



The Fledgling

YAB Monthly Newsletter  
July 2016



## Chairman's Chatter - John Kinghorn



I remember when I initially started birding close on ten years ago, opening my Roberts bird guide and being absolutely amazed at the plethora of species, brilliant colouration, restricted distribution and the variety in sizes. This was all, quite honestly, rather daunting and I feared that I would never quite be able to learn all these incredible birds in my pursuit for all things feathered. My world became fixated on birds of southern Africa and southern Africa only, my mind closed to the avian wonders that lay beyond our borders. This was truly a sad moment, for little did I know that what lay beyond our borders were more extravagant colours, more ridiculous displays and whole new bird families I had never even heard of.

It was only recently (2014) that I started to open my eyes to what lay beyond the borders of our sub-region and I was amazed. The trip reports from South America, comprising a list of over 1000 species of birds, the ridiculous displays of the Birds-of-Paradise and the cherry on the top, one man's quest to see all the world's 34 species of Pitta in the space of a calendar year. This then led me to join numerous Facebook groups which were dedicated to birding worldwide or a specific country. These showcased images and tales which would occupy me for hours on end behind my computer, all whilst my craving to further my knowledge was quenched.

So where am I going with all of this? A simple piece of advice to all those who are wholeheartedly dedicated to their southern African birds, that there is a whole world of 9 300+ other species waiting to be seen, so expand your mind and marvel at the avian wonders that call our earth home!

Yours in Birding,  
John Kinghorn

## Editor's Note - Mike Myburgh



July seems to have been forgotten in the wake of what has happened in the last two weeks down in Cape Town. This news again proves that winter is not a dead period in the birding calendar. Anything can show up anywhere at anytime. As exciting as that has all been, there has been a lot of other things happening in the Southern African birding world with many rarities (national and regional) still popping up all over the sub-region, as well as many trips and another awesome Youth Africa Birding event.

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Fledgling and remember to send your articles and pictures to us at [youthafricabirding@gmail.com](mailto:youthafricabirding@gmail.com).

Happy birding.



White-crested Helmet-shrike

*YAB Regular -  
Toni Geddes*

## **Birding in Buffelsdrift Conservancy**

Buffelsdrift Conservancy is a little gem of bushveld lying on the western boundaries of the Dinokeng area, between Roodeplaats Dam and the N1 highway. It has become a fairly popular place to visit, not only because it is so easy to reach, so close to both Pretoria and Johannesburg, but also as a birding hotspot for birders and lovers of nature.

The Conservancy is entirely privately owned, but birding is allowed on all the public roads throughout the area. Buffelsdrift is far more than just a wonderful place in which to spot birds, it's location is pretty unique. It lies in an old volcanic crater and has a river running through its centre. The fact that

the area lies between the Bushveld and the Highveld regions, encompassing a number of wetlands, rocky ridges and river banks, means that it has its fair share of animal and plant life. Boasting a bird list of 265+, it is one of the easiest areas in which to view most of the typical thornveld species, as well as rarities, migrants and vagrants from time to time.

Some of the specials of the area include: Coqui Francolin, Purple Roller, Greater and Lesser Honeyguide, Marsh owl, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Flappet Lark African Pygmy, Giant and Malachite Kingfisher, African Harrier Hawk Southern White Faced Owl (Breeding), Village Indigo Bird, Fiery-necked Nightjar, African Stonechat, Northern Black Korhaan, Violet-eared Waxbill, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Mocking Cliff-chat, Crimson-breasted Shrike and Yellow-bellied Eremomela.

Due to the proximity to Roodeplaats dam, an extensive canal system and

the Pienaars River running through the Conservancy, birding year round is rewarding. Along the Pienaars River, the route offers great views of colonies of Village Weavers and a good chance of Giant, Malachite and Half-collared Kingfishers and sometimes the elusive Finfoot! On a hiking trail along the ridge, you might encounter Spotted Eagle-Owl, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Brown backed Honeybird, as well as European Rollers, Southern Carmine Bee-eaters and Common Swift.

