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UNUSUAL EGG COLORATION IN THREE-BANDED PLOVER *CHARADRIUS TRICOLLARIS*

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Three-banded Plovers *Charadrius tricollaris* mostly nest near water and nest sites can be up to 500 m from the water. Nest sites are also known to be on the stony road verges of gravel roads (Tarboton 2001). Mostly 1–2 oval to sub-elliptical eggs are laid and these are pale greenish to khaki, overlaid with fairly evenly spread of brown blotches and scrawls (Turpie and Tree 2005). They are also known to cover their eggs with sand when temporally leaving the nest to camouflage the eggs. This note reports on an unusual pale coloration in the eggs observed in this species.

During a recent SABAP2 atlasing field trip to the Reddersburg – Dewetsdorp districts in the Free State from 22 – 24 November 2010, the following observations of a nest of Three-banded Plover were made. While atlasing in pentad 2950_2630 on 23 November 2010, I observed a plover flying near me at the farm Hammath (29 51 580 S; 26 32 17.3E) where the stream with water cross the road and also observed two nestlings of White-throated Swallows *Hirundo albigularis* sitting on the fence near the road culvert. Later during the afternoon (when backtracking my path to my overnight accommodation) I stopped again at the stream and again the plover was seen flying – this time from the gravel road. On inspection, I found a nest with two eggs on the road verge of the road (Figure 1).

Back at home I downloaded the pictures and I was intrigued to see how pale the eggs of this clutch actually were (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Nest site of the Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* nest on the road verge at Hammath near Reddersburg, Free State.

The eggs were very unusual for Three-banded Plover as the pale background which is normally greyish and also the two distinct rings of darker markings are missing. These eggs are more whitish with brown flecks and markings. In a certain way these eggs resembles Chestnut-banded Plovers *C. pallidus*, but this species only occur around salt pans and in the Soutpan area north of Bloemfontein, and not really in grassland areas. Similar pale eggs have also been found in a nest of Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus* which not blends with their surroundings (Warwick Tarboton, pers comm.). No reference is also made in both on pale coloured eggs in Three-banded Plovers by Tarboton (2001) and Turpie & Tree (2005).



Figure 2: Close-up view of the pale coloured Three-banded Plover Charadrius tricollaris eggs.

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