



BATIS

August
2024
No. 107

Somerset West Bird Club
quarterly magazine


BirdLife
SOUTH AFRICA
Giving Conservation Wings

Rare Birds and Other Sightings



In the last Batis we reported on the 'Nederlandse Kwaker' that had been spotted around town, but we didn't have a photo. Hernus Langeveldt took this picture at Dick Dent in April.



A real treat for Riël Tredoux [photo] and Sarel Snyman was, after scanning Disakloof at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens for 90 mins, spotting a Narina Trogon. They were only allowed about 10 seconds for photos before it flew off.



Common Waxbill by Paul Styger, Dick Dent, May



African Rail, also by Hernus, at Dick Dent in April



Jenny Wentzel and Hernus Langeveldt both took photos of this Grassbird at Rooi Els



INDEX

	Rare Birds and Other Sightings	2
	Editorial	4
1	Thru the Scope	
	a World Parrot Day / World Migratory Bird Day	5
	b Paardevlei Solar Development – An update	6
	c Protect the West Coast	7
2	Club Meetings	
	a May - Lourens River Update / Helderberg Ocean Awareness Movement	8
	b June - Searching for the African Pitta in Zimbabwe	10
	c July - Birding in Paradise – Papua New Guinea	11
3	Club Outings	
	a May – Moorreesburg / June – Jessie’s Farm	13
	b July - Vergelegen	14
4	Citizen Science	
	a Winter CAR Count / PAACs / Denel Munitions Bird Counts	15
	b SA Rare Bird News	16
5	Member Contributions	
	a The Incredible Journey of a Honey Buzzard / Wind Turbines Stopped for Birds	17
	b A Day of Good Deeds in Switzerland	18
	c CALL TO ACTION: Are White Storks breeding in South Africa?	19
	d Acacia Pied Barbets breeding in Strand - Part 2	21
6	Newsworthy	
	a Hadedas have a Sixth Sense	23
	b Under threat wild horses returned to their wetland home	24
	c Turning the tables: the incredible creativity of Magpies	25
	d On the Brink: Botha’s Lark	26
	e Extinct Vultures on their way to Hartbeespoort	27
7	Birdlife SA and related organisations	
	a Obituary: Peter Steyn	28
	b Tankwa Karoo Birding Bonanza / Karoo Birds & Birding Course / SA Bird Fair	29
8	Helderberg information	
	a Nature Reserve information / Bird Rescue contacts	30
9	Club Information	
	a Your Committee	31
	b Somerset West Bird Club Meetings – Diary	32
	c Somerset West Bird Club Upcoming Events	33
	d Tea Roster / Contacts / Welcome New Members	34
10	By Bird Club members	35



A special thank you to Mike Spaletta and his friendly and efficient team of PostNet Gordon's Bay. Their quick turn around on printing the quarterly Batis is just amazing!

Truly, you won't get better service anywhere.

Email: gordonsbay@postnet.co.za; Telephone: 021- 021 856 0220.

Editor's Note

By Marion Herholdt



Welcome to Edition 107 of the Batis. As I write this, winter is truly upon us, and storms are raging across our region. It was good to be transported to other worlds when writing about the talks we had at our meetings last quarter.

One of the 'unexpected pleasures' of our talks is information we learn that isn't strictly about birds. I was fascinated by hearing about the 'Wallace Line', which I had never heard of before. It is a boundary that separates the ecozones of Asia and Australia; species on either side are different and generally do not cross the invisible line. It is named for Alfred Russel Wallace who noticed the clear divide during his travels through the East Indies in the 19th century.

The root cause of Wallace's line is the ancient supercontinent Gondwana was separated entirely from other parts of the world after Pangaea broke up.

Australasia and its smaller islands were part of Gondwana, and that is why their fauna is so different from that of south-east Asia.

Wallace's line marks where part of the old Gondwana plate touches part of the old Laurasia plate.

I'm sure many readers knew all this already! But, I hope you do learn something from this edition of the Batis, and, like me, are inspired to find out more.



In this edition we were able to follow up on some of the news from Batis 106. We have updates on the Lourens River work, the developments at Paardevlei, mining on the West Coast, and the plight of the Rooisand wild horses.

I would like to thank everyone who sent in varied and interesting contributions including Willem Botes, Nando Walzer from Switzerland, Marion and Jan Strobbe from the Netherlands, John Fincham, Peter Greaves, Paul Russel and Marinda Bruwer, plus everyone who provided photos which bring our magazine to life every quarter.

Happy reading - *Marion*





THRU THE SCOPE World Parrot Day 2024



World Parrot Day was
on May 31!

It was started by the World Parrot Trust in 2004 as a way to let everyone know that these remarkable birds need protecting in the wild.

Did you know nearly 1 in 3 parrot species are threatened in the wild due to habitat loss, trapping for the pet trade, and other human-generated threats? Make a pledge to raise awareness about the plight of parrots and to commit to their well-being in companion care. **Add your name to show you care!**

Go to <https://www.parrots.org/lp/pledge2parrots/> to make your pledge.

World Migratory Bird Day 2024

In 2024, World Migratory Bird Day will be celebrated on two days, 11 May and 12 October, aligning with the cyclic nature of bird migration in different hemispheres.

The World Migratory Bird Day campaign in 2024 is focused on the importance of **insects** for migratory birds, and highlight concerns related to decreasing populations of insects. Insects are essential sources of energy for many migratory bird species, not only during the breeding seasons but also during their extensive journeys and greatly affect the timing, duration, and overall success of bird migrations.



The campaign in 2024 will stress the need for proactive conservation measures. This includes reducing the use of pesticides and fertilisers, and where possible, switching to organic farming. Other measures include maintaining and connecting areas of natural vegetation which provide food and shelter for birds and other species.

Find out more here: <https://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/>



Paardevlei Solar Development – An update

Following on from the fascinating talk by Tiffany Schultz we enjoyed earlier this year about the history and future of the Paardevlei area, the Club has registered as an IAP (Interested and Affected Party) for the “PROPOSED PAARDEVLEI SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC & BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM PROJECT”. Huge thanks to **Marinda Bruwer** who spent many hours on the registration.

The application consisted of no less than 17 documents including 15 detailed Annexures, many of which were comprehensive bird counts highlighting the number and variety of species found in the area. At the heart of the Application is a list of 16 comments that require feedback from JG Afrika, the Engineering and Environmental Consultants for the project.

One of the key comments is:

“Based on the huge presence of birds in the greater PV area and based on the different global and regional agreements that the country is party to, please explain how the avifauna assessment was classified at the lowest level and why the best practice guidelines by BirdLife SA... were not implemented”.

SWBC believes that the data gathering carried out was not up to standard for the area.

Other comments that require feedback:

- Birds can be injured because they perceive PV panels as bodies of water. What measures are being taken to mitigate this?
- Which bird specialist took part in the studies?
- Which bird specialist will be engaged during the implementation phase?
- Please supply more details on the bird counts done



**We are appealing for help to ensure the future of SABAP2!
Are you able to assist?**

Donations large or small, monthly or once-off contributions would be appreciated. We would also value any suggestions of corporate or other sources of funding we could investigate. Send your suggestions to Hilary Buchanan at fitz@uct.ac.za. All donations will be eligible for a 18A tax certificate.

