



Wakkerstroom Bird Club



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

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NEWSLETTER NUMBER 64 - JANUARY 2019

Hello fellow birders,

The WBC Committee would like to wish you all a very happy 2019, with only good things coming your way this year. As we start the new year, we'll look back at December's special bird sightings, a recent birding day out to the Uys Farm, our year-end get together, our January events, as well as BirdLife South Africa's *Bird of the Year* initiative. We also have a very exciting event planned for October, but for details on that you will have to wait a little – suffice it to say that you should keep the weekend of 11-13 October 2019 in your diaries because you won't want to miss it!

Help BirdLife South Africa track 2019's Bird of the Year - the Secretarybird!

BirdLife South Africa has teamed up with BirdLasser to set up an exciting conservation initiative - the Bird of the Year 2019 event. We encourage all users of the BirdLasser app to email ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za to be added to this challenge which will feed your logged Secretarybird sightings to us and help to build up a year-long distribution map for these charismatic birds. Sightings can be viewed at www.birdlasser.com/events/secretaryb2019 throughout the year. #Secretarybird #SaveOurSecbirds #BotY2019 #Strider #GivingConservationWings



Interesting Local Sightings

We plan to re-introduce this section in the newsletter and ALL contributions will be welcome – remember, a picture if possible!



*Male (left) and female Greater Painted-snipes.
(Picture from Google Images)*

The December Wetland Walk threw up a really interesting sighting – none other than a male **Greater Painted Snipe**! The club pentad records that I have go back to 2006 and don't include any sightings; John Burchmore has Andre Botha's records showing a male on the wetland in July 1994 and a female on BirdLife property on 23 October 2001. Unusually, the female is more brightly coloured than the male. Nice record!



Caspian Tern (Picture Mike Maxted)

On 30 September I visited Martins Dam with our son and grandchildren as they wanted to fish, on arrival I saw 7 or 8 **Whiskered Terns**, suddenly there was another tern that was twice as big as the others, through the binoculars I could see the large red bill as it swooped over the water, it then disappeared in an easterly direction, I was only able to get one snap as it flew away, I returned for the next 2 days but did not sight the bird again. – *Mike Maxted*

This species was also recorded again over the wetland by David Nkosi.

Over time we have had reports of **Red-backed Shrike** in our area but all the records we can find are of females. This picture was taken in February 2016 and is of a female. Not a good pic as the faint scalloping on the breast/belly of females is not clearly shown, males have a pinkish buff front.



Female Red-backed Shrike. (Picture Brian Guerin)

The question of sightings at one stage still remains unexplained but recently males have been seen on several occasions raising another question: do the females arrive before males? Roberts 7 indicates the opposite, maybe there are just not enough observers out in the field looking, hint.

Another interesting sighting was a **Spotted Crake** by Richard McKibbin's group here for the Bio-Bash and we await details/photographs.

Two old sightings were advised by David Nkosi "Last year after the first storm around October 2017 I saw a single **White-fronted Plover** at the township soccer field. I also told Lucky (Ngwenya) about it, it was before I joined BirdLife South Africa Wakkerstroom Centre on their school project".

Also: "After another week I saw three **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** near Gary Laverack's farm near the Pound. I was collecting some of our cattle from the Pound."

Mike Maxted reports **Brown Snake Eagle**, male **Red-backed Shrike**, **Botha's Lark**, **Denham's Bustard** and **Yellow-breasted Pipit** from the Jantjieshoek area recently.

Thanks everyone for these contributions, keep it up!

New Members

The following people joined the Club in December, bringing membership total to 76:

Carmen and Derek Jacobs of Weavers Nest

Lesley and Hayley Laverack – and it was Lesley who won the Christmas raffle of the hamper and half-day tour with bird guide Lucky. See what happens when you become a member 😊

We wish all these folk a long and happy association with the Club.

