

The Kite

Tygerberg Bird Club
Tygerberg Voëlklub

Photo credit: Robert Brink

Number 144 (May - November 2025)

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Chirp from the chair

Birding brings us so much joy! Not only do we visit beautiful places and see what different venues have to offer – but we share a LOVE for nature with our fellow birders! Most of us started off watching the birds on our bird feeder in the garden, and then it developed into so much more. Many of the members of the Tygerberg Bird Club have ended up expanded their interests beyond birding to also include insects, frogs, butterflies, trees and plants!

A big thank you goes to the array of speakers that gave up their time to visit us during this year and gave us some great and interesting talks. Some of them travelled to interesting parts of our country and shared their experiences and the love of ALL things NATURE with us! In her talk, Laura Roberts from Birdlife SA informed us of the devastation caused by the Avian Influenza and the important role that SANCCOB is playing, with early detection and most importantly, what we should do if and when we come across dead birds.

We admire the TBC Bird Ringing Unit who have been getting up early to put up their nets at sunrise, for the past 34 years! Wonderful stats are gathered in this way. A special record was of a Namaqua Dove ringed by Lee Silks at Rocher Pan and then re-trapped in Namibia. Lee is now in the top 10 of re-traps in the country. We are very proud of you Lee!

We look forward to the 2026 TBC Bird Calendar that will soon be available. Make sure you purchase your copy (or more than one) from one of our committee members. All profits from this project goes to valuable avian research projects. A BIG thank you to Lesley Teare who has compiled the calendar for the past 14 years. Thank you also to all our Sponsors – without who this project would not be viable.

Happy birding!

Brigid Crewe

It's a win for Black Harrier!

The people of South Africa have spoken, and the Black Harrier (*Circus maurus*) will be BirdLife South Africa's Bird of the Year for 2026.

For the first time, instead of being decided internally, BirdLife South Africa asked the public to participate in the selection process, in an initiative which saw well over 10 000 people cast their votes. The Black Harrier received the most votes, followed closely by the Bearded Vulture and Botha's Lark.

Listed as Endangered in BirdLife South Africa's Africa's Regional Red Data

Book of South Africa, Lesotho, and Eswatini (a record of the conservation statuses of threatened birds across the region), the Black Harrier has been the subject of intense conservation and scrutiny for many years. Known as the *Witkruisvleivalk* in Afrikaans, *mmankodi-wa-dihlaba* in Sesotho and *umamhlangenomnyama* in isiZulu, it is categorised as "near-endemic", meaning that 70% of its population occurs within South Africa; a large portion of this population migrate in summer from their core ranges in the Western Cape province to grasslands in Lesotho and the Free State province, as they are attracted to heavy rainfall events. There is an isolated population of only around 10 individuals in northern coastal Namibia, and they have been observed in southern Namibia and Botswana, most often in winter.

The conservation of this magnificent raptor has been overseen for several years by the members of the Black Harrier Task Force, who have greatly increased knowledge and understanding of the Black Harrier.

The 2026 Bird of the Year will, among other celebrations and initiatives, appear on the January/February cover of the BirdLife South Africa publication *African Birdlife* magazine, feature in educational webinars, and become the subject of a dedicated webpage offering posters, infographics, fact sheets, and other resources designed to share knowledge and spark a passion for birding and conservation amongst the general public.





The Pamela Isdell Seabird Nursery

On 25 July 2025, SANCCOB proudly celebrated the official opening of the Pamela Isdell Seabird Nursery, a state-of-the-art facility purpose-built for the incubation, hatching, and hand-rearing of wild African Penguin eggs and chicks.

This project was made possible through the generosity of our donors, with special recognition to the late Pamela Isdell, a former SANCCOB Board Director and passionate advocate for African Penguins. The nursery is named in her honour, and her legacy will live on in every chick raised and released from this facility.

During the opening, Natalie Maskell, SANCCOB CEO, shared: "As environmental pressures facing African Penguins escalate, the number of chicks and eggs that we need to care for has risen dramatically. It became clear to us that our previous facility was not adequate."

Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Dr Dion George, who was unable to join in person but took the time to share his support and encouragement via a prerecorded message: *"It is a space built on science, compassion, and a deep commitment to conservation. This is more than just a building. It is a lifeline for a species that urgently needs our help."*

The Pamela Isdell Seabird Nursery stands as a symbol of SANCCOB's unwavering commitment to seabird conservation. It represents a significant milestone in their mission to halt the decline of the Critically Endangered African Penguin and to safeguard the future of this iconic species.



Remember birds in your will

If you have had a lifetime's pleasure from birds, why not help ensure their future by leaving a legacy/bequest to BirdLife South Africa in your will? Any amount, large or small, will be put to excellent use.

Your will helps to ensure that your intentions are honoured after your lifetime. It can help protect the people closest to you, and further the causes about which you feel most deeply.

BirdLife South Africa's work could not continue without the generous bequests from many of our supporters. It is not just a thing for wealthy people to do nowadays.

Supporters come from all walks of life who wish to leave something to the wild birds and their habitats which brought so much pleasure to their lives.

