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The first six months of this year have been agonizing for the Committee of the Club — we had taken the Club out from under the wing of the Namibia Scientific Society and now the question arose as to whether it was the right decision. The fundamental changes that were decided upon were fairly simple. Firstly we had to take control of our own administration, secondly we had to get more information out to members on a regular basis (i.e. get *Lanioturdus* out regularly) and we had to put a cohesive programme of events and outings together.

When we sent out our early appeal for members to indicate whether they were interested in joining the "new" Club we were a little concerned that only 80 or so people responded — we had "lost" nearly 50 members overnight!! This gave us some food for thought, but it was decided we needed to go ahead with the changes as these were designed to make the Club more appealing. Happily, we think we made the right decision. Membership is up to where we were before the changes, we have a broader membership base (with a good representation on the coast and in the country districts) and more people are signing up every month.

Our programme of events seems to be hitting the right spot as well. We are averaging about 20 people per outing, with some reaching the unbelievable level of over 50!! The evening lectures are also being well attended and it is gratifying to see new people coming to these activities.

Lastly, it seems that *Lanioturdus* may be taking off as well. Articles and information seem to be coming in at a steady pace and we were able to put this copy together with the minimum of begging for material. Many thanks to Coleen Mannheimer for her artwork! I think it is the first copy for a long time with minimal inputs from professional ornithologists!!

Many thanks to all of you who have supported us through this period of change. Much still remains to be done (most importantly we need to appeal to younger members) and we depend on you, the Club members, for support and guidance in the future. Lets keep on hearing from you.

In terms of the Namibia Bird Club Constitution, the Committee may grant an Honorary Life Membership to an individual who has given outstanding service to the Club.

At the 1997 AGM Dieter Ludwig was proposed and accepted as our first Honorary Member in recognition of all his hard work and involvement in the Namibia Bird Club and its predecessor, the *Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe*. Dieter has been active in all aspects of the Club since 1967, acting as its ringing co-ordinator, committee member, outing leader, but most importantly it's Chairman — even through the dark days of a few years ago when little was going right with the Club. Through his efforts, the Club is where it is today.

H. Dedekind



WHILE THERE IS "NOTHING" AT THE WATERHOLE

Jeremy Duffield-Harding
PO Box 30452 Windhoek

I am sure you will have noticed how a birder's intense and engrossed actions at Etosha's waterholes are generally viewed with great confusion by other visitors. African Hawk Eagle, Bateleur, Spotted Eagle Owl, Secretarybird, Kori Bustard, even Slender Mongoose and Black Mamba all slip by undetected to the usual declaration, "there's nothing here!".

While at Salvadora (in Etosha) at the beginning of May, some foreign tourists stopped next to our combie and asked what I was looking at. I replied with excitement, "Two Blue Cranes", a confused reply, "What!". My wife said, "Two birds", "Oh, no lions!"

I was pleased that someone at Nature Conservation had the sense of humour to put up a board at Okaukeujo's waterhole reading, "while there is "nothing" at the waterhole". It identifies the birds and mammals under five tons and without manes!

BARBETS AND HONEYGUIDES

Hartwig Dedekind
PO Box 9279, Windhoek

A few years ago, I was given a sisal trunk about 1 000 mm long, with a shallow hole, about 50 mm in diameter, drilled near one end — a "do-it-yourself" nestbox for woodpeckers or barbets.

Early in the next spring, the trunk was installed about 1.6 m above ground level in a Candle Acacia, *Acacia hebeclada*, regularly visited by barbets and woodpeckers, 20 m away from my front door. Within a few days, there were indications that further excavation of the pre-drilled hole had started. To my disappointment, this stopped after the soft pulp had been excavated only to a depth of about 80 mm.

During the next winter, I started to provide a suet made by lightly frying butchers' sawdust in lard and placing it in plastic containers in a fork of the *A.hebeclada* tree. This food was readily accepted by barbets, sparrows, starlings and even weavers.

When spring came, I was delighted to see that excavation of the cavity had resumed, and soon afterwards it became evident that a pair of Pied Barbets *Tricholaema leucomelas* were resident and breeding. In the course of the 1996/97 summer, at least three broods were raised in the same nest cavity — whether by the same pair of barbets was not clear. Generally, the adults did not spend much time waiting near the nest when bringing food to the nest during the incubation/brooding period before disappearing into the cavity, and would emerge and disappear after a short while. It was not possible to determine whether the bird was bringing food to its incubating mate or to feed its young. Only on one occasion could faint cheeping noises be heard from the nest during my infrequent closer approaches to the site.

