

Namibia Bird Club



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Editorial

The symposium and dinner to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Namibia Bird Club have come and gone. I am very pleased to be able to say that our members attended these events in numbers and that we had over seventy people there (including the invited speakers). The symposium went off without any real problems – none of the speakers overran his allotted time slot and on the technological front the laptops and the beamers communicated with each other.

There will be a special edition of *Lanioturdus* incorporating the papers presented so I will not go into detail here. Suffice to say that all the talks were at layman's level, all the feedback we have had has been positive and that we have had a number of people enquiring when we will be presenting another symposium – the answer to that one is simple – not before we have again accumulated sufficient funds.

Many people were able to obtain the software necessary to commence atlasing thanks to Arnold van der Westhuizen's efforts. SABAP2

are taking off 400 to 500 birds per season which is possibly the equivalent of the entire season's breeding. How much longer the birds will return there remains to be seen.

It is also again rumoured that there is a demand for the feathers of these birds and that Chinese are paying locals to raid the breeding colonies and capture and kill the birds for their feathers. This story has been around for a while but it is very often the case that there is no smoke without fire.

Milvus Kites

The summer of 2011/2012 produced many sightings of Black or Yellow-billed Kites in Windhoek and its suburbs. On an almost daily basis for a period of several weeks I saw up to three or four birds over the urban areas. I cannot recall ever seeing these birds in town so frequently in the past.

African Red-eyed Bulbul Behaviour

Elmarie Visser provided the following :-

“Recently I witnessed some interesting African Red-eyed Bulbul behavior. A colleague of mine picked up an African Red-eyed Bulbul chick near his flat – partially feathered but clearly not yet ready to leave the nest. Due to the number of cats in the vicinity he brought the bird to his secretary to hand rear. She brought the little bird to work in order to be able to feed it regularly. On a particular day we celebrated a colleague's birthday in the garden at our workplace. The young bulbul was also there and it began to call when it heard wild bulbuls in the garden. Inquisitively they moved closer. After a while I put the chick on the ground some five metres away from us. The wild bulbuls then started bringing food for the youngster – berries and insects. They took it in turns and were nervous of any movement from our side but they continued to feed the chick for quite a while. The nest from which this chick must have come must have been at least 3 km away so it is highly unlikely that these were its parents feeding it.”

Elmarie asked whether bulbuls are prone to this sort of behavior.

I have heard of this behavior before but I am not sure in which species. I am, however, unable to find any references to it in the literature available to me. I should imagine that this behavior on the part of the adult birds is triggered by the begging call of the chick albeit that it is not their own chick.

Common Tern Ring Recovery

While Mark Boorman captures a number of foreign ringed terns each season it is not very often that we get to be informed of foreign ringed birds by non-birders. Butz Hoffmann saw us ringing at Farm Teufelsbach when Gudrun held her birthday bash there and having this awareness of the whys and wherefores of ringing noticed a ring on the leg of a dead tern he found on the beach about 5 km north of Torra Bay (approximate coordinates 22.28°S 13.20°E) on 03/01/2012. He informed us of this recovery and enquiries revealed that this was a Common Tern that had been ringed as a young bird out of the nest at Virolahti, Finland (co-ordinates 60.24°N 27.42°E), on 27/06/2011. In its short life this bird travelled a minimum distance of about 9 260 km from the ringing site on a single migration. This is the direct distance – the actual distance covered following coastlines would have been considerably greater.

A Different Kind of Birding Birds on the Stamps of Namibia : Namibia's 5th Definitive Series

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My previous contributions on Birds on the Stamps of Namibia ended with the anticipation of birds on the next definitive series of Namibian stamps which would be dedicated to our endemic and near-endemic birds only.

Knowing that Helge Denker was to be the artist for the stamps made me look forward to a very special stamp issue. And he did not disappoint me - they are very special indeed. Eleven of our near-endemic birds and the only true endemic, the Dune Lark, are depicted on the stamps. The control blocks consist of blocks of ten stamps surrounding a neat distribution map and a description of the bird.



The denominations of the stamps range from 5 cents to N\$ 100-00. Many of these highly varying values will not be frequently used and this will unfortunately result in many of us not seeing all the stamps in the set, unless one buys a full set of stamps. But then the costs range from 50 cents to the ridiculous amount of N\$ 1 000-00 per control block!!

