

Ornithological Observations



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Ornithological Observations accepts papers containing faunistic information about birds. This includes descriptions of distribution, behaviour, breeding, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and plumage. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, and any other interesting or relevant material.

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FIRST RECORD OF A LESSER MOORHEN IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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FIRST RECORD OF A LESSER MOORHEN IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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We were surveying pentad 2800_2635 just southwest of Welkom for SABAP2 on 8 March 2014. It had rained quite a lot during the week and the roads were muddy and slippery in places, but passable with a high clearance vehicle.

The morning started well with a sighting of an Orange-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*. We recorded the usual and expected birds along the route.

We stopped at a small seasonal pan next to the road to scout for waterbirds. The pan is situated on a private game farm at S28° 01.650' E26° 37.200'. I spotted a waterfowl not looking familiar just 4 m from the car. At first I thought it was a juvenile Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, but I was not entirely sure. I pointed it out to Janine to look as well and to make notes. We started to discuss the possibility of a Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata* and we consulted our field guides. By now we were quite certain it was a Lesser Moorhen. Great excitement, a lifer for both myself and Janine. We soon discovered a second bird about 2 m to the left of the first one.

I took photos of the birds from the car and then I got out of the car and took more photos with the car between myself and the birds. The

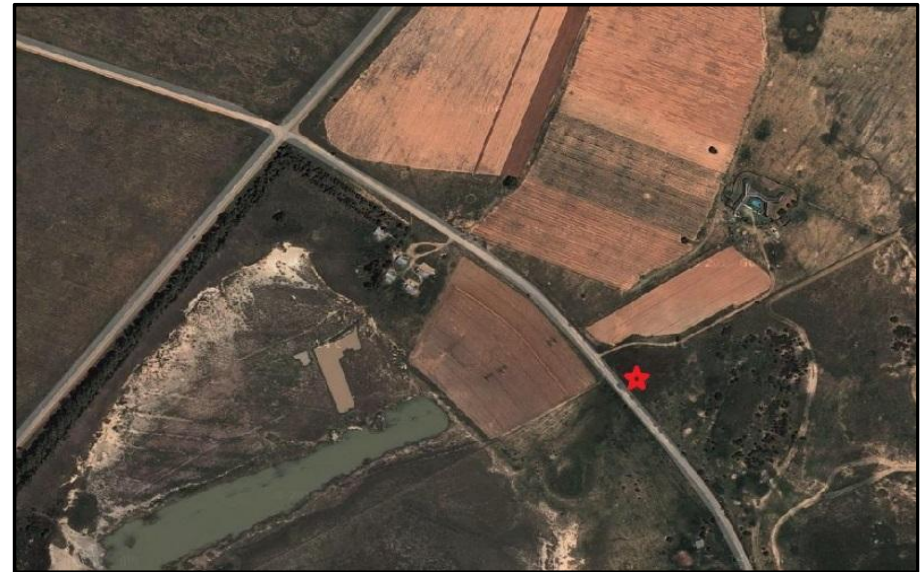


Fig 1 - Location of the sighting on a Google Earth map.

birds were unperturbed by our presence and continued to forage among the reeds and grass.

We then moved on and surveyed the rest of the pentad. On the way back we stopped at the spot where we observed the birds. We were fortunate enough to see the birds again..

On 26 April 2014 we surveyed the pentad again. There was still plenty of water in the pan and the grass had grown quite tall. The Lesser Moorhens were not to be seen on this visit.

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Acknowledgements

Confirmed by the Free State Regional Atlas Committee.



Fig 2 - One of the Lesser Moorhens *Gallinula angulata* that was observed at the pan.