



# Laniarius

April 2025 | No 154



*BirdLife Noord-Gauteng  
BirdLife Northern Gauteng*

*Image Source: Orange-breasted Waxbill by Marlou Schalkwyk*

  
**BirdLife**  
SOUTH AFRICA

*Giving Conservation Wings*

# 2025 KOMITEE

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# FROM THE EDITOR

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The announcement of BirdLife South Africa's Bird of the Year 2025 heralded a celebration of conservation successes. In recent years, birds with dwindling numbers which were cause for concern, were championed as BOTY: the Bateleur, the Cape Parrot, the Secretarybird, Cape Gannet, Cape Rockjumper and Southern Ground Hornbill.

The Red-billed Oxpecker represents a conservation success story, as its numbers have increased, and its range expanded. Their population and range had been shrinking, but thanks to concerted conservation efforts, the tide has turned, due to re-introduction to areas where they had previously flourished, and farmers using more oxpecker-friendly alternatives to poisonous dips.

When BirdLife South Africa received the international 2024 Gold Eco-logic Award, the significant impact of their projects on bird conservation was recognised. BLSA staff focus on protection of threatened bird species such as vultures from lead in ammunition, the White-winged Flufftail in its critical wetland habitat, the eradication of mice from Marion Island. The Albatross Task Force managed a significant 98% reduction in seabird bycatch – their methods now being implemented internationally. Importantly, BLSA's collaboration with communities in South Africa's threatened habitats was recognised.

But no legal win in birding circles has ever been celebrated with so much joy as the news this past month that BLSA won the ambitious and daring litigation case against the South African Government to save the African Penguin from extinction. Fishing around their main breeding colonies is now prohibited through the permanent and science-backed protections won in this court-sanctioned settlement.

These are not the only recent conservation success stories in the media: for the first time in four decades, vultures have returned to the Eastern Cape. At least forty Cape Vultures circled over a farm near Cradock in February. Yellow-billed Oxpeckers are expanding and their numbers increasing in Kruger NP, where some forty years ago, they were thought to be extinct south of the Limpopo. The numbers of Black Oystercatchers, BOTY 2018, have increased due to municipalities protecting their nesting sites with barring tape and signs.



*Ivonne - Editor*

Flock to Marion Again raised over R9 000 000 for Mouse-Free Marion, a staggering sum and testament to the generosity of passengers and various sources for conservation causes.

Our own Liesl de Swardt, BLNG committee member, was mentioned in the February BLSA newsletter when she managed to raise R8300 to support BLSA's African Penguin conservation work- through sales of raffle tickets and arranging sponsors for prizes in the draw in their veterinary clinic in Faerie Glen.

In Birder's eye view Christoff Swart tells of incredibly rich birdlife in the carefully planned indigenous garden where they live.

Come, share in the joy of celebrating bird conservation successes. Your efforts and donations contribute much more than you may be aware of!

"If you take care of birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems in the world." (Dr. Thomas Lovejoy)

# FROM THE CHAIR

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It has been a great start to 2025 with the first quarter already done.

We have had some wonderful outings and some superb camps. We have been to some new places with the Dullstroom area being a first for the club. Some great but tough birding. Our program team has continued to do a magnificent job. It is amazing what can be achieved with a close-knit team of dedicated individuals.

The big news is the African Penguin. BLSA secured a historic victory for the critically endangered African Penguin after a six-year battle. The following article is well worth reading:

<https://sanccob.co.za/news/high-court-victory-for-the-critically-endangered-african-penguin/>

Our new committee has settled down very well and the club is doing a lot of work to make sure we are all taken care of. The new billing system is in full swing after some small hiccups to start with.

Again, some very hard-working people have made a huge difference to the club. A huge thank you must be said to Annatjie and Fransie for all their hard work and long hours. We truly appreciate it.

The birding in general has been amazing this year so far. Some magnificent and surprising rarities have shown up all over Gauteng and the country in general. I suspect there are many people who have made quite a few unplanned trips this year.

I have only been in this role a few months and it is such an honour to work and spend time with the committee members and to be able to meet and get to know many new faces in this amazing club.

We are all looking forward to 2025 being a wonderful birding year.

Warm regards,

Sean



# LANIARIUS - APRIL 2025

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# SANI CAMP CAMP

The ultimate birding experience must be seeing the Blue Swallow in flight. Firstly, because it has become so rare and secondly because of the beauty of its colour and the swift, elegant and purposeful flight patterns. We were standing on a slope surrounded by green hills. The nest was some 50 m below us in an embankment, out of sight. The bird came sailing down the valley, circled the large cabbage tree, heading for the ploughbreaker (in full bloom) and then disappearing into the nest, just to reappear seconds later. It seemed as if several adult birds were involved in feeding the young – a moment none of us will ever forget. The BLNG committee had once again excelled, by organizing a wonderful weekend just for our enjoyment. The Cedar Gardens guesthouse in the centre of Underberg was spacious, comfortable, and neat – surrounded by an old English garden. On the first afternoon Aldo took us for a little drive to the foothills of the Drakensberg. Barratt's Warbler called and then the Cape Grassbird appeared with the Bush Blackcap on its heels. And this was only the beginning...

Next day early we headed up the Sani Pass. Aldo had engaged Stuart Mc Lean, a legendary bird guide from Himeville, to assist us, as we were a large group of fifteen birders in five cars. The first part of the road was tarred and easy, but the second part was very treacherous, indeed. As we slowly crawled up Sani Pass, hundreds of Common Quails were calling, like frogs. Nicholson's Pipit was by the wayside and Gurney's Sugarbird on the sugar-bush. The Cape Rock Thrush showed up nicely and then to the left, frolicking over the boulders, a family of Ground Woodpeckers. Everybody had a good look at the Buff-streaked Chat. It sounded as if a different Barratt's Warbler was hiding in the bushes around every bend. The Drakensberg Siskin rocked up and there it was - the female Drakensberg Rockjumper, and minutes later the flamboyant male – jumping onto the bonnet of one car! It gave us an acrobatic performance and we all had an exceptionally good view.



*Blue Swallow*  
[Sean Naude]



*Bush Blackcap*  
[Sheleph Burger]



*Drakensberg Rockjumper (M)*  
[Sheleph Burger]





*Drakensberg Rockjumper (M)*  
[Sean Naudé]



[Louis Burger]

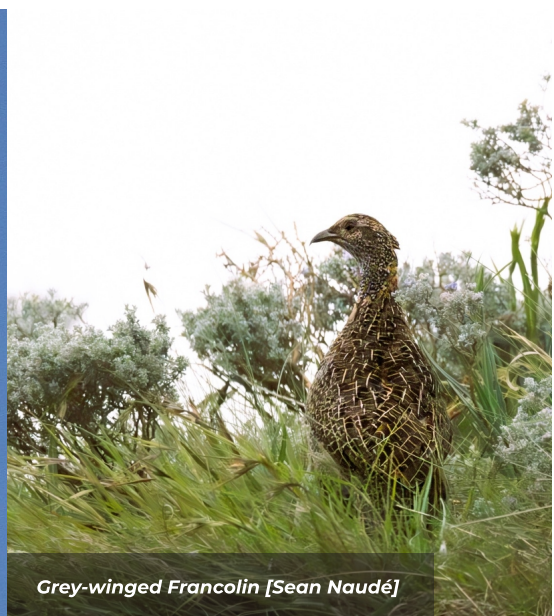
We had left the cloudy weather in the valley and once we crossed the Lesotho border, the sun was out, and the majestic mountain landscape draped in beautiful light. Young boys herding the sheep, Basotho on their little horses disappearing in the distance. I would have liked to have stopped for the myriads of flowers – but the birds had all our attention. We drove a beautiful pass for 50 km and then turned back and down the Sani Pass again. The most impressive birds at the top were Sickie-winged Chat, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Mountain Pipit, Grey Tit, Horus Swift, Karoo Prinia, Malachite Sunbird, Cape Vulture, Bearded Vulture, Southern Bald Ibis, and Large-billed Lark. On the descent a covey of Grey-winged Francolins entertained us with their young. What a wonderful day it had been, and then Stefan spotted Denham's Bustard.



*Mountain Pipit* [Craig Green]



*Bearded Vulture* [Craig Green]



*Grey-winged Francolin* [Sean Naudé]

The next day Aldo took us to some beautiful indigenous forests – but we saw very few birds, even though we could hear them: African Emerald Cuckoo, Narina Trogon, Red-capped Robin-chat (Natal Robin). The Collared Sunbird introduced himself very graciously! And off we went to meet the star of the weekend – the legendary Blue Swallow. On our return we spent time at various dams, with a fair number of ducks and other water birds: African Spoonbill, African Snipe, Cape Shoveler, Little Rush Warbler, South African Shelduck – to name but a few.

But the highlight was the cranes, namely : Wattled, Grey Crowned and Blue!

On the road we were met by a covey of Red-necked Spurrows and then two beautiful Lanner Falcon on a tree close by. The Pale-crowned Cisticola gave us a lovely display and plenty of photographic opportunities! The Dark-capped Yellow Warbler was a delight.



Thank you to the lovely company shared by all birders. A big round of applause to all the photographers!

Aldo Berutti - our guide - excelled, once again. The online course had prepared us well. We thank you and your lovely wife Sharron for making this wonderful weekend happen, and we hope that in future more club members will have the opportunity to experience your unwavering dedication and your love for our feathered friends.

ILSE MÜLLER



# FLOCK TO MARION AGAIN! 2025

# CAMP



Om 'n geleentheid te kry om saam te gaan na die Marion- en Prince Edward-eilande as deel van 'n kykie na die see- en voëllewe, om hul in hul natuurlike habitat te kan ervaar en meer kennis op te doen saam met wêreldkenners op die gebied, was vir voëlliefhebbers 'n kans van 'n leeftyd.

Op Vrydag, 24 Januarie 2025 het bykans 1900 voëklublede en ander belangstellendes aan boord van die MSC Musica vanaf Durban vertrek met groot verwagtings! Hierdie ervaring het hul stoutste verwagtinge oortref en hul het veel ryker en met hernude inspirasie veilig terug aan wal gestap in Durban, op Vrydag, 31 Januarie 2025.

Die wisselende see-elemente was deel van die ervaring en het bygedra om dieper te kyk na die seelewe en ook na ander skaarser voëlsoorte, om hul in hul natuurlike habitat te kon sien en te leer ken. Die uitgestrekte waters wat verby die horison strek, die sterk energie van die breek van branders, die roep van die seemeeue en die koel seebries, was soos om 'n knus kombers om jou te vou en met verwondering daar te vertoef... met 'n verwagting om 'n spesiale mariene soogdier of voëlsoort te bespeur.

Die albatros is deel van die ryke en een van vele voëlsoorte wat die oog gevang het tydens die seevaart met die besoek aan Marion- en Prince Edward-eilande. Daar is 22 spesies van hierdie uitsonderlike voëlsoorte en hul is bekend vir hul uitsonderlike wye vlerkspan, vermoë om moeiteloos lang afstande deur die lug te sweef, maar ook dat hul voortbestaan bedreig word en hul kwesbaar is.



