Official Newsletter Amptelike Nuusbrief

The Kite

Tygerberg Bird Club
Tygerberg Voëlklub

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BirdLife SOUTH AFRICA
Giving Conservation Wings

Chirp from the Chair

During these lockdown days – we have become more aware of 'how blessed we are' to live in such a beautiful part of Cape Town. After lovely rain in June and July, the surrounding areas are looking good – almost as lovely as the hundreds of Red Bishops in my garden in D'Urbanvale. As they change into their full breeding colours – their comical stages of moult have really entertained us.

A big thank you to all our monthly guest speakers for bringing their interesting talks into our homes via Zoom and Facebook. Some have commented how difficult it is giving a talk without the live interaction of our Members. We are grateful to Dalene and Brian Vanderwalt for their hard work behind the scenes to get the 'TBC show back on the road' again!

We are really missing the TBC outings and seeing our fellow birders, but remain focused that everybody should try and stay safe and healthy during this time.

Thank you to all members and friends, who contributed to CWAC water bird and CAR roadside bird counts during July, whilst adhering to safety guidelines. It is great once more to visit Strandfontein, Intaka and other reserves around the Peninsula.

This new era has made us aware that 'less can be more' - and we are grateful to enjoy our wonderful hobby of birdwatching. To all our Members – we miss you and look forward to seeing you at TBC events in the future. Please keep sharing your lovely pictures and travel tips!

Happy birding.

Brigid Crewe

We stay connected, despite the lockdown!

Due to the current lockdown regulations, there are no official club outings or meetings scheduled. Thankfully, we are able to continue some club activities, with regular talks via Zoom and live streaming on our Facebook page being hosted for the benefit of our members and birding guests. Be sure to login via one of these methods and enjoy the virtual experience with us!

Club virtual meeting on Thursday, 20 August 2020 @ 19:30

SPEAKER: Matthew Orolowitz

TOPIC: "Life on the edge: does body size influence how birds deal with the heat in South Africa's most extreme desert?"

Climate change is acknowledged as one of the foremost threats to biodiversity. Animals can use behaviour to reduce the impacts of increasing heat. Traits such as body size has been identified as a factor that may influence species vulnerability to climate change. Previous studies have found that larger birds may be more vulnerable to climate change than smaller birds. However, these studies look at birds with very different foraging methods. My study looked at larks in the Tankwa Karoo National Park and aimed to find out whether large species really are in trouble with increasing temperatures?

Matthew's project was proudly supported by the Tygerberg Bird Club Conservation Fund.

Club virtual meeting on Thursday, 17 September 2020 @19:30

SPEAKER: Kevin Drummond-Hay TOPIC: Birding in Thailand

Kevin spent 21 days visiting 14 National Parks and had a sojourn in the Ancient City. Thailand is a birding destination of note!! Come and enjoy the incredible birding on offer in this area with us.

Sneak preview from Kevin's presentation ….

Thank you to the following members for their donations:

Renè Patterson, Anton Maree, Petrus Vermeulen, Kobie & Sarah van der Merwe, Colin Jones, Shelly Nichols, Jo Hobbs, John Fincham, Pierre van Zyl, Wendel du Buy, Pieter Diederichs, Angus & Francis Hemp, Hanne & Emil Boeke, Andrè & Tia Visser, Peter & Laura Loynes, Ronald Uijs, Barry Street, Jon & Marjè Hemp, Horton & Christine Griffiths, Jenny Brink, Sigi Vollmer, Sigi Frye, Liz van Wyk, Otto Schmidt, Diane Cameron, Emielka van Wyk Borst, Vic Els, Jill Frazer, Robert Brink, Rick Shuttleworth, Lionel Crewe, Annette Versluis, Wilma Meanly, Johan Swart, Anila van der Merwe and Riaan and David Hall.

We apologise for any names that might have been omitted from this list. The TBC is very grateful for all donations made to the Club. A large percentage of which goes to the TBC Conservation Fund.

What factors affect Blue Crane breeding success?

The Blue Crane is near-endemic to South Africa, with a very small population in Namibia (2017 census: 32 Blue Cranes).


Photo: Brian Vanderwalt

The South African population can be broadly split into three sub-populations, the eastern grasslands, the Karoo and the Western Cape (McCann 2001; Namibia Crane Working Group 2018). The stronghold for this species was once the eastern grasslands of South Africa, but as this habitat became degraded through afforestation, mining and agriculture, the population plummeted, leading to it being listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. While the grassland population was dwindling, Blue Cranes began to increase in the Western Cape, as fynbos was cleared for cereal cultivation and pasture. It is now estimated that more than half of all Blue Cranes reside in the Western Cape - with the Overberg being the main stronghold for the species (McCann 2001). While Blue Cranes seem to have adapted well to this intensively farmed landscape, they face many challenges - including powerline collisions, fence entanglements and breeding disturbance.

