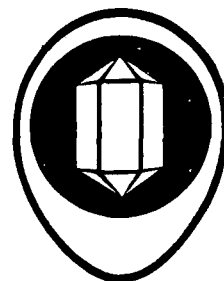


Lanioturdus torquatus
Drosselwürger

MITTEILUNGEN ORNITHOLOGISCHE ARBEITSGRUPPE



SCHRIFTFÜHRUNG: POSTFACH 67, WINDHOEK, S.W.A.

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POST-SYMPOSIUM EXCURSION TO NAMIB AND THE COAST 26-28 SEPTEMBER 1973

R. A. C. Jensen

Early the morning following the second day of papers at the Har-dap ornithological symposium, twenty delegates climbed into a bus for the post-symposium three-day excursion. We were followed by two other delegates and families in two other cars. However, we lost these "hangers-on" when our bus developed two punctures- fortunately within "civilization" in the bustling quasimetropolis of Maltahoehe. Having rapidly exhausted the bird-watching possibilities, the shopping-possibilities and most other possibilities in Maltahoehe, our group descended to the hotel and would have doubtless rapidly exhausted their stocks too, had the bus not arrived shortly thereafter.

Birds were rather scarce along the route until we stopped for lunch in Bullspoort, the pass through the Naukluft Mountains. Conditions were very dry here of course, but despite the heat several members of the group plunged forthwith into the scrub and were rewarded variously with "South West Specials" like Monteiro's Hornbill, Rosy-faced Lovebird and white-tailed Shrike. Everybody admired two proud black Eagles sitting like sentinels on the Mountain top just west of our picnic spot.

On the plains west of the escarpment, where the rapid decrease in precipitation (about 150 mm per year) changes the vegetation drastically, our first Rueppell's Korhaans came in view. We stopped shortly at the Kuiseb Canyon, but in view of our earlier delay, pushed on almost immediately towards Ganab in the vast (5 000 square miles) Namib Desert Park.

Here the plains receive about 70 mm of rain yearly on average, but the falls are very patchy and the resulting grass also. Herds of ostrich, springbok and gemsbok were seen, increasing in numbers towards Ganab, a wide wadi or omuramba with large camelthorn trees, where a borehole with windpump provides water for the game. A quick walk in the wadi provided views of gemsbok as well as Lanner Falcon and several common desert birds. Into the sunset we pressed on towards Walvis Bay, passing groups of antelope and flocks of ostriches and larks in a grassy area where good showers had fallen the previous year. As darkness fell we reached the truly arid Namib, where rainfall averages below 50 mm a year.

The next day, Hugh Berry, our Division's coastal ornithologist, took charge of the main group, visiting spots along the coast to observe sea-birds and waders. I took a few ornithologists inland for a further look at desert birds and other fauna and flora. On Friday, having moved to a Swakopmund Hotel the previous evening, we drove out to the Swakopmund Salt works where Mr. Klein, the owner, had given us special permission to enter. Our visitors were tremendously impressed by the enormous numbers of cormorants on the guano islands and platform which are strictly protected by Mr. Klein.

Returning via the Swakopmund sewage works, our carload was privileged to stumble on the ornithological highlight of the whole excursion, a Broad-billed Sandpiper Limicola falcinellus in breeding plumage at a small puddle. Pandemonium ensued as driver and passengers battled for positions and dozens of photographic salvos were fired by batteries of glass-eyed telephoto "cannons". During the whole "engagement" which compared in intensity if not scope with those later desert battles to the north, the sandpiper calmly went about its business 10-15 metres away. The message was passed on to those already back at the hotel and a second group of "reinforcements" rushed out to give the bird a further optical and photographic "pounding". Soon thereafter, well satisfied if somewhat weary, the group embarked for Windhoek where they arrived safely in time for a late dinner.

SOME ORNITHOLOGICAL SIGHTINGS IN THE WINDHOEK AREA

S. M. Seftel

These notes concern some of the more interesting and attractive birds seen during the past six months, in or near Windhoek - four interesting zones well worth regular visits: Avis Dam (East); Daan Viljoen (West); Municipal Sewage Works, including nearby scrub flats and dry riverine (North-West); Eros- from wireless Hill to the Riding School, including hillsides and dry riverine (North East). The notes are informal and do not follow any particular system.

Avis Dam:

Apart from the dam and surrounding mudflats (well-populated with large and small waterfowl and waders) there are two other rewarding zones for bird-watching: the major and minor river beds (now, in September, quite dry) that flow into the dam from opposite directions; and the tree-fringed edges of the hills on two sides of the dam. The minor river that flows from the North and enters the dam near the outflow tower is also the late evening route taken by kudu and baboon which may often be seen dramatically silhouetted against last light, framed by *Acacia hereroensis* and *giraffae*.

In the late afternoon, to the East of the dam and in front of a fine young *Acacia karoo* I have recently seen small mixed bird parties of Malba Finch (P830) and Violet-eared Waxbill (R840) feeding on or near the ground. This requires a long patient watch but the small scene has a carnival quality given added depth by the lower-keyed colouration of females, and the possible addition