

THE LARK

Local Birding

Moordrift

Blouberg

Travel

Namibia

In memoriam

Gideon Odendaal

Don't be a chicknapper this summer

White-backed Vulture resightings • Measurements and moult data of the Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis* Vieillot, 1817 in Namibia • Red-winged Starling breeding observations. Part 1: Nesting • Red-winged Starling breeding observations. Part 2: The bomb squad • Dickinson's Kestrel on the hunt.

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 OCTOBER 2024

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

Cover page theme 2024: female birds

COVER Cape Rockjumper (female)
© Daniel Engelbrecht.

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*This venue is fast becoming a hotspot for surprises. **Jody de Bruyn** joined the club outing and reports back.*



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*Hulle weet nie wat ons weet nie ... Blouberg het alles. Lees wat **Richter van Tonder** te sê het oor die klub se onlangese uitstappie na Bie Blouberg Natuurreservaat.*



For a lark ...



An armchair tick
© Derek Engelbrecht

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Editors' chirps

We start this issue on another sad note. Gideon Odendaal, a much-loved friend and member of Birdlife Polokwane for many years, lost his life on the 22nd of August. Gideon always shared interesting stories and observations, and we will miss him at our meetings. Rus sag Ou Grote. To Cornie, our hearts go out to you, your family and friends in this difficult time as you come to terms with the loss of Gideon and Riana.

Despite the sadness our club has endured this year, spring has sprung, and with it comes the promise of new life and new beginnings. The dawn chorus opens the day's proceedings, and the birds just seem more exuberant. We've already welcomed the first of the migrants back in Polokwane - a pair of Lesser Striped Swallows seen by the Friskins on the 1st of August.

Every year in spring, we post our "What to do when you find a baby bird". Please don't be a chicknapper! Follow our easy to follow steps (pp 39-40) to ensure the best outcome.

We urge all our readers to raise awareness of our beloved African Penguins' dire situation. The sad reality is we may lose this species forever, within our lifetimes, if we don't act now. We've included some links to inform our members of the current state of affairs.

[Penguins to the High Court](#), [Penguin settlement?](#), [Seal attacks on penguins, Penguins and Boulders Beach](#), and [Plummeting penguin populations](#).

Equally concerning, is the conservation status of Botha's Lark.

[Botha's Lark on the brink of extinction](#).

So, as you can see, there is a lot to be done, and each one of us can make a difference. Also, thanks to Birdlife South Africa for being our voice in all of this. In this issue, we report back on two club outings, and we also stick to one of our aims for 2024, which is to include at least one travelogue in every issue of 2024. The popular Bird Brief sections include notes on White-backed Vulture movements, the much-adored Rosy-faced Lovebird, Dickinson's Kestrel's diet, and a warning not to cross paths with nesting Red-winged Starlings!

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

Raelene and Derek

Namibia



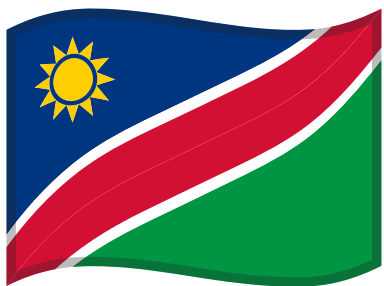
Mark Friskin

In early April 2023, I was diagnosed with lower rectal cancer. To say the least, the news was shocking and life-changing.

Successful surgery took place, and the tumour was removed, as well as the surrounding lymph glands (stage 3 cancer). During the 48 days

of chemotherapy that followed, Julia and I made a firm decision that to get through this period of our lives, we needed to have a vision for the

future, something to give us hope and a future. We were comforted by the many individuals praying for my healing and safety.



We chose a birding and sightseeing tour of Namibia; it's been on our bucket list for a long time already, and this took my mind off the treatment and inspired me to research and plan the trip. Namibia is a vast country of spectacular vistas, landscapes, sunsets and sunrises. A 25-day trip was planned, as all the magazines, bird guiding books (Southern African Bird Finder), and numerous editorials mentioned that 10 days was not enough to experience the beauty of Namibia. Well, let's go big and have no regrets!

Week 1

We planned to travel from the bottom of Namibia to the top and back to South Africa through Botswana. We travelled to AuGrabies National Park via a stopover at Kimberley. The birds in this area delighted us: Orange River White-eye, African Red-eyed Bulbul, and Bradfield's Swift, to

name only a few. Sadly, our stop at Kamfers Dam was disappointing. The gate was chained and locked, the entrance was flooded and overgrown, and there was litter everywhere. We actually wondered if we received the correct pin to the entrance gate.

We first camped at the AuGrabies National Park under the shadiest trees (and did we need the shade!!) we could find, and then we spent two days birding for species we had previously dipped on. The Namaqua Warbler was spotted in the reeds at a bridge over some reed beds (a Joe Grosel spot), singing its heart out and being very territorial. The Karoo Korhaan gave us many beautiful fly-by experiences but never landed close enough for that good photo opportunity. Leaving AuGrabies, we found substantial numbers of Black-eared Sparrow-Lark driving along the main tar road, and besides this lifer, we ticked many species we had already seen on a previous trip.

Then, it was off to Namibia, and the new splendour awaited us. Our first destination was the SA border post in Onseepkans. We were thrilled to see hundreds, if not thousands, of quiver trees on the South African side of the border.

Amazing! The mountains here were extraordinary with their different colours, shapes and sizes. We were the only vehicle at both border crossings, and then we drove on to Canyon Roadhouse for two nights of camping and adventure. This overnight establishment has quirky/retro décor and the legendary 'old wheelers' restaurant and bar. Also, it has a much-needed swimming pool where we spent many hours cooling down.

We left before sunrise to visit the mighty Fish River Canyon, and

it was so worth it seeing majesty of this harsh landscape in the soft light of dawn. Brilliant! In this vast emptiness, Speckled Pigeons, Pied Crows, Pale-winged Starlings, and Spike-heeled Larks eke out a living. Julia and I placed rocks on the huge mounds of piled-up rocks to say we were also there in God's superb creation. We certainly won't attempt the 5-day hiking trail - that would be too tough for us.

BELOW The majestic Fish River Canyon.





Lüderitz is a fascinating town full of history, good and bad, where we stopped to view the Dias Cross and the lazy seals. We also booked a catamaran cruise to Halifax Island to see a colony of African Penguins and the Bank and Cape Cormorants. The beautiful Heaviside dolphins appeared alongside the boat on several occasions. Thereafter, we joined the fascinating tour of the ghost town at Kolmanskop. It was extraordinary to view the abandoned buildings taken over by the dune sand.

From here, we drove to Ais-Ais, enraptured by dramatic scenes of huge rocky hills where we encountered the different patterned Hartmann's mountain zebra, gemsbok, springbok, wild Common Ostrich, and abandoned vehicles, most used for target practices as they were covered in bullet holes. Moving on

we were thrilled to see about 40 wild horses near Aus. This area boasts rivers of red, copper and golden sand that reach up rocky hills, quite something. It reminded us of those fascinating glass bottles that the Zulu children sell to tourists in the Drakensberg, layer upon layer of different colour bands upon each other.

ABOVE Rüppell's Korhaan are common on the gravel plains of the Namib Desert.

RIGHT Rosy-faced Lovebirds thrive in the barren landscape.





ABOVE Mark the mechanic.

Week 2

A highlight of our trip was our visit to the red dunes of Sossusvlei and the Dead Vlei. We camped at Sossus Oasis, which reminded us of the Wild West in this hot, barren land. At dawn, there was a buzz of activity outside the entrance gate, and vehicles lined up waiting to enter this wonderland. The gate opened, and it was as if we had entered a Formula One race - buses and game vehicles breaking the speed limit as they disappeared into the distance. It's a race to get to the best spots to photograph the casting shadows and capture the colours of these mighty dunes at first light. We caught the shuttle, which takes one a further 5 km on an extremely soft sandy road, then followed by a fair walk

to see the Dead Vlei. The contrast of the hardened white pan with the thousand-year-old dead trees within the red sands against the blue sky is a truly magnificent sight.

We decided to leave for Walvis Bay a day earlier via the delightful town/hamlet of Solitaire, a popular stop for motorists. We travelled over a terrible mountain pass on a poor gravel road with twists and turns, rises and dips, loose rocks and boulders, which gave us many anxious moments! Unfortunately, we did not appreciate the amazing scenery up there. Finally ... over the last rise, we encountered the unbelievable sight of the golden sands



ABOVE The iconic Sossusvlei.

of the Namib Naukluft, (the largest in the world); this land is so vast! Soon, we heard the distinct sound of a flat tyre, which was thankfully our first and last. We appreciated the assistance of the other motorist who stopped to help us change the wheel. We loved spending time at the Walvis Bay lagoon, filled with thousands of Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Great White Pelicans and many more waders, gulls, and terns.

We booked a catamaran cruise to Pelican Island to see a 60,000+ Cape fur seal colony. A few came

along for the ride!...as well as some pelicans. Together, these two species entertained the passengers, and everyone had a chance to take selfies and get really close to them. I sat still and was not impressed, considering the danger I believed they posed! We saw several diamond dredging ships and had an excellent tour guide who gave us details of all the vessels and industries in this part of Namibia.



From Walvis Bay, we moved on to Swakopmund, just 40 km further. We were amazed at how many buildings are constructed on sea sand. We stopped by to see the shipwreck, the Ziela, and, thereafter, the Cape Cross Reserve to see the 100,000+ Cape fur seal colony. The pungent smell took getting used to, and the same for their constant "baaing" noise. But what a spectacular sight to see thousands upon thousands of seals on the sand, rocks, walkways, and in the sea, surfing the waves, diving, and resurfacing. The sad part was seeing dead pups, with gulls and crows feasting on their carcasses.

We booked an expensive day trip with a bird guide. Timothy, our guide, was excellent,



Two must-see Namibian Specials: Gray's Lark (TOP) and Dune Lark (BOTTOM).

and we spent the day birding with him and exploring the area. He showed us the endemic Dune Lark, Gray's Lark, Black Tern, and Red Phalarope ...nice ticks in the book for us - and of course, many more birds we had already seen. Before we knew it, the day had passed, and it was time to say goodbye. Satisfied with a good day's birding, we slept well that night. Just an observation for food: across the road from the Swakopmund Sands Hotel where we stayed, are three food caravans that serve the most delicious seafood at very reasonable prices compared to the fancy expensive restaurants in the area.

Week 3 and 4

We loved the town of Swakopmund and would have liked to stay on longer, but it was time to move on to explore the area of Spitzkoppe. We camped here: no power, no water, a fire pit, and a long drop toilet - but what an experience to be amongst these colossal rock mountains and the weird-shaped boulders that tower over the flat desert landscape. As the sun rises and dips in the sky, these rocky, boulder-strewn

mountains change colour from brown to orange, red, light pink, and purple. One can only marvel at God's beautiful canvas. The season's first rains arrived with a terrific thunderstorm and lightning bouncing off the mountains. This caused us to seek safe shelter in the bakkie. The braai fire and chicken were flooded, and crisps and baked potatoes were all we had for dinner. What a pleasure it was to cool down the next day in the rock pool that formed following the previous night's rain - two years before this pool last had water. Special new



RIGHT A Red-billed Spurfiowl posed beautifully for us.