Christie Craig and her supervisors Tanya Smith & Prof. Peter Ryan (Endangered Wildlife Trust & FitzPatrick Institute) are busy with a PhD looking to understand the past trends and predict future trends for Blue Cranes in the Western Cape. In the past we witnessed fast declines of Blue Cranes in the grasslands and we need to stay abreast of the situation in the Western Cape to ensure this does not happen again. Blue Cranes are typically sexually mature from 4 years old, and breed monogamously, producing one or two chicks per year (Hockey et al. 2005). This type of slow breeding system is often a contributing factor in species with declining populations (Purvis et al. 2000). During her PhD, Christie is monitoring broad breeding success, but we would like to recruit two MSc students to investigate some of the mechanisms leading to a nest failing or succeeding. This information is important for informing appropriate conservation action. We are proposing two Conservation Biology MSc projects, one looking at Blue Crane nest success and monitoring nests to see what causes nest failure and a second project will look at how breeding Blue Cranes cope with high temperatures.

Blue Cranes breed over the summer, nesting in very exposed landscapes. The parents shade the clutch in the heat of the day, which has physiological costs to the parents who need to keep their clutch at a healthy temperature but also ensure that they themselves do not overheat or dehydrate. Climate change predictions are for the Western Cape to get hotter and drier and this could have impacts on Blue Cranes ability to breed successfully.

In 2004, Mark Bidwell, a Conservation Biology MSc student, conducted a project titled: “Breeding habitat selection and reproductive success of Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradiseus* in an agricultural landscape of

the Western Cape, South Africa". He monitored nest success at 63 nest sites near Caledon, in the Overberg, Western Cape and assessed habitat selection of breeding cranes. He found nest survival rate to differ between cranes nesting in pastures (79%) versus cereal crops (42%) (Bidwell 2004).

Since 2004, there have been several conservation initiatives in the Overberg, but also changes in land use, as more farmers have moved towards minimum till practices. These changes may well have resulted in changes to Blue Crane nest success. Therefore, the Conservation Biology MSc students will follow up on this study in the same area, to look at whether there have been changes in survival rates, habitat selection, reasons for nest loss and behavioural response to temperature.

The first project will follow the same methodology as Bidwell (2004), with a potential addition of camera traps to get detailed monitoring data while cranes are nesting. Blue Cranes typically start to defend territories in September/October, with breeding activity reaching a peak in November. Depending on the lockdown restrictions - the students would aim to start the project at the beginning of September, as Blue Cranes are pairing up and establishing territories.

A big thank you to the Tygerberg Bird Club committee and its members for their generous contribution towards the running costs of these projects - we could not do it without you!

Christie Craig: Blue Crane PhD Candidate & Western Cape Field Officer
Overberg Crane Group Extension Officer

Wat is "CAR"? - "Coordinated Avifaunal Road counts" of Gekoördineerde Padtellings van Voëls.

So vir die laaste twee jaar of so, is ek 'n geesdriftige groentjie "birder" (wat is dit in elk geval in Afrikaans – "voëler"?). Voëlkyk is interessant, dis pret en ek doen dit omdat ek wil. Dis nou tot so twee weke gelede, toe Mr B ewe aankondig: "it's payback time girl". Ons gaan blykbaar ons gewig ingooi by "CAR" en 'n bydrae maak ten opsigte van die bewaring van voëls. Dis nie 'n probleem nie – ek is heel gewillig. Totdat ek hoor ons moet reeds 7:30 by die beginpunt van ons roete wees – daar in die omgewing van Mooreesburg. Dit beteken ek sal moet 5:00 opstaan! Nou, sommige mense hou van die oggendstond, maar ek is nie een van hulle nie – ek word stadig wakker. Die vooruitsig van 'n lekker stomende koppie tee langs die pad kry my egter aan die gang en ons doen dit.

"Padtellings" is a tegniek wat gebruik word om waarnemings te maak (vanuit voertuie wat vaste roetes dek) met die doel om die bevolking van groot landvoëls te monitor.

Dit is juis hierdie groot landvoëls wat tekens van bedreiging toon as gevolg van verlies aan habitat a.g.v. veranderinge in grondgebruik, toenames in landbou gewasse en die bevolkingsdigtheid van mense, vergiftiging sowel as mensgemaakte strukture soos kragdrade. Met die vooruitsig dat wind- en sonkrag plase die gebruik van hernubare energiebronne sal verhoog, is monitering van hierdie spesies dus baie belangrik.

