

Namibia Bird Club



1962 - 2012

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This issue of *Lanioturdus* is dedicated to the founders of the Namibia Bird Club:

Heinrich von Maltzahn

Herwarth von Schwind

Herrmann Kolberg

May their legacy continue forever!

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Editorial

At the annual general meeting of the Namibia Bird Club in 2008 I was co-opted (shanghaied?) onto the committee. At the very first committee meeting I attended I noticed that one of the items on the agenda was “50th Anniversary 2012”. Your chairperson was well aware way back then that this important anniversary was approaching and that serious consideration had to be given as to how it should be celebrated. In 2008 2012 seemed very far away and more pressing immediate issues took priority at committee meetings until it was realized that 2012 was just

around the corner and that action was required if the anniversary was to be celebrated at all.

It was decided early on that whatever was presented should be for the benefit of the members of the Namibia Bird Club and that it should be free of charge to all members.

Holger Kolberg was by then a member of the committee and once it was agreed that a symposium should be presented, it became Holger's task to secure the speakers as he had more personal contact to the top people in various fields of ornithology in southern Africa than anyone else on the committee.

A lot of effort from various members of the committee went into the organization of the event which took place on 30 April and 1 May 2012 at the Arebbusch Travel Lodge in Windhoek. Speakers had to be contacted, co-rrsed and confirmed, a budget prepared, sponsors sought, a venue selected, accommodation secured, a menu selected, funds raised through running the coffee shop at the "Biomarkt" etc.

No commercial sponsorships were forthcoming although several members made very generous contributions towards the cost of the symposium, for which the committee is extremely grateful, and the celebration was, in the end, financed largely from the accumulated funds of the Namibia Bird Club.

We believe that the symposium was an unqualified success. Not only were our members able to attend superb presentations by a number of top people in various fields of ornithology from all over southern Africa but they were able to interact with these experts both at the symposium itself and at the dinner held on 30 April.

I have been asked not infrequently when we will be presenting another symposium. I cannot answer that one but I can say that it will only be possible when we have again accumulated sufficient funds unless one of you out there would care to sponsor it for us.

What follows here is the proceedings of the symposium. As the papers were presented using modern technology such as Powerpoint presentations, in some cases only a brief outline of the presentation is given while in other cases we are able to publish a full transcript.

Welcome by the Chair of the Namibia Bird Club

Gudrun Middendorff



Photo © Dirk Heinrich

Good morning ladies and gentlemen!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here to this symposium to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Namibia Bird Club. It is a special privilege to be able to welcome so many experts in their diverse fields of ornithology who have come to share their knowledge with us. From South Africa we have Mark Anderson, Andre Botha, Dieter Oschadleus, Rob Simmons and Les Underhill; from Botswana Pete Hancock and from Namibia Dayne Braine, Holger Kolberg, John Mendelsohn and John Paterson while Chris Brown will be officially launching the start of the second Atlas project in Namibia. Yesterday we were privileged to be able to attend a workshop presented by Arnold van der Westhuizen who gave us a great introduction to atlasing.

I will not go into the history of the Namibia Bird Club as Holger Kolberg will be doing that shortly. Suffice to say here that the club has gone through a number of ups and downs during its 50 year history. There have been periods of high membership and periods of low membership; there have been periods of good attendance of our outings and periods of poor attendance.

A recent milestone that has been achieved is that our membership has once again soared above the 100 mark. I just hope that the new members will not be fair weather friends who have joined merely to attend this symposium only to quietly disappear again once it is over. I hope that they will remain members and take part in our outings and activities and I hope that all will become active atlassers as well.

This symposium has been financed largely out of the accumulated funds of the bird club as no major sponsors could be found. My sincere thanks to those members who have made donations to the bird club in addition to their subscriptions.

Since 2008 our journal, *Lanioturdus*, has been published electronically and distributed by email. While some members were unhappy with this arrangement when we started on this course I can honestly say that had we had to pay for the printing and postage for the last 16 issues of *Lanioturdus* this symposium would not have been possible.

