

CONTENTS

VOLUME 36 (3) 2003

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial	1
BOIX-HINZEN, C & M. BOORMAN. Helping behaviour in Gray's Lark <i>Ammomanes grayi</i>	2
DANTU, S.& M. BOORMAN. A homing pelican—part II.	4
DANTU, S. Ugab birding week	5
BOORMAN, M. Bird ringing in Namibia	6
PAXTON, M. Some Unusual Sightings at Shamvura Restcamp – Okavango River	7
BOORMAN, M. Second coastal record of Buff-spotted Flufftail <i>Sarothrura elegans</i> for Namibia	8
OSCHADLEUS, D. National ringing training courses	10
HEINRICH, D. Pygmy Kingfisher <i>Ispidina picta</i> at Epupa Falls, Namibia	11
OSCHADLEUS, D, BM DYER, RJM CRAWFORD, & L UPFOLD Sociable Weaver roadside nest densities in southern Namibia	12
BIRD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS	18

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.

Some of the highlights included realising just how small a Pearlspotted Owl *Glaucidium perlatum* is in the hand; watching Tim herd a Ruppell's Korhaan *Eupodotis rueppelli* into his giant mist-net; finding a family of Burchell's Courser *Cursorius rufus* complete with chicks, and my ringing lifer in the form of a Barecheeked Babbler *Turdoides gymnogenys*. The non-birding highlight was the movement of elephants through our camp. A herd of 12 adults with 4 calves passed through one evening and again the next afternoon while Mark and I were in the outdoor shower. My feelings swung from petrified to privileged.

The most heartening of all was to meet these guides and trackers who despite their daily hardships have embraced the ideas behind conservation and conservancies, and from whom we could all learn so much.

BIRD RINGING IN NAMIBIA

Mark Boorman
PO Box 1445, Swakopmund, Namibia
felix@mweb.com.na

Bird ringing is often a natural progression in the life of a birder. It opens up a whole new way of observing birds and their behaviour: what do they do, where do they go, how long do they live?

At a scientific level, ringing projects attempt to answer these questions. At an individual level, ringing means different things to different folks.

There is the indescribable experience of holding a tiny Dusky Sunbird in your hand, the grappling with an African Penguin to get its flipper band in place, the rush when a raptor goes down onto your Bal-Chatr.

There are the early morning starts to get your nets set before the birds get going, when it seems as if all of nature is still asleep, but you have to leave your warm

bed or sleeping bag. Your reward is a net of birds needing rings or retrapped birds wearing rings already — who ringed this? —where? —and when?

Then there are the people. Young and old. Loners and flockers. Scientists and hobbyists. From all walks of life. From all parts of the world. All sharing a common passion.

Bird ringing is done under the auspices of Afring, the co-ordinating centre for ringing in Africa, based at the University of Cape Town. Training is required to obtain a ringing licence from Afring, after which a ringer may obtain rings and other equipment. No licence, no rings issued. In addition, a permit from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism's Directorate of Scientific Services is needed to trap and ring birds in Namibia.

Ringing in Namibia will have its 40th anniversary this ringing season. What better opportunity to generate new interest and fresh enthusiasm.

One of the initiatives planned is the setting up of a ringers' forum on the internet, similar to sabirdnet and ringersnet.

If anyone is interested in learning more about this fascinating subject, please feel free to contact Mark or Sandra.

Some Unusual Sightings at Shamvura Restcamp – Okavango River

Mark Paxton
Shamvura Restcamp
P O Box 183, Rundu
shamvura@iway.na

Red-headed Quelea

On the morning of 26 March 2003 I observed a small group of about 12-15 birds flying into the reedbed on the edge of the Okavango River close to Shamvura Restcamp. This group had at least two brightly coloured males amongst them. We were not able to verify any further details of the group. The brightly coloured males, however, made identification easier even though the group was observed

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

Mark Boorman
PO Box 1445, Swakopmund, Namibia
felix@mweb.com.na

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