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#### Affiliated member of:



# Chirp from the Chair

A big welcome to our members! We hope 2022 will be a great 'birding year' for all of us. The TBC also welcomes all our new Members – we trust you enjoy our monthly meetings and outings.

January started off with some really hot weather in the Cape. We urge you to please put out water for the birds and to refill water containers regularly.

In the summer, it's a case of "early bird catches the worm"! Yesterday, after the heat wave cooled down, I went birding with a friend at 08:00 in the Majik Forest in Welgemoed. In a short time, we had seen 45 different bird species, and had great sightings of Booted Eagle and African Harrier Hawk. My friend commented that she now realises she needs to bird earlier, as the birds are clearly a lot more active in the early hours.

TBC 2022 Calendar sales have gone very well and the Committee still have a few copies for sale. Contact one of us if you still have not bought one of these lovely calendars. The Conservation project we are planning to support in 2022 with funds from this project, is the revamping of the Seeberg Hide in the West Coast National Park. The Honorary Rangers are actively busy with this project. A BIG thank you to them for all the work they do in the park – often a thankless job!!

It is once more time for CAR roadside birds and CWAC water bird counts. We encourage Members to join in with these worthwhile projects. This year the TBC will have done Bot River Lagoon CWAC counts for 30 consecutive years! WELL DONE to all involved in these counts – adding valuable data to conservation.

Weather permits, the TBC Bird Ringing Unit goes ringing on a Wednesday morning at first light. Contact Gerald Wingate (083 443 9579) on a Tuesday afternoon if you want to join the Ringing Unit activities on a Wednesday. This is a wonderful opportunity to see birds up close and in the hand.

Happy Bird Watching!

**Brigid Crewe** 

# A sad day for Black Harriers: Next steps



# to protect this Renosterveld icon

Black Harriers are listed as Endangered – and recent research suggests just over 1000 mature individuals remain in the world.

According to ORCT Director, Odette Curtis-Scott, "Black Harriers are the scarcest endemic raptor in Southern Africa. So, most worrying for us was when two out of the six birds we tagged died in the space of one day in November 2021. Is this representative of the mortality rates of Black Harriers? Although we don't have a large enough sample size to answer the question, it does mean we need to urgently find out more."

When an adult male Black Harrier dies, it can lead to the deaths of additional birds, because the loss of the main food provider increases the chances that his dependent chicks will perish too. The two male Black Harriers who died had at least five chicks depending on them at the time of their deaths.

### So what happened?

The first harrier, tagged only a few weeks earlier, appears to have been killed by a grain-cutter during the Overberg harvest season. The satellite data suggests that he was night-roosting in a grainfield, some distance from his nest. Much of the cutting and harvesting of grain takes place at night (because of the more suitable conditions and the fact that there is so much to bring in within such a short window and therefore farmers have to work through the night). The team believes that the harrier became disorientated by the sudden arrival of a large, noisy machine with bright lights, and was sadly unable to get out of its way in time.

The second harrier, tagged in 2020, was the first Black Harrier to be killed by a wind turbine at the new Excelsior Wind Farm north of Bredasdorp. The wind farm is the first to run a shutdown-on-demand programme – where observers monitor bird movement around the wind turbines seven days a week and can radio-in to instruct a specific turbine's shutdown should a priority species, including a Black Harrier fly close to a turbine.

Clarissa Mars, Biodiversity Supervisor at the wind farm says, "The Black Harrier collision with our turbines has been such a huge disappointment for our team, and heart-breaking for me. We are so committed to implementing our shutdown-on-demand programme. These collisions will be prevented in the future."

She says, "We instantly analysed the situation to understand what further mitigation measures should be introduced and this has been done to ensure these types of mistakes don't happen again." In this instance, the number of observers has been doubled at a particularly challenging vantage point for greater all-round vision.

#### Observations and shutdowns to date

Clarissa says the shutdown-on-demand programme can be an effective mitigation measure. The wind farm has already had more than 179 successful shutdowns between 23 December 2020 and 14 November 2021 for 288 Cape Vulture sightings, 48 Black Harriers and one Verreaux's Eagle. "Priority species were regularly observed by

the monitors and it was encouraging that no priority species mortalities were recorded when the wind farm went into operation in December 2020 till the end of October 2021."



