LANIOTURDUS

Newsletter of the SWA/Namibia Bird Club
Mitteilungen des SWA/Namibia Vogelklubs
Vol./Jg. 22, No. 4 1987

CONTENTS

INHALTSANGABE

EDITORIAL/ REDAKTION................................................. 66

ARTICLES & REPORTS/ ARTIKEL & BERICHTE:

SMA/Nambia Rare Bird Report for 1985/1986.................. 66
Southern African Bird Atlas Project.............................. 72
Some observations on oxpeckers in eastern Caprivi,.... 74
SMA/Nambia.............................................................. 79
Batis meets batis in Namibia...........................................

PARK NOTES/ BERICHTE:

Notes from an Etosha diary........................................... 82

NOTES & NEWS/ BEMERKUNGEN & MITTEILUNGEN

Whitetailed Shrike nesting in the Naukluft Park........... 82
Eine Beobachtung...................................................... 83
Ekongoro - a veritable birding paradise..................... 84
Partial albinism in a Red-vented Bulbul....................... 85
Tragen Nilgaense ihre kuecken in Schnabel.................... 86
Recovery, treatment and release of a House Sparrow...... 87
Letter to the editor................................................... 87

PROJECTS... REQUESTS................................................ 88

Printed by John Meinert (Pty) Ltd.

HÄGAR the Horrible ®

By Dik Browne

WOMEN GET SO EXCITED WHEN SOMEONE'S EXPECTING!

YES, I KNOW... BUT AN EGG ?!
EKONGORO - A VERITABLE BIRDING PARADISE

Ekonoro, the Kavango Administration Education Centre about four kilometers east of Rundu (1719 Dl), and the associated sewage ponds and seepage lakes were visited three times in 1986. On all three occasions the visits proved to be those. Large numbers of reed-beds, hidden mud-fringed pools, remnants of tall riparian woodland, open grassland and dense thorn scrub, make this one of the finest birding localities in Namibia. One can see 200 species in three days of twitching, many of them rare or unusual or totally unexpected.

On our first visit to Ekonoro in February 1986 we focused on netting warblers in the reedbeds around the sewage ponds. This had not been done before, so it was not surprising to find species which 'shouldn't' have been there. We caught large numbers of European Sedge Warblers Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. Great Reed Warblers Arundinacea, African Marsh Warblers A. bicicolor and Cape Reed Warblers A. agilis, and most exciting of all, an European Reed Warbler A. scirpaceus * (we had caught three other European Reed Warblers previously; two at Nama Pan in Bushmanland and one at Kwete in the Mahango Game Reserve). Another unusual record for the area was a Cuckoo-finch Anomalospiza iberae, caught near a seepage stream, away from the sewage ponds. Chirping Cisticolas Cisticola pipiens were plentiful in the more open reed beds, as were Fantail Cisticolas C. juncoides. Surprisingly, Black-backed Cisticolas C. melanostomus were not recorded.

Waterbirds abound on the sewage ponds and seepage lakes below, with large numbers of White-faced Dendrocygna viduata and Fulvous Ducks D. bicolor. Redbilled Ana erythrorynche and Hottentot Teals A. hottentotta, and hundreds of waders (including Ringed Stilts Himantopus himantopus and White-fronted Plovers C. margins) frantically feeding in and around the water. Seven species of herons, two species of Bittern, and confusing assortment of cranes were commonly seen, despite their being wading neck-deep in the sewage ponds.

Our second visit to Ekonoro (with a party of dedicated twitchers) in October brought some new surprises. The water level had subsided dramatically since February, and a large area of reeds had been burnt during our absence. Accordingly, many of the normally well-hidden ponds held large concentrations of birds, and were readily visible. Many 'Okavango Swamp' specials were recorded, includin

On our most recent visit in December we caught and ringed six European Reed Warblers *, along with large numbers of the more common migrant and resident warblers. The reed beds had recovered considerably, with abundant growth of lush green reeds. The water level was considerably lower than in October, resulting in large expanses of mud around the ponds, and large concentrations of waders - including two Blacktailed Godwits Limosa limosa * and another Great Snipe *

[three days in succession we had a very tired-looking skimmer resting and feeding alongside White-winged Terns Chlidonias leucophaeus on the upper sewage ponds - and a most unusual skimmer at that. Much larger than an ordinary African Skimmer Rynchops flavirostris, this skimmer had a prominently red black bill, and a very obvious white tail with orange black tail feathers: it also had very shabby black plumage and badly broken primary feathers, indicating some recent trepidation. On consulting our local field guides, we could not come to any definite conclusion about this odd-looking skimmer - it was only on our return to Windhoek that we discovered that this was an American Black Skimmer Rynchops niger * a first record for Africa! Unfortunately, despite desperate appeal, no one managed to get up to Rundu to confirm the identity of this exciting, and highly unusual, vagrant (in fact, the most noteworthy response was ... why didn't you shoot it ?).]

It is obvious from this article that Ekonoro is a 'birding paradise', a place to see 'rare' and unusual birds. Unfortunately, Ekonoro ponds and the sewage ponds there are partly over-run by local fisherman and poachers - and the place is over-run by local fishermen and poachers - in both October and December we were forced to interact with poachers who indiscriminately shot at everything in sight (including us!), through the fence on the eastern boundary of the property. The fence is broken in numerous places, providing ready access to dogs, cats and human beings. The remnants of riparian woodland are receding rapidly as a result of indiscriminate and through strictly enforced 'artificial' environment. Ekonoro, the sewage ponds and seepage lakes desperately need strict supervision by the local administration, if not by the Department of Nature Conservation, to ensure that it remains a favourable habitat for an impressive variety of otherwise rare and unusual birds in southern Africa.

JURIS & LIZ KOMEN, c/o State Museum, P.O. Box 1203, Windhoek.

[N.B. All species marked with an asterisk (*) in this article are subject to confirmation by the Namibia Unusual Bird Sighting Committee.]