

## Recent Sightings

### *Kruger National Park – 2010*

#### December 2010

30th

Barend Pretorius reports:

The calls of HARLEQUIN QUAIL can be heard all the way from Skukuza to Olifants along the main tarred road in the Kruger National Park.

We had beautiful sightings, one between the highwater bridge turn off and Tsokwane in the grassland surrounding the koppies as well as a second between Satara and Olifants in the grassland plains.

Wed 12/29/2010

Alastair Kilpin has contacted me to let me know that the Green Sandpiper is still showing well on the Mapone River at the Ngala Safari Lodge, and he also reports that at least two River Warblers were present along the Mapone River as well.

20<sup>th</sup>

The LESSER KESTREL from about 5km north of Satara in the Kruger National Park reported a little while ago was also still present in the same area this morning.

THREE-BANDED COURSERS have once again been found near Ngala Tented Camp on the weekend whilst a GREEN SANDPIPER was present on the Mopane River next to Ngala Safari Lodge as well.

13<sup>th</sup>

Still in the province, there was also some excitement on Thursday when what appears to be another new species for the Kruger National Park, SOUTHERN BROWN-THROATED WEAVER, was located at Crocodile Bridge. Further investigation showed that the birds were actually nesting there and, in total, 2 males and a single female were seen in the area.



Southern Brown-throated Weaver at Crocodile Bridge  
© Duncan MacKenzie

Continuing in the province, but moving across to the Kruger National Park, a number of interesting records were reported yesterday. 2 **COMMON WHITE-THROATS** were present at Nwanetsi picnic site east of Satara whilst, in Satara camp itself, a pair of **CAPE SPARROWS** were found to be nesting. Another female was also reported from near Nwanetsi yesterday as well.

Other good birds, particularly for the southern Kruger, included 5 **LESSER KESTRELS** about 2km north of Satara, a female **PALLID HARRIER** about 7km north of Satara and a **RED-KNOBBED COOT** at Komana Dam between Satara and Tshokwane.

Also of interest was the continued presence of a **BLUE CRANE** at Shitlhave Dam near Pretoriuskop which was still on view yesterday morning. Based on further research, it would certainly appear that this is the 1<sup>st</sup> record for the park.



Blue Crane at Shitlhave Dam  
© Dave Allan



Cape Sparrow at Satara  
© Duncan McKenzie



Red-knobbed Coot at Komana Dam  
© Duncan McKenzie

## **November 2010** **Shitlhave Dam – 27<sup>th</sup>**

Mpumalanga held some surprises recently as well, not least of which was a **BLUE CRANE** located on Saturday afternoon at Shitlhave Dam about 8km from Pretoriuskop Rest Camp in the Kruger National Park. This is certainly an eastward extension by some way of this species' range and is the first record for the park noted on the SABAP2 database. I don't have immediate access to any historical records from the park, so perhaps someone out there might be able to assist with this.



### Malelane area – 26<sup>th</sup>

Also in the Kruger National Park, but this time about 5km east of Malelane on the S114 heading to Crocodile Bridge, a GREEN SANDPIPER was located at a small stream crossing on Friday morning.



### Satara – 21<sup>st</sup>

The park also delivered yet another interesting record last Sunday when a pair of CAPE SPARROWS were found in the camping site area of Satara. This is well east of this species' known distribution range.

### Pafuri area

Limpopo Province also jumped in on the rarity action producing a CHESTNUT-BANDED PLOVER at Makwadzi Pan on the Limpopo floodplain at Pafuri in the Kruger National Park on Friday (12<sup>th</sup>). There do seem to be a handful of historical records from this general area, but I cannot find anything specific to mention here.



Chestnut-banded Plover at Makwadzi Pan  
© Simon Stobbs

### **Between Hazyview and Kruger Gate:**

Mpumalanga also continues to produce good birds with a BLACK-BELLIED STARLING reported on Friday (12<sup>th</sup>) morning about 5km from Hazyview on the road to Sabie and a EURASIAN HONEY BUZZARD located about 6km from Hazyview on the road to Kruger gate on Friday afternoon.

