



WITWATERSRAND BIRD CLUB – BRANCH OF BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA

www.wbc.co.za

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Public Benefit Organisation Exemption No 930 026 454

Nonprofit Registration Number 001-298 NPO

Secretary
Lauraine Leigh

NOTICE OF 2010 WBC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 50th Annual General Meeting of the Witwatersrand Bird Club, a branch of BirdLife South Africa,

Will be held on Thursday 18th February 2010
19h15 for 19h30 at Delta Environmental Centre

At this meeting the President of the Club and the Committee to hold office for the year 2010 will be elected.

Members are asked to submit nominations signed by the proposer, the seconder and the nominee.

Nomination forms (on the back cover) should be sent to the above address to arrive no later than 11th February 2010.

After the Annual General Meeting cheese and wine will be served to which all members are invited.

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting
3. Financial Report
4. Chairman's Report
5. Election of the President and Committee members for 2010
6. Appointment of auditors
7. WBC Diamond Award
8. General

Minutes Of The 49th Witwatersrand Bird Club Annual General Meeting held at The Delta Park Environmental Centre, Thursday 19th February 2009 At 19h30.

Present: Helen Biram, Ray Biram, Joanne Buttress, Rob Crosbie, Tracey Dirsuwei, Jean Donaldson, Claire Eksteen, Pierre Eksteen, Eric Ehlers, Joan Faiola, Andy Featherstone, Barbi Forsyth, John Freer, Mike Fullerton, Sandy Goodall, Sadie Halbhuber, Iris Hemmings, Judi Jacquet, Tony Jacquet, Arnold Jelk, Felicity Kanichowsky, Lauraine Leigh, Rob Leigh, Geoff Lockwood, Stan Madden, Lester Niss, Gisela Ortner, Mari Palmer, Noel Peverett, Howard Rayner, Magui Rayner, Lance Robinson, Gail Schaum, Sandra Small, Philip Stapelberg, Lia Steen, Dael Stojakovic, Koos van Dijk, Elsabe Vorster, Marguerite Waite, Gina Wilgenbus, Peter Wilgenbus, Michael Witcomb

Apologies

Graham Allin, Roy Altman, Steffie Altman, Jan Basch, Lesley Cornish, Karen Dixon, Jacqui Ehlers, Alan Forsyth, Janice Isom, Alison Hanson, Judith Hawarden, Susan Hesketh, Clara Jelk, Dee Johnston, Forbes McKay, Athol Midgley, Val Odendaal, Michael Parker, Ivan Quarmby, Liz Quarmby, Alison Richardson, Jeanne Thomas, Jo van Dijk, Jean Wilson.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the 48th AGM:

The Minutes of the previous AGM had been circulated prior to the meeting. These were taken as read and approved.

Proposer: Peter Wilgenbus

Secunder: Eric Ehlers

Financial Report

The Treasurer presented the Financial Report and told the meeting that a copy of this is available in pdf format from the office.

Proposer: Howard Rayner

Secunder: Gisela Ortner

Chairman's Report for 2008

The Chairman, Lance Robinson, welcomed everyone to the 49th Annual General Meeting of the Witwatersrand Bird Club. His report is attached hereto.

Election of Honorary President

At our AGM last year we elected a new Honorary president and I am delighted that Murrie Slotar has agreed to be nominated again to serve in 2009.

Proposer: Joan Faiola

Secunder: Lester Niss

Murrie is unfortunately unable to be with us this evening. She has however asked that I extend her thanks to the members of the committee for all the time and efforts they expend in getting their respective tasks done. Murrie is looking forward to 2009, and with everyone's co-operation and commitment she is confident that we will once again have a successful year.

Election of the Committee For 2009

The proposed candidates of the incoming committee are:

Joan Faiola

Andy Featherstone

Barbi Forsyth

Janice Isom

Lester Niss

Gisela Ortner

Robert Leigh

Lance Robinson

Marguerite Waite

Proposer: Joanne Buttress

Secunder: Koos van Dijk

Appointment of Auditors

The committee would like to re-appoint HLB Barnett Chown Inc as the WBC auditors.

Proposer: Claire Eksteen

Secunder: Rob Leigh

WBC Diamond Award

Last year we introduced something new to our AGM, the WBC Diamond Award and Koos van Dijk was the worthy first recipient. I would like to remind you that inserted into the plaque of this award are the diamonds so generously given to us by De Beers in 2007

I wish to thank everyone who sent in nominations. Some of the members of the committee were nominated again for which we sincerely thank you. The intention of this award is however, to recognise individuals who are not necessarily in the spotlight and have contributed in some sterling way to the club, to the projects we are involved with and to conservation of birds and their habitats.

