



SABAP NEWS

December 2023 - Issue 4



New pentad record for NW Bushmanland Subproject



Also ...

- **Destinations**
Namibia, Kazuma NP, Kaapsehoop, Ladismith
- **Birding technology**
Bindo Birding
- **Natural history notes**
Pied Starling, Cardinal Woodpecker, Ovambo Sparrowhawk
- **Tribute: David Ward**

<https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/>



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EDITORIAL

The year 2023 - a SABAP2 success story!

The abstract of a recently published paper with the title “*Long-term trends from Citizen Scientists: 24 years of breeding success data of African Oystercatchers Haematopus moquini in the Garden Route*” ended with the following sentence “This article highlights the usefulness of long-term datasets for corroborating outcomes from other large datasets, like the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2” (SABAP2). This is not the first time that authors using SABAP2 data have come to this conclusion! It is important that academics analyse the data and publish the results. The SABAP2 online distribution maps are helpful on their own, but we need to analyse the data to unlock the full potential and value of the data. You can find a list of publications under the Resources tab on the SABAP2 website.

Not only are the data used by academic institutions but also by conservation agencies. For example, BirdLife South Africa recently submitted SABAP2 data, combined with fine-scale Habitat Suitability Models, to the Conservation Planner for the Northern Cape Provincial Government. This data will feed into the revised provincial conservation plan to be published in 2024. These plans set the basis for how land is used in South Africa, and map areas critical for the conservation of birds and other taxa.

These are just two examples of how your SABAP2 data submissions, contribute to the conservation of birds. The SABAP2 Steering Committee would like to thank you for your contributions; sometimes under increasingly difficult circumstances. The year 2023 was not easy for the project, but it seems that the number of full protocol cards submitted for 2023 will be near, or even pass, the total for 2022. This is a fantastic achievement, considering, for example, the rise in fuel costs. One of the highlights of 2023 is the number of new atlasers now submitting data, helping us maintain the momentum.

We are encouraging the creation of new subprojects to gather data in areas with no to very low coverage. Our newest subproject is the Bushmanland Subproject, which you can read about on page 10.

Last but not least, thank you to everyone contributing to the project - atlasers, Regional Atlas Committee members, management team, Steering Committee members, app developers, regional champions and many more. SABAP2 is a great success because of all your support!

Sincerely,
Ernst Retief

Cover: Bateleur - Birdlife SA Bird of the Year 2024 © Johan Wandrag.





A hidden birding gem

in Kazuma National Park

Corner Pan, Kazuma National Park.

TEXT AND PHOTOS **Stephen Long**

My wife, Sue, and I are part of Bhejane Trust, which works with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority in north-

west Matabeleland. Bhejane assists the Parks Authority wherever possible, especially with game water supply, transport, anti-poaching, rhino monitoring and

support for the Parks' ecologists. One of the parks where they are active is Kazuma, on the Botswana border between Hwange National Park and Zambezi. Bhejane Trust

has installed and maintains water pumps in Kazuma, but Sue and I are based at Sinamatella Camp in Hwange and Kazuma is covered by a different part of the Bhejane

team. So until this year, our only visit to Kazuma was in the early 1990s. With reliable solar pumps in place, Kazuma has changed quite a bit since those days and now gets a trickle of visitors - in the past there were sometimes fewer than twenty visitors in a year!

Bhejane has recently arranged for a chalet and hide to be built at Corner Pan in Kazuma, and when I checked the SABAP2 coverage map for the Park I found there were just two sets of data for the three pentads that cover most of the Park; all from 2016. That gave us a great excuse to go there and do some atlasing, so we planned a three-day trip to cover at least three pentads.

We travelled from Victoria Falls, through Sikobela communal land and Matetsi Safari Area, entering Kazuma at Kasetshete. We found the journey a bit bumpy in places but basically easy and having left Vic Falls around mid-morning, we reached Kasetshete in time to have lunch at the old camp site. The Kasetshete River is right at the Park boundary and a little Black Crake got us off to a good start when it hopped out of cover as we crossed and gave us a clear view of itself. We had started

atlasing outside the Park as soon as we entered the relevant pentad and the crake was species number 11 - numbers one to 10 having been pretty standard birds like Ring-necked Dove and Southern Red-billed Hornbill. We stayed in the pentad for three hours and got a total of 34 species with none being anything out of the ordinary apart from an African Fish Eagle, which we certainly hadn't expected as we thought (wrongly) that the river was far too small to hold fish. The most exciting moment in the pentad was when we found spoor of White Rhino. Sadly, when we looked around properly, it was obvious that it was actually hippo spoor and the excitement quickly died.

From Kasetshete, which is in pentad 1815_2540, we entered 1815_2535. Atlasing as we moved, we stopped at Eland Pan, a smallish, pumped but muddy-looking pan amongst trees where we got a few water birds for our list. We were travelling past this pan the next day, so we visited the pentad again and had lunch at Roan Pan where we clocked up the necessary hours for a Full Protocol list. I was surprised to find that the most



numerous doves were Namaqua Doves, rather than the Ring-necked Doves we usually see, but otherwise everything was pretty normal and the best species was an Arnot's Chat - the only one we saw anywhere in the Park.

So far, I'm sure you are thinking that Kazuma doesn't sound interesting and I must admit that as we travelled through on our first day, we began to feel

Southern Carmine Bee-eater were a constant presence on the fringes of Corner Pan.

the same - but then we reached Corner Pan in 1820_2530, where we were to stay for three nights. Not only does Corner Pan have a very comfortable new hide and camping chalet, but it also has birds - lots of birds!

There was a flock of Black-winged Pratincoles that we estimated at around 550, and I counted 827 Egyptian Geese. There were also Spur-winged Geese, Black-headed and Grey herons, Blue-billed and Red-billed teals, various small waders, egrets, Glossy Ibis, African Spoonbill and more. The pratincoles would take to the wing from time to time and soar around while Sue took dozens of photos in the hope of being able to count them, but at any given moment there were pratincoles arriving, pratincoles leaving and pratincoles sitting doing nothing, so counting was hopeless.

In the evenings they all disappeared, as did the geese, leaving the pan looking deserted. The pratincoles probably went to feed nearby in the Kazuma Depression, but we guessed that the geese went to feed in the agricultural lands on the Botswana side of the border at Pandamatenga. They returned noisily every morning, arriving in small groups and settling to a day of resting next to the pan.

When we could drag ourselves away, we atlasted elsewhere in the Corner Pan pentad, eventually recording 81 species.

My favourites were Amur Falcons and Lesser Kestrels over the Depression. Southern Carmine Bee-eaters were easy to photograph sitting on termite mounds. However, the Montagu's Harrier was determined not to be photographed!

Along with all the birds, we also saw a good variety of mammals, including Elephants, Kudu, Buffalo, Giraffe, Zebra and Wildebeest at Corner Pan.

On our second day we visited Insiza Pan, pentad 1815_2530, where we saw our biggest birds of the trip - a flock of Common Ostrich. They didn't like the look or sound of our Land Rover on the rather bumpy road and ran as soon as we saw them.

