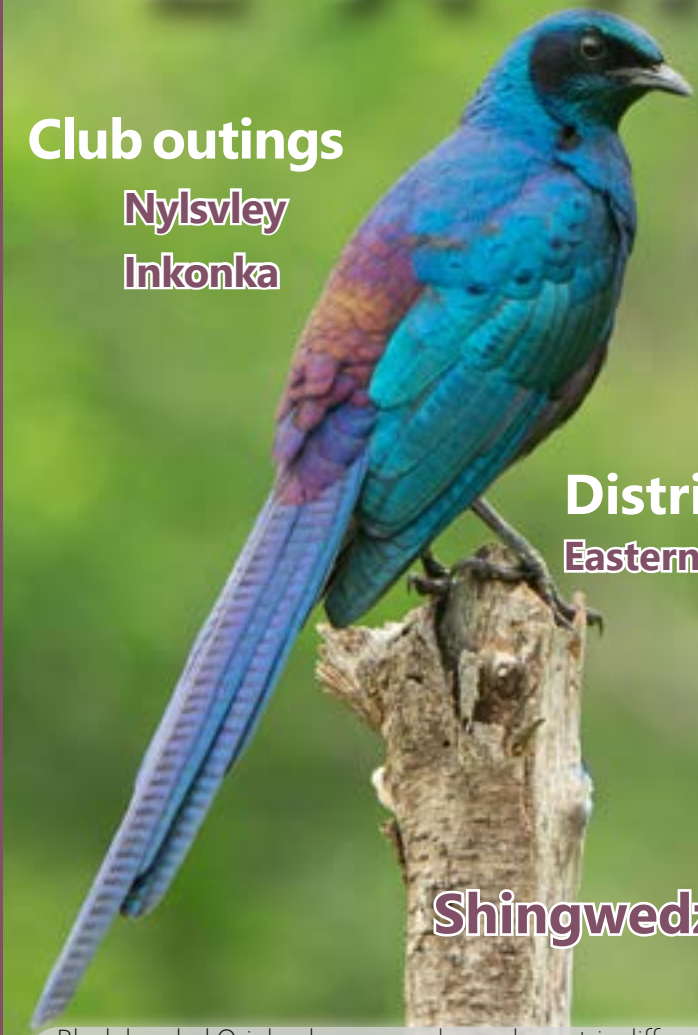
The Birdlife Polokwane Magazine 62 November/December 2025

THE LARK



Club outings

Nylsvley

Inkonka

Distribution

Eastern Long-billed Lark

Shingwedzi's Secret

Black-headed Oriole plumage and morphometric differences • Yellow-billed Stork notes • Common Bulbul retrap • Fishing line injuries to birds • Marico Sunbird longevity record • Weeping Boer-bean nectarivores • African Wood Owl in Polokwane • Predation records • Fiery-necked Nightjar nest and egg details

Birdlife Polokwane

Affiliated to BirdLife South Africa

BirdLife SOUTH AFRICA Giving Conservation Wings

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.

The editors reserve the right to edit articles as necessary. All images are copyright protected and the property of the author/s of the article unless otherwise stated. Please send all your contributions to the editors at thelarknews@gmail.com.

The opinions expressed by contributors in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editors, the Birdlife Polokwane committee or Birdlife South Africa.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE:

15 December 2025

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

Cover page theme 2025: Limpopo Specials

Cover Meves's Starling © Daniel Engelbrecht.

CONTENT

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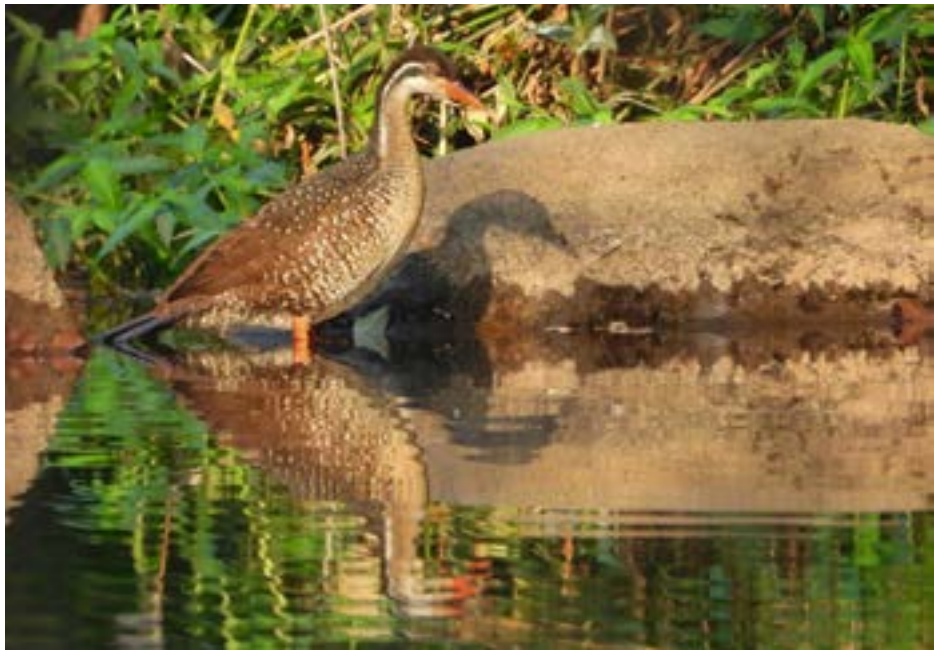
November/December 2025

Featured

For a lark ...



African Finfoot 3-in-1 © Derek Engelbrecht.

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Editors' chirps

It's hard to believe this is the last edition of 2025, a year in which we celebrated six of Limpopo's special birds. It's a pity there were only six issues, because we are blessed with so many specials in our province. In 2026, we set the bar high as our front cover theme will be "Young Birds", so keep snapping away at young birds in the coming months.
While we prepare for 2026, BirdLife South Africa's Bird of the Year will be the Black Harrier—more about this in the next issue. Also, in case you haven't noticed, BirdLife South Africa has a new logo - the Blue Crane. Well, it's not entirely new. The Blue Crane was the original logo of the South African Ornithological Society until 1996, when it morphed into BirdLife South Africa and adopted the Arctic Tern, the logo of its parent partner, BirdLife International. There is nothing wrong with the remarkable Arctic Tern, but it is nice to return to a homegrown species.
This edition is a medley of interesting trip reports, expeditions and natural history observations. If you haven't visited the Shingwedzi Bird Hide, be sure to add it to your to-do list. There is always something happening there. You can read about this relatively new addition to the Shingwedzi birding experience in Pietman Muller's article on page 13.
Jody de Bruyn's article is a testament to the fact that there is still much to discover about our birds. To all the intrepid and adventurous birders, get out there and report your discoveries. And finally, Derek spent time at some flowering Weeping Boer-beans and added no fewer than seven new records for *Schotia* nectarivory, and, together with a literature search of nectarivory, the number of avian *Schotia* nectarivores was raised from 54 to 75 species.
We hope you enjoy this edition as much as we enjoyed compiling it, and we look forward to your contributions in future editions.
We wish our readers an enjoyable festive season.
Raelene and Derek

Red-billed Oxpecker © Derek Engelbrecht

The feathered jewels of Nylsvley

text by **Cornet Kleynhans**

photos by **Jody de Bruyn**

White-backed Ducks

The African Fish Eagle's typical call welcomed us as we arrived at Nylsvley. The sun had just risen, and the vlei was full of surprises. It stretched out beside and before us like a lush green carpet.

On the 13th of September 2025, five of us visited Nylsvley. We left Polokwane at 4 am and arrived at our destination at dawn. Initially, the weather was rather chilly, but it soon turned out to be perfect for outdoor activities. Although we wore gumboots, the pathways were not too wet or slippery. Those in shorts complained about mosquitoes, but perhaps the excitement of seeing birds everywhere soon made up for the discomfort.

From the very start, numerous birds were present; 113 species were logged for the day! Early morning peak traffic included fly-bys of numerous African Darters, African Spoonbills, Black-crowned Night Herons, and Blue-Billed Teals.

Below One of many African Spoonbills that flew passed us.

Two tern species were also spotted, namely the Whiskered and White-winged Tern.

There were also plenty of birds on land and water. We had the chance to observe the copper-coloured Glossy Ibis and Yellow-billed Stork up close. The Goliath Heron displayed its impressive wingspan and spread its wings for a photo. A Marsh Owl circled the drier grassy edges of the vlei for quite some time. Some of us were lucky enough to see the out-

Above The stately Great Egret with a small catfish.

Below A Marsh Owl coursing over dry grassland.

Above The Rufous-bellied Heron was one of the highlights of the day.

of-range Rufous-bellied Heron, as well as Curlew Sandpiper, with their characteristic downward-curving beaks, flying alongside a flock of Little Stints. This marked the first

Above A few Curlew Sandpipers amongst a flock of Little Stints caused great excitement - the first SABAP2 record of the species at Nylsvley.

record of this species at the reserve since SABAP2 began in 2007. Curlew Sandpipers are mainly passage migrants in our region, so spotting them was very fortunate. Other uncommon birds seen included the White-backed and Fulvous Whistling Ducks. The White-backed Ducks were constantly active, either diving for food or floating calmly while scanning the skies warily.

The area is a mosaic of habitats: acacia, Combretum, broad-leafed woodland, and grassy floodplains, creating an interesting mix of birdlife. Within the reserve, the habitat is more bushveld. We visited the secluded Jacana Hide, surrounded by reeds, which was well worth the stop due to the abundance of bird activity. Other charming birds of the day included the Brown-hooded Kingfisher, the shy Purple Heron, the ever-present African Stonechat, the long-beaked Squacco Heron, and many more. Although I have always loved birds, as a newcomer to the group and with








From left to right, top to bottom Burchell's Starling, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Fulvous Whistling Duck, White-throated Swallow, Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Tern, Southern Red-billed Hornbill, Black Crake.

limited knowledge on the subject, these outings are very stimulating and memorable for me. Birding is truly a fascinating new world opening before me. Even the quite common African Jacana captivates me; its white throat contrasts with its body's Sienna-red feathers. Its legs resemble stilts. Seeing them was indeed a personal highlight. I also especially enjoyed the Black Crakes (lifer), with their bright yellow beaks, cadmium-red legs, and quick, humorous, energetic movements in the shallow water. Needless to say, I encountered many more lifers. Interesting animals seen included the Roan, Reedbuck, and Tsessebe. We also saw Common White Water Lilies. Other highlights for me were the mysterious bird sounds emanating from within the lush reeds and the soothing sound of gently flowing water. The images of free-flying birds against a clear blue sky are now etched into my memory. Thank you to everyone who made this unforgettable outing possible.

