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## Editorial

This issue of the *Lanioturdus* would have been rather skinny had it not been for Wessel Swanepoel's numerous contributions. The editor is still waiting for the Chairman's annual report delivered to the March 2005 AGM and any trip reports from members on outings.

Peter Steyn and Rob Martin report on the puzzle of Namibia's Booted Eagles. Here is a species that used to be difficult to identify thus adding to the confusion but recent advances in field guides should help even novice birders identify this species. Surely the bird is a more common breeder than we think, people just have to scan likely breeding rocks, kloofs and canyons. Perhaps we can solve the mystery.

New birds have been reported for the country so it is good to see that birders have been active even though it is the dry season. There are two articles on rarities within the country and one from our neighbour, Botswana.

Once again I appeal to all members to help the Namibia Bird Club. If you want to keep the club viable you must also do your part and try and get new members to join.

October to June, respectively, coinciding with the birds visit to the area. Bento (2002) indicates the sedge *Eleocharis* sp. dominating the diet of *G. carunculata* in Mozambique. This sedge is scarce in the Okavango Swamp area where the birds are presumed to feed on the roots and tubers of other sedges (Hancock *in litt.*). *Eleocharis acutangula* is known to occur in the Bushmanland pan system (Clarke & Mannheimer 1999), but not known if it is included in the diet of *G. carunculata*.

Hines (1993) and Simmons *et al.* (1998) suggests that the overall threats to the Nyae-Nyae wetland system is low although increased tourism and farming may affect the drainage and subsequently also the birds visiting the area. Fires have also been identified as a major threat to the birds feeding sites elsewhere (Rodwell 2004) and should thus be contained in the Nyae-Nyae area during the bird's temporary residence. The area is also significant from a bird diversity point of view as Mendelsohn *et al.* (2002) indicate between 201-230 species of birds are known to occur in the general area. Simmons *et al.* (1998) classifies the pan area, when wet, as an important birding site in Namibia, which can hold more than 10,000 waterbirds of 84 species. Although the area now falls within a conservancy it is imperative that the Nyae-Nyae pan system be adequately protected so as to ensure the future of the site for summer foraging and socialising of the *G. carunculata* migrants.

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### Birds on the move : range extensions and vagrants in western, central and southern Namibia 1994-2005

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Many bird species are subject to movements, some of which are poorly understood. As such, individuals or even flocks, may be recorded unexpectedly at any specific locality. In Namibia this is particularly evident in the arid southern and western regions, where a wide range of habitats are found locally in a specific area, e.g. the riparian woodland along river courses and small wetlands or fountains along the coast and in the ephemeral river courses. These habitats provide refuge to resident, migratory and vagrant birds and are localities where observers should be on the lookout for species unusual to the specific area. Some species even establish resident populations, as the Karoo Thrush *Turdus smithi* and Cape Robin *Cossypha caffra* did along the Fish River in southern Namibia.

An annotated list of such species as recorded by myself is provided and covers the post southern African bird atlas project (SABAP) data collecting period, from 1994 up to May 2005. These records are compared with the records of the SABAP as indicated in *The atlas of southern African birds* Vols. 1 & 2 (Harrison *et al* 1997).

#### Saddlebilled Stork – *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*

A single adult bird was seen on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2002 at a permanent pool in the Fish River at Küb, near Kalkrand (2417AB). This record is 80 km to the south of the southernmost record during the SABAP period. Like all previous records from central Namibia, this bird is suspected to be a vagrant to the area (Benn 1997).

### **Fulvous Duck – *Dendrocygna bicolor***

A suspected vagrant adult bird was seen in October 2004 in the small wetland of the Swakop River at the train bridge, Swakopmund (2214DA). This record is 220 km WSW from 2216BA (probably also on the Swakop River) near Okahandja, the nearest record during the SABAP.

### **Red-eyed Dove – *Streptopelia semitorquata***

A single bird was recorded in riparian *Acacia* on the Fish River at Mariental (2417DB) in July 2001. Identity was confirmed by its highly distinctive call. Another bird was heard calling in December 2003 at the Naute Dam near Keetmanshoop (2617DB), in dense exotic trees serving as a windbreaker at the Naute irrigation scheme. These records are approximately 370 km to the NNE and 120 km to the NE respectively, from the nearest records on the Fish River in the Ai-Ais area. The birds probably moved northwards along the Fish River from the populations centred along the Orange River and lower Fish River. The Naute Dam bird probably followed the Löwen River upstream, all the way from its confluence with the Fish River to the dam. The Löwen River is a major tributary of the Fish and with tall riparian *Acacia* in places. Suitable habitat, i.e. tall trees in the vicinity of water (Colahan 1997), exists at many localities along the Fish River and along some of its tributaries. As this species is inclined to considerable range extensions (Colahan 1997), resident populations may eventually be established or exist already locally along the Fish River, similarly to that of the Karoo Thrush *Turdus smithi* and Cape Robin *Cossypha caffra*.

