

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.

References

- C. W. Mackworth – Praed and C.H.B. Grant. 1963. *Birds of the Southern Third of Africa* Vol. II.
R.A.C. Jensen and M.K. Jensen. 1971. *The Ostrich Supplement* No. 8
P. A. Clancey. 1985. *The Rare Birds of Southern Africa*.
Stuart Keith *et al.* 1992. *The Birds of Africa* Vol. IV
G.L. Maclean. 1993. *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*.
J. A. Harrison *et al.* 1997. *The Atlas of Southern African Birds* Vol. 2.
Ian Sinclair *et al.* 2002. *Sasol Birds of Southern Africa*.
E. Demasius. 1999. *Birding in Namibia*.

CONCERN ABOUT PALM SWIFT HABITAT LOSS

Melle Orford
45 Feld Street, Windhoek
eco-plan@iafrica.com.na

Why are palm trees being stripped of their old leaves? This new fashion like most fashions, is unnecessary (and ugly) but more importantly it also has the added disadvantage of being an environmental tragedy for the palm-loving swifts.

Windhoek is graced with a small number of large old palm trees of various types including *Washingtonia* palms (fan palms). Although palms are not indigenous to Windhoek, they have become an ornithological asset to the town since they attract swifts and the trees are considered to be aesthetically pleasing. As palms grow, older leaves die and form an attractive, dense protective covering around the palm tree's stem, similar to bark. This covering of dead leaves prevents dehydration of the palm stem and attack by diseases. Furthermore, this attractive 'petticoat' of dead leaves is home to one of Windhoek's wonders, the Palm Swift (windswael) *Cypsiurus parvus*. These beautiful birds along with Bradfield's Swifts *Apus bradfieldi* use these dead palm leaves as nesting and roosting sites.

Palm Swifts do not land to gather nesting materials, rather they gather nesting material on the wing that is floating in the air. With this material they fly in under the dead palm leaves. Clinging on to a dead palm leaf, swifts use their saliva to glue the nesting material onto the dead leaf forming a tiny nest. They

mate while clinging onto the leaves. Using saliva, the female glues each egg (she usually lays two) on the palm leaf and the nest. When the eggs hatch the baby palm swift then clings to the palm leaf until they are ready to fly. They fly off by dropping out from under the leaves and into the Windhoek sky. Palm swifts cannot take off horizontally, so without the dead leaves to cling and drop from even adult birds cannot use stripped palms.

If you have a moment spend some time watching a palm tree (with dead leaves still attached) and you will notice the swifts coming and going under the dead leaves. At sunset there is a surge of activity as the swifts come in to roost in the warmth of the dead leaves. Despite this incredible process, some humans feel the need to strip the dead palm leaves, leaving crushed eggs and young swifts on the ground. The adults are left without either a roosting or nesting site.

For the survival of the swifts, and the other creatures who live in these leaves I am appealing to everyone who has palms on their property, to landscapers and to developers to please stop the destruction to these birds. Please leave the palms with their dead leaves for the swifts.

SUN ECLIPSE NAMIBIAN STYLE

Tineka Frederichs
PO Box 207, Grootfontein, Namibia
tsutsab@mweb.com.na

On 30 November 2002, together with the Osborne's we went for a trip to the Caprivi to experience the Solar Eclipse. We decided a long time ago to join them for this trip, and do some birdwatching in that area. Günther also wanted to do Tree Atlasing that Barbara Curtis of the National Botanical Research Institute had requested him to do. There were some squares that hadn't been done yet and he was going to get financial assistance. Who would say no to such an opportunity?

