

SHORT NOTE

Additions to the bird checklist of Etosha National Park

by

C. F. Clinning

and

R. A. C. Jensen*

Nature Conservation and Tourism
Division, S.W.A. Administration.

The most recent checklist dealing with the birds of Etosha National Park is that of Winterbottom (1964), although van der Westhuizen (1967) and Dixon (1970) published a few additional records from the Park. In compiling a popular guide to the birds of the Park (Jensen and Clinning 1976) we have attempted to update the checklist of birds recorded there. This paper annotates all hitherto unpublished records, both our own and those of others, which have accumulated on the files of the Nature Conservation and Tourism Division since the publication of Winterbottom's original list (*op. cit.*). A few important amendments to status, distribution and breeding data are also included in a separate section, for species previously recorded from the Park. In all cases FC refers to the Field Card Files of the Nature Conservation and Tourism Division, NRC to Nest Record Cards filed in duplicate both at the Division's Ornithology Laboratory in Walvis Bay and the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology in Cape Town.

In a number of instances we have rejected what we regard as doubtful occurrence records, pending suitable confirmation. These are listed at the end of the paper.

Scientific names follow Winterbottom (1971) except where noted, and common names mostly follow McLachlan and Liversidge (1970). "Winterbottom" without date should be taken to refer to Winterbottom's 1964 checklist of the birds of Etosha National Park (then Game Reserve No. 2.)

ADDITIONAL SPECIES

Phalacrocorax carbo — White-breasted Cormorant

Phalacrocorax africanus — Reed Cormorant

Anhinga rufa — Darter

These three species occur irregularly on large bodies of water during periods of good rainfall (Winterbottom (1971) uses the name *lucidus* for *P. carbo*).

Egretta intermedia — Yellow-billed Egret

Recorded only from Owambo by Winterbottom, but recent records show that this species occurs seasonally throughout Etosha in suitable flooded areas.

Egretta garzetta — Little Egret

A common species at waterholes throughout Etosha, also on flooded pans. Has nested on Bird Island off Okerfontein in company with Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*, ibises, spoonbills and gulls.

Egretta ardesiaca — Black Heron

A single bird recorded near Halali in February, 1977 by J. E. W. Dixon.

Ardeola ralloides — Squacco Heron

Recorded from several localities throughout the Park during the abnormally wet 1975/76 season.

Anastomus lamelligerus — Openbill

While Winterbottom recorded this species as common in Owambo he did not find it in Etosha. It has since been recorded from several areas of the Park during summer and autumn.

Ciconia nigra — Black Stork

Winterbottom (1971) records this species from scattered localities in South West Africa, but not from Etosha. Birds have recently been seen in the Park by Dr J. M. Hofmeyr at Agab on 11.12.75 and by A. Lowry at Aroe.

Ciconia ciconia — White Stork

There are several recent records of single birds and groups from a number of localities within the Park.

