

LANIOTURDUS

Volume 52 No 1

March 2019



Journal of the Namibia Bird Club
<https://www.namibiabirdclub.org>

About the Namibia Bird Club

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. The club's mission is to contribute to Namibian ornithology by, amongst other things, arranging regular birding outings, conducting bird ringing and atlasing excursions and educating the public about the value of birds. To achieve this, we organise monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Water Care Works and occasional weekend trips further afield. Bird club members also participate in the African Waterbird Census twice a year.

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 present occasional lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive the bird club's journal, *Lanioturdus* and outings and events are advertised on the club's website www.namibiabirdclub.org.

The Namibia Bird Club is not affiliated to any global or regional organisation and relies entirely on members' subscriptions and donations to fund its activities.

The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Namibia Bird Club or its committee.



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Cover photo Southern Red Bishop © Beate Schwippert

Rarities and Interesting Observations

Compiled by Neil Thomson

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There is nothing like being able to start this column with a MEGA even if it does disrupt the chronological order of the records. (This column actually includes a disproportionate number of MEGAs). Dirk Bockmühl found a male Eurasian Blackcap at Farm Krumhuk some 20 km south of Windhoek on 22 November 2018. It seems that this is only the 29th record of this species in southern Africa and the 3rd for Namibia following John Paterson's Möwe Bay record in 2003 and another record in the Mahango area. Several members of the Namibia Bird Club connected with the bird in the course of the club's outing to Farm Krumhuk on 25 November.



Figure 1: Eurasian Blackcap © Dirk Bockmühl

White-faced Ducks were photographed at the Otjiwarongo sewage ponds on 03 November 2018 (Posted on Birds of Namibia Facebook page).

A Western Osprey was reported south of Swakopmund on 09 November 2018.

Curt-Ingo Sagell found an American Golden Plover at Walvis Bay on 10 November 2018. (Posted on Birds of Namibia Facebook page).

The long staying Black Sparrowhawk which has been in the vicinity of Swakopmund for about four years was seen again in Vineta on 21 November 2018.

Ulrich Hofmann reported a Magpie Shrike, a species he had never seen there before, at Farm Kakuse some 70 km north west of Tsumeb in mid-November 2018. We subsequently found single birds of this species on three different pentads on the farm during the first half of December.

Thomas Wiedemann mentioned that the yellow morph Crimson-breasted Shrike which has been present for some time at Farm Binsenheim south east of Windhoek was still there on 24 November 2018 (see *Lanioturdus* 48[1]).

A single European Honey Buzzard was seen at Farm Krumhuk on 25 November 2018.

A picture of a Java Sparrow that was seen in a Pioneerspark garden was posted on the Birds of Namibia Facebook page on 03 December 2018. Another photograph of a single bird of this species seen in Academia on 7 January 2019 was posted on the same Facebook page. While undoubtedly an escapee/escapees, the question arises as to whether or not this/one of these is the same individual photographed in Rocky Crest in June 2018 (see *Lanioturdus* 51[3]).

A photograph of a European Honey Buzzard seen in Klein Windhoek on 08 December 2018 was posted on the Birds of Namibia Facebook page.

On 09 December 2018 Gudrun Middendorff saw a Yellow-bellied Greenbul at Farm Kakuse. While seemingly well off range this is not the first record of this species in the general area. One was reported at Grootfontein in 2013 (see *Lanioturdus* 46[4]) and another at Mokuti Lodge in 2015 (see *Lanioturdus* 49[1]).

Curt-Ingo Sagell again reported the presence of Common Mynas in Katima Mulilo on 11 December 2018.

Another MEGA in what is probably only the sixth Namibian Corn Crake was found by Phil Palmer at Namutoni on 11 December 2018 (see also below). It was seen together with an African Crake, another uncommon bird in Namibia.



Figure 2: Corn Crake © Phil Palmer



Figure 3: African Crake © Ian Brookes

Phil Palmer also reported a Dwarf Bittern at the Waterberg on 12 December 2018.

A recently dead juvenile Allen's Gallinule was found in the garden at Farm Kakuse on 13 December 2018. This species has been recorded on the farm before but only when the vleis have been flooded which was not the case at this time.



