

The Kite

Tygerberg Bird Club
Tygerberg Voëlklub



Number 127 Winter (May 2020 – July 2020)

In this issue:

Club news	Pg 2
Wader Bash 2020	Pg 3
CWAC counts at Botriver	Pg 4
Vulture feeding: more study needed	Pg 6
Know your birds	Pg 7
International news	Pg 10
Brain teasers	Pg 11
General information	Pg 12

Affiliated member of:



Chirp from Brian

Well here we are in lockdown - confined to home - and no birding/atlassing! NEVER - just look out the window and see who is at your bird feeder or jumping around in the garden shrubs, you will be surprised! Even Birdlasser has set up a "Home" challenge to keep you birding whilst in lockdown.

From my desk at the window overlooking the wetland I can see both Bishops, Weavers (Cape and Southern-Masked), Mousebirds (White-backed and Red-faced), Doves, Sparrows, Guineafowl, Cape Spurfowl, Ducks and Geese as well as a number of raptors on the pylons close by. So far, the total bird species for our garden over the last two days was 27.

But for me the highlights are seeing Le Vaillant's Cisticola and of course a Karoo Prinia. I have never seen Prinia bathing so ran for my camera when this happened in our bird bath.



Yesterday, as I scanned outside for more birds, another surprise arrived – not only one, but a family of four Large Grey Mongoose trotted past in the wetland! A stare-off between them and the Cape Spurfowl ensued. Lockdown may just turn out to be fun after all.

Keep safe and keep birding from your windows!

Brian Vanderwalt

Due to the nation-wide lockdown, club activities are suspended until further notice. Watch our Facebook page for information and updates.

Birdlasser “Lockdown Challenge”

We're excited that Birdlasser has launched a special “Lockdown Challenge” in South Africa! We want to encourage you to use this super opportunity to atlas wherever you find yourself for the lockdown.

It also presents a unique opportunity to map records in urban centers especially. To take part:

1. Make sure the Birdlasser app is installed on your phone
2. Make sure the app knows you are an atlaser. Go to settings and select the “atlassing mode”. You will also need to enter your Citizen Science number. Watch our webinars if you need a reminder.
3. If you unsure where to locate the challenges on your app you can visit the BirdLasser webpage and join there <https://www.birdlasser.com/challenges/lockdown2020/overview>

Remember to submit your cards to #SABAP2 every 5 days, as per the protocol. Birdlasser would love to hear about your Challenge adventure! Please do share your photos and stories.

Feedback on recent TBC and other birding activities:

A number of rare birds started to make their appearance over the last two or three months on the Berg River estuary at Salt Works in Velddrif and had our members driving up and down between the salt pans at Kliphoek Pans to see them! The stars of this show were: White-rumped Sandpiper, Wilson’s Phalarope & Red-necked Phalarope, Common Redshank, Greater Sand Plover, Goliath Heron and Great Egret.

The club outing in **January** to West Coast National Park was well attended and produced many wader species as well as identification challenges, with some birds already starting to acquire breeding plumage. This is always a problem for birders who just start to learn the “grey” colouring of the birds in summer and they fox you by adding some rufous or spots or leg colour as the season changes and they prepare for their migration back to their breeding grounds.

The TBC AGM in **February** was a short one - thanks to load-shedding! (At least we managed to squeeze it in – the CBC had to cancel their AGM completely). Nonetheless, Kevin Drummond-Hay entertained us with accounts and photos from his recent birding trip to Zimbabwe.

The Western Cape Birding Forum met in **March** and discussed a number of matters related to all regions. In particular, they are encouraging the continuation of CAR counts on a national basis. The TBC CAR counts in Swartland went well. The TBC committee approved the refunding of fuel costs for participants from the club to ensure this important work continues.

15 or so TBC members attended the **March** camp at Kliphoek River Cottages, Velddrif along the Berg River. The accommodation was excellent and the birding good. In total, we managed to see 102 species over the two days. On Saturday morning, a lovely gesellige group visited the neighbouring Kliphoek Salt Works in the hope of spotting some of the specials which were being seen there lately. Happiness all around when we eventually managed to see the mega White-rumped Sandpiper after much searching and driving around the pans. Unfortunately, the Wilson’s Phalarope and Red-necked Phalarope were nowhere to be seen. Sunday’s riverboat trip was a big hit and thoroughly enjoyed by all. Our excellent skipper on the “Crackling Rosie” (a member of the West coast Birding Club himself), managed to get us close-up views of amongst others Purple Heron and Black-crowned Night-heron – photographers’ dream photo opportunities!