Unpublished modelling data from Dr Rob Simmons and Dr Francisco Cervantes Peralta of the University of Cape Town has found that if three adult Black Harriers are killed every year by wind turbines around South Africa, the species will be extinct in 100 years. Should five birds be killed by turbines per year, then Black Harriers will be extinct in just 75 years.

Aside from the short-term measures to protect birds at wind farms, there are also other methods which eliminate the potential for human error,

which have proven to reduce collisions by 100% in some areas: for example, painting one of the turbine blades (or two-thirds of it) black, which makes the turning blades highly visible to birds. This idea has been tested in Norway and was found to be 100% successful with no running costs. Other mitigation measures such as the automated shut down are extremely costly and difficult to implement post-construction. Painting blades is not favoured by South African wind farms as yet because it has an impact on the warranty of the blades and civil aviation insists on white blades. Much work still needs to take place before such interventions become common practice.

From the ORCT side, we need to find out more. That means tagging more birds so that we can better understand mortality rates, and the species' use of the landscape, in general. And we'll continue to work with our partners to do what we can to protect this iconic Renosterveld species.

At the same time, it's crucial that windfarm developers (of both existing and planned developments) do everything they can to funnel resources into developing and improving the mitigation measures currently in place. BTE has done a lot for the harriers already, more than others have done, but these events show us that all

wind farm companies need to do a lot more. 'Green' energy needs to be truly green and if it is going to cause the extinction of a top predator, then it cannot claim to be green. We are calling for more stringent conditions to be imposed by government for approved wind farm developments and a more vigorous and proactive approach from developers towards preventing both bird and bat collisions.



## Our sincere thanks:

Three of the six tags were funded by the **Tygerberg Bird Club**, one tag was funded by the **Overberg Crane Group**, one by **BTE Renewables**, and one by the **National Research Foundation**. We're so grateful to our partners and friends for the support to date. We look forward to working with you in future as we find a sustainable future for Black Harriers.

Odette Curtis-Scott: Director - Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust (ORCT)

# Club Activities

# Birding fun day with team "Banded Martins"

The team consisting of Judy Kotze, Margaret Oosthuizen and I, set off from D'Urbanvale at 5:00 on Friday afternoon 12<sup>th</sup> November. The weather was perfect, and we really enjoyed birding along the Durbanville farm roads. Highlight was seeing three Banded Martins on the Spes Bona Road – really close to our car. I have atlassed this pentad monthly for more than 10 years and never seen them in the pentad. Blue Crane, numerous Redcapped Larks and a Common Buzzard were all good to see.



Next, we travelled to the Old Malmesbury Road, near Philadelphia. At the 'Two Bridges' we saw many Little and White-rumped Swifts, as well as a Spotted Eagle-Owl. Travelling back to the N7, all the regular roadside birds were seen. The farmers were harvesting along the Vissershok Road, where we saw many Yellow-billed Kites, enjoying the bounty behind the harvesters.

Saturday morning – thanks to a special permit, the teams were allowed into Kirstenbosch Gardens at 6:00. This is always a HIGHLIGHT. Forest and Brimstone Canaries, and many Swee Waxbill were seen. A Forest Buzzard and an African Goshawk added to our Raptor count. Sombre Greenbuls were very active and calling. Alas – NO Lemon Dove!

Next, we were off to Strandfontein. Many Greater and Lesser Flamingo, ducks of all varieties and numerous Black-necked Grebe were added to our list. Unfortunately, water levels were not ideal for waders. Our route after



this took us to Milnerton
Lagoon mouth, where
numerous Common and
Sandwich Terns were
present amongst African
Black Oystercatchers.
Onward via Dolphin Beach,
Melkbosstrand, Darling
Hills Road and back to
Durbanville via
Malanshoogte Road. We
were happy to have 127
species on our list by 17:00.

