



Wakkerstroom Bird Club

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 6

NOVEMBER 2012

Welcome to our sixth newsletter

Committee news

Paul Tubb, one of our committee members, has resigned as a member of our committee, much to our disappointment. He remains a member of the Club, however, which means he's not totally lost to us. On the subject of the committee, we did give their names and contact details in an earlier newsletter. However, as it is not always easy to have details at hand in case you'd like to send us an article for future newsletters or whatever, here they are again:

POSITION HELD	NAME	CELL NO:	LANDLINE NO:	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Chairperson	Guerin: Brian	0834156701	0137449456 / 0177300570	bguerin@nelweb.co.za
Vice-Chair/CAR Co-ordinator	Wheeler: Judy-Lynn	0836093513		judy@bruwer.net
BLSA Representative	Steenkamp: Andre	0843966853		wakkerstroom@birdlife.org.za
Projects Co-ordinator	Dennett: Norman	0825000212	017 730 0523	dennett@mtnloaded.co.za
Recorder	Burchmore: John	0822243326		burchmore@telkomsa.net
Secretary/Treasurer	Barrow: John	0822556778	017 730 0169	dajohn.barrow@gmail.com
BLSA Representative	Garland: Kristi	0832270128		wakkerstroom-centre @ birdlife.org.za

Joint meeting with the Ama Clic Clic Club

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we held a joint session with the Ama Clic Clic Club, a locally based camera club at *The Mucky Duck* on Tuesday, 6 November 2012. Because the Camera Club's theme for November was "Indigenous Birds", we were asked to provide a Bird Quiz for attendees to take part in after the pics had been exhibited.

Unfortunately, very few Bird Club members attended the event, which was a bit of a downer, but those of us who did attend enjoyed it. The people were divided into three teams and had to identify birds shown on the "Big Screen" for 30 second per slide. These were chosen by Andre Steenkamp and Glenn Ramke. The team which included John and Penny Burchmore were the winners.

Trip to the Vlei – 3 November 2012

On a warm morning 9 of us set out to enjoy an hour or so's birding in the next of our series of summer vlei walks. The weather had not been very nice during the week before with strong winds nearly every day and expectations were not very high. Nevertheless we ticked a total of 41 birds including Little Egret, Glossy Ibis (noticed how common these are on the vlei at present?), Hottentot Teal, Southern Pochard, Grey Crowned Crane and African Marsh Harrier – a suspected breeding pair.

Join us on Saturday 1 December @07h: 00!

Interesting local sightings

Fred Kolbe of the Wakkerstroom Farm Lodge contributed the following:

1. In 1970, the Red billed Ox Pecker was common on what is now my farm;
2. At the time I also saw a black eagle and dead sheep or cattle attracted vultures fairly quickly (I am not sure which vulture/s it was;
3. The Crowned plover was also common at the time. Since about 1985 I have never seen a bird of that specie on the farm again until last week Thursday – what a pleasant surprise.

Please keep John Barrow (dajohn.barrow@gmail.com) posted on unusual bird sightings that you see on your travels around our village and surrounds. We find this very interesting and are sure that recipients of the newsletters will be equally interested.

Display material for the Bird Hides

Random House Struik (Pty) Ltd have been approached for permission to use the illustrations from Sasol **Birds of Southern Africa** for the new interpretive mini posters that we intend placing on the walls. They have, most generously, agreed to our using their artwork provided we acknowledge their copyright, include their website address and make sure that the illustrative material is not abused.

Several people have donated funds for the production of the plaques and when these are produced, these will be placed in the Hides

Our grateful thanks to those who donated money for the plaques.

Bird Hides

On the subject of the Hides around our village;

The Flufftail Hide, as you know, was totally destroyed by fire during the winter. Fortunately, it was insured and once the claim has been settled, it will be rebuilt.

The Iain Drummond Hide had need of major repairs which are nearly finished. Our grateful thanks go to Mr Malcolm Drummond and Mr Howard Marshall of the Sandton Bird Club for their most generous contributions to the repair of the Hide

Facebook

To some of our members, it comes as no surprise to be told that the Club has its own page! For those of you who are on Facebook but are unaware of the page, please call it up and “like” it. We have 23 “likes” and evidently we need in excess of 30. So, please get clicking!

Also, the page is like fledglings! It needs to be fed often to keep it up-to-date and relevant. So if you have any pictures of unusual birds or any anecdote about a recent bird sighting, please e-mail John Barrow on dajohn.barrow@gmail.com

Also, Norman Dennett is adept at placing information in the Volksrust Recorder, so buy a copy regularly!

Bird of the Month

The Black Stork

(Extracted from Wikipedia)



The **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* is a large wading bird in the stork family Ciconiidae. It is a widespread, but uncommon, species that breeds in the warmer parts of Europe (predominantly in central and eastern regions), across temperate Asia and Southern Africa. This is a shy and wary species, unlike the closely related White Stork. It is seen in pairs or small flocks—in marshy areas, rivers or inland waters. The Black Stork feeds on amphibians and insects.

Taxonomy and etymology

The stork family contains several genera in three major groups: the open-billed and wood storks (*Mycteria* and *Anastomus*), the giant storks (*Ephippiorhynchus*, *Jabiru* and *Leptoptilos*), and the “typical storks”, *Ciconia*. The typical storks include the White Stork and six other extant species, which are characterised by straight bills and mainly black and white plumage. Within the genus *Ciconia*, the Black Stork’s closest relatives are the other European species, the White Stork and its former subspecies, the black-billed Oriental White Stork of East Asia. The Black Stork was found to be basal in analysis of mitochondrial cytochrome b DNA by Beth Slikas in 1997. Fossil remains have been recovered from Miocene beds Rusinga and Maboko Islands in Kenya, which are indistinguishable from the White and Black Storks.