For more information and banking details, visit <http://sabap2.birdmap.africa/funding>



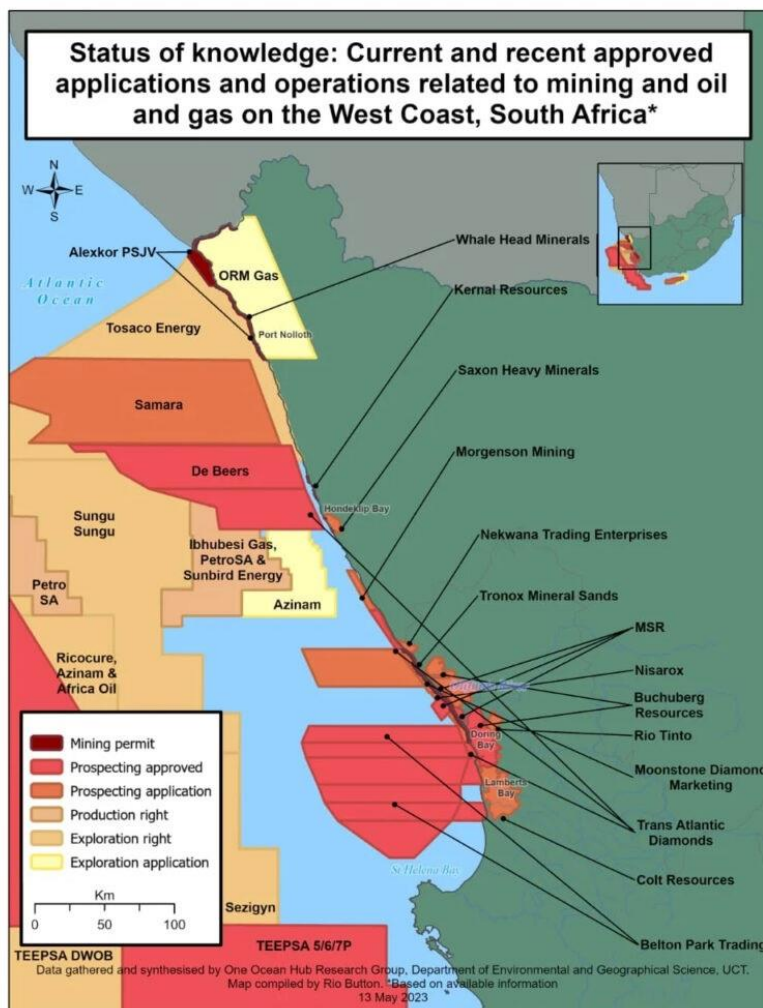
Protect the West Coast



Protect The West Coast (PTWC) is dedicated to informing and empowering civil society to stand against unjust mining activity on the West Coast. We believe in wielding the power of legal action to hold companies and the government accountable. We inspire a deep connection to the region's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

From the Orange River to Cape Columbine, hundreds of kilometres of South Africa's West Coast coastline are being mined or have been earmarked for mining. These industrial-scale extractions have lasting consequences for local communities, fisheries and the natural environment, for generations to come.

There are more than 30 prospecting and mining applications, as well as scores of active mines on the West Coast.



PTWC calls for an urgent moratorium on all prospecting and mining for oil, gas, diamonds and heavy mineral sands until a comprehensive, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of this coast is completed.

An SEA would provide a vital tool to promote sustainable development which the DMRE (Dept of Mineral Resources and Energy) and DFFE (Dept of Forestry, Fisheries and the environment) are mandated to strive towards.

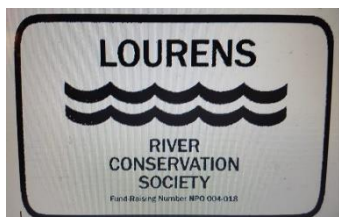
Without an SEA, each application is considered ad-hoc and in a vacuum, which serves the mining interests and no-one else.

Find out more and see how you can get involved at <https://protectthewestcoast.org/>



CLUB MEETINGS

May 2024 – Lourens River / Helderberg Ocean Awareness Movement



Our May meeting was a 'two for one' where we were treated to talks related to water which is such an important habitat for birds.

First **Stephen Louw, Chair of the Lourens River Conservation Society (LRCS)**, spoke about the plans for the river. We had a report on this in the Batis 106, so it was great to get an update from Stephen and the chance to ask questions.

The Lourens River is the only riverine protected area in South Africa and the LRCS aims to keep it as natural as possible, within the limitations of its urban environment. The protected area is 45m from the middle of the river each way, so it includes the erven next to the river.

The **Flood Alleviation project** has been running for 20 years and is still in phase 1 (!). Its key objective is to protect against 'once in 50 year' floods. We are now in phase 1J – the largest phase – which is widening and lowering parts of the river (to slow the flow down) and removing alien vegetation. Other key work includes widening the bridge over Broadway and building a berm next to the Dick Dent Sanctuary to protect the Scout Hut.

You may have noticed a lot of work happening close to Victoria Park and the electricity substation. The Society got the contractors to rescue thousands of plants in that area that is now being stored ready for re-planting. Unfortunately in some areas this did not happen, and plants were destroyed. The Tereos School and Somerset West Traffic Licensing Centre are moving, and the current buildings are due for destruction. The Society is suggesting to retain the buildings to be used by NGOs. They are also trying to get improvements to the river Hiking Trail (instigated by the LRCS, but fallen into disrepair) included in the works.

Further phases include an underground canal running alongside the river to take storm water – this is a massive project which may or may not happen. If it does there could be implications for Dick Dent as the water level there may be lowered to match the river.

How can you help the LRCS?

- The Society needs funds for an office / storage space and would also like to appoint a River Manager. Get in touch if you can help
- Speak out to keep the Lourens River's vital Protected status
- Let us know if you can help with social media marketing or fundraising
- Donate office equipment
- Donate bric-a-brac for the twice yearly White Elephant fundraising sale (you can give donations to SWBC Chair Willene who will pass it on)
- Cash donations (make donations to SWBC Treasurer Sakkie who will pass it on)

Follow them on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/LourensRiverConservationSociety>

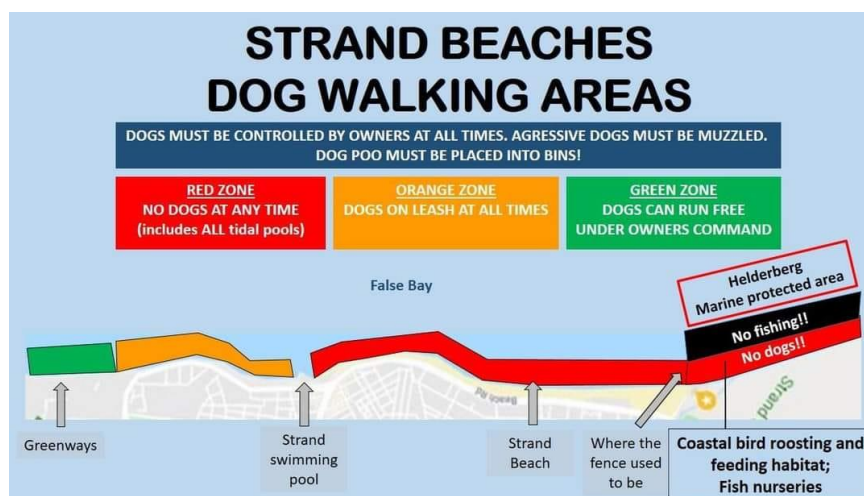


May 2024 – Lourens River / Helderberg Ocean Awareness Movement



Second, **Lisa Starr** spoke passionately about the Helderberg Ocean Awareness Movement (HOAM). Lisa's passion for conservation started in childhood when she helped her parents take rubbish, illegally dumped close to their countryside home, back to the owners!!

The HOAM key objective is to protect the **Helderberg Marine Protected Environment (HMPA)**, one of 41 MPAs in South Africa. MPAs manage the environment by protecting fisheries, species and ecosystems. Key to this is stopping people fishing and walking dogs in MPAs.



The HMPA starts at the bollards on the west end of Strand Beach and stretches about 6km through Macassar. It goes out 500m into the sea and also includes the dunes. It includes two river mouths, the Lourens and Eerste, and supports a huge amount of fish and bird life. The HMPA put the bollard in place and also a sign sponsored by Denel Munitions.

