



# AGULHAS PLAIN BIRDING PROJECT

## YEARLY REPORT 2017

**This report is a requirement of an agreement with Agulhas National Park and Nuwejaars Wetland SMA at the start of the project 8 years ago.**

### INTRODUCTION

The year 2017 marked the second year of the second 5-year phase of the Agulhas Plain Birding Project. Despite the drought, the Plain kept entertaining the birding community with some special observations.

Hereby a short summary of the most interesting observations, developments and birding achievements:

1. All 27 pentads were covered at least once following SABAP standards of at least 2hrs per pentad and all habitats covered. This was achieved by 15 December which meant for the first time in 7 years we could spend quality time with our families during December! 31 Checklists were submitted for the year which brings the total checklists for the project to 190 (Those who read previous reports will notice that previous year checklist numbers were incorrect due to a mix-up between full protocol and ad hoc checklists). Additional to these, 54 ad hoc submissions were submitted via Birdlasser which is the direct result of Birdlasser implementation in 2017. Now, one could visit 3 different pentads chasing interesting opportunities and simply record as you go and then submit as ad hoc submissions.
2. Using Birdlasser, as explained above, was a new experience but nearly caused havoc when on 1<sup>st</sup> of December, I realized, I still needed six 2hr checklists for the project. This was because I incorrectly counted the ad hoc submissions as "full protocol"! Needless to say this was achieved in the remaining 2 weeks. In retrospect though, Birdlasser also made one lazy and less focussed, and for the next year we will go back to the previous strategy of spending a day in one pentad only as one tends to cover the habitats more accurately.
3. The new improved Birdlasser should probably go down as one of the most important developments in birding in the past 10 years. Birdlasser now allows for easy addition of bird numbers while birding. This makes the data submitted to SABAP much more valuable as previously one would enter an ID only once, which said nothing about the numbers of a species occurring in the pentad. Let me explain: In 2016 I see 400 White Stork in a pentad and in 2017 only 1. Although White Stork could have been massacred on their way to South Africa in 2017, the SABAP program would not have captured this dramatic incident. With the new BIRDLASSER this now reflects as every bird one sees is accurately recorded to the closest number. Similarly, when a common species like Common Starling is accurately recorded, SABAP and the ADU can use the data to assess whether their numbers are problematic. I think Henk Nel deserves a medal for this improvement! Thanks, Team Birdlasser !
4. True to a great birding destination, the Agulhas Plain has once again produced the goods when it comes to birding. Despite the very dry conditions, species diversity seemed to remain intact and in one pentad, a record number of species were recorded. Part of the reason for this was that the Agulhas Plain has many vlei's and pans of varying depth which meant that previously "dead" and deep water bodies, suddenly became the shallow pans required by waders and the like! Also important is the opening up of areas previously overgrown by alien vegetation as this improves visibility for certain species(as in harriers for instance) and improved mobility for others(some species need lower scrubs for take-off).
5. Analysis of checklists confirms my expectations with regard species diversity on checklists in the 27 pentads. As indication of species diversity, I used the average of the 3 best (longest/biggest) checklists

in each pentad. The highest number of species per checklist is **not** found around De Mond pentad (3440\_2005) but rather around Zoetendalsvlei and lower Nuwejaars river pentad (3440\_1955). In second position before the De Mond pentad is actually the Struisbaai pentad (3445\_2000)! When you look at the Agulhas Plain as a whole, the top ten pentads in terms of species diversity are:

- i. 3440\_1955 Zoetendalsvlei
- ii. 3445\_2000 Struisbaai
- iii. 3440\_2005 De Mond
- iv. 3445\_1955 Suiderstrand
- v. 3435\_1950 Bo-Voelvlei
- vi. 3435\_1945 Elim
- vii. 3435\_2000 Groote Eiland
- viii. 3435\_1955 Heuningrug
- ix. 3430\_2005 Nachtwacht
- x. 3440\_1945 Rietfontein
- xi. 3440\_2000 Klipfontein (same as Rietfontein)

This information could be of value for birding tourism, as up to now De Mond pentad has been visited three times as much as Zoetendalsvlei pentad, but the latter potentially has more species. The Struisbaai pentad surprisingly is as lucrative probably because of the variety in habitat and exciting coastal species that is very accessible. Visitors should know that the Agulhas Plain has much more to offer than just De Mond. The diversity inland is probably due to the network of rivers, pans, dams and wetlands in the Plain.