ABOVE A pair of the delightful Rüppell's Parrot.

birds for us included White-tailed Shrike, Monteiro's Hornbill, and Augur Buzzard. We spent many hours searching for the elusive Herero Chat, but sadly we dipped on this species.

A short stop at Windhoek to visit the Daan Viljoen Game Reserve and Avis Dam frustrated us as we were not getting our target birds. The Waterberg Plateau came up trumps with the delightful Rüppell's Parrot. We then headed for Etosha

where we camped at the Trading Post close to the Anderson Gate. We felt privileged to spot the black rhino, herds of springbok, impala, zebra, and the near-endemic black faced impala. We also saw a large pride of lions at the water hole and two amazing white dust-covered elephants. We spent half a day at



Black-faced Babbler



Hartlaub's Babbler



ABOVE The unmistakable landscape of Etosha Pan.

a water hole outside a camp and saw plenty of game. However the corrugated sandy roads were not great, and we got our fair share of "the African massage!" Our one-night stay at Roy's Camp was memorable with its quirky accommodation, and we got the Black-faced Babblers. Yay!

Our last few days, we camped at the luxurious Shametu Lodge on the banks of the Okavango River ... a stunning fertile area, teeming with birdlife. The Hartlaub's Babblers and Swamp Boubous frequently visited our campsite/private garden. We went on a sunset cruise to Popa Falls and a day trip into the picturesque Mahango Game Reserve where we

ticked off the Sharp-tailed Starling. What a wonderful time spent in this paradise.

A month-long trip had ended, and we headed back to South Africa through Botswana, risking our lives on the awful, treacherous roads. So thankful to God for travelling mercies and our 16 new lifers, and the privilege of touring the amazingly beautiful country of Namibia. We missed some birds, but hey that's birding; we could easily go back to Namibia to find the ones we missed.

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Special memories of a special trip - camping at Spitzkoppe (TOP) and a sunset cruise on the Okavango (BOTTOM).

Tribute to Gideon Odendaal



2 MAY 1950 - 22 AUGUST 2024

I cannot remember the exact circumstances under which I met Gideon and Cornie. It would definitely have been at their nursery, and definitely would have involved me needing indigenous plants. I do remember the feeling of joy at meeting two people who so passionately understood the value and beauty of our veld and the importance of promoting our plants.

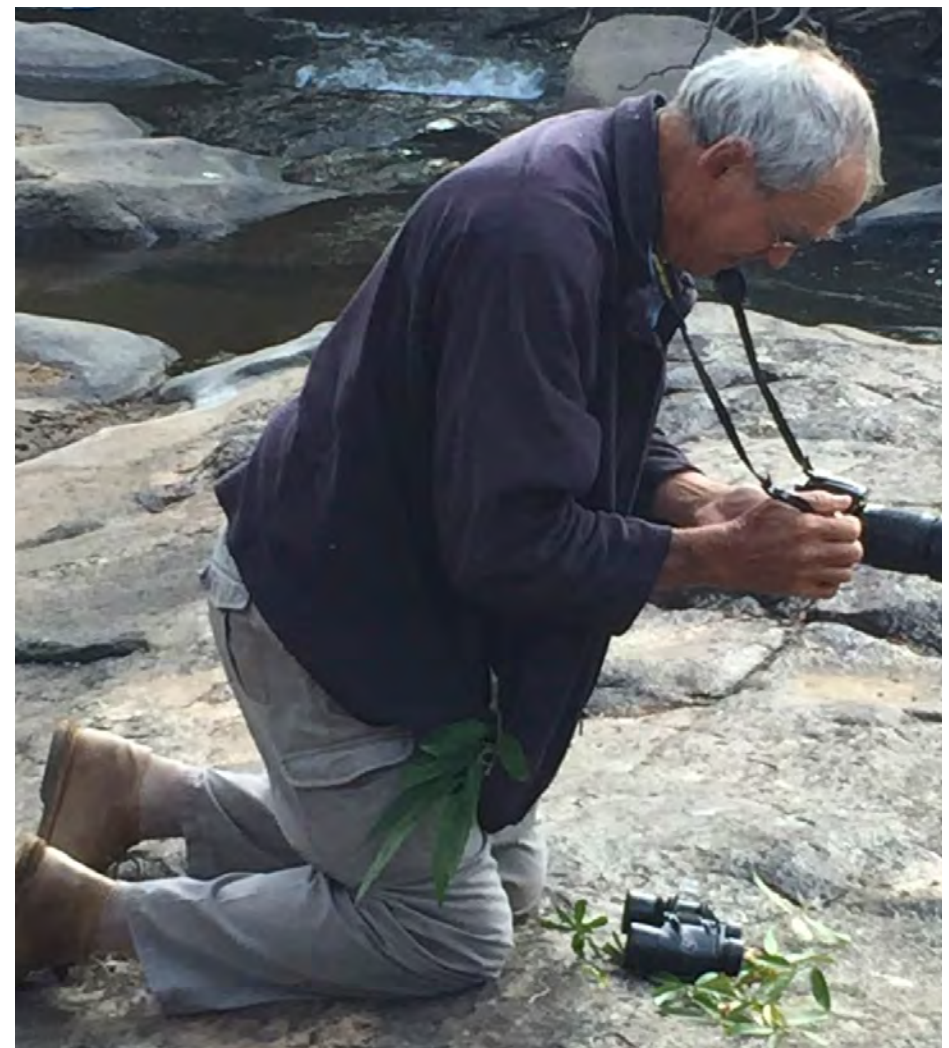
But it wasn't just plants that drew me back to the Odendaals. Gideon had a calm strength and quiet demeanour that perfectly complimented Cornie's effervescence and her bubbly talk. Together they were a delight to be with, whether wandering through their garden or drinking "Engelse tee" under the famous pergola.

That pergola epitomised Gideon's life. His meticulous way of producing the stuff of dreams in a practical and measured manner meant that any project he initiated (or indeed that Cornie initiated), was completed exactly to the specifications required, and was made to last! This included woodwork, gardens, irrigation, solar installations and innovative compost drums. Gideon was not only an implementer, but he was also an inventor. And he did not just invent and build, he made the world a better place by doing so. All his efforts were informed by a deep love for the natural world and a wish to put something back into what humanity generally just takes from. Gideon knew where the barbets nested and what the patterns on an aardvark tooth looked like. He could read the signs of the animals in the bush and the signs, in the trees, of their health or struggles. He didn't just know their names, he knew the type of habitat they would thrive in, and how to recreate it. He knew where birds would like to rest and bats to roost and what type of box or platform to build for them. His love was practical and applied. He wouldn't just watch, he would do!

Gideon always spoke carefully and in a considered manner, and I loved listening to his stories, which usually imparted some interesting snippet of natural history or understanding of the importance of family. His delight in the antics of his family, whether those of his grandchildren or of his long-lost ancestors, was deep and infectious and rooted in respect for those from his past who had contributed so much to his future. Researching his family's history was yet another interest which Gideon carefully carried out and which resulted in more fascinating insights into our world and our shared humanity.



Gideon, as many of us will remember him - always marvelling at nature's splendour.



Gideon at work, taking photos of plants for identification purposes.

Gideon brought so many ideas and dreams to life that it is impossible to list all his accomplishments. But long though this list is, these are not what I will miss most about him. He was a man who truly “walked with God” and this aura enclosed everyone who worked or walked or shared tea with him! I am so grateful to have a beautiful reminder of him in the


garden he and Cornie planted at the University of Limpopo. Sincere condolences to all who knew him, and, in particular, to his beloved wife, Cornie.

By Bronwyn Egan

Moorddrift

revisited

TEXT AND PHOTOS Jody de Bruyn

A photograph of a White-crested Helmetshrike perched on a bare, grey branch. The bird has a white head with a prominent white crest, a yellow eye, and a black stripe through the eye. Its body is primarily white with dark grey wings and tail. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with warm, golden-brown tones.

White-crested Helmetshrike

As we entered the property of Moorddrift Dairy Farm, my car's temperature indicator dropped to -4°C. I knew that a few of the winter club outings would be cold, but I wasn't fully prepared for this chilly weather. The layers of clothing and beanie helped keep me semi-defrosted for the early part of the morning. In total, we had a group of 17 club members who joined the outing, and as we all signed in at the gate, we started recording some species in the form of a trio of lapwings; Crowned, Blacksmith and African Wattled. We also added

a Black-headed Heron, Egyptian Goose, Fork-tailed Drongo and a very quiet Hadada Ibis to the list.

As we made our way to the day visitors area, we recorded a few more species. These included: White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Dark-capped Bulbul, Blue Waxbill, Crested Barbet, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Lilac-breasted Roller, Rattling Cisticola, and an African Harrier-Hawk. Geared up with binoculars, cameras, layers of jackets and beanies, most of the group joined the walk along the dam's shoreline to see what could be found. The dam's water levels

had dropped since last year's outing, which made for a good wading shoreline. Unfortunately, with this being a winter outing and all of the migrant wader species gone by now, we only managed to record Three-banded Plover, Kittlitz's Plover, Cape Wagtail, and African Pied Wagtail.

The shoreline walk was very productive, and we were continuously adding species to our lists. Some of the birds included: African Spoonbill, Red-billed Teal, Glossy Ibis, Reed Cormorant, White-breasted Cormorant, African Darter, White-faced Whistling Duck, Squacco Heron,

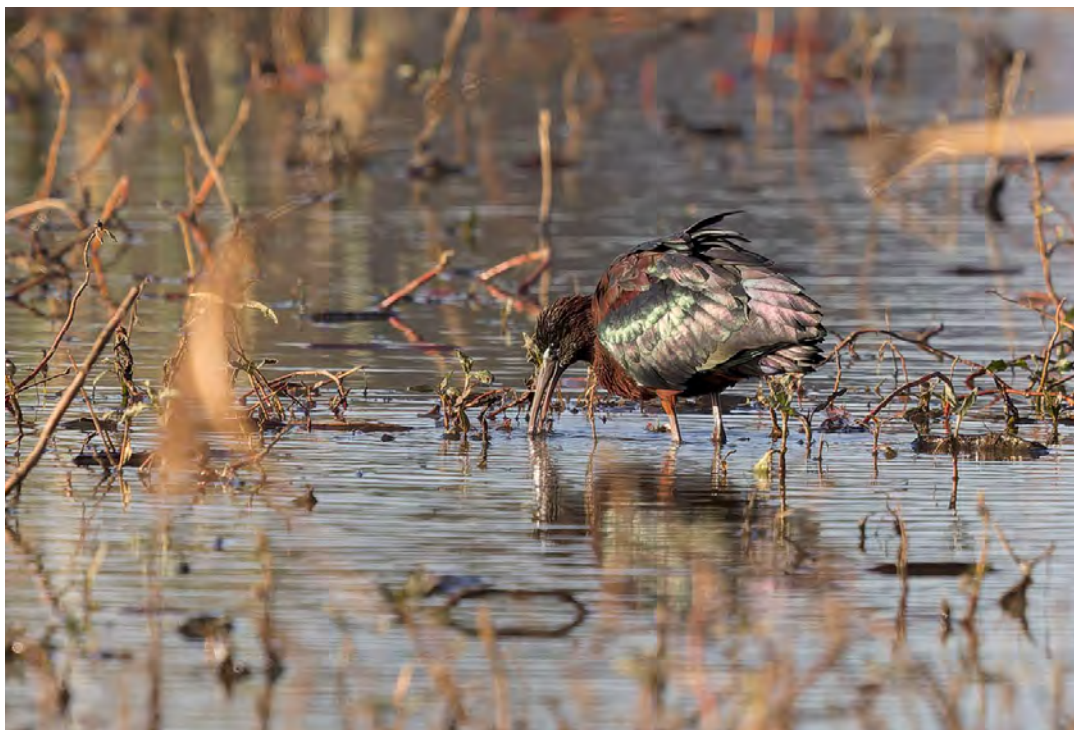
Spur-winged Goose, Blue-billed Teal, Malachite Kingfisher, Giant Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Pearl-breasted Swallow, Spectacled Weaver, and Buffy Pipit. Some of the stand out species we found were a Goliath Heron, a Black Heron, and three Grey-headed Gulls, which allowed me to get a few fairly decent photos.

