



BLiNG WiNGS

Fairy Flycatcher [Pieter Heslinga]

Edition 36 June 2026

CLUB MEETING 12 May

Alastair Sinclair managed to make this talk about the sad plight of our critically endangered vultures humorous and interesting, with justification for tracking these birds. Some 50 club members braved the cold and attended.



Inside This Issue

Club meeting	✓
Marievale	✓
Aloe Farm	✓
Hedianga Farm	✓
Devon Grasslands	✓
Rarities	
Photograph of the month	
July Programme	

MARIEVALE – 14 Junie

Marlou, ons leidster, se mening was: “Dis 'n spesiale tipe mens wat bereid is om op 'n Sondagoggend in die koue en donker op te staan en te glo daar wag iets moois. Die spesielys was bietjie korter as waarop ons gehoop het, en die son het regtig sy tyd gevat om deur die miswolke te breek, maar winter birding gaan nie altyd net oor hoeveel voëls jy sien nie. Soms gaan dit ook oor warm koffie, die stilte van die vleiland en die voorreg om dit alles met mense te deel wat dieselfde dinge geniet 🌿🐦.”



Op soek na die ontwikkelende Kleinswartrugmeeu by Springs.



Grootwaterhoender [Jan van Biljon]

ALOE FARM – 17 June

Winter Blooms and Brilliant Birds: An Unforgettable Morning at The Aloe Farm

What a spectacular morning it was for the birding outing! A group of 23 enthusiastic birders gathered at The Aloe Farm for what promised to be a memorable outing, and the day certainly did not disappoint.

Nature provided the perfect setting: a classic, mild winter's day with hardly a breeze in the air. An overcast sky kept the temperature at a very comfortable 13 degrees Celcius early morning and provided a beautifully soft, diffused light across the landscape. While the overcast conditions meant we didn't have to battle harsh shadows, the lower light levels did present a fun challenge for the photographers in the group, forcing us to balance slower shutter speeds with higher ISO settings to freeze the action.

The avian action started the moment we stepped into the nursery. The vibrant, flowering aloes were alive with movement, most notably hosting a flurry of darting Amethyst Sunbirds. Trying to lock focus on these fast-moving jewels in the soft morning light was no easy feat, but it made for an exhilarating start to the day.

As we wandered deeper into the stunning nursery grounds, the species list began to grow quickly. Bronze Mannikins zipped through the undergrowth. A Southern Boubou put on a great show, meticulously scrounging the ground for insects. The distinct call of an Orange-breasted Bushshrike echoed through the foliage, leading the group to a great visual as it darted between the branches.

The excitement wasn't just at ground level. Looking up, the group managed to spot and identify an African Harrier-Hawk cruising high into the distance. Despite the altitude, a few photographers managed to capture clear enough frames to secure a positive ID.

Shortly after, a pair of African Green Pigeons stole the spotlight. They spent some time foraging in a nearby tree, giving the entire group excellent, prolonged views. We also scanned the power lines and pylons to no avail.

As we reached the boundary of the nursery—right at the imposing foot of the mountain—we were treated to one last high-altitude thrill, three Cape Vultures soaring far off in the distance.

By the end of the morning, our collective checklist reached an impressive 46 species. While we "dipped" on a few of The Aloe Farm's usual residents—like the vibrant Little Bee-

eaters and White-fronted Bee-eaters—the sheer variety of what we *did* see more than made up for it.

Final Tally: 46 species spotted, 23 happy birders, and countless memories.

A massive thank you to everyone involved in organizing and participating. It was another wonderfully pleasant day spent in the company of great friends and fantastic birds. Until the next outing, happy birding!



[Trevor Scheferman]



Amethyst Sunbird [Jan van Biljon]



Marico Sunbird (juvenile) [John Truter]



Chinspot Batis [Willie Victor]



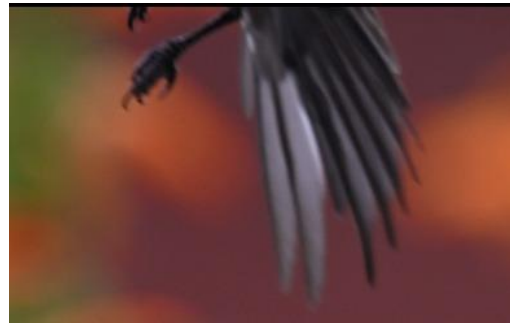
African Green Pigeon [JP van der Merwe]



[Trevor Scheferman]



Amethyst Sunbird (female) [John Truter]



The struggle was real... [Mara Raath et al.]



© JP van der Merwe

White-bellied Sunbird [JP van der Merwe]

New club member Michelene Moore's reaction: "Thank you all for a fantastic day trip. I thoroughly enjoyed being out in nature and seeing some truly beautiful birds. As a complete novice, I learned so much from the incredible depth of knowledge and experience within the group."