I will now hand over to Holger Kolberg who has volunteered to act as master of ceremonies – yes – he really did volunteer – and Holger will now provide us with a brief history of the Namibia Bird Club from its founding as the *Ornitologische Arbeitsgruppe* in 1962 until the present.

Over to you Holger

A Brief History of the Namibia Bird Club

Holger Kolberg

(**Holger Kolberg** is employed as a scientist by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism in Windhoek, Namibia.)

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in April or May 1962 by Heinrich von Maltzahn, Herwarth von Schwind and Herrmann Kolberg. It was founded as the *Ornitologische Arbeitsgruppe* (ornithological working group) of the South West Africa Scientific Society and, as the name implies, its main aim was to further the knowledge of ornithology in Namibia through active participation in field work. A drawing of a Magpie Shrike (*Urolestes melanoleucus*) from Walter Hoesch's book *Die Vogelwelt Südwestafrikas* was chosen as the emblem of the group.



Peter Becker and Jürgen Pilaski in the Namib, November 1964, photo © Peter Becker

The first birthday of the *Arbeitsgruppe* was celebrated with a symposium in Windhoek from 31 May to 2 June 1963. In November 1964 the Ornithological Society of Hildesheim, Germany, sent a young man, Peter Becker, to Namibia to teach the local members everything about bird ringing. Birds were ringed at Avis Dam, the Windhoek sewage works and on the guano platform near Walvis Bay amongst other places.

In March 1972 the White-tailed Shrike (*Lanioturdus torquatus*) replaced the Magpie Shrike as the emblem of the *Arbeitsgruppe*. The reasoning behind this was quite simple: the Magpie Shrike is common in southern Africa but only occurs in north-eastern Namibia whereas the White-tailed Shrike is a Namibian endemic. The White-tailed Shrike logo, which is still used by the bird club today, was designed by Mr Cornelius Werhahn, an architect and active member of the *Arbeitsgruppe*.



Part of the exhibits for the tenth anniversary, April 1972, photo © Nitzsche-Reiter

From 4 to 6 April 1972 the *Arbeitsgruppe* celebrated its tenth anniversary with a large symposium and exhibition in the *Karakulhalle* on the Windhoek show grounds. Apart from an impressive list of local and international speakers, there was also an exhibition of live birds, museum specimens, a nest collection, wing collection, skulls, ringing equipment and a book display.

In 1973 the *Arbeitsgruppe* landed another *coup* when it hosted the congress of the South African Ornithological Society (which is now BirdLife South Africa) on 24 and 25 September at Hardap Dam. The congress was attended by many of southern Africa's top ornithologists of that time.

The *Arbeitsgruppe* celebrated its 20th anniversary in Swakopmund from 3 to 6 April 1982. An excursion into the Namib was arranged before a day of presentations.

Regrettably no 30th or 40th anniversary was celebrated but it is hoped that the 50th anniversary celebrations will more than make up for that.

Bird ringing was one of the main focus areas of the *Arbeitsgruppe*. Initially ringing was done under the name of the *Arbeitsgruppe* but in 1972, when the administration of the bird ringing scheme was handed over to NUBRA (National Unit for Bird Ringing Administration) and ringers had to pay for rings, each ringer had to submit their data under their own name. It is therefore difficult to say exactly how many birds were ringed as part of official activities by the *Arbeitsgruppe* but since most ringers were also members of the group one can safely assume that most of the birds ringed in the early years were ringed as part of such activities.



Putting up mistnets on a farm, photo Kolberg archive

Field trips were the other main activity of the *Arbeitsgruppe*. Apart from regular *Morgenwanderungen* (morning walks) to Avis Dam, the sewage works and other localities close to Windhoek, excursions were arranged over long weekends to farms and parks. Regular visits were undertaken to the vulture colony at the Waterberg to monitor its status and there was even a 'special operation' in 1971 to count the penguins on Halifax Island. The farm *Frauenstein* became a regular destination for bird ringing.

The club's journal has been a major source of information on Namibian ornithology since the

first issue was published. It has undergone several changes over the years, the first one came when the emblem of the *Arbeitsgruppe* was changed in 1972. More significantly, in April 1984 the journal's name was changed to *Lanioturdus*. This was mainly for practical reasons: previously the title had had to be written in three languages (German, English and Afrikaans) whereas *Lanioturdus* is the same in all languages.