I am very pleased to announce that we have received numerous nominations for this year's recipient of our annual floating trophy.

A little more on this year's recipient:

- He has been involved in conservation for over 50 years
- His main focus over 30 years has been Blesbokspruit, which is one of the earliest designated RAMSAR sites (1986)
- Is probably best known for his work at Marievale which is a notable and he is a Founder Trustee of Grootvaly Wetland Reserve
- Has been CWACing since 1992, he is one of the longstanding participants and participates in several CWAC counts
- He has kept bird records from Blesbokspruit since 1948
- In 1996 his records from bird counts were used to prove industrial pollution had affected bird numbers

Due to his wealth of knowledge I also know that he is called upon to assist in many EIA's, a further reflection of how well he is regarded in the environmental sector.

For all the many years of dedicated work we would like to award Stan Madden the Wits Bird Club Diamond Award in 2009 and hereby recognise his lifetime of dedication to conservation of birds in this small way. Congratulations Stan.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

In the first quarter of 2008 we received confirmation from SARS of our income tax exemption and of our registration as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO).

Wakkerstroom was certainly a hot topic last year; the anti-mining campaign sparked much debate and geared many into action. Geoff Lockwood raised concern regarding the proposed mining at our last AGM and I indicated at the time that WBC would definitely take appropriate action. I am very pleased that the club was at the forefront of supporting BLSA's appeal, by donating R35, 000 to assist with the legal costs incurred by the Luneburg Wakkerstroom Environment Protection Association (LWEPA) that lodged the review application against the Department of Minerals and Energy and the Delta Mining Corporation with the high court. **Our speaker tonight will further enlighten us on the current situation.**

We officially launched our third satellite branch in Henley-on-Klip in March and this event was well attended. This satellite is helping to attend to the needs of birders on the southern fringe of Gauteng and is growing in strength and numbers.

In May we were pleased when the citations we submitted to BLSA were subsequently both recipients of Owl awards. No doubt you will agree that the work undertaken by the Friends of Nylsvley and the West Rand Honorary Rangers makes them both worthy recipients.

Later in the year we welcomed the appointment of Mark Anderson as the new Executive director of BLSA. Mark is faced with many new challenges and I have already assured him of our continued support in these difficult times.

The committee's responsibility is to make sure that the club provides the right kind of environment within which our members can achieve some of their birding goals. We therefore like to see as many members as possible participating in the events, outings, courses and conservation initiatives that we are responsible for. We also need to see that we actively recruit new members and very importantly retain our current members.

The committee has prepared reports on their individual portfolios and I would like to share these with you.

COURSES: PORTFOLIO OF JACK DE BOER

Our series of courses commenced with a Photography course conducted by Dr Philip Stapelberg in May. Beginner's courses are always popular and the July course with Geoff Lockwood was very well subscribed. Beginner's courses also assist in recruiting new members and so we were pleased to welcome a few new members to the club following this course. The atlasing workshop presented by Ernst Retief in September could have been better attended but I trust those that did, subsequently helped the Gauteng province to be the first province to achieve a 100% coverage status.

PROGRAMME PLANNING PORTFOLIO – GISELA ORTNER (Assisted by the Programme Planning Sub-committee comprising: Bev Carstens, Janice Isom, Lester Niss and Jeanne Thomas)

During the time of prohibitively high fuel prices, we adopted a "local is lekker" approach to our trips and here the local venues of the Jo'burg City parks in particular, fitted nicely into this category. There were of course trips that ventured slightly further afield and these would include Lowry's Farm, just 120 Km away and Kedar near Rustenburg.

Overall both weekends and outings were well supported. By example 46 members booked for Kimberley's Easter weekend. Here we combined camping, self catering and fully catered accommodation and we had all the experts Kimberley had to offer to show us around.

Kedar Country hotel was another new venue and the opportunity to view the Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, which was a lifer for many, is certainly noteworthy.

New venues for day outings were also well received and attended. Sailing on the Vaal dam in Deneyville, enjoying a Rotary breakfast after some birding on a barge on Mother's day in Henley-on-Klip, and the night walk at Jo'burg Zoo are some to note.

Our programme has had global appeal and we've even had a number of overseas visitors.

We express our sincere thanks to all the leaders and guides. We truly appreciate their time and expertise which leads ultimately to an enjoyable outing for all.

The sub-committee has worked hard to bring you an interesting and varied programme of events. Gisela would like to wish the programme planners a happy term in office.

COORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNT (CWAC) – COORDINATED BY KOOS VAN DÏK

At the end of July 2008 we were very reluctant to let Koos van Dyk step down as the CWAC co-ordinator and I would again like to thank Koos for his many years of dedicated service

A summary of the counts at Rolfe's Pan, Elandsvlei, Vaalkop Dam and Nylsvley follows.

Rolfe's Pan.

Rolfe's Pan would appear to be in a good condition and this is probably due to the 'protection' afforded to it by the industrial sites along the perimeter, preventing unwanted access to the pan.

Elandsvlei.

During winter the main pan was only half full and there was very little open water on the secondary pan. Some 2500 birds were counted, which is slightly higher than the winter average for this site. Only 25 species were recorded and 632 birds counted at Elandsvlei in summer. Of this number about 270 were Black-winged Pratincole. The lesser pan is non-existent at present being completely overgrown with vegetation.

Vaalkop Dam.

Magalies Water is controlling the water level of Vaalkop Dam these days and the dam was 100% full during the winter count. We were however, able to make use of pontoons to do the counts which was arranged by Nick Bezuidenhout. With a winter count of nearly 5300 birds comprising some 50 species, this was a notable birding experience. The summer count was unfortunately curtailed fairly early in the morning by the onset of rain which lasted well into the following week.

Nylsvley.

The winter count at Nylsvley was unfortunately a low key event. Low water levels resulted in a count of only around 600 birds (32 species); this is about 30% lower than the average winter count. This summer the grasses in the vlei were very tall and the birds would appear and then quickly disappear. A total of 36 species were counted numbering some 1855 birds. The cattle egrets were the most abundant and kept the volunteers busy as they returned to roost on the Saturday evening

Koos would like to extend sincere thanks go to each individual that formed part of the all the counts over the years.

CONSERVATION PORTFOLIO - CO-ORDINATED BY BARBI FORSYTH

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Summer 2008

Conditions were generally cloudy and cool with a light breeze. There had been heavy rains in the weeks prior to the count, but the roads were still in a fairly good condition.

The rains meant that the grass was very long in places, which may account for the lack of korhaans and the low numbers of Helmeted Guineafowl, but this count yielded the overall lowest species count during the four summers we have been counting in Chrissiesmeer.

Winter 2008

The weather for the count was perfect. There would however appear to be a steady decline in Spurwing Geese, Helmeted Guineafowl and Black-headed Herons in this area. Bald Ibis have also shown a decline since 2006. These 4 four species are now down to 21% of previous totals.

While our total number of birds seen was slightly up on winter 2007, our overall species count has continued to dwindle

Ringling:

WBC continues to conduct ringing at various sites. We have made some encouraging progress at the AfriSam quarry and we are assisting with the eradication of alien vegetation in an effort to encourage the Barn Swallows to return to roost at the quarry.

Yellow-Throated Sandgrouse

Our concerns regarding the South African population of the Yellow-Throated Sandgrouse have been relayed to Mark Anderson of BirdLife SA. We will continue to monitor this species and are hopeful for some additional expert input.

Pel's Fishing Owl

This project falls under the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) Birds of Prey Working Group (BOPWG) and last year the committee approved a funding proposal to facilitate a survey of the Olifants River in 2008. A full report hereof was published in the December newsletter and Andre Botha gave us an update in this regard with a talk in October.

SABAP2

SABAP2 is a follow-up from the first Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1) which took place in the late eighties to early nineties. The new project has been designed to build on the successes of the first and to make even a greater contribution to bio-diversity planning and conservation in southern Africa. It is therefore unfortunate that more of our members are not yet participating. Many of us already keep bird lists, if the basic protocol is followed and these lists are submitted to the project we could all add to the current knowledge of the distribution of birds. Talk to an atlaser, they will tell you that atlassing has added a new perspective to their birding. Many have discovered great birding spots and even national rarities right on their doorstep.

Arbour Day

The Wits Bird Club held an inaugural Arbour Day on September 6th. We planted 15 beautiful indigenous trees in the Florence Bloom Bird Sanctuary under the guidance of Geoff Lockwood. We would like to make this an annual event and would encourage members to donate trees in memory of loved ones or to mark a special occasion in their lives. In this small way we can help

offset some of our carbon emissions and provide food and homes for all sorts of creatures alongside the birds at the sanctuary.

Yebo Gogga

The club manned a stand at the University of the Witwatersrand's Yebo Gogga exhibition from Saturday 27 until Tuesday 30 September. Attendance was fairly good despite the fact that it was held during government school holidays. We plan to participate again in 2009 year and make our stand a little more exciting.

IBAs - Important Birding Areas

BLSA has allocated both the monitoring and reporting of the proposed Grassland Biosphere Reserve (a massive area which includes Wakkerstroom) and Nylsvley to the club. An initial report was compiled for Wakkerstroom by BLSA Conservation manager, Neil Smith following the threat of mining in the area.

