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EDITORIAL

This copy of *Lanioturdus* is made up almost entirely of trip reports and observations made during trips around the country. This is encouraging in that it is clear that people are getting out and watching birds – and much of the country is getting covered. The information given in these articles is non-scientific for the most part, but important none-the-less. In Peter Kaestner's article on the North of the country, he reports the first record of Blackfaced Lovebird from the Caprivi for close on ten years. Tony Tree's article gives a brief account of an American Black Skimmer seen in Walvis Bay in February – a first record for Africa. Mark Paxton's account of breeding pelicans in the Chobe area is the first in many years. These articles are largely reports of observations given in a generalised way, but their value in putting important information into print cannot be stressed enough. The point I want to make here is that *anyone* can do it. You don't need scientific training, a degree in journalism or any birding credentials. In this sense I would like to encourage people to join the Club's outings and activities, write them up and contribute to the process of developing the Club.

With regard to outings and activities, the Club Committee as a whole would like to thank Daphne McGivern for acting as our activities co-ordinator over the past couple of years. Daphne put in a tremendous amount of work, and the success of our programme was in a large part due to her inputs. We wish the McGivern family well in Cape Town. We are now looking for a new co-ordinator – anyone interested?

I would also like to thank Carole Roberts for her inputs into *Lanioturdus* over the past year and for volunteering to put the December edition together. I will be away in Australia and the Netherlands until January 1999 and Carole will be handling the magazine. Please submit all contributions directly to her via e-mail at carole@dea.met.gov.na or through the Club's postal address.

EASTER WEEKEND ON TSUTSAB

Thorsten Ludwig
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Over the Easter weekend the Namibian Bird Club was invited to Günther Friederich's farm Tsutsab, north of Grootfontein. After the drive from Windhoek we met up with others in Grootfontein where it began to rain. We had rain all the way to Tsutsab where we arrived in the late afternoon and it was still raining softly. Detailed signs had been erected to indicate where to go. When we arrived the Osbornes and Friederichs were sitting under the Osborne's tent awning. Günther came to greet us and handed us a list of birds to be seen on his farms. We pitched our tents and soon all the birders gathered around to discuss the weekend's prospects.

Günther Friederich had worked out a programme for the whole weekend. The next morning he invited us to his house. On our way there we saw Burchell's Sandgrouse (*Pterocles burchelli*). My father imitated the sound of the Pearlspotted Owl (*Glaucidium perlatum*) and in the bush Chinspot Batis (*Batis molitor*) and Longbilled Crombec (*Sylvietta rufescens*) answered. We stood and watched the birds for almost for an hour.

We went further on to the house where we saw many other birds. We went for a trip to see an African Hawk Eagle's nest (*Hieraaetus spilogaster*). But the nest was empty – the whole nest had fallen down from last storm that occurred. Then we drove down to the vlei and decided to go back through the bush and again saw a lot of birds. Many spiders' webs blocked the road where we wanted to walk. Back at the house we drank something because we were as thirsty as camels.

Afterwards, Günther Friederich took us back to the camp and announced that he would pick us up again at 15h00 to leave for Muramba Bushmantrails to watch birds there. On the way there we again got some rain. We drove on the back of Günther Friederich's truck and got quite wet. When we arrived at the trails we first went to see the bird hide and found a porcupine in a trap. Günther took us along the trail where he told us about

the traps and many other things bushmen do. It was already getting dark and then Günther drove us home. There we made a braai under much drier conditions than the evening before when everybody tried to keep the fire going by holding his or her umbrella over the fire.

The next morning most of the people present had to leave again for home. We also went to Grootfontein for the day but we returned back to Tsutsab later that evening. On our arrival we found a message to go and meet up with the Friederichs and Osbornes who were busy ringing birds. They had caught a Doublebanded Sandgrouse, which was ringed by Tineke Friederich. We also caught a lot of bats.

The Easter weekend was a great success. We saw 74 bird species and we also identified four new species for the farm. Many thanks to Günther and Tineke for making it such a success.



SHORT NOTES

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

A single bird was reported by Adam Riley from Avis Dam, Windhoek, on 31 August. This is an exceptionally early date for this species.

Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Peter Kaestner reports a single bird flying over the International School in Windhoek during late August. This is also a very early record of this species.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

The Osprey at Avis Dam has been present on and off through the whole winter. In early August it was seen being attacked by the pair of African Fish Eagles now seemingly resident at the dam. It was again seen in late

August and early September. This bird is probably the same one which has been seen at Friedenau Dam on several occasions during the same time period.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

A single Redshank has been present on the Walvis Bay lagoon (usually between the cottages and the Municipal bungalows) throughout the winter. This bird was interesting in that it moulted into almost full breeding plumage during this period. Redshank are generally rare in southern Africa and seldom overwinter.

Blackheaded Gull *Larus ridibundus*

A single second year winter plumage bird was seen by Chris Hines and Josep del Hoyo at the Ngoma Bridge over the Chobe River on 31 July. This bird was in a large group of Greyheaded Gulls feeding at the bridge. This species is expanding its range in Africa and should be looked out for on the Zambezi-Chobe system, as well as other major wetlands in the North.

Cape Eagle Owl *Bubo capensis*

Wessel Swanepoel reports seeing this species on the Brandberg in early August and then again on the Zebra River south of the Naukluft in early September.



European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

European Bee-eaters (and several species of swallow) have been reported very early this year, probably following the very mild winter here and the unusual rain in early September. Dieter Ludwig reports European Bee-eaters from Grootfontein on 23 August, Chris Hines found them at Namutoni on 29 August and there were several flocks reported from around Windhoek between 3–9 September.



ROADSIDE BIRDING IN THE FAR NORTH

Peter G Kaestner

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During a week-long business trip from Ruacana to Katima Mulilo in early August, 151 species of birds were sighted, mostly from the car. Highlights include a Horus (Loanda) Swift at Ruacana, Racket-tailed Roller at Eenhana, and Blackfaced Lovebird west of Katima Mulilo. Also notable were two concentrations of aerial insectivores, one in Ruacana and one near Lianshulu Lodge in East Caprivi.

Accompanied by an official from our Embassy in Pretoria, I traveled from Windhoek to the far north of Namibia for a week from August 1 to 6, 1998. While the purpose of the trip was official, I had several opportunities to observe birds in the early morning or evening. In addition, many birds were seen from the moving vehicle.

The drive up to the North on August 1 was uneventful, except for a male Shaft-tailed Whydah in breeding plumage just south of where the Red Line crosses C35. At the Ruacana Falls, a flock of Violet Woodhoopoes flew into Angolan territory, adding a species to my nascent Angolan list. While fueling up in Ruacana (and fixing a flat tyre) I noticed a large group of maybe 200 swifts and swallows. Looking carefully, I could see that the bulk of the swifts were Little and Alpine, the latter powerfully swooping low over the ground with whistling wings. I also noticed a couple of Bradfield's Swifts in the group, and a lone Palm Swift. As I was looking at a group of Little Swifts, I noticed a different bird, a larger swift with a forked tail, noticeably brown plumage and no white rump. The bird was noticeably smaller than the Bradfield's in the same flock. From the size, brown colouration (including rump) and range, I believe that the bird was a Horus (Loanda) Swift *Apus horus fuscobrunneus*, which has been recorded near Epupa Falls in August. (This form was described from the coast just north of the Cunene River in southern Angola.) The swallows flying over Ruacana that day were South African Cliff, Redbreasted Lesser Striped, Wiretailed, Pearlbreasted and Whitethroated.