A full days birding in the area is recommended to include all habitats and can deliver a birdlist in summer of 150+ species and in winter up to 120 species. Rarities, migrants and vagrants to the area include: Harlequin Quail, Fulvous Duck, Woodland and Striped Kingfisher African Black Swift, Levillant's, Great-spotted and Black Cuckoo, African Grass Owl, Common Cuckoo, African Rail, Pennant-winged and Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, African and Corn Crake, Red-crested Korhaan, Ruff, Red-chested Flufftail, Marsh Sandpiper, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Cape Vulture, Greater-painted Snipe, Booted Eagle, Bronze-winged Courser, Lanner Falcon, Whiskered Tern, Black Sparrowhawk, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Goliath Heron, Cape Vulture, Montagu's Harrier, Marabou Stork, White-crested Helmet-Shrike, Sedge and River Warbler, Black Cuckooshrike, Buffy Pipit, Southern Pied Babbler, Cuckoo Finch, Monotonous Lark, Red-billed Oxpecker and Capped Wheatear.

I am privileged to have grown up in the Conservancy, but please come and visit for an enjoyable day's birding.



## 10 Days of Pelagic Birding Bliss - John Knghorn

Birding at sea has never really been my forte. A trip out to sea generally results in either prolonged states of sturgeon induced sleep, enough vomiting to replenish the bird bait, humiliation from a Subantarctic Skua now eating your fresh bird bait and the feeling of still being on the boat for at least two days after you stepped onto the docks. It was with all this in mind that I very sceptically began typing a motivation as to why I thought I would be best suited for 10 days at sea - needless to say it was decided to make no mention of the Skua incident. It wasn't long before I had a response from the team at Birdlife South Africa and before I knew it I had pressed the send button with a message containing two simple words: "I'm in!"

I arrived in Cape Town and was greeted by fellow YAB'er Andrew de Blocq who had so graciously offered me a bed and food for the evening leading up to my departure from the V&A Waterfront the following morning. We dropped my bags off at his place and were then off for a cheeky beer with another Cape Town YAB'er, Nicholas Fordyce who had taken a 'casual' jog from his house to the bar, having not broken a sweat (guess it 'runs' in the family). Sharing birding stories, laughs and thoughts on what I was going to encounter on the trip and how well my stomach would cope was absolutely fantastic and a truly great time spent with likeminded youth.

The next morning I was up before the break of dawn, guzzling down some breakfast and a steaming cup of tea, as I raced against my uber driver to see who would be ready first. The drive was an experience on its own- my driver was a Congolese man and proceeded to give

me an intricate recount of the Rwandan genocide which happened a few years back. On this happy note we arrived at east pier, rounded the corner and before my eyes, sat afloat the almighty SA Aghulas II in all its blood red glory; South Africa's most prestigious ship. Clad with some of the world's most intricate scientific devices I couldn't even pronounce the names of, the words "dedicated to Miriam Makeba" sprawled along the side and a group of enthusiastic student-scientists waiting to board the gang plank and begin our ten day adventure.

The ship itself is gorgeous both inside and out. Once I had managed to get myself acquainted with it, I was able to sit down with the three other bird observers on the trip to discuss our plan

of action and to run over what exactly was expected of us with regards to capturing data for the atlas of seabirds at sea project. It wasn't just a free joy ride-we had to work for our lifers. The plan itself was fairly simple - conduct ten minute transects and record any bird we may come across which was approaching from the front only and not following the boat. These transects could also only be conducted whilst the ship was steaming and the recording of coordinates after each ten minute period was crucial.

The days went by fairly quickly and my initial concerns of getting sea sick soon faded as my body started to re-adjust to my home for the next ten days. Swaying from side to side felt 'normal' and not only my mind re-adjusted but my body aswell, muscles now fully familiar with



The SA Aghulas II



## 10 Days of Pelagic Birding Bliss - John Knighorn

the swaying motion and I was now no longer rolling off of my bed in the evenings.

The route that was to be travelled was one which provided a limited amount of time spent in Western Cape waters, which is ideally where one wants to be at this time of the year. However the silver lining came in the form of a direct route out from Port Alfred which would take us to roughly 180 nautical miles and past the continental shelf. We would then traverse this same line back to Port Alfred and then hug the coast all the way back to Cape Town. This was brilliant news and when hearing it my heart sped up instantly, because as per Finding Nemo the 'drop-off' is where all the crazy stuff lies and the same goes for birds. The edge of the shelf often brings with it upwellings which in turn attracts birds and being so far out it's not normally the more common species that end up joining the party.

