

NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

CONTENTS

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NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

LANIOTURDUS publishes articles and notes of broad birding interest to the membership of the Namibia Bird Club. Contributors should look at recent issues of the magazine for guidance on suitability and presentation of material. Manuscripts in English, German or Afrikaans are requested and should be typed in double spacing on A4 paper. Sketches, maps and figures should be submitted on good quality white paper in black ink. High contrast black and white or colour photographs may be submitted to illustrate articles. Artwork illustrating any aspect of birds and/or birding are also requested. The editor is allowed a wide latitude in his choice of materials, thus any views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Namibia Bird Club. All material in *LANIOTURDUS* is copyright and permission to reproduce material should be negotiated with the Editor.

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All disks and photographs will be returned to authors - manuscripts will not be returned. A single copy of the Volume issue in which your article appeared will be sent to the senior author.

All contributions (including books for review) to *LANIOTURDUS* should be sent to:

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Namibia.

or to: P.O. Box 22527, Windhoek, Namibia.

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NBC was not involved in the direct running of the Atlas and when it came to a close we failed to recognise that this would leave a big gap for our active membership.

It has taken some time to bring things to a head but I am happy to announce that we are hopefully entering a new period of activity in the club. Many of you may not know but the committee has changed somewhat at the last AGM and we are trying to improve things within the club. Which brings me to the point of the Editorial - the club cannot depend on the committee alone - it is up to you, the members, to give inputs into what you want from the club *and* it is also up to you the members to get involved. There are currently 6 members on the committee and we are trying our best to get things as organised as possible. If you have anything you want addressed by the club let us know - we will do what we can to satisfy your interests, frustrations etc. - but - please don't sit on the sidelines and be the source of uncommitted complaints and whining about the club - the committee is there to serve you and we need your involvement - nothing will be achieved by sniping at us - get involved, help us to do what needs to be done and the club will see a huge improvement in activities, publications and membership.

This in turn brings me to the issue of *Lanioturdus*. As the mouthpiece of the NBC, *Lanioturdus* has a crucial role to play in the club, but like the club as a whole it cannot survive without your inputs - I need material to keep it going. Sharing information widely is a key step towards better birding and *Lanioturdus* can serve as a catalyst for such exchanges. What we need is regular inputs and we can get the magazine out twice a year. In this issue there are comments on a new Editorial policy for *Lanioturdus*, an activity schedule for 1996 and some outlines for a number of regular items for the magazine. Let us know what you think - I will also publish a Letters to the Editor column should there be sufficient response to any points of debate.

In conclusion then - GET INVOLVED - and lets hear from you at all levels.
Good luck and good birding in 1996.

THE NAMIBIAN NEST RECORD SCHEME

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT: MAY 1993 - AUGUST 1994

Dr. R. SIMMONS, Ornithology Section,
Ministry of Environment & Tourism, Private Bag 13306, Windhoek, Namibia

**This report is dedicated to the memory of CHARLES CLINNING
who contributed greatly to Namibian ornithology**

Summary

This third annual report of the Namibian nest record scheme covers the breeding year May 1993 to August 1994. Over 900 records were contributed from 20 observers with Dr Dave Noble and Christine Carey (from Cambridge University) contributing the most cards ever submitted to the scheme (554 cards). Large contributions came from amateur ornithologists John Mendelsohn, Chris Hines, Steve Braine, Tommy Hall and Peter and Marilyn Bridgeford.

The most interesting finds of the year came from Lüderitz where approximately 40% of the southern African population of Swift Terns bred successfully, and from Epupa where the first record of a Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush was uncovered. Several more nests of Slaty Egrets were found in among many other wetland birds, and a total of 148 species were recorded in the year under review.

Introduction

Breeding data for Namibian birds is a fundamental contribution to knowledge of bird biology and ultimately the conservation of Namibian birds. For this reason, the nest record scheme, held by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism's Ornithology section and run for more than 20 years, aims to encourage all enthusiastic and experienced amateurs to support its continued success by providing cards on breeding birds. The aim is to piece together using this basic information, a picture of the breeding seasons and clutch and brood sizes of all Namibian birds. They do not have to be rare or exotic species, but we do request as much detail as possible on each card.

