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PBO Exemption No: 930004518

OWL AWARDS

André Marx

André Marx became interested in birding during his years at the then University of Natal in the early 1980s. He was privileged to be introduced to birding by Prof. Gordon Maclean, who at that stage was editing the 5th edition of *Roberts' Birds of South Africa (1985)*. After relocating to Pretoria in 1984, André joined BirdLife Northern Gauteng (then Pretoria Bird Club) and, after nearly forty years of membership and serving in various committee portfolios, including as chairperson, he is currently the club president, a position he has held for the past 15 years.

André was also the representative of BirdLife Northern Gauteng and the Gauteng region on the Southern African Ornithological Society and he served on the BirdLife South Africa Council for several years.

He has been involved in various bird monitoring and conservation projects over the years, including CWAC (Co-ordinated Waterbird Counts), and SABAP1 and SABAP2. As a very keen bird atlaser, he has been the Regional Atlas Co-ordinator for the Gauteng and North West provinces since the start of the SABAP2 project in 2007 and has been adjudicating local rarities and compiling rarity reports for the greater Gauteng region for a number of years. He has initiated atlas bashes to areas of poor coverage.

André is respected as an outing leader and expert guide to various locations in the region, such as the Lesotho highlands, Memel and Wakkerstroom. His phenomenal knowledge of bird calls and behaviour, top birding sites, and contacts with local landowners, ensures that every excursion is an in-depth learning experience on many levels. He is especially interested in bird outings with beginner birders as he enjoys starting them on their birding journey.

André hopes to spend many more years birding locally and internationally when he has retired from his demanding career and has more time to dedicate to his lifetime passion of birding and the conservation of our country's birds.



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Carol Jacobs

Carol Jacobs is a long-time official of the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (and its precursors), currently within DFFE's Environmental Programmes.

For three decades or more she has been involved with environmental management of the Prince Edward Islands, including by being a member of DFFE's Prince Edward Islands Advisory Committee (PEIAC). She has been DFFE's liaison person with the Environmental Control Officers who spend a year on the island, helping to direct their field work and preparing their reports for the Advisory Committee.

A significant part of this work has been her input to the eradication of alien plants and invertebrates on the island. On a number of annual research visits to Marion Island (and to Gough Island) she has been the department's senior representative. On several of these visits, she has conducted environmental inspections of Marion Island, including week-long hikes to assess the environmental 'footprints' of the island's field huts.

Carol has also played a particularly important role in building the focus on biosecurity within the South African National Antarctic Programme, SANAP, and has co-ordinated the Department's efforts to improve its capacity and practices to address this risk, especially in relation to reducing the chances of new species of alien rodents, invertebrates and plants reaching Marion Island.

In all her environmental work related to SANAP she is widely regarded for her attention to detail, rigour of analysis and firm stance on principles.

Her work-ethic is exceptional

She is passionate and committed to see House Mice eradicated from Marion Island. She further brings a firm adherence to process and ethical practices, and this has been of particular value for management of the Mouse-Free Marion Project. With her island experience, Carol is a valued team member of the Mouse-Free Marion Project Management Committee (and several of its specialist committees), acting as a highly important liaison person for project partner DFFE.

As MFM Project Manager, Dr Anton Wolfaardt, stated "We are very fortunate to have Carol as part of the MFM team. Her depth of knowledge about the island and its management, and her passion and commitment to eradicate invasive mice from Marion Island have been instrumental in achieving the progress we have made to date."



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Dave Hayter

As the acting Director for Biodiversity and Conservation in the Free State Department of Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Dave plays a crucial role by supporting protected areas in general in the Free State.

For BirdLife South Africa, he has provided vital and valuable support for the declaration of the 17 000 ha Sneeuwberg Protected Environment near Memel, and the 24 000 ha Upper Wilge Protected Environment near Harrismith. He is currently also assisting with the declaration of a second phase of declarations for the Sneeuwberg Protected Environment and the proposed Jadelo Nature Reserve near Vrede.

Dave is always willing to travel to new proposed protected areas, and his door is always open to BirdLife South Africa staff, landowner associations and management authorities, supporting them extensively in especially legal, governmental, and ecological aspects to efficiently manage and sustain their protected areas.

During the declaration process, Dave engages with the provincial legal team to ensure that all documents and applications are up to the required standard, compiles all required documentation and site assessments, and runs the public participation phase before presenting the MEC with sufficient motivation to declare the protected area.

