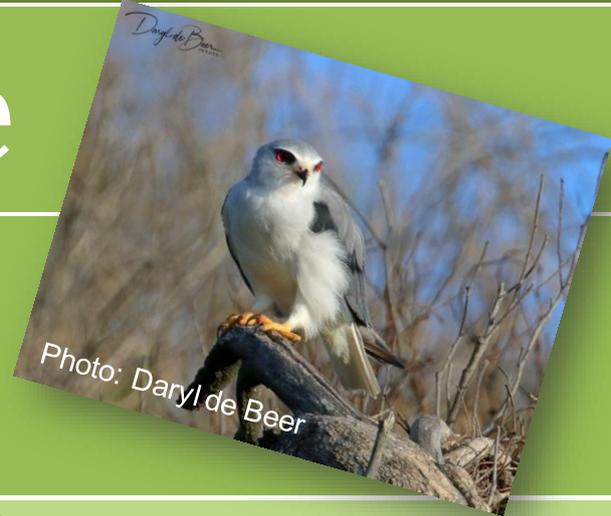


The Kite

Tygerberg Bird Club
Tygerberg Voëlklub



Number 129 (November 2020 – January 2021)

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Affiliated member of:



Chirp from the Chair

Although 2020 has been a really “upside down” year, with meetings on Zoom and no on-site evening meetings held since March – the TBC has continued with doing good work behind the scenes. Recently, TBC conservation funds were donated towards repairing the bird hide roof at Geelbek in the West Coast National Park – something that needed to be done desperately. We thank the Honorary Rangers for organising quotations and obtaining the necessary Park approvals, as well as supervising the actual on-site work.

The 2021 TBC Calendars for Conservation are available and as always, they are lovely. Please go to our website www.tygerbergbirdclub.org to order yours and support this great conservation project. You can also contact any of the TBC committee members who have stock at home. Well done Lesley for producing another great calendar. Also, a big thank you to our sponsors who support the club with this project. All profits made from the project go towards carefully selected avian conservation projects.

The TBC club outings resumed in September, with several members joining us for a lovely day spent in the Darling farms area. Wildflowers were still beautiful and bountiful, and birds were displaying everywhere. Other outings to Intaka Island, Majik Forest & the Tygerberg Nature Reserve once more show that birding at our local spots is worthwhile! Great birds can be seen all around the Peninsula, for those who look for it. Our hobby is fun and gets us out into beautiful parts of our country.

We thank the 2020 TBC committee for all the hard work behind the scenes, and specifically Dalene Vanderwalt for co-ordinating all the Zoom meetings this year as well as putting together the KITE magazines.

A big thank you to members who volunteered to do CWAC water bird counts, as well as CAR counts. To all the citizen scientists who are doing SABAP2 bird atlassing counts – well done and keep up the great work.

Happy Bird Watching!

Brigid Crewe



The Tygerberg Ringing Unit has been one of the most productive ringing groups in southern Africa, and this has been largely due to the efforts of our stalwart, Margaret McCall.



Photos: Kevin Drummond-Hay

TBC pays tribute to Margaret McCall

After serving for three decades, Margaret is retiring from leading the Tygerberg Bird Club's Ringing unit.

Margaret's first ringing session as a qualified ringer was in October 1994 at Protea Valley. In the short time left that year, she ringed 218 birds. Her annual totals increased and between 1996 and 2011, Margaret ringed over 1000 birds every year (plus many recaptures).

Margaret has ringed a total of more than 36000 birds over the last 27 years, putting her in twelfth position of overall ringing totals in the SAFRING database. She has recaptured nearly 5000 birds, contributing valuable information on bird longevity and movements.

Margaret has done a few ringing trips to other parts of South Africa, but most of her ringing has been in the Western Cape, with her top site being the Goedeontmoeting farm (with more than 12000 birds ringed there). Margaret has ringed a total of 174 different species, with her top species ringed being Southern Red Bishop, Cape Weaver, Southern Masked Weaver, Cape White-eye, and Cape Sparrow (over 2000 birds for each of these species). A few of the many exciting species she has ringed include Peregrine Falcon, Lanner Falcon, and

Black Crake.

While the above statistics relate to Margaret's impressive ringing efforts, she worked as part of a team, the Tygerberg ringers. The ringing sessions involved different ringers over the years, as well as birders that joined the sessions to help and to enjoy this birding experience. Two of the more specific team projects involved swallows and Koeberg.

