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EDITORIAL

This is my first issue as editor of *Lanioturdus* and by reading the articles you may think I have taken the opportunity to monopolise the issue to publish everything I have done over the past several years. I do admit that my quest for material has spurred me to finalise several papers. But it seems that a stiffy disk with four articles, I sent to the previous editor, Chris Hines, over a year ago, got lost in the post. I have included these although the one on flamingos is dated information.

Good rains have fallen over most of the country and the birds are responding by breeding and the migrants are getting fat on the insects. Everyone should be seeing new birds and hopefully will report on the vagrants, local migrants and oddities.

When Chris met with me, over a beer at Joe's pub, to hand over the editor's job he said the hardest part of this job would be trying to get people to put to paper their observations, adventures and studies. Once again the editor appeals to all the members to please send in your articles so we can get our journal back on a four-times-a-year schedule. I would like to start a section of the *Lanioturdus* for visitors' comments, trip reports, etc. If any members have visitors or bird-watching clients please ask them to send us a short summary of their trip. I am sure that we would like to know what visitors are seeing and how their experience was in Namibia.

We are unable to follow the cryptically coloured chicks to fledging because they move very large distances, but the size of the area now protected suggests these birds will be more likely to fledge.

The success of this project is due mainly to the persistence of conservation officials in Swakopmund, particularly Rod Braby (the area is known already as Rod's farm), and it bodes well for other clumped species that interact negatively with humans near beaches (e.g. oystercatchers). Our hope is that pairs from the sub-colony closer to Swakopmund which are heavily impacted by quad bikes now move to this protected site where they too will enjoy enhanced protection. Further monitoring will tell us whether this is so and whether breeding birds continue to show improved success.

This year has been a good one for Damara Terns – new breeding sites have been uncovered at Easter Cliffs, and a new breeding record of 11.5 km from the coast, in the southern Namib – were all brought to light in the last 12 months. We hope this trend continues for this diminutive species which is still regarded as a globally near-threatened Red Data species.

HARTLAUB'S FRANCOLIN BREEDING IN NAMIBIA

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Hartlaub's Francolin *Francolinus hartlaubi* is a near-endemic to Namibia which is restricted to rocky hills in the country from Windhoek north to the extreme south-west Angola. There is one breeding record of a female laying three eggs in May (Komen 1987) from the Omaruru area.

Shortly after we purchased the farm, Windpoort, in the Outjo district, we discovered that the site we had chosen for construction of our house was in

the middle of the territory of a pair of Hartlaub's Francolin. We erected a tent at the building site located at Tandala Ridge, 19°21.48'S 15°29.03'E and in the mornings made observations on the birds. On 2 September 1999 we saw the pair accompanied by 3-month-old chicks. We continued to see the birds and the three chicks daily until 17 October when they did not frequent the area around our tent anymore. We continued to hear the male calling in the mornings and evenings in the vicinity, however.

On 5 November we again saw the adults but they were accompanied by three small chicks probably less than a week old. On 6 November we again saw the birds but this time they were accompanied not only with the three small chicks but also with three large juveniles. It appeared to us that the pair had nested a second time in the same breeding season. We continued to see the adults and both broods each evening as they came into our outdoor shower which dripped constantly. According to Maclean (1993) the bird "does not drink water". Our birds would drink the water that leaked from the shower and would also stand under the water to bathe.

In February 2000 while clearing some dead brush from next to the front stoep of our chalet I found the remnants of a francolin nest with egg shells. There were shells from three eggs, one of which could be accurately measured 25.4x37.5 mm, a second approximated 24x39 mm and the other was not complete enough. The shells were a plain cream colour with a dirt stain. The nest scrape was in a bowl of dried Sorghum grass *Sorghum verticilliformum* on a rocky ledge under the dead branches of a Purple-pod terminalia *Terminalia pruniodes*. The nest was surrounded by exposed rocks below a rock wall 1-m high. The eggshell fragments were sent to the Namibia National Museum where they were identified as Hartlaub's Francolin (J. Komen pers. comm.).

We set up a mist net to catch bats and in the morning of 10 April 2000 I found the female francolin in the net. We ringed her with a metal and red colour ring. By this time all the juvenile birds had dispersed and we only saw the adult birds around our house. During early June we saw the pair daily but then in late June through July we only heard the birds but did not see them. On 2 Aug. we saw the pair accompanied by a week-old chick. We were gone from the farm most of Aug. and Sept. and next saw the birds on 30 Sept. when

the covey was comprised of the adults, a juvenile male and three chicks about 10 days old. The adults drank water at our birdbath. On 10 Oct. the whole covey drank at the birdbath. On the 16 Oct. when we saw the covey one chick was missing. At the time the female was chasing the juvenile male way from holes she was digging for the smaller chicks to feed in.

Part of the feeding behaviour of these francolins is that one member of the covey is always on guard duty. The guard perches on a rock above the rest of the flock and does not feed until relieved by another bird. We once saw a 3-week-old chick relieve its mother and proudly perch on the rock watching the surroundings.

As of 11 March 2001 the covey was still together and composed of an adult male, adult female (ringed), and three immature males, one from the first brood and two from the second brood.

Double brooding is rare in francolins in Africa and has only been suspected in Grey-winged Francolin *Francolinus africanus* but not proven (Little, Crowe and Barlow, 2000). It is thought that only those birds that lost their eggs would re-nest since juveniles stay with their parents through the breeding season (ibid.). The accidental catch and ringing of the female Hartlaub's Francolin was fortuitous as it afforded us the proof that the female had nested twice in the 2000 breeding season. Although the female we saw with two broods in 1999 was unmarked we strongly suspect it was the same bird with we ringed in 2000.

References

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RAPTOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED WITHIN ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK

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We have been colour ringing nestling vulture chicks in Etosha National Park since 1998. The object of the research has been to determine how far the fledged birds wander from the park and if they have a direction to their dispersion. Each bird was given a unique colour coded series of rings on the legs. The birds also have a metal numbered ring bearing the inscription "inform SAFRING, University Cape Town". African White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus* had blue over metal rings on the right legs and either 2 or 3 colours on the left leg in 1998 and 1999. During 2000 the birds were ringed with metal over blue over yellow on the left leg and three colours on the right leg. The colours used are yellow, white, blue, red and green. During the rains the colours may appear less distinct due to dirt. The Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotus* had metal over red over blue on the left leg and 3 colour combinations on the right leg in 1998 and 1999. In 2000 they had metal over green over blue on the right leg and 3 colour combinations on the left leg.

Table 1. Number of vultures ringed by year in Etosha National Park.

Year	Lappet-faced	White-backed	White-headed
1998	9	16	0
1999	11	30	1
2000	17	19	1

If vultures are seen at a carcass either within the park or elsewhere in Namibia, we would like to know if any colour ringed birds are present and the total number of vultures at the carcass along with the date and location. If birds are found dead we would like to have the metal ring returned to us but not the dead bird. We would like to know the date the bird was found and the location. If the ring is returned to us we will send the details to SAFRING. We will