One of the strangest sights of our Kazuma trip was at Corner Pan where I saw a Saddle-billed Stork briefly chase a Black-headed Heron and, focussing on it with my binoculars, saw that the stork was carrying a squirrel in its beak. It took the squirrel down to the pan and dropped it in the water, then spent some minutes shaking and stabbing it before eventually swallowing the bedraggled corpse whole. Also a bit strange, was the behaviour of a group of Southern Ground



A Saddle-billed Stork "rinsing" its prey, a squirrel, before swallowing it.

Hornbills. They walked across in front of the pan one morning but, instead of their normal stately progress, they were in a playful mood and kept annoying each other by pulling each-other's tail feathers. Strangest of all, one of them spent a while hopping in circles and chasing its own tail. The Egyptian Geese clearly didn't like them and followed at a safe distance, honking quietly. The hornbills ignored them.

All in all, we saw just over a 100 species in Kazuma, submitted

data for four pentads and had a great time. We returned to Sinamatella via Pandamatenga and can report that the road is good, so if anyone fancies a few days of civilised camping at somewhere that feels really remote, try Corner Pan, Kazuma National Park.

Establishment of the

Bushmanland Subproject

Peter and Wally Silbernagl



Sclater's Lark © Derek Engelbrecht.

This is the final instalment of a three-part series of articles about atlasing in Bushmanland, South Africa¹

Under the SABAP2 there are a number of subprojects – see the drop-down menu amongst the top level menu items at <https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/#>.

These subprojects all have in common an identified area across which there is a particular focus. They are all within reach of bigger towns or national parks or close to other forms of accommodation.

The purpose of the Bushmanland Subproject is to create a platform

that will enable prospective atlasers drawn to this area to engage with a suitable farmer, arrange the accommodation and find out how to access the various high priority squares. It then also provides a safety net, should something go wrong, while still experiencing the absolute remoteness of the area.

A rainbow over the plains of Bushmanland near Brandvlei
© Derek Engelbrecht.



¹ There is also a Bushmanland on the eastern border of Namibia, north of Gobabis.

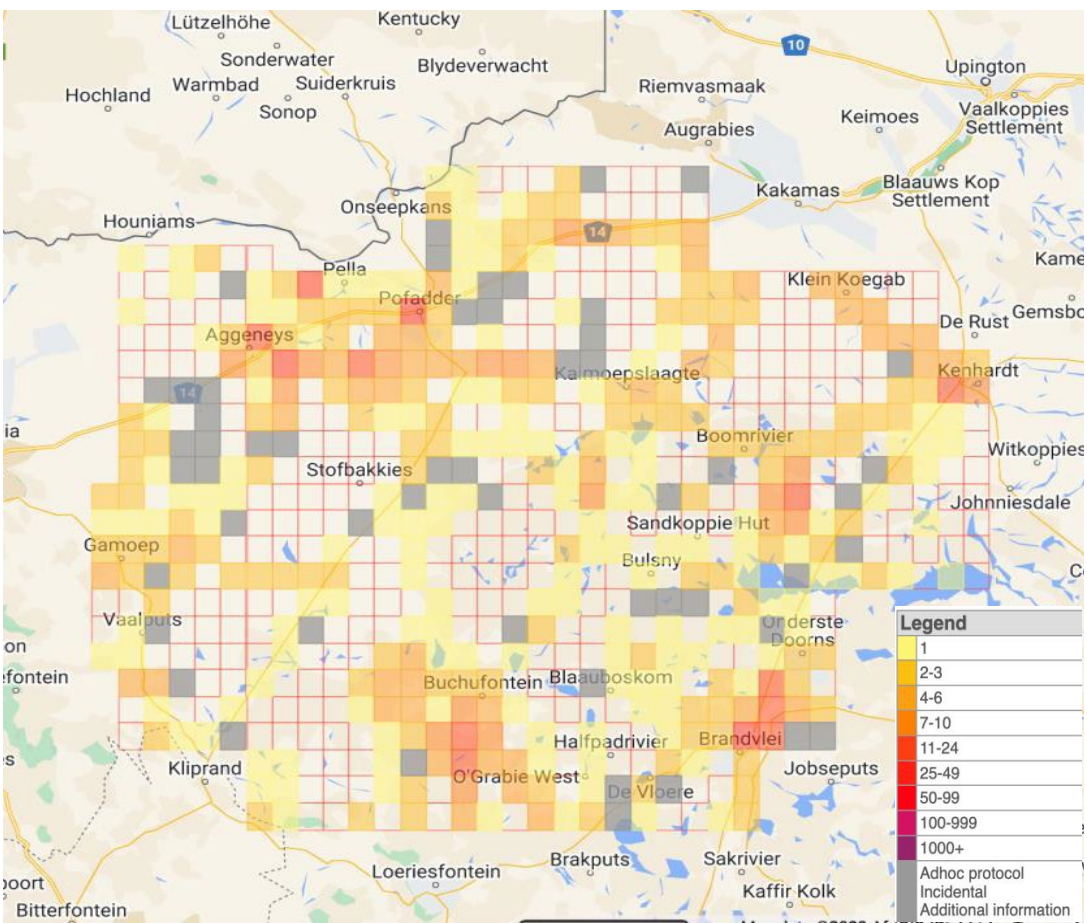


Figure 1. Outline of the pentads falling within the proposed Bushmanland Subproject.

For the Bushmanland Subproject the area has been determined by referring to the book *Pioniers van die Dorsland* by Dr PJ van der Merwe (1944). The information from the book has been adjusted, based on our own knowledge and the needs of the SABAP2 project.

In the proposed area there are 720 pentads, of which 693 are High

Priority pentads² (meaning there are three or fewer Full Protocol cards for the pentad) which includes 282 pentads with NO Full Protocol cards.

This means that more than 96% of the pentads have less than four Full Protocol cards, while over 40% of the High Priority pentads have NO Full Protocol cards.



Pale Chanting Goshawk © Derek Engelbrecht.

So there are enough challenges for atlasers. You can certainly raise your SABAP2 milestone awards very quickly, with a trip or two, to a Platinum or even an On Fire badge!! In order for prospective atlasers visiting Bushmanland to be able to grasp the critical success factors for a trip into this region, namely accommodation and local knowledge, some of the local farmers (who all have had some experience

with birders) have provided their contact information.

With respect to their privacy, and in agreement with the SABAP2 team, this contact information will not be published on the SABAP2 website, but the contact details of a SABAP2 registered member will be provided who can then share the contact information with interested atlasers.

Enjoy and see you in Bushmanland!

² As at 25 April 2023.



The LEBB experience

Jenni Sharkey

Ladismith Endemic Bird Bash (LEBB). Quite a mouthful, for a first time birder like myself, leaving me with some uncertainty as to what to expect. Fortunately the less experienced BirdLasser users were lucky to have patient, old timers like Francois Furstenburg (LadiBirds team leader) and Ian Elvey (Birding Old Farts team leader) to advise and guide them, and of course bird identification was made so much easier for all by Francois's comprehensive Ladismith Birding booklet. Although birding was the key objective, the Ladismith birding bash from the 13th to the 21st of May 2023 encompassed so much more than just birding.

