



# LANIOTURDUS

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## Editorial

English common names of bird species occurring in southern Africa : this topic seems to be the subject of a never ending debate. Recently *The Hornbill*, the journal of BirdLife Lowveld, published letters fuelling this debate over the ever changing English common names of our birds. My article in the last issue of *Lanioturdus* shows however that "new" bird names are nothing new at all and that the common names of species have been changing and evolving for many years.

The question does arise, however, as to which names a journal such as *Lanioturdus* should use. It is my policy as editor to use the common names used in Roberts VII and I shall continue to do so until another definitive publication is issued. I believe it is necessary to choose a standard and stick to it in order that most readers will be able to determine which species are being discussed. The common names used in Roberts VII are also for the most part used in all the newer publications such as Roberts Bird Guide, Sasol 3, Sinclair and Ryan, Oberprieler and Cillié and the new revised edition of Newman's. I am sure that most readers have access to at least one of these publications. Thus I shall stick to the names Comb Duck, Osprey, Barn Owl, Cattle Egret and Great Egret as per Roberts VII in spite of the fact that I understand that these are now Knob-billed Duck, Western Osprey, Western Barn Owl, Western Cattle Egret and Western Great Egret. I shall also continue to use the name Black-headed Canary and not the split Black-headed Canary/Damara Canary as it occurs in Sasol 3 – it seems that the authors of Sasol

33 sites were counted, and that includes the three areas at the Orange River Mouth that are counted together with South African colleagues. The most birds were counted at Walvis Bay (119 860) and the same place also holds the joint record with the Orange River Mouth Ramsar site for the most species seen (48). Numbers at Sandwich Harbour were very low, presumably because the mudflats were completely flooded due to the rain (water extended 5 km past the point where it normally ends).

The usual gaggle of rarities popped up at Walvis Bay, Sandwich Harbour and the Mile 4 Saltworks whereas Pink-backed Pelicans were recorded for the first time (in the counts) at Otjivero Dam.

Many thanks to the counters who braved the “interesting” conditions to help with the counts and keep this project going. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

Note: See the last page of this edition for a table of the counts by location.

### **Weaver Colonies in Namibia**

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PHOWN (Photos of Weaver Nests) already has over 800 records of 33 weaver species globally, and most of the records include colony size. In Namibia there are PHOWN records for six species: Red-billed Buffalo Weaver (4), White-browed Sparrow-Weaver (7), Sociable Weaver (1), Lesser Masked Weaver (2), Chestnut Weaver (42), and Southern Masked Weaver (5).

The Chestnut Weaver records are largely the Nest Record Cards which can, for the first time ever, be viewed on the internet (see [http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown\\_sp.php?Sp=796](http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown_sp.php?Sp=796)).

The Handbook of the Birds of the World, Vol. 15 (HBW) is the most recently published summary of weaver information and for

Chestnut Weaver it gives the following: “highly colonial, e.g. more than 100 trees each held 40-100 nests at site in Namibia”. Data currently in PHOWN gives more detailed information on colony size for this species as up to 250 nests per colony, mean 86.0 (n=30).

The HBW does not have any data on colony sizes for the White-browed Sparrow-Weaver. Data currently in PHOWN gives colony size for this species as 1-35 nests, mean 12.8 (n=60). Neil Thomson and Gudrun Middendorff have submitted several interesting White-browed Sparrow-Weaver colonies on man-made structures.

No species has enough data yet - more records are needed to study variation in colony size geographically and in different years. Records from long ago can be submitted if you have a photo, GPS location, and date (nest count and other data is preferable but if you don't have this, still submit the record). To browse records and find out about submitting records, read

<http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php>.

### **A Different Kind of Birding Part II:**

#### **Birds on the Stamps of South West Africa**

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South West Africa – the future Namibia - was declared a German Protectorate on 7 August 1884. Just under four years later, on 7 July 1888, the first stamps were used in Otjimbingue.

In 1891 the Eagle issue appeared and was used in the whole country. So the first stamps used in SWA had a bird as their image, be it “only” a graphical Reichsadler.

