

Recent Sightings

Kruger National Park – 2009

January 2009 – Ngala – near Orpen

a **THREE-BANDED COURSER** was discovered in Mopane woodland near Ngala Lodge in the Kruger National Park yesterday. Normally only known from the very north of the park, this record is a little out of place.



Three-banded Courser at Ngala © Alistair Kilpin

Pafuri – 23rd February 2009

Last Wednesday also produced a pair of **PLAIN-BACKED SUNBIRDS** at Crooks Corner near Pafuri in the Kruger National Park in Limpopo Province.

Satara – March 20th 2009

Cliff Dorse has just called in to report a RIVER WARBLER calling and providing satisfactory views in Satara camp in the Kruger National Park about 20 minutes ago. They have not yet caught up with the earlier reported Thrush Nightingale which has been present in the camp for a couple of weeks now, but it certainly seems like this camp is becoming a bit of a warbler trap at the moment.

Good luck if you are chasing this one!

Kind regards
Trevor

Lower Sabie – early May 2009

In Mpumalanga, an interesting regional vagrant was a **DICKINSON'S KESTREL** seen hawking insects over a recently burnt patch 4 km south of Lower Sabie Camp on the tar road to Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger National Park.



Dickinson's Kestrel near Lower Sabie © Duncan McKenzie

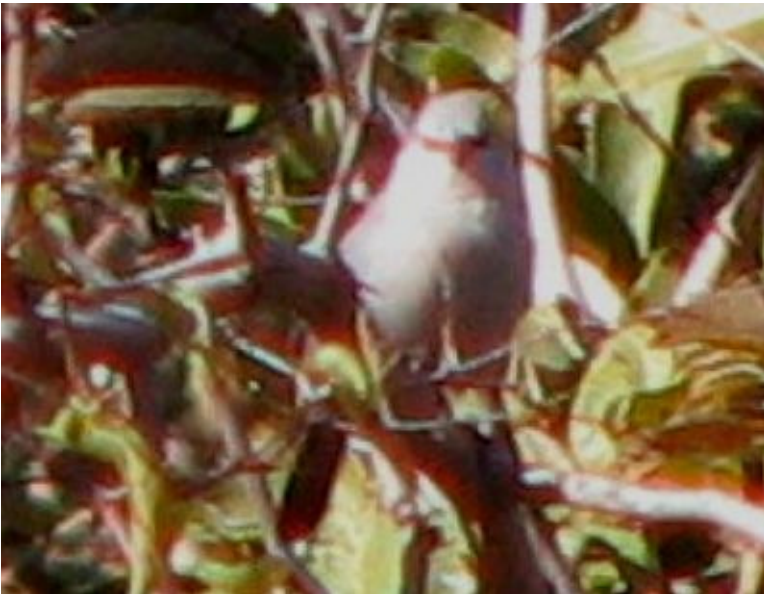
Lower Sabie – early May 2009

Lake Panic – July 2009

Lastly, I have just received 2 photos of a small *Estrilda* waxbill photographed last Saturday at Lake Panic bird hide near Skukuza in the Kruger National Park. Although the photos are not absolutely clear, there is a black facial mask visible (but no black bib below the bill) and the bill appears to have a reddish base to it. There also appears to be some red tones in the tail (and the observer mentioned this in his description). So, rather than believing that this is an out of range Grey Waxbill which is what the observer initially thought it might be, I strongly suspect that this is a **LAVENDER WAXBILL** *Estrilda caerulescens*, a species restricted to West Africa and I am assuming fairly popular in local collections. So, therefore, given the location of this sighting, one has to believe that this is an escapee from somewhere. Does anyone know if any of the staff in the park are keeping exotic birds as pets? If anyone disagrees with this identification, I would be happy to hear your thoughts on this bird.



Waxbill at Lake Panic © Pete Mullineux



Waxbill at Lake Panic © Pete Mullineux

Pafuri – August 2009

20 August 2009

Limpopo Province also produced an interesting record with a **GREEN TWINSPO**T being recorded at Wilderness Safaris' Pafuri Camp on the banks of the Levhuvhu River in the Kruger National Park. This is a little way further north than where they are normally recorded.

Another rather interesting record coming from very close to here was the discovery of a pair of **THREE-BANDED COURSERS** that were breeding.

Although this species is resident in this area in low numbers (and therefore not a rarity as such), this appears to be the first record of breeding that I can find any reference to in South Africa. Logically, they must have previously bred in South Africa, but there seems to be no documented proof of it mentioned in any of the local literature that I have checked.

Three-banded Courser near Pafuri © Alweert, Pafuri guide

November 1983 – birds observed with a chick near Pafuri in the Kruger National Park

April 2007 – bird observed incubating eggs near Pafuri in the Kruger National Park

June 2007 – bird observed with chicks near Pafuri in the Kruger National Park

August 2007 – birds observed incubating eggs in Mapungubwe National Park

October 2008 – birds observed incubating eggs in Mapungubwe National Park

I am sure there are others as well, but the above is what I have received so far.



