

## CONTENTS

VOLUME 37 (1) 2004

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial .....	1
OSBORNE, T.O. Interesting ringing recoveries .....	2
CHILDRESS, B. Remarkable Lesser Flamingo recovery .....	3
KOLBERG, H. Summary of the 2002 ringing year in Namibia .....	4
BLANE, S. The happy wanderer .....	10
RODWELL, L. SCOTT, A. & M. SCOTT. Water, wetlands, Wattled Cranes and people .....	13
LENSEN, J. Adaptive behaviour of the Namaqua Sandgrouse .....	15
CANTRELL, M. Red-billed Firefinch and Waxbills of Windhoek ....	17
OSBORNE, T. O. A Zambian adventure .....	18
ERARD, J. Observation of two Openbilled Stork <i>Anastomus</i> <i>lamelligerus</i> along the Namibian coast .....	22

## Editorial

Tim Osborne

Here we are starting the New Year with the first issue of the bird club journal out early. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to make the *Lanioturdus* a success. I would like to specially thank Ellen Gudde for all the work she has done proofing the printer's drafts. Willie Peter and staff from Typoprint have been very understanding in trying to print the journal remotely from Outjo District.

There is a variety of articles in this issue, so there should be something for everyone. The editor would like to see a few more articles in German. None have appeared since Micki Ludwig published in Volume 35-1.

The country has finally had some rain over most parts so birding should be good for the remainder of the season. I have a nest of Carp's Black Tit in one of my nest boxes and the Chestnut Weavers are in breeding plumage. It looks as if the birds also like the rain.

It was difficult returning to city life, but a few days in Barberton with friends, a couple of weeks later, got the adrenaline rushing once again. Marjorie Nuns and I were quite amazed to see 5 Bald Ibises flying in to settle down to a cold and very windy night's sleep on the top branches of a dead tree in a local farmer's dam. John Bunning, Lorna and Frank Rautenbach from the Barberton Bird Club, were quick to arrive just before nightfall to witness this new sighting for Barberton.

I give the approximate distances for anyone else who would be interested in driving across Namibia so they see that it is not for the faint at heart.

**Approximate DISTANCES:**

Vioolsdrif	to	<b>Seeheim</b>	295km
<i>(border post)</i>			
<i>(via Fish River Canyon view point)</i>			
Seeheim	to	<b>Lüderitz</b>	300km
Lüderitz	to	<b>Sesriem (Sossusvlei)</b>	505km
<i>(via Helmeringhausen, camping at Saraus Farm, Duwisib Castle (good birding))</i>			
Sesriem	to	<b>Walvis Bay</b>	320km
Walvis Bay	to	<b>Omaruru</b>	285km
Omaruru	to	<b>Waterberg Plateau</b>	225km
<i>(via Otjiwarongo)</i>			
Waterberg Plateau	to	<b>Tandala Ridge</b>	280km
<i>(south of Okaukuejo)</i>			
Tandala Ridge	to	<b>Hobaterere Lodge</b>	180km
Hobaterere Lodge	to	<b>Ruacana (Kunene River)</b>	230km
Ruacana	to	<b>Namutoni (Etosha National Park)</b>	445km
Namutoni	to	<b>Roy's Camp</b>	290km
<i>(via Tsumeb) (north-east of Grootfontein)</i>			
Roy's Camp	to	<b>N'Kwazi Lodge (near Rundu)</b>	225km
<i>(on Kavango River)</i>			
N'Kwazi Lodge	to	<b>Mahangu Lodge (near Popa Falls)</b>	225km
<i>Via Divundu (Bagani)</i>			
Mahangu Lodge	to	<b>Kalizo Lodge</b>	370km
<i>(on Kavango River) via</i>			
Kalizo Lodge	to	<b>Ngoma Bridge (Botswana Border)</b>	110km
<i>(on Chobe River)</i>			
Ngoma Bridge	to	<b>Kubu Lodge (Kasane)</b>	65km
<i>(on Chobe River, Botswana))</i>			
		Total	4350km

## WATER, WETLANDS, WATTLED CRANES AND PEOPLE

### *The birth of a new Crane and Wetland Conservation Programme in Africa*

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In August 2003 an extraordinary group of people gathered in Maun in Botswana. They came from as far a field as Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and the USA. Their common interest and passion - the Wattled Crane - is a globally-endangered resident of Africa. Countries that support Wattled Crane populations are referred to as *range countries* and this group represented 8 of the 11 Wattled Crane range countries in Africa. They were gathered for the first meeting of the steering committee of the African Wattled Crane Programme (AWAC), an initiative that has been many years in the making.

