



# Wakkerstroom Bird Club



*Affiliated to BirdLife South Africa*

*Principal supporter of the Wakkerstroom Junior Bird Clubs*

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 84 – APRIL 2020

Dear Wakkerstroom Bird Club members,

As we start to make our way into winter, I am sure like most, your birding trips start to slow down, except of course if you're heading to the coast where it's more temperate over the next few months. Please do keep us updated on your trips that may take place.



Birds and birdwatching – have you ever thought about the benefits of this ever-growing pastime? Most importantly and right up at the top of the list is really getting closer to nature. Not only are you observing birds in their natural habitat, but you are also breathing in fresh air, soaking up the sun's rays and experiencing all the things that make being outdoors so great. You may be shocked to know that birding can count as a bit of a workout. Often there is some hiking or rather testing walks to find the perfect spot for bird watching. A little bit of a hike to get the blood pumping! Did you know whilst you are birding, you are honing your patience skills? The payoff is not immediate but as you spend more time and practice, waiting for that elusive species to make an appearance, you are refining your patience skill which incidentally improves your mental well-being. A 2007 study reports that people that are more patient are less likely to experience headaches, ulcers, pneumonia, acne, and other health problems. Now isn't that food for thought in these current times....

Birders also need to have the reflexes of a cat. Not in terms of landing on your feet, although that would be a good thing, but in terms of having quick reflexes. Being ready at any given second to grab your binoculars or camera to capture that long-awaited moment. Birding connects people and takes you places perhaps you've never imagined visiting before. The act of coming together with a common interest can do wonders in building life-long friendships and a sense of community. Let's not forget the role technology and the internet play in connecting birders across the world!

## **CLUB DIARY – DATES TO MAKE SURE YOU ADD TO YOUR CALENDAR**

### **8 May – Global Big Day**



An annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are located in the world, join global teams in sharing the birds they find through an app called eBird. Participating is easy – whether you are heading out into the countryside or happy to bird from your veranda. Your submitted observations help to better understand global bird populations through

animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science – see <https://ebird.org/science>. How do you participate you may ask? Register with eBird, if you haven't already, and start up your account. Download the free application – it's 100% free from start to finish. Watch and log the birds you see / hear on 8 May – its that simple. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight so watch the sightings start to roll in. There's a real-time page where you can follow what species approximately 170 teams around the globe are submitting.

## **15<sup>th</sup> May – the Wakkerstroom Bird Club’s AGM**

Join us at the BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Centre to catch up on the past year’s activities, select your committee and hear an awe-inspiring talk by Carina Pienaar from BirdLife South Africa. Watch your inboxes for more details soon.



## **5 June – Morning vlei walk**



Starting a little later than normal, join us down at the picnic spot for a stroll through the wetland to get your blood pumping. We’ll be meeting at 07h30 to do some birding with tea / coffee and delicious breakfast buns (on sale) from 10h00. See you there!

## **26 June – Afternoon braai and speaker at De Oude Stasie**

We are extremely excited to host Bradley Gibbons from EWT in Wakkerstroom once more. Join us as Bradley takes us all on a journey through his projects. Please do bring your own meat. Salads etc will be provided by De Oude Stasie, and the bar will be open for drinks etc – all for your own account. Card facilities are available.



For the rest of winter, like most animals out there, the Club will be in semi-hibernation. We should be up and running at full steam in August / September.

## **Wakkerstroom Bird Club’s Second-Hand Bookstore**

Come visit if you haven’t been to the Total Garage yet! You are sure to find something interesting, and at phenomenally low prices. Our permanent book sale is open Monday to Saturday for your convenience, and with low, low prices. Hundreds of titles available and not only novels. We have a wide range of genres to choose from including politics, faith, war, gardening, handcrafts and many more! Our thanks to the many people who donate books, buy, and read books from us and then donate them back and buy more, very much appreciated!!!! All proceeds go to preserving our avian heritage and removal of alien vegetation in the wetland area.

## **Junior Bird Clubs**

The committee recently decided to start a newsletter for our JBCs. This will be published every second month and distributed to the three clubs we support through Kristi and her team. Each issue will cover an iconic bird of the local area, a diary of events, bits and bobs from this newsletter as well as an activity or two i.e. a crossword / word search, what species to look out for etc. Half the newsletter will be in Zulu and the other in English.

