

Issue 72 | SEPTEMBER 2023

KZN BIRDS

BirdLife KZN Forum

White Birds in the Midlands

Albinism and Leucism

Monitoring a restoration
project using birds

BirdLife KZN Forum | Zululand



News from the
KZN Bird Clubs

KZN Birds is the magazine of the regional BirdLife KZN Forum and acts as the communication tool of the KZN Bird Clubs



Editorial Team

Prof Anthony Forbes (Ticky) | **Editor**
Nicolette Forbes | **Layout and Design**

Contributors

Eckhart Buchmann
Steve Davis
Peter Vos
Sean Glynn
Nicolette Forbes
Peter Nelson
St John Field



Published by the **BirdLife KZN Forum** which is proudly affiliated with **BirdLife South Africa** and the **KZN Affiliated Bird Clubs**

Cover Photo | Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* by EJ Bartlett Taken at uMbogovango Nature Reserve see short story on page 17.

KZN Birds is the quarterly digital magazine of the regional **BirdLife KZN Forum** and also acts as the communication tool of the KZN bird clubs.

If you would like to contribute to future issues of KZN Birds please send photos, short articles or feature articles to the editor@birdlifekznforum.org following the guidelines and timelines below.

Deadline for article and photo submission during 2023

Issue #73: 20 November 2023

Submission guidelines

Photos:

- Images must be submitted **with captions** via email to editor@birdlifekznforum.org
- Width: 1920 pixels max
- Height: 1080 pixels max
- File Size: not exceed 2MB
- No borders or watermarks can be used - photograph credits will be included with the caption

Articles: if you would like to submit short or feature articles please send a title and three line paragraph indicating the contents and the editor will respond.





ATC/STC ADVENTURE AWAITS

SEE *THE* UNSEEN



From the Editor

Dear Forum followers - our third edition of KZN Birds for 2023 already. How the year has flown by!

Well! What can one say about this edition? Another eclectic mix of contributions and contributors – both going to show that birding is alive and well in KZN.

This latest edition of KZN birds incorporates items on some colouring aberrations, bird clubs assisting with the monitoring of urban habitat restoration at Van Riebeeck Park in Durban South, a remarkable aloe garden, places to go in the province, a reason to go on club walks (a mega regional rarity for KZN), details of the recent BirdLife KZN Forum weekend at Bonamanzi Nature Reserve, the use of mud in nest building and finally activity reports from the provincial club Chairs.

The high points for me were the van Riebeeck Park restoration activities, which reflect what can be done to improve urban habitats, the demonstration, via the reports on uMkhuze and other birding hotspots, how habitat and bird diverse our beautiful KZN province is, and finally what can turn up unexpectedly on a club outing.

Delving a bit deeper it is again remarkable how Hugh Chittenden manages to get those mud collecting shots of swallows, hornbills and palm thrushes. The description of human activities at the Bonamanzi Forum gathering in terms of the numbers of people attending, the numbers of bird species recorded, the number of lifers and finally the reactions from the attendees should be a harbinger of things to come in the KZN birding world.

Not the least of these is the fact that 2024 is BirdLife eThekweni KZN's 75th Anniversary so we hope people from all over KZN will join in to celebrate with some special events starting to line up. Watch out in the next issue for more details about this. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this recent issue and we appeal to everyone to submit their photos, articles and other musings to us for the next issue.

Ticky Forbes
Editor-in-Chief | KZN Birds



From the Chair: BirdLife KZN Forum

Welcoming our migrants back to KZN

The changing weather and sightings of the first migrants heralds the return of spring. The BirdLife KZN Forum has had a lot of activity over this quarter with a KZN Rendezvous in the Umkuze area (see page 11), a report to the BirdLife South Africa Board and the Spring Forum event held at Bonamanzi (see page 19).

News coming through from the individual KZN Bird Clubs indicates an upswing in numbers of members, activities and general interaction between club committees (see the club reports on page .

For the second consecutive year, the

BirdLife KZN Rendezvous unfurled its wings, this time centering around the very birdy area of Umkuze. The adventure led us through the enchanting uMkhuze Game Reserve, one of the jewels nestled within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage Site. The breathtaking sights of the flowering aloe garden at Zimanga Homestead were a spectacle that left us in awe of the diversity available.

Looking ahead, the anticipation for summer is palpable, promising endless days of birding delights and holiday festivities. With binoculars at the ready, we begin to gear up for a season of exploration and discovery.

With the incredible Zululand Forum now behind us I am very pleased to announce that the next Autumn Forum will convene in the picturesque KZN Midlands on the long weekend in March 2024. It's an invitation to gather, share stories, learn and revel

in the shared passion of our birds with other like-minded people.

Nicolette Forbes
Chair BirdLife KZN Forum



KZN BIRDS ISSUE #72 | WHAT'S INSIDE

FEATURE ARTICLES

- 6 White birds in the Midlands** Stella Bush to Pigeon Valley the messages from history.
- 8 Monitoring an Important Restoration Project** Using the birds to provide important feedback to eThekweni Municipality
- 11 BirdLife KZN Rendezvous | Zimanga Aloe Garden and uMkhuze Weekend** The BirdLife KZN Forum decided to use the Aloe garden as the focal point for another BirdLife KZN Forum rendezvous
- 19 Bonamanzi in September 2023** The second forum of 2023 was another roaring success with lots of birding, fire pits, talks and camaraderie.



Anneli Mynhardt

Nicolette Forbes

8 Monitoring an Important Restoration Project

REGULAR ITEMS

- 15 KZN Birding Hotspots** A profile on uMkhuze and the specials found there.
- 24 Members Murmurings** Peter Vos shares his interesting observation of a foraging Olive Woodpecker
- 26 Birds in Focus** Photos sent in from birders showcasing birds seen in and around KZN and beyond.
- 30 Hugh's Views** Learn about the mud-nesters

UPCOMING NEWS AND EVENTS FROM BLSA

- 16 BirdLife South Africa Birding Big Day**

CHAIRS CHIRPS

News from the BirdLife South Africa affiliated bird clubs and other bird clubs around KZN



37 BirdLife eThekweni KZN

36 Ladysmith Birders



38 BirdLife KZN Midlands



38 St Lucia Bird Club



39 Dolphin Coast Bird Club



White Birds in the Midlands

Albinism, and leucism in birds.

Birders, like collectors, tend to appreciate the rare or unusual. In that sense I was fortunate in recent months to find and photograph three 'white' birds, meaning individuals with abnormally white or pale plumage, which many people refer to as albinos.

Most often these are not albinos, but are leucistic, where only the plumage colouration is affected, ranging from dilution of colours to complete whiteness. True albinos, which are unable to produce melanin in their pigment cells due to an enzyme deficiency, are super-rare. Sadly, their life expectancy is greatly reduced because of structural weakness in their feathers and difficulties with vision. They are best identified by having pink bare parts, and most important, pink or red eyes.

The Egyptian Goose here has been seen by several local birders, and I have encountered it on four occasions around Cedara, twice in a flock and twice on its own. Its yellow iris and light brown shadowing around the eye and on other parts of its plumage (dilution) confirm leucism and exclude albinism. The Cape Longclaw, which I found at Fordoun near Nottingham Road, is similarly



Above | *Leucistic Egyptian Goose flying past at Cedara*

leucistic with a dark eye and bill. During the time I was following it, it remained in the company of another (normal) Cape Longclaw, possibly a mate. It proved difficult to approach in the grassland, hence the poor image. The Levallant's Cisticola, in a wetland at Doornkop near Estcourt, is not as straightforward. It could be an albino, with its snow-white plumage, pink gape, and pink legs and feet. But the eye appears dark and the surrounding skin is more brown than pink. Considering also

its apparent good condition, this may be a leucistic cisticola. Incidentally, its bill is open not to call but to pant, thanks to the midday heat at the time.