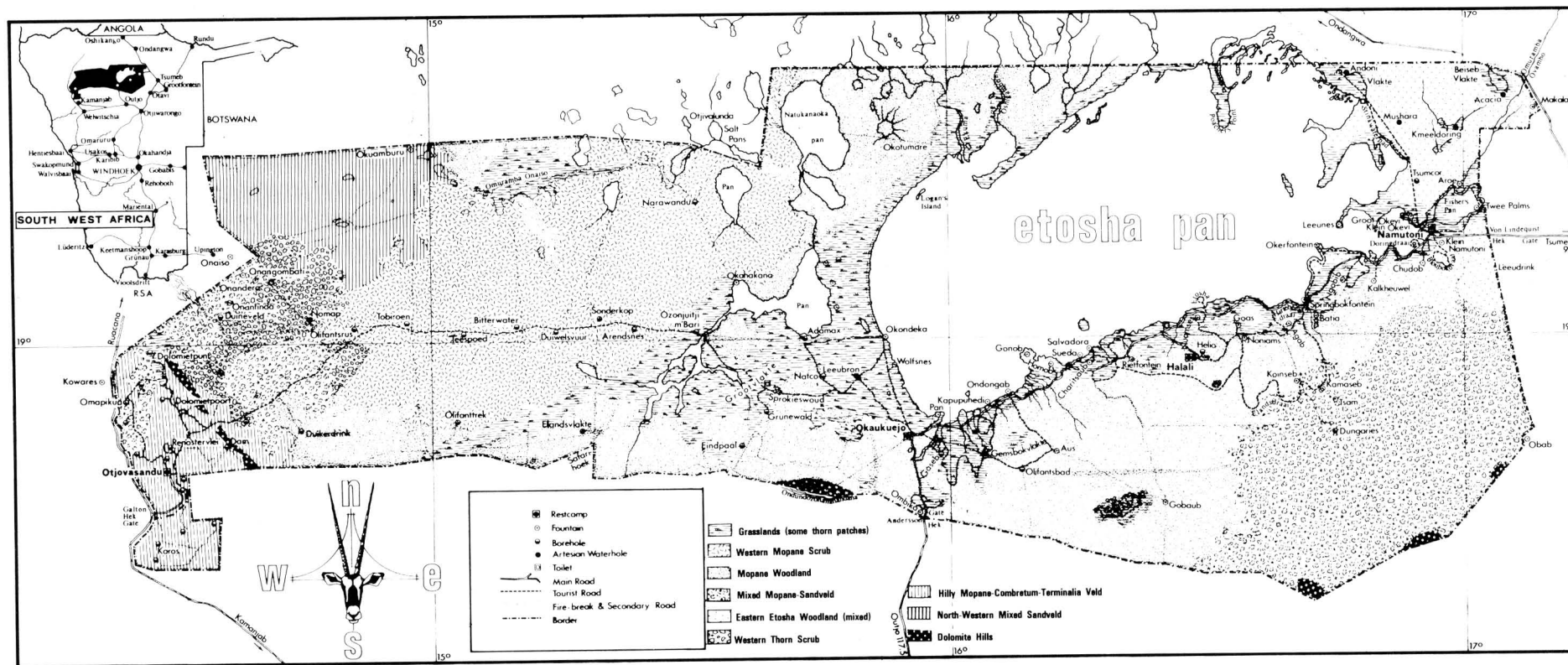


Fig. 1: Map of the Etosha National Park showing broad avifaunal habitat divisions (modified from C. J. G. le Roux, Nature Conservation Research Reports S.W.A.A.).

Tadorna cana — African Shelduck

Our only record from the Park is a single bird seen at Fischer's Pan by R. Jensen in December, 1973.

Dendrocygna viduata — White-faced Duck

Several recent records confirm the occurrence of this species in the Park.

Plectropterus gambensis — Spurwing Goose

One bird was seen at a temporary pan near Leeubron by R. Jensen on 5.2.76

Oxyura punctata — Maccoa Duck

We have several records of this species from various localities in the Park.

Gyps coprotheres — Cape Vulture

Winterbottom tentatively identified this species. It has since been seen on a number of occasions in Etosha but not reliably recorded since 1971. In view of its catastrophic decline in the Waterberg breeding colonies since 1969 (Mitteilungen Ornithologische Arbeitsgruppe, S.W.A. Wissensch. Gesellschaft, 10 (7): 1 (1974)), it seems likely to disappear altogether from northern S.W.A.

Necrosyrtes monachus — Hooded Vulture

Recorded (with photograph) by Dr H. Ebedes in April, 1969, by P. Becker in August, 1972 and by A. Lowry in July, 1975 in the eastern half of the Park; westernmost sighting at Gobaub. Winterbottom (1971) uses the genus *Neophron*.

Falco peregrinus — Peregrine

An immature female near Okondeka, December, 1974 (R. Jensen) was a huge bird, one of the Palaearctic races. Other summer sightings have been reported to us.

Aquila verreauxii — Black Eagle

Restricted to hilly country in the south and west. Breeds in the Otjovasandu area, two tree-nests known.

Aquila nipalensis — Steppe Eagle

A photograph, taken by Mr. C. Vaucher in December, 1974 constituted the first definite record, but other probable as well as definite records now indicate the regular occurrence on passage of this species in summer.

