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

Beiträge bitte an den Redakteur des LANIOTURDUS p.A. SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, Postfach 67, Windhoek, 9000 senden.

Mitgliedsbeiträge für die S.A.O.S. und die Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für 1986 sind wie folgt:

Mitgliedschaft SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft und
SWA/Namibia Vogelklub R 25-00 pro Jahr

Mitgliedschaft SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft und
der Southern African Ornithological Society R 26-00 pro Jahr

Als ein Ordentliches Mitglied von sowohl der S.A.O.S. als auch der SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft, erhalten Sie die populärwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift BOKMAKIERIE, das wissenschaftlich ausgerichtete Journal OSTRICH und ebenfalls die lokalen Mitteilungen LANIOTURDUS, weiteres Informationsmaterial und die allgemeinen Publikationen der SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft.

Als Ortsgruppen-Mitglied des SWA/Namibianischen Vogelklubs stehen Ihnen der LANIOTURDUS, sowie die Mitteilungen und zusätzliche Informationen der SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft zu.

Bemerkungen an Mitarbeiter:

Manuskripte sollten mit Schreibmaschine (oder in gut leserlicher Handschrift) geschrieben sein und zwar mit doppeltem Zeilenabstand auf A4 (30 x 21 cm) Format.

Skizzen, Karten und Tabellen sollten auf weissem Qualitätspapier mit schwarzer Tinte gezeichnet werden.

Klare Schwarz-weiss-Photographien (15 x 20 cm) können eingereicht werden, um die Arbeit zu illustrieren.

LANIOTURDUS

Newsletter of the SWA/Namibia Bird Club
Mitteilungen des SWA/Namibia Vogelklubs
Vol./Jg. 22, No. 2 1986

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INHALTSANGABE

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What was this bird doing on the island so far from its normal habitat? Broadbilled Rollers are intra-African migrants which arrive in southern Africa in late September or October, and move northwards again in March or April (Irwin 1981). Perhaps the Possession Island bird was a juvenile on its first migration and had become disorientated.

What this record brings home is that one should always be on the alert for possible vagrants. Even the most unlikely species can pitch up in your recording area.

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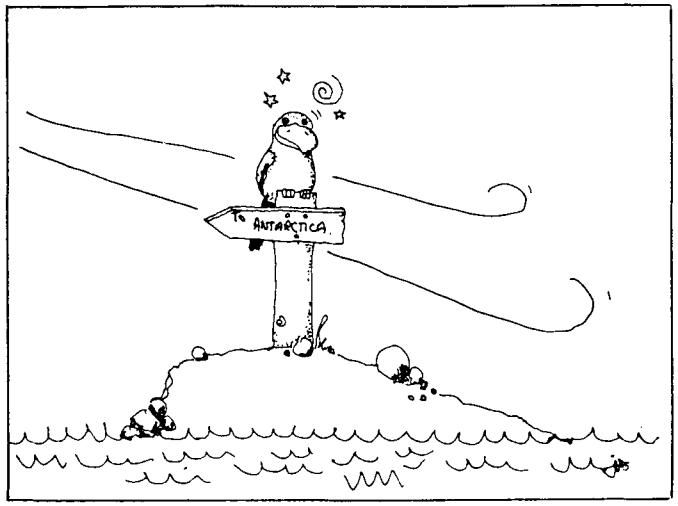

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The Bird Club is selling back-issues of LANIOTURDUS while supplies last. If you are interested, please contact Almuth at (061) 22 5372.

Der Deutschen Namen der Vögel im südlichen Afrika

Please note that the new, revised edition of this valuable publication is now available, and can be obtained from the Scientific Society. Contact Almuth Henrichsen at (061) 22 5372.

PARK Notes / Berichte

WATTLED STARLINGS BREEDING AT RIETFONTEIN, ETOSHA

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[Recieved August 1986]

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Eine Brutkolonie von Lappenstaren Creatophora cinerea wurde beim Rietfontein Wasserloch im Etoscha Nationalpark beobachtet. Einzelheiten über Brutplätze, Brutzeit, Grösse der Eier, Anzahl der Jungen, Fütterung und Gefahren durch Raubtiere in dieser Starkolonie werden hier aufgeführt.

