

SACRED IBIS LIKES KAROO LAMB

Karoo lamb has a well-earned reputation for flavour and succulence, which some claim comes from the aromatic and wholesome Karoo shrubs that they feed on. As a well-used bumper sticker proclaims "I like Karoo lamb - a thousand jackals can't be wrong".

I recently came to appreciate the dietary preferences of even such a catholic feeder as the Sacred Ibis! A well-grown Merino lamb had died on the farm Tierhoek near Calvinia of unknown causes. The fatality was first discovered when a Verreaux's Eagle, Pale Chanting Goshawk and several Pied Crows rose from the carcass as I drove past. Later, on a second passing, the crows and goshawk were again in attendance.

The next day I was particularly surprised when a Sacred Ibis was at the carcass together with two crows as I approached it to see how far it had been scavenged since the day before. Although I did not see the ibis feeding from the lamb carcass, there could presumably be no other reason why it was there. The rib cage of the unfortunate lamb had by then been opened and cleaned out completely, and so too had the abdomen. The ibis' bill would have been handy to reach into the rib cage between the exposed and cleanly picked ribs to get scraps which scavengers with shorter bills could not have reached.

Sacred Ibis take carrion as described in, for example, *Roberts' 7*. What carrion and under what circumstances are, however, not described. With its rather delicate, elongated bill, the ibis can never be a specialist carrion eater, but its attendance with other avian scavengers at a Karoo lamb carcass is worth noting.

François van der Merwe



African Sacred Ibises in typical West Coast habitat

PIED CROW PREDATION RESPONSES

In *Promerops* 291:12 John Paine relates a predation incident involving Pied Crows and asks if any readers have witnessed similar attacks.

We have received two responses, with **Wendy Perks** in East London writing:

"Many years ago we sold our house in Harare, Zimbabwe and stayed in a caravan park with a small chalet attached. One morning, as my husband departed for work I noticed a Pied Crow "bombing" something in the adjoining field and on investigation found it was diving down on a Bronze-winged Courser! I chivvied the bird into a small garden and ran inside to fetch a box to put it into so that I could examine it. The crow had managed to take several chunks of flesh out of the poor bird's shoulder and it was very stressed. I took it to Larvon Bird Garden up the road where they rehabilitate many injured birds. It did recover and was set free many miles away. Our club had never seen this courser so close to Harare before."

A second contribution came from **Bruce Mackenzie** who comments:

"Over recent years I have had chicks or eggs removed from Laughing Dove nests situated in two of our Guava trees. The only likely predator could be a Pied Crow. I have observed that whenever a Pied Crow flies through my garden, calling, the nesting Laughing Doves leave their nest. This however does not apply to the Red-eyed Dove which calls from the nest, but does not leave it when Pied Crows are around. Recently there was an exception as I discovered a dead Red-eyed Dove chick beneath our lemon tree and another on a branch of the tree. Both chicks had had their necks mauled. Although Pied Crows are suspected of this "crime", the attack was not witnessed and a Common Fiscal, which was trying to feed on the Red-eyed Dove chick on the ground, could have been the perpetrator".

Editor's note: *Pied Crows seem to be high on many birders' "hate lists" and their numbers both inside and around the city are certainly on the increase. Further comments from readers and from scientists who may be involved in monitoring this trend would be welcomed. We believe that the Percy FitzPatrick Institute plans to set up a post graduate project looking into the situation. Recently there was a lively debate on the subject on the capebirdnet. It is also possible that the ADU's CAR project may add crows to the list of species it counts as this will give good solid quantitative evidence for regional trends in crow populations.*

More observations

PEREGRINE FALCON OUT TO SEA

30 July 2012 was a perfect Blouberg winter's day, calm blue sea and clear blue sky.

In these idyllic conditions I went for a walk along the beach walkway in Stadler Road at about 10am. A pair of fast-flying birds caught my attention as they sped over the rocky shoreline. At first I thought it was a pair of African Black Oystercatchers but their flight pattern was haphazard and this prompted me to stop and watch more closely.

To my great surprise the bird in front was a Speckled Pigeon and it was being chased by a Peregrine Falcon. The pigeon was ducking and diving for its life and headed out to sea. The falcon was so close to catching it, but in the end failed and gave up the chase. The falcon then flew parallel to the shore, still about 50m out to sea, when a party of about 12 Hartlaub's Gulls launched a vociferous and physical assault on the raptor. The unperturbed falcon just cruised along and eventually turned towards the shore and flew out of my vision. This incident certainly added excitement to my walk!

Gill van Zijl

SUBURBAN ROCK KESTRELS ON THE WEST COAST

Rock Kestrels are commonly found in West Coast Strandveld, especially in the vicinity of the calcrete cliffs that dot this landscape. Unfortunately urban development in the vicinity of Yzerfontein and elsewhere along the West Coast has reduced the suitable habitat. The calcrete cliffs south of Yzerfontein are now part of the new Pearl Bay housing development and provide sought-after perches for often palatial holiday homes that continue to be built in this area.

Although I have been watching and photographing Rock Kestrels around Yzerfontein for almost 30 years, I have never been able to find out where they breed. My visits to Yzerfontein are always in late December / early January when chicks generally have fledged and are already on the wing. This year, however, I found two sets of fledged young at or near their presumed nests. In one instance this was on a double storied flat-roofed holiday house at the popular Yzerfontein swimming beach. The second set of young was near the harbour and they were being fed in a hole in a vertical 20 m high excavation "wall" in



Chris Schmidt

A "suburban" Rock Kestrel

calcrete rock behind an equally large double storied holiday house. Both nesting sites were within 40 or so metres of the coast and were in the "older", well-established, built-up part of Yzerfontein from where the adult kestrels would have had to travel some distance to suitable hunting areas.

Suburban and even urban (inner-city) kestrels are of course not unknown and for many years kestrels bred in the Cape Town CBD on the high rise foreshore buildings and elsewhere (cf Van der Merwe 1986 *Promerops* 176:12 -13). Breeding on or near residential homes is perhaps less often encountered and the Yzerfontein breeding demonstrates how adaptable this species is when natural breeding sites are no longer available.