Other enjoyable highlights for me were the mysterious bird sounds coming from inside the lush reeds and the soothing sound of gently flowing water. The images of free-flying birds against a clear blue sky are now etched into my memory. Thank you to those who made this unforgettable outing possible.

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a hidden gem

Shingwedzi's bird bath

text and photos **Pietman Muller**

Little Sparrowhawk

Tucked away in the aloe garden near the east gate of Shingwedzi Rest Camp, Kruger National Park, are a few quirky structures, three of which resemble tiny bus stops. This is Shingwedzi's bird watching and bird photography area. It consists of a raised bird bath and three mini-shelters that allow for bird photography at eye level.

Since its completion about two years ago, I have observed the following birds at the bird bath: Pearl-spotted Owlet, Little Sparrowhawk Green Woodhoopoe, Arrow-marked Babbler, various starlings, including Violet-backed, Greater Blue-eared,

Below The Shingwedzi birdwatching and photography area, with the mini bus stop in the foreground © Derek Engelbrecht.

Above The bird bath does not only attract birds - two Vervet Monkeys are taking a drink.

Top In July, the aloe garden attracts a plethora of sunbirds, offering excellent opportunities to photograph these shimmering beauties.

Right An inquisitive Brown-hooded Kingfisher making an appearance.

Overleaf A collection of some of the photos taken at the Shingwedzi bird bath.

Cape, and Meves's, Black-headed Oriole, Long-billed Crombec, Red-headed Weaver, Blue Waxbill, firefinches, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Crested Barbet, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Grey Go-away-bird, Grey-headed Bushshrike, and many more! Several sunbird species are also abundant when the aloes bloom in July.

A new walking trail has been laid out through the aloe garden and the A-circle of the camp, to facilitate bird watching, as well as viewing several tree species in the camp. The month of July is an excellent time to see sunbirds and other birds here. The best times are in the mornings around 10 am and especially in the afternoons after 2 pm. The mini-shelters are positioned to take into account the position of the sun throughout the day and chosen as such to ensure a clean backdrop for photos. Just take a bean bag or a monopod with you to rest the camera on (and maybe a pillow for yourself!).

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A buzz of weavers


Long-billed Crombec


Greater Blue-eared Starling


Black-headed Oriole


Grey Go-away-bird


Crested Barbet


Fork-tailed Drongo


Cape Starling


Golden-tailed Woodpecker

Johan Janse van Vuuren

BirdLife Polokwane hosted a birding weekend from 10 to 12 October 2025 on the Inkonka Game Farm in the scenic Kudus River valley between Mooketsi and Houtbosdorp. This is a fantastic area with a great diversity of habitats, forest-like scrub, mountains, plains and small water streams – and lots of birds! It was quite dry at the time, and water in the bush was limited to artificial water holes and some rock pools.

On Friday afternoon, a group of seven club members arrived, with two couples deciding to camp, while the rest stayed in the chalets for the weekend. Birding was done in the camp, as well as around the braai and deck areas. During the late afternoon, we heard a Red-chested Cuckoo in the distance and later in the evening, the calls of the Fiery-necked Nightjar and African Wood Owls. Birding around the lodge's deck area was quite good, and by the end of Friday evening, approximately 20 species were already on our list.

Some club members opted for a day outing, leaving Polokwane on the Saturday morning at approximately 05:00 and arriving at the farm just after 06:30. First, it was a quick leg stretch and coffee break at the camp, while some did a bit of birding around the lodge. The Scarlet-chested Sunbirds entertained us by feeding on flowers close to the lodge's deck area. There were also sightings of the Purple-crested Turaco and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds, to name a few. All indications were that it was going to be a very hot day, and we were not disappointed as temperatures eventually soared to 34°C!

At approximately 07:00, our group boarded the three game drive vehicles, and we set off in search of the feathered beauties. The main target species for most of the group were the Gorgeous Bush Shrikes (Konkoit) and Narina Trogons. At our second stop, we heard the Konkoit, but, as usual, they played their favourite game of hide and seek, only giving us brief

Below Scarlet-chested Sunbirds were in constant attendance at the deck © Elize Mostert.

Above The exquisite flowers of the Impala Lily © Elize Mostert.

obstructed glimpses and no real photo opportunities. At the next stop at the Bush Camp for a coffee break, we spotted a Brown Snake Eagle, which was the first sighting on the farm. Again, the Konkoits did their antics by calling and then hiding. Luckily, some of the group managed to get sightings and photos, allowing them to tick the bird off as a lifer. The Narina Trogon was missing in action for the whole day.

While birding at one of the spots, a Jackal Buzzard flew over the group and, close to one of the farm houses, a Yellow-throated Longclaw and Black-winged Kite were spotted in an open area. All three of these birds were new records for Inkonka's bird list.

At around 12:00, everybody arrived back at the lodge, where we updated the farm's bird list and enjoyed boerie rolls and sauces. The day group left for Polokwane at approximately 13:30, and the rest of the group had a short "shut-eye" to recover from the early morning rise and the effect of the heat. During the

Above The habitat at Inkonka
© Elize Mostert.

Left The tiny Yellow-breasted Apalis
© Elize Mostert.

evening, we were joined by one of the farm owners and enjoyed a nice braai together. The Fiery-necked Nightjar entertained with a few fly-bys, and the Red-chested Cuckoo again announced that he had arrived back.

In total, we spotted approximately 75 species for the weekend, of which 23 were new records for the farm. This raised the farm's official bird list to 130 species. The highlight of the trip was undoubtedly the brief sightings of the Konkoit, which were a first for some of the group. The Red-faced Cisticola was heard but not seen. This would have been a lifer for me - if only I could have taken a photo.

Except for the birds already listed above, we inter alia also had sightings of the following species: Long-crested Eagle, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Lesser Honeyguide, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Red-faced Mousebird, Swee Waxbill, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Cardinal Woodpecker, Violet-backed Starling, Ashy Flycatcher, Long-billed Crombec, Southern Black Flycatcher, and White-rumped Swift, to name a few.

Above A huge fig tree provided the ideal setting for a quick picnic break
© Madeleine Spies.

Some of the special birds of the farm that eluded us were: Broad-billed Rollers, Crowned Eagles, Verreaux's Eagles, Narina Trogons and African Hawk-Eagles.

We will plan another outing to Inkonka in 2026, but this time when all the migrants are back. Just look out for the dates on the club's communication channels. It would be great if we could take over the entire camp for our next planned club weekend trip.

For more information about accommodation options, please click here.

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Cost excludes: Conservation fee and accommodation
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Hiding in plain sight

finding Limpopo's Eastern Long-billed Larks

text and photos **Jody de Bruyn**

Eastern Long-billed Lark

In August 2022, a distinctive whistle revealed the presence of an Eastern Long-billed Lark in the Kwaggavoetpad Nature Reserve, the first record in the province for 14 years (Engelbrecht 2022). In August 2025, Richter van Tonder and I returned to the same rocky hillside in the Kwaggavoetpad Nature Reserve where we recorded it three years earlier. We found the species once again, suggesting that the 2022 records were not a one-off event, but rather that this isolated population is likely resident in the reserve and surrounding areas.

Kwaggavoetpad Nature Reserve can be found about 30 km from the southern border of Limpopo, accessible from the R579. The reserve is characterised by its predominantly treeless, undulating grassy hills with patches of strewn rocks. With so much of the same habitat around, the question is: are there more Eastern Long-billed Larks in this area?

Below The habitat at the Kwaggavoetpad Nature Reserve is ideal for this lark - short grass in rocky grassland.

Above Surveying its territory from a boulder.

The Eastern Long-billed Lark is endemic to South Africa and Lesotho. Its preferred habitat is centred on upland grasslands, particularly where there are rocky ridges and slopes. Its distribution in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces makes for interesting reading. The core parts of the northern limits of the species fall tantalizingly close to the southern border of the Limpopo Province. With numerous records of the species immediately to the south of the Limpopo Province, the question arose whether there is a "hidden" resident population in some isolated upland grassland patches in the southern Limpopo Province?

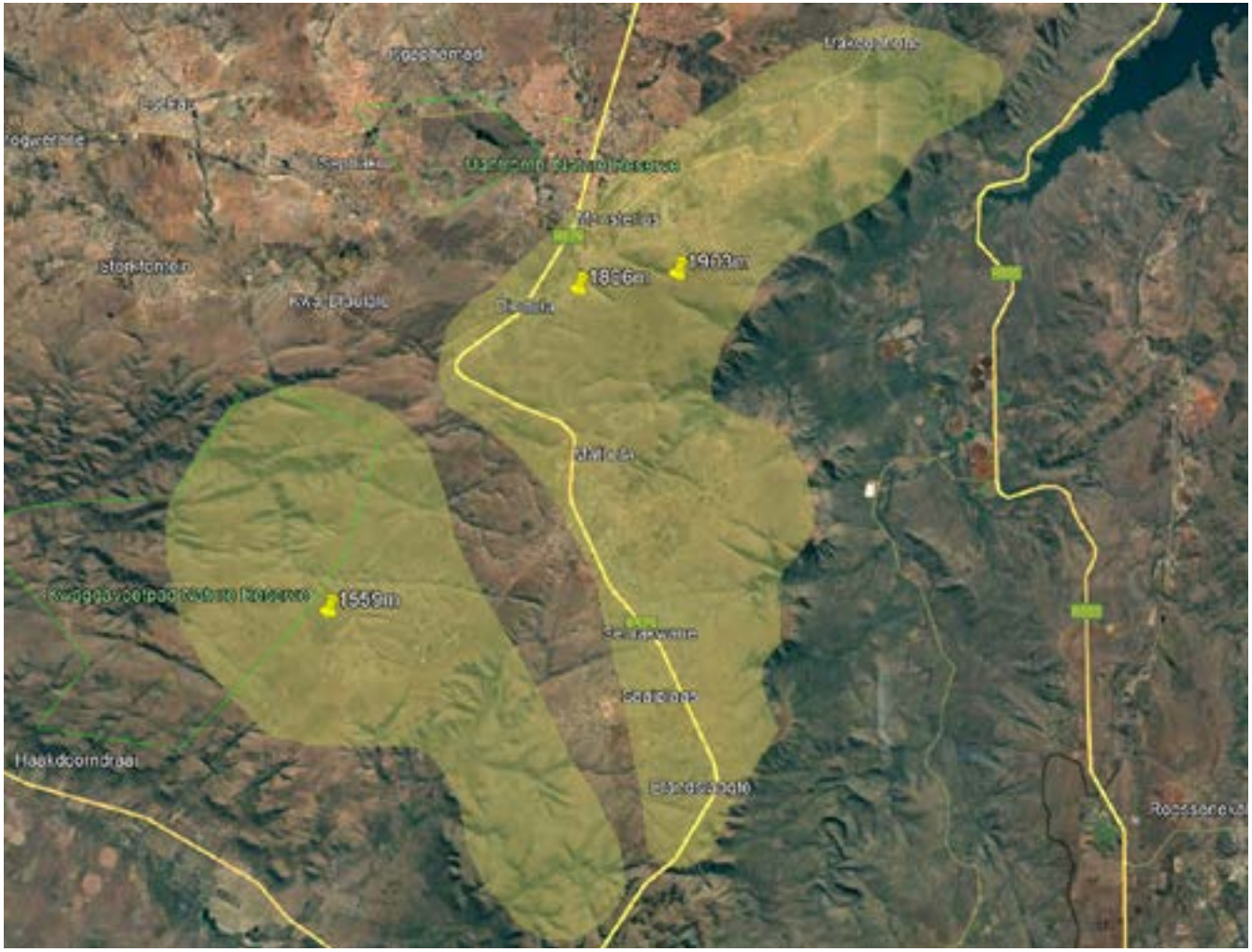
In the early 1980s, the species was recorded in quarter-degree grid square 2528BB, in the mountainous highlands south of Mkhombo Dam (Tarboton et al. 1987). However, the species then went undetected during the first South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1 from 1987–1991). In fact, the first documented record in the province since the early 1980s was in 2008, when Warren McCleland encountered the species east of Ohrigstad in pentad 2445_3035 2008 (see SABAP2). It was thought that the paucity of records in the province indicates that the Eastern Long-billed Lark was an occasional, perhaps seasonal, visitor to the province.

