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Editorial

The trials of the Namibia Bird Club continue with it mainly being a Windhoek orientated organization. The number of articles submitted to its journal the *Lanioturdus* has withered to almost unacceptable levels. In 2006 only one issue of the *Lanioturdus* was published and here we are half way through 2007 and finally the editor has enough articles to publish what probably will be the only issue of 2007.

There is obviously an interest in birding within Namibia since there are now many subgroups specializing in aspects of birds. There is Raptors Namibia who publish an on line newsletter once a month. The Crane Working Group, Raptor Road Counts, Rare and Endangered Species Trust working on vultures, and the Wetland Bird Counts which enumerate all the wetlands twice per year.

I know that there are birders observing birds because of the rare birds which have been reported to the magazine *Birds and Birding* from Namibia.

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. We are currently down to fewer than 100 members.

Fortunately there is good news and there has been a recent increase in the number of articles submitted and hopefully this trend will continue and we could see another issue published this year.

I hope readers will note the addition to the Namibia list of Ruppell's Vulture. There are probably more juvenile Ruppell's Vultures visiting Namibia than we realize. Observers should keep their eyes open when watching vultures at a kill, you may be able to add a new species to your list. If you do see one of these birds please try to photograph it.

A first breeding attempt since the late 1960's / early 1970's for Grey Heron. The chick we eventually found dead, it had hanged itself in the branches of the tree. One immature African Fish Eagle seen on 05.06.2006, again on 12.07.2006. It was feeding on young freshwater Barbel in the receding water. Last seen on 21.07.2006 when last water was gone. As the water diminishes, more species of waders appear.

Note: We have up until now assumed this vlei covering an area of ± 70 ha. I have made the effort now and walked the edges, close to the high-watermark, which was not always possible due to dense thickets, measuring the distance with a GPS. The calculations result in an area of about 300 ha, of which the smaller, overflow-vlei takes up $\frac{1}{3}$ of the area. Average depth 0,8 m, at the deepest 1,2 m when full.

The last puddle dried up on 21.07.2006, after we've rescued lots of ± 20 cm long freshwater Barbel. Birds still present then were 17 *Cattle Heron*, two *Three-banded Plover* as well as scores of juvenile *Wattled Starling* which were feeding on insects in the still wet soil. Closer to sunset we saw the *African Fish Eagle* perched on a tree.

Reference

Wetland Birds on Tsutsab Vlei, *Lanioturdus* Vol. 34 (3) 2001

Birding weekend on farm Tiefland

Günther & Tineke Friederich
PO Box 207, Grootfontein
Tel. 067 – 232000
bateleur@iway.na

On Friday morning 23.03.2007 we, Tineke (T) & Günther (G), as the sole representatives of the Namibian Bird Club, were having a splendid time on Tiefland. We had an unrestful night in our tent. For yesterday evening's supper we had to move from our open-air kitchen / living / sleeping quarters underneath a *Prosopis* tree into the garage, where we also had to have coffee this morning. The sleeping quarters had to stay, the rest we shifted into an open-plan sort of kitchen. This place was quite smelly; a stench coming from some dried cattle/game skins. Four empty tins of "Ustilan" arboricide and a wooden plank made a nice bench for kitchen utensils. Was that charcoal in this old bucket? A roof overhead, three sides covered, one of them only partially with corrugated roof sheets, the other side open. A beautiful view, nice for birding. But we did not dare leave the shelter, except if we were willing to get wet. Yes – there you have it: it was raining. During the night we had a few light showers. This morning we had just enough time for our morning duties before we were rained down again. Now it was just a case of sitting it out.

We arrived on Tiefland early Wednesday afternoon 21.03.2007, coming from the north, through the Paresis Mountains. A warm welcome from the owner of the farm, Hildegard Becker (H), a committee member of the Club, and her mother: coffee and a chat. This was especially significant for me (G), as my mother had visited this farm frequently in her youth, being friends with Hildegard's parents, the Hofmeister's. While pitching our campsite we noticed all those African Palm Swifts *Cypsiurus parvus*. Maybe unusual for this area but two Makalani palms *Hyphaene petersiana*, about 70 years of age, 20-25 m high, suited them well.

