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The Avian Demography Unit is conducting the Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcounts in partnership with BirdLife South Africa.

The Tony and Lisette Lewis
Foundation South Africa



BIRP (Birds in Reserves Project)

Newsletter 8

August 2003

Dear BIRPer

I must sincerely apologise for the delay in getting this issue of the newsletter to you, but due to resource and time constraints it has not been possible to do so earlier.

This is the eighth year that BIRP has been running and it has certainly grown in leaps and bounds since its launch in 1995. Many of you would have found it an easy transition from the bird atlas project, while others have joined subsequent to the atlas and have, I hope, enjoyed learning about and participating in this atlas project for birds in protected areas. There are nearly 600 people participating in BIRP with about 40–50 new participants joining every year. It is due to your immense support that nearly 21 000 checklists have been submitted and this represents a substantial dataset on information pertaining to birds in protected areas in South Africa. Well done! We hope that with your enthusiasm, and much needed funding, BIRP will continue for many more years.

Coverage

As BIRP focuses primarily on public protected areas (PAs), this issue will highlight the coverage at provincial and local authority sites, and provide insight into where monitoring priorities lie. However, I will also discuss coverage at Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and Natural Heritage Sites (NHSs), two of the important categories of non-public PAs. For a full breakdown of the coverage to date, please visit the BIRP webpage (<http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/birp.htm>) where provincial lists and coverage statistics are available.

Provincial PAs

Figure 1 shows the coverage of provincial game/nature reserves in each of the provinces. As with all the results presented here, coverage is based on the percentage of sites with <10 checklists submitted and those with 10 or more checklists submitted. Ten has been selected as the cut-off point as it has been found that at least 10 checklists are needed to provide adequate information on the bird diversity at a site.

Results from Fig. 1 show that:

- ✦ Gauteng and Northern Cape, having fewer than 10 provincial reserves each, have all their reserves visited at least once and more than two-thirds have good coverage.
- ✦ Eastern Cape, Free State, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Northern Cape all have a third or more of their sites with <10 checklists, the Eastern Cape the only province with >50%.
- ✦ Only Mpumalanga does not have at least half of all its provincial reserves monitored at least once; while six provinces (North West, Gauteng, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and Eastern Cape) have >66% of all their provincial reserves covered at least once.
- ✦ North West, Gauteng and Northern Cape are the only provinces to have 50% or more of all provincial reserves with 10 or more checklists.

Local PAs

A summary of the coverage at local authority reserves, including botanical gardens, is given in Fig. 2 and provides a sharp contrast to the provincial PA results.

Results from Fig. 2 show that:

- ✦ Limpopo has all its local PAs monitored at least once, with five other provinces (Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape) having >66% monitored.
- ✦ Only three provinces (Limpopo, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal) have >60% of their local reserves with >10 checklists, KwaZulu-Natal with the greatest (77%) coverage in this regard; Northern Cape is the only province which has no PAs with >10 checklists.
- ✦ Six provinces (Limpopo, North West, Free State, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Western Cape) all show that 33% or more of their local PAs are not well covered (<10 checklists).

IBAs

IBAs have been identified as priority bird conservation areas and as such require regular monitoring of their avifauna. Many IBAs are popular areas (e.g., Kruger National Park, Ndumu GR, etc.) and coverage at these sites is thus fairly good. However, it is those areas under private ownership that are less frequently visited and this is where BIRP needs to gather more information. This is shown in Fig. 3 where 60% of PAs with good coverage are mainly for those IBAs that double as provincial reserves or national parks, while the remaining 40% constitutes areas that are mainly under private ownership and that are often remotely located. Data presented in Fig. 3 has been combined for IBAs that are monitored on a quarter-degree grid cell basis (e.g. Kruger National Park) or where individual PAs occur within a particular IBA (e.g., Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Grootvaly Wetland Reserve, etc. as part of Blesbokspruit IBA).