If you would like to remember BirdLife South Africa in your will, please contact Tarryn McKechnie on +27 (0)11 789 1122 or e-mail tarryn.mckechnie@birdlife.org.za

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA

POSITION STATEMENT**Impact of an increased number of
Pied Crows on South Africa's biodiversity****PROBLEM STATEMENT**

There is an increasing public perception that Pied Crow *Corvus albus* populations are increasing and expanding their range. The Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2) data supports this and show increased reporting rates in the southwestern region of South Africa over the last decade, with landowners reporting large flocks of Pied Crows as regular occurrences in areas of the Northern and Western Cape. Human population growth and expansion, climate change, an expanding electricity grid, increasing access to human waste, and extensive road networks have all been identified as potential drivers of this apparently growing and spreading population (Cunningham et al. 2016, Joseph et al. 2017, Dean et al. 2018). Coinciding with this, there has been an increase in concern and anecdotal reports of the following suggested impacts of increases in Pied Crows:

- Livelihoods affected through increased stock losses caused by the predation of new-born livestock.
- A reduction in the reproductive success of threatened raptor species due to competition for prey and/or nesting locations, mobbing raptors during hunting and direct mortality of nestlings and fledglings.
- Increased mortality rates and reduced reproductive success in smaller passerine due to predation of adults, juveniles and eggs.
- Impacts on other components of biodiversity, including increased predation levels on small reptiles such as tortoises and lizards, small mammals, and amphibians.

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA POSITION STATEMENT

BirdLife South Africa recognises the potential threat of an increasing number of Pied Crows and other corvid species on indigenous fauna and livestock.

In acknowledging these potential threats, BirdLife South Africa supports the need for urgent scientific research. This research should verify the presence of these threats and quantify the degree to which they impact indigenous fauna and human livelihoods.

Currently these suggested threats are based on an increasing number of anecdotal reports and sightings across the country of Pied Crows engaged in the above-mentioned behaviours. There is however currently insufficient reliable evidence to either quantify the perceived impacts of crows in South Africa, or to justify the institution of a large-scale control programme.

While a comprehensive review of crow impacts on bird populations globally suggests that a proliferation of crows has a minimal impact on bird populations (Madden et al. 2015), a significant number of credible studies do provide clear evidence that, under some circumstances, crows can cause significant biodiversity loss (Kristan & Boarman 2003, Daly et al. 2019, Krüger et al. 2018).

Internationally, many crow control or eradication programmes have been conducted and some have shown success (Suliman et al. 2011). However, a common conclusion was that determining and controlling the anthropogenic drivers of crow population growth, rather than the crows themselves, is a more efficient way of dealing with the problem (Preininger et al. 2019). Therefore, careful investigation of how humans have influenced the expansion of both crow distributions and their numbers need to be conducted to best evaluate the causes of these potential problems and to develop effective solutions.

BirdLife South Africa reserves action on this issue until adequate scientific evidence demonstrates the need for appropriate action for threatened species and a full and balanced appraisal of this perceived threat has been completed.

BirdLife South Africa does not currently support the control of indigenous corvid species and condemns the use of poisons, in any manner, to kill crows. Using poison has far reaching knock-on effects on non-target species.

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What is “Bird ringing” and why is it important?

How it works

Bird-ringing involves catching birds, securing a small metal ring around one of their legs, and ideally recording the bird's species, age, sex, wing length and weight. Rings have a reference code inscribed on them that allows that particular bird to be uniquely identified if it is caught again in the future. Rings are lightweight and harmless, akin to a human wearing a watch.



Bird-ringing techniques have been carefully designed to minimise harm, although trapping and handling birds inevitably causes a small amount of stress to the birds. Many studies have shown that ringed and handled birds very quickly return to what they were doing previously, whether that's sitting on eggs, feeding chicks or migrating.

Bird-ringers must train alongside experienced professionals for hundreds of hours to ensure they are trapping and handling birds with the utmost care and minimal disturbance.

The importance of data

The main focus of bird-ringing is to gather ‘demographic’ data. Bird-ringing, alongside other surveys and data, helps us to build up a picture of each population and whether they're struggling or thriving.

Exceptional re-trap of a Namaqua Dove



The Tygerberg Bird Club ringing unit has been actively ringing birds for the last 34 years and continues their dedication once a week before dawn breaks – when they put up their mist nets used to trap birds to obtain valuable statistical information.

The following re-trap episode illustrates this point. A male Namaqua Dove was ringed in September 2018 at Rocher Pan, near Velddrif on the West Coast of South Africa by Lee Silks from the Tygerberg Bird Club.

More than five years later, the same bird was re-trapped by Ursula Bryson, Research Associate at the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology in Namibia, in December 2023 on the farm Hamakari south of the Waterberg. The straight-line distance between the two locations is approximately 1328 km, and 1925 days. I.e. about five years and 100 days elapsed between ringing and recapture.

This re-trap represents both longevity as well as the long-distance record for this species.

Snippets ...

Beautiful bees – did you know?

- old bees don't return to the hive in the evening? They spend the night on flowers and if they have the chance to see another sunrise, they resume their activity by bringing pollen or nectar to the colony. They do this sensing their end is near. No bee waits to die in the hive so as not to burden the others.
- Bees have cold blood like all insects, yet at colony level, they are a warm mega-organism. There are bees that bring pollen and bees that bring nectar. Never will a pollen-collecting bee change its task to bring nectar and vice-versa.
- Although dandelions are yellow, their pollen collected by bees turns orange in the mixing urn with nectar.
- The record for keeping a bee colony alive during winter was 356 days without them going out for cleansing flights.
- Bees can be useful to humans even after having died, as they are used in the form of poultices to treat joint pain.
- Bees never sleep!



Source: Weird, Strange and Interesting things by David Attenborough on Facebook



Preserving a woodpecker's home

In Argentina, a wooden utility pole was replaced with a new one made of reinforced concrete, but with a touching detail: the part of the old pole containing a woodpecker's nest was preserved!

It was carefully attached to the new pole at the same height, so the bird wouldn't lose its home.

A simple gesture... but it says a lot about respecting wildlife, even amid infrastructure projects.

The #1 mistake new birders make ... and how to avoid it

In their enthusiasm on seeing a new bird, many newer birders grab for their field guide to try and work out what bird they are looking at. People in the know, suggests that new birders should rather focus on carefully observing field marks on the bird while in the field.