His passion for the grasslands of the Free State is clear to anyone engaging with him and, without his expertise and guidance, protected area expansion in the critical Eastern Free State High-altitude Grasslands would have been very difficult.

His contribution to the conservation of the grasslands is invaluable, and BirdLife South Africa appreciates his efforts to protect our threatened and endemic high-altitude species, such as the Yellow-breasted Pipit, Rudd's Lark, and Southern Bald Ibis.



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Floreat Educational Environmental Club

Floreat Primary School's interest in environmental education started in the 1980s when Joanne Swart and Charmaine Southgate, two teachers at this Cape Town school, started an environmental club. These two dynamic teachers took pupils on regular hikes, beach clean-ups and camps. The school tuckshop was set up with the primary aim of subsidising the costs of these outings.

In 2006 the current principal, Mr Noel Isaacs, suggested the name 'Floreat Educational Environmental Club' and 'FEEC', as it is affectionately called, was born.

After thirty years of activities, including tree planting, camps with environmental organisations, 'adopting' penguins, chairing the Steenberg Environmental Teachers Forum, and being named a Platinum Eco School for 2016-2019, the baton was passed on to Nicole Thomas (heading 'Floreat Eco Schools') and Kristi Rossouw (running 'Floreat Birders').

During the past two years, the FEEC Committee has grown to ten actively involved teachers from Grade R to Grade 7, each responsible for a different activity. These include the school's Indigenous Bird Garden.

There are currently 70 members from Grade 4 -7 signed up with FEEC.

Since 2017, Kristi Rossouw has been working closely with the Cape Bird Club and together they have organised Birding Basics workshops, as well as outings each term to local birding venues, such as Rondevlei Nature Reserve, Kirstenbosch Gardens, Boulders Beach and Silvermine.

FEEC helps children find their own place in the natural world and their unique connection point. The school believes in the beneficial effects of environmental education and young people – the custodians and decision-makers of the future – are encouraged to make friends with nature for life.



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Ford Wildlife Foundation

For the past five years the Ford Wildlife Foundation has contributed to BirdLife South Africa's efforts to conserve our embattled vultures and various threatened bird species in the grasslands of the eastern Free State. The Foundation has provided BirdLife South Africa with two top-of-the-range vehicles, one in support of the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas Programme and another for the Vulture Project Manager. Both positions require extensive travel, often across challenging terrain.

BirdLife South Africa's research into lead poisoning in vultures, as well as the implementation of Vulture Safe Zones in Zululand and the Northern Cape, would not have been possible without the Foundation's support. The vehicle has also been instrumental in other projects, particularly our efforts to better understand the distribution of other threatened species, such as the Black Stork, Taita Falcon and Southern Banded Snake Eagle, as well as our efforts to better understand the breeding patterns of the Critically Endangered White-winged Flufftail.

The vehicles were also used in support of the stewardship work done in the Grassland Biome of South Africa, from Dullstroom to the remotest corners of the eastern Free State. Our team has been able to meet with landowners who had or plan to formally declare their properties as formal protected areas. This includes landowners in the Sneeuwberg Protected Environment and the Upper Wilge Protected Environment.

The vehicles were also used to collect data for the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP) and to host SABAP workshops.

These projects have taken the Ford Ranger over every terrain imaginable, from desert dunes and rocky mountain terrain to grassy wetlands and boggy forests. Without the use of these vehicles, this work would not have been possible.

BirdLife South Africa would like to thank Neale Hill and Lynda du Plessis for recognising the importance of conserving our country's threatened birds, and the need for reliable vehicles to do so.



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Joe Grosel

Joe was a conservationist at heart since his early formative years. Although he had an unrivalled knowledge of the natural world, it is with and amongst birds that he flourished.

He presented numerous natural history courses catering for laypeople and professionals, as well as training and mentoring of bird guides and general field guides in topics ranging from an introduction to birds and birding to more specialised courses such as on LBJs and raptors. This he did in a unique, fun way, and he had loyal customers who returned again and again as the attendees always learned something new on every course. He not only taught birding skills but made birding fun.

Joe was president of BirdLife Polokwane for 14 years, from 2005 until his 'retirement' in 2019.

Joe's tireless work and friendly demeanour made the monthly meetings fun and, under his watch, membership grew to well over a hundred people at its peak.

Visitors at club meeting remarked about how much they enjoyed the monthly meetings and how well the club was doing under Joe's leadership.

Joe was the driving force behind increasing SABAP2 coverage in the Limpopo Province. He also served on the Limpopo Regional Atlas Committee for SABAP2 since 2007, was the representative for the Limpopo Province for Turn Kruger Green, and was a member of the SA Rarities Committee and several other committees.

