



The Lark

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We are officially half way through this year which seems surreal, so break out the soups and stews and keep warm in these cold days to come. 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 bird watching.*

Chantelle

Birding hotspots near Polokwane 5. Percy Fyfe Nature Reserve

by Joe Grossel

The Percy Fyfe Nature Reserve, one of the oldest provincial nature reserves in the province is run by the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism. Mr. Percy Poynton Fyfe who owned the original farm Lunsklip was one of the first game farmers in the country and famous for breeding up one of the largest privately-owned Blesbok populations at the time. With no heirs to inherit the farm, Mr. Fyfe donated the property to the former Transvaal Nature Conservation Division in 1953. Today this reserve of approximately 3000ha serves as a free-range breeding centre for rare game such as Roan Antelope, Tsessebe and disease-free Cape Buffalo of which the original herd was brought in from Addo in the eastern Cape. The topography of the reserve consists of undulating hills in the north and central regions and a series of impressive granite outcrops in the south-western section. The vegetation is a combination of Polokwane Plateau open thorn-savannah, thickets associated with outcrops and drainage lines and broad-leaved woodland elements of the Waterberg Mountain Range.

The birdlife is consequently quite diverse. Amongst the large boulders of the granite outcrops Mocking Cliff-Chat, Short-toed Rock-Thrush, Lazy Cisticola, Cape Bunting, Striped Pipit, Lanner Falcon and a breeding pair of Verreaux's Eagle can be seen while the associated rock figs attract an assortment of fruit-eaters such as Green-pigeons and various barbets and starlings. The open woodland and thornveld-savannah habitats have a good variety of sought-after 'LBJ's' such as Bushveld, Long-billed, Buffy and Plain-backed Pipit, Tinkling, Levaillant's and Cloud Cisticola, Yellow-bellied and Green-capped Eremomela, Pale Flycatcher and Barred Wren-Warbler. Other resident specials include Cuckoo Hawk, Lizard Buzzard, Shelley's Francolin, Freckled Nightjar, Pearl-breasted Swallow, African Quail-Finch and Ovambo Sparrowhawk.

The reserve is divided into three separate camps, namely the Roan Camp, which measures approximately 1 650 ha and is situated in the northern part of the reserve; the Tsessebe Camp of approximately 450 ha in the central part of the reserve and the Sable Camp of 700 ha situated in the south-western part of the reserve. Although there are separate entrances into each camp the entrance gate and public facilities are located in the large Roan Camp. A picnic site is available for day visitors, but this facility is currently in a poor condition. Sadly much of the infrastructure including the visitor's facilities such as the group camp, communal kitchen, communal ablution facilities and walking trails are rather rundown to the point of not being functional at all, so come prepared.

Fortunately though, a strategic plan for the reserve addressing all these issues has been accepted by the department which has undertaken to return the reserve to its former state within the next two years. Lets hold thumbs!

At this stage only day visits are advised but for those who want to spend more time in this beautiful area there are a number of fine lodges situated in the hills around the reserve.

The reserve is easily accessible from Polokwane via the Percy Fyfe road which leads off from the Matlala road. Directions: From Nelson Mandela Avenue turn towards Westernburg. About 1.5km after the main entrance to the Westernburg suburb turn left onto the Percy Fyfe road. Travel along this road for about 25km and turn left at the T-junction onto a gravel road. About 1.2km further, veer off to the right at a staggered junction and continue for a further 9.5km. Just before reaching a railway crossing, the entrance to the reserve will be to your left. S24°01' 24.32" E29°08' 19.63".

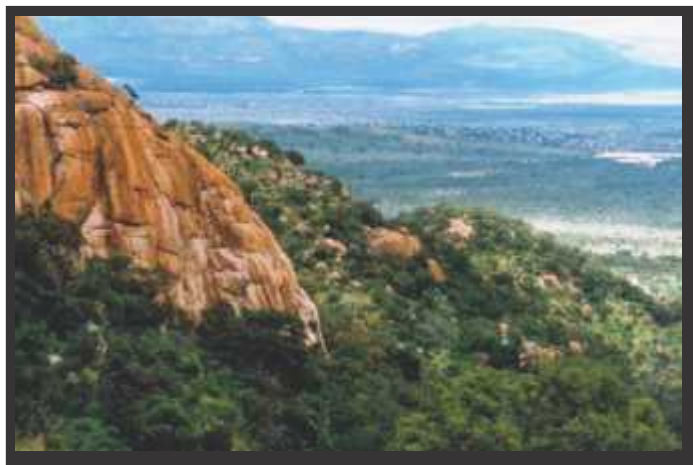
For more information contact: 015 290 735.

