

## CONTENTS

VOLUME 39 (1) 2006

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial .....	1
BROWN, I., CUNNINGHAM, P.L. & DE KLERK, M. A comparative study of wetland birds at two dams in central Namibia .....	2
OSCHADLEUS, H. D, & FRANKE, U. Roadside colony densities of three weaver species near Windhoek, Namibia .....	9
SWANEPOEL, W. Levaillant's <i>Cisticola tinniens</i> , a new bird for Namibia .....	14
OSBORNE, T. <i>Roberts Birds of Southern Africa</i> - a review .....	16
BIRD OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES .....	18
Preliminary Program 2006 .....	28
Program January - March 2006 .....	29
Back Issues available .....	30
Photos from Monte Christo outing .....	31

## Editorial

With this issue the bird names and order follow the new *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa* VII<sup>th</sup> edition published in September 2005. For those of you who have not purchased the N\$ 870 book yet, a real treat awaits you. The book has all the up-to-date information on all the species found in Africa south of the Kunene and Zambezi Rivers. For more on the book see the review in this issue.

Although *Roberts* is an epic tome, there is still much information needed on our Namibian endemic species. For example, there is scant information on the Bare-cheeked Babbler – little data on breeding, none of incubation, none on what newly hatched young look like, nothing on moult and only one nest has been found. Page through a copy and see what nearby species you have so you can contribute data.

The editor would like someone who has attended recent club outings to write up reports so those of us who missed the trip can see what was observed.

Contributions to the observations and notes section is the largest in many years and it is good to see that members are getting out and watching birds. Under the observation section the order of birds follows the new *Roberts* classification system. However, in the paper by Brown *et al.* I have not corrected the order of species in the tables. In the future all submissions must follow the new order.

Once again I appeal to all members to help the Namibia Bird Club. If you want to keep the club viable you must also do your part to try and get new members to join. We are currently down to less than 100 members.

If you are lucky you could have up to six "new" species to add to your tick list without leaving home.

The species accounts contain much new information which is a great improvement, and the species authors are to be commended. However, the accounts that cover species mostly endemic to Namibia are still missing some data. This is where members of the Namibia Bird Club can still contribute. Pick a species, try and fill in the missing data and then write an article for the *Lanioturdus*.

The only complaint I have with the book is with the colour plates illustrating the species. Seven artists are used and each has a different style, from detailed drawings to watercolour washes which makes paging through a little jarring to the eye. The biggest problem I have, however, is the subject matter of the plates. Roberts is too large to carry as a field guide so it will be used as a stay home reference book. The publisher missed a golden opportunity to illustrate those birds which are not illustrated in the plethora of field guides, and handbooks already in most people's home libraries. Everyone must know what a male breeding plumaged Eastern Paradise Whydah looks like but nowhere is the juvenile illustrated, not even in Birds of Africa (BOA), Volume 7 by Fry and Urban. Another bird which is not illustrated is the female Little Sparrowhawk. It cannot be found in any of the guides or BOA. Plates of un-illustrated birds would have been the ultimate fall back for everyone who has seen a bird and been unable to ID it using the standard guides.

### Bird observations and notes

Observations follow the classification order in the new *Roberts*.

#### Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

Two ringed lesser birds were seen at the corner dam on Windpoort Farm. Although I have only ringed 8 honeyguides at our house 3 km away it was surprising to see the 2 together as a pair on 8 July 2005. T.O. Osborne

#### Verreaux's Eagle-Owl *Bubo lactus*

At Huab Lodge a nestling was ringed on 17 Oct 2005. It was being fed African hedgehogs which have only been seen once on the property. T.O. Osborne, J. & S. van de Reep

#### Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufigena*

A male starting to call on 15 Sept 2005 at Windpoort Farm. This is about a month early. T.O. Osborne

#### Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus*

One seen on 1 July 2005 at Walvis Bay Salt Works, another bird on 2 Oct. TO Osborne. Seen 30 Oct on in non-breeding plumage Salt works pump house, on 1 Nov in full breeding plumage at pump house and one in partial breeding plumage at Mile 4 Salt works, Swakopmund. T. Tree and M. Boorman

#### Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinerea*

One bird seen at the last salt pond next to Paaltjies on 30 Oct 2005. T. Tree, TO Osborne & M. Boorman

#### Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

4 & 5 Nov 2005 one at Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund. On 14 Nov 2005 4 at Paaltjies. T. Tree & M. Boorman

#### Red Knot *Calidris canutus*

On 27 Oct 2005 ca 500 at Dolphin Park beach. T. Tree & M. Boorman

#### Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

One on 1 July 2005 at Walvis Bay Salt Works, T.O. Osborne. One on 1 Nov 2005 same place. T. Tree & M. Boorman

#### American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

One seen at Walvis Bay sewerage works on 2 Oct 2005. The bird was seen with a 45 power scope and the following features were noted. Wings longer than tail and a broad buffy eye stripe. T.O. Osborne & P. Triggs

**Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus*

13 Oct 2005 Andoni Plain outside Etosha NP, 155 plovers were seen. Rather early for Etosha as they normally only come during the rains. T.O. Osborne & P. Triggs

**Burchell's Courser** *Cursorius rufus*

Two adults with 2 five day old chicks at Gemsbokvlakte, Etosha NP on 11 Oct 2005. T.O. Osborne

**Double-banded Courser** *Rhinoptilus africanus*

Female seen incubating one egg at Okondeka, Etosha NP on 11 Oct 2005. T.O. Osborne

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis*

On seen on 6 & 11 Nov 2005 at Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund. This may be the same bird seen in May as reported in Vol. 28(2). T. Tree & M. Boorman

**White-wing Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*

One flying over a small dam in the Huab River at Huab Lodge on 17 Oct 2005. One at Walvis Bay on 22 Oct, T.O. Osborne & P. Triggs. One on 5, 6 and 13 Nov 2005 at Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund. This is the first record from this site. 40+ at Paaltjies on 14 Nov 2005. T. Tree & M. Boorman

**Black Harrier** – *Circus maurus*

An adult bird was seen on 1 February 2005, on the B2 main road 5 km north of the Gibeon turnoff. The bird was quartering and hovering against the wind, about 1 m above the ground. W. Swanepoel

**European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*

One bird seen at Windpoort Farm on 12 Feb 2005. Another one seen 16 Feb 2005 at Okaukeujo, but it may have been the same bird. T.O. Osborne

**Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennatus*

One pale phase seen on 22 Oct 2005 at Walvis Bay sewerage works. It was being chased by a pair of Black-shouldered kites. T.O. Osborne and P. Triggs. One

immature seen at same place on 1 Nov 2005. T. Tree and M. Boorman. Two birds, one dark phase and one pale seen on 29 Nov 2005 at Windpoort Farm. T.O. Osborne

**Black Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii*

One adult reported in March 2005 at Ongava Lodge. An adult seen on 29 Nov 2005 at Windpoort Farm. The closest nesting territory I know about is at Otjitambi Guest Farm 57 km to the southwest. T.O. Osborne

**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus*

One adult female was seen 5 km north of Okahandja on 2 Oct 2005. Perhaps these birds are finally starting to recover from their decline. T.O. Osborne

**Black Stork** – *Ciconia nigra*

At 18:00 on 1 February 2005, a single adult bird was seen on the B2 main road, 7 km north of Asab. The bird was standing on top of a telephone pole next to the road. W. Swanepoel

**Saddlebill Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*

One adult bird was seen at the Otjiwarongo Sewerage Works on 14 July 2005. T.O. Osborne

**Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*

29 Oct in late afternoon 30-40 sooty shearwaters passing the landward side of Pelican Point only 50-100m off inside shore as they headed back from a circuit of Walvis Bay. T.O. Osborne, T. Tree and M. Boorman

**Forked-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis*

30 May 2005 a flock of 17 birds in family groups at waterhole on Windpoort Farm. On 13 July I saw a counted 70 drongos sitting in the trees and bushes surrounding Tsumcor waterhole at Etosha NP.

