

		<u>WITWATERSRAND BIRD CLUB</u> <u>PROGRAMME 01/2026</u> <u>FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN BRIEF</u> <u>- JANUARY TO MAY 2026</u>
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Date	Event - Venue	Leader/Speaker
FEBRUARY		
6-8th	Weekend Away - Sediba Game Lodge, Brits	Lance Robinson & Chris Hines
11th	Wednesday Outing - Northcliff Eco Park	Andy Featherstone
15th	Sunday Outing - Rockwall Dam & YTSG	Charles Foot
17th	East Rand Evening Meeting	Chris Hines
19th	WBC evening meeting - Linden Bowls Club	Lance Robinson
21st	Birding with purpose: Atlassing	Werner Van Goethem
23,25,26	Raptors course with Aldo	Aldo Berruti
28th	Saturday Outing - Rietvlei NR	Dave Bentley
28th	Saturday Outing - Seringveld	Jared Beukes
MARCH		
1st	Birding with purpose: Atlassing	Werner Van Goethem
8th	Sunday outing - Cradle of Humankind	Grant Egan
11th	Wednesday Outing - Ferndale NR	Andy Featherstone
14th	Northern Forum Leaders Workshop	Northern Bird Club Forum & BLSA
15th	Sunday Outing - Marievale	Geoff Lockwood
17th	East Rand Evening Meeting	Peter Greaves
20-22	Weekend away - Wolfhuiskraal	Connor Nicholson
24th	Tuesday Outing - Pretoria Botanical Gardens	Werner Van Goethem
28th	Annual General Meeting & Presentation	Committee & Kailen Padayachee
APRIL		
7th	Tuesday outing - Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden	Andy Featherstone
12th	Birding with purpose: Atlassing	Werner Van Goethem
16th	WBC evening meeting - Linden Bowls Club	Lesley Cornish

Date	Event - Venue	Leader/Speaker
19th	Sunday Outing - Random Harvest - New member meet & greet	WBC Committee
21st	East Rand Evening Meeting	Eco Solutions
25th	Saturday - Elandsvlei	Awie Coetzee
MAY		
7th	Thursday Outing - President Ridge Bird Sanctuary	Gill Isaac
9th	Birding Basics Course	Chris Hines & Lance Robinson
17th	Birding with purpose: Atlassing	Werner Van Goethem
19th	East Rand Evening Meeting	Andy Featherstone
21st	WBC evening meeting - Linden Bowls Club	Claudia Holgate
20-24th	Learn About Birds Conference - Bonamanzi, KZN	BirdLife South Africa
23rd	Saturday outing - Roodeplaat Dam	Awie Coetzee
31st	Sunday Outing - Klipriviersberg NR	Lance Robinson

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTION

9th - 12th October 2026: Birding Longweekend to the Makuleke Concession near Pafuri
Swifts & Swallows Course - Stephan Terblanche

Target Bird Challenge

Target birds are not necessarily the most elusive, prettiest, or rarest birds to be found. We encourage you to read up beforehand and get to grips with our nominated target birds; share your newly acquired knowledge with your fellow members, and in this way, we all learn something. Please note that the overall objective is to learn more and to have fun; no prizes will be awarded for spotting the target bird on the day.

DATE: 06 - 08 FEBRUARY / WEEKEND AWAY

TITLE: SEDIBA - A WINGS, WHISTLES, AND WONDER WEEKEND

A weekend celebration of birds & the natural world. Join Chris and Lance for an immersive weekend exploring aspects of the biology, ecology & diversity of birds. This will be a combination of guided walks, interactive talks & workshops, together with hands-on activities. Whether you're a seasoned birder or just curious about the feathered wonders around you, come discover how birds communicate, migrate, adapt, and thrive in ecosystems. Let your curiosity take flight!

Route: From Randburg, take the R512 past Lanseria. At the Broederstroom T-junction, turn left. Turn right at the Sun City/ Brits turn-off and cross over the bridge over Hartbeespoort Dam. At the T-junction, turn right towards Brits/ Sun City. At the 4-way stop, turn left towards Brits R512. At the next stop, turn right onto the R512. Proceed to and through Brits and turn left onto the R511 to Thabazimbi. Travel 17 km from the outskirts of Brits to the stop street at the railway line. Cross over the railway and travel 4km. Turn right (signposted Sediba and Dikhololo) onto the Veekraal road (sand road). Sediba is 13km from the intersection. The gate is locked at all times. A code for the main gate will be issued the week before arrival and will only be provided to those going.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

GPS: 25°21'45.0"S 27°43'22.3"E

Meet: Friday 18h30 at the boma for briefing

Cost: R1,700 per person sharing. R400 single supplement (limited numbers available). Camping facilities are available and can be arranged on request.

Chalets have en-suite bathrooms; linen and towels are provided. The communal kitchen facilities include all crockery and cutlery for chalet guests. The Bush Camp is situated near the main lodge, and campsites have electricity, kitchen facilities, and an ablution block with showers.

