



# Laniarius

December 2024 | No 153



*BirdLife Gauteng-Noord  
BirdLife Northern Gauteng*

*Image Source: Malachite Sunbird by Marna Buys*

  
**BirdLife**  
SOUTH AFRICA  
Giving Conservation Wings

2024 KOMITEE

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# FROM THE EDITOR

**Survivor's guilt...** This past quarter sang a dirge to species soon to be wiped out.

A number of species are now just one step away from extinction in the wild. Botha's Lark... Critically Endangered. Only some 350 remain while their breeding grounds are being decimated for agriculture. The African Penguin will become extinct in our lifetime, in a span of a mere ten years.

A decline of 90%, from millions, happened in our lifetime. A sad day was on October 29 when their status was upgraded to critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. White-headed vultures are a rare sight in South Africa, with only an estimated 160 adult birds remaining in the country. Fewer than 1000 mature breeding Black Harriers are left in the population, and these in particular danger of wind farms. The Cape Gannet, the Bateleur, the Cape Parrot... the list goes on and on. Most are critically endangered.

But why? You might well ask.

The answer is simple. The human population explosion. There are just too many people in the sub-region that must be fed. At the bottom rung it has to do with subsistence. High up, rife commercialism. The competition for land for agriculture, crop spraying, and, in the case of seabirds, the commercial purse-seine fisheries, off-shore bunkering and even climate change decimates birds. Pollution of land and rivers has reached critical proportions.

Who is to blame?

**Us.** All of us.

Even if we diligently recycle, have bird feeders in the garden, report contamination of rivers and support conservational organisations, our ecological footprint is huge. Much, much larger than those who currently demolish the Panda Woodlands in neighbouring Mozambique or forests in the Isimangaliso Wetlands.

BirdLife South Africa is facing this conservation obligation with visionary courage. Imagine instituting litigation against a minister and consequently the government that supported her in ignoring international recommendations to limit fishing - Barbara Greecy, under whose watch the penguin population dwindled by almost 90% in a decade.



Ivonne - Editor

Imagine trying to save the seabird population of Marion Island by raising enough funds to try and eradicate mice from an island. BLSA is trying to raise funds to do exactly this.

How does BirdLife Northern Gauteng support BLSA in the conservation of birds? Equal amounts were donated to the Secretary Bird and European Roller Projects to sponsor trackers, and to the support of the Botha's Lark Species Action Plan.

*... we willingly watch our Wild World*

*Wilt weighing the weight of survivors*

*Guilt fueling the Flames of the fire we*

*built solely to blame our hands on the hilt.*

Excerpt, "Survivor's Guilt" - Luke Western. Follow the link below for his prize-winning poem read by Stephen Fry, with visuals. A work of art.

<https://youtu.be/5Lmwwd0jhbEsi?GNHN4lqDEdP37t2e>

# FROM THE CHAIR

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Dear Club Members,

I am truly honoured to write to you as the new Chairperson of our cherished Bird Club. As I step into this role, I want to take a moment to express my deep gratitude to everyone who has contributed to our club's success.

The club's continued success is a reflection of the dedication and hard work of our entire committee and all the members who give their time and energy to nurture our shared passion for birds.

Our club thrives because of the remarkable individuals who volunteer behind the scenes, organizing events, sharing their knowledge, and fostering an environment where we can all learn from one another. Your commitment to our mission of promoting birdwatching and conservation is inspiring, and I am excited to build on the strong foundation laid by Elouise.

She has handed over the reins of a thriving club and has graciously agreed to stay on as vice chairperson.

This has given me in particular a wonderful position to be able to still draw off her vast experience while growing into this new role.

As we look to the future, I am eager to continue fostering our community spirit and expanding our outreach. I welcome your ideas and contributions, as I believe that together we can make this club even more vibrant and inviting. Let us work hand in hand to create memorable experiences, whether that involves birdwatching excursions, educational programs, or simply enjoying the beauty of our feathered friends.

There are some amazing outings planned for 2025 as well as some wonderful camps. Keep looking out for those on our social media platforms.



*Sean - Chair*

Atlassing and SABAP2 remains a high priority focus of the club as part of our bird conservation activities. Some focused outings will be part of our planned outings and camps in the coming year.

The Secretary Bird project in conjunction with BLSA continues to track the birds we have contributed towards their trackers. We continue to get reports of their movements and activities.

Our warmest welcome to all the new BLNG members. Welcome back to some other members.

I hope you will all be able to join us throughout the coming year for some of our activities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a wonderful festive season. If you are travelling, travel safely.

Warm regards,

SEAN





MEMEL - 17-20 OCTOBER 2024

# CAMP

We arrived at our accommodation, Mahem Guest House in the early afternoon, where our host Jimmy Saunders was very keen to give us some pointers on where to bird. After examining the maps, we decided to visit the farm Goeie Hoop belonging to the Theron family which was about 7 km from town. Jimmy called ahead and we were warmly welcomed and given access to their newly ploughed maize and potato lands, as well as to their dam. While talking to them we were very excited to hear the Blue Korhaan calling.

In the lands we saw many Red-capped Larks, and then there was great excitement when a photo taken by Dave appeared to be either a Rudd's Lark or a Pink-billed Lark. Pink-billed was ruled out as it had a more conical bill and a stripey head, whereas the bird in the photo had a spotty head. Finally, we resorted to sending the pic to the experts, and Ivonne identified it as a juvenile Red-capped Lark. It reminded us that common things occur commonly, but that it is also important to always look, investigate, discuss, and get expert advice!

The dam on the farm is large and shallow and we were told where to wait for the cranes to come in for the night. What an experience! Just after sunset we started hearing the Blue Cranes, and then later the Grey Crowned Cranes calling as they came in to land and overnight on the sand banks in and around the dam. It was a very special almost spiritual experience to be part of that ancient ritual. We saw approximately 200 Blue Cranes and about 50 Grey Crowned Cranes, but the owners told us that in May and June there are often many, many more. On Friday morning we met our guide, Dolly, who took us to Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve. We started on a high point overlooking the lovely oxbow wetland. The rains had not started yet so although there was water in the river, the wetlands themselves were still dry. Our group was small with only six people attending the weekend, but this made it easier to communicate.



Red-capped Lark  
[André Taljaard]

There were three men in one car and three women in the other, which gave rise to some friendly banter and rivalry. Dolly has been a ranger on the reserve for many years, but only received her bird guiding training from BLSA two years ago. We again heard the Blue Korhaan but could not spot it.



Jenna van Schoor



Jenna van Schoor





*Grey-winged Francolin*  
[Angela Openshaw]



*African Rail*  
[Angela Openshaw]

At another spot, two Grey Crowned Cranes gave us a good opportunity for photos. The Grey-winged Francolin were calling and at an old barn Dolly and some of our group then managed to see them. She also told us to look out for a Western Barn Owl that roosts in the barn. It flew out and landed in a nearby tree where some of the group managed to photograph it.

Further along our drive, at a bird hide, we had some lovely sightings, specifically of an African Rail, an African Marsh Harrier, and a Black-crowned Night Heron. Then began our epic journey to search for the Wattled Crane. Dolly knew a farmer called Kalla who had given us access to his farm. It was a long drive on small farm roads, through many gates, high up (2000 m above sea level) in the mountains near Kranskop to find the two birds. And it was worth every km travelled. We kept our distance so as not to scare them off, but we spent quite some time watching them. What beautiful, graceful birds they are! On the way we saw Southern Bald Ibis and a Cape Canary in the distance that had us convinced it was a Yellow-breasted Pipit. Unfortunately not.

Back at our guesthouse a mystery bird was heard and recorded, and although many of us felt it was a bird known to us, we again had to resort to base for an identification – a Red-throated Wryneck. We all felt rather red-faced!



*African Marsh Harrier*  
[Angela Openshaw]

On Saturday Dolly took us on some local roads for more roadside birding. We saw Jackal Buzzard, Buff-streaked Chat and after a long wait at a specific spot, a Ground Woodpecker showed itself. We spent quite some time enjoying its presence and watching it fly in and out of a hole in a clay bank.



*Black-crowned Night Heron*  
[Angela Openshaw]



*Wattled Crane*  
[André Taljaard]



After a lunch break and a nap back at the guest house, the two groups decided to split up as the men wanted to find the Yellow-breasted Pipit, Denham's Bustard and White-bellied Bustard.

The ladies decided to look for the Blue Korhaan and go back to the dam on Goeie Hoop and, hooray, on the way there, a pair of Blue Korhaan showed themselves.

We introduced Dolly to the owners so that she could take guests there in future. They were very happy to meet her as they have been having challenges with the Department of Water Affairs because their dam is too big and is storing water that should go into the Vaal River system.

They asked Dolly to assist them in motivating that the dam is an important birding site and should not be altered. The men unfortunately did not find what they went looking for.

The evenings around the fire were spent getting to know each other, discussing sightings from the day, and trying to identify birds from photographs. When we called the bird list on Saturday evening, we had a nice round 100, but a few were added on the way home. The Kommandospruit route to Vrede that the ladies took on the way home was rewarding and worth a visit.

The highlights of our trip were: Blue Korhaan, African Rail, African Marsh Harrier and three types of cranes, but we dipped on Rudd's Lark, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Denham's Bustard and White-bellied Bustard. Next time!

