

# LANIOTURDUS

SWA/NAMIBIA VOGELKLUB  
eine Zweigstelle der  
SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft  
und der  
Southern African  
Ornithological Society

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## Parknotes

### Berichte aus den Naturschutzparks

#### SWALLOWTAILED BEE-EATERS FORAGING IN ASSOCIATION WITH HELMETED GUINEAFOWL

M. PAXTON

c/o Directorate of Nature Conservation, Hereroland,  
Okakarara, 9000.

On 23 April 1987, at about 12h00, a group of 18 Helmeted Guinea-fowl Numida meleagris was observed feeding at a leisurely pace through thick mopane Mopane colophospermum woodland along the Elandsdraai road, about five kilometres west of Koinseb in the Etosha National Park. The guineafowl were spread out about two metres apart and were scratching for food in every suitable place. A group of five Swallowtailed Bee-eaters Merops hirundineus were seen in close attendance on the foraging guineafowl and twice bee-eaters were seen to catch grasshoppers which had been disturbed by the guinea-fowl. The bee-eaters made use of every available perch in the area through which the guineafowl were foraging and definitely seemed to be feeding in association with the guineafowl.

It is well established that other species of bee-eaters will follow large mammals, humans and even vehicles to catch insects which they disturb (Cramp 1985) but this is apparently the first record of such activity in the Swallowtailed Bee-eater.

CRAMP, S. (Ed.) 1985. Handbook of the birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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\*\*\*\* Diese Seite wurde ermöglicht durch eine Spende\*\*\*\*

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Postfach 1954, Tel.: 225641, Windhoek, 9000.

NAMUTONI, DECEMBER 1986

A.J. WILLIAMS

c/o Directorate of Nature Conservation, Private Bag 13306,  
Windhoek, 9000.

In Etosha National Park, December is the 'tail end' of the hot dry season. December 1986 was no exception. The Etosha and Fischer's Pans were bone dry and the water level in the natural springs was low. The ground was largely bare and the heat was so severe that even Crowned Plovers Vanellus coronatus were reluctant to leave the shade between 12h00 and 17h00. The relatively small variety of birds (110 species) found in three days of 'tourist-holidaying' in the area around Namutoni, reflected this hot 'pre-rains' atmosphere.

Two "rare" species were observed (both subject to confirmation by the Namibia Unusual Bird Sightings Committee (UBSC); a Lesser Blackbacked Gull Larus fuscus at, and a Black Sparrowhawk Accipiter melanoleucus near, the Klein Namutoni waterhole.

The gull, an immature bird, had pink legs, blackish brown back and upperwings and a white rump with a distinct dark tail band. It arrived on the afternoon of 14 December with a flock of Greyheaded Gulls Larus cirrocephalus after a period of strong winds. That evening after the wind had abated, the entire flock of gulls flew up, circled the waterhole a few times and then flew away. If accepted by the UBSC; this will be the second record of this Eurasian species in Namibia.

On 15 December at about 08h00, when hundreds of Cape Turtle Doves Streptopelia capicola were gathering to drink, a brief glimpse was had of a black and white raptor, the size of a small buzzard, perched in a tree near the waterhole. Almost immediately the raptor flew rapidly into thick bush, revealing broad, rounded wings and an impression of black and white upperparts. Although the view was brief, this can only have been a Black Sparrowhawk. This species has previously only been certainly recorded within Namibia along the Kavango River.

Other notable species seldom or infrequently recorded in Etosha were a single immature Blackcrowned Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax at Koinchab, and a Wattled Crane Grus carunculata at Andoni (A. Harrington and P. Coulson personal communication; subject to confirmation by the UBSC).

Waterbirds were restricted by the lack of open water in the pans, but many species were concentrated at waterholes, especially the extensive, mudfringed pools at Klein Namutoni and Andoni. Since little quantitative information is available about numbers of wetland

birds at inland localities in Namibia. The numbers of birds recorded at these two pans during my visit are detailed in Table 1.

Noteworthy were the very small number of Chestnutbanded Plovers Charadrius pallidus, a single Whitefronted Plover Charadrius marginatus (subject to confirmation by the UBSC) and the total absence of Caspian Plovers Charadrius asiaticus. Ruffs Philomachus pugnax actively foraged across the short grass area around the buildings and in the campsite at Namutoni.