6. The Agulhas Plain Birding Project website ([www.agulhasplainbirding.co.za](http://www.agulhasplainbirding.co.za)) went online this year thanks to Sam Beeslaar who spent endless hours designing the website! The website was an immediate success and clearly has played an important role in marketing the Agulhas Plain as a birding destination. Of particular value was the positive comments from fellow birders who said they found the BIRDING ROUTES most helpful. There certainly is an opportunity for corporate sponsorship of the website in the near future.

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2017	34	66	697	1,644	158.28 MB
Feb 2017	14	36	378	723	31.20 MB
Mar 2017	48	154	3,526	13,566	3.25 GB
Apr 2017	123	235	2,536	19,922	2.23 GB
May 2017	36	144	1,347	3,623	216.73 MB
Jun 2017	56	329	1,838	3,253	172.98 MB
Jul 2017	69	349	1,975	7,944	707.64 MB
Aug 2017	91	193	1,219	4,953	689.36 MB
Sep 2017	80	134	609	3,504	383.20 MB
Oct 2017	80	166	1,209	3,136	176.84 MB
Nov 2017	74	122	415	1,972	140.74 MB
Dec 2017	66	119	495	2,792	417.42 MB
<b>Total</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>2,047</b>	<b>16,244</b>	<b>67,032</b>	<b>8.50 GB</b>

7. The Buttonquail Bash was organized by Nuwejaarsrivier wetland SMA in April 2017 and thanks to Eugene Hahndiek, Erica Brink, Liohan Gilliomee, Johannes Uys and sponsorships by Black Oystercatcher and Strandveld wineries, the day was thoroughly enjoyed by all present. The Hottentot Buttonquail remains one of the most elusive species to find and will remain a main attraction in the Agulhas Plain.
8. A further 11 species were added to the Agulhas Plain Birding List in 2017. The official list now stands at 265 species! The new species recorded in 2017 are:

Common Cuckoo  
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater  
Indian Peafowl  
Black-chested Snake-eagle  
Olive Woodpecker  
Temminck's Courser  
African Olive Pigeon  
Knob-billed Duck  
Lesser Grey Shrike  
Ground Woodpecker  
Brown Snake-Eagle

9. An Agulhas Plain Birding group with representation from ANP, Nuwejaars Wetland SMA, Overberg Crane Group, Bionerds.co.za and other interested parties was established this year. The idea is to get all role players in the Agulhas Plain together 3 times a year to discuss birding matters, co-operate in research and protect the avian population in the Agulhas Plain and preparing for sustainable avian protection for years to come. An African Grass-owl research project, which is the brainchild of Keir Lynch and Bionerds.co.za has commenced in 2017 and will investigate the status of the species in the Agulhas Plain.
10. The Agulhas Plain Birding Project is also active on social media thanks to the hard work of Alouise Lynch who also designed the new logo for the project. You can follow the project on **Instagram - @agulhasplainbirding** and also on **Facebook - @agulhasplainbirding** which already has 122 followers each.
11. Together with Piet le Roux, I had a successful meeting with the developer at Langerzandt end of November where we discussed the protection of the Langerzandt wetland and perhaps cleaning up the wetland during the holiday. Johan Roodt promised to look into it and subsequently, in the first week of January we had an outing where I showed him and a group of about 10 others, the birding potential of the wetland. It was a great success and all present were pleasantly surprised about the beautiful birds on their doorstep. Johan clearly understood that the wetland is an asset to the whole of Langerzandt and its people and said that he would himself organize a clean-up of the wetland, removing the plastic bottles, crates and even old mattresses from the wetland. I promised the support from the Agulhas Plain Birding Project in developing the wetland as an attraction.

