



# LANIOTURDUS

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### Editorial

Pete Hancock, the editor of African Raptor News, commented in the first issue of that publication that it is sometimes easier as editor to write the newsletter yourself than to get contributions from others. Fortunately I have not been in this position during my first year or so of editing Lanioturdus but the one thing that I have found rather disconcerting is that of the 34 articles published in Lanioturdus 41 and Lanioturdus 42 (1-4) 26 have been written by only seven individuals. A very big thank you to those who have contributed but I am sure that many more of you have something to contribute. Remember – if it interests you it most likely interests other birders as well.

In anticipation of an influx of contributions I would like to offer the following guidelines to prospective authors:-

**Editorial policy:** Lanioturdus publishes articles and notes of broad birding interest for the membership of the Namibia Bird Club. Although preference is given to articles dealing with birds in Namibia, articles dealing with birds in southern Africa and beyond are also acceptable. The editor is allowed wide latitude in the choice of material; thus any views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Namibia Bird Club. All material in Lanioturdus is copyright and permission to reproduce material should be negotiated with the editor and the author.

**Format of submission:** Manuscripts are accepted in English, German or Afrikaans. If papers are submitted in German or Afrikaans a short English summary should accompany the article. For papers in English, summaries in German or Afrikaans may also be submitted.

The preferred method of submission is via an attachment to an email. The preferred word processing programme is MS Word. The editor has MS Word 2007 and can thus open files in earlier versions. Other programmes are accepted but the files must be submitted as text only (.txt) or rich text format (.rtf) files. Typed or hand written submissions are also acceptable but the editor does not accept any responsibility for mistakes occurring from indecipherable handwriting. Photographs accompanying the articles are desirable and as Lanioturdus is now distributed electronically digital colour photographs are preferred. The photographs should be sent as a separate attachment and not be embedded in text files. If photographs are to be used in a specific position in the text this should be indicated. Likewise tables and graphs should also be sent as separate attachments and not be embedded in the text. Authors should however indicate where in the text such tables and graphs should be placed in the article.

**Bird Names:** The common names of birds should follow the new edition of Roberts Birds of Southern Africa Edition 7. Papers on the biology of species should include the scientific name of the bird the first time it is mentioned in the text. For long lists of species observed scientific names are not required.

**References:** References should be in the following format:

## More Birds On Tsutsub Vlei Part 2.

(See *Lanioturdus* 42-2)

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Then it started all over again! On 6 February 2009, six weeks after the vlei had dried up, it started filling again. Good rains in the catchment area filled the vlei within four days. Birding kicked off with Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa* and ten Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*, amongst others. The depth of the water ruled out waders, as areas around the edge of the vlei that had had no water before now had dense vegetation inundated with water.

The rains persisted during February. Heavy rains in the catchment area kept pushing water in. During the first week of March 2009 water in the vlei was still above the normal level. Few birds were seen as such a vast area was covered by water that the birds had many options.

On the 26th February we saw a Jacana at the edge of the water next to the gravel road where the grass had been trampled flat. At first glance it was obvious that this was no African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* – it was too small. This bird did not have a blue forehead. It had an eyebrow stripe like the immature African Jacana but the forehead was brown, not black. The back was brown with black edges showing, the underparts white. The nape appeared darkish gold, stretching down to the breast. Did we have a Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis* here? We have recorded African Jacana here before on a few occasions. We managed to get a photo of not the best quality which we mailed to Neil Thomson. He was pretty sure that our findings were correct.

On Sunday 3 March I (G) took to the paddle boat. The chances of seeing elusive species from the boat should be better than walking the edges of the vlei. As a precaution I took the camera along. I crossed the first stretch of open water towards the opposite shore. A bird was perched on a leadwood tree *Combretum imberbe*, a Heron. But this one I hadn't seen here before. It was darker than those we knew. The determining feature was the light red-pinkish bill

with the darker tip. I had a Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris* in breeding plumage only a few paces from me. Who would believe me? Hey - why did I take the camera along? No problem - I had the long lens on already; I just had to try to keep the boat in position under my tree. But then the camera would not snap. I switched it off and on again a few times, re-focused, still ... Then I looked at the displays: "Battery alert - recharge"! ~~###~~!!!! Was I mad !!! I nearly discarded that machine into the water. The bird was still perched, uneasy about that thing underneath the other tree. Eventually it flew off; I moved on along the shore when I saw another bird - there were two of them. Another lucky (?) day!

Moving along the shore I found nests of Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* on the branches of shrubs in the water. A Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata* was still collecting nesting material. An African Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* was perched on a distant tree presenting its beautiful white plumage in the morning sun. I saw a few Little Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii* and looked for their nests in the trees but found nothing. On a more overgrown part of the vlei I was delighted to see a pair of small swimming birds with beautiful colourful face markings - they are also called "water lily birds". We had last seen African Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus auritus* here in February 2004. They are a scarce, elusive species more often found in the overgrown parts of the vlei which give adequate cover.

