



BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA e-newsletter

June 2016

AFRICAN HARRIER-HAWK ALBERT FRONEMAN



Giving Conservation Wings

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL COMPETITION

The lucky draw has been done for BirdLife South Africa members who renewed their membership in April 2016. We congratulate the five members who will each receive a copy of the *Robins of Africa* coffee-table book:

- Bruce Clark
- Robert Burton
- Wessel Dirksen
- Heta Mager
- John Robson

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

campus BIRDING

Birding is rapidly becoming one of the coolest pastimes at the University of Limpopo. This rise in interest was sparked when I started presenting a beginner's bird identification course to a few postgraduate students in ornithology in 2013. The course takes place annually in May and is free of charge and open to anyone interested. The first course was very successful and word quickly spread that birding is not only great fun, but you also learn a lot. To continuously improve the students' birding skills – and life lists – we do a monthly walk on campus, known as the Early Bird Walk. Several course alumni have joined the local bird club, as well as BirdLife Polokwane, and attend the monthly meetings and club outings.

The Early Bird Walks are usually well attended, with between 12 and 16 birders in tow on any given day. Although most of the students have their own field guides, buying a pair of binoculars is beyond the means of most of them. This means that three or four of us share a pair of binoculars – a situation that, as you can imagine, is not ideal. It would be great if there were more binoculars between us to allow more of the group to see a bird before it takes off.

I humbly ask birders who have spare second-hand binoculars (still in good working condition) to consider donating them to our birding group. The binoculars will belong to the group and will only be issued at birding events. Anyone interested in donating their spare binoculars can contact me at faunagalore@gmail.com

Derek Engelbrecht, Biodiversity Department, University of Limpopo



christmas IN JULY

Do Join Us for Christmas in July.

BirdLife South Africa
Isdell House,
17 Hume Road,
Dunkeld West.
011 789 1122

SHOP For the BIRDS! SOUTH AFRICA

Saturday 30th July from 10h00 to 14h30
Shop 'For the Birds!' will be open, our lovely indigenous garden, plus lots of winter warming food.

BirdLife South Africa would like you to join us for 'Christmas in July' at the head office, Isdell House, in Dunkeld West on Saturday 30 July 2016 from 10h00 to 14h30. The shop will be open for those who would like to 'Shop for the Birds!'. There will also be warm food for sale to keep the winter chills away. We are hoping that some of our partners will join us and will have more news about this event in next month's newsletter.

Rose Knight, bookkeeper@birdlife.org.za



BIRDPWATCHERS PRONE TO SUDDEN STOPS

DECALS



BOOKS



BirdLife South Africa Shop,
Isdell House, 17 Hume Road,
Dunkeld West

Hours of business:
08h30 to 14h30

We stock various books, including the *Eskom Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas of South Africa* (the IBA directory) and *The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas Status Report, South Africa*. Among the other bird- and nature-related items for sale are bird feeders, suet and

seed blocks, nest-boxes and sisal logs, branded T-shirts, peaked caps and leather belts, ceramic nest cups, posters, pin badges, key rings, various cards (including the new Heritage Card series), book marks and car magnets.

For more information, please contact me at 011 789 1122 or janine.goosen@birdlife.org.za
Janine Goosen, Office Administrator

THE AFRICAN BIRD FAIR

BirdLife South Africa is excited to invite you to join us at the African Bird Fair. The Fair (previously known as the Sasol Bird Fair) will take place over the weekend of 3 and 4 September at the beautiful Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden in Roodepoort. With a vibrant array of exhibitors, presentations, guided walks and

workshops lined up, it is set to be bigger than ever! Be sure to put the event in your diaries, as it is one that you won't want to miss. Please contact Emma Askes for more information at emma.askses@birdlife.org.za



clearing aliens from the BERG RIVER ESTUARY

The removal of invasive alien vegetation from our rivers is an essential first step in our bid to restore freshwater ecosystems. BirdLife South Africa's Western Cape Estuaries Conservation Project is working with landowners in the Berg River estuary to keep it free of these alien plants. By ensuring that our rivers remain clear of infestations of fast-growing, non-native plants and trees, we make it possible to release much-needed water back into our rivers and estuaries. We can also reduce the impact of wildfires and floods, restore biodiversity, improve water quality and increase the resilience of natural systems to climate change. Programmes to remove alien vegetation enrich not only our landscapes, but also our local communities through job creation.

In early 2016, BirdLife South Africa received funding from the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve's Small Grant Programme to help clear alien vegetation from the upper Berg River estuary. Working alongside crews from the West Coast District Municipality, BirdLife South Africa's team followed up the original clearing carried out through the Working for Water Programme. Our work included the removal of regrowth and large, woody debris from the river channel and 30-metre riparian zone. At the request of landowners in the area, the team also identified and mapped areas of significant riverbank erosion, which is a key environmental issue at the estuary. This information will help in the development of an erosion control programme for the lower Berg River estuary.



