



CONTENTS

THOMSON N	Editorial	1
DEMASIUS E	Roberts Geographical Variation of Southern African Birds	3
FRIEDERICH G	A Zambian Birding Experience – Part 3	6
KOLBERG H	Summary of the 2012 Ringing Year in Namibia	16
DEMASIUS E	Cuckoo – African or Common?	19
KOLBERG H	Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 9 : Waders and Shorebirds – Part 3	21
BARTLEWSKI S	Some Conservation Efforts in other Countries	27
SKINNER G	Birding Central and Northern Namibia – 10 to 20 October 2012	28
KOLBERG H	Summary of the 2012 Winter Wetland Bird Counts in Namibia	34
THOMSON N	Colour Rings on Sociable Weavers	34
AN APPEAL BY TREVOR HARDAKER		35

ATLAS UPDATE	36
RARITIES AND INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS	37

Editorial

Normally I would have been tempted to devote a good part of the editorial space to another two species which have allegedly turned up in the northwest of Namibia. These birds were allegedly seen by one of the region's top birders but the validity of these claims appears to be in doubt and hopefully I will obtain more information and will be in a better position to comment in a future edition.

However, my editorial comment concerning previous sightings of Black Skimmers in Southern Africa (Lanioturdus 46 (1)) seems to have raised some lively debate and I think it is only right to conclude this issue now.

I published Tony Tree's response in Lanioturdus 46(2) and this has in turn solicited a response from Joris Komen which I am reproducing here. I am going along with Joris's closing remark that this matter should now be put to rest and I will not publish any further correspondence on this matter.

Joris's response reads:-

If all atlasers were prepared to make this sort of list for pentads where they are not able to spend long periods I think we will very soon start getting meaningful coverage (at least for the species maps) of large tracts of the country. Tour guides who leave their tourists to specialist guides for short periods (for example to visit a San village) are ideally placed to make this sort of list (in areas which would not otherwise be atlased) while their charges are otherwise occupied.

Atlasers should, however, also be aware of the “risks” associated with atlasing. On 21/06/2013 after completing my site work at Ongwediva I had some five hours to kill before check in time at Ondangwa Airport and went off atlasing with binoculars in hand.

It was not long before a police vehicle pulled up next to me and the occupants demanded to know what I was doing. While one was questioning me the other was busy on the radio and shortly thereafter reinforcements in the form of the Ondangwa station commander and two more police officers arrived.

It took quite a while to convince them that I was a quantity surveyor whose hobby was birds and that I was not a journalist and that I did not have a camera with me. The station commander went on to clear my activities with his superior officer before I was presumably deemed to be harmless and was allowed to continue birding after having been warned to beware of botsotsos in the area.

I don't know whether I should be happy that the police took quick action to investigate a “suspicious” character or whether I should be embarrassed that I had drawn five police officers away from their important crime fighting duties but I am quite convinced that all five of them thought I was stark raving mad!

Rarities and Interesting Observations

Firstly a slightly older record. Wessel Swanepoel photographed a Gull-billed Tern on the Andoni Plains just north of the Etosha National Park on 06/03/2013. This is a very rare species in southern Africa but there have been a number of recent records from both the Andoni area and from the coast.



Gull-billed Tern © Wessel Swanepoel

Dawid van der Merwe saw a single African Harrier-Hawk in Klein Windhoek on 01/04/2013. Roline and Johan Fourie reported an adult bird accompanied by two juvenile birds hunting around their palm tree in Suiderhof on 05/04/2013. The two juvenile birds were seen again at the same location on 24/04/2013 and on the same day Dawid saw two adult birds in Klein Windhoek. Sakkie von Plato reported a single adult African Harrier-Hawk seen in the vicinity of Maerua Mall on 19/04/2013 and Gudrun Middendorff saw a single bird flying over the city centre on 07/05/2013. I saw a single adult in the vicinity of the Alte Feste on 14/05/2013. Gillian Barnes also reported a single bird seen in the city centre on 14/05/2013 and Stefan Rust reported a juvenile bird in Pioneer Park on 18/05/2013. Wessel Swanepoel saw a single bird in Suiderhof on 20/05/2013. Bernette Louw saw a single bird investigating a palm tree in Eros in the last week of May and Helmut

and Alrun zur Strassen reported a single bird seen at Hida's Centre in Klein Windhoek on 02/06/2013 while Dawid van der Merwe reported a single juvenile bird seen at the same location on 23/07/2013. These sightings virtually confirm my suspicion that there is a breeding pair in the vicinity of Windhoek.



