

CONTENTS

VOLUME 36 (4) 2003

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial	1
THERON, T. CUNNINGHAM, P. & E. SIMATAA. Notes on the breeding of White Pelicans <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i> at Hardap Dam, Namibia.	2
CUNNINGHAM, P., ADANK, W., MULISA, C. & B. SIMATAA. The diet of Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i> from the Otjivasando area, Etosha National Park	7
DEMASIUS, E. Damara Terns and the upcoming holiday season ..	12
DEMASIUS, E. Fourth Gray's Lark Ringed in Namibia	15
DEMASIUS, E. Another nest in the road	19
BIRD OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES	22
ERRATUM	24

Editorial

Another year is about over and we have produced four issues of the *Lanioturdus*. The Namibia Bird Club would like to thank all those who contributed. Your articles are what keep the club informed and active. As you read the articles you will see that some people were prompted to write because of an article they had read in the journal. It either confirmed an observation they had made or pointed out the rarity of such observations. That is the reason the journal is published to inform readers about club activities and to stimulate members to report on their observations. I am still waiting for the Chairman's annual report as given at the Annual General Meeting in March 2003. Regretably no reports of club outings in 2003 have been submitted. Perhaps if the club would undertake outings to the remote and exotic areas of Namibia participants would be impressed enough to share the results.

Once again it is the time of the year when everyone is wishfully looking into the sky for clouds that can build up into something bigger to convert the parched landscape into green vistas. The Red-crested Korhaans are calling but whether they breed or not will depend on the amount of rain. Last season they called but no breeding took place in northern Namibia. As of late November there have been reports of rain but not in all regions.

Once again I appeal to all members to try and sign up a friend as a member of the Namibia Bird Club. It would be nice to see the club membership double this year.

The measurements of the nest are as follows, inner diameter = 56 mm and depth = 75 mm, which compares well with the information given (Keith *et al.* 1992). The egg had the following dimensions: 21,0 mm x 15,6 mm, which falls within the average egg size reported of 21,2 mm x 15,3 mm (n=21) in the same publication.

The literature refers to the period between March and July as the main breeding period, with opportunistic occurrences in any month in response to rain, as well as exceptional records in September and January respectively. As we had no occurrence of rain at the coast during this period, this record would fall in the latter category.

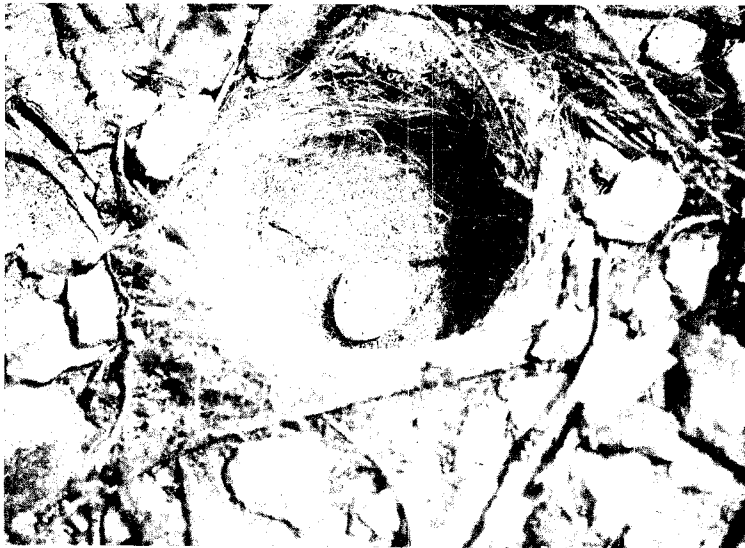


Figure 3.
The unhatched
egg in the nest.

References:

- Boix-Hinzen, C. & M. Boorman. 2003. Helping behaviour in Gray's Lark *Ammomanes grayi*. *Lanioturdus* 36(3):2-3.
- Keith S, Urban E. K and Fry C. H (ed's). 1992. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol 4, Academic Press Limited, Inc, London.
- Tarboton, W. 2001. *A Guide to the Nests and Eggs of Southern African Birds*. Struik Publishers (Pty) Ltd, Cape Town