Die CAR-padtellings het reeds in 1993 begin en vind elke jaar op die laaste Saterdag van Januarie en Julie plaas. Meer as 750 mense neem deel, reis op hobbelrige agter paaie, wat hierdie een van die grootste projekte vir voël deelname in Afrika maak – met deelname van 42 distrikte in agt provinsies. CAR het floreer met die entoesiastiese, vrywillige deelname van lede van voëlklubs en boerderygemeenskappe, natuurbewaarders, skole en belangstellende lede van die publiek.

Dieselfde, voorafbepaalde roetes word elke keer gemonitor en dit maak die tellings wetenskaplik betekenisvol. Yippee – ons het 'n padkaart vir die dag! Dit beteken dat hierdie "kaartolis" (iemand wat daarvan hou om 'n kaart byderhand te hou), weet waarheen ons oppad is vir die dag. Iets wat my gewoonlik nie gegun is nie, aangesien Mr B geneig is om agter sy neus aan te ry en meestal self nie weet waarheen hy oppad is nie.

Ongeveer 50% van die roetes word deur boere gedek, wat die bewaring en voëlvriendelike grondbestuurs-praktyke op privaatgrond bevorder. Die meeste landvoëls het groot areas en word nie voldoende bewaar in beskermde gebiede nie. Boere bestuur die meerderheid van Suid-Afrika se grond – ongeveer 80% daarvan. Dit is vanselfsprekend dat indien bewaring nie op 80% van die land plaasvind nie, dit nie in die land as geheel kan slaag nie. Die boer is dus 'n belangrike bewaarder en bestuurder van ons natuurlike rykdom en erfenis, en hulle bydraes tot die bewaring van voëls en ander diere- en plantspesies is baie groot.

Die padtellings word op 'n bepaalde manier gedoen. Ons ry stadig en maak aantekening wanneer enige van die spesifieke voëls opgemerk word. Ons hou ook elke 2km stil (nie om tee te drink nie) – om die omliggende veld/landerye te bespied met ons verkykers en voël getalle aan te teken. Die roetes beslaan slegs openbare paaie en geen privaat-eiendom word besoek nie.

Meer as 36 groot landvoël spesies (onder andere bloukraanvoëls, reiers, korhaan, ooievaars, sekretarisvoëls en ibis), word deur die CAR padtellings gemonitor, waarvan 14 soorte in die Suid-Afrikaanse Rooidataboek as Krities Bedreig, Kwesbaar of Amper Bedreig beskou word.

Die CAR padtellings word gekoördineer deur Sanjo Rose by die FitzPatrick Instituut vir Afrika-ornitologie, Universiteit van Kaapstad.

Heerlike, sonnige weer (nie te koud nie) dra by tot 'n lekker uitstappie, die gebruiklike piekniek langs die pad en alles boonop met 'n goeie doel. Natuurlik kom ons nie vroeg tuis nie – almal weet jy pak vir 'n lang dag met Mr B aan die stuur!

Dalene Vanderwalt

Bearded Vulture - re-introduction in SA

A SA new study, led by scientists at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and published in the journal Ostrich, explores where best to establish a new population of bearded vulture. The study identifies five potential locations within the species' historic South African range – in both the Eastern and Western Cape – and explores the potential benefits and threats present at each site. The study also found that any reintroduction would be far more likely to succeed if a captive breeding population is established first.

The bearded vulture is one of the most threatened vultures in Southern Africa, with only around 100 breeding pairs left in the wild. In the past, the species was once far more widespread, occurring in both the Eastern and Western Cape. However, the species' range is now restricted to the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains of Lesotho and South Africa.

The bearded vulture is threatened by poison, electrocutions and collisions with powerlines, and more recently, by wind energy developments. Scientists predict that without intervention, the population could completely disappear within the next 50 years. Now, conservationists are proposing that a new population be established elsewhere in South Africa to help safeguard the future of the species.

Based on the study's findings and motivated by successful reintroductions of the species in Europe, the Bearded Vulture Recovery Programme has initiated a captive breeding programme, Bred 4 the Wild, under the management of Shannon Hoffman. This breeding programme aims to supply young captive-bred vultures for the proposed reintroduction.

"We have already successfully reared seven chicks from eggs that were taken from wild nests," said Dr Sonja Krüger, an ecologist with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, an author of the study and coordinator of the Bearded Vulture Recovery Programme. She explained that these egg removals will have no effect on the wild population because bearded vultures lay two eggs, only one of which ever survives to fledge.