We launched several "expeditions" to pentads in the Tonteldoos region in southern Limpopo, to find the "lost lark". There is plenty of suitable habitat for Eastern Long-billed Lark around Tonteldoos and, importantly, it has been recorded in some neighbouring pentads in Mpumalanga. However, all our efforts proved unsuccessful.

We then shifted our attention to areas with potentially suitable habitat in the Kwaggavoetpad region. A promising high-altitude area was identified near Dindela village, which seemed to match the Eastern Long-billed Lark's typical habitat preferences perfectly. The terrain, characterised by grasslands and rocky slopes, provided the perfect setting for a targeted search. Upon exploring the area, we were thrilled to discover at least two more pairs of these birds near Dindela village. This new finding, in conjunction with the records from the Kwaggavoetpad Nature Reserve, confirms my suspicion that the birds are likely more common in suitable habitats than the current records suggest.

In my opinion, these discoveries suggest a population that likely extends along the rocky slopes running parallel with and to the east of the R579, possibly from Makgophong village in the north to Elandslaagte in the south. The new records from Kwaggavoetpad Nature Reserve and Dindela village, which falls well within the boundaries of the Limpopo province, are significant because they fill in a crucial distribution gap and challenge the long-held notion that the species is an occasional visitor to the Limpopo Province.

The limited number of atlased or documented Eastern Long-billed Lark records from this region is likely a result of low numbers of atlasers within these isolated, often difficult-to-access areas. Another contributing factor for the low reporting rates and number of records could be the agricultural activities from rural communities, which may well lead to the disturbance of these isolated populations, forcing the larks to search other undisturbed, suitable habitat elsewhere, where human interference and access are limited. Possibly with some future atlasing in these areas, the status of Eastern Long-billed Lark, could change from uncommon and isolated to, a range-restricted but common Limpopo species.



Above The pins indicate the recorded sightings, with altitudes varying from 1,550–1,900 m of elevation. The highlighted yellow suggests the possible areas where Eastern Long-billed Lark can be found.

References

Engelbrecht, D. (2022). Interesting sightings 16 August to 15 October 2022. The Lark 22:79–83.

Tarboton, W. R., M. I. Kemp, and A. C. Kemp (1984), Birds of the Transvaal. Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, South Africa.

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ROBERTS 8 WISH LIST

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.

All honeyguides
- Photos showing behaviour
- Young birds with their hosts

Woolly-necked Stork
- Nests and nestlings
- Different age classes
- Behaviour
- Diet
- Typical habitat

Black Harrier
- Foraging and with prey
- Typical habitat
- Nests, eggs, and nestlings

Chestnut Weaver
- Different age classes
- Photos showing diet
- Photos showing behaviour, interactions, birds at nests, nestlings, etc.
- Photos of nests

African Spoonbill
- Photos related to breeding, e.g., nests, eggs, chicks, etc.
- Photos showing behaviour and interactions
- Photos showing diet

Recently published species accounts

Southern Brown-throated Weaver
Pale-winged Starling
Green-headed Oriole
Temminck's Courser
Burchell's Courser
Lowland Tiny Greenbul

Regulars

Birds in Art

Pied Kingfisher

Text and Artwork

Willem van der Merwe

View my gallery by clicking on the logo below:

DEVIANT ART

Pied Kingfisher

Our bird art for this issue features the Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* – I have made two depictions of it, so here are both of them. For some reason, both are showing a male! The female looks similar but only has a single, broad black band, often broken in the middle, across her chest.

Unlike the woodland kingfishers, such as the Woodland Kingfisher featured in the previous issue, the Pied Kingfisher really does fish most of the time! You're likely to see it, hovering in one place relatively high over the water, rapidly beating its wings while scanning the water with its sharp eyes. It has a very keen vision and can even see in the ultraviolet spectrum. It is the largest bird species capable of sustained, active hovering. When it spots a fish, it will plunge with its long bill first, trying to catch it, not by spearing it, but by grabbing it in its bill. It is quite a successful hunter of small fish. This ability to hover over the water makes it independent of waterside perches, which most other birds that fish from outside of the water (unlike birds that swim and dive to fish) use. Indeed, these kingfishers can sometimes be seen a great distance away from the shore, over the water of the huge lakes of the African Rift Valley, or even over the sea. Indeed, they may be out of sight of any land. Still, these kingfishers do use perches, if available. Perched birds will regularly bob their heads and tails. Often, after catching a fish, they will return with it to a perch to beat it against it, to stun or kill it before swallowing it. They do this with larger fish, swallowing the smaller ones directly after catching them in flight.

Pied Kingfishers often occur together as couples. The males court females in groups of up to 12. They perform a kind of 'dancing' display, calling while spreading their wings, chasing each other, fighting with their bills and wings. Males will offer food to the female as well, sometimes regularly for a period of three weeks. Once mated, males and females will perform synchronised flights together. If using a perch, the male and female will usually perch close to each other. But they tend to

Left A male on his perch.

hunt separately, with females being found more often where the shores are rocky, where there often exist nesting sites close by, while the males can hunt greater distances away. The females are limited by having to spend more time close to their nests when breeding, to brood eggs and care for chicks. These kingfishers are very vocal, their loud, high-pitched twittering betraying their presence. To neighbouring birds, they display and show their ownership of their territories by raising their crests. They also often roost in groups at night, perching in trees or sheltering in holes in steep riverbanks or cliffs. They regurgitate pellets with indigestible fish bones and scales at these roosting sites.

Another interesting social feature is that many times, a kingfisher couple will have an assistant! This assistant might be their own chick, usually a one-year-old male. But it might even be an unrelated kingfisher! This will also be a male, but one that doesn't have a female and a nest, or one that's failed at nesting. For some reason, this unrelated male kingfisher will decide to aid a couple. This might help it gain experience, which will aid it in the future when it manages to nest and breed. Strangely, in this species, there are more adult males than females … maybe up to 1.5 males for each female.

Below A pair (male left, female right) eyeing out a potential nest site in an earth bank © Derek Engelbrecht.

Whatever the case, the helper will assist the breeding couple by bringing them fish. There is sometimes a little show-fight before the helper relinquishes the fish to the breeding male or the female. Pairs living in areas with less abundant fish are more likely to wind up with a helper. Or sometimes more than one helper! In Kenya, up to four helpers have been recorded aiding a single breeding kingfisher couple.

Helpers also help with 'mobbing' predators. This behaviour is for the sake of making the predator's presence known, so that it can't sneak up on unsuspecting birds. The birds will call loudly, circle over the predator and swoop and dive at it, often managing to chase it away.

In South Africa, the breeding season for Pied Kingfishers is from August to November. Like other kingfishers, they breed in holes. They usually excavate these themselves in steep riverbanks, using their bills to peck, but they have been seen to usurp the nests of White-fronted Bee-eaters (Derek Engelbrecht, personal communication). Once the tunnel is deep enough, they enter it and scrabble loose earth backwards and out with their feet. The tunnel can be as long as 2 m. The clutch can be from one to seven eggs, most often five. The baby kingfisher chicks themselves do some work at nest sanitation, digging out earth from the walls and floor of the nesting chamber with their beaks, to cover their faeces.

Thankfully, Pied Kingfishers are not threatened. They are among the most abundant kingfisher species in the world. They're found all over sub-Saharan Africa, and are conspicuous where they occur. They also occur in Iraq and in southern and eastern Asia, from India eastward to China. They have benefited in some places from human-created lakes and the stocking of these with fish. They're not seen as a nuisance, and in some areas of Africa, they are tamed and kept as pets.

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Reflections

Birding in SANParks Limpopo parks

Pafuri Picnic Site

The Perfect Place to Pause in Paradise

Chris Patton

Above The Pafuri region in the far northern Kruger National Park - a birder's paradise!

Pafuri Picnic Site is along the S63 on the southern banks of the Levhuvhu River, about 5 kilometres from the H1 tar arterial road that runs through the length of the Park.

The Pafuri Picnic Site is unique, and the perfect place to break the absolute birding frenzy of a visit to the Pafuri region, with coffee, a picnic, a fried breakfast (there are stand-up gas frying pans for hire) or a braai (grids and fireplaces are also available) … some of you might need a catnap too. But it is also an outstanding place to bird at, in its own right. Lofty Leadwoods *Combretum imberbe* and giant Jackalberries *Diospyros mespiliformis* are prominent amongst the profusion of stately riparian trees that create wonderful shade and ambience at the site, and host a steady stream of birds moving through the canopy and mid to upper stratum of these trees throughout the day. At the same time, the open expanse of bare earth means it's easy to get around, and to move between scanning the river, the overhead canopy or the undergrowth that flanks the river, the parking area, the interpretation display kiosk, and the two ablution blocks (one on the western side, the other on the eastern side of the site), all combined where plenty of interesting birds will lurk or pass through.

