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Editorial

Timothy O. Osborne

We were supposed to be back on "schedule" with editions appearing every 3 months and I thought we were but a minor glitch occurred at the printers for volume 35(2). I had submitted the edition before returning to Alaska for a month and expected to find the volume in my mail box upon my return. It came as a surprise to me that no edition was ready. I inquired and found out that neither the Scientific Society nor Typoprint who prints the *Lanioturdus* had any idea where the manuscripts were. After several weeks of phoning and trying to trace the papers it turned out that a woman at Typoprint who had quit her job, had stuffed the manuscript into her desk drawer. It was finally located and printed in July instead of May!

I want to thank everyone who has been submitting papers for publishing, as we are now back to having a Club journal with recent information. This edition contains a variety of papers starting with two opposing viewpoints, but both working towards the same end result—reducing the number of birds poisoned in Namibia. Rob Simmons and Penn Lloyd give us the biology behind the hunting seasons and other authors see one small event but it all contributes towards scientific knowledge.

ARIS CAMPING WEEKEND 16-17 FEB 02

Nigel Steyn

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Under threatening skies five brave souls met at Farm Aris to camp on Saturday late afternoon. The campsite is in a lovely spot next to the Schaaf River and after a short walk in the evening we sat down to watch a spectacular sunset and a group of kudu crossing the river. Fortunately the heavens did not open and we had a dry night!

The next morning another 13 people joined us for a very rewarding walk, 73 different bird species were identified. As always, the farm was teeming with Cuckoos, Greater Spotted being the most in number, then African, Diederick, Black and Jacobin. Hornbills put in a good appearance with Monteiro's, Grey, Yellow-billed and Redbilled seen. A Puffback was heard calling which is unusual this far south.

Notes on the breeding of the Redcrested Korhaan, *Eupodotis ruficrista*.

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During a recent Nature Conservation student excursion west of Windhoek, a Korhaan nest with one large egg in the process of hatching was located. This occurred as the students were pitching their tents at approximately 16h00 on 22 April 2002. Due to the female having fled the nest as well as a heavy thunder shower over the area, the egg was removed from the nest. The partially hatched egg (an opening of approximately 2mm x 3mm was visible with a vocal chick

inside) was "heated" in the engine of a vehicle and later moved within the authors sleeping bag to ensure continuous warmth. On 23 April 2002 the chick was taken to Windhoek and placed in the care of the Roth family who have experience in raising orphaned birds and who promptly adopted it.

Initially it wasn't clear which Korhaan we were dealing with, but a sighting on the road close to the nest of a Redcrested Korhaan *Eupodotis ruficrista* as well as the distinctive "wak...wak...wak" call of the male at night suggested this species.

The southern subspecies of the Redcrested Korhaan is distributed throughout the more northerly parts of South Africa to Angola and Zambia in savanna, semi-desert grassland and bushveld (Gill 1945, Maclean 1985, Sinclair 1987). Although this species is not shy, it is easily overlooked due to its habit of freezing when threatened. Its status is documented as "common resident" throughout its range (Maclean 1985).

The Record

Location: The nest was located 60km west of Windhoek on the farm Aub (22°41S; 16°34E) past the Daan Viljoen Nature Reserve. Although the general area is undulating this specific area where the nest was located was flat with a good grass cover and dominated by *Acacia mellifera* (Black Thorn) trees. This area is commonly referred to as Highland Savanna (Giess 1971).

Nest: The well disguised nest was simple in construction and an almost perfect circular (23cm x 23cm) scrape on the ground with a slight depression of 1-2cm. It was located on the south side and approximately 2m from an *Acacia reficiens* (Red thorn) tree between tufts of *Enneapogon cenchroides* (Nine-awned Grass) and *Antheplora pubescens* (Wool Grass) grass. The nest was sparsely lined with a few dried grass stems including a few small ungulate (possibly Steenbok) droppings. The location of the nest ensured shade from the *Acacia reficiens* tree from about 10h00 onwards.

Clutch & Egg: A single large slightly oval shaped "chicken-sized" egg was present. The colouration was pinkish buff spotted dark red-brown. The mottling

was heavier towards the widest side of the egg. The size was approximately 4cm x 4cm.

Chick: The chick was in the process of emerging when first located and had fully emerged by 23h30. The chick's eyes were closed after hatching and first opened 24 hours later (Roth pers. comm.). The yoke-sack detached on day 2. The colouration of the chick was light brownish with darker brown dorsal streaks. The legs were well developed.

Fledging: Fledging has not been documented for this species (Maclean 1985).

According to Maclean (1985) the breeding season for Redcrested Korhaan is September to February with 2 eggs (sometimes only 1) being laid on bare ground with no nest being present. The extended breeding season as indicated by our recent sighting is probably due to the "lateness" of the rains Namibia received during 2002. Another sighting of a Redcrested Korhaan chick ("very precocial, it had a very faint call which sent its mother into paroxysms") was encountered in the escarpment area during April 2002 (Simmons pers. comm.). Our record also describes a distinctive nest scrape, albeit simple, with some nesting material present. The description of the egg is similar to that as presented by Maclean (1985). Ground nesting precocial birds abandon the nest shortly after hatching, or at least within the first day or two after hatching (Maclean 1985). The fact that the chick's eyes opened 24 hours after hatching possibly suggests that some nest-sitting behaviour occurs, probably only in the short term. Unfortunately the chick died three days after hatching, probably due to the initial stressful period experienced, so the fledging period could not be determined.

Acknowledgments:

Our sincere appreciation to the Roth family who took on the task of raising the noisy and demanding chick as well as to Imanuel Kapofi for bringing the nest and egg to our attention.

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