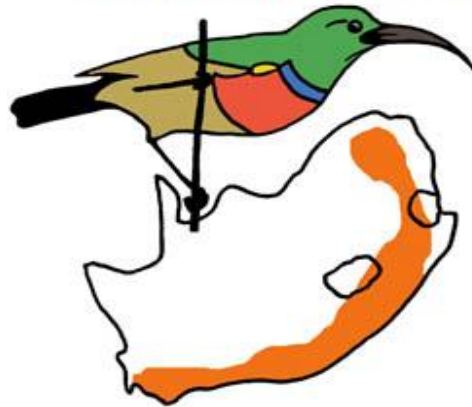


SABAP2



Atlasing under lockdown: five olives, the corona-bird and other raptors

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Hilton in KwaZulu-Natal will be remembered as the start-line of the Coronavirus outbreak in South Africa. More redeeming is its diversity of habitats for birds – urban, grassland, mistbelt forest, thornveld and wetland. This is my patch, from which I've sent so many pentad submissions to SABAP2. But could this work in the lockdown?

Maybe, as I do have the good fortune of living in a complex overlooking Town Bush valley and abutting on a 'forest' of gums, bugweed and some indigenous *Halleria lucida*. And, on the way to buy essential goods, the road to the Rotunda stall passes a patch of Cedara grassland, while the Quarry Centre with its supermarket has its own lake, in the stone quarry that helped build Pietermaritzburg. So without breaking the law, just stopping briefly at the roadside and peeking at the lake, I got to the birds!

Cisticolas, euplectids and swallows in the grass; cormorants and darter, Little Grebe, Goliath Heron and martins at the quarry. At home, among the gums and bugweed, the five olives (pigeon, woodpecker, thrush, sunbird and bushshrike). And eagles from the patio – Long-crested, African Fish and, of course, typing 'corona' into Birdlasser, Crowned Eagle. In the five weeks of level 5 lockdown, my mean species count for six lists was a respectable 48. Now, in May, under the less brutal level 4, outdoor morning exercise is permitted. My choice – walking in Queen Elizabeth Park in the valley – turned out productive, with the two pentad lists for May bringing 67 and 70 species.

It's been a privilege contributing data to SABAP2, and on a personal level it offsets some of the anxiety during this difficult time for so many of us. For those with the location, the time and a creative plan, productive atlasing is possible. My best moment? With a count of 69 species and sunset approaching on the fifth and last day for the pentad, the bird on a distant dead gum tree proved, through my scope, to be a Peregrine Falcon, number 70! And I even got an acceptable photo, my phone placed over the scope's eyepiece.





Figure 1 Atlasing highlight! Peregrine Falcon at sunset.