### **Skukuza area – 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>**

It would also appear to be a particularly good season for THICK-BILLED CUCKOOS this season with a bird reported on Saturday at Ingwe Donga about 12km from Skukuza on the way to the Phabeni gate in the Kruger National Park whilst, on Sunday, another individual was located at Lake Panic, also near Skukuza. This may not necessarily be terribly out of range, but can be a particularly tough species to connect with.

### **October 2010,**

#### **Skukuza - 31/10/10**

a BROAD-BILLED ROLLER was located in the first group of Sycamore Fig trees along the Alpha Loop near Skukuza in the Kruger NP on Sunday.

#### **Olifants Bridge - 31/10/10**

I have also received a delayed (21 October 2010) report of a GREEN SANDPIPER seen from the high level bridge over the Olifants River in the Kruger National Park along the main road between Satara and Letaba.



### **Olifants/Letaba – 17/10/10**

Then into Limpopo Province where a CASPIAN PLOVER was reported on Sunday along the tar road between Letaba and Olifants camps in the Kruger National Park.



### **Skukuza 17/10/10**

Up into Mpumalanga where the Kruger National Park has been keeping local listers entertained in recent days. In Skukuza, the GREEN TWINSPOTS were still showing well yesterday whilst, on Saturday,

### **Mlondozi**

there was some serious excitement when a male PURPLE-BANDED SUNBIRD was located at Mlondozi Picnic Site north of Lower Sabie. Although certain literature refers to historical records of this species in the park, these records all seem to be unsubstantiated and, to the best of my knowledge, this would appear to be the first claimed record from the park in many years.

### **Lower Sabie**

In Mpumalanga, there was some excitement on the weekend when a lone BLACK-TAILED GODWIT was reported from the sandbanks in the river in front of Lower Sabie camp in the Kruger National Park. I cannot find any reference to previous records in the park, so this may well represent the first record of this species for the Kruger.

### Ngala (Orpen Area)

In Limpopo, the THREE-BANDED COURSER reported from near Ngala Tented Camp at the end of September was also still present on Saturday and was seen to be sitting on two eggs.



Three-banded Courser at Ngala  
© Wally Davey

### Skukuza

Then into Mpumalanga where the GREEN TWINSPTS at Skukuza in the Kruger National Park continue to entertain visitors. A male, female and 2 juveniles have been spending most of the last few days feeding in a flowering Weeping Boer-bean in the middle of the western side of the parking area at the shop and are apparently quite confiding at the moment, so well worth a look if you are in the area.

### Satara area

In Mpumalanga, a number of interesting sightings have been reported. On Wednesday a DARK-CAPPED YELLOW WARBLER was located at Nsemani Dam about 10km west of Satara in the Kruger National Park,

### Skukuza

whilst, also in the park, a male GREEN TWINSPT was reported from Skukuza Rest Camp (it is recorded from here very occasionally and is the first SABAP2 record for the area). This latter record was also reinforced on Saturday when a further 4 individuals were located about halfway along the boardwalk at Skukuza Nursery. The park also produced another potentially interesting record with a probable MIOMBO BLUE-EARED STARLING recorded very early on both days of the weekend in Skukuza Rest Camp. Unfortunately, the bird was only seen in poor light and no photos were possible, but the call was recorded and does sound reasonably good for this species. Anyone visiting this area in the near future should certainly keep an eye out for this one and hopefully, it will be able to be confirmed one way or the other.

### Pretoriuskop Area

Another interesting Wednesday recorded was a STRIPED PIPIT located on the Shabeni Loop north of Pretoriuskop (this species is very rare in the Kruger NP away from the Berg-en-dal

Mountains). This was followed on Thursday by a CAPE CANARY located on the Manungu Loop west of Pretoriuskop. This latter record seems to be the first ever atlas record for the park and possibly only the second ever record in history.

## September 2010 Pafuri

Following on from Samson's post, I was at Pafuri this weekend (18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>) (the Safari Adventure Company camp on the Luvuvhu) and we saw Bohm's spinetail and Pel's fishing owl in camp, as well as white-breasted cuckooshrike in the mopane en route to Pafuri Gate. A scaly-feathered finch was also a good bird. Other birders over the weekend saw racket-tailed roller and Arnot's chat among other specials for this area.