We are in the process of selecting a name for this newsletter and here is your chance to cast a vote for which name you may think will fit the bill. Select your option and WhatsApp this through to Kristi on 081 7265282. We will do the same with the JBC. As soon as a name is chosen, we will go into production.

- Option 1        Izimpaphe – meaning feathers
- Option 2        Amaphiko – meaning wings
- Option 3        Osofufusa – meaning fledgling
- Option 4        Iphuphu – meaning chick

Voting will be open until 2 May 2021.

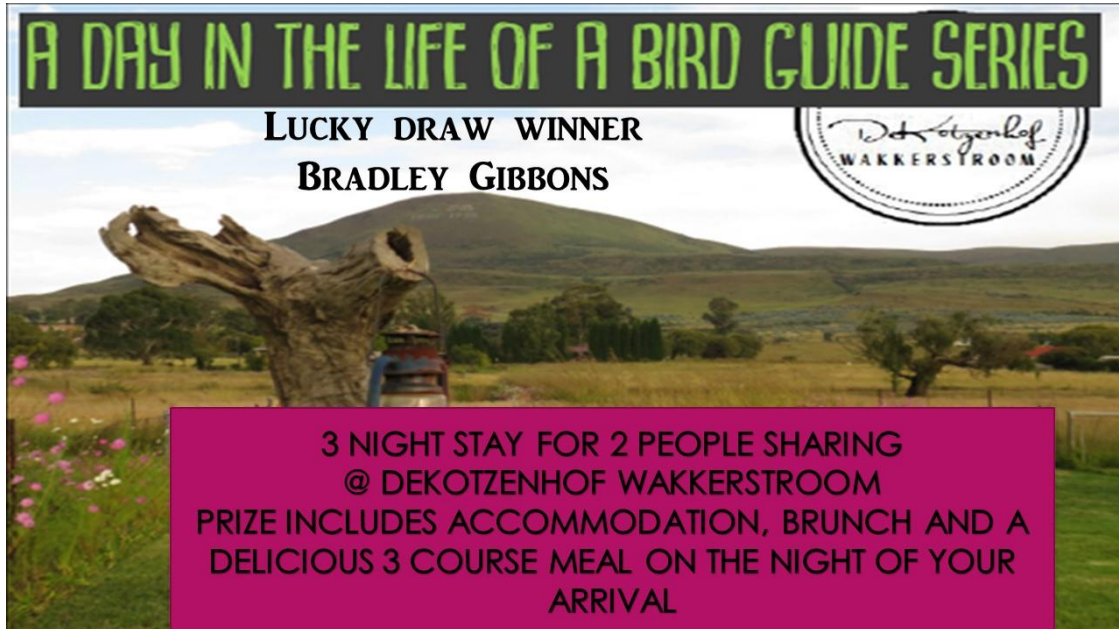
## Junior Bird Club outing

Speaking of our Juniors, here are some pics of the Clay Junior Bird Club in their first hike - 3.1km at the back of eSizameleni. 35 members took to conquering the hill. The WBC sponsored refreshments at the end of the hike. Going forward we will be doing a hike at the end of each term, logging birds as we go. As you can see, the kids had a fabulous time!



### **Bird Guide Zoom series**

During the month of March, we ran a series of short presentations with all four of the Wakkerstroom bird guides. This was completely new to them and although the nerves were quite high, they definitely held their own. Thanks to all who tuned in every week. Also thank you to DeKotzenhof who put forward a super prize for the lucky draw at the end of the series. Congrats to the winner, Bradley Gibbons!



### **BirdLife South Africa Virtual AGM**

Dear Chairpersons of bird clubs

We'd be grateful if you'd encourage your members to attend BirdLife South Africa's 92<sup>nd</sup> AGM, which will be held by Zoom at 10h00 on Saturday 29 May 2021.

Amongst others, there will be a report on BirdLife South Africa's work and the presentation of the prestigious Gill Memorial Medal to a distinguished southern African ornithologist.