Congratulations to Gerald Wingate and Deona Andrag (The Boston Barbets team) who won the competition with 131 different species on their list. All participants gathered at Gert and Judy Kotze's home for a well-deserved braai afterwards where we chatted at length about the great sightings and wonderful weather during the competition. A good time was had by all. All TBC members are encouraged to participate in this annual event.

**Brigid Crewe** 

# Karoo "Shy Five" trip to New Holme enthralls TBC members



Wow! We are pretty sure that none of the eight participants - or perhaps even the leader of the pack, Kevin himself - knew, as we set off on the great road North to New Holme just outside Hanover in the Northern Cape for this trip, what an awesome (some even used the word lifechanging) experience it would be.

The group of nine that included some very experienced birders and some relative "newbies" and a "KZN-interloper" set off from Durbanville at 06:00 on Tues 30 November in the rain. This

soon cleared and a cool breezy Karoo welcomed us, with a noticeable paucity of all the usual birds one would have expected to find along the way. We really did wonder what had happened to cause this. However, the road beyond Beaufort West yielded a few more species, especially the stop at Three Sisters, and so we arrived at New Holme with a bit more hope of some good birding. There we met PC (Pieter Cronje Ferreira) the owner, our host and guide for the next three days and the adventure began.

Well, this aforementioned hope was certainly realised and then some! Best to let the participants speak for themselves. So here goes.....

"Highlights???? The very best trip-mates, fantastic hospitality, and amazing wildlife, with abundant birds. I loved every minute and would do it all again in a heartbeat."

Pat van der Byl

"The highlight for me was the Aardvark that leapt into our headlights on the first night drive! A magical few days in another world, created by inspirational endeavour. I respected PC's views on making a difference and the creation of the Buffalo and Rhino projects."

Francis Hemp

"Our hosts were great, the food was great, the accommodation was great and the "shy five" were far from shy, and all showed themselves off to PC's expertly handled spotlight. It all far exceeded my expectation."

Angus Hemp

"This trip will engender a host of amazing memories. These include all three sightings of Aardvark, an animal so astounding that not even Dr. Seuss could have dreamed it up. The surprise that the Aardwolf is a beautiful animal! I was enchanted by the Eastern Clapper Lark; and the distant flock of over 100 Blue Cranes will be a lasting memory. My birding highlight though was undoubtedly being with true birders who were so gracious in answering my questions and teaching me to differentiate Pipits and Larks, Swallows and Swifts. An enduring memory too are the sunsets and the vision of PC for the Seekoei River, both ecological and social. The memory of the 5-star meals will pale long before the joy of spending 4 days with such special companions on this trip."

"Loved the Eastern Clapper Lark in action!! Wetland in the Karoo! Sunset splendour! SCANS in the afternoons (Senior Citizens Afternoon Naps) – very necessary after 05 00 starts in the morning and 23 00 finishes at night!! Six lovely Lifers including Melodious Lark, Rufous-eared Warbler, Double-banded Courser, Whiskered Tern, and Cloud and Desert Cisticolas, not to mention all the amazing 'Shy Five' already mentioned, of which the "Springhaas" (Africa's answer to the Kangaroo) was my

favourite. Imagine all this topped off by a 'Brandy Infused Carrot Cake with Cream-Cheese and ice Cream' for dessert on our final night ..... you'd better believe it!!!!''

Daryl Newton

"Every bit as great as I had heard it would be. Definitely will go back. PC and his family are wonderful hosts. 'Shy five' drives a real treat. Birding on the farm and along the river was very special. Kevin and the group were fun to be with."

Sandy Schmidt

"Fantastic few days. From the Melodious Lark to the Aardvark. The birds and mammals were very special as was the scenery. PC and his family were great hosts making our stay very special. Thanks to Kevin and the group for making this time away so special."

