



CBC Newsletter 186 July – September 2024

FORTHCOMING CLUB MEETINGS

Every third Tuesday of the month

Next Meeting: 17th October 2024

19h00 for 19h30

Wanderer's Club

Come early and join us for supper in the restaurant. Good food, great company!



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SPEAKERS

Organiser: Debbie Jennings

deb.jiq@gmail.com



DAY OUTINGS

Organiser: Dennis Townsend

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MID-MONTH OUTINGS

Organiser: Lester Niss

lestern256@gmail.com



TRIPS AWAY

Organiser: Marion Melville

marion@rbs.co.za





FROM THE CHAIR

FIRST CWAC (CO-ORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNT) – BEAULIEU BIRD SANCTUARY 13 JULY 2024

❖ Last year I agreed to take over the count. I attended the January summer CWAC with Craig Whittington-Jones, a CWAC veteran of many years' standing.

Craig is an Ornithologist at Scientific Services, Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, and the Environment. Fellow CWACers on the day were Bev, Sue, Alex and Heather.

A little chilly in the early morning, but as the morning wore on, it became very pleasant. Before and after the count, we were well-sustained with coffee, egg sarmies and rusks. Typical Cuckoo fare and very welcome!

There seemed to be very few water birds whilst we were walking around. We counted 73 birds, comprising 13 species. Whilst walking, we recorded 33 other species, including Malachite Kingfisher, Swainson's Spurfowl, Yellow-fronted Canary and a White-bellied Sunbird to name a few.

Among the water birds was a pair that we could not identify. I asked around and we were told to report it as an 'unidentified duck'. We thought it might be a hybrid Mallard/Black Duck.

When I referred back to previous counts, ours is in line with previous expeditions. All recorded information was submitted to Craig, who in turn, reports the count to the Animal Demography Unit in Cape Town. The data is then analysed and actioned as required.

Thanks to Bev, Sue, Alex, and Heather for their assistance.

Dennis Townsend



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❖ Greetings from the African Penguins at SANCCOB, Cape Town

“Dear Dennis,

Thank you for our chat earlier and once again for The Cuckoo Club's donation of R3000. Please do extend our thanks and well wishes to the rest of your committee and members.

We sincerely appreciate your support which makes a wonderful contribution towards our conservation work.

Please do share SANCCOB news with other bird clubs and may we encourage you to sign up to our newsletter which will keep you updated on all our activities and conservation work. Please share this [link](#) with your members.

In addition, for those who like to keep up to speed with [Instagram](#), we have a very active account which posts all the latest information about SANCCOB. You are welcome to join us too!

Lastly, don't forget to visit our new Education and Visitor Centre when next in the Cape.

Sending you well wishes from everyone (especially the Penguins) at SANCCOB.”

In addition to the SANCCOB donation, your club also donated R500 to Norscot Manor. Both are worthy causes, and we hope you'll see both the Penguin Visitor Centre and Norscot at some stage.

Dennis Townsend



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Colin Gibbings
Karen Portman
Sharon Johnstone
Liz v d Jagt
Kaeri v d Jagt

We look forward to seeing you at meetings and on outings and trips.

EDITOR'S CHIRP

- ❖ Starting off with some good news and something to look forward to. Our end-of-year function will be at Alex and Roy's home in Paulshof on 1st December. Make a note in your diaries but watch Debbie's Newsflashes for further information.
- ❖ Some of us might be needing binocular or camera servicing/repairing. Please give Bill Bunn a call; many birders use his expertise to bring their equipment up to speed.

Pro Am photographic
Tel 011 7921097
Cell 0842054395
abbunn@aol.com
Address; 9A. Langwa Street
Strijdom park

- ❖ I hope you enjoy this issue – lots of wonderful photos from Heather, Dennis, Steve and Johna, whose article on a Caprivi trip is a must. Thanks to all who sent articles, webpages, and info for inclusion. We have some additional items at the end of the newsletter – For Sale, Weekend Accommodation and Bookbinding.

❖ Don't forget the Web Pages – there are some interesting articles and videos that won't take long to read/watch.

ERRATA

Unfortunately, there were a couple of errors in the last newsletter. The Tawny and Martial Eagle captions in the article on Gonarezhou and the Tawny-flanked Prinia and the Pale Flycatcher captions in Heather's photos of the Aloe Nursery outing were swapped over.



A majestic Tawny Eagle waiting its turn at a carcass

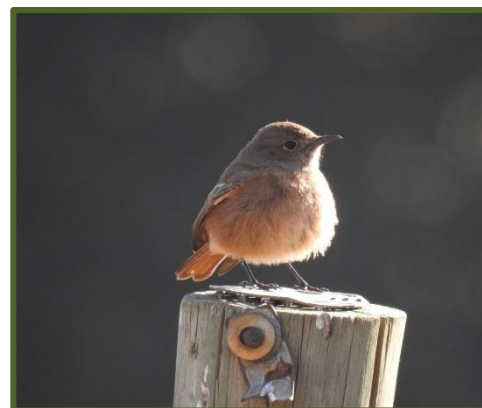


An immature Martial Eagle at the Runde

Apologies to Johna and Heather and thanks to the spotters out there for letting me know.



Tawny-flanked Prinia



Pale Fly-catcher, posing nicely

JUST FOR LAUGHS!

First picture ever of a newly hatched electrician still has part of the egg shell on its head



ZAAGHUILSDRIFT BIRDING

Heather went on a birding weekend to Zaaghuisdrift recently and she shared her photos with us.



Speckled Pigeon



Chestnut-vented Tit Babbler



Long-billed Crombec



African Pipit



Blue-billed Teal



Great Sparrow Pair



Great Sparrow



Lazy Cisticola



Namaqua Dove



Crested Francolin



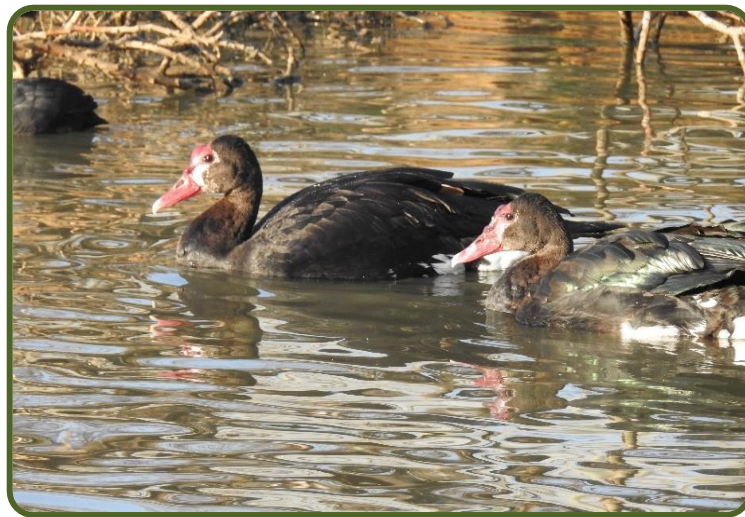
Marico Flycatcher



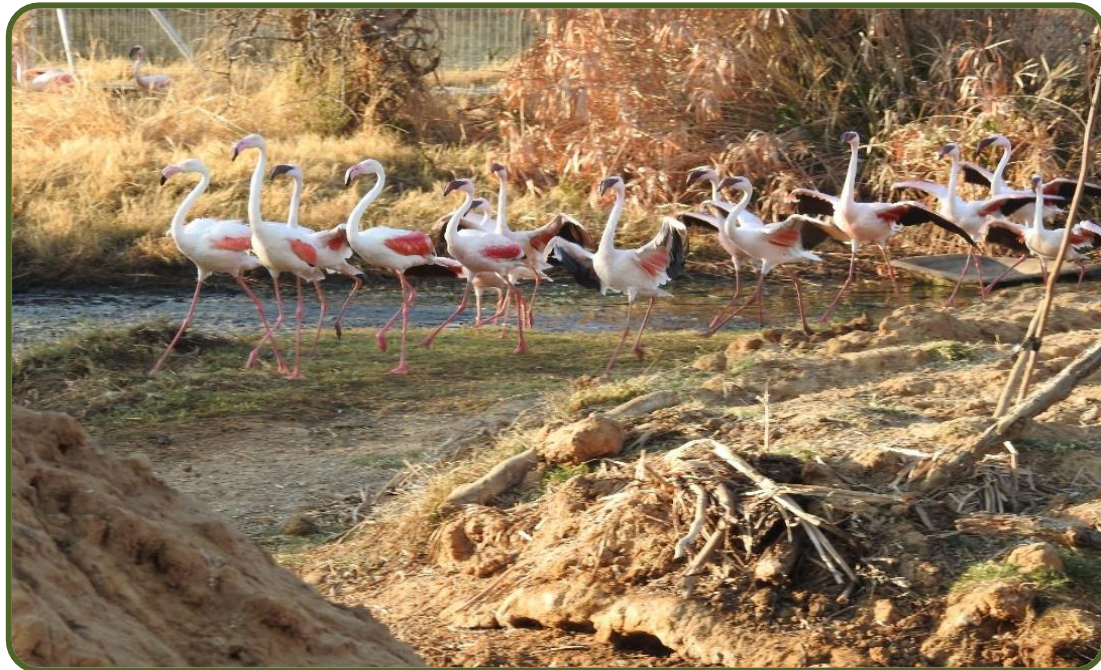
Fulvous Whistling Duck



Neddicky



Spur-winged Goose



Greater Flamingo

And last, but certainly not least, a beautiful Painted Dog.



