

THE LARK



Travel

Bariloche - Argentina
Zaagkuilsdrift

Local Birding

Van Waveren Farm
Hout River Dam

In memoriam

Riana Odendaal

Breeding records from Sofala Province, Central Mozambique • Nest predators at Roodewal Forest Reserve, Soutpansberg

The Lark is the newsletter of Birdlife Polokwane and is published bimonthly. It publishes reports of club activities, trip reports, photographic contributions and any natural history notes of birds or events involving birds. Contributions are accepted in English or Afrikaans and are accepted at the discretion of the editors. Non-members are also welcome to contribute, especially if it is of relevance to birds or birding in the Limpopo Province. When submitting images, please submit high resolution images without any borders, frames or signatures.

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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE:

15 JUNE 2024

This newsletter is best read in a 'two page view' format.

Cover page theme 2024: female birds

COVER Arnot's Chat (female)
© Derek Engelbrecht.

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For a lark ...



Choir practice © Sanj de Wet

P.O. Box 699

Fauna Park 0787

Tel: 015 263 6473

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Editors' chirps

We start this editorial on a sad note. The Odendaal family, loyal club members for many years were involved in a serious accident on the 23rd of March 2024. Gideon, Cornie, and Riana sustained serious and life-threatening injuries and were taken to different hospitals. Sadly, Riana's injury were too serious and she lost her life on the 3rd of April 2024. We will miss Riana at our club meetings and outings. On behalf of Birdlife Polokwane and our readers, we send our condolences to Cornie and Gideon, the Odendaal family, and friends. On a better note, Cornie was released from hospital on the 21st of April and is recovering well at home with her beloved plants - and numerous cups of tea. At the time of writing this editorial, Gideon is still in the ICU at Milpark Hospital and is slowly making progress. Vasbyt Gideon, jy's 'n yster! We keep Cornie and Gideon in our thoughts and wish them a full recovery.

On another sad note, one of our contributors, Duncan Parkes, also lost his life on the 3rd of April. Duncan had a treasure trove of natural history notes of birds from Central Mozambique and Zimbabwe. He started sharing his notes in *The Lark* 51, and we were busy preparing the second instalment of breeding records from Central Mozambique when he passed away. There will also be a final note about breeding records from Zimbabwe in the next issue of *The Lark*.

Duncan's legacy will live on forever as he made a tremendous contribution to our knowledge of birds from a poorly known region. His records are sure to be incorporated in the 8th edition of Roberts Birds of Southern Africa, which is currently under revision. We are honoured that Duncan chose *The Lark* to publish these valuable natural history notes. We send our condolences to his wife, Isla, his family, and friends.

This issue is packed with some excellent reading. We take our readers far and wide: to South America, one of the premier birding roads in the region, and we also give feedback about two club outings. Our Bird Briefs section is a little thin this time around, and we call on our readers to please consider writing something about your interesting observations or perhaps a study you did for this very important section.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we look forward to receiving your contributions to the next issue.

Raelene and Derek

Birding

Bariloche

A week chasing specials in picturesque Patagonia

TEXT AND PHOTOS **Daniel Engelbrecht**

Far on the western horizon, an imposing wall of mountains rose from the dry and desolate plains. I was in awe; as we slowly made our way closer, what looked like clouds morphed into snow-capped peaks. Before us lay the Andes, the longest mountain range in the world, stretching from Venezuela over 7,000 km, all the way down the spine of South America before splintering into fjords and islands in the icy waters of the Southern Ocean.

I now found myself closer to the southern end of the Andes, in Patagonia – a region governed by Chile and Argentina. After travelling for nearly two full days from the



A Flying Steamer Duck, one of four steamer duck species in the world, all from South America and the Falkland Islands. The Flying Steamer Duck is the only steamer duck capable of flight, hence the somewhat strange common name.



agricultural heart of Argentina in Santa Fe, we were finally approaching our destination, [San Carlos de Bariloche](#), a touristy town known for its famous Swiss-style architecture. Everywhere we looked, we were greeted with postcard picture vistas of snow-capped peaks, crystal-clear melt-water lakes, rocky beaches, and vividly coloured wildflowers. Our AirBnB was right on the shore of the massive Nahuel Huapi Lake and a

short drive from the charming town square.

There was, of course, business to attend to, and after dumping my bags, I picked up my binoculars and camera and set off along the lake shore. Immediately, I picked up my first lifer, the cute Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail. I had never birded the Andes nor Patagonia, and as such, many of the common species were new for me. Black-chinned Siskins

flitted about on the lawns, and other-worldly trumpeting calls revealed the presence of a pair of Black-faced Ibises. Other non-lifers included the diminutive Tufted Tit-Tyrant, a showy Diuca Finch, and the ever-present House Wren.

The sun was already low, and we settled in for an early night with the prospect of exciting birding the next day. I was up before dawn and watched the sunrise from the

ABOVE You'd be forgiven if you thought this was somewhere in the Swiss Alps, but this is in Bariloche in southern Argentina.

lake shore. Patagonia has some fantastic waterfowl species, and whilst enjoying my morning coffee, I spotted three Flying Steamer Ducks – what a bird! There are four Steamer Ducks in the world, all restricted to Patagonia. Great Grebes were



ABOVE The Dark-bellied Cinclodes is always associated with water.

OPPOSITE TOP My first Patagonian lifer - the Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The Black-faced Ibis is interesting because southern populations are migratory, moving north to escape the harsh Patagonian winters.

also in evidence on the lake, whilst Dark-bellied Cinclodes patrolled the shoreline.

We set off south today, towards Lago Pueblo, a small town in the

neighbouring Chubut Province. En route, a massive black bird with a vast wingspan cruised over the car - an Andean Condor! Rufous-tailed Plantcutters, the southernmost representative of the Cotinga family, were relatively common at roadside pull-ins, as were Austral Thrushes. Lago Pueblo delivered yet another waterfowl lifer in the form of a flock of Chiloe Wigeons; these attractive ducks are migratory and trade the hostile Patagonian winters for warmer weather in the Argentine Pampas. Chucao Tapaculos were



highly vocal yet proved to possess arcane skulking abilities, not offering me even a glimpse. I also dipped out on Magellanic Woodpecker in the forests surrounding the lake, a bird I was extremely keen to lay eyes on. I would have other opportunities for it, but it seemed like a bad start to the scorecard.

Patagonia really has some classy waterbirds like this Great Grebe (OPPOSITE TOP) and the Chiloé Wigeon (OPPOSITE BOTTOM).

ABOVE Rufous-tailed Plantcutters were common roadside birds.

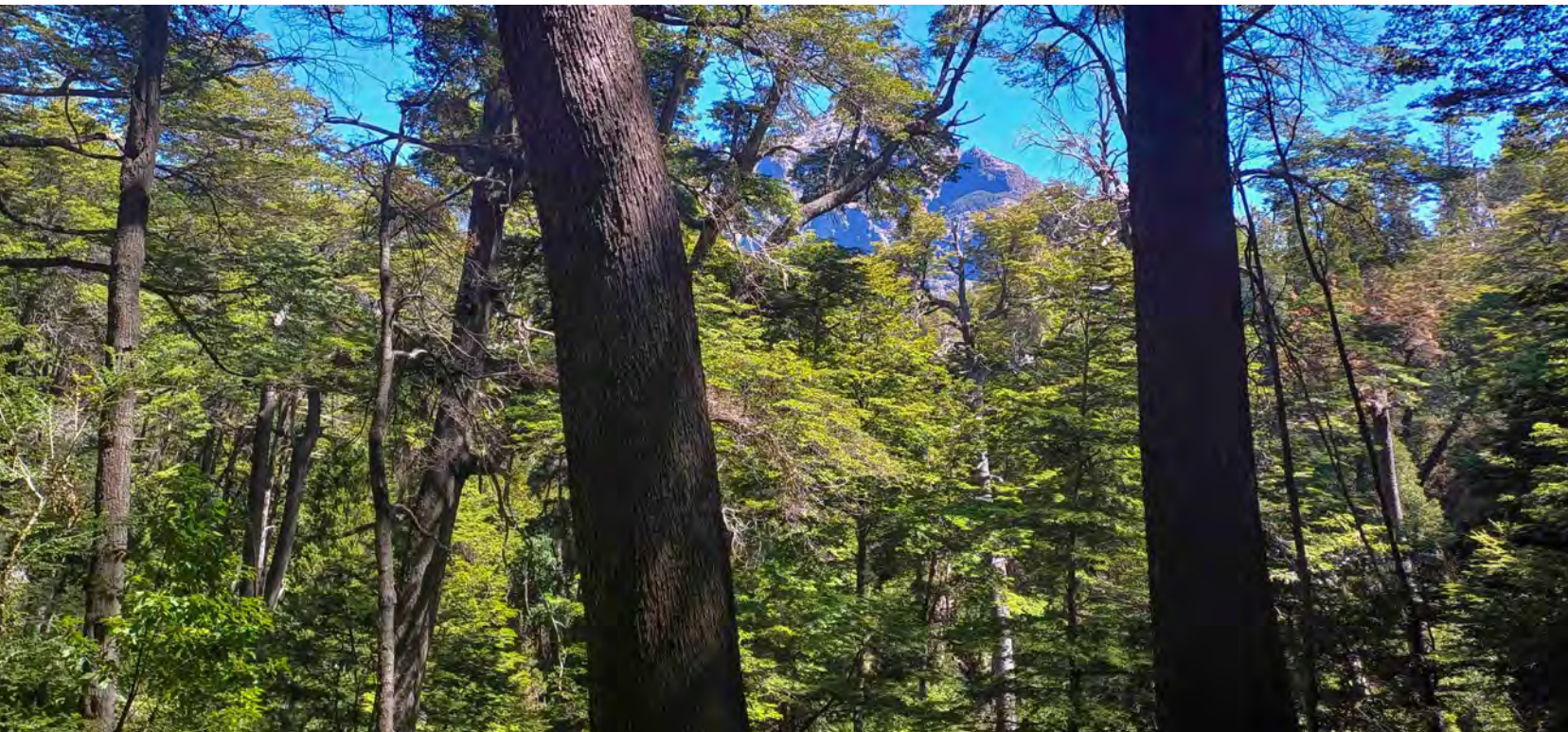
We then ventured into pristine austral temperate forests dominated by towering beech and cypress trees, some as old as 3,600 years! The birding was spectacular, and I added the large Chilean Flicker, a flock of Austral Parakeets, an adorable Austral Pygmy Owl, and the only hummingbird here, the relatively drab Green-backed Firecrown (needless to say, the crown was concealed). The



highlights, however, were the two tapaculos, the tiny Magellanic Tapaculo, and the bulky Black-throated Huet-huet. Both birds showed absurdly well, yet I still couldn't coax out a Chucao Tapaculo despite hearing them more than any other bird.

RIGHT The diminutive Magellanic Tapaculo, a temperate rainforest endemic of southern South America.

The impressive southern beech (*Nothofagus* spp.) forests (BELOW) support a diverse bird community, including this Austral Pygmy Owl (LEFT).



I had heard rumours of Austral Canasteros around Bariloche and quickly became obsessed with the idea of finding this relatively drab Furnarid. The following day, I set off on a walk from our accommodation to investigate a spot where they had been reported on eBird. Unfortunately, I had no joy here, but I did score plenty of Sharp-billed Canasteros, Patagonian Sierra Finches, Long-tailed Meadowlarks, and Chilean Elaenias. So, it was back to the drawing board for me, and I found another site where the canasteros had been reported. This spot was too far to walk to,



LEFT The sought-after Austral Canastero.