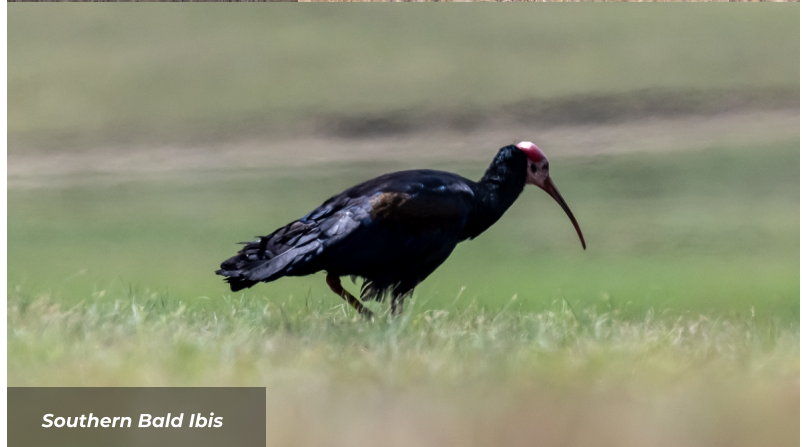
NICOLE CRISP



*Ground Woodpecker*  
[André Taljaard]



*Blue Korhaan*  
[Angela Openshaw]



*Southern Bald Ibis*



[Nicole Crisp]



# CARACAL LODGE SEPTEMBER 2024

# CAMP



*White-throated Swallow*  
[Rose Clark]

The eastward drive to Caracal Lodge was enjoyable and easy along the N4, and as we approached the turnoff, it was interesting to see the scale of the Ngodwana Paper Mill. En route to the lodge, we stopped at a small bridge and saw Black Saw-wing and White-throated Swallow.

Along the dirt road to the lodge, we also saw the first of many African Paradise Flycatchers in the thickets.

Other birds we spotted, thanks to the expert eyes of Ilse Müller and Thea Jenkins, were a Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, an African Firefinch, a Long-crested Eagle, and more than one majestic Mountain Wagtail, bobbing their long tails in a rocky roadside mountain stream.

Once we'd arrived and negotiated a few accommodation hiccoughs, we went on a walk around the lodge with our guide for the weekend, Thinus van Staden. Thinus' passion for birding and connecting with people and life is infectious, and we enjoyed many moments of appreciation for all the beauty and birds around us.

Some of the birds we saw on just a short walk in the surroundings, which evolved from agricultural fields up into forests, included the African Dusky Flycatcher, Scaly-throated Honeyguide (heard), Groundscraper Thrush, which posed beautifully for Sean Naudé in a tree, a Greater Double-collared Sunbird, and a Yellow-throated Petronia.



*Mountain Wagtail*  
[Sean Naudé]



*Cape Batis*  
[Sean Naudé]





*Purple-crested Turaco*  
[Sean Naudé]

Other interesting birds on the grounds were a Chorister Robin-Chat, an African Harrier-Hawk flying over the fields, many Cape Batis with their raspy growls in the trees, a brief glimpse of a Black Cuckooshrike along a tuft of grass, and the always attractive Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike flitting in and out of the thickets around us. We also saw Yellow-breasted Apalis at the top of a tree and many Purple-crested Turacos, whose flash of red wings were a common sight around the lodge.

On our first full day of birding, we woke up to a Narina Trogon sitting right in front of our stoep, which seemed like a good omen for the forest birding ahead. From the vantage point of our outside table, while drinking coffee and rusks, we also saw Sombre Greenbul, Black-backed Puffback, Yellow-bellied Greenbul and a possible juvenile Gorgeous Bush-Shrike, which Thea Jenkins may need to confirm!

Later, after meeting up at the start of the forest trail, the forest birding began. We saw Amethyst Sunbirds as we climbed into the forest full of trees and thorny brambles. Other highlights included taking moments to stop and appreciate the forest silence, punctuated with sightings of unique birds like the White-starred Robin, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Olive Bush-Shrike and the Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher.

On our way out of the forest, we spotted a Golden-tailed Woodpecker and a Southern Double-collared Sunbird “pronking” and displaying its seldom-seen yellow “shoulder” tufts.



[Annetjie Barkhuizen]



*Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler*  
[Sean Naudé]



*Amethyst Sunbird*  
[Ronel Viljoen]



After our forest climb, which proved slightly strenuous, we drove to the cliff face in the mountains on the other side of the road from Caracal Lodge. Unfortunately, the brambles were so overgrown that we couldn't get up close to the face, but we did spot a nest along the cliff line, indicating raptor activity. Sean Naudé also got a brief glimpse of a Grey Cuckooshrike here, but most of us missed it. However, we later saw a Yellow-billed Kite perched on the ground on the fields adjacent to the lodge, a Lesser Honeyguide, White-fronted Bee-eaters and a Streaky-headed Seedeater around the communal accommodation area.

Our second full day of birding began very early with a drive to meet bird guide Johan Gouws in Kaapsehoop. Even though it was one of the coldest days of the year, we stood for hours in front of a waterside thicket in a private orchard, waiting for a range of specials to appear. While shivering and wishing I'd worn thermal leggings, the sun eventually broke through the clouds. We had close-up sightings of a Bush Blackcap, Olive Bush-Shrike, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, White-starred Robin, a Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher and Barratt's Warbler, flitting inconspicuously along the low watery scrub. If that wasn't close-up enough, two Chorister Robin-Chats also flew past us out of the thicket, right in front of Thinus' face.

We spent the rest of the day exploring Kaapsehoop and its surroundings, where we saw Buff-streaked Chat on the rocks and a Cape Rock Thrush on a telephone wire. After a coffee stop, we drove further afield into the plantations, stopping at a dam to see what we could find. Along with sunbirds flying in and out of the prominent yellow-flowered bushes around the dam, we also saw African Pied Wagtail along the water pipes, some Bronze Mannikins (no Magpies, unfortunately), Common Waxbill, and the beautiful African Golden Weaver. At an abandoned farmhouse in the vicinity, we were thrilled to spot an Olive Woodpecker making its way up the branches of a beautifully big and spreading Lowveld tree.

Our final stop for the day was a caravan park near Nelspruit, where we saw Southern Black Tit, a Purple Heron, African Fish Eagle, a Spotted Thick-Knee and familiar favourites like the Crested Barbet, and more African Paradise Flycatchers. We had wanted to visit the Blue Swallow Reserve, but after some problems with accessing the area, we decided to head back to the camp for some more relaxed stoep birding and our final braai together for the weekend.

It was a chilly weekend, but comfortable accommodation with hot baths and electric blankets, as well as the warmth of our shared birding camaraderie, made it one of my most enjoyable camps of the year. On our way out, we saw yet another robin, the Red-capped Robin-Chat, which felt like another exceptional addition to a long list of lifers and other memorable sightings. Thank you to Angela Openshaw and the rest of the committee for organising the weekend and to Thinus and Johan for their guidance and passion for birding.

Jenna van Schalkwyk



*Robin Naudé*



*White-fronted Bee-eaters  
[Graig Green]*



*Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher  
[Sean Naudé]*



*[Thinus van Staden]*



# LIMPOKWENA CAMP

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The collaboration between Ecotraining, Limpokwena NR and Birdlife SA offered us the opportunity to visit the northern part of the Limpopo Province. Remembering previous visits to Makuleke Ecotraining camp, we were very excited and ready to go!

Limpokwena NR is 46 km north-west of Alldays close to the Platjan border post. It comprises 2500 ha of pristine riverine forest along the Mogalakwena and Limpopo rivers, and vast plains of mopane bushveld with a scattering of rocky outcrops.

Three of us booked in a day earlier and on the way successfully ticked the Short-clawed Lark in the Polokwane NR, whistle and all. On arrival at Limpokwena NR we were warmly welcomed by Nadine, our hostess, and settled in very comfortably.

And off we went... exploring.

The cuckoos had just arrived and the African Cuckoo kept us well entertained. We chanced on a Grey-headed Kingfisher and lo and behold: the secretive African Finfoot! How happy we were to share these sightings with our birding group at a later stage. A resident Shikra at the lodge was flying back and forth from the nest.

Next morning Daan, the manager, took us on a drive and it was good to get a feel for the area ahead of the scheduled birding excursion. Our friends arrived and we met Robert Wienand, our guide. By now we had all realized we were in for a very special treat. Robert had seen the Boulder Chat the previous day: a mega bird for SA. Off we went to the rocky outcrops overlooking the Limpopo. It whistled, once, twice – but was not to be seen.

Two days later, early in the morning, we tried again: and there it was!

How this bird survives in this barren, unforgiving environment, seems a miracle. A pair of African Hawk Eagles trailed by a juvenile bird were sailing through the skies above the rocks.







*Boulder Chat*  
[Hannes van den Berg]



*African Hawk Eagle*  
[Johan Botha]



*Saddle-billed Stork*  
[Rosalind Hattingh]

We meandered in our Land Cruiser along the Limpopo River. There was almost no flowing water, only remnant pools, the fish seemingly trapped and an easy meal for Yellow-billed-, Saddle-billed-, Black Storks and African Openbills. We would have expected more waders. Meyer's Parrot was very abundant and raucous – feeding on new leaves.

The Island camp on the Limpopo is a magical place framed by tall, beautiful trees. A pair of Broad-billed Rollers kept us entertained. The Tropical Boubou was calling, but it took us a while to spot it in the undergrowth. Elephants were everywhere – mostly anxious mothers with their young.

Back to camp we went for breakfast and a swim!

Late that afternoon we hit the Limpopo again. When we finally turned around, it was quite dark already – the flashlights came on, and there ... Robert hit the brakes: two majestic adult Pel's Fishing Owls in a Sycamore Fig by the roadside in full view! Everyone enjoyed a good sighting before the first one took to the wing followed by the second one.