After everyone enjoyed a coffee and snack break, we headed out again. This time, we spent

BELOW A Glossy Ibis wading in the shallows.



ABOVE Moorddrift has justified its status as a hub for Polokwane 100K specials such as Goliath Heron (TOP), Black Heron (MIDDLE), and Grey-headed Gull (BOTTOM).





ABOVE It was so cold, it looks as if this Giant Kingfisher is covering his feet with his very own feather blanket.

some time on some mountain bike trails that crisscrossed the hillside. We found a few mixed flocks of foraging birds on the route. Some of the birds we recorded were: Southern Black Flycatcher, Chinspot Batis, Green-winged Pytilia, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Acacia Pied Barbet, Long-billed Crombec, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Black-crowned Tchagra, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Red-faced Mousebird, Yellow-

fronted Tinkerbird, Black-backed Puffback, Cape White-eye, and Southern Boubou.

The walk was very productive, and Willie added to this by sharing his knowledge of some of the interesting tree species he found and showed us. It seemed that

this stretch of bush had more to offer than we hoped for, and here are some of the stand out species we recorded: African Red-eyed Bulbul (1st spotted by Julia), a group of White-crested Helmetshrikes, Red-headed Weaver, Grey Penduline Tit, and a pair of Ashy Flycatchers.

RIGHT Another local special! African Red-eyed Bulbul.

BELOW The diminutive Grey Penduline Tit.





Ashy Flycatcher



ABOVE A pair of Bennett's Woodpeckers seemingly doing some maintenance work on one of the power poles at Moorddrift.

Heading back to the car park, we got great views of a pair of Bearded Woodpeckers inspecting a few nesting cavities in a power pole. Some of the other species we recorded were: Black-faced Waxbill, Groundscraper Thrush, Rock Martin, Brown-headed Kingfisher, Burnt-necked Eremomela, and Black-collared Barbet. With a quick drive down the opposite end of the dam, we managed to add a few more species in the form of Yellow-billed Stork, Marabou, African Fish Eagle, Southern Pochard, Grey Heron, Great Egret, Red-knobbed Coot, and Common Moorhen.

All in all, we recorded over 110 species on the day. Thanks to all who braved the cold and joined the outing, and to Richter and Bruce, who organised the outing for the club. I suspect our next outing to Moorddrift Dairy Farm will be a summer event, as requested by many of the freezing participants!

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Daar anderkant die

Blouberg

Richter van Tonder



Dis 'n hele ruk terug wat ek laas op die Blouberg Natuurreservaat was.

So om te sien dat dat daar nuwe goed soos die padpredikante op gesit is was lekker. Ons was met sonsopkoms die 3^{de} Augustus by die hek en het ons wiele afgeblaas vir die dik sand paaie. Dit was nie te koud nie en die weervoorspelling was dat dit warm sou word. Ons het sommer gou-gou ontbyt by die ontvangs geniet en 'n half uur later was ons weer oppad.

Ons was slegs sewe mense in twee karre, so dit het dit gemaklik gemaak om almal die voëls uit te wys.

Na so kilometer of twee het ons op 'n 'bird party' afgekom en hier kon ons heelwat spesies opteken. 'n Witkoluitjie (Pearl-spotted Owlet) het ook geroep en die voëls het mal gegaan. Bruinkopvisvangers (Brown-hooded Kingfisher), Baardspette (Bearded Woodpecker) en Geelborswillies (Yellow-bellied Greenbul) het hulself gewys.



Ander spesie wat ook kom inloer het was onder andere Gewone Swartmees (Southern Black Tit) en Withelmlaksmanne (White-crested Helmetshrike). Die habitat waardeur

Bo Die spesie van die dag - 'n Koekoekvalk (African Cuckoo-Hawk) wat taamlik ver buite sy gewone verspreidingsgebied was
© Richter Van Tonder.

ons gery het was gemengde bosveld met 'n yl gras bedekking op dik rooi sand. Oral waar ons gery het was Groenvlekduifies (Emerald-spotted Wood Dove) alomteenwoordig.

Na ons toe so entjie verder wes in die reservaat gery het, vlieg daar skielik 'n roofvoël voor ons verby. Ek kon sien dat dit grys was met bande oor sy bors. My eerste gedagte was Afrikaanse Sperwer (African Goshawk) of ook dalk Koekoekval (African Cuckoo-Hawk). Gelukkig het dit voor ons in 'n droë boom geland en ons kon vinnig fotos kry en dit met ons verkykers besigtig. Koekoekvalk! Volgens SABAP2 se inligting is dit heeltemal buite sy area en 'n eerste vir die reservaat. Beslis die spesie van die dag.

Na al die opwinding het ons aanbeweeg tot by 'n area waar daar nou en dan 'n Driebanddrawwertjie (Three-banded Courser) gesien word. Die outjie kom eers skemer uit so ons het maar 'n kans gevat om dit op te spoor. Die bos hier is baie yler met groot oop kolle grond en klippe. Ons kon nie hierdie skugter voël kry nie maar het 'n groot swerm Witpenswindswaels (Alpine Swifts) sien oor vlieg. Van die eerste trek spesies wat ons vir die nuwe seisoen gesien het was 'n Geelbekwou (Yellow-billed Kite).

ONDER 'n Groot swerm Witpenswindswaels (Alpine Swifts) het gesorg vir 'n indrukwekkende skouspel met hulle vlug vermoë © Jody De Bruyn.





Bo Middagete in die Vyeboom Woud.

LINKS 'n Groenvlekduifie (Emerald-spotted Wood Dove) les sy dors by Buffelspan © Richter Van Tonder.



Hier kon ons rustig deur die woud stap en ook middagete geniet. Daar was heelwat vye beskikbaar en die tiptolle het mal gegaan. 'n Eekhorning was heel mak en ons kon binne 2 meter van dit kom en fotos neem.

Hierna beweeg ons toe na die Buffelspanskuiling. Dis 'n skuiling wat effe in die grond gesak is sodat jy amper gelyk met die grond is. Dit maak dat daar mooier fotos geneem kan word van al die voëls en diere wat daar kom water drink. Baie Groenvlekduifies en Gewone Blousysies (Blue Waxbill) het kom drink. So ook Rooikopwewer (Red-headed Weaver), Swartwangsysie (Black-faced Waxbill), Rooikophoutkappers (Black-collard Barbet), Rooirugstreepkoppie (Golden-breasted Bunting) en Gewone Tortelduiwe (Ring-necked Dove). Diere wat kom water drink het was bobbejane, rooibokke, kameelperde, twee groot koedoe bulle en 'n spesiale paartjie rooiribbokke.

Ons volgende stop was die Vyeboom "Woud". Dis 'n heeltemal ander tipe habitat met groot bome en digte bos. Spesiale spesies wat ons hier gesien het was Blougrysvliëvanger (Ashy Flycatcher), Waaiertertvliëvanger (Grey Tit-Flycatcher), Kuifkoptarentaal (Crested Guinefowl), Spookvoël (Grey-headed Bushshrike), Oranjeborsboslaksman (Orange-breasted Bushshrike) en Boskrapper (Terrestrial Brownbul).

Hierna het ons besluit om maar te draai en die pad huistoe te begin. Oppad uit het ons 'n Gestreepte Visvanger (Striped Kingfisher) en 'n Groenrugreier (Striated Heron) gesien. Dankie vir die wat daar was. Dit was lekker en ons sal weer so maak, dalk ene in die somer.

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BLUBERG POTPOURRI



I found a baby bird ... now what?

Move or shepherd it to a safe location.

It is OK to handle the baby bird, the parents won't abandon it if touched by humans.

Is the bird in immediate danger?
Traffic, pets or people

Yes

No

Contact a wildlife rehabilitator, the SPCA or a veterinary surgeon for advice?

Do not feed or give it water; place the bird in a dark box with ventilation and some padding for warmth.

Is the bird bleeding or visibly injured?
Laboured breathing; weeziness when breathing; appearing sleepy/drowsy; puffed-up feathers; flopping

No

Yes

What does it look like?

Hatchling to about 3 days old; Chick naked or it may have down; eyes closed.

Nestling, 4-16 days old; Eyes open, initially as slits; body and flight feathers emerging but feather sheaths still visible.

Fledgling; may flutter or fly short distances, hops or shuffles on the ground; wings and tail short.



Can you see the nest?

Yes

No

Is it in immediate danger?

Yes

No

If possible, return the chick to its nest. If not, follow the instructions under 'No' or contact a wildlife rehabilitator, the SPCA or a veterinary surgeon for advice.

Construct an artificial nest, fill it with grass or natural soft lining and place near the nest; monitor the nest from a distance to see if the parents attend to the chick.

Move or shepherd it to a safe location; keep cats, dogs and people away

Leave the bird where you found it, the parents know where it is and will continue to look after it.



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Derek Engelbrecht
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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.

Pale-winged Starling

Photos of

- nests and/or nestlings
- spread wing and head profile (ringers)
- typical habitat.

Levaillant's Cisticola

Photos of

- nests and/or nestlings
- spread wing, tail and head profile (ringers)
- typical habitat.

Spotted Ground Thrush

Photos of

- nests and/or nestlings
- spread wing, tail and head profile (ringers)
- typical habitat.

Cape Sugarbird

- nests and/or nestlings
- spread wing, tail and head profile (ringers)
- typical habitat.

