



The Lark

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A warm welcome to all on this winters evening. Please visit our facebook page, come and see what other members have been up to or share your sightings, identification queries and photos with us. www.facebook.com/birdlifepolokwane. If you happen to come across anything you would like to see in our next newsletter, or you would like to give feedback you can e-mail me at chantz66@gmail.com. *Happy bird watching.*

Chantelle

A charming long-weekend birding in Mapungubwe

by Joe Grossel

Nine eager birders from Polokwane and Gauteng arrived at Mapungubwe National Park's Tshugulu Private Camp on the afternoon of 'Friday the 13th of June'. They didn't let this inauspicious date dampen their spirits and were soon setting off on the first outing of the weekend, a short drive to a sandstone outcrop and waterhole not far from camp. The honorary rangers had secured an open game drive vehicle for the event which made it possible for the entire group to get clear sightings of the birds. After admiring some intriguing San rock art at the outcrop we settled down at the waterhole for sundowners. As the sun set the Barking Geckos started calling while hordes of Double-banded Sandgrouse came in to drink. Freckled Nightjars flew around the site and later started called just to confirm their identity. Back at camp the evening was rounded off with a braai and an 'alfresco' presentation by Joe about the birds and habitats of the Mapungubwe National Park.

Day two started off with the customary early morning tea & rusks in the company of the resident Mocking Cliff-Chats, followed by a drive to the eastern section of the park. Before setting off on this day-trip a Striped Pipit who didn't want to be outdone by the Cliff-Chats also put an appearance. The aerial boardwalk was fairly quiet by its normal standards but the group was nevertheless entertained by some of the riparian woodland specials including Meves's Starling, Tropical Boubou, Bearded Woodpecker and African Barred Owlet. A picnic breakfast was taken at the confluence lookout points were as always some spectacular views of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers were enjoyed. At these lookout points both the Rock Hyrax and rarer Yellow-spotted Hyrax were added to the week-end's mammal list while a host of rock-dwelling birds were also spotted. Next on the program was a guided tour of the impressive Mapungubwe Museum and visitor's centre followed by a great bush lunch at the base of the famous Mapungubwe Hill. Those who were up to it then took a walk to the top of the hill while the less energetic preferred to photograph the birds coming to drink at a small waterhole. On the way back to camp some birding was done around the main gate and the adjacent waterhole where Grey Penduline-Tit, Meyer's Parrot and Cut-throat Finch were seen. Back at camp some tired souls relaxed around the campfire before another superb dinner was served by the HR's.

The morning of day-three provided the highlight for many of the newer birders with a visit to the irrigation dams on the farm Samaria which has recently become part of the park. As usual this prolific birding spot didn't disappoint and lots of quality waterbirds were seen. A pre-breakfast snack was enjoyed on the banks of the Limpopo River on the Samaria farm where Horus Swift was a new bird for

some of the group. On the way back to camp a beautiful Burchell's Sandgrouse posed for pictures in the road. The afternoon session took us to the western portion of the park. The open thornveld habitats produced great views of Kori Bustard, Pale-Chanting Goshawk, Southern Pied Babbler, several Pipit species and breeding Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark. After sundowners and much laughter at 'Palm Springs' it was back to birding business as the sun set and after some searching a Three-banded Courser was seen in the beam of the spotlight. On the return drive to camp via Pontdrif several owls were seen including a Spotted Eagle-Owl that posed beautifully for the photographers. The day's activities ended with a three-course dinner comprising traditional South African dishes and everyone was relieved to know that the weekend wasn't quite over yet with Monday being a public holiday.

On the last morning Joe took the guests on a short walk into the sandstone ridges that surround the lodge. The ecology of this unique habitat was explained and its fascinating Kalahari-like features were pointed out. A Fawn-coloured Lark proved very valuable to some as it was yet another new tick for their life lists.

After our last breakfast of the weekend the event ended off with a very 'serious' birding quiz and prize giving session before everyone left Mapungubwe, rejuvenated having spent three enjoyable days in this special place.

Thanks must go to Charles and Lois Hardy and Bruce Goetsch from the Limpopo Honorary Rangers for the superb organization, catering and driving. Special appreciation also goes to the sponsors of this event Sasol and Stretton's Gin



Turning Kruger Green

Prof. Les Underhill

Shortly before Doug Harebottle left the Animal Demography Unit he had a vision about getting all the pentads in the Kruger National Park to green status on the SABAP2 website map. He spoke to Peter Lawson about working towards a minimum of four atlas cards per pentad over a three year period and arranged for the ADU to be registered with SANParks Scientific Services, with Les Underhill heading the project. (So the project title Turning Kruger Green refers to the goal of atlasing each pentad in the Kruger National Park four times, thus colouring that pentad on the SABAP2 South African map green). SANParks has registered four atlas observers (Peter Lawson, Ian Whyte, Andrew McKenzie and Joe Grosel) to be able to collect bird data away from tourist routes with authority from Section Rangers when doing so. These are the only four people who will have this privilege.