The “birding family” from the outset made everyone feel part of the group, but make no mistake there was an underlying, competitive spirit. It was dizzying to follow: Tour de France like! Initially BirdLasser team Birding Old Farts took the lead (in numbers of species seen), but was soon overtaken by the RooyVinke (lead by Johan van Rooyen). Then team LadiBirds arrived and surged into the lead, providing followers a Wimbledon rally contest between Francois and Johan. Team Vinkies, who unfortunately got to the start line late, also put in a stout effort but couldn’t manage to catch up, and LadiBirds came out tops. At the end of each day a Bird of the Day jersey was even awarded. Alas the Huge Siskins team (four local amateurs) was left in the dust, too gobsmacked at the level of expertise to do much more than stand with mouth agape. It seemed a micro-second’s chirp or the flutter of a wing was enough to not only identify the bird, its sex and age, but even what it was going to do next! Experience counts – thus ends today’s lesson for the novice. Nevertheless, the thrill, some would say addiction, of the anticipated next hopefully big sighting was there. Even for me, whose chances were, to say the least, not that great for spotting a special. But hey, birders are optimists, right?

The May weather was unseasonably cold and rainy, at least for Ladismith, which gets some 300 mm of rain per year. The bitterly cold weather sorted out the boys from the men. True birding men got going at first light. I’m ashamed to say I wasn’t one of them. When the sun, (and I), came out though, it was perfect birding weather. An advantage of the LEBB was that the 50 km radius area encompassed south and north of the Klein Swartberg mountains, and invariably when one area had inclement weather the other did not. A short heavy downpour, however, led to some folk being temporarily trapped at their accommodation by a flooded river. I like to think this was mother nature’s way of forcing them to slow down, relax, and enjoy the spectacular scenery. Luckily by the next day the river was passable and it was game on again.

The birding area has an exceptionally diverse habitats and this was reflected in the variety of birds, making the bird bash anything but dull. Some areas were found to be hotspots for endemic birding. Boschluyskloof was very popular, and another excellent area in the south, was near Moose Valley, something resident Ladismithers had till now largely not appreciated. A total of 190 bird species were recorded in eight days,



We had wine, soup, bread and cheese for lunch in the Otto Hager Church Building, a provincial heritage church building. The lunch was sponsored by the Ladismith Tourism Bureau. Two of the team leaders, Francois Furstenburg (Above, far right) and Johan van Rooyen (Below, far left).





with 3 628 records submitted to the SABAP2 database. The LadiBirds recorded 146 species, and four teams exceeded 100 species across 50 pentads.

As I have stated, this event was more than just birding. It was a getting together of like-minded people. In my case I was very pleased to be reacquainted with an old school friend at the lunch and social get-together. We had last seen one another 50 years previously. Needless to say we immediately recognized each other, as neither of us has aged a day.

I like to think that the LEBB had only winners. Participants all had a great time and of course most importantly the increased bird knowledge and SABAP2 input will help with the conservation of our feathered friends.

Special thanks to Francois Furstenburg for planning and organising all aspects of the LEBB, and compiling a birding guide for participants, with assistance from Johan van Rooyen for the route maps. The Ladismith Tourism Bureau thanks everyone for their enthusiastic commitment to birding.

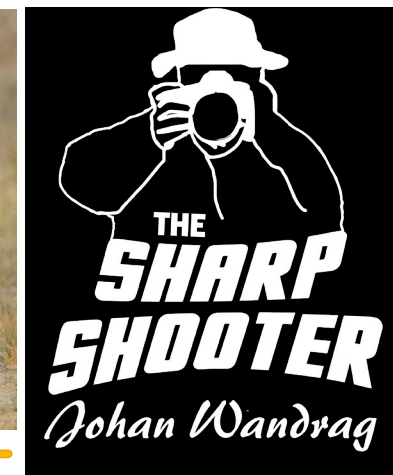
Chat Flycatcher was one of the special birds seen during the birding bash
© MD Anderson.




Birding Big Day 2023 - 2 December 2023

Register at

<https://www.birdlife.org.za/birding-big-day-2023-entry-form/>



Cover photo credit to 



Bindo Birding



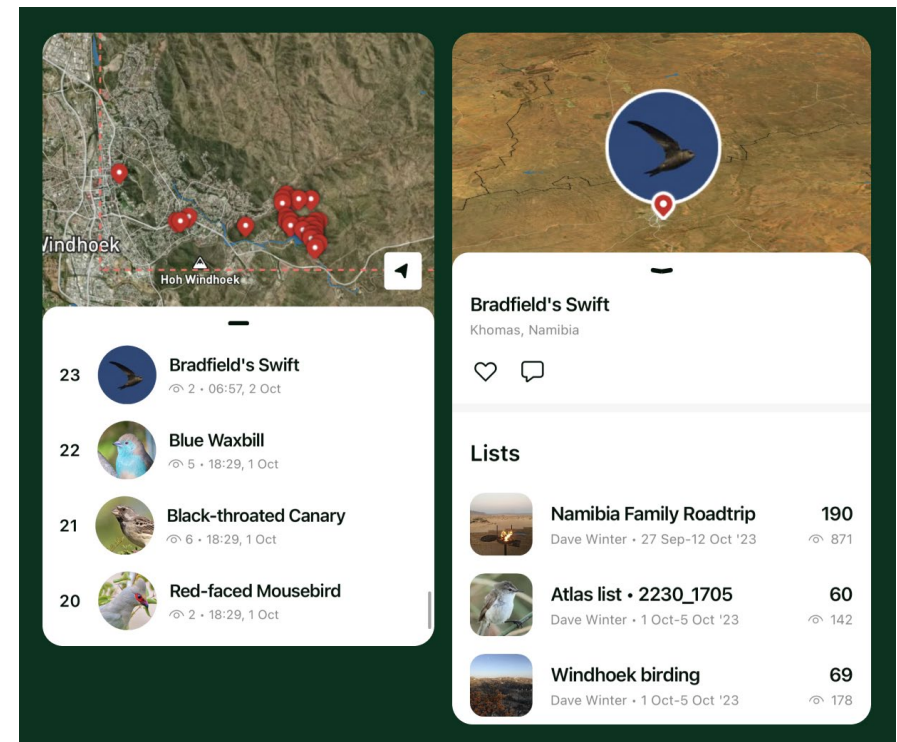
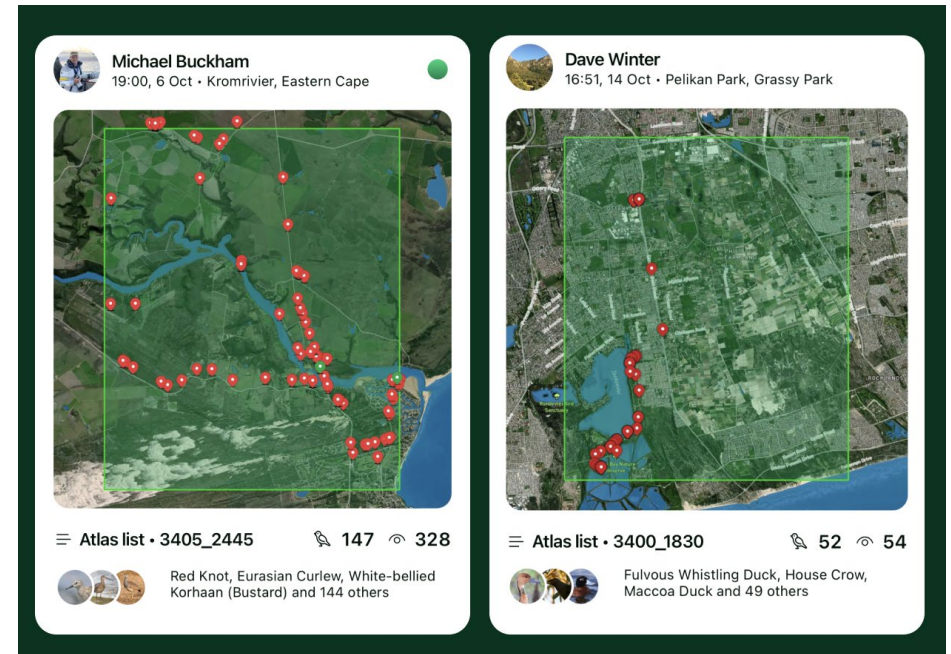
Bindo Birding is a newly released bird logging app that allows birders to log and submit full protocol or ad hoc protocol cards to the SABAP2 project. You can download Bindo Birding from the Android or Apple app store. Find out more about how to atlas using Bindo here: [How to Atlas in Bindo](#).

