

From the editor:

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this month's newsletter with your articles and reports on the club outings. Please contact me should you wish to share your story or sighting with us at labmarcia@gmail.com.

Happy birding! **Marcia**

Mkhombo Dam Outing –12March 2016

Article by Saartjie Venter

Ons is vroegoggend uit die vere waar ons mekaar 05:00 ontmoet het by die golfklub om die dag saam met ons toergids, Richter, die skaars swarstertgriet (Black-tailed Godwit) te gaan soek.

With great anticipation, we watched the clouds as it was raining throughout the week. Fortunately for us, we had a lovely sunny day of birding. When we arrived we were greeted by an Osprey (Visvalk) sitting in a dry tree in the dam, feasting on his catch. For some of us it was a lifer. Later on he gave the photographers in the group a great opportunity to snap him as he circled overhead.

Nog „n hoogtepunt was die groot groep Swartreiers (Black Heron) wat ons gesien het. Saam met die Lepellaar (African Spoonbill) wat die water vir hulle geroer het, het die Swartreiers saam beweeg en almal saam hulle sambreëltjies opgeslaan. Ons het altesaam omtrent 90 voëlspecies gesien waarvan die volgende hoogtepunte op ons lys was: Visvalk (Osprey), Swartreier (Black Heron), Groot Flamink (Greater Flamingo), Klein Flamink (Lesser Flamingo), Staalblouvinkie (Village Indigobird), Ringnekstrandkiewiet (Common Ringed Plover), Swarteend (African Black Duck), Fluiteend (Fulvous Duck), Gryskopmeeu (Grey-headed Gull), Witbaardsterretjie (Whiskered Tern), Witvlerksterretjie (White-winged Tern), Geelborsstrandkiewiet (Kitlitz's Plover), en vele meer.

Late afternoon a group of us left for Settlers where we stayed at a guest house on a farm in the area. Here we saw the Cuckoo finch (Koekoekvink), which was also a first for most of us. The farm owner and his sheepdog even gave us a sheep-hearing demonstration. A great time together with good friends. Thanks to Richter, Gershwin, Conrad, Johannes, Saartjie, Sandrie, Willie, Susan, Lucean, Billy, Dudley, Hilde, Mark, Julia, Les, Leonie, Almarie, Lynette.



Swartreiers / Black Heron at Mkhombo Dam

The World's oldest known bird just became a mom again!

Article submitted by Joe Grosel

A Laysan Albatross (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) named Wisdom, the world's oldest banded bird, has hatched what could be her 40th chick. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that the bird, who is at least 65 years old, and her mate welcomed their latest chick to the World on the 1st of Feb 2016.



Wisdom returns to her nest at the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in the Pacific Ocean every year. She was first banded there in 1956 as part of a project with the U.S. Geological Survey and has bred consecutively at the refuge since then. Based on six decades of observation, researchers believe that she has raised as many as 40 chicks and logged over three million miles of ocean flight time during her life.

Nature World News (11 Feb 2016)

Wisdom and her latest chick photographed by Kiah Walker

Uitstappie na Sebayeng – 19 Maart 2016

Artikel deur Sandrie de Wet

Vroeg-vroeg is ons uit die vere waar ons nog voor sonsopkoms die eerste voëltjies opgeteken het.

Dit het baie gereën en alles was baie nat. Jody en Richter het die pad aangewys en ons is almal agterna met waterskoene, kamera's en verkykers. Ons sien onder andere; Europese Vleisanger (Sedge Warbler), Lysternagtegaal (Thrush Nightingale), Europese Rietsanger (Marsh Warbler), en „n hele paar Kaapse Kapokvoëltjies (Cape Penduline-tit) baie naby aan ons. Daarby het ons ook „n hele paar watervoëls gesien soos Nonnetjie-eend (White-faced Duck), Ralreiers (Squacco Heron), Gevlekte eend (Hottentot Teal), en Grootlangtoon (African Jacana). Terwyl ons knie-diep en plas-plas deur die vleiland stap hoor ons die Grootriethane (African Rail) naby ons roep, maar wou net nie hulself wys nie. In totaal teken ons byne 80 spesies aan vir die dag. Richter, baie dankie vir „n weereens goed georganiseerde uitstappie!

