



Mobility

SEPTEMBER 2019



24-Hour N3TC Helpline
0800 63 4357



@N3Route



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OUR COVER:

Blue Cranes, from the book *The Sentinels: Cranes of South Africa* by Daniel Dolpire

Wildlife photographer, Daniel Dolpire, captivates readers with sublime imagery in his book, *The Sentinels*.

"Every worthwhile photograph of Blue, Grey Crowned and Wattled Cranes has now been taken – in every possible pose and context. For me, this book is a striking example of what conservation-driven photography should be about. The images virtually browbeat their audience into seeing the fundamental beauty of cranes, loving their seductive aura, understanding their tender fragility and caring about their oh-so-tenuous future."

Dr Andrew Jenkins , AFRICAN BIRDLIFE

Order your book now

The Sentinels is available at R790.00 including packaging and postage. Order directly from Daniel at: ddolpire@me.com

Stand a chance to win

You stand a chance to win a copy of Dolpire's magnificent book by entering the N3 Radio competition. [Details on page 24.](#)

Route Map





[ROAD SAFETY]

**CATCH
THEM
YOUNG -
ENGAGE
YOUR
CHILDREN ON
ROAD SAFETY**

Use traveling time with your children to teach them about road safety in a fun, interactive way. “Young minds are impressionable and the sooner we start educating them about road safety, the better our chances of raising responsible road users and young drivers,” stresses N3TC's commercial manager, Con Roux.

In 2016 it was estimated that worldwide 1,25-million people die annually due to road crashes and a further 50-million people suffer varying degrees of injuries as a result thereof. By 2030, road traffic crashes are expected to become the fifth leading cause of global fatalities.

Increased community involvement, pro-active approaches and individual responsibility and actions are desperately needed to influence and change behaviours to stem the carnage on our roads,” explains Roux.

Parents and care-givers can help turn this tide by modelling responsible behaviour and using children's natural curiosity to start teaching them about safety and the rules of the road from a very young age.

Start by teaching your children the language of road safety by pointing out the various parts that make up roads such as pavements, emergency lanes, right- centre and left lanes, road signs, lighting, solid and broken lines, road and street names, and more. Also teach them about the different types of vehicles and the various types of people working on roads from construction workers, to cleaners, the police, ambulances, traffic police and the fire brigade.

Make it fun by playing “I spy with my little eye” or counting games.

As children grow older and their knowledge and experience of roads develop, key safety messages can be shared and discussions can now evolve. Even teens, who may think they “know it all” or may feel invincible, can benefit by playing out different scenarios and thinking about the type of actions or interventions they can take to achieve desired outcomes in different situations.



“Remember to always be a good role model to your children, whether you are the driver or passenger in a vehicle, riding a bicycle or a pedestrian. Children imitate adults, most notably their parents or close family members. Let's teach our children to be good citizens and to take responsibility for their actions. Ultimately, road safety is about stopping fatalities and serious injuries and it is crucial that we start taking it seriously. Your actions always speak louder than your words,” ends Roux.

Numerous resources are available online, at retail outlets and from community organisations to guide you and your children to be responsible road users. Make sure that you also stay familiar with the rules of the road, what the common risks are and how to prevent these. Always consider these when you get in a vehicle or on the road – practice makes perfect.



[ROUTE UPDATE]

TRAVEL CONDITIONS ON THE N3 TOLL ROUTE

Although a few drops of rain have been reported since the turn of the season, conditions along most parts of the N3 Toll Route are still very dry and windy. Veldfires remain a high risk and can create challenges for drivers.

Always reduce speed and keep headlights switched on when visibility is affected. This also applies in misty and wet weather conditions.

“Our weather remains unpredictable and can quickly change from a beautiful, clear spring day to high winds or temperatures dropping sharply. It is therefore best to be prepared before you set out on your journeys and to heed warnings,” explains Praveen Sunderlall, manager of N3TC's road incident management systems (RIMS).

It is not uncommon to experience strong winds in mountainous areas, such as Van Reenen's Pass, where the pass can act as funnel for wind. High winds can cause sudden gusts making large vehicles or vehicles towing caravans or trailers difficult to control. Always reduce your speed and keep both hands on the wheel in these conditions.

N3TC operates a **24-hour Route Control Centre (RCC)** from where any information about the route and travel conditions can be accessed. Problems can also be reported here and emergency assistance obtained. Stay in touch with N3TC by contacting our RCC on its helpline number: **0800 63 4357** or via Twitter: **@N3Route**.

