The 2019 Cape Bird Club AGM Reports
An Atlassing Bash at the SKA
Tribute to a Champion of Birds in Need
Promerops: Magazine of the Cape Bird Club
Issue No. 314, July 2019

(Best viewed as two-page spread in Adobe Reader)
Please send your news, articles, travel reports, observations, and comments to Fiona Jones at promerops@capebirdclub.org.za. The deadline for contributions to the next issue is 10 September 2019.
EDITORIAL

By the time you read this, winter will be well underway – so keep warm and enjoy your winter birding! And when it’s cold, wet and windy outside, what better way to keep warm than to sit in front of a lovely fire with a mug of something hot and a copy of Promerops!

You will find a wide range of topics covered in this issue of your magazine. Our Chairman’s annual report, delivered at the club’s Annual General Meeting in March, is reproduced here for those who were unable to attend the meeting (see page 12), and the Conservation Committee Chairman’s annual report appears on page 20. These reports make interesting reading, and we can be very proud of both the main CBC Committee and the Conservation Committee for their excellent achievements over the past year. In the coming year, the committee would like to improve its communication with club members in order to provide a clearer picture of our club’s goals and objectives, the projects that are being undertaken, and how the club is run. To this end, we are introducing a new feature in this issue called Bird’s Eye View – News & Views From Your Committee. In this and future issues of Promerops, a member of the committee will share with you some of the thought processes going on, and the actions being taken behind the scenes to make the CBC the great club that it is, and may possibly even inspire you to take part in some of its conservation, education, and outreach projects. So keep an eye out for Bird’s Eye View! (The first one appears on page 6.)

Also in this issue, Mel Tripp takes us on an atlassing bash to the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) in the Northern Cape, where cutting-edge technology is being used to build the world’s largest radio telescope. In this dry, desolate place atlassing is no picnic – but the 22 atlassers managed to cover a good number of un-atlassed and under-atlassed pentads, providing data not only for SABAP2, but also for the SKA management team which hopes to establish a nature reserve in the SKA area. (See page 8.)

Many members will know Jessie Walton as a brilliant bird photographer and the creator of the beautiful gardens and wetlands on her farm in Elgin, where several most successful CBC outings have taken place. But did you know that she is also a champion of injured birds, especially raptors? In this issue Jessie’s friend, Jennifer Lean, pays tribute to Jessie’s caring nature, describing how she skilfully saves, rehabilitates, and even befriends injured and needy birds. (See page 24.)

And then we have “Mystery Buzzards”, Chukar Partridges, Diederik Cuckoos, Cape Rockjumpers … and more. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue of Promerops. Without your contributions there would be no magazine! It is my hope that your interesting articles will inspire others to write up their birding experiences and share them with the club in Promerops.

Fiona Jones

Promerops Awards 2019

This year the Cape Bird Club has honoured five of its members with Promerops Awards for long service, excellent work, and dedication to the club. The 2019 recipients of the delightful little sugarbird water dish award are:

Merle Chalton    Mel Tripp
Paul & Cathy Jenkins    Fiona Jones

Congratulations!

(Tributes to these members appear at the end of the Chairman’s AGM report on p.17)
Welcome to our new members

We are delighted to welcome these new members of the Cape Bird Club …

Rosanne de Klerk, Newlands
Janine Smith, Costa da Gama
Julia & Firdhose Coovadia, and Imraan, Hana, and Zachariah Coovadia, Bishopscourt
Anthony Clay, Zeekoevlei
Lisa Bradley, Observatory
Rein Buyze and Oren and Fynn Buyze, Lakeside
Donald & Judy Scott, Constantia
Sharon Williams and Ken Urquhart, Hout Bay
Christopher Every, Little Mowbray
Chris & Barbara Cory, Bishopscourt
David & Sharon Riley, Milnerton
Janet Aird, Westlake
Sally Bailey, Noordhoek
Edward & Sharon Dowling, Constantia
Christina Geddes-Elderkin, Rondebosch
Margaret Hackett, Kirstenhof
Tish Haynes, Mowbray
Sarah Heeger, Claremont
Pam Jearey, Muizenberg
Lolly Leonard, Harfield Village

And a warm welcome back to …

Delene & Danie van Dyk, Devil’s Peak
Bas Kothuis, Somerset West
Sureth & Cliff Dorse, Kirstenhof

We look forward to seeing you at our evening meetings where you can enjoy illustrated talks by experts on a variety of birding and related topics, and afterwards, stay for tea or coffee and biscuits and get to know your fellow members. We also have regular field outings where you can visit new places, see new birds, and make new friends. Check the CBC Programme at the end of the magazine for more details.

Thank you for your donations!

Our grateful thanks go to the following members for their generous donations: Mr FJ Joubert, Miss PJ Dichmont, Mr M Bester, Dr JA Davey, Ms Diana Callear, Ms CD Leslie, Mr & Mrs JM Brown, Mrs MM van der Spuy, Mr & Mrs D van Dyk, Mr B Kothuis, Mrs MA Hoole, Dr PJ Louw, Miss PA Beeton, Mr J Schlebusch, Mrs & Mr JM Mortensen.

Your donations are very much appreciated and will be put to good use!

You can donate to the CBC …

… either when you renew your subscription with BLSA, or by donating directly to the CBC by EFT or direct deposit into the Cape Bird Club account: Nedbank, Claremont, Branch Code 104609, Account No. 1046380400.
The House Crow is back!

Some years ago the Cape Bird Club, together with Cape Nature and the City of Cape Town’s Invasive Species Unit, was involved in an attempt to locally eradicate the House Crow (Corvus splendens) – an invasive alien species with a reputation for causing considerable damage in a number of countries. A native of the Indian subcontinent, the House Crow has invaded eastern and southern Africa by hitching rides on ships sailing between the continents. The House Crow is an aggressive and opportunistic feeder and is known to eat the eggs and nestlings of indigenous birds as well as amphibians, reptiles, small birds, and small mammals.

Since the launch of the eradication programme in 2009, the population of House Crows in our area has been considerably reduced, but the species has not been totally eradicated. The CBC Conservation Committee has lately been receiving reports of the species returning to a number of sites ranging from Epping to Plumstead.

Club members are asked to be on the lookout for these birds, and to send any sightings, including numbers of birds, location, and date, to conservation@capebirdclub.org.za.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Promerops is your magazine - written by CBC members, for CBC members.

Contributions are invited in English or Afrikaans on birding news and views, sightings, observations, birdwatching, and projects, particularly in, but not confined to, the southwestern Cape.

English bird names should be those listed in the latest BLSA Checklist of Birds and Afrikaans names should be those listed in the latest BLSA Voëllys, both of which are available online at www.birdlife.org.za/publications/checklists.

Please send your contributions to promerops@capebirdclub.org.za by 10 September 2019.

July 2019
Help needed for new CWAC counts!

The land around the Edith Stephens Nature Reserve in Philippi is an important focus area for the CBC Conservation Committee. The committee was previously involved in the rehabilitation of the old Consol Glass sand mining site, and another major rehabilitation project is now being planned for the area. Gerhard Bothma, who has been leading bird counts at the Edith Stephens Nature Reserve, is initiating a new CWAC count nearby, at a site in the vicinity of the Consol Glass head office. He will also be establishing a CWAC at the Symphony Way Nature Reserve near the Cape Town International Airport.

Please volunteer for these CWACS!

Cape Bird Club members are urged to come on board to help Gerhard with these counts. Big industry is encroaching on this area, which, for 60 years has been an important birding area for our club, and bird population data are required to inform rehabilitation processes going forward.

Gerhard has set aside 8 August 2019 and 14 November 2019 for CWACs at Consol Glass. Please contact him if you can help. Tel. 074 320 0813 or email bb13ca@gmail.com.

Did YOU forget to renew your club membership?

If you did, you could miss out on your copies of African Birdlife and Promerops. So don’t delay!

Renewing your membership: Invoices are sent out by email (or by post if you do not have email), and you are encouraged to make your renewal payment by EFT or direct bank deposit to BirdLife South Africa, Account No. 620 6750 6281, FNB, Randburg, Branch Code 25 40 05. Please use your membership number as reference.

Address changes: If you change your home address or your email address, please inform BLSA at membership@birdlife.org.za, and Linda at membership@capebirdclub.org.za.

Seniors ... from the year you turn 60, you qualify for reduced CBC and BLSA members’ rates. Be sure to inform BLSA if you qualify!

Stumped for a gift for someone special?

Why not give fun, friendship, excitement, new knowledge, and outdoor enjoyment?

Give a gift subscription to the Cape Bird Club that will bring delight for the whole year!

Visit the Cape Bird Club website for more details: www.capebirdclub.org.za

Jeni Steyn’s cards

Those who come to the monthly Thursday evening talks may have noticed the beautiful cards on sale before the talk and during tea time. Some are made with real feathers (from South African and Australian birds); others are 3D ‘cut-outs’ - all made with love and artistic flair! These lovely cards are made by Jeni Steyn, and what you may not know is that Jeni donates R5 from the sale of every card to the Cape Bird Club to help fund our magazine Promerops.

Thank you so much Jeni.

Penguin photo by David Nunn (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)
“What has he been drinking?” I hear you mutter ... no, honestly, nothing. Alcohol was strictly forbidden, as were cell phones, iPads, other electronic devices AND petrol driven vehicles!

I joined an atlassing bash at the S.K.A. (Square Kilometre Array) in the remote Northern Cape, northwest of Carnarvon. Twenty-two experienced atlassers from various parts of the country spent five days gathering valuable data for SABAP2 on the avifauna at the site of the world’s most advanced radio telescope. But not just for SABAP2. The S.K.A. management needs baseline data on bird species (and eventually other fauna) as they plan to make the area a nature reserve, possibly managed by SANParks.

I went with my birding mate Simon Fogarty and we invited a young club member, Joel Radue. Joel is just 17, a passionate birder with a desire to become a bird guide. Being home schooled, he was able to bunk off and convince his teachers (his mum and dad) that this would be a better opportunity to advance his career aspirations than studying for matric Afrikaans. And besides, in these remote farming areas Afrikaans is the lingua franca. Why he could even translate for Simon and me – two dyed-in-the-wool “Engelsmanne”!

In the end Joel actually atlassed with Alan Collett and not with us.

Etienne Marais organised the bash. His wife, Alice Pienaar-Marais, is the manager of Land and Institutional Governance as well as the security manager at S.K.A. She pulled all the strings and made everything possible. She even fixed the failed plumbing one night!

But don’t mention “land acquisition” in the kroeg in Williston or Carnarvon on a Saturday night. Many farmers are still not happy about the large tracts of land purchased for this huge project (see map with spiral arms stretching hundreds of kilometres). However, this was not land-grab stuff without compensation. Alice’s job at the outset was chief negotiator to buy at agreed prices.

Once you have been in these areas, you wonder why anyone would want to “farm” these harsh, inhospitable places. Drought-ravaged for almost

10 years, some say in living memory, most farms are deserted with just a handful of tough, determined souls waiting and praying for rain. During the three full days Simon and I atlassed away from the camp, we only saw five people, and two of those were children.

Birds fare better than humans, as many have evolved and adapted to survive in these arid areas, until climate change that is! Sclater’s Lark is just one example.

Wind-pumps across the desolate landscape continue, unattended, diligently doing their job, giving a life-line to birds and beasts alike. These are of course a magnet for birds. Discovering one in your pentad significantly pushes up the species count. Stefan Theron and Alan Lee cracked 59 species in a pentad that had five working wind-pumps. Most pentads average 25 to 30 species.

This is lark-land. Of the 14 species of larks and finch-larks occurring here, all were seen by someone at some stage. Etienne even had Stark’s and Sclater’s on his first day! Sabota Lark here is the heavy-billed subspecies, referred to by some as Bradfield’s Lark.

On this trip I was introduced to “relay atlassing”. Teams are usually 2 people and some bright spark has come up with this method to almost double the return. One person is dropped off in a pentad and walks! The other drives to the next pentad and after 2 hours returns to hopefully find the walker, thereby doing 2 pentads in the minimum 2 hours required for a pentad.

SARAO*: Images courtesy of the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory
Temperatures ratcheted up to the high 30s, low 40s after 11am, and some actually walk in this!!! Simon and I preferred the standard method: drive, stop, get out, look, listen, get back in the vehicle, drive on … yes with the aircon on.

Also, birds are not daft. Anything above 35 Celsius and they are in the deepest shade they can find, under one of the scraggy drie-doring shrubs that dominate most of the habitat, conserving energy and body condition. Early mornings and late afternoons are the best times in these environments.

On the Friday we knocked off at lunchtime – a tour of the project had been organised by Alice. We all arrived at a large white shed, no windows and a few doors. After a short briefing we entered and descended – almost everything here is underground. Three massive immaculate diesel engines are on stand-by; one automatically starts up in 2 seconds should the power supply from Eskom go down. Well we all know about that don’t we? Power cannot be lost to the nerve centre, the banks of super computers and other highly sophisticated stuff collecting data from each radio telescope. The science and technology is mind-bending.

