

GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB

NEWSLETTER



SUMMER 2010/11

FOR MEMBERSHIP AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT JUDY CARYER AT 049-8910353

JOAN COLLETT, FOUNDER-MEMBER OF THE GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB

In our Spring Newsletter, we gave you a brief history of the establishment of our Club. In this edition, we bring tribute to a wonderful lady, the late Joan Collett, founder-member of the Graaff-Reinet Bird Club.

Joan was born on 9 March 1922 at Mitford, Bath, in England, the first of three children to Harold and Nell Bladen. They emigrated to South Africa when she was a year old, having bought a small irrigation farm near Cradock on the irrigation scheme of Grassridge Dam. Her father studied History at Cambridge and had been head of a college in India. He taught his children to appreciate nature. Learning about the birds was part of their education, so it was early in her life that Joan developed her interest in ornithology and it became a life-long hobby and passion.

Joan, with her sharp intellect and dedication, excelled in her nursing training at Groote Schuur during the war years when her fiancé Godfrey was a prisoner-of-war. They married in 1945 and settled on Katkop, their farm situated between Cradock and Middelburg. She settled her mind to building a home and garden and to becoming an excellent mother and wife, as well as a contributing member of the close-knit Fish River community. When her children were grown, she compiled a comprehensive study of the Birds of the Cradock District for the series, Southern Birds. She also wrote the biography of James Collett, 1820 Settler, and in its foreword, Guy Butler described 'A Time to Plant' as a scholarly product of a discriminating intelligence and an impressive labour of love.

She and Godfrey shared a love of nature and their holidays were spent exploring Southern Africa, visiting the game parks and wild places, always taking special interest in the birds, animals and plants. They passed this on to their six children, and the involvement with the research done by the Avian Demography Unit at UCT was done faithfully by them until they grew too old to participate. Their son, Alan, is passionate about birds and has inherited Joan's interest in detailed study and observation. His delight in retirement is that he has the time to be wholly involved in the Atlasing Project.

Godfrey and Joan moved from the farm to Graaff-Reinet in 1996 and she was the prime mover in establishing the Graaff-Reinet Bird Club. Even though she suffered a stroke in 2001 which confined her to a wheelchair, she continued to attend Bird Club meetings whenever possible and contributed in whatever way possible. The Bird List compiled by her is used as a benchmark in identifying the various bird species found in our area.

Joan died on 12 March 2010, ready and willing to meet her Lord, who had been her strength and Redeemer for so many years.

(Story submitted by her daughter, Judy Caryer)

THE TWITCHING POST

ADDO BIRDING WEEKEND PHOTOS

15 – 17 October 2010



Photos : Leonie Fouché



Top, from left : Young elephant, waving goodbye; Red-necked Spurfowl; Group getting ready for their Off-the-Beaten-Track safari; Spotted Eagle Owl, Sunday's River embankment.

Bottom, from left : Cruising up the Sunday's River; Ferry moored after the excursion.

LEE & BARRY VISSER'S BLUE HILL ESCAPE ATLASING WEEKENDS OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2010

"On the 8th October Barry and I went on a marvellous SABAP2 atlasing weekend. Blue Hill Escape is a 2,300-ha mountain fynbos reserve in the Little Karoo, close to the Baviaanskloof Wilderness Area. It is named after the Bloukop Peak on the property, part of the Kouga mountain range. The aim of the weekend was to expand the atlasing efforts in the area as there are many unatlased pentads in and around the area.

We stayed in a gas-powered, converted labourer's cottage quite far from the main farmhouse and other B&B accommodation. It was blissfully quiet, pitch-black at night and the only creatures we saw, and heard, were birds and a lone baboon charging through the lucerne field in front of the cottage. We met the other Birders at a communal braai on the Friday evening; they came from Oudtshoorn (there isn't a Bird Club there!) the Lakes, St Francis Bay, and Cape Town.

Most of the other birders were very experienced atlasers, covering 2 or 3 pentads in their vehicles before breakfast, a couple during the morning, and more in the afternoon! Barry and I enjoy hiking so elected to atlas the home pentad, walking up into the mountains until we eventually came to a small pond in one of the rugged gorges. It was absolute magic walking up the track through headhigh flowering fynbos, with incredible views of hills and mountains. September/October is the best time for fynbos flowers.

That afternoon we atlased another section of the home pentad, following a little stream up another 'gorgeous' gorge! Everyone gathered in the main diningroom that evening for an illustrated talk given by our host, Alan, on parrots and macaws of the Peruvian Amazon. Alan is a field biologist and has just completed his PhD on that subject.