Birding begins in the parking area, an expansive cleared zone adjacent to the picnic site's cleared area. Natural logs (Leadwood, I think) separate the parking area from the picnic area. The logs are raised on short natural pole stumps, with gaps periodically spaced to allow people to walk through into the picnic site clearing. But visitors should first look back away from the river and the picnic site to the open skies and out to the baobab-strewn hillocks that are a feature of the area and punctuate the open floodplain that I described in September's edition of Reflections (The Lark 61). This vista from the parking zone is a regular

place to find Böhm's Spinetail, which can be seen anywhere along the river roads around Pafuri, but the open space behind the Picnic Site's parking area is a better place than most.

From the parking lot, the first bird you encounter will likely be the ever-active Meves's Starling (or, in my early visits to the Park, what was then called Long-tailed Starling). These birds are a staple of the entire Pafuri Area, and it's impossible to miss them.

I know I first visited the Pafuri Area with my family in 1985 and 1987. Still, those early picnic site memories are all a bit hazy 40 years on, although I do remember my

Above Pafuri Picnic Site is a beautiful blend of towering trees, tangles of tropical shrubbery, river vistas, and cleared bare earth punctuated with braai stands, picnic tables, an interpretation display kiosk and a central pergola © Chris Patton.

Opposite top Böhm's Spinetail © Tommy Liversage.

Right Meves's Starling © Dries de Wet

brother flushed an African Wood Owl on one visit, which, at the time was a bird I hadn't seen, and caused my brother (who is almost 5 years younger than me, but also a keen birder) to delight in lauding that over me until I finally tracked one down a few years later…But my first clear memory of something special there was in December 1988, when after just finishing high school, a birding buddy (one Anthony (Billy) Mills) and I, had set off on a 3-week camping trip over the length of Kruger in his mom's Volkswagen Passat station wagon, culminating in about 5 nights at the nearby Punda Maria Camp, so we made the trek up to Pafuri a couple of times.

We knew that in those days Narina Trogon's were regulars at the site and could be called up by cassette tape playback or even by cupping one's hands and blowing into them. With teenage enthusiasm, meaning we had no regard for the potential stress to local birds that playback might cause, we tried our luck… Regular readers might recall from my article on Punda Maria's Mahonie Loop (Western and Southern section) from The Lark 46, that completely by chance, I had only secured my first trogon sighting a day or two before, this one was also a more or less instant strike, and resulted in drawing a crowd of other eager onlookers.

I had another quality trogon sighting there in August of 1989, this time in the company of a young French lad called Richard Bris (in French pronounced *Reeeshaar Breee*), who came out to stay with our family in South Africa for a couple of months to improve his English (his father and mine had established a Franco-Irish friendship in the 1960s and they are still in touch today, especially when international rugby matches are on the go – readers may also enjoy that my father's name is Richard, and Richard Bris's father is Christian, so both sons are named in honour of this friendship). Richard would follow me closely wherever I went, and I led him around the entire picnic site as I tried to spot birds, so it was pretty special to conjure up this delightful beauty to enhance his African sojourn. Best of all, the bird was wooed entirely by blowing into my cupped hands. His father recently turned 80, and I reminded Richard of the encounter.

Sadly, in most of my visits to Pafuri Picnic Site through the 2000s and 2010s, trogons were a much rarer occurrence at the site; in fact, I don't know that I've seen them there since 1989, in all probability because of people over-calling them… Trogons are known to attack their mates if they cannot find a would-be intruder, and I am a little ashamed to have been complicit in calling trogons at Pafuri, even though I was able to do so with my bare hands.

Above Eastern Nicator
© Scott Chalmers

A few (maybe 50) metres west of the current picnic area is an old campsite when Pafuri was a tented camp (we're talking 1940s or 50s), and there is still a footpath that links the two. Going on the theory that the birding is indeed always better on the other side, in my youth, I would walk out of the current designated area upriver to the old campsite clearing area. There was a distinctive mound of earth there that looked like it was human-created, but also gave an elevated place to sit or stand on and to ensure you are not within the undergrowth, with potential dangers lurking, both with excellent river frontage and of the canopy above. My second trogon sighting was here, but the other bird I was determined to coax out into the open at this site is the usually heavily concealed Eastern Nicator (although back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was called Yellow-spotted Nicator). Typically, these birds are heard from dense undergrowth with their mesmeric liquid warble, so seeing one in plain view is a rare and special thing to cherish.

One of the features of the birds of the picnic site is the birds that move through the canopy and upper stratum of the riparian trees. Some species or individuals may do so in silence, but thankfully,

Above Trumpeter Hornbills will bombard their way through Pafuri Picnic Site if you spend a bit of time there, usually in the mid to upper stratum of the riparian trees, but will occasionally forage on the ground © Chris Patton.

most announce their presence with distinctive vocalisations. None is louder than the prehistoric-looking Trumpeter Hornbills with their enlarged casques atop their beaks, particularly on the males. Usually, they are strictly birds of the canopy. While they are omnivores, they feed predominantly on fruit, particularly wild figs. Now and then, one will descend onto the ground, perhaps to snare a grasshopper or a lizard. Once or twice, I've been blessed to see a terrestrial Trumpeter at Pafuri…

Other frequent and vocal upper stratum birds are the helmetshrikes, and both species (Retz's and White-crested are regular at Pafuri Picnic Site, and along the river road, which I will describe in more detail in a future article.) They maraud through the trees in constantly moving flocks, both uttering their characteristic resonant churrs (sometimes even in 'inter-species' mixed flocks, but more regularly with their own kind. They will be busy and noticeable for a short while, searching for

Above White-crested (left) and Retz's Helmetshrikes (right) © Dries de Wet.

Right Ashy Flycatchers are usually arboreal, but will inspect for insect life on the ground © Dries de Wet.

caterpillars, moths, lizards and geckos, and then just as soon they will be gone.

The other upper stratum bird I most associate with Pafuri Picnic Site is not as brash as the helmet-shrikes or the hornbill, but has a distinctive call that is a regular feature of the picnic site. Most visitors will not pay it much attention, but birders will recognise it as the contact call of the Ashy Flycatcher. While usually these birds can give you a crick in your neck trying to watch them above in the upper parts of trees, as insect eaters, they will sometimes descend

to lower levels. I had one particularly nice sighting of a bird mooching around the stone bricks at ground level by the Thulamela interpretive displays in the southeastern part of the picnic area.

Now, no account of birding at Pafuri Picnic Site can be complete without mention of the legendary Frank Mabasa. He was appointed picnic site attendant in 2000 and served with distinction until his untimely death in 2017. During that time, he became one of the most loved picnic site attendants throughout the Park with his self-taught enthusiasm for birds and desire to show visitors many of the special birds the site would host. So impressed were many of the visitors with Frank's knowledge, keen eyesight and helpful ways, that he was rewarded with donated binoculars and bird books. After I started working for SANParks in 1998 and made many trips to Pafuri over the years during my time working in Kruger, Frank would always greet me with a beaming smile and a bit of a boast about the myriads of amazing species he would regularly see.

I think Frank's absolute favourite bird to show visitors were the little Black-throated Wattle-eye that he could usually track down in the tangled vegetation alongside the eastern ablution block. This is also a favourite haunt of what was until very recently known as Grey-backed Camaroptera (now lumped with the Green-backed form and called Bleating Camaroptera). Still, the Grey-backed is the form found in the Kalahari-influenced reaches of the Pafuri area. Frank would take great delight in mimicking the sounds of these two skulking species, and with a bit

BELOW Frank Mabasa and family at Pafuri Picnic Site in July 2003, proudly wearing his binoculars and clasping his bird book © Chris Patton

Two of Frank's favourites, Black-throated Wattle-eye (TOP) © Tommy Liversage and Bleating Camaroptera (Grey-backed form) (BOTTOM) © Derek Engelbrecht.

Above The elevated but close-quarter river views of the Levhuvhu and the vegetation between the picnic site clearing and the river always delivers © Dries de Wet.

of patience and luck, visitors would be rewarded with excellent sightings. He also once tipped me off to the presence of a Thrush Nightingale in the tangled undergrowth near the ablution block.

So, I've written about birds of the canopy, birds of the undergrowth and birds you will or might see in the car park, but of course, the real feature of Pafuri Picnic Site is its proximity to the Levhuvhu River. I have many wonderful memories of making my way along the river frontage from spots where one can clearly see the river and its banks and little islands of vegetation in the middle of its flow, but also the riverside undergrowth at close range. African Fish Eagles, White-crowned Lapwings, and Striated Herons will probably stand out, but I have fond recollections of some of the smaller species seen at close quarters from the elevated vantage point of the picnic site. I recall seeing Lemon-breasted Canary on one of the river islands that houses

Above African Pygmy Kingfisher is one of the many delights that skulk in the riverside vegetation at Pafuri Picnic Site © Scott Chalmers.

some stunted Lala Palms, but close-quarter sightings of African Pygmy Kingfisher and Red-capped Robin-Chat also stand out. I think photos of these two birding beauties are an apt way to leave the picnic site, until the next edition, when I will try and chart some of my favourite memories of the Levhuvhu River Road that runs from the picnic site to the delightfully named Crooks' Corner. Until next time, adieu…

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Black-headed Oriole plumage and morphometric differences

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I live in Modimolle (formerly Nylstroom) and have a bottle of sugar water in my garden to attract nectar-feeders. I observed that several Black-headed Orioles regularly visited my nectar-feeder, and I also noticed that the yellow colour pattern on their secondary feathers varied. To confirm this, I started a ringing project and, in addition to the standard SAFRING metal ring, I also began fitting each individual with a unique combination of colour rings to assist with individual identification. All captured birds (juveniles and adults) were photographed in the hand, and I also started taking photos of colour-marked individuals when they came to drink.

I noticed that the pattern on the innermost secondary is retained from juvenile to adult plumage and that the pattern remains the same across years. By comparing the photos of colour-ringed individuals, I was able to confirm that the pattern on s11 allows for individual recognition. I have now ringed or seen 59 individuals in my garden.

The photos opposite show Black-headed Oriole CC87987 with colour rings white/olive green, ringed as an immature on 19 July 2020 (1 and 2). This individual was resighted on 11 July 2021 (3), 11 mo, 22 d after its initial ringing, and again on 30 July 2022 (4), 2 yr, 0 mo, 11 d after its initial ringing. The hook (circled in red), is retained after every moult and allows for individual recognition.