The Mogalakwena River appeared to have much more water, and the crocodiles and hippos seemed to agree. Some cattle grazed along the river and both Red-billed- and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers could be watched side-by-side.



*Meyer's Parrot* [Johan Botha]



Along the river, on the sandbanks, under trees, hidden in the undergrowth, quite a few birds could be found. White-faced Whistling Ducks, Black Crake, White-crowned Lapwings, some herons but again, only once the sun had set the White-backed Night Herons became visible hidden deep in the undergrowth. Photographs proved that one juvenile White-backed Night Heron was present.

Then the African Finfoot swam into view!

Close by was a bridge and the bird seemed to be impartial to people walking along the bridge from their homes to the potato fields. We watched the bird for some 45 minutes moving in and out of grass tufts in the middle of the river. A peculiar bird indeed: not a duck and yet not quite a cormorant either.



Robert Wienand



Grey-headed Kingfisher  
[Rosalind Hattingh]



Pel's Fishing Owl  
[Marna Buys]



Red-billed- and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers  
[Wouter Fourie]



As we moved from one river to the other, we crossed the mopane plains several times. There were not many birds around, and yet it was a striking habitat. The Red-headed Finch finishing off the nest in a flowering Baobab tree – how beautiful was that. Greater Honeyguide, Brubru, Spotted Flycatcher, Barred Wren-Warbler and a Grey-rumped Swallow were some of the jewels found among the Mopane shrubs.

As we left, homeward bound, the African Mourning Dove was calling, one last time.

Thank you for the lovely companionship of our team members. Thank you to everybody involved in the planning and execution of this event. And a very special thank you to Robert for guiding us, sharing with us his amazing knowledge and most of all the sensitivity for all things birding.

The total tally of birds observed in Limpokwena NR during our stay was 183.

ILSE MÜLLER



*White-backed Night Heron*  
[Marna Buys]



*African Finfoot* [Marna Buys]



*Spotted Owlet* [Johan Botha]



*Retz's Helmetshrike*  
[Hannes van den Berg]



# SAY HELLO TO SOUTH AFRICA'S BIRD OF THE YEAR 2025 CONSERVATION

A LITTLE BIRDIE TOLD US THAT THE EXPERTS HAVE SPOKEN, AND SOUTH AFRICA'S BIRD OF THE YEAR (BOTY) FOR 2025 HAS OFFICIALLY BEEN DECLARED! A CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY AND A SPECIAL SPECIES THAT KEEPS TICKS IN CHECK, MEET THE BOTY:



Owen Deutsch for BirdLife SA

South Africa (25 November 2024) — BirdLife South Africa have spoken and South Africa's Bird of the Year for 2025 has officially been declared. Taking on the baton from the 2024 Bird of the Year, the Bateleur, the 2025 bird to watch is the Red-billed Oxpecker! Also known as the Rooibekrenostervoël (in Afrikaans) ihlalankomo (in isiZulu) and ihlalanyathi (isiXhosa), the Red-billed Oxpecker is set to be celebrated all year long.

## A Conservation Success Story

"It is an aptly chosen Bird of the Year", says Mark D. Anderson, BLSA's Chief Executive Officer. While the oxpecker's population was at one time shrinking in its South African range, conservationists celebrate its resilience and its notes as a "conservation success story" whose numbers have increased and its range expanded.

## Not Just a Pretty Face

The Red-billed Oxpecker's distinctive looks may make it a joy to spot, as visitors to the Kruger National Park and other protected areas will know, but it also serves an important function within the ecosystem—feeding on ticks!

You might have caught the bird crawl over antelope and other ungulates and feeding on the ticks that parasitise them. In this way, they perform not only a service to these hosts, but also to other players in their ecosystem by controlling tick populations.

It has been proposed that they also benefit their hosts by providing an early warning system of approaching danger; of particular interest is how this communication may help rhinoceroses avoid danger from poachers.



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## Expansion and New Friends

Dr Lorinda Hart, BirdLife South Africa's Birds & Agrochemicals Project Manager explains how farmers have even teamed up with the oxypecker.

"Although the [oxypecker's] population increase can partly be attributed to reintroductions into areas where they had previously been extirpated, farmers have assisted this useful species by...using more oxypecker-friendly alternatives to control ticks and other ectoparasites on their cattle and game."

Dr Linda van den Heever, BLSA's Species Conservation Programme Manager adds:

"Until a few decades ago, the Red-billed Oxpecker was confined to large protected areas...but is now encountered in areas of the Eastern Cape, a province where it was absent until relatively recently," among other range increases into the North West province."

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# THE AFRICAN PENGUIN - IS THERE HOPE? CONSERVATION

QUIETER SEAS ARE GOOD NEWS FOR AFRICAN PENGUINS

12 AUGUST 2024 | BY RENÉE BONORCHIS NEWS | GQEBERHA



The Number of breeding pairs of African penguins in Algoa Bay have bounced back since bunkering stopped.

With numbers dwindling, scientists are concerned about the future of African penguins.

On St Croix Island in Algoa Bay, which is part of the Addo Elephant Marine Protected Area (MPA), there were 7,000 endangered African penguin breeding pairs in 2015. By 2023, the number had collapsed to 700, according to researcher Professor Lorien Pichegru. But the good news is that numbers are rising again - thanks to a tax dispute.

St Croix, only 12 hectares in size and four kilometres from the Port of Coega (Ngqura) couldn't be in a worse spot. The African penguins on St Croix suffer, says Pichegru, from the double whammy of commercial fishing in the surrounding areas and noise pollution from ships heading in and out of the port.

Pichegru, who is acting director of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, has been knee-deep in African penguin research for about 15 years. She sometimes lives with them on Bird Island. Pichegru has published nearly 100 papers and been cited more than 2,000 times, according to ResearchGate, and is one of the world's leading authorities on the species known as *Spheniscus demersus* (African penguin).

In a study published in 2022 called "Maritime traffic trends around the southern tip of Africa – Did marine noise pollution contribute to the local penguins' collapse?" Pichegru led a team of eight fellow scientists as they researched the impact of noise in Algoa Bay.

They found that an increase in annual estimated vessel noise corresponded to a significant average decrease of penguin pairs and that the lowest recorded numbers of penguins' breeding pairs corresponded to the period after ship-to-ship bunkering began in 2016.

Bunkering is a practice whereby ships are refuelled out at sea instead of coming into port. It's a noisy process and increases the risk of oil spills. And in Algoa Bay all this takes place in or right next to the MPA.



THE AREA WHERE THE AFRICAN PENGUINS OF ST CROIX ISLAND FORAGE IS FULL OF SHIPS. SOURCE: "MARITIME TRAFFIC TRENDS AROUND THE SOUTHERN TIP OF AFRICA – DID MARINE NOISE POLLUTION CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOCAL PENGUINS' COLLAPSE?"

L. Pichegru et al. Science of the Total Environment 849 (2022) 157878

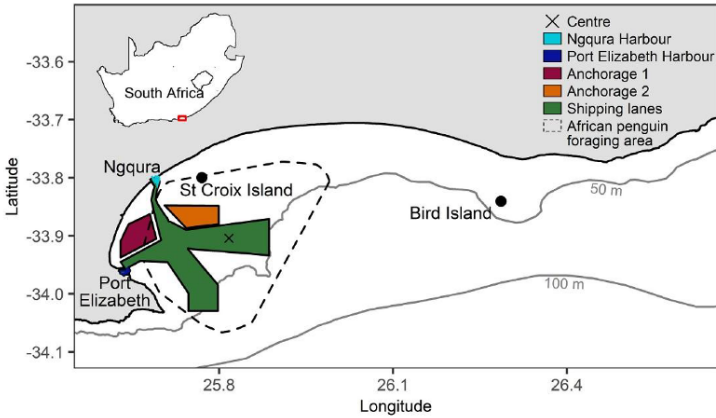


Fig. 1. Map of the study area, showing Ngqura (light blue) and Port Elizabeth (dark blue) harbours, anchorage areas 1 and 2, shipping lanes, as well as the main African penguin foraging area (dotted line) from St Croix Island and its centre (back cross).

"The intensification of underwater noise levels in the African penguin's foraging habitat was linked to the initiation and expansion of ship-to-ship bunkering activities which intensified the maritime traffic in the area," the scientists said in the 2022 paper.

"Noise levels were significantly related to the collapse of what had been the world's largest remaining colony of endangered African penguins."

Algoa Bay became one of the noisiest bays in the world.

Breeding pairs of penguins dropped as noise levels rose. Source: "Maritime traffic trends around the southern tip of Africa – Did marine noise pollution contribute to the local penguins' collapse?"

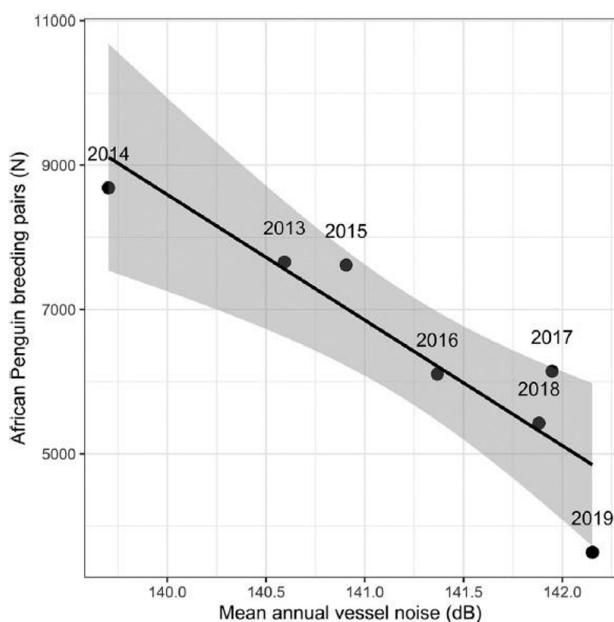
But this year, the number of pairs of penguins, who mate for life, has almost doubled on St Croix. Pichegru, who has just returned from a stay on nearby Bird Island, says the number is up to 1,200 pairs.