Ten years ago, also in Maun, the USA based International Crane Foundation (ICF) hosted the African Crane and Wetland Training Workshop. Just over 100 people from 23 countries across Africa attended. It was at this gathering that the seeds for a number of crane conservation programmes in Africa were sown. As result, there are established crane projects across east Africa, ICF supports a remarkable Black Crowned Crane programme that incorporates 19 west and central African countries, and now the African Wattled Crane Programme or AWAC, a partnership between the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) in South Africa, the International Crane Foundation and the 11 Wattled Crane range countries, is the latest regional initiative.

A 13-member AWAC steering committee guides the programme, and includes one representative from ICF, one representative from EWT and a representative from each of the 11 range countries. Among these Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe already boast crane working

groups or established research and survey programmes and the remaining range countries are now being encouraged to link into this supportive network.

With regard to Namibia, large numbers of Wattled Cranes have been recorded on the ephemeral wetlands in the north of the country during the wet season. The current population of this species in Namibia is estimated at 250 birds. Of these, only a few birds are breeding residents but these may be important post-dispersal areas for breeding birds in Angola, Botswana and Zambia. Until recently the Namibian representative on the AWAC steering committee has been Rob Simmons of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Due to his relocation to South Africa, however, a new representative is being sought as well as ways of strengthening Namibia's involvement in the AWAC programme. With the proximity of Caprivi to a large proportion of the Wattled Crane range countries, Namibia could potentially play a leading role in the establishment of transfrontier conservation partnerships that focus on both cranes and people, and their wetland habitats.

AWAC hopes to evaluate how conservation efforts targeting the Wattled Crane as a flagship species can promote wetland conservation in southern Africa, especially for endangered but lesser-known species. We will approach this by identifying major threats to Wattled Cranes and their habitats through aerial surveys, field research, and interviews with local people and determining the links between management practices and wetland biodiversity. Based on the results of this research, we will be undertaking conservation planning for Wattled Cranes and wetlands, including strategic plans for each range country and a global action plan for the species.

We will facilitate support and training for key individuals who will become the future conservation leaders of Africa. Regular regional meetings and training forums will provide a platform, where participants from all 11 range countries can present the goals, strategies, and achievements for their projects and share their field work experiences with others.

The human component of this conservation programme is fundamental to its long-term success, as we recognise the intimate link between Wattled Cranes

and people through their dependence of the same wetland systems. By focusing attention on the conservation of the large wetlands of Africa, Wattled Cranes as well as communities relying on these systems for their livelihood will benefit in the long run.

This is an ambitious and exciting programme that will have to circumvent borders, political agendas, cultures and languages to ensure that a species and the precious wetlands it represents are secured for future generations.

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#### NOTE

Ways of strengthening Namibia's involvement in AWAC are currently being investigated, in co-operation with local role players. These include a mini-workshop during the first half of 2004 to review the current situation and do some forward planning for crane conservation in Namibia as well as looking at the feasibility of establishing a Namibian crane working group. If you would like to participate and/or be informed of further developments, please contact us.

## ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR OF THE NAMAQUA SANDGROUSE

J. Lensen

NamibRand Nature Reserve

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The most northern farm of the NamibRand Nature Reserve (25S, 16E,) is Vreemdelingspoort (12,700 ha) and it has no water in the western and central parts. Only one borehole supplies water in the northeastern corner of the farm and it cannot serve the rest of the farm. To promote a better distribution of wildlife on