There does not appear to be any reference to this plumage feature in some of the major ornithological sources, e.g., Fry (2000) and Dean (2005).

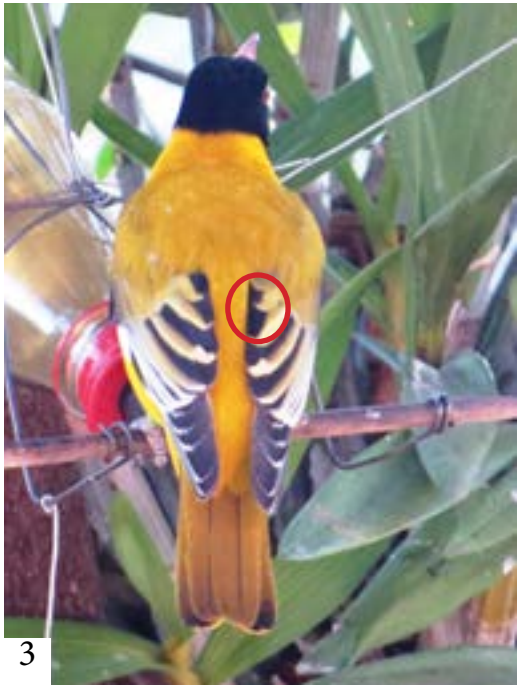
Table 1 provides a summary of my Black-headed Oriole ringing data. All the birds were ringed in the Limpopo Province, and therefore represent the nominate subspecies *Oriolus larvatus larvatus*. Individuals were sexed based on an examination of cloacal protuberance, wing length and subtle differences in the plumage colouration of males and females, females being somewhat duller than males (Dean 2005). The data were

BIRD BRIEFS

BIRD BRIEFS

1

2



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4

BIRD BRIEFS

Table 1. Summary of the mass and morphometric data (mean ± SD, range, sample size) of adult Black-headed Orioles *Oriolus larvatus larvatus* in the Limpopo Province. Measurements were performed as described by de Beer et al. (2001). Mass was measured in grams (g) and all morphometric measurements in millimetres (mm).

	Male	Female	Unsexed
Mass	73.2 ± 7.9 (58.8–91.2, *n* = 19)	65.5 ± 6.92 (55.5–82.3, *n* = 17)	68.1 ± 5.11 (61.4–77.8, *n* = 16)
Wing	141.0 ± 2.95 (138.0–148.0, *n* = 19)	134.0 ± 2.19 (130.0–137.0, *n* = 17)	138.0 ± 2.03 (135.0–142.0, *n* = 16)
Head	54.1 ± 1.34 (51.4–56.1, *n* = 14)	53.2 ± 1.85 (50.3–56.1, *n* = 13)	54.2 ± 1.47 (51.9–56.7, *n* = 14)
Culmen	27.9 ± 1.71 (22.7–30.0, *n* = 14)	27.7 ± 1.16 (26.2–30.3, *n* = 13)	28.1 ± 1.89 (22.7–30.8, *n* = 14)
Tail	92.2 ± 2.46 (89.0–97.0, *n* = 18)	90.5 ± 3.97 (85.0–102.0, *n* = 17)	90.8 ± 2.17 (86.0–95.0, *n* = 16)
Tarsus	24.2 ± 0.82 (22.2–25.5, *n* = 14)	23.8 ± 1.10 (22.1–26.1, *n* = 13)	24.6 ± 1.03 (23.0–26.3, *n* = 14)

analysed in SPSS v30. To determine if there exist statistically significant sexual size dimorphism (SSD) between the sexes, the data were tested for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Based on the results of the normality tests, either an Independent Samples T-test (normally distributed data or Mann-Whitney U-test (data that deviate significantly from a normal distribution) was used to test for SSD. Only two parameter showed significant SSD. Males were significantly heavier than females (Independent Samples T-test, $p = 0.002$) and also had significantly longer wings (Mann-Whitney U-test, $p < 0.001$).

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Miscellaneous notes on the Yellow-billed Stork

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Despite its widespread distribution, relatively little is known about the day-to-day life of the Yellow-billed Stork. For example, we do not know at what age individuals start breeding, plumage development from a nestling to an adult, their different moults, and their diet, to name a few aspects. For example, its diet is often simply described as "fish", "frogs", "small mammals", or "aquatic invertebrates", without specific details. True, it is not always possible to identify a food item to species or even family level, but advances in camera technology and access to large online natural history repositories of media (photos, videos, and sounds), such as the Macaulay Library and iNaturalist, now make it possible to identify prey in many instances. Understanding the dietary composition of a species is vital for understanding its nutritional needs and ecological role. Similarly, knowledge of plumage development and other ageing criteria is essential to understand the population dynamics of the species.

In this note, I summarise some of my field observations of this species, present some of my findings of an online survey of prey items, and provide egg dimension data of eggs in the ornithological collection of the Ditsong Museum of Natural History.

Eye colour

Nestlings (see ML611401888) and recently fledged young (see ML635110323) have dark eyes, as do the adults (see overleaf). However, young (1st-year?) birds have a pale-eyed phase that presumably develops during the post-juvenile moult and (presumably) lasts until adult plumage is attained. This phase is not described in the literature sources I consulted (Brown 1982, Elliot 1992, Anderson 2005). It is likely that the pale eye signals immaturity and

Left Eye colour changes in Yellow-billed Storks with age. For nestlings, see ML611401888, and for fledglings, see ML635110323.
Top A (presumably) 1st-year bird (© Hugh Chittenden, see ML639557170).
Middle An older immature bird of unknown age but still in formative plumage. Note that although the eyes are darker, it is not as dark as those of adult birds (© Derek Engelbrecht).
Bottom. The dark eyes of an adult (© Derek Engelbrecht).

may reduce intraspecific aggression, although one would think that the greyish-brown immature plumage would serve the same purpose. There is a need to study the plumage development of the Yellow-billed Stork from hatching to a breeding adult.

Diet

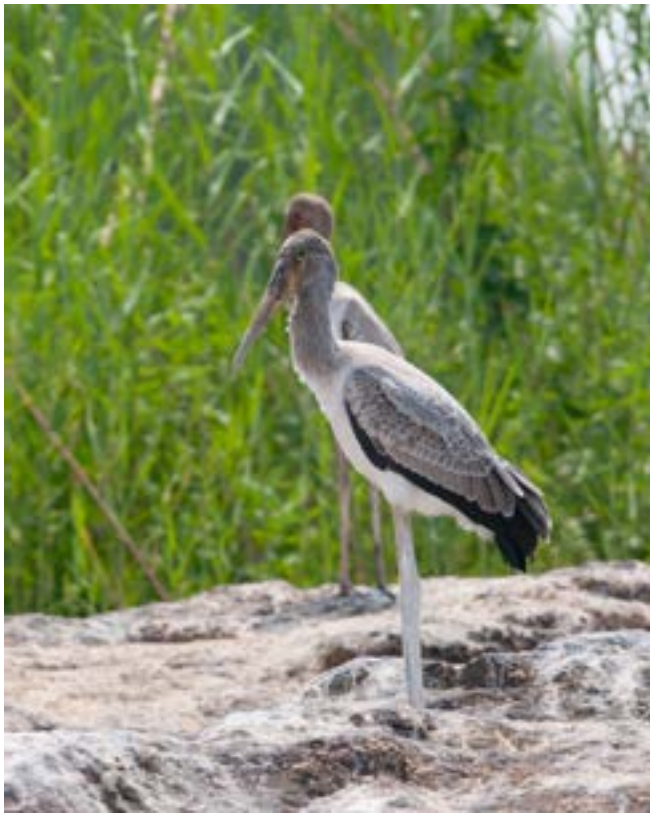
I performed an online survey of prey items, supplemented with my own notes. At a coarse scale, the search confirmed the known diet of invertebrates, frogs, and fish. Where possible, I identified the prey to the species level, and, as such, this is mainly restricted to southern Africa, the region I'm most familiar with.

Aquatic invertebrates, include crustaceans like crabs and shrimps (see ML639557170 are regularly taken.

A great diversity of fish species is present in the diet. Catches are dominated by siluroids (*Clarias*, *Schilbe*, and *Synodontis* spp.), and the larger cichlids, while smaller cyprinids also contribute to some extent. Species that were identified include:

- Sharp-tooth Catfish *Clarias gariepinus* (see ML555940671),
- Silver Butter Catfish *Schilbe intermedius* (see ML488836411),
- Several squeaker species (see ML614891346), including Brown Squeaker *Synodontis zambezensis*,
- Several species of cichlids, including Mozambique Tilapia *Oreochromis mossambicus* (see ML423444381) and Lowveld Largemouth *Serranochromis meridianus*.
- Red-eye Labeo *Labeo cylindricus*, and
- Silver Robber *Micralestes acutidens* (personal observation).

It also eats fish offcuts and offal at informal markets (see ML179997651).



Above Two recently fledged young © Derek Engelbrecht).

Given that the Yellow-billed Stork is mainly aquatic, frogs in the diet are dominated by platannas (*Xenopus* spp., including Common Platanna *Xenopus laevis* and Müller's Platanna *X. muelleri*). Another species identified includes the Edible Bullfrog P*yxicephalus edulis* (see ML631829143). This is an explosive breeder that breeds in shallow, temporary pools that form after heavy rains. Other storks, such as Saddle-

billed and Marabou Storks, have also been recorded preying on Edible Bullfrogs (Engelbrecht et al. 2015).

Egg data

I measured three eggs in the egg collection of the Ditsong Museum of Natural History, Tshwane. The three eggs were collected at Rwhihinda, Burundi, on 18 August 1962.

The mean dimensions are: 62.6 mm ± 0.36 SD x 44.2 mm ± 1.5 SD (range 62.3–63.0 x 43.1–46.0, n = 3). The egg elongation index is 1.4 ± 0.04 SD. Using a K_V value of 0.51 (Hoyt 1979), the mean egg volume is 62,166.16 ± 4,759 SD (range 58,674.7–67,587.16). To estimate the egg mass, I used Hoyt's formula (Hoyt 1979) and an egg weight coefficient value (K_w) of 0.548, yielding a mean estimated egg mass of 67.2 g ± 5.14 SD.

