



# LANIOTURDUS

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## Editorial

This is now the eleventh edition of Lanioturdus that I have edited. Looking back to Lanioturdus 41 (1), the first I edited, I note that I wrote "I do not see myself as a longterm replacement in this position but rather as someone who will fill the gap until a permanent editor can be found. However, I have the feeling that this statement might well end up in the category of 'famous last words.'" How true that statement has turned out to be! However, I must hasten to add that I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the journal. My first attempt at editing was also our first electronic edition of Lanioturdus and looking through all the electronic issues to date I see that we have come a long way since the early attempts.

The last four issues have been set by Eckart Demasius and I believe that Eckart has done a fine job after initially finding himself up against a rather steep learning curve. Eckart also has a huge library of birding related digital photographs, some of which we have used to illustrate various articles and which have, in my opinion, really enhanced the publication.

I would really like to know what you, the readers, think of Lanioturdus. I have had the odd email commending the journal and initially there were one of two who said they preferred Lanioturdus in the booklet form to the electronic format. Printing and postage costs made the booklet form prohibitively expensive forcing us to change to the electronic format. In this regard we are way ahead of most of the South African bird clubs some of which are now starting to investigate

The Namibia Bird Club celebrates its **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary** in 2012. To celebrate this occasion we are holding a symposium on 30 April and 1 May 2012 in Windhoek. The symposium will be followed by the ringers get-together and a birding excursion to some of Namibia's birding hotspots.

To collect **funding** for the upcoming anniversary we ran the Bio Market coffee shop twice last year and managed to collect a welcome sum of money as Jutta will mention in the treasurer's report. We plan to do the same this year and want to thank all our donors for the generous gifts.

We have sent out a **survey** on various issues to test the general feeling and most respondents like the Sunday outings and are prepared to travel for more than 100km. Should we plan a trip to Antarctica? Thanks to all of you who filled out the survey and returned it. We had some valid feedback which enables us to expand on the current program.

Finally I want to thank our members for their continued support not only in the form of their subscriptions but also for participating in the various activities. Sincere gratitude goes to the committee members for their effort, time and good spirit. Finally I want to thank the Scientific Society and staff for the excellent co-operation and partnership.

Thank you all for your attention.

### **Blue Crane Report: December 2010**

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My wife and I arrived at Namutoni for our annual wellness retreat in Etosha on 26 December. She always does the paper work in the office so that she can also study the big book of sightings recorded.

She was queuing behind an English speaking gentleman in a wheelchair who tried to pass on some information on ringed Blue Cranes to the lady behind the counter, but the lady was not in the least interested. So much for the staff of Namibia Wildlife Resorts!!

My wife gratefully accepted the information offered; it was the recorded sighting of two Blue Cranes at Charitsaub. Both cranes were ringed and the following information was obtained from the gentleman: Green ring on left leg, inscription on ring: NHF. Green ring on right leg (of second crane), inscription on ring: HHN. Furthermore he also reported having seen two Blue Cranes at Salvadora.

We commenced our tour through Etosha with a visit to Fischer's Pan. It was full of water and plenty of birds were present. One Blue Crane was seen at a pool of water at the Pan's Edge road turn off. We could not detect any ring on the bird.



The previous year we saw a pair of Blue Cranes on the plains around Chudop and our expectations were met once again. At the culvert some 200 metres beyond the turn off to Chudop on the main road to Halali we met the next pair right next to the road. Neither crane was ringed.



Our destination was Halali and at Springbokfontein we recorded the next pair of Blue Cranes: both birds were unringed.



We made good progress to Halali and so we decided to move on to check on the reported cranes at Salvadora. We found the two cranes at the waterhole, one was incubating and the second was searching for food around waterhole. The latter bird was also ringed. This was not reported by the English gentleman.



We then drove on to Charitsaub where the ringed pair had been reported and indeed both ringed cranes were present at the shallow waterhole.



