



# BLiNG WiNGS

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## ***News Flash***

We are honoured to announce and to welcome our new BLNG President, Philip Calinikos. Philip is a Chartered Accountant by profession. He has been serving on the board of BirdLife South Africa for years as Chairman and currently as Treasurer. He is a passionate birder and citizen scientist. He previously served as BLNG Chairman and treasurer for many years.



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*Botanical Gardens – 2 September.*

Prof. Willem Boshoff was the leader, while Philip Calinikos also joined this bird walk. 70 species were seen.

Philip Loots also joined with boys from Pretoria Boys High School who provided great photographs. The bird ringers there showed their process and equipment, and some great close-ups of birds could be had.



Cape Weaver – Kaapse Wewer [Reinier Meyjes]



Brown-crowned Tchagra – Roovlerktjagra  
&  
Arrow-marked Babbler – Pylvlekkatlagter  
[Andrió de Vries]



Southern Boubou – Suidelike Waterfiskaal  
[Reinier Meyjes]

## *Mkhombo Day Trip - 10 September*

In preparation for leading a day trip birding outing, I normally do a recce just before the actual trip in preparation and try to source all sorts of information from the experts beforehand, to familiarize myself with the various conditions and to maximize the members value on the day. This might include road conditions, access to the venue, the surroundings and even the birds to be expected, after all when I put a number up, it's got to be a somewhat calculated guess. It so happened that I decided late the previous Saturday that Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> would be the most appropriate for this excursion since this would duplicate the day and off we went.

The Mkhombo dam level had been as low as 1% in 2019. With the level this low, one could drive for long distance along the bank and spot all the waders. However, at present with the water level at 99.8% last week, this in effect, only provided one with two streets/roads as access, leading through Libangeni and Allemansdrift-C to the most productive areas.

When the question was asked as to how long this trip would take, 4 hours was a very reasonable time for birding at Mkhombo, walking would be limited since one would not like to wander off too far away and we looked forward to the actual trip.

We met in front of the fire-station. We were 14 keen birders including 5 new members and 1 guest.



We took a slow drive through Allemansdrift and started off with Rock Doves, Pied Crows and lots of Common Myna, Go-away birds, many Marico Flycatchers and various African Pipits. We stopped where the road lead into the dam and started walking. Here, for some, the first “lifer” was seen- two pairs of Great Crested Grebes (Kuifkopdobbertjie).

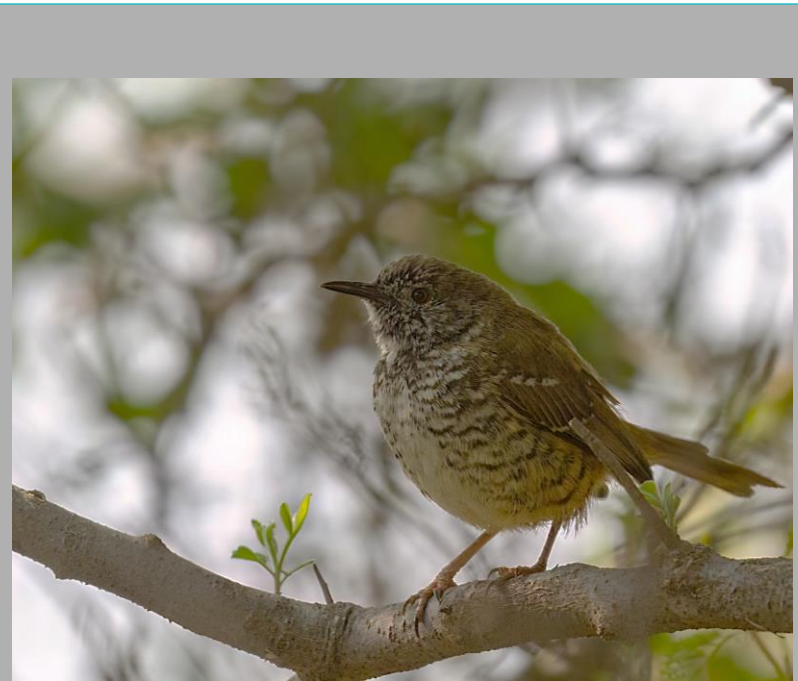


[Deon van der Merwe]

It was not very long, while some were still looking at the Grebes that one of the members pointed to the next “lifer”, an elusive Barred Wren-Warbler (Gebande sanger).

