

LANIOTURDUS

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Editorial

Although I am the editor of Lanioturdus, Lanioturdus is not my journal. Lanioturdus is your journal (i.e. the members’ journal). However, for it to be truly the members’ journal it needs contributions from the members.

I have been fortunate in having been able to obtain sufficient articles to have allowed me to produce four editions for three consecutive years (actually this year there will be a special fifth edition) but it is somewhat disconcerting how few people actually contribute articles. Without the contributions of the likes of Eckart Demasius and Holger Kolberg I would have been very hard pressed to find sufficient material and I would then probably have found myself in another of those editor’s nightmare situations of having to write the bulk of the articles myself. A big thank you to all who have contributed especially those who contribute regularly - to the rest of you out there - why not try your hand at writing - if something interests you it will most probably interest other birders as well.

And it is not only articles for which I am looking. Your observations of rare birds, off range species, birds new to an area etc. are all worthy of a mention in Lanioturdus. We are not yet atlassing in Namibia and records of these sightings form valuable contributions to Namibian ornithology. I have mentioned it before - Lanioturdus is sent to the Niven Library of the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology and the librarian, Margaret Koopman, has assured me that bird club journals are indeed used by researchers

A Different Kind of Birding Part III

Birds on the Stamps of Namibia (1) (1990- 2003)

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Namibia became an independent country on 21 March 1990. Bird lovers will be glad to hear that in the twenty one years that have gone by our country did by far the best compared to South Africa and South West Africa when it came to birds on stamps. All in all 100 identifiable species are recorded on the stamps issued so far, (i.e. up to 2011) in Namibia.

Because of this multitude and not wanting to water down this article I will discuss Namibia in two parts. The first part will cover the period from Independence in March 1990 until the end of 2003. The second part will cover the period from then to date, i.e. until 2011.

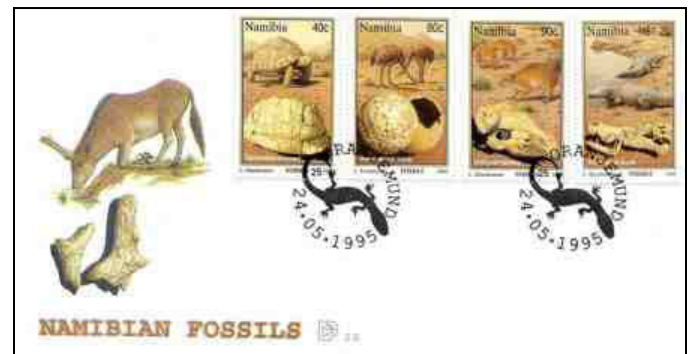
Not unexpectedly the peace dove had the privilege of kicking off Namibia's bird stamps with a stamp celebrating Namibia's independence on 21 March 1990.



Three years Later, on 3 June 1994, a series of stamps titled "Birds of Etosha (Storks)" was issued, depicting Yellow-billed Stork, Abdim's Stork, African Openbill and White Stork.

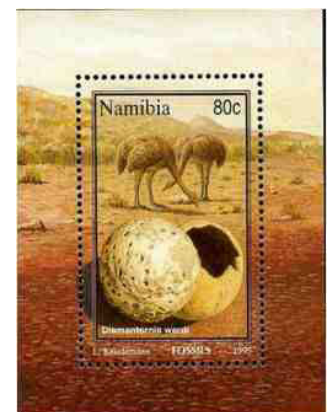


On 24 May 1995 a set of stamps was devoted to the fossils found mainly in the south of the country. One of the stamps shows the pre-historic ostrich with its huge almost round eggs in the foreground of the painting.



The same stamp was issued on the same date and with the same title as a mini sheet.

These fossils are on exhibition in the museum at the entrance to the Ministry of Mines and Energy in Windhoek.



