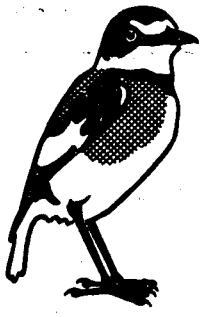
S.W.A. SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY / S.W.A. WETENSKAPLIKE VERENIGING / S.W.A. WISSENSCHAFTLICHE GESELLSCHAFT



Lanioturdus torquatus
Drosselwürger

MITTEILUNGEN

ORNITHOLOGISCHE ARBEITSGRUPPE

SCHRIFTLEITUNG: POSTFACH 67, WINDHOEK, S.W.A.

No. 3 | 12. Jahrgang | Juni 1976

HALBJAHRESPROGRAMM DER ORNITHOLOGISCHEN ARBEITSGRUPPE.

Windhoek
Juni bis Dezember 1976

(Einzelheiten der Veranstaltungen werden in den Ornith. Mitteilungen von Monat zu Monat für den folgenden Monat bekanntgegeben.)

Morgenwanderungen zur Vogelbeobachtung:

Sonntag, den 20. Juni	24. Oktober
" 25. Juli	28. November
" 15. August	19. Dezember
" 19. September	

Treffpunkt zur Morgenwanderung am C. von Francois-Denkmal um 7h30.

Arbeitsabende: 20h00 im Merensky-Zimmer der Dr. Erich Lübbert Stiftung John Meinertstr.

Donnerstag, den 3. Juni	7. Oktober
" 1. Juli	4. November
" 5. August	2. Dezember
" 2. September	

Vogelberingung am Wochenende:

Samstg./Sonntg., den 26./27. 6.	9./11. 10.
" 10./11. 7.	20./21. 11.
" 21./22. 8.	11./12. 12.
" 25./26. 9.	

Abfahrt zur Beringung vom C. von Francois-Denkmal 14h00.

Anfragen erbeten an:

D.E. Ludwig: Telef. 2-5506 (Bürozeiten)
Postf. 21870 Windhoek
H. Stöck : Telef. 2-9651
Frau A. Benseler: Telef. 2-5372 (vorm.)
" 2-4817 (nachm.)

Änderungen des Programms vorbehalten.

DIE VERANSTALTUNGEN IM JULI

Do., 1. Juli: Arbeitsabend 20h00 im Merensky-Zimmer - Besprechung der nächsten Exkursionen und Beringungen. - Arbeit am Diasarchiv.

Sa./So., 11./12. Juli: Beringung auf Farm Frauenstein (42km. NO Windhoek bei H. Stöck) Abfahrt 14h30 vom Francois-Denkmal oder Anmeldung bei D.E. Ludwig, Tel. 2-5506 (Bürozeit). - Verpflegung und Schlafsäcke mitbringen! Strasse für alle Autos passierbar.

So., 25. Juli: Morgenwanderung; zwei Stunden Beobachtung und Bestimmung von Vögeln am Avisdamm; 7h30 Treffpunkt am Francois-Denkmal. - Leitung: D.E. Ludwig. (H.L.

Dieser Tage beobachteten wir einen Spatzenvater beim Füttern seiner beiden Jungen auf dem Futterplatz (der nur ca 4m von unserem Fenster weg ist). Zwei anwesende andere Jungen sahen dies und liefen flatternd, erst das eine, dann das zweite, hinzu an die Seite der ersten zwei Kinder, und sperrten mit bettelnden Flügeln ebenfalls hungrig die gelbumrandeten Schnäbel. Vater Spatz fütterte gutmütig vier bettelnde Spatzenkinder, ohne Unterschied, mit grossem Eifer. Er hatte Mühe dabei, denn der Papp war leider alle, und die Vogelsaat und Schrot nur noch wenig, weil schon viele Fresser vorher da waren. Es dauerte nicht lange, so stellten sich noch zwei weitere Spatzenkinder ein, liefen flatternd hintereiander auch zu der Gruppe und sperrten gierend, wie die ersten Vier. Vater Spatz stopfte immer schneller und schneller, wie gehetzt, denn alle Sechs piepsten jämmerlich mit bettelnden Flügeln. Sein Kopf flog hin und her, nach links und rechts nach allen Richtungen, dazwischen immer wieder auf die Erde, um ein Körnchen aufzupicken und gleich irgendwo hineinzustopfen. (Wir hatten dabei den Verdacht, dass er manchmal nur ein Steinchen oder etwas Sand aufnahm). Und so, wie er sich dabei suchend weiterbewegte, schob sich die ganze Gruppe geschlossen mit, mit offenen Schnäbeln, bis er sichtlich ermüdet war und plötzlich das Weite suchte. Die Sechs blikkten verdutzt hinter ihm her. - Auch eine Spatzenmama sahen wir neulich umringt, die auch geduldig nach allen Richtungen stopfte, bis es ihr zu viel wurde und ebenfalls fort flog.

