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Editorial

With funding for research projects becoming ever more difficult to secure more and more reliance is placed on the citizen scientist to help collect the data required for research. You and I who participate in atlassing, ringing, wetland counts, raptor road counts etc. are the citizen scientists, the amateurs, who provide much of the data from which the professionals are able to conduct their research.

In a way the wheel has turned a full circle. Some years ago (as far as I am aware around the mid 1970's) the school of thought was that research was purely the domain of the professionals and amateurs or citizen scientists were actively discouraged from data collection. A case in point is bird ringing where a policy was introduced whereby amateur ringing was only permitted if a project was registered. The immediate result of this was that many amateur ringers lost interest and threw in the towel. One cannot help wondering how much valuable data was lost through this short sighted approach. How many birds, that might have been ringed by

the feeding table at any one time. Most often only a single bird is present. At the times when there are numbers of Laughing Doves on the table there is always a lot of pushing and shoving with a few birds being pushed off only to promptly return to try to push their way in again. Amongst the smaller birds such as Southern Masked-Weavers, Southern Red Bishops, Red-headed Finches and Black-throated Canaries there is often a bit of squabbling but this depends on the numbers present and the degree of overcrowding. When there are only a few of these small birds present they seem to feed together quite harmoniously. It is however interesting to watch how the Speckled Pigeons interact with the other birds. They are generally tolerant of the small birds feeding alongside them without showing any aggression whatsoever towards these birds. However, they do not tolerate the close presence of Laughing Doves and, when the doves get too close they actively attack these birds, pecking at them until they give way. I have ringed several Speckled Pigeons at my home and I have observed this behavior amongst both ringed and unringed birds so it is not something peculiar to one individual. A Speckled Pigeon is about three to four times the mass of a Laughing Dove. I can only assume that the Speckled Pigeons see the Laughing Doves as competitors for a particular type of seed (perhaps the crushed maize and larger seeds in the mixture) and thus attempt to chase them off whereas the smaller birds feed predominately on the smaller seeds which are not favoured by the Speckled Pigeons.

Flamingo Hunt

The following article appeared in the newspaper, der Südwestafrikanische Zeitung, on 04 December 1907. Today it is hard to believe that the graceful flamingos which enhance our coastal wetlands were once almost declared vermin to be eradicated. Fortunately the authorities declared them protected before this could happen.

Flamingojagd

Unglaublich aber wahr ist folgende Kampfansage an die Flamingos in Swakopmund, die der Deutsche Südwestafrikanischen Zeitung von 4. Dezember 1907 zu entnehmen ist.

“In letzter Zeit wurden die Gefilde unserer Stadt verschiedentlich von Flamingos heimgesucht. Zum Glück wurde jedoch zur Verhütung eines unabsehbaren Schadens sofort Jagd auf diese Tiere gemacht. Es freut uns, mitteilen zu können, daß auch nicht einer dieser Schädlinge länger als einen Tag uns belästigt hat und daß dem lebhaften Schützenfeuer, das kühne Jäger gegen sie eröffneten, kaum einer Räuber völlig gesund entronnen ist. Es wäre auch zu schade, wenn das reizende Landschaftsbild an der Swakopmündung mit seinen Seen und Villen durch derartiges Raubzeug, das sich in der Lagune breit macht und die Spaziergänger belästigt, beeinträchtigt und unsere ohnedies überreiche Fauna noch weiter vermehrt würde. Darum : Krieg bis aufs Messer!”

Soweit kam es aber glücklicherweise nicht, da die Flamingos kurz danach, am 16. Dezember 1907, laut Polizeiverordnung unter Schutz gestellt wurden.

Rarities and Interesting Observations

First a couple of records from the end of 2011 received too late for inclusion in the previous edition of Lanioturdus and starting with an absolute “mega”.

