



# Birdlife Polokwane

# The Lark

JUNE 2010

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## From the Editor

Feel it, it is here!! One can hardly believe that the time has finally come for us, as nation to shine, to be an outstanding host and let the whole world see the rainbow nation that we are. I truly hope that you all share these sentiments and support our team and our country with this fantastic privilege and honour of hosting the FIFA football world cup.

Not quite as big, but equally exciting, 'for some of us anyway' is our annual June - Soup and Sherry evening. I always see this day as the start of the second half of the year - can you believe it! As we near mid-winter, the chilly weather, the absence of migrants and maybe even the dull weavers and bishops in their eclipse plumages cause many of us to go into "birding hibernation". To prevent this sad condition, the managers of SABAP2 have come up with a great initiative in celebration of the Soccer World Cup. It's a mini-project during June and July called GOALS (another damn acronym) – **GO** Atlassing and **Love Soccer!** Read all about it, get active and feel it, it is here!

Happy birding .... and "footballing".

Lisa

## Regional round-up

Compiled by Joe Grose!

Here is a summary of unusual and interesting bird sightings reported within the greater Polokwane region for May 2010.

The Polokwane area hasn't escaped the countrywide invasion of **African Openbills** (Oopbekooivaar). On the May 8<sup>th</sup> a single bird was spotted at the Mockford farms south-west of Polokwane.

On May 19<sup>th</sup> a **Black Stork** (Grootswartooivaar) was seen perched on one of the tall pylons which run alongside the very busy Veldspaat Road in upper Bendor.

There has been a steady influx of **Southern Bald Ibis** (Kalkoenibis) into the Polokwane area over the past three weeks. This seems to be an annual occurrence in early winter as this trend has been observed over the past three years. The most recent sightings of this species include:

5 birds on main sports fields of the University of Limpopo (11 May – Derek Engelbrecht), 3 birds on the Polokwane Golf Course (seen daily between the 17 – 21<sup>st</sup> May by green keeper Mr. Koos Hoffman) and 2 birds on an instant lawn farm near Almadal (27 May – Mr. J. Koornhof).



Photo: Derek Engelbrecht

Please report any unusual sightings around the Polokwane area to Joe.

## Hoopoe High Jinks at Tembele.

Joe Grose!

The resident pair of African Hoopoes in my garden always seem to provide some sort of entertainment in the form of very unusual 'avian behaviour'. You will remember the bizarre photos of a hoopoe cuddling up to a soft pink toy on the garden lawn (May 2009 Newsletter). Well this time, the male bird decided that he was going to pull off a "Steve Austin" by tackling a Black-headed Centipede-eater (*Aparallactus capensis*). The only problem was that he didn't quite know how to dispatch the little snake. With a bill that's designed more for probing than for spearing, the poor hoopoe really had a hard time dealing with its scaly prey. The unfortunate snake who didn't offer much resistance was continuously "softened and tenderised" between the mandibles rather than being pecked or jabbed. This ineffectiveness clearly frustrated the bird as it first shook, then tossed the snake into the air a few times only to go running after it as it tried to escape. After a struggle that lasted about 45 minutes the bird flew off with its prize which was still quite alive. So, the outcome of this encounter is unknown, although I think it is safe to say that the persistence shown by the bird suggests that it would eventually have had a rather substantial dinner.

Be sure to catch the next instalment of Tembele's Hoopoe High Jinks in July.



## Klub uitstappie na Doornbult 22 Mei 2010 Koos du Plessis

Aantal lede teenwoordig 10, Spesies waargeneem 65

Die eerste stop van die dag was die Doornbult voerkrale waar ons 'n Witooivaar (White Stork) sien wat besluit het om nie die tog van 13926 km terug Europa toe aan te pak nie. Tussen die krale sien ons talle Tuinduiwe (Rock Doves), Lelspreeus (Wattle Starling), Skoorsteenvoer (African Sacred Ibis) en baie mossies. Die dam lewer Blouereier (Grey Heron), Swartkopreier (Black-headed Heron), Driebandstrandkiewiet (Three-banded Plover) en o.a. Kroonkiewiet (Crowned Lapwing), wat Mara opgeteken het en Billy moes gaan soek om dit te bevestig. Die Gewone Koester (African Pipit) lewer soos gewoonlik baie vroeë en verskillende opinies op tussen al ons ervare voël kykers, maar ons sien ongelukkig nie die Geelborsstrandkiewiete (Kittlitz's Plover) en Oranjekeelkalkoentjie (Cape Longclaw) vanweë die gras wat baie langer as gewoonlik is a.g.v. die goeie reën die laaste tyd. Die omgewing van die bos kamp word verken na 'n koppie koffie en ons sien o.a. Witkeeljanfrederik (White-throated Robin-Chat), Kuifkopvisvanger (Malachite Kingfisher), Groenrugreier (Green-backed Heron) en Staalblouvinkie (Village Indigobird). Na die braai met 'n verbyvlug van 'n paar Maraboes (Marabou Stork) besoek ons die laaste dam wat die uitstappie afsluit met twee Visarende (African Fish-Eagle), Bruineend (Southern Pochard), Geelbekeend (Yellow-billed Duck) en Kolgans (Egyptian Goose) Ons dank aan Saartjie vir die reëlings en Frikkie & Sonja van Doornbult vir die gebruik van hul fasiliteite.

## World Cup fever hits SABAP2: go for GOALS!

A birding/football message from  
**Doug Harebottle**, Project  
Manager of the South African  
Bird Atlas Project 2



In celebration of the **2010 Soccer World Cup**, SABAP2 will be launching a mini-project during June and July called **GOALS – GO** Atlassing and Love Soccer!

