



## Wakkerstroom Bird Club



*Affiliated to BirdLife South Africa  
Principal supporter of the Wakkerstroom Junior Bird Clubs*

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### **NEWSLETTER NUMBER 58 – JULY 2018**

Hello Everybody,

We were thrilled to see that our “audience” on Facebook has grown to over 500 during June, with some posts seen by several hundred people. As of 1 July, we had 515 “members” and 513 “followers” on the Page. It’s a great way not only to share interesting birding information of local as well as international interest, but also to let you know about last-minute changes for events and outings, and unusual bird sightings around Wakkerstroom. So if you’ve not yet joined us on Facebook, we’d love to see you on there.

#### **Arts & Crafts Ramble Activities**

June saw the Ninth Annual Arts & Crafts Ramble come to town, attracting artists and visitors from far and wide. The three main interests for the Club were the photographic birding workshop, and the prize-giving of both the Sandy Twomey Photographic Competition and the WBC fundraising raffle. That lucky person turned out to be our own Carol Preston, who was delighted to receive her Weber braai, kindly donated to the Club by John and Judy Ryder. Carol was a popular winner as she does a tremendous amount of work - often behind the scenes - with the children around our town, the local recycling efforts, the anti-litter campaign with her Litter Lions project, and of course she was also the talent behind the adorable illustrations in “Ringo, Story of a White Stork”. Congratulations, Carol, well deserved!

Due to deadlines of sending this newsletter out, I’ve not had details or photos of the photo workshop, so will be reporting on this next month.

Not many of the winners of the photographic competition were present at the prize giving unfortunately, and Kristi was probably tempted to nab all the generously donated prizes for herself when announcing them! The competition was of a high standard this

year, and Warwick Tarboton had a challenging time deciding on the Top Three but eventually decided on these:

**FIRST PRIZE:** **Charmaine Benadie** who won a 2-night mid-week stay at Forellenhof Guest House, a full-day tour with a BirdLife South Africa bird guide, as well as a “Birds of Wakkerstroom” fold-out brochure from BirdLife SA, for her stunning photograph of the sheep herders with their flock:



**SECOND PRIZE:** **Linda Michelmore** who won a breakfast for two at Wetlands Country House and Sheds, a half-day tour with a BirdLife South Africa bird guide as well as a “Birds of Wakkerstroom” fold-out brochure from BirdLife SA, for her photograph of Nguni Cattle in our idyllic countryside:



**THIRD PRIZE:** **Sue Goodman** who won a picnic hamper from Grasslands Cottage, and a “Birds of Wakkerstroom” fold-out brochure from BirdLife South Africa, for her unusual photograph of this female Amur Falcon:



**SPECIAL MENTIONS:** **Alta van Emmenis**, **Liese Pieterse**, and **Owen Castleman**, who all won a beautiful Wakkerstroom notebook courtesy of The Crow’s Nest.

**SPECIAL MENTION AND HIGHLY COMMENDED:** **Chris Voets** who won a copy of “The Robins of Africa” by Terry Oatley and Graeme Arnott, a “Guide to Wakkerstroom Birds” fold-out brochure, both donated by BirdLife South Africa, as well as a Wakkerstroom notebook donated by The Crow’s Nest.

**Well done to all, and A BIG THANK YOU to all our generous sponsors!**

The 2018/19 Sandy Twomey competition will re-commence in August, so get those cameras and smartphones pointing the right way!

**Outing to Wessels Farm, 30 June 2018**

Members who braved the early-morning cold and wind last Saturday travelled out to Jurie and Colleen Wessels’ beautiful farm, and were spoilt by them with tasty treats, as well as being amply rewarded with some wonderful bird sightings. Gurney’s Sugarbird (photo, left), Lesser Honeyguide, Golden-breasted Bunting, and Olive Woodpecker (photo, right) and more added to the riotous colours of kingfishers and sunbirds.

Photo credits to Jenni Maxted-Smith whose patience was rewarded with these stunning shots:



Mike Maxted and Brian Guerin, who isn't WBC "Chair Man" for nothing!

And these photos from the same outing come courtesy of Graham and Claudine Spencer:



### **July Diary**

**Saturday, 7 July:** Our monthly Wetland Walk starts around 7h30 at the bridge on the road to Amersfoort. Coffee and tea to warm the toes and hands will be available.

