

CONTENTS

VOLUME 37 (1) 2004

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial	1
OSBORNE, T.O. Interesting ringing recoveries	2
CHILDRESS, B. Remarkable Lesser Flamingo recovery	3
KOLBERG, H. Summary of the 2002 ringing year in Namibia	4
BLANE, S. The happy wanderer	10
RODWELL, L. SCOTT, A. & M. SCOTT. Water, wetlands, Wattled Cranes and people	13
LENSEN, J. Adaptive behaviour of the Namaqua Sandgrouse	15
CANTRELL, M. Red-billed Firefinch and Waxbills of Windhoek	17
OSBORNE, T. O. A Zambian adventure	18
ERARD, J. Observation of two Openbilled Stork <i>Anastomus</i> <i>lamelligerus</i> along the Namibian coast	22

Editorial

Tim Osborne

Here we are starting the New Year with the first issue of the bird club journal out early. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to make the *Lanioturdus* a success. I would like to specially thank Ellen Gudde for all the work she has done proofing the printer's drafts. Willie Peter and staff from Typoprint have been very understanding in trying to print the journal remotely from Outjo District.

There is a variety of articles in this issue, so there should be something for everyone. The editor would like to see a few more articles in German. None have appeared since Micki Ludwig published in Volume 35-1.

The country has finally had some rain over most parts so birding should be good for the remainder of the season. I have a nest of Carp's Black Tit in one of my nest boxes and the Chestnut Weavers are in breeding plumage. It looks as if the birds also like the rain.

the western side of town. My most regular visitor is the Common Waxbill *Estrilda erythroneura* found singly or in pairs. Add to the list the Black-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda erythroneura* and the Violet-eared Waxbill *Uraeginthus granatinus* which often forage together (though I must confess the latter has yet to put in an appearance over the wall) and you have a varied and interesting collection of waxbills.

Previous articles raise the question of distribution since Blue Waxbills in Windhoek (and also firefinches) are outside their recorded range. Two hypotheses are advanced – escapees from captive flocks or a possible expansion of range in years of good rain. Enquiries I have made with some of the local birders favour the former idea, but unless there is clear historical evidence for the escape of captive birds, I side with the latter. While man obviously does affect the ranges of many organisms, changes over time through natural causes are the norm rather than the exception. Imagine for instance corridors of good forage being formed after several years of good rain down which seed eating populations can expand, only to contract again in pockets of relative plenty (i.e. Windhoek) in less favourable times. This is how House Sparrows are thought to have expanded to most of southern Africa from their release point of Durban by using a corridor of roads and railroads.

I wonder if other birders can top my list of waxbills in their gardens – don't cheat now!

A Zambian Adventure

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As you may recall from *Lanioturdus* 34(2) Peter Leonard, from Zambia, visited Namibia and wrote an account of his travels here. I recently returned from Zambia and thought the more adventurous club members might consider a trip up there.

Laurel and I were traveling from 12 October to 4 November 2003, but were only in Zambia from 16 October to 2 November. On our last night in Namibia we

stayed at Kalizo Lodge where the Carmine Bee-eaters were busy breeding at their colony. We inquired about road conditions driving from Sesheke to Livingstone but no one knew any fresh information except Dick Sharpe who heard that someone had made it in 3 hours. That 200-km stretch of road has the reputation, even in Zambia, of being horrid. We crossed the border at Katima Mulimo and found the immigration officials efficient since we had the required US\$40 each for a 3 year multiple entry visa. We crossed by ferry to Sesheke and made it to Livingstone in 2.5 hours on a road where 60 km was under construction but most was new tar. From Livingstone (after buying third party insurance for Kwacha 60,000 (US\$20) we drove to Muckle Neuk Farm outside Choma. The Bruce-Millers run a guest lodge there and it is one of the best places to find the endemic Chaplin's Barbet. Lodging is US\$50 with full board and the farm is a combination of cattle and game farming. New birds to Namibians will start coming as soon as you arrive at the lodge. They have recorded over 470 species from the farm with specialties like African Broadbill, Narina Trogon, African Finfoot, Slaty Egret, nesting Crowned Eagle, Emerald Cuckoo, and Souza's Shrike. There is plenty of good miombo habitat and it is not uncommon to run into bird parties with 35 species. They also have 2 large dams and during November get up to one million Barn Swallows roosting.

