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Editorial

Tim Osborne

The dry season is truly upon us with the east winds howling in the interior and the berg winds affecting the coast. News reports state that the winds at Lüderitz were reaching 140 km/h. I wonder if there were any birders there to look for vagrants to the coastal desert? On our farm we have hardly seen any Queleas or Chestnut Weavers in months. I wonder where they have gone, in search of food and water I presume. The rodent high we have been experiencing for the past three years crashed and now the effects are evident in the form of missing birds. Gone are the Barn Owls, Black-shouldered Kites, Marsh Owls and even the Pearl-spotted Owls are scarce.

For those of you with Internet access you should check out the website for SAFRING. Go to www.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/safring_index.htm. The site has life histories of all the birds that have been ringed. Each week more histories are added to the site. If you have ever wondered how many African Hawk-Eagles have been ringed and where you can check it out. It might surprise you how many have been ringed since 1948. There have been 244 birds ringed and with the start of computerized records in 1975 Namibia has the most birds ringed at 76. There have been 10 recoveries with the longest distance being 795 km and oldest time being 22 years, 9 months and 21 days.

It is nice to see more articles being submitted by members from the coast. Lots of interesting birds with some out of place like Black Kites, Flufftails and breeding Gray's Larks. I have requested the annual Chairman's and Financial reports for those of us who could not attend the AGM and I will put them in the next edition. I, like many of the outlying members, wonder if any of the outings publicized in the Bird Call were attended, as there have not been any reports submitted to the *Lanioturdus*. These are important to write up because those of us who cannot attend meetings in Windhoek and outings close to Windhoek would like to know what is being seen and more about club activities.

flying over the river into the reeds along the bank. The birds were not observed more closely to conclusively establish whether they might well have been Cardinal Quelea.

Yellow-billed Duck

During November 2002 I reported a small group of 15 Yellow-billed Duck on the Okavango River near Shamvura Restcamp. At the time, with the onset of the rainy season, I suspected this group to be a transient flock that would shortly move out of the area. However, on 25 May 2003, I again observed Yellow-billed Duck on the river near Shamvura Restcamp. This time I saw two separate pairs on small lily covered inlets. Both these pairs seemed more relaxed and allowed close approach before flying off.

Wattled Crane

In early February 2003 I briefly saw two Wattled Cranes flying over the floodplains adjacent to the Okavango River near Shamvura Restcamp. Later, on 2 June, I again saw a pair (undoubtedly the same pair) flying overhead while I was on the river with a group of guests. This pair were circling quite low and calling before disappearing from view. Later on that same day we encountered what must have been the same birds on a sandbank. Here they were photographed together with Slaty Egret, Sacred Ibis, Yellow-billed Stork and a small group of some thirty African Skimmers.

Second coastal record of Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans* for Namibia

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During the dry season at Swakopmund we get seasonal berg winds (locally known as east winds) originating inland which attains fairly high velocities and higher temperatures when it reaches the coastline of Namibia. This wind regularly delivers vagrant bird species to the coast.

On 8 May 2003, soon after such a wind, a nondescript rallid was given in to the local veterinarian in Swakopmund. Although we were unable to trace the exact origin of this bird we felt confidently that it was found in Swakopmund or the immediate environs. Unfortunately the bird died shortly after our having received it.

An initial identification, aided by measurements taken from the specimen, was that of Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans*. Photographs of the bird were taken and sent to Dr. Barry Taylor, at University of Natal, who confirmed our identification. He added that the bird was an immature female of about 3-5 months old.

This bird constitutes the second coastal record and fourth record for Namibia, the other three were a bird at Oranjemund in May 1976, one between Omitara and Gobabis in May 1994 (Taylor, P.B 1997. (Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans*. in *The Atlas of Southern African Birds*. Vol 1. Non-passerines. Harrison, J.A., Allan, D.G., Underhill, L.G., Herremans, M, Tree, A.J., Parker, V., & Brown, C.J. (eds), pp 330-331. BirdLife South Africa, Johannesburg) and a third from Lianshulu, Caprivi in Oct 1995, close to its normal range (R Simmons in litt., specimen examined). It is interesting that all the extralimital Namibian records have been from the month of May.



Buff-spotted Flufftail
with Namibian \$5 coin
(3 cm diameter)
for scale