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Editorial

A new year has rolled around and at least we have enough material for an issue of our journal the *Lanioturdus*.

After good rains in October and November we then had a very long dry spell until the first week of January. More good rain then with up to 100 mm at some places but another dry spell into February. The poor birds have had their share this season of starts and stops as far as breeding has been going. The masked weavers have built nests but then they sit and wait for the females who are not quite in the mood. Wait until the next rain!

During the festive season we went to Alaska to see our children and grandchildren. We mainly stayed in the city of Anchorage where the weather was a bit like here with the starts and stops to winter. Instead of just being winter the weather brought freezing temperatures with snow and then it would warm up above freezing and rain. Watching the Bohemian Waxwings (family: *Bombycillidae*) they would huddle in the hundreds during the cold but then when it warmed up descend on the crab apples and other shrubs with berries and eat the defrosted fruit.

Once again I appeal to all members to help the club. If you want to keep the club viable you must also do your part and try and get new members to join.

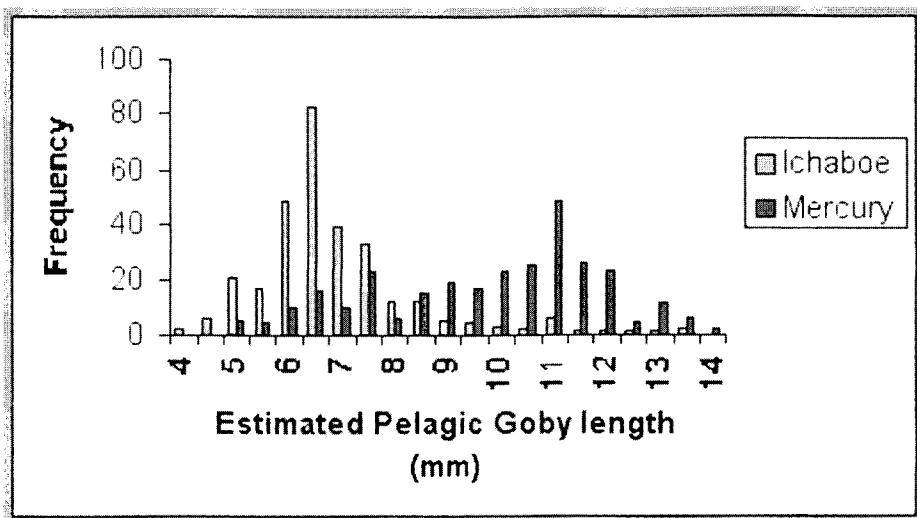


Figure 1. Size frequency distribution (total length) of 300 Pelagic Goby estimated from otolith measurements from Ichaboe and Mercury Islands as collected from Bank Cormorant pellets on 25-27 December 2002.

Pelagic Gobies. Figure 1 also indicates the differences in range between the two sites with the Ichaboe Island fish generally being smaller than those taken at Mercury Island. This difference in Pelagic Goby length could possibly affect or contribute to the overall health of the Bank Cormorant population at Ichaboe Island. Bank Cormorants have a peak breeding period between May and July (Maclean 1984, Tarboton 2001). This smaller available food source during the critical breeding period could affect the birds negatively – i.e. they would have to catch more fish and thus spend more energy fishing to attain their dietary requirements and for those of their offspring. The birds at Mercury Island would possibly not have to fish as frequently resulting in an overall better health for this population. This hypothesis would, however, have to be tested more rigorously. The lack of a major significant difference in total nesting bird numbers between the two islands may indicate a long-term fluctuation in Bank Cormorant numbers. More complex variables affecting the breeding success of the Bank Cormorant is also not ruled out and it is therefore imperative that long-term monitoring of the species is encouraged.

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Summary of the 2003 ringing year in Namibia

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The 2003 ringing year ended on 30 June 2004 and the following is a summary of ringing activities in Namibia for the period 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004.

In total, 10426 birds were captured of which 9366 were "new" (Code 1) birds and 1060 were recaptures or controls. Dirk Heinrich ringed the most birds, followed by Ursula Franke, Tim Osborne and Mark Boorman (Table 1). The "new" birds represent 242 species and again Dirk heads the list of most species ringed (Table 2). The most common species ringed was Lark-like Bunting, followed by Cape Sparrow and Common Tern (Table 4). Birds were ringed at 314 localities (Table 9).

This year we were fortunate enough to be able to have a ringers' get-together, hosted by Renate and Werner Bader on the farm Wiese. Dieter Oschadleus and

Michael Brooks from SAFRING joined us and many topics ranging from ringers' ethics to moult were discussed in between ringing sessions. Almost all active ringers in Namibia attended and everybody enjoyed the event. Hopefully this will become an annual occasion.

Namibian ringers achieved several noteworthy records this year. Over 200 adult White-backed Vultures and three Cape Griffons were ringed at the REST capture aviary on the farm Uitsig this year. In addition, GPS harnesses were fitted to one Cape Griffon and two White-backed Vultures (one a suspected hybrid) to track their movements. This effort was mainly due to the energy and drive of Maria Diekmann who organised the event and saw to it that everything ran smoothly. As far as we can establish this is a world first.

As part of the ringers' get-together 63 White Pelican chicks were ringed at Hardap Dam. This is the first time that an operation of this magnitude has been carried out since the 1970s.