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Regulars

Birds in Art

Yellow-bellied Greenbul

Text and Artwork

Willem Van der Merwe

View my gallery by clicking on the logo below:



Yellow-bellied Greenbul

In this issue, we look at a friendly little birdie, a Yellow-bellied Greenbul! It is not one of the really cautious, skulking birds we have; though not quite as bold as some of the other bulbuls, it nevertheless is not too difficult to catch a good glimpse of. But first, more about the name – this is indeed one of the bulbuls, which include several species called ‘greenbulbs’ or ‘brownbulbs’, though not always accurately. In this case, it isn’t particularly green anywhere, but it is more of a greenish-brown, apart from the underparts that can vary from somewhat dull to brighter yellow. It also has a broken white ring around the eye. It doesn’t have a crest like some other bulbuls, but it will sometimes raise its shaggy head feathers. Its scientific name is *Chlorocichla flaviventris*, which means ‘yellow-bellied green/yellow

thrush’. Many birds that aren’t actual thrushes, and some that are, have ‘cichla’ as part of their genus names. Apart from its size and general shape, this bulbul is not really thrush-like at all. In Afrikaans, it is called a ‘Geelborswillie’ and in older English texts as ‘Yellowbreasted Willie’, the latter referring to the call of a related species, the Sombre Brownbul or ‘Gewone Willie’ – which I hope to feature here soon.

Europeans and Americans are unlikely to know about bulbuls, but they will be familiar birds to birdwatchers and nature lovers all over Africa and the warmer parts of Asia. They include some very bold and vocal birds and some that are extremely secretive and cryptically coloured. In Africa, the majority of species live in forests and are extremely hard to distinguish from each other visually. But at least in



ABOVE Drinking nectar of a weeping boerbean © Derek Engelbrecht.

South Africa, they can be told from each other through their voices as all the species have characteristic songs and contact calls.

Among the African bulbuls, this is one of the more striking species. It doesn’t live in the interior of dense forest but instead on the edge or in more open riverine forest, thickets, or open woodland and dry, scrubby savannah, so long as there’s some shelter nearby. They sometimes occur singly but may also live in pairs or groups of up to five birds. They keep in contact by uttering a characteristic, rather nasal call. They may also utter less distinctive chattering calls. Their calls are quite uniform over their large range, which extends

from southern KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, to northern Angola in Central Africa, and to Kenya in East Africa. They avoid, however, the huge tropical lowland rainforest block of the Congo and western-equatorial Africa. They feed mostly on small fruits that they peck off bushes and trees, but also nectar, when available, and some insects and other invertebrates. It even sometimes picks ticks off large mammals, like the oxpeckers I hope to paint soon. Its nest is a flimsy cup made of dry grass, twigs, and other bits, attached to a tree, shrub or



LEFT Head profile of a Yellow-bellied Greenbul © Derek Engelbrecht.



ABOVE The flimsy, cup-shaped nest of a Yellow-bellied Greenbul
© Derek Engelbrecht.

creeper using cobweb. The female lays 1–3 eggs and incubates them alone. The chicks are blind, naked, and helpless on hatching, and they fledge in 16–18 days.

I am very fond of these birds. I saw them first in the Polokwane Bird Sanctuary, where they frequent the lush riverine woodland. I was quite excited after first managing to spot a bird after tracking it by its call. I've seen them many times since, though recently, I've not found them in the reserve. They occur widely in my home province, Limpopo, where they can be seen in various lush vegetation types. I saw

them best on friends' farm, close to the scenic town of Haenertsburg. My friends have a bird bath set up right in front of their living room window, and these bulbuls, along with a delightful variety of other bird species, make regular use of it. Because they are widespread, abundant and adaptable, the Yellow-bellied Greenbul is not of conservation concern.

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Bateleur

Terathopus ecaudatus

The Bateleur is monogamous, which means having a single mate during a period of time. In the wild they can reach ages of 20-25 years.



The chick is covered in cream and chocolate brown when it hatches. The brown feathers of the juvenile take 4 weeks to develop.



The juvenile Bateleur takes 5 - 8 years to mature and for its plumage to change to the adult colours.



Juvenile Bateleurs grow rapidly with their weight increasing 50% every week in the first few months.



The egg is 79 x 63 mm in size and chalky white in colour with a few reddish markings. The shell is thin, as with other eagle species. It hatches after 52 - 59 days.

The size of the Bateleur's nest varies, depending on the age and breeding status of the birds. The female lays and incubates one egg and the male will feed her while she is on the nest. The male will take over the incubation when the female takes a break from her duties.

The Bateleur's diet consists of:

- 36% carrion
- 24% small birds
- 18% small mammals
- 17% reptiles
- 2% fish
- 2% invertebrates
- 1% amphibians



The Bateleur is a formidable hunter and known for its impressive hunting skills. It is not uncommon for this species to prey on small birds in mid air.

The Bateleur feeds mostly on mammals and carrion. Its prey items are more diverse than other African eagles, with 160 different prey items being known.

Design and illustrations by Di Martin. Photographs used as reference for the illustrations were taken from: iStock - H. J. Davies; Alamy - R. Kawka and O. Ozmen; Pinterest - L. Moolman; Nature conservancy, Tanzania; African Bird Club; W. Tarboton and Wikipedia.

Reflections

REFLECTIONS

Birding in SANParks Limpopo parks

Mapungubwe's Western Section: The lure of Limpopo Floodplain

Chris Patton

Twice in previous *Reflections* articles, I've written about my birding memories from Mapungubwe National Park. Once about Maloutswa Bird Hide ([The Lark 36](#)), arguably the best hide in all SANParks, and then about the unique experience of the Limpopo Treetop Boardwalk ([The Lark 40](#)), which takes visitors through the riparian forest of the Limpopo.

This edition, I'm returning to Mapungubwe, to its western section, and I want to recount my birding memories from in and around the Limpopo Tented Camp,

the nearby Mazhou Campsite, and the plains that lie between those camps and the afore-described Maloutswa Bird Hide. For readers who do not know the park at all, Mapungubwe National Park is on the south side of the Limpopo River, at the meeting point of three countries: Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. It is part of a Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) and encompasses the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape, a World Heritage Site. It is an amazing place to visit given its history, cultural heritage, geology, botany and biology.

The park is divided into two sections linked by public roads. While the eastern section contains the main camp Leokwe, the World Heritage Interpretation Centre, Mapungubwe Hill, the Limpopo Tree-top Boardwalk, the three country confluence viewing decks, and Poachers' Corner, the western section is in the heart of the Limpopo floodplain (see overleaf). And while the scenic geological splendour of the eastern section is absent, the subtropical riparian forests and the open plains that for decades were used for agriculture and for the last 26 years have been in habitat recovery are so bird-rich it can be overwhelming at times.

The riparian fringe of the Limpopo is of prime importance from the point of view of conservation. It is a dense vegetation community with a closed canopy which occurs in the rich alluvial deposits along the river. The most striking trees in this community include fever trees, ana trees, leadwoods, fig trees and acacias. Extensive patches of this vegetation have been cleared for cultivation elsewhere along the length of the Limpopo River, but in the western section the Limpopo floodplain has allowed some trees to grow to massive sizes. Nyala and ana trees can get particularly big.

There is still some private land within the floodplain, and more land that is now part of the park, but with contractual land rights for continued agriculture for a finite period, making it a bit unusual to have crop fields within the park's boundaries.

Mazhou Campsite and the Limpopo Tented Camps are embedded in the Limpopo riparian forest, and readers familiar with the Pafuri region of Kruger National Park will have an idea of how the camps look and feel. The accommodation at the Tented Camp is far more modern and comfortable than what visitors will be used to in Kruger.

Birdlife is abundant, and the cacophony of sound during the dawn chorus is enriching. Like at Pafuri, some of the loudest and most extrovert species include Meves's Starling, Tropical Boubou, White-browed Robin-Chat and Yellow-breasted Apalis. Grey-backed Camaropteras, Burnt-necked Eremomelas, Retz's and White-crested Helmetshrikes, and Natal Spurfowls will also be prominent. But there is an exciting supplement to the suite of birds found at Limpopo Tented Camp... being further west, there are the additions of Kalahari species, such as the Southern Pied Babbler occurring



Legend

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MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK



ABOVE The accommodation at Limpopo Tented Camp is a lot more modern and comfortable than some of the older accommodation in Kruger © Chris Patton.

BELOW The tropical forest and lush grass in and around the road network linking Mazhou Campsite and Limpopo Tented Camp is a haven for surprises © Chris Patton.



alongside their Arrow-marked cousins, while Meyer's Parrot replaces the Brown-headed Parrot. I'll return to some of the other more western species later in this article, those that don't tend to penetrate the riparian forest, but will be encountered in the thornveld a little further away from the River.

And the action doesn't settle down at night either. My wife, daughter, and I were the first people to sleep in the universally accessible



ABOVE Southern Pied Babbler will pick their way through the undergrowth of Limpopo Tented Camp, something one doesn't find further east in Kruger © Chris Patton.



ABOVE Limpopo Tented Camp is Owl City, and Southern White-faced (LEFT) and African Scops Owls (RIGHT) should be heard at night © Chris Patton.

tent before the camp was opened to the public in 2004. At one point at night, we had six owl species calling more or less simultaneously: the Southern White-faced Owl, the African Scops Owl, the two owlets (Pearl-spotted and African Barred), Verreaux's Eagle-Owl and Western Barn Owl, all serenading the night alongside some nightjars and thick-knees. Then, in the hour before dawn, the main nocturnal party had settled down a bit, but we then heard the coup de grace, the mournful cry of a seventh owl, a Pel's Fishing Owl.

But it is not just birds that visitors will encounter in and around the camps. When the Tented Camp was first opened to the public in 2004, there was a little plunge pool in the camp, but this became too much of a problem to manage because elephants would break past the strands of electric fencing and use the pool as their private refreshment bar. Baboons, monkeys, squirrels, bushbuck, nyala and banded mongooses are more or less resident, and leopards are also known to steal into the camp too.

But I think my most exhilarating find in Limpopo Tented Camp was to come across a Corncrake idly strutting through the open earth created by the roads to the units. I'd actually heard on the birding

network that others had seen them in and around the camp, too, but I had thought that might be a once-off and had not been expecting it. Spending my early years in Ireland and hearing their rasping call in springtime when visiting the remote north-western parts of the country are one of my enduring childhood memories, but you would never see them out in the open. So suddenly having one right there in front of you was very special. Corncrake is not the only rarity to be reported from Limpopo Tented Camp. I don't have any details or even recall who the observer was, but I do recall there was a claim of a Basra Reed Warbler from the surrounds of the Camp, too.

When one leaves the sanctuary of the Limpopo Tented Camp to travel to Maloutswa Hide, one emerges from the closed canopy of the camp precinct, which occurs in the rich alluvial deposits along the river, and is greeted by an extensive open plain, which was undoubtedly cleared for agriculture in previous times. At the start of this plain, there are some enormous trees outside the spread of the riparian forest, and one of these housed a nesting hollow for Southern Ground Hornbill. They, too, are prone to serenading the surrounding bushveld early in the mornings.