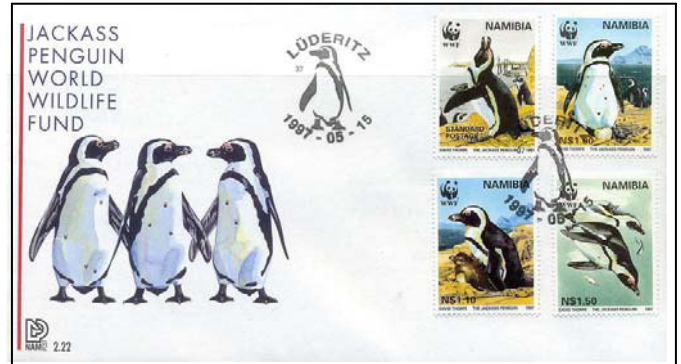
Then it took another three years before we had the pleasure of seeing birds on stamps in Namibia again and this time it was a real beauty! A stamp booklet was issued with 50c and 60c stamps depicting Cinderella and Black-faced Waxbills on the stamps.



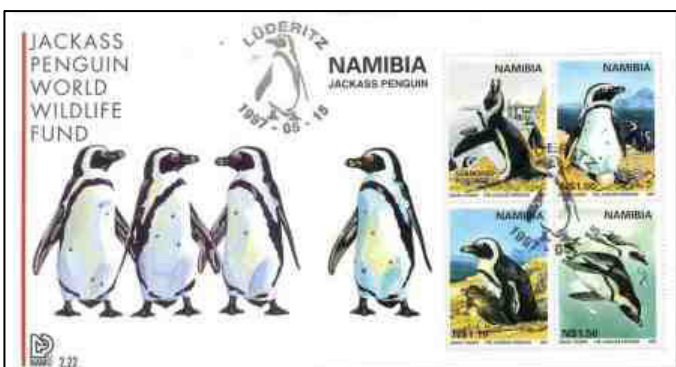
On 6 May 1997 a single stamp depicting a Helmeted Guineafowl was issued, entitled "Greetings from Namibia".



Fund". On the same day the same first day cover was issued with the four stamps as single stamps each with the World Wildlife Fund logo!



1997 will no doubt be remembered as the year of the Helmeted Guineafowl. On 11 July a stamp booklet was issued with ten different guineafowl stamps. Four months later another set of four stamps was issued, titled "Christmas" and to top it all on the very same day yet another mini sheet with a Helmeted Guineafowl was issued, also titled "Christmas".



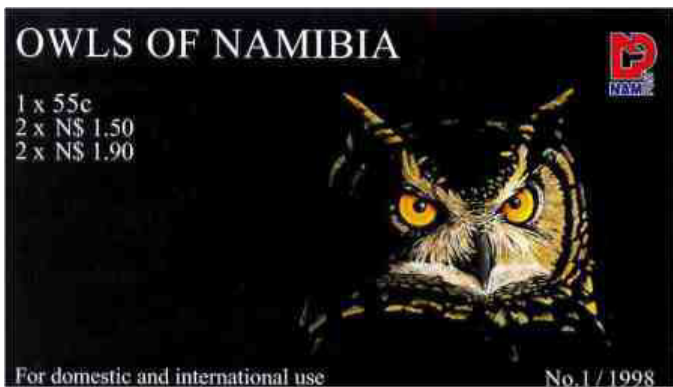
A week before the last Guineafowl stamps were issued, Namibia's second definitive series was released, titled "Namibian Fauna and Flora". Of the eighteen stamps, six were dedicated to birds. The Helmeted Guineafowl did not make it this time though!

On 15 May 1997 a rather strange stamp issue took place. African Penguins were portrayed on four different stamps as part of a mini sheet, titled "Jackass Penguin World Wildlife





The philatelic services produced a real beauty on 1 April 1998 – a stamp booklet dedicated entirely to “Owls of Namibia” - at least almost entirely as one of the stamps shows a tree mouse!!