Unbeknownst to us, this particular spot happened to be the local car wash and we decided to move on since the bird choir could not compete with the distorted bass from the boot of the vehicle, but all were very friendly. We then took a very slow drive to Allemansdrift. The road was quite busy and with a slow-moving convoy I spotted a Telegram message from Pieter Verster about a Water Thick-knee, Lesser Moorhen and Pygmy Geese 700 m west of the new “under-water”, water pump station. I radioed that we would expedite this section and try to get to the pump station as soon as possible. Once there, excitement took over and we started walking. The terrain was quite difficult to cover since there were no clear pathways along the bank. We tried to follow cattle tracks, ducking thorn tree branches and fueled with adrenalin we covered the 700 m of difficult terrain quite quickly, passing one of the locals practising his backstroke swimming about 30 m into the dam. Another 50 m further there was a 2.5 m crocodile basking in the sun and slipped into the water as we approached.

At that point, still no waterlilies; a quick message via Telegram again, and at this



Barred Wren-Warbler – Gebande Sanger  
[Anne-Marie van der Merwe]

point it started to dawn on us that it was about 33°C and due to the “short” walk most of us did not take water along. We spotted the lily pads and I saw some White-backed Ducks and I have seen them close to African Pygmy Geese on many occasions. Then we spotted Eduard on his way back and he pointed to the African Pygmy Geese (Dwerggans) in the distance! A lifer for at least 6 members in the group!



African Pygmy Geese [Marlou Schalkwyk]

That little bay was absolutely beautiful with an immature African Fish Eagle on a perch in the middle surrounded by rushes, water grass and lily pads. Vegetation is quite dense, but bird life is prolific in this area. Due to the heat and our need for safe drinking water, we did not stay there too long.



Shikra – Gebande Sperwer & White-backed Ducks – Witrugeend [Marlou Schalkwyk]

In total, we walked almost 4 km and most of us were very hot and tired when we got to the vehicles. There was no shade and with the four hours LOOOOONG GONE we decided to do the list via WhatsApp. It was exhausting but totally worth it. To anyone going to Mkhombo, be prepared for that walk and start walking early. The little bay surrounding lily pads is a gem! In total we identified 101 species on the day.

A HUGE THANK YOU to BLNG for making these outings possible and to all the members who joined us on this outing. I hope you had a great experience.

*JP van der Merwe*

Immature Fish Eagle – Visarend [Michael Erasmus]





Philip Calinikos welcomed by Chair, Elouise Kalmer, and delivering his inaugural speech as new president of BLNG



Renowned ornithologist, Etienne Marais, delivering a talk on migration, answering questions we did not even think to ask.



*Hex River Thornveld Day Trip - 16 September*



**Keanu Canto was the leader, and he took us straight to the Yellow-throated Sandgrouse (Geelkeelsandpatrys) spot.**

**How lucky to get a whole family with three chicks!**

**The group ticked 86 birds for the morning, despite the heat and dry conditions. Other highlights were to see the first Yellow-billed Kite (Geelbekwou) and Wahlberg's Eagle (Bruinarend) back from migration.**

**Four different species of kingfisher at the Hex River was also a nice find.**

**Pied Kingfisher – Bontvisvanger**  
[Ivonne Coetzee]





Keanu Canto guided this morning walk. The highlight was without a doubt mating Little Sparrowhawks (Kleinsperwer), and the multiple Brown-backed Honeybirds (Skerpbekheuningvoël) chasing each other around.

We ended on a decent 74 species with a nice variety of species.



All photographs by Philip Calinikos

### Egyptian Goose - Kolgans





Photograph of the month: Green Wood-hoopoe – Rooibekkekelaar [Pieter Heslinga]



PROGRAMME OCTOBER



7 Oct Voortrekker Monument



14 Oct Bronkhorstspuit Dam



21 Oct UP Campus Bird Census



23 & 25 Oct Birds of Sani Pass – Aldo Berutti



29 Oct Groenkloof NR

Bookings: <mailto:secretary@blng.co.za>

For future placements: Ivonne Coetzee @  
<mailto:lanariuseditor@blng.co.za>

17 Oct Club meeting with Thinus van Staden:

Bird Photography