When a Barn Swallow roost was found in Durbanville, the Tygerberg ringers spent many sessions in 2010 and 2011 ringing the swallows at night. Several exciting Barn Swallow recaptures from overseas were handled by Margaret. Six from the United Kingdom and one from Spain.

The other important project that the Tygerberg ringers were involved with, was ringing fynbos birds at Koeberg Nature Reserve for an important study of breeding habits. Several great papers were published from these studies, with acknowledgements to Margaret and the TBC ringers.

Thank you Margaret - we salute you!

H. Dieter Oschadleus

Ringer Extraordinaire!

Many of us have had the privilege of being tutored by Margaret McCall; from how to ID, putting rings on birds, taken measurements, learning about moult and brood patches. Margaret started my birding career, she taught me ringing and been a long-standing friend for more than 20 years.

At the great age of 86, her dedication to this cause is unparalleled. She still wanders out in the early hours on a Wednesday morning to join new ringers - giving up her knowledge freely to ensure the unit continues to function. Happy in the knowledge that her longtime friend and fellow ringer, Lee, is there to continue the projects and mentoring the new ringers while they work towards qualifying for their ringing licenses.

Over the years, Margaret has ringed from the littlest Penduline Tits to large raptors. She had to contend with running away from angry ostriches, chasing cows away from the mist nets, swatting hordes of midges which try to eat you alive, and yet continued to pursue her hobby with enthusiasm and dedication.

We are grateful that Margaret’s valuable knowledge will not be lost to us at the TBC as she will still attend some of the ringing sessions, scribing and teaching new ringers the tricks of the trade.

Margaret, you are a legend in the TBC - enjoy your retirement.



Several TBC ringers were recognised for their contribution to science by the Tygerberg Rotary Club in 2018. From left to right: Lee Silks, Gerald Wingate, Rick Shuttleworth and Margaret McCall.

Kevin Drummond-Hay



Photos: Gerald Wingate

Club Activities

The Magic of Majik Forest

Nine brave TBC club members turned up on a mildly overcast morning on 8th October for our first outing after lockdown. The day gradually turned out into a wonderful spring day. We managed to see 40 species for the morning including Paradise Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Southern BouBou, Red-faced and White-backed Mousebirds and Reed Cormorant.

At one point during the walk we encountered a great birding party. We stood in this spot for some time as the birds came through in numbers while being regaled with the knocking of the Bar-throated Apalis in the thickets nearby.

The Majik Forest always makes for some light birding. If you want to make a day of it, hop over to Doordkraal Dam and stroll along the stream below Willowbridge centre down to the edge of the Waterfront.



Kevin Drummond-Hay



Tygerberg Hills – a treat on our doorstep

It was perfect weather for the TBC outing to Tygerberg Nature Reserve on 4th November led by Brigid. The small group of members managed to see a Karoo Prinia feeding a juvenile Brown-backed Honeybird and a Cape Cobra slithering by just a few meters from the tea spot.

Picture: Lynette de Beer

Join our club “meet and greet” via Zoom @ 19:30 on 19th November

We’re planning a fun meeting, with cameras on and wine /coffee in the hand. Let’s see and greet each other – it’s been a long time! Send us your favourite pictures of 2020 to share with all.

Get Blown away- CWAC’ing at Bot River in November

On Saturday 7th November, with ominous looking weather, five teams set out to count the water birds at Bot River lagoon. Despite gusting winds of 40 – 60km/h, and challenges holding binos and scopes steady, everybody enjoyed the morning.

We did expect to see more waders owing to the lagoon that breached a while ago and the open shoreline, but the wind must have prevented the waders from feeding along the water’s edge. We did get large numbers of birds in groups huddling from the wind though. We counted almost 1400 Common Terns and some 300 Greater and Lesser Flamingo’s and observed a pair of Avocets viciously defending two young chicks from intruders. That’s what makes CWAC’ing exciting!



Diarise the dates for 2021 and come join us for a good experience and a great way to learn about birds in wet habitats. (6 February, 3 April, 3 July and 6 November 2021.)

Kevin Drummond-Hay

Tracking Blue Crane movements help to conserve these regal birds

One of the main threats to Blue Cranes is collision with powerlines. Using the data obtained from satellite trackers fitted to cranes, provide understanding of their flight patterns and contribute towards mitigating the risk of collision with powerlines.