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*

On 15 Oct 2005 I saw 6 house martins at one of our waterholes on Windpoort Farm. Three birds flew in my mist net for ringing and they were juveniles. Nowhere in Africa are these birds common. T.O. Osborne

**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens*

The last 2 weeks I have noticed something in our town-house-complex which is exciting but seems somehow strange to me - since I never saw this before- but however, maybe it is not such an unusual sighting? I live in Pioneerspark, Ext 1; Windhoek

During one morning around 7h00h I hear this frantic knocking sound outside and to my surprise I see two Cardinal Woodpeckers ( male and female or Male and young-one) knocking away at the candle tree acacia seeds. They seemed unperturbed about me just a mere 2 m away moving the curtain and taking a video-film of them (yes, I have proof)

The male can be easily identified by the red head crest, but the other bird did not show any red on the head, so I presume it is the female - or maybe a young-one practicing his daily chores? Yesterday afternoon I noticed the female or young-one even knocking the thin branches of the acacia. Can someone tell me if this occurrence and behaviour is 'normal'? I always thought woodpeckers look for decent trees with thicker branches, but being a novice I do not know. Your thoughts on this would be interesting.

P.S: By the way - Waterberg Guestfarm (Schneider- Waterberg) has offered an outing to the Bird-Club at any time next year - maybe you can include this in the year-planner? Also an excellent birding spot- Khan River Lodge (166 km from WDH near Mariental) - they also have a lovely camping spot - and Aabadi Bushcamp- right next door (they have a lovely dam and from what I saw last time - excellent birding) -Maybe this could be considered for a day-or weekend -outing some time ?

Lisa Berl

**Three-banded Courser** *Rhinoptilus cinctus*

We were perched on the chairs at our kitchen table on the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005, at about 19h03, discussing the shopping list for the next day. We have heard this call previously before, especially during the summer of 2004. It was always after dark, some distance away but distinct. We never made an effort to refer to the Bird-call tapes. We later presumed the call must have been uttered

by maybe a sub-adult Crowned Plover *Vanellus coronatus* because these were also always calling. But tonight was different. We discussed the call, I thought it could be a Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*, of which I had suspected a sighting earlier the month. But Tineke was closer. The time was right, the moon close to full, clear skies with some rains the days before – what about a Courser?

So I dug up the tapes and there it was: Three-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus cinctus*. Only since the previous season we have been aware of its call, never seen or heard it here or anywhere else before. According to the "Atlas Of Southern African Birds" this bird has been recorded only on four locations in north-central Namibia before: on 1716Bc / Db, in northern Ovambo east of Eenhana; 1816 Dd in the Namutoni Area, Etosha Pan and in south-eastern Etosha on 1916 Bd. It was also recorded in the western Caprivi.

This bird makes it No. 255 of our species count on this square 1818 Cc.

References:

- Sinclair, Ian; Hockey, Phil; Tarboton, Warwick: SASOL Birds of Southern Africa, Third edition. Published by *Struik Publishers*.  
Gibbon, Guy: Southern African Bird Sounds Published by *Southern African Birding cc*.  
Harrison, J.A.; Allan, D.G.; Underhill, L.G.; Herremans, M.; Tree, A.J.; Parker, V.; Brown, C.J.: The Atlas of Southern African Birds, Vol. 1 Published by *Birdlife South Africa*.

Günther & Tineke Friederich

**White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis*

The following report came from my cousin, who runs a game farm on the farm "Die Park", No. 1055, district Grootfontein, 1818Cd, Namibia.

