Recent Rare and Unusual Bird Sightings

**Kruger National Park – 2014**

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 2014**

In Mpumulanga, news has just filtered through of a Great Snipe seen near Sweni in the Kruger National Park at the end of December. Bird was in a flooded roadside 'vlei' on the S37. 12km, south of the H6 between Satara and Nwanetsi.” A Green Sandpiper was at the same location.

In Mpumulanga, a pair of Cape Teals was photographed at the Nsemani Dam, near Satara on 18 December which is a very good record for the Kruger National Park. Staying in the Park a Green Sandpiper was seen at the Biyamiti Weir on 20 December although subsequent searches have not relocated it. Also, a Sand Martin was seen at Hippo Pools near Crocodile Bridge this afternoon 22nd. Finally, a Southern Brown-throated Weaver was seen building a nest near Crocodile Bridge this weekend (20th/21st).
A group of at least **RED-HEADED FINCHES** were located along the H1-6 about 6km south of Shingwedzi in the Kruger National Park on the afternoon of the 8th, a continuance of the recent eastward expansion of this species in the region.

**GREEN SANDPIPERS** remained at the Sweni bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park over the weekend of the 6th and 7th.

Not in the park, but on its boundary, 3 **GREEN SANDPIPERS** were reported together along the Sand River in the western sector of the Sabi Sands Game Reserve on the morning of the 2nd, whilst a single bird was seen on the morning of the 4th at the Sweni bird hide.
November 2014
The area around Tihongonyeni Windmill near Mopani Rest Camp in the Kruger National Park held some nice birds on the weekend 30th and 31st, producing at least 8 CASPIAN PLOVERS in the area as well as a single immature CAPPED WHEATEAR, a good bird for the park.

GREEN SANDPIPERS remained in place at the Sweni Bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park until at least Friday 30th.

A new GREEN SANDPIPER was located on the 27th at some pans about 1km west of Vutomi Dam on the S33 near Tshokwane in the Kruger National Park.
On the 24th at least 4 **COMMON RINGED PLOVERS** was still present at Sunset Dam in the Kruger National Park earlier today.

The **SOUTHERN BROWN-THROATED WEAVER** was also still in the park at Crocodile Bridge on the 24th.

**A GREEN SANDPIPER** was still present at Sweni bridge along the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park throughout the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd.

**A EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD** was reported from along the Sabie River at the Lubye-Lubye bridge near Lower Sabie in the Kruger National Park on Saturday 22nd.

At least 2 **COMMON RINGED PLOVERS** at Sunset Dam near Lower Sabie in the Kruger National Park on the 18th.

A different **GREEN SANDPIPER** was located along the S25 near Biyamithi Bushveld Camp at 25 23.563 S 31 39.773 E on Monday 17th.
A **EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD** was recorded between the H12 high water bridge and Nkulu picnic spot in the Kruger National Park on the 16th.

![European Honey Buzzard near Nkulu picnic site](image1.jpg) © Dirk Human

Update: A **GREEN SANDPIPER** was still present at Sweni bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park until at least late on Saturday the 15th.

![Green Sandpiper at Sweni bridge](image2.jpg) © Elaine Fisher

A **GREEN SANDPIPER** was still present at Sweni Bridge on the 11th and again on the 20th.

Moving up into Limpopo Province, news has filtered through from a visiting British birder of a possible male **EUROPEAN BLACKCAP** seen on the weekend (8th/9th) at Mopani Rest Camp in the Kruger National Park. It was apparently seen in bushes next to the furthest verandah overlooking the dam. This record cannot be taken as confirmed at this point, but the description given does sound good and the observer knows the species well from home (and it is supposedly
a male which makes things slightly easier), but it is merely shared here for those that might be in the vicinity to keep a look out for it.

There are now apparently 2 GREEN SANDPIPERS present at the Sweni Bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park and both birds were still present until at least Friday 7th.

Moving into Mpumalanga, the GREEN SANDPIPER remained on view at the Sweni bridge in the Kruger National Park throughout the weekend of 1st and 2nd, with a number of people managing to connect with it.
**October 2014**

A **EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD** was reported east of Pretoriuskop in the Kruger National Park on the 31st.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** – the single bird is still present this morning (31st) at the Sweni bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park – reported by Rob Croly.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** – the single bird is still present this morning (30th) at the Sweni bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park – reported by Liz Blomeyer and Andrew Pickles.

