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EDITORIAL

This is my first issue as editor of *Lanioturdus* and by reading the articles you may think I have taken the opportunity to monopolise the issue to publish everything I have done over the past several years. I do admit that my quest for material has spurred me to finalise several papers. But it seems that a stiffy disk with four articles, I sent to the previous editor, Chris Hines, over a year ago, got lost in the post. I have included these although the one on flamingos is dated information.

Good rains have fallen over most of the country and the birds are responding by breeding and the migrants are getting fat on the insects. Everyone should be seeing new birds and hopefully will report on the vagrants, local migrants and oddities.

When Chris met with me, over a beer at Joe's pub, to hand over the editor's job he said the hardest part of this job would be trying to get people to put to paper their observations, adventures and studies. Once again the editor appeals to all the members to please send in your articles so we can get our journal back on a four-times-a-year schedule. I would like to start a section of the *Lanioturdus* for visitors' comments, trip reports, etc. If any members have visitors or bird-watching clients please ask them to send us a short summary of their trip. I am sure that we would like to know what visitors are seeing and how their experience was in Namibia.

more in the outside world.

A special 'thank you' goes to our Windhoek Radio Stations and the City of Windhoek who advertise our meetings in their programmes and in the *Aloe*.

The Club Membership has dropped to 90 members. This decline is alarming but it seems to be that other clubs experiencing the same problem.

Last but not least I again want to appeal to members to pay up their subscriptions at the beginning of the year by the due date. We have to order Birds and Birding at a certain time at the beginning of the year, for the full year. It is not fair to keep those who have already paid up waiting.

Thank you and good birding.

D.E. Ludwig
Chairman



ROADSIDE ODDITY

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On 5 March at 15h00, we were driving on the Toshari-Biermans School road D2695 through the farm Windpoort when Laurel said that she had just seen a plastic flamingo of the garden-lawn variety on the roadside. After a bit of debate we backed up to investigate, while Tim suggested that it could have been a red plastic feed bag. We finally arrived at the oddity and there was a motionless adult Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor* standing 10 m from the roadside. The habitat of the area was mopane-thorn scrub on rocks. Tim's first thought was that it was one of the stuffed birds from Etosha Ecological

Institute put there by Wilferd Versfeld as a joke. We had recently purchased Windpoort and were busy compiling a bird list of the farm. After 20 seconds the bird started to move its head and then slowly walked into the Sicklebos *Dichrostachys cinerea*. I got out of the vehicle to try and catch the bird but it managed to manoeuvre through the thorn trees back onto the road where it took wing. We watched it fly off in a southwesterly direction.

The 1998–1999 rainy season had been very poor up to 18 March within Etosha National Park. Normally if the rains are good the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* and Lesser Flamingos arrive from Walvis Bay around November–December and stay until April. If the rains are enough to partially fill the pan the birds will breed. This rainy season the first flamingos arrived on 9 January 1999 in the Namutoni area. From 9–12 Jan. we heard birds flying overhead during the night at Okaukuejo on the way to Etosha Pan. On 12 Jan. we drove around Fischer's Pan and estimated 19,000 Greater and 1,000 Lesser Flamingos. We conducted the Fischer's Pan wetland count on 27 Jan. but only found 1 Lesser and 75 Greater Flamingos. The Etosha Pan had water all along the southern edge and we estimated about 4000 flamingos were spread out over the pan. On the 10–11 Feb. we heard flamingos calling as they flew overhead northwards during the night at Okaukuejo. On 18 Feb. we again visited Fischer's Pan and found 20,000 birds. During 28 Feb. through 3 March we heard flamingos at Okaukuejo flying south. This was during the period of the full moon. On 12 Mar. we visited Fischer's Pan and counted 191 Greater Flamingos and also found an additional 1400 birds feeding in the old channel north of Okerfontein. As far as we know no breeding had occurred at Etosha in 1999.

We surmise that the flamingo we saw at Windpoort got lost during the nocturnal migration to Walvis Bay from Etosha. Due to the poor rains all the dams on the farm were dry and the bird could not have been attracted to the area by water. Whatever the reason the bird made us slightly *deurmekaar* for a few seconds to find a Lesser Flamingo totally out of its habitat.