I have read about whiteness in Egyptian Goose, but have not found accounts of any such cases for Cape Longclaw and Levallant's Cisticola. While these three individuals appeared in good condition, their distinctive appearance would have placed them at increased risk of predation, mainly by hawks and



Right | *Leucistic Egyptian Goose socialising at Cedara*



falcons. Another issue for leucistic birds is potential difficulty with finding a mate. The goose may have had problems in this regard, but the longclaw appeared as an item with its companion, seemingly not shunned for its aberrant appearance. Good-natured sentiment wishes well for all creatures that find themselves, or dare, to be different.

Sources: <https://www.audubon.org>;
<https://avianreport.com>

Photos and text by
Eckhart Schumann



Above | A leucistic Levillant's Cisticola at Doornkop, near Estcourt

Below | Leucistic Cape Longclaw at Fordoun, near Nottingham Road



Monitoring an Important Restoration Project

The Birds of Van Riebeeck Park, Durban



Above | A view of Van Riebeeck Park

Background

The late Arnia van Vuuren, who served as Conservation Coordinator on the BeKZN Committee, previously provided monitoring information regarding VR Park to the eThekweni Municipality Biodiversity Management Department.

This restoration project has been developed by eThekweni Municipality as an offset area for the benefit of the people of the South Durban basin to replace the green lung lost in the eradication of the wetland flora and fauna of the Clairwood racecourse.

BeKZN is now fortunate enough to have well known birder and author, Mr Steve Davis step into the role as Conservation Coordinator on the 2022 and 2023 committee and he has begun monitoring the birds of VR Park. In this regard he has

produced an excellent report which follows. BirdLife eThekweni KZN intends to maintain this collaboration with eThekweni Municipality and will endeavour to continue to provide information to monitor this important project as part of our conservation portfolio.

Nicolette Forbes
Chair | BeKZN

Introduction

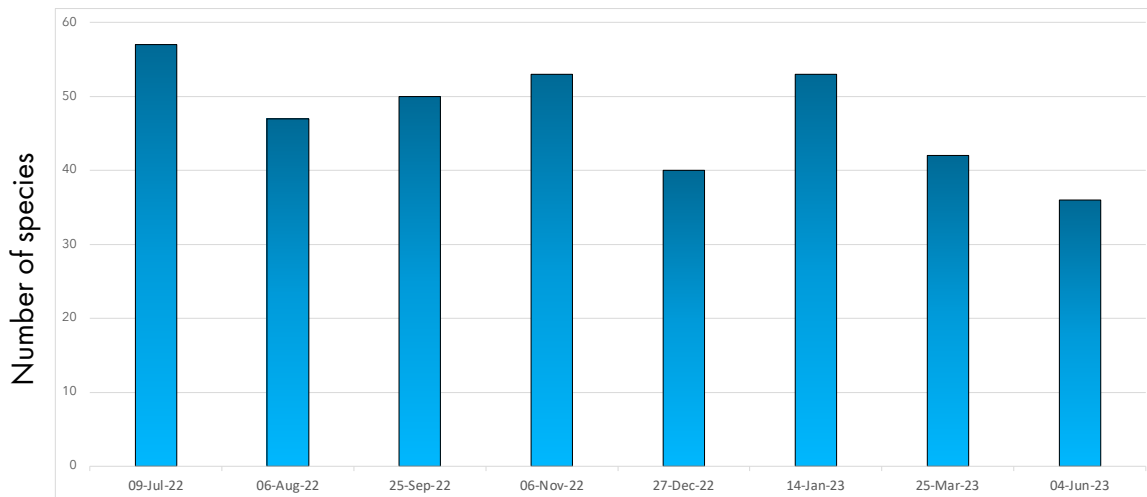
The newly developed van Riebeeck Park on the Bluff, was established on an old landfill site by the municipality to replace lost wetlands and grasslands in the area. Although the vegetation is still establishing and the wetlands will be wetter in summer, it still provided a good range of birds, even in winter.

Monitoring the birds in this restoration project provides a clear indicator of habitat quality and suitability. Now with 12 months of monitoring having been done this is a good time to have a look at the dataset before continuing with the inputs to eThekweni Municipality.

First Three Visits (July, August, and September 2022)

During the initial three visits on July 9th, August 6th, and September 25th, 2022, the wetland displayed varying conditions. In July, it was relatively dry with extensive bullrushes *Typha capensis* growth. By August, grass had grown more extensively, with some areas cut. An early September fire burned long grass and alien vegetation, and subsequent clearing by workers, especially of larger alien plants, left the wetland more open.





Above | The number of species counted on each survey over the year.



Anneli Mynhardt

Right | Spotted Thick-knee in July 2023



Anneli Mynhardt

Left | Rufous-winged Cisticola



Wetter conditions in September favored frogs, with a significant presence of snoring puddle frogs.

Bird species counts were consistent across these visits, with totals of 57, 47, and 50, respectively. Notably, there were relatively few waterbirds, and the wetland attracted more grassland and forest birds. Key wetland birds included Spur-winged Goose, Egyptian Goose, Blacksmith Lapwing, and Malachite Kingfisher.

Other species like Grey Herons, Hamerkops, Woolly-necked Storks, and Yellow-billed Ducks flew over but did not land, while Black-headed Heron was consistently observed on

Subsequent Visits (November 2022 to June 2023):

Since our October 2022 report, an additional five visits occurred on November 6th, December 27th, 2022, January 14th, March 25th, June 4th, and July 28th, 2023. These visits followed the same survey pattern, including bird surveys, fixed point photos, and noting butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, and frogs. The January count involved participation from other BirdLife eThekweni KZN members who came to count birds and see the progress.

Over summer and autumn, good rains maintained some water in the

Bird species counts declined in recent visits, reaching 36 in the last count. The total list over the year has now climbed to 94 species, with the latest additions being Fiscal Flycatcher and Purple-banded Sunbird, both more numerous in Durban in winter. Within the wetland grassland, Southern Red Bishop, Fan-tailed Widowbird, and Rattling Cisticola were consistently present. Barbets frequented the forest, and Little Bee-eaters were a constant presence on the margins. Common birds in wooded areas included Dark-capped Bulbul, Sombre Greenbul, Southern Boubou, and Spectacled Weaver. Many forest birds were counted based on



Anneli Mynhardt

Above right | Fiscal Flycatcher

Above left | A view of Van Riebeeck Park

the ground.

In the grasslands, Rattling and Rufous-winged Cisticolas, Village Weavers, Fan-tailed Widows, Southern Red Bishops, Red-billed Queleas, Burchell's Coucals, Little Bee-eater, Lesser Striped Swallows, and Black Saw-wing were frequently observed.

wetland, but extensive vegetation growth occurred, largely dominated by alien species like *Sesbania bispinosa*, *Desmanthus (virgatus?)*, and common *Hibiscus cannabinus*. *Sesbania bispinosa* recently died back, but *Desmanthus* continued to smother grass in some areas.

The boardwalk had also become a bit obscured by rapid plant overgrowth.

calls, with reduced calling expected during winter.

Steve Davis
BirdLife eThekweni KZN
Conservation Coordinator &
Honorary President



BirdLife KZN Rendezvous

Zimanga Aloe Garden and the uMkhuze Game Reserve in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park

A special birders-only day (Saturday 15 July 2023) which was offered to bird clubs to visit the Zimanga Aloe Garden in the Mkuze area, acted as the impetus for the second BirdLife KZN Rendezvous weekend in the area. A big thank you to St John Field, Chair of the St Lucia Bird club for organising and then prompting me to try to gather birders to this spot and repeat the previous year's weekend success. Even a special BirdLasser challenge was setup with a 25km radius for the weekend.



Ticky and I stayed at Ghost Mountain Inn for the first two nights and then the uMkhuze Game Reserve for the next two. Ghost Mountain Inn was a wonderful venue for birding within the challenge area. Also it provides close and easy access to the Aloe Garden allowing us to get an easy early start before joining the larger group at uMkhuze Game Reserve.

