



Wakkerstroom Bird Club



Affiliated to BirdLife South Africa

Principal supporter of the Wakkerstroom Junior Bird Clubs

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 86 – SEPTEMBER 2021

Dear Wakkerstroom Bird Club members and friends,

As spring starts to stick her head out from under winter's cloak, we hope that you are going to be doing the same. The change in season kick starts one of the most incredible natural phenomena – migration. Research by National Geographic reveals that up to 4.5 billion birds, representing around 185 species fly from Europe and Asia in the north to southern Africa and back again each year. Interestingly although they follow the same migration routes every year without fail, the route to their summer destination in the south may differ from the trip back home. Spring heralds the first of these non-breeding migrants from further north and also the start of the breeding season for resident species.



As these birds move from the north down to the south, they may concentrate at bottlenecks where geographical features funnel them over narrow ocean crossings, or where rich feeding opportunities enable them to rest and build up fat reserves before continuing on. Here are five of the eleven bottlenecks, as described by BirdLife International.

1. Fraser River Delta, Canada. An enormous area near Vancouver is one of the most important systems for waterbirds, yet it faces development pressures. There is no legal framework protecting this area, so *Bird Canada* and *Nature Canada*, both BirdLife partners, are among the many fighting plans for the construction of a huge trading port. One-day estimates at least 500 000 Western Sandpipers indicate that much of the global population stops over in this area in spring. High counts were also recorded for Dunlin and Grey Plover.
2. Cape May, USA. This New Jersey peninsula is a natural funnel for birds migrating through Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. This passage sees more than 100 species and 100 000 individuals in spring and even greater numbers in the autumn with birds of prey, shorebirds, seabirds, and impressive waves of passerine migrants.
3. Veracruz, Mexico. This area is renown for the spectacular raptor passage – up to six million birds of prey from eastern, central, and western North America converge en route to wintering grounds in Central and South

America. Almost the entire Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk and Mississippi Kite pass through. This area has become known as the River of Raptors.

4. Panama City, Panama. The urban bustle and hype form a very unusual backdrop to the raptors migrating between breeding and wintering grounds. Mudflats located near the city are recognised as one of the five most important areas for migratory and wintering shorebirds. An estimated 1.3 million pass through in autumn and globally important species such as the Western Sandpipers and Whimbrel included. *Panama Audubon Society*, a BirdLife Partner, spearheads movements to save the bay from development and this has led to protected status being ratified by the country's Supreme Court.
5. Wadden Sea, northwest Europe. An intertidal area shared between the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark, is one of the most important hubs for migratory birds. Yet it is threatened by fishing, salt mining, gas extraction and climate change. Some 12 million waterbirds breed, pass through or overwinter here, including 267 000 Red Knot and great numbers of Eurasian Spoonbill. *Vogelbescherming Nederland*, BirdLife Partner work on ensuring the protection from disturbance at the high watermark when birds need to roost safely.

Our next issue will focus on the remaining six bottlenecks, so watch this space for more on international areas of importance for migratory birds.

CLUB DIARY - DATES TO MAKE SURE YOU ADD TO YOUR CALENDAR





**Wakkerstroom
Bird Club**



Coming Soon

4 September 2021

Saturday Morning Vlei Walk 07h30 onwards

Breakfast buns R25 each (scrambled egg and bacon) from 09h00

Tea and coffee will be available as well

Please confirm with Belinda (072 454 3074) on how many rolls you would like, by 1 September



Meet on the wetland picnic spot.

A great opportunity to explore using the BirdLasser app and record sightings.

All COVID protocol will be observed.

Remember to bring your mask.



7 September 2021

**BIRD
OUTING
CLUB**

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**EXPLORE
EXPERIENCE
ENJOY
the
Pretorius Farm**

07h00

meet at the
Wakkerstroom
Library

Join the Wakkerstroom Bird Club as we head off to Ben & Martie Pretorius's farm. Pack a picnic basket, your binoculars, a friend & your mask.



**Wakkerstroom
Bird Club**

COME & JOIN US FOR OUR

**CAR
DEBRIEFING**

Keen to learn what the coordinated avifaunal roadside count is all about...



WEDNESDAY
SEPT 15
13h00 @ De Oude Stasie
Braai fires ready at 15h00

An overview of the CAR project, data collected, teams involved & how you can contribute.

All welcome. Join us for a braai after the meeting. R110 per person - includes a braai pack, salads and a roll. or bring your own meat @ R50 per person. Cash bar available.

FOR MORE INFO & RSVP TO:

Belinda 072 454 3074 by 10 September

Lockdown / Winter quiz

As many will know, the club ran a weekly quiz during the winter period. Each week, the quiz was sent out via our club WhatsApp group. After nine weeks, the results are as follows:

- 1st place – Judy Ryder, Jane and Karin
- 2nd place – The Dells, Miles and Belinda
- 3rd place – Penny Burchmore

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.

LPs for sale

The club recently received a box filled with LPs as a donation. There is quite a mix of titles from instrumental classics to movie soundtracks. If you are interested and want to find out more, please contact Kristi on info@wakkerstroombirdclub.org.za and make your offer.

Lucky gets lucky with a new scope

(Article from the recent BirdLife South Africa monthly newsletter, August 2021)

Swarovski Optik has been supporting BirdLife South Africa's Community Bird Guide Project for two decades, providing financial contributions as well as loan equipment for some of the top guides. In July, Lucky Ngwenya became the first of the guides to be loaned a Swarovski spotting scope. Based at the BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Tourism and Education Centre, Lucky is widely known as a 'lark whisperer' and has shown countless local and international visitors their Rudd's Lark and Botha's Lark lifers. He is incredibly grateful for this very useful addition to his guiding kit and will be putting it to good use on his tours. To book a tour with Lucky, please contact Kristi Garland at wakkerstroom@birdlife.org.za / kristi.garland@birdlife.org.za.

