

BLiNG WiNGS

Dusky Lark [Philip Calinikos] Edition 29 December 2025

Reflections: BLNG COMMITTEE 2025

A word of appreciation goes to each BLNG committee and sub-committee member at the end of 2025. Each plays a vital part in making our club the success that it is.

Club members, we couldn't do it without you. I think here of Laetitia Steynberg who tackled the ongoing fight for Rietvlei with so much courage. And of Annetjie Barkhuizen, with the accounts and club meetings. Anneke Jordaan, spending untold hours each month as sub-editor of BLiNG WiNGS and Laniarius. And to all the outing and camp leaders - you add so much value in guiding a day outing, or leading or joining a camp.

Here I would also love to mention BLNG's world-class bird photographers and beginners alike, who share photographs of outings or camp groups – invaluable for enjoying it a second time and helping to identify species. You make our club publications possible. A special word of gratitude to those who write articles. Each effort, however small that might be in your own eyes, is a vital part of the mosaic of BirdLife Northern Gauteng.

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CLUB YEAR-END CELEBRATION – 13 November

The rain couldn't interfere with our wonderful celebration with more than 50 club members, held at Sheleph and Louis Burger's home in Mooikloof Equestrian Estate.



The four stages of our celebrations: Bird walk, a 30-question Higher Grade Quiz by our president, Philip Calinikos (we learnt a lot!), Awards, socialising ... and eating!



Thank you, Angela, for handing out awards and certificates – see the next page.

2025 BLNG Year End Function

Certificates of Appreciation and Recognition

1. Ivonne Coetzee - Crimson-breasted Shrike award.

This certificate is proudly presented to **Ivonne Coetzee** with great appreciation and in recognition of her unwavering commitment, dedication, and exceptional editorial skills as the editor of the *Laniarius* magazine and the monthly *BLING WiNGS*. These magazines play such an important role in shaping our club's image and in keeping us all connected. Through the stories and photos of our weekly outings, monthly camping trips, and all the contributions from members, you help bring our bird club together. We deeply appreciate the time, care, and dedication you put into every edition.

2. Frik & Wanda du Plooy - Ring-necked Dove award.

This certificate is proudly presented to **Frik & Wanda du Plooy** for many years of dedicated partnership in bird ringing, working together side-by-side to gather knowledge and information about every bird they ring. Like the Ring-necked Dove, their teamwork and devotion to their task has been a steady, guiding presence in the club.

3. Philip Calinikos - Grey Go-away -bird award

This certificate the **Grey Go-away-bird** award is proudly presented to **Philip Calinikos** for steadfast dedication and unshakable resolve during the annual BLSA Birding Big Day. Like the **Grey Go-away -bird** (emphasis on *grey*), Philip and his team, "**Den Pao Pouthena**", stood their ground and did not *go away*. They recorded 150 species in a 6 km radius, equalling their previous record, thus proving that sometimes, "not going anywhere" but staying at home can lead to some marvellous results!

4. Marlou Schalkwyk - Green-backed Camaroptera award

This certificate is proudly presented to **Marlou Schalkwyk** for her brilliant "camera-operator" skills, capturing the most beautiful photographs of birds that you see in the club magazines. For those

who don't know this, her photographs have even been featured in GO! or WEG! magazine and the PSSA Travelling Exhibition.

5. Wilma van der Merwe - **Scaly-feathered Finch** award

This certificate is proudly presented to **Wilma van der Merwe** for her extraordinary photography and patience in capturing the incredible beauty of feathers. Her amazing project, which she shared with the club through an inspiring presentation, showcases the skill, patience, and artistry that make her work truly exceptional.

6. Renate Reiff - **African Skimmer** award

This certificate is proudly presented to **Renate Reiff** for her sense of adventure and willingness to join in on an African Skimmer twitch to the Malelane Gate at KNP in search of new species. Like the African Skimmer, Renate embraced the thrill of discovery, soaring into new experiences and celebrating a lifer sighting with us.



NORTHERN FARM – 10 December



[Mara Raath]



Long-crested Eagle [John Truter]



Yellow-billed Ducks [John Truter]



Black-headed Heron [John Truter]



Pied Starling [John Truter]



Purple (African) Swamphen [John Truter]