**Thursday 19 July:** *Wakkerstroom Bird Club and BirdLife South Africa* will be doing an interesting informative talk, with complimentary cake and coffee (10am at the Bioscope). Come and join us for a chat on what your Bird Club is involved in. Everybody welcome, bring a friend or two!

**Saturday 28 July:** our *monthly outing* this month will be in the form of the *Winter CAR Count* ... counting birds not Toyotas! There will be a briefing by Kristi at the BirdLife Centre at 18h00 on the Friday evening. Enquiries Kristi Garland 081 726 5282.

An early notice about *Birding Big Day* which will take place on 24 November – you can register now on the BirdLife SA website.

Online registration form: <http://birdlife.org.za/events/birding-big-day/bbd-2018-entry-form>

For more information about BBD please visit <http://birdlife.org.za/events/birding-big-day>

The link to the BirdLasser online map: <https://www.birdlasser.com/events/bbd2018>

### **Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP)**

Mainly for the serious birder, the SABAP is a survey protocol, designed to record the presence of as many bird species as possible within a defined area. For information go to the SABAP2 website [http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage.php#menu\\_top](http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage.php#menu_top) or contact Kristi (number above)

### **Kruger Wildlife Challenge and Fundraiser**

This has popped up in the latest BirdLife South Africa newsletter, and might be of interest to some – if you'd like to participate and are a member of WBC, please contact Kristi (number above) so we can perhaps get a group of 9 together and qualify for the 50% discount:

“We would like to invite you to join us on a 10 day (6 to 15 February 2019) epic wilderness experience in the Kruger National Park. The Kruger Wildlife Challenge will be co-hosted by BirdLife South Africa, Rockjumper Birding Tours, Zeiss and Middelpunt Wetland Trust and will help raise much needed funds to save the “Critically Endangered” White-winged Flufftail from the brink of extinction. Rockjumper is donating its time and expertise to arrange and manage this event.” More information is available on <https://www.rockjumperbirding.com/tours/kruger-bird-challenge-2019>

### **Newspaper article**

Rita Wiesemann found an interesting article the newspaper last week; the original is in Afrikaans so here's the translation:

“The Owl Rescue Centre at Hartbeespoort Dam was recently inspired to build owl houses from recycled plastic, after seeing the plastic pollution of our oceans shown so vividly in the media.

Brendan and Danelle Murray, a married couple who say that nature conservation and specifically owls are their passion, started the Centre ten years ago. Owls seem to be the most vulnerable birds when it comes to injuries, and many a vet has been woken by a knock on the door to ask for help with an injured or sick owl. So it became the Murrays' life mission to save owls from becoming extinct.

Brendan and Danelle rehabilitate owls and, if at all possible, release them back into the wild. The Owl Rescue Centre, a registered rehabilitation organisation, is an NPO which relies completely on donations to treat the hundreds of owls they look after every year. Their six-year-old daughter, Rebecca, saw a television programme one day about the plastic pollution in oceans, and from that day on has refused to use plastic straws and other plastic items. ‘We realised that if a six-year-old can be so motivated by a problem, then anybody can,’ says Danelle. ‘Brendan wanted to do more than simply not using plastic, and started doing research on recycling and recycled plastic items.’

He started experimenting with recycled plastic as building material, and soon the Centre started producing eco-products such as owl- and bat-houses, as well as beehives. The Murrays say this is the first time this has been done here, and that it helps Nature in two ways – not only does it utilise plastic that would normally end up on our landfills and oceans, but the new products will last for up to 400 years. ‘Wooden beehives and housing works well, but these recycled items are so much better because they don't weather,’ says Brendan.

Danielle adds that they also make people aware of the plight of owls and overcome superstitions. 'We educate people about how much owls help control rodents, and that they cause no harm to humans.' They are aiming to collect 600 tons of plastic every year with which to make the houses and hives. These are then sold in order to collect funds for the Centre.

'Lots of schools, businesses, and individuals now help us collect the plastic,' enthuses Brendan. He calls for even more schools and businesses to assist them with this, so that owls, bats, and bees can be accommodated in the new "homes", and as much plastic as possible can be recycled for this purpose.

To find out more about the rescue centre, please go to their webpage [www.owlrescuecentre.org.za](http://www.owlrescuecentre.org.za) or join their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/OwlRescueCentre](http://www.facebook.com/OwlRescueCentre)."

(Original article by Alet van der Walt, for "Beeld" newspaper). Many thanks Rita, for sending this to us!

So a nice long newsletter to keep you all busy and warm, hopefully!

Till next month, happy birding!

Chris

