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EDITORIAL

This summer has seen the most remarkable influx of huge numbers of birds of a variety of species and a surfeit of rarities from the North to the coast and places in the South – or is it that we are getting more birders out into the field finding more birds and reporting their observations. I think it is probably a combination of both.

This year, some of the biggest numbers of Abdim's Storks I have ever seen, arrived and stayed even though there was a general lack of rain and *Koringkrieks!* Around Etosha, through the central parts of the country to south of Windhoek there were storks everywhere. Huge numbers of coastal terns, skuas, waders and pelagic seabirds were reported from the Walvis Bay and Sandwich Harbour areas. Large numbers of Western Redfooted Kestrels were reported from the central part of the country for most of the summer and huge numbers of European Swifts were reported at the same time. But for me the interesting thing has been the number of reports we have received of other species of interest (see *SHORT NOTES*) and the number of people reporting these. I can only hope that people's interest has again been stimulated to get out birding and that, although local, *Lanioturdus* is starting to provide the medium for pricking people's interest. This is what it is there for, and I cannot stress enough to you all that without your support and contributions the magazine (and the club) will fail.

Thanks for all your support and keep on birding.

wat 'n voël aanmekaar uiter. Dit geluk ons om die voël uiteindelik op te spoor. In werklikheid toe twee voëls – twee Gestreepte Visvangers. Dit is die teenwoordigheid van 'n Witkoluiltjie in 'n manketti wat die twee uiters aggressief maak. Hulle duik beurtelings skellend op hom af om dan tjoepstil aan die kant van 'n nabye boomtop stelling in te neem. Hul vlerke word met die duikslag teruggewerp soos 'n arend sy prooi sou skep. Die uiltjie sit dan vroom en onskuldig onder die beskerming van 'n dikkerige tak. Skielik probeer hy vinnig wegkom maar die visvangertjies is meedoënloos agter hom aan. Deur hulle volgehoue strydkrete kon ons vasstel dat sy wegglippoging onsuksesvol was. Ons hoor 'n keer of wat die Gestreepte Visvangers se gewone roep, 'n pragtige geluid, so eie aan Afrika.

Hier by Manketti Mansions sien ons ook weer die Bradfieldse Neushoringvoëls. Dit was nie eintlik 'n verrassing nie. Ons het al geleer dat die kansse goed is om hulle raak te loop indien daar mankettis in die omgewing is. Hulle vreet seker die neute.

Onder in die Eiseb Omuramba is Marico Vlieëvangers tussen die acacias en slegs 500 m verder uit die omuramba in die duine kry ons Muiskleurvlieëvangers. Die Swartkroontjagra en Rooivlerktjagra kom ook hier langs mekaar voor. Ons sien ook die pragtige groen en wit Witpensuikerbekkie.

Op pad na Otjinene stop ons by 'n paar kalkagtige kranse in die Theronsvallei. In die grotte hou heelparty Nonnetjie-uile skuil. Ons versamel 'n paar uilkoutjies wat heelwat muishare en voëlkopbeentjies bevat. Langs die nes van boomblare en gras van 'n kolonie muise in 'n vlak grot, is ook 'n netjiese latrine van een of ander katspesie. By een van die kamphekke wat ons later deurgaen, lê 'n elandkoei rustig en herkou tussen die Brahmane in die beeskraal! By 'n volgende hek is 'n swerm Baardmannetjies in 'n digte blinkblaar wag-'n-bietjie struik doenig. Hulle vlieg sporadies weg maar kom dan weer vinnig sit om langnek te loer in 'n verinnuweerde voëlnessie se rigting. Baie versigtig maar nogtans ook vol bravade en nuuskierigheid. 'n Bosveldtjeriktik en 'n Kalahariwipstert is sommer openlik besig om ondersoek in te stel oor die Baardmannetjies se konsternasie. Ons sien toe die ligbruin streepmuis in die digte lower raak.

Hy leef hoofsaaklik van saad, plantjies en insekte. 'n Mens wonder hoekom die voëltjies die muis so wantrou? Het hulle sy stert vir 'n slangetjie aangesien? Lyk hy vir hulle na 'n soort kat? Of weet hulle dat hy dalk voëleiertjies vreet?

Ons ry hiervandaan voet in die hoek Windhoek toe. 'n Swartborsslangarend druk haar kop sku in 'n nes weg waar dit in 'n kameeldoringboom se kroon vlak teen die grootpad gebou is. 'n Laaste stop by 'n bruggie langs die Otjivero-dam stel ons in staat om 'n klompie Familieswaels se bedrywigheede dop te hou.

