



BLING WINGS

Red-headed Weaver, Wilgerivierkloof [Bill Gie]

Reflections: Club Meeting – 9 April



What do the Horned Lark, Long-tailed Tit, Wallcreeper, White-winged Redstart, and Rock Nuthatch have in common? Prof. Andy Featherstone of WITS Bird Club came to enlighten us about the birds of Georgia, as well as its fascinating history and geography, at our club meeting. He guided a tour of his club to this exciting and diverse birding destination. Afterwards, long-time birding friends could catch up again, as Philip and Amanda Calinikos did.

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WILGERIVIERKLOOF – 6 APRIL

The 16 club members who joined Fransie O' Brien on this outing experienced a day of undiluted magic. 124 Species were seen. Let the photographs tell all about it.



Zusterstroom route [Hanjo Gouws]



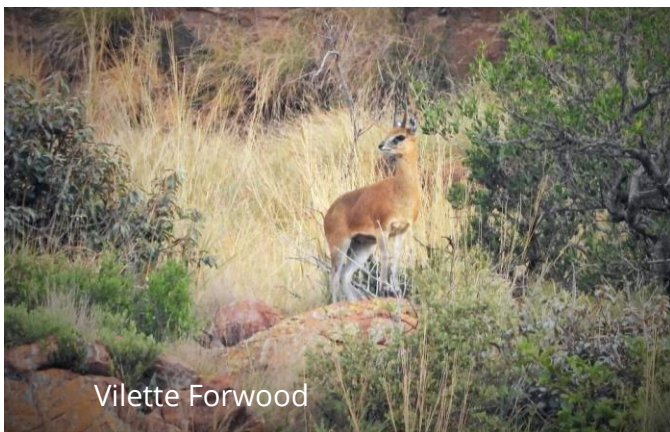
Entering Hephzibah [Vilette Forwood]



Striped Kingfisher [Craig Green]

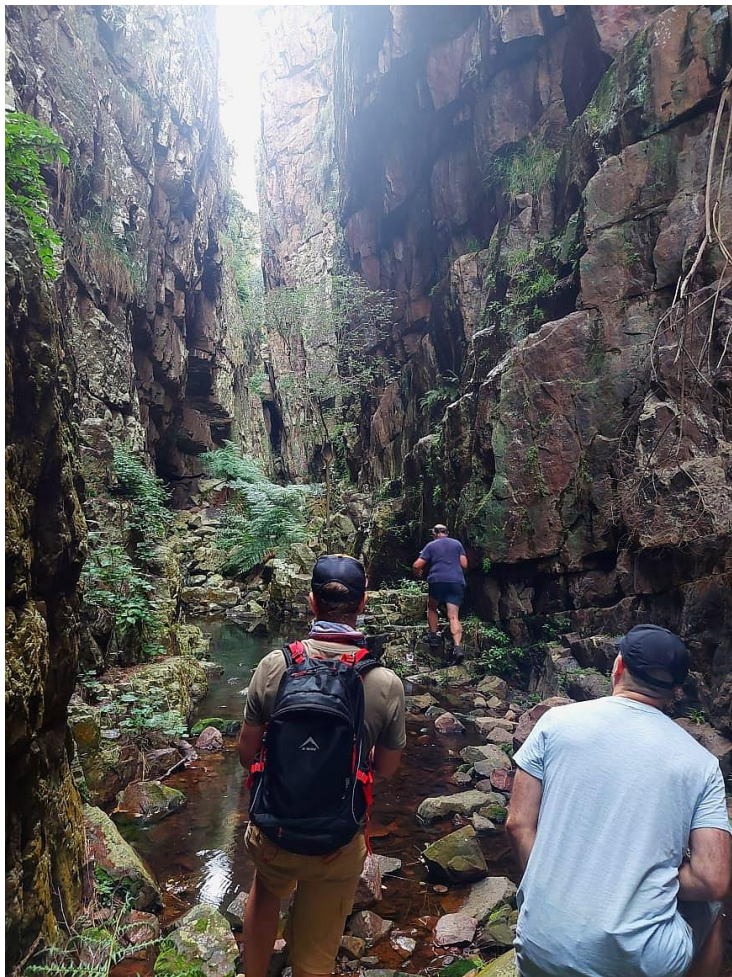


Swee Waxbill & Long-crested Eagle [Johan Botha]



