



The Lark Leaflet

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From the Editor

I know that all of us at Birdlife Polokwane can't quite come to terms with the tragic loss of Ben De Boer who, to many was a dear friend, fellow naturalist and passionate birding pal. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Lisa the family. Ben will be missed and always remembered.

As I am sure you are all aware Ben's legacy will live on through the trust that his family has established to support bird guide training in the Limpopo Province.

During this meeting our chairman will discuss possible options for the utilization of the funds which were raised with our run & cycle for wildlife event in June. One of the much-needed projects is the signage of the Capricorn Letaba Birding Route – a project that Ben initiated and a very appropriate one in light of the current events.

On a brighter note thank you to each and every one of the club members who contributed, supported and participated in our very successful fund raising event. It is only through the voices of organizations such as ourselves that the plight of our living planet can be illuminated. I for one, felt that more important than the funds which were raised was the way our club members put in a wholehearted effort and showed great camaraderie to make the entire event a great success. This put Birdlife Polokwane Firmly on the map.

Well done to all!

Enjoy the last "official" month winter – spring has almost sprung!!

Happy birding to you all.

Lisa

Some "ringer" stories from around the world

Compiled by Derek Engelbrecht

"Ring spotting" is fashion

We know of some funny past times and challenges like birding and train spotting. The last couple of years, a new fad has started - "ring spotting". These dead-eye dicks use telescopes to read the ring numbers off the legs of waders and storks! Magda Remisiewicz, ADU postdoc from Poland, reports. "The KULING ringing group is currently running a wader and tern ringing camp at the mouth of the Vistula River (5422N 1856E), on the edge of the Baltic Sea in Poland. This is where the only Polish breeding colony of Sandwich Terns is located, and some Common Terns breed and rest there as well. Today, I got from Poland a set of observations of SAFRING rings of Sandwich and Common Terns read by telescope.

One of these rings was read on 1 August 2009. It was Common Tern 4H36857. Tony Tree ringed this bird at Swakopmund on 23 March 2006. It is almost certainly breeding in Poland."

Source: www.kuling.org.pl and www.safring.adu.org.za.



A ring seen through a spotting scope

New fashion accessories for bird ringers!



Unusual recovery

Yennifer Hernandez, a temporary field assistant with Ingrid Wiesel's Brown Hyena Research Project in Lüderitz, has recently been busy with the fun-filled task of lovingly taking apart and sorting a whole collection of brown hyena poohs to extract prey items. On Saturday 20 June 2009, she came across ring FH41384 in a scat that had been collected by Ingrid on 28 October 2008 at a brown hyena den near the Swakopmund Salt Works.

The ring belonged to a white-fronted plover, ringed as a chick on 21 March 2007 at Mile 4 (2234S, 1431E) by Dirk Heinrich. Ingrid was asked whether the scat in question was still steaming-fresh when she collected it, to find out whether we could narrow down the plover's date and cause of death. Unfortunately the scat had been dry and white when it was collected, but Ingrid says that they do dry out quite fast. She has had reports that the den area was active around the beginning of 2008, so it could have originated from that time. In that case it is likely that the plover died from something else and the hyena subsequently scavenged it. Alternatively, it is possible that the hyena predated the plover when it was still a chick and before it could fly.

Source: www.safring.adu.org.za.

Wash, boil and serve!

The inscription on the metal bands used by the U.S. Department of the Interior to tag migratory birds has been changed. The bands used to bear the address of the Washington Biological Survey, abbreviated as "Wash. Biol. Surv." -- until the agency received the following letter from an unhappy camper: "Dear Sirs: While camping last week, I shot one of your birds. I think it was a crow. I followed the cooking instructions on the leg tag "Wash Boil & Serve" and want to tell you it tasted horrible."

The bands are now marked "Fish & Wildlife Service."

Run and Cycle for Wildlife

Nick Baglow

The club, in conjunction with WESSA Limpopo, held a highly successful Run and Cycle for Wildlife at the Polokwane Nature Reserve on 11th July. Though the early morning was chilly as expected, registration proceeded smoothly and there was a good turnout for the first event to take off, the 35 km cycle race through the reserve. The 10 km cycle, 10 km run and 5 km fun run proceeded at short intervals thereafter. All abilities and ages were represented!

All participants received medals, with prizes for the top contenders, plus there were lucky draws on entry numbers – the drawing of these prizes proved to be very popular, with some delighted winners!

The atmosphere was convivial throughout, and those kids that weren't showing their parents the way in the races were kept occupied with a variety of other activities on offer, in addition to the food and beverage stalls.

With most of the direct costs being covered by sponsorship, the event was a financial success; the funds raised will go towards a club conservation project, with the erection of birding route signs for our Capricorn Letaba Birding Route being one possibility. There were calls for this to become an annual event (a confirmation that it was well organized), and with what we've learnt at our first attempt, this could well materialize!

Coverage from the local newspapers was good, with both conservation organizations getting much needed exposure. Additional photos from the event, details of sponsors etc can be viewed on our website www.birdlifepolokwane.co.za.



Early morning registration as some intrepid athletes and bird club members brave the early morning, winter chill.



...and they're off ... on the first Birdlife Polokwane 35Km Mountain Bike Challenge in the Polokwane Game Reserve.

Winter garden bird-ringing

Nick Baglow

On the 18th July an assorted group of members gathered to man the nets that had been erected around Joe and Lisa's garden at Tembele. The day started off with a flourish with a significant proportion of the Pietersburg Plateau's population of **White-browed Sparrow weavers** (well, 19 of them!) giving the ringing team plenty of practice. These were one and all by far the noisiest birds of the day. In all 36 birds were caught and ringed (we just missed nabbing the Cape Griffon and White-backed vultures that flew overhead!), with 13 species represented. Highlights included our old logo representative, the **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, and a male **Marico Sunbird**, both of them displaying stunning colours up close.

During quiet periods we sampled various pancake fillings, braaied some of the delicious wors left over from the cycle/run, and kept up to date with the Ashes cricket and Currie Cup rugby. Basically a tough day!



Bird ringing mosaic; clockwise from top left – Crimson-breasted Shrike, Marico Sunbird, Golden-tailed Woodpecker and Black-chested Prinia.

What's on?

- 1) **16 August** - Sunday morning club outing to the Mockford farm and vulture restaurant. **KdP & LG.**
 - 2) **27 August – 06 September** – Larks, Flowers & Whales excursion to the Western Cape with Eden Routes **LG.**
 - 3) **02 September** – Birdlife Polokwane - monthly meeting at "Die Koraal" 18h30.
 - 4) **19 – 20 September** – L.B.J identification course at Tembele and the Polokwane Nature Reserve **LG.**
 - 5) **07 October** – Birdlife Polokwane - monthly meeting at "Die Koraal" 18h30.
 - 6) **15 – 18 October** – Honorary Rangers raptor identification course at Letaba in the KNP. **Charles Hardy 0834571721**
- Contact Koos du Plessis - **KdP** (082 772 5293) or Lisa Grosel - **LG** (083 380 2322) for enquiries & reservations.