Michelle Ahrens photographed an African Pitta on Farm Hauchabfontein on the south side of the Naukluft Mountains on 19 and 20/12/2011. This may well be the first record of this species in Namibia. Roberts VII does not indicate any Namibian records. This species is a much sought after southern African rarity occurring usually on the eastern

side of the sub-continent. This is almost undoubtedly the western most record for this species in southern Africa.



African Pitta – Photo : Michelle Ahrens

I received a report that John Davies had seen a male Narina Trogon about 2 km downstream from Hippo Pools Camp Site at Ruacana on 24/12/2011. It seems that this bird is at least 700 km west of the nearest indicated southern African record. This species occurs in Angola somewhat closer to where this bird was seen and it seems very possible that this could be a bird of Angolan origin. Pete Morgan managed to relocate and photograph the bird a few days later.



Narina Trogon – Photo : Pete Morgan

Eckart Demasius reported a juvenile Saddle-billed Stork seen at Klein Namutoni Waterhole on 26/12/2011. In addition I received a belated report from Tim Osborne of two Saddle-billed Storks seen from the Pan's Edge Road on 11/11/2011. An uncommon species in the Etosha National Park but not unique records – a juvenile was reported from Rietfontein Waterhole in December 2009 (see Lanioturdus 43(1)).



Juvenile Saddle-billed Stork – Photo : Eckart Demasius

Eckart also saw a tagged Kori Bustard during the course of his Etosha trip. This bird, with a yellow patagial tag inscribed with the number 65, was seen at a few kilometres west of Halali between the main road and the pan on 27/12/2011. The bird was ringed and tagged by Tim and Laurel Osborne in the course of their work on this species. This particular bird was ringed as an adult female on 06/02/1999 on the Nuamses Road not very far north east of Halali. Please be on the lookout for such tagged birds as their reported resightings add tremendously to our knowledge of movements, longevity etc.



Tagged Kori Bustard – Photo : Eckart Demasius

In the last week of December 2011 a single Spur-winged Goose was seen for a few hours on ploughed fields at Farm Kakuse some 70 km north west of Tsumeb. Farmer Christian Hofmann advised that this was the first time he had seen this species there in his almost thirty five years on the farm.

Maren Thomson reported at least 500 Abdim's Storks seen from the B2 between Karibib and Okahandja on 09/01/2012.

Calle Schlettwein advised that he had seen a male Village Indigobird on 16/01/2012 on the feeding table at his home at the northern end of Klein Windhoek. This is the second Windhoek record for this species this summer of which I am aware (see *Lanioturdus* 45(1)).

The summer wetland count at Walvis Bay on 21 & 22/01/2012 turned up one Common Redshank, three Terek Sandpipers, an Osprey and thirteen Red-necked Phalaropes. A Pied Kingfisher was also seen and this appears to be a very unusual record on the central Namibian Coast. Perusal of the Atlas (SABAP1) indicates that the species has been recorded at Swakopmund (possibly only a single record) but there are no other records from the coast between the Orange River mouth and the Kunene mouth. I subsequently found out that the species has been recorded at Nonidas but this could well be the Swakopmund record in the Atlas and that it was also seen some years ago at the Walvis Bay Sewage Works.

A Glossy Ibis was seen at the Walvis Bay Sewage Works in the course of the count there on the same weekend.

Jo Tagg reported four male Village Indigobirds on his Klein Windhoek feeding table on 24/01/2012.

The summer wetland count at the Gammams Sewage Works on 28/01/2012 turned up a pair of African Black Ducks. This is an uncommon species in central Namibia and although its preferred habitat is running water it has been seen at the sewage works on occasion before.

The wetland count at Otjivero Dam on 29/01/2012 produced a single Yellow-billed Stork, an uncommon species in central Namibia, and a single Black Heron. The Black Heron was certainly not recorded there during the Atlas period but it has been recorded at this location twice before in the course of wetland counts (April 1999 and January 2001).



Black Heron – Photo : Christiane Maluche



Yellow-billed Stork – Photo : Christiane Maluche

Also on 29/01/2012 Mark Boorman found a Greater Sand Plover at Mile 4 Saltworks. This is an extremely rare bird on the Namibian coast although one was reported from the same location about a year previously (see *Lanioturdus* 44(1)).