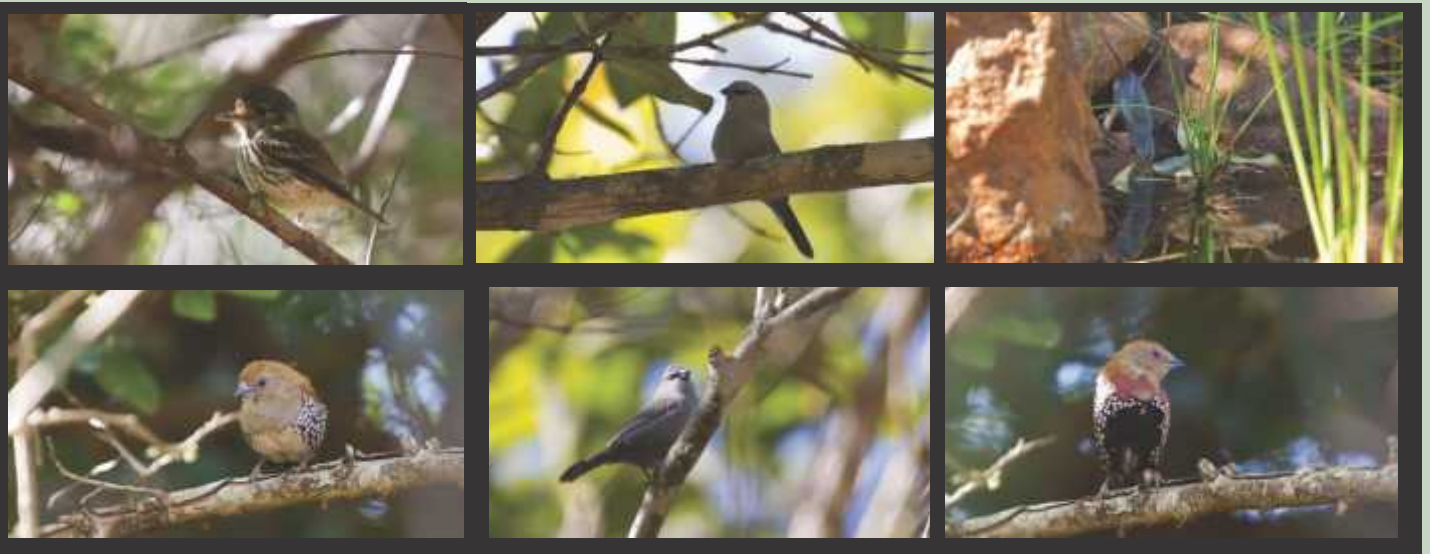
We also want accessible pentads which have already been well covered to continue to be atlased because we can never collect sufficient data,

particularly in Kruger National Park which is such a large and incredible natural area. So that is where all you Citizen Scientists visiting Kruger step in. The more atlas cards we can get throughout Kruger the better; the birding is exciting and rewarding in this vast area at all times of the year.

There are still pentads on tourist routes within Kruger that have not yet reached the minimum of four checklists and we urge you to concentrate on these during your visits. Some may only have a tourist road traversing a corner, or small section of a pentad but it can still be rewarding to spend the two hour minimum in such areas and end up with a reasonable list. We urge you to do this to help with turning Kruger green. See the SABAP2 website for a list of pentads in tourist areas which have not yet been atlased four times.

Golwe Picnic and Camp Site

Richter van Tonder, Marcia van Tonder and Jody de Bruyn visited Golwe picnic and camp site in Northern Limpopo on Saturday the 7th of June, and had some great sightings, which included the following species: Pink-throated Twinspot, African Broadbill, African Goshawk, Black Sparrowhawk and the highlight of the day was a pair of Grey Waxbill.



Outings / Uitstappies

Saturday 05 July: Big birding race – Polokwane (**JG**)

19 – 20 July: LBJ Identification course (Polokwane) *Discounts for Birdlife Polokwane members.*

24 – 27 July: Bateleur Wilderness Birding Bash with the Honorary Rangers – KNP (**CH**)

30 July: Winter CWAC counts at Vencor, Kalkfontein and De Loskop (**JG**)

02 Aug: CWAC count at the Polokwane Bird Sanctuary (**RvT**)

Tuesday 12 Aug: Monthly meeting for August (Not 05 Aug)

16 Aug: Day trip to Schoemansdal in the Soutpansberg (**RvT**)

02 September: Monthly meeting with special guests from Birdlife SA.

Contact Persons

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