#### PENTAD REPORTS 2017:

1.

Pentad Number:3430\_1935

Pentad Name: Kouerivier

Habitat: Only half of this pentad falls within the Agulhas plain (southern part). It is drained by the Koue and Bloed rivers. The South-Western corner has some smallholdings and the Tierkloof Conservancy near Baardskeedersbos with small dams. The South-Eastern pentad includes the very interesting De Kouderivier farm. The rest of the pentad is cultivated land and alien forest with a track that covers mountain fynbos.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 3

Ad Hoc Checklists submitted to SABAP: 6

New species added this year: 1

Project Species Number: 81

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 10

SABAP2 Species Number: 112

Comments: The checklist was a short 2hr winter checklist with no extraordinary species recorded. The De Koude rivier Estate has varying habitat with rivers, dams, forests and wetlands and makes for great birding to those using Doornbosch accommodation. Reliable spot for African Black Duck.

2.

Pentad Number: 3430\_1940

Pentad Name: Janswartzkraalrivier

Habitat: Includes large tracts of cultivated land on De Koude river farm, the Koue river with large sedge marshes which runs into the Janswartzkraal river, large alien forests and a gravel road that runs past farm yards with small dams, just below the Soetmuis mountain.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 4

New species added this year: 4

Project Species Number: 80

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 8

SABAP2 Species Number: 100

Comments: Black Harrier and White-faced Duck the only 2 new species for the pentad. Many of the farms in the pentad have been cleared of aliens which has dramatically changed the habitat. This could lead to big increase in species in the next few years.

3.

Pentad Number: 3430\_1945

Pentad Name: Pietersieliefontein

Habitat: Cultivated land with farm dams, alien forests and the Pietersieliekloof river with marshes. Elim Nature Reserve has fynbos.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 3

New species added this year: 13

Project Species Number: 94

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 8

SABAP2 Species Number: 110

Comments: Access to the farm of Mr Oktober (Pietersieliefontein) has increased the species number of this pentad by 25%. Large areas was cleared of aliens and planted with Rooibos. This gave access to the upper regions of the mountains and the first record of Hottentot Buttonquail!

4.

Pentad Number: 3430\_1950

Pentad Name: Kosierskraal

Habitat: Natural fynbos, alien forests, cultivated land (Quoin Rock vineyards) and the Soetmuis mountains southern slope. The Kastaaingskloof river runs through pentad.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 6

New species added this year: 7

Project Species Number: 118

Species Reported not confirmed: 5

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 9

SABAP2 Species Number: 125

Comments: This pentad has kept its promise as the pentad where most of the raptors are seen when African Goshawk and Forest Buzzard were recorded for the first time. Other new species were African Paradise Flycatcher, Amethyst Sunbird, Spotted Eagle-owl and White Stork.

5.

Pentad Number: 3430\_1955

Pentad Name: Graskloof

Habitat: Southern slopes of the Soetmuis mountain with natural fynbos, alien forests, cultivated land, some large farm dams.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 4

New species added this year: 3

Project Species Number: 95

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 4

SABAP2 Species Number: 101

Comments: One of the target birds for 2017, Olive Woodpecker, was found on the farm Grashoek. This pentad gives access to mountain species when using Bergendam Cottage accommodation.

6.

Pentad Number: 3430\_2000

Pentad Name: Bredasdorp

Habitat: Urban area, Bredasdorp sewerage works, cultivated land, Heuningberg Nature reserve on Soetmuis mountain.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 1

New species added this year: 33

Project Species Number: 74

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 22

SABAP2 Species Number: 147

Comments: The increase in new species due to the fact that this was the first full checklist for the pentad which added mostly expected species. The one exception was the Knob-billed duck seen at the Bredasdorp Sewerage works which is well worth a visit. Don't miss the ponds to your right!

7.

