



# BLING WINGS

Bar-throated Apalis [Pieter Heslinga ]

## Reflections: Club Meeting: 10 September



Robin Cook explained how bee hives are used to protect marula trees against elephants. But this meeting will be remembered more for the inaugural speech by Sean Naudé, the new BLNG Chair, after Elouise Kalmer stood down after 7 years.

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## GROENKLOOF NR – 7 SEPTEMBER

Laura Jordaan guided the group, and helped members to identify birdsong by means of YouTube videos. Photographs by Wouter Fourie.



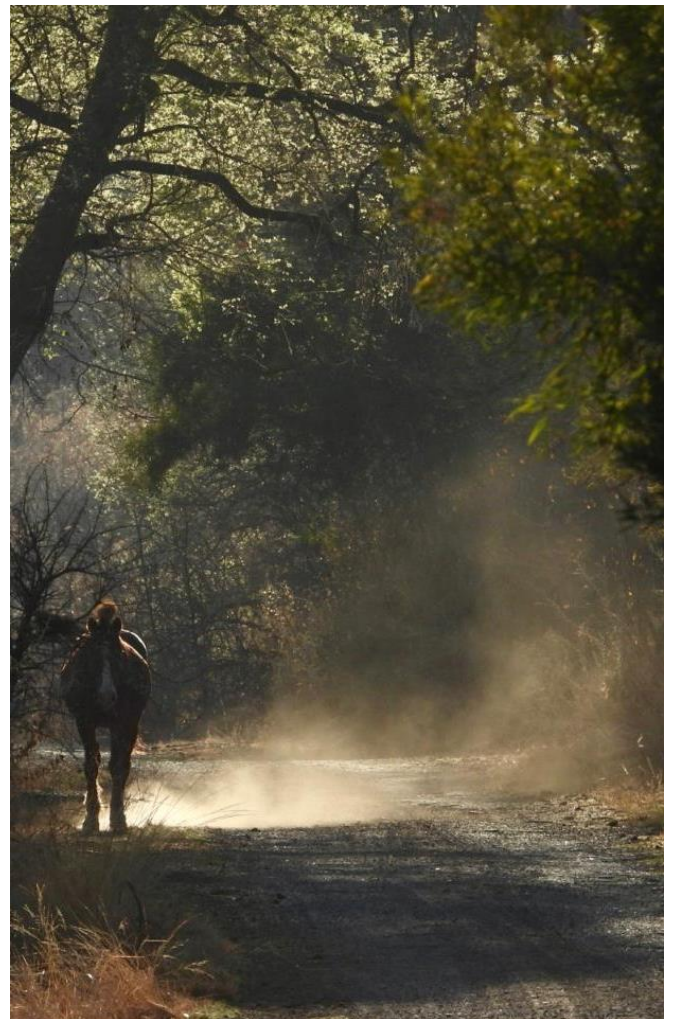
Kurrichane Thrush.



A Neddicky, perfectly camouflaged



Mr and Mrs Cape Sparrow, at opposite ends



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## HEX RIVER THORNVELD – 15 SEPTEMBER

The Hex River Thornveld day trip took place on Sunday, 15 September 2024 with Keanu Canto as the leader. An early start was needed to drive to the meeting point near Ikageng in the North West province. The Hex River Thornveld is just south of Pilanesberg National Park. This region is often overlooked by birders in favour of the Pilanesberg NP, although it offers great birding opportunities in acacia-dotted flats and agricultural fields. Our target species for the morning was the Yellow-throated Sandgrouse.

We met just before 7 am, and sadly missed the Greater Kestrel seen by the others. We drove a short distance to a spot where our target bird had been seen before, stopped and got out and waited. Here we scanned the sky and listened for its distinctive call, and luckily fairly quickly someone called out “incoming”, and we were rewarded with the arrival of a single Yellow-throated Sandgrouse. We noted its landing spot and slowly but surely moved closer to it for better observation. It was a lifer for some.



Yellow-throated Sandgrouse [Angela Openshaw]

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We were really excited when we spotted a well camouflaged chick with the adult, which turned into two chicks when we looked at the photos.

We did see a few more Yellow-throated Sandgrouse flying past us but they landed too far away for a good look.

We birded a bit longer in the area and saw a few Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks foraging on the local dirt-packed soccer field, as well as Yellow Canaries, Common Mynas, Cape Sparrow, Rock Doves (Feral Pigeons), Laughing Doves, White-throated Swallows, and Southern Masked Weavers.

Mission accomplished and target bird ticked, we drove away to explore more of the Thornveld area, stopping at spots where bird parties were happening. Here we ticked off Marico Flycatchers, Marico and White-bellied Sunbirds, Kalahari Scrub Robin, energetic Chestnut-vented Warblers, noisy Tawny-flanked Prinia, and gorgeous Lilac-breasted Rollers.