For your convenience, you can now also tune into the **N3 Radio** app which has updates on traffic flows and any news relevant to motorists on the N3 route. In addition, N3 Radio broadcasts wonderful stories about the region, its people and places. [Read more about this on page 24](#). Access the app by downloading it on your mobile devices. It is available from both Android and iOS App Stores.

Upgrading the N3 Toll Route

Travellers are reminded that major construction work is currently underway along three sections of the N3 Toll Route:

- Cedara to Nottingham Road
- Van Reenen's Pass
- Warden to Villiers

“Road works (including maintenance, rehabilitation and upgrades) are essential to maintain our transport networks, to extend their lifespan and to ensure we keep our economy moving. It is a necessary inconvenience which may cause traffic disruptions and frustrations for both construction workers and road users,” says N3TC's commercial manager, Con Roux.

“At N3TC we carefully plan and manage our construction programmes to limit disruptions, especially during peak periods such as long weekends and holidays. At peak times only essential works are carried out, but lane closures and reduced speed limits may still remain in place at existing construction zones. Road users are advised to pay careful attention to temporary yellow warning signs indicating construction zones as well as their cautionary instructions,” ends Roux.



[N3TC PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION]



Arum Mono : Overall winner, Leon Heyes

**MARITZBURG
MAN WALKS
AWAY AS
WINNER OF
THE 2019
N3TC
PHOTOGRAPHIC
COMPETITION**

Irish poet, William Yeats, said the world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for senses to grow sharper. Leon Heyes, the winner of N3TC's 2019 Photographic Competition, concurs whole heartedly with Yeats' sentiments.

"I always say that I see things that other people don't see," laughs Heyes, "although my way of looking at the world around me sometimes gets strange reactions from people."

But it was this ability of Leon to spot uniqueness and beauty in ordinary moments that led him to taking the winning shot, titled *Arum Mono*, in this year's photographic competition.

"I was at Tanglewood Garden Centre in Hilton where they have a huge field of Arum lilies growing wild – in a wetland area. On my way out, among a sea of white flowers, I spotted this particular flower. The shape was so appealing. I love flower photography and I knew I just had to have this bloom. The owner of the Centre is a friend of mine and he gave me permission to do so."

Back home, Heyes started planning to get this perfect specimen captured. "My study window is west-facing. I decided to put the Arum in the strong natural light and I used quite a long exposure to get this image. And VOILA! This is the result."

The original photograph was not altered in any way. It was only cropped and converted to mono.



Leon Heyes

The essence of the image lies in its simplicity. No fuss, no bother, only beautiful lines and beautiful light.

Now retired, Leon is very involved with the Amber Camera Club in Howick. He spends a lot of his creative time in and around Howick and the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

"This is where most of my photography takes place. I used to be an IT trainer when I was still working so, luckily, I have a fair computer aptitude which really helps in, the sometimes, very technical hobby of photography. I love all aspects of photography and especially enjoy nurturing and mentoring *newbie* photographers," says Heyes. "The rest of my time is taken up by my two wonderful little grandsons who live in Hillcrest and keep me on the hop!"



This particular moment, captured by Leon Heyes, is one of his favourite images. "I was in the Berg on my way to a vantage point that would give me spectacular views and, for some unknown reason, I turned around and this was the view behind me. Total fluke, and completely unplanned."

Leon says he fell in love with photography at the age of 21 when he inherited two old box cameras.

"I lost my father when I was very young and I did not even know that he had a passion for photography until I inherited the old cameras. In my younger years, I travelled overseas extensively and that was a good starting point for what eventually became my passion. A couple of years later, I did my first "real" shoot when a friend got married and I offered to take the wedding pictures. This catapulted me into the wedding world. I did weddings for about 35 years as a hobby – strictly non-professional. I have never done a photographic course in my life and I use very basic mid-range camera equipment.

This particular winning shot was taken with Canon 70D camera, a 100mm macro lens and totally natural afternoon daylight. I enjoy macro, wildlife and sport photography.

All I know is self-taught, with more recent help from my dear friend, Mr Google," explains Heyes.

Leon finds creative inspiration all around him; all the time. "In the most inconceivable places," he says. "I always have my eyes open and I see things that other people may miss. The beauty of nature that surrounds me in the Midlands is a huge inspiration. I already have more than 250 000 images on my various hard drives!"