One of the successes of this scheme for example is the large number of cards obtained for the Damara Tern. From these cards the Ornithology Section, past and present, have been able to identify the most important breeding areas, ascertain that the terns lays a single egg (unlike all other terns of its size) and that it starts breeding earlier at southern latitudes than more northerly ones. With impending oil exploration offshore these breeding aspects will become increasingly important in identifying sensitive areas. This year's nest records have added to that mapping with the discovery by Tommy Hall of globally significant numbers of Swift Terns breeding in Luderitz. At the opposite end of the country the scheme attracted the first record of the Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush, an exotic species that creeps into Namibia only along the Cunene River. These and other records then are invaluable for both monitoring birds in sensitive areas and recording the rarer species; we are particularly thankful

for contributors for helping us continue this tradition. We know however, that there are many more people out there who see and monitor breeding birds (some of which we don't have on our scheme) but never fill in cards. Everyone can contribute to this scheme.

The South African nest record scheme, run by the Avian Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town is also being revamped and updated. Like us they are considering computerising the entire scheme so any species can be called up and details acquired at the push of a button. This is a major undertaking and requires some dedicated computer operators not to mention careful planning. They have asked observers to fill out computer-like cards with codes for different aspects. We will be carefully monitoring the success of this undertaking because it has both enormous advantages (instant transfer to the computer screen) and some disadvantages (learning and applying all the right codes). For now we will stick to the old description format. However, please note that we would appreciate **as much information as possible on nest site characteristics, the habitat type and any behavioural information on the adults and chicks**. Remember that for some birds your nest record cards may be the only data available on that species and therefore a photograph accompanying the card might save you a thousand words!

Results

Table 1: New nest records submitted for the breeding year May 1993 to August 1994

| Species | Cards | Nest contents* |
|--------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|
| Ostrich | 6 | 20e.11y.12y,12y,13y. 45y |
| Jackass Penguin | | |
| Little Grebe (Dabchick) | 10 | (4ex2).5e,2y.(3yx2).(5y x2).(4yx2) |
| Blacknecked Grebe | 6.1c | (4ex2).5e,2y,3y.4y.1ex14,2ex4,3ex4 |
| White-brstd Cormorant | | |
| Crowned Cormorant | | |
| Cape Cormorant | | |
| Spoonbill | | |
| Glossy Ibis | 2 | (2ex2) |
| Grey Heron | 7 | 1y.(2yx5),3y |
| Squacco Heron | 2 | (3ex2) |
| Blackcrowned Night Heron | 6 | (2yx2),3y.(3ex2) |
| Greenbacked Heron | 1 | 3y |
| Great white Egret | 1 | ? |
| Dwarf Bittern | 10 | 1y.(2yx3)(3yx3)(4yx2) |
| Slaty Egret | 6 | 2e,(3yx5) |
| Purple Gallinule | 3 | 3e,1y,2y,4y |
| Lesser Gallinule | 2 | 5e,6e |
| Black Crake | 1 | 3e |
| Redknobbed Coot | 1 | 2y |