Heather Darby

MIDWEEK OUTING TO GOLDEN HARVEST PARK

18 July 2024

Golden Harvest Park is near Northgate Dome. This was a first for most participants.

A pristine 55ha park with rolling walks around a dam and indigenous bushveld. This picturesque park is a delightful surprise and a secret treasure about which many Johannesburgers are unaware.

Our most enjoyable walk started at 09h00 and we hiked for about two and a half hours. Most enjoyable!

Thirty-five species were recorded, including a number of birds I never expected to see in a Johannesburg suburb. These included a Giant Kingfisher and a Green-back Heron (Striated Heron).

One bird with a bald head could not be identified. Some said Mynah, Thrush, Juvenile Egyptian Vulture. Eventually, after studying a photo, we confirmed that it was a Common Mynah (see photo).



Giant Kingfisher



Common Mynah



Black Sparrowhawk



Striated Heron



Dennis Townsend

MARIEVALE – CWAC

28 July 2024



Snipe



African Swamphen



Swamp Warbler



Common Shelduck



Kittlitz's Plover



Lesser Flamingo



African Marsh Harrier



Lesser Flamingo

Steve Stephenson

ROODEPLAAT NATURE RESERVE

25 August 2024



Fish Eagle



Groundscraper Thrush



A well-earned rest!

Dennis Townsend




BIRDLIFE NEWS



THE BALD & THE BEAUTIFUL

From first dates 📅 to feathered affairs ❤️, the life of a White-backed Vulture has more binge-worthy family drama than an addictive TV soap 📺.

In celebration of International Vulture Awareness Day 2024, BirdLife South Africa ZA presents 'The Bald & The Beautiful'... a glimpse into the life of the Critically Endangered White-backed Vulture 🦅.

 **Watch the trailer [here](#)**, and look out for new episodes dropping soon 📺.

BIRDLE



Birdle goes global!

You've obsessed over the buff 'secondaries' of a Square-tailed Nightjar (or was it a Fiery-necked)? You've been thrown off the trail trying to solve a White-winged Flufftail – without audio. You've stayed awake to get your next rush of Birdle-induced dopamine (yes, we see you playing at 00h01).

Whether you are a birdwatching pro and can identify a Sabota Lark calling in one guess (despite its mimicry skills) or simply enjoy seeing birds in your garden and need a few more clues, Birdle Earth is fun for everyone. Every day until 20 October 2024, a new migratory bird from around the world will be shared for you to guess!

Birds have to be clever about where, when and how they travel. They rely on vast networks of habitats that act as refuelling stations, where they can rest and gain energy. What connects these habitats are the flyways, the fastest, most energy-efficient routes of choice for thousands of migratory birds. Learn more about the flyways at birdlife.org/globalflyways/.

Birdle Earth has been created by a collaboration between Raining Rock Studio, BirdLife International, BirdLife South Africa and Nature Canada for the run-up to the 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP16) that will be held in Colombia. Its aim is to showcase international migratory birds. The original Birdle, which many readers are familiar with, was developed by Raining Rock Studio together with BirdLife South Africa.

Don't miss out! Join the daily (global) bird-guessing game challenge now by clicking one of the options below:

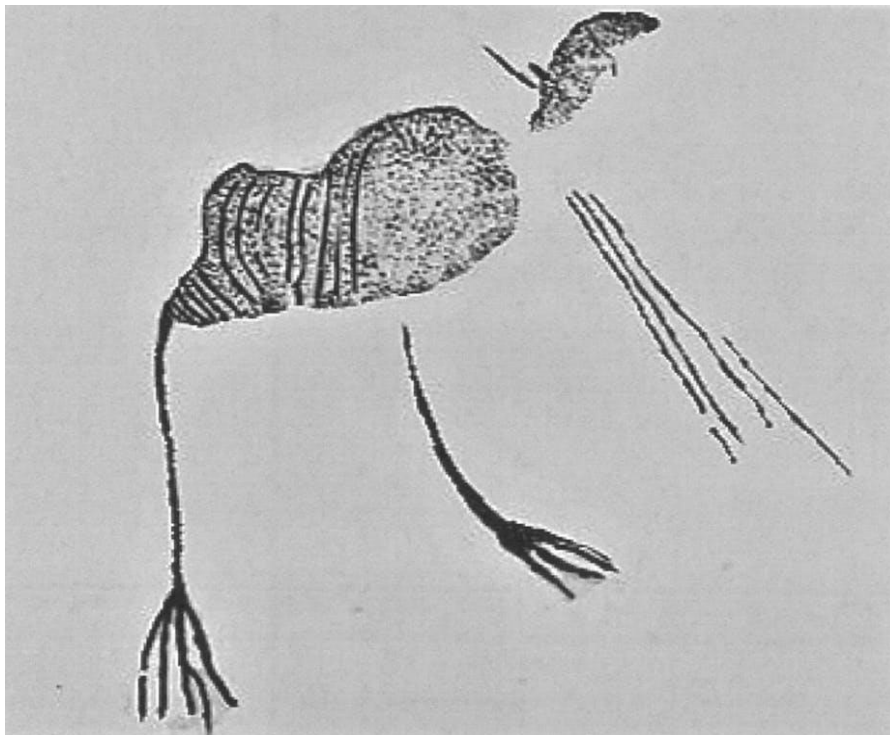
- Download the app for Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rainingrock.birdle>
- Download the app for iOS: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/birdle-a-daily-guessing-game/id6447200029>
- Play the web version: <https://birdle.earth/>

ANDY WASSUNG, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

ROCK PAINTING IS THE OLDEST IMAGE OF AN AFRICAN RAIL

A BIRD THAT MAY HAVE HAD A SPECIAL MEANING FOR THE SAN PEOPLE

August 27, 2024



This apparent bird-human hybrid is the largest image in a panel of rock art by a San artist.

The African rail (*Rallus caerulescens*) is a handsome bird, with a blueish breast, red legs, eyes and bill, prominent barring on the flanks, chestnut upper parts, and long toes. It also has a characteristic trilling call. This wetland dweller is only found in sub-Saharan Africa, with a concentration in South Africa's Western Cape province.

The species is one of about 140 members worldwide of the Rallidae, the bird family that includes coots, moorhens, gallinules, rails, crakes and flufftails. In southern Africa there are about 15 representatives of the family.

In science, a “holotype” is the type specimen upon which the description and name of a new species is based. These are usually preserved or described specimens. The African rail is unusual in this regard: the species holotype is a 1773 watercolour painting by Georg Foster, now housed in the Natural History Museum in London.



African rail. A Oosthuizen / Getty Image

Foster was an artist on board British explorer Captain James Cook’s second expedition (1772-1775), which aimed to determine if a great southern continent, “Terra Australis”, existed. En route to the Southern Ocean the expedition stopped at the Cape of Good Hope (now Cape Town), where Foster created the painting.



The holotype of the African rail, a 1773 watercolour painting by Georg Foster. Natural History Museum

Now we believe we’ve found a far earlier representation of the species. We are members of the African

Centre for Coastal Palaeoscience at South Africa’s Nelson Mandela University, where we study fossil tracks, traces, and images. In a recent research article, we described what we interpret as a painting of an African rail, found on the walls of a rock shelter in the Western Cape, south of the Langeberg range of mountains. At its longest it measures 20cm; it is the largest image in a panel of rock art by a San



artist that includes probable images of bees, humans, an aardvark, antelope, and plants. While it is not possible to establish the exact age of the rock art, it likely dates back centuries or even thousands of years.

If our interpretation is correct, it would almost certainly predate Foster's holotype image. It would also underscore the depth of indigenous knowledge, exemplified by San people who were the original indigenous inhabitants of the region, and who left a remarkable legacy of rock art.

THE ROCK PAINTING

The San were (and remain) accomplished ornithologists (bird experts). Western explorers have related how the San had names for as many as 68 out of 76 species identified during a single day.

The San also considered the thought processes and values of birds to be similar to those of humans, and thought that birds would react to many situations in the same way that humans would. The artist who created this painting has captured the “giss or jizz” (an acronym of “general impression of size and shape”) of the African rail, showing its widely spaced feet and forward-angled legs.

Whereas most examples of San avian rock art, such as depictions of kingfishers, swifts, vultures, or herons, can only be identified to family level, we contend that identification to species level is possible in this case.

This is exemplified by the 14 sub-parallel bars on the flanks and under the tail coverts that closely resemble the pattern in the African rail. Such prominent barring does not occur in any other member of the rail family in the region.

HALF-HUMAN, HALF-BIRD

However, the image does not simply depict an African rail, and this hints at a spiritual dimension to the purpose of the painting. Often San rock art images take the form of therianthropes, which are half-animal, half-human forms. The term “avianthrope” is used to describe images that contain both birdlike and human features.



Figure 4. The rock art panel at the Langeberg foothills site. The purported rail image is at the upper right. The horizontal scale bar represents 40 cm.

