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## Editorial

Once again in this issue we are able to report on species new to Namibia. Er, well, perhaps one of them is not really new to Namibia, but none of the previous records was accepted.

The species concerned is the Black Skimmer, a species native to the Americas and for which, as far as I can determine, there were no confirmed records on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

A single bird suddenly appeared at Rietvlei near Cape Town in October 2012, stayed a few days and then disappeared. A couple of days later a single bird (believed to be the same individual) appeared in Walvis Bay, stayed for a short period and again disappeared.

There have been two previous unconfirmed records of this species in Namibia of which I am aware. The first is Joris Komen's record from the Rundu Sewage Works in the mid 1980's which was not accepted by the then rarities committee on the grounds that it was just too unlikely that this species had found its way there - I don't think that Joris has forgiven that committee to this day.

The second record is Tony Tree's sighting of a single bird at Walvis Bay in February 1998, which, as far as I am aware, was also shot down by the rarities committee.

For more on the Walvis Bay Black Skimmer see Otto Schmidt's article and John Paterson's stunning action picture in the "Rarities and Interesting Observations" section of this issue.



The next morning's walk started noisily with a woodpecker making quite a noise. It probably scared the wits out of a poor worm before it eventually got the better of it.

I moved to a quieter place and stood under a tree waiting for something to happen when I felt I was being watched.



I turned around and to my amazement I saw a Pearl-spotted Owlet watching me with a very stern expression.

Then the Grey Go-away-bird told me to "go away".



Well it was indeed time to go and I thought to myself that the workshop had turned out to be pretty good after all!!

## **A Zambian Birding Experience 2-6 July 2012 Trip (Part 1)**

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Open Africa is in the process of developing a birding route in south-western Zambia. This area is best known for the highly localised and endangered Black-cheeked Lovebird. Besides the lovebirds the area is well known for the Caprivi/Delta specials including Schalow's Turaco, Coppery-tailed, Senegal and White-browed Coucals, Chirping and Luapula Cisticolas, White-backed Night-Heron, Rufous-bellied Heron, African Pygmy-Goose, Slaty Egret, Lesser Jacana, Western Banded Snake-Eagle, Shelley's Sunbird, Three-banded Courser, Tropical and Swamp Boubous, Brown Firefinch, African Skimmer, Pel's Fishing-Owl and Long-toed Lapwing, to name a few.

As part of the development and promotion of the route and local guides, Open Africa had approached Caprivi Birding Safaris/Tutwa Tourism and Travel to help organise and lead the first organised trip. They were sponsoring and covering a lot of the expenses for this trip. Caprivi Birding Safaris/Tutwa Tourism and Travel referred this to the Namibia Bird Club to try to find birders who might be interested in going.

This seemed to be a difficult search. Only Jutta Surén from Windhoek and I had initially shown interest. I just could not let this opportunity go by however, and I managed to get Werner von Maltzahn from Otavi into the

mistnet, (although I'm no ringer, nor have I actually attempted to catch people in a net as yet). But it worked; I had reeled in a great companion for the trip. We would travel together by road from Grootfontein; Jutta would fly to Katima Mulilo from Windhoek. I had an offer from one member of the Bird Club to carry my bags during this trip, but I was so loaded, it would not have been nice to this person for me to have accepted this offer.

### **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012:**

On Sunday morning, 01 July 2012, Werner and I departed from Grootfontein. We would have done so in Werner's more comfortable Audi, but he had called me the day before to inform me that he had a steering problem on his car; did I have a vehicle available? So it was back to my trusty old Toyota Hi-Lux 4x4. With a full 140 l tank and extra 150 l of cheaper fuel from Grootfontein we departed. In Rundu we refuelled once more, had a look at the floodplains of the Okavango River and then carried on towards Shamvura Camp belonging to the Paxtons, just east of the confluence of the Cuito and Okavango Rivers. From there we carried on to Popa Falls, where I had booked a river cabin, for an overnight stop.