Well done to the team of Andrew and Heather Hodgson, who with Kevin Drummond Hay as their guide, was crowned as the winning team.



Brigid Crewe and her team proudly took 2nd place



Photos: Rocco Nel

TBC supports “WADER BASH” 2020

This event was arranged by SANParks Honorary Rangers arranged in the West Coast National Park from 14 – 16 February.

A total of 61 birders, comprising 16 teams (including 4 teams made up of school learners), participated in this event. Teams competed against each other, with the team that clocks-up the most birds in the allotted time, being the winner.

14 TBC members participated in this fun event, with 5 TBC members leading teams and acting as “birding experts” for their teams. It was very encouraging to see the enthusiasm of the youngsters in the school teams and this bodes well for the future of birding.

Birding started on Friday afternoon and continued throughout Saturday until the flag dropped at 17:30. We were blessed with good weather over the weekend and the notorious west coast southeaster stayed away. This made for fine birding - although Saturday afternoon was as hot as the competition.

As could be expected the top three teams were from

the TBC.

A total of 154 birds were identified. Amongst the rare and uncommon birds seen were the Southern Giant Petrel, (identified by Andrew Hodgson), Grey-Headed Sparrow, Cape Long-Billed Lark, Wattled Starling, Paradise Flycatcher and a Black-Crowned Night Heron perching on the rocks at Tsaar’s Bank. Our own Brigid was excited with her sighting of a flock of Little Terns in full breeding plumage at the Seeberg hide.

A most enjoyable weekend was ended on Sunday with an interesting talk on birding in general by Vernon Head and a talk by Dr Giselle Murison about mapping birding and biodiversity hot spots as well as the importance of the estuary at the Berg River.

Rocco Nel & Ettienné Kotze

27 years of Co-Ordinated Waterbird Counts “CWAC” at Bot River Lagoon



On 8th February, supported by local birders from Arabella and Kleinmond, the TBC was once again involved in the quarterly counting of birds at the Bot River Lagoon.

The day started out with lovely cool weather and little wind - making the conditions for counting ideal. Unfortunately, the lagoon water levels were very high which made walking the shorelines difficult.

This year, of great concern was the low bird numbers in this valuable bird breeding site – a continuation of the previous counts in the last two years, that haven't been much better. This may be as a result of the water salinity that isn't what it should be, with insufficient fresh water flowing into the area.

We suspect that should the upper regions of the area get some heavy rains, it could result in a natural breach of the lagoon mouth which will result in a lot of salt water accessing the lagoon. This may have a further impact on the bird species in the lagoon complex.

Many years ago, Red-Knobbed Coot was present in vast numbers, but in recent times numbers have decreased to such an extent that some areas of the lagoon are devoid of any coot. This is very puzzling – only two of the five teams encountering Coot and only 52 were counted over the entire lagoon area.

A total of 51 species were counted by our five teams and an accumulated total of 2544 birds were recorded on the day. Greater Flamingo's accounted for 344 of the total number with Terns making up another large figure of 431 birds of this species observed. Despite the low numbers of birds counted, a great day out was had by all who took part.



A chance to see and interact with the local Wild Horses is an added attraction!

All our TBC members are encouraged to join in the fun and take part in this event. It really is a great morning of interesting birding, lovely scenery and a wonderful way to see and learn about birds and their behaviour.

Don't miss out on the next CWAC on 8th May 2020. Contact Kevin to arrange your participation in this vital conservation project.

Read more on the project @ <http://cwac.birdmap.africa/>

Kevin Drummond-Hay

Thank you to the following members for their donations:

Pierre van Zyl, Wendel du Buy, Anton en Wiesa Maree, Anila van der Merwe, Riaan van Wyk, Jill Fraser, Mike Smith, Eike and Pieter Diedericks and Lee Silks (apologies for the gremlin in your name in issue 126!).