Pentad Number: 3430\_2005

Pentad Name: Nachtwacht

Habitat: Cultivated land, The beautiful Nachtwacht Restaurant Garden, fynbos chalk dunes and Kars river with weir which gives rise to a permanent water body. Below the 2<sup>nd</sup> weir is a very lucrative wetland.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 2

New species added this year: 22

Project Species Number: 102

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 6

SABAP2 Species Number: 119

Comments: This pentad was highly under-recorded which explains the high increase in species. Some good ID's included African Black Duck, Alpine Swift, Amethyst Sunbird, Barn Owl, Burchell's Coucal, Denham's Bustard, Giant Kingfisher, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Malachite Kingfisher and Southern Tchagra.

8.

Pentad Number: 3435\_1935

Pentad Name: Nuwedam

Habitat: Natural fynbos and proteaceae, Alien forest, cultivated land, the large dam at Nuwedam and some impressive wetlands revealed by alien tree removal.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 8

New species added this year: 8

Project Species Number: 120

Species Reported not confirmed: 1

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 10

SABAP2 Species Number: 126

Comments: The habitat in this pentad has changed dramatically with the removal of aliens on the farm Nuwedam. The wetland above the dam has been disturbed extensively but could very soon become a haven for flufftail species. Congratulations once again to the Pratt family for protecting this great asset.

9.

Pentad Number: 3435\_1940

Pentad Name: Viljoenshof

Habitat: Alien forests, large patches of proteaceae (farming), natural fynbos, origin of the Ratel river, Viljoenshof wetland and Wolfgat and other small dams.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 7

New species added this year: 2

Project Species Number: 79

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 10

SABAP2 Species Number: 99

Comments: This pentad produced the first record of African Olive Pigeon for the project.

10.

Pentad Number: 3435\_1945

Pentad Name: Elim

Habitat: Cultivate land, Nuwejaars river and marsh lands, Waschkraalvlei, Strandveld dam with marsh. Natural fynbos. The newly discovered Skaamgesiggie bird sanctuary in the Nuwejaars river.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 10

New species added this year: 11

Project Species Number: 137

Species Reported not confirmed: 3

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP- total: 22

SABAP2 Species Number: 164

Comments: The newly discovered Skaamgesiggie bird sanctuary on the farms of Liohan Gilliomee and Jan Bekker unfortunately over-shadowed my plans for Waschkraalvlei. The sanctuary is under development, but promises to be one of the best birding spots in the Agulhas Plain and a great attraction to avid birders. Flufftails, crakes and other secretive waterbird species almost certainly occur here in large numbers.

11.

Pentad Number: 3435\_1950

Pentad Name: Bo-Voelvlei

Habitat: Nuwejaars river and wetland, Langpan, 1/3 of Rondepan and Northern third of Voelvlei. Cultivated land, natural fynbos and alien forest.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 7

New species added this year: 5

Project Species Number: 130

Species Reported not confirmed: 1

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 17

SABAP2 Species Number: 160

Comments: Brown Snake-Eagle and European Roller were the find of the year in this pentad. Other notables were Martial Eagle, Grey-headed Gull, Whiskered Tern, White-faced Duck and African Snipe.

12.

Pentad Number: 3435\_1955

Pentad Name: Heuningrug

Habitat: Largely cultivated land with the natural fynbos covered Heuningrug taking up most of the pentad. Small farm dams and 2/3's of Rondepan.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 7

New species added this year: 3

Project Species Number: 121

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 10

SABAP2 Species Number: 142



Comments: Access to some of the farms improved this year and very good coverage was achieved. The best sighting was a Greater Honeyguide in the open veld, watching us from about 10 meters!

13.

Pentad Number: 3435\_2000

Pentad Name: Grooteiland

Habitat: Cultivated land, large wetland area due to Kars river ending in flat plain, Varkvlei, Man-made canals made to drain the area towards Heuningnes river. Small patches of fynbos and alien forest.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 10

New species added this year: 3

Project Species Number: 129

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 24

SABAP2 Species Number: 150

Comments: One of the best pentads to survey in a dry year as the canals always have water and Varkvlei attracts waders due to lower levels of water. Best observation was a Knysna Woodpecker.

14.

