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## STRANGE VISITORS TO THE DESERT

During the last summer months (December 1990 to January 1991) I was fortunate enough to see a handful of strange birds that one would not expect to see in the Namib Desert. It was early December when the first of these "Desert" birds arrived at Sesriem in the Namib-Naukluft Park. It had us all up in arms for a while till we settled down to examine our Roberts'. The bird did not move around much, and therefore we were able to study it in great detail. In the end we all agreed it was a Common Sandpiper Tringa hypoleucos. But that was not the end of the story for that day, because not long there after, its place was taken up by yet another waterbird; a Ruff Philomachus pugnax!

We were at each others throats again, but it did not take us as long to identify this oddity as the first bird; I felt as if we had practised for this moment, and the agreement arrived a lot quicker. Both birds stayed for about a week and then disappeared not to be seen again.

The waterbirds did not let us down in December, as a Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus and Blacksmith Plover Vanellus armatus were also seen. It was only the Blacksmith Plover which stayed for more than a day at Sesriem during this month. Over Christmas, Namibia has a flood of tourists from all over the world; this seems to go for the birds as well. It took us two days of running around with book and binos to finally catch up with a lovely European Golden Oriole Oriolus oriolus. It was a lot of hard work, but well worth the running.

Down at Sossusvlei over the December holiday period I found that there to were birds that I had never seen there before. They were the Brubru Nilaus afer, Yellow Canary Serinus flaviventris and the Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata, and the January Atlas Card looked good with birds like the Wattled Starling Creatophora cinerea, Yellowbilled Kite Milvus migrans and Richard's Pipit Anthus novaeseelandiae. While in the process of writing this article, I was told of yet another waterbird. This time it was a Spotted Crake Porzana porzana which was rather far out of its known range in Namibia. This little bird stayed for just under a month and then mysteriously disappeared. I think that an owl must have caught it, as it used to walk around the garden till well after sunset.

It was interesting to see these waterbirds in the desert, and it keeps us on our toes with expectation; will we see more of these "desert" birds in the future?

Graeme Austin Wilson, Namib-Naukluft Park, Sesriem.

## NOTES ON THE NESTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE WHITETAILED SHRIKE

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Am Nest Des Drosselwürgers Lanioturdus torquatus: Während den ersten Wochen im Januar 1987 wurden insgesamt 9 Stunden am Nest eines Drosselwürgerpaares verbracht. Das Verhalten der Altvögel, und die Beute, die als Futter für die beiden Jungvögel gebracht wurde, ist notiert worden und wird Zusammengefaßt: Insgesamt 66 Fütterungsanflüge zum Nest wurden beobachtet. In 43 Fällen konnte die Beute nicht identifiziert werden. In 14 Fällen wurden Grashüpfer, in 4 Fällen grüne Raupen, in drei Fällen wurden braune Raupen, und zweimal Motten oder Falter als Futter gebracht. Die Altvögel besuchten im Durchschnitt das Nest jede 6.1 Minuten zwecks Fütterung, d.h. jeder Jungvogel bekam alle 12.2 Minuten was zu Fressen. Das Nest wurde nach jede Fütterung durch die Altvögel vom Kot gesäubert, und die Jungvögel sind im Alter von etwa 15 Tage Flügel geworden.

## INTRODUCTION

On 3 January 1987, a nest containing two nestling Whitetailed Shrikes Lanioturdus torquatus, was found in the vicinity of Hofmeyr Walk, south of the "Ice Cream Cone" water tower in central Windhoek. During the ensuing two weeks, a total of just over nine hours was spent at the nest site, observing parental behaviour and prey-items delivered to the nest by the adult birds.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The nest

The nest, which appeared more ragged and untidy on the outside than other nests of this species examined to date, was situated about two metres from ground level in a horizontal, forked branch. The nest diameter and height, on the outside, were about 70 and 80 mm respectively.

Another nest of this species was found by Dieter Ludwig on 4 January 1987, about 300 metres north of the one described here. This nest contained one nestling, fully fledged at that stage, since it left the nest on 5 January and did not return. It was situated about two metres from the footpath in a tree growing on a