

# The Kite

Tygerberg Bird Club  
Tygerberg Voëlklub



Number 123 Autumn May – July 2019

## In this issue:

Success for Cape Rockjumpers	Pg 2
Life on the edge in the Tankwa	Pg 3
TBC in Grootvadersbos	Pg 5
Cape Parrot fighting for survival	Pg 7
Bird milk	Pg 8
Ringing unit update	Pg 9
Interesting sightings	Pg 10
Know your birds	Pg 12
Our members on tour	Pg 15
Brain teasers	Pg 18
Club meetings & outings	Pg 20
General information	Pg 21

**Affiliated member of:**



## Chirp from the Chair

We thank all our members who have taken part in CAR roadside counts and CWAC water bird counts during the last few months.

Club meetings and outings have also been well attended, with some interesting speakers. Andrew de Blocq gave us new insight into the perils of the African Penguin population in SA. We wish Birdlife South Africa success with their endeavour to create a new breeding colony for penguins at De Hoop Nature Reserve. Peter Ryan's talk highlighted just how remote Inaccessible Island really is and the incredible logistics involved to reach it in order to do valuable research on seabirds and monitoring plastic pollution. We have to admire those who go to such far away islands to do research and monitor the incredible birds of these unique places.

This time of the year makes for enjoyable birding. The mornings are cooler, and the bishops and weavers in my garden are starting to change colour. Every day we watch their transformation take place. My husband and I atlas our local pentad every month, and yesterday in the space of one hour, managed to record 50 birds just in and around D'Urbanvale where we live. The Birdlasser app that we use for this purpose makes atlassing of birds so easy, and it automatically keeps your birding "year list"! This is handy information to have at hand - especially when you visit new areas. We encourage members who are interested in this to talk to one of the TBC committee members.

This month we have a 'new look' KITE. This is exciting and promises to make good reading. We look forward to future editions Dalene!

A BIG THANK YOU to all members who have made donations to TBC during the last quarter. The steering committee endeavours to put all donations to good use.

Happy birding!

Brigid Crewe



Photos: Gerald Wingate

## Fledging success for Cape Rockjumpers in 2018

The Tygerberg Bird Club has been a sponsor of the project on Cape Rockjumpers for the past four years. Researcher Krista Oswald gave us some positive feedback on this project.

As you may remember from when I was last able to speak to the club, the 2017 breeding season was disastrous for Cape Rockjumpers. While I suspect this is due to continuing drought, or early heat waves (or both) there was a depressing amount of nest failure. Nest failure came from a few causes - some unexpected (an unidentified thorn in the abdomen), and others due to more expected causes like predation. Boomslang was by far the largest culprit, with grey mongoose a close second.

I had high hopes for 2018, but was disappointed by terrible weather early in the season. I initially thought the Rockjumpers had delayed breeding, as my first few attempts at finding nests resulting in nothing.

However, I believe this was due to high winds and my as yet un-honed skills at nest finding. When the wind died down eventually, I found nests in all stages from building to some with eight-day old nestlings. It seemed that some birds had begun breeding in late July only.

Blue Hill did not really see full "winter" until the end of August, when an unfortunate massive snowstorm hit in early September. While birds with nestlings seemed to cope with the unfortunate cold spell, for nests at the egg stage, the snow cover meant eggs froze - likely because parents were unable to spend all their time incubating.

While I was able to find a pleasingly high number of 20 nests by the end of September, October saw the welcome addition of two volunteers to help me, (partially funded with a grant from TBC).

Cam and Ceili, both recent graduates from American universities, spent the next 6-8 weeks assisting me and we managed to find an additional 22 nests. 2018 finally seemed to show encouraging breeding results. This was especially wonderful for a returning couple (John and Lizzie) who had helped me in 2017, as during that season they had not seen any success (the one and only fledgling emerged after they left).

In total, we saw fledge success at eight territories in 2018! Interestingly, this seems to be correlated with recent fires (the more recent the fire, the more fledge success), and while we still see plenty of attacks by boomslang and mongoose, there are now young Cape Rockjumpers once again roaming at Blue Hill!

Krista Oswald



Red-capped Lark

“The larks of the Tankwa Karoo present the opportunity to properly investigate the role of body mass in climate change vulnerability of birds and other animals. This is achieved by collecting data on thermoregulatory strategies and behavioural trade-offs within a group of closely-related species with similar ecologies, but different body sizes.”

Large-billed Lark



**The Tygerberg Bird Club will be sponsoring this study that is to be undertaken from Sept 2019 to Feb 2020.**

## Life on the edge in the Tankwa

### Does body size dictate how birds deal with the heat in South Africa's most extreme desert?

The Tankwa Karoo is among the most arid of South Africa's deserts, receiving on average less than 75mm of rain annually. Temperatures are extreme, reaching almost 40°C in January. Landscapes are stark and open, offering no relief from the relentless heat – if you are a person. But down at ground level, a sparse scattering of small bushes growing through the sharp stones of this ancient landscape provide tiny oases of shade to birds and animals.

These tiny, scattered patches of shade are likely vital to the survival of smaller members of the Tankwa's fauna (e.g. birds, reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates) during hot weather. The Tankwa is particularly famous for larks - at least six species are either breeding residents or regular visitors. These species co-exist across subtle differences in the landscape (ridges, washes, open plains), but all forage in the open on the ground for seeds, small insects, or a combination of both; and all seek the meagre shade of tiny bushes as shelter from the hot sun.

The Tankwa's larks span a range of body masses from ~14 g black-eared sparrow-larks to ~45 g large-billed larks. We think body mass could play a role in vulnerability of species to climate warming because of the physics of heat transfer: surface-area to volume ratios control the rate at which heat flows from a bird's body to the environment and vice versa. Large birds should therefore pick-up heat from the environment more slowly than small birds, but also cool down more slowly.

The relationship between body mass and rates of heat transfer becomes important in the context of a landscape where the best foraging opportunities are out on hot, open gravel plains and respite from the sun is found only under tiny bushes where foraging opportunities are limited.

The ability of very small birds to rapidly dissipate heat should allow them to remain active and continue to forage

continued

Continued

at higher air temperatures than larger species; by dint of shuttling in and out of the shade. Larger birds might therefore have to make more severe trade-offs between foraging and thermo-regulation than smaller birds when the going gets hot - placing them at greater risk of loss of body condition and breeding success during hot weather (e.g. du Plessis et al 2012; Cunningham et al 2013; 2015). There is some evidence from large-scale studies across

multiple bird taxa in different families and orders, that activity is indeed more strongly suppressed in large than small birds during hot weather (Smit et al 2016).

