

THE UNSUNG HEROES OF SABAP2

In the heart of southern Africa a remarkable endeavour is under way: the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2). At its core, more than 2000 birders diligently record bird sightings in pentads across the region. Together these citizen scientists have amassed 21 million records, and counting, and add another 1.22 million records annually.

While SABAP2's volunteer force stands as the public face of this noble cause, less conspicuous but equally vital is the team working behind the scenes. If the project is to prosper and continue making a positive impact, sound governance and expertise are essential. This is where its steering committee comes into play, providing invaluable counsel on how SABAP2 is managed.

At the helm of this committee is Susie Cunningham, the director of the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Her enthusiasm and charm have made her a perfect fit as the committee's chair, succeeding Peter Ryan, who recently retired as the director of 'the Fitz'. Accompanying Susie is a group of luminaries, each bringing their own wealth of knowledge and expertise:

- Mark Anderson, the CEO of BirdLife South Africa
- Alan Lee, BirdLife South Africa's Science and Innovation Programme Manager
- Andrew Skowno of the South African National Biodiversity Institute
- Chevonne Reynolds, senior lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand
- Robert Thomson, associate professor at UCT
- Henk Nel, operations manager at BirdLasser
- Res Altwegg, Centre for Statistics in Ecology, Environment and Conservation, UCT
- Duncan McKenzie, an ecologist and representative for the Regional Atlas Committees.

Also serving on the committee, but with additional responsibilities to manage the daily running of the project, are:

- Michael Brooks, the chief technical officer at the Department of Biological Sciences, UCT, who also manages the CWAC and CAR database systems
- Tania Anderson, the recently appointed coordinator of SABAP2
- Ernst Retief, BirdLife South Africa's Spatial Planning and Data Project Manager.

To ensure the highest standards of data quality and accuracy in mapping bird distributions, SABAP2 relies on the diligent work of 13 Regional Atlas Committees. Comprising experts and enthusiasts, these committees verify out-of-range records that are automatically flagged when data are submitted. Their profound knowledge of the birds in their respective regions equips them to make informed judgements on these sightings. The committee members also coordinate atlas efforts, organise birding events and bridge coverage gaps in their regions, ultimately contributing to more robust analysis and interpretation of the data and thus

more successful conservation outcomes. In addition, they play a pivotal role in grassroots advocacy, actively promoting SABAP2 within their regions.

Those seeking assistance or wishing to engage with their Regional Atlas Committees can find contact details of the chairperson of each committee on the SABAP2 website at sabap2.birdmap.africa/content/3. Whether you have enquiries about out-of-range records or simply want to discuss atlas-related matters, please feel free to contact these individuals directly.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated volunteers of the SABAP2 Steering Committee and the Regional Atlas Committees. Their meticulous evaluation of data and tireless efforts contribute immeasurably to the conservation of South Africa's birdlife.

TANIA ANDERSON, ERNST RETIEF AND
MICHAEL BROOKS



PROVINCE/COUNTRY	REGIONAL ATLAS COMMITTEE CHAIR/S
Eastern Cape	Jeff Curnick/Gerrie Horn
Free State and Lesotho	Dawie de Swardt/Rick Nuttall
Gauteng and North West	Stephan Terblanche
KwaZulu-Natal	Colin Summersgill
Limpopo	Derek Engelbrecht
Mpumalanga	Duncan McKenzie/Peter Lawson
Northern Cape	Doug Harebottle/Vincent Parker
Western Cape	David Winter/Garret Skead
Botswana	Chris Brewster
Eswatini	Ara Monadjem
Malawi	Bob Medland
Mozambique	Etienne Marais/Dylan Vasapolli
Namibia	Holger Kolberg
Zimbabwe	Ian Riddell/Julia Pierini