

NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

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All contributions for *LANIOTURDUS* should be sent to:

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DIARY OF A TRIP TO SHAKAWE & CAPRIVI

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On a warm calm day I left Windhoek on a birding trip to Caprivi and Shakawe with Eva in her new Toyota HiAce. Our first night was spent in Rundu at Kaisosi Lodge. From there it was straight on to Popa Falls where we overnighted. In the time we were there we recorded 44 species including Rock Pratincole, Swamp Boubou, Plumcoloured Starling, Meyer's Parrot, Yellow White-Eye and Little Sparrowhawk.

We left Popa Falls and travelled through the Mahango Game Reserve where we had some very good birding. During our short stay here we saw 34 species including Longtailed Shrike, African Hawk Eagle and Black Sparrowhawk. After clearing the border post we travelled to Shakawe Fishing Camp about 35 km South of the border. Hundreds of Carmine Bee-eaters nest in the embankment of the Okavango below the camping site; there are also some Little, Whitefronted and Swallowtailed Bee-eaters. They arrive in the morning at about 6h30 and spend the rest of the day flying to and fro from the nests to the opposite side of the Okavango river to the reeds and trees.

The river traffic of numerous boats can be disturbing. A large riverboat makes 5 trips per day to the landing jetty and the motorboats zoom past every now and then. A Squacco Heron and an Egret come down to the opposite side in the shallow water possibly to catch a fish or frog, when swoooosh a motorboat zooms past and the birds take flight.

One evening we had a boat trip of one hour after a nice dinner. Our aim, to see the Whitebacked Night Heron and Pel's Fishing Owl. The boat was not all that noisy, it would just float quietly on when a sleeping bird was spotted in the torch light. A Malachite Kingfisher spotted sleeping in the reed, was oblivious of our presence with his head tucked under his wing. Duncan Pritchard, the resident Ornithologist, is very sympathetic towards the wildlife and when a bird was spotted, he simply shone the torchlight for few seconds so as not to disturb the bird unduly. A Hadeda, sleeping on a dead tree in the water, woke up, but before it could take flight, the torchlight swept by. On an overhanging tree just above the water a young Whitebacked Night Heron sat, waiting for a fish. The bird did not approve

of the torch lighting up its perch and it moved. The white spots on the wings were still visible. We passed and on our return, had another look at it before it flapped to another branch. We passed the sleeping Hadeda but Duncan did not let the light disturb it - only a quick light up and we continued on our way. Our next sighting was the sought after Pel's Fishing Owl - a good sighting of the bird sitting in a green tree on a branch just above the water. It also did not like the light and moved but we could still observe this beautiful bird. The light once again disturbed it so we moved on, this time looking at the many crocodiles in the water and on the little sandbanks at the water's edge. There were dozens of little ones which tried to scatter and disappear before we got too near. Then less than 100 meters from the landing bay, a beautiful adult Whitebacked Night Heron feeding in the shallow water amongst the waterlilies. We went to bed, satisfied that we had observed what we had come to see.

Early the next morning we boarded the boat and Duncan headed for the sandbanks downstream; we passed the nesting banks of the Carmine Bee-eaters, stopped for a quick photo and continued. *En route* we saw Fish Eagles, African Marsh Harriers, Bateleurs, Malachite, Pied and Giant Kingfishers, Goliath Heron and an African Marsh Warbler tried to avoid detection. The sandbanks, the breeding ground of the African Skimmers are not very large. We saw a dozen or so skimmers, their numbers rapidly decreasing because of the disappearance of the sandbanks. There was only one chick on one of the two sandbanks. At the boat jetty there is a poster "Save The Skimmers". They are currently severely threatened. The chicks on the sandbanks are easy prey for the fishermen who use them for bait, the raptors and the crocodiles. On our return, we had a lovely breakfast after which we broke camp and packed up for our long journey to Lianshulu, on the Kwando River. Before departing, a scorpion did not like the idea of his shelter, my tent, being taken down and calmly stung me twice on the finger. I quickly went for some petrol - that got rid of the burn, but the swelling and soreness remained another five days.

