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EDITORIAL

Summer's definitely here with the arrival of migrants and the promise of rain, and that means that we're nearing the end of yet another year. This is the fourth and final edition of *Lanioturdus* for the year. As many of you are aware, Chris Hines is roaming the globe at the moment and has trustingly left me (Carole Roberts) in charge of getting this edition out. (Hmm, I'm afraid the "Short Notes" are a little short this edition.) After having spent a month "down under" birding in Oz, Chris is now "up North" studying for a couple of months in the Netherlands. However, he hasn't forgotten us or *Lanioturdus* and submitted an article on his trip to Australia which mentions all sorts of winged wonders – frogmouths and friarbirds, parrots and pittas (to mention just a few). I have a feeling, though, that we might expect a much shorter article on his trip to the Netherlands!

There's no excuse for ignoring many of those LBJs in 1999! Peter Kaestner has put together a guide to the larks of Namibia for us. It will be published in two parts, the first of which is in this edition. He has tried to make it easy for us by highlighting the characteristics and range of each species found here, and has provided a field key as well. Peter stresses that the key should be regarded as incomplete because it needs to be put to the test (yes, that's our job), and that he would appreciate any comments to help improve it. So, birders, get out there and hit those larks!

I don't know about the rest of you, but I certainly didn't get out and about as much as I would have liked to this year. In this issue we have published a preliminary list of activities and outings for 1999 so we can all plan our trips early. If anyone has any ideas, requests or queries in this line, they should contact Dieter or Jeremy. See you out there!

That really just leaves me to extend heartfelt thanks to all those who've contributed to the journal over the past year – it can't happen without you – you've been great! Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a prosperous, bird-filled New Year!

eye and black bill, and noted to be all black above and clean white below was spotted around the sewage ponds at the Windhoek Sewerage Works on 12 October by a couple of visiting birders. It was first thought to be a Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (which would be special enough) but on examination of their slides by various experts and a closer look at their fairly detailed notes, it is thought to perhaps be Southern Pied Flycatcher or a hybrid. Did anyone else see this bird? If so, what's your opinion?



ALBINO GABAR GOSHAWK IN WINDHOEK

John Mendelsohn
PO Box 80044, Windhoek

At about 06h30 on the 3rd of November 1998 I heard the call of a Gabar Goshawk from a tree just outside our garden in Olympia, Windhoek. The calling bird was perched near the top of a large camel thorn tree and, remarkably, its plumage was completely white. Looking at it through a telescope showed that the beak was black, while the cere, legs and toes were also normally coloured in being orange-red. The bird's right eye was dark and thus also normal in colour, but the left eye was much paler.

Has anyone else seen this very distinctive individual in Windhoek?



TSAOBIS LEOPARD PARK FIELD TRIP

Jeremy Duffield-Harding
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The weekend field trip to Tsaobis got off to a good start. Eighteen people were blessed with cool weather and overcast skies, lasting the entire weekend.

Proclaimed a game reserve in 1969, Tsaobis was bought by Major Simon, a Swiss national who wished to protect the leopards and Hartmann's Zebra resident in the area. A footpath passes through desert scenery, dominated by biscuit-coloured outcrops, where we had good sightings of Tractrac Chats *Cercomela tractrac*, Blackbreasted Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, and African Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*.

The path continues through contorted rock formations. Here, some of us turned to geology, while three larks were teasing us, too far and too active for us to even have a stab at identification. Previously, I had seen a Spikeheeled Lark here – for me it's a major achievement to identify any lark! A lonely, stunted Shepherd's tree, *Boscia albitrunca*, caught Dieter Ludwig's attention; its spartan crown providing a nesting opportunity for a single nest. On reading Roberts' nesting details for the Great Sparrow *Passer motitensis*, the nest in question could have been used for the text!

Further along, the rocky-gravel path descends into the soft sand of the Swakop River, lined on either side by Ana *Faidherbia albida*, Ebony *Euclea pseudobenus*, thickets of Wild Tamarisk *Tamarix usneoides*, and the dreaded exotic, Glandular Mesquite *Prosopis glandulosa*. In stark contrast to the surrounding desert, this greenness is a welcome sight. Here we were rewarded by an abundance of bird life; both Grey Lourie *Corythaixoides concolor* and Rosy-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis* were present in large numbers.

Saturday night we congregated around a communal grill which the Bruces

had cleaned for us. During the night our sleep was disturbed by a fierce storm, but only two-and-a-half millimetres of rain fell. However, this was enough to give a fresh-humid start to the morning. After a rude awakening from the resident Blackbacked Jackals, we decided to walk the Swakop, this time a few kilometres upstream. Before starting, a strange sight greeted us, a rather confused duck flying frantically around in circles. Silhouetted against a light sky, it might be thought that identification was out of the question; however, one pointer was evident, its legs were very prominent, sticking right out behind its tail. According to Sasol, only three ducks in the southern African region share this trait, and only one comes into this area – the Whitebacked Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*. While not

a positive identification, it just proves again that there is usually some diagnostic characteristic present, even in the most awkward sighting.

No sooner had we started walking, when a flock of ten Rüppell's Parrots *Poicephalus rueppellii*, were seen. We saw more along the river, but it was difficult to tell if these were new birds, or some of the first birds following us. A flock of five woodhopes were also seen. In all, a total of forty-six species.

I wish to thank both Peter and Désirée Bruce for allowing the Club to take over the park, and also Dieter Ludwig for sharing both his knowledge and scope with us.



WALVIS BAY WADER WEEKEND

Tim Osborne, Jill Stringer & Keith Wearne

It MUST have been a good weekend! Usually we can't get anyone to write up the weekend's outings – this time we had three articles submitted from a small group of seven people! I hope they'll understand why I combined them, and that they won't allow it to discourage them from sending in other articles in the future. – Ed.

The Walvis Bay Wader Weekend (WWW) held over 21–22 November 1998 was a smashing success under the tutelage of Keith who was able to impart his extensive knowledge to all who participated. Those who didn't make it, missed a great weekend!

Tim and Laurel, having temporarily given up Kori Bustards, travelled to Walvis Bay on the 19th which was new moon, to try out their flamingo net on the salt works' pans. Accompanied by Keith, Bruno Nebe and Sue Roux we set up this rather oversized mist net at sundown with the Southwester blowing a gale of about 35–40 Knots. While the wind howled the party sheltered behind the oyster workers' hut; Tim, Sue and Bruno ventured out every now and again to inspect the nets and bring back one or two trophies. Those present thought Alaskan blood helped as Tim waded out into the water in his bathing costume. We were able to catch one flamingo (juvenile Greater) along with a Kelp Gull, Arctic Tern, Hartlaub's Gull, Avocet, Sandpiper, Cape Teal and Greater Swift Tern. *(There's a bit of discrepancy here between the reports – but then it was before the ID course – Ed.)*

We stayed at the excellent facilities of the Walvis Bay Municipal Esplanade Bungalows. On the 20th we birded the beach across the road and had a half-hour view of a Broadbilled Sandpiper from 10 m away. The reference books indicate the double eyebrow stripe is diagnostic but what attracted us to the bird was the way it walked compared to the Sanderlings and other smaller sandpipers. The bird ran with jerky little goose-steps then stopped to feed before resuming to run again.