*Grootalbatros*  
*Wandering Albatross*  
[Sheleph Burger]



[Sheleph Burger]





Grootnellie  
Northern Giant Petrel  
[Sheleph Burger]

Samantha Peterson, 'n mariene-bioloog wat haar hart verloor het op die seevoëls en albatrosse van die koue Antarktika sê: "Seevoëls gee my vlerke", want dié geveerdes het haar hart gesteel. Samantha werk nou met passie aan haar doktersgraad oor hoe die visbedryf die voortbestaan van die albatros beïnvloed. Die grondslag hiervoor is op Marioneiland gelê, waar sy dikwels onder moeilike omstandighede navorsing gedoen het. Marioneiland is dus 'n baken waar mens eerstehands kan ervaar hoe daar met navorsing baanbrekerswerk gedoen word om die seelewe te beskerm. Hoe spesiaal en interessant die albatros is, laat mens saam met Robert Cushman Murphy in verwondering en hy beskryf dit as volg: "I now belong to a higher cult of mortals for I have seen the albatross." (28 October 1912). Om hierdie eilande te besoek was nie die enigste hoogtepunt nie. Daar was interessante lesings deur 'n hele paar wêreldkenners, boek-ondertekenings en persoonlike tyd saam met die outeurs van onder andere Seabirds – The New Identification Guide by Peter Harrison, Martin Perrow and Hans Larsson asook Guide to Seabirds of Southern Africa by Prof. Peter Ryan, 'n voëlkyk-ervaring saam met Hans Larsson en 'n filmvertoning, om net enkeles te noem.



[Sheleph Burger]



[Sheleph Burger]



*Bruinalbatros*  
*Sooty Albatross*  
[Sheleph Burger]



**Dag 1: Vrydag (24.01.25)**

- Vertrek vanaf Durban hawe - "Flock to Marion AGAIN! 2025"
- Lesing: Dr. Anton Wolfaardt - "Saving Marion Island's seabirds - The Mouse-free Marion project."

**Dag 2: Saterdag (25.01.25)**

- Lesing: Peter Harrison (MBE) "Ocean Nomads: The Albatrosses"
- Lesing: Dr Liezl Pretorius & Leandri de Kock - "Life in the Roaring Forties."
- Boek-ondertekening en foto: Prof. Peter Ryan "Guide to seabirds of Southern Africa"

**Dag 3: Sondag (26.01.25)**

- Lesing: Prof Peter Ryan - "Prince Edward — one of the world's most pristine sub-Antarctic islands."
- Ete saam met klublede
- Penguin-partytjie

**Dag 4: Maandag (27.01.25)**

- Voëlkykdag: Vanaf 4h30 (Bitter koud)
- Voëlkykdag en foto met Hans Larsson  
(Mede-outeur - "Seabirds — The new identification guide")

**Dag 5: Dinsdag (28.01.25)**

- Filmvertoning aangebied deur Brett de Groot - Call of the Wild

**Dag 6: Woensdag (29.01.25)**

- Lesing: Danielle Keys - "Birds, Beacons and the Wild Unknown: Uncovering Seabird Secrets on Marion Island."
- Lesing: Peter Harrison (MBE) - "The World Of Seabirds."

**Dag 7: Donderdag (30.01.25)**

- Lesing: John Cooper - "The Human History of the Prince Edward Islands – a Conversation perspective."
- Lesing: Prof. Peter Ryan - "Emperors of Ice – deep field tourism in Queen Maud Land"
- Lesing: Roger Machin - "Canon Products for birders"
- Afsluitingsfunksie: "Teatro La Scala"

Tyd het gevlieg aan boord van die "MSC Musica" met "Flock to Marion AGAIN! 2025" en daar is op 'n gepaste wyse afgesluit met 'n spesiale funksie in die "Teatro La Scala".

**Dag 8: Vrydag (31.01.25)**

- Aankoms by Durbanhawe!





[Sheleph Burger]



[Sheleph Burger]



[Sheleph Burger]

Om in stilte te staan... die see en son en klank om jou in te adem en 'n spesiale oomblik van 'n voëlvlug teen sonsondergang te sien, is onbeskryflik! Dit bring diep vrede in die hart. Elkeen se ervaring is uniek en gaan lê diep geanker. Tyd staan stil en die natuur met die see in al sy fasette, speel die hoofrol. Elke voëlvlug is 'n bewussyn van die skepping en die Skepper se volmaakte handewerk! Die sonsondergang op die water met sy blink kleurespel, is asemrowend. "Flock to Marion AGAIN! 2025" is soos 'n "ligtoring", 'n sterk baken van hoop en inspirasie. Mag dit vir elkeen die begin wees van 'n nog groter inspirasie... om soos die albatros ook "jou vlerke wyd te spreid op wieke van die wind."

Daar is groot dank en lof vir die gasheeraanbieders van BirdLife Suid-Afrika, met die fantastiese en insiggewende program tydens "Flock to Marion AGAIN! 2025".

Die "Mouse Free Marion Project" met die reusetaak om die seelewe en voëllewe se bewaring, beskerming en voortbestaan te help verseker, lê almal na aan die hart en is 'n uiters gewaardeerde projek.

Die onderskeie gassprekers het met hul ryke kennis, insig en inspirasie ons volle aandag geniet met elke lesing... dit was verrykend en hul verdien elkeen groot lof en erkenning vir hul bydraes gelewer. Prof. Peter Ryan se lesing oor die Prince Edward-eiland asook beide lesings van prof. Peter Harrison verdien spesiale vermelding.

Daar was ook heerlike informele saamkuier-geleenthede waar daar onder andere ook 'n groepsfoto van al die klublede teenwoordig geneem is. Om trots op 'n foto saam met ons eie voëlklub, "Birdlife Noord-Gauteng", te verskyn, is soos om anker uit te gooi en in 'n veilige hawe te vertoef. Die gesamentlike belangstelling in voëllewe en die reeds bestaande vriendskapsbande is opnuut verstewig met hierdie geleentheid "Flock to Marion 25" . . . wat 'n belewenis!



[BLSA]





© Sheleph Burger

Grootalbatros  
Wandering Albatross  
[Sheleph Burger]

## LYS VAN VOËLSPESIES



**Flock**  
The Wildlife South Africa Expedition to our Southern Ocean Islands  
to Marion AGAIN! 2025

# OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

V1

Checklist of birds, seals and cetaceans recorded on the Flock to Marion AGAIN! 2025 voyage

Species with an asterisk\* occurring solely within the Prince Edward Island Marine Protected Area.

Conservation status is gleaned from the IUCN Red List ([www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)) and is correct as of January 2020.  
LC = Least Concern, NT = Near Threatened, VU = Vulnerable, EN = Endangered, CR = Critically Endangered, DD = Data Deficient.

**KEY**   Confirmed sighting   Pending review   Further evidence

	Common name	Scientific name	24 Jan	25 Jan	26 Jan	27 Jan	28 Jan	29 Jan	30 Jan
	<b>BIRDS</b>								
<b>ALBATROSS</b>	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>							
	Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>				✓	✓	✓	
	Grey-headed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chrysostoma</i>				✓	✓	✓	
	Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
	Light-mantled Albatross	<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Northern Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea sanfordi</i>					✓	✓	
	Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>							
	Sooty Albatross	<i>Phoebastria fusca</i>				✓	✓	✓	
	Southern Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea epomophora</i>							
	Tristan Albatross	<i>Diomedea dabbenena</i>			✓		✓		
	Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>PETRELS</b>	Atlantic Petrel	<i>Pterodroma incerta</i>							
	Barau's Petrel	<i>Pterodroma barau</i>		✓	✓			✓	
	Blue Petrel	<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓
	Pintado (Cape) Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>				✓			
	Great-winged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	✓						
	Grey Petrel	<i>Procellaria cinerea</i>		✓		✓	✓		
	Kerguelen Petrel	<i>Aphrodroma brevirostris</i>				✓	✓		
	Northern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Soft-plumaged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma mollis</i>						✓	✓
	Southern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>							
	Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>				✓			
	Spectacled Petrel	<i>Procellaria conspicillata</i>							
	White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	White-headed Petrel	<i>Pterodroma lessonae</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Common Diving Petrel	<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>				✓	✓	✓	
	South Georgian Diving Petrel	<i>Pelecanoides georgicus</i>				✓	✓		

SHEARWATERS	Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris borealis</i>									
	Flesh-footed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna carneipes</i>									
	Great Shearwater	<i>Ardenna gravis</i>									
	Little Shearwater	<i>Puffinus assimilis</i>									
	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>									
	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>									
	Subantarctic Shearwater	<i>Puffinus elegans</i>									
	Tropical Shearwater	<i>Puffinus bailloni</i>									
PRIONS	Antarctic Prion	<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>									
	Broad-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila vittata</i>									
	Fairy Prion	<i>Pachyptila turtur</i>									
	MacGillivray's Prion	<i>Pachyptila macgillivrayi</i>									
	Salvin's Prion	<i>Pachyptila salvini</i>									
SKUAS	Slender-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>									
SKUAS	Long-tailed Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>									
	Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>									
	Pomarine Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>									
	Subantarctic (Brown) Skua	<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>									
STORM PETRELS	Common name	Scientific name	24 Jan	25 Jan	26 Jan	27 Jan	28 Jan	29 Jan	30 Jan		
	Black-bellied Storm Petrel	<i>Fregetta tropica</i>									
	European Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>									
	Grey-backed Storm Petrel	<i>Garrodia nereis</i>									
	Leach's Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates leucorhous</i>									
	White-bellied Storm Petrel	<i>Fregetta grallaria</i>									
	White-faced Storm Petrel	<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>									
	Wilson's Storm Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>									
PENGUINS	Gentoo Penguin	<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>									
	King Penguin	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>									
	Macaroni Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>									
	Southern Rockhopper Penguin	<i>Eudyptes chrysocome</i>									
TERNS	Antarctic Tern	<i>Sterna vittata</i>									
	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>									
	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>									
	Kerguelen Tern*	<i>Sterna virgata</i>									
	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>									
	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandwicensis</i>									
	Sooty Tern	<i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>									
	Swift (Greater Crested) Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>									
GULLS	Grey-headed Gull	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>									
	Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>									

# LOODSWAAI 7-9 MAART 2025

# CAMP

Loodswaai is 'n uitdrukking wat beteken “om jou plig te versuim of te probeer ontduik”. Matrose van ouds moes, voor die ontdekking van radar, lood tot op die seabodem laat sak om die diepte van die water te bepaal. Dit was egter fisies uitputtende werk en eerder as om die 25 kg lood te laat sak en telkens op te hys, het hulle dit net rondgeswaai om voor te gee hulle werk.

Loodswaai is ook 'n privaat wildreservaat, ongeveer 80 km noordoos van Pretoria, midde-in ryk Miombo-bosveld. Dis geleë op die rand van 'n oeroue krater, wat met impak van die meteoriet mineraalryke feldspar-are na die oppervlak van die aardkors gedruk het. Ontginning van dié feldspar verklaar die mynaktiwiteite in die omgewing.

Die impak van die myne is egter gering en doen geen afbreuk aan die ryk biodiversiteit en verskeie habitate van die reservaat self nie. Laagliggende gemengde bosveld verander vinnig in steil, klipperige rante en klofies en maak net so skielik weer oop in plat, hoërliggende grasveld. Dié uitsonderlike habitat-afwisseling maak dit 'n gesogte en opwindende bestemming onder natuurentoesiaste.