Birds are Shrinking Because of Climate Change

A new report from scientists show birds are getting smaller. The cause? Rising temperatures from climate change. The study examined birds over a 40 year period.

Birds' wings are getting longer, legs are getting shorter and their bodies are shrinking. Over 70,000 birds were measured from 52 different species, between 1978 and 2016. The study started by collecting dead birds that had crashed into Chicago buildings.

Animal body sizes are tied to their home climate. Animals in colder climates are usually larger than warmer areas. Cold area animals need more mass to stay warm.

Now with rising temperatures, the extra mass isn't needed. Scientists believe the increased wingspan is to aid birds in long migrations, even with smaller bodies.

Scientist David Willard, who collected the birds, said of the change in size, "as the breeding grounds of these birds are getting warmer, it may be advantageous to be smaller."

The study's lead author, Brian Weeks, an assistant professor at the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability, said in a press release about the study, "we had good reason to expect that increasing temperatures would lead to reductions in body size, based on previous studies.

The thing that was shocking was how consistent it was. I was incredibly surprised that all of these species are responding in such similar ways."

As published by OneGreenPlanet

One animal migrates between poles: *Sterna paradisaea*

Some arctic terns migrate pole to pole for breeding and wintering, the longest yearly migration of any bird.

The Arctic tern has the longest commute in the world: About 44,000 miles each year on a roundtrip migration between Greenland, where it breeds, to Antarctica.

It's unknown why the tern travels so far, but there's no question it's perfected the journey: A single bird can easily fly 1.5 million miles, or three roundtrips between Earth and the moon, in its 30-year lifetime.

Now that's what you call a long commute!

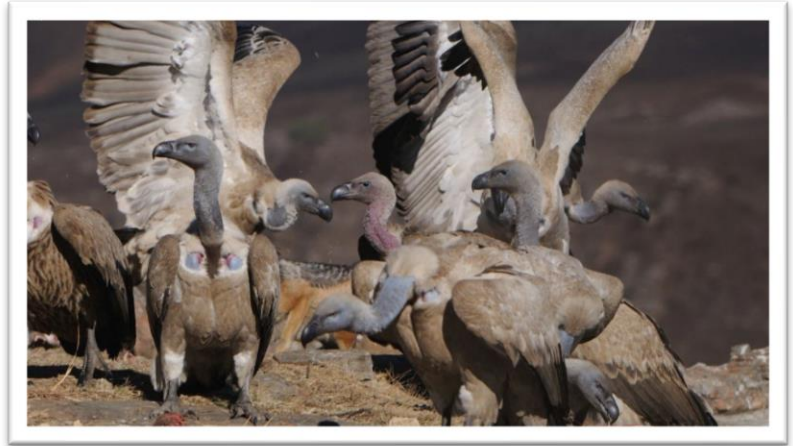
Source: National Geographic

Migration route of an Arctic tern



Vulture feeding: more study needed

Photo: Cape Vultures at Giant's Castle Hide Restaurant – Shane Elliot



The 143 vulture feeding sites across SA provide about 3301 tons of meat each year – enough to feed almost the entire regional vulture population, researchers at the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at UCT found.

The sites, also referred to as “vulture restaurants”, are a conservation tool first started in the 1970’s to help protect vultures in Europe, Africa and Asia.

The study suggested that in providing vulture meals, conservationists hoped the feeding sites might limit the birds’ exposure to poison-laced carcasses, which have decimated vulture populations across Southern Africa.

Despite the restaurants’ popularity, up until now there has been little research into how they function and their impact on vulture populations.

Lead author Christiaan Brink, a PhD student at UCT, hopes the new study will help inform future vulture conservation decisions. “Currently the beneficial effects of supplementary feeding sites for vultures are still debated and there may be trade-offs which should be considered.

“Most research to date has been conducted in Europe, where feeding sites are more formally documented.”

“Our aim was to determine the extent and contribution of South African supplementary feeding sites so that future research can establish if they have a positive effect. Such research will be essential to ensure that limited conservation resources are not wasted on ineffective or even counter-productive efforts”, Brink said.

The findings of the study suggest that the number of feeding sites has stabilised over the past decade, with each site providing an average of about 65kg of meat a day.