Antarctic Prions; Soft-plumaged and Great-winged Petrel's and Sooty Shearwaters were undoubtedly the most numerous species that we encountered around the ship. We were blessed with Albatross sightings as well with Shy, Black-browed and Indian Yellow-nosed all giving us fantastic views. Other treats which hung around the boat were Pintado Petrel's and Wilsons Storm-petrels and mammals which came in the form of Cape Fur Seals and plenty Humpback Whales which would often breach as close as 100m from the ship.

The highlight of the trip however came one morning after breakfast where I decided to head up to the observation

deck as I knew we were now roughly 170 nautical miles out, prime birding was no doubt awaiting. Although it was my off-shift I would be stupid to sit in the lounge eating Romany Creams when there were potential lifers hanging around and boy am I glad I made that decision. I got outside and was following a gorgeous little Pintado Petrel which gave us a close fly-by and as it went to the back of the boat my eyes were diverted to a large, brown figure which had just dipped behind a swell. Whilst following the path I suspected the bird was following all of a sudden it appeared. Big, brown, slender wings, wedged tail, white around the eye and the clincher; a yellow line though the bill- SOOTY ALBATROSS! The calls I am sure were heard by the captain from his ridiculously comfortable seat on the bridge and we soon found ourselves jumping down flights of stairs and sprinting to the helipad, where we tried our best to relocate the now invisible

bird. Was I finally succumbing to cabin fever and going delusional? Was I so keen on finding something rare that I had thought up this absolute mega? All of these were answered when all of a sudden the chocolate beast reappeared, this time a little distant, but the bird nonetheless. It was on that high note in which we began the trip back down toward Port Alfred and hugged the coast again as we tackled calm seas all the way back to Cape Town harbour.

Undoubtedly one of the best experiences I have had in my birding career to date and one which I will treasure and take to my grave one day. I can only but encourage fellow YAB members to get out onto a boat, either from Durban or Cape Town and to experience the magic that is pelagic birding rather than skip over the pages in your field guide.

It is more than worth it!



"Black Betty". Sooty Albatross



Freckled Nightjar (Melissa Whitecross)

## Freckled Fun Report - Josh Olszewski

On the second of July, YAB held an outing to Walter Sisulu National Botanical Gardens. Our main objective was to locate the elusive Freckled Nightjar, which is known to sit on the roofs of buildings in the area at night.

Melissa, Caroline and I arrived mid afternoon, getting Southern Masked Weavers and a White-bellied Sunbird in the parking lot and considering everyone was only supposed to meet at 16:00, we decided to take a walk while we waited for the others. Speckled Pigeons sat on the roofs of the buildings near the entrance, and Dark-capped Bulbuls were constantly chattering and moving about in the trees throughout the garden. The lawns between the entrance and the waterfall played host to the African Wattled, Crowned and Blacksmith Lapwings, Common Mynas, Cape Wagtails, Hadedda Ibis and Red-eyed, Laughing and Cape Turtle Doves.

We soon caught up with Jordan and Rushada and the five of us then walked down to the waterfall. On the way, we heard Bar-throated Apalis and Black-backed Puffback next to the river but had no sightings of either one. Cape Robin-Chats worked the undergrowth and a very inquisitive Kurrichane Thrush (that had been ringed) on the lawn just next to the restaurant walked right up to us and posed obligingly for Melissa and I to snap a few shots. At the waterfall itself, there wasn't much action other than a pair of Egyptian Geese in the plunge pool (not even a flyby from the eagles) until an African Black Duck came speeding down from out of nowhere, passing us by at eye level and alighting on the river running off from the plunge pool. We followed it down the river back to the bridge until he flew underneath us and further down the river.

We headed back towards the entrance, noticing an old sunbird nest on one of the trees closer to the restaurant. We also managed to get a Southern Boubou next to the succulent garden. The trees and bushes around the flower bed at the entrance were

also really productive, with flocks of Cape White-eyes, Yellow-fronted Canaries, a Karoo Thrush (also ringed), a Streaky-headed Seedeater and a few Cape Weavers, one of which busy plucking the individual flowers off an aloe and stealing its nectar.

