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EDITORIAL

The publication of this copy of *Lanioturdus* has been considerably delayed and this copy covers the June, September and December 1999 editions. It will immediately strike you that this is probably the least substantial copy of the magazine for a long time. We have a problem – for some reason 1999 seems to have represented the low point of everyones birding and ornithological careers – the articles and other materials have just not come in at all this year.

The success of the magazine and the Club as a whole depends on member participation. The committee recognises that most members are passive for the most part and choose to go their own way for most of their birding. However, we can't rely on just a few people to keep us going all the time. We need new members, new activities and new vision for the future. This is really a plea to you to get more involved in the future and to help the committee keep the Club going. If we are unable to keep bringing *Lanioturdus* out on a regular basis we are in real trouble.

On the positive side of things – the Club in conjunction with the Namibia Nature Foundation and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, is planning to start up a number of new projects as well as revive a number of older ones, including Raptor Road Counts and some form of atlassing in the future. We will probably put out a special edition of *Lanioturdus* in the New Year giving details of each of the projects.

A wonderful festive season to all of you – and good birding.



put out to graze in a camp approximately 800 m x 1000 m in size close to the homestead at 08h00 on the 3/12/1997. The sheep and lambs were then left in the camp overnight. The following morning (4/12/1997) various vultures were observed and one Lappetfaced landed at 10h45 in the camp (see table below). The observer arrived five minutes later and found the Lappetfaced Vulture approximately 20 m from the sheep ewe. The ewe was standing at the carcass of the half eaten lamb. According to the condition of the carcass, it was estimated that the lamb must have died during the night. There were also clear signs of a scuffle, with jackal spoor imprints clearly visible. The next morning (5/12/1997) vultures started landing at 08h30 in large numbers. The observer arrived at the scene two minutes later and found 35 Whitebacked and four Lappetfaced Vultures at a carcass of a Steenbok. The area was searched for clues, and spoor which could possibly have been cheetah or dog were found in the vicinity.

The Whitebacked and Lappetfaced Vultures are virtually exclusive carrion eaters (Mundy, Butchart, Ledger & Piper, 1992; Maclean, 1993; Pickford, Pickford & Tarborton, 1994). The literature does however indicate that Lappetfaced Vultures were observed occasionally killing the young of Springbok, Thomson's Gazelle and "hare", while Whitebacked Vultures were observed preying on baby Springbok. Mundy *et al.* (1992), however, emphasises that there are no known records of Lappetfaced Vultures preying on domestic stock.

Although the camp in which the ewes and lambs were kept was supposedly "jackal-proof", the farm labourers acknowledged that holes did exist under the fence. The fact that jackal spoor as well as possible feline spoor were observed around the various carcasses suggests that predators were responsible for the deaths. The many inconsistencies of the farmer regarding the predatory behaviour of the vultures as well as the inability of the farmer to differentiate between vultures and eagles and the belief that bat-eared foxes also prey on lambs, suggests that vultures were possibly not responsible for the deaths of the sheep lambs. During the observation period it can, with relative accuracy, be stated that the Lappetfaced and Whitebacked Vultures were not responsible for the domestic stock deaths. It must however be stated that this issue needs further research to verify the

predatory behaviour of vultures.

The following table indicates the various times that vultures were seen over the camp area during the observation period.

Observations of vultures over the vicinity of the camp

Date	Time	Altitude	Number	Species	
2/12/1997	16h30	Ground	6	Whitebacked	
3/12/1997	09h05	High	4	Whitebacked	
	10h47	High	2	Whitebacked	
				1	Lappetfaced
			Low	1	Lappetfaced
4/12/1997	11h50 - 13h30	Various	9 - 20	Whitebacked	
	09h00	Medium	4	Whitebacked	
	09h24	Various	9 - 22	Whitebacked	
	09h49	Low	2	Lappetfaced	
	10h45	Low - Lands	1	Lappetfaced	
	12h00	Low	1	Lappetfaced	
	15h00	High	2	Whitebacked	
5/12/1997	08h30	Low - Lands	35	Whitebacked	
			4	Lappetfaced	

References:

- Mundy, P. & Butchart, D. & Ledger, J & Piper, S. 1992. *The Vultures of Africa*. Acorn Books and Russel Friedman Books, Randburg, South Africa.
- Maclean, G.L. 1993. *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa*. The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Pickford, P & Pickford, B & Tarborton, W. 1994. *Southern African Birds of Prey*. Struik Publishers (Pty) Ltd, Cape Town, South Africa.

SHORT NOTES

Lesser Kestrel Falco naumanni

Mark Boorman reports a Lesser Kestrel found by a fisherman on his boat out at sea was brought to Keith Wearne in November 1998. It was ringed and released from his garden. This is the first ringing record for this species

in this area.

Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus*

A single adult bird was seen at the Fish Farm west of Katima Mulilo in mid-August 1999 (K. Sharpe). This is one of the rarest (and under reported) raptors in Namibia. All sightings should be reported.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus*

The first kites were noted arriving in Katima Mulilo in early August 1999 (K. Sharpe). A pair were found nest-building in the grounds of the Zambezi Lodge in Katima Mulilo on 19/8/99.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

Two adult birds were noted following early rain near Luiperdsvallei, near Windhoek on 7/10/99. This species usually arrives later in the central parts of the country.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Pompie Burger and his family photographed an immature bird in the Mahango Game Reserve on 5-6/11/98.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficolis*

Two birds thought to be of this species were reported from Walvis Bay lagoon in October. The birds were reported by Keith Wearne and subsequently seen by a number of observers. Records in southern Africa are mostly from the eastern seaboard and this record represents a first sighting for Namibia.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Mark Boorman observed a Ruddy Turnstone with colour rings on the beach at Mile 4. The ring combination was as follows: right upper leg, yellow; right lower leg, flagged white over metal; left lower leg, light blue. This bird was ringed in the summer (northern) of 1996 in Alert, Ellesmere Island, which is in the high Arctic of Canada. This record is remarkable in

that there are very few records of any trans-Atlantic movements of waders from the Canadian Arctic. Most Turnstones recorded in Namibia are from Europe and eastern-Asia.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

An adult in breeding plumage, first reported by Bruno Nebe, was subsequently seen by numerous observers on the Walvis Bay lagoon for most of August. This is a very rare gull in southern Africa with only about ten records in the past. This is a first record for Namibia.

Greater Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*

Mark Boorman reports a Scimitarbill which was mist-netted in a Kramersdorf, Swakopmund, garden in April 1999. This is believed to be a ringing first for this area, although they are known to occur in the Swakop River near Goanikontes.

Gray's Lark *Ammomanes grayi*

A Gray's Lark nest with two nestlings being fed by adults was observed by a number of people in February 1999 reports Mark Boorman. A few days later, the nest was empty, but the absence of predator tracks leads us to assume that the chicks survived.

Red-breasted Swallow *Hirundo semirufa*

Günther and Tineke Friedrich noted arrival and departure dates for Red-breasted Swallows on their farm Tsutsab (1818Cc) over the last couple of years. Arrival dates are remarkably constant with birds being first recorded on 15/08/97, 08/08/98 and 10/08/99. Departure dates were noted on 05/02/98 and 03/03/99.