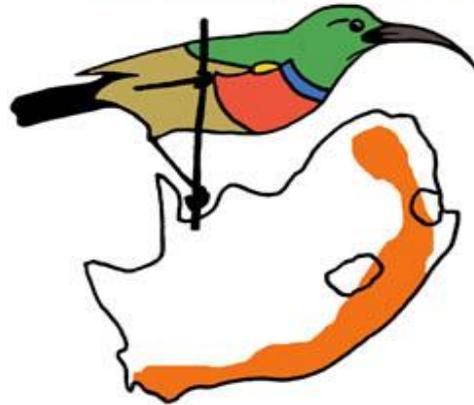


SABAP2



That Final Pentad Turning Kruger Green Bird Atlas Project

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That final pentad

Pentad 2535_3200 was the last pentad left and had three cards, so a single list was needed to complete the Turning Kruger Green bird atlas project. This was all that was left from a total of 446 pentads and a minimum of 1 784 lists required in the three year registration period. Sounds easy when we still had a couple of months left to wrap up the project, but not so and this final pentad gave me nightmares.

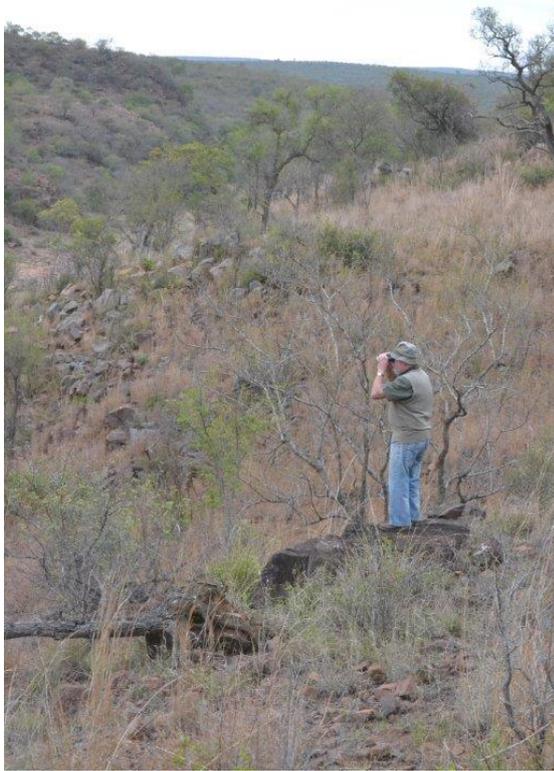


Figure 1: Peter, searching for more species to be added to the pentad list.

I was initially told by numerous people that it would not be possible to achieve 100% coverage in the allotted time, and in the words of SABAP2 leader Les Underhill, "It seemed a task that 90% of the big objective would have been deemed, by most people, to be adequately close to call it a mega-success". Now that is like a red rag to a bull and I was determined to turn every pentad green or brighter before the end of December 2016. All those who contributed in one way or another to make this the bird project of all time can be truly proud of their achievement.

This final pentad overlapped into Mozambique and it was not possible to cover it on the South African side due to regular border patrols by the SANDF. We tried to negotiate with them but were told we should stay away from the boundary in that area. We thus made an excursion into Mozambique a while back to cover the pentad from that side. To do so it would be necessary to gain access to a private farm and the Portuguese farmer turned us away as he did not fully understand why we wanted to be on the property. There was a language problem and sadly we reluctantly had to turn around and head back to South Africa empty handed.

This made me all the more determined and I eventually got in touch with Mariana Carvalho from University Eduardo in Maputo and she kindly agreed to explain to the farmer, Sr. Santos, and get permission for us to access the SAPAP farm. Garth Batchelor and Tom Vorster met up with Mariana in June and the first list was

made. Then in early October Garth Batchelor, Duncan McKenzie and Jacques de Villiers were able to atlas the pentad twice more, after negotiation again by Mariana on our behalf. That left just one more list needed to wrap up the project which was planned to take place in early November. My nightmare increased somewhat when this excursion had to be postponed due to rain making the area impassable. We were getting very close to the year end and it was essential to cross the border prior to December school holidays. This border post is difficult enough and time consuming out of holiday periods and would be a no-go once traffic increased.

The next date was set for 23 November and myself, Richard Purdon, Duncan McKenzie and Tom Vorster left home at 04:30 and headed for the border control near Komatipoort. Crossing into Mozambique is time consuming, with plenty of locals hounding to assist at a fee. They are so insistent and sound so convincing and it is difficult getting rid of them. Finally after just over an hour we were through and heading for the farm. As usual the gate was locked and it took a while to get someone to open it for us after Mariana had made numerous phone calls from Maputo on our behalf.



My nightmare was now over and overcast weather was perfect for birding. The team kindly insisted that as Project Leader I should have the honour of submitting this final list which was growing rapidly. I was in my element and truly enjoying myself, with the others assisting and calling out new birds to add to the list. After the first hour we already had a good list which included species such as Flappet Lark, Wattled Starling, Gorgeous Bush-Shrike, Red-crested Korhaan, Levallant's Cuckoo, Burnt-necked Eremomela and Red-billed Oxpecker, plus many more.

We spent almost three hours in the pentad and added other good birds such as Eastern Nicator, Black-bellied Bustard, Grey Penduline-Tit and numbers of Monotonous Larks which have been absent in KNP during the drought. Some specials near the end were White-backed and Lappet-faced Vultures in a thermal, with a Tawny Eagle amongst them. Our final bird of the morning was a Brown Snake-Eagle perched on a powerline near the pentad boundary. We ended with 106 species on the list and I felt so honoured submitting it to the ADU to make the project final, just one month prior to expiry by SANParks Scientific Services.



Figure 2: This pentad contained beautiful unspoiled areas.

Links

See this link for the Greater Kruger National Park Challenge:

<http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage/group/gknp>

