



AgulhasNPark eBulletin



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Birding Big Day (SA) – 23 November 2013

Birds belong to the class Aves and, of the higher vertebrates, they are the most studied, the most easily seen and accessible, the most melodious and many think, the most beautiful animals on Earth. Fish are the only other vertebrates that have a higher number of species than birds. There are approximately 10 000 species of bird distributed over most of the Earth. They are found in forests, deserts, mountains and prairies, and on lakes, rivers and oceans. A few species have even visited the North Pole and one, a skua, was seen at the South Pole! Some birds dive to depths greater than 45m to prey on aquatic life while others live in caves and in this total darkness are able to find their way around by echo-location. South Africa is richly endowed with a diversity of approximately 890 different bird species. In recognition of our bird heritage, BirdLife South Africa co-ordinates two importing birding events, Birding Big Day and National Bird Week. Birding Big Day is a competition open to everyone with the aim of seeing how many birds can be spotted on that day, within a radius of 50km. Prizes are awarded to the team who spots the highest numbers. National Bird Week, usually held in May each year, is a national bird awareness and conservation initiative in South Africa that focuses on birds, their habitats and their conservation needs. For more information go to www.birdlife.org.za. (SOURCE: A year of special days, 2012. Sharenet; Picture: S. Brink.)

Struisbaai-Elim Birding Route

The Struisbaai-Elim road is a very exciting birding route as is experienced right now after the winter floods. The route meanders for 35km along the very important Nuwejaars River wetland system, through rehabilitated wetlands and agricultural land between the gravel road turn-off to Elim from the tar road between Struisbaai and Bredasdorp to Elim village itself.



Birding spots en route

Look out for raptors on the telephone lines and fence posts; the small birds in the shrubs along the road, wetland birds in the pans and pools.



The Saltpans, agricultural fields, Nuwejaars River, Voëlvlei and trees .



Connecting to Society

Agulhas Birding Project Report October 2013 – Dr Wim De Klerk

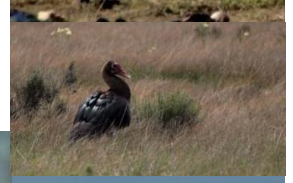
Birding the Agulhas Plains the past month has proved to be rather challenging. Due to the wet and muddy roads, access was limited and at stages even dangerous. Despite these conditions, birding has been exciting as we experienced some fantastic windless sunny days. Three pentads were covered in the last month and it became clear that our summer visitors were slowly returning. Whiskered Tern, Witbaardsterretjie, *Chlidonias hybrida*; Little Stint, Klein Strandloper, *Calidris minuta*; Curlew Sandpiper, Krombekstrandloper, *Calidris ferruginea* and Yellow-billed Kite, Geelbekwou, *Milvus aegyptius* were all seen during our last outing. We counted 48, 41 and 62 species on respective outings.



The Brandfontein pentad trip was a slip-sliding affair but interesting because water birds apparently thought the gravel road was a river. African Purple swamphen, Grootkoningriethaan, *Porphyrio madagascariensis*; Reed Cormorant, Rietduiker, *Phalacrocorax africanus*; Yellow-billed Duck, Geelbekeend, *Anas undulata* and African Spoonbill, Lepelaars, *Platalea alba* were parading next to the road as if this is the norm. Other species seen was Bar-throated Apalis, Bandkeelkleinjantjie, *Apalis thoracica*; Common Waxbill, Rooibeksysie, *Estrilda erythronotos*; African Stonechat, Gewone Bontrokkie, *Saxicola torquatus*; Black Harrier, Witkruisvleivalk, *Circus maurus*; Sombre Greenbul, Gewone willie, *Andropadus importunus*, African Snipe, Afrikaanse snip, *Gallinago nigripennis*, the first White-throated Swallows, Witkeelswael, *Hirundo albigularis* of the season and African Black Oystercatcher, Swarttobie, *Haematopus moquini*.