African Harrier-Hawk in Suiderhof © Johan Fourie

Village Indigobirds were again seen at various locations in Windhoek in the course of the summer with reports of sightings from Pioneer Park, Eros, Klein Windhoek, Suiderhof etc. These birds are most conspicuous in summer when the males are wearing their striking blue/black breeding plumage although they are presumably present throughout the year. The first birds of this species to be ringed in Windhoek (as far as I am aware) were two caught by Dirk Heinrich on 05/04/2013 and two caught by Gudrun Middendorff and myself on 07/04/2013, all in Klein Windhoek.



Female Village Indigobird © Neil Thomson

Gudrun was informed by Ivan Killian that he had sighted a White-fronted Bee-eater near the railway station in Windhoek on 07/04/2013. Unfortunately the bird was not photographed but if indeed a White-fronted Bee-eater it was a long way off its recorded range.

The participants in the Namibia Bird Club's morning walk at the Gammams Sewage Works on 14/04/2013 saw South African Shelduck in numbers not previously seen there. On one pond alone there were upwards of sixty birds and it is quite possible that at least one hundred were present all in all.

Also on 14/04/2013 Dawid van der Merwe reported another sighting of the Long-crested Eagle in the vicinity of Windhoek, this time near the van Eck Power Station (see *Lanioturdus* 46(1) and 46(2)). On 09/05/2013 a Long-crested Eagle was again seen by Michael Houlden in the dry river bed behind Hochland Park while on 09/06/2013 Hanjo Böhme reported sighting it in Eros/Klein Windhoek and on 15/06/2013 Klaus Hoffmann saw this bird at the Gammams Sewage Works (I am assuming that all these sightings are of the same bird).

Mark Middendorff reported seeing about eight Greater Flamingos at Swakoppoort Dam on the weekend of 20-21/04/2013 and then on 03/06/2013 he saw a flock of about twenty flamingos which he thought were probably greater in a flooded borrow pit near Hochfeld. It seems that flamingos are occurring in many strange places at present with reports from areas where they are not usually seen coming in from all over southern Africa.

Eckart Demasius reported a Fork-tailed Drongo in Swakopmund on the weekend of 20-21/04/2013. This is the first time he had seen this species in Swakopmund although he had

previously seen one near Wlotzkasbaken after east wind conditions had prevailed.

A White-backed Vulture with the patagial tag L276 was photographed by the camera trap at NARREC at Brakwater on 21/04/2013. This bird was ringed and tagged by myself at Farm Smalhoek south east of Dordabis on 16/09/2012. Please be on the lookout for these tagged birds and report all sightings.

The annual Namibian Ringers Get-Together was held at Palmwag Lodge from 01 to 05/05/2013. Some amazing birds were seen there in that period. A single White Stork was present the whole time, presumably an overwintering bird, while no fewer than thirteen Black Storks were seen. If the population estimate in the Red Data book currently being compiled is correct this constitutes nearly 10% of the entire Namibian population of this species! The most surprising sighting, however, was probably that of a single Southern Carmine Bee-eater. This bird was a long way to the south west of its recorded range and was possibly a reverse migrant or perhaps a victim of the east wind conditions prevailing at the time. Other unexpected species seen included Green-backed Heron and Malachite Kingfisher.



White Stork © Neil Thomson

Sakkie von Plato reported a single adult Spur-winged Goose at Avis Dam on 01 & 05/05/2013. This is an unusual sighting for central Namibia but these birds have been seen at Monte Christo in the past.

On 09/05/2013 Gudrun Middendorff and I saw a pair of South African Shelducks at the Mile 4 Saltworks north of Swakopmund. It is unusual to find this species in a marine environment.

The east wind conditions in early May were presumably responsible for a host of unusual sightings at the coast. On 10/05/2013 we saw a Fork-tailed Drongo at the Aphrodite Beach Development while later the same day we saw at least three in the area where the C28 crosses the Swakop River. Eckart Demasius reported another at Wlotzkasbaken on 14/05/2013.