Once Mike, Monica, Werner and Ernest (who would be taking us to where the nightjars were) arrived, the group was complete, and we decided to continue walking through the garden until nightfall, when all the people had gone and the nightjars would be out. A walk down to the Sasol Cormorant hide overlooking the small dam turned up a very confiding Little Grebe, two Egyptian Geese, two Yellow-billed Ducks, two African Black Ducks, flocks of non-breeding Southern Masked Weavers, Southern Red Bishops, Red-collared Widowbirds and a Common Moorhen that walked onto the pathway leading into the hide.

We got African Olive Pigeons in the tall trees next to the waterfall, a group of Speckled Mousebirds sunning their bellies near the succulents and a few Natal Spurfowls on the fringes of the grassland and the lawn close to the entrance. A large group of Helmeted Guinea fowl had now assembled on the lawn with flocks of Cape Sparrows and a pair of Crested Barbets. Other birds we saw whilst walking around the garden were Cape Glossy Starling, Pied Crow and Amethyst Sunbird.

When nightfall came, Ernest led us to the Nestle Centre behind the main entrance buildings. Here we waited outside the buildings until it was totally dark, constantly watching the two roofs in front of us. Suddenly, in the half light, I saw a bird land on the corner of one roof. I thought I'd shine my torch on it to see what it was, but before I could do so, I heard someone say, "There it is!" We had our nightjar. Then all torches and spotlights were on the bird for all of a second or two. Then it flew away, but came back shortly afterwards. Again, the minute the bright lights went on, it took off. So, for the sake of those wishing to photograph the

bird, we used the dimmer lights and only shone them on the bird when the photo was to be taken.

We all came away with satisfactory photos and views of a truly awesome bird and I came away with a lifer!

The nightjar wasn't the only highlight. We continued walking through the gardens thereafter to see what other interesting creatures we could find, besides the many Spotted Thick-knees walking around the lawns near the entrance, and sure enough, we did. In the grassland near the dam we came across a very fast, nimble and tiny mouse. Despite being in awe of its cuteness, no one knew what it was. We eventually had to leave it and move on, but I managed to identify it that same night after the outing with my mammal field guide. It turned out to be a Chestnut Climbing Mouse and even more interesting, it happened to be a new mammal record for the garden. The last surprise of the night was a pair of Mandarin Ducks we saw at the small dam from the Sasol hide. It was quite random seeing these exotic escapees on the dam.

All in all we all had an amazing time. We managed to get our target bird along with some other awesome sightings and the banter was truly entertaining! You definitely don't want to miss the next Freckled Fun outing. It's one to remember!



Chestnut Climbing Mouse  
(Melissa Whitecross)



## Lasser Year List Challenge - Mike Myburgh

# Lasser Year List Challenge

May the best (most obsessed) birder win...!



Youth Africa Birding



The big news of July was Dylan Vasapoli's rise to second place, knocking Melissa to third for the first time in a few months. Caroline Howes is still sitting pretty in top spot, quite a way ahead of the rest. Melissa Whitecross and Dylan are very close indeed. Frans-Hendrik Joubert also gets himself into the top ten for the first time. Well done Frans-Hendrik.

The top ten looks like this: 1. Caroline Howes(563) 2. Dylan Vasapoli(542) 3. Melissa Whitecross(539) 4. David Snow(521) 5. Jo Balmer(506) 6. John Kinghorn(505) 7. Werner van der Walt(473) 8. Frans-Hendrik Joubert(460) 9. Marco Gouws (448) 10. Ian Luyt (442).

Well done to you all, especially Caroline, Dylan and Frans-Hendrik.

Remember to keep listing anywhere you go, because a lot can still happen over the rest of the year.