However, phylogenetic and behavioural differences between different families of birds; and the lack of detailed information on the consequences of suppressed activity for larger species; hinder our ability to draw strong conclusions about body mass effects.

We therefore lack information on a fundamental species trait that could be vitally important in predicting the vulnerability of birds to climate warming.

Susie Cunningham; FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology



Karoo Long-billed Lark

Photos: Gerald Wingate



Brian Vanderwalt hands Peter Ryan, director at the Fitz Patrick Institute, a cheque for R20 000 on behalf of the TBC to finance the “Hot Birds of the Tankwa” project.

Peter entertained members of the TBC during the March meeting, with a very informative talk on his research spanning over many years on Inaccessible Island.



# TBC in Grootvadersbos

## 23 members gathered for a “gesellige” camp at Honeywood Farm near Grootvadersbos in March

The Grootvadersbos forest is the largest indigenous forest in the south Western Cape. Many normally eastern species reach their western limit here so it's a popular venue to see these species fairly close to Cape Town, keeping in mind that forest birding never is easy and not guaranteed!

Saturday morning dawned with cloud cover, but an enthusiastic group split up into two to bird in different parts of the forest. Birding was slow in the cold, with most activity in the upper branches of the trees and not easily seen.

The mournful call of the Sombre Greenbul reminded us of its presence. This bird call, that is common from Cape East Coast to Tanzania, is definitely a bird call that needs to be learnt!

A South African endemic, a male Greater Double-collared Sunbird flitted about in the middle canopy showing its broad red chest band. A great bird for TBC members who are used to Southern Double-collared in the south. The grey female was also around showing her more de-curved beak of this species.

A lone Dusky Flycatcher darted down from its pathway perch to catch insects disturbed by our

presence, one of the flycatchers that breeds here and can be seen all year round. In the undergrowth, clucking noises were heard - which was the communication call of Terrestrial Brownbul. A difficult bird to actually see fully and most members had only fleeting glimpses. A male Bar-throated Apalis called with his monotonous “bleep-bleep-bleep” and the female responded with a much faster, almost scolding call (was this a reprimanding or loving call .... mmm...we will never know)! For interest - there are 19 Apalis sub-species in Africa and 13 of them occur in SA - so try to find them during your travels.

Another forest bird - the attractive endemic Cape Batis (a female, with her rufous chest markings), entertained us in the lower canopy. It is the only Batis with orange on the wings and back in SA - so easy to id.

The walk down to the bottom forest to see the American Redwoods, didn't produce many birds but good views were had of Olive Woodpecker. Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher called from the dense trees but wasn't seen by all members. Olive Thrushes seemed to be building nests

even at this time of the year as most were carrying mouthfuls of nest building material.

The various bracket fungi were plentiful and many members stopped to admire their strange shapes. We were drawn to two odd red fungus growing in the undergrowth - evil looking and smelly. These were two species of stinkhorns - *Aseröe Rubra* and the other unknown.

In the fynbos area next to the forest, Sweet Waxbill and Forest Canaries were quietly feeding on grass seeds whilst Black Saw-wing and Greater-striped Swallows were skimming the trees, fattening-up for their impending departure northwards. An Amethyst Sunbird in full breeding garb entertained us with its wine-red throat and turquoise forehead ...always a good bird to see in colour.

White-rumped and Little Swifts were forced to fly low as the mist was still thick. Fork-tailed Drongo hunted insects above the campsite lawn and Brimstone Canaries were calling near the parking lot where members were having their morning tea.

A quiet birding morning in the misty forest, but a good soul-enriching walk none the less.

continued

Continued

On the way back, African Olive Pigeons were visible, feeding on fruit in the canopy and a juvenile Forest Buzzard was spotted on a pole where it was enjoying a catch.

An afternoon walk around the manor house and “honey workshop” produced Greater & Lesser Honeyguides, (it was obvious what they were after) and Streaky-headed Seedeater with its heavy bold white eye stripe was also seen. The ever-present Cape Robin-chat darted amongst the shrubbery watching the goings on of the Southern Boubou. Fiscal Flycatchers were also using the opportunity to hawk insects near used bee hives.

A White-rumped Swift emerged from a used Greater Striped Swallow nest which they had used for breeding after the swallows were done with their breeding.

Whilst we were waiting for the braai fire to burn down (this took some time as it was a BIG fire in the fire pit), a lone Hamerkop with a few Hadeda Ibis flew by.

An evening walk, after hearing a bird call, had a few of us observing a Fiery-necked Nightjar calling from a fence post. (Still don't know where they get “Good Lord deliver us” as an explanation of this call!)

Sunday morning dawned with

really thick mist and we decided to go down to the bottom of the farm where John owns a section of the indigenous forest. This area has produced some good birds in the past. Things were quiet there, but Cape Canary, Cape Bulbul and Speckled Mousebirds entertained us on the edge of the forest. The small dam produced a pair of Red-knobbed Coot and Common Moorhen, with Red Bishops and Cape Weavers in the reed beds.

All in all a quiet birding weekend, with enough exercise for the body and friendly chats amongst friends, ended this TBC weekend camp.

Brian Vanderwalt



Photos: Brian Vanderwalt



## Africa's most endangered parrot fighting for survival

There are fewer than 2,000 Cape parrots left in South Africa's southern mist belt forests.

Source: National Geographic

Hogsback is a haven for yellowwoods, South Africa's national tree. Logging companies favour the tall evergreen for furniture, and since the late 1800s they've razed 60 percent of the country's yellowwood forests.

The widespread loss of these native trees has had dire consequences for South Africa's only native parrot, the Cape parrot, which relies on yellowwoods for food and nesting cavities. An often-fatal virus called "psittacine beak and feather disease", has also taken a toll. The virus's origins are debated, but research suggests wild parrots may have caught it from captive birds kept in aviaries.

Today the Cape parrot bears the dubious title of Africa's rarest parrot, with remnant populations spread among three isolated forest patches in the South African provinces of Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal. But teams of dedicated researchers are toiling to better understand the

little-known species and reverse its downward spiral.

Constantly on the hunt for yellowwood seeds, Cape parrots fly great distances, easily over 60 miles a day, to find trees that are in fruit. But when their preferred food isn't available they adapt, eating as many as 30 different types of seeds, nuts, and fruits, though it's unknown if such substitutes are as nutritious as their mainstay.

