

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA e-newsletter

October 2014



GURNEY'S SUGARBIRD ALBERT FRONEMAN



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WINNERS OF LUCKY DRAW

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

Adrian Kenneth-Watts, Lorna Phillips, Derek Fly, Butch James, Pieter la Grange

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.

saving seabirds

Weighting longline hooks
no burden for South Korea

The 'Tragedy of the Commons' was first advanced as a concept by the economist Grant Hardin. It describes how short-term, selfish interests, which trump long-term, communal interests when exploiting a common resource, lead to overexploitation. The high seas and Antarctica are the last global commons that contain exploitable mineral and biological resources. The rules that govern activities (particularly extractive ones such as mining) are very strong in Antarctica. The same is not true of the oceans. There are rules, mostly housed within 'Regional Fisheries Management Organisations', such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), but enforcement of the rules is exceedingly difficult to achieve. Albatrosses are the most highly threatened group of birds on earth. Longline fishing plays a large role in that situation. The battle to overcome alarmingly high mortality from albatrosses and petrels in high seas tuna longlining, forms a major component of the Marine Programme of BirdLife International.

The approach to IOTC and similar bodies has built off the work and scientific achievements of BirdLife's Albatross Task Force (ATF). First the ATF teams have demonstrated, through scientific experiments onboard commercial fishing vessels during production fishing, that seabirds can be protected from the fishing hooks, safely and cost-effectively. Those results are then translated into new rules at these international commissions. In theory, once the rules have been agreed upon, everyone will follow them or face >>>



LEANDRO TAMINI/ALBATROSS TASK FORCE

A South Korean fisherman shows his delight at catching a tuna on a line fitted with Lumo Leads, specially designed to help reduce seabird bycatch.

the consequences. However, detecting non-compliance is almost impossible, but pales to insignificance when compared with the task of getting sanctions against fishing nations which don't follow the rules. BirdLife's approach to this is to work with fishing vessels and responsible nations like South Korea, to convince fishermen that there is a better way, and not to make the rules and then look for a stick to beat nations into compliance.

In 2013, the Republic of Korea became the first Asian fishing nation to invite a non-governmental organisation onboard a tuna longliner. Dr Zang Geun Kim brokered an agreement with Sajo Industries and BirdLife International, who undertook research to see if Korean-style tuna longline fishing could adopt new technology that is safe, and helps minimise the risk to seabirds. The system, developed by Bird-

Life and UK company Fishtek, is designed to sink baited hooks fast, so that seabirds have little chance to snatch the bait and get hooked. The trials went well, and the Korean fleet has decided to take the next step and roll out the system across all the vessels that operate in the southern Indian Ocean. The South Korean government supports the industry's decision. 'Korea agreed to follow the rules of the IOTC seabird measure. We will continue to work with fishermen and organisations such as BirdLife International to ensure that the new system works well,' said the South Korean authority.

Dr Ross Wanless, BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Conservation Programme Manager, has been at the centre of a deal with South Korea's tuna fleet to move towards more seabird-friendly fishing gear. In late February, the fishing association from South Korea chose

to refit their fleet with 40 000 specially designed weights, for the sake of preventing accidental seabird deaths during tuna fishing operations. 'The magnitude of this decision from Korea should not be underestimated,' said Dr Wanless. 'For the entire fleet to resolve to adapt their fishing gear for the sake of seabirds was almost unthinkable just a few years ago. It's a really impressive step for Korea to become a responsible fishing nation,' he continued.

'The commitment from all parties to understand, test, refine and commit to solutions that will reduce seabird bycatch is highly commendable. Hopefully this marks the beginning of a new chapter for seabird interactions with tuna longliners,' said Dr David Wilson, Science Coordinator and Deputy Secretary of the IOTC. [Ross Wanless, Seabird Programme Manager, ross.wanless@birdlife.org.za](mailto:ross.wanless@birdlife.org.za)

FLOCK IN JOZI 2015

With over 1 000 BirdLife South Africa members in the Gauteng area, and with many others who can easily get to Johannesburg, we hope to have a record attendance to celebrate the conservation successes of the past year as well as to enjoy the more than 400 bird species in the province. More details to follow soon.

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




Don't Miss It!