BELOW The Thorn-tailed Rayadito lives in noisy groups and occupies a wide range of forest habitats.

but it proved easy to hitch a ride there. Upon arrival, I noted that the habitat looked good – open shrub and Patagonian steppe. After trawling around for a while, I heard a response in the distance, which led me to frame-filling views of this Patagonian special, followed by a flyover of a pair of Upland Geese. Canastero acquired, I found a lift back to town and celebrated with a cold beer on the shore of the lake as I watched an Andean Negrito forage along the waterline. What a place!





TOP The scenery is simply breathtaking!

LEFT The understory of southern temperate forests is where you'll find Des Murs's Wiretail - if you are patient.



Magellanic Woodpecker – a bad feeling was developing around these two, particularly the latter, as this was one of the best locations for it. The reality was that I still had a chance for those two species, but I had missed my one and only shot at Ochre-flanked Tapaculo. I only had an outside chance of this species, but it was still a disappointing dip. We spent the rest of the day driving the winding roads through this beautiful part of the world before enjoying the sunset back at our accommodation.

The next day saw us visiting several hiking trails along the idyllic Llao Llao road. The birding was incredibly enjoyable, and I added a number of new birds: a White-throated Treerunner doing what he does best, several Thorn-tailed Rayaditos, and Des Murs's Wiretail – a secretive denizen of the understory. Other additions included Patagonian Tyrant, Chilean Pigeon and the scarce White-throated Hawk. Still, no views of Chucao, and no

Our plan for the fifth day was to drive the renowned 'Seven Lakes Road,' a more than 200 km round trip through some of the best scenery in Patagonia. Birding was relatively limited (I had to oblige to

the requests of the non-birders in my party from time to time) and delivered many of the species I had seen earlier, along with Ashy-headed Geese and more photo opportunities of Magellanic Tapaculo and Thorn-tailed Rayadito. The road worked its way through picturesque Patagonian scenes and must rank as one of the best and most scenic drives in the world. A quick mission up Cerro Otto, a ski-slope in winter, failed to deliver Magellanic Woodpecker – yet again, but did produce my lifer Fire-eyed Diucon, a distinctive looking grey tyrant flycatcher.

We returned to the Llao Llao area on day six, and I was now beginning to run out of lifer options. I had another wonderful

forest birding session, but a liferless one at that. I was starting to lose hope of finding my woodpecker and still only had brief glimpses of Chucao Tapaculo – leaving much to be desired but an encouraging improvement.

Christmas Day arrived; this was to be our last full day in Patagonia before we undertook the arduous almost 2,000 km journey back to Santa Fe. I had one last shot to pull off a miracle. The woodpecker had now become a haunting obsession, and I convinced my party to drive to Villa Cerro Catedral. The hiking trail here had a reasonable reporting rate for both of my remaining targets, and it was now or never. Our timing was

suboptimal; it was warm and quiet. After two hours, I decided to call it quits. I felt defeated and slowly dragged myself back to the car.

Then, as I left the trail, I heard two loud drumming sounds. My adrenaline shot through the roof. I scrambled for my phone and shakily found the downloaded call. I clicked play. 1 second, 2 seconds, 3 seconds and then, as if in slow motion, two bulky black figures darted in and landed in the tree above me. The male had a red head, and the female was predominantly black; both had white braces on their backs. I was speechless and victorious. Magellanic Woodpecker, you beauty!

Remarkably, not even 20 minutes later, I found myself on

all fours in the undergrowth, photographing a Chucao Tapaculo. The bird was so relaxed that I decided when I was ready for the encounter to end and retreated to the car, on top of the world near the bottom of the world. This was a trip I will never forget, permanently etched into my all-time best birding memories. Ochre-flanked Tapaculo, I'll get you one day, and I hope it's soon.

Author email: danielengelbrecht101@gmail.com

Perseverance pays off, and I was particularly delighted to finally get good views of Black-throated Huet-huet (LEFT), Magellanic Woodpecker (MIDDLE), and Chucao Tapaculo (RIGHT).





Zaagkuilsdrift

TEXT AND PHOTOS Johan Janse van Vuuren

Much was heard, googled, and read about the Zaagkuilsdrift wetland area as one of South Africa's birding hotspots, with over 400 birds on the birding list for

the area. So, when the opportunity arose to join a SANPARKS Honorary Rangers guided trip to the area, I could not say no. The Zaagkuilsdrift/Kgomo-Kgomo wetland area is situated close to the small town of

Pienaarsrivier. The [Zaagkuilsdrift Bird Sanctuary and Lodge](#) and birding area around the lodge fall within Limpopo Province, while the Pienaarsrivier Bridge and Kgomo-Kgomo wetland area, about 25 km

from the lodge, fall in North West Province. The Zaagkuilsdrift road linking the Lodge and the Kgomo-Kgomo wetland area is deemed one of the prime birding roads in South Africa.

Getting there and Friday afternoon's birding

With my bakkie packed and cameras charged, I set off on Friday morning, the 22nd of March 2024, from Polokwane for Zaagkuilsdrift Lodge. The trip had two purposes: first, to go lifer-hunting for warblers to push my life list closer to the 600 mark, and second, to try and get good-quality photos of most of the birds seen on the trip.

The gravel road leading to the lodge was very wet from the downpour they had on Thursday night. The approximately 15 km to the lodge from the Old Warmbaths road was very productive, with sightings of Long-crested Eagle, Red-

backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes (lots of them), Southern Boubou, Magpie Shrikes, Southern Pied Babblers, Crowned and Wattled Lapwings to name a few. I arrived at the Lodge just after 13:00 in overcast conditions and quickly set up my campsite before the afternoon's predicted rain, which fortunately never came. Then, it was off to the Lodge's hides to try and get some of the specials. The Lodge itself is great for birding with grassland, two completed bird hides and one nearly finished, marshy areas, and thornveld, and ample

BELOW The good rains meant wet roads and tricky driving.



place to go for walks. The area did not disappoint, and I very quickly managed to log approximately 20 species, including Grey and Black-headed Herons, Common Moorhen, Black Crake, Gabar Goshawk, Blue Waxbill, Cape Shoveler, Fulvous Whistling Ducks, Pied Kingfisher, and Red Billed Teals.

Later in the afternoon, I made a quick trip to the nearby Zaagkuilsdrift and Crake Roads, although I knew it was on the cards

RIGHT Numerous Lesser Grey Shrikes were encountered on the road to the lodge.

BELOW Fulvous Whistling Ducks - always a welcome sight.





Johan Janse van Vuuren
PHOTOGRAPHY

ABOVE Burchell's Coucal.

for Saturday morning's official trip. Again, fingers were kept busy on the camera and the Birdlasser App to log all the birds I saw. I logged about another 15 species, including Burchell's Coucal, Jameson's Firefinch, Diederik Cuckoo, Fork-tailed Drongo, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Red-billed Firefinch, and more Southern Pied Babblers.

The "quick" afternoon trip took longer than anticipated, and I arrived back at the lodge just after dark. Then, it was off to the restaurant for a fantastic dinner. There, I met Etienne

Marais, who was at the Lodge but guiding his own group of birders. Etienne is a well-known birder and birding guide from Gauteng. We discussed his morning's birding, and he informed us that the warblers that were high on everybody's trip wish list were, unfortunately, extremely scarce, in his opinion, due to low water levels. This was not good news for us.

Just after dinner, a Marsh Owl was spotted at the one hide, and it was a rush to grab spotlights and get to the hide. The owl was too far for photos, and it was impossible to clearly ID the bird. During a restless night, I was woken occasionally to the calls of African Scops Owls, Fiery-necked Nightjars, and the alarm calls of monkeys at about 02:00 in the morning.

Saturday morning's official birding event

Saturday morning, I was up at 04:00 to be ready for the planned

05:00 departure. The birding outing usually lasts from 05:30 to 10:30. There were four official guides for the day, and they were stationed at different focus points on the day's route. They were excellent and had their hands full to spot, identify and show us all the birds that came into sight or that were heard.

As the estimated time to cover the whole route was just over five hours, I initially decided to spend

BELOW The official birding trip map. You could plan your trip around the various guide stations.





ABOVE I had excellent views of a pair of Dusky Larks feeding within metres of me.

just over an hour at each waypoint and do some birding while travelling between the guide stations.

**Piensaars River bridge
Floodplain area**

The first convoy of cars arrived at the bridge just after 05:15 to an unbelievable cacophony of different bird calls. The wetland was not as wet as it normally gets, yet it was still amazing to stand in the dark and listen to the bird calls and admire the most fantastic misty

sunrise that appeared in front of us. The first bird of note spotted in the semi-dark was an African Snipe, and then a Wood Sandpiper. And then it got really busy as the sun showed itself and exited people were up and down the road with cameras and binoculars. Blacksmith Lapwings, Egyptian Geese, Yellow-billed Duck,



ABOVE One seldom gets such good views of Crested Francolin chicks.

Fulvous and White-faced Whistling Ducks, Black Herons, Great Egret, Pied Kingfisher, Yellow-billed Storks, Common Moorhen, African Sacred Ibis, Three-banded Plovers, cisticolas, Amur Falcons, and of course Common Mynas. This is just to name a few.

Pan River area

I overstayed my planned time at the bridge and then rushed to the Pan River area. To get there, you had to travel the "Scratch Alley road." A very

narrow two-track road through thick bush. I did not stay long at this site as the guide and group had already left on a walk and I was struggling with an aching foot thanks to either a spider or tick bite. A nice sighting at this area was a feeding pair of Dusky Larks, but I also spotted Scaly-feathered Weavers, Wattled Starlings, Lilac-breasted Rollers,



various dove species, Crested Francolin, Swainson's Spurfowl and noisy Arrow-marked Babblers.

Zaagkuilsdrift road area

As a result of my aching foot, I decided to travel up and down the popular Zaagkuilsdrift and Crake Roads for the remainder of the official birding time. Sightings on these roads were extremely good, and I was fortunate to have fantastic sightings of a pair of Purple Rollers and then a family group of Great Spotted Cuckoos. Other birds spotted were inter alia Pied Crows, Amur Falcons, European Bee-eaters, Southern Grey-headed Sparrows, Southern

Masked Weavers, African Hoopoe, Wattled Starlings, Crimson-breasted Shrikes, and many more of the migrant shrikes, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes.

The grand finale

Official birding stopped at 10:30, so I quickly packed my things up and met the rest of the group of birders and guides at the lodge's pool area at 11:30. This was for the trip's final wrap-up and short prize giving by the honorary ranger

Opposite Purple Roller with a millipede.

BELOW Great Spotted Cuckoo.



representatives and a group braai. The total number of birds logged for the morning's official birding trip from 05:30 to 10:30 was a massive 192 birds by approximately fifteen teams. I managed to log 86 species for Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, but unfortunately no lifers. I went for the warblers, but they were extremely scarce, and only a couple of sightings of single birds were logged by people in some of the other teams.

The event was very well organised, and I can really recommend a trip to this area. I will definitely be back for the event in 2025, and then I'll stay for the weekend. The [Zaagkuilsdrift Bird Sanctuary and Lodge](#) is superb and in a safe environment. Accommodation consists of chalets, campsites with private kitchen and toilet facilities, and bushcamp campsites with shared facilities. They also have a pool, tennis court, restaurant, and bar/reception area.