The following IBAs have no BIRP checklists and therefore have high priority. If you are able to monitor at least one or part (if the IBA is large) of these you will be making a valuable contribution in:

- Limpopo** – Blouberg Vulture Colonies (SA004), Northern Turf Thornveld (SA009)
- Mpumalanga** – Graskop Grasslands (SA011), Chrissie Pans (SA019)
- Northern Cape** – Spitskop Dam (SA028), Dronfield Farm (SA031), Mattheus-Gat Conservation Area (SA034), Haramoep & Black Mountain Mine Nature Reserve (SA035), Bitterputs Conservation Area (SA036)
- North West** – Middle Vaal River (SA038)
- Free State** – Sterkfontein/Meriondal (SA040), Voordeel Conservancy (SA041), Alexpan (SA042), Bedford/Chatsworth (SA043), Murphy's Rust (SA045)
- KwaZulu-Natal** – Lake Sibaya (SA054), KwaZulu-Natal Mistbelt Grasslands (SA078), Greater Ingwangwana River (SA080), Penny Park (SA083)

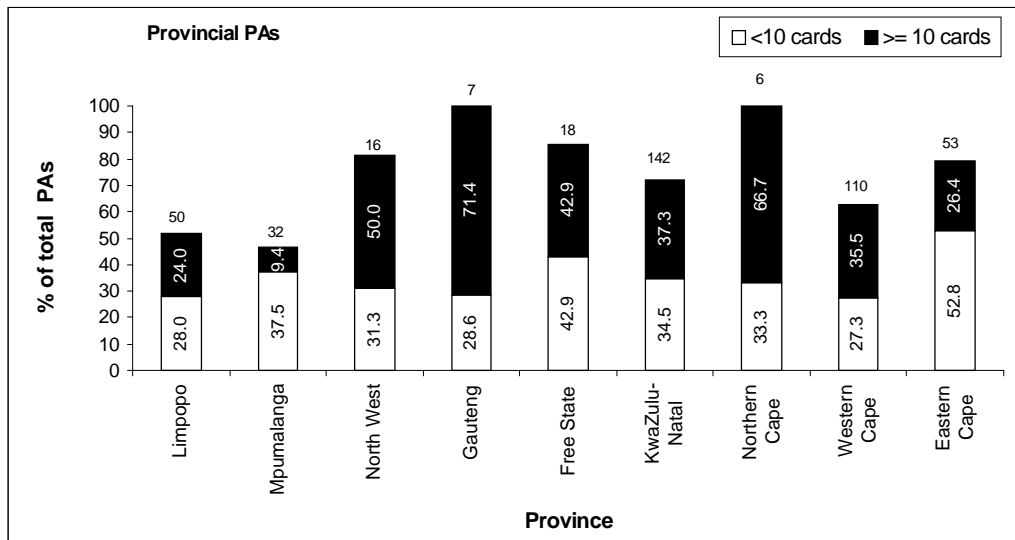


Fig. 1. Present BIRP coverage at provincial game/nature reserves. The number above each bar denotes the total number of provincial PAs in each province that is registered with BIRP.

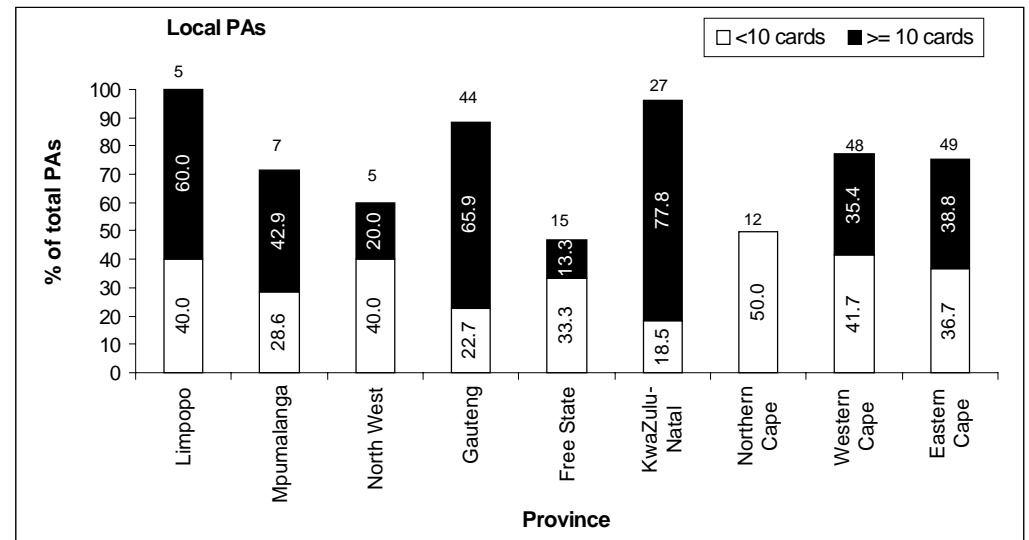


Fig. 2. Present BIRP coverage at local authority reserves, including Botanical Gardens. The number above each bar denotes the total number of local PAs in each province that is registered with BIRP.

