



The Water Birds of Ledibeng (Part 3)

The **African Pied Wagtail** / Bontkwikkie or ***Motacilla aguimp*** has very distinct markings and is easy to identify. The wagtail gets its name from the motion of the tail. When the bird is stationary the tail moves up and down and when the bird is on the move the tail is stationary. They readily become accustomed to human activity in the areas where they feed. They mainly live on insects but will also eat breadcrumbs.

The **Egyptian Goose** / Kolgans or ***Alopochen aegyptiacus*** can be seen sitting next to the water's edge or on sandbanks of the dams located on the Estate. This species can easily be identified by a dark brown patch around the eye and on the chest. They are usually seen in pairs. The presence of two Egyptian Geese, in the vicinity of an old tree with a giant nest in it, indicates that they might be getting ready to breed on the Estate. It is not uncommon for the little ones to leave the nest within 6 hours of hatching, jumping to the ground and then following the female to a nearby water source. It is a known fact that Egyptian Geese and domestic geese are the first animals to react when an earthquake or earth tremor is about to occur.



The **African Fish Eagle** / Visarend or ***Haliaeetus vocifer*** is unmistakably an African icon and is well known all over the continent. At Ledibeng we are fortunate to see them frequently and hear them call. The Fish Eagles are usually found in the vicinity of the big dam on the north eastern side of the Estate and also close to the dams located on the south eastern side. For decades the ability of the Fish Eagle to grab a fish from the water whilst in flight has fascinated people.





Around Lake Malawi the Fish Eagles have become so accustomed to locals calling them and then throwing a capenta (a kind of fish) into the water wherever they wish to attract them. This occurrence has turned into a matter of 'eagle on demand'. The most spectacular pictures can be taken in this way. The caller will however request a small tip afterwards!! Fish Eagles usually fish but will also eat carrion, nestlings and eggs of waterbirds, adult waterbirds up to the size of a flamingo, monitor lizards, frogs and even monkeys. Any fish of more than 2,5 kg cannot be carried in flight. The moral of the story is: Make a good estimate regarding the weight of the fish you are about to catch or go swimming!! A pair of Fish Eagles is currently breeding on the Estate. Due to the big demand and exorbitant prices paid for baby chicks, this location is guarded day and night. The location remains a safely guarded secret.

The **Black Crake** / Swartriethaan or ***Amaurornis flavirostris*** is another reed dweller that can be found on the Estate. This bird has red eyes, a greenish lemon yellow bill and red legs and feet. Most water birds will fly away when threatened or if scared for any reason but a Black Crake will fly up into a tree and observe the situation from there. They usually feed on a number of insects, molluscs, worms, small fish, heron's eggs, seeds and water plants. This species is very vocal at night.



A Storm from Another Planet Descends on Ledibeng

During the night of Friday 28 October 2011 a dark cloud mass started to develop on the western side of Lephalele.



Shortly after 22h00 all hell broke loose in the form of heavy rain and gale force winds. This had only lasted a few seconds before the electricity went down. The next morning some areas of town still

did not have any electricity. The roads were littered with branches and four out of every ten trees were uprooted, obstructing the roads.





A total of 40 millimetres of rain fell in about half an hour. On the Ledibeng Eco-Estate the tar roads were turned into well designed streams of mud and large quantities of sand and mud were deposited everywhere. There was

no time to sit around because the clean-up on the Estate was put into action.

Trees had to be removed from the roofs of houses, some trees fell in such a way that driveways were obstructed, road signs and sign boards were pushed either completely down or were standing at an

angle. When, we thought we had seen the worst of it, yes, think again.... another storm and strong wind made an appearance on Monday evening, October 31. This time solar panels were blown from rooftops, a Venter trailer was pushed into the street by the wind, a trampoline was picked up and put down 300 meters from where it originated. Roof tiles and fascia boards were blown from roofs and thrown all over the place. Internet poles were mangled and garden furniture was scattered around. More trees were uprooted and two big trees fell on the perimeter game fence.

This second storm brought 13 mm of rain.





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THE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT TEAM
WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL THE RESIDENTS OF
LEDIBENG ECO-ESTATE
A HAPPY AND SAFE FESTIVE SEASON



MAY 2012 BE A GOOD ONE FOR ALL...

