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Editorial

The attendance at our morning walks and outings has been disappointing of late and is a cause for concern. The committee goes to great lengths to organize outings to places where we are likely to see interesting birds.

The morning walk at the Gammams Sewage Works on 09/10/2011 is a case in point. There were only seven participants and four of those were committee members. Yes – I know that South Africa was playing Australia in the Rugby World Cup that morning – I decided to give the rugby a miss and go on the bird club outing instead and I think that was a good choice given the result of the rugby and the good birds found at the sewage works. In about three hours we found sixty eight species with a number of specials amongst them. A Pink-backed Pelican was seen – this is the second sighting of which I am aware at the sewage works – two birds were seen on 12/06/2011 and it constitutes only the fourth recent sighting of which I am aware in central Namibia; the others being a single bird at Avis Dam on 17/04/2010 and two birds seen at Otjivero Dam on 30/01/2011.

**A Different Kind of Birding
Part IV:**

**Birds on the Stamps of
Namibia (2) (2004-2011)**

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2004 was a very quiet year for birds on stamps. The centenary of the war of anti-colonial resistance in Namibia was commemorated on 23 September with a peace dove stamp. A very difficult topic but well mastered in the execution.



Being a member of SAPOA, on 4 October 2004 the First SAPOA Joint Issue stamp was also released in Namibia. This is exactly the same stamp set discussed under the South African stamps.



4 April 2005 let the “Sunbirds of Namibia” see the light for the first time. In golden rays of light an Amethyst Sunbird is brilliantly displayed on a mini sheet.

Four more sunbird stamps were issued on the same date and rather unusually, all together on the same First Day Cover.





In 2006 the focus on birds moved to the coast when on 28 February “Seagulls of Namibia” were released in Walvis Bay. Grey-headed, Kelp, Hartlaub’s and Sabine’s Gulls were depicted.



We had had the wetlands, ephemeral rivers and now we also had the “Perennial Rivers of Namibia”, i.e. three of the seven bordering on Namibia. These fine stamps were issued on 24 July 2006.

The Kunene River was shown at what looks like the Hartmann Valley with the Sierra Cafema in the background. A Verreauxs’ Eagle soars in the sky above.

The mighty Zambezi River stamp features an action-packed scene with an Osprey catching a tiger fish while a Goliath Heron waits in anticipation on the bank opposite.



The third stamp shows the Orange River along the southern border with South Africa with five Great White Pelicans flying in formation along the river course.



15 February 2007 Namibia’s third definitive series was launched under the topic “Biodiversity of Namibia”. The series consists of twelve stamps and at a quick glance only two birds are recognizable on the stamps – disappointing! That is before the magnifying glass is put to the test!!

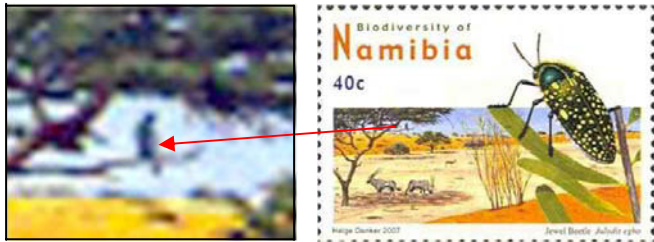


The 5c Bullfrog stamp has Okavango River-like scenery in the background with a large bird circling in the skies above. This could be an African Fish-Eagle.

The 30c stamp depicts a coastal scene and on the tidal flats a White-fronted Plover is seen searching for edible items.



The Kalahari stamp is devoted to the jewel beetle, but in the background river scene in the tree where the oryx find some shade a raptor is also hiding from the heat.

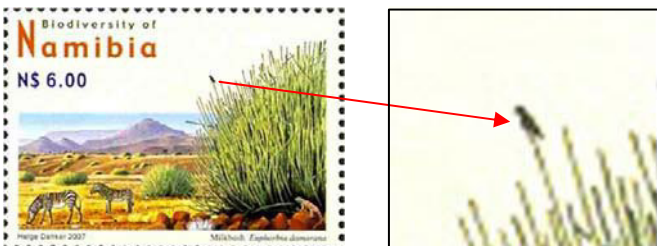


The marine stamp features a compass jellyfish and also shows a leather-back turtle with some albatross-like birds in the sky.