In my account of Maloutswa Hide, I spoke of the schizophrenic nature of the hide from what occurs there in the wet and dry season. This same variance applies to the floodplain. For much of the year, it will be very dry and at first, seemingly quite barren. Still, it is very popular with Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark and African Quailfinch, and Wattled Starlings and Red-billed Queleas will be abundant. At the same time, stately Kori Bustards and Secretarybirds will stalk through the veld in search of delicacies, but the real targets for birders must be coursers. Three species can be looked for: Bronze-winged, Temminck's and Three-banded, all possible, with a high expectancy rate.

ABOVE There is a Southern Ground Hornbill nest hole in a huge tree, just past the camp precinct en route to Maloutswa Hide © Chris Patton.

But when the floodplain contains water, there are many other things to look out for. The veld will be alive with the pogo-stick-like call of Harlequin Quails, African Crake will emerge from the wet grass, particularly in the early mornings, while Dwarf Bitterns will bark their presence, sometimes from cover, yet sometimes perching conspicuously out in the open.

If one refers back to the map of the park on pages 51 and 52, it will show that the road through the floodplain takes one to Maloutswa



ABOVE Three-banded Courser are found fairly regularly in Mapungubwe's western section © Johan du Preez.

RIGHT Their eggs are curiously buried into the sand to aid incubation © R and F Hurt.



Hide, but there is also a road down to the Limpopo River. This is a narrow single-lane track, and there are still places along its course where one can see signs of veterinary and military fences from past times. This road is frustrating in some respects because

there are very few places to view the river, but it is also amazing because one is driving through spectacular riparian forest. It feels like you are in your own little patch of private subtropical Africa. I have two specific birding memories of this route.



ABOVE Sunlight illuminating the bill of an African Pygmy Kingfisher on the river road © Chris Patton.

One is stumbling upon an African Pygmy Kingfisher where the sunlight illuminated its bill as if it was artificial. And the other is finding a roosting Pel's Fishing Owl.

Now, perhaps I should have started this memoir with the access road into the tented camp from the public gravel road, which on the map is labelled the Den Staat gravel road and leaves the park at Rhodes Drift Lodge en route to the Pontdrift border crossing into Botswana. This is only a short stretch of dirt road covering a distance of maybe a kilometre or two at most, but it has so many birding possibilities in both the

wet and dry periods. One is not yet in the riparian forest, but there is some wonderful open thornveld to drive through. There are many roadside depressions that will fill with water after rain, and in wet years, before one even gets to camp, one can sit and watch Lesser Moorhen and Allen's Gallinules being far less reclusive than one is typically used to.

I wrote earlier that there are some Kalahari species that you will find here that may be absent or hard to find in Kruger... and Violet-eared and Black-faced Waxbills are two such species to look out for.

It was also along this stretch that I first encountered Senegal Coucal in the Park, which, because of its similarity to Burchell's, may have been



overlooked in the past. There can also be large numbers of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters on show, and I secured the following photo on leaving the camp to return to the gravel road one year. It should also be added that carmines can be abundant on the floodplain too.

But my last birding memory from the western section of Mapungubwe was as I reconnected with the gravel road once. I could see a bird perched on one of the old agricultural fence

posts that separate the croplands from the public gravel road, and with the characteristic sandstone hillocks in the background, I fired a couple of

ABOVE Hearing the haunting hoot of a fishing owl is one of the possible attractions of a stay at Limpopo Tented Camp, and lucky visitors might find one in the riparian trees along the narrow Limpopo River track © Roy Ballantyne.



ABOVE Two of the waxbills more readily found in Mapungubwe than further east in Kruger - Black-faced Waxbill (LEFT) and Violet-eared Waxbill (right) © Mike Buckham.

shots of an unexpected Western Yellow Wagtail sitting on the fence. I know it's not a great photo, but it symbolises the unexpected that one can expect when visiting this remarkable part of the world.

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BELOW This Western Yellow Wagtail was a surprise find on the Den Staat Road at the junction with the road from Limpopo Tented Camp © Chris Patton.



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White-backed Vulture resightings

Daniel Engelbrecht

email: danielengelbrecht101@gmail.com

The following two tagged White-backed Vultures were recently resighted by me in the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate. The details follow below.

TAG A720: WHITE-BACKED VULTURE
The bird was tagged as an adult on the 11th of November 2021 during a mass capture at the Lornay

Airstrip in the Timbavati Game Reserve. It has been resighted five times since its initial tagging, the most recent resighting being in the Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate on the 10th of July 2024. The straight-line distance between the tagging and resighting locality was 24.7 km and the days elapsed were 973 days (2y, 8m).



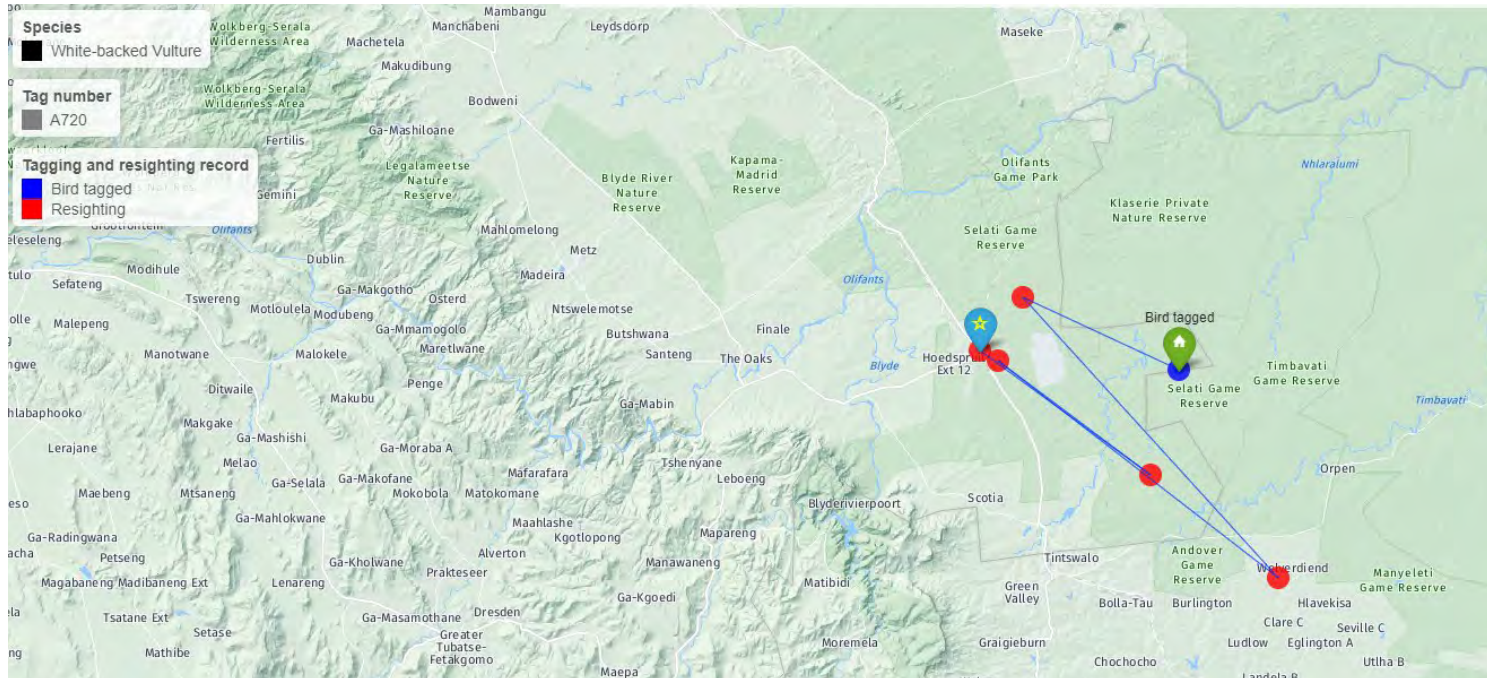
White-backed Vulture A720 © Daniel Engelbrecht

TAG A720: WHITE-BACKED VULTURE
The bird was tagged as an adult on the 19th of November 2021 at Khaya Ndlovu near Hoedspruit. It has been resighted six times since its initial tagging, the most recent resighting being in the

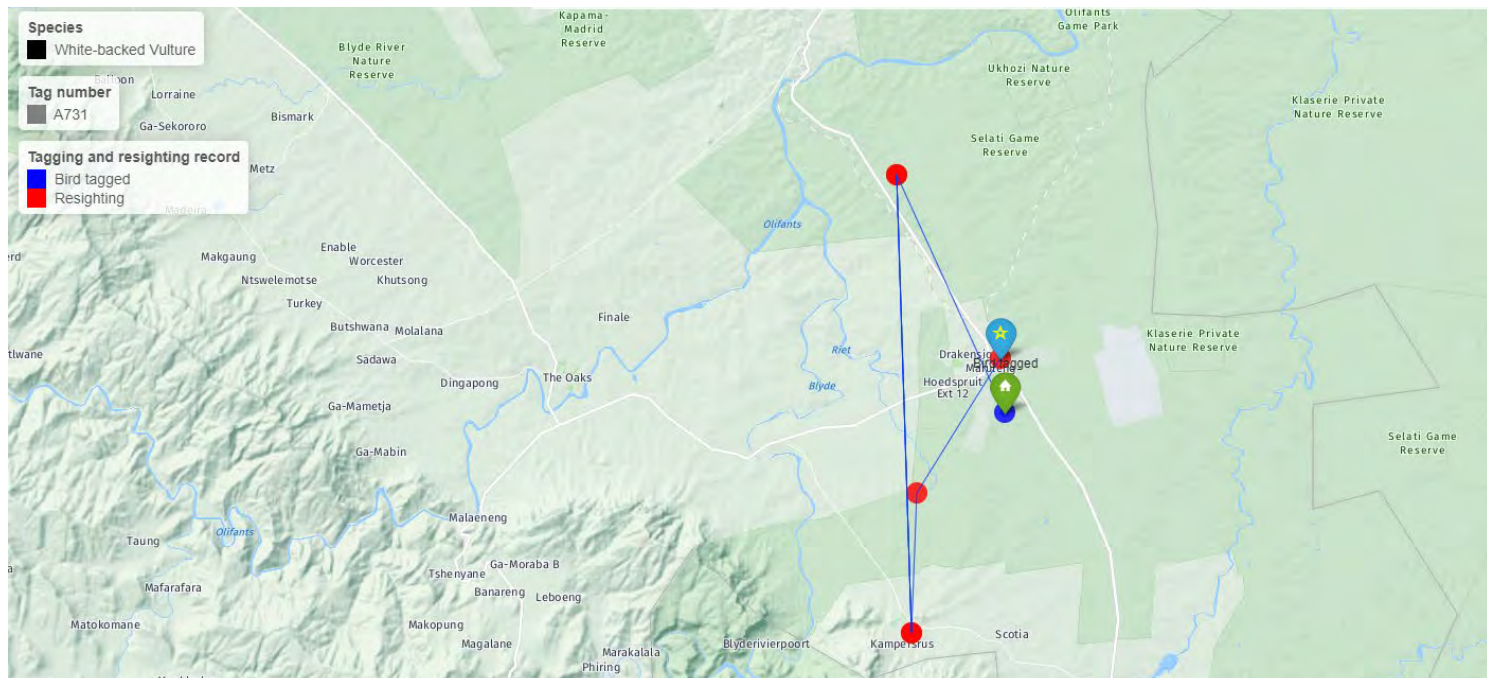
Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate on the 10th of July 2024. The straight-line distance between the tagging and resighting locality was 3.5 km and the days elapsed were 965 days (2y, 7m, 22 d).