Leaders: Lance Robinson (082 927 9785) and Chris Hines

SABAP2: 2520_2740

DATE: 11 FEBRUARY / WEDNESDAY OUTING

TITLE: NORTHCLIFF ECO PARK

Northcliff Ridge, formally known as Aasvoëlkop, with its landmark water tower built in 1939, is a prominent feature in the Johannesburg landscape. This small park (11 hectares), enclosed with palisade fencing, is 1807m above sea level, making it the second-highest point in Johannesburg from which you can enjoy a 360-degree view of Johannesburg and beyond. Various swifts, swallows, and martins grace the air with their presence, and one can also normally enjoy good views of the migrant *European Bee-eaters* that may be plentiful at times. Be on the lookout for the occasional *Cape Rock Thrush*, *Striped Pipit*, and even *Peregrine Falcon*.

Route: Travelling along Beyers Naudé Drive (M5) (from Melville towards Honeydew), turn left into Frederick Drive, and follow the road as it ascends the hill. Turn left onto Hearn Drive, pass the Northcliff Manor Guest House, and then continue along Rockey Drive. Turn right onto Louie Avenue, proceed through the boom, and turn right onto Lucky Avenue, where there is parking at the base of the water tower.

GPS: 26°8'43"S 27°58'7"E

Time: 07h00 at the entrance gate

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Andy Featherstone (083 259 0231)
SABAP Pentad: 2605_2755
Target bird: Striped Pipit

DATE: 15 FEBRUARY / SUNDAY OUTING
TITLE: ROCKWALL DAM

We will depart from the meeting point at 07h00 for the Robega Sunflower Fields to find the Yellow-throated Sandgrouse. These birds fly into the fields between 07h30- 9h00. Once in the fields, these birds are difficult to find among the long vegetation. Other birds that can be found in the area include Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark, Capped Wheatear, Yellow Canary, Lanner Falcon, and Temminck's Courser. From Robega Sunflower Fields, we will travel to Rockwall Dam. During a recent bird count, 895 birds were counted, including Pink-backed Pelican, Caspian Tern, Lesser Flamingo, and Greater Flamingo. Other specials seen in the past year include Lesser Black-backed Gull, Ruddy Turnstone, and African Skimmer. Additional interesting birds occasionally seen are Yellow-billed Storks, Great-crested Grebe, Brown-throated Martin, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Osprey, all three Teal species, and many waders. The acacia thornveld around the dam hosts Magpie Shrike, Acacia Pied Barbet, White-throated Robin-chat, White-fronted Bee-eater, and recently, Little Bee-eater. Telescopes are advisable for those who have. We should be finished at Rockwall Dam at about 13h00. Birders can then proceed home or continue to Kgaswane Nature Reserve.

The recommendation is for high clearance vehicles for both Robega & Rockwall Dam. For safety reasons, please remain with the group and remain vigilant.

Route: Total Pilanesberg Motors - Travel on the R512 past Hartebeespoort Dam and turn west onto the N4. After about 64km, take exit 169 and turn right. Travel for 11km and when you reach the roundabout, take the first exit onto the R565. Travel for 8.6km until you reach Total Pilanesberg Motors

GPS: 25°30'04.9"S 27°05'29.7"E

Time: 06h30-06h45 at Total Pilanesberg Motors. The group will leave at 07h00 for the sandgrouse location.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Charles Foot (073 452 3874)

SABAP Pentads: 2530_2710

Target bird: Yellow-throated Sandgrouse

DATE: 17 FEBRUARY / TUESDAY - EAST RAND BIRD CLUB EVENING MEETING
TITLE: THE EASTERN HIGHLANDS OF ZIMBABWE

For any birder wanting to fill their southern African lifelist, the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe are a priority destination. These highlands are part of the eastern arc mountain chain running from Ethiopia to South Africa. They are considered a biodiversity hotspot within the Afrotropical region with high levels of endemism and diversity within a range of different plant and animal groups. Swynnerton's Robin, Lesser Seedcracker, Red-faced Crimsonwing, and Bronzy Sunbird are just a few of the birds here with very restricted ranges in southern Africa. The region's biogeography is largely influenced by its physical isolation from other similar habitats and a long period of climatic stability. Join Chris in exploring the birds and other animals in the range of habitats from high altitude grasslands and montane forests to low altitude miombo and the floodplains of Gorongosa.

Speaker: Chris Hines

Venue: Main Hall, Country Life Retirement Village, Brentwood Park.

Meet: 18h30 for 19h00

ID/Driver's license to be scanned at the entrance.

Cost: Members R20.00 / Non-members R30.00. Cash at the door.

Tea, coffee, and snacks will be served after the presentation

DATE: 19 FEBRUARY / THURSDAY EVENING MEETING
TITLE: AN EAST AFRICAN BIRDS & WILDLIFE SAFARI

In May 2025, Lance embarked on an unforgettable journey through Tanzania's most iconic wildlife destinations. The region boasts a remarkable variety of bird species, both endemic and migratory, with over 1,300 bird species recorded across East Africa. This safari offered a diverse mix of birdwatching and big game viewing, set against the stunning landscapes of northern Tanzania. The itinerary included Tarangire National Park, known for its baobab-studded landscape and seasonal wetlands that attract a variety of birds. The park is also home to tree-climbing lions. Located at the base of the Great Rift Valley escarpment, Lake Manyara National Park is famous for thousands of pink flamingos and troops of endemic Manyara (Blue) Monkeys. Serengeti National Park, renowned for the Great Migration, teems with wildlife year-round, and an incredible variety of birds can be observed on its expansive savannas. Finally, time spent at the Ngorongoro Crater, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was entertaining for the birders, who were treated to the somewhat amusing displays of dancing Jackson's Widowbirds at their leks, amidst the remarkable concentration of wildlife, including the Serengeti Wolf, and endangered Black Rhino.