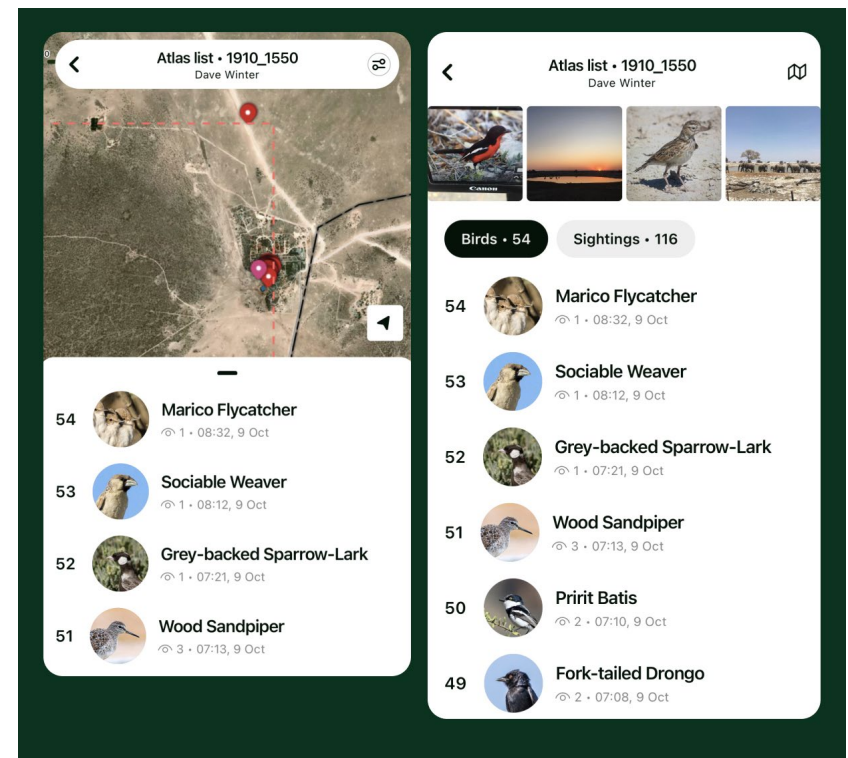
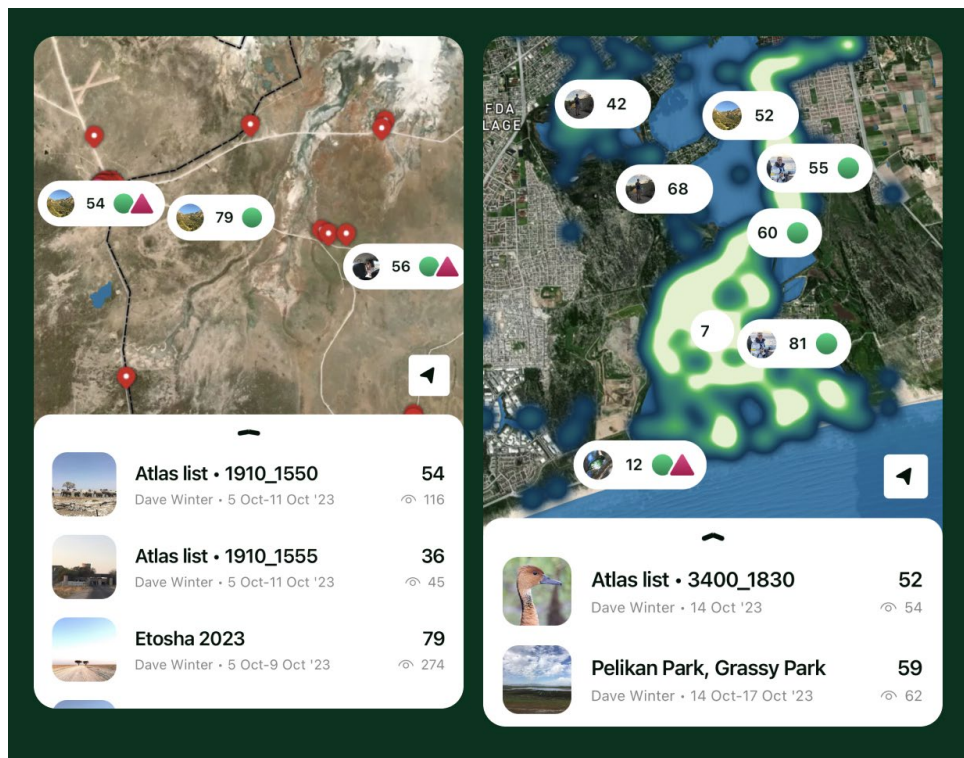
How is Bindo different from other bird logging apps?

Logging made easy - Bindo suggests “nearby” birds when logging so the common or more easily spotted species are shown first. These suggestions are based on SABAP2 data and will make logging quicker and help reduce logging errors.
Nearby targets - based on SABAP2

data, Bindo will also show you a list of birds you haven’t yet seen in the area. This is a great way to ensure you haven’t left anything out. This view of “nearby targets” is shown on your list (rather than the logging screen).

Run multiple lists concurrently - Bindo allows you to create multiple lists (example: atlas list, eBird list,





trip list) and you then only need to log a sighting once. Bindo will allocate each sighting to all active lists. This allows you to “nest” lists within lists. In other words, sightings don’t have a 1:1 relationship with a list, they can have a 1:many relationship. For example, you can start a “Kruger Trip List” that you keep running for the 2 weeks you are in the park, but you can also start and end multiple other lists (for example, Pretoriuskop camp, Skukuza camp) or multiple atlas cards during this same timeframe. All of the sightings on the “nested lists” or atlas cards that you created

within the timeframe of your Kruger Trip List will also be allocated to this list.

GPS data - Bindo submits the GPS data of your sighting to SABAP2, rather than just pentad-level data. This gives the data more utility for researchers.

Connect with other birders - Bindo allows you to connect with and follow other birders across Southern Africa. One of the primary goals of Bindo is to make birding fun and help birders connect with others to learn and share together.