There are at least two examples of this in the African rail image. First is the absence of the bill, which gives the image a more human appearance. Second is the orientation of the toes. The African rail has long toes, three pointing forward and one pointing backwards. In the San image four or five forward-pointing digits are depicted, imbuing it with human hand-like characteristics.

We considered that the absence of the bill might have been due to the disappearance of pigment, and that the pattern and number of the toes might represent an artistic error. But we rejected these notions in favour of the artist deliberately creating what might be mistaken for anomalies and essentially creating a “rail-person”.

Why would a San artist wish to create an image of an African rail? We cannot claim to understand the mind of an individual artist and can only speculate.

However, we noted in our paper that the rock shelter lies very close to the African rail’s preferred habitat, a wetland with reedbeds. And the bird’s distinctive features and call would have rendered it easily recognisable and memorable. Red was an important colour for the San due to its links to blood.

Furthermore, as with some other rails, the African rail can compress itself laterally and become almost two-dimensional. This is the origin of the term “as thin as a rail”



and its unusual ability allows the rail to pass easily between vertical reeds and disappear quickly into a reedbed. We suggested that the “rail-person” may have been a conduit for the San to the spirit-world beyond the reedbed. A similar theory has been advanced for avianthropes of swifts or swallows entering a spirit-world behind the rock face.

A RICH CULTURE AND WORLDVIEW

Tragically, the San were relentlessly pursued, persecuted, and killed by various colonists, mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries. They were essentially wiped out from many parts of southern Africa.

However, the richness of their culture and worldview is now widely recognised. They were among the finest trackers the world has known. San master-trackers from Namibia are now assisting our research team with fossil track recognition, and have recently identified, among other discoveries, fossilised ostrich tracks which would otherwise have been missed.

The African rail painting which we have described can take its place as the oldest known example of its kind and can provide a window into the world of the knowledgeable field ornithologists of a distant past.

Thanks to the CBC members who submitted this article.

THE RARE BIRD CLUB



Your support makes a real difference

Once teetering on the brink of extinction, Echo Parakeet, endemic to Mauritius, avoided the fate of the Dodo and became encouraging proof of how effective targeted conservation action can be.

It was known as the world's rarest parrot in the 1970s, with fewer than 20 birds left in the wild because of destruction and degradation of its native habitats. Fast forward over 40 years and this vibrant green parakeet has made a remarkable recovery, with more than 800 birds now in the wild thanks to an intensive conservation programme.

Become a Rare Bird Club member today so that more bird species and their habitats around the world can be saved.

You can help support species under threat across the world, and gain access to exclusive birding trips, events and webinars by becoming a Rare Bird Club member.

Contact us at rarebirdclub@birdlife.org to find out more



"I am not a hardcore birder, but love to understand the behaviour of birds, their environments and the problems they face. Through BirdLife I learn straight from the scientists, and can travel with experts on fun trips to wonderful wildlife destinations."

Mary Matthews, member since 2016

The joining donation of the Rare Bird Club is £6,000 / \$5,000 / \$6,500

THE CREATURE FEATURE

HONEY AND HONEYBEES

04 August 2024



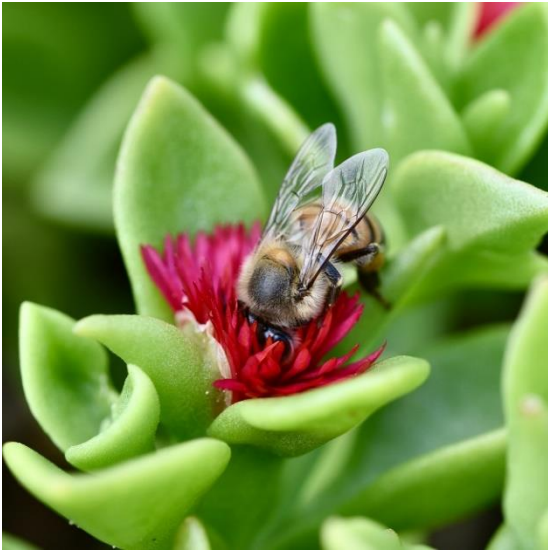
*Natasha Lyon of LYON RAW Artisan Honey
Image: Sharon Crouse*

**THIS IS FOR
THOSE OF YOU
WHO MISSED THE
MARVELLOUS
TALK BY
NATASHA LYON
IN MAY – AND
FOR THOSE WHO
WOULD LIKE
MORE INFO.
ENJOY!**

In celebration of Woman's Day, we meet Natasha Lyon, South Africa's first internationally trained honey sommelier who shares her deep passion for bees and raw honey with Hilary Biller

I grew up in Paarl in the Western Cape and from my early childhood I've had a connection and fascination with nature. My journey with bees and honey has been a roller-coaster ride from the day we discovered that a wild swarm of honeybees had set up home in the irrigation box in our garden in Gauteng about six years ago.

It is a privilege to work with bees and they keep me humble. Over time, I've realised and discovered I'm merely one of their instruments. Honouring their hard work keeps me focused. When I came to understand how honey was produced and discovered the plethora of colours, flavours, and aromas of raw honey, I was simply blown away.



'Apis mellifera scutellata' on a Baby Sun Rose succulent.
Image: Sharon Crouse

What drives me? I have a deep sense of justice, and when I discovered that consumers are often exposed to honey that has been so compromised (it is said that honey is fast becoming one of the most adulterated food items in the world) and with my understanding of what it takes for the bees to make honey I have decided the world needs to know this and so started my journey with bees.

Honeybees are only one of about 22,000 bee species in the world. Many of these

species are not easily identifiable. South Africa is home to only two subspecies of honeybees — the *Apis mellifera scutellata*, or the Savannah honey bee found in the southern and eastern regions of Africa, and *Apis mellifera capensis*, or the Cape honey bee, found in the Western Cape and parts of the Eastern Cape — and is endemic to the unique Fynbos ecoregion in the country. *Apis mellifera scutellata* is known for its highly defensive behaviour while *Apis mellifera capensis* tends to be a more docile honey bee, but it can also become defensive when provoked.

The need for comprehensive honey testing is becoming a key requirement in the face of food fraud and honey adulteration. The birth of LYON RAW Artisan Honey was partly inspired by the need to not only showcase the incredible diversity of honeys found in South Africa, but also to create a platform where trust and transparency is at the heart of what we do to ensure the consumer is offered the highest possible quality of small batch honeys.



South African honey varieties are believed to be some of the most diverse, delicious, and sought after in the world.
Image: Sharon Crouse

Due to the complex nature of honey, there is no single test which can verify the authenticity of honey. Instead, laboratories use a collection of specialised tests. To date, there are no laboratories in South Africa accredited to perform comprehensive honey authentication/adulteration tests: most samples are sent to Europe for testing, which is very costly.



Different types of honey
Image: Sharon Crouse

NATASHA'S TIPS FOR BUYING

- Not all honeys are the same. Honey comes in different colours, flavours and aromas.
- Raw, unheated honey is the best. Avoid extreme temperature fluctuations.
- Try to buy from local beekeepers.
- Educate yourself on how the honey was processed. Honey which is heated in excess of 40°C may impact negatively on heat sensitive health properties.
- Read the labels. A blended honey does not necessarily mean it is an adulterated honey. Rather, it infers that honey from different origins are blended together.
- All foreign honeys are irradiated.
- Aged and reheated honey can negatively affect the properties of honey; and

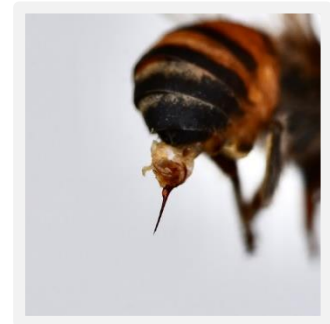
- All honey will crystallise over time. This natural progression of crystals does not impact on the aroma, flavour, or the innate health properties of honey. Place crystallised honey in warm water to return it to liquid state. Never microwave honey.

Lyon is the founder of LYON RAW Artisan Honey and is passionate about bee conservation. She is a beekeeper, bee guardian and a leading authority on honey. LYON RAW Artisan Honey offers honey tasting experiences and sells a range of top quality raw honeys.

www.lyonraw.co.za

Bee stinger on 'Apis mellifera scutellata'.

Image: Sharon Crouse



THE STING IN THE TAIL

In summer when gardens will be in full bloom the worker honey bees visit around one hundred flowers per foraging flight, flying up to 28km/h. With about ten foraging flights a day, each bee could pollinate around 1,000 flowers. This figure can easily go up to a maximum of forty foraging flights a day. If 20,000 bees take flight many times a day, twenty million flowers or more are being pollinated. Therefore, the risk of being stung increases during spring and summer.

Once a bee has stung, ensure to scrape the stinger out as soon as possible — use your fingernail or credit card or anything with a sharp edge. Never pull out the stinger as this will release more venom from the poison sac, which acts like a contracting muscle and keeps injecting venom after the actual sting occurred. Apply raw honey, a cold press or ice to reduce swelling, which also helps with the pain. Swelling can take a while to subside depending on the individual and location of sting. Seek immediate medical attention if severe allergic reaction occurs.