I left for Polokwane just after 13:00 and was fortunate to have a super sighting of an African



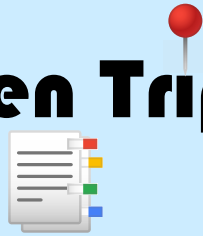
Crake in the road, aptly known as Crake Road. The relaxed bird was walking in the road and water puddles right in front of my car. I spent nearly ten minutes watching it until it eventually disappeared into the marsh area. This bird was on the wish list of a lot of the people that attended the event. Fortunately, I was lucky and got the photos and the bragging rights. Just before joining the Old Warmbaths tar road, I spotted what I thought was a Red-footed falcon. I am still awaiting confirmation, as it could also have been an Amur Falcon.

It was a very short but productive birding weekend, and I managed to get some great photos of the specials I saw. Highlights were undoubtedly getting the opportunity for great photos of the African Crake, Purple Roller, and Great-Spotted Cuckoo. However, there is still a lot of travelling and birding outings for me to get to the 600 mark. Fortunately, an Easter weekend in Kruger is lying ahead, so hopefully, some lifers this time and more great photos.

Author email: firesjohan@gmail.com

LEFT I was lucky to have spent about 10 minutes with this very obliging African Crake before it vanished into the marsh again.

Van Waveren Trip report



Willem Van der Merwe

On Saturday, the 9th of March 2024, a few intrepid birders joined our club's first outing to a promising new venue, the Van Waveren Farm, just outside town close to The Ranch. At the outset, we were left in a lurch as some of the farm folks who were supposed to accompany us were unavailable. So, we had to feel our way around as we started. We had difficulty finding access to one of the dams, but fortunately, there were many others! These were all quite full and fringed by a variety of vegetation that hosted numerous species of waterfowl, reed skulkers, and waders. The farm appeared to have received a decent amount of rain this year, and the veld was lush. There were extensive stretches of tall grassland, well-developed savannah, and lush riverine woodland beside the Sand River. The farm compares very favourably with our local nature

reserve, but there's more water and, in general, the veld looks to be in near-pristine condition. It is close to the size of the nature reserve, to boot!

In addition to some cattle and orchards, the farm also hosts some big mammal species, including impala, zebra, eland, kudu, and reedbuck.

But we were there for the birds - and we were not disappointed! We arrived a bit before six in the morning. The day started cloudy, but the sun soon broke through. Amidst the usual suspects such as Cape wagtail (Gewone Kwikkie), Fork-tailed Drongo (Mikstertbyevanger), Natal Spurfowl (Natalse Fisant) (as typical, heard more than seen), Cape Sparrow (Gewone Mossie), Pied Crow (Witborskraai), Ring-necked Dove (Tortelduif), and Southern Boubou (Suidelike Waterfiskaal), we were delighted



to hear some Cape Grassbirds (Grasvoëls), quite appropriate for the grassy habitat. Another grassland stalwart was the Rufous-naped Lark (Rooineklewerik), which we could hear singing almost everywhere. Similarly, we heard Zitting Cisticola (Landerykloppie) all over the place. These tiny little birds are actually the most widely distributed of all the cisticolas, occurring in sub-Saharan Africa, southern Europe and Asia, and northern Australia! They usually inhabit lush grassland but adapt well to farm fields. They display high over the grass, flying and

dipping as they emit their '*zit-zit-zit*' calls. We heard Rattling Cisticola (Bosveldtinktinkie) and Neddicky (Neddikkie) in the bushveld. We also found Desert Cisticola (Woestynkloppie) and Short-clawed Lark (Kortkloulewerik) in the more open patches. The only pipit for the day was the Africa Pipit (Gewone Koester); its close relative, the Cape Longclaw (Oranjekeelkalkoentjie), was also

ABOVE It was nice to see some Common Reedbuck again.



ABOVE Levaillant's Cisticola
© Johan Janse Van Vuuren.

around. In the distance, we heard the raucous calls of the Northern Black Korhaan (Witvlerkkorhaan). Black-headed Heron (Swartkopreier) was

stalking amidst the grass. Around the farmhouses and buildings was a group of surprisingly tame Magpie Shrikes (Langstertlaksman). Perched

on the shade nets covering the orchard trees was a Speckled Pigeon (Kransduif).

An amazing sighting was a pair of Secretarybirds (Sekretarisvoël) strutting about the tall grass not far from the road! We had great glimpses of them as well as photos, including of the birds in flight. After Cassie Carstens's talk on the Secretarybirds at our last meeting, it's encouraging to see them around Polokwane. They might even have a nest somewhere in the region!

Several other raptors were to be seen on the day! Most were seen in soaring flight. A lifer for Johan was a Black Sparrowhawk (Swartspewer) flying in the distance, but at least identifiable. Others included Wahlberg's

Eagle (Bruinarend), Amur Falcon (Oostelike Rooipootvalk), Greater Kestrel (Grootrooivalk), Black-winged Kite (Blouvalk), Black-chested Snake Eagle (Swartborsslangarend), African Hawk Eagle (Grootjagarend), and, of course, African Fish Eagle (Visarend). Soaring high were vultures, likely ones visiting the restaurant at the Mockford Farm not far away – both Cape (Kransaasvoël) and White-backed Vultures (Witruugaasvoël).

The rank grass around the water hosted three different species of *Euplectes*-weavers: Red and Yellow-crowned Bishop (Rooi- en Goudgeelvink) and White-winged Widow (Witvlerkflap), all displaying in their full feather finery. Moreover, in a distant patch of grassland beyond the farmhouses, we spotted a Long-tailed Widow (Langstertflap)! Tiny residents of the reeds and grass were the Orange-breasted Waxbill (Rooiassie) and Quailfinch (Kwartelvinkie), of which we caught but fleeting glimpses. Tawny-flanked Prinias (Bruinsylangstertjies) were noisy and active.

Other specials of the reeds and the rank grasses included the common Lesser Swamp Warbler (Kaapse Rietsanger) and the rarer Great Reed Warbler



ABOVE There were plenty of waders, here are a Wood Sandpiper and Common Greenshank © Richter Van Tonder.

(Grootrietsanger), with its harsh, churring call. As usual, the Little Rush Warbler (Kaapse Vleisanger) was heard but not seen. We did have an extremely good view of the little Levaillant's Cisticola (Vleitinktinkie), which perched out in the open and relatively close by, allowing some good photos to be taken. Darting in and out of the reeds were Black Crake.

Proper aquatic birds were numerous! Both reed and white-breasted cormorants (Rietduiker en Witborsduiker) were flying around and perched alongside the water, as were several African Darters (Slanghalsvoël). There were numerous

different anatids: Spur-winged Goose (Wildemakou), Knob-billed Duck (Knobbeleend), White-faced Whistling Duck (Nonnetjieseend), Red-billed Teal (Rooibekeend), Yellow-billed Duck (Geelbekeend), and the ever-present Egyptian Goose (Kolgans). Swimming with the ducks were Little Grebes (Kleindobbertjies).

Waders and other waterside birds included Grey Heron (Bloureier), Little Egret (Kleinwitreier), Squacco Heron (Ralreier), Ruff

(Kemphaan), Common Greenshank (Groenpootruiter), Wood Sandpiper (Bosruiter), Black-winged Stilt (Rooipootelsie), Three-banded Plover (Driebandstrandkiewiet), and Blacksmith Lapwing (Bontkiewiet). A welcome sight was a small flock of Wattled Lapwing (Lelkiewiet), which permitted us some good views. Burchell's Coucal (Gewone Vleilorie) was amidst the lush waterside reeds and bushes. A lovely Malachite Kingfisher (Kuifkopvisvanger) and a Pied Kingfisher (Bontvisvanger) were hunting over the water.

We saw three species of ibis: Hadedda, African Sacred Ibis

(Skoorsteenveër), and several Glossy Ibis (Glansibis) at one of the dams.

It paid off to look skyward ever so often. Flying about were African Palm Swift (Palmwindswael), Common Swift (Europese Windswael), Little Swift (Kleinwindswael), White-rumped Swift (Witkruiswindswael), Pearl-breasted Swallow (Pêrelborsswael), Barn Swallow (Europese Swael), Greater Striped Swallow

BELOW White-breasted Cormorant © Richter Van Tonder.





ABOVE Ahren Van Tonder carefully scanning through all of the lapwings
© Richter Van Tonder.

(Grootstreepswael), and Red-breasted Swallow (Rooiborsswael). European Bee-Eaters (Europese Byvreter) were announcing themselves in flight with their mellow calls. Marabouts were soaring. Right at the start of the day, I saw a single Black Stork (Grootswartooievaar) in flight, and we all glimpsed it again later on. Near the end, we caught a glimpse of a Banded Martin (Gebande Oewerswael), which is not a frequently seen species!

The well-developed savannah and riverine woodland hosted several species that prefer such dense, lush habitats. Terrestrial

Brownbul (Boskrapper), Yellow-breasted Greenbul (Geelborswillie), Bar-throated Apalis (Bandkeelkleinjantjie), Yellow-breasted Apalis (Geelborskleinjantjie) all were evident by their calls, but we didn't see them very well. But a tiny and noisy Grey-backed Camaroptera (Grysrugkwêkêvoël) showed itself plainly – at least to me! Also heard were the Willow Warbler (Hofsanger) and Icterine Warbler (Spotsanger).

Other savannah and woodland birds included Scimitarbill (Swartbekkakelaar), Burnt-necked Eremomela (Bruinkeelbossanger), Chinspot Batis (Witliesbosbontrokkie), Crested Barbet (Kuifkophoutkapper), Acacia Pied Barbet (Bonthoutkapper), Brown-hooded Kingfisher (Bruinkopvisvanger), Long-billed Crombec (Bosveldstompstert), Arrow-marked Babbler (Pylvekkatlagter), Cape Starling (Kleinglansspreeu), Black-crowned Tchagra (Swartkroontjagra), Orange-breasted Bush Shrike (Oranjaborsboslaksman), Crimson-breasted Shrike (Rooiborslaksman), and Golden-breasted Bunting (Rooirugstreepkoppie). Associated with the big game were Red-billed Oxpeckers (Rooibekrenostervoël). We were lucky with the waxbills - Blue Waxbill (Blousysie), Green-winged Pytilia (Gewone Melba), African Firefinch (Kaapse Vuurvinkie), Jameson's Firefinch (Jamesonse Vuurvinkie), and Red-billed Firefinch (Rooibekvuurvinkie).

Interesting sightings connected with the waxbills were the whydahs and widowbirds! Several Pin-tailed Whydah (Koningrooibekkie) were displaying, and a Long-tailed Paradise Whydah (Paradysvink)

was seen perched on a wire. In the riverine woodland, we saw a Dusky Indigobird (Gewone Blouvinkie). All of the whydahs and widowbirds lay their eggs in the nests of waxbills, who bear the burden of parenting their offspring. Whydah chicks grow up alongside the waxbill chicks and, even in adulthood, incorporate some of their calls.

As we left the farm, we saw a bird flying and landing on some of the big irrigation structures. It was a greyish cuckoo without a red breast. Was it African or European? It was difficult to see in the distance, but we got a couple of photos, and Richter's opinion was African Cuckoo (Afrikaanse Koekoek).

On our way back to Polokwane, we made a final stop at a roadside dam, and there netted four more species: Red-knobbed Coot (Bleshoender), Southern Pochard (Bruineend), Maccoa Duck (Bloubekeend), and African Jacana (Grootlangtoon).

