



## Wakkerstroom Bird Club

*Affiliated to BirdLife South Africa*

*Principal supporter of the Wakkerstroom Junior Bird Clubs*

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### **NEWSLETTER NUMBER 60 – SEPTEMBER 2018**

Spring is busting out all over, with trees greening up and flowers starting to blossom, birds putting on their finery to attract mates, and even a couple of early migrants visiting us during August (White-throated Swallows and South African Cliff Swallows) spotted by a member's keen eyes on 13 August). As I type this, I'm watching an African Harrier-Hawk make the local Speckled Pigeons very nervous as it's looking for their nestlings under the neighbours' eaves; as well as a very busy Helmeted Guineafowl keeping his flock in line in a cloud of dust, while a pair of Bokmakeries duet in the blossoming peach tree nearby.

This month we are celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> newsletter with some exciting news for you – the WBC Committee is currently working with Jane Harley on a new bird club website, which should be fully operational by the beginning of October. You'll be able to check up on all the projects the Club (as well as the Junior Bird Club) is busy with, upcoming important dates and functions, download the current local bird checklist, see what special sightings have been made of late, look back on previous newsletters, and keep an eye on the current Sandy Twomey Photographic Competition and previous winners. Something to look forward to as the new summer season gets into full swing, and we hope you'll enjoy it as much as us!



#### **Outing to Hare's Rest**

Our first outing to the relatively new Hare's Rest just outside Wakkerstroom was a huge success. We had "chosen" a lovely warm and sunny day, and were made very welcome by the owners Billy and Nolene Hare – many thanks for letting us visit!

Some 24 species were recorded and particularly good views were had per the photographs here.

Bokmakerie (photo by Jenni Maxted-Smith)

Here are some more of Jenni Maxted-Smith's wonderful photos of the day:



Tranquility in abundance at Hare's Rest



Smiles all round



Olive Woodpecker



**We Welcome Donations!** The Club is in the very fortunate position of receiving a regular supply of books from members and the public for re-sale at our main outlet at the Total garage in town. This, too, is a great benefit and we thank the proprietor and staff for their great support over a long period. This past weekend a new pair of waders was donated by Paul Tubb and they will be a great help in the slushy areas of our Wetland. Thanks, Paul! And thanks to everybody else for their support! (Brian Guerin)



**Wakkerstroom  
Bird Club**

**Sandy Twomey  
Memorial Photographic  
Competition**

**Wakkerstroom at a Glance**

Interpret this as you wish

- # Total of 10 entries (one per month) per person
- # Photographs can be taken with a digital camera or smart phone
- # Photographs may be enhanced but not manipulated

Submit your photographs between  
27th August 2018 - 1st June 2019

Contact Kristi Garland to submit your entries  
[photocomp@wakkerstroombirdclub.org.za](mailto:photocomp@wakkerstroombirdclub.org.za)

Each month the submitted entries will be sent to our committee. They will then select the top 10 photographs which will be put forward to the public for voting. Votes can be cast on the Wakkerstroom Bird Club and Wakkerstroom Group facebook pages. Finalists will be judged by Warwick Tarboton.



### **WBC Presence at Heritage Day Market**

Please visit our information table at the Heritage Day market on Saturday 22 September, from 10am to 14h30. For the first time we will have a small range of bird seeds, dried meal worms etc. for sale.

### **September Diary**

**Saturday 1 September:** Celebrate the unofficial “Spring Day” by joining our monthly Wetland Walk. Meet at the bridge on the road to Amersfoort from around 7h30; coffee and tea available.

**Saturday 15 September:** This month we’re going to Kate and Rory’s farm, meet at the library 07:30 as usual. Bring along your binoculars, chairs, snacks. We look forward to spotting some lovely birds. Any queries, contact Claudine on 083 347 2770.

**Saturday 22 September:** Heritage Day Market, see above.

Remember also to book for the presentations by Steve Davis on **Saturday 13 October:** Steve will present talks on “The Mysteries of Migration” and “Getting Others to Raise your Chicks”, after which there will be a light lunch and an outing to the wetland to see if we can find any of the migrants, as 13 October is World Migration Day for the southern hemisphere.

- 08h30 to 14h00, at the BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Centre.
- Only R80 per person including lunch. Bring your own refreshments.
- Book with Judy-Lynn Wheeler on 060 427 2819, or via email on [judy@bruwer.net](mailto:judy@bruwer.net). Bookings essential!

## Way Up High by Judy-Lynn Wheeler

As many of our readers know, Wakkerstroom Bird Club is involved with a “hands on” approach to maintenance of the wetland, which area is governed by the Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association (WNHA).

The maintenance projects team has successfully removed alien plant species along the Amersfoort Bridge and, with methodical herbicide spraying, has pushed back the *Phragmites australis* reeds in selected areas exposing mud flats to improve bird viewing and photographic opportunities.

Access to the central reed beds however has been somewhat of a challenge. The reeds are too dense to get an inflatable boat in and wading out is for feathered ducks only. But, as the old saying goes, “Where’s there’s a will, there’s a way”. The “Way” came in the form of Sean Cloete and his willingness to provide the use of his Drone.

A day was chosen in advance – Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2018, and most will remember a day of sunshine, clear visibility and strong windy conditions. The team was introduced to Sean’s delightful partner, Lavern Jacobs and an amazing drone named Maverick.

Not having had prior contact with a drone I was somewhat surprised at the shiny oblong piece of technology that fitted the adult human hand. I should have known that a drone named Maverick would have a surprise up his sleeve. The drone lit up. Arms extended from its sides. Little blades whirred at the end of each arm and the drone indicated he was ready for the task. And I was totally enmeshed with the transformation.

Whilst the conditions were not ideal the drone was released from the steady hand of the lovely Lavern and with blades whirring Maverick took to the air with some speed. The versatility of the drone was as enthralling as the wind was challenging. After a short flight and with wind gusts increasing to 35km/hr, the pilot was forced to bring the drone home. And what a landing! Lavern took charge of the controls while Sean stretched out his arm for the drone to land on his hand. It reminded me of a falcon with his master. But, the story doesn’t end here.

Later in the afternoon, Sean found a window of opportunity and sent Maverick skywards once again. This time, a video of the central reed beds was achieved. Analysis of the recording has provided excellent and much needed aerial views of the channels and reed beds.

This could not have been achieved without the kindness of Sean and Lavern and the sheer brilliance of Maverick. A big thank you to all of you from all of us and we hope you will visit again in the not too distant future.



**Updates on Birdlasser Challenges** by Kristi Garland

- **Newcastle 150km Challenge 2018:**

3<sup>rd</sup>: Mike and Jenni Maxted – 275 species

13<sup>th</sup>: Kristi and David - 199 species

17<sup>th</sup>: Penny Burchmore - 161 species

18<sup>th</sup>: John and Penny - 152 species

34<sup>th</sup>: Team Wheeler - 17 species

- **BLSA IBA Birding Challenge 2018:**

39<sup>th</sup>: John Burchmore - 256 species

45<sup>th</sup>: John and Penny - 241 species

59<sup>th</sup>: Kristi and David - 192 species

That's it for this month – enjoy the warmer weather, and happy birding!

*Chris*

**Did you know ....:**

**Recycling:** *did you know that SA ranks 15th globally in respect of the generation of waste, but that we recycle*

•70% of paper

•75% of aluminium

•44% of plastic

•9% of e-waste

*(Ref. "South Africa The Good News, 29 August 2018)*