

Sakabula

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BirdLife Vrystaat / BirdLife Free State



*'n Tak van BirdLife Suid-Afrika
A branch of BirdLife South Africa*

BESTUURSLEDE / COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Louise Coetzee (Voorsitter)

E-pos: loucoetzee@mweb.co.za
Tel: 051-4479609 (w)
Tel: 051-4487382 (h), 0823821341
Faks: 051-4476273

Annalie van der Vyver (Sekretaresse)

E-pos: koppie.alleen@bfn.co.za
Tel: 0825539528

Werner Sinclair (Ondervoorsitter)

E-pos: wernersinclair5@gmail.com
Tel: 0823780938

Fanie Buys (Tesourier)

E-pos: sbuys@xsinet.co.za
Tel: 051-4462478 (h), 0726724989

Stefan du Preez (Addisionele lid)

E-pos: stefan@mcintyre.co.za
Tel: 0827711728

Dawie de Swardt (Atlas ko-ordineerder)

E-pos: dawie@nasmus.co.za
Tel: 051-4479609 (w), 0836381604

Marelize Badenhorst (Addisionele lid)

E-pos: marelize@quality-print.co.za
Tel: 0824121211

Arnold van der Westhuizen (Addisionele lid)

E-pos: arnold@arnwaltenviro.co.net
Tel: 0832621273

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Branch: Randburg, code 254005
Reference: Member number
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e-mail: membership@birdlife.org.za

Stuur alle bydraes vir die nuusbrieff aan /
Send all contributions for the newsletter to:

Die Redakteur, Jeanette Buys,
E-pos adres: sbuys@xsinet.co.za
Niel van Loggerenbergsingel 23,
Universitas, Bloemfontein, 9301.

Alle ander korrespondensie aan:

Die Voorsitter, BirdLife Vrystaat,
Posbus 6614, Bloemfontein, 9300.

Missie: Birdlife Vrystaat poog om as klub ons kennis van alle voëls, hul gedrag en hul habitat te verbeter en deur genotvolle deelname van klublede, die publiek bewus te maak van die bewaring en wetenskap van ons plaaslike voëlerfenis.

Mission: Birdlife Free State tries to enhance our knowledge of all birds, their behaviour and their habitat and to introduce the public to the conservation and science of our avian heritage through enjoyable participation by club members.

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VERRASSINGS BY SOUTPAN

W Dit is nie so maklik om 'n geskikte, en tog ook interessante, plek naby Bloemfontein te kry om in die winter te gaan voëls kyk nie. Die Vrystaatse koue is iets om mee rekening te hou. Dit was my taak om op 9 Julie 'n uitstappie in die omgewing van Bloemfontein te reël. Die ongewone baie winterreën het egter gesorg dat Soutpan, sowat 50 km noord van die stad, tot oorlopens toe vol was. Gerugte van baie voëls op die pan het ons soontoe gelok. En wat 'n verrassing het dit nie opgelewer nie!

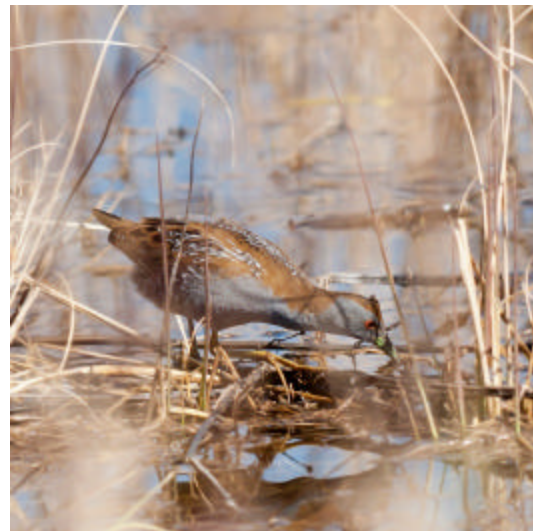
Ons het die pan van Florisbad se kant af benader en het sommer uit die staanspoor gesien hier is dinge aan die gang. Die eerste verrassing, eintlik nog voor ons by die pan uitgekom het, was twee Wit ooievaars wat oorwinter het en klaarblyklik nie die tog Europa toe aangepak het nie. By die pan was "honderde" Nonnetjieseende en die "gewone" watervoëls was ook in oorbloed. Watervoëls wat ons nie so dikwels hier sien nie maar wat goed verteenwoordig was, is Glansibis, Afrikaanse snip, Rooiborsstrandkiewiet en Ralreier.