Circaetus pectoralis — Black-breasted Snake Eagle

Numerous records show that this species is widely distributed in Etosha, and much commoner than the Brown Snake Eagle *C. cinereus*.

Haliaeetus vocifer — Fish Eagle

Occurs sporadically on feeder rivers and at pans and waterholes throughout Etosha.

Circus macrourus — Pallid Harrier*Circus pygargus* — Montagu's Harrier

Winterbottom recorded an unidentified harrier and mentioned *C. pygargus* seen by others of his party. Both *C. macrourus* and *C. pygargus* occur as uncommon summer migrants from the Palaearctic (more records from the latter, based on males).

Polyboroides typus — Gymnogone

Recorded from various areas in the Park, apparently resident although rare.

Francolinus levaillantoides — Orange River Francolin

During February 1976 this species was encountered in the hills at Otjovasandu.

Francolinus hartlaubi — Hartlaub's Francolin

Recorded from Dolomietpunt, Otjovasandu area by H. H. Berry and J. E. W. Dixon in February 1976, and by R. Jensen at the same place the following month. Dixon reported young chicks in July 1976 at Kaross.

Crex egregia — African Crake

A single bird seen at Rietfontein in December 1972 constitutes our only record of this species from the Park (Winterbottom, 1971, uses the genus *Mustelirallus*).

Porzana porzana — Spotted Crake

In February 1976 we saw a single bird on a temporary pool at Ombika.

Porzana pusilla — Baillon's Crake

A pair of these crakes was recorded in flooded grassland beside a small pool on Andoni flats in February 1976.

Gallinula angulata — Lesser Moorhen

During the heavy rains in February 1976 this species was recorded in considerable numbers at Fischer's Pan and at the same pool near Ombika as *Porzana porzana*.

Charadrius hiaticula — Ringed Plover

Winterbottom (1971) gives several inland records for this species but not from Etosha. We recorded it at Andoni on 8.4.75.

Charadrius mongolus — Mongolian Plover

Winterbottom (1971) cites a record from Andoni. This species was recorded by R. Jensen and H. Heinzel at Klein Namutoni in November 1972 and subsequently at the same place (the same bird?) in December by C. Clinning. In December 1974 R. Jensen recorded a further example on the Ekuma River.

Charadrius marginatus — White-fronted Plover

Winterbottom (1971) records the nominate *C. m. marginatus* from coastal S.W.A. and *C. m. tenellus* (= *mechowi*?) from the Zambesi in the Eastern Caprivi. On 8.4.75 a specimen of the White-fronted Plover was collected at Andoni. It was one of a group of about ten birds present there at the time and at least two others were present at Fischer's Pan. P. A. Clancey (*in litt.* and 1975) considered it to represent the West African *C. m. mechowi* but the characters involved are not entirely satisfactory and it is possible that the specimen represents another race, an opinion also expressed by Dr. D. W. Snow of the British Museum (Natural History), who felt that the available material was inadequate to resolve the problem.

Squatarola squatarola — Grey Plover

A vagrant, our only record is of a single bird at Andoni in October, 1975.

Rhinoptilus chalcopterus — Bronze-wing Courser

A species of uncertain status for which we have a number of records from Etosha, particularly in years of good rainfall.

Glareola pratincola — Red-winged Pratincole

Small flocks of this species were recorded in the Namutoni area by us in April 1975 and October 1975, and independently by A. Lowry during the exceptional rains early in 1976. Perhaps commoner than Black-winged Pratincole *G. nordmanni* of which we have only odd scattered observations of one to three birds together.

Chlidonias leucopterus — White-winged Black Tern

Several records, from Fischer's Pan, Okaukuejo and the Ekuma River mouth, show that this species is a regular summer visitor to Etosha. (*Contra* Winterbottom, 1971, the genus is nowadays considered masculine).