Besondere hoë reënval die afgelope weke het die veld omskep in ruie, ondeurdringbare bosse en lang gras, wat wildkyk 'n uitdaging maak. Gelukkig kan en hou ons geveerde vriende van vlieg en word ons voëlkyk-stokperdjie weinig hierdeur benadeel.

Elkeen is op 'n unieke manier verwelkom met die ryk klanke van bosveldvoëls. By die hek reeds sing die Gestreepte Wipstert (White-Browed Scrub Robin) sy vrolike, herhalende maar unieke deuntjie; by die kampeerplek onder digte lower herinner Bosveldvisvangers (Woodland Kingfisher) ons dat die suidelike somer nog lank nie verby is nie; by die Veld Chalets ongeveer 1 km daarvandaan – Swartkopwielewaal (Black-headed Oriole) en Grysneushoringvoëls (African Grey Hornbill), en iewers in die lang gras - Bruinsylangstertjies (Tawny-flanked Prinia) en Neddikkies (Neddicky).

Getrou aan ons voëlkyker-aard kan ons nie gou genoeg ondersoek instel na wat dié juweel diep in die bos het om te bied nie. Gehawende Rooikopwewerneste (Red-headed Weaver) hang oral aan die drade en ons ontdek gou 'n aktiewe nes. Hul uitspattige kleure vertoon ekstra helder in die goue laatmiddaglig. 'n Groepie Withelmlaksmans (White-crested Helmet-shrike) kom een-een nader, bars dan gelyk weg om hul voëlpartytjie elders voort te sit.



Swartkopwielewaal  
[JP van der Merwe]



'n Witkoluil (Pearl-spotted Owlet) bons van boom tot boom; skep gou asem voor hy weer vlug voor die knaende aanslag van 'n dapper, nóg kleiner geveerde spesie.

Energieke Blougrysvlieëvangere (Ashy Flycatcher) gebruik die laaste daglig om vernuftig insekte uit die lug te vang, keer dan weer terug na hul pos en wag vir die volgende niksvermoedende prooi. Die houthutte en ablusiegeriewe by die kamp is baie basies en die kombuis so groot soos 'n posseël, maar BLNG-lede bewys weer daar pas baie mak voëlkykers in 'n kraal. Vreugdevure brand hoog, die kampvuur sowel as die donkie, (dankie Bernard en Nicole!) en daar word uitbundig gekuier en geëet soos ou vriende wat mekaar al jare lank ken. Die Afrikaanse Naguiltjies (Fiery-necked Nightjar) vermaak ons deurgaans met hul roep. Diegene wat lig slaap of deur die nag met muskiete stoei, word geselskap gehou deur die veraf roep van 'n Witwanguil (Southern White-faced Owl) – 'n wafferse troos!

Op ons uitstappie in 'n westelike rigting, Rust de Winter se kant toe, is die Witvlerkflap (White-winged Widowbird) volop - pronkende mannetjies in vol broeigewaad jaag die wyfies meedoënloos. Die immergewilde Gewone Melba (Green-winged Pytilia) laat 'n mens altyd vassteek en weer kyk om die verskeidenheid helder kleure te bewonder. Waar die lang vleigras plek maak vir bosveldhabitat is Rooirug- en Gryslaksmans (Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes) nog oral te sien voordat hulle die tog terug noorde toe aanpak.

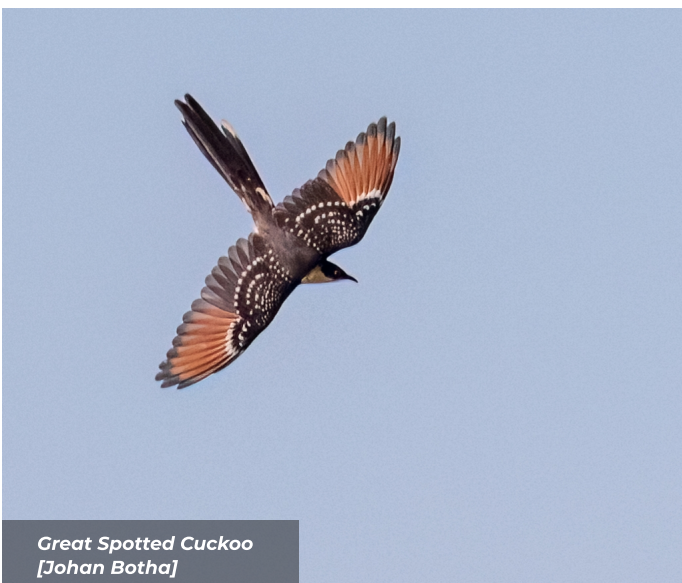
Op pad na Kgomo-Kgomo, ons omdraaipunt vir die dag, ry ons deur diep poele water maar die pad is andersins droog en maklik begaanbaar. Enorme Kameeldorings (Vachellia erioloba) met hul geharde, ruwe voorkoms huisves talle bosveldvoëlspesies. 'n Driebandstrandkiewiet (Three-banded Plover) maak gebruik van die tydelike waterbronne in die pad.



Bruinsylangstertjie  
[JP van der Merwe]



Withelmlaksmans  
[Anne-Marie van der Merwe]



Great Spotted Cuckoo  
[Johan Botha]



Ben Espach



Die Zaagkuilsdrift-roete is uiters geliefd onder voëlkykers landwyd en daar is rekords van skaars en opwindende voëlspesies. Dit skep vanselfsprekend 'n verwagting, maar ek dink daaraan as 'n gelukspakkie ('lucky packet') – die afwagting om dit oop te maak, die inhoud nog onbekend, en uiteindelik bring dit altyd blydschap – al is dit die hoeveelste keer!

Ons vreugde is die Bruinakkalsvoël (Common Buzzard) wat doenig bly met iets op die grond, twee Visarende (African Fish Eagle) wat 'n lugdans doen en terselfdertyd roep, kop agteroor. Die Bruinslangarend (Brown Snake Eagle) wat ons met skerp, geel oë stip dophou vanuit die hoogte. Oostelike Rooipootvalke (Amur Falcon) wat sweefvlieg oor die lang gras terwyl hulle jag maak op insekte.

By die vloedvlakte vind ons 'n swerm Witvlerksterretjies (White-winged Tern) - meeste dryf rustig op die water, sommiges sweef en draai-duik behendig op soek na vlieënde insekte, vis en krappe. Eers sien ons net een Grootkoningriethaan (African Swamphean), dan twee, en skielik lyk dit of elke swart kol verander in 'n groenpers voël sodra die son op hul vere val.

Die “vuil” Veereier (Western Cattle Egret) blyk toe 'n Ralreier (Squacco Heron) te wees. Blou- en Swartkopreiers (Grey and Black-headed Heron) kom in fokus as jy lank genoeg na die grys kolle staar. Nonnetjie-eende (White-faced Whistling Duck) demonstreer met hul fraai fluit hoekom hulle in Engels “Whistling Ducks” genoem word. Ons draai terug sonder die Kleinwaterhoender (Lesser Moorhen) op ons lysie, slegs Grootwaterhoender (Common Moorhen), maar in 'n gety-dammetjie langs die pad word ons tog bederf met 'n Kleinwaterhoender wat haar twee kuikens maan om in die veiligheid van die langs gras te bly.

Hoewel daar nie reën vir die naweek voorspel is nie, kry ons teen laatmiddag die buiterand van 'n donderstorm. Ons word bederf met 'n voortreflike dubbelreënboog en die druppels op die plante en aanskoulike wolpatroon sorg vir 'n asemrowende sonsondergang.

Sondagoggend wil ons vir oulaas die grasplato gaan verken. Op gaan ons met die klipperige grondpaadjie wat plek-plek 4x4 vereis – iets waarin nie-voëlkykers hulself heerlijk verlustig. Klipstreepkoppies (Cinnamon-breasted Bunting) is volop hier en verder op sien ons ook Rooirugstreepkoppies (Golden-breasted Bunting).

Terwyl ons voetslaan en die voertuie nader gebring word, hoor ons die onmiskenbare vlerkklap van die Laeveldklappertjie (Flappet Lark) - 24 slae per sekonde! (volgens Roberts se app – ek het nie getel nie). Hy kom sit vlugtig in 'n boom om seker te maak ons neem wel kennis van hom. Vir sommige in die groep is dit 'n “lifer” – so ook die Kaapse Kapokvoël (Cape Penduline-tit) wat met sy 6 gram borrelende energie net-net genoeg tyd gee vir 'n vinnige foto.



Bruinslangarend  
[JP van der Merwe]



Grootwaterhoender  
[[Anne-Marie van der Merwe]



Die Sabotalewerik sorg vir 'n onverwagse viering – Nicole se 500ste spesie! Die Rooineklewerik (Rufous-naped Lark), ikoon van die grasvlakte, kom maak ook 'n draai. Simon Barnes skryf in sy boek “How to be a Bad Birdwatcher”: “...revel in what you see rather than what you want to see”.

Behou altyd die naïewe “gelukspakkie”-tipe vreugde. Gaan ‘bird’ telkens met ‘n oop bladsy, verlustig jou in wat Moeder Natuur hiêrde keer vir jou wil wys.

Ons voel tevrede met die 167 spesietelling vir die naweek. Hier kan jy maar gerus jou lood kom swaai – jy sal nie teleurgesteld wees nie.

JP en Anna-Marie – jul vriendelikheid en opregte besorgdheid oor elkeen maak dit altyd ‘n plesier en voorreg om julle as ons kamp-ouers te hê.

**MARIANA ARNOLDI**





# MIDDELPUNT 14 17 MARCH CAMP

The White-winged Flufftail (*Sarothrura ayresi*) is listed as globally Critically Endangered with an estimated population size of fewer than 250 mature individuals. Ethiopia and, more recently, South Africa are the only two countries where the White-winged Flufftail is known to breed, with only one confirmed site in South Africa: Middelpunt Wetland.

Middelpunt Nature Reserve is not only an important site for White-winged Flufftail but provides habitat to a diversity of floral and faunal species. This nearly 10,000-year-old, peat-based wetland also provides ecosystem services through water retention, purification, and flood attenuation. It is for these reasons that the nature reserve was proclaimed a Ramsar Site in 2024, recognising it as a wetland of international importance under the Convention on Wetlands.

<https://www.birdlife.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Media-Release-Middelpunt-Nature-Reserve-Ramsar-Site.pdf>

Let me tell you how Middelpunt (meaning centre point) near Dullstroom became the epicentre of our existence for four days. Visiting Middelpunt was a wonderful privilege, as it is not open to tourists, but BLNG chair, Sean Naudé, is one of the owners of Middelpunt Wetland. He kindly made it available to BLNG members. It was so much larger and beautiful than we could have imagined: pristine grassland as far as the eye could see, seven dams, and great accommodation, perfectly geared towards large groups.

The birding on the farm itself was superb – Giant Kingfisher, Long-crested Eagle, Pale-crowned Cisticola, White-backed Duck, Cape Canary, Grey Crowned Crane, Secretarybird, and even Black-winged Lapwing were part of the rich and diverse species enjoyed there. A variety of Swallows and Martins swirled non-stop, fattening up for their imminent migration – Banded Martin, White-throated, Striped and Barn Swallows. Add to that the otter, civet and caracal seen by a lucky few – riches, indeed!