Just as beautiful was the sheetlet dedicated to the Caprivi Region depicting Southern Carmine Bee-eater, African Jacana, African Fish-Eagle and Woodland Kingfisher, issued on 6 September 1998.



Only in May 1999 did the next bird stamps appear, but they were certainly worth waiting for. Helge Denker’s stunning art work on “Falcons of Namibia” will remain unchallenged for me. Greater Kestrel, Red-necked Falcon, Rock Kestrel and Lanner Falcon appear as portraits with their typical habitat in the background.



More birds appeared on stamps in this year, this time the topic was our wetlands and their importance in providing plentiful natural resources, their vital part of the livelihood and culture of many Namibians. The stamps issued on 28 June 1999 included the following Namibian birds and wetlands: Wattled Cranes

are shown in a typical oshana in northern Namibia, Burchell's Sandgrouse drink at an ephemeral pan in Etosha, a Rock Pratincole sits on its breeding rocks in the Okavango River and Great White Pelicans fly past Sandwich Harbour south of Walvis Bay.

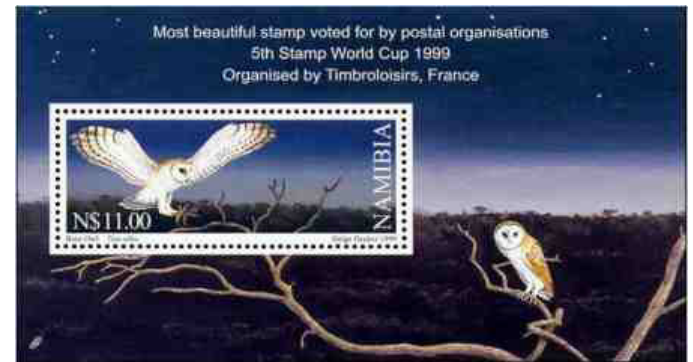


1999 turned out to be a splendid year for birds on stamps in Namibia and although the next issue, dated 2 July 1999, did not have birds as its topic but the well-known Omajova mushroom, the stamp only really comes to its worth because of the Bateleur circling in the sky in the background of the painting, depicting a typical mixed thornbush savannah and the termite mounds at the base of which the Omajovas grow in the rainy season. A familiar site when I leave Windhoek heading north, hopefully on a birding trip!



The highlight for the artist Helge Denker that year must have come on 30 September when one of his owl stamps was judged the most beautiful stamp at the fifth Stamp World Cup held in France. Well deserved indeed! Now the

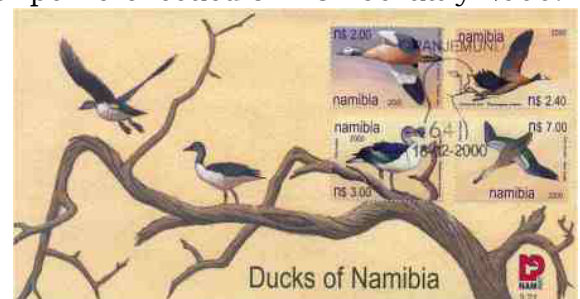
Barn Owl forms part of a mini sheet depicting a typical Namibian night in the bush with the starry skies above and of course our Southern Cross is not to be missed.



This was the last year of the century and how many of us did not sit at the beach waiting for the sun to set for the last time in the 20th century. I was one of them. Together with friends we drank champagne while worrying a bit that our computers would crash at midnight!! Oh, what worries we had a decade ago!! But it still turned out to be a good party, probably because the computers did not crash at midnight as the doomsday prophets had predicted.



A new century had started and we all had to get our ducks in a row, so the philatelic services followed suit and produced a series of stamps titled "Ducks of Namibia", which included South African Shelduck, White-faced Duck, Comb Duck and Cape Shoveler. These stamps were issued on 18 February 2000.

