

CONTENTS

VOLUME 38 (2) 2005

| | |
|---|---------|
| OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial | 1 |
| SWANEPOEL, W. White-throated Canary <i>Serinus albogularis</i> unusual behaviour | 2 |
| STEYN, P. & MARTIN, R. Booted Eagle Enigmas | 3 - 4 |
| SWANEPOEL, W. African Mourning Dove <i>Streptopelia</i> <i>decipiens</i> range extension and habitat requirements | 5 - 6 |
| KOMEN, J. Is the Black Skimmer at Walvis Bay another "rarities" record destined to obscurity? | 6 - 8 |
| BOIX-HINZEN, C., FULTON, I., ANDERSON, J. & ASPINAL, T. Thick-billed Cuckoo at Shakawe Fishing Lodge, Botswana | 8 - 10 |
| BOORMAN, M. First record of Lesser Crested Tern for Namibia | 10 - 12 |
| SIVHUTE, V., CUNNINGHAM, P.L., ADANK, W. & ALBERTS, A. Wattled Crane <i>Grus carunculata</i> numbers, habitat use and diet in Bushmanland | 13 - 19 |
| SWANEPOEL, W. Birds on the move : range extensions and vagrants in western, central and southern Namibia 1994–2005 | 19 - 24 |

Editorial

This issue of the *Lanioturdus* would have been rather skinny had it not been for Wessel Swanepoel's numerous contributions. The editor is still waiting for the Chairman's annual report delivered to the March 2005 AGM and any trip reports from members on outings.

Peter Steyn and Rob Martin report on the puzzle of Namibia's Booted Eagles. Here is a species that used to be difficult to identify thus adding to the confusion but recent advances in field guides should help even novice birders identify this species. Surely the bird is a more common breeder than we think, people just have to scan likely breeding rocks, kloofs and canyons. Perhaps we can solve the mystery.

New birds have been reported for the country so it is good to see that birders have been active even though it is the dry season. There are two articles on rarities within the country and one from our neighbour, Botswana.

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

The enigmas involve the Waterberg records of Booted Eagles which laid in mid-winter (June) at a completely different time to those in South Africa which, at that stage, would have moved northwards to Namibia where they would presumably overlap with those breeding in the Waterberg.

The enigmas are now further compounded by Gordon Scholtz's record of a Booted Eagle at a nest in southern Namibia in December. Although the contents of the nest were not known, the Brukkaros record suggests nesting that coincides with the South African laying season in the second half of September where breeding evidence extends to the Orange River at Augrabies Falls and into the Richtersveld. Significantly, there is even one record (Anderson *et al.* 1995) north of the Orange River near Griekwastat with eggs at the end of September, and this record is not a great deal further south than that at Brukkaros.

Dr Rob Simmons, formerly State Ornithologist for Namibia, who kindly commented on our first draft of this note, informs us that nesting at Brukkaros had been suspected but not confirmed. He also suggests that breeding further north at Spitzkoppe and in the Erongo Mountains in suitable habitat seems very likely as pairs have been seen there in November/December at a time when South African birds would not yet have moved northwards. Thus it appears on the evidence available that the isolated records of breeding in mid-winter in the Waterberg are at variance with the probable nesting season elsewhere in Namibia. Visitors to Namibia would do well to publish their observations on Booted Eagles, especially suspected breeding, and thus help to make them less enigmatic.

Literature Cited

- Boshoff, A.F. & Allan, D.G. 1997. Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*. in The Atlas of Southern African Birds. Vol. 1: Non-passerines. Harrison, J.A., Allan, D.G., Underhill, L.G., Herremans, M., Tree, A.J., Parker, V. & Brown, C.J. (eds) pp.184-185. Birdlife South Africa, Johannesburg.
- Anderson, M.D., Maritz, A.W.A. & Anderson, P.C. 1995. Booted Eagles breeding north of the Orange River, South Africa. *Journal of Raptor Biology* 10(1): 28-29.
- Simmons, R.E. & Brown, C.J. 2005. Birds to watch in Namibia: red, rare and endemic species. National Biodiversity Programme. Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Windhoek.
- Steyn, P. 1982. The birds of prey of Southern Africa. David Philip, Cape Town.
- Steyn, P. & Grobler, J.H. 1985. Supplementary observations on the breeding biology of the Booted Eagle in Southern Africa. *Ostrich* 56:151-156.

African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* range extension and habitat requirements

Wessel Swanepoel
P.O. Box 21168, Windhoek, Namibia
monteiro@iway.na

In Namibia, the Afrotropical African Morning Dove occurs in the far north, where it is found in the area bordering Angola, Zambia and Botswana. It inhabits riparian woodland, cultivated land and villages (Maclean 1993) and is localized due to these particular habitat requirements. The atlas of southern African birds (Colahan 1997) indicates its distribution to extend as far south as the Hoanib River in the Sesfontein area (1913BD) in the arid north-west.