Figure 4: Allen's Gallinule © Neil Thomson

In mid-December 2018 Danie Brand found Southern Ground Hornbill(s) about three fifths of the way between Divundu and Kongola. While this species is not really a rarity in this area it is always nice to find these birds.

We found a juvenile Lesser Moorhen at a small vlei at Farm Kakuse on 16 December 2018 and saw another at the farmstead the following day.



Figure 5: Lesser Moorhen © Neil Thomson

Another Lesser Moorhen was reported by Arthur Hall at Daan Viljoen Game Reserve on 17 December 2018.

Photographs of a Red-billed Oxpecker seen at the north west edge of the Erongo Mountains on 20 December 2018 were posted on the Birds of Namibia Facebook page. This bird is

a long way off its known range with the nearest population probably being the reintroduced population west of Otavi.

Gudrun Middendorff and I found single Lesser Moorhens at both Koinachas and Chudop waterholes in the Etosha National Park on 22 December 2018. We also saw a “ringtail” harrier near Ockerfontein (juvenile or female Pallid or Montagu’s Harrier).

Marc Cronje found a rather off range Bokmakierie near Halali in the Etosha National Park on 23 December 2018.



Figure 6: Bokmakierie © Marc Cronje



Figure 7: Long-crested Eagle © Iain Guthrie

Wilfried Friederich informed us of a Long-crested Eagle he had seen in the Hochland Park area shortly before Christmas 2018. It subsequently transpired that this bird had been seen and photographed by Iain Guthrie at Avis Dam on 30 November 2018. This species was

recorded previously in the Hochland Park area in November 2012 (see *Lanioturdus* 46[1]).

I was extremely surprised to catch a Red-chested Cuckoo, a very uncommon species in Namibia, at Farm Kakuse on 25 December 2018.



Figure 8: Red-chested Cuckoo © Neil Thomson

Eckart Demasius reported the following sightings in the Etosha National Park:- White-headed Vulture at Klein Namutoni on 26 December 2018, Dwarf Bittern at Rietfontein on 27 December, Lesser Moorhen at Goas on 28 December and what appears to be a very far off range Meves’s Starling at Grünwald on 30 December.



Figure 9: White-headed Vulture © Eckart Demasius



Figure 10: Dwarf Bittern © Eckart Demasius



Figure 11: Lesser Moorhen © Eckart Demasius

A photograph of a Dwarf Bittern seen on a farm in the Nina area was posted on the Birds of Namibia Facebook page on 28 December 2018.

Franz Klein reported seeing eight Common Mynas (a flock of seven plus a single bird) in Katima Mulilo on 31 December 2018. It looks as if this invasive alien species is rapidly becoming established there.

A report from Shamvura Camp posted on Facebook in early January 2019 indicated that African Emerald Cuckoos and a pair of Schalow's Turacos had been present in the area in December 2018. It seems very far to the west for both these species although Schalow's Turaco had been reported there before.

In the course of a trip to the north east of Namibia at the end of December 2018/beginning of January 2019 Franz Klein, Michael

Houlden and others saw, *inter alia*, a Common Cuckoo at Shankara, a Levallant's Cuckoo in the Mahango Game Reserve, an African Emerald Cuckoo in the Buffalo Core Area of the Bwabwata National Park and both Racket-tailed Roller and Lesser Jacana near Katima Mulilo. (The African Emerald Cuckoo sighting at the above location is extremely interesting as it serves as confirmation that this species was indeed present there, far west of its known range, in January 2014 when Bernhard and Antje Madden identified it by call but we were loath to atlas it without seeing the bird).



Figure 12: Common Cuckoo © Michael Houlden



Figure 13: Levallant's Cuckoo © Michael Houlden



Figure 14: African Emerald Cuckoo © Michael Houlden



Figure 15: Racket-tailed Roller © Michael Houlden



Figure 16: Lesser Jacana © Michael Houlden

Vernon Swanepoel reported the presence of a Western Osprey at the Gammams Water Care Works on 05 January 2019.

