



AFRICAN HARRIER-HAWK ALBERT FRONEMAN

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA e-newsletter

February 2016



BOOK donation

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BirdLife South Africa has received a large collection of bird and other natural history books from the library of the late Roelof van der Merwe. These include, very pleasingly, a full set of *Handbook of Birds of the World*. The books are housed in the library at Isdell House, BirdLife South Africa's head office in Johannesburg. Roelof's legacy will live on in many ways, including by having his vast book collection available to ornithologists, conservationists and BirdLife South Africa's members. BirdLife South Africa is very grateful to Roelof's widow, Willene, for the generous donation.



A large number of bird and other natural history books from the collection of the late Roelof van der Merwe have been generously donated to BirdLife South Africa.

Mark D. Anderson, CEO: BirdLife South Africa, ceo@birdlife.org.za

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL COMPETITION

The lucky draw has been done for BirdLife South Africa members who renewed their membership in December 2015. We congratulate the five members who will each receive a copy of the beautifully illustrated *Robins of Africa* coffee-table book:

- Mike Mair
- Callan Cohen
- Joan Shuter
- Ina Meyer
- Mr V Coley

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership.
Shireen Gould, Membership Manager, membership@birdlife.org.za

Message to all BirdLife South Africa members

Due to the incorrect reference number being used when membership fees are being paid, we have a number of unallocated payments. Many are simply referenced 'BirdLife South Africa', making it impossible for us to allocate them. If you think that your payment may not have been allocated, please contact Shireen Gould at membership@birdlife.org.za or Ntombi Stungu at memadmin@birdlife.org.za

The following are some of the unallocated payments:

07/12/2015	Tydskrif Praktyk	R445.00	24/11/2015	BirdLife	R315.01
07/12/2015	M McNally	R288.00	25/11/2015	BirdLife SA	R315.01
29/12/2015	G/Sog/12/13	R415.01	15/06/2015	H Roeland	R495.00
	De Villiers		30/03/2015	Angela Roche	R195.00

Please remember to use your membership number as the reference when paying your membership fees. Should you pay an amount different from your invoiced amount, please send us an e-mail to membership@birdlife.org.za detailing the payment.

Attention BirdLife South Africa members

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



on the road with ROSS



2016 got off to a flying start (sorry – couldn't resist it!). My second week in the office saw me on a mission to Nosy Be, an island off north-western Madagascar, for a meeting about marine spatial planning (and marine IBAs). Sadly, much of the meeting was directed at national representatives, not the NGO and other 'resource people' who made up almost half the delegates. Along with several others, I found myself sitting on the sidelines and not contributing much to anything.

Although I'm a hardcore fan of islands, Nosy Be is not a good option for birding as it has no endemic birds of its own and, being an island, automatically has fewer bird species – and lower numbers – than adjacent mainland areas. There were only two, relatively small birding highlights for me there. One involved sitting on the beach loungers during coffee breaks watching Greater Sand Plovers on the mudflats and seeing a female Lesser Frigatebird fly past. The second occurred as I was whiling away two hours at the airport before returning to Antananarivo. I saw a fig tree in fruit and while idly scanning it I realised there were half a dozen or more roosting Madagascar Green Pigeons in the tree. Bonus!

Back in 'Tana, my attempts to visit Tsarasaotra, the Ramsar site in the city (and seemingly

the only green space that isn't a rice paddy), were severely curtailed. The person at the gate ignored me as I walked in, unaware that this wasn't the correct protocol. During the 10 minutes I was there I saw some great species, including a family of White-throated Rails. This is the species that I studied for my Master's degree (under the late Phil Hockey), but this was the Aldabra form (possibly a distinct species though I'm not convinced, having now finally seen and heard them both). It was a rare moment of absolute delight, the achievement of a desire I'd held for 17 years (since 1999, when I started planning my Aldabra research). Eventually the park staff found me and, through a friendly local who was practising his English with me, explained that I needed a ticket, so I had to leave. For reasons known only to the powers that be, instead of collecting entrance fees at the site, they require prospective visitors to take a taxi ride to an office a few kilometres away to purchase a ticket. It was too much effort, there wasn't much time before my next flight and I was now too irritated to bother, so my birding in 'Tana ended on a slightly sour note. Next time I'll go, with my wife as company, and do a proper birding trip.

