

CONTENTS

VOLUME 36 (2) 2003

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial	1
DANTU, S. & BOORMAN, M. A homing pelican?	2
SWANEPOEL, W. Mimicry by the Herero Chat <i>Namibornis herero</i>	4
ORFORD, M. Concern about Palm Swift habitat loss	6
FRIEDERICHS, T. Sun Eclipse Namibian style	7
MWANZA, I. Solar eclipse from a Zambian perspective	14
KESTENHOLZ, M. First record of the European Turtle-dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i> for Namibia	18
CUNNINGHAM, P. Observations from Peter Cunningham	20
PAXTON, M. Chobe River count	21
DOUTHWAITE, R. J. Red-footed Booby at Walvis Bay	28

Editorial

Timothy O. Osborne

This edition has been edited 16,000 km from Namibia while I was in Alaska visiting our daughters and granddaughters. When we arrived in early March it was -30°C and the only birds I saw were hardy winter birds like ravens, redpolls and ptarmigan. Now it is Easter and the sun is shining, the snow is melting fast in the 10°C weather and Trumpeter swans, Canada geese and mallards are arriving into the snow-melt ponds. I have been out of touch with the Bird Club but I note that still our membership has not increased with the new year. Again I have to appeal for everyone to give out membership forms to people you know who are not members. How many of you have done this? The Club is slowly withering on the vine and it is frustrating for those of us who live somewhere other than Windhoek. We do not know what is going on with the Club. Are we perishing as a Club or not, that is the question? Certainly birding is growing worldwide and I would hate to think that we are not part of that trend.

At least I am still receiving articles for *Lanioturdus*, which means that there are still interested Bird Club members who want to communicate with their fellow members. As the article on Herero Chats shows us there is still plenty to be learned about our local birds. We have another chapter in the Paxton boat saga. He is still looking for volunteers (victims) to assist him as he tries to count birds on the various waterways of the north. One place he has not counted yet is the Orange River. Perhaps it is too tame without his usual challenges of crocs, hippos, bilharzia and UNITA soldiers.

SOLAR ECLIPSE FROM A ZAMBIAN PERSPECTIVE

Ilse Mwanza
PO Box 51186,
Lusaka, Zambia

ilse@imwanza.com or ilsemwanza@yahoo.co.uk

Namibian birders were there in goodly numbers, I think 14 in all. They had come long distances – from Windhoek and Okaukuejo, from Tsumeb and Oshikango – most having driven more than 1000 km. There was even a couple from Zimbabwe and a visitor from Germany. We were to meet at Susuwe Park (the old West Caprivi Park) on the Kwando River, do a couple of days' birding and game viewing there, then relocate to a farm north of Singalamwe, in no-man's land between the Zambian and Namibian border. From here the eclipse would be seen at its best, and atlas work for Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS) was to be done on the boundary road. Due to communication hitches only three of us came to the Nangwa campground in Susuwe Park, the others had gone straight to the farm in no-man's land.

I had come in from the north, from Imusho, crossing the border at the little-used army post of Singalamwe. (This, by the way, is a perfectly feasible crossing into Namibia.) Susuwe Park was new to me, and I saw my first Black-cheeked Waxbill there, as well as a roost of 17 Black-crowned Night Herons. Black and Jacobin Cuckoos were calling from everywhere, eagles and vultures were circling above, and Bee-eaters were filling the air with their trilling sound. But, as I don't want to extol the virtues of birding in Susuwe here, let's get into no-man's land and the Imusho Square with the Shaft-tailed Whydah.

To start with, I must say I've never seen so many different species of Bee-eaters in one area. There were Carmine and White-fronted, Blue-cheeked and Swallow-tailed, Madagascar and Little, not to mention lots of European Bee-eaters. Raptors were well represented too: Fish Eagle, Yellow-billed Kite, Bateleur, Marsh Harrier, Shikra, Wahlberg's, Long-crested, Lesser-spotted, Tawny, Steppe, Black-breasted Snake and Martial Eagles. We saw several European Hobby and a few

vultures (Lappet-faced, White-headed and White-backed). I got excited by my first Burchell's Sandgrouse, three of which I spotted on an evening drive at a pool near the Kwando.

We were camped under some trees on the Kwando, on an unserviced patch of land, that chief-organiser Tim Osborne had negotiated with the local farmer for use. It was boiling hot, more than 40° C during the day, and not terribly conducive to birding on foot. Namibia's bird club does things differently from us – no going off together under someone's wise leadership – birders just go birding when they feel like it, alone or in small groups. It doesn't matter who goes birding when, though someone does take note of sightings. Because they all come from so far away, NBC's outings are quite a social event.

When comparing notes we found that 116 species for Imusho square 1723C was our two-day total. The day of the eclipse saw us all perched on camp chairs from 7 a.m. onwards, watching the event unfold. Drifting clouds gave cause for worry but, in the deciding moment lasting only 1 minute, the corona was brilliantly clear, the stars came out, and the horizon turned a crimson red. As expected, the birds had gone home to roost when it got darker and colder, and came out again when the sun reappeared.