HOAM activities include educational beach clean-ups and park cleaning in communities, often getting young people involved. If you would like to get a school or church group involved, Lisa can provide rubbish bags for clean-ups. On International Coastal Clean-Up Day on 18 Sept 2023, they removed 998kg of rubbish! Beach cleanups are important because cancerous microplastics are now being found in many species including dolphins' milk, and in human fetuses as plastic waste makes its way into drinking water.

How can you help?

- Join or initiate a beach clean-up. Pick up litter on the beach and everywhere you go – otherwise it ends up in storm water and then in the sea

Small things make a difference:

- Refuse single-use plastic e.g. plastic water bottles. Re-use, repair, refurbish, recycle.

Follow HOAM on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/604855949952137>



June 2024 – Searching for the African Pitta in Zimbabwe

At our June meeting, we were very grateful to **Carin Malan** from the Overberg Bird Club who entertained us at short notice with her account of a wonderful trip to Zimbabwe in search of the African Pitta (*Pitta Angolensis*), also known as the Jewel Thrush because of its brilliant colouring and thrush-like behaviour. Carin's account was so evocative; we were transported to Zim for a while, and learnt about more than birding.

We journeyed to Musake in the lower Zambezi area, about 6 hours from Harare, in mid-December. Arriving at the airport, what a surprise to find a modern airport renovated to the same standard as at home. If you go, take US Dollars - everything is done in dollars cash! On the trip to Musake through amazing landscapes we learnt about the country's environmental plans including a 'conservation corridor' connecting areas for elephants, and saw traditional farming methods using ox carts. It is an untouched place with beautiful and friendly people, but the Chinese are now there mining and building a huge new road. This is creating jobs and increasing skills, but will bring 'foreign' ways.

The African Pitta was discovered in 1893 by Daniel Elliot. They arrive in Southern Africa in late October, one of 44 Pitta species worldwide. It makes a bizarre mechanical bleeping noise as part of its mating ritual. We heard our first Pitta by a riverbank, and in total saw seven different birds in nine places.



(Pictures: African Pitta Safaris)

How to see an African Pitta!

- Get off the jeep staying very quiet
- Sit in a chair and play the bird's sound
- Do not start photographing until the bird starts displaying

We saw many other birds on the trip including Thick-Billed Cuckoo, Retz's and White-Crested Helmet Shrike, Dwarf Bittern, Livingstone Flycatcher, Lilian's Lovebird (heard more than seen), Narina Trogon, White-Banded Snake Eagle, Arnot's Chat, Dickinson Kestrel (the only Kestrel which does not hover), Freckled, Pennant-Winged and Fiery-necked Nightjar, Bronze-Winged Courser and Dark Chanting Goshawk.

Back in the Harare suburbs we saw a Bat Hawk and youngster. They are very skilled hunters, which they need to be as there is a short period to hunt the bats as they leave their caves. Studies showed they can take 11 bats in 18 minutes.



July 2024 – Birding in Paradise: Papua New Guinea

Everyone was looking forward to hearing one of our best known birders, **Trevor Hardaker**, tell us about his trip to Papua New Guinea in 2022. PNG is known of course for Birds of Paradise and we get our impression of them from David Attenborough's programmes where he is so close he can touch and stroke them. This is far from the truth – they are actually very difficult to get near to, BUT they are one of the most exciting groups of birds to spot.



PNG is roughly one half of the island of New Guinea. The other half is West Papua, part of Indonesia – a separate country, and you cannot cross the border by foot! PNG also includes multiple islands and 850 different languages are spoken. 742 species of birds have been recorded, 112 endemics, and 7 endemic bird families. Most species are related to the birds of Australia. 95% of the Birds of Paradise are found on the main island.

The group's first stop was the University of Port Moresby (the capital) where it was easy to see birds like the Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Osprey and Australian Swamphe. They also encountered their first Bower Bird (Fawn Breasted). Male Bower Birds build intricate structures – not nests – and decorate them, often with colour-coordinated items, to attract a mate. Each species has different techniques and picks different colours. Another great spot was the Papuan Frogmouth, a type of nightjar with a huge bill and amazing camouflage.



Fawn Breasted Bower Bird



Papuan Frogmouth

Next they visited PNG's first National Park, Varirata, which is mainly rainforest and eucalyptus woodland. The trick to birding here is 'wait and watch'; there is a long history of hunting and the birds are skittish. Some of the birds viewed were many types of beautiful Fruit Doves; Parrots; Butcher Birds; Kingfishers (including Kookaburras); Barking Owls; and the Barred Owlet Nightjar, which is completely different to the Nightjar we know. A very special sighting was the very rare Forest Bittern.

There was a large feeder at the lodge where the group stayed, where fruit was placed to attract the birds. Finally they were treated to the sight of the Raggiana Bird of Paradise, PNG's national bird, which appears on their flag, currency and symbol. The people are incredibly proud of it and even those with no other interest in birds make an effort to see it in their lifetime.



Other interesting species are the Ifrit, which is poisonous to eat; Ribbon Tailed Astrapia whose tail is over 1metre long; and the King of Saxony Bird of Paradise which enchanted the group with the movement of its plumes.

The next stop on the trip was Kiunga, by the border with West Papua, one of the wettest areas in the world where it rains every day. Here they spotted the King and Greater Birds of Paradise, before heading to Kwatu Lodge, a place so remote they had to go by boat through the forest. They birded from boats or by walking into a very muddy forest. Leech socks were a must here! It was very hot with 98% humidity.



The best spot at Kwatu Lodge was the Flame Bower Bird – pictures do not do justice to how this bird's plumage glows.

(Trevor showed us his beautiful photos throughout the talk, however all the photos used to illustrate this article are from eBird)

Final stats: The group saw 344 species, Trevor himself recorded 324 of which 256 were lifers. 16 were heard only and 4 heard by others. The totals may not seem high compared to other birding areas but it was very much quality over quantity. Asked if he would go again, Trevor hesitated, explaining that it is an expensive trip, and the water pressure in the showers was non-existent, which is a big deal with that much mud and humidity!!



CLUB OUTINGS

May 2024 - Moorreesburg

On 18 May 2024 the club visited Moorreesburg, in Swartland. We didn't get a report from this outing. The Editor is always happy to receive your reports and photos from your outings – just a few lines and / or one or two photos is fine!



June 2024 – Jessie's Farm

By Marinda Bruwer

On 15 June 2024 club members set out from the Vergelegen Plein parking area in six cars to Keurbos, Elgin, property of Jessie Walton, also a SWBC member. It was a beautiful sunny day with no wind. Nearing Grabouw streaks of fog were visible in the lower-lying areas. It created such a fairy-like atmosphere; I was expecting some fairies to appear at any moment.

Our first stop was at a fairly big dam with a bird hide across the Highlands Road from Jessie's place. There were spider webs galore, hanging on the grass and fences like crocheted doilies. The fog lifted while we were sitting in the hide. There was no breeze; the trees and clouds reflected on the water as if in a mirror. Egrets everywhere...; they dotted the tree tops like Christmas decorations. Apart from them there were also a few African Darters on display, as well as a Night Heron or two.

At Keurbos our first stop was to look at the Spotted Eagle Owls. They have been breeding there a few times. Paul Styger spotted a hybrid Buzzard, presumably between a Common and Forest Buzzard. It was discussed that some of them had been seen in the Western Cape and that two Master's Degrees had been done on the phenomenon.

A great sighting, and a first for Jessie at her place, was an Amethyst Sunbird. Unfortunately we were all so fixed on staring at it that no-one pressed a shutter button on a camera.

Jessie started to re-wild her garden around five years ago and has planned it very cleverly to ensure that there are plants for a variety of bird and insect species. The masses of proteas also bring a wide variety of winged visitors.