SPEAKER: Lance Robinson

Venue: Meet: 18h45 for 19h00

Cost: Free to members. R50 for non-members. Cash at the door or prepayment to Wits Bird Club. Refreshments will be served. Cash bar available.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Contact Diana at diana.m.cowen@gmail.com if you can contribute a plate of savouries/sweets

DATE: 21 FEBRUARY / SATURDAY ATLAS DAY
TITLE: BIRDING WITH A PURPOSE - ATLASSING

Please check the 4 Degrees Green sub-project SABAP2 site (<https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/coverage/group/GP4>), select year 2026, and find one or more blank pentads to atlas; check again closer to the time to ensure they are still blank before you head out. As at 02/02 there were already 171 pentads with at least 1 FP card for 2026.

SABAP2 Coordinator: Werner van Goethem (082 462 7108)

SABAP2: Pentads that have not been visited yet this year.

DATE: 23, 25 & 26 FEBRUARY / ONLINE COURSE
TITLE: RAPTORS WITH ALDO

Raptors with Aldo: A guide to 68 South African raptors

Raptors are difficult. Using multiple superb images, Aldo will show you techniques for simplifying the recognition of raptors. Instead of rote learning confusing details on each species, I demonstrate frameworks for recognition of sub-groups before moving to species-level identification - 2-step identification protocols. Aldo emphasizes process over detail. This course covers 68 common raptors of South Africa.

You will be engaged and enthused (and have fun) with the comparative work, games, and self-identification exercises. What once seemed daunting becomes doable.

Course Schedule:

Session 1: Monday, 23 February 2026 at 19h00.

Session 2: Wednesday, 25 February 2026 at 19h00.

Session 3: Thursday, 26 February 2026 at 19h00.

Course Content:

Session 1. Principles of raptor ID – falcons, kestrels & bare-headed vultures

Session 2. Vultures and eagles

Session 3. Buzzards, Goshawks, Harriers, and all

Cost:

Members	R 375,00
Member Families	R 475,00
Non-Members	R 425,00
Non-Member Families	R 550,00

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Payments for the Course

Bank – Nedbank Hyde Park
Branch Code: 198-765
Account No: 1913 257 789
Name of Account: WITS BIRD CLUB
Reference: RAPTORS – SURNAME

Please email proof of payment to witsbc234@gmail.com, and Zoom links will be issued and emailed.

DATE: 28 FEBRUARY / SATURDAY OUTING - *NEW LEADER*

TITLE: SERINGVELD CONSERVANCY

The Seringveld Conservancy offers accessible birding in excellent broad-leaved woodland habitats, and owes its fame in birding circles to the discovery of a population of *Tinkling Cisticola*, less than 30 kms from the Pretoria city centre. Specials of the area besides the *Tinkling Cisticola* are *Green-capped Eremomela*, *Pale Flycatcher*, *Striped Kingfisher*, and *Short-toed Rock Thrush*. Early morning is the best time to visit this area, and we'll therefore make an early start.

Route: Follow the N1 North past Pretoria. Take the Sefako Makgatho Drive (Zambezi toll gate) off-ramp, toll applicable, and turn East (right) on the R513 towards Cullinan. Drive for approximately 6.2 kms then turn left into Kameelfontein Road. After 10.4 km, turn right onto Kobra Road. The meeting point is at the junction of Kobra and Rinkhalsweg, 1.2 km from the turnoff.

GPS: 25°36'48.6"S 28°24'46.2"E

Time: 06h00 at the junction of Kobra and Rinkhalsweg

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Jared Beukes (081 891 0081)

SABAP Pentad: 2535_2825

Target bird: Tinkling Cisticola

**Introducing one of the next generation of leaders. Jared Beukes has been a birding hobbyist since childhood, when his father taught him to see birds at home and on holiday. Jared is a member of Birdlife Northern Gauteng, where he has led outings in the Wider Gauteng area, and has directed and participated in several citizen science birding programmes for community groups and local nature reserves.*

DATE: 28 FEBRUARY / SATURDAY OUTING - DAVE BENTLEY

TITLE: RIETVLEI NATURE RESERVE

Rietvlei Nature Reserve comprises 3 800 ha of Highveld grassland with occasional patches of acacia woodland. The Rietvlei Dam and the Marais Dam are linked by the Grootvlei Spruit, and there is an extensive network of roads around the Reserve. As the reserve now contains some of the Big Five, visitors are only allowed to alight from their vehicles at designated picnic spots. African Finfoot has been observed from the bridge over the spruit, and the grasslands are a prime area for larks and cisticolas. **This outing will be limited to 5 Vehicles.**

Route: Travel north on the N1 towards Pretoria/Polokwane, take the M9 Rigel Avenue off-ramp (junction 136) and turn right onto the R50 Delmas Road. Drive for 5.1 km, then turn right onto the M31 Nellmapius Drive towards Rietvlei and Irene along the boundary of the reserve for 3.2 km to the junction with the M57 and turn left. After 1.7 km (crossing the Sesmyl Spruit), turn left onto the entrance road to the reserve.