To simplify the process, by looking for the following key field marks, you should be able to identify most birds you encounter:

1. Does the bird have wing bars?
2. What colour is the throat?
3. Does it have breast streaks?
4. Is there an eye-ring?
5. Check the colour of the outer tail feathers.
6. Does it have a stripe through the eye?
7. Does it have an eyebrow (supercilium)?

Try not opening your field guide until you have

taken note of these features first. If you spend too much time flipping through your field guide, by the time you find a possible match, the bird has often already flown off!



Atlassing & BirdLasser

Atlassing, simplified, is recording bird species seen or heard, within a grid square (Pentad), during a specified period. The technology used in Atlassing has come a long way since the late 1970's when field sheets were hand-written, posted to the project office, transcribed onto punch cards, and processed on a massive mainframe computer at one of the universities.

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) was launched in 2007 and is an ongoing project that contains more than 17 million records and can now illustrate distribution and seasonality changes over the years. Initially the observers entered their data over the internet via their PCs but, since the development of the BirdLasser app, the logging of records can be done on cell phones while in the field.

The value of this huge repository of avian data is far beyond a hobby for keen birders. It is an acknowledged database that is used by a variety of disciplines:

- Conservation: Important Bird Areas (IBAs), Red Data Species List
- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs): Wind farms, Power lines, Mining, Industrial development
- Research: Range expansion, Climate change, Migration timing
- Field Guides: Maps (in books and Apps)

Maybe the primordial instinct to hunt is stimulated when I find myself in the field? Analysing the habitat to anticipate which bird species should occur in a pentad is like a treasure hunt. For example, when I approach a wetland, I look for local water-fowl, waders, warblers, weavers, wagtails, waxbills and whydahs. Frequent Atlassing excursions improved my knowledge of the birds' habits, flight style and calls. This has definitely helped me to become more familiar with most of the formidable Little-Brown-Jobs (LBJs) that were responsible for the furrows on my brows.

I have atlased in more than 250 pentads, which include some in Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique. During these trips I have been to sites that I would ordinarily never have visited, met many hospitable rural folks, and got to know my wonderful country so much better.

Atlassing permits us to make a meaningful contribution to citizen-science while enjoying the natural wonders in our extensive landscapes. I sincerely appeal to all members to support Atlassing and, where possible, to influence the youth of today to atlas now for their tomorrow.

Gerald Wingate: Tygerberg Bird Club

Participate and register as an observer / atlasser

In order to participate in this process, you must register as a 'Citizen Scientist' on the SABAP2 website. Go to; <http://sabap2.birdmap.africa/register>

Follow the following steps:

- Register as an observer. You will receive an observer card, citizen scientist number and a login password
- Download the BirdLasser app
- Make sure you understand the difference between a full protocol and adhoc protocol card
- Download the app BirdLasser
- Capture your data whilst in the field
- Submit your data – either whilst in the field, or once you are connected to wifi.



What's the best app for birding in South Africa?

Adam Cruickshank from The Birding Life give his view on the matter.

This is a question that gets asked on social media pages again and again. And to be honest, sometimes I get irritated by the answers that are given. People often push certain apps, thinking that the app that suits their needs will suit everyone else. Some may even have a connection to the app or its development, so the answers can be skewed. Another bias comes down to which apps people already have on their phones - they'll recommend what they know and love.

So, what qualifies me to write this and give my opinion?

1. I am not sponsored and have no connection to any of the app developers.
2. I have all the local bird identification apps on my phone. Yes, all of them. Sasol eBirds 5th Edition, Roberts Guide 2, Roberts Birds, Newman's Birds, Firefinch, and BirdPro South Africa.

As someone who has used and tested all these apps, the best way I can offer insight is by sharing which ones I actually use the most, and for what reasons.

The app I use most for identifying birds is Firefinch. This is a monthly or yearly subscription app, but it offers loads of value. It's regularly updated, with new articles published often - many by Faansie Peacock. The plates are in Faansie's style, so if you like his art, this app will be a winner. The photos are labelled to highlight key ID features, and the calls are excellent, with notes explaining what to listen for. Recently, detailed text on breeding biology was added, making it useful even for more advanced birders. Firefinch is a great app for both newer and experienced birders.

The app I probably open second most is BirdPro South Africa. Like Firefinch, it's subscription based. Where it shines is in the photos - it provides a wide range showing different plumages, morphs, and sexes. Under most of the photos, there are ID notes to guide you. The calls are excellent, and the inclusion of text from The

Ultimate Companion is a big win. This is an award-winning app that I use regularly in the field, and it appeals to all levels of birders.

Next is Sasol eBirds 5th Edition. This app offers the most “bang for your buck.” It’s a once-off purchase, not subscription-based, and has good plates, decent text, and easily accessible calls, you can play them right from the main screen, which is quick and handy in the field. The photos are not as strong as Firefinch or BirdPro, but for the price, this is a fantastic all-rounder, especially for newer birders buying their first app.

For detailed information, I use Roberts Guide 2. This remains one of the most popular apps among experienced birders because of the in-depth text and high-quality plates. I also own the newer Roberts Birds app, but honestly, I find it less user-friendly and often go back to the older app. Many birders share this frustration. Roberts is subscription-based, and while it appeals more to experienced birders, most birders will eventually add it to their collection.

The Newman’s Birds app I don’t use as often, but that’s because of my current birding level. For newer birders, though, this is a great app. It uses Kenneth Newman’s simple methods to teach ID, has good-quality calls (many supplied by Doug Newman), and is straightforward to use. It’s also a once-off payment.

Finally, the BirdScan app is a companion to Veld Birds of Southern Africa – The Complete Photographic Guide. While it has brilliant photos, I don’t think the app adds much value compared to the book, which is excellent.

