



Newsletter 156 August/September 2018

FORTHCOMING CLUB MEETINGS

Every third Tuesday of the month:

19h00 for 19h30

Wanderers Club

Come early and join us for supper in the restaurant. The food is great and the company is excellent!

In this edition:

FORTHCOMING CLUB MEETINGS	1
SPEAKERS	2
FORTHCOMING DAY OUTINGS	3
WEEKENDS AWAY	5
REVIEWS	7
WHAT'S IN A NAME?	9
NEWS OF THE PEARSONS	10
BIRD-FRIENDLY PLANTS	11
IT'S BIRD FAIR TIME AGAIN!	11
DO YOU KNOW?	14
EDITOR'S CHIRP	15
CUCKOO CLUB COMMITTEE	16
BANKING DETAILS.....	16

20% birding, 80% fun

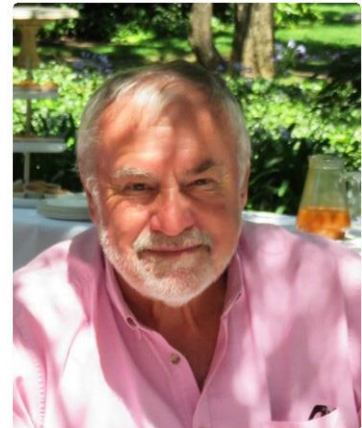


SPEAKERS

Organiser: John Blackmore

083 302 3929

blakkers@iburst.co.za



Tuesday 21st August

Speaker: Peter Sharland

Topic: Butterflies and Birds: An Introduction

- Introduction to butterflies
- Some similarities with birds
- Butterfly watching
- Butterfly conservation in RSA
- Selected photos
- Questions

Tuesday 18th September

Speaker: Margi Brocklehurst

To be advised



FORTHCOMING DAY OUTINGS

Organiser: Bev Williams

083 4811597

bevjiwil@gmail.com



Sunday 26 August, morning outing: Meet at the Reserve at 08h00

Blesbokspruit/Grootvaly Wetland Reserve

The Grootvaly Wetland Reserve is part of the Blesbokspruit system and forms the northern section of the Blesbokspruit Ramsar Site. The reserve site covers 350 hectares and is a high altitude wetland consisting of open water, reedbeds and marshy areas with grasses and sedges which are sometimes flooded.

The Blesbokspruit system is valuable to the ecosystem of the area because of its ability to purify industrial and domestic discharge into the Blesbokspruit River from local industries, sewage works and mines, reducing the amount of pollution entering the Vaal River.

Water birds and waders are the main attraction depending on water levels and the reserve is a good area for duck species including White-faced, Fulvous and Yellow-billed as well as Hottentot Teal and Cape Shoveler. Winter visitors include Sentinel Rock-Thrush and Capped Wheatear and South African Shelduck are occasional visitors. In the grassy areas a variety of bishops and widows occur as well as finches and waxbills such as African Firefinch, Red-headed Finch, Orange-breasted and Violet-eared Waxbills.

We will meet just inside the entrance to the reserve at 08h00 for our morning coffee/sandwiches/rusks. We will do a short drive to the hides, and then walk around the area. There are two hides and a couple of lapas where we can have a picnic lunch after our morning's birding. Although there are toilet facilities, these are usually locked and not accessible.

Directions:

From OR Tambo International Airport take the R21 south then the N12 Witbank freeway towards Springs. Take exit 457 marked Springs/Etswatwa, turn right at the intersection and proceed south towards Springs for 6,7 kilometres. The entrance to the reserve is sign



posted Grootvaly/Blesbokspruit at the gate on the left side of the road. The site is approximately 40 minutes from OR Tambo International Airport.



Sunday 30th September – Pretoria Botanical Gardens

The garden is a favourite birding spot and over 220 bird species have been listed. Interesting birds that have been recorded include hawks, falcons, kestrels and even the Verreaux's Eagle. These birds prey on the dassie population and can sometimes be seen flying above the ridge in search of their favourite prey. Also on the bird list are Pied Kingfisher, Giant Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, Green Wood-hoopoe, Black-headed Oriole, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Bokmakierie and Violetbacked Starling.