There are reports of children from a nearby town using slingshots to down the birds and sell them alive for R200, about 15 US dollars. Such incidents reveal a lack of awareness and appreciation for a bird that should be valued as a national treasure, say its advocates.

To help increase awareness of the Cape parrot's presence, Colleen Downs, a zoologist at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, founded the Cape Parrot Big Birding Day.

Now in its 20th year, the annual event sends volunteers and schoolchildren into the coastal forests to search for the rare

parrots or signs of their presence. In May 2017, the census counted some 1,500 birds. "Numbers have stayed stable in the last 10 years, which we didn't expect," says Downs, who has studied the birds for decades.

That stability is owed in part to laws requiring anyone who wants to keep a Cape parrot as a pet to obtain a special permit. But, says Downs, "it doesn't mean people don't want them."

To give Cape parrots a chance to rebuild their numbers, South Africa needs to protect at least 18% of its indigenous yellowwood forest, says Steve Boyes, scientific director for the Wild Bird Trust. Boyes, also a National Geographic explorer, is working to establish a 45,000-acre refuge for the birds.

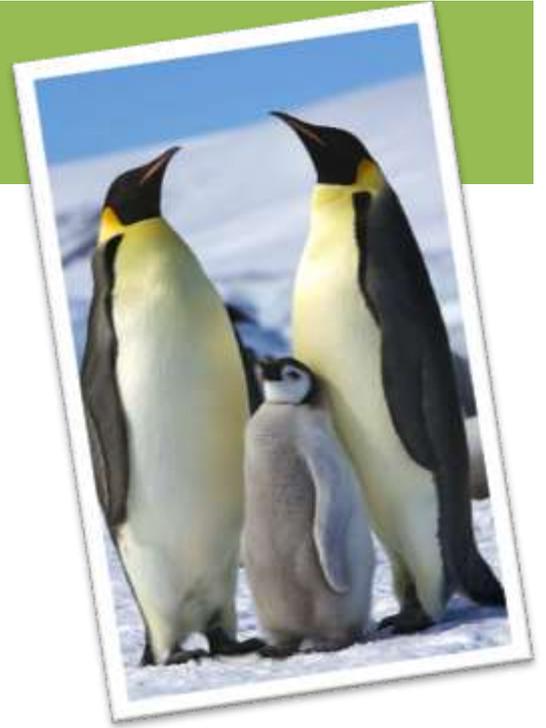
Meanwhile, the Cape Parrot Project manages yellowwood nurseries in Hogsback State Forest, supplying seeds and seedlings to growers in a neighboring village and buying the seedlings back when they're large enough to plant.

# Bird milk

We are mammals and a common feature of mammals is that babies are fed on nourishing milk.

Four kinds of birds also feed their newly-hatched young on “milk”.

Can you name them? Some you often see in your garden, some you may not have known of.



Bird milk is formed by fat containing cells sloughing off the lining of the parent’s upper digestive system and has a composition similar to mammal milk.

Birds that feed hatchlings on milk are: the pigeons, flamingoes, the South American Oilbird, and the Emperor Penguin.

Pigeons feed on seeds or fruit which are unsuitable for hatchlings. Other birds that eat the same foods provide their young with insects to provide the protein for growth. Pigeons don’t do this. Pigeons have crops so when feeding they can store a lot of food for later processing. They produce milk from cells lining the crop so they can provide the necessary fats and proteins their chicks need for growth. There are limits to the amount of milk they can produce which is why pigeons have broods of no more than two chicks. In seed-eating pigeons, it takes about

two weeks for the guts of young pigeons to acquire the necessary bacteria to digest whole seeds. The Oilbird, which forages for fruit at night and breeds in caves, has a similar strategy.

Flamingoes have a different situation. Adults feed on minute food items which they obtain from sediments or water, using special filters on their beaks. Filters only develop on the beaks of young birds when they are two months old. Until that happens the young are fed on milk produced from the parents’ oesophagus. The ability to produce an equivalent nutritional fluid is enabling volunteers at SANCCOB and the World of Birds to feed the many young Lesser Flamingoes rescued from Kimberley’s Kamfers Dam.

Milk-producing birds differ from mammals, in which only females produce milk. In the pigeons, oilbird and flamingoes, both sexes can produce milk. In the case of Emperor Penguin, it is only the male that can do so!

The Emperor Penguin is by far the most extreme case. These penguins arrive at their colonies on permanent firm ice in the early winter after walking or tobogganing for up to 200 km from the sea. After courtship the female lays a single egg, transfers this to the male, and goes back to sea to forage. The male Emperor daddy, undertakes the entire two-month incubation of the egg through the severe Antarctic winter. By the time the chick hatches, the father has gone without feeding for more than 100 days. If his lady is late in returning to feed the chick, the male can still produce milk to sustain its chick.

Tony Williams



Malachite Kingfisher netted at Rocklands near Klipheuwel on 27<sup>th</sup> February.

The headgear indicates where the Afrikaans name comes from: "Kuifkop-visvanger"



Olive Thrush netted at Tygerberg Nature Reserve on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

The deformed bill reminds one of an Open-bill Stork. The bird in question is an adult, and it's not known if it was hatched like this. If so - it managed to survive to adulthood in spite of the handicap.

## Update from the TBC ringing unit

### 2019 started well with good numbers of birds being ringed at all sites

At the small Botterblom reserve in Vierlanden, which is surrounded by suburbia, 83 birds - 16 species were ringed on 30<sup>th</sup> January and 199 birds at Goede Ontmoeting on 20<sup>th</sup> February.

German student, Samantha McCarran, joined us at most ringing sessions. A post-graduate student at UCT, she is working towards obtaining her permit to ring in the field. Her thesis is on sunbirds and she is being guided by Anina Coetzee (Heystek) who still rings with us occasionally.

In addition Dieter Oschadleus (former Safring co-ordinator), who offers a South African ringing course for students from other countries, joined us with his students (one from Spain and one from Nigeria) on 20<sup>th</sup> February at Goede Ontmoeting and they ringed a large number of birds. On that day, four Malachite Kingfishers and two Three-banded Plovers, a Barn Swallow and a Little Swift were ringed. Dieter and his team also joined us the following week at Rocklands and we ringed good numbers of birds there. We were delighted that Dieter's team managed to ring three Red-capped Larks at this site.

During the 20 years we've been ringing at Rocklands, we have never captured one of these birds! The first Blacksmith Lapwing for Rocklands was also ringed on this day.

