



Wakkerstroom Bird Club



Affiliated to BirdLife South Africa

Principal supporter of the Wakkerstroom Junior Bird Clubs

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 88 – April 2022

Dear Wakkerstroom Bird Club members and friends,

The last few months have definitely flown by – no pun intended 😊. In this newsletter, you'll find the club's plan of activities for the next few months along with interesting articles and updates on some of our projects. Please mark these in your diaries and remember to bring a friend along to one, if not all, our events.

MAY

7th – Vlei walk with a difference. As we start heading into the winter season, we will be starting our vlei walk this month a little later. Meet on the Amersfoort bridge at 10h00. Don't worry, we'll remind you closer to the time. After the walk we will head to a local restaurant for a bite to eat.

10th – Outing. Details will be released in due course.

18th – Speaker / evening meeting

JUNE

4th – vlei walk. Meet at 10h00 on the Amersfoort Bridge and a bite to eat at a local restaurant.

14th – Outing to a local site. Details will be released in due course.

25th – Speaker / afternoon meeting

In July and August, we will be running our weekly bird quizzes via our social media platforms due to the cold and potentially slower birding opportunities. Watch our various communications prior to September when we start our outings, walks and meetings again.

BIRD OF THE YEAR FOR 2022 - BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA (WWW.BIRDLIFE.ORG.ZA)

BirdLife South Africa is pleased to announce the Cape Gannet as Bird of the Year for 2022. Gannets are spectacular high-speed diving birds. With their unusually narrow-set eyes and exquisitely painted faces, these birds are as unmistakable as they are beautiful. They feed primarily on sardine and anchovy; small schooling fish which form the basis of the food chain.

To compete with the many other seabirds, fish and mammals that also chase after these fish, they plunge dive to depths of over 20 metres. To do this they hover some 30 metres up in the air, spot a fish, and plummet headfirst towards it. They can reach speeds of up to 100 km per hour by streamlining their body, extending their wings backwards before literally cutting the water surface with their sharp beaks!

The Cape Gannet is an excellent ambassador to highlight two of the most pressing conservation issues facing South Africa's seabirds. Cape Gannets breed on only six islands across South Africa and Namibia. Their population has decreased by over 50% in the last 60 years, resulting in the species being listed as Endangered. Cape Gannets are threatened by the lack of sardine and anchovy due to the combination of a shift in the distribution of the fish populations and competition with one of the most important commercial fisheries in South Africa. To compensate,



gannets often resort to feeding on hake discards thrown off the back of trawl vessels. This is however a double-edged sword; they are vulnerable to becoming tangled in the fishing nets and, while the discards are enough to support the feeding requirements of adults, the lower fat content of hake is not sufficient to raise healthy chicks.

Be sure to follow BirdLife South Africa's website for additional information on the Bird of the Year as well as novel resources etc.

UPDATE ON THE WETLAND TRAIL

It has been a while since our last update, so here it goes. In the last week, we installed the two turnstiles toward the end of the trail. This will make it that much easier to pass through the existing fencing as one heads back up to the Amersfoort Road.

Thanks to Marc de Jager, Optimum Maintenance, and the Working on Fire Team. Next step is to get a few benches installed and develop the interpretive signage. We will continue to fundraise over the next few months and hope that you will continue to support this initiative.



Environmental Days

- 1 National Walk to Work Day
- 4-10 Community Garden Week
- 15 International Micro-volunteering Day
- 22 International Mother Earth Day
- 28 Stop Food Waste Day

Have you seen our new sign up at the entrance to the BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Centre? Why not take a photograph and post it on social media. Remember to tag the club. Let's get the country talking about what our club gets up to!



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Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*) by Santiago Caballero Carrera | Macaulay Library

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DID YOU KNOW?

The Wakkerstroom Bird Club has a website – www.wakkerstroombirdclub.org.za?? Here you can find all sorts of information about our club and activities.

We are also on social media – facebook and Instagram. Why not follow us and keep up to date with various snippets of information, upcoming events etc.