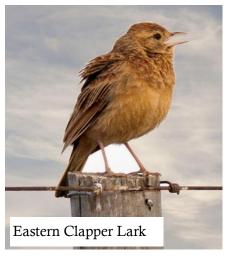
Otto Schmidt

"Highlights for me included.... Meeting new friends and being fully accepted, and not left feeling overawed despite being a 'newie' who couldn't contribute much but learned a great deal. Seeing the Eastern Clapper Lark performance was indeed entrancing, .... Lifers including the Thick-billed Lark, Double-banded Courser and Desert Cisticola. The animals except for the Bat-eared Fox, were all lifers for me, and esp. the Aardwolf which I must confess I thought was a mythical Karoo Desert creature that Kevin had thrown into the mix to make the trip more attractive. The food, the chatter, the laughter, and of course seeing Kevin looking 'pensive' at one point, which he assures me was a rare sighting – though he wouldn't let me get a photo!! And, of course, there was the passion; passion for birds, for animals, for the environment, and for a vision, esp. the visit to the Khoi site seeing the etchings and sharing PC's vision of a 'new' community around the Seekoei River. As one who loves and enjoys 'passion' I found all of this very compelling and good for the soul."

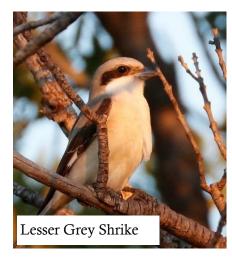


#### Pictures taken on New Holme farm









### Summary of the trip

We arose at 5:00 every morning for a birding drive that included muffins to sustain us till breakfast when we got back at about 10:00. After breakfast was time for individual activities that could include exploring the area around the lodge for birds or whatever, or for many of us time for a "Scan" (Senior Citizen's Afternoon Nap).

Around 16:00 each afternoon we went on a birding drive that also included various buck species i.e., Blesbok and Eland, and also, Buffalo, and of course many, many birds. Then back to the lodge for an amazing supper followed by the evening game drive to see the "Shy five". Then home just in time to collapse into the very spacious and

comfy beds!!

The total bird list for the trip numbered 126, with highlights being Clapper Lark (and his amazing performance), Blue Crane, Blue Korhaan, Caspian Tern (in middle of the Karoo!), Double-banded Courser, European Bee-eater, Large-Billed Lark, Lesser Grey Shrike, Melodious Lark, Namaqua Warbler, Whiskered Tern, and Yellow-bellied Eremomela to name but a few. What an amazing array of birds!





An amazing trip, a lovely experience, a delightful place, and an amazing group of fellow-travellers. What a delight it was!

And finally.... many and heartfelt thanks to Kevin for putting it all together.

Dave and Daryl Newton

## Did you know?



## Peregrine "eyeliner" not just for show ...

Researchers from UCT and WITS published the first scientific study proving the long-time hypothesis that the dark "eye-liner" feathers (known as the malar stripe) in Peregrine Falcons reduce the amount of solar glare reflected into the falcon's eyes, improving their ability to pinpoint and target agile prey in bright conditions.

The study found that the brighter the climate, the bigger the dark plumage on the Peregrine Falcon and the darker the climate, the smaller the dark plumage.

12200 km . . . The distance a bird covered in 11 days, setting a new world record for uninterrupted flight of a bird. The bird, a Bar-tailed Godwit, flew non-stop from Alaska, USA, to New Zealand – at times flying 80km/h. Researchers tagged the bird with a satellite market to monitor its journey. Bar-tailed Godwits weigh between 190 and 400g but can contract their organs to make them even lighter for a long flight.

## "Loving flamingos" form friendships

There are more to Flamingos than just their pink plumage and the ability to stand on one leg. They are friendly and loyal too, a study found.

Despite being in flocks of up to two million, the birds form small friendship groups which can last for years. They may team up to share information on feeding and nesting sites, or as "wingmen" for group displays in mating. They also tend to avoid some birds.

Researchers at Exeter University followed four flocks for four years and lead author Dr Paul Rose said: "Flamingos don't simply find a mate. Other social bonds clearly also exist".





Nordic master of disguise ... No bird displays the mellow colours of winter quite like the Brindle-toned Brambling.

Burnished copper hues allow this Nordic finch to feed contentedly amid the decaying leaf litter found in woodlands in December.

The combination of orange, brown, black and white, make for perfect camouflage to prevent predators from swooping on bramblings that are feasting on beechnuts on the forest floor.

