Editorial

This is now the eleventh edition of Lanioturdus that I have edited. Looking back to Lanioturdus 41 (1), the first I edited, I note that I wrote “I do not see myself as a longterm replacement in this position but rather as someone who will fill the gap until a permanent editor can be found. However, I have the feeling that this statement might well end up in the category of ‘famous last words’.” How true that statement has turned out to be! However, I must hasten to add that I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the journal. My first attempt at editing was also our first electronic edition of Lanioturdus and looking through all the electronic issues to date I see that we have come a long way since the early attempts.

The last four issues have been set by Eckart Demasius and I believe that Eckart has done a fine job after initially finding himself up against a rather steep learning curve. Eckart also has a huge library of birding related digital photographs, some of which we have used to illustrate various articles and which have, in my opinion, really enhanced the publication.

I would really like to know what you, the readers, think of Lanioturdus. I have had the odd email commending the journal and initially there were one of two who said they preferred Lanioturdus in the booklet form to the electronic format. Printing and postage costs made the booklet form prohibitively expensive forcing us to change to the electronic format. In this regard we are way ahead of most of the South African bird clubs some of which are now starting to investigate
This article continues the series on trends in Namibian waterbird populations and summarises count data for herons and egrets for the period 1977 to December 2008. For each species the Red Data Book (RDB) status, both global and Namibian, is given, the population trend as per Wetlands International, the number of times the species was counted, the number of times it has passed the 1% population criterion, the maximum count and the sites where it has passed the 1% population criterion.

The local trend is calculated for the period 1991 to 2008 only because continuous data is available for that time. The computer programme TRIM was used for these analyses (see an earlier publication for the selection criteria and methods). (Lanioturdus 43(2) - Ed).

For each species the number of sites used in the analysis, the number of observed counts (this includes zero counts), and the sites containing more than 10% of the total number counted are given. A trend and slope are given. A slope value of 1 would indicate a perfectly stable population, whereas any value above 1 means a positive trend and a value of less than 1 a negative trend. Population trends are graphically presented as indices relative to a base year (in this case 1991) and thus all have a value of 1 for 1991. An index value of 2 indicates a doubling of the population relative to 1991 and an index of 0.5 would mean half of the 1991 figure.

Trends for thirteen species of heron and egrets could be determined. Out of these, two are increasing, two are stable, one is decreasing and the remainder are uncertain. None of the species considered has ever passed the 1% population mark in any of the counts, in fact, figures for all the species are well below the 1% figure.

(Larger scale replications of the graphs in this article are attached to the end of this edition).

### 4.1 Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern  
Namibia RDB Status: ?  
WI Trend: Stable

This is one of the most widespread herons in southern Africa and it has been counted at least once at every Namibian site for which there is data. Numbers counted are generally low, reflecting the birds’ solitary nature with higher aggregations found at the larger sites.

No of times counted: 590  
No of times past 1% population (=10 000): 0  
Maximum count: 257 at Lake Oponono on 10 July 1995  
Past 1% population at: Nowhere

**Trend analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sites: 20</th>
<th>Number of observed counts: 265</th>
<th>Number of missing counts: 95</th>
<th>Total number of counts: 360</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Lake Oponono  1468  28.4
Sandwich Harbour  1168  22.6
Walvis Bay  965  18.7

Overall slope: Stable
0.9987 ±0.0099

Number of sites: 7
Number of observed counts: 97
Number of missing counts: 29
Total number of counts: 126

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardap Dam</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Oponono</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahango Game Reserve</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall slope: Uncertain
1.0795 ±0.1197

4.2 Black-headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*)
IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Increasing

This heron is less common in Namibia than the Grey Heron and this is reflected in the counts. It has been counted mainly at the large dams and perennial river sites. The peak in numbers in 2004 and 2005 is due to abnormally high numbers at Hardap Dam where it occurs in heronries on two islands.

