baie nuwe voëls gesien. Ons was van suid na noord tot by die Zambezirivier en het baie *specials* gesien: Roeskopbyvreter, Dubbelsnip, Bloukwartel, Groentinker, Knopsterttroupan [Böhm's Bee-eater, Great Snipe, Blue Quail, Green Tinkerbird, Racket-tailed Roller], en baie ander. Maar natuurlik ook geglip op ander *specials* soos Angolapitta, Olyfkopwewer, Vleitjagra [African Pitta, Olive-headed Weaver, Marsh Tchagra] en nog baie ander.

Daarom wou ons graag weer gaan en het ons na 'n geskikte toer gesoek met tye wat by

ons program sou pas en wat hierdie keer ook Zimbabwe sou insluit. Ons was gelukkig om van Niall Perrins van Bustards Birding Tours te hoor wat 'n toer sou doen wat beide Zimbabwe en Mosambiek insluit. Dit het ons die geleentheid gegee om nie net weer in Mosambiek te kom nie, maar ook in Zimbabwe te gaan voëls kyk. Was dit nie lekker nie! Ons kon nog 'n klompie *lifers* by ons lewenslysie voeg.

Ons roete vir die 2 weke was min of meer soos volg: via Francistown in Botswana en by die Plumtree grenspos oor na Zimbabwe, daarna Masvingo en Mutare, deur die grenspos by Machipanda, oor na Beira in Mosambiek, dan noord na Catapu (naby Inhamitanga) en Caia, terug na Beira en daarna suid na Vilanculos, Inhambane en Macaneta digby Maputo, dan huistoe – Pretoria.



Pieter Hesiinga

Groepfoto: Francistown

Baie vroeg op Saterdag 7 Desember het Niall ons by 'n vulstasie in Atterburyweg gekry. Ons het met een motor gery, sy Toyota Quantum bussie, en die res van die groep het reeds gesit. Hulle was Ken Logan, bekend vir sy fotografie van voëls (ons het dit eers later uitgevind) en sy vrou Stephanie, en Lynette Knot-Rudman en Sandy Lombard van die Oos Kaap. Ons was 7 altesaam. Niall se spanmaat kon nie meer saam nie en hy was letterlik bestuurder, voëlgids, 'chief cook and bottlewasher'. 'n Groot taak het op hom gewag met uitdagings wat reënweer sou bied en wat niemand natuurlik kon voorsien nie. Maar ons was almal baie opgewonde en het land en sand gesels. Ons het via Botswana gery en ons eerste aand in Francistown geslaap. Die dag was lank en ons het laatmiddag daar aangekom, gou ons kamers gekry en toe bietjie in die tuine rondgestap en voëltjies gekyk, dan vroeg gaan eet en bed toe gegaan. Daardie nag begin dit reën en die volgende dag pak ons op in die reën. Ons eet ontbyt en vertrek na die Plumtree Grenspos om Zimbabwe binne te gaan. Ons groot droom om Swartberglysters [Boulder Chat] te sien is aan skerwe, want dit het die hele pad aan en af gereën. Ons ry via Bulawayo na Masvingo en slaap by die bekende Norma Jean's Gastehuis op die walle van die Mutirikwi Dam (voorheen Kyle Dam). Dit het al laat geword en van

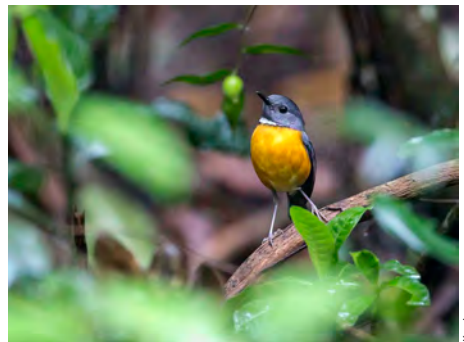
voëltjies die middag was daar nie sprake nie. Na 'n paar lekker biere en goeie aandete is ons bed toe.

Vroeg Maandagoggend, voor ons vertrek, gaan ons vir die eerste keer voëltjies kyk. Dit het die nag weer gereën en die volgende oggend was nog swaar bewolk. Niall neem ons op 'n teerpad wat al langs die dam loop en ons stop telkens. Dit reën soms saggies, maar ons kry wat ons soek: Boskoester, Gestreepte Koester, Angolakiplyster, Miombogrysmees, Miombo-rooibandsuikerbekkie, Groenrugkwêkwêvoël [Wood and Striped Pipits, Miombo Rock Thrush, Miombo Tit, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird, Green-capped Eremomela], en heelwat ander. Ons *lifers* groei sommer gou aan maar ons



Ken Logan

Geelbleshoutkapper/Whyte's Barbet: Mutare



Ken Logan

Bandkeeljanfrederik/Swynnertons Robin: Seldom Seen

moes terug gastehuis toe om te gaan ontbyt en die pad aan te durf Mutare toe. Die roete wat ons gery het was pragtig: op plekke baie kremetartbome, maar baie daarvan egter erg geskend deur die plaaslike bevolking wat groot dele van die boombas gestroop het. Hulle week die bas in water totdat sulke garinglyne te voorskyn kom en weef dan matte daarvan. Oral langs die pad is daar stalletjies waar die pragtigste veselmatte te koop aangebied is. Ons ry baie voorspoedig en toe ons in Mutare aankom gooi Niall eers petrol in by 'n brandstofopslagplek in 'n nywerheidsgebied. Ons gaan tuis in die Vumba gebied wat soortgelyk is aan ons Oos-Transvaal soos dit vroeër genoem is, by 'n plek met die naam Seldom Seen, in die Miombo woude.