The following other noteworthy birds were ringed:

- ~ A European Bee-eater at Tygerberg Nature reserve on 7<sup>th</sup> February.
- ~ A Cape Weaver ringed in 2014 was recaptured at Botterblom on 13<sup>th</sup> February.
- ~ A Southern Masked Weaver ringed in 2013 was recaptured at Botterblom on 30<sup>th</sup> January.

We are fortunate to have a team of enthusiastic, dedicated and competent people assisting us – namely Gerald Wingate, Ettienné Kotze, John and Gail Maberley and Rocco Nel.

Lee and I thank them for their hard work and for getting up in the early hours of the day to assist us!

Our thanks also go to the TBC for all the support they give us. It is much appreciated.

Margaret McCall

# Interesting sightings

Share your interesting sightings with other club members. Please mail your contributions (including pictures) to [dalene@brians-birding.co.za](mailto:dalene@brians-birding.co.za)

## Elegant Tern

Members of the TBC recently saw the vagrant Elegant Tern on the False Bay coast. Did they appreciate the potential difficulty of making a sure identification? These pictures are of, in no order, Lesser Crested, Royal and Elegant terns. Can you sort them out? All three are in the same genus, *Thalasseus* and the Royal and Elegant have hybridised.



Assuming the bird was an Elegant Tern it is important to appreciate how lost, and special, this vagrant was.

The global population is some 60,000 individuals of which 20,000 pairs breed at a single locality, Isla Raza in Mexico's Gulf of California and the rest at only 2-7 other localities on the Pacific coasts of southern California and in Mexico. Outside the breeding season the majority of the population migrate to contra-nuptial quarters off the Pacific coast of South America between Ecuador and Chile i.e. the nutrient rich Humboldt Current (equivalent to, but richer than, our Benguela Current) and mainly off Peru. The southernmost area of occurrence is Puerto Montt in Chile. This is the start of the Chilean cold rain forest coast which terns appear to avoid. There have been no records from the Atlantic coast of South America.

However, it seems likely that our vagrant crossed the Andes and then the Atlantic – a route probably used by the Franklin's Gulls that also have occurred in southern Africa. A flight across the Andes is not unprecedented as a population of northern Pacific breeding Arctic Terns is known to make this crossing, probably aided by the strong westerly winds.

Answer: 1. Royal Tern, 2. Elegant Tern, 3. Lesser Crested Tern

Source: Tony Williams



## A rare half-male, half-female cardinal was spotted in Erie, Pennsylvania

Known as gynandromorphs, or "half-siders," these birds are uncommon but not unheard of. Male cardinals are red, and females are tan. Half-siders can express red or tan on either side. This cardinal is tan on its left side.

Most gynandromorph individuals are infertile. Since female birds are only fertile in their left ovaries, this cardinal may actually be fertile, according to an ornithologist who viewed images of the bird.

Erie resident Shirley Caldwell, who recorded the sighting, recently observed the half-sider and an accompanying male cardinal in courtship behaviour.

Source: National Geographic

## Burchell's Courser near Piketberg

Spotted on 29 March by Brian Vanderwalt, Gerald Wingate and Shaun Ferguson – unfortunately too far for a good picture!



Photo: Brian Vanderwalt

## From the archives



■ Because its there... This group of determined members of the Tygerberg Bird Club hiked to the top of the Paardeberg while enjoying their most recent monthly outing. Many other birders also went along but found the gradient rather steep and preferred to amble back to the cars. A total of 64 species were spotted during the trip to a privately owned farm.

As featured in Tygertalk 1998

## We welcome the following new members:

Jenny Brink, Gill Ginsberg,  
Paul and Elaine Edwards,  
Andrew and Heather Hodgson,  
Samantha Kirves, Elmarie Reinke,  
Beryl Liebbrandt,  
Stuart Shillinglaw,  
Stuart and Mandy Turner,  
Adam and Ricky Schuster,  
Andre and Tia Visser.

We trust you are going to enjoy birding with the Tygerberg Bird Club – known as the “friendly club”!

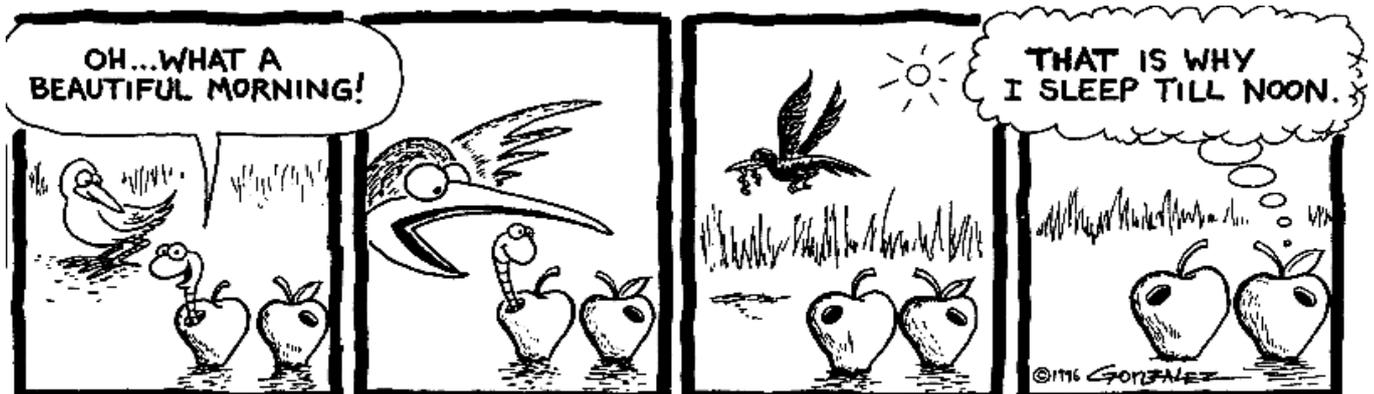
## A big thank you to the following members who made donations recently:

### Donations to the Ringing Unit

Benita Bartlett, Andrew Bell, Hanna Boeke, Jenny Brink, Robert Brink, Diane Cameron, Pieter Dorfling, Kevin Drummond-Hay, Ruthette du Toit, Jurie Fourie, Jill Fraser, Peter Loynes, Anton Maree, Wilna Meanley, Rocco Nel, Lyn O’Kennedy, Elmarie Reinke, Linda Reynolds, Stuart Shillinglaw, Lee Silks, Barry Street, Elizabeth van Wyk, Pierre van Zyl, Sigi Vollmer, Karin Wilson, Rene Patterson, John Fincham, Wendel du Buy.