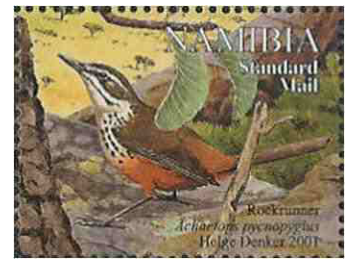


Stamp sheetlets were becoming very popular, and they serve a very good purpose at the same time reflecting how we should rather view the environment, i.e. as a whole and not by isolating a species and caring for that species only. Once again I need to stress how sad it is that the average person hardly gets to see these stamps and their educational value is relative at best! Nevertheless, here they are for us to enjoy!

“The Namib” mini sheet was produced for the May 2000 Stamp Show held in Earls Court, London. The side-winder, Namib golden mole, tenebrionid beetle, brown hyaena, shovel-snouted lizard and our only endemic bird, the Dune Lark feature on this sheet.



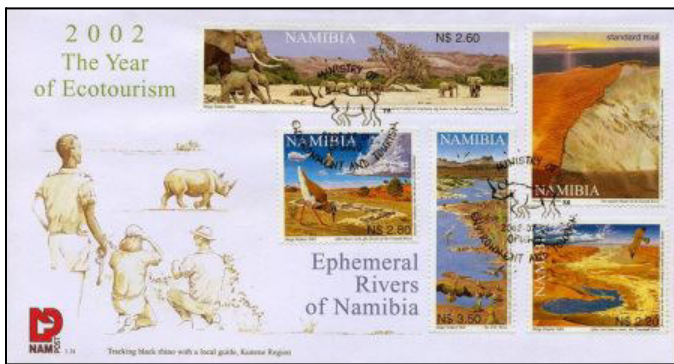
On 5 September 2001 it was again Helge Denker’s turn to produce a sheetlet, this time titled “The Central Highlands of Namibia”, and Rockrunner and Rüppell’s Parrot feature in typical fashion.



In May 2002 a set of bird stamps was issued, aptly titled “Birds of Namibia” and this set portrayed African Hoopoe, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater and Malachite Kingfisher, none of which had featured on our stamps before.



The year 2002 was also known as “The Year of Ecotourism” and the ephemeral rivers were chosen as a topic to celebrate this occasion as ecotourism plays an ever increasing role in the lives of many rural and urban Namibians. The stamps feature the Kuiseb, Tsauchab,



Fish, Nossob and the Hoarusib Rivers. The Kuiseb River stamp has no bird on it.

The Tsauchab stamp looks at the river from a bird's eye view, i.e. Lesser Kestrel's eye view with its mate flying close by over Sossusvlei.



On the Nossob stamp the river has just started to come down and a Crowned Lapwing is busy making a feast of creepy crawlies trying to escape the flood.



The Fish River stamp has no fewer than five bird species depicted. These are, from bottom to top: Namaqua Sandgrouse, Marsh Sandpiper, Grey Heron, Pied Kingfisher and Spur-winged Goose!! This is according to www.bird-stamps.org.

With a good magnifying glass I recognized five different birds but to be able to identify them all by name at this size is a big challenge. I wonder whether Helge Denker



agrees with the identification of the birds. I ask this question as it was pointed out to me by Andreas Voigt during a NATH ornithology lesson that I also need to have a closer look at the Hoarusib stamp, which I immediately did and with the magic of my now famous magnifying glass I found what Andreas was alluding to! Another bird in the half fallen tree in the river!



Now we just had to identify the bird but as bird-stamps made no mention of this, Andreas e-mailed Helge to ask whether it was a Black-chested Snake-Eagle or a Martial Eagle. The answer, I believe was very enlightening and very honest at the same time, as Helge reckons we just need to sit and wait for the eagle to fly off then all identification problems would be solved and we would know what we are talking of.



I informed bird-stamps.org accordingly and since then the eagle is referred to as Short-toed Eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*, which is the old scientific description of what we know as Black-chested Snake-Eagle, *Circaetus pectoralis*! The last time that name was referred to in our Southern African literature was 27 years ago in Newman's Birds of Southern Africa and then only as an alternative name for what was then known as Blackbreasted Snake Eagle. So much for that.

