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EDITORIAL

The publication of this copy of *Lanioturdus* has been considerably delayed and this copy covers the June, September and December 1999 editions. It will immediately strike you that this is probably the least substantial copy of the magazine for a long time. We have a problem – for some reason 1999 seems to have represented the low point of everyones birding and ornithological careers – the articles and other materials have just not come in at all this year.

The success of the magazine and the Club as a whole depends on member participation. The committee recognises that most members are passive for the most part and choose to go their own way for most of their birding. However, we can't rely on just a few people to keep us going all the time. We need new members, new activities and new vision for the future. This is really a plea to you to get more involved in the future and to help the committee keep the Club going. If we are unable to keep bringing *Lanioturdus* out on a regular basis we are in real trouble.

On the positive side of things – the Club in conjunction with the Namibia Nature Foundation and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, is planning to start up a number of new projects as well as revive a number of older ones, including Raptor Road Counts and some form of atlassing in the future. We will probably put out a special edition of *Lanioturdus* in the New Year giving details of each of the projects.

A wonderful festive season to all of you – and good birding.



Dieter, Hardi and Suzan for giving up their time to liaise with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

NAMIBRAND GAME RANCH TRIP REPORT

Tim & Laurel Osborne
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The Namibian Bird Club visited farms Keerweder, Draaihoek, Toskaan, Jagkop and Wolwedans during the period 30 April to 3 May 1999. Nine members and family had a very enjoyable weekend recording 64 species of birds and accompanied by the farm manager, Achim Lensen, toured the sand dunes. Mr. Lensen's invaluable help was greatly appreciated.

The trip was led by Tim and Laurel Osborne who arrived on the Friday 30 April to reconnoiter the place since they had never been in the area before. We camped at the base of the mountains on farm Draaihoek near the old homestead. The rest of the group: Lynette and Charl Redelinghuis, Helmut and Agnes Bistri, Sean and nephew Sean and Gerda arrived on Saturday 1 May.

We walked around our camp site to a dry waterfall which had water in a small pool at the bottom. Numerous birds were coming in to drink and everyone got excellent views of the Lark-like Bunting which is bird distinguished by its 'lack of diagnostic features' (Newman's Bird Guide, SASOL bird guide) or described as 'nondescript' (Roberts). The pool was also full of two species of tadpoles as pointed out by nephew Sean.

On Sunday we all piled into two vehicles to tour the red sand dunes. Game animals were plentiful as the rains had been good and the grass very luxuriant for the desert. We saw both Greater and Rock Kestrels and found the Dune Lark in the dunes. Achim was very helpful as he explained the geology of the area and conservation measures taken by the Ranch. We wanted to know what the bare patches were in the grassland on the dunes and he stopped to explain that they were 'fairy rings' which might have been

created by chemicals from termites but no-one really knew what made them. He did offer us the opportunity of a lifetime to buy a fairy ring for the cheap price of N\$300. The owner would get a ceramic disk with a number placed in the ring, a certificate indicating the GPS location and the satisfaction that the money would go into research on Namib Rand Ranch. I am afraid that our group did not want to find out the answer to fairy rings that badly. The dunes did not yield many species but all agreed that the scenery was spectacular.

We found Grey-backed Finch-Larks feeding young, a pair of Doublebanded Coursers with a five-day old chick and a Bokmakierie building a nest in a *Euphorbia virosa*. The finch larks were the most numerous bird with thousands taking advantage of the flush of grass to breed.

On the last day (2 May) everyone left but the Osbornes who spent the day trying vainly on foot to catch a Ruppell's Korhaan. During the first Namibrand weekend in 1998, 39 species of birds were seen. We had a preliminary list of species likely to occur drawn up from the Atlas of Southern African Birds and Roberts. We saw 60 species from that list and added four species. What are lacking are migratory species and we recommend that the next Namibrand weekend be in early March.

NAMUSHASHA AND THE KWANDO RIVER: THE BIRD CLUB LONG WEEKEND FIELD TRIP

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The Bird Club enjoyed a convivial and relaxing long weekend on the Kwando River. Willem de Wet had invited the Club to Namushasha Lodge for the long weekend of the 22nd till the 25th of May, for the purpose of producing a bird list for the Lodge. A list downloaded from Roberts' multimedia CD-Rom, had given the area 380 species, so the Club had quite