Op 'n grondpaadjie kort voor ons by ons blyplek sou aankom, stop Niall vinnig. Daar voor ons in die lang gras speel Bronsuikerbekkies, Singende Tinktinkies en Tropsiese Swies [Bronzy Sunbird, Singing Cisticola, Yellow-bellied Waxbill] – almal nuwes vir ons. Die eienaars ontvang ons baie vriendelik en ons kry ons kamers. Oudergewoonte drink ons 'n paar lekker biere, eet goed en gaan slaap. Daardie nag reën dit 100 mm en alles is sopnat die volgende dag, maar ons sien uit na 'n lekker voëlkyk. Die bekende Bulawezi sou ons gids wees. Dis so nat dat hy besluit om ons eers na die Cecil Kop Nature Reserve toe te neem aan die weste van Mutare waar dit hopelik nie so nat sou wees nie. Daar aangekom vind ons alles ook maar nat. Die grondpaadjie wat ons moes ry was 'n uitdaging. Ons sien darem 'n sopnat Geelstreepkoppie [Cabanis's Bunting], en ietsies van 'n Swartkopmees [Cinnamon-breasted Tit], 'n Boomkruiper [African Spotted Creeper] en Withalsvlieëvanger [Collared Flycatcher], maar nie genoeg om hulle met oortuiging aan te teken nie. Ek wou so graag die Boomkruiper afmerk. Met die omdraaislag sit ons eers in die modder vas en moes Niall sy 'recovery' planke uithaal om ons uit te kry. Daarna neem Bulawezi ons na Mutare se gholffaan toe en kon ons mooi fotos neem van Geelbleshoutkapper [Whyte's Barbet], nog 'n *lifer* vir ons. Hierna keer ons terug na Vumba



Pieter Heslinga

Oranjelyster/Orange Ground Thrush

toe. Die weer het bietjie verbeter en ons gids neem ons op een en ander van die woudpaadjies. En toe een van die groot oomblikke van die trippie: ons sien 'n Bandkeeljanfrederik [Swynnerton's Robin] – pragtig – en kon mooi foto's neem. Ons sien ook Woudlangstertjie, Geelpensuikerbekkie, Streepwangwillie [Roberts' Warbler, Variable Sunbird, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul] en 'n mooi Rooikeelfsant [Red-necked Spurfowl] in die pad voor ons. Dit word laat en ons keer terug Seldom Seen toe. Dit begin ook weer reën, maar na 'n lekker aandete is ons bedtoe.

Dis Woensdagoggend en ons is vroeg op om gou weer bietjie voëls te kyk voor ons vertrek Beira toe. Ken Logan wou graag 'n Gevlekte Vleikuiken [Buff-spotted Flufftail] afneem en is saam met Bulawezi een koers in en die res van ons 'n ander koers. Hulle het met leë hande teruggekom vir hulle moeite, en ons kon 'n paar Oranjelysters [Orange Ground Thrush] en 'n Konkoit [Gorgeous Bush-Shrike] mooi afneem. Die Gryskleinjantjie [Chirinda Apalis] het ons ontwyk, hoe ons ook al geroep en gesoek het. 'n Witkoljanfrederik [White-starred Robin] kom op die grasperk voor ons wei, wat ons mooi kon afneem, en toe was dit ontbyt eet, oppak en vertrek.

Dit was die einde van die Zimbabwe deel van ons toer en ons begin reeds uitsien om Mosambiek te bereik. Daar was weer 'n lang pad wat voorgelê het, en die wêreld rondom ons soos ons ry is deurnat. By Beira aangekom het dit gelyk of die dorp in 'n dam staan. Die wêreld is plat en die reënweer wat ons by

Pieter Hestlinga



Beira onder water

Pieter Hestlinga



Grand Hotel, Beira

Seldom Seen gehad het was duidelik ook hier verby – die arme mense wat daar woon! Soos wat ons Beira binne ry stop Niall by 'n groot kremetartboom wat so tussen die mense se huisies staan en daar kry ons twee mooi Vlermuisvalke [Bat Hawk] wat vir ons loer. Die plaaslike inwoners verdien 'n geldjie om die toeriste die voëls te wys. Die neste is al donkiejare daar en so bly die valke daar tussen die gewoel en geraas van die plaaslike bevolking. Ons het by ons blyplek, Jardim das Velas, aangekom en gou afgepak. Terwyl die ander uitpak en ontspan ry ek gou saam met Niall om ons drinkwater vir die pad by die naaste Spar aan te vul. Hy wys my wat oorgebly het van Beira se spoghotel, die Grand Hotel – dis skokkend om te sien, en onwillekeurig vergelyk ek die verval wat gekom het sedert die Portugese nog daar was enkele jare gelede, met die ontsaglike armoede wat nou daar te bespeur is.

Oral staan murasies en halfklaar geboue, en die grootste gedeelte van die plaaslike bevolking is bitter arm. Later die middag gaan ry ons 'n klein draaitjie. Buite die dorp, by 'n pannetjie sien ons pragtige Dwerglangtone en Dwergganse [Lesser Jacana, African Pygmy Goose]. Verder aan sien ons twee pragtige Witaasvoëls [Palmnut Vulture] en 'n Langkuifarend [Long-crested Eagle] en, by 'n vleg gebied, Kleinwulp [Common Whimbrel] en Ringnekstrandkiewiete [Common Ringed Plover] asook 'n mooi Terekruiter [Terek Sandpiper]. Dan is ons terug na ons gastehuis om die aand by 'n lekker restaurant te gaan eet wat kreef, garnale en vis voorsit. Die 2M bier van Mosambiek is darem baie lekker.

Baie vroeg die volgende oggend ry ons na die Rio Savanne vleilande, maar besef gou ons gaan nie ver kom nie. Die pad was sopnat en omdat die Quantum nie vierwiel-aangedrewe is nie, moes ons stop en omdraai, ons drome om Oostelike Saadbrekertjie, Rooivlerkkwartelvinkie, Dubbelsnip en Bloukwartel [Lesser Seedcracker, Locustfinch, Great Snipe, Blue Quail] te sien aan skerwe. Nietemin is ons met waterskoene die veld in en het 'n Swartrugkwarteltjie [Black-rumped Buttonquail] voor ons uitgevlieg en kon ons uiteindelik darem Trekdrawwertjies, Rooikopkweleas en 'n Geelkeelkalkoentjie [Temminck's Courser, Red-headed Quelea, Yellow-throated Longclaw] afneem. Terug by die gastehuse het 'n paar Huiskraaie [House Crow] geraas. Ons kon ontsan en weer die aand lekker gaan eet.