Hoe verder ons om die pan gevorder het, hoe beter het dinge geraak. Daar was 'n hele aantal Fluiteende, wat baie ongewoon vir Bloemfontein is. Gevlekte eend, net so skaars in ons omgewing, was ook teenwoordig. Verder het 'n Afrikaanse vleivalk ook sy opwagting gemaak.

Teen die einde van die roete het die laaste kar (Louis Goedhals) die voorstes teruggeroep met die grootste verrassing van die dag – Kleinriethaan! Dit is inderdaad 'n klein voëltjie (sowat 17 cm

lank) maar onmiskenbaar met sy bruin rug en blougrys maag. Hulle is maar skugter en kruip goed weg, maar ons kon hom almal darem gesien kry. Dit was 'n hoogte-hoogtepunt om die dag mee af te sluit. 'n Totaal van 88 spesies vir die middel van die winter is glad nie sleg nie.

Dit was egter nie die einde van die storie nie. 'n Paar sms'e het vir die tweede hoofstuk gesorg. Sondagoggend het 'n paar ander lede ook na die Kleinriethaan gaan soek. Soos ons al in die verlede gesien het - 'n naald kán in 'n hooimied gevind word! Na 'n intensiewe soektog die oggend is die Kleinriethaan weer opgespoor. Nog 'n paar mense het die middag weer gaan soek, en hom sowaar weer gekry, maar met 'n ekstra bonus in die vorm van 'n Grootriethaan.



*Die einste Kleinriethaan op Soutpan.
(Foto: Tony Archer)*


Die boodskap het verder as Bloemfontein versprei en mense van elders in die Vrystaat, Gauteng en die Noord-Kaap het ook kom soek, blykbaar met sukses. Dit blyk dat daar meer as een Kleinriethaan in die pan

teenwoordig was. Hulle is nie almal gesien nie, maar op roep geïdentifiseer.

Hoewel Bloemfontein in die verspreidingsgebied van die Grootriet-haan val, het ek hulle nog nooit hier gesien nie - nou nie dat dit die maatstaf is nie, maar hulle is skaars. Die Kleinriethane op Soutpan was heeltemal buite hulle verspreidingsgebied. Dit wys maar net weer dat veranderde weerpatrone voëls se bewegings beïnvloed. Hou julle oë oop vir sulke verrassings.

Louise Coetzee

BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATERS IN BLOEMFONTEIN

 Neels Pelsers, Wildlife Control Officer at the Bloemfontein Airport, reported a flock of six Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters near the runway at Bloemfontein Airport on 20 October 2011. The birds are still present.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters are Palearctic migrants, i.e. breed in the northern hemisphere and migrate to Africa (from southern Sudan and Ethiopia to subtropical southern Africa) in our summer. They breed from the Nile Delta east to Kazakhstan and Pakistan.

In Southern Africa they are most common in the countries on our northern border, but also occur in the northern parts of South Africa (North West Province and Limpopo) and in the east (KwaZulu-Natal). According to the current SABAP2 (Second Southern African Bird Atlas Project) data, there are only two records of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters in the Free State.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters (*Merops persicus*) are green above and green to blueish below. The forehead, supercilium and cheek are blue with a black mask through the eye. The chin is yellow and the throat rufous to brick red. They can easily be distinguished from the common European Bee-eater by the lack of the chestnut crown and back, and the lack of the bright yellow throat with black band.