In the last month, the African Crane Conservation Programme (Endangered Wildlife Trust/International Crane Foundation) fitted seven satellite trackers to Blue Cranes in the Western Cape. The cranes were trapped around sheep troughs where they like to congregate during the winter. Once captured, a hood over the crane's eyes keep it calm while the trackers are fitted. The small satellite tracking device sits on the crane's back, attached with a harness. The crane then gets some colour rings so that it may be recognised afterwards. The devices work off the iridium satellite network, much like a satellite phone. The device records the cranes location and height every time it moves 200 metres from its previous location, allowing the capturing of data on any significant movement the crane makes.

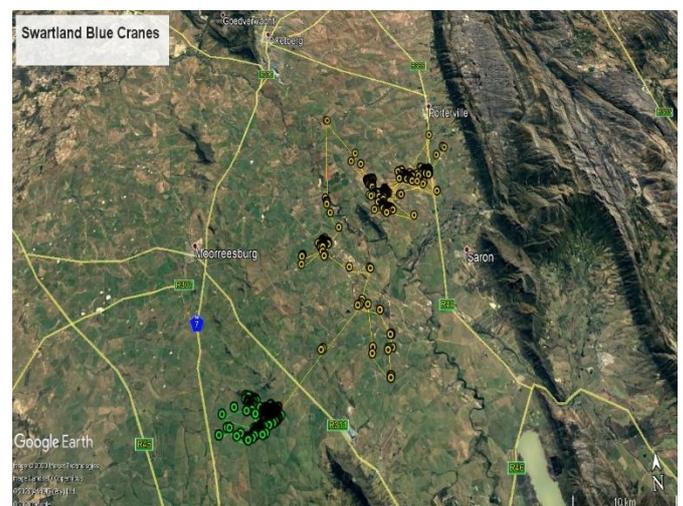
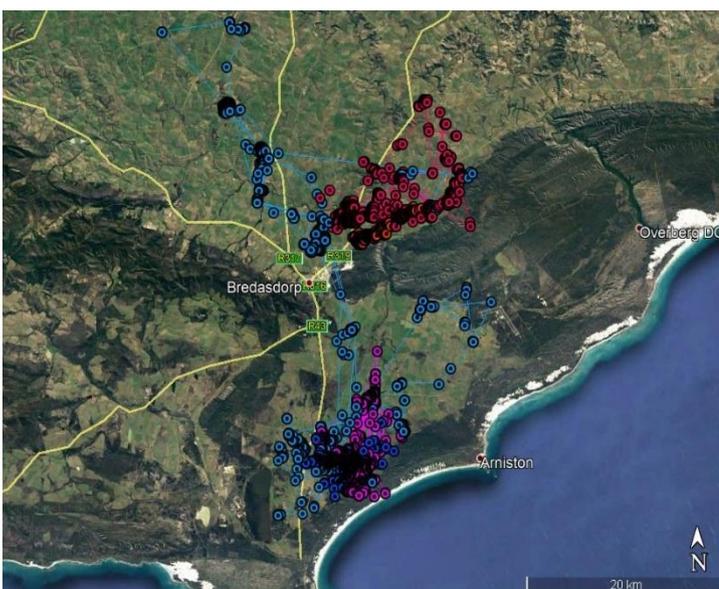
So far, two cranes have been fitted with trackers in the Swartland, and five in the Overberg. The plan is to fit another seven cranes with trackers in the next few months. Most of the cranes' movements have been quite local so far, aside from one crane that left the Agulhas area and is now moving around north of Napier.

As more data is obtained, the researchers will begin to model the data to better understand the risk of collision with powerlines. Learnings from this project is vital in assisting Eskom with making decisions about mitigating the impact of powerlines on cranes and making the lines safer for cranes.

If you see any Blue Cranes fitted with colour rings, please report this information to EWT at christiec@ewt.org.za or 066 289 5988.

Christie Craig: Blue Crane PhD Candidate & Western Cape Field Officer
Overberg Crane Group Extension Officer

Movements recorded from trackers in the Overberg and Swartland



TBC supports African Penguin study

Birdlife SA will be assessing the impacts of marine noise on the at-sea behaviour of endangered African Penguins around two of their largest breeding colonies, Simons Town and St Croix Island.