Flock 2016

Article by Ali Halajian

Birdlife Polokwane and the University of Limpopo was well represented at Birdlife South Africa's Flock 2016 event in Skukuza, KNP from 9-13 March. At the LAB (Learn about Birds) conference we had a significant contribution with eight presentations at at – eight oral presentations by Derek Engelbrecht(2), Tshifhiwa Mandiwana-Neudani, Dikobe Molepo, Ali Halajian, Joe Grosel(2) and Peter Mokumo and two poster presentations by Masotla Makhudue and William Malepe. Not only was the conference very fruitful but also our game and bird sightings.

On our first day as we drove through the park towards Skukuza through the first good rains of the season, we got to see the big-5 and an extra bonus in a Cheetah at a kill. On our outing during the event we were also lucky to have two wild dog sightings and a rare Sooty Falcon, a lifer for everyone in our group except for Joe.

Unfortunately there were still many signs of the terrible drought with a lot of hippo and buffalo carcasses, particularly around the Sabie River.

Birdlife Polokwane's latest „lifer hunter“ Peter Mokumo used the opportunity to add to his life list and did so with in excess of 30 species.

On the Saturday afternoon of the event Birdlife South Africa held its Annual General Meeting and our clan from Polokwane were there to represent one of the „most successful“ bird clubs in the country.



The Birdlife Polokwane / University of Limpopo team that did oral and poster presentations at the 2016 LAB in Skukuza.

Lark course for Birdlife Polokwane members

By Wilna Campbell

On Saturday the 2nd of April, 19 members of the Polokwane Bird Club attended a birding course that was presented by our very own Joe Grosel. Although the topic of the course was a bit grey (or is it brown?), Joe gave us a very colourful and interesting lecture about the world of larks. We learned a lot more about larks and how to identify them, only to make us release that it needs a lot of practice to make perfect. When it came to the ID quiz at the end of the course many of us still got confused, particularly when Joe threw in a photo of a „pipit“.

After the day in class, we went for a practical excursion to „Larkville“ (near the settlement of Chebeng), where we could put our knowledge to practice. Here we recorded 5 lark species, namely Spike-heeled (see photo), Sabota, Short-clawed, Red-capped and Grey-backed sparrow-lark. However, once again we released that it is almost as difficult to spot larks in the grass, as it is to ID them.

What amazed me most after learning all of this and much more about larks, is how wonderfully adaptable they are - their colouration can even differ within the same species, according to the habitat where they live. Nature is wonderful indeed!

CLUB OUTINGS / UITSTAPPIES:

- 09 April** – Outing to the University Experimental Farm (**RvT**)
- 27 April** – Birdlife Plk annual ‘Amazing Photographic Bird Race’ (**JG**)
- 01 May** – International Dawn Chorus Day & bird atlassing around Polokwane (**JG**)
- 03 May** – Birdlife Plk monthly meeting at Plk Golf Club
- 14 May** – Day outing to Kurisa Moya (**RvT**)
- 20-22 May** – Wildlife tracking & bush observation skills workshop in th Thornybush Game Reserve (**JG**)
- 02-05 June** – ‘The Mapungubwe Birding Experience’ with the Limpopo Honorary Rangers (**CH**)
- 07 June** – Birdlife Plk monthly meeting at Plk Golf Club
- 11 June** – Day trip to Haenertsburg Grasslands (**RvT**)

Contact persons:

Charles Hardy – **CH** (083 457 1721); Joe Grosel – **JG** (082 415 5250); Lisa Grosel - **LG** (083 380 2322); San3 de Wet – **S3** (082 453 2754); Richter van Tonder – **RvT** 082 213 8276