Sobald die Kleinen ganz selbständig fressen können (anfänglich macht ihnen scheinbar das Befördern des aufgenommenen Korns von der Schnabelspitze nach hinten in den Rachen einige Schwierigkeiten, bis sie es gelernt haben), kümmern sich die Eltern nicht mehr um sie. Dann scharen sich die Spatzenkinder gerne zusammen und bilden eine Spatzenschule. Überall sind sie zusammen, kommen zusammen ans Wasser oder Futter, fliegen zusammen weg, halten sich aber immer in der näheren Umgebung des Futterplatzes - ihres Zuhause - auf und vertreiben sich spielerisch die Zeit mit "Sandbaden", Sonnen, Herumklettern und Spielen. Dabei beobachteten wir einmal, wie z.B. ein kleiner Spatz in eine liegende leere Konservendose (Ø 75mm) kroch und drinnen blieb. Als nun ein Zweiter nachkam und vorbeihüpfte, kam er herausgeschossen und verschwand sofort wieder drinnen. Der Zweite flog erschreckt hoch und ein Stückchen weg, kam dann aber sofort neugierig zurück, um zu sehen, was eigentlich los war. Vorsichtig kam er seitlich von hinten näher und wollte in die Dose gucken, doch ehe er ganz so weit war, kam der Erste wieder herausgeschossen und erschreckte ihn zum zweiten mal. Als No. Zwei nun wieder zurückkam, liess er sich nicht mehr erschrecken, - ein Dritter spielte nun auch noch etwas mit, - sie alberten noch ein bischen und hüpften dann von der Dose fort, die nun ihren Reiz verloren hatte.

Humor kann man öfter bei den Vögeln beobachten, wenn man sich die Zeit dazu nimmt, und es macht viel Spass und Freude.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NESTING HABITS AND PREDATORS OF BREEDING COLONIES OF RED-BILLED QUELEAS

by U. de Piennaar

(Fortsetzung aus Mitt. der Ornith. Arbeitsgr., Mai 1976)

The years 1965 1966 were obviously very favourable for quelea breeding activity in the Park, as no less than 16 breeding colonies were found in 1965 and 13 in 1966. On the other hand, the drought years of 1961 and 1962 did not promote quelea breeding activity of any consequence and only a single breeding colony was found in each year. Conditions deteriorated while the birds were nesting during the 1962 season, and the colony was abandoned by the parent birds.

This is a phenomenon that has also been witnessed on other occasions in the Park, and is not always associated with diminishing food supplies or wilting of their food grasses. In some instances harrassment by predators was the causative factor in driving the birds away, whilst in other cases the nesting colony was abandoned without any apparent reason.

Depending on whether good rains had been received early in summer, quelea breeding colonies have been found in December and January but, in the Park as a whole, the majority of breeding colonies are usually reported during the months of February and March (a few also late as April), in view of the more general heavy precipitation during these months. Local grasses soon attain the required stage of maturity for the feeding of young birds, and it has been noted that in the Park the birds utilize for this purpose mainly the seeds of Panicum maximum, P. coloratum, P. deustum, Sorghum versicolor, S. verticilliflorum, Setaria woodii, S. holstii, S. spachelata and Urochloa mossambicensis.

