



LANIOTURDUS

VOL. 43 (2) 2010

www.namibiabirdclub.org

CONTENTS

- THOMSON N Editorial
- MIDDENDORFF G Chairperson's report
- DEMASIUS E A Visit to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
- HILL G A Walk on the Wild Side – Windhoek Style
- KOLBERG H Have you ever been to Antarctica?
- DETERING H Caprivi Tour August/September 2009
- KOLBERG H Wetland Bird Counts in Namibia 1: Introduction and Overview
- KOLBERG H Summary of the 2009 Winter Count
- KOLBERG H Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 1: Introduction and Overview
- PAXTON M Contentious, Thought Provoking Observations : Shamvura Camp and Kavango Region
- RARITIES AND INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS
- FUN NAMIBIAN BIRD QUIZ

Editorial

I don't believe that anyone can deny that the Namibia Bird Club is moving forward. The chairperson's report published in this issue outlines some of the activities of the Namibia Bird Club including outings, wetland counts and our well attended Birding Big Day as well as the donations given to various bird rehabilitation centres and projects.

Your committee has managed to keep the subscriptions at their current levels for several years now. In this day and age where the price of everything is constantly increasing we would like to continue to maintain them at the current levels but this will depend on whether or not we can increase our membership base. If we can attract more members we will not need to increase the subscriptions. If you have enjoyed our outings and enjoyed reading Lanioturdus spread the word, bring your friends along and get them to join as well. It could just save you some money!

Mark Paxton's article in this issue certainly is a thought provoking one. Has he found species way off their recorded range? Or perhaps undescribed subspecies? Or even hybridized birds? Does the breastband of Shelley's/Marico sunbird change colour with age? It seems that there is plenty of scope for an ornithologist in his region.

In this issue we also have a trip report by Helga Detering written in German. Helga has however included the English common names of all species mentioned in the text in brackets



Violet Wood-hoopoe showing coppery tinged neck and long tail

Rarities and Interesting Observations

Otto Brase reported a great reed-warbler seen on Farm Neuras north west of Maltahöhe on 09/01/2010. While there are a few scattered Atlas records for this species in central Namibia the closest one seems to be about 100 km to the east of where this bird was seen.

The only rarity seen by the summer wetland counters at Walvis Bay on the weekend of 16 & 17/01/2010 was a single common redshank.

Ulrich Hofmann reported a saddle-billed stork seen on Farm Kakuse north west of Tsumeb in mid January.

On 21/01/2010 I saw a number of southern carmine bee-eaters including juvenile birds at Katwitwi on the Angolan border. This sighting is just about at the western extremity of their atlassed range in Namibia. These birds disperse widely after breeding and it would be interesting to know where they bred. The only colony I am aware of in the Kavango region is near Shamvura Camp some 270 km to the east but there could well be other sites in the region or in Angola.



Juvenile southern carmine bee-eater – Photo:Neil Thomson

During the course of the wetland bird count at the Gammams Sewage Works on 23/01/2010 Bird Club members saw sand martins and a grey-headed gull. Atlas data suggests that these are both very uncommon species in central Namibia and Holger Kolberg confirmed that there are only two Atlas records for each of these species for the Windhoek Quarter Degree Square out of a total of 559 Atlas cards for the QDS. Richard Niddrie advised however that he had seen sand martins there before.

Hanjo Böhme reported a grey-headed kingfisher seen at Monte Christo Guest Farm on 24/01/2010 during the course of the wetland bird count conducted by Namibia Bird Club members. While not considered a rarity this species is seldom seen in central Namibia.

Holger Kolberg's summer wetland bird count travels this time also failed to find much by

way of rarities although he reported a terek sandpiper at Griffith Bay, Lüderitz, on 01/02/2010. While not considered a southern African rarity this is a very uncommon species on the Namibian coast. Holger's count at Hardap Dam however included a healthy count of 24 pink-backed pelicans. This compares with 9 seen here during the 2009 summer count (Lanioturdus 42-3).

Holger also reported a solitary white stork at the Lüderitz sewage works at the end of January. Perusal of the Atlas reveals that this is not a unique record although it is a very unusual sighting in this area.

Only one great crested grebe was seen during the summer count. This bird was seen at the Mile 4 Saltworks north of Swakopmund. This species seems to have become extremely rare in Namibia.

