



Wakkerstroom Bird Club

(Affiliated to BLSA)



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Hello All,

A special day that we think the Club should take part in:



This eye-catching poster is advertising Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's annual Global Big Day and is reproduced here in order to, we hope, encourage Club members to take part. The rules are very simple: all you have to do is record every sighting you make on Saturday May 13, wherever you are and hand your list to a Committee member to be combined with the other lists and forwarded to Cornell University. You can take 5 minutes or any portion of the day to record observations.

In 2016 Global Big Day featured 17 200 eBirders who recorded 6 334 species in 151 countries and submitted 47 000

Checklists! A total of 335 000 eBirders have contributed 360 million observations from every country, representing 98% of all bird species.

We have a chance of making birding history: together we can set a new threshold for a single day of birding. For more information visit www.ebird.org/globalbigday but you don't need to individually register for the event, the Club will.

You merely need to fill in the usual Pentad Survey checklist for the day and provide a little additional information regarding e.g. weather, distance covered etc. If you don't have the checklist please contact me (Brian, 083 415 6701) and I will supply them.

An interesting observation from a regular wetland watcher:

A recent drop in the number of species to be seen in and around the vlei has been quite marked, coupled with infrequent sightings of some birds which are normally common residents. Many people have commented on the situation and the fact that even acknowledged non-birders are aware of change is disturbing. Certainly it does appear as though there are fewer birds about the village and wetland. So it came as a surprise one morning when watching a Common Moorhen and her day-old chick, to think I had momentarily glimpsed the crown of an African Snipe - albeit in an unlikely situation amongst deep vegetation - before realising it was a Striped Mouse (*Rhabdomys pumilio*) cautiously observing the birds. Moments later the adult issued an alarm call and rushed at the mouse, promptly joined by a clamouring Black Crake and Lesser Swamp Warbler. Given the situation, the fact the mouse disappeared was not unexpected, particularly as other birds arrived to join the mob, rushing around and calling before eventually moving off. On a fairly regular basis I have observed rats amongst the reeds, but never witnessed such a reaction to their presence.

After the rain, two Slender Mongooses were observed meticulously checking the tarmac for road-kills.

Future Events for your Diaries:

April 18-20 - Ingula Outing: It's still not too late to join us for all or part of this trip which promises to be great fun.

Saturday May 6 – the usual Wetland Walk, let's keep up the good work for the Atlas, BIRP, Pentad Survey and the Migrant Arrivals and Departures (MAD) surveys....and you just thought it was a mindless meander!

Tuesday May 9 – a repeat visit to Gert van der Merwe's farm La Belle Esperance with stunning views of Majuba, leave the Wakkerstroom Library at 07h30. We need to increase the Atlas coverage in that area so please do your best to join us and help.

Wednesday May 10 – Meeting at BirdLife Centre, 17h30 for 18h00, we are hoping to get Rina Pretorius to give us an update on the summer visit of the Amur Falcons and the perceived decrease in their numbers. Rina may have a timing problem with this date so we may have to change to a day or two earlier. You will be advised in good time.

Saturday May 13 – Global Big Day, see details above.

And, while you're in your Diary, mark Saturday July 29 for the Winter Car Count.

Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association has erected a number of new direction signs to the Wetland, on Badenhorst Street, right into Vlei Street and then left to Kort Street and the Wetland Gate. Well done!

Another interesting local sighting – Graham Spencer reported an adult and juvenile African Harrier-Hawk in town on the weekend. These birds have been seen more and more frequently in town in recent years and obviously find town to be a good food source!

We would like to repeat the appeal that any sightings of two or more raptors being seen together or interacting should please be circulated immediately on WhatsApp (Wakkies Bird Club) or directly to me. Too many of these interesting sightings go unreported!

The birding community has received the following appeal from Les Underhill at the Animal Demography Unit:

Now that SANBI funding for SABAP2 has ended, we need to keep the data management component of the project at the ADU going ourselves. To make a donation to the ADU using a credit card, please click on the following: <https://www.uct.ac.za/dad/giving/ways/online/?proj=ADU> The full amount of the donation goes to the ADU, and you get a Section 18A tax certificate which reduces your taxable income. This donation system was set up by the Development and Alumni Department at UCT.

We hope your long weekend atlassing went well.

Thank you from the SABAP2 team.

Les.

Roy Cowgill:

The death of Roy Cowgill was announced recently and, in his memory, donations for a suitable tribute were sought by BirdLife Port Natal. As a result of this our Club made a donation of R500 to the KZN Ornithological Trust, of which Roy was Chair. The intention is to erect a memorial bench in the Kenneth Stainbank Nature Reserve. Roy and Steve Davis were good friends to the Club over some time – we will keep you advised on progress.

Yours in Birding,

Brian Guerin.