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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.

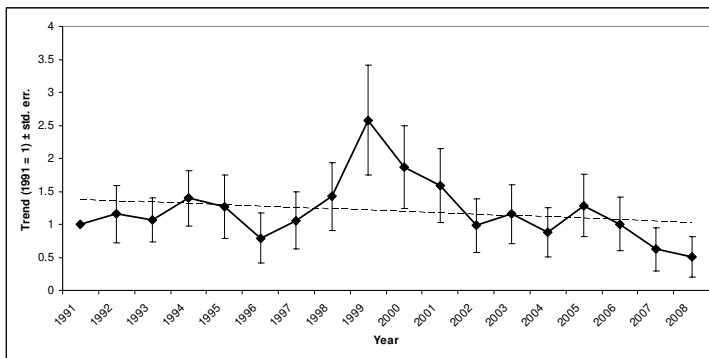


Figure 8 : Trend of Grey Plover population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

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Atlas Update

These are exciting times we are living in – bird distributions are changing and SABAP2 is an ideal opportunity to use and improve your birding skills and to help remap the distribution of our birds.

In response to Holger Kolberg's post on Facebook when Namibia went past 200 pentads atlased, Les Underhill posted the following :- "When the enormous amount of ad hoc data is added to the full protocol lists for Namibia progress is really good – while full protocol lists remain the first prize ad hoc lists are really valuable to provide basic data for all thinly covered areas such as Namibia, and in South Africa for much of the Northern Cape and other thinly covered areas."

There we have it again – if you are unable to spend the full two hours atlasing please submit your ad hoc list anyway – this data is also valuable.

Namibia comprises 10 584 pentads. This is more than double the number of pentads incorporated in the largest region in South Africa (Northern Cape 5 103 pentads). South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland have been atlasing for over five years now while the atlas has been going in Namibia for less than one year. I am pleased to be able to say that on 08/10/2012 the number of records (sightings) submitted by Namibian atlasers (11 039) overtook the number (11 036) submitted by atlasers for Lesotho although at that stage they had submitted more full protocol cards than we had. On 13/12/2012 we achieved 2% coverage – 212 pentads. This has taken a bit over six months – according to Les Underhill it took the Northern Cape, the largest of the South African provinces (which has less than half the number of pentads we have) a full year to achieve their 2% mark. At the same time we were only 4 cards behind Lesotho (394 vs 398). On 15/12/2012 we equaled the number of cards submitted for Lesotho (398).

On 14/01/2013 we passed 20 000 records on full protocol cards. By 04/02/2013 a total of 529 full protocol atlas cards for 278 pentads comprising 23 371 accepted records had been submitted. This constitutes some full protocol coverage for about 2.6% of the pentads in Namibia. I am also pleased to be able to say that quite a number of ad hoc lists and incidental sightings have been submitted. The maps of Namibia on the ADU website are starting to "gain a bit of colour".

The next target we should be looking at closing in on is Swaziland. The atlasers there have submitted 49 418 records on 740 full protocol cards so we have a fair way to go to overtake them. Let's make the most of the summer season and get as many of those migrants into our data base as possible before they depart again.

It is hoped that more atlas workshops will be presented in the near future and hopefully we will be able to get more of our members on board to participate in this worthwhile project. Believe me – "birding with a purpose" is fun.
 Neil Thomson