So, here’s my summary:

- **Best all-round app:** Firefinch
- **Best photography app:** BirdPro South Africa
- **Best “bang for your buck” app:** Sasol eBirds 5th Edition
- **Best information app:** Roberts
- **Best beginner app:** Newman’s Birds

I’d love to hear your opinion - what’s the best birding app for you, and why

Adam Cruickshank: The Birding Life, 23 September 2025

Donations

The Tygerberg Bird Club made a donation of R5000 towards the Birdlasser programme in October, as well as R10 000 to the Owl Orphanage in Velddrif. You may read more on the importance of the Birdlasser programme on page 8. We have featured the Owl Orphanage in The Kite no 138. Both these organizations were hugely grateful for the sizable donations. Below are their respective responses.

Dear Brigid and Tygerberg Bird Club members,
A huge thanks for this enormously generous donation received! I’m sure you can agree, the Birdlasser app has revolutionised the way we bird, and for us at the Science and Innovation Programme, revolutionised the way we are able to conserve our precious bird diversity. Your donation goes a long way to ensuring that BirdLasser will support both bird conservation and enjoyable birding long into the future.
Kind regards,
Dr David Ehlers Smith, Science and Spatial Planning Project Manager | Birdlife South Africa

Dear Brigid and Benita,
Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. This is such an incredible blessing at the current moment.
Please share our appreciation with the whole club.
With gratitude,
Jacques, Owl Orphanage Velddrif

International News

From South Africa to China: the incredible migration of a European Roller

GPS data and photographs from a Chinese ornithologist confirm that a European Roller from South Africa migrated to breed in China.

In July 2025, BirdLife South Africa announced a new milestone in migratory bird research: The first confirmation that European Rollers migrate between South Africa and China. A European Roller, fitted with a GPS tracker by a BirdLife South Africa conservationist in Limpopo, South Africa, in March 2025, has been relocated in Xinjiang, China, after completing a journey of over 15,000 kilometres - through 13 countries - in just over three months.

The individual bird, affectionately named 'Rory' by the late Pamela Isdell, one of BirdLife South Africa's Honorary Patrons, was found by Professor Ma Ming from the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology & Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences. After three days of intensive searching along the rugged Tian Shan Mountains on the edge of the Gurbantünggüt Desert, guided by BirdLife South Africa's GPS data, Professor Ma and his team located Rory near a nest, indicating that Rory has found his breeding ground for the season.

Without Professor Ma and his team's determination, Rory's breeding site would remain an abstract point on a map. Instead, this growing partnership is now offering valuable, on-the-ground insights into the habitats European Rollers rely on in this region of China. European Rollers are charismatic and beautiful, familiar to South Africans during the summer months that the birds spend here, but few know the incredible voyage these birds undertake each year. Their full migratory routes, particularly those of the eastern subspecies, have remained largely unknown. That began to change in March 2024, when BirdLife South Africa began to fit European Rollers with solar-powered GPS trackers. Since then, seven European Rollers (Hera, Apollo, Atlas, Juno, Rory, Aether, and Royal Wasi) have transformed speculation into data, mapping their routes across continents in near real time. These birds have been tracked to presumed breeding grounds in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and now China, but this discovery is the first time a tracked bird has been physically sighted in its breeding ground.

Why It Matters: A Call for Flyway Collaboration

Rory's journey illustrates the core of BirdLife South Africa's Flyway and Migrants project: migratory birds depend on a network of viable habitats, which are collectively called flyways, that stretch across borders, cultures, and continents. These flyways are used by millions of birds each year, but without protection, these remarkable migrations, shaped over millennia, could collapse. That is why we track European Rollers.

Across Europe and Central Asia, their populations are in decline, with local extinctions already recorded in parts of their breeding range. In response, governments under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) adopted the Flyway Action Plan for the European Roller, calling for urgent, coordinated action across the species' entire range. Protecting the European Roller demands a flyway-scale approach - one that considers every phase of their lifecycle, from breeding grounds in the north, the critical stopover sites where they rest and refuel during migration, to their non-breeding habitats in the south. To achieve that, international collaboration

A European Roller fitted with a GPS tracking device, Limpopo. Photograph credit: Jessica Wilmot, BirdLife South Africa.



is essential; satellite tracking provides the big-picture view, but what happens on the ground matters just as much.

Local knowledge and conservation action guided by collaboration across the flyway is essential to securing the future of these birds. Professor Ma's insights have now provided a better understanding of the threats that Rory and his clutch of chicks are facing. The landscape of the breeding ground is dominated by cotton fields, currently plagued by a pest outbreak. Drones are being used to spray pesticides which pose a potential threat to the survival of the European Rollers and their food sources in the area. 2 Jessica Wilmot, BirdLife South Africa's Flyway and Migrants Project Manager, explains: "It was surreal receiving photos of Rory - thousands of kilometres from where we first encountered him in South Africa. It is a testament to what a flyway conservation approach can achieve. Professor Ma's enthusiasm to collaborate has opened the door for impactful conservation efforts across continents. How often do we get the chance to work with passionate individuals not just in another country, but on an entirely different continent? I'm incredibly excited to see how this partnership grows." This milestone underscores the importance of international collaboration in migratory bird conservation. BirdLife South Africa is calling on researchers, birdwatchers, conservationists, and passionate individuals across Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia to join this effort. Whether their region hosts breeding, stopover, or wintering sites, people can play a vital role in uncovering and protecting the full migratory story of the European Roller.

