

ANDRÉ MARX

Citizen scientist, conservationist and passionate birder

It is with great sadness that we have learnt about the passing of André Marx on 1 May 2023. André was a keen contributor to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project and a beloved member of the birding community.

André's passion for birding began during his time at the University of Natal in the early 1980s, where he was introduced to the hobby by Prof. Gordon Maclean. After relocating to Pretoria in 1984, he joined the Pretoria Bird Club (now BirdLife Northern Gauteng) and remained an active member for nearly 40 years. He held various positions on the committee, including that of chairperson, and had been the club's president for the past 15 years.

With a dedication to birding that went beyond his local club, André represented BirdLife Northern Gauteng and the Gauteng region on the Southern African Ornithological Society and served on the BirdLife South Africa Council for several years.

He was respected for his exceptional knowledge of bird calls and behaviour, his expertise on top birding sites and his contacts with local landowners, all of which ensured that every birding excursion he led was an in-depth learning experience for everyone. André was particularly interested in mentoring beginner birders and enjoyed getting them started on their birding journey.

His contribution to SABAP2 was immense. He submitted 1448 full protocol atlas cards for 531 pentads, completed a further 131 ad hoc cards for 104 pentads and was an additional observer on 82 cards for 78 pentads. These pentads cover every province in South Africa as well as countries outside its borders, such as Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. However, André's contribution to the project went even further than submitting atlas cards; he



also initiated or supported many atlas bashes for areas of poor coverage.

In addition to being a valued member of the SABAP2 Steering Committee, he served as the regional atlas co-ordinator for the provinces of Gauteng and North West and meticulously kept records of regional rarities in Gauteng. He also supported many other citizen science projects, including the Co-ordinated Waterbird Counts (CWAC), and submitted data to the first atlas project.

During André's memorial service, many speakers mentioned his passion for teaching and sharing the skills needed to identify birds. During birding outings, he would always give special attention to beginner birders, providing them with advice and motivating them to learn more. Thanks to his encouragement, an incredible number of birders were inspired to pursue this hobby. Moreover, many of his fledgling birders have also become keen citizen scientists.

BirdLife South Africa recognised André's contribution to citizen science when then Chairman Philip Calinikos (left) presented him with an Owl Award.

André's phenomenal contributions to the birding community will be greatly missed, but his legacy will live on through the countless birders he encouraged throughout his lifetime. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends during this difficult time.

ERNST RETIEF, TANIA ANDERSON AND
MICHAEL BROOKS, SABAP2 MANAGEMENT
TEAM