This 71% year-on-year jump in numbers, she says, is because there has been no bunkering in the area in the last year. And this is because of a tax dispute. Earlier this year the Eastern Cape High Court heard the case, with the South African Revenue Service (SARS), which confiscated some of the refuelling vessels last year, claiming that illegal bunkering had cost the fiscus as much as R7-billion in lost revenue. The defendants said SARS's directives about bunkering were unclear. The court found that SARS needed to clarify its regulations, a process that's still ongoing. While this is ongoing bunkering has stopped, which is good for the penguin population.

But though the news from St Croix is good, Pichegru is still very concerned about the future of the penguins.

An expert panel appointed by former Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Barbara Creecy recommended in 2023 various measures to protect penguins.

In August that year, Creecy said the partial ban on commercial fishing for anchovy and sardine around six penguin island colonies, including St Croix would continue unless conservationists and fisheries came to agreements on new fishing bans by the start of this year. With no agreements reached, the partial bans are now in place for the next ten years.



BirdLife South Africa and SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds) have challenged this decision in court, saying Creecy did not take into account all the recommendations of the panel.

Specifically, they say, she did not take into account recommendations on how to define a "valuable area for African penguins" when considering how to balance penguin needs with fishing industry interests.

As a result, her decision was "biologically meaningless", they say.



“I do believe penguins have a high risk of becoming functionally extinct by 2035 at the rate they’re going,” Pichegru says. And this is despite the fact that scientists are working to identify the next 5% of South Africa’s ocean that needs protection. At present South Africa has 41 MPAs covering 5.4% of the sea which is under South African law. Like many other countries, South Africa has promised to protect 30% of its sea by 2030.

Given the penguins’ core foraging range, it would be enough to extend the closures out to sea for 40 kilometres at most, says Pichegru. That’s a tiny speck of space when compared to the 1.1 million square kilometres of ocean that fall within South Africa’s exclusive economic zone but would make all the difference to the penguins.

“They can be resilient and have the capacity to produce up to four chicks a year in really good conditions, so they can bounce back should we give them a chance,” Pichegru says. “There is a realistic chance to stop them from disappearing by providing them with adequate protection at sea.”

Renée Bonorchis is a journalist and the founder of The Ocean Advocate, which is co-publishing this story. This is the last in a three-part series.

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#### **Update on litigation instituted by BLSA and SANCCOB:**

##### **African Penguin newly classified as ‘critically endangered’ as breeding pairs fall below 10,000**

- 28 October 2024: The International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN] has uplisted the African Penguin from Endangered to Critically Endangered, underscoring the species’ extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.
- The bird has already lost 97% of its population and could be extinct in less than 4,000 days if nothing changes.
- Among other threats, commercial purse-seine fishing is competing with penguins for sardines and anchovies, their main source of food, leaving them hungry and making it harder to breed.
- Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds [SANCCOB] and BirdLife South Africa have initiated landmark litigation against the South African government to enforce greater protection of this species

The legal dispute concerns the closure of fishing areas around critical African Penguin breeding sites.

For now, the high court case is still on the roll, although delayed to March 2025.

*African Penguins at Boulders Beach in Cape Town.  
Archive photo: Ihsaan Haffejee / GroundUp*





# THREE OWLS... AND AN ORIOLE

# TRAVELOGUE

To go birding in Botswana and Namibia had always been my dream – but one I did not want to experience without my husband. 45 Years before, he had been in Namibia and even Angola during his army days, had told me about the palm trees around Grootfontein, about crossing the Okavango near Rundu, and the beauty of Angola. And now, for the first time, the two of us would go on an extended camping trip to Botswana and Namibia, to join up later with his birder brother and sister-in-law in the Caprivi. They had been traveling and birding their way up from southern Namibia and had been on the road for a month already, in their Jimny and dome tent. Their example of minimalistic camping was seductive. Why bother dragging trailers or campers full of stuff on bad roads if we could pare down to essentials?

What struck me in Botswana was, to begin with, their roads – almost all tarred, well-maintained, long stretches devoid of traffic. Then the people: relaxed, friendly, and welcoming. There was no load-shedding, even if ESKOM provided all their electricity. Their towns were neat and clean. All in all, what a refreshing change! Along the A2 main road, there must have been hundreds of Lilac-breasted Rollers and Fork-tailed Drongos, some Tawny Eagles and even a few Red-crested Korhaan.

True, the last stretch of road between the Okavango Delta and Shakawe was challenging due to potholes, and we were relieved to arrive at Drotsky's Cabins in the late afternoon and to set up camp. We were immensely chuffed to be the only campers there and even more with our magnificent campsite next to the Okavango.

Having set up camp, our whole existence at once shrunk to the 2 square metres of our small dome tent, with its inflatable mattresses, the four ammunition crates which held our stuff, the campfire, but at the same time stretched immeasurably to miles and miles of grey-green Kalahari plains/ flats, riverine forest giants, the glistening Okavango, and the Milky Way which would be arching above us at night.

The tent and camping table and chairs had minutes ago been set up. At last. Our first night in Botswana. Even though late in the day, it was quite hot. I had just plunked down in my camping chair, camera and binoculars not even at hand yet. Suddenly, a large, gingery-orange shape landed soundlessly in a tree above me. PEL's!!! The only lifer which I fervently hoped and prayed for to see on this trip! I sprang up to fetch my camera... but alas, this spooked the owl, and it flew off. Well, we planned to go on a boat trip on the river during the next few days and I trusted to see it then and take that coveted photograph. Suddenly energised, I decided to do some birding before dusk and soon arrived at the camp's reception area and jetty. Here I found Holy, camp manager supreme, and started talking with him. I told him how desperate I was to see Pel's on our planned boat trip, and how it had eluded me in both Mapungubwe and Pafuri, only to tease me just now with a partial sighting at our camping spot.







He laughed and told me it was hard to see, and he just hoped we would be lucky on our boat trip. In fact, we should pray hard for this. This set me worrying. What if the flash of half an hour ago would be my only 'sighting'?

I returned to our campsite and had just started preparations for our evening meal when Holy arrived at our camping spot and instructed me to quickly follow him. He did not explain why but I had the foresight to grab my camera. We rushed quite a distance on rough footpaths, the last part threading through bushes, me stumbling on flimsy sandals.

Then he stopped, pulled me beside him, pointed, and whispered: "Look! There!!" I'll never forget that magic moment – a magnificent pair of Pel's Fishing Owls stared down at us. Most birders rate that as THE bird to see - its secrecy, scarcity and beauty always make them an incomparable sighting. I was surprised by their sheer size – 64 cm, as large as Verreaux's Eagle Owl (Reuse-ooruil), and when they puff up their feathers, even larger.

In this case, the female flew off before I could capture them together - my camera wasn't even switched on as I had no idea why Holy had dragged me off in the first place. To say that I was overwhelmed and delirious with joy was an understatement. The Pel's was relaxed and gave me the opportunity for many great photographs.

Holy must have loved my praise and gratitude and my casual mention of also hoping for African Wood Owl and African Barred Owllet, as he arrived early the next morning when I was still enjoying my first cup of coffee: "Come!" I knew to follow him without questions. Again, we left the camping grounds, crashed through the vegetation, even further than the previous evening...

Holy stopped, drew me alongside, and pointed at a broken hollow tree trunk. Nothing. I turned to him, baffled, and he whispered to me where I should look. I looked some more, and suddenly spotted an African Wood Owl, perfectly camouflaged. Lifer number two! I never, ever would have found that owl on my own.

As it was, I was just four or five metres from the spot where it was roosting, but if I so much as looked away, I almost couldn't find it again. I battled to photograph it, though, as a branch was in the way, right across its face.

However much I crouched, moved to the side and eventually knelt, I had to be satisfied with the dratted branch, or risk disturbing the owl, which I absolutely did not want to do.

Still, I was ecstatic, again. TWO lifer owls, in a bit more than twelve hours!







But this was not the end yet. When I struggled up from my knees, ruefully checking the blood spots where thorns had pierced right through the material of my cargo pants, we walked back to our tent.

I praised Holy for his amazing ability to find these owls, obviously honed by years of living in the bush. On the way back, I was lucky enough to spot another lifer, African Oriole.

But I wasn't allowed to go and finish my coffee yet – I had to follow Holy to the camping spot just next to ours. Again, he motioned me to look at a clump of trees.

Again, nothing. Exasperated, he explained where to fix my eyes. Western Barn Owl! Fast asleep, and so close! How could I have missed it? Not a lifer, though, but still, extremely gratifying...

I doubt whether any birder, new to Botswana, would be lucky enough to repeat this amazing sequence of three owls in 13 hours, unless, of course, you ask for Holy, Owl Whisperer, at Drotsky's Cabins.





# BEST OF BLNG

We regularly receive stunning images from BLNG members which are not necessarily part of a camp, club outing or travelogue.

This forum was created for just this niche. Any special species seen on holiday or when out birding on your own, garden birds, or any arial photographs which you might want to share with our members are more than welcome.



