

## CONTENTS

VOLUME 32(2, 3 & 4), December 1999

EDITORIAL .....	1
HOCKEY, P. & BOORMAN, M. Eyes peeled for oystercatchers .....	2
DANTU, S. Of <i>Haematopus moquini</i> and Mal de Mer .....	4
BIRDING NONSENSE. ....	6
DANTU, S. Christmas penguins and pelicans .....	6
CUNNINGHAM, P.L. & A.I. Observations of vultures at domestice stock lamb carcasses .....	7
SHORT NOTES .....	9
ROBEL, D. Damarasegler in Windhoek .....	12
BEKKER, H. Birds and the tree of the year: The Makalani palm .....	15
DANTU, S. Rocky's tale .....	17
GLAFKE, S. Bird of the month: Monteiro's Hornbill .....	18
NEBE, B. Unusual birds on the coast .....	20
DUFFIELD-HARDING, J. & OSBORNE, T. West Etosha bird monitoring project .....	23
OSBORNE, T. & L. Namibrand Game Ranch trip report .....	28
DUFFIELD-HARDING, R. & J., et al. Namushasha and the Kwando River .....	29
RAPTOR ROAD COUNT FORMS ON THE WEB .....	33
PROVISIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR 2000 .....	33

## EDITORIAL

The publication of this copy of *Lanioturdus* has been considerably delayed and this copy covers the June, September and December 1999 editions. It will immediately strike you that this is probably the least substantial copy of the magazine for a long time. We have a problem – for some reason 1999 seems to have represented the low point of everyones birding and ornithological careers – the articles and other materials have just not come in at all this year.

The success of the magazine and the Club as a whole depends on member participation. The committee recognises that most members are passive for the most part and choose to go their own way for most of their birding. However, we can't rely on just a few people to keep us going all the time. We need new members, new activities and new vision for the future. This is really a plea to you to get more involved in the future and to help the committee keep the Club going. If we are unable to keep bringing *Lanioturdus* out on a regular basis we are in real trouble.

On the positive side of things – the Club in conjunction with the Namibia Nature Foundation and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, is planning to start up a number of new projects as well as revive a number of older ones, including Raptor Road Counts and some form of atlassing in the future. We will probably put out a special edition of *Lanioturdus* in the New Year giving details of each of the projects.

A wonderful festive season to all of you – and good birding.



## EYES PEELED FOR COLOUR-RINGED OYSTERCATCHERS

Dr. Phil Hockey & Mark Boorman  
 Percy Fitzpatrick Institute for African Ornithology  
 University of Cape Town  
 Rondebosch, 7701, South Africa

Large numbers of young African Black Oystercatchers *Haematopus moquini* have been colour-ringed in South Africa, and a few have been ringed in Namibia as part of the Oystercatcher Conservation Programme. A significant number of these young birds disperse north to the central Namibian coast, between Walvis Bay and Swakopmund, and some go to Angola. It is likely that some also disperse to the coast between Lüderitz and Spencer Bay. The Walvis Bay/Swakopmund area is the most important nursery ground known for African Black Oystercatchers and is therefore of key conservation importance, but very few oystercatchers have been checked for rings elsewhere in Namibia.

Young birds are ringed in one of two ways (depending on how large they are when caught). Some have one small colour ring above the metal ring on the right leg (denoting site of ringing) and another single small colour ring on the left leg (which denotes year of ringing). To date, the following colour combinations have been used:

- Left leg, yellow (chick from the 1997/98 breeding season)
- Left leg, white (chick from the 1998/99 breeding season). A few birds from Possession Island carry a dark green ring on the left leg (1998/99).
- Left leg, red will be used for the breeding season of 1999/2000.

Possible colours above the metal ring on the right leg are: dark green (Possession Island), blue (west Cape mainland coast, south to Cape Peninsula), yellow (Saldanha Bay islands), orange (Dassen Island), red (False Bay to Breede River), pale green (south Cape coast, mostly Goukamma to Knysna), white (Port Elizabeth area) and black (East London area). A small number of subadult birds have been ringed at Cape Recife

with a dark brown ring on each leg – these are unlikely to be seen in Namibia. Some of the birds carrying two small rings have lost one or other ring – and some may have lost both. Even information from a single colour ring is valuable, however, as it will tell us either origin or age of the bird.

