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## EDITORIAL

This is the final edition of *Lanioturdus* for 1997 — the fourth of the year and an achievement for all those people who contributed to the journal over the past year. Although we have seldom exceeded 40 pages in any one edition we feel that the value of the magazine has increased in that we are keeping our members informed and hopefully fostering more interest in birding in Namibia as a whole. Many thanks to all the authors and artists who submitted material for the year and I hope that the articles will keep on rolling in to make 1998 as successful as 1997.

The summer heat is upon us and with the first migrants having already arrived, you should all be looking forward to some excellent birding over the coming holiday period. This may be a particularly interesting year — the predictions of the weather boffins is that *El Nino* is likely to negatively influence the rainfall patterns in the country. This in turn will have a major effect on the distribution and breeding of birds over the next couple of months. I encourage all of you to get out there and look at what's going on — keep field notes on your observations and make some comparisons with what you know of previous years. This applies equally to common as well as rarer species. How much do we really know about doves in this country? I have noticed that in Bushmanland and at Aris, near Windhoek, that the numbers of Namaqua Doves is highly variable both within and between years. I suspect the same thing of Laughing Doves which seem to disappear at certain times of the year. Keeping basic notes and records can tell us so much about the birds we take for granted (many of which are surprisingly poorly studied). Your notes and records do not have to take the form of detailed scientific observations — casual and incidental observations are also valuable. Collect information, put it together in the form of an article and send it to *Lanioturdus*. Anyone can do it and I encourage of all of you to try!!!

On behalf of the Namibia Bird Club Committee, I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Good birding in 1998 and let's hear from you.

## THE PAVLOVIAN PHENOMENON (ANOTHER WINDHOEK GARDEN LIST)

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This is not a behavioural discourse on the salivatory patterns of Russian dogs. Nor is it an attempt to cause similar antisocial behaviour in Namibia's twitchers. Rather, it is in response to the entertaining and useful article by Peter Kaestner entitled "The Patagonia Phenomenon" which appeared in *Lanioturdus* 30(3):14-21. It is also to show that relatively low-key and casual observations by a family with variable and varying interests in birds can, over a period of years, result in quite a reasonable "garden list", even in a built-up area near the city centre.

We moved to 12 Pavlov Street, Windhoek West, in 1985. The garden was well provided with large trees, all exotic, to which we have added more than a dozen species of indigenous shrubs and trees. Three bird baths and three feeding sites are maintained, with wild seed, crushed maize and fruit being provided, usually daily.

Sadly, much of the scrub and wild grasses in the lower part of the garden have been cleared to accommodate the material aspirations of car ports, swimming pool and slasto pavings. While small areas have been replanted to wild grasses and shrubs, these have been insufficient to attract all species which previously visited the garden.

The view from the garden is across the valley of the city centre to the hills behind the TintenPalast, and thence to the mountains beyond. The distance to the nearest natural landscape is too great to see any birds other than the larger raptors soaring on the slope-lift along and above the hills.

The number of species recorded in and from our garden to date is 112. Of these, 31 are considered common. Thirteen species have been recorded breeding and 50 feeding in the garden, excluding aerial feeders foraging immediately overhead, such as swifts, swallows and bee-eaters. Nineteen

species have fed from the food provided and 11 do so regularly.

There is considerable variation in the abundance of many species from year to year and between seasons, even for non-migrant species. These variations and the movement patterns that lead to them, are mainly rainfall- and thus food-linked. For example, Yellowbilled Kites appear in large numbers over Windhoek in years when this area gets relatively good showers compared to the surrounding countryside. By contrast, African Hoopoes and hornbills are more common in town during dry years. There are clear seasonal movements into gardens by Redeyed Bulbuls in winter, for a few weeks before the trees begin to bud. The extent of this movement depends on how dry the season has been. In particularly dry years we have had up to 40 bulbuls in the garden at a time, a veritable herd-herd. As soon as the trees begin to bud, the bulbuls disperse.

In addition to the garden birdlist provided below, the following notes on selected species are offered.

### Abdim's Stork

A bit of a cheat putting this on our garden list, although we have seen this species flying over Windhoek, but not from our garden. It is on the list because we held four birds in captivity in the garden and nursed them to full health following their injury by hail. They were force-fed on fresh fish and lean meat, twice daily, and released a week later on farmlands 40 km west of Windhoek amongst a large flock of Abdim's Storks. As we still have the whitewash on our garden-shed floor and scars on our fingers, I feel justified in including this species on the list.