Pity the runway of the airport is not a suitable birding spot...

Louise Coetzee


References:

Hockey, P.A.R., Dean, W.R.J. & Ryan, P.G. 2005. Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa. Cape Town: John Voelker Bird Book Fund.
SABA2 <http://sabap2.adu.org.za>



*Blue-cheeked Bee-eater near the runway of Bloemfontein Airport.
(Photo: Neels Pelsers)*

SWAZILAND SE MLAWULA NATUURRESERVAAT

 Wie wil nou Itala toe gaan as Swaziland se Mlawula Natuurreservaat net 200 km verder wag. Tog is dit te ver vir een dagreis. Ons slaap oor by Itala se buurplaas, Madaka Game Ranch, met 'n pragtige luukse grasdakhuis en

kampeerplek met krag – mens mag hier rondry en uitklim, en is billik geprys - ‘n goeie keuse vir ‘n volgende keer. Ons is egter vroegdag daar weg en deur Pongola en sonder enige “hassles” oor die grens.

Die ingang na Mlawula lyk goed maar kommunikasie is ietwat moeiliker. Tog ontvang ons ‘n kaart en goeie aanwysing na ons verblyfplekke – kampering by Siphiso-kampplek en 16 km verder die chalets by die Magadzavane lodge. Die verskeidenheid suikerbekkies, waaronder Purperband-, Rooibors- en Kortbeksuikerbekkie, en ander voëls by die blommende aalwyne hou almal lank besig. Daar is tyd vir middagete by die kampplek, waar die Kuifkoptarentale ons begroet. Hulle staan traag terug en poseer vir fotos terwyl die res van die lede die area bespied vir nog nuwe voëls – ons sien Waaierstertvlieëvanger en die Swart-vlieëvanger kon almal goed bekyk.

Die ablusieblok by die kampterrein is egter droog - ‘n uur later is dit nog so en na beloftes deur die kampopsigter van ‘n badkamer by die “cottage”, vertrek ons maar na die res van die groep. Ons word verras deur ‘n bord wat waarsku teen “steep and sharp curves for the next 1.5 km”, maar die Toyota bestuurders met die *off-road* Explorer-karavane maak korte mette van die uitdaging. Bo weet die opsigter egter van geen sout of water nie – ons moes na die Sara Cottage gegaan het, maar na onderhandelings kry ons 2 chalets om te gebruik en so kon ons die naweek al 13 saam in die pragtige lodge deurbring. Daar is niemand anders in die lodge nie, maar dit is blykbaar ‘n gewilde somer bestemming.

Die uitsig vanaf die lapa oor die swembadrand na die valleie ver onder is asemrowend. Die volgende oggend vertrek ons vroegdag weer berg-af met asemrowende lae wolke wat die uitsig vervolmaak.

Die eerste dag volg ons die oostelike roete na die kampplek, teen die westelike randjies en die Bloukuifloerie sorg vir die eerste opwinding. Ons ry weer deur die kampplek, uit by die hoofhek en reg oorkant in na die noordelike en oostelike deel van die reservaat. Hierdie roete volg die Mlawula- en later die groter Mbuluzi-rivier deur ‘n pragtige ravyn op pad na Maputo. Heelwat van ons sien die Geelvleknikator, Withelm- en Swart-helmlaksmanne. Oppad terug is die hoogtepunt die Gryssysies en Rooskeelkolpensies wat so naby sit dat almal hulle goed sien – die hooptepunt van die dag!



Die uitsig oor die swembad by die Magadzavane-lodge.

