

# GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB

NEWSLETTER



AUTUMN 2011

FOR MEMBERSHIP AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT JUDY CARYER AT 049-8910353

## CO-ORDINATED AVIFAUNAL ROADCOUNTS (CAR)

UCT's Animal Demography Unit (ADU) collects data of CAR counts bi-annually, from approximately 800 participants nationally. The counts are done in summer (last Saturday of January) and winter (last Saturday of July). The purpose of this is to establish trends in migration and prevalence of certain Bird Species in particular areas of the country, during different times of the year. These counts are conducted along pre-determined routes and in a set order, i.e. you cannot reverse the direction unless special permission has been granted by the ADU.

CAR in our region focuses on specific bird species, namely Crane (Blue, Grey Crowned, Wattled); Bustard (Kori, Ludwig's, Denham's); Stork (Abdim's, Black, White, Yellow-billed); Secretary Bird; Korhaan (Southern Black, Black-bellied, Blue, Karoo, White-bellied, Northern Black; Southern Ground-Hornbill; Southern Bald Ibis; Spur-winged Goose and Black-headed Heron.

Fiona Munro, accompanied by Leonie Fouché, did a CAR count on Route ES03 in the Pearston district, on Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010. The weather forecast had predicted very high temperatures for that day, and it was sweltering by 9am; not many of the big birds were seen in the open veld. The trip produced a sum total of 10 birds, namely 6 Karoo Korhaan, 1 Black-headed Heron and 3 Blue Crane (one of which was a juvenile). As Murphy would have it, the minute they left the route, they saw a Cori Bustard and numerous White Storks and Blue Cranes on either side of the road going back to Graaff-Reinet!

One has to drive very slowly while conducting a CAR (about 20km/hour), stop every 2kms and record the distance between each species count. On no less than two occasions concerned farmers drew up alongside Fiona's slow-moving vehicle, wanting to know whether they were lost. Probably the highlight of the outing was the sighting of an old Singer sewing machine, secured between two fence posts next to a motorgrid, on this deserted stretch of road!



**LEONIE'S GAMKABERG EXPERIENCE**

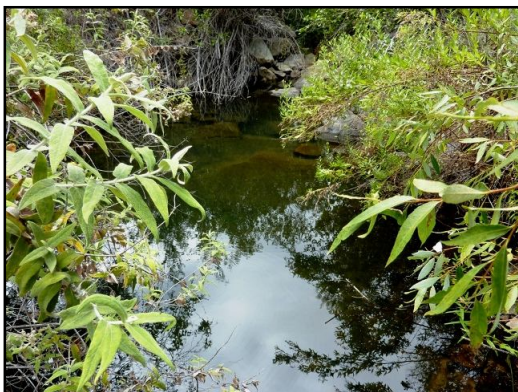
**28<sup>TH</sup> – 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2010**

I would have spent the last few days of 2010 in Robertson with friends, but they decided to extend their stay at Hartenbos. Since I had just spent the Christmas weekend at Cape L'Agulhas and had had enough of the wind and rowdy festive crowds, and not wanting to go back to Graaff-Reinet just yet, I decided to check whether there was still some camping space left at Gamkaberg Nature Reserve, situated between Calitzdorp and Oudtshoorn. Fortunately there was, and what an amazing stay I had!

Gamkaberg is owned by CapeNature and managed by Tom Barry, who has visited Graaff-Reinet on occasion. They have a variety of affordable accommodation options and you can camp there at R55.00 per person per night ~ which is very reasonable. Everything is kept very tidy and clean and the beautiful fynbos garden with its bird ponds in front of the Park's office building is worth spending some time in. For more information, visit their website <http://www.capenature.co.za/reserves.htm?reserve=Gamkaberg+Nature+Reserve>

There are a number of hiking trails. I did most of them, including Tierkloof, which takes one past a mountain stream with crystal-clear rock pools, visited by birds and small game. Gamkaberg is an active partner in the Cape Leopard Trust's Gouritz Project and has a gallery of photographs of a beautiful specimen known as Oom Pep. Up along the cliffs in the Tierkloof one can see Verreaux's and Booted Eagles' nests.

I managed to spot the elusive Cape Siskin, and on the same trail saw a clump of feathers belonging to an African Sacred Ibis, purportedly caught by a Booted Eagle and brought into the Kloof. Driving back to Graaff-Reinet on New Year's day, I stopped at the Smits Winkel Farm Stall, which apparently serves the best pancakes on Route 62.



**BESIDES THE CAR COUNT**

**SATURDAY, 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2011**

Although Route E503 did not produce vast numbers of the big birds required for the CAR count, Fiona and Leonie were privileged to spot a European Roller and a variety of Larks, Pipits and Raptors. There were hundreds of Amur Falcons and Lesser Kestrels perched on power and telephone lines running along the route; some Greater Kestrels and Pale Chanting Goshawks were seen as well.