Travel Advisory: Although this is the regular route, be advised that as of 24/01/2026, there is much construction and disruption along the route.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Cost: An entrance fee is payable; no cash accepted

Time: 07h30 at reception

GPS: S25°52'58.7", E28°15'47.5"

Leader: Dave Bentley (083 253 4995)

SABAP Pentads: 2550_2815

Target bird: Black-chested Snake-Eagle

DATE: 1 MARCH / SATURDAY ATLAS DAY

TITLE: BIRDING WITH A PURPOSE - ATLASSING

Please check the 4 Degrees Green sub-project SABAP2 site

(<https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/coverage/group/GP4>), select year 2026, and find one or more blank pentads to atlas; check again closer to the time to ensure they are still blank before you head out.

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SABAP2 Coordinator: Werner van Goethem (082 462 7108)

SABAP2: Pentads that have not been visited yet this year.

DATE: 8 MARCH / SUNDAY OUTING

TITLE: CRADLE OF HUMANKIND

The Greater Cradle Nature Reserve, a 9,000-hectare sanctuary, is nestled within the Cradle of Humankind, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This reserve is not only a haven for biodiversity, but a globally significant repository of our shared human story. The reserve is a haven for birdlife, with over 250 recorded species. Among them are the endangered *Blue Crane* and the elusive *African Grass Owl*.

Grant will drive us around the reserve in a game-viewing vehicle with the occasional stop to explore prime birding areas on foot. Limited to 10 people

Route: Take Beyers Naude Drive (M5) in a westerly direction. Turn left onto the R540. Drive for approx. 3km, the entrance to the Cradle Nature Reserve and Cradle Boutique Hotel will be on your right.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Cost: R350 per person

Meet: 07h00 at the parking area

GPS: S25° 55' 05.0" E27° 50' 49.6"

Leader: Grant Egen (084 731 3344)

SABAP2: 2550_2750, 2555_2750

Target Bird: White-bellied Bustard

DATE: 11 MARCH / WEDNESDAY OUTING - *NEW VENUE*

TITLE: FERNDAL ARBORETUM

Ferndale Arboretum is a small 3 ha green space of riverine bush in the heart of Ferndale, bordering the Bryanfern Spruit. This wilderness area is a haven for many species of birds and mammals, such as Water Mongoose. Join us for a leisurely walk through this urban sanctuary.

Route: Follow the N1 Western Bypass towards Bloemfontein. Take the R512 Malibongwe Drive off-ramp, and turn South (left) towards Strijdom Park. Drive for approximately 1.1 kms then turn left into Rocky Street. Take the first left onto West Avenue, then the third right into North Street. At the T junction with Cork Avenue, turn right, and the meeting point is at the entrance gate immediately on the left-hand side.

GPS: 26°04'16.5"S 27°58'57.1"E

Time: 07h00 at the entrance gate on Cork Avenue

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Andy Featherstone (083 259 0231)

SABAP Pentad: 2600_2755

Target bird: Black Sparrowhawk

DATE: 14 MARCH /SATURDAY

TITLE: BIRD CLUB LEADERS TRAINING & ACTIVATION WORKSHOP

The Northern Bird Club Forum & BirdLife South Africa present an opportunity for all aspiring and existing leaders to attend a workshop to discuss the legal and regulatory environment around bird guiding and organised birding activities in South Africa. Recent developments have begun to affect who may legally guide birding trips, under what circumstances, and with which registrations, or professional recognition is required.

This workshop will shed light on recent developments, clarify what bird club leaders and guides need to be aware of, and explore how to operate responsibly, ethically, and within the law—without losing the joy and accessibility of birding.

Topics that will be covered include:

- An Introduction to the Legal Requirements of Guiding
- An introduction to FGASA
- Insights from Qualified Bird Guides: Challenges & Opportunities
- An Introduction to First Aid

Please note: This workshop provides awareness and guidance, not legal advice, and is designed to help bird leaders ask the right questions and make informed decisions.

Venue: Random Harvest Nursery, Muldersdrift

Time: 09h00-16h00

Cost: Free, but lunch is for your own account

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com or dennis.townsend4@gmail.com

DATE: 15 MARCH / SUNDAY OUTING

TITLE: MARIEVALE BIRD SANCTUARY

Part of the Blesbokspruit RAMSAR site, Marievale's large tracts of open water and reedbeds always have interesting birds on offer, whatever the season. March is an excellent time for migrating waders, and if water levels are right, there should be plenty on show. Marsh Sandpiper, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, and Little Stint are all regular visitors. In addition, other potential birds for the area include African Marsh Harrier, Marsh Owl, and African Rail. Marievale is also regularly visited by the occasional vagrant Western Marsh Harrier.

Route: Take the N3 south. At the Klipriver/Nigel off-ramp, turn left towards Nigel on the R550. About 20 km further, turn right at a T-junction to Nigel (M63). Continue through Nigel to Marievale on the R42 (Delmas Road). To enter through the main entrance (about 5km from Nigel), pass the turn-off at Union Carriage and over the Blesbokspruit bridge, turn left into a marked gate (just after the Holgatfontein/Nigel sign). Park in the designated area outside the reception/office.