*African Jacana*  
[Marna Buys]



*Allen's Gallinule*  
[JP van der Merwe]





*Black Crake*  
[Anna-Marie van der Merwe]



*Egyptian Goose*  
[Marna Buys]



# RINGERSHOEKIE

# CITIZEN SCIENCE

## 3 Augustus, Moreleta Kloof NR (o.l.v. Hein Bantjes)

Twaalf ringers en sewe potensiële ringers het opgedaag vir die ringsessie by hierdie natuurreservaat. Daar was dus genoeg hande om die 229 voëls te hanteer. Die Dikbekwewers (Thick-billed Weavers) was die meeste met 61 voëls, terwyl die Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked Weaver) die tweede meeste was met 56 individue. Die C-ringers het behoorlik kennis gemaak met die byters: Dikbekwewers (Thick-billed Weaver). Daar is 22 verskillende spesies gering soos Kleinheuningwyser (Lesser Honeyguide), Geel- en Rooibeklyster (Karoo and Kurrichane Thrush) (12+2), Grasvoël (Cape Grassbird), Swart- en Witpenssuikerbekkie (Amethyst and White-bellied Sunbird), Swartband- en Bruinsylangstertjie (Black-chested and Tawny-flanked Prinia), Gewone Fret (Bronze Mannikin), Bontrugwewer (Village Weaver) (15) en een Kaapse Wewer (Cape Weaver).

Van die 37 hervangste (16,2%) was die Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked Weaver) die meeste met 14 voëls. Ander spesies was Rooivink (Southern Red Bishop) (3), Gewone Janfrederik (Cape Robin-Chat) (7), Bruinsylangstertjie (Tawny-flanked Prinia) (4), Bontrugwewer (Village Weaver), Kaapse Wewer (Cape Weaver) en Swartoogtiptol (Dark-capped Bulbul) (2).



*Reinhardt Fowler was maar skrikkerig vir hierdie byter, 'n Dikbekwewer (Thick-billed Weaver) wyfie wat hy by 'n koue Moreleta Kloof in die nette gekry het.  
Foto: Brigette Hamilton*



*Fotobyskrif 2: Sonya de Bruyn was baie trots op hierdie Rooiborslaksman (Crimson-breasted Shrike) wat sy by Krokodilspruit ge'retrap' het.  
Foto: Nanet Pieters*

## 17 Augustus, Krokodilspruit, Soetdorings, Cullinan (Nanet Pieters)

Net twee A-ringers en drie C-ringers het op hierdie koue dag die ringsessie bygewoon. Omdat daar so min A-ringers was, was die nette ook maar min. Net 29 voëls het nuwe ringe gekry.

Nanet ring dikwels op hierdie plaas, so die drie hervangste (10,3%) was nie 'n verrassing nie: twee Langstertlaksmanne (Magpie Shrike) en een Rooiborslaksman (Crimson-breasted Shrike). Die baie spesiale spesies het egter opgemaak vir die min voëls.

Die volgende spesies het nuwe ringe gekry: Kardinaalspeg (Cardinal Woodpecker), Pylvekkatlagter (Arrow-marked Babbler), Witkeeljanfrederik (White-throated Robin-Chat), Gestreepte Wipstert (White-browed Scrub-Robin), Bruinkeelbossanger (Burnt-necked Eremomela), Oranjekeelkalkoentjie (Cape Longclaw), Grysrugkwêkwêvoël (Grey-backed Camaroptera), Rooibeklyster (Kurrichane Thrush), Fiskaallaksman (Common Fiscal) en Gewone Bontrokkie (African Stonechat).



## 31 Augustus, Bishopvoëlpark, Wierdapark (o.l.v. Marina Pienaar)

Hierdie slag het elf ringers die park toegespan met hulle nette. As gevolg van 'n skielike koue wat die vorige nag oor die gebied in beweeg het, was die getalle maar laag. Net 68 voëls is hanteer, waarvan agt hervangste was (11,8%).

Vier van die elf ringers is nog in opleiding. Dit is verblydend om te sien hoeveel jonger mense aangesluit het by die ringers (sewe in die laaste twee maande). Een van die Gewone Janfrederikke (Cape Robin-Chat) wat ge'retrap' is, is veertien jaar gelede, op die 18de Oktober 2010 deur Mari Ueckermann vir die eerste keer as 'n volwasse voël gering. Dit is daarna al ses keer weer gevang. Daar word nie weer 'n ring aangesit nie, maar al die afmetings word wel geneem en 'n kode "2" dui aan dat dit 'n hervang is.

Ander spesies wat ons weer gevang het, was Kaapse Glasogie (Cape White-eye) en Swartkeelgeelvink (Southern Masked Weaver).

Nog 'n verrassing was die drie kanariespesies wat ons saam gevang het. Ons kon hulle dus baie mooi vergelyk met mekaar. Die spesies was: Geeloog-, Berg- en Geelkanarie (Yellow-fronted, Black-throated and Yellow Canary).

Ander spesies wat nuwe ringe gekry het, was Bruinsylangstertjie (Tawny-flanked Prinia), Fiskaalvlieëvanger (Fiscal Flycatcher), Suidelike Waterfiskaal (Southern Boubou), Gewone Mossie (Cape Sparrow) en Geelbeklyster (Karoo Thrush).

## 7 September, Voortrekkermonument (Reinhardt Fowler)

'n Groot groep van sestien ringers, waarvan sewe C-ringers was, het op 'n koel lente-oggend langs die nisse by hierdie historiese plek bymekaar gekom.

Die groot totaal vir die dag was 67, waarvan agtien hervangste was (26,9%). Die getal hervangste was besonder hoog, want ons ring dikwels by die Monument, ten minste drie keer 'n jaar.

Onder die 49 voëls wat nuwe ringe gekry het, was daar spesies soos: Witkeeljanfrederik (White-throated Robin-Chat), Neddikkie (Neddicky), Pylvekkatlagter (Arrow-marked Babbler), Rooikopwewer (Red-headed Weaver), Kleinheuningwyser (Lesser Honeyguide), Hadede (Hadede Ibis), Afrikaanse Naguil (Fiery-necked Nightjar) en Bosveldstompstert (Long-billed Crombec).

Die agtien hervangste het die volgende spesies ingesluit: Bosveldtjeriktik (Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler), Rooivlerktjagra (Brown-crowned Tchagra), Bruinsylangstertjie (Tawny-flanked Prinia), Suidelike Waterfiskaal (Southern Boubou), Rooikophoutkapper (Black-collared Barbet) en Gewone Janfrederik (Cape Robin-Chat).

Die oudste hervang was 'n Rooivlerktjagra (Brown-crowned Tchagra) wat tydens ons afsluitingsfunksie op 30 Desember 2017 vir die eerste keer gering is. Dit is daarna weer drie keer gevang. 'n Jaar later op 3 Maart het dit weer in Fransie O'Brien se nette beland. Eers na Covid op 30 Desember 2023 het Marina Pienaar die tjagra weer gekry. En nou het Mari Ueckermann dit vir die vierde keer gevang.



Nanet Pieters met die Hadede (Hadede Ibis) wat Arrie Klopper ingehardloop en vir haar gevang het by die Monument. Foto: Suné Janse van Rensburg.



Suné Janse van Rensburg het hierdie Afrikaanse Naguil (Fiery-necked Nightjar) vroegoggend in die nette gekry by die Monument. Foto: Wanda Louwrens



Sestien ringers (waarvan sewe nog in opleiding is), het hulle ringstasie naby die nisse by die Monument gemaak. Foto: Frik du Plooy



### 13-15 September, Wolfhuiskraal-kamp (o.l.v. Wanda Louwrens)

Hierdie werkende beesplaas naby Pienaarsrivier is 'n gewilde ringplek. Die naweekkamp is bygewoon deur ses A-ringers en drie C-ringers. Die lente het hierdie naweek somer oorgeslaan na somer en ons het lekker warm gekry. Alhoewel ons twee keer 'n jaar op die plaas ring, was die hervangste maar skraal, want dit is baie droog daar. Net twaalf voëls is weer gevang (6,0%). Dit sluit spesies in soos 'n Bruinkopvisvanger (Brown-hooded Kingfisher), wat in 2021 deur Nicole de Jager vir die eerste keer gering is, en sedertdien al ses keer weer in die nette betrap is. Ander hervangste was: Bosveldtjeriktik (Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler), Maricovlieëvanger (Marico Flycatcher), Neddikkie (Neddicky) en Langstertlaksman (Magpie Shrike). Die 43 Gewone Blousysies (Blue Waxbill) het met die eerste prys weggeloopt, terwyl die 31 Gewone Melbas (Green-winged Pytilia) tweede was. Die sewentien Bosveldtinktinkies (Rattling Cisticola) was 'n groot verrassing (dit gebeur selde).

Die 201 voëls wat die naweek gehanteer is, het 36 verskillende spesies ingesluit. Die 189 voëls wat nuwe ringe gekry het, was spesies soos Rooioogtiptol (African Red-eyed Bulbul), (die eerste een wat ons van weet wat op hierdie plaas gering is), Pêrelborsswael (Pearl-breasted Swallow), Geelbekneushoringvoël (Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill), Bontroklaksman (Brubru), Kalahari- en Gestreepte Wipstert (Kalahari and White-browed Scrub Robin), Koningblousysie (Violet-eared Waxbill) en Witkeeljanfrederik (White-throated Robin-Chat).