After unpacking, we strolled along the walking trails (did the hippos also use them?). Werner insisted on seeing the rapids. We followed the route towards a stream with the only possibility to cross, a line of rocks in rushing waters, most of them wet and slippery. Werner? – hop, hop, hop – crossed. Me? Shit! Do I have to? I have had my experiences before, like running into things unintentionally, taking a shortcut down a windmill (no shortcut possible – just straight down)... But I had not tried this before; so – what the heck – I'll do this, cautiously and slowly however. And so it came to pass as it had to: an accident on its way to a place to happen. I slipped on a rock and found myself in rushing water, close to hip-deep. But nothing serious came of this, binoculars still dry, and we carried on. Only I left the last rock outcrops to Werner. Not me again, thank you!

### **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012:**

Monday morning, after breakfast we left for Katima Mulilo. Just outside Divundu we stopped for a raptor in a tree. It flew off, no ID. Just back on the road we saw the first and only elephant on the route. At Kongola, on the Kwando River, we had a late breakfast break – Greater Striped Swallow and some waterbirds. We arrived at Katima around lunchtime where we were met by Katy Sharpe and Nick Buys. There was still enough time to transfer our stuff and fill up with drinks. Jutta was collected at the airport and we departed in two vehicles, loaded with everything imaginable.



Participants on the excursion - back: the author; from left: Nick Buys, Jutta Surén, Katy Sharpe, Werner von Maltzahn

Crossing the border was an experience in itself. The Namibian side was efficient, the only problems were the locals who have not yet learned that you should wait your turn to be dealt with, pushing into the line in "a straight bundle". The Zambian side was quite chaotic but we were through in a reasonable time.

We crossed the bridge over the Zambezi into Sesheke and proceeded on tarmac that was plastered with speed bumps that could damage your vehicle's shocks, or full of potholes which had to be negotiated carefully and with some heavy trucks coming from the direction of Livingstone. On Nick's suggestion we started recording every bird sighting. For this purpose I had brought along a notebook



which I started to use more or less successfully, depending on the quality of the road and Nick's driving. This recording later turned into a voluntarily obligation, as I was unanimously appointed by the party as record keeping officer.

At Shackleton's Lodge we were met by the personnel with a welcome drink and shown to our chalets. Wow! What luxury!

Each chalet had a splendid view over the Zambezi and surrounding floodplains. We settled in quickly, the boat was waiting.



Slowly we made our way downriver. Birds everywhere, calling, flying around ... Stop the boat! Back! Aah – beautiful! Time to get the camera into operation. Now, what now? Why would this thing not do what it's supposed to do? Just nothing. Is the card faulty? Jutta: "Try my card". But still nothing. Until I checked the display: "Bat" flashing. Oh yeah! Nice! Good! Just what I needed right then! It

had happened to me before with a vital bird. Why was the battery flat? I had charged it fully before I left home. Good then, thank you very much, no photos, serves you right if you leave the camera on. So Jutta's camera had to work double shift and I had only two things to concentrate on viz. observing and recording.

Purple, Squacco and Grey Heron; Black-collared Barbet; Malachite, Half-collared, Giant and Pied Kingfisher; Grey-headed Gull; Yellow-billed Stork flying; African Marsh-Harrier; African Skimmer on a sandbank and also skimming; African Sacred Ibis; African Spoonbill flying; White-crowned Lapwing; Black-winged Stilt and African Fish-Eagle were some of the birds we recorded. There were some lifers among them for us. But what were the two Greater Flamingos, flying amidst the flock of African Openbills, doing in this area?



The sun had set in the meantime and as it was getting quite cool, we made our way back. There was time for a decent hot shower. I plugged the camera battery onto the supply net to get it charged while the generator was running. In the bush camps over the following days we would not have such luxury. Around the campfire we had drinks and discussions. A delicious buffet dinner was served, after that it was off to get some rest and get the emotions experienced for this day under control. The jackpot for the evening: a hot water bottle in the bed! Those people really thought of every small detail. This did our freezing feet the world of good.

## Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012:

Tuesday morning saw me up before daybreak, sitting outside on the porch, listening to bird calls. I could hear Barn Owl, Southern White-faced Scops-Owl and a Bittern, amongst the others. It was cold, so the fire was a welcome retreat, as well as the coffee. Slowly everybody pitched up. But where was Werner? We had wanted to see what birds popped up around the lodge; was he still asleep? He eventually turned up, surprised that we were all ready. He had waited for his first morning coffee to be served in his chalet; the coffee we had tried in vain to coax out of the waiters the previous evening. Bad luck for him!

We searched the close surroundings of the lodge for birds. Golden Weaver; African Yellow White-eye; Meyer's Parrot. A Boubou was the subject of discussions. It was still close to the Zambezi. Was this then a Swamp or a Tropical? The Swamp is "restricted to well-vegetated waterways..." has ..."almost snow-white underparts...", whereas the Tropical Boubou has ..."creamy white to pinkish underparts..." (Roberts Bird Guide – 2007). We made our decision and carried on.

Boarding the vehicles again, we made our way out towards the "Simungoma Important Bird Area", stopping for bird parties along the way: Neddicky; Black-backed Puffback; Southern Black Tit; Red-headed Weaver; a Gabar Goshawk which was mobbed by a Pied Crow.

At the turnoff to "Simungoma IBA" we met our guide, Brian. He would guide us around and probably lead us to the "White-bellied Korhaan", which was supposed to occur in this area.



We concentrated mostly on the edges of the vast floodplains, keeping the open vegetation behind us. Katy and Jutta reported a Lizard Buzzard they had seen on their way, so it was a turnaround for us other three. The bird had not yet flown from its perch, giving us a chance to have a good look at it. Scanning the reedbeds we saw Lesser Swamp-Warbler; Common Moorhen; Tawny-flanked Prinia; Little Grebe; African Rail ...



We turned off the floodplains into the bush, consisting mainly of Silver Cluster Leaf (*Terminalia sericea*), *Acacia* species, there were Large Sourplum (*Ximenia caffra*) (STOP: I'm birding here, not tree atlasing!). There I was very lucky to flush a nightjar, no ID. Had anybody else passed there it would have sat tight, but from my size 13 boot there would have been no escape, so it had no choice but to make the sensible decision to search for another roost.

We discussed the presence of the White-bellied Korhaan with Brian. Although this area had been combed extensively earlier in search of this bird, nothing had been found. Brian informed us that the children of the nearby village had seen this bird earlier during the morning. At about 10h00, I heard a Red-crested Korhaan calling in the bushes, a distance away, from the direction that Brian had indicated the White-bellied Korhaan had been seen. Werner and Brian did a scan into the bushes with no result. Back at home I listened to the different calls of Red-crested and White-bellied Korhaan – it was definitely a Red-crested I had heard. My conclusion is that, until a positive sighting of White-bellied

Korhaan is made in this area, in my opinion its presence there remains doubtful.

Turning our attention back towards the floodplains we came upon a waterlily vlei. It was full of life: Lesser Moorhen; Little Bittern; some Pygmy Geese; White-backed Duck; Grey and Squacco Heron; Pied Kingfisher; Hottentot Teal, to name but a few. Vegetation on the vlei was quite dense so we had to scan intensively to find the concealed birds between the plants.



At about 12h45 we made our way back to Shackleton's Lodge. There we packed our gear, bade our farewell and gratitude to the staff and left for the "Muchile IBA", which was a few hours drive away, taking the track, Nick's driving (Katy had no choice but to follow) and ongoing birding into account.

#### List of birds recorded for Shackleton Lodge and Simungoma IBA area

Cardinal Woodpecker  
Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver  
Pied Crow  
Blue Waxbill  
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver  
Fork-tailed Drongo  
Blacksmith Lapwing  
Lilac-breasted Roller  
African Harrier-Hawk  
Red-billed Hornbill  
Crested Francolin  
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill  
Dark-capped Bulbul  
Purple Heron  
Swamp Boubou

