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CONTENTS

THOMSON, N. Editorial

MIDDENDORFF, G. Chairperson's Report

KOLBERG, H. Of Gale-Force Winds and Balmy Days...
Narrative of Twenty Five Days of Bird Counting in the
Wild Hinterland of Namibia

THOMSON, N. Ringed Blue Crane Sighting

PATERSON, J. Vagrants, Range Extensions and Interes-
ting Bird Records for Skeleton Coast Park, Namibia and
Southern Angola

FRIEDERICH G. & T. Early Birds on Tsutsab Vlei

KOLBERG, H. Population Census of Flamingos in Nami-
bia, July 2008

RARITIES AND INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS

Editorial

Included in this issue is the chairperson's report as delivered at the Annual General Meeting held on 5 March 2009. In it our chairperson, Gudrun Middendorff, outlines the activities of the Namibia Bird Club over the past year which include outings, talks, attendance of meetings and conferences by committee members and others, the partnership agreement with NEWS (Namibia Environment and Wildlife Society) and the donations and sponsorships given to various causes.

There are a number of birding projects on the go in Namibia and also a number of special interest groups eg. ringers, raptors, cranes and coastal birds. One can then ask what the primary function of the bird club is. We believe that the Namibia Bird Club provides social and educational birding to its members through outings, talks and of course, the publication of *Lanioturdus*. Morning walks are led by ex-

perienced birders who are able to help others develop their bird identification skills and general birding knowledge. It is our hope that members will go on to become involved in other projects where they can use these skills. A number of members have participated in the summer and winter bird counts at Walvis Bay which form part of the African Water Bird Census under the auspices of Wetlands International. The Bird Club has undertaken to contribute to these counts by doing summer and winter counts at Monte Christo. On 1 February 2009 four Bird Club members, Gudrun, Hanjo Böhme, Rolf Adrian and myself assisted by my daughter, Maren, as scribe, counted 335 birds of 34 species at Monte Christo. If there is interest from members and particularly if someone can provide a boat, the Bird Club could make an even bigger contribution to this project by doing counts on other inland waters such as perhaps Hoffnung Dam or Otjivero Dam which are not currently being counted.

Although I only fairly recently formally joined the Namibia Bird Club I have long been of the opinion that if one gets a lot out of birding one should put something back. Over the years I have been involved in data collection for the Atlas of Southern African Birds, various wetland counts, raptor road counts and I now have a ringer's license. I believe that by participating in these various activities I am putting something back into birding and I hope that others will also follow this path.

Tim Osborne resigned from the committee before the AGM (after resigning as editor of *Lanioturdus* some months ago) and Suzan Mallet-Veale has stood down from active involvement. We now welcome two new committee members in Holger Kolberg and Richard Niddrie.

Chairperson's Report 2009 Presented at the Annual General Meeting held on 5 March 2009

Gudrun Middendorff
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First I want to thank my committee for their hard work, support and commitment and good spirit over the past year. Secondly a want to thank our members and friends for supporting our outings and lastly I want to thank the Scientific Society for the venue and their staff for excellent cooperation.

It has become a set pattern that we visit Avis dam and the sewage works alternately at the beginning of each month

soooo much baling twine for so few bales of Lucerne.

On Saturday I leisurely (= bal-chatri trapped) made my way down to the Orange River and after yet another stunning, balmy evening and a good night's sleep I reached Oranjemund on Sunday 27 July. Here bad news awaited me! My friend and long-term counting partner Mark Anderson had gotten entangled in Namibian bureaucracy and had not received his security clearance in time. All this meant was that I would have to do the bulk of the count on my own with Mark having to stay south of the border. For those of you not *au fait* with the geography of the Orange River Mouth, this equates to a 20 km plus walk. In the good old days we used to do the entire count by boat without getting stuck on a sandbank once – nowadays you end up carrying the boat more than you row it. Yes, the mighty Orange has been reduced to a mere trickle in the past ten or so years. Buoyed by the knowledge that I would at least be doing something for my personal fitness, I embarked on my "Groot Trek", first counting the Hohenfels to Skilpadkop section on Monday and then the section from Hohenfels down to the bridge on Tuesday. At least on Wednesday, when counting the actual river mouth, my slightly stiff legs got some respite because larger tracts of this section can be covered by car. An unforeseen opportunity arose to visit some more sites in the Diamond Area on Thursday 31 July when I was invited by Dr Antje Burke to have a look at some of her rehabilitation sites (No, this is not the same as being invited to look at a lady's paintings!!). Unfortunately we did not see any flamingos at Chameis Head, Baker's Bay or Bogenfels but we did see lots and lots of "very exciting" plants which all had to be photographed (by Antje and Silke, not me). We reached Lüderitzbucht well after sunset but the long day was soon forgotten after a hot shower and a cold beer. The Lüderitz count is always fun because you never know what you're going to get. This time it was stacks of Oiks, that's African Black Oystercatchers in bird-nerd speak. The flamingos had all been counted by Jessica Kemper a week or so earlier and she must have done a good job because she counted more than I did! But then Jessica is an official seabird biologist and I'm only an *ad hoc* ornithologist (I'm not making excuses, just justifying my ineptitude).

My return trip to Windhoek was uneventful except for the Black Harrier road kill (already reported on namringers) and my second raptor re-trap within a year (already reported to SAFRING). In October 2007 I caught a PCG (Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk) near Solitaire that had been ringed by Steve Braine a bit earlier and this one was another PCG that had been ringed by Dirk Heinrich in May 2006. Pretty cool!

Ringed Blue Crane Sighting

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The committee of the Namibia Bird Club is always ready to help birders in any way we can. Although none of us professes to be an expert at bird identification we are always willing to try to identify birds from pictures sent to us. A

recent example was when Lisa Berl sent us a photograph of a bird taken in the Richtersveld in South Africa which we were able to identify for her as a Karoo Thrush. The exchange of emails led to Lisa sending a picture of a colour ringed Blue Crane taken at Nieuwoudtville in Namaqualand, RSA in September 2008. I sent this photograph to SAFRING and the feedback received was that this bird had been ringed by Kevin McCann at Basberg, Hanover on 22/01/1998 more than 10 years before Lisa resighted it 475 km from the ringing site. Perusal of the SAFRING data base shows that Kevin McCann is a member of the Crane Working Group in South Africa and that he ringed 91 cranes - 43 Wattled Cranes, 23 Grey Crowned-Cranes and 25 Blue Cranes, one of which Lisa photographed.

As the Namibia Bird Club is a co-sponsor of the "Take a Closer Look" poster which was printed to raise awareness of ringed birds we are only too willing to forward any ringed bird sightings to SAFRING, and in the case of ringed birds seen in Namibia, to MET as well, and to pass any feedback information received on to the observers.



Ringed Blue Crane

Photo: Lisa Berl

Vagrants, range extensions and interesting bird records for Skeleton Coast Park Namibia and southern Angola

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Introduction

The Skeleton Coast Park (SCP) encompasses the arid coastal strip from the Ugab River in the south to the Kunene River in the north of north-western Namibia. The area is bisected by west flowing ephemeral rivers supporting permanent and semi permanent wetlands providing islands of suitable habitat for many wetland associated species. The Kunene River is the only permanent river in the region providing an important wetland at the mouth that is considered to be the second most species rich coastal wetland in Namibia (Simmons *et. al.* 1993) and is a listed Important Bird