Such disguise also means birdwatchers need patience to detect single birds among chaffinch flocks, with their autumnal shades of subdued pink, blue and brown.

Bramblings have to migrate south when their chilly forest haunts, stretching from Norway to the eastern most

Bramblings have to migrate south when their chilly forest haunts, stretching from Norway to the eastern most parts of Siberia, start to freeze.

The latest report from the Rare Breeding Birds Panel shows that in 2019 there was only one pair with eight chicks raised at a site in Clyde, Scotland. That was the first successful nesting since 2002 and only the fourth since 1988. Sadly, it is a pattern that corresponds with the 49% decline of the species across Scandinavia the past four decades.

Winter's planter - International Express / Photo: Shaun Ferguson

Birds "divorce" due to climate change ... Albatrosses are known for mating for life – but new research reveals climate change might be causing their relationships to suffer.

Scientists in Britain studied 15 500 of the large seabirds over the past decade and discovered more breeding pairs break up in years when the weather is unusually warmer. They suspect it's because warmer water means less fish and therefore less food for the birds.

The warm weather also makes the birds' environment less ideal, which causes them to release stress hormones – leading to an increased chance that they will go looking for a new place to live and "divorce" their mate.



Gannets are spectacular high-speed diving birds. With their unusually narrow-set eyes and exquisitely painted faces, these birds are as unmistakable as they are beautiful. They feed primarily on sardine and anchovy; small schooling fish which form the basis of the food chain.

To compete with the many other seabirds, fish and mammals that also chase after these fish, they plunge dive to depths of over 20 metres. To do this they hover some 30 metres up in the air, spot a fish, and plummet headfirst towards it. They can reach speeds of up to 100 km per hour by streamlining their body, extending their wings backwards before literally cutting the water surface with their sharp beaks!

The Cape Gannet is an excellent ambassador to highlight two of the most pressing conservation issues facing South Africa's seabirds. Cape Gannets breed on only six islands across South Africa and Namibia. Their population has decreased by over 50% in the last 60 years, resulting in the species being listed as Endangered. Cape Gannets are threatened by the lack of sardine and anchovy due to the combination of a shift in the distribution of the fish populations and competition with one of the most important commercial fisheries in South Africa. To compensate, gannets often resort to feeding on hake discards thrown off the back of trawl vessels. This is however a double-edged sword; they are vulnerable to becoming tangled in the fishing nets and, while the discards are enough to support the feeding requirements of adults, the lower fat content of hake is not sufficient to raise healthy chicks.

SA Birdlife

In the words of David Attenborough ... "Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, and as universal as a bird?"

## Brainteasers

## **CROSS WORD PUZZLE NO. 11**

1	2		3	4	5		6
7				8			
9							
					10	11	
12	13						
					14		15
16		17					
		18		19			
20				21			

Compiler: Gerald Wingate

#### **Clues Across:**

- 1. A sandpiper with upcurved bill
- 4. A warbler or tree
- 7. Someone's Apalis
- 8. A fishy raptor
- 9. This bird cost a farthing
- 10. Digits on feet
- 13. A facial stripe
- 14. A crane or korhaan
- 16. Nocturnal wisdom
- 18. A huge albatross
- 20. A colour on a prinia or eagle
- 21. Could be a swallow or house of worship

#### **Clues Down:**

- 1. Little seabirds
- 2. The colour of a lark
- 3. Small raptors
- 4. A batis named after these brothers
- 5. The face of a vulture
- 6. A barbet named after him
- 11. It may give a hoot
- 12. A black-and-white wader
- 14. Structures for some swallows
- 15. A type of raptor
- 17. An alien mute or whooper
- 19. A body of water

## General Club information

#### Subscribe to the TBC Birdnet

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

#### tygerbergbc+subscribe@groups.io

In case your e-mail address changes, 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:

tygerbergbc@groups.io

#### NB: note new information

## Join our Facebook page

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

www.facebook.com/groups/tygerbergbirdclub/

### 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: <a href="www.tygerbergbirdclub.org">www.tygerbergbirdclub.org</a> PO Box 1321, Durbanville, 7551

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

Vice Chairperson's e-mail: dalene@brians-birding.co.za

#### Contributions to The Kite

Please mail any contributions to the newsletter (include pictures where possible) to: dalene@brians-birding.co.za

## TBC Steering committee 2021

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	Cell: 073 210 9397
Membership Secretary	Judy Kotze	Cell: 083 254 0919
Communication & Public		
Relations Officer	Dalene Vanderwalt	Cell: 084 702 4201
TBC Ringing Unit	Lee Silks	Cell: 083 208 8766
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 voel erfenis.