The Nylsvley report has not yet been compiled but we have been in contact with Friends of Nylsvley who will be invaluable to assist us in this regard.

In conclusion Barbi would like to thank all the members who make these initiatives possible. We acknowledge that a lot of time, money and effort is spent making sure these projects run smoothly and efficiently. Barbi would also like to encourage every member of the club to participate in our conservation efforts.

EVENING MEETINGS – PORTFOLIO OF ROBERT LEIGH:

2008 proved to be both entertaining and informative and all of our speakers were of a very high standard. Rob informs us that over the years that he has been convenor of the evening meetings, he is never ceased to be amazed by the willingness of the speakers to give up their time and to impart of their specialised knowledge. On some evenings we were whisked away on armchair journeys to places as diverse as the south islands of New Zealand and the Sub-Antarctic Islands with Greg Lock, to Kenya with Philip Stapelberg and to the shadows of Kilimanjaro and other African delights with Ria Milburn.

Closer to home Vincent Carruthers gave us new insight into the Magaliesberg and Steven Piper enthralled us all about birds of the Mountain kingdom while we all listened attentively by candle light, thanks to the load shedding so prevalent at the time. Chris van Rooyen, a recognised authority on bird photography, not only delighted us with his presentation but aided the photographers amongst us with tips on producing better photos. Andre Botha highlighted the plight of the Pel's Fishing Owl in SA, whilst Joe Grossele delighted us with his talk on Aloes and Birds. Be assured that you simply cannot afford to miss a single evening meeting.

THE WBC WEBSITE – PORTFOLIO OF GISELA ORTNER

The website is being visited more and more. We will continue to keep it informative and up to date. Gisela appeals to all of us to keep sending in photos of both outings and birds. The album size has now been increased and we will therefore be able to load many more photographs to view.

Gisela reminds us that this is your site, so please send in your photos and other contributions.

BOKMAKIERIE – EDITED BY LAURINE LEIGH

Lauraine thanks everyone for all your submissions and for sharing your birding experiences with all of us. I have to advise that the committee has taken a decision to reduce the number of issues to three per annum due to ever increasing costs associated with printing and postage.

IN CONCLUSION:

Faced with ever increasing costs the committee held a special session regarding our finances in October. Our treasurer has indicated that our financial position remains relatively healthy. We need only to look around at what is happening on a global scale and become even more vigilant with our expenditure. That being said, as a registered PBO we are obliged to spend a percentage of our interest income to retain our tax exemption status.

With the current global trend to cut back, we know that there will be even less corporate funding available to carry out the very necessary and ever increasing conservation work. The committee has and will continue to apply due consideration and sound judgment when assessing any funding proposals that we may receive.

I would like to thank our East, West and Southern satellite chairman: Dick Harris, Hennie Bornman and Ginny Mes respectively. We are indebted to you and your respective committees for your unstinting work in maintaining the WBC standard.

Our club secretary Lauraine Leigh continues to keep the office running and is currently solely responsible for our newsletter, the **Bokmakierie**. Lauraine we thank you for all your hard work in the office, at evening meetings and at all other events, it is sincerely appreciated by us all.

I am proud to represent a team of dedicated committee members, all of whom continue to strive to maintain the objectives and best interests of the club. My sincere thanks go to Jack de Boer, Joan Faiola, Rob Leigh, Gisela Ortner and Barbi Forsyth for all their efforts in 2008.

Jack has indicated that he will no longer be available for re-election and we thank him for his contributions while on the committee.

Gisela has decided that her many years as programme planner have come to an end. Gisela was instrumental in setting up the programme planning sub-committee to ensure a smooth transition. Gisela we applaud your years of dedication, all your endeavours for always looking for something new for us all to enjoy and for always having the best interests of everyone in mind. I am very pleased that Gisela has decided to remain on the committee, albeit in a lesser capacity.

On behalf of the committee we wish to thank each and every one our valued members, for your continued support which has ensured our many successes in 2008.



**WITWATERSRAND BIRD CLUB
BRANCH OF BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA**

The Secretary
Witwatersrand Bird Club
PO Box 641
Cresta
2118

NOMINATION FORM

I am a member of the Witwatersrand Bird Club and I am prepared to stand for election to the Committee of the Witwatersrand Bird Club for the year 2010.

NAME OF NOMINEE (Block Letters) _____

Signed _____

NAME OF PROPOSER (Block Letters) _____

Signed _____

NAME OF SECONDER (Block Letters) _____

Signed _____