Günther Friederich reported a flight of 30 – 40 greater flamingos heading northwards over Farm Tsutsab near Tsintsabis on the morning of 29/01/2010. One can only wonder where these birds were going as the Etosha Pan is to the west and Sua Pan is far to the east.

On 02/02/2010 Richard Niddrie reported a sighting of slaty egret from a very flooded Mahango Game Reserve.

Eckart Demasius and Richard Niddrie reported five red-necked phalaropes present at Walvis Bay lagoon on 07/02/2010.

In recent months there has been the strange phenomenon of irruptions of African openbills all over South Africa with numbers of these birds appearing in places where they have never before been recorded. It seems that this is also happening in Namibia.

On 14/02/2010 at least two of these birds were seen at Windhoek's Gammams Sewage Works by participants in the Namibia Bird Club morning walk. Three weeks later on 07/03/2010 a single African openbill was seen soaring high over Avis Dam, Windhoek, by Bird Club members.



African openbill at Gammams Sewage Works – Photo Neil Thomson

On 23/02/2010 I saw a single southern ground-hornbill at Katima Mulilo Airport (Mpacha). This bird is likely to have been a female as it is the young females that leave the family groups to seek mates and thus solitary birds are most often females. This is a species that is becoming increasingly uncommon outside of protected areas.

Ulrich Hofmann saw a juvenile lappet-faced vulture with the patagial tag L90 at Ganab on 02/03/2010. This bird was ringed and tagged by myself as a 4,7 kg nestling in the Ganab area on 10/10/2009 – nice to know that it fledged successfully.

On 15/03/2010 Mark Boorman recaptured a Swiss ringed common tern at Mile 4 Saltworks. This bird was ringed as a chick at Oberhofen bei Kreuzlingen in Switzerland on 25/06/2008 and was recaptured 626 days later 7822 km from the ringing site. This is the furthest south that a Swiss ringed common tern has ever been recaptured. There are apparently about 500 pairs of common terns that breed in Switzerland.

The pelagic bird trip organized by the Namibia Bird Club out of Walvis Bay on 20/03/2010 produced no fewer than eleven red (grey) phalaropes. The first group of seven birds was encountered about 35 km offshore while the second group of four birds was found a little closer inshore. A couple of lucky participants

also got a glimpse of the Franklin's gull flying over the boat near Pelican Point (see below).



Red phalaropes – Photo: Neil Thomson

On 22/03/2010 Gudrun and I saw a single common redshank at Mile 4 Saltworks north of Swakopmund.

In addition Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since the beginning of January 2010.

A common black-headed gull was photographed at Walvis Bay on 23/01/2010 and one was reported there again in the last week of February.

The report dated 29/01/2010 again mentions the sighting of a grey kestrel in the Caprivi Region, this time about 30 km west of Katima Mulilo. This bird is far to the east of its normal range (See also Lanioturdus 43-1).

A winter plumaged Franklin's gull was reported from Walvis Bay on 02/02/2010.

The report of 18/02/2010 mentions the presence of two common redshanks at Mile 4 Saltworks and a black-tailed godwit at Sandwich Harbour.

In the report dated 01/03/2010 it is stated that two common redshanks were seen at Mile 4 Saltworks while a single bird was observed at Walvis Bay. Three red necked phalaropes

were also seen at Walvis Bay while the Franklin's gull was again showing at Pelican Point.

The report dated 08/03/2010 mentions a golden plover seen at Rundu sewage works. At that stage it was thought to be an American golden plover but photographic evidence was awaited to determine whether it could possibly be a Pacific golden plover. This is the first golden plover record I am aware of this summer. For the past few years there have been a number of records from the Namibian coast.

Neil Thomson

FUN NAMIBIAN BIRD QUIZ

Provided by Paul Gascoigne

The names of ten species of birds occurring in Namibia are suggested in the clues below. See how many of these you can work out. Some lateral thinking is required. No prizes for the correct answers but we would be very interested to know how many you get.

1. A strong wind during the hours of darkness.
2. Crash hat costing twenty one shillings.
3. Paperwork received for late payment of game bird purchase.
4. Water bird gives you a neat hairdo.
5. Very religious head banger.
6. The bird in the timepiece on the wall calls out every hour.
7. Water bird from the pyramids.
8. Messing about on a mountain of sand.
9. A religious place for a gulp.
10. Repeated conversation.

The answers will be published in the next edition of Lanioturdus.