We finished just after 1 pm, at which time we had logged just over 150 species! This farm rivals the Polokwane Nature Reserve and many other birdwatching spots close to Polokwane. I'm hoping we return there soon!

Author email: willemsvandermerwe@gmail.com

Hout River Dam and Larkville trip report



Julia Friskin

Departing at 6:00 on a cool, overcast morning, our small group of six enthusiastic birders travelled the 35 km to the Chebeng region for a morning's birding. Our first destination was the Hout River Dam, and our first stop was the dam wall. Here, the bird activity was initially subdued but quickly picked up as the birds started to warm up and become more active and vocal. Many different swallows, martins, and swifts criss-crossed above and around us: Brown-throated, Western House, and Banded Martins, White-throated, Barn, and Lesser Striped Swallows, and Little, White-rumped, and African Black Swifts.

On the water, we saw several Red-knobbed Coots, Common

Moorhens, and Yellow-billed Ducks. After a warm cup of coffee, we ventured to the shallower inflow region of the dam. Unfortunately, the reeds have become so dense and tall that it restricted good views of the reed-loving species, but we heard the African Swamphen, Lesser Swamp and Little Rush Warblers, and Levillant's Cisticola. A Grey and Purple Heron flew over, followed by four African Spoonbills in tow. Several Quailfinches, Common, and Orange-breasted Waxbills were flushed as we walked through the grass along the shore.

Away from the shores, Red-faced Mousebirds, Lesser Grey Shrike, Marico Sunbird, Sabota Lark, Southern Boubou, Grey Go-away-birds, and the active Cape Longclaws were duly noted.



ABOVE Sabota Lark
© Julia Friskin.

From the dam, we headed to the open grasslands of the Vaalkop and Chebeng regions. Our first stop was at a reliable spot for Tinkling Cisticola. A pair showed well and delighted the group with their cheerful song – a special bird for our list! Chebeng or 'Larkville' came up trumps with lark sightings, and we were well pleased to add Spike-heeled, Rufous-naped, Red-capped, Pink-billed, and an unexpected surprise, Melodious Lark. To conclude the LBJ assemblage, two pipit species, namely African and Plain-backed pipit, were also found. It is always lovely to see the Grey-backed Sparrow-Larks,

and we were also treated to flybys of a Cape Vulture, Greater Kestrels, Black-chested Snake Eagle, and Black-winged Kites. A non-birding highlight of the day was an interesting encounter with a tiny, shiny thread snake, a first for most of us!

It was an enjoyable, relaxed morning birding in the company of other birders. I am grateful to Richter Van Tonder for organising the outing. Our total for the morning - 100 bird species!

Author email: juliafriskin@yahoo.com

Riana Odendaal and her parents, Cornie and Gideon, have been members of Birdlife Polokwane for many years.

The committee and members of Birdlife Polokwane received the tragic news that the Odendaals were involved in a serious motor vehicle accident on the 23rd of March 2024, and as such all three were rushed to various hospitals for urgent and immediate medical attention.

Sadly, Riana passed away in the hospital on Wednesday the 3rd of April 2024.

Riana was a bubbly, happy and positive woman who brought sunshine into people's lives. Her friends described her life and personality in such touching and memorable tributes to how she lived. The following extracts have been taken from individuals who paid tribute to Riana.

Minkie Prinsloo

I was fortunate enough to be one of the many people who could call Riana my friend. We had many fun times together, from going out to spend the day bird watching and enjoying nature together to binge-watching TV series, drinking coffee, and enjoying each other's company. We participated as a team in the

Riana Odendaal



12 JULY 1986 - 3 APRIL 2024

annual Birding Big Day competition in 2019. We competed as the Luna Chicks. It was a last-minute decision with basically no planning, and we have been going at it ever since.

The aim of Birding Big Day is to identify by sound or sight as many bird species in a 24-hour period as possible. Riana and our team members had so much fun and adventure on these days. Memorable moments that I recall: we got stuck in two hail storms in one day, which rendered birding almost impossible; we went into Woodbush to identify the forest birds and came out with more butterflies than birds, which got us laughing so much - all part of the excitement and fun.

We also forgot to accumulate as many known species as possible at certain times and found ourselves chasing birds for our life list (lifers), all the while losing competition time, but so what!

At times, we were laughing so hard and loud that we actually scared the birds off, all part of the fun, togetherness and adventure; the list goes on and on (good times with Riana).

To top it all, after a tough day birding, we would get home tired and fatigued, and my pets would be happier to see Riana than me! What I will remember most about Riana



is her love of nature; there was always time to stop and look at the smaller things: the frogs, butterflies and, of course, the wildflowers.

Beverly
I can tell you my most beautiful memories of Riana were her beautiful infectious laughter and her Big bear hugs, Riana's dedication to our Lord Jesus Christ, and our chats about everything and anything.



I have lost my very special friend and partner for the ladies teaching in Mozambique. The ladies will miss Riana so much.

Debbie
Riana is the perfect definition of a true friend. Her laughter echoed through the African bush that she so loved, helping me climb step by step up a mountain, she was determined to make it possible for me, a person with a disability, to see one of God's most beautiful and breathtaking creations, in 42 degrees heat. Riana, this is not goodbye but see you in Glory precious friend.

Pastor Chauke
Riana used her own money to buy Tsonga Bibles. We took these bibles with us to Mozambique last week to donate them to the people who received them with joy.



Riana left a legacy, which is the Word of God, that can change many lives.

On behalf of Birdlife Polokwane we express our deepest condolences to the Odendaal family and wish Cornie and Gideon a speedy recovery.
Mark Friskin

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PROJECT NEWS

Derek Engelbrecht
email: roberts8revision@gmail.com

GEOGRAPHIC VARIATION

Many species exhibit geographic variation, usually in plumage, but also in size or body proportions. This variation forms the basis for recognising subspecies, i.e., a discrete regional population that shows consistent differences in plumage, size or proportions of various body parts. Some of the most apparent plumage differences in southern Africa include the paler western vs. darker eastern populations, e.g., Spike-heeled Lark. There are many more such examples, and the interested reader should see Chittenden et al. (2012): *Roberts Geographic Variation of Southern African Birds*.

The newly revised species accounts for the online Roberts 8/BoW allows for the inclusion of images of different subspecies to supplement the text in the section on

Systematics. However, the subspecies of many taxa are poorly represented in online image repositories such as the Macaulay Library, our primary source of images for inclusion in the revised species accounts. This is particularly true for Africa. I want to encourage birders and photographers to go out and take photos from across a species range and to upload the images to the Macaulay Library via an eBird checklist. For instructions on how to do it, please contact me.

BELOW Spike-heeled Lark geographical variation.





Roberts 8 on Learn the Birds

On the 12th of October 2023, Derek Engelbrecht, editor-in-chief of Roberts 8, and Laura Kammermeier, communications manager with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, presented a webinar on how the 8th edition of Roberts Birds of Southern Africa (Roberts 8) has evolved, the Roberts 8/Birds of the World partnership, and where you can find the newly revised Roberts 8 content. You can watch the webinar on the Learn the Birds YouTube channel at <https://youtube.com/@learnthebirds>. Please reach out to either of us if you have any questions about Birds of the World or would like to contribute data, observations, photos, or sound recordings (even from Xeno-Canto) to the Cornell Lab.

Derek Engelbrecht, email: roberts8revision@gmail.com

Laura Kammermeier, email: lmk25@cornell.edu



Species currently under revision

Do you have any unpublished data, observations, images or sound recordings of any of the species below you'd like to share with the world? Please email me at roberts8revision@gmail.com.

Courasers

- Bronze-winged Couraser
- Burchell's Couraser
- Double-banded Couraser
- Temminck's Couraser
- Three-banded Couraser

Falcons

- Pygmy Falcon

Parrots

- Cape Parrot

Storks

- Abdim's Stork

Tinkerbirds

- Green Tinkerbird
- Red-fronted Tinkerbird
- Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird
- Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird

Babblers

- Southern Pied Babbler

Larks

- Pink-billed Lark

Weavers

- Chestnut Weaver
- Spectacled Weaver

Pipits

- Rock Pipit

Swallows

- Blue Swallow
- Wire-tailed Swallow

Cisticolas

- Cloud Cisticola
- Levillant's Cisticola

Starlings

- Red-winged Starling

Grassbird-like warblers

- Barratt's Warbler

Thrushes

- Spotted Ground Thrush

Soon-to-be-released species accounts

African Rock Pipit

Secretarybird

Cape Weaver

Southern Brown-throated Weaver

Monteiro's Hornbill

Recently published

[African Finfoot](#)

[Gurney's Sugarbird](#)

Regulars

Birds in Art

Long-crested Eagle

Text and Artwork

Willem Van der Merwe

View my gallery by clicking on the logo below:



Long-crested Eagle

This issue's painting shows a Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*. The scientific name means 'occipital-crested eagle'. With its long, floppy crest, this is one of the easiest South African eagles to identify if seen well. On the road east from Polokwane, on the stretch from Haenertsburg to Tzaneen, you're almost guaranteed to see at least one if you keep an eye on the telephone poles beside the road. One hung around Polokwane for a while; I took my mom to see it in the Bird Sanctuary, where it allowed us some great glimpses, both perched and in flight. Sitting, it appears all dark, except for (mainly in the male) fluffy

white leggings or 'trousers' as seen in my painting. In flight, it shows large, white panels in its wings and a white-barred tail.

Long-crested Eagles occur over most of sub-Saharan Africa. They are only absent from the driest desert regions and, for some reason, from most of Angola, despite that country having lots of suitable habitat. Though not rare, it is not very common either, and thus, it is always lovely to see. It likes well-watered regions with trees to perch and breed in and

BELOW A close-up of a Long-crested Eagle to show its 12 cm long crest © Marianne McKenzie.



grassland or marshy places where it hunts. It eats almost nothing but rodents, particularly the chunky vleis (marsh) rats. Its hunting method is to sit still on a high perch – benefiting much from telephone poles – and scan the ground with its keen yellow eyes as the wind blows its crest this way and that. It swoops down and grabs its prey in its talons. Most rodents are gulped down whole. Minor items in its diet include birds up to the size of francolins, insects, crabs, lizards, snakes, and occasionally even fish. It will spend some time hunting from one perch and then move off to another, covering a large terrain over the course of each day.

To some degree, these eagles have benefited from human alterations to the landscape. I've mentioned telephone poles; they also use trees planted in otherwise tree-deficient regions. In particular, they enjoy nesting in gum trees. These trees grow naturally in Australia, but many have been planted in South Africa. They grow rapidly, straight, and tall, indeed, taller than any of our native trees. One in Magoebaskloof, which stands over 80 m, is the tallest planted tree in the world and a contender with a tree growing on Kilimanjaro for the title of



ABOVE A study in concentration © Derek Engelbrecht.

the tallest tree in Africa! Long-crested Eagles often nest high in gum trees, in one case at a height of 45 m. They place their nests on a horizontal branch close to the main trunk. The smooth bark of eucalypt trees means that few predators can climb up to reach them. They also place their nests to be well-concealed by foliage from above. Sited thus, they are very safe places for the vulnerable chicks.