We met our guide, Steve Vincent, at Dullstroom early on Saturday morning and rode via Coromandel and other back roads towards Kwena Dam. A plethora of widowbirds and Pin-tailed Whydahs were along the road. Highlights were African (Holub's) Golden Weaver, a large group of Cape Vultures soaring overhead, and African Olive Pigeons at our delightful brunch stop at Winderton Trout Farm. The owners there welcomed us with open arms.

We hardly were on our way again when we stopped for a commando of bright green wingless locusts crossing the road – a fascinating sight.





This turned out to be only the first of many interesting non-birding stops for plants, insects and flowers, as our guide, Steve, was an expert and delighted in naming them, their characteristics, flowering periods and more... botanist Marit and, Annie too, were in their element. We all stood awed by the beauty of roadside flowers, even orchids.

At Kwena Dam, the juvenile African Fish Eagle perched on top of a tree on closer inspection turned out to be an Osprey, no less, its impressive size a surprise to me, as I had ever only seen them in flight. Wing-snapping Cisticola and Pale-crowned Cisticola also made brief appearances. While we were headed to Verlorenkloof Estate, we could see a heavy rainstorm veiling the cliffs of our destination.

But, just in time for our arrival, the rain clouds lifted, and the sun even started shining again! We could enjoy a group of Southern Bald Ibis, Spectacled Weavers and later, a Black Sparrowhawk juvenile.

That evening, after the braai, we all tucked into the lovely custard cake that Angie had brought along to celebrate a birthday in style. And, of course, my lifer Black-winged Lapwings just inside Middelpunt farm's gate.

We set off for Verloren Vallei (the only other Ramsar site in Mpumalanga, and also home to White-winged Flufftails) the next morning in mist and drizzle, with Steve's Land Rover leading the way. The mist cleared for a minute or two, enough to spot a small covey of Red-Winged Francolin from the parking area at reception. Steve had arranged for us to visit high-lying areas of this incredible nature reserve which are normally out of bounds for visitors, due to their sensitive vegetation of orchids and mosses.



*African (Holub's) Golden Weaver*  
[Sean Naudé]



*A late lunch enjoyed at Verlorenkloof Estate*  
[Matthys van den Hout]



[Craig Green]



Then, contrary to the dire weather predictions, the mist cleared, and the sun and magical blue skies appeared. We could truly glory in the high elevation with its breathtaking views all around. Cape Rock Thrush and Eastern Long-billed Lark were ticked, a possible Yellow-breasted Pipit disappeared before positive identification – but the variety of flowers, mosses and butterflies almost overshadowed the birding. A couple of Grey Rhebuck bounded away. And then – a pair of Denham's Bustards!

The birding picked up with Buff-streaked Chat, Mocking Cliff Chat and Mountain Chat / Wheatear hopping around hillside rocks, now disappearing, then perching out in the open again. They truly seemed to enjoy the scarce bursts of sunshine on the north-eastern lying slope.

Steve then took us to overlook flowering proteas in the hope of seeing Gurney's Sugarbirds. They did not appear, but a Malachite Sunbird more than made up for this. Sean crept ever closer and got an incredible photograph that seemed to sum up the magic of Verloren Vallei.

The walk on Middelpunt farm on Monday morning had rich rewards - amongst others White-backed Duck, an otter, Malachite Kingfisher, Grey Crowned Crane, and Secretarybirds. Even though Sean invited us to walk to the White-winged Flufftail site, we opted not to go, due to the extremely sensitive nature and scarcity of these birds. In any case, the chance of seeing even one was zero, due to their very secretive nature. It was quite enough to know that here they had found a safe, protected area to breed and hopefully – maybe, one day, moving off the Critically Endangered list. What a great privilege it was to be able to visit Middelpunt Nature Reserve – all made possible by our host Sean, who generously shared his knowledge, the comfortable accommodation, and leading our group around this precious area.

IVONNE COETZEE



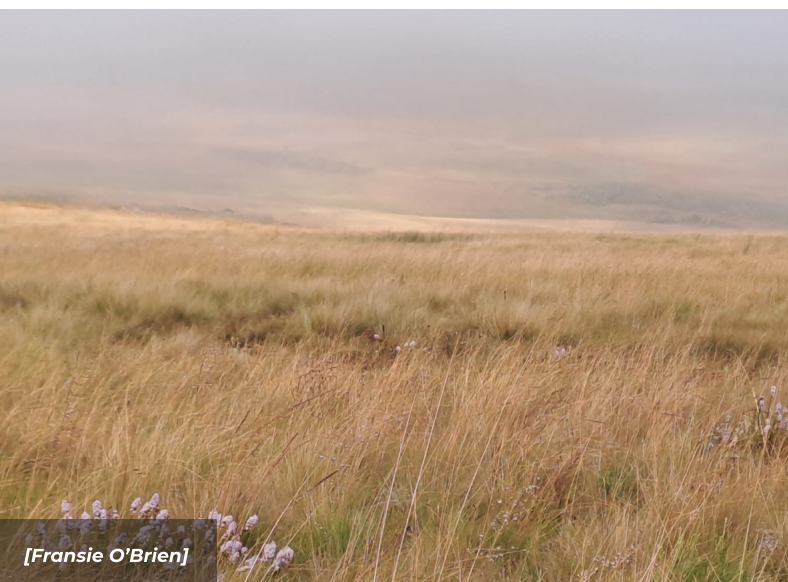
*Black Sparrowhawk (Juvenile)*  
[Sean Naudé]



*Black-winged Lapwing*  
[Ivonne Coetzee]



[Fransie O'Brien]



[Fransie O'Brien]



*Flowers and butterflies*  
seen at Verloren Vallei





*Denham's Bustard*  
[Sean Naudé]



*Malachite Sunbird*  
[Sean Naudé]



# LEARN ABOUT WETLANDS 2025 AND BIRD RINGING CONSERVATION

ON WORLD WETLANDS DAY, 1 FEBRUARY, FRIENDS OF COLBYN VALLEY HOSTED VARIOUS SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS TO LEARN ALL ABOUT WETLANDS AT COLBYN NATURE RESERVE.



*They could watch and learn about birds and bird ringing from the BirdLife Northern Gauteng Bird Ringing organisation.*







*They went in groups on a Wetland Walk, each with their own guide.*



*A miniSASS (Mini stream assessment scoring system, a simple and accessible citizen science tool for monitoring the water quality and health of a stream and rivers), model and Quiz was next.*



*A certificate ceremony was held afterwards.*

*A most enjoyable and successful celebration of World Wetlands Day for all involved!*

*All photographs from Friends of Colbyn Valley Facebook and Flickr pages*

**TAMSYN SHERWILL**



# THE RED-BILLED OXPECKER - BOTY 2025

# CONSERVATION

For almost 20 years, BirdLife South Africa has named a Bird of the Year. This tradition is a way of championing one of South Africa's many incredible bird species. The BOTY is celebrated all year long to highlight the importance of conserving our precious avifauna. Although it's always tough to narrow down the hundreds of wonderful species to just one, we're thrilled to announce that the Red-billed Oxpecker (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) is Bird of the Year for 2025.

The Red-billed Oxpecker, also known as Rooibekrenostervoël (Afrikaans), ihlalankomo (isiZulu), and ihlalanyathi (isiXhosa) is a fascinating bird known for its complex relationship with large herbivores, such as buffalo, giraffes, and rhinos.

Red-billed oxpeckers are highly social and vocal, often seen in flocks, and are adaptable, feeding on a variety of animals and scavenging from carcasses when necessary. They nest in tree cavities, with both parents sharing incubation, and other members of the flock contributing to chick care. Found across sub-Saharan Africa in savannas, grasslands, and open woodlands, oxpeckers play a significant role in the ecosystem, particularly by their controlling of tick populations.

The breeding behaviour of this species is fascinating and involves several key aspects. These birds typically nest in tree cavities or holes, where they lay 2 to 4 eggs, which are incubated by both parents. The oxpeckers form monogamous pairs during the breeding season, and both the male and female share responsibility for incubating the eggs, and multiple helpers from the flock help in caring for the chicks. The chicks are fed by regurgitation, with both parents and helpers contributing food, mainly small insects and parasites like ticks. Oxpeckers are often territorial during breeding and defend their nesting sites. The breeding season usually coincides with wetter months when food is abundant, and the chicks are altricial, relying on their parents for warmth and food until they are ready to leave the nest. These behaviours ensure the survival of the species and support its role in the ecosystem, particularly its relationship with large herbivores.



[Dom Rollinson]







# BIRDING ZIMBABWE AND MOZAMBIQUE DECEMBER 2024

# TRAVELOGUE

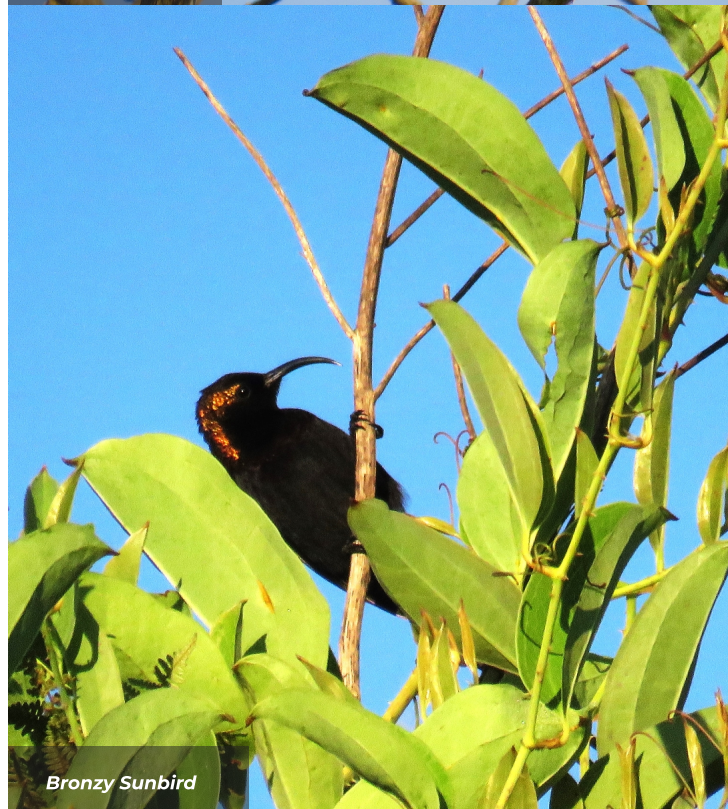
This trip had grown in my mind for some time. In 2015 we had missed the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe due to the misfortune of a vehicle breakdown, about which I am still unhappy with the guide at the time. I longed to see so many good birds in the “Eastern Highlands” of Zim and so much of that beautiful area to experience and enjoy. The planning of this trip commenced many months ago. I was going to travel with a well-known bird guide in a smallish group. That was certainly an appealing thought. Also, we were not going to cross the Zimbabwe border at Beitbridge with all the corruption having spread from the Zimbabwe to the South African side, but travel through Botswana. I was picked up on 3rd December 2024, as the third of three guests. We crossed into Botswana at Stockpoort, the border crossing was uncomplicated. We drove on a very good road, passed Francistown and 40 km beyond checked in to Tantebane Lodge for the night, having casually ticked 34 bird species en route: Lilac-breasted Roller, Large Rock Martin, Common Buzzard, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Brown Snake Eagle, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver in their tatty nests constructed of mainly sticks, also Red-billed Oxpeckers, and a good sighting of White-backed Vultures.

