

CONTENTS

VOLUME 36 (4) 2003

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial	1
THERON, T. CUNNINGHAM, P. & E. SIMATAA. Notes on the breeding of White Pelicans <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i> at Hardap Dam, Namibia.	2
CUNNINGHAM, P., ADANK, W., MULISA, C. & B. SIMATAA. The diet of Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i> from the Otjivasando area, Etosha National Park	7
DEMASIUS, E. Damara Terns and the upcoming holiday season ..	12
DEMASIUS, E. Fourth Gray's Lark Ringed in Namibia	15
DEMASIUS, E. Another nest in the road	19
BIRD OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES	22
ERRATUM	24

Editorial

Another year is about over and we have produced four issues of the *Lanioturdus*. The Namibia Bird Club would like to thank all those who contributed. Your articles are what keep the club informed and active. As you read the articles you will see that some people were prompted to write because of an article they had read in the journal. It either confirmed an observation they had made or pointed out the rarity of such observations. That is the reason the journal is published to inform readers about club activities and to stimulate members to report on their observations. I am still waiting for the Chairman's annual report as given at the Annual General Meeting in March 2003. Regretably no reports of club outings in 2003 have been submitted. Perhaps if the club would undertake outings to the remote and exotic areas of Namibia participants would be impressed enough to share the results.

Once again it is the time of the year when everyone is wishfully looking into the sky for clouds that can build up into something bigger to convert the parched landscape into green vistas. The Red-crested Korhaans are calling but whether they breed or not will depend on the amount of rain. Last season they called but no breeding took place in northern Namibia. As of late November there have been reports of rain but not in all regions.

Once again I appeal to all members to try and sign up a friend as a member of the Namibia Bird Club. It would be nice to see the club membership double this year.

Damara Terns and the Upcoming Holiday Season

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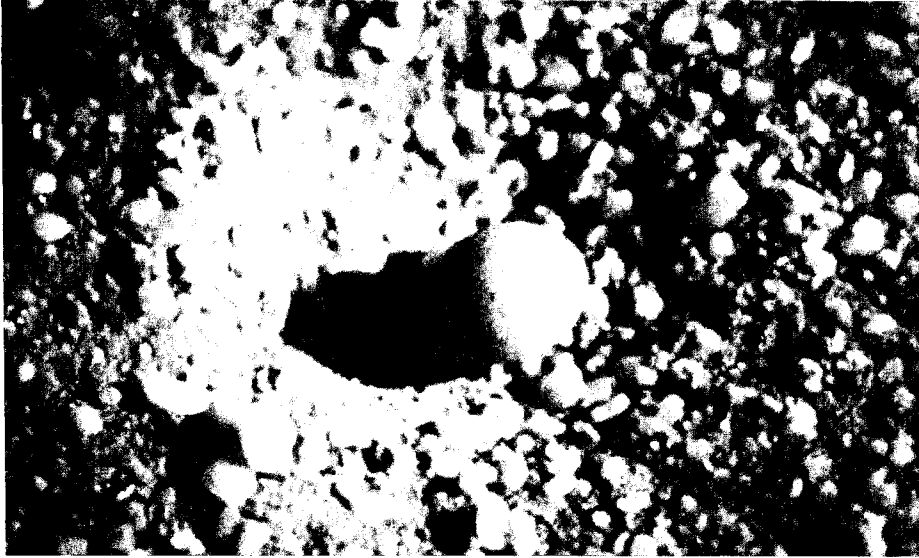


Photo No. 1

Last year during November while spending a weekend at Wlotzka's Baken, my friend Richard Niddrie and I went to see whether the Damara Terns had started breeding at their breeding site north of Wlotzka's Baken. After some time we heard the birds calling and we observed a tern land near its egg.

We went to photograph the egg in the scrape after it took off again, Photo No. 1. Then, as we returned to the car we were totally astonished to see an egg of the Damara Tern in the middle of the track in front of the vehicle, Photo No. 2, hardly visible. Had we driven any further along the track, we would have squashed it, totally unaware of its existence.