BirdLife South Africa needs help to write the next chapter of this extraordinary migration story. Working collaboratively, scientists and conservationists across the world's flyways can ensure that future generations will be able to look to the skies each summer and catch that unforgettable turquoise flash of a European Roller. Find information about migratory birds and the global flyways here: <https://www.birdlife.org/globalflyways/>

Birdlife South Africa

A Flamingo Paradise

Lake Nakuru, situated in the Rift Valley province, is renowned for its diverse birdlife, including several globally threatened species. However, it is the sheer number of flamingos that truly sets this lake apart. The shallow waters, rich in algae, provide an ideal habitat for these elegant creatures, attracting both greater and lesser flamingos in staggering quantities.



The Lesser Flamingo: A Marvel of Nature

The lesser flamingo, with its distinctive deep red bill and pink plumage, is particularly abundant at Lake Nakuru. These birds are filter feeders, consuming algae and plankton from the lake's waters. The flamingo population can fluctuate throughout the year, with peak numbers often exceeding a million.

Challenges and Conservation Efforts



Despite its natural beauty, Lake Nakuru faces several challenges, including pollution, drought, and habitat degradation. These factors can impact the availability of food for the flamingos and force them to migrate to other nearby lakes. Conservation efforts are underway to address these issues and protect the fragile ecosystem of Lake Nakuru.

HasanJasim.online

Club News and Activities

Club Outing: Babylonstoren - 20 September 2025

The weather forecast for the Saturday was promising, so Brian and I made a spontaneous decision to join the Saturday outing to Babylonstoren. I haven't been to this venue at all and was keen to see the much talked about spectacle of Clivias. I wasn't disappointed. The weather was fantastic, as were the ambience and show of flowers. The succulent house with arid-adapted plants, kept Brian and I captive for almost an hour!

It was also quite special to meet up with birding buddies – old and new.

Spring has definitely arrived, and this is evident from the combined bird species number recorded by Brian and Keith for the day – 51 in total.

Several flycatchers and sunbirds were seen – e.g. African Dusky Flycatcher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Malachite Sunbird and Southern Double-collared Sunbird. The water pans delivered the following species: African Darter, Common



Moorhen, Yellow-billed Duck and Purple Heron. The following were either heard or seen in the reed beds: Common Reed Warbler, Lesser Swamp Warbler, Levillant's Cisticola, Little Rush Warbler, Southern Masked Weaver and Yellow Bishop. Pity we only heard the Olive Woodpecker and didn't get to see it.

Brigid and Brian had a fleeting glimpse of a Black Sparrowhawk, before it disappeared amongst the foliage of the trees again.



This is a special venue – although the entrance fee is quite steep if you only visit once in a while. An option to obtain a multiple entry permit is cheaper in the long run.

Dalene Vanderwalt

Photos of African Dusky Flycatcher, African Moorhen and Olive Woodpecker by Brian Vanderwalt



Club Outing: Intaka Island - 13 August 2025



Club members having their compulsory tea on the patio at the visitor's centre, Intaka Island



Majestic Purple Heron: photo by Lydia Lacerda



Another rare species seen at Intaka "Monteith": photo by Cheryl Grobler



Elusive Black Crake: photo by Philip Fry

Club Outing: Strandfontein WWW - 19 July 2025

A visit to Strandfontein Waste Water Works always deliver a number of duck species.



Cape Teal: photo Michael Manzoni



Cape Shoveler: photo Otto du Plessis



Red-billed Teal: photo Michael Manzoni



Southern Pochard: photo Otto du Plessis



White-backed Duck: photo Otto du Plessis

Picnic after a good morning's birding



A River Runs Through It | Club Outing: Eerste Rivier - 8 July 2025

It was a delightful sunny morning when we set off for a stroll along the Eerste River route in Stellenbosch. You could tell the 18 birders were just happy to get out and see one another, shaking off the winter blues with cheerful greetings. Laughter floated freely like the birds above.

We smelt the fresh, verdant scent of the forest, a mixture of damp earth, leaf litter, and the lingering aroma of river air. The emerald-green forest enticed and the leaves of the trees, in their winter hues, beckoned - ochres, russets and worn gold catching the sunlight like forgotten treasure.

The Eerste River trail is a 5km loop. The path was mushy here and there - thanks to recent rain, but nothing a decent pair of boots couldn't handle. Overall, it made for a comfy walk, with the sound of water rushing over the rocks and forming a backdrop to our muffled voices.

A beautiful pair of African Black Duck entertained us with their antics in the river, even clambering over the smooth round rocks and revealing their yellow legs, feet and toes.

The birds were chirping and frolicking in the foliage, weaving an invisible thread through the morning. Some were hidden in the thickets; others darted across shafts of sunlight. The noisy calls of Egyptian Geese and Hadedra Ibis formed a shrill contrast to the gentler whistles of smaller birds.

At one point, we looked up to see a leafless tree full of chattering starlings, their glossy feathers catching the light like jewels. They filled the air with sound and motion like a living Christmas tree.

An Olive Woodpecker revealed itself to a few birders before flying off. Small Cape Batis skulking in the undergrowth was no match for some accomplished photographers.

There was a magical moment when a Jackal Buzzard soared overhead in the blue sky, majestic and effortless.



We were able to catch our breath at a lookout point over the river. Sweet Waxbills in abundance flitted and frolicked in the foliage along the river. We breathed deeply and enjoyed the rich tapestry embroidered by nature.

A Pin-tailed Whydah, without breeding plumage but with characteristic red bill, darted hither and thither overhead. A magnificent Malachite Sunbird in iridescent green did the same. Southern Double-Collared Sunbirds chirped their swizzling song in the treetops. A dull female Amethyst Sunbird with her striped belly made a surprising appearance.

Suddenly, an African Harrier Hawk glided gracefully and low over the birders, showing off its unmistakable shape and grey colours with a spatter of yellow; a moment of quiet reverence followed the surprised gasps as it settled in a tree.