I was using the BirdLasser App for the first time on such a trip and was impressed by how well this worked. After unpacking, I had my first pleasant surprise: in between the chalets constructed on a rocky outcrop, the guide called up a Boulder Chat, which I had not seen before. (He remarked that my bird list was somewhat “patchy” - I agreed). I managed to get a few somewhat dark pictures as it was 17:40 in the late afternoon. In and around the dam in front of the lodge main building we spotted Great White Pelican, Striated Heron, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Water Thick-knee, in total 26 species. I had been lucky, the next morning there was no Boulder Chat to be seen – that is birding, never in nature do you have any guarantees what you will see.

We departed after breakfast, crossing the Botswana/Zimbabwe border at Plumtree. What a pleasant surprise from the corruption-infested Beitbridge. We were courteously processed and within 30 minutes we were in Zim, driving on to our next stop at Masvingo. The road in Botswana as well as in Zimbabwe was good. The guide made regular stops to fill up our water bottles and have some good filter coffee. These also developed into “birding stops” spotting Purple Roller, Red-billed Quelea, White-throated Robin-Chat, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Streaky-headed Seedeater. Arriving at Clevers Hotel outside Masvingo (with wonderful views of Lake Kyle) that afternoon and the next morning we were treated to some excellent sightings: Red-faced Crombec and Miombo Tit, the latter being a new addition to my list as well as Yellow-breasted Apalis, Lazy Cisticola, White-necked Raven and Wood Pipit. Leaving Masvingo and driving on in the direction of the “Eastern Highlands” in Zimbabwe, (where I had wished to bird for a long time), we were able to see White-breasted Cuckooshrike, White-crested Helmet-Shrike, and Violet-backed Starling.



Boulder Chat



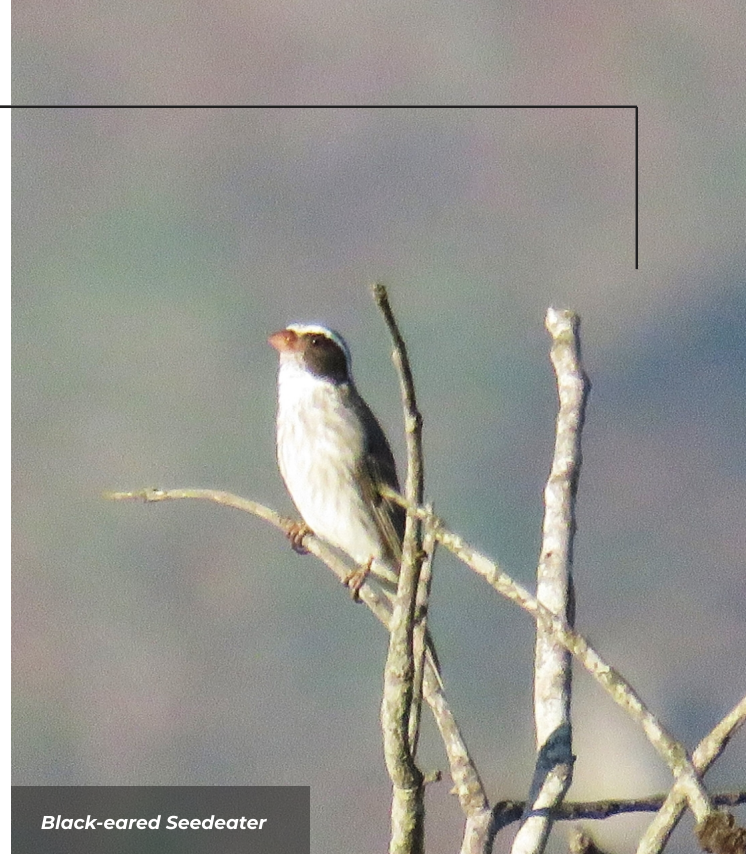
Bronzy Sunbird



The birding at the “Eastern Highlands” (Mutare area) began with a big bang: After stopping at Mutare to stock up on beer as Seldomseen Lodge does not sell any, we arrived at White Horse Inn for lunch. This must have been the “in” Hotel years ago; a sign in the entrance portal reads “Dress Smart casual at all times – From 6.30 pm Long Trousers, no Jeans or Tee Shirts, Ties appreciated.” We were dressed in shorts, obviously not conforming to the dress code. In the gardens’ flowering shrubs variable sunbirds were nectar-feeding on the profuse load of flowers, together with my next lifer, a very noisy Stripe-cheeked Greenbul, and a host of other nectarivores. We arrived at our birding destination Seldomseen “Lodge”, unpacked and went for a birding walk in the surrounding gardens, where a large variety of flowers and flowering shrubs attracted nectarivores. White-eared Barbet was followed by Roberts’s Warbler, Orange Ground Thrush, Southern Yellow White-eye and Red-necked Spurfowl (which looked very different to the ones I had spotted and photographed on numerous occasions in Northern Namibia/Kunene Region; in this case they were probably sub-species *swynnertoni*).

Seldomseen is a “lodge” in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. The buildings and furnishings hail from a time of yesteryear but are functional and comfortable, the hosts Ken and Sue are kind and welcoming, and the food is pleasant. The “lodge” (possibly a farmhouse in years gone by) is set in lush flowering gardens, attracting many excellent birds. The natural surroundings display considerable beauty, rolling grassy high-altitude hills and dense natural forest vegetation. The environment is most pleasing and tranquil. At that higher altitude, the temperature was pleasantly moderate, a pleasant relief from the heat in Botswana and Mozambique. The next morning we were taken out by the local guide called Buluwezi who certainly knows his turf, driving-walking-driving: Wailing Cisticola, Eastern Saw-wing, Bronzy Sunbird, Chirinda Apalis, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Ashy Flycatcher, Whyte’s Barbet, Grey Waxbill, Miombo Rock Thrush, Black-eared Seedeater, Stierling’s Wren-Warbler, Southern Hyliota, and to crown it all, Swynnerton’s Robin and White-tailed Crested Flycatcher, as well as Black-fronted Bush-Shrike, Lemon Dove, Red-faced Crimsonwing and Red-throated Rock Martin (the latter has been envisaged as a new “split” by the IOC). WOW, why did I not earlier on in my birding-life come here?? This was “next-level-birding,” I was stunned and over the moon.

That afternoon, another group of three birders, two of which hailed from the UK/Scotland joined our group. The Scotsman had excellent eyesight and managed to point out an African Spotted Creeper, which was indeed “creeping” higher up on a large branch and creeping around the branch; it was so well camouflaged, its colour blending in with that of the tree trunk and branches, that I could only locate it by way of its “creeping” movement along and up the large branch. Towards late-afternoon, we were taken up a rocky ridge, stopped the vehicle and observed 30 – 50 Mottled Swifts flying around a yet higher rocky granite hill. When I asked the guide how he knew that this was indeed Mottled Swift, I was told “this is a well-known roost of Mottled Swift, they roost here in the rock crevices”.



*Black-eared Seedeater*



*Swynnerton's Robin*





To end the day, I spotted Eastern Miombo Sunbird feeding off the flowering shrubs in the gardens. On that day alone, I was able to add 12 new birds to my list, absolutely amazing. Seldomseen is such an excellent birding destination. In the Vumba/Seldomseen area, I listed 51 species of birds, but I omitted to list the “common” birds. Before leaving, we did some birding before breakfast: Red-chested Cuckoo, Singing Cisticola, Pale Flycatcher, Green-capped Eremomela, and Tropical Boubou to name but a few. We tried to get Cabanis’s Bunting, but without success.

Our next destination was Beira in Mozambique. The border crossing was more difficult, and due to the unrest in Mozambique as a result of disagreements about the election outcome, which got worse during our stay, the border was very busy with many truckers on either side. And the “helpers” or “runners” on the Mozambique side are difficult to hold off – see point 4 under “Further Information”. En route, and in Beira we spotted Long-crested Eagle and in Beira town House Crows en masse, which seemed to be making a living there. The roads were a lot worse than those in Zimbabwe, but still drivable.



Locust Finch



Broad-billed Roller



African Goshawk

The next morning very early we drove out of Beira towards Rio Savane and other birding spots on small gravel roads. Fan-tailed Widowbird, African Wattled Lapwing, African Marsh Harrier, Brown Snake Eagle, Rufous-winged Cisticola, Yellow-throated Longclaw were some birds spotted on the way. Large numbers, if not hundreds, of bicycle riders with large heavy bags of charcoal were riding into town in a never-ending stream of bicycles with some odd motorbikes in between. (Some motorbikes, in an act of miraculous balancing, carried four adult persons). Regrettably, the large indigenous trees are cut down and are turned into charcoal in a non-sustainable manner, and are transported by bicycle for sale into town.

There was a confusing maze of gravel roads, and the guide used his GPS to track the correct route. We came to a vlel with short grass and a smallish dam. A single Collared Pratincole was perched on the ground, Temminck’s Courser close to the dam, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Common Ringed Plover, Marsh Sandpiper, and Little Stint were spotted. One target bird was Blue Quail – we walked in a line next to each other across the target area but to no avail. Back at the dam, the guide was looking for Locust Finch. I spotted a Rufous-bellied Heron settling in the reeds, African Quail-finch and Orange-breasted Waxbill were seen, as well as Common Greenshank. I saw two “reddish” birds flying into the grasses on the shoreline, but ignored them at first; we were about to leave when I asked the guide if we could carefully go to the spot where the two “reddish” birds had landed, these turned out to be our sought-after Locust Finch. The guide took some very nice pictures and posted them on some or other bird-net and received compliments for the excellent sighting.

We ticked Red-headed Quelea, another “special” of the area, Red-backed Shrike, and Saddle-billed Stork. Arriving at another site, we spotted Purple-banded Sunbird, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Pink-backed Pelican, Greater Sand Plover by the shoreline of the river estuary, Curlew Sandpiper and Caspian Tern. We drove to another part of the Rio Savane estuary, where the birds were far off, and I hauled out my spotting scope, ticking Lesser Crested Tern, Common Tern and Sanderling, but the wind was getting stronger, and the scope was vibrating, making viewing difficult. We certainly had had a good day’s birding with many “specials” of the region; we headed back to our accommodation and a cold beer. My fellow guests celebrated with a plate of prawns.



The next day we drove north towards the Zambezi River, which bisects Mozambique. The road deteriorated even more, and we encountered some really bad patches which slowed down our progress. The EN1 “highway” was found to be very heavily potholed and not easy to drive. On the way, we casually ticked European Roller, Woodland Kingfisher, Ring-necked Dove (what was wrong with “Cape Turtle Dove”? This name adds to considerable confusion – there are actually three species of doves with ringnecks, Red-eyed and Mourning Collared Dove included), Brown-headed Parrot, and some super-sightings of Dickinson’s Kestrel and White-headed Vulture, followed by Broad-billed Roller and African Emerald Cuckoo. We stopped at a bridge over a river.

