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Wakkerstroom
Bird Club

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Hello fellow Birders,

How has everyone's birding been of late, wherever you may be? It's getting quieter here in Wakkerstroom now that it's cooler and the migrants have all left, but as always it's still rewarding. Acquaintances who were in town a couple of weekends ago reported seeing a flock of about 50 Grey Crowned Cranes as well as 25 Blue Cranes on a drive north of the village! We are always happy to receive sightings news, so please let us know what you've seen lately. We're having beautiful weather lately, with the days warming up quickly from the previous night's chill. The photo below was taken from the nearby "airfield", it looks so peaceful and "very Wakkerstroom" ... excuse the *Pyracantha* (*Pyracantha angustifolia*) on the right-hand side of the photo, as it's a no-no in South Africa (although it's pretty with its orange berries in winter and its white blossoms in spring). An invasive species with a 1b status, *Pyracantha* ("fire thorn") needs to be eradicated wherever it appears. The WBC does so around the wetland wherever possible, which is an ongoing process, and not an easy one at that – it's a prickly character and the birds do their best to spread the seeds all over the place. So if you see it or even have it in your garden, please get rid of it



Ernst Retief on SABAP2 And Atlassing

Here is an interesting article by Ernst Retief about SABAP2 and bird atlassing. While it may sound complicated at first, it really isn't. "This is a useful guide to print and keep handy at all times," writes Ernst. He will be one of our guest speakers at the Birding Bonanza in October, and we look forward to seeing him here.

SABAP2 website, a treasure-trove of information!

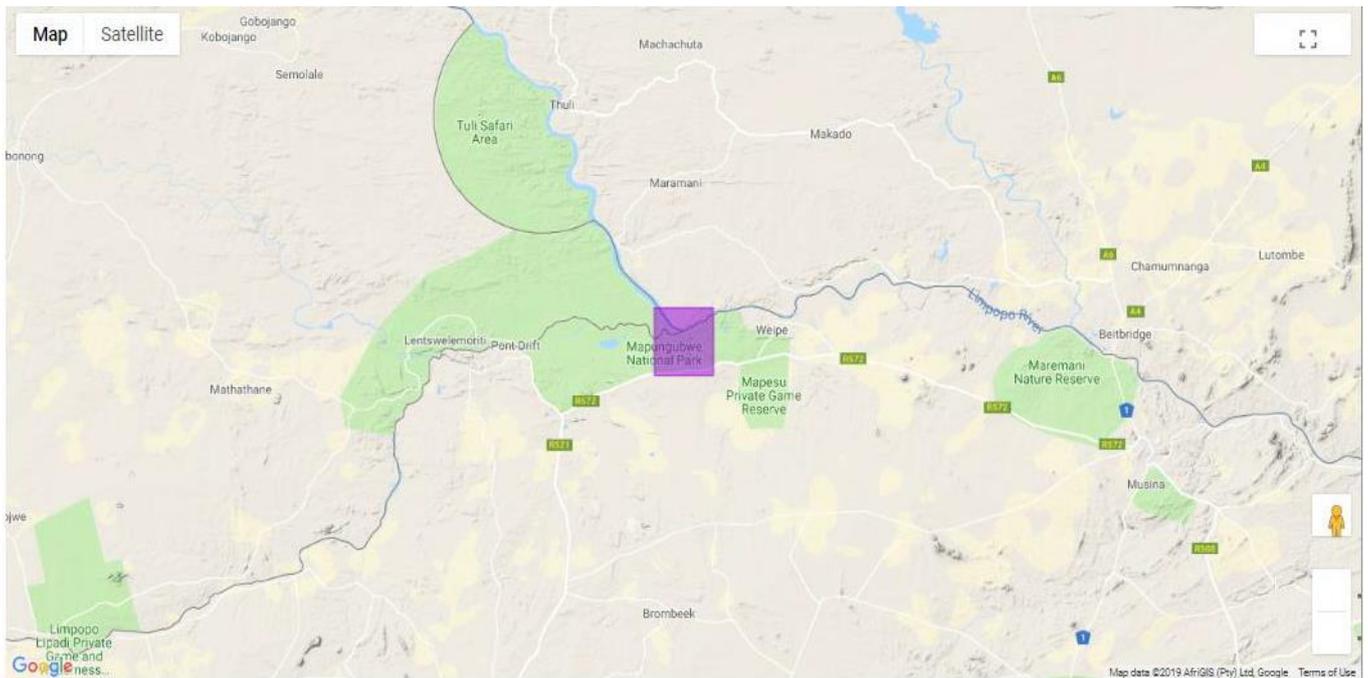
A new website for the Southern African Bird Atlas Project was launched in February 2019 that boasts a much more modern look and functionality. The website is a treasure trove of information for atlassers and non-atlassers alike. This article describes some of the useful information available on the website.

