

FEBRUARY 2015

It's a new year with new obstacles and challenges but also new memories and good times, may 2015 be a fantastic year for all of you and may your highs far outweigh your lows. Welcome back. Visit our facebook page, come and see what other members have been up to, 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 birding.*

Chantelle

Why do African Broadbills have such a poor breeding success?

by Derek Engelbrecht

The enigmatic African Broadbill's behaviour of typically sitting silent and motionless for extended periods, usually in the dense understorey. This means its presence in a particular area is often overlooked. For example between 1976 and 1985 there were only two records of the species in north-eastern Venda. The species then went unrecorded in the same area during the Southern African Bird Atlas Project from the late 1980's to early 1990's. The species was then "rediscovered" in October 1999 when a female was caught in a mist-net near Levubu. Given the species' retiring nature and inconspicuousness when it is not calling, it is hardly surprising that relatively

little is known about it, in particular of its breeding habits. Since 2007 I have been studying various aspects of the breeding biology of the species at Golwe in Venda and Roodewal State Forest in the Soutpansberg. Thanks to two Limpopo Birding routes guides, Christopher Nethonzhe and Samson Mulaudzi who are exceptionally skilful at finding their



African Broadbill nest

Our initial efforts focussed on studying basic breeding parameters such as the duration of the incubation (15-16 days) and nestling (13-15 days) periods, diet of nestlings, roles of the sexes and their breeding success. Surprisingly, they have a dismal success rate at both sites - about 12% over all years! But what are the causes of nest failure? Well, we knew it was predation, but who were the culprits? The main suspects were Vervet Monkeys and Baboons. To determine who the main nest predators are, we placed trail cameras near nests. The results surprised us as the main culprit seems to be the Thick-tailed Bushbaby. Other predators caught on camera include baboon and an African Goshawk. All this information contributes to our growing understanding of the ecology and threats faced by the species in the Limpopo Province, which will help us to conserve this enigmatic species.



Thick-tailed Bushbaby near a broadbill nest. skilful at finding their nests, we are piecing the puzzles together.

Some interesting bird sightings in and around Polokwane for January 2015

by Joe Grosel

- 1) Numerous Olive-tree Warblers (Olyfboomsangers) were recorded in and around the Polokwane Game Reserve during January. As usual a good stakeout for this bird is within the Acacia tickets around Aloe Ridge waterhole.
- 2) Several Cuckoo Finch (Koekoekvink) were recorded at the Turfloop Dam Nature Reserve during the CWAC count on the 29th of January.
- 3) There has been an influx of Honey Buzzards (Wespedief) into the Polokwane area with no less than five separate sightings (of different individuals) around the city in the past month.
- 4) An African Crake (Afrikaanse Riethaan) was flushed from a marshy area near Seloka Dam in the Polokwane Game Reserve on January 15 by Derek and Daniel Engelbrecht.
- 5) The Broad-tailed Warblers (Breëstertsanger) which were very active in the Haenertsburg grasslands in December continued to entertain birders throughout January.

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Some interesting bird sightings in and around Polokwane for January 2015 (cont)

by Joe Grosel

6) De Loskop Farm south-west of Dendron has provided lots of excitement for Derek Engelbrecht who is using the property as his current study site. Some of the goodies seen over the past month include Corn Crake (Kwartelkoning), Maccoa Duck (Bloubekeend), White-backed Duck (Witrugeend) and Thrush Nightingale (Lysternagtegaal).

7) On the 31st of January Richter van Tonder and Jody de Bruyn spotted and photographed a female Red-footed Falcon (Westelike Rooipootvalkie) on the Percy Fyfe Road, 3.5km from the turnoff near Westernburg.

8) A Red-capped Robin-Chat (Natalse Janfrederik) flew into the house of Karin & Keith Baragwanath in Magazyn Street Polokwane on January 31st. As far as can be ascertained, this is only the second record for this species for Polokwane. The closest population is in the Randfontein valley west of Haenertsburg.

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



Photos from left: Honey Buzzard – Capricorn Polokwane (Anette van Schalkwyk), Broad-tailed Warbler – Haenertsburg grasslands (Jody de Bruyn), Honey Buzzard (pale morph) – Polokwane Golf Club (Thomas Pretorius)

2014 - Birding Big Day Results – Limpopo is tops!

by Joe Grosel

On the 26th of November 2014 over 150 teams participated in four differs categories in the popular Birding Big Day event across the country. As far as I could establish, at least 35 teams selected their centre points within the Limpopo Province and when looking at the final results it's not difficult to tell why our province is fast being recognised as the most prolific birding area in the country. Of the top twenty teams in the open category 10 were from the Limpopo Province including the teams who were placed first and second. More specifically 4 of the best placed teams chose the Capricorn – Letaba Birding Route which encompasses Polokwane, Turfloop, Haenertsburg, Magoebaskloof, Tzaneen and Letsetele.

As far as Birdlife Polokwane is concerned, seven teams competed in three different categories and apparently everyone had a great birding day and at the same time generated some much-needed funds for Birdlife South Africa conservation projects.

Our congratulations go to all the teams from our region that supported the event. Hopefully a few more from Birdlife Polokwane will enter this year's Birding Big Day challenge on 28th of November.

Outings / Uitstappies

05 February	– CWAC counts at Vencor, Kalkfontein and De-Loskop (CH).
14 Feb	– 'Valentines' CWAC count at the Polokwane Bird Sanctuary (RvT).
19 – 22 Feb	– Greater Limpopo Birding Routes – 'Birding off the beaten track in the Waterberg' event. Shondoro Mountain Retreat. Camping option available (LG).
03 March	– Monthly meeting and the Animal Demography Unit's Citizen Science Promotion with Prof. Les Underhill (LG).
07 – 08 March	– Weekend bird ringing in the Polokwane Game Reserve with Derek Engelbrecht and Billy Attard (LG & DE)
12 – 15 March	– Shimuwini Wilderness Birding Event with the Limpopo Honorary Rangers. Shimuwini Bushveld Camp, KNP (CH).
14 March	– Day outing to the Nylsvley Nature Reserve (RvT).
26 – 29 March	– GLBR presents the 'Wolkberg to Woodbush' 4x4 birding event (LM).
28 March	– Beginner Birders morning outing and picnic in the Polokwane Game Reserve (RvT).

Contact Persons

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