COMPILATION: 2025's PHOTOS OF THE MONTH



January: African Harrier-Hawk – S Burger



February: African Pygmy Kingfisher – A vd Merwe



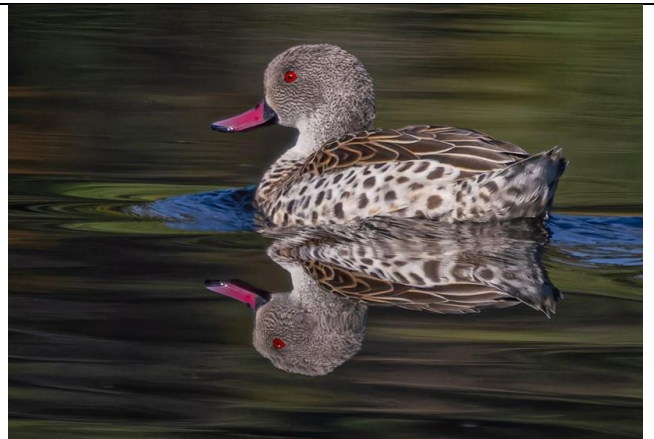
March: Swee Waxbill – Marlou Schalkwyk



April: Reed Cormorant – G Heydenrych



May: Half-collared Kingfisher – P Heslinga



June: Cape Teal – J Croukamp



July: White-throated Robin-Chat – A vd Merwe



August: Spotted Eagle-Owl – C Kotze



September: African Stonechat – Z Croukamp



October: Southern Red Bishop – W vd Merwe



November: Little Swift – S Naudé



December: Malachite Kingfisher – J v Biljon

REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

The **Slaty Egret** was still at Walkhaven Dog Park and moving to Gnu Valley in between sightings. Hugo le Roux found **Allen's Gallinule** at Rust de Winter Dam. Jacques Jordaan spotted this **Ayres' Hawk Eagle** in the Randburg area, while Tristan Spurway reported the first of probably more **European Honey Buzzards** to come at Riverclub, Sandton.



Allen's Gallinule [Pieter Lombaard]



Ayres's Hawk-Eagle [Jacques Jordaan]

The Wilge River Valley continues to deliver species not found anywhere else in Greater Gauteng. Klaus Schmid reported that **Red-capped Robin-Chat** and **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** were sightings at Deale's Rock, while Selwyn Rautenbach saw **African Goshawk** and the male **Narina Trogon** had also been present earlier. Fransie O'Brien with Lamorna Georgiades reported a pair of **Southern Bald Ibis** next to the road.



Narina Trogon [Selwyn Rautenbach via Deale's Rock]



Red-capped Robin-Chat [Klaus Schmid]

Rietondale Proefplaas once again hosted various interesting species during December. Reinardt Haywood reported finding **Bronze-winged Courser** and **Southern White-faced Owl**, the latter not a rarity but still a novel find in suburban Pretoria. A **Booted Eagle** was also seen there and what appears to be annually returning, a pair of **Dusky Larks**.



Bronze-winged Courser [Thea Jenkins]



Booted Eagle [Abri Jordaan]



Dusky Lark [Attie Hartsliet]



Dwarf Bittern [Doug Newman]

The floodplain at Zaagkuil drift was flooded after excellent rains and bristling with birds. Christo Swart saw **Saddle-billed Storks** at Kgomo-Kgomo, while Doug Newman reported that **Dwarf Bitterns** had started breeding again at the bird hide at Zaagkuil drift Bird Lodge. **African Crake** and **Greater Painted-snipe** were also present. Of note was this sighting of a **Red-footed Falcon**, while **Icterine Warbler** and

Common Whitethroat rang in warbler season at Zaagkuil drift. (All Doug Newman). A single **Dwarf Bittern** also showed up at Farrarmere, Boksburg, at Homestead Lake.



Icterine Warbler [Doug Newman]



Red-footed Falcon [Doug Newman]

A **Common Cuckoo** was seen at Dinokeng and a **Montagu's Harrier** was seen hunting near Devon. (Both Andrew Pike).

A **Western Marsh Harrier** was at Marievale (Joshua Winter). The Seringveld Conservancy also had its share of rare bird sightings when Michael Johnson reported a **Rufous-bellied Heron** – which, unfortunately, wasn't seen again, and Selwyn Rautenbach a **Black Saw-wing**, which was more cooperative and seen again on later days. A **Dusky Lark** as well as a **European Honey Buzzard** also turned up in the vicinity.



European Honey Buzzard [Klaus Schmid]



Double-banded Sandgrouse [Marna Buys]

A group of birders visiting Winterveld were treated to sightings of **Double-banded Sandgrouse**, **Greater Painted-snipe**, **Cape Vulture**, **Dusky Lark** and a surprise **Monotonous Lark**.



Dusky Lark [Peter Thompson]



Monotonous Lark [Ivonne Coetzee]

This **Pennant-winged Nightjar** had a number of birders rushing to Groenkloof NR, but sadly, it didn't stick around after Thomas Steynberg found it. [Thomas Steynberg]



Photograph of the month

This photograph is a symphony of light. The eye is first drawn to the breathtaking glints on the iridescent head feathers which are repeated in the glistening gossamer wings of the dragonfly. The drama of the prey in the red beak is placed in the centre of the stage. If we delve deeper, the perfect placement of the subject, adhering to the rule of thirds, the contrasts of bold complementary colours against the unfocused background are all bound together by the slight diagonal line of the reed. Congratulations on this superb capture of a Malachite Kingfisher, Jan van Biljon!





Club meeting – 13 January 2026
Melissa Hoffman – Bird Strike
Avoidance Programme at OR Tambo
Come and join us!



PROGRAMME – January 2026



18 Jan – Austin Roberts Photo
Special



21 Jan – Mooikloof Country Estate



24 Jan – Moreleta NR Kids hike



31 Jan – Rockwall Dam, NW



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