Species Maps

Do you want to know if a species occurs in an area you will be visiting? SABAP2 maps can assist you! Visit <http://sabap2.adu.org.za/species> and search for a species in the search box. You can either scroll down the species list or simply type "kingfisher" to see a list of all the kingfishers in Africa. If you scroll down to African Pygmy Kingfisher and click on the name, a map is displayed with the pentads where the species has been recorded (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Map of African Pygmy Kingfisher. Click on the square in the top right corner to go to full screen view.

You can zoom into the map, and if you select the square box on the top right -hand side of the map, it will open the map in full screen view. By zooming into the area of interest you can see exactly where the species was recorded. Below the map are graphs of seasonal changes in reporting rate (the proportion of cards that contain the species), which gives some idea of the relative abundance of the species and is especially valuable for migratory species. By selecting the download tab, you can download the data for this species in different formats.



Full protocol summary									
Species list		Observer summary (FP)		Cards		Data access			
Spp	Common_group	Common_species	Genus	Species	Full (RR%)	Latest Full			
1	409 Bee-eater	White-fronted	Merops	bullockoides	92.1	2019-04-21			
2	245 Lapwing	Blacksmith	Vanellus	amatus	90.7	2019-04-21			
3	545 Bulbul	Dark-capped	Pycnonotus	tricolor	89.4	2019-04-21			
4	742 Starling	Meves's	Lamprolaima	mevesii	88.7	2019-04-21			
5	838 Waxbill	Blue	Uraeginthus	angolensis	88.1	2019-04-21			
6	573 Cliff-chat	Mocking	Thamnodon	cinnamomeiventris	84.8	2019-04-21			
7	317 Dove	Laughing	Streptopelia	senegalensis	84.8	2019-04-21			
8	413 Roller	Lilac-breasted	Coracias	caudatus	84.8	2019-04-21			
9	316 Turnstone	Cane	Actinotornis	nanus	84.8	2019-04-21			

Pentad species lists

Do you want to obtain a species list for a site you plan to visit? Easy to do on the SABAP2 website. Visit <http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage/country/southafrica> and zoom into the area of interest (Figure 2). Double click on one of the pentads and a new page will open for the pentad - click on the “species” tab below the map.

Figure 2: Click on the pentad for which you would like a species list

This generates a large table listing all the species recorded in this pentad (Figure 3). Do you want to know which is the most commonly recorded species? Click twice on the “Full ((RR%))” column heading. The table will be sorted according to reporting rate with the species with the highest reporting rate at the top. These tend to be the most common species in the atlas block and should be easy to find. As you go down the list, the reporting rate decreases, indicating that species are increasingly less likely to be seen.