Under the expert guidance of Keith Roxburgh, the group identified 30 species including Cape Canary, Fiscal Flycatcher and Cape Robin-Chat, amongst others.

Eventually, some birders heeded the call for coffee at a café while others found a picnic spot in the parking area next to Coetzenburg Stadium. In a world that often moves too fast, mornings like this feel like a gentle reminder that beauty is found in nature and community.

The works of art and display boards along the meander provide additional inspiration. The sculptures create an interactive and creative environment for the enjoyment of all.

‘In every walk with nature, man receives far more than he seeks.’

Notes:

The Eerste River rises on Dwarsberg at the head of the Jonkershoek Valley. Only about 40 km long, it flows into the sea on the northern part of False Bay at Macassar.

The route, adjacent to the Mile-long Art Gallery, was built, and is maintained by the Stellenbosch Trail Fund, (STF) that aims to create and improve hiking, biking and running trails in and around Stellenbosch. Businesses and individuals provide the funding.

Article: Cheryl Grobler | Photos: Karen Small

Club Outing: Tygerberg Nature Reserve 11 June 2025

The highlights of the Tygerberg Nature Reserve midweek walk were the gorgeous weather and a number of special birds.



Grey-backed Cisticola: photo credit Firefinch birding app

Shortly after the start of the walk, the friendly group of 12 birders were quickly immersed in the game of spot the Swee Waxbill. Swee Waxbills are not common in the reserve, and it was great to see them feeding opposite the Duiker Trail turn-off.

The Bitou bushes have started to flower, and they are always good for spotting feeding Brimstone and White-throated Canaries. The Bokmakierie calls were heard often, and eventually they were seen. The Southern Boubou was only heard but never seen.

The Grey-backed and Levaillant's Cisticolas gave us all very good sightings.

The bird of the day, Layard's Warbler, was soon heard, and those with more patience, got to see and photographed it. The rest had to wait a bit longer for their good sighting.

The newly arrived Stonechat pair was seen as well. The raptors were a bit shy, but the Jackal Buzzard, Rock Kestrel, and Black Sparrowhawk did eventually appear.

Thanks to all for a great morning out. A total of 36 species were seen on the day.

Keith Roxburgh



Levaillant's Cisticola: photo Ettiene Kotze

Know Your Birds

The Hamerkop...

With a wide distribution across Southern Africa, it's a species most birders in the region are familiar with.

The Hamerkop is a connector species. In other words, it's one of those birds that even non-birders tend to know about, creating a unique opportunity for us to bridge the gap between our world and theirs. On a Big 5 game drive, this large, odd-looking bird is interesting enough to warrant a stop.

The Zulu name for the species is uthekwane, which comes from the word for "bay" or "lagoon"—the same root word used in eThekweni, the Zulu name for Durban.

So, here are some cool facts about the Hamerkop:

- **The Only One of Its Kind:** The Hamerkop is the sole member of both its genus (*Scopus*) and its family (Scopidae), making it a monotypic family—a rare distinction in the bird world. Though it resembles a heron or stork, it's not closely related to either.
- **The Name Says It All:** The name "Hamerkop" is Afrikaans for "hammer head," referring to the bird's unique head shape, formed by its long, flat bill and backward-pointing crest.
- **Legendary Nest Builders:** Hamerkops are famous for their enormous dome-shaped nests—some weighing over 50 kg and strong enough to support a human's weight! Nest construction can take up to six weeks and may involve more than 8,000 sticks. The interior is even plastered with mud to create a smooth, waterproof lining.
- **Nesting Obsession:** They don't stop at just one nest. Hamerkops often build several nests in a single season, sometimes without ever using them. These "practice nests" may be used later, taken over by other animals, or simply abandoned.
- **Superstitions and Symbolism:** In some African cultures, Hamerkops are considered birds of omen or magic. Disturbing a Hamerkop or its nest is believed to bring misfortune—and according to legend, anyone who destroys a Hamerkop nest could be struck by lightning.
- **Ritualised Displays:** Pairs engage in elaborate greeting rituals, including mutual preening, calling, and striking postures. These behaviours are believed to strengthen pair bonds and reinforce social cohesion.
- **Opportunistic Feeders:** While commonly seen wading in shallow water, Hamerkops are far from picky eaters. They feed on fish, frogs, tadpoles, insects, and even small rodents—using a shuffle-and-snap technique to flush out prey.
- **Ecosystem Engineers:** Abandoned Hamerkop nests are often taken over by other species—including owls, snakes, bees, genets, and monitor lizards. Their nest-building behaviour plays an important role in the ecosystem, supporting a wide range of life.



Cape Wagtail...

Here are five quick facts about this species:

- **A Close Relative of Pipits:** The Cape Wagtail is closely related to pipits and longclaws, as they all belong to the Motacillidae family. This explains their shared traits such as ground-feeding, constant walking or running, and a love for open areas. While wagtails are often more striking and associated with water, their pipit cousins show similar foraging behaviours—just without the dramatic tail wagging.
- **The Purpose Behind Its Tail Wagging:** One of the Cape Wagtail's most distinctive habits is its constant tail wagging. Scientists believe this behaviour may help flush out insects from hiding places or act as a visual signal to predators, showing that the bird is alert and ready to escape.
- **Masters of Adaptation:** These birds are incredibly adaptable and thrive in a wide range of environments—from mountain streams and farmlands to urban gardens and city parks. They are especially drawn to areas near water, where insect prey is plentiful.
- **Devoted Parents with Hidden Nests:** Cape Wagtails build well-hidden nests, often tucked into crevices, dense vegetation, or even human-made structures. Both parents share the responsibility of raising the chicks, and many pairs reuse successful nesting sites across multiple seasons.
- **More Subtle Than Flash, but Still Elegant:** Though not brightly coloured, the Cape Wagtail has its own subtle charm with soft grey, white, and dusky tones. They move along the ground with an almost royal grace, offering those who take the time to observe them a chance to appreciate their elegant movements.