From Choma we drove to the Copperbelt and stayed at Greystone Farm just outside Kitwe. Mike and Jan Fisher who are cousins of Bruce-Millers own it. The farm has game and excellent miombo habitat. We saw Chestnut-mantled Sparrow-weaver, African Goshawk, and miombo specialties like Laura's Woodland Warbler, Black-necked Eremomela, both *Hylotias*, Böhm's Flycatcher and Black-faced Canary.

Driving in Zambia is quite nice these days as the roads are mostly new tar with wide shoulders. The Zambian police are quite vigilant in their roadblocks however. The police are a "for-profit" organization and the roadblocks are not just to keep vehicles unfit for driving off the road. If your vehicle is not carrying 2 breakdown triangles you can get fined and it just so happens that an off-duty policeman is selling triangles at the roadblocks. We got fined kwacha 108,000 for not having two front white reflectors. Needless to say, at the next town I

bought some reflector tape. They also have radar speed traps in the bigger cities so watch for vehicles heading your way flashing headlights and slow to the limit.

From the Copperbelt our plan was to drive to the Mwinilunga District which is located in extreme northwest Zambia on the DRC and Angola border. It is about 600 km from the Copperbelt to Kalene Hill. As you drive northwest the road slowly dissolves from tar to dirt. There are stretches of good tar where you can hit 120 km/h for 10's of km but soon large potholes appear. It is an all day drive. 40 km west of Solwezi you cross the Mututondo Bridge. Nesting under the bridge are Red-throated Cliff Swallows and in the woodland we saw Cassin's Flycatcher. It is also a good place to see the Bamboo Warbler but we missed it.

As we headed north we passed through many kilometres of good miombo habitat but knew that we wanted to get to our destination before dark. It is a good rule never to drive after dark in Zambia since anything can be in the middle of the road. At Kalene Hill we booked into Hillwood Farm, which has excellent accommodations. Peter and Lynn Fisher, more cousins of the Bruce-Millers, own it and the cost is US\$40 for self-catering or \$150 full board. Camping is also available. The reason for our going to the ends of Zambia was in their backyard. It is the evergreen forest, that contains the southern edge of the Guinea-Congo avifauna. A morning walk into the forest soon proved its worth with Grey-winged Robin, Little Greenbul, Red-tailed Bristlebill, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Afep Pigeon, Bannerman's Sunbird, Bate's Sunbird, Black-collared Bulbul and the lovely Lady Ross's Turaco.

The next day we backtracked down the road 40 km and birded the Chitanta Plain where we saw Grimwood's Longclaw, Bocage's Weaver, Angola Lark, Angola Swallow, Black-and-rufous Swallow and Splendid Glossy Starling. We stopped at the source of the Zambezi, where the mighty river arises as a small spring 2 m in diameter in the middle of an evergreen forest patch. However, birding was difficult since it was raining. Yes, it rains in October in other countries and it was refreshing to find green grass after the dryness of Namibia. We saw many termite hatches while driving along the roads. The following day we drove

north of Hillwood 20 km to the Zambezi River rapids where the river was now 40 m wide and 0.3 m deep flowing across broad granite bedrock. Here we saw Forbes Plover and a rare bird for Zambia, the Turnstone!