Burnt-necked Eremomela [Kayleigh Marcus]

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Still further along the way we saw a pair of African Hawk Eagles soaring lazily above us and a Black-winged Kite perched on top of a tree. The quiet roads around the rural farms produced Fork-tailed Drongo, Southern Yellow-billed and African Grey Hornbills, Red-billed Oxpeckers snacking on cattle, Arrow-marked Babbler, Magpie Shrike, an extremely elusive Red-crested Korhaan and Black-collared Barbet. A number of Swifts and Swallows were seen too. We were very chuffed when Jared spotted the Burnt-necked Eremomela jumping around the Acacia trees.

At a small bridge crossing over a low-level stream, we saw a Squacco Heron, Rattling Cisticola, an extremely camera-shy Burchell's Coucal, Blacksmith - and African Wattled Lapwings, and even an African Spoonbill that quickly flew off as we stopped. The day warmed up quickly, getting up to 35 degrees which was fortunately cooled by a light breeze. The final surprises were the Pale Chanting Goshawk, and a Great Sparrow spotted by eagle-eyed Keanu. The Hex River Thornveld is definitely a great birding area, with a great variety of species in diverse habitats. Thanks to Keanu's knowledge of the area we had a very enjoyable and productive day. A total of 85 birds were listed for the day.

*Angela Openshaw*



Squacco Heron [Angela Openshaw]



Pale Chanting Goshawk [Angela Openshaw]

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## KIMIAD GOLF COURSE – 18 SEPTEMBER

The Kimiad Golf Course has a fantastic 3.6 km walking trail that goes around and through the golf course with its dams, lush fairways, and natural bushveld. This blend of habitats attracts a variety of bird species, making it a worthwhile birding spot.



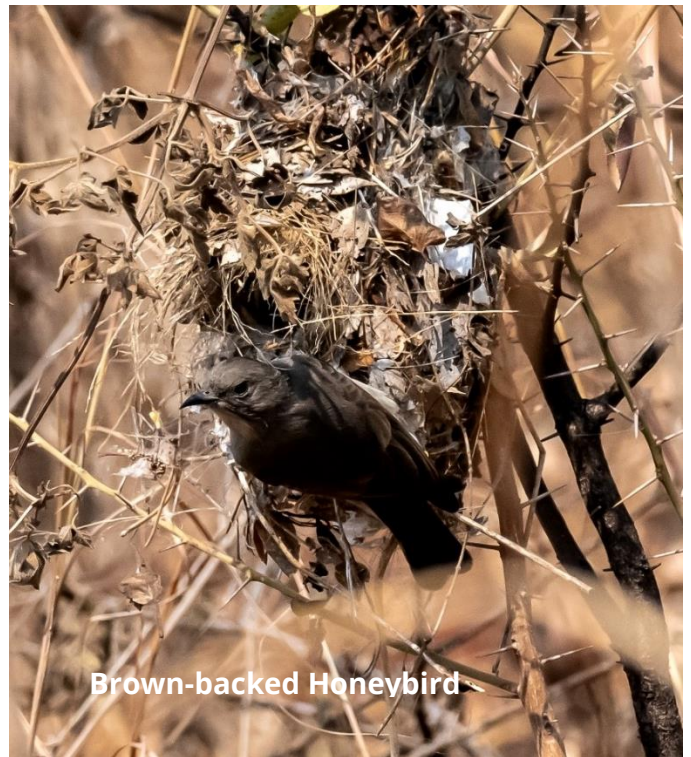
Chinspot Batis



African Olive Pigeon

*Text and photographs: Angela Openshaw*

The dams were busy with Red-knobbed Coots, Egyptian Geese, Village - and Thick-billed Weavers, Little Grebes and a Purple Heron. A highlight for some was the two Malachite Kingfishers who darted and chased each other across the water. In the bushveld areas some Long-billed Crombecs were foraging in the Acacias, Chinspot Batises, and Black-backed Puffback and Amethyst - and White-bellied Sunbirds. Other birds sighted included the Black-chested Prinia, an elusive Brown-backed Honeybird who was inspecting the nest of a smaller bird, possibly to parasite the nest.



At the end of the walk, we had seen 80 bird species. The blend of habitats at Kimiad Golf Course, from dams to bushveld, ensured a lovely morning of birding. Thanks to Keanu Canto for leading another successful birding trip for BLNG.

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## MKHOMBO DAM – 28 SEPTEMBER

With migrants returning from the northern hemisphere, Mkhombo Dam proved to be the place to visit for a wonderful array of special species. Enjoy this birding feast as presented by some of BLNG's top photographers. JP van der Merwe led this annual outing.

