



AgulhasNPark eBulletin

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Birding Big Day (SA) ~ November 26

South Africa is richly endowed with a diversity of about 890 different bird species. Fish are the only other vertebrates that have a higher number of species than birds. There are about 10 000 species of bird distributed over most of the Earth. 248 bird species have been identified on the Agulhas Plain and in the Agulhas National Park up to now. In recognition of our bird heritage, BirdLife South Africa co-ordinates Birding Big Day on November 26. 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 number. For more information about the different categories and rules, visit the BirdLife South Africa website. Tel: (011) 789 1122. Fax: (011) 789 5188. E-mail info@birdlife.org.za, www.birdlife.org.za.

Terrestrial Bird Conservation

Conservation is the primary reason for BirdLife South Africa's existence. BirdLife South Africa believes that by conserving birds, the broader environment can be conserved. Birds are among the most visible, and mobile, animals in the natural environment. A healthy environment will have a full complement of native birds, and for this reason birds are widely recognised as exceptionally good indicators of the health of ecosystems. BirdLife South Africa is part of a global network of bird conservation organisations falling under the umbrella of BirdLife International. BirdLife SA bird conservation action is targeted at three levels: threatened species, threatened habitats and biodiversity conservation in general, with many cross-cutting bird and habitat conservation programmes. There are a number of globally and nationally threatened bird species in southern Africa. The Threatened Bird Species list contains the red data status of the threatened bird species in South Africa and also indicates their endemic and migratory status. Read more about Threatened Species and Threatened Habitats at www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/terrestrial-bird-conservation. (SOURCE: www.birdlife.org.za)



Agulhas Kids in Parks (KiP) programme 2016

The Agulhas KiP programme kicked off on October 12 with Protea Primary from Napier the first school to visit the park this year. For October the following schools took part: Struisbaai, Elim, St Paul's, Gansbaai, Die Bron Stanford and Protém. Part of the programme is to visit the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum, the Lighthouse, Southernmost Tip with a park's programme on the second day. This programme consists of plant monitoring, fresh water monitoring, the Saltpans and an enacted Khoi village site. Fun time consists of swimming, canoeing and ball games.



Connecting to Society

Rietfontein Cottages in Agulhas National Park situated in a birding paradise – Wim De Klerk

The Rietfontein cottages in the western section of Agulhas National Park is situated in the midst of a birding paradise! As you enter the Park with the Rietfontein se Baai public road the whole Rietfontein/Ratelriver plain opens up before you with Soetansberg in front and to the left, Melkbospan to the right and the Ratelrivier vlei area further south-west. Apart from the wetland habitat, the beautiful restored fynbos veld of this area promises exceptional birding opportunities. To begin with, this is Lark territory. On entering the Rietfontein area of the park the Agulhas Clapper Lark (Kaapse klappertjie, *Mirafrapiata*) is seen to the left of the road. At present there are four larks in this area. The Red-capped Lark (Rooikoplewerik, *Calandrella cinerea*) is seen on the dirt road towards the sea. The Large-billed Lark (Dikbeklewerik, *Galeridamagnirostris*) is heard before it is seen. So prepare yourself with the Roberts App! The Agulhas Long-billed Lark (Overberglangbeklewerik, *Certhilauda bevirostris*) can also be spotted along the entrance road, but is also more likely to be heard than seen. Use the Roberts App. The Agulhas Clapper Lark (Agulhas klappertjie, *Mirafrapiata*) is not displaying at the moment and is quiet, but can be spotted in fynbos 30-50cm high. The plain area is perfect Hottentot Buttonquail (Kaapse kwarteltjie, *Turnix hottentottus*) habitat. The Secretarybird (Sekretarisvoël, *Sagittarius serpentarius*) keeps to the seaside of the Rietfontein extension of the Soetansberg, but has also been spotted on farmland just before entry into the park. Melkbospan is a favourite with Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus sp*), not to mention all the ducks and teals. Contact the park for permits to visit these birding spots or book at Rietfontein for a pleasurable and quiet stay full of birding and walking opportunities.



Rietfontein

Rietfontein is situated on the southern slopes of Soetansberg, overlooking the ocean and coastline, 63km from the Park's offices in L'Agulhas, following the Struisbaai-Elim road, turn off at Die Dam sign and turn off again at the *Uintjieskuil* Vineyards sign. Rietfontein has three self-catering semi-detached units (*Langhuis*), a barn unit and a "worker's house" unit, 10 beds in total. The barn also houses a conference facility. The farmstead is surrounded by a stone wall about 220 years-old.



Bookings: Central Reservations: +27 (0) 12 428-9111, Web: www.sanparks.org, E-mail: reservations@sanparks.org. Seasonal discount (20%): 4 May to 19 September; T&C's apply. Rates are subject to alteration without advance notice. All rates are in South African Rand (ZAR). Tel: +27 (0) 28 435-6078, Fax: +27 (0) 435-6225.

Recent interesting bird sightings and calls heard on the Agulhas Plain



White-faced Duck, Nonnetjie-eend,
Dendrocygna viduata

Knysna Woodpecker, Knysnaspeg,
Camphethera notata

Black cuckoo, Swartkoekoek, *Cuculus
clamosus*



T. Hardaker



A. Manson



D. Human



Encyclopedia of Life

Buff-spotted Flufftail, Gevlekte
vleikuiken, *Sarothrura elegans*

Greater Painted-Snipe, Goudsnip,
Rostratula benghalensis



W. De Klerk

Ruddy Turnstone, Steenloper,
Arenaria interpres

Barn Swallows respond to climate change

Local bird watchers report that they have not spotted the Barn Swallow (European swallow, *Hirundo rustica*) yet this season. Barn Swallows breeding in Europe have shown well-documented responses to climate change there, mainly by arriving earlier after their African migration, to coincide with an earlier spring, the feature of climate change. But what happens to them in their non-breeding grounds in Africa is still a mystery. During their stay in Africa swallows undergo critical life-cycle events such as moulting and “refueling” after breeding. Do swallows leave their African non-breeding grounds earlier, fly faster, or perhaps do not fly as far south as they did previously? A new study, however, has shown that Barn Swallows leave SA earlier than normal. Data from two innovative citizen-science projects, the Southern African Bird Atlas Projects 1 (1987-1991) and 2 (2007-present) show that Barn Swallows certainly do leave earlier from those parts of their South African non-breeding grounds, where they stayed the longest. Read more at www.sanbi.org/news/barn-swallow-migration-patterns-move.



