

BIRDS OF THE BRANDBERG AND SPITZKOPPE

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INTRODUCTION

The Brandberg and Spitzkoppe are two well-known mountains on the Namibian landscape. They are popular destinations for Namibians as well as visitors to this country. In particular, they are known as good localities to see some of Namibia's endemic birds. As such, these two localities are on the list of most bird-watcher's places to visit.

There is no checklist available of the birds that have been recorded at these two mountain outcrops. I now present such a checklist, so that visitors to the area may obtain more enjoyment from their visit, as well as record any additional species not included on this list.

STUDY AREAS AND METHODS

The Brandberg and Spitzkoppe are both large granite inselbergs, about 90 km apart, that rise out of the Namib coastal plain in Damaraland. The Brandberg, which is about 70 km inland from the Atlantic Ocean, is the highest mountain in Namibia (2573 m above sea level) and rises 2000 m above the surrounding plains. It receives about 100 mm of rain per year as well as occasional coastal fog. The Spitzkoppe is about 100 km inland and lies on the 150 mm rainfall isohyet. Both mountains fall on the western edge of the pro-Namib, the transition zone between the Namib and the arid savannas.

The surrounding regions are sparsely vegetated, flat to rolling gravel and rocky plains, intersected by drainage lines supporting *Acacia* species. Characteristic vegetation includes *Welwitschia*, *Euphorbia*, *Cyphostemma*, *Moringa* and *Commiphora* species. Because of the run-off from the mountains after rainfall, these areas are better watered than the surrounding plains. More than twice as many bird species are recorded from the Brandberg and Spitzkoppe than from the pro-Namib in general.

In addition to sightings recorded during my own visits to these localities, I have included the information contained within the

Namibian Bird Atlas Project. To date 38 field cards have been completed for the Brandberg area and 88 for the Spitzkoppe.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 151 bird species have been recorded to date for the Spitzkoppe and 120 for the Brandberg (Table 1). The Spitzkoppe received slightly more rainfall than does the Brandberg, which probably accounts for the greater diversity of birds recorded at the former. Arid regions are characterised not only by low rainfall, but also by highly variable rainfall. For example, a rainfall station on the edge of the Namib with an annual mean of 86 mm experienced an annual range of 9-374 mm. During dry periods, Namib birds such as Gray's Lark extend their range eastward, while in wet periods, savanna species such as Carp's Tit spread westwards.

Many species typical of, and endemic to, the escarpment transition zone can be seen on the lower slopes of the Brandberg and Spitzkoppe and in the adjacent wooded drainage courses. These include Hartlaub's Francolin, Ruppell's Parrot, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Monteiro's Hornbill, Herero Chat, Rockrunner and Whitetailed Shrike. Barecheeked Babblers occur on the lower slopes of the Brandberg, but do not extend as far south as the Spitzkoppe. The gravel and rocky plains surrounding the two inselbergs support typical Namib birds such as Ludwig's Bustard, Ruppell's Korhaan, Stark's and Gray's Larks. Augur Buzzards, Black Eagles, Lanner Falcons, Rock Kestrels and owls nest and roost on ledges on the granite cliffs, while Bradfield's Swifts breed in the crevices and fissures in the rocks.

Finally, in years of above-average rainfall, a number of unexpected birds enter the desert. These include Hamerkop, Lesser Honeyguide, Greater Striped Swallow, European Golden Oriole and Cape White-eye, and flamingoes and pelicans have both been recorded flying overhead to inland wetlands.

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TABLE 1:

Bird species recorded at the Brandberg and Spitzkoppe with an indication of status. A = abundant (recorded on >50% of field cards), C = common (21-50% of cards), U = uncommon (5-20% of cards) and R = rare (<5% of cards).

Species	Brandberg	Spitzkoppe
Ostrich	U	U
Hammerkop		R
Abdim's Stork	R	R
Greater Flamingo		R
Egyptian Goose	R	R
Whitebacked Vulture		R
Lappetfaced Vulture	U	U
Yellowbilled Kite	R	U
Black Kite		R
Blackshouldered Kite		R
Black Eagle	U	C
Tawny Eagle	R	
Booted Eagle	R	U
African Hawk Eagle	U	U
Martial Eagle	R	R
Blackbreasted Snake Eagle	R	U
Steppe Buzzard		R
Augur Buzzard	U	C
Gabar Goshawk	R	U
Pale Chanting Goshawk	U	C
Lanner Falcon	R	C
Rock Kestrel	C	A
Greater Kestrel	R	U
Redbilled Francolin	U	C
Hartlaub's Francolin	U	
Common Quail		R
Helmeted Guineafowl	R	C
Kurrichane Buttonquail		R
Kori Bustard	R	U
Ludwig's Bustard	U	U
Ruppell's Korhaan	C	A
Redcrested Korhaan		U
Black Korhaan	U	C
Threebanded Plover	U	R
Crowned Plover	R	C
Blacksmith Plover	R	R
Spotted Dikkop	R	U
Burchell's Courser	R	R
Doublebanded Courser	R	U
Namaqua Sandgrouse	U	C
Doublebanded Sandgrouse	U	U
Rock Pigeon	C	A
Cape Turtle Dove	U	C
Laughing Dove	A	A
Namaqua Dove	C	C
Ruppell's Parrot	U	
Rosyfacd Lovebird	A	A
Grey Lourie	U	A

