On Wednesday evening, 28th September 2011, a well-attended and fruitful AGM was held in the Dudley Hall, Caledon Street, Graaff-Reinet. Walter Murray ensured the smooth running of the meeting, until the newly elected Chairman took the chair and called for proposals for the rest of the Committee, which is now constituted as follows:

1. Chairman                    Jerry Rose-Innes
2. Vice-Chairman               William Luckhoff
3. Secretary/Treasurer         Judy Caryer
4. Additional Member           Leonie Fouché (Publicity)
5. Additional Member           Anna-Maree Vorster
6. Additional Member           Tim Hobson

The Committee will deal with a number of issues raised during the meeting, such as:

- Taking out Group Membership with BirdLife South Africa;
- Compiling a roster of outings and their convenors;
- Updating the Club’s Constitution, Signatories and Membership;
- Involving young people in the Club’s activities and approaching SANParks regarding the posting of information at the Bird Hide.

The decision was taken not to increase the annual subscription fee, but members were encouraged to take out membership with BLSA, as they are doing sterling work in the field of bird conservation and related programmes.

Congratulations to the new Committee and our thanks to Judy Caryer for taking care of the arrangements and securing the venue, as well as to other members for their contribution towards making the AGM a success. Thank you also to the Methodist Church for availing the venue and its facilities.
THE TWITCHING POST

JUDY & ZORB’S HOLIDAY IN OUR NEIGHBOURING STATES  APRIL 2011

“At the beginning of April we began our holiday in Botswana, meeting our friends en-route to the Mashatu private game reserve in the Tuli Block. We spent five days there, having wonderful early morning and late afternoon/evening game drives, watching the animals and birds. We made a list of 115 species, particularly enjoying the African Hawk Eagle and Brown Snake Eagle and Martial, Wahlberg’s and Tawny Eagles. The Pearl-Spotted Owl showed itself beautifully and we found the little Scops Owl which called nightly at the lodge. Storks seen included the Marabou, Yellow-billed, Woolly-necked and Saddle-billed. Ten kinds of shrikes seen were the Red-backed, Long-tailed, Crimson-breasted, White-crowned, Lesser Grey, Puff-back, Orange-breasted, White Helmet, Tropical Boubou and Grey-headed Bush Shrike.

En-route to the Zimbabwe border post at Beit Bridge we visited Mapungubwe National Heritage Site and Park. It is situated at the confluence of the Limpopo and Sashe Rivers and we enjoyed the Tree Top Walk which is situated in the riverine forest. It was great to watch birds at almost eye-level in the canopy instead of getting a sore neck! We visited the Matopos - what beautiful scenery - and so lacking in the tourists badly needed for the economy.

A highlight was a wonderful three days in the Bvumba near Mutare in the Eastern Highlands. We stayed in a cottage at Seldomseen and had some wonderful walks in the forest with a guide named Bulawezi, who showed us the shy and difficult-to-spot forest birds. Some of the birds seen are as follows: Augur Buzzard, Miombo-, Variable-, White-bellied-, Olive- and Malachite Sunbirds, Terrestrial-(heard), Stripe-cheeked-, Yellow-streaked- and Sombre Bulbuls, White-tailed-, Blue-grey- and Dusky Flycatchers, White-eared Barbet, Livingstone’s Turaco, Eastern Sawwing, East African Swee, Lemon and Tambourine Doves, Swynnerton’s and Heuglin’s Robins, Robert’s Prinia, Chirinda Apalis, Yellow White-eye and Square-tailed Drongo. We heard the Barratt’s Warbler and the Orange Thrush loud and clear but did not see them. A visit to the Bvumba Botanical Gardens was very worthwhile and we were fortunate to see the Bronze Sunbird and the Red-faced Crimsonwing.

We visited Lake Kariba and stayed with our daughter-in-law and family at their Cerruti Lodges in the Charara Game Reserve. We had wonderful fishing for bream on the lake and a highlight there was a late afternoon boat trip up a river to see the nesting site of hundreds of White-fronted Bee-eaters.
The last part of our holiday was spent with our youngest son and his wife in Mocambique at a resort near Inhambane. We exited Zimbabwe at Mutare and drove east on the Beira road and then a long drive south to Inhambane. This part of the holiday was dedicated to the beach and snorkelling so bird watching took a hind seat! It was a great holiday, with no hassles and one that we can highly recommend!