Other contact numbers are 015 491 5678 (Percy Fyfe) or 015 288 0099 / 015 295 8262 (Central Reservations),

Fax: 015 291 5583

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Birding Q & A

from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Q: I found a nest near my house and want to observe it but I am worried about disturbing it. Can you give me any advice?

A. Observing nesting birds deepens our understanding and appreciation of the complex and fascinating lives of these animals. But nest monitoring needs to be done safely for it to have value for both the birds and for you. The Cornell Lab runs a citizen science project called NestWatch that offers the following advice about how to monitor a nest safely:

- Do not check in the early morning. Most birds lay their eggs in the morning so plan on visiting nests in the afternoon. Also, most adults will temporarily leave the nest when you are near, and eggs and young nestlings can become cold quickly if left alone in the morning.
- Avoid disturbing nests during the first few days of incubation. If necessary, observe nests from a distance and approach only when the female leaves the nest.
- Do not approach nests when young are close to fledging. When the young are disturbed during this stage, they may leave the nest prematurely. Young that fledge prematurely usually do not stay in the nest despite attempts to return them, and their survival rates away from the nest are low. When young birds are fully feathered and very alert, only observe the nest from a distance.
- Avoid disturbing nests during bad weather as this can be stressful for the birds. If it is cold, damp, or rainy, postpone checking nests until another day.
- Do not check nests at or after dusk, when females are returning, or have returned, to the nest for the night. The exception to this would be owls, which typically leave the nest at dusk.

Be careful of attracting nest predators. Whenever possible take a different route away from the nest site than the route you took to reach it. Walking back and forth to the nest along the same path leaves a dead-end trail that can lead predators directly to the nest. Don't touch the birds.

In most instances it is illegal for you to touch or otherwise physically disturb an active nest or its contents.

Blouberguitstappie – 17 Mei 2014

deur Richter van Tonder

Ons oggend het lekker vroeg afgeskop toe 10 van ons, waarvan 2 potensiele nuwe klublede, 5:30 vertrek het na Blouberg NR. Na 'n effe verdwaal het ons Derek en 3 ander by die ontvangsarea gekry. Derek was die 'toerleier' vir die dag en ons het vertrek na 'n mooi kremetart waar ons koffie en oggendete kon geniet.



Hier het ons spesies gesien soos Rooikopwewer, Withelmlaksman en Groenvlekduifie. Daarna het ons beweeg na 'n plekkie waarons by 'n sementdam stilgehou het en hier het 'n voëlgeselskap van 15 en meer ons vermaak. Ons sien onder andere Witkoluil, Witkruissperwer, Geelborskleinjantjies, Gewone Swartmees, Rooibekrenostervoëls en 'n Spookvoël.

Na 'n goeie ruk van gesels en bespreking van die spesies beweeg ons toe na die Vyebos. 'n Pragtige stuk bos met groot bome en digte plantegroei. Hier gewaar ons toe die raserige en uitspattige Kuifkoptarentale wat almal vermaak het met hul masjiengeweeragtige geroep. 'n Boskrapper het mooi vertoon vir 'n ruk lank, sodat meeste hom kon bestudeer.

Ons is toe na die aasvoël restaurant om te sien wat vir ons wag. Hier was ons redelik verras deur 'n groterige groep aasvoëls. 2 soorte was geïdentifiseer nl. Kransaaasvoël en Witruugaasvoël. Die dag was lekker warm en almal het dit geniet.

Daar was ongeveer 70 spesies opgeteken vir die dag. Dankie aan Derek vir sy hulp en kennis.

Outings / Uitstappies

13 - 16 June: Sasol, Limpopo Honorary Rangers and the Greater Limpopo Birding Routes present the Mapungupwe Birding Adventure (CH)

21 June: Morning visit to the Mockford Farms and vulture restaurant (RvT).

28 - 29 June: Beginners bird id course in Polokwane (LG) Discounts for Birdlife Polokwane members

05 July: Third annual Big birding Race around 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)

Contact Persons

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