Chris Roche

## Ngala – Timbavati

Lastly, in Limpopo, there was some excitement on Saturday when a **THREE-BANDED COURSER** was seen near Ngala Tented Camp. Whilst this is the second year in a row that it has been discovered in this area, this sighting was particularly exciting as the birds are nesting and were found to be incubating 2 eggs. This may well turn out to be the most southerly breeding record of this species.



Three-banded Courser at Ngala  
© Alistair Kilpin

## August 2010 – Pretoriuskop – Cape Robin-chat

Then into Mpumalanga where 2 CAPE ROBIN-CHATS were reported along a drainage line about 4km west of Pretoriuskop in the Kruger National Park yesterday. As with the above record, this seems to be a slightly eastward movement for this species.

## 2 August 2010

Morning all - the below reported by Walter Jubber at Pafuri Camp in far northern Kruger.

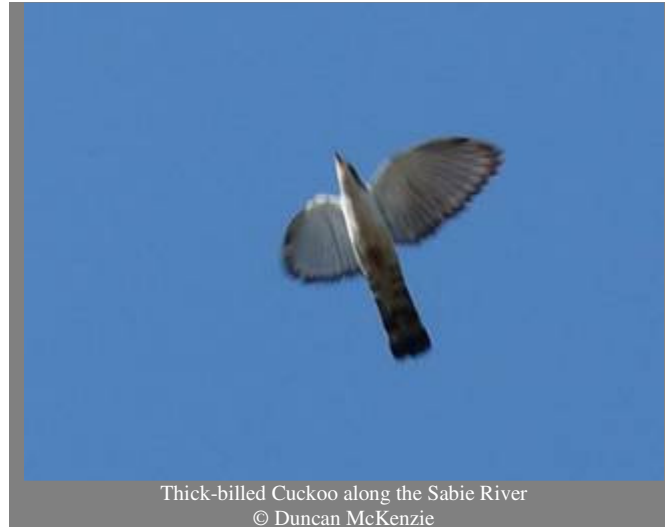
Courtesy the dry Limpopo River Valley and a generally arid corridor that extends as far east as the confluence of the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers two species more generally associated with drier western habitats - White-browed Sparrow-Weaver and Scaly-feathered Finch - are being seen at Pafuri.

The scaly-feathered finches have been resident around camp for probably 18 months or so, while the sparrow-weavers haven't been seen for a while after building a nest on the floodplain in 2005.

CHRIS ROCHE chrisr@wilderness.co.za

### 24 July 2010

And lastly, in Mpumalanga, a single THICK-BILLED CUCKOO was seen repeatedly on the S3 gravel road along the Sabie River in the Kruger National Park on Saturday. Although this is not an unusual location for this species, the time of year certainly is and there are very few winter records of this species in the area.



Thick-billed Cuckoo along the Sabie River  
© Duncan McKenzie

### July 2010

A small group of nesting WHITE-BROWED SPARROW-WEAVERS (3-4 birds) were located about 4km from the Tshokwane picnic site on the tar road to Lower Sabie in the Kruger National Park



White-browed Sparrow-weaver near Tshokwane  
© Duncan McKenzie

### 20 – 29 June – Far Northern Kruger

We recently visited the Northern Section of Kruger (20-29 June) and came across the following interesting birds:

- Eastern Nicator (Geelvlékniaktor), in Punda rest camp.
- Cape Sparrow (Gewone Mossie), on the S143 close to Tihongonyeni waterhole (Mopani area)
- Yellow-billed Oxpecker (Geelbekrenostervoël), H15 road towards Makhadzi and just south of Mopani camp

- Ruff (Kemphaan), Shingwedzi low water bridge

See photos attached of the Nicator, Sparrow and Oxpecker.

The Pafuri region was also excellent for birding the day we spent there.