Introduction

Wattled Starlings Creatophora cinerea are endemic to Africa where they occur throughout southern Africa and northwards to Eritrea, occupying the drier regions. Wattled Starlings are generally present in the Halali area (between Suaeda and Springbokfontein waterholes) of the Etosha Pan National Park, but only as scattered individuals which appear erratically in the company of Cape Glossy Starlings Lamprotornis nitens (personal observations during the last eight years, and D. & J. Bartlett pers. comm.).

In March 1986 there was a marked influx and massive local breeding attempt of Wattled Starlings close to the Rietfontein waterhole. This breeding coincided with the first large irruption of mopane worms (caterpillars of the Emperor moth Gonimbrasia belina) in the Halali area in eight or more years. This note details our observations on the breeding habitat, breeding season, egg measurements, clutch and brood size, food fed to the young and predation of Wattled Starlings at the colony.

Breeding habitat

The colony, which comprised about 700 nests, was built within 100 to 150 metres of the Rietfontein waterhole in an area of open "mopane woodland". Most of the nests were built in Acacia leuderitzii thorn trees, but about 100 nests were built in a single, large thornless Colophospermum mopane tree. Wattled Starlings generally prefer to build their nests in thorn trees (Liversidge 1961) but regularly use thornless gum trees (Eucalyptus sp.) in the western Cape Province of South Africa (Uys 1977).

The domed nests were made of interwoven thorn twigs and had a funnel-like entrance in which the thorns were directed outwards to make predator access difficult (and for a human, painful !). The nests were built between two and eight metres above the ground.

Breeding season

The colony was fully built and occupied when first discovered on 7 March. On 12 March most of the nests contained recently hatched chicks which were naked and blind.

Since the incubation period of Wattled Starlings is eleven days (Maclean 1985) this indicates that a synchronised mass-laying took place at the end of February and the beginning of March. The colony was occupied until late March.

Egg measurements

The mean size of 45 eggs, measured with vernier callipers, was 27,1 mm (range 25,4 to 31,6 mm) x 20,1 mm (range 19,1 to 22,4 mm). Although slightly smaller, these measurements are comparable with those of 48 eggs measured elsewhere in southern Africa (28,3 mm (range 26,4 to 31,9 mm) x 20,5 mm (range 18,3 to 21,9 mm) (Maclean 1985). The somewhat smaller size of eggs measured at Rietfontein may be the result of these eggs being addled, or among the last to hatch in each clutch.

Egg measurements sometimes varied markedly within a clutch. In one extreme case, two eggs (in a nest which also contained three chicks) measured 31,6 mm x 21,8 mm and 26,5 mm x 20,8 mm, respectively. This suggests that Wattled Starlings, like many other species of birds, may have different sizes of eggs within the clutch as a possible means of regulating brood survival in relation to changes in local food supply (O'Connor 1984, Williams et al. 1986).

Nest contents

The contents of 171 nests were ascertained on 12 March. In 14 nests (8 %) there were neither eggs nor chicks. Five nests (3 %) contained only one egg. In 30 nests (18 %) there were two "offspring" (either two eggs, or one egg and one chick, or two chicks). In 57 nests (33 %) there were three offspring, in 53 nests (31 %) there were four offspring and in ten nests (6 %) there were five offspring. One nest contained seven chicks and one egg. The clutch size of Wattled Starlings usually ranges between two and five eggs, with a mean clutch size of 3,6 eggs (Maclean 1985). It seems likely, therefore, that the eight "offspring" in this single nest resulted from two females laying in the same nest.

Food

Most of the prey brought to the nests during a period of observation of about ten hours comprised mopane worms. Individual starlings were seen carrying as many as five worms at a time! Other prey were locusts and a single praying mantis. Starlings which could be individually recognised by their plumage peculiarities were seen to bring food to their young at intervals of between ten and 15 minutes. Feeding appeared to reach a peak in the morning, between 08h00 and 10h30. Elsewhere in Africa locusts are the main prey of Wattled Starlings, but during massive breeding in the vicinity of Windhoek in 1983, "koringkriks" (armoured ground crickets of the genus Hetrodes) were the main prey (A.J. Williams pers. comm.).