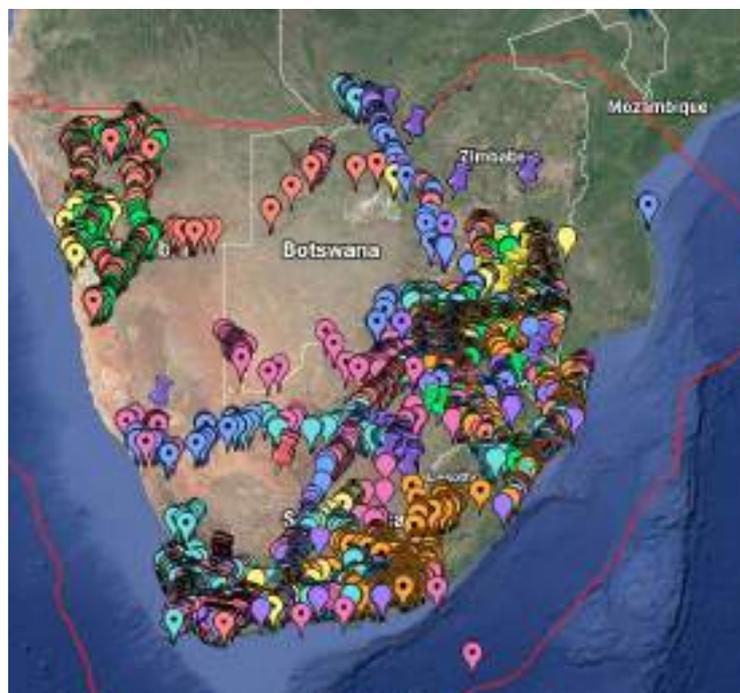
Thanks again to BirdLasser for this great challenge and to all the YABers who keep the challenge alive.

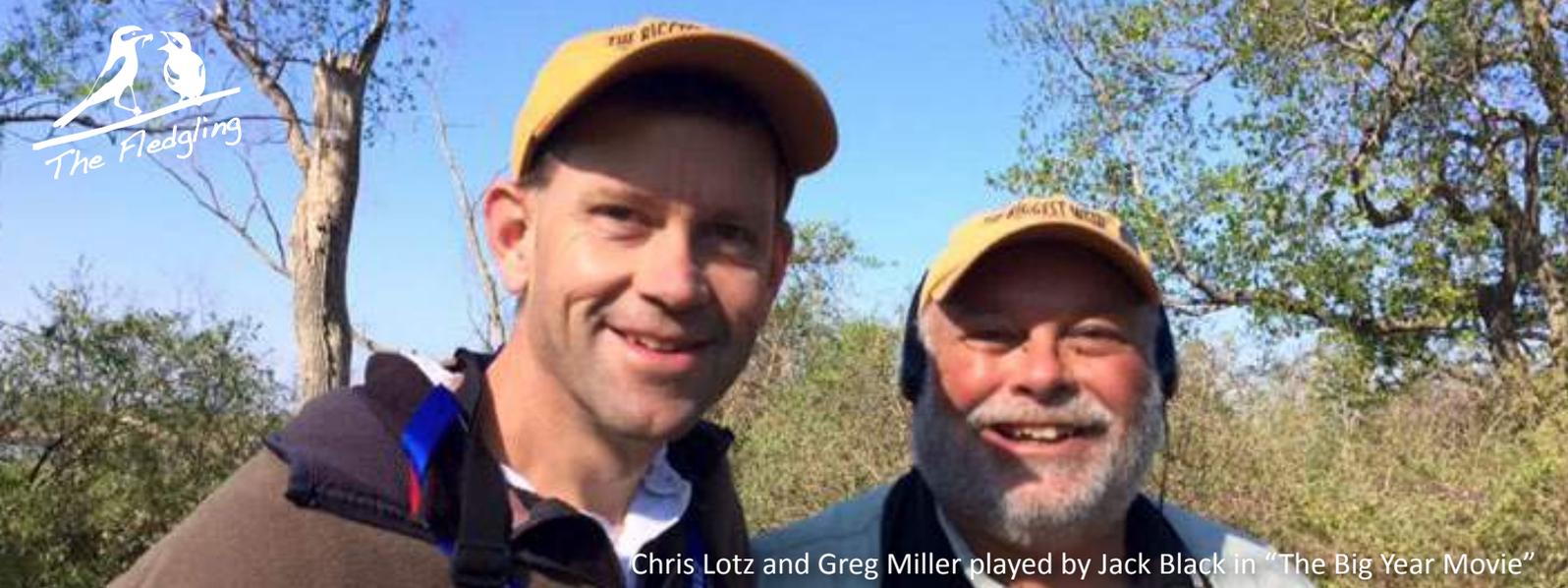
Good luck and safe birding to you all.