The water level being very low with the terrible heat and drought, here we spotted a pair of Collared Palm Thrush, Red-winged Prinia and Jacobin Cuckoo. We headed for our next stop, Mpingwe Lodge within Catapu (forest) and the hunting concessions Coutada 12 and Coutada 11, situated some 30 km south of Caia, the town on the Zambezi River where a large bridge crosses this mighty river. We checked into our cabins, no air conditioner, only a fan and with the temperature heading for 40°C, I just sat outside under the roof and panted. We had a spot of lunch and at a small birdbath we spotted what the guide thought was a juvenile Southern Banded Snake Eagle. Later that afternoon, we went for a “bird drive”. We were certainly rewarded with some excellent sightings: Green Malkoha, Eastern Nicator, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, an African Goshawk perched in the open on a large bare branch, a Southern Banded Snake Eagle and the star of that afternoon, a Plain-backed Sunbird which showed well. It looked like it had a blackish throat and a “bib” on the upper chest of “metallic” blue-black.

The next morning saw us out early, the temperature had “cooled down” to a morning temperature of 27°C and we travelled into the Coutada 12 which, despite the heat and desperate drought sported some fine natural forests, protected from cutting down the large old trees by way of the hunting concession. At a particularly large and tall tree, the guide showed us a nesting/breeding Black-and-white (Vanga) Flycatcher (called a Shrike-Flycatcher on the BirdLasser App), the little nest with the small bird was well concealed by dense foliage and being so high up, pictures were very difficult to take. Mangrove Kingfisher was followed by Red-headed Weaver, Livingston’s Flycatcher and Black-headed Apalis. A brilliant bird to see again was a Lowland Tiny Greenbul, but it flew off busily before I could get pictures. Retz’s Helmetshrike were flying around busily but far off.

Forest birding is never easy and with the tall trees and dense foliage even more so. We stopped for a Speckle-throated Woodpecker, (a “cousin” of Bennett’s Woodpecker) which was feeding on a large tree trunk and posed well. The sightings list just continued: East Coast Akalat (previously known as Gunning’s Robin and looking very robin-like) was followed by a group of Chestnut-fronted Helmet-Shrike, issuing their “screechy” calls. By noon, the heat got unpleasant, but we were still able to spot a European Honey Buzzard before we returned to camp for lunch and an uncomfortably hot siesta.



*Southern Banded Snake Eagle*



*Coutada 12*



*Speckle-throated Woodpecker*



*African Broadbill*





Hooded Vulture



Böhm's Bee-eater

The following day we were out early again and were rewarded with a splendid sighting of an African Broadbill. We drove-stopped-birded-on-foot in various habitats and vegetation types, and in the forest thickets, first hearing the “churring” prrrrrriiirr sound, which is actually not a call, but a mechanical sound created by the bird’s wings, but it’s quite loud. When we got closer, carefully moving through the dense forest as quietly as we could, we saw the African Broadbill in front of us, perched on a fairly open branch. All of a sudden, it sprang up like a Jack-in-the-box, flew up rapidly for just a very short distance, all the while issuing the prrrrrriiirr sound then it turned in a flash and charged back to return to its original perch, this display happened within a few seconds, and was repeated several times. Quite amazing, we were very privileged to be able to observe this display.

A Narina Trogon followed this super sighting; I was surprised how such a colourful bird can camouflage itself so well, as it was perched inside dense bush, my pictures were a disaster. We spotted Crowned Hornbill, Böhm’s Spinetail, Pale Batis, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, African Openbill, African Sacred Ibis and Glossy Ibis in wetland areas. A Hooded Vulture stole the show as it was perched on the ground and drinking water from a small dam where the water had receded markedly as a result of the terrible heat and drought, next to some Red-eyed Doves.

The heat gradient was 37°C to 41°C and no rain. It also did not cool down sufficiently at night, the morning temperature still being around 27°C. The natural environment was taking a terrible pounding. Water sources were scarce. While we were spending a late afternoon at a waterhole, a pair of warthogs came trotting up to the water, which was only about 10% of capacity; the animals picked up our scent and after mulling around, they left without a drink, scared they might become dinner. The Nyala antelopes were braver and were able to quench their thirst.

Regular news was reaching our guide from the areas further south, where our planned route was to take us: the unrest by opposition to the elections was getting more and more ugly; after Mpingwe, the trip programme saw us driving back to Beira, and then bird further South to Vilankulos, Inhambane and the Barra Peninsula, where we were expecting good birding opportunities, and as far down South as Macaneta which is approximately 30km north of Maputo. The messages were: “Don’t come south Boet, the unrest is chaotic here.” The guide and us guests had a serious talk: my original suggestion to avoid Lebombo/Komatipoort border post and return through Giryondo gate into the Kruger National Park had become impossible, as we would have to go down to Xai Xai (Shai Shai) which was even further South than Inhambane. We therefore decided to backtrack our route through Mutare Zimbabwe, to Botswana and back to South Africa.



Early the next day we were travelling north to Caia and on to Sena broadly parallel to the Zambezi River, where one of the other guests was hoping to connect with Böhm's Bee-eater. We stopped occasionally and birded along the way. At various wetlands we spotted Black-winged (Red) Bishop which was a much-desired lifer for some of the other guests, interestingly, they had not gained their breeding/summer plumage yet and were still in transitional plumage. I thought that this was rather odd as we were almost in mid-December. Red-backed Shrike were plentiful, we also spotted Rufous-winged Cisticola, being a "special" bird to be found mainly in eastern Mozambique, Red-necked Falcon on some telephone lines, and Yellow-breasted Apalis were spotted to name a few. The farm where we hoped to spot Böhm's Bee-eater was further up to the North-West, and the farmer reported unrest there also. The guide decided to take advice from colleagues not to go to the farm but to try to get the bird in the Sena surroundings. We drove up to the Zambezi, or rather side-branches thereof.



We disembarked on various occasions, walking fair distances seeking for the bird, it was like finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. Local people were doing their washing in the river under a massive railway bridge, a mother had soaped down her son and was rinsing the soap off with a bucket of water, the poor soul was covering his private parts with his hands when he saw us – a scene from Africa. But no Böhm's Bee-eater. We drove to different areas searching. On one such occasion I was sitting in the left rear of the vehicle, and spotted two Böhm's Bee-eaters perched openly on a branch; I "called the bird," the guide stopped the vehicle abruptly and we were treated to good sightings of one adult and two sub-adult Böhm's Bee-eaters. We had found the "needle"! Cameras were clicking out an excited staccato and the guests were "all smiles". When the guest thanked the guide for his lifer, the guide remarked: "Don't thank me, thank Neithard, he spotted them."

Other good sightings in the area were: Western Banded Snake-Eagle and European Roller. On the return journey we also spotted some good birds: Grey-rumped Swallow and Collared Pratincole. Back at Mpingwe and in the heat of the day, starlings were gathering around the small birdbath next to the lodge: Miombo Blue-eared and Black-bellied Starlings were spotted. Later that afternoon on yet another drive we spotted Trumpeter Hornbill at one of the regular stops and to our delight we spotted a Pallid Honeyguide clinging onto a tree trunk and foraging. I could kick myself that I was too slow with the camera... Further on we again spotted the breeding Black-and-white Flycatcher. The beer and G&T flowed freely that evening at dinner.

The next day we departed from Mpingwe but were still rewarded with a sighting of Woodward's Batis. Driving back from Mpingwe down south on the potholed EN1 until it met up with the EN6, being the road from Beira to Zimbabwe/ Mutare. Speed traps: we passed various of these, with officials holding a "speed camera" on their shoulder: "You exceeded the speed limit, the charge is 1.000 Meticaís (about R330)". The guide silently opened his purse, took out a US\$10 bill (about R180), which slid unnoticed into the official's pocket and the guide just pulled away, driving on without waiting for a reply. On another occasion, we were also stopped by officials claiming that the guide had exceeded the speed limit – at such an occasion, he very politely argued, saying he had watched the odometer and the GPS and he had stayed within the limit, then without waiting for an answer he just proceeded driving again, with no reaction from the officials. These were all attempts to solicit a bribe. I certainly learnt a few "tricks" from him! Ahead of the border post on the Mozambique side, there were possibly three km of trucks standing nose-to-tail; we presumed that they had come up from Lebombo trying to find a route away from the chaos. I learnt some "border protocol" from our experienced guide. Instead of standing in the queue he just passed all the standing trucks on the "wrong side of the road" and drove straight down to the border post; an oncoming truck blocked the way and he squeezed in between the tiny gap, even managing not to scratch the vehicle, he then audaciously parked in front of the customs building (in a no-parking zone), where we were again harassed by the "helpers and runners". Eish, driving in Mozambique is quite an experience. I was also surprised at the substantial number of Chinese-made trucks, many with the name Sinotruck.

Back at Seldomseen, I was pleased to be able to do some more birding in this area, where I had not birded prior to this trip. Leaving early the next morning, the local guide Buluwezi suggested we drive to Cecil Kop Reserve (apparently a municipal reserve/camping/picnic area). The guide paid the entrance fees, but the official "did not have change" (another way to solicit a bribe). We again spotted Miombo Rock Thrush, and a nice sighting of a female Black Cuckooshrike, which looks very different to the plain-black male, showing greenish-yellow streaked/barred upperparts, followed by Common House Martin and Black-eared Seedeater and then I was lucky that the guide spotted a Cabanis's Bunting, which we had searched for extensively a week or so earlier when we were at Seldomseen, a nice lifer indeed; this was followed by Striped Pipit, Eastern Saw-wing, a good sighting of an Augur Buzzard. Back at Seldomseen, I spotted and got pictures of Olive Sunbird, feeding on the nectar-rich profuse load of flowering shrubs.





*Olive Sunbird*

After two (further) nights at Seldomseen, we backtracked our route and drove to Masvingo, and from there the border-crossing into Botswana and on to Tantebane Lodge north of Francistown, where we spotted Dwarf Bittern and Common Greenshank to name a few. Our further return journey took us to an unplanned stop at a lodge in the Botswana Tuli Block from where we crossed into SA via the Platjan border post, a small facility with very little traffic and we were done with formalities in less than 15 minutes.

We had travelled some 5.300km, I had not recorded all the birds we spotted and my total came to 293 species recorded on BirdLasser; as a group, we ticked a list provided by the guide at regular intervals, which came to a total of 336 species and I returned with a bundle of “lifers”, which I would never have expected, the majority of which came from the Mutare/Seldomseen area.

#### **Further Information:**

1. Border crossing South Africa to Botswana – we used Stockpoort which made the border crossing quick and stress-free. I was told that Martin’s Drift further North is very busy and not to be recommended.
2. The tar roads we travelled in Botswana and Zimbabwe are in good condition. Main roads in Zimbabwe are toll roads throughout, payment in cash in US\$ only.
3. The currency in use in Zimbabwe is US\$ exclusively, which makes everything quite expensive, including fuel. No coins, only bank notes are in use, many of which are heavily soiled due to extensive use (and storage).
4. Mozambique border crossings have their own peculiar challenges: in full view of border officials, a host of “helpers” or “runners” who claim to assist you in a speedy transit are a proper nuisance. All they want to do is rip you off and they are most persistent and pushy. One needs to be very firm in dealing with them. And even when we did not make use of their unsolicited “services,” they demand money. We never paid them anything.
5. Speed traps in Mozambique: the officials hold a “speed camera” on their shoulder, but this device cannot take pictures, it only records the speed. One cannot prove if the speed they show you is of your vehicle, or of a previous vehicle they recorded.
6. At the Mutare Zimbabwe/Mozambique border crossing, I found a Bureau de Change on the Zimbabwe side where I could exchange ZAR for Mozambique Meticaïs at a reasonable rate; Standard Bank does not keep or sell Meticaïs.