By die Boskamp (Wolfhuiskraal) het ons die ringstasie somer onder die Witgatboom gemaak.  
Foto: Wanda Louwrens



Nanet Pieters en Marie Ueckermann het elkeen 'n Geelbekneushoringvoël (Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill) by Wolfhuiskraal gering.  
(Foto: Wanda Louwrens)

### 8-10 Maart, Pienaarsrivier, Wolfhuiskraal-kamp (Wanda Louwrens)

Agt ringers het hierdie plaas in die Bosveld besoek. In November verlede jaar kon ons maar net vir 51 voëls nuwe ringe aansit, as gevolg van die Pienaarsrivier wat in vloed was. Dit het ons verhoed om by die pomphuis uit te kom. Die area rondom die pomphuis is by verre die beste ringplek op die plaas! Hierdie naweek was egter 'n ander storie! Ons het 'n allemintige 327 voëls gekry.

Dit was gewis die naweek van die suikerbekkies en kweleas! Die veldaalwyne was in die blom en dit het baie suikerbekkies gelok. Drie spesies is in die nette gevang: negentien Marico- (Marico), twaalf Witpens- (White-bellied) en sewentien Swartsuikerbekkies (Amethyst Sunbird), asook 172 Rooibekkweleas (Red-billed Quelea).

Die 45 spesies het ook die volgende ingesluit: Kleinsperwer (Little Sparrowhawk), Gewone Dikkop (Spotted Thick-knee), Witkoluil (Pearl-spotted Owlet), Afrikaanse Naguil (Fiery-necked Nightjar), Groot- en Kleinheuningwyser (Greater and Lesser Honeyguide), Bruinkeelbossanger (Burnt-necked Eremomela), Gysrugkwêkwêvoël (Grey-backed Camaroptera), Grootmossie (Great Sparrow), Bergkanarie (Black-throated Canary), Langstertlaksman (Magpie Shrike), Gebande Sanger (Barred Wren-Warbler), Suidelike Waterfiskaal (Southern Boubou), Rooivlerktjagra (Brown-crowned Tchagra).

Daar was 314 voëls wat nuwe ringe gekry het en dertien was hervangste. Die 4,0% 'retraps' het bestaan uit spesies soos Bosveldtjeriktik (Chestnut-vented Warbler), Langstertlaksman (Magpie Shrike), Rooibekkelelaar (Green Wood Hoopoe) en twee tinkinkies naamlik Neddikkie en Bosveldtinktinkie (Neddicky and Rattling Cisticola).



## 24-29 September, Wilton Valley-kamp, Laphalale (Elba Swart)

Agt A-ringers en drie jong vakleerlinge het hierdie ses dae op 'n jagplaas naby die Limpoporivier deurgebring vir verskeie ringsessies. Daar is op die plaas gering en sommige dae het ons die grondpaaie in die omgewing vir roofvoëls verken.

Elba doen verslag:

Ons het in totaal 311 voëls hanteer, van 47 verskillende spesies. Daar was nie baie 're-traps' nie, net vyf in totaal. In terme van lewensduur is die 4 jaar, 6 maande en 6 dae, van die Rooioogtiptol (African Red-eyed Bulbul) en 3 jaar 7 maande en 22 dae van die Maricovlieëvanger (Marico Flycatcher) glad nie sleg nie. Veral gegewe die twee voëls albei regtig veldvoëls is, geen groen tuine met ingewerkte kompos, wat insekte oplewer nie, nee, hulle is beide by die plat suiping gering en weer ge-'retrap'.

Arrie se "poelie kontrepsie" het groot vreugde gebring en ten minste een 'lifer' vir Nicole opgelewer, die Bennettspeg (Bennett's Woodpecker).

Die groot 'lifer'-gons was natuurlik dat elkeen van die teenwoordige A-ringers 'n trouphant as 'lifer' gekry het, hetsy dit 'n Gewone Trouphant (Lilac-breasted Roller) of 'n Groottrouphant (Purple Roller) was. Ek dink dis 'n eerste vir enige ringkamp! Veral as oom Frik een van die groep is wat 'n 'lifer' kry. Altyd vir my baie spesiaal as dit gebeur. Hy ring immers al vir meer as twintig jaar ons inheemse voëls.

Interessante spesies was: drie roofvoëlspesies naamlik Edelvalk (Lanner Falcon), Swartborsslangarend (Black-chested Snake Eagle) en Bleeksingvalk (Pale Chanting Goshawk). Ook Dubbelbandsandpatrys (Double-banded Sandgrouse), Groenvlekduifie (Emerald-spotted Wood Dove), Sabotalewerik (Sabota Lark), Gebande Sanger (Barred Wren-Warbler), Grootmossie (Great Sparrow), Vaalstreepkoppie (Lark-like Bunting), Bospatrys (Crested Francolin) en Grootglansspreeu (Burchell's Starling).

In die Bosveld is daar nie so baie Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked Weaver) (21 voëls) nie, so die Rooirugstreepkoppies (Golden-breasted Bunting) het voorgeloopt met 69 van hulle wat in die nette gevang is. Die Koningblousysies (Voilet-eared Waxbill) was tweede met 54 voëls.

Om op te som: dit was sommer net 'n lekker kamp gewees en nogmaals dankie vir elkeen se bydrae. Saam met julle doen ek dit enige tyd weer.



Daniel Keyter was baie ingenome met sy Bruinkopvisvanger (Brown-hooded Kingfisher) by Wolfhuiskraal.  
Foto: Wanda Louwrens



Elba Swart het ook 'n 'lifer' by Wilton Valley gekry, 'n Groottrouphant (Purple Roller).  
Foto: Nicole de Jager





Elkeen van hierdie agt A-ringers het by Wilton Valley 'n 'lifer' gekry, hetsy 'n Gewone Troupant (Lilac-breasted Roller) of 'n Groottroupan (Purple Roller).  
Foto: Elréne du Plooy.



Frik du Plooy het na meer as twintig jaar se ring, uiteindelik 'n Gewone Troupant (Lilac-breasted Roller) naby Wilton Valley gekry.  
Foto: Wanda Louwrens.



Arrie was so gelukkig om hierdie Swartborsslangarend (Black-chested Snake Eagle) naby Wilton Valley te ring.





Madeleen van Loggerenberg is 'n ou ringer en om nog 'n 'lifer' te kry is 'n groot ding vir haar, soos by die plaasdam op Boekenhoutskloof waar sy hierdie Grootlangtoon (African Jacana) gekry het.  
Foto: Pieter Pienaar



Nanet Pieters ring dikwels op hierdie plaas wat aan haar ouers behoort. Hierdie Swartriethaan (Black Crane) was egter 'n eerste vir haar. Foto: Pieter Pienaar

## 28 September, Boekenhoutskloofdam, Cullinan (Nanet Pieters)

Vangste was maar skraal as gevolg van 'n sterk wind wat heel oggend gewaai het. Die meeste in die groep van ses ringers het darem 'n 'lifer' of twee gekry.

Net tien voëls het nuwe ringe gekry. 'n Gebrek aan getalle het opgemaak vir baie besonderse spesies soos: Kleinwindswael (Little Swift), waarvan drie gevang is, twee Grootlangtone (African Jacana) en die volgende spesies het elk net een opgelewer: Swartriethaan (Black Crane), Oranjekeelkalkoentjie (Cape Longclaw) en Driebandstrandkiewiet (Three-banded Plover).

Die enigste hervangs was 'n Gewone Bontrokkie (African Stonechat). Dit het 9,1% van die totaal teenwoordig.

Die dam was baie leeg. Met meer water, soos na goeie somerreëns, sal hierdie dam baie meer voëls oplewer.

## 12 Oktober, Rietvleidam (Witkoppies) Julian du Plooy

Agtien ringers, waarvan nege C-ringers was, het op hierdie lieflike lente oggend by die dam bymekaar gekom vir 'n ringsessie. Daar was genoeg hande om baie nette op te sit. Die poging is beloon met amper 200 voëls.

Daar is vir 156 voëls nuwe ringe aangesit, terwyl 33 (17,5%) van die 189 voëls hervangste was. 'n Goeie een was die Gewone Bontrokkie (African Stonechat) wat op 6 Desember 2014 deur Mari Ueckermann gering is, amper tien jaar vandat dit die eerste keer in die nette gevang is.

Twee 'retraps' van ses jaar terug (2018), was 'n Kleinrietsanger (Common Reed Warbler) en 'n Rooivink (Southern Red Bishop) wat onderskeidelik in Januarie en Desember van daardie jaar gering is.

Ander spesies wat weer gevang is, was drie Kaapse Rietsangers (Lesser Swamp Warbler), een Kaapse Vleisanger (Little Rush Warbler), ses Vleitinktinkies (Levaillant's Cisticola), agt Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked Weaver) en een Langstertflap (Long-tailed Widowbird).

Ander interessante spesies wat nuwe ringe ontvang het, was: Bokmakierie, Oranjekeelkalkoentjie (Cape Longclaw), Namakwaduifie (Namaqua Dove), Kaapse Rietsanger (Lesser Swamp Warbler), Kaapse Vleisanger (Little Rush Warbler), Vleitinktinkie (Levaillant's Cisticola), en Geelsanger (African Yellow Warbler).

Die Rooivinke (Southern Red Bishop) het loshande voorgeloopt wat getalle betref. Daar is 40 van hulle gevang, terwyl die Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked Weaver) tweede was met 27. Die Rooibeksysties (Common Waxbill) en Kortstertflappe (Fan-tailed Widowbird) was gelyk met 17 voëls elk.



