



BLiNG WiNGS



African Cuckoo Hawk (JP van der Merwe)

Reflections: Club Meeting – 13 February



We were honoured when Mark Anderson, CEO of BLSA, was the guest speaker at our AGM. Read all about it on p.7

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WORLD WETLANDS DAY at COLBYN NR – 3 FEBRUARY

This event was celebrated in Colbyn Nature Reserve, when the bird ringers set up their mist nets and demonstrated to members of Friends of Colbyn Valley and visiting scholars the ringing process. Photographs provided by Philip Calinikos.





ROOIWAL PENTAD BASH – 4 FEBRUARY

14 participants joined this annual Rooiwal Pentad Bash, organised by Pieter Verster. New BLNG Members who had joined during the previous week, and had in recent days downloaded BirdLasser, attended. Jenna, who had only joined in January, also participated. Raw newby Atlassers, thrown in the deep end! They were assisted by seasoned Atlassers such as Keanu Canto, Ilse Muller, Koos van der Merwe, Thea Jenkins, Roelof Jonkers and of course, Janelle Verster. Pieter Verster, the leader, commented: "Pretty crazy morning out!! 🤔🤔🤔"



We got 165 birds by 12:30. (Excluding Cut-throat Finch, Red-Winged Starling, Common Greenshank, Lesser Masked Weaver and Fiery-necked Nightjar that only Roelof, Keanu, and us saw in the end). Some awesome birds were seen, including African Cuckoo Hawk, (Front page photo) European Honey Buzzard, Gabar Goshawk, Temminck's Courser, Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow (Petronia), Bushveld Pipit, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Abdim's Stork, White Stork, and Cape Vulture. I sent pics to some experts who confirmed Cape Vulture (not too uncommon in the pentad actually). I reckon if we continued all day we would have got the first 200 card ever inside one day in Gauteng- which is unthinkable!

Well done everyone - we made a great team! I know it was a bit fast paced, but we worked through habitats fast in order to get as much as possible before 12:30.

Thanks for joining!"



Fulvous Whistling Ducks [Adele van Zyl]



White-winged Tern roost [Adele van Zyl]

FRIENDS OF RIETVLEI HIKE – 10 FEBRUARY

Johan Botha said: “We had the pleasure of going for a guided bird walk with the Friends of Rietvlei Nature Reserve, GP. Although I missed my mobile hide (my volla) it was still very worth it.”



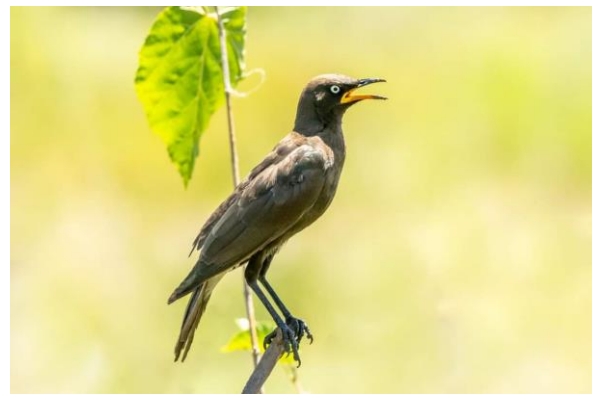
[Vilette Forwood]



White-throated Swallow [Johan Botha]



Dideric Cuckoo [Johan Botha]



Pied Starling [Johan Botha]



[Vilette Forwood]

AGM – 13 FEBRUARY



BLNG Chair, Elouise Kalmer, cited some interesting data during her 2023 annual report. 147 club members had attended the monthly weekend camps, 510 members joined the 33 weekly bird walks, while 100 members attended one of three courses offered. This made BLNG surely one of the most active bird clubs in our country.

Our president, Philip Calinikos, presented a talk on the fascinating species discovered in green areas in northern Pretoria suburbs which had begun to be intensively birded since COVID-19 travelling restrictions were in place. This data was gleaned from BirdLasser. Club members were encouraged to join various BirdLasser challenges to boost provincial and pentad numbers, and especially those of Tshwane Metro for the SA inter-city challenge .



Our guest speaker, Mark Anderson, presented the plight of the seabirds of Marion Island. It is South Africa's southernmost territory in the Atlantic and home to several internationally threatened species. Unfortunately, breeding birds and juveniles are decimated by an unlikely but voracious predator: the house mouse. This pest was introduced accidentally by berthing ships in the 1800's. BLSA is partnering with the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries and

international bird conservation groups in a collaborative effort, Saving Marion Island's Seabirds: **Mouse-Free Marion**.

This ambitious project aims to spread bait by helicopters during the austral winter of 2027, using methods previously employed in other successful eradications. The sheer scale of the island and pilot expertise needed to spread the bait in grids were explained. To date, 25% of the island's grids have been sponsored and more funds were urgently needed.



The AGM was concluded with a wonderful array of snacks, juice, and wine, prepared by some of our club members.

The AGM was attended by some 45 members.

SMUTS KOPPIE – 17 FEBRUARY

More than 20 members attended this hike, led by Marna Buys. It offers a variety of views from the koppie and across a valley. A total of 60 species were seen, with the highlight without question a stunning Honey Buzzard.

All photographs by Amanda Gazendam.



European Honey Buzzard – Wespedief [Amanda Gazendam]

REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Beautiful images of a **White-backed Night-heron** juvenile taken by JP van der Merwe at Rust de Winter dam early February.



Red-footed Falcon, and Thrush Nightingale below.
[Both Angela Openshaw].

Zaagkuildrift continued delivering rarities. **Bronze-winged Courser, Collared Pratincole, Dusky Lark, Dwarf Bittern, Red-footed Falcon** and **Thrush Nightingale** were reported by Pieter Verster and others.



Philip Yiannakou had an exciting find for Gauteng near Northern Farm mid-February: **Woolly-necked Stork**. A few **Black Kites** were at the same locality.

Even though not a provincial rarity, a **Pygmy Kingfisher** juvenile on the Friends of Magalies MBT caused some excitement under local birders. JP van der Merwe captured the image on p. 12.

Lastly, a **Booted Eagle** was seen at Zaagkuildrift by Rena van Wyk on 25 February.

Photograph of the month

This beautiful photograph shows why this species is called Longclaw. Thank you, Marlou Schalkwyk, for this photograph of the month!





Pygmy Kingfisher [JP van der Merwe]

A warm thank-you to all our club's outing leaders who send in summaries of species seen and the Bird of the Day, as well as our eager photographers their photos. Without your contributions, BLING WiNGS would not be possible.

PROGRAMME	
	2 Mar– Bird ringing at Moreleta NR
	9 Mar – Roodekopjesdam
	12 Mar – Evening meeting
	13 Mar – Friends of Magalies Trail
	15 – 26 Mar Mozambique Camp
	30 Mar - Zaagkuildrift Road
Bookings:	mailto:secretary@blng.co.za

12 March - Club Meeting

Dr Linda van den Heever



Dr Linda van den Heever, a.k.a the Raptor Warrior, had a career in the corporate world after obtaining B.Com and B.Sc. (Applied Mathematics) degrees. In her heart, she always knew she wanted to get involved in avian conservation and joined BLSA. She currently is running BirdLife South Africa's project looking into the effects of lead toxicosis in South Africa's bird species, with the aim to eventually pinpoint the source of the lead poisoning and finding ways to mitigate its impacts. Dr. van den Heever was involved recently with the ambitious and successful relocation of a colony of vultures from DeWildt to Vulpro at Shamwari Private Game Reserve.

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