After birding the area on Friday, with most people in uMkhuze Game Reserve we managed to garner a new member from Gauteng who was travelling and birding - James Rolle - who asked about joining us for the aloes during a meeting at the Kumasinga Hide but quickly caved to the pressure from Dael and Nicky to join the bird club. Welcome James! We look forward to seeing you in KZN for more birding or online at our meetings. It was an early night to leave early for the Aloe Garden on Saturday morning.

What a spectacular sight greeted early arrivals who managed to get there by 7:30am. The morning light in the garden combined with the huge variety of flowering aloes and



From a planning point of view this was a free-form gathering and people booked their own accommodation in the area. A variety of places like Ghost Mountain Inn, Umziki Chalets, Igula, Baobab Inn and uMkhuze Game Reserve were used prior to the Aloe Garden visit on Saturday with some people arriving on Thursday and others on Friday before everyone staying for the weekend converged on uMkhuze Game Reserve. We had a remarkable turnout with 57 people staying over and joining the weekends festivities.



the bird chorus was amazing.

People began to arrive from the surrounding areas and Durban and the reaction in each case was the same. Amazement and surprise - and many other reactions as they arrived and took in the full scale of the garden with its meticulous layout and the synchronous flowering of so many species and hybrids was almost as much fun as watching the birds. Surrounded by the Zimanga Game Reserve the garden on this private homestead draws all sorts of bird species from the surroundings.

The aloe flowers were spectacular and the pictures give some idea but

this is something which should be experienced first hand. The central lawns allowed people to have tea together and then wander away again and look at different areas and flowers, birdwatch and then wander back to the tables generously set out by Elize Senekal and her staff to compare sightings and thoughts all over again.

After lunch people began to drift back to the uMkhuze Game Reserve for some late afternoon birding before the get-together braai at Mantuma Camp.

Early arrivals at the braai area



next to the office had sundowners together. As the fires were laid and roaring, we went through the group bird checklist together and discussed the lifers seen, and recommended places to go to connect with 'target'



Left top | Pathways through vast swathes of aloes, top right | a beautiful waterfall is incorporated in the garden's design. Bottom | beauty in every direction





Left | The morning light was just beautiful

Right | Hard at work early in the morning getting ready for the crowds of birders.



Left | Lawns with tables and chairs set out by the very kind Elize Senekal



birds for the next day.

It was great to hear about the birds that people had connected with. A number of specials had already been seen and lifers ticked by many of the members including Poobalen and Savani Naidoo connecting with a spectacular lifer in Pel's Fishing Owl, on a walk in the Fig Forest. A number of people also found one of my favourite birds, Eastern Nicator, for the first time and quite a few other species. The list by this time had already hit 150 species with Rob McLennan-Smith leading the challenge when we did the tally at the braai.

A debate, as is always the case with a group of avid birders, ensued about one of the birds seen - was it a Dark Chanting or Gabar Goshawk?. Verification by photo would have to settle the question once we were all back home so our attention turned back to dinner preparations. Finally the fires were ready and it was time to braai, chat and eat in earnest before heading back to our beds, some to the safari tents, some to chalets and some to their own camping sites. We were all lulled to sleep to the sounds of Wood Owl and Fiery-necked Nightjar.

The next morning was a cold and early start to keep finding birds to add to the atlas challenge (serious competitive streaks were starting to show), our own checklists and find lifers. A lot of birding, chatting, ooohing and aahing was done. A range of great birds was seen over the weekend and some worth mentioning in addition to those listed already include African Pygmy Goose, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Bateleur, Lemon-breasted Canary, Neergaard's Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Pale Flycatcher, Martial, Tawny and Wahlbergs Eagles and Pink-throated Twinspot to name just a few.

The birdlist reached a cumulative total of 222 species on the atlas challenge. The challenge was eventually won by Nicolette and Ticky Forbes who just managed to overtake Rob McLennan-Smith with a very lucky midday sighting of Common Buttonquail and Black-bellied Bustard.

So many photos were received from members of this expedition. Sorry we could not include all of them with this article but please look at the Birds in Focus section of this issue as many of them have been included there.

Nicolette Forbes

Chair | BirdLife eThekweni KZN and BirdLife KZN Forum

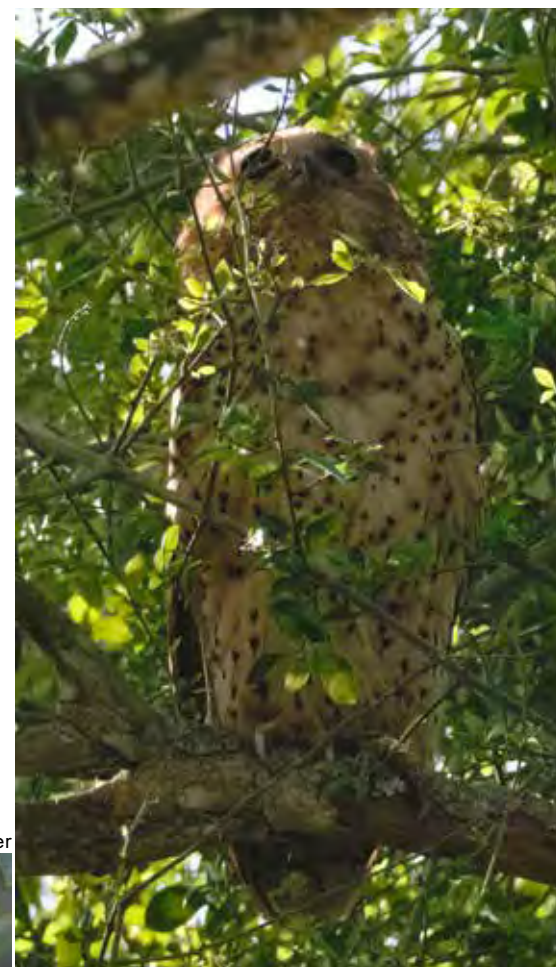
Top right | African Openbill

Middle right | Pel's Fishing Owl in the uMkhuze Game Reserve Fig Forest

Cary Kroeger



Hiedi Paul



Poobaalan Naidoo

Left | Yellow-bellied Greenbul



KZN BIRDING HOTSPOTS



uMkhuze Game Reserve in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park

Bird Specials

Pel's Fishing Owl
Pink-throated Twinspot
African Broadbill
Orange-breasted Waxbill
African Quailfinch
Eastern Nicator
Stierling's Barred Warbler
African Pygmy Goose
Green Malkoha



Poobalan Naidoo

Bird Hotspot of Note

One of South Africa's oldest game parks (est. 1912), the 40,000ha uMkhuze is a spectacular part of the iSimangaliso World Heritage Site. Famous for birding and game-viewing it is home to more than 420 bird species, as well as the Big 5 and rare species such as cheetah and wild dog – all at home in an amazing landscape of acacia savannah, rivers, pans, and riverine forest.

Great Hides

The game-viewing hide in the sand forest, kuMasinga, provides an all-day game show spectacle as herds of animals gather to drink at the waterhole. The beautiful iNsumo Pan is host to hippo, Nile crocodiles and many bird species. iNsumo supports one of only two significant Pink-backed Pelican breeding colonies in southern Africa. Visitors can relax in one of the two bird-viewing hides next to the iNsumo Pan.

Accommodation

Accommodation is available in fully equipped safari tents or chalets in Mantuma Camp. A rustic private bush lodge and camping is also available.



Events and News BirdLife South Africa

Birding Big Day

BBD is nearly 39 years old!

It's quite extraordinary to think that the first Birding Big Day (BBD) took place more than 38 years ago. Paper lists were still the order of the day, you had to post your list to the organising committee and the results were published months later... How things have changed! Now you can log your data on the mobile app BirdLasser and view your and other teams' data on an online map within minutes of logging it anywhere in South Africa.