13 Februarie breek aan en van Beira af vertrek ons na die magiese Coutadawoude. Ons gaan die volgende 4 nagte tuis wees by M'phingwe Kamp, Catapu, sowat 40 km van die groot Zambezirivier en die dorpie Caia. Ons ry eers bietjie oos en toe noord, tussen Mount Gorongosa en die bekende Gorongosa Nasionale Park verby, alles darem teerpad. Omdat die Gorongosaberg deesdae vir die publiek gesluit is kon ons nie na die gesogte Groenkopwielewaal [Green-headed Oriole] gaan soek nie – tog te jammer. Daar was ook 'n korter grondpad van Dondo via Inhaminga en Inhamitanga wat ons maar vermy het as gevolg van die groot reën wat die omgewing gehad



Pieter Heslinga

Niall by Blouduiker: M'phingwe



Ken Logan

Vleitjagra/Marsh Tchagra: Caia



Lynette Rudman

Rooskopbyvreter/Böhm's's Bee-eater

het. By die ingang van die park ry ons 'n entjie in en stop vir *brunch*. Die middag arriveer ons op 'n goeie tyd by M'phingwe. Dis 'n pragtige opset met wonderlike fasiliteite. 'n Blouduiker kom dagsê en aan Niall se vingers lek.

Dis Saterdag en baie vroeg die volgende oggend geniet ons koffie en vertrek na die Coutadawoude, met Angolapitta [African Pitta] heelbo aan ons lys. Ons dink terug aan ons besoek hier 2 jaar gelede en alles is nog bekend en duidelik in ons geestesoog. Daar aangekom klim ons uit en patrol eer ons die paaie op en af met ore gespits. Die voëls is met hulle 'dawn chorus' besig – te pragtig. Soos almal weet daag die Pitta na die eerste lentereën in daardie gebied op en ons wonder by onself of hulle al daar is en of hulle nog kom. Etienne Marais en 'n groep voëlkykers was 2 weke tevore daar en het die Pitta nie gesien of gehoor nie. Die volgende oomblik roep Niall: 'ek hoor hom!' Ons is die bosse in al agter sy geluid aan. Soos wat ons nader kom, vlieg die voël verder van ons af weg. Op 'n punt kom ons tog nader, Niall voor, ek tweede, toe Ken en toe die res. Ons gaan om 'n boom en daar voor ons is die Pitta besig met sy danspassie op 'n tak... ons gryp ons kameras maar te laat – dit sien ons en vlieg dieper die woud in. Niall, ek en Ken het die Pitta gesien, die ander nie – en geen foto's as bewys nie. Tog so jammer dat almal van ons groep nie die Pitta gesien het nie. Maar dit was maar Dag 1 en ons sou die volgende dag terugkeer en weer probeer. Ons het voortdurend debateer of die pittas besig is om te arriveer en of dit die laaste sien van hulle vir die seisoen was.

Die volgende dag het ons eers weer na die Pitta gaan soek. Ons stop weer waar ons dit die vorige dag gekry het. Almal luister aandagtig. Ek hoor die Pitta een keer kortweg en Niall beaam dit – toe nie weer nie, en na 'n uur of wat besluit ons om ons soektog vir die voël af te las – daar was nog heelwat ander voëls wat ons graag wou sien. Gedurende die 2 dae wat ons in die Coutadawoude spandeer het, het ons 'n groot verskeidenheid ander woudvoëls gesien: Swartkoekoek, Mooimeisie, Piet-my-vrou, Europese Koekoek, Bosloerie, neushoringvoëls, heuningwysers [Black,

Emerald-, Red-chested- en Common Cuckoos, Narina Trogons, hornbills, honeyguides], om maar 'n paar groepe te noem. Daar was ook wonderlike oomblikke van Tanzaniese Spegte [Speckle-throated Woodpecker], helmlaksmanne [helmet-shrikes], boslaksmanne [bush-shrikes], tjagras [tchagras], 'n Europese Wielewaal [Eurasian Golden Oriole] en 'n Geelvleknikator [Eastern Nicator]. 'n Gunningse Janfrederik [East Coast Akalat] het voor ons heen en weer oor 'n bospaadjie gevlieg (te vinnig om af te neem) en so ook 'n paar Kleinboskruipers [Tiny Greenbul]. Die skugter Witborswoudlyster [White-chested Alethe] kom sit vir 'n oomblik op Niall se luidspreker en woerts weg. Ons kry 'n paar Witpensvlieëvangers [Black-and-White [Vanga] Flycatcher] wat op 'n nes hoog in die bome broei (maar te hoog vir goeie fotos). En ek kom gou agter hoe moeilik fotografie van woudvoëls is – alles so donker en grys. Die dag stap aan, ons het 'n wonderlike 'innings' gehad. Oppad terug kamp toe kry ons nog Oranjevlerkkelba, Swaelstertbyvreter, en Bosveld- en Manglietvisvanger [Orange-winged Pytilias, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters en Woodland en Mangrove Kingfishers].

Dis Maandag, 16 Desember, en vandag mik ons noorde toe: Caia, die Zambezirivier en daarna Sena, 'n dorpie so 60 km river op in 'n westelike rigting. Die pad Caia toe is maar sleg en dit neem tyd. Maar ons is baie opgewonde want die voël om te sien was die Roeskopbyvreter [Böhm's's Bee-eater], waarvan enkele vanuit die noorde oor die rivier gekom en daar gevestig het. Digby die brug wat oor die Zambezirivier gebou is, is daar groot rietbeddings. Niall roep die Vleitjagra [Marsh Tchagra] vir ons, en somer vinnig kom een uit tussen die riete en vertoon te pragtig. Daarvandaan ry ons Sena toe en besoek 'n groot suikerplaas waar die Böhm's gesien word. Dit het nie so maklik gegaan nie maar uiteindelik kry ons drie voëls, te pragtig, maar ongelukkig nie in broeidrag nie. Die ander byvreter was ook daar, Rooikeel-, Blouwang- en Kleinbyvreter [White-fronted, Blue-cheeked and Little Bee-eaters], sowel as Geelpens- en Kopersuikerbekkies [Variable and Copper Sunbird] en Geelkwikkies [Western