We saw a big white bird coming down to land in the direction of the dam, so we had to have a look at the dam first. Slowly reaching the top of the wall we saw a single White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, which took off again. There was not much

water, but still enough to sustain a number of waterbirds. Two Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, a few Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*. We heard and saw Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* all over the area. Common Greenshank *Tringa totanus* swept the shallows, sometimes chasing Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*. This promised a good start for the days to come.

Early next morning we were awakened by a cacophony of babbling by Violet Wood-hoopoes *Phoeniculus damarensis*. There were six of them, roosting every night underneath the roof of a barn, which was also used by a Barn Owl *Tyto alba*. First thing – the dam. Two black birds, Storks of some kind had come down earlier but they were somewhere else. While T. kept to the dam wall with the spotting scope, I walked the water edge. Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*, Red-billed Francolin *Pternistes adspersus*, Damara Hornbill *Tockus damarensis*, Acacia Pied Barbet *Tricholaema leucomelas*, Bearded Woodpecker *Dendropicos namaquus*, Crimson-breasted Shrike *Laniarius atrococcineus*, Burchell's Starling *Lamprotornis australis*, Shaft-tailed Whydah *Vidua regia*, Black-throated Canary *Serinus atrogularis* and Lark-like Bunting *Emberiza impetuani* were some of the birds we saw or heard. At the water edge in a Buffalo-thorn tree *Ziziphus mucronata* some immature Gabar Goshawk *Melierax gabar* were active. Enough possible prey was available, they even chased around the Plovers & Greenshanks. Tineke recorded the single Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* in the water.

While T. stayed at home the afternoon, I accompanied H. into the veld to do some necessary fence work. Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*, Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii* were seen. There were some species of Larks and other small stuff around on which we had to make an effort on after the easy species had been called onto the records. The Nightjars we saw would not call, so they had to be rounded up for ID. During the night Barn Owl & Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* called.

The rains had stopped later in the morning, so I went on a bird-finding mission while T. concentrated around the homestead and the dam. I eventually found the dry riverbed. What a feast of birds! I could hardly get forward, birds and

-parties all around. That is where my new *Steiner 8 x 42* binoculars were put to the test. Slowly making my way down the riverbed: Pririt Batis female *Batis pririt*, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler *Parisoma subcaeruleum*, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*, Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus* through the undergrowth, a Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus* on a branch, prey in talons, Blue- *Uraeginthus angolensis*, Black-faced- *Estrilda erythronotos* & Violet-eared Waxbill *Granatina granatina*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Southern Pied Babbler *Turdoides bicolor* ... birds everywhere. You could sit close to a flowering Buffalo-thorn tree and have them. After 2 hours I was back at home, congratulating myself on my findings with a cold Windhoek Draught. Those binoculars are really good – close focus, good buy. This riverbed had to have another investigation.

We hung around for the rest of the day. Late afternoon a call came in, we had to meet Ellen Gudde (E) and Gudrun Middendorff (Gu), our Club Chairlady at the turnoff from the main road. So H. & I drove off to meet them, through a wet and slippery road, with some mud holes which had to be negotiated with care. H. decided E. had to leave her clean white little car at the neighbours, the road was too risky. But E. would not have it; she would manage those few mud holes. Through some patches of mud and water later we stopped, I got out to tell E. that this deeper waterhole was OK, firm underground. E. with a disheartened voice: "Does it get worse? You take my car!" and without any further arguments allowed, she joined H. in her Toyota bakkie. We all made it back home safely.

After supper we had a chat in H's kitchen. There I had to solve another crisis – H's fridge wouldn't operate after having been supplied with a full gas cylinder. Spanners were supplied (I had left my toolbox at home); I went down onto the floor with a torch. After checking the jet and getting soot off the burner and out of the chimney, with lots of comments from the onlookers, the appliance started freezing again.