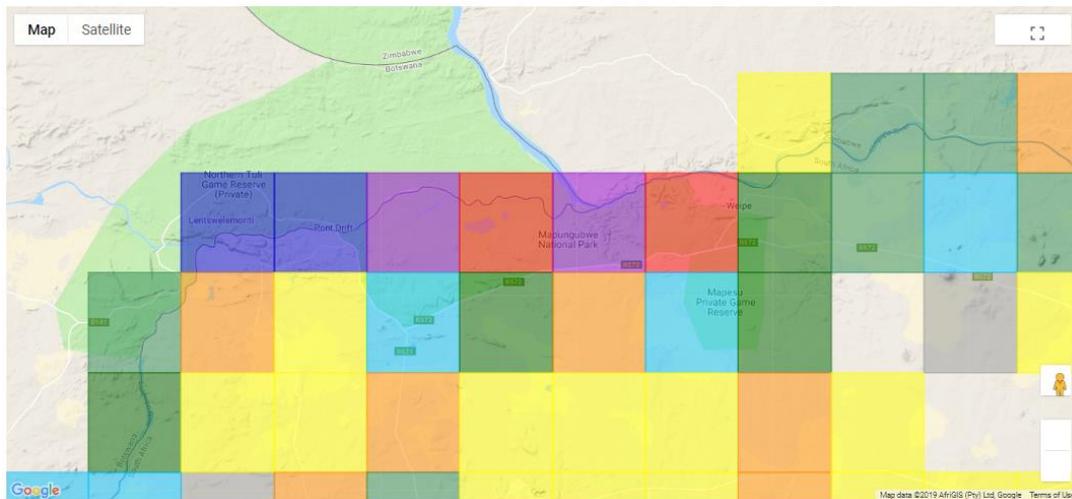


Figure 3: Click on the heading “Full (RR%)” to change the sort order so that the birds with the highest reporting rate is at the top.

Find gaps in the 2019 Coverage Map

Lastly, for the atlasers. Earlier this year we set atlasers a challenge to atlas 5 300 pentads in 2019. The reason for this request is that in order to monitor changes in bird distribution we need data for as many pentads as possible each year. So how do you know if a pentad has been atlased in 2019?

Easy. Visit <http://sabap2.adu.org.za/> and then select the menu item “Coverage”, then “South Africa” and then the province you want to atlas. A map with all the pentads atlased since 2007 will be displayed. To the right of the map select “2019” in the “Select Year” drop down box. This restricts the map to pentads atlased in 2019. By zooming into the area, it is easy to identify pentads that have not been atlased in 2019.

Summary

There is a lot more you can do on the SABAP2 website. Spend some time on the website, try out the different menu items and search for the hidden treasures. The data shown on these maps was collected by dedicated atlasers and we thank them for their contribution.

If you are keen to become an atlaser, write to sabap2@birdlife.org.za and we will try our best to assist you.

Ernst Retief; BirdLife South Africa & SABAP2 Co-ordinator

WNHA Update On The Proposed Martin's Dam Pipeline

"Following many attempts to engage with the Municipality as well as the Department of Environmental Affairs, the WNHA has launched an application in the Mpumalanga High Court in relation to the project to construct a bulk water pipeline from Martins Dam to Volksrust. In this application, the WNHA has asked for the reviewing of the process by which this project was approved, as well as requesting an interdict pending the conducting of appropriate environmental processes. At this point, the application has been opposed by the Municipality and the contractors. The Ministers of Water and Sanitation and Environmental Affairs have indicated that they will not participate in the court processes."

The Wakkerstroom and eSizamalení communities are planning a protest march against the pipeline this Friday, 31st May at 9h00, from the Youth Centre in eSizamalení to the Town Hall, and from Torrazzo at 10h00 for those who are unable to walk so far. Please spread the word in town and among your staff, so we can put up a huge united front for all to see. This march will be covered in the local Rekorder newspaper, and if you have any contacts to other media please let the WNHA committee know as soon as possible.

Talks by Peter Greaves

There was a good turnout on both evenings this month for Peter Greaves's two highly-entertaining talks at the Dana Dienssentrum. They were on "Epic Ethiopia" and "Birding and Travelling in China" respectively. Thanks Peter, keep travelling and birding, hope we'll see you again soon!

Updates - IBA And Newcastle Challenge (27 May 2019)

IBA Challenge:

1st: Richard van Tonder (448 species!)

30th: Mike and Jenni Maxted (255 sp)

31st: John and Penny Burchmore (241 sp)

73rd: Kristi Garland (75 sp)

Newcastle Challenge:

1st: Mike and Jenni Maxted (307 species!)

