

NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

LANIOTURDUS publishes articles and notes of broad birding interest to the membership of the Namibia Bird Club. Contributors should look at recent issues of the magazine for guidance on suitability and presentation of material. Manuscripts in English, German or Afrikaans are requested and should be typed in double spacing on A4 paper. Sketches, maps and figures should be submitted on good quality white paper in black ink. High contrast black and white or colour photographs may be submitted to illustrate articles. Artwork illustrating any aspect of birds and/or birding are also requested. The editor is allowed a wide latitude in his choice of materials, thus any views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Namibia Bird Club. All material in *LANIOTURDUS* is copyright and permission to reproduce material should be negotiated with the Editor.

Authors are requested to submit articles on a computer disk (MS-DOS, low or high density, 5.25" or 3.5"). The preferred wordprocessing programme is WordPerfect, but Word, Wordstar and Multimate and a few other commonly available wordprocessing programmes can also be accommodated. **Please mark which programme has been used.** If you do not have one of the above programmes please submit an ASCII conversion of your manuscript. Handwritten articles are sure to be delayed as the current Editor and co-Editors are unable to spend a great deal of time typing articles. Handwritten short-notes and observations are acceptable but please make sure they are legible - typewritten is always better and invariably requires the author to give some thought to what is written (less editing is therefore required).

All disks and photographs will be returned to authors - manuscripts will not be returned. A single copy of the Volume issue in which your article appeared will be sent to the senior author.

All contributions for *LANIOTURDUS* should be sent to:

The Editor LANIOTURDUS, Namibia Bird Club, P.O. Box 67, Windhoek, Namibia.

CONTENTS

VOLUME 30 (3), September 1997

Editorial	1
VAN ZIJL, H. New Year's Day at Ruacana	2
SCHMIDT, S. Die Schwalbe und der Falke	8
KAESTNER, P. Feeder Frenzy	10
NOTICE: World Bird Count 1997	12
HINES, C. Where to buy bird books	13
KAESTNER, P. The Patagonia Phenomenon: A Windhoek yard list	14
McGIVERN, D. Recent evening meetings	22
MANNHEIMER, C. & CURTIS, B. The Namibian Tree Atlas	24
McGIVERN, D. Working weekend at the Waterberg	26
SIMMONS, R. Namibian wetland bird counts, 1997	27
WEARNE, K. Towards an integrated management and development plan for Walvis Bay Lagoon	32
HINES, C. Short Notes	33

FEEDER FRENZY

Peter Kaestner

Private Bag 12029, Ausspanplatz, Windhoek

As an ardent naturalist, I was somewhat disappointed when I discovered in August, 1996 that my home for the next three years while posted at the U.S. Embassy had a small yard with almost no native vegetation. In order to increase my chances of seeing some of Windhoek's fabulous birds, I decided to get a bird feeder. Since my sea freight had not yet arrived, I bought two 30 cm diameter ceramic dishes, and filled one with "chicken feed" and the other with water. For several weeks, I dutifully filled the water, but had no need to refill the food dish since no birds came to eat. Then, slowly but surely, some birds found the food. First, Black-throated Canaries (called Southern Yellow-rumped Seedeaters in Clements' *Checklist of Birds of the World*) and nondescript weavers came, soon followed by Laughing Doves. Then, all of a sudden, the Laughing Doves got the word out (do they use the Internet?) and we were inundated with dozens of the voracious visitors. The doves were excluding all other birds from the feast, and keeping up with the evaporation of the water was child's play compared to filling the cavernous crops of our Columbine callers. Not only was it a chore to keep filling the feeder, but the cost of the feed was starting to add up. The doves may have been "laughing," but we were not.

I was getting a bit pessimistic about the bird feeding business when our sea freight arrived with a "real" bird feeder. The feeder is a clear plastic tube about 30 cm long and 5 cm in diameter. The food is accessed through six openings about 1.5 cm in diameter, each with a small perch. With the smaller holes, we changed feed to mixed millet (about N\$40 for a ten-kg bag). The new feeder was a huge success. The songbirds instantly came back, and the doves were vanquished to the ground, where they scavenged seeds that fell from above.

By this time, the rains had started, and the species diversity had increased dramatically as nesting birds needed energy for egg laying. On November

23, one of the confusing weavers became a lot less confusing when it was joined by a spectacular male Chestnut Weaver. Then, I became quite confident at telling non-breeding Souther Masked and Chestnut Weavers apart. They are really quite different, as the Chestnut Weaver is noticeably bigger, has a greater contrast between the black streaks and the tan back, a streakier crown, a tan/brown chest, buff-not yellow-edgings on the flight feathers, more contrastingly white crissum, reddish brown eye, yellow confined to the face, and a bigger, grey bill. (Soon after, however, all of the Chestnut Weavers disappeared to breed, not to return until the end of May. But by July 1997, they were a dominant species again.) In December, things really started to take off. The small bush under the feeder became the haunt of several shy estrildids such as Melba Finch and Blue and Black-cheeked Waxbill. Occasionally dozens of Red-billed Queleas would show up for a few days, and then disappear as quickly as they came.

