

MENTORING *Community Bird Guides*



SHAUN MCCARTNEY

Back row Edwin Muneri (*Limpopo Parks and Tourism*), Jeremia Raseala, Ulrich Oberprieler (*course presenter*) and Nikki McCartney (*BirdLife South Africa*).
Front row Moses Maponya, Lizzy Makgamatha, Lucas Namanyane and Paul Nkhumane.

BirdLife South Africa's guide-training programme is focusing on upgrading the skills of guides trained in previous years. Last year a successful

refresher course, presented by Joe Grosel, was held for the Limpopo Community Bird Guides, in which topics such as identifying raptors in flight and the current South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) were covered.

Lizzy Makgamatha, Moses Maponya, Jeremia Sello Raseala, Paul Nkhumane and Lucas Namanyane from Limpopo attended an LBJ- and warbler-identification course presented by Ulrich Oberprieler at the Nylsvley Nature Reserve in November 2010. By helping to lead the field trips, the guides gained invaluable experience.

Joe Grosel, Lisa Martus-de Boer, Derek Engelbrecht and David Letsoalo, as well as many members of BirdLife Polokwane, are instrumental in mentoring guides in Limpopo Province and BirdLife South Africa is grateful to them for their ongoing support.

In southern KwaZulu-Natal a refresher course, attended by guides from the South Coast, Midlands and Van Reenen areas, was run by Roy Cowgill at Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve. Here the focus was on getting back to basics and honing the identification skills of the trainee birders.

Four mentorship workshops for guides in Limpopo, the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal are planned for 2011.

BirdLife South Africa thanks Bushnell, Sasol and Rand Merchant Bank for their contributions to and funding of the training and mentorship programmes. Their generous support has also enabled BirdLife South Africa to equip the guides with new binoculars, bush shirts, caps and business cards, making the BirdLife South Africa Community Bird Guides look and feel a good deal more professional.

Birders are encouraged to visit the birding routes website (www.birdingroutes.co.za) to obtain contact details for the guides. They are affordable, provide improved security and offer valuable information on where elusive and special bird species may be found in their areas.

If you or your bird club, conservancy or environmental group are interested in assisting with Community Bird Guide mentoring, please contact Martin Taylor on tel. +27 (0)72 277 7254 or e-mail tourism@birdlife.org.za

A NEW WAVE FOR SEABIRD CONSERVATION

BirdLife's terrestrial IBA Programme continues to produce impressive results for bird conservation by identifying critical habitats and using the IBA monitoring and assessment frameworks to drive formal (and informal) protection for key sites.

However, extending IBAs offshore to the seabird realm has lagged, primarily because of the lack of good, usable, at-sea distribution information, and also the complicating factor of the dynamic nature of marine ecosystems. How can we protect birds at sea if they are constantly on the move, tracking ephemeral or only semi-predictable features such as oceanic fronts? The answer is: with difficulty.

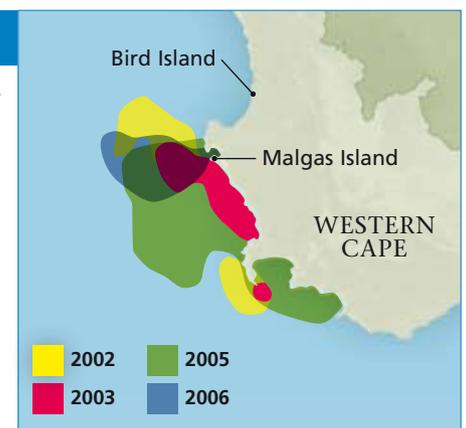
Nonetheless, for many species, seaward extensions from breeding islands should afford a measure of protection if those marine IBAs are declared Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). This is the first phase in BirdLife South Africa's marine IBA

Programme and is being spearheaded by Tim Reid, a post-doctoral fellow at UCT's Percy FitzPatrick Institute.

The African Penguin conservation work that BirdLife South Africa funds is a good example. Twenty-kilometre no-fishing zones around penguin breeding islands could well become our first marine IBAs, and simultaneously they are being subjected to vigorous discussion and research to determine if they could be declared MPAs. Tim is also considering conservation measures for the Cape Gannet; the accompanying map shows how wide-ranging birds such as the gannets frequent a few areas fairly consistently.

Our vision for the marine IBA programme is to amalgamate information from multiple sources that demonstrate where seabirds consistently go to find food. We hope to use these 'layers' to help inform national MPA expansion planning processes.

ROSS WANLESS & TIM REID



Foraging 'hotspots' of Cape Gannets from Malgas Island, from 2002 to 2006. The colours represent different years, and the area of high overlap is a candidate site for a marine IBA. Data courtesy of Lorien Pichegru.



BirdLife South Africa's marine IBA work is funded by the Plastics Federation of South Africa.