

making memories

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS
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BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY is a tonic for my soul and the photographs I take form part of a memory bank of special people, places and occasions. Seven years ago I started taking my photography more seriously, using my wife's 400D and 18-55mm lens. The birds I managed to photograph were incredibly small in the frame and the images included more of the environment than the bird. At first I paid attention to how close I could get to the birds, then I progressed to flight and action images, followed by the desire to capture a special moment with a narrative. Ironically, it appears that I have now gone full circle and reverted to wanting to capture birds in their habitat - small-in-the-frame shots that give context and tell a story at the same time. >

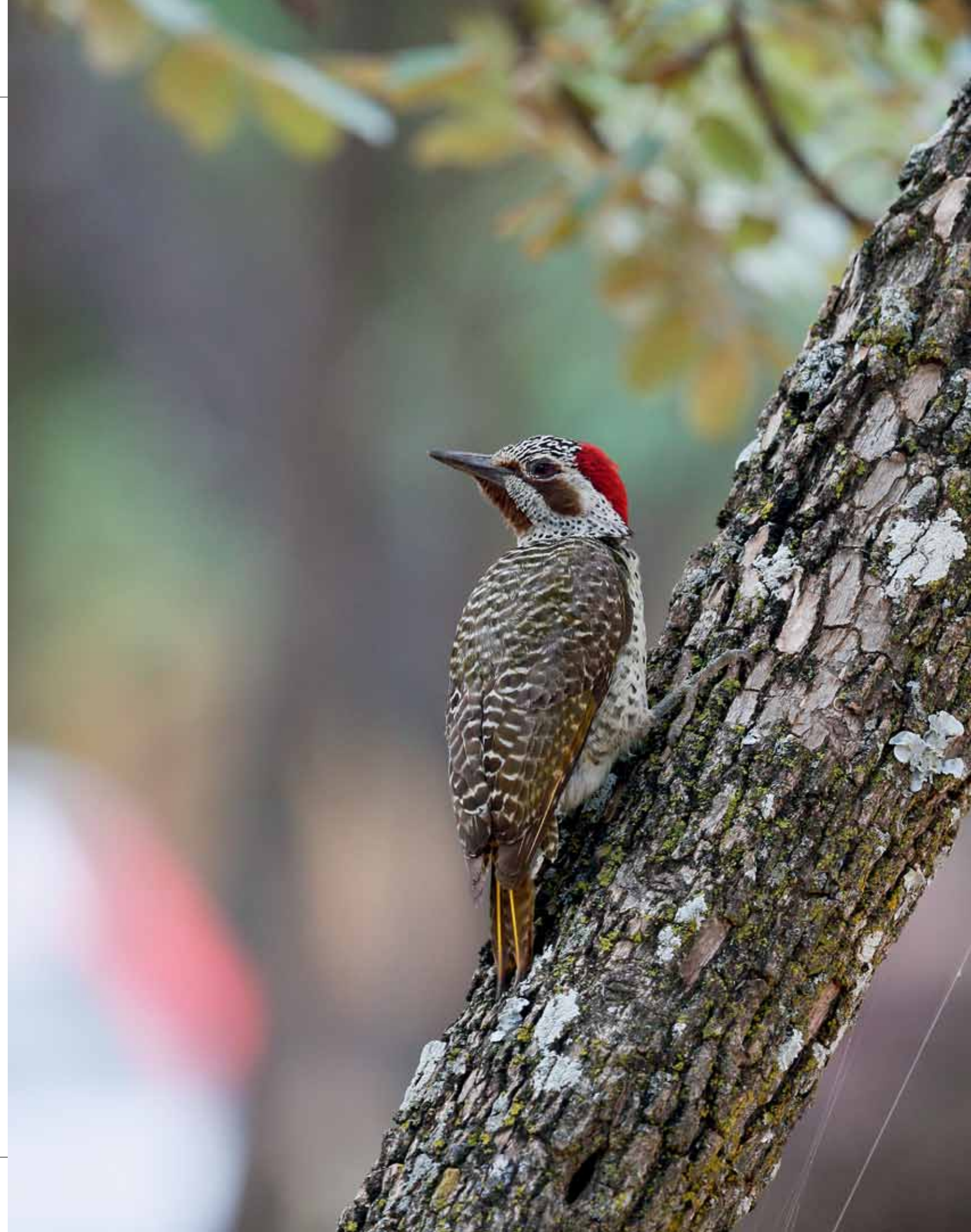




above Thick-billed Weavers not only are beautiful birds, they also build fantastic nests. I had always wanted to photograph them in full nest-building mode and was afforded the opportunity while staying with my parents-in-law on their smallholding on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast.

opposite I have had some of my best photographic outings when exploring the gardens of lodges and camps. The birds are more habituated to people and are likely to remain in position a while longer than those elsewhere. While investigating the gardens of Mabula Game Lodge in Limpopo I encountered a family of Bennett's Woodpeckers. The lodge accommodation in the background helped to add some character and depth to this shot of the female.

previous spread White-throated Swallows herald the beginning of summer and the start of the breeding season. I love watching their aerial antics and anticipating what they will do next. I photographed these two at Marievale Bird Sanctuary near Nigel.





This image evokes great memories of a family holiday spent at Limpopo Lipadi. I was lying under a game-drive vehicle, taking photographs of seedeaters at a small pond we had built. This tiny Blue Waxbill had just finished taking a bath there and was drying off when a flock of Red-billed Queleas dived into the pond and started splashing about madly. The resultant spray of water droplets added an extra dimension to the background of the photograph.

