

# Sound Birding



**Green Barbet**  
*The fig-specialist of  
Ngoye Forest.*

**ON BIRDLIFE SA'S BIG BIRDING DAY 2024,  
THE SATOSHI'S SPARROWS SET OUT EARLY  
TO NOT ONLY ENJOY THEIR LOCAL RARITIES,  
BUT TO HIGHLIGHT THE ULTIMATE THREAT  
TO BIRDS AND CONSERVATION:  
THE MONEY WE USE IS NOT RARE,  
IT'S ABUNDANT.**

**TEXT STUART MCKERNAN | IMAGES HUGH CHITTENDEN**

## *Swamp Nightjar*



What is so special about a **Green Barbet**, a **Bronze-naped Pigeon** and a **Swamp Nightjar**? Why do birders descend in their flocks for an unassuming sandpiper on the Mtunzini mudflats?

Rarities have value because they're hard to find. We have to work for them, either by spending time in the right habitat or travelling to wherever their location might be.

Humans make decisions at the margin, under the influence of scarcity- the value of something is determined by how easy it is to obtain another one.



That's why no one makes a special trip for a **Burchell's Coucal** or an **Olive Thrush**, but happy to do so for a **Black Coucal** or a **Spotted Ground-Thrush**.

*The Satoshi's Sparrows atop the Dlinza Forest Aerial Boardwalk.*

## THE PROBLEM

We all recognise that our birds and their habitats are threatened. If they weren't, there wouldn't be non-profits fighting everyday to counter the anthropogenic challenges.



*Black Coucal*

But the question is, do we really understand the problem? Are our interventions reversing the trends, or only offering a temporary resistance? It is only when a disease's underlying cause is understood that it can be cured.

In March/April 2022, *African Birdlife* magazine reported on the dire state of Ndumo Game Reserve in the article “*Vested Interests*”. Two paragraphs are startling:

- *“...the human population living along the Phongolo River (which stretches up to Jozini beyond) had grown from 30 000 to more 400 000 from 1980 to 2020.”*
- *“...in communities surrounding Ndumo Game Reserve, more than 70 percent of the population survives on less than R800 a month, provided by government grants and a small informal economy, and that up to 70 percent of residents are under the age of 18.”*



*Pel's Fishing Owl*

This is the elephant in the room. And it's going to get worse- this is why nothing conservation is doing today will make any difference.

Because the biggest threat to conservation is a socio-economic problem, and we are not addressing the economics.



*African Finfoot*



*African Broadbill*

## **TIME IS FUNDAMENTAL TO CONSERVATION**

**Conservation** is the sustainable use of our natural resources. **Sustainable** means we are concerned about the future.

Human **time preference** can be described as the rate at which we discount the future compared to the present. We all agree that today is more important than tomorrow- there is a lot that can happen today that completely changes the context of tomorrow, and every individual discounts the future at a different rate than another.



*Yellow-streaked Greenbul*

Those with **low time preference**, for instance, start planning for their child's university education as soon as the child is born. The future is recognized as important enough, and provision is made today.

Humans with **high time preference** are not sure from where their child's next meal will come.

The future is uncertain, and therefore, university education is not considered during the actions of the present day.

As humans, we are all individually, communally, and nationally moving on the spectrum of time preference.

What determines a person's time preference?

The leading factor is **economic freedom**.

The more economic freedom a person has, the more likely they are to make decisions that benefit the people around them, because it's mutually beneficial for their future self.



*Spotted Ground-Thrush*

It follows that countries with high economic freedom have higher prosperity and better social indices, such as *increased GDP, increased life expectancy, higher happiness scores in polling, lower corruption and violence*, and, importantly, *increased income levels for the poorest 10%* ([heritage.org](https://www.heritage.org)).

Notably, these countries also have better environmental protection.



*Crowned Eagle*

Therefore, if we want to lower the time preference of communities for the benefit of biodiversity, ***we need to increase economic freedom.***

People will only protect Nature if they can afford a future where Nature still exists.

*Property rights, monetary policy, rule of law, freedom to trade and work, and low levels of bureaucracy and corruption collectively influence our economic freedom.*

*How could we as citizens then influence economic freedom when governments are largely responsible?*

## SOLVING CONSERVATION

We need to start using sound money.

When money is abundant, resources become rare; when money is rare, resources become abundant.

*What do we mean by that?*

The natural state of a free market is deflation. Thanks to entrepreneurs and advances in technology, prices fall to the marginal cost of production. New entrants to the market will capture the difference between inputs and sales, enhancing competition and driving down prices.

*But why then do our prices continue to rise?*

Because the money supply is increasing at a higher rate than the influence of deflationary factors. For this, we can thank *central banking* and, more specifically, *fractional reserve banking*. Every time a loan is made, new money enters the financial system. **Currency debasement** distorts price signals, increases business input costs, and inflates asset prices.



African Golden Weaver

What makes this worse is something called the **Cantillon Effect**. This ensures that those, who receive the newly created money first, benefit at the expense of all others, meaning that rural people living at the environmental interface become poorer as their earnings are eroded and their cost of living increases.

This is the cardinal reason why we see progressive wealth inequality.