Then outside into the core area, where all the futuristic radio telescopes are located. First we visited KAT 7, then MeerKAT, then HERA (you can read up on this surprisingly low-tech one). Oh, and if you think of those cute little mammals that live in the Kalahari when you read MeerKAT, think again. Translate “MeerKAT” into English … you get “More KAT”!

Standing in the shadow and shade of radio telescope 47 (there are 64 in the MeerKAT array, all connected by fibre optics which make this array work as a single radio telescope), Alice enlightened us, in layman’s terms, about “seeing with radio eyes”. She knows quite a lot about the science too! How the universe began, black holes, dark matter, distant galaxies, the big bang and even E.T. are being “looked for”… well he did go home didn’t he?

S.K.A. is only starting construction later this year, though one of the new dishes was already taking shape. When finished, it will have 197 antenna dishes spread across this huge area.

While we stood there, I saw a Lark-like Bunting perched on one of the dishes. It would have made a great photo, but cameras are banned, lest the small radio waves emitted by the micro-processors in digital cameras interfere with the sensitive radio wave technology. My mind wandered … what if this bird showed up among some astrophysicist’s data at mission control deep in the bowels of the shed, suggesting life forms on some distant galaxy?

We got two punctures on Simon’s vehicle. Some vehicles just had one. Going out into these remote areas without a spare and no cell phone communication might be risky … it was!

Alice to the rescue … we were given a 2-way radio to use in an emergency. “Come in Lima 1.
Come in Lima 1. Over.” – me practising. Thankfully this was not needed. Giving directions to find us, had we had problems, would have been a challenge, travelling across those many remote tracks, farms, and fence lines. We did have a GPS though.

Here are the stats: In total, the group completed cards for 96 different pentads, of which 47 were virgins (had no prior coverage), and 33 pentads had only one card. The species list (not final) is approximately 155. The final tally of full protocol cards was 160 (within the area designated for the S.K.A. Bash). What this will reflect, and what SABAP2 is all about, is the changes in range for some species, either contracting or expanding, by laying down a base-line for an area where very little monitoring of species has been done previously.

(You may have noticed I prefer to write S.K.A. rather than SKA, just to avoid confusion. SKA is a genre of music, a kind of cross-over between Blue Beat and Reggae that originated in Jamaica in the late 1950s with artists such as Prince Buster, Desmond Dekker, The Ethiopians etc. It enjoyed a revival in the 1970s courtesy of the British band, Madness ... but you knew that didn’t you?)

Mel Tripp

Mystery buzzard – creating a buzz!

On 22 October 1960 I found a buzzard’s nest in Constantia on the extensive property known as Zonnestraal adjacent to the Wynberg Hospital. It was situated at a height of 15 metres in an enormous stone pine growing in the midst of a thick grove of poplar trees.

Next day my friend Joe Brooks and I began our difficult ascent to the nest, Joe leading the way. About half way up we encountered a swarm of angry wild bees and were forced to beat a very hasty retreat, Joe having been stung a number of times. Nothing daunted, we returned the next day, dressed more appropriately for an ascent of Everest than for a climb up a pine tree. We were soon covered in bees, but managed to reach the nest and photograph and measure the three eggs.

A friend took the accompanying photograph of us prior to our ascent and I found it recently in an album of my early bird pictures. It brought back vivid memories of the event which I briefly recorded in the CBC News Letter No. 61 in April 1961, edited by Rudolf Schmidt, Otto Schmidt’s father.

Peter and Joe – dressed for the ascent and the onslaught of angry bees!

So why ‘Mystery Buzzard’? At the time, Forest Buzzards (known then as Mountain Buzzards) were not known to occur on the Cape Peninsula – so what could it be? Possibly a breeding Steppe Buzzard, which seemed unlikely, or the first-encountered nest of a Forest Buzzard? Although we returned several times, the buzzards were extremely wary and no photographs were possible (this was long before the digital era). My own feeling is that it was a Forest Buzzard, now known to breed on the Cape Peninsula. However, as I have written in a footnote to Jennifer Lean’s account in this issue (see page 26) the situation with our local Forest/Steppe Buzzards is extremely complex and the enigma remains to be solved.

Peter Steyn

The mystery buzzard’s nest – recorded on film in stressful circumstances
For reasons not totally understood, but probably related to predation and parasite pressures, nearly all introductions of foreign gamebirds have fortunately been unsuccessful in southern Africa. Had these introductions been successful, there may have been dangerous consequences, such as the spread of new infectious diseases and detrimental ecological competition with indigenous gamebirds.

There are numerous accounts of attempts to introduce foreign gamebirds to South Africa, from the Bobwhite Quails to the Common (Ring-necked) Pheasants, all without success. Tales are recorded of the odd lingering population, occasional breeding success, and stray individuals observed in strange localities, but no established wild populations are known.

However, one exception is the Chukar Partridge, which is closely related to the Rock, Przevalski’s, and Philby’s Partridges. All four species live on bare stony slopes sparsely covered with short grass and low shrubs. They hybridize readily with each other where one or the other is introduced. There are 16 subspecies of Chukar Partridges which occur from Greece and Turkey down to Israel in the eastern Mediterranean, across south-central Asia to Mongolia and northern China in the east. Chukars have been introduced to the UK, USA, Canada, Mexico, and New Zealand, in many cases to provide humans with sporting wingshooting quarry.

In April 1964, customs officials in Cape Town harbour confiscated six Chukar Partridges of unrecorded sex which were destined for a life as cage birds, and ‘banished’ them to Robben Island. A genetic investigation into the origin of these six Chukars in the 1990s suggested that they probably came from somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, possibly Turkey. This seed population flourished on Robben Island, and today a few hundred Chukar Partridges enjoy the privilege of living on the island, along with Helmeted Guineafowls and Cape Spurfowls, most likely in the case of the Chukars because the island is free of blood parasites which usually infect the gamebird populations on the mainland.

The Common Peafowl or Indian Peacock, apparently introduced to southern Africa as an ornamental garden bird as recently as in 1968, has also established feral populations on Robben Island and in urban Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and East London, but only the Robben Island population is considered truly self-sustaining. In their native country, India, they occupy open forests, orchards, and other cultivated areas near villages, generally preferring deciduous forests near streams. They roost overnight high in trees but will also use large buildings and electricity pylons as roost sites. Their tolerance of humans and affinity to live in close proximity of human dwellings lends them to suburban life where their size also means that they are relatively immune to predation by domestic cats. However, dogs and large birds of prey tend to keep most colonising populations in check.

Rob Little
FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology

* This plate from Game Birds of Southern Africa is reproduced here with the permission of Struik Nature, Penguin Random House SA.
Chairman’s Report
April 2018 – March 2019

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Cape Bird Club, our 71st AGM.

Last year’s AGM, many of you will remember, marked our 70th anniversary as a bird club. It should have been a joyful and celebratory occasion, but instead was marred by a cloud over our heads, as we had just discovered that we had lost an enormous amount of money out of our investment account through internet fraud. In fact it was an awful evening but this committee, which was unanimously re-elected, felt so supported by the members of the club. I am sure you are all aware that those stolen funds were recovered in full and our various projects that were put on hold for a couple of months were able to resume as before.

The Cape Bird Club is a very large club – in December the number of members recorded was 755 (including family members) – which is gratifying – but are we doing enough?

On our website we state: “This is a friendly and informal club which welcomes young and old who wish to share their appreciation, understanding, and knowledge of birds.” But are we reaching both young and old (and those in between)? The other day I was asked about what activities we could offer a twelve-year-old girl – and on replying, I realised that the answer was “not many”. We welcome children at outings and meetings but these activities remain essentially adult! We are reaching out to children via the annual Family Camp, and to specific Cape Flats school groups – but what about a regular offering to the twenty or so children who are currently part of the club in their own right? I wish we could resurrect the Junior Bird Club which was run by Heather Howell until a few years ago – but that faltered as children had to rely on parents for transport, and their lives were overtaken by school activities. We also need someone younger to lead something like this. Any ideas or volunteers in this direction would be most welcome! I also question how welcoming are we to new members when they first arrive?

Constitutional Objectives

The objectives of the CBC, as stated in our Constitution, are “to promote the enjoyment, understanding, study, and conservation of birds and their environments, primarily in the geographical regions of the Cape Peninsula and the surrounding western Cape areas.” ARE we doing what we are meant to do? I will go through these objectives trying to place our club activities under specific headings, always remembering that the objectives are all linked – enjoyment leads to learning, which generates knowledge, which in turn leads to conservation.

Objective 1 – To promote the enjoyment of birds

Our evening meetings certainly do this – but I am going to say more about those in the next section on learning.

Club Outings

Our outings are fun. They have averaged three in most months this past year and have taken us to many different venues. My perception is that the numbers of people attending outings have grown in the last year; regularly 22 or more join the mid-week outings that used to have only about 12 participants. And Sunday outings can easily have 30 - 40 participants – so many we are now thinking that we need to have two or three leaders at each outing. Even distant outings such as last month’s “Farewell the Waders” outing at Langebaan are well attended. We owe this to several factors – better advertising perhaps, but even more importantly, to our outing leaders!

So many thanks to: Gillian Barnes, Merle Chalton, Felicity Ellmore, Simon Fogarty, Vernon
Head, Heather Howell, Margaret Maciver, John Magner, Marilyn Metcalf, Graham Pringle, Otto Schmidt, Peter Steyn, Mel Tripp, Brian Vanderwalt, Vince Ward, and Dave Whitelaw. They are so willing to organise outing venues and share their expertise! They do a lot of ‘homework’ to ensure the success of the outing, and very often also end up writing the trip report for the newsletter, website, or *Promerops*.

I must also thank Daryl and Lynette de Beer who have very kindly offered to take on the organisation of the Outings Programme. This takes a huge load off me – and I am sure they will come up with new and different ideas for outings, and for running this important portfolio. And while not strictly part of the Outings portfolio, I would like to thank Linda Hibbin and her team, many of whom are Cape Bird Club members, for the Kirstenbosch bird walks and their promotion of bird watching.

**CBC Camps**

Camps are a major source of enjoyment and learning. Gillian Barnes arranged four camps last year, and has done so with quiet efficiency. Thank you, Gillian.

Mel Tripp and Simon Fogarty led the first two camps – the Breede River Camp in May, which saw the 30 participants staying at Breede River Lodge (the smartest accommodation I have experienced on a CBC camp!), and then the August camp held in the Tanqua Karoo National Park, with the 22 participants staying in the Guesthouse complex. Many got to see the Double-banded Courser, but the “bird” of the camp was the aardvark that kept us all entertained for about fifteen minutes before it disappeared into its burrow – a lifer for many! Thank you to Mel and Simon for their generous and exciting leadership.

The Family Camp in September, with 5 families including 10 children participating, presented huge opportunities for fun and learning. While we would love to continue with Family Camps, we have found that a small group of CBC members (mostly committee) are stretching themselves very thinly with youth projects in the absence of a Youth Co-ordinator. Unless we get more assistance from a wider range of people, this camp may not happen in 2019. This is a great pity as we have had an influx of children joining the club with their parents. The Floreat Camp in October was, for some of the 20 participants, the first time they had been out of Cape Town and they learned so much from the various birding and non-birding activities planned for them. They did not want the fun to stop! Thank you to the entire team who made possible either one or both youth camps.

**The annual Quiz**

Our participative quiz and end-of-year party in December last year, with Mike Buckham again being the quizmaster and asking some very challenging questions, was fun. I think people enjoy this evening because of learning opportunities and also meeting friends and even fellow-members they have not met before (inevitable in so large a club). Thank you, Mike and committee and helpers for setting up the hall and organising the evening.

**Objective 2 – To promote the understanding and study of birds**

In this last year I believe we have very well fulfilled this objective.

**Evening Meetings**

Our monthly evening meetings, a very rich part of what we offer, have been informative, enter—
taining, thought-provoking, and educational. We have had a wonderful array of speakers, starting with that amazingly inspiring 70th anniversary lecture by Dr Ian McCallum entitled “Hope is a thing with feathers”. We travelled to Uganda and Thailand as Johan Schlebusch and Joy Fish recounted their experiences on the last two international CBC camps. Dr John Fincham took us to four neighbouring countries to look at birds there. Prof Peter Ryan brought us all down to earth with his talk on plastic pollution in our oceans. (Is there anyone who attended that talk who doesn’t now think twice about plastics use?) Dr Tony Williams entertained us with his presentation on reptiles as predators of birds. Two talks covered conservation topics – Dr Mark Brown’s presentation on the Nature’s Valley Trust’s conservation programme to secure the future of the African Black Oystercatcher and the White-fronted Plover, and then Robin Colyn shared with us the excitement of, and the technology behind the discovery that the White-winged Flufftail does breed in Mpumalanga at Middelpunt. Then Matthew Syphus entertained us with his and his wife, Mary-Anne’s observations of Cape clawless otters in the South Peninsula.