Save the dates 20-22 March
Full details and programme to follow


Flock
The Annual Gathering of Members of BirdLife South Africa
In Jozi 2015

gardening

FOR BIRDS

Gardening for birds just became a lot harder! An extra-dry winter, a week of minus-a-lot frost followed by hot and dry and windy conditions have completely foiled my best-laid plans of a continuous supply of nectar and fruit for my avian friends. My *Ochna* didn't flower at all, the buds of early-flowering aloes got zapped by the frost – and so continues the sad saga. An upturned flowerpot filled with hungry bees has reduced my sunbird feeder to a bee-feeder; they have even taken over the half-orange I impale on a spike. I am amazed at how much nectar a swarm of bees can drink. I have tried hard to be an 'all embracing' nature lover, but that advert in the newspaper about bee removal gets more appealing by the day! It's fun to watch the Amethyst Sunbirds do a couple of close fly-bys to disturb the bees, then grab a quick sip before the little buzzers come back; but not enough fun to want to keep it that way. I have noticed that the bees only seem to be out and about when the sun shines, and like the nectar feeder to be in the sun; maybe I should find a really shady nook to hang the bottle. But would the sunbirds find it? Who said life would be easy?

Living on a nature reserve is great, one of the reasons we came to live here in Howick, but sometimes it is hard to love the creatures that roam among us. Right now I am finding my love for porcupines at quite a low ebb! My very precious *Dierama* bulbs made a delicious snack for them, just the bulb nibbled off, the leaves tossed carelessly to one side. *Galtonia* and *Ornithogalum* got the same treatment. I know porcupines particularly love Arums so I have not



Zebras drinking from the bird bath.



Amethyst Sunbird

RICHARD MEINESZ

even tried to plant them. On the plus side, we heard the clink of quills outside our bedroom window one night and managed to get a quick glimpse of this amazing creature as it shuffled off, leaving a large quill as a souvenir! I have been collecting small rocks and am planting replacement bulbs among them; not aesthetically pleasing but hopefully not appealing to the porcupines. Here's hoping anyway.

Then there are the duikers; as food got scarcer in the natural areas, so the leaves of my *Agapanthus* got more and more appealing. Luckily,

being a bit of an indigenous freak, I don't have roses – the perfect treat for duiker. Zebra prefer grass, but they get thirsty and birdbaths are the perfect answer. But they don't look where they are walking and they are heavy and can leave quite a noticeable trail of destruction. Of course, there is always a plus and this time it is their poo – free fertiliser!

So for now it is back to the expensive birdseed and watching the antics of the hordes of queleas, bishops, whydahs, weavers and sparrows as they swoop and squabble and add the all-important ticks to our monthly garden bird list. Between the dry conditions and the block burns I don't think there is much out in the real world for them right now. Hopefully next time I chat to you there will be all sorts of exciting bird-attracting plants calling out for attention. Keep your birdbaths full and enjoy whatever nature brings into your garden.

Sally Johnson, sarahjarvis.johnson@gmail.com

TURNING KRUGER *green*

We are in the last quarter of 2014 and are pleased to report that we are still ahead of the targets set for us by the Animal Demography Unit (ADU) for this year. To be on target by the end of September we should have submitted 75 per cent of the 1 250 cards we have been aiming at, but we were ahead of this with 78.56 per cent. Pentads covered by that date had escalated to 93.43 per cent, so we are well ahead of target.

Thanks for this must go to our team of registered observers and assistants, but also to the many citizen scientists who have diligently been atlassing to the east of 31 degrees and north of 26 degrees. It is due to your efforts that we stand where we are at present and this is most appreciated. I would also like to thank those who have contributed to our funding and for the accommodation provided in different areas. Without this assistance

we most certainly would not be in the position where we stand at present.

Remember that all data submissions are important, even if a pentad has been frequently atlassed. The more cards submitted the more meaningful the results, so keep on submitting your findings. These final three months of the year are crucial to recording migrant arrivals as well. It is an exciting time, with birds being more vocal and active because summer is the breeding season for many species. The first rains have been late in the Kruger National Park this year but the drought has now broken and our lists will grow.

In my previous report I mentioned the Marula South Region had just a short way to go for all six Sections to turn green. There are now only four pentads out of 69 that are not yet green. Of these, two require just one card each and two require two cards.



GARTH BATCHELOR

That sounds as if just a couple more visits will suffice but it is not that simple. Firstly the pentads take time to negotiate and secondly they are in poaching hotspots, but we are getting there and should be able to pop the champagne cork before the year ends.

Further north progress is also being made and we have major plans for all four registered observers over the next couple of months. If all goes well my next report will be showing remarkable results, so keep watching this space for updates!

Peter Lawson,
peter@lawsons-africa.co.za

SABAP2 TOP 10 PRIORITIES

1. Please maintain 'sustainable atlassing'. We cannot afford for you to suffer 'burn-out' because we need you in 2015. Please keep on atlassing at the pace you enjoy doing it.
2. Please recruit new atlassers, teach them the protocol and get them involved. We are NOT near the END of the project, we are near the BEGINNING.
3. There is no pentad for which we have 'enough' data.
4. Please treat any pentad with fewer than four full-protocol checklists as a top priority pentad.
5. If you are able to travel, please help fill the major gaps in coverage. Try to participate in gap-filling expeditions. Even better, take courage, and organise an expedition yourself.
6. If you are in an area where data coverage is poor, and you have the opportunity to make even a short list of species for a few minutes, please submit the records as an ad hoc list.
7. If you have seen a single species which you know is rare in a pentad (or might not yet have been observed), please submit it as an incidental record. If in doubt, submit.
8. If a pentad has not yet been atlassed in 2014, treat it as a priority. Try to get 2014 coverage up to four checklists in as many pentads as feasible.
9. Ask permission before you venture onto private land. And don't atlas and drive at the same time.
10. Most importantly, your participation needs to be something that you enjoy doing.

