



LANIOTURDUS

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Editorial

Although I am the editor of Lanioturdus, Lanioturdus is not my journal. Lanioturdus is your journal (i.e. the members’ journal). However, for it to be truly the members’ journal it needs contributions from the members.

I have been fortunate in having been able to obtain sufficient articles to have allowed me to produce four editions for three consecutive years (actually this year there will be a special fifth edition) but it is somewhat disconcerting how few people actually contribute articles. Without the contributions of the likes of Eckart Demasius and Holger Kolberg I would have been very hard pressed to find sufficient material and I would then probably have found myself in another of those editor’s nightmare situations of having to write the bulk of the articles myself. A big thank you to all who have contributed especially those who contribute regularly - to the rest of you out there - why not try your hand at writing - if something interests you it will most probably interest other birders as well.

And it is not only articles for which I am looking. Your observations of rare birds, off range species, birds new to an area etc. are all worthy of a mention in Lanioturdus. We are not yet atlasing in Namibia and records of these sightings form valuable contributions to Namibian ornithology. I have mentioned it before - Lanioturdus is sent to the Niven Library of the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology and the librarian, Margaret Koopman, has assured me that bird club journals are indeed used by researchers

Walvis Bay Pelagic Trip

Richard Niddrie

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On 20 March 2011 your bird club embarked on another successful pelagic trip off Walvis Bay. The trip was skippered by the well known Neels Dreyer and lasted approximately five hours.

In perfect weather we left the jetty just after eight. Soon we were greeted by Great White Pelicans opportunistically waiting for some handouts. Our skipper obliged and we were given a chance to see just how big their pouches are.

Shortly thereafter, still within the lagoon, we came across a feeding frenzy of Common and Black Terns. Some of the Black Terns were in breeding plumage. They were very close to the boat affording good views and photographic opportunities.



Tern feeding frenzy - Photo : Richard Niddrie

As we headed out of the lagoon into the open sea we came across Cape Cormorants and Cape Gannets. A number of the gannets were juveniles, their grey-brown plumage with white spotting contrasting with the bright white plumage of adults.

Out at sea we had good sightings of White-chinned Petrels, the white chin being clearly visible on some of them. Wilson's Storm-Petrel was another special coming quite close to us. The name petrel is derived from St Peter who

is reputed to have walked on water. To see them living up to their name "walking" on water with raised wings was truly magnificent. Sightings of Cory's Shearwater and Subantarctic Skua were also had while some also saw an albatross far off.

Another advantage of doing a pelagic trip off Walvis Bay is that you are almost guaranteed close up views of the endemic Heaviside's dolphin. This trip was no exception. An added bonus was a school of Dusky Dolphins.

Too soon it was time to head back and round the trip off with snacks and fresh oysters. All in all a great little trip.

Rarities and Interesting Observations

Subsequent to the spate of sightings of African Harrier-Hawks around Windhoek (see *Lanioturdus* 44 (3) and elsewhere in this issue) I saw an adult bird soaring above the Windhoek city centre on the afternoon of 29/06/2011. This bird even alighted briefly on top of the Swabou Building. Then on 18/07/2011 Sonja Bartlewski reported an adult bird seen perched on a street lamp standard in Hochland Park. It would appear that at least one African Harrier-Hawk has taken up residence in or around Windhoek.

On 30/06/2011 Gudrun Middendorff saw a female Red-billed Firefinch feeding three fledglings in Windhoek's Southern Industrial Area. This seems to indicate late breeding this year. In the past I have caught fledglings in March and April and Peter Cunningham observed chicks fledging in mid March in 2010.

On 13/07/2011 I again saw Red-billed Oxpeckers between Rundu Airport and Ncaute. This time I saw at least four birds, two between Sharukwe Village and Ncunicuni Village and at least two birds at Ncaute (one bird was seen in the morning and two were seen in the afternoon at the same location). This species was not recorded in this area during the Atlas (SABAP1) period but I have

had numerous sightings of small numbers over a distance of about 33 km from just south of Sharukwe Village to Ncaute (see *Lanioturdus* 43(1), 43(3), 43(4), 44(1) and 44(3)). Obviously sightings of this species along this route are dependent on cattle and donkeys grazing fairly close to the road but it seems that the species is established in this area albeit in low numbers.

