



BLING WINGS

Lesser Yellowlegs [Johan Croucamp]

Edition 18, February 2025



Reflections: AGM Club meeting February 2025

Our AGM was a triumph, in more ways than one... It was a celebration of our healthy, thriving club with 342 members, stable finances, excellent electronic communication systems, weekly birding walks and monthly camps, conservation actions, training courses, and reporting on these through BLING WINGS and Lanarius.

An exciting new opportunity arose when the BLNG Photography Club was started and monthly meetings well attended.

"Hot Birds" was the topic of our excellent speaker, Prof. Andrew McKechnie. See the photographs on P7.

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VERENA & MABUSA NR – 1 February

In the car, on the way, we discussed our targets: topping the list was Short-tailed Pipit and White-bellied Bustard. No one could have imagined that we would tick them off within the first half hour of our arrival. In fact, after Common Buzzard had welcomed us at the entry of the Verena road, and we had parked the cars to wait for the rest to arrive, there they were: a pair of small brown birds with the tell-tale white outer feathers to their very short tails – Short-tailed Pipits! They were enjoying the freshness after the previous night's rains and gave us all a magnificent display by zooming past, close by, at great speed, dropping down into the long grass, suddenly popping out again – but thankfully staying around until everyone had arrived, had had good views, and Fransie O' Brien, our leader, confirmed. High Fives!

That our next target would be seen so soon after, first seen flying near the ridge and then landing, seemed too good to be true: White-bellied Bustard! Though far away, and proper photographs almost impossible, a wonderful thrill.



Red-breasted Swallow [Ronel Viljoen]



Orange-breasted Waxbill [Ivonne Coetzee]

Add to that a pair of Blue Cranes, beautiful displaying widowbirds of all four South African species, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Common House Martin, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Red-breasted - and South African Cliff Swallows and even a hooting Red-chested Flufftail – Verena more than delivered.

When we at last arrived at nearby Mabusa NR, the heatwave struck in full force and birding slowed down considerably. Brown Snake Eagle waited at the entrance, and later Common Buzzard and Wahlberg's Eagle soared above. A Short-toed Rock Thrush skittered away, but unfortunately, no Red-faced Cisticola was waiting at the first bridge. Fransie showed us where to look for the nesting Red-headed Weavers.



[Ivonne Coetzee]



Golden-breasted Bunting [Ronel Viljoen]

At the Moses Bridge, when having lunch, we decided to turn around and head back home via Renosterkop. Wailing Cisticola, a lovely Rock Kestrel and Nicholson's Pipit ended a great day.



Woodland Kingfisher [Ronel Viljoen]

Rock Kestrel [Ronel Viljoen]

NORTHERN FARM – 5 February

Bird expert Selwyn Rautenbach guided this outing. It was a brilliant day, with 109 species recorded. What truly set this outing apart from many others, was that eager beginner birders had joined on this, their first outing. Their joy at seeing an African Swamphen and others was infectious, and having Selwyn pointing out each species, a rare privilege. Highlights were Red-backed Shrike, Blue-billed Teals and Marsh Warbler.



Common Reed Warbler
[Matthys van den Hout]



Hamerkop [Matthys van den Hout]



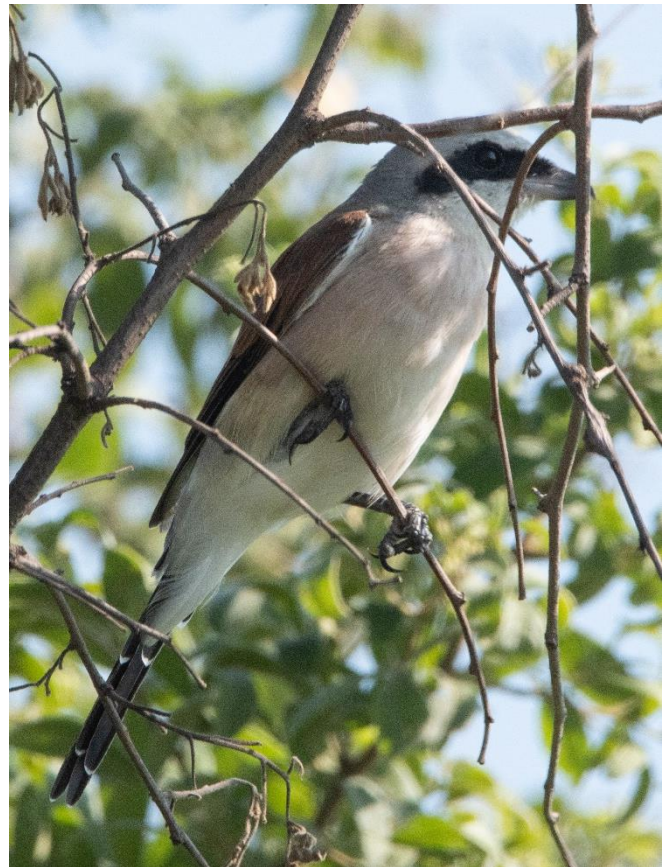
African Fish Eagle [Matthys van den Hout]



Blue-billed Teal [Matthys van den Hout]



Egyptian Goose and Black-headed Heron



Red-backed Shrike [Willie Victor]



& Yellow-crowned Bishop [Matthys van den Hout]

BLNG BOSBERAAD 14 - 16 February

In preparation for the AGM, reporting and planning for the rest of the year, committee members met at Wolfhuiskraal for the weekend. After the programme, budget, portfolio reporting and planning for 2025 were finalised, we enjoyed owl hunts in the evenings. We departed via Nylsvley on Sunday: a Black Coucal was calling!