## Celebrating 35 years of bringing birders together



# Club meetings and outings

## January 2022

#### Thursday 20 January @ 19:30 Zoom meeting

Speaker: Kevin Drummond-Hay

Topic: 'Memories of Northern KZN – Tembe or Bust with St. Lucia to sooth ya!'

Kevin shares memories from a trip with friends to Tembe Elephant Reserve in Northern KZN, St Lucia Estuary and the Isimangaliso Wetland Park. Enjoy the birds and wildlife seen in these areas with him.

## Saturday 22 January @ 07:00 outing to West Coast National Park

Contact: Brigid 082 5700 808

Follow the R27 West Coast Road from Melkbosstrand, past the Yzerfontein/Darling turnoff, to the entrance to the park. Entrance fee of R70, or Wildcard. We meet at Geelbek hide. Get to main gate at 6:45, as park is popular in Summer. Day is long, so bring drinks, hat and picnic.

# Saturday 29 January @ 07:30 CAR Blue Crane Counts in the Swartland

Contact: Brigid Crewe 082 5700 808

These Co-ordinated Avifaunal Road counts take place countrywide twice a year. There are many Swartland routes to be counted. Contact Brigid to join a team to help us count blue cranes, raptors, and other large birds along fixed routes.

### February 2022

#### Saturday 5 February @ 08:00 CWAC counts Bot River Lagoon

Contact: Kevin Drummond-Hay 074 587 3792

TBC have been doing these counts for nearly 30 years. The count consists of 5 teams covering the Lagoon. Contact Kevin if you want to be assigned to a team. This is the club's flagship bird count!

# Wednesday 9 February @08:00 outing (note Wednesday) to Majik Forest, Welgemoed

Contact: Brigid 082 5700 808 or Kevin 074 587 3792

ONLY park at the Protea Hotel or at the office block parking area opposite this. Traffic fines are given outside the gate. We meet at the lower gate at 08:00. Lovely birds are being seen in this small Reserve.

#### Thursday 17 February @ 19:30 Zoom meeting

Joint Meeting with Cape & Tygerberg Bird Clubs
Speaker: Mike Buckham Topic: 'A Namibian Road Trip'
Mike and his family escaped the 3<sup>rd</sup> Covid wave in Cape Town and headed for the wide-open spaces of Namibia. They did a road trip of birds, mammals, scenery, and sunsets. Mike will take us through a visual journey of some of Namibia's most beautiful places.

# Saturday 19 February @ 08:00 outing to Table Bay Nature Reserve (Rietvlei)

Contact: Kevin 074 587 3792 or Brigid 082 5700 808

10 Sandpiper Crescent, Flamingo Vlei (Table View). Travel to Table View along Blaauwberg Road, turn into Grey Avenue, and then into Sandpiper Crescent. Entrance fee of R10 – Pensioners, and R17 – Adults, plus R25 per Vehicle. Try and share lifts to limit congestion. We park just beyond the gate, at the first building (under the large trees).

#### March 2022

# Tuesday 8 March @ 08:00 mid-week outing (<u>note</u> <u>Tuesday</u>) to Tygerberg Nature Reserve, Welgemoed

Contact: Gerald Wingate 083 443 9579

We meet just inside the gate. Entrance fee payable. Raptors are always good here. Wear good walking shoes.

#### Thursday 17 March @19:30 – ZOOM Meeting

Tygerberg Bird Club - Annual General Meeting

The AGM is followed by the evening talk.

**Speaker:** to be announced.

Saturday 26 March @ 08:00 outing (note later date)

Venue to be announced Watch website/Facebook