

LANIOTURDUS

SWA/NAMIBIA VOGELKLUB
eine Zweigstelle der
SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft
und der
Southern African
Ornithological Society

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Parknotes

Berichte aus den Naturschutzparks

SWALLOWTAILED BEE-EATERS FORAGING IN ASSOCIATION WITH HELMETED GUINEAFOWL

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Okakarara, 9000.

On 23 April 1987, at about 12h00, a group of 18 Helmeted Guinea-fowl Numida meleagris was observed feeding at a leisurely pace through thick mopane Mopane colophospermum woodland along the Elandsdraai road, about five kilometres west of Koinseb in the Etosha National Park. The guineafowl were spread out about two metres apart and were scratching for food in every suitable place. A group of five Swallowtailed Bee-eaters Merops hirundineus were seen in close attendance on the foraging guineafowl and twice bee-eaters were seen to catch grasshoppers which had been disturbed by the guinea-fowl. The bee-eaters made use of every available perch in the area through which the guineafowl were foraging and definitely seemed to be feeding in association with the guineafowl.

It is well established that other species of bee-eaters will follow large mammals, humans and even vehicles to catch insects which they disturb (Cramp 1985) but this is apparently the first record of such activity in the Swallowtailed Bee-eater.

CRAMP, S. (Ed.) 1985. Handbook of the birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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NAMUTONI, DECEMBER 1986

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Windhoek, 9000.

In Etosha National Park, December is the 'tail end' of the hot dry season. December 1986 was no exception. The Etosha and Fischer's Pans were bone dry and the water level in the natural springs was low. The ground was largely bare and the heat was so severe that even Crowned Plovers Vanellus coronatus were reluctant to leave the shade between 12h00 and 17h00. The relatively small variety of birds (110 species) found in three days of 'tourist-holidaying' in the area around Namutoni, reflected this hot 'pre-rains' atmosphere.

Two "rare" species were observed (both subject to confirmation by the Namibia Unusual Bird Sightings Committee (UBSC); a Lesser Blackbacked Gull Larus fuscus at, and a Black Sparrowhawk Accipiter melanoleucus near, the Klein Namutoni waterhole.

The gull, an immature bird, had pink legs, blackish brown back and upperwings and a white rump with a distinct dark tail band. It arrived on the afternoon of 14 December with a flock of Greyheaded Gulls Larus cirrocephalus after a period of strong winds. That evening after the wind had abated, the entire flock of gulls flew up, circled the waterhole a few times and then flew away. If accepted by the UBSC; this will be the second record of this Eurasian species in Namibia.

On 15 December at about 08h00, when hundreds of Cape Turtle Doves Streptopelia capicola were gathering to drink, a brief glimpse was had of a black and white raptor, the size of a small buzzard, perched in a tree near the waterhole. Almost immediately the raptor flew rapidly into thick bush, revealing broad, rounded wings and an impression of black and white upperparts. Although the view was brief, this can only have been a Black Sparrowhawk. This species has previously only been certainly recorded within Namibia along the Kavango River.

Other notable species seldom or infrequently recorded in Etosha were a single immature Blackcrowned Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax at Koinchab, and a Wattled Crane Grus carunculata at Andoni (A. Harrington and P. Coulson personal communication; subject to confirmation by the UBSC).

Waterbirds were restricted by the lack of open water in the pans, but many species were concentrated at waterholes, especially the extensive, mudfringed pools at Klein Namutoni and Andoni. Since little quantitative information is available about numbers of wetland