Pentad Number: 3435\_2005

Pentad Name: Princekraal

Habitat: The Kars river ends in a delta in this pentad which forms a wetland before it forms again into the Kars river in the Grooteiland pentad. Largely cultivated land with patches of gumtree forests. Water canals deviated from the Kars river runs to Vogelgezang and feeds into this wetland. Ideal habitat for African Grass-owl.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 8

New species added this year: 4

Project Species Number: 113

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 32

SABAP2 Species Number: 153

Comments: The African Grass-owl seems to be doing well. We purposefully stayed away from the spot as others already frequented the sight this year and more could be detrimental. The best sighting for the year was the first Lesser Grey Shrike recorded by Keir Lynch. The first Klaas's Cuckoo was also added for the pentad.

15.

Pentad Number: 3440\_1935

Pentad Name: Waterford

Habitat: Coastal fynbos, Northern Buffelsjagtbaai coast, Maccoavlei, alien forest, Haelkraal river and Koks river with wetland feeding Ratel river.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 5

New species added this year: 17

Project Species Number: 104

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 9

SABAP2 Species Number: 123

Comments: The Maccoavlei added to this record checklist because of the low water level which attracted many waders. Another reason was the alien removal program which has completely changed the habitat. Twenty five more species than the previous best checklist! Who says you cannot rehabilitate alien infested land!!!!  
Congratulations to the Agulhas National Park for a job well done! Now we need a bird hide here more than ever.

16.

Pentad Number: 3440\_1940

Pentad Name: Wolvengat

Habitat: The Ratel river wetland, Soetwater fountain, cultivated land, Uintjieskuil pan, Uintjieskuil dam, Alien forest patches, rehabilitated fynbos/wetland Ratel river plain. Wolvengat semi-urban area.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 6

New species added this year: 4

Project Species Number: 125

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 11

SABAP2 Species Number: 133

Comments: The highlight of the year was a majestic African Goshawk photographed by Chrisna Steyn as well as the first African Olive Pigeon recorded for the project. Other sightings were: Agulhas Long-billed Lark, Burchell's Coucal, Common Quail, Greater Honeyguide (now a regular) and Pearl-breasted Swallow.

17.

Pentad Number: 3440\_1945

Pentad Name: Rietfontein

Habitat: Cultivated land, alien tree patches, Uintjieskuil and river, small patches natural fynbos, Melkbospan and vlei and Vispan (salt pan).

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 9

New species added this year: 7

Project Species Number: 133

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 16

SABAP2 Species Number: 156

Comments: This pentad always seems to produce and this year was no exception. The highlight of the year must be the Temminck's Courser photographed by Liohan Gilliomee, but the first African Black Duck recorded in the pentad was also the most Southern record in history! The Amethyst Sunbird reported before was eventually photographed and the first Black Sparrowhawk, Cardinal Woodpecker and Greater Double-collared Sunbird were also recorded. Another Spotted Flycatcher was also recorded on the farm Vlooiakraal.

18.

Pentad Number: 3440\_1950

Pentad Name: Voelvlei

Habitat: Natural fynbos Soetanyenberg, Voelvlei, some seasonal pans, cultivated land, 4 dams West of Springfield Saltpan and Western edge of the Saltpan. Small portion of the Nuwejaars river wetland.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 7

New species added this year: 8

Project Species Number: 125

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 15

SABAP2 Species Number: 149

Comments: The Voelvlei water levels were the lowest in 7 years of birding which brought with it a very different perspective of the vlei. No extraordinary species recorded.

19.

Pentad Number: 3440\_1955

Pentad Name: Zoetendalsvlei

Habitat: Zoetendals vlei, Nuwejaars river wetland, Springfield Saltpan, Cultivated land and renosterveld.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 14

New species added this year: 3

Project Species Number: 158

Species Reported not confirmed: 1

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 35

SABAP2 Species Number: 184

Comments: Zoetendalsvlei was extremely dry this year which made birding very difficult. The highlight of the year was 6 Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters which entertained the birding community for a few months. The other excitement was the first Pale Chanting Goshawk recorded for the pentad. The southern edge of the vlei on the farm Soetendalsvlei is an exceptional birding spot!

