

LANIOTURDUS

Newsletter of the SWA/Namibia Bird Club

Mitteilungen des SWA/Namibia Vogelklubs

Vol./Jg. 22, No. 4

1987

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

Beitraege bitte an den Redakteur p.A. SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, Postfach 67, Windhoek 9000, SWA senden.

Mitgliedsbeitraege fuer die S.A.O.S. und die Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft fuer 1987 sind wie folgt:

Privatperson: S.A.O.S. + SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft [mit Ostrich]	R 58.00
Privatperson: S.A.O.S. + SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft [ohne Ostrich]	R 50.00
Schueler und Studenten unter 24 Jahren: [mit Ostrich]	R 38.00
Schueler und Studenten unter 24 Jahren: [ohne Ostrich]	R 30.00
Privatperson: nur SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft	R 30.00
Schueler und Studenten: nur SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft	R 20.00
Abonnement nur fuer den LANIOTURDUS	R 10.00

Bemerkungen an Mitarbeiter

Manuskripte sollten mit Schreibmaschine (oder in gut leserlicher Handschrift) geschrieben sein und zwar mit doppeltem Zeilenabstand auf A4 (30 x 21 cm) Format. Skizzen, Karten und Tabellen sollten auf weissem Qualitaetspapier mit schwarzer Tinte gezeichnet werden. Klare Schwarz-weiss-Photographien (15 x 20 cm) koennen eingereicht werden, um die Arbeit zu illustrieren.

CONTENTS

INHALTSANGABE

EDITORIAL/ REDAKTION..... 66

ARTICLES & REPORTS/ ARTIKEL & BERICHTE :

SWA/Nambia Rare Bird Report for 1985/1986.....	66
Southern African Bird Atlas Project.....	72
Some observations on oxpeckers in eastern Caprivi, SWA/Namibia.....	74
Batis meets batis in Namibia.....	79

PARK NOTES/ BERICHTE :

Notes from an Etosha diary.....	82
---------------------------------	----

NOTES & NEWS/ BEMERKUNGEN & MITTEILUNGEN

Whitetailed Shrike nesting in the Naukluft Park.....	82
Eine Beobachtung.....	83
Ekongoro - a veritable birding paradise.....	84
Partial albinism in a Redeyed Bulbul.....	85
Tragen Nilgaense ihre kuecken in Schnabel.....	86
Recovery, treatment and release of a House Sparrow...	87
Letter to the editor.....	87

PROJECTS...REQUESTS..... 88

Printed by John Meinert (Pty) Ltd.

HÄGAR the Horrible

®

By Dik Browne



EKONGORO -
A VERITABLE BIRDING PARADISE

Ekongoro, the Kavango Administration Education Centre about four kilometres east of Rundu (1719 Dd), and the associated sewage ponds and seepage lakes were visited three times in 1986. On all three occasions the visits proved to be thrilling! Large expanses of reed-beds, hidden mud-fringed pools, remnants of tall riparian woodland, open grassland and dense thorn scrub, make this one of the finest birding localities in Namibia. One can see 200 species in three days of twitching, many of them rare or unusual or totally unexpected.

On our first visit to Ekongoro in February 1986 we focused on netting warblers in the reedbeds around the sewage ponds. This had not been done before, so it was not surprising to find species which "shouldn't" have been there. We caught large numbers of European Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Great Reed Warblers *A. arundinaceus*, African Marsh Warblers *A. baeticatus* and Cape Reed Warblers *A. gracilirostris*, and most exciting of all, an European Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* * (we had caught three other European Reed Warblers previously; two at Nama Pan in Bushmanland and one at Kwetche in the Mahango Game Reserve). Another unusual record for the area was a Cuckoofinch *Anomalospiza imberbis* *, caught near a seepage stream, away from the sewage ponds. Chirping Cisticolas *Cisticola pipiens* were plentiful in the more open reed beds, as were Fantail Cisticolas *C. juncidis*. Surprisingly, Blackbacked Cisticolas *C. galactotes* were not recorded.

Waterbirds abound on the sewage ponds and seepage lakes below, with large numbers of Whitefaced *Dendrocygna viduata* and Fulvous Ducks *D. bicolor*, Redbilled *Anas erythrorhynchos* and Hottentot Teals *A. hottentota*, and hundreds of waders: (including Ringed *Charadrius hiaticula* and Whitefronted Plovers *C. marginatus* *) frantically feeding in and around the water. Seven species of herons, two species of Bittern and a confusing assortment of crakes were commonly seen, despite the daily disturbance created by large numbers of local fishermen (and women) wading neck-deep in the sewage ponds.