To conclude, it is evident from the above, there is still much to learn about the ecology of the Yellow-billed Stork. I encourage birders to take photos and recordings and upload them to online natural history repositories such as the Macaulay Library, iNaturalist, or Xeno-Canto. Making your media available will allow ornithologists to study and analyse your contributions, ultimately improving our knowledge of the species.

***Acknowledgements**. I wish to thank Mpho Malematja and Mpho Kalo at the Ditsong National Museum of Natural History in Tshwane for allowing me to measure the Yellow-billed Stork eggs in their collection.*

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Top Eggs of the Yellow-billed Stork
© Derek Engelbrecht.

Bottom Close-up view of the eggshell to show the surface texture
© Derek Engelbrecht.

A remarkable Common Bulbul retrap record

Derek Engelbrecht

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On 11 July 2025, Marianne McKenzie, Daniel Engelbrecht and I were ringing birds in Woodmere Forest, approximately 3.5 km northeast of Haenertsburg in the Magoebaskloof region, as part of Daniel's BSc Honours research project. We caught several interesting records, such as Orange Ground Thrush, Brown Scrub Robin, Chorister Robin-Chat, and an African Goshawk, to name a few. One of the birds captured was a retrapped Common (Dark-capped) Bulbul (BE49710). Since I knew that other ringers ringed birds at this site at the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025, I didn't take much notice of this particular retrap. But I should have...

It turns out this bird was initially ringed by Marianne on 12 March 2024 at Umoya Khulula Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre near Letsitele. But how did it end up at the rehabilitation centre? Someone with a good heart found it as a nestling that had fallen from its nest in Letsitele and took it to the rehabilitation centre. It was reared successfully and after Marianne ringed it, the bird was released at Umoya Khulula. As mentioned above, it was then recaptured on 11 July 2025, 1 yr 3 mo 29 d later in Woodmere Forest. The straight-line distance between Umoya Khulula and Woodmere Forest is 41.5 km.

I always say, every bird has a story to tell, but this little orphan's story is a particularly inspiring one. The Common Bulbul is by no means a glamorous or rare species, but thanks to the love and care of several people, this bird got a second chance in life, and it seems this one took its chance! Well done to all involved!

Acknowledgements. *I wish to thank Lorena Peral for granting us permission to ring in Woodmere Forest, and Emma de Jager for sharing information about the early life of this bird.*

ABOVE Google Earth Image of the movements of Common Bulbul BE49710. 1) Letsitele, 2) Umoya Khulula, and 3) Woodmere Forest.

RIGHT Common Bulbul BE49710 on the day it was ringed © Marianne McKenzie.

Injuries from fishing line to birdlife in KZN

text and photos Hugh Chittenden

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Appeal to fishermen to not discard fishing line

The discovery of an entangled Water Thick-knee at the end of July 2025 on the beach at Mtunzini, KwaZulu-Natal has prompted me to once again appeal to fishermen to be careful and not to discard fishing line, or to at least pick up and remove any line that they may find on beaches or on waterside bodies. In the past 11 years I have found five different African Woolly-necked Storks that have foot injuries or lost limbs from fishing line!

Since the article I wrote in 2019 (see The Lark 24) on this very same subject, I have subsequently

Opposite, above and right
A Water-Thick-knee found at the end of July 2025 on Mtunzini beach. The photos show the entangled bird and the necrotic foot.

Above A rare Mangrove Kingfisher perched on fishing line, hooks, etc. Not a pleasant sight!!

Bird Briefs

Bird Briefs

found more birds that have become entangled with fishing line.

Not all fishermen behave irresponsibly of course. I have friends who are keen fishermen and I know they act very responsibly and would never discard a single matchstick at the water's edge, let alone bunches of fishing line. Sadly however, and judging by the amount of fishing line that one sees lying around on the margins of dams and along beaches, the majority of fishermen seem to have no concern for the way they litter!

In the past 11 years I have photographed 5 different Woolly-necked storks that have injured or lost limbs from fishing line left lying around at fishing sites. When storks become entangled in fishing line, the line often becomes tight, stopping the flow of blood, resulting in swelling and eventually foot or toe loss. This also means that the entangled birds can no longer roost on tree branches at night as they no longer have the capability to clasp onto the branch when the wind blows.

The first two incidents that are described in the pages that follow were at Albert Falls Dam near Pietermaritzburg (March

Above An African Woolly-necked Stork on the edge of Albert Falls Dam, completely oblivious to the danger of fishing line just one meter behind where it is standing!

Bird Briefs

Bird Briefs

Stork #1

Above Foraging or aquatic prey along the shallow margins of Albert Falls Dam.

Opposite top The left foot is entangled in fishing line and is clearly causing this bird discomfort.

Opposite bottom Its right foot shows a stump-end and loss of toes from a previous (healed) fishing line injury. The left foot is now undergoing similar constriction and potential further loss of toes.

Stork #2

Above Within minutes of photographing the first African Woolly-necked Stork entangled with fishing line at Albert Falls Dam, a second bird was seen limping badly with a swollen toe dangling and about to fall off!

Stork #3

Opposite top This bird, in obvious pain, was found limping badly at the edge of the Umlalazi Lagoon, Mtunzini.

Stork #4

Opposite bottom An African Woolly-necked Stork, also at the edge of the Umlalazi Lagoon in Mtunzini

Bird Briefs

Bird Briefs

Bird Briefs

BIRD BRIEFS

2019), and Storks #3, 4, and 5 were photographed at Mtunzini.

By exposing the above incidents, it is hoped that fishermen will become more aware of the dangers of discarding unwanted fishing line. Also, more signage at fishing sites is needed to alert and educate fishermen about the potential threat of discarded fishing line.

Stork #5

ABOVE This stork was caught, treated and released at Mtunzini in September 2024.In November 2015.

RIGHT This Palm-nut Vulture, was photographed at Mtunzini with fishing line attached to its one foot. The insert (below) shows one toe badly swollen and this bird would have in all probability lost that extremity shortly after this photograph was taken!

BIRD BRIEFS

Marico Sunbird longevity record

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Occasionally, you recapture a bird and know that this is going to be an interesting record. While ringing on the farm, Hanover, Lephalale district, we captured a ringed Marico Sunbird male. The ring itself looks as good as new. But given that we have only ringed in the vicinity once the previous month and no Marico Sunbirds were ringed, the bird must have been ringed somewhere else—1.3 km to the east, to be precise. But the original ringing location was not the surprise; the initial ringing date was.

The bird was initially ringed on 24 November 2016 as an adult male by Mr. Shonie Raijmakers. The bird was recaptured 3,183 days or 8 yr 8 mo 3d after it was initially ringed. The previous longevity record in the SAFRING database was of a recovered (dead bird) found 2,837 days or 7 yr 9 mo 7 d after it was initially ringed. However, since the bird was found dead, the exact date of death might not be known. Nevertheless, the recapture record at Hanover extends the previous record by nearly a year—346 days to be exact.

As of 17 September 2025, there was a total of 1,736 ringed Marico Sunbirds in the SAFRING database, including 96 retraps and four. The Top 5 longevity records for Marico Sunbirds in the SAFRING database are (* recovery):

1. L05711: 8 yr 8 mo 19 d
2. AF93671: 7 yr 9 mo 7 d*
3. AD11240: 5 yr 6 mo 28 d
4. AD10752: 4 yr 8 mo 28 d*
5. AE21438: 4 yr 11 mo 27 d.

Marico Sunbird L05711 © Stella Denholm

BIRD BRIEFS

BIRD BRIEFS

New additions to and an update of the list of Weeping Boer-bean *Schotia brachypetala* nectarivores

text and photos Derek Engelbrecht

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The Weeping Boer-bean *Schotia brachypetala*, which flowers from late July to October, produces an abundance of nectar. The nectar can sometimes be seen dripping from the flowers, hence the name Weeping Boer-bean, and attracts a diverse array of bird and mammal species that either take the nectar or eat the flowers or petals. Furthermore, the rich diversity of birds attracted to a flowering *Schotia* is evident in 25 species recorded at a site in the Lowveld (Craig and Yoganand 2013).

The Weeping Boer-bean is a southern African endemic tree species. It is found in the warm, semi-arid bushveld and subtropical woodlands of Zimbabwe, northeastern Botswana, Eswatini, southern Mozambique, and the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, and Eastern Cape provinces of South Africa. In spring and early summer, the tree erupts in dense clusters of brilliant, deep claret-red, cup-like flowers. The genus name honours R. van der Schot, a former head gardener of the Empire Gardens at Schönbrunn Palace in Austria. The species name refers to the short petals, being a combination of the Greek words 'brachys' (short) and 'petalon' (leaf). The short petals place the focus squarely on the vibrant sepals and stamens.

Flowers of *Schotia brachypetala*.

BIRD BRIEFS

This species has long been recognised as a valuable source of nectar to wildlife. Craig and Yoganand (2013) collated records of all bird species observed drinking *S. brachypetala* nectar, culminating in a list of 54 species. However, their list was not exclusively of *S. brachypetala,* as explained below. Here I report on birds observed feeding in Weeping Boer-bean trees in the Limpopo Province from August to October 2025. The observations were mainly made on the Polokwane Plateau in Polokwane and Mankweng in the central Limpopo Province, and in the Blouberg Nature Reserve in the northwest of the province. Observations were made on an *ad hoc* basis throughout the day. I also noted a) birds that visited the trees, but that were not observed taking nectar, and b) birds known to feed on *S. brachypetala* nectar that were seen in the general area but that were not observed visiting the flowering trees. I also performed a comprehensive literature search to update Symes and Yoganand's list of 54 species. Symes and Yoganand's (2013) list included Skead's (1995, 1997) *Schotia* nectarivores in the Eastern Cape Province, but Skead's records are for *S. latifolia* and *S. afra*, and he makes no reference to *S. brachypetala*. However, all the species recorded probing the Eastern Cape *Schotia* species have also been recorded probing *S. brachypetala* elsewhere in its range. I also removed the African Dusky Flycatcher record from Symes and Yoganand's list and placed it under Unconfirmed Species in Table 1. This record, attributed to Sally Johnston (Johnston 1989), states: "… flocks of white-eyes plus warblers and flycatchers such as Yellowbreasted Apalis [sic] and Dusky Flycatcher [now African Dusky Flycatcher] coming to follow the insects." Since the author does not explicitly indicate nectarivory, the record is excluded. It should be noted that Symes (2010) included the species in its list of Mountain Aloe *Aloe marlothii* nectarivores, albeit based on an unpublished observation by another source.