François van der Merwe

A NOTE ON THE THRUSHES OF THE LITTLE KAROO

Roberts' Birds of South Africa, first published in 1940, treated the Olive Thrush and the Karoo Thrush as separate species. (In those days they were known as the Cape Thrush and the Namaqua Thrush). By 1957, when *Roberts'* was revised by McLachlan and Liversidge, the two species had been "lumped" and that is how the situation remained until the publication of *Roberts' 7* in 2005 when they were again treated as distinct species. The distribution maps in the latest field guides show that the Olive Thrush has a

typical “eastern” distribution and is largely confined to the higher rainfall areas whereas the Karoo Thrush replaces the Olive Thrush in the interior. Both species have adapted to man-made habitats, and the homestead gardens and poplar woods of the Little Karoo provide an ideal habitat for thrushes. It is in this region where the two species could conceivably overlap.

Ten years ago when we first started compiling a checklist of the birds of Red Stone Hills (a holiday farm 30 km north-west of Oudtshoorn), we recorded the local thrushes as Olive Thrushes and we gave them scant attention. Since the Karoo Thrush has been “reinstated” as a species we started to observe the Red Stone Hills thrushes more carefully and the results have been confusing. Typical Olive Thrushes show white on the vent, orange extending to the flanks and black in the nostril region. Many of the Little Karoo individuals show orange on the flanks but have dark vents and no black in the nostril region. We consider most of the thrushes at Red Stone Hills to be indeterminate but occasionally we see individuals that appear to be pure Karoo Thrushes or pure Olive Thrushes.

Roberts’ 7 states of the Karoo Thrush: “Reportedly hybridises with *T. o. olivaceus* [Olive Thrush] in Little Karoo, but a recent molecular study failed to detect hybridisation”. However, the 4th edition of *Sasol Birds of Southern Africa* (2011), states: “... intermediates at contact zones suggest some hybridisation”. Our observations in the Little Karoo tend to support this.

Rob Martin Jessie Walton Dawn Tyler

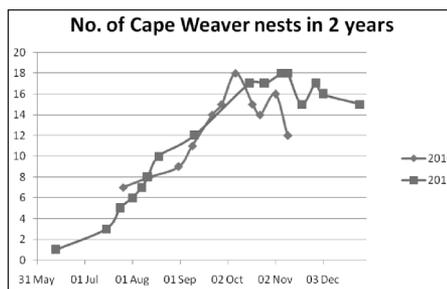


Olfo Schmidt

A male Cape Weaver at his nest

COLONY SIZES OF WEAVERS

For the last two years I have monitored the colony size of a Cape Weaver colony at Rondevlei, approximately every two weeks through the breeding season. At the beginning of the season one male was present, but it was soon joined by a second male. In both years the colony size steadily increased. Near the end of the season, the colony size plateaued and then slightly decreased. The decrease is due to the males breaking down some of the nests but not building any new ones. It is remarkable how similar the curves are for the two years.



This pattern, however, is certain to be different in different weaver species and in different colonies of the same species. The biggest factors are probably the number of males in a colony, and the number of females attracted to a particular colony.

If you have a weaver colony near your home or work or favourite birding site, or en route between any of these you may like to assist with the PHOWN project.

PHOWN (Photos of Weaver Nests, <http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php>) is a citizen science project, aimed at collecting data on the variation in colony sizes in weavers, breeding distribution and range changes in weavers and other breeding information about weavers.

H. Dieter Oschadleus
ADU, UCT, weavers4africa@gmail.com

Useful web pages:

- http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown_public.php - detailed explanation on taking part
- <http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php> - see some summaries and recent submissions
- <http://vmus.adu.org.za> - register here and upload your photos

The deadline for our next issue is 9 January 2013

BIRDING IN ALASKA

SNOWY OWLS, PTARMIGANS AND GRIZZLY BEARS

A fair amount of preparation went into our trip which will take us to the most northerly town in Alaska and then down to Ushuaia at the southern-most tip of South America. The first section which took three months is now complete. Central and South America will be tackled next year.

We arrived in Portland, Oregon on 17 April 2012 and spent five days looking for and buying a secondhand 4x4 "bakkie" and a pop-up camper which fits snugly onto the back. This was a bit stressful as the Americans are quite finicky about foreigners buying such an acquisition. Once all the paperwork was completed we made for Bellingham just south of Canada. This was about a 360 km dash as we had to board the pre-booked local ferry which was to take us with our vehicle on a three night inland passage up to Skagway. The weather was foul, very cold with rain most of the time. Not very pleasant birding whilst standing on the deck in the rain and snow! However, I managed to nail a few birds such as Double-crested Cormorant, White-winged Scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck, Bonaparte, Mew and Glaucous-winged Gulls, Common Murre, Western Grebe, Northern Harrier and of course Bald Eagles plus a whole lot more.

We disembarked from the ferry at the old historic gold mining town of Skagway. Fortunately this was on 1 May, too early in the season for the multitude of tourists who descend on this town. There was a splattering of snow around but luckily for us our camper came equipped with a small heater. Our campsite was next to a clear swift running creek and the next morning whilst walking into the village to buy bread, I could not believe my eyes when I spotted an American Dipper doing its dipper thing just 50m from where our camper was parked. I watched it, not 10m away, ducking and diving in the water. Needless to say, I did not have my camera with me - typical!

From Skagway we drove 1400km via the snow covered White Pass all the way to Valdez, infamous for the Exxon Valdez oil-pollution tragedy. Another plus/minus 900km took us to Anchorage and down to Homer where we arrived on 7 May in time for the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival. These festivals are planned to coincide with the arrival of millions of migratory birds at

their shores in early May. Americans know how to organise events like these. They held lectures, had meetings, outings and brochures and birders came from all around. We spent a good seven days there enjoying the company of so many like-minded people. We made it just in time to experience this exciting phenomenon. On our first evening whilst scanning the shore we saw only a few birds, but the next morning millions of Western Sandpipers arrived and kept coming while we watched. During our stay there we saw Common Loons, a single Yellow-billed Loon, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Horned and Crested Puffins, Pintails, Mergansers, Wandering Tattlers, Surfbirds, Black Turnstones, thousands of Common Murre and Black-legged Kittiwakes, Pigeon Guillemots, a few Least Sandpipers and many more.