The challenge, however, remains much the same as it was all those years ago. A team logs as many bird species as it can within a 50km radius and within 24 hours. It depends on you how seriously you want to take this challenge. You can plan which route to take, which species to target or arrange entrance to private properties months ahead. Or you can take a more relaxed approach, select your favourite birding spot and bird for a few hours, enjoying your time with birding friends. In recent BBDs over 400 teams comprising more than 1000 passionate birders have taken part. Come and join this exciting event!

How to participate? Create a team of at least four birders, select your birding location and complete the registration process at birdlife.org.za/birding-big-day-2023-entry-form/. You can choose to log your sightings using the BirdLasser mobile app or the traditional method of jotting down species on paper.

For more information about BBD see birdlife.org.za/support-us/events/birding-big-day-2023/ or e-mail bdd@birdlife.org.za. Don't miss out on this fantastic and fun event. Join us, and together let's make Birding Big Day 2023 an unforgettable adventure!

ERNST RETIEF, BIRDING BIG DAY ORGANISER



African BirdLife

September/October 2023

In this issue...

- The beautiful bird art of Zimbabwean artist Nicole Sanderson features on the magazine's front cover, as well as in her portfolio inside.
- As spring is sprung, the Southern Carmine Bee-eaters arrive in the thousands! Learn more about these wonderful birds in our latest issue.
- Read about Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park and why it's a great birding destination.
- Renowned conservationist and artist, Clive Walker, enlightens us on the 'Art of Birds', from ancient cave paintings to modern guide books.
- European, Asian and North American bird populations are in flux, but what's happening with South Africa's common birds? Peter Ryan shares some 'Common Truths'.
- Our youngest contributor yet reviews Faansie's Bird Book 2!

Look out for the eye-catching September/October issue of *African BirdLife* on shelves!



A Thrush Nightingale didn't sing in Amanzimtoti but still thrilled many!

How it started...

There is an old – and I mean really old – expression about the continent in which we live. In the original it goes as follows: *Ex Africa semper aliquid novum*.

For the non Latin scholars, which is probably most of us, it translates as "out of Africa always something new".

True to form it did hold for our province of KZN and we had the first confirmed record of a Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* on the morning of the 9th September 2023.

Discovered on a BirdLife eThekweni KZN bird club walk (BeKZN Walks...) at Mbogovango Nature Reserve in Amanzimtoti, it generated a bit of confusion for the group of bird club members none of whom had seen this species before. Careful checking by the walk host Adam Cruickshank A photograph taken by Jenny Sole at 9am was sent to the chair Nicky Forbes, was inspected and she confirmed to Adam that she thought it may be a Thrush Nightingale. By this time a number of other European based birders and other local birders were also confirming the ID. By 10am Nicky and I were already in the car and mobilising to get to the site.

The bird was seen a few times but very fleetingly between 9 and 12 and an attempt was made to get another image which resulted in a large crowd sitting on the road verge waiting, getting excited when anything twitched and back to waiting again. Eventually at 3pm a much longer and better sighting generated multiple photos one of which by Elton-John Bartlett graces

the cover of this KZN Birds issue. Not an easy bird to photograph!

A number of other bird club members got images which are included here and Jonathon Hemson was inspired with AI to produce a short poem in response to the waiting game that was playing out on our club whatsapp chat.

*Nicky had requested a photo,
Desolate, they couldn't win,
The Thrush Nightingale remained hidden,
a cruel, elusive sin.*

J.Hemson/AI



Cary Kroeger

Patient birders waiting for the 'TNG'



Roger Hogg

Thrush Nightingale at aManzimtoti Nature Reserve

Confirmation of the sighting generated the predictable flood of keen listers and twitchers who descended on the site over the next few days. Access to the site generally requires a permit and advance notice and Adam very kindly assisted to facilitate this access in a more speedy fashion.



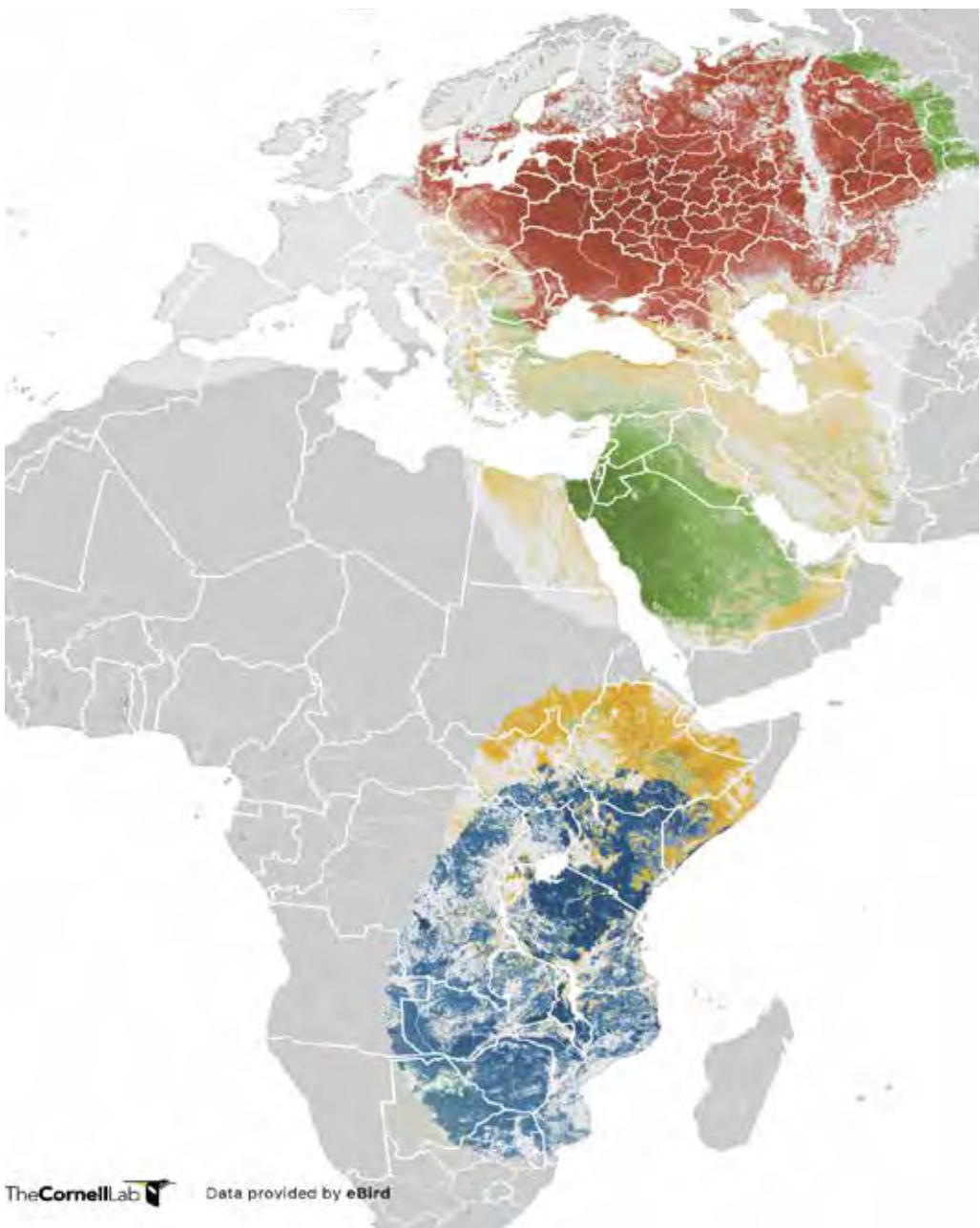
FAQs - Thrush Nightingale

For the benefit of those a bit more interested in this bird, over and above simply adding it to their life list, the following details may be relevant. It is a migrant from a broad swathe of Eurasia from central Europe virtually all the way to China. It migrates to Africa but rarely south of Zimbabwe and northern Botswana and Namibia. It is not a thrush, which as a group generally forages on the ground. As the people who saw it would have noticed, it stayed low, like a ground foraging thrush, for most of the time and this was probably where part of its name came from. Roberts VII refers to a "large, migratory warbler." Just to make it more interesting it belongs, according to the Cornell Birds of the World, to the Old World, i.e. Eurasia and Africa, flycatchers of the family Muscicapidae. This family includes the legendary Robin Redbreast of the UK. Everybody wants a robin!