Unusual among birds, Long-crested Eagles don't seem to have a particular breeding season. This is likely because they prefer moist regions with vegetation growing and rodents active throughout the year. Males and females pair up for life and cement their relationships with courtship displays. One kind of display flight is an undulating dive while calling; another is a level flight but rocking the body from side to side while half-closing the wings. Sometimes, the male and female fly or soar together for a while. They mate in a tree close to the nest, calling loudly. The call is a simple, high-pitched scream or a more rapid series of 'kik-kik-kik-kik-kee' sounds.

The nest is made of sticks, and the eagles will keep it lined with green foliage throughout the season. Most of the time, the female will lay two eggs, occasionally only one. The female does most of the incubating, while the male brings her food. If two chicks hatch, they are unusual among large eagles for not fighting with each other. Thus, if there's enough food, the female can raise both chicks; indeed, a good rodent season may enable her to raise two broods in one year. The pair feeds the chicks on rodents mostly brought to the nest in their crops, rather than

in their claws, and regurgitated for the chicks. When the chicks are tiny, the parents tear prey items up into smaller bits, but larger chicks, like their parents, swallow prey animals whole. In addition to renewing the fresh green foliage lining the nest, the parents also remove the chicks' droppings. Chicks fly at 53 to 58 days but stay close to their parents for another three or four months as they learn to hunt and take care of themselves.

Being dependent on rodents, Long-crested Eagles lead somewhat tumultuous lives. Rodents breed rapidly, responding quickly to changes in rainfall and vegetation growth. In rodent boom years, the eagles do very well, and breeding is successful. Eagles may move out from their regular haunts into regions that are usually too dry for them. Young eagles often wander and may be seen in areas with quite atypical habitat. This eagle does not seem to be in danger of extinction, though it occurs at fairly low densities. Specialising in rodents, farmers do not persecute it, but the Long-crested Eagle does not like too much human activity on its hunting grounds. It may also be vulnerable to agricultural pesticides and chemicals.

Author email: willemsvandermerwe@gmail.com



Bird of the Year 2024

Bateleur

Terathopus ecaudatus

Teras - marvelous; ops - face; e - without; caudatus - tail.



The Bateleur is a medium-sized eagle and is considered a relative of the snake eagles. It is classified in the family Accipitridae within the subfamily Circaetinae. It is the only member of the genus *Terathopus*.



'Bateleur' means 'street performer' in French. The name was given to the bird because of its distinctive aerial acrobatics.



The juvenile Bateleur has pale tawny feathers on its head, the eyes are brown and the cere is a unique greenish-blue.



The Bateleur was given its common name by François Levaillant, a French naturalist and explorer.



The Bateleur has a thick neck and a very large, cowled head with a proportionately short yellow bill, covered with a very large, red cere.

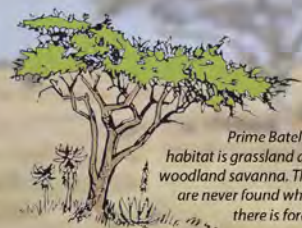
The bare parts of adult Bateleurs are bright red. They can fade to pink, or yellowish when they are perching in the shade or bathing. When excited the skin flushes very red.



The Bateleur occupies a very large range through sub-Saharan Africa.



They have short legs and the shortest tail of all birds of prey.



Prime Bateleur habitat is grassland and woodland savanna. They are never found where there is forest.

Design and illustrations by Di Martin. Photographs used as reference for the illustrations from Frank Wouters, Helen Davies and taken from Wikipedia and Ecophoto.

Reflections

Reflections

Birding in SANParks Limpopo parks

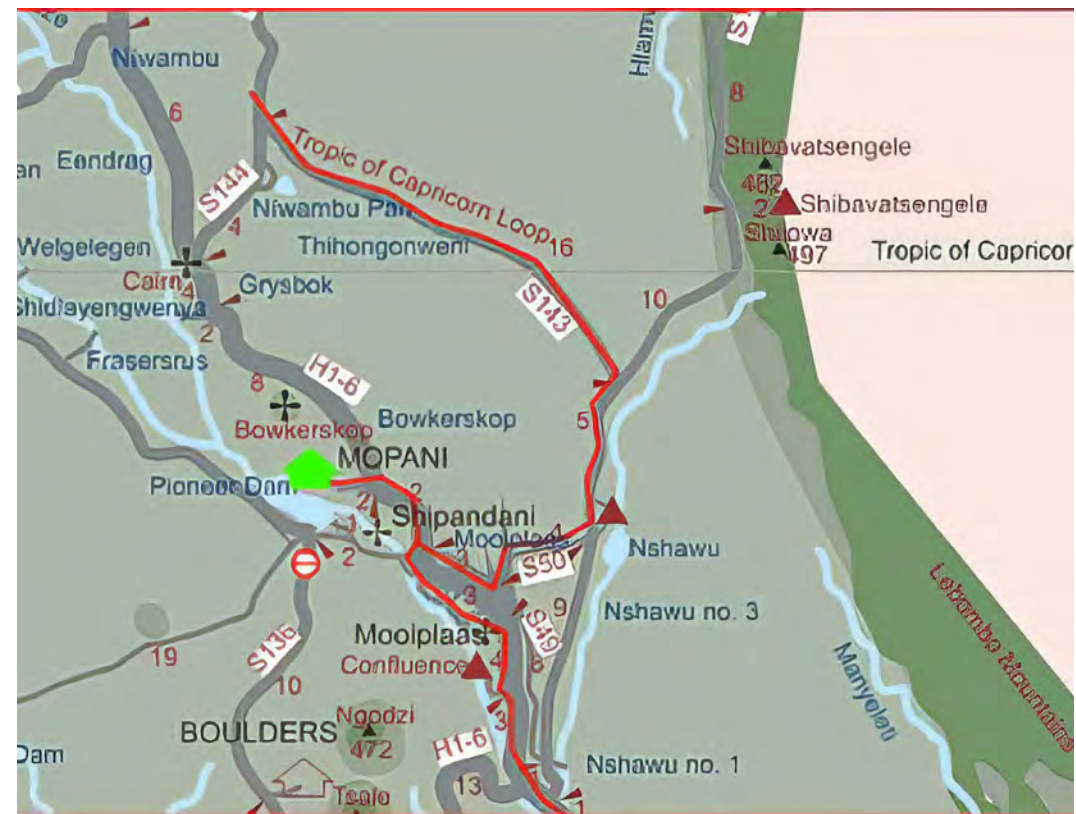
The Magic of Mopani

Chris Patton

Mopani Rest Camp is the newest of all the Kruger Park rest camps, having only been completed in 1992. That means when I first started visiting the Park in the 1980s, the camp wasn't there. I can't even remember if the main tar road through the Park diverted to allow access to Mopani's main selling point, Pioneer Dam on the Tsendze Spruit. Most of Kruger's 12 main rest camps are located on rivers, but Mopani is uniquely appointed atop a hill commanding a spectacular view over the extensive Pioneer Dam. Visitors can enjoy a rich game-viewing experience without even leaving the camp and also

view the abundant waterbirds on offer. But the camp isn't just about birding. There are many fascinating archaeological and cultural heritage things to explore when visiting the camp.

Mopani obviously takes its name from the mopane veld which dominates the plains of Kruger north of the Olifants and south of the Limpopo. I first visited the camp in the mid-1990s, a couple of years before I started working in the park, and just a few years after falling off Table Mountain and becoming a paraplegic. What immediately attracted me to the camp was that inside Mopani Camp, the indigenous vegetation



ABOVE Map of Mopani Camp's location and surrounds (see https://www.krugerpark.co.za/Kruger_Park_Game_Viewing_Routes-travel/mopani-camp-game-viewing-routes.html)

has been left largely untouched, although some planted trees have been laid out along the camp's tarred roads. The wonderful maze of interior roads is very wheelchair friendly and allows for excellent birding just by moving around the camp's roads. Most readers will be able to walk, and there is a perimeter nature trail around the rest camp that further enhances birding opportunities within the camp. It's not just the vegetation which gives the camp an 'in-the-bush-feel'; the accommodation is comprised of thatched buildings

with rock-faced walls and paving. All the units are built from natural materials such as rough stone, wood, and thatching grass, which blends them in beautifully with the environment.

So, moving around the roads of the camp one can expect to see a variety of birds. Seedeaters will be particularly prominent when



ABOVE A typical Mopani Camp road showing the indigenous woodland and rich seed-filled grasses
© Chris Patton.



LEFT A Cinnamon-breasted Bunting in the roadside verge near Mopani Reception
© Chris Patton.

the grass is in seed. Blue Waxbills and Yellow-fronted Canaries should be seen, but the one seedeater I associate with Mopani is the Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. I suspect the paved brick



ABOVE Mopani's imposing baobab tree is always good for unusual birds
© Chris Patton.

roads mimic the rocky environment that they usually naturally hang out in.

There are a couple of destinations to target if one is moving around the camp's roads while birding. Near the entrance gate is the camp's day visitor area. I've seen Red-capped Robin-Chat there, and both the park's tchagra species. The camp's swimming pool is a fantastic, natural-looking location and an excellent place to look for sunbirds. But one place

to spend some time is the camp's baobab tree, which is not too far from the camp's reception. Red-headed Weaver, Common Scimitarbill, and Cut-throat Finch should be looked out for, the former having their untidy nests in the tree, but the real thing to look out for here is Mosque Swallow.



ABOVE Mosque Swallow is always special to see, and the Mopani baobab is a regular perch © Chris Patton.

Mopani is also an excellent camp for nightjars. Freckled, Fiery-necked, and Square-tailed are all frequently heard at night, but perhaps the easiest one to find is silent. A walk around camp at dusk in the summer will offer a good chance of seeing these big bulky nightjars flitting about. Still, with a bit of searching, it is also possible to find them perched within the camp itself, with their curious and diagnostic habit of perching along a branch rather than across the branch like most birds.

Now, the last time I stayed at Mopani was back in December 2017, just a couple of weeks before I left up north and transferred down to Garden Route National Park. I had some work to do and remember setting my laptop up on the table outside my bungalow, but I had my camera on the table surface to photograph any passing avian traffic... and of



ABOVE A European Nightjar perching along a mopane branch in Mopani Camp © Tommy Liversage.

RIGHT An inquisitive Violet-backed Starling at Bungalow 17 © Chris Patton.

course, there were lots. Like most camps in Kruger, Natal Spurfowl and Crested Francolin, Arrow-marked Babblers, Southern Grey-headed Sparrows, and a couple of hornbill species were ubiquitous, So too were the Greater Blue-eared Starlings, and being summertime, another most welcome visitor was a Violet-backed Starling, that paused long enough to allow a photo.



But the starling wasn't the only bird that posed for a photo that hot December afternoon. I remember sitting at the table and watching a Laughing Dove saunter across the ground adjacent to the bungalow, and I thought to myself, I don't have a photo of a Laughing Dove in all my photo albums. Because they are so common, we all take them for granted and turn our attention to other targets. So there, on the 1st of December 2017, after birding in South Africa since I got here in 1982, I finally took my first photograph of a Laughing Dove. Of course, they are much more

beautiful than we give them credit for when you look at them closely, with their dappled throat and subtle blend of greys, browns, and pinks.

But the main birding hotspot of Mopani Camp is, of course, the view of the dam from the camp's restaurant or the lookout platform next to the camp shop. The view is amazing, with many submerged dead leadwood trees providing daytime perching for ever-present

BELOW My virgin Laughing Dove photo in December 2017 © Chris Patton.