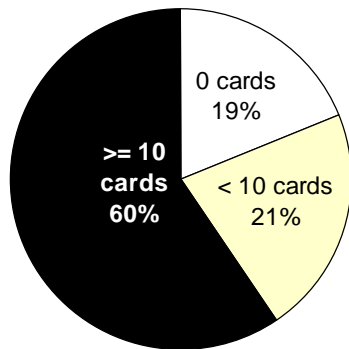


Fig. 3. Present BIRP coverage at South Africa's 122 IBAs.

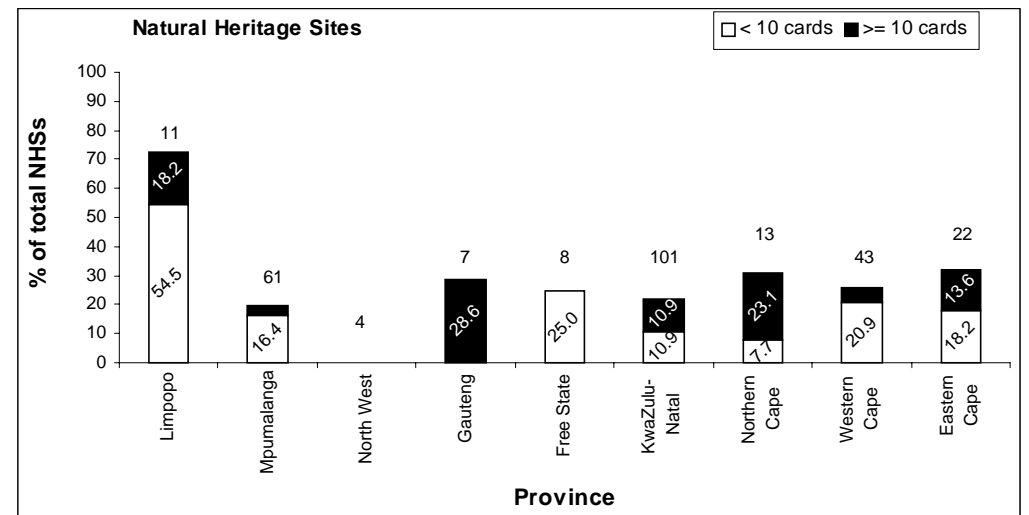


Fig. 4. Present BIRP coverage at Natural Heritage Sites. The number above each bar denotes the total number of NHSs in each province that is registered with BIRP.

Eastern Cape – Collywobbles Vulture Colony (SA088), Maitland-Gamtoos Coast (SA097)

Western Cape – Olifants River Estuary (SA099), Overberg Wheatbelt (SA115).

Further information about IBAs can be obtained from Steven Evans at BirdLife South Africa (iba@birdlife.org.za, Tel. (011) 789-1122)

NHSs

For NHSs, most are privately owned and have often been designated for botanical, cultural or other reasons rather than on the site's birdlife. Their role in bird conservation is poorly understood and very few sites have a bird checklist. This led BirdLife South Africa, together with the Department of Environmental Affairs (coordinating body of the NHS programme) and the ADU, to introduce a programme to assess the birdlife in NHSs through regular monitoring. Fig. 4 shows the current BIRP breakdown of NHS monitoring per province. Compared with July 2001, when 26 (19%) out of the 138 sites registered had at least one card, current results show that this has increased to 69 sites (50%). In addition, 25 sites now have >10 checklists each, representing a 2.5 fold increase on 10 sites in July 2001. This improved coverage has come from the BLSA/DEAT initiative which has been strengthened by regional co-ordination activities. In the south-western Cape, regular six-monthly meetings between the ADU and five regional bird clubs has ensured that monitoring at NHSs in this region has been coordinated and streamlined to ensure consistent seasonal coverage at all viable sites. Other regions are encouraged to set up similar structures to assist in better planning and monitoring at sites in their regions.