Mammals such as the slender mongoose, scrub hare and common duiker often visit the natural grassland for food or for shelter. Various species of skinks, yellow-throated or plated lizards and rock monitors have found a place to live within the Garden. Visitors might even be lucky enough to see a spotted-necked otter around the wetland area. More than 50 butterfly species have been recorded.

Meet in the parking at 07h45 - gate opens at 08h00. Bring along coffee/rusks/sandwiches and water to take on the walk, and a picnic lunch for after our walk around the gardens.

Entrance fees (from their website) are R35.00 per person; Senior Citizens R15.00.

Directions: (Not confirmed – taken from Google)

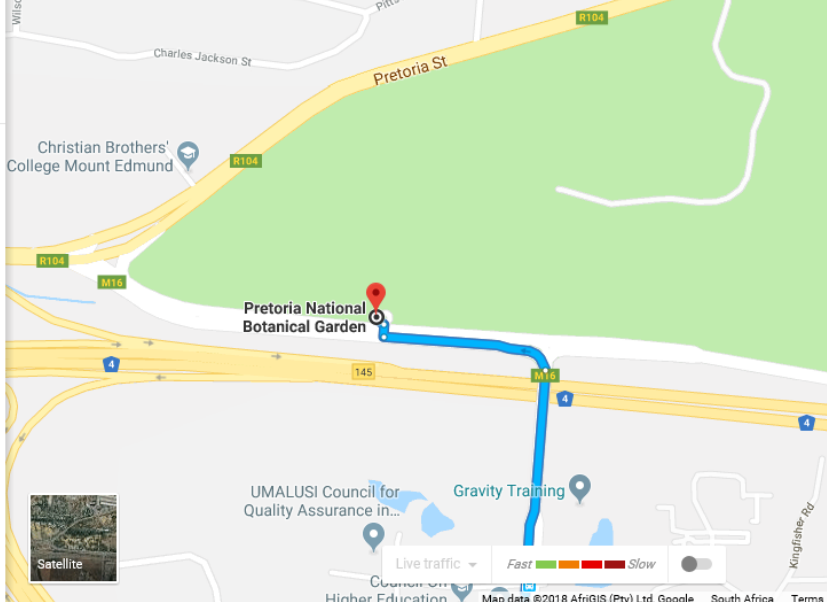
From the N1, take exit 141 for M6/Lynnwood Road

Follow M16 to the Gardens (2 Cussonia Ave, Brummeria, Pretoria)

via Ben Schoeman Fwy/Pretoria Main Rd/N1 and Ben Schoeman Fwy/N1
Fastest route, the usual traffic
⚠ This route has tolls.

Follow M16 to your destination in Koedoespoort 456-Jr
6 min (3.5 km)

- Use the 2nd from the left lane to turn right onto Lynnwood Rd/M6
200 m
- Use the left 2 lanes to turn left onto Meiring Naude Rd/M16
3.0 km
- Turn left onto Cussonia/M16
350 m
- Turn right
23 m
- Turn left
21 m



The map displays a route starting from Pretoria, South Africa, heading south on the M16 highway. Key landmarks include the Pretoria National Botanical Garden, Christian Brothers' College Mount Edmund, and the UMALUSI Council for Quality Assurance. The route is marked with a blue line, and the map includes a satellite view inset and a traffic status indicator.

GPS Co-ordinates:

- 28°16'19.8"E 25°44'18.2"S
- Long 28.27218 Lat -25.73838

WEEKENDS AWAY

Organiser: **Beth Hackland**

072 266 1821

011 4467907 (direct)

beth@urban.co.za



Boschfontein Guest Farm: Marakele, Thabazimbi: 17–19 August

Marakele National Park is home to one of the largest colonies of breeding Cape Vultures and in addition has a wide variety of game and birdlife in the bushveld, plus spectacular scenery. Thabazimbi is about a 3-hour drive via Brits, and also has a number of other smaller reserves that are worth a visit if time allows.



Target birds are the Cape Vulture colony, and Yellow Throated sandgrouse. We have a booking at a guest farm just outside the Marakele National Park, which we visited some years ago. There is a combination of camping, 2 mountain chalets, or bedrooms en suite at the farmhouse itself. Price at the farm for 2 nights R900, (camping R450). Members are welcome to stay 3 nights if they wish to do so. Some members have already put their names down and I have about 5 places available.



