

LANIOTURDUS

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NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

A branch of
the Namibia Scientific Society
and
the Southern African Ornithological Society

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All contributions (including books for review) to *LANIOTURDUS* should be addressed to the Editor, *LANIOTURDUS*, Namibia Bird Club, P.O. Box 67, Windhoek, Namibia.

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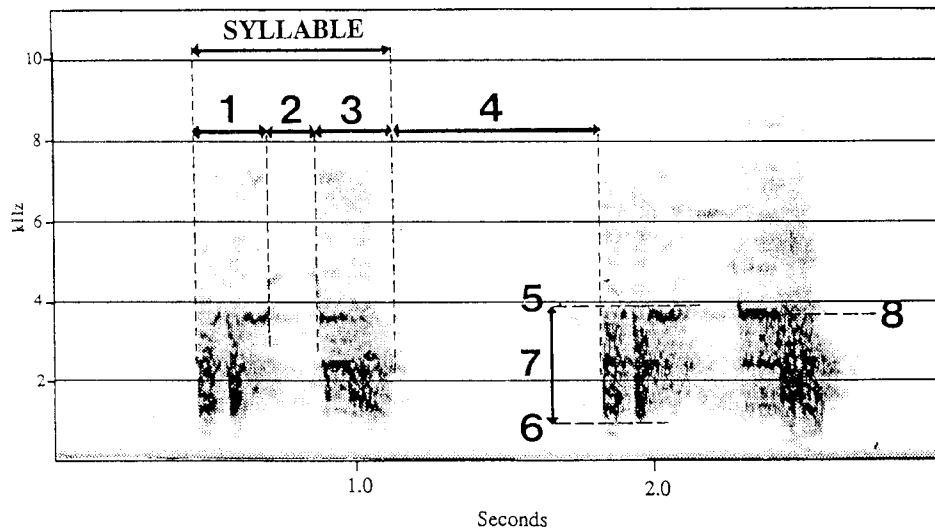


Figure 1. A sonogram illustrating nine bird-call variables which may be measured and compared statistically. "Syllable" and variables 1 - 4 are measures of sound-duration (seconds) and variables 5 - 8 measures of sound-frequency (kiloHertz).

COCKY BUSTARD

JAN AND SUZI VAN DE REEP

P.O. Box 180, Outjo

Redcrested Korhaan (*Eupodotis ruficrista*): observation of the mating display, 27th October 1987 at 17:30, approximately 5km east of "Etosha Point" turnoff in Etosha National Park.

We had, in fact, stopped to watch and photograph a zebra at the edge of the road, standing against the light, his mane and whiskers ablaze in a glory of silver.

"There it is!" exclaimed one of our party and the combi rocked as everyone jerked around to follow the accusing finger pointing at ... it HAD to be at least a leopard.

"There, there, in the grass!"
"Where, where, what, what??"

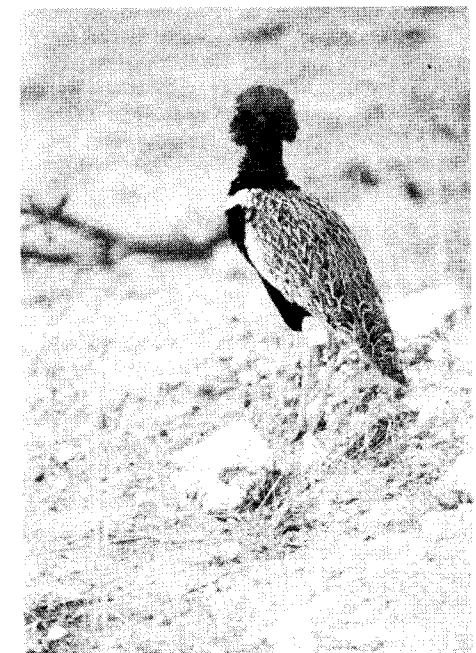
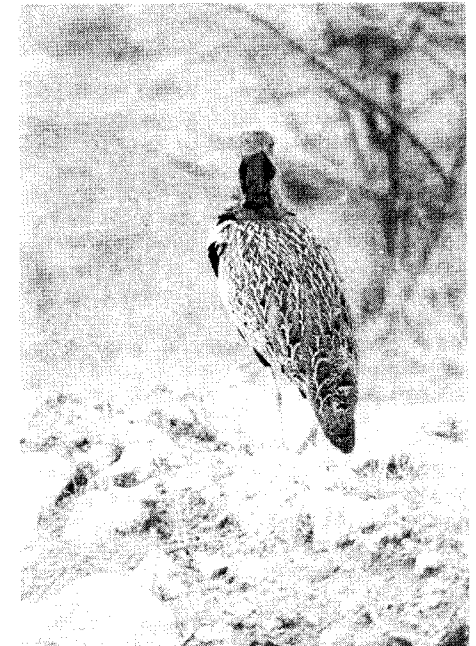
"That bird with the bonnet, in the grass!"

The excitement rose as everyone realised what we were looking for. The Redcrested korhaan is not aptly named as the crest is only displayed during actual courtship. The perfect camouflage created by the exquisite batik-like chevron markings makes it a difficult bird to find at the best of times. The most easily observed display of this korhaan is the rocket-like shot into the air - about 20 yards straight up - and the subsequent tumble and fall. It is quite spectacular and for the uninitiated can cause some eye-rubbing as to whether one had seen it at all. The marked piping whistle is also easy to detect (when you know the call!) but the male bird we were watching was doing neither of these displays.