Removing alien plants from the Berg River estuary contributes to restoring biodiversity and improving water quality.

The primary objective of BirdLife South Africa's Western Cape Estuaries Conservation Project is to facilitate the expansion of formal protected areas through biodiversity stewardship agreements or similar conservation models. This alien clearing project has helped to establish good relations with local farmers through practical, on-the-ground conservation action that has produced tangible results. The project's success depends on recognising the needs of the farmers and other land-users and incorporating those needs in its development. It is only by working together that the Western Cape Estuaries Conservation Project will achieve protection for the Berg River estuary and ensure a safe haven for its incredible birdlife.

Giselle Murison, Western Cape Estuaries Conservation Project Manager, giselle.murison@birdlife.org.za

CALLING FOR NOMINATIONS

Austin Roberts Memorial Award and Gill Memorial Medal Award

BirdLife South Africa is inviting nominations for these awards in 2017. To make a nomination, please visit the BirdLife South Africa website for criteria and procedure information:

www.birdlife.org.za/about-us/our-organisation/gill-memorial-medal-award

www.birdlife.org.za/about-us/our-organisation/austin-roberts-memorial-award

Please send your nominations to Pamela Barrett at secretary@birdlife.org.za by Friday 2 September 2016.



on the road with ROSS

My blog is back! After a sustained period of no travel, during which I got on top of a completely unruly e-mail inbox, early May found me on another long-haul flight. Our involvement with the Common Oceans Tuna Project meant that I was asked to attend a conference in Sri Lanka and present some of the work achieved. To my delight, I discovered that the first day of the conference was devoted entirely to registration. That seemed a little excessive to me, so I skipped it and went birding instead!

As I had never been to Sri Lanka before, the endemic junglefowl (aka chicken) was my top priority. But there are about 40 endemic species, so I figured I should head to the place with the highest concentration of them. This was Sinharaja Forest Reserve and, as it was a 3.5-hour drive from Negombo, my driver collected me at 04h00. The trip was well worth it.

I was very glad that upon arrival I agreed to purchase a pair of anti-leech garters. The guides at the entrance were very knowledgeable about the birds and almost immediately after setting off we hooked up with a feeding party that included four Sri Lanka endemics, including the Rufous-backed Owlet. The walk continued, but we failed to find another feeding party and I had to content myself with photographing lizards, snakes and the amazing rhinoceros moth. I began to fret about encountering the chicken – was I going to ‘chicken out’?

It seemed that I was. We reached the end of the walk and did a short loop where we caught up with the extremely secretive Scaled Thrush. But then, on the main road back, a stunning male Junglefowl came trotting down the



Sri Lankan Junglefowl

ROSS WANLESS

road towards us. It’s astonishing that these birds still exist in the wild, because a) they are chickens and therefore demonstrably edible, b) they pay no attention to humans at all, and c) they are sensationally beautifully plumed! Then it seemed the dam wall had broken and we encountered two more chooks on the way home, as well as the endemic Sri Lanka Frogmouth. I ended the day with two punctures where leeches had breached my defences and painlessly attached themselves to me – a trivial price to pay for an amazing day.

The conference itself provided good networking opportunities and I had an excellent meeting with other Common Ocean representatives about electronic monitoring, including the project we are hoping to implement. I was also interested to discover that the Global Environment Facility is launching a new thematic area, the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI), and has started discussions about linking up with our work in West Africa. I will also explore options to bring the CFI concept to bear on our activities in southern Africa.

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



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albatrosses

SPREAD THEIR WINGS IN KOREA



South African kids may be aware that albatrosses exist, but in South Korea it's a very different story. Few youngsters have ever heard of these amazing birds, perhaps because albatrosses are distributed mainly in the southern hemisphere.

To increase awareness about albatrosses and their conservation, the Korean National Institute of Fisheries Science (NIFS; www.nifs.go.kr/page?id=en_index) and BirdLife South Africa, as a partner in the Common Oceans Tuna Project (www.commonoceans.org), hosted a seabird photo exhibition at the Fishery Science Museum in Busan, South Korea, from 12 April to 31 May 2016. Photographs of seabirds from our 2015 Oceans of Life competition and some donated by seabird researchers were displayed in a special exhibition room in the museum. To increase awareness about by-catch issues, a short video called 'BirdLife's Saving Albatross' was continually played at the exhibition (www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fr4icCbEaA).