The **“LESSER” CUCKOO** was still present on the Skukuza Golf Course on the 25th/26th. There is, however, still no clarity on whether this is an (Asian) Lesser Cuckoo or a Madagascar Cuckoo as yet.

![“Lesser” Cuckoo at Skukuza Golf Course](image)

**GREEN SANDPIPER** – the single bird is still present this morning (27th) at the Sweni bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park (reported just before 10am) – reported by Simon Vegter.

Moving up into Mpumalanga, a **GREEN SANDPIPER** was located at Sweni Bridge on the H1-3 in the Kruger National Park by Robert Wienand on the 26th, possibly the same individual that has returned to this site that was also present there last year.

More on the rare cuckoo at Skukuza Golf Course:
The most frustrating bird of the recent period was photographed on Skukuza Golf Course on Monday. It is, in all likelihood, one of the “LESSER CUCKOO COMPLEX” and the editor of SARBB has been in discussion with a number of the top birders in South Africa about it, but, based on current knowledge and literature, it does not seem like it is going to be possible to decide whether this bird is, in fact, an (ASIAN) LESSER CUCKOO or a MADAGASCAR CUCKOO. Both species is particularly rare in the sub-region and, without the bird calling, it seems like we are going to have to keep this one in the “pending folder” until further information on how to possibly separate these two species in the field without call comes to light.
A probable “LESSER” CUCKOO – a bird was located and photographed on the 20th on the Skukuza golf course in front of the restaurant roughly at -24.985, 31.578. It remained silent during the entire observation. At the moment, it is thought to most likely be of this species complex, although further research is required to see whether it can be definitively ascribed to either an Asian Lesser Cuckoo or a Madagascar Cuckoo. This alert is posted merely to make people in the area aware of this bird in case they want to go and look for it – reported by Josef van Wyngaard.

A single CAPE TEAL was located at Engelhardt Dam near Letaba in the Kruger National Park yesterday, an unusual species to encounter in the park.

A single BANDED MARTIN located at Banyini Pan in the Makuleke Concession in the Kruger National Park on Saturday (11th), a rare bird in the park indeed.
A KNYSNA TURACO was located on the morning of the 8th along the Mahonie Loop near Punda Maria in the Kruger National Park. Whilst they are common enough in forests in the Soutpansberg about 70km west of here, this is a really bizarre record for the park. The bird was seen about 14.8km from the tar when doing the loop anti-clockwise.

In the Kruger National Park, a single COMMON RINGED PLOVER was reported from Sunset Dam near Lower Sabie on Friday 3rd.
September 2014

In the Mpumalanga section of the parks, there was a report from the week of the 22nd of a pair of possible COLLARED FLYCATCHERS at Mlondozi Dam in the Kruger National Park. They were apparently seen in the bush below the car-park. The description given sound reasonable, but not totally conclusive, so this record should be taken as unconfirmed for now but it would be useful to keep your eyes open and your cameras ready if you are in this area.

Update: In the northern part of the Kruger National Park no fewer than 2 AFRICAN SKIMMERS were located along the Limpopo River at the Makwadzi look-out in the Makuleke Concession late last week (12th). Based on the information available at the moment, this may well represent the first ever record for the park of this species.

Also of interest, and just 2km upstream of Crook's Corner, 2 SWALLOW-TAILED BEE-EATERS were a rather interesting find on the weekend of the 6th/7th. Elsewhere in the park, a single male CAPE SPARROW was present on the 15th at a waterhole at 23.436740 S 31.434652 E. The Cape Sparrow is not a normal Kruger bird.

AFRICAN SKIMMER – news has filtered through this morning (12th) of a single bird seen along the Limpopo River yesterday in the Makuleke Concession in the Kruger National Park. It still needs to be checked and confirmed, but this may well represent the first record for the Kruger ever – reported by Bruce Lawson.
**August 2014**
A small group of CAPE SPARROWS (a male and 2 females) was located at Thihongonyeni waterhole between Mopani and Shingwedzi camps in the Kruger National Park yesterday (24th), a rather unusual species for the park.

![Cape Sparrow at Thihongonyeni waterhole](https://placekitten.com/150/467)

© Dirk Human

**July 2014**
A COMMON FISCAL was reported near Shabeni Hill in the Kruger National Park on Thursday (3rd), possibly the same individual that was reported in April around Mestel Dam, and it was still there on the 19th.

**June 2014**
In Limpopo Province, a group of RED-HEADED FINCHES were reported along the S50 in the Kruger National Park on Saturday (28th) between Mopani and Shingwedzi - this species certainly seems to be being recorded with more regularity in the park in recent years.

**May 2014**
There were a number of interesting records that came out of the Makuleke Concession in the northern Kruger National Park in the last week of May, all of them considered to be rarities in the park. These included AFRICAN PURPLE SWAMPHEN, ALLEN'S GALLINULE, LESSER MOORHEN, RED-KNOBBED COOT and WHITE-BACKED DUCK at Banyini Pan and AFRICAN RAIL and AFRICAN SNIPE at Gila Pan.
April 2014
A COMMON FISCAL was reported from Mestel Dam close to Pretoriuskop in the Kruger National Park on Saturday 12th. This species is surprisingly unusual and uncommon in the park.

[Image of a bird]

the COMMON FISCAL was still present on the 27th of April at Mestel Dam in the Kruger National Park, boding well for all keen Kruger listers who may still need this species for their park lists.

There were a couple of reports of RIVER WARBLERS in the Kruger National Park on the weekend of the 5th/6th April, one near Mopani Rest Camp and another along the Shingwedzi River near Red Rocks. The northern Kruger also delivered some other good birds, not least of which was 2 STRIPED CRAKES at Palm Vlei in the Makuleke Concession whilst the Concession also held WHITE-BACKED DUCK, SOUTHERN POCHARD and ALLEN’S GALLINULE at Banyini Pan.
March 2014
8 separate EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARDs were reported from the southern (Mpumalanga) section of the park over the long weekend (21st to 23rd).

A EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD was present near Pretoriuskop in the Kruger National Park on 5th March.

The weekend (1st/2nd) saw confirmation that at least one SOUTHERN BROWN-THROATED WEAVER was still present at Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger National Park.

In Limpopo Province, a SOOTY FALCON was located 6km outside of Letaba in the Kruger National Park yesterday (2nd), still a very rare bird for this part of the world.
February 2014

A EUROPEAN HONEY BUZZARD was recorded along the S27 in the Kruger National Park on Tuesday 25th.

4 BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLES were recorded at Tihongonyeni on the 23rd whilst, on the same day, 2 THRUSH NIGHTINGALES were reported on the Mphongolo Loop, about 5km into the loop, coming from the Shingwedzi side.

The pratincoles are a most unusual and exciting find because it is usually the COLLARED (formerly RED-WINGED) PRATINCOLE that is recorded in the park, particularly in the Letaba and Mopani areas like this record, but the recorder is an experienced birder who would no doubt recognize the key distinguishing features.

Details of the 3 WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATERS along the S25 near Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger National Park and following a record on 2nd February in the same general area of 2 birds, so they are obviously moving around in the vicinity and people may get lucky and bump into them if they keep their eyes open. This is only the 15th record of this species in Southern Africa and there has yet to be a twitchable one, so it remains a highly sought after bird for many keen listers in the subregion.

The following information on the locality was received from the observer: If one takes the S25 (Crocodile River Road) from Crocodile Bridge, heading West, approx 1.2km after going past the turnout to the Hippo Pools Road (on LHS), is where we saw the birds, perching in some branches close to the road (RHS).
WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATER - news just in is that 3 individuals were seen and photographed around midday yesterday (22nd) along the S25 (Crocodile Bridge Road) in the Kruger National Park. Still waiting for details of exactly where. - reported by Mike Merry.

In Mpumalanga, a PINK-THROATED TWINSPOT was reported from Lake Panic bird hide near Skukuza on Friday 14th whilst, on Thursday 13th, a GREEN SANDPIPER was still present at the Sweni Bridge on the H1-3, both in the Kruger National Park.

Perhaps, however, the most exciting record from the province is also rather delayed and concerns 2 WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATERS reported near Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger National Park on 2nd February! I have only received this report second hand at the moment, but if it is able to be confirmed, it would only be the 15th record for Southern Africa, so still pretty much a hugely sought after mega!

January 2014
1 bird present at Pafuri in the Kruger National Park on Wednesday (Limpopo)

European Honey Buzzard at Pafuri
© Tertius Gous

A European Honey-buzzard was seen over Satara in the Kruger National Park (Mpumalanga) on Tuesday 14th.

There were 2 GREEN SANDPIPERS present this morning (13th) at a pan along the S130 (Gomondwane loop), 1.3km from the northern end.