Die tweede oggend stap ons eers na die suidelike hek, 100 m daarvandaan en deur die kamp, waar ons die Gestreepte Wipstert agtervolg, maar hulle is baie skugter. Daarna pak ons die suidelike en westelike roetes en sien Akkedisvalk, Suidelike Waterfiskaal en Bosveld-tinktinkie. Ons stap vroegoggend na die

Python Pools, maar net drie van ons klim die laaste paar rotse en word beloon met 'n volledige blik op die poele. Die ander bly onder die wal, waar die Dassievoëls ons almal vermaak met hul vertoning. Die roete na die Hiëna poele lewer Draaihals en Bontroklaksman op. Daarna gaan ons na die uitkykpunt by Sara Camp en rus vir middagete by "ons" cottage. Op die terugpad sien ons nog Nyalas en hoor Groot-heuningwyser.

Die aande se saam braai in die lapa sal almal lank onthou. Ons kan nie wag om die plek in die somer te ervaar nie – maak net seker dat daar water by die kampplek is en dat dit skoongemaak is. Die huisies was almal in 'n baie goeie toestand.

Jeanette Buys

*Mlawula NR 002682 3838885
Madaka Game Ranch, 034 9814861
harvie@dalesvanheerden.co.za*

MOSAMBIEK SE TURTLE BAY

✈. Die klub se Swaziland-uitstappie in Augustus is opgevolg deur 'n ekstra paar dae in die suide van Mosambiek, so 180 km noord van Maputo. Alhoewel Bilene nie as besondere "birdingspot" aangegee word nie, was die Laguna Camp-omgewing en Limpopo vloedvlakte 'n uitstekende inwyding van wat verder noord op besoekers wag. Ons is vinnig deur die Siteki-grenspos, maar wees bedag op helpers wat in 'n mate rigting gee, maar gou-gou hulle op jou afdwing. Laguna Camp, so 7 km noord van Bilene aan die oewer van die meer, is 'n aangename verrassing - met netjiese chalets, kampplek met krag en elkeen privaat ablusiegeriewe, apart afgeskort.

Die uitsig oor die meer is pragtig en die vriendelike diens verdien voorwaar 'n pluimpie.

'n Dagrif na Xai-xai, al langs die Limpopo vloedvlakte het Lelkiewiet, Oopbekooievaar, Rooiereier, Langkuifarend en Akkedisvalk opgelwer. Hier het ons saam met Luray Badenhorst haar eerste see verjaarsdag met ontbyt op die Mosambiekse strand gevier. Oppad terug die middag sien ons nog Dwerggansies en Dwerglantoon in 'n vlak meer so 15 km voor Bilene. Die grashellings lewer later ook nog Bruinkoppapegaai en Laeveldklappertjie op en 'n wandeling om die kampterein Swartkatakoeroe, Beloogbosbontrokkie en Swartblestinker.

Behalwe die baie nuwe soorte voëls, was die bootrit op die meer by Bilene na "Turtle Bay" vir my 'n besondere belewenis. Ons het oor die helder water geskeer teen 'n spoed wat die vrouens se hare in die wind laat wapper het. Die ervare bootsman moes met draaie en swaaie navigeer om in die diep water te bly. Hy was egter heel gewillig om spoed te verminder en naby 'n sandbank met Grootflaminke met kuikens te draai sodat ons beter kon sien.



Turtle Bay by Bilene

Ons is behendig by 'n natuurlike vasmeerplek afgelaai en die boot is aan 'n groot klip op die strand vasgeanker. Vergesel van ons bootsman het ons 'n stywe stappie langs die see gou kafgedraf en toe met 'n gelykmatige helling langs die koppie uitgestap tot by die uitkykpunt. Aan die ander kant was 'n stil sandbaai waar die seeskilpaaie op die regte tyd hul eiers begrawe. Volgens ons gids is hulle "huis" in die see net onder die uitkykpunt. Vanweë die ontstuimige see was hulle die dag blykbaar dieper in die see as normaalweg en dit het omtrent stip kyk gekos. Marelize het ontpop as die "turtle spotter" wanneer hulle soos wafferse branderplankryers die branders ry. Sommige kon egter slegs 'n enkele skilpadkoppie vir 'n breukdeel van 'n sekonde bo die water sien uitsteek en ander niks. (Wie het gesê voëls kyk is moeilik!) Tog was dit interessant om die omgewing te sien waar hulle tuis is en broei. Volgens die gids is die gebied 'n bewaringsgebied, alhoewel dit soos orals maar moeilik afdwing word.

