

# LANIOTURDUS

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## CONTENTS

### NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

A branch of  
the Namibia Scientific Society  
and  
the Southern African Ornithological Society

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EDITORIAL	.... 2
GALLAND, B. "Grusswort"	.... 3
ARTICLES, REPORTS, NEWS AND REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION:	
BECKER, P. Blutschnabelweber ( <i>Quelea quelea</i> ) brütet im Zuckerrohr ( <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> ).	.... 4
FRIEDE, G. & G. FRIEDE. Birds of the Swakop river lagoon - (Follow-up report 1992/1993)	.... 7
SIMMONS, R. Namibia's third national wetland bird survey, July 1992.	.... 9
VAN DE REEP, J. & S. When in doubt, check again!!	.... 12
SCHOPPE, R. Die Ernährung der Eulen Namibias: eine übersicht.	.... 13
GERSTLE, K. & P. From rags to riches.	.... 31
SCHOLZ, C. Notes on captive Orange River Francolins.	.... 35
WALTER, A. Unusual feeding behaviour of terns.	.... 36
BROOKE, R. A five-toed European Nightjar.	.... 37
WALTER, A. Kittlitz's Plovers in town.	.... 37
WALTER, A. Some observations of humorous nature.	.... 38
ROBITZSCH, G. Beobachtungen mit Witwen- und Melba-Finken im Karibiber Garten 1980 bis 1983.	.... 38
ROBITZSCH, G. Vergeblicher Nestbau eines verliebten Cabanis Webers.	.... 39
BROWN, C.J. Birds of the upper Huab River catchment, Cunene province.	.... 40
BAUER, W. Vogelbeobachtungen im Norden.	.... 47
KOMEN, J. & E. MALULEKE. Bio-acoustic research at the State Museum of Namibia.	.... 48
VAN DE REEP, J. & S. Cocky Bustard.	.... 50
BRIDGEFORD, P.A. & M. South African Cliff Swallows in Namibia.	.... 53
VAN DE REEP, S. ? Thorn bird ?	.... 57
BECKER, P. & O.G. AMIR. Effects on non-target birds through spraying operations on quelea roost and colonies in Somalia (With a list of birds predatory on Red-billed Quelea and a list of palaeartic bird species observed in Somalia).	.... 58
VAN DE REEP, J. & S. Flashing jewels in combat.	.... 63
BRIDGEFORD, P.A. & M. More birds of the Naukluft Mountains.	.... 64
SIMMONS, R. The Namibian nest record scheme: history, contributors and competitors.	.... 66

possible to save the remaining eggs. Thus, more detailed observation of their anti-predator behaviour was not possible in this case. (This was done when they were attacking me when trying to remove their eggs!).

After approximately five to eight minutes the snake was killed and removed to be measured and identified. During this process my husband, Arthur, noticed three bulges on the ventral side and, on dissection, three eggs were removed from the snake's stomach. Two were unharmed while the third had a bit of the outer shell removed at one end. Not really believing the eggs still viable but having learnt to expect the unexpected from nature (and to humour the ever-optimistic Arthur), we rinsed the eggs, marked them with a permanent koki-pen and replaced them in the nest. This was done 30 to 45 minutes after having sighted the snake.

Before the hatching date, the enclosure had to be removed as we were moving to Tsumeb. Joris Komen of the State Museum kindly agreed to remove the eggs to his incubator where, in March, one of the eggs removed from the zebra snake's stomach actually hatched. One egg was infertile while the third failed to hatch. At the time of writing, April 30, the chick and its family are thriving at NARREC.

Does anyone know of similar experiences? Please let me know. I would also very much appreciate any information on cases where more than one bird used the same nest simultaneously.

#### UNUSUAL FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF TERNS

A. WALTER

P.O. Box 1163, Walvis-Bay

It was about sunset on 9 March 1992 when I drove to the thatched cottages along the lagoon. Although a heavy cloud of fog hung over the town was it balmy and warm and absolutely wind-still. From some distance already I noticed a lot of activity in the air, mainly between the long row of cottages and the Esplanade, the road running all the way parallel along the lagoon. There was a very large flock of European Swallows mixed with Little Swifts and a few unidentified Martins, all in a feeding frenzy as I never have seen before. And in between were terns: Damara and Whitewinged and the third species possibly Black Terns (not 100% sure). The terns were hunting in good swallow fashion from as low as 50cm above the ground up to some 3m above the cottage roofs, flitting to and fro almost colliding with the many onlookers who had stopped to watch this rare spectacle. This frenzy stopped when the street lights came on. First the swallows and swifts dispersed, the terns being the last to leave the scene.

#### A FIVE-TOED EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR

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A female European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, killed by a car, was recovered some 40 kilometres north of Otjiwarongo on 23 February 1992 by Dalton Gibbs and handed to me for onward transmission to the comparative avian osteology collection at the South African Museum, where it now is. This record would not be worth writing about in itself, since the state of the specimen precluded an attempt to place it to subspecies, of which five have been recorded in southern Africa.

However, the right leg is aberrant in that it has two hind toes instead of one. In addition to the normal hind toe there is a smaller and shorter hind toe with claw immediately above it. This last is clearly not functional.

Some years ago I examined a juvenile female specimen of the Yellowbilled Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* in the Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo, in which one leg had two hind claws and the other three, making eleven toes in all. All three additional hind toes were placed above the main hind toes, and would not have interfered with the normal functioning of the toes. The matter is described and illustrated in the 1975 *Honeyguide* 82: 38-39.

#### KITTLITZ'S PLOVERS IN TOWN

A. WALTER

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During our yearly bird counts in the Walvis wetland the Kittlitz Plover is rarely encountered. Yet, a few birds are present year round keeping more to the larger lawns of sports fields and parks. They even breed with success in not too densely built up areas in town. October 1991 a pair led their two chicks every day onto the freshly planted lawn at my son's house to feed. At sunset they retreated behind the shelter of a sewage manhole built high above the flat terrain on a vacant plot. There they had a shallow scrape with bits of broken shells. Of this clutch one chick fledged end of October. Both parents were present until fledging.

Then, on 15th February 1992 two eggs were discovered in the very same nest-scrape suggesting that the same pair made a second attempt within three and half months, contrary to what every bird book is saying. Ten days later the chicks hatched and soon afterwards the male disappeared. The female led the chicks onto the lawn daily. My granddaughter had placed a little boiled rice on a bare patch in the lawn. Although the chicks were never observed feeding on rice, the female did regularly and could be photographed doing so.