Now it was time for the real work, the atlasing for ZOS. We travelled along the boundary road, 16 km into the square east of Imusho (1723D?). The track wasn't too bad, just slightly overgrown. It is used on occasion by Namibian border patrols, we were told, and so we didn't worry too much about land mines. Twice we went along that road to see what we could see. I especially enjoyed the displays of male Black-bellied Korhaan – loud wak-wak-wak calls followed by spectacular parachute flights. Willow warblers and Rattling Cisticola were everywhere, and I was pleased to see my first Crimson-breasted Shrike in Zambia (thanks Guenther). Others were: Senegal Kingfisher, Black Cuckoo, Marico Flycatcher, Steppe Buzzard, Helmeted Guinea fowl, Lesser Grey Shrike, Crested Barbet, Wattled Starling, African Masked Weaver, Common Bulbul, Violet-backed Starling, Blue Waxbill, European Swift, Little Sparrowhawk, Purple-banded Sunbird, Cattle Egret, Jacobin Cuckoo, Capped Wheatear, Village Weaver, Black Tit, Crested Francolin, Buffy Pipit, Chinspot Batis, Arrow-marked Babbler,

Lesser Honeyguide, Red-crested Korhaan, European Swallow, Namaqua Dove, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Bateleur, Orange-breasted Bush Shrike, Lesser Blue-eared Starling, Fork-tailed Drongo, Cape Turtle Dove, White-backed Vulture, Spotted Flycatcher, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Steppe Eagle, Booted Eagle, Red-billed Quelea, Yellow-billed Kite, Laughing Dove, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Red-billed Wood Hoopoe, Cape Starling, Black Kite, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Carmine Bee-eater, Gabar Goshawk, Grey Hornbill, Yellow-throated Sparrow, Scimitarbill, Red-breasted Swallow, African Masked Weaver, European Bee-eater, White-browed Scrub Robin, Brown-headed Tchagra, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Ground Hornbill, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, and Bleating Bush Warbler.

That evening Tim, a keen ringer, mist-netted a Green Pigeon. I'd never been able to see one up close and was admiring the superb colour mixes of this bird (I didn't know, for example, that they had brown undertail coverts). The next day we left the hospitable Singalamwe farmer and drove to Katima Mulilo, to Kate Sharpes' fish farm. There were loads of birds on Kate's property, located right on the Zambezi River (very near the new Sesheke-bridge building site). An incessantly calling Barred Owllet kept us awake at night, a big colony of Village Weavers had settled near a fishpond, and waders, flycatchers, bee-eaters and swallows were plentiful. Tim found the roost of a Bathawk nearby, and everyone got really good views of that dusk-hunting raptor. But, as it was outside the square to be atlased, we moved back to the boundary road, this time going in from the east. For two hours we searched for an entry point (the beginning of that track is between the borders, so couldn't be used) till finally we were directed to go past an army post (it got us into trouble on the way back - "who are you, and who allowed you to pass here?" - which a fast-KiOvambo-talking Nancy got us out of) which led us in the right direction.

The track was much more heavily overgrown than the western entry point; it obviously hadn't been used in a long time. We mowed down shrubs and had our 'ears' (side-mirrors) snapped back by tree-branches. Still, we made good progress until Tim's GPS showed we had entered the right square (1724). Moving from habitat to habitat, looking for bird parties, then walking off the road, we ticked off Red-crested Korhaan, Rattling Cisticola, Willow Warbler, Black-crowned Tchagra, Whitethroat, Violet-backed Starling, European Hobby, Wahlberg's

Eagle, Diederik Cuckoo, Orange-breasted Bush Shrike, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, European Bee-eater, Chinspot Batis, Icterine Warbler, Broad-billed Roller, Brown Snake Eagle, Mosque Swallow, Grey Hornbill, Brubru, Lilac-breasted Roller, European Swallow, Cape Turtle Dove, Red-backed Shrike, Stierling's Barred Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Purple-banded Sunbird, Black Cuckoo, Carmine Bee-eater, Yellow-billed Hornbill, Fork-tailed Drongo, Red-billed Quelea, Golden-breasted Bunting, Meyer's Parrot, Violet-eared Waxbill, Black Tit, Crowned Hornbill, Kurrichane Buttonquail, Lizzard Buzzard, White-bellied Sunbird, African Cuckoo, White Helmet Shrike, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Scimitarbill, European Cuckoo, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Grey-headed Sparrow, Arnot's Chat, Greater Honeyguide, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Kite, Black Kite, Mosque Swallow, Lesser Spotted Eagle, and Steppe Buzzard. We found 54 species in all, some of them additional to Pete Leonard's 2001 dry-season findings and new to this atlas square. It had taken us nearly all day, in wilting heat, to cover c. 6 km of that square.

On the way back, pursued by black rain clouds and descending dusk, Alex caught sight of a Spotted Dikkop with 2 chicks. Tim sprinted after them for ringing purposes, caught one, but found the chick too small to be ringed. That night, our dinner spoilt by drizzling rain, we had a final nightcap together, shared addresses and last notes, and said a sad goodbye. It had been an absolutely fabulous outing, and I (on behalf of ZOS) am most grateful to Tim, Laurel and NBC for the enormous efforts they'd gone to in organising this event. Thanks a million for everything.