

BLiNG WiNGS



Crimson-breasted Shrike (*Laniarius Atrococcineus*) [Marna Buys]

Reflections: Club Meeting –16 January



Once again, whether old-time users of BirdLasser or not, all were fortunate to learn something new from Ernst Retief's talk. A great many questions were asked and answered, and the socializing afterwards enjoyed by all.

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COLBYN NR – 13 JANUARY

Philip Calinikos, BLNG Club president, was the leader of this very successful outing to Colbyn Wetlands NR. 23 Members attended this great start of the club's activities of 2024. 76 Species were seen. There were beautiful views of the wetlands from the top of the ridge. Highlights included Black-crowned Tchagra, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, and Brown-backed Honeybird.



MOOIKLOOF EQUESTRIAN ESTATE – 24 JANUARY

An incredible number of 89 birds were seen during the morning. Several members recorded up to six lifers, such as Burnt-necked Eremomelas, Klaas's Cuckoo, Spotted Eagle Owl, and Ring-necked Parakeet. This outing was led by Sheleph Burger. Keanu Canto also joined the 13 BLNG members. All bird photos by Lindie Jordaan. group photos by Derek and Sheleph.



ZAAGKUILDRIFT – 28 FEBRUARY

This popular destination featured prominently in social media due to incredible specials seen in the week just prior to the outing... 17 members pitched up with high expectations, even earlier than the meeting time. But birding was sometimes inexplicably slow, brilliant sightings that had been recorded just hours or the day before by the leader, JP van der Merwe, inexplicably absent, and the pools of water drying literally before the eyes in the searing heat. Well, such is birding! Still, the pleasing number of about 120 species were recorded, and bushveld birds such as Scaly-feathered Finch, Namaqua Dove, three species of hornbills, and waterbirds were a pleasure to see.

All photographs by Charles Gilfillan.



Charles Gilfillan came across this Hamerkop feeding in this unpromising puddle on the road and wondered what it found to eat there. To their surprise, he captured this image of it eating a tadpole which was in the very shallow puddle.



Southern Red-billed Hornbill



Wood Sandpiper

REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

Despite high water levels, Mkhombo dam held onto its rarities:

Common Tern, Pygmy Goose and Wire-tailed Swallow remained near the pump house.

Pieter Uitenweerde found this **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Mkhombo, and Emile Blanchè **Pygmy Geese**.



Mabusa held onto its **Red-faced Cisticola** and **White-backed Night-Heron** and Verena, the displaying **Short-tailed Pipits**. This rare close-up of this vulnerable species was sent to us by Rob Cliff.



Dinokeng delivered **Monotonous Lark** (Jon Kinghorn) and **Dusky Lark** (Niall Perrins). A pair of **Dusky Larks** was also discovered at Rietvlei NR (Michael Mason), as well as the returning **Eurasian Hobby**, seen intermittently by several birders.

Adrian Haagner spotted a single **Rock Pipit** at Suikerbosrand, while a **Lark-like Bunting** was seen there by Dom Rollinson and Fransie and Patrick O'Brien.

A **Lesser Moorhen** was recorded north of Brits Golf Course by Philip Yiannakou, while Andy Featherstone saw a **European Roller**.



Reports of sightings of **European Honey Buzzard** seem to feature particularly prominent on provincial rare bird forums. Michael Wescomb captured this stunning image at the Friends of MagaliesTrial.

The **Ayres Hawk Eagle** which has been a fairly regular visitor at Pretoria University Proefplaas, returned mid-January, and was reported by Philip Calinikos. [Elmarie Hirschhorn]