The genus *Luscinia* has four species including the legendary Common Nightingale *L. megarhynchos* which sang, according to the song, in Berkeley Square in London. Neither this species nor the other two in the genus occur anywhere near us. Both Common and Thrush Nightingales are renowned for their songs but one must wonder whether the judges have been exposed to some of our "robin" type songsters.

The song, as in many other skulking songsters, proclaims territory and a search for a mate after which the singing slows and may stop. An interesting feature of singing is that much of it occurs at night which raises further questions – are females able to locate singing males at night? Many small migratory birds do so at night so presumably have reasonable night vision. There is an

argument that Thrush Nightingales are under reported in their non-breeding grounds, but as they do sing to some degree in these areas, one should keep an ear open for any unfamiliar calls emanating from an impenetrable thicket.



RELATIVE ABUNDANCE

Breeding season Jun 21 - Jul 13

Non-breeding season Dec 28 - Jan 4

Pre-breeding migratory season Mar 29 - Jun 14

Post-breeding migratory season Jul 20 - Nov 30

0

0.05

0.4



BirdLife KZN Forum | Zululand

Bonamanzi Game Reserve
21-25 September 2023



The BirdLife KZN Forum has begun

*In Zululand, where skies are blue
Over a hundred with binoculars will pursue,
Feathered friends, whether rain or sun,
For the BirdLife KZN Forum's begun*

*With feathers, binocs, and lots of sun,
We'll bird, we'll learn, and we'll all have fun!
So let's gather our gear and raise a cheer,
For the BirdLife KZN Forum was here.*



The BirdLife KZN Regional Spring Forum was held over five days, 21 – 25 September 2023 centred at Bonamanzi Game Reserve, Zululand. And what a happy and wonderful gathering it was!

The event was held over the Heritage Day public Holiday weekend. Apt because we use the forum to celebrate our country's birds and they are such a part of our Heritage. The forum comprised a whole range of activities; an atlas challenge and workshops, birding excursions with professional local guides and a day of bird related conservation talks. The invitation to this was open to anyone with an interest in birds to attend. The business part of the Forum, a meeting of the KZN bird clubs and other KZN bird related organisations, was held on Sunday 24 September to discuss

regional issues, conservation projects and bird club business. The forum weekend had a bumper turnout with 120 people checking in and a few more popping in to take part in some of the events. Registration was very efficiently handled by Carron Dove BL KZN & BeKZN Secretary and Shireen Gould from BLSA.

Friday Evening talk on the restoration of Lake St Lucia

A very well-attended talk was held

Friday evening after the fire-pit sundowners. Nicolette, who worked with this important project for 10 years, shared the story of significant interference in our largest estuary system and the project that aimed to change this trajectory.

Saturday Conference

The Saturday conservation talks were well-attended with a total of 80 people present through the day. It was a bit disappointing that



not everyone took the opportunity to come and listen to the excellent speakers and important subjects on offer but hopefully they will take up this opportunity at the next forum.

After a welcome and introduction by Nicolette Forbes, Chair of the BirdLife KZN Forum (BL KZN Forum) the talks were opened by BirdLife South Africa's CEO Mark Anderson speaking about the highly important and significant programme that is the Mouse Free Marion Project. The talks that followed were of an extremely high standard and covered a wide range of topics, starting with Linda van den Heever's very impressive scientific research and conclusions. Linda is running BirdLife South Africa's project looking into the effects of lead toxicosis in South Africa's bird species, with the aim to eventually pinpoint the source of the lead poisoning and finding ways to mitigate its impacts. This was followed by a riveting presentation on the breeding behaviour of Spotted Ground-thrush by Hugh Chittenden. Steve McCurrach took us through to the lunch-break with an impressive report on the voluntary work of The Bateleurs in support of wildlife conservations that had the audience feeling inspired. Prof

Ticky Forbes changed the pace a bit as we eased out of the lunch break with a history of studies in Maputaland and an overview of its key biogeographic features. The regional talks then rounded off the

Right from top | Mark Anderson talking eloquently about the Mouse Free Marion Project; Linda van den Heever providing vital information about lead poisoning through ammunition; Hugh Chittenden sharing his incredible knowledge about bird ecology.

programme with Tania Anderson the new SABAP2 (South African Bird Atlas Programme) co-ordinator providing us with a fantastic overview of the programme and the KZN perspectives. Steve Davis followed with an outstanding talk profiling the CWAC (Coordinated Waterbird Counts) data (another important long-term national monitoring programme) and he gave us pause to be extremely concerned about the state of our water habitats (wetlands and estuaries) as he showed us the declines in various waterbirds over time.

The Saturday talks ended on a lovely note with a get-together Quiz and Boma Dinner hosted by BirdLife eThekweni KZN. The dinner was very well attended with a full complement of registered attendees turning up for the quiz and the food. A fantastic meal, and an evening in perfect weather under the stars rounded off the day of talks beautifully. And then we watched the rugby together in the Boma - not even the loss against the Irish dampened the spirits of the day although it was a lot quieter at the end than the beginning. The talks were the core of the forum, and these were surrounded from Thursday to Monday by a wide variety of bird related workshops and activities.

Left | Under the stars ...supporting the Boks in the Boma - not even the loss could dampen the spirits of a wonderful day.





Left from top | Steve McCurrach of The Bateleurs speaks about their important contributions to conservation; Dr Ticky Forbes speaks about the history of Maputaland; Tania Anderson updating the audience in her new role as SABAP 2 Co-ordinator; Steve Davis talking about the importance of CWAC programme and the terrible messages coming back from the data.



Above | EJ Bartlett and Corrine Pieterse wearing their green and gold to show support #BokFriday

number of delegates elected to go on the 16 bird excursions (BEX's) on offer led by the professional bird guides. These took people to areas that are in some cases tricky to access. All benefitted by going with guides that are extremely knowledgeable about their own birding areas. Areas visited included Nibela Peninsula and False Bay Park on the shores of northern areas of the Lake St Lucia estuary, Muzi Swamps and Mpempe Pans, and the Lake St Lucia estuary mouth and the Gwala-Gwala trail. Thanks to the four guides Themba Mthembu, Junior Gabela, Dave Rimmer and Ian Ferriera who provided people with outstanding experiences.

Networking

Lots of self-exploration occurred with people driving around the Bonamanzi Game Reserve itself as well as to surrounding birding hotspots including the Eastern and Western shores, the uMkhuze Fig Forest sections of iSimangaliso World Heritage Site and other areas close by. Lots of fun was had by all and the combined bird list reaped the results of all this birding. Lots of chatting was done around the braai pits each evening while watching the sunset and the Quiz and Games evening had lots of laughter and robust debate.

Atlas Challenge and bird list.

The atlas challenge really brought friendly competition between individuals and teams to the forefront. A combined total of 270

birds indicated the level of birding that was carried out. The challenge was led by Steve Davis and Anneli Mynhardt from an early point during the weekend and they held onto the lead right to the end with a total of 163 birds under their belt.

Some fantastic birds were added to individual lifelists as well as the general combined list with species such as Pel's Fishing Owl, Green Malkoha, Pink-throated Twinspot, Rudd's Apalis, Woodward's Batis, Narina Trogon, Livingstone's Turaco, Ashy and Grey Tit-flycatcher and, Rufous-bellied Heron.

Below | African Cuckoo Hawk seen by many within Bonamanzi - a lifer for many during the Forum.