Jessie's place is definitely worth a visit. If you have never been there, keep an eye open for when we next go there or go to her nursery on a weekday at 65 Highlands Road, Elgin.

Thanks a lot for having us over Jessie, despite your mom being sick and you busy with arrangements for her care. We hope that she is be better and will be able to celebrate her 100th birthday in September.

On the next page you can see Marinda's photo montage from the outing.



July 2024 - Vergelegen

The outing scheduled for 20 July unfortunately had to be cancelled due to wet roads on the farm. Even though we are sad about the cancellation, we are grateful for the rain.



CITIZEN SCIENCE



Winter CAR Count

The Winter Co-ordinated Avifaunal Roadcount (CAR) is due to take place on 27 July, in the Overberg, just after the Batis goes to press.

The CAR project monitors the trends and habitat use of cranes, bustards, storks and other large terrestrial birds on farmlands. Many of these species are threatened Red Data species.

Roadcounts began in 1993 in the Overberg and 350 routes were established in seven provinces. About 750 volunteers, farmers, bird club members, conservationists and some schools were involved in CAR. Volunteers are responsible for counting a fixed route regularly twice a year.

We will report more in a future edition, in the meantime if you would like to get involved in CAR counts please chat to a committee member. Contact details are further on in the Batis.



Get Involved: PAACs

The City of Cape Town makes use of a system of Protected Areas Advisory Committees (PAACs) which provide valuable advice with regards to our Nature Reserves. Bird club representation is always extremely valuable. The Cape Bird Club has nominated representatives to sit on the False Bay, Zandvlei and Edith Stephens Nature Reserve PAACs. It is felt that a bird club representative would be hugely valuable on both the Greater Wolfgat (an area which includes Macassar and the Eerste River estuary) and the Table Bay Nature Reserve PAACs.

Please, if you are interested in representing any of the constituted bird clubs at one of our nature reserves, please email the below address for more information. Thank you!

ProtectedArea.AdvisoryCommittees@capetown.gov.za



Denel Munitions Bird Counts

SWBC would like to carry out bird counts in parts of Denel Munition's land where the public normally cannot go. We need more volunteers to carry out these counts, who will be added to a list at Denel and allowed access. At the moment, we do not have enough people to make this viable. Please contact our chair Willene or any Committee member to get more information and volunteer. Contact details are further on in the Batis.



SA Rare Bird News

Summary of some of the rare birds spotted in the Western Cape the past quarter:

MEGA SPOTS



TEMMINCK'S STINT
Port Elizabeth, Pan 7



LESSER WHITETHROAT
Mosaic Lagoon Lodge, near Stanford

WHINCHAT	Strandfontein Sewage Works
BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE	Near Moorressburg
ROSEATE TERN	Agulhas
BLACK HERON	Zandvlei Bird Sanctuary
AFRICAN JACANA	Dreyersdal Wetland
WHITE-FRONTED BEE-EATER	Bontebok National Park
BATELEUR	Outside Mossel Bay
CAPE STARLING	Cape of Good Hope
ABDIM'S STORK	Near George
DUSKY SUNBIRD	Milnerton Race Course – Table Bay
NORTHERN ROYAL ALBATROSS	Offshore on a trip from Hout Bay
SOUTHERN FULMAR	Offshore on a trip from Hout Bay
SPECTACLED PETREL	Offshore on a trip from Hout Bay
AFRICAN RED-EYED BULBUL	Reservoir Road, Somerset West
AFRICAN JACANA	White Horse Dam
SQUACCO HERON	Strandfontein Sewage Works

If you are interested to know more about rare bird sightings, including reports from other provinces, visit the Google Groups page - <https://groups.google.com/g/sa-rarebirdnews>

Pictures: Richard Crawshaw & Glynis Coetzee – from Rare Birds News Report



MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

The incredible journey of a Honey Buzzard

A female European Honey Buzzard Bird was fitted with a satellite tracking system in



Finland recently, and was of particular interest to locals because it spent the most recent austral summer around the town of Reitz in the Free State in South Africa. She left Reitz to start heading north on 20 April and on the 2nd of June, she finally reached Finland where she will probably spend the boreal summer before returning next season for a visit in South Africa.

The image shows the data received from the tracker which plots out the route that she took to head north... so, in just 42 days, she covered over 10,000 km at an average of more than 230 km every single day!

What is amazing is how she took a straight line north, except for when she had to fly over water (or Sudan). Apparently she turned right at the source of the Nile and followed it. After that deviation she returned to the same

longitudinal line she started on and continued until she reached her destination.

From BirdWatch Zambia. Thank you to Paul Russell for sending this for the Batis readers.



Wind turbines at sea stopped for migratory birds

By Marion Strobbe

Last May, wind turbines at sea were shut down for four hours for the first time. The reason was the expected massive bird migration above the North Sea, to give the birds' safe passage. A PhD student at the University of Amsterdam has created a model that predicts bird migration two days in advance. This gives the grid operator time to carefully initiate the shutdown of the turbines while guaranteeing the stability of the high-voltage grid.

Twice a year, in spring and autumn, millions of birds migrate across the North Sea on some nights. It is extremely important that the growth in the number of wind farms in the North Sea is done as ecologically



responsible as possible with minimal impact on the North Sea and migratory birds. Temporarily shutting down the turbines during migration contributes to this. North Sea wind farms are expected to be shut down more often from next autumn.

Wind turbines at Wijk aan Zee, North Holland, the Netherlands [Photo by Marinda Bruwer]



A Day of Good Deeds in Switzerland

By Nando Walzer

For half a year I'm back home in Switzerland. It took time to get warmer days here, but it's wonderful how the birds are chirping everywhere again in springtime. The most wonderful call reaches me every morning from the Blackbirds (Turdus Merula) - beautiful sound.

The first White Storks already have offspring and are bringing food into the nests. Around 205 species of birds breed in Switzerland. 83 of them are endangered, however, and this is where Birdlife Switzerland comes into play. With 69,000 members it is one of the largest national nature conservation organisations, and is divided into local sections. For over 100 years it has been implementing concrete projects for biodiversity to preserve endangered species and their habitats.



Birdlife Switzerland is also a main partner of the "Day of Good Deeds" for the first time, and carried out various biodiversity projects on May 25th, which I took part in, from nature expeditions to the construction of nesting aids to the improvement and maintenance of habitats. There were enough helping hands to guide children and adults with information, instructions, games, competitions and explanations. There was also a braai and lots of drinks available in the shop. The residents of each month were shown and explained on 12 screens, and expert Bird Club members also led the visitors to two bird hides.

The whole event was a success and both children and adults were able to get good impressions of the birds' world.



CALL TO ACTION: Are White Storks breeding in South Africa?

By John Fincham

John has highlighted an article on the Biodiversity & Development Institute website (<https://thebdi.org/>).

The BDI has been given the task of finding out how many pairs of **breeding** White Storks there are in South Africa, currently. For now, the focus is on **nests**, rather than on birds!

The International White Stork Census takes place every 10 years. This year's is the eighth. The number that South Africa submitted to the seventh census in 2014 was zero. We know that was wrong. In 2004, the number of pairs of breeding White Storks was 10.

On 18 November 1940, Austin Roberts (the first edition of the bird book now named after him in was also published that year) was driving around the Oudtshoorn district, when what he saw a nest made of sticks at the top of a dead eucalypt. He had the courage to believe what he was seeing: a White Stork nest with three chicks. The farmer told him the storks were already breeding when he moved to the farm in 1933. The storks bred again in 1941, but the nest had grown larger than the dead tree could support, and the three chicks died in the nest crash. This pair was not recorded breeding again.