Eighteen species took nectar in the Polokwane region, and 23 in the Blouberg Nature Reserve. Although a female Black Cuckooshrike appeared to be probing a cluster of flowers, my view was obscured, so I could not confirm whether she was taking nectar. The species was excluded from the list but included under Unconfirmed Species in Table 1. My observations led to the addition of seven new records of opportunistic nectarivores for *S. brachypetala*. A brief description of the seven new records follows.

Southern Black Flycatcher: The species was a frequent visitor to a flowering tree in Tambotie Camp in the Blouberg Nature Reserve. This is the first record of the species taking *S. brachypetala* nectar, but it has been recorded taking nectar of the Mountain Aloe (Engelbrecht et al. 2014).

Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow: One of the most frequent visitors to flowering Weeping Boer-beans in the Blouberg Nature Reserve. This species has been recorded feeding on nectar from *Aloe* species.

Cape Sparrow: Only seen probing flowers in Polokwane, where it was a regular visitor to a flowering tree in my garden. It is a regular opportunistic nectarivore, especially of *A. marlothii* (Engelbrecht et al. 2014).

House Sparrow: Seen once, probing a flowering *S. brachypetala* in the parking lot of a busy shopping centre in Polokwane. It is a known opportunistic nectarivore (Engelbrecht et al. 2014).

Willow Warbler: This is an interesting record. The species is not known to be an opportunistic nectarivore. Probing was observed on two separate occasions on the same day (5 October 2025), but it is unknown if it was the same individual or two different birds. Willow Warbler/s must have arrived in the reserve on the day of the observations (perhaps during the night?) as none were heard or seen in the preceding two days. It remains to be seen if the Willow Warbler is a regular nectarivore. This Palearctic migrant usually starts arriving in southern Africa from the end of September and into October, when many Weeping Boer-beans have passed their peak flowering time. As a result, this food source may not always be available to the species.

Yellow-bellied Greenbul: This was an irregular visitor over two days at Blouberg Nature Reserve. It is perhaps surprising that this seems to be the first published report of opportunistic nectarivory for the species, as several members of the family are regular nectar drinkers.

Violet-backed Starling: Several individuals were visiting a flowering tree in Tambotie Camp in the Blouberg Nature Reserve intermittently on the third day of observations. No birds were seen or heard in the general area

BIRD BRIEFS

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before this sighting, so they must have arrived early on day 3 (i.e., 5 October 2025), or during the night. It is perhaps not a surprise that it has been recorded engaging in opportunistic nectarivory, since the majority of southern African Starlings are nectar addicts. However, like the Willow Warbler above, this intra-African migrant has a similar arrival phenology, i.e., towards the end of September through October. Thus, the species may only begin arriving towards the end of the *S. brachypetala* flowering period, when this abundant nectar source may be waning.

The following species were seen in the flowering trees but were not observed taking nectar: Chinspot Batis (observing catching insects at flowers), Grey Tit Flycatcher, and Kurrichane Thrush (a known *S. brachypetala* nectarivore in the Lowveld; Symes and Yoganand 2013).

Following the addition of my seven new *S. brachypetala* nectarivory records and a comprehensive literature survey, the list of *S. brachypetala* nectarivores now stands at 75 species, up from the previous compilation of 54 species 12 years ago. Table 1 summarises the species known to take Weeping

Top to bottom, left to right Cape Sparrow wiping its bill after drinking nectar; Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow was a regular visitor; Willow Warbler after drinking nectar; Southern Black Tit reaching for nectar; Violet-backed Starling drinking nectar; a few Yellow-bellied Greenbuls visited the flowering tree a few times. All photos were taken in the Blouberg Nature Reserve, except the Cape Sparrow which was photographed in Polokwane.

Top to bottom A nectar-robbing Black-collared Barbet eating some petals; an immature Black-headed Oriole; Yellow-fronted Canary.

Boer-bean nectar. To indicate the geographic spread of records, all literature sources are included.

I am confident that this list is not complete, and I encourage birdwatchers and photographers to report their records, either to me or your local bird club newsletter or journal, preferably with "caught in the act" photographic evidence.

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Table 1. The list of birds recorded probing or consuming *Schotia brachypetala* flowers or petals. Consuming flowers, either whole or parts thereof, is included under the broad term of "nectarivory" as it can be difficult to distinguish between pure nectarivory and nectar robbing, i.e., damaging the flower to reach the nectar, in situ. Birds observed hawking invertebrates attracted to the nectar but not observed engaging in nectarivory were excluded. Red text represent new records for *S. brachypetala* nectarivory.

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Bucerotidae				
Bycanistes bucinator	Trumpeter Hornbill		Eats flowers	Kemp (1995)
Cisticolidae				
Apalis flavida	Yellow-breasted Apalis	BNR	Nectar	Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Apalis thoracica	Bar-throated Apalis		Nectar	Butchart (2004)
Prinia subflava	Tawny-flanked Prinia		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013) Douglass (2022) Kiepiel et al. (2022)
Coliidae				
Colius striatus	Speckled Mousebird	PLK	Nectar and eats flowers	Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Urocolius indicus	Red-faced Mousebird	BNR, PLK	Nectar and eats flowers	Butchart (2004) Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Columbidae				
Treron calvus	African Green Pigeon	PLK	Nectar and eats petals	de Moor (2013) This study

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Cuculidae				
Chrysococcyx caprius	Dideric Cuckoo		Nectar	Sievi (1974)
Dicruridae				
Dricurus adsimilis	Fork-tailed Drongo	BNR	Nectar	Butchart (2004) Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Estrildidae				
Spermestes bicolor	Black-and-white Mannikin		Eats petals	Stidolph (1969)
Fringillidae				
Serinus canicollis	Cape Canary		Nectar	Christie and Lawson (2012)
Crithagra gularis	Streaky-headed Seedeater	PLK	Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Crithagra mozambica	Yellow-fronted Canary	BNR, PLK	Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Crithagra scotops	Forest Canary		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Leiothrichidae				
Turdoides jardineii	Arrow-marked Babbler			Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Lybiidae				
Lybius torquatus	Black-collared Barbet	BNR, PLK	Nectar and eats flowers	Johnson (1989) de Moor (2013) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022) This study

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Pogoniulus bilineatus	Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Pogoniulus pusillus	Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbird		Nectar	Johnson (1989)
Trachyphonus vaillantii	Crested Barbet	BNR	Nectar and eats flowers	Sievi (1974) de Moor (2013) Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Malaconotidae				
Dryoscopus cubla	Black-backed Puffback		Nectar	Butchart (2004)
Laniarius ferrugineus	Southern Boubou		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Muscicapidae				
Dessornis caffer	Cape Robin-Chat		Nectar	Johnson (1989)
Melaenornis pammelaina	Southern Black Flycatcher	BNR	Nectar	This study
Muscicapa adusta	African Dusky Flycatcher		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Turdus libonyanus	Kurrichane Thrush		Nectar	Johnson (1989) Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Turdus smithi	Karoo Thrush		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Nectariniidae				
Chalcomitra amethystina	Amethyst Sunbird		Nectar	Sievi (1974) Butchart (2013) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022)

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Chalcomitra senegalensis	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	PLK	Nectar	Stidolph (1969) Sievi (1974) Johnson (1989) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Schofield (2001) Butchart (2004) Baker (2011) Butchart (2013) Mackintosh (2022) This Study
Cinnyris afer	Greater Double-collared Sunbird		Nectar	Butchart (2013) Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Cinnyris cupreus	Copper Sunbird		Nectar	Baker (2011)
Cinnyris chalybeus	Southern Double-collared Sunbird		Nectar	Sievi (1974) Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Cinnyris bifasciatus	Purple-banded Sunbird		Nectar	Stidolph (1969) Johnson (1989) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Butchart (2004)
Cinnyris manoensis	Eastern Miombo Sunbird		Nectar	Baker (2011)
Cinnyris mariquensis	Marico Sunbird	BNR	Nectar	Johnson (1989) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Schofield (2001) Symes and Yoganand (2013)

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Cinnyris neergaardi	Neergaard's Sunbird		Nectar	Stidolph (1969) Berruti (1989)
Cinnirys talatala	White-bellied Sunbird	BNR, PLK	Nectar	Stidolph (1969) Johnson (1989) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Butchart (2004) Baker (2011) Butchart (2013) de Moor (2013) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Mackintosh (2022) Kiepiel et al. (2022) This study
Cinnyris venustus	Variable Sunbird		Nectar	Sievi (1974) Tree (1997) Baker (2011)
Cyanomitra olivacea	Olive Sunbird		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022)
Cyanomitra veroxii	Grey Sunbird		Nectar	Stidolph (1969) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Butchart (2004)

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Hedydipna collaris	Collared Sunbird		Nectar	Stidolph (1969) Johnson (1989) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Butchart (2004) Butchart (2013) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022)
Nectarinia famosa	Malachite Sunbird		Nectar	Phelps (2009)
Oriolidae				
Oriolus larvatus	Black-headed Oriole	BNR	Nectar	Sievi (1974) Butchart (2004) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Mackintosh (2022) This study
Paridae				
Melaniparus niger	Southern Black Tit	BNR	Nectar	Mackintosh (2022) This study
Passeridae				
Gymnoris superciliaris	Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow	BNR	Nectar	This study
Passer diffusus	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	BNR	Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Passer domesticus	House Sparrow	PLK	Nectar	This study
Passer melanurus	Cape Sparrow	PLK	Nectar	This study

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Phoeniculidae				
Phoeniculus purpureus	Green Woodhoopoe	BNR, PLK	Nectar	de Moor (2013) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022) This study
Rhinopomastus cyanomelas	Common Scimitarbill		Nectar	Sievi (1974) Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Phylloscopidae				
Phylloscopus trochilis	Willow Warbler	BNR	Nectar	This study
Platysteiridae				
Batis capensis	Cape Batis		Nectar	Butchart (2004)
Ploceidae				
Amblyospiza albifrons	Thick-billed Weaver		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Anaplectes rubriceps	Red-headed Weaver	BNR	Nectar	Sievi (1974) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Mackintosh (2022) This study
Ploceus capensis	Cape Weaver		Nectar	Johnson (1989) Craig (2004b)
Ploceus cucullatus	Village Weaver		Nectar	Johnson (1989) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022)

