Recent Rare and Unusual Bird Sightings

Kruger National Park – 2013

The records listed in this document are courtesy of Trevor Hardaker’s SA Rare Bird News at sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com, submissions via the SANParks website, or direct contact between birders and SANParks staff. They reflect birds that are considered rare, vagrant or accidental in the park, or that reflect highly unusual behaviour or special sightings.

December 2013

Simon Vegter reported, “Green Sandpiper at Sweni bridge (H1-3) in Kruger (6h00)” on the 29th. Sally & Bernard Heritage reported a male and female Greater Painted Snipe. At Sweni Dam Bird Hide this morning 22nd, at 9h30 in the Kruger National Park” On Monday 9th, a LARK-LIKE BUNTING was reported from near Crook’s Corner and a WHITE-BROWED SPARROW-WEAVER was seen at Shingwedzi, both in the Kruger National Park.

In Mpumalanga, the SOUTHERN BROWN-THROATED WEAVER was still on view yesterday (8th) at Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger National Park whilst, close by, a single COMMON MYNA still persisted at Sunset Dam too.

The MADAGASCAR CUCKOO near Biyamithi in the Kruger National Park frustrated many birders on the weekend (30th/1st Dec) doing disappearing acts for long periods of time or calling from points that were just impossible to get a view of the bird from, but it was still around late yesterday afternoon. The SOUTHERN BROWN-THROATED WEAVER was still present at Crocodile Bridge in the park on Saturday 30th as was the GREEN SANDPIPER at Sweni bridge.

3 LARK-LIKE BUNTINGS were reported near Satara in the Kruger National Park on Friday.

November 2013
27th – GREEN SANDPIPER - a single bird still present at Sweni Bridge in the Kruger NP this morning - reported by Simon Vegter.

26th - MADAGASCAR CUCKOO - still present today along the S114 around 7km north of Biyamithi weir at 25 13 03 S 31 37 23 E (not always apparently visible, but calling incessantly) - reported by Dewald Swanepoel.

GREEN SANDPIPER – a single bird present late this afternoon at the Sweni bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park – reported by Simon Vegter.
25th - MADAGASCAR CUCKOO – the bird was still present and calling until at least 14h20 this afternoon 7km north of the Biyamithi weir – reported by Amelia and Anjolize Wassenaar.

24th - MADAGASCAR CUCKOO - present this morning along the S114 7.4km north of Biyamithi weir at 25 13 03 S 31 37 23 E (this is a public road, so no problems with access) - reported by Rael Loon.

SOUTHERN BROWN-THROATED WEAVER – at least one individual present at Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger National Park yesterday – reported by Johan and Annalie Potgieter.

23rd - MADAGASCAR CUCKOO - a single bird calling along the S114, a public road north of Biyamithi weir, this morning at S25 12.891 E31 37.357 - reported by Duncan McKenzie and Don English.

GREEN SANDPIPER - a single bird present at Biyamithi weir in the Kruger NP this morning (23rd) - reported by Duncan McKenzie.

MADAGASCAR CUCKOO – a single bird (probably the same individual that was present there last year at this time, but still only the 9th record for Southern Africa) calling actively and showing well along the Biyamithi road in the Kruger National Park this morning 22nd.

In the southern Kruger National Park 2 CASPIAN TERNS were reported upstream of the weir on the H4-2 heading towards Lower Sabie on Saturday 16th whilst, on the same day at Sunset Dam, a BLACK HERON was present.
Further north in the park, but in Limpopo Province, the area around Mooiplaas waterhole continued to deliver sightings of GREY-BACKED SPARROW-LARKS, LARK-LIKE BUNTINGS whilst a WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL was also a good find there. Near to this at Tihongonyeni windmill RED-HEADED FINCHES remained present whilst at least 5 CASPIAN PLOVERS were also around (surely the same individuals that had been at Mooiplaas previously). Also of interest were 2 GREEN SANDPIPERS reported along the Tsendze Loop.
The weekend of the 9th/10th saw continued reports of good numbers of both GREY-BACKED SPARROW-LARKS and LARK-LIKE BUNTINGS in the vicinity of Mooiplaas waterhole in the Kruger National Park.
A PINK-BACKED PELICAN was present at Sunset Dam in the Kruger National Park on the 3rd.

**October 2013**

A COMMON MYNA was reported at Sunset Dam in the Kruger National Park on the morning of the 31st, the third report of this species from the park in the last week. They are clearly moving in en masse!

