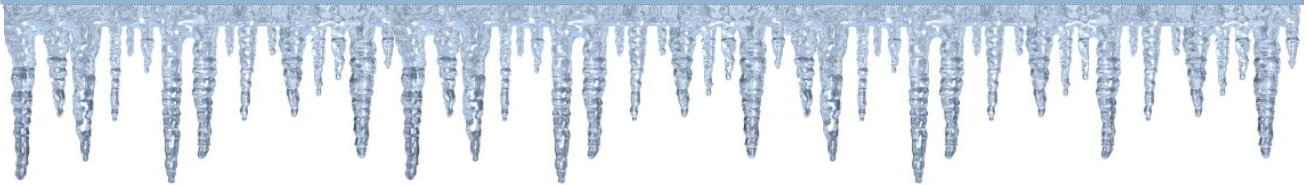


GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB

NEWSLETTER



WINTER 2011



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

CO-ORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWAC)

In our Autumn Newsletter, we read about CAR, or Co-ordinated Avifaunal Roadcounts. Similarly, UCT's Animal Demography Unit (ADU) collects data from 400 wetlands sites throughout South Africa bi-annually; in mid-summer (January) and mid-winter (July). The CWAC project was launched in 1992 and involves a regular census of the country's waterbirds, their habitats, migratory patterns and general wellbeing.

CWAC typically requires a more focused approach than CAR, as the range of birds to be counted amounts to approximately 143 species and they are more likely to be found in much larger numbers per site than the 21 or so bird species making up the CAR list. In order to ensure that you don't count the same flock twice, it is crucial that the birds you are counting are not flushed and end up being counted again, but in a different spot! Nqweba Dam is one such site and is registered with ADU under Site Code 32132432. For more information on CWAC, visit their website at <http://cwac.adu.org.za/news.php>.

BARN SWALLOW FLIES AN AVERAGE OF 11,000 KM EACH YEAR



The Barn Swallow has been announced as the **Bird of the Year 2011**. If you would like to learn more about this amazing bird (for instance its migratory patterns and distances; why it has been chosen as Bird of the Year; the difference between Swallows, Martins and Swifts, etc.), visit BirdLife South Africa's website by clicking on the following link :

www.birdlife.org.za/page/5319/national_bird_week

Photo : Warwick Tarboton, courtesy
BirdLife S.A. e-Newsletter May 2011

LEONIE'S EASTER ROAD TRIP

22ND APRIL – 2ND MAY 2011

The two long weekends gave me ideal opportunity to take off the 3 open days in-between and have a much-needed 10 day break-away. I spent 4 days camping with my family next to the dam at the Fish Eagle Resort, 8kms outside Calitzdorp (on the Kruisrivier road); 4 days in a log cabin at Bushman Valley, a few kms outside Prince Albert and 2 days at Blue Hill Escape, bordering on the Baviaanskloof. All three destinations offered a variety of hiking trails, with some good birding as well.

It was a thrilling experience sitting next to the Calitzdorp Dam, watching the Fish Eagle flying overhead and hearing its distinctive call. Malachite Kingfishers, canaries and weavers created a whirl of colour amongst the reeds and the veld abounded with Acacia Pied Barbet, Cardinal Woodpecker, Fairy Flycatcher, Cape Batis, C-V Tit-babbler, etc.



← View over the dam at Fish Eagle Angling Resort

Early morning at the camping site



I discovered Bushman Valley by chance exactly a year before and spent two nights in one of their chalets. Going on a hike the first morning, I saw this lovely log cabin at the entrance to the Kloof and made up my mind there and then that I would return to this place and spend a few days in that cabin. My stay last year coincided with the Prince Albert Olive Festival, and as luck would have it, this year again! Another bonus this time round was that Japie Claassen (Karoo Birding Safaris, Beaufort West) was offering some birding excursions as part of the Festival's programme. My Prince Albert bird sightings included Layard's Tit-babblers, Fairy Flycatchers, Cape Buntings and Mountain Wheatears.