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Ploceus intermedius	Lesser Masked Weaver	BNR	Nectar	Johnson (1989) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022)
Ploceus ocularis	Spectacled Weaver		Nectar	Craig (2004a) Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Ploceus velatus	Southern Masked Weaver	BNR, PLK	Nectar	Craig (2004c) Symes and Yoganand (2013) This study
Psittacidae				
Poicephalus cryptoxanthus	Brown-headed Parrot		Nectar and flowers	Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Hoddinot (1998)
Poicephalus meyeri	Meyer's Parrot		Eats petals	Perrin (1999)
Pycnonotidae				
Andropadus importunus	Sombre Greenbul		Nectar	Johnson (1989) Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Chlorocichla flaviventris	Yellow-bellied Greenbul	BNR	Nectar	This study
Phyllastrephus terrestris	Terrestrial Brownbul		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Pycnonotus barbatus	Common Bulbul	BNR, PLK	Nectar	Sievi (1974) Johnson (1989) de Moor (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022) This study
Sturnidae				
Cinnyricinclus leucogaster	Violet-backed Starling	BNR	Nectar	This study

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Creatophora cinerea	Wattled Starling	BNR, PLK	Nectar	Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) This study
Lamprotornis australis	Burchell's Starling		Nectar	Palmer and Palmer (1972)
Lamprotornis chalybaeus	Greater Blue-eared Starling		Nectar	Butchart (2004)
Lamprotornis nitens	Cape Starling	BNR	Nectar	Johnson (1989) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022)
Notopholia corusca	Black-bellied Starling		Nectar	Johnson (1989) Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998)
Onychognathus morio	Red-winged Starling	PLK	Nectar	Dinkelman and Dinkelman (1998) Symes and Yoganand (2013) Kiepiel et al. (2022) This study
Acridotheres tristis	Common Myna	PLK	Nectar	Gumede and Downs (2019) This study
Sylviidae				
Sylvietta rufescens	Long-billed Crombec		Nectar	Symes and Yoganand (2013)
Zosteropidae				
Zosterops anderssoni	Southern Yellow White-eye			Stidolph (1969) Sievi (1974)
Zosterops virens	Cape White-eye	PLK	Nectar	de Moor (2013) Chittenden (2018) Kiepiel et al. (2022) This study

BIRD BRIEFS

BIRD BRIEFS

Family and scientific name	Common name	This study	Type	Source
Unconfirmed species				
Campephagidae				
Campephaga flava	Black Cuckooshrike	BNR	Probing for nectar or prey?	This study
Cisticolidae				
Eremomela scotops	Green-capped Eremomela		Hawking insects?	Mackintosh (2022)
Muscicapidae				
Muscicapa adusta	African Dusky Flycatcher		Hawking insects?	Johnson (1989)

BIRD BRIEFS

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Movements and Migration: Nonmigratory Movements

African Wood Owl in Polokwane

Following on my recent note about forests birds that have been recorded in Polokwane (Engelbrecht 2025), it slipped my mind to include an African Wood Owl that was recorded in the suburb of Welgelegen, Polokwane, on 7 May 2013.

Reference

Engelbrecht, D. (2025). Olive Woodpecker in Polokwane. The Lark 61:85.

Derek Engelbrecht • faunagalore@gmail.com (received 8 September 2025).

Behaviour: Predation

Jackal Buzzard predating an adult Crowned Lapwing

A Jackal Buzzard have been present in the Welgelegen region since January 2024. On 13 October 2025, I noticed it on the ground in an open park in Welgelegen. Some Crowned Lapwings were mobbing it, and I thought it must have caught one of their chicks as it was clearly eating something. I returned to the site later that afternoon, and found some feathers of an adult Crowned Lapwing. The buzzard must have flown off with the carcass as it was nowhere to be seen.

Derek Engelbrecht • faunagalore@gmail.com (received 15 October 2025).

Behaviour: Predation

Burchell's Coucal robbing a Black-backed Puffback nestling

On Sunday 19 October 2025, I heard a commotion outside my study window. A pair of Black-backed Puffbacks were dive-bombing a Burchell's Coucal. The pair had a nest in the canopy of one of the trees in my garden, but it was too high to see its contents. At one point, the Burchell's Coucal briefly perched on an aloe, allowing me to see the chick dangling from its beak. It flew off with the parents in tow.

Derek Engelbrecht • faunagalore@gmail.com (received 20 October 2025).

Diet and Foraging: Diet

Fiery-necked Nightjar nest in Broadlands Estate, Polokwane

There has been a surge in nightjar (Fiery-necked and Freckled) reports in Polokwane suburbs in recent years. Michael Bosman phoned me in September to say he had found a Fiery-necked Nightjar nest in his garden in Broadlands Estate, Polokwane. I took the opportunity to get some egg measurements and to measure the dimensions of the nest, or rather the scrape.

The mass and dimensions of the two eggs were:

- 5.6 g and 25.96 x 20.62 mm, and
- 5.2 g and 26.70 x 20.22 mm.

Using an incubation period of 18–19 days, and backdating to the hatching date using plumage development of a nestling as seen on 9 October 2025, the eggs must have been laid on about 13–14 September 2025 and hatched on about 2 October 2025. This corresponds well with the notion that most eggs are laid within a week after a full moon (Jackson 1985), which was on 7 September 2025, and, interestingly, coincided with a 'blood moon' total lunar eclipse.

The nest diameter was ~107 mm and the scrape was about 10 mm deep.

Acknowledgements. *I wish to express my gratitude to Michael Bosman for notifying me about this breeding attempt.*

Reference

Jackson, H. D. (1985). Aspects of the breeding biology of the Fiery-necked Nightjar. Ostrich 56:263–276.

Derek Engelbrecht • faunagalore@gmail.com (received 10 October 2025).

RIGHT "Nest" and eggs of the Fiery-necked Nightjar in the Broadlands Estate, Polokwane.

POLOKWANE 100 KM

... and a bit beyond

Interesting sightings
16 August 2025 - 15 October 2025

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

Common Ringed Plover - 20 September 2025. One seen at Hout River Dam (Richter van Tonder).

European Bee-eater - 21 September 2025. Several reported flying over town (Fatima Cachalia).

Fiery-necked Nightjar - 22 September 2025. A pair breeding in a garden in Broadlands Estates (Michael Bosman).

Great Spotted Cuckoo - 3 September 2025. Returning migrant. One seen at Soetdorings (Leonie Kellerman).

Fiery-necked Nightjar © Michael Bosman

Jackal Buzzard - 15 October 2025. An adult seen in Welgelegen (Derek Engelbrecht).

Saddle-billed Stork - 5 October 2025. An adult in the Polokwane Game Reserve (Minkie Prinsloo).

Southern Bald Ibis - 18 September 2025. Two seen on the golf course at the University of Limpopo (Bronwyn Egan).

Southern White-faced Owl - 9 September 2025. One seen and calling in Welgelegen (Rupert Harris).

Wahlberg's Eagle - 24 August 2025. Returning migrant. One seen in Welgelegen (Derek Engelbrecht).

Yellow-billed Kite - 2 September 2025. Returning migrant. One seen at the Flora Park Dam (Johan Janse van Vuuren).

Saddle-billed Stork © Minkie Prinsloo

Southern White-faced Owl © Derek Engelbrecht

Wahlberg's Eagle © Derek Engelbrecht

Passerines

Ashy Flycatcher - 5 October 2025. One seen in the Polokwane Game Reserve (Minkie Prinsloo).

Barn Swallow - 19 September 2025. One seen near Nobody east of Polokwane (Derek Engelbrecht).

Capped Wheatear - 5 October 2025. One seen in the Polokwane Game Reserve (Minkie Prinsloo).

Lesser Striped Swallow - 16 August 2025. Returning migrant. A pair seen at the Mokopane Train Station (Bruce Goetsch); 10 September

Ashy Flycatcher © Minkie Prinsloo

2025. Returning migrant. A pair seen at the University of Limpopo (Derek Engelbrecht).

Red-breasted Swallow - 5 September 2025. Returning migrant. Seen at Marlo Nursery (Leonie Kellerman).

Scarlet-chested Sunbird - 20 September 2025. Seen in the Polokwane Game Reserve (Minkie Prinsloo).

Lesser Striped Swallow © Derek Engelbrecht

Curlew Sandpiper © Jody de Bruyn

Rufous-bellied Heron © Jody de Bruyn

Golden Pipit © Kyle McGarvy

Best of the Rest
Limpopo Province

Non-passerines

Curlew Sandpiper - . A few seen at Vogelfontein (BirdLife Polokwane club outing, see trip report on page 5).

Eurasian Whimbrel - 7 October 2025. One seen at Engelhardt Dam, Kruger National Park (SA Rare Bird News - 9 October 2025).

Greater Flamingo - 25 August 2025. Three seen in the Makuleke Concession near Pafuri in the Kruger National Park (SA Rare Bird News Report - 25 August 2025).

Rufous-bellied Heron - 13 September 2025. One seen at Vogelfontein (Jody de Bruyn).

Passerines

Golden Pipit - 10 October 2025. One seen in the Kapama Game Reserve (Kyle McGarvy).

HELP SAVE OUR SEABIRDS

The Mouse-Free Marion Project is a partnership between the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and BirdLife South Africa, which established the Non-Profit Company (MFM NPC) to help restore Marion Island to its once-pristine beauty by eradicating the invasive mice plaguing the island.

To help raise the necessary funds, please would you consider sponsoring one or more hectares of land on Marion Island.

At R1000, 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 in a single attempt.

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/

7 July 2025
Percent of target reached: 40.6%
Sponsored Hectares: 12173 ha
Sponsors: 2362

9 September 2025
Percent of target reached: 41.6%
Sponsored Hectares: 12,489 ha
Sponsors: 2569

UPCOMING EVENTS

Birdlife Polokwane Year-end Function
Date: 26 November 2025
Time: 18:30
Venue: Polokwane Korfball Courts

Birdlife Polokwane Club Meeting and AGM
Date: 3 February 2026
Time: 18:30
Venue: Polokwane Golf Club

Birdlife Polokwane Club Meeting
Date: 3 March 2026
Time: 18:30
Venue: Polokwane Golf Club

Shopping list: African Finfoot, Half-collared Kingfisher, African Penduline-Tit, White-breasted and Black Cuckooshrike, Croaking Cisticola, Green-capped Eremomela, and a variety of waterbirds.

BirdLife SOUTH AFRICA
Giving Conservation Wings

Birding BIG DAY

In partnership with

RETURN AFRICA

BirdLife South Africa's Birding Big Day (BBD) 2025 will take place on 06 December 2025.
Register for Birding Big Day by clicking **here**.

All birds are equal

In 2025, the front covers of **The Lark** will be dedicated to Special Birds of the Limpopo Province and the back cover to others, some of which are unlikely to grace the front covers of publications.

African Woolly-necked Stork © Derek Engelbrecht.