22 bleary-eyed Birders left Graaff-Reinet just after 5am for the long-awaited outing to Asante Sana. Fears that the weather would undermine our arrangements were cast aside as the stars gave way to clear blue skies and a most spectacular sunrise. After a drive of approximately 68 km, we were met by reserve manager Richard Viljoen and ranger Alwyn, who spent the morning with us. The group was split in two, one being led by Judy Caryer and the other by Tim Hobson.

We spent about 2½ hours birding, and came up with a consolidated count of 46 species. Apart from a few duck varieties, the dams and marshes rendered a disappointing account. This was due to the amount of rain that had fallen in recent weeks, which resulted in the absence of a muddy apron where one would normally find the waders. Some of the more interesting sightings were :

- 🦉 Golden-breasted Bunting, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Paradise Flycatcher,
- 🦉 African Spoonbill, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Red-fronted Tinkerbird ,
- 🦉 A variety of Swifts, Swallows and Starlings.

Judy's group was thrilled to spot a White Rhino mother with her baby; some Giraffe, Red Lechwe and other antelope were seen in the bush. The veld all around was in a superb condition and it was hard to believe that we were in the arid Karoo! We enjoyed a lovely braai afterwards under some shady trees next to the well-maintained cricket field.



Asante Sana is a 12,000 ha Private Game Reserve, adjacent to Samara and Mount Camdeboo, and made news headlines some years ago when the fossilized footprints of a Dicynodont (pre-dinosaur herbivore of 253 million years ago) were discovered. There are a number of historic buildings on the property; some formed part of the small settlement Petersburg, which was established in the late 1800's.

## **NQWEBA DAM**

**WEEKEND 12<sup>TH</sup> – 13<sup>TH</sup> FEB. 2011**

With so much water and no place to go, waders were in a quandary as to where they belonged during this period of abundance. Showing clear signs of frustration at being displaced, a flock of 25 Lesser Flamingos was spotted flying around aimlessly, for an hour or more, before finding an island of reeds and debris, where they joined other, equally perplexed waders. And the Bird Hide? Well, the last time it was seen, it looked as if it was standing knee-deep in water.

Our thanks to Judy Caryer for arranging this lovely outing! Most of the weekend's participants arrived at the beautiful Lowlands Country Estate on Friday afternoon; some camped and others enjoyed the luxurious comfort of the Lowlands Guest House. Our hosts, Dave and Anne Bowker, made sure that we were not left hungry or wanting; they prepared sumptuous meals and the deserts were to die for.

Saturday's early-morning outing started at the farm dam and by mid-morning we took a walk up the Kloof, where Jerry and Tim educated us on the different varieties of grass and other plants. The weather was a bit unstable and our late-afternoon trip had to be cut short due to a threatening storm, which Liz Buisman and her accompaniment of day-trippers had to brave on their way back to Graaff-Reinet.

We woke up to a perfect Sunday morning and drove out to the other side of the Great Fish River, where Zorb Caryer showed us the quaint little cottage where the Water-Superintendent (Waterfiskaal) lives. We were also given a bit of the history of Lowlands (belonging to the Collett family) and Katkop (which is a very small katkoppie indeed). It was along this route that we experienced some of our best early-morning birding, as conditions were very favourable all-round. A bunch of us was dropped off at a bridge, from where we had to do some serious bundu-bashing and scaling of steep and slippery embankments to find our way back to the original Lowlands house, the old farmstead built in the early 1900's, where we were treated to a king's feast of a brunch, in the most beautiful garden setting.

Our weekend's excursions rendered a total of 97 species, which included the following :

- 🐦 Double-banded Courser and European Roller,
- 🐦 Ludwig's Bustard, Blue and Northern Black Korhaan,
- 🐦 Dideric and Jacobin Cuckoos; Red- and Blue-billed Fire Finches,
- 🐦 Red-backed Shrike, African Fish Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Black-crowned Night Heron,
- 🐦 A variety of Buntings, Canaries, Chats, Swallows and Swifts and a large variety of Cisticolas, Larks and Pipits.



We would love for this to be an annual event, but maybe at a different time of the year, when the grass is not so thick and long.

**Please let us have any snippets you would like to share with others here on the [TwitChing Post](#).**

## NEXT OUTINGS

To recap : at our last AGM on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2010, consensus was reached that in future, the arrangements for outings will be rotated amongst Club Members. Each Outing Organizer will be responsible for :

- ✓ Identifying the venue and obtaining the necessary permission from the landowner,
- ✓ Planning the route and conducting a recce beforehand, if necessary,
- ✓ Liaising with the Birdday Co-ordinator (Walter Murray) and relaying this information timeously to the Club Secretary (Judy Caryer), who will then notify all members,
- ✓ Ensuring that braai wood, grid and fire-lighters are transported to or available at the venue,
- ✓ Appointing additional Group Leaders, depending on the size of the group,
- ✓ Bringing with the Club's Clipboard and Bird List (to be collected from Judy Caryer),
- ✓ Chairing the mini-meeting directly after the outing and submitting a report and the completed Bird List to the Club Secretary within a week after the outing,
- ✓ Traditionally there is no outing in January.