Our second visit to Ekongoro (with a party of dedicated twitchers) in October brought some new surprises. The water level had subsided dramatically since February, and a large area of reeds had been burnt during our absence. Accordingly many of the normally well-hidden ponds held large concentrations of birds, and were readily visible. Many 'Okavango Swamp' specials were recorded, including Rufousbellied Herons *Eurorides rufiventris*, Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula* * and Copperytail Coucals *Centropus cupreicaudus*. A 'dedicated thrash' through hot, sticky mud and blackened reeds gave all concerned excellent views of Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, and, most exciting of all, Great Snipe *Gallinago media* *. A brief spate of netting only caught Cape Reed and African Marsh Warblers - the migrant warblers had not arrived yet.

On our most recent visit in December we caught and ringed six European Reed Warblers *, along with large numbers of the more common migrant and resident warblers. The reed beds had recovered considerably, with abundant growth of lush green reeds. The water level was considerably lower than in October, resulting in large expanses of mud around the ponds, and large concentrations of waders - including two Blacktailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* * and another Great Snipe *.

On three days in succession we had a very tired-looking skimmer roosting and feeding alongside Whitewinged Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* on the upper sewage ponds - and a most unusual skimmer at that. Much larger than an ordinary African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*, this skimmer had a prominently red and black bill, and a very obvious white tail with central black tail feathers! It also had very shabby black plumage and badly broken primary feathers, indicating some recent trepidation. On consulting our local field guides, we could not come to any definite conclusion about this odd-looking skimmer - it was only on our return to Windhoek that we discovered that this was an American Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* * - a first record for Africa! Unfortunately, despite desperate appeal, no-one managed to get up to Rundu to confirm the identity of this exciting, and highly unusual, vagrant (in fact, the most noteworthy response was "... why didn't you shoot it?").

It is obvious from this article that Ekongoro is a 'birding paradise', a place to see 'lifers' and unusual birds. Unfortunately, Ekongoro and the sewage ponds are unsupervised, and the place is overrun by local fishermen and poachers - in both October and December we were forced to interact with poachers who indiscriminately shot at everything in sight (including us!), through the fence on the eastern boundary of the property. The fence is broken in numerous places, providing ready access to dogs, cats and human beings. The remnants of riparian woodland are receding rapidly as a result of indiscriminate woodcutting. Although strictly speaking an 'artificial' environment, Ekongoro, the sewage ponds and seepage lakes desperately need stricter supervision by the local Administration, if not by the Department of Nature Conservation, to ensure that it remains a favourable habitat for an impressive variety of otherwise rare and unusual birds in southern Africa.

JORIS & LIZ KOMEN, c/o State Museum, P.O.Box 1203, Windhoek.

[N.B. All species marked with an asterisk (*) in this article are subject to confirmation by the Namibia Unusual Bird Sighting Committee.]

PARTIAL ALBINISM IN A REDEYED BULBUL

Partial albinism has been recorded in two of the bulbul species which occur in southern Africa; the Cape Bulbul *Pycnonotus capensis* (Broekhuysen & Broekhuysen 1969 *Ostrich* 40:62) and the Blackeyed Bulbul *P. barbatus* (Ashley Maberley 1970 *Ostrich* 41:261).

On 26 January 1987 a predominantly albino Redeyed Bulbul *P. nigricans* was observed on the farm Matador No. 179, about 40 km north of the town of Okahandja. The bird retained some normal coloration, displaying the lemon-yellow vent as well as the diagnostic orange-red eye ring. The plumage was otherwise mostly white, with only the crest on the head being a dark grey colour.

The bird was observed alone in a tree, although normal conspecifics were observed in the immediate surroundings on the same day.

ALLISDAIR R. MACDONALD & STEVEN D. GILDENHUYS, Directorate of Nature Conservation, Private Bag 13306, Windhoek 9000.

TRAGEN NILGAENSE IHRE KUECKEN IM SCHNABEL WENN SIE VON EINER WASSERSTELLE ZUR ANDEREN WECHSELN ?