It was 21 years before the next White Stork nest was found, in 1961, on a farm near Bredasdorp. Quickly, nests came to light on other nearby farms. The maximum number of active nests was four. It is this little population that has persisted the longest. The excess chicks were brought to Cape Town where they were hand-raised. The plan was to keep them at the old Tygerberg Zoo for a few years before they were released. Apart from the fact that there were at least 18 of them, there is no record of what happened to the captive-reared White Storks at Tygerberg Zoo, but it does seem certain that breeding there was initiated by wild storks.

How can you help?

Please search diligently for breeding White Storks this year. If you chat to farmers, ask them if they know of any nests. We need to track them down, so that we can provide

reliable information to the 2024 edition of the International White Stork Census. Right now it is **nests** that we are interested in (not birds or even flocks of birds, at least for now). Please also report any nests known to have been occupied in the last decade or so.

Please contact **Les Underhill** (les@thebdi.org) with whatever information you find - Ideally, the report will contain place, coordinates, contact details of landowner, and a few photos!

Read the full article here

<https://thebdi.org/2024/05/26/how-many-pairs-of-breeding-white-storks-are-there-in-south-africa-in-2024/>



White Storks at Tygerberg in 2003 with the Paarl Mountains behind: Photo Credit The BDI

John adds:

The late Jan Hofmeyr showed me about seven nests at Tygerberg Zoo about 10 -12 years ago (maybe it was longer). Jan used to ring the chicks. That Zoo no longer exists and nor do any of those nests, according to my casual observations. At the same time Jan took Otto Schmidt and me to a nest on a farm near Bredasdorp, where he also ringed the chicks. I have no current information on that nest.

So I suspect there may no longer be any nesting White Storks in SA. I will be glad to learn that there are, with details on localities.



Acacia Pied Barbets 'At Home' in Strand: Part 2

By Willem Botes

In the Batis 106 we featured Part 1 of Willem's story of Acacia Pied Barbets breeding in his Strand garden. Read on to find out what happened when they bred again... and once again.

I presume that the second batch of eggs was laid in mid-November. I heard two new chicks for the first time on 1 December 2023. After some time I realised that only one chick is alive.

Now it was feeding time the whole day. After feeding, one of the parents would clean the nest. Again I saw the parents bringing a great number of different fruit and insects. The variety of food always surprised me: sometimes it was flower petals which the chick eagerly ate, one time it was some kind of cricket.



Photo - On 1 January 2024, for the last time, before it flew off, not to come back again.

I read somewhere that the breeding season for the Acacia Pied Barbet is from August to April and that they breed twice in a season. This pair did not adhere to that information. Only a few days after the last chick left the nest, they laid eggs for the third time this season, around 3 January 2024.



I so much wanted to see what was going on in the nest that I bought an Endoscope that I could connect to my cell phone.

I waited till both parents left the nest and then had a peep inside the nest.

What a surprise to see three eggs with one newly hatched chick, on a floor of wood chips.

On 19 January the second egg hatched, but the third never did.

On 2 February, I could see a trace of yellow feathers started to show on the chicks.



I often wondered how the two could fit into that small nest. During the day, one of the parents would go into the nest and often stay for some time. If it was warm, one of the parents would sit in the opening of the nest to protect them. Late afternoon one of the parents would also go into the nest to sleep there for the night. That the chicks never suffocated, is amazing.

On 12 February, I had a look in the nest again and was amazed at how fast the chicks grow. The yellow feathers are now clearly showing. Later that day, I saw one of the chicks peeping out of the hole for the first time. They were 24 days old that day.



It was early morning on 19 February 2024, that I again saw one of the chicks looking out from the nest. After that sighting, they must have left, as the nest was now empty. It was 32 days after birth that they left the nest, but now they reached the age to take to the wing and explore the skies of the Strand.

I measured the depth of the nest after the Pied Barbets bred three times during this season. As they were constantly pecking inside, I was amazed to see that the depth of the nest now measured 440mm in the Sisal Stump.

What a wonderful experience to be able to see the pair of Acacia Pied Barbets in our garden rearing four chicks and to be part of their lives for a few months.





NEWSWORTHY

Hadedas have a 'Sixth Sense'

Article from Internet – Spotted by Marinda Bruwer

South Africans love to hate Hadedas, (Hadedda Ibis - *Bostrychia hagedash*) aka 'Africa's alarm clock'.

A new study has revealed details of these birds' extraordinary sensory capabilities and clarified why perhaps they are now found across South, and Southern Africa.

Led by ornithologist Dr Carla du Toit, the study reveals that Hadedas possess a virtual 'sixth sense' that allows them to detect vibrations in the soil and find their prey even if they can't detect these with their other senses.



"Broadly speaking, Hadedas and various other groups of birds have this sense that they are able to detect vibrations in the soil using a special organ in their beaks. These vibrations in many cases result from the movement of little worms or invertebrates... and the birds can detect those and actually locate their prey even if they can't see, hear, or smell them."

Dr Carla du Toit, University of Cambridge

Picture credit: Wikimedia Commons

The main focus of the study was how the levels of water in the soil affect the Hadedas' ability to sense these vibrations and find their prey. While we may find them almost everywhere today, historically these birds were restricted to the eastern parts of South Africa, Dr du Toit says. This makes them a good example of how animals can actually follow changes in habitats across a given area, she explains.

"Over the last 100 years they've spread out and as we know now they're everywhere from Joburg to Cape Town - anywhere near bigger cities and farmlands. One of the factors tied to this, if we map out artificial irrigation in gardens and farmlands... is it seems that Hadedas have followed the irrigation of soils by human beings. One of the things that we thought, was that the reason for this is it may be easier for them to detect vibrations in wetter soils."

Dr Carla du Toit, University of Cambridge

Full article: <https://www.ewn.co.za/2024/05/15/we-know-hadedas-are-noisy-but-did-you-know-they-have-a-sixth-sense-drawing-them-to-your-garden>



Under-threat wild horses returned to their wetland home

In our last Batis edition we reported on the plight of the Fisherhaven wild horses. In this edition we are happy to follow up the story with the news that the herd has been safely returned home. The Daily Maverick reported:

It's been an incredible journey with many anxious moments, but they are home – and they are safe.

That is the heart-warming news from Leanne Dryburgh and her team of wild horse volunteers. They have managed to return a group of free-roaming horses from an area near Hermanus to their original wetland home near the Bot River estuary in the Western Cape and have been keeping a watch over them since their arrival.

“We knew that it was not going to be an easy operation and that the stress factor was going to be an issue when it came to loading the horses,” Dryburgh explained. “But we have a very experienced team. For something like this you need patience, compassion, skill, an understanding of the herds and their dynamics and, above all, cool heads!”

On 18 February at 7am the Fisherhaven herd was released back to its original home and back to safety. Their destination was a stretch of deserted privately owned land in the Bot River area as well as part of the Rooisand Nature Reserve belonging to CapeNature.

The Fisherhaven wild horses were a breakaway group from the original Rooisand herd of wild horses that have roamed freely in a protected area on the Bot River estuary for more than a century. With the recent acceleration of development in the Hermanus area, the small group needed to be returned to its Rooisand family of 28 horses as quickly and safely as possible.



Said Dryburgh: “They are currently roaming right where we hoped they would, away from humans so they can settle into the environment and hopefully start a new chapter in their lives. The mission of our team has never wavered – to keep these magnificent creatures free-roaming and at a respectful

distance from humans. They have proved that they survive incredibly well on their own – in their vlei. We need to keep it that way. They are a national treasure.”

Read the full article here

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-05-06-under-threat-cape-wild-horses-returned-to-their-wetland-home/>



Turning the Tables: The incredible creativity of Magpies

By Nando Walzer, from an internet article (Translated by Google Translate!)

Magpies surprise us in Europe when they build their nests. You can see them on many buildings in the city centre: sharp metal spikes mounted on roofs, window sills and balconies. Such defensive spikes are intended to scare away pigeons and other city birds and prevent them from building their nests there. But some birds are smarter than they seem. Corvids in particular, which include magpies and crows, are considered to be very intelligent.