Southern White-faced Owl [Pieter Heslinga]



Spotted Eagle Owl [Pieter Heslinga]



Some BLNG club statistics:

- 324 Main members + 78 spouses
- Effective communication
- 33 outings with 510 participants
- 11 camps with 147 attendees
- 3 training courses with 100 participants
- 12 monthly meetings
- 12 x BLiNG WiNGS, 3 x Laniarius annually
- Healthy financial status
- New photography club is flying
- 30 Bird ringing sessions

AGM - 18 March



Wilma Grobler and her catering team working their magic.



BLNG Chair, Sean Naudé with Prof. Andrew McKechnie (UP). Prof. McKechnie's riveting talk centred on increasing heat, the devastating effect on bird populations, and mitigating measures investigated during his research.



REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Mkhombo Dam's shore flooded after excellent rains and a plethora of national and regional rare species departed. Then Zaagkuil drift stepped up to the plate and almost daily reports flooded in of a variety of crakes, warblers, bitterns and more.

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

Selwyn Rautenbach reported a **Montagu's Harrier** near Devon.

European Nightjars were seen both in Rietondale and on the Magalies MBT Trail.



European Nightjar [Daan van den Wetering]



Red-footed Falcon - Zaagkuil drift [Ivonne Coetzee]

Zaagkuil drift and Kgomo-Kgomo had various sightings of **Lesser Moorhen**, **Dwarf Bittern**, and **African Crake**. (Doug Newman)
Warblers such as **Thrush Nightingale**, **River Warbler**, **Icterine Warbler**, and **Common**



Bronze-winged Courser at Zaagkuil drift [Pieter Heslinga]

African Crakes were regular sightings on Crake Road.



African Crake [Pieter Heslinga]

Whitethroat were heard/seen as well as **Allen's Gallinule** and **Striped Crake**. (Etienne Marais). A **Red-footed Falcon** was also seen.



Lesser Moorhen [Marna Buys]



Dwarf Bittern [Ivonne Coetzee]

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]



Cuckoo Finch at Rietvlei [Marna Buys]

A **Red-footed Falcon** was seen at Suikerbosrand NR. (Joel Radue)

A **Grey Tit-flycatcher** was found near Kwalata at Dinokeng, and a **European Honey Buzzard** at Derdepoort Regional Park.

Doug Newman heard a **Cape Eagle-Owl** calling in the vicinity of Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens.

Southern Carmine Bee-eaters were again seen on the Pienaarsrivier Road after an absence of a few weeks.



A **Corncrake** was seen in Rietvlei NR by Duncan Oosthuizen near the end of February.

All records are sourced from Social media postings.

Photograph of the month

Who could not be beguiled by this breathtaking photograph of an African Pygmy Kingfisher by JP van der Merwe? Perfect composition regarding placement of the subject on the branch which leads the eye to the subject, applying the rule of thirds; the pleasing contrasting colours of the neutral branch vs vibrant bird, with the lighting suggesting forested conditions, and the softening of background noise - pure perfection!

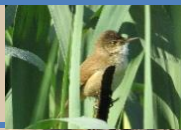


You are invited to send me your photographs of Wider Gauteng species for placement here. Technical data is welcome.



BLNG members on Flock to Marion II, aboard the MSC Musica [Sheleph Burger]

PROGRAMME – MARCH 2025



1 Mar – Moreleta Park NR



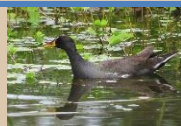
5 Mar – Eugene Marais Park



7 – 9 Mar – Loodswaai Camp



9 Mar – Zaagkuilsdrift & Kgomo-Kgomo



11 Mar – Club meeting



14 – 17 March – Middelpunt Camp, Dullstroom

BLNG Club meeting - 11 March

Where do waterbirds go when it is dry?



Christopher Hines is busy with a fascinating research project: where do birds such as flamingos, Lesser Moorhen, Crakes and other waterbirds go when floodplains and dams dry up? He will share his findings with us.

The **Photography Club** will meet beforehand, at 6 pm, with the topic: Birds seen on Flock / Dream Journey through Zimbabwe and Mozambique recently.

Come and join us for all this, free of charge.

All invoices for annual **BLNG** membership fees will be sent out on 1 March.

You need to pay **BLSA separately** for membership, if you so wish. Contact BLSA at membership@blsa.org.za

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