Above | Lesser Jacana | Johnny de Beer

Left | Rufous-bellied Heron one of the rarer species captured on the Eastern Shores of iSimangaliso | Johnny de Beer

Below | Bearded Scrub-robin striking a pose in Bonamanzi | Val Rowles



Below | Pel's Fishing Owl seen on the Fig Forest Walk | Johnny de Beer



Sunday Business Meeting

The business meeting was held the next day, Sunday 24 September. This involved the full BirdLife KZN Forum committee, which includes the BirdLife affiliated club Chairs (Nicolette Forbes-BeKZN, Sean Glynn-BLKZNM, Tony Coetzer-BLS), BirdLife South Africa representatives (Mark Anderson CEO and Shireen Gould (Membership Manager), representatives of the KZN Rarities Committee and the KZN Ornithological Trust. A number of matters were discussed including:

- Mark Anderson described the BLSA activities and priorities while Shireen Gould provided some input regarding membership of the clubs and BLSA. The magazine delivery issues were also discussed and some of the solutions communicated to the committee.
- Difficulties and opportunities facing KZN bird clubs and how we can all support and assist each other
- The chairs discussed the venue and dates for the March 2024 and September/October 2024 venues. It was agreed that the next forum will be hosted by BirdLife KZN Midlands in the KZN Midlands.

Sunday Board Games and Vortex Binocular Raffle

The Sunday Games Evening saw people bringing their dinners, drinks and snacks to the games venue and linking up in teams to play the bird equivalent of well known board games like Pictionary=Bird Pix, I know=I know Birds, and 30 seconds.

There was a lot of raucous fun and friendly banter and the younger members of the teams gave significant support to their sides as they ran with the answers to the front - well done Caleb, Addy, Caleb - and joining the runners but maybe not quite as young and fast, Steve Davis, Corrina Pieterse. Thanks to all for joining in the fun. Halfway through the games the BeKZN raffle draw took place with two pairs of Vortex 10x42 Diamondback binoculars as prizes.. Many thanks to Vortex and Whylo for the binoculars. This allowed us to raise R10 000 for the BeKZN bird conservation fund. The draw was conducted with all the people on each sheet holding the same number standing and the winner was then drawn by the sheet letter. This raised the tension significantly for each draw. Brian Roberts was incredibly generous buying 50 tickets and was in each draw but was not the

final winner letter, Andrew Mather. Margaret and John Cooke also outdid themselves by purchasing a full sheet of tickets each. Thank you to all of you who bought a ticket and supported this initiative.

The winners of the binoculars were both delighted and were both present at the games and the draw to receive their prizes. Pat Jennings of BirdLife KZN Midlands was the first winner and Michel Dos Santos of BirdLife eThekweni KZN won the second pair of binoculars. Both the winners are fairly new bird club members so it is fantastic that they have such lovely new binoculars to continue their bird journeys.

Final Words

In closing Nicolette Forbes as Chair would like to say a big thank you to all the speakers, a special thank you to the representatives from BirdLife South Africa for attending and to everyone who made the effort to be with the forum which is what made it such a success.

Keep safe, happy summer birding and we hope to see you all back plus more friends at the next Forum meeting in 2024.

*Text | Nicolette Forbes | Chair
BirdLife KZN Forum*

Below | Gorgeous Lake St Lucia | Val Rowles



Member Murmurings

An unusual observation by Peter Vos, KZN



An Interesting Frugivore

Peter Vos sent in these interesting photos and account of what he observed on the 16 June 2023 at Sea Park, near Port Shepstone, KZN south coast.

Peter says "I was fascinated to watch this male Olive Woodpecker - A. On the ground; and B. Eating the flesh from a burst avocado dropped by monkeys from our "honorary indigenous" avocado wildlife magnet tree ..."

David Allan commented in a reply email that "this observation is worthy of publishing in KZN Birds as he states that Roberts 7 makes no mention of feeding on the ground and / or on fruit particularly avocados".

The following account from the Birds of the World also emphasizes the arboreal habits:-

Olive Woodpecker *Chloropicus griseocephalus*

Olive Woodpecker *Chloropicus griseocephalus* is found in forest and dense woodland. Restricted to middle and high elevations across much of the range, though found down to sea level in South Africa.

Their known diet includes Insects and their larvae, particularly ants, beetles (Scarabaeidae). Occurs singly or in pairs, and frequently joins mixed-species feeding flocks. Strictly arboreal, these birds forage on upper trunks and on branches, preferring small trees and small branches in larger trees. Moves quickly through a tree, often shifting sideways or backward foraging at preferred heights between 10 m and 15 m.

Source: Hans Winkler and David Christie *Birds of the World* Version: 1.0 — Published March 4, 2020



PHOTOS GENEROUSLY
DONATED BY
HUGH CHITTENDEN

COME DINE WITH ME



Ready to hang
or use flat as a desk pad
Great Gifts for Overseas
or as
stocking fillers
for all ages

2024



COME DINE WITH ME

COME DINE WITH ME
April 2024

13 months each and 14 wonderful bird photos plus
monthly planner blocks marked with holidays,
and special bird/environmental days highlighted

ORDERS OPEN !

BirdLife eThekwni KZN's
2024 Calendar
is going to be a significant one

This year's theme
Come Dine with Me
profiles birds, their food and feeding behaviour

R120 PER CALENDAR

orders of 3 or more R100 per calendar

**Pre-Order your 2024 calendar now
by paying by EFT or credit card**

Bank: Nedbank
Branch code: 198765
Account Number:
1305421663
Please use reference
YOURNAMECAL24

Please email
calendar@bekzn.org
to pre-order by
sending
proof of payment



PAY BY CC

Foraging, from the Old French fourrage (to forage, pillage, or plunder), refers to the ways birds find food. This activity, followed by feeding, consumes much of a bird's day. There is a good reason for this - efficient foraging is indispensable for survival.

Below a Crowned Hornbill gets breakfast - a large juicy locust..



Nicolette Forbes





Birds in Focus

Send your interesting sightings, rare bird photos or just great pics of birds seen while you are out and about birding. Send in any contributions following the guidelines and deadline dates on page 2. Note that the design and layout editor may crop, or change the editing of the photos if necessary to improve the publication quality.



Black Cuckooshrike in uMkhuze Game Reserve | Cary Kroeger



Marico Sunbird at the Zimanga Aloe Garden | Cary Kroeger



A Speckled Mousebird gorging on aloe nectar with a significant amount of pollen being transferred to its feathers | Poobalen Naidoo





An Orange-breasted Bushshrike in a lovely pose not often so easily seen | Poobalen Naidoo



Common Buttonquail at uMkhuze in July 2023 | Nicolette Forbes



Burnt-necked Eremomela at uMkhuze in July 2023 | Nicolette Forbes



A Bush Black-cap photographed at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo in early September 2023 | Andrew Brown



A young Yellow-billed Stork forages in the shallows | Stewart Clarke



A Palmnut Vulture soars overhead at the Durban Botanical Garden | Gerhard Delpont





Above and Below | A Dark-backed Weaver sews with a vine to begin nest construction for the upcoming breeding season | Val Rowles



Mud-Nesters

Hugh's Views

It's surprising how few bird family groups in southern Africa use mud as a medium to construct nests. Swallows and martins are the dominant mud-building nest specialists. Their eggs are laid, within the mud structure, on a pad of soft fibrous material and feathers. The other bird family that utilizes mud in nest construction are the Palm Thrushes.

Red-winged Starlings occasionally use limited amounts of mud in construction to the nest base, or foundation, but not in the cup structure itself. Hornbills use mud to

seal off their nest entrance holes in tree cavities (and sometimes in rock face cavities!).

Prior to the presence of man-made structures, mud nests built by swallows would have been placed under branches or below rock faces etc.

So, apart from the swallows and martins, few other birds in the southern African region utilize mud for construction purposes.

The Palm Thrushes are the other family that interestingly utilizes mud

extensively. Both Palm Thrush species in southern Africa utilize mud to construct cup-shaped nests.

Hornbills seal their nest enclosures with mud, they don't actually construct nests from mud. Red-winged Starlings occasionally use mud as a base on which to construct their cup-shaped nests.

