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Editorial

The attendance at our morning walks and outings has been disappointing of late and is a cause for concern. The committee goes to great lengths to organize outings to places where we are likely to see interesting birds.

The morning walk at the Gammams Sewage Works on 09/10/2011 is a case in point. There were only seven participants and four of those were committee members. Yes – I know that South Africa was playing Australia in the Rugby World Cup that morning – I decided to give the rugby a miss and go on the bird club outing instead and I think that was a good choice given the result of the rugby and the good birds found at the sewage works. In about three hours we found sixty eight species with a number of specials amongst them. A Pink-backed Pelican was seen – this is the second sighting of which I am aware at the sewage works – two birds were seen on 12/06/2011 and it constitutes only the fourth recent sighting of which I am aware in central Namibia; the others being a single bird at Avis Dam on 17/04/2010 and two birds seen at Otjivero Dam on 30/01/2011.



By late February to early March the terns are fully grown and they feed themselves.



Then the time has come to commence the long journey back to West Africa from where they will start the circle of life again.



Note : All photographs in this contribution are by Eckart Demasius

References:

Hockey PAR, Dean WJR, Ryan PG (eds) 2005
Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa, VIIth ed.
The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book
Fund, Cape Town.

Ringers Get-Together 2011 at Augurabis

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When Claire Kolberg announced the previous year that the Ringers' Get-together was to be held at Augurabis I was immediately tempted to make the trip, both because it was considerably closer for those of us travelling from South Africa, but also because I had never seen the Fish River Canyon – and this would be only a short distance from the ringing site.

So, at the end of April we set off on the long trip from the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast to Namibia stopping off at a freezing Middelburg and at Upington on the way. Once we entered Namibia through the Ariamsvlei Border Post, we liaised with Colin de Kock, my erstwhile ringing colleague from Gauteng and met to fill up at Grünau before the final leg to the ringing site. Driving along the track to Augurabis through the stark and sparsely vegetated surroundings it was difficult to envisage the lush river valley that we entered once we reached the ringing camp at Augurabis Cañon Outpost where we were met by Holger and Claire.

Colin and I wasted no time after unpacking our vehicles and soon had several nets up in the riverine bush. We managed to catch a few birds before it got too dark and we had to close the nets. By that stage most of the other participants had also arrived and we could get to meet them again – and some for the first time. Holger had started cooking dinner (fortified by his first Tafel) while those of us from SA tried to reset our biological clocks while we kept an eye on him.

The plan was to open the nets just before first light the next morning, but we heard strange sounds overnight – sounds that were distinctly like thunder and rain, but this was Namibia, the land of sunshine – right? Unfortunately rain it proved to be and this delayed ringing proceedings while coffee and rusks were consumed. It was mid-morning before we could open the nets but the birds still seemed

to be recovering from the unexpected shock of being doused during the night and there was little movement although a few birds were caught later that day. By that stage other ringers had nets erected over or near the stream and they were bringing in interesting species like Brown-throated Martins and Three-banded Plovers.



Kai and Robin Teifel erecting a mistnet at the stream : Photo Jessica Kemper

The following day started off overcast but the catches were moderate until rain forced play to be abandoned for the day – where was all the sun we had been expecting? Wednesday morning was more promising and the catches improved. Colin and I decided to try a couple of nets in the stream and our last round before closing these nets for the night delivered a good haul of plovers, a Brubru and several Common Waxbills. Even Peter Bridgeford got swept up in the ringing excitement and put up some nets – he was so overcome with nerves that he donated his only catch, a prize Larklike Bunting, to me to ring. There was also enthusiastic interest and participation by the trainees attending for the first time. Thursday saw the numbers tailing

off as some of the ringers packed up for departure.



Dirk Heinrich instructing trainee ringer Ulrich Hofmann : Photo Jessica Kemper

On Friday, Holger and Claire took some of the more adventurous on a trip to see the Fish River from the Gondwanaland viewpoint and from there down to the Koelkrans camp. I even tried to swim across the Fish River but turned back quickly when I realised that the current would take me far downstream. So, I have been there, seen that but am still waiting for the Tee-shirt!

And every evening Holger and Claire were demonstrating their culinary brilliance over the fire accompanied by much repartee from the many enthusiastic spectators. Meal times best demonstrate that there is much more to the annual RGT outings than just the ringing.

So once again, a big thanks to Holger and Claire for organising this event and for all our Namibian colleagues and friends for making it a great success – well worth travelling for.