Whereas breeding colonies of queleas in the north-western Transvaal build their nests mainly in dense stands of Swarthaak Acacia mellifera subsp. detinens, Knoppiesdoring or Knobthorn Acacia nigrescens is the favourite nesting tree in the Kruger Park. Areas are selected where closed stands of young knoppiesdoring trees, or scrub forms, occur. These may be confined to a relatively small area of a few hundred yards square, or may be more dispersed and covering larger areas of as much as ½ mile. In the absence of Knoppiesdoring, breeding birds will also utilize other trees for nest building. In most instances thorny trees are selected, for protective purposes, but shrubs and trees with dense, thorn-like twigs and branches such as Terminalia prunioides (Sterkbos), Combretum imberbe (Leadwood or Hardekool), Dalbergia melanoxylon (Driedoring or Zebrawood), Commiphora pyracanthoides ssp. glandulosa, Commiphora betschuanica (Kanniedood) and Cordia gharaf are also used. Of the thorn trees Acacia tortilis (Umbrella-thorn or Haak-en-steek) is favoured after Acacia nigrescens, and followed in order of preference by Acacia welwitschii ssp. delagoensis (Delagoa thorn), Acacia nilotica ssp. kraussiana (Red heart, Arabic gum or Kuikpeul), Acacia gerrardii (Rooidoring), Acacia xanthophloea (Fever tree), Ziziphus mucronata (Buffalo thorn), Acacia polyacantha ssp. campylacantha (White thorn), Acacia exuvialis and Dichrostachys cinerea ssp. cinerea (Sicklebush). During 1957 a breeding colony invaded the Nyandu sandveld near Machai pan, in the north-eastern sector of the Park, and in the absence of thorn trees built their nests in scrub forms of Guibourtia conjugata (Baster-mopanie) and other dense shrubs such as Baphia obovata and Hugonia Swynertoni. Along the Shingwedzi River an at Mahlati spring queleas often build their nests in the dense stands of wild date palms Phoenix reclinata, along the fringes of the water. In the Sabi River, along the Letaba and at Malelane, quelea colonies nested in the dense reed beds Phragmitis communis on islands in the rivers, or on the banks.

A breeding colony of queleas at the Munweni-drift near Tshokwane commenced building their nests on the 4th January 1963. Two days later they commenced laying, and on the 7th the majority of nests contained two eggs. Examination of the nests 7 days later proved that most of the nests contained 3 to 4 eggs, but some had 5 and other only 2 eggs.

Hatching commenced on the 19th - giving an incubation period of 12 to 13 days. The nestling period lasted for about 2 weeks, which confirms the figure quoted by Lourens (1961) and by McLachlan and Liversidge (1966).

Despite the fact that the selection by queleas of thorny trees and shrubs, for nest-building, has obvious protective value, these large breeding colonies in undisturbed areas, such as the Kruger Park, are

nevertheless quite vulnerable and are preyed upon throughout the breeding period by a large variety of predators. In certain instances predation becomes so intense that breeding activity is disrupted and the colonies are abandoned. During the egg-laying stage the nests are robbed by baboons, mongooses, Grey-footed Squirrels Paraxarus cepapi, Egg-eating Snakes Dasypeltis scabra and Tree Leguaans Varanus albigularis.

When the young birds hatch the intensity of predation increases, and the hatchlings are preyed upon by such snakes as Bush Snake Philothamnus irregularis, Boomslang Dispholidus typus, Bird Snake Thelotornis kirtlandii, Python Python sebae, Mamba Dendroaspis polylepis and Black-necked Cobra Naja nigricollis, as well as Tree Leguaans. Baboons, Genets, Transvaal Red Mongooses Herpestes sanguineus, African Wild Cats, servals and civet cats tear open the nests within their reach and also feed on chicks which fall from the nests. Hyaenas (both Spotted and Brown) and Saddle-backed Jackals as well as Ratels, have been observed prowling around breeding colonies. At a breeding colony near Punda Milia camp both lions and a leopard were seen tearing open nests and robbing them of young.

