



# Wakkerstroom Bird Club



*(Affiliated to BLSA)*

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## **NEWSLETTER NUMBER 55 – APRIL 2018**

Hi Everyone,

Brian has asked me to try my hand at the newsletter this month, so here goes!

We're coming to the end of the summer season, and most of our visiting migrants have left for their long journey home. Of course we're always left with "our" birds that stick around all year, so it's never boring going out to see what you can find (or simply watching them in your own garden). And every so often something REALLY special comes along ... as you'll read in Judy-Lynn Wheeler's article about our latest Bird I.D. workshop:

### **Bird ID Workshop – Easter – 2018**

Steve Davis has visited Wakkerstroom for many years and is always keen to return and share his knowledge and experiences of birding. The workshop "Confusing Common Birds of Wakkerstroom" was structured around the 8-point framework for identifying birds correctly. Attendees enjoyed the interaction and the quiz birds thrown in to test their skills. Accompanying Steve was Rocky, the 2018 Bird of the Year. Rocky travels with Steve to create awareness for the African Black Oystercatcher and was well photographed in various places over the Easter weekend. (Ed: as you know, Birdlife SA chooses one species of bird annually to raise awareness of its plight, so keep an eye out for media on Rocky's mates.)

The field outing on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April was misty and chilly mostly with the occasional light rain and very wet birds. There being no visible Weaver species, attention was turned to Swallows using the same identification principles. We were treated to Barn Swallows and White throated Swallow – adults and juveniles with an adult Banded Martin thrown in – and they were at rest which made identification easier. The highlight of this outing was a sighting of a Red Phalarope, a rare visitor to Wakkerstroom. This bird, with its snow white plumage, gives the immediate impression of a wader, but the fast swimming ability rules this out. This bird breeds on the Arctic Tundra and its plumage turns red. A mega- tick for those who braved the elements.

All round, the Easter weekend was a great one.

Judy-Lynn Wheeler.



This is the Red (previously Grey) Phalarope spotted several times at the Wetland – note that the bird is not in its breeding colours in southern Africa as it breeds in the Arctic. It also has the characteristic feeding habit of darting back and forth and sometimes swimming around in tight circles.



And this picture shows why the bird's name in our field guides was changed to Red Phalarope as it is called in the northern hemisphere! The bird when seen in full breeding plumage is anything but grey. One of the more acceptable name changes!



Participants in Steve Davis's I.D. course

### **Global Big Day**

This is an international event covering the 24 hours of May 5, 2018 and the object is to tick as many species as you can in that timeframe or as many hours that you have available on the day. Last year some club members took part in this event, run by Cornell University in America. It was sprung on us very late last year and our preparation left a bit to be desired. We must, this year, register (“Create an eBird Account”) as an individual entrant or under the name of a team leader if you go out on the day in a group. Remember you can list birds anywhere you care to go, there are no geographical limits whatever, and no Atlas protocols! Your sightings may be submitted via the website or the eBird mobile app.

Could you please let Brian Guerin (083 415 6701) know as soon as possible if you are interested in taking part this year either as an individual or as part of a team? You can locate all the registration information by Googling [www.Global Big Day](http://www.GlobalBigDay) and in particular “How do I Enter Sightings in eBird?”

Incidentally their website, [www.eBird.org](http://www.eBird.org), is well worth a browse. Some of the distribution maps are “live” and show, in motion, the movement of migratory birds from their winter to summer quarters.

### **WOW Hide**

This week, Graham Spencer fitted the wind shield boards on the back (road) side of the Working on Water, or WOW, hide. This aspect of the hide was very exposed and sometimes became unpleasant when the winter winds blew. It is made of special timber and was coated with four coats of Waksol for good measure. Thanks, Graham! I’m sure many of us will appreciate this on windy and cold days.



### **Volkstrust Recorder Articles.**

I’d like to mention how much I enjoy Glenn Ramke’s monthly article in the Recorder newspaper. She puts a huge amount of effort into producing interesting facts about birds, wetlands etc. as well as updating us on the current feathered residents here. Thanks Glenn!

## **Raffle**

Don't forget to buy your raffle tickets to win a brand new Weber Silver Line braai. The Weber was kindly donated to WBC in order for us to raise funds – Takealot currently have these on sale at R2199, and it could be yours at only R20 per raffle ticket! Have a look at it at the Crow's Nest, where you can also get your tickets. The draw will take place on Saturday 16 June at the prize giving for the Arts & Crafts Ramble.

At the same time we will also be announcing the winners of the Sandy Twomey Photographic Competition. There's still time to get your photos in – some wonderful prizes have been sponsored, so don't miss out! Send your entries to [wackersbirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:wackersbirdclub@gmail.com), the ten best contributions of each month go forward to local Facebook pages like Wakkerstroom Group and Wakkerstroom Bird Club, as well as being showcased in the Suikerbekkie Bakery window, and the two finalists are chosen from the number of "like" and "love" votes. Good luck to all those who have entered already – the photographs have been of a really high standard, considering this is an amateur competition, and are showcasing our lovely village beautifully. Everyone would by now also have heard that Wakkerstroom was chosen as the current Mpumalanga Dorp van die Jaar by Kyknet's programme "Kwela", something we can all strive to push all the way to the year's winning town in late May – details to be announced closer to the time. Exciting times!

## **Diary – May**

Saturday May 5 – two options! The normal first Saturday Wetland Walk on the Amersfoort Bridge from 07h00 OR take part in the Global Big Day mentioned above. Please register early for that one.

Saturday May 12 – note, another Saturday outing – venue will be Bobby and Cathy Barnardo's farm on the Oude Stasie road. As the autumn moves on we will only leave the library at 07h30 for the short trip to the farm.

Monthly meeting at BirdLife Centre – we are hoping to get Robyn Colyn late of Ingula and now of the White-winged Flufftail research group. You will have heard of the recent first S.A. breeding record of this bird, at Middelpunt, near Belfast. Robyn hopes to be in our area in May assessing the wetland with a view to monitoring the birds here. This may be a "short notice" affair but we will do our best to let everybody know in time.

Enjoy your birding!

Chris Voets

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