Extract from The Sunday Times

Submitted by Alex Jennings



BIRD NAME CHANGES (AGAIN!)

It seems that the latest version of the IOC world list, version 14.2, has now gone live and, with that, it brings some changes for us here in Southern Africa since the last update of our own subregion checklist (version 12) that was sent out a while back.

Just a quick summary of some of the changes that have happened that will affect us:

The Rock Martin has now been *split into two species: the Large Rock Martin and Red-throated Rock Martin, so we have effectively gained an additional species in the subregion because both occur here. The Rock Martin that occurs in South Africa, Lesotho, eSwatini, southern Mozambique, south-western Zimbabwe, south-eastern Botswana and most of Namibia would be Large Rock Martin and the Rock Martin that occurs in central and northern Mozambique, most of Zimbabwe (except the south-western corner), most of the Caprivi and the northern parts of Botswana would now be Red-throated Rock Martin. This latter also occurs widely further north in Africa.

* Don't get too excited about that split though because there has also been a lump.

Barlow's and Dune Larks have been lumped into one species now and, as far as I can tell, will retain the name Dune Lark.

That's about all when it comes to splits and lumps, so the net effect is zero change to the overall number of species recorded in the subregion.

There are a few other splits which involve species across the African continent, and these will affect some of the common names used for our species locally.

The Red-fronted Tinkerbird has been split and our birds in the subregion will now be Southern Red-fronted Tinkerbirds. The Yellow-throated Leaflove has been split and our birds in the subregion will now be Pale-throated Greenbul (not a great name, unfortunately!). The Red-rumped Swallow has been split, but I need to do



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further research on this before being sure which one of the splits is what we have had as a vagrant in the subregion before.

There has also been a lump of birds across Africa with The Rock-loving and Lazy Cisticolas being lumped and it is suggested that the name is now Rock-loving Cisticola, although I'm not sure that we need to change this locally.

Other proposed common name changes include changing the Cape Petrel back to the so-much-better Pintado Petrel (finally!!!), the Mountain Wheatear back to the previously used Mountain Chat, and the Bronzy Sunbird is now changed to the Bronze Sunbird.

There are a number of other taxonomical changes in terms of changed genera for a number of species, but I won't bore you with those for now. Perhaps one interesting change for those of you that follow these things is that our African Spotted Creeper (together with Indian Spotted Creeper) has been moved out of the Treecreeper family (Certhiidae) into their own new family, Salpornithidae. So, we will have a completely new bird family in Southern Africa, although the overall number of families in the subregion won't change.

All of the changes will be incorporated into the next update of the Southern African checklist, (whenever that might be).

Trevor Hardaker <hardaker@mweb.co.za>: Aug 28 2024

Submitted by Dennis Townsend and Bev Williams

THE CAPRIVI WITH BATIS BIRDING

In November 2023, a group of seven birders explored the birding beauty of the Caprivi with Batis Birding. Batis Birding provided the guide and an ideal vehicle where each person was seated next to a large window for a good view of the surroundings. The modus operandi was to disembark from the vehicle at key birding spots and bird on foot.

Over 10 days, we stayed at four different lodges from which, and travelling between, we were able to cover the Caprivi panhandle and Rundu and the major habitats of the area. In comparison to visits decades ago, human activities have increased, and birding occurred in an environment of often fragmented habitats.

The total species count was about 260 birds, varying slightly between the different members of the trip. We considered this a reasonable total as the rains had not yet arrived and some migrants were missing. With many species being endemic to the Caprivi/Okavango area, all trip members recorded a number of 'lifers.'

With this number of species, only the highlights of the trip are included in this report, and hopefully this will help birders who are dreaming about a similar adventure.

KATIMA MALILO/ZAMBEZI RIVER/CHOBE FLOODPLAIN



White-backed Night Herons hiding in dense riverine vegetation during the day

We stayed at the Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge on the banks of the Zambezi River, where the accommodation and camping are highly recommended. From here we did two Zambezi River trips that produced four White-backed

Night Herons (*Gorsachius leuconotus*), a colony of 20 Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), three African Finfoots (*Podica senegalensis*) and plenty of the usual waterbird species. African Skimmers (*Rynchops flavirostris*) were seen skimming at a distance across the Zambezi from the lodge.



An African Finfoot crossing a channel to escape from our boat

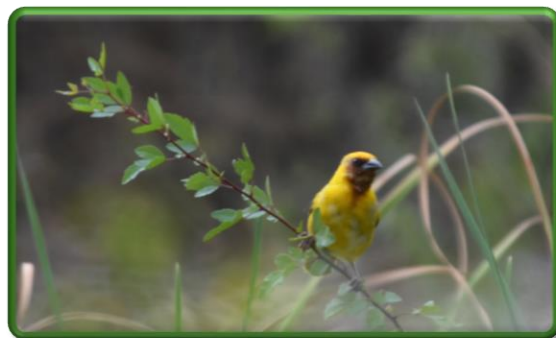
Birding spots away from the river were fragmented and required local knowledge to find and without the support of Kurt (lodge owner) some highlights would have been missed. The grounds of the lodge were a good habitat. The dawn chorus at the campsite was one of the best I have experienced. Schalow's Turacos (*Tauraco schalowi*) were nesting in the lodge grounds and regularly seen, as were Western Barn (*Tyto alba*) and African Wood Owls (*Strix woodfordii*) (which were heard every night in the trees above the campsite).

The Yellow-throated Leaflove (*Atimastillas flavicollis*) was ticked off at a neighbouring property to the lodge. For any twitchers this is the only location where it is recorded in Southern Africa. There was a disused flooded sand quarry a few kilometres from the lodge, where Southern Carmine Bee-eaters (*Merops nubicoides*) were breeding in their thousands. We visited this colony on two occasions in the late afternoon when the bee-eaters had returned and were feeding their young in the tunnel nests, mainly with cicadas (order Hemiptera).

We were also fortunate to see Golden Weavers (Holub's) building a nest and the Brown-throated Weaver.



An African (Holub's) Golden Weaver building a nest



Brown-throated Weaver



A feeding frenzy in a shallow pan in the Chobe floodplain



Lesser Jacana hopping across the lily leaves



Long-toed Lapwing in typical swampy habitat

The experience was spectacular, with bee-eaters flocking in the air (apparently catching cicadas), settling in the trees and entering and leaving the nesting tunnels to feed young in a series of noisy waves.

The Chobe floodplains and some pans in the area produced an array of sought-after birds; Lesser Jacana (*Microparra capensis*), Slatey Egret (*Egretta vinaceigula*), Long-toed Lapwing (*Vanellus crassirostris*), Rufous-bellied Heron (*Ardeola rufiventris*), Rosy-throated Longclaw (*Macronyx ameliae*), Luapula Cisticola (*Cisticola luapula*), Coppery-tailed Coucal (*Centropus cupreicaudus*), among others.

A highlight was nightjar hunting in the mopane woodlands. With a strong flashlight in hand, we walked through the woodlands, picking up the reflecting eyes and finding numerous Fiery-necked (*Caprimulgus pectoralis*) and Square-tailed (*Caprimulgus fossii*) Nightjars. Many of these had chicks with them. But the best was four sightings of male Pennant-winged Nightjars (*Caprimulgus vexillarius*) adorned with long white trailing primary wing feathers. It was possible to get to



Fiery-necked Nightjar with chick

within a few meters of the birds without flushing them.



Pennant-winged Nightjars were reasonably abundant in the mopane woodlands



Rosy-throated Longclaw calling in the floodplain grasslands



Coppery-tailed Coucals were common in typical moist grassland habitat.



Luapula Cisticola in the Chobe floodplain grasslands



Copper Sunbird

Highlights were Wattled Crane (*Grus carunculata*), Copper Sunbird (*Cinnyris cupreus*), Greater Swamp Warbler (*Acrocephalus rufescens*) and Western-banded Snake Eagle (*Circaetus cinerascens*). We stayed only one night but a longer stay was warranted.

KWANDO RIVER

Our base was the Namushasha River Lodge with the Mudumu National Park just 15 minutes away. This is the start of the Linyanti floodplain, but the water level was too low to contemplate a boat cruise, and we probably did not see as many species as when water levels are higher.



Western-Banded Snake Eagle

KAVANGO/OKAVANGO RIVER



Part of the colony of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters, with a solitary Northern Carmine Bee-eater (second from the right)

We stayed at Mahangu Safari Lodge for two nights, with a well appreciated swimming pool in the +40°C temperatures. A boat trip here was possible and took us to a Southern Carmine Bee-eater (*Merops nubicoides*) colony in the banks of the river. Another one for the twitchers – a solitary Northern Carmine Bee-eater (*Merops nubicus*) which seems to have been lost and



A Rock Pratincole and chick on the rock where it bred

with chicks were found in the rapids.

Very large flocks of White-faced Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*), Egyptian Geese (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) and Spur-winged Geese (*Plectropterus gambiensis*) were a feature of the river. The lodge grounds produced Swamp Boubou, Olive Woodpecker (*Dendropicus griseocephalus*) and Meyer's Parrot.

become a member of this colony for the past few years - the only bird and only site where it has been recorded in Southern Africa. The difference between the two species is the extent of green on the face.