Terug by die boot het 'n Geelbekwou ons kom groet en met behendige bewegings bo-oor en langs ons gesweef. Dit was 'n onvergeetlike dag – dankie Jeanette!

Magriet Bester

MARAKABEI IN LESOTHO

✍ Sewe klublede het einde Maart sentraal Lesotho besoek. Ons het weereens afgewyk van die gebaande weë en wat 'n aangename verrassing! Die hoogtepunt vir my was die Bergpietjiekaniarie (Drakensberg Siskin) wat, soos Else vinnig uitgewys het, haar nessie in rotswande maak – hier was dit in die

gleuf wat deur padwerkers in die rotswand met dinamiet geskiet is. Ons kon lank dophou hoe sy haar nessie skoon woel. 'n Rare en uitsonderlike ervaring!



Bergpietjiekaniarie (Drakensberg Siskin)

Ons het oos van die Mohaledam by die Marakabei Lodge, op die oewer van die Senqunyanerivier tuisgegaan in 'n aantal rondawels en chalets – basies maar skoon, alhoewel nie selfsorg nie. Ons kon wel die lodge se kombuis gebruik.

Die uitsig vanaf die lodge was onverbeterlik en die Lesotho berghange het hulle eie bekoring. Die plattelandse kinders het oral bosse bymekaar gemaak en op hulle koppe aangedra om op te gaan vir die winter - met hul klein pakdonkies ewe gehoorsaam agter mekaar in die pad was dit 'n eiesoortige gesig. Die kinders is ook nog nie bederf deur toeriste nie en mens kan orals met gemak uitklim.

Tydens 'n rit na die Mohaledamwal was ons gelukkig om 'n paar van die spesiale bergspesies wat endemies in die gebied is, te sien soos die Langtoonkliplyster (Sentinel Rock-Thrush) en die Oranjesborsberglyster (Drakensberg Rock-jumper). Ander "sightings" wat ek onthou sluit in Rooiborsjakkalsvoël (Jackal Buzzard), Rooiborsperwer

(Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk), Swart-eende (African Black Duck), Reusevisvanger (Giant Kingfisher) en Hamerkop. Die Grondspegte met hul bekkies in die lug by die Mohaledam Hotel, was vir my ook fassinierend. Die Lammergeier het ons ontwyk, maar sommige het die Kaalwangvalk (African Harrier-Hawk) langs die stroompie gesien en op die pad terug het ons 'n Witkruisarend (Verreaux's Eagle) gesien.

Die natuurskoon was besonders, so ook die deeglike ingenieurswerk aan die paaie. Baie dankie aan Werner Sinclair vir 'n heerklike Lesotho ervaring. Die Lesotho grenspos is nou "drive in and tjap" sonder enige oorsig oor wie en wat die land binnegaan.

Joan Mackenzie

HIGH SPEED BIRDING IN THE UK

W We recently travelled to the UK for a combined tour, visit to relatives and to attempt to do some good birding in mainly RSPB reserves in England. Our tour was a 10 day coach trip through Ireland and Scotland which was obviously not a birding trip but we took every opportunity to find as many birds as possible whenever possible! We were actually amazed how few species of birds we saw in Ireland and Scotland. The best areas in Ireland were the Irish Horse Stud Farm and along the coast of Northern Ireland at Rosses Point and Ballygally. In Scotland we spent two nights in Newtonmore and saw large numbers of Oystercatchers and Gulls feeding in the grasslands! Apparently changing farming methods are largely being blamed for the loss of not only birdlife, but wildlife in general.