**NEITHARD GRAF VON DÜRKHEIM**



# BEST OF BLNG

ONS DROOMTOER — ZIMBABWE EN MOSAMBIEK DES 2024

JP EN ANNE-MARIE VAN DER MERWE



*African Broadbill / Breëbek  
(M'phingwe, Mozambiek)  
[JP van der Merwe]*

© JP vd Merwe



*White-starred Robin / Witkoljanfrederik  
(Nyanga, Zimbabwe)  
[Anne-Marie van der Merwe]*

© Anna-Marie vd Merwe





Augur Buzzard / Witborsjakkalsvoël  
(Lake Mutirikwi, Zimbabwe)  
[JP van der Merwe]



Stripe-cheeked Greenbul / Streepwangwillie  
(Nyanga, Zimbabwe)  
[Anne-Marie van der Merwe]





**Bronzy Sunbird / Bronssuikerbekkie**  
(Seldomseen, Zimbabwe)  
[JP van der Merwe]



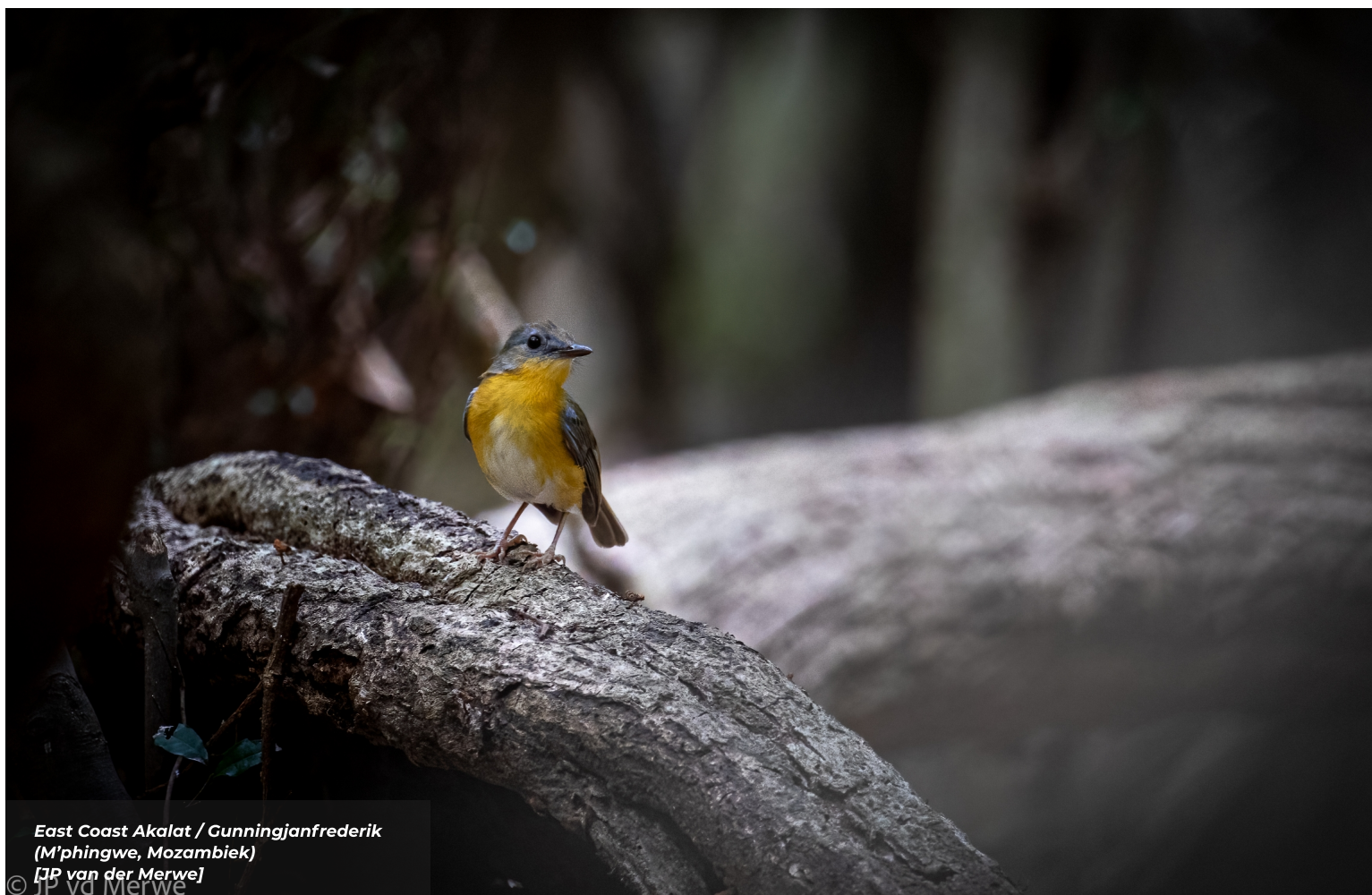
**Black-fronted Bush-Shrike / Swartoogboslaksman**  
(Seldomseen, Zimbabwe)  
[Anne-Marie van der Merwe]





*Böhms Bee-eater / Roeskopbyvreter*  
(Vila de Sena, Mozambiek)  
[Anne-Marie van der Merwe]

© Anna-Marie



*East Coast Akalat / Gunningjanfrederik*  
(M'phingwe, Mozambiek)  
[JP van der Merwe]

© JP van der Merwe



# MIDRAND SPRINKAANSANGER BIRDERS' EYE VIEW

Oor die afgelope vier jaar het my verloofde en ek 'n diep passie vir voëlkyk ontwikkel. Tydens die 2020 COVID-19 pandemie was ons vasgekeer op 'n wildsplas naby die Rust de Winter-dam, waar ons ons beskeie tellinglys amptelik begin het – en dit was toe dat die gogga ons behoorlik gebyt het.

Middel 2024 het ons besluit om nader aan ons werk te verhuis. Ná maande se soektog na 'n blyplek wat beide ons begroting en behoeftes pas, het ons uiteindelik op 'n ware stukkie paradys in Glen Austin Landbouhoewes, Midrand, afgekom. Die vorige eienaar het doelbewus sy een-hektaar plot ingerig om wildlewe te lok met 'n pragtige inheemse tuin. Hy het die eiendom reeds in 1973 gekoop en sedertdien uitsluitlik inheemse bome en plante geplant. Dit het 'n natuurlike toevlugsoord vir voëls geskep, aangesien hierdie tuin uitstaan tussen die oorvloed uitheemse bome in die omgewing. Die omgewing is veral bekend vir die duisende Afrikaanse Brulpaddas (African Bullfrogs) wat jaarliks hier uitbroei – 'n belangrike voedselbron vir baie van die voëls in die omgewing, vandaar die talle voëls!

Die tuin bestaan uit meer as 300 inheemse bome en 'n verskeidenheid inheemse plante. Dit is spesifiek ontwerp om verskillende biome in Suid Afrika te weerspieël en is hoofsaaklik in vier afdelings verdeel: 1. Bosveld, 2. Woud, 3. Moeras en Vleiland, 4. Graslande.

Die bome en plante is volgens hierdie biome versprei, wat 'n verskeidenheid diere- en voëlspesies huisves. In die Bosveld-afdeling (deel 1) kom verskeie Akasia-spesies, Wilde-olyf en Vals-olyfbome voor.



*Sprinkaansanger (River Warbler)*



*Bosveld*





Die Woud-afdeling bevat bome soos die Stinkhout en Brosblaarboom.



Die Moeras en Vleiland gedeelte was spesifiek ontwerp om water op te vang, terwyl plante wat dig groei daarvan voordeel trek.





VLEILAND EN MOERAS

Die Grasland-afdeling bevat 'n groot verskeidenheid inheemse grasse.



GRASLAND

Sedert ons hier woon, het ons reeds meer as 80 voëlspesies in die tuin en 140 spesies in die breër omgewing aangeteken. Van die spesiale voëls wat in ons tuin waargeneem is, sluit in: Swartkoekoek (Black Cuckoo), Europese Vlieëvanger (Spotted Flycatcher), Bosveldvisvanger, Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoël (Levaillant's Cuckoo), Paradysvlieëvanger (Paradise Flycatcher), Kaalwangvalk (African Harrier-Hawk), Afrikaanse Naguil (Fiery-necked Nightjar), Nonnetjie-uil (Barn Owl), Gevlekte Ooruil (Spotted Eagle-Owl), en Hofsanger (Willow Warbler). Selfs Dwergvisvanger, Europese Rietsanger (Marsh Warbler), Feevlieëvanger, Tuinsanger, en die gewilde Sprinkaansanger wat 'n groot Nuwejaarsgeskenk was.





Dwergvisvanger (African Pygmy Kingfisher)  
[Johan Croucamp]



Christa Gwart  
a Wildlife Photography

Feevlieëvanger (Fairy Flycatcher)







Danksy ons uitmuntende verhuurders het verskeie mense die geleentheid gehad om die spesiale Sprinkaansanger in ons tuin te sien en selfs 'n seldsame "oop" foto daarvan te neem.

Hierdie besondere waarneming was 'n onverwagte verrassing op die dag van ons terugkeer vanaf Pafuri. Op 27 Desember 2024 het ons die Krugerwildtuin verlaat ná 'n tien dae lange reis van suid na noord. Op pad terug na Midrand het ons oornag in Magoebaskloof en Sterkrivier, waar ons steeds aktief op soek was na nuwe spesies vir ons tellinglys. Ons was egter onbewus daarvan dat 'n unieke waarneming op ons sou wag by die huis.

Oujaarsaand het ons saam met familie in Montana deurgebring, en op Nuwejaarsdag het ons teruggekeer na ons klein paradys. Ná die uitmergelende taak van uitpak het ons uiteindelik kans gekry om te ontspan, maar skaars het ons agteroor gesak, toe 'n bekende klank die lug vul – so naby, dit klink amper of die voël op ons skouers sit.

Dae se voëlkyk-ekspedisies in die Wildtuin het ons goed opgelei, en binne 'n oogwink spring ons regop. Paniekerig skarrel ons rond, gryp die verkykers wat ons pas netjies weggepak het, en storm na die deur. Dit is 'n volle wedloop – wie kom eerste buite? Soos twee jong boeties wat vir die beste stuk hoender aan die etenstafel baklei, hardloop ons mekaar byna uit die pad. Die honde, wat hierdie vertoning waarskynlik al te goed ken, besluit dis beter om eenvoudig te wyk vir die twee benige malletjies wat opgewonde deur die huis jaag, toe... na 'n oomblik van skielike oorverdowende stilte, ore gespits, asem opgehou, toe sien ons dit – die **Sprinkaansanger**, asof hy spesiaal vir ons wag! Vir 'n oomblik vergeet ons van die chaos, die gejaag, en selfs die honde wat ons nuuskierig dophou.