Species	Brandberg	Spitzkoppe
Klaas' Cuckoo	R	U
Diederik Cuckoo	R	U
Barn Owl	U	C
Scops Owl	R	R
Whitefaced Owl	R	R
Pearlspotted Owl	C	U
Spotted Eagle Owl	U	C
Rufouscheeked Nightjar	R	U
European Swift	R	R
Black Swift		R
Bradfield's Swift	U	C
Whiterumped Swift	R	R
Little Swift	R	R
Alpine Swift	R	C
Whitebacked Mousebird	U	A
Redfaced Mousebird	U	C
Swallowtailed Bee-eater	R	C
Purple Roller		R
Hoopoe	R	U
Scimitar-billed Woodhoopoe	U	C
Grey Hornbill	U	
Redbilled Hornbill	R	
Yellowbilled Hornbill	C	U
Monteiro's Hornbill	U	C
Pied Barbet	C	A
Lesser Honeyguide		R
Goldentailed Woodpecker		U
Cardinal Woodpecker	U	U
Bearded Woodpecker	R	
Rufousnaped Lark	R	
Sabota Lark	U	A
Longbilled Lark	U	C
Spikeheeled Lark	R	C
Redcapped Lark		R
Stark's Lark	R	C
Gray's Lark	U	R
Greybacked Finchlark	U	C
European Swallow	R	R
Greater Striped Swallow		R
Rock Martin	C	A
Forktailed Drongo	U	U
European Golden Oriole		R
Black Crow	U	R
Pied Crow	R	U
Ashy Tit		C
Carp's Black Tit		R
Cape Penduline Tit	R	U
Pied Babbler		R
Barecheeked Babbler	U	
Redeyed Bulbul	A	A
Shorttoed Rock Thrush	U	U
Mountain Chat	A	A
Capped Wheatear		U
Familiar Chat	C	C
Tractrac Chat	U	U
Karoo Chat		C

Species	Brandberg	Spitzkoppe
Anteater Chat		C
Kalahari Robin	R	U
Herero Chat	U	A
Titbabbler	U	A
Layard's Titbabbler	U	C
Willow Warbler		R
Longbilled Crombec	U	C
Yellowbellied Eremomela	U	C
Bleating Warbler	R	R
Barred Warbler		R
Rockrunner	U	U
Greybacked Cisticola	U	U
Blackchested Prinia	C	A
Rufouseared Warbler		R
Spotted Flycatcher		U
Marico Flycatcher	R	C
Chat Flycatcher	U	C
Pirit Batis	C	A
Cape Wagtail	U	R
Longbilled Pipit		R
Lesser Grey Shrike		U
Fiscal Shrike	C	A
Redbacked Shrike		R
Crimsonbreasted Shrike	U	U
Brubru	U	U
Threestreaked Tchagra		U
Bokmakierie	C	A
Whitetailed Shrike	U	A
Whitecrowned Shrike	R	
Plumcoloured Starling	R	U
Glossy Starling	U	C
Palewinged Starling	A	A
Marico Sunbird		R
Dusky Sunbird	A	A
Scarletchested Sunbird	R	R
Cape White-eye		R
Whitebrowed Sparrowweaver	U	A
Great Sparrow	R	C
Cape Sparrow	U	U
Scalyfeathered Finch	U	C
Chestnut Weaver		U
Masked Weaver		U
Redbilled Quelea		R
Melba Finch		U
Violeteared Waxbill		C
Common Waxbill	U	R
Blackcheeked Waxbill	R	C
Redheaded Finch	R	U
Shafttailed Whydah		U
Blackthroated Canary	U	C
Yellow Canary		R
Whitethroated Canary	C	A
Goldenbreasted Bunting		R
Cape Bunting	C	C
Rock Bunting	U	R
Larklike Bunting	C	C