JUNIOR BIRDS CLUBS UPDATE

Through Kristi Garland at the BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Centre, the club has been supporting three local junior bird clubs – a junior and senior group from Country College and the Clay Edu-Centre. Kristi meets with these groups on a weekly basis and each session focusses on an aspect of birds, birding, and their habitats. For term one, the focus was on Wetlands and associated fauna where the groups learnt more about what a wetland is and how it functions, how various birds are adapted to living in this watery environment as well as practical bird identification activities and most definitely the highlight of the term – making a functioning wetland in a 2l bottle. Each group participated in a colouring in competition for World Wetlands Day and 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners were awarded. This really got the learners excited as prizes included a SASOL Field guide to southern African birds, pin badges and certificates.

As term two starts in early April. The focus will be on biodiversity, identifications and classification of fauna and flora as well as fire safety and awareness. We look forward to sharing more on our work. Thanks must be extended to the Wakkerstroom Bird Club for supporting this extremely important work with our future landowners and users.



Don't forget to register for the upcoming online atlas workshop!

The Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) is an important bird monitoring project in our region. Following a straightforward protocol and using the mobile app BirdLasser, hundreds of birders submit lists of species they have seen each month. Conservation organisations, academics, students, and government use the data for academic studies or to plan and monitor bird conservation activities.

If you are keen to take part in SABAP2, or are already a keen atlaser, please join us for a SABAP2 virtual workshop on **Saturday 23 April 2022 at 09:00 – 10:30**. We will discuss the atlas protocol, the vetting process, how to make use of the SABAP2 website, a short introduction to the BirdLasser mobile app and some feedback on how atlas data is used. Presenters include Colin Summersgill, Henk Nel, Michael Brooks, Sanjo Rose, and Alan Lee.

To register for the webinar please follow this

link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2Are7WXDQEGV3YqB5m5g8w

We are always on the lookout for new photographs for our website and communications (newsletters/social media etc). If you are interested in sharing these, please do send to info@wakerstroombirdclub.org.za. All photographs used will acknowledge the photographer.

Thank you to all club and community members who continue to support our second handbook 'store' at the Wakkerstroom Diensstasie. The sale of these books and magazines assists us in funding a variety of ongoing projects.

Should you wish to donate to this initiative, please do contact Brian on chair@wakerstroombirdclub.org.za.

There are many ongoing projects, specifically relating to maintenance of our hides, trails, and walkways. Should you wish to offer some of your time and expertise toward a work party scenario – please do drop us a line on info@wakerstroombirdclub.org.za. We are looking at doing some work around the Iain Drummond Hide in the next few weeks and would love to have you join us, even if it is for an hour or two. This work as already started with a new sign board which went up in recent weeks.

Our committee manned a table at the Vleifees on 16 April. We had a range of branded goodies for sale, including licence disk holders, magnetic birding signs, branded cooler bags (perfect for you purchase at the meat sale) as well as raffle tickets for an amazing hamper of picnic / table items. Funds raised through the raffle will go towards seating and signage on our Wetland Trail. Tickets will still be on sale until 1 May at various establishments / shops around the village. Be sure to get yours! You can also contact Kristi on info@wakerstroombirdclub.org.za for more information.

Notification for the latest published scientific article that uses SABAP2 data. Your contribution as citizen scientists! The article, *'The SABAP2 legacy: A review of the history and use of data generated by a long-running citizen science project'*, discusses the SABAP2 database and data use in particular. The article is freely available here: <https://sajs.co.za/article/view/12030>





On a recent trip to the Lowveld we heard a loud disturbance from a pair of Burchell's Starlings and a Fork-tailed Drongo. Reversing to the scene we witnessed a very large Mamba raiding the nest of the starlings. In the second picture the snake is going into the nest hole and much of its body is still wrapped around and out of sight. Eventually his whole body entered the nest hole presumably to finish the meal and sleep it off.

Brian Guerin

That's our latest newsletter in a nutshell. Remember to watch out for our newsflash in the coming month.

Kristi

Vice-chair WBC

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