Kind regards

Werner Smit and Andre Taljaard



### 14 June 2010 05:55 PM

Message from Walter Jubber at Pafuri Camp in the Makuleke Concession, far northern Kruger NP is that on 9 June he had 6 pink-backed pelicans flying over Crooks' Corner at the confluence of the Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers. The Limpopo is flowing strongly currently and the pan system along its floodplain is boasting far more water than for a number of years. This has meant Pel's fishing owls are difficult to find in the usual riverine haunts.

CHRIS ROCHE [chris@wilderness.co.za](mailto:chris@wilderness.co.za)

### Thur 2010/06/03

Lastly, in Limpopo Province, visitors at Pafuri Camp were a little surprised to see a **ROCK DOVE** (aka Feral Pigeon) walking across the main deck recently. Typically, this introduced species is normally associated with more urban environments and seemed a little out of place here.



Rock Dove at Pafuri Camp  
© Simon Stobbs

## May 2010

My brother in law (Andre Taljaard) visited the Kruger Park in the beginning of May 2010 and took nice pictures of the Grey-backed Camaroptera in Mopani camp. See pictures attached.

I saw in the Roberts guide of KNP that their distribution is in the north of the park but from Pafuri to just South of Shingwedzi.

Regards  
Werner Smit



Lastly, although not a rarity, it is still particularly interesting. A rather bizarre lapwing was recorded at the low water bridge over the Sabie River just outside Skukuza in the Kruger National Park on Tuesday. It does not fit any known *Vanellus* Lapwing and current thinking is that it is possibly either a **BLACKSMITH X WHITE-CROWNED LAPWING** hybrid or a bizarrely aberrant **WHITE-CROWNED LAPWING**. Have a look at the photos below and see for yourself...



Strange Lapwing near Skukuza  
© Graeme Ellis



Strange Lapwing near Skukuza  
© Graeme Ellis

From the Forum

There is currently a strange Lapwing present in and around the Skukuza area which sparked quite a bit of discussion surrounding its ID.

Can I please ask that if you are planning to go to that area soon to please keep an

eye out for it. We are looking for photos of the bird especially in flight or with its wings stretched out on the ground to get a better look at the wing pattern.

It would even be first prize if you are as lucky as to get your hands on a feather of this bird. Please don't go trampling around in the bush now. 😊

If you have any photos or sighting information to share, please do so in this topic where a group of experts will keep an eye on the information in order to assist them with identifying this bird.

Here is a photo of the most wanted lapwing:



**MEGA ALERT: White-throated Bee-eaters at Balule Fri 3/19/2010 1:44 PM**

Steve Baillie has let me know that there were 2 **WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATERS** in amongst a group of European Bee-eaters yesterday at Balule Nature Reserve. He has also sent a photo which confirms the sighting, but I'm not sure how to post it here with this new toy of mine, so that will have to wait until I get back home on Monday.

I'm not sure how accessible this place is if you are not staying there, but good luck to those of you that decide to chase it. I am very jealous! And please forward any updates if there are any.

**Mon 3/22/2010 9:33 PM**

In the North-west Province, birding at the Kgomo-Kgomo floodplain on Saturday turned up both a **WESTERN MARSH HARRIER** and a **SPOTTED CRAKE**.

Limpopo Province also put in a pretty good performance turning up an absolute mega in the form of 2 **WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATERS** in amongst a group of European Bee-eaters at Balule Nature Reserve on Thursday.

This species has a reputation in Southern Africa for being notoriously difficult to twitch and many of the top listers have chased several of the previous records without success! There are 10 previous records of this species in Southern Africa – a single bird in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in December 1988, a single bird in Sedgelyield in February 1990, one near Wakkerstroom in April 1995, 7 birds at Cape Point in March 1998, 2 in Mkuze Game Reserve in September 1999, a single bird in Mana Pools National Park in Zimbabwe in November 2002, one bird in Pearly Beach in April 2004, a singleton at Shingwedzi in the Kruger National Park in December 2004, one near East London in September 2006 and one in a Hillcrest garden in October 2008.



