



Wakkerstroom Bird Club



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NEWSLETTER NUMBER 46, SEPTEMBER, 2016.

Hi All,

Newsletter time again, the months fly! This simplified format seems acceptable so we'll stick with it. And as for the comment that we have copied Chit-Chat, well.....

Winter Car Count, July 2016

Set out below is a quick and simplified summary of the club's results in the July Winter Car Count. We don't have comparative figures for previous counts to hand but hope to get these details from ADU people here for the Citizen Scientist Day. If we are successful a more detailed summary will be produced in a future issue.

Unfortunately only one Denham's Bustard was recorded but the Black Harriers were, hopefully two different birds! Interestingly three teams didn't see Helmeted Guineafowl.

CAR COUNT JULY 2016 SUMMARY

WAKKERSTROOM BIRD CLUB

FULL NAME	PRECINCT/ROUTE							TOTAL
	MW01	MW03	MW06	MW07	MW08	MW09	MW10	
BLUE CRANE		2	2			6	2	12
GREY CROWNED CRANE	2				1	12	2	17
WATTLED CRANE	2							2
DENHAM'S BUSTARD			1					1
BLACK STORK					1			1
SECRETARY BIRD		1	3	1	2	2	3	12
BLUE KORHAAN				1		1		2
WHITE BELLIED KORHAAN					6			6
BLACK-HEADED HERON	12		42	9	8	13	4	88
SPUR-WINGED GOOSE		3	40		3	14		60
SOUTHERN BALD IBIS	23		15	7	10	256		311
HELMETED GUINEAFOWL	49				20	134	78	281
BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE		2	1	5	2	1	2	13
BLACK HARRIER	1	1						2
JACKAL BUZZARD		1	2	2	5	4	2	16
LONG-CRESTED EAGLE	2				1			3
CAPE CROW	4	12	3	9	20	1	5	54
PIED CROW						2		2
	95	22	109	34	79	446	98	883

Team Leader:

John Burchmore	Brian Guerin	Ann Cleal	John McAllister	Mike Maxted	Mike Maxted	Graham Spencer	883
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A Venerable Old Lady with Loads of Life!

Site checking a tiny Southern Bald Ibis colony mid-morning on September 13th proved extremely rewarding; seven birds were present and, at that time of day, there was a strong possibility that at least a few potential 'partners' were out foraging. Disappointing, but not unexpected given current conditions, little water could be seen entering the site catchment area, nor was actual nest building in progress. However the attitude of those birds present certainly indicated breeding was imminent and spotting one bird sporting an ADU silver 'anklet' really boosted our interest levels. Infuriatingly, sight of the other leg was obscured by the partner. It seemed ages before we were given a tantalising glimpse of the second leg, bearing colour-coded rings – and then the bird promptly sat down! Sight of the colour coding immediately sent our blood-pressure soaring – it was literally years ago that a ringing programme was in place when Wesvaal Bird Club used to visit Wakkerstroom each breeding season, accompanied by volunteers from their local fire department. The firemen honed their abseiling techniques whilst collecting chicks from their natal ledges, carefully noting which nest each came from before they were bagged and transported to a ringer seated some distance away in a less precarious position. Once processed, the system was reversed as each chick was then returned to the appropriate nest, "walkie-talkies" in full cry.

Even though the colours had been visible through binoculars, there was a scrabble for the spotting scope and hasty repositioning of the vehicle for optimum viewing position. It seemed an eternity before the bird stood, both legs clearly visible and the colours confirmed: red, black and yellow on the left leg. Totally unfazed by our presence and intense interest, the pair began 'sabre rattling' their bills (a prequel to copulation) and nature took its course. This particular bird, now known to be female, received her rings during an exercise which took place at Vryheid farm in the Wakkerstroom district on 19th October, 1996 – she is almost exactly 20 years old!!

We have asked Dieter Oschadleus, head of Safring at the Animal Demography Unit, University of Cape Town to check this if is a longevity record Southern Bald Ibis.

Donations

Many thanks to Bertus and Rita Wiesemann for their generous donation of a Trim-Tech brushcutter, this will be a boon to us in future!

Whilst on the subject of donations, we have sometimes been remiss in thanking those members (and non-members) who have given books over the years for our book sales. We have raised more than R12600 in sales of (mostly) books in our four and a half years of existence which has funded herbicide purchases and helped to keep annual subs down also.

Vlei Clean-up Day.



Picture shows our regular worker "Shorty" with his "haul" of five bags of rubbish collected from the vlei last week. Our record number of bags is well in excess of the number here. Wakkerstroom Bird Club regularly conducts these forays late in the week so that the area is presentable for residents and visitors on weekends at least. The combination of untidy people who throw down these papers, bottles and plastic, together with the high winds we experience makes it an endless and thankless task.

ADU Citizen Scientist Day.

Good news is that the Citizen Scientist Day attracted an excellent turnout at BirdLife on Saturday 17 and also for the (freezing) ringing exercise on Sunday morning. A full report, with photographs, is on facebook. Many, many thanks to all who worked so very hard to make the event a possibility. We received the following e-mail from Peter Greaves, who is a member of the Animal Demography Unit Advisory Board, yesterday. Take a bow, everybody!

Dear Brian,

On behalf of everyone from ADU I would like to express ADU's gratitude for a wonderfully well organised Citizen Scientist day at Wakkerstroom on 17th September 2016. Every aspect of the day was perfectly arranged and timed and I can only heap praise on your entire team. From the Tea, Coffee, Rusks, Muffins and biscuits for breakfast through the Lunch and then to include hot soup to follow the Virtual Museum workshop was inspirational on a very cold and wet day. And the attention to detail did not stop there. Your club followed up on Sunday morning at the Wakkerstroom Wetland with more Coffee, Tea, Rusks and support during the bird ringing and then served everyone breakfast on a day when it snowed as we drove to Volksrust! Grateful thanks to Brenda and the team of Ladies who provided all the food and hot drinks are simply not enough. Without you we would have frozen.

On the organisation of the event everyone at Wakkerstroom contributed enormously to the wonderful success. You had Citizen Scientists from KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Gauteng all coming to join the fun day and the interactions, questions, interest and support was way beyond what we expected or have rarely experienced at similar Citizen Scientist days. I personally was blown away by the 20 or so members who joined us for the afternoon VM workshop, more than twice as many as I expected to join us!

The comment by one member of your local club members "I have been inspired to day and want to register to become a Citizen Scientist this afternoon" is all we ever HOPE to achieve and when he sat and registered to get his Observer number during the VM workshop we were all impressed. Another member told me he last sent in a BIRP list in 2003 and took the excel files on his camera's SD card so he could start and submit all his lists between 2003 and today. Such enthusiasm shows just how well organised your day was and I can honestly say that once we put the programme together Wakkerstroom Bird Club did an amazing job with everything else.

Please take the time to read this email to your club members at your next meeting on Wednesday and tell each and every single one of them that ADU is proud have been part of such a fantastically successful day. To your entire club at Wakkerstroom all I can say is,

WELL DONE!

Best Regards

Peter and Sandra Greaves

email: peter.greaves@tiscali.co.za

Diary of Forthcoming Activities:

Saturday October 1 – Our 50th Vlei Walk! To celebrate it we will be serving Bacon/Scrambled Egg rolls and coffee after the walk. Usual start time for the walk, 07h30?

Tuesday October 11 – Outing to the berry farm, near Charlestown, leave the Library at 07h00.

Wednesday October 19 – Speaker/DVD, details to be finalized.

See you on the 1st, The Committee.