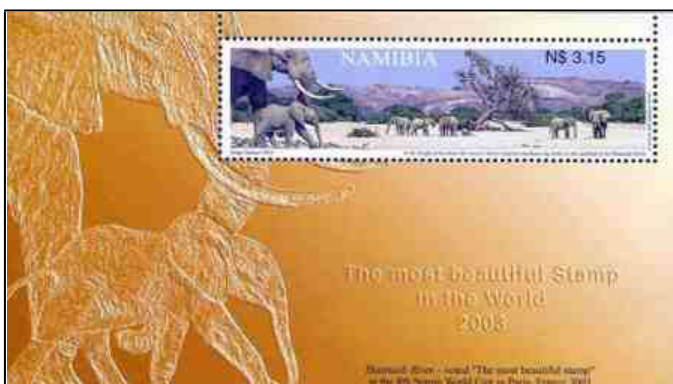
That was plenty of excitement for 2002! So we had to wait a year before birds turned up again. On 6 June 2003 another exciting topic was chosen, "The Cuvelai Drainage System", something I had heard pretty little of before and certainly not at school, but then I went to school in the previous century. I hope they teach the scholars more useful things at school today than they did when I had to spend my time there.

The set of Cuvelai stamps consisted of three stamps, two of which have bird images on them. Another bird's eye view, this time from an Abdim's Stork over a traditional homestead, built on raised ground so as not to get flooded while the water passes it on either side. The second stamp has three birds on it, Grey Crowned Crane, Egyptian Goose and Lesser Flamingo flying over the Omadhiya Lakes, north of Etosha.



Once again the year must have ended on a high for Helge Denker when he was again the winner of the most beautiful stamp award when he took the honours at the eighth World Stamp Award held in Paris on 8 December 2003. This time the award was for the stunningly beautiful Hoarusib stamp, one of the five ephemeral rivers of Namibia stamps.

When I saw this stamp for the first time, I just thought to myself that I had never before seen a more beautiful stamp. Once again, well-deserved for Helge Denker and Namibia as a whole.



Who were the People after whom some of our Bird Species are named? (Part 4 : Orange River Francolin to Wire-tailed Swallow)

Neil Thomson

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Orange River Francolin *Scleroptila levaillantoides* (Smith 1836) Named after Francois Le Vaillant (1753-1824). See above under Crested Barbet.

Pel's Fishing-Owl *Scotopelia peli* (Bonaparte 1850) Named after HS Pel (d 1854), a Dutch official in, and later governor of, the Dutch Gold Coast.

Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii* (Shelley 1894) Named after Alexander Whyte (1834-1905) who was government naturalist in Nyasaland (now Malawi) where he collected between 1891 and 1896. (This species is included here on the strength of Mark Paxton's observations in the Shamvura area [see *Lanioturdus* 43-2]).

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* (Linnaeus 1758) Named after Canute (circa 995-1035), king of England, Denmark and Norway. He was so greatly respected that his courtiers maintained that he had the power to stop the tide. They were of course proven wrong when this was put to the test! The connection between the bird and Canute is presumably due to its habit of running up and down the beach in front of the breaking waves although this characteristic is more noticeable in Sanderlings.

Retz's Helmetshrike *Prionops retzii* (Wahlberg 1856) Named after Anders Adolf Retzius (1796-1860), a Swedish anatomist.

Ross's Turaco *Musophaga rossae* (Gould 1851) Named after Lady Anne Ross (d 1857) who was the wife of the Arctic and Antarctic explorer Rear Admiral Sir James Clark Ross (after whom Ross's Gull and the Ross Sea are named). Lady Ross kept one of these birds in captivity for some ten years while stationed on St Helena. Gould described the bird as new to science on the strength of a drawing by