Collecting stamps is becoming a rather expensive hobby.

Carp's Tit is presented on the 5 cent stamp with beautiful Mopane bush in green and autumn colours in the background lining a river course at the foot of some hills.



Hartlaub's Spurfiowl is worth 10 cents and on account of this low value it will be used very seldom. One really has look carefully to recognise the female bird which blends in beautifully with the natural environment in the background.



The Herero Chat, a favourite of many a birder, is landing at its most famous location, the Spitzkoppe. Not easy to find, this bird, not even at the Spitzkoppe!! Such a landing will put you back only 20 cents!!



Rüppell's Parrot is busy with its antics in a *Faidherbia albida*, - if that is still its current name - tree names change even more often than those of birds!! - and that for only 30 cents. The typical Damaraland background makes me yearn to go there again!!

passing by in their characteristic tumbling flight and this you get for only 50 cents!!!



It appears that the Rockrunner is at the Kunene River; what better spot to be!! N\$ 5-00 for such an outing is definitely not unreasonable!!!



Rüppell's Korhaan is on guard in the Namib overlooking the plains while its mate is



The Damara Tern is lucky to have a sunny day at the coast. It can be very cold at the end of the year when they come in to breed but on such a sunny day it can get very hot on the plains and they need to protect their young

from the heat of the sun. N\$ 20-00 for such a rare sight is a well-priced offer.

Namibian Endemic it certainly deserves to be put on many a postcard to be sent around the world for all to see.



The Bare-cheeked Babbler is a bird that I have not seen in a long time. They do not seem to use their former favourite haunt at Halali anymore, one of the birding spots you would be “guaranteed” to see this near-endemic bird. Now one has to put down N\$ 100-00 to see it. It will certainly rarely be seen!!!

And so the White-tailed Shrike, our *Lanioturdus*, was assigned to take up the standard mail duties. I think this is a lovely gesture for all of us bird club members. This is the most used stamp and I believe this beautiful little bird richly deserves this honour. The two on the stamp appear to be equally proud of the honour!!



The Dune Lark was initially earmarked for Standard Mail postage, but being the only true

The Damara Hornbill has only recently joined the club of recognized near-endemics and it seems to have settled in very well with its new friends.



Finally, the Violet Wood-Hoopoe is responsible for all the registered mail. Its loud chattering call will no doubt announce the arrival of any registered mail well in advance.

But what about our remaining near-endemic birds that do not feature on this series?

Well, let's hope they still have a chance. It is not uncommon for additional values to be added to a definitive series instead of overprinting existing stamps which do not sell on account of their face values not being in demand. Monteiro's Hornbill, Barlow's Lark, Gray's Lark, Benguela Long-billed Lark and Rosy-faced Lovebird are all lined up to feature on any additional stamps.

I believe all bird club members have a duty to lobby for this. How nice would it be to have all of our endemics and near endemics on this set of Namibian stamps?

A Visit to the Austin Roberts and Barberspan Bird Sanctuaries

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All photographs in this article are by Sonja Bartlewski

In April/May 2011 our holiday took us to Pretoria. The city is an African mess of taxis and shebeens and actually we had a lot of trouble finding our way to the Zoological Garden. After a heavy fight with the lady in the GPS Nüvi shouting at me "if possible please turn around" and me shouting at Michael "please do not turn around", we were eventually able to find the parking area and could then relax in the tranquil atmosphere of the zoo. We like to look at foreign zoos and to compare them. Today zoos are not places where poor wild animals are locked away behind bars but they have developed into ecosystems of their own where (if done correctly and according to standards) a lot of effort and love is invested by humans to make it as comfortable as possible for the animals. High reproduction rates of some animal species, extinct in the wild, are proof of this. Furthermore zoos are very important sources of research and education. We definitely felt that it is not without reason that the Pretoria Zoo is the only internationally accepted zoo in Africa. A highlight was the Koala Bears which have been my favorite mammals since childhood, but also the beautifully flowering gardens and the clean and well looked after aviaries and cages were an eye catcher.



Juvenile Penguin at Pretoria Zoo