Southern Cassowary: The giant prehistoric bird with dinosaur feet

They are often likened to a modern-day dinosaur due to their massive size, vivid colouration and powerful, raptor-like feet, earning them the title of the "world's most dangerous birds."

Native to tropical rainforests, the southern cassowary is the heaviest flightless bird in Australia and the second-heaviest in the world, after the common ostrich (*Struthio camelus*). These birds can grow up to 5.6 feet (1.7m) tall and belong to the ratite group, which includes ostriches, emus and kiwis, according to the San Diego

Zoo Fossil evidence and genetic studies suggest that cassowaries have existed in some form for tens of millions of years.

One of the cassowary's most prehistoric-looking features is its feet. Each foot has three toes, with the inner toe bearing a dagger-like claw that can grow up to 5 inches (12 cm) long. These claws aren't just for show; they're capable of delivering powerful, slashing kicks that can injure or even kill potential threats, including humans. Their legs are extremely muscular and adapted for quick, forceful movements, which helps them lash out at predators, such as crocodiles and pythons.

Cassowaries also have a striking and unusual appearance. Their heads and necks are bare and vividly coloured in shades of blue and red, but their bodies are covered in coarse, black feathers that look more like hair than typical bird plumage. This coat provides protection from sharp thorns and branches as they move through dense vegetation.

The giant birds also have brightly coloured pouches of flesh, called wattles, that dangle down from their necks. These are thought to help cassowaries relay social cues to others: For example, if they shake their heads and clap their wattles it may be a sign of territorial aggression.

They also have large, helmet-like structures called 'casques' on top of their heads. The exact function of the casque is still debated among biologists, but research suggests these structures act as "thermal windows" or radiators, allowing the bird to release excess heat in hot weather and conserve it in cooler conditions. It may also amplify and direct the birds' low-frequency calls, helping them communicate over long distances.

Unlike many animal species, male cassowaries are the primary caregivers for their offspring. They sit on their eggs for about 50 days and once the eggs have hatched, they tend to their chicks for around nine months.

Despite their fearsome nickname, cassowaries are generally shy and elusive and prefer to avoid confrontation and people when possible. However, attacks can occasionally happen if cassowaries are approached by



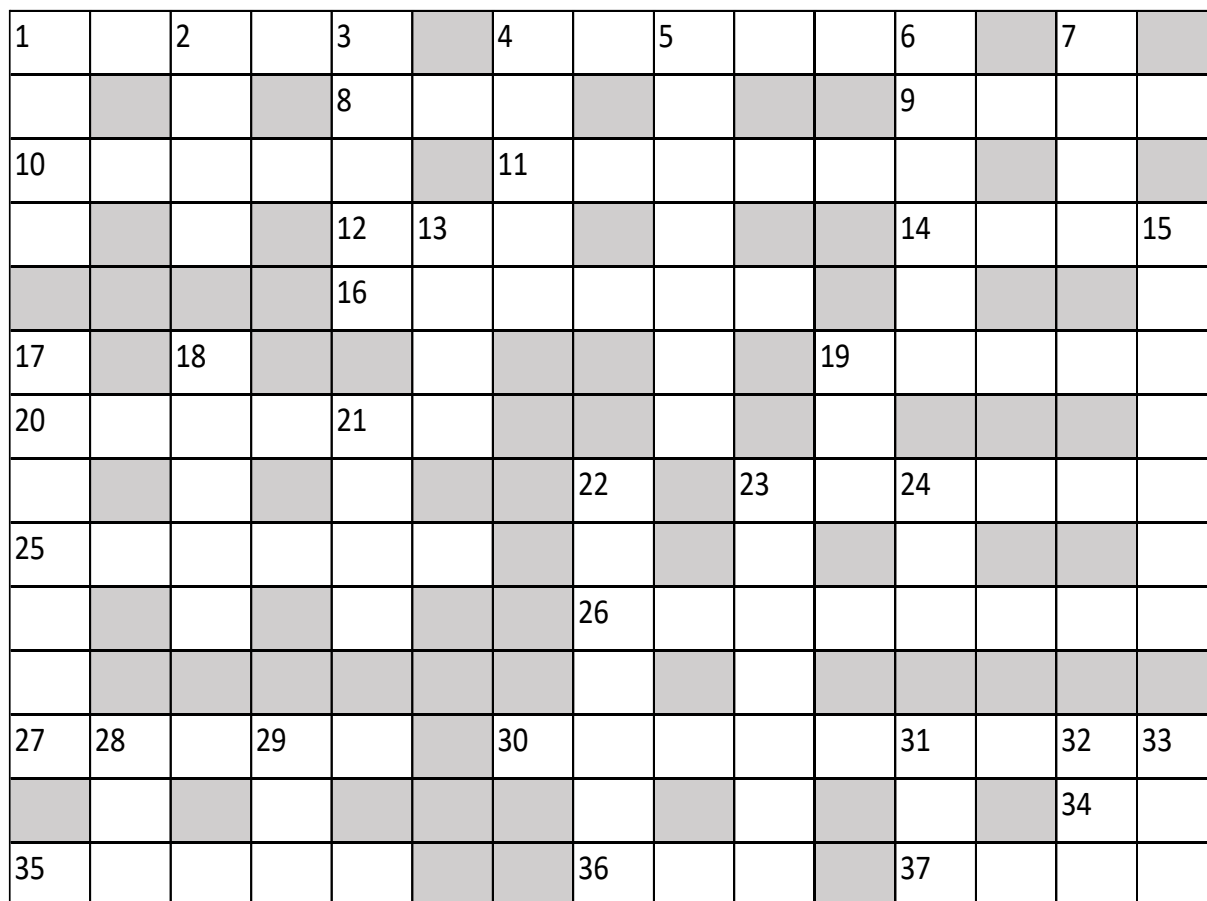
(Image credit: Getty/Wokephoto17/Alamy/Trevor Collens)

humans. In 2019, a man in Florida was killed by a cassowary that he was keeping as a pet. This was the first reported fatality in almost 100 years.