White-backed Vulture A731 © Daniel Engelbrecht



Map showing initial tagging site (in blue) and resightings (in red) for White-backed Vulture A720. Data extracted on 7 August 2024.



Map showing initial tagging site (in blue) and resightings (in red) for White-backed Vulture A731. Data extracted on 7 August 2024.

Acknowledgements Thanks to Dr Gareth Tate, Manager: Birds of Prey Programme of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, for sharing the ringing details of these birds and preparing the maps.

Measurements and moult data of the Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis* Vieillot, 1817 in Namibia

Ursula Bryson and Dane M. Paijmans

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Moult of southern African parrots in the wild is little known, and the Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis* is no exception. Perrin (2005) noted there is no moult data for Rosy-faced Lovebirds. We present our moult data and biometrics for the nominate subspecies, *A. r. roseicollis* (Fig. 1) from Namibia, ringed between 2003 and 2024. The dataset includes moult data of 207 adults and 64 first-year birds.

Methods

Birds were captured and biometric and moult data were collected at the following localities.

- [Hobaterere](#) (19°19'S, 14°22'E),
- [Farm Hamakari](#) (20°36'S, 17°20'E),
- the [Erongo Mountains](#) (21°29'S, 15°52'E),
- [Farm Okatjerute](#) (22°21'S, 18°31'E), and

- [Farm Sphinxblick](#) (22°29'S, 15°27'E),

Biometric data were recorded as described by de Beer et al. (2001). All the rings used were SAFRING numbered rings. The following parameters were recorded: the length of the flattened wing chord, tail length, tarsus length, head length, culmen length and mass.

Results

Mass and measurements

A summary of the mass and selected measurements recorded are presented in Table 1.

The meristic data for unsexed birds in our sample are generally bigger than those presented by Maclean (1993; and also published in Perrin [2005]), but the provenance of Maclean's sample is unknown. The mean mass of the adult Namibian birds in our study was slightly less (mean = 53.1 g, n



Figure 1. Adult Rosy-faced Lovebird in fresh plumage with SAFRING ring, 26 June 2003, Farm Sphinxblick, Erongo region, Namibia. 5H32761, [ML621776429](#).

Table 1. Average measurements (mean \pm SD, range, sample size) of adult and first-year Rosy-faced Lovebirds *A. r. roseicollis* from Namibia.

Age \rightarrow	Adults	1 st -year birds
Parameter \downarrow		
Wing (mm)	105.4 \pm 2.9, 98.0–118.0, n = 142	103.2 \pm 2.5, 97.0–109.0, n = 60
Tail (mm)	51.3 \pm 2.9, 42.0–58.0, n = 131	48.0 \pm 3.1, 39.0–57.0, n = 58
Tarsus (mm)	14.5 \pm 0.6, 12.7–15.7, n = 74	15.0 \pm 0.6, 13.9–15.7, n = 16
Culmen (mm)	20.6 \pm 1.4, 16.2–25.0, n = 101	19.9 \pm 1.2, 15.9–21.9, n = 51
Head (mm)	33.9 \pm 1.2, 31.2–37.7, n = 104	33.4 \pm 1.0, 31.4–36.7, n = 51
Mass (g)	53.1 \pm 4.3, 45.0–67.3, n = 129	51.0 \pm 3.3, 45.0–58.7, n = 52

= 129) than the mean of 54.8 g (n = 18) reported by Maclean (1993) and 54.0 g (n = 29) given by Perrin (2005).

Nesting

Laying dates in Namibia span mainly from February to April (n = 30 nests), and one nest each in May and October (Brown et al. 2015). This is relevant for the moult records since primary moult generally starts after breeding. In

all the examples that follow, the moult sequence is given from p1 (proximal) and proceeding to p10 (distal).

The breeding season peaks in February and March, followed by a post-breeding moult commencing in April but mainly in May and June (Fig. 2). Figure 2 also reflects irregular moult patterns, mainly interrupted moult. Some birds showed two irregularities in one wing, e.g., SAFRING 4-70386 with

moult codes of 0000054004, or 4-97739 with 5553155550.

Out of 235 birds handled, 41 showed irregular moult, i.e., deviating from the descendent sequence. Additionally, we recorded an interrupted primary moult in 22 individuals with a moult code of 4 before the subsequent 0, with a varying number of fully grown primaries, e.g., SAFRING 4-97771 on 21 January 2008 with 5555400000, or SAFRING 4-97734

with 5540000000 in summer on 9 January 2007, but also in winter SAFRING 5H32763 on 26 June 2003 with the same 5540000000.

In six cases, moult was found starting after 2–5 old primaries (e.g., 0000045545, 0000053000, 0000054004, 0000055000, 0000555400, and 0045555553). In one case, the next primary moult cycle commenced with p1, while p9 and p10 had not yet moulted (1555555500).

In 20 cases, one individual feather was growing in an otherwise descendant moulting wing e.g., SAFRING 4-51888 with 5355555410, SAFRING 4-51858 with 5555100200, or even two: SAFRING 4-51866 with 0000055000.

We found suspended moult in numerous individuals. In eight individuals, moult was suspended at p8 or p9 (5555555500 and 5555555550) and one at p7 (5555555000). In six individuals, p6 was still growing without further continuation of the moult (5555540000), and the same was found in eight individuals at p7 (5555554000), in four individuals at p8 (5555555400) and three individuals at p9 (5555555540).

Month	adult										first-year										Nests	Moult Score		
	n	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	n	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8			P9	P10
Jul	0										0												0	
Aug	14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sep	10	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Oct	0											0											1	1
Nov	8	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Dec	6	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	2	0	0	3	1	1	1	3	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	2
Jan	73	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Feb	22	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0											12	3
Mar	0											0											12	
Apr	3	5	4	3	3	3	3	1	1	0	0	0											4	4
May	26	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	1	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Jun	46	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5

Figure 2. Extent of primary feather moult (p1 to p10) of adult and first-year Rosy-faced Lovebirds. Values are average moult scores of each primary for the number (n) of birds per month sampled. The colour gradient is shown on the side. Nest count values for Namibia are from Brown et al. (2015).

Retraps

From retraps we gained valuable information about the individual moult pattern over the years. We found considerable inter-annual variation in moult, which led us to hypothesize that the initiation and progression of moult is not intrinsic, but dependent on other (extrinsic) circumstances. Three examples follow:

- The moult score of SAFRING 4-97729 was 0/50 on 9 January 2007, 19/50 (5554000000) on 21 January 2008, and 0/50 again on 13 January 2010.
- For SAFRING 4-97775, the moult score was 49/50 (5555555554) on 25 January 2008, but 19/50 (5550040000) on 5 February 2009.
- Finally, for SAFRING 4-51887, its moult score was 29/50 (5555540000) on 17 January 2019, and already at 34/50 (5555554000) 23 December 2020.

As far as we can determine, the irregularity of the primary moult is also not consistent over the years. For example, SAFRING 5H19991 had a moult sequence of 5545444500 (moult score = 36/50) on 26 March 2003, and 5555555500 (moult score = 40/50) on 24 August 2004. SAFRING 5H32753 had all new (5555555555) (moult score

= 50/50) primaries on 26 June 2003, but on 31 May 2004, its moult sequence was 5555540000 (moult score = 29/50). Also, the moult sequence of SAFRING 5H32754 was 5555555550 (moult score = 45/50) on 26 June 2003, 5554555540 (moult score = 43/50) on 31 May 2004, and 5550000031 (moult score = 19/50) on 8 September 2005.

The individuals in Figures 3, 4 and 5 were ringed and photographed on the same day. Figure 3 shows a presumably second-year bird. The age was determined by the fresh primary p6 and p7 in pin between pale, brown, old primaries with worn tips, where they had been exposed to the sun. Also, the red area in the tail is paler than in the adult of Figure 4.

Figure 4 shows a presumably adult male. The age was determined by the advanced primary moult, darker p9 and p10 than in Figure 3 and the darker red area in the tail. Sex was determined by the broad subterminal band (Schwichtenberg 1973).

Figure 5 shows an adult. The age was determined by the primary moult starting at p4, and p5 in pin, and moult limits on primary coverts (blue arrow in Fig. 5a), and



Figure 3. Presumably second-year bird, with fresh primary p6 and p7 in pin between pale, brown, old primaries with worn tips where exposed. Note the pale red area in the tail. 24 December 2021, near the Waterberg, Farm Hamakari, Otjozondjupa, Namibia. SAFRING DH13354, [ML621979957](#).

the full colouration of head and mantle (Figure 5b).

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Brown, C. J., P. A. Bridgeford, S. G. Braine, M. Paxton, and W. Versfeld (2015). Breeding data on the birds of Namibia: laying months, colony and clutch sizes

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Figure 4. Adult, presumably male by broad subterminal band and well-expressed red in the tail. Primary moult score 5553553000. 24 December 2021, near the Waterberg, Farm Hamakari, Otjozondjupa, Namibia. SAFRING E39479, [ML621979964](#).

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Figure 5a. Adult with primary moult starting at p4, and p5 in pin, and moult limits on primary coverts (blue arrow). Primary moult sequence 0005100000. **5b.** Close-up of bright head and mantle, and grey area behind the ear coverts. 24 December 2021, near the Waterberg, Farm Hamakari, Otjozondjupa, Namibia. SAFRING DH13354, [ML621979961](#).

Red-winged Starling breeding observations Part 1: Nesting

Derek Engelbrecht

email: faunagalore@gmail.com

This note summarises some of my observations of a breeding pair of Red-winged Starlings on the Turfloop campus of the University of Limpopo. On October 15, 2023, I noticed a pair carrying nesting material. I watched them for a few minutes and soon discovered a nest in the early stages of construction on top of an air conditioning unit mounted on the wall of a tall building. The nest was about 3 m off the ground and within easy reach to monitor the breeding attempt.

Both sexes participated in nest construction, and although they were seen carrying nesting material at different times of the day, the delivery of nesting material peaked in the early morning until about mid-morning. The nest was a bulky structure with the following dimensions: maximum nest width = 218 mm, cup diameter = 68 mm, cup depth = 46 mm, and nest height = 81 mm. The nest had a

rather rough exterior, constructed of small pliable twigs, rootlets, grass blades and inflorescences, leaves (dead and green) and cob clods (a mixture of plant matter and mud). Although Craig (2005) mentions Red-winged Starlings using mud to bind the nest together, it seemed the cob clods at this nest were used purely for 'decorative' purposes as it was not bound to the nest but placed loosely along the base of the nest. The cup was lined with finer material.