The beautiful fishing town of Seward was next, then up through Anchorage and on to Denali. Finally after 14 days we arrived in Fairbanks. This is where the real fun began. We had set our sights on driving the Dalton Highway (of the popular Ice Road Truckers TV programme) up to Deadhorse/Prudoe Bay. We were warned that our windshield would probably be shattered on this treacherous road and that we would have to carry extra tyres, chains for crossing the snow, vehicle spares and a full medical kit! A two-way radio was also recommended. This made us a bit nervous but we soon settled down and really enjoyed the 660km drive up to Deadhorse. Fortunately there was only snow at the high altitudes. The road itself was no big deal, even the Tankwa roads are worse. We had not a single puncture or broken windshield.

The first night we spent at Wiseman, having crossed the Arctic Circle at latitude 66 degrees 33". At every opportunity we stopped to check for birds. I was hoping to spot a ptarmigan which we eventually did. In fact we added all three species,



A Willow Ptarmigan

Pieter van Oudshoorn

Willow, Rock and White-tailed to our list, also a Sharp-tailed Grouse. The warblers, which were arriving at this time, were sighted as well as Boreal Chickadee, Lapland Longspur and Snow Buntings started appearing the further north we went.

On the second day we passed over the Brooks Mountain Range via the magnificent Attican Pass altitude 1400 m. Here we were a bit on edge as it was snowing and the road was not well defined. Naturally the Snowy Owl was foremost in my mind and once or twice we nearly left the road as I scrambled for my binoculars every time a Short-eared Owl flew up from the tundra vegetation. That evening we made Deadhorse, latitude 70 degrees 12". The town is close to Prudoe Bay which is on the Arctic Ocean. This whole area is an American oilfield and we were fortunate to spend a night at their hotel/hostel where all the oil rig men stay. I dropped Sue off there and drove off at 11pm to try to find the Snowy Owl. Of course, at this latitude the sun never sets at this time of the year so one can bird right through the night if one so desires.

All the birds on the tundra were in breeding plumage and getting ready for nesting. Thousands of Snow Geese, Canada Geese and Great White-fronted Geese were arriving. The Arctic Terns, phalaropes and Golden Plovers were all in full colour. Just before midnight I saw the Owl!!! Not too close, but I did manage to get a picture. Unfortunately Deadhorse is a dry town so Sue and I could not celebrate with a drink. That we did later. After leaving the next morning on our long drive back to Fairbanks we were rewarded with sightings of another four or five Snowy Owls. Three days later we arrived back at Fairbanks feeling very pleased with ourselves.

We had a fair number of things to do before

we caught a plane to Barrow at latitude 71 degrees 17". This is an Eskimo town and is also the most northerly town in America. The climate of Barrow is Arctic Desert. From November to February the temperature ranges between -21°C and -29°C. The sun does not set between May 6 and Aug 2 and does not rise between November and January. Daily minimum temperature is below freezing on 324 days of the year. We nearly froze our butts off. However, I could easily have spent more time with the Eskimos and the birds were special. The breeding season is very short and so the bird activity is boisterous. Millions of them descend on the tundra, breed and leave before the heavy snows arrive. Besides the hordes of geese there were Common, King and Steller's Eiders, Long-tailed Ducks, Green-winged Teals, Northern Pintails and phalaropes to name just a few. Here we were also lucky to spot one or two owls.

The Dalton Highway and Barrow were our main objectives and having completed those we headed south through a fair section of Canada and back to Portland, Oregon. Our vehicle is now in storage there. Next April we will fly back and pick it up and head south through western America, Mexico, Central America and end up in Costa Rica. The year after that we tackle South America so we are learning Spanish!

Although the mammals in Africa surpass those of all the other countries in the world, we did manage to see quite a few. These were all new to us - polar bear, brown bear (grizzly), black bear, wolf, coyote, lynx, bison, elk, moose, caribou, musk ox, mule deer, Dall sheep, mountain goat, beaver, three species of squirrel and a whole bunch of other small creatures.

Pieter van Oudtshoorn

Finally, just before midnight, I saw the Snowy Owl!



Pieter van Oudtshoorn

CLUB ACTIVITIES

We try to arrange activities to suit all levels of interest, so please participate whenever you can. We welcome suggestions, so if you know of interesting speakers or good venues for field outings, please let us know.

EVENING MEETINGS

These are normally held at 20h00 on every second Thursday in the month at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands. However, our year-end party will take place on 8 December.

Tea and biscuits will be served after the meeting at a cost of R4,00. Do bring your friends, but remember that there will be a charge of R10 for visitors and non-members.

Are you a new member? Please introduce yourself to Gill or Joan on arrival.

SPECIAL EVENTS

In addition to our regular field outings and evening meetings, our club organises a range of other activities. These include weekend camps, courses and sometimes boat trips.

We also arrange trips to other African countries (Namibia in April/May 2013 and Ghana later in the year) in addition to our trip to Ecuador in November this year.

Our latest course was "The Never-ending Story" and our next important events are the Year-end Celebration in December (see notice on page 3) and our AGM next March.

COURSE: THE NEVER-ENDING STORY: BIRD EVOLUTION FROM DINOSAURS TO THE LATEST SPLITS

Saturday, 18 August 2012

About 70 people, members of the Cape Bird Club, other local bird clubs and from the general public including some students attended this day long course hosted by the Cape Bird Club.

From the deep origins of birds and their dinosaur records, delightfully and interestingly presented by Dr Aurore Canoville, to the remote islands of Tristan da Cunha, Nightingale and Inaccessible, the issues of bird evolution and the challenges of their classification comprehensively covered by Professor Peter Ryan, this was a thorough, challenging and beautifully illustrated series of talks separated by teas and lunch.

Catering to a broad range of members, from those with serious avian scientific interests to those with a general interest in birds, THE NEVER ENDING STORY left us all in awe of the research, challenges and complexities of this branch of ornithology and with a much deeper appreciation of our interest and hobby. Attending these courses exposes one to the richness of birding and just how much there is to learn, a most beneficial and worthwhile course!