Joe was also a supporter of BirdLife South Africa and he encouraged birders to become a member, presented several talks and courses for BirdLife South Africa, and freely offered his services or advice when asked to do so.

Joe was also a registered professional natural scientist, author or co-author of several scientific papers, served as an advisor on several ornithological platforms, and was an outstanding professional ecologist involved in managing large private game reserves, game capture and translocation, and an environmental impact assessment consultant.

He was a gifted presenter and photographer, so his talks were always lively and inspirational.

Joe was very humble, and there are undoubtedly more accolades that can be bestowed on him.



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Joe's passion for birds has inspired a generation of birders and ornithologists, and he is therefore a very deserving recipient of an Owl Award. As Joe passed away on 14 August 2021, leaving a tremendous void in the southern African birding and conservation community, his award is presented posthumously.

Malcolm Gemmell

Malcolm Gemmell was co-founder of BirdLife Sisonke, chairing the inaugural bird club meeting in 1985, and he continued to play roles on the committee up until 2021. He co-founded the Sisonke Birding Route, has monitored Cape Parrots and Blue Swallows for many years. Malcolm participated in CAR counts from 1996 to 2008.

He has expended significant energy in trying to make Ntsikeni Vlei a viable conservation and birding destination, including managing the Ntsikeni Lodge (2006-2010) and obtaining a mobile vulture hide for the reserve. His activities and enduring interest in Ntsikeni and its management was key to the donation of a large sum of money to BirdLife South Africa to purchase camera traps to search for White-winged Flufftail at Ntsikeni.

In 2009, he undertook a survey with Stuart Maclean for Egyptian Vultures in the region of Tina and Cintsa, Eastern Cape.

Malcolm has been a very successful bird guide in the Sisonke area, including Sani Pass, and is well-known for showing many people the elusive Black-rumped Buttonquail. As a skilled bird guide, Malcom has contributed to avitourism in the Underberg region by guiding hundreds of clients, thus stimulating an interest in birds and birding. He is a very important ambassador for birds, birding and bird conservation in the district of Sisonke.



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Otto Schmidt

A dedicated member of the Cape Bird Club for many decades, Otto Schmidt has participated in nearly every aspect of the club with his trademark enthusiasm and commitment.

In addition, he has assumed leadership positions for extended periods. After being Vice-Chairman of the Cape Bird Club for three years, Otto became Chairman in 1989, a position he held for ten years. He provided the club with a degree of stability, while maintaining the momentum of its activities.

Another enormous contribution was his work as co-editor of the club's quarterly magazine, *Promerops*, along with Jo Hobbs, for seventeen years. The high standard of the publication has been widely acknowledged. Otto has written prolifically for the magazine, both while editor and since.

A talented writer, speaker and photographer, he has communicated his birding experiences, which span seventy years, to a wide audience. Many of his articles include entertaining and astute observations of local or garden birds, illustrated by his excellent photographs.

Otto has conducted monthly bird counts for the past two years along the Upper Liesbeek, close to where he lives near his beloved Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. He has also led regular Cape Bird Club weekday outings along the Lower Liesbeek and at Kirstenbosch, sometimes having up to 40 attendees at the latter destination – a testament to his popularity as a leader and knowledge of his local patch.

An enthusiastic atlasser, he and his wife, Sandy, diligently record sightings in their home pentad. He has also taken an active interest in local conservation issues.

Otto and Sandy have travelled widely in their birding. This includes all three "Flock at Sea" cruises and four of the CBC International birding tours (to Madagascar, Ethiopia, Ghana and Costa Rica). His favourite destinations are the Kgalagadi and Namibia, and Otto has presented several talks about these trips at Cape Bird Club evening meetings, always drawing a large audience. He has taken the subject of birding, including the experience of "Flock to Marion" to a wider audience, as a regular speaker on the fortnightly "Room To Grow Kirstenbosch Wednesday Talks" (now hosted on Zoom by Struik Nature).

Otto and Sandy have been actively involved in the Cape Bird Club's high school programme, helping lead small groups at the club's recent outings with Claremont High School. By sharing his love of birds with



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these teenagers, and introducing them to BirdLasser, he has helped mentor these young birders of the future.

Pat Nurse

Pat Nurse noted that she had a budding interest in birds while tending livestock on her farm in the erstwhile Rhodesia, especially considering security issues at the time. After finding life a little hectic in the newly independent Zimbabwe, her family moved to Botswana where they lived for about a decade and here she found she could engage in birdwatching in relative safety.