ABOVE The view of Pioneer Dam from Mopani's Ladies Bar, directly below the restaurant © Chris Patton.

species like African Fish Eagle, a plethora of storks, herons, egrets, Egyptian Geese and Knob-billed Ducks. But the dam also has a penchant for turning up rarer park waterbirds. In the summer months, it is probably the most reliable place in the whole of Kruger to find Osprey, but other park rarities or uncommon species I've seen on Pioneer Dam include Black Heron, Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Tern, Great White Pelican, Greater Flamingo

(an immature bird), Collared Pratincole, and this was also one of the first locations in the park to produce African Skimmer when they started to recolonise the park after around 2010, having been absent for several decades from before World War 2.



Now, most of one's birding gaze will be out towards the Dam when you are at the Mopani Restaurant complex, but if you wander down the ramp to the Lady's Bar, take a look behind the bar area, too. When last there in

December 2017, a White-throated Robin-Chat was roosting under the deck of the restaurant above in some natural vegetation that had penetrated the interior of the structure, which was somewhat unexpected.

So those are some of my birding memories from Mopani. In the next edition, I'll share some memories of just around the corner at places like the Pioneer Dam Hide, the Shipandane Sleepover Hide, Tsendze Drift, and Tsendze Campsite.

ABOVE Pioneer Dam is probably the best place in Kruger to see Osprey © Tommy Liversage.

Author email: chris.patton@sanparks.org

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Breeding records from Sofala Province, Central Mozambique

Duncan Parkes†* and Derek Engelbrecht

email: faunagalore@gmail.com

**Duncan sadly lost his life on the 3rd of April 2024 while this note was in preparation. I did my best to draw together everything discussed in our correspondence. I have Duncan's original dataset, so should there be any questions about any aspect of this paper, I can be contacted at the email address provided. I will try my best to assist where possible.*

This is the second of Duncan's notes on the breeding of birds in Sofala Province, Mozambique. A third, his breeding records for Zimbabwe, will feature in the next issue of The Lark. These three notes significantly contribute to our knowledge of the breeding season and other aspects of their breeding biology in Central Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Our hearts go out to Duncan's wife, Isla, and his family and friends. Thank you, Duncan.

This note follows on the first of the notes on the breeding biology and ecology of the birds of Sofala Province in Central Mozambique (Parkes 2024). In this note, we present the breeding records collected by Duncan Parkes between 2004 and 2015, but mainly in 2006 and 2007. The records report only on breeding seasonality and clutch sizes.

Reference

Parkes, D. (2024) Miscellaneous breeding records from Central Mozambique. *The Lark* 51:77–92.

Accipitriformes Accipitridae

African Harrier-Hawk

Phenology

Laying Dates

September (n = 1), October (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

Mean = 1.5 eggs (range 1–2, n = 2).

Bateleur

Phenology

Laying Dates

March/April, using backdating.

Eggs

Clutch Size

1 egg (n = 1).

Bat Hawk

Phenology

Laying Dates

September/October, using backdating.

Eggs

Clutch Size

1 egg (n = 1).

Black-chested Snake Eagle

Phenology

Laying Dates

September or October (incubating in October).

Dark Chanting Goshawk

Phenology

Laying Dates

August–September.

Eggs

Clutch Size

Mean = 1.2 eggs \pm 0.4 (range 1–2, n = 5).



Dark Chanting Goshawk © Derek Engelbrecht.

Shikra

Phenology

Laying Dates

September

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 1).

Southern Banded Snake Eagle

Phenology

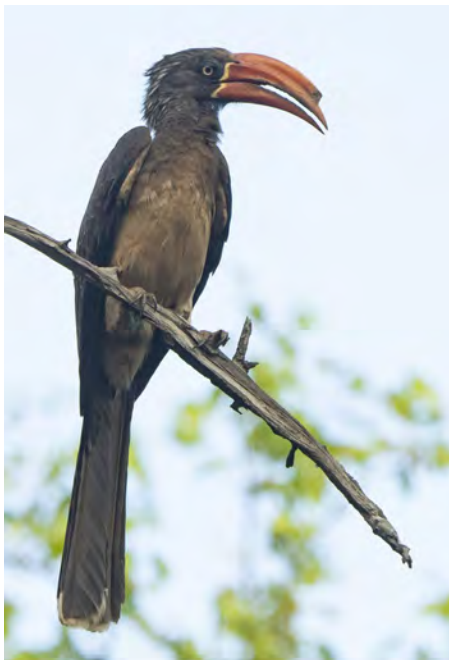
Laying Dates

July–September, possibly October.

Eggs

Clutch Size

1 egg (n = 7).



Crowned Hornbill © Derek Engelbrecht.

Bucerotiformes

Bucerotidae

Crowned Hornbill

Phenology

Laying Dates

October.

Eggs

Clutch Size

Mean = 4.5 eggs (range 4–5, n = 2).

Charadriiformes

Charadriidae

Senegal Lapwing

Phenology

Laying Dates

July (n = 1), August (n = 5), October (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3.3 eggs ± 0.5 (range 3–4, n = 7).

Long-toed Lapwing

Phenology

Laying Dates

June (n = 1), July (n = 2), August (n = 6), September (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3.3 eggs ± 0.5 (range 3–4, n = 9).

Glareolidae

Collared Pratincole

Phenology

Laying Dates

August and September (n = 145).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 45).

Rostratulidae

Greater Painted-snipe

Phenology

Laying Dates

June (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

4 eggs (n = 1).



Greater Painted-snipe (male) © Derek Engelbrecht.

**Coraciiformes
Meropidae**

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater

Phenology

Laying Dates

September (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 1) (+ 1 egg of Greater Honeyguide).



Swallow-tailed Bee-eater at nest © Derek Engelbrecht.

**Cuculiformes
Cuculidae**

Burchell's Coucal

Phenology

Laying Dates

November (n = 1), December (n = 2), January (n = 3), February (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3.7 eggs ± 0.5 (n = 7).

Jacobin Cuckoo

Phenology

Laying Dates

December (n = 2) (Sombre Bulbul hosts).

Eggs

Clutch Size

1 egg/nest (+2 eggs of Sombre Bulbul host) (n = 2).

**Falconiformes
Falconidae**

Dickinson's Kestrel

Phenology

Laying Dates

September–October (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 1).

Red-necked Falcon

Phenology

Laying Dates

August–September (n = 4).

Eggs

Clutch Size

Mean = 3.5 eggs (range 3–4, n = 2).



Dickinson's Kestrel © Derek Engelbrecht.

**Galliformes
Phasianidae**

Red-necked Spurfowl

Phenology

Laying Dates

July (n = 1), January (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

Mean = 6 eggs (n = 2).

Passeriformes
Alaudidae

Flappet Lark

Phenology

Laying Dates

January (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 2).

Calyptomenidae

African Broadbill

Phenology

Laying Dates

November (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 1).



African Broadbill nest and eggs © Derek Engelbrecht.

Cisticolidae

Red-winged Prinia

Phenology

Laying Dates

January (n = 1), February (n = 8), March (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 10).

Rufous-winged Cisticola

Phenology

Laying Dates

August–September (n = 4).

Eggs

Clutch Size

The mean clutch size is 2.8 eggs \pm 1.3 (range 1–4, n = 16). There is evidence of seasonal variation in clutch size, with the mean clutch size in February and March being 3.3 eggs and 2.0 in January, April, and May, but the sample size is small.

Yellow-breasted Apalis

Phenology

Laying Dates

September (n = 1), November (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 2).

Grey-backed Camaroptera

Phenology

Laying Dates

November (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 2).



Grey-backed Camaroptera © Derek Engelbrecht.

Dicruridae

Square-tailed Drongo

Phenology

Laying Dates

October (n = 1), November (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 1).

Estrildidae

Green-winged Pytilia

Phenology

Laying Dates

February (n = 1), March (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

Mean 2.7 eggs \pm 0.6 (n = 2); one nest had a Long-tailed Paradise Whydah egg, making the clutch size 3.

Red-backed Mannikin

Phenology

Laying Dates

January (n = 2), February (n = 1), April (n = 1), May (n = 1), June (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

Mean = 5.8 eggs \pm 0.4 (range 5–6, n = 6).

Red-billed Firefinch

Phenology

Laying Dates

February (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs + 2 Village Indigobird eggs (n = 1).



Red-billed Firefinch nest and eggs © Derek Engelbrecht.

Red-throated Twinspot

Phenology

Laying Dates

January (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

5 eggs (n = 1).

Hirundinidae

Red-breasted Swallow

Phenology

Laying Dates

October (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

4 eggs (n = 1).

Macrosphenidae

Red-faced Crombec

Phenology

Laying Dates

August (n = 1), September (n = 2), October (n = 2), November (n = 1), January (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 4).

Muscicapidae

Ashy Flycatcher

Phenology

Laying Dates

October (n = 1), November (n = 1), December (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 3).

Bearded Scrub Robin

Phenology

Laying Dates

September (n = 1), October (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3 eggs (n = 1).

White-browed Scrub Robin

Phenology

Laying Dates

October (n = 1), January (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 2).



White-browed Scrub Robin at nest © Derek Engelbrecht.

Nectariniidae

Collared Sunbird

Phenology

Laying Dates

August (n = 1), October (n = 2), December (n = 1), March (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 3).

Purple-banded Sunbird

Phenology

Laying Dates

August (n = 1), September (n = 3).

Eggs

Clutch Size

1.8 eggs ± 0.5 (range 1–2, n = 4).

Western Violet-backed Sunbird

Phenology

Laying Dates

October (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 1).

Nicatoridae

Eastern Nicator

Phenology

Laying Dates

November (n = 1), January (n = 1), February (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 3).



Trail cam footage of Eastern Nicator at nest © Derek Engelbrecht.

Platysteiridae

Pale Batis

Phenology

Laying Dates

August (n = 1), September (n = 6), October (n = 2), November (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 7).

Ploceidae

Dark-backed Weaver

Phenology

Laying Dates

November (n = 1), December (n = 1), January (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3.3 eggs \pm 0.6 (range 3–4, n = 3).

Pycnonotidae

Sombre Greenbul

Phenology

Laying Dates

December (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 2); One Jacobin Cuckoo egg per nest.

Remizidae

Grey Penduline Tit

Phenology

Laying Dates

October (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

4 eggs (n = 2).

Sturnidae

Black-bellied Starling

Phenology

Laying Dates

January (n = 2).

Eggs

Clutch Size

3.5 eggs (range 3–4, n = 2).

Viduidae

Long-tailed Paradise Whydah

Phenology

Laying Dates

February (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

1 egg in nest of Green-winged Pytilia (n = 1).

Village Indigobird

Phenology

Laying Dates

February (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 Village Indigobird eggs in a 3-egg Red-billed Firefinch nest (n = 1).

Piciformes
Indicatoridae

Greater Honeyguide

Phenology

Laying Dates

September (n = 1)

Eggs

Clutch Size

1 egg in a 3-egg nest of Swallow-tailed Bee-eater.



Greater Honeyguide egg © Derek Engelbrecht.

Strigiformes Strigidae

African Wood Owl

Phenology

Laying Dates

September (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 1).



African Wood Owl 'brancher' © Derek Engelbrecht.

Southern White-faced Owl

Phenology

Laying Dates

September (n = 1).

Eggs

Clutch Size

2 eggs (n = 1).

Nest predators at Roodewal Forest Reserve, Soutpansberg

Derek Engelbrecht

email: faunagalore@gmail.com

Nest predation is the primary cause of breeding failure in passerines. This is exacerbated in fragmented habitats because the habitat edges may increase nest predators' diversity, density, and foraging intensity. Predators may also find it easier to access some habitats and nests (Chalfoun et al. 2002).

