

CONTENTS

VOLUME 32(1), March 1999

EDITORIAL	1
KAESTNER, P.G. A beginners guide to the larks of Namibia: Part Two	3
PAXTON, M. & SHEEHAN, L. January wetland bird count in the Mahango Game Reserve, Kavango	15
BRELL, B. & E. Birding on the Farm Rustig, Kamanjab District.	18
GLÄFKE, S. NBC bird of the quarter	20
NOTICE. News from the Namibia Scientific Society Library	22
BOIX-HINZEN, C. Interesting sightings from Daan Viljoen Game Reserve	24
BOIX-HINZEN, C. & JACOT, A. The counts of Monte Cristo	28
HINES, C. Short Notes	32
KIEKEBUSCH-STEINITZ, B. (Bird) Racing around Windhoek	38



EDITORIAL

Summer has almost come and gone without my noticing it. It has been an odd summer in terms of weather but judging from my discussions with other people, the birding has been excellent this year. The thing I have noticed while putting this edition of *Lanioturdus* together is the really good numbers of rare birds that were seen during these last few months. These records raise the question of what brings these spurts of rarities about.

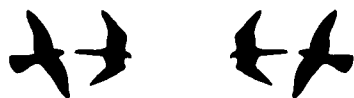
Is it the unusual rainfall and general climatic patterns experienced over much of the subcontinent? Is just that we are getting more reports of rarities because there are a lot more birders out there at the moment? Is it a consequence of the "Patagonia effect" described by Peter Kaestner in a previous edition of *Lanioturdus*. Whatever the situation is, we have had two new birds added to the Namibian list in the last six months. A presumed Pied Flycatcher at the Windhoek Sewerage Works (October 1998) and a Red-throated Pipit in Swakopmund (March 1999). These records may represent interesting biological indicators of broader environmental processes influencing the sub-continent. These records are interesting in themselves but seen against a background of a large number of other rare birds in the same period we have to admit the possibility of large scale climatic (or other) factors influencing their occurrence in Namibia.

So what happens to these records? Currently nothing much!! All records reported to me are put into the Short Notes section and I encourage people to write up their sightings. My feeling is that a tremendous amount of

inland and assumed them to have been counted on the bank previously. Some birds seen previously on the sandbank showed signs of having nests with eggs. With the lack of suitable sandbanks there was an understandable lack of African Skimmers which although present during December were scarce. The rise in the river which was a month earlier than last year and this definitely had an impact on this year's count.

The count was not without other exciting incidences: We saw an adult male Sitatunga, which we even photographed. This was apparently the first confirmed sighting in the past three years for the Park. I also found the drag marks of a lion kill early one morning, and later that day Linda and I followed the spoor some 600 metres into thick bush where two or three lions had dragged a Wildebeest kill to eat in peace. When Sukela was invited to attend she declined the invitation with absolutely no grace and insisted that she was more needed to guard the car. We surprised the lions while still 200 metres from the kill area and they made off with their customary indignation.

(Mark is looking for volunteers for his next count in April – just get your life insurance sorted out!!! – Editor)



BIRDING ON THE FARM RUSTIG, KAMANJAB DISTRICT

Bernd & Erica Brell
P.O. Box 2451, Walvis Bay

We are lucky enough to spend most of our time on the Farm Rustig, north of Kamanjab. Our camp is situated at the base of a dolomite ridge and on our doorstep we have a range of habitats, but most of the farm comprises mopane woodland. At the camp we have several nests of Masked Weaver

and about 150 m away is a nest of a Spotted Dikkop with two eggs at the base of a mopane tree. The nest is a shallow scrape in the ground with little pebbles around it. Since the rainy season started we hear Orange River Francolin calling in the evening and Hartlaub's Francolin in the early morning hours. Rockrunner are very active calling all through the morning and much of the day. There melodious calls are a feature of the soundscape here.

So far we have been able to count 114 species of birds at Rustig including a number of Namibian specials like Rüppel's Parrot, Rockrunner and Violet Woodhoopoe. During the day we have Monteiro's Hornbill, Red-eyed Bulbul, Violet-eared and Black-cheeked Waxbill, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Black-throated Canary and the occasional Carp's Black Tit on our feeder and around our birdbath.

During a recent walk with a birder along a dolomite ridge where the vegetation comprises mostly Carrot Trees, Paperbarks and Acacias, we saw Black-chested Prinia, Swallow-tailed Bee-Eater, Pied and Bare-cheeked Babbler, Rüppel's Parrot, Kalahari Robin and Familiar Chat. We were also lucky enough to see a pair of adult African Hawk Eagles teaching their youngster to fly. Game is also abundant on the farm, with regular sightings of Steenbok, Damara Dik-Dik, Gemsbok, Kudu and smaller creatures like Dassie Rats.

Recently we had a both sad and exciting experience involving the capture and ringing of an immature African Hawk Eagle. Every morning I do a couple of hours of mist netting and a Black Cuckoo got caught on this particular morning. Before I could get to him the African Hawk Eagle attacked getting himself entangled in the nets. Unfortunately the cuckoo was killed.