| Species | Cards | Nest contents* |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Moorhen | 3 | 8e,3y,6y |
| Lesser Moorhen | 9 | 1e,3ex2,4ex3,6ex2,7e,7y |
| Painted Snipe | 1 | 4e |
| South African Shelduck | 1 | 8y |
| Redbilled Teal | 1 | 12e |
| Cape Teal | 1 | 5y |
| Knobbilled Duck | 1 | 9y |
| Cape Shoveller | 1 | 7y |
| Southern Pochard | 1 | 3y |
| Secretary Bird | 2 | Building,2y |
| Lappetfaced Vulture | 31 | 1e, (1y x 30) |
| White-backed Vulture | 1 | 1e [1989 record] |
| Blackbreasted Snake Eagle | 1 | 1e |
| Martial Eagle | 1 | 1y |
| African Hawk Eagle | 2 | 1y,? |
| Wahlberg's Eagle | 1 | egg [1989 record] |
| Little Sparrowhawk | | |
| Pale Chanting Goshawk | 1 | 1e |
| Gabar Goshawk | 1 | 1e [covered in spiders web] |
| Rock Kestrel | | |
| Greater Kestrel | 4 | 2e,3e,4e,1y |
| Rednecked Falcon | | |
| Rednecked Francolin | 2 | 2y[Kunene River race] |
| Hartlaub's Francolin | 1 | 1y |
| Red-billed Francolin | 1 | 4e |
| Orange River Francolin | 1 | 5e |
| Black Korhaan | | |
| Ruppell's Korhaan | 1 | 2y |
| Redcrested Korhaan | 4 | 1e,1yx3 |
| Kori Bustard | | |
| Namaqua Sandgrouse | 4 | 3yx4 |
| Avocet | 2 | 3y,4y |
| Black winged Stilt | 1 | 4e |
| Spotted Dikkop | 2 | 1y,3e |
| Hartlaub's Gull | 2c | 412nests=400y; 601nests=800y |
| Kelp Gull | 1 | 1e |
| Damara Tern | 9 | (1e x 6)(1y x 3) |
| Swift Tern | 2c | 767nests=1225y; 1151nests=2112y |
| Whiskered tern | 1c | 1ex2, building |
| Whitefronted Plover | | |
| Chestnutbanded Plover | | |
| Kittlitz's Plover | 2 | 2e,1yx2 |
| Threebanded Plover | 2 | 2e,1y |
| Double-banded Courser | 1 | 1y |
| Burchell's Courser | 1 | 1y |
| Temminck's Courser | 1 | 3y |
| Crowned Plover | 6 | 2e,3ex4,2y |

| Species | Cards | Nest contents* |
|------------------------|-------|---|
| Blacksmith Plover | 1 | 2y |
| Cape Turtle Dove | 4 | 1e,2e,1y,2y |
| Laughing Dove | 1 | 2e |
| Green-spotted Dove | | |
| Rock Pigeon | 2 | 2e,2y |
| Cape Parrot | | |
| Meyer's Parrot | | |
| Grey Lourie | 1 | eggs |
| African Cuckoo | | |
| Greater Spotted Cuckoo | 1 | 1y [in Palew.Starling] 2e[Glossy Starl.] |
| Striped Cuckoo | 1 | 1y [Pied Babbler] |
| Hoopoe | 1 | 5e |
| Scimitar Bill Hoopoe | 1 | 3e |
| Giant Eagle Owl | 1 | 1y |
| Spotted Eagle Owl | 1 | 1y |
| Scops Owl | 2 | 4e,4y |
| Pearl Spotted Owl | 8 | 1e,3e,4e,1y,2y,3yx3 |
| Whitefaced Owl | 1 | egg [in Gabar nest with spiders] |
| Marsh Owl | 1 | 1y |
| S.A. Cliff Swallow | | |
| Little Swift | | |
| Wire-tailed Swallow | | |
| Lesser Striped Swallow | | |
| Rock Martin | 8 | 1e,2e,3e,4e,2yx4 |
| Banded Martin | 1 | young [First record, Hobatere] |
| White-b-Mousebird | | |
| Red-faced Mousebird | | |
| Olive Bee-eater | | |
| Swallow-t-Bee-eater | | |
| Purple Roller | 2 | 3e,2y |
| Lilac-b-Roller | 4 | 1e,3ex2,5y |
| Yellow-billed Hornbill | 8 | 2e,3e,2yx3,4yx2 |
| Red-billed Hornbill | 8 | 3e,5e,3y,4y,5yx4 |
| Grey Hornbill | 9 | y,y,4ex3,5e,2y,4yx2 |
| Monteiro's Hornbill | 28 | 2e,5ex2,2yx4,3yx8,4yx10,5yx3 |
| Cardinal Wodpecker | 1 | 1y |
| Pied Barbet | 2 | young |
| Fork tailed Drongo | 6 | 2e,2yx3 |
| Redeyed Bulbul | 3 | 1e,2e,2y |
| Carp's Tit | 3 | 3ex2,4e |
| Ashy Grey Tit | 6 | 3e,5e,3y,3y,4y,4y |
| Cape Penduline Tit | 1 | 5e |
| Arrowmarked Babbler | 1 | 3y |
| Barecheeked Babbler | 1 | 2y |
| Pied Babbler | 1 | ? |
| Whiterumped Babbler | 1 | 2y, |
| Ground scraper Thrush | 3 | ?,3y |