I studied the breeding ecology of the African Broadbill at Roodewal Forest Reserve in the Soutpansberg between 2013 and 2018. The species' continuing decline throughout its range has resulted in it being listed as Vulnerable in the latest Red Data assessment (Engelbrecht 2015). Roodewal Forest Reserve is one of only two formally protected reserves in the Limpopo Province where the African Broadbill occurs. Although it is a protected area, it is situated within a mosaic of different land use types, including silviculture and commercial farming, mainly subtropical fruit and nuts, resulting

in a fragmented area with large amounts of edge habitat.

It soon became clear that the African Broadbill at Roodewal Forest Reserve experiences high rates of breeding failure. My earlier study of African Broadbills at Golwe in northeastern Venda also demonstrated poor breeding success in that population (Engelbrecht and Nethonzhe 2008). However, the causes of nest failure remained a mystery.

Determining the identity of predators is notoriously tricky. The actual predation event is seldom observed; some predators are wary in the presence of an observer, some are active at night when visibility is poor, or the nest is in a position that makes observing it difficult. So, the identity of nest predators are often inferred using the state of the predated nest as an indication of the identity of the potential predator, e.g., a severely damaged nest is usually considered indicative of small mammalian predators, e.g., monkeys, rodents,

genets, and mongooses. In contrast, an intact predated nest is generally ascribed to a snake. However, several studies have shown that these clues are unreliable as they discount the possibility of birds as potential nest predators (Engelbrecht 2011, Engelbrecht and Mulaudzi 2017, Menezes and Marini 2017).

To understand the causes of nest failure, knowledge of the predator suite in a system is necessary to identify predation patterns and mitigate losses to nest predation if possible.

Methods

Roodewal Forest Reserve is situated on the southern slopes of the Soutpansberg Mountains in the

Limpopo Province. It is located in a summer rainfall region with a mean annual precipitation of 716 mm. The breeding season of birds in the region coincides mainly with the wet season, starting in about September and ending in March/April. The vegetation at Roodewal Forest Reserve is classified as Soutpansberg Mountain Bushveld (Mucina and Rutherford 2006) and comprises subtropical moist thickets.

To establish if the high nest failure rate of African Broadbill was species-specific or if other species at Roodewal Forest Reserve

BELOW The typical habitat at Roodewal Forest Reserve is moist subtropical thickets..



experienced similar levels of predation, a camera trap study was initiated to determine the causes of nest failure.

Nests were located by random searching in the study area and using parental behaviour cues. With the aid of local bird guide and master nest finder [Samson Mulaudzi](#), we deployed concealed, strategically placed trail cameras near a sample of active nests of various species in the Roodewal Forest Reserve. To determine if camera placement affected the breeding outcome, a sample of nests was treated as controls where no cameras were deployed, and disturbance was kept to a minimum. When a nest

was located, the clutch size was recorded, and the stage (incubation or nestling) was noted. Nests were checked every three to four days to establish the outcome.

Results

During this study, 149 nests representing 25 species were monitored. Thirty predation events were captured during the study, but the identity of the nest predator at two nests could not be established as the trail camera was triggered too late to make a reliable identification of the predator. Nine taxa were recorded as nest predators (Fig. 1). Some taxa were lumped into groups, e.g., snakes or rodents since

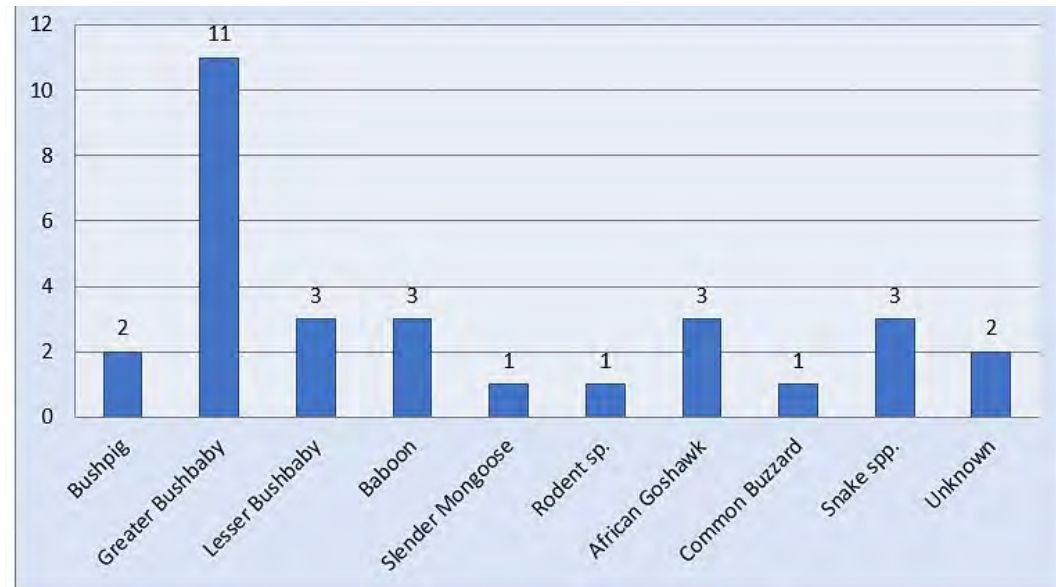


Figure 1. Nest predators recorded at Roodewal Forest Reserve between 2013 and 2018.

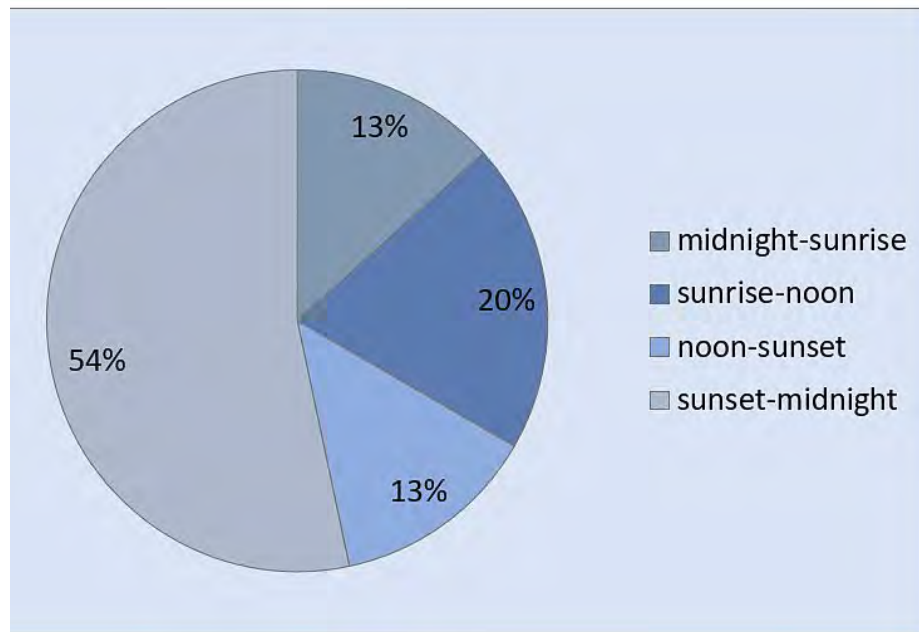


Figure 2. Daily temporal variation in predation events at Roodewal Forest Reserve between 2013 and 2018.

it was not always possible to reliably identify a nest predator to species level on the trail camera.

Primates were the main predators, with 56.6% of all predation events caught on camera being attributed to Chacma Baboon, Southern Lesser and Thick-tailed Greater Galagos. Although snakes were recorded on three occasions, they could not be identified at the species level.

Most predation events (67%) occurred at night, the majority (54%) between sunset and midnight (Fig. 2).

Discussion

Nests of all types (cup, ball) and guilds (ground, scrub, canopy) were predated. Most nests were predated during the incubation period, refuting the findings of some studies that increased parental activity at nests during the nestling period leads to higher predation rates than during the incubation period (Martin et al. 2000). It may simply be that a poorly concealed nest will be found relatively easily and quickly, compared to a well-concealed nest.

Galagos were the dominant nest predators at Roodewal Forest

Reserve, accounting for 47% of all predation events captured on the trail cameras. However, of the two galago species found in the reserve, the Thick-tailed Greater Galago was by far the most dominant nest predator, with 37% of the nest predation events attributed to this species.

Although the Greater Thick-tailed Galago is a known nest predator, this study was the first to identify the Southern Lesser Galago as a nest predator (Engelbrecht 2016).

Being highly agile and well-adapted for an arboreal life, their ability to reach nests on slender, outer branches of trees puts them at an advantage compared to some of the larger potential nest predators. Given that galagos were the dominant predators at Roodewal Forest Reserve, it is not surprising that nocturnal predation accounted for 67% of all predation events captured on camera. Most of these were between sunset and midnight, coinciding with the peak foraging time for the galagos following their diurnal roosting (Bearder and Svorboda 2013, Pullen and Bearder 2013).

Two interesting and unexpected predation records were of Bushpigs predated a nest of Yellow-bellied Bulbul,

approximately 1 m above the ground in a low shrub, and a Crested Guinea fowl nest on the ground. Another unusual event was observed at a nest of an African Broadbill. At a nest containing two eggs, one chick had just hatched and the other was expected to hatch the next day. However, a female returned to the nest and removed the unhatched egg. Unfortunately I cannot say if this was the nesting female, in which case it may have been a case of brood reduction, or an independent female, in which case it constitutes a case of partial intraspecific nest predation, possibly to reduce competition.

The results showed that the nesting success of African Broadbill compared well with the overall nesting success of the other species monitored at Roodewal Forest Reserve.

The study found that primates, particularly galagos, represent a significant threat to the nesting success of birds at Roodewal Forest Reserve. It is unknown if habitat fragmentation through various commercial activities in and around the reserve has resulted in higher densities of nest predators, particularly galagos, or if it has always been like that. More research is required on the ecology of galagos

to establish if they are significant nest predators at other localities or whether it is a site-specific phenomenon.

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Addendum 1. Species and number of nests monitored in brackets.

African Paradise Flycatcher (41), Yellow-bellied Greenbul (26), African Broadbill (24), Green-backed Camaroptera (9), Terrestrial Brownbul (9), Southern Boubou (5), Red-capped robin-Chat (4), Cape Batis (3), Dark-capped Bulbul (3), Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher (3), Collared Sunbird (2), Southern Crested Guinea fowl (2), Sombre Greenbul (2), White-browed Robin-Chat (2), Bar-throated APalis (2), Bearded Scrub Robin (2), Natal Spur fowl (2), African Firefinch (1), Eastern Nicator (1), Hadada Ibis (1), Kurrichane Thrush (1), Mountain Wagtail (1), Amethyst Sunbird (1), Chorister Robin-Chat (1), Lemon Dove (1).



TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT
 African Goshawk predated a nest with an African Broadbill nestling.
 A female African Broadbill removing an egg from a nest - the reason not known.
 Bushpigs predated a nest containing Southern Crested Guinea fowl eggs.
 A Southern Lesser Galago predated an African Paradise Flycatcher nest with two nestlings.
 A Thick-tailed Greater Galago about to predate an African Broadbill nest containing eggs.





Interesting sightings

16 February 2024 - 15 April 2024

Share your interesting sightings seen within the Limpopo Province.