20.

Pentad Number:3440\_2000

Pentad Name: Klipfontein

Habitat: Most of the Heuningnes river, cultivated land, various small pans and natural fynbos. Southern part of the De Mond Nature Reserve. Andrews Field Nature reserve fynbos with coastal dunes.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 12

New species added this year: 2

Project Species Number: 134

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 32

SABAP2 Species Number: 175

Comments: The team at last saw their first Cape Vulture in the Agulhas Plain although there were previous records. The Buttonquail Bash was a great success in this pentad and delivered several Buttonquail.

21.

Pentad Number:3440\_2005

Pentad Name: De Mond

Habitat: De Mond Estuary and Nature Reserve, Vogelgevang wetlands, Coastal dunes and cultivated land.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 10

New species added this year: 2

Project Species Number: 156

Species Reported not confirmed: 2

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 127

SABAP2 Species Number: 220

Comments: The highlight of the pentad was the Common Cuckoo reported by Des Hall. Other rare and nice to see species: American Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and 6 Eurasian Curlew.

22.

Pentad Number: 3445\_1935

Pentad Name: Quoin Point

Habitat: All alien plants have been eradicated in this pentad now and the habitat now consists of mostly coastal fynbos. Quoin Rock falls in this pentad.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 6

New species added this year: 1

Project Species Number: 72

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 10

SABAP2 Species Number: 101

Comments: This is a very rewarding pentad and this year has not disappointed. Although only one new species recorded (Bar-tailed Godwit x 4), sheer number of those seen on the shores were very special. Large tern roosts promised some rarities, but unfortunately despite very long observation at close range, delivered nothing out of the ordinary! There must have been a thousand Curlew Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Common Ringed Plover, White-fronted Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Greenshank, Common Whimbrel, and Grey Plover in a 200m stretch at one stage! Just one of those very special days!

23.

Pentad Number: 3445\_1940

Pentad Name: Die Dam

Habitat: Coastal fynbos with small pans. Ratel river marsh last km before the mouth.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 6

New species added this year: 9

Project Species Number: 98

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 8

SABAP2 Species Number: 106

Comments: The almost complete eradication of Alien trees in this pentad has completely changed the habitat for the better. Although 9 new species were recorded, none of these were spectacular, just normal fynbos species, that previously just ignored the area because of the alien overgrowth. This is once again proof that just about any track of land can be rehabilitated! Congrats to the ANP and Cape Nature for a job well done!

24.

Pentad Number: 3445\_1945

Pentad Name: Rietfontein se Baai

Habitat: Coastal fynbos and dune veld. Drie Vleijtjies pans.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 6

New species added this year: 4

Project Species Number: 70

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 7

SABAP2 Species Number: 103

Comments: The rehabilitation of the coastal fynbos is now almost complete with the result that most of the Hottentot Buttonquail probably have left the area now as the cover is just too thick and high. The display of hundreds of sunbirds (Orange-breasted, Southern Double-collared and Malachite) and Cape Sugarbirds above the millions of proteas in the Rietfontein plain..... at sunrise..... with no wind whatsoever.....will stay with me forever! Just incredible to think that 5 years ago the plain was totally overgrown with aliens. Such a great story!

25.

Pentad Number:3445\_1950

Pentad Name: Brandfontein

Habitat: Fynbos and Dune veld. Soetanyberg southern slopes. Wetlands in valley below Soetany.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 7

New species added this year: 1

Project Species Number: 89

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP total: 13

SABAP2 Species Number: 128

Comments: Due to the drought, this pentad was particularly disappointing this year.

26.

Pentad Number: 3445\_ 1955

Pentad Name: Suiderstrand

Habitat: Coastal Duneveld, Fynbos and Renoster pan, Sandberg. Ryspunt peninsula.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project:7

New species added this year: 5

Project Species Number: 139

Species Reported not confirmed: 0

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 33

SABAP2 Species Number: 169

Comments: The Ryspunt walkway produced a Bar-tailed Godwit and a number of other waders. The big attraction though was the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater that entertained birders for about 2 months. This also then on the side delivered the first Black-chested Snake-eagle for the project as photographed by Howard Langley.

