

CONTENTS

VOLUME 32(2, 3 & 4), December 1999

EDITORIAL	1
HOCKEY, P. & BOORMAN, M. Eyes peeled for oystercatchers	2
DANTU, S. Of <i>Haematopus moquini</i> and Mal de Mer	4
BIRDING NONSENSE.	6
DANTU, S. Christmas penguins and pelicans	6
CUNNINGHAM, P.L. & A.I. Observations of vultures at domestice stock lamb carcasses	7
SHORT NOTES	9
ROBEL, D. Damarasegler in Windhoek	12
BEKKER, H. Birds and the tree of the year: The Makalani palm	15
DANTU, S. Rocky's tale	17
GLAFKE, S. Bird of the month: Monteiro's Hornbill	18
NEBE, B. Unusual birds on the coast	20
DUFFIELD-HARDING, J. & OSBORNE, T. West Etosha bird monitoring project	23
OSBORNE, T. & L. Namibrand Game Ranch trip report	28
DUFFIELD-HARDING, R. & J., et al. Namushasha and the Kwando River	29
RAPTOR ROAD COUNT FORMS ON THE WEB	33
PROVISIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR 2000	33

EDITORIAL

The publication of this copy of *Lanioturdus* has been considerably delayed and this copy covers the June, September and December 1999 editions. It will immediately strike you that this is probably the least substantial copy of the magazine for a long time. We have a problem – for some reason 1999 seems to have represented the low point of everyones birding and ornithological careers – the articles and other materials have just not come in at all this year.

The success of the magazine and the Club as a whole depends on member participation. The committee recognises that most members are passive for the most part and choose to go their own way for most of their birding. However, we can't rely on just a few people to keep us going all the time. We need new members, new activities and new vision for the future. This is really a plea to you to get more involved in the future and to help the committee keep the Club going. If we are unable to keep bringing *Lanioturdus* out on a regular basis we are in real trouble.

On the positive side of things – the Club in conjunction with the Namibia Nature Foundation and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, is planning to start up a number of new projects as well as revive a number of older ones, including Raptor Road Counts and some form of atlassing in the future. We will probably put out a special edition of *Lanioturdus* in the New Year giving details of each of the projects.

A wonderful festive season to all of you – and good birding.



Dieter, Hardi and Suzan for giving up their time to liaise with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

NAMIBRAND GAME RANCH TRIP REPORT

Tim & Laurel Osborne
P.O. Box 22, Okaukuejo

The Namibian Bird Club visited farms Keerweder, Draaihoek, Toskaan, Jagkop and Wolwedans during the period 30 April to 3 May 1999. Nine members and family had a very enjoyable weekend recording 64 species of birds and accompanied by the farm manager, Achim Lensen, toured the sand dunes. Mr. Lensen's invaluable help was greatly appreciated.

The trip was led by Tim and Laurel Osborne who arrived on the Friday 30 April to reconnoiter the place since they had never been in the area before. We camped at the base of the mountains on farm Draaihoek near the old homestead. The rest of the group: Lynette and Charl Redelinghuis, Helmut and Agnes Bistri, Sean and nephew Sean and Gerda arrived on Saturday 1 May.

We walked around our camp site to a dry waterfall which had water in a small pool at the bottom. Numerous birds were coming in to drink and everyone got excellent views of the Lark-like Bunting which is bird distinguished by its 'lack of diagnostic features' (Newman's Bird Guide, SASOL bird guide) or described as 'nondescript' (Roberts). The pool was also full of two species of tadpoles as pointed out by nephew Sean.

On Sunday we all piled into two vehicles to tour the red sand dunes. Game animals were plentiful as the rains had been good and the grass very luxuriant for the desert. We saw both Greater and Rock Kestrels and found the Dune Lark in the dunes. Achim was very helpful as he explained the geology of the area and conservation measures taken by the Ranch. We wanted to know what the bare patches were in the grassland on the dunes and he stopped to explain that they were 'fairy rings' which might have been

created by chemicals from termites but no-one really knew what made them. He did offer us the opportunity of a lifetime to buy a fairy ring for the cheap price of N\$300. The owner would get a ceramic disk with a number placed in the ring, a certificate indicating the GPS location and the satisfaction that the money would go into research on Namib Rand Ranch. I am afraid that our group did not want to find out the answer to fairy rings that badly. The dunes did not yield many species but all agreed that the scenery was spectacular.

We found Grey-backed Finch-Larks feeding young, a pair of Doublebanded Coursers with a five-day old chick and a Bokmakierie building a nest in a *Euphorbia virosa*. The finch larks were the most numerous bird with thousands taking advantage of the flush of grass to breed.

On the last day (2 May) everyone left but the Osbornes who spent the day trying vainly on foot to catch a Ruppell's Korhaan. During the first Namibrand weekend in 1998, 39 species of birds were seen. We had a preliminary list of species likely to occur drawn up from the Atlas of Southern African Birds and Roberts. We saw 60 species from that list and added four species. What are lacking are migratory species and we recommend that the next Namibrand weekend be in early March.

NAMUSHASHA AND THE KWANDO RIVER: THE BIRD CLUB LONG WEEKEND FIELD TRIP

Ruby & Jeremy Duffield-Harding, Tineke Friedrich & Jill Stringer
P.O. Box 30452, Windhoek

The Bird Club enjoyed a convivial and relaxing long weekend on the Kwando River. Willem de Wet had invited the Club to Namushasha Lodge for the long weekend of the 22nd till the 25th of May, for the purpose of producing a bird list for the Lodge. A list downloaded from Roberts' multimedia CD-Rom, had given the area 380 species, so the Club had quite

a challenge; namely to extend it!

