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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.

'THE HAPPY WANDERER'

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I started my trip on 15 March 2002 and ended it 13,000 km later on 28 June 2002. I travelled from Johannesburg to SW Cape, West Coast, Northern Cape, and Namibia, south to north, through Botswana, back to South Africa. I started the trip with my life list at 688 and ended with it at 711.

I set out with a list of a possible 45 new birds to see and where they may be found, so was very pleased with a 50% return, considering that some were migrants. My first tick was the Cape Siskin at Grootvadersbosch and my 700th bird, a male Hartlaub's Francolin seen together with the Namibia Bird Club, on Tim and Laurel Osborne's veranda at their lodge some 40km south of Okaukuejo.

Most of my specials were found in a rather comfortable and leisurely fashion, either sitting in the car or standing nearby, ie. Rüppell's Korhaan, Barlow's Lark, Damara Tern, Gray's Lark, Knot, Yellow-billed Oxpecker and Bradfield's Hornbill. Cruising down the river brought Coppery-tailed Coucal and Long-toed Plover and relaxing outside my tent, with a cold G & T produced Brown Firefinch, Black-faced Babbler, Chestnut Weaver, Rüppell's Parrot, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Sharp-tailed Starling, White-browed Coucal, African Skimmer and Coppery Sunbird. Walking, but never too strenuously, turned up the Cape Siskin, Dune Lark and Eurasian Oystercatcher.

Perhaps, if a little more energy had been expended, I may have found the Cinderella Waxbill, Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush etc., but what the heck - the other 50% are waiting for my next visit!!

My friend, Virginia and I spent a wonderful few days with Richard and Vivienne Liversidge, who were at their holiday home in Nature's Valley, where occasionally the Knysna Woodpecker puts in an appearance, though sadly not while we were there. Richard took us on some magnificent nature trails - he can still 'walk the hind legs off a donkey!!' A male Narina Trogon spent time with us every day

while we prepared and ate lunch at our cabin in De Vasselot Rest Camp, while the Chorister Robin showed no table manners whatsoever!!

A great morning was spent with Ian Sinclair in Cape Town, who gave us good advice on where to look for some Namibian specials. Mark Boorman, from Swakopmund, took us out and entertained us with his antics on how to catch and ring Chestnutbanded Plover chicks, while seven very inquisitive Gray's Larks flew in to see what was causing all the commotion. To watch Tim Osborne manoeuvre Korhaans into a net, ring and extract blood, was an unforgettable experience, and sitting on an extremely comfortable outside flushing loo, watching Chestnut Weavers at Steve and Louise Braine's campsite at Hobatere, west of Etosha, was absolute bliss - this type of hide is highly recommended!!

Virginia returned home to Durban from Walvis Bay (she got scared of the vast emptiness of the southern desert), and I carried on solo further north. The highlights of my trip were watching Yellow-billed Oxpeckers feeding on cattle beside the Kunene River; Black-faced Babblers waking me every morning at Roy's Camp near Grootfontein; Grey-rumped Swallows diving and disappearing into rodent burrows in the ground and African Skimmers entertaining me at sunset over the Zambezi River at Kalizo Lodge near Katima Mulilo.

Of course, all these halcyon days were not entirely without mishap. I lost two new tyres in southern Namibia to the evil little sharp stones that prey on under-inflation, and got horribly stuck in deep sand near Walvis Bay due to over-inflation. My walking companion Diesel, a Staffordshire Terrier resident at N'Kwazi Lodge on the Kavango River, was bitten by an unknown snake, and although treated by a vet, died the following day.

Unleaded petrol was available everywhere and, in the bigger towns, fresh fruit and vegetables were nearly always on the shelves.

Camping in Namibia is reasonably priced averaging R35 per person per night. Many of the lodges, where excellent campsites are available, offer meals if required, and bar facilities - a great way to meet the locals and tourists alike. Etosha National Park, on the other hand was, I felt, overpriced, especially for one person camping. I paid, as a non-citizen; nearly R200 per day for a campsite (maximum 4 people) which included park usage and entrance fees. Botswana, if you are a South African, is the best place to put foot down and get out of as quickly as the speed limit allows!! A wonderful day spent in the Chobe National Park cost me nearly R300!! Camping would have been another R55.

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