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Editorial

Timothy O. Osborne

We were supposed to be back on "schedule" with editions appearing every 3 months and I thought we were but a minor glitch occurred at the printers for volume 35(2). I had submitted the edition before returning to Alaska for a month and expected to find the volume in my mail box upon my return. It came as a surprise to me that no edition was ready. I inquired and found out that neither the Scientific Society nor Typoprint who prints the *Lanioturdus* had any idea where the manuscripts were. After several weeks of phoning and trying to trace the papers it turned out that a woman at Typoprint who had quit her job, had stuffed the manuscript into her desk drawer. It was finally located and printed in July instead of May!

I want to thank everyone who has been submitting papers for publishing, as we are now back to having a Club journal with recent information. This edition contains a variety of papers starting with two opposing viewpoints, but both working towards the same end result—reducing the number of birds poisoned in Namibia. Rob Simmons and Penn Lloyd give us the biology behind the hunting seasons and other authors see one small event but it all contributes towards scientific knowledge.

Red-billed Hornbill subspecies hybrid

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In mid-May 2001 I was at Roy's Camp north of Grootfontein and noticed a Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* flying to a tree where it was, I thought, feeding the female in the nest. I photographed the bird and sent the picture to Alan Kemp, Manager/Curator of Birds, Transvaal Museum, South Africa.

Dr. Kemp wrote back to me with the following comments: "It is a female (no black on the base of the bill), and the yellow eye points to it being the South African subspecies/species *Tockus (erythrorhynchus) rufirostris*. It does appear rather white, both on the head and breast, and the bare facial skin areas appear rather extensive and pale pink. It might just be a hybrid with the Damaraland Red-billed hornbill *T. (e.) damarensis*, and knowing where it was seen would allow one to judge if it falls within the hybrid zone". It turns out that the bill we saw in the nest were chicks receiving food not a female. Dr. Kemp sent a copy of the photograph and comments to Dr. Wayne Delpont who has studied the hybridization in hornbills.

Dr. Delpont's comments indicated that the bird we had seen was indeed a strange bird. He said "It is strange since in all my time in the Namibian hybrid zone (Outjo to Tsumeb) I never saw this combination of eye colour and facial plumage colour. Basically the southern African subspecies *T. e. rufirostris* has yellow eyes and grey facial plumage and the Damaraland subspecies *T. e. damarensis*, brown eyes and white facial plumage. I saw plenty of brown eyed birds with grey facial plumage but never yellow eyed birds with white facial plumage."

This chance encounter with a "common" bird of Namibia taught me that even the birds that we often just glance at can prove exciting to science if we actually take the time to "look" at them. I would like to thank Alan Kemp and Wayne Delpont for the time they took to examine and analyze my photograph. I also thank the editor for helping to write up this note.



Hybrid Red-billed Hornbill

POISONS AND SCAVENGERS - THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD!

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Many of you are probably aware of my position on poisons. They should be banned for purposes of predator control. The logic is simple. Poisons kill indiscriminately. For every target SPECIES (e.g. a jackal) that is killed, they kill many non-target species, mainly useful scavengers, both mammals and birds. Work done to date in the Kruger Park, in parts of Namibia and elsewhere in southern Africa show that the ratio of non-target to target species is often way in excess