| Species | Cards | Nest contents* |
|----------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|
| Kurrichane Thrush | 1 | 3y |
| Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush | 1 | 2y [At the Epupa Falls] |
| Short-toed Rock Thrush | 1 | 3y |
| Capped Wheatear | 2 | 1y |
| Karoo Robin | | |
| Familiar Chat | 1 | 1e |
| Mountain Chat | 3 | 1e,2e,2e |
| Kalahari Robin | 2 | 4e,2y |
| Longbilled Crombec | 1 | 2y |
| Rattling Cisticola | 1 | 2e |
| Fantailed Cisticola | 1 | 1e |
| Black chested Prinia | 1 | 1e |
| Titbabbler | 1 | 2e |
| Marico Flycatcher | 1 | 2e |
| Paradise Flycatcher | 4 | 2ex3,3y |
| Pirit Batis | 1 | 1y |
| Stark's Lark | 1 | 3e |
| White tailed Shrike | | |
| White crowned Shrike | 1 | 2y |
| Fiscal Shrike | 4 | 1e,2y,2y,3y |
| Crimsonbreasted Shrike | | |
| Puffback Shrike | 3 | eggs,2y,building, |
| Three-streak Tchagra | | |
| Burchell's Starling | | |
| Cape Glossy Starling | 8 | 1e,2e,3ex2,4ex3 |
| Pale winged Starling | 1 | 3y |
| Longtailed Starling | 1 | 2y |
| Plum coloured Starling | 1 | y |
| Scarlet chested Sunbird | 2 | 1y,3y |
| Marico Sunbird | | |
| White-bellied Sunbird | | |
| Dusky Sunbird | | |
| Red-bill Buffalo Weaver | 3 | 1y,y,3y |
| House Sparrow | 1 | 2y |
| Cape Sparrow | 3 | ?2y,3e |
| Great Sparrow | 3 | 4e,eggs, young |
| Grey headed Sparrow | 4 | 5e,2y,2y,4y |
| White-brow Sparrowweav | 1 | 2y |
| Masked Weaver | 5 + 6c | 3y,x3,(2yx4)(1ex8)(2ex7)(3ex15)(3yx5) |
| Lesser masked Weaver | | |
| Spotted Backed Weaver | 1 | 3e |
| Scaly feathered Finch | 2 | 2e,4e |
| Brown Firefinch | 1 | y |
| Redheaded Finch | 1 | 2y,young |
| Melba Finch | 1 | 4e |
| Blue Waxbill | 1 | 2e |
| Black cheeked Waxbill | | |
| Violet eared Waxbill | | |

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Golden breasted Bunting | 1 | 2e |
| Sub Totals | 365 Records | 127 SPECIES |