The 1200 kilometre drive from Windhoek was easily justified, the beauty of the area, combined with around 400 bird species promised a great weekend! While still in the strip, a number of us had a privileged sighting of four Ground Hornbills by the roadside.

Twenty-one people attended this trip making it the most popular field trip on our 1999 programme. We all met at Open Sky Lodge, where we spent the first night camping. A short spell birding here was enough to bring things into perspective, as Dieter remarked, "it's like being a beginner all over again". A short walk around the camp brought such delights as Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii*, and Brown Firefinch *Lagonosticta nitidula*. At night, a couple of torches revealed a Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* and African Barred Owl *Glaucidium capense* in the boughs above our tents.

Open Sky had a deck overlooking the river, a modest affair compared to the beautiful bar and deck at Namushasha, overlooking both the river, floodplain and the West Caprivi Game Park. At Namushasha, we stayed in the fifteen bungalows spread out along the riverbank, our meals served in the open-sided thatched restaurant.

On Sunday, we split into two groups, one group took the guided boat ride, while the other group also went by boat to meet the game viewing truck. Due to a damaged tyre, this group also had a boat ride! As the weekend progressed we all had our turn on the river and over-land towards the golden triangle. As time passed, our lists grew longer, apart from the residents, Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*, Heuglin's Robin *Cossypha heuglini*, Swamp Boubou *Laniarius bicolor*, African Green Pigeon *Treron calva* and Meyers Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri*, we were able to find species not recorded on the Roberts list, some rare and some exotic, and some unexpectedly common and familiar, for example, Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*, seen everyday! Although there were Bee-eaters wherever you looked, all appeared to be Little *Merops pussillus* and White-fronted *M. bullockoides*. A measure of just how good

the birding is here, can be found in the fact that most of us ran up a total of around 100 species "identified", and this was the beginning of the cold-dry-season, most migrants had already left! On Sunday night Dieter read out the Roberts list, and we called out each sighting as the name came up, then added the new species at the end.



The two-kilometre riverside walk was perhaps the most rewarding and accessible. A thin strip of rich riverine woodland followed the bank, Wild Date Palms leaned out lazily over the dark water, Sycamore Fig, Waterberry, their lofty canopies alive with Vervet Monkeys, the water with Water Monitors, Otters and the odd Nile Crocodile, but all along, birds. Eastern Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*, and Purple-banded Sunbird *Nectarinia bifasciata*. On Monday morning, I decided to concentrate on the smaller end of the spectrum, finally identifying a Blue-grey Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens*. I had seen many, however I struggled to get a positive identification. While waiting patiently in the shadows, three metres away, a dark greyish button-quail walked out of the reeds, immediately, I knew something was wrong, aren't button-quails normally fawn and brown? A quick look at my Sasol revealed that it was in fact *Sarothrura rufa*, a female Red-chested Flufftail! Just in case I had missed this encounter, another followed closely behind!

The Ludwig's left for Rundu, planning to break the long drive back. After their departure a group of us took a guided walk into the dry woodland behind the lodge. Here we picked up Racket-tailed Roller *Coracias spatulata* and Green-spotted Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*. A large Knobthorn harboured a multitude of birds including, Collard Sunbird *Anthreptes collaris* and African Black Sunbird *Nectarina amethystina*. Willem had asked for pictures of birds, for use in a brochure, however no one except Tim Osborne and the Friederichs had equipment up to the task, Later in the afternoon, they went out on the river to take some pictures for the Lodge.

Tuesday morning arrived all too soon. One by one the cars left. The Duffield-Harding's vehicle had an electrical problem, so they had to stay behind and as it was a holiday no help could be found. Tim had set up mistnets and Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia* and Terrestrial Bulbuls *Phyllastrephus terrestris* formed part of the catch. After ringing these birds, the Osborne's also left. On Wednesday, Coleen Mannheimer and Barbara Curtis of the Tree Atlas Project arrived, and some of our members joined them for a walk along the river. If you think birds are tricky, have a go at trees!

For the next three days the Duffield-Hardings were stranded with vehicle problems. After breaking down again and again, tow-ins, battery charges and other excitements we made it back to Windhoek. The stressful journey home did little to spoil this great weekend. A big thank you to Willem de Wet for inviting the Club, and the staff at Namushasha for making our stay so perfect.

[This article is a combination of three articles submitted by the authors listed above]

RAPTOR ROAD COUNT FORMS ON THE WEB

Anyone interested in contributing to this project can get the forms on the internet at the following address:
[www.dea.met.gov.na/Programmes/Biodiversity/RRC form/RRC_form.htm](http://www.dea.met.gov.na/Programmes/Biodiversity/RRC_form/RRC_form.htm)

PROVISIONAL ACTIVITIES LIST FOR 2000

To give you an idea of the activities planned for next year, we have listed the provisional programme below. These are subject to change. Anyone willing to lead any of the trips please let us know. If you know of any good birding spots we can visit as a club please let us know. Details of excursions will be sent out in Bird Call. Contact telephone numbers for Committee Members are given in the list on the last page.

JANUARY

During the month there will be special events celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Scientific Society.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 23-24 | Coastal Wetland Counts. Contact Keith Wearne in Walvis Bay (064-205057) |
| 30-31 | Inland Wetland Counts. Contact Dieter Ludwig |