### Leaderboard

751 unique species

Pos.	Team	Unique species
1	Caroline Howes	563
2	Dylan Vasapoli	542
3	Melissa Whitecross	539
4	David Snow	521
5	Jo Bugge Balmer	506
6	John Kinghorn	505
7	Werner van der Walt	473
8	Frans-Hendrik Joubert	460
9	Marco Gouws	448
10	Ian Luyt	442





Chris Lotz and Greg Miller played by Jack Black in "The Big Year Movie"

## *Ballies Birding - Chris Lotz*

I've been birding as long as I can remember. It all started when I was a young child growing up in the suburbs of Joburg. I could not help but notice Crested Barbets, Black-collared Barbets, mousebirds (all three species commonly visited our Randburg garden back then) and other spectacular birds.

Family holidays to the Kruger Park and Plettenberg Bay only fuelled my growing passion for birds – who would not love glossy starlings, bee-eaters, rollers, Knysna Turacos and other stunning things? My parents left a very old copy of Roberts lying around and I started using that to identify my own birds (my parents were more into big mammals and other stuff so my specific interest in birds was a spontaneous thing that for some unknown reason developed without any direct encouragement). One afternoon after school I also made the fateful decision to count how many birds I'd identified and I could not believe it was just over 100, a number I thought was spectacular – although the only school friend who shared my interest in birding did not seem to care, frustratingly!

Anyway, my goal suddenly (that very afternoon) became to see every species in Roberts (all 900 of them). At that stage I had no idea that listing was such a popular endeavour and I guess in South Africa it did not in fact yet have that much of a following like it did in the UK (and if it did I would not have known about it anyway since I did my birding in isolation). I had the most awful pair of binoculars imaginable and in fact a great many of the birds I first identified were without binoculars at all – the challenge of getting close enough to identify species with the naked eye was part of the fun. I realized, for example, that no

two species behaved the same (in any way), some of them never allowing a good view.

The quality of my field guide also left much to be desired and I was often extremely surprised to see what a new species actually looked like compared to the tiny painting in Roberts. Of course, probably the biggest disadvantage of starting my birding back then in the 80's was the lack of other youngsters to learn from. My friend Mike enjoyed birding to some extent, but I never met another birder of my own age until my varsity days in Cape Town. Everything that I knew about birds was from the Roberts text combined with detailed personal observation (over and over again, especially of things with real personality such as Grey Go-away- birds; while I was certainly a keen lister, I also simply enjoyed observing the fabulously intriguing behaviour of even the common species). The amount I learned from the birding friends I made later while at the University of Cape Town (studying ornithology) was of course huge in comparison to what I was able to figure out on my own.

I eventually managed to get my hands on the pioneering bird-finding book "Where to watch birds in southern Africa" by Ian Sinclair and Aldo Berruti. The excitingly-written text allowed me to plan family trips to Zimbabwe, Namibia and other parts of the Roberts listing region. My dad was always impressed when I presented him with an itinerary for our next trip and he'd invariably say, "This will work well, I know you're just after birds but this will allow the rest of the family to see the countryside and landscapes as well". Then my dad would do the real work booking campsites and so forth and the next thing we'd actually

be going! I'd write out all the birds I "needed" in the area we were going and loved crossing them out as I managed to find them. The tantalizing part, of course, was repeatedly paging through Roberts and seeing all the amazing-looking species lurking only in northern Namibia, the Okavango or in Zimbabwe – so seemingly out of reach to us South Africans.

To every problem there is a solution and with the help of the Berruti/Sinclair book, I eventually managed to see the bulk of southern Africa's regularly occurring species. This was, of course, not without problems. While the authors were legendary African birding pioneers, any book written in 1983 will be out of date and also won't have the advantage of building on other birders' knowledge (considering that this book was written pre-internet and all). When the authors stated that "the Spitzkop is one place where the rare Herero Chat can be ticked with certainty round the bases of the granite hills", it meant that I allocated only about three hours of our first planned Namibian family holiday, to the Spitzkop, thinking I'd be kicking the chats off the ground. Imagine my panic when there were none of them in evidence no matter what I did – even climbing the lower reaches of the massive rocks didn't help.

Furthermore, the Ruacana/Kunene region had not yet been pioneered – I don't even think Cinderella Waxbill, let alone Angola Cave Chat, had been discovered in Namibia when I first went there. These birds certainly didn't get any mention in "Where to watch birds in southern Africa" – these areas, along with the Caprivi were off-limits to birders anyway because of the Angolan war. As for Mozambique, this is what



Chris Lotz and his school friend Mike a couple of years later

## Ballies Birding - Chris Lotz

I had to deal with in my early birding days (another excerpt from this book) "The part of Mozambique south of the Zambezi River, which forms the northern boundary of the southern African region, is included only for the sake of completeness as, since the country's independence in 1975, all forms of tourism and casual visits have been discouraged. During a short trip in 1976 I [Ian Sinclair] found birding virtually impossible, however, I have described the best-known birding areas which one day may again be accessible to the twitcher".

