

## New Year Birds

*Günther & Tineke Friederich*  
*Farm Tsutsab 293, 1818 CC*  
*Tel: 067 - 232000, bateleur@iway.na*

On Saturday 29.12.2007 we, Tineke (T) & Günther (G), once again traveled to Hakusembe Lodge just west of Rundu on the Okavango River to spend a few quiet days. We had been there on business twice before a few weeks earlier. We took along a birdlist for the lodge, (QDS 1719 DC), that we had compiled from “Roberts Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa”, “The Atlas of Southern African Birds” and other books. On one of the previous visits we had added Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* to the existing list.

It had rained somewhat since we had been there previously, so we could observe the floodplains where a lot of waders and storks were active. We made contact with some campers from the RSA who were also interested in our activities. Rob & Jane Wilkinson, a couple from the RSA staying in Windhoek did the birding more seriously than we did, adding some species to our list. They however could not confirm a Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* they had flushed from the reeds early one morning.

We were awakened every morning by Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* calling close by. On the lawn Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyanus* was searching for insects. They had to supply a nest of chicks in a Leadwood tree *Combretum imberbe* close to our tent. Strangely we heard Fiery-necked Nightjar calling during the day, but maybe that's how things are done up there at the Okavango.

One afternoon we heard a commotion in the trees, and, as some snakes been seen around the lodge, G. went to investigate. There he saw a bird which he thought was the Kurrichane Thrush but on seeing those on the lawn...

The field guide cut the choice down to two: White-browed Robin-Chat *Cossypha heuglini* or Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus*. The bird call tapes could not give a clear answer so we decided to try to call them out. The pair of White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin's Robin) went mad. We

managed to get some nice photographs. In return the birds apparently must have decided to follow us and give us a repertoire of their calls. That is when we were made aware of the Fiery-necked Nightjar's call during daytime. It is mentioned in "The Complete Book of Southern African Birds" that this species seldom mimics other birds but in the DRC it has been heard mimicking both birds and frogs. Now - was it also them that were mimicking Helmeted Guineafowl at the neighbouring lodge?

On the 2.1.2008 we returned home, arriving in dry and hot conditions. It had rained well on the 23.12.2007, but not since then. On the afternoon of Sunday 6th we received a shower of 34 mm. Early on Monday morning G heard Wattle Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus* calling but we could not find it. Two Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegytiacus* took a rest on the field for a while. Later in the day a few Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* started arriving. However, by late afternoon there were plenty, coming in from the east and landing on the field. There must have been more than 100 birds. As we were having sundowners on the verandah we had a fly-by of waders of which we heard the call of two Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, which we could recognize. The others were either Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* or Little Stint *Calidris minuta*.

The following morning we had another fly-by of a species to identify. They landed on an open field which gave us the chance to get out the big stuff. We had recorded Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* once before on the farm on 22.12.1998, in a similar situation, on an open field with short vegetation. This bird however did not fit the description. T made the suggestion of Pratincole but G did not like the bill. The upper mandible did not appear curved, the beak appearing short, straight and blackish. The white rump shown in flight also did not fit Caspian Plover. On some birds there was an indication of a throat collar which confused us more. G flushed them to get a call but this did not reveal much. We got busy with other duties then but G still thought of trying for photographs.

On Wednesday morning 9th we saw them again, 27 of them flying over the field. G took his binoculars and had a look again, memorizing the birds in flight: white rump, tail kept sharply pointed, splitting when manouvering and showing the darker tail feathers behind the white rump. From there on it was easy: Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*, a new record for our QDS. Everything on this bird fitted with all the books we have consulted. These birds were still present on the morning of 12.1.2008 while it was drizzling lightly.