

BIRD OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES

Black heron sighting

On Sunday, 05 January 2008 Gudrun Middendorff and I saw two black herons at the Gammams Sewerage Works in Windhoek. Neither Roberts VII nor the Atlas of Southern African Birds reflects any records of this species in central Namibia. Further enquiries with Holger Kolberg revealed that the species has been recorded sporadically at Omatako Dam, Otjivera Dam, Swakoppoort, von Bach Dam, Monte Christo, Avis Dam, a small dam in Pioneers Park Extension and at Hardap Dam. However, this species is obviously not common in the area and our sighting may well be a first for the sewerage works.

Neil Thomson

Hadeda Ibis Sightings in and around Windhoek

In mid October 2008 we received reports from two Namibia Bird Club members of sightings of Hadeda Ibises in and around Windhoek. Jutta Suren reported one seen in her garden in Pioneers Park while Dieter Ludwig reported one from Monte Christo Guest Farm some 25 km to the north west of the city. Subsequent enquiries revealed that a Hadeda Ibis has also been seen at Brakwater over the past six months. Hadedas are known to occur in Namibia along the Orange River and in the eastern Kavango and Caprivi Regions.

Hadeda ibises have experience a dramatic range extension over the past 75 years with the species spreading rapidly into arid areas due to habitat modification increasing the food supply and to alien trees that provide nesting sites in formerly treeless areas.

One can only speculate about the origins of these birds seen around Windhoek but it seems plausible that they could be from the Orange River population and have moved up the Fish River valley following a good rainy season. The Lucerne farms at the Hardap scheme near Mariental would provide ideal habitat for this species and it may well be worthwhile to look for these birds in that area.

The Windhoek sightings represent a range extension of at least 650 km and it now remains to be seen whether the birds will be able to establish a viable population in the area.

Neil Thomson

Hadeda Ibis

Photo: Jutta Surén



Reference:

Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ

& Ryan PG. 2005. Roberts Birds of Southern Africa – Seventh Edition

Common Redshank sightings at Mile 4 Salt Works

In recent years there have been numerous reports of common redshank sightings at Mile 4 Salt Works just north of Swakopmund. Since August 2008 up to four birds have been reported from there. Roberts VII states under the heading Population & Demography - “Uncommon non breeding visitor. Probably overlooked but numbers visiting southern Africa unlikely to exceed 10 – 30 birds/year. At Walvis Bay and Swakopmund, Namibia 3 – 5 annually.” Most of the sightings have been at the northern edge of the salt works close to the Sea Bird Guano Company building or from the entrance channel between the pump station and the northern end of the salt works. It would appear that the Mile 4 Salt Works is probably the best place to find this rarity in southern Africa at present with some young birds seeming to overwinter there.

Neil Thomson



Common Redshank Photo: Neil Thomson

Rarity sightings

Two Caspian terns and a black heron were seen by Gudrun Middendorff and Neil Thomson at Hardap Dam on 25/05/2008. The Caspian terns were seen there again September 2008 by Mark Middendorff. Caspian terns are not unheard of on inland waters in Namibia but are by no means common.

Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities seen in Namibia since July 2008:-

- Palmnut Vulture seen 50 km south of the Kunene on 16/07/2008.
- Shelley's sunbird reported from Kalizo Lodge east of Katima Mulilo in September. These birds are resident in the gardens there and have been reported there for a few years now.
- Lesser crested tern reported from Mile 4 Salt Works Swakopmund in October 2008. One bird has been seen there at irregular intervals since it was first reported in July 2005.
- Two Souza's shrikes reported from the vicinity of the radio mast about 20 km south of Rundu at the end of October 2008. After the Shamvura area this location seems to be the most promising for locating this elusive species.
- Thirteen red-necked phalaropes were reported from Walvis Bay in late September with another report of fourteen of these birds coming from the same location in early November.
- A single common black-headed gull was seen at the Walvis Bay Lagoon on 06/11/2008.
- A really exciting record is the sighting of two sweet waxbills at Ehomba just south of the Kunene River. These birds are of the isolated Angolan race *bocagei* which is sometimes treated as a subspecies of sweet waxbill and sometimes as a subspecies of yellow-bellied waxbill. Many taxonomists feel that this race may constitute a separate species and if and when it is split it would be an addition to the Southern African subregion list.
- A solitary glossy ibis was reported from the Swakop River mouth circa 09/11/2008. This bird was apparently seen at Walvis Bay some days earlier.

Neil Thomson

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. We organize monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Sewerage Works and occasional weekend trips further afield.

Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we have lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive a programme of forthcoming events (the Bird Call Newsletter) and the Bird Club journal, Lanioturdus.

Membership Fees 2009

Members can receive a discounted subscription to the *Africa Birds and Birding* magazine. The fees below are with and without this subscription.

Category	Without	With
Single member	N\$ 120	N\$ 300
Family membership (Husband, wife, children)	N\$ 140	N\$ 320
Junior member (All scholars and students)	N\$ 80	N\$ 260
Pensioner	N\$ 80	N\$ 260
Foreign member (Not resident in Namibia)	N\$ 165	N/A
Corporate membership		N\$ 400

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