About the same time (early December) a Shaft-tailed Whydah started frequenting the feeder. While we were revelling in our most distinguished visitor, others came. After hosting a maximum of five Shaft-tails on one day, we were amazed that Eastern Paradise Whydahs were also starting to come in. Finally, we were visited by breeding Pin-tailed Whydahs on a couple of occasions! Things were so exciting at the feeder that I could hardly wait to get up in the morning or come home from work to see what new bird had graced our yard. (I was so proud of "my" whydahs, that some of my colleagues at work forbade me from talking about them.) Several times, two species of male breeding whydahs were feeding at the same time, but the closest I came to a "full house" was one evening in early January when all three species came within five minutes of each other. We saw fewer female whydahs than males, and the duller birds tended to keep to the safety of the bush under the feeder. The first female Paradise Whydah I saw was so different that I was unable to initially put it in a genus. Only after eliminating everything else and consulting a field guide, that I realized what I was looking at. After the rains, the whydahs dried up and disappeared. I did, however, see one moulting male shaft-tail on July 12, missing his marvelous tail.

At the height of the summer season (early January) we had as many as 12

species at the feeder at one time. In total, we recorded 21 species at the feeder in the first year (not counting an obviously escaped albino Australian Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*). Now, as I write this in mid winter, the spectacular species diversity of the summer has ebbed. The old standbys, Laughing Dove, Black-throated Canary, Southern Masked and Chestnut Weavers, House Sparrow, and Red-headed Finch are our constant companions. We are, however, always on the lookout in case something new comes in as the native seed sources are depleted. (On July 12, we had nine species at once when the moulting Shaft-tailed Whydah, a Great Sparrow, and several Red-billed Queleas joined the regulars.)

For a list of the feeder birds seen at my home from August 1996 to August 1997 see the list in the article "The Patagonia Phenomenon" on page 14.

NOTICE

WORLD BIRD COUNT 1997

The 3rd NTT World Bird Count takes place from the 1st-30th October this year. NTT is a Japanese telecommunications company which sponsors a worldwide fund raising effort for bird conservation. NTT makes a donation of about US \$ 10.00 per bird sighted during the period of one calendar month. Some 80 000 birders took part in the 1996 count and saw about 5 300 species of birds, thus raising US \$ 53 000 for Birdlife International.

If you are interested in taking part, just record the date, place and species that you saw (or heard) during the month of October and forward them to the NTT World Bird Count Office by e-mail wbc@wnn.or.jp. If you do not have access to e-mail please send your lists to me (Chris Hines) at the Bird Club address and I will send them on to the World Bird Count Office. With a bit of effort I think Namibia should be able to produce about 500 species in the month, although we may battle a little with some of the migrants, depending on the rainfall.

WHERE TO BUY BIRD BOOKS

Christopher Hines, Editor

A number of people have asked me over the past couple of months where to buy bird books. The short answer is, not in Namibia. I have found the selection poor and ordering is generally difficult. However, when looking for books in Windhoek, I have found the Windhoek Book Den in Frans Ndonga Gardens (off Trip Arcade) to be the most efficient - ordered books usually arrive within a month. I have only ever bought books published in South Africa. Generally I find the Book Den to be cheaper than the CNA and a lot cheaper than Russel Friedman Books in Johannesburg (the postage from South Africa is very high). Speak to Ms. Elmarie Kotze the owner.

I buy most of my books overseas - for this it is usually easiest to use a credit card - otherwise you need to organise a bank draft. Most of the book suppliers have good, comprehensive and up to date catalogues which are generally free. One small tip here - if you are buying books published in the UK buy them from a UK dealer (likewise buy US books in the US) the exchange rate sometimes gets completely skewed and books become markedly more expensive once they have crossed the Atlantic. Some useful addresses are:

- Natural History Book Service, 2-3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5XN, UK. They have a range of very comprehensive catalogues which are sent free. They also have a Web site which I found by searching for their name.
- Subbuteo Natural History Books, Treuddyn, nr Mold, Clwyd, North Wales, CH7 4LN, UK. Ask for their Wildlife and Travel Catalogue which is very comprehensive.
- American Birding Association Sales, P.O. Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80934-6599, USA. Produce a catalogue of books, optical equipment and sound recordings of interest to birders. Very good and fast ordering service. E-mail: abasales@abasales.com.
- Amazon Books on the Internet - I don't have the address. The biggest book supplier in the world with 2.5 million titles.