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EDITORIAL

This is the final edition of *Lanioturdus* for 1997 — the fourth of the year and an achievement for all those people who contributed to the journal over the past year. Although we have seldom exceeded 40 pages in any one edition we feel that the value of the magazine has increased in that we are keeping our members informed and hopefully fostering more interest in birding in Namibia as a whole. Many thanks to all the authors and artists who submitted material for the year and I hope that the articles will keep on rolling in to make 1998 as successful as 1997.

The summer heat is upon us and with the first migrants having already arrived, you should all be looking forward to some excellent birding over the coming holiday period. This may be a particularly interesting year — the predictions of the weather boffins is that *El Nino* is likely to negatively influence the rainfall patterns in the country. This in turn will have a major effect on the distribution and breeding of birds over the next couple of months. I encourage all of you to get out there and look at what's going on — keep field notes on your observations and make some comparisons with what you know of previous years. This applies equally to common as well as rarer species. How much do we really know about doves in this country? I have noticed that in Bushmanland and at Aris, near Windhoek, that the numbers of Namaqua Doves is highly variable both within and between years. I suspect the same thing of Laughing Doves which seem to disappear at certain times of the year. Keeping basic notes and records can tell us so much about the birds we take for granted (many of which are surprisingly poorly studied). Your notes and records do not have to take the form of detailed scientific observations — casual and incidental observations are also valuable. Collect information, put it together in the form of an article and send it to *Lanioturdus*. Anyone can do it and I encourage of all of you to try!!!

On behalf of the Namibia Bird Club Committee, I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Good birding in 1998 and let's hear from you.

SHORT NOTES

Chris Hines, Editor

Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*

Gunther Friedrich found a single bird (male?) on the farm Wildernis 882 (1818Cc) in the Tsumeb District on 9/10/97. As with other out-of-range records this is relatively early in the season (although the Atlas indicates that the peak in numbers in Zimbabwe is late September-October) and represents a considerable range extension. This species is probably largely overlooked as it has a very indistinct insect-like call and may have a wider distribution in Namibia than previously suspected.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Rob Simmons reports that a bird from Etosha and released at Walvis Bay as a juvenile in June 1994 was resighted at the lagoon on 30/1/97 by two French birders. This is nearly three years after its release and only the second resighting of one of the 76 birds originally released at the lagoon.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Peter Kaestner and Keith Wearne found several Red-necked Phalarope in the Walvis Bay Salt Works on 20/11/97. This species is regular in small numbers at Walvis Bay and other salt works on the coast.

Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus*

A Black Cuckoo was reported calling during the International Birdwatch count held at Avis Dam on 4/10/97. This is the earliest record for this species this year. I have found it noteworthy that very few birds have been calling during November and early December. I found no birds during a birding trip through the Caprivi in late November. Most (if not all) of our cuckoos are intra-African migrants and their movements are generally poorly understood. Please keep a record of first arrivals and last departures and send your observations to this column.

Black-faced Babbler *Turdoides melanops*

John Mendelsohn reports finding a fairly confiding and easy to see group of this uncommon babbler at Roy's Camp (a campsite and lodge) about 50 km north of Grootfontein. This babbler is probably the most difficult to see in southern Africa and this is certainly a very accessible site.

Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*

Anton Coy and I (CH) found at least three birds in tall grass fringing the Kwando River at Lianshulu in the Mudumu National Park. We had at least ten sightings of these birds over a three day period. Tall grass areas on the Kwando River floodplain from Susuwe down to the Mamili National Park are probably the best sites in Namibia to see this elusive bird.

South African Cliff Swallow *Hirundo spilodera*

Several birds seen around the tower at Okaukuejo, Etosha National Park, on the 27/9/97 (CH). There are very few records of this species in the north of Namibia and these birds were probably on southward migration to their breeding grounds. It may be worth checking the tower at Okaukuejo this wet season as it may be a good breeding site.

European (Barn) Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

No-one has reported first arrival dates for this species this year. The earliest record I have is for a bird seen in Windhoek on 29/8/97. Please report arrival dates of migrants to me.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

Small flock of seven to nine birds seen at Mount Etjo Safari Lodge, near Otjiwarongo on 26/9/97.

Angola Swallow *Hirundo angolensis*

Peter Kaestner (in article entitled Cyber-Cindy in this edition) mentions seeing this species on the Kunene River recently. During the Atlas period there was only one unconfirmed record of this species from Botswana. This may represent the first record for southern Africa in recent years (or

ever!!!). The Kunene is likely to be one of the best sites to look for this species as it is known from an area in southern Angola only 80 km north of Ruacana.

Eastern Red-footed Falcon *Falco amurensis*

Anton Coy and I (CH) found a single adult female in a small party of Western Red-footed Falcons *Falco verspertinus* just north of Lianshulu Lodge in the Mudumu National Park on 26/11/97. There are only a few records annually of this species in Namibia, but they are regular and should be looked for in the large flocks of migrant raptors following the rainfronts in late December and January.



WESTERN ETOSHA AND HOBATERE LODGE

Daphne McGivern
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The Club had a well attended outing (18 people) to Hobatere Lodge over the long weekend, 23rd to 26th August this year. We had plenty of shade and level areas to set up our tents. Thanks to Steve Braine for accommodating us all!

A flock of Whitebrowed Sparrow-weavers which were resident at the Lodge were cause for great speculation as quite a number of them did not have white brows but were instead dark headed. Eddie Kehlbeck took photos of these birds and we hope to see them at a slide presentation in the new year. Most of our group were able to view a Giant Eagle Owl as she sat on her nest in the crook of a tall tree, also near the lodge.

It was a privilege to be allowed to visit the Western regions of the Etosha Park, and our thanks go to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for

granting us the Permit. The permit was obtained for six vehicles (30 persons) to enter the park at Galton Gate on day visits on the Sunday and Monday. We made full use of this and two parties went in on both days. The wind got up early on both mornings which in some ways was a relief as the Mopane flies have difficulty in coping with wind! Despite the wind we all enjoyed the birds and also the game which was particularly abundant at the man-made water holes. The natural water holes seemed to be dry. There were large herds of Gemsbok, Springbok, and Burchells Zebra. Red Hartebeest, Blue Wildebeest Giraffe, Baboon, Kudu, Warthog, Jackal and Hartmanns Mountain Zebra were represented in smaller numbers. We saw one Black Rhino, and a group of four Elephant.

We were pleasantly surprised to see fourteen Kori Bustards, we checked, but none of them appeared to be tagged. The bird list within the park reached well into the sixties and included Monteiro's Hornbill, Crimsonbreasted Shrike, Secretarybird, Black Korhaan, Pied Babbler, Blackchested Prinia and Yellowbellied Eremomela.

All in all it was a very worthwhile and enjoyable trip!

BIRDWATCH 97

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It was the first time for the Namibia Bird Club to participate in an International Birdwatch. The committee decided to hold the day at Windhoek's Avis Dam, because is well frequented by the Windhoek Public.

It was 7:00 on 5 October that dedicated members of the committee set up camp at Avis Dam. A large gazebo was erected, chairs and tables arranged and a small display of infomative literature displayed: Telescopes were set up and a large board prepared on which the birds sighted during the day could be listed. It was still nice and cool when everything was ready for the