

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA e-newsletter

September 2015



GURNEY'S SUGARBIRD ALBERT FRONEMAN



Sasol bird fair 2015

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The Sasol Bird Fair was held on a wet and chilly Spring weekend, 5 and 6 September, at the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden.

Despite the wet conditions, the team from Birding Ecotours led the guided bird walks and 85 species were recorded over the two days. This was good considering the challenging weather! Highlights on the walks included Striped Pipit, Little Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, Fairy Flycatcher, Grey-headed Bush-Shrike and African Paradise-Flycatcher, one of the first individual birds for the Gauteng region.

Over 40 exhibitors put on a stunning show of everything birds and birding, from books, birding apps, binoculars and spotting scopes to bird feeders, birding holiday destinations and tour operators, while children enjoyed a variety of activities including face-painting and learning about the bird of the year for 2015, the Blue Crane.

BirdLife South Africa is grateful to Sasol for sponsoring this event, and for SANBI and the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden for hosting the Fair.

Nikki McCartney, Events & Marketing Manager, events@birdlife.org.za



LUCKY DRAW WINNERS

A lucky draw was done for all BirdLife South Africa members who renewed their membership in July 2015, and we congratulate the five members who will receive a copy of the beautifully illustrated *Robins of Africa* coffee-table book:

Edwin Letty
Hennie Welman
Martin Potgieter
Hilton Cockcroft
Chris Bothma

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.



Attention BirdLife South Africa members:

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

training with SANCCOB

BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Conservation team was recently invited by the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) to undergo basic seabird training at their facilities in Table View, Cape Town.

SANCCOB is the government-mandated rehabilitation authority in South Africa, and shares its specialist skills with the international community and local organisations alike.

Because Seabird Conservation Programme staff spend several days onboard fishing vessels as observers to monitor seabird populations and mitigate seabird by-catch in the fishing sector, it is vital that they learn basic seabird handling techniques, should they happen to find an injured or oiled bird while out at sea or conducting research at breeding colonies.

The training at SANCCOB spanned two full days and included handling of juvenile and adult African Penguins, cormorants, gulls and an immature Cape Gannet. This provided great entertainment for the experienced SANCCOB handlers and volunteers, as the BLSA team dodged sharp beaks and chased after feisty penguins. The training also included oral fluid therapy, wound management and spot washing to remove oily patches. The information and training that was provided



From L-R: Marna Smit (SANCCOB), Adri Meyer, Chrissie Madden, Bokomoso Lebepe, Mmatjie Mashao, Christina Hagen (BirdLife South Africa) and Albert Snyman (SANCCOB) with Princess the African Penguin.

is invaluable to the BLSA team since they need to be able to react rapidly if oiled or injured birds are encountered.

SANCCOB was generous enough to donate two seabird rescue boxes to the team, which can be taken along onboard fishing vessels or to fieldwork. The boxes contained towels, bandages, syringes, antiseptic ointment and everything the team needs to take care of injured or oiled birds.

[Adri Meyer, Intern, Seabird Conservation Programme, seabird@birdlife.org.za](mailto:seabird@birdlife.org.za)

COMMUNITY BIRD GUIDE NEWS

A generous donation by a client of Shem Compion's C4 Images enabled Junior Gabela to become the proud owner of a pair of 8x42 Swarovski EL binoculars. Junior is a fantastic guide and ambassador for conservation and we could not think of a more deserving recipient. Thank you to Shem Compion and C4 Images for facilitating this.

If you're planning to go birding in northern KwaZulu-Natal and would like to use the expertise of one of the nicest and most motivated guides around, visit Junior's website – www.bubblenet.co.za/gabela – for more information and contact details.

Martin Taylor, Special Projects Manager, martin.taylor@birdlife.org.za



gardening

FOR BIRDS



Now that the great flush of flowering aloes has finished, the sunbirds need to look elsewhere for their daily nectar fix. Proteas, Leucospermum and their ilk are good providers, but my newfound favourites are the Cotyledons. These succulents are pretty good at withstanding frost and have a nice variety of leaf shape and colour, making them an all-year-round point of interest. The flowers are shades of red and orange, borne in a cluster from a sturdy central stem and so very accessible to the sunbirds. *Cotyledon orbiculata*, Pig's Ears or Plakkies, is very variable in leaf colour – large and rounded, from bright green with a reddish edge all the way through to silvery-white as a result of protective surface wax. The leaves of *C. barbeyi* are again very variable, borne on the top third of the stem, not rounded but more like thick fingers. The flowers are red. For contrast use *C. tomentosa*, which has densely hairy leaves that appear almost grey, with reddish-brown markings near the tips. Sometimes called Bear's Paw, this species is usually smaller than the others and has dark red flowers.

For those of you who, like me, enjoy peering closely at flowers through a loupe or upended binoculars, here are some fun facts. *Cotyledon* has its flower parts in fives, with twice as many stamens as petals, and the petals are united above halfway into a tube, the inflorescence always terminal. Then check a *Kalanchoe*, where everything is the same except that the flower parts are in fours. *Crassula*, on the other hand, has the same number



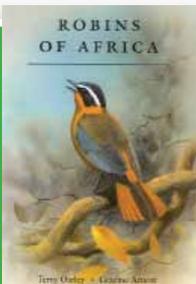
Cotyledon orbiculata

of stamens as petals. It's such fun getting up close and personal with the flowers in your garden!