Also on 13/07/2011 there was an interesting recovery of a Lappet-faced Vulture near Calomanga Village about 3 km from Old Chicomba in Huila Province, Angola. This bird had been ringed and tagged by Wilferd Versfeld as a chick on 21/10/2010 near Leeubron in the Etosha National Park. It was recovered some 557 km from the ringing site.

On 14/07/2011 Gudrun Middendorff saw a group of about ten Cape Penduline-Tits in my Klein Windhoek garden. This is the first record of this species at this house where I have lived since 1987. This is a fairly uncommon species in central Namibia and I have certainly never seen it in a suburban environment before.

In the course of the wetland count at Cape Cross on 15/07/2011 four species of waterbirds were observed to be breeding there. These were Kelp Gull, Hartlaub's Gull, Pied Avocet and White-fronted Plover. As it seemed unusual that these birds should be breeding in mid winter I consulted Robert's VII and it seems that there are winter breeding records for all except the Kelp Gull where the egg laying dates for southern Africa are from September to January with the month of November given for the first eggs in Namibia.

The winter wetland bird count at Walvis Bay on 16 & 17/07/2011 produced very low numbers of birds but in spite of this there were a few interesting sightings. An overwintering Osprey was seen and this could perhaps be the same bird seen by Holger Kolberg in Swakopmund about a month earlier (see *Lanioturdus* 44(3)). Another unusual sighting was that of an overwintering Damara Tern while a pair of South African Shelduck was seen on the water in the vicinity

of The Raft. This is a species very seldom found in a marine environment.

The count at Sandwich Harbour on the same weekend produced two Eurasian Oystercatchers and about 5 000 overwintering Common Terns. An Osprey was also seen between Sandwich Harbour and Walvis Bay on 17/07/2011. It seems highly likely that this is the same bird that was seen at Walvis Bay the previous day (see above).

On 16/07/2011 Gudrun Middendorff and I counted sixty one African Black Oystercatchers at Mile 4 Saltworks north of Swakopmund. Amongst these we picked out three ringed birds. One bird had yellow over metal rings on the right leg and a white or green and white Canadian ring on the left. We are fairly sure that this is the same bird we observed in March and it seems that this bird might have been ringed near Knysna. The other two both had yellow Canadian rings on the left leg and one had only a metal ring while the other had red over metal rings on the right leg. The yellow Canadian rings suggest that these birds were ringed on the Saldanha Islands. We are awaiting feedback from SAFRING on these birds.

I received a report from Hanjo Böhme of a Black-headed Oriole seen by a friend of his in Swakopmund on 21/07/2011. This species, which is regarded as sedentary, is normally found only in the far north eastern regions of Namibia so this bird was a very long way off its normal range.

The wetland count at Monte Christo on 23/07/2011 produced a single White Stork. This is presumably an overwintering bird as it is far too early for the arrival of migrants. While there are records of White Storks overwintering in South Africa I am not aware of any Namibian records.

Also seen in the course of this count at Monte Christo was at least one Pied Kingfisher. This is an extremely uncommon species in central Namibia and while there are isolated records I personally cannot recall ever having seen this

species anywhere between Hardap Dam and the Oshakati area.

The wetland count at Otjivero Dam on 31/07/2011 turned up a real surprise. Christiane Maluche photographed a smallish “heron” (which no one else saw) from the road bridge near the informal settlement below the dam. I was not positive of the identification but suspected that this bird might be a Slaty Egret. I sent the photograph to Trevor Hardaker who confirmed this. It seems that this is only the second ever record for Slaty Egret from central Namibia. The first was a bird photographed at Daan Viljoen Game Park in February 2008.



