

LANIOTURDUS

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Editorial

This is now the eleventh edition of Lanioturdus that I have edited. Looking back to Lanioturdus 41 (1), the first I edited, I note that I wrote "I do not see myself as a longterm replacement in this position but rather as someone who will fill the gap until a permanent editor can be found. However, I have the feeling that this statement might well end up in the category of 'famous last words.'" How true that statement has turned out to be! However, I must hasten to add that I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the journal. My first attempt at editing was also our first electronic edition of Lanioturdus and looking through all the electronic issues to date I see that we have come a long way since the early attempts.

The last four issues have been set by Eckart Demasius and I believe that Eckart has done a fine job after initially finding himself up against a rather steep learning curve. Eckart also has a huge library of birding related digital photographs, some of which we have used to illustrate various articles and which have, in my opinion, really enhanced the publication.

I would really like to know what you, the readers, think of Lanioturdus. I have had the odd email commending the journal and initially there were one of two who said they preferred Lanioturdus in the booklet form to the electronic format. Printing and postage costs made the booklet form prohibitively expensive forcing us to change to the electronic format. In this regard we are way ahead of most of the South African bird clubs some of which are now starting to investigate

New Names, Old Names and Very Old Names.

Neil Thomson
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With the publication of Roberts Birds of Southern Africa (VIIth Edition) in 2005 a huge controversy was sparked over the introduction of the “new” bird names (some of which were in fact not “new” at all but reversion to names that had been in use more than fifty years earlier). While some of the name changes came about through reclassification of species, many were changed to conform to the common names used elsewhere in the world. Howls of protest went on for months and it was impossible to find a birding magazine or bird club journal without a host of indignant letters to the editor complaining about the changes. I must admit that I was one of those who could not see the necessity for some of the changes – if one of our rivers can have a variety of names (Mashi, Kwando, Linyanti, Chobe) depending on where one is why should we be forced to conform to the common names of bird species used in east Africa and elsewhere?

But “new” names are really nothing new. I recently acquired access to old issues of Bokmakierie, the magazine of the South African Ornithological Society and the Witwatersrand Bird Club dating back to the 1950's. I found reading many of the articles therein to be a rather frustrating exercise as I was totally unfamiliar with many of the species names used.

Some were easy enough to decipher as the names now in use are merely developments of those in use back then. Examples of this are Smaller Stripe-breasted Swallow (Lesser Striped Swallow), Shaft Tailed Widowbird (Shaft-tailed Whydah) and Treble Banded Sandplover (Three-banded Plover). Others have undergone more substantial changes but are still recognizable. Examples of this are African Pochard (Southern Pochard), Natal Black Tit (Southern Black Tit), Black Roughwing (Black Sawwing) and Herero Flycatcher (Herero Chat).

A bit of general knowledge also came in handy in deciphering some of the names. Coly is an old name for a mousebird and thus Cape Coly is a White-backed Mousebird (this by elimination as I found references to Red-faced Coly and Speckled Coly), while Cape Rook is surely Cape (Black) Crow. Another mystery that could be solved using some general knowledge was the identity of Mzilikatzi's Roller. This is what we know as Lilac-breasted Roller but in the 19th century, Mzilikatzi, king of the Matebele, decreed that only he was allowed to use the feathers of this bird. Also knowing that a wigeon is a type of duck makes it relatively easy to deduce that a Cape Wigeon must be what we know as a Cape Teal.

A few considerate authors included the scientific names of the species in their articles and this made it easier to figure out some of the species but some of the scientific names have also changed in the intervening fifty plus years. However, through looking up the scientific names I did learn that snake-eagles were once called harrier eagles, that the African Green-Pigeon was formerly the Zambezi Pigeon, that the Wood Ibis is what we now call the Yellow-billed Stork, that the Collared Palm-Thrush was then called the Morning Warbler and that the Grey-backed Cameroptera was called the Grey-backed Glasseye. In using the index in Robert's II to discover that *Poliospiza leucoptera*, the White-winged Seedeater, is in fact today's Protea Seedeater I happened to notice that the next species in the index was *Poliospiza mennelli* and tracing this name back to the text I was able to discover that Mennell's Seedeater is what we know as Black-eared Seedeater. I also found out that what was then referred to as the Grey Kestrel is in fact Dickinson's Kestrel, *Falco dickinsoni*, and not what we know today as the Grey Kestrel, *Falco ardosiaceus*.