"Photographers must know their equipment well and be able to operate it in their sleep. On a shoot, things can change very rapidly and a competent photographer should be able to change settings almost without thinking. Patience is a huge asset too. If you are photographing wildlife, you may sit for hours trying to get THE shot," ends Leon.

Leon's other entries:



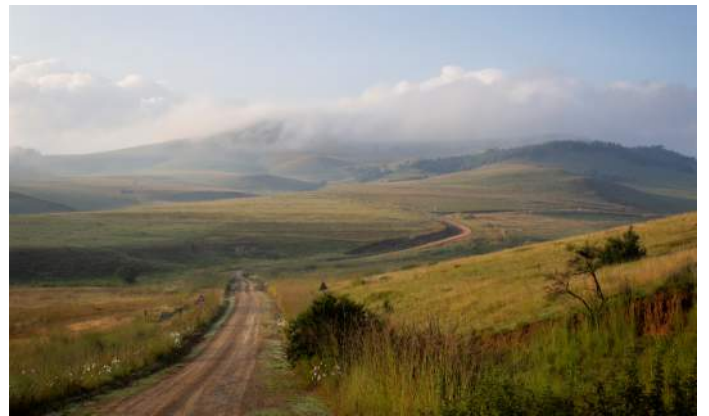
Top left: "Sushi for lunch", Winner: Nature/Wildlife

Top right: "Harmoniously juxtaposed", Altered images: Runner-up

Bottom right: "Winter morning", Merit award: Landscapes



N3TC PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION



Mono: Winner: Joy Mullin "I'm watching you"; Runner-up: Francois van Jaarsveld "Sunrise over eastern buttress" • **Nature/Wildlife:** Runner-up: Pieter Kotzee "Agitated"; Merit: Inneke Kleingeld "Salsify seed" • **Landscapes:** Winner: Francois van Jaarsveld "View of the valley"; Runner-up: Claudi Lourens "On the way to Normandien Pass" • **Scholar:** Winner: Claudi Lourens "Bedazzled" • **Altered Images:** Winner: Claudi Lourens "Delicate"; Merit: Francois van Jaarsveld "Reflections" • **Sport & Recreation:** Merit: Storm Storah "After the storm"; Merit: Joy Mullin "Flying colours"





Photo by desdot photography

HERITAGE DAY

DID YOU KNOW?

Heritage Day – 24 September – was always known as Shaka Day in Zululand. Shaka Day is a commemoration of the life of King Shaka. In 1995, when South Africa's list of official public holidays got a democratic makeover, this important day for the Zulu nation was incorporated into Heritage Day.

Who is King Shaka?

Sigidi kaSenzangakhona – the warrior king of the Zulu nation – also known as King Shaka was born in 1787 and died on 24 September 1828. Based on mostly oral historic accounts, King Shaka did not have an easy childhood – he was born out of wedlock and his father initially denied paternity. As a child, Shaka was bullied and ridiculed by his peers, but grew up to become a tall young man, powerfully built with great physical prowess and a natural sense of mastery. On the battlefields of Zululand, Shaka, as a young impi (soldier) demonstrated courage, strength and excellent strategic faculties.

On the death of his father, the former king, Shaka started his rise to power assuming strong leadership skills and conquering surrounding chiefdoms. Shaka brought about numerous military-, social- and economic changes during his rule. He was revered throughout his land ... and to this day, his name inspires awe.

NELSON MANDELA CAPTURE SITE



Photo by Matthew Willman

A timeless ode to history

A visit to KwaZulu-Natal's Midlands will not be complete without a stop at the Nelson Mandela Capture Site, where an important piece of South African history has found a tangible heritage home.

Situated along the R103 near Howick, this memorial site has become a prime attraction for local and foreign visitors alike. It has been seven years since its official opening in 2012 and the keen interest in the site has shown no sign of abating.

And no wonder – it definitely rates as one of the most evocative and thought-provoking odes to history in the country.

Beautifully designed and executed, the memorial site commemorates former president Nelson Mandela's capture on this unassuming road as he was driving back from a secret visit to ANC leader Albert Luthuli's house in Groutville, two hours away.

The date was 5 August 1962 and Mandela's capture by the apartheid police would mark the start of his "long walk to freedom", which only ended with his release from prison in 1990.

Mandela's long journey to freedom is represented by a pathway that leads from the visitor centre to the breathtaking centrepiece of the site: a larger-than-life sculpture set against the backdrop of the rolling Midlands landscape.