A palette of colour next to the Kruisrivier Road



Log Cabin, Bushman Valley

My last stop ~ at Blue Hill Escape ~ was too short and I will definitely go back for a longer stay. This is fynbos country and the proteas were in full bloom, luring birds by the hundreds. There were Malachite-, Orange-breasted-, Southern- and Greater Double-Collared Sunbirds, as well as Cape Sugarbirds. On one of my hikes I saw a Jackal Buzzard, Cape Rock Thrush, Cape Batis, Chestnut-vented Titbabbler, a variety of Canaries and small groups of Cape Siskin having a lovely time in the mountain stream.



Blue Hill Escape, Baviaanskloof



San Rock Art

BIRD DAY OUTING : COLONIESPLAATS

SATURDAY 2ND APRIL 2011

Thank you Mark Brodie for arranging this lovely outing! After a very early departure from Graaff-Reinet and some slip-sliding along the waterlogged dirt road, we passed the old railway siding, reminiscent of a bygone era of steam engines puffing through the snowy Karoo landscape. Arriving in drips-and-drabs at the magnificent homestead, we were warmly welcomed by owners James and Shirley-Anne Kingwill. After some coffee and rusks, James accompanied our group of Birders for part of the route and gave us a brief history of their farm, also explaining how he has successfully implemented scientific breeding-methods amongst his livestock. Going down to the river, we could see the damage done by recent floods; huge trees that had been uprooted and fences simply torn away.

It was a beautiful day and after spending a most enjoyable morning traipsing around in the veld (and marshes!), we returned to the homestead's lovely garden and had our braai under the shady trees. We spotted a total of 53 species, which included :

- 🦅 Variety of Raptors : A pair of Verreaux's Eagle, Pale-chanting Goshawk, African Harrier Hawk, Lesser & Greater Kestrels;
- 🐦 Almost the full range of Doves : Red-eyed, Namaqua, Laughing, Turtle; also Speckled Pigeon;
- 🦜 Misc : Lesser Swamp, Namaqua & Rufous-eared Warblers, Blue Crane, Mountain Wheatear, Cardinal Woodpecker, Jacobin Cuckoo, Giant Kingfisher, etc.



A different kind of Bird, Coloniesplaats 02/04/2011

We were scheduled to visit Harefield on this day, but the outing had to be cancelled as a result of heavy rains, which continued throughout the weekend and during much of the month of May. The outing was postponed until 4th June (and thanks to Jerry Rose-Innes for making the necessary arrangements).

BIRD DAY OUTING : HAREFIELD**SATURDAY 4TH JUNE 2011**

There must have been a flurry of activity at Harefield, in preparation of this long-awaited outing. Tim Hobson had a whole route worked out ~ a drive of approximately 35 kms on typical farm dirt road, on what turned out to be a perfect day for Karoo birding. A visit to Tim's farm is guaranteed to be filled with adventure, and adventure we had!

Tim's veld was looking even better than the last time we were there, and against the distant backdrop of a snow-covered Nardou, we set off ~ most of us standing on the back of Tim's bakkie, with a trailer full of proviand bouncing merrily behind us. Our first stop at a dam rendered some good sightings of Egyptian Geese, Yellow-billed Duck, South African Shellduck, Red-billed Teal, Red-knobbed Coot (with "cootlets") and African Spoonbill.

From there we continued on our little safari; in-between the serious (and more often not-so-serious) birding, we saw several Steenbokkies, Duiker, Kudu and also a porcupine! Even though we were well into winter, it looked more like spring with all the colourful veld flowers and berries brightening up the surrounding lush vegetation. Katryn van Heerden was in her element. We then headed for the hills and were taken up to a beautiful spot, reminiscent of that romantic scene from the film "Out of Africa", with spectacular views all round and ideally situated for a relaxing braai.

The highlight of the trip was probably the sighting of one of a pair of resident Martial Eagles, as we were descending the koppies on the last leg of our trip. This outing rendered a total count of 57 bird species. Other sightings included :

- 🦅 A variety of Larks : Eastern Clapper, Sabota, Spike-heeled, Long-billed & Red-capped;
- 🦅 Lark-like & Cinnamon-breasted Buntings; Rufous-eared Warblers; Speckled & Red-faced Mousebirds; Ludwig's Bustard, Karoo & Southern Black Korhaan; etc.

Thanks Tim for a most enjoyable day.



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

DID YOU SEE THAT ?!!

