



Report of the BirdLife South Africa Rarities Committee - 2016

It gives us great pleasure to present the 2016 Report of the BirdLife South Africa Rarities Committee.

What an interesting year the Rarities Committee has had in terms of adjudications. One of the tasks that the Rarities Committee undertook this year was to review a number of historical records that had never previously been submitted for adjudication and, therefore, did not appear on the official South African checklist. To this end, the following historical records were officially accepted by the committee: Masked Booby at sea off of Kosi Bay, African Spotted Creeper at Mabula Game Reserve, European Turtle Dove and Rose-coloured Starling in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, White-throated Robin on a farm outside Williston and Whinchat just outside Percy Fyfe Nature Reserve.

2016, itself, also produced some great rarities to be adjudicated, not least of which was the only current new addition to the South African list, the very popular Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin along the eastern shores of Zeekoevlei in Cape Town. This bird stayed in the area for a few weeks and drew a massive crowd over time to come and enjoy it. Over and above all the other rarities that were submitted for adjudication, perhaps one of the best things to see is the increasing number of African Skimmer reports that are starting to come through. What had once been a breeding bird in the country many moons ago had since disappeared with just the odd vagrant record coming through, but there has definitely been a sharp upturn in the number of records and perhaps we are hopefully seeing the start of a slow recolonization of this species in South Africa?

Trevor Hardaker continued as Chairman of the Rarities Committee during 2016 and most of the rest of the committee remained unchanged as well including Athol Marchant, David Allan, David Hoddinott, Etienne Marais, Faansie Peacock, John Graham and Phil Whittington. During the course of 2016, Adam Riley stepped down from the committee and was replaced by Keith Valentine and we thank Keith for agreeing to come on board and take on this workload. Thanks very much to all of these members for their hard work during the past year. Hanneline Smit-Robinson and Linda van den Heever from BirdLife South Africa also continued to be involved behind the scenes assisting with all the administrative duties that has enabled the committee to function more smoothly and, for this, we thank them too.

The Rarities Committee is made up of a group of volunteers who give freely of their time to undertake this task. The members, most of them very busy individuals in their own rights, have to take the time to work through each submission with due diligence and make a decision based on the evidence presented to them in that particular submission. Once again, we would like to encourage observers to continue to submitting their records for adjudication by the Rarities Committee. All these records will be included into an official database of accepted South African rarities for future generations to refer back to and will be incorporated into scientific studies.

Let's hope that 2017 continues to produce some really great rarities and we hope to report back on further exciting records next year.

Trevor Hardaker
Chairperson: BirdLife South Africa Rarities Committee