**PALMNUT VULTURE** – a single adult bird has been seen and photographed in the Makuleke concession at Pafuri in the northern Kruger National Park on the 29th – reported by Gavin Lautenbach
On the park's western boundary, a GREEN SANDPIPER was reported along the Palmloop River in the Olifants River Game Reserve on Tuesday 22nd, a year to the day since another one was reported at this same site. The other GREEN SANDPIPER continued to show along the Levhuvhu River at the Pafuri picnic site in the Kruger National Park.

A little more depressing, was a report of a COMMON MYNA at Punda Maria in the Kruger National Park, also on Tuesday 22nd - up to 6 COMMON MYNAS have now been reported from around the hide at Punda Maria.
A few GREY-BACKED SPARROW-LARKS were also still present in the vicinity of Mooiplaas waterhole on the 27th.

GREEN SANDPIPER – a single bird present along the Levhuvhu River at Pafuri picnic site in the northern Kruger National Park on the 24th – reported by Anton Odendaal.

On Tuesday 24th at least 6 CASPIAN PLOVERS are now being reported around the Mooiplaas waterhole in the Kruger National Park.

There was some surprise on Tuesday 22nd when a CRESTED GUINEAFOWL was located near Skukuza in the Kruger National Park, seemingly well out of the usual range for this species in the park which is from the sand-veld areas around Punda Maria, Pafuri and the eastern boundary with Mozambique.
September 2013
On Tuesday 24\textsuperscript{th} at least 6 CASPIAN PLOVERS are now being reported around the Mooiplaas waterhole in the Kruger National Park.

A CASPIAN PLOVER was reported from Mooiplaas waterhole just south of Mopani Restcamp in the Kruger National Park on Sunday 15\textsuperscript{th}. 
August 2013  
On the 29th it was confirmed that it was a LESSER FLAMINGO and was still present at Crocodile Bridge. It is not know if this is the same bird that was present in April this year.

Staff from Crocodile Bridge reported that a flamingo (unidentified type) was present at the Crocodile Bridge causeway in the evenings from the 19th to the 21st.

Not in Kruger itself, but close to its western boundary in a garden just outside Hoedspruit a COLLARED PALM THRUSH was still on view on the 29th having been present for a week or so. This species has been recorded from time to time in the park in areas with lala palms, most notably at Shingwedzi Camp where they were resident for a while during the late 1990s/early 2000s. This record suggests there may be a southward movement of the species and they could be more widespread in the park in suitable habitat than the current records suggest.
The influx of LARK-LIKE BUNTINGS into the Kruger National Park continues unabated with good numbers reported north of Satara yesterday and birds reported from just north of the Timbavati Picnic Site earlier today (1st).

**July 2013**
In Limpopo Province, there are still reports of many wayward LARK-LIKE BUNTINGS and GREY-BACKED SPARROW-LARKS from around the Letaba area in the Kruger National Park.

**June 2013**
Today (14th) a GREATER FLAMINGO was seen at the main Ngotso Dam between Satara and Olifants camps in the Kruger National Park. This species is very uncommon in the park.

A report yesterday (16th) confirmed that there are now three GREATER FLAMINGO’S at the main Ngotso Dam between Satara and Olifants Camps.

Another interesting and worthwhile sighting, although not a rarity for the Kruger Park, an AFRICAN CROWNED EAGLE was seen flying from the Skukuza Golf Course towards the nursery earlier today (17th). This species is not often recorded in the southern Kruger.

**May 2013**
GREY CROWNED CRANE

27th Further to the report last night, I have received news this morning that the GREY CROWNED CRANE was actually back at Nsemani Dam near Satara in the Kruger National Park late yesterday afternoon again, so you are still in with a chance if you are wanting to add this one to your Kruger lists. The birds movements are a little unknown at the moment, but hopefully, with
continued reporting of sightings, we can work out some sort of pattern about when the best times are to look for it.

27th There was some local excitement when a GREY CROWNED CRANE was located at Nsemani Dam west of Satara in the Kruger National Park yesterday morning. Unfortunately, news only reached me late yesterday and so the first people could only get out there this morning to check up on it by which stage the bird had already moved off. Based on the literature available and, with assistance from several other birders, it would appear that there is only one confirmed record of this species for the park in recent history which was of 8 birds near Letaba on 15 February 1972! There do not seem to be any more recent records than that...