Streptopelia semitorquata — Red-eyed Turtle Dove

Winterbottom (1971) says of this species " . . . Only along the big rivers of the north". R. Jensen recorded many dozens drinking at Fischer's Pan in December 1973, (but not subsequently), and one at Sprokieswoud in February 1976. It is probably subject to periodic irruptions related to food and water conditions.

Cuculus gularis – African Cuckoo

A regular summer visitor to Etosha, frequent in well developed mopane at Halali, and less often in other localities. (Winterbottom (1971) regards it as a subspecies of *C. canorus*).

Cuculus clamosus – Black Cuckoo

An uncommon summer visitor, possibly only on passage, in the eastern sector.

Chrysococcyx klaas – Klaas's Cuckoo

An uncommon migrant; we have summer records from Von Lindequist Gate, Halali, Ombika and Otjovasandu. Appears to be associated with the hill areas in the Park.

Chrysococcyx caprius – Didric Cuckoo

We have very few records, all of which are from west of Halali.

Asio capensis – Marsh Owl

Recorded by R. Jensen from grassy flats in the Okaukuejo area in December 1974 and again in March 1976. Also recorded at Okaukuejo waterhole in summer 1976–7.

Otus scops – Scops Owllet

We have several records from a number of localities in the Park.

Apus caffer – White-rumped Swift

Occurs regularly throughout, both alone and in mixed flocks with other swifts.

Halcyon leucocephala Grey-hooded Kingfisher

Recorded uncommonly in summer in areas of the Park from Okaukuejo eastwards.

Merops superciliosus – Blue-cheeked Bee-eater

W. T. Ferguson recorded a flock at Otjovasandu in January 1972.

Calandrella conirostris – Pink-billed Lark

Winterbottom only found it in Owambo, but it appears to move into Etosha in substantial numbers in summer, at least in years of high rainfall. Found in short grass mostly; no breeding records but we have encountered singing birds.

Delichon urbica – House Martin

Our only record of this species from the Park is a specimen found by J. E. W. Dixon on 22.1.76 at Okaukuejo. It is probably more common than this suggests, possibly only on passage.

Hirundo semirufa – Red-breasted Swallow

A pair was seen by R. Jensen near Namutoni on 7 October 1976, the only record for Etosha.

Oriolus oriolus – European Golden Oriole

Oriolus auratus – African Golden Oriole

Winterbottom gives sightings of unidentified orioles at Namutoni and Okaukuejo and mentions that Finch-Davies recorded *O. auratus* from Etosha in 1918. Winterbottom (1971) regards *auratus* as being "much rarer" than *O. oriolus* in S.W.A. generally. Our own records from Etosha show that the two species occur side by side in mopane and mixed woodland to the east of Okaukuejo, and that *O. auratus* is the commoner of the two.

Sylvia borin – Garden Warbler

The only Etosha record is of a dead specimen picked up by J. E. W. Dixon at Okaukuejo on 19.10.75

Acrocephalus arundinaceus – Great Reed Warbler

We have recorded this species at Rietfontein, where a number were present in December 1972, obviously on passage.



Plate 1: Hartlaub's Francolin *Francolinus harlaubi crypticus* ♀ at Dolomietpunt, March 1976.



Plate 2: Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* ♂.



Plate 3: Rufous-eared Prinia *Malcorus pectoralis etoshae* at nest near Okondeka, February 1976.

(Photos by R. A. C. Jensen)

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus – European Sedge Warbler

Also recorded on passage at Rietfontein in December 1972, when it was more numerous than *A. arundinaceus*.

Cisticola juncidis – Fantail Cisticola

Found in perennial grassland at Andoni and Okondeka.

Cisticola rufilata – Tinkling Cisticola

Occurs in sandveld scrub mopane to the west of Etosha Pan, but is not common.

Anthus similis — Long-billed Pipit

W. T. Ferguson recorded the species from near Okaukuejo, but this was rejected as a probable misidentification at the time. However, a single bird was subsequently seen by R. Jensen in Okaukuejo camp on 22.12.76; it seems likely to be found in the hilly country around Otjovasandu.