HEDIANGA FARM – 20 June



Dark-capped Bulbul [Sherelle Myburgh]



Fork-tailed Drongo [Sherelle Myburgh]



Striped Pipit [Sherelle Myburgh]



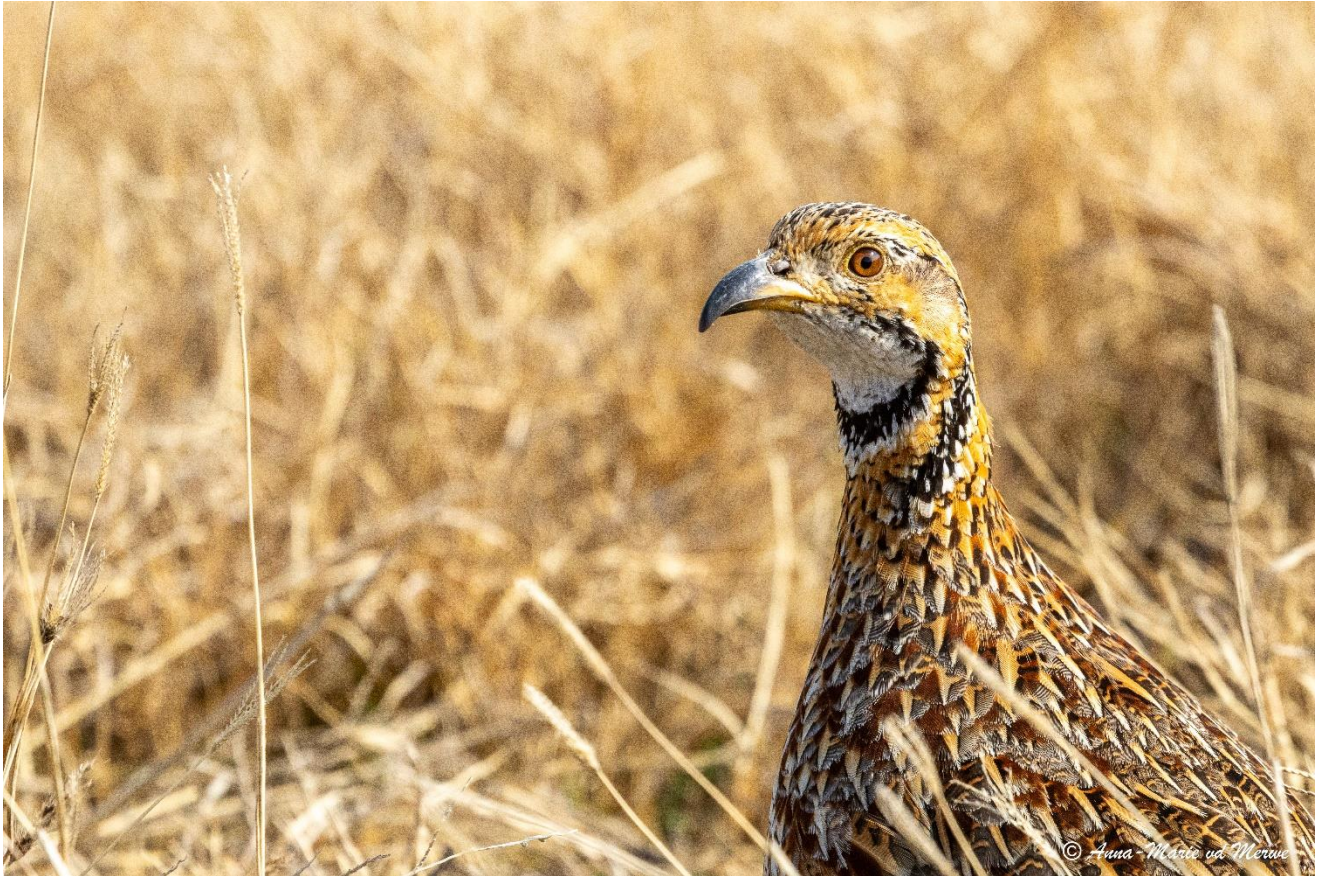
[Sherelle Myburgh]



Keanu Canto guided the group on this overcast and chilly day. [Mike Wentzel]

DEVON GRASSLANDS – 27 June

The annual outing to Devon with Prof. Andy Featherstone as guide is always a high point on the BLNG birding calendar. 69 Species were seen.



Orange River Francolin [Anna-Marie van der Merwe]



Capped Wheatear [JP van der Merwe]



REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

June did not have much to offer in the Rarities section. Possibly, birders relaxed their efforts as the cold crept in, and birds seemed fewer and quieter.

The celebrity of April and May, the single **Collared Sunbird** remained at Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens for some days but wasn't reported later in June. (Connor Nicholson). The rarity of the month, however, pitched up at Cowles Dam near Springs – A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (Sam van Zwieten). A number of twitchers enjoyed the bird there. By 25 June, it had moved to Marievale, entertaining birders there.