Sources of anthropogenic marine noise can be intentional such as those emanating from seismic surveys and naval operations, or unintentional by-products such as those coming from commercial shipping traffic. All three of these sources of marine sound are of concern to many marine species, including top predators such as penguins that spend a considerable part of their at-sea life underwater while foraging and are known to use acoustic cues for communication and predator location at sea

A recent study of African Penguins found strong avoidance behaviour of African Penguins to seismic survey activities in Algoa Bay which impacted their foraging site selection and foraging efforts. African Penguins are currently endangered having lost > 60% of their South African population since the turn of the century largely due to the reduced availability of their principle prey, sardine and anchovy. Since 2010 their population has continued to decrease and there are new emerging threats associated with marine industrial development, such as ship-to-ship bunkering operations that were initiated in Algoa Bay in 2016.

The African Penguin population at St Croix Island has decreased by 60% since the beginning of the bunkering activities in 2016, raising questions about potential impacts of this activity on that population. To address this shortfall in research, Birdlife SA propose to deploy miniature hydrophones coupled with accelerometer/depth loggers on breeding African Penguins from Simons Town and St Croix Island to assess if there are significant responses in penguin behaviour to these different sources of noise. The results from this research may be crucial to various authorities to mitigate the impact of noise pollution in sensitive penguin habitat.

The acoustic monitoring will be performed with the acoustic tag (Ausoms micro) that will also be used on penguins as well as other autonomous acoustic recorders available during the study (e.g., Soundtraps).

The Tygerberg Bird Club committee has already sponsored R20 000 towards the purchasing of the hydrophones for this study.

The initiation of this project is planned for the 2021 penguin breeding season. As soon as the data has been analysed and results available, the committee will organise a presentation to our members to update them on the matter.



AquaSound hydrophone

Source: Dr Alistair McInnes
Seabird Conservation Programme Manager: BirdLife South Africa

Know your birds



Black metaltail hummingbird

To survive frigid nights, hummingbirds cool themselves to record-low temperatures

High in the Andes, thousands of meters above sea level, speedy hummingbirds defy near-freezing temperatures. These tiny flyers endure the cold with a counterintuitive trick: They lower their body temperature—sometimes as much as 33°C—for hours at a time, new research suggests.

Among vertebrates, hummingbirds have the highest metabolism for their size. With a metabolic rate roughly 77 times that of an average human, they need to feed nearly continuously. But when it gets too cold or dark to forage, maintaining a normal body temperature is energetically draining.

Instead, the small animals can cool their internal temperature by 10°C to 30°C. This slows their metabolism by as much as 95% and protects them from starvation. In this state, called torpor, a bird is motionless and unresponsive. But when the morning comes and it's time to feed, the birds quickly warm themselves back up again.

Extensive studies were done to compare how different hummingbird species utilized torpor at higher elevations. 26 Hummingbirds from six different species, including the 12-centimeter-long black metaltail (*Metallura phoebe*) and the giant hummingbird (*Patagona gigas*), were captured as part of the studies.

What they found was, not only did every species of hummingbird go into torpor, but several reached surprisingly chilly temperatures. One black metaltail hummingbird's body temperature dipped to 3.3°C, the lowest ever recorded in birds or non-hibernating mammals. (The Arctic ground squirrel, which hibernates for weeks at a time, can lower its body temperature below freezing.)

The closer a hummingbird's internal temperature is to the outdoor air, the less energy they need to spend on metabolic processes, such as keeping warm and maintaining a normal heart rate. Although hummingbird hearts can beat by 1000 to 1200 beats per minute in flight, this can slow to as low as 50 beats per minute in torpor.

Cooling down has a trade-off, though, as motionless birds make easy prey. Although this would be a big risk at lower altitudes, the high Andes are relatively predator free for these tiny birds.

Source: National Geographic



From Finland to the Free State ...

... females don't need to ask for directions!

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 probably returning again next season for a visit in South Africa.

