



LANIOTURDUS

VOL. 43 (4) 2010

www.namibiabirdclub.org

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Editorial

We rely heavily on books such as Roberts VII, (often referred to as the “birders’ bible”), for distribution maps, biometric measurements etc. - but is the information in these reference books always correct? And, possibly more importantly, do we read it correctly? Mark Paxton’s observations on the tail length of the green/violet wood-hoopoes he measured at Shamvura (Lanioturdus 43-2) got me interested. My own records of the measurements of the southern masked-weavers occurring in Namibia which can be seen in this issue further stimulated this interest. While there are some very obvious mistakes in even the best of publications (the distribution map for malachite sunbird in Roberts VII is a case in point as is the distribution map for red-billed quelea in Roberts Field Guide – Chittenden 2007), some of these can probably be put down to editorial oversight and printers’ gremlins, but the

Some Birding Notes on a Trip to Etosha

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Summertime is bliss!! We at the coast note this very well as many inlanders invade the west. So what should we at the coast do? Make way for those heading west and head east ourselves. The destination was Etosha and what a great place to visit, no matter how often you've done it before or what time of the year it is, it still remains one of the top destinations to visit. And the renovated bungalows with breakfast included just add to the relaxing holiday charm.

We arrived around lunch time entering the von Lindequist Gate near Namutoni. Our first stop was Klein Namutoni where White-backed Vultures flew in for a bath and to give three lonely Flamingos some company.

The waterhole at Namutoni was full of Blacksmith Lapwings and at least ten pairs of South African Shelduck. I have never seen them in such large numbers.

Shortly after the turn-off to Chudop we encountered a pair of Blue Cranes strolling along completely undisturbed by the car. Back on the main road to Halali jackals had killed a Springbok and were still feeding on the remains of it when we arrived. Marabou storks, White-backed, Lappet-faced and one of the rather rare White-headed Vultures joined the feast.



In the late afternoon we were at Rietfontein where a large congregation of Abdim's and Marabou Storks was present. The highlight however was three juvenile Lanner Falcons and a Red-footed Falcon.



En route to Salvadora we saw another pair of blue cranes, one being a ringed bird and at Salvadora itself another two blue cranes, (one a juvenile), took to the water for a preening session.

During an early morning walk through Halali Camp I was alerted by a strange shrieking call which led me to a juvenile Gabar Goshawk. White-crested Helmet-shrikes did their rounds through camp as well and the Southern White-faced Scops-Owl was still roosting in the mopane tree on the eastern side of camp.

The remainder of the day was spent mainly watching a leopard and when we took a break from that we saw lion at Goas.

A late afternoon visit to Rietfontein on 28 December delivered a juvenile Saddle-billed Stork. And as if we were not spoilt enough by cats, that day we saw an African Wild Cat hiding in the grass waiting for an opportunity to fill its stomach!



On Tuesday we decided to drive east again, but before doing so I did my morning camp walk following the juvenile Gabar Goshawk. Interestingly I noticed how it chased a Pearl-spotted Owlet, which then turned the tables and took up the chase of the Gabar. This to and fro play continued for quite a while.

At Springbokwater four more Blue Cranes were spotted with some jackals milling around. Suddenly a jackal had a go at one of the cranes which had to jump and fly up to avoid the leaping jackal. Amazing what courage these little guys have to tackle such a big bird!!

The highlight of two Okevi's was the sighting of a Greater Painted Snipe and many European Rollers, the behaviour of which is very different from any of the other rollers. Another Greater Painted Snipe was seen at Twee Palms.



The next day we moved west to Okaukuejo and nothing out of the ordinary was recorded in the veld which was possibly also influenced by the sighting of another eleven lions at various stations and my wife's profound liking of lions.

In camp however I spotted a Cuckoo, which the next day was kind enough to give itself away calling and thus saving me the laborious task of identifying it as African Cuckoo.



The pair of Verreaux's Eagle-Owl was also present at the large Omumborongbongo tree. This time without a nest and a brood.