Miss Chrissie's at Chrissiesmeer (past Ermelo): 21–24 September



We will travel to this wetland area in the spring. Target birds, will be Baillon's Crake and the Blue Korhaan, plus all the usual waterbirds. The guest farm is a lovingly restored sandstone building nearly 150 years old, and is iconic of the area. R1600pp incl. breakfast for 3 nights

Botswana Circle: 7–20 October

Price: Chalet accommodation including allowance for self-catering food and petrol R16,000; camping will be R7500. This will truly be a trip of a lifetime, with the most wonderful birding and game viewing opportunities, so do take this opportunity to join us. Please contact me direct for more details (Beth Hackland, 0722661821 bethhackland@gmail.com).

(Additional information on this amazing trip appeared in the June-July Newsletter. Ed.)

Madikwe Reserve: 30 Dec–3 January 2019



Due to a cancellation in another Bird Club, an opportunity for birders to visit Mooifontein in the Madikwe Reserve has come up. The total cost (excluding gate fees) is R4,590.00pp for four nights (arriving on Sunday, 30th December,



leaving Thursday, 3rd January), self-catering accommodation with two game drives daily. If you are interested, please contact Peter Appleyard (appleyardpd@telkomsa.net) of the Sandton Bird club as soon as possible. You will also need to pay a deposit (R500.00 pp.) not later than 15th August. Please reference your payment with your name. The balance (R4,090.00) is payable by 31st October.

Beth Hackland

REVIEWS

Marievale Outing: Sunday 29 July

Marievale was beautiful in the early morning light as we met with other birders from various clubs at 7.30 in the Marievale picnic area. We were allocated a good stretch of road, including the bridge, for our part of the CWAC and, as there were only 5 of us, we piled into one car and we began our count. Over the next hour we walked and drove, counting each member of the various species that we saw. It was easier to keep track of some – like the one purple heron that flew over – than others, such as the moorhen and coot which moved about randomly!

When the official count time was over, we birded a bit more, being rewarded by



sightings of a marsh harrier (right) and a black swan, swimming about regally and incongruously – most unexpected although listed in the bird guides! We ended the group outing with a cup of soup provided by the organisers of the CWAC, and a congenial time enjoying a snack together.

Sue Cohen



Rondebult: June 2018

After the traditional coffee in the parking lot, we visited the several hides at Rondebult. One of the highlights for me was the magnificent views of the Hottentot Teal (left) in the sunlight making for beautiful photographs (for those who remembered to bring their cameras!). Also special was the aerial drumming displays of the many African



Snipe we saw. Other interesting sightings were Cape Longclaw, Southern Pochard, Maccoa Duck, and on the way out some members spotted a Red-throated Wryneck. We recorded a total of 45 species – not bad for a morning outing at a venue in the middle of an industrial area. If you couldn't make the outing, Rondebult is definitely worth a visit.

Bev Williams

The Cumberland Bird Sanctuary

(Opposite the Bryanston Country Club - 011 712 6731)

Having heard that the Cumberland Bird Sanctuary is open to visitors on the first Sunday of the month (thank you to Leonie for this information, and to Debbie for publicising it), we took a walk through on 5 August.

It was quite a surprise find, considering that it is relatively close to home, and at just over 5 hectares with a watercourse through the middle, bigger than one might think. It was very dry, with most of the trees bare, and a lot of exotic vegetation, including a dense stand of eucalyptus. This seemed to be in the process of being thinned out, as a number of the trees had been ringbarked, and there was also evidence of other brush clearing work. It was a windy day, so not the best for birding, but even so, from the hide (which is quite large) overlooking a small dam we saw African black duck, a reed cormorant and a pair of moorhens.

Further on we saw thick-billed weavers, canaries (who refused to sit still long enough to be definitively identified), white-bellied sunbirds (right), and, most beautiful of all, amethyst



sunbirds (left) feeding on a stand of aloes blooming on a rocky outcrop more or less in the middle of the reserve.



There are a few benches and picnic tables dotted here and there, but as parking is on the pavement on Cumberland Avenue outside the entrance, it is quite a trek back to fetch your picnic things if you haven't taken them in with you. In the end, we devoured our sandwiches in the car at the end of the walk, as we hadn't the energy to retrace our steps. There is a friendly guard close to the entrance, where you leave your details.