### Whitebacked Vulture

All the vultures and most of the other large birds of prey have been sighted from the garden flying high overhead the city, usually using the hills for slope lift, or just gliding across the sky. Two Whitebacked Vultures have also spent a few nights in our office, recovering from organophosphate poisoning. The office was under renovation at the time, the wooden floor had just been stripped and polished and we had almost finished painting all

the walls, pure white. The only equipment in the room was a tall ladder and assorted tools. The vultures were very sick and lying in boxes in the late evening. We injected them with an anti-toxicant and left them to sleep. The next morning the birds had fully recovered and were perching on the top of the ladder. From this elevated position, their active stomachs had redecorated our walls, from almost the ceiling to the floor, to their own rather unpleasant style and odour. The birds were released about 30 km east of Windhoek that day, and flew off strongly. The walls were washed down and repainted, but even today, some seven years later, there is sometimes just the faintest sniff of something that reminds us of vultures.

#### Little Sparrowhawk and Gabar Goshawk

Both these small raptors come into the garden a few times each year, to hunt small birds. They usually sit in well foliated trees or bushes, usually overlooking feeding sites, and burst out after prey. As yet we have not seen them make a kill in the garden. Little Sparrowhawks are more common in Windhoek than many people appreciate. I know of four pairs. A good location for them is in the TintenPalast gardens during quiet times, such as early in the morning.

#### Peregrine Falcon

A pair used to frequent the top of the Windhoek State Hospital, situated about one kilometre from our garden. Many of our neighbours breed pigeons, and these provided fine fare for the falcons, which would circle high overhead and swoop down on the birds as they flew from and to their lofts. We have not seen the Peregrines as frequently in the past two years.

#### Bradfield's Swift

A large exotic Washingtonia palm tree in our neighbour's garden provides a roost and breeding site, for about 8–10 Bradfield's Swifts, amongst the dead fronds hanging down the trunk below the crown. Also roosting and breeding here are Palm Swifts, House Sparrows and Redheaded Finches.

#### African Hoopoe

They arrive in mid-summer, but are erratic, and some years don't use the

garden. They have twice attempted to breed, entering the roof of our house through a small hole under the eaves. At the end of the dry season in 1996, a particularly severe time, large numbers of hoopoes congregated in and around the city. In one morning we counted 18 birds at Avis Dam.

#### Pirit Batis

A pair moves between our garden and that of the neighbours quite regularly, breeding on different properties from year to year. They have bred three times in our garden, twice building their usual small cup nest bound with spider webs and decorated with bits of bark, and once laying two eggs in a Masked Weaver nest built some months previously and not used by the weavers. The nest was attached to the end of a long bougainvillea shoot. During a violent thunderstorm the nest broke off the shoot and, although the eggs were not broken and we carefully re-attached the nest to the branch with top quality cotton, the parent birds abandoned their breeding attempt. As far as we can determine this is the first record of a Pirit Batis using the nest of another species.

#### Bokmakierie

Windhoek is on the extreme eastern edge of this species' range in Namibia. We have never seen it in or around the city except once, in the garden, in September, a dry time in a dry year. We were sawing wood, and the bird popped out of some low bushes and hopped across the patchy lawn to watch. It seemed attracted to the sound. After about five minutes it hopped across to the sprinkler, which was set on a low water flow, and took an extended shower. It departed back to the bushes never to be seen again.

#### Redbilled Firefinch

In Namibia this species occurs in the extreme north, from the Kunene, across Owambo to the Kavango and Caprivi. It also occurs at 12 Pavlov Street, Windhoek. Some two years ago three birds appeared, one male and two females. They were secretive and shy, hiding in the more densely foliated bushes, but coming out to feed on wild seed, to drink and shower under the sprinkler. We examined the birds closely for evidence of their having been in captivity, e.g. rings, worn plumage on wings and head, but

no evidence was found. These birds are still present, and come to feed almost daily. We assume that they must be cagebird escapees, but seem to survive quite well in the relatively mesic garden environment some 700 km south of their normal range.

### Waxbills and Whydahs

In the olden days (1985–89) when the garden had more scrub and wild grasses, all three waxbill species were regular to common visitors, and the Common Waxbill bred each year, in trellises covered with creepers, against the side of the house. The three whydah species were also regular visitors. In at least one year the Pintailed Whydahs successfully parasitised the Common Waxbills. In recent years the Common and Blackcheeked Waxbills put in an occasional appearance, but the other species have moved elsewhere.