On Saturday, 19 April 1997, I noticed a bird sitting inside the cavity, looking out. On closer inspection, it became apparent that this was not a juvenile barbet, but an olive-green honeyguide with a slightly streaked

breast and darkish bill with a lighter base to the lower mandible. This I immediately recognised as a Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*. The barbets were observed feeding the young parasite once — when the adult bird approached the nest, the usurper disappeared back into the cavity, followed by its foster parent, which reappeared and flew off a few seconds later.

On Sunday morning, I made a point of spending some time observing the nest. The young honeyguide sat at the entrance for a while, then emerged and suddenly flew off before I could observe it closer. It was not seen in the vicinity of the nest afterwards. According to *Birds of Africa, Vol III*, this is typical of the species, where the young do not return to their nesting site to roost, in contrast to the Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* which remains in the nest vicinity and is fed by its foster parents for about a week after fledging.

What makes this observation particularly interesting is the time of year: according to *Birds of Africa* and *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa*, the nestling period of this species is about 38 days, with an incubation period of 12 to 17 days. This means that the egg was laid sometime late in February, which would appear to be fairly late when compared to the currently available data, which suggests that breeding ceases towards the end of January or early February.

Pied Barbets may breed as late as April, and have an incubation period slightly longer than the Lesser Honeyguide, which enables the young parasite to kill its younger and weaker host nestmates soon after hatching.

BARTVÖGEL UND HONIGANZEIGER

Am 20. April dieses Jahres wurde beobachtet, wie ein junger Kleiner Honiganzeiger Indicator minor den Nistplatz zweier Rotstirnbartvögel Tricholaema leucomelas verlies, den sie am vorigen Tag noch fütterten. Bemerkenswert an dieser Beobachtung ist, dass der Kleiner Honiganzeiger angeblich nur bis Ende Januar oder Mitte Februar paart: mit etwa 15 Tagen Brutzeit und circa 38 Tagen Nistzeit heisst es, dass dieses Ei, aus dem der beobachtete Honiganzeiger schlüpfte, erst Ende Februar gelegt worden sein kann.

VOGELWELT AUF TSUTSAB

Gunther Friedrich
PO Box 207, Grootfontein

An einem Sonntagmittag sitzen wir hier, an einem Posten, auf meiner Farm im nördlichen Tsumeb Distrikt. Vor uns das Überlaufwasser aus dem Bassin, ein kommen und fliegen von Vögeln. Vielleicht lässt sich heute was Neues finden.

Wir haben heute mal wieder die Stellung gewechselt. Die letzten Monate haben wir uns nur auf das Fley konzentriert. Dieses Fley, Grösse ca. 40 ha., hat im Dezember letzten Jahres endlich nach gutem Regen wieder Wasser erhalten. Durch die grosse Oberfläche hält das Wasser nie lange, trocknet gegen Ende Mai bis Mitte Juni aus, aber wir werden durch eine reichhaltige Vogelwelt verwöhnt. Das Fley ist eine grosse, offene Steinfläche mit dichtem Baum- und Buschbestand ringsum. Die Wassertiefe beträgt an der tiefsten Stelle etwas über einen Meter.

Gleich zu Anfang der Regenzeit, das Wasser war noch am Einlaufen, sahen wir Afrikanische Löffler *Platalea alba*. Ich kann mich entsinnen dass mein Vater, in den 60iger Jahren, von denen sprach. Rotschnabelenten *Anas erythrorhyncha* waren einige da, sowie Höckerenten *Sarkidiornis melanotos*. Selbst die Taucher liessen nicht lange auf sich warten und wir konnten sie als Zwergtaucher *Tachybaptus ruficollis* und Schwarzhalstaucher *Podiceps nigricollis* identifizieren. Es macht schon Spass bei noch flachem Wasser mit Toyota Allrad näher an die Vögel ranzukommen, aber wenn man dann irgendwann hängenbleibt und Mühe hat rauszukommen, besorgt man sich doch lieber ein Paddelboot.

Es war im Boot zwar etwas eng für uns Beide, aber wir bekamen eine viel bessere Perspektive. Man kommt viel näher an die Vögel ran, kann auch Nester untersuchen, was meiner Meinung nach eigentlich ethisch nicht richtig ist. Überall auf dem Fley war das fröhliche Gelächter der Zwergtaucher zu hören. Wir fanden viele belegte Nester. Eine besondere Überraschung war die Zwergrohrdommel *Ixobrychus minutus*, eine erste Ansicht, dazu auch das Nest: vier Eier und ein Junges. Drei bis vier