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## Editorial

With this issue the bird names and order follow the new *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa* VII<sup>th</sup> edition published in September 2005. For those of you who have not purchased the N\$ 870 book yet, a real treat awaits you. The book has all the up-to-date information on all the species found in Africa south of the Kunene and Zambezi Rivers. For more on the book see the review in this issue.

Although *Roberts* is an epic tome, there is still much information needed on our Namibian endemic species. For example, there is scant information on the Bare-cheeked Babbler – little data on breeding, none of incubation, none on what newly hatched young look like, nothing on moult and only one nest has been found. Page through a copy and see what nearby species you have so you can contribute data.

The editor would like someone who has attended recent club outings to write up reports so those of us who missed the trip can see what was observed.

Contributions to the observations and notes section is the largest in many years and it is good to see that members are getting out and watching birds. Under the observation section the order of birds follows the new *Roberts* classification system. However, in the paper by Brown *et al.* I have not corrected the order of species in the tables. In the future all submissions must follow the new order.

Once again I appeal to all members to help the Namibia Bird Club. If you want to keep the club viable you must also do your part to try and get new members to join. We are currently down to less than 100 members.

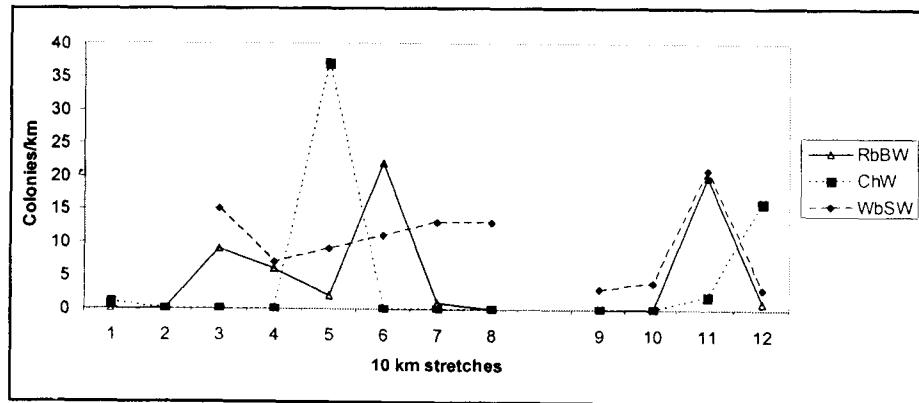


Figure 2. Roadside colony densities of weavers near Windhoek, Namibia. The number of nests per km for successive 10 km stretches of road, starting from 76 km south of Windhoek and ending at the Windhoek International Airport. No counts were made in Windhoek (open section between points 8 and 9 on the x axis)  
 ChW = Chestnut Weaver  
 WbSW = White-browed Sparrow Weaver  
 RbBW = Red-billed Buffalo Weaver

### Levaillant's Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens*, a new bird for Namibia

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Levaillant's Cisticola occurs from the Western Cape Province of South Africa northeastwards to Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola and Kenya. It inhabits vleis, marshy areas, moist grassland and edges of reedbeds where it is highly vocal and conspicuous at all times (Maclean 1993). Prior to the Southern African Bird Atlas Project, it was regarded as being absent from the arid north-western parts of South Africa and from Namibia (Clancey 1980), probably due to lack of suitable natural habitat in these areas. As such, the various field guides and Roberts Birds' of Southern Africa indicated it as being absent from both Namibia and the middle and lower Orange River. During the Bird Atlas Project, Levaillant's

Cisticola was sparsely recorded all along the middle and lower Orange River in South Africa, as far west as quarter degree square 2820AC which is adjacent to Namibia (Berruti 1997). However, it was not recorded by Simmons on the Lower Orange River during a study of the avifauna along 50 km of river downstream from Haibmond, conducted in 1996 and 1997 (Simmons & Allan 2002).

On the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2004, I recorded several Levaillant's Cisticolas on the Namibian side of the Lower Orange River, on the Farm Stolzenfels 74, in quarter degree squares 2819BC and 2819DA. The birds were seen foraging and singing in cultivated lucerne fields on the river-bank. The diagnostic song and conspicuous dark back confirmed the identity of the birds. Levaillant's Cisticola occurred on the farm in lucerne fields only and at a density of approximately 2 birds/ha. It was recorded sympatric with the Fantailed Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*, a species normally associated with cultivated fields wherever it occurs in arid areas.

Lucerne is extensively cultivated along the middle and Lower Orange River (pers. obs). These fields superficially resemble the preferred habitat of Levaillant's Cisticola, thus providing suitable habitat and facilitating the western movement of this species into an arid area with otherwise completely unsuitable habitat. With time, Levaillant's Cisticola will most probably colonize the complete Lower Orange River wherever lucerne is cultivated.

The Stolzenfels records present a small western extension of the known range of Levaillant's Cisticola along the Orange River and is the first record (to the best of the author's knowledge) for Namibia. In addition, it is another example of the ongoing influence that human activities have on bird distribution in southern Africa.

### References

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