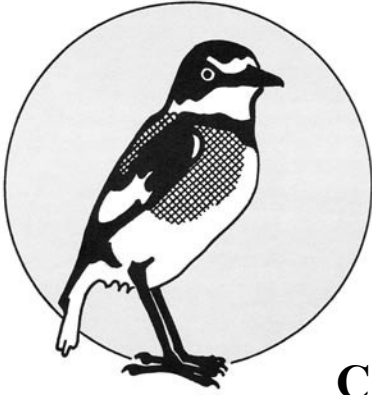


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Blackcap, *Sylvia atricapilla*, a New Record for Namibia

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The Blackcap, *Sylvia atricapilla*, is a rare vagrant to Southern Africa with one record from Mellville Koppies, Johannesburg, South Africa (Sinclair 1987). Blackcaps are generally palearctic migrants through East Africa to Malawi and the Eastern Highlands in Zimbabwe. The preferred habitat in this southern limit of their migratory range seems to be the fringes of Afromontane forest above 1500 m. In Europe it prefers mature forest with tall shrubby undergrowth (Cramp 1992). In Europe it favours deciduous forest and mixed woodland (Svensson et al. 1999).

Möwe Bay is situated on the hyper arid Atlantic coast at -19.372° S 12.709° E in the Skeleton Coast Park. Open gravel plains with small coppice dunes dominate the coastal plain that is separated from inland by an extensive dune field. This is a harsh landscape unsuited to supporting a bird favouring more vegetated and wooded habitat.

On 05 December 2003 a small warbler was seen flying around a scrawny Tamarisk tree, *Tamarix usneoides*, at Möwe Bay. The bird was a nondescript brownish olive colour with a conspicuous rich chestnut cap. The bird then disappeared into a small Dollar bush, *Zygophyllum stapfi*. During attempts to get a better look at the bird it broke cover and flew straight into a window stunning itself. The bird was collected but died soon after.

The warbler was identified as a ♀ Blackcap, *Sylvia atricapilla*. The characteristic chestnut crown and forehead distinguishes the ♀ from the black crowned ♂ (Cramp 1992 and Hockey et al. 2005). The majority of previous records of this species in Southern Africa have been of ♂ birds (Cohen 1997). Measurements are presented in Table 1.

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Cramp, S. 1992 Handbook of the birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. 6. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

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Sinclair, J. C. 1987. SAOS Rarities Committee Annual Report 1987. *Bokmakierie* 39: 12-14.

Svensson, L., Grant, P. J., Mullarney, K. & Zetterstrom, D. 1999. Bird guide: the most complete field guide to the birds of Britain and Europe. Harper Collins, London. p. 176.

Table 1:

Measurements of the Möwe Bay specimen.

	Möwe Bay ♀
Culmen	11.0
Total Head Length	32.8
Tarsus	19.8
Wing	76
Tail	60