She was soon seen as a competent observer and not only rose to become chair of the Francistown Bird Club, but also initiated biannual bird counts in the Makgadikgadi Pans as well as in the Okavango Delta. In this capacity she became arguably one of the more respected bird enthusiasts in Botswana.

Upon retirement from their business in Francistown, the family moved to Knysna in 2000. Here she soon showed her strengths in the local birding community.

She has been a member of the Lakes Bird Club for the past twenty years, starting off as Secretary/Treasurer and has been Chair of the Club for 15 years. In this capacity she ensured that the club and its members become active as citizen scientists, including as CAR and CWAC participants.

In the recent decade, Pat has proved her worth as a citizen scientist and has submitted more than 828 cards to SABAP2.

Not only does she see to the day-to-day running of the Club, but she is also very active in the community, serving for instance on the Knysna WESSA committee. She also makes very valuable contributions to organizations involved in environmental matters such as the Pledge Nature Reserve and the Knysna Basin Project.

She never misses an outing and with her customary exuberance and good cheer, ensures that newcomers are made to feel welcome and that novices to birding receive appropriate attention in learning the birds.

In this regard, one of her lasting legacies will be the tremendous effort she plays in encouraging and nurturing the youthful members of the community. To this end she makes sure that newcomers on



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outings are given every opportunity to learn and assigns them subtly to the guidance of one or other of the longer-standing members of the club to help.

The fruits of her efforts can be seen with one of the “cadet” beginners who has now risen to become a well-respected wildlife guide operating out of the Addo area.

Her dedication to the encouragement of the youth also resulted in two of our junior members receiving an Owlet Award from BirdLife South Africa in 2020.



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OWLET AWARD

Romario Valentine

Romario Valentine, who is (10 years' old, resides in Durban. He is an ornithophile and has been an active eco-warrior for five years. This arose when he was an orca in a school play and discovered that they are endangered. He then decided to clean the beach weekly. His first clean-up was on 28 July 2017, aged six. He has subsequently done over 200 beach clean-ups. He helped birds at Umgeni River Bird Park during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, and has raised more than R55,000 in the last 12 months for bird conservation in Durban and in Western Cape.

His reforestation programme started in August 2020 and continues to flourish. For his 10th birthday he raised funds for indigenous trees to be planted in Segera in Kenya, through the Zeitz Foundation. He has now planted/sponsored more than 455 trees in 23 countries through various local and international environmental organisations, including with Ethekewini Municipality. He has recently started his own permaculture garden to learn how to grow his own vegetables.

His environmental campaigns have resulted in him featuring in numerous media around the world. For example, Romario featured at the Global Citizen Prize 2020 awards event and he has worked with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification on several occasions to highlight land degradation, including an interview with the Executive Secretary on World Environment Day in 2021. He was filmed by the German environmental programme, "Deutsche Welle", and BBC Africa, during the COP26 build up, including for a podcast series "Defending our Water" which will feature climate activist, Lewis Pugh. On 27 November 2021 he was a panelist speaker at the Africa Green Awards in conjunction with the Swedish Embassy in Abuja. He also paints endangered birds and creates eco art out of pollutants to raise awareness of environmental issues.

He has featured in a book "What a Wonderful World", and his photo is on the front cover alongside Greta Thunberg and Dr Wangari Maathai.

Romario is a 10-year-old with a vision of a better earth. His approach is to encourage other children, as well as adults, to do what they can with what they have through optimistic approaches.



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EAGLE-OWL AWARDS

Italtile & Ceramic Foundation

The Italtile & Ceramic Foundation has provided significant support in the categories of education, sport and conservation to various organisations over the past years.

Since the first introduction to Gianni Ravazotti and colleagues, the Foundation has supported BirdLife South Africa's then Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas Programme for a number of years. Following on from this, the Foundation has invested an interest and financial support in the establishment of BirdLife South Africa's Empowering People Programme, supporting the position of the Programme Manager and the Environmental Education & Awareness project in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The funding from the Foundation has been the catalyst for the growth of our empowering people activities and projects, including the current development of two livelihood projects at Ntsikeni, southern KwaZulu-Natal, and Daggakraal, near Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga. These sites respectively are important for the conservation of the Critically Endangered White-winged Flufftail and Endangered Botha's Lark.

