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Editorial

In this issue I am delighted to be able to publish articles on two species new to Namibia, one of which is in fact new to the southern African sub-region and is believed to be resident in the far north west of Namibia.

In May 2012 Wessel Swanepoel discovered a population of Angola Cave Chats on the southern slopes of the Zebra Mountains west of Swartbooisdrif in the far northwest of Namibia. This species was thought to be an Angolan endemic but has now been found south of the border. Please take note of Wessel’s request that he be informed of any further sightings of this species in order to facilitate his research into this species in Namibia.

The second species new to Namibia which we feature in this issue is the Lesser Yellowlegs seen by Simon Woolley at the Rundu Sewage

Works in August 2011. This sighting constitutes another first for Namibia and is only the seventh record of this species in southern Africa.

I believe that there could well be a number of new species out there along our northern borders waiting to be discovered. There are a number of species such as Black Scimitarbill, Fülleborn's Longclaw, Sooty Chat etc. which occur in southern Angola but to date have not been recorded in Namibia. In August of this year there was a possible sighting of a "Sweet Waxbill" near Kunene River Lodge. The subspecies of the Yellow-bellied Waxbill (formerly East African Sweet), *Coccyzygia quarantina bocagei* occurs in Angola and there was one unconfirmed sighting of this species at Ehomba (about 17 km south of the Kunene River) in 2008. Given the isolated range of this subspecies it is possible that it will be deemed to be a full species sometime in the future.

Perhaps it is only a matter of time before someone finds some of these species in northern Namibia. Come on – make a name for yourself – find (and photograph) some of these birds in Namibia and add another species to our already impressive national list.

I would also like to appeal to readers to report sightings of three species in which I am particularly interested at the moment.

One is the African Harrier-Hawk (*Gymnogene*) which appears to have taken up residence in or near the city of Windhoek in recent months. This is a species which was virtually unknown around the capital until fairly recently. Juvenile and sub adult birds were seen some two years ago and there have been a number of sightings of adult birds more recently. To the best of my knowledge all sightings have been of single birds. I am interested to find out whether there is perhaps a breeding pair in or near the city.

The others in which I have a particular interest are the Red-billed Firefinch and its brood parasite the Village Indigobird. Red-billed Firefinches are well established in Windhoek but I am interested in sightings

outside of Windhoek. To date they have been sighted north of Windhoek at Monte Christo, Otjiseva, Otjihavera Portion No 3 (opposite the Namwater pump station) and in Okahandja. I am not aware of any sightings to the east, south or west of Windhoek. There was also a sighting just south of the Etosha National Park.

Village Indigobirds of the subspecies *Vidua chalybeate okavangoensis*, which very much resemble Dusky Indigobirds, having red bills and white legs, have been recorded in small numbers in Windhoek since the end of 2009. Recently there have been sightings of this species at Monte Christo and in Okahandja.

We do not know the origins of either of these species in central Namibia. It was initially thought that the firefinches originated from escaped or released cage birds. With this new pattern of sightings emerging it is starting to look as if both the firefinches and the indigobirds may have found their way to the capital naturally down a north/south corridor. Any information on sightings of these species in central Namibia outside of Windhoek might help to throw more light on their origins.

Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei* in the Kaokoveld of Namibia

Wessel Swanepoel
(wessel@kaokosafari.com)

(The photographs in this article are © Wessel Swanepoel).

Several species occurring in Angola just enter Namibia in the Kaokoveld of north western Namibia. These species are highly sought after by birdwatchers from abroad and locally, who visit the Kunene River Valley in the hope of ticking birds such as Grey Kestrel, Cinderella Waxbill, Rufous-tailed Palm-Thrush and Red-necked Spurfowl. Since May of this year the Angola Cave Chat can also be chased in Namibia. Until then the Angola Cave Chat was not known to occur in Namibia and was

considered to be an Angolan endemic. In Angola it is extremely localized in four isolated areas along the Great Escarpment in the west where it frequents rocky hills and gorges.

Towards the end of May of this year, while on an expedition to the Zebra Mountains in the Kaokoveld, I discovered a population of Angola Cave Chat. A strange bird call was heard and after a while the bird was clearly seen and immediately recognized as being an Angola Cave Chat - the first record for Namibia of this enigmatic species! It perched on a rock just long enough for a couple of photographs before it flew off to join another bird in the distance, presumably its mate. The habitat where these first two birds and subsequent pairs were recorded consists of mountain scree.



Angola Cave Chat perching on a scree slope in the Zebra Mountains

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) at Rundu Sewage Works – a New Species for Namibia

Simon Woolley
(skw@Wincoll.ac.uk)

(The photographs in this article are © Simon Woolley).

On the morning of August 21st 2011, I arrived at Rundu Sewage Works, Namibia (17°53'22"S, 19°48'2"E), along with my wife, Julia Casson, 14 teenage boys from Winchester College Natural History Society (UK), and Rainer Summers, our local leader from Rockjumper Birding Tours. After checking through the various commoner birds present, a calling wader attracted my attention, and I saw a medium-sized, grey *Tringa* with obviously yellow legs and a squared-off white rump fly past. Rainer's "what was that?!" was instantly met with a response of "Greater Yellowlegs!" from me, on account of the trisyllabic, very Greenshank-like call.

Calm analysis of the bird, feeding with a Wood Sandpiper, and SMS input from birding friends back in the UK, enabled us to rule out this even more outrageous identification, and the good photos obtained confirm that this was "just" an adult Lesser Yellowlegs, apparently the first for Namibia.



Habitat of Angola Cave Chat in the Zebra Mountains of north-western Namibia

The Angola Cave Chat is not to be confused with the Mountain Wheatear, which has similar black and white plumage colours. It also has remarkably similar plumage colouration to the local subspecies of Common Fiscal with the white eyebrow.

No doubt there will be many more sightings of Angola Cave Chat now that its existence in Namibia is known. Feedback on sightings of the Angola Cave Chat will be highly appreciated and will be useful for my future studies on this bird in Namibia.