Auke-Florian Hiemstra knows this only too well. The Dutch biologist from the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden has been studying animal architecture for years. What fascinates him most is that nowadays birds often use man-made materials for their nests: for example condoms, fireworks, sunglasses, windshield wipers and drug bags.

It was already known that birds are not always scared away by the defensive spikes and sometimes tear the steel pins off the roofs. But the fact that they literally turn the tables and use the metal for breeding surprises even a bird expert like Hiemstra. "It really is like a joke," he says. "These are the craziest bird nests I have ever seen." Hiemstra's research team describes other strange bird nests in the Netherlands and Scotland. There, magpies and crows used sharp materials such as barbed wire and knitting needles to build their nests.



The discovery of a huge bird structure in the courtyard of a hospital in Antwerp exceeded the wildest imagination.

High up in a tree, a pair of magpies had built a nest made of anti-bird spikes: a fortress made of up to 1,500 metal spikes.

The birds had previously pulled the bird protection spikes from a roof overhang.

A magpie's nest is usually made of brushwood. The parents build it as a spherical structure on tall trees. A hood made of thorny branches is intended to protect the nursery from enemies. But the creative power of the adaptable corvids seems to know no bounds. Sharp metal spikes are even more effective than prickly plants.



On the brink: Botha's Lark

From Daily Maverick – spotted by Marinda Bruwer

The Botha's Lark, a small brown bird with an orange-pink conical bill, endemic to South Africa and found in grasslands along the escarpment of southwestern Mpumalanga, is under serious threat of extinction. The species is not sufficiently protected in nature reserves and grasslands are not adequately preserved as a vegetation type.



Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, head of conservation at BirdLife South Africa, told *Daily Maverick*, “If we look at the decline, unless there’s a serious intervention, the species could be extinct as early as 2025.” The species, *Spizocorys fringillaris*, has a tiny and limited distribution in the grasslands of South Africa, of which 34% have been irreversibly transformed with less than 2% being formally protected.

Dr David Ehlers Smith, science and spatial planning project manager at BirdLife South Africa, said this may not be the most charismatic of bird species, but the conservation of the Botha's Lark is the most pressing issue facing South Africa's terrestrial fauna. The population was estimated at 20,000 individuals in 1983; in 2015 it had declined to under 2,500. Now, in 2024, it has declined to 340 individuals, and analyses indicate a 29% reduction of suitable habitat within its already tiny, historic distribution.

Lack of political will

The Botha's Lark faces a myriad of threats, but according to experts, one of the greatest is the lack of political or economic will to safeguard species, resulting in a dearth of funds to address and mitigate the threats. The major threat facing the species is the fragmentation and loss of habitat. Smit-Robinson said the habitat area for the species was decreasing through an increase in monoculture and agricultural expansion for soy and maize in the area. Additionally, a shift in grazing from sheep to cattle appears to be changing the grass conditions upon which the Botha's Lark relies.

From the initial discussions, BirdLife SA believes they can come up with a good working relationship with landowners and farmers to increase the protected environment for the species that overlaps with their land, and take into account economic benefits as well.

“The beauty of having a protected environment will also be the signing of an agreement with the landowners where there will be a habitat management plan and a bigger management plan for that protected environment, where we would be able to limit this kind of ploughing of grasses and planting of crops,” Smit-Robinson said. She added that these threats not only affect the Botha's Lark species but others in the ecosystem.

Read the full article here

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-07-04-bothas-lark-sas-most-threatened-terrestrial-bird-species-likely-to-become-extinct-as-early-as-2025/>



Extinct Vultures on their way to Hartbeespoort

Internet article spotted by Marinda Bruwer

In an attempt to reintroduce the Egyptian vulture to South Africa, two of these birds will soon be homed in Hartbeespoort. These birds have been extinct in South Africa for decades, and a breeding pair is currently in quarantine at a zoo in Johannesburg.

“For the first time in decades, two African Egyptian Vultures are joining VulPro’s breeding programme. This is just the start of our efforts to reintroduce the species to South Africa. This programme marks a historic step towards reintroducing Egyptian Vultures into the wild, aiming for a sustainable breeding population in South Africa,” said Keri Wolter, founder of VulPro.



The birds are currently in quarantine at Lory Park Zoo to ensure a smooth transition and optimal health as they acclimate to their new surroundings. After quarantine, the pair will be homed at VulPro in Hartbeespoort until permits can be obtained to move them to the new VulPro centre at the Shamwari Private Game Reserve, Eastern Cape.

The birds come from the World Bird Sanctuary and San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance in America. “For years we’ve worked toward the shared goal of reintroducing Egyptian vultures into their native habitat. Each new success is a testament to the power of international collaboration in wildlife conservation,” said Andrew Stehly, Curator of Birds at San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

“The Egyptian Vulture, also known as “Pharaoh’s Chicken,” is one of the most fascinating birds in the world! Sadly, Egyptian vultures are endangered worldwide due to habitat loss, poisoning, and other human-related threats. Conservation efforts are crucial to protect these incredible birds,” Wolter said. “One fascinating fact about Egyptian vultures is their use of tools, which is exceptionally rare among birds. These intelligent vultures are known to pick up stones and use them to break open the hard shells of ostrich eggs, demonstrating remarkable problem-solving abilities. This behaviour showcases their adaptability and intelligence, setting them apart as one of the few avian species capable of using tools in the wild.”

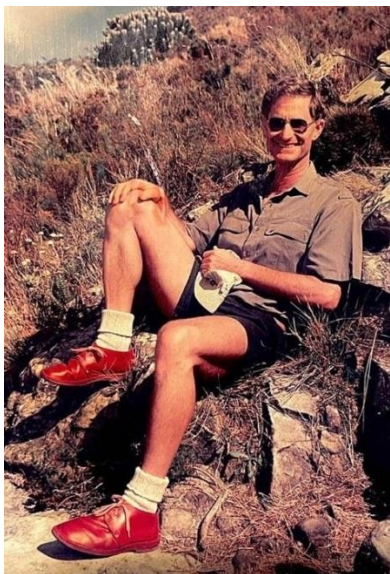
“This achievement is the culmination of extensive planning and coordination, representing a notable milestone in our ongoing commitment to safeguarding endangered species and preserving biodiversity,” Wolter said.

Source: <https://kormorant.co.za/extinct-vultures-on-their-way-to-hartbeespoort/>



BIRDLIFE SA AND RELATED ORGANISATIONS

Obituary: Peter Steyn



A legend of Southern African birding, Peter Steyn, passed away peacefully on July 4th 2024 aged 88.

He was made Honorary Life President of the Cape Bird Club in 1998, and in 2011 he was awarded the Gill Memorial Medal (BirdLife SA's highest recognition for advancing the knowledge of birds), and in 2012 the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Steven Piper Lifetime Achievement Award for his raptor conservation and research.

To Jenny and Peter's children and relatives, we send our heart-felt condolences. *A special request from Peter's family: "To honour the memory of this great man please plant a tree where a bird may one day nest."*

Trevor Hardaker was one of many who paid tribute.

"Peter will be especially well known to birders of my generation and older where he was a mentor and inspiration to so many. His accolades are numerous and copies of his various books will adorn many a book shelf among us. Peter's bird photography was also setting very high standards long before the thought of a digital camera even existed and many of his photos taken on old slide film with old technology still compare very favourably with what is being produced today by the very best of photographers with the most technologically advanced equipment.

There is lots that could be written about Peter but, perhaps something that many might not necessarily know is that Peter was the oldest birder to ever be involved with the discovery of a new species for the Southern African bird list, when he found the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin at Zeekoevlei in 2016, still the only record that we have in Southern Africa of this species.

