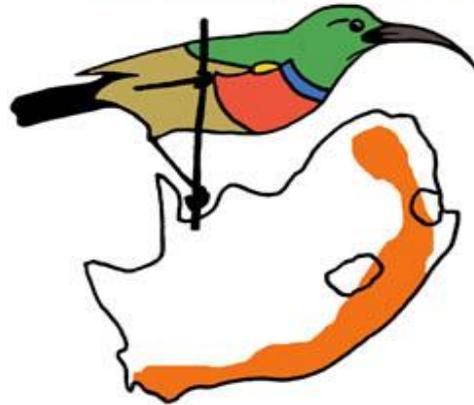


SABAP2



A record-breaking pentad!

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A RECORD-BREAKING PENTAD!

Below is a brief report on the efforts of our team of four atlasers (Pieter and Janelle Verster, Eduard Tiehardt and myself, Jason Boyce) to break the species total record for a Full Protocol Card since SABAP2 begun. Record to crack? 217 species!

I am not going to focus much on the actual birding in this report as the really amazing part was the way in which we had to prepare for this record and the process and planning beforehand. This record attempt was a long time coming and we started scouting a potential record-breaking pentad in 2016. We soon realized that pentad 2530_2810 in Gauteng was of record-breaking calibre and set our sights on an attempt in November 2018.

For those who have birded in Pretoria you wouldn't immediately think of this pentad as one that could deliver over 217 species in a FPC. The pentad has the Rooiwal Sewage Works, the Apies river and... well, not much else. What pentad 2530_2810 (http://sabap2.adu.org.za/pentad_info.php...) does have though is a range of different habitat, a good network of quiet roads, decent farmland and a community of people that are largely friendly and welcoming to birders!

The Birding

In all of our scouting (32 FP cards with an average of 152.4 species per card) we've learnt that there are *always* more birds to find! In fact, this has become our team motto, and with it in mind we set off at 3am on Thursday the 22nd of November 2018 to pentad 2530_2810.

Day 1 was great, we picked up a few owl and nightjars and by 07h00 we hit the 100 mark! By 12h30 we had 150 and we ended the day on 193 species – one species more than Pieter's estimation.

Day 2 was even better; we were aiming to add about 17 species to push us up to 210 but ended up adding an incredible 27 species and got to our target of 220 at 17h40 that afternoon!

Day 3 was obviously on the slow side, and we were only adding one species every hour or so. By 17h30 that afternoon we reached 231 species. I must admit that we were pretty exhausted and even though we had another two days to go we were pleased with our effort and decided to leave it at that and give it another go again next year.

Best birds for the area and for Gauteng as a whole included; Wire-tailed Swallow, African Firefinch, Western Yellow Wagtail, Abdim's Stork, Bushveld Pipit, Sand Martin, Common Buttonquail and Red-throated Wryneck (which has about a 0.5% reporting rate in the QDGC).





Figure 1 Some stars of the day!

Interesting Stats

One of the most interesting things is that we didn't have any new species for the pentad, nor did we receive any ORF's. Every species we recorded was largely expected and we recorded no new birds for the pentad.

- We ended up making contact with 40 different landowners.
- We birded for 39 hours and drove just under 500km in the pentad in the 3 days.
- 193 species we recorded more than once which means 38 species were recorded only once.
- The previous 21 cards submitted in the month of November had a combined total 230 species.
- We missed 10 migrant species that we had recorded in our scouting. Things were really dry and many of the migrants seemed on the late side. Interestingly enough we also didn't record Black, Levillant's or Jacobin Cuckoo's, all of which are normally easy to get in a full day in summer.
- We dipped both Southern Black Flycatcher and Fiscal Flycatcher – both seem to leave the area in the summer. Fiscal Flycatcher was especially common in the pentad 3 months ago.





Figure 2 Showcasing the range of species seen.

Pieter made a What's App group and was in communication with all the landowners in the pentad and those in the community that were interested in our challenge. It was amazing to see how many people supported our challenge during the scouting period and the challenge itself. People were sending us messages all the time about species that they had in their gardens and on their farms.

Below are small excerpts from the group that might be interesting to read:

"Pieter en span, die Apiesrivier gemeenskap is baie opgewonde oor julle poging, verbasende resultate en veral die kommunikasie! Jou "update" boodskap is op gemeenskaps groepe aan gestuur, en Ek kry gereeld boodskappe van mense oor die 20 "vermiste" voëls, en ek stuur vir jou aan as dit binne julle 9km blok val. Hou asb aan met goeie kommunikasie, en as moontlik, kan jy die groep maak dat ons n link kan stuur sodat meer mense die groep kan aansluit."

"Fantasties, baie dankie dat jul ons omgewing op die "map" sit."

"Ons het al by ons:

Bosveld visvanger

Swartvleevanger (hy sny saam my gras ook 😊)

Papegaaiduif (hulle broei in ons wilde vy boom)"



"Ons sien gereëld grasuile, nonnetjies (my kinders het 6 hand groot gemaak, en vlieg in area rond), witkoluile, gevlekte ooruike, en dan 2 tipes naguiltjies(een klink soos lister enjin wat begin revs optel). Het lan gesien by vergadering, hy sê sekretarisvoël wag vir jou 😊"

Thanks to Henk Nel and the Birdlasser guys for keeping our Challenge 'live' so that others can follow it! (<https://www.birdlasser.com/private/events/25302810220...>)

Finally, and most importantly is just a huge well done to our Team! I can't explain how hard these guys have worked on this – the scouting and planning was HUGE! Congrats guys!! We definitely believe that a 250 card is possible so here's a challenge to the public to go out and dig deep into those pentads – there are always more birds!



Figure 3 Our team!