GPS: 26°22'47.5"S 28°30'28.1"E

Time: 06h30 in the parking lot

Cost: A fee per person and per car is payable on entrance
Book: witsbc234@gmail.com
Leader: Geoff Lockwood (082 346 2597)
SABAP Pentads: 2620_2825, 2620_2830, 2615_2830
Target bird: African Rail

DATE: 17 MARCH /TUESDAY - EAST RAND BIRD CLUB EVENING MEETING
TITLE: AOTEAROA: LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD

Peter will talk about his travels to New Zealand (more info to follow)

Speaker: Peter Greaves

Venue: Main Hall, Country Life Retirement Village, Brentwood Park.

Meet: 18h30 for 19h00

ID/Driver's license to be scanned at the entrance.

Cost: Members R20.00 / Non-members R30.00. Cash at the door.

Tea, coffee, and snacks will be served after the presentation.

DATE: 20 - 22 MARCH /WEEKEND AWAY - *NEW LEADER*
TITLE: WOLFHUISKRAAL ON ZAAGKUILDRIFT ROAD

The Wolfhuiskraal area is renowned for producing sightings in late summer of amongst others: *Common Whitethroat*, *Olive-tree Warbler*, *Thrush Nightingale*, and at times, the most elusive of all, the *River Warbler*. *Bronze-winged Courser* is another possible special at this time of year. Depending on the rains of the season, the Zaagkuil drift road to Kgomo-Kgomo wetland may also produce sightings of crakes and a host of other water-related species.

Route: Take the N1 north through Pretoria towards Polokwane. Approximately 63km from the N1/N4 junction in Pretoria, take the Pienaarsrivier/Rust de Winter off-ramp (exit 205). Turn left on the R25 towards Pienaarsrivier and drive approximately 700m towards the intersection with the R101. Turn North (right) on the R101 and take the first turning to the West (left) over the railway line. Weekenders travel along this dirt road to the gate of Wolfhuiskraal farm.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

GPS: 25°09'42.0"S 28°11'07.6"E

Meet: Friday 18h30 for briefing

Cost: Accommodation R1,230 per person sharing.

Camping R550 per person.

R300 additional fee per person for the leader's fee

Leaders: Connor Nicholson (076 445 5672)

SABAP2: 2505_2810

Target bird: River Warbler

****Introducing one of the next generation of leaders.** Connor Nicholson is studying to become a regional bird guide through the FGASA training programme. Connor started his training in the Kruger Park area, where he was employed as a field guide at Balule for a 7-month period. Since then, he has travelled widely through South Africa, expanding his knowledge of birds and the environment and completing the requisite modules of the FGASA course.*

DATE: 24 MARCH / TUESDAY OUTING
TITLE: PRETORIA BOTANICAL GARDENS

The Pretoria National Botanical Garden is a 76ha urban oasis where birding is in a relaxed and safe atmosphere, with up to 50 species of birds to be seen in a morning's birding. The best way to observe the birdlife is to walk the undemanding trails that criss-cross the gardens. The garden consists of various habitats,

including woodland, acacia thickets, extensive lawns, and a few small ponds with a 35m high quartzite outcrop running down the centre.

Route: From Johannesburg International Airport, take the R21 north to Pretoria. Take the off-ramp at the intersection with the N1 north to Polokwane shortly before you reach Pretoria, and then the Lynnwood/WNNR off-ramp. At the top of the off-ramp, turn right and immediately after crossing over the highway, turn left into Meiring Naude. Continue until you reach a T-junction with Cussonia. Turn left into Cussonia, and you will find the entrance to the gardens immediately on your right.

GPS: 25°44'22.4"S 28°16'24.1"E

Time: 08h00 at the entrance

Cost: Pensioners free (ID required), R90 adults, R50 students, payable on entrance

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Werner Van Goethem (0824627108)

SABAP Pentad: 2540_2815

Target bird: Blue Waxbill

DATE: 28 MARCH / SATURDAY

TITLE: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOLLOWED BY A PRESENTATION

At this meeting, the President and the Committee to hold office for the year 2026 will be elected. Please join us for the AGM and celebrate with our winners of the annual Diamond Award and Bearded Vulture Award (in honour of the late Steven Piper).

This will be followed by a talk by Dr. Kailen Padayachee entitled 'Voyage to the White Continent: An Antarctic Season as an Expedition Ornithologist'. Dr. Kailen Padayachee's talk will be an insider's look at life as an expedition ornithologist during an Antarctic season. We'll journey onto the deck, into the Zodiacs, and across the ice as we encounter the seabirds that define the Southern Ocean—albatrosses, petrels, penguins, and more. This is a behind-the-scenes look at birds, ice, adventure, and conservation in one of the planet's last great wildernesses.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com (for catering purposes)

Venue: St Luke's Church, Norwood.

Meet: 14h30 for 15h00

Refreshments will be served

DATE: 07 APRIL / TUESDAY OUTING

TITLE: WALTER SISULU BOTANICAL GARDENS

We have all probably visited the botanical garden to stroll amongst the magnificent gardens, or to watch the resident Verreaux's Eagles soaring overhead. The garden offers many habitats from cliff face and grassland to water, woodland, and bushveld, attracting a diverse range of birds. This will be an opportunity for members to enjoy a leisurely walk around the gardens and be helped in identifying some of the birds that frequent the gardens.

Route: Travel towards Tarlton/Krugersdorp along the R47 (Hendrik Potgieter Road). Turn left onto Doreen Road (approx. a 10-minute drive from the Hendrik Potgieter/Christiaan de Wet intersection), turn right onto Malcolm Road, and carry on straight until the road curves. The gate to the garden is on the left.