On Sunday 22 March while I was on a trip through the farm T. noticed a bird trying to access the pond we had recently built in the garden. It could have been some kind of Francolin. Outside the fence the grass was high providing adequate cover. Late in the afternoon this bird approached again. We were seated less than 10 metres from the pond having a sundowner on the verandah. I grabbed the binoculars - the bird had managed to creep through the mesh fencing to the edge of the pond. Another bird appeared outside the fence. The light was not too good any more but we could identify two Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* in the garden. Should they be here? Why not at the vlei? We had not seen them on our farm or at the vlei before but this species was reported for this Quarter Degree Square during January 2000 on another farm. The birds made further appearances at the pond on 13 & 14 April. (*Günther later reported another wetland species in the form of a yellow-billed egret visiting this water feature on 14/12/2009 - Ed*).

On Saturday afternoon, 28 March, we were at the vlei once more together with visitors. Birds were few; mostly Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, some Great Egret *Egretta alba* and a few Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*. Then T. noticed a bird landing at the edge of the vlei. In flight it showed much red on the wing as well as long trailing legs. Our African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* was back! Since January 2000 we have seen it a few times at the vlei.

After that we did not visit the vlei much more - just to check-up when we happened to pass by. At the end of April the Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax neglectus* made its appearance, a Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* a few days later, then an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. At the end of this period we counted at least 14 Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* and four Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippio-*



The vlei full of water

Photo: Günther Friederich

*rhynchus senegalensis* while two African Fish-Eagle were present. We regularly heard them calling from our home during the early morning and late afternoon. At the beginning of July we got a surprise from the Egyptian Geese *Alpochen aegyptiacus* - the pair that had stayed for the period dragged along two sub-adult chicks !! We had always suspected them to be breeding. Freshwater barbel were in abundance, *thousands*, a feast for the birds. *We have never seen so many fish in the Vlei.* We saw a Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*, a single African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis* and a few Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* at the end of June. The only waders still around were Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* and Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus* with a few sub-adult birds. On the morning of the 5 July we counted 38 Marabou Stork, one Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*, two Grey Heron and the four geese. The water would last only for a *few more days* so we took out the fish before they went to waste.



The water level receding Photo: Günther Friederich

On Saturday 11th July after we collected the last fish the water was gone as were the birds - no birds except for seven Marabou Stork.



Water gone – only dead fish and marabou storks remain Photo: Günther Friederich

**Reference:** Friederich G. & T. : Wetland Birds on Tsutsab Vlei and surrounding waterbodies. Lanioturdus Vol. 34 (3) 2001

Species recorded:

- |                           |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Grey Heron                | Red-billed Teal                      |
| Cattle Egret              | Little Stint                         |
| Egyptian Goose            | Comb Duck                            |
| Hamerkop                  | Little Grebe                         |
| Blacksmith Lapwing        | Maccoa Duck                          |
| Whiskered Tern            | Dwarf Bittern                        |
| Three-banded Plover       | Black-winged Stilt                   |
| Lesser Moorhen            | Little Egret                         |
| Red-knobbed Coot          | Lesser Jacana<br>(new record)        |
| African Openbill          | Rufous-bellied Heron<br>(new record) |
| African Fish-Eagle        | Brown-hooded Kingfisher              |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron | African Pygmy-Goose                  |
| Common Moorhen            | Saddle-billed Stork                  |
| Glossy Ibis               | Spotted Crake                        |
| African Jacana            | Reed Cormorant                       |
| Grey-headed Gull          | Osprey                               |
| Marabou Stork             | Wattled Lapwing                      |
| African Snipe             | Greater Painted-Snipe                |

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**Another Traditional Tale from the Shona Culture**

as told by Stewart Matsopo

It so happened long ago that the red-necked spurfowl and the rooster were the best of friends. They looked alike, lived together and slept together. They lived happily enough together with man but the problem was man used to kill and eat them whenever he wished because he kept and fed them. Then the spurfowl called his friend aside and said "Look here my friend, we have lived with man all our lives and although he provides us with shelter and food, he kills and eats us whenever he wishes." It was then that they decided to leave the compound and stay in the bush where they would be free. They saw that it would be wise for one to go out first and make a survey in the bush to see whether it was a suitable place for them to stay. It was only natural for the spurfowl to go because he was the one that had come up with the idea. When the rooster was left alone he thought to himself why should they go out to the bush where life is tough, scary and full of predators yet at the man's compound everything was provided - accommodation, food and water and even security although man ate them sometimes. The spurfowl waited for hours which turned to days and then to weeks for his friend to come. He started calling for his friend from a distance and the rooster replied kokokorigoooo`chikwari handichauyiiiiiiiiiiiiiii` which means "I'm not coming" in the Shona language. The spurfowl replied in a harsh manner `kkkooorwwa korwa` (meaning "alright, alright no problem"). Even today the rooster stays with man and the spurfowl stays in the bush and they are always calling to each other. If one goes to the rural areas one can still hear the rooster early in the morning saying kokokorigooooo and the spurfowl replying `kkkrr kkrww korwa korwa`.