For those of you not whacked by frost, the Coral Trees, *Erythrina lysistemon*, and the coastal *E. caffra* are now in full bloom. With no leaves and a profusion of red tubes offering nectar to

sunbirds and nectar-pirates alike, this is a must-have in frost-free gardens. But remember that the roots can be destructive to walls, so make sure the tree is planted at least five metres from your garden wall or house. The much smaller *E. humeana* flowers later in the season, decorating your Christmas garden. *E. zeyheri*, the Ploegbreker (plough breaker), is a sort of underground tree with a huge root system hidden away in the earth. It sends up its glorious red flowering spike in spring, but after flowering and fruiting it returns to the earth and becomes invisible again; so this is a plant for a huge garden where it is not required to decorate year round. *E. latissima*, the Broad-leaved Coral Tree, is the largest of the bunch, heavily branched with very large, leathery leaves. It can withstand some frost. The spikes of red flowers appear before the leaves in spring, and mature in sequence over an extended period. All the coral trees have attractive pods containing black seeds encased in a red aril, sometimes called Lucky Beans – but don't be tempted to eat them, as they are poisonous. As an added bonus, the wood of Coral Trees is soft enough to be used by hole-nesting birds.

Sally Johnson, sarahjarvis.johnson@gmail.com



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

Africa, it's your turn... migratory birds NEED YOU!

Migration is an awe-inspiring natural phenomenon. Without becoming lost and facing ever-changing challenges along their routes, birds continue to amaze and inspire us upon their arrival each Spring.

September 1st each year marks the start of the Spring Alive Project season in Africa. This is an international project which, through various activities, gets children and their families involved in the wondrous movement of birds between continents. This year the theme of the project is 'make your garden or balcony bird-friendly' to help refuel tired birds on their migrations.



Here's how you can get involved:

- Check the Spring Alive website at www.springalive.net for an event near you and to record observations of Barn Swallow, White Stork, Common Cuckoo, Common Swift and European Bee-eater.
- Share your photos of migratory birds, Spring Alive events or birds in your garden on the Spring Alive facebook page www.facebook.com/springaliveforbirds

It's your turn to join the migratory movement, help birds and have fun! For further information please contact Kristi Garland on 083 227 0128 or kristi.garland@birdlife.org.za

Kristi Garland, Grasslands Environmental Education Project Manager, kristi.garland@birdlife.org.za

Join the new partnership between **BIRDLASSER** and **BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA!**

We live in exciting times. Software apps aimed at assisting birders to maximise the enjoyment they get out of birding are constantly being launched. One of these applications is BirdLasser, which enables birders to enter their bird sightings directly onto a mobile phone. This user-friendly application is free, and can also be used to record and submit data to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2). Atlasing has never been easier!

BirdLife South Africa and BirdLasser are working together to use this tool to obtain data for threatened bird species. This is an extremely valuable project for BirdLife South Africa as we need to know where, and in what numbers, threatened bird species occur in order to implement conservation actions. For example, the Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Programme will use the data to determine how well IBAs cover these species, and The Terrestrial Bird Conservation Programme will be able to use the data for the specific species they are targeting, such as Secretarybird, Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Black Stork, Black Harrier, Taita Falcon and Southern Bald Ibis.

BirdLife South Africa and BirdLasser would like to invite you to become part of a growing community of people who record data electronically when birding and submit it to the various bird monitoring projects to be used for bird conservation.

What do you need to do? Download BirdLasser from Playstore or iTunes or visit www.birdlasser.com
For Android-based phones: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.lasser.birdlasser&hl=en>
For iPhone: <https://itunes.apple.com/app/birdlasser/id896342249?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>

It will take you five minutes to learn how to enter your data, which will be automatically uploaded to the BirdLasser database, from where the relevant data will be forwarded to BirdLife South Africa.

Become a BirdLasser today and make a valuable contribution to bird conservation. For more information, visit www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/important-bird-areas/iba-projects/blsa-threatened-species-birdlasser-cause

Ernst Retief, Regional Conservation Manager: BirdLife South Africa, ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za

landowners and their special vlei



Malachite Sunbird

Verlorenvlei is a waterbody of great beauty with over 180 bird species surrounded by a community of people, most of whom are farmers. These landowners are at the centre of projects such as the Verlorenvlei Protected Areas Project, which was initiated to implement stewardship actions around Verlorenvlei Estuary, which is both a Ramsar site and Important Bird & Biodiversity Area (IBA). Biodiversity stewardship is essentially about building trust with private landowners and working in partnership to protect important ecosystems. If conservation is to succeed, we need to meet their needs as well as our own. But what are these needs, and how can conservationists meet them?