Pieter Hellinga

Groenvleioerie/ Green Malkoha

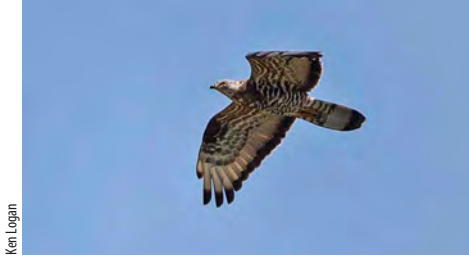


Pieter Hellinga

Palmomörelyster/Collared Palm Thrush

Yellow Wagtail]. Teen hierdie tyd was dit die middel van die dag en snikheet warm. Ons vertrek terug na die lafenis van ons M'phingwe kamp toe. Nadat dit bietjie afgekoel het ry ons na 'n pan digby die kamp om te sien wat ons kon kry. Ons het nie Niall se Dwergrietreier [Dwarf Bittern] gekry nie maar was baie gelukkig toe 'n Groenvleioerie [Green Malkoha] vir ons kom kuier. In die lug sweef Witpensstekelsterte [Böhm's Spinetail] heen en weer. Soos elke aand eet ons heerlik en kuier vir oulaas met die eenaars.

Die volgende dag vertrek ons terug Beira toe om aansluiting te vind met ons roete na die suide. Dit was maar 'n lang dag, maar ons stop van tyd tot tyd om voëls te kyk. By 'n brug word ons bederf deur 'n Palmomörelyster [Collared Palm Thrush], asook 'n Grootrietsanger [Great Reed Warbler] wat pragtig sing. 'n Kortvlerk-tinkinkie [Short-winged Cisticola] skarrel letterlik oor ons voete, so naby is dit. Ons stop weer



Ken Logan

Wespedief/European Honey Buzzard: Save Pan

Pieter Hestings

Gevlekte Speg/Green-backed Woodpecker

by die ingang van die Gorongosa Nasionale Park om iets te eet en te drink. Hier kry ons toe Breëstertparadysvinke [Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah] wat besig was om hulle broeidrag aan te trek en Oranjevlerkmelbas, Rooikopkweleas [Orange-winged Pytilia, Red-headed Quelea] en 'n Withelemlaksman [White-crested Helmetshrike] op 'n nes wat broei, en dan ook twee jong Gryskopvisvangers [Grey-headed Kingfisher]. Terug in Beira slaap ons weer by die Jardim das Velas Lodge. Ons ry die middag weer 'n entjie, terug na die klein pan-netjie wat ons die vorige keer besoek het en kry weer die Dwerlangtone [Lesser Jacana] en Dwerrganse [African Pygmy Goose].

Die volgende dag, Woensdag 18 Desember, ry ons suidwaarts Vilanculos toe en stop vir middagete by die Save Pan. Dis hier waar die Groentinker [Green Tinkerbird] voorkom, maar dis warm en die pan byna kurkdroog; geen voëls. Die volgende oomblik kom 'n Wespedief [European Honey Buzzard] voor ons in die pan sit, maar vlieg op toe ons nader kom. Verder

langs die pad by mooi kremetartbome kry ons Gevlekte Stekelstert [Mottled Spinetail] maar nie Witpensstekelstert [Böhm's Spinetail] nie. Laatmiddag kom ons by ons blyplek in Vilanculos, Casa Cabana aan. Dit was te laat om nog verder voëls te kyk en ons verkeer rustig met koue 2M bier. Die volgende oggend voor ons vertrek Inhambane toe, ry ons eers deur die agterstraatjies van die dorp en kry sowaar 'n Gevlekte Speg [Green-backed Woodpecker] wat *out-of-range* is, en drie soorte kanaries – Dikbek-, Geelbors en Geeloog- [Brimstone, Lemon-breasted, Yellow-fronted Canary]. 'n Diederikkie [Diderick Cuckoo] kom gesels ook saam. Terug by Casa Cabana eet ons gou ontbyt en vertrek.

Dit was weer 'n lang dag op die pad en ons kom moeg in Inhambane aan. Ons slaap by die Barra Beach Club. Maar ons kry ons kamers, eet ietsie en vertrek later die middag na die peninsula toe met sy uitgestrekte moddervlaktes. Ons kry meeste van die normale waadvoëls en ook Ringnekstrandkiewiet, Grootstrandkiewiet en Mongoolse Strandkiewiet [Common Ringed, Greater Sand, Lesser Sand Plover]. Daarna ry ons na die ligtoring en soek vir Krapvreters [Crab Plover], maar kry hulle nie.

Die volgende dag is bestem vir die Miombowoude naby Panda. Dit gaan maar stadig en ons kom eers ongeveer half nege daar aan. Ons sou so graag die Olyfkopwewers [Olive-headed Weaver] wou sien, maar dis reeds goed warm. 'n Paartjie Knopsterttrou-pante [Racket-tailed Roller] was nie skaam om vir ons 'n vertoning te gee nie, en so ook kon ons Mosambiekbosbontrokkie, Gryskapokvoël, Bloukruissuikerbekkies, en 'n Muiskleurvlieëvanger [Pale Batis, Grey Penduline-tit, Neergaard's Sunbird, Pale Flycatcher] te siene kry. Maar daar is geen teken van die wewers nie. Niall neem ons na 'n paar plekke toe waar nog stukkie van die Miombowoude oor is. Die plaaslike inwoners het egter die woude so uitgeroei dat daar min oor is. Die wewers kom voor in bome waar 'oumansbaard' voorkom en ons soek orals daarvoor. Daar is min oor. Teen 12 uur die middag en met 'n temperatuur van 38 grade besluit ons om halt te roep en ry terug na ons blyplek. Die middag ry ons gou weer na

Kent Logan



Knopstertrouphant/Racket-tailed Roller: Panda

Pieter Heeslinga



Grootrietreier/Eurasian Bittern

Pieter Heeslinga



Groepfoto

die moddervlaktes toe en is gelukkig om ook Krombekstrandloper en Terekrutter [Curlew and Terek Sandpiper] te kry.

Daardie aand hoor ons van Grootrietreiers

[Eurasian Bittern] wat by Inhambane te siene is. Baie van ons het hulle nog nooit gesien nie, en Niall reël dat ons die volgende oggend gou eers daarvoor kan gaan soek voor ons vertrek later die oggend Macaneta toe. Mark Boorman, eienaar van 'n plaaslike lodge ontmoet ons by 'n vlei gebied, en was ons nie gelukkig om sowaar twee van die voëls te kry nie! Dit voel na die hoogtepunt van ons trippie. Ons kon nie lank versuim nie en vertrek Macaneta toe.