Peter was 80 years old at the time and, in finding the bird, set in motion one of the biggest twitches in Southern African history at the time with around 1300 birders going to see his special find. I remember well how excited he was when the ID of the bird was confirmed and I still have a note which he sent to me later that same evening which says: "I am still a bit gobsmacked, so am going to make myself a nice strong Milo" 😊

A huge loss to our birding community, RIP Peter, may you now fly high with all of those raptors that you loved so much".



Tankwa Karoo National Park Birding Bonanza

The Boland region of the SANParks Honorary Rangers invites all birders to join us for a fun-filled weekend at our annual Tankwa Karoo Birding Bonanza.



From the rocky outcrops of the spectacular Gannaga Pass to the shores of the Oudebaaskraal Dam, you and your team, accompanied by an experienced birding guide, will set out to identify as many birds, especially endemics, as possible.

Excellent birding, friendly camaraderie and delicious meals laid on, all add up to an unforgettable weekend, proceeds from which will go directly to conservation projects identified by SANParks.

Date: 20 - 22 September 2024	Price: R2650 per person	Contact:
Venue: Tanqua Guesthouse Complex, Tankwa Karoo National Park	Costs include two nights' accommodation, welcome function and a prize-giving dinner	Jacqui Badenhorst
Registration from 14:00 on 20/09/2024	Vehicles and drivers will be available if required	Cell: 082 792 7075 boland.sec@sanparksvolunteers.org



Karoo Birds & Birding Course – 1st to 3rd November 2024

This 4-day, 3-night course will be presented by **Rick Nuttall** (Ornithologist, Naturalist and former Director of the National Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa). Rick is an expert on the birds of central South Africa, with a particular interest in avian ecology and behaviour.



Cost: R6,950 per person all inclusive.
To book, or for further information, please contact PC Ferreira
082 567 9211 or info@karooariep.co.za

South African Bird Fair 2024



Save the date of **24 August 2024** for an epic day of birding excitement at the Country Club Johannesburg (Woodmead) or online via Zoom. Expect another sell-out event of early morning birding walks, talks by inspiring guest speakers and workshops aimed at kids, beginner birders and garden birders, as well as those who want to get to grips with LBJs.

There will also be a full house of exhibitors, the annual fundraiser auction and, of course, the ever-popular wine-down birding quiz.

More details on <https://www.birdlife.org.za/south-african-bird-fair-2024/>



HELDERBERG INFORMATION

Helderberg Nature Reserve News



The Reserve hosts regular nature walks & hikes, hacks and talks.

Please consult the HNR website for more information

<https://helderbergnaturereserve.co.za/#>

or, their Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/helderbergnaturereserve>

Guided Hikes: the schedule has been reduced to a Quarterly hike to West Peak. The next hike is scheduled for 5 October 2024. Please check with the Reserve nearer the time to ensure it is going ahead.



Bird Rescue in the Helderberg area

The following people are available for advice only:

- Maddie Oosthuizen - 082 528 8489.
- Jolene Fourie - 084 462 3088 - Gordon's Bay.

The following people are available for advice and assistance:

- **Hank Chalmers** of Eagles Encounters. Tel 082 462 5463 or 021 858 1826. He works with all birds but is an accredited specialist in raptors and owls.
- **Charlotte White**. Tel 084 434 4084. She lives in Sir Lowry's Pass and cares for small raptors as well as common and garden birds, excluding geese, ducks, Hadedas and Guinea Fowl.
- **Cape Nature**
 - **Helene van der Westhuyzen**, Conservation Services Manager - 082 773 4278
 - **Dumisane Jula** - 071 999 5348
 - **Leandri Wessels** - 072 592 3517
 - **Khungeka Beda** - 076 103 4615
- **Grabouw: Jessie Walton** - 083 458 3790. Raptors and mammals.
- **SANCCOB** Cape Town. Seabirds only. Tel: 021 557 6155 or 078 638 3731



Please note that these wonderful people are volunteers and therefore not always immediately available. Donations are welcome and always appreciated to cover some of their costs. If you know of anyone else who is prepared to help in this area, please let any member of the committee know – we will follow up.



CLUB INFORMATION

Somerset West Bird Club Committee Members - 2024

CHAIRPERSON	Willene van der Merwe vdmwillene@gmail.com	082 567 8631
VICE-CHAIRPERSON	Vacant	
TREASURER	Sakkie Krynauw sakkie@krynauw.net	021 853 6814 082 904 5363
SECRETARY	Vacant [Maresa Volsteedt is acting]	
SPEAKERS	Bas Kothuis baskothuis@gmail.com	082 784 0074
OUTINGS	Riël Tredoux rtredoux@telkomsa.net	072 326 2298
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION	Freya Brett Helderberg.ecoschools@gmail.com	021 444 9745 082 708 1016
CONSERVATION	Vacant [Willene van der Merwe is acting]	
EDITOR OF Batis	Marion Herholdt batis.editor@gmail.com	084 213 7437
WITHOUT PORTFOLIO	Annamarie Krynauw akrynauw@yahoo.com	021 853 6814 082 394 5585
EQUIPMENT	Maresa Volsteedt jandmvolsteedt@telkomsa.net	021 854 4063 083 680 6502
<u>ADDITIONAL:</u>		
WEB-SITE ADMIN	Marion Herholdt batis.editor@gmail.com	084 213 7437
TEA ORGANISATION	Bernice Green albern@zsd.co.za	082 820 4082
WITHOUT PORTFOLIO	Marinda Bruwer mbruwer1@gmail.com	082 774 9408

Contributions for the Newsletter

Please send any contributions for the newsletter (interesting sightings, photographs or any interesting news items) to Marion Herholdt at batis.editor@gmail.com. Photographs should not exceed 3MB in size.

Deadline for the next issue: 18 October 2024.



Somerset West Bird Club Diary



August 2024 to October 2024 Programme



The programme can change at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances

August	1	Thursday	19h00 Library	Penguin Colonies Update – Christina Haagen	Maresa
August	10	Saturday	15h00	Paardevlei	Sakkie
August	17	Saturday	07h30	Van der Stel Pass	Riël
Sept	5	Thursday	19h00 Library	To be confirmed	Maresa
Sept	14	Saturday	15h00	Dick Dent Bird Sanctuary	Sakkie
Sept	21	Saturday	08h00 Habitat	Darling / Tienie Versfeld / Groote Post	Riël
Oct	3	Thursday	19h00 Library	Birds of New Zealand – John Magner (TBC)	Bas
Oct	12	Saturday	15h00	Paardevlei	Sakkie
Oct	19	Saturday	08h00 Habitat	Weekend Away Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve	Willene

Please refer to the club committee member page for contact details. This page will be placed on the HNR notice board and will therefore not have contact details.



Somerset West Bird Club Meetings and Outings

Club meetings - 18h30 for 19h00 at the Somerset West Library Hall, c/o Victoria and Andries Pretorius Streets, Somerset West, every first Thursday of the month (except January where it is the second Thursday).

Club outings - departing at 07h00 [summer time] or 07h30 [winter time] unless communicated via Whats App group with a different time / venue. Please arrive 15 minutes before the departing time so that car sharing can be arranged.

Depending on where we are going, parking at Habitat Centre, c/o N2 and R44, Somerset West [next to Somerset Mall], 34.0795783°S, 18.8207871°E or Vergelegen Plein c/o Sir Lowrey's Pass Rd and Bizweni Ave, 34.101943°S, 18.873910°E.

Dick Dent Bird Sanctuary and Paardevlei - April till September at 15h00; October till March at 16h00. DD - park at the church, c/o Woltemade and Jennings Streets, Strand. Paardevlei - park at Cheetah Sanctuary [34.091037°S, 18.813905°E].



SWBC Annual Weekend Away

Our trip away is planned for the weekend of 18 to 20 October 2024 at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve close to Swellendam / Heidelberg.