**BIRD DAY OUTING : WINTERHOEK**

**SATURDAY 2\(^{\text{ND}}\) JULY 2011**

Thank you Judy & Zorb for arranging this outing. We started out on a frost-laden route, but as soon as the sun started warming up the kloof, the veld sprung to life and we managed to do some good birding around the koppie, not too far from the old Homestead. Close on 40 bird species were seen, including small flocks of Red-billed Queleas twittering happily on tree-tops, a Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Cinnamon- and Golden-breasted Bunting, Acacia Pied Barbets and an African Firefinch ablaze with colour as the sun lit up its red breast. Some of the birders also spotted a pair of Verreaux’s Eagles soaring above the ridge... The small dams we passed were iced over, possibly explaining why we weren’t seeing any water-birds, apart from a lone South African Shelduck flying overhead! It turned out to be a beautiful day and our excursion ended with a sociable braai at a lovely spot overlooking a river-stream.

Other sightings included:

- Bar-throated Apalis, Pririt Batis, Grey-backed Cisticola & Streaky-headed Seadeater;
- Fairy Flycatcher, Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler, Southern Boubou & Sombre Greenbul.

**BIRD DAY OUTING : RIETVLEI**

**SATURDAY 6\(^{\text{TH}}\) AUGUST 2011**

Unfortunately this outing had to be called off due to bad weather and the Interschools taking place on the same day.

**BIRD DAY OUTING : RIETVLEI**

**SATURDAY 3\(^{\text{RD}}\) SEPTEMBER 2011**

As a result of the cancellation of the Camdeboo National Park’s Birding Weekend, it was decided to schedule an outing for September and visit Rietvlei, the farm of Richardt and Lyell van Rensburg. It was a glorious Spring day and the veld flowers were in full bloom. After some enjoyable birding, the group met up with Lyell, who gave an interesting talk on the KhoiSan engravings found on the farm.

Lyell explained that the engravings (or etchings) have been dated between 300 – 15,000 years and showed us a number of good examples. The more recent ones were probably done by the last remnants of the Khoi-Khoi, just after the white settlers arrived in the area, whilst the older ones are more than likely the work of the San people. Images of ostriches, reptiles, antelope and people were engraved in the Desert Veneer layer of rocks spread out over an area of several kilometres. Whilst some of the engravings are still quite clear, others have faded away almost completely.
It is believed that these former hunter-gatherers and herders drew their energy from the engravings and many of the images depict energy fields streaming from the head or limbs of the subject they portray...

We were shown a Settlement Circle in an area where trance dances were performed, with the shaman as the central figure.

The day’s excursion ended with a sociable braai at the lapa, overlooking a river-stream. A total of 48 bird species were ticked, of which the most notable was a Black Stork!

Other sightings included:

- Golden- & Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, Red-billed Firefinch, Red-headed Canary;
- White-browed Scrub Robin, South African Shellduck, Brown-hooded Kingfisher;
- Southern Double-collared and Amethyst Sunbirds, Bar-throated Apalis and Verreaux’s Eagle.

Leonie’s articles on her Birding Safari through Mozambique & Eastern Zimbabwe, as well as the Karoo National Park’s Birding Weekend, will appear in the next Newsletter.

Please let us have any snippets you would like to share with others here on the Twitching Post.

Feedback: Southern Boubou in Judy & Zorb’s garden

Lee Visser responded as follows: “Thanks for a very interesting newsletter. A pair of Southern Boubous have been coming to our garden and environs ever since we’ve been here - just over 3 years - and are often in the Diospyros Lyciodes (Bloubos) right outside our lounge window. They are most amusing when Barry is playing opera as they hop onto the lounge windowsill, or cling to the fanlight window, and appear to listen with their heads cocked on one side!”
African Marsh Harriers at Nqweba Dam

On Sunday, 10th July 2011, Leonie was treated to the magnificent sight of a pair of African Marsh Harriers flying lazily from the direction of the dam wall to the Nqweba Dam picnic site (most of which is still under water), where they found themselves a tree and decided to stay put. Could this be a resident pair?