It is, of course, also the scientific name of the bird on the club's emblem. Two years later the journal changed into a printed booklet of A5 size (before this it had been A4 and mimeographed) and in 2008 it changed to its current format, i.e. digital.



On excursion in the Erongo mountains, photo © Hans Kolberg

A Pan-African Approach to Vulture Conservation

Andre Botha

(**Andre Botha** is the Manager of the Birds of Prey Programme of the Endangered Wildlife Trust and co-chair of the Vulture Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission. He is an expert on birds of prey and also a passionate wildlife photographer.)



Photo © Dirk Heinrich

Eleven species of vulture occur on the African continent and many populations of these species have declined considerably. The range and extent of threats facing these species is varied, but include poisoning, habitat loss, energy infrastructure and collection for food and muthi.

Approaches to vulture conservation in Africa have to date focused on conserving breeding sites, parks and reserves or particular areas where these birds forage for food. Studies using colour-marking (tagging) and tracking of vultures from various sites in Africa have confirmed that these birds are incredibly mobile and can cover large distances daily during foraging flights, often crossing one or more international boundaries in the process

often making the site-based approach in terms of their overall conservation ineffective. It is during these flights that the birds are exposed to a variety of potential threats and where birds are often injured or killed causing a decline in vulture populations. The conservation, monitoring and research of vultures therefore pose definite challenges and the need to approach this work from a broader perspective is evident. This has resulted in the establishment of a Pan-African Vulture Conservation Strategy which aims to address this need.

The Albatross Task Force in Namibia

John Paterson

(**John Paterson** heads the operations of the Albatross Task Force in Namibia.)



Photo © Dirk Heinrich

Seabirds migrate to the Benguela ecosystem to forage. From their breeding islands in the southern oceans they cross international waters with many fishing fleets and this requires international conservation efforts. There are Albatross Task Force teams in South America and in southern Africa. Eighteen of 22 species of albatross are threatened in some way or another. Five of these albatrosses and three petrels of conservation concern forage in Namibian waters. Albatrosses are long-lived, have delayed sexual maturity, are slow breeding, mate for life and depend on high adult

survival. Two fisheries are under review in Namibia: hake long-line and bottom trawl. Birds see the bait on the long-line, get hooked, dragged under and drown. Three factors influence the seabird by-catch on long-lines: the time when the lines are shot – more birds are caught during the day than at night; the rate at which the line sinks – slow sinking lines catch more birds; and deck lights – the more light there is the higher the chance that the birds will see the bait. With trawl fishing birds get entangled in the trawl warps, get dragged under and drown. Wind direction, offal discard and wave height play an important role in the number of birds caught in this industry. Mitigation measures include bird scaring lines, good offal management, time of setting, minimum weights, spacing of weights and minimal deck lighting.

Angola Birding – a Diamond in the Rough

Dayne Braine

(**Dayne Braine**, together with his parents and brother, owns Batis Birding Safaris. The company offers specialized birding tours throughout southern Africa.)

Angola is a relatively new and unexplored birding destination. Five areas and their birds are show-cased. These are: Tundevala, Kissama National Park and surrounds, Gabela, Uige and N'Dalatando and surrounds, and Calandula and surrounds.





Photos © Braine Photography

Satellite Tracking Black Harriers Reveals a New Migration Route to Lesotho

Rob Simmons

(Rob Simmons is Associate Researcher at the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology and is a world authority on harriers.)

The globally Vulnerable Black Harrier *Circus maurus* is unusual among African raptors in that adult birds rarely return to their nest sites in the following year to breed. This suggests either a highly nomadic life style or high mortality.

In an effort to determine where breeding birds disperse to post-breeding, five birds were fitted

with 12.5 gram solar-powered transmitters between 2008 and 2010 and followed post-breeding. Three of the five birds remained relatively close (60 -100 km) to their breeding grounds in the western coast core regions during the summer non-breeding season. Local movements back towards their previous sites in April-June showed that birds do attempt to return to breed but at least two of the three birds died and a third transmitter may have failed just before breeding.



