



Wakkerstroom Bird Club



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

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Hello fellow Birders,

No sooner was the “ink” dry on last month’s newsletter with the insert about the Owl Rescue Centre in Hartbeespoort, when WBC committee vice-chairman Judy-Lynn Wheeler had a call from Kana Retirement Village resident Celia Davel to report an injured owl outside her home. It turned out to be a Barn Owl with a badly injured left wing, and it was in dire need of some TLC after having spent at least one night out in the freezing weather. Judy duly came to collect her new patient and took it home. The owl was somewhat reluctant to do much for the next 24 hours or so (other than glare balefully at its rescuer), so Judy needed to keep trying to entice it with bits of food offered, in this case chicken meat with minced bone and feathers. Eventually the owl started to gobble it up - as you can see from the photo below, Judy was by then “encouraged” to wear a protective glove during feeding times!! (cont. on next page)



(cont.)

Judy had also contacted the above-mentioned Owl Rescue Centre right away to ask their advice. They were extremely helpful, and were also happy to collect the owl from Judy's home – in fact they were driving around collecting no less than TWELVE injured owls that day alone! Our last report-back from them was that “our” owl is doing well. WBC gave a donation to thank the Centre for their work, as they are completely reliant on these. Well done to all involved!! <photo credit: Judy-Lynn Wheeler>

Bird Club talk at the Bioscope

On the 19th of July, the WBC and BirdLife South Africa held an informative get-together, during which Kristi Garland did a presentation about the different programmes both organisations are involved in around the Wakkerstroom area, and Carol Preston spoke about the anti-littering and recycling campaigns she heads up as part of her PhD. It was great to see some new faces in the audience, as both these ladies do such a lot of commendable work in our communities that often goes unheralded, so now we have more people to “spread the word” and to become involved.

There was also a display of the winning entries of the 2017/18 Sandy Twomey Photographic Competition, and a table with information about the WBC and BirdLife South Africa, as well as our WBC mugs being for sale. A wonderful spread of home-made cakes, quiches, sandwiches, muffins and sausage rolls, coffee and tea, and a glass or two of sherry, ensured that no-one left hungry. Many thanks to all who attended, as well as to the “tummy fillers”, for making it such an enjoyable morning.



Kristi with an attentive audience



Carol in a serious discussion



Snacks were well received too



Wetland water flow project

This ongoing exercise, which ensures that the wetland waters flow as efficiently as possible, continued last weekend when a group of enthusiastic helpers (and once again our much-adored caterers!) got together at Paul Kruger Bridge. With the aid of the bird club's inflatable boat, ropes, heavy chains, gum boots, waders and life jackets - as well a couple of 4x4s – they moved dead wood, roots and debris such as large plastic sheets and dragged them out the water. As soon as that had been done, fish of all sizes came to investigate the now-open underwater area.

It's a work in progress, as some very large pieces are all tangled up and connected to form an island in the middle of the river which will require a tractor to shift. Once that's done and the rainy season begins, the water can proceed downstream until the next obstruction.



Team effort, hard work, and much discussion



Row, row, row your boat



Hoekom nie ietsie in Afrikaans in ons nuusbrief? ☺

We would like to add something a bit different to our monthly newsletter from now on by including an Afrikaans segment, either a letter we've received from our readers or interesting snippets and sightings. We hope you'll enjoy the following by Elize McAllister, entitled "Amper al 24 jaar in Wakkerstroom!" Baie dankie, Elize! – Feel free to send us your contributions for future newsletters, by emailing me at cvoets@absamail.co.za. Here's Elize's letter:

"In 1995 was ons so gelukkig om permanent van die stad af na Wakkerstroom toe te kon verhuis. Ons het sommer dadelik heeltemal verlief geraak op die pragtige natuurskoon - grasvelde, blomme en natuurlik die voëls van Wakkerstroom en omgewing. Na byna 24 jaar is ek nog net so lief vir die besonderse ou dorpie en wat dit bied.

Vir die eerste 10 jaar het ons in 'n pragtige 120 jaar oue huisie in van Riebeeckstraat in die dorp gewoon. Daarna het ons na Kana Aftree Oord toe geskuif waar ek nou nogsteeds woon.

Gelukkig het ons deur die jare lyste gehou van die voëls wat in ons tuine voorgekom het. Vir die tuin in die dorp het ons 86 spesies afgemerk en hier by Kana 98 tot dusver. Wat nogal opvallend is van die voëls in ons dorpstuin en die in die Kana tuin is hoe die Draaihals (Red-throated Wryneck) hier so toegeneem het. Vroeër jare het ons dit nooit in in die dorp gesien nie en moes ons na 'n sekere wilgerboom op die Amersfoort brug gaan om die voëls daar waar te neem. Hier by Kana is die Draaihalse nou so volop en inspekteer hulle gereeld die neskassie in ons tuin. Omtrent so twee jaar gelede het hulle twee albinistiese kuikens uitgbroei wat nou nog hier rondvlieg en nog net so bleek is.