Collared Pratincoles (*Glareola nordmanni*) were common along the riverbanks and Rock Pratincoles (*Glareola nuchalis*)



A typical large flock of Egyptian Geese

The sandveld woodlands delivered Hartlaub's Babbler (*Turdoides hartlaubii*), Black-faced Babbler (*Turdoides melanops*), Bradfield's Hornbill (*Lophoceros bradfieldi*), Souza's Shrike (*Lanius souzae*), Tinkling Cisticola (*Cisticola rufilatus*), Brown Firefinch (*Lagonosticta nitidula*), Racket-tailed Roller (*Coracias spatulatus*) and Stark's Lark (*Spizocorys starki*).



Bradfield's Hornbill

RUNDU AREA

This was a disappointing end to the trip, which had been motivated by the desire mainly to see Ross's Turaco (*Tauraco rossae*) at Taranga Safari Lodge, but also to visit the Rundu sewage ponds. The Rundu sewage ponds are the worst recognised birding spot I have ever visited. The litter and pollution were disgusting, the reed beds had been burned and the stench was unpleasant.



Swamp Boubou

Taranga is a small oasis of riverine bush in the middle of communal lands. The disappointment of Rundu was softened when Ross's Turaco was seen by some of our group, and also good sightings of Black Cuckoo (*Cuculus clamosus*) and Swamp Boubou (*Laniarius bicolor*). But with a 500 km round trip from Mahangu this is not something I would recommend. We should have stayed an extra night at Namushasha instead.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The trip was in mid-November. It was very hot, and the rains had not yet begun. Not all the expected migrants had arrived, and the timing was probably one to two weeks too early. Counteracting this, many species were seen breeding.



Elusive Black Cuckoos

The enduring memory of this trip will be the reality of birding in Africa. Habitat is being lost at an alarming rate and birding outside of national parks is in fragmented patches of a past pristine environment. This was obvious from observing the human encroachment everywhere. The rivers and fragmented riverine habitat, for example, do not support the numbers of birds that I remember from previous trips. The logic is understandable – a reduction in water and land habitats must affect bird populations and movement patterns. In a way this supports the organisations offering birding tours as knowledge of the surviving habitat areas becomes more valuable. This was definitely the case with Batis Birding. Our guide was able to take us to locations which we would never have known about otherwise.

Johna Turner

Here's a reminder that Johna is planning a visit to Gonarezhou, where you can experience Africa at its most beautiful. He is planning an 8-day trip in 2025 if anybody is interested in joining him. It's early days and dates are not set. You will need a 4x4 and there will be rough camping. The cost depends on which campsites are used (no mark-up). Budget about \$40 pppn in Gonarezhou.

Contact Johna at: accipitertours@gmail.com



MOZAMBIQUE: GORONGOSA PARK

AERIAL WILDLIFE COUNT TO BEGIN IN OCTOBER



FILE - For illustration purposes only. Gorongosa National Park, a view of the 2022 aerial wildlife count [File photo: Gorongosa National Park]

Gorongosa will begin an aerial census in October to ‘track’ the number and distribution of the different animals living in the more-than 220,000-hectare conservation area in central Mozambique.

“We’ve been doing this survey every two years since 2014. This will be the sixth survey using the same methodology. The aim is to track the numbers and distribution of the different species,” the science director of Gorongosa National Park, Marc Stalmans, explained to Lusa on Friday.

“It takes us approximately two weeks to cover around 220,000 hectares of the park,” he added, preferring not to put specific expectations for this survey “so as not to bias” the observations.

The last aerial count of wildlife in the area occurred in 2022. It documented the presence of more than 100,000 animals in 60% of Gorongosa National Park, including around 1,500 blue wildebeest, more than 1,400 buffalo and 900 hippos.

This survey specifically detected the presence of 2,875 crocodiles, 620 elephants,



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9,907 impalas, 5,685 warthogs and 41 zebras, among other species.

“The lower elephant count in 2022 should not be alarming,” according to the same report, recognising that no carcasses were observed in the aerial count or by ground patrols “as a result of poaching”.

“It appears that the Gorongosa elephant population is healthy and growing,” the report adds.

“I think it is the best park in the world because we have biodiversity and beauty. Our project has two objectives: nature conservation and human development for the communities around the park. We have agriculture, health and education projects. I’m proud,” Carr explained in an interview with Lusa this month in Chitengo, in the heart of Gorongosa National Park.

For Greg Carr, Gorongosa has also become his home for 20 years: “Yes. 50/50, Gorongosa and the United States,” he adds, mixing Portuguese and English, while saying that this is a public-private partnership: “It’s a team effort with the government”. “I met former President Joaquim Chissano more than 20 years ago; he’s a good visionary who wanted to see Gorongosa restored but wanted to include human rights for the park to help people. And I liked that vision of doing both,” Carr recalled.

Today, the park is almost a world apart in Mozambique, with 1,700 workers, including seasonal labourers and a force of nature rangers who work throughout the territory. Gorongosa coffee and honey are already produced in the park’s area, with a view to export, representing income for thousands of families.

“We are the largest employer in the centre of Mozambique,” he said.

“What’s unusual is that the largest number of workers are from outside the park. Inside the park, we have nature rangers, scientists, and tourism support workers, but outside,



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we have agricultural technicians, education and health promoters. And because we're building many things outside the park, like schools, we have contractors. I think we spend two-thirds of our time and investment outside, in the Sustainable Development Zone," he explained.

"We have been doing this census every two years since 2014. This will be the sixth census using the same methodology. The objective is to track the numbers and distribution of different species," Gorongosa National Park's science director, Marc Stalmans, explained to Lusa on Friday.

The 2022 aerial census also detected the presence of 2,875 crocodiles, 620 elephants, 9,907 impalas, 5,685 warthogs and 41 zebras, among other species.

Gorongosa was Portugal's first national park, established during the colonial era in 1960, but was decimated between 1977 and 1992 by the civil war that followed Mozambique's independence.

In 2008, the foundation of American millionaire and philanthropist Greg Carr signed a 20-year management agreement with the Mozambican government – extending it for another 25 years in 2018 – which has led to its renewal on several fronts, with social projects combined with conservation and with the number of animals growing from 10,000 to more than 102,000.

More than 20 years ago, Greg Carr rediscovered Gorongosa and the most important park in Mozambique has never been the same again, rehabilitated, with more fauna and flora, focused on the community, leaving the American millionaire and philanthropist thrilled.

Submitted by Debbie Jennings



THE SHOEBILL STORK (On everyone's bucket list!!!)

September 16, 2024

This formidable bird is not afraid of anything. When this gigantic creature spreads its wings, it measures 8.5 feet (2.6 meters). It lives in the predator-infested swamps of Africa. The shoebill feeds on any living being that fits in its beak, eating it in a single bite. It even eats crocodiles!

See the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Wf1vICS1y38?feature=share>

THE SHOEBILL IS UNIQUE

The shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*), or whale-headed stork, is one of the most impressive birds in Africa. It has the long, thin legs of a stork and a huge beak like a pelican. Though it was once classified as a stork, it now has a family of its own. The shoebill is the only member of the *Balaenicipitidae* family.

This creature stands out thanks to its deep gaze, its gray-blue plumage, a crest on the back of its head and, of course, its enormous beak shaped like a Dutch wooden shoe, hence its name. The name “rex” also makes you think of dinosaurs, right? But it's all about the appearance, because rex is Latin for “king.”

The shoebill is the largest bird on the African continent and one of the largest birds on the planet. It measures about 3.6 to 5 feet (110 to 150 cm) in height. The length from tail to beak can vary between 3.3 and 4.6 feet (100 and 140 cm). When this majestic avian spreads its wings, the total wingspan is 7.5 to 8.5 feet (230 to 260 cm).

It's one of the longest-lived birds in the world, with a lifespan of about 50 years. That gives the shoebill many years for fighting.



The shoebill is the largest bird in Africa and one of the largest in the world. Image via Melissa Askew/ Unsplash

THE SHOEBILL HAS A BEAK MADE TO KILL

This impressive creature inhabits the wetlands and swamps of Africa, which are full of predators. But, of course, the shoebill is an amazing predator itself. It feeds at night and walks on floating vegetation or through mud, thanks to its strong legs. It usually hunts fish, but it can eat anything that fits in its beak. In

addition, it devours its prey in a single bite.

The beak measures about 10 inches (25 cm) in length and 8 inches (20 cm) in width. It's the 3rd-longest beak in the world, which allows it to hunt extremely large prey. The shoebill remains motionless and completely silent for long periods of time. When prey approaches, the shoebill pounces on it, beak first. The good news is because the beak is so strong and sharp, the prey usually dies by decapitation. So at least it's a quick death.

Shoebills can consume snakes, eels, frogs, turtles, lizards, rodents, birds and baby crocodiles. One may think baby crocodiles are small, but their protective parents are not! The shoebill must enter swamps infested with huge crocodiles to hunt. This bird is not afraid of anything.



Shoebills possess the third-longest beak in the world. They can eat quite large prey in just one bite. Image via David Valentine/ Unsplash.