Photo © Dirk Heinrich

The two remaining birds however, undertook unpredicted long-distance movements of 1200km across the species global range from South Africa's west coast to Lesotho and beyond. They moved rapidly (~250 km/day) over the dry Karoo basin and slowed their journeys as they reached the foothills of the Drakensberg. Slower but parallel movements through the Lesotho highlands in February when rains were persistent suggests Lesotho (and for one bird, the Free State grasslands) are favourable destinations. Ice Rats (*Otomys sloggerti*) breed in Lesotho at this time so the harriers may be timing their movements to favourable food conditions.

Since two of five tagged birds have undertaken this migration it suggests a regular and unexpected movement across country for this species. Reasons for the movements may include favourable food or favourable climates elsewhere.

Kimberley's Pink Gems

Mark Anderson

(Mark D. Anderson is Chief Executive Officer for BirdLife South Africa and is a world authority on old world vultures and flamingos. He has been involved in ornithological work since 1991 and has received numerous awards for his work.)

Kimberley is known for its many tourist attractions relating to diamond mining but flamingos can be considered just as important. For example, flamingos have been incorporated into the coat of arms of the Sol Plaatje municipality. Kamfers Dam on the outskirts of Kimberley is a Natural Heritage Site, an Important Bird Area and a potential Ramsar site because at times it houses more than 80 000 Lesser Flamingos. In May 2006 81 664 flamingos were counted by means of high resolution aerial photography. Kamfers Dam's Lesser Flamingos may be the largest permanent population in southern Africa and it is one of the most important feeding localities in southern Africa. Greater Flamingos attempted to breed there in 1994 and in 2005 about 2 500 nests of Lesser Flamingos were counted. The Lesser Flamingo is considered threatened internationally and in the South African red data book because it is dependent on few breeding sites, the breeding sites are not protected and under threat and the flamingos breed infrequently and often unsuccessfully. The effects of climate change on the flamingos still need to be determined but could potentially be very significant. There are only three known breeding sites in Africa: Lake Natron (Tanzania), Etosha Pan (Namibia) and Sua Pan (Botswana). Establishing new breeding sites therefore would significantly boost the population of Lesser Flamingos. Although the idea to build an artificial island at Kamfers Dam arose in 1995, discussions with Ekapa Mining only started late in 2005. Construction started in September 2006 and a total of 26 000 tons of material were used at a cost of about R500 000, but in-kind contributions will have made the final cost of the construction close to one million Rand.

The island was completed in eleven days. In March 2008 the flamingos bred successfully on the island and produced about 9 000 chicks. The significance of this event cannot be underestimated: it was the first time that Lesser Flamingos bred on an artificial structure, the first time in recorded history that Lesser Flamingos bred in South Africa, it was only the 4th breeding locality in Africa and the 6th in the world. The flamingos bred again during the summer of 2008/9, producing about 13 000 chicks. This was a significant contribution to southern Africa's small and declining population. The successful breeding attempts received plenty of publicity and a webcam was placed on the island. The project also received many awards. The project is facing several challenges. The water quality in the dam is deteriorating due to broken sewage works which release pollutants and coliform bacteria into the dam. Several sick flamingos were found to have the avian pox virus. Due to the growing human population and the abolition of the bucket system in Kimberley there is too much water released into the dam, resulting in the flooding of the island. A large housing development is planned adjacent to the dam and the conservation of Kamfers Dam is by no means secure. Some comments: One can debate whether human intervention is necessary to safeguard the species. There is a definite need for regional cooperation through the international Lesser Flamingo Action Plan and the national single species action plan. Research is needed to understand the implications of climate change, the population size and trends and movements. To ensure the conservation of the species breeding sites need to be secured.

Dial in to PHOWN

Dieter Oschadleus

(Dieter Oschadleus is the Ringing Coordinator with SAFRING based at the University of Cape Town. He started ringing while a student at UCT where he obtained a PhD in 2005 on the primary moult patterns of many southern African weavers.)