You can add your photos - Bindo allows you to add photos to your lists or atlas cards. This is a great way to capture your birding memories.

Atlasing and eBird - with Bindo you can atlas directly in the app, but if enabled, you can also create eBird lists that are emailed to you for CSV upload. You can enable the CSV file share in your user profile.

Compete with friends - everyone loves a challenge so Bindo, just like Strava, has defined birding areas across the region where you can

compete with yourself or friends. When you log a species within one of these areas you will automatically be added to the leader board.

Explore - Bindo has a fantastic map interface that allows you to explore sightings, lists and photos recorded in Bindo across Southern Africa. When you navigate to new areas on the map, the lists and species logged in that area will be shown.

We love feedback and are always trying to improve - please send your suggestions or questions to support@bindo.app. Happy birding!

The joy of atlasing and bird ringing in Namibia

TEXT AND PHOTOS **Ursula Bryson**



Atlasing and bird ringing go well together, since a bird in the hand gives you an opportunity to take pictures, to be sure of the species identification and to determine the age and sex.

We ring and atlas annually in Namibia and usually at our favourite places. One such place is a cattle farm north of Witvlei (pentad 2221_1831). When we started atlasing here we got Out of Range forms for nearly every species; even the Scaly-feathered Warbler which is very common in this area. Clearly no-one had visited this pentad yet!

Atlasing during summer in this pentad often yields around 115 species within five days. One of the reasons for this high number is a spring and a dam that holds water - if there is rain. Mostly Red-billed Teals and, in ever-increasing numbers, Egyptian Geese gather on the shore. They are joined by Maccoa Duck, Southern Pochard, White-backed Duck, and the scarcer South African Shelduck to rest on the shoreline.

With some luck we may see an African Spoonbill, a Hammerkop or even a small flock of Greater Flamingos. All these species seem to make use of small farm dams on their routes between the different large dams like Otjivero Dam near Omitara and the dam in Gobabis.

I especially delight in the Palearctic migrants. A highlight is watching the European Bee-eaters feeding on insects above the dam or even taking a bath by repeatedly plunging into the water.



European Bee-eater.



Icterine Warbler.

It is a rare sight to see shy Icterine Warblers sneak through the bushes.



Garden Warbler.

The same is true for our first Garden Warbler in this pentad.



Common Whitethroat.

And then, there are the very inconspicuous birds which are just as exciting, like the Common (Greater) Whitethroat; a recent first for us in this pentad and rarely observed in Namibia.



European Roller.

Welcomed, but scarce, are sightings of the European Roller which usually perch on power lines. This past summer there was an influx, with daily sightings, and we were able to trap and ring one.



Spotted Flycatcher.

The farmhouse with vegetable garden and trees is situated in the same pentad. Spotted Flycatchers are often seen using the garden fence as a perch from which to hunt.



Eurasian Golden Oriole.

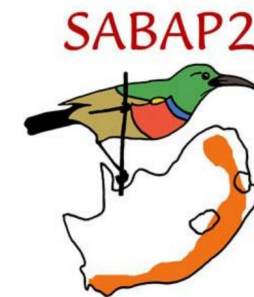
The garden fig tree attracts adult and juvenile Eurasian Golden Orioles like moths to a flame.



Tree Pipit.

Not only have we caught and ringed the stunning Eurasian Golden Orioles, we also unexpectedly netted a young Tree Pipit which was way out of range!

It is a daily pleasure to observe birds and to contribute to the SABAP2 project! Thanks to Henk Nel and the BirdLasser team for providing such a fantastic and efficient tool to make atlasing a breeze - for the benefit of birds.



A North West birding “record”

Janelle Verster

A new record for the most bird species observed within a period of five consecutive days in the North West Province was set in the Vaalkop Dam/Bushwillow Estate area in December 2022. My husband Pieter Verster and myself, both very keen birders, managed to find 236 different species of birds during this period within pentad 2515_2725, which includes a portion of the Vaalkop Dam and Bushwillow Estate not too far from the centre. The atlasing protocol of the SABAP2 was strictly adhered to and all data was submitted. If you are new to atlasing visit <https://sabap2.birdmap.africa>, a treasure trove of information on how to participate, the protocol, coverage maps and data access.

We started our attempt at the record late afternoon on 15

December 2022 and passed the previous record of 206 on day four of the SABAP2 prescribed maximum of five days per card. We duly continued recording more species over the remainder of the period up to the morning of 19 December 2022, and set the new record of 236 species.

The Bushwillow Estate adds some “unique” habitats in the pentad and, therefore, some unexpected birds for the area. This estate was extremely valuable in the record attempt. Special birds such as Marsh Owls and Common Buttonquails were found in the adjoining North West Bird Sanctuary; not likely to be found anywhere else in the pentad.

A lot of time was spent walking and driving to cover all habitats. A notably high number of raptor species were observed during the



Mocking Cliff Chat © Tania Anderson.

five-day period, potentially due to the very good recent rainfall that likely resulted in abundant food sources for them, such as large numbers of Red-billed Queleas. However, the previous heavy rains resulted in high water levels at Vaalkop Dam that probably led

to the absence of many of the 29 waterbirds that are reasonably expected to be found during the record attempt. Of these, 17 waterbird species are very common in the pentad.

An astonishing 57 species that are recorded in the pentad less than 10%



Red-billed Quelea © Tania Anderson.

of the time were recorded during the record attempt! Only one bird with a reporting rate of more than 10% was missed, despite several attempts at finding it and for some reason it wasn't calling if indeed present at the time. This was the Fiery-necked Nightjar. Five species were new SABAP2 records for this pentad, namely Mocking Cliff Chat, Western Yellow Wagtail, Terrestrial Brownbul, Eurasian Golden Oriole and Long-Crested Eagle.

Naturally an effort like this

cannot succeed without the help and support of several very kind people. We stayed in the Bushwillow Estate during our five-day attempt, with Dries and Julia Laubscher generously hosting us on the first night and thereafter Sue and Norval Lippiatt. Dries also provided invaluable information about the area during both the planning and execution phases of the record attempt. Thanks are also due to many others, such as Fanie of Bulkop farm, Sarel and the staff

of Finfoot Lake Reserve and the staff of Magalies Water for arranging access to and help at their respective establishments. These parts of the pentad also delivered a significant number of additional species. We were thrilled to have our friend Eduard Teichert join us on the final day who brought some fresh eyes, ears and energy, and who also morally supported us throughout our birding endeavour.

From a conservation perspective, the results of this record attempt may raise awareness of the critical importance of protecting these natural areas and their habitats. This small area, based on SABAP2 data, is currently a hotspot of bird species richness in South Africa. From what we can gather, the highest number of species observed in a pentad over five days in South Africa is 247 species in the Komatipoort area in Mpumalanga (in 2018), which makes our total of 236 the 2nd highest recorded number of species; just 11 short of the national "record".

Contact Janelle at verstjm@unisa.ac.za if you'd like a full list of the species before you visit the area.



Long-crested Eagle © Derek Engelbrecht.

