

CONTENTS

VOLUME 32(1), March 1999

EDITORIAL	1
KAESTNER, P.G. A beginners guide to the larks of Namibia: Part Two	3
PAXTON, M. & SHEEHAN, L. January wetland bird count in the Mahango Game Reserve, Kavango	15
BRELL, B. & E. Birding on the Farm Rustig, Kamanjab District.	18
GLÄFKE, S. NBC bird of the quarter	20
NOTICE. News from the Namibia Scientific Society Library	22
BOIX-HINZEN, C. Interesting sightings from Daan Viljoen Game Reserve	24
BOIX-HINZEN, C. & JACOT, A. The counts of Monte Cristo	28
HINES, C. Short Notes	32
KIEKEBUSCH-STEINITZ, B. (Bird) Racing around Windhoek	38



EDITORIAL

Summer has almost come and gone without my noticing it. It has been an odd summer in terms of weather but judging from my discussions with other people, the birding has been excellent this year. The thing I have noticed while putting this edition of *Lanioturdus* together is the really good numbers of rare birds that were seen during these last few months. These records raise the question of what brings these spurts of rarities about.

Is it the unusual rainfall and general climatic patterns experienced over much of the subcontinent? Is just that we are getting more reports of rarities because there are a lot more birders out there at the moment? Is it a consequence of the "Patagonia effect" described by Peter Kaestner in a previous edition of *Lanioturdus*. Whatever the situation is, we have had two new birds added to the Namibian list in the last six months. A presumed Pied Flycatcher at the Windhoek Sewerage Works (October 1998) and a Red-throated Pipit in Swakopmund (March 1999). These records may represent interesting biological indicators of broader environmental processes influencing the sub-continent. These records are interesting in themselves but seen against a background of a large number of other rare birds in the same period we have to admit the possibility of large scale climatic (or other) factors influencing their occurrence in Namibia.

So what happens to these records? Currently nothing much!! All records reported to me are put into the Short Notes section and I encourage people to write up their sightings. My feeling is that a tremendous amount of

INTERESTING BIRD SIGHTINGS FROM DAAN VILJOEN GAME RESERVE

Christian Boix-Hinzen
P.O. Box 8952, Bachbrecht, Windhoek

Black Duck *Anas sparsa*

Two pairs of Black Duck have been seen regularly in the Augeigas stream. All four individuals were seen flying together at dusk, heading upstream towards the DVGR overnight shelter. This is not the first time I have seen them moving at dusk and they seem to be coming from further downstream (Ongos and Montecristo farms). Black Duck is restricted and localised in its distribution in central Namibia and it is good to know that there are resident pairs near Windhoek.

Eastern White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Seeing a White Pelican over the Khomas Hochland is always a surprising sight. It seems that a trio or a pair have become common residents at Avis Dam. After the waterfowl census I also learned that there are more Pelicans stranded in dams and backwaters along the Augeigas. The birds I saw may well be one of those, taking a thermal spin.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

On 6th Feb. 1999 I spotted the bird flying over the river and hills of the reserve. Possibly the same bird was seen at the Namibian Bird Club outing to the reserve on 7th Feb. We had good views of the bird soaring over several minutes. Though it did not show the clearest double barring in the tail (possibly an immature), the scalloping of the chest was obvious. Other good field characters were the long tail, slender black-tipped wings and trailing edge and a distinct carpal dark smudge in the underwing. At close range the bird immediately comes across as nothing like a Steppe Buzzard or an African Hawk Eagle. The exaggeratedly upturned wingtips gives the bird a look (jizz) of its own.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*

On my first monitoring check last year (17.2.98) I came across an adult Augur Buzzard perched on an old African hawk eagle nest. Late in January this year we spotted another individual flying high over the Choub River near the Rooiberg cliffs. Recently (14.2.99), an Augur Buzzard was seen soaring below a pair of African Hawk Eagles near the park entrance. These birds are not often seen so early in the season, the odd individual is normally seen towards the end of the hornbill breeding season in April–May at DVGR. Last year several individuals timed it beautifully to be in the reserve at the time the hornbills were fledging. Just when I thought the chicks would be safe since no African Hawk Eagles had been spotted with any regularity in the reserve. Augur Buzzards were regularly seen feeding on young hornbills and as much as I dislike their intentions, they are at DVGR already!

