

# Karkloof Sightings

## July/August

### 2011

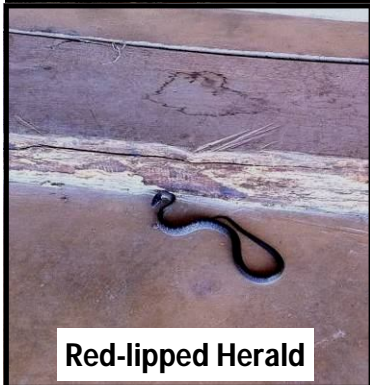


## Karkloof Conservation Centre

*Clivia miniata*



Flowering since mid-August



Red-lipped Herald



Cape Eagle Owl

### July:

- 8 1X Blue Crane
- 11 1X Blue Crane  
1X African Marsh Harrier  
1X African Harrier Hawk (Gymnogene)  
3X Jackal Buzzards
- 12 2X Grey Crowned Cranes dancing on Loskop farm
- 13 3X Blue Cranes flying over Gartmore
- 14 2X Pied Kingfishers (Male and Female)
- 15 1X Cape Eagle Owl—Gartmore farm's avenue of trees  
Pied and Malachite Kingfishers  
3X Black Crake (1 Juvenile)
- 21 6X Bald Ibis (20m from Karkloof Conservation Centre Parking)

### August:

- 11 2X Blue Cranes - Morphew's Pan  
1X Great White Egret  
Dabchicks  
Pied and Malachite Kingfishers
- 13 1X African Marsh Harrier  
5X Grey Crowned Cranes  
1X Lanner Falcon
- 14 2X Purple Herons  
2X Blue Cranes  
1X Long-crested Eagle
- 15 1X Otter  
2X African Marsh Harriers  
4X Pied Kingfishers
- 18 Red-lipped herald sun bathing in front of the office
- 28-31 Daily sightings of 2X Blue Cranes on the Morphew's Pan

On the 1 July 2011, the Karkloof Conservancy held their 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Game Count. Despite the cold weather (which was eased with Gluwein), the Conservancy were delighted with the results. Their **Oribi** numbers increased from the previous year's count of 9 to a healthier population of 25! The **Waterbuck** numbers have also increased from 17 to a count of 26 this year.

# Postman Pat Pat Cahill - Karkloof Conservancy Volunteer



## What's in a name?

We recently saw a bunch of **Green (Red Billed) Woodhoepoes** flying between the trees in the avenue leading to Gartmore Farm and then flying into trees on the other side of the main road. The isiZulu name "iNhlekabafazi" refers to their call being like the sound of women laughing. (I would have likened it to my late mother-in-law who sounded more like the Afrikaans name "rooibekkekelaar", but more malevolent. These birds have the unusual distinction of having a bacterium named after them. Some years ago, a post graduate microbiology student at UCT found a new species of *Enterococcus*\* in a foul smelling secretion from the preen gland of Green Woodhoepoes

and named it *Enterococcus phoeniculus* after their scientific name *Phoeniculus purpureus*! A hypothesis was proposed that the foul smell deters predators and the infection is thus beneficial to the birds. Some birds were treated with an antibiotic which killed the bacterium and reduced the foul smell of the secretion.

\*Second cousin to Streptococcus species which are responsible (amongst other things!) for "Strep throat, Scarlet Fever and Rheumatic Fever"

**Left: Male Common Reedbuck photographed by the Karkloof River on the Morphew's farm. Looks like a healthy and strong male.**



## John Robinson (Benvie)

Whilst driving along the Karkloof road on the 25 July 2011, I stopped to look at Pete Morphew's vlei across the road from the Karkloof Conservation Centre and saw  $\pm$  20 **Black-winged Lapwing** (known as a Black-winged Plover) on the burnt grass. According to *Newman's Birds of Southern Africa*, the Black-winged Lapwing "prefers short or burnt grass".

## Charlie MacGillivray (Gartmore Farm)



Charlie reported in early July that there was not just one **Giant Eagle Owl**, but in fact a male and a female. This was quite exciting to know that there is a pair in his garden. The excitement doesn't end here though, because Charlie then reported that the pair had undoubtedly bred as he saw 2 juvenile Giant Eagle Owls with the Adults!!

Charlie mentioned that these owls have been breeding in his garden since about 5 or 6 years ago. He is, however, not sure what happens to the chicks once they have fledged.

One day, Charlie saw one of the Giant Eagle Owl's sitting on his tennis court fence in the pouring rain, drenched. **(This photograph is up at the Conservation Centre above the sightings board)**

He has also said that they have been communicating at night with incessant and protracted high-pitched whistling sounds. According to *Newman's Birds of South Africa*, female and young utter a long-drawn-out whistle which may be repeated all night.

Charlie has also had sightings of **Fish Eagles** around Gartmore Farm.

# Crane Sightings

## John Hill (Amber Valley)

The pics of the **Blue Cranes** were taken late in the morning of 9th August on the wetland across the main road from the Conservation Centre (Morphew's Pan). As it was 'Women's Day' I suppose it was quite appropriate that the male was making advances to the female. The display was not prolonged, just a minute, and then one of them went to sleep standing on one leg. I wonder if that was 'He or She'???



## Tony Matchett (Agricultural Manager - Benson Farming)



In July there were a pair of **Wattled Cranes** with a chick +/- 45 cm sighted regularly on a farm nearby. This chick was ringed in August by Tanya Smith from EWT, and weighed over 5kg.

Left: Tanya Smith, Vaughan Koopman and Tony Matchett with the Wattled Crane chick after it was fitted with its rings.



Right: Tanya Smith releasing the Wattled Crane chick after it was fitted with its rings.

There were another pair nesting on a farm in the Karkloof. There were two eggs in the nest and were weighed and measured by Tanya Smith who reported that the one egg is very big and the second an unusually elongated shape. Perhaps the hen had hiccups when she laid it!!!

Tanya Smith has collected the second egg from the nest where it was taken for incubation. Two days later I observed the chick that hatched, so her calculations were spot on with regard to the timing of when to remove the second egg. The chick is big considering it was only +/- two days old. Tanya says she is not surprised as it was a very big egg.

The second egg has hatched and was flown to Johannesburg Zoo where it will be reared with a puppet as part of the Wattled Crane Recovery Programme. The Karkloof Conservancy are currently raising funds to adopt this chick named Mbeche.

We would like to thank Pannar Seed for their generous donation of R 2,000.00 towards the adoption of our local chick Mbeche.

