

# LANIOTURDUS

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## **About the Namibia Bird Club**

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. The club's mission is to contribute to Namibian ornithology by, amongst other things, arranging regular birding outings, conducting bird ringing and atlasing excursions and educating the public about the value of birds. To achieve this, we organise monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Water Care Works and occasional weekend trips further afield. Bird club members also participate in the African Waterbird Census twice a year.

Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we present occasional lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive the bird club's journal, *Lanioturdus* and outings and events are advertised on the club's website [www.namibiabirdclub.org](http://www.namibiabirdclub.org).

The Namibia Bird Club is not affiliated to any global or regional organisation and relies entirely on members' subscriptions and donations to fund its activities.

The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Namibia Bird Club or its committee.



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## CONTENTS

SCHWIPPERT B	African Harrier-Hawk vs Smith's Bush Squirrel ..... <b>1</b>
THOMSON N	An overview of ten years of bird ringing in Klein Windhoek ..... <b>9</b>
DEMASIUS E	How I became a birder ..... <b>14</b>
KOLBERG H	Summary of the 2018 winter wetland bird counts in Namibia ..... <b>17</b>
THOMSON N	Some "Do's" and "Don'ts" when feeding garden birds ..... <b>21</b>
ANON	Rotstirnbartvogel, R. No 432 ..... <b>23</b>
BOORMAN M	Vultures Namibia..... <b>25</b>
THOMSON N	Short Notes ..... <b>26</b>
THOMSON N	Rarities and Interesting Observations ..... <b>30</b>
KOLBERG H	Bird Atlas Update ..... <b>37</b>
KOLBERG H	Tracked Vultures ..... <b>38</b>

Cover photo Black-chested Prinia © Holger Kolberg

## How I became a birder

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Around 1983 I was introduced to the late Richard Niddrie by Chris Grundy, who had already been on a number of trips with us in Namibia. Having returned from university there was a desire to make new friends and together we travelled to a new destination almost every second weekend. That is how Richard came on board.

We went on many trips with Richard, including some epic ones in what was then still wilderness in Namibia and Botswana.

But it was a simple short weekend trip where Richard had the biggest impact on my life – a weekend visit to Namutoni. In the course of that weekend, knowingly or not, he made a birder of me!

One weekend in May 1985 Richard invited me and my then fiancée, Birgit, now my wife for more than 33 years, on a weekend trip to Namutoni, Etosha.

Birgit declined; she was still teaching and had many books to mark over the weekend but she was only too happy for me to join Richard.

Just before sunset we arrived at Namutoni. We had a good braai; there was never a need for vegetables with Richard, those were substituted by a beer and some more for “dessert”.

The next morning we got up early and enjoyed a cup of coffee whilst many of the other visitors left in a frantic rush.

I said to Richard: “Let’s get going, there is something out there, we are

missing something!”, but he was in no hurry at all. Eventually we got into his little silver Golf, but before we even reached the entrance/exit gate of Namutoni we had stopped at least twice with Richard looking at birds. I became ever tenser.

Eventually we left camp, but before we reached the turn-off to Fischer’s Pan Richard stopped abruptly, and, while other cars sped past us covering us in dust, he grabbed his binocs and the bird watching continued.

He said: “Check there – magnificent!” I said: “I see a little grey bird.” “No, take your binocs and have a look!!” I did so and – WOW – that was not just a little grey bird – this was a little jewel of a bird. “What’s that”, I asked, “Blue Waxbill”. “What? – never heard of it before”.

So we continued and he said to me: “When you see the little things, you cannot miss the big ones, you know, like elephants ... and that’s how you see da leopard.” I laughed out loud and thought: “Now I’ve heard it all!”

We were back in camp by half past ten. I offered to make breakfast, so I sent him out to find out what the others had seen. He came back with a two word answer which means, in more civil language, absolutely nothing.

He then hastened to say that we had already seen 46 different bird species. WOW, was my reaction.

We continued our day with Richard being ever patient with me trying to photograph birds – after all, who does



not want a nice photograph of a Crimson-breasted Shrike?



Later in the afternoon we arrived at Ngobib and there he was – the elephant bull. And Richard was right: “When you see the little things, you cannot miss the big ones, you know, like elephants ... “



We continued with our sightseeing and animal watching amid lots of laughter and fun. With Richard we never spoke about work – NEVER – and that made life so much more of a pleasure.

I knew that back in town he was an accountant, clad in his dark suit and tie – he always looked professional. On trips we NEVER discussed work. Nothing spoils a brilliant weekend trip more than ending up talking about work!!

Soon we were back at Fischer’s Pan and enjoyed the lovely views of the

flamingos and animals coming for a late afternoon drink.



We then left for the Okevis. Returning shortly before sunset from Klein Okevi, Richard suddenly slammed on the brakes – I could not help spilling the beer – and he said: “I told you, ... and this is how you see da leopard”. He was right - AGAIN!



I was floored, to say the least! Yes, I heard it in my inner ear again:



“When you see the little things, you cannot miss the big ones, you know, like elephants ... and that’s how you see da leopard.” And there it was –

my very first leopard in the wild – in Etosha!

The next weekend we were at the Waterberg – watching birds!

