



Among the species identified in around the Sibaya Coastal Forest were the European Honey Buzzard, Grey Waxbill and the Dark-backed Weaver. A European Roller was also identified for the first time in the precinct.

Coastal forest is a bird haven

EARLIER this year a Gauteng based birder spotted a remarkable 155 bird species in and around the Sibaya Coastal Forest with some species identified for the first time.

His new findings were added to the South African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2) website and the area now has a total of 279 documented sightings.

Pieter Verster was on holiday in KwaZulu-Natal and spent some time in the Sibaya area and during his five day stay, he identified 155 species including the Green Malkoha, Crested Guinea fowl, European Honey Buzzard, Grey Waxbill and the Dark-backed Weaver. A European Roller was also identified for the first time in the precinct.

The location of Verster sightings falls within a five-kilometre radius of the Sibaya Coastal Forest extending to uMhlanga Lighthouse in the south and to the eMdloti lagoon in the north.

"My wife and I love spending time in the Sibaya

Coastal Forest. We visit KZN regularly and are always pleasantly surprised with the bird species we find. This past visit was a record for us with an amazing number spotted. It's truly a birder's haven and we will surely be visiting again, hoping to exceed our last total, and hopefully spot more species," Verster explained.

Sibaya Precinct Manager, Gray Braatvedt, who along with his team manages the forest, said it was refreshing seeing birders enjoying the area.

"Our team works hard daily to create a sustainable indigenous environment that attracts birds and other wildlife. The noteworthy number of bird sightings is testament to our ongoing effort to maintain the Sibaya Coastal Forest and

surrounding areas. We always knew it was home to some wonderful bird species and it's great that birders are spending time in the forest and documenting them. We hope to see many more of them come through to see what they can spot. They certainly won't be disappointed," said Braatvedt.

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What is the Southern African Bird Atlas Project?

The Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) is a citizen science project that is driven by the energy of several hundred volunteers who are mapping the distribution of birds across several southern African countries. SABAP2 is the follow-up project to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1), which took place from 1987-1991. The second bird atlas project started on 1 July 2007 and is still growing. The project aims to map the distribution and relative abundance of birds in southern Africa and includes: South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, eSwatini, Zimbabwe, Zambia. To gather data, volunteers select a geographical 'pentad' on a map and record all the bird species seen within a set time frame, in order of species seen. This information is uploaded to the SABAP2 database and is used for research and analysis by several different agencies, including the South African National Biodiversity Institute, BirdLife South Africa, as well as academics and students at various universities. To find out more, visit sabap2.birdmap.africa/

Sassa cards lands man in hot water

A 47-YEAR-OLD uMhlanga resident was arrested last week on charges of fraud and possession of a stolen property.

Provincial SAPS spokesperson Captain Nqobile Gwala said 70 South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) cards were seized from the suspect as well as R7 640 in cash.

"His arrest came after an intelligence driven operation that was conducted by the Durban Central District Task Team. The team pounced on the suspect who was withdrawing cash from different Sassa cards at an ATM on Anton Lembede Street. The suspect was driving a Mercedes Benz which he recently bought.

"His vehicle was also seized by police. Further investigation conducted by the team led them to the suspect's residence in uMhlanga. The suspect was placed under arrest for fraud as well as possession of stolen property," Gwala said.

The suspect appeared in the Durban Magistrate's Court and was granted bail. He is facing a series of fraud charges.



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