

SHORT NOTE

The occurrence of the
Cape eagle owl
in South West Africa

by

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The Cape eagle owl *Bubo capensis* is restricted in its distribution to montane areas in eastern and southern Africa (Benson and Irwin, 1967; Steyn and Tredgold, 1977; McLachlan and Liversidge, 1978). There are no published records of the species from South West Africa (above references and Winterbottom, 1971).

Plate 1 illustrates an adult Cape eagle owl photographed near Lorelei in the lower Orange River valley (28°S 17°E) by Mr H. Walter in October 1956. Mr Walter had until recently been unaware of the identity of the bird. The nearest localities to Lorelei from which *Bubo capensis* has been previously recorded are the Clanwilliam district 32°10'S, 18°52'E (R. Jensen pers. comm.) and Kimberley 28°45'S, 24°46'E (Benson and Irwin, 1967).

The bird recorded from Lorelei may have been a vagrant, a possibility supported by the lack of any more recent records. There are unsubstantiated records of Cape eagle owl from the Fish River Canyon.

Benson and Irwin (1967) point out that the species would probably have been more widespread in the last wet phase of the pleistocene and that its present distribution comprises a series of relict isolates. Possibly a relict population exists in the less arid areas of southern South West Africa. For example the lower Orange and Fish River drainage systems and the Naukluft mountains. Geological evidence indicates however, that even during the wettest periods of the pleistocene South West Africa remained arid (Verdcourt, 1969).

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PLATE 1: An adult Cape eagle owl photographed near Lorelei in the lower Orange River valley. (Photograph: H. Walter).