

LANIOTURDUS

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Editorial

Once again in this issue we are able to report on species new to Namibia. Er, well, perhaps one of them is not really new to Namibia, but none of the previous records was accepted.

The species concerned is the Black Skimmer, a species native to the Americas and for which, as far as I can determine, there were no confirmed records on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

A single bird suddenly appeared at Rietvlei near Cape Town in October 2012, stayed a few days and then disappeared. A couple of days later a single bird (believed to be the same individual) appeared in Walvis Bay, stayed for a short period and again disappeared.

There have been two previous unconfirmed records of this species in Namibia of which I am aware. The first is Joris Komen's record from the Rundu Sewage Works in the mid 1980's which was not accepted by the then rarities committee on the grounds that it was just too unlikely that this species had found its way there - I don't think that Joris has forgiven that committee to this day.

The second record is Tony Tree's sighting of a single bird at Walvis Bay in February 1998, which, as far as I am aware, was also shot down by the rarities committee.

For more on the Walvis Bay Black Skimmer see Otto Schmidt's article and John Paterson's stunning action picture in the "Rarities and Interesting Observations" section of this issue.

Rarities and Interesting Observations

First an older record that has just recently come to my attention. On 13 & 14/11/2011 Joe Gross photographed a Slaty Egret at Monte Christo. To the best of my knowledge this is only the third record of this species in central Namibia. A bird was photographed at Daan Viljoen Game Reserve in 2008 (see *Lanioturdus* 41(1)) and one was photographed at Otjivero Dam in 2011 (see *Lanioturdus* 44(4)).



Slaty Egret – Photo © Joe Gross

Mrs T Malan atlasted a Burchell's Coucal at Auob Lodge north of Gochas on 15/09/2012. This is another species which has not previously been recorded in Namibia but perhaps this is not such a strange sighting as there are historical records of a White-browed Coucal at Monte Christo and a Senegal Coucal near Hosea Kutako International Airport both very far from their recorded ranges.

The two Greater Flamingos reported at Sossusvlei (see *Lanioturdus* 45(4)) were still present on 17/09/2012. On 01/10/2012 only the juvenile bird was still present.

Stefan Rust reported two Black Storks from the Henno Martin Shelter area of the Kuiseb Canyon on 19/09/2012.

An American Golden Plover still wearing most of its breeding plumage was found just south of Lover's Hill, Walvis Bay, on 25/09/2012 by Sean Braine and photographed the following day by Mark Boorman.



American Golden Plover – Photo : © Mark Boorman

Mark Boorman reported a Great White Pelican with the Canadian ring YN seen at Walvis Bay on 09/10/2012. This bird was ringed by Dirk Heinrich at Hardap Dam on 25/05/2008.

On 12/10/2012 a Little Bittern, a Pied Kingfisher and at least two Greater Painted-Snipe were seen at Monte Christo. These are all uncommon species in central Namibia although there have been a number of sightings of Pied Kingfisher from various locations around Windhoek in recent times.

Holger Kolberg photographed a Brown Snake-Eagle at Ganab on 13/10/2012. In terms of the SABAP1 distributions this bird seems to be well to the south west of its recorded range.



Brown Snake-Eagle – Photo : © Holger Kolberg

The Namibia Bird Club morning walk at the Gammams Sewage Works on 14/10/2012 produced sightings of a single Little Bittern and a single Pied Kingfisher.

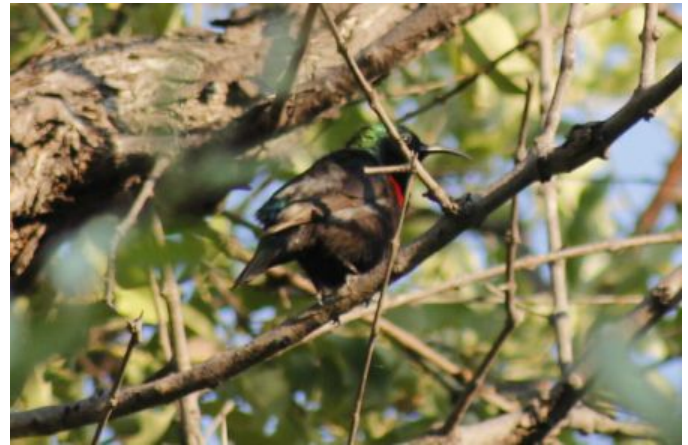
Otto Schmidt reported at least three Baillon's Crakes well as numbers of White-face Ducks near Mariental on 14 & 15/10/2012. The crakes are seldom seen although may well be more common than is generally believed. White-faced Ducks are uncommon in central Namibia.