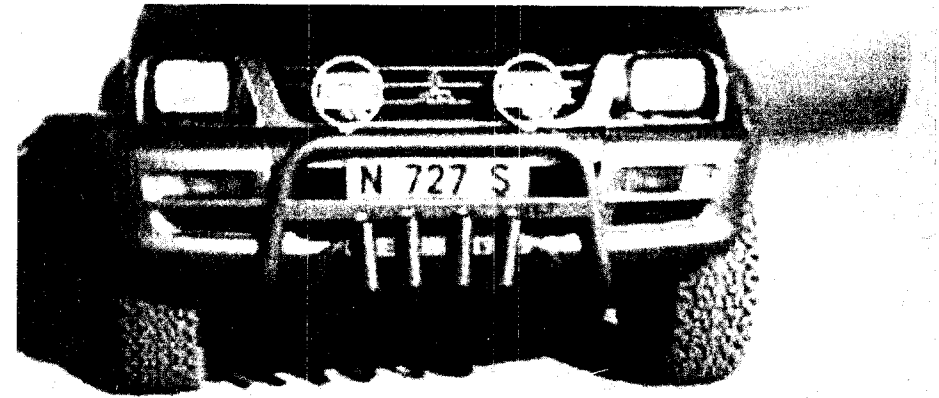


Photo No. 2



In the Photo No. 3, Richard points out the egg, this still remains very difficult to see.



Photo No. 4

We reversed the bakkie and decided to wait for the tern to return to its egg. After a couple of minutes this happened and the tern quite unperturbed continued to sit on the egg. Photo No. 4.

Damara Terns are said to use tracks in the desert as markers for their nests. Obviously they do seem to lay their eggs in the tracks at times as well!

We could not establish whether the bird managed to hatch and leave the scrape safely before the holiday season started in mid December.

We all know how important it is to remain on existing tracks, yet it may appear inevitable that some egg and/or chick casualties may still occur in the holiday season at the end of the year, which coincides with the breeding season of the Damara Tern.

Fourth Gray's Lark Ringed in Namibia

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On Monday, 29 September, my wife Birgit took our new Irish Terrier puppy, Miss Bonnie, for a walk on the gravel plains east of Kramersdorf in Swakopmund. She and her friend with her dog, Jule, soon noticed that Miss Bonnie was curiously inspecting something next to an old track at some dead branches of an ink bush *Salsola* sp.

Fearing it could be an adder; they immediately called back the dog and went to inspect what caused the curiosity of Miss Bonnie. Instead of a snake it was a newly born chick in a cup-shaped nest, neatly lined with fine grass inflorescences (fig.1). They decided to immediately leave the nest alone for fear of more dogs coming to inspect. The area east of Kramersdorf is very popular with dog owners who take their dogs for a walk.

Over lunch I was informed about the find and we decided to have a look later in the afternoon, in the hope of being able to identify the little chick. The chick was absolutely minute, its beak still bigger than its head. It was very clear to me from the outset that Miss Bonnie found a newly hatched Gray's Lark chick. In addition, the nest contained an unhatched egg.

We wanted to protect the nestling and ensure its survival, so we only requested Sakkie Roothman to take some photos, as our equipment is not well suited for these photos. We wanted Sakkie to take a photo of the adults feeding the chick at a time when not many people were about with their dogs. Sakkie put up his camera and long lens with remote control and he himself sat in his car as far as possible to ensure the remote to function, but he reported that the adults would not come closer than one hundred metres from the nest. In order not to stress the little one he repeated the exercise two days later with the same effect.

It was then that I received the latest edition of *Lanioturdus*, 36 (3) 2003, and after reading the article on the ringing of the third Gray's Lark in Namibia, I decided to inform Mark Boorman about our discovery. Naturally he was keen to see the nest, but when I tried to fend him off with the excuse, that it would only