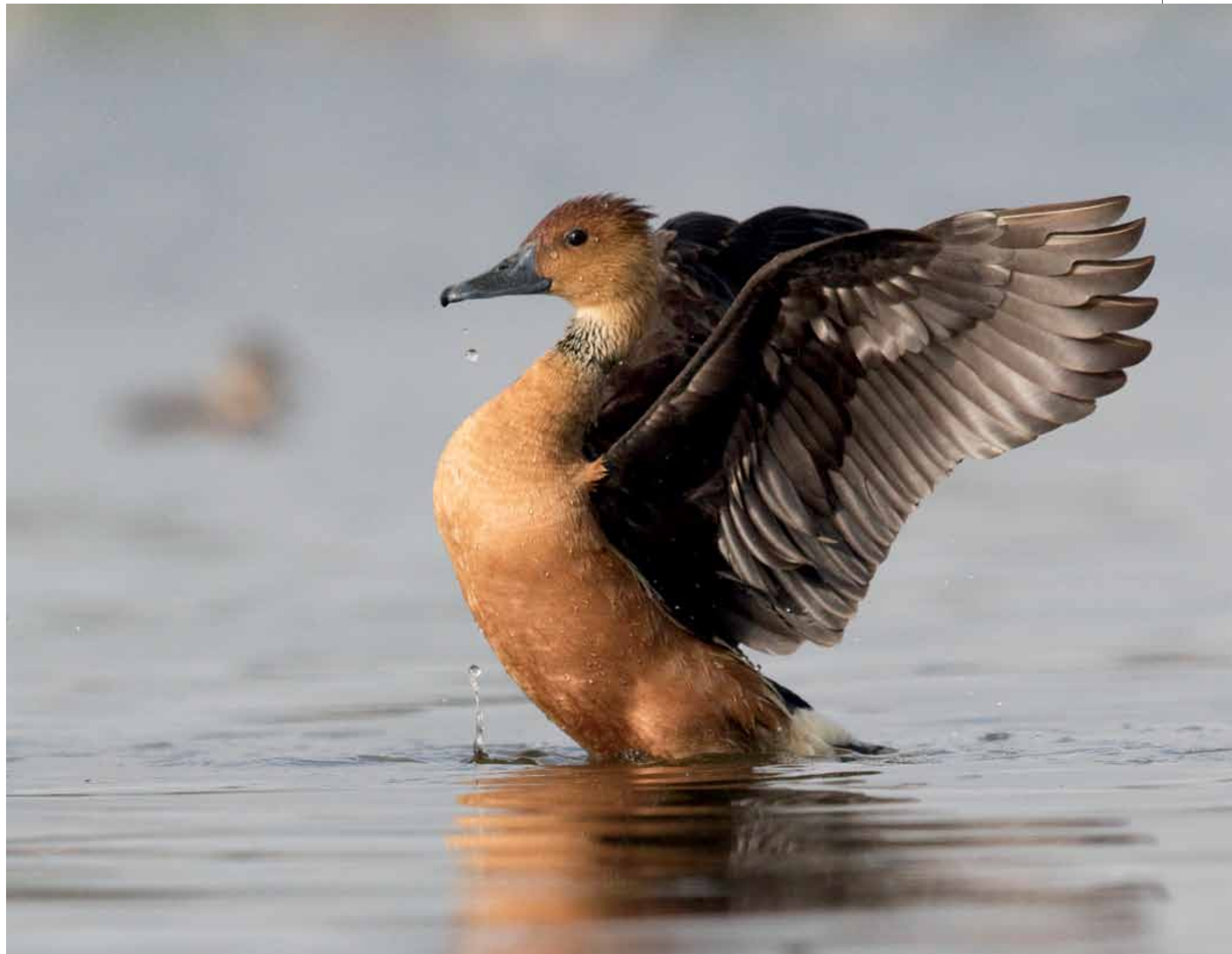


I enjoy birding in the Devon Grasslands IBA in Gauteng with its beautiful farm vistas, charming tranquillity and abundant birdlife. In summer it bursts with the colour of cosmos flowers and breeding widowbirds and bishops. On this occasion, an excited Levaillant's Cisticola used the cosmos as a vantage point from which to sing to attract his partner.



above One of my favourite early-morning birding destinations is Rietvlei Nature Reserve, near Irene. This urban game reserve often produces surprisingly good birding; even with the powerlines and houses in the background, you can for instance find yourself watching a Giant Kingfisher smashing a crab on a small bridge. I have seen this behaviour on two occasions while visiting the reserve and this time a bit of luck and good timing enabled me to capture the moment.

right I have spent many good times lying at the edge of Bullfrog Pan, near Benoni, watching as a variety of ducks go about their day. Summer is particularly rewarding as a number of ducks and grebes breed within the pan's boundaries. On this occasion two Fulvous Ducks mated in front of me and then proceeded to preen, rising out of the water.



This photograph, which hangs in our dining room at home, brings back a raft of memories. We had decided to 'escape' Joburg and headed to the Waterberg for a break. We stayed at Shondoro Mountain Retreat and woke to the unmistakable sound of Pearl-spotted Owlets duetting. The sun was rising over the mountains and highlighting the background when one of the little owls landed in a tree right in front of our chalet, perfectly positioned for an image.



Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is one of my favourite destinations. My wife Eileen and I have spent many a morning laughing at our failed attempts to photograph sandgrouse – endless hours of frantic photographic activity have resulted in only a few sharp images. One morning an adult Lanner Falcon decided to visit Leeudril and all the time I had spent practising photographing sandgrouse finally paid dividends. ♦