In die ou dae het ons ook nooit in die dorp se tuin 'n Bontrugwewer (Village Weaver) waargeneem nie. Nou is hulle egter baie volop en bly rustig hier in die tuin saam met die Kaapse Wewers en Swartkeelgeelvinke.

'n Gereelde somerbesoeker aan die riete by ons visdam in die dorp was die Groot Rietsanger. Elke somer hat ons in spanning gewag dat hy sy opwagting moes maak en het hy ons nooit teleurgestel nie. Ek mis hom nogal maar hier by Kana is ons visdammetjie te klein en hier is ook nie genoeg riete nie. Jammer.

Wat wel 'n bonus in ons Kana tuin is is die Streepkopkanarie (Streaky-headed Seed-Eater) wat nooit in die dorp ons tuin besoek het nie. Hier by Kana weet hy presies wanneer die Anchusa Capensis in saad en daag dan gereeld op.

Nog iets uit die ou dae is die "Town Count" waaraan al die voëlkykers saam met Warwick Tarboton deelgeneem het. Ons was in spanne opgedeel en elke span het 'n blok gekry wat

ons dan te voet ge-"bird" het. Dit was baie interessant om die jaarlikse lysie met mekaar te vergelyk. Die Fiskaallaksman was gewoonlik die mees algemeenste voël in die dorp. Daar was ook 'n prys vir die mees "bird friendly garden" en dit het nogal die tuiniers aangemoedig om voëlvriendelike tuine aan te lê. Dit sal goed wees as die Voëlklub weer met so 'n projek kan begin."

Birding with a professional bird guide

Many visitors and residents here have taken advantage of hiring one of BirdLife South Africa's professional birding guides, and have nothing but good things to say about this. As you will see from the following articles, kindly written and submitted by Rita Wiesemann, there are great benefits and rewards to be found from this, and is a worthwhile venture. We are 'lucky' to have these guides right on our doorstep!

"TALK ABOUT GETTING LUCKY

On 21 June (2017) there was a birding quiz at BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Centre. I ventured out that evening and was lucky enough (with me being a novice) to be part of the very experienced team of John & Penny Burchmore and Norman Dennett. And . . . lo and behold, the team won to my utmost joy! Subsequently the Burchmores donated their prize to Lynn and Pete Goodrum - the prize being a birding trip with Lucky Ngwenya as the guide. So bright and early on Thursday 7 September we set out in anticipation. I have always known that Lucky is a bird guide of note, but nothing could prepare me for a first-hand experience of the gentleman's know-how. I might see a streak that looks like a bird in flight, but he is able to identify it correctly. He is also very good in pointing out characteristic features that will help us novices in future. I personally jotted down 50 species including 3 lifers for me: White-bellied Korhaan, Black-winged Lapwing and Botha's Lark. Seeing the latter will be a lasting memory for me - I thought that seeing that little lark which has made Wakkerstroom famous would be a momentous happening, and in many ways it was. But nothing prepared me for its delicate minuteness, its perfect camouflage and its light-footed scurrying about on the burnt-out veld.

We had a most enjoyable day and a very educational one at that. Wakkerstroom is blessed to have a formidable guide like that. Thank you to the Burchmores, to BirdLife South Africa for donating the prize, and then of course to Lucky.

Rita Wiesemann (a.k.a. How Lucky Can You Get!)

Many thanks for the article and photo below, Rita! We all know that once the birding bug has bitten, it doesn't leave.



WBC book sales

Just to remind everyone of our book sales at the Total garage in Wakkerstroom - come have a look at our new set-up, with all the books now sorted into their relevant categories. Pop in on any weekday or during village market days from 9am to 2pm. Donations are always welcome, as these sales are an important fund raiser for the WBC.

August diary

Saturday 4th: As always, we start our birding month with our Saturday morning Wetland Walk. Meeting at around 7h30 at the bridge on the road to Amersfoort, there will be coffee and tea to warm you up.

Tuesday 14th: Outing to "Hare's Rest"... so not far to go at all, as it's just out of town. Meet at the Library at 7h30, bring your chair, coffee/ tea, snacks, hat, binoculars, and bird books. - If you know of a good spot to visit, let us know ... we love going back to some of our regular haunts, but are always looking for new destinations.

Wednesday 22nd: Talk to be confirmed

Secretary Bird Project

Want to contribute to BirdLife South Africa's Secretary Bird Project? They need assistance in locating breeding Secretary Birds (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) across Southern Africa, including both historical and new records of nest localities. If you come across a new nest, or still have records of past ones, please submit the information to Dr Melissa Whitecross, the Raptors & Large Terrestrial Bird Project Manager at BirdLife South Africa, via email at melissa.whitecross@birdlife.org.za. The key information required is the DATE of the sighting and the GPS LOCATION of the nest to within 20m. Any additional information that can be obtained without causing unnecessary disturbance to the birds, such as the number of eggs/ chicks, and the approximate age of any chicks present, will also be appreciated.

The project has its own Facebook page for you to follow: <https://www.facebook.com/secretarybirdconservation/>



Photo credit: Burrard-Lucas Wildlife Photography

That's it from me for today. Till next month, happy birding!

Chris