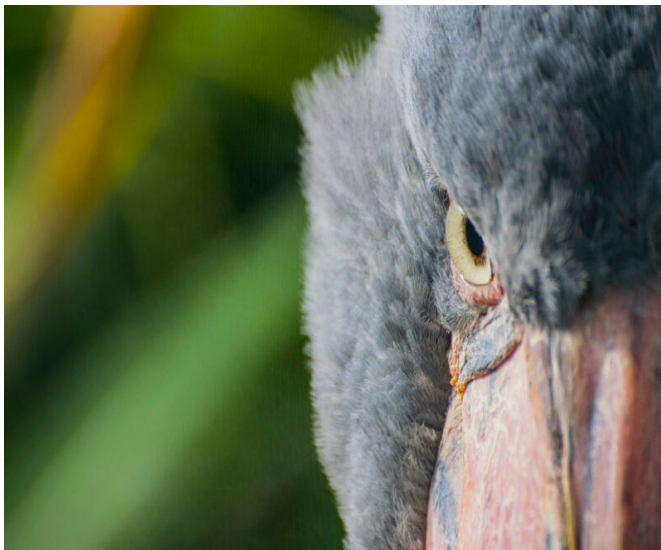
SHOEBILLS POSSESS A STRONG PERSONALITY

The shoebill is a silent creature that can remain motionless for hours and hours. Likewise, it is quite solitary, so much so that after mating, the male and female go in opposite directions to hunt and feed independently. But they are usually monogamous.

Now, the silence is broken when the time for mating arrives. Then, these birds are loud. They open and close their beaks quickly many times to produce a sound like a machine gun. They do this to attract a mate or to scare away intruders.

Shoebills don't like to share territory, which is made up of between 0.8 and 1.5 square miles (2 and 4 square km). Shoebills fiercely defend their territory, as they don't like to see other birds loitering in that range. However, when bred in captivity, they prove to be docile toward humans.

These birds are not known for making long migratory journeys. They normally only travel short distances to find food or mate.



They are silent and solitary creatures, but they are also fierce hunters and very territorial. Image via Tomáš Ejem/ Unsplash

FAMILY LIFE? NO, THANKS

The shoebill's incubation period lasts approximately 30 days, and both the female and male are dedicated to caring for, feeding and providing all the necessary protection to their young. However, territoriality also applies to the chicks themselves, who don't want to compete for the affection of mom and dad.

Some time after the eggs hatch, the earliest chick to hatch (which is usually larger), attacks the smaller chick while its parents are away from the nest to monopolize all

the attention and sustenance. The older sibling may even kill the younger sibling. The best thing the youngest can do is run away and find its own territory.

In addition, Birdlife.org says: Females lay up to three eggs and when hatched, both parents feed, guard, and shade the chicks. Although shoebills commonly hatch more than one chick, they only raise one. The younger chicks are usually left to die, unless the eldest is weak or doesn't survive.

Only the fittest survive. A shoebill's life is not an easy one. Plus, living in swamps presents extreme danger, as multiple diseases exist, predators are everywhere, and food can be scarce. For this reason, the shoebill is ruthless. These animals fight small and large animals alike.

THE SHOEBILL IS VULNERABLE

It is curious to find the word vulnerability and shoebill in the same sentence, but the truth is that this peculiar creature is in danger. The species is listed as a vulnerable species. It is estimated there are between 3,300 and 5,300 specimens left in the wild.



Females usually lay 2 eggs, but only 1 chick survives. Image via Marvin Semakula/ Pexels.

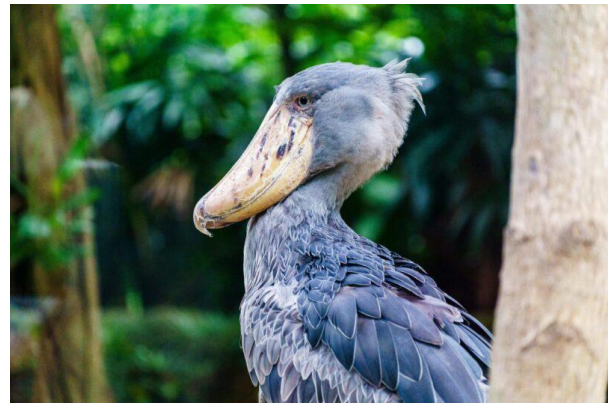
The bird is threatened by poachers, human destruction of its environment and cultural taboos. Many tribes believe these birds bring bad luck and kill them to cleanse their land of bad omens. This has led to the extinction of the species in some parts of Africa.

Unfortunately, the demand for shoebills is high both in zoos and for private collectors. The problem is that many birds taken from their native environment and placed in zoos don't mate, as these animals have specific habitat requirements. Likewise, the stress of transit to unknown environments and the presence of humans stresses and kills them.

From certain angles shoebills may look menacing, but they are truly unique and beautiful birds. The shoebill's wing beat is one of the slowest of all birds, with approximately 150 wing beats per minute. It is a pleasure to see this creature take flight in its natural environment.



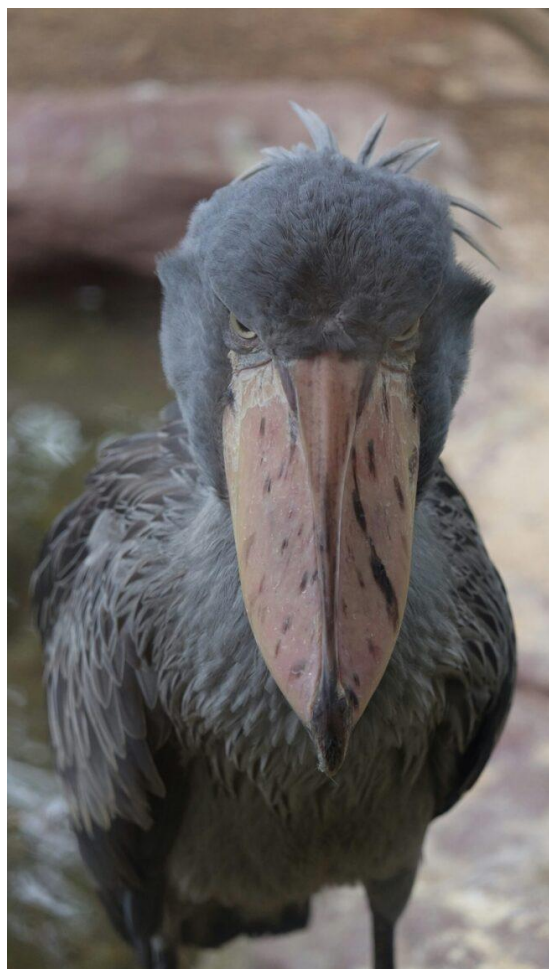
Even though they are tough birds, they need a specific habitat to thrive. Shoebills are listed as a vulnerable species. Image via Melissa Askew/ Unsplash.



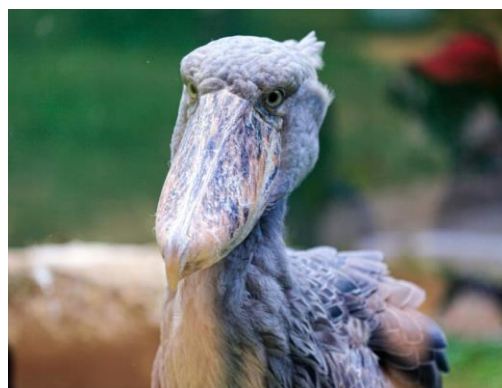
Shoebills have an enormous beak shaped like a Dutch wooden shoe. Image via Cyrill/ Pexels

MORE IMAGES OF THE MAJESTIC SHOEBILL

They open and close their beaks very quickly many times to produce a sound like a machine gun. They do this to find a mate or scare away animals entering their territory. Image via Erik Ding/ Pexels



This creature stands out thanks to its deep gaze, gray-blue plumage, a crest on the back of the head and enormous beak. Image via Alice Teh Larsson/ Unsplash.



Shoebills feed at night and walk on floating vegetation or through mud, thanks to their strong legs. Image via Marvin Ssemakula/ Pexels.



This impressive creature inhabits wetlands and swamps of Africa. Image via Morriz95/ Pexels

Bottom line: Meet one of the biggest birds in the animal kingdom. The shoebill looks like an imposing dinosaur. And indeed it is fierce. It eats everything that fits in its beak, and in just one bite!



Usually, shoebills are gray, but they also show blue plumage. Image via Francesco Ungaro/ Pexels.



CORNELL: COSMOPOLITAN BIRDS

MEET THE “COSMOPOLITAN” BIRDS THAT OCCUR ALL OVER THE WORLD

August 8, 2024



An acrobatic **Barn Swallow** in the skies above Nepal. *Photo by [Deepak Budhathoki / Macaulay Library](#).*

Our planet has a bounty of birds—more than 11,000 species in all. But on a global scale, most have relatively small ranges. And only a few dozen species can be called “cosmopolitan,” with ranges that touch six continents or at least three oceans. These are the birds that tie our human world together—birds that nearly all of us have in common.

The Barn Swallow on the previous page is one of the best examples: a bird weighing less than an ounce, whose migratory routes touch Canada, Tierra del Fuego, Norway, Namibia, Russia, Australia, and most places in between. Their gleaming colors and graceful aerobatics delight birdwatchers on every continent save Antarctica.

