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## Editorial

Timothy O. Osborne

The first edition of the *Lanioturdus* this year came out with only 20 pages and had a "thin" feel but I have received one email from a member who praised the contents as quality not quantity. His statement was "Congrats on the new *TURD!!!!!!!* That was really very much better! You know, if people just start thinking, observe, keep records, whatever. Then something like the paper by Eckart Demasius appears on adding value to bird lists. I think his results could be applicable everywhere. Those are the guys "who have nothing else to do but to observe their surroundings"." These are the kind of email editors enjoy receiving and it is even better if is accompanied with a CONTRIBUTION!

The rain, what there was of them, have come and gone so winter is rapidly approaching, the palearctic migrants have gone back north and the intra-African migrants have left but that is no reason to quit observing as there are many birds breeding during the dry season

I do not know if anyone has seen drafts of the new "Robert's" yet but it will be a massive book to cover "everything" known about the birds. One of the good features of the book is it will highlight what we do not know about the birds and that is still considerable, especially here in Namibia with our endemics and local races of birds. As an example the species editor of the Short-toed Rock Thrush, Richard Dean appealed to me to find nests of this common bird as little is known about most aspects of the breeding biology such as courtship behaviour, displays, number of breeding attempts per year, geographical/seasonal variation in clutch size, sex roles in nest building and incubation, incubation shift lengths, plumage and morphological development of young, fledging and post fledging dependence periods, interactions among young and breeding success. Incubation period is unknown. All that is just for one species for starters.

## INTERESTING BIRD SIGHTINGS FROM DAAN VILJOEN GAME RESERVE OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS.

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In 1998 the present bird checklist of DVGR was compiled with the seasoned experience of Martin and Anne Marie Britz, Rob Simmons, my own observations since 1995 and Elly Hamunyela's creative layout skills. On a recent visit to the Tourist centre I managed to get hold of the checklist. Whilst using it, I realised that an update was overdue. So I gathered my last four years set of field notes, and below is what I had noted. I would like to remark however, that the following observations were obtained on the eastern sections of DVGR (an area restricted to the public) and not in the Tourist section.

**Wahlberg's Eagle** *Aquila wahlbergi*: An infrequent visitor by my standards. A dark adult morph, soaring lazily over the Augeigas river whilst hunting the hills and cliffs above the stream. The bird was seen once on 26 Feb 2000. This was my first sighting of the species at DVGR.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*: A common sight at Friedenau and Avis dam, but not so common at DVGR. Two individuals that may have been the same individual? were sighted on consecutive days downstream from the Aretaragas stream entrance into the reserve on 14-15<sup>th</sup> March 2001. The birds were seen as they flew upstream, prospecting this perennial stream. Their course was set towards DVGR rest camp.

**Palmnut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis*: I was honoured to overhear a conversation whilst attending a conference in Australia, where raptorophile expert Rob Simmons, accredited the one and only sighting of Palmnut Vulture in the Khomas Hochland recorded by Simon Aspinall and myself in March 1996. Whether this was a belated overcoming of a natural frustration for not having been there, or whether he was just being nice to me for taking him on a birding weekend esca-

pade to the Queensland Outback, is actually irrelevant...the sighting was "dincum"... and it's now been ratified by the expert. The question remains is it worth adding a rarity to a reserve's checklist?, maybe not but perhaps the next checklist should feature a table of rarities.

**Augur Buzzard** *Buteo augur*: Not too sure if this is the bird that should be on the list instead of Jackal Buzzard?? Regardless, this bird has a very distinct habit of showing up at DVGR, during the Hornbill fledging months. It is quite obvious that the riches of the Hornbill fledging season, when the veld is clad with clumsy novice "flysters" represents a good excuse to abandon the granite outcrops of the Namib-Naukluft. In May 2000 an adult Augur buzzard was sighted feeding on a recently fledged Yellowbilled Hornbill, and in April 2001 a pair of buzzards ended several months of hard Hornbill parental efforts, when they managed to seize the only two fledglings emerging from a nest.

