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Another month has passed and we hopefully head to warmer weather and closer to the return of our migrant feathered friends for the summer.

I am thrilled that we now have 112 bloggers who have signed up to receive the blog, and we are now communicating with approximately 75-80% of our members in a far quicker and more effective manner. If you have not yet signed up on the blog – don’t be nervous as it is not difficult at all. Please Google Hermanus Bird Club and on the bottom right is a spot for you to add your e-mail address. Once you have done this you will get a mail back confirming that you have activated the blog – it's that simple. This is the most effective way of member communication and I do believe that soon this will become our preferred contact method.

John and Irene Saunders have sadly decided to return to the UK. We wish them well for the future and look forward to their return visits to Hermanus.

We should soon get finalisation on the erection of the owl boxes as well as the bench installation at the Vermont salt pan. The bird hide is an on-going problem and our new committee member will manage this project. We need a bird hide in Hermanus and Kari Brice, the Ward 3 councillor, is very positive and helpful. We need a volunteer to take over from John – please talk to me!!

Margie has been busy with the Oystercatcher and I am sure that you will all agree that this is a marvellous communication tool. Margie enjoys getting exciting and interesting articles for us to read, and will continue to include short reports from travelling members. (See reports within on Cherry’s tour and Margie and Barbara’s trip to Namibia). I really look forward to every edition and read it from cover to cover.
David and Elizabeth Watson have been away in Europe and the UK and I am happy to welcome David back to the financial table.

Cherry Mills spent 3 weeks in Namibia on a birding trip and has returned waving the Namibia banner enthusiastically as a place to visit. She is very willing and keen to tell all about her wonderful trip (see report within).

Lee Burman continues with her hard and enjoyable work regarding the CAR and CWAC reporting in the Overberg. Thank you Lee!

There are still a few spaces available on Mike Ford's Course. Please contact me if interested. **Date: 11th and 12th September.** Mike assured Barbara Palmer this week that the course is for birders of all levels.

In August we had an excellent birding morning at Jessie Walton’s farm, Restonwald, and a visit to Iona wine estate. Jessie has an open day for the public on the 24th September, so please enjoy a walk around the farm and the dams, purchase plants and enjoy refreshments at the nursery. To get there join the N2 and at Peregrine Farm Stall turn left and continue for 5 km – turn left and continue for 3km to Keurbos (the name of the nursery). You can return along that gravel road (Highlands Road) past Iona and eventually join the Kleinmond road near the turn off. A lovely drive.

Our quiz evening was well run by Ronnie Hazell who taxed our brains with questions that built up our appetites for the great selection of soups and bread on offer. We all left with greater birding knowledge.

Our evening presentation, by Wicus Leeuwner, was on the Blue Crane, our National Bird, and was both fascinating and interesting. His accompanying photographs were excellent and those present enjoyed the evening.

*Please check page 14 and diarise: Meetings every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 19h00 and our Thursday walks – every 1st Thursday.*

The 4th September outing is to Beaumont Farm. Jessie Walton will present at the evening meeting on the 17th September on Verreaux’s Eagle and the Harriers. Happy and successful birding to you all.

Cordially, Craig
Field outing: Stanford Revisited – 3rd July

Our monthly walk on 3 July turned out – despite early misgivings about possible wind – to be a perfect, sunny winter morning. 18 Members braved the morning chill and were well rewarded for their efforts.

The river at first seemed devoid of birds but the neighbouring gardens made up for that with a dozen or so species quickly being added to our list. As we headed for the river, our first special of the day, a Giant Kingfisher flew past. We dashed down to the river bank and were lucky enough to get good views of it perched on a look-out tree close by.

A pleasant stroll along the river delivered quite a few more species, including an African Goshawk flying over – heard by most but seen by only a few. A Black-headed Heron perched atop a tall tree gave rise to much speculation – was it a Black-headed or a Grey Heron? In the sun its bill seemed to glint yellowish but as we got closer it became obvious that it had a black head! A Purple Heron was also spotted amongst the trees.

The walk back to our cars through the streets delivered several more garden species including a group of Common Waxbills and an out-of-breeding male Pin-tailed Whydah.

Our last stop was Appel se Dam – usually a good spot and the newly built hide did not let us down. In quick succession there were sightings of African Darter, White-backed Duck, African Purple Swamphen, Yellow-billed Duck, Moorhen and, seen by only a few, a Black Crake scooting across the lily pads.