On Saturday morning we all went down to the dam: Speckled Pigeon *Columbo guinea* & Wattled Starling *Creatophota cinerea* besides the other ones already recorded. Then breakfast (why did you take so long, ladies?). Thereafter the riverbed was investigated again thoroughly. Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus*

cubla, a Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*, two Secretary Birds *Sagittarius serpentarius*, African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus* were just some of the specials seen. In a dead *Acacia reficiens* we found a nest, probably of African Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*. We did not see them, but they had been around as H. told us. Three ladies left for home as it was getting hot, Gu. and I checked further. In the far distance we saw some vultures circling. They came closer but still high up, possibly African White-backed *Gyps africanus*. However, there was one amongst them that baffled us. On the underwing it was mostly white like Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis* but with primaries black-tipped and the secondaries less black-tipped, much whiter, tail also black tipped. We could not decide what it was. Then another unknown raptor flashed overhead which we could not ID. They did not hover around to do us the favour. We came upon a dead bird in the riverbed, obviously a Lark of some sort. We checked it out – no decision. It had been dead for some days. We took it back where T. made an effort on it. She identified it as a Stark's Lark *Eremalauda starki*, (but we decided this bird had to go to Windhoek to be identified properly.)

A trip through the farm was scheduled for the afternoon to search for Ludwig's Bustard *Neotis ludwigii* and Courser. To kill some time (some of the ladies were having coffee – again) I went down to the dam to try to find that Swallow or Martin again. Instead I found what I had suspected to be there from during late afternoon. In the short vegetation at the water edge I detected one female Greater Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*. So everybody had to come to the dam once again to have a look at it. H. had not noticed this bird there before. The trip later produced Pearl-breasted Swallow *Hirundo dimidiata*, Temminck's Courser, one Kori Bustard, then three more, then again one, one Swainson's Francolin *Pternistes afer*, lots of Springbok, Oryx, Kudu & Warthog.

Sunday morning was packing-up time but we had been promised a trip to the "Springbok Koppies" before we would leave. On the way H. showed me the only Bottle tree *Pachypodium lealii* on the farm. The koppies – very interesting. A rocky outcrop, some holes and "basins" filled with water from the recent rains. The Bushman engravings of animal tracks were most interesting. We spent some time there, arguing, discussing. I, as usual, wandered off alone without telling anyone where to, in search of unfamiliar plant species. But I found something

else interesting – a small pile of stones, some distance away from other rocks, which could only be a grave. Could this be a grave of a Bushman that had existed there some hundreds of years before? This pile was definitely built there by man as it contained different kinds of rock. Not far away was another ridge which also contained some water. The rock faces, where they have broken apart, showed unusual markings like year-rings on a tree trunk. Somehow these rocks must have been formed in this way – while being in a molten state and cooling? Here we found some more engravings, one of a track of a Chackma baboon. Some of these engravings were very faint, very old. One could only guess the age of these engravings. H. & E. took some photo opportunities. Then we decided the water-filled basins with some contents should make a nice new front cover for *Lanioturdus*. So we called upon the two younger ladies further down to volunteer to come up and pose as a bathing beauty. However T. complained of her sore foot and Gu. suddenly was more interested in a Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* she had disturbed from its daytime roost. Shame.

Having now already spent too much (but still not enough) time at this most interesting place, we went back, packed up and left. A very warm thank you to Hildegard and her mother for the most enjoyable time. You really gave us something special. Thank you to Ellen and Gudrun for joining the party, you were part of the fun. We saw you made it safely back through the mud and I'm relieved that I could not be around to get another friendly request to clean a now not so clean any more white little car. At least it's a Toyota ...