On the 29th the Osbornes arrived on our farm (a convenient stop-over for them). The next morning we left for Suclabo Lodge. My brother-in-law works there as the manager and he gave us the best service. The first obvious bird – you can't miss it – is the White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin's Robin). It is all over the lodge and calls all the time. That evening we saw an African Wood Owl at the spotlight near the dining room. The light attracts insects and he must have thought he was at a fast food restaurant. It had rained the night before and termites were flying in their thousands. All along the road and roadsides where we drove we saw lots of Kites – Yellow-billed and Black. On the rocks in the water, Rock Pratincole's sat. The level of the river was rising but there were still enough rocks to perch on. Reed Cormorants were abundant too. Swamp Boubou calls were heard between the trees on the riverbanks. It's a very distinctive call, sounds like water gurgling in a bottle. African Paradise Flycatchers were breeding in the trees around the lodge. Thick-billed Weavers were breeding in the reeds just left of the platform over the river.

On 1 December, we left for the Kwando River campsite that had been reserved for us at the MET camp. But Tim decided to stay somewhere else, because it was obvious that Nancy's car would never be able to get to the MET campsite. So we ended up at a campsite with no facilities [*Editors note: there were also no facilities at the MET camp*], but we had our own beach and the most wonderful scenery. That was north of Kongola, past Singalamwe at a place called Nghuru. We made our own shower in a tree where Laurel and I had our showers every evening amidst a lot of giggling and fun. The men without fear or sense bathed in the river. Fortunately there weren't any crocs or hippos, at least we did not see any. Two days later the rest of the NBC members joined us. Along with Ilse from the Zambia Ornithology Society who wanted assistance with atlassing Zambian birds in the border area, Nigel Steyn and wife, Nancy Robson, Alex and a German man with his wife.

We had lots of fun and did a lot of birding. Tim put up his nets between the trees, but we didn't catch a lot of birds. Tim caught an African Green Pigeon and we saw what a beautiful bird it is. It was also our best look at a Great Reed Warbler. We saw a Long-crested Eagle across the river one evening. The long crest was obvious.

The eclipse was great. We waited and hoped that the clouds would disappear (they did at the last moment) and we looked at the sun for 68 sec. without any



Members of the Namibia Bird Club and Zambia Ornithological Society viewing the total solar eclipse in December 2002.

protection. It was incredible. All the birds went quiet for a while until everything was normal again.

On 4 December after the eclipse we drove around a bit and went to the Zambia/Namibia border to look for birds. It was the cut line that we drove on and the best find of the day was a Crimson-breasted Shrike, which was a new Zambian record for Ilse.

The heat was terrible, about 42° C in the sun. We watched some birds at a small pan then went back to the camp. The next day we had to leave our friends as they were going further into Zambia and we had to go back towards Rundu to do Tree Atlassing.

Our first stay again was at Suclabo Lodge for a while, and then we drove slowly but surely towards Rundu. After a few days of driving at 40 km/h it irritated me

out of my mind, but that's tree atlassing speed. Günther wanted it like that; otherwise he couldn't spot the trees. All I spotted were Pied Crows walking between the rows of maize.

Our next stop was Nkwasi Lodge about 17 km from Rundu. It was a beautiful place but a lot of plants in the garden are exotic species, so it didn't please Günther at all. The view from the bar is beautiful, with the river right in front of you. The next day we stayed with a friend in Rundu. What a strange feeling it was to me to be in a town again with radios blaring, cars and loud noises around us. I didn't like it at all. I would've preferred to stay in the bush. But we had already decided to go back before the end of the year.

We came back home on 14 December and left for the second leg of our trip again on 22 December. This time we decided to go west of Rundu first. Our first stop was Hakusembe Lodge about 12 km from Rundu. What a beautiful place!! We camped there at a very reasonable price. We stayed there for 4 days, taking 2 boat rides, birding around the lodge and just enjoying everything. When you go on a boat trip, you see a lot of birds. JC, who works there, knows his birds too, and he showed us Lesser Jacana and a sub-adult African Fish Eagle. In front of the bar, the Black Crakes are so cute as they walk around. As soon as danger appears, they disappear into the reeds. The managers throw maize kernels out every morning and the Red-eyed Doves, the Crakes, and the African Pied Wagtails come and pick up the seeds. There was also a Common Sandpiper every day. On the jetty between the boats, the Pied Wagtails hopped around. They look at themselves in front of the windows of the boats. The birds were so many, I can't list them all now.