Professor Les Underhill, Animal Demography Unit,
les.underhill@uct.ac.za

BIRDING BIG DAY

Saturday, 29 November 2014

Calling all budding beginners or backyard birders who enjoy watching birds from the comfort of the garden – have you decided where you will Bird your 'Hood this year?

The Open Category and the Family/Community Category cater for the more serious twitchers looking for birds over a 24-hour period within a 50-kilometre radius.

There is no entry fee. However, raise R250 or more in sponsorship for BirdLife South Africa's conservation work and you will receive a cloth badge and be entered into the lucky draw for a chance to win some fantastic prizes, including Chamberlain's, Garden Shop and Woolworths vouchers, weekends away and more.

For more information, please contact Nikki McCartney on 083 636 1060 or visit www.birdlife.org.za/events/birding-big-day
Nikki McCartney, Events & Marketing Manager, events@birdlife.org.za



BIRDING IN YOUR 'HOOD THE DURBAN GREEN CORRIDOR

Visit the Durban Green Corridor (DGC) sites at eNanda, uMngeni Mouth and KwaDabeka on Birding Big Day.

The DGC will be offering birders:

- FREE guided bird walks departing on the hour every hour at uMngeni Mouth (GreenHub), eNanda Adventures (Inanda Dam) and



AFRICAN FINFOOT HUGH CHITTENDEN

KwaDabeka (KwaDabeka Bridge) for birders taking part in Birding Big Day

- Excellent chances of seeing African Finfoot, Grey Waxbill, Half-collared Kingfisher, waders and loads more

The DGC is also offering great prizes for Birding Big Day teams in the 'Bird My 'Hood' category visiting DCG sites, and these include:

- 1 x Roberts Multimedia App
- 1 x Family Pass allowing free access of any DCG site for an entire year!

For more details and directions to the sites, please visit www.durbangreencorridor.co.za



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migrating ACROSS THE POND

Birds do not know international boundaries. Herein lies the challenge of conserving migratory birds. They do not only face threats in one area, but face a variety of challenges as they fly across numerous nations and sovereign borders. Habitat loss at their breeding or over-wintering sites; direct persecution and hunting; ever-expanding industrial development and multiple other threats along their long migration journeys, all impact on species survival. Dale Wright, Western Cape Regional Conservation Manager for BirdLife South Africa's Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Programme, recently underwent a brief migration across the Atlantic Ocean to participate in a two-week course on the Ecology and Conservation of Migratory Birds. The course was taught by members of the Migratory Bird Centre, a division within the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, and hosted at the Institute's training facility: The Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation in Front Royal, Virginia, USA.

Each day began before sunrise with a mist-netting session, lessons on bird-banding best practice (bird ringing to those of us in South Africa), taking body size measurements and fitting tracking devices. Morning lectures covered topics such as basic migration ecology; life history evolution and physiology; bird breeding and moult strategies; tracking technologies; genetic techniques; isotope analysis and phenology. These jam-packed theoretical sessions were fortunately interspersed with outdoor practical sessions, to exercise our minds in a different way. The practical exercises taught point count and distance sampling methods, and using



The class participants learning the safest way to extract and handle birds during the bird-banding exercise.

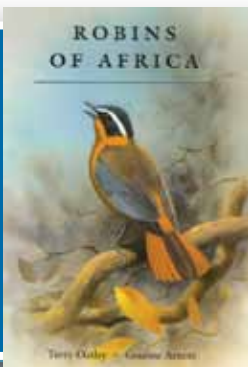
radio tracking equipment, while visits to an isotope and genetics laboratory and the 'how to' of museum study skin preparation added to the new experiences. The intensive course exposed us to the latest, cutting-edge research approaches in migratory bird conservation, with a focus on providing a platform for

the participants to follow-up and apply whichever of the tools and techniques learnt best suits their context back home.

After some brief birding in the evening we also heard about each of the participant's work programmes. A total of 11 different countries were represented on the course and the diverse work experiences added more knowledge to our almost saturated minds. The instructors always ensured all participants were up to speed and the energy and enthusiasm from the course participants kept us going through the 15-hour days!