Greater Sand Plover – Photo : Mark Boorman

On 03/02/2012 I saw what I believe can only have been a Crowned Hornbill near Katima Mulilo Airport. Having just seen several Bradfield's Hornbills this bird was very different with deep chocolate brown upper parts. Perusal of the Atlas (SABAP1) suggests that this bird was seen near the western extremity of its limited range in Namibia. This is the first time I have seen this species in Namibia although I had seen it in Zimbabwe.

Anita Witt reported two sightings of African Harrier-Hawk in the vicinity of Baines Centre in Pioneer Park. The first was on 05/02/2011 and the second on 15/02/2012. This follows a number of recent sightings of this species (which is uncommon in central Namibia) in the Windhoek area (see *Lanioturdus* 44(2), 44(3), 44(4) & 45(1)).



African Harrier-Hawk – Photo : Anita Witt

The Namibia Bird Club morning walk at the Gammams Sewage Works on 12/02/2012 produced sightings of an Osprey and at least one Purple Heron. These are both uncommon species in central Namibia.

Stefan Rust reported one male and two female Village Indigobirds seen in his garden in von Falkenhausen Street, Pioneer Park, on 17/02/2012. And then the reports started to roll in with Sakkie von Plato reporting a pair of indigobirds seen in Kleine Kuppe on 22 & 23/02/2012 and Dieter Ludwig advising us of a further sighting in Klein Windhoek.



Village Indigobirds – Photo : Stefan Rust

In mid February a juvenile Allen's Gallinule was found in Windhoek West and taken to Sonja Bartlewski's Wild Bird Hospital where it was "fattened up" prior to being released at Monte Christo on 25/02/2012. This species is virtually unknown in central Namibia although there was a sighting of an adult bird at the Gammams Sewage Works in February 2011 (see *Lanioturdus* 44(2)). It would appear that the birds returned this summer and bred somewhere in or near Windhoek.



Juvenile Allen's Gallinule – Photo : Neil Thomson

Mark Boorman reported a Common Black-headed Gull at Walvis Bay on 25/02/2012.



Common Black-headed Gull – Photo : Mark Boorman

In the course of atlas training at the Gammams Sewage Works on 10/03/2012 at least two African Black Ducks were again seen (see above).

In addition Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since the beginning of January 2012.

In the first report of the year dated 02/01/2012 it was stated that all three phalarope species were seen in Walvis Bay with the Wilson's Phalarope still present, a number of Red-necked Phalaropes about and a Red Phalarope also seen. At least one of the Gull-billed Terns was also still present (see *Lanioturdus* 45(1)).

Namibia was still humming at the end of the second week in January. The Wilson's Phalarope was still at Walvis Bay along with at least fifty Red-necked Phalaropes while Eurasian Honey-Buzzards were reported from about 100 km north of Gobabis and an immature Egyptian Vulture was photographed at Ombika Waterhole in the Etosha National Park.

A Yellow Wagtail was reported from NamibRand in the third week of January while three Eurasian Oystercatchers were seen at Sandwich Harbour on 21/01/2012.

The report dated 20/02/2012 makes mention of a number of Village Indigobird sightings from various locations around Windhoek.

A Slaty Egret was reported on the Andoni Plains in the Etosha National Park on 27/02/2012.

It was mentioned in the report dated 01/03/2012 that one of the Gull-billed Terns (see above) had been seen again at Walvis Bay while a different Common Black-headed Gull from the one mentioned above had also been seen there.

Two Gull-billed Terns were seen again at Walvis Bay on the weekend of 03 & 04/03/2012.

A Eurasian Honey-Buzzard was reported from Katima Mulilo on 16/03/2012.

In the last week of March the two Gull-billed Terns and one Common Black-headed Gull were still showing 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 (Namibia Bird News) and the Bird Club journal, *Lanioturdus*.