Three-banded Courser incubating eggs
in August 2007 in Mapungubwe NP
© Johann du Preez



Three-banded Courser nest with typically half-buried eggs
in October 2008 in Mapungubwe NP
© Richard and Francoise Hurt

Hi Chris

We were recently (25-31 July) visited the KNP and I think the following sightings were interesting, according to your KNP list on the Sanparks website:

African Stonechat - several sightings North of Lower Sabie

Swee Waxbill - a few birds @ Matjulu waterhole near Berg-en-Dal

Yellow-billed egret - 2 birds @ Berg-en-Dal dam

Green-backed Bleating Warbler - 1 sighting in Berg-en-Dal camp

Whiskered Tern - Mazhiti dam

Fan-tailed flycatcher - 1 sighting in Berg-en-Dal camp

We've seen several Grey Penduline Tits (Berg-en-Dal & Lower-Sabie camps).

Regards

Werner Smit

082 9297313

Pafuri 091009:

And finally, in Limpopo Province, an **ORANGE-WINGED PYTILIA** was picked up on a walk from the Wilderness Safaris Pafuri Camp in the far northern Kruger National Park which, according to the people at the camp, is only the 3rd or 4th record of this species in the area since they have been operating this concession.

Red-headed Finches Oct 2009:

The eastward irruption of **RED-HEADED FINCHES** also continues with 3 birds (2 females and a male) being located along the S100 near Satara in the Kruger National Park.

October 2009

Moving to Mpumalanga, the **GREEN SANDPIPER** reported recently from the Olifants River near Balule camp in the Kruger National Park was still present on the weekend as well whilst 4 **COLLARED PRATINCOLES** in the same area was also an interesting record. Although this species is regular further north around Letaba, they are certainly very uncommon in this part of the park.

Limpopo joined in by providing a pair of **AFRICAN PYGMY GEESE** on Engelhard Dam east of Letaba on the weekend whilst **RED-HEADED FINCH**, recorded for the first time in the park ever this year, were still present in large numbers north of Satara at the Ngotso waterhole on the weekend.

Pafuri – October 2009

Today, I have also received a late record from Limpopo Province from a group of British birders who were on an extended tour of South Africa. On 23 October 2009, whilst birding in the Pafuri area, they recorded a male **EUROPEAN BLACKCAP** in some scrub just on the eastern side of the car park at the Pafuri picnic site. They obviously know the species well, so although this record is already a little old, it may well be worth keeping an eye out for any odd warbler-types when you are next in this area! In Southern African terms, this is a decidedly rare species, but in a SOUTH African perspective, this appears to only be the second record ever for the country with the previous one from Melville Koppies in Johannesburg.

November 2009

Chris, I was birding at Piet Grobblers dam North of timbavati picnic spot. At one stage I heard the alarm calls of ducks and wow two ducks land in my view. Red bills, mottled bodies and no dark caps on the heads. Serious search because field guide and your park birdlist states that cape teals do not happen in kruger. I play the recording of the alarm calls to myself only to be more sure that these two birds are cape teals. Could not see green patch on wings. Spent 15 minutes of serious diagnostics but could not convince myself of anything other than cape teals. Unfortunately do not have photographic evidence. Viewing with 10x50 binos and 20x spotting scope.

Seënwense
Pieter Blanché
083 230 6250

November 2009

In Limpopo, a **GREEN SANDPIPER** was present on Saturday at Nsemani Dam west of Satara in the Kruger National Park whilst Botswana also joined in on the action turning up yet another **GREEN SANDPIPER**, this time at the sewage works about 10km west of Gang.

Crook's Corner:

Continuing in the province, an **AYRE'S HAWK EAGLE** was reported from Crooks Corner near Pafuri in the Kruger National Park. Although not unknown from this area, it is certainly rather uncommon here.



Ayre's Hawk Eagle at Crooks Corner
© Ken Logan

Nyamundwa Dam – November 24

In Mpumalanga, an **AFRICAN EMERALD CUCKOO** was reported from riverine thickets alongside the Nyamundwa Dam on the S1 Doispans road in the Kruger National Park on Monday. Although there are previous records from the southern half of the park, this appears to be the first record since the inception of the second bird atlas project (which has already been running for about 2,5 years).

December 2009

Shingwedzi

In Limpopo Province, a **GREEN SANDPIPER** was reported about 1,5km from Shingwedzi camp in the Kruger National Park en route to Kanniedood Dam on Sunday whilst a **THREE-BANDED COURSER** was once again located near Ngala Lodge on Wednesday (still present today) at the same site it was last seen 11 months ago!

Phabeni

Mpumalanga delivered yet another record of **GREEN SANDPIPER** last Wednesday when a bird was located at the bridge over the small river near Phabeni Gate in the Kruger National Park.

African Openbills:

Other than sightings in out-of-range places, sightings in normal areas of distribution are indicating a marked increase in numbers of actual birds with reports from St. Lucia of a flock of between 200-300 birds and a sighting near Skukuza in the Kruger National Park numbering in excess of 1 000 individuals!