'n Heerlike langnaweekwegbreek!

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

GREENSPACE AND THE NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

The Bird Club and the much newer group 'Greenspace' have a lot in common – shared values, shared stamping grounds, and even shared ancestry, as Bird Club members, in particular Klaus Gerstle, were thoroughly involved in the 1995 events surrounding development at Avis Dam which hastened Greenspace's formation. At that stage, as many might recall, an especially inappropriate Malaysian proposal for a casino, hotel, golf course and large housing settlement on the site of the Avis parking lot and floodplain met with support from the City Council and rejection from almost everyone else. The event galvanised us into action around the theme of a greater need for sensible, appropriate, and judicious urban environmental planning, with much greater public participation and accountability. Thus, Greenspace, which otherwise might have only developed when we all had enough free time (c. 2030), had a rather tumultuous birth. And, thanks to all of you who gave of your time, we have kept our options for Avis Dam open, for the moment. We (in both groups) are now stronger and much better placed to advise on appropriate development options. Would-be golfers and gamblers arriving at Avis Dam

without their SCUBA diving gear are in for a long wait.

How can the two groups best work together to ensure the protection of Avis Dam? There are two sets of ongoing, easy activities that can help strengthen our joint efforts. Greenspace's subgroup, 'Friends of Avis Dam', is the frontline contact here, and its chair is Christa Müller.

The first is immediate and effective: Help act as voluntary wardens whenever you visit, by noting offenders, and wherever possible, use friendly persuasion to enlist their co-operation. Under Greenspace's lease, all off-road drivers and scramblers have been barred from the area, and signs have been put up to say so. The 4x4 and biker communities are perhaps not well known for their meek acquiescence, however, and despite engaging the relevant off-road driving associations in a cordial discussion, we expect that the nasty minority will flaunt the new rules. Please, carry a small pencil and paper with you (and binoculars) so that you can note down registration numbers. If it seems appropriate, you can try to engage individuals in a polite and firm discussion of the need to organise themselves to negotiate the lease of an alternate off-road site with the City Council, but state firmly that public opinion has been strongly in favour of excluding drivers from the Avis Dam. However, bear in mind that some people may be aggressive. It's best not to confront them but simply to note as many details as possible. Please report these details to Greenspace at 228886 (Sally Harper, Kitti Stern) or 2012581 (Christa Müller), *and* to the Chief Traffic Control Officer of the Windhoek Municipality, at 2903120 or 258473 (Deputy Chief of Operations, Eliphas Owos-Oab). Windhoek Traffic Department has been extremely supportive, and Deputy Chief Owos-Oab attended a Friends of Avis meeting to discuss nuisance bikers and related matters with the group. Of course, please also note details of any suspected poachers, woodcutters, vandals or thieves. We need to act together to ensure environmental protection and public safety at the dam, while at the same time keeping a low, friendly (never vigilante!) profile.

The second thing you can do is to help the cross-pollination of ideas between the two groups by attending Friends of Avis meetings. These are held at 18:00 on the first Monday of every month at the Forum, 6 Burg

Street (off Heinitsburg Street near its intersection with Robert Mugabe). We have a lot of things of joint interest and concern to discuss, and this is one of the best and most fun ways. For example, we are currently expanding and modifying the draft management plan for Avis Dam, a process that will need input between February and May 1998. How do you feel that multiple activities at the dam should be zoned or controlled? What sort of major development options do you feel are acceptable? Please come and share your ideas and views!

Phoebe Barnard
Private Bag 13306
Windhoek

RESULTS OF THE WIS BIRD RACE

On Saturday, 14 March, 1998, the Windhoek International School and the Bird Club ran its first-ever co-sponsored BIRD RACE, in which 54 people participated. These were not your usual participants: most were young (still in primary school, or with their parents), and most had never gone birding before. So, when the BIRD RACE organizers told the participants ahead-of-time that time that they would likely spot 35 different species *or more* within three hours, most thought the organizers were nuts.

But imagine their surprise: by 10:30 that morning, the teams averaged fifty species, or more (with one team at 75, and another at 83). Several participants said that they had never imagined that so many species existed...

The BIRD RACE had three goals:

1. To introduce birding (and an awareness of the environment) to novice, young, and out-of-practice birders, ages seven and up.
2. To raise money for a school bus for the Windhoek International School – by getting people to pledge a certain amount per species seen.
3. To have fun.

Because of the many "little ones", the event was kept short-and-sweet, from