Priscilla Beeton and the Courses Committee of the Cape Bird Club extend their thanks to all concerned with the success of THE NEVER ENDING STORY.

Mervyn Wetmore

FIELD OUTINGS

We arrange field outings throughout the year, usually on the first Saturday, third Sunday and one weekday morning in the month.

We try to introduce members to a variety of habitats and give them the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the common and less common birds of the areas. It is a good idea to obtain a large-scale road map and to check your route to the outing venue beforehand.

A good starting point for beginners is Rondevlei Nature Reserve, and club outings take place there on the first Saturday morning in every month. There are several excellent bird hides and always something of interest to be seen.

WEST COAST OUTING

Sunday 17 June 2012

We left Cape Town on a cold, miserable and overcast morning. Making our way to the Engen Garage at the turnoff to Langebaan it was comforting to see other members waiting while enjoying hot tea or coffee. We were 32 in total.

From here we continued on the R27 in convoy to the next turning to the left where we stopped several times further along the road and scanned the veld with good results, seeing Red-capped Larks, Cape Longclaw, Yellow Canaries and many Crowned Plovers amongst others. Vernon also spotted two Secretarybirds through the scope in the far distance as well as a Peregrine Falcon.

It was still cold but we pushed on and Keith Harrison of Vredenburg took us to a private Nature Reserve where the habitat and veld is classified as Saldanha Limestone Strandveld. There were plenty of bush birds to be seen and as we walked along the road a pair of Spotted Eagle Owls surprised us, flying off from a mound of

rocks where they were very well camouflaged. A Rock Martin was spotted on a flat rock area above the quarry and there were numbers of Sickle-winged Chats throughout the Reserve.

A brief visit to the rest rooms of the Swartriet Holiday Cottages on the coast followed, and two kilometres further on, just past Jacobsbaai, we stopped at the Antarctic Tern Roost at Mauritz Bay where Vernon described the difference between the Antarctic and Arctic Terns. This was a lovely place and besides large numbers of terns we saw a Grey Heron, South African Shelduck, Little Egret, African Black Oystercatcher and Cape and Crowned Cormorants amongst others. The weather now improved somewhat and we enjoyed our picnic lunch here while we drew up a collective bird list totalling 78 species.

We encourage all newcomers to the Club to go on the outings. It is a great way to get to know other members and the collective knowledge is phenomenal and keenly shared. Our thanks to Vernon, Mel and Anne for an enjoyable outing.

Helga Hill and Yvonne Dixon

OUTING TO DIE OOG

Tuesday 7 August 2012

Early in the morning the rain was pelting against the windows and the wind was blowing hard, but this abated by 8:30 am and so I set off. Professor Dennis Davey was already waiting at Die Oog. He had offered to come and give us a brief talk about the history of the area and the establishment of Die Oog as a bird sanctuary and nature reserve.

When the members arrived we were 12 in total with Prof. Davey and Malcolm Pearce who is the current chairman of the Friends of Die Oog. As we gathered around to hear Prof. Davey's talk a large dark raptor flushed from a nearby tree and we were able to identify this as a Black Sparrowhawk, a good start to the morning!

The brief talk was very informative and there were questions asked by the members, after which we took a stroll around the dam to have a closer look at the Cape Weavers' nests and the wetland, having already noted the Spotted Thick-knee standing close to the Fynbos area.

We saw at least 24 species of birds during our brief outing and a Black-headed Heron flew by as we were leaving. Everyone was delighted to have discovered Die Oog, which is really a gem of a place. For more information about Die Oog go to their website: <http://www.dieoog.org.za>

Linda Hibbin

BIRD COUNTS & HACKS

We would like to encourage more members to take part in these activities, which add a new dimension to birdwatching. They also serve a useful conservation purpose.

Strandfontein Sewage Works Counts (Monthly)

These counts take place on the second Sunday of every month at 08h00 (or 08h30 in winter). To reach Strandfontein, travel down Strandfontein Road towards the coast and turn off to Zeekoevlei (just past 15th Avenue). Continue right to the end of this road, through the gates to the works. Phone Dick Barnes at 021 689 1106 for more details.

Paarl Bird Sanctuary Counts (Monthly)

These counts take place on the 3rd or 4th Saturday in the month at 09h00. Check programme for dates and phone Yvonne Weiss at 021 872 4972 for more details.

Wildevoëlwei (Kommetjie) Counts (Monthly)

These counts take place at 08h30 on the second Thursday in the month. If you live near the area do make a point of joining the group. From the Sun Valley 4-way stop take the road to Kommetjie, continue for 2,3 km and turn right at Compass Bakery. Meet near the main works at the end of the road. Phone Eric Barnes at 021 782 5429 for more details.

Kirstenbosch BIRP Counts (Monthly)

These BIRP (Birds in Reserves Projects) counts take place at Kirstenbosch on the first Sunday in the month at 08h00. We meet at the Visitors' Centre (bottom gate). Duration about 3 - 4 hours. Phone Derek Longrigg at 021 674 1248 for more details.

Rietvlei Counts (Quarterly)

These counts take place on Fridays in January, April, July and October (see programme for dates). Phone Koos Retief at 021 550 1086 (w) or 082 788 6987 for details.

Zandvlei Counts (Quarterly)

These counts also take place in January, April, July and October (see programme for dates). Phone Gavin Lawson at 021 705 5224 for details.

Zandvlei Hacks (Monthly)

Second Saturday in the month from 14h00. Phone Gavin Lawson at 021 705 5224 for details.

CWAC Counts (Twice yearly). See page 26 for more details.

CBC PROGRAMME

See under "Club Activities" for general information and details of venue for our Evening Meetings, as well as more information on Bird Counts and Hacks.

NOVEMBER

Sat 3 RONDEVLEI OUTING

Meet at 08h00. These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts and beginners are especially welcome. Travel down the M5 (Prince George Drive) towards Grassy Park and look out for Nando's at the 5th Avenue traffic light. Turn left here and continue along 5th Avenue to the first set of traffic lights. Turn right into Perth Road and continue to the end of the road. There is a small entrance fee for those without season tickets. **Convenor: Merle Chalton ☎ 021 686 8951**

Tues 6 WEEKDAY OUTING: SILVERMINE SUNBIRD CENTRE

Meet at 08h30 The Silvermine Sunbird Centre winds along the Kleintuin River where there are Cape Batis, Southern Boubou, Cape Grassbirds and many other Fynbos endemics. In summer there are Paradise Flycatchers nesting. This walk is nicely sheltered from the South Easter and is an easy stroll.