Dit is Vrydag 20 Desember – nog net Macaneta en dan huistoe. Ons gaan tuis by 'n baie lekker plek met die naam Tan 'n Biki. Macaneta het die afgelope jare bekend geword vir die Sharp-tailed Sandpiper wat elke somer daar kom kuier. Dit is egter baie droog in die omgewing; die vloedvlaktes is omtrent droog en ons sien geen Sharpie nie. Die gety was ook nie reg nie. Die aand kon ons weer lekker smul aan Portugese hoender en 2M bier en vroeg die volgende oggend het ons gou eers weer vir die Sharpie gaan soek – maar nee. Niall stel voor ons loop bietjie in die grasvlaktes rond en daar kry ons toe Afrikaanse Snip [African Snipe] en 'n pragtige Rooskeelkalkoentjie [Rosythroated Longclaw].

Ons keer terug lodge toe, eet ontbyt en vertrek huiswaarts. Dis Saterdag 21 Desember 2019, en ons kom aan die einde van ons toer. Gerugte het dit dat die Komatipoortgrenspos met motors en vragmotors toegeblok is en Niall besluit om via Swaziland terug te ry. Dit was 'n baie mooi pad; ons ry voorspoedig en arriveer ongeveer 5 uur Saterdagmiddag terug in Pretoria.

Soos die spreekwoord sê, aan alle goeie dinge kom daar ook 'n einde. Dit was 'n fantastiese toer. Niall is 'n uitstekende gids, en so ook was sy reëlings en die verversings wat hy voorsien het. Die reënweer aan die begin het ons bietjie gekortwiek en ons kon nie al die specials sien wat ons graag wou nie, maar nou-ja, *next time*. Die totale afstand deur ons afgelê was net minder as 6 000 km en ons het ongeveer 260 spesies voëls gesien. *Lifers* aan ons kant was 15. Baie dankie aan Niall en baie dankie ook aan die res van ons geselskap – dit was oor en oor 'n groot trip! 🐦

Wishbirds: Part 5

We continue our series of want-to-see birds and how to go about finding them: this set of species and advice was first published in either Laniarius 90 (Sept 2003), 91 (Dec 2003) or 93 (June 2004), with contributions by Faansie Peacock, André Marx, Etienne Marais and Peter Irons.

Broad-tailed Warbler / Breëstertsanger

As in most warblers, the best way to locate this secretive species is to listen for the male's extremely high-pitched, metallic song. They deliver this song in a characteristic display flight in which the bird cruises above its territory at a height of 5–20 m while continually flicking its heavy tail and snapping its wings. Apart from these visual signals, it also utters well-spaced, clear and extremely high-pitched notes, which is somewhat reminiscent of the song of Zitting Cisticolas [Landerykloppie]. A variety of other calls, which include variations of the metallic song described above as well as clicking notes, are also given from a low song-post, especially in misty or rainy conditions, when the birds perch conspicuously to sun themselves.

Broad-tailed Warblers are normally quite



Broad-tailed Warbler / Breëstertsanger (photo by Alan Manson, used under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/))

approachable, but they may dive into the depths of grassy thickets when disturbed. Here they creep away from danger, and are very adept at eluding birdwatchers. Although it is found in a variety of habitats, the presence of tall, dense grass is essential. It is mostly a bird of damp or boggy ground, although it does occur in dry upland grasslands on hill slopes. They can be looked for on the edges of dambos in clearings in lowland woodlands, lush grassland on sloping ground and overgrown patches of tall grass along small streams on open hillsides.

In high-altitude localities, this species is a summer visitor, spending the winter months along the coastal plain and at lower altitude sites, where it can be seen throughout the year. Small numbers occur in Mpumalanga and Limpopo but it is best sought in KwaZulu-Natal, where it occurs in scattered localities throughout the province. Try the Drakensberg reserves in summer, and perhaps Zululand in winter. However, this is one of the most difficult birds for which to provide a specific locality.

You can listen to recordings of this bird at: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/explore?query=fan-tailed%20grassbird>

African Finfoot / Watertrapper

The African Finfoot is difficult to see because of its favoured habitat, which is flowing rivers, with a good deal of overhanging vegetation along the banks. It can be quite shy and easily slips away unnoticed. Its plumage provides particularly good camouflage on rivers with flowing water and dappled light. The African Finfoot avoids very fast flowing streams and stagnant water and prefers clear water. It may also occur on large dams with quiet backwaters and overhanging vegetation – such as at



African Finfoot / Watertrapper

Albasini in Limpopo Province, where it is usually easy to see by taking a boat trip. It is however fairly widespread in the eastern parts of South Africa, from the Garden Route northwards to Pafuri. In the wider Pretoria area it occurs on most of the larger rivers where there is good habitat. Localities where it is regularly recorded include the Elands River below Rust de Winter Dam, the Pienaars River from Baviaanspoort to Ditholo, the Hennops River west of Pretoria, Skeerpoort and rivers in the Magaliesberg area, and probably also on the Jukskei. One of the better local places to see it is on the Moretele River below Klipvoor Dam, Borakalalo NP. Several pairs may be present, and quiet and patient watching of the river will eventually produce a sighting. Further afield, Skukuza Rest Camp, Lake Phobane (Eshowe) and Enseleni NR (KZN North Coast) are well known as good spots for this bird.

Because this is a secretive and shy species it is best to use stealth at any of the localities where it is known to occur. The Finfoot will often move away as soon as it detects a human presence and is therefore often not observed. Early morning, before there has been much movement in the vicinity of the river, is the time of day when it is most often seen. It is quite distinctive in appearance, with some differences in plumage between males and females; however the diagnostic bright orange-red legs and feet and red bill of the adult should eliminate confusion with any other species.