21 October 2023: The female was seen sitting in the nest for at least an hour, but when I inspected it at about 14:30 (after she voluntarily vacated it), it was still empty.

23 October 2023: The female attended almost continuously, suggesting laying and incubation had commenced.

24 October 2023: At about 9:30, the nest was inspected, and it contained



ABOVE The bulky nest of the pair of Red-winged Starlings atop an air conditioner.

Table 1. Egg data for three eggs in a Red-winged Starling nest.

	1	2	3	Mean ±SD
Dimensions (l x w, mm)	33.12 x 23.99	33.23 x 22.87	32.87 x 23.44	33.07 ± 0.18 x 23.43 ± 0.56
Mass (g)	10.24	9.06	9.75	9.68 ± 0.59

three eggs. This suggests laying commenced on the 22nd of October 2023. The egg mass and dimensions of the three eggs are presented in Table 1.

Since the mass of the eggs was recorded within four days of

laying, the mass of the eggs can be regarded as the Fresh Egg Mass, which can be used to calculate the egg weight coefficient (K_w) for Red-winged Starlings. The egg weight coefficient for Red-winged Starlings is $K_w = 0.5328$ ($n = 3$ eggs).



ABOVE Three eggs and a hatchling as observed on October 6th, 2023.

2 November 2023: The nest was inspected at 09:00, and the female was still incubating four eggs. This suggests that the last egg of the clutch was laid on October 25th, 2023.

6 November 2023: One nestling had just hatched, and its plumage was not fully dry yet. If one assumes incubation commenced upon the laying of the first egg, this suggests an incubation period of 15 days.

The newly hatched nestling is sparsely covered with grey down on the dorsal surface, the ventral

surface being naked. The eyes are closed, the skin is pale pinkish, the bill is pale yellow, and the gape is paler yellowish-white. The claws are white. This nestling weighed 6.91 g at hatching and measured ~60 mm in length.

7 November 2023: At 09:00, there was still only one nestling, and none of the other three eggs were pipped.

8 November 2023: Two nestlings and two eggs.



ABOVE Three nestlings, the oldest (on the right) is seven days old.

9 November 2023: Three nestlings, one egg.

13 November 2023: The first primaries and secondaries are now in pin on the oldest nestling (i.e., seven days old). The rectrices are not yet in pin.

15 November 2023: Three nestlings, no egg.

17 November 2023: The first primaries and some secondaries are in brush on the oldest nestling (i.e., 11 days old).

30 November 2023: At 09:00, all three nestlings were still in the nest. The nestlings were now fully grown and appeared ready to fledge.

1 December 2023: Only one nestling in the nest at 09:00, but the nest was empty at 14:30. This suggests a nestling period of 24–25 days.

Although both sexes performed incubating and brooding duties, it was mainly the responsibility of the female. In fact, of more than 30 ad hoc observations of incubating/

Red-winged Starling breeding observations Part 2: The bomb squad

Derek Engelbrecht

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LEFT Three nestlings, the oldest (on the right) is 11 days old. The asynchronous hatching pattern can be seen in the different stages of feather development of these three nestlings.

LEFT Three nestlings approaching fledging. The oldest individual is 21 days old.

I was told not to look a gift horse in the mouth, so when I was presented with a Red-winged Starling nest within relatively easy reach, I decided to monitor the nesting attempt. I know starlings, particularly Red-winged Starlings, are aggressive at the nest and are known to dive-bomb and strike potential predators or humans venturing too close to the nest. In Part 1 of this 2-part mini-series of the nesting of a pair of Red-winged Starlings on the campus of the University of Limpopo, I reported on aspects of its breeding biology, e.g., egg mass and dimensions, the incubation and nestling period, and some notes about plumage development of the nestlings. Here, I report on nest defence by the breeding pair.

I found the pair carrying nesting material on October 15, 2023. Since the nest was midway between our car park and my office block, I walked past it twice daily and could see when incubation commenced on the 23rd of October. At no stage between the

15th and the 23rd did the pair show any aggression towards me. But the mood changed when I inspected the nest contents and weighed and measured the eggs on the 24th of October. The birds called their harsh charr alarm call and dive-bombed me, but fortunately, I wasn't struck on the first day. This was the order of events every time I climbed up to the nest to inspect the contents and record the nestlings' plumage development. Remarkably, I was struck only once during the observation period – on my shoulder – and to be honest, it hurt a lot! After that, precautionary measures when doing my 'rounds' included carrying a backpack, wearing a hard hat and having an 'aerial' with a small red flag extending about 30 cm above my head. OK, so nothing unexpected regarding their aggressive defence of their nest. What did surprise me, however, was how I became starling enemy #1 from then on.

For the next five weeks, I ran the gauntlet twice daily when walking the approximate 250 m between the car

brooding birds, I only saw the male twice in the nest, a figure remarkably similar to the 3 of 33 observations reported by Craig (2005).

The breeding success was 75% in this nest, with one egg not hatching. Nest defence will be discussed in Part 2.

References

Craig, A. J. F. K. (2005). Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio*. In Roberts Birds of Southern Africa (P. A. R. Hockey, W. R. J. Dean and P. G. Ryan, Editors), Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town, South Africa. pp. 961–962.

park and my office. The nest was about 90 m from my office block, but they would fly towards me as soon as the birds noticed me, sometimes from 100 m away. Initially, the bird/s wouldn't dive-bomb me but follow me closely, occasionally alarming and flying from one tree or building to another while keeping a wary eye on me. As soon as I entered within an approximately 30 m radius of the nest, the male (and the female if she wasn't already part of the entourage) would switch to attack mode. I

would be dive-bombed from all angles, and alarm calls would be hurled at me. The attacks would continue until I was beyond the nesting zone. This was somewhat embarrassing as I was singled out amongst the tens or hundreds of people in that area. Also, I usually walk with two colleagues when arriving or leaving, but the birds would single me out, leaving them alone. Furthermore, the birds were unperturbed if my colleagues were alone or if I wasn't with them



ABOVE The bomb squad - male left and female on the right © Derek Engelbrecht.

when passing the nest. This shows that Red-winged Starlings can distinguish between individual human beings – from 100 m away!

Once the nestlings fledged, the attacks ceased. Either the starling family moved away from the nesting zone, or the birds no longer considered me a threat.

Dickinson's Kestrel on the hunt

TEXT AND PHOTOS Derek Engelbrecht

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During a recent visit to Punda Maria Camp in the Kruger National Park, I spent some time in the camp's hide overlooking the waterhole. A pair of Dickinson's Kestrels was active around the waterhole, so I decided to sit it out to see if I could get to know this relatively rare raptor a bit better and perhaps capture some action. One of the pair flew off to a tree in the distance, but the other stayed within range and I focused my attention on this individual for the next hour or so.

Dickinson's Kestrel always favoured a high perch in a tall tree or

snag, but it was almost always below its highest point. Although some birds (starlings, oxpeckers, weavers, etc.) were aware of its presence, most birds just kept their distance, except, of course, for the constant mobbing of a Fork-tailed Drongo. In turn, the Dickinson's Kestrels showed little interest in avian prey, although it had a half-hearted attempt at catching a Greater Blue-eared Starling. It had a regular strike rate, about one attempt

BELOW The Dickinson's Kestrel chasing after a lizard on a dead tree.





ABOVE The Dickinson's Kestrel taking off with the frog in its beak, and (INSET) eating it in one of the trees.

every 5–10 minutes, and of eight strikes seen, five were successful. Once, it had just finished eating something small and was wiping its bill on a branch when it saw a lizard. It chased after it, clambering up along the main stem, almost like an African Harrier-Hawk. It then perched in a spot where I couldn't see the bird clearly, but judging by its behaviour, it must have caught the lizard.

It showed particular interest in the muddy edges of the waterhole and had good success catching whatever it saw there. I couldn't determine what it was catching, but I got some photos on the third attempt. It was catching frogs 'trapped' in elephant

footprints! It didn't appear to use its talons to capture the prey but instead caught the frogs using its bill and flew to a perch with the frog in its beak. Unfortunately, I couldn't identify the species of frog.

Please use and dispose of fishing gear in a responsible manner

The [Dyer Island Conservation Trust](#) launched the Fishing Line Bin project in Gansbaai in 2010. The bins are sponsored by MacNeil Plastics in partnership with PlasticsSA, and the project is supported by municipalities and conservation organisations along the South African coastline.



© Hugh Chittenden

A fishing line bin on the banks of the Blyde River near Hoedspruit.

© Derek Engelbrecht



Interesting sightings
16 June 2024 - 15 August 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

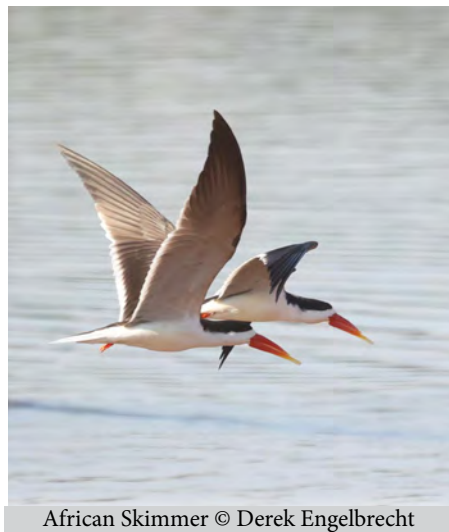
African Goshawk - 13 August 2024. One seen on the campus of the University of Limpopo (Derek Engelbrecht).

African Grey Hornbill - 9 August 2024. Three seen in Bendor (Jody de Bruyn).

African Skimmer - 2 July 2024. A pair seen at Letaba Estates (Johan Botma).

Common Greenshank - 15 August 2024. Returning migrant. One seen at Letaba Estates (Johan Botma).

Ovambo Sparrowhawk - 21 June 2024. One seen at Roodepoort town



African Skimmer © Derek Engelbrecht

south-west of Polokwane (Justin Rhys Nicolau).

Purple Roller - 21 July 2024. Seen on the Soetdorings road (Minkie Prinsloo).

Ruff - 15 August 2024. Returning migrant. One seen at Letaba Estates (Johan Botma).

Southern Red-billed Hornbill - 21 July 2024. One seen on the Polokwane Golf Course. The species is an occasional winter visitor to the Polokwane Plateau (Mark Friskin).

Spotted Eagle-Owl - 1 August 2024. One seen at Cycad Estate in Bendor (Fatima Cachalia). 10 August 2024. One at Koraal Retirement Village (Marie Botha).

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater - 15 August 2024. A small group seen at the Bushveld Hunters Shooting Range, Tzaneen (Hannes Swanepoel).

Yellow-billed Stork - 31 July 2024. Five at Flora Park Dam (Marcia van Tonder).