Vilette Forwood





Piet Groenwald, leading the way up the gorge
[Liesl de Swardt]



Greater Double-collared Sunbird (F) [Bill Gie]



Bird of the Day, at the top of the gorge:
Mountain Wagtail [JP van der Merwe]



Grey Tit-Flycatcher [JP van der Merwe]



African Fish Eagle [Craig Green]

RUST DE WINTER DAM – 13 APRIL

This was a day outing that I almost didn't go on but, fortunately for me, a severe case of FOMO kept me on that list. What we thought was going to be a normal day trip around the Rust De Winter Dam turned into a very special day of bird drives and pontoon cruises in the Rust De Winter Conservancy. This was organised by Thinus van Staden in conjunction with Pieter Smith (from the RDWC).

We met on the Dinokeng Road before 6 am, extremely excited about the day ahead, and after introductions were made and the days plans were discussed, we drove into the conservancy. We were divided into two groups of nine people. The first group would do the bird drive first whilst the other group went on the pontoon cruise, each of these were expected to be about two hours long.

Pieter accompanied our group on the bird drive around the Conservancy showing us the various habitats and outlined their vision for this wonderful conservancy. Unfortunately, due to the recent rains, we were unable to access some areas where the Pygmy Geese have been seen swimming amongst the lilies. We saw some great birds on the drive including Pale Chanting Goshawk, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Brubru, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Little Bittern, and the largest flock of Red-faced Mousebirds ever (seriously there must have been more than 50)!

Then it was our turn to go on the pontoon. We boarded and set off with great excitement. What a fantastic way to bird watch! We were stunned into silence at the beauty and tranquillity around us as we floated across the Rust De Winter Dam. Lily pads with beautiful flowers dotted the surface and provided us with many photographic opportunities of the long-legged, long-toed African Jacanas and shy Black Crakes that darted across them.

There is a diverse array of bird life on the Rust De Winter Dam. Among the sightings were Giant and Pied Kingfishers, Gabar Goshawk, Common Moorhen, African Darters, African Fish Eagle, and Reed Cormorants basking in the sun with their wings outstretched. The highlight of the cruise was undoubtedly the Allen's Gallinule, both an adult and a juvenile were seen. It was wonderful to be able to compare their different plumages. The Allen's Gallinule was also a lifer for many of us.

The pontoon cruise on the Rust De Winter Dam was an experience that I won't forget too quickly. The tranquillity, the beautiful lily pad flowers in the dam, the bird life, every moment spent on the Rust De Winter Dam was a privilege. Our heartfelt thanks to Thinus for arranging this special trip, as well as to Pieter Smith for sharing the wonders of Rust De Winter Conservancy with us.

Angie Openshaw



Burnt-necked Eremomela [Sean Naudé]



Black Crane [Anne-Marie van der Merwe]



Giant Kingfisher [JP van der Merwe]



The star of the show – a juvenile Allen's Gallinule [Ben Espach]

HEDIANGIA FARM - 28 APRIL

Fourteen members attended this hike, led by Keanu Canto. Hediangia Farm offers a variety of views from the koppie and across a valley. A total of 58 species were seen, with the highlight without question two raptors, a Black Sparrowhawk and Ovambo Sparrowhawk. Views of the normally skulking Grey-headed Bush-Shrike were also much more satisfying than only hearing it, as is usual.



[André Taljaard]



Black Sparrowhawk [Mariana Arnoldi]



Ovambo Sparrowhawk [René Stander]



Chinspot Batis [Megan Greyvenstein]

REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS



April started with a great record of a **Lark-like Bunting** – another provincial rarity at the fountain on the Magalies MBT & hiking trail. (Anne-Marie van der Merwe).

Walter Sisulu BG also hosted a **Lark-like Bunting** during this reporting period. (Hennie Storm)

Suikerbosrand NR continued delivering rarities, such as **Lark-like Bunting, Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Pale Chanting Goshawk** and late departing **European Honey Buzzard**, all reported by Niall Perrins.