## 19 Oktober, Botaniese Tuin (Arrie Klopper)

Arrie doen verslag:

Ten spyte van die droogte het ons sommer 'n lekker klomp voëls gevang, 128 van 29 spesies (gering en 'retraps'). Wanda se 'lifer', Swartkopwielewaal (Black-headed Oriole) en Nanet se 'lifer', Draaihals (Red-throated Wryneck), was die hoogtepunte van die dag. En laaste, maar nie die minste nie, die eerste baba Swartkeelgeelvink (Southern Masked Weaver) vir die seisoen. Sy ma het seker nie geweet dat hy uit die nes is nie! Die Swartoogtiptolle (Dark-capped Bulbul) was besig gewees en was loshande die meeste, 31 wat gering is en 5 'retraps'.

Nog meer indrukwekkend was die 'retraps': Sommer 34 van hulle van 14 spesies (26,6%). Drie van hulle staan uit. Almal is tien jaar terug op 11 Oktober 2014 gering. Die twee Rooibeklysters (Kurrichane Thrush) is oorspronklik deur Hein Bantjes gering en die Swartoogtiptol (Dark-capped Bulbul) het was Mari Ueckermann s'n. Al drie was al die afgelope jare weer gevang in die tuin, maar nie baie gereeld nie.



*Sonya de Bruyn was baie bly oor hierdie Oranjeborsboslaksman (Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike) wat sy by die Botaniese Tuin gering het. Foto: Nanet Pieters*



*By die Botaniese Tuin het Wanda Louwrens nog 'n ring-'lifer' gekry, 'n Swartkopwielewaal (Black-headed Oriole). Foto: Frik du Plooy*

Die Bruinsylangstertjies (Tawny-flanked Prinia) is duidelik gereelde besoekers by ons nette met drie van hulle wat amper jaarliks gevang word. Dink almal van hulle in die tuin is nou gering, ses was ge'retrap' en net een het 'n nuwe ring gekry. Die Suidelike Waterfiskaal (Southern Boubou) mannetjie is self 'n gereelde besoeker aan daai hoek van die tuin.

Ander interessante spesies was: Afrikaanse Naguil (Fiery-necked Nightjar), Kleinheuningwyser (Lesser Honeyguide), twee vlieëvangerspesies soos Fiskaal- en Paradysvlieëvanger (Fiscal and African Paradise-Flycatcher), en twee houtkappers naamlik Rooi- en Kuifkophoutkapper (Black-collared and Crested Barbet).

Tussen al die lekker ring en kuier het ons nog drie evaluasies ook gedoen. Weer eens baie geluk aan Frans Burger wat gekwalifiseer het as A-ringer. Daniël en David Keyter het ook goed gedoen met hulle 300-evaluasies. Teen die spoed wat hulle vorder gaan dit nie meer lank wees nie. Dankie almal vir 'n heerlike dag se ring!



## 26 Oktober, Ringsvergadering (Frik du Plooy)

Nege A-ringers het by Heuwelsig, Frik en Wanda se aftree-oord, saamgekom vir ons Oktober vergadering. Tydens die vergadering het ons gehoor dat twee van ons ringers, Hein en Marlien Bantjes na die Oos-Kaap verhuis het. Hein was die ringer wat die langste al ring in die groep. Hy het reeds in 1992 gekwalifiseer as ringer.

Maar ons het nog 'n ringer verloor. Ons oudste ringer, Jan Beukes (79) het ook nou uitgetree. Jan het sedert 2012 saamgering en in 2014 gekwalifiseer. Hy het ook as roofvoëlringer klaargemaak tydens 'n ongelooflike toer saam met sy vrou, Jeannie, Frik du Plooy en Wanda Louwrens. Die toer het plekke soos Bray en Tosca ingesluit. Plekke wat mens nie normaalweg sal besoek vir 'n vakansie nie. Die spreekwoord sê: die een se dood is die ander se brood! Jan het al sy ringtoerusting aan Frans Burger verkoop, wat dit nodig gehad het om op sy eie te begin ring.

Die vergadering was soos 'n familiebyeenkoms. Daar is oor ringsake gepraat en verder het ons lekker gekuier soos ou vriende maak.

By dié geleentheid het Pieter du Plessis, 'n lid van ons opleidingskomitee 'n sertifikaat aan Frans Burger oorhandig, wat pas as ringer gekwalifiseer het.

In memoriam:

Ons is hartseer oor een van ons ringers, Leon Lötter wat op 7 Augustus oorlede is na 'n operasie. Ons hart gaan uit na Lucia wat alleen moes agterbly.





# CLUB RARITIES

AUGUST – DECEMBER 2024

## National Rarities/ Nationale Rariteite

This report covers the period of August - December 2024. Spring and early summer is the time of year when many migrants arrive and there was a plethora of wader sightings. One locality that stands out in this regard is Mkhombo Dam. The dam has open areas of shoreline that provide good habitat for shorebirds.



### Broad-billed Sandpiper [Eduard Teichert]

Two mega-rarities dominated: the discovery of a Broad-billed Sandpiper mid-October. To put this national rare sighting in perspective: one Broad-billed Sandpiper was seen at West Coast NP in 2021, and one again in 2022. One also briefly appeared at East London in 2021. This appears to be the first-ever record for Mpumalanga and Greater Gauteng.



### Red-throated Pipit [Pieter Scholtz]

Then, early December, a scarce Red-throated Pipit was discovered there. The Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*) is a rare vagrant to southern Africa. There have been two recorded sightings in South Africa, both at the Umvoti River mouth, KwaZulu-Natal.



### Gull-billed Tern [Mark Freeman]

Not to be outdone, a Gull-billed Tern was found in the same area of Mkhombo dam. This is a rare Palearctic vagrant to coastal lagoons and wetlands.



### Slaty Egret [Elandré Scherman]

Excellent records during the period were the ongoing presence of a Slaty Egret, plus a scarce Terek Sandpiper, seldom seen inland.



### Terek Sandpiper [Pieter Uitenweerde]



## REGIONAL RARE BIRDS



### **Collared Pratincole [Klaus Schmid]**

Pieter Verster reported on 1 September that the Collared Pratincole population at Mkhombo Dam had grown to almost 20 birds.



### **Southern Bald Ibis [Cameron Blair]**

Cameron Blair went on to pick up a Southern Bald Ibis at the same locality as the Broad-billed Sandpiper and the Slaty Egret.



### **Caspian Plover [Pieter Scholtz]**

This was followed by a Sanderling reported by Etienne Marais, and a Grey Plover by Michael Johnson. A Caspian Plover also came to the party!



### **Pectoral Sandpiper [Richard Crawshaw]**

And, unbelievably so, a Pectoral Sandpiper as well - most probably as a result of the so-called Patagonian picnic table effect. This would explain the discovery of an impressive number of rare birds at one site: many birders flock to a site to photograph a rarity, and in that way more and more other rare species are discovered.

Then, in quick succession, **Pink-backed Pelican, Spotted Crake, Osprey, Saddle-billed Stork** and **Allen's Gallinule** (Juan van den Heever) were reported.

**Western Yellow Wagtails** were reported at Mkhombo and Bronkhorst Bay.

Michael Johnson again found a pair of **Grey Penduline-tits**, possibly now breeding in the Seringveld Conservancy.

Rust de Winter Dam and surrounds are also worth investigating. A small group of **African Pygmy Geese** had returned to the inlet, and **Allen's Gallinule** was also present.





### Grey-headed Kingfisher [André Thomas]

André Thomas photographed both Grey-headed Kingfisher and breeding pair of White-backed Night Heron at Mabusa NR.



### White-backed Night Heron [André Thomas]

Reports of **Short-tailed Pipits** seen on the nearby Old Verena Spa road were submitted on eBird recently.

Zaagkuildrift also lived up to its reputation when Mo van der Merwe reported at least two **White-backed Vultures** feeding on a carcass. **Black Storks** were also seen in the vicinity. The flushing of a **Pennant-winged Nightjar** added to the excitement.

Michael Wright spotted a single **Black Saw-wing** amongst other swallows at Marievale towards the end of August.

Suburbia also delivered a number of provincial rarities:

Tristan Silver reported **Orange River White-eye** in Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens – possibly the same bird seen there a month or more ago.

Interesting sightings for suburban Pretoria at Rietondale Proefplaas were a **Horus Swift**, with short on its heels a juvenile **Common Cuckoo**. A **Booted Eagle** was photographed there next, following several sightings of these raptors there last summer. Other noteworthy reports were of **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark** and **Dusky Lark**, also at Rietondale Proefplaas.



### Horus Swift [Marna Buys]



### Common Cuckoo [Daan van de Wetering]





**Booted Eagle [Marna Buys]**



**Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark [Elandré Scherman]**



**European Honey Buzzard [Glen Barnes]**

The first two individuals for the season were reported, one over the Magalies mountain at Wonderboom, and the other at Rietvlei NR. Rietvlei also had an **African Crake**.

Pretoria East had several interesting records during this reporting period. A **Broad-billed Roller**, **Olive Bush-Shrike**, **Dwarf Bittern** and a pair of **Lesser Spotted Eagles** were seen.



**Buff-spotted Flufftail [Malcom Fawkes]**

An exciting discovery was a Buff-spotted Flufftail in a private garden in Centurion.

Another was subsequently reported at Kimead Golf Estate by Daniel Engelbrecht – Birding Eco Tours.





### **Green Sandpiper [Tristan Spurway]**

Tristan Spurway reported a Green Sandpiper at Helderberg Estate, possibly the same individual that entertained twitchers there in 2023.