### Other Donations

Benita Bartlett, Andrew Bell, Magna Blignaut, Jenny Brink, Robert Brink, Angela Dalziel, Pieter Dorfling, Ruthette du Toit, Horton Griffiths, Marge/Jonathan Hemp, Colin Jones, Pule Keswa, Wilna Meanley, Linda Reynolds, Annelize Roos, Otto Schmidt, Stuart Shillinglaw, Rick Shuttleworth, Mike Smith, Douw Steyn, Marianne Toros, Ronald Uijts, Elizabeth van Wyk, Pierre van Zyl, Mara Wege, Les Teare, Rene Patterson, Pat Milligan, Elizabeth de Villiers, Beryl Liebbrandt, Etienne Kotze, Rodney Gray, Andre Visser, Anila van der Merwe.



# Know your birds

## THE PENTAX ID SERIES No 6 — by Gordon Holtshausen **BLACK BIRDS**

This ID series focuses on particular groups of birds that many beginner birders may find difficult to separate. Each illustration is accompanied by a key to an icon indicating the key areas of identification to concentrate on, e.g., Bare Parts, Song, etc.



The box below provides information on the group as a whole as well as detailed information on the identification of each species. The key identification area is indicated for each species e.g. BP for bare parts.



NOT TO SCALE

GROUP: BLACK BIRDS				DIAGNOSTIC FEATURES		
<b>FOCUS ON:</b> 1. SIZE 2. BEHAVIOUR 3. HABITAT				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These 5 species all have black plumages and are frequently confused.</li> <li>• However, they are easy to identify if one knows what to look for. Pay attention to habitat, behaviour, as well as to eye colour and tail differences.</li> </ul>		
SPECIES	S	B	P	SIZE	STATUS	NOTES
BLACK CUCKOO				30 cm	Summer breeding visitor	Noticably larger, with the distinctive cuckoo shape. Solitary and secretive with a distinctive call (I'm so sad). Feet pinkish brown. Tail long with white tip, barred buffy underneath. Underwing shows white spots in flight. Eye black. Appears to hang from, rather than perch on, a branch.
FORKTAILED DRONGO				25 cm ♂ 22-24 cm ♀	Resident	Conspicuous, aggressive species with longish deeply forked tail. (Beware when moulting, resembles a Christmas tree). Eye deep red. Very noisy. Hawks. Underwing appears pale in flight. Perches with tail and body in a straight line.
BLACK CUCKOO-SHRIKE				19-22 cm	Resident	Only the male is black, female brown & yellow. Male has an orange gape, and some show a yellow shoulder patch. Tail rounded. Eye black. Creeps through the canopy. Unobstrusive.
BLACK FLYCATCHER				19-22 cm	Resident	Slender species with a notched square tail. Wings appear pale in flight. Bill slender. Hawks prey on the ground. Perches with tail held at an angle to the body. Confiding. Eye brown.
SQUARE-TAILED DRONGO				19 cm	Localised resident	A forest species. Smaller & more slender than Forktailed Drongo, tail not as deeply forked. Aggressive & noisy. Twitches tail sideways when perched. Hawks prey. Eye red.

Thanks are due to Ken Newman and Southern Book Publishers for allowing us to use Ken's illustrations from his Birds of Southern Africa.

## Bird of the year 2019 – The Secretary Bird



## Birds get weird on islands. Here's why

When Charles Darwin studied the Galápagos Islands, he was fascinated by the many kinds of finches that now bear his name - all closely related but strikingly different in appearance. On many island chains, a process called "adaptive radiation" drives one species to evolve into many varied forms in a relatively short time. Read more on this classically important process with rich illustrations and examples including the Galápagos, Hawaii, Madagascar, and your backyard on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. [Link](#)



Art in the sand - San Francisco, California, by Andrés Amador

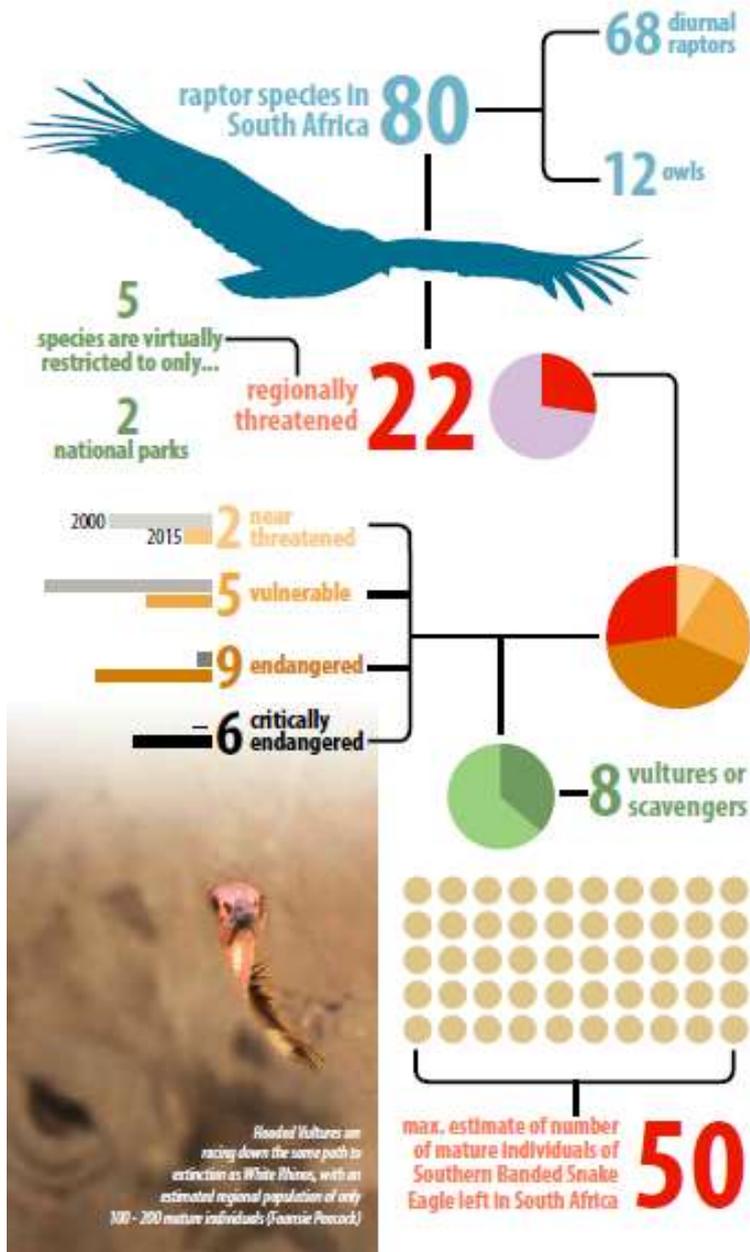
## What's in a name?

