



AGM 20 FEBRUARY 2016

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

2015 Committee

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Chair : Lesley Frescura
Vice-Chair : Arnia van Vuuren
Treasurer : Frankie Berghorst
Secretary : Rowena Pankhurst
Membership: Lesley Frescura
Publicity: Arnia van Vuuren
Activities: Paul Bartho
Indoor meetings: Rob Jamieson and
Des Porter
Publications : Crystelle Wilson
Courses: Lesley Frescura
Shop:
Media: Virginia Cameron
Website: Paul Bartho
Conservation: Arnia van Vuuren

Welcome to this Port Natal AGM – the 67th. and we are also delighted to welcome today our guest speaker Mark Brown. **(Slide 3)**. It is very special to have him with us today – an old friend, and one who represented our club for a time on the rarities committee for KZN.

2015 was an interesting and challenging year. Our committee was strengthened by the addition of Frankie, Rowena and Des, but we lost Merle and Dave Bishop. Thanks to those both on and off the committee who have assisted us throughout the year. **(Slide 4)**.

Your committee has worked hard throughout 2015, all volunteers, with their own lives and commitments. We are now losing Virginia and Des – and sorry I am to see them go. **(Slide 5)**. Virginia has done a fantastic job of ensuring that the media in eThekweni receive due notice of our activities and has been involved in many other outreaches, always ready to lend a helping hand when needed, either with education, publicity or other initiatives. We wish her good health and thanks for agreeing to continue the media information until we find someone else to do it. **(Slide 6)** Thankyou to Des for organising the indoor meetings and we are sad to say goodbye.

(Slide 7). During the course of this year Crystelle Wilson will be moving to Howick and her beloved farm in Boston. Luckily she will continue to edit our magazine *KZN Birds*, and prepare the calendar, our major source of funding. However she will no longer be

available for taking orders and posting out calendars, so if anyone would like to help out there, we would be delighted. BirdLife Midlands' gain is our tremendous loss – we wish her all the best for the future and hope to continue to see her regularly as she atlases and photographs the countryside. **(Slide 8)**. Her love for the Crowned Cranes on her farm and their struggles to raise their chicks bring empathy and compassion.

(Slide 9) Arnia van Vuuren has continued to be our voice for conservation, apart from education and publicity. Your club continues the partnership with Coast Watch which will be reviewed again in March. Sometimes the EIAs arrive thick and fast and Arnia has to decide where and how we should comment. Registering as an Interested and Affected Party means a lot of work, but it behoves us to try and remember our birds, their habitats and the onward march of humanity. Thanks also to David Allan for his assistance, and of course to Carolyn Schwegman from CoastWatch whose expertise plays such a large role in our small attempts to stem the onrushing tide.

Once again we participated in the Sustainable Living Exhibition, and drew many members of the public to our stand with the constant flow of bird photographs. Thanks to Herman Bos for the video images. **(Slide 10)**. We also worked hard at the Kloof Indigenous Gardens which was held on 16/17 May 2015 at Cotswold Downs – working out in the open showing visitors the birds at the dams, and leading

guided bird walks into the forest. **(Slide 11)**. Derek Spencer spotted a White-backed Duck on the pond which made our list of 50 birds on a weekend of rainy, cold weather memorable. 1 May had seen us at the Beachwood Mangroves Open Day, which is always great fun and gives us an opportunity to interact with families. Arnia and Rhona Brown were at KwaNunu in August, which gives us an opportunity to talk birds with the many learners who attend and Crystelle designed a poster for us for the World Forestry Congress in September. **(Slide 12)**.

Although Paul Bartho is often away, his work for BirdLife Port Natal is inestimable. He maintains the website, which in January 2016 had a total of 283 000 views with 614 followers. We invite the photographers in the club to send their trip photographs to Paul as people around the world are keen to view them. **(Slide 13)**. Paul is also the world's number 1 calendar seller, and since approaching companies and individuals to advertise on our calendar pages, has managed to offset much of the printing costs. He is indefatigable when the bit is between his teeth, and his worth to the club cannot be quantified.

(Slide 14). Rob Jamieson continued in 2015 to see to our indoor meeting evenings at the Westville Methodist Church, providing the refreshments, setting us the screen, and collecting the donations, as well as providing the bottle of wine given as a prize. He was

ably supported by Terry Walls and Des Porter, who introduced and found the speakers respectively.