List of birds recorded:

Cattle Egret	Cardinal Woodpecker
White Stork	Bearded Woodpecker
Egyptian Goose	Monotonous Lark
Red-billed Teal	Stark's Lark
Secretary Bird	Pearl-breasted Swallow
White-backed Vulture	Rock Martin
Black-chested Snake Eagle	Fork-tailed Drongo
Little Sparrowhawk	African Golden Oriole
Shikra	Southern Pied Babbler
Gabar Goshawk	African Red-eyed Bulbul

Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk
Red-billed Francolin
Swainson's Francolin
Helmeted Guinea Fowl
Kori Bustard
Red-crested Korhaan
Greater Painted Snipe
Three-banded Plover
Crowned Lapwing
Blacksmith Lapwing
Wood Sandpiper
Common Greenshank
Curlew Sandpiper
Spotted Thick-knee
Temminck's Courser
Namaqua Sandgrouse
Double-banded Sandgrouse
Rock Dove
Cape Turtle-Dove
Laughing Dove
Namaqua Dove
Rüppell's Parrot
Grey Go-away-bird
Barn Owl
Pearl-spotted Owllet
African Palm Swift
Red-faced Mousebird
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater
Lilac-breasted Roller
African Hoopoe
Violet Wood-hoopoe
Common Scimitarbill
Red-billed Hornbill
Damara Hornbill
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Acacia Pied Barbet

Groundscraper Thrush
White-browed Scrub Robin
Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler
Grey-backed Camaroptera
Barred Wren Warbler
Rattling Cisticola
Black-chested Prinia
Spotted Flycatcher
Pririt Batis
Buffy Pipit
Lesser Grey Shrike
Red-backed Shrike
Crimson-breasted Shrike
Black-backed Puffback
Brubru
Southern White-crowned Shrike
Wattled Starling
Burchell's Starling
Cape Glossy Starling
Marico Sunbird
Dusky Sunbird
Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Green-winged Pytlia
Blue Waxbill
Violet-eared Waxbill
Black-faced Waxbill
Red-headed Finch
Shaft-tailed Whydah
Long-tailed Paradise-Whydah
Black-throated Canary
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting
Lark-like Bunting

Summary of the 2005 ringing season in Namibia.

Holger Kolberg
Ministry of Environment and Tourism
Private Bag 13306, Windhoek, Namibia
holgerk@mweb.com.na

The 2005 ringing season ended on 30.06.2006 and the following is a summary of data received by 31.07.2006

Namibian ringers yet again excelled, ringing 16 650 birds of 298 species. Out of this total 15 842 were newly ringed birds, making this the highest total of birds ringed in Namibia in one season ever, easily beating the record set last season. Ursula Franke was the top ringer with over 3 000 birds, followed by Tim Osborne and Dirk Heinrich, both of whom ringed well over 2 500 birds. Dirk was again the top ringer in terms of number of species, followed by Ursula and Steve Braine. Common Tern head the list of species ringed, followed by Red-billed Quelea and Lark-like Bunting. Not surprisingly, Pale Chanting Goshawk head the list of 405 raptors of 33 species ringed, but only two species of vultures were ringed. The list of wetland birds is headed by Common Tern, followed by White Pelican and Black Tern; in total 2 855 birds of 47 species were ringed in this category. Ten out of fifteen Namibian endemic species were ringed (183 birds in total). In terms of localities, Mile 4 just pips the Osborne residence and the Heinrich residence. Birds were ringed at 672 different localities.

Several species specific projects were continued. Mark Boorman's tern ringing at Mile 4 continues to yield interesting data and controls. Rod Braby continued the work on the Damara Terns and for the first time news of controls from outside Namibia (West Africa) was received. Dirk has continued the nest box work in Daan Viljoen with some very interesting results. The pelican ringing at Hardap is in its third season and has already resulted in four amazing recoveries. The vulture ringing in Etosha and Namib-Naukluft was continued despite the lack of colour rings. Several ringers are collecting blood samples for DNA analysis for a global project on bird taxonomy.