



# Wakkerstroom Bird Club

*Affiliated to BirdLife South Africa*

*Principal supporter of the Wakkerstroom Junior Bird Clubs*



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## **NEWSLETTER NUMBER 56 – MAY 2018**

Hi Everybody,

It's gone chilly here in Wakkerstroom! With frost on the ground for the past few mornings, you could be excused for setting out on your birding stints a bit later than usual. With that in mind, we have also decided this is a good time to change our usual Wednesday monthly evening talks **to Saturdays at 11am**. The next one will happen on *Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May* at BirdLife Centre, when there will be a talk by Kristi and David Nkosi about the National Lotteries Biodiversity Stewardship Project (pew, managed to say that all in one breath!) This will be followed by a bring 'n braai, so please bring some meat and perhaps a bottle or three – strictly to keep you warm of course – while we will provide rolls and salads as well as plates and cutlery. Please join us and invite someone you think might enjoy the day and perhaps become a member.

On *Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June* we will have our monthly Wetland Walk as usual. We'll meet as early as temperatures permit, say around 7h30 on the bridge? Coffee and tea will be available as always. – Attendance has been somewhat erratic lately, any suggestions on what we can do to improve numbers?

A couple of weeks later, on *Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June*, we will have our annual pilgrimage to Jurie and Coleen Wessels' farm – last year members found the Gurney's Sugarbird here, what a fantastic tick for this area! Because the farm is well out of town, we should aim to leave from the Library at 07h00.

While you're noting all that in your diary, let's give you some advance notice for the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, which is World Migratory Bird Day for the Southern Hemisphere. Of course we'll remind you again closer to the day. – No confirmed date as yet, but also in October (spring, yay!!) we will once again host Steve Davis who ran a Bird Identification Workshop here recently. This time around he will be presenting a one-hour talk on the off-course

migratory bird species that arrived in the country this past summer, followed by a two-hour informative talk on brood parasitism. As you probably know, a brood parasite is a bird that lays its eggs in the nest of another bird and expects that other bird (called the host or foster parent) to incubate the eggs and raise the chicks. R80 per person for the full morning with a light lunch included. Further details and how to book will follow closer to the time.



If you feel exhausted after all those diary notes, settle back for some more relaxing news. Our fundraising raffle of the Weber braai is going well and there have been quite a number of tickets sold so far - we thank the Crow's Nest folk for handling the majority of the sales at the shop. If you haven't bought your ticket/s yet, they're only R20 each and you can view the brand new Weber there as well. We will draw the winner's name during the Arts Ramble in mid-June. Also coming to an end then is the annual Sandy Twomey Photographic Competition – so this is the final month of the competition and the last entries have to be in by 5 June. There have been so many excellent contributions every month; it will be quite a task for Warwick Tarboton to choose the winners. Prizes include a stay at a beautiful local destination, birding tours, books and note books, a framed version of Frances Kendall's stunning new map of Wakkerstroom, as well as winners' framed photographs. Email your entries to [wakkersbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:wakkersbirdclub@gmail.com) . Again, winners will be announced during the Arts and Crafts Ramble.

Food for thought: during Professor Bob Scholes' informative talk about wetlands earlier this year, he mentioned the positive impact the local hippopotamus population used to have before they were eliminated some years ago. Hippos have a huge role in the rivers and lakes they frequent, from preventing underwater channels silting up, to adding important minerals through their dung distribution. Let us know what you think about the

idea that has been muted of re-introducing hippos to our wetland? Do you love the idea, hate it, or does it simply scare you? The local cattle would certainly get a surprise!



Another popular project to report on is the second story in BirdLife's Spring Alive Project. You will all be aware of the 'Ringo the White Stork' story by Kristi Garland, Judy-Lynn Wheeler and Carol Preston which appeared last November. Great news is that they have started on the new story, which this time is about another popular migrant to our shores, the European Bee-eater. The story follows the migration of the Bee-eaters which goes more along the western African coast where most other migrants trek further east than that, and therefore the Bee-eaters visit a lot of other countries than Ringo's story does. Can't wait, Ladies!



**An update by John Burchmore on the ongoing "94 Pentads Project":**

"94 pentads refer to the map in the publication of Warwick and Michele Tarboton 'Wakkerstroom Bird and Nature Guide, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 2004'. The map has been divided into 94 pentads or areas. Our aim is to turn all the pentads 'green', which means that each one has to be atlased with four full protocol cards (explanation of this follows below).

Greening of pentads was mostly done by Peter Lawson and his team when they started two-year-project in the Kruger National Park. The project was initiated by BirdLife Lowveld.

Having completed the KNP project and turned the area green, 'Greening the Escarpment of Mpumalanga' (GEM) was started. This area covers all SAPPI plantation pentads from Sabie/ Graskop down to Piet Retief. It is funded and supported by SAPPI, and one can obtain permits to enter their forestry areas. Some of the GEM pentads in the Piet Retief area are included in the Wakkerstroom Bird and Nature Guide. We initiated our 94 pentads project to link up with GEM, and in so doing we would turn our area green as well and in turn link up with the Kruger Park.

All pentads must be full protocol i.e. a minimum of two hours must be spent in a pentad covering all the different habitats if possible, irrespective of the number of species recorded. Incidental reports will not be accepted.

There is a large map on the wall at BirdLife Centre showing all the remaining pentads that need to be covered.

If any members are interested in taking part in this survey, please contact me, John Burchmore, on 017 730 0317 or 082 224 3326."

That's it from me for now. Let us have your comments, thoughts, and ideas on any of the above at [wackersbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:wackersbirdclub@gmail.com) – we'd love to hear from you!

Enjoy your birding!

Chris

***REFUSE -- REDUCE – REUSE – RECYCLE – ROT***