Tribute to David Graham Ward

Namibia's champion citizen scientist



5 October 1949 - 15 June 2023

For the past 20 years, Dave Ward has been the backbone of the monitoring system of Namibia's community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programme, which now covers over 20% of the country. The 86 communal conservancies and two community associations within the CBNRM programme support some 240,000 rural people living in the most remote parts of Namibia. These rural communities manage their wildlife and other natural resources, as well as their wildlife economies (tourism, hunting, crafts, plant products, etc) for the benefit of their people.

Dave's job was, inter alia, to train community game guards to use the system, help run annual game counts, carry out annual audits on the monitoring system, provide refresher training, and undertake monitoring. This work took him into many poorly studied parts of the country with limited biodiversity data.

Dave's love of citizen science pre-dated the 1st Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1) when he was a geological field assistant. Like many people in geology, he had a love of nature which went back to his childhood and school days in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) and holidays and short-term jobs in Botswana, particularly in the Chobe area. Birds were his passion, and he was one of the leading contributors to Namibia's bird atlas project in the 1970s and 1980s when Namibia brought its data into SABAP1. Dave contributed just over 100 atlas cards and was in the top 10% of Namibian contributors.

But it was to SABAP2 and Namibia's biodiversity citizen science programme (<http://www.the-eis.com/atlas/>) that Dave made his largest



contributions. Over a period of almost 12 years, from 2012 to 2023, he recorded 516 bird species for SABAP2, with a yearly average of 387 species (342–429). These numbers are impressive when considering that Namibia is a hyper-arid, arid and dry-subhumid country with a total bird list of some 680 species. He averaged about 120 cards per year and covered 314 different pentads (Figure 1). All except three of his 1 325 submissions were full protocol cards.

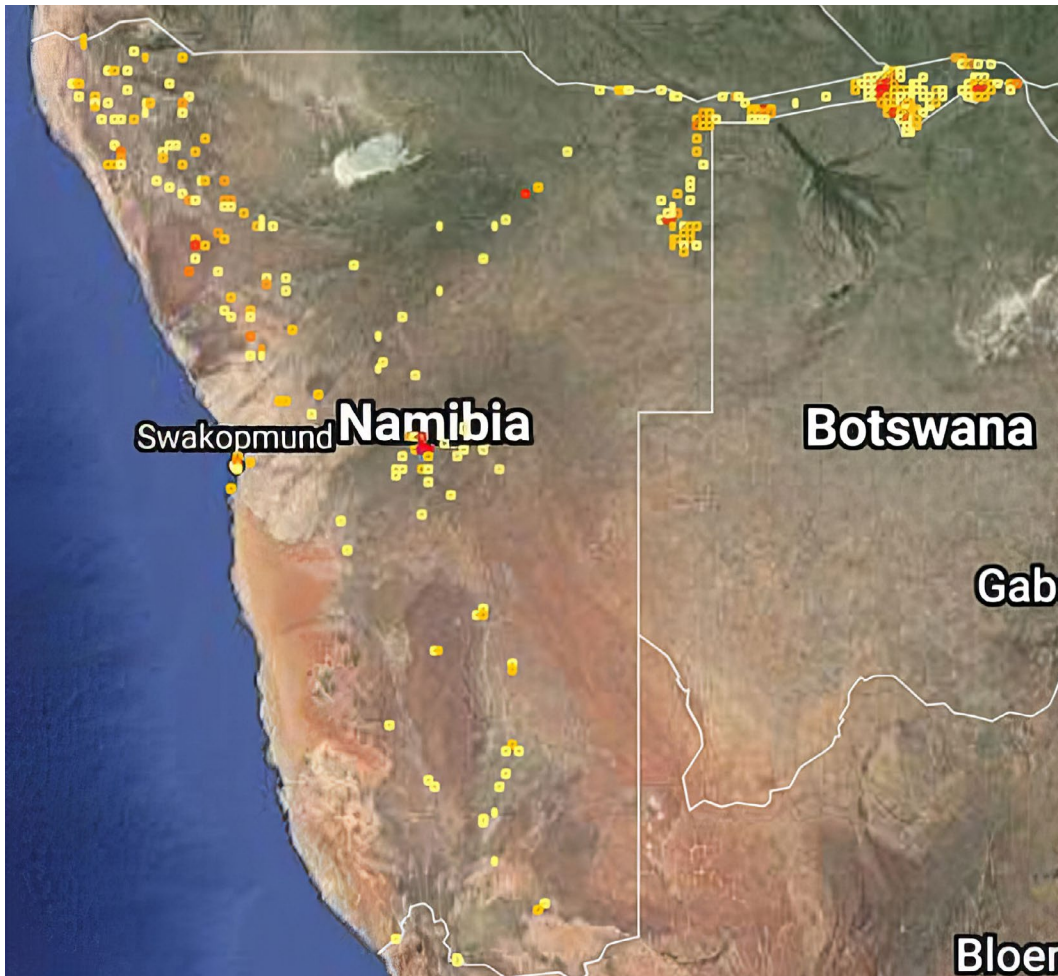


Figure 1. Pentads covered by Dave Ward during SABAP2 over almost 12 years (2012 to 2023).

Dave was the leading contributor to Namibia's biodiversity citizen science programme with 14,926 records. His focus after birds were mammals and butterflies, but with significant contributions also to reptiles and invasive alien plants. These records covered an impressive amount of the more remote parts of Namibia, particularly in the central, north-west and the north-east.

Besides the impressive number of records that Dave submitted to the various atlas programmes, the geographical scope and quality of his records stood out from the rest.

He worked in remote areas where few other citizen scientists visited, and repeatedly visited these areas as part of his work. In 2012 and 2013 about 90% of his pentads were low coverage, many being virgin pentads, where no previous records existed. By 2021 and 2022 he had almost single-handedly brought this down to about 33%.



His records were scrupulously reliable. He was meticulous in recording information, always handwritten in notebooks, and making sure that all identifications were correct. “You can take Dave’s records to the bank” was the view of atlas administrators. New distribution records from Dave, no matter how far removed from conventional knowledge, were never rejected. To do so would be folly. All follow-ups confirmed the new distributions.

He was also a guiding mentor to young field staff in the CBNRM programme and got them interested and involved in citizen science. One of Dave’s protégées is now the second largest contributor to the programme and another is in 6th place.

The information from these citizen science programmes is used in research, conservation planning, education, policy development and other related ways. Dave’s records, together with those of all the other citizen scientists, will live on far into the future, helping the country move towards a sustainable future.

Tributes to Dave from his many friends and colleagues include: “His campfire stories were legendary!” “One of the greats in Namibian conservation.” “Our beloved wilderness will be the poorer for his absence.” “His quiet commitment to his work will be a great loss to the conservation world.” “Always unassuming and humble, he was a great friend and mentor – a quiet legend.” “David always made us laugh with his amazing sense of humour and jokes.” “His beautiful heart-warming soul could take the chill off a cold evening.” “He will be deeply missed by all who he touched.”

Go well Dave, and rest assured that your citizen science contributions are of great value to science and conservation, and your dedication and commitment is greatly appreciated, both now and far into the future. You set the bar high and leave a legacy of which you can be justifiably proud.

Chris Brown: Namibian Chamber of Environment



PIED STARLING

RANGE EXPANSION

Brian Vanderwalt

I have always wondered where the range ended for Pied Starling *Lamprolornis bicolor* beyond Calvinia on the road to Brandvlei. Looking at distribution maps in bird guides, they confirmed that Calvinia was the “end of the line” for them in the Brandvlei direction.