Barry and I went back to Blue Hill Escape at the end of November and hiked along a new trail into the mountains; more stunning views, interesting vegetation, game and birds. Alan and Anja showed us photos of terrestrial mammals (including us hiking on the atlasing weekend!) captured on their 4 cuddyback automatic cameras. The Landmark Foundation, specialising in leopard conservation, also have 3 cameras on their reserve, so there are closeups of leopard.

Some of the birds we saw - as well as 'the usual suspects' - were: Orange-breasted and Malachite Sunbird, Cape Sugarbird, Cape Siskin, Cape Grassbird, Cape Rock-jumper, Yellow Bishop, Ground Woodpecker and we heard Victorin's Warbler.

If you want to know more about Blue Hill Escape their website is: www.bluehillescape.co.za "a tranquil conservation experience!"

CAMDEBOO NATIONAL PARK BIRDING WEEKEND

5 – 7 NOVEMBER 2010

Some of the Club's members attended the Park's 2nd very successful Birding Weekend, arranged by the Camdeboo and Addo National Parks' Honorary Rangers. The weekend commenced with registration and a cheese-and-wine function on the Friday night, then a choice of 3 different excursions on the Saturday, with the option of participating in the outing to the Educational Centre on the Sunday. The outings were well-organized, with friendly and experienced Park Wardens and Honorary Rangers accompanying the groups. The local knowledge was exceptional and the interest displayed in Birding by some of the Park Wardens is worthy of following up.

A wide variety of birds were spotted by the three groups, and recent rains had provided a little greenery after a rather severe dry spell. There were also a few comical moments, for instance, a Birder was accidentally locked in at the Park Offices on Saturday morning, and had to wait until the Park Manager arrived to let him out! The function on Saturday evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all, with lots of prizes (courtesy of the sponsors Sasol, Stretton's and others) and the superb cuisine prepared by Brian and Magda Jones.

Some of the weekend's participants drove out to the Educational Centre on Sunday morning, where they were joined by Leonie Fouché, who decided to hike there from the Spandauville side. It was a beautiful morning, and Leonie spotted 23 species while walking the Eerstefontein Trail. This included a pair of Southern Boubous, some Golden-breasted Buntings (collecting nesting material), Bokmakieries, Acacia Pied Barbets and Malachite Sunbirds.

Several members of Birdlife Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth and Port Alfred) spent a most enjoyable weekend in the Camdeboo and all promised that they would be back next year.

Our December outing took us to the farm Harefield, owned by Tim Hobson, who also led the group. About 13 Members and 2 PE Birders (Corné and Martie) participated and spent a most enjoyable day on the farm. Everyone noticed and commented on how wonderfully preserved Tim's veld was, much to the delight of Katryn van Heerden, who pointed out a number of unusual veld plants and other rare attractions. The route, which called for a slight deviation due to rain, produced some interesting sightings, amongst others :

- 🦅 Verreaux's Eagle;
- 🦅 Larks (Sabota, Eastern Clapper & Rufous-naped)
- 🦅 African Pipit, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Little Stint & many other species as per the Bird List forwarded to members by Judy Caryer.

Harefield has an interesting history :

David and William Carey Hobson came out to SA with the 1820 Settlers and were settled on farms along the Eastern Cape Frontier near Grahamstown. After their farms were burnt down in the 1835 Frontier War, they trekked to the Karoo and settled in the Lootskloof. Here they bought farms from the Dutch farmers who were leaving the Cape to go on the Great Trek. David named his farm Wellfound, and William Carey named his farm Ebenezer.

William Carey and his wife Susannah (nee Bonnin) had two sons and two daughters. They named their sons Samuel Bonnin (1832-1887) and Jonathan (1835-1914). These sons farmed together with their father on Ebenezer until they were able to buy the adjoining farm, Harefield, in 1870. Samuel Bonnin inherited Ebenezer and Jonathan took over Harefield. He married Ruth Roberts of Baddaford (near Fort Beaufort) (1836-1930). Ruth and Jonathan had much sadness in their lives. They lost their son and later their grandson (both called William Carey), so Harefield was left without a direct heir. Jonathan, however, had stated in his will that his ground should not be sold, but go to the 3 sons of his nephew Percy Edward Glover Hobson (son of his brother Samuel Bonnin of Ebenezer). The names of his 3 great nephews were Barry Hobson, Percy Edward Barry Hobson and Edward Barry Hobson. It was decided that Barry, the eldest, should inherit the home farm, Ebenezer, and Percy and Ed should inherit Harefield. These two brothers farmed in partnership on Harefield all their lives. Ed had no sons, but his brother Percy had a son, Tim, who inherited Harefield and still farms there today.