In the course of a watch at the Kalkheuwel waterhole from 9h30 to 12h30, an eye was kept on the resident pair of Blacksmith Plovers Vanellus armatus. In this three-hour period the plovers copulated five times. The female invited copulation by lowering her head and depressing her tail while holding the body upright to display her white rump and back. The male mounted briefly. During copulation a sharp twittering call was repeatedly picked up small bits of plant material and debris in his bill and tossed it sideways over his shoulder towards the nest scrape. While scraping, he squatted forward onto his breast with folded wings held out from the body and alternately dragged his feet backwards. In this fashion several scrapes were made close to the water's edge, and if used for nesting would inevitably have been flooded after the rain. The female did not visit any of these sites. However, when the male scraped at a site on a small rise away from the water's edge, the female showed some interest.

The only breeding record was of Groundscraper Thrushes Turdus litsirupa feeding young. A thrush perched readily on the open car door and attacked its image in the side mirror. On another occasion a fledgling thrush installed itself in the shade of the car (within two minutes of the car's arrival) and was fed there by its (presumed) parents.

Apart from the observations mentioned, the area held less of interest as usual. There were noticeably fewer raptors than seen on previous occasions, and only one vulture and three Bateleurs Terathopus ecaudatus were seen in the three days of twitching. Palearctic migrants and intra-African migrant cuckoos were also scarce, and noticeably fewer than in the Karstveld bush near Tsumeb, where Redbacked Shrikes Lanius collurio, Willow (Phylloscopus trochilus) and Icterine (Hippolais icterina) Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers Muscicapa striata were seen within 15 minutes of observation.

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## Notes & News

### Bemerkungen & Mitteilungen

#### KLEINE BEOBACHTUNGEN AN VERSCHIEDENEN VÖGELN

A. Krieg

Postfach 2958, Windhoek

Vor einigen Wochen kam an einem schönen Sonntagvormittag ein Pärchen Rotbauchwürger (No. 739) - Laniarius - in unseren Garten und entdeckte dabei eine sehr erwünschte Badegelegenheit in Form einer Berieselungsanlage. Scheinbar hatten sie davon Besitz ergriffen; sie suchten in allen Beeten, im trockenen Laub, unter den Obstbäumen, kletterten in den Weinspalieren herum, flogen von Baum zu Baum und zwischendurch immer wieder zum Wasser.

Seit diesem Tag kommen sie nun immer wieder, wohnen in den Bäumen und an dem kleinen Rivier ca 60 m von hier.

Eines Tages, als Laniarius mit der Futtersuche beschäftigt war, kam ein Rotstirnbartvogel (No. 465) von der Tränke her auf den Maulbeerbaum geflogen, in der Hoffnung, doch noch etwas Fressbares zu finden, denn es war ja alles abgefroren. Als er den unter sich im dürren Laub wühlenden Rotbauchwürger entdeckte, äugte er sehr gespannt mit langem Hals nach unten, dann flog er hinab, um zu sehen, was jener wohl verspeiste. Weil er aber nichts sehen konnte, hüpfte er nun ganz hinunter, den Kopf vorgestreckt, so dass er den anderen fast mit seinem Schnabel berührte. Der Rotbauchwürger wunderte sich über solche Aufdringlichkeit, starrte den Rotstirnbartvogel an, reckte sich in seiner ganzen Grösse, die schöne leuchtende Brust vorgestreckt, die Beine steif und gerade, den Kopf hoch, so dass er stolz und drohend auf den anderen herabsehen konnte mit der stummen aber deutlichen Aufforderung: das Feld gefälligst zu räumen. Der Rotstirnbartvogel aber dachte nicht daran, sondern stellte sich auch in frecher Herausforderung auf: „Ich gehe nicht eher weg, bis ich weiss was Du gefressen hast.“ Nach einer ganzen Weile wendete sich der Rotbauchwürger dann ab und suchte weiter. Der Rotstirnbartvogel hoppste nebenher und streckte seinen Schnabel immer dorthin wo der andere seinen gerade hatte. Dem Rotbauchwürger wurde es allmählich zu dumm, und er flog hoch ins Geäst.