The Heuningberg Pentad was another muddy outing which produced some interesting birding. Species noticed was Zitting Cisticola, Landerykloppie, *Cisticola juncidis*; Large-billed Lark, Dikbeklewerik, *Galerida magnirostris* and Denham's Bustard, Veldpou, *Neotis denhami* but the find of the day was a covey of nine White-faced Duck, Nonnetjie-eend, *Dendrocygna viduata* found in a small dam next to the gravel road. This is only the third encounter with this species in the past three years.

The third pentad Prinskraal was covered in perfect weather and five new species were recorded for the project. Capped Wheatear, Hoëveldskaapwagter, *Oenanthe pileata*; Red-capped Lark, Rooikoplewerik, *Calandrella cinerea*; Red-faced Mousebird, Rooiwangmuisvoël, *Urocolius indicus*, Cape Canary, Kaapse Kanarie, *Serinus canicollis*, Southern Tchagra, Grysborstjagra, *Tchagra tchagra*, Pied Avocet, Bontelsie, *Recurvirostra avosetta*; Spotted Thick-knee, Gewone Dikkop, *Burhinus capensis*; South African Shellduck, Kopereend, *Tadorna cana* (at least 20 of them!), Little Stint, Kleinstrandloper, *Calidris fuscicollis* and a beautiful soaring female Rock Kestrel, Kransvalk, *Falco rupicolus* were seen. The cherry on top though was only the second record of Southern Pochard, Bruineend, *Netta erythrophthalma* for our project.





Save Our Indigenous Waterfowl



Threats to our waterfowl include:

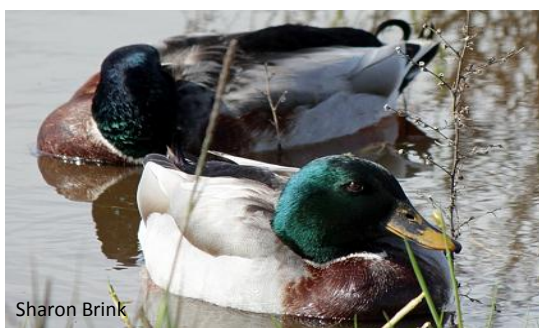
- Mallard ducks are a threat to the survival of our South African waterfowl.
- Invasive plants, such as water hyacinth, reduce habitat for waterfowl.
- Pollution creates poor water quality and decreases food resources.

What can you do?

- Report Mallard duck sightings to www.ispot.org.za
- Don't keep Mallard ducks as pets.
- Don't feed the ducks.
- Plant indigenous plants.
- Never dump aquarium water, fish or plants in wetlands.
- Report illegal dumping and littering: 021 596 1999.

The survival of our indigenous waterfowl is in your hands:





Sharon Brink

Read about the invasiveness of the mallards at

<http://www.invasives.org.za/> and

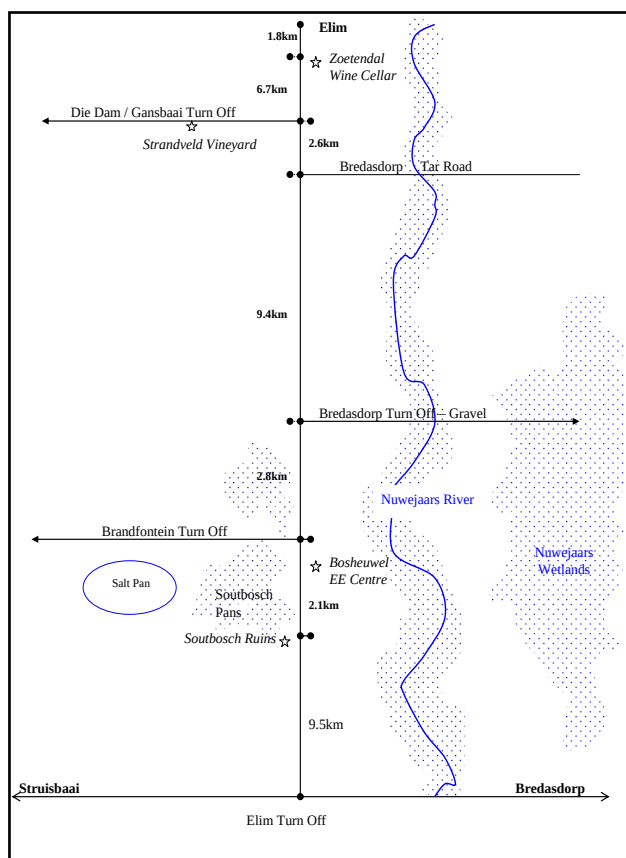
www.invasives.org.za/item/548-invasive-mallards-under-discussion.html