The female was crouched nearby, almost impossible to see, except for the light catching her eye when she cautiously turned her head. The male was "limping" towards her, loudly clacking his beak on every downward motion of the "limp" and he began circling her rapidly, as best as the surrounding bush would allow. His crest sometimes partially, sometimes totally erected. Three times he went around her and she remained motionless in her crouched position.

His personality had changed from the secretive, slowly moving bird that relies so much upon its camouflage, to a flamboyant show-off with only this "Chick" on his mind. Our proximity did not interest him in the least - indeed, I doubt if he knew we were there.

His "shoulders" rose (giving the impression that had he claws on them, he would have clutched her to him!), his head went low on stretched neck, his cheeks puffed out, his eye was beady and under his beak the fluffed feathers showed a broad black line, while the raised crest gave him a decidedly cocky appearance as he clacked and limped about in circles. He was quite unrecognisable by now and if we hadn't seen the transition we would have been hard-pushed to identify him by the depiction in the book.



Then, as suddenly as he had begun, he retreated to about ten feet from the hen and stood motionless, perfectly hidden by his cryptic coloration, no crest to be seen (had we imagined it?) and only his beak regularly opening and closing about twice a second, but soundlessly now, his eye fixed on the female all the while. Presently, she rose and crept off a few yards, and when he followed, she ducked behind a tuft of grass - invisible again. He too stood, continuing his soundless beak action, and by following the direction of his gaze, we could only pick her out amongst the grasses if the sun caught her eye.

This status quo continued for up to twenty minutes, and off he'd go again: clacking loudly and increasingly insistently, circling her rapidly from six inches to ten feet, depending on the vegetation, his crest rising and falling, sometimes scruffy and sometimes forming a perfect crescent.

After three such performances - we lost track of time - the female began to peep quietly; we were close enough to detect the sound. Finally, she got up and cautiously crossed the road, ignoring the male. He followed equally slowly, but only to the edge of the road. By this time she had reached the other side and another bird - presumably a male - appeared from the vegetation and began "whooping" gently (listen to your bird tape).

At this, the first male lost interest, maybe the female had now left his territory and he returned to the grassy tufts and began pecking at them, showing no hint of a crest or any of the previous excitement.

In the meantime the female had disappeared, probably lying low and the third bird had also vanished from our sight, only his gentle whooping remaining as evidence that we had not dreamt it all.



SOUTH AFRICAN CLIFF SWALLOWS IN NAMIBIA

P.A. & M. BRIDGEFORD

Namib Naukluft Park, Private Bag 1018, Maltahöhe

INTRODUCTION

South African Cliff Swallows *Hirundo spilodera* are poorly distributed in Namibia and Maclean (1985) shows that they are found in the north-east of the country to just south of Windhoek. Earle (1987) states that "patchy distribution in S.W.A. is probably the result of a lack of records from these areas". However, even with additional information from the Namibia Bird Atlas Project, they are still sparsely distributed, although the range has been extended to the south. (Figure 1).

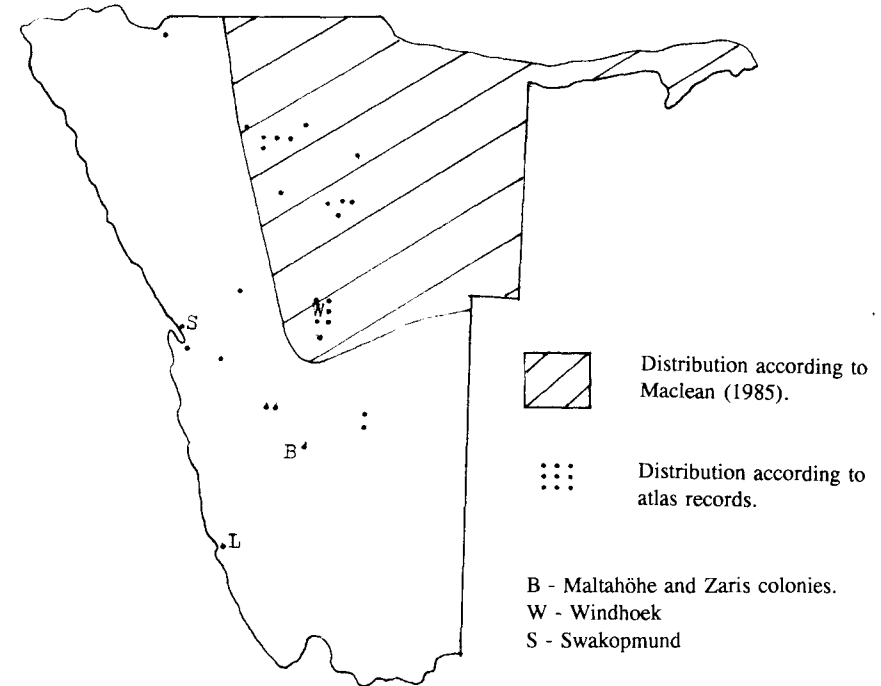


Figure 1. Distribution of South African Cliff Swallows in Namibia.