Mangrove Kingfisher



Red-chested Flufftail

## *Narina Trogon*



An ever-increasing money supply is not needed for an economy to grow; we do not need a central bank-regulated interest rate—all we need is a single divisible monetary unit to run the economy.

Yes, capital may be needed to start a business, but that doesn't mean new money has to be conjured magically onto a bank's spreadsheet.

Humans are consumers, and with money that is finite in supply, purchasing power will rise as the amount of goods and services increases. It's simply math, and the only available form of money that enables us to accurately perform this calculation, is Bitcoin.

Thus, for a community champion like Junior Gabela, or a conservation non-profit organisation, the cost of living or operational costs will get cheaper should they migrate to a Bitcoin Standard.

**Bitcoin's value proposition is that it is the best savings technology. And only when humans can save, can they start to value everything around them.**

## *Red-capped Robin-chat*



## **WHY IS BITCOIN VITAL FOR CONSERVATION**

The future of biodiversity will be determined by the choices of people at scale, whether it is communities at the wildlife interface, humans harvesting resources on which other species depend, or elected politicians making decisions about land-use.

***If we want to spread this philosophy of conservation, then we also need to scale low time preference.*** People need to value their future, but how can they when their economic energy is being debased by inflation?



***White-backed Duck***

When you are struggling to pay rent, transport and food, what does it matter if **African Penguins** are going extinct. We don't need birds and grasslands and wetlands in order to survive ourselves- humanity will always engineer an alternative or synthetic solution; that's why the human species continues to flourish in places where the biodiversity has been eliminated.

But if we all use sound money, that is finite in supply and incorruptible, we can secure our future with productivity. With free market money, prices will fall to the marginal cost of production, and savings will increase in purchasing power.

We can then spend more time enjoying life, and we can value Nature purely for the Cultural Services she offers us, *like birding.*

## WHY DID WE CHOOSE THE NAME “SATOSHI’S SPARROWS”?

The [Bitcoin White Paper](#) was published by cypherpunk **Satoshi Nakamoto** on 31 October 2008, and in 2011 Satoshi disappeared— to this day his identity remains a mystery.

What we do know is that he favoured Austrian economics and despised central banks. He knew that the perfect money needed to be independent of human control, and so he wrote the open-source code for Bitcoin: sound money run on an incorruptible ledger that is maintained by thousands of contributors around the world.

What remains is all the early Bitcoin that he mined. And it serves two purposes:

- For 16 years no individual, company or nation-state has been able to hack the wallet and move these enormous holdings, proving the networks’s security model of cryptography and proof-of-work.
- The voluntary protocol has demonstrated anti-fragility and immutability; growing in the absence of any singular entity or group, revealing that we have finally [separated money from state](#).



**Sparrow Wallet** is an open-source, globally reknown, Bitcoin desktop wallet.

In a small way, our birding team pays homage to the South African developer that in the spirit of Satoshi, shares it for free with the world for anyone seeking self-sovereignty.

Visit [sparrowwallet.com](https://sparrowwallet.com)



## *Southern Banded Snake Eagle*

### **HOW DOES BITCOIN HELP A BIRD GUIDE?**

Junior Gabela is a local legend in Mtunzini, and your best *birding* asset when visiting Ngoye and Dlinza mistbelt forests, or when searching for local specials such as **Palmnut Vulture**, **Mangrove Kingfisher** and **Southern Banded Snake Eagle**.

But the reality is that the financial system is rigged against him. The only *honest* way to improve the quality of one's life is to add value to society, live within your means, and then accumulate *financial* assets; but what do you do when you can only save in cash, and your money is a melting ice cube?

What do you do when you can't afford to buy a mortgage, or don't meet the barriers of entry to get exposure to the Magnificent 7?

***Bitcoin is the most equitable asset available.*** Now Junior can access the same asset class as a Wall Street banker or a nation-state. Bitcoin doesn't care what your name is or what you look like like, plus it's permissionless- the protocol for prosperity.

With a smartphone, or even an old school feature phone (*thanks to proudly South African [machankura.com](http://machankura.com)*), anyone can save in the instrument that measures everything else, and everything goes to zero against Bitcoin.

Not only is it the best way to hedge against inflation and migrate one's economic energy through time, but it is also extremely liquid and portable, and can be used for daily transactions using the Lightning Network.

You can spend it at Pick n Pay (using the [blink.sv](http://blink.sv) phone wallet), or at any business on [btcmmap.org](http://btcmmap.org) or [wedobitcoin.co.za](http://wedobitcoin.co.za), or you can trade a few satoshis peer-to-peer for ZAR with a friend that's also stacking.

That's why we call it **Freedom Money**. Study Bitcoin.

For awesome birding in KZN, contact Junior at **082 667 3704**, and why not send some sats to his Lightning address:

[juniorgabela@blink.sv](mailto:juniorgabela@blink.sv)



LET'S



CONSERVATION

[SATOSHISSAFARIS.COM](http://SATOSHISSAFARIS.COM)

[WILDVETSTU@NOSTRPLEBS.COM](mailto:WILDVETSTU@NOSTRPLEBS.COM)