Thank you to all our guest speakers! We truly appreciate the hours you spent preparing, and your generosity in sharing your knowledge and experiences with us. And we must not forget to thank the refreshments team (organised by Sylvia Ledgard) who provide refreshments after our evening meetings, giving us the opportunity to chat and share over a cup of coffee.

Courses

Major sources of learning have been the three courses held since the last AGM. In May Alan Lee enthralled us with his fantastic course on Endemism in the Fynbos. The next was the Beginners’ Course run over three Saturdays and one Sunday in September – run superbly, as always, by Heather Howell, and drawing many new members into the club. In October Faansie Peacock, an excellent teacher, ran a very entertaining and informative Bushveld Birding course. Many thanks to Johan Schlebusch, his Courses Committee, and the refreshments team for organising these well attended courses so efficiently!

Patrick Riley, our audio-visual co-ordinator, adds tremendous value to our evening meetings and courses by ensuring that we always have good quality visuals and sound. It is thanks to him that this aspect of our educational offerings runs as smoothly as it does.

Floreat Primary School Bird Club

I have already mentioned the two youth camps but would like to say more about the Floreat Educational Outreach Programme. This project at the Floreat Primary School in Steenberg included classroom and local birding activities, and culminated with a wonderful camp at the West Coast National Park.

This year, 2019, it took a while to get going again but there have already been a classroom session and an outing to Rondevlei. Johan will be talking later about this outreach project and its expansion, but I want to pay tribute to our “champion” teacher at Floreat Primary, Kristi Jooste. Without her infectious enthusiasm, and indirectly the support of her principal and colleagues, we certainly could not have achieved what we have thus far.

Many thanks also to the CBC members who have made our educational outreach initiatives possible – Johan Schlebusch, Priscilla Beeton, Gillian Barnes, Brian Vanderwalt, Melodie Hertslet, Joy Fish, and others who have joined us for the field trips.

Birdathon

This event is an important part of the CBC’s calendar with Dave Whitelaw masterminding our involvement. In 2018, the Birdathon was held much later in the year than usual – in October – and we almost blew away on the day! The wind
was so strong that Disaster Management moved the exhibitions and exhibitors into the old environmental education building just at the entrance to the sewage works – I am not sure it was any safer there with the corrugated iron roof sheets flapping in the wind! Despite the adverse conditions, the event was relatively well attended, and the Committee thanks all CBC members who assisted in any way.

Education is part of conservation – as knowledge leads to action and so this brings us to...

**Objective 3 - To promote the conservation of birds and their environment.**

Dave Whitelaw will not be delivering a separate Conservation Report this evening, but I will mention a couple of aspects here. There will be a full conservation report in the July issue of *Promerops* in which Dave will cover in more detail the conservation work done under the auspices of Cape Bird Club. (See page 20.)

**Strandfontein** remains an important focus of the Cape Bird Club’s conservation efforts. The construction part of the TMAK (Terns, Martins and Kingfishers) project to facilitate the breeding of these birds, was completed during this year, with Joy Fish as our project manager. NCC Environmental Services successfully built two breeding walls, one near the Julie te Groen Education Centre and the other near to the tern roost picnic area. We originally planned three – but the canal on the west side of the pans dried up completely in the drought so we decided to start with just two and then assess their success before proceeding with a third. The explanatory signage has drawn attention to the project, and some birders have observed martin activity at the banks, but so far no attempts at nest building. We must await next year’s breeding season to assess its success.

Anyone who has visited Strandfontein knows the enormous challenges facing this Important Birding Area (IBA). The first thing that strikes one is how dry the pans are because of a drastic reduction in water flow to the sewage works. Sadly, it also means that the habitat for wading birds is being altered. The next thing one notices is the spread of *Typha* bulrushes, especially on Pans 1 and 2. Apparently, the only effective control method is removal of the rhizomes and currently there is simply no heavy machinery available to do this. Then there is the overwhelming water hyacinth problem, however Dave reports that there’s a realistic chance that we may be able to eliminate this invasive weed thanks to the efforts of Prof. Julie Coetzee of Rhodes University, who has suggested the introduction of *Megamelus*, a parasite of this plant. There is an excellent article in the March edition of *Promerops* about this. There has also been some mechanical removal of water hyacinth by the conservation manager, Rolivuyo, and the Cape Bird Club has given him monetary assistance to repair the boat so that this work can continue.

Many thanks to the Conservation Committee and others, both members and non-members, who have assisted with the various conservation issues in which the Cape Bird Club is involved.

The CBC also made a significant donation to the West Coast National Park - to go towards the improvement and maintenance of the hides.

**Links**

Our links continue with lingcungcu, the Stepping Stones Sunbirds in Gardens Project, and Ceinwen Smith as well as with Communitree. Some of our members have successfully grown proteas and other indigenous plants in their
gardens and on their balconies. We need to pick up on this again and I would like to encourage far more members to get involved in this project where the seedlings are nurtured in your own home and then planted in green areas by the Communitree team.

Many of our members are regularly involved in citizen science activities – we are proud of the work they do for conservation and thank them for holding the name of the Cape Bird Club high. Regular counts, listed in *Promerops* (with contact telephone numbers), are held at Strandfontein, Wildevoëlvlei, Paarl Bird Sanctuary, Athlone Wastewater Treatment Works, Zandvlei, Kirstenbosch, and Rietvlei. The Zandvlei hacking group meets regularly, and there is also the six monthly CAR count of large terrestrial birds seen from cars. All counts are done in teams – and teams are always looking for new people to assist. In Dave’s report you will see that there are more counts starting at other sewage works around Cape Town and so even more volunteers are needed.

Other citizen scientists include our many atlassers who submit their sightings to SABAP2 and other website communities like iNaturalist. (Let me take this opportunity to strongly encourage all of you to get involved with the City Nature Challenge. Please register.)

Some of our members volunteer at SANCCOB and have been assisting with the Lesser Flamingo crisis. The club made monetary donations to both SANCCOB and World of Birds to help them buy much needed equipment and supplies. There was also a donation by our members of listed items they needed. Sadly, all has not been plain sailing for these flamingo chicks, and many have died. Many of you will have received the pleas of Mark Anderson for more donations as they fear that over 5000 more chicks may have to be rescued from Kamfers Dam which is drying up.

**Communications**

To ensure our three objectives are attainable our activities must be advertised and promoted – and here we come to our excellent communications team. I believe we are very, very fortunate in the Cape Bird Club to have such excellent communications at hand. Whichever medium members choose to utilise, they can be fairly sure of being kept abreast of what is happening in the club.

Our thanks go to Fiona Jones, our *Promerops* editor, and her team – Simon Fogarty compiling the rarities list, Dennis Randell looking after the advertising, Daryl and Lynette de Beer for the Outings programme, Priscilla Beeton for the Guest Speakers programme, Jo Hobbs for the Counts & Hacks programme and liaison with the mailing house and Linda Merrett who prepares the labelled envelopes. And of course, many thanks to those who take time to write articles to be included.

The team that works on our website can be very proud – Gillian Barnes, Mel Tripp, Otto Schmidt, Cheryl Leslie, and Gavin Lawson. The stats show that our website was accessed over 13000 times in 2018, on average about 40 per day. Although the stats are apparently not very accurate, they do give us an idea of how much our website is being consulted.

Thanks are also due to Cheryl Leslie, who produces the e-newsletter. Many members still prefer to use the printed medium of the club magazine, but more and more are referring to the e-newsletter for up-to-date information and news. Cheryl is also our Facebook page administrator. The CBC Facebook page has 2414 members, many of whom share their beautiful photographs on the page. I wonder how many of you followed the delightful, almost daily, photographic diary of Gerald(ine), the baby owl on Noordhoek Common through Rob Mousley’s photographs and captions. We love it that non-members choose to share their birding highlights on our Facebook page. And Facebook is an excellent way to advertise CBC activities to members and non-members!

Thank you also to the photographers out there who so willingly share their photographs on the website, in *Promerops*, or the e-newsletter, enhancing trip reports and other items.

Linda Johnston arranges advertising of our events in the local community newspapers and other media. Quite a few people attending evening meetings or outings have told us they knew about it because of an advertisement in the newspaper! Thank you, Linda!
The Committee

I want to thank the members of the main committee who have been such fun to work with and who are so willing to take on more and more: Johan, Joy, Barbara, Gillian, Dave, Linda and Cheryl. Melodie Hertslet served for some months on the committee and assisted in the Youth Portfolio but resigned because of work and other commitments. I could go on and on about this wonderful team – but you need just to look at the reports of the last 3 years where I have sung my praises for them. To you, members of the committee, I extend my huge thanks and tell you again how much we treasure what you do to keep the Club running so smoothly!

I also want to thank Mary Debrick, who with such commitment looks after the day-to-day accounts and payments. Despite the fact that she and Terry have moved to Somerset West, she has agreed to continue!

And a final very big thank you to the many members who give so willingly of their time, talents and knowledge to ensure that this club runs more or less like clockwork. You will have noticed that the same names are coming up over and over. We always need new and more volunteers to give fresh life and blood to the club. Please volunteer YOUR skills and don’t wait to be approached. Rest assured – volunteering to help somewhere does not mean you have to serve on the committee!

**Promerops Awards**

This year we are honouring five of our members with Promerops Awards (one is a joint award), and I invite Peter Steyn our Honorary President to hand over the awards.

**PAUL AND CATHY JENKINS**

In December 2018 Paul and Cathy resigned from running the Sales Table after six years. In 2012 they volunteered to take over the Memorabilia Table, until then run by Simon Fogarty after it was set up in 1998 for the 50th anniversary celebrations. A year or two later, when the Frylincks retired, they amalgamated the Sales and Memorabilia tables. Second-hand books and home-made greetings cards were added to the goods for sale. If an especially suitable book came along Paul and Cathy would run a raffle, often raising more than the book could have been sold for. I am sure that any of you who were ever approached by Paul or Cathy to buy a raffle ticket will remember how “persuasive” they were in getting you to part with some money in aid of club funds. Over the six years they raised more than R24 000 for the club coffers! We thank them for their huge efforts and commitment to the club. It took a lot of effort sorting through second-hand books and goods, pricing them and then carting them backwards and forwards to the evening meetings. They are well-deserving of this award for their willingness to provide a service to the club that many enjoyed.

**MERLE CHALTON**

For many she is the “face” of the Cape Bird Club, especially since she took over the running of the Beginners’ Outings at Rondevlei in 2011. She is a quiet, friendly, and warm person, and an excellent and patient teacher. We asked several members for some input and Daryl and Lynette de Beer wrote this creative citation:

“People such as Merle are, and always will be, the greatest asset of the Bird Club. The success of the monthly Rondevlei outings is dependent on having a capable and devoted leader such as Merle who draws a large crowd of ‘newbies’ and experienced birders each month.

We began our visits to Rondevlei about three years ago as ‘newbie’ birders and have continued attending the monthly Saturday outing. Under Merle’s tutelage our knowledge of birds has grown greatly as she does not stint on sharing her valuable tips, wide reading and general knowledge of birds. Her warm welcome each month and her assurances that “there are no stupid questions” make “newbies” feel immediately comfortable and they are quickly taken under her wing and motivated by her enthusiasm.

Merle has an eagle eye and one of her many talents is the easy recognition of the SMSS (Swallows, Martins, and Swifts). She has a unique way of remembering each one and patiently explains (and re-explains each month!) the difference in wing shape, size, colouring and the
flight pattern of each. She is immensely proud as a peacock and complimentary of her fledgling birders when they recognize a species. And her keen listening skills and tips have taught many how to recognize and identify the calls of the two different warblers present at the reserve. Our birding experience has been greatly enriched by our visits to Rondevlei with Merle (and Derek, her dedicated scribe and wingman). Thank you, Merle.”

**FIONA JONES**

Fiona stepped in as editor of *Promerops* in 2015, taking over from Jo Hobbs and Otto Schmidt who had been doing the job for the previous 17 years. In her first editorial she said she was stepping into their “big shoes” with trepidation, and that she was somewhat daunted by the lofty standards they had set. Fiona need not have worried. From her very first edition in March/April 2015 she has maintained the same high standards in the 13 issues published since then. *Promerops* has continued to flourish. For many it is still the primary source of communication from the club, and for those who live far away or who are unable to access the Internet it is an important link.

Fiona and her husband had been members of the club for a long time, but largely inactive. She saw the advertisement in *Promerops* calling for a new editor and decided to apply because she wanted something relevant and worthwhile to do in her retirement! She had been the academic reference librarian in the Science and Engineering Library at UCT Libraries for 34 years. However, full retirement for her has still not happened – she keeps being called back to UCT each year by the Engineering Faculty and the Research Office, to collate and record the faculty’s research publications. So, she has produced *Promerops* while continuing to work at UCT, albeit part-time.