Sites attract a broad range of vultures but species with large home ranges, like the African White-backed and Cape vultures, have the greatest access to the sites.

At the same time, the authors acknowledged that the impacts from the sites might not be all positive.

The study notes that a significant number of site managers were unaware of the dangers of inadvertently poisoning vultures through contaminated meat.

“We found that 68% of managers were unaware of the dangers of lead and 28% were unaware of the dangers of veterinary drugs, suggesting that many feeding sites may be providing carcasses containing these substances.” Brink says.

This could undermine the potential positive effects of supplementary feeding sites for vultures, he said.

Almost 70% of Old World vulture species are threatened with extinction, with the most rapid population declines occurring in the vulture-rich regions of Asia and Africa.

As published in Cape Times

Know your birds: Raptor identification

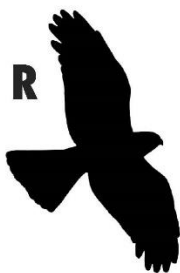
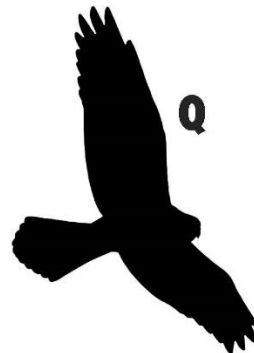
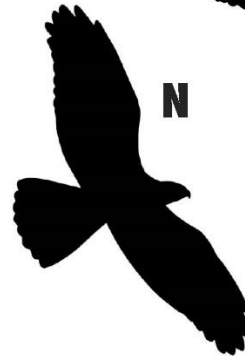
Faansie Peacock suggests that identifying raptors are easier than you think! Even if the only view you have of a raptor is from below, with the light in your eyes and thus with very little features visible, Faansie suggests that identification is still possible by recognition of shape, size of wings, body, tail, head, etc.

Below are Faansie's outlines of several raptors found in SA (used with permission). Are you able to match the outlines to the correct bird?



Bateleur
 Buzzard, European Honey
 Buzzard, Steppe
 Eagle, African Hawk-
 Eagle, Ayres's Hawk-
 Eagle, Brown Snake
 Eagle, Lesser Spotted
 Eagle, Martial
 Eagle, Steppe (adult)
 Eagle, Steppe (juvenile)
 Eagle, Wahlberg's

Falcon, Amur
 Falcon, Peregrine
 Harrier, African Marsh
 Hawk, African Cuckoo-
 Hawk, African Harrier-
 Hobby, Eurasian
 Kite, Yellow-billed
 Sparrowhawk, Little
 Sparrowhawk, Ovambo
 Vulture, Lappet-faced
 Vulture, White-backed



Answers:

A - Lappet-faced Vulture
 E - Steppe Eagle (juv)
 I - Wahlberg's Eagle
 M - Steppe Buzzard
 Q - African Marsh Harrier
 U - Eurasian Hobby

B - White-backed Vulture
 F - Brown Snake Eagle
 J - Lesser Spotted Eagle
 N - European Honey Buzzard
 R - Ovambo Sparrowhawk
 V - Amur Falcon

C - Martial Eagle
 G - African Hawk Eagle
 K - Bateleur
 O - African Cuckoo Hawk
 S - Little Sparrowhawk

D - Steppe Eagle (adult)
 H - Ayres's Hawk Eagle
 L - African Harrier-Hawk
 P - Yellow-billed Kite
 T - Peregrine Falcon

All aboard for a trip round the waterbody!

Some waterbirds act as passenger vessels for their less than week old young. Besides the novel experience for the chicks, this behaviour has considerable benefits to both chicks and parents.