One of my favourite birding spots, Stanford is always rewarding. We ended with a total of 45 species seen – not too bad for the middle of winter!

Lee Burman

Photos courtesy Charles Naudé
Field Outing – Highlands Road, Jessie Walton’s Farm and Iona Estate

The Overberg never ceases to amaze with its hidden secrets available for our bucket lists, and Highlands Road, a scenic gem, lies in wait for those who dare to seek adventure off the tarred roads. The HBC monthly outing along this dirt road once again surprised many and introduced members to stunning birdlife at selected venues.

We commenced our morning at Jessie Walton’s Farm, Restonwald, which offers viewing at 3 different man-made dams. Jessie herself joined our group of 27 and spent a few hours showing the group around the farm and nursery. Our special sightings included Hamerkop, African Darter, African Black Duck, Black-crowned Night Heron, Moorhen, African Spoonbill and Pied Kingfisher all displaying themselves on and around the same old Willow tree.

A Southern Pochard was spotted on the lower dam as were Little Grebes and Yellow-billed Ducks, before a lucky few members spotted a Black Crake amongst the reeds.

After our walk with Jessie and coffee and tea on her nursery lawns, some were privileged to spot a Cape Batis at arm’s length and Malachite Sunbirds dashing from flower to flower.

A short drive further east brought us to the Iona Wine Estate, where Andrew Gunn met us and introduced us to his farm with its interesting history. Having bought the farm, previously named Geelbeksvlei in 1997, Andrew began replacing the apple orchards with vineyards, and restored the outbuildings to house the Iona tasting venue, and changed the name to Iona. The main house was designed by Herbert Baker. The HBC offered to list the birds on the estate and began this pleasurable task immediately.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Swee Waxbills, Cape Siskin and Osprey were a few of the more uncommon species found during our walk-about.

The morning was completed with wine tasting directed by Andrew and enjoyed by all.

MJO Editor
Members' Annual Quiz Evening

Our annual quiz evening was enjoyed by the 46 members who faced the challenging sets of questions in the 9 categories set up by quiz master, Ronnie Hazell.

With the five pots of soup keeping warm, the teams of 4 and 5 members kept their senses of humour intact and stood up to Ronnie's well planned questions. There was much laughter, testing and teasing during the first session as we all tried our best to reach into our mature memory banks and find the answers to the various questions.

Afrikaans was used where the English species name could not be recalled by a few members, but language did not matter as Ronnie was very flexible and in the end we were a 46 member team trying to do well against the quiz master.

After the first 60 or so questions, soup and bread plus sherry or fruit juice were served by the committee to the group – thank you to all who prepared the delicious meal.

The final set of 40 questions really tested our hearing and listening skills and general birding knowledge. Everyone in the room felt highly tested and stretched and I am sure have promised themselves to get out into the countryside as often as possible and learn to identify as many species as possible before the 2015 quiz.

Our winners for the evening were Val and Mike Ford with Sheelagh and John Bowman, with a total of 72, 2nd were Cynthia and Gavin Turner with Paul and Susan De Villiers – 61 points, and in 3rd place were Barbara and Graham Palmer together with Irene and John Saunders – 60 points – well done to everyone! MJO – Ed
**Evening presentation by Wicus Leeuwner – The Blue Crane**

Fifty-five intrepid birders ventured out in cold and miserable weather to the Fernkloof hall to enjoy our August meeting presentation.

Wicus Leeuwner was our guest speaker and he addressed us on his passion – The Blue Crane.

He presented us with a magnificent collection of photographs of the Overberg area where the Blue Cranes have made their homes in recent years.

He explained the breeding habits, and the threats that the birds face – the challenges from fences, power-lines, and humankind. It was fascinating to hear of the extent to which the farmers have cooperated in assisting with the Blue Crane population growth.

It was also interesting to learn of the threats posed by expanding canola fields as the other farmlands, in which the birds forage for food, diminish.

He showed us a brilliant series of photographs of the chicks breaking out of their eggs – their little beaks have a strong tip to enable them to peck their way through a thick shell. To see them from the moment of freedom to the moment they are on their legs, and the way that they are nurtured by the parent birds, was fascinating.

An amazing and wonderful presentation by a man of passion and humour.

It was a wonderful evening which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

*Craig Holmes*
**CWAC – 8th July**

**Six** brave members met at De Mond at 08:30 to participate in the annual CWAC (Co-ordinated Waterbird Avifaunal Count) venture. Mike Ford once again led the counting of all birds on and along the Kleinrivier Estuary from De Mond to the eastern section of the Estuary.