Having worked out the above I was still left with a rather formidable list of species where I had no clue as to what they might be in today's terms – Horsbrugh's Falcon, MacKenzie's Bustard, Sooty Chat, Hartlaub's Chat, Layard's Chat, Grey-rumped Sicklewings, Layard's Bulbul, Jardine's Babbler, Smith's Wood Shrike, Swempi

Francolin, Seebom's Courser, Fleck's Coucal, Woodford's Owl, Exton's Barbet, Cape Pigeon, Cape Hen, Kolbe's Vulture and Black Vulture.

My research for my series of articles on the people after whom some of our bird species were named solved a few of these mysteries. The scientific name of the Arrow-marked Babbler is *Turdoides jardinii* which solves Jardine's Babbler and likewise *Strix woodfordi* is the scientific name of the African Wood-Owl or Woodford's Owl as it was called back then. Today's Karoo Chat has the scientific name *Ciromela schlegelii* which was the key to the current identity of the Grey-rumped Sickle-winged Chat. In the course of that research I also discovered that the Trac-trac Chat was formerly called Layard's Chat and that the Cape Vulture was once called Kolbe's Vulture. Five down, fourteen to go - but where to start looking?

My starting point was my copy of Roberts II (1957 sixth impression 1966) and here I discovered that at that time the Lappet-faced Vulture was known as the Black Vulture and also that the Pintado Petrel and White-chinned Petrel were known by the rather quaint names of Cape Pigeon and Cape Hen respectively. Perhaps the name Cape Hen for the White-chinned Petrel is not so surprising as sailors have long called storm-petrels Mother Carey's Chickens. (Mother Carey is apparently a corruption of Mater Cara, one of the epithets of Maria, mother of Christ).

The next idea I had was to check on the scientific names of subspecies and here I hit paydirt. Between Robert's VII and Birds of the Southern Third of Africa I was able to discover that the key to the identities of a number of the mystery birds lay in the sub-species. One of the sub-species of the Red-necked Falcon is *Falco chiquera horsbrughii*, hence Horsbrugh's Falcon and MacKenzie's Bustard turned out to be a sub-species of the White-bellied Korhaan. Likewise Layard's Bulbul is *Pycnonotus tricolor layardi*, a subspecies of the Dark-capped Bulbul, while Fleck's Coucal, *Centropus senegalensis flecki* is a subspecies of the Senegal Coucal and Seebom's Courser is the subspecies, *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*

seebohmi, of the Three-banded Courser. Exton's Barbet turned out to be one of the subspecies of the Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, *Pogoniurus chrysoconus extoni*.

I had by now exhausted my own literature but had still not discovered the current identities of Hartlaub's Chat, Sooty Chat, Smith's Wood Shrike and Swempi Francolin and to determine any of these I thought that I would have to start looking further afield but to start with I decided to reread some of the old articles to look for further clues I might have missed. On reading that the Swempi Francolin was seen on the Rhodesia/Portuguese East Africa border I consulted one of my field guides in order to eliminate the francolins which do not occur in that area. However - my eye caught the Afrikaans name of the Coqui Francolin (Swempie) and that was another one solved. In another article I found the scientific name for Smith's Wood Shrike (*Eurocephalus anguitimens*) and from there it was a simple matter to determine that this mystery bird is what we know today as the Southern White-crowned Shrike. I noticed that this species was described by Smith so I thought perhaps that might be the key to the identity of Hartlaub's Chat. I set about looking for a chat described by Hartlaub and was able to discover that the White-browed Robin-Chat had been described by him so I thought that perhaps I was on the right track but it turned out however that this was not the key to the identity of Hartlaub's Chat. I asked Eckart Demasius, who has a far bigger collection of bird books, including a first edition Roberts and Gill's "A First Guide to South African Birds", to see if he could determine what this species is called today. Eckart was able to discover that Hartlaub's Chat was another name for the Grey-rumped Sickle-winged Chat which is what we know as the Karoo Chat today. Eckart was also able to determine for me that the curiously named Cloud Scrapper Warbler is today's Cloud Cisticola.