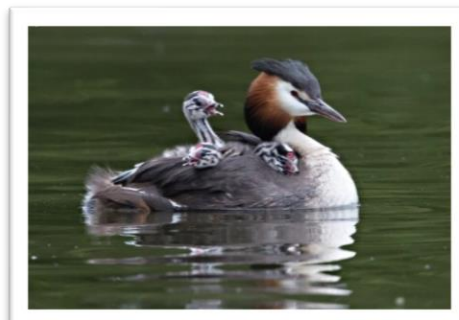
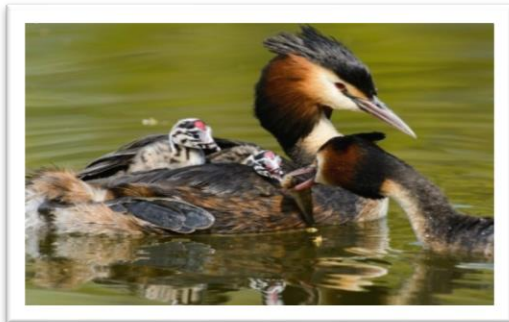
For chicks (cygnets, ducklings - and what is the name for small grebes and loons?) the benefit is being taken away from land where most predators occur. For such small chicks the predator range is large and in addition to mammals, also includes herons and some rails. Sailing on a parent's back also keeps the chicks in a dry warm environment without the potential energy loss from paddling exercise and possible loss of heat in cooling water.

The parents benefit because they can ferry chicks to feeding areas instead of having to travel to and fro - fetching food and at the same time alerting predators to where their chicks are. Ferrying chicks also keeps the brood together, so is easier to control. Often one parent acts as a ferry and the other brings food to the chicks. Goosanders are sexually dimorphic - so in the photo below it is the female that is ferrying the young. Is it always the female that does this - we don't know, even in this genus where differences in plumage make sexing easy. For those waterbirds in which males and females look alike, we have no idea if there is sexual difference in ferry care.

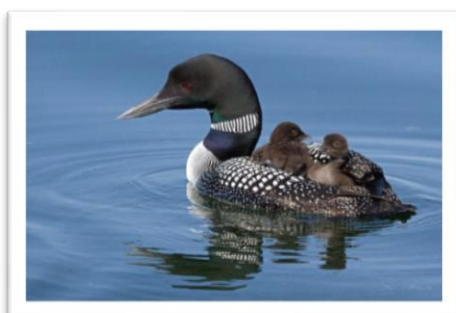
Chick ferrying can occur in all grebes - including our regional Great Crested Grebe. Though this is apparently less common in Little Grebes. Chick ferrying also occurs in loons and in most, if not all, swans, but occurs in only some ducks - largely the fish-eating Mergansers.

Great Crested Grebe

Tony Williams



Mute Swan

Female
GoosanderCommon
LoonRed-necked
Grebe

International news

Millions of Migratory Birds Catch a Break as NYC Passes Bird-Friendly Building Law

In February 2020, the New York City Council approved a new policy requiring that new buildings' materials meet bird-friendly standards that greatly reduce collision risks to birds.

"New York's world-famous skyline lies right in the middle of an incredibly important migratory pathway, and this critical legislation will now make that journey a little safer for millions of migratory birds," said Dr. Jill Deppe, senior director of Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative.

"Birds like the Blackpoll Warbler fly for three days straight across the Atlantic Ocean between North America and their South American wintering grounds, but a glass window in New York is too often the deadliest part of their migratory journeys.

This policy is great news for migratory birds and all who care for them. Bravo to New York City Audubon and their partners for setting the bar on bird-friendly building policy."

This legislation will be the most broad-reaching bird-friendly building policy in the country to date. The New York City Council worked directly with the following groups: New York City Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Bird-safe Buildings Alliance, and architects representing FX Collaborative and Ennead Architects.

"This bill is a compromise forged by our diverse consortium, which wrestled with and reconciled competing interests of many sorts — design, light, height, use, location, cost, bird mortality. It's a huge leap forward for long-term conservation," said Kathryn Heintz, New York City Audubon executive director.

"It will reduce collisions and save migratory birds whose numbers are declining dramatically. As a whole community, we must do better for the future, better for the sustainability of urban living, and better for the health of both birds and people," Heintz added.

The policy also covers major renovations that include modifying existing glass and applies to construction across the city's five boroughs.

"Collisions with buildings are one of the greatest threats to birds, and one of the most preventable. North America has lost nearly three billion birds since 1970 and we must make every effort to create a safer future for New York State's wildlife. Audubon is thrilled that the New York City Council has set this precedent for the rest of the nation to help reduce or eliminate mortality from collisions," said Ana Paula Tavares, executive director of Audubon New York.