Directions: Travel along Ou Kaapse Weg towards Simonstown until you reach the Silvermine Retirement Village. Turn left and drive down the road opposite. Park on the grass at the Centre.

Leader: Eric Barnes ☎ 021 782 5429 Co-ordinator: Anne Gray ☎ 083 311 1140

Thurs 8 EVENING MEETING: "ADVENTURES IN SEARCH OF NOCTURNAL BIRDS"

Speaker: John Carlyon

Meet at 20h00. John Carlyon is the author of the highly recommended new book *Nocturnal Birds of Southern Africa*. With Penny Meakin he spent many years obtaining photographs for the book and they have travelled extensively in southern Africa in search of night birds. John and Penny live in Pietermaritzburg where John practises as a veterinarian. Penny is a wildlife artist and is one of the artists for *Roberts VII*. Our thanks to Peter Steyn for spotting this potential presentation and for arranging the contact. Signed copies of John and Penny's book will be available at a special discount on the night. If you already have a copy it is a chance to get it autographed!

Sun 18 OUTING: PORCUPINE HILLS GUEST FARM Nr THEEWATERSKLOOF

Meet at 08h30. This farm is situated in the Overberg and the rolling hills and mountains are covered with a rich diversity of indigenous vegetation, including Fynbos and Renosterbos. The farm falls within a Reserve under the Stewardship of Cape Nature. There are walking routes as well as 4x4 tracks. A high-clearance vehicle is preferable.

Directions: From Cape Town take the N2 over Sir Lowry's Pass and at the Orchard Farm stall take the Grabouw turnoff. Travel through Grabouw, over the river and take the R321 Villiersdorp/ Franschoek turnoff to the left. Travel for 22.5 km and look for a little sign on the left marked Bot River. Turn right and travel for 11kms. Diepkloof Nature Reserve and Porcupine Hills Guest Farm is on the left. Continue down into the farm until you cross the little stream and park in the area on the left.

Overnight accommodation on a self-catering basis is available on the farm at special rates for birders. See www.porcupinehills.co.za for booking. State you are a Cape Bird Club member.

Leader & Co-ordinator:

Mike Saunders ☎ 082 882 8688

HACKS & COUNTS IN NOVEMBER

See page 23 for contact details and more information

Sun 4	08h00	▪ Kirstenbosch BIRP Count
Thurs 8	08h30	▪ Wildevölvlei CWAC Count
Sat 10	14h00	▪ Zandvlei Hack
Sun 11	08h00	▪ Strandfontein CWAC Count
Sat 24	09h00	▪ Paarl Bird Sanctuary Count

Sat 24 BIRDING BIG DAY

All day The Century City Bird Week Festival will run up to this all-day fun event to raise funds for BLSA

DECEMBER

Sat 1 RONDEVLEI OUTING

Meet at 08h00. These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts and beginners are especially welcome. See under 3 November for directions.

Convenor: Merle Chalton ☎ 021 686 8951

Thurs 6 MEMBERS' EVENING AND YEAR-END PARTY

18h30 for 19h00. COME AND JOIN US! Note earlier starting time. See notice on page 3 for booking details.

Sat 8 OUTING: WITSANDS AQUIFER NATURE RESERVE, ATLANTIS

Meet at 08h00. This interesting and unique Strandveld venue will be a new one for most members. We will be introduced to facts about the Aquifer habitat, its birds, mammals, frogs, reptiles, mammals and vegetation by the Conservation Officer, Elzanne Burger. We can expect to see waterbirds, waders, raptors, bushbirds and migrants. Bring refreshments for a picnic after the walk.

Directions: From Cape Town take the R 27 West Coast Road and drive past the Koeberg Nuclear Plant turn-off on the left (35km from Cape Town). Travel approximately 6 km further on the R27 and take the Atlantis turn-off to the right, which is Dassenberg Road. After approximately 500 metres turn left and park at the Atlantis Water Scheme offices. From here we walk to Pan 7 across the road.

Note: A limit has been placed on numbers and therefore you have to book. Contact Anne Gray at gray-ad@mweb.co.za

Leader: Elzanne Burger

Co-ordinator: Anne Gray ☎ 021 713 1231

Sun 16 BREAKFAST OUTING: ZANDVLEI NATURE RESERVE

Meet at 07h30. This is traditionally the last organised outing of the year so come early for a pleasant birding stroll along a waterside path, pausing at two hides and a viewing platform. Bring picnic baskets and folding chairs for a picnic breakfast after the walk and enjoy some sparkling wine or fruit juice to end the year on a cheerful note.

Directions: From Main Road Retreat turn into Military Road at the "Lavender Hill" sign and continue over the level crossing. At the first set of traffic lights (just before the Shell garage) turn right into Coniston Road. After 200 metres turn right along a dirt road at the Zandvlei sign. Continue until you reach a municipal depot. Drive through the smaller of the two gates, over a cattle grid, past the buildings to the parking area where we meet.

Leader: Heather Howell ☎ 021 788 1574

Co-ordinator: Anne Gray ☎ 083 311 1140

HACKS & COUNTS IN DECEMBER		
<i>See page 23 for contact details and more information</i>		
Sun 2	08h00	▪ Kirstenbosch BIRP Count
Sat 8	14h00	▪ Zandvlei Hack
Sun 9	08h00	▪ Strandfontein Count
Thurs 13	08h30	▪ Wildevölvlei Count
Sat 15	09h00	▪ Paarl Bird Sanctuary Count



JANUARY 2013

CWAC AND CAR COUNTS

This is just a reminder that the summer CWAC counts take place from mid-January to mid-February. For the information of our newer members, CWAC stands for Co-ordinated Waterbird Counts. These twice-yearly counts have been organised for the past 20 years and the data collected is processed by the Animal Demography Unit at UCT. It is already proving immensely valuable for research and conservation purposes.