Lamprotornis chalybaeus — Blue-eared Glossy Starling

Winterbottom (1971) records this species only from the Caprivi Strip. R. Jensen heard and saw a party of 15 to 20 of these starlings, including diagnostic juveniles, in woodland between Namutoni and Andoni on 11.2.76. Dr. H. Ebedes (*in litt.*) has subsequently informed us that he saw this species in the same area some years previously.

Nectarinia talatala — White-bellied Sunbird

Winterbottom only recorded this species from Owambo. We have several records from the Namutoni area, and one from Okaukuejo, but it is uncommon in Etosha National Park.

Nectarinia senegalensis — Scarlet-chested Sunbird

Winterbottom's only record was outside the Park. It occurs throughout in small numbers except in pure mopane.

Passer domesticus — House Sparrow

A recent arrival in the Park, where it has established itself around the rest camp at Namutoni.

Ploceus intermedius — Lesser Masked Weaver

Recorded from Namutoni and Otjovasandu, where it breeds. Status uncertain, but occurs irregularly in other localities.

Euplectes orix — Red Bishop

Not actually recorded from the Park by Winterbottom. We have records from Namutoni.

Serinus albogularis — White-throated Seedeater*Emberiza capensis* — Cape Bunting

Neither of these two species was recorded by Winterbottom; both are fairly common in the west of the Park and the bunting also on hills in the south and east.

Amendments to status,
distribution and
breeding data

Pelecanus onocrotalus — White Pelican

Occurs and breeds in numbers on the Etosha Pan, although the latter may be a recent development (see Berry *et al.* 1973).

Ciconia episcopus — Woolly-necked Stork

First noted by van der Westhuizen (1967), it is known to occur as a regular wet-season visitor in small numbers.

Ibis ibis — Wood Ibis*Threskiornis aethiopicus* — Sacred Ibis*Plegadis falcinellus* — Glossy Ibis*Platalea alba* — African Spoonbill

Occur in varying numbers during the flood season, the Wood Ibis being least common. The other three species have all been found breeding at Bird Island, off Okerfontein, along with herons and gulls, e.g. April 1971.

Falco naumanni — Lesser Kestrel

Not recorded since Winterbottom's sightings.

Aquila wahlbergi — Wahlberg's Eagle

Found throughout, but uncommon. The unusual dark-headed pale phase (see Kemp and Mendelsohn, 1975) has been seen at Ombika.

Melierax metabates — Dark Chanting Goshawk

There are no records since Winterbottom's specimen.

Vanellus senegalensis — Wattled Plover

A rare visitor in the flood season, only one record since Winterbottom's.

Columba guinea — Rock Pigeon

Not uncommon from Okaukuejo westwards.

Streptopelia decipiens — Angola Mourning Dove

No records since Winterbottom's sightings.

Clamator glandarius — Great Spotted Cuckoo

Dixon (1970) recorded a single bird at Okaukuejo. It is a fairly common summer migrant which we have found parasitizing Burchell's Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis australis* (NRC's 16.3.76).

Otus leucotis — White-faced Owl

Generally but sparsely distributed throughout the Park.

Apus bradfieldi — Bradfield's Swift

May occur anywhere, especially outside the late summer breeding season, frequently in mixed flocks with other species.

Winterbottom, who regards it as a subspecies of *A. barbatus*, recorded it only at Otjovasandu.

Tockus monteiri — Monteiro's Hornbill

Occurs at least as far east as Ombika along the dolomite hill ranges. Winterbottom recorded it only from Otjovasandu.

Mirafra passerina — Monotonous Lark

Winterbottom, who regards it as a race of *M. javanica*, recorded it only at Otjovasandu. It is, in fact common but patchily distributed in various types of open scrub woodland, east to Halali or beyond. Numbers fluctuate and large movements if not actual migration must occur.

Aethocichla gymnogenys — Bare-cheeked Babbler

Apparently the first recorded nest of this species was one found by R. Jensen with two eggs, near Kalkheuwel on 27.12.75 (NRC's). Several birds were in attendance. (Winterbottom, 1971, places the species in *Turdoides*).

Eremomela usticollis — Brown-throated Eremomela

Occurs throughout in acacia veld with taller trees (4 m or more).

