The FitzPatrick Report in the July/August 2015 issue of African BirdLife highlighted the apparent plight of Martial Eagles. The comparison of SABAP1 and 2 data showed declines in reporting rates of up to 60 per cent of the species across South Africa. Particularly alarming was the fact that these declines have occurred even in the country’s largest protected areas, including the Kruger National Park, long considered a stronghold for the species. As a result, Rowen van Eeden started a PhD study to understand the drivers of the declines of these impressive birds in Kruger.

By GPS tracking Martial Eagles, Rowen has begun to unravel the mystery of how many pairs of eagles nest on pylons, and has used it to estimate how many pairs of eagles nest on pylons. So far 92 Martial Eagle territories have been found through aerial surveys, and the models predict a further 50 eagle territories along non-surveyed lines. The 140 or so Martial Eagle nests on the South African transmission network is clearly of national importance for this declining species.

Birders can help by reporting Martial Eagle sightings and nest locations, particularly those on power pylons, to martial.eaglesightings@gmail.com. In the Kruger National Park we have colour-ringed 18 Martial Eagles and are especially keen to obtain sightings or photographs of these birds. Please include the date and location with all sightings submitted.

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