![Image of birdwatchers](image1)

With beanies, gloves, coats, scarves, scopes and binoculars, the group set about counting the various species out and about on this freezing cold morning.

Lee was our scribe and Chris and Mike tested their visual spotting skills through the scopes, while John, Barbara Palmer and Margie assisted when possible.

**Our initial sightings were of Yellow-billed Ducks, Grey Heron, Black-Winged Stilts and hundreds of Red-knobbed Coots, but as we moved eastwards, the Greater Crested Grebes began to display their beauty as did the Red-billed Teals.**

An African Fish Eagle was seen sunning itself across the waters, and the ever present Greater Flamingoes gently moved along the misty edges of the Estuary.

This 6-monthly count is performed with enthusiasm and care by the HBC members and all the results are forwarded to BirdLife SA for the continuous updating of their records.

All in all 1 268 birds were counted and 26 different species were noted. Our thanks to the dedicated 6 who braved the morning freeze – we shall try for a later start in 2015!
CAR Report

On Saturday 26th July Lee Burman led 3 cold members of the HBC into the fields for the annual July count of Blue Cranes and various other endangered species.

Our route was from Hermanus to the N2 via Bot River, along the N2 and right onto Swart River Road (near Gabriëlskloof Estate) driving west to the Karwyderskraal Road crossing where we turned left towards the R42 and back towards Hermanus. At Hemel en Aarde Valley Village we turned northwards towards the valley and followed the muddy untaured road over the top of the ridge and down towards Caledon to the end of our route.

With only a stop for a gentle morning tea break and the clouds starting to roll in again, we managed to cover the 56 kilometres of Overberg beauty in time to move off home for late lunches (in pouring rain) having completed our birding duties once again.

Our final count was as follows:
Blue Crane 88
White Stork 2
Spur-winged Goose 69
Black-headed Heron 2
Black-shouldered Kite 1
Jackal Buzzard 3
Cape Crow 9
Pied Crow 2
White-necked Raven 14
Vaal Rhebok 11
Cape Fox 2

Thanks to Mike and Helen Mac Naught, Margie Ogston and Lee for their continuous work on the CAR count – it is appreciated.
CAPE TO CUNENE.

A cancellation! Shall I, shan’t I pick up on what promised to be a most exciting birding trip to Namibia? Been there, done that, but never birded there – sufficient justification to get up and go? – yes, I'll go!

I remembered Namibia as being mostly desert but was astounded by the majesty of the mountains and ranges that skirted it – the Spitzkoppe and Brandberg to name the two highest.

Special birds sighted are too numerous to name but some highlights were views of Gray’s and Stark’s Lark, plus Bradfield’s Swifts flying high.

A visit to Walvis Bay Lagoon exposed literally thousands of Flamingoes foraging and flying, almost reddening the skyline. We went in search of the Dune Lark at Rooibank and were successful with another tick to our list.

Further on our journey, while seeking just a single Kori Bustard, a group of five posed for us along the road! Rüppell’s Korhaan, the Herero Chat and the Groundscraper Thrush were also exciting finds. And then right up north, with one foot on Namibian soil and the other on the Angolan border across the Cunene River, we were overwhelmed by the number of different species spotted.

The celebrated Cinderella Waxbill, Carp’s Tit and Bennett’s Woodpecker were special and some of our group departed before dawn hoping to get a glimpse of the famed Angolan Cave Chat – the only place in S.A. where it can be found. They were not disappointed.

We skirted Ethosha National Park but popped in to Namutoni for the day. A very worthwhile birding destination, increasing the bird list with sightings of Burchell’s Sandgrouse and Damara and Monteiro’s Hornbills.

Let it be said – Namibia is a must for birders and well worth every one of the 6,300 kilometres we travelled. Oh, and I enjoyed some delicious swims in sparkling pools at various lodges en route – chilly, but cold enough to cool down my loaded bird brain!

Cherry Mills
(Thanks to Cherry for this report – great decision you made – Carpe diem! MJO Ed)
Every academic conference should be followed by some exciting and uplifting activity. What better than birding? Margie and I stayed in one of the Gecko Inn’s lovely self-catering cottages in the gravelly and sandy plains outside Swakopmund for the duration of my 3-day conference. After the lights in the conference rooms had been turned off, we were fetched by Steve Braine of Batis Birding and taken on a fantastic 5-hour excursion into the dunes and along the salt pans and lagoon at Walvis Bay.