Baillon's Crake – Photo : © Otto Schmidt

Stefan Rust reported a Red-billed Oxpecker seen at Klein Namutoni on 16/10/2012. This bird is a long way west of the recorded (SABAP1) range for this species but Red-billed Oxpeckers were relocated to the Otavi area a few years ago. It seems most likely that this bird has its origins in the relocated population.

In the second week of November Richard Niddrie and Christiane Maluche reported Shelley's Sunbird at Mahangu Safari Lodge near Divundu on the Okavango River. Other interesting birds seen by them in this area included Wattled Crane, White-backed Night-Heron and Slaty Egret.



Shelley's Sunbird – Photo : © Christiane Maluche

Eckart Demasius reported Wilson's Phalarope, American Golden Plover and Red-necked Phalarope at Walvis Bay on the weekend of 17 & 18/11/2012.



American Golden Plover – Photo : © Eckart Demasius

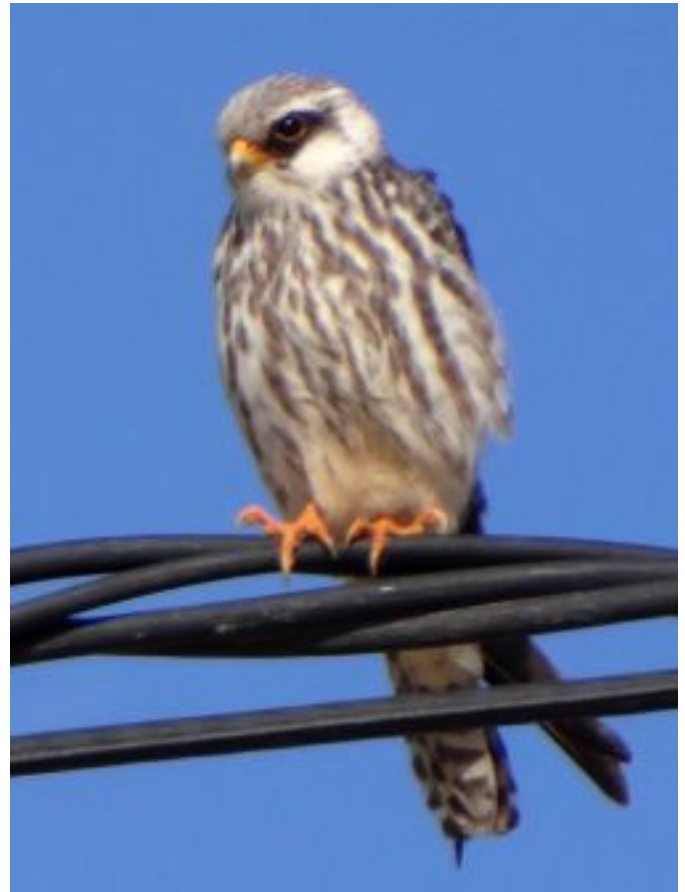
On 17/11/2012 Gudrun and I saw four Black Storks and two Greater Painted-Snipe at Onganja Mine east of Okahandja. These are both uncommon species in central Namibia.

Stefan Rust reported a Souza's Shrike seen 25 km west of Katima Mulilo on 23/11/2012. This inconspicuous species is possibly more common close to some of our northern borders than is generally thought.

Jennie Lates reported a Long-crested Eagle seen in a river bed behind Hochland Park, Windhoek on 24/11/2012. This bird is a very long way off its recorded range.



Long-crested Eagle in Windhoek- Photo : © Michael Houlden



Juvenile Red-footed Falcon – Photo : © Jessica Kemper

The Namibia Bird Club's Birding Big Day atlas challenge on 25/11/2012 at Monte Christo turned up further sightings of Greater Painted-Snipe while the Woodland Kingfishers have again returned to this location well south of their normal range. This time it seems that at least four birds (possibly six) are present. In addition a Pied Kingfisher and a Little Bittern were also seen again (see above).

