

Friends of
ZEEKOEVLEI
& RONDEVLEI



CAPE TOWN SOUTH AFRICA

FoZR

Newsletter

November 2016

About FoZR

FoZR is an apolitical, community-based, non-profit organisation that aims to assist the nature reserve authorities to protect the much-threatened flora and fauna that make this corner of the Cape Flats their home.



Contacts

Friends of Zeekoevlei & Rondevlei (Dee Cranswick): 083 2525 680

False Bay Nature Reserve Office: 021 396 4283 / 81

Reserve's emergency response number: 083 499 1717

Environment

Migratory birds

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

The Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) is a very small wader with an extremely large range, being a long-distance migrant that migrates overland utilizing many routes. This species breeds in arctic Europe and Asia, with breeding occurring between late-June and early-July (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). During the breeding season this species inhabits low altitude tundra in the high Arctic (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996).



On migration this species can be found along the muddy edges of small inland lakes, reservoirs, sewage farms (Johnsgard 1981), riverbanks (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996) and seasonal pools (Snow and Perrins 1998), as well as on coastal mudflats and seashores (Johnsgard 1981, del Hoyo *et al.* 1996).

This species can currently be seen occurring in small groups at the Zeekoevlei weir and the Strandfontein sewerage works birding area.

Reference:

BirdLife International (2016) Species factsheet: *Calidris minuta*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 23/11/2016.

Tipling, D. (n.d.). *Juvenile little stint*. [image] Available at: <http://www.arkive.org/little-stint/calidris-minuta/image-G54379.html> [Accessed 23 Nov. 2016].

Barber's Cape Flats Ranger – An Extremely Rare Cape Flats Skipper Butterfly

The Barber's Cape Flats Ranger (*Kedestes barberae bunta*) is a skipper butterfly on the brink of extinction. This cute little flutterby is only about the size of the distance between your forefinger tip and your first knuckle. It only occurs in the Pelican Park section of False Bay Nature Reserve (FBNR), located near Muizenberg on the Cape Peninsula. Within the Pelican Park section of the reserve it only occupies an area of 4.18ha out of a total of



244ha. Many decades ago it used to occur in the area around Steenberg railway station, but the habitat in this area has been destroyed by housing development. The only known locality of this butterfly is currently in FBNR. The adult butterflies feed on common Strandveld plant species such as *Jordaaniella dubia*, *Dimorphotheca pluvialis* and *Zaluzianskya villosa*. The adults utilise cottonwool grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) as their larval food plant. Cottonwool grass grows in the dune seeps in the reserve. The grass is used as a breeding ground for adults and a feeding source for their larvae which feed exclusively on cottonwool grass. Cottonwool grass occurs in most tropical and subtropical parts of the world and is well adapted to fire. The butterfly, however, is not adapted to fire and is easily killed off by fires. The Pelican Park section of FBNR is prone to fires in the summer months and current research suggests that past fires have depleted their population numbers in patches of cottonwool grass where fires have occurred.



The fire risk to their habitat is further exacerbated by human access to certain patches of cottonwool grass, as a main arterial road (Strandfontein road) runs through the Pelican Park section of FBNR. The patches of cottonwool grass adjacent to this road are the only patches in Pelican Park to have been burnt. This indicates that the access provided by the roadway is a hazard to the cottonwool grass habitat of *K. b. bunta* as these patches are more vulnerable to accidental fires of anthropogenic origin.

Current research suggests that *K. b. bunta* will not survive the next 5 years and its chances of survival grow slimmer with each passing year. They occur in small numbers in each patch of cottonwool grass. A population census in 2015 revealed only 40 individuals for the entire population. *K. b. bunta* shares its cottonwool grass habitat with the False Bay Unique Ranger (*Kedestes lenis lenis*). The larval habitat requirements of both *K. b. bunta* and *K. l. lenis* appear to be highly influenced by the density of cottonwool grass (habitat structure) and not on the leaf succulence or soil moisture of cottonwool grass patches. *K. b. bunta* females appear to prefer to lay their eggs in sparse areas of a cottonwool grass patch. The larvae that hatch out of these eggs therefore feed on grass in sparse areas of a patch. Most of the sparse grass areas in a patch are around the edges. Field observations revealed that the grass around the edges of a patch tends to become dry and unpalatable with the onset of summer. *K. b. bunta* eggs are laid during spring, when grasses on the edge of a patch are still palatable. The rarity of *K. b. bunta* could be influenced by mortality arising from larval mortality that occurs due to grasses becoming too dry to feed on. *K. l. lenis* females prefer to lay their eggs in the denser areas of a patch. *K. l. lenis* eggs are laid in November when most edge grasses have already dried up, which could force them to lay their eggs in denser areas of a patch.

A management plan for *K. b. bunta* is currently being compiled based on research into the habitat requirements of *K. b. bunta* larvae and adults in 2015 and 2016. This management plan will include suggestions on the implementation of a breeding and translocation programme for *K. b. bunta* informed by data collected during 2015 and 2016 research. This will hopefully aid in the recovery of this precious endemic and draw it back from the brink of extinction.



Photos & Text: Ismat Adams

Coming up soon...



FoZR

Annual General Meeting

Monday, 28 November 2016

Rondevlei Lecture Hall

19:00

The following talks will take place at the AGM:

- The Gantouw Project (Petro Botha)
- Mouse Project (Robyn Mortens)
- Fish Ladder (Dalton Gibbs & Tayla Hadwen)

FoZR Committee

Chair – Dee Cranswick (083 2525 680)

Treasurer – Tracy Gibbs

Secretary – Nicky Stock

Fundraising – Tom Schwerdtfeger

Activities – Neil Major

Reserve Liaison – Liz Day

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Compiled & Designed by Jocelyn van Eeden