Source: Live Science, June 2025

Brain teasers

CROSSWORD PUZZLE NO. 21



Compiler: Gerald Wingate

Clues Across

1. Home for some swallows
4. These birds could be yellow-billed
8. A food type for a chat
9. Abrev. for a nosy Albatross
10. Plants in ponds
11. These birds could be bald or glossy
12. This bird could be wood, or marsh
14. A type of raptor
16. This egret is not big
19. A marsh gamebird for a marksman
20. A chat could be doing this
23. A region or tern
25. It was a Loerie
26. Not migratory
27. Someone's Petrel
30. Seasonal movement
34. To be, or not to
35. A shady dove
36. Abrev. for a migrant shrike
37. Examine or check

Clues Down

1. The cheeks of a babbler
2. A rocky feature at the seashore
3. A sponsor of a field guide
4. A very long leg
5. These birds could be black- or green-headed
6. A small seedeater
7. A distance, speed, or wader
13. On a _ _ _ _ and a prayer
15. A graceful tern
17. A small raptor
18. Someone's lark
19. Abrev. for a regal albatross
21. A characteristic feature of a flamingo
22. A war-like eagle
23. Very arid habitats
24. Building material for *hirundines*
28. Black-throated Wattle- _ _ _
29. The call of a dove
31. A tiny tot

General Club Information

How do we communicate with members?

Notices on outings, etc. are sent to members via a “groups” e-mail address. **Members only MUST SUBSCRIBE themselves** – we cannot do it.

It is quick and easy to do. Send an e-mail to: tygerbergbc+subscribe@groups.io and you will be included in future communication regarding club matters.

Join our Facebook page

Members are welcome to share information regarding their travels and interesting sightings on this page.

www.facebook.com/groups/tygerbergbirdclub/

Change of contact details

Please notify the TBC Membership Secretary, Judy Kotze, should your e-mail address or other contact details change on gert.k@absamail.co.za

TBC contact details

Website: www.tygerbergbirdclub.org

PO Box 1321, Durbanville, 7551

Chairperson's e-mail: B.crewe@wo.co.za

Vice Chairperson's e-mail: gert.k@absamail.co.za

Contributions to The Kite

Please mail any contributions to the newsletter (include pictures where possible) to:

dalene@brians-birding.co.za

TBC Steering committee 2025

Honorary President	Brian Vanderwalt	Cell: 082 999 9333
Chairperson	Brigid Crewe	Cell: 082 570 0808
Vice Chairperson	Judy Kotze	Cell: 083 254 0919
Treasurer	Benita Bartlett	Cell: 083 254 8791
Committee Member	Margaret Oosthuizen	Cell: 073 210 9397
Membership Secretary	Judy Kotze	Cell: 083 254 0919
Editor of The Kite	Dalene Vanderwalt	Cell: 084 702 4201
TBC Ringing Unit	Lee Silks	Cell: 083 208 8766
Conservation Officer	Kevin Drummond-Hay	Cell: 074 587 3792



Tygerberg Bird Club's Mission / Missie van die Tygerberg Voëlklub

To enhance our knowledge of all birds, their behaviour, and their habitats and to introduce the public to the conservation and science of our avian heritage through enjoyable participation by club members.

Om as klub ons kennis van alle voëls, hul gedrag en hul habitat te verbeter en deur genotvolle deelname van klublede, die publiek bewus te maak van die bewaring en wetenskap van ons plaaslike voël erfenis.

Celebrating 38 years of bringing birders together

Upcoming Club Outings and Activities



October 2025

Thursday 16 October – Club meeting @ 19:30

Speaker: Gert Kotze

Topic: “Makuleke – True gem of Northern Kruger Park”

Five TBC friends went on a memorable trip to Makuleke, in Northern Kruger Park. Many incredible baobabs seen, and many of the ‘special birds’ of the North enjoyed by all. Mad dash from Kruger International at White River – to get to Punda Maria sleepover in the North – not without incidents! Birding on game vehicle for 3 x days was wonderful. Then South through Kruger in 37 - 43-degree heat! Lots of nice game seen and some scary moments with elephants. A trip to remember!!!

Saturday 18 October - Club outing @ 8:30

RIETVLEI WETLAND RESERVE, Sandpiper Crescent, Table View.

Contact: Judy Kotze (083 254 0919)

Travel to Table View – from Blaauwberg Road, turn into Grey Avenue, and then into Sandpiper Crescent. The Rietvlei wetlands have a lovely variety of birds. Entrance fee R50 for Pensioners with ID's, and R75 – Adults, plus R28 for the vehicle. Try to share lifts please. RESERVE IS CASHLESS – bring Bank cards. Prices subject to change.

****We park at the education building, near the Ablution block – from where we walk.**

Please bring water to carry, and good hiking shoes, and coffee baskets.

November 2025

Tuesday 11 November – Club outing @ 8:30
Paardevelei, Strand.

Thursday 20 November – Club meeting @ 19:30

Speaker: Pieter Roux

Topic: The beauty of Kgalagadi

Saturday 22 November - Club outing @ 08:00
Delheim Wine Estate

December 2025

Tuesday 9 December – Club outing

Saturday 13 December - Club outing

Out bird watching today and got this great shot of a falcon resting in a tree. I love nature.