Titled "*Release*", this world-renowned sculpture was designed by SA artist Marco Cianfanelli, who was also involved in the planning of the landscaping and design of the sculpture "*The Reeds*" at Freedom Park in Pretoria.

Cianfelli has used 50 steel columns measuring between 6.5 and 9.5 metres high to create a portrait of Madiba looking west. It comes into focus at exactly 35 metres from the front of the sculpture as the columns line up to create the illusion of a flat image. Often, the captivating

HERITAGE
DAY

NELSON MANDELA CAPTURE SITE



sight is accompanied by “music” created as the wind blows through the columns, adding to the sensory experience.

The state-of-the-art visitor centre, which is opening soon, will replace the temporary exhibition currently at the site. Among other things, the 1,000-square metre space will feature a massive screen taking visitors on an interactive tour of Madiba's life and times. It will also house a replica of the 1962 Austin Westminster vehicle which he was driving when arrested.

According to the site's head of operations, Brendan Copestake, plans are afoot for major upgrades by KZN Tourism. It will include additions to the landscaping and lighting, creating more parking, upgrading the entrance, and paving roads and pathways. Completion of this work is scheduled for 2020. In the meantime, though, visitors have plenty to see and experience, as the glowing reviews on tourism websites such as TripAdvisor attest.

The Nelson Mandela Capture Site is open every day 9am-4pm. Take note, though, the restaurant and craft shop are closed on Mondays.

For more information, visit www.thecapturesite.co.za

MIDLANDS EMERGING ARTISTS



A tapestry of talent

Since its founding in 1985, the Midlands Meander has been synonymous with the choice selection of arts and crafts it offers visitors. Some artists of the region are well-established contributors to galleries across the country, but there are also hidden gems who need a helping hand to introduce and market their wares to the public.

Midlands Meander Emerging Artists and Crafters

For these men and women, who often work in co-operatives, the Midlands Meander Association created the Emerging Artists and Crafters project. According to Marian Evans, the project's champion, it seeks to "add more members to the meander family" by giving exposure and marketing opportunities to local artists whose work is of a high standard.

"Each year, members of the public and the association nominate artists and crafters to join the project," explains Evans. "Those selected get access to marketing channels such as websites and social media, as well as any business training that we are able to co-ordinate. In addition, their work gets showcased and sold in the craft shop at the Nelson Mandela Capture Site, which is very popular among tourists."

The crafters include **Themba Creations**, a women's co-operative based in deep rural Middelrus. These ladies produce high-quality oven gloves, garments and aprons sewn from beautiful African cloth, as well as a variety of crocheted items.

Stanley Nxumalo, who hails from Mount West, is the man behind the intricate beadwork used in the creation of unique flags, place mats and artworks.



Themba Creations

MIDLANDS EMERGING ARTISTS



Stanley Nxumalo



Siyaphambili Disabled Crafts

Then there is the Bruntville-based co-operative **Siyaphambili Disabled Crafts**, which consists of expert weavers. Despite their disabilities, the members work tirelessly to create baskets, trays and other woven items that can earn them an income through sales at the shop.



Khanya Themba

Plastic is a dirty word these days, but in the hands of the ladies from the **Khanya Temba** co-operative it is transformed into objects both practical and beautiful. Their colourful holders for pot plants of all shapes and sizes exemplify functional art, and these Howick locals keep adding to their range as their skills and imagination evolve.

Alson Zuma from Fort Nottingham is an accomplished Zulu artist whose rock art and wood carvings have earned him commissions over the years. His artworks tell stories – and none more so than his exquisitely carved music boxes, which never fail to catch the eye of visitors.

Two newcomers to the project stable are the co-operative **Senzokuhle Handcrafts**, whose members expertly crochet everything from bath mats to handbags, and Sbonelo Kunene, an accomplished fine artist. His paintings truly add the “art” to the offerings on show in the shop.



Senzokuhle Handcrafts

“These artists' efforts are supported through generous funding from N3TC,” says Evans. “We have seen remarkable progress in the six years that the project has received funding, and it has really opened economic doors for people who would otherwise have great difficulty to get their artwork out there to the public.”

Thandiwe Rakale, N3TC's corporate social investment (CSI) officer, says it is vital to create a showcase for rural-based artists and crafters. “N3TC is passionate about enterprise development in the rural communities along the route. We fund this project in the hope that it helps participants to not only grow and expand artistically, but to secure a sustainable income for themselves and their families.”

* The craft shop and gallery at the Nelson Mandela Capture Site is open 9am-4pm from Tuesdays to Sundays.