We tracked down some Gray’s and Dune Larks (lifers!), and then went down to the pans to check on the waders and water birds. Between hundreds of Lesser and Greater Flamingoes, Curlew Sandpipers, Cape Teal, various Terns and Greenshank, we found some real specials and more lifers: Chestnut-banded Plovers, Marsh Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Damara Tern, and Black-necked Grebe. On the way back, in Swakopmund, we saw the Scarlet-chested Sunbird and some Orange River White-eyes, and at our cottage a beautiful Tractrac (albicans) Chat.

Our next stop was Hohenstein Lodge in the Erongo Mountains just north of Usakos where we spent 3½ wonderful days. Due to the heat we restricted our walks to between 06:00 and 11:00, and after 16:00, but the area outside the lodge’s dining room was always buzzing with birds. Black-faced and Violet-eared Waxbills, Marico Sunbirds, Red-headed Finches, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Great Sparrows and the gorgeous Golden-breasted Bunting were regular visitors to the small fishpond. And right outside our room we saw the Short-toed Rockthrush and the Ashy Tit.

The area is really beautiful, with well-marked trails and dry riverbeds to walk along, and guided evening game drives to find the springbok, klipspringers, wildebeest, red hartebeest, kudu, gemsbok and giraffe.
Along the walks and on the drives we found some real treats: Rüppell’s Parrot, Rosy-faced Lovebirds, Red-billed and Hartlaub’s Spurfowl, Monteiro’s Hornbill, Green-winged Pytilias, and Chestnut-vent ed Titbabblers; an early morning Pearl-spotted Owlet and a late afternoon Augur Buzzard. But our highlights on the walks through the thornbush and savanna and around boulders and koppies were undoubtedly the Rockrunner, White-tailed Shrike, and the Barred Wren-Warbler.

Amazingly, none of the guests sitting on the veranda showed any interest in the birds whizzing around their heads while Margie and I lifted up our binoculars thousands of times and gasped with amazement. It was rather amusing though to have the German visitors rush over to us every now and again asking: “Is zere an animal? You see ze animal?” and then watch their blank expressions when we tell them that we’re watching the Lark-like Bunting and the Black-chested Prinia.

The 8-day visit to Namibia was truly wonderful with a bird list of 106 species and 22 lifers. Oh, and somewhere along the line there was a conference.

Barbara Swart . Pics courtesy MJO
**Seen around Hermanus**

Please forward ID tips to Mike Mac Naught

Cape Fox seen on Swartrivier Road

**Vermont Salt Pan – update on water level and Heronry**

“The water is now at an all time high. The shorter of the vertical poles are 2.6 metres high so the depth of the water must exceed 2 metres at this point. The previous highest was just over a metre” – Comment and pics Mike Mac Naught

Feb 2013  
April 2013  
May 2014

July 2014 – all pathways are flooded  
July 2014
DIARY NOTES

Event and field outing reminders for September – October 2014

September

Thurs: 4th  Morning outing to Beaumont Wine Estate Meet at OTP at 08:30 Bring morning drink + snack

Wed: 17th  Presentation by Jessie Walton on Verreaux’s Eagles Fernkloof Hall 19:00

October

Thurs: 2nd  Morning outing to Paarl Birding areas Meet at OTP at 07:00 Take morning tea/snacks and picnic lunch

12–15th  Duinepos away trip Fully booked

Wed: 22nd  Presentation by Dale Wright Fernkloof Hall 19:00

COMMITTEE MEMBERS & PORTFOLIOS

Craig Holmes  Chairperson  028313 2458
Margie Ogston  Vice Chairperson + Newsletter  028313 0407
Dave Watson  Treasurer & Membership Secretary  028313 0740
Lee Burman  Secretary, Environment, Teas  028312 3011
Cherry Mills  PR + Events Catering  028316 4333
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Hermanus Bird Club. P O Box 208 Hermanus 7200 http://hermanusbirdclub.wordpress.com/

Hermanus Bird Club items for sale
Contact Cherry Mills – cherrypie@telkomsa.net – to order any of the below items:

Birding in the Walker Bay area – DVD – R50.00/The Birds of Walker Bay – booklet – R25.00
“Birders of a Feather” edited by Harvey Tyson – R50.00 per copy.