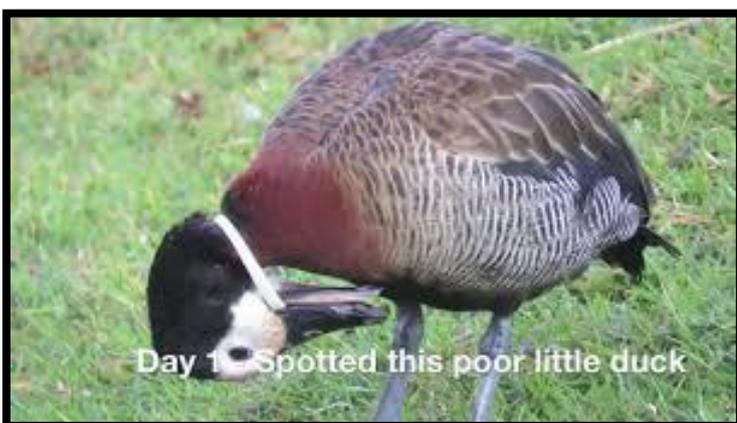
The image shows the data received from the tracker which plots out the route that she took to head north... so, in just 42 days, she covered over 10 000 km at an average of more than 230 km every single day! She took a straight-line north except for when she had to fly over water. (or Sudan).

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.



Source: #wildaware #animals #birds #nature

Cut your plastic rings – they kill our birds slowly!



Around House and Home by Brian Vanderwalt

Barbet nest breakdown

When I moved into my house next to the vlei in February 2018, it didn't take long for a roaming Acacia Pied Barbet to take possession of the old sisal nest log I put up. Within four days he started excavating, making this his home and brought his lady along. When they peeked out of the hole, it would appear that they are hanging onto the ledge, but from inspecting previous nests, I've learned that they actually make a ledge on the inside – a little “stoep” that they sit on to inspect the outside from inside (while of course I could sit and watch them from my “stoep”). Mr and Mrs Barbet successfully raised a number of broods in the nest since 2018.

Imagine my disappointment when I recently realised they have abandoned the nest! I know that the sisal log only last about 2 – 3 years, after which the walls may become too thin, but I hadn't noticed the cracks and holes. to appear. However, the barbet had noticed one at the back and he didn't like that. If he looks inside a nest and sees light shining in, he leaves.

We quickly took down the old log and replaced it with a new one. Although the barbets have been coming to the feeder on occasion, they haven't moved back. (Now I'm sorry about handing out so many sisal logs to neighbours - he's probably found a new home in one of them!)

However, I am happy about the opportunity to inspect the old nest and hoping this will help me to understand their needs better. On inspection of the old nest, I found that – as the family grew over the years, they have excavated all the way down in the log, almost falling out the bottom. Interestingly, the distance from the bottom of the nest to the exit hole was 30cm. There were also cracks and holes where the light was shining through from the outside.

I wonder - if the log had been longer, would they have made a new entrance lower down? It will be great to have a small camera in a nest to see what they get up to and how they move around the nest that's so deep!

Inside the damaged old nest



Hole on outside



New nest waiting for occupants



“Nutcracker” or “nut snatcher”?