Although the Natural Heritage Site programme is currently lacking resources to maintain its *modus operandi*, monitoring at these sites should continue in the hope that, in the long-term, this data could prove valuable to landowners, conservation agencies and national government.

BIRP Report for Gauteng

In early 2002, the Gauteng Dept of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs (DACEL) approached the ADU to

undertake an analysis of BIRP data for Gauteng as part of their conservation planning strategy. This was excellent news as it meant that BIRP data would, for the first time, be analysed and used for conservation purposes – a primary objective of the project. Owing to limitations on BIRP coverage in the province, however, it was decided to extend the contract into 2003 to allow additional data to be collected. This would undoubtedly add value to the dataset and make it more meaningful from a conservation perspective.

Working with Craig Whittington-Jones from DACEL, we have advertised widely on the birdnets and to Gauteng bird clubs to make birders aware of those PAs requiring more checklists and many birders have responded diligently to this call. We have also acquired the support of the Pretoria Conservation Challenge (PCC) which, through the efforts of Etienne Marais and Pieter van Zyl of the Pretoria Bird Club, has managed to raise the profile of BIRP in Gauteng and supplemented the database with more than 300 checklists! The ADU is grateful for the PCC's involvement and contribution to BIRP and the upcoming report.

Coverage, particularly of the public PAs, has increased substantially but there are some localities still urgently requiring checklists if they are to be included in the report. These are listed below and if you are able to complete BIRP checklists for any of these PAs between now and the end of the year, you will help in ensuring that the Gauteng BIRP report is as comprehensive as possible, and you will be aiding nature conservation activities in the province.

The report is planned to be published in April 2004 and will include comprehensive site accounts and detailed accounts of selected priority species. It will conclude with a discussion on Gauteng's role in bird conservation in South Africa and will (a) identify the sites that have greatest importance for bird conservation in Gauteng, (b) identify the priority species for which Gauteng has a particularly important responsibility and (c) make recommendations as to the way forward for DACEL. In acknowledgement to the observers who submitted BIRP checklists for Gauteng, a full list of observer names will be included. Free copies of the report will also be made available to all Gauteng bird clubs.

Very High Priority (provincial PAs at which data collection is urgent)

Grootvaly Wetland Reserve, Melville Koppies Nature Reserve, Leeuwfontein Collaborative Reserve, Alice Glöckner Nature Reserve, Tswaing Crater Museum, Faerie Glen Nature Reserve.

High Priority (conservancies and private PAs/IBAs at which data collection is important)

De Tweedespruit Conservancy, Blesbokspruit (SA021), Magaliesberg & Witwatersberg 2627BC, 2527DB, 2528CA, 2627AC, 2627AD (SA025), Kudu Conservancy, Brandbach Conservancy, Leeuwkloof Conservancy.

Low Priority (Local and private PAs at which data collection is needed but not important)

Con Joubert Bird Sanctuary, Victor Penning Bird Sanctuary, Vaal Dam Nature Reserve, Stan Madden Bird Sanctuary, Norscot Koppies Nature Reserve, Johannesburg Botanical Garden, Papillion (Natural Heritage Site 265), Rustig (Natural Heritage Site 295), Zemvelo Game Park, Nooitgedacht Private Game Reserve, Cradle of Humankind (World Heritage Site), Dalpark Bird Sanctuary, Kings Kloof (Natural Heritage Site 177), Plover's Lake (Natural Heritage Site 271), Bon Accord Dam, De Onderstepoort Private Nature Reserve, Voortrekker Private Nature Reserve, Groenfontein Pan.

KwaZulu-Natal update

Steve Davis and Row Cowgill, BIRP coordinators in KwaZulu-Natal, who are doing an outstanding job of promoting and coordinating BIRP activities in the province, have compiled a list of PA codes for some of the more popular camps and resorts in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park and the Ukhulamba-Drakensberg Park. Many of these places are frequently visited by BIRPers but few lists are generated. Many observers are unsure as to what PA code should be used or are unaware that checklists can be submitted for a particular locality within these large conservation areas. Hopefully the

lists below will encourage many of you to keep daily bird lists while visiting these popular destinations and to submit them to BIRP.