PASSERINES

Cape Bunting - 18 July 2024. One seen on Randfontein farm in near Haenertsburg (Schalk van Schalkwyk).

Cape Rock Thrush - 17 June 2024. Seen at Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve (Hannes Swanepoel).

Capped Wheatear - 21 July 2024. Seen on Soetdorings road near the Sand River bridge (Minkie Prinsloo); 11 August 2024. One seen near Vencor (Derek Engelbrecht).



Ovambo Sparrowhawk © Justin Rhys Nicolau



Spotted Eagle-Owl © Fatima Cachalia



Swallow-tailed Bee-eater © Derek Engelbrecht



Cape Bunting © Schalk Van Schalkwyk

Fairy Flycatcher - 30 June 2024. One seen in a garden at the Soetdorings smallholdings (Minkie Prinsloo).

Lark-like Bunting - 21 June 2024. Two seen near dam of the UL Experimental Farm (Justin Rhys Nicolau).

Lesser Striped Swallow - 1 August 2024. Returning migrant. A pair seen at Flora Park Dam (Mark and Julia Friskin).

Little Swift - 13 August 2024. Returning migrants seen at the University of Limpopo (Derek Engelbrecht).

Red-eyed Bulbul - 21 June 2024. A pair seen near Makotopong (Justin Rhys Nicolau).

White-crested Helmetshrike - 20 July 2024. Seven seen in Dorp suburb, Polokwane (Mark Friskin).

Wing-snapping Cisticola - 17 June 2024. Several seen at Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve (Hannes Swanepoel).

BEST OF THE REST LIMPOPO PROVINCE

NON-PASSERINES

African Cuckoo-Hawk - 3 August 2024. One seen in the Blouberg Nature Reserve (Richter van Tonder).

African Skimmer - 17 July 2024. Three individuals on the Olifants River at the Phalaborwa Barrage ([SA Rare Bird News Report - 18 July 2024](#)).

Bat Hawk - 9 August 2024. One near Rust De Winter Dam (Marna Buys).



Capped Wheatear © Derek Engelbrecht



Fairy Flycatcher © Daniel Engelbrecht



Lark-like Bunting © Derek Engelbrecht



African Cuckoo-Hawk © Jody De Bruyn

Glossy Ibis - 2 August 2024. One seen at Nagude farm, Letsitele (Derek Engelbrecht).

Kori Bustard - 7 August 2024. A pair seen on farm Doornpan near Marble Hall (Retha Weir).

Pink-backed Pelican - 28 April 2024. Seen at the Kgomo-Kgomo floodplain near Pienaarsrivier (Pieter Verster).

Rufous-bellied Heron - 8 August 2024. One seen on the Limpopo River floodplain in the Makuleke Concession, Kruger National Park (Ross Hawkins).

White-rumped Swift - 15 August 2024. Returning migrant. Several seen in a mixed flock with Little Swifts near Letaba Rest Camp, Kruger National Park (Derek Engelbrecht).

PASSERINES

Black-faced Waxbill - 25 June 2024. Two seen just south of the Levhuvhu River bridge near Pafuri ([SA Rare Bird News Report - 27 June 2024](#)).

Black Saw-wing - 15 June 2024. Two seen on the Letaba River at the Letaba Rest Camp, Kruger National Park ([SA Rare Bird News Report - 17 June 2024](#)).

Chestnut-vented Warbler - 25 June 2024. At the Levhuvhu River bridge at Pafuri, Kruger National Park ([SA Rare Bird News Report - 27 June 2024](#)).



Bat Hawk © Marna Buys



Kori Bustard © Retha Weir



Rufous-bellied Heron © Ross Hawkins



Black Saw-wing © Derek Engelbrecht

Crimson-breasted Shrike - 16 July 2024. The rare yellow morph of the species was seen at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve (Stefan Els).



Crimson-breasted Shrike © Stefan Els

Greater Striped Swallow - 2 August 2024. Returning migrant. Several seen in a mixed flock of swallows that included Grey-rumped and Lesser Striped Swallows at Nagude farm, Letsitele (Derek Engelbrecht).



Red-headed Finch © Daniel Engelbrecht

Lark-like Bunting - 17 July 2024. Several seen at the Bowkerkop waterhole near Mopani Rest Camp, Kruger National Park (Daniel Engelbrecht). 15 August 2024. Numerous birds drinking at the Malopenyana Waterhole at the turn-off to the Giryondo Border Post (Derek Engelbrecht).

Red-headed Finch - 17 July 2024. Seen at the Bowkerkop waterhole near Mopani Rest Camp, Kruger National Park (Daniel Engelbrecht).



Red-breasted Swallow © Derek Engelbrecht

Red-breasted Swallow - 15 August 2024. Returning migrant. A pair at the Malopenyana Waterhole at the turn-off to the Giryondo Border Post (Derek Engelbrecht).



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

LIMPOPO RARITIES

Bateleur

Terathopus ecaudatus

The Bateleur occurs in a very large range of habitats, through open savanna and woodland within sub-Saharan Africa.

The Bateleur is mainly found at altitudes below 3 000 m. They are not often seen in tropical forests or mountain areas, and very rarely occur in deserts. The Bateleur can forage extensively over treeless savannas.

During the breeding season, Bateleur pairs prefer closed-canopy savannah-woodland habitats including *Acacia* savanna, mopane and miombo woodlands, as they like to nest in large, leafy trees.



Mopane woodland is dominated by *Colophospermum mopane* - a small, deciduous tree. The wood is often used for building and fuel. This type of woodland is found particularly in regions with a dry climate.



Bateleurs rely on water sources for drinking and cleanliness.



The Bateleur spends a large amount of time on the wing. It uses its keen eyesight to scan the landscape for prey while conserving energy by gliding at low altitudes.

Map showing Bateleur range across Africa



Threats to the Bateleur

- **Loss of habitat** attributed to climate change, urbanisation and intensive agriculture.
- **Disturbance of the Bateleur pair** while breeding can result in the nest being abandoned, and the single chick not surviving.
- **Collisions with powerline cables, reservoir drownings and road casualties.**
- **Poisoned carcasses.** Bateleurs are sometimes inadvertently killed when they feed on poisoned carcasses.
- **Bateleurs are sometimes shot by poachers.**
- **The use of pesticides** is contributing to the decline of the Bateleur.



Bateleurs are found in northern and northeastern parts of South Africa, particularly in protected areas like the Kruger National Park.

For more information



Design and illustrations by Di Martin. Photographs used as reference for the illustrations were taken from iStock - Nathanx1; 123rf - M. Swanepoel; W. Tarboton and Wikipedia.

Mouse Free Marion

BE A PART OF HISTORY AND HELP SAVE MARION ISLAND'S SEABIRDS

SPONSOR A HECTARE NOW



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.

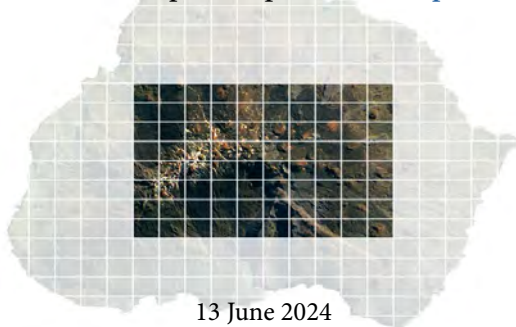
The bait required to cover the island alone will cost upwards of R30 million. To help raise the necessary funds, please would you consider sponsoring one or more hectares of land on Marion Island.

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.

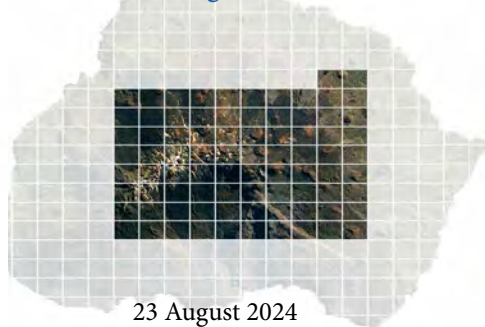
Be a part of history, and sponsor one (or more) hectares of this beautiful oceanic gem.

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



13 June 2024

Percent of target reached: 26.0%
Sponsored Hectares: 8012 ha
Sponsors: 1732



23 August 2024

Percent of target reached: 36.0%
Sponsored Hectares: 8257 ha
Sponsors: 1758

Saving Marion Island's Seabirds™
The Mouse-Free Marion Project



ALBATROSSES ON MARION ISLAND

1. Grey-headed *Thalassarche chrysostoma*
2. Wandering *Diomedea exulans*
3. Sooty *Phoebastria fusca*
4. Light-mantled *Phoebastria palpebrata*

mousefreemarion.org

UPCOMING EVENTS



Birdlife Polokwane Club Meeting
Date: 3 September 2024
Time: 18:00
Venue: Polokwane Golf Club

Birdlife Polokwane Club Meeting
Date: 8 October 2024
Time: 18:30
Venue: Polokwane Golf Club

Birdlife Polokwane Club Meeting
Date: 19 November 2024 (to be confirmed)
Time: 18:30
Venue: To be announced.

SAVE THE DATE

IVAD 2024

International Vulture Awareness Day

📅 7 September 2024 📍 Everywhere

Club outing

Where? Club Ranch -
Limpopo River valley
Date: 14 September 2024
Contact: Richter van Tonder
Cell: 082 213 8276



Shopping list: Pel's Fishing Owl, Meves's Starling, Tropical Boubou, White-crowned Lapwing, Meyer's Parrot, Temminck's Courser, Kori Bustard, White-backed Night Heron, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Southern Ground Hornbill, Water Thick-knee, etc.

Club outing

Where? Eshowe Farm -
Limpopo River Valley
Date: 4-6 October 2024
Contact: Richter van Tonder
Cell: 082 213 8276



Shopping list: Boulder Chat, Retz's Helmetshrike, White-crested Helmetshrike, Meyer's Parrot, Tropical Boubou, Meves's Starling, Grey Penduline Tit, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Bennett's Woodpecker, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Red-eyed Bulbul, and Freckled Nightjar.

Club outing

Where? Mahela - Nagude Farm
Date: 9 November 2024
Contact: Richter van Tonder
Cell: 082 213 8276



Shopping list: Hooded, White-backed and Cape Vultures, Tawny Eagle, Shikra, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Arnot's Chat, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Orange-winged Pytilia, Bushveld Pipit, Green-capped Eremomela, Grey Penduline Tit and many more.



Short-clawed Lark census

Where? Polokwane Game Reserve
Date: 12 October 2024
Contact: Derek Engelbrecht
Cell: 082 200 5277

We will be doing a census of Short-clawed Larks to compare with data collected nearly 20 years ago during the 2005/06 season. How has habitat changes in the reserve affected the numbers of this species?



Birding Big Day 2024 - 7 December 2024

Register at

<https://www.birdlife.org.za/birding-big-day-2024-entry-form/>

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.



Fiery-necked Nightjar © Derek Engelbrecht