No of times counted: 45
No of times past 1% population (=3 000): 0
Maximum count: 22 at Hardap Dam on 29 July 2004
Past 1% population at: Nowhere
*Trend analysis*

4.3 Goliath Heron (*Ardea goliath*)
IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Stable

Photo: Eckart Demasius
This species is fairly rare in Namibia, perhaps because of its preference for shallow waters, such as margins of rivers and dams. It is however, consistently counted at the sites where it does occur.

No of times counted: 60
No of times past 1% population (=1 000): 0
Maximum count: 19 at Mahango Game Reserve on 24 July 2006
Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis
Number of sites: 4
Number of observed counts: 57
Number of missing counts: 15
Total number of counts: 72

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:
Site          Number %
Hardap Dam    27 13.8
Mahango Game Reserve139 70.9

Overall slope: Uncertain
1.0395 ±0.0379

Figure 3: Trend of Goliath Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.4 Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)
IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Decreasing

This species prefers dense emergent vegetation such as reedbeds and its secretive nature results in it often being overlooked at counts. Internationally this species is affected by habitat loss and although the model gives the slope as uncertain, it does appear to be on the decline in Namibia as well.

No of times counted: 68
No of times past 1% population (=2 200): 0
Maximum count: 19 at Olushandja Dam on 14 April 1997
Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis
Number of sites: 4
Number of observed counts: 45
Number of missing counts: 27
Total number of counts: 72

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:
Site          Number %
Mahango Game Reserve43 24.0
Olushandja Dam    69 38.5
Shamvura 58 32.4

Overall slope: Uncertain
0.9538 ±0.0406

Figure 4: Trend of Purple Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.5 Great Egret (*Egretta alba*)
IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Stable

This is the largest of the white egrets and is counted regularly at the sites in northern and north-eastern Namibia but it has also been
recorded elsewhere. Counts of this species show a steady increase at Lake Oponono and in the Mahango Game Reserve, the reasons for this are unclear.

No of times counted: 113
No of times past 1% population (=3 000): 0
Maximum count: 95 at Lake Oponono on 23 July 2008
Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis
Number of sites: 9
Number of observed counts: 117
Number of missing counts: 45
Total number of counts: 162

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:
Site Number %
Lake Oponono 248 22.9
Mahango Game Reserve434 40.1
Shamvura 144 13.3
Swakoppoort Dam 136 12.6

Overall slope: Moderate increase (p<0.01)
1.1105 ±0.0327

Figure 5: Trend of Great Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.6 Yellow-billed Egret (Egretta intermedia)
IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Stable

This is also a less common heron in Namibia because of its preference for seasonally flooded grasslands and marshes. It is mainly counted at the north-eastern sites but has also been recorded at Sandwich Harbour and Naute Dam.

No of times counted: 46
No of times past 1% population (=1 000): 0
Maximum count: 52 at Lake Oponono on 30 April 2001
Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis
Number of sites: 5
Number of observed counts: 65
Number of missing counts: 25
Total number of counts: 90

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:
Site Number %
Lake Oponono 98 34.5
Mahango Game reserve98 34.5
Tsumkwe Pans 46 16.2

Overall slope: Uncertain
1.1666 ±0.2239

Figure 6: Trend of Yellow-billed Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

References:
4.1 Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

Figure 1: Trend of Grey Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.2 Black-headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*)

Figure 2: Trend of Black-headed Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.
4.3 Goliath Heron (*Ardea goliath*)

![Graph showing trend of Goliath Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.]

Figure 3: Trend of Goliath Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.4 Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)

![Graph showing trend of Purple Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.]

Figure 4: Trend of Purple Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.
4.5 Great Egret (*Egretta alba*)

![Graph showing the trend of Great Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.](image)

**Figure 5:** Trend of Great Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.6 Yellow-billed Egret (*Egretta intermedia*)

![Graph showing the trend of Yellow-billed Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.](image)

**Figure 6:** Trend of Yellow-billed Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.