A **Lark-like Bunting** was seen by Etienne Marais, as well as a flock of **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** at Rietvlei NR, on 11 April.



He also reported a fly-over of a **Black Stork** at Dinokeng. Of interest in the 100 km Wider Gauteng region, Etienne submitted sightings of

of **Pink-backed Pelicans** at Rockwall Dam, and **Short-clawed Lark** in North-West, this locality about a 100 km east of its known distribution range on the Botswana border and south of the population occurring in the Polokwane region.



A pair of **Swee Waxbills** returned to Magalies MBT trial. [Daan van de Wetering]

Mike Pope reported a **Dwarf Bittern** at Northern Farm mid-April.

Zaagkuildrift had a **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, as well as a **Lizard Buzzard**, spotted by BLNG members, on 21 April. A **Pink-backed Pelican**, flying over the Kgomo-Kgomo bridge, saw Pieter Verster ready, as always, to catch the action.



Another great sighting for Gauteng was an **African Openbill** at Korsmans Bird Sanctuary on 28 April. (Raymond Campling)

Photograph of the month

We celebrate the arrival of the first winter migrants with this beautiful photograph of a Fairy Flycatcher by Hannes van den Berg. The first arrivals of this captivating species were seen in Fairy Glen NR and the Magalies MBT trail by mid-April.





Common Moorhen [Craig Green]

A warm thank you to all our club's outing leaders who share information of species seen and the Bird of the Day, as well as our eager photographers, their photographs. I try foremost to select a variety of species seen in that month by club members for each issue, and across issues of a year, to show our readers the remarkable diversity of bird life in our region. I also try to feature a few photographs from our different photographers in each issue. Without your contributions, BLiNG WiNGS would not be possible.

PROGRAMME



4 May – Roodeplaat NR



12 May – Pretoria Botanical Garden



15 May – Derdepoort Regional Park

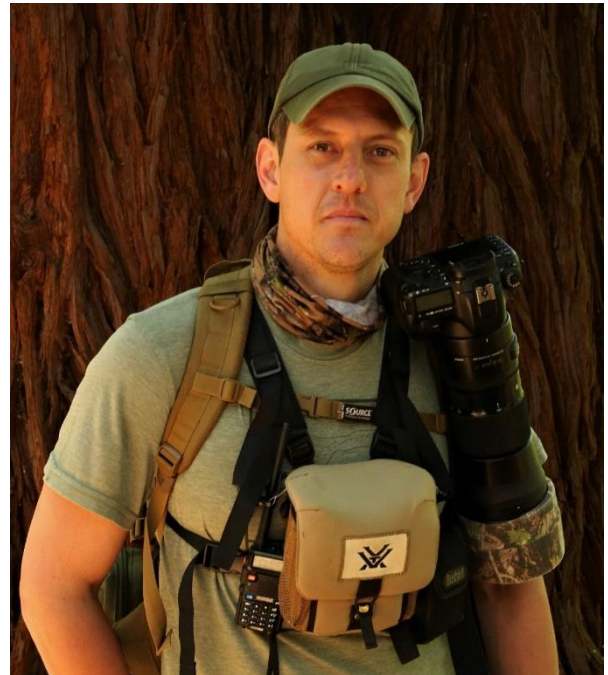


19 May – Ezemvelo NR



26 May – Suikerbosrand

14 May - Club Meeting
Cassie Carstens



[BLSA – M Whitecross]

Most of us associate Cassie with the Cape Parrot Project, but he recently was appointed as BLSA's Secretarybird Conservation Officer. Join us to learn more about efforts to mitigate threats to these vulnerable striders.

Compilation and lay-out by I Coetzee

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Birding for Beginners
17 – 19 May
@Zaagkuilsdrift Lodge

Join Etienne Marais for a
wonderful weekend of Birding
and Learning about Birds!!
Includes lodge accommodation,
dinners and brunch.

From R2700 pp sharing or R1800 pp Camping

Contact Etienne : info@etiennebirding.com
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