The CAR count takes place on Saturday 26 January 2013 on various routes in the Overberg and Swartland region. CAR stands for Co-ordinated Avifaunal Road Counts and the aim is to assess the populations of large terrestrial birds along these routes. Contact Donella Young at 021 650 4239 (w).

Please assist with these counts if you possibly can. You do not need to be an expert to help.

HACKS & COUNTS IN JANUARY

See page 23 for contact details and more information

Sun 6	08h00	▪	Kirstenbosch BIRP Count
Thurs 10	08h30	▪	Wildevoëlvlei Count
Sat 12	14h00	▪	Zandvlei Hack
Sun 13	08h00	▪	Strandfontein Count
<i>CWAC counts start now</i>			
Fri 18	09h00	▪	Rietvlei CWAC Count
Sat 19	08h00	▪	Zandvlei CWAC Count
Tues 22	09h00	▪	Radyn Dam CWAC Count
Sat 26	09h00	▪	Paarl Sanctuary CWAC Count
Sat 26	all day	▪	CAR Count
Tues 29	08h00	▪	Wellington CWAC Count

NOTE: The dates and times for the Radyn Dam CWAC Count (Malmesbury district) and Wellington Sewage Works CWAC Count are provisional. For details please contact Otto Schmidt at 021 674 2381 for Radyn Dam and John Fincham at 021 919 4069 for Wellington. The dates and times for the Langebaan and Berg River Estuary CWAC Counts are tide-dependent and have not yet been finalised. Please contact Doug Harebottle at 021 650 2330 (w) or e-mail doug.harebottle@uct.ac.za if you would like to join these counts. These are large areas and additional helpers will be most welcome.

Sat 5 **RONDEVLEI OUTING**

Meet at 08h00. These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts and beginners are especially welcome. See under 3 November for directions.

Convenor: Merle Chalton ☎ 021 686 8951

Thurs 10 **EVENING MEETING: "GRACEFUL HUNTERS OF THE NIGHT"**

Speaker: Dr. Samantha Stoffberg

Meet at 20h00. Dr Samantha Stoffberg is a zoologist with a special interest in bats. In her presentation she will reveal some of the fascinating facts about bats, including their importance to ecosystems.

Fri 18 **WEEKDAY OUTING: RIETVLEI WETLAND RESERVE**

Meet at 09h00. Rietvlei is a large wetland in the floodplain of the Diep River between Milnerton and Table View. There is a variety of habitats, including a permanent freshwater lake, shallow marshes, reed beds, and an estuarine lagoon with salt marshes. About 180 bird species have been recorded here.

Directions: From Cape Town head north on the N1, turning off onto the R27 to Milnerton. Continue along this road to Table View with the vlei on your right. Turn right into Blaauwberg Road at Table View, then right into Pentz Drive. Continue along Pentz Drive, past SANCCOB, to the four-way stop. Turn right into Grey Avenue and drive two blocks down to the water, following the road to the entrance hut at the Milnerton Aquatic Club gates. Park outside the gates just to the right and walk to the Environment Centre to avoid the parking levy of R16,00. There is an entrance charge of R12,00 or R6,00 for pensioners. From here we walk to the hides.

Leader: Elzette Krynauw

Coordinator: Anne Gray ☎ 083 311 1140

Sun 20 OUTING: ROCKHAVEN FARM, PORTERVILLE

The farm is situated in the Winterhoek Mountains above Porterville. It is a registered Organic Farm and produces essential oils, among other things. They boast an array of wildlife in the way of Rhebuck, Klipspringer and Porcupine and have had numerous sightings of Cape Leopard in the area. Their bird list includes Verreaux's Eagle and Cape Eagle Owl. African Goshawk and Black Sparrowhawk have also been sighted. Accommodation is available for those wishing to stay over.

NB. Booking is essential. Please contact Mike Saunders for directions, starting time and to make arrangements for accommodation if required.

Leader & Coordinator: Mike Saunders ☎ 082 882 8688

FEBRUARY**Sat 2 RONDEVLEI OUTING**

Meet at 08h00. These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts and beginners are especially welcome. See under 3 November for directions.

Convenor: Merle Chalton ☎ 021 686 8951

Wed 13 WEEKDAY OUTING: STRANDFONTEIN SEWAGE WORKS

Meet at 08h30. One of our premier birding spots!

Directions: From Muizenberg take the Baden-Powell Drive and after 7 km turn left into Strandfontein Road (M17). After another 4 km turn left to Zeekoevlei and follow the road that leads to the Sewage Works. We meet at the entrance gate.

Leader: Otto Schmidt ☎ 021 674 2381 Cell 073 043 2761

Co-ordinator: Mike Saunders ☎ 082 882 8688

Thurs 14 EVENING MEETING: "uPHOLI WANT A FOREST"

How can we save the Cape Parrot from extinction?

Speaker: Dr. Rutledge S. Boyes

Meet at 20h00. There are less than 1,100 Cape Parrots (*Poicephalus robustus*) remaining in the wild after hundreds of years of deforestation, disease outbreaks, persecution as a crop pest, and capture for the wild-caught bird trade. In 2009, the Percy FitzPatrick Institute launched the Cape Parrot Project to better understand an apparent population bottleneck in relation to the availability of suitable food resource and nest cavities, and the incidence of Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease in the Amathole region. This ongoing project has made a positive impact but there is a long way to go if the Cape Parrot is to be saved.

Sun 17 OUTING: MOUNTAIN MIST RETREAT, AURORA

This Retreat is set in the mountains above Aurora and has some of the most beautiful views on the West Coast. The Retreat is situated in pristine fynbos and is well known for abundant sightings of Protea Canary, Cape Siskin, Booted Eagle and Ground Woodpecker. There is also a resident Cape Eagle Owl and Verreaux's Eagle.

Because this Retreat is situated in a Conservancy it will be necessary to limit the number of vehicles. Lifts and sharing can be arranged. High clearance vehicles are suggested. Accommodation is available for those who wish to stay over. Contact Mike Saunders for details. **Booking for the Outing as well as the Accommodation is essential.** There will be a Day Visitors Fee of R25 for those that are not staying over.

