LANIOTURDUS

VOL. 44 (2) 2011

www.namibiabirdclub.org

CONTENTS

THOMSON N Editorial **1**

MIDDENDORFF G
Chairperson's Report **2**

DEMASIUS E
Blue Crane Report : December 2010 **4**

THOMSON N Who were the People after whom some of our Bird Species are named? (Part 2 : Abdim's Stork to Franklin's Gull) **7**

BARTLEWSKI S
Portrait – Spotted Flycatcher **11**

KOLBERG H Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 4 : Herons and Egrets Part 1 **12**

THOMSON N New Names, Old Names and Very Old Names **16**

BARTLEWSKI S Ost-Afrika Bericht **18**

DEMASIUS E A Different Kind of Birding Part 1 : Birds on the Stamps of South Africa **22**

RARITIES AND INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS **31**

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

Rarities and Interesting Observations

The year got off to a good start with Hanjo Böhme reporting a Eurasian Oystercatcher, a Red-necked Phalarope and an Osprey seen at Walvis Bay on 06/01/2011.

On 08/01/2011 Eckart Demasius photographed a Greater Sand Plover at Mile 4 Saltworks. This bird had been found by Mark Boorman earlier in the week (See article in Lanioturdus 44(1)). Eckart also reported two Common Redshanks at the same location.

Common Redshank – Photo Eckart Demasius

In the second week of January Monika Gerlach saw what she believed (on the basis of the white bills and red legs) to be Dusky Indigobirds in her Klein Windhoek garden. It is however far more likely that these birds are Village Indigobirds of the subspecies *Vidua chalybeata okavangoensis* which occurs west of the Victoria Falls. (This subspecies also has a white bill and red legs). There is a previous record of this species in Windhoek; a pair was seen at Avis Dam on 20/12/2009 (See Lanioturdus 43 (1)). The Village Indigobird parasitizes the Red-billed Firefinch and this host species has become quite common in Windhoek whereas the Dusky Indigobird parasitizes the African Firefinch which does not occur here (at least as far as we are aware). Subsequently Jo Tagg told me that he had regularly seen two male Village Indigobirds in his garden mornings and evenings from the end of December onwards. I understand that he lives in the same vicinity as Monika Gerlach so these are likely the same birds seen by both. But then the reports started flooding in with Linda Baker reporting regular sightings of these birds in Olympia and Wilfried Friederich reporting them in Hochland Park at the beginning of February. On 15/01/2011 Gudrun Middendorff saw a male indigobird with a white bill and white legs at her Olympus Village home. The white bill and legs are diagnostic of Purple Indigobird, the brood parasite of Jameson's Firefinch. I am not aware of any confirmed sightings of Jameson's Firefinch around Windhoek but I do recall being told of suspected sightings where the bird in question could not be positively identified. This could however be a misidentification of a Village Indigobird as the red legs sometimes appear to be pale particularly in poor light conditions. From where these indigo birds may have come is a mystery. The nearest parts of the recorded ranges are hundreds of kilometers from Windhoek. Whether they originate from escaped/released aviary birds or whether they have somehow naturally found their host species in central Namibia is unknown. The origin of the firefinches around Windhoek is equally uncertain.

Village Indigobird – Photo Jo Tagg

I received a report from Kobus Bekker of a Pallid Harrier seen between Sesriem and Sossusvlei around mid January. This sighting is further to the south west than any of the Atlas records.

The summer wetland count at Walvis Bay on 22 and 23/01/2011 turned up a Eurasian Oystercatcher, a Common Black-headed Gull and 13 Red-necked Phalaropes. Interestingly

no Terek Sandpipers were counted whereas the last winter count (when one would expect them to be absent) turned up eight (See Lanioturdus 43-4). In addition several seabirds, which normally do not feature in the counts, were observed from the beach in the vicinity of Pelican Point. These were 3 White-chinned Petrels, 13 European Storm-Petrels, 24 Pomarine Jaegers, a Great Shearwater and 11 Sooty Shearwaters. The presence of these birds was probably due to the unusual climatic conditions (rain and poor visibility) and the warm water temperature prevailing at the time.

Eckart Demasius reported a Diderick Cuckoo in Swakopmund on 22/01/2011. The distribution map in Roberts VII indicates few records for this species at the Namibian coast.

The bird count on 30/01/2011 at Otjivero Dam about 90 km east of Windhoek turned up two Pink-backed Pelicans. This is a very uncommon species in central Namibia and was a lifer for all the counters. This is the first time that this species has been recorded in a wetland count at Otjivero Dam although it was recorded in this Quarter Degree Square (QDS) during the Atlas period. In mid February Holger Kolberg counted five of these birds in the course of the summer count at Hardap Dam.

Pink-backed Pelican – Photo Neil Thomson

Also seen at Otjivero Dam were displaying male Yellow-crowned Bishops. These "avian bumble bees" have a limited distribution in Namibia. Another interesting sighting was that of an adult African Harrier-Hawk, an uncommon species in central Namibia, which was not recorded in this particular QDS during the Atlas period.

Yellow-crowned Bishop – Photo Neil Thomson

Also on 30/01/2011 Dirk Heinrich caught a ringed Black-chested Snake-Eagle about 60 km north of Okahandja. This bird had been ringed by Mike Yates about 40 km north of Okahandja on 13/10/1990! This is possibly the longest known survival of a ringed raptor in southern Africa.

And the day got even better! Jessica Kemper was able to read the ring on a Great White Pelican which had first been seen the day before at Second Lagoon, Lüderitz. This bird had been ringed on 30/01/2009 on Dassen Island 55 km north west of Cape Town and about 800 km south of Lüderitz! This is possibly the northernmost sighting of a Dassen Island pelican.

