



# LANIOTURDUS

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## Editorial

This is now the eleventh edition of Lanioturdus that I have edited. Looking back to Lanioturdus 41 (1), the first I edited, I note that I wrote "I do not see myself as a longterm replacement in this position but rather as someone who will fill the gap until a permanent editor can be found. However, I have the feeling that this statement might well end up in the category of 'famous last words.'" How true that statement has turned out to be! However, I must hasten to add that I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the journal. My first attempt at editing was also our first electronic edition of Lanioturdus and looking through all the electronic issues to date I see that we have come a long way since the early attempts.

The last four issues have been set by Eckart Demasius and I believe that Eckart has done a fine job after initially finding himself up against a rather steep learning curve. Eckart also has a huge library of birding related digital photographs, some of which we have used to illustrate various articles and which have, in my opinion, really enhanced the publication.

I would really like to know what you, the readers, think of Lanioturdus. I have had the odd email commending the journal and initially there were one of two who said they preferred Lanioturdus in the booklet form to the electronic format. Printing and postage costs made the booklet form prohibitively expensive forcing us to change to the electronic format. In this regard we are way ahead of most of the South African bird clubs some of which are now starting to investigate

## Portrait – Spotted Flycatcher

Sonja Bartlewski  
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Grey, brown, beige and not even a talented singer: Spotted Flycatcher.

You may hear a sort of cracking which is produced by clapping together the two mandibles of the bill. (This is where the German name “Schnäpper” comes from). Or you may see an LBJ flying loops and catching insects just to sit down quietly on a perch afterwards. This is where the English and Afrikaans names come from: flycatcher, vlieëvanger.

The inconspicuous colouration is perhaps a sort of economisation, because the spotted flycatcher migrates over vast distances. Birds from Finland and Wales have been found wintering in South Africa! When other birds are already defending their territories and some have started building nests, the Spotted Flycatcher is only arriving at its breeding areas in central Europe. For colourful plumage or a sonorous melody there is simply no time or energy!

These LBJ's show a very distinct understanding of meteorology when crossing over deserts, mountains, oceans, the equator etc. on their way from southern Africa to central Europe. They leave southern Africa during March and follow the rains to the north using the mainly south-easterly winds. On their southward migration, when they leave Europe during August, they once again have to cross the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara. Other migrating birds like warblers use the areas around the Mediterranean Sea to regain energy, but flycatchers take their energy rather from the desert. They stop at oases because August and September are the rainy months in the Sahara. Further south the rainy season during November gives them lots of dry savannas loaded with green and energy and thus also full of insects. The flycatchers mainly follow the huge clouds developing before a thunderstorm thus arriving in southern Africa during November

and leaving again during March - for the whole cycle to start all over again!



Photo: Birds of Southern Africa - Complete Photographic Field Guide

Name: Spotted Flycatcher, *Muscicapa striata*,  
Grauschnäpper, Europese Vlieëvanger

Size: 14cm

Mass: 15g

Food: Flying insects, caterpillars, berries

Habitat: Gardens, parks, open woodlands

Nest: In niches and hollows

Breeding: 4-6 Eggs. May to August in Central Europe, in good seasons twice a year.

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