Follow us on a tour of our favorite cosmopolitan birds—whether over land, in cities and towns, or out at sea.

THE BIRDS OF SIX CONTINENTS



A Peregrine

Falcon evades a Black Kite in India. Peregrine Falcons occur on every continent except Antarctica. (Black Kites are absent from the Americas.) *Photo*

by [Kakul Paul / Macaulay Library](#)

If you took a highlighter and outlined all the coastlines of the world, you'd be pretty close to drawing the range map for **Ruddy Turnstone**—a truly cosmopolitan shorebird. *Photo (Japan) by [Ayuwat Jearwattanakanok / Macaulay Library](#).*



Black-bellied Plover (often called Grey Plover outside the U.S.) is another shorebird that you can see on virtually any beach in the world. *Photo (Russia) by [Volkov Sergey / Macaulay Library](#).*



Ospreys hunt fish along coasts and waterways all around the globe. *Photo (Sweden) by [Marc Fasol / Macaulay Library](#)*



Sanderlings breed in the northernmost reaches of the globe and spend the rest of the year chasing waves in and out on six continents. *Photo (South Africa) by [Michael Buckham / Macaulay Library](#).*





The magnificent **Caspian Tern**—largest tern in the world—often occurs inland in places like the Nile Valley, interior Australia, and Kazakhstan. *Photo (Western Sahara) by [Yeray Seminario / Macaulay Library](#).*

Glossy Ibises have a spotty distribution, but their range does touch six continents, giving birders the world over a chance to admire this bird's spectacular iridescence. *Photo (Türkiye) by [Soner Sabirli / Macaulay Library](#).*



Though their grace and poise can make a **Great Egret** sighting feel like a rare moment, their range blankets much of the inhabited world—only absent from deserts and the far north. *Photo (Delaware) by [Hannah Greenberg / Macaulay Library](#).*

Whimbrels wing their way along the coastlines of six continents to prey on fiddler crabs and other marine invertebrates. *Photo (Morocco) by [Max Khoo / Macaulay Library](#).*



THE BIRDS WE BRING WITH US

With their seemingly inexhaustible talent for flight, birds are inherently good at finding new places to live (see the Western Cattle Egret below for a good example). But some species get a helping hand from humans. Some, like Rock Pigeons and House Sparrows, formed a bond with humans centuries ago and have followed us around ever since. Others are brought along for a variety of reasons—parrots and parakeets come with us as pets, for instance—but may escape or be released and gain a toehold on a new continent.



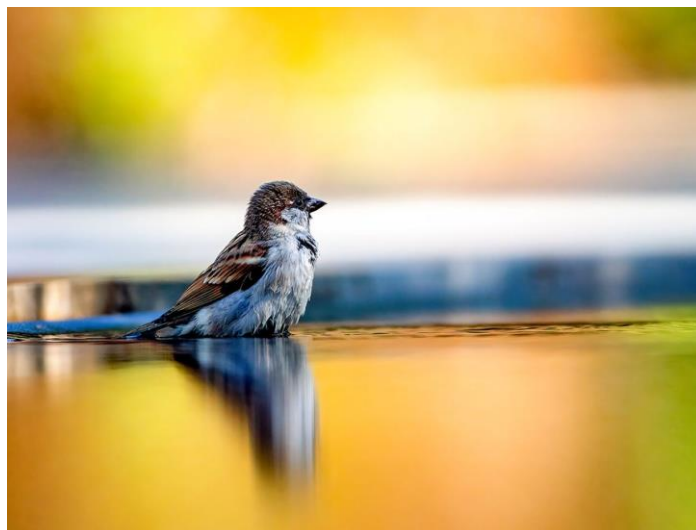
A **European Starling** shows off its rainbow brilliance in Israel—a part of its native range. Introductions have brought starlings to New Zealand, southeast Australia, South Africa, Argentina, and virtually all of North America. *Photo by [Uriel Levy / Macaulay Library](#).*

Native to India and sub-Saharan Africa, **Rose-ringed Parakeets** have established populations as far away as Sydney, Tokyo, London, Los Angeles, Riyadh, and Caracas. *Photo (India) by [Raghavendra Pai / Macaulay Library](#).*



Rock Pigeons were domesticated 5,000 years ago and have moved around the world with humans ever since. *Photo (Oregon) by [Brad Imhoff / Macaulay Library](#).*

House Sparrows have been living alongside humans for centuries. *Photo (Kuwait) by [Lukasz Ifczok / Macaulay Library](#).*



OCEAN TRAVELLERS



Arctic Tern: Superstar

Cosmopolitan. These champion migrators fly from the Arctic to Antarctica and back—25,000 miles per year. When it's time to molt, they sit on a patch of pack ice while they regrow their feathers, then keep going.

Photo (Finland) by [Matti Rekilä / Macaulay Library](#).

Oceans cover more than two-thirds of the planet, and birds have evolved to exist across most of that endless blue-gray habitat. The Arctic Tern is famous for covering a distance equal to the circumference of the Earth every year. With a lifespan that can exceed 30 years, an Arctic Tern might travel three-quarters of a million miles in its lifetime. Plenty of other seabirds have the ability to spend years on the wing, without touching land—following are a few examples of species that touch at least three of the world's five oceans in their travels.



An endurance migrant to rival the Arctic Tern, the **Sooty Shearwater** can be found in ocean waters from Greenland to Tierra del Fuego and Tasmania to Kamchatka. Photo (Australia) by [David Sinnott / Macaulay Library](#).

The **Long-tailed Jaeger** breeds in the Arctic and then fans out across the other four oceans: Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, and Southern. *Photo (Sweden) by [Ivan Sjögren /Macaulay](#)*



Red-necked Phalaropes are tiny sandpipers that nest on tundra, migrate through coastal waters, and winter on the open ocean in the Pacific, Indonesia, and Arabian Sea. *Photo (Iceland) by [Joshua Hogan / Macaulay Library](#).*

Wilson's Storm-Petrels breed in Antarctica yet still manage to be one of the most common pelagic seabirds in the rest of the world, only absent from the North Pacific and Arctic. *Photo (North Carolina) by [Kate Sutherland / Macaulay Library](#).*





Sooty Tern is one of several seabird species that occur in a broad band across all the world's tropical oceans. *Photo (Midway Island, Pacific Ocean) by [Jonathan Plissner / Macaulay Library](#).*

Several species of boobies are widespread in tropical oceans, including the **Brown Booby**. *Photo (Thailand) by [Natthaphat Chotjuckdikul / Macaulay Library](#).*



Frigatebirds are famous for the males' outrageous red throat sac. Of the five species, the **Great Frigatebird** has the largest range and occurs in the tropical Pacific, Indian, and parts of the Atlantic Oceans. *Photo (Galápagos) by [William Richards / Macaulay Library](#).*

HONORABLE MENTIONS



The **Short-eared Owl** is *almost* a cosmopolitan species. Its range doesn't quite reach Australia, though it has managed to colonize several oceanic islands including Hawaii. *Photo (Alaska) by [Nathan Kelly / Macaulay Library](#).*

The world is a big place, and some widespread bird species don't quite make it to that sixth continent. Some species fall short through the vagaries of taxonomic changes—for instance, the cosmopolitan species previously known as Cattle Egret was recently split into two species (Western and Eastern Cattle Egrets), neither of which make it to six continents. Others, like the Black-crowned Night Heron, come oh-so-close to that sixth continent, but fall just short. We love them anyway: these are our honorable mentions.

By turns beautiful and enigmatic, the **Barn Owl** makes our cosmopolitan list—at least temporarily. As of press time, it's scheduled to be split into three species later in 2024. *Photo (Australia) by [Brett Mezen / Macaulay Library](#).*





Bank Swallows (known as Sand Martins in the U.K.) occur across most of the world, though the closest they regularly get to Australia is Borneo. *Photo (China) by [Vincent Wang / Macaulay Library](#).*

Black-crowned Night Herons are the most widespread of the nine night heron species, but don't quite reach the Australian continent (they get as close as East Timor). *Photo (Montenegro) by [Jérémy Calvo / Macaulay Library](#).*



Cattle egrets qualified as a cosmopolitan species up until 2023, when taxonomists split them into two species. These enterprising birds colonized South America (from Africa) in 1877, and reached North America in the early 20th century, all without human assistance.

Western Cattle Egret photo (Slovakia) by [Slávka Michalková / Macaulay Library](#).

The **Gull-billed Tern** is another species that lost its cosmopolitan status recently, when taxonomists separated a population in Australia as its own species, the Australian Tern. Image (Bermuda) by [Tim White / Macaulay Library](#).