Linda Sheehan and Mark Paxton ringed 106 African Skimmers, most of them as chicks, in the Mahango Game Park over a marathon period of several months.

Steve Braine and Mark Paxton travelled to Angola and ringed birds there – probably the first ringing in Angola since 1976.

Dirk Heinrich became the first person ever to ring a Ludwig's Bustard. This happened on farm Wiese on 30 August 2003.

Several ringers have continued long-term projects: Peter Bridgeford on Lappet-faced Vultures, Wilferd Versfeld on vultures in Etosha, Rod Braby on Damara Terns, Mark Boorman on terns, Dirk Heinrich "resurrected" the Daan Viljoen hornbill project.

We have also had some remarkable recoveries this year: Mark Boorman with his "global village" of tern controls leads the field, a Martial Eagle ringed by Steve Braine was recovered seventeen years after it was ringed and Rod Braby got a couple of "neat" Damara Tern controls.

However, there are a few issues of concern: At the end of 2003 we lost the official ornithologist, Dr Rob Simmons. To date no replacement for him has been appointed and ornithological work at the Ministry of Environment and

Tourism is therefore at a standstill. Administration of ringing activities and issuing of permits is done on an *ad hoc* basis.

Although there has been considerable improvement, not all ringers submit their data to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism or SAFRING. This has led, in several cases, to recaptures not being traceable.

Several foreign ringers visited the country and have so far omitted to send their schedules to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, again leading to recaptures being untraceable.

It is my aim to convert as many paper schedules as possible into digital format this year. I wish to encourage all ringers that still have old paper schedules to do the same.

Table 1: Number of new birds ringed per ringer	
Ringer	No. Ringed
Dirk Heinrich	2587
Ursula Franke	2168
Tim Osborne	1226
Mark Boorman	1222
Holger Kolberg	674
Peter Bridgeford	275
Mark Paxton	235
Dieter Oschadleus	234
Sandra Dantu	164
Bernd Brell	141
John Paterson	106
Rod Braby	97
Sigi Braby	95
Wilferd Versfeld	91
Jessica Kemper	38
John Mendelsohn	7
Maria Diekmann	5
Marek Hrywniak	4
Total	9366

Table 2: Number of birds species ringed per ringer	
Ringer	Species
Dirk Heinrich	125
Tim Osborne	104
Mark Boorman	76
Holger Kolberg	72
Ursula Franke	53
Mark Paxton	42
Dieter Oschadleus	41
Sandra Dantu	37
John Paterson	37
Peter Bridgeford	35
Bernd Brell	27
Wilferd Versfeld	13
Sigi Braby	12
Jessica Kemper	2
Marek Hrywniak	1
John Mendelsohn	1
Rod Braby	1
Maria Diekmann	1

Ringer	Recaps
Jessica Kemper	515
Dirk Heinrich	125
Mark Paxton	112
Tim Osborne	102
Ursula Franke	99
Peter Bridgeford	42
Holger Kolberg	20
Dieter Oschadleus	14
Sigi Braby	11
John Paterson	7
Rod Braby	7
Bernd Brell	6
Total	1060

Species	Number
Pale Chanting Goshawk	40
Greater Kestrel	12
Pygmy Falcon	11
Rock Kestrel	7
Augur Buzzard	3
Lanner Falcon	3
Little Banded Goshawk	3
Black-breasted Snake Eagle	2
African Hawk Eagle	2
Tawny Eagle	2
Black-shouldered Kite	1
Grey Kestrel	1
Little Sparrowhawk	1
Secretarybird	1
Peregrine Falcon	1
Jackal Buzzard	1
African Fish Eagle	1
Total	92

Species	Number
Lark-like Bunting	852
Cape Sparrow	712
Common Tern	703
Redheaded Finch	545
Chestnut Weaver	514
White-throated Canary	501
Laughing Dove	387
White-backed Vulture	301
Masked Weaver	282
Sociable Weaver	268
Common Waxbill	243
Namaqua Dove	206
Red-eyed Bulbul	170
Orange River White-eye	156
Grey-headed Sparrow	151
Black-throated Canary	149
House Sparrow	122
African Skimmer	106
Red Bishop	104
Damara Tern	97

Species	Number
White-backed Vulture	301
Lappet-faced Vulture	59
Cape Vulture	3
White-headed Vulture	1
Total	364

Species	Number
Pearl-spotted Owl	26
African Scops Owl	2
White-faced Owl	2
Total	30

Species	Number
Common Tern	703
African Skimmer	106
Damara Tern	97
White Pelican	63
Kittlitz's Plover	44
Black Tern	42
African Penguin	36
Three-banded Plover	35
White-fronted Plover	35
Curlew Sandpiper	33

Locality	Number
Nelsville	1272
Wiese	1215
Klein Windhoek	1016
Mile 4 Salt Works	803
Tandala Ridge	606
Hartebeestposten	337
Kramersdorf	306
UWM Posten	257
REST capture aviary	250
Kolberg Home	197
Schumannndamm	156
Swakopmund Sewage Works	124
Claustal	117
Shamvura	117
Hohenfels	115
Pferdeposten	111
B1 Teufelsbach	110
Aandster House	105
Rustig Toko Lodge	91
Farm Tsutsab	85

Figure 1: Location and number of birds ringed in Namibia in 2003