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

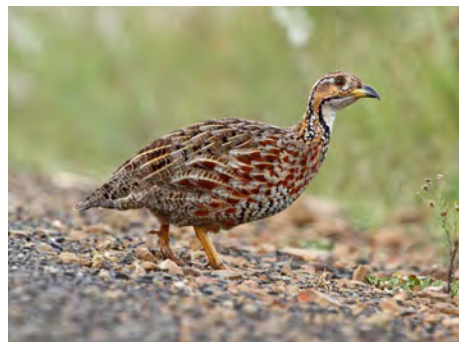
Laeveldpatrys / Shelley's Francolin

Die Laeveldpatrys is nie so moeilik om waar te neem as mens sy roep en habitat ken nie. Dit is egter 'n skaam voël wat meesal deur die gras versteek word. Verder is dit ook minder algemeen as meeste ander patryse en fisante.

As een van vier verteenwoordigers van die 'rooivlerk patrys'-groep (die ander is Kalahari-, Rooivlerk- en Bergpatrys) word hierdie spesie gekenmerk deur 'n halsbandpatroon om die nek, rooibruin vliegvere en 'n kenmerkende, musikale roep wat meestal vroeg in die oggend gegee word vanaf 'n prominente punt soos 'n miershoop, rots of die kruin van 'n heuwel.

Laeveldpatryse gebruik 'n verskeidenheid habitate in hulle verspreidingsgebied, maar word in die Pretoria-omgewing meestal aangetref in klipperige heuwels met lang gras en breëblaarboomveld. Verder oos word hulle in klam grasvelde gevind. Hulle kom meestal in swerms van 6–8 voëls voor.

Die kenmerkende roep word gewoonlik weergegee as '*I'll drink yer beer*' en dit is die beste manier om die spesie op te spoor. Dit kan egter besonder moeilik wees om hulle ordentlik te sien te kry. Hulle het 'n gewoonte om plat te gaan lê en te vries as hulle gevaar vermoed,



Laeveldpatrys / Shelley's Francolin (photo by [Alan Manson](#), used under [CC BY 2.0](#))

en sal dan eers opvlieg wanneer mens feitlik op hulle trap. Soms kan hulle gesien word waar hulle versigtig oor die pad stap of terwyl hulle vanaf 'n uitkykpunt skree.

In areas waar hulle met die Kalaharipatrys oorvleuel is dit gewoonlik nodig om die swart-en-wit merke op die pens te sien om hulle te onderskei, aangesien die gesigspatruon baie soortgelyk is. Wyfie Swempie [Coqui Fancolin] vertoon ook 'n wit keel en 'n swart halsband, maar het 'n unieke postuur en word meestal deur mannetjies vergesel.

Een van die beste plekke om die voël te siene te kry is die Ezemvelo Natuurreseervaat naby Bronkhorstspuit, waar 'n goeie hoeveelheid geskikte habitat te kry is. 'n Ander goeie (en selfs nader) plek is Edenkamp, 'n kerkkamp-plek net van die KwaMhlangapad (R573) af. Die beste kans is om langs die paaie te loop of aan die kante van die kamplek, waar die lang gras begin, te soek. Verder weg is die Percy Fyfe Natuurreseervaat en die Polokwane Natuurreseervaat goeie plekke om te soek.

Interessant genoeg is die suidelike dele van die Krugerwildtuin een van die maklikste plekke om die voëls te sien, veral in die omgewing van rotsagtige plekke. Hier sal die voëls, gewoon aan voertuie, geredelik oor die pad loop. Self hier is geduld egter nodig, omdat hulle minder algemeen is as ander patryse en fisante.

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

Akasiagrismees / Ashy Tit

Hierdie mees word nie dikwels in Pretoria se omgewing gesien nie. Daar is hoofsaaklik twee redes hiervoor: eerstens is hulle nie algemeen nie, en tweedens spandeer hulle 'n aansienlike deel van hulle lewens in digte doringstruie en -bome.

Die Akasiagrismees se naam is aanduidend van die habitat waarin hulle feitlik uitsluitlik voorkom. Mens mors dus jou tyd om hulle in enige ander habitat as suiwer doringveld te soek. Ander tipiese voëls van hierdie habitat



Akasiagrismees / *Ashy Tit* (photo by [Derek Keats](#), used under [CC BY 2.0](#))

sou Rooiborslaksman, Bosveldtjeriktik and Maricovlieëvanger wees. Indien mens hierdie spesies teëkom, is die kans altyd daar vir die Akasiagrismees ook. Die mees is 'n verrassend goeie sanger, met 'n verskeidenheid van besondere mooi liedjies. Hierdie geluide sal tipies bestaan uit 'n vinnige herhaling van dieselfde suiwer note, wat kan klink soos *tjol-tjol-tjol* of *doe-doe-doe-doe*, ensovoorts. Daar is ook 'n kenmerkende *derrr*-geluid. Al hierdie klanke behoort egter op klankopnames nagegaan te word, omdat dit so moeilik is om die geluide in woorde weer te gee. Enige soet klank uit 'n doringbos behoort ondersoek te word, al sal die bron meesal 'n Gestrepte Wipstert of 'n Bosveldtjeriktik wees.

Redelike goeie lokaliteite vir die Akasiagrismees sluit die Zaagkuildrifpad in, asook doringruigtes by plekke soos Vaalkopdam. Ditholo is ook 'n goeie plek, en 'n klubuitstappie daarheen het 'n goeie kans om 'n mees op te lewer. Hulle raak algemeen in die sentrale dele van die Noord-Kaap en suidelike Botswana.

Om na opnames van die voël te luister: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/explore?query=ashy%20tit>

Trekdrawwertjie / Temminck's Courser

Die laaste voël het baie min kommentaar van die deskundiges uitgelok. Hulle het wel aangedui dat mens die beste kans het om hierdie drawwertjie te kry in laatwinter, op varsgebrande grasveld. Dit is egter 'n baie



Trekdrawwertjie / [Temminck's Courser](#) (photo by [Derek Keats](#), used under [CC BY 2.0](#))

nomadiese spesie wat mens toevallig teëkom, eerder as dat jy spesifiek na 'n bepaalde plek gaan om dit te kry. Dit is ook baie maklik om hulle mis te kyk, en as mens 'n area met geskikte habitat nie versigtig bespied nie gaan mens hulle nie sommer raaksien nie.