*Dr Ross Wanless, Seabird Programme Manager,
ross.wanless@birdlife.org.za*



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gardening

FOR BIRDS

Just when you think you've seen it all as far as garden birds are concerned, something extraordinary crops up! Recently we were at the Cavern Berg Resort in the northern Drakensberg, hosting a nature weekend. While pottering in the resort's extensive and largely indigenous garden, we were enjoying the busy antics of a Willow Warbler in a large paperbark acacia *Vachellia sieberiana* when we noticed three or four other little birds behaving in much the same way. To our amazement these were Sweet Waxbills, birds always seen foraging on the ground, where they look especially for soft grass seeds at the edges of lawn missed by the mower. Everything we knew told us that these birds would not be found high up in a tree, but there they were. I don't know what they were eating, but as they bustled along horizontal branches they were picking up lots of something tasty. The flaky bark of the tree was obviously sheltering something delicious and this little band of seed-eaters had discovered it. How I wished I could shin up the tree and find out what they were enjoying, but without camping under the tree for a considerable time, I will never know whether this was a once-off or a newly discovered addition to the Sweet Waxbill menu. The paperbark acacia has always been a great garden tree and this just adds to its attraction.

As we approach autumn, many of our fruit-bearing trees start to produce their delicious



Canthium mundianum

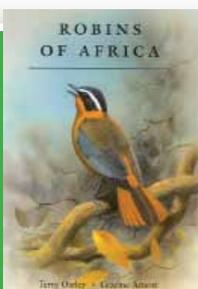
and bird-attracting offerings. In winter there is a real dearth of insect food and many of our insectivorous birds are happy to change to a vegetarian diet when there are no hungry chicks demanding high-protein food. The Cape White-eye is a good example of this: during the breeding season pairs are busy

finding insect food for their brood, but as winter approaches they will gather in large flocks and enjoy a diet of fruit. No need to defend a crop of berries – the whole gang can enjoy the feast and then move on to the next tree.

For coastal gardens, the turkey-berry *Canthium inerme* is a good choice. The dense clusters of greenish flowers attract small insects and thus the small insectivores, while the little fruits are relished by frugivores. The Afrikaans name, *gewone bokdrol* stems from the resemblance of the fruits to antelope droppings. This is also the food plant of the Natal bar butterfly.

Further inland, where frost becomes a problem, choose *Canthium mundianum*, the rock alder. The pale grey bark is smooth and has light and dark patches, making it an interesting focus in the garden. Like its coastal cousin, it bears scented, greenish-white flowers that attract insects and little fruits that are devoured by all the small frugivores. The good news is that both these species occur in the Cape Town area and will grow happily in your bird gardens. Happy bird gardening!

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

fences... FRIEND OR FOE?

As nature lovers, we all understand that when predators kill for food, it is part of a natural process. We may not like to see it, but we know why it happens. However, when animals die because of what human beings do, like put up fences on which birds can become entangled or get stuck, we should be angry and sad because they die a horrible, painful death through starvation, thirst and exhaustion. A few years ago BirdLife South Africa started looking at ways to mitigate this threat and asked the general public to submit records of birds killed on fences. Sightings of 23 species that died in this way were received. Some of the species, such as the African Grass Owl, Secretarybird, Blue Crane, Black Stork, Greater Flamingo and Southern Ground-Hornbill, are endangered, but more common birds such as Crowned Lapwings, Laughing Doves and Southern Red Bishops, as well as Marsh Owl, Cape Eagle-Owl and Western Barn Owl suffered the same fate. Nor is it only birds that are affected; we received

records of small and large mammals that were killed on fences or became entangled in them.

With the information received we could determine that it was the top strand of a barbed-wire fence that was responsible for the deaths and that larger birds become entangled when the top two strands are not taut due to lack of maintenance. It is believed that both these issues can be mitigated relatively easily. In the year ahead we will discuss mitigation methods with fencing companies and publish a report. We will then launch a campaign based on this report, aiming it at landowners. The campaign will highlight the impact of fences on birds and other animals and propose mitigation methods.

Please submit any records of birds killed on fences by e-mail to Ernst Retief or online at www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/important-bird-areas/iba-projects/fence-mitigation-project
Ernst Retief, Regional Conservation Manager: Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Free State, ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za



Secretarybirds need to cross fences every day, as shown by this series of photos.

CRYSTELLE WILSON (4)

NEW BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA STAFF MEMBER

Chevaughn Nagiah joined BirdLife South Africa in February in the position of the DAWN Fellow of Environmental Education. Chevaughn's role is to establish and manage an innovative membership system for schoolchildren. Her tasks include the creation of online content and interactive tools that will introduce a large number of young people to the wonders of birds and nature in general. We feel that the position has huge potential in that it will reach significantly more pupils than traditional school assembly-type interactions. With her extensive knowledge of social media and her ample creative talents, we can't wait to see how Chevaughn's plans for the position take flight. We would like to thank DAWN for sharing our vision and making this position a reality.

Fanie du Plessis, Finance and Operations Manager, accounts@birdlife.org.za



snippets

NOTICE OF THE 87th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA to be held at 14h00 on Saturday, 12 March 2016 at the Conference Centre, Skukuza Camp, Kruger National Park.
For more information, please visit www.birdlife.org.za/events/flock/flock-in-kruger-2016

Birder-friendly news

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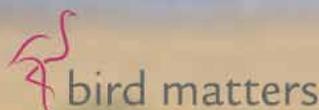
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