Black-crowned Night-heron, Fiery-necked Nightjar, Whiskered Tern were some of the other interesting ID's.

27.

Pentad Number:3445\_2000

Pentad Name: Struisbaai

Habitat: Urban area surrounded by natural fynbos, coastal dune veld and Langerzandt Wetland.

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP for Project: 15

New species added this year: 2

Project Species Number: 155

Species Reported not confirmed: 1

Full protocol checklists submitted to SABAP - total: 56

SABAP2 Species Number: 183

Comments: The Abdim Stork visited again this year but could not be photographed. The first Amethyst Sunbird was recorded for the pentad but this species seems to pop up in every pentad lately. The best ID was the Ground Woodpecker photographed by Karien le Roux. The Knysna Woodpecker visited my Struisbaai garden again this year. We look forward to the development of the Langerzandt Wetland and involving many locals in the protection of this very special area.

## **GOALS FOR 2018**

### **AGULHAS PLAIN BIRDING PROJECT:**

I will have to go back to the conventional method of data collecting i.e. cover only one pentad per day but doing it thoroughly. Ideally one has to stop every 200m for ten minutes and record all species accurately (even if it is the tenth group of Guinea fowl of the day!) The data quality must improve. Because of time constraints, I will aim to cover each pentad at least once but ideally one checklist in summer and one in winter.

The MYBIRDPATCH data collection will no more be a focus as Birdlasser now allows for bird numbers to be counted. However, specific farms or campsites will still be recorded if requested and done during pentad research.

Early in 2018, Andrew de Blocq, contacted me with the news that he found a bird list of the Agulhas Plain dated 1935 to 1960. This was published in the Ostrich, a scientific ornithology magazine. This is very exciting as this gives us a look into the past and how the bird population has changed over the past 60-80 years. On this list there are species not yet identified in the plain which will form part of our focus of attention. In 2017 we aimed for 5 new species and found 11 ! For 2018 we will focus our attentions on the following target species not yet recorded in the Plain:

Striped Flufftail

Rufous-cheeked Nightjar (recorded for SABAP but not for the project)

Baillon's Crane (one record heard only)

Spotted Crane – no record yet but as it occurs in the peninsula occasionally, it could soon be found

Cape Penduline-Tit (recorded for SABAP but not for the project)

Cape Rock-Thrush (recorded for SABAP but not for the project)

Cape Siskin (recorded for SABAP but not for the project)

European Bee-eater(recorded for SABAP but not for the project)

Great Egret (recorded for SABAP but not for the project)

Karoo Korhaan (recorded for SABAP but not for the project)

Lemon Dove

Little Sparrow-hawk

Marsh Owl (Waschkraalvlei)

Sand Martin and

Willow Warbler.

And from the **OSTRICH:**

Hartlaub's Spurfowl(although highly unlikely let's give thm the benefit of the doubt)

Kori Bustard(there was a report of one 8 years ago as well)

Common Redshank

Roseate Tern

White-winged Tern (immature Whiskered Tern??)

White-backed Mousebird

Grey Tit

Karoo Lark

Sand Martin

Red-breasted Swallow

Barratt's Warbler

Rufous-winged Cisticola

Victorin's Warbler



Black-bellied or Cape Glossy Starling(they were not sure)

Sickle-winged Chat

Black-headed Canary

Please report any of the above asap and take photographs or sound recordings to help us with identification.  
Please contact me at:

[doc@agulhasplainbirding.co.za](mailto:doc@agulhasplainbirding.co.za) or

Cell: 0828070904 (SMS or call me)

You are invited to also report interesting ID's on the website([www.agulhasplainbirding.co.za](http://www.agulhasplainbirding.co.za))

### **THANK YOU**

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Lastly, thank you to Dave and Andrew at SABAP for all the help with SABAP submissions and Trevor Hardaker for his patience in helping out with possible rarities. Andrew, thanks for finding the x2 Ostrich articles!

Yours

Wim de Klerk