However, I found African Mourning Dove on four out of eight visits to the lower Ugab River, another major ephemeral river further to the south. All these records were from the period autumn to early winter, in June 2000, May 2003, April 2005 and May 2005. The birds were detected by their highly distinctive vocalisations after which good views were also obtained. At least two birds were present on the first three occasions while three birds were found in May 2005. The precise locality is at the foot of the Brandberg massif at Alpha (21° 01.05' S; 14° 38.78' E), approximately 210 km SSE of the southernmost record of the bird atlas project, on the Hoanib River.

The habitat at the Alpha locality consists of riparian woodland (mainly tall Ana Trees *Faidherbia albida* and thickets of Wild Tamarix *Tamarix usneoides*) at a marshy section of river, with permanent surface water. Similar habitat is also to be found at certain localities along the Hoanib and Hoarusib Rivers further to the north, where the African Mourning Dove is regularly recorded. From these observations it seems that in the arid north-west, the African Mourning Dove requires in addition to riparian woodland with tall trees (especially *Faidherbia albida*), also the presence of open water. Its preference to particularly *Faidherbia albida* is also mentioned for other parts of its range in southern Africa (Colahan 1997).

In order to ascertain the status of the species at Alpha, the specific locality was also visited in June 2001, June 2002, November 2003 and August 2004. Although no birds were found during any one of these brief visits, its presence at the time at other suitable localities on the Ugab River cannot be ruled out. The birds were recorded on several occasions over a relatively long period and that numbers are apparently on the increase, indicate a range extension and not merely vagrancy. Likely scenarios are that the Alpha birds either present a small resident population along the Ugab River or a seasonal north-south movement during the latter part of the rainy season.

The African Mourning Dove may be more widespread in the arid north-west than the current published records suggest. The preferred habitat of African Mourning Dove exists at various localities along the Huab River to the north and the Omaruru River to the south of the Ugab. As such it may prove to be worthwhile to search for this species along these rivers.

References

- Colahan, B.D. 1997. African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*. In: The atlas of southern African birds. Vol. 1: Non-passerines. Harrison J.A., Allan D.G., Underhill L.G., Herremans M., Tree A.J., Parker V. & Brown C.J. (eds), pp 508 & 509. Birdlife South Africa, Johannesburg.
- Maclean, G.L. 1993. Roberts' birds of southern Africa. 6th ed. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.

Is the Black Skimmer at Walvis Bay another "rarities" record destined to obscurity?

Joris Komen
Director, Schoolnet Namibia
<http://www.schoolnet.na>

I was pleased to read that not all my rejected sight records of rarities over the 18 years I spent as curator of birds at the National Museum of Namibia have faded into obscurity, or gone altogether unnoticed <grin>!

A. J. Tree's four-page descriptive article of a sighting of a Black Skimmer at Walvis Bay in *Lanioturdus* 38(1) 2005 refers.

A correction is appropriate given the very surprising fact that the Rarities Committee of the then day failed to keep my rare bird sighting submission on file for future review ain't that a shame?! If my memory serves me well, I recall having sent a fuzzy slide of the bird in flight as part of my submission to the then Rarities Committee – I believe that Tony Tree was a member of this committee at the time?

The Black Skimmer Liz and I spent considerable time watching at the RUNDU Sewage Works near the Okavango river (NOT CUNENE!) on Christmas Day so many years ago remains crystal clear in my mind's eye for simple reason that I decided (against my better academic judgment) to not blow it away and obtain the first specimen of this species in Africa for the National Museum collection, for two reasons. 1. Liz would have been pissed off with me killing the bird in her company on an otherwise very peaceful Christmas Day, and 2. I would have had to recover the specimen by wallowing in shoulder-deep scheit.

This incident, and the subsequent debates about it, the long-legged buzzard we recorded further down the road (I seem to recall that record "was" accepted by the rarities committee of the then day:-), and the numerous European Reed Warblers we caught and ringed (and even collected) during this time in Kavango region, had been the source of much amusement, ridicule and even hot dispute in the bird circles (and journals) of that time.

I learned an important lesson by these experiences - as rightly pointed out to me by John Mendelsohn at the time - "What's hit is history; what's missed is mystery". Apparently Clancey was fond of saying this, but John can correct me on this one. The subsequent (very) determined blowing away (under permit) of a couple of Royal Terns (also hotly disputed sight records of that time!) at the Cunene River mouth comes to mind. These Royal Tern specimens aptly served as the subject of my very last academic contributions published in a memorial edition (in honour of Richard Brooke?) of *Ostrich* by Peter Ryan and company... some years ago. (Peter Ryan should be able to give you the correct citation on this scientific publication, Tim - I don't recall receiving reprints of this paper). But then I was already well on my way out of the esoteric circle of Bostonian corvids and their ilk <grin> and pushing back ICT frontiers in disadvantaged schools in Namibia.