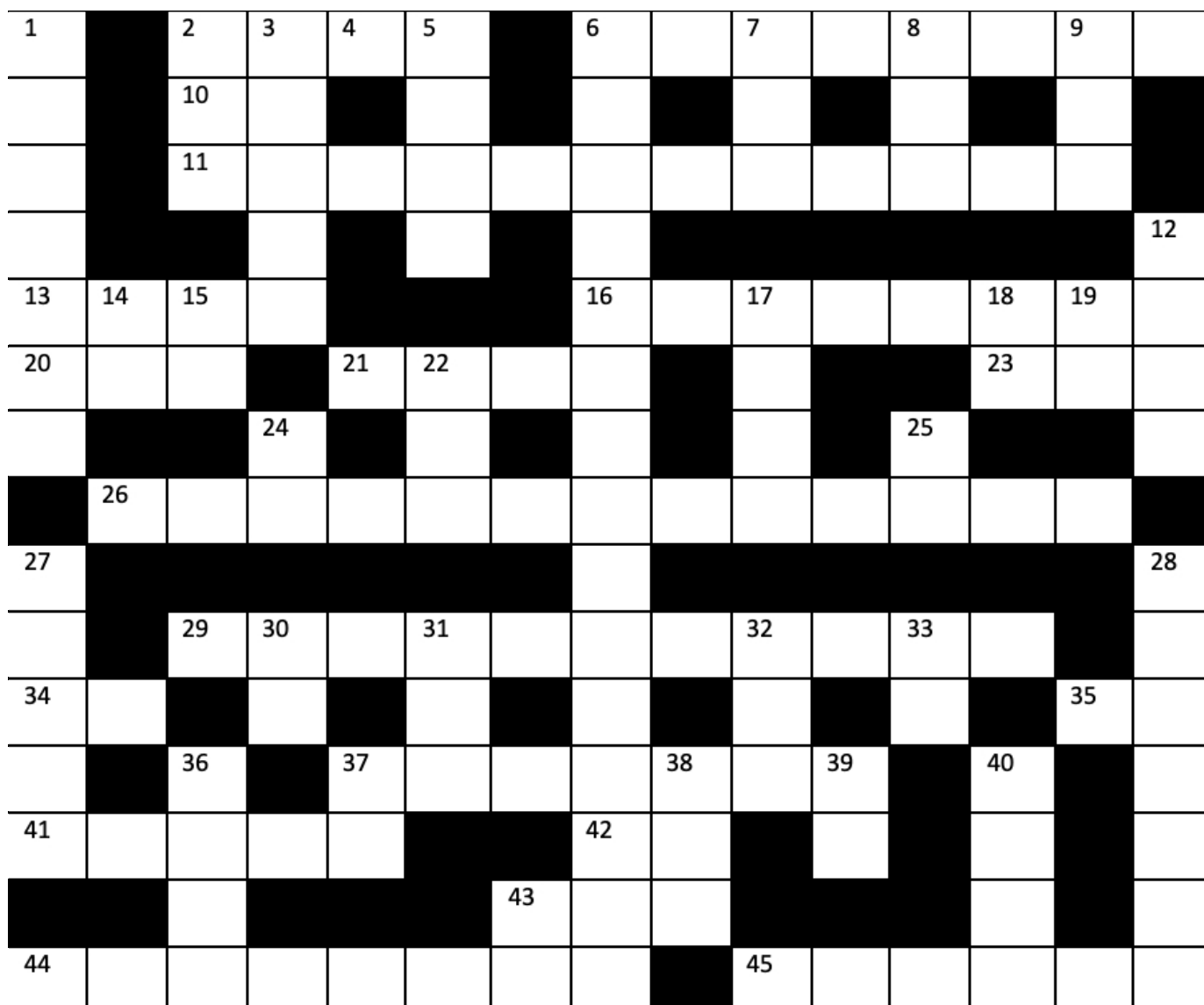
*These sightings were compiled from various social media Wider Gauteng Rarity sources and eBird. - Ed.*



CLUB

# BLOKRAAISEL

BLOKRAAISEL TEMA : Voëls van die wêreld





## Dwars

- 2 Soort roofmeeu (4)
- 6 Hierdie watervoël met 'n spatelvormige snawel se Latynse naam is *Anas smithii*, vernoem na Sir Andrew Smith, 19e eeuse ontdekker (8)
- 10 Geen potjie is volmaak sonder hierdie groentenie (2)
- 11 Dit domineer alle ander spesies by karkasse (12)
- 13 Nylreier (4)
- 16 'n Groot, bedreigde spesie wat in klein groepies in die Kruger Wildtuin rondloop (8)
- 20 'n Geliefde se as word daar bewaar (3)
- 21 'n Klein voëltjie met 'n opvallende rooi kruis en tweekleurige snawel (4)
- 23 Tydperk (3)
- 26 'n Klein watervoël met lang rooi bene (13)
- 29 Ou naam vir 'n veereier (11)
- 34 'n Eerste graad (2)
- 35 Moeg (2)
- 37 'n Kleinerige, Palearktiese trekvoël wat harders en kurpers vang tydens plonsduikslae (7)
- 41 Soort reier (5)
- 42 Reeds (2)
- 43 Web of stoorplek (3)
- 44 Watervoël wat sy kop heen en weer beweeg op soek na kos (8)
- 45 Hierdie groot, bedreigde nagroofvoël eet by voorkeur babers en kurpers en hou langs groot riviere (6)

## Af

- 1 Pienkerige watervoël wat kop onderste bo kos soek (7)
- 2 'n Naby familielid (kort) (3)
- 3 Nieu-Seelandse loopvoels (5)
- 4 Formele aanspreekvorm (1)
- 5 Floreer (4)
- 6 'n Groot, bedreigde spesie wat lyk of dit op stelte loop, langs groot riviere hou en wat hoofsaaklik vis en paddas eet
- 7 ... wes, tuis bes (3)
- 8 Voorvoegsel wat met die omgewing te doen het (3)
- 9 Stroop by tennis (3)
- 12 Langstertvink (4)
- 14 Voorvoegsel wat dubbel beteken (2)
- 15 God ... liefde (2)
- 17 Dit is ... .. groot of te klein (2,2)
- 18 Kykers (2)
- 19 Trilklank (2)
- 22 'n Valstrik (3)
- 24 ... en behalwe (2)
- 25 Boomsoort (2)
- 27 Hierdie spesie se getalle het verbeter nadat voertuie op die strand verbied is (5)
- 28 Grysloerie (7)
- 30 Seboe (2)
- 31 Nie baie fluks nie (3)
- 32 Sierstrook aan 'n rok (3)
- 33 Ongeveer 67 cm (2)
- 36 Koumaag van 'n voël (4)
- 37 Voet (afk) (2)
- 38 Papegaaiduiker (3)
- 39 Kunsmatige Inseminasie (2)
- 40 Seevoël wat ook binnelands aangetref word (4)
- 43 Dwarsmas (2)

Die antwoorde verskyn op die volgende bladsy.



**BLOKRAISEL TEMA : Voëls van die wêreld**

F		S	K	U	A		S	L	O	P	E	E	N	D
L		U	I		A		A		O		K		U	
A		S	W	A	R	T	A	A	S	V	O	E	L	
M			I		D		L							F
I	B	I	S				B	R	O	M	V	O	E	L
N	I	S		S	W	I	E		F			E	R	A
K			B		I		K		T		E			P
	R	O	O	I	P	O	O	T	E	L	S	I	E	
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O		B	O	S	L	U	I	S	V	O	E	L		W
B	A		S		U		E		A		L		P	E
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E	G	R	E	T			A	L		I		E		O
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L	E	P	E	L	A	A	R		V	I	S	U	I	L

**WANDA LOUWRENS**



# LANIARIUS NEW MEMBERS: AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2024

# BLNG MATTERS

## AAN ALLE NUWE LEDE - BAIE WELKOM!

Ons sien daarna uit om julle by ons aandvergaderings, daguitstappies of tydens 'n naweekkamp te leer ken.

## TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS – WELCOME!

We trust you will enjoy your birding with us and look forward to seeing you at our evening meetings, day outings or weekend trips. *Please contact Fransie at [secretary@blng.co.za](mailto:secretary@blng.co.za) or phone her on cell number 072 737 0862 for any queries or information.*

Gerné van Niekerk	Garsfontein
Charl le Roux	Irene
Renée le Roux	Irene
Marissa & Ronnie Wolhuter	Villieria
Mike & Sanet Vos	Doornpoort
Selma Horn	Menlo Park
Adriana Leira	Roseville
Regina & JC Duvenage	Kemptonpark

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Die Laniarius word slegs elektronies versprei. Dit word nie meer gedruk deur BLNG nie.

Fransie O'Brien | 072 737 0862 | [secretary@blng.co.za](mailto:secretary@blng.co.za)

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A sincere thank you for your generous donation. Your contributions help us to reach our goal toward bird conservation projects. We really appreciate it.

Ons opregte dank aan almal vir donasies gemaak. U donasie verseker dat ons 'n groter bydrae tot die bewaring van voëls kan lewer. Ons waardeer dit opreg (August to November 2024)

Amanda & Herman Gazendam	Pieter Heslinga	Regina Duvenhage
Antony Cooper	John van den Berg	Selma Horn
Gerne van Niekerk	Laura Jordaan	Alan Whyte
Imme Shipham	Nicole Crisp	Jan & Hannelien Meyer



# **BUFFELSDRIFT Rust de Winter**

## **ACCOMMODATION**

**R700/adult/night;**

**R350/child 12 years and younger/night;**

**Day visitors R100/person/day**



## **BOOKINGS**

**Please call Donald**

**on 082 885 5577;**

**or e-mail**

**bookings@birdhiking.co.za**

**Website: www.birdhiking.co.za**