On Saturday, October 8th, 2005, a White-headed Vulture was noticed on the above mentioned farm. A vulture restaurant is being upheld there which keeps the vultures in the vicinity. Vultures are breeding in tall Marula, *Sclerocarya birrea* and Camelthorn, *Acacia erioloba* trees. A natural vlei is being kept filled with water where game can drink. This vlei is regularly visited by vultures. As guests were being taken on a game drive this vulture was seen taking off from some tall trees, together with others, mostly African White-backed vultures *Gyps africanus*. Distinctive marks were the white head and more white on the underbody as that of a Lappet-faced vulture *Torgus tracheliotus*.

Note should be taken of this sighting as this vulture is a rare species in northern Namibia and it will be interesting to know whether this bird is also breeding in the vicinity.  
Günther Friederich

**Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*

Just after 18h00 on 11th October 2005, we arrived back home to our farm Tsutsab, Tsumeb district (1818 Cc), from a trip to town. The workers reported an unknown bird in the outside garden, smallish and "flat", a bird that "does not belong here".

This garden is not really cultivated except for a few trees and some greenstuff that gets watered regularly. One worker led us to a green "Muleberry" tree and there it was - perched in between the green branches: Little Bittern. As the bird was "sulking" and making itself invisible by typically "skypointing" its beak, we had enough time to have a good look at it. The underparts were heavily streaked from the throat downwards, legs greenish, which makes this bird a juvenile. It did not have the conspicuous pale buff wing patterns of the adult bird.

Now what was this bird doing here? We presume it was on a voyage to where some water would be available, stopping here for a rest and to replenish its reserves.

Previous records? Yes - only one record on Tsutsab Vlei on 1st March 1997. The vlei had water and we were boating, looking for wetland birds, when we found the nest in a Hardekool (Leadwood) *Combretum imberbe*, within the water. The nest was about 2m above the water level, one chick, and three eggs still being incubated. We later found another nest being incubated, clutch size unknown. All eggs had hatched eventually and on later visits we found the chicks scrambling around in the branches.

Since then - no records of Little Bittern. The vlei has had water last during 1999/2000, but no birds seen. We have been anticipating another water-filled vlei but that does not seem to happen regularly any more. This is the longest period ever (5 years) that the vlei has not received any inflow.

The next morning the bird was gone.  
Günther & Tineke Friederich

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

On 23 Feb 2005 we had to make an unscheduled trip to Windhoek, via Grootfontein. We left Grootfontein at about 07h00 and after passing through Kombat we saw the first White Stork, *Ciconia ciconia*, a single bird on an unplanted maize field next to the road, 1917 Da.

The next sightings were south of Otjiwarongo after crossing the Omatako River, 2116 Bb. This area had received good rains a short while back and vleis were covered with water. Groups of 2 to 3 birds were gathered, walking in the tall grasses. A few more single birds were also present on 2116 Bd, although no water along the roadside.

On the morning of Saturday, the 26 Feb 2005 I made my way back to the farm, accompanied by my brother. White Storks were still present on 2116 Bb. We counted up to 9 birds in a flock, with more single ones present elsewhere. Early Monday morning 28 Feb 2005 we again made our way to Windhoek. The birds seemed to be gone but we eventually saw a flock of 6 birds along the road of which my brother managed to take a photo. A single bird was present on 2116 Bd.

On 5 Mar I made my final trip home. Neither on 2116 Bd or 2116Bb any birds were present. The vleis and water along the roadside was drying up. It could be possible that the birds had moved to the nearby Omatako Dam. The only bird I saw on that trip was the single one on 1917 Da which had moved to another location, but still on the same QDS.

All these trips had been done in a hurry so we only stopped for this one occasion to take a photo. No colour rings were seen on the birds.