My birding years with that book "Where to watch birds in southern Africa" gradually transitioned into birding with varsity friends and getting all the Cape birds. Eventually, after spending many years studying, culminating in 2.5 years of doing post-doctoral research on hummingbirds in the USA, I began to realize two things. First, my research was not allowing me to pursue my passion of seeing as many of the world's birds as possible. Secondly, I realized I liked all birds and did not want to specialize in any particular group of them.

So in 2003 I decided to start a birding tour company ([www.birdingecotours.com](http://www.birdingecotours.com)) and my aim since then has been to get to know as many of the world's birds as possible. It's been stupendous, of course, every minute of it! Being asked to write this piece for the "Birding Ballies" section has certainly forced me to reflect how things have changed in the South African birding scene over the three and a half decades I've been birding (yes, I'm old!).

It's been an extremely exciting journey. A few of the landmark things I've observed happening during the course of my

birding career are as follows:

- The very start of the internet and the formation of the "sabirdnet" e-mail group thanks to Jenny Norman who continues to run this.
- The start of rare bird reporting, eventually perfected by Trevor Hardaker of course.
- Guy Gibbon and the Sasol folks both launching the very first birding "apps" the world had ever seen – the concept of e-guides (including bird calls and all) was pioneered in South Africa by these other "birding ballies". These apps of course ran on Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) prior to the emergence of smartphones and tablets.
- The vast improvement of navigation, which is critical to bird-finding - I started with map books and now thankfully rely on GPS co-ords/Garmin/Tracks for Africa/Google Earth.
- The "Birds of Africa South of the Sahara" book by Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan which is encouraging travel outside our own listing region. In fact, there's a huge trend for South African birders to now work on their world lists as well as their local lists.
- The discovery of new breeding species in our region, such as Angola Cave Chat, Green Tinkerbird, Bohm's Bee-eater and Yellow-throated Leaflove, I now feel a part of an incredibly brilliant birding community and it is exciting to think where we might be headed for in the future.

Southern African birders are becoming better and better equipped and skilled to push the boundaries, largely because of amazing access to information (as we're all so much better linked into the birding

community as a whole than we used to be) and technology – look at Birdlasser as one final example.





Roseate Tern

## Quest for an Eastern Cape Big Year Record - Jo Balmer

The whole concept of a Birding Big Year has been thrown around a lot in recent times. My first real experience with it was last year when a mate of mine, Dylan Weyer, was busy with his Eastern Cape Big Year. For the last few years, the record had stood at 365, set by Jeff Curnick in 2007. Dylan managed to significantly better it last year and ended on 408 species.

This year, I took up the challenge. Having discussed in provincial circles that a Big Year didn't necessarily have to start on January 1st and rather only had to be 365 continuous days, I began my quest for the Eastern Cape Birding Big Year record on 9 February 2016.

My initial target was the old record of 365. I figured I could base my chase on that just to get a feel as to whether or not Dylan's record was attainable. Thanks to advice and help from many birding friends down here, I hit that target on 22 May, only 104 days into my Big Year. My target was reached with a phenomenal encounter with an African Scops Owl, a fitting species and one I'd struggled to photograph in the past. Having reached my preliminary target after less than a third of the year, I set my sights on Dylan's 2016 record.

There are the inevitable bogies still to tick off; species such as Blue Korhaan and Squacco Heron. There are also those species that are generally tough to find in the province, like Narina Trogon and Southern Ground Hornbill. But the year thus far has produced a few gems that I never could have imagined seeing in the Eastern Cape.

These include species like Steppe Eagle, Spotted Crake, Common Redshank, Protea Canary and Sedge Warbler.

As I sit and write this, I have 194 days still left of my ECBY, and I'm really hoping that the migrant season will produce a few more crackers. I should also be able to boost my numbers with those migratory species I didn't manage to connect with in the latter chunk of last summer.

Roll on, migrants!