Dave Noble's records summarised (not all cards arrived in time for this report)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----|--|-----|
| Longbilled Crombec | 4 | Redeyed Bulbul | 10 |
| *Yellowbellied Fremomela | 1 | Rock Martin | 3 |
| Bleating Warbler | 12 | *Pearlbreasted Swallow | 1 |
| *Barred Warbler | 3 | Ashy Tit | 5 |
| Rattling Cisticola | 13 | Carp's Tit | 2 |
| *African Marsh Warbler | 15 | Cape Penduline Tit | 1 |
| Blackchested Prima | 15 | Pied Babbler | 3 |
| Titbabbler | 6 | Marico Flycatcher | 16 |
| *Cape Wagtail | 1 | Pirrit Batis | 3 |
| Groundscraper Thrush | 3 | Paradise Flycatcher | 7 |
| Mountain Chat | 2 | Scarletchested Sunbird | 2 |
| Familiar Chat | 1 | *Marico Sunbird | 3 |
| *Whitebrowed Robin | 16 | *Dusky Sunbird | 1 |
| Kalahari Robin | 15 | Cape Glossy Starling | 20 |
| *Short-toed Rock Thrush | 1 | *Burchell's starling | 1 |
| Fiscal Shrike | 1 | Palewinged Starling | 6 |
| *Crimsonbreasted Shrike | 21 | Whitebrowed Sparrowweaver | 19 |
| *Three-streaked Tchagra | 6 | Masked Weaver | 117 |
| Puffback | 1 | *Lesser Masked Weaver | 1 |
| *Brubru | 1 | *Red Bishop | 58 |
| *Bokmakierie | 1 | Great Sparrow | 25 |
| *White-tailed Shrike | 1 | Cape Sparrow | 5 |
| Whitecrowned Shrike | 1 | Grey headed Sparrow | 10 |
| Laughing Dove | 11 | Scalyfeathered Finch | 25 |
| Lilac-b-Roller | 3 | Redheaded Finch | 20 |
| African Hoopoe | 2 | Golden breasted Bunting | 2 |
| Scimitar-bill Hoopoe | 1 | Melba Finch | 10 |
| *Whitebacked Mousebird | 2 | *Violeteared Waxbill | 4 |
| *Sabota Lark | 1 | Blue Waxbill | 2 |
| Forktailed Drongo | 10 | *Blackcheeked Waxbill | 1 |
| | | Subtotals: 554 cards and * 21 additional species for 1993-1994 | |

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|-------------|
| GRAND TOTALS: | 932 cards | 148 SPECIES |
|---------------|-----------|-------------|

*Nest contents where 1e = 1 egg, 1y = 1 young etc, c = colony
Where eggs and young were recorded on the same card only young are given here.

Summary of breeding studies underway in Namibia

Several breeding studies are underway in Namibia, some short term, some long term. Dave Noble of Cambridge University, with his assistant/wife Christine Carey, finished up his Ph.D study of cuckoos and their hosts in April 1994. His total number of nests was even larger than last year, not only adding significantly to our overall total, but making him the largest single contributor to our scheme. Dave is now finished writing and is the proud owner of a Ph.D He has significantly increased our knowledge of cuckoo parasitism rates and the reasons that some species accept cuckoo eggs and others reject them. Anyone who saw him working on shimmering thorn covered hillsides in Daan Viljoen, sans hat, sun glasses and sun screen will know the enormous work load that went into this undertaking. That he added to our nest record scheme in such a major way gives credence to the idea that foreign researchers don't just come and take all their data away with them.

Dr John Mendelsohn in his private capacity and Dr Mark Stanback undertaking a post-doctoral study (now at Sheffield University in England) are continuing long term monitoring of four species of hornbills breeding in the Daan Viljoen Reserve. Mark's new study will assess how female hornbills manage to store sperm for long periods while walled up inside their nest boxes and how long that sperm remains viable to fertilise eggs. The total number of hornbills breeding this year (49 in 96 large boxes) was slightly lower than last year, when 61 pairs occupied 97 boxes. However, the species composition was interesting this year with the first records ever of Carp's Tit (3) and Ashy Tit (5) as well as some Scops Owl clutches and a probable Scimitar Woodhoopoe clutch (the bird was never seen). The 40, newly erected small boxes are part of a new study by Dr David Wiggins of cooperative breeding among the African Tits. He has several study sites including the Huab Lodge (of Susie & Jan van de Reep), the Waterberg region and further afield in Zimbabwe. Nest boxes are also being erected in the Okavango region for southern Black Tits and in Kaudom for Rufous-bellied Tits.

Nature conservation's Peter Bridgeford is continuing his monitoring of Lappet faced Vultures in the central Namib and will be colour ringing further chicks this year. His report on the first-time occurrence of two Lappet-faced Vulture chicks in one nest is now out in the *Ostrich*. Peter is marking nests using a Global Positioning System so he can plot and map nests to work out spacing and density patterns.