Jessica Kemper reported a juvenile Red-footed Falcon just outside Lüderitz on 29/11/2012. This bird seems to be a long way off its recorded range although this sighting was not without some controversy as opinion was divided as to whether this was indeed a juvenile Red-footed Falcon or a juvenile Amur Falcon. Trevor Hardaker posted it on SA Rare Bird News Reports as an immature Red-footed Falcon.

Helmut zur Strassen reported three Horus Swifts in Klein Windhoek in the last week of November.

On 30/11/2012 there was another sighting of an African Harrier-Hawk hunting swifts in a palm tree in Suiderhof, this time by Johan and Roline Fourie.



African Harrier_Hawk – Photo : © Johan Fourie

Phil Palmer reported some interesting sightings in Namibia at the end of November/beginning of December 2012. Starting with the Wilson's Phalarope, 45 Red-necked Phalaropes and two Terek Sandpipers at Walvis Bay on 28/11/2012 and followed by male Pallid and Montagu's Harriers at Okondeka in the Etosha National Park on 01/12/2012. Further unusual sightings included a Gull-billed Tern at Andoni on 04/12/2012 and African Crake, Lesser Moorhen, Malachite Kingfisher, seven Greater Painted-Snipe and an Amur Falcon in the company of Lesser Kestrels at Namutoni on 04 & 05/12/2012.

Jo Tagg reported a probable juvenile African Harrier-Hawk seen on 05/12/2012 and again on 11/12/2012 in Klein Windhoek. This may indicate that there is a breeding pair in the vicinity of the city although all sightings of which I am aware have, to date, been of single birds.

The Namibia Bird Club's morning walk at the Gammams Sewage Works on 09/12/2012 produced another fleeting glimpse of a little Bittern.

Eckart Demasius photographed a Gull-billed Tern at Walvis Bay on 16/12/2012.



Gull-billed Tern – Photo : © Eckart Demasius

Also on 16/12/2012 Ute von Ludwiger photographed an African Crake at Chudop waterhole in the Etosha National Park. It is very unusual to see this species in the open like this.



African Crake – Photo : Ute von Ludwiger

On 19/12/2012 Gudrun and I saw a Senegal Coucal at Namutoni which seems to be some distance from its recorded (SABAP1) range.

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

Further sightings of Angola Cave Chat were reported from the Zebra Mountains on the third weekend in September (see *Lanioturdus* 45(4)).

According to the report dated 24/09/2012 at least one Red Phalarope had been seen amongst small groups of Red-necked Phalaropes at Walvis Bay.

In the last week of September the leucistic Common Redshank was still present at Mile 4 Saltworks while several Red-necked Phalaropes were to be seen at Walvis Bay.

On Sunday 07/10/2012 a "Mega Alert" was put out as Mark Boorman and Otto Schmidt had found a Black Skimmer at Walvis Bay. This sighting came only a few days after the first confirmed record of this American species in southern Africa when a bird was seen at Rietvlei near Cape Town. It is thought that the Walvis Bay bird could be the same individual last seen near Cape Town on the evening of 05/10/2012. By the morning of 10/10/2012 the bird had disappeared. There have been at least two previously unaccepted records of

this species – one from Rundu in the mid 1980's and one from Walvis Bay in 1998.



Black Skimmer at Walvis Bay – Photo : © John Paterson

It was reported on 08/10/2012 that in addition to the Black Skimmer, the American Golden Plover, several Red-necked Phalaropes and the single Red Phalarope were still present at Walvis Bay while the leucistic Common Redshank was again seen at Mile 4 Saltworks.

On 29/10/2012 it was reported that the Wilson's Phalarope (see *Lanioturdus* 45(4)) was still present at Walvis Bay together with at least forty Red-necked Phalaropes while a Great Egret was seen at the lagoon in the vicinity of Lover's Hill.

The partially leucistic Common Redshank at Mile 4 Saltworks was mentioned again in the report dated 05/11/2012. This bird had by

then been present at this location for over a year.

An American Golden Plover was reported at Mile 4 Saltworks on 17/11/2012.



American Golden Plover – Photo © Eckart Demasius

It was reported that a Gull-billed Tern had been seen on 13/12/2012 on the Andoni Plains in the Etosha National Park (see also above).

In the final report for 2012 dated 31/12/2012 a Pectoral Sandpiper was reported from Rietfontein Waterhole in the Etosha National Park.

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*.