

## CONTENTS

VOLUME 38 (1) 2005

OSBORNE, T.O. Editorial .....	1
CUNNINGHAM, P. African Palm Swift distribution .....	2
SWANEPOEL, W. Cape Eagle Owl near Kunene River .....	3
BROWN, C.J. High density of Dusky Sunbirds in ephemeral river course in the Namib .....	4
LAKAY, A. & CUNNINGHAM, P.L. A dietary study of the Bank Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i> ) at Ichaboe and Mercury Islands .....	6
KOLBERG, H. Summary of the 2003 ringing year in Namibia .....	11
CUNNINGHAM, P. African Green Pigeon distribution .....	16
TREE, A.J. Black Skimmer at Walvis Bay .....	17
BIRD OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES .....	20

## Editorial

A new year has rolled around and at least we have enough material for an issue of our journal the *Lanioturdus*.

After good rains in October and November we then had a very long dry spell until the first week of January. More good rain then with up to 100 mm at some places but another dry spell into February. The poor birds have had their share this season of starts and stops as far as breeding has been going. The masked weavers have built nests but then they sit and wait for the females who are not quite in the mood. Wait until the next rain!

During the festive season we went to Alaska to see our children and grandchildren. We mainly stayed in the city of Anchorage where the weather was a bit like here with the starts and stops to winter. Instead of just being winter the weather brought freezing temperatures with snow and then it would warm up above freezing and rain. Watching the Bohemian Waxwings (family: *Bombycillidae*) they would huddle in the hundreds during the cold but then when it warmed up descend on the crab apples and other shrubs with berries and eat the defrosted fruit.

Once again I appeal to all members to help the club. If you want to keep the club viable you must also do your part and try and get new members to join.

## African Green Pigeon distribution

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On a recent trip (late August 2004) to the Kunene Region in far northwestern Namibia I observed Green Pigeons (*Treron calva*) feeding in wild fig trees (*Ficus sycomorus* and *Ficus cordata*) at Otjapitjapi between Sesfontein and Opowo.

According to Maclean (2001) Green Pigeons are absent from the arid western regions of Namibia. However, Tarboton's (2001) distribution map for the species includes the far northwestern corner of Namibia. Green Pigeon diet is confirmed as fruit – mainly figs – something also confirmed by the local villagers at Otjapitjapi. According to them the pigeons migrate into the area during the *Ficus* fruiting season. The fruiting season for the *Ficus* species is between September to February for *F. cordata* and July to December for *F. sycomorus* (Coates Palgrave 1983). *F. sycomorus* fruits are even utilised by humans (Van Wyk & Van Wyk 1997).

The main breeding season for these pigeons is documented as between August and January (Maclean 2001) and October to April (mainly November to December) (Tarboton 2001). How this source of "westerly" figs affects or influences the distribution, migratory patterns and breeding season in Namibia is open for speculation.

## References

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## Black Skimmer at Walvis Bay

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While setting up mist-nets on the tidal flats at Meersig, Walvis Bay (2258S 1429E) in the late afternoon of 24 February 1998 I noticed a skimmer sitting amongst a flock of Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. Mist nets were unceremoniously dumped as I reached for my binoculars. After watching the bird for a short time and taking a brief field description I assumed the bird to be an African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris* although was puzzled by certain features and when walking back to the embankment to call Keith Wearne (who was waiting for me there) something niggled at the back of my mind that all was not right. By the time Keith reached the spot the birds had flown. Remembering the record from the Cunene submitted by Joris Komen to the Namibian Rarities Committee some years earlier, and subsequently sent to the South African Rarities Committee for comment, I thought "was this possibly a Black Skimmer"? Our comments on the earlier record were that we thought that it was likely to be a Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* but no-one was prepared to put their heads on the block and say that it definitely was that species as the field description was not detailed enough. Our comments on this record were returned to the Namibian Rarities Committee who decided to leave the bird as a 'possible'. Unfortunately all trace of this submission was subsequently lost.

The morning following my Walvis Bay sighting, after a successful night wader netting when I also caught a European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, I phoned Peter Kaistner in Windhoek who was very familiar with this bird in North America. He came down with Chris Hines on the 28<sup>th</sup> and after searching for the bird they retired to the Raft for a beer. Whilst sitting there the skimmer flew past very close affording only a quick view the most important of which was that of the tail, which I had not viewed well in the short time that I saw the bird in flight. Peter agreed that he thought the bird to be a Black Skimmer. On returning to South Africa I tried to dig up as much as I could on this species, especially on the immature plumage, and found the available literature sadly lacking in detail and it was only in 2003 that I discovered and managed to obtain