The second way in which chicks are ringed is with a single, long coloured ring on the left leg (and a metal ring on the right leg). These long rings are individually engraved with a three digit letter–number combination (e.g. A12), and all are from the 1998/99 breeding season. In 1999/2000, these birds will also carry a small red ring on the right leg. If you see a bird carrying a long ring, the key information is background colour (yellow, blue, red, green, white or black). You will need to be fairly close to read the letter/number combination, but this information would, of course, be doubly valuable (as we may be able to track these birds back to their breeding grounds). To date, approximately 30 of these colour-ringed oystercatchers have been resighted in the Walvis Bay/Swakopmund area. These sightings involve chicks from Possession Island, Saldanha Bay, Dassen Island, the Cape west coast, Cape Agulhas and Knysna. As yet, there is no evidence that chicks from Port Elizabeth or East London disperse to Namibia. Any information you provide on any colour-ringed oystercatchers will contribute directly to the objectives of the Oystercatcher Conservation Programme.

The ring combinations below were seen along the central coast this year:

### Colour-ring combination

Left leg	Right leg	Natal Site	Breeding season
yellow	yellow on metal	Saldanha Bay	97/98
white	yellow on metal	Saldanha Bay	98/99
white	orange on metal	Dassen Island	98/99
white	blue on metal	S.W. Cape	98/99
long yellow	metal only	Saldanha Bay	98/99

Chicks ringed in the 98/99 season will, if they were large enough at the

time of ringing, have long colour-rings on the left and metal only on the right. These new colour-rings are bi-layered with an alpha-numeric code etched onto them that can be read through a good spotting scope.

Please send details of sightings to:

Prof. Phil Hockey, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa  
Fax: +27 21 650 3295; e-mail ocp@botzoo.uct.ac.za.

Please provide details of date and precise locality, as well as of the ring combination. Additionally, if you know the location of any high tide oystercatcher roosts in Namibia (other than those in the salt pans at Walvis Bay and Swakopmund), this would also be extremely valuable information.

---

## OF HAEMATOPUS MOQUINI & MAL DE MER

Sandra Dantu  
P.O. Box 1445, Swakopmund

Mark Boorman and I went to Possession Island in early April 1999 to catch, ring and sample the blood of African Black Oystercatchers as part of Phil Hockey's African Black Oystercatcher conservation programme.

The project has been active in the Republic of South Africa for a few years, but this was the first opportunity to kickstart it in Namibia. One of the aims is to determine where juvenile birds disperse once they leave their natal areas. It was initially thought that the dispersal areas were not more than 100–150 km from the natal site. This theory was turned upside down when Mark and Tony Tree mist-netted a bird in Swakopmund that had been ringed as a chick in Mossel Bay. We have since seen a number of colour-ringed birds from the East and West coasts of South Africa at Swakopmund Guano Works and nearby shoreline, at Walvis Bay Oyster Farm and at the bird platform north of Walvis Bay.

While waiting in Lüderitz for the weather to allow sailing to the island we had a chance to do ringing work in a breeding colony of Swift Tern on

Shark Island. The colony was mixed with a breeding colony of Hartlaub's Gull, and a small breeding colony of Crowned Cormorant.

We found that the terns were not breeding synchronously. Some birds were still incubating eggs, and the chicks ranged from freshly hatched to almost fledged. There was also a range of leg colours from completely yellow to mottled yellow–black to completely black. This did not seem to be an age- or size-related characteristic. Also noteworthy were breeding adults that did not show a full black breeding cap.

After a four-day wait we eventually set sail for Possession into the teeth of a howling south-wester and waves the size of skyscrapers. I was later told that they were "only two-metre swells". However big they were, I was in no state to appreciate my first sightings of Whitechinned Petrel and Blackbrowed Albatross.

Apart from being a breeding site for oystercatchers, Possession is also home to a number of small breeding colonies of African Penguin, Cape Gannet, Swift Tern, Hartlaub's and Kelp Gulls, Crowned Cormorant and Whitefronted Plover. There are also resident groups of Yellow Canary, Cape Wagtail and Cape Sparrow. Here we also saw Swift Terns breeding before the appearance of the full breeding dress.

The oystercatcher chicks proved quite difficult to find and catch on the rocky shores. We spent many hours watching areas we knew had chicks in them, to no avail in many cases. When instructed by the parent's alarm call to go down, they do exactly that and don't budge again. They are cryptically coloured, go to ground under stones, rocks or overhangs or onto narrow ledges, and become all but invisible.

The technique for processing these chicks has been demonstrated to Sea Fisheries personnel on Possession, and hopefully the project will continue each breeding season.

We are now eagerly awaiting the arrival of juvenile African Black Oystercatchers from Possession Island here at the central coast. These birds