26th: I've just received word via Juan Pinto that a GREY CROWNED CRANE was seen and photographed this morning by Riaan Fourie at Nsemani Dam along the H7 about 8km from Satara in the Kruger National Park. From what I can work out, this would appear to be an incredibly rare bird for the park and I would imagine that many of the keen park listers might be interested in going to have a look for it. I've only received a rather blurred cell phone photo taken of the back of the camera, but one can still clearly see what the bird is and there is no doubt about the ID. Hopefully, I will receive a copy of the original photo in due course. - TH

EGYPTIAN VULTURE
(Update 16th) In Mpumalanga there has been a little bit of turmoil with the discovery of an EGYPTIAN VULTURE along the S28 in the southern Kruger National Park at the beginning of the week. News was a little delayed in getting out and was only spread late on Tuesday. Wednesday saw a handful of twitchers getting into the park early with at least a couple of people connecting with the bird before lunch time. This boded well and several contingents from Gauteng arrived in the park early this morning and began searching. Unfortunately, by last light, the bird had not been reported at all today, so we will have to wait until tomorrow to hear whether anybody manages to connect with it again.
Robert Wienand has been in touch to let me know that he has seen the EGYPTIAN VULTURE this morning 1.1km south of the Nhanganzwani Dam turn off East of the S28 in the Kruger National Park. So, it seems to be sticking around in this general area...

Good luck if you are planning on chasing it!

Kind regards
Trevor

A sub-adult EGYPTIAN VULTURE was seen and photographed yesterday (13th) along the S28 between Crocodile Bridge and Lower Sabie in the Kruger National Park. The news has only filtered through to me via Duncan McKenzie a little earlier today and he only received the photo this morning. However, it would definitely be worth keeping your eyes open if you happen to be in that area over the next few days.

Although it may not be comprehensive, I can only find reference to 6 previous records for the Kruger National Park with the last one being back in April 1994, so it’s certainly seems to have been a while since there has last been a confirmed record for the park.

And just to continue with the eastwardly irruption of LARK-LIKE BUNTINGS, groups of birds were reported around Letaba and a singleton along the Sable Dam Loop near Phalaborwa gate in the Kruger National Park over the last few days whilst there were also apparently at least 10 GREY-BACKED SPARROWLARKS present around Mopani in the park as well.
April 2013
In Limpopo Province, the LARK-LIKE BUNTING irruption has hit with a real blow with records coming in around Pafuri, Punda Maria and even Shingwedzi in the Kruger National Park over the last few days whilst, in Mpumalanga, there was also a record of one on the road to Shitlhave Dam near Pretoriuskop on Friday (26th) afternoon.

Split across 2 provinces, but both in the Kruger National Park, a GREATER FLAMINGO was reported at Letaba (Limpopo) on Sunday (14th) whilst a LESSER FLAMINGO was seen at Crocodile Bridge (Mpumalanga) on Monday (15th)
A CAPE TEAL was reported last week (1\textsuperscript{st}) just east of Mopani Rest Camp in the Kruger National Park.

The Easter Weekend (29\textsuperscript{th} March to 1\textsuperscript{st} April) saw a number of reports of up to 6 individual RIVER WARBLERS around the Lower Sabie area in the Kruger National Park. Most of the birds were heard calling only and some of them even at midday!

\textbf{March 2013}

A European Honey-Buzzard reported between Tshokwane and Skukuza in the Kruger National Park on Sunday the 3\textsuperscript{rd}
European Honey Buzzard near Tshokwane
© Lesley Greyling

February 2013
A European Honey-Buzzard reported near Pretoriuskop in the Kruger National Park on Wednesday (20th).
Earlier today (7th), a GREEN SANDPIPER was reported from the bridge below Lower Sabie in the Kruger National Park.

The AFRICAN PYGMY GEESE and at least 2 ALLEN’S GALLINULES were still present at Leeupan in the Kruger National Park earlier today (4th) and again on the 11th and still on the 21st.

**January 2013**

In the Kruger National Park, Leeupan had at least 2 AFRICAN PYGMY GEESE, 2 WHITE-BACKED DUCKS and 2 ALLEN’S GALLINULES on Saturday 26th whilst, yesterday 27th, a EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD was reported from Skukuza.

At least 4 THREE-BANDED COURSERS were located in the Timbavati Private Game Reserve on the western border of the park on Friday 18th – they certainly seem to have moved into these more southerly areas with a vengeance in recent times and are now getting reported with some regularity from the general area.

A Pectoral Sandpiper was seen at the Engelhard Dam in the Kruger Park this afternoon (10th)

In Mpumalanga there was another sighting of a BLACK COUCAL in the Kruger Park yesterday (9th). This time at the Nhlanganzwani Dam on the S107 between Lower Sabi and Crocodile Bridge.

A BROWN-THROATED WEAVER being seen at Crocodile Bridge on Tuesday (1st), where there is a small isolated population of these birds.

In Limpopo Province there has been another report of a GREEN SANDPIPER; one bird was found alongside the Timbavati River in the Ngala Private Nature Reserve.