Fiona is quiet, but forceful. She knows exactly what she wants in the magazine and ensures that she gets it. She is very organised and her work is painstaking and precise, but at the same time very creative and artistic. Jo Hobbs tells me that as part of her application to be editor of *Promerops* she sent examples of newsletters and pamphlets that she had created using desktop publishing. With *Promerops* she has continued to put her desktop publishing skills into practice, designing the layout of the magazine herself before sending it to the printers.

Fiona, you tell us you LOVE being editor of *Promerops*. WE LOVE YOU being editor of *Promerops* and producing for us an interesting and highly readable magazine.

**MEL TRIPP**

Mel Tripp is one of our Cape Bird Club characters, one of those people that most members of the club are a little in awe of – incredibly knowledgeable and, although he calls a spade a spade, also helpful and kind. He has excellent teaching skills which many beginner birders (and even not-so-beginner birders) can confirm if they have been lucky enough to go on an outing or camp with him.

Since arriving in Cape Town in about 1982 and joining the Cape Bird Club, he has played a huge role as a leader and he has done a tremendous amount for the Cape Bird Club. He was on the committee for many years, including serving as vice-chairman for 6 years. Even after resigning from the main committee, he continued to serve on smaller sub-committees such as the 50th Anniversary Committee, the Courses Committee and others. He has helped with the new website and is responsible for arguably the most used part of the website where top birding venues in the Western Cape are described. (This of course follows on from the book he co-compiled in 1995 - *Guide to the Birds of the South Western Cape*, now out of print.)

Simon Fogarty summed up the qualities of Mel Tripp as follows:

“Apart from his organizational skills, he has a great work ethic and I think his career in the advertising industry and administering the AAA School of Advertising, has enhanced his exceptional observation skills and attention to detail, which, coupled with his willingness to research and plan thoroughly, almost guarantees success, whether for a club camp he’s leading, a bird talk/presentation, a bird quiz, a birding holiday, an article for *Promerops* or anything else he embarks on.

He’s an exceptional birder, with a keen sense of humour and a willingness to share his birding knowledge with birders of all levels and always
with attention to detail. He loves the waders and LBJ’s and helps so many others on the path to identifying and enjoying them. Birding with Mel on an outing or a longer trip is always memorable.

Mel has a passion for birds and their conservation and apart from doing more than his share of work for the CBC, he has been involved for many years in CWAC counts, CAR counts, atlassing and atlas bashes. He is always prepared to promote and advance the CBC, birding, and bird conservation.”

Mel not only promotes the CBC, but works incredibly hard for BirdLife South Africa too. He is senior marketing advisor on the National Marketing Committee and is directly responsible for many of the innovative advertising ideas for BLSA. He received a prestigious Owl Award in 2017 for his outstanding long-term service, selflessness, and dedication over many years to BirdLife South Africa.

Mel, this is a richly deserved award (and probably overdue) from your own club which you have served and supported and continue to do with such dedication. Congratulations.

Priscilla Beeton
Conservation Committee
Chairman’s Report: April 2018 – March 2019

The committee has remained unchanged, consisting of Dave Whitelaw (Chair), Clifford Dorse, Suretha Dorse, Dick Bos, Simon Fogarty, Dieter Oschadleus, Gavin Lawson, and Felicity Ellmore, who continues to do sterling work as the secretary.

We are now represented on four Protected Area Conservation Committees – False Bay Ecopark, Zandvlei Nature Reserve, Rietvlei Nature Reserve, and Dieter has agreed to represent us at the Edith Stephens Wetland Park. These committees have significant influence on the oversight and management of these areas. In addition Kaye Foskett represents us on the advisory body for the Boulders penguin colony.

What follows is a summary of some of our activities.

False Bay Ecopark

This past year has not been a good one for this area. A reduction in water flow to the Strandfontein Sewage Works, combined with the City’s plans to extract water for recycling, has placed a considerable strain on water flow to a number of pans, particularly P1 and P2. This has resulted in their being dry or with greatly reduced water volumes and an alteration in the habitat particularly for wading birds.

The rapidly increasing spread of *Typha* bulrushes has added to the deterioration of the habitat at these two pans. Control of this plant is difficult as the only effective method is removal of the rhizomes and currently there is no heavy machinery available to effect this.

However it’s not all negative. With the arrival of the plant-sucking *Megamelus*, we now have a realistic chance of eliminating the water hyacinth. *Megamelus* is a tiny (and I mean tiny – about 1mm in length) bug which bores into the plant, opening the way for other insects and pathogens to attack the plant. We are indebted to Professor Julie Coetzee of Rhodes University for introducing us to this invaluable bug. Roli and I spend a couple of hours each month wading around the pan, attempting to monitor the effects.

Another positive has been the completion of the breeding banks for terns, martins and kingfishers – or the TMAK project. We await with interest the coming breeding season to see how the martins and hopefully kingfishers respond to the artificial breeding banks that were constructed.

Other Sewage Works

Counts continue at three other sewage works – Athlone, Mitchells Plain, and more recently, Borchers Quarry.

One may wonder why we spend so much time at sewage works, but if you examine the peninsula you’ll find little open water except at sewage works. We are building up relationships with the staff at these works and they are receptive to our plans to improve the habitat. Unfortunately, Mitchells Plain has the disadvantage of lacking heavy machinery to effect alterations to improve habitat.

Gull Colony

We were alerted by a CBC member to the many road deaths of birds at the gull colony along Baden Powell Drive due to the heavy traffic flow along this route. To try and remedy the situation we intend using a three-pronged approach: educating the public; using road signs; and (hopefully) enlisting the help of the Traffic Dept.

Consol Glass

Some years ago Consol ceased to mine sand at its Athlone site. Together with a team from the Ecology Unit at UWC we proposed a rehabilitation programme for the disused mining site. A number of birders under Gerhard Bothma has recently commenced counting the birds there and the results are reasonably positive. Long term counts are important to enable us to assess the site and also to guide our activities at other potential sites.

LIBAS (Locally Important Bird Areas)

This is a concept in which we identify sites which carry important numbers of birds but do not qualify as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The concept has been debated for some time at the Western Cape Birding Forum, and has at last been finalised. We can now start developing this theme, the idea being that should one of these sites be proposed for development we will have evidence that it has conservation importance.
Finally: Some years ago we were involved with the management at the V&A Waterfront regarding the gulls and terns which nested on the buildings. We had proposed a breeding platform but were unable to find a site where it could be erected. The management has now decided to erect it just beyond its major parking area. We trust the birds will enjoy this new facility.

Dave Whitelaw

Springing into action for the Rooi Els Rockjumpers!

Cape Rockjumpers, it can be argued, are the most charismatic of the six “classic” fynbos endemics. They are locally common in the Cape Fold Mountains, ranging south from the northern Cederberg, and east as far as Uitenhage. However, in the mind of most birders, the species is synonymous with two localities: Sir Lowry’s Pass and Rooi Els.

The “older” site at Sir Lowry’s is becoming increasingly unpopular. The site is becoming more unsafe, with a four-lane highway to cross, and requires a not insubstantial amount of bundu-bashing. The “new” site south of Rooi Els, is, by comparison, the more relaxed and easily accessible option for finding the species. The area’s combination of a safe gravel path, vistas over False Bay, and an easily “scan-able” slope, draws a considerable amount of local and international birder traffic. Unfortunately with this popularity, comes temptation.

Recently, there has been a sustained and alarming increase in the number of birders and bird photographers leaving the path and venturing up the slope to get closer to these birds. This has raised concern amongst Rooi Els locals, birders, bird guides, scientists, and the broader conservation community.

Many of the reported instances are minor, consisting largely of birders/photographers wandering a short way up the slope to get a better vantage point. Others are more serious, including an infamous case of a photographer venturing high up the slope, and setting up several speakers to call in breeding adults with food items.

The natural, unfenced nature of the site creates the impression that there is no harm in, or restrictions on, leaving the path. The only appeal to the better nature of visitors comes in the form of the famous sign on the gate. Its language is unfortunately vague, only asking for the birds to be left alone during the breeding season. This creates an impression that the birds are immune from disturbance when they are not breeding, and leaves it to the individual to decide what constitutes disturbance.

So, why all the concern? One might argue that most of the estimated 30,000 – 60,000 rockjumpers never regularly see people, and occur widely in protected areas. Why worry about a mere 20 – 40 birds? The counter-argument is that the Rooi Els rockjumpers are unique in being the only known sea-level population of an otherwise strictly alpine species. They inhabit an equally unique remnant patch of alpine fynbos, which is a hold-over from when sea-levels were substantially lower during the last Ice Age. From a birding standpoint, this site is the best place for local and international birders to see and appreciate the species.

The Cape Bird Club is currently spear-heading action to safeguard the site and its rockjumpers. We are working to engage with all the relevant landowners/stake-holders to better manage this unique area. Amongst the various options under consideration is a system of clear signage asking visitors to respect the space used by the birds by keeping to the path, and to refrain from using playback.

In conclusion, we appeal to all birders, and photographers visiting Rooi Els (or any other birding site) to practice the highest ethical standards when birding. Please stay in designated areas, and use playback sparingly.

Additionally, we urge you to politely interact with, and try to educate, fellow birders who are not doing so.

Vincent Ward
on behalf of the CBC Committee
Searching for hosts of the Diederik Cuckoo

In an ongoing quest to find hosts of the Diederik Cuckoo in the Western Cape, a short trip to Kam’Bati River Resort was undertaken. Phil Green, my son Milo, and I left on Wednesday 5 December 2018 for Kam’Bati, a site on the Breede River near Swellendam. There were very few campers this early in the month, and on the Thursday we put up mist nets around our campsite.

Amazingly, at about 06h20 we heard a Diederik Cuckoo near the camp. At about 07h45 two Diederik Cuckoos called in the tall gum trees above our site for about 15 minutes. We tried calling the birds down to our nets without success. We heard a cuckoo on and off during the day in the general area but not close to the nets again.

I hired a canoe to check weaver nests along the Breede River.

Cape Weavers had finished breeding here and only a few old nests were found. There was a small colony of Southern Red Bishops in a reed patch, with two males in breeding plumage, but only one nest was active (with one egg). Nine Southern Masked Weaver colonies were found in trees or bushes overhanging the river. Five colonies had nests where all or most nests could be checked, two colonies had breeding nests out of reach, and two colonies were inactive. Altogether five eggs were found in three nests. One clutch of two eggs, and a clutch of one egg, were blue with fine brown spots, and a third clutch of two eggs was white with fine brown spots – so no non-matching eggs were found within a clutch. Five nests contained chicks (brood sizes 3, 2, >1, 2, 3) and of the (at least) 11 chicks, 7 could be ringed. Three chicks were too small for ringing, and in another nest I felt at least one chick but it was too high to safely extract. The weaver colony records were all added to PHOWN (PHOtos of Weaver Nests, http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php). So no Diederik Cuckoo chicks or obvious eggs were found, but Kam’Bati is a potential site to look for signs of Diederik brood parasitism in weaver and bishop nests; by also checking sparrow and wagtail nests; and by keeping a look out for juveniles being fed by host parents.

We would have stayed another night but a large cold front coming in changed our minds and we packed up camp late on Thursday afternoon, as there wasn’t much chance of finding cuckoos in the rain!

Thanks to Dayo Osinubi who sponsored the trip (with funds from the British Ecological Society), while he was busy catching migrant cuckoos and kingfishers in Limpopo Province. Dayo is developing a project to explore sympatric speciation in Diederik Cuckoos that breed in South Africa, aiming at nuclear and mitochondrial DNA differentiation between Diederik Cuckoos that target different hosts.

Please keep looking for Diederik Cuckoo juveniles being fed by hosts in the Western Cape, and thanks to those who have sent in records of such sightings.

H. Dieter Oschadleus
doschadleus@gmail.com
New Holme Farm, Northern Cape

At the Karoo birding bash in October 2018 we were lucky enough to win. (It wasn’t so much our birding skills as Gita Claassen’s guiding – to us everything up there is either a lark or a pipit).

Our prize was two nights at New Holme Farm near Hanover in the Northern Cape. Strangely enough Vic Smith had been sitting with us at supper that night and telling us about the very place, as he had travelled to Beaufort West for the bash from New Holme himself. “The chef has won an award for her cooking” said Vic, “you’ll love the food.” (Yes Vic, you were right, we did!)

So in March we flew to PE and then drove up via Graaff-Reinet to the farm. The bird list boasts over 200 species and the farmer is a keen birder himself. The 8,000 hectares of farmland hold a variety of birds and there had been plentiful rain just before our visit, so the birding was good. (The Karoo was green!)