NEXT OUTINGS

At our AGM on 28th September 2011, a proposal was supported that the arrangements for outings will continue on a rotational basis amongst Club Members. Each Convenor will be responsible for:

- Identifying the venue and obtaining the necessary permission from the landowner,
- Planning the route and conducting a recce beforehand, if necessary,
- Liaising with the Chairman or Vice-chairman and relaying this information timeously to the Club Secretary (Judy Caryer), who will then notify all members,
- Ensuring that braai wood, grid and fire-lighters are transported to or available at the venue,
- Appointing additional Group Leaders, depending on the size of the group,
- Bringing with the Club’s Clipboard and Bird List (to be collected from Judy Caryer),
- Submitting a report on the outing and the completed Bird List to the Club Secretary within a week after the outing,
- Traditionally there is no outing in January.

Outings are scheduled for the 1st Saturday of each month, unless this clashes with another important event, in which case the alternative will be the previous or next Saturday. The meeting place remains the same, namely in front of the Department of Agriculture / Environmental Affairs Building in Bourke Street, Graaff-Reinet ~ unless otherwise informed. Details of each outing will be confirmed about two weeks in advance. Time of departure varies according to the season, but we do try to hit the road between 5am and 6am in the summer and by 7am in the winter. Bring along a breakfast snack (to be enjoyed on the trot), something for the braai after the outing, and a chair. Don’t forget your binoculars, field guide, hat, sunblock and H₂O! Comfortable, yet sturdy, walking shoes are a must. Even though we are now entering summer, it is advisable to bring along something warm, like a windbreaker jacket.

At the new Committee’s first meeting held on Monday 3rd October 2011, a provisional schedule of outings was drawn up for the next 11 months. Kindly note that this programme is not cast in stone, but at least it will assist our members (especially those living further afield) with their forward planning. Confirmation will be given by way of each quarterly newsletter and Judy will send out separate notices of each outing well in advance.

Please let us have your suggestions on any other suitable localities we should consider.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATE OF OUTING</th>
<th>LOCALITY</th>
<th>CONVENOR</th>
<th>TELEPHONE NO.</th>
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<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER 2011 Saturday the 5th</td>
<td>The Shepherd’s Tree (Graaff-Reinet district)</td>
<td>Anna-Maree Vorster</td>
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<td>DECEMBER 2011 Saturday the 3rd</td>
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<td>049-8910255</td>
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<td>JANUARY 2012</td>
<td>No outing in January</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>FEBRUARY 2012 Saturday the 4th</td>
<td>Roodewal (Graaff-Reinet district)</td>
<td>Mark Brodie</td>
<td>049-8919013</td>
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<td>MARCH 2012 Weekend TBC</td>
<td>Camdeboo National Park Birding Weekend</td>
<td>Honorary Rangers</td>
<td>TBS</td>
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<td>APRIL 2012 Saturday the 31st March</td>
<td>Borden (GRT/Jansenville district)</td>
<td>Judy Caryer</td>
<td>049-8910353</td>
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<td>MAY 2012 Saturday the 5th</td>
<td>Middelvlei (Murraysburg district)</td>
<td>Trevor Kingwill</td>
<td>049-8923302</td>
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<td>JUNE 2012 Saturday the 2nd</td>
<td>Dalham (Graaff-Reinet district)</td>
<td>William Luckhoff</td>
<td>049-8922893</td>
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<td>JULY 2012 Saturday the 7th</td>
<td>Vrede (Camdeboo/GRT dist.)</td>
<td>Zorb Caryer</td>
<td>049-8910353</td>
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<td>AUGUST 2012 Saturday the 4th</td>
<td>Roodebloem (Graaff-Reinet district)</td>
<td>Tim Hobson</td>
<td>049-8910412</td>
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<td>SEPTEMBER 2012 Weekend TBC</td>
<td>Blue Hill Escape (Baviaanskloof area)</td>
<td>Leonie Fouché</td>
<td>049-8923200</td>
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(TBC = to be confirmed) (TBS = to be supplied)

SPECIAL EVENTS

Interesting Birding workshops and excursions take place from time-to-time and members will be kept informed about them. Please support these events. Some forthcoming attractions are:

- Sasol’s fully revised and updated **Birds of Southern Africa 4th Edition** will be available in English and Afrikaans at Bookstores from October 2011.