### **Senegal Coucal – *Centropus senegalensis***

A suspected vagrant was heard calling on the Ugab River in dense riparian thickets at Alpha (2114BA) in August 1994. The bird probably moved down the Ugab River from its catchment area in the Outjo District. This record is approximately 200 km to the SW of the Outjo area (1915DB) where Senegal Coucal was recorded sparingly during the SABAP period.

### **Cape Eagle Owl – *Bubo capensis***

During the SABAP, Cape Eagle Owls were recorded in Namibia only from along the Orange River and locally from the Khan River near Swakopmund. Subsequently, I recorded Cape Eagle Owls from several localities along the Great Escarpment. Cape Eagle Owls were heard calling in the Fish River Canyon

(2717DA) in July 1996 and in April 1999 (2717BC). These records are 70 and 110 km respectively to the north of the nearest SABAP records along the Orange River in 2817AB. On the farm Klein Aus Vista (2616CA) near Aus, 170 km NW of the Orange River, birds were heard calling in April 1999, June 2001 and August 2002. A single adult Cape Eagle Owl was seen roosting in a small recess on a cliff on the farm Zebrarivier, in the Tsaris Mountains (2416CB), September 1998. This record is 250 km to the SE of the nearest SABAP record at the Khan River in 2215CA.

In the Naukluft Mountains (2416AC), 210 km to the SE from the Khan River records, Cape Eagle Owls were heard calling in May 1996, March 1997 and April 1998. On the upper Brandberg (2114BA), 160 km to the north of the Khan River, a single adult bird was seen roosting on a cliff ledge in August 1998 and Cape Eagle Owls were heard calling in May 1996, April 1998, May 1999, May 2000 and August 2003. In the Hoanib River Valley, approximately 400 km to the NW of the Khan River, Cape Eagle Owls were recorded at several localities; near Dubis (1913AD) in August 1996; near Amspoort (1913AC) in April 2000 & 2001 and in the Khwarib Schlucht (1913BD) in August 2002 and May 2004. A bird was heard calling in April 2003 from the cliffs at Okandjombo (1812BB) near the Hoarusib River, 520 km NW of the Khan River (Swanepoel 2003). In the Okakora/Otjihipa Mountains (1712BB) near the Kunene River, a bird responded in January 2004 to the playback of a tape recording. This record is 640 km to the NW of the Khan River records (Swanepoel 2005).

The Cape Eagle Owl is probably resident at all the mentioned localities. The above-mentioned records present substantial range extensions for the species, all along the Great Escarpment from the Orange River in the south to the Khan River in central western Namibia and again from the Khan River up to the Kunene River on the border with Angola.

### **Lesser Striped Swallow – *Hirundo abyssinica***

A pair was seen hawking insects, September 2001, 12 km north of Omaruru on the Kalkfeld road (2115BD). This record is 85 km to the SW of the southernmost record for Namibia (2016DC) during the SABAP period. This species was probably overlooked previously and is probably more widespread in the area, especially during above-average rainy seasons.

### **Bare-cheeked Babbler – *Turdoides gymnogenys***

A flock of 10 birds was seen foraging in the Omaruru River in riparian Ana trees *Faidherbia albida*, in February 2002. The specific locality is 25 km upstream from Okombahe in 2115BC. This record is 60 km to the south from the southernmost record during the SABAP period. During the SABAP period, Bare-cheeked Babblers were only recorded as far south as the Ugab River catchment area, which coincides with the southernmost margin of the Mopane belt in Namibia. Bare-cheeked Babblers were not recorded at all during the SABAP period from the Omaruru River catchment area, where Mopane does not occur and where the vegetation is predominantly *Acacia*. However, the riparian habitat of the Omaruru River (mostly *Faidherbia*), is similar to that favoured by the Bare-cheeked Babbler in the Ugab River as well as in the Huab and Hoanib Rivers further to the north. The Bare-cheeked Babbler was probably overlooked in the Omaruru River during the SABAP period and is probably resident.