However, more research is still required before any reintroduction programme can begin. "Our study helps give a general idea of potential areas to consider for the reintroduction," said Christiaan W Brink, UCT PhD student and lead author. "However, it is now vitally important to ground-truth their suitability and engage with stakeholders to ensure it is safe for the species to return."

Poisoning, for example, the use of poison to control predator numbers and avoid livestock losses, is the single most important cause of bearded vulture declines in Southern Africa, explained Krüger, and landowner cooperation within a release area will, therefore, be vital to the success of any reintroduction project.

Associate Professor Arjun Amar, who supervised the research, said, "Our study suggests that establishing a new population away from the species' current range can act as an insurance policy against the extinction of this population.

"Successful reintroductions in Europe have shown that such a strategy can work for this species and is, therefore, something that we need to start exploring here in Southern Africa; our study is the first attempt to explore its feasibility."

Source: Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology

Know your birds:

Get to know "Bird of the Year" – Southern Ground-Hornbill

Southern Ground-Hornbills *Bucorvus leadbeateri* are large, group-living birds which require extensive territories and relatively undisturbed areas with large trees for breeding and roosting. With high rates of habitat destruction during the past century, which has accelerated in recent decades, these requirements have become increasingly rare, leading to a two-thirds reduction in the Southern Ground-Hornbill's range within South Africa. A long-term study at the Fitz, initiated in 2000, has been investigating their habitat use, reproductive success, and natal and breeding dispersal. Now they are building on this foundation to study the social behaviour in more detail, specifically how group members contribute to vital group functions such as territory defence and reproduction, and whether larger groups are more resilient when facing extreme climate events. To read more on this research, go to:
http://www.fitzpatrick.uct.ac.za/fitz/research/programmes/maintaining_species_level/southern_ground-hornbill_conservation

Fascinating Facts About the Misunderstood Magpie

Magpies are often maligned as pests, but they're actually quite interesting birds that are usually overlooked for both their beauty and their intelligence. Here are some interesting facts about magpies.

Magpies Don't Like Shiny Things — They're Scared of Them

Magpies have a reputation as thieves out to steal your shiny jewelry or take ornaments from your garden, but new research shows that flashy objects probably repel magpies. The myth seems to have built up without much science to back it up, but the truth could actually be useful. Magpies are capable of wrecking crops by digging for grain, berries and other food, so along with other bird-scaring measures, placing shiny materials in fields might deter magpies and keep crops safe from being upturned and trampled.

Magpies Will Eat Almost Anything, Including Bird Eggs and Chicks

While their natural diet is quite broad — including insects, small rodents, grain and berries –magpies have been known to steal other birds' eggs, and even young chicks. Magpies have adapted rather well to suburban living, so they'll often eat leftover food scraps.

Magpies Are Closely Related to Crows, Jays and Ravens

Though they may look quite a bit different at first glance, magpies belong to the bird family Corvidae, a group that includes crows, ravens, rooks, jackdaws and jays, as well as lesser recognized members like treepies, choughs and nutcrackers. While they share some similarities with their corvid family, the magpies possess an extremely long tail. In fact, a magpie's tail is often roughly the same length as its entire body.

Why magpies have such long tails remains up for debate, but it may provide magpies with the ability to make swift turns while in the air. This would allow the birds to evade larger predators and make up for rather average flying abilities.

Magpies Recognize Themselves in Mirrors

Magpies are among the most intelligent family of birds recognized by modern science. European magpies have demonstrated the remarkable ability to recognize their own reflections in mirrors, something that was once thought to be a defining characteristic belonging only to humans. This might not sound that amazing, but out of countless species tested, only four ape species, bottlenose dolphins and Asian elephants have demonstrated this ability.

Source: Focusing on wildlife.com

Diminituve Chirper of the night

Many people associate the African Scops Owl with trips to the Kruger National Park and other bushveld getaways. In some of the bird books from many years ago, the distribution maps show this little Owl either to occur in the Eastern Cape province very sparsely, or not at all. However, this is not true. There are enough records of this bird in the area to confirm that it is not at all uncommon in the Eastern Cape. There are records (both old and recent) from Port Alfred, Bathurst, Bedford, Adelaide, Grahamstown… the list goes on.

My own first encounter with this bird was at Double Drift on the Fish River in 1997. As we shone our torch, it sat in front of us watching the insects and moths that were being attracted by the light. Of course, being such a small owl, insects form a large part of the diet, although it will also take small rodents and reptiles.