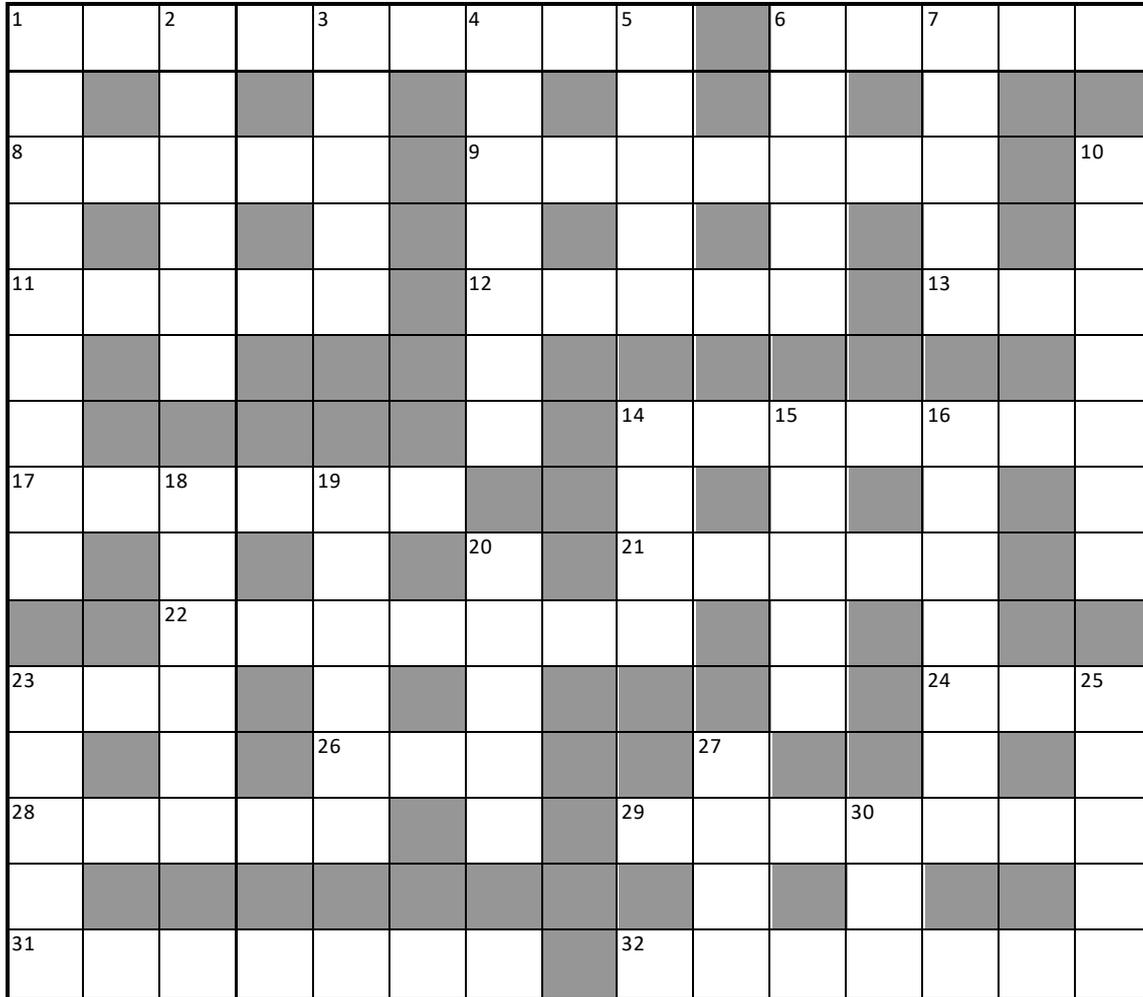


A Striped Field mouse enjoyed peanuts and raisins I put out. But not for long!
Enter Fiscal Shrike...
Was the shrike aiming for the mouse, but found the peanuts and settled for that instead? Isn't he supposed to eat meat??



Brain teasers

CROSS WORD PUZZLE NO 07



Clues Across

1. A local hill.
6. A bird's brief twitter.
8. A _ _ _ _ -billed lark.
9. A Blacksmith is one.
11. A canary eats these.
12. Red-billed Queleas are regarded as these.
13. An item to hatch.
14. This species could be brown or black-crowned.
17. A speech mimic.
21. These could be white-throated or white-starred.
22. A huge wetland bird.
23. This tiny tot could be grey.
24. It might not give two hoots.
26. Sandwich Tern has yellow _ _ _ to the bill.
28. Structures for swallows or owls.
29. Europe and Asia.
31. Pied waders with upturned bills.
32. A plover from an English county.

Clues Down

1. A long optical instrument.
2. A drab warbler with large dark eyes.
3. Vegetation around wetlands.
4. Intermediate plumage.
5. Flanges of bills.
6. Opposite to heads.
7. A raptor name that could refer to a large owl.
10. A seasonal visitor.
14. A seabird that could be black or sooty.
15. A raptor or a pastime.
16. Penguins of the southern oceans.
18. Refers to a bird of prey.
19. Little nocturnal birds of prey.
20. An owlet.
23. Part of a bird's leg.
25. Storm-petrel with forked tail named after him.
27. Endemic lark of Namibia will be found on this.
30. A chat might be seen eating this insect.

General Club information

Subscribe to the TBC Birdnet

Make sure you get all the communication from the club. Send an e-mail to:

Tygerberg-subscribe@yahogroups.com

To unsubscribe, send an e-mail to:

Tygerberg-unsubscribe@yahogroups.com

In case your e-mail address change, unsubscribe your old address and send a subscribe request from your new e-mail address.