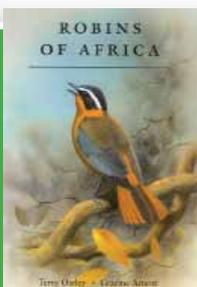
NIFS created a life-sized replica of a Black-browed Albatross and displayed it in a

LEFT TO RIGHT *The Chrissie Can Draw* colouring-in book was published in Korean with the support of NIFS and FAO/GEF funds. Children dwarfed by a Black-browed Albatross. Kids in albatross masks.

prominent position to give visitors a sense of the real size of these birds – and many were astounded at how big they are. As part of the exhibition, I delivered an educational programme targeting kids and their parents, and 46 parents and 57 kids took part. Using the *Chrissie Can Draw* seabird colouring-in book, Korean kids were introduced to seabird biology and conservation concepts, with an emphasis on seabird by-catch issues in tuna fisheries. Albatross masks and badges were handed out to the visitors to make them aware of the collaborative work that BirdLife and NIFS are doing to mitigate seabird by-catch in longline fisheries.

More than 80 000 people visited the exhibition. Such was the success of the event that NIFS is negotiating to hold a similar exhibition at other museums in Korea.

Yuna Kim, Fleet-based Training Coordinator, Yuna.kim@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

gardening FOR BIRDS

One of the wonderful things about gardening for birds is watching your garden mature. As your shrubberies get denser and trees begin to stand tall, your list of garden birds starts to grow and, almost monthly, the excitement of a new species is there to celebrate. June is not a great month for gardening, so I thought I'd share my experiences of making a bird garden from scratch.

We created our first bird garden in Pietermaritzburg. The property we had bought had lawn and one lone tree, an exotic but bird-friendly Australian bottlebrush that attracted sunbirds – among the first species on our garden list – and provided an excellent vantage point for a Southern Fiscal. At first there were wagtails, sometimes Cattle Egrets and occasionally even the thrill of an African Hoopoe. A toss of expensive bird seed and in came the mannikins and bishops and their ilk, but they did not stay – there was nothing to stay for – just scooped a free meal before they were off again. Cape Turtle Doves pottered happily on the grass and once a Bokmakierie graced us with its presence.

Then began the back- (and bank account-) breaking period. The ground was rock hard. We dug out enough shale to build a dry-stone wall along the front of our property (a marvellous home for lizards), but of course had to truck in soil and compost to replace the shale. We found that it was easier to build the flower beds up slightly, using yet more of the shale as an edge. At times it felt more like a mining operation than gardening, but we were determined to create a garden for our beloved birds.

At last we were able to start planting, choosing each plant carefully. We made lists of indigenous trees and shrubs that would provide fruit, flowers, nesting sites and resting places, and at the same time be to scale in our



smallish garden and enjoy the climate we lived in. We planned dense shrubberies for robins and thrushes, thickets for warblers and the like, open spaces with exposed vantage points for the flycatchers and shrikes, trees with rough, crinkly bark for tits and woodpeckers.

In the early days we set our sights on a Cape Robin (there was no 'chat' in its name then!), feeling that if a robin gave our garden the thumbs up we would have chalked up a success. It was two years before we could claim our own Cape Robin – you can imagine the excitement! From then on it was a joyous journey to attaining our dream of an indigenous forest at the back of our home and a slightly more normal garden with a lawn and surrounding flowerbeds in the front. After 30 happy years we had recorded a total of 138 species, including birds that happened to fly overhead while we were watching. Our rule was 'If you can see it (overhead) from the garden, it goes onto the list'. You can make your own rules, but you must stick to them!

I have now started all over again in Howick – but more of that next time.

Sally Johnson, sarahjarvis.johnson@gmail.com

Attention BirdLife South Africa members

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

snippets

BIRD OF THE YEAR 2016 SOCIABLE WEAVER



FRANCK THERON

A reminder that you can download the Bird of the Year 2016 learning resources from the BirdLife South Africa website at www.birdlife.org.za/events/bird-of-the-year. The Bird of the Year 2016 poster (free of charge), CDs containing the learning resources (free of charge) and pin badges (R25 per pin badge, excluding postage) are available on request from BirdLife South Africa's head office, Isdell House, in Johannesburg. Please call 011 789 1122 or e-mail info@birdlife.org.za

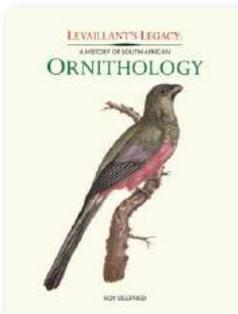
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For more information, please contact Robin Stuart-Clark at 021 789 0155, 083 280 0237 or robin@printmatters.co.za



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We are offering three seven-day tours departing on 1 December, 8 December and 15 December 2016. Those who wish to forego the Böhm's Bee-eater can opt for the first five days only. Prices, per person, are R15 000 (5 days) and R21 750 (7 days). For more details, visit www.rockjumperbirding.com/tour/info/mozambique-african-pitta-and-regional-specialities-2016 e-mail info@rockjumperbirding.com or call 033 394 0225.

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