Description

Slightly smaller than the White Stork, the Black Stork is a large bird, 95 to 100cm in length with a 145–155cm wingspan, and weighing around 3 kilograms. They can stand as tall as 102cm. Like all storks, it has long legs, a

long neck, and a long, straight, pointed beak. The plumage is all black with a purplish green sheen, except for the white lower breast, belly, axillaries and under tail coverts. The breast feathers are long and shaggy forming a ruff which is used in some courtship displays. The bare skin around its eyes is red, as are its red bill and legs. The sexes are identical in appearance, except that males are larger than females on average.

The juvenile resembles the adult in plumage pattern, but the areas corresponding to the adult black feathers are browner and less glossy. The scapulars, wing and upper tail coverts have pale tips. The legs, bill, and bare skin around the eyes are greyish green.^[10] It may be confused with the juvenile Yellow-billed Stork, but the latter has a paler wings and mantle, longer bill, and white under the wings.

It walks slowly and steadily on the ground. Like all storks, it flies with its neck outstretched. It has a rasping call, but rarely indulges in mutual bill-clattering when adults meet at the nest.

Distribution and habitat

During the summer, the Black Stork is found from Eastern Asia (Siberia and China) west to Central Europe, reaching Estonia in the north, Poland, Lower Saxony and Bavaria in Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Greece in the south, with an outlying population in Spain and Portugal. They are nowhere abundant in these western parts of their distribution, but more densely inhabit the eastern Trans Caucasus. A population of Black Stork is also resident in Southern Africa.

Preferring more wooded areas than the better known White Stork, the Black Stork breeds in large marshy wetlands with interspersed coniferous or broadleaved woodlands, but also inhabits hills and mountains with sufficient network of creeks. It does inhabit more areas in the Caspian lowlands.^[10]

Migration

The Black Stork is a strong migrant, wintering in tropical Africa and India. A broad-winged soaring bird, the Black Stork is assisted by thermals of hot air for long distance flight, although are less dependent on them than the White Stork. Since thermals only form over land, storks, together with large raptors must cross the Mediterranean at the narrowest points, and many Black Storks can be seen going through the Bosphorus. They fly approximately 100 to 250 km a day with daily maxima up to 500 km.

The storks migrate from the middle of August to the end of September. They return in the middle of March. About 10 % of the western storks choose the passage Sicily to Cap Bon in Tunisia. The common route goes over Gibraltar. Many birds fly around the Sahara next to the coast. Most birds winter in the wetlands of Nigeria or Mali. The eastern birds take the route Bosphorus-Sinai-Nile to Africa. Birds that summer in Siberia, winter in northern and northeastern India. In Southern Africa, Black Storks that nest in the central montane areas perform season winter movements to warmer coastal and subtropical zones.

[Breeding

The Black Stork builds a stick nest high in trees or on cliffs. It nests in Central Europe in April to May, and is a winter visitor to northern India, Nepal east to Myanmar.

Black Stork parents have been known to kill one of their young, generally the smallest, in times of food shortage to reduce brood size and hence increase the chance of survival of the remaining nestlings. Stork nestlings do not attack each other, and their parents' method of feeding them (disgorging large amounts of food at once) means that stronger siblings cannot outcompete weaker ones for food directly, hence parental infanticide is an efficient way of reducing brood size. Despite this, this behaviour has not commonly been observed.†

Our previous outing

Fickland's Pan is open again! After an uneventful recce a week or two earlier the Committee decided to hold an outing to the Pan, partly to confirm its open status and partly because of its proximity to town. On one of the best recent weather days our group of 12 members enjoyed a most pleasant morning, finished off with a braai at BLSA. As commonly happens at Fickland's, many birds moved away from the parking/viewing area making some ID's a little more problematic.

Birds seen on the way included Black-bellied Bustard, Grey-winged Francolin, Bald Ibis, Secretary Bird, Blue and Grey Crowned Crane and Steppe Buzzard.

The pan itself yielded lots of the usual water birds, among them Cape Shoveler, Southern Pochard, Common Greenshank, Red-billed Teal and a lone Great Crested Grebe, a bird that doesn't seem to like our vlei very much!

Now you can add Fickland's Pan back to your list of birding spots! Don't forget there is an entrance fee of R20 per vehicle.

Christmas Drinks and Snacks

It seems fitting that we cap a successful "year" with a bit of a get-together and snacks with some Christmas Cheer. We are proposing that we meet at the Clubhouse (the building below the BLSA offices) at about 15h30 on Monday December 10th for a visit to the refurbished Drummond Hide and to view the new interpretive mini posters there. This to be followed by drinks and Christmas snacks back at the Clubhouse. The road to the hide is suitable for 2 wheel drive vehicles but we will be able to offer 4x4 vehicles if the weather so dictates.

Sherry, coffee and tea will be laid on, and if the ladies could each bring a plate of eats that will be very much appreciated.

And if everybody could bring a suggestion for what they think we could do next year in terms of projects, meetings outings, etc. that would also be appreciated!

Looking forward to having ALL the members there!

Future outing

As our outings planner has been out of sorts, we haven't as yet organised an outing for late November or early December. You'll be advised of the outing once it has been decided.

The Committee