



Wakkerstroom  
Bird Club



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

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## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 61 – OCTOBER 2018

Hello fellow birders,

The weekend before last saw the Heritage Market in Wakkerstroom, which was a great success for most stallholders. It was the largest market to date, lots of visitors were in town to see all the locally-produced crafts, and the weather held up until an almighty storm in the early evening gave us our first good rainfall of the season. WBC and BirdLife South Africa were out in full force at the market – there were snacks for both feathered friends and humans, our newly-launched fridge magnets, books and other birding goods were on sale, and BirdLife South Africa had a kite-painting competition for the kids which was very popular.



Snacks for birds and humans.



Judy-Lynn Wheeler sharing valuable birding tips.



“Paint a Bee-Eater kite” competition



The children hard at work painting the best Bee-eater kites to win great prizes

### **Steve Davis birding talks**

Not long to wait for Saturday 13 October when Steve Davis will be back in town to present talks on “The Mysteries of Migration” and “Getting Others to Raise your Chicks”, fitting in with World Migration Day (southern hemisphere) on that day. There will be a light lunch and an outing to the wetland to see if we can find any of the migrants

- 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, don't miss out!

**Updates on two of our Projects** by John Burchmore

**(1) GREENING ESCARPMENT MPUMULANGA (GEM)**

A successful atlasing bash was carried out by members of Lowveld Bird Club during the weekend of 29 June to 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2018, in the Amsterdam area.

Over the three days, a total of 22 pentads were atlased, with 29 full protocol cards submitted. 15 pentads were turned green (4 full protocol cards each). Very good results for a winter outing.

We visited the Sheepmoor (GEM) area on 14 August and were able to complete two full protocol cards for pentads 2655\_3015 & 2655\_3020. Pentad 2655\_2615 had only been done once by Peter Lawson from the Lowveld Bird club in 2010. The 2655\_3020 pentad is now green.

We had a very interesting trip in the Sheepmoor area. Using the map for the pentad on the Birdlasser app, we were able to access some very interesting habitats. Rough tracks led us almost up to the indigenous forest on the Escarpment, an area we will definitely visit again, weather permitting in November. Some of the birds we logged were Long-crested Eagle, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Bronze Mannikin & a flock of approximately 65 Grey Crowned Cranes. We also saw a Black-winged Lapwing before we entered the pentad.

*Thanks to Sappi for sponsoring our fuel.* Without their support we would not be able to collect this valuable bird information for the Animal Demography Unit in Cape Town.

(Reference: GEM ATLAS BASH JUNE 2018

A total of 34 pentads need 170 cards to turn GEM Green

A total of 15 pentads need 26 cards to turn all SAPPI plantations Green

Lifted from The Hornbill No. 130 Spring 2018)

**(2) Southern Bald Ibis Monitoring project:**

The weather is starting to warm up so Penny, Glenn and I decided to check on some of the Bald Ibis breeding colonies.

At the Vryheid site a few birds were perched at nest sites, 2 birds had laid eggs and were sitting. The second site had only a single bird perched at an old nest position.

Once the rains begin, more birds should start breeding.

We have 7 possible breeding sites which have to be monitored, so anybody interested in helping Penny and I, please contact me.

John Burchmore

082 224 3326

***Many thanks, John & Penny, Glenn, and everyone else for your valuable work on these projects!***

## **New Members**

We welcome three new members this month:

*Jennifer Russell*, currently residing in KZN but a house-owner in and frequent visitor to Wakkerstroom. We're hoping to tell you a little more about Jenny's work in an upcoming newsletter.

*Mick and Cornelia Lamb*, residents at Kana and with a long history in birding, including egg collecting in Zimbabwe, sounds like an interesting talk to the Club, Mick?

*Kim Risen*, owner of NatureScape Tours and from Montana, U.S.A who joined the Club on a recent visit to Wakkerstroom. He hopes to be in town again next year.

## **SABAP2 project update**

Here is an email by SABAP2 Coordinator Ernst Retief, to update us on the project:

*Dear SABAP2 participant*

*If you have a look at the totals at the top of the SABAP2 website (<http://sabap2.adu.org.za/index.php>) you will notice that we have passed the 20 000 full protocol atlas cards mark for 2018. Furthermore we need just over 50 000 records to reach 1 million records in 2018. This is an amazing effort, well done to all.*

