



Wakkerstroom Bird Club



(Affiliated to BLSA)

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Hi All,

It's time for another Co-ordinated Avifaunal Roadcount (or CAR Count to us ordinary folk) and there are a few additional species to be counted but they shouldn't bother us too much, mostly Francolins. We still need a couple of volunteers, please attend the pre-Count briefing on this (28th July) Friday evening at 17h15 at The Crowned Crane, we will also be showing a few interesting slides(assembled by Mike Maxted-Smith) taken from previous Counts. We've been trying to get this data together for a long time. See you there!

Another interesting project to take on comes from the following e-mail:

"Greetings Everyone,

Our next edition of the BirdLife Lowveld newsletter, The Hornbill, is due for distribution in September. That is springtime and as migrants are starting to arrive we would like to feature 'Migrant Arrivals' in Mpumalanga in this edition. Please keep an eye out and let me know where and when you find your first migrants. We have already heard that Lesser Striped Swallows were seen in Steiltes on 18 July so they are starting already. I look forward to hearing from you and please put the word out to others not mentioned here.

Best regards,

Peter Lawson, Editor."

Peter Lawson is a life-time birder and addressed us at the Citizen Scientist Days last year and was also instrumental in the success of the Turning Kruger Green project recently. As you may know the Club has been recording migrant arrival and departure dates for a few years now. There is a very simple tick list to complete and return to me. It's also a chance to promote the Club in their magazine, The Hornbill which Peter has edited since (I think) about 1986 when that Club was formed. I will send blank forms to anybody interested, filling them in is simple!

Interesting Local Sighting.

On 10th July, a young otter was seen actively hunting in the large canal (Oude Stasie side) where it caught a fairly large fish which protested vigorously - so much so in fact, that the otter began to manoeuvre it onto the bank. Unfortunately I was not the only spectator and the fish was landed in close proximity to a Purple Heron who had been watching the event with singular interest. It stepped up to otter which bared its teeth in a threatening manner (difficult feat with a mouthful of wriggling fish) and was very deliberately stabbed for its trouble. The attack was so quick that I could not say for certain where, or how deeply the otter was struck, but it squealed and jerked backwards, releasing the fish which the Heron promptly captured. No mistakes here, It was immediately positioned for swallowing, a lengthy process during which the heron's neck distended to an alarming degree.....at times the bird looked singularly uncomfortable! After watching for about ten minutes, I crossed the road and noticed a lone otter hunting on that side: as there had been no sign of any others in the vicinity, can only assume it was the same

individual who had lost the fish, albeit a tad wiser. One wonders how often this sort of piracy occurs and if mortality results – the weapon certainly appears lethal enough.

Another “Big Day”, But Later in the Year!

BirdLife South Africa has announced details for this year’s Birding Big Day (BBD), to take place on Saturday 25 November, 2017. Participants can enter for one of two categories: Open, with teams of three or four members, or the Community Category, suitable for larger groups such as a Bird Club. The object (apart from having a super time) is to tick as many birds as possible within a 50km radius. And within the 24 hours of Saturday 25th. But we needn’t worry too much about that! Judy-Lynn Wheeler has volunteered to run this one, we must give her all the support we can, thanks, Judy.

More details will be given in future communications but you can go to www.birdlife.org/events/birdingbigday for a full explanation of the competition.

This means that during a year the Bird Club will participate in two CAR Counts, Global Big Day for Cornell Laboratory in the U.S., Birding Big Day, our continuing Pentad Survey, SABAP 2, Peter Greaves’ Birds in Reserves Project as well as outings, meetings, etc., spraying the vlei and cleaning up the rubbish that gets thrown there. Whew!

Wakkerstroom Interest Group (WIG)

Not another group/association/body you may be asking? Well, hopefully more than that.

The following registered NPOs and NGOs make up the current body of WIG:

- BirdLife South Africa, Wakkerstroom Centre
- Wakkerstroom Bird Club – WBC
- The Endangered Wildlife Trust – EWT
- Wakkerstroom Tourism Association – WTA
- Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association – WNHA

The Chairnan or local representatives of these bodies, or an alternative attend these meetings.

WIG was created with the aim of forming a consultative body that focusses on issues relating to Wakkerstroom and to understand the “gaps” that fall outside the mandates of the above bodies. Any issues raised from the community must be received in writing with a name and contact details and all supporting documentation, preferably with photographic evidence. The issue will then be assessed and, if thought valid, acted upon.

Diary of Future Events

Friday 28 July – CAR briefing, 17h15 at Crowned Crane,

Saturday 29 July – CAR Count,

Saturday 5 August – Vlei walk, 07h30 on the bridge, first some atlassing, then some tea or coffee,

Tuesday 8 August – return outing to the attractive Zoetendalvlei Farm, on the Vrede road, to leave the Wakkerstroom Library at 08h00. PLEASE let Claudine know if you are coming as our host has asked for numbers.

Saturday 19 August – we are hoping to have Rina Pretorius give us an update on the seasons Amur Falcon monitoring and the observed reduction in their numbers. Rina has just returned from overseas a day or two ago so we will firm up this talk as soon as possible.

PLEASE NOTE: The Committee has decided that evening meetings during the winter months of June, July and August are just too risky, weather-wise, and that they should rather be held on the third Saturday afternoon, 14h00 for 14h30 in future, just as we started in July this year.

Yours in birding,

Brian Guerin.