Photo © Dirk Heinrich

Photographs of Weaver Nests (PHOWN) is part of the virtual museums of the Animal Demography Unit (ADU) at the University of Cape Town. The requirements for a contribution to PHOWN are the date, coordinates and one to three photos. Photos should show the colony, an adult male at the nest or in the colony and a close-up of the nest. It is also recommended to make a count of the nests, describe the nest site, add any other notes of interest and, if possible, an identification of the species. It may be necessary to crop or resize photos before uploading them to the virtual museum. The virtual museums can be found on the website of the ADU. Users need to login to upload material, once logged in follow the steps under the VM upload tab. Various summaries can be extracted from the PHOWN site such as current statistics regarding the database, maps etc.

Birds Know No Boundaries

Pete Hancock

(**Pete Hancock** is Conservation Officer for BirdLife Botswana, responsible for the northern part of the country. He lives with his family in Maun, on the edge of the Okavango delta and considers himself one of the fortunate people who have their hobby as their job.)

BirdLife Botswana started as the Botswana Bird Club in 1980 and is therefore some 18 years junior to its sister organization, the Namibia Bird Club! I congratulate the NBC on 50 years of birding and bird conservation, and thank the organizers for inviting me to the conference.

In 2000, the Botswana Bird Club transformed itself into BirdLife Botswana by joining the BirdLife International partnership. Since then, our activities have broadened from social bird-watching to include also bird research and conservation work. By way of introduction, it is helpful to describe the activities of BirdLife Botswana, since this forms the framework for my presentation. Our work is based on four pillars or programmes that guide BirdLife's activities:

Species Programme – the focus of this programme is on globally threatened birds, while at the same time ensuring that common birds remain common, in the realization that it is not possible to conserve all species in Botswana.

Sites and Habitat Programmes – these closely allied programmes follow the same rationale; it is not possible to protect birds everywhere so the focus is on Important Bird Areas (IBAs) which are key sites to ensure the long-term survival of birds. Often IBAs are specific habitats such as wetlands, grasslands or forests, which is why I have joined these two programmes together. It is a well-known axiom that if the habitat is in good condition, the birds will look after themselves.

People Programme – last but not least, birds are conserved by and for people, and this is encapsulated in the BirdLife slogan “Together for birds and people”.

In my presentation, I am going to elaborate on Important Bird Areas and the People Programme, but the main focus will be on our globally threatened birds. At the end, I will show the relevance of my approach to this conference.

Important Bird Areas



Botswana has 12 IBAs, and these include *inter alia* obvious sites such as Chobe National Park IBA, Linyanti Swamps IBA and the Okavango Delta IBA (with its appendage Lake Ngami, recognized as a separate IBA). The map above shows the location of these areas and their proximity to your Important Bird Areas in Namibia:

It is quite obvious from the map that these areas are arbitrarily separated by political boundaries, and are in fact contiguous bird habitats occupied by common, shared species. Even N007 - Bushmanland Pans, although not immediately adjacent to an IBA on the Botswana side, is inextricably linked to the Okavango Delta by Wattled Cranes (and other species) which fly to Nyae Nyae every summer to feed and socialize (they are apparently referred to as “the visitors from Botswana” by people living in the area). We need to work together to protect these areas.

People Programme

BirdLife Botswana is a membership organization, and arranges a variety of activities for these members, similar to those organized by the Namibia Bird Club. In addition, we have Site Support Groups comprising local people living in proximity to Important Bird Areas, who take responsibility for protecting these sites, and BirdLife Botswana works to build the capacity of these groups. Many local citizen members are professional guides who have an interest in

birds, and we organize training courses to assist them, for example, in bird identification. All members receive quarterly and annual journals and newsletters.



A group of trainee bird guides on successful completion of a bird identification course

Species conservation

There are approximately 450 bird species found in both Namibia and Botswana, and these represent a range of families and groups of birds such as raptors, waterbirds, gamebirds *etc.* – most are birds of arid and semi-arid areas. A major difference between the two avifaunas though is the complete lack of coastal marine species in Botswana. Of course, the Namibian endemics such as Dune Lark, Monteiro’s Hornbill, Herero Chat and White-tailed Shrike are not found in Botswana, but the two countries do share a few near-endemics. There are a number of globally threatened birds found in both countries too *viz.* Bateleur, Ludwig’s Bustard, Chestnut-banded Plover, Southern Ground-Hornbill and African Skimmer, to name just a few.