Nearly 200 bird species are regularly spotted in the reserve. Visitors should keep a keen eye out for Black, Crowned and Booted Eagles as well as the rare Striped Flufftail, the Narina Trogon and beautiful Sunbirds and Sugarbirds.

The forest area features two bird hides which are easily accessible via the hiking trails, and provide great vantage points from which to view the many bird species in the nature reserve.

After looking into the accommodations options, the committee decided to ask all that are interested in coming to book their own accommodation inside the reserve.

If you do book please let a committee member know so we can plan the socials!

Photo: California Redwoods in Grootvadersbosch. These trees are not indigenous to South Africa and was planted in 1907. The highest tree is 40 m, but in the USA, where their status is 'endangered', it can grow as high as 100 m.

(<https://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/grootvadersbosch-nature-reserve>).



We Want Your Photos!

We are planning to run our popular Club Photo Evening at our December meeting, Thursday 5th December 2024.

It may seem like a long way off but if you would like to part of this, please start putting together the photos you would like to present.

Ideally we would love you to present your own photos and talk about them, but if you would prefer not to, we will just show them for you.

You can produce your own presentation, or you can send your photos to us at any time at batis.editor@gmail.com. More details later in the year.



Tea Roster

September	Jenny Parsons Marie Finlayson Annelee Steyn	083 448 2467 072 017 7047 082 631 5944
October	Sue van Oudtshoorn Annalie Botes Margie Humphris	072 476 7666 083 729 2658 082 641 4819
November	Jeanne Kothuis Febe van Tonder Cecile Perold	083 556 9573 071 443 8857 074 055 5062
<p><i>Our usual thanks to the gallant team who prepare and serve eats and drinks for every meeting. We all really do appreciate your efforts.</i></p> <p>REMINDER: Refreshments are now R10 per person</p>		



New Members

The club would like to welcome our new members who joined since April 2024.

Denise Fourie	April 2024	Somerset West
Nicky Smit	June 2024	Somerset West
Alta & Allen Fraser	June 2024	Brackenfell
Bridget Hill	July 2024	Somerset West
Nick & Gerda Liebenberg	July 2024	Somerset West
Kaylin Willscott	July 2024	Somerset West



Somerset West Bird Club Contact Details



Facebook page: Somerset West Bird Club Group
 Website: <https://www.somersetwestbirdclub.co.za/>
 Email address: info@somersetwestbirdclub.co.za
 Email address: somersetwestbirdclub@gmail.com
 Batis email address: batis.editor@gmail.com



Beach clean-ups

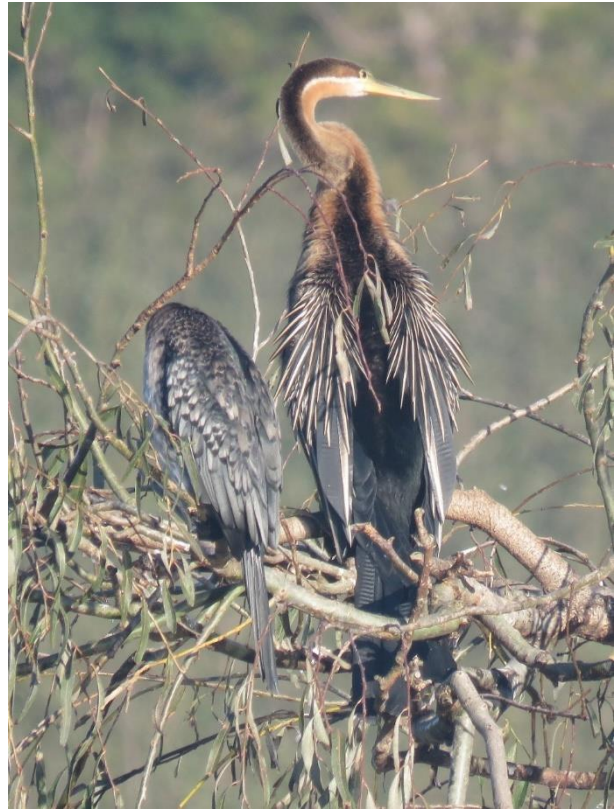
Please check the relevant Facebook pages to see what is happening



Photographed by Bird Club members

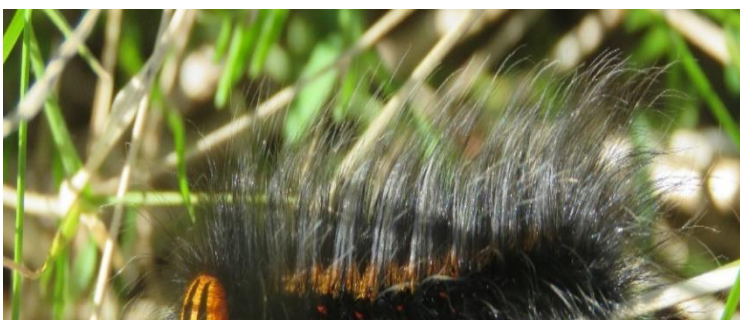


Paul Styger's photo of the juvenile hybrid Buzzard at Jessie's place. Gareth Bain had this to say: There was quite a darter bundle on Jessie's dam.

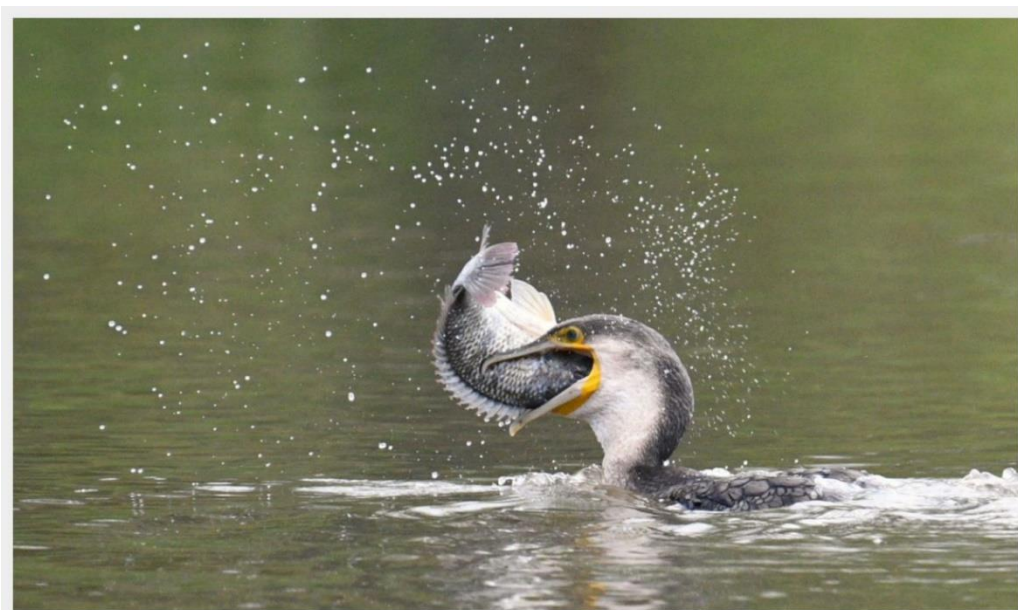


Suné Greeff supplied this stunning photo of our bird of the year, the Bateleur.

Paul Styger took the photo of the Cape Shoveler at Paardevlei, to which Riël Tredoux tweeted and cracked us up with his comment of whether it should become the new logo for Twitter, now known as X.



Gareth Bain entertained us with what he called a 'Bird Hors D'irb' - a Mountain White spot Caterpillar. Photo was taken at Paardevlei.



Peet Marx's photos at Spier on 20 July 2024 makes one think of the Chomp advertisement of years gone by – '**Big mouth / Ou grootbek**' 😊