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*: Becoming a more and more common sight around Windhoek over the years, this species has been seen on numerous occasions along the Aretaragas stream. I saw it for the first time in April 1999 during an NBC outing lead by myself. Subsequently that year, it was seen again twice on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of April respectively, which I thought was interestingly late for a migrant species of its kind. In 2000 it hung out around the same area and was spotted on several occasions. 2001 was an excellent year to spot the bird as the reserve had received early rains in January, and as a result of an unusual fire, had most beehives on the move looking for new snag hollows or nest boxes...grrrrr!!!!...23 occupied nest boxes!!!!), the bird was definitely busy and on the wing most of the time. I only wished there had been flocks of them to save me the workload of emptying nest boxes full of bees. Having been only a few weeks in Windhoek so far this year I have seen an individual at the back end of the Gammans Sewage Works, near the heronry, in the afternoon and all three afternoons I visited the site.

**Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio porphyrio*: Following a bout of torrential rains that massacred the fence where the Aretaragas enters the reserve an adult individual of this species was seen the following day desperately looking for cover along the waters edge on 12 Feb 2000. Quite likely a flood victim, working his way back to the Gammans Water Treatment Ponds.

**Burchell's Courser** *Cursorius rufus*: "Cryptic, elusive and confiding"...no friggin wonder...if it chooses to hang out on the quartz pebble hilltops of DVGR's most inaccessible koppies. In Feb 2000 and March 2001 whilst walking a hornbill census transect I came across a single individual (possibly the same one) scurrying along the very top of a koppie on the SE section of the reserve. Nice views from up there... but otherwise not a clue what he was doing there. However, the bird may be more common than we think if one keeps an ear out for it, Rob Simmons has reported hearing the bird several times in the early morning or late afternoon whilst checking nest boxes.

**Ruppell's Parrot** *Poicephalus rueppellii*: Thin on the ground as ever, at least at DVGR I have three more sightings to add to the list. The first one dates from 13<sup>th</sup> March 1999 when two individuals shot overhead whilst I was checking nest boxes in the Choub river at an area known as Rooiberg, not far from the reserve's northern fence. On 7<sup>th</sup> April 2000 an adult pair was sighted after good rains feeding on Buffalo Thorn *Ziziphus mucronata* berries around Peter Eisselein's dairy farm. These birds were subsequently re-sighted during the following week. Finally, last year, an adult single bird was seen after the late March rains and coinciding with the ripening of Buffalo Thorn berries. This bird also stayed a few days before disappearing...my guess is that it went downstream towards the denser riverine forests downstream from Ongos and towards the Montecristo farms.

**Southern Grey Tit** *Parus afer*: Observed by Mark Brown and Craig Symes and subsequently confirmed by myself in April 2000. A pair of Southern Grey Tits made residence along the *Acacia karoo* forests growing below Peter Eisselein's farm. Its quite likely that this species could be grossly overlooked, but I cannot say that I have seen any others ever since.

**African Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus*: Possibly a typing drop-out as it is a very common species in the reserve. Often found foraging along the river's edge or in *A.karoo* stands along the Aretaragas stream.

**African Barred Warbler** *Calamonastes fasciolata*: I am sure that this is also a typing error, as the reserve squeaks alive every year to the tunes of several hundred

Barred Warblers, resembling a vintage Argus cycle tour...if it's true that their call resembles a rusty old "fiets".

**Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea*: Responding to the late March 2001 rains, a flock of 36 birds settled at Peter Eisselein's farm and roosted in a large *Acacia erioloba* within the reserve. They were not however spotted breeding.

**Lesser Masked Weaver** *Ploceus intermedius*: A local common resident in the reserve that somehow did not crack the nod on to the list either when first compiled. Obviously a mistake as this is a common and abundant resident in the *Acacia mellifera* stands of the reserve. Often seen breeding along the Aretaragas and in mixed flocks with Chestnut weavers.

**Larklike Bunting** *Emberiz impetuani*: In typical rain-tracking fashion this bird has not failed to show itself literally a few days after a reasonable downpour over the past four years.

Care to share some more of your own precious sightings with us? Would love and appreciate to hear all about them.....

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### Bushmanland Adventures

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My husband and I decided to visit Bushmanland again and we left on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2002. We did not have enough time so we only wanted to look around Tsumkwe and the surrounding areas. Sadly we could not go into the Kaudum Game Reserve this time.

We arrived at Tsumkwe Lodge around lunch time, it was still drizzling from the good rain shower they had and we had to wait before we could pitch up our tent at the campsite. That evening a lot of people arrived and we talked well into the night. The next day it still looked rainy and overcast so we took a walk near the