Once our tour ended in Edinburgh we picked up our hire car and headed south to North Berwick and the Scottish Sea Bird Centre. There they have a wealth of information and a very interesting programme to get young children involved in the life of birds! Just off the shore is a huge rocky outcrop – Bass Rock – covered with Gannets – literally thousands, with probably just as many flying around the area. Quite amazing! After a short stop in the area we moved on to the Yorkshire Dales where we saw Lapwing and Red Grouse, as the weather improved.

From the Yorkshire Dales we headed east to Flamborough and Bempton Cliffs. After booking in at our B&B we took a drive along the coast and whilst having a good look at some Razorbills swimming just below our cliff-top look-out we discovered Puffins swimming with them! Much excitement – our first target bird! The following morning we joined a guided walk at Bempton Cliffs. The RSPB guides are great! Very friendly, equipped with good spotting scopes and always willing to go the extra mile. We had great sightings of Razorbill, Guillemot, Fulmar, Puffin, Kittiwake, various gulls, huge numbers of Gannet as well as some grassland type birds such as Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Reed Bunting, etc!

On our last morning in the area we joined a birding sea cruise from Bridlington. This cruise, which lasted 3 hours, went along the base of the cliffs we had been on the previous day. As we left harbour we were shown a flock of Little Gull – this caused some excitement as they are not usually inshore so early in the season. Further

along, the guides shouted 'Skua' and we had good views of an Arctic Skua, also not usually around in early July. Seeing all the nesting birds from a different perspective was very interesting.

The following morning saw us on our way to the second relatives where we stayed near Oundle. They had bird feeders in the garden and we were able to see Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Blue Tit, Chaffinche, Goldfinche, Greenfinch and a young fox that had come into the garden to eat plums that had fallen from a tree! We also saw a Red Kite flying over the cultivated fields nearby.

From here we did a day trip to Rutland Water Reserve, also managed by the RSBP. As we parked the car we noticed a Green Woodpecker feeding close by. Here there are a series of dams and we had some exciting sightings. Unfortunately most of the ducks had already lost their breeding finery and were very difficult for us to identify, but we saw Barnacle, Canadian and Greylag Geese, a pair of Pheasant with a juvenile, Egret (equivalent to our Little Egret), Shoveller, Teal, Moorhen, Gadwall, huge flocks of Tufted Duck, Common Tern, Lapwing, amongst others. There is great rejoicing in the reserve as the first Avocets have been successfully hatched since this species returned to the reserve. The other special sighting was a pair of Osprey with their brood of three youngsters almost due to fledge. The eggs of these birds were monitored 24 hours a day (by CCTV and a guard posted on shore) until they hatched, when it was reduced to monitoring only during daylight hours! Another highlight for us was to

see a tiny Wren with her brood of three hungry youngsters in one of the hides.

After leaving Oundle we headed for The Wash, near King's Lynn and arrived at just the right time for the incoming tide. With a freezing wind off the North Sea, we walked about 2 km, laden with cameras, scope, etc, but the sight that awaited us was worth every aching muscle! Getting to the shoreline is only the start. One then does a long walk along the shore. The first bird we saw was a Redshank and then as we walked along (with the wind behind us) we saw hundreds of Bartailed Godwit – mostly in breeding finery; a few Blacktailed Godwits; hundreds of Dunlin; Little Ringed and Ringed Plovers, Red Knots, Shelduck with lots of youngsters and Oystercatcher in large numbers, many who appeared to be nesting on the shore. It was incredible to watch huge flocks of birds (we think they were mainly Dunlin), swirling into the sky almost like our flocks of Redbilled Quelea. There were hundreds, if not thousands of them! There are a number of hides along the shoreline but we did not manage to reach them on our first visit as our return would take a lot longer against the wind, and the cold was really getting to us!