Acknowledgments: I thank John Mendelsohn for comment.

Text and photos | Hugh Chittenden



Left | Different coloured Lesser Striped Swallow nests, constructed from different coloured mud sources.

Right | A typical Lesser Striped Swallow nest constructed under the limb of a Baobab tree.





Above | A Greater Striped Swallow (left) and Lesser Striped Swallow (right), both collecting mud for nest construction.



Above | The following two Lesser Striped Swallow nests were built beneath unusual material; thatching and corrugated iron! The nest cavity and tunnel temperature beneath corrugated iron must be extreme during mid-summer.



Above | South African Cliff Swallow nests.





Above | A South African Cliff Swallow about to enter its nest



Below | A South African Cliff Swallow with aerial insects to feed chicks





Above | Two Red-breasted Swallows busy collecting mud to build their nest.

Below | A huge beakful of mud collected from a waterhole by a Mosque Swallow.



Below | Wire-tailed Swallows build cup-shaped mud nests.





Below: Rock Martins also construct cup-shaped nests.

Below: A Rock Martin is adding nest lining to its cup-shaped nest.



Below: A Collared Palm Thrush collecting mud for nest construction.





Below: A Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush constructing a cup-shaped mud nest below a palm frond.

Below | A male Trumpeter Hornbill collecting mud to plaster up its nest entrance enclosure.





Chair's Chirps Ladysmith Birders



Peter Nelson continues to steer the ship as the dedicated Chair, with Ian Gracie overseeing the finances as Treasurer and Michele Kirsten in the role of Secretary Bird. The committee, comprising six members, convenes bi-monthly, to manage governance of the club, organizing outings, and contributing to the diverse program that keeps bird enthusiasts engaged.

The recently held Annual General Meeting (AGM) in August 2023 yielded a unanimous decision to retain the existing committee. The Ladysmith Birders remain steadfast in pursuing their dual objectives: to promote birding within the Ladysmith community and to showcase Ladysmith as a prime destination for birding enthusiasts. At every gathering, members are reminded of these goals, and it is used to guide our events and activities to achieve the objectives.

With a membership of 43 avid birders at the time of the AGM, the club is witnessing a steady rise in members, drawing from surrounding areas like Van Reenen, Elandslaagte, Weenen, Winterton, and Bergville. Meetings are spurred by the availability of guest speakers, and occur approximately every two months with communications through email to members.

The Ladysmith Birders, maintain their affiliation with BLSA, and have been busy on multiple fronts. They hosted the March BirdLife KZN Bird Forum, a gathering that drew birders from across KZN. Attendees had the opportunity to visit a number of areas not normally accessible to the public, and were able to record species not often recorded in their home areas. Members are thanked for their efforts in hosting the event and arranging all logistics.

Club activities to local hotspots are arranged and attended by members, with a focus on the Malandeni Waste Water Treatment works in Ladysmith, Weenen and Spionkop Nature Reserve. An outing to Spionkop Battle Field and Lodge, hosted by the Heron family attracted almost 50 participants.

A visiting celebrity, the Namaqua Sandgrouse, resulted in a large number of expeditions to the Bergville area.

The Ladysmith Birders aren't just recreational bird watchers; they are contributors to conservation efforts. The Ladysmith Birders have contributed to the Mouse Free Marion Project, and have also sponsored trees for the local Arbour day celebrations held by BirdLife officials at local schools.

Involved in the Klip River Forum, they've engaged with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) to manage Malandeni Wetlands and address local municipality concerns. Another offshoot of the Klip River Forum was the development of a community based group addressing the condition of urban rivers in the Ladysmith area. This group, named the African Black Duck project after the key indicator species that will be attracted to the area, is supported by the Ladysmith Birders, with members

supporting through sponsorship and assistance with monitoring programmes.

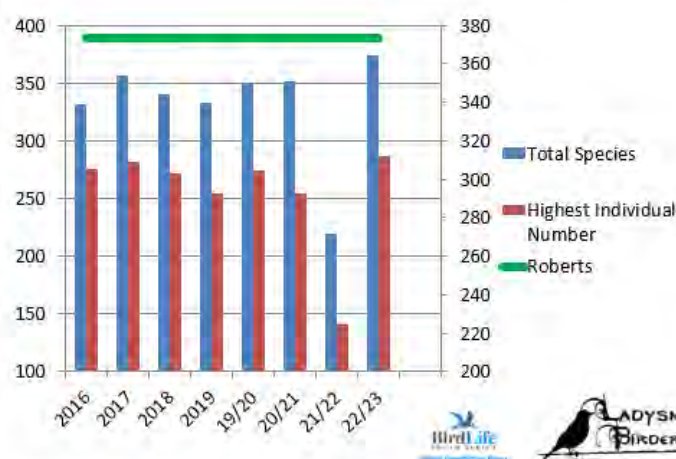
Atlasing is gaining momentum and will be a focus going forward. There are many areas that have not been fully explored in the district, and members are encouraged to go explore and atlas these unknown areas.

Members are also working with resorts in the Berg to raise awareness of birds and identify potential guides.

Current listing competitions include an informal seasonal challenge. Recording birds seen throughout Africa encourages birding amongst members and others, and results in some interesting discussions at meetings.

More seriously, the 50 km Challenge where all birds within 50 km of our meeting point are recorded annually, from July to June, allows the club to determine birds in the Ladysmith district. Members of the Ladysmith Birders recorded 374 species and logged 17 200 records in the target area during the challenge period. A big thanks to Henk Nel for enabling the challenges on BirdLasser.

*Peter Nelson
Chair Ladysmith Birders*



Chair's Chirps

BirdLife eThekweni KZN



BirdLife eThekweni KZN | July to September 2023

As we transition from the cool embrace of winter into the warm embrace of summer, BirdLife eThekweni KZN's diary has been buzzing with a host of exciting activities. Our committee and members have been, exploring new areas and enjoying the season change which has brought with it increased bird calls and activity.

Diverse Range of Activities

One of the highlights of this quarter was the activity series which included the routine birding walks, sit-ins and atlas adventures. Nine walks, four sit-ins, and two atlas adventures were rolled out across the municipality and further afield into Umdoni and Illembé. These went to both familiar areas and some new places. Most exciting for the club was the find of the Thrush Nightingale on one of our walks. BeKZN was then instrumental in providing access to the wider birding community to this tightly controlled location. Our themed activity, *In our Backyards* has been running since the AGM in March 2023, and has covered different talks, presentations and tasks including bird calls, seasonal sightings, keeping a proper checklist and with great participation by the registered attendees.

Sit-Ins with a View

Birding isn't just a morning activity for some. Outdoor activities also included morning and afternoon "Sit-Ins," where we patiently wait for birds to make their appearance. It's during these tranquil moments that we truly connect with the world around us.

Atlas Challenge Continues:

The Atlas Challenge remained a cornerstone of our atlas activities. Dave Rimmer, our expert guide, led participants to explore different pentads. It's all about contributing

valuable data while having an unforgettable adventure.

Inspiring Talks

BirdLife eThekweni KZN has again hosted some captivating talks. Cassie Carstens shared insights into atlasing, Richard Flack delved into the world of bird photography, and the brilliant Dr. Lucy Kempenlightened us about the conservation of the majestic Southern Ground Hornbill.

Events and Outreach

The club attends or participates in a number of events and outreaches to advocate birds, bird conservation and is able to fly, metaphorically speaking, the club and official BirdLife South Africa flag high. A number of club events – a Winter Solstice Party and the KZN Bird Club Rendezvous allowed for great gatherings, networking and the creation of lovely memories. Nicolette Forbes was kept busy as Chair doing talks at various locations, including the Ballito Photo Club, Mt Edgecombe Country Club, Le Domaine, Hillcrest, and Somerset Valley Estate, Umhlanga. The club also joined the Kloof Conservancy's Open Indigenous Garden event for a day.