ANDREW DE BLOCQ, AVITOURISM PROJECT MANAGER

Junior Bird Clubs

In a previous newsletter we mentioned the newsletter that was being developed for our junior members. Things have gone really well, and we are currently on our second issue of Amaphiko – giving juniors wings. Each issue covers a species of the month, important environmental days during the month, an action taking activity for the children to do at home or at school as well as a competition and word search. Kristi Garland ensures that copies are printed for our junior clubs. Unfortunately, due to COVID still being rife in our communities, Kristi delivers copies to each of the clubs for the children to work on. From issue three onwards, Carol Preston will be contributing to the newsletter too.



Afrikaanse Voëllys

Wakkerstroom leen homself tot n wonderlike stokperdjie naamlik die identifikasie van voëls. Almal wat al n bietjie voëls geïdentifiseer het weet dat die stokperdjie baie fasette het en n persoon se belewenis van die natuur baie verander en verreek.

Huidiglik bestaan daar slegs n Engelse voël lys van die groter Wakkerstroom area. Daar is min Afrikaanssprekendes wat deelneem aan die aktiwiteite van die Voëlklub. Daar is besluit om ook n Afrikaanse voëllys saam te stel om te kyk of meer belangstellendes nie wil deelneem aan die aktiwiteite van die klub nie. Ons poog om die twee weergawes van die Voëllys met mekaar te kombineer sodat identifikasie makliker in beide tale sal wees.

Enige terugvoering en positiewe voorstelle sal waardeer word. *Rina Nel*

Spring Alive 2021 African season plans

Spring Alive is an international project which encourages children's interest in nature and the conservation of migratory birds, taking action for birds and other wildlife as well as to participate in events organized by BirdLife Partners across Europe, Asia, and Africa. It all began in 2006 as a European project, which soon spread to Central Asia. In 2010, Spring Alive was extended into Africa, where from September to mid-December children and adults alike, look out for the return of the same seven species from their breeding grounds in the north.

Spring Alive brings together children, their teachers, and families to record their first sightings of seven easily recognised migratory birds: Barn Swallow, White Stork, Common Cuckoo, Sand Martin, Common Swift, Common Ringed Plover and European Bee-eater. By posting your first sightings of these mascots of migration on

www.springalive.net, a real-time map is created of the incredible journeys these birds take every year. Each year a theme is selected by the International Steering Group to guide the season's objectives. This season the theme is Birds nests and how to protect them.

Spring Alive encompasses many indoor and outdoor events, to engage children, schools, and the wider community in the conservation of migratory birds. In South Africa, Kristi Garland heads up the project and designs a range of 'take-home' resources and activities for schools and community groups as well as annually, adding the ever growing a story book collection.

In 2021 season, Kristi plans to incorporate the Spring Alive activities into the Junior Bird Club sessions. Each month during the season the Junior newsletter will feature two of the project's mascots as species of the month as well as marketing monthly competitions for the learners to enter. These include an 'Adopt a species' poster competition, a mascot puppet story telling competition and a teachers lesson plan contest for the whole of the continent. There will also be weekly quizzes on the Spring Alive RSA facebook page. In October, the CAR (Avifaunal roadside) count will focus not only on the regular large terrestrial species but include specifically the project's mascot species. We also plan to do a clean-up of a wetland (Wakkerstroom) and a river (Volksrust) during October and November, COVID regulations permitting. Resources developed during the season will be showcased at each WBC event and or meeting.

What to learn more or get your children and grandchildren involved, feel free to drop me a mail at kristi.garland@birdlife.org.za.

Wakkerstroom 4, Greening Mpumalanga Project

The Wakkerstroom 4 sub-project which will ultimately link up with the Greening the Escarpment Project. GEM is organised by the Lowveld Bird Club and covers the SAPPI plantations and surrounds from Sabie to Piet Retief. There are 110 pentads in total across the broader project area, covering an area of 10,000 square kilometres. All the pentads have to date been atlased at least once. This equates to 2 200 full protocol cards and 373 species having been recorded. Our target is to cover all the pentads with four or more full protocol cards. The map indicates the area and the pentads that have been covered. Yellow and orange pentads still need to be atlased at least twice, before the map 'turns' green. Thanks to all the keen birders (atlasers), who have supported the sub – project over the years.



Local guide sightings

Here's a new section to our newsletter, reports of bird sightings via our Wakkerstroom Community Bird Guides.

David Nkosi

11 August – Black Sparrowhawk up near the base of Ossewakop.

17 August – Black-winged Lapwing together with Crowned Lapwing out on the airfield road.

Lucky Ngwenya

August – Blue Crane, Black-winged Lapwing and Secretarybird on the Amersfoort Road.

White-bellied Bustard, Buff Pipit and Black-winged Lapwing all in Dirkiesdorp

African Rail, Brown-throated Martin and African Black Duck all located in the wetland.

Do your bit for our birds and natural habitats

Campaign elastic Cut has started. Before throwing away masks, simply cut the elastics – depositing of them properly. Both marine and terrestrial fauna are affected by this new pollutant and birds have been seen with masks tangled on their wings and feet. Do this and show respect to our cohabitants on this planet. You can also cut the masks into smaller pieces. (Thanks to Lynn Goodrum for sharing.)



Till next time, keep safe and keep on birding! We would love to hear more from you – please feel free to drop me an email with your unusual sightings, a report on a recent trip or even a suggestion of what you would like to see in your newsletter.

Kind regards

Kristi

Vice-chair WBC

info@wakerstroombirdclub.org.za