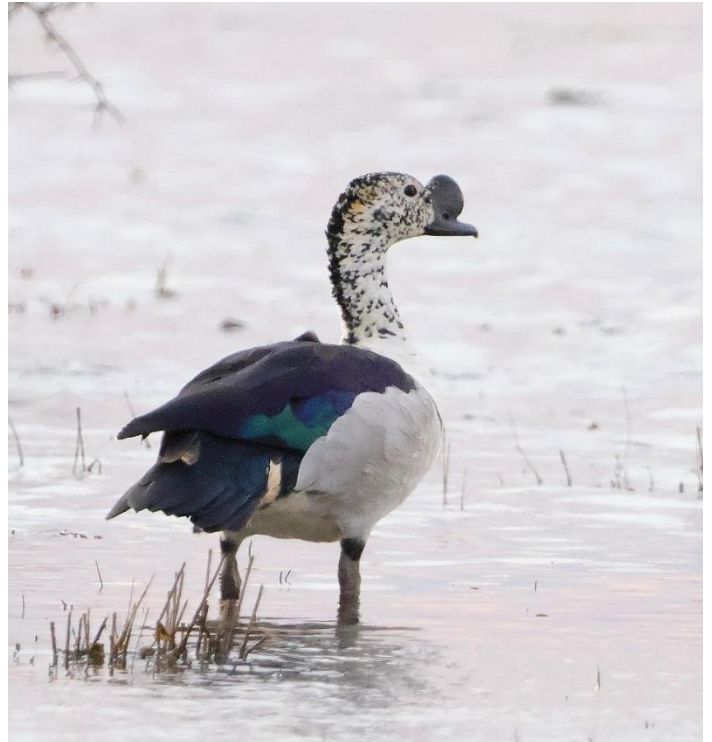


Collared Pratincole [Marna Buys]

Also, below – see the apt Afrikaans name:



Roovlerksprinkaanvoël [Wihan Barnard]



Knob-billed Duck [Rulien Erasmus]



Ruddy Turnstone [Marna Buys]



Caspian Tern [Anna-Marie van der Merwe]



Greater Painted-snipe [Michael Erasmus]



Kittlitz's Plover [JP van der Merwe]



Curlew Sandpiper [Anne-Marie van der Merwe]



Yellow-billed Stork [JP van der Merwe]





Amazing spurs of this Blacksmith Lapwing adult, with the chick middle right [JP van der Merwe]



Little Bee-eater [Anne-Marie van der Merwe]



Juvenile African Jacana [Marna Buys]



White-breasted Cormorant [Marna Buys]

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## REGIONAL AND LOCAL RARITIES AND INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

September, despite returning migrants, delivered scant reports of rarities. Pieter Verster reported on 1 September that the **Collared Pratincole** population at Mkhombo Dam had grown to almost 20 birds.



**Collared Pratincole** [Michael Erasmus]

Michael Johnson again found a pair of **Grey Penduline Tits**, possibly now breeding, in the Seringveld Conservancy.



The BLNG group spotted various Wider Gauteng Rare birds on 28 September at Mkhombo Dam:



**Wire-tailed Swallow** [Michael Erasmus]



This **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** was photographed by Werner Fourie in Rietvlei.



**Ruddy Turnstone** [Marna Buys]

*These sightings were compiled from various social media Wider Gauteng Rarity sources. - Ed.*

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## *Photograph of the month*

To capture two endangered species in a photograph is extraordinary. Marna Buys managed to photograph this jaw-dropping image of Verreaux's Eagle with its prey, an endangered Mountain Reedbuck foal, of which there is a small and seldom-seen population in the Friends of Magalies section. The Eagles are currently breeding on the cell phone tower on the ridge above Pretoria North, and the female and juvenile were quite vocal when they saw their substantial meal arriving.

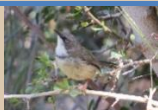




A **Red-capped Lark** seen at Mkhombo Dam by Michael Erasmus during the BLNG outing.

*A warm thank-you to all our club's outing leaders, and our eager photographers, for your support. You make BLiNG WiNGS possible!*

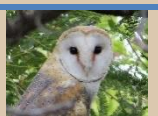
#### PROGRAMME



2 October – Derdepoort Regional Park



5 October – Boekenhoutskloof



12 October – Buffelsdrift



17 – 20 October – Memel Camp



26 October – Rietvlei Hike

## 8 October – Club Meeting

John Gibbs, BLSAs Birds and Renewable Energy Project Leader, will explain the effects of renewable energy on birds, in particular habitat loss (solar and wind), collision (wind turbines and power lines) and electrocution (power lines).



<https://www.birdlife.org.za/who-we-are/meet-the-team/>

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