



# Wakkerstroom Bird Club

*(Affiliated to BLSA)*



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Hello All,

There has been much comment from members and the public in recent months about the amount of vegetation that largely covers the river flowing under both bridges on the vlei and upstream as well. This is a source of concern to all interested parties including this Bird Club, Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association, Wakkerstroom Tourism Association and the town's residents who benefit substantially from birding tourism. The problem stems from untreated effluent escaping from the sewage works system.

Monitoring of water coming into the vlei reveals high levels of nutrients with readings sometimes going "off the dial", i.e. at totally unacceptable levels. These readings are done on a regular basis and they are also taken at the other end of the vlei, south of the Volksrust road. Here, however, results are at near normal levels. This indicates the vlei is doing its job as a filter, or sponge, which is how nature designed them. HOWEVER, this additional man-generated strain cannot go on indefinitely or the system may collapse.

The addition of over 100 houses being built in Esizameleni will put extra pressure on an already unacceptable situation.

We have a letter from bird club member Professor Bob Scholes of the Global Change and Sustainability Institute which gives further explanation and recommendations to follow. If anybody would like a copy I will e-mail it on request. A copy is on the whiteboard outside The Crow's Nest.

Urgent action is intended under the auspices of the Wakkerstroom Interest Group (which consists of the Chairmen of WNHA, Wakkerstroom Tourism, Bird Club, Kristi Garland from BirdLife South Africa and Mauritz de Bruyn, a Field Officer with the Endangered Wildlife Trust). We will keep members posted on this vital matter.

### **Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) Project.**

We thought that this appeal from EWT's June 2017 magazine, "The Green Mile" was worth publishing. Note that this app is very easy to install.

"Roadkill data can be emailed to: [roads@ewt.org.za](mailto:roads@ewt.org.za) or submitted via EWT's Road Watch app. Visit the iTunes or Playstore store to download.

Further details can be found on the EWT website: [www.ewt.org.za](http://www.ewt.org.za)

When reporting roadkill, the following information should be provided:

Location of roadkill (GPS co-ordinates);

Identification of species (as best as possible);

Date and time it was seen; and,

Notes on the habitat type at the particular section of the route where the roadkill was located (e.g. riverine, grassland, rocky, wetland, etc.) would also be useful.

Good identification photos (particularly if the carcass is very squashed) requires a little bit of attention.

Only stop and take a photo if it is safe to do so, then try and record the following:

BIRDS: Tail and wing feathers / beak and feet (if the whole bird is no longer there) and eye

REPTILES: Scales / head shape / foot shape (if applicable)

AMPHIBIANS: foot shape (webbed) / presence of warts / colouration around head and eye

MAMMALS: fur / hair colour / body size / teeth type (carnivore or herbivore)

Your support will no doubt help us to protect our wildlife. We do, however, request you not to put your own lives at risk in an attempt to provide information. Always consider your safety and please do not use your phone while driving.”

### **Knysna Fires.**

Mike Maxted-Smith sent in a copy of Endangered Wildlife Trust’s statement from Escarpment Bird Club’s June magazine dealing with the recent devastating fires in and around Knysna. The statement is too long to repeat here but the tenor of it is that these fires were greatly exacerbated by the volume of alien vegetation such as pine and wattle in the affected area. The irony is:

The threat posed by alien invasive plants in the area was identified many years ago. An article written by Richard Cowling, Brian van Wilgen, Tineke Kraaij, and Jonathan Britton, titled How no-man’s-land is now everyone’s problem, and published in the September 2009 edition of Veld&Flora, was almost prophetic in the concerns it raised regarding the potential for abnormally intense fires to ravage the area, due to the replacement of indigenous fynbos with alien plant species such as pine trees. The authors developed various scenarios for the Garden Route and, based on the existence of uncontrolled alien spread, and periods of lower rainfall, they predicted that “... fires would rage with abnormal intensity, seriously threatening homes, crops, plantations and people. The high-intensity fires would damage the soil, resulting in erosion and silting up of dams, further exacerbating water problems.”

If anybody would like to read the full report please contact me for a copy.

### **Third Sandy Twomey Memorial Photographic Competition.**

Entries are NOT rolling in for the competition as yet, are you saving the best for last? Winter scenes are a dime a dozen at the moment so get out there and start clicking! We have amended the rules so that each entrant may submit up to 10 entries, this should be an encouragement to participate. Entries to John Barrow at [wakkersbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:wakkersbirdclub@gmail.com).

### **Wakkerstroom Pentad Survey.**

The fifth year of the survey, although we have individual records going back much further, comes to an end on Sunday 2 July. The number of weekly checklists submitted to the Club has recently been sagging a little and we need YOUR help to bolster it up a bit. Remember you don’t have to be an expert birder, so long as you only submit records where you are sure of the identification. Likewise, birds identified by call can be ticked. Even the common birds like sparrows and those ghastly Common Mynas count and it’s important to the bigger picture to list them! Please contact any Committee member if you would like to help and you will be briefed and given the necessary paperwork. The Golden Rule is “**If in doubt, leave it out**”.

### **Diary of Forthcoming Events.**

**Saturday July 1** – the Wetland Walk, meet at the bridge from as early as it suits you for our monthly Wetland Walk. Tea and coffee as usual.

**Tuesday 11 July** – to be confirmed but we are trying to organize a return visit to “the Berry Farm,” near Charlestown. We have been asked to compile a bird list over time and, as well, it is not too far from home. Meet at Wakkerstroom Library to leave there at 08h00.

**Saturday 15 July** – **PLEASE NOTE THE DAY AND DATE CHANGE!** Our monthly meeting at BirdLife Centre. This month Bronwyn Howard will give us a talk on her and her photographer husband’s latest publication “Urban Birds of South Africa”. I have seen a preview and it’s most attractive. It is available as a CD or as a PDF download, both are available at special prices for the CDR150 (Retail R165) and the download PDF version at R115, both inclusive.

### **The Winter CAR Count.**

Saturday July 29 is the date to diarise! As always this is a day to travel out to places you might not visit very often, always a good thing to do! And you can garner some good information for the CAR Project as well. As well as the “regulars” we need some new recruits to learn the ropes of recording sightings and getting the feel of the process. Please contact Judy Wheeler on [judy@bruwer.net](mailto:judy@bruwer.net) with details of your team. High clearance vehicles or 4x4 vehicles are advisable but at least the roads should be dry.

### **Possible Extended Visit to Memel.**

We would like an idea of how many people might be interested in a two or three night visit to Memel AND whether weekend or midweek days are preferable. The accommodation is (finally) open to the public at approximately R700 per night for four persons. Please reply to Claudine: [grasslandscottage@gmail.com](mailto:grasslandscottage@gmail.com) to help us plan.

Yours in birding,

Brian.