GPS: 26°05'13.5"S 27°50'42.2"E

Time: 08h00 at the entrance

Cost: Pensioners free, R100 adults, R50 students payable on entrance

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Andy Featherstone (083 259 0231)

SABAP Pentad: 2605_2750

Target bird: Kurrichane Thrush

DATE: 12 APRIL / SUNDAY OUTING
TITLE: BIRDING WITH A PURPOSE - ATLASSING

Please check the 4 Degrees Green sub-project SABAP2 site (<https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/coverage/group/GP4>), select year 2026, and find one or more blank pentads to atlas; check again closer to the time to ensure they are still blank before you head out. As at 02/02 there were already 171 pentads with at least 1 FP card for 2026.

SABAP2 Coordinator: Werner van Goethem (082 462 7108)

SABAP2: Pentads that have not been visited yet this year.

DATE: 16 APRIL / THURSDAY EVENING MEETING
TITLE: BRAZIL'S ATLANTIC RAINFOREST

Brazil's Atlantic Rainforest is a habitat that is under threat from deforestation. It also has many endemic birds, which make it worthwhile to visit and explore. Within this area, there are several different habitats, including the low and higher altitude forests, as well as the neotropical cloud forest, including the stunted neotropical cloud forest at much higher altitudes. There are different birds in these different habitats, and some of the endemics have very restricted ranges, which makes tracking them down very rewarding. Although some of the birds visit feeders, others are very skulky and need more work. Lesley will describe her trip to this exciting and sometimes challenging region, where she saw over 250 different birds.

SPEAKER: Lesley Cornish

Venue: Meet: 18h45 for 19h00

Cost: Free for members. R50 for non-members. Cash at the door or prepayment to Wits Bird Club. Refreshments will be served. Cash bar available.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Contact Diana at diana.m.cowen@gmail.com if you can contribute a plate of savouries/sweets

DATE: 19 APRIL / SUNDAY OUTING
TITLE: RANDOM HARVEST - NEW MEMBER MEET & GREET

As a special welcome event for new members, the Club is hosting a gathering, and we'd love it if you could join us! This informal event is aimed at showcasing Club member benefits, with Committee members on hand to explain ways to get involved in the organisation, and to answer new members' questions!

Whether you're a long-standing member or simply curious about who we are and what we do, this is a great opportunity to connect over coffee and a chat. We'll start with a bird walk and socialise in the tea garden afterwards.

Route: From the N1 Western Bypass, take Beyers Naude Road towards Krugersdorp. Using Garden World Nursery, on your right as a landmark, measure 1.8km to the turn-off. Opposite Oakfield farm (which is well sign-posted) at Valdor Centre, turn right into College Road. Continue for 2.2km keeping right and following the small directional signs to Random Harvest Nursery.

GPS: 26°01'50.6"S 27°53'37.9"E

Time: 09h00

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Members of the WBC Committee

SABAP Pentads: 2600_2750

Target bird: Spotted Eagle Owl

DATE: 21 APRIL / TUESDAY - EAST RAND BIRD CLUB EVENING MEETING
TITLE: BREAKING NEGATIVE STIGMAS AROUND OWLS

Jonathan will talk about owls and efforts into changing their negative stigma.

Speaker: Jonathan Haw

Venue: Main Hall, Country Life Retirement Village, Brentwood Park.

Meet: 18h30 for 19h00

ID/Driver's license to be scanned at the entrance.

Cost: Members R20.00 / Non-members R30.00. Cash at the door.

Tea, coffee, and snacks will be served after the presentation.

DATE: 25 APRIL / SATURDAY OUTING
TITLE: ELANDSVLEI PANS AND VARKFONTEIN PAN

With the ongoing support of the farmer, the Elandsvlei Pans remain an attraction for many waterbirds and grassland species. The water levels of the pans have fluctuated from bone-dry to flooded due to long-term precipitation cycles. The pans are in a mix of farmland and rank grassland with alien trees in the mix. Access must be arranged and is dependent on road conditions as determined by the farm manager. An outing here could offer several wader, heron, waterbird, and raptor species. Not much walking is required, and the site is safe.

Varkfontein Pan is located on a farm in Bapsfontein, accessed from the R51. Access is unrestricted, but the access road can be impassable at times. The birdlife on this small pan can be incredible, with many waterbird species. Grassland species are also abundant. The site is considered safe, but one should remain vigilant; no walking is required.

Route: From the R21, take exit 32 and head East on the R25 towards Bapsfontein. At the T-junction with the R50, turn right towards Delmas. Meet at the Caltex garage at the intersection of the R25/R50 & R51.

GPS: 26°00'32.2"S 28°25'27.1"E (Meeting point)

Time: 07h30

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Awie Coetzee (083 677 7097)

SABAP Pentad: 2555_2825 & 2600_2825 (Elandsvlei) 2600_2820 (Varkfontein)

Target bird: African Swamphen

DATE: 7 MAY / THURSDAY OUTING
TITLE: PRESIDENT RIDGE BIRD SANCTUARY

Join for a gentle walk around President Ridge Bird Sanctuary. The sanctuary has many interesting species to find, including Malachite Kingfisher, Thick-billed Weaver, Lesser Honeyguide, and even Black Sparrowhawk, which are all regularly seen. After the walk, relax with coffee and rusks at the picnic spot and just enjoy the tranquillity of this oasis in a busy metropolis.