The following morning we were up early and headed out to the same venue. The wind did not seem to have abated – nor had the cold! The tide was just turning and, to start with, there were very few birds around. We did get a wonderful sighting of a pair of Linnet (our bird book was very useful). We made it to the first hide and watched as the waters swirled out at the most amazing speed, bringing the birds to the mud flats. We did not observe any new species but had good sightings of some of the species

seen previously before heading back into the village of Dersingham.

After leaving Dersingham we headed north to Tichwell Marsh Nature Reserve. This is a small RSBP reserve with three marsh areas – freshwater, brackish and tidal, so provided suitable habitat for a large range of bird species. One can walk right through to the beach where are two hides. Guides are available there and throughout the reserve to assist. The hide on the brackish marsh is newly completed and is amazing. It has open and closed areas, and is on three levels. We spent quite a while here and saw a Ruff in almost complete breeding plumage – almost completely black. Ruffs are not normally found as far south as Tichwell, especially in breeding plumage. Birds seen here made us think of home – (Grey) Heron, (Little) Egret, as well as Godwit, Lapwing, various Gulls, Barn Swallow, Linnets and Avocets with young, were some of the stand-outs. At the bird feeders there were lots of Blue Tits, Chaffinches and a Blackcap. Unfortunately we could only spend a few hours at this reserve as we needed to move further south to Saxmundham so we could call in at Minsmere the following day.

Minsmere is a small reserve really hidden away in a maze of roads in the Saxmundham area of Suffolk. It is very popular with lots of visitors arriving during our short stay there. An interesting fact here is that the sea-walls are being heightened as a precaution against higher sea levels, to prevent the low-lying reserve being flooded with salt water in years to come. We walked down to the beach and then headed to a hide where we spent the remainder of our time. Here the highlights were

Greenshank, Spotted and Common Redshank – all in breeding plumage, Common Sandpiper, Spoonbill (black legs and bill), Lapwing, Avocet, Dunlin, Shoveller, Barnacle Goose, Sandwich Tern and Common Tern. Unfortunately we had to leave far too soon. As we were packing everything away a Magpie, which had proved a most elusive bird to photograph, strolled right up to our car!

Now that we have had a small sample of UK birding we are hoping to be able to return in a few years' time – maybe a little earlier in the year – and have a more leisurely visit. Obviously we have not attempted to list all species seen – just some we felt were special. We were really impressed with the RSPB reserves that we visited – how well-kept they are, how friendly the staff and guides are, and the facilities on offer. Birding is obviously a huge business in the UK and has massive public support! In total we saw 93 species. Not too bad for the few days we had in England.

Peter and Anita Divall



Rook (Photo: Peter Divall)

BADEN-BADEN NEAR DEALESVILLE

W Gariiep Bird Club is the newly established branch of BirdLife South Africa in Kimberley. A joint outing was suggested to meet our neighbours, which took place on 24 September. It was decided to go to Baden-Baden, a farm in the Dealesville district, more or less half way between Bloemfontein and Kimberley.

Twelve members from Bloemfontein and 15 from Kimberley met at 08:00 in Dealesville. The owner of Baden-Baden, Nellis Nel, arranged for entry onto surrounding farms, which allowed us access to the closest known Sociable Weaver nest to Bloemfontein. This nest

is built on an unused windmill structure and contains about 100 nest chambers.

We also saw a Secretarybird nest on top of a dense Wag-‘n-bietjie tree. Standing on tip-toe on a rock, one could only see the back of a Secretarybird. We could not see whether there were eggs or chicks yet, but at least we know that they are trying!

Back at Baden-Baden, named such for the historical, covered hot spring bath, we had more good birding and a braai, to get to know each other better. It was a pleasant day and more joint outings are envisaged.

Louise Coetzee



Members of BirdLife Free State and Gariiep Bird Club at Baden-Baden

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