*However, we are lagging behind with the number of pentads atlased in 2018. In 2017 we submitted full protocol cards for 7 157 pentads. We are currently at 5 500 pentads for 2018, so we need to atlas another 1 657 pentads to reach the 2017 total. Please consider submitting an atlas card for a pentad which has not been atlased in 2018. The link to the 2018 map is [http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage.php?DGC=&year=2018#content\\_90perc](http://sabap2.adu.org.za/coverage.php?DGC=&year=2018#content_90perc) – if you click on the top right square on the map, the map will open in full screen view. You can also reach this map from the Home page, then “Coverage maps” and then select 2018 from the top menu. You will notice there are still lots of open pentads in easy reach of the major cities and towns. Also when traveling, for example this coming long weekend, maybe target pentads which have not been atlased in 2018.*

*In addition please keep an eye on the overall coverage map for those yellow and orange pentads, one of the aims is still to get them all to green i.e. four cards per pentad! I think you will find that many of those pentads have also not been atlased in 2018!*

*If you have any questions about the project, please email me directly at [ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za](mailto:ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za). If I cannot help you, I will refer you to a person who can.*

AND AN UPDATE FROM ERNST RECEIVED JUST YESTERDAY:

*Dear SABAP2 Participant*

*A very short email to let you know that yesterday we passed the **one million (1 000 000)** full protocol records mark for 2018! That is an amazing achievement, thank you to everyone who contributed.*

*We also received a huge amount of data yesterday, 9 102 full protocol records, 167 full protocol atlas cards and 33 new 2018 pentads were atlased.*

*Thank you also for the wonderful response to my last request that we target pentads which have not been atlased in 2018. During the last 10 days 213 pentads were atlased for the first time in 2018, if we keep this up we will not only reach the 2017 target of 7 159 pentads, but might even surpass it!*

*Please submit any data you have, it is always best to submit your data as soon as possible after your atlasing trip, otherwise you might just forget to do so! ☺*



African Purple Swamphen (from [http://sabap2.adu.org.za/species\\_info.php?spp=208#menu\\_left](http://sabap2.adu.org.za/species_info.php?spp=208#menu_left))

## Local school children learn about the environment

Following on from our recent endeavour to include other-language articles in your newsletter, here is one in Zulu by David Nkosi – David is one of the bird guides with BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Centre and a WBC Committee member, and is very involved in projects with the area's children. David has also kindly translated the article into English for us, which follows after the Zulu version:

### *Umsebenzi esiwenzela abantwana baseWakkerstroom*

*Abantwana sibafundisa ngokunakekelwa kwemvelo njengoba kuyinto ebalulekile ezimpilweni zabo ukuze baphile impilo enhle kumele banakekele imvelo.*

*Ukunakekela imvelo into ebalulekile njengoba isincedisisa esimweni sezimpilo zethu ngezindlela eziningi. Ngokusinika amanzi, nezindawo ezahlukenene okuhlala izilwane ezahlukenene khona lapha eWakkerstroom, Nezokuvakasha zincedisa abantu abanengi lapha ngamathuba emisebenzi Sisebenzisana nabantwana abangamaqembu amathathu- elodwa iqembu liseVolkrust amabili amaqembu alana eSizameleni eWakkerstroom. Lamaqembu siyaye sihlangane nawo kanye ngeviki singamalunga kaBirdlife South Africa ukubafundisa ngezemvelo ukuthi kumele bayinakekele nokuyivikela lapha endaweni yethu. Bafundiswa nangokubaluleka kwayo kanye nezinye zezinyoni ezitholakala lapha eWakkerstroom kuphela, ukuthi zihlukaniseka kanjani nokugcina inani lazo, ukuthi bazibona kuphi kanti futhi nini lezinyoni ngokwahlukahlukana kwazo.*

*Inhlangano yezinyoni zaseWakkerstroom iyancedisa kulamaqembu ngezizimali nangezincwadi nezidingo abazidingayo. Ngaphandle kokuthi abantwana babenokuthokoza ngokufunda ngemvelo kodwa bayancedisa nangokuthi abantwana babenokufundiseka nasezindaweni zabo zokufunda. Okuchaza ukuthi bayancediseka ezifundweni zabo esikolweni njengabo Natural Science, Ezibalweni, Ezilimini nasekufundeni.*

*Kulezifundo zifaka phakathi ukufundiseka kokuhlukanisa izinyoni zendawo. Siyaye sibafundise ngezithombe esinazo ukukwazi ukuzihlukanisa besebenzise izincwadi zezinyoni ngokuthi babuke okuthile njengasekhanda, intamo, isifuba, isisu, iqolo, nomsila kanye nemibala thizeni ukukwazi ukuzihlukanisa lezinyoni kwezinye.*