Route: From the N1 Western Bypass, take the R512 Malibongwe Road towards Johannesburg. After crossing the intersection with Republic Road, turn left onto Cross Street and then first right onto Malcolm Road. The entrance to the sanctuary is 400m on the left-hand side, with parking in front of the Duneden apartment block.

GPS: 26°06'31.2"S 27°59'35.9"E

Time: 09h30 at entrance

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Gill Isaac (082 655 9283)

SABAP Pentad: 2605_2755

Target bird: Malachite Kingfisher

DATE: 9 MAY / SATURDAY COURSE

TITLE: BEGINNER'S BIRDING COURSE - START SEEING MORE THAN "JUST A BIRD"

Have you ever wondered *what* bird you're looking at, or wished you could identify the birds around you with confidence? This course offers an introduction to birding, helping beginners learn how to observe, identify, and appreciate birds in everyday settings.

Facilitated by Chris Hines and Lance Robinson, this relaxed, beginner-friendly course is designed for anyone new to birding and curious about the natural world. Together, Chris and Lance bring a practical, down-to-earth approach that makes birding accessible, enjoyable, and unintimidating. Learn:

- Easy bird identification tips
- How to use binoculars & fieldguides
- Where, when, and how to start birding on your own

Birding is more than a hobby—it's a way to slow down and reconnect with the natural world.

Cost:

Members	R 375,00
Member Families	R 475,00
Non-Members	R 425,00
Non-Member Families	R 550,00

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Venue: TBA

Time: This will be a full-day workshop, including bird walks. Times will be advised once the venue has been finalised.

DATE: 17 MAY / SUNDAY OUTING

TITLE: BIRDING WITH A PURPOSE - ATLASSING

Please check the 4 Degrees Green sub-project SABAP2 site (<https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/coverage/group/GP4>), select year 2026, and find one or more blank pentads to atlas; check again closer to the time to ensure they are still blank before you head out. As at 02/02 there were already 171 pentads with at least 1 FP card for 2026.

SABAP2 Coordinator: Werner van Goethem (082 462 7108)

SABAP2: Pentads that have not been visited yet this year.

DATE: 19 MAY / TUESDAY - EAST RAND BIRD CLUB EVENING MEETING

TITLE: COSTA RICA

Andy and a group of seven other Wits Bird Club members and friends recently visited Costa Rica to explore this beautiful country and its fascinating wildlife. Visiting coastal forests, river estuaries, stunning beaches, and rugged mountains, the group was shown a wide range of birds, mammals, reptiles, and smaller fauna. Andy will share his images, ranging from raucous Scarlet Macaws to tiny hummingbirds.

SPEAKER: Andy Featherstone

Venue: Main Hall, Country Life Retirement Village, Brentwood Park.

Meet: 18h30 for 19h00

ID/Driver's license to be scanned at the entrance.

Cost: Members R20.00 / Non-members R30.00. Cash at the door.

Tea, coffee, and snacks will be served after the presentation

DATE: 20 - 24 MAY

TITLE: BLSA - LEARN ABOUT BIRDS CONFERENCE - BONAMANZI KZN

BirdLife South Africa and the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology invite you to one of South Africa's premier birding destinations for the 7th Learn About Birds conference and BirdLife South Africa's 97th Annual General Meeting (AGM). (The AGM will take place at 16h00, Friday 22 May 2025). Nestled in the heart of a spectacular sand forest and moist savanna, Bonamanzi Game Reserve offers unparalleled opportunities to observe some of South Africa's rarest bird species, including the elusive Green Malkoha and African Broadbill. Whether you're a scientist, seasoned twitcher, or just beginning your birding journey, this conference offers something for everyone. Experience the thrill of logging that elusive lifer, learn cutting-edge conservation techniques, and contribute to citizen science projects that protect our rich avian diversity.

What Awaits You:

- An opportunity to learn from leading scientists in conservation and ornithology
- Expert-led walks and game drives through Bonamanzi's diverse habitats
- Interactive workshops on conservation, bird identification, and behaviour
- Networking opportunities with passionate birders nationwide

The 7th Learn About Birds Conference

The conference will consist of two parallel sessions. The scientific programme will consist of shorter, research-based presentations, while the other programme will cater to a more general audience with longer, more interactive presentations.

Rates include a welcome function on Wednesday evening, as well as conference lunches and dinners on Thursday and Friday evening.

The conference will not be live-streamed, but the AGM will be.

Space is limited to 180 to ensure a more immersive experience, so book now to avoid disappointment.

BirdLife South Africa's 97th AGM

The 97th AGM will take place at 16h00 on Friday, 22 May 2026, straight after the close of the conference in the main plenary room.

For additional information and bookings, go to

<https://birdlife.glueup.com/event/learn-about-birds-lab-conference-2026-154368/>

DATE: 21 MAY / THURSDAY EVENING MEETING

TITLE: A BIRDSEYE VIEW OF THE WORLD

Have you ever wondered what the world looks like through a bird's eyes? Join us for a fascinating talk that explores how birds perceive their environment — from extraordinary colour vision and ultraviolet light, to motion detection, navigation, and survival strategies shaped by evolution. Whether you're a birder, nature enthusiast, or simply curious about the natural world, this talk promises a fresh perspective on life as seen from above.