The second bird stamp in this series depicts an African Hawk-Eagle with its prey, a Hartlaub's Spurfowl in its talons, after a successful hunt.

The stamp depicting the Bergsig area in Damaraland shows the beautiful flat-topped mountains with mountain zebra happily grazing. On the typical milkbush, *Euphorbia damarana*, an unidentifiable bird is perched. Note the rock agama in the bottom right corner, nice detail!



Finally, on the highest value stamp of N\$ 50-00 another raptor-like bird has its resting place. At this size it remains unidentifiable.



www.bird-stamps.org has identified these birds, but I have my strong reservations about this. On the Bullfrog stamp it is an African Fish-Eagle, on the Kalahari stamp a Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk, on the Marine stamp Black-browed Albatross, on the Damaraland stamp a Mountain Wheatear and on the Baobab stamp a Long-crested Eagle.

For me, it is not so much about identifying the bird in a non-bird stamp : rather the fascination for me is that the artist found his painting complete only by adding a bird to it!

On 22 March 2007 the Centenary of the Etosha National Park was celebrated in style, and on such an important occasion the philatelic services did not disappoint either. A First Day Cover with three stamps and a sheetlet were issued on the occasion and Helge Denker performed accordingly. The FDC's stamps indicate the work done in the park : research, conservation and tourism.



On two of these stamps I recognize birds: on the Otjivasando stamp a Bateleur graces the skies, whilst on the Okaukuejo stamp two small grey birds appear at the waterhole as well.

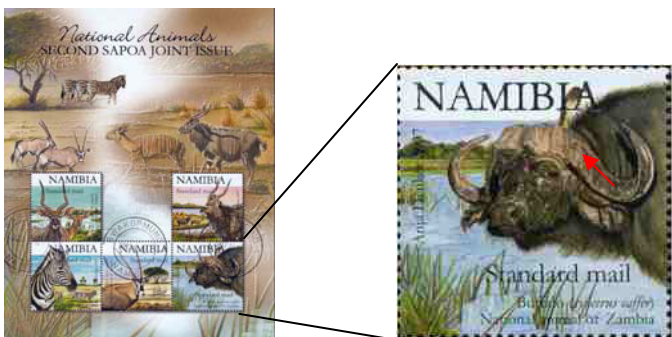


For the sheetlet the *Salvadora* waterhole was chosen ; for me there could not have been a better choice. If I look at the sheetlet I get so immersed – it feels as if I could be there.



Blue Cranes fly eastwards, sadly they do not form part of a stamp, while Red-billed Queleas flee to the west with a Gabar Goshawk following them in hot pursuit.

The second SAPOA JOINT ISSUE sheetlet was issued on 12 October 2007. For me it is interesting to note that on the first joint issue, eight countries were represented, while this time only five made it. This set of stamps also does not feature in my South African collection and the reason simply being that they do not form part of this joint issue. The reason for this remains unknown to me; surely a country like South Africa would have a national animal.



The Buffalo, Zambia's national animal does the trick for us as it is the only stamp with a bird on it. Unfortunately it is partly covered by the lettering and I do not think I could identify it as a Yellow-billed Oxpecker, although bird-stamps.org does.

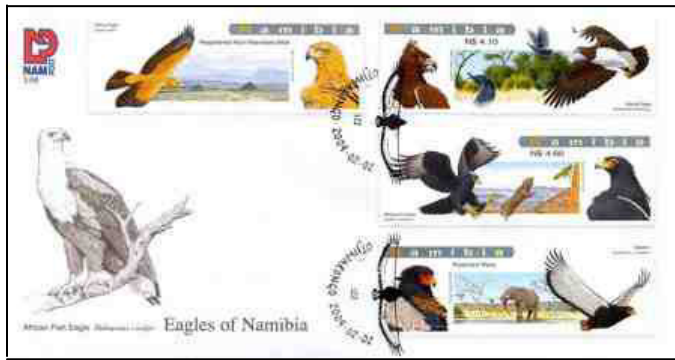
As was the case in recent years in South Africa, Namibia now also had its annual bird stamps issued. On 28 February 2008 "Weaver Birds of Namibia" appeared. A very fine set of stamps indeed.



Thick-billed Weaver, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Red-headed Weaver, Sociable Weaver and Southern Masked-Weaver are beautifully portrayed together with their nests.