We went out twice on birding trips and got some fabulous birds: Northern Black Korhaan, Blue Korhaan (singing away but you’d need to be tone deaf to appreciate that as a song), Greater and Lesser Kestrels, Pink-billed Larks, hundreds of Kittlitz’s Plovers by the river, Black-eared Sparrow-lark, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Burchell’s Courser, Cape Clapper Larks, Grey Plover, and Ludwig’s Bustard among others.

We also went star gazing which was amazing as there is very little light pollution there, just tiny dots of light from Colesberg and De Aar.

Definitely worth a visit!

Kaye Foskett

A solution to Kelp Gull road kill on Baden Powell Drive?

Many of you will have read the disturbing article by Peter Ryan in African Birdlife on Kelp Gull chick deaths on Baden Powell Drive. Newly-fledged gulls are killed in large numbers when they wander onto this busy road or when they try out their flying skills from the dunes where they hatched.

Your Conservation Committee has been aware of this problem and has proposed a number of possible solutions. The issue was raised at a recent False Bay Ecopark Protected Area Advisory Committee (PAAC) meeting. Asief Khan, the manager of the Ecopark, has been studying the problem on the ground, and at the meeting he proposed a possible solution. He pointed out that the majority of deaths occurred along a short stretch of road where the dunes on the landward side are high. At this point the fledglings, still learning to fly, follow the slope of the land before gaining height. As a result they tend to be at car grill height as they reached the road, with disastrous consequences.

Asief has undertaken to build a length of fencing adjacent to the road to force the birds to gain height before crossing the road – a solution that sounds both logical and achievable. Hopefully by next breeding season the problem will have been resolved. Your committee will continue to monitor the situation and keep you informed.

Dave Whitelaw
Dynamite comes in condensed packages – and in the context of the welfare of birds, diminutive Jessie Walton is as explosively pro-active as that. She just doesn’t make any noise chirping about it.

For most of her (married) life, she has dedicated herself to creating a veritable birds’ paradise on an apple farm in Elgin. Her annual Open Spring Garden is justifiably well known and attracts visitors from all over the Cape. But it’s all year round that her feathered friends (especially nectar-seeking sunbirds) come and go amongst the flowers and protective foliage of her vast and varied Eden, one created through decades of tireless sweat and toil, from early in the morning, before birds have even stirred, until dark falls and they have disappeared from sight.

Hard to imagine then, that her dedication could stretch even further. Yet, as most of the Cape’s esteemed birders know, as well as everybody in the Elgin area, Jessie also dedicates herself to the care and rehabilitation of damaged, needy birds. Just some of her rescued birds are Poly, an African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene), Bernie, a Cape Buzzard juvenile, Chad, a Cape Buzzard, and Stevie and Duffy, two Spotted Eagle-Owls. Thanks to her expertise and commitment, Poly made a full recovery and was released many months ago, but still regularly pays visits, alighting on a nearby visible perch, and waiting until Jessie greets him and calls him down.

The rare privilege of experiencing this intimate interaction between a human and a wild bird of such stature has been granted me during many a stay there. Watching this hugely graceful harrier-hawk swoop down at her call to collect an edible treat will always leave me disbelieving and overawed by what Jessie’s healing hands accomplish.

Bernie, the Cape Buzzard chick, had presumably fallen from the nest, was found helpless and hungry on a nearby farm, and brought to Jessie. During the same stay, the equally unparalleled privilege of getting to know and feed him was allowed me. At first the food had to be cut into small pieces for the nestling, but Jessie soon instructed me to offer bigger chunks, so that he would have to learn to secure it with a talon while ripping off pieces with his beak.

It was a testament to her thoughtful, giving nature that Jessie reported daily on his progress when I had to leave. Something unusual occurred: almost as if commenting on the usurper in what used to be his territory, Poly began to manifest an interest in the younger bird. The regularity of the harrier-hawk’s visits increased. He soon made a habit of sitting on the roof of the enclosure while the buzzard complained volubly beneath him. While this raised concern, as Bernie was soon to be sharing the same sky, Jessie remained largely convinced that the interest was benign.

After a two-month stay, during which time this vulnerable nestling had metamorphosed into a startlingly good-looking fledgling, Bernie was at
the nest-leaving stage. The significant releasing process warranted twice daily reports for a good few days. These arrived in the stirring form of phone videos, showing Jessie’s attempts to gradually inculcate sufficient confidence in Bernie to persuade him to venture out into the bigger birdy world.

Jessie managed this by placing his food gradually ever further from the safety of the large and comfortable enclosure she has built especially for raptors in need. She would open the enclosure and alternately whistle and call his name from a distance. To see this transformed and beautiful Cape Buzzard respond by hesitantly, in bursts of flight from perch to perch, approach both Jessie and his food, was to marvel at the magnificence of his wide, effortlessly powerful wings and the enormity of what Jessie has achieved by taking him in. Arguably even more touching was hearing his plaintive calls as this big/little juvenile (almost questioningly?) answered her every call with one of his own.

The process took three days. On the third evening Bernie soared skyward. Jessie explained that his hunting skills would require time to develop. To forestall his going hungry, she stood ready with food the following morning. It came as little surprise that it was not one raptor who arrived to feast off the offerings: as if proclaiming his superior status, Poly flashed by first to scoop up a morsel. Thereafter Bernie was granted his. Feeding both was suddenly the beginning of a daily ritual. Some weeks later, news came from Jessie that, in an amusing role reversal, the now confident young Buzzard swooped by one afternoon to snatch up a treat Jessie had prepared for Poly. His hunting skills were clearly being honed. She also reports that proof of this is provided by his occasional disinterest in her ‘home’ fare.

Jessie’s enclosure does not remain empty for long. Shortly after Bernie’s release into his exciting new-found world, Chad arrived. He was found soaking, but still afloat, in a cement dam, had what Jessie termed ‘gurgling’ lungs, and needed his food injected with antibiotics. I was entrusted with feeding Chad for a few days and can vouch for this handsome buzzard’s quick recovery and healthy appetite.

On a subsequent visit, it came as no surprise that two new admissions, both Spotted Eagle-Owls, Stevie first, and then Duffy, had appropriated the space left by Chad. To cut a long story short, both have recently, and successfully, been released.

Rest, finally, for the weary? Not, it would seem, for selfless Jessie. With an invitation to visit just recently, she sent news of yet another new admission. This latest, a Cape Buzzard whose ring confirms that it was a previous patient from eight years ago, is dragging a wing which might
need to be strapped before it can heal. Not knowing what mishap befell a bird can make things difficult for Jessie. She has to intuit as to which corrective measures to apply. She is hoping the wing problem is caused by a torn ligament that will heal over time. I feel one can safely assert that this beautiful buzzard will soon be on its way to wellbeing.

Fish Eagle and Goliath Heron encounter

On 14 March 2019 we visited the Gariep Dam in the Free State. Having walked to the dam wall to admire the view, we saw down below the overflow, a standoff between a Goliath Heron and two African Fish Eagles – the one an adult bird and the second a young fledgling. We then noticed a second and third fledgling perched nearby. The adult Fish Eagle was eating something when the Goliath Heron approached from the water. It made aggressive little attacks towards the feeding eagle, with stabbing beak and wings out. The eagle reacted by opening its wings to full stretch, and only backing up a little when the heron came too close. The fledglings had obviously already eaten, as their crops were bulging. Once the adult was sated, the remains were left to the heron who pounced immediately as the four eagles took flight and headed downstream.

Locals confirmed that there was no sign of a second pair of adult Fish Eagles in the vicinity. The three fledglings looked of similar age (very young) and having witnessed the close interaction between the three and the adult eagle, I have little doubt that they were from the same nest.

Seeing three well-fed youngsters restores one’s faith in the breeding ability of these iconic birds. Although there are records of African Fish Eagles raising three chicks in one clutch, this is not a common occurrence.

A note on the “Cape Buzzard”

The mention of “Cape” Buzzard will be confusing for most readers of Promerops as no such species exists in the field guides. In my Birds of Prey of Southern Africa (1982) I open my identification section on the Steppe Buzzard with “This species could well be named the “fingerprint buzzard” as no two are alike.” Since then the identification situation has been further complicated by the apparent hybridization of Steppe and Forest Buzzards, but the DNA situation is confusing and research is ongoing. In the meanwhile these mystery buzzards have been called Cape Buzzards to place them in an indeterminate and unresolved category.

Fortuitously, Jennifer Lean’s contribution coincides with mine elsewhere in this issue (see page 10) where I also had a problem with a “Mystery Buzzard” way back in 1960.

Members’ Observations

Amur Falcon sightings

It has been some time since I saw a sizeable group of Amur Falcons, but on a recent trip up to Northern Natal, on 14 March 2019, we saw a group of at least 20 Amurs hunting. This was on the road from Bethlehem to Kestell. After that, for the next 10 kilometres before Kestell, we had more sightings – a smattering of smaller groups as well as single birds.

July 2019
Unusual food for Grey Go-away-bird

In early August 2018 Sandy and I spent several most enjoyable days at the Korocreek Golf and Wildlife Estate just outside Modimolle in Limpopo province.

On the morning of 8 August, whilst walking down one of the roads adjacent to the golf course, we noticed some activity in an acacia tree a short way ahead of us. Three Grey Go-away-birds flew into the tree in which we spotted a Laughing Dove sitting on its nest. As the go-away-birds very deliberately approached the dove, it tried valiantly to defend the nest with flapping wings but was no match for the much larger birds and eventually it flew off. One of the go-away-birds then broke the two eggs and ate the contents, the empty shells falling onto the ground below.

This seemed an odd food item for this species, and looking through the quite comprehensive list of food items listed for Grey Go-away-birds in Roberts 7, birds eggs are not mentioned. The observation therefore seemed worthy of being recorded.

Otto Schmidt

Vultures – noteworthy by their absence!

We spent 11 days (16th to 27th March 2019) in some of the Northern Natal parks – Ndumo, Thembe Elephant Park (well worth the visit with an excellent BirdLife-trained guide) and Mkuze.

In that whole time, we saw a total of two vultures at Mkuze (adult and juvenile White-backed Vultures). At Ndumo there is a vulture restaurant where a fairly fresh giraffe lay (meat still red). Over four days we saw not a single vulture (or jackal or hyena) at the carcass. The only sign of any feasting was by four Woolly-necked Storks, but whether they were feeding off scraps or insects attracted by the meat was unclear. On our last day we came across a dead Wildebeest already bloating. Again there was no sign of any scavenger, mammalian or avian.

I found this somewhat worrying.

Jessie Walton

Dark-rumped Little Swift near Citrusdal

The Little Swift, a widespread species that ranges from southern Europe through Africa to Asia, has benefited from its ability to breed on bridges and buildings. One of its diagnostic features is its broad white rump.

On 6 January 2019 I was surprised to see a dark-rumped Little Swift in the Olifants River Valley, 24 km south of Citrusdal. It was in a flock of approximately 50 Common Swifts, with a few Alpine, White-rumped, and African Black Swifts. Typical Little Swifts were seen elsewhere on the same day, but this appeared to be the only Little Swift in this particular flock. It was readily identified by its distinctive flight action, smaller size and shorter, broader wings and tail than Common Swifts. The short, square tail had a small notch in the centre, presumably because of moult, but it definitely wasn’t a Horus Swift (which is known to have dark-rumped ‘morphs’ in Angola and Zimbabwe). I presume it was a melanistic Little Swift.

Peter Ryan

Rarity Sightings

Please report your sightings to compiler Simon Fogarty, Tel. 021 701 6303, or by e-mail to fogarty@fhnewlands.co.za.

A list of all species that constitute Western Cape rarities and the South African National Rarities list, can be found on the CBC website www.capebirdclub.org.za under ‘Resources’.

Please note that none of the sightings listed below have been verified by either a regional or national rarities committee.

NATIONAL RARITIES:

Northern Rockhopper Penguin – a bird came ashore at Misty Cliffs, 24 April 2019 (MG)

Northern Royal Albatross – a bird seen west of Cape Columbine, 11 March 2019 (DeK), a bird seen on the Agulhas Bank by observers en route to Marion Island, 14 April 2019, reported by TH

Salvin’s Albatross – a bird seen west of Cape Columbine, 11 March 2019 (DeK)

Australasian Gannet – 2 birds present on Malgas Island, 17 January 2019 and 1 bird present 28 March 2019, reported by TH.
European Honey Buzzard – a bird seen on the Klaasenbosch Trail, 13 January 2019 (MaM), a bird seen in Somerset West, 13 January 2019 (SN), a bird seen over Wynberg Hill and another over Newlands Forest, 19 January 2019, reported by TH. On 20 January 2019, 2 birds seen circling against Table Mountain, from the Contour path (AD), 2 over Cecelia Forest (MB, AD), 1 at Kenilworth Race Course, reported by TH and 1 seen in Napier (SP). On 21 January 2019, 2 birds seen over Fernwood (OS), 1 seen in a tree above UCT (AD) and 1 seen on Lourensford Wine Estate, Somerset West (HF). A bird seen over Stanhope Road, Claremont, 24 January 2019 (TT), a bird seen in Cecelia Forest, 27 January 2019 (JG), a bird seen in Cecelia Forest, 30 January 2019 (DG), a bird seen over Laaiplats Farm, near Mossel Bay, 18 February 2019 (SA), a bird seen in Cecelia Forest, 23 February 2019 (AS), a bird seen in a garden in Newlands, 17 March 2019 (AB), a bird seen in Rome Glen, Somerset West, 19 March 2019 (KM), a bird seen at D’Aria, Durbanville, 28 March 2019 (BV), a bird seen flying over Nature’s Valley, 4 April 2019 (ToK), a bird seen just below Sir Lowry’s Pass, 28 April 2019, reported by TH.