*Bayafundiswa ukusebenzisa incwadi ephethe zonke izinyoni ukukwazi ukuthola lohlobo lwenyoni abalubonile esigangeni ngokuyithola kulencwadi. Uma sebakwazi ukusebenzisa lencwadi siyaye siqale sibafundise ukusebenzisa izipopolo kanye nezincwadi ukuthola lenyoni abazibona uma besebenzisa izipopolo eziphilayo. Lezinyoni eziphilayo bayaye bazihlukanise encwadini, ukuze bafunde ukuzihlukanisa. Kuyinto ethokozisayo abayijabulelayo abangeke bayilibala impilo yabo yonke.*

*Okunye okubalulekile siyaye sisebenzise bona labantwana ngokwabo ukuthi basiqoqele ulwazi ngezinyoni abazibona mihlanamalanga. Siyaye sithathe lololwazi lwabo, silugcine ezincwadini kuyasisiza ukubona ukuthi nabo babambe iqhaza kulokuqoqa kolwazi ngezinyoni.*

*Sibafundisa izinto eziningi ngezemvelo izinto eziphilayo nezinto ezingaphili zonke lezinto ziyaye zihambe ibanga elide. Sisebenzisa izinyoni, izindawo ezihlala kuzona nemikhuba yazo ukuthokozela imvelo umhlaba wonke jikelele. Kulemnyaka endlule, Sesisebenzisane nabantwana abangamakhulu amabili kulamaqembu amathathu. Sizama ngayoyonke indlela ukuthi izifundo zethu ziba sezingeni eliphezulu nabo futhi babaseqophelweni eliphezulu uma bezifunda ukuze bazithokozele. Okuyimbangela yokuthi iviki neviki abalibali esibafundise khona bahlala bekukhumbula ngasosonke isikhathi.*

*We teach our kids how to look after their environment as well as their responsibility of living in such an important area. To look after our environment is something very important as it supports our lives in so many ways. For example, providing water, habitats for various animals and more specifically in Wakkerstroom, the tourism in our area supports many people with work - there are a few things that we need to prevent such as soil\_erosion, pollution (in the water and littering, removal of indigenous plants etc.). - We are working with three groups – one in Volksrust and two in eSizamaleni. These children meet once a week with the staff from BirdLife South Africa to learn more about our environment and how to be responsible in conserving our area. They also learn about the important and special birds in Wakkerstroom, how to identify them as well as keeping lists of when and where they see the different birds. The Wakkerstroom Bird Club supports these groups as well through sponsorship and resources. Not only do these children have fun out in the environment, but we also make sure that we support the learning they do in class. This means that the various activities we do, link to the curriculum, mainly in Natural Science, Maths, Languages and Literacy. Some of these lessons include learning to identify common birds from the area. We start by teaching the children to identify birds from pictures because they stay still and the children are able to look for different features. They are taught how to use a field guide / bird book to find the bird they are seeing. Once they are used to this, we then introduce them to using binoculars. This is always a fun activity! Over the past year, we have worked with a total of 200 children across these three groups. We make sure that our lessons are exciting and the children have fun whilst learning. This ensures that they don't forget what they are learning each week. The children are encouraged to keep records of the birds they see each day. The things the children learn go far beyond just birds. We use birds, their habitats and habits to explore the natural world around us.*

**Thank you, David – the work you all do with these children is so important and it reaches far beyond the ones you actually come into contact with!**



Having fun outdoors and learning at the same time



**Club outing in September to Rory & Kate Wilkie's Farm** by Brian Guerin

A small group of members arrived for this outing on a very windy (what's new?) day, not the happiest conditions for good birding. After the birding and buffeting we headed for the sheltered and warm verandah to settle the list. It ended up at some 30 species, very pleasing under the circumstances.

There were two big surprises for the morning and they were first seen within seconds of each other, White-browed Sparrow-weaver and Thick-billed Weaver. The first is primarily a bird of the western side of South Africa and those who may have seen them there will recall their extremely untidy nests, frequently in Kameeldoring trees.

The Thick-billed Weavers seem to be recorded more frequently around our pentad in recent times and all sightings should be reported so we can monitor them. Have you joined our Whatsapp group, *Wakkies Bird Club* which exists specifically for reporting interesting local sightings?



Image of Thick-billed Weaver from: <http://www.flickriver.com/photos/ruslou/7262033320/>

## **October Diary**

**Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> October:** Our monthly Wetland Walk starts around 7h00 at the bridge on the road to Amersfoort. Coffee and tea will be available as always, come and join us to see some of the early migrant birds.

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October:** Steve Davis presentations and light lunch (see more details above). Please note that this replaces both the monthly outing and the monthly talk as it falls on the weekend between the second Tuesday and third Wednesday.

That's all from me for today – wishing you all a wonderful October!

Chris

P.S.: I couldn't resist ending this newsletter by adding this photo of Graham Spencer clearly enjoying himself at the Heritage Market's WBC stand!

