

## SHORT NOTE

### Extension of the breeding range of the African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini*

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The African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* is endemic to the coasts of southern Africa between Transkei on the Indian Ocean coast and the Skeleton Coast park in SWA/Namibia (Hockey 1983a). The established northerly breeding limits are Lüderitz (26°20'S 15°20'E) on the mainland and Ichaboe Island (26°20'S 14°59'E) offshore (Hockey 1982a, Hockey in press). Nonbreeding birds have been recorded as far north as Lobito, Angola (12°35'S 13°25'E) (Hockey 1982b). Observations by staff of the Skeleton Coast Park, reported here, have extended the known breeding range of this species by c. 800 km.

On 11 February 1984 two eggs were found in a nest-scraper about 2 km south of the Hoanib River mouth (19°30'S 12°50'E). The nest-scraper was situated among scattered dry *Laminaria* kelp strands just above the high water mark. These eggs had disappeared when the nest was checked again on February 18 and were possibly taken by Blackbacked Jackal *Canis mesomelas* as fresh jackal tracks were found near the nest. A second nest was found about 100 m above the high water mark among vegetated sandy hummocks on the south bank of the Hoanib River on March 4. The eggs in this nest were found deserted on April 2. Because of the small (max. 16 birds) local population and the timing of two clutches it is suspected that both breeding attempts were made by the same pair. The main egg-laying period of this species in South Africa is between December and February with a January peak and most replacement clutches are laid after late January (Hockey 1983b, Maclean 1984).

Both clutches were of two eggs. Average measurements were 58.1 x 40.8 mm with a range of 58.0-58.4 x 39.9-42.1 mm. these are smaller than the established average size of eggs of this species (60.7 x 40.1 mm) but well within the normal size range of 55.8-65.2 x 37.9-43.7 mm (Hockey 1983b). Further observation is needed to establish whether breeding is regular so far north of the established breeding range and whether one or more pairs are involved.

I thank A.J. Williams and P.A.R. Hockey for help in revising the text of this communication.

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