I suspect that this little protected area has a loyal following, since as we were leaving we heard an incoming visitor and the guard greet each other by name, and speak to each other as old friends. Most of the viewing is on one side of the watercourse; we crossed over a bridge, but on the other side found little beyond more eucalyptus trees, and had to retrace our steps as we found that the route we had taken was not a circular one, as we had first thought. I think this little bird sanctuary may be prettier in spring, when the new leaves come through, so perhaps diarise a visit then.

Janet Sheldon-Heeg

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Jacobin Cuckoo

What is the bird featured on our club's emblem? It's the Jacobin Cuckoo, differentiated



from the Levillant's Cuckoo by having a white rather than a streaked breast. But why the name Jacobin?

A short history lesson: The Order of Preachers is a mendicant Catholic religious order that dates back 800 years. It was founded by the Spanish priest Dominic of Caleruega in France, and so is also known as the Dominican Order, with the friars, nuns etc. who make up the membership referred to as *Dominicans*.

All very interesting you may say, but what does that have to do with our cuckoo?



Well, there are a few such religious orders, and they are distinguished from each other by their habits: Carmelites wear white, Franciscans grey, and the Dominicans a black cape over a white vestment. Because the bird's plumage is similar to the Dominican habit it was named after them.

So why isn't it called the Dominican Cuckoo?

In Paris, the Dominican's convent was attached to a church which belonged to the Italian Order of Saint James, which in Latin is *Sanctus Iacobus*. Hence, in France, the Dominicans became known as Jacobins.

And since the species was first described by a Frenchman, that's the name it received.

Steve Stevenson

NEWS OF THE PEARSONS

As most of you know, David and Marina Pearson, previous editors of this newsletter, have relocated to George. As you can see, it's a hard life but they are adjusting and enjoying their new environment, especially the early morning walks in this stunning part of the world!





BIRD-FRIENDLY PLANTS

Following last month's talk, here is an article on plants to attract birds to your garden.

The best feeding programme for birds is to plant shrubs and trees which offer nature's menu. Aloes, watsonias, lion's ear (*Leonotis* spp.), red-hot poker (spp.) and wachendorfias will attract nectar-feeding birds such as the sunbird. Seed-eating birds are attracted to the seed heads of grasses and grains. Plant patches of mixed birdseed and you'll be fascinated to see the response from local birds. Seedeaters also thrive on the seeds of ordinary daisies (such as the euryops daisy). Leave the dried out dead heads of daisies for as long as you can to give the birds time to take most of the seed at the end of summer. To attract fruit eating birds, such as the loeries, plant fruit producing plants. Try the tree fuchsia (*Halleria lucida*), dune crowberry (*Rhus crenata*) or white stinkwood (*Celtis africana*).

For more information on plants and birds, contact <https://www.lifeisagarden.co.za/how-to-attract-birds-to-your-garden/>.

(Ed.)

IT'S BIRD FAIR TIME AGAIN!



The African Bird Fair is an ideal opportunity to add to your knowledge of birds and learn about some of the measures being taken to conserve the continent's birdlife. The two days are packed with fun-filled activities that range from guided walks and demonstrations to shows and talks. There will be a photography workshop and interactive activities for children. A range of exhibitors will be displaying their wares, including binoculars, camera



equipment, bird books, bird feeders and birding destinations. Food and drink stalls will keep up your strength!

Whether you are a seasoned birder or a beginner, there are at least four reasons to visit The African Bird Fair.

Conservation success

The African Black Oystercatcher, the 2018 Bird of the Year, is a modern-day conservation success story because its population has increased dramatically over the past few decades. In fact, its regional Red List status has been downgraded from Near Threatened in 2000 to Least Concern in 2015. BirdLife South Africa has produced



African Black Oystercatcher-themed posters, buffs, T-shirts, pin badges and soft toys, which will be on sale at The African Bird Fair. The children's activity area will make use of oystercatcher resources, including educational games and pictures to colour in.

Birds

The many different habitats of the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden, from cliff faces and grassland to water, woodland and bushveld, attract a diverse range of birds. A total of 240 bird species has been recorded in the garden – and there is even a resident pair of Verreaux's Eagles nesting on the cliffs of the Witpoortjie Waterfall (and you can purchase a Verreaux's Eagle pin badge as a memento at the Bird Fair).

Learn

EcoSolutions will have a 'pellet dissection table' with a supply of owl pellets, tweezers, face masks and Petri dishes for visitors to dissect owl pellets, using a skeleton key to identify the bones they find.



