



# LANIOTURDUS

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## Editorial

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Bird distributions are on the move with ranges both expanding and contracting. I have noticed in the short time that I have been editing this journal that there have been a number of sightings of various species in areas where they have not previously been recorded. Some examples of this are blue waxbill and African harrier-hawk sighted at the Spitzkoppe, great spotted cuckoo east of Lüderitz (although I suspect that this one might be a case of reverse migration), lesser jacana and rufous bellied heron at Farm Tsutsab etc. I was recently browsing through old issues of *Mitteilung der Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe*, the predecessor of *Lanioturdus*, and came across an article by S. M. Seftel wherein the writer was commenting on the disappearance of fiscal shrikes and southern white crowned shrikes from the Avis Dam area back in the 1974. I have also heard Dieter Ludwig comment that chat flycatchers and capped wheatears are no longer to be seen in the Windhoek area and that ant-eating chats have also disappeared from the Avis Dam area. I have myself noticed that white-tailed shrikes, which were regular visitors to my Klein Windhoek garden in the late 1980's, are now very seldom seen there while until about three years ago I had never seen a southern red bishop in my garden and now they come in droves. A new species moving into an area is probably far more noticeable than the gradual disappearance of an established species. While the Atlas of Southern African Birds and Roberts VII still contain the most accurate information available on species distributions in Namibia it must be remembered that data collection for the Atlas ceased some 16 years ago in 1993 and that there have been changes in the relatively short period since then although it must also be remembered that coverage for each individual species was not 100 %. Seven of the last ten rainy seasons have brought above average rainfall (at least to central Namibia) so changed climatic conditions may well be a factor in the extended ranges while disturbance and changes in habitat probably play a role in the contracting ranges and disappearance of species from some areas. Please continue sending in your observations of species new to an area or unusual in an area and also of species that may have disappeared. You never know – maybe someone who reads this journal in 35 years time will say “Oh wow – species X was already present in that area way back in 2009.”

## Greater Painted Snipe in Swakopmund

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On Friday 6 March 2009 I was driving to work along Libertina Amathila Avenue when I passed a dead bird lying in the middle of the road. "Another dove" I thought and made nothing more of it.

Work was as dreary as could be on a Friday morning when the phone rang and Mark Boorman told me of a Greater Painted Snipe he had found in the middle of the road close to his house.

I mentioned the "dove" that I had seen the same morning, but that evidently was no dove as Mark had gone to the trouble of stopping and picking up the dead bird.

As I had my camera with me to document the Gray's Lark chicks reported on earlier in Lanioturdus, I dashed over to his house to photograph this beautiful bird.



Photographs: Eckart Demasius

Now the day was no longer boring and dreary.

The moral of this story is that even a dead bird can make your day, so don't just drive past it, you never know what surprise might be waiting for you!!

This is by no means the only record of a Greater Painted Snipe in Swakopmund. Mark had documented another Greater Painted Snipe before at the local sewage works on 2 March 2007.



Photograph: Mark Boorman

*(It appears that there is at least one record from the Atlas period for this area as well – Ed.)*

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## Traditional Tales from the Shona Culture

as told by Stewart Matsopo

### Why the owl moves by night

Once upon a time in Africa the owl ruled over all the bird species. He was the bird king. It so happened that all the birds were scared of him because of the tufts on his head. He had lied to the others that they were actually horns.

But the owl was a bad ruler, a ruthless dictator. It was the duty of every bird to bring him water and food to eat. Everybody hated the king but there was nothing that they could do because they were all scared of him.

One day during one of his many court sessions, a tiny blue waxbill sat close to his throne and watched closely as he talked. The waxbill noted that the so called horns were not actually horns but just tufts of feathers. Suddenly he sat on top of the king's head and everyone was astonished because nobody dared to do that to the king. He shouted while flipping the tufts "listen all of you all – for too long we have been subjected to misery by this owl because of his so called horns – these are not horns as you can see." All birds were shocked to see the tufts being flipped.

Every one laughed their lungs out. The owl was so ashamed he ran away and went into hiding. To this day he moves mostly at night because he is too embarrassed to be seen by other birds.