M. Anderson



Pied Crow



Cape Crow

Climate change and Pied Crows

Research at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town shows that Pied Crow (Witborskraai, *Corvus albus*) numbers are increasing because of climate change. This is detrimental to other species as they prey on smaller birds, tortoises and their eggs. The research shows that Pied Crow numbers can increase up to 13%, especially in the Western Cape, Karoo and Fynbos areas. The south-west of the country is getting warmer where the rest of the country is getting wetter. The Institute wants to monitor Pied Crow nests with cameras and they want the public to inform them of nests. Dr Arjun Amar of the Institute can be contacted at 063 865 7326 or carles7292@gmail.com. (SOURCE: Elsabé Brits, Die Burger, 1 October 2016). On the Agulhas Plain the Cape Crow's (Swartrkraai, *Corvus capensis*) numbers are increasing, causing the same problems as the Pied Crow which represents about 5% of the crows on the Plain.

Bird's eye view of Tankwa Karoo National Park



Roggeveld Mountains



Oudebaaskraal Dam

Game on the increase in Tankwa Karoo National Park, census shows

Proclaimed in 1986 the Tankwa Karoo National Park, a sister park within the Cape Cluster parks, is now one of the largest parks within SANParks. During the early 1990's the first reintroduction of wild animals occurred with the release of 25 springbok. Since then gemsbok, eland, red hartebeest and Cape mountain zebra have been reintroduced. The first aerial census took place in 2013 using a SANParks helicopter. Due to the size of the park it was decided to use a fixed-wing aircraft to conduct game counts. The aerial census is flown every two years, 2014 and now in 2016, using the SANParks Cessna 182. Taking off at dawn counting started as the sun rose from behind the Roggeveld mountains. An average of five hours were flown a day to cover the park and a total of 3161 animals and birds were counted. Given the poor rainfall experienced in the park over the last two seasons, it was good to see that the springbok, eland and gemsbok numbers had all increased. The next census will take place in September 2018. (Information and pictures from Carly Cowell, Regional Ecologist, Cape Research Centre)



M. Gore

Ludwig's Bustard, Ludwigpou, *Neotis ludwiggi*

74 Ludwig's Bustard were counted during the game count.



Macaroni Penguin



Blue-cheeked Bee-eater



Marabou Stork



Pacific Golden Plover



Gull-billed Tern



Open-bill stork



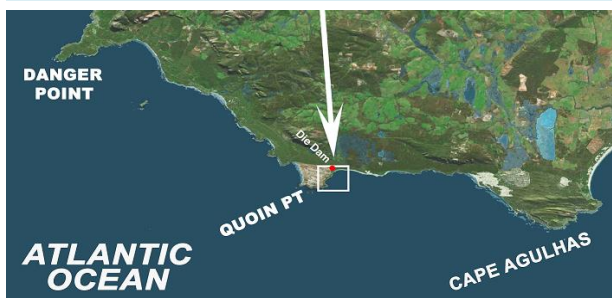
Black Stork

Overberg maritime history – Jimmy Herbert

A most significant maritime history and archaeology discovery was that of the *Joanna* in 1982 - exactly 300 years after she disappeared to the bottom of the typically low visibility waters at *Die Dam*. The tragic loss of the *Joanna* made her the first English East-Indiaman to be wrecked on South African shores. Her discovery resulted in another first. It was the first time that silver ingots had been found on a shipwreck in South African waters. Silver cob coins were part of this phenomenal find. The name "cob" refers to crude pieces of silver (coins) issued in the Spanish colonies of the New World from about 1580 to 1732. It is believed that the term "cob" was derived from the old English word "cob" or, from the Spanish phrase "Cabo de barra". The Old English word cob normally referred to a small mass of something lumpy, such as a "cob of coal". The Spanish phrase, "Cabo de barra", is by far the most often-cited etymology. Translated "Cabo" means "end" while "de barra" means "the bar". Thus meaning, cut from the "end of the bar". The process of how these cobs was made accounted for the many irregular shapes. Visit the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum to learn more about the *Joanna* and her valuable cargo. Also, read more about the *Joanna* in *Resting in her light: Zoetendal 1673 and Joanna 1682* by J.M. Herbert, available at the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum from the beginning of November.

Did you know...

Die Dam's name, at Quoin Point, comes from the fact that the sea water often looks like muddy dam water. (E. J. Herbert)



Silver and gold ingots on display in an American museum

Cob coins 8 reales, 4 reales, 2 reales and 1 reales. An *ingot* is one bar of silver. Silver and gold were transported as *ingots* or bars and/or coins. Ingots are used to this day. It is referred to as *bullion*. Bullion is gold bars, silver bars and other bars or ingots of precious metal. So one can say that in those days they were transporting a CARGO OF BULLION AND COB COINS.

Ratelrivier restoration progress



Main house



Stables



Garden cottages



Back of stables



Stables c1902



Bird's eye view of the Ratel River estuary