Sooty Falcon – returned to Emily Moon, Plettenberg Bay for the 8th consecutive year, 16 February 2019 (MiB), seen 20 February 2019 (WZ), seen again 25 February 2019 (AnS, BW), still there 16 March 2019, reported by TH

Lesser Black-backed Gull – a bird seen and photographed on pan P2 at Strandfontein Sewage Works, 7 January 2019 (JG, MM, JR, NF)

Franklin’s Gull – a bird in breeding plumage seen at Stony Point, 13 February 2019 (VW)

Elegant Tern – a bird seen near Pelican Park and then on Pans P2 and P3 at Strandfontein Sewage Works, 8 February 2019 (MM), seen around Pans P2, P3 and P4 until 10 February 2019, reported by TH. A bird seen in the tern roost at Strand, 20 February 2019 (TK), a bird at Macassar Sewage Works, 23 February 2019 (BV, AH), seen again 24 February 2019 (MB) and 26 February 2019 (ToK)

Grey Wagtail – a bird seen on the rocks below the parking area at De Kelders, 6 May 2019 (PeH, KL), seen again 7 May 2019 (PL, DG, JV, GR, FV, RJ, LeV, CC, PR, AD)

LOCAL RARITIES:

Spectacled Petrel – a bird seen on a pelagic out of Simon’s Town, 19 January 2019, reported by TH, a bird seen on a pelagic out of Cape Town, 16 February 2019 (VW), 3 birds seen on a pelagic out of Cape Town, 24 February 2019 (AS), 2 birds seen on a pelagic out of Cape Town, 16 March 2019 (VW), a bird seen on a pelagic out of Simon’s Town, 30 March 2019, reported by TH

Flesh-footed Shearwater – a bird seen on a pelagic out of Cape Town, 16 February 2019 (VW)

Great Egret – a bird present at Rooisand Nature Reserve, Kleinmond, 9 January 2019, reported by TH. A bird found at Dolphin Beach Pan, 23 February 2019 (RB, KP), a bird seen at De Plaat, Velddrif, 10 March 2019 (GS), a bird seen at Kliphoek Salt Pans, 23 March 2019 (GS)

Black Heron – a bird seen in the channel between Langley and Rondevlei, Wilderness, 21 July 2019
January 2019, reported by TH

**Squacco Heron** – a bird seen at Dick Dent Bird Sanctuary, 13 April 2019 (RT), subsequently seen in the next few days by (GS, CB, PP, SN), seen again, 1 May 2019 (KW), still there 6 May 2019 (SN)

**Marabou Stork** – a bird seen at the landfill site west of Petro SA, near Mossel Bay, 20 February 2019, reported by TH

**Knob-billed Duck** – a bird seen along the river at Stanford, 17 February 2019, reported by TH

**Cape Vulture** – a young bird seen on Klipkrans farm, about 60 km south west of Beaufort West, 19 January 2019 (TT), a bird seen on the mountain side of the yacht club between Hermanus and Stanford, 24 April 2019 (PeH)

**Wahlberg’s Eagle** – a bird seen behind George Airport, 26 January 2019, reported by TH. A bird seen alongside the Island Lake Holiday Resort, Wilderness, 7 March 2019 (OS, SS)

**Brown Snake Eagle** – a bird seen on a farm in Paardeberg, near Malmesbury, 24 February 2019 (JR), a bird, possibly the same one, seen on top of Paardeberg, 28 February 2019 (GW), a bird seen north of Stanford, 23 March 2019 (FD), a bird seen near Stellenbosch on Baden Powell Drive, 23 - 24 March 2019 (LM, AD, SN)

**Amur Falcon** – about 10 birds seen in the Buffeljags/Swellendam area, 19 March 2019 (AD), a bird seen on the Malgas Road with Lesser Kestrels, 20 March 2019 (BV)

**Hottentot Buttonquail** – 3 pairs seen on a flush organized by Vince Ward on Sandberg Fynbos Reserve, near Baardskeerdersbos, 13 March 2019 (VW, PH, TD, SN, SF, PS, DS, GR, JN, MW)

**Baillon’s Crake** – a bird seen between Pans E2 and E3 at Paarl Bird Sanctuary, 23 February 2019, reported by TH

**Lesser Sand Plover** – a bird seen at the marsh behind Geelbek, West Coast N.P., 17 February 2019 (AD, DG), a bird seen at the Seeberg Hide, West Coast N.P., 23 February 2019, reported by TH, a bird seen from the Geelbek hide, 21 April 2019 (MT, CD)

**Greater Sand Plover** – 3 birds seen at Kuifkop Salt Pans, Velddrif, 16 February 2019 (AD), 2 still present 3 - 7 April 2019 (TL, CaB, GS, MaB)), 1 bird still present 9 – 14 April 2019 ( RB, KP, MBo, SN, NF)

**Caspian Plover** – 17 birds seen at Langebaan Lagoon during the CWAC count on 20 January 2019 (BV), a bird seen on pan on right hand side of boardwalk to Geelbek Hide, West Coast N.P., 7 February 2019 (VW), a bird in breeding plumage seen at Kliphoek Salt Pans, 24 February 2019 (FP)

**Red Phalarope** – a bird seen on a dam on a farm 45kms from Clanwilliam, 17 February 2019 (ZV, SL)

**Red-necked Phalarope** – 2 birds seen on Pan S2 at Strandfontein Sewage Works, 26 January 2019 (PU), one bird seen on Pan S2, 27 January 2019 (FD, MBe), 3 birds seen at Kuifkopvisvanger Salt Pans, Velddrif, 16 February 2019 (AD, LM), 2 birds seen at Kliphoek Salt Pans, 5 March 2019 (GV), 2 birds seen at a private salt works north of Velddrif, 5 March 2019 (JS), 2 still at Kliphoek Salt Pans, 9 March 2019 (CD) seen again 15 March 2019 (FD) and 28 March (LG), a bird present at Kliphoek Salt Pans 14 April 2019, (GS) and 29 April 2019 (LaM)

**Burchell’s Courser** – 8 birds seen at Kolsvlei Farm, near Piketberg, 26 March 2019 (PB). During the next 4 – 5 weeks, the farm owner, Paul Burger, allowed many birders to see the birds, including (MP, AD, BV, MBe, DD, LD, ViS, KW, OS, SS, SF, StF, PB, GB, P & NN). On some occasions, only a few birds were present, but on others up to 25 – 50 birds.

**Temminck’s Courser** – 5 birds seen at Skaamgesigge Bird Sanctuary, Nuwejaars Wetland SMA, Agulhas Plain, 7 May 2019 (EH, DG), seen by many birders 8 May 2019, including ( AD, TH, JG,LM, MM, CM, GR, KP, DD, LD, ViS, KW, OS, SS, SF, StF, PB, GB, P & NN).

**Double-banded Courser** – a bird seen at Kolsvlei Farm, amongst a group of Burchell’s Courseres, 5 May 2019 (PB)

**African Palm Swift** – a bird seen at the Diep River Bridge on Blauberg Road, 26 February 2019 (TH), a bird seen near the race course at Milnerton, 27 April 2019, reported by TH

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** – a bird still present at Goose Marsh, Plettenberg Bay, 12 January 2019, reported by TH

**European Roller** - a bird seen in Uplands Road, Plettenberg Bay, 12 January 2019 (MiB), a bird seen near the R316 east of Bredasdorp, 22 January 2019 (KL), a bird seen near George
Airport, 22 January 2019, still there 27 January 2019, reported by TH, a bird seen on the road to Oubaai Golf Estate, 24 January 2019, reported by TH. A bird seen about 3.5km east of Bredasdorp, 25 January 2019, reported by TH. The bird in Uplands Road, Plettenberg Bay still present 5 March 2019, reported by TH. A bird seen in Hoogeekraal Road, near Lancewood Farm, inland from Sedgefield, 9 March 2019 and still there 13 March 2019, reported by TH. A pair of birds seen hawking insects off the telephone poles on the R43 between Elim and Baardskeerdersbos, 13 March 2019 (TD, SN, PH, SF), seen again 16 March 2019 (CM), 21 March 2019 (AD) and 23 March 2019 (PL)

**Stark’s Lark** – a bird, the first record for the Western Province, seen at Bushmanskloof Private Game Reserve, 29 March 2019 (ZV)

**Sand Martin** – at least 5 birds around Pan P1, Strandfontein Sewage Works, 31 January 2019, reported by TH, a bird seen at Rooisand Nature Reserve, 2 March 2019 (DW), 2 birds seen at Pan S4, Strandfontein Sewage Works, 3 March 2019 (DG), seen again 3 March 2019 (CaB, JR), 23 March 2019 (LM), 25 March 2019 (GS), 5 birds seen eastern side of Pan S2, 14 April 2019 (SF), a number of birds still present 21 April and 1 May 2019 (FD)

**Eurasian Golden Oriole** – a bird seen at Boland College, Stellenbosch, 19 March 2019 (JO)

**Lesser Striped Swallow** – several birds present at the bridge where the N2 goes over the Goukamma River, 26 March 2019 (SF), 5 birds still present 7 April 2019, reported by TH

**Garden Warbler** – a bird seen and photographed in the rocky area below the parking area at De Kelders, 7 May 2019 (PC, RJ)

**African Pied Wagtail** – a bird seen in the Knysna Waterfront area, 14 March 2019 (TM)

**Western Yellow Wagtail** – a bird seen in front of the platform on Pan P1 at Strandfontein Sewage Works, 11 February 2019 (VW), seen in the same area, 12 January 2019 (KP). A bird seen at the George Sewage Works, 7 April 2019, reported by TH

**Lesser Grey Shrike** – a bird seen at Danger Point, 31 January 2019, reported by TH. A bird seen along road from R27 to Saldanha Bay, 6 March 2019 (VS), seen again 9 March 2019 (MH, TH, CD, SF, MM)

**Red-backed Shrike** – a bird seen near the offices at Rondevlei, Wilderness, 21 March 2019, reported by TH, a bird seen just east of Riversdale, 29 March 2019 (AW)

**Red-billed Oxpecker** – a bird seen on an Eland at Koeberg Nature Reserve, 23 April 2019 (LV), still there 27 April 2019 (TH, IR)

**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** – 1 seen at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, 17 April 2019 (JB)

**BIRDS ESTABLISHED IN THE SOUTH WESTERN / WESTERN CAPE, BUT RARE OR LOCALISED:**

**Secretarybird** – a bird seen at Melkbos on the road to N7 between R27 and first farm under pylons, 27 February 2019 (BV)

**Greater Painted-snipe** – a bird seen from the Wheeler Hide at Rondevlei Nature Reserve, 24 January 2019 (MB), 3 birds seen at Paardevlei, near Strand, 17 March 2019 (SN), a bird seen at Dick Dent Bird Sanctuary, 1 May 2019 (JC), a bird seen at Macassar Sewage Works, 3 May 2019 (SN)

**Black-collared Barbet** – a bird seen near the Kingfisher Hide, Wilderness Lakes, 2 March 2019 (OS, SS)

**Willow Warbler** – a bird seen at Rietvlei Nature Reserve, 24 February 2019 (TH), seen again in the trees opposite the Admin. Centre, 28 February 2019 (DG)
OTHER INTERESTING SIGHTINGS:

**Goliath Heron** – a bird seen on Hartebeeskuil Dam, Hartenbos, 12 January 2019 (EB), a bird seen at Rondevlei Nature Reserve 19 & 20 January 2019 (DK), seen again, 9 February 2019, reported by TH, a bird seen at De Plaat, Velddrif, 16 February 2019 (AD), a bird seen at Sedgefield Lagoon, 2 March 2019 (OS), seen again 26–30 March 2019 (SF, CB, MM), a bird seen at Rondevlei Nature Reserve, 3 March 2019 (MC, DC), a bird seen at Kliphoek Salt Pans, 6 April 2019 (Cab, MP)

**Greater Kestrel** – a bird seen flying near Abrahamskraal, West Coast N.P., 17 February 2019 (AD, GR)

**Terek Sandpiper** – a bird seen at De Mond, 22 January 2019 (KL)

**White-backed Duck** – a bird being chased by Red-knobbed Coots, seen at Scout Bay, Zandvlei.

**African Wood Owl** – a bird, the first record for the Agulhas Plain, seen on a farm between Bredasdorp and Elim, 18 March 2019, reported by TH

**Narina Trogon** – a bird seen in woodland, behind the church in Genadendal, near Greyton, 14 April 2019, reported by TH

**Dusky Sunbird** – a bird seen from the Abrahamskraal Bird Hide, West Coast N.P., 7 April 2019 (TH)

**9 Raptor species** – a total of 9 raptor species were seen during the monthly count at Vergelegen Wine Estate, including Martial and Verreaux’s Eagles, 15 January 2019 (JoC)

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**OBSEVERS:**

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<th>Name</th>
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Red-billed Oxpecker perched on an eland in Koeberg NR
CLUB ACTIVITIES

Your committee seeks to arrange outings, camps, and other activities for members to suit all levels of interest, so do come along and enjoy the birding and the camaraderie. Details of activities appear in our events programme, starting below on this page. If you can suggest other entertaining speakers or new exciting venues for field outings, please let us know, as we want to ensure that the programme is interesting and varied.