The Italtile & Ceramic Foundation has extended its support to BirdLife South Africa's Community Bird Guides through the sponsorship of a Wilderness Leadership School Entrepreneur course for a select group of eight guides.

Susan du Toit, trustee of the Foundation, was instrumental in supplying BirdLife South Africa with the funding for the purchase of a vehicle, which was required for the Empowering People Programme, at the start of 2022.

In addition, Susan, has introduced us to many potential funders, and has become a champion for the Science & Innovation Programme's Red List project. The most recent funding committed from the Italtile & Ceramic Foundation is an annual contribution towards Red Listing.

The Italtile & Ceramic Foundation is providing significant support to BirdLife South Africa and is therefore a very worthy recipient of an Eagle Owl Award.



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Garth Batchelor

Garth's interest in birds started at an early age. At 10 years' old the family visited Charters Creek at Lake St. Lucia. The Lake warden, Gordon Forest, had invited the family to drop off rations at all the pickets around the Lake with him. On the jetty to the Hamilton jet boat Garth identified a "Forest Weaver" and this prompted him to say, "I see I'm going to have to watch my P's and Q's"! Gordon remembered this event and mentioned it in his book "The Spirit of the Wilderness" 60 years later.

The family had "Fan-tailed Pigeons" at their home in Tongaat. These pigeons were constantly the target of raptors. On one occasion a falcon arrived and was too persistent so it got shot. He could not identify it in their copy of Roberts Birds and persuaded his parents to take it to the museum in Durban. The taxidermist, Mr Bradley, took one look at it and said he could not identify it and that he would like to keep it for a study skin. Many years later Peter Milstein gave Garth a copy of a paper on Sooty Falcons and this skin was mentioned as the first record of an immature Sooty Falcon in South Africa.

Garth did his B.Sc at Pietermaritzburg where Professor Gordon Maclean was one of his lecturers. After finishing his B.Sc he worked on estuarine fish at the Oceanographic Research Institute. A recommendation from this research was that Richards Bay, which was destined to be a harbour should be split with a natural sanctuary separated from the harbour itself. This recommendation was later implemented.

After completing his B.Sc. Honours he moved to the former Transvaal where he worked for the next twenty years, firstly as a fisheries scientist obtaining M.Sc and Ph.D and later as an environmental planner. he was responsible for motivating a number of conservation areas to be established. These included the expansion of Blyde Canyon, Suikerbosrand, Barberspan, Marievale, Nylsvley, and Rustenburg Nature Reserves and also the acquisition of three new reserves, Bothasvley, Pongola and most importantly Verloren Valei at Dullstroom. The importance of the latter area for conservation as a significant refuge for especially Wattled Cranes was identified by Warwick Tarboton. Garth's role was to assist in the administrative process to acquire the properties.

Apart from these, another of his most important conservation contributions, together again with Warwick, was in managing to convince the then Department of Water Affairs to follow an Integrated Environmental Management process before allowing the construction of the proposed Olifantspoort Dam in the catchment of the Nyl floodplain. This process led to other alternatives for a water supply to be evaluated for Nylstroom and the proposed Olifantspoort Dam was set aside. Flow calculations had shown this dam would have prevented the Nyl River from flooding the floodplain.

The second 20 years of his career has been dedicated to facilitate the development of an Environmental Management Department in the Mpumalanga Provincial Government.



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The Crowned Eagle Working Group was the brainchild of David Steyn, an ex Department of Forestry employee. David, during the course of his work and his interest in birds, had over the years recorded a number of Crowned Eagle nests and suggested trying to map and plot these. Dave prepared a list of nests and land owners and Garth and colleagues started systematically revisiting the nests. They discovered that many were no longer active and the process of trying to locate new nests started. Dave retired to the Eastern Cape over ten years ago and Garth took over the reins.

The purpose of the group is to promote the conservation of Crowned Eagles. The study area is the Mpumalanga Escarpment with a core area within a radius of 100km of Mbombela. The study focuses on locating nests, monitoring their productivity and informing and motivating landowners. 42 nests are currently being monitored annually. Each nest is accorded a number, coordinates, tree species, tree height, nest height and fledging success. Prey remains are also recorded and identified where possible. Threats to the population have been identified and land owners advised of possible mitigation measures where possible.

Most land owners take great pride in their Crowned Eagles and have set up solar powered remote cameras to record nesting behaviour. A camera on a local residential estate has brought enjoyment and awareness to a number of residents while another camera on a macadamia farm has alerted the owners to the potential hazards of pesticides. This has elicited considerable interest in the macadamia growers in and around Mbombela.