One day we drove towards Mupini. At Rupara we turned around, having seen a lot of things. On Christmas day we stayed at the lodge, relaxing and Günther doing his paperwork. He found a lot of new trees and shrubs that he was unfamiliar with and which hadn't been recorded before. Everything needed to be written down. I'm telling you, I'm glad I'm not doing tree-atlassing. It's a lot of writing and work involved. Yes, I know, to take a sample - examining it at your own time (with a beer in hand) is easier than bird watching. And if you cannot identify a bird, and it flies away, you still don't know what it was. That's the case for me with raptors. Although they are my favourite birds, I often have to give up on them.

The day after Christmas we carried on towards the Musese Project. There we saw the new managers – a couple that we'd met once before in Grootfontein. It is a lovely place. We unpacked our tent on the lawn and that night a huge rainstorm came. Fortunately our tent was waterproof this time (Günther treated it to a waterproofing spray before we left), so we were dry and warm while it poured outside. Some Barn Owls bred in the shed behind us so we had nice company that evening with them shrieking around us.

On 27 December, we looked for a way towards the 1818 square. On the way to Mpunguvlei we picked up two locals who were going towards Kamupupu, their village. That was the village we had to pass on our way. The vegetation is so lush and over grown it is like driving through a tunnel. At 16h00 we started looking for a campsite. Between some trees we found a little opening and unpacked our tent. Early that morning it rained again! I saw an African Cuckoo Hawk perched on a tree, this time it wasn't so difficult to identify. After my Bushmanland adventure I know what it looks like.

After packing up we carried on, still south in a straight line. We came to a biggish vlei blocking the way that had been filled by the rain. Pity there were no waterbirds there. Eventually we turned back the same route, but at least with the highest possible speed: 20–30 km/h. However, at one point we were uncertain which track to take. The GPS tracks only for a certain distance, and the route we had driven was erased. We just took the left track and came back onto the main road leading to Musese even quicker than we had come.

As it was already late, we stayed another night at Musese. Again we had a rainstorm in the early morning. So we packed up, left the tent to dry and went further towards Nkurenkuru. We crept through this "town", seeing everything and took the road towards Nepara. Just past the ELCIN Training Centre, Günther took his last collections. We hurried back to Musese, packed our tent and also hurried back to Hakusembe Lodge.

At Hakusembe Lodge we stayed for one night. It was 30 December. Günther tried to catch a big tigerfish that evening from the jetty, but only got a smallish one. The next day we went to Suclabo Lodge. We wanted to spend New Year's

Eve with my brother-in-law. The Lodge was fully booked so we unpacked our tent again. I went again for a boat ride, which I always enjoy. You see a lot of birds that way.

On 1 January 2003, we went to Mahango Game Park. It was still very beautiful with lots of water on the floodplains, although the whole area was dry. Although it had not received proper rain we enjoyed it immensely. At a picnic site overlooking the river I couldn't believe how close a Red-billed Francolin came to me, it. They are normally so shy and run away at the slightest movement from you. But it was so close I could nearly touch it!

On 2 January, we made a tour through the Buffalo Conservation Area. It's no problem to get in, just report at the offices there. It's a conservation area run by MET. It's the most beautiful place I've ever seen. I couldn't get away. The birds, hippos, crocs, waterbucks and others are so abundant there. Later back home we heard about the danger of landmines there, but no one told us about it then. But it was still a lovely place. It is better than the Mahango Game Reserve, because everything is so unspoiled there. The forest is in pristine condition. But the strange thing is, we did not see elephants at all. My brother-in-law told me we were the only ones that didn't see them.