EVENING MEETINGS: These are normally held at 20h00 on the second Thursday of each month at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands, and feature interesting illustrated talks by birding experts, ornithologists, or professionals in related fields. Secure parking is available, and tea or coffee and biscuits will be served after the meeting at a cost of R10,00. Do bring your friends, but remember that there will be a charge of R10 for non-member visitors. If you are a new member please introduce yourself at the entrance table when you arrive.

FIELD OUTINGS: We arrange field outings throughout the year, usually on the first Saturday, third Sunday, and on one weekday morning in the month. You will be introduced to a variety of habitats and hopefully see many of the birds that occur in them.

COURSES, CAMPS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS: In addition to our regular activities, we organise a range of other events. These include weekend camps, bird courses, and occasional boat trips.

BIRD COUNTS: Our club supports ornithological research and conservation by conducting regular bird counts at a number of sites. Monthly counts are held at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Paarl Bird Sanctuary, Wildevoëlviel, and Athlone WWTW, while quarterly CWACs (Coordinated Waterbird Counts) take place at Rietvlei and Zandvlei. A BIRP (Birds in Reserves Project) species count takes place monthly at Kirstenbosch and there is a monthly “hack” at Zandvlei. See our Programme for details. The contact details for the count leaders are as follows:

- **Strandfontein monthly count**
  - Dick Barnes 021 532 1632

- **Wildevoëlviel monthly count**
  - Gillian Barnes 021 782 5429

- **Paarl Bird Sanctuary monthly count**
  - Yvonne Weiss 021 872 4972

- **Athlone WWTW monthly count**
  - Dick Bos 021 423 2546

- **Zandvlei quarterly CWAC**
  - Gavin Lawson 021 705 5224

- **Rietvlei quarterly CWAC**
  - Koos Retief 021 444 0315 (w)

- **Kirstenbosch monthly BIRP count**
  - John Magner 082 881 3845

- **Zandvlei monthly hack**
  - Gavin Lawson 021 705 5224

CBC PROGRAMME: JULY – NOVEMBER 2019

**JULY 2019**

Sat 6 July  RONDEVLEI NATURE RESERVE OUTING

**Leader:** Merle Chalton  📞 079 343 1047  

*Note later starting time.*

**Meet at 08h30*.** These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts, and beginners are especially welcome. Duration 2½ hours. Be sure to dress warmly – it can get very cold in the hides. Entrance is free.

**Directions:** Take the M5 (Prince George Drive) towards Grassy Park. Look out for Nando’s at the 5th Avenue traffic lights. Turn here – left if coming from the Rondebosch side or right if coming from the Muizenberg side. Continue along 5th Avenue to the first set of traffic lights. Turn right into Perth Road and continue to the end of the road.
Thurs 11 July  EVENING MEETING – Albatross – a film by Chris Jordan  (97 minutes)
Meet at 20h00 at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands.
ALBATROSS is a film everyone (and especially birders) should see. Be warned though, that while beautiful, it is also disturbing. It is an adult film, not recommended for children below 13 years. Anna Turns, a Devon-based freelance journalist and biology graduate specialising in sustainability, marine issues, and food and drink, reviewed this film in *The Guardian* of 12 March 2018. You can read it at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/12/albatross-film-dead-chicks-plastic-saving-birds. The film ends with Jordan’s call to action to love the albatross more: “I want people to watch this film and feel sadness and rage and realise that comes from a place of love. Don’t pull the plug out of the bathtub just yet; don’t let all that raw emotion drain away. Once you feel love, you can be more courageous and make more radical choices.”

Tues 16* July  WEEKDAY OUTING – Klaasenbosch Trail (Constantia Greenbelt)  *Note change of date
Leader: Margaret Maciver  ☎ 082 459 8843  ✉️ maciver@xis.co.za
Meet at 09h00. We will walk the trail which is circular. Anyone could leave at any time as it is easy to find one’s way back to the cars. The paths are in the shade of trees and are usually wind free. However, it could be muddy along the trail if (hopefully!) there has been recent rain, so wear suitable footwear and bring a stick for balance if you tend to slip. There is a large open area of grass with some tree stumps where we can have morning tea together, weather permitting.
Directions: We will meet at the end of Oak Avenue. It is a cul-de-sac so even if there is not enough parking at the end of the road, you can safely park on the kerb. To get to Oak Avenue, drive up Alphen Drive (towards the mountain) past the start of the Alphen Trail and the Alphen Hotel. Just past the Alphen Hotel, turn left into Peter Cloete Avenue. Follow this road to the next intersection. Go straight through the intersection after which the road becomes Oak Avenue. Continue to the end of Oak Avenue where we meet.

Sun 21 July  SUNDAY OUTING – Annual seabird watch from Cape Point Nature Reserve
Leader: Mel Tripp  ☎ 083 461 4365  ✉️ trippmel3@gmail.com
Meet at 08h30. This is our annual visit to the best location for land-based seabird watching on the Peninsula. It’s a good way to get to grips with some pelagic species that are mostly encountered on pelagic trips. Hopefully there will be some winter gales to drive the seabirds in closer to shore. Spotting scopes will be available but if you have one, please bring it along. Afterwards we will move off to one of the bays for a picnic brunch, so bring refreshments.
Directions: From Simon’s Town head south along the M4 and follow the signs to the Cape Point NR. If coming from the Kommetjie side take the M65 to the reserve, which is also well sign-posted. We meet in the parking area just beyond the pay point. Don’t forget your Wild Card as Cape Point is very pricey to enter these days.

**BIRD COUNTS & HACKS IN JULY**
Please support the winter CWAC counts!
See page 32 for leaders’ contact details

Sunday 7 July – 08h00 – Kirstenbosch BIRP Count
Thursday 11 July – 08h30 – Wildevoëlvlei CWAC
Saturday 13 July – 14h00 – Zandvlei Hack
Sunday 14 July – 08h30* – Strandfontein CWAC
Thursday 18 July – 09h30 – Athlone WWTW CWAC
Friday 19 July – 09h00 – Rietvlei/Table Bay NR CWAC
Saturday 20 July – 08h00 – Zandvlei CWAC Count
Saturday 27 July – 09h00 – Paarl Bird Sanctuary CWAC
Saturday 27 July – All day – CAR Count

*Note later winter starting time

Continued ➔
More CWAC Counts
CWAC Counts will also take place at Radyn Dam (Malmesbury) and Wellington WWTW on weekdays in July, still to be confirmed. The Wellington count will depend on access to the site due to ongoing construction work. Anyone interested in assisting can contact Otto Schmidt (Radyn Dam) at 021 674 2381 or John Fincham (Wellington) at 082 370 8499 for details. Additional helpers will be most welcome.

AUGUST 2019

Thurs 1 August  EVENING MEETING – A trip of a lifetime to Peru
Meet at 20h00 at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands.
Speaker: Mike Buckham
Mike has recently returned from Peru where he travelled on a bucket list trip to see and photograph some of the best birds in the world – in a country that boasts one of the highest species counts of any country. Join Mike for a talk on some of the birds and great scenery encountered on his travels.

Sat 3 August  RONDEVLEI NATURE RESERVE OUTING
Leader: Merle Chalton  ☎ 079 343 1047
Meet at 08h30.* These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts, and beginners are especially welcome. Duration 2½ hours. Be sure to dress warmly – it can get very cold in the hides. Entrance is free. See 6 July for directions.

Mon, 19 August  WEEKDAY – Not an outing ... but a Succulent Workshop!
Facilitator: Alison James  NB. Email alisondoug@telkomsa.net to book your place.
Workshop duration: 10h00 – 12h30  Maximum 16 participants. RSVP required.
This is an outing with a difference! Following the great success of this event last year, Alison will once again host a workshop on succulent plants. Come and learn how to make your garden more drought resistant. Participants will receive notes on the plants that Alison introduces. She will include some succulents that attract birds. There will be a tour of her garden followed by tea and question time. Each participant will receive some cuttings (free) BUT Alison will also have 6-packs of mixed succulents on sale at R50 each.
Directions: Those who book will receive directions by email.

Sun 25 August  SUNDAY OUTING – Rooi Els and Harold Porter Botanical Garden
Leader: John Magner  ☎ 082 8813845  johnmagner@netactive.co.za
Meet at 08h30 in the parking area outside the Rooi Els restaurant/ shopping centre.
We will walk along the gravel road at Rooi Els to look for Cape Rockjumpers, Ground Woodpeckers, and (hopefully!) a Sentinel Rock Thrush. We will then visit the beautiful Harold Porter Botanical Garden (a small entrance fee is payable unless you are a member of the Botanical Society, so remember your membership card). This garden is one of the best places to find the elusive Victorin’s Warbler and other endemics such as Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, and Cape Siskin. Bring tea and snacks.
Directions: From Cape Town take the N2 through Somerset West. Just before the assent to Sir Lowry’s Pass turn right into Sir Lowry’s Pass Road (M165) towards Gordon’s Bay. Continue straight to
the T-junction in Gordon’s Bay and turn left into Faure Marine Drive (R44) which takes you along the coastline and eventually becomes Clarence Drive. Cross the bridge at the start of the village of Rooi Els, then take the first right into Anemone Street and park in front of the small shopping centre where we meet.

**BIRD COUNTS & HACKS IN AUGUST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Leader</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday 3 Aug</td>
<td>14h00</td>
<td>Zandvlei Hack</td>
<td>Gerald Wingate</td>
<td>083 443 9579 <a href="mailto:gwingate@xsinet.co.za">gwingate@xsinet.co.za</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday 4 Aug</td>
<td>08h00</td>
<td>Kirstenbosch BIRP Count</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 8 Aug</td>
<td>08h30</td>
<td>Wildevoëlvlei Count</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday 11 Aug</td>
<td>08h00</td>
<td>Strandfontein Count</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 15 Aug</td>
<td>09h30</td>
<td>Athlone WTW Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 31 Aug</td>
<td>09h00</td>
<td>Paarl Bird Sanctuary Count</td>
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**SEPTEMBER 2019**

**Thurs 05 September**  **WEEKDAY OUTING – Tygerberg Nature Reserve**

**Leader:** Gerald Wingate  
**Contact:** 083 443 9579 gwingate@xsinet.co.za

**Meet at 08h30.** This outing has been carried over from April when it was rained out. Tygerberg Nature Reserve is a 309 hectare reserve on the Tygerberg Hills. It supports one of the last remnants of the critically endangered Swartland Shale Renosterveld vegetation type and boasts 562 plant species. The reserve has 137 bird species recorded, including Black-winged Kite, Peregrine Falcon, and Barn Owl. The area is quite hilly, so wear good walking shoes. Bring water and a snack.

**Directions:** Take the N1 north to Bellville. At Exit 20 turn left onto the M16 for 1.2kms. At the 3rd traffic light turn left into Kommissaris Street and left again into Rheede Ave. Follow the road signs on a zig-zag route to the venue. A small entrance fee is payable. Enquire about pensioners’ rates. (Address: 1 Totius Street, Welgemoed. GPS coordinates: 33°87′83″ S 18°59′72″ E)

**Sat 7 September**  **RONDEVLEI NATURE RESERVE OUTING**

**Leader:** Merle Chalton  
**Contact:** 079 343 1047

**Meet at 08h00.** These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts, and beginners are especially welcome. Duration 2½ hours. Bring a warm anorak even if it is a hot day as it can get very cold in the hides. Entrance is free. See 6 July for directions.