Bird List from club Outing to the Uys Farm

One of the great privileges of being part of this bird club is that we often have access to private farms for our outings. In November we visited Ben and Hanlie Uys's farm. En route, the following birds were noted (list kindly provided by Mike and Jenni Maxted-Smith):

Tawny-flanked Prinia; Greater Striped Swallow; Red-capped Lark; Purple Heron; African Paradise Flycatcher; Yellow Bishop; Red-winged Francolin; Blacksmith Lapwing; Spike-heeled Lark; Ashy Flycatcher; Ant-eating Chat

The setting is beautiful, and a few members wandered off for some serious birding. The following were seen and logged. Please bear with us, the list seems exhaustive, but it is fantastic to note the number of species seen:

Black-headed Heron; Little Grebe; Red-knobbed Coot; Southern Red Bishop; Yellow-billed Duck; Cape Longclaw; Long-tailed Widowbird; African Stonechat; Cape Wagtail; Red-chested Cuckoo; Diederik Cuckoo; Speckled Pigeon; Bokmakierie; Cape Turtle Dove; Levillant's Cisticola; Cape Crow; Pied Crow; Cape Bunting; Pied Starling; Drakensberg Prinia; Common Fiscal; Hadeda Ibis; Steppe (common) Buzzard; Cape Robin-chat; Bar-throated Apalis; Grey-winged Francolin; Cape Whiteeye; Amethyst Sunbird, Jackal Buzzard; Malachite Sunbird; Cape Canary; Little Swift; Southern Grey-headed Sparrow; Common House Martin; Blue Crane; Secretarybird; Sentinel Rock Thrush; White-throated Swallow; Buff-streaked Chat; Ground Woodpecker; Familiar Chat; Black Cuckoo; Rufous-naped Lark; African Pipit; African Rock Pipit; Cloud Cisticola; Dark-capped Bulbul; Cape Weaver; Egyptian Goose; Village Weaver; Brown-throated Martin; Fan-tailed Widowbird.

Diary – January 2019

Saturday, January 5: Wetland Walk – 07h00 (or so) on the Amersfoort Bridge. You will see from the Interesting Local Sightings section that some goodies have been seen lately, maybe we will be lucky? Tea, coffee, chat as usual.

Tuesday January 15: a return visit to Ben and Martie Pretorius' farm "Bergen" off the Amersfoort road. Leave the Library at 07h30 for the short trip. We may be having a braai there – details to follow when finalised but pencil it in!

Wednesday January 16: a nice gentle start to 2019 – a DVD and get-together to start the year off!

And, don't forget our **Annual General Meeting on Saturday 9th of February**. We have a very special speaker in Dr Gus Mills, author of several books and an authority on hyena and cheetah with many years' experience studying these animals in the Kgalagadi.

Tackling Martin's Dam

On a hot day in early December, a group of Wakkerstroom Interest Group (WIG) members gathered at Martin's Dam to attempt to gauge the current water content of the dam – this in order to determine whether the municipality's plan of a pipeline from the dam to Volksrust is feasible. The exercise was done under the direction of Mary and Sterling Scholes and was rated successful at the end of the day. Our inflatable boat was used with lines running across the dam which Mary and Sterling pulled, taking readings at regular intervals. Our special thanks to the Scholes's and WIG'ers Rupert Lawlor, Owen Castleman and volunteers Graham Wheeler and assistant Mbongeni (who also turned out to be a great raconteur!). These people worked the whole day in hot, trying conditions until dark to get the job done, save the pipeline fight a great deal of money and deserve many thanks."

Year-end get-together/ bring and braai

Members had a fun afternoon at our Christmas party, hosted at the BirdLife South Africa Centre. It started as another very hot day, but some of us got a welcome drenching by a sudden rain shower while trying to finish braaiing our meat. That was quickly forgotten when we happily tucked into the wonderful salads, and later the desserts, provided by various members. The tables had been beautifully decorated and it was a festive scene all around. Kristi had provided some props for photographs, the results of which you can see in some of the photos below. THANK YOU to everybody who attended and made this a truly special event!

That's it from me for now. Enjoy your birding!

Chris