Leader & Co-ordinator:

Mike Saunders ☎ 082 882 8688

HACKS & COUNTS IN FEBRUARY

See page 23 for contact details and more information

Sun 3	08h00	▪	Kirstenbosch BIRP Count
Sat 9	14h00	▪	Zandvlei Hack
Sun 10	08h00	▪	Strandfontein CWAC Count
Thurs 14	08h30	▪	Wildevölvlei CWAC Count
Sat 23	09h00	▪	Paarl Bird Sanctuary Count

MARCH

Sat 2 RONDEVLEI OUTING

Meet at 08h00. These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts and beginners are especially welcome. See under 3 November for directions.

Convenor: Merle Chalton ☎ 021 686 8951

Wed 13 WEEKDAY OUTING: KIRSTENBOSCH BOTANICAL GARDENS

Meet at 08h00. Bring a picnic tea to enjoy after the walk.

Directions: From the City travel up the M3 towards Muizenberg and turn right at the traffic lights into Rhodes Drive. Follow the M 63 to the Main Entrance to the Gardens and continue to the Visitors Centre (lower parking area) where there is ample secure parking. We meet outside the ticket office. There is no entrance fee for BotSoc members.

Leader: Peter Steyn ☎ 021 674 3332

Co-ordinator: Mike Saunders 082 882 8688

Thurs 14 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING + Nesting Secrets of Black Sparrowhawks

Meet at 20h00. Come and learn more about your club and its achievements over the past year. Following the reports from the CBC Chairman, Treasurer and Conservation committee a new CBC committee will be elected. After the AGM there will be a short presentation by Gareth Tate, a post-graduate student at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, who has kindly agreed to give us some insight into his research on Black Sparrowhawks. His work involves the use of nest and trap cameras which have provided fascinating images. Although his research is far from complete, he will explain his modus operandi and share some of his photographic discoveries.

Sun 17 OUTING: WEST COAST NATIONAL PARK

Meet at 08h30. This is the last chance to see the waders before they head north. Some of them will already be in their breeding plumage getting ready for the breeding season. We meet in the car park at the Geelbek Manor. The group will then split up and move to the various hides depending on the tides. **Bring along a picnic brunch to enjoy during the course of the day.**

Directions: Take the R27 north of Cape Town, travel through Milnerton and up the West Coast. Shortly after passing the Yzerfontein/Darling intersection, take the road left to the main entrance of the WCNP. Distance is approx. 90kms from the City Centre. Allow 1½ hours for the journey. Wild Card holders gain free entrance.

Leaders: Vernon Head ☎ 076 569 1389 and Mel Tripp 083 461 4365

HACKS & COUNTS IN MARCH

See page 23 for contact details and more information

Sun 3	08h00	▪	Kirstenbosch BIRP Count
Sat 9	14h00	▪	Zandvlei Hack
Sun 10	08h00	▪	Strandfontein Count
Thurs 14	08h30	▪	Wildevölvlei Count
Sat 23	09h00	▪	Paarl Bird Sanctuary Count

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2013

All happy campers please note that the next camp is scheduled for 13 and 14 April 2013 at the Swartriet Resort on the West Coast, north of Saldanha. Details to follow in the next issue of *Promerops*. Please diarise. We shall also be organising at least two more of our popular weekend courses next year as well as other special events.

CBC-E-MAIL CIRCULATION LIST

If you would like to be added to our CBC e-mail circulation list in order to receive regular programme updates and other news please contact Jo Hobbs at johobbs@lantic.net

**The deadline for our March 2013 issue
will be 9 January 2013**

JUNIOR PROGRAMME

How old are the Juniors? They could be any age as long as they are school children. Regrettably, we cannot accommodate pre-schoolers. With mixed levels of competence, the outings are divided into two groups. The deputy co-ordinator, Matthew Orolowitz, leads the advanced birders while I attend to the needs of the beginners.

Who are the Juniors? They are any children who are becoming interested in birds, *whether they are members or not*. All are welcome. (Special worksheets are available on request for those who wish to advance their birding skills at home.)

We have one outing per month - on the **first Sunday of each month**. (Put it in your diary!) Binoculars are not essential at first but will become an essential tool for serious bird watching. Children should bring something for the tea break but note that we do not snack on the path - only during our tea time!

Notification of venues and starting times are confirmed by email in the week prior to the outing. Because parents have to provide transport, they are encouraged to come along with their children but it is also fine to drop them off and fetch them at the appointed time. All outings last for 1½ hours unless otherwise stated. **Booking is essential** - at least 24 hours ahead.

Co-ordinator: Heather Howell ☎ (021) 788-1574 E-mail: howellh@telkomsa.net
Deputy co-ordinator: Matthew Orolowitz

DECEMBER

Sunday 16 Zandvlei Nature Reserve
Meet at 07h30

The whole club marks the end of the year with a picnic breakfast here. It would be lovely to have the Juniors at this outing. On some previous occasions the Juniors have acted as guides. See main Programme for directions and details.

JANUARY 2013

Sunday 6 Helderberg Nature Reserve
Meet at 09h00

Directions: From the N2 to Somerset West, take the Strand/Somerset West turnoff (R44). At the traffic lights at the top of the ramp, turn left. At the next set of traffic lights turn right and travel down Main Road to the Lourensford intersection. Turn left and continue for some distance until you reach a Shell garage where you turn left. Then follow the Helderberg Nature Reserve Signs. There is a small entrance fee to pay at the gate. We meet in the main parking area opposite the Tea Room.

FEBRUARY

Sunday 3 Intaka Island
Meet at 08h00

Directions: Travel north along the N1. Take the Sable Road off-ramp. Turn left and follow the signs towards Century City. Go straight ahead at the first traffic lights. (Do not turn at

Century Boulevard.) Continue in the same direction and turn right at the 3rd traffic lights. At the 1st traffic circle turn right. There is a sign indicating "Intaka Island". Follow the sign and take the left fork to the parking area beside a steam engine. Please note that there is a small admission fee. Walk over the bridge and buy your ticket. We meet on the deck behind the ticket office.