Die klein, maar magtige voëltjie sit toe daar, perfek geskape, vir die eerste keer... en in ons eie tuin. Ons verkykers bewe effens van opgewondenheid, en ons fluister terselfdertyd: "Het jy hom?!"





Op daardie oomblik besef ons weer hoekom ons so lief is vir voëlkyk – daardie opwinding, die onverwagte verrassings, en die absolute vreugde van 'n nuwe spesie op die tellinglys.

Ons kon ons oë nie glo nie! Te danke aan Justin Nicolau van Rare Bird News is die waarneming van dié voël bevestig! Nie lank daarna nie, het talle mense kom “koffie” drink. Die opgewondenheid was aansteeklik, en elkeen wat hier weg is, het met 'n breë glimlag en 'n hart vol vreugde vertrek. Dit was werklik 'n geskenk – nie net die voël nie, maar ook die wonderlike gemeenskap wat rondom hierdie oomblik ontstaan het. 'n Klein saadjie is geplant, een wat ongetwyfeld in nog baie spesiale vriendskappe sal groei.

## CHRISTO SWART

*(Alle foto's deur Christo Swart geneem, behalwe waar anders aangedui)*





# RINGERSHOEKIE CITIZEN SCIENCE



Die ringessie in Desember by Rietveldam het hierdie Vlei-uil (Marsh Owl) opgelewer. Arrie Klopper het dit vier uur die oggend somer met die hand gevang. Dit was 'n 'lifer' vir Elba Swart. Foto: Julian du Plooy



Ons kon ons oë nie glo toe hierdie Blouvisvanger (Half-collared Kingfisher) verlede jaar in November by Strubendam in die nette beland het nie. David Keyter, toe nog 'n C-ringer, was die gelukkige een om dit te ring. Foto: Daniel Keyter



Hierdie Grootjagarend (African Hawk-Eagle) was maar een van die meer as twintig roofvoëls wat die groep op 'n ringuitstappie na Wilton Valley naby Steenbokpan en Laphalale (Ellisras) area gering het. Julian du Plooy het hierdie een gering. Foto: Hanneke van Loggerenberg



Nadat ons die Bronsvlerkdrawwertjie (Bronze-winged Courser) vir die eerste keer op Birdlasser op Wilton Valley anderkant Lephallale (Ellisras) aangeteken het, het ons 'n "Out of range" boodskap van SABAP2 gekry. Nou het Reinhardt Fowler dit weer gering. Foto: Elba Swart





Die Groottroupan (Purple Roller) is nie 'n maklike voël om te vang nie. Naby Wilton Valley is dit op 'n bal-chatri met twee wit muise in gevang. Dit was 'n 'lifer' vir Wanda Louwrens. Foto: Frik du Plooy



C-ringer, Lirina Fowler, verduidelik hier aan 'n klomp kinders hoe voëls gemeet word. Foto: Wanda Louwrens



Elke jaar op 1 Februarie vier die wêreld 'World Wetlands Day'. Hierdie jaar was die ringers ook daar om te help met die demonstrasies. [Tamsyn Sherwill] 40











# CLUB RARITIES

January - March 2025

## National Rarities/ Nationale Rariteite

The excitement of December's national rarities had twitchers travelling the road to Mkhombo Dam every few days for new rarities. No one would have expected another mega on top of the Red-throated Pipit and Broad-billed Sandpiper which still hung around – but this is exactly what happened when Thea Jenkins and Etienne Marais discovered a new celebrity, the Lesser Yellowlegs, a rare vagrant with only seven previously recorded sightings in South Africa. This is a first for Wider Gauteng.



**Lesser Yellowlegs [Thea Jenkins]**



**Red-throated Pipit [Johan Kriek]**

## REGIONAL RARE BIRDS

Thea Jenkins photographed a juvenile Collared Pratincole at Mkhombo Dam, proving that these species breed there. Pink-backed Pelican, Caspian Plover and Allen's Gallinule stayed around in the same area while Common Tern, Western Yellow Wagtail and African Crake were also seen. Mkhombo Dam's shore flooded early February after excellent rains and the plethora of national and regional rare species departed.

Zaagkuil drift / Kgomo-Kgomo was where it all happened next. Birders had various sightings during this entire reporting period of Lesser Moorhen, African, Baillon's and Striped Crake, Allen's Gallinule, African Hawk Eagle, Dusky Lark, and Dwarf Bittern.



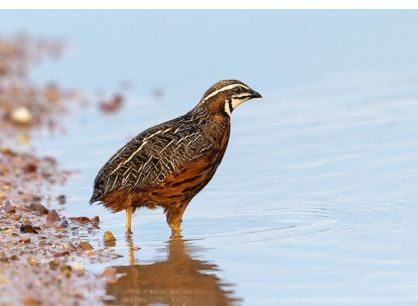
**Dwarf Bittern chicks [Doug Newman]**





**Lesser Moorhen [Charles Gilfillan]**

Harlequin Quail was seen on Zaagkuildrift Road, Meyer's Parrot (Doug Newman) as well as African Openbill (Trevor Hardaker).



**Harlequin Quail [Ard van de Wetering]**



**Meyer's Parrot [Doug Newman]**

Warblers such as **River, Olive-tree, and Icterine Warbler** were seen as well as **Common Whitethroat** and **Thrush Nightingale** (Etienne Marais). A **Red-footed Falcon** also joined the party. A **Bronze-winged Courser** (Dov Drishner) was particularly obliging, as well as **Southern Carmine Bee-eaters**, mainly around the Pienaarsrivier and Assen Roads. Two **Pygmy Geese** were seen at Kgomo-Kgomo (Jandré Verster).



**Bronze-winged Courser [Pieter Heslinga]**



**Southern Carmine Bee-eater [Doug Newman]**



Moving on from Zaagkuildrift, **Swee Waxbills** and **Cuckoo Hawk** (Reinhard Haywood) were reported in the Seringveld Conservancy.

BLNG members on an outing to Verena spotted **Short-tailed Pipits**, **White-bellied Bustard** and **Blue Cranes**.

Marievale also had its fair share of rare species after the pans and streams filled up again. The first was **Allen's Gallinule** by Nicholas Burnham.



**Allen's Gallinule [Nicholas Burnham]**



**African Crane [Marna Buys]**

**African Crane** and **Booted Eagle** (Marna Buys) were seen at Marievale and a flock of **Blue Crane** flew over. Pieter and Janelle Verster with Justin Nicolao flushed a **Corn Crane** near the mine dumps, and recorded **Horus Swift**.

Some excitement was generated when a **Grey Crowned Crane** was seen over Marievale by Justin Rhys Nicolau, and this **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** was found by Andrew Pike.



**Verreaux's Eagle Owl [Andrew Pike]**

Deneysville in the Vaaldam area is also worth visiting. Luca Tomlinson photographed this **Montagu's Harrier** there.



**Montagu's Harrier [Luca Tomlinson]**





**Double-banded Courser [Marlou Schalkwyk]**

Marlou Schalkwyk, Kayleigh Marcus and Sandy Neveling reported **Double-banded Courser**, **Eurasian Curlew** and **Pink-billed Larks** in the Deneysville area.



**Eurasian Curlew [Kayleigh Marcus]**



**Pink-billed Lark [Marlou Schalkwyk]**

Selwyn Rautenbach reported a **Montagu's Harrier** near Devon. A **Red-footed Falcon** and **Cuckoo Finch** were seen at Suikerbosrand NR. (Joel Radue) A **Slaty Egret** was reported to be back at Gnu Valley Farm in Muldersdrift where it had returned several years running in the past.



**Slaty Egret [Matt Vogel]**



**Corn Crane [Duncan Oosthuizen]**



Rietvlei NR had **Corn Crane** (above) and **African Crane**.

Christoff Swart discovered this **River Warbler** in his Centurion garden, and a number of happy twitchers lined up for a chance to see this master skulker so relaxed and in the open.



**River Warbler [Christoff Swart]**

Rietondale Proefplaas continued to turn up interesting species. **Dusky Larks**, two adults and a juvenile, were regularly seen in January, as well as a **Booted Eagle**.



**Dusky Lark [Peter Thompson]**



**Booted Eagle [Marna Buys]**

**European Nightjars** were seen there (Reinard Haywood) and elsewhere in the pentad until mid-March. **European Roller**, **European Honey Buzzard** and **Cuckoo Finch** (Philip Calinikos) were also reported. **Corn Crane** and **Common Quail** (Reinard Haywood) were spotted on the Magalies MBT in the same pentad.



**European Nightjar - Rietondale [Daan van den Wetering]**

*All these sightings were reported on various social media forums. Some records were sourced from EBird or Sabap2 records. You are invited to share information about an interesting or rare bird with us.*



# 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.*

Jacek Zawada	Elarduspark	Carin van der Veen	Waverley
Serah de Klerk	Wapadrand	Davin Hanzen	Pretorius Park Ext 3
Daniël du Preez	Murrayfield	David Keyter	Kloofsig
Megan Aspden	Wonderboom	Daniël Keyter	Irene
Rose & Victor Williams	Waterkloof	Jeff Isaacson	Bronberg
Ilse & Christo de Bruin	Pretoria East	Hannetjie Liebenberg	Magalieskruin
Charmain Engelbrecht	Irene	Mike Wentzel	Garsfontein
Anton van Loggerenberg	Skukuza	Johan Meyer	Centurion
Marit Greenwood	La Montagne	Krynauw Otto	Silver Lakes
Sannie Booyens	The Willows	Hannes & Mariaan Cloete	Elofsdal
Tiaan Schwirzer	Lynnridge	O'Neill Marais	Centurion
Hendrik de Swardt	Garsfontein	Chris Steyn	Evenvale
Gerda Ferreira	Mooikloof		

### IMPORTANT NOTICE/BELANGRIKE AANKONDIGING

The Laniarius is only distributed electronically. The Laniarius will no longer be printed by BLNG.

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)

### DONATIONS / DONASIES:

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 (December 2024 - March 2025)

Izak Spangenberg	Hendrik de Swardt	Philip & Amanda Calinikos
Alan Whyte	Elba Swart	Desire Cantor
Jan & Hannalien Meyer	Shirley van der Merwe	Jenny Smulders
Ansie Dee Reis	Derik & Germaine Janse van Rensburg	



# **BUFFELSDRIFT**

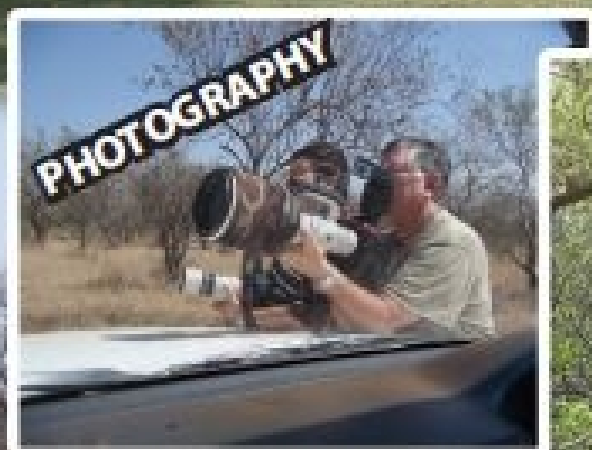
## **Rust de Winter**

### **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](mailto:bookings@birdhiking.co.za)**

**Website: [www.birdhiking.co.za](http://www.birdhiking.co.za)**