Registering private PAs

Please don't forget that if you visit a private PA that is not on the list, we rely on you, the observer, to send us all the necessary details in order for the site to be registered. The information we require includes: **official name of the PA, centre-point coordinates (to the nearest minute), size (in hectares) and owner contact details (full name, tel/fax/cell/e-mail)**. A map showing the boundaries of the PA is also useful.

Greater St Lucia Wetland Park

Place/PA	PA Code
Banghazi Bush Camp	28073222
Black Rock	27073252
Cape Vidal State Forest	28073223
Charter's Creek	28073222
Dukuduku State Forest	28223215
False Bay Park (incl Dugandlovu)	28003222
Fani's Island	28073222
Kosi Bay	26593248
Mabibi	27223237
Mapelane Forest Reserve	28223224
Mkhuze Swamp	27523237
Mkhuze Game Reserve	27453215
Muzi & Yengweni Pans	27373222
Nyalazi State Forest	28153222
Ozabeni	27373237
Sodwana Bay National Park	27373238
Sodwana Bay State Forest	27453230
St Lucia Game Reserve	28083230
St Lucia Marine Reserve	27453237
St Lucia Park	28073231

Ukhulamba Drakensberg Park

Place/PA	PA Code
Cathedral Peak State Forest	29002915
Cobham State Forest	29422925
Garden Castle Nature Reserve	29452911
Giant's Castle Game Reserve	29112924
Highmoor State Forest	29222930
Kamberg Nature Reserve	29202943
Loteni Nature Reserve	29242937
Mkhomazi State Forest	29272935
Monk's Cowl State Forest	29042923
Royal Natal National Park	28422856
Rugged Glen Nature Reserve	28402857
Vergelegen Nature Reserve	29272930
Bushman's Nek	29452911
Sani Pass	29372922
Drakensberg Gardens	29452911
Injasuti	29072922

New bird names and additional species

Most of you will no doubt be aware of the changing bird names and new species' splits that are envisaged for the new Roberts VII. These new names and species are already present in the recent updated fieldguides and many birders are using or referring to these new names and/or species. In light of this, BIRP will need to adapt to these changes but please understand that the transition to include the new names and species will not occur overnight. Much needs to be done to make this happen and with our limited resources we will, in the interim, continue to use the current versions of the BIRP checklists. Updated checklists will therefore be made available once (a) Roberts VII has been published, and (b) the current stock of 'old' checklists has been used up. Consequently, we kindly ask you to be patient with us during this process and to continue using the original checklists for your submissions.

Instruction booklets

These booklets, which are now out of date, are being revised and updated. However, limited resources have meant that this is going to be a slow process. We will continue, therefore, to hand out photocopied versions of the booklet to any new participants or interested persons. Once the revised booklet is finalised, an electronic copy will initially be made available on the web. The printing of hardcopies is ultimately going to depend on funding.

Replacement checklists

It has been policy for BIRP to issue replacement checklists to observers once completed lists have been submitted to the ADU. Unfortunately, due to staff shortages, this can no longer take place and, until these limitations can be resolved, replacement checklists will only be issued on request from observers. Those of you with internet access are encouraged to download and print blank forms from the BIRP webpage (see URL address on page 1). I apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but hope that this will only be an interim measure. Please note that you are welcome to make photocopies of the checklists all of which can be done on white paper.

BIRPNET

I hope that that this electronic news and information service is useful and keeps many of you up to date of BIRP news and activities. If you have only recently acquired an e-mail address and you would like to receive BIRPNET messages, please send an e-mail to me at doug@adu.uct.ac.za and I will gladly add you to the mailing list. If your email address has changed, I will need to be informed of your new address so that you can continue being a part of this service.

Finally, please remember to complete each form as **completely** and **clearly** as possible. This all helps to streamline the processing of the forms and assists us in keeping our mailing list up-to-date.

Thank you

The ADU appreciates your support and participation. Keep up the good work and happy BIRPing!

*Doug Harebottle
Project Coordinator*