Cameroptera fasciolata — Barred Warbler

Recorded from Okaukuejo eastwards, but common only in the Namutoni area.

Cisticola chiniana — Rattling Cisticola

Common to abundant in most bushveld and scrub with thorns.

Malcorus pectoralis — Rufous-eared Prinia

Winterbottom, who placed it in the genus *Prinia*, described the localized subspecies *etoshae* from near Leeubron and mentioned its biotope — small shrubs (*Leucosphaera*, *Suaeda* and *Salsola*) in open grassland. This habitat occurs mostly around the south-western edge of the Etosha Pan. We found two nests with eggs on 6 and 7.2.76 (NRC's).

Prinia subflava — Tawny-flanked Prinia

There are no records since Winterbottom's observation.

Terpsiphone viridis — Paradise Flycatcher

One or two birds regularly recorded in summer at Okaukuejo, but no other observations.

Motacilla capensis — Cape Wagtail

Around water in all sectors, but not common.

Corvinella melanoleuca — Long-tailed Shrike

No records since Winterbottom's specimen from Namutoni.

Dryoscopus eubla — Puff-back Shrike

Extends west at least to Halali, probably mostly along dolomite hills in the south of the Park.

Tchagra senegala — Black-headed Tchagra

Not uncommon in the sandveld scrub west of Ozonjuitji m' Bari.

Cinnyricinclus leucogaster — Plum-coloured Starling

Found throughout but much commoner in the extreme east and west of the Park.

Lamprotornis mevesii — Long-tailed Starling

No records since Winterbottom's specimen from a waterhole which now falls just outside the Park boundary in the west.

Doubtful species
requiring confirmation

*Neophron percnopterus**Gypohierax angolensis**Kaupifalco monogrammicus**Pandion haliaetus**Otis denhami**Eupodotis melanogaster**Charadrius dubius**Larus fuscus**Clamator levaillantii**Tyto capensis**Caprimulgus pectoralis**Pogoniulus chrysoconus**Campethera bennetti**Mirafra rufocinnamomea**Hirundo abyssinica**Acrocephalus palustris**Anthus vaalensis**Lagonosticta senegala**Malimbus rubriceps*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks are due to Messrs. J. Dixon, H. Berry, A. Lowry, H. Germishuys, P. Becker, W. Ferguson, Dr. H. Ebedes and Dr. J. M. Hofmeyr, all of whom have contributed their Etosha records to the field card files of the Nature Conservation and Tourism Division.

REFERENCES

- BERRY, H. H., STARK, H. P. & VAN VUUREN, A. S.
1973 White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* breeding on the Etosha Pan, South West Africa during 1971. *Madoqua* Ser I No. 7: 17-31.
- DIXON, J. E. W.
1970 Miscellaneous notes on South West African birds. *Madoqua* No. 2: 45-47.
- CLANCEY, P. A.
1975 Miscellaneous taxonomic notes on African birds 43: On the relationships of *Charadrius marginatus* Vieillot of Ethiopian Africa to *Charadrius alexandrinus* Linnaeus. *Durban Mus. Novit.* 11: 1-9.
- JENSEN, R. A. C. & CLINNING, C. F.
1976 *Birds of the Etosha National Park*. Div. of Nature Conservation and Tourism, S.W.A.A., Windhoek.
- KEMP, A. & MENDELSON, J.
1975 What colour is Wahlberg's Eagle? *Bokmakierie* 27 (4): 72-74.
- MCLACHLAN, G. R. & LIVERSIDGE, R.
1970 *Roberts Birds of South Africa*. Central News Agency, Johannesburg.
- VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, P. M.
1967 Black Kites and Woolly-necked Storks in South West Africa. *Ostrich* 38 (3): 203.
- WINTERBOTTOM, J. M.
1964 Results of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute/Windhoek State Museum joint ornithological expeditions: Report on the birds of Game Reserve No. 2. *Cimbebasia* No. 9: 1-75.
- 1971 *A preliminary checklist of the birds of South West Africa*. S.W.A. Scientific Society, Windhoek.