

## CONTENTS

VOLUME 30(4), December 1997

Editorial .....	1
KAESTNER, PG. Cyber-Cindy .....	2
BROWN, CJ. Early Record of a Yellowbilled Kite .....	6
HINES, C, <i>et al.</i> A Rash of Rarities .....	8
BOIX HINZEN, C. Beware! Gin Traps at the Sewage Works .	17
BROWN, CJ. "Stanley's Bustard" in Etosha National Park ...	19
McGIVERN, D. Von Bach Dam Bird List .....	21
MENDELSON, J. Namibian Hornbills in Nest Boxes .....	22
BOIX HINZEN, C. Notes on Misdirected Feeding Behaviour .	26
BROWN, CJ. Ospreys at Friedenau Dam .....	29
HINES, C. Grey-headed Sparrow Complex in Namibia .....	30
THE BROWN FAMILY. The Pavlovian Phenomenon .....	32
SHORT NOTES .....	38
McGIVERN, D. Western Etosha and Hobatere .....	40
LUDWIG, DE. Birdwatch 97 .....	41
PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES	
Co-sponsored Bird Race: Members Welcome! .....	43
Update on the Namibian Tree Atlas Project .....	44

## EDITORIAL

This is the final edition of *Lanioturdus* for 1997 — the fourth of the year and an achievement for all those people who contributed to the journal over the past year. Although we have seldom exceeded 40 pages in any one edition we feel that the value of the magazine has increased in that we are keeping our members informed and hopefully fostering more interest in birding in Namibia as a whole. Many thanks to all the authors and artists who submitted material for the year and I hope that the articles will keep on rolling in to make 1998 as successful as 1997.

The summer heat is upon us and with the first migrants having already arrived, you should all be looking forward to some excellent birding over the coming holiday period. This may be a particularly interesting year — the predictions of the weather boffins is that *El Nino* is likely to negatively influence the rainfall patterns in the country. This in turn will have a major effect on the distribution and breeding of birds over the next couple of months. I encourage all of you to get out there and look at what's going on — keep field notes on your observations and make some comparisons with what you know of previous years. This applies equally to common as well as rarer species. How much do we really know about doves in this country? I have noticed that in Bushmanland and at Aris, near Windhoek, that the numbers of Namaqua Doves is highly variable both within and between years. I suspect the same thing of Laughing Doves which seem to disappear at certain times of the year. Keeping basic notes and records can tell us so much about the birds we take for granted (many of which are surprisingly poorly studied). Your notes and records do not have to take the form of detailed scientific observations — casual and incidental observations are also valuable. Collect information, put it together in the form of an article and send it to *Lanioturdus*. Anyone can do it and I encourage all of you to try!!!

On behalf of the Namibia Bird Club Committee, I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Good birding in 1998 and let's hear from you.

## GREY-HEADED SPARROW COMPLEX IN NAMIBIA: WHICH SPECIES OCCUR IN THE CAPRIVI?

Christopher Hines  
PO Box 22527, Windhoek

The Grey-headed Sparrow complex in Africa has been the subject of considerable taxonomic debate in the past. A number of authorities have tended to lump all the forms into a single polymorphic species, but Hall & Moreau (1970), Summers-Smith (1988) and Clement, *et al.* (1993) consider the races of this one polymorphic species (the Grey-headed Sparrow) as five separate species. These are: Swainson's Sparrow (*P. swainsonii*), Parrot-billed Sparrow (*P. gongonensis*), Swahili Sparrow (*P. suahelicus*), Grey-headed Sparrow (*Passer griseus*) and Southern Grey-headed Sparrow (*P. diffusus*). As pointed out in Clement, *et al.* (1993) all these species are extremely similar, but differ subtly in details of plumage. The first three species are essentially eastern and north-eastern African species with only *P. suahelicus* coming as far south as central Malawi. None of these species are likely to occur in Namibia.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow (*P. diffusus*) is well known to most people as a common and widespread bird of towns and bushveld throughout Namibia (except parts of the extreme South).

(Northern) Grey-headed Sparrow (*P. griseus*) is a common species with a very wide distribution through Africa with several races extending from West Africa through to southern Zambia (ZOS, 1996). There are no records of this species for Southern Africa (Harrison, *et al.*, 1997). The preliminary Zambian Atlas records *P. griseus* from the Livingstone area and Dodman (1995) recorded both *P. griseus* and *P. diffusus* from the Mulobezi area about 70 km north of the Namibian border. Pete Leonard (pers. comm) indicated that *P. griseus* was known from the Katima Mulilo area in Zambia (around the Sesheke Ferry). The southern part of Zambia is a zone of considerable overlap of both *P. griseus* and *P. diffusus*.

During a recent trip (18–22/11/97) to Impalila Island at the eastern tip of

the Caprivi Strip I saw what I consider to be *P. griseus* on several occasions. On the island, *P. diffusus*, is common and found in most habitats. The birds considered to be *P. griseus* were generally uncommon, seeming to be restricted to areas of rockier ground on the edges of homestead clearings and fields. They were observed using 10x42 binoculars and a 25x Kowa 'scope and were generally approachable and confiding. They were, however, easily distinguishable from *P. diffusus* with which it was found on two occasions. Most noticeable is the fact that *P. griseus* has a larger, heavier bill, a larger, rounded head and appears dark-headed with sooty tones in a facial patch running through the eye, giving the bird an "angry" look. The mantle of *P. griseus* is considerably darker than that of *P. diffusus* and the white shoulder patch, so marked in *P. diffusus*, is either absent or vestigial in *P. griseus*. Overall, *P. griseus* strikes me as a deeper bodied and bulkier bird than *P. diffusus*, with darker and duller colours. The birds seen on the island are presumably of the race *P. griseus ugandae*, although Clement, *et al.* (1993) do not indicate any distribution of this sub-species in Zambia.

These records may constitute the first records for this species in southern Africa, but require confirmation probably through the collection of specimens for housing in the National Museum. Should anyone else be visiting the area around the Katima Mulilo border post, Impalila Island or the area opposite in Botswana, I would strongly recommend having a good look at the "Grey-headed" Sparrows in the area — you could have "one in the bank".

### References

- Clement, P, Harris, A & Davis, J. 1993. *Finches and Sparrows*. London, Christopher Helm.
- Dodman, T. 1995. *Status and distribution of the Black-cheeked Lovebird* *Agapornis nigrigenis*. Report to, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
- Hall, BP & Moreau, RE. 1970. *An atlas of speciation in African Passerine birds*. London, British Museum (Natural History).
- Harrison, JA, Allan, DG, Underhill, LG, Herremans, M, Tree, AJ, Parker, V & Brown, CJ. (Eds). 1997. *The Atlas of southern African birds*. Johannesburg, BirdLife South Africa.
- Summers-Smith, JD. 1988. *The Sparrows*. London, Calton.
- ZOS (Zambian Ornithological Society). 1996. *Atlas of Zambian Birds*. Preliminary draft.