



# BLiNG WiNGS

Southern Masked Weaver [Pieter Heslinga]

Edition 30 January 2026

## CLUB MEETING – 13 January

Melissa Hoffman had a riveting talk on preventing bird strikes at OR Tambo International Airport.



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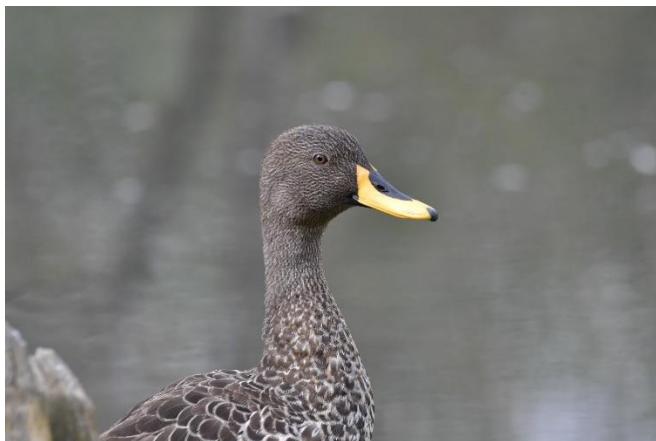
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## AUSTIN ROBERTS BIRD SANCTUARY PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP – 18 January

Saudiq Davis was the expert who took charge of the camera training at Austin Roberts Bird Sanctuary. Saudiq also made available a Pdf format of the training afterwards.



[Marit Greenwood]



Yellow-billed Duck [Sheleph Burger]



Bronze Mannikin [Sheleph Burger]

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## MOOKLOOF BIRD WALK - 21 January

This is Sheleph Burger's home pentad, and a group of birders took advantage of her expertise and joined the bird walk at this beautiful estate. Besides the feast of birds commonly spotted in and around our city, an African Harrier-Hawk and Ovambo Sparrowhawk were seen. One of the highlights was spotting juvenile Little (Striated / Green-backed) Herons on a nest. Not to mention the fresh coffee at her home afterwards!



[Sheleph Burger]



[Geoff Abbott]



Little Heron [Sheleph Burger]

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## VLAKLAAGTE – 31 January

According to *Birding Gauteng*, the area comprises a matrix of pristine grasslands, cultivated fields, sizable wetlands and interesting farm dams, offering arguably some of the best roadside birding in Gauteng. It is a particularly good area for harriers, korhaan, francolins and many interesting LBJs – in our case, great views of Common Quail, six Temminck's Coursers, Cuckoo-finch (twice) and as a departing gift, a pair of Blue Crane.

Fransie O'Brien, our competent leader, commented afterwards: "Hoe kan 'n mens nou eintlik al die wonder van 'n voëlkyk-dag van 8 ure vastrek in ons harte. A prayer to say Thank You to the Maker of this intriguing kingdom that has become so vulnerable. Thanks to everyone for contributing to the enjoyment of birding together. The perfection comes with our struggles to put it all together, from arranging lifts to laughter about wrong ID'S (alien ducks versus juvenile Spur-winged Geese, and Abdim's Stork turning into a Glossy Ibis), cancelling a hair appointment when the arrangements weren't all that clear, kneeling in the mud to unhook old fences from exhausts, a piece of cake shared together in the only bit of shade on the whole road, sometimes even a missed lifer, because it saves that joy for a next trip... Take care till next time. Somewhere, the promise of another Lifer in the Gift of Time awaits."



[Robin Naudé]



[Johan Kampman]



Cuckoo-finch [Adelle van Zyl]



White-fronted Bee-eater [Johan Kampman]



Temminck's Courser [Ivonne Coetzee]



Blue Cranes [Ivonne Coetzee]



Common Quail [Adelle van Zyl]

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## REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

With excellent rains over wider Gauteng during January, reports of rare birds in our region came in at a fast pace.

Still, the only **National Rarity** reported, compared to the incredible sightings enjoyed at Mkhombo Dam a year ago, was the **Slaty Egret** still showing at Walkhaven Dog Park (Selwyn Rautenbach) and moving to Gnu Valley in between sightings.

### Regional Rare bird sightings:

Madelein van Schalkwyk reported a **Bronze-winged Courser** at Rietvlei NR and Dave Reinecke found **Greater Painted-snipe** there as well. A **Red-footed Falcon** was also photographed at Rietvlei.



**Bronze-winged Courser** [M van Schalkwyk]



**Red-footed Falcon** [Trenly Meacham]

Dinokeng delivered some good birds with **Lesser Moorhen** (Akil Ramcharan), **Bronze-winged Courser** and **Eurasian Hobby** (Anthony Paton). A **Blue Crane** was seen flying over a farm by Daniël du Preez.

Etienne Marais found three **Double-banded Coursers** near Deneysville, and Sandy Neveling photographed a **Booted Eagle** over the area.

Devon Grasslands yielded great species during January.

Fransie O'Brien found **Red-footed Falcons** and Niall Perrins reported seeing a **Booted Eagle** and **Montagu's Harrier**.

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Ludwig Roell then had fantastic sightings of both **Montagu's Harriers** and **Pallid Harriers** simultaneously quartering a freshly mown field.



**Montagu's Harrier** [Ludwig Roell]



**Pallid Harrier** [Ludwig Roell]

Marievale also offered a feast of rarities: **Spotted Crake**, **Baillon's Crake**, **Bronze-winged Courser**, **Western Marsh Harrier** and a **Lesser Moorhen**.



**Spotted Crake** [Martin Brits]



**Western Marsh Harrier** [Ed Urban]



**Baillon's Crake** [Danny Hitge]

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One report of a **Buff-spotted Flufftail** heard calling and a **Common Cuckoo** at WSBG were posted on social media. The latter could be the same individual that was seen there in January 2025.



**Common Cuckoo** [Bruce Long]



**Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** [Jacques Jordaan]

Zaagkuildrift Road had the regular annual summer rare bird sightings of **Allen's Gallinule**, **Lesser Moorhen**, **Dwarf Bittern** and various others, such as **African Crake**, **Icterine Warbler** and **Thrush Nightingale** – reported by Doug Newman. Stephan Terblanche found a **Dusky Lark** on the Zaagkuildrift Road. Dale Horne managed to see an **African Finfoot** there as well.

Jacques Jordaan seems to have particular luck with finding **Ayres's Hawk-Eagles** being harassed by Pied Crows – this second sighting in as many months was seen over Newlands.

*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.*

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## Photograph of the month

Whoever said LBJs are boring? This Black-chested Prinia is simply captivating. What immense attitude from such a tiny bird! Note the cocked tail and confident and charismatic stance, the come-what-may look in the eye, and some proclamation of ownership surely in progress. If we delve deeper, the perfect placement, adhering to the rule of thirds, the lines and colours of the stump leading upward to and repeated in the subject's tail make this a sure winner. The white highlights on the stump and the throat contrast with the black chest and muted greens of the background. This little bird, so full of character, was captured mid-song by Marlou Schalkwyk.





AGM Club meeting – 10 Feb 2026

**Dr Hanneline Smith-Robertson**

Head of BLSA's Terrestrial Bird Conservation  
Programme

Come and join us!



## PROGRAMME – February 2026



8 Feb – Marievale



13 -15 Feb – Wolfhuiskraal



18 Feb – Albert's Farm



22 Feb – Wilge River Valley



27 Feb - 1 March – Bosbareaad



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Compilation and layout by I Coetzee  
<mailto:laniariuseditor@blng.co.za>

For enquiries: <mailto:secretary@blng.co.za>