Ludwigs Bustard *Neotis ludwigii*

On 12 January 1999 I recorded Ludwig's Bustard for the second time since the beginning of my work at DVGR. It was walking along a service road at one of the highest koppies in the reserve. On 24 February, A. Jacot spotted another individual at Zebradrink waterhole. I am not sure what the birds movements in the Khomas Hochland are, but it seems DVGR is a technical "pit stop" for strays.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

The shallow platform nest at Rooiberg mountain on the NW side of the reserve shows clear signs of having been utilised. I have not seen any birds at the nest between December and February, despite my early morning and late afternoon visits to the area. Nonetheless a pair has been seen several times flying over the reserve (12/01, 23/01 and 7/2/1999), as well as fishing in the river (15/01 and 21/01 1999). Two pairs were counted during wetland counts (24/02/99) on the Montecristo farms nearby.

Giant Eagle Owl *Bubo lacteus*

A pair has been seen and heard regularly along the cliffs of the Augeigas

river bed since early February 1999. One generally sees both individuals when one is flushed, since they roost close-by if not together. I had not seen them or heard them last year, and its certainly rewarding to end the day having seen or heard one of this birds.

Greyhooded Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*

This year the bird arrived much earlier than usual. Whilst normally spotted at the river crossing during the end of February or early March, this summer it was seen as early as 19/12/98. The bird has been spotted on several occasions always along the Augeigas River, perching in nearby trees and hunting over the 'kikuyu' grass embankments. During the NBC outing (07/02/99) we were fortunate enough to put a scope on it. During the inland wetland count on the 24/02/99 at the Montecristo farms, we had two different sightings of this species, perching and fishing in similar habitat.

Dusky Lark *Pinarocorys nigricans*

On 12/02/99 the first individual of the season was spotted flying over the road and foraging on a gravelly hill right next to my car. Last year these birds were out at DVGR in good numbers as where Monotonous larks. We watched the bird for a while and noted that the bird had a shoulder shrugging habit, not quite the wingflick shown by Familiar Chat, but clearly a raising and lowering of shoulders as it walked. Has anyone seen this behaviour before? Is it characteristic of these birds? I asked around only to find out to my amazement how many people are still waiting to see the bird.

Stark's Lark *Eremalauda starkii*

This is a bird that tends to get overlooked quite easily. During hornbill census transects this year I discovered that the birds were regular on small gravelly hilltops in Daan Viljoen. I have now located at least three similar areas where the birds are relatively common. It will be interesting to see if they decide to breed or whether they'll stay for any extended period of time.

Monotonous lark *Mirafra pasesrina*

A single bird was heard and seen on 03/03/99 but I have yet to hear the bird

once more. Last year the reserve was crawling with them and their three note 'monotonous' call could be heard throughout the day. Whilst the rainfall this year is lower than last year, it has fallen more steadily with the result that there is more food on the ground than last year. yet the larks havenot come back. I am fascinated by this probable nomadic rain tracking behaviour, and I would appreciate learning from anyone who is hearing them more regularly anywhere around Windhoek? My guess is that they could be near the Khomas Hochland escarpment where rainfall has been higher, possibly creating good food stockpiles and optimal long grass nesting substrate.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

On 17/02/99 I came across a brown slender warbler, very much like an Icterine Warbler but completely lacking yellow. After a good 20-minute follow up and a check in my bird book I discovered that Icterines also come in an anaemic pallid brown morph. At DVGR all the "Ickies" I have seen till that day had been clearly yellow morphs. Has anyone seen this form in Namibia?