I was guiding in the Brandvlei area in April 2023 when a resident asked

me to identify a “new” bird in his yard. Low and behold it was Pied Starling. I was very pleased to log it on my atlas card for the town.

Once at home I checked the SABAP2 data, and it showed a possible range expansion into “unknown” territory for the Pied Starling (Fig. 1). One wonders whether this was due to the good rains in 2022! Viva Atlasing!

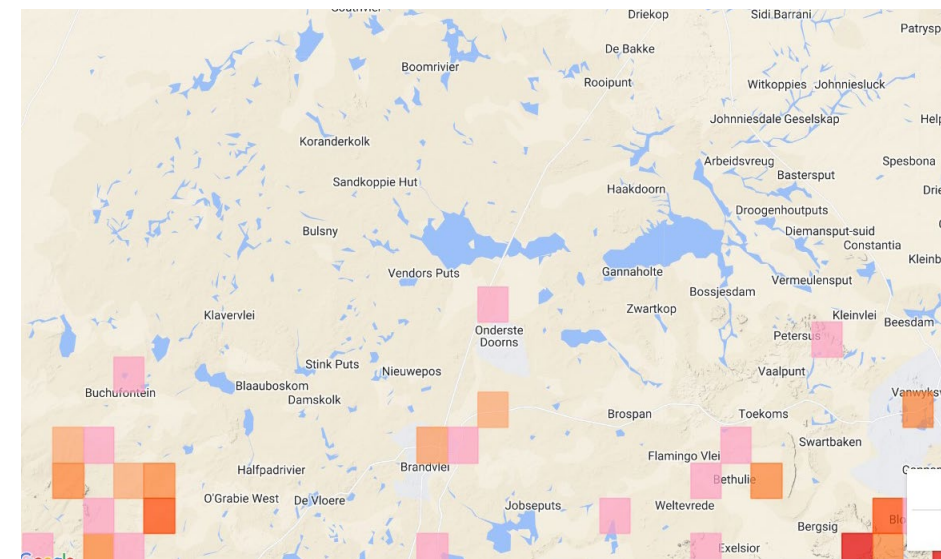


Figure 1. The new distribution of Pied Starling in the Brandvlei area.

SUMMER BIRDING ***AT*** ***KAAPSEHOOP***

TEXT AND PHOTOS **Johan Gouws**



Groundscraper Thrush.

In February of the 2023 summer season, we had so much rain that birders cancelled trip after trip to Kaapsehoop. Over 698 mm of rainfall was recorded! When we did have a break in the weather birding was still very good, but with all the water around we had to move around quite a lot to find birds. Birding in these conditions was slower than usual. Around 50 species per day was considered a good total.

No sooner had the veld dried a bit than a cool nip in the air heralded the change of the season. This always brings with it some good news! May sees the start of the aloe season here on the mountain

Mocking Cliff Chat (female).





Mocking Cliff Chat (male).

and we joyfully welcomed back the Malachite Sunbirds and Gurney's Sugarbirds. Birding amongst the rocks in May is very different from any type of birding one would normally experience. Find the aloes in flower and wait patiently for the birds to arrive. Make sure to dress warmly and have coffee at hand for the early start. It is always fun to pick a particular aloe, set up your camera on a tripod and wait for the opportunity for a perfect shot of a bird feeding on a flower. We often see the Malachite Sunbirds in their eclipse plumage; it is very seldom that they have their full colors here.

The arrival of a pair of Mocking Cliff Chats and a Groundscraper Thrush pair this summer has been quite heartwarming. These two

species have been absent from Kaapsehoop for a few years now, so it is wonderful to have them back here again. They are easy to find. The Groundscraper Thrushes frequent the central part of the village, mostly on the pavements, and the Mocking Cliff Chat pair are very active amongst the rocks to the east side of the village.

Of the 2 438 Full Protocol cards I have submitted to SABAP2, 502 of these were for the Kaapsehoop pentad and the number of species recorded so far is 272!

For a birding experience at Kaapsehoop, contact Johan Gouws at 0832943370.



The male Cardinal Woodpecker takes off from the nest site in search of more food to feed the Lesser Honeyguide chick in the nest.

CARDINAL WOODPECKER

breeding in Plettenberg Bay (pentad 3400_2320)

TEXT AND PHOTOS **Bruce Ward-Smith**

Woodpecker nesting sites are generally more accessible for observation, usually being in a suitable cavity a metre or two off the ground and most often not hidden or obscured by thick foliage like many other species. This nest hole was in a tree next



Lesser Honeyguide.

to the road and made for easy observation and some great photographic opportunities. Spending time watching this pair going about their duties collecting grubs, spiders, centipedes and even small scorpions was fascinating. Photos were a bit of a challenge due to generally poor light conditions and the bright backgrounds experienced on most days. These challenges aside, the photographers produced many outstanding images. The most sort after photos are the flight shots of the woodpecker flying into the nest or flying away, and of course the most difficult to achieve, taking hours of patience and hundreds of photos to get that one spectacular in-flight photo.

Only when the chick got large enough to start poking its head out of the nest hole, was it evident that the Cardinal Woodpeckers' nest had been parasitised by a Lesser Honeyguide. Both these species are not commonly seen around Plettenberg Bay, compared

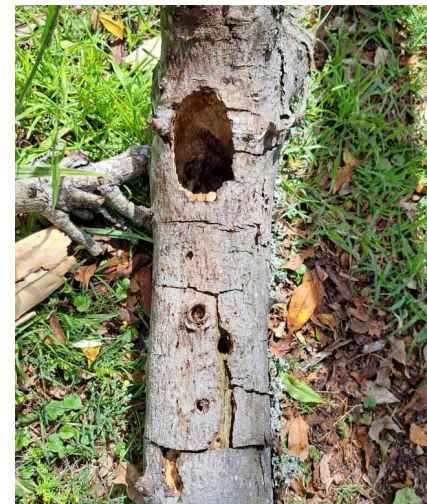


Male Cardinal Woodpecker feeding a Lesser Honeyguide chick.

to the Knysna and Olive Woodpeckers, which are seen and heard fairly regularly.

Fortunately, the day the Lesser Honeyguide chick left the nest, one of our local birders was at the nest site and got some shots of it nearby. Then a few days later strong winds brought down the branch with the nest hole, so the birds got out just in time.

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The nest on the ground after strong winds brought it down.



A SWIFT OVAMBO SPARROWHAWK

TEXT **Andy Branfield**
PHOTOS **Gareth Hazell**

Ovambo Sparrowhawk
preying on a Little Swift
at Levuvhu river bridge,
Kruger National Park.

The Ovambo Sparrowhawk *Accipiter ovampensis* is a rare resident accipiter in the Kruger National Park (KNP). It favours tall woodland. The last published record for Pafuri was in November 2012 and according to SABAP2 data, recorded in the Pafuri pentad (2225_3115) in January 2022. From an SABAP2 atlas perspective, prior to the following account, it has been recorded at the Levuvhu River bridge and Pafuri Picnic Site (2225_3110) pentad on 0.6% of Full Protocol (FP) atlas cards submitted as of March 2023. It has been recorded on only 0.4% of FP cards in the “Turning the KNP Green Atlas Project” - 26 793 cards submitted by 885 observers covering 446 pentads; an incredible example of citizen science in action! To date, 901 FP cards have been submitted for this pentad. My recent contributions, together with other atlasers, have increased the sightings of this bird to nine and it is now on 1.1% of FP cards in this pentad. It is incredible what a few records of a rare bird can do to statistics! This is another reason why these records are so important.