### Garden List – 12 Pavlov Street, Windhoek West, 1985 to 1997

Key: B = breeds in garden, F = feeds in garden, P = perches in garden, O = flies over garden, H = heard from garden / C = common (seen/heard daily to weekly), U = uncommon (seen/heard about monthly), R = rare (few times per year or less), 1 = one record only — if seasonal migrant, marked as Cs, Us or Rs / E = exotic species, \* = see notes.

White Pelican	O/R	African Hawk Eagle	O/R
Whitebreasted Cormorant	O/R	Martial Eagle	O/R
Reed Cormorant	O/R	Blackbreasted Snake Eagle	O/R
Grey Heron	O/R	Steppe Buzzard	O/Rs
Hamerkop	O/R	Augur Buzzard	O/R
White Stork	O/1	Little Sparrowhawk	P/R*
Black Stork	O/R	Gabar Goshawk	P/R*
Abdim's Stork	*	Gymnogene	P/1
Egyptian Goose	O/R	Peregrine Falcon	O/U*
Whitebacked Vulture	O/R	Lanner Falcon	O/R
Lappetfaced Vulture	O/R	Hobby Falcon	O/1
Yellowbilled Kite	O/C-Us	Western Redfooted Kestrel	O/Rs
Black Kite	O/Us	Rock Kestrel	O/U
Blackshouldered Kite	P/1	Crowned Plover	H/R
Bat Hawk	O/1	Spotted Dikkop	H/C
Black Eagle	O/R	Feral/Domestic Pigeon	O/C
Steppe Eagle	O/1s	Rock Pigeon	O/R
Booted Eagle	O/Us	Cape Turtle Dove	F,O/R

Laughing Dove	B,F/C	Whitethroat	F/Rs
Namaqua Dove	F,O/R	Titbabbler	B,F/C
Rosy faced Lovebird	F,P/U	Icterine Warbler	F,P/Rs
Budgerigar	P/1/E	Willow Warbler	F,P/Rs
Grey Lourie	F,P/U	Longbilled Crombec	B,F/C
Red chested Cuckoo	H/1	Yellowbellied Eremomela	F,P/R
Black Cuckoo	H/Rs	Burntnecked Eremomela	F,P/R
Diederik Cuckoo	B/Cs	Barred Warbler	F,P/R
Barn Owl	H/C	Spotted Flycatcher	F,P/Us
Scops Owl	P/1	Marico Flycatcher	P/1
Spotted Eagle Owl	P,H/R	Pirit Batis	B,F/C*
European Swift	O/Cs	Fiscal Shrike	P/1
Bradfield' Swift	O/C*	Brubru	F,P/U
Whiterumped Swift	O/U	Bokmakierie	P/1*
Little Swift	O/C	Wattled Starling	F/C
Alpine Swift	O/Us	Plumcoloured Starling	F,P/Rs
Palm Swift	O/C	Glossy Starling	F,P/C
Whitebacked Mousebird	B,F/C	Palewinged Starling	F,P,O/C
Redfaced Mousebird	F/R	Marico Sunbird	F/U
European Bee-eater	P,O/Cs	Dusky Sunbird	B,F/C
Swallowtailed Bee-eater	P,O/R	Scarlet chested Sunbird	F,U
Lilacbreasted Roller	O/1	House Sparrow	B,F/C/E
Purple Roller	P/R	Greyheaded Sparrow	F/R
African Hoopoe	B,F/C-U	Scaly feathered Finch	F/C
Simitar billed Woodhoopoe	P/1	Chestnut Weaver	F/Us
Grey Hornbill	F/U	Masked Weaver	B,F/C
Yellowbilled Hornbill	F/R	Redbilled Quelea	F/U
Monteiro's Hornbill	F/R	Redbilled Firefinch	F/C*
Pied Barbet	F/R	Violeteared Waxbill	F/U
Goldentailed Woodpecker	F/R	Common Waxbill	B,F/C-R*
European Swallow	O/Cs	Blackcheeked Waxbill	F/C-U
Greater Striped Swallow	O/Cs	Redheaded Finch	F/C
Rock Martin	O/C	Pintailed Whydah	F/U-R*
House Martin	O/U	Shafttailed Whydah	F/C-R*
Forktailed Drongo	P/R	Paradise Whydah	F/U-R*
African Golden Oriole	P/1	Blackthroated Canary	B,F/C
Redeyed Bulbul	B,F/C	Yellow Canary	F,P/U
Groundscraper Thrush	F/R		
Shorttoed Rock Thrush	F,P/U		