Lesser Black-backed Gull [Cameron Blair]

Photograph of the month

However striking this photograph by Sheleph Burger is, with its bold primary colours and strong geometric lines and blocks, it still has an element of humour that lifts it out of the ordinary. No other word could describe the pair of Red-billed Oxpeckers better than the word “droll”. Note the expression of these wattle-eyed birds. They seem slightly bored, even contemptuous and have a definite air of superiority. And who could fault them, when they are perched on such a sumptuous couch? This photograph is carried by the contrasts and repetitions of black, white, yellow and red. The similar postures, the direction of the heads, and the striking eyes and beaks of our twin subjects make for a delicious combination. The glint of light in the eyes is the final touch. Wonderful!





BLNG BIRD QUIZ

DATE:
14 JULY 2026

TIME:
18h30

VENUE:
EASTSIDE COMMUNITY
CHURCH & SCHOOL



HOW IT'S GOING TO WORK:

- Teams of max 6 people, min of 4 people
- Team members will be formed by a random selection process
- Each team selects their own team name and team captain
- Bring "team mascots" to score extra points (stuffed birds, carved birds, etc. No printouts/photos/pictures)
- Come dressed (even partially) as a bird and earn even more points for your team




THE QUIZ FORMAT:

- There will be 4 rounds of 10 questions each:
- All answers will be marked by another team
- Marking will be done after round 2 and round 4
- We will have a short break for homemade soup and rolls after round 2
- The final 2 rounds of questions will follow, then marking and announcing of the results
- Any ties between the top scoring teams will result in a "Quiz-Off" between the captains of each team



BOOK YOUR "PERCH" FOR THE EVENING!

Soup, rolls, birding knowledge, laughter and friendly competition guaranteed!
Book your "perch" for the evening via the BLNG booking form.
For any queries, contact the BLNG Secretary: secretary@blng.co.za

	Membership type	Membership fees	Notes
Main member	Individual Adult	R 405.00	Choose only 1
	Senior Citizen (60+)	R 260.00	
	Student with student card (18-25)	R 195.00	
Family member	Spouse	R 175.00	Choose as many as applicable
	Child 1 (12-18)	R 75.00	
	Child 2 (12-18)	R 75.00	
	Child under 12	Free	

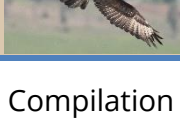
Please note that payments made after March will include pro-rata fees up to February 2027

BLNG Membership allows you to participate **free of charge** in bird walks and outings with experienced leaders. Camps and courses come at an extra fee.

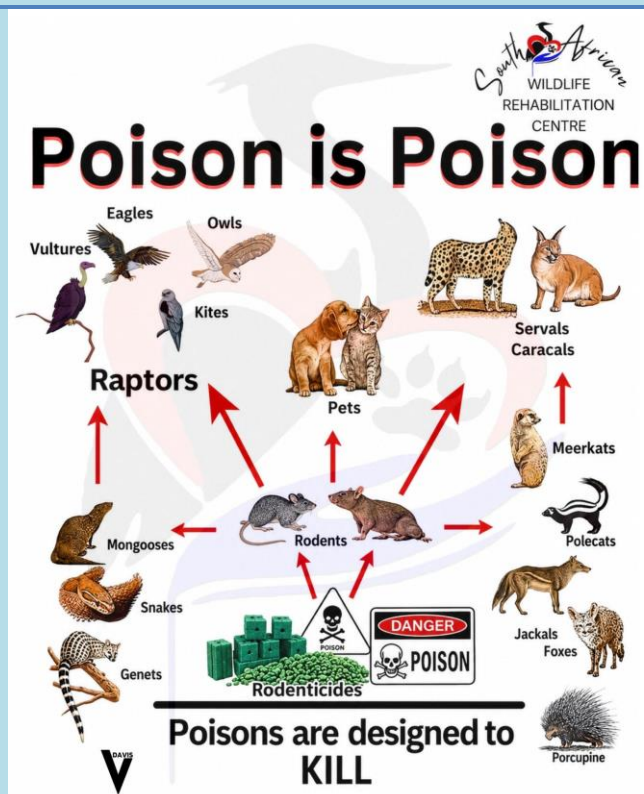
BLNG Membership does **NOT** automatically qualify you to be a member of **BirdLife South Africa**.

Contact them at membership@birdlife.org.za

PROGRAMME – JULY 2026

	5 July – VulPro
	11 July – Hoogland Health Hydro
	19 July – Deneysville
	25 July – Magalies MBT
	28 July – WSBG

Compilation and layout by I Coetzee
<mailto:ivonnecoetzee@outlook.com>



For enquiries: <mailto:secretary@blng.co.za>