

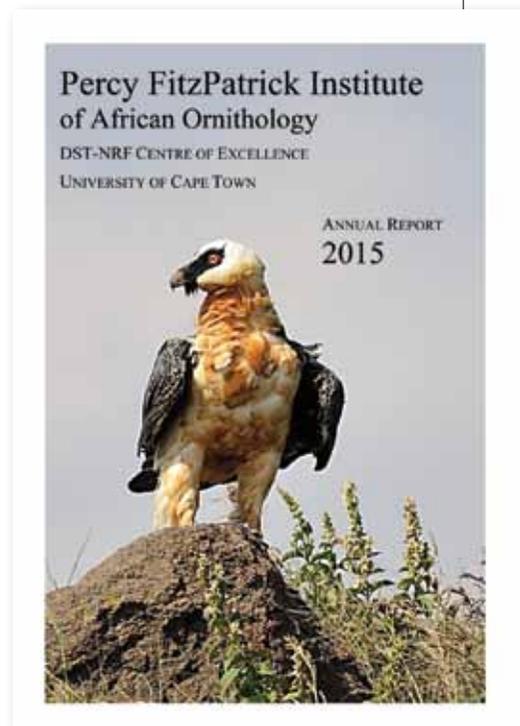
the year.in review

The Fitztute page typically highlights a new research finding or advertises the start of a new research project. However, only a fraction of the Fitztute's activities can be featured in this way. A more comprehensive summary of Fitz research endeavours can be found in the annual report, which is presented to the Board at the end of March each year. The 2015 report, which has an illustrated, two-page spread on each of the main research programmes, covers 25 topics in two broad themes: understanding and maintaining biodiversity. New programmes initiated in 2015 included projects on parasitic interactions between Fork-tailed Drongos and African Cuckoos, conserving vultures in Botswana and Lilian's Lovebirds in Zambia, understanding intra-African bird migrations, and the impact of human disturbance on waterbirds.

The programme accounts are written to be accessible to a broad audience. Each starts with a brief rationale, which tends to remain more or less the same from year to year for long-running projects. The main body of each report summarises progress over the year in

review, highlights key achievements and lists the research team. In addition to the programme outlines, there are brief accounts of the conservation biology programme, the Niven Library, and social responsiveness, as well as lists of key sponsors, staff, students, research associates and their publications over the past year. In 2015 a Fitztute record was set in terms of publications, with 138 papers appearing in peer-reviewed journals.

When Cecily Niven had the vision and drive to create the Fitztute in the late 1950s, one has to wonder whether she had an inkling of how the Fitz would flourish during the following half-century? Thanks in part to its recognition as a national Centre of Excellence since 2004, the institute has grown considerably over the past decade and in 2015 supported 57 postgraduate students and eight postdoctoral fellows. This places a large administrative burden on the five academic and six support staff. The good news is that from July 2016, when Claire Spottiswoode joins the Fitz as the new Pola Pasvolsky Chair in Conservation Biology, the Fitz staff complement will stabilise after a period of considerable turnover. We are eagerly



looking forward to having Claire back at the University of Cape Town.

The challenge in future is that our Centre of Excellence funding will almost certainly be phased out from 2020. Paradoxically, the programme most at risk is the conservation biology course, which since its inception in 1992 has trained more than 250 Masters students from all over the world. This includes 75 graduates from 22 African countries, many of whom have gone on to play key roles in conservation on the continent. Funds for the academic coordinator for the course currently come from the Centre of Excellence grant; we are exploring options to be able to continue this position beyond the period of Centre of Excellence support.

Copies of the 2015 annual report can be downloaded from the Fitz website at www.fitzpatrick.uct.ac.za/fitz/about/report. Past reports also can be obtained from the website.



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