The experience was invaluable and I plan to provide a workshop for the BirdLife South Africa staff, and potentially members of the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Cape Town, in order to share the lessons learnt. The nature of migration requires collaborative efforts and knowledge sharing between multiple partners and across borders. I must thank the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute for awarding me the scholarship that made it possible for me to experience this incredible opportunity, which also added many lifers to my personal bird list!

Dale Wright, Regional Conservation Manager: Western Cape,
dale.wright@birdlife.org.za



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

BIRD CONSCIOUSNESS PROJECT TAKES OFF IN GAUTENG

Happy Feed CC, with three Pet Food and Pet Requisite stores in Parkmore, Parkhurst and Glenhazel in Gauteng, promoted a Bird Consciousness Project to St John's College in Johannesburg. Assisted by the Witwatersrand Bird Club, the objective was to instil a lasting sense of responsibility in pupils of the school to care for and take an interest in birds.

St John's College is set within large grounds, with a variety of environments suitable for habitation by birds. Mrs Lane, Headmistress of the Pre-Preparatory School, and Patrick Lees, Headmaster of the Preparatory School, immediately embraced the concept of protecting and caring for the birds on the grounds on a sustainable basis.

A survey was conducted by the Witwatersrand Bird Club to see which of the birds in the area were endemic, and which could be encouraged to inhabit the unused environments in the school grounds if the correct food and habitats were made available. The survey revealed 30 different species. In order to create or awaken a desire to nurture the project's objective among the students, parents and staff at the school, they were issued a challenge to make bird feeders from predominantly recyclable materials.

They were given two weeks to complete the project, after which the feeders were judged and prizes awarded for the best models. Briza Publications generously provided a copy of *SAPPI Birds of*



above *Lance Quiding, CEO of Happy Feed, issuing the challenge to the students.*



left *Some of the bird feeders made by the Pre-Prep pupils at St John's College.*

South Africa with a Call-finder® device as a prize for the Pre-Prep winner, and ZEISS South Africa made a pair of Zeiss Terra Binoculars available for the Prep winner.

The pupils and their parents had fun finding the recyclable materials and making the feeders, and the teachers were made aware of how much their pupils knew and had learned about birds. There are now 380 more bird feeders in the suburbs of Johannesburg and Sandton than there were before the challenge started!

Based on the incredible success of this year's project, Happy Feed, the Witwatersrand Bird Club and BirdLife South Africa are now making plans for next year to further the objective.

[Keith Quiding, Happy Feed, keith@happyfeed.co.za](mailto:keith@happyfeed.co.za)



CHILDREN'S COLOURING BOOK

We are very excited to launch a new colouring book for children. Chrissie Cloete has done a fantastic job explaining all about seabirds through beautifully drawn pictures and fun activities. She is very kindly donating 20% of all sales to BirdLife South Africa so I encourage you to order copies for Christmas presents or for your bird clubs. The books are available for R65 (plus R30 for registered post). For orders, or more information, contact Chrissie Cloete at chrissiecandraw@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/chrissiecandraw

BIRDLASSER SPOT. PLOT. PLAY A PART.

New free app to log your bird sightings

BirdLasser, a bird observation logging app for iPhones, was recently launched for the South African market. You can now plot your sightings with GPS precision, update your 'lifelists', share it with friends and submit data to worthy causes like SABAP2. More causes will soon be supported, with the aim of giving conservation a broader and more accurate picture of what's happening to our birds.

The creators of BirdLasser have high ambitions of changing citizen science as we know it... for the better. The app is the brainchild of avid SABAP2 atlasser, Henk Nel, who wanted an atlassing app for his iPhone, but soon realised it could be more than that – an app that's fun and useful for birders, but most importantly, good for birds too.

'We call it *birding with a purpose*. So, while you have fun spotting birds, you automatically play a part in helping the thing you love,' says Henk. He goes on to say, 'We built it with both beginner birders and twitchers in mind. So, whether you're using it for everyday birding or to contribute to a serious cause, the app is a perfect companion.'

Gone are the days of paper and pen, or even Excel, to capture your observations. Now, thanks to BirdLasser, they're all stored (and backed up on the cloud) as your 'lifelists'. That's just one of the features, with many more being developed as you read this.

The future looks bright for BirdLasser and because of its effortless way to record sightings, and share with communities and causes, it's looking brighter for the birds we love.



Important details:

- It's a free download from iTunes. Currently only available for iPhone users – more specifically, iPhone4 (or later), running iOS7 (or later) and for people with a Facebook account
- Southern African species database only
- Android version due out in Autumn 2015
- Website: www.birdlasser.com
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/birdlasser
- Twitter: @henkbirdlasser

For more information, contact info@birdlasser.com
Ernst Retief, Regional Conservation Manager: Gauteng, North West, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Free State, ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za

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October and November 2014

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