

CONTRIBUTE TO SCIENCE



HENNIE STORM



DAWIE KLEYNHANS

Contributing bird distribution data to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP) is a way of life for Sasolburg residents Dawie and Sarieta Kleynhans. Grabbing every opportunity to atlas has led to many special memories for them and also the notable achievement of Dawie being the third most prolific atlaser ever!

Dawie and Sarieta started atlasing in 1997 during SABAP1, after encouragement from Rick Nuttall. However, the bug only well and truly bit in 2007, at the beginning of SABAP2. Since then, they atlas together as a couple whenever and wherever they can and it brings them great joy.

Even with more than 3400 full protocol cards from almost 700 different pentads to his name, Dawie is as enthusiastic as ever about SABAP2. His primary motivation is the satisfaction of contributing to science and being able to update species coverage maps in real time. A self-proclaimed lister, Dawie relishes building species lists for pentads. This means finding rarities or out-of-range species, which requires patience and dedicated monitoring. Although he's atlased throughout

southern Africa, regularly atlasing his home pentad is a passion. He has submitted more than 700 full protocol lists for his home pentad (2645_2745), so finding new species is not easy, but he managed to add species number 294 – Knob-billed Duck – in March 2022. Dawie lives by the maxim that you will only find things if you go looking!

Identifying new or unusual species for a specific pentad means that you need to know the 'usual' or frequently recorded species. Before he visits a new area, Dawie keeps a close eye on the SABAP2 website to keep track of the species recorded in specific pentads. As he explains, 'I don't use the maps in field guides; I rely on maps on the SABAP2 website as these are updated in real time.' He is interested in the finer details of atlasing too, for example, taking note of arrival dates for migrants in his home pentad, which enables him to explore trends over time. He encourages atlasers to use the SABAP2 website to add depth to their atlasing.

According to Dawie, it's never been easier to be a citizen scientist and he urges all birders to register and get

involved. He admits that atlasing was more challenging when he and Sarieta started, before BirdLasser revolutionised data collection and submission. But that is no longer the case – BirdLasser is user-friendly, which makes it easier for anyone to be a citizen scientist.

His advice to new atlasers? Be willing to be surprised and respect the atlas protocol: spend as much of the five days allowed in a pentad as possible to search out all the available habitat types. That's the best way to ensure you get a comprehensive list and maximise your chances of finding the unexpected.

above *Knob-billed Duck: the latest addition to Dawie's home pentad list, species number 294!*

above, left *Atlasing is always an adventure for Dawie and Sarieta Kleynhans.*