1. SA's Strongest Man Competition

2. 'n Kring in die Bos



Leonie attended a very interesting and informative course on those frustratingly hard-to-identify Little Brown Jobs, at the Newton Park Library, Port Elizabeth. There were two in-depth theoretical sessions (with skins on display and an audio-visual powerpoint presentation) and two practical field outings. The focus was on Larks, Pipits and Cisticolas and a variety of all three were seen and positively identified during the field trips! There were also sightings of several other species, for instance Terns, Plovers (including a Chestnut-banded), and a Black-collared Barbet.

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

NEXT OUTINGS

To recap : at our last AGM, consensus was reached that in future, the arrangements for outings will be rotated amongst Club Members. Each Outing Organizer 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 Birdday Co-ordinator (Walter Murray) 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),
- ✓ Chairing the mini-meeting directly after the outing and submitting a report and the completed Bird List to the Club Secretary within a week after the outing.

During our last Club Meeting, it was decided to reschedule our outings to the **1st Saturday of each month**. 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 by 6am in the summer and 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.

The next two outings are being arranged by Jerry Rose-Innes and Judy Caryer respectively, while Gerald Buisman and Mark Brodie have volunteered to take their turn thereafter. Traditionally there is no outing in January. The provisional programme looks like this :

DATE	DESTINATION	ORGANIZER	TELEPHONE NO.
Saturday, 5 th Feb. 2011	Asante Sana, Pearston District	Jerry Rose-Innes	049-8910255
4 - 6 th March 2011	Lowlands Farm, Fish River, Cradock district	Judy Caryer	049-8910353
Saturday, 2 nd April 2011	Coloniesplaats, Graaff-Reinet District	Walter Murray	049-8923234

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 :

- 29 January 2011

CAR (Co-ordinated Avifaunal Roadcount)
- Jan/Feb 2011

SABAP2 Workshop on Bird Atlasing (theory & practical)
 Judy Caryer will confirm in due course.
- 11 – 13 February 2011

Sasol Golden Gate Birding Weekend
 Contact Schalk Burger on 082 492 2301 or 051-4081883,
 e-mail swburger@absamail.co.za
- 4 – 6 March 2011

SABAP2 Atlasing Weekend at Blue Hill Escape
 Phone 044-752 1254 or visit www.bluehillescape.co.za
- Members are encouraged to join **GRANAAT**, our local Environmental Interest Group.
 They meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month. Please contact any of the following
 for more information : Theuns Eksteen (049-8922983), Brian Charles (049-8924662)
 or Walter Murray (049-8923234).

GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB CONTACTS

PORTFOLIO	MEMBER	TEL. / CELL.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Birdday Co-ordinator	Walter Murray	049-8923234	waltermurray@wam.co.za
Vice Birdday Co-ordinator	Jerry Rose-Innes	049-8910255	jerry.roseinnes@gmail.com
Secretary & Treasurer	Judy Caryer	049-8910353	caryer@isat.co.za
Marketing & Promotion	Leonie Fouché	082 7077 403	fouchel@camdeboo.gov.za

A FRIENDLY FINAL REMINDER...

To those members who have not yet renewed their annual subs. For only R30.00 you can participate in one of the fastest-growing recreational hobbies in the world; go on a monthly outing and receive a quarterly Newsletter! We are in the process of updating our Members' List and regret to advise that non-paying members will be removed from our database.

Please let us have your interesting stories and events for inclusion in our next Newsletter.

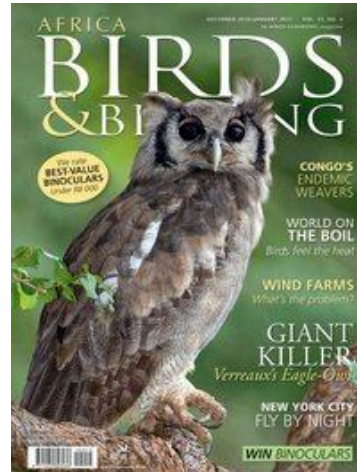


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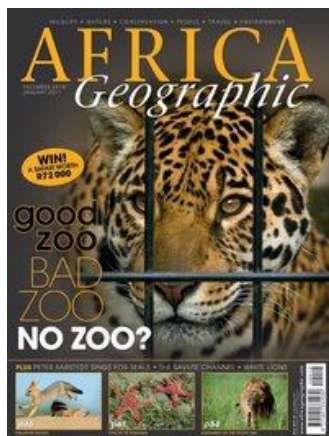


For more information visit their website www.birdlife.org.za

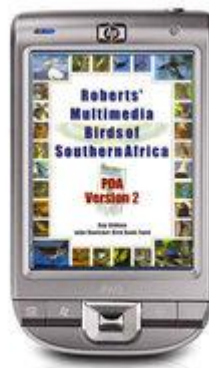
OR on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=106516523414>

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

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