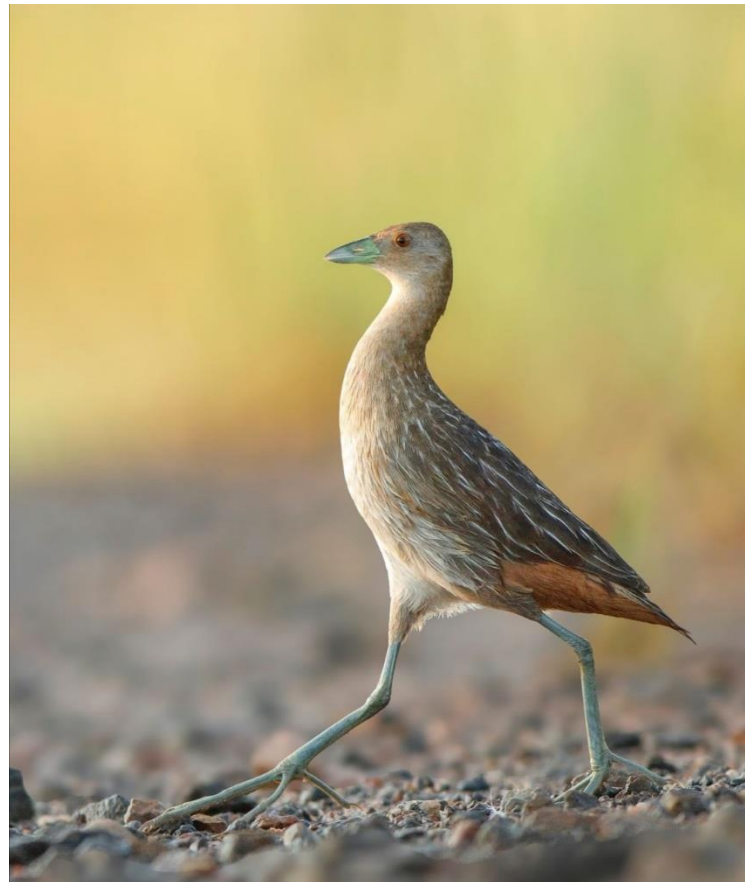
Zaagkuil drift is cooking at the moment. A **Striped Crake** was photographed by Jandré Verster at Zaagkuil drift on 23 January. He also reported a **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, Western Yellow Wagtail, Red-footed Falcon** and **Collared Pratincole** with Niall Perrins at Kgomo-Kgomo bridge. Etienne Marias spotted a **Tawny Eagle**, while Pieter Uitenweerde reported a **Baillon's Crake** as well as a **Grey-headed Kingfisher** there. Another was found near Loodswaai by Pieter Verster. While Wilgerivier Valley seemed much quieter, a **Crowned Eagle** was spotted and the BLNG club reported the **Red-capped Robin-Chat** on 28 January.



[Phillip Calinikos]

A special find by Peter Thompson was this **Green Sandpiper** at Rainbow junction, north of the Magalies NR. An interesting find at the same locality, also by Peter Thompson and Phillip Calinikos, was a lovely pair of **Greater Painted Snipe**.

An **African Openbill** was reported at OR Tambo airport by Ronel Steenkamp, and a few days later, by Lydia Durand, at Rietvlei.



Photograph of the month

Even though this is still part of the rarities, probably the most exciting discovery of the month, if not the coming year, was this **Buff-spotted Flufftail** by Jandr  Verster in Pretoria. But this beautiful photograph also deserves this spot as photograph of the month!





Hoping you have flown into 2024 with as much verve and enthusiasm as this Little Bittern of LC de Villiers, captured during our New Year pentad bash.

[Marna Buys]

13 February - Club Meeting

Mark Anderson, CEO of BLSA

Marion Island is a South African territory in the south Atlantic which is home to several threatened seabird species. Unfortunately, these birds are threatened by an unlikely but voracious predator: the house mouse. BLSA is partnering with the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries and others in a collaborative effort, Saving Marion Island's Seabirds: the Mouse-Free Marion Project, to eradicate mice from the island, using methods employed in other successful eradications. We will be informed of the method chosen, the international fund-raising efforts, and the individuals who sacrifice time and effort for this venture. Come and support us and enjoy a lovely spread of snacks and drinks.

PROGRAMME	
	3 Feb – Bird ringing at Colbyn NR
	4 Feb – Rooiwal Pentad Atlas Bash
	10 Feb – Friends of Rietvlei hike
	17 Feb – Smuts Koppie
	23 – 26 Feb – Nylsvley Camp
Bookings: mailto:secretary@blng.co.za	



For future placements: Ivonne Coetzee
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