Ringed Dassen Island pelican – Photo Jessica Kemper

And it went on! The weekend of the 29-30/01/2011 was even more productive with Mark Boorman finding a Lesser Sand Plover on the beach near Mile 4 Saltworks. This bird was still present on the weekend of 12-13/03/2011 but we failed to find it on 21/03/2011.

Pic Lesser Sand Plover – Photo Eckart Demasius

Richard Niddrie and Christiane Maluche returned from a few days in the Kavango Region at the beginning of February with a bird list of 146 species. Some of the highlights were Slaty Egret seen in the Mahango area, White-backed Night Heron seen at both Shamvura and the Mahango area (the latter almost undoubtedly the same birds reported by Chris Elmer - see Lanioturdus 44(1)), Baillon's Crake at Shamvura, Grey-headed Parrot at both Shamvura and the Buffalo area and Thrush Nightingale seen in dense vegetation at Mahangu Safari Lodge. These are all species with a very limited distribution in Namibia and the Thrush Nightingale is a particularly difficult bird to find.

On 06/02/2011 Eckart Demasius reported an Osprey at Mile 6 north of Swakopmund.

On the same day on the bird club outing to Monte Christo at least one of the off range Woodland Kingfishers was seen again. A Black Stork was seen there as well and Ursel Röthel advised that a Saddle-billed Stork had also been present there not long before.

The bird club outing to the Gammams Sewage Works on 13/02/2011 produced a sighting of an immature African Harrier-Hawk. This is an uncommon species in central Namibia and I have certainly never seen it close to Windhoek before.

On the same day Tom Breckwoldt reported the presence of Fulvous Ducks at Avis Dam. These birds are a long way south of their normal range but vagrants are occasionally encountered, the most recent of which I am aware was at Walvis Bay sewage ponds in August 2010.

On 20/02/2011 we saw a pair of Black-backed Puffbacks feeding a youngster at Monte Christo. This seems to be a southward range extension of about 80 to 100 km from the data published in the Atlas of Southern African Birds and Roberts VII.

Paul Gascoigne reported 22 Red-necked Phalaropes and a Terek Sandpiper at Walvis Bay on the weekend of 19-20/02/2011.

Liz Komen found a dead Lesser Moorhen on a road in the Brakwater area in the last week of February. The distribution map in Roberts VII indicates that this is a very uncommon species in central Namibia.

The Namibia Bird Club outing on 27/02/2011 to Farm Hoffnung just east of Windhoek turned up at least three Greater Painted Snipe and a displaying Yellow-crowned Bishop. These are both uncommon species in central Namibia and neither was recorded in that particular QDS during the Atlas period.

Inge Brase reported a congregation of more than 100 Marabou Storks in the vicinity of Windhoek's Kupferberg landfill site on 27/02/2011.

Dieter Ludwig reported two White-faced Ducks and a number of Lesser Moorhens at Avis Dam on 13/03/2011. The exceptionally wet rainy season being experienced is now starting to produce some very unusual sightings. As stated above Lesser Moorhens are very uncommon in central Namibia and White-faced Duck is also an extremely uncommon species in this area.

Mark Boorman reported at least four (possibly

five) Common Redshanks at Mile 4 Saltworks in mid March and Gudrun Middendorff and I saw at least two on 21/03/2010.

Kobus Bekker informed us of a sighting of three Lilac-breasted Rollers reported to him at Farm Helmeringhausen. This appears to be some 90 km south of the closest Atlas record.

Southern White-crowned Shrikes were reported from a farm where the Tsondap River enters the Namib Naukluft Park on 20/03/2011. This seems to be a considerable south westward range extension, probably of at least 160 km from the closest Atlas record.

In addition Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since the beginning of January 2011.

The report dated 24/01/2011 deals with no fewer than four Common Redshanks seen at Mile 4 Saltworks while a Great Knot was apparently photographed at Walvis Bay.

A single Eurasian Oystercatcher was reported at Sandwich Harbour on the weekend of 22-23/01/2011.

The report of 31/01/2011 mentions a Black Cuckoo just outside Namibia's border at Mata Mata in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. This bird is way off its normal recorded range. This is the second recent record of a cuckoo well south of its normal range – in October 2010 a Jacobin Cuckoo was seen at Ai-Ais (See Lanioturdus 44(1)).

The report of 03/02/2011 features an Allen's Gallinule photographed at Windhoek's Gammams Sewage Works. This bird is a very long way south of its normal range.

A Comb Duck landed in a Walvis Bay garden on 17/02/2011. This is a species which is virtually unknown on the Namibian Coast.

The report of 24/02/2011 again makes mention of at least two Common Redshanks at Mile 4 Saltworks.

The report dated 07/03/2011 confirms the continued presence of two Red-necked Phalaropes at Walvis Bay.

Neil Thomson

About the Namibia Bird Club

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. We organize monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Sewage Works and occasional weekend trips further afield. Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we have lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive a programme of forthcoming events (the Bird Call Newsletter) and the Bird Club journal, Lanioturdus.

Namibia Bird Club Committee 2011

Gudrun Middendorff (Chairperson) Tel: 061 225727 (h)
Sonja Bartlewski (Secretary, Bird Call editor) Tel: 081 149 2313
Jutta Surén (Treasurer) Tel: 061 241382 (h)
Liz Komen (Planning and education) Tel: 061 264409 (h)
Neil Thomson (Editor Lanioturdus) Tel: 061 222140 (h) email: batqs@mweb.com.na
Holger Kolberg (Member) Tel: 081 129 5163
Richard Niddrie (Member) Tel: 061 233 892 (h)

Another member will be co-opted after the next committee meeting to fill the vacancy left by Wilfried Hähner's resignation.