Slaty Egret - Photo Christiane Maluche

Kobus Bekker reported a single Fulvous Duck seen at Kulala Desert Lodge approximately 20 km south of Sesriem on 01/08/2011. This bird is a long way off its normal range and in a very strange habitat but in recent years there have been a few vagrants with one having been reported from Walvis Bay sewage ponds in August 2010 (see *Lanioturdus* 43(4)).

In early August in the course of his wetland counts Holger Kolberg found a Glossy Ibis at the Orange River mouth. This bird is also a long way off its recorded range with the nearest Atlas record (SABAP1) being some 460 km to the east although Holger advised that this species has been seen before in this area in the course of the wetland counts.

Eckart Demasius reported Burchell’s Coursers seen with juveniles only 300 m inland from the beach at Mile 14 on 14/08/2011. Eckart advised that he had never seen these birds so

close to the sea before although he had seen them a few kilometres inland on occasion.



Adult Burchell’s Courser -Photo: Eckart Demasius



Juvenile Burchell’s Courser - Photo: Eckart Demasius

On 28/08/2011 Gudrun Middendorff and I heard the first Diderick Cuckoo of the summer (or a very good mimic of its call) at my Klein Windhoek residence. This seems very early for this species to be present – in some years we do not hear it until about December. Was this perhaps an overwintering bird?

On his travels in the north east of Namibia in the second half of August Holger Kolberg saw two Pel’s Fishing-Owls, two Slaty Egrets and four Wattled Cranes in Mahango Game Reserve and a further two Wattled Cranes on the Kwando River.

On 03/09/2011 Gudrun Middendorff and I found two colour ringed Swift Terns amongst a group at a roost at Mile 4 Saltworks north of Swakopmund. One bird was ringed red over metal on the left leg indicating that it is one of 365 ringed at Walvis Bay in May 2011. The other bird had the combination orange over

metal on the right leg indicating that it is one of 500 ringed on Robben Island in April and May 2009.

On the same day we saw two Common Redshanks at the Mile 4 Saltworks.

Mark Middendorff reported several Caspian Terns at Hardap Dam in the second week of September. This species is known to occur there but this is just about the only inland venue in Namibia where it can be seen.

A number of Blue Waxbills were seen on 11/09/2011 in the course of the Namibia Bird Club outing to Farm Otjompauwe to the west of the Daan Viljoen Game Park. It appears that this species was not recorded in that area during the Atlas (SABAP1) period so this is another possible small westward range extension.

In addition Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since the beginning of July 2011:-

On 06/07/2011 a Livingstone's Flycatcher was reported at Ngepi Camp on the Okavango River. This sighting is several hundred kilometers west of the known range of this species.

A "Mega Alert" was sent out on 19/07/2011 after the sighting of at least one Royal Tern at Cape Cross. While there are a few isolated records from the Namibian coast, the Kunene mouth is generally regarded as the southern limit of the normal range of this species. In spite of further searches of the area the following day the bird was not seen again.

The report dated 29/08/2011 deals with another "Mega Tick" – this time a Lesser Yellowlegs photographed at Rundu Sewage Works. According to the report this is only the seventh record for this species in southern Africa and the first in Namibia. Also included in this report are the sightings of five Red-necked Phalaropes at Walvis Bay and two Common Redshanks at Mile 4 Saltworks.

A Common Black-headed Gull was reported from Walvis Bay on 26/09/2011 while up to

13 Red-necked Phalaropes had been seen there in the preceding week.

Neil Thomson

About the Namibia Bird Club

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. We organize monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Sewage Works and occasional weekend trips further afield.

Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we have lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive a programme of forthcoming events (the Bird Call Newsletter) and the Bird Club journal, *Lanioturdus*.

Membership Fees 2011

Members can receive a discounted subscription to the *Africa Birds and Birding* magazine. The fees below are with and without this subscription.

Category	Without	With
Single member		
N\$ 130		N\$ 310
Family membership (Husband, wife, children)		
N\$ 150		N\$ 330
Junior member (All scholars and students)		
N\$ 90		N\$ 270
Pensioner		
N\$ 90		N\$ 270
Foreign member (Not resident in Namibia)		
N\$ 165		N/A
Corporate membership		
N\$ 400		