Mark Boorman reported both African and Long-billed Pipits present at the Paddock Gardens area of Swakopmund and on 11/05/2013 we saw an African Wattled Lapwing and a juvenile African Jacana in this area. On 14/05/2013 Eckart Demasius reported a Wattled Starling at Wlotzkasbaken and on 16/05/2013 he reported a Jackal Buzzard from the same area.



African Wattled Lapwing © Eckart Demasius



African Jacana © Eckart Demasius



Fork-tailed Drongo © Eckart Demasius



Wattled Starling © Eckart Demasius



African Red-eyed Bulbul © Eckart Demasius



Jackal Buzzard © Eckart Demasius



Red-billed Quelea © Eckart Demasius

It was presumably the east wind that continued to bring strange birds to the coast and on 25/05/2013 Eckart Demasius photographed Fork-tailed Drongo, African Red-eyed Bulbul, Red-billed Quelea and Southern Masked-Weaver at Wlotzkasbaken. On 30/05/2013 Elsje Winckler photographed a Swallow-tailed Bee-eater at the same location. One can only wonder how many of these small birds are blown out to sea by this wind.



Southern Masked-Weaver © Eckart Demasius



Swallow-tailed Bee-eater © Elsje Winckler

And then, on 01/06/2013, Eckart found another Fork-tailed Drongo at Cape Cross.

While all these weird and wonderful birds were appearing on the central coast Jessica Kemper reported the following from Lüderitz – Southern Masked- Weavers on 27/03/2013 and 25/06/2013, African Pipit on



Southern Masked-Weaver 27/03/2013 in Lüderitz © Jessica Kemper



Southern Masked-Weaver 25/06/2013 in Lüderitz © Jessica Kemper

08/04/2013 and a Fork-tailed Drongo on 09/05/2013. Jessica indicated that there had been serious east wind events in this period.

She also advised that she had never before seen a weaver in Lüderitz in her fourteen years of residence there.



African Pipit in Lüderitz © Jessica Kemper

The Bird Club morning walk at the Gammams Sewage Works on 09/06/2013 produced another sighting of a Pied Kingfisher, an uncommon species in central Namibia.

Marianne Zappen-Thomson informed me of a yellow morph Crimson-breasted Shrike she had seen at Erindi Private Game Reserve on 15/06/2013 (photographed by Lourens De Kock). This is an extremely uncommon form of this species and is highly sought after by birders.



Yellow morph Crimson-breasted Shrike © Lourens De Kock

On 16/06/2013 Klaus Hoffmann reported an overwintering Osprey at the Gammams Sewage Works. This bird was seen again at the same location on 22/06/2013 in the course of a Namibia Bird Club outing.



Osprey © Klaus Hoffmann

On 06/07/2013 Gudrun Middendorff and I had an unusual sighting at the Swakop River mouth where we found a (presumably overwintering) Greater Striped Swallow. This bird looked particularly scruffy and appeared to be moulting primary and/or secondary flight feathers.

Eckart Demasius photographed a White-faced Duck in Swakopmund on 10/07/2013. This bird had apparently been around for about three weeks before Eckart saw it.



White-faced Duck © Eckart Demasius

In addition Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in and off Namibia since the end of March 2013.

Two American Golden Plovers, a number of Red-necked Phalaropes and a Wilson's Phalarope were reported at Walvis Bay over the Easter Weekend.

The Pacific Golden Plover (see Lanioturdus 46(2)) and at least one American Golden Plover were reported to be still present at Walvis Bay on 05/04/2013.

It was reported on 18/04/2013 that the American Golden Plover had still been present at Walvis Bay on 14/04/2013 while the Pacific Golden Plover and at least ten Red-necked Phalaropes were seen there on 16/04/2013.

A Black-eared Sparrowlark was reported about 60 km south east of Walvis Bay on 26/04/2013. This seems to be some way north of its usual range.

The Pacific Golden Plover was seen again on 01/05/2013 at the Walvis Bay Lagoon.

A single Spectacled Petrel was reported about 180 nautical miles off Walvis Bay in the second week of May.

Neil Thomson