With many of your favourite teams arriving in South Africa to compete for the acclaimed Jules Rimet trophy, one thing will be on their minds, scoring goals and reaching the final. It has taken four years of preparation and qualification for the 32 teams to reach the final rounds. Almost three years into SABAP2 and we have a team of 741 players whose goal it is to contribute as many pentad checklists as possible so that we can document changes in bird species distribution and abundance since the first bird atlas (**SABAP1**), over 20 years ago. It's a great challenge but one which is exciting and has got team SABAP2 out and about in the back and beyond of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

GOALS is intended to be fun and relaxing but with a keen eye on sustaining our atlassing efforts during the soccer bonanza - we don't want to lose sight of our own goals!

So, with players ready, officials ready, here are the 'MATCH RULES'...

The project **KICKS OFF** on 1 June and the **FINAL WHISTLE** will be blown on 31 July

**PASS** some time in between matches to do some atlassing – get into the **FIELD OF PLAY** and don't get caught in **NO MANS LAND**, there's no **SUBSTITUTE** for great birding on a perfect winters day!

Have a **BALL** making lots of lists and **THROW IN** a few incidentals here and there...

Get a **GAME PLAN** together and think **OUTSIDE THE BOX**. Possibly go **WIDE** and **HEAD** for some virgin pentads where you can **TACKLE** these head on – it may be a **LONG SHOT** but you may just **NET** some new and interesting species. Remember though, you may get a **RED CARD** for an out-of-range species. Don't panic, it doesn't mean any **PENALTIES** but it will be the **REFEREE**'s decision, so take notes and don't get **SIDELINED**!

- Take a **SHOT** at going **DEEP** in to your home pentad – who knows, it may just be on **TARGET** to reach a milestone.
- Be able to say **I WAS THERE** – in the forests, the wetlands, the karoo, the fynbos, the bushveld, the grasslands, and the mountains! You don't want to give yourself a **FREE KICK**!
- Think about **COACHING** a fellow birder to become an atlasser and set out **TACTICS** to help them get going.
- Continue to be avid **SUPPORTERS** – let's **CHEER** everyone on to do one more new pentad.
- Remember every contribution **SCORES** a **GOAL** for SABAP2 and biodiversity conservation – everyone's a **WINNER** with SABAP2.
- Finally, become a **FAN** of **TEAM** biodiversity and fly the **FLAG** and blow the **VUVUZELA** for SABAP2!

As we have done for other mini-projects, we'll keep the counter on the website going for **GOALS** from 1 June to 31 July to track our winter progress. So light those fires, get the blankets out, and fill up those flasks...there's going to be some good football to watch but most of all...enjoy the atlassing this winter!

## Some wacky historical bird facts ..... use it, don't use it!!!

The scientific name for the kingfisher is 'halcyon', from the Greek words 'hals' meaning *sea* and 'kyon' meaning *conceiving*. In Greek mythology it was said a kingfisher made a floating nest on the sea, and the eggs successfully hatched when the weather was calm and clear (from which the term 'halcyon days' comes).

In Medieval Europe it was just as common for animals to be brought to a court of law and tried before a judge for various misdemeanors, as it was for humans. In the 1400's in Basel in Switzerland, a cockerel was accused of sorcery when it laid an egg! The cockerel was found guilty, and was burnt at the stake along with the egg.

Why is it traditional to eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day in the USA? In 1621 the Pilgrim Fathers put on a big feast that included roasted wild turkey, to give thanks for their successful harvest, and invited all the Native American Indians (who had helped them set up the colonies), to join them. In view of this, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln decided that every fourth Thursday in November was to be a national holiday to keep up the tradition of thanksgiving, with roast turkey on the menu.

The famous musical composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had a pet European Starling that was said to be able to sing the first few bars of his Piano Concerto in G Major.

In times gone by, the European Blackbird was known as a *merle*, and the Song Thrush was known as a *mavis*.

The girl's name Penelope comes from the Greek word *penelopeia* meaning duck.

Contrary to popular belief, swans are not native to England. The Mute Swan was first introduced to England when Queen Beatrice of Cyprus gave King Richard I (1189-1199) a few swans as a present. Since that time, the swan has been regarded as a royal bird and is still held under legal protection.

In 1784, Benjamin Franklin, stated publicly, that he was unhappy that the Bald Eagle had been chosen as USA's national bird, ahead of the Turkey???

### Compiled by Joe Grosel

*Reader's Digest Did You Know?* (1990). The Reader's Digest Association Limited. London.

[www.buzzle.com/articles/interesting-facts-birds.html](http://www.buzzle.com/articles/interesting-facts-birds.html)  
[www.funshun.com/amazing-facts/birds-facts.html](http://www.funshun.com/amazing-facts/birds-facts.html)

### Upcoming events

1) **12 June** (Saturday) – Outing to the Machaka Nature Reserve near Matoks (approximately 50km north of Polokwane). RSVP to **KdP** before 07 June.

2) **26 June** (Sat) – Morning outing to the Sterkloop wetlands. **KdP**.

3) **07 July** - Birdlife Polokwane - monthly meeting at “Die Koraal” 18h30.

4) **17 July** – Atlassing day around Zebediela. **KdP**.

5) **21 July** – 01 August – Eastern Zimbabwe & Central Mozambique birding tour with Eden Routes. **L.G.**

6) **04 August** - Birdlife Polokwane - monthly meeting at “Die Koraal”

7) **05 – 08 August** - Greater Limpopo Birding Routes & the Limpopo Honorary Rangers present an exclusive Birding Long-weekend in the Mapungubwe National Park. **CH**.

Contact Koos du Plessis - **KdP** (082 772 5293), Lisa Grosel - **LG** (083 380 2322) Charles Hardy – **CH** (083 457 1721) and San3 de Wet – **San3** (0824532754) for enquiries & reservations.