These key questions formed the departure point for the Verlorenvlei Landowner Needs Analysis, surveys undertaken by Samantha Schroder to determine the perceptions and needs of the landowners surrounding Verlorenvlei. The surveys were done in person and telephonically, with interviews completed for 16 of the 21 major landowners. Five main themes arose from this, including: Conservation, Communication, Education, Alien Vegetation and Government (including taxes, legislation and land restitution).

These themes were common across many responses and reveal the principal concerns of the

landowners in this area. One result, which is not directly reflected, is the appreciation of landowners to being contacted directly, as well as making enquiries about their needs first, before steaming ahead with project actions. The interviews have allowed landowners to answer and ask questions on their own terms, leaving the community open to the project and what it desires to achieve. The results show a greater need for communication with landowners from all conservation organisations, both governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Landowners also feel the need to be involved in decisions and actions taken with regards to Verlorenvlei and those which may impact their properties.

The survey not only brought the importance and purpose of the project to the attention of landowners, but also put a face to the project and opened essential communication channels between the project partners and the community. By determining the desires of the landowners we will allow for the improved protection and management of this exquisite vlei, thereby protecting this important wetland and summer refuge for numerous migratory waders and other waterbirds.

Samantha Schroder, Verlorenvlei Project Manager,
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dogs AND birds

Every dog owner will agree that dogs are family and it is impossible to imagine a life without them. Every dog will agree that a walk in the local park is the high point of any day. Unfortunately, there are instances when the boisterousness of our canine friends, particularly when they are taken out of their familiar home environments and into the exciting environment of a park or other unexplored terrain, can harm other wildlife.

This was no more evident than in a recent incident where some dogs, in the company of their owner, attacked and killed a number of wild birds in Sedgefield. It is our understanding that the dogs were not on a leash and were allowed to roam freely. They came across a flock of guineafowl and attacked the birds. Even though the owner of the dogs was negligent by failing to control the dogs, it was clearly not her intent to hunt with the dogs. Therefore, in terms of the Animals Protection Act, the death of the birds was not intentional and no legal action can be taken against the owner of the dogs.

However, we must all keep in mind that, even though they are domesticated and our favoured pets, dogs, like cats, may still revert to their natural hunting instincts when the opportunity

presents itself. This is even more pertinent when considering that dogs are pack animals and, when more than one is present, could easily slip into pack behaviour and 'hunt' as a group.

In view of this, we would like to recommend the following when taking your dog(s) for a walk on a beach, in a park or other natural environment where wild birds are present:

1. Keep your dog on a leash at all times;
2. If your dog becomes excited at the presence of wild birds, keep it under control and, preferably, remove your dog from the situation immediately;
3. Respect any regulations regarding the presence of dogs in any protected area you are visiting; and
4. If no such regulations exist, avoid walking your dog near nesting and/or roosting areas, especially during the breeding season.

As dog owners, we all have a responsibility towards our wild animals to protect them from domesticated species. After all, it is the presence of wild animals that make our parks and beaches so special.

Linda van den Heever, Administrator: Terrestrial Bird Conservation Programme, linda.vdheever@birdlife.org.za

POUNDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR WHITE-WINGED FLUFFTAIL

During the 2015 British Bird Fair held at Rutland Water in England in August, South African-registered birding tour operator Birding Ecotours raised funds for White-winged Flufftail conservation by selling pin badges.

John Kinghorn, a bird guide with Birding Ecotours, handed over the funds raised to Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, BirdLife South Africa's Terrestrial Bird Conservation Programme Manager and Middelpunt Wetland Trustee at the Sasol Bird Fair (pictured here) held earlier this month.

Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, Terrestrial Bird Conservation Programme Manager, conservation@birdlife.org.za



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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



snippets



FLOCK AT SEA AGAIN! 2017

With over 680 cabins sold, the Flock at Sea AGAIN! 2017 cruise will definitely be going ahead. Thank you to all those who have booked their berth. Now let's fill this ship with birders! Balcony cabins and balcony suites are sold out, but there are still restricted-view outside cabins and inside cabins available.

Book your berth by calling the MSC Cruises Call Centre on 011 798 3600 and quote BirdLife.

For more information about prices, deck layout, programme of events etc, visit www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock/flock-at-sea-again-2017 or contact Nikki McCartney on 083 636 1060 or events@birdlife.org.za



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Emily Moon



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During summer, the Garden Route shows off more than ever! Its diverse landscape blossoms anew, drawing the attention of nature lovers as well as exciting birds such as Narina Trogon, Cape Siskin, Victorin's Warbler, Half-collared Kingfisher and Knysna Woodpecker. The Garden Route is home to over 300 species of birds, with close to 30 species endemic to the Southern Cape.

From 5–7 December 2015, Colin Wylie, specialist nature guide and experienced birder, will be hosting an exciting weekend of walking and birding at Emily Moon River Lodge, unpacking the Garden Route's rich natural heritage.

Spaces are limited and bookings close on 5 October 2015. For more information and the full programme, visit www.emilymoon.co.za/blog/birding-nature-retreat/#more-2776 or contact Emily Moon River Lodge on 044 501 2500 or e-mail info@emilymoon.co.za

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