At Hillwood the Fishers have cattle and in the game camp they have about 300 sable, Lichensteins' hartebeest, oribi, eland, zebra, lechwe, forest sitatunga, and blue duiker. After 8 days of birding the area we finally packed and headed back to Greystone for the night. From there we drove south to Kapiri Mposhi and then northeast up the Great East Road. Our destination was Mutinondo Wilderness Lodge between Serenje and Mpika. The camp is located 25 km off the road and is owned by Mike and Lari Merrett (sister of Jan Fisher). The place is 10,000ha and is surrounded by 120,000 ha of wilderness with virgin miombo woodland. Their lodge is perched on top a large granite koppie with guest chalets scattered around the sides and built into the koppie. Full board is US\$40 a night and they also have camping. We made the trip to find the Bar-winged Weaver, which was nesting, over the campground. They also have a new species of miombo Double-collared Sunbird, as yet undescribed, which inhabits the rocky areas. Another specialty is the Chestnut-headed Flufftail, a rare bird everywhere in Africa. One of the other guests staying was Ilse Mwanza, who joined us at the 4 December 2002 solar eclipse trip on the Kwando River. Ilse was with friends heading to Tanzania and joined us to flush the flufftail one evening. I had set up two mist nets hoping the bird would flush into one of them but although it was calling we did not get it to flush. Finally well after dark and in light rain I flushed one bird which only flew 2 m and then landed and disappeared into the fog again. Still it was a lifer for us all.

After three days at Mutinondo we drove back to Choma to try our luck at ringing at the swallow roost. There were only 7000 birds present and the first night my nets were too low. All we caught were Red Bishops, Queleas and various marsh warblers. The next night we ringed at another dam, 4.5 km away, and caught 50 swallows and one of the bishops and queleas from the night before. One of my bogie birds has been the African Hobby. A friend told me where one was nesting just 2 km outside of Livingstone. We headed back towards Namibia and sure enough there was a hobby nesting in a Pied Crow nest on a power pylon. More

of the Livingstone-Sesheki road had been constructed in the 17 days of our trip and we were able to make it in 2 hours but then the inevitable loomed. The ferry had broken down and we were stuck. Fortunately, with a lot of help from all the other drivers, after 3 hours we managed to get it going and crossed the border 10 minutes before it closed. Anyone planning a trip there in the future will be pleased to know the new bridge and border post will be open by April 2004.

In the 18 days in Zambia we saw 329 species and I picked up 38 new birds. Driving is not for the timid. Fuel prices range from US\$0.50-1.00/liter. The following is the distance between our stops. Katima Mulima to Choma 354 km, Choma to Greystone 699 km, Greystone to Hillwood 607 km, Greystone to Mutinondo Wilderness 552 km, Mutinondo to Choma 968 km. In total from Windhoek up to Hillwood and back including running around we totaled 8111 km.

OBSERVATION OF TWO OPEN-BILLED STORK *ANASTOMUS LAMELLIGERUS* ALONG THE NAMIBIAN COAST.

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The 2nd August 2003 at 7am, we arrived at the "Guano Platform" in Walvis Bay to observe the take-off of thousands of Cormorants (Cape, Crowned and Bank) that had been roosting on the platform for the night. As we scanned the beach for shorebirds we came across two dark shorebirds sleeping in the middle of a group of White-breasted and Cape Cormorants.

Their identity was soon revealed when one of them lifted its head and after a while started walking. There was no room for doubt...yet plenty for surprise!! At this distance the birds looked very similar in size to White-breasted Cormorants, their body was uniformly dark brown, they had a long neck, dark legs, and a massive long dark bill. We didn't see any opening in the bill, but this

may have been due to the safe distance we kept (400m) or maybe because they may have been young dispersing birds.

Searching the literature (Sinclair *et al.* 2002, del Hoya *et al.* 1992), it seems that the bird is rare south of its breeding range and is more likely to hang around its preferred habitat, fresh water. But in McLachlan & Liversidge (1978), I read about "a single record from Swakopmund".

I hope this record is of any use to the local bird-watching community. For any further information needed on the sighting please contact me. I would like to thank Christian Boix for editing and submitting this record.

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