Predation

Four species were observed to catch and consume young Wattled Starlings, mostly when feathered chicks clung to the outside of the nests in the two to three day period before they could fly. These predators were adult and subadult Secretary Birds Sagittarius serpentarius, a subadult Tawny Eagle Aquila rapax, subadult and adult Gabar Goshawks Micronisus gabar (which took some chicks from within the nest), and an adult Lanner Falcon Falco biarmicus. A pair of Gymnogenes Polyboroides typus resident at the waterhole were often seen close to the colony, and were believed to take young starlings, although they were not actually observed doing so. Surprisingly, no snakes were seen in the trees containing the colony.

Acknowledgements

We thank Des and Jen Bartlett for their comments on the long term status of Wattled Starlings in the Halali area, Mrs C. Paxton for typing the initial report and A.J. Williams for help in revising the original report.

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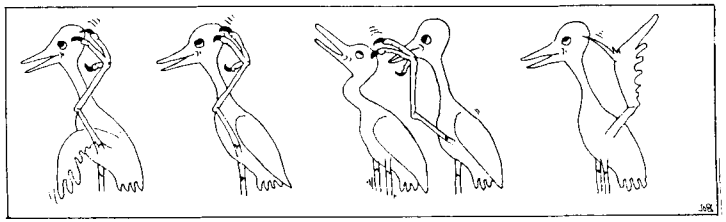
Headscratchers

Zum Kopfzerbrechen



Chestnut Weavers Ploceus rubiginosus (812)

In the last issue I queried the historical occurrence of Chestnut Weavers in Windhoek. Mrs A. Krieg, one of our older and still tremendously active members, has kindly offered her views (see below).

This issue's headscratcher is as follows :
Why is it that despite a very large readership and active birding group in SWA/Namibia, **NOBODY** had any challenging 'headscratchers' to offer for this issue ? [Ed.]

------ooOOoo------

Antwort von Frau A. Krieg, Windhoek, auf die Aufforderung der Rubrik "Zum Kopfzerbrechen", **LANIOTURDUS** 22 (1).

Der Rotbrauner Weber Ploceus rubiginosus (R812) richtet sich wie alle anderen Vogelarten nach dem Wetter, die Zugvögel mit ihren Reisedaten, die Einheimischen mit ihren Bruten.

Der Diderikkuckuck (R382) wird von den Webervögeln wie die Pest gehasst und als der Kälteeinbruch (3°C) vom 26. zum 27. März eintrat, ergriffen die Diderikkuckucks die Flucht in wärmere Zonen. Alle Weber sowie die anderen Vögel nutzten das darauffolgende schöne warme Wetter, um in Ruhe noch Bruten aufzuziehen. Der gute Regen und das üppig in Blüte stehende Gras boten die günstige Gelegenheit, für die vorangegangenen Jahre Erzatz zu schaffen. Daraus ist die derzeitige Invasion zu erklären.

Der Rotbrauner Weber ist in Windhoek sehr häufig anzutreffen. Er konnte im August 1982, März 1984, vom Juni 1985 jeden Monat bis August 1986 beobachtet werden.

Seit Wochen kommen abends grosse Schwärme Weber an meine Vogeltränke und der Rand der Tränke ist von einem Vogelkranz geschmückt. Die dünnen Aeste des Maulbeerbaumes biegen sich unter der Vogellast. Kaum ist der Schwarm satt und fortgeflogen, folgt schon der nächste; so geht es fort, bis die Sonne untergegangen ist. Meistens sind es die Rotbrauner Weber.

------ooOoo------

[If **anyone** has any queries, 'headscratchers', controversies, objections, criticisms or ideas, **this is the section for you!** Without **your support** this forum **cannot** be maintained. Ed.]

GABAR

A new journal covering African raptors

GABAR (Growth and Biology of African Raptors) is a new journal publishing material on African raptors, here defined as eagles, hawks, harriers, falcons and owls, i.e., excluding vultures, seabirds and other predatory birds already covered by specialist publications in the region. Contents will include:

short papers on completed studies, progress reports on ongoing research, short notes, unusual sightings, conservation problems and a Forum in which opinions, continuing controversies, constructive criticisms and new ideas are aired and challenged.

The first edition has been printed, and copies can be obtained free of charge from the address below. Subsequent editions will be distributed on receipt of a subscription fee.

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