Alson Zuma

PROTECTING CRANES



Photo by Davide Gajjio

Protecting cranes and the places where they dance

Stories of the wonder of cranes have been told and shared for thousands of years – not surprising considering cranes are among the oldest family of birds alive today.

“Their mystery and wonder drive us to find out more so that we can ensure our efforts to conserve them are fitting and effective. With 11 of the world's 15 species of cranes threatened with extinction, it's sad to admit that all four of Africa's resident cranes are on *that* list. We have our work cut out to halt the declines we bear witness to,” says Tanya Smith, regional manager of the Africa Crane Conservation Programme of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT).

South Africa is home to three of Africa's four resident cranes, namely the Blue Crane (our national bird), Grey Crowned and Wattled Cranes.

In Africa, the endangered Grey Crowned Cranes are showing the fastest decline.

South Africa, however, has the only confirmed increasing population of the endangered Grey Crowned Crane; and our Wattled Cranes have also been showing consistent growth over the past two decades – 380 Wattled Cranes were counted during the 2018 aerial survey for cranes.

“This is an incredible achievement that serves as inspiration for efforts in the rest of Africa to conserve cranes,” continues Smith.

With the advent of satellite tracking and the advancement of technology, conservationists are able to delve deeper than ever before into the lives and biology of a species.

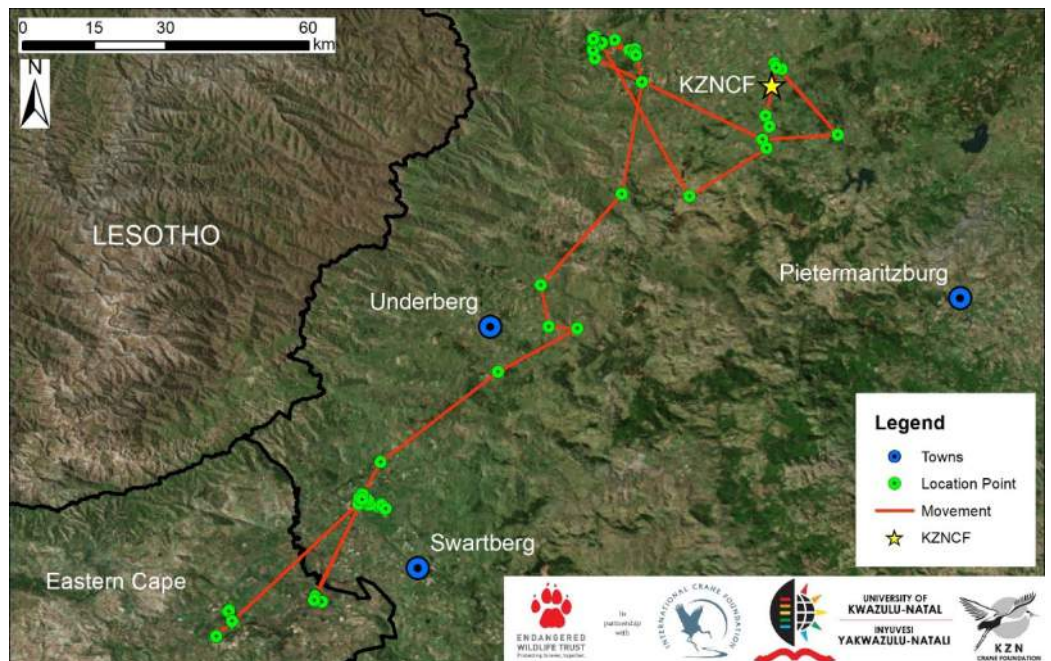
“For the first time in the world, we have successfully fitted satellite trackers to five wild Wattled Cranes, thanks to collaboration between the EWT, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the KZN Crane Foundation and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.”



Photo by Janine Rennie

PROTECTING CRANES

A map showing the seasonal movement of a Wattled Crane between the KwaZulu-Natal midlands and the Southern Drakensberg of the Eastern Cape



Valuable information collected through satellite tracking

Although non-migratory in the true sense, Wattled Cranes in South Africa tend to form “non-breeding” floater flocks that move across the eastern grasslands of the country. Results from the trackers fitted have demonstrated a seasonal movement of the non-breeding portion of the population between the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands and the Southern Drakensberg region near Cedarville.

“These birds, often as young as one-year-old, make a direct overnight flight of over 200 km, where they then spend several months over summer and autumn in the floodplains of the Umzimvubu river, otherwise known as the Cedarville flats, before returning to the KZN midlands at the start of winter.