White-throated Bee-eater at Balule Nature Reserve  
© Steve Baillie

In Mpumalanga, a male **RED-HEADED FINCH** was reported from the Lower Sabie camp in the Kruger National Park on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March.  
From Mpumalanga, I have received a slightly delayed report (9 April 2010) of a **SOOTY FALCON** seen near the Afsaal Tea Room in the Kruger National Park.

**Thu 2010/02/18 09:48 PM**

Then, in Mpumalanga, a **PALLID HARRIER** was reported from the basalt plains south of Lower Sabie in the Kruger National Park on Saturday normally encountered whilst a single **BLACK COUCAL** was also still present near Numbi gate in the park yesterday.

**Mon 22 February 2010**

In Limpopo Province, 4 **CAPE TEALS** were present at Nshawu Dam in the Kruger National Park last week on at least 4 consecutive days. Currently, the “official” park list on the SANParks website lists only one previous record of this species in the entire park also at Nshawu in 2004. However, as has often happened in the past, this record is bound to prompt others to put forward their previous records of this species in the park, so if you are aware of other records of this species in the park, I would be interested to hear from you.

**7<sup>th</sup> February**

**A party of 4 Southern Hyliota were seen on the vlei on the Thulamila Rd near Punda Maria by Mike Buckham and Rowan Goeller**

**11<sup>th</sup> February**

In Limpopo, several **RED-HEADED FINCHES** were still present just north of Satara in the Kruger National Park last Wednesday whilst a **THRUSH NIGHTINGALE** was reported from 15km south of Sirheni on Saturday. On

Tuesday, a single **BLACK COUCAL** was also present about 6km north of Gudzani windmill.

The park has also produced several further records of **EURASIAN HONEY BUZZARD** as well. A single bird has been reported several times independently from the Fever Tree Forest along the banks of the Levhuvhu River near Pafuri, another has been reported along the Mahonie Loop near Punda Maria and a third was seen earlier today about 3km west of the Timbavati picnic site.



Eurasian Honey Buzzard near Pafuri  
© Tertius Gous



Red-headed Finch near Satara  
© John McFarlane



Eurasian Honey Buzzard near Timbavati picnic site  
© Niall Perrins



Black Coucal near Gudzani  
© Niall Perrins

Interesting sightings from the 2<sup>nd</sup> SASOL HR Birding Weekend at Punda Maria  
5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> February:

Pennant-winged Nightjars – 2 males on H13-1 at +- 04h00

African Finfoot at Klopperfontein

African Cuckoo Hawk at Crook's Corner

Eurasian Honey Buzzard between Pafuri Picnic Site and Crook's Corner  
Thick-billed Cuckoo near TEBA House  
Rudd's Apalis, Pink-throated Twinspot, Fawn-coloured Lark, CrestedGuineafowl – in Nwambiya

### Thu 2010/02/04

In Mpumalanga, yet another **BLACK COUCAL** report comes from along the S90 south of Olifants camp in the Kruger National Park last Friday. Tuesday was also a good day in the province with a **RIVER WARBLER** being reported from some thick scrub near Numbi gate in the Kruger National Park



Black Coucal near Olifants camp  
© Michal Groenewald

Interesting sightings from the 1<sup>st</sup> SASOL HR Birding Weekend at Punda Maria  
29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> January:

Lemon-breasted Canary, Tambourine Dove, Bohm's Spinetail at Pafuri Picnic Site  
Pink-throated Twinspot, Fawn-coloured Lark, Crested Guineafowl – in Nwambiya

A pair of Pied Avocet were present at NShawu 4 (near Mopani) on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> February

### Mon 2010/02/01

In Mpumalanga, there seems to be a little bit of an influx of **BLACK COUCALS** with up to 5 different individuals reported from the area around Pretoriuskop in the Kruger National Park over the last few days.

Also of interest in the park was a report of at least 3 different **THRUSH NIGHTINGALES** in the Lower Sabie camp over the weekend.



Black Coucal near Pretoriuskop  
© Ian Grant



Thrush Nightingale at Lower Sabie  
© Johann Grobbelaar



Thrush Nightingale at Lower Sabie  
© Johann Grobbelaar