We had a European Honey Buzzard on our doorstep in the Rykvoet Street circle in Klein Windhoek on 11 January 2019.



Figure 17: European Honey Buzzard © Neil Thomson

Ursula Franke-Bryson ringed an Olive Tree Warbler at Farm Hamakari near the Waterberg on 13 January 2019.



Figure 18: Olive Tree Warbler © Ursula Franke-Bryson

Gudrun Middendorff and I saw a single Black Stork circling over Brakwater on 16 January 2019.

Vernon Swanepoel reported a possible Green Sandpiper at Avis Dam on 20 January 2019. In spite of an extensive search we were unable to find the bird the following day and this must remain an unconfirmed sighting for now.

The camera trap at Hotsas waterhole in the Namib Naukluft Park picked up another MEGA in the form of a young Egyptian Vulture on 20 January 2019.



Figure 19: Egyptian Vulture © Vultures Namibia

In mid to late January there were a number of reported sightings of both Lesser Moorhen and Allen's Gallinule

from the eastern side of the Etosha National Park.

Ursula Franke-Bryson caught and ringed a Common Whitethroat about 50 km south of Usakos on 23 January 2019.

Gudrun Middendorff saw two European Honey Buzzards over Klein Windhoek on 27 January 2019.

Another report was received of Common Mynas in Katima Mulilo. This time John Mendelsohn saw two birds there on 27 January 2019.



Figure 20: Common Myna © John Mendelsohn

Jens Schneider photographed a European Honey Buzzard in Ludwigsdorf on 29 January 2019 and Gudrun Middendorff saw another in Klein Windhoek on 31 January 2019.

In addition, Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since early October 2018:-

A Common Redshank was reported from Mile 4 Saltworks on 04 October 2018 while at least two Yellow-throated Leafloves were again seen at Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge on 06 October.

A very far off range Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird was reported at Erongo Farmhouse on the western side of the

Erongo Mountains on 11 November 2018.



Figure 21: European Honey Buzzard © Jens Schneider

Four Caspian Plovers were found on the western side of Olushandja Dam on 14 November 2018.

Olushandja Dam remained in the news with a Baillon's Crake and a Kittlitz's Plover reported there on 16 November 2018 while seventeen Caspian Plovers were seen there on 17 November.

A Tree Pipit was seen in Halali Rest Camp in the Etosha National Park on 19 November 2018.

Then another MEGA in the form of an Ortolan Bunting was found at Halali the very next day. This is the second record of this species in Namibia (the first was seen at NamibRand) and only the third for southern Africa (the other bird having been seen at Killiekrankie in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park).

A Corn Crake (*another MEGA bird for Namibia*) was seen at Mokuti Lodge on 22 November 2018 (see also above) and there were further sightings of the Yellow-throated Leafloves at Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge on the same day.

A juvenile Lesser Moorhen was seen at Rietfontein waterhole in the Etosha National Park on 14 December 2018.

Two European Honey Buzzards were seen at Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge on 16 December 2018.

One Common Redshank was reported along the Paaltjies road at Walvis Bay on 17 December 2018.

Reports of various crakes continued to pour in; an African Crake was seen at Halali on 18 December 2018.

A single European Honey Buzzard was seen over the Katima Mulilo sewage works on 19 December 2018.

Common Redshank, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Red-necked Phalarope were all reported at Walvis Bay on 20 December 2018 while an

Antarctic Prion was seen from the Paaltjies road the same day.

A Dwarf Bittern was reported from Halali in the Etosha National Park on 23 December 2018 while a Woodland Kingfisher was seen in Omaruru on 24 December.

Both Eurasian Oystercatcher and American Golden Plover were reported at Walvis Bay on 24 December 2018.

Red-necked Phalarope was reported at Walvis Bay again on 29 December 2018 while yet another Lesser Moorhen was seen at Goas waterhole in the Etosha National Park.

The report dated 24 January 2019 mentions an Allen's Gallinule seen at the edge of Fischer's Pan on 22 January and the reappearance of Yellow-throated Leafloves at Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge on 23 January.

A European Honey Buzzard was seen at the Wanderers Sports Club in Windhoek on 24 January 2019.