We arrived at Lianshulu Lodge in the late afternoon, got bungalow and got ready for dinner at 20h00. The drums beat for a minute before meals, calling all to the diningroom. After dinner we left to have a good night's sleep, but an elephant blocked our way so we had to call Grant to get the elephant out of the way.

We set out at about 06h00 in a Landrover for the river bordering Botswana where we did some birdwatching before continuing to the Carmine Bee-Eaters and then further to the river from where we continued on foot, birding. The habitat is mostly riverine forest with a bit of swamp. There was a herd of elephant so we had to be very quiet and stay down wind as they have a very good sense of hearing and smell. We returned to the Lodge for breakfast at 09h00 after which we were free to do our own thing, birding and resting until lunch. After tea we boarded a large slow moving riverboat for a trip up the Kwando River. The boat is high so one has a good view. We spent about an hour near the Lodge as there was a herd of elephant on the island bathing, drinking and playing in the water. Later on, a herd of hippo also delayed us a bit. After we turned, we stopped midstream for refreshments and continued back without a hitch.

We were out again early the next morning for a game drive with Francois in a larger vehicle mostly looking at elephant, but my priority was birds. We stopped where there was large herd of elephant and went carefully down wind on foot. A dead baby elephant in the veld near the airstrip about 6km from the lodge attracted many vultures and Francois wanted to investigate. He asked if we were interested and we departed for the area, parked and went on foot to where the carcass was. The little body was lying with the partially open, eaten part downward so that the vultures were unable to get to the flesh. They were not strong enough and the hyenas would be able to turn it and if there was anything left, the vultures could feed. Those waiting on the trees were mostly Whitebacked. We returned to the camp and were once again free for the rest of the day.

Following afternoon tea we were asked if we would like to join Grant on another boattrip to check some waterholes on the island. We were accompanied by Dave Wiggins, a scientist doing research on the tits and putting up breeding boxes for them in the Caprivi. We bypassed the herd of elephant, still around on the island and in the river. A quick swoosh and we were past, leaving the elephant, making a mockcharge and flapping his ears in disgust and disappointed that he was not able to stop us. The hippos would also have liked to get us out of the river but we sped past them and stopped near the waterholes. The waterholes, were two large pans and some smaller ones with aquatic plants and reeds growing in and around them. We watched some Redwinged Pratincoles, a courser and other water-related and aquatic birds. We returned to the

boat, left and stopped midstream for refreshments, watching a Broadbilled Roller catching insects. We returned to the Lodge and after dinner we went owling with Dave, in search of the Wood Owl which we found in a large tree.

On our last day at Lianshulu we went out in the early morning and watched Pygmy Geese and some other aquatic birds before we returned to the Lodge for breakfast. After these beautiful, relaxed days it was packing and then back on the road to Rundu, Rietfontein, Waterberg and Windhoek.

FLUG NACH KARIBA

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Im September 1995 beschlossen meine Frau und ich, mit der DC-6 der NCA Fluggesellschaft nach Kariba in Simbabwe zu fliegen.

Der Flug dauerte 3 Stunden, mit einem Rundflug über die Victoria-Fälle, die leider sehr wenig Wasser hatten, da der Sambesi zur Zeit nicht sehr viel Wasser führte.

Nachdem wir alle Formalitäten am Flugplatz von Kariba erledigt hatten, ging es im offenen Safari-Landrover in Richtung des Kariba-Stausees. Unser Landrover bekam Bremsenschaden und wir mußten umsteigen in einen zweiten Wagen, in dem andere Angehörige unserer Gruppe fuhren.

Wir waren aber ganz froh, daß es so kam als wir sahen, in welchen Serpentina wir vom Hochland zum See runterfuhren.

In der Nähe eines großen Hotels lag unser 'Schiff' vor Anker; es war im Stil eines 'Mississippi Riverboat' gebaut; die Überraschung war groß, als wir dann an Bord gingen, und unsere Kabine sahen, und feststellten, mit welchem Komfort dieses 'Schiff' ausgestattet ist. Am Heck des Schiffes waren 5 kleinere Motorboote angebunden, mit denen man dann, wenn das Schiff nachmittags um ±1700 Uhr am Ufer anlegt, Tiere und Vögel beobachten kann.

Die Bootsfahrer kennen sich sehr gut aus und wissen ziemlich genau, was