As dusk falls and the night sounds fade in, the African Scops Owl starts advertising its presence from the Euphorbia covered slopes, valleys, streams and other watercourses. The call is a distinctive, short "Prrrp", which carries far. The pitch and speed of this chirp can vary slightly between individuals. You may visit https://www.xeno-canto.org/385223 to hear my recording of this owl. When calling, the bird leans forward slightly, puffing up a section of the throat on each note.

During the day it is almost impossible to see the bird. The grey colouration, fine bars, speckles and other markings give it such camouflage that it blends right in with the bark of the surrounding trees. To further disguise itself, it sits upright, closes its yellow eyes and stays so still that it is transformed into a "stump".

Tim Cockroft Birding

Tim Cockroft is available for birding tours in and around the Eastern Cape. For more information, visit his website: https://timwcroft.wixsite.com/timcockcroftbirding

Brainteasers

CROSS WORD PUZZLE NO 06

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24											
						25					

Clues Across

1. African raptor.
5. Swift that breeds in trees.
7. Laid in nest.
8. A boubou.
9. A trogon.
10. Part of a bird's leg.
12. Frozen water.
15. A huge heron.
16. A vagrant tern-like seabird.
18. Some are speckled.
20. Black-winged wader.
22. A tiny bird.
24. A flight feather.
25. A dull greenbul.

Clues Down

1. Wader with greenish legs.
2. Gurney's bird.
3. _ _ _ -eating chat.
4. Feature on a coot's head.
5. Karoo or Drakensberg bird.
6. Introduced duck.
11. Somebody's owl.
13. A common goose.
14. A tiny wader.
17. A facial adornment.
19. A lark of the Namib.
21. A swift seabird.
23. A male cat.

Compiler: Gerald Wingate

Do you know Breeding colours?

When we see them, shorebirds are at their dowdiest unless we catch a few early moulters which achieve breeding plumage before they depart. In most, the breeding colours are not just to attract a mate but must also provide camouflage to minimise the risk of incubating birds to the prime predator - the Arctic Fox. The russet colours match the colour of the local vegetation which is that of autumn as these are the colours when winter snow covers the tundra and the colour revealed as the snow melts in spring before plants turn greener during the brief summer.

Can you match the breeding and non-breeding pictures on the next page?

A Red-Knot's colour act as camouflage against russet lichen on local rocks.

Compiler: Tony Williams


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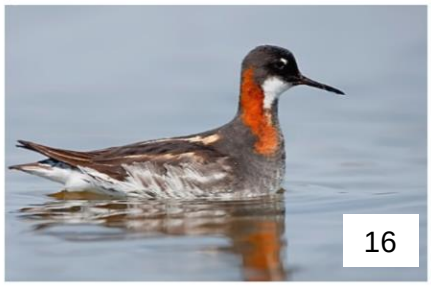
16

Answers:

1. Curlew Sandpiper 2. Little Stint 3. Ruff 4. Sanderling
5. Sanderling 6. Ruff 7. Bar-tailed Godwit 8. Grey Phalarope
9. Little Stint 10. Red-necked Phalarope 11. Knot
12. Curlew Sandpiper 13. Bar-tailed Godwit 14. Grey Phalarope
15. Red Knot 16. Red-necked Phalarope

General Club information

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Make sure you get all the communication from the club. Send an e-mail to:
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In case your e-mail address change, unsubscribe your old address and send a subscribe request from your new e-mail address.

You may share information / important sightings with other club members by sending an e-mail to:
tygerberg@yahoogroups.com

Change of contact details

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

TBC contact details

Website: www.tygerbergbirdclub.org

PO Box 4388, Durbanville, 7551

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

Vice Chairperson's e-mail: dalene@brians-birding.co.za

Join our Facebook page

Members are welcome to share information regarding their travels and interesting sightings on this page.
www.facebook.com/groups/tygerbergbirdclub/

Contributions to The Kite

Please mail any contributions to the newsletter (include pictures where possible) to:
dalene@brians-birding.co.za

TBC Steering committee 2020

Honorary President	Brian Vanderwalt	Cell: 082 999 9333
Chairperson	Brigid Crewe	Cell: 082 570 0808
Vice Chairperson	Dalene Vanderwalt	Cell: 084 702 4201
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Membership Secretary	Judy Kotze	Cell: 083 254 0919
Communication & Public Relations Officer	Dalene Vanderwalt	Cell: 084 702 4201
TBC Ringing Unit	Margaret McCall	Cell: 083 720 0747
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 voel erfenis.

Celebrating 34 years of bringing birders together