This valuable information allows us to focus conservation efforts in both breeding and non-breeding range of Wattled Cranes – unfortunately still listed as critically endangered in this country – to ensure safe spaces for cranes through collaborative partnerships,” says Smith.

Cranes released into the wild after being painstakingly reared by humans

Understanding the movements of Wattled Cranes in the wild in South Africa has come at an important time. Two young Wattled Cranes reared by humans dressed in crane-costumes have now been released in floater flocks by the KwaZulu-Natal Crane Foundation.



As part of the Wattled Crane Conservation and Research Programme, the KZN Crane Foundation undertook the ambitious task of rearing Wattled Cranes chicks hatched from second-eggs collected from the wild. “Second eggs are abandoned by the parent birds once the first egg hatches,” explains Smith.

The first two birds were successfully raised at the isolation rearing facility in Nottingham Road, KwaZulu-Natal and the birds, affectionately known as Isabelo and Umfula, have been released into two different flocks of non-breeding Wattled Cranes.

PROTECTING CRANES



Photo by Daniel Doppre

Isabelo, one of the costume reared Wattled Cranes, was released this year into the wild floater flock of Wattled Cranes. Here he comes into roost for the night – Note the satellite tracker on the left leg – this gives us daily information of Isabelo's movements.

“Fitted with satellite trackers the research team are able to monitor their movements in relation to the wild birds and document their integration into the wild. This is an exciting stage for the conservation of Wattled Cranes, where several partners have worked tirelessly for the past two decades to halt the decline of a species that was perilously close to extinction. We are able to now spend valuable time and resources in getting answers to so many questions that have been left unanswered,” continues Smith.

Special habitats and species are receiving special protection in KZN

“Together with farmers, other conservation organisations and NGO's, the SA government and corporates such as N3 Toll Concession, we have worked for over two decades to reverse the decline of all three of South Africa's cranes and protect the wetlands and grasslands that are the backbone of our natural heritage.

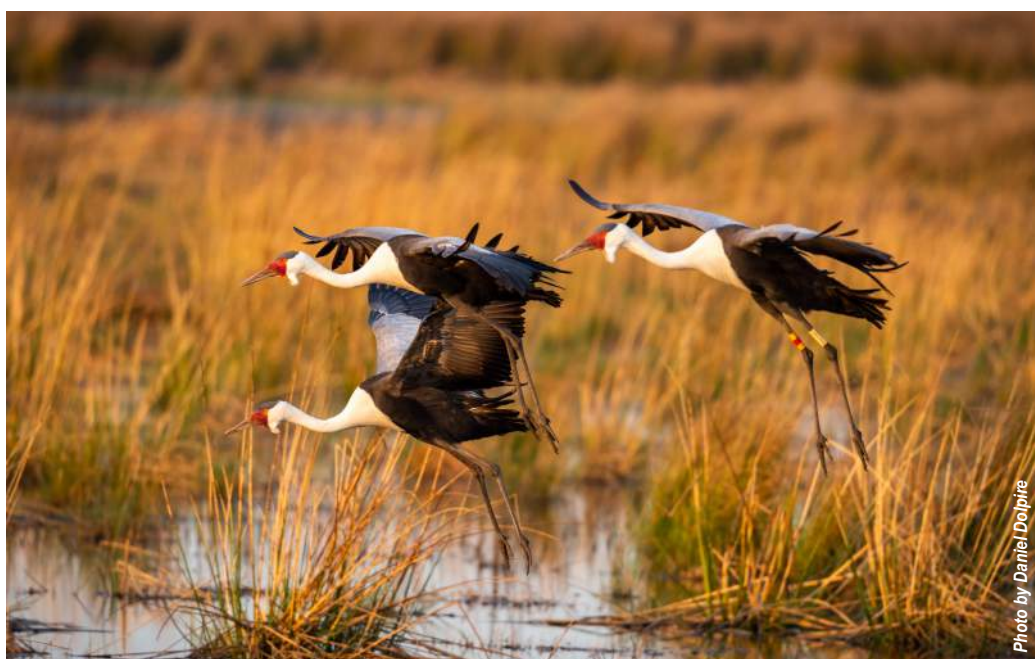


Photo by Daniel Doppre

Wattled Cranes coming into roost – the colour ringing of Wattled Cranes started in 1986 and allows researchers to document the resighting of known individuals in order to better understand population dynamics such as survival, age of first breeding, site fidelity and range expansion.