MARCH

Sunday 3 Macassar Waste Water
Treatment Works

Meet at 08h30

Directions: *From Cape Town:*

Travel on the N2 towards Somerset West and turn off at Exit 38 (Macassar Road - the first off-ramp after the Engen Service Station) and turn right. Go through the robots and about 500 metres ahead look out for an electricity sub-station and turn left. Continue for ± 1 km to the entrance of the works. We meet outside the security gate. We will leave the vehicles inside the works and walk around the pans.

From Muizenberg:

Travel along Baden-Powell Drive towards Somerset West. You will pass a small Sewage Works. Very soon after, turn right into Macassar Road. Continue for 5 km and then look out for an electrical sub-station and turn right. Continue for ± 1 km to the entrance of the works and then follow the directions above.

CBC SMALLS

*CBC Small Ads is a free service to members
(max. 50 words).
("Repeats" strictly subject to space being available).*

*Cost to non-members R60,00 for 50 words,
plus heading, additional words pro rata.*

Cash with order please.

*For ad bookings/enquiries, Tell/Fax: (021) 981-1275
or email johobbs@lantic.net*

GLEN HOUSE, KNYSNA

Self-catering units situated in the secluded village of Lake Brenton opposite Yellowwood Bird Sanctuary. Facilities include M-Net, separate braai areas, covered parking, patio and peaceful garden surrounds where bushbuck still roam freely. Seasonal rates from R150 pppd. Contact Pat Booysen, Tel. or Fax: 044 381 0048, Cell 072 129 3684 or e-mail pbooyesen@mweb.co.za

GROOT WINTERHOEK MOUNTAINS

Pristine fynbos, waterfalls, bushman caves, wildlife and excellent birding including resident pair of Black Eagles, Eagle Owls, Nightjars and more. Gorgeous walks and views. Two fully equipped s/c cottages sleeping 6 and 4 in the Winterhoek mountains above Porterville, looking down onto Beaverlac and Oliphants Valley. R 825 and R 530 per night. Contact: adbrown@law.co.za or visit website at www.ratelfarming.co.za

PUMULA LODGE - B&B, KNYSNA ★★★

Nestled between the town of Knysna and the famous Knysna Heads, lies Pumula Lodge - "the place of rest". The lodge, with its tranquil, parkland setting where nature lovers can enjoy the abundant bird life supported by the beautiful gardens. Over 100 species have been identified. Private entrances to en-suite bedrooms, each with a deck overlooking the gardens and swimming pool. "Tree-top" breakfasts, secure undercover parking, communal kitchenette and barbecue facility. Close to golf courses, bird sanctuary and restaurants. Children 10+ welcome. Credit cards. Non-smoking lodge. TGCSA - 3 Star B&B. Accredited by Knysna Tourism.
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Email: info@pumulalodge.co.za
Tel: 044 3841193 Fax: 0866 727 206

Birds of Southern Africa on DVD

The first in a series of video bird guides, aimed at those who enjoy birds, deals to certain extent with many aspects of the species covered, e.g. characteristics, behaviour, calls, flight, habitat etc.

**Volumes 1, 2 & 3 -
WATERBIRDS AND WADERS**
representing some 95 species.

Volume 4 - THE LARKS
A notoriously difficult group to identify.
23 species are covered.

Volume 5 - THE GAME BIRDS
covers 32 species including Sandgrouse,
Francolins, Bustards, Korhaan, Coursers etc.

Volumes 6 & 7 - RAPTORS Part 1 & Part 2
representing some 57 species.

DVD's sell at R80 each
Contact: Brian Wilson 021 976 4410
email: brianwilson@cybersmart.co.za

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD?

Have you ever heard
the sound of a bird,
as it sings in a tree-top above?
Or the mournful fall
of a Fish Eagle's call,
or the soft cooing of a dove?

Or the fighting cry,
when a hawk does spy
a threat to its nest of young?
Or the saddened lament,
when its mate's life is spent,
and the tears from its heart are wrung?

Have you heard those too,
that live in a zoo,
eagle, hawk, vulture and kite?
Surely you see,
that their lives should be free,
to live in a cage is not right.

For their lives past,
they have had to last,
on the food given them by man.
Shouldn't they live
on what nature can give,
and live free as well they can?

Fly away now bird,
and sing songs you have heard
of stories and legends gone by.
Maybe one day we'll make
it illegal to take,
a bird that sings free up on high.

Cecil Giddey

KNYSNA TOYOTA DRIVES BIRD CONSERVATION

In August this year BirdLife South Africa received the very generous sponsorship of two Toyota Hilux single cab vehicles from Knysna Toyota. These will help to drive two headline bird conservation programmes in our area, namely seabird conservation and conserving Important Bird Areas.

Important Bird Areas

Dale Wright is BirdLife SA's Western Cape Regional Conservation Manager and he spends much of his time crossing rugged terrain to access the 24 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) across the Western Cape as well as parts of the Eastern Cape. These include beautiful wilderness and mountain areas with many special fynbos and forest birds requiring urgent conservation intervention and long term protection.



Dale Wright with his new Toyota Hilux. He travels widely throughout the Western Cape, working closely with local communities as well as private land owners, government and other NGO's.

Seabird conservation

The Albatross Task Force (based in Cape Town) has achieved international acclaim for its work. They conduct scientific experiments to devise new techniques to avoid seabird deaths without impacting fishing practicality and profitability. The sponsored vehicle from Knysna Toyota will enable them to transport their bulky research gear to fishing vessels and bring back the carcasses of dead seabirds to UCT for identification and analysis. It will also assist with monitoring the endangered African Penguin populations at Dassen Island and Bird Island.

Members of the Albatross Task Force with their newly branded Toyota Hilux and some of their gear. BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Division is at the forefront, globally, of addressing the many issues affecting seabirds.



Mark Anderson, CEO of BirdLife South Africa, commented:

"We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Tom Esterhuizen of Knysna Toyota for his generous contribution to the conservation work of these two programmes. We look forward to working together in the coming years."

For more information you can contact: Dale Wright (IBA Programme) at 072 562 3946 or email westerncape@birdlife.org.za
Bronwyn Maree (Albatross Task Force) at 082 364 9281 or albatross@birdlife.org.za
Tom Esterhuizen (Knysna Toyota) at 044 382 1122 or email tom@knysnatoyota.co.za
or visit www.knysnatoyota.co.za