If you browse through your bird guide, you will come across many species that are named after people. But just who are these people who had species named after them and why/how did it happen? A book called "**Whose Bird?**" by Bo Beolons and Michael Watkins shed light on how many of these species got their names. We will be featuring regular extracts from this book.

**William John Burchell** (1781 – 1863) was an English explorer-naturalist who came to the Cape in 1810 and explored South Africa from 1811 to 1815. He also discovered the Zebra and a new forest tree. He was the first to describe the White Rhino, published a two volume book on his travels and returned to England in 1815. In 1825 he left for Brazil where he collected extensively, returning to England after five years where he became ill and eventually took his own life. Six birds were given his name:

- ~ one by himself in 1822 – the Burchells' Gonolek – now known as the **Crimson-breasted Shrike** *Laniarius atrococcineus*,
- ~ the **Coucal** was described by Swainson in 1838 as *Centropus burchellii*,
- ~ the **Courser** by Gould in 1837 as *Cursorius rufus*,
- ~ the **Sandgrouse** by Sclater in 1922 as *Pterocles burchellii*,
- ~ and the **Starling** by Smith in 1836 as *Lamprotornis australis*.
- ~ There is also a bustard, the **Burchell's Bustard** – one type specimen collected in east Sudan that appears to be a race of the Denham's Bustard and not a full species.

# Extracts from The State of South African Birds 2018



## RAPTORS IN DECLINE

South Africa has a high diversity of raptors, representing six families, but worryingly, more than a quarter are now considered threatened. Significantly, a large portion of the species that were listed as Vulnerable in the 2000 assessment have found their way into the Endangered category and some have managed to leapfrog categories all together; the Southern Banded Snake Eagle, for example, moved from Vulnerable straight Critically Endangered.

Of great concern is the plight of the scavenging raptors in South Africa. In line with reports from both East Africa and West Africa, the region's vulture populations are in steep decline. The Bearded Vulture, together with the Hooded Vulture, White-backed Vulture and White-headed Vulture, is leading the headlong rush of the region's vultures towards extinction, with all four of these species classified as regionally Critically Endangered. The Cape Vulture, whose breeding distribution once covered southern Africa, is now being pushed back into its last remaining strongholds in the Limpopo and Eastern Cape provinces as is the Lappet-faced Vulture, now largely confined to protected areas in the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. These species are joined by the Tawny Eagle and Bateleur, two obligate scavengers that are now both listed as regionally Endangered.

Three species out of the 22 are habitat specialists that are constrained by their very specific ecological requirements: Bat Hawk, African Marsh Harrier and Pel's Fishing Owl. Three raptors, Martial Eagle, Bateleur and Tawny Eagle, all require vast home territories.

Raptors are apex predators and while we expect them to naturally occur in lower numbers than other groups of birds, we also recognise that they are indicators for lower trophic levels that may also be in decline. Compounding this, the majority of raptors tend to be comparatively large bodied, reproduce slowly, some are migratory and some are specialist predators - all factors that increase the number of risks that a species will face.

### PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY

The Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology is located at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where it is housed within the Department of Biological Sciences. Situated at the tip of Africa, the institute is uniquely positioned to take advantage of the vast untapped biological resources of the continent. Members of the department are committed to developing a greater understanding of these through the training of scientists and the pursuit of primary research, from evolutionary ecology to conservation biology. The institute is also home to the Niven Library, which holds what is probably Africa's most comprehensive collection and reprints of the institute's vast publication record.

### ADU: ANIMAL DEMOGRAPHY UNIT, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

The Animal Demography Unit is a research unit of the University of Cape Town. Established in December 1991 within the Department of Statistical Sciences, it was built on the nucleus of the South African Bird Ringing Unit (SAB-RING) and the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP). Established in December 1991 within the Department of Statistical Sciences at the University of Cape Town. The mission of the unit is to contribute to the understanding of animal populations, especially population dynamics, and thus provide input for their conservation. This is achieved through mass participation projects, long-term monitoring, innovative statistical modelling and population-level interpretation of results. The emphasis is on the curation, analysis, publication and dissemination of data.

### EWT: ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-governmental, not-for-profit conservation organisation founded in 1973. It fills the key niche of conservation action through applied research, field work and direct engagement with stakeholders. With specialist programmes and a large team of skilled field staff deployed throughout southern Africa, the EWT's work supports the conservation of threatened species and ecosystems. Priority interventions focus on identifying the key factors threatening biodiversity and developing mitigating measures to reduce risk and reverse the drivers of species extinction and ecosystem degradation. Through a broad spectrum of partnerships and networks, the EWT responds to the key threats driving species and ecosystem loss by developing innovative methodologies and best-practice guidelines that support reduced impact, harmonious co-existence and sustainable living for all.

# Our members on tour

## Birding on the Shipwreck hiking trail

It is not often that I am able to combine two of my hobbies in one holiday! Hiking and birding are not normally good companions - birding is done at a slow pace and hikers prefer to cover some distance every day.

The Shipwreck hiking trail is an exception though. 67 km of hiking and 16 km of canoeing (from Port Alfred to the Fish River mouth), allows one enough time to hike, to bird along the way, to take afternoon naps and even to catch-up on some reading! An ideal December holiday activity.

In December 2018, eleven hiker-buddies and I started the trail with three sets of binoculars between us and a printed bird list of which species are to be found on the trail. The terrain starts off relatively flat and stays that way over beaches, forests and cattle camps.

Day one was a sandblasting beach hike, steep sand dunes and an overnight stop amongst tall trees with a small fish pond. This provided opportunity for birding (and binocular sharing). We found Cape Glossy Starling, Cape Robin-Chat, Olive Thrush and a greyish Cape White-eye for a start. Then came the kingfishers (Malachite and African Pygmy), weavers (Cape, Dark-backed, Village and Spectacled) and finally the Red-billed Wood-Hoopoe. This set the scene for the rest of the hike.

Part of the hike is done by paddling in a canoe down the Kleinemonde River. Around every corner we found something of interest. Identifying birds from a rocking canoe – with water splashing everywhere, proved to be a challenge so we focused on the bigger, colourful birds that were easy to spot. An African Fish Eagle or two, Knysna Turaco, kingfishers (Giant, Pied and Half-collared).

Other birds we managed to see included Purple Roller, Chinspot Batis, Trumpeter Hornbill, Crowned Hornbill, Black-collared Barbet, Amur Falcon, Woodland Kingfisher, Martial Eagle (on a nest) and a white-morph Oystercatcher. In total, we saw 80 bird species over the 3 days.

Accommodation on the hike varied with interesting amenities. We slept amongst the tree tops in a tree-house six meters above ground and in an 1820 Settlers stone-cottage with an interesting history. The story goes that the original occupants were murdered during a cattle dispute with locals and apparently you can still hear them screaming on a quiet full-moon night.

Estelle Zietsman



## Action in the Kgalagadi!



Photos: Lyn O'Kennedy

For the third year in a row, four of us - Geoff and Sigi Frye, Lyn O'Kennedy and I – visited the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in February, the “hottest month”.

Two years ago the park had good rains, many bulb plants were in flower then - a real highlight for the botanists in our group. Last summer the park also had some rain, but this year's drought was very evident. Everything was parched, dry and shriveled-up. Despite this, the animals were in the riverbeds doing what they do, eating, digesting and procreating. We saw Blue Wildebeests calves and some baby Springbok.

Driving up past Molopo Lodge, one sees the first White-backed Vultures on the tops of the camelthorn trees. We ticked the usual birds, and the Marico Flycatchers were very evident in the park. One sighting that stands out is the Verreaux's Eagle-Owl roosting in big trees just as one leaves Tweerivieren Camp. This bird is regularly seen and is very accommodating - often in a position for good photos.

A memorable animal sighting was that of three young lions at the Craig Lockhart waterhole one morning. After drinking some water, they flopped down in the shade. Being the only vehicle there, we parked under the only big tree and waited for some action. Earlier on, we saw a big group a springbok moving down the riverbed towards the waterhole. As they came closer, they stalled – cautious of the lions. Two lions made a half-hearted rush towards them, but the springbok escaped easily. Two wildebeests with a calf approached from the other side - unaware of the lions' presence. The lions again halfheartedly rushed towards the animals, but they too galloped away with the calf in tow. By now the parking area was packed with about 15 vehicles, all wanting unobstructed views for their long lenses and video cameras. I was amazed at how gentlemanly everyone behaved – nobody pushed to be in front and all were keeping the other visitors in mind!

Then came the highlight of the morning. A group of 12 giraffe approached the waterhole - carefully observing the lions. The groups of wildebeest, springbok, bontebok, and red hartebeest were all waiting to drink but hesitated to go closer. Eventually (unbelievably) two giraffe approached the lions (who were still lying in the shade) and eye-balled them from as close as eight to nine meters away. They rotated this “guard duty” with other members of their group, keeping the lions at bay, while the whole group of giraffe drank water in rotation. When they all had their fill, they moved off unscathed. The lions became drowsy, flopped over and went to sleep, allowing the other animals to approach the waterhole and drink – with no further action. It took a few minutes for all the visitor vehicles to untangle and everyone left to find other exciting sightings.

continued

Continued

Cubije Quap waterhole came up trumps again. (This is the first waterhole north of Nossob camp.) A favorite visiting time, especially for photographers, is in the early morning (with the sun from behind), producing good photographic opportunities of the coming and goings of both Namaqua and Burchell’s Sandgrouse. The resident Black-backed Jackals hunt these birds, usually unsuccessfully, but one particular morning we saw one jackal take down three birds and devour them in approximately 15 minutes. Lyn managed to get some pics of this action. At lunch time, keen photographers gather again at this waterhole to see the eagles and vultures come to bath. The Cubije Quap waterhole is also a great favorite for Cape sparrows, Cape Turtle doves and Red-headed finches. However, this year there were virtually no doves in sight, but huge flocks of the sparrows and finches were present. An unusual sighting was that of two Pale Chanting Goshawks eating a puff adder from both ends.

As a result of the drought, temperatures this year were over 40 degrees, dropping to middle 30’s some days. Despite this, we are booking again for next year - the Kgalagadi has its own irresistible charm!

Wendel du Buy

**// The primary threat to pelagic seabirds is the accidental yet deadly interaction with fisheries //**

### OVER-EXPLOITATION OF FISH STOCKS: PUSHING BENGUELA ENDEMIC TO EXTINCTION

**3/3** of South Africa’s marine cormorants threatened

In coastal and marine environments, commercial stocks of harvestable fish species have been over-exploited, which has reduced food supply for many inshore foraging seabirds and resulted in concomitant declines. The fisheries based on the rich Benguela ecosystem off the West Coast have greatly depleted stocks of some species, including Pilchard and Cape Anchovy, with others soon to follow. This has had an impact on the Cape Gannet and African Penguin, two Benguela-endemic seabirds, both of which have recently been uplisted to regionally

**470** pairs of Bank Cormorant remaining in the region

**57%** decrease in Cape Cormorants at 6 main breeding islands

Endangered. Bycatch by commercial fishers is a serious problem in the marine environment, leading to the incidental mortality of non-target species, with rates varying between 5% and 70% of the total catch.

Extract from: The State of South African Birds 2018



# Brain teasers

## WORD SEARCH



The words in the list appear on the grid – horizontally, vertically or diagonally, backwards or forwards. Find and circle them.

### BIRDS

- |           |          |             |         |
|-----------|----------|-------------|---------|
| albatross | flamingo | kingfisher  | penguin |
| barbet    | goose    | lourie      | quail   |
| cardinal  | hadedda  | marabou     | roller  |
| duck      | ibis     | nightingale | swallow |
| egret     | jacana   | owl         | toucan  |



vulture



Photo: Brian Vanderwalt

**Question:** Which bird family has the widest global distribution?  
**A clue:** five species in this family breed in, and an additional five species are regular migrants to, the Western Province.  
 Can you name the family and the species?

**Answer:**  
 The family of terns, *Sternidae*, is the most widely distributed. There are tern species at all latitudes from the Arctic to Antarctica; marsh and riverine terns occur widely across inland areas, and terns occur at hundreds of islands across the world's oceans.

Terns that breed in the Western Province are: Swift, Caspian, Whiskered, Damara (at De Mond) and Roseate (Dyer island) while Common, Arctic, Sandwich, White-winged and Antarctica terns are regular migrants.

Source: Tony Williams

# CROSS WORD PUZZLE NO 01

1		2		3		4			5	6		7		8
9								10						
11			-											
										12		13		
14			15			16			17					
					18						19			
	20							21						
22								23						
24		25			26				27					28
				29					30					
31						32					33			
34								35						

**Clues across**

1. Bird conservation society
5. Somebody's Stork
9. An optical instrument
11. A colourful hawk of flying insects
12. A white relative of the herons
14. What a tired bird does at a roost
16. What singing Bokmakieries produce
19. A sharp spike on a gamebird's leg
20. The lower part of a bird's leg
21. A bird's traditional enemy
24. Nocturnal predators
26. A raptor with black shoulders
27. A large cousin of the egret
31. The number of bands on a courser
32. A corvid
33. These tiny birds may be penduline
34. A black-faced weaver
35. Somebody's sunbird

**Clues down**

1. It can fly, but is not a bird
2. Colourful birds that rock and roll
3. A smaller honeyguide
4. A White .....Bee-eater
6. These korhaans have white .....
7. This bird could be glossy or bald
8. This raptor strides and kicks
10. An eagle's cliff-top nest
11. Swallows may nest inside this structure
13. A name for a bird of prey
15. These marine birds roost on shores
17. A small duck
18. A waterfowl

22. The sound made by a large owl
23. These birds are reported to deliver babies
25. The area between the eye and bill
28. Breeding structures
29. Flesh at the base of the upper mandible
30. A tiny endemic waxbill

Compiler: Gerald Wingate



**Question:** Which four Southern African birds have been named after attributes associated with the female of the species?

- Answer:
1. Chinspot Batis
  2. Black-throated Wattle-eye
  3. Olive-headed Weaver
  4. Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon

**Question:** Which four bird names include the names of mammals?

- Answer:
1. Bat Hawk
  2. Red-billed Buffalo Weaver
  3. Speckled Mousebird (OK, Red-faced and White-backed)
  4. Cattle Egret



## Club meetings and outings

### Going on 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 share lifts. Passengers contribute towards the driver's fuel costs.

### May 2019

#### Wednesday 1 May: Midweek outing

##### Avondale farm, Paarl

See website for details. Contact Brigid 082 5700 808.

#### Thursday 16 May: Club meeting 19:30

##### Speaker: John Fincham Topic: Birds, Elephants & Lion and fun in 5 African countries!

John started birding at school in Rhodesia. (Peter Steyn has been a powerful mentor and friend of his for about 55 years.) John views birds as a window to the environment. His talk will cover parts of Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and promises to be a fun adventure!

#### Saturday 18 May: Club outing

##### Helderberg farm, Somerset West

Take N2 to Somerset West, turn onto R44 towards Stellenbosch. Travel for 4.5km. Turn right onto Klein Helderberg Rd. It is 1km along this road. Gates open at 08:00. Entrance fee payable. Contact: Lesley (021)982 8256 / 0827705397

### June 2019

#### Wednesday 5 June: Midweek outing 07:30

##### Diemersfontein, Wellington

See website for details. Contact: Helene 082 222 3968.

#### Thursday 20 June: Club meeting 19:30

##### Speaker: Otto Schmidt

##### Topic: "Summer Birding to Botswana & the Caprivi"

In 2018 Sandy and Otto joined a 17 day birding tour to N. Botswana and the Eastern Caprivi. They hoped to add a few of the area specials which they had missed on previous trips. Weather conditions were pretty extreme, but they visited many excellent birding spots, saw a great many good birds, and missed some others!

#### Saturday 22 June: Club outing 08:00

##### Rietvlei, Table View

See website for details. Entrance fee payable. Contact: Gerald Wingate 083 443 9579.

### July 2019

#### Wednesday 3 July: Midweek outing 08:00

##### CWAC Count, Droëvlei Farm, Klipheuwel

Meet at Durbanville Municipality at 08:00 (outside parking area, facing Oxford Str), to arrange shared transport. Come and enjoy the waterbird count. Contact: Helene 082 222 3968.

#### Saturday 6 July: Western Cape Birding Forum Meeting

#### Saturday 6 July: CWAC count Bot River Lagoon

We encourage members to take part in this IBA waterbird count. This is our flagship count, and data has been obtained at these bi-annual counts for the past 26 years. Contact Kevin to be assigned to a team 074 587 3792.

#### Thursday 18 July: Club meeting 19:30

##### Speaker: Tony Williams Topic: When Emperors and Kings are related to Africans – The Penguins!

Tony will talk on how 'our penguin' is related to the other species. He will highlight what sets penguins apart from other birds, the threats they face and conservation of the species. Also find out why 'Kings and Emperors' take their eggs for a walk.

#### Saturday 20 July: Club outing 08:00

##### Rondevlei Nature Reserve

See website for details. Contact: Brian 082 9999 333.

#### Saturday 27 July: CAR counts 07:00

**Swartland Routes.** Blue cranes and Raptors are counted in the Swartland. Contact: Brigid 082 5700 808.

### September 2019

#### TBC Camp 13th - 5th Traveler's Rest Clanwilliam

A rustic farm, on the Pakhuis Pass in rural Clanwilliam. Cost is between R500 to R650 per person sharing for the weekend. Book with Brigid. "Spring time on a farm – promises to be great!" **Members only.** Full payment by 30 June.

# 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@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Tygerberg-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

To unsubscribe, send an e-mail to:

[Tygerberg-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Tygerberg-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.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@yahoogroups.com](mailto:tygerberg@yahoogroups.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](mailto:Gert.k@absamail.co.za)

## TBC contact details

Website: [www.tygerbergbirdclub.org](http://www.tygerbergbirdclub.org)

PO Box 4388, Durbanville, 7551

Chairperson's e-mail: [B.crewe@wo.co.za](mailto:B.crewe@wo.co.za)

Treasurer's e-mail: [Helene.thompson@ewit.co.za](mailto:Helene.thompson@ewit.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/](http://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](mailto:dalene@brians-birding.co.za)

## TBC Steering committee 2019

Honorary President	Brian Vanderwalt	Cell: 082 999 9333
Chairperson	Brigid Crewe	Cell: 082 570 0808
Vice Chairperson	Helene Thompson	Tel: (021) 976 4079
Treasurer	Helene Thompson	Tel: (021) 976 4079
Secretary	Margaret Oosthuizen	Tel (021) 976 2217
Membership Secretary	Judy Kotze	Cell: 083 254 0919
Public Relations Officer	Antoinette le Roux	Cell: 083 236 8230
Communications Officer	Dalene Bennett	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 voëlerfenis.

**Celebrating 32 years of bringing birders together**