6th: John and Penny Burchmore (188 sp)

17th: Chris Voets (115 sp)

19th: Kristi Garland (75 sp)

Competitions coming to an end

- The “Name our Mascot” competition will close this Friday 31st May. If you haven’t sent in your suggestion for a name of our cute Secretary Bird soft toy from BirdLife South Africa, please send it to Kristi on 081 726 5282 double-quick! One entry per person only. The committee will select their favourite Top Ten which will be put out on Facebook for YOU to vote on. The lucky winner will be announced at the Arts and Crafts Ramble on the 15th of June, and can not only gloat but will also receive a Secretary Bird soft toy. Nothing to sneeze at. Unless you’re allergic to soft toys, that is ...
- The other competition that’s been keeping us entertained since last August is the always-popular Sandy Twomey Photographic competition. Since the final two months’ worth of photos was displayed on the different Facebook pages, there have been over 1800 views! The competition is now closed to new entries; winners will be chosen by Warwick Tarboton and announced at the Arts and Crafts Ramble as well, and will of course appear on social media and in the next newsletter. Some really fabulous prizes await the winners – we are so grateful for the generous businesses and individuals in town who never fail to support us!

June WBC Calendar

Saturday, 1st June: Our monthly Vlei Walk is as early in the month as can be! Meet from 7h30 at the bridge on the Amersfoort road. Tea and coffee to keep those hands and feet warm!

Tuesday, 11th June: Our outing this month will be to the Wessels farm. Meet at 7h30 at the Library, and bring some food and drink with you, as well as binoculars and bird books.

With the Arts and Crafts Ramble during mid-month, we will be giving our meeting a break. From next month, and lasting through to spring, we will as always move our meeting from the third Tuesday evening to the third Saturday during the day, with a bring ‘n braai which is always popular and great fun.

WHAT A SHOT!

Although not from South Africa, I simply have to share one of the most special bird photographs you are ever likely to see. Social media has been going crazy sharing this everywhere, but in case you haven't seen it yet, take a look at this:



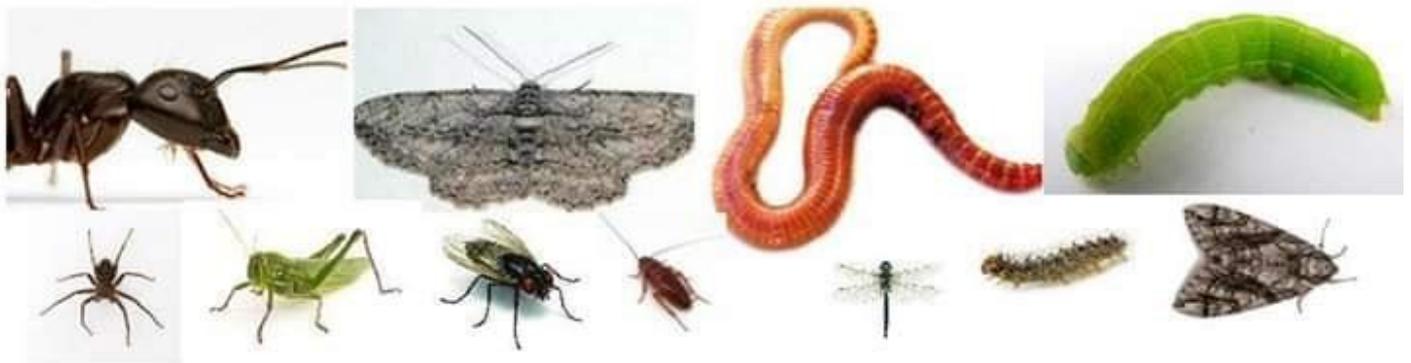
Steve Biro snapped the image of a bald eagle at the Canadian Raptor Conservancy and first posted it on some Facebook photography groups. It was one of several hundred he snapped that day, but this one is perfect. The image of the bird of prey "staring daggers" at the photographer with its piercing eyes has since gone viral.

That's it from me for the month. Keep birding and send us some of YOUR photos!

Chris

P.S. I've added a lovely page from the BirdLife Lowveld Quarterly magazine Hornbill no. 133 – it's a good reminder that a lot of what we regard as pests are valuable food for birds. So go easy on the chemicals please!

ALL YOUR LIFE
YOU'VE BEEN TOLD
THESE ARE BUGS
BUT THEY'RE NOT



THEY'RE BIRD FOOD



NO INSECTS equals NO BIRDS

STOP MOSQUITO SPRAY
STOP LAWN CHEMICALS

*pollinator
friendly yards
on facebook*