On 3 January we went back home. I bought some pots and other handcrafts on the way. I find them so beautiful and if you bargain with the sellers, you can buy their work for a very reasonable price.

In conclusion it was a very successful trip. I enjoyed it tremendously. My thanks to my husband Günther who was willing to go and to Tim and Laurel, our very good friends for inviting us on the first trip. We just might do it again this year or next year.

Birds seen during the Sun Eclipse Trip: Total species: 119

58 Reed Cormorant	346 Yellow-throated Sandgrouse	567 African Red-eyed Bulbul
60 African Darter	347 Double-banded Sandgrouse	568 Dark-capped Bulbul
62 Grey Heron	353 African Mourning Dove	569 Terrestrial Brownbul
65 Purple Heron	354 Cape Turtle-dove	596 African Stonechat
68 Yellow-billed Egret	358 Emerald-spotted Wood-dove	599 White-browed Robin-chat
71 Cattle Egret	361 African Green-pigeon	628 Great Reed-warbler
72 Squacco Heron	373 Grey Go-away Bird	634 Sedge Warbler
75 Rufous-bellied Heron	378 Black Cuckoo	643 Willow Warbler
81 Hamerkop	380 Great Spotted Cuckoo	658 African Wren-warbler
87 African Openbill	382 Jacobin Cuckoo	664 Zitting Cisticola
89 Marabou Stork	385 Kluas's Cuckoo	672 Rattling Cisticola
94 Hadedda Ibis	386 Diderik Cuckoo	675 Rufous-winged Cisticola
123 White-backed Vulture	388 Black Coucal	683 Tawny-flanked Prinia
126 Black Kite	390 Senegal Coucal	685 Black-chested Prinia
126.1 Yellow-billed Kite	395 Marsh Owl	689 Spotted Flycatcher
127 Black-shouldered Kite	396 African Scops-owl	695 Marico Flycatcher
133 Steppe Eagle	398 Pearl-spotted Owllet	701 Chinspot Batis
134 Lesser Spotted Eagle	399 African Barred Owllet	710 African Paradise-flycatcher
136 Booted Eagle	401 Spotted Eagle-owl	717 Long-billed Pipit
139 Long-crested Eagle	406 Rufous-cheeked Nightjar	731 Lesser Grey Shrike
140 Martial Eagle	411 Common Swift	733 Red-backed Shrike
142 Brown Snake-eagle	428 Pied Kingfisher	735 Magpie Shrike
146 Bateleur	433 Woodland Kingfisher	738 Swamp Boubou
148 African Fish-eagle	437 Striped Kingfisher	740 Black-backed Puffback
149 Steppe Buzzard	438 European Bee-eater	743 Brown-crowned Tchagra
161 Gabar Goshawk	441 Southern Carmine Bee-eater	744 Black-crowned Tchagra
164 European Marsh-harrier	444 Little Bee-eater	760 Wattle Starling
165 African Marsh-harrier	445 Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	761 Violet-backed Starling
172 Lanner Falcon	447 Lilac-breasted Roller	762 Burchell's Starling
173 Eurasian Hobby	457 African Grey Hornbill	778 Copper Sunbird
194 Red-billed Francolin	458 Red-billed Hornbill	779 Marico Sunbird
213 Black Crane	464 Black-collared Barbet	780 Purple-banded Sunbird
237 Red-chested Korhaan	470 Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	792 Amethyst Sunbird
238 Black-bellied Bustard	487 Bearded Woodpecker	814 Southern Masked-weaver
240 African Jacan	494 Rufous-naped Lark	816 Golden Weaver
249 Three-banded Plover	518 Barn Swallow	828 Fan-tailed Widowbird
255 Crowned Lapwing	534 Banded Martin	843 Brown Firefinch
260 African Wattle Lapwing	541 Fork-tailed Drongo	844 Blue Waxbill
265 Green Sandpiper	544 African Golden Oriole	
266 Wood Sandpiper	562 Hartlaub's Babbler	