

TURNING THE *page*

A new editor for *Ostrich*



MICHAEL AND ROSMARIE SEIPT

I have my younger sister to thank for getting me into birds. At the age of 12, my eyes and binoculars were still on a quest to spot and list big mammals (which included the *Ostrich* by virtue of its size) and my monopolisation of the necessary resources had left her with the bird book. Then I realised that her list was longer than mine: unacceptable! And so a life-long learning journey into the world of beaks and feathers began, a journey that was facilitated by family safari holidays to diverse southern African destinations.

I completed my BSc Hons, on botanical themes, at Wits in 1996. After a brief stint as a game ranger I headed to London, where I did a variety of jobs, starting literally at the bottom as a grave-digger and

ending my three years as an IT consultant for BP after I had completed a diploma in computing. But soon I had to answer the call of the wild, a call that had been growing stronger over the years.

At the end of 2002 I planned to return to South Africa via a round-the-world cycle trip, but after I had pedalled across South America from Argentina to Peru one thing led to another and I spent the next seven years spellbound by the biodiversity of the Peruvian Amazon rainforest and the magical wildlife of the Tambopata. Five years of that time were used to complete my PhD at the Manchester Metropolitan University on the topic of parrots and their clay-eating habits.

The completion of my PhD in 2010 also saw the end of my nomadic lifestyle, courtesy of my very organised German wife. To get a roof over our heads, we agreed to help my father set up the Blue Hill Nature Reserve on the edge of the Baviaanskloof in the Western Cape. My tropical world was replaced by a Mediterranean one, surrounded by fynbos. Soon the researcher in me was trying to answer questions about the local bird movements, and a few years later I was taken on by Phoebe Barnard at SANBL. This was the start of five productive years as a postdoc at the University of

Cape Town and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, researching birds of the fynbos biome.

Although my travels and research have taken me around the globe, I am African born, a citizen of this continent, and am so proud of what Africa has to offer the world. It is beautiful and exciting, a continent of adventure, diverse peoples and iconic wildlife. The time is ripe for our history of exploring and adventure to be channelled into useful research that will guide us and our wildlife through rapidly changing and challenging times.

I believe African ornithology has great potential and wish to see *Ostrich* as the flagship publication medium for avian research across the continent. I also believe that an understanding of our environment, through research, is vital for informing policy-makers and managers and I envisage that the information we disseminate through *Ostrich* will be important in this regard.

In addition, I relish a bit of humour, so you can expect the journal to be more interesting and entertaining in some respects in the future. At the same time, I have committed to increasing the rigour of the science presented in it.

ALAN LEE



ALL TOGETHER NOW

In July BirdLife South Africa gathered at Glenburn Lodge in the Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng, for our annual staff meeting. Items on the agenda included introductions for the new employees from the past year.

Like any team, we aim high. But, unlike South Africa's Olympic team, our success isn't measured in gold; it's measured in extinctions avoided, sites protected and an increase in the public's appreciation of nature. Sadly, the less glamorous, but essential core work of our support staff often goes unsung, so rather than review progress and discuss conservation strategies, the team engaged in highly interactive sessions, with a lot of fun team-building activities. Now it's back to work to see what we can accomplish in the coming year!