- Upcoming Birding Events & Weekends:
  - **19 – 23 October 2011**  **Sasol Stretton’s Wildernis Birding Experience.** Contact JJ van Rensburg on cellular 083 325 9897 or e-mail [natalco@iafrica.com](mailto:natalco@iafrica.com) for more information.
  - **4 – 6 October 2011**   **Sasol Stretton’s Agulhas Birding Weekend.** Contact Angela Cassani on tel. no. 028-4233095 / cell. 072 283 5282 or e-mail [eddieandangela@telkomsa.net](mailto:eddieandangela@telkomsa.net) for more information.
10 – 12 February 2012  **Sasol Golden Gate Birding Weekend.**
Contact Elinda Meintjies on cell no. 082 820 5212 or e-mail elinda@vodamail.co.za for more information.

**Camdeboo National Park’s next Birding Weekend** is due to take place sometime early next year. The exact date and programme will be announced in due course.

**Japie Claassen of Karoo Birding Safaris** arranges small tours throughout SA, as well as neighbouring countries such as Namibia and Mozambique. Contact him at karoobirding@beaufortwest.net if you want to be placed on his mailing list.

Members are encouraged to join **GRANAAT**, our local Environmental Interest Group. They meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month, at 6pm. Please contact any of the following for more information: Theuns Eksteen (049-8922983), Brian Charles (049-8924662) or Walter Murray (049-8923234).

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**BIRDING TIPS : BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES**

There is a vast range of binoculars to choose from. For the beginner, it can be very daunting when confronted with all sorts of technical terms, such as: Roof- or Porro Prism; Magnification vs Field of View; BAK or BK prisms (go for the BAK); Eye Relief & Exit Pupil, etc. Roof prisms, though more expensive, seem to be the popular choice these days.

Don’t go for the smallest. In this instance, one obviously has to look for the right pair with which to do birdwatching and this narrows down the range to 8 x 40, 8 x 42 or 10 x 42 ~ first-mentioned most suited for women as the 10 x 42’s tend to be a little heavier and more difficult to hold steady. After this, it becomes a matter of affordability and value for money.

Don’t go for the cheapest. A good entry-level pair of binoculars should cost you about R2,000 to R4,000 and there are several good makes to choose from, such as Bushnell, Nikon, Pentax, Kowa & Lynx. After a few years you can upgrade to the better range of optics, and if you are a really serious birder and can afford it, you can go for the Leicas, Zeiss or Swarovskis, which will set you back a mere R20,000 or so!

I suggest that you visit the following websites as they give good guidance in choosing the right pair of birdwatching binoculars:

[http://www.squidoo.com/birdwatchingbinoculars](http://www.squidoo.com/birdwatchingbinoculars)

Spotting scopes are ideal for long-distance viewing and extended periods of observation; they basically have the same features to take into consideration as with binoculars. Scopes are very useful items to take with on organized birding tours and other nature study trips. Some of the above websites will give you info on scopes, but you can also try:

THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR BIRD-HOUSE TREES

[Source: http://fr.toonpool.com/cartoons/government%20bird%20house%20trees_51629]

GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB CONTACTS & BANKING DETAILS

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<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Jerry Rose-Innes</td>
<td>049-8910255</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jerry.roseinnes@gmail.com">jerry.roseinnes@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice-Chairman</td>
<td>William Luckhoff</td>
<td>049-8922893</td>
<td>7 Olivier Dippenaar Street GRT</td>
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<td>Secretary &amp; Treasurer</td>
<td>Judy Caryer</td>
<td>049-8910353</td>
<td><a href="mailto:caryer@isat.co.za">caryer@isat.co.za</a></td>
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<td>Marketing &amp; Publicity</td>
<td>Leonie Fouché</td>
<td>049-8923200</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fouchel@camdeboo.gov.za">fouchel@camdeboo.gov.za</a></td>
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<td>Additional Member</td>
<td>Anna-Maree Vorster</td>
<td>049-8922032</td>
<td><a href="mailto:VorsterinGR@telkomsa.net">VorsterinGR@telkomsa.net</a></td>
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<td>Tim Hobson</td>
<td>049-8910412</td>
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A FRIENDLY REMINDER...

Kindly note that your annual subscription fees are renewable now. For only R30.00 you can participate in one of the fastest-growing recreational activities in the world, go on a monthly outing and receive a quarterly Newsletter! We are in the process of removing arrear members from our database.

Please submit your interesting stories & events for inclusion in our next Newsletter.

P a g e  | 8
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OR on Facebook http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=106516523414

OR e-mail your enquiry to info@birdlife.org.za

Some other interesting sites to visit on Facebook :


http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/EverythingBirding