Zimanga Aloe Garden, uMkhuze Game Reserve Adventure

As part of the KZN Forum activities, we ventured to the enchanting Zimanga Aloe Garden. This outing was followed by an exhilarating weekend with birders from different clubs in uMkhuze Game Reserve. For more details on this exciting journey, be sure to check out page 11.

Upcoming Excitement

In September 2023, BirdLife eThekweni KZN was the host club for the BirdLife KZN Forum | Zululand. See the article reporting back on this exciting event on page 19 of this issue.

The BeKZN Calendar is Set for

2024

Our calendar for 2024 is already complete and will shortly go to print. Pre-orders are now open and you should do this before they are all sold out. Grab your copy and start planning your birding adventures for next year. The theme this year is **Come Dine with Me!** and profiles bird food and feeding behaviour

Conservation.

Our conservation activities have picked up. The funding of various research projects and operational support continue but in addition the club submitted a letter to eThekweni Municipality expressing concern about the invasion and spread of House Crow within the city. A number of members also assisted the municipality with their recent count of this species.

The monitoring of a local restoration offset Van Riebeeck Park has continued under Steve Davis' expert guidance and a formal report submitted to the municipality covering 12 months. They have been extremely appreciative and provided complimentary feedback. Financial support going forward for additional projects has been agreed by the committee with Ntsikeni NR, Secretarybird, BirdLasser, Southern Banded Snake-eagle mooted for this year's budget.

With the arrival of summer, the migrant birds have already started making their presence felt. We're eagerly anticipating a fantastic summer of birding. BirdLife eThekweni KZN is dedicated to fostering a deep connection between people and birds, and we invite you to be a part of our passionate community. Please join us and happy birding!

Nicolette Forbes | Chair BirdLife eThekweni KZN & Chair BirdLife KZN Forum





Chair's Chirps



BirdLife KZN Midlands

Following the course on basic Raptor Identification, which clearly demonstrated the need for such type of education as many attendees were non-members or newer birders. In response we are arranging for a course on Bird Sounds and Calls on 25th November this year. This will be presented by Steve Davis from BeKZN.

We are working with the Karkloof Conservation Center and Spekboom Tours to bring children from two schools in the area for a day of conservation and birding on Friday

27th October 2023. If any members wish to be involved in this outreach program, please contact Sean Glynn

The Club received an invitation from Andrew De Blocq at BLSA to send two people to BLSA in Wakkerstroom for two months to be trained as bird guides. We contacted all people/organizations who we thought might be interested and one lady submitted an application and was accepted. The club is providing support in the form of transport costs to Wakkerstroom and we are looking at providing support in other areas

as well. The course leader found that Nobuhle Mbothwe was doing well but struggling to see and read and turns out she needs reading glasses! The Women's Leadership and Training Programme (Marylyn Aitkin) arranged for Nobuhle a pair of borrowed binoculars and the Roberts' App but we are working on getting something permanent for her after the completion of her course.

*Sean Glynn
Chair BirdLife KZN Midlands*

News from non-affiliated KZN bird clubs

St Lucia Bird Club

Membership Update

As of September 2023, the St Lucia Bird Club boasts 44 official members. Notably, the club maintains an inclusive approach, welcoming non-members to participate actively in their diverse activities.

BirdLife South Africa Affiliation

The club's affiliation with BirdLife South Africa was discussed, revealing a lapse in payment for the affiliation fee. The members unanimously agreed to let the affiliation lapse, and the chairman duly informed BirdLife South Africa.

Financial Matters

The St Lucia Bird Club faced challenges with its bank account in August 2022, leading to its closure. The balance was transferred to the private account of John Field. The club has also decided to abolish membership fees, relying on the current balance to cover expenses related to outings and cruises.

Financial Report

Despite challenges, the club stands in good financial health with a credit of R6 802.36.

Office-bearers

The leadership of the club sees John Field remain as the Chair, while the roles of Treasurer and Vice-Chair will be shared by Irma King and Caroline Fox.

Outings in 2023

The club has been actively organizing outings throughout the year, including trips to St Lucia, hosting the Dolphin Coast Bird Club, and explorations of Kuleni Game Park and Teza Conservancy.

General Observation

A decline in the regularity of monthly club evening meetings, signals a shift in the club's operational dynamics.

In conclusion, the St Lucia Bird Club remains resilient in the face of challenges, adapting its approach to sustain its vibrant community of bird enthusiasts.

*John Field
Chair St Lucia Bird Club*



News from non-affiliated KZN bird clubs

Dolphin Coast Bird Club

The Dolphin Coast Bird Club has taken flight and is riding the winds of growth and enthusiasm, as highlighted in their latest report for the KZN Forum in September 2023.

Soaring Membership Numbers

In the aftermath of the COVID era, the Dolphin Coast Bird Club has witnessed a remarkable surge in membership. What was once a family of 40 has now blossomed into a flock of over a hundred passionate bird enthusiasts. The North Coast of KZN seems to be not only recovering but thriving, evident in the remarkable growth of the club.

An exciting trend within this surge is the influx of younger members, injecting fresh energy and curiosity into the birdwatching community. Currently boasting 61 family memberships, the club is fostering a diverse and vibrant community of bird lovers.

Active Wings: Monthly Outings and Beyond

The monthly outings of the Dolphin Coast Bird Club continue to be a feather in their cap, drawing a strong attendance as a rule. However, a noticeable pattern emerges - the farther the distance, the fewer the birders. Despite this, newer venues have proven to be hits, demonstrating the club's adaptability and commitment to exploring diverse birdwatching landscapes.

In collaboration with the Simbithi Country Club, the Dolphin Coast Bird Club spreads its wings further by contributing to monthly environmental talks. This collaboration not only enriches the knowledge of its members but also reinforces the club's commitment to broader environmental awareness.

A standout event was a successful weekend away to St Lucia, where Dolphin Coast members joined

forces with the local St Lucia Bird Club. The camaraderie extended to a dendrological outing to Kuleni Game Park near Hluhluwe.

Feathers in the Conservation Cap

The Dolphin Coast Bird Club takes flight not only for pleasure but with a sense of responsibility. Several members actively contribute to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2), furthering the understanding of bird distributions and abundance.

The club also organises CWAC (Coordinated Waterbird Counts) events for the Sappi Mbozambo Wetland, showcasing a commitment to the ecological health of the region.

In 2022, R10,000 was donated to the Southern Banded Snake Eagle Project. Unfortunately there has been no feedback and there is a real need for progress updates.

In the current financial year, a sum of R6,000 has been allocated to the Mouse Free Marion Island project, underlining the club's commitment to conservation initiatives.

Chris McDonald
Chair Dolphin Coast Bird Club



BirdLife KZN Forum 2023 Committee

Office Bearers

Chair | Nicolette Forbes (BirdLife eThekweni KZN)
Secretary | Carron Dove (BirdLife eThekweni KZN)
Treasurer | Tony Coetzer (BirdLife Sani)
Editor KZN Birds | Ticky Forbes (BirdLife eThekweni KZN)

BirdLife Affiliated Club Chairs (voting members)

Sean Glynn (BirdLife KZN Midlands)
Peter Nelson (Ladysmith Birders)
Otto Nel (BirdLife Northern KZN)
Nicolette Forbes (BirdLife eThekweni KZN)

Non-voting representatives invited to attend the BirdLife KZN Forum committee meeting:

Representatives from relevant KZN bird-related organisations invited to attend the committee meeting

KZN Rarities Committee Chair | Digby Cyrus
Natal Ornithological Trust | Steve Davis (BirdLife eThekweni KZN)
SABAP2 KZN representative | Cassie Carstens (BirdLife eThekweni KZN)
John Voelcker Bird Book Trust | Guy Upfold

Bird Club Chairs from non-affiliated clubs always invited to attend the committee meeting

John Field (St Lucia Bird Club)
Chris MacDonald (Dolphin Coast Bird Club)
Harry Voorma (Mount Edgecombe Bird and Environment Club)
Carole Hills (Birdlife Zululand)