On the 4th of February 2023 at about 15:00, on a hot, partly cloudy day, Gareth Hazell and I saw an adult Ovambo Sparrowhawk perched prominently in a tall Buffalo Thorn about 10–15 metres up, overlooking the Levuvhu River. It was in the open. The Little Swifts, that nest below the bridge, were flying at high altitude, instead of the low altitude flight over the bridge that is their usual flight pattern. The reason for this change in behaviour soon became obvious. When a lone Little Swift ventured down to low altitude to fly over the river, the Ovambo



Sparrowhawk launched itself, stooped and caught the swift in its outstretched talons over the water. It then flew off to a more sheltered riverine tree to enjoy its meal. We were both atasing at the time and were en route to the Pafuri Border Camp where we were setting up a West Rand Honorary Rangers Birding Weekend due to start the next day. We were able to show our guests the same bird the next day.

Swifts are a well-documented prey item of Ovambo Sparrowhawks. I have also witnessed a White-rumped Swift being taken in a direct attack; the Ovambo Sparrowhawk stooping from a high exposed

perch. It has been described as “most falcon like of all accipiters with relatively long wings and short tail” and its hunting technique is also more falcon-like than that of other accipiters. Characteristically, as in this story, it hunts over open areas and typical recorded hunting methods involve stooping, after soaring to 100–150 metres, or stooping from an exposed perch about 30 metres high. The literature further describes the hunting techniques of these birds: “[it] more typically forages on the wing over woodland and adjacent grassland, and other open country and chases individual birds or flocks

it flushes. The predator will then chase its prey for distances of 100–200 metres, and then take the prey close to the ground.” A success rate of 6 out of 46 (13%) attempts has been documented. I have published descriptive notes of shorter chases close to the ground that were largely unsuccessful. These included attacks on waterbirds, forcing the bird into the water, and attacking from low altitude in cover.

This article documents a sighting of a rare accipiter in the KNP and highlights the value of using a FP card to provide important statistics. Interestingly, this species is rare in the Lowveld, even outside the KNP. In contrast, the Black Sparrowhawk, features on only 0.5% of “Turning the KNP Green” FP cards and 0.6% of Pafuri pentad FP cards, but in suitable habitat outside of the KNP it is more regularly recorded.



For literature references or correspondence, please contact me at the email address below.
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PROJECT NEWS

Atlasing Milestones

5 June – 15 November 2023

Atlaser	Cards	Atlaser	Cards
Duncan McKenzie	4700	Cassie Carstens	1500
Andy Branfield	3800	Rihann Geyser	1500
Marc Cronje	3100	Roddy Furlong	1500
Japie Claassen	2700	Martin Benadie	1400
Ross Hawkins	2700	Eric Herrmann	1200
Johan Gouws	2400	Hugh Retief	1200
Stefan Theron	2400	Sue Oertli	1200
Craig Whittington-Jones	2200	Toby Pretorius	1200
Anneke Vincent	2100	Christo Venter	1200
Werner van Gothem	2000	Felicity Kanichowsky	1100
John Randell	2000	Crystelle Wilson	1000
Jason Boyce	1800	Elmarie Brits	1000
Johan van Rensburg	1700	Jannie Jansen	1000
Stephan Terblanche	1700	Linda du Plessis	1000
Andrew Featherstone	1600	Trevor and Margaret Hardaker	1000

Let's beat 2022's number of atlas cards

Did you know we only need another 4 480 Full Protocol cards to do better this year than we did in 2022! We have around 2 500 participants, so if we each do just two FP cards, we can get there! But please aim to do far more! The holidays are a perfect opportunity to log birds.

To beat last year's total number of cards we need (as of 23 November 2023):

Country	Province	Number of cards
South Africa	Eastern Cape	943
	Free State	21
	Gauteng	460
	KwaZulu-Natal	342
	Limpopo	480
	Mpumalanga	253
	North West	265
	Northern Cape	600
	Western Cape	392
Eswatini		3
Malawi		21
Mozambique		6
Namibia		426
Zambia		33
Zimbabwe		235
TOTAL		4 480

What about Lesotho and Botswana? Botswana is already at 39 cards more than 2022, and Lesotho has 30 more cards than last year! But don't take your foot off the pedal yet; keep pushing those numbers higher!

You can do it, wonderful atlasers!

Recent publications using SABAP2 data

Arendse, B., Dawson, P., Mels, B. & Brown, M. 2023. Long-term trends from Citizen Scientists: 24 years of breeding success data of African Oystercatchers *Haematopus moquini* in the Garden Route, Ostrich, DOI: 10.2989/00306525.2023.2272047.

Cervantes F., Altwegg, R., Strobbe, F., Skowno, A., Visser, V., Brooks, M., Stojanov, Y., Harebottle, D.M. and Job, N. 2023. BIRDIE: A data pipeline to inform wetland and waterbird conservation at multiple scales. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2023.1131120>.

De Swart, D. 2023. Birds of SABAP2 pentad 2915_2555 on the Jagersfontein Road, south-west of Bloemfontein, Free State. *Biodiversity Observations*. <https://doi.org/10.15641/bo.1315>.

New atlassers submitted data in 2023

Andrew Lean

Anri Marais

Bennie van der Merwe

Carl L. De Klerk

Carla Erasmus

Christiaan de Wet

Christoffel J. Swart

David Lukas

Donald W. Fraser

Dorette and Schalk Kotze

Evan John Kortje

Gabriel Kingsley

Jacob Henry

Johannes Pienaar

Kagiso A. L. Raphela

Mark Needle

Martin van der Walt

Maud van der Merwe

Nicolene Swart

Portia L. Chake

Robert Montignies

Ryan Dewey

Sabrina Luppnow

Siphesihle M. Mbokazi

Solly Bellingan

HELP ENSURE THE FUTURE OF SABAP2

SABAP2 is hosted by the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology with support from BirdLife South Africa, BirdLasser and the South African National Biodiversity Institute.

We thank our citizen scientists for their ongoing commitment to protecting South Africa's diverse bird populations. Together, we can ensure the survival of these inspiring species that connect us all around the world.

Once-off donations, large or small, or monthly contributions would be appreciated. We would also value any suggestions of corporate or other sources of funding we could investigate. Send your suggestions to Hilary Buchanan at fitz@uct.ac.za.

Donations can be made to:
Account Name: UCT Donations Account
Bank: Standard Bank of South Africa Limited
Branch name: Rondebosch
Branch code: 025009
Account Number: 071522387
SWIFT: SBZAZAJJ

Please note: It is important to use as reference: **SABAP 426411** *surname of donor/business* and email proof of payment to Hilary Buchanan at fitz@uct.ac.za.

**Connect with
the Southern African Bird Atlas Project
and tag us on your atlas adventures!**



sabap2@birdlife.org.za



YouTube





Western Cattle Egret
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