Red-winged Francolin



Fiery-necked Nightjar



Protea Canary



Rufous-Tailed Scrub Robin (Jo Balmer)

## Rufous-Tailed Scrub Robin Twitch - Shaun Atkinson

It all started on the Sunday evening while myself and Brendon were enjoying a few post-braai beers and a game of Uno when one of us noticed a strange bird being posted on Trevor's wall with the caption: "I don't want to get too excited just yet but what is this?!"

That shot of excitement went right down my spine with the thought of a possible twitch on the cards. The three of us- Brendon, Zandri and myself started planning and once the GIGA alert and confirmation of the species came through, our plans were almost concreted. Brendon and myself had a lecture the following morning which we had to attend and happened to drag on forever, followed by a quick escape and by 11am we were Cape Town bound!

We arrived at the Zeekoeivlei picnic site at about 15h30, where we joined the mass of people with cameras all marching in a similar direction and within about 10 minutes, we got a brief visual accompanied by a proof shot or two of southern Africa's first ever RUFIOUS-TAILED SCRUB ROBIN!

We stayed around until dark but the wind kept the little guy within the long grass and by around 5pm we decided to retire for the evening and try again in the morning.

The next day, it was much of the same- weather wise, with rain added to the mix. The Scrub Robin was

rediscovered again and we all got great views with bins but still no photographic opportunities.

Before returning to George we took a quick trip to Strandfontein sewage works to see what we could pick up. This little detour gave me my second lifer of the trip, Black-necked Grebe as well as some fairly relaxed Water Thick-knees.

What an awesome impromptu Cape Town twitch- here's to the next one!

\*Rufous Scrub Robin/Rufous Tailed Scrub Robin/Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes* is a partial migrant. Its breeding range extends from Portugal, southern Spain and the Balkan Peninsula, through the Middle East to Iraq, Kazakhstan and Pakistan. In Africa it breeds from Morocco to Egypt and south of the Sahara as far east as Somalia. The furthest south they usually go is down to Kenya. This bird seems to have reverse migrated and thus ended up in Cape Town. Welcome to South Africa.



Rufous-Tailed Scrub Robin  
(Brendon White)



Water Thick-Knee



Nervous Twitchers



## Upcoming Events

### 1. African Bird Fair - 3 & 4 September 2016, Walter Sisulu National Botanical Gardens.

2016 sees a new era of bird fairs in South Africa with the creation of the African Bird Fair.

Two days of pure birding awesomeness held at one of South Africa's most famous National Botanical Gardens. The two days will see a plethora of birding related exhibitors, guided bird walks and various other fun activities for all!

Further info will be released closer to the time regarding YAB's participation and how you can get involved.

But for now, be sure to save the date.



### 2. Youth Africa Birding Pelagic Trip - 10 & 11 September 2016, Simonstown.

The first YAB Pelagic Trip in conjunction with Birding Ecotours will depart from Simonstown early on Saturday morning (weather permitting). We will spend the day out at sea trying to notch up as many pelagic specials as possible. If Saturday's weather is not conducive for a day out at sea, we will postpone till the following day and hope that the weather will play its part.

For those of you who have never been on a pelagic trip, this is opportunity not to be missed. For all the details, see the advert below and if you have any more questions, please feel free to pop a mail to the committee at [youthafricabirding@gmail.com](mailto:youthafricabirding@gmail.com). Thanks to Birding Ecotours for their help in arranging this amazing trip.

**Date:** 10 & 11 September 2016

**Venue:** Simonstown Harbour

**Space available:** Maximum of 12 YAB members & 2 guides over 2 boats

**Cost:** R1700 p/person

(This is the pelagic fee only.

Travel & accommodation is at your own expense.)

**Travel:** Each person must arrange their own travel and accommodation to Cape Town/ Simonstown)

**What to bring:** Warm clothes, Food & Drinks, Sea Sickness pills for the weak stomached



## Birding Ecotours & Youth Africa Birding Pelagic Trip

Youth Africa Birding & Birding Ecotours are not liable for any injury, loss or damages sustained during the trip. Joining is at your own risk.





## Our Sponsors

A huge thank you goes out to the following sponsors for their unwavering support:



YAB has its own group on WhatsApp for organizing twitches among youth, "YAB Twitchers". For further information drop John Kinghorn a message on Facebook!