On Saturday afternoon, 12th June 2011, I received a call from a very excited Judy Caryer. There was a Southern Boubou in their garden! It was flitting from branch to branch in the Boerboon Tree, then it went and sat on the wall, cheekily eyeing Judy. I could actually hear it calling while we were having our telephonic conversation. Might it be considering a move into town? Is this a first for Graaff-Reinet?



Granaat member Pam Neuweiler very kindly submitted some photographs taken in April 2011, of what could possibly be an Orange River White-eye, which has been frequenting their garden in Donkin Street. According to Pam it is on its own and our local Cape White-eyes do not want to have anything to do with it. Has anyone else seen it around?



NEXT OUTINGS

To recap : at our last AGM on 11th September 2010, 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,
- ✓ Traditionally there is no outing in January.

At our December 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 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. Now that we are into winter, it is advisable to include gloves, beanie, warm jersey and wind-breaker jacket.

The next outing is being arranged by Judy & Zorb Caryer, while Gerald Buisman has volunteered to take a turn at some stage. The provisional programme looks like this :

DATE	DESTINATION	ORGANIZER	TELEPHONE NO.
Saturday, 2 nd July 2011	Winterhoek, Camdeboo National Park, GRT	Judy & Zorb Caryer	049-8910353
Saturday, 6 th Aug 2011	Still to be announced	Gerald Buisman	049-8922458
Saturday, 3 rd Sept 2011	Still to be announced (combined with AGM)	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 :

- 11 – 14 August 2011

Stretton's Gin **Mapungubwe Birding Weekend**.
 Contact Charles Hardy on 083 457 1721 or e-mail charlois@mweb.co.za for more information.
- 16 – 18 September 2011

Sasol / Stretton's Gin 5th **Karoo Birding Weekend**, being arranged with the assistance of the Karoo National Park Honorary Rangers. Essential to book. Contact Maria Andela on 073 019 9353 or e-mail mtandela@telkomsa.net for more information.
- 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).

BIRDING TIPS : WHAT TO WEAR

For the serious Birder, blending in and being able to observe birds in their natural habitat, without being observed, becomes a crucial part of the whole bird-watching activity. General consensus seems to be that one should not wear white or bright colours, as birds have a much keener vision than ours and are very quick to pick up movement simply because of the sharpness of the colour of the moving object. Various sources recommend that one dresses down, in clothing that is lightweight and comfortable and of subdued or earthy colours that will camouflage; such as darker shades of green, khaki, brown and grey.

Another no-no is wearing clothing that squeaks and rustles when you move ~ not only can this be very irritating to fellow-birders, but the birds you are hoping to spot can hear it a mile away. By observing a few basic rules, a successful birding experience is guaranteed.

GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB CONTACTS

PORTFOLIO	MEMBER	TEL. / CELL.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Birdday Co-ordinator	Walter Murray	049-8923234	waltermurray@wam.co.za
Vice Co-ordinator	Jerry Rose-Innes	049-8910255	jerry.roseinnes@gmail.com
Secretary & Treasurer	Judy Caryer	049-8910353	caryer@isat.co.za
Marketing & Publicity	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 regret to advise that members in arrears will henceforth be removed from our database.**

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

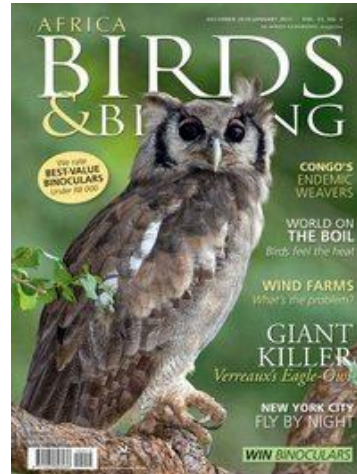


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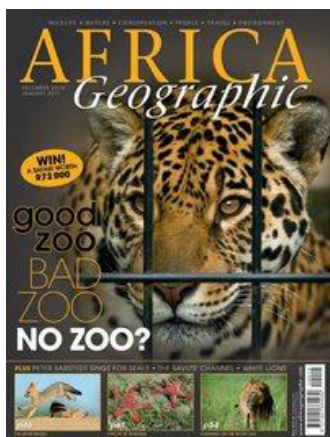


For more information visit their website www.birdlife.org.za

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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