Die Trekdrawwertjie is meer algemeen in kaal, oop gedeeltes van die bosveld as in grasveld. Hulle is al in die Seringveld gesien, en word so een keer elke twee jaar tydens opnames soos die Dinokeng Bird Bash gekry. Die bosveld naby die Limpopoprivier en die Krugerwildtuin gee egter beter geleenthede om dit waar te neem as enige plek naby Pretoria.

Om na opnames van die voël te luister: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/explore?query=temminck%27s%20courser> 🐦

Cows and Speckled Mousebirds

Animals eating low-nutrient foods like leaves/grass have specialized digestive tracts and processes to extract the maximum value from this food, e.g., ruminants like cows and other grazers who 'chew the cud' and have adaptations like multi-chambered stomachs and populations of microbes that enable them to digest cellulose by fermentation (releasing methane in the process – one of the reasons that eating beef/mutton is implicated in climate change). This diet and its specialisations are mostly seen in mammals, explained by the fact that mammals have relatively large body size. Such low-energy food cannot generally be utilized by smaller animals like birds because they have higher energy requirements (smaller animals have higher surface area to body mass ratios, and thus lose heat faster than larger animals – and in the case of birds large amounts of energy are also required for flight). However, there are birds that eat leaves (folivory). The South American Hoatzin (which notoriously smells like cow manure), is the only bird known to eat only leaves (obligate folivory), and has been found to have a digestive tract and bacterial populations that indicate a ruminant-like digestive process. And so has... our very own Speckled Mousebird. This species eats leaves in addition to fruit, flowers and nectar, can maintain its body weight even when eating only leaves, and maintains a variable body temperature – basking in the sun and huddling together for warmth. A study to investigate the digestive system of Speckled Mousebirds revealed a ventriculus with a large surface area due to convolutions, which were covered by microbial flora, suggesting that Speckled Mousebirds, to some extent, can employ the same digestive strategies as cows to survive on a diet of low-nutrient plant material.

To read the full study see: [Downs CT, Wirminghaus JO and Lawes MJ \(2000\) Anatomical and nutritional adaptations of the Speckled Mousebird \(Colius striatus\). *The Auk* 117 \(3\) 791–794.](#)



Michelle van Niekerk

BLNG held its AGM on 11 Feb, after which BirdLife South Africa CEO Mark Anderson spoke to us about how BirdLife International undertakes its work across the world and how the partnership is making important contributions to the conservation of birds and their habitats. From left to right: BLSA CEO Mark Anderson, BLNG Chairperson Elouise Kalmer, BLNG President André Marx



The world's most admired Helmeted Guineafowl: The BLNG ringers held a demo at the Colbyn Wetland Nature Reserve as part of World Wetlands Day celebrations on 1 Feb, attended by around 150 children who spent the morning learning all about wetlands and why we need to restore and protect them. Another highlight of the programme was a performance of BirdLife SA and the Rare Finch Conservation Group's Waxi the Hero puppet show, generously sponsored by Toyota South Africa.



Storrei Botha

The BLNG committee at their annual Bosberaad at Wolfhuiskraal in mid-January. From left to right: (back) Frik du Plooy, Tamsyn Sherwill, Pieter Heslinga, Elouise Kalmer, Sheleph Burger, Riana Botha, (front) Wanda du Plooy, Rita de Meillon



Tamsyn Sherwill

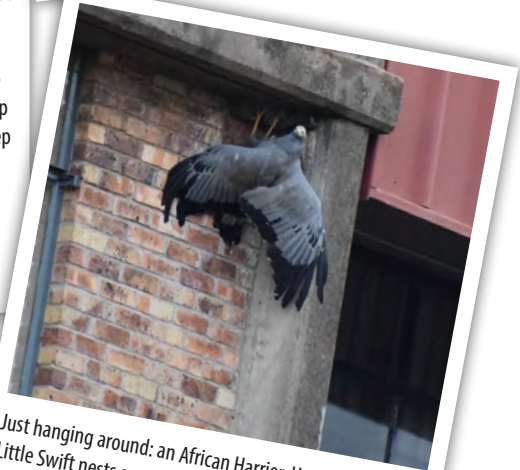
Bosberaad: Cape Penduline-Tit spotted near the Kgomo-Kgomo bridge



BLNG uitstappie, 4 March 2020: Northern Farm is 'n besondere plek met verskeidenheid van habitat: plaaslewe, grasveld, water, bome, ens. Ons het by die 100 voëlsoorte in net meer as 4 ure aangeteken (vir myself 'n rekord) – dit was vir almal 'n baie lekker uitstappie wat hulle enige tyd weer graag sal doen. André Marx se kundigheid oor die voëls en bereidheid om ander te help en te leer is uitstaande. 'n Paar hoogtepunte was 'n groep van 17 Gewone Dikkoppe bymekaar, asook 'n groep van sowat 80 Glansibisse. Verder het ons 6 soorte roofvoëls aangeteken: Geelbekwou en Swartwou, Oostelike Rooipootvalk, Swartborsslangarend, Langkuifarend en Visarend – Matthys van der Hou



To generate interest in the club and birding in general, BLNG set up a stall at the Succulent Festival held at the Pretoria Bot Garden on 1 March. The festival was extremely well attended and lots of people stopped by the stall to chat about the club and look at the books and other material on display. We hope that everyone who showed an interest will join BLNG. A huge thank you to Riana and Stoffel for running the stall.



Just hanging around: an African Harrier-Hawk raiding Little Swift nests on a block of flats next to the Colbyn Wetland – a very common summer sight for (observant) residents.

The South African Lockdown Challenge

From 27 Mar 2020 (00:00) to
16 Apr 2020 (23:59)



The birds are still out there – you just have to wait for them to find you. By Day 3 of the SA 21-day Lockdown to slow the spread of Covid-19, birders taking part in BirdLasser's South African Lockdown Challenge had already logged over 500 of South Africa's bird species, while staying home (or at least within the confines of their properties – including suburban gardens, farms and probably a few nature reserves).



The second-most-frequently-logged bird in the SA Lockdown Challenge (beaten only by the Hadedda Ibis). Also reasonably endearing and entertaining lockdown companions (until the bird seed runs out).



Something I might not have noticed without a lockdown: This roosting nest, seemingly made entirely out of grass harvested from the nearby greenbelt, is being built by a flock of about 15 Bronze Mannikins in a very large monkeythorn tree in front of my home. It is a very flimsily constructed nest, a wide tunnel open on both ends, but to date has survived high winds and heavy rain. At sundown the whole flock flies as one into another part of the tree – individual birds then leave their perches one by one to fly into the nest – Ed.