SPEAKER: Claudia Holgate

Venue: Meet: 18h45 for 19h00

Cost: Free for members. R50 for non-members. Cash at the door or prepayment to Wits Bird Club.

Refreshments will be served. Cash bar available.

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Contact Diana at diana.m.cowen@gmail.com if you can contribute a plate of savouries/sweets

DATE: 23 MAY / SATURDAY OUTING

TITLE: ROODEPLAAT DAM

Roodeplaat Dam Nature Reserve lies on the southern shore of the Roodeplaat Dam and has two hides overlooking the water. The reserve is accessed by a network of roads and is generally comprised of acacia woodland with reed beds along the shore of the dam. The bushveld areas are good places to look for Chinspot Batis, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Burnt-necked Eremomela, and Long-billed Crombec, amongst others. The picnic site overlooks the dam and is ideal for looking for the various water birds present.

Route: Travelling north on the N1, take off-ramp No152 in Pretoria through the toll gates and turn right onto Sefako Makgatho Drive (R513). Continue east on the R513 for approximately 6km and turn left on the Kameelfontein road. After 3,6km, turn left towards the reserve entrance.

GPS: S25° 38' 59.7" E28° 21' 48.4"

Time: 06h45 at the entrance to start at 07h00

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Cost: There is an entrance fee payable

Leader: Awie Coetzee (083 677 7097)

SABAP Pentad: 2535_2820

Target bird: Burnt-necked Eremomela

DATE: 31 MAY / SUNDAY OUTING

TITLE: KLIPRIVIERSBERG NATURE RESERVE

The largest nature reserve (680 ha) within the Johannesburg Metropolitan area, the reserve is bisected by the Bloubospruit, which runs through a valley. Ashy Tit, Common Scimitarbill, Brown-backed Honeybird, Orange River Francolin, Nicholson's Pipit, and White-fronted Bee-eater are all possible species to be encountered. A variety of antelope have been introduced.

Route: We will be starting at the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve entrance (alongside the Recreation Centre). From the M1 South, follow the Southgate indicators and take the R82 toward Vereeniging (the M1 becomes R27, and at Kibler Park sign becomes R82). At the Kibler Park sign, turn left onto Gordon Road. At the second road, turn left onto Pierpoint Drive and follow the road to Peggy-Vera Road. Turn left on Peggy-Vera, pass the Klipriviersberg Recreation Centre, and the entrance to the KNR is the next right (thatched entrance).

GPS: 26°18'12.5"S 28°00'42.1"E

Time: 07h15 for 07h30 in the parking area

Book: witsbc234@gmail.com

Leader: Lance Robinson (082 927 9785)

SABAP Pentad: 2615_2800

Target bird: Fairy Flycatcher

NOTES

1. Always consult a map before leaving home or the AA for routes, tollgate costs, and road works. GPS coordinates (where applicable) have been sourced from the internet or from the venue, and it should be noted that accuracy, completeness, reliability, usability, or suitability cannot be guaranteed. WBC assumes no responsibility for incorrect results or damages resulting from the use of the data.
2. Entrance fees may apply at some venues, and these may have been revised by the time of publication.
3. Before the walk, please advise your leader of any medical problems.
4. If you have booked for a weekend away/ outing/ event requiring payment, but you are unable to attend, and if you haven't cancelled before the due date, you are still liable to pay the Club. We have to pay the venues very shortly after the due date mentioned in the programme. Too many losses are incurred because members are neither cancelling nor paying for their bookings. If your payment is not received by the due date, we will have to cancel your booking/ reservation.

5. PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR WEEKENDS AWAY AND OUTINGS

You may make your payments for weekends away and other outings in any of the following ways:

- Preferably, pay directly into the Wits Bird Club Bank account and email the deposit slip to witsbc234@gmail.com

Banking details as follows:

BANK – NEDBANK HYDE PARK

BRANCH CODE: 198-765

ACCOUNT NO: 1913 257 789

NAME OF ACCOUNT: WITS BIRD CLUB

- Please note NO CREDIT CARD FACILITY.
- *Please assist the Club to minimise exorbitant banking fees by paying by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) wherever possible.*

RULES REGARDING BOOKINGS AND PAYMENTS OF OUTINGS:

- A booking for an outing or weekend away will only be confirmed once a deposit has been received.
- If the cost is below R1 000, payment in full must be paid on booking.
- If the cost of the outing/weekend is over R1 000, a 50% deposit must be paid on booking.
- In all cases, 25% will be non-refundable to cover costs.
- The final 50% must be paid one week before the closing date.
- Non-members accompanied by members are welcome. For weekend outings and courses, an additional administration fee of 20% may be payable.

NB: Grading of outings - distance to be walked or steepness of terrain

Most outings are grade 1. We will therefore only show grades 2 and 3 on the programme

Please note the following:

1. An easy stroll suitable for people of all ages and abilities
2. A comfortable but slightly challenging walk (e.g., uneven terrain with some gradient)
3. A strenuous/challenging walk (fairly long distances covered, steep gradients, or difficult terrain)

FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT:

Louise Rowbotham

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WEBSITE: www.witsbirdclub.org.za