PROTECTING CRANES



Photo by Tanya Smith

We focus on protecting private and communal land through a voluntary, but legally contractual process called the Biodiversity Stewardship Programme. Within KwaZulu-Natal – thanks to our ingenious legislation, civil society and government – we have been able to declare 32 private and communal Nature Reserves and nine Protected Environments. These areas are protecting special species such as our cranes, chameleons, Blue Swallows, Oribi antelope, Golden Moles and so much more.

Together with landowners, we work to a future where land is managed sustainably, wetlands and grasslands support biodiversity whilst supplying us with essential life services such as clean water, provision of water during dry seasons, carbon sequestration, natural materials for houses and crafts, as well as grazing for livestock.

Thanks to all our partners for making a difference,” ends Smith.

Why do crane conservationists dress so peculiarly?

When hand-rearing crane chicks, human caretakers are required to dress in special crane costumes and to mimic the behaviours of adult cranes to teach the youngsters the skills they will need to survive in the wild.

Costume-rearing is a proven and effective technique to avoid “humanisation” of the birds. By following this technique, crane chicks stand a better chance to successfully be released back into nature.

For the first two weeks costumed-parents spend the nights with their chicks as they require to be fed every two hours. Caretakers also take their crane babies for regular walks, and teach them how to forage and feed on foods in their natural wetland habitats.

Rearing cranes in captivity is a slow and fascinating process, requiring absolute commitment, but every chick successfully raised and released is a gift to our heritage.



Photo by Daniel Dolpire

BLUE SWALLOWS



Rangeland assessment work

Race to save SA's critically endangered Blue Swallows

There are less than 30 pairs of Blue Swallow left in South Africa!

In the race to save the Blue Swallows it is essential that the remaining fragments of their habitat (and natural water production) are protected and managed to ensure the survival of these beautiful little creatures; as well as that of the Cape Parrot and other threatened species.

The plight of the Blue Swallow (*Hirundo atrocaerulea*) in South Africa is well documented and reported. This intra-Africa migratory species is threatened by destruction, degradation and fragmentation of its grassland and wetland habitats on both its breeding grounds (Southern Africa) and its non-breeding grounds (East Africa). The destruction and fragmentation of natural habitat led to a rapid reduction of its already small population and this could be close to being SA's most threatened bird.

In KwaZulu-Natal Blue Swallows have a narrow habitat preference for moist Midlands mistbelt grassland where it forages for insects and breeds in Aardvark holes and sinkholes.

"The mistbelt is a highly productive area and because of this, the competition for land use by timber plantations and formal agriculture is intense. Today, this grassland type is classified as endangered with only approximately 2% of its original extent found in formal protected areas. Most remaining Midlands mistbelt grassland is on private and communal land and so the fate of these areas and the critical biodiversity in them rests mainly in landowners' hands," explains Steve McKean, director of Conservation Outcomes.

A new conservation partnership fledges in KwaZulu-Natal

Conservation Outcomes and Birdlife South Africa have initiated a partnership to promote and support the conservation of KwaZulu-Natal's natural heritage. Its focus is to conserve

BLUE SWALLOWS



and manage areas essential for bird conservation. The partnership's emphasis is initially on the critically endangered Blue Swallow and its threatened mistbelt grassland habitat. N3TC is a proud partner to both Conservation Outcomes and BirdLife South Africa.

"We are working against the clock. That is why it is essential to understand what is happening to our Blue Swallows and what is driving the changes that are happening. The information helps us to prioritise areas for landowner engagement and to try and secure land use for conservation.

Conservation Outcomes and BirdLife SA along with key partners such as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, several volunteers and landowners jointly monitored the 2018/19 Blue Swallow breeding season.

Sadly, the information gleaned from the last breeding season shows that Blue Swallows are indeed in trouble. Only 13 active nests were found and 29 chicks fledged from the nests. This is a dramatic decline from the already low number of 30 active nests found in previous years. Of the 13 active nests found, only two were in formal protected areas, while the remaining 11 nests were on private and communal land. This emphasises the critical role private and communal landowners have in conserving these birds and their habitat," continues McKean.

"There is so much we still don't know about the Blue Swallows. There has been a steady decline in this species when compared to data from the late 1980s, with the recent decline being far worse than expected. And we still do not know why. There are many theories, but sadly very few facts to refute or back up these theories."