Grey Go-away-bird  
African Jacana  
Grey Heron  
Reed Cormorant  
Cape Turtle-Dove  
Black-collared Barbet  
Burchell's Starling  
Pied Kingfisher  
Little Bee-eater  
Grey-headed Gull  
African Grey Hornbill  
Little Egret  
Malachite Kingfisher  
Giant Kingfisher  
Yellow-bellied Greenbul  
Grey-backed Camaroptera  
Half-collared Kingfisher  
Great Egret  
White-browed Robin-Chat  
Lesser Striped Swallow  
White-fronted Bee-eater  
Yellow-billed Stork  
Pied Wagtail  
Southern Masked-Weaver  
Hartlaub's Babbler  
Green-backed Heron  
Marico Sunbird  
African Marsh-Harrier  
African Skimmer  
Tawny-flanked Prinia  
African Sacred Ibis  
Greater Flamingo  
African Spoonbill  
Comb Duck  
White-crowned Lapwing  
Black-winged Stilt  
Little Bittern  
Common Greenshank  
Black-crowned Night-Heron  
Black Heron  
Coppery-tailed Coucal  
African Openbill  
African Fish-Eagle  
Squacco Heron  
Red-billed Spurfowl  
Spectacled Weaver  
White-breasted Cormorant  
Black Crake  
Barn Owl  
Southern White-faced Scops-Owl  
African Green-Pigeon  
Goliath Heron  
Golden Weaver  
African Yellow White-eye  
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow  
Meyer's Parrot  
White-bellied Sunbird



Red-eyed Dove  
 Red-faced Mousebird  
 African Mourning Dove  
 Tropical Boubou  
 Wire-tailed Swallow  
 Black-faced Waxbill  
 Magpie Shrike  
 Neddicky  
 Violet-eared Waxbill  
 Black-backed Puffback  
 Red-billed Firefinch  
 Green Wood-Hoopoe  
 Common Scimitarbill  
 Burnt-necked Eremomela  
 Bearded Scrub-Robin  
 Long-billed Crombec  
 Chinspot Batis  
 Southern Black Tit  
 Brubru  
 Brown-crowned Tchagra  
 Swallow-tailed Bee-eater  
 Red-headed Weaver  
 Arrow-marked Babbler  
 Purple Roller  
 Gabar Goshawk  
 Terrestrial Brownbul  
 Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove  
 Black-throated Canary  
 Grey-rumped Swallow  
 Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird  
 Hamerkop  
 Lizard Buzzard  
 Lesser Swamp-Warbler  
 Red-billed Teal  
 Red-billed Oxpecker  
 Little Grebe  
 African Rail  
 Red-crested Korhaan  
 Lesser Moorhen  
 African Stonechat  
 African Pipit  
 African Wattled Lapwing  
 Pygmy Goose  
 White-backed Duck  
 Hottentot Teal  
 Cattle Egret  
 Crowned Lapwing  
 Rattling Cisticola  
 Bateleur  
 Swainson's Spurfowl  
 Namaqua Dove

(123 species)

## **More Records for the Cape Eagle-Owl** ***Bubo capensis*** **in North-Western Namibia**

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Only five published substantiated records for the Cape Eagle-Owl in Namibia exist, four of which are substantiated by photographs and the fifth by a sound recording (Swanepoel 2003, 2005). Our knowledge regarding the distribution of this enigmatic owl species thus is mostly based on call records and a few sight records. These owls occur in remote areas and unless calling their presence is usually not detected.

Since the last published record of Cape Eagle-Owl in Namibia in 2005 (Swanepoel 2005), the author has found the species in a number of localities in north-western Namibia at which it was not recorded before:

- Baynes Mountains, Okavhare River, 8 km south of the Kunene River, 1712BB, July 2005. Two birds heard calling from cliffs above the river.
- Otjihipa Mountains, 4.5 km south of Onyesu and the Kunene River, 1712BA, April 2006. Two birds heard calling from cliffs in the mountain.
- Mikberg, 14 km south of De Riet and the Huab River, 2014CA, October 2006. One bird heard calling from the northern slopes of the mountain.
- Otjihipa Mountains, top of Van Zyl's Pass at view point, 1712DA, May 2007. One bird heard calling.
- Rocky outcrops, 19 km south of Leyland's Drift and the Hoarusib River, 1912DD, January 2012. One bird seen and photographed (Fig.1), roosting on ground amongst boulders in early morning sun.