The topic for the 2009 bird stamps was "Eagles of Namibia". Our National Bird only made it onto the First Day Cover, so some

other eagles had the privilege of being licked at the back before being sent off!



The Tawny Eagle has this stamp for itself.....



... and the Martial Eagle has to show where it got its name from...



... while Verreaux's Eagle will simply not miss a chance to fill the larder...



... and the Bateleur reminds us that not only elephants need a drink.

There appears to be a greyish heron-like bird at the waterhole with the elephant. I will not attempt to identify this one either!

Whilst the "Eagles of Namibia" made their appearance on 2 February another stunner was issued on 10 April 2009, "The Brandberg" depicting its fauna and flora in one sheetlet.



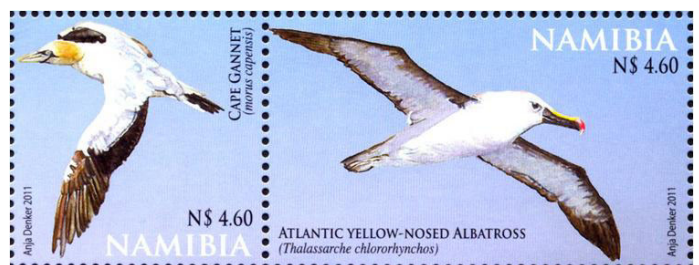
These sheetlets do have a three-dimensional feel around them and the Bokmakierie in the foreground seems touchable, not to forget the cuddly rabbit. The Augur Buzzard enjoys the thermals as the temperatures rise and Verreaux's Eagle is already circling Konigstein with its height at 2579 metres above sea level.

The Endangered species of Namibia sheetlet was issued on 8 February 2010 to raise awareness of at least the fifteen species represented on the sheetlet. Although five birds appear on the sheetlet only two, the Wattled Crane and the Cape Vulture, made it onto the stamps. I do not know whether this reflects their more endangered status.



More birds appeared on stamps during 2011 than in 2010 – good news! The year started off with a sheet on endangered marine life depicting amongst others four birds, the African Penguin, Cape Gannet, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross and Bank Cormorant.

The bird topic chosen for 2010 was “Bustards and Korhaans of Namibia” and was issued on 4 April 2010. The six species chosen appeared as part of a mini sheet and they are Northern Black and Red-crested Korhaan, Black-bellied Bustard, Ruppell’s Korhaan, Ludwig’s and Kori Bustards.

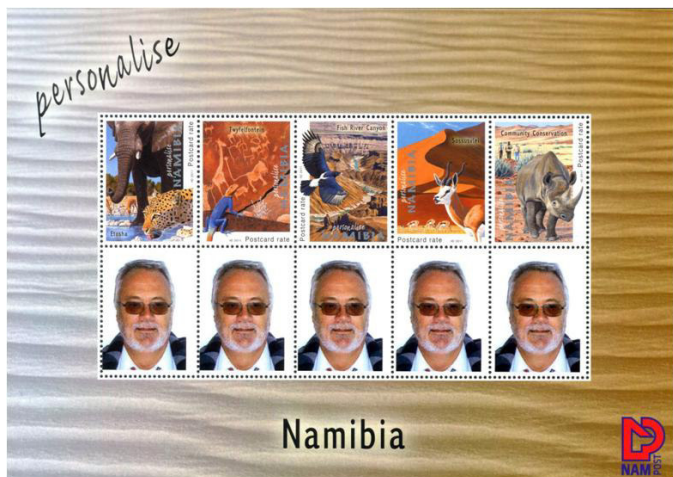




On 18 July 2011 it was time for the bird theme stamps of the year and a stunningly beautiful set of stamps depicting our Grebes was produced by Helge Denker.



Not for the first time, but for the first time with birds, personalized stamps made their appearance. This is a unique way of marketing philatelic products and being personalized, these stamps may end up being some of the rarest in the world. A beautiful set of five stamps with Namibian scenes appeared at the beginning of June 2011. The Fish River Canyon stamp shines with a stunning Verreauxs' Eagle in flight over the Canyon.



The future for birds on Namibian stamps bodes well taking into consideration that the next definitive series of Namibian stamps will be dedicated to our endemic and near-endemic birds only.

With some luck we might even see a commemorative envelope being issued on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Namibian Bird Club, which might necessitate an addendum to this final part of this series of articles on birds on stamps in South Africa, South West Africa and Namibia.