However, it is not all doom and gloom. There are already numerous landowners who are committed to help us save and protect these birds through habitat conservation; biodiversity stewardship programmes; and careful monitoring and tracking of the Blue Swallows and their breeding habits.

"Land owners who wish to help conserve Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) are invited to partner with us. Together, we can enhance the conservation of key biodiversity areas," invites McKean.

More information is available from www.conservation-outcomes.org or www.birdlife.org.za.

THE BLUE CRANE



Heritage, naturally

A country's story is told through its national symbols, be it a flag, an anthem ... or a bird. So, what is the story behind South Africa's blue crane?

The Blue Crane - SA's national bird

The history of why the Blue Crane was chosen as South Africa's official bird seems somewhat blurred and exact details are hard to come by. In various ways the Blue Crane has held special meaning among different cultures in the country, but one thing is clear: historically it has been revered and admired by all.

Unfortunately, the Blue Crane population in South Africa has been decimated in the past few decades. Without serious, collective conservation efforts, our children's children may never see this elegant official symbol of our cultural and natural heritage in real life.

Certain areas along the N3 Toll Route provide an important habitat for the Blue Crane, and N3TC supports many important conservation projects along the route.



Photo by Daniel Dolpire



Photo by Daniel Dolpire

N3 RADIO



N3 Radio – your N3 Gateway companion

Talking about cranes and conservation – visit N3 Gateway <https://www.n3gateway.com> for more information about the places where you can see Blue- and other cranes along the N3 Route. You can search and find many more authentic experiences with the help of N3 Gateway.

The N3 Gateway region stretches from Pretoria in the north to Valley of a Thousand Hills in the south, traversing four provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. The region incorporates cross-border tourism with Lesotho through Phuthaditjhaba, Caledonspoort and Sani Pass and includes the Battlefields Route up to Newcastle.

And whilst you are exploring the N3 Gateway, tune into N3 Radio **to stay informed and entertained.**

This free app, proudly sponsored by N3TC, can be downloaded from both Android and iOS stores.

It gets triggered – via the GPS in your smartphone – when you are near a place that has a story on the app.

While listening to whatever radio station or music you've chosen to accompany your trip, N3 Radio will cut in to tell the stories and share interesting bits of information about the areas you are driving by. You can even choose to stream N3 Radio all the way along the N3 Toll Route.

The call of the crane is not often heard outside of protected areas, but now you can even hear the distinctive “Ma-hem” resonating on N3 Radio.

If you have ever been fortunate to witness the dancing of cranes, the narrations and sounds on N3 Radio will once again conjure up exquisite images in your mind of cranes gracefully moving in grasslands, wetlands and maize fields.

And if you have never experienced cranes in their natural habitat, but are keen to know more, N3 Radio will happily oblige. Listen to the story about Wattled Cranes, narrated by David O'Sullivan, and their somewhat otherworldly sounds right here on N3 Radio. SoundCloud link here.



WIN WITH N3 RADIO AND N3 GATEWAY

Mobility readers now stand a chance of winning a copy of wildlife photographer Daniel Dolpire's book, *The Sentinels: Cranes of South Africa*.

“*The Sentinels* is a work of art. It is truly a visual feast celebrating the beauty and uniqueness of these remarkable birds,” said N3TC's commercial manager, Con Roux at the announcement of this competition.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/N3RadioApp/> now to enter.

HERITAGE
DAY

OAKLANDS MANOR ZULU EXPERIENCE



Food for thought

Food and the way it is sourced and prepared are part of a nation's intangible heritage. Some nations' foods have even received World Heritage status, such as Croatia's gingerbread-making, Turkish coffee and the French gastronomic meal.

Here in South Africa our food heritage is wonderfully varied, with each culture having unique dishes and methods of making them. However, since you're in KwaZulu-Natal, why not try a traditional Zulu culinary experience?

It can be found at the village at Oaklands Manor in Van Reenen, where guests are welcomed at the Malotja homestead with *amaHewu* (non-alcoholic beer) made in Zulu pots. After a reading by a traditional healer, guests move on to the Mabizela homestead for a meal prepared by the village women. Zulu dancing completes a thrilling cultural experience.



Oaklands Manor practises ethical and sustainable farming and most of the produce for its restaurant comes from the food gardens on the property or farmers nearby. There is also a medicinal garden that supplies the production kitchen where tonics and natural antibiotics are produced.

For more information, visit www.oaklands.co.za or enquire on +27 79 529 2314.



The route that takes you there.

Stay in touch

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