You may share information / important sightings with other club members by sending an e-mail to: tygerberg@yahogroups.com

Change of contact details

Please notify the TBC Membership Secretary, Judy Kotze, should your e-mail address or other contact details change. Gert.k@absamail.co.za

TBC contact details

Website: www.tygerbergbirdclub.org

PO Box 4388, Durbanville, 7551

Chairperson's e-mail: B.crewe@wo.co.za

Vice Chairperson's e-mail: dalene@brians-birding.co.za

Join our Facebook page

Members are welcome to share information regarding their travels and interesting sightings on this page.

www.facebook.com/groups/tygerbergbirdclub/

Contributions to The Kite

Please mail any contributions to the newsletter (include pictures where possible) to:

dalene@brians-birding.co.za

TBC Steering committee 2020

| | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| Honorary President | Brian Vanderwalt | Cell: 082 999 9333 |
| Chairperson | Brigid Crewe | Cell: 082 570 0808 |
| Vice Chairperson | Dalene Vanderwalt | Cell: 084 702 4201 |
| Treasurer | Lionel Crewe | |
| Secretary | Margaret Oosthuizen | Tel (021) 976 2217 |
| Membership Secretary | Judy Kotze | Cell: 083 254 0919 |
| Communication & Public Relations Officer | Dalene Vanderwalt | Cell: 084 702 4201 |
| TBC Ringing Unit | Margaret McCall | Cell: 083 720 0747 |
| Conservation Officer | Kevin Drummond-Hay | Cell: 074 587 3792 |



Tygerberg Bird Club's Mission / Missie van die Tygerberg Voëlklub

To enhance our knowledge of all birds, their behaviour and their habitats and to introduce the public to the conservation and science of our avian heritage through enjoyable participation by club members.

Om as klub ons kennis van alle voëls, hul gedrag en hul habitat te verbeter en deur genotvolle deelname van klublede, die publiek bewus te maak van die bewaring en wetenskap van ons plaaslike voel erfenis.

Celebrating 34 years of bringing birders together



Club meetings and outings

Our club members love going on outings but are aware of the environmental effect of carbon emissions. To combat this and to save costs, we encourage members to share lifts and to contribute towards the driver's fuel costs.

November 2020

Saturday 7 November 2020

CWAC Count – Bot River

This flagship count of the TBC – is most enjoyable. Please contact Kevin if you want to be assigned to a team. Thank you to all our Members, for their input with this valuable IBA count.
Kevin 074 587 3792

Birding fun day: 13 – 14 November 2020

Come and join this 24-hour fun challenge. From Friday @ 17:30 to Saturday @ 17:30

Starting and ending in Durbanville, we bird within a 100km radius in teams of four. This year we will have teams of 3 persons per car. Unfortunately, we will not have the usual braai at the end of the day. Enjoy a fun day out, birding all around the Peninsula and Durbanville Farms. Contact: Brigid 082 5700 808

Thursday 19 November 2020: Club zoom meeting @ 19:30

Let's "meet and greet" via Zoom, while we share members' favourite pics of the year.

Contact Dalene to have your pics included: 084 702 4201 or e-mail to: dalene@brians-birding.co.za Followed by a short Special AGM to vote for the 2021 TBC Committee.

Thursday 26 November 2020: Extra Club zoom meeting @ 19:30

Alan Lee from Fitzpatrick Institute will talk to us on bird species richness in the Karoo.

Saturday 21 November: Club outing 08:00

Strandfontein WWTW

Sign in at security and proceed to the first large pans where all meet at 08:00. We hope to see a good variety of birds at this popular venue. Contact Brian Vanderwalt 082 9999 333. Calendars on sale.

December 2020

Wednesday 2 December: Midweek outing 08:00

Hillcrest Quarry - We meet outside the restaurant parking area at 08:00. Contact Kevin 074 587 3792. Calendars on sale.

Saturday 5 December: Club outing 07:30

Rooi Els & Betty's Bay: Contact: Brigid 082 5700 808
Travel on N2, turning off towards Gordon's Bay (R44). Continue to T-junction at the edge of Gordon's Bay, turn left onto scenic coastal road – follow to Rooi Els. Meet in the car park at 7:30 outside the shop. After looking for the Rockjumper along the mountain, we go to the Harold Porter Botanical Gardens for our year-end lunchtime picnic. Entrance fee payable. Remember snacks, drinks, hats & chairs. Calendars on sale.

January 2021

Diarize the following dates:

13 January 2021 – Midweek outing

21 January 2021 – TBC Meeting

23 January 2021 – Club Outing

30 January 2021 – CAR Blue crane counts

Details to be announced on the website and Facebook page