So, on the first day of our Etosha visit we recorded nine Blue Cranes, three of which were ringed birds!!!

The next day we spent around Halali and the cranes reported the previous day were all seen again.



The incubating crane at Salvadora



Pair of cranes at Charitsaub

On 28 December we visited the area around Namutoni but on our way there we did not see the cranes at Springbokfontein.

The Chudop cranes were feeding on the plains towards the water hole.



On our way to Twee Palms we saw three more Blue Cranes, possibly parents with a juvenile bird. This was difficult to distinguish as they were not as close to the car as the other birds. None of the three birds was ringed.



On our way back to Halali we met up with the Chudop pair at the culvert again. They crossed the road in front of us...



... and went on feeding quite unperturbed next to the road. It was good to see how many cars stopped and watched the cranes, as if they were lions!!!



On 29 December we moved on to Okaukuejo and we experienced some incredible rains on the way to our new destination. Shortly before Rietfontein we saw a new Blue Crane, also unringed.



We popped in at Salvadoria; the two cranes were there, both taking a rest from the incubation duties and then the rain caught up with us again.



The Charitsaub cranes were not at their water hole when we passed there.

No further cranes were seen by us over the next two days around Okaukuejo.

Note : Unless otherwise stated all photographs in this report by Eckart Demasius

### Addendum by Richard Niddrie

The by now abundant rains and cool weather certainly aided the sighting of cranes. New Year's Eve produced the perfect ending to 2010 when Christiane Maluche and Richard Niddrie sighted the Chudop pair in the morning and, in the late afternoon, a flock of 10 Blue Cranes 10 km west of Aroe. We could not see whether any of the cranes were ringed. This was the first time that I had seen so many cranes together. It was a truly awesome sight with the heavy clouds and Fischer's Pan in the background providing the perfect setting. Only after absorbing this spectacle could the photographing commence.



Photo: Richard Niddrie

On 2 January the same Chudop cranes were sighted and in the evening the Salavadora pair. On the way back to Halali a lone Blue Crane was seen patrolling the main road 10 km east from Rietfontein.

A minimum of 19 possibly 20 confirmed sightings of Blue Cranes in the space of eight days must surely give hope for the future of Etosha's Blue Crane population.

### Who were the People after whom some of our Bird Species are named? (Part 2 : Abdim's Stork to Franklin's Gull)

Neil Thomson

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**Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii* (Lichtenstein 1823) Named after Bey el-Arnaut Abdim (sometimes given as El Arnaut Abdim Bey) (circa 1780-1827), the governor of the Wadi Halfa area of the Sudan. Carnaby gives his nationality as Egyptian while Clinning describes him as Turkish. Abdim assisted Eduard Rüppell during the latter's expedition to north east Africa.

**African Black Oystercatcher** *Haematopus moquini* (Bonaparte 1856) Named after Horace Benedict Alfred Moquin-Tandon (1804-1863), a French botanist and director of the botanical garden at Toulouse (although a qualified medical doctor). He published a number of ornithological papers including one on the birds of the Canary Islands where a black oystercatcher (now extinct) occurred.

**African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis* (Smith 1839) Named after Sir Andrew Smith (1797-1872), a Scottish army surgeon and zoologist who came to the Cape as surgeon to the Cape Mounted Rifles circa 1821. Smith persuaded the governor of the Cape, Lord Charles Somerset, to establish a natural history museum at the Cape and Smith was appointed the first superintendent in 1825. Smith undertook expeditions to the interior in the course of which many specimens were collected. (Smith's post at the museum was temporarily filled by Jules Verreaux when Smith was away on these expeditions). He described 79 southern African bird species and published "Illustrations of Zoology in South Africa" in five volumes. Some time after leaving South Africa Smith was in charge of medical services in the Crimea during the war but was unjustly accused of mismanagement probably because he fought with Florence Nightingale. Despite this he was knighted in 1859. Smith became a recluse after the death of his wife in 1864.