BEAUTIFUL BIRDS WITH UNUSUAL ADAPTATIONS



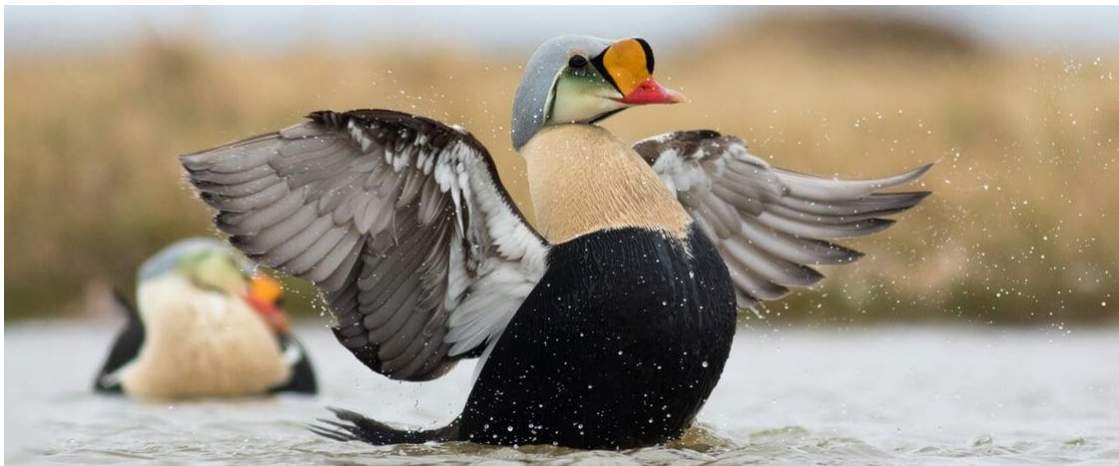
Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise © [Andrew Spencer / Macaulay Library](#)

There are few birds in the world stranger and more enchanting than the birds-of-paradise. This spectacular family of birds includes [15 genera and approximately 42 species](#), and many are startlingly unique with unusual feather adaptations. Fluffy plumes, stiff wires, and plastic-like ornaments are just some of the display feathers of the birds-of-paradise. But why have they evolved this way, and how far has their specialization gone? Hear ornithologist Ed Scholes talk about feathers and the birds-of-paradise while watching the beautiful photography of Tim Laman in this film.

[Watch the Full Video](#)

From the brightly colored, spiral-tailed Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise to the shapeshifting, iridescent-throated Vogelkop Lophorina, birds-of-paradise are fantastic examples of bird evolution, speciation, and adaptation. How do all those fancy feathers and dance moves help birds-of-paradise find their mates? How did these birds evolve to be so spectacular, and how have the choices of female birds played a role? Learn the answers to these questions and more with the [Birds-of-Paradise Project](#).

CORNELL BIRD ACADEMY



King Eider August Davidson-Onsgaard/Macaulay Library

With a brightly colored face and unusually shaped head, the [King Eider](#) might seem like an exceptionally strange bird. These diving ducks spend summers high in the Arctic, and retreat to the southern edge of sea ice in winter. They forage for marine invertebrates and might even pursue prey 80 feet below the water's surface! Despite these spectacular diving feats, King Eiders still share the same basic anatomical structures common to all birds.



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From diving ducks to flightless ostriches to zippy hummingbirds, all birds have some basic anatomical features in common. If you're curious about all the nerdy-birdy details of how birds move, forage, and fly, learning bird anatomy can be a real leg-up! **Train your anatomy knowledge with the free [All About Bird Anatomy learning tool](#).** Click through the interactive image to learn all the parts and pieces of birds, then turn on flashcard mode to quiz yourself. You'll be a bird anatomy pro in no time!

FOR SALE

Cold drinks on tap after a long drive? Frozen foods when you're far from shops?

This large Snow Master Refrigerator-freezer is for sale. Contact Barbara at

barbara@thorntonpromogifts.co.za for more

info. Asking R6000.00



WEST RAND REGION HONORARY RANGERS

KRUGER PARK BIRDING



Sponsors  **WEST RAND REGION**

 **DISCOVER KRUGER'S RICH AVIAN TAPESTRY.**

Embark on a Birding Adventure with Purpose

Join us for the annual West Rand Region's Kruger Birding Experience, where birding meets conservation. Explore the magic of Kruger National Park, home to over 500 bird species, including rare gems and summer migrants.

Dates: 21 January - 07 March 2025	Accommodation: Packages starting from R6 062 per person sharing, inclusive of accommodation, 2 dinners and 8 to 12 hours of birdwatching and game drives	Contact: For Bookings Contact: Norma on 011 476 3057 or westrandbirders@gmail.com
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Choose Your Haven:
Choose from a list of iconic camps

Book now to secure your spot and make a meaningful impact on Kruger's conservation.

Partners  **SANParks Honorary Rangers - Volunteers in Support of SANParks.**
Proceeds from this event will go towards projects identified by SANParks
www.sanparksvolunteers.org - connect@sanparksvolunteers.org



ACCOMMODATION



079 220 8745

admin@goldenview.co.za | www.goldenview.co.za

As we approach the end of September 2024, there are still a few days left to take advantage of our amazing early bird offer - a fantastic 15% discount on your December getaway. Don't let this opportunity slip away!

SOUTPANSBERG BIRDING WEEKEND


I am excited to announce that we will be hosting our annual specialist birding weekend at Sigurwana Lodge in the Soutpansberg again. The weekend is scheduled for October 25th - 27th.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could share this email and the attached flyer with your club members. This is a wonderful opportunity for all birding enthusiasts to enjoy a weekend filled with unique bird sightings and expert insights.

Thank you for your support, and we look forward to welcoming your members to this exciting event.




BOOKBINDING



*Our passion – Restoring books of antiquity, books of sentimental value and binding of theses, dissertations and legal documents.
For an overview of projects and procedure, see the attached file ...*

Annan Bookbinding and Restoration
(Based in Northwold, Randburg) - Cell or WhatsApp 072-454-0501



“Preserving the Written Word”

I have a fascinating hobby which became a little business when I retired from the publishing industry. I repair/restore books of antiquity and books that have sentimental value.

Recently some friends of mine showed me a signed copy of **Newman's Birds of Southern Africa**. It had travelled with them to various parts of Southern Africa and was filled with notes recording sightings of a wide range of birds. After much use it was falling apart—the spine stitching was coming adrift, and the paper cover was almost detached.

They could, of course, buy a new copy of Newman's, but they wanted to preserve the treasury of recorded sightings—as would most bird lovers.

While much of my work has centred on repairing/restoring Bibles (antique and newer), I've also restored books on natural history—even one on the trees of Zambia.



WEB PAGES

Animals

Research on evolution

<https://www.livescience.com/planet-earth/evolution/how-fast-does-evolution-happen>

Geology

Watch an intriguing dance through time

<https://theconversation.com/witness-1-8-billion-years-of-tectonic-plates-dance-across-earths-surface-in-a-new-animation-238209>

Photography

Superb Photos – take a look. No, nothing to do with birds. Just the human animal.

https://petapixel.com/2024/06/28/the-24-winners-of-the-2024-world-sports-photography-awards/?utm_source=PetaPixel&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=email-share

Birds

A breakthrough in owl conservation in Northern Ireland

https://bbc.com/news/articles/cwye5qeq5l2o?at_campaign_type=owned&at_medium=emails&at_objective=awareness&at_ptr_type=email&at_ptr_name=salesforce&at_campaign=newsbriefing&at_email_send_date=20240924&at_send_id=4178361&at_link_title=https%3a%2f%2fwww.bbc.com%2fnews%2farticles%2fcwye5qeq5l2o&at_bc_team=crm

Interesting. And a little scary!

<https://phys.org/news/2024-09-pirate-birds-seabirds-regurgitate-fish.html>

<https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/>

Help on the way for a cousin of our friend the Hadada

<https://www.getaway.co.za/environment/scientists-fly-daring-migration-mission-to-protect-rare-bird-species/#:~:text=According%20to%20BBC,%20determined%20scientists%20embarked%20on%20a%20daring%20mission>

Submitted by Mo Bellis



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Relevant for Heritage Month, a celebration of our birdlife:

https://youtu.be/crIPsVKA-p4?si=_hgi6c_r3ymrENWj

Some fascinating research on White-browed Sparrow-weavers

<https://www.popsci.com/environment/bird-culture/>

Filming migratory birds in China (Yellow Sea)

<https://youtu.be/F84v0CFN4Pw>

[6 Common Bird Migration Questions, Answered by Our Expert | All About Birds](#)

Find out about more about the Swift People

[Called by Birds - South Africa's Cultural Heritage - Ep. 01 \(youtube.com\)](#)

(Sourced by Eduard de Koning)



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COMMITTEE

Chair	Dennis Townsend
Secretary	Mo Bellis
Treasurer	Alex Jennings
Day Outings	Bev Williams
Weekends Away	Marion Melville
Speakers	Debbie Jennings
Newsletter	Penny Clemson
News Flashes	Debbie Jennings

OFFICE BEARERS

Facebook Page	Bev Williams
WhatsApp	Bev Williams
Equipment	Lester Niss
Mid-month Outings	Lester Niss
Technical Support/Online Host	Mike Hamilton



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BANKING DETAILS

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

CONTACT: info@thecuckoobirdclub.org.za

NOTES

1. This newsletter is for members of the (Slightly) Cuckoo Bird Club only. It is not intended to be passed on to people outside the club.
2. To opt out of receiving mail from the Cuckoo Bird Club, please send an email to dennis.townsend4@gmail.com with the title: **Opt Out/Unsubscribe**