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Editorial

A report was posted on SA Birdnet in July 2013 by a renowned birder claiming to have seen two species in north western Namibia new to Namibia (there was a hint of a third) and indeed new to the southern African subregion. This person also claimed to have visited the site where Angola Cave Chat is known to occur and to have made an overnight foray into Angola to see Swierstra's Spurfowl.

These last claims set alarm bells ringing as some who had seen the Angola Cave Chat were adamant that the vehicle purportedly used could not possibly have accessed the terrain and also that it is not possible to reach the area where Swierstra's Spurfowl occurs in Angola on a single overnight trip unless there is another population of these birds a lot further to the south. This makes the

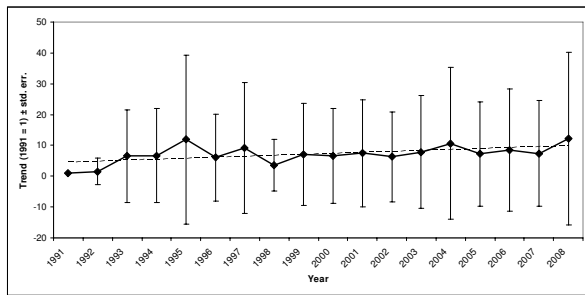


Figure 9: Trend of Swift Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.10 Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)



© Eckart Demasius

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern

Namibia RDB Status: ?

WI Trend: Stable

This migratory tern is common at the coast but not in the same numbers as the Common Tern.

No of times counted: 138

No of times past 1% population (=1700):
4

Maximum count: 5400 at Sandwich Harbour on 2 February 2005

Past 1% population at: Sandwich Harbour (3), Walvis Bay (1)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	6
Number of observed counts:	85
Number of missing counts:	23
Total number of counts:	108

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Sandwich Harbour	15973	59.4
Walvis Bay	6478	24.1

Overall slope: Uncertain

1.0825 ± 0.0840

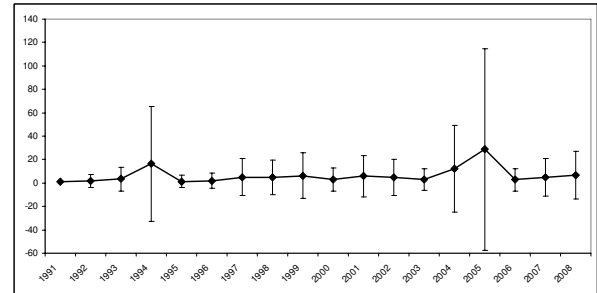


Figure 10: Trend of Sandwich Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

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African Harrier-Hawks in Windhoek

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In an article by Chris Brown entitled *African Harrier-Hawk hunting in Palm Tree in Windhoek* published in *Lanioturdus* 44(4), the author, after observing a sub-adult bird in Windhoek West on 31/03/2011, opened with the following statement:-



Windhoek West 31/03/2011 © Chris Brown

The African Harrier-Hawk or Gymnogene is a rare species in Namibia south of Etosha National Park. Over the past 28 years living in Windhoek I have had only three sightings in the Windhoek district.

Since that time (or slightly earlier) there has been a spate of reported sightings of this species within the greater Windhoek area. The first was of an immature bird seen at the Gammams Sewage Works on 13/02/2011 and until recently all sightings had been of single birds. After 31/03/2011 until 05/12/2012, (when a suspected juvenile bird was seen in Klein Windhoek), all sightings appeared to be of adult birds but the frequency of the sightings suggested to me that there might well be more than one bird present. If there was indeed more than one bird around what were the chances that there was a breeding pair in or around the city?

The first proof that the birds had bred was a photograph by Michael Houlden of a juvenile bird seen behind Hochland Park on 02/04/2013 and this was closely followed by a sighting of an adult accompanied by two juveniles in Suiderhof on 05/04/2013.

There can now be very little doubt that there is a breeding pair around Windhoek.

The following is a summary of the sightings of African Harrier-Hawks around Windhoek reported to

Lanioturdus since 13/02/2011 (all single birds unless otherwise indicated).

13/02/2011 Gammams Sewage Works

31/03/2011 Windhoek West

10/04/2011 Gammams Sewage Works

Late May 2011 Suiderhof

29/06/2011 City Centre

18/07/2011 Hochland Park

December 2011 Klein Windhoek

05/02/2012 Pioneer Park

15/02/2012 Pioneer Park

17/04/2012 City Centre

April 2012 Pioneer Park

14/04/2012 Botanical Gardens

22/04/2012 Klein Windhoek

10/05/2012 Eros

17/06/2012 Alte Feste

27/07/2012 Pioneer Park

05/12/2012 Klein Windhoek (suspected juvenile)

11/12/2012 Klein Windhoek (suspected juvenile)

15/02/2013 City Centre

07/03/2013 Eros

09/03/2013 Klein Windhoek

02/04/2013 Hochland Park (juvenile)

01/04/2013 Klein Windhoek

05/04/2013 Suiderhof (adult and two juveniles)

19/04/2013 Maerua Mall

24/04/2013 Suiderhof (two juveniles)

24/04/2013 Klein Windhoek (two adults)

07/05/2013 City Centre
 14/05/2013 Alte Feste
 14/05/2013 City Centre
 18/05/2013 Pioneer Park (one juvenile)
 Late May 2013 Eros
 02/06/2013 Klein Windhoek
 23/07/2013 Klein Windhoek (one juvenile)
 23/07/2013 City Centre (one juvenile)
 06/08/2013 Christus Kirche (one juvenile)

According to Roberts VII African Harrier-Hawks have been recorded in the suburbs of Port Elizabeth, East London and Stellenbosch in South Africa and I am fairly sure that I have read about them occurring in other built up areas in that country as well so it is not unusual to find them in an urban environment.

This species is known to be a “nest robber” preying partially on nestlings and eggs. Its small head and “double jointed” legs enable it to reach into nests and crevasses to grab prey. Not surprisingly several of the Windhoek sightings have been of birds hunting in palm trees where African Palm-Swifts, Bradfield’s Swifts, other species of birds and bats are known to roost and breed. Other sightings have been of African Harrier-Hawks robbing or investigating Speckled Pigeon and Rock Dove nests.

In the course of writing this article I noticed that, in spite of this host of sightings, this species had not been atlased in any of the four Windhoek pentads! I rectified this by sending in some of the above sightings as incidental observations. The African Harrier-Hawk is now recorded on all four Windhoek pentads so it is surely

only a matter of time before it appears there on some full protocol cards as well.



Pioneer Park 15/02/2012 © Anita Witt



Pioneer Park 27/07/2012 © Eddy Kadima



Suiderhof 30/11/2012 © Johan Fourie



Hochland Park 02/04/2013 © Michael Houlden



Suiderhof 05/04/2013 © Johan Fourie



Christus Kirche 06/08/2013 © Dawid van der Merwe

**Layard's Tit-Babbler *Parisoma layardi* : North-western Range
Extension in Namibia**

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Layard's Tit-Babbler is endemic to southern Africa and occurs in western Namibia from the Orange River northwards to the 20th degree of latitude in the Wêreldsend area, in quarter degree square 2013BB (Berruti 1997). Its habitat requirements are, *inter alia*, arid and semi-arid shrublands on rocky hillsides and outcrops (Dean 2005). It

also occurs in karroid vegetation away from mountains (Berruti 1997).

In April 2005 and again in October 2005, the author recorded Layard's Tit-Babbler in the Otjihipa Mountains in north-western Namibia. The Otjihipa Mountains are part of the Great Escarpment in the extreme north-western part of Namibia and form the eastern boundary of the Marienfluss Valley. The first sighting was from the bottom of a kloof just before it enters the Marienfluss, in quarter degree square 1712AD. The second was from the 1 836 m high peak, 4 km south of the Kunene River, in 1712BC. On both occasions only one bird was recorded.

The Otjihipa records are 360 km to the northwest of Wêreldsend and at the time were thought to represent an isolated population. However, in May 2012 the author recorded Layard's Tit-Babbler in another locality along the Great Escarpment to the northwest of Wêreldsend. This record was from scrub on the southern slopes of a freestanding mountain, 32 km to the northwest of Puros in 1812DB. The particular mountain is situated on the watershed between the Hoarusib and Khumib Rivers and is part of the Etendeka Mountains. This record is 220 km to the northwest of Wêreldsend, more than halfway between Wêreldsend and the Otjihipa Mountains.

These new records are all from mountainous terrain and represent a considerable range extension for Layard's Tit-Babbler, almost to the Angolan border. As the Serra Cafema Mountains are the continuation of the Otjihipa Mountains into Angola and boast similar vegetation, Layard's Tit-Babbler most probably also occurs there. Layard's Tit-Babbler was probably overlooked in the past between Wêreldsend and the Kunene River due to the remoteness of the area. Its habitat requirements of rocky slopes