Another Nest in the Road

Eckart Demasius
P O Box 1413, Swakopmund, Namibia
e-b.de@iway.na

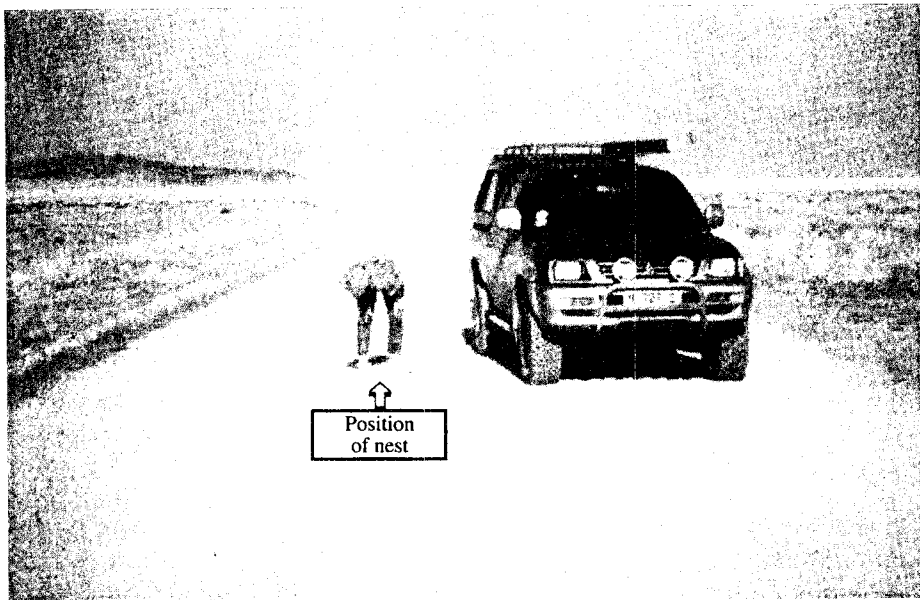
The article in the latest *Lanioturdus*, 36 (3), 2003, on the helping behaviour in Gray's Lark made me aware of how seldom nests of these birds are seen in the veld and it persuaded me to share an experience me and my wife had some two years ago.

We were on a leisurely bird watching and "sunsoaking" trip on our way towards Ganab. We enjoyed the heat, as only we coastal folk can appreciate it after weeks of cold and misty weather at the coast. I was cruising at a slow speed, the windows open, the arm out of the window to enable me to have a view simultaneously out of my side window and the front screen.

Shortly after entering the turn-off from the C14 east of Walvis Bay towards Ganab, the bakkie comfortably tugged in under my right arm, a Gray's Lark flew off in front of us from the middle of the road. Nothing unusual, but as we crossed the spot the lark flew off, I noticed in a glimpse something unusual, similar to when unexpectedly seeing a coin in the street. We reversed back and went to investigate and to our utmost surprise and astonishment found a nest of the lark in the middle of the road in the intervening space *middelmannetjie* of the vehicle tracks on the gravel road.

We decided not to stay too long so as not to draw unnecessary attention or cause too much disturbance and stress to the Gray's Lark.

After driving off for a short distance, we decided to look back to see whether anyone would or could notice the nest. However, only when one was aware of the existence of the nest one would possibly notice it, as the photo below indicates. Once we were in Swakopmund I phoned Rod Braby requesting him to arrange not to grade the road for some time because of the nest, which I trust was done.



The photo above shows my wife, Birgit, looking at the cup-shaped nest, thickly lined with fine grass, in which only one egg was lying.

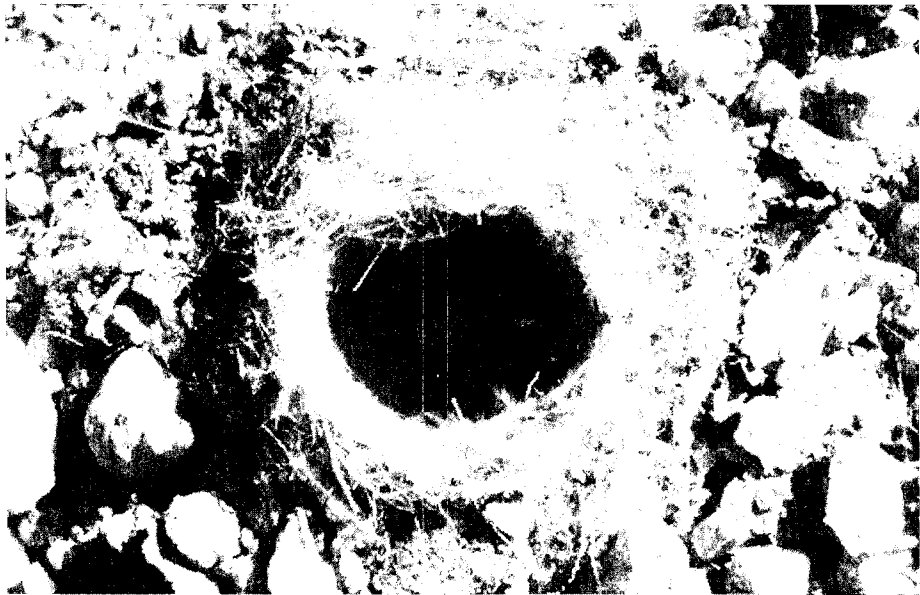


Figure 3: The unhatched egg in the nest

The question arises why the lark decided to have its nest at that spot? Would it be because the surrounding area was very hard and only the intervening space between the tracks on the road had suitably loose gravel that could be used to build the cup-shaped nest?