Please submit your sightings to thelarknews@gmail.com and include the date, locality and a brief write-up of your sighting. Photos are welcome but will be used at the discretion of the editors.

SABAP2 Out of Range; Regional Rarity; National Rarity, †Unvetted

COMPILED BY Derek Engelbrecht

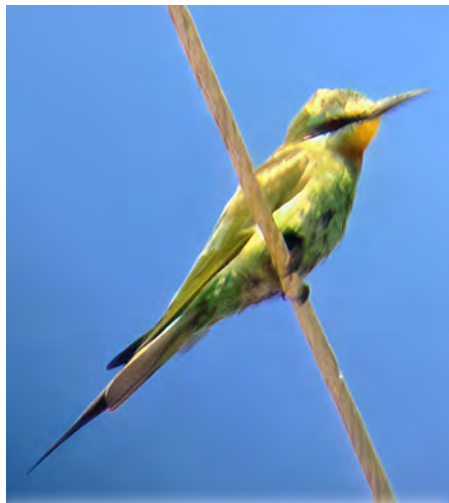
NON-PASSERINES

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater - 26 March 2024. A small group on the Annie's Fortune road near Haenertsburg (Wessel Uys).

Jackal Buzzard - 12 March 2024. An adult flying over Cycad Estate (Jody De Bruyn).

Secretarybird - 9 March 2024. A pair seen at the Van Waveren Farm (Birdlife Polokwane club outing).

Yellow-billed Stork - 25 February 2024. Two seen flying over Flora Park Dam (Jody De Bruyn).



Blue-cheeked Bee-eater © Wessel Uys

PASSERINES

Melodious Lark - 6 April 2024. Four seen near Vaalkop Village in the Chebeng region. (Richter Van Tonder).

BEST OF THE REST LIMPOPO PROVINCE

NON-PASSERINES

African Skimmer - 13 April 2024. One seen at Pioneer Dam at Mopani Rest Camp, Kruger National Park (Faiyaz Vally).

Lesser Jacana - 15 March 2024. One seen at Pioneer Dam at Mopani Rest Camp, Kruger National Park (Paul Burger).

Red-footed Falcon - 17 February 2024. At least two along Zaagkuil drift road (Calvin Van der Merwe).



African Skimmer © Faiyaz Vally



Lesser Jacana © Paul Burger

PASSERINES

Arnot's Chat - 26 February 2024. An adult male seen at Tshugulu in Mapungubwe National Park (Pieter Lombaard).

Crimson-breasted Shrike - 13 April 2024. One seen at Banyini Pan in the Makuleke Concession, northern Kruger National Park (Johan Eksteen).

Larklike Bunting - 28 March 2024. Four seen at Shipandane Hide in the Kruger National Park (Leigh-Ann Hoets).

Orange-winged Pytilia - 10 March 2024. A male seen at Nagude Farm, Letsitele (David Letsoalo).



Arnot's Chat © Pieter Lombaard



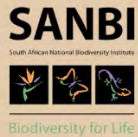
Orange-winged Pytilia © Marjorie

VACANCY

Regional Conservation Programme Manager/
National Red List Programme Officer

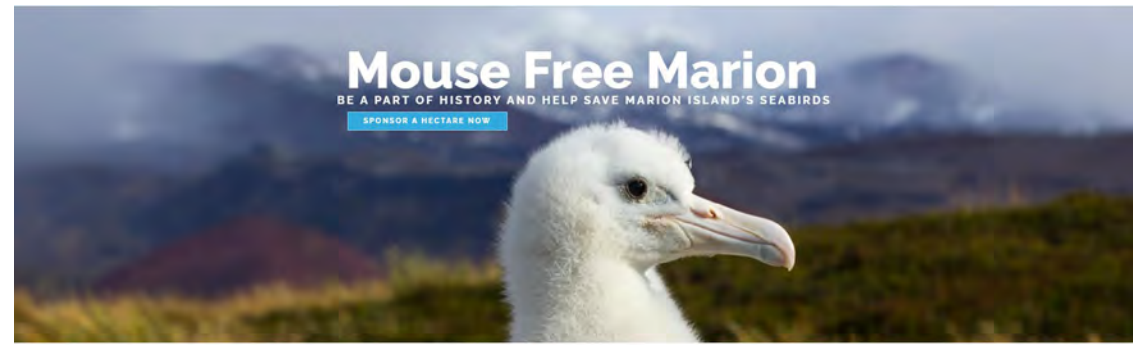


We are looking for someone to support southern African countries to carry out National Red List assessments and identify Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).



Check out the latest official bird list for the Limpopo Province on the LimpopoRaritiesgroup on Telegram. Thanks to Daniel Engelbrecht, Jody De Bruyn, Derek Engelbrecht and Richter Van Tonder.

LIMPOPO RARITIES



HELP SAVE OUR SEABIRDS

BirdLife South Africa is collaborating with the Department of Environmental Affairs and the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology to rid the island of mice and restore it towards its once-pristine beauty.

The bait required to cover the island alone will cost upwards of R30 million. To help raise the necessary funds, please would you consider sponsoring one or more hectares of land on Marion Island.

At R1000 (US\$56), you can aid us in ensuring that this monumental project will be successful.

Once completed, Marion Island will be the largest island from which mice have successfully been eradicated.

Be a part of history, and sponsor one (or more) hectares of this beautiful oceanic gem.

For more information about this very worthwhile project and how to become a sponsor, please visit <https://mousefreemarion.org/>



9 February 2024

Percent of target reached: 24.0%
Sponsored Hectares: 7313 ha
Sponsors: 2026



24 April 2024

Percent of target reached: 25.0%
Sponsored Hectares: 7749 ha
Sponsors: 2052

UPCOMING EVENTS



Birdlife Polokwane Club Meeting
 Date: 7 May 2024
 Time: 18:00
 Venue: Polokwane Golf Club

WINTER BREAK
 No club meetings for June and July
 STAY WARM!

Birdlife Polokwane Club Meeting
 Date: 6 August 2024
 Time: 18:30
 Venue: Polokwane Golf Club

Club outing

Where? Witvinger and Mashashane
 Date: 11 May 2024
 Contact: Richter van Tonder
 Cell: 082 213 8276



Shopping list: Freckled Nightjar, Flappet Lark, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Verreaux's Eagle, Shelley's Francolin, Short-clawed Lark, Southern Bald Ibis, Pearl-breasted Swallow.

Club outing

Where? Mockford Vulture Restaurant
 Date: June 2024 (date to be confirmed)
 Contact: Richter van Tonder
 Cell: 082 213 8276



Shopping list: Cape Teal, various vultures including Hooded, Lappet-faced, Cape and White-backed, Marabou Stork, Secretarybird, and various bushveld birds..

Club outing

Where? Woodbush
Date: July 2024 (date to be confirmed)
Contact: Richter van Tonder
Cell: 082 213 8276



Shopping list: Black-fronted Bushshrike, Brown Scrub Robin, Cape Parrot, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Cinnamon Dove, White-starred Robin, Cape Grassbird.

Club outing

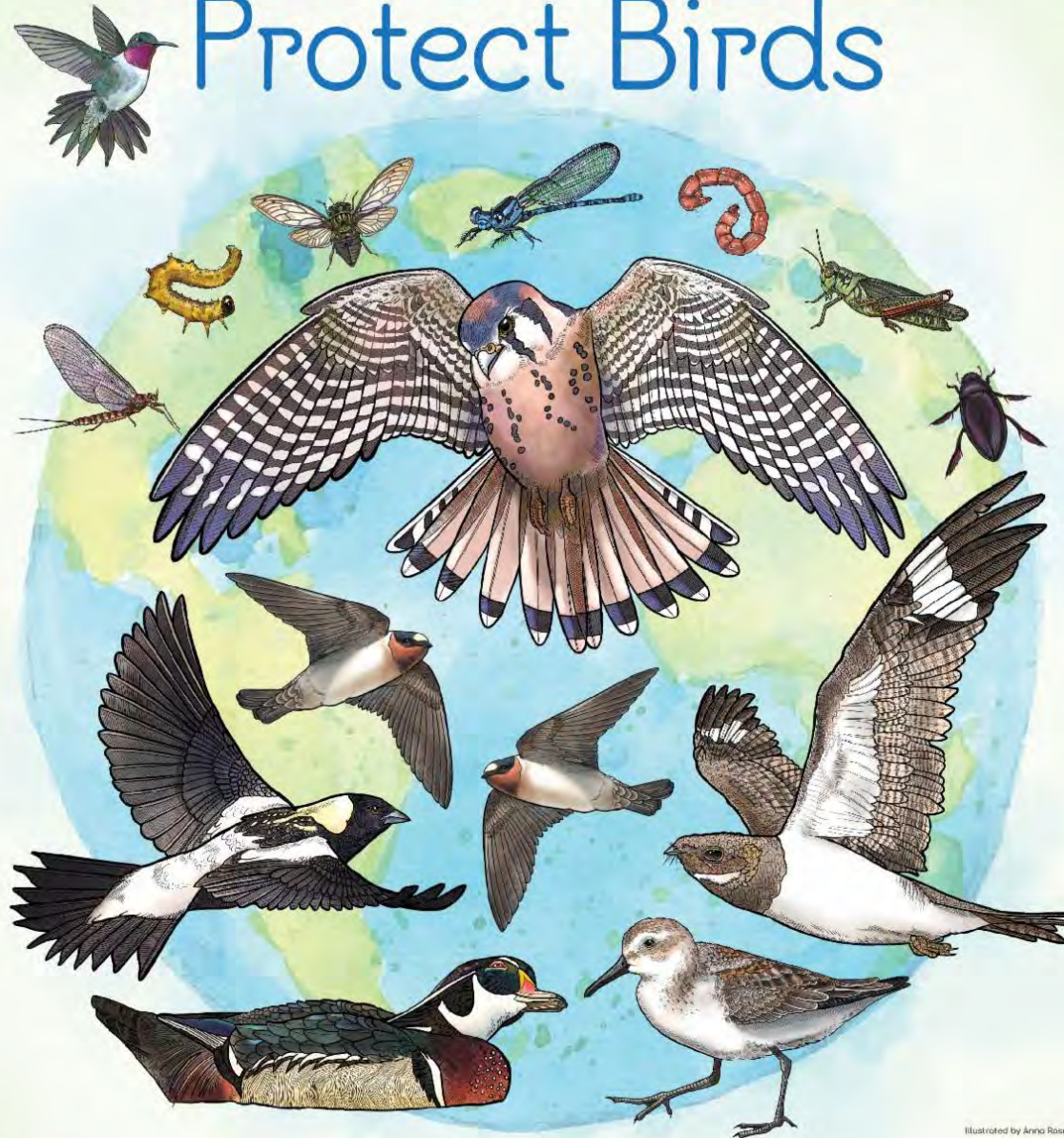
Where? Blouberg Nature Reserve
Date: August 2024 (date to be confirmed)
Contact: Richter van Tonder
Cell: 082 213 8276



Shopping list: Various vultures including Hooded, Lappet-faced, Cape and White-backed, Marabou Stork, Grey Penduline Tit, Retz's Helmetshrike.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY 2024

Protect Insects Protect Birds



Illustrated by Anna Rose



All birds are equal

In 2024, the front covers of **The Lark** will be dedicated to the female of the species as they seldom feature on any front cover. All the other bird beauties will be featured on the back cover.



Orange-breasted Sunbird © Daniel Engelbrecht