The breeding colonies also attract birds of prey, although some of these, such as Tawny Eagles Aquila rapax, Wahlberg's Eagles Aquila wahlbergi, White-backed Vultures Gyps africanus, Lappet-faced Vultures Aegypius tracheliotus, Marabou Storks Leptoptilos crumneniferus, Saddlebilled Storks Ciconia ciconia, Yellowbilled Hornbills Tockus flavirostris, Grey Hornbills Tockus nasutus and Ground Hornbills Bucorvus leadbeateri have been seen to raid nests containing young birds. They exert their greatest influence when the fledglings leave the nests. During this stage, great numbers of predatory birds are often found in close attendance to breeding colonies, and young and adult birds are heavily preyed upon. Important avian predators during this time are Wahlberg's Eagles, Tawny Eagles (Aquila rapax or possibly A. nipalensis). Yellow-billed Kites Milvus aegypticus, Bateleurs Terathopius ecaudatus, African Hawk Eagles Aquila fasciata and Marabou Storks. Other birds of prey which have also been found preying on the young quelea fledglings include the Banded Gymnogene Polyboroides radiatus, Gabar Goshawk Melierax gabar, Little Banded Goshawk Accipiter badius, Dark Chanting Goshawk Melierax metabates and Spotted Eagle Owl Bubo africanus.

There is little doubt that a more intensive study of quelea breeding colonies in the Park will reveal many additional predators, but those listed above have been most frequently observed at breeding colonies during the period 1956-1969. The extent of predation on five different quelea breeding colonies in the Satara area, was measured by Mr. A. Kemp during 1967, and the author is indebted to him for allowing the reproduction of the results in this paper.

Three different methods of estimating the impact of predation on breeding success were employed.

(i) For two colonies a sample of nests was marked and the contents recorded at regular intervals. This allowed the fate of each nest to be determined.

(ii) In another two colonies samples of 100 and 200 nests were examined. This examination was done at regular intervals in the same portion of the colony, although the same nests were not necessarily examined on each visit. A good indication was obtained however, of the success of the colony.

(iii) At one colony, found when the chicks were already large, the ratio of intact to torn nests was determined for a large sample, to show what proportion of the nests had received the attentions of a predator. These results will of course be conservative as no account is

Inhalt:

taken of the predators which do not disrupt the nests.

RESULTS

(i) A large colony 2 miles south of Bangu windmill, during January 1967, showed 13% predation on a sample of 54 nests, mainly due to squirrels (and possibly baboons) at the egg stage.

In another colony, partly on the Mareyo experimental plots, during the same period, there was very little predation on a sample of 113 nests.

(ii) In a colony 4 miles east of Satara on the Nwanetzi road, during January and February 1967, there was 35% predation on a sample of 100 nests -- the main agent being Marabou Storks, with several Tawny Eagles also attendant. A small colony on one of the Nwanetzi experimental plots showed 14% predation in a sample of 200 nests.

(iii) A very large colony near Semane koppie was examined on the 5th February 1967 and showed exactly 60% of the nests to be torn open, with the remaining chicks still in the nests and begging loudly. At this stage an estimated 1,000 - 1,200 eagles were attendance (an estimated ratio of one Wahlberg's Eagle to five Tawny Eagles(possibly A. nipalensis), as well as about 300 Marabou Storks.

To sum up, it would appear that birds and baboons are the commonest predators, with the greatest overall impact on the breeding success of quelea. The extent of predation varies greatly for each colony,as well as from year to year, but the mortality-rate can be very high, and under prevailing conditions in the Kruger Park is often more than 50 percent of all clutches in the breeding colony.

When the fledglings leave the breeding colonies, mass mortality sometimes occurs when the swarms descend to drink before roosting. During such periods drinking troughs and water holes in the Park have, on occasion, been found choked with drowned quelea fledglings, which have been pushed into the water by the weight and numbers of the adult birds in the swarms.

REFERENCES CITED

Kemp, A. (1969) - Personal communication.
Lourens, D. (1961 et seq.) - Personal communication.
McLachlan, G.R. and Liversidge, R. (1966) - Roberts Birds of South Africa.
Naude, T.J. (1959) - Personalcommunication.
Pienaar, U. de V. and Prozesky, O.P.N. (1961) - An amended checklist of the birds of the Kruger National Park. Koedoe No. 5, pp. 117-140.
Pienaar, U. de V. and Prozesky, O.P.N. (1967) - A supplementary checklist of birds recorded in the Kruger National Park. Koedoe No. 10 pp. 92-101.