Table 2: Contributors to the 1993-1994 nest record scheme

| Contributor | No. of records | Species |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. D. Noble/C. Carey | 554 | 58 |
| 2. John Mendelsohn | 90 | 16 |
| 3. Chris Hines | 77 | 35 |
| 4. Steve Braine | 50 | 42 |
| 5. Peter/Marylin Bridgeford | 34 | 23 |
| 6. David Ward | 27 | 21 |
| 7. O. Friede | 20 | 4 |
| 8. Dr.G. Friede | 12 | 9 |
| 9. J. Steenkamp | 10 | 2 |
| 10. J. Erasmus | 8 | 4 |
| 11. R.Miller | 7 | 4 |
| 12. M. Paxton | 7 | 6 |
| 13. W. Swanepoel | 5 | 1 |
| 14. N.Berriman | 4 | 3 |
| 15. T.Hall | 4 | 2 |
| 16. W. Versfeld | 4 | 3 |
| 17. J. Lenssen | 4 | 3 |
| 18. B. Brell | 3 | 3 |
| 19. M. Berry | 3 | 1 |
| 20. J. Ward | 1 | 1 |
| Contributors: 20 | Cards: 932 | Species: 148 |

A surprise on the tern front was conservator Tommy Hall's report of thousands of Swift Terns breeding in Luderitz. This species has been reported breeding in this area (maximum 480 pairs) before but never in the numbers reported by Tommy. He found two sites, one on Shark Island a small gravel/sand spit joined to the mainland by a sand bar and one in the harbour. Shark Island housed a colony of Swift Terns 767 pairs strong in April from which 1225 chicks fledged (flew). The harbour colony numbered 1151 pairs from which 2112 chicks hatched. Since the world population is estimated at about 6 000 pairs this breeding represented about 40% of the total population. Tommy Hall also ringed over 1400 Swift Tern chicks and he has estimated that 75% of the hatched chicks have fledged. He is currently writing up his findings.

Table 3. The top 20 contributors to the Namibian Nest Record scheme 1960 to 1994 inclusive.

| CONTRIBUTOR | TOTAL CARDS | MOST CARDS/YEAR |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. D. Noble/C. Carey | 980 | 554 |
| 2. R. Jensen | 748 | 208 |
| 3. S. Braine | 536 | 126 |
| 4. C. Clinning† | 508 | 147 |
| 5. P&M. Bridgeford | 366 | 88 |
| 6. C. Hines | 354 | 152 |
| 7. R. Simmons | 227 | 216 |
| 8. P. Tarr | 184 | 42 |
| 9. M. Paxton | 184 | 35 |
| 10. G. Patten | 174 | 69 |
| 11. H. Berry | 166 | 87 |
| 12. T. Archibald | 164 | 59 |
| 13. R. Loutit | 158 | 34 |
| 14. W. Niethammer | 148 | 40 |
| 15. R. Braby | 132 | 76 |
| 16. J.H.& O. Friede | 129 | 68 |
| 17. L. Baker | 111 | 33 |
| 18. J. Cooper | 110 | 59 |
| 19. C.J. Brown | 96 | 32 |
| 20. R. Noller | 90 | 57 |
| 21. J. Mendelsohn | 90 | 90 |
| Total cards: | 5652 | Most cards/year: 554 |

† Charles Clinning, for several years ornithologist with Nature Conservation, died in 1994. He was a major contributor to not only this scheme but to Namibian ornithology in general.

Acknowledgements: The success of this scheme is a tribute to the long term support of people such as Steve Braine and many conservation officials around the country who have contributed for over 20 years in some cases. Equally, short term and large contributions from visiting researchers has in recent years injected massive amounts of information into this scheme and I am thankful to both groups for their support. I am grateful to Annette Sheppard for her organisation, collation and checking of all cards that made this report possible.

Please send all nest records to the Ornithology Section, clearly marked as such on the outside of the envelope before December each year. For cards or assistance please contact Rob Simmons at the address given above.