Source: Supertrooper Causes, News, Wildlife

Brain teasers

CROSS WORD PUZZLE NO. 05

1		2					3	4		5
6				7		8				
9										
								10		
	11									
12								13		14
						15				
16						17				
18					19					

Clues Across

- 1. A male goose
- 3. A bird's melody
- 6. Quacking waterfowl
- 8. Sea/shore birds
- 9. Yellowish warbler
- 10. A female swan
- 11. A forked or square-tailed bird.
- 12. A male duck
- 13. A bird's means of travel
- 16. Structures for breeding
- 17. _____-spotted owl
- 18. A pale tit
- 19. Skulking cousins of rails

Clues Down

- 1. A wader with a long bill
- 2. Bird with yellow spots
- 4. A nocturnal raptor
- 5. A baby goose
- 7. Dishonest twitchers
- 8. A penguin species
- 10. Small bird with white plumes on rump
- 11. Anhingas or "snake-birds"
- 14. Yellow part of eggs
- 15. Abbreviation of sparrowhawk

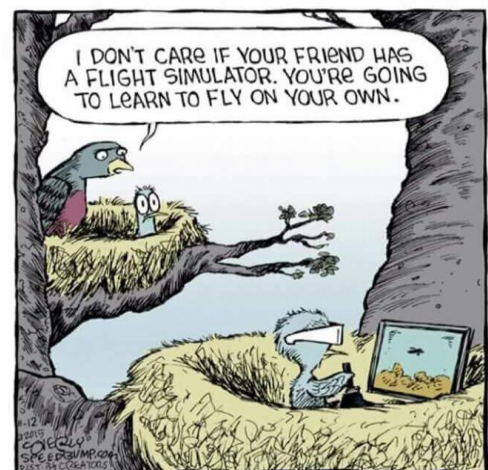
Compiler: Gerald Wingate



Rare sighting: White-rumped Sandpiper

Photo: Gerald Wingate

During the TBC camp at Kliphoek in Velddrif, club members managed to see this rather illusive bird. For a certain club member, this was the 5th attempt to find this bird at the spot!



General Club information

Subscribe to the TBC Birdnet

Make sure you get all the communication from the club. Send an e-mail to:

Tygerberg-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

To unsubscribe, send an e-mail to:

Tygerberg-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

In case your e-mail address change, unsubscribe your old address and send a subscribe request from your new e-mail address.

You may share information / important sightings with other club members by sending an e-mail to: tygerberg@yahoogroups.com

Change of contact details

Please notify the TBC Membership Secretary, Judy Kotze, should your e-mail address or other contact details change. Gert.k@absamail.co.za

TBC contact details

Website: www.tygerbergbirdclub.org

PO Box 4388, Durbanville, 7551

Chairperson's e-mail: B.crewe@wo.co.za

Treasurer's e-mail: lionel@dna-biopharm-sa.com

Join our Facebook page

Members are welcome to share information regarding their travels and interesting sightings on this page.

www.facebook.com/groups/tygerbergbirdclub/

Contributions to The Kite

Please mail any contributions to the newsletter (include pictures where possible) to:

dalene@brians-birding.co.za

TBC Steering committee 2020

Honorary President	Brian Vanderwalt	Cell: 082 999 9333
Chairperson	Brigid Crewe	Cell: 082 570 0808
Vice Chairperson	Dalene Vanderwalt	Cell: 084 702 4201
Treasurer	Lionel Crewe	
Secretary	Margaret Oosthuizen	Tel (021) 976 2217
Membership Secretary	Judy Kotze	Cell: 083 254 0919
Communication & Public Relations Officer	Dalene Vanderwalt	Cell: 084 702 4201
TBC Ringing Unit	Margaret McCall	Cell: 083 720 0747
Conservation Officer	Kevin Drummond-Hay	Cell: 074 587 3792



Tygerberg Bird Club's Mission / Missie van die Tygerberg Voëlklub

To enhance our knowledge of all birds, their behaviour and their habitats and to introduce the public to the conservation and science of our avian heritage through enjoyable participation by club members.

Om as klub ons kennis van alle voëls, hul gedrag en hul habitat te verbeter en deur genotvolle deelname van klublede, die publiek bewus te maak van die bewaring en wetenskap van ons plaaslike voëlerfenis.

Celebrating 34 years of bringing birders together