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## Editorial

Another hot dry season is upon us and birding is slow as we await the rains. Soon, however, the palearctic and intra-African migrants will arrive to increase the numbers of species. Our drab non-breeding local birds will get dressed up for the ladies and identification of most of the weavers, bishops and whydahs will be a lot easier. Unfortunately, the bird guides usually only illustrate these birds in breeding dress. In Namibia we only see them dressed up for 3-5 months of the year and identification is often frustrating.

Recently I caught non-breeding Shaft-tailed Whydahs in my mist net for ringing. After consulting all the reference books I found it is impossible to sex any of the birds. either in the hand or in the field. It would most helpful if members who know of any special aids or resources for identifying Shaft-tailed Whydahs would publish that information in the *Lanioturdus* for all of us. Another bird I have been trying to sex in the non-breeding season is the Chestnut Weaver. In the hand there is no problem since the male has a larger wing length and is heavier, but free-flying in a tree then identification becomes difficult.

The new Roberts VII will be about 1200 pages and will be out in April 2005 at a cost of R799. It will be nice to have all the up-to-the-date data on the birds but it is obvious from the draft texts on the website that information is missing on many of the species. See [www.fitzpatrick.uct.ac.za/docs/roberts.html](http://www.fitzpatrick.uct.ac.za/docs/roberts.html). Perhaps after the book comes out I will try and summarize where gaps in information on Namibia birds occur so we can try and fill the gaps.

## Blue Waxbill *Uraeginthus angolensis* nesting in exotic fig *Ficus microcarpa*

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On 19 November 2003 I discovered a blue waxbill *Uraeginthus angolensis* nest with a bird sitting in an exotic *Ficus microcarpa* (Figure 1) used as an ornamental in the Polytechnic of Namibia gardens. The nest was 3 m up on a branch close



Figure 1: Blue waxbill nest in *Ficus microcarpa* as seen from below. The wasp nest is not visible in the photo.

to the rim of the canopy, a little above a wasp nest, a common placement according to Tarboton (2001 A guide to the nests and eggs of Southern African Birds. Struik Publishers (Pty) Ltd., Cape Town.). Also present in the tree at that time was a red-eyed bulbul and a whitebacked mousebird, presumably attracted to the small *Ficus* fruits. Black throated canaries frequently visit the tree as well.

No further activity was observed until 24 November when the female was seen moving through the *Ficus* tree and calling occasionally. On 26 November two blue waxbills (one seen) were calling to each other in the tree at about 10h30. Thereafter, no further activity was observed, and it is presumed that the nest was abandoned, possibly due to disturbance, since there is a high volume of pedestrians and vehicles in the car park where the tree is situated.

As far as I know, blue waxbills have not been recorded as nesting in this exotic *Ficus* before. Tarboton (2001) states that blue waxbills prefer nesting in thorny trees.

## Monteiro Hornbills *Tockus monteiri* in unserem Garten

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Schon vor fast drei Jahren hatte ich einen Nistkasten für das Tokopaar (Monteiro Hornbills) gebaut, das uns oft im Garten in der Nähe der Heinitzburg besuchte. Der Kasten wurde nach wenigen Tagen bereits von den Tokos begutachtet, das Weibchen schaute häufig in den Kasten hinein, klapperte mit dem Schnabel an der Öffnung, aber mehr erfolgte nicht. Bezogen wurde der Brutkasten leider nur dreimal von Bienenvölkern. Unter viel Aufwand mussten wir die Bienen vom Imker abholen lassen und den Kasten gründlich reinigen, weil der Geruch der Waben sofort wieder Bienen anlocken soll. Ich habe ihn dann aus der Bienenfluglinie, die über unsere Araukarie hinweg ging, weggenommen und unten in den Garten in einen Moringabaum gehängt. Vom Küchenfenster hatten wir den direkten Blick darauf.