Of all the shared bird species, two are worthy of special mention since Namibia and Botswana hold the largest, most healthy populations, in the region; these are the Lappet-faced Vulture and Kori Bustard.

Lappet-faced Vulture – BirdLife Botswana monitors Lappet-faced Vulture breeding sites on a regular basis, in much the same way as is done by Raptors Namibia – checking on

nests from the air, and then visiting active nests at the end of the breeding season to ring/tag the nestlings. In fact, we have regular communications with Peter Bridgeford and his team, and have learnt a lot from them in terms of Lappet-faced Vulture monitoring. However, we have never even come close to their record of over 100 chicks tagged in one season! Some of the fledglings tagged in Etosha by Wilferd Versfeld have been resighted in Botswana, for example E217 flew over 950 kilometres from its natal area to northern Chobe National Park where it was photographed, alive and well by a BirdLife Botswana member. E052, also from Etosha, was not so fortunate; it was poisoned along with 30 White-backed Vultures in the western Okavango Delta, and recovered dead. However, these two resightings illustrate the point that we're dealing with the same Lappet-faced Vulture population in Namibia and Botswana.



Tim Osborne releases a Kori Bustard after fitting a satellite transmitter and wing tag

Kori Bustard – although not globally threatened, nor subject to great local movements, the Kori Bustard is an important flagship for the semi-arid savannas found in the Kalahari Basin.

The Director of BirdLife Botswana, Kabelo Senyatso, has recently completed his PhD on this species, and an interesting part of his

study included tracking the movements of a sample of bustards using satellite transmitters. Tim Osborn's work in the Etosha region showed that the birds moved extensively, and in fact some of them disappeared out of the range of his radio receiver – hence Kabelo's decision to use satellite transmitters which allow birds to be located anywhere on the earth's surface.

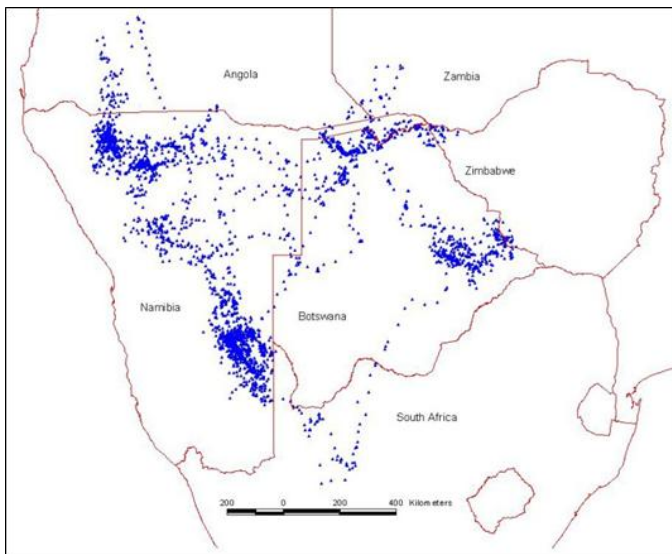
Tim Osborne very kindly assisted with the capture of the Kori Bustards in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve; his experience proved invaluable.



Maun Wattled Crane workshop participants

Interestingly the Koris in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve had very small home ranges and never moved further than a few kilometers from their capture sites!

Cape Vulture – Botswana has two Cape Vulture breeding sites, in mountainous areas similar to the Waterberg in Namibia. We followed with interest the movements of CV6 which was fitted with a satellite transmitter in Namibia a few years ago, especially when it entered Botswana. John Mendelsohn very kindly sent us reports on the movements of this individual, and within the first year it traveled a minimum of 64,000 kilometres and visited six southern African countries, as shown in the map below.



Movements of CV6, a Cape Vulture fitted with satellite transmