

# BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA e-newsletter

January 2015



GURNEY'S SUGARBIRD ALBERT FRONEMAN



## 2015 BIRD OF THE YEAR blue crane

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### LUCKY DRAW WINNERS

A lucky draw was done for all BirdLife South Africa members who renewed their membership in November 2014, and we congratulate the five members who will receive a copy of the beautifully illustrated *Robins of Africa* coffee-table book:

Andre Marx  
Gina Baldo  
Pieter Venter  
John Bircher  
Rory Kelly

We are sure you will enjoy the wonderful illustrations by Graeme Arnott and interesting accounts by Terry Oatley.

Thank you to all who renewed their membership with BirdLife South Africa.



MARK D. ANDERSON

The Blue Crane is South Africa's national bird and is featured on our five-cent coin. As such, it is one of the most recognisable birds in South Africa. Threats include habitat loss, illegal trade, power-line collisions, poisoning and active persecution by landowners. Education and awareness are key to its long-term survival.

The bird of the year resources (posters, pin badges and learning materials) are currently being developed and will be officially launched at BirdLife South Africa's AGM on Saturday, 21 March 2015 at Benvenuto Hotel and Conference Centre in Johannesburg. For more information, please contact Nikki McCartney on 083 636 1060 or [events@birdlife.org.za](mailto:events@birdlife.org.za)

The Bird of the Year 2015 initiative is proudly sponsored by Waltons.

**Waltons**  
Breeding success

# gardening

## FOR BIRDS



**W**andering around the very birdy garden of my friend Jen in Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, I noticed a spindly tree that I did not recognise. That's *Cordia monoica* said Jen, so I decided to investigate further as I had not come across this tree before. Well, if you want to be confused, try researching *Cordia monoica*! The name changes from *C. monoica* to *C. ovalis*, back and forth depending on which book you are looking at. The most up-to-date suggests *C. ovalis*. Older books give the common name as Snot Berry – don't really like that one – and lately it has been called Sandpaper Cordia or Sandpaper Saucer-berry, much nicer and more appropriate. The leaves are so harshly hairy on the upper surface that they can be used to polish wood!

The persistent calyx is likened to a saucer upon which the fruit is set, hence the Saucer-berry bit. The flowers are greenish white and sweetly scented, occurring in clusters at the ends of branchlets. Many different insects find this sort of thing irresistible, thus in turn attracting lots of insectivorous birds, while the orange fruits keep the small frugivores happy. Occurring naturally from northern Zululand northwards in bushveld and thicket, I am not sure of its frost-hardiness, but if you have a sheltered spot it is well worth a try.

I have always treated *Gomphocarpus physocarpus* (that's GF's Hairy Balls or Wild Cotton) as an annual and that is what it really is. But it grows into a dainty small tree and I so wanted it to be permanent; so I left it alone and for 18 months it has delighted me with flowers

*Cordia ovalis*



*Aloe cooperi*



and fruits and lots of birds. Sadly, it is now declaring that it really is an annual and showing every sign of giving up the ghost. But I am leaving it till the end of the breeding season as Amethyst Sunbirds and Cape Sparrows are both collecting nesting material from its failing branches. They manage to pull little strips of an almost spiderweb-like material from the surface of the twigs, both male and female birds coming back again and again. Unfortunately, snails find the bark irresistible too, but I come out early in the morning and pick them off and throw them onto the grassy bank where the Hadedas gobble them up.

This is the time of year when *Aloe cooperi* is the award-winning succulent. I have planted a couple of groups of them and the sturdy orange-and-green flower spikes make a delightful statement and attract all the different sunbird species of the area. I know I repeat myself, but the *Leonotis dysophylla* continues on its merry way and the sunbirds are delighted. So far it still has the award for Best Bird Plant in my garden!

*Erythrina humeana* is still ablaze with nectar-filled red florets and *Rhamnus prinoides* is offering tiny red and black fruits suitable for even the smallest frugivores. In the wonderful and diverse world of plants there is always something for the birds. What a glorious combination birds and plants make – happy gardening and HAPPY NEW YEAR to you all.

Sally Johnson, [sarahjarvis.johnson@gmail.com](mailto:sarahjarvis.johnson@gmail.com)

# VOTE FOR South Africa's FAVOURITE BIRD

chickens don't count



[www.birdlife.org.za/vote](http://www.birdlife.org.za/vote)

BirdLife South Africa invites all South Africans to vote for their favourite bird in a fun and feathery poll. Although there are 845 species of birds in South Africa, the experts at BirdLife South Africa have whittled down the list to 52 popular species. Voting started on 30 November 2014 and closes on 28 February 2015. Over 4 250 votes have been cast to date!

Vote now at [www.birdlife.org.za/vote](http://www.birdlife.org.za/vote)

Nikki McCartney, Events & Marketing Manager, [events@birdlife.org.za](mailto:events@birdlife.org.za)

## NOTICE OF THE 86TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA

The AGM will be held at 16h00 on Saturday 21 March 2015 at the Benvenuto Hotel and Conference Centre, 1 Pitsani Road, Kelland, Johannesburg, Gauteng. In accordance with Clause 12.1 of the BLSA Constitution, the AGM will consider resolutions submitted by members, notice of which has been submitted to the Company Secretary no fewer than two months before the meeting.

The Agenda, Nomination of Office Bearers and Proxy Forms are available on the BirdLife South Africa website [www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock](http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock) or contact Pam Barrett on (011) 789 1122 or e-mail [secretary@birdlife.org.za](mailto:secretary@birdlife.org.za)

## A new bird on a branch ESCARPMENT BIRD CLUB



A new bird and conservation club to be affiliated to BirdLife South Africa was launched in December 2014. Founded in Dullstroom, the club will serve the whole of the escarpment, from the Blyde River Canyon in the north to Chrissiesmeer in the south. The

club will arrange localised meetings, outings, education courses, and bird and biodiversity monitoring activities across the escarpment. Birders from Gauteng who have holiday homes or time-share ownership are also welcome to become members.

Escarpment Bird Club intends to be: the leading source of information concerning all species of birds and their habitats falling within the Mpumalanga Escarpment; facilitators for monitoring Important Bird & Biodiversity Area Programme; promoters of Biodiversity Stewardship amongst private land owners; the support base for the establishment and liaison with Birder Friendly Establishments, within its area of influence as a club.

The Founding Committee comprises a number of seasoned birders, namely George Skinner (Chairman), Ben von Wielligh (Vice Chairman), Mike Brett (Treasurer), Mike Clacey, Chris de Beer, Hugo Fourie and Alan Hatton.

Membership enquiries can be directed to George Skinner at [georges@shopz-group.co.za](mailto:georges@shopz-group.co.za)



*The Committee: (Back L-R) Mike Brett, Chris de Beer, Mike Clacey and Hugo Fourie. (Front L-R) Ben von Wielligh, George Skinner and Alan Hatton.*

### Attention BirdLife South Africa members:

Please use your membership number as a payment reference when paying your membership fees.

# what's on



Flufftail Festival  
3 to 8 February 2015

[www.birdlife.org.za/events/flufftail-festival](http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/flufftail-festival)



Flock in Jozi  
20 to 22 March 2015

[www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock](http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock)

For more information on both events, please contact Nikki McCartney, Events & Marketing Manager, on 083 636 1060 or [events@birdlife.org.za](mailto:events@birdlife.org.za)

## MONTY BRETT BIRDING AND WILDLIFE COURSES

Bird ID at Fordoun, KwaZulu-Natal Midlands

Dates: 8 to 11 March 2015

Venue: Fordoun Hotel and Spa near Nottingham Road

Costs: R3 490 for those doing the course only – includes breakfasts, lunches, morning and afternoon teas. R5 690 for guests staying at Fordoun – includes bed and breakfast for three nights, lunches, morning and afternoon teas.

For more information, to book and for details of other courses and events, contact Kim on [kim@montybrett.com](mailto:kim@montybrett.com) or call 082 824 9378 or (033) 266 7023.

## SASOL SHIMUWINI WILDERNESS BIRDING

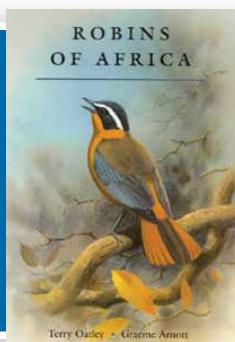
12 to 15 March 2015

An off-the-beaten-track birding experience hosted by Honorary Rangers Limpopo Region and leading Limpopo Province ecologist Joe Grosel. For more information and to book, please contact Charles Hardy on 083 457 1721 or email [charlois@mweb.co.za](mailto:charlois@mweb.co.za)

## WATERBERG BIRDING TOUR

19 to 22 February 2015

Stretton's, the Greater Limpopo Birding Routes and Eden Routes Eco-tours present the 'Birding off the beaten track in the Waterberg' tour, based at Shondoro Mountain Retreat in Limpopo. To book and for more information, contact Joe or Lisa Grosel at [edenroutes@telkomsa.net](mailto:edenroutes@telkomsa.net) or 083 380 2322.



### RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND STAND A CHANCE TO WIN!

Renew your membership in the month that it is due and stand a chance to win one of five copies of the beautifully illustrated *Robins of Africa*, a celebration of the African robin and its world in all its variety.

Please remember to use your membership number as the reference when making your payment.

Shireen Gould, Membership Manager, [membership@birdlife.org.za](mailto:membership@birdlife.org.za)



### ORDER ZEISS PRODUCTS & SUPPORT CONSERVATION

To look through a pair of Zeiss binoculars is to get closer to your quarry than you ever thought possible. Suddenly, there is no forest too dense or too dark in which they can hide. You can purchase Zeiss binoculars directly through the BirdLife South Africa website and support bird conservation. Visit: [www.birdlife.org.za/support-us/zeiss-optics](http://www.birdlife.org.za/support-us/zeiss-optics)