Bei einer Farmrundfahrt im Maerz entdeckten wir oben in einem Baum auf einem Gesellschaftsvogelneest eine bruetende Nilgans *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, etwa einen Kilometer von einer Wasserstellen entfernt.

Anfang April schwamm die Gans mit sechs Kuecken auf dem Ruecken auf dem Wasserloch. Wie kommen diese Kuecken aus dem Nest? Hat die Nilgans die Kuecken im Schnabel zur Wasserstelle gebracht oder laesst die Gans die frisch geschluepften Kuecken aus dem Nest fallen und traegt sie zur Wasserstelle ?

Die Nilgans stand oft mit den Kuecken am Ufer, um Nahrung zu suchen. An einem Tag schnappte sich eine Wasserschildkroete eines der Kuecken. Nach zwei Tagen war die Nilgans mit den fuef verbleibenden Jungen zu einem drei Kilometer entfernten Wasserloch gezogen. Unser Arbeiter behauptet, dass die Nilgaense ihre Kuecken im Schnabel von einer Wasserstelle zur anderen tragen.

J & C FISCHER, Farm Omongongua, Okahandja.

-----ooOoo-----

Nilgaense auf dem Nest eines Baumes oder auch auf einem Windmotor: Das Nest wird auf einer Unterlage von Bueffelwebern *Bubalornis niger* so ausgebaut, dass die Gans die Umgebung beobachten kann. Nach dem Schluepfen lassen sich die Kuecken nach einem Lockruf der Eltern aus dem Nest fallen, zu Fuss wird der Gang zum Wasser gemacht. Bei einigen Beobachtungen haben wir gesehen, dass die Kuecken im Rueckengefieder der Mutter gehalten werden. Auch bei Beobachtungen am Avidamm sahen wir eine Nilgans, die mit sechs Jungen zur Wasserstelle marschierte.

Wir selbst haben noch keine Nilgans gesehen, die ihre Jungen im Schnabel zur Wasserstelle bringt, aber Arbeiter haben dies schon beobachtet.

A. BENSELER, Postfach 189, Windhoek 9000.

Well, do they or don't they carry their young in their beaks? If any readers have an answer to this problem, please let us know. Ed.

RECOVERY, TREATMENT AND RELEASE OF A HOUSE SPARROW

A juvenile House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* was found lying on a road, possibly injured by a passing car. I took the sparrow home and examined it for injuries. Fortunately, no bones were broken. The sparrow was placed in a cage, and was force-fed water and some Pro-nutro. Food and water were left in the cage, which was darkened for the afternoon and night. The following day the cage was moved to the verandah, where other wild birds congregate daily to feed. On the third day the cage door was opened, and the sparrow, apparently recovered, left shortly thereafter. The sparrow regularly returned to feed in the cage, until eventually I removed the cage.

SUZANN MALLET-VEALE, P.O. Box 3787, Windhoek 9000.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir

Jessnitz & Jessnitz (1986 *Lanioturdus* 22:55) reported two records of Black and Pied Crows *Corvus capensis* and *C. albus* burying food in the sand. They were unable to find previous records of this behaviour in the literature. I observed a Pied Crow bury a lamb chop bone in the sand at Okaukuejo rest camp, Etosha, some years ago.

H. J. L. ORFORD (DR.)

ANSWER TO LAST ISSUE'S MYSTERY BIRD

The flying mystery bird in the last issue of *LANIOTURDUS* was a Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*.
[The Windhoek State Museum is acknowledged for permission to publish the photograph]

ERRATA - APOLOGIES !

In:

BECKER, P. 1986. *Lanioturdus* 22:28-31.

1. On page 30, line 5, November should be Dezember.
2. On page 30, GRESSMANN 1969a. 5 (1):2-4 should be 5(1/2):4.
3. On page 31, MALTZAHN 1961. *Mitt. Orn. Arbeitsgr. SWA Wiss. Ges.* II (Sept.) 3:4-5 should be *Mitt. SWA Wiss. Ges.* 2(9):4-5.

HARRIS, T. 1986. *Lanioturdus* 22:47-51.

1. Joerges 1972 (page 50, line 14) was omitted from the list of references:
JOERGES, B. 1972. Der Drosselwuerger - *Lanioturdus torquatus*. Eine Verhaltensbeobachtung. *Mitt. Orn. Arbeitsgr. SWA Wiss. Ges.* 8(1/2):6-8.