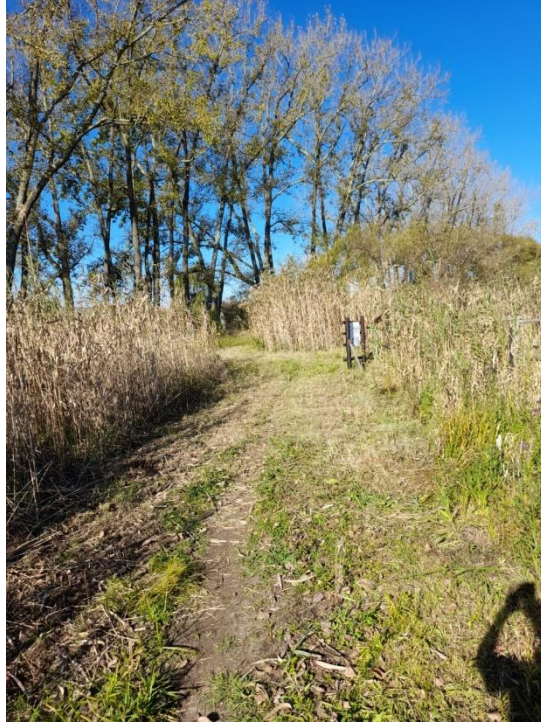
Please register at:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_hqxKZVYRQ0GxMzKRiezWdw?fbclid=IwAR1mb41AtOXAxn2ACqzGNjN\\_tNiAlDHNbjDayTzpwXQU1AZAeh8hNuyMnKU](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hqxKZVYRQ0GxMzKRiezWdw?fbclid=IwAR1mb41AtOXAxn2ACqzGNjN_tNiAlDHNbjDayTzpwXQU1AZAeh8hNuyMnKU)

The AGM meeting documents are available at: <http://www.birdlife.org.za/support-us/events/birdlife-south-africas-annual-general-meeting/>

**A Big THANK YOU!**

Vusi and Xoli from the Working on Fire team did some hard work just before the long weekend, when they cut the grass and tidied the paths to both bird hides. Just in time for the weekend visitors and locals alike – and it's sure to be appreciated by all. Thanks to you both!! Here are some before and after photos:





CHRIS VAN ROOYWN

# Owl Awards

BirdLife South Africa recognises the valuable contributions that people and organisations make to the conservation of South Africa's birds and their habitats. This recognition is in the form of the presentation of Owl Awards to deserving recipients.

For BirdLife South Africa's 2021 awards, we will be hosting a dedicated virtual event as part of our Conservation Conversations webinar series.

Please keep an eye on our social media pages to register closer to the time at [www.birdlife.org.za/blsa-conversations](http://www.birdlife.org.za/blsa-conversations)

**The 2021 Owl Awards event will take place at 19h00 on Tuesday, 22 June 2021.**

*The Owl Award statuettes are kindly sponsored by Charles Greig.*





With protection and conservation of biodiversity firmly at the core of the Rockjumper Team, we are excited to offer you this opportunity to order one of our **limited edition** eco performance Rockjumper t-shirts!

Your purchase will help fund the exceptional conservation initiatives for [BirdLife South Africa's 2021 Bird of the Year](#), the mountain fynbos endemic [Cape Rockjumper](#). You will also be supporting a cleaner planet as each shirt is made from 70% recycled contents, approximately 3 water bottles worth!



Help us raise funds and awareness for the habitat loss and climate change threats facing the Cape Rockjumper.

**FOR JUST \$25.00**

Terms and conditions available online.

Our outdoor performance t-shirts are super soft, designed to draw moisture away from your body and would make wonderful gifts for your nature loving family and friends.

### UNISEX - ECO PERFORMANCE ROCKJUMPER T-SHIRT SIZE CHART

Size	XS	S	M	L	XL	2XL	3XL
Body Length	27 1/2	28 1/2	29 1/2	30 1/2	31 1/2	32 1/2	33 1/2
Body Width	17 1/2	19	20 1/2	22	24	26	28
Above sizes are measured in inches.							

(Why the price is in US\$ I'm not sure – you'll have to check that with the organisers 😊😊😊..... Ed.)

### Celebrating Success

*Dr Melissa Whitecross, Landscape Conservation Programme Manager at BirdLife South Africa, reports the following:* We are pleased to announce that the White-winged Flufftail Conservation Project has been awarded two small grants from the Club300 Foundation and the African Bird Club to support research exploring the population demographics, distribution, movement patterns and habitat requirements of this Critically Endangered bird. Research is being conducted by BirdLife South Africa's Rockjumper Fellow of White-winged Flufftail Conservation, Dr Kyle Lloyd.

We are also grateful to the generous companies and individuals who have donated field equipment to the project, including: Deynecke Engineering, Johan and Madeleen van Loggerenberg, Eurolux, Chamberlains, Jones and Wagener Engineering and Environmental Consultants, Dr Jessica Briner and Travis Duck. Your support is greatly appreciated and will go a long way to securing the survival of the White-winged Flufftail.

