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Editorial

T. O. Osborne

After the cold winter everyone was predicting a very wet rainy season but as usual weather predictors were as wrong as ever. The farmers in the north are worried about drought but predictably most of the birds were holding off breeding until they saw signs of good rain. The guineafowl are not yet paired up and the kori bustards are just eating what few insects are about maintaining their bodies. It will take lots of rain followed by good growth of the grass before the insect abundance is enough to stimulate breeding.

After a drought of another sort articles and bird notes and observations are finally being sent for publication in the *Lanioturdus*. The club cannot function unless members know what is happening in the various parts of the country. It is the only publication we have which informs members of what has happened at the various outings. Once again I appeal to all members to send in to me your observations and articles. The editions of the journal are getting very thin and it is up to the members to contribute if they want to see the journal continue.

The following raptors were seen. Lappet-faced vultures soaring, one Martial Eagle, Pale Chanting Goshawk and Rock Kestrel. One Peregrine Falcon perched was near a particularly beautiful waterhole in the Achab river, most probably waiting for one of the many Red-billed Quelea visiting the water early in the morning.

Other species identified were Pied Crow wherever we camped, Mountain Chat, Crowned Plover, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Laughing Dove, Namaqua Dove, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Lilac-breasted Roller, Purple Roller, Rock Martin, Fork-tailed Drongo, Red-eyed Bulbul feeding on ripe *Salvadora persica* berries, Ant-eating Chat, Great Sparrow, Golden-breasted Bunting and of course Ostrich and Secretary Bird. Our guide introduced us to some scatology and gave one particularly amusing explanation of the Ostrich dropping, especially when the ostrich had some water. He assured us that it was easily identified by its "romerige" (creamy!) looks and feel.

The weather was most pleasant for hiking and as soon as the heat became unbearable a westerly breeze would cool us down. Only a week before our hike Damaraland experienced the most unpleasant east wind conditions which brought stifling heat.

Damaraland had good and well scattered rains during the 2000-2001 rainy season and therefore wildlife was abundant. It was a most memorable excursion.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS/SHORT NOTES

Herero Chat - *Namibornis herero*

Neil MacLeod (NM) heard a Herero Chat call while playing golf at the Karibib Golf Course on Saturday, 27 October 2001. I visited the area again in the late afternoon on Monday 29 October, but failed to find the bird. I visited the area again on the 30th at about 11:00 am and managed to get good views of the bird which could possibly be nesting in the area.

Cutthroat Finch - *Amadina fasciata*

NM saw a bird drinking at a leaking sprinkler at the Karibib Golf Course.

Marsh Owl - *Asio capensis*

NM saw one bird at the Halali waterhole on 10 December 2001.

Tawny Eagle - *Aquila rapax*

Gunther and Tineka Frederichs (G&TF) went to Roy's Restcamp the weekend 12 Dec 2001 and as we drove there, we saw 2 Tawny Eagles on a dead tree. After looking at them carefully I saw they were a pale form juv. and a streaked form. On the other side of the road was another dark form Tawny. It was 85km from Grootfontein on the Rundu road north of Roy's Camp, just past the farm Taranaki at 19°03'04"S 18°40'28"E.

Kori Bustard - *Ardeotis kori*

G&TF report that since we started birding here on the farm in 1997, we had only three sightings of the Kori Bustard so far on 1818CC. These were all on the southern edge of the square on the farm Don Tsebibi 828, where the habitat is suitable. The adjoining square there is 1918AA where the birds also roam into the farm Kliprand 827. The area is a drainage area with low potential soil, therefore not bush encroached. Trees consist of clutches of Marula *Sclerocarya birrea*, with the rest mostly Purple pod terminalia *Terminalia prunoides*, Birdplum *Berchemia discolor*, Lavender Croton *Croton gratissimus*, Leadwood *Combretum imberbe*, Red bushwillow *Combretum apiculatum*, Black thorn *Acacia mellifera*, Common & Blue-leaved Commiphora *Commiphora pyracanthoides* & *C. glandulosa*, to name the most common ones. There is open veld between all these bushes, making this habitat suitable for Kori.

We have seen the birds so far on the following dates: 29.07.1998, 18.01.2001 and on 01.11.2001. We travel along the road to town only once a week and all the sightings have been in the morning with one bird in flight when we first noticed it. This most recent sighting was within 1918AA.

The present farm owner once told me that he has a few Koris on the farm, but exact numbers are unknown. It has to be investigated if this is a viable population. The bad news is that part of the farm, of which all lies within 1918AA, is in the process of being sold. My guess is that any new owner will see the Kori as a source of nutrition. How long they will be able to survive we can just guess. The good news is that the northern part of the farm which all lies within 1818Cc, is owned by my cousin. Under his ownership the Koris will be safe but try to tell the Koris to stay there!

African Hawk Eagle - *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

We have a resident pair of African Hawk Eagle (AHE) which breed every year in visual proximity of our house, across an agricultural field in a live *Marula Sclerocarya birrea*. For a number of years they successfully raise their chick and we do not get excited about them any more, however we still do observe. They regular perch on a dead Tambotie *Spirostachys africana* from which they observe and probably start their hunting trips.

This Sunday morning, 13th Jan. 2002, I had to get up early, cattle had to be loaded for the factory. By 06h30 I observed two AHE's perched on the tambotie, did not take further notice. Later, sitting in the kitchen, slurping morning coffee and observing all kinds of small passerines drinking, bathing and feeding on the lawn, I noticed a movement on the ground on the agricultural field, near some bushes: our AHE's had something. At first both birds were scurrying around at something, later one bird was plucking at something near a bush while the other one was sitting in the shade of another bush. Got the scope out for a better vision. One bird was feeding, the other was just sitting in the shade. We could not make out what they were feeding on, the distance was too far in the grasses. Taking into consideration the time the one bird was feeding, it could not have been a dove or a francolin, both are readily available. At the moment we do not have Helmeted Guineafowl on the field, although ...

It was clear to us that the mother AHE had caught some prey for her still dependent sub-adult offspring. She had no interest in the food, just sitting there and supervising the proceedings of the chick.

Later, when they both were gone, I went to look what the prey had been. I found the head skin with still one ear of a Scrub hare attached to it, some intestines and a patch of blood. No bones were left.

This confirms the observations previously done on African Hawk Eagle, namely that they also take scrub hares (Ginn, P.J., Mc. Illeron, W.G.; Milstein, P. le S : The Complete Book of Southern African Birds. Text on African Hawk Eagle by W.R. Tarboton.).

On another occasion a few years ago I saw this same pair flying in low to the nest one evening, carrying a Helmeted Guineafowl.

A few steps further I found something else in which the dogs were rolling themselves. It looked to me like faeces, still fresh, probably left there the previous night by a jackal. The specimen consisted of what appeared to me of three parts: grass, a piece of tail of a lizard and some skin with scales on it which once must have been either a Centipede or a Scorpion. I calculate that either one of both meat stuff must have not been compatible with the carnivore and he swallowed some grasses to regurgitate. I left the scene then.

Just as I was coming back, I saw another raptor circling overhead: Yellow-billed Kite. I observed for a while and saw him swooping down to inspect the leftovers of the AHE's. I did not observe and do not know whether the YBK finished the leftovers.