In the course of all this I was also able to discover that firefinches were once called ruddy waxbills, cisticolas were cloud warblers, the Burnt-necked Eremomela was the Magaliesberg Warbler and the Bronze

Mannikin was the Hooded Finch. Also Southern Red Bishops were once Grenadier Bishop Birds, the Violet-eared Waxbill was the Grenadine Waxbill and that many of today's warblers were once flycatchers while the Boulder Chat was once called the Sooty Babbler – Hey! – I think I have just cracked it if the Boulder Chat was the Sooty Babbler then it was most probably at some intermediate stage the Sooty Chat!

After struggling to discover the current names for some of the species mentioned in these fifty year old articles I am starting to think that there is a case for standardizing the common names of species. However, as the frontiers of science expand and more work is done on DNA analysis etc. we are likely to see even more lumping and splitting of species so I am afraid that standardization of names will forever be just a dream. In fact, I had hardly finished researching this article when I received a new southern African species list from Trevor Hardaker wherein Comb Duck had reverted to Knob-billed Duck (because of a clash of names with a South American species) and Cattle Egret, Great Egret and Osprey had become Western Cattle Egret, Western Great Egret and Western Osprey presumably because of splitting of these species.

Should anyone read this journal in fifty years time they will possibly be as confused by the species names now in use as I was when I encountered some of the names used fifty years ago.



Southern White-crowned Shrike
Photo: Eckart Demasius

Ost-Afrika Bericht Sonja Bartlewski

This article deals with some of our holiday experiences between 21 May and 19 June 2010.

We started from Windhoek and travelled via Katima Mulilo to Zambia. After five days we reached Dar-es-Salam in Tanzania. We visited Zanzibar, Manyara National Park, Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Serengeti. Afterwards we crossed through Tanzania eastwards to Tanga and Pangani on the Indian Ocean. Finally we had some beautiful days at Lake Malawi, South Luangwa and Victoria Falls before returning to Namibia.

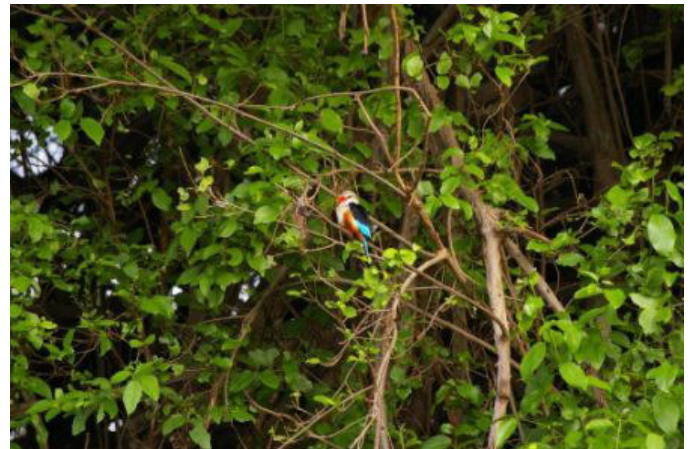


Bild 1 – Graukopfliest (Grey-headed Kingfisher, Gryskopvisvanger) im Manyara National Park

Am 21.Mai 2010 um 4:00 Uhr Nachts gings los! 4:00 Uhr!! Pünktlich stand Olli mit dem Toyota Landcruiser 4.5EFI samt riesen selbstgebautem Anhänger vor unserer Tür. Nachdem wir die anderen 2 Mitfahrer in Windhoek aufgesammelt und 2 200 km zurückgelegt hatten erreichten wir die von den Fluten des Zambezi ziemlich aufgeweichte Caprivi River Lodge. Aber die tolle Bewirtung, ein zahmes Warzenschwein, dass beim Gepäck ausladen helfen wollte, mit den 4 Männern Armdrücken spielte und meinen Kaffee austrank und einem wunderbaren Sonnenaufgang bereiteten uns auf eine unbeschreiblich tolle Safari vor. Wir hatten