We also thank GroundTruth cc, Rhodes University, Verdant Environmental, the Water Research Commission, and the Organisations for Tropical Studies for awarding Dr Kyle Lloyd with scholarships to study short courses that will enable him to assess wetland health, ecosystem services, and process bioacoustic data.

The position of Rockjumper Fellow of White-winged Flufftail Conservation is made possible by Rockjumper Birding Tours through the BirdLife International Preventing Extinctions Programme.

# Jackpot birding!

Help our country's birds by purchasing a ticket in BirdLife South Africa's annual raffle. This year there are four prizes! **First prize is R100 000**, with three additional prizes of R10 000 each.



**RAFFLE!**  
 R500 per ticket  
 (only 1000 tickets)

RICHARD DU TOIT



## **Mabola Coalition Statement on MEC's Exclusion of Properties from the Mabola Protected Environment**

*Also close to home is this statement from Dr Melissa Lewis, BLSA's Policy and Advocacy Programme Manager, published on 12 February 2021:*

As many of you will already be aware, BirdLife South Africa is part of a Coalition of eight NGOs who, since 2015, have been challenging the development of a new coal mine in the Mabola Protected Environment in Mpumalanga.

We are currently a party to several High Court applications, aimed at setting aside the various authorisations needed to commence mining.

The latest development in this matter is that the Mpumalanga Provincial MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs recently published his decision to revoke the protected area status for a large part of the Mabola Protected Environment in order to allow the mine to go ahead.

BirdLife South Africa and the other Coalition members are currently liaising with the Centre for Environmental Rights about how best to respond to this decision. A short summary of the media statement is available here: <https://cer.org.za/news/coalition-condemns-mecs-decision-to-revoke-protected-area-to-allow-new-coal-mine>

### **April WBC Outing to Graham Sutherland's Farm** *by Brian Guerin*

Our outing to Graham Sutherland's farm attracted 12 people, a pleasing turnout for the first outing for a long while due to Covid restrictions biting us. The weather was a bit cold and windy and the hardy souls who went the distance ticked 30+ species including the highlight, Black Sparrowhawk, which has bred on the farm for several years. A distant Jackal Buzzard completed the raptor count. All in all a good turnout after such a long gap!



And If You're Feeling Flush .....



**A celebration OF BIRDLIFE**

Join BirdLife South Africa on an **EXCLUSIVE BIRDING SAFARI** at Zimanga Private Game Reserve, KZN

**ZIMANGA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE**

**BirdLife SOUTH AFRICA**  
Giving Conservation Wings

BirdLife South Africa will be hosting a 5-night safari in July 2021 at Zimanga Private Game Reserve, Mkuze, in KwaZulu-Natal. The group – accompanied by Mark Anderson, CEO of BirdLife South Africa – will enjoy exclusive use of the entire reserve and its state-of-the-art hides. Not only does this offer come at a discounted rate, but a portion of the booking fee will be donated to BirdLife South Africa for its important work on bird conservation.

**SPECIAL OFFER:**  
21–26 July 2021 (5 nights): R24 960 pp

This offer includes accommodation, all meals and two activities (one hide session and one game drive) each day. It excludes transfers, alcoholic drinks and additional canned and bottled beverages. This offer is available to a maximum of 14 guests. *Limited* single rooms can be booked at no extra cost.



Enquiries and reservations can be e-mailed to: [reservations@zimanga.com](mailto:reservations@zimanga.com)

**LBJs ... Help!!**

If, like me, you are forever struggling with those infamous “Little Brown Jobs” (LBJs) while you’re out birding, you may be interested in this: a visual presentation entitled “Making LBJ identification simpler”, which was recently given by Doug Newman, presented by the Struik Nature Club and SANBI. You will need to sign up to Struik before accessing the talk, which will cost you nothing. Please note that the talk runs to about 54 minutes, so if you’re not able to watch this via WIFI, there will be quite a lot of data involved.

Here's the link to Doug's presentation on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/2QL5Byr>

Here's the link to sign up to the Struik Nature Club : <https://bit.ly/2NwpOXh>

( No no no, not THAT LBJ ..... This is a bird club newsletter after all ☺ )



**LYNDON JOHNSON**

And last, but not least, here is a smile for you ... Entitled "If Kobus Wiese was a prinia", this gorgeous photo was taken by Colin Lagerwall:



That's it from us for now. Stay warm, stay safe, and keep birding!

Kristi and Chris