Birding Big Day, 23 November 2013, on the Struisbaai-Elim birding route

Agulhas National Park is celebrating Birding Big day with the rest of South Africa on 23 November 2013 and invites you to count all the birds you see on 23 November 2013 on the Struisbaai-Elim Birding route between 6:00 until 18:00. The route will be registered on My Bird Patch and used for research purposes. Early morning starts always more lucrative while raptors become more later in the day. You have the options to bird for a minimum of two hours on any stretch of the route, the full 12 hours or the whole route if you wish. All we ask is that you register the species and the numbers seen in the whole of the patch. Record start time as well. You may include Elim village. Please send your recordings to the Park office. For more information and to register contact E. De Kock, 028-4356078 (Mon-Fri, 8:00-16:00) or M. Fourie, 028-4357185 (Mon-Sun, 9:00-17:00).

Plight of the African Penguin

In the early 1900s there were several million pairs of penguins, by the 1950s this had decreased to 140 000. Last year there were only 19 000 pairs. We have lost two thirds of the African penguin population in the last 30 years. Penguins can travel more than 500km to find enough food to bulk up before the moulting season. But it's getting harder to find food close to home. Penguins on the West Coast have to travel further than penguins on the East Coast. The dying out of this species is an early warning system for environmental threats. Read "Race to save the African penguins", The Citizen, 13/10/2013 and visit www.birdlifesa.org.za.



Kids in Parks 2013

Another successful Kids in Parks programme ended on 18th October. 249 learners participated in the programme.



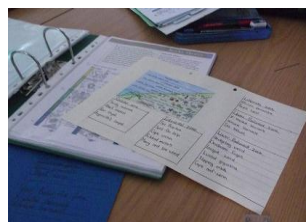
A Junior Ranger success story – Christa Stringer, Table Mountain National Park.

Mike Henshall participated in his second year of Junior Rangers in Table Mountain National Park (TMNP) when he was in Grade 12. A passion awoke in him to choose conservation as a career and he applied to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's (CPUT) Nature Conservation course. One of the main criteria to be accepted is to have the correct subjects, of which geography and biology were essential. Mike did not choose biology as a subject earlier in his school years and was very worried that he would not be accepted. It was also a problem for CPUT, although he was a distinction achiever. CPUT noticed on his application form that he mentioned he has been a TMNP Junior Ranger for the past two years and they enquired further. They asked him if TMNP could verify this and give them an indication what being a Junior Ranger entailed. TMNP proudly did that and elated when Mike received the good news that he was accepted to enrol in the course! TMNP is extremely proud of Mike and hope to support him throughout his career as a nature conservationist.



Agulhas Junior Rangers

Agulhas National Park commenced with a Junior Ranger programme in 2013. The programme started off with 18 learners between the ages of 12 and 16. The Objectives of the SANParks Junior Ranger Programme is to create an individual who is environmentally aware and knowledgeable of conservation and the relevant issues that surround it, who is an active participant in conservation areas and can bridge conservation into the communities, who is an ambassador for South African National Parks and who has basic skills in conservation areas. The project also aim to foster a youth that is passionate and committed to upholding the Conservation Ethic, to develop a youth that takes ownership of their role in the environment and to create an awareness of South African National Parks nationally and on Park level. For more information on this programme contact Alliston Appel at 028-4356078 during office hours.



Suidpunt Events Calendar

Plan your 2013 festive season at the Southernmost Point of Africa according to the Suidpunt Taxpayers Association's events calendar. For more detail of all the events visit : www.suidpunt.co.za and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/suidpunteventscalander>.