At our December Club Meeting, it was decided to reschedule our outings to the **1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month**. The meeting place remains the same, namely in front of the Department of Agriculture / Environmental Affairs Building in Bourke Street, Graaff-Reinet ~ unless otherwise informed. Details of each outing will be confirmed about two weeks in advance. Time of departure varies according to the season, but we do try to hit the road between 5am and 6am in the summer and by 7am in the winter. Bring along a breakfast snack (to be enjoyed on the trot), something for the braai after the outing, and a chair. Don't forget your binoculars, field guide, hat, sunblock and H<sub>2</sub>O! Comfortable, yet sturdy, walking shoes are a must.

As we start moving into winter, it is advisable to include a light jersey or wind-breaker jacket.

The next two outings are being arranged by Mark Brodie and Tim Hobson, while Gerald Buisman has volunteered to take his turn thereafter. The provisional programme looks like this :

DATE	DESTINATION	ORGANIZER	TELEPHONE NO.
Saturday, 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2011	Coloniesplaats, Graaff-Reinet district	Mark Brodie	049-8919013
Saturday, 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2011	Still to be announced	Tim Hobson	049-8910412
Saturday, 4 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	Still to be announced	Gerald Buisman	049-8922458

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Interesting Birding workshops and excursions take place from time-to-time and members will be kept informed about them. Please support these events. Some forthcoming attractions are :

- 🦉 April / May 2011                      SABAP2 Workshop (theory and practical) on Bird Atlasing. More details will be provided in due course.
- 🦉 Japie Claassen of Karoo Birding Safaris arranges small tours throughout SA, as well as neighbouring countries such as Namibia and Mozambique. Contact him at [karoobirding@beaufortwest.net](mailto:karoobirding@beaufortwest.net) if you want to be placed on his mailing list.
- 🦉 Members are encouraged to join **GRANAAT**, our local Environmental Interest Group. They meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month. Please contact any of the following for more information : Theuns Eksteen (049-8922983), Brian Charles (049-8924662) or Walter Murray (049-8923234).
- \*    12<sup>th</sup> April 2011                      GRANAAT STEAK EVENING (Fundraising event)  
Phone Christo Vorster on 049-8922032 or e-mail him at [VorsterinGR@telkomsa.net](mailto:VorsterinGR@telkomsa.net) for more details.

## GRAAFF-REINET BIRD CLUB CONTACTS

PORTFOLIO	MEMBER	TEL. / CELL.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Birdday Co-ordinator	Walter Murray	049-8923234	waltermurray@wam.co.za
Vice Co-ordinator	Jerry Rose-Innes	049-8910255	jerry.roseinnes@gmail.com
Secretary & Treasurer	Judy Caryer	049-8910353	caryer@isat.co.za
Marketing & Promotion	Leonie Fouché	082 7077 403	fouchel@camdeboo.gov.za

### A FRIENDLY FINAL REMINDER...

To those members who have not yet renewed their annual subs. For only R30.00 you can participate in one of the fastest-growing recreational hobbies in the world, go on a monthly outing and receive a quarterly Newsletter! We regret to advise that non-paying members will henceforth be removed from our database.

**Please submit your interesting stories & events for inclusion in our next Newsletter.** 

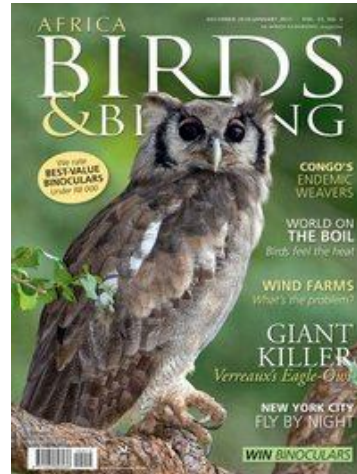


**SUBSCRIBE TO**



**and receive this beautiful glossy magazine, every 2 months, as well as a free monthly e-News...**

**PLUS other benefits !!**

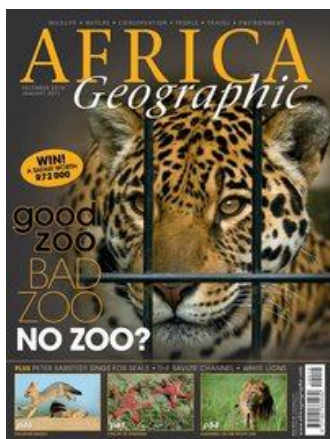


**For more information visit their website [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za)**

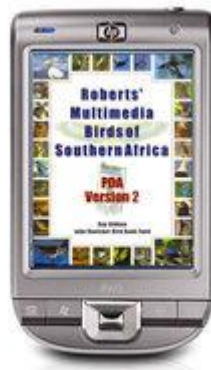
**OR on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=106516523414>**

**OR e-mail your enquiry to [info@birdlife.org.za](mailto:info@birdlife.org.za)**

**Some other interesting sites to visit on Facebook :**



**<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/Africa.Geographic>**



**EVERYTHING BIRDING**

**<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/EverythingBirding>**