**Thurs 12 September**  **EVENING MEETING – PechaKucha – the Kruger Birding & Wildlife Challenge**

**Speakers:** The CBC Team – Vernon Head (Guide), Mel Tripp (Captain), Otto Schmidt, Sandy Schmidt, Pieter Van Oudtshoorn, Rod Douglas, John Magner, Peter Hills, Sandy Hills, and Simon Fogarty

**Meet at 20h00** at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands.

In February this year the Cape Bird Club entered a team of 9 members, guided by Vernon Head, to compete in the Kruger Birding & Wildlife Challenge. Run by Rockjumper Worldwide Birding Adventures and BirdLife South Africa, the challenge was organised to raise funds for the critically endangered White-winged Flufftail.
Eight teams competed with many international birders participating and the entire length of the Kruger Park was covered from Berg-en-Dal in the south to Pafuri in the north over the 9 days. Many spectacular birds and many challenging mammals were seen.

The talk tonight will take the format of a PechaKucha (a Japanese style presentation), where every member of the team will present “One day of the nine days of the event”. Come and see how the team performed and who won.

**Sun 15 September  SUNDAY OUTING – Ganzekraal**

**Leader:** Felicity Ellmore  ☎️ 021 762 0176  ✉️ fellmore@absamail.co.za

**Meet at 08h00.** Ganzekraal is a Cape Nature reserve on the R27, about 8km north of Koeberg Nature Reserve. It is quite extensive along the coast and comprises Strandveld, wetlands, streams, old pasture, rocky shores, sandy beaches, and historic buildings which are great for roosting. This will be about a 3 hour walk, depending on the number of birds. Take water, tea and a snack.

**Directions:** Travel up the R27 past the Koeberg NR and the Silverstroomstrand. Continue on the R27 to the Ganzekraal turnoff, where you turn left towards the sea. Drive to the end of the road and park. We will be walking south, most of the time along a jeep track that is sandy in places.

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**BIRD COUNTS & HACKS IN SEPTEMBER**  
See page 32 for leaders’ contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Outing Description</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 1 Sept</td>
<td>Kirstenbosch BIRP Count</td>
<td>Felicity Ellmore</td>
<td>021 762 0176  <a href="mailto:fellmore@absamail.co.za">fellmore@absamail.co.za</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 7 Sept</td>
<td>Zandvlei Hack</td>
<td>Tony Williams</td>
<td>084 5055450  <a href="mailto:capeokapi@gmail.com">capeokapi@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 8 Sept</td>
<td>Strandfontein Count</td>
<td>Merle Chalton</td>
<td>079 343 1047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 12 Sept</td>
<td>Wildevoëlvei Count</td>
<td>Tony Williams</td>
<td>084 5055450  <a href="mailto:capeokapi@gmail.com">capeokapi@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 19 Sept</td>
<td>Athlone WWTW Count</td>
<td>Tony Williams</td>
<td>084 5055450  <a href="mailto:capeokapi@gmail.com">capeokapi@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 28 Sept</td>
<td>Paarl Bird Sanctuary Count</td>
<td>Tony Williams</td>
<td>084 5055450  <a href="mailto:capeokapi@gmail.com">capeokapi@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**OCTOBER 2019**

**Wed 2 October  WEEKDAY OUTING – Intaka Island**

**Leader:** Tony Williams  ☎️ 084 5055450  ✉️ capeokapi@gmail.com

**Meet at 09h00.** We will meet near the ticket office. There is a small entry fee (and a discount for pensioners). We will spend time in the various hides and walk the winding paths to see the variety of bush birds and water birds. Optionally, depending on the weather and time, we may also include a trip on a canal boat. Bring along your tea and a snack.

**Directions:** From the N1 take Exit 10 onto Century City Drive which runs parallel with the N1. Follow the road, take the sharp left turn to the robot. At this robot turn right onto Century City Boulevard and stay in the left lane. Drive through 3 traffic circles. At the 4th traffic circle take the first exit left (signpost) and then the first left again into Park Lane. Park your vehicle on Locomotive Square. Collect a parking ticket from Intaka reception desk.

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**Sat 5 October  RONDEVLEI NATURE RESERVE OUTING**

**Leader:** Merle Chalton  ☎️ 079 343 1047

**Meet at 08h00.** These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts, and beginners are especially welcome. Duration 2½ hours. Bring a warm anorak even if it is a hot day as it can get cold in the hides. Entrance is free. See 6 July for directions.
Thurs 10 October   EVENING MEETING – Around Antarctica in 88 days  
Speaker: Prof Peter Ryan  
Meet at 20h00 at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands.  
In 2016/17 Peter Ryan was fortunate to be able to join the Antarctic Circumnavigation Expedition (ACE), a privately-funded research cruise from Cape Town to Cape Town via Hobart and Punta Arenas. In addition to visiting the continent itself, the cruise called at a mouth-watering array of islands en route, including all the sub-Antarctic islands in the Indian Ocean, the Balleny Islands, Peter I Island, Scot Island, Diego Ramirez, South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands, and Bouvet. Peter will share the highs and lows of living on a Russian ice-breaker for three months.

Sun 20 October   SUNDAY OUTING – Koeberg Nature Reserve  
Leader: Peter Nupen  
Meet at 08h00. This reserve includes two major types of veld: West Coast Strandveld and Duineveld, and 153 bird species have been recorded. One can also look out for grysbok, steenbok, bontebok, springbok, and grey mongoose.
Directions: From the Cape Town side, take the R27 West Coast road, past Milnerton, Blouberg and Melkbosstrand. The reserve entrance is on the left and is signposted. It is a private reserve run and managed by Eskom’s Koeberg Power Station. NB. Bring along your ID book/card as it is necessary to check in at security. Once inside proceed straight for about one kilometre, go around the small traffic circle to the car park immediately below the Koeberg Information Centre where we meet. Bring refreshments for a full morning.

Sat 2 November  RONDEVLEI NATURE RESERVE OUTING  
Leader: Merle Chalton  
Meet at 08h00. These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts, and beginners are especially welcome. Duration 2½ hours, but you can stay as long as you like. Bring a warm anorak even if it is a hot day as it can get cold in the hides. Entrance is free. See 6 July for directions.

Wed 13 November  WEEKDAY OUTING – Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area  
Leader: Dave Whitelaw  
Meet at 09h00. Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area (KRCA) consists of 52ha in the centre of the racecourse, and is regarded as the best example of Cape Flats Sand Fynbos remaining in the Cape Peninsula. It is one of the largest stretches of natural vegetation remaining in Cape Town’s

See page 32 for leaders’ contact details

BIRD COUNTS & HACKS IN OCTOBER

Saturday 5 Oct – 14h00 – Zandvlei Hack  
Sunday 6 Oct – 08h00 – Kirstenbosch BIRP Count  
Thursday 10 Oct – 08h30 – Wildevoëlvlei Count  
Sunday 13 Oct – 08h00 – Strandfontein Count  

Thursday 17 Oct – 09h30 – Athlone WWTW Count  
Friday 18 Oct – 09h00 – Rietvlei Quarterly Count  
Saturday 19 Oct – 08h00 – Zandvlei Quarterly Count  
Saturday 26 Oct – 09h00 – Paarl Bird Sanctuary Count  

NOVEMBER 2019

Sat 2 November  RONDEVLEI NATURE RESERVE OUTING
Leader: Merle Chalton
Meet at 08h00. These regular monthly outings are for all Rondevlei enthusiasts, and beginners are especially welcome. Duration 2½ hours, but you can stay as long as you like. Bring a warm anorak even if it is a hot day as it can get cold in the hides. Entrance is free. See 6 July for directions.

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Leader: Dave Whitelaw
Meet at 09h00. Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area (KRCA) consists of 52ha in the centre of the racecourse, and is regarded as the best example of Cape Flats Sand Fynbos remaining in the Cape Peninsula. It is one of the largest stretches of natural vegetation remaining in Cape Town’s

July 2019
southern suburbs, and hosts more than 300 indigenous plant species of which 34 are considered to be threatened with extinction. Many of these rare species are endemic to Cape Flats Sand Fynbos.

Besides being botanically important, it also hosts 11 amphibians, including 3 highly endangered endemic frogs, at least 17 reptile species, and 10 mammal species as well as a healthy bird community of at least 80 species. This outing will last 1-2 hours and will be led by one of the KRCA rangers.

Directions: Travel along the M5 and turn off at Exit 15. If coming from the north, turn left into Racecourse Rd. If coming from the south, turn left into Racecourse Rd. (heading towards the mountain) to the traffic lights at the corner of the Kenilworth Centre, where you turn left into Doncaster Rd. Follow Doncaster Rd. to the intersection with Rosmead Ave. where you turn left into Rosmead. Continue to the Pick n Pay office park entrance (on your left) and turn left at the traffic lights. The racecourse entrance is a short distance further on, to the right. Secure parking.

Thurs 14 November  EVENING MEETING – Spiders and the mythological spider bite
Speaker: Norman Larsen
Meet at 20h00 at the Nassau Centre, Groote Schuur High School, Palmyra Road, Newlands.

Norman Larsen is the Honorary Associate Arachnologist at the Iziko South African Museum. He is the author and photographer of the arachnid section (spiders, scorpions and solifuges) of the South African Museum’s Biodiversity Explorer website (www.biodiversityexplorer.info/arachnids/index.htm). In addition to writing various articles, he has supplied images and information to many publications on spiders, and he has revised and updated two spider books published by Struik: Filmer’s Spiders – An Identification Guide for Southern Africa and the Sasol guide, First Field Guide to Spiders & Scorpions of Southern Africa. He is currently writing a new book on spiders of Southern Africa, informed by new and ongoing research. He is also involved in dispelling rumours and myths in South Africa about spider bites, especially cytotoxic bites, and he even has two spiders named after him: Australutica normanlarseni Jocqué, 2008 and Hahnia larseni Marusik, 2017.

Sunday 17 November  SUNDAY OUTING – Keurbos Farm and Bird Reserve, Elgin
Leader: Mel Tripp  📞 083 461 4365  💌 trippmel3@gmail.com
Meet 06h30. Keurbos is Jessie Walton’s farm and nursery. It also has nice wetlands and recently she constructed a hide at one of the ponds. November is also when they have open gardens, so if people like plants as well as birds, it is an excellent time to visit, as the gardens are well worth exploring.

Directions: From Cape Town go over Sir Lowry’s Pass down over the Palmiet River and just past the Peregrine Farm stall you turn right onto Viljoenshoop Road. Continue for about 5 km, then turn left onto Highlands Road (the only turnoff to your left). Continue for 3 - 4 km, Keurbos is signposted on your right. We meet there at the garden/nursery which is farm number 65. The wetland hide is at farm number 71 where we will go later. Bring refreshments for the day.
NAPIER BIRDSONG

DE MOND VELD COTTAGE, Overberg
Restored veld cottage in the pristine coastal fynbos adjacent to the Heuningnes Estuary of Cape Nature's De Mond Reserve. This special getaway, with fresh water plunge pool, has all linen supplied for 4 guests and two bathrooms (one en-suite). Six can be accommodated with two camp beds. Wonderful walks, clear night skies and abundant birdlife, especially in the unspoilt reserve. Fynbos endemics, wader hotspot and home to the Damara Tern, with year round Caspian Terns. Tel. 078 543 0443. Email: info@demondveldcottage.co.za Website: www.demondveldcottage.co.za

FROG MOUNTAIN GETAWAY
Nestled at the foot of the Langeberg Mountains is a little piece of paradise called Frog Mountain Getaway. We offer our guests private secluded cottages, beautiful mountain and waterfall walks, sparkling clear swimming pools, river activities such as fishing, canoeing, zip line and plentiful bird life. Frog Mountain, ‘Nature lovers’ paradise’ – where families connect and children are free range. Website: www.frogmountain.co.za
Bookings: info@frogmountain.co.za or contact Stephen / Gabriella directly at 028 512 3732.

THE MOUNTAIN BARN
Self-catering accommodation located in the Mount Bain Nature Reserve, with good birding in the undisturbed riverine fynbos on the Witterivier. Good swimming in large river pool. Scenic environment only an hour and a half from Cape Town. Bains Kloof R301, Breede Valley. Tel. 083 675 8520 or email: larryf.za@gmail.com.

GLEN HOUSE, Knysna
Self-catering units situated in the secluded village of Lake Brenton opposite the Yellowwood Bird Sanctuary. Facilities include M-Net, separate braai areas, covered parking, patio and peaceful garden surrounds where bushbuck still roam freely. Seasonal rates from R300 pppn. Couples get 15% discount for weekend stays. Contact Pat Booyse: Tel/Fax 044 381 0048. Cell: 072 129 3684.

CBC Small Ads are available to all at R80 per insertion (max 50 words + heading). Cash with order please. Rates for larger display ads on request. For bookings or enquiries please phone Dennis Randell at 082 320 3377 or email randestates@yebo.co.za