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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!

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.

On the 21 November our WWW school began with Keith as the instructor. We were joined by Quinton and Meryl Butcher, and Jill from Windhoek, and Sandra Dantu all the way from Swakopmund. We started at the "Raft" (one of the fine seafood restaurants in town on the edge of the bay), working our way around the lagoon and through the birds. It was the best place in the bay to see Knots and Keith lost no time in explaining the fine differences between Knots, Ruffs, Grey Plovers and Curlew Sandpipers. He reminded us of the standard pointers: How does it move? What shape is it? How does it compare to the other birds? Colour of bill? Colour of legs? ...and so on.

We moved 100 m down the beach and it was exam time for all to see how good our retention power was. We then drove to the beach in front of the bungalows and found three Terek Sandpipers but failed to find the Broadbill. Keith and Tim kept going on about the 'Broadbill' and finally Meryl said that she noticed that the range of the Broadbill was a long way from Walvis. Only then did we realize that we were using the adjective as a noun and she was looking up 'The' Broadbill – after that we started to refer to it as the Broadbilled Sandpiper.

We then drove to the salt works' oysterbeds and had good views of African Black Oystercatchers, a Whimbrel standing next to a Curlew and a Redshank. After lunch we drove back to the Esplanade beach for another forlorn look for the Broadbilled Sandpiper. Meryl said that out of all the birds, she felt comfortable identifying everything we had seen except the Knot. We returned to the "Raft" and while Keith explained the finer points Jill commented that one of them had red legs and looked like a Redshank. Keith awarded her a gold star for the day, as the bird was a Redshank.

The next day we again looked in vain for the Broadbilled Sandpiper. Meryl was particularly keen to see phalaropes and Keith knew just the spot. We drove to back of the salt. The water level was very low and we could not find any birds. We drove to the beach and got adequate views of Whitechinned Petrel and Gannets. On the return we spotted a

Rednecked Phalarope right next to the road and five others further out on the salt pan. The flamingoes were out in force – so many that the sea looked pink and we also saw a flock of about 100 pelicans huddled together on the beach prior to taking off in formation in groups of three to six birds.

Before leaving Walvis Bay, we paid a short visit to the sewerage works. Here we saw a juvenile Purple Gallinule, a young Great Crested Grebe and a Wood Sandpiper as well as the other birds that you would expect to find, for example, moorhens, coots, herons, egrets, flamingoes and pelicans.

All in all it was a very successful weekend. It was enjoyable, relaxing and informative, and we saw over 50 species of birds. Warmest thanks to Keith for giving up his time and teaching so much in such an entertaining way. Keith hopes that he will see us all (and the rest of you) back for the bird count on 16th and 17th January.



ACTIVITIES

PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR 1999

To give you an idea of the activities and events for 1999, we have listed a proposed programme below. At this stage events are subject to change, but members will be updated on activities through *Bird Call*.

January

16th-17th Coastal Wetland Count at Walvis Bay
24th Inland Wetland Counts

February

7th Morning walk at Daan Viljoen
18th Slide show or Lecture
21st Morning walk at Finkenstein or Frauenstein