White Stork had not been atlassed on 1917 Da. It had been atlassed on 2116 Bb, but not on 2116 Bd, (*The Atlas of Southern African Birds, Vol. 1.*)

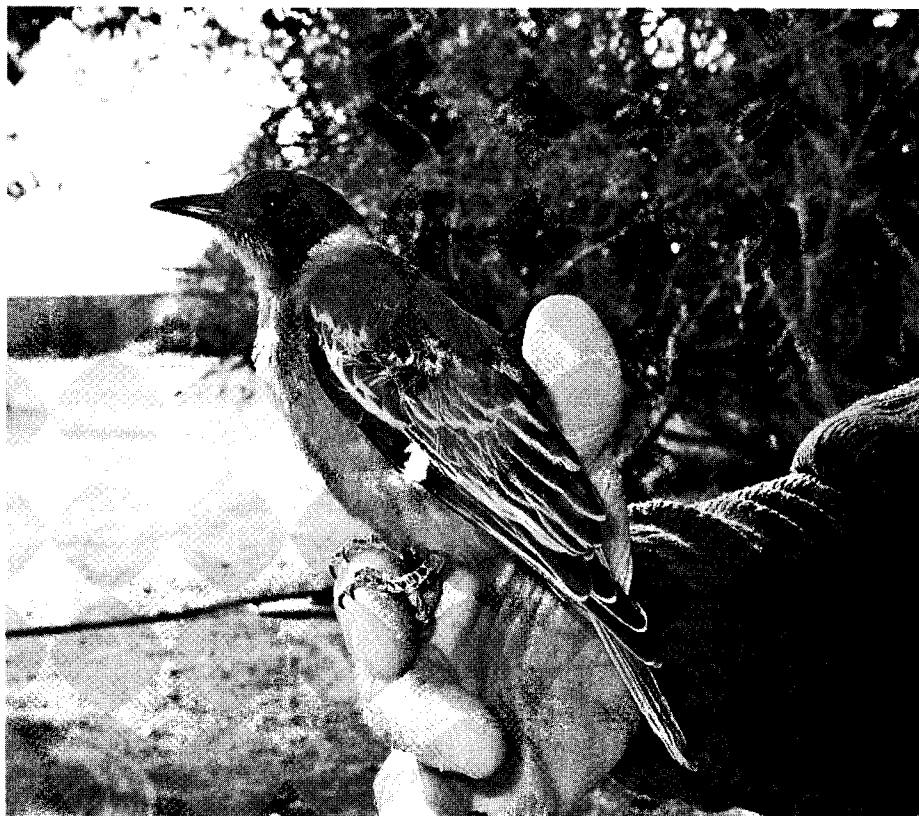
Günther Friederich

**Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus*

This bird is usually found in closed canopy woodland in northeast Namibia. On 3 June 2005 an immature bird was seen and later caught and ringed at Okaukuejo

in Etosha National Park. This is the first record of the species within Etosha. Atlas records show the bird most common along the boundary rivers to the north with one record from Ondongwa area.

W.D.Versfeld



### Syringa Trees

In *Lanioturdus* 36(3): 18, I published a sighting of White-backed Mousebird and Black-throated Canary feeding on the leaves of the poisonous alien invasive Syringa Tree *Melia azedarach* in Windhoek. During late July 2005 I observed Red-eyed Bulbul feeding on the ripe (yellow) fruit of the same tree. The birds – and there were up to 6 individuals – would peck off parts of the ripe fruit and

consume them on site although 1 individual was observed taking an entire fruit in its beak off somewhere, possibly indicating that it was feeding young the fruit as well. The fruit is deemed “extremely toxic” by Van Wyk & Van Wyk (1997), and even known to kill humans, poultry and domestic stock, especially pigs. Van Wyk *et al.* (2002) state that the ripe fruit are more poisonous than green berries or leaves although the authors include that some trees and trees from some areas are more toxic than others. It is obvious that Bulbuls know this and are thus obviously not birdbrains!

### References:

Van Wyk, B. & Van Wyk, P. 1997. Field guide to trees of southern Africa. Struik Publishers, Cape Town.

Van Wyk, B.E., Van Heerden, F. & Van Oudtshoorn, B. 2002. Poisonous plants of South Africa. Briza Publications, Pretoria.

Peter Cunningham