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Editorial

Timothy O. Osborne

This edition has been edited 16,000 km from Namibia while I was in Alaska visiting our daughters and granddaughters. When we arrived in early March it was -30°C and the only birds I saw were hardy winter birds like ravens, redpolls and ptarmigan. Now it is Easter and the sun is shining, the snow is melting fast in the 10°C weather and Trumpeter swans, Canada geese and mallards are arriving into the snow-melt ponds. I have been out of touch with the Bird Club but I note that still our membership has not increased with the new year. Again I have to appeal for everyone to give out membership forms to people you know who are not members. How many of you have done this? The Club is slowly withering on the vine and it is frustrating for those of us who live somewhere other than Windhoek. We do not know what is going on with the Club. Are we perishing as a Club or not, that is the question? Certainly birding is growing worldwide and I would hate to think that we are not part of that trend.

At least I am still receiving articles for *Lanioturdus*, which means that there are still interested Bird Club members who want to communicate with their fellow members. As the article on Herero Chats shows us there is still plenty to be learned about our local birds. We have another chapter in the Paxton boat saga. He is still looking for volunteers (victims) to assist him as he tries to count birds on the various waterways of the north. One place he has not counted yet is the Orange River. Perhaps it is too tame without his usual challenges of crocs, hippos, bilharzia and UNITA soldiers.

**FIRST RECORD OF THE EUROPEAN TURTLE-DOVE
(*Streptopelia turtur*) FOR NAMIBIA**

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On 31 July 2002, 1600 hours, we observed a single European Turtle-dove *Streptopelia turtur* sitting on an acacia tree near the petrol station in Namutoni, Etosha National Park, northern Namibia (18°49 S, 16°55 E). We were able to approach the bird to c 10 m and to photograph it (opposite). It was a bird in adult plumage. The pointed dark feather centres on the wing coverts with contrasting pale fringes are diagnostic to exclude a possible Oriental Turtle-dove *Streptopelia orientalis*. The pale iris separates it from the Laughing Dove.

The European Turtle-dove is a very common non-breeding visitor to the Sahelian zone of sub-Saharan Africa (Urban et al. 1986) but records south of the equator are very rare. So far, there were only two accepted records of this Palearctic migrant to southern Africa (Harrison et al. 1997): on 12 June 1988 in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, and on 10 January 1989 in the Kruger National Park. Two former Namibian records were from caged offspring of two birds caught on the Okavango River and at the mouth of the Orange River, respectively (Winterbottom 1974). They were omitted from the Namibian bird list because of concerns about their dubious origin (Harrison et al. 1997). Therefore, this record is the first for Namibia and the third for southern Africa.

References

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European Turtle-dove at Namutoni, Etosha National Park, 31 July 2002. Photo: M. Kestenholz