To our volunteers – Terry for continuing to support the club by being the co-signer on our cheques, and for doing all our printing; Elena, Sandi, Dave Rimmer, Crystelle, Paul and Sally, Jenny Rix, Rex Aspeling, Barry Swaddle, Malcolm Stainbank, Crispin Hemson, Roy Cowgill and Steve Davis for leading outings; Cheryl and John Beavin for organising weekends away; Anthony Humphris for organising the monthly Bay Counts, Mike White for representing us at the uShaka airport and organising BBD there; Flick McKenzie, Peter Farrington, Maureen Geall, Sheryl Venter, Merle Mackenzie, Liz Cook, Sabrina Porritt, Nomusa Mkhongo, Janet Levy, Tessa White, Derek Spencer, Jairam Reddy, Marika Wade and Joyce Morton for representing us at outreaches. We could not do this without you all.

The ringers continue their very important work – Garth Aiston, Andrew Pickles and James Rawdon. **(Slide 15)**. Andrew's data on Barn Swallows has added so much to our knowledge of their movements, and there was great excitement when a youngster from Wales was re-trapped in Umzumbe. BLPN continues its financial support for the ringers. He also maintains a facebook page on Birds of Southern KZN – very well worth a visit.

Krantzkloof Birds' indoor meetings continue to pull in the crowds on the second Tuesday of every second month, with excellent speakers. With the revamp to the Krantzkloof Interpretive Centre, they have had to move their meetings to a couple of different venues, but I am sure once the new centre is ready, we will see them there again.

(Slide 16). Roy Cowgill, the club's Honorary President, represents the province on BLSA's Executive Board, as well as chairing the KZN Forum, organising the annual Save our Seas meeting at uShaka Seaworld, organising with Steve Davis the two CWAC counts held every year, attending committee meetings, and very many other things besides. **(Slide 17)**. Steve is our Honorary Recorder, and represents the club on the Regional Rarities Committee.

(Slide 18). Adam Riley from Rockjumpers and BirdLife Midlands ran a very successful course in April 2015 on Bird Families of the World. Roy and Steve held one of their popular quizzes at the indoor meeting in Durban North May.

Our educational outreach project which is carried out with the Botanical Gardens' took place in June, where we were sadly short of volunteers to assist us at the lake where we take binoculars and the scope to show the learners the various birds. Arnia and Rhona Brown were once again at KwaNunu at the City Hall, which is always successful with many

young people visiting and engaging with the exhibits and our talks.

(Slide 19). The 2016 Bird of the Year is the Sociable Weaver, an icon of our arid zones, small birds with big personalities and a complex social life.

2015 has seen many changes in our clubs – which is why today we ask you to endorse the changes to our Constitution to bring us in line with BLSA's changes. Members can choose to belong to both BLSA and BLPN, or BLPN only. Clubs are now considered to be autonomous entities, and may no longer use the BLSA logo on our letterheads or publications. We remain affiliated to BLSA, and have signed an affiliation agreement with them. They continue to do our membership and magazine administration. Forum too has seen changes – there are now 3 representatives who serve for 3 years on the Executive Board, and Roy Cowgill has now served his first year in that capacity. We continue to work closely with BLSA and their regional Conservation Manager and work closely with other environmental NGOs and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife on specific projects, and we all meet bi-annually at Forum in Howick. **(Slide 20).** All members are welcome to attend on Saturday 5 March – and if you want to know more about the state of avian conservation in our province, do come along.

In 2015 we made donations to CROW and the Raptor Rehabilitation Centre, as well as

funding the Ezemvelo guide based at the Ntsikeni Vlei, Dalu Ncobo, to attend the 2016 Flock in the Kruger. We believe in building capacity amongst our colleagues, and the BLSA guide training must rank amongst the best in the world.

KZN Birds, which includes the Chair's Chirp, gives you detailed information on what is happening and has happened in your club, so I'm not going to go through all our accomplishments but have brought some extra copies along for those who might not have received it.

(Slide 21). I want to commend today two people, Hennie and Decklan Jordaan. Hennie for always seeing that his son is able to attend outings, and then for encouraging his photography – and Decklan for his generosity in sharing those photographs with the club. It is wonderful to have young members and we hope more will come and join us following the Jordaan's example.

(Slide 22). I ask you all to remember those members of the club who have died in the past year, particularly Barry Pullock who passed away in March 2015. Tina Haine's words embody what we all felt at losing such an excellent birder and leader of groups on the south coast. "I will miss my birding buddy very much. He taught me a tremendous amount over the years about birds. I would phone him and say 'let's go there for a few hours' and

those were always good outings. Bless Barry, my Birding Mate".

Thankyou all for your continued support and friendship in 2015. **(Slide 23).**

(Slide 24). I end with something borrowed from Phoebe Barnard, Honorary President of BLSA, and a most remarkable woman.

"Once upon a time,
When women were birds,
There was the simple understanding
That to sing at dawn
And to sing at dusk
Was to heal the world through joy.
The birds still remember what we have
forgotten,
That the world is meant to be celebrated."

-Terry Tempest Williams, When Women Were Birds

(Slide 25).