On Saturday 29.12.2007 we, Tineke (T) & Günther (G), once again traveled to Hakusembe Lodge just west of Rundu on the Okavango River to spend a few quiet days. We had been there on business twice before a few weeks earlier. We took along a birdlist for the lodge, (QDS 1719 DC), that we had compiled from “Roberts Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa”, “The Atlas of Southern African Birds” and other books. On one of the previous visits we had added Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis to the existing list.

It had rained somewhat since we had been there previously, so we could observe the floodplains where a lot of waders and storks were active. We made contact with some campers from the RSA who were also interested in our activities. Rob & Jane Wilkinson, a couple from the RSA staying in Windhoek did the birding more seriously than we did, adding some species to our list. They however could not confirm a Marsh Owl Asio capensis they had flushed from the reeds early one morning.

We were awakened every morning by Woodland Kingfisher Halcyon senegalensis calling close by. On the lawn Kurrichane Thrush Turdus libonyanus was searching for insects. They had to supply a nest of chicks in a Leadwood tree Combretum imberbe close to our tent. Strangely we heard Fiery-necked Night-jar calling during the day, but maybe that’s how things are done up there at the Okavango.

One afternoon we heard a commotion in the trees, and, as some snakes been seen around the lodge, G. went to investigate. There he saw a bird which he thought was the Kurrichane Thrush but on seeing those on the lawn...

The field guide cut the choice down to two: White-browed Robin-Chat Cossypha heuglini or Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike Telophorus sulfureopectus. The bird call tapes could not give a clear answer so we decided to try to call them out. The pair of White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin’s Robin) went mad. We
managed to get some nice photographs. In return the birds apparently must have
decided to follow us and give us a repertoire of their calls. That is when we
were made aware of the Fiery-necked Nightjar’s call during daytime. It is men-
tioned in “The Complete Book of Southern African Birds” that this species sel-
dom mimics other birds but in the DRC it has been heard mimicking both birds
and frogs. Now - was it also them that were mimicking Helmeted Guineafowl at
the neighbouring lodge?

On the 2.1.2008 we returned home, arriving in dry and hot conditions. It had
rained well on the 23.12.2007, but not since then. On the afternoon of Sunday
6th we received a shower of 34 mm. Early on Monday morning G heard Wat-
tled Lapwing Vanellus senegallus calling but we could not find it. Two Egyptian
Geese Alopochen aegytiacus took a rest on the field for a while. Later in the day
a few Yellow-billed Kite Milvus aegyptius started arriving. However, by late af-
ternoon there were plenty, coming in from the east and landing on the field. There
must have been more than 100 birds. As we were having sundowners on the ve-
randah we had a fly-by of waders of which we heard the call of two Black-winged
Stilt Himantopus himantopus, which we could recognize. The others were either
Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola or Little Stint Calidris minuta.

The following morning we had another fly-by of a species to identify. They
landed on an open field which gave us the chance to get out the big stuff. We
had recorded Caspian Plover Charadrius asiaticus once before on the farm on
22.12.1998, in a similar situation, on an open field with short vegetation. This
bird however did not fit the description. T made the suggestion of Pratincole
but G did not like the bill. The upper mandible did not appear curved, the beak
appearing short, straight and blackish. The white rump shown in flight also did
not fit Caspian Plover. On some birds there was an indication of a throat collar
which confused us more. G flushed them to get a call but this did not reveal much.
We got busy with other duties then but G still thought of trying for photographs.

On Wednesday morning 9th we saw them again, 27 of them flying over the
field. G took his binoculars and had a look again, memorizing the birds in flight:
white rump, tail kept sharply pointed, splitting when manouvering and showing
the darker tail feathers behind the white rump. From there on it was easy: Black-
winged Pratincole Glareola nordmanni, a new record for our QDS. Everything
on this bird fitted with all the books we have consulted. These birds were still
present on the morning of 12.1.2008 while it was drizzling lightly.