### **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler – *Euryptila subcinnamomea***

A single bird was seen in February 2000 on a boulder strewn hillside in the granite kopjes on the farm Namibgrens (2316CA). This record is 45 km to the north of the northernmost SABAP record, in the Naukluft Mountains (2416BB). An extensive area with suitable habitat is found locally on Namibgrens. The species is probably resident in the area and was probably overlooked in the past.

### **Rattling Cisticola – *Cisticola chiniana***

A bird was seen and heard calling, on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2005 in riparian woodland of the Ugab River at Alpha (2114BA). On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2005 three more birds were recorded from the same locality and on the next day one bird was recorded 4 km downstream, near De Rust. These localities are close to the Brandberg and more than 100 km to the west from the nearest records during the SABAP period, from the Otjohorong area (2015DC) NW of Omaruru. The Rattling Cisticola was also not recorded for the area by Brown (Brown 1991). The bird probably moved down along the Ugab River from further upstream where it is widespread in woodland. As suitable habitat is to be found all along the Ugab River even deep into the Namib, the Rattling Cisticola may occur sparingly all along it.

### **Rufous-eared Warbler – *Malcorus pectoralis***

An adult bird was seen in December 2000 at the confluence of the Epukiro

Omramba and the Elandslaagte, eastern Otjozondjupa Region, in 2120BB. The habitat at this locality consists of low bushes (*Rhigozum*, *Grewia*, *Terminalia* and *Combretum* spp.) and scrub in the dry river valley of the Epukiro Omaramba. The bird was seen perched in a *Rhigozum* sp. This record is 340 km to the northeast from the nearest SABAP record in Namibia in 2217BC (Sees area, east of Windhoek). The nearest SABAP record in Botswana is 280 km to the south, in 2321A (150 km SE of Buitepos and 100 km NW of Tshane). As suitable habitat is to be found all along the omarambas in the region, Rufous-eared Warblers probably occur more widespread in the region and were probably overlooked in the past.

### **White Helmet-shrike – *Prionops plumatus***

A flock of 7 birds, including one immature, was observed foraging in riparian Ana trees *Faidherbia albida* in the Omaruru River, 25 km upstream of Okombahe (2115BC) in February 2002. This record is 60 km to the south from the southernmost record during the SABAP period in the catchment of the Ugab River. The Ugab River is on the southern extreme of the Mopane belt in Namibia whilst the Omaruru falls in the *Acacia* dominated zone. The White Helmet-shrike prefers deciduous broadleaved woodland (e.g. Mopane) but disperses into a wide range of habitats, including *Acacia* after breeding. (Maclean 1993). This species is probably a regular post-breeding visitor to the Omaruru River and was probably overlooked in the past.

### **White-bellied Sunbird – *Cinnyris talatala***

White-bellied Sunbirds were recorded in the arid western and southern regions, from the dry season of 2003 onwards. It was found in riparian woodland along the major west-flowing rivers: Hoanib; Huab; Ugab; Omaruru; Khan and Okahandja River during the months falling in the period June–October. Its occurrence there coincides with the blossoming season of the Ana tree *Faidherbia albida*, on which it was recorded feeding. It was also recorded from Windhoek and the Kalkrand area, where it was recorded feeding on flowering plants in gardens and flowers of the mistletoe *Tapinanthus oleifolius*. White-bellied Sunbirds were probably overlooked in the past in these areas due to being less vocal after breeding. It is probably a regular, seasonal non-breeding visitor to the mentioned areas, present there only during the period June–October. As such,

the mentioned records present western and southern range extensions of up to 200 km and 300 km respectively for the White-bellied Sunbird. Unlike other populations of this species, which is subject to movements to the north and east (Tree 1997), at least part of the Namibian population moves westwards and southwards during the winter months into biomes with seemingly unsuitable habitat (Swanepoel 2004).

### Chestnut Weaver – *Ploceus rubiginosus*

A male in full breeding plumage and one female were seen together at the confluence of the Löwen and Fish Rivers on the farm Elizabeth 383, in April 1999 (2717BA). The birds were seen over a period of two days and were highly vocal while being perched in *Ficus cordata* trees. These birds were probably vagrants, which moved southwards along the Fish River from the Kalkrand area where it occurs sporadically (pers. obs.) during above average rainy seasons. This was the case in 1999; the Fish River was still in flood when the birds were recorded. This record is 360 km SSE from the nearest SABAP record in the Naukluft Mountains in 2416AC and 350 km due south from the Kalkrand area.

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