The Rare Finch Conservation Group will present 'Waxi the Hero' puppet shows at the amphitheatre. These performances are all about bird conservation and the importance of preserving wetlands and are fun and informative for kids and adults alike. Guided bird walks to



the wetland area of the botanical garden will take place after each show.

Birding resources

It would not be nearly as exciting to discover a new bird species for your life list if you weren't able to learn more about it. Thankfully, birders will find many superb resources offered by exhibitors, including a wide range of field guides and reference books and birding tours and destinations. There will also be products on display and for sale that make birding at home rewarding, such as specialised bird feeders, nectar feeders, owl and barbet boxes and birdbaths.

For more information about the African Bird Fair, contact Nikki McCartney at 083 636 1060 or nikki.mccartney@birdlife.org.za

(Acknowledgments: Birdlife SA July Newsletter)



DO YOU KNOW?

...what a ratite (relating to a bird) is? These birds have a flat breastbone without a keel, and so are unable to fly. For example, our very own **ostrich** (right):



And from the other side of the world:

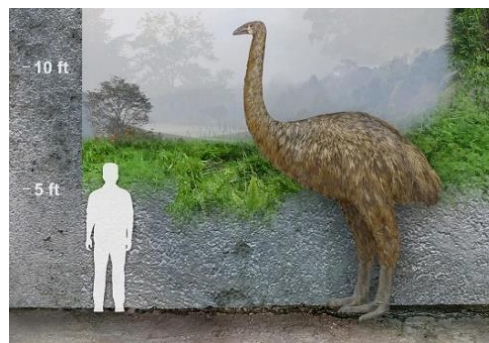
Cassowary – said to be the world's most dangerous bird.



Kiwi – likes subtropical and temperate forests, wetlands, farms grasslands and sand dunes



Emu – endemic to Australia and can reach a height of 1.9m.



The **Giant Moa Bird** (above) is, sadly extinct (maybe not such a bad thing as this monster would undoubtedly take over the bird feeder).

(Ed.)



EDITOR'S CHIRP

Here we are again but now heading for spring – a wonderful time of year, especially after the cold winter we've had (still having at time of writing this!) on the Highveld. Time for a renewed interest in birdwatching so keep us all in touch with what you see over the next weeks – remember that not everybody is on Facebook so send info to the Newsletter as well and vice versa.

Thanks to the contributors this month – great articles. Please hone your writing skills on the Cuckoo Newsletter!

By the way, have you visited the Birdlife South Africa shop, in the beautiful Birdlife offices at Isdell House, 17 Hume Road, Dunkeld West? We received the following from Deborah Hele:

“We stock a range of bird-related items such as bird feeders, seed and suet blocks, birding books, field guides, branded t-shirts, cards, keyrings, posters, car magnets and much more!”

Contact Deborah on 011 789 1122 or email shopforthebirds@birdlife.org.za

(We should warn you, it's a bit like going into Woolies for 'a couple of things' and coming out with an overflowing trolley.)

Have a lovely spring!

(Ed.)



CUCKOO CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman	Steve Stevenson	082 567 7398	steve.midacc@gmail.com
Vice-Chairman & Away Trips	Beth Hackland	072 266 1821	bethhackland@gmail.com
Treasurer	Lorna Greenwood	084 500 4438	ljgreenwood@gmail.com
Day Outings	Bev Williams	083 481 1597	bevjwil@gmail.com
Speakers	John Blackmore	083 302 3929	blakkers@iburst.co.za
Secretary	Mo Bellis	082 430 8725	mobell@absamail.co.za

Other Office Bearers

Newsletter	Penny Clemson	082 456 4210	penny@thuki.co.za
Facebook Page	Jan Walker	073 296 1504	jan@rasc.co.za
Front Desk	Janet Sheldon-Heeg	082 950 8779	jsheldonheeg@gmail.com
Equipment	Lester Niss	082 570 4641	lestern256@gmail.com
Member Details	Debbie Jennings	082 880 9323	debbie.jennings@liberty.co.za
Help with Day Outings	Phillip & Helena Nieuwoudt	To be supplied	phillip.nieuwoudt@telkomsa.net

BANKING DETAILS

Cuckoo Bird Club,
 Standard Bank
 Sandton City
 Branch code 051 001
 Account number 023 212 934