Rarities and unusual sightings report: 29 February 2020

Compiled by André Marx

This report covers the months of November 2019 to end-February 2020. It would appear that birds associated with wetland habitat dominated the recent period, probably as a result of the excellent rainfall after November 2019. Regular sightings of the Slaty Egret in the Muldersdrift area continued to be enjoyed, with surprise appearances of two very uncommon birds in the region; namely Rufous-bellied Heron and White-backed Night Heron, the latter breeding in a suburban estate. Other good records were Lesser Moorhen in Centurion as well as Grey Phalarope at Bronkhorstspuit Dam. One of the biggest surprises was a first sighting of Yellow-billed Oxpecker for the region. The introduction of big game in recent years at Dinokeng north of Pretoria may have assisted the spread of this species, but it nevertheless is somewhat surprising and I am not aware of any records in recent times. 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 rariteite

Egret, Slaty [Rooikeelreier]

The bird that was at Gnu Valley/Walkhaven Dog Park in the Muldersdrift area from Sep to end-Oct 2019 was still present during Nov and Dec 2019 with reports up to and including 13 Jan 2020 at this locality, reported by several observers (GBird).

Harrier, Western Marsh [Europese Vleivalk]

A female bird was at Marievale, 23 Feb 2019 (MJ).

Regional rarities / Streeksrariteite

Brownbul, Terrestrial [Boskrapper]

A single bird was mistnetted and ringed at



Terrestrial Brownbul near Magaliesburg

Bushtrails, north of Magaliesburg, 25 Jan 2020 (AK; photo MS).

Bunting, Lark-like [Vaalstreepkoppie]

Three birds were at the Eco Park on Northcliff Hill, Johannesburg, 20 Nov 2019 (AF, LR).

Heron, Rufous-bellied [Rooipensreier]

The bird that was first seen in Centurion near Candlewoods Estate in Oct 2019, continued to be recorded by several observers until at least 18 Dec 2019 (GBird; photo MG).



Lark-like Bunting, Northcliff Hill, Johannesburg



Michal Groenewald

Rufous-bellied Heron, Centurion

Heron, White-backed Night [Witrugnagreier]

A surprise sighting was of two birds at Cedar Lakes Estate in the Fourways area of northern Johannesburg, when on 26 Jan 2020 two birds were confirmed to be present (IM, JN). In the following days several local birders managed to get to see this secretive, nocturnal species. *This is a most unusual record as this species is seldom observed in a suburban environment, but its presence can be attributed to the suitability of the local habitat, with large, shallow dams with small fish prey available, and dense willow trees in summer for roosting. The birds were subsequently seen to be collecting nesting material, confirming that they were breeding.*

Moorhen, Lesser [Kleinwaterhoender]

During an atlasing initiative in Pentad 2550_2810 one bird was found at the wetland near Candlewoods Estate, Centurion, 11 Nov 2019 (MG; photo DT), and subsequently reported by several birders in the following days. *An unusual record for the locality. This is a species that will move into areas where conditions are optimal after good rains.*

Nightjar, Square-tailed [Laeveldnaguil]

One bird was at the start of the Zaagkuil drift road, north of Pretoria, 30 Dec 2019 (MJ).



Justin Nicot-Bat

White-backed Night Heron, Cedar Lakes Estate, Fourways

Osprey, Western [Visvalk]

One bird was at Bronkhorspruit Dam, 9 Nov 2019 (MJ).

Oxpecker, Yellow-billed [Geelbekrenostervoël]

A sighting of one bird, photographed on a buffalo in Dinokeng Game Reserve, north-east of Pretoria, is likely a first confirmed record for Gauteng, 14 Dec 2019 (RP; photo DvR). *This species has not been recorded with any certainty in the last 30 odd years of monitoring rarities in the region.*



Dauid Teichert

Lesser Moorhen, Centurion

Phalarope, Grey [Grysfraingpoot]

One bird was at Bronkhortspruit Dam, 15 Feb 2020 (GBird; photo DT).

Plover, Grey [Grysstrandkiewiet]

A single bird was at Vaalkop Dam, 25 Nov 2019 (RH).

Plover, White-fronted [Vaalstrandkiewiet]

One bird was still present at Bronkhortspruit Dam, 9 Nov 2019 (MJ).

Sandpiper, Green [Witgatruiter]

One bird was present along Crake Road in the Zaagkuil drift area (JK).

Warbler, Dark-capped Yellow [Geelsanger]

This species was located in Suikerbosrand NR in Pentad 2625_2815, a new locality during the atlas period of the last 13 years, 20 Feb 2020 (CWJ, ID).

Other interesting observations / Ander interessante waarnemings

Bee-eater, Blue-cheeked [Blouwangbyvreter]

One bird was at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, where this species is seldom recorded, 21 Nov 2019 (AS).

Observers / Waarnemers:

Adriaan Stander (AS)
Andy Featherstone (AF)
Arrie Klopper (AK)
BirdLife Northern Gauteng members (BLNG)
Craig Whittington-Jones (CWJ)
Delene Janse van Rensburg (DvR)
Duard Teichert (DT)



Duard Teichert

Grey Phalarope, Bronkhortspruit Dam

Gauteng Birders (GBird)

Ian Davidson (ID)

Ian Malcolm (IM)

John Kinghorn (JK)

Justin Nicolau (JN)

Lance Robinson (LR)

Martin Steyn (MS)

Michal Groenewald (MG)

Michael Johnson (MJ)

Riaan Pieters (RP)

Rupert Horley (RH)

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.

WELCOME TO BLNG!

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

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

Annemarie Marais (Rooihuiskraal), Arrie Klopper (La Montagne), Amanda Schoonderwoerd (Villieria), Henriette Rothmann (Waverley), Ryan Blumenthal (Monument Park), Brigitte & Bruce Double (Centurion), Geoffrey Ellis (Lyttleton), Jan & Audi Snijman (Elarduspark), Carla Lewis (Kempton Park), Bradley Edwards (Sandton), Etesia Egger (Constantiapark)

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