

# BIG BIRDING DAY

@Verlorenkloof November 2011



**“Ek slaan my oë op na die berge, waar sal my hulp vandaan kom?”**

On 26 November 2011 a small group of about twenty seven birders were so privileged to do the annual Sasol Birding Big Day, bird species census, in one of the most beautiful indigenous kloof's in Mpumalanga. This Nature Resort is known for the up market mountain crofts situated amongst crystal clear streams and indigenous forests on the escarpment of the Steenkampsberg. What makes this place so special for visitors is not so much the rich diversity of forest birds and terrestrial orchids but also the very special people who work there. I am sure there must be some kind of conflict and friction in the engine room when the visitors leave, but that is the only way to get things done. The reason why one wants to return is because of the friendliness, peacefulness and sincerity amongst the staff and the way they treat you. The peacefulness must be because of the clean water that they drink! Furthermore, the food and atmosphere at Reception and our third experience of Foodspace @ Verlorenkloof was also exceptional.

It was nice to meet new people during the birding event. Croft 20 contributed at least 8 Birders and most of them even spoke Afrikaans! We actually missed our dear Rooineck friend Jane Smart from Croft 19. “ Die een se dood is die ander se brood”. Jane can whistle like any bird can and we saw her favorite bird the Lesser Honey guide with the help of the technologically advanced Debbie. The “verdomde” Genet cat at Croft 19, (Jane's special pet) not only grabbed a piece of raw meat from my hand but also took the chance and bit my middle finger. Every night when I woke with a slight head ache, a voice tells me that I might have contracted rabies and then I start thinking with whom I still need to make peace with.



**A croft overlooking the forests and streams at Robin kloof.**

Our birding route took us down to the river and back to the restaurant, where some left us to go and prepare brunch.



**Rob you hold this while I take a sip of water. Did you know that a Hamerkop in English is Hammekop ? And a Bokmakierie is a problem. I wonder if that Bokmakierie was not a .....**

The others joined us for a quick visit at the waterfront of the Kwena dam. We spotted a pair of Crowned Lapwings with three chicks in the veld and a flock of Comb Ducks (Knobbel) and a White-winged Tern in the water.



**A picture of a Gaudy Commodore taken for a special person at Verloren Kloof.**

During the afternoon walk more people joined us and friends such as Alan, Allison and Geoff from Dullstroom also joined in. Robin kloof again provided us with many interesting birds, plants and organisms to stimulate healthy debate. Every time we tried to mimic bird calls the thousands of Cicadas' responded. At long last we started to spot the elusive forest birds and we had close up sightings of first, a yellow colored, White Starred Robin, what a beaut! And then an orange breasted Red-capped Robin Chat. Theresa's water bottle became too heavy at the early stages of the kloof and the only Robin she spotted was her own Robin.

Theresa suggested that next time we take our Jimnys and explore the mountains upstream in the direction of Spoelklippies because a Suzuki Jimny can.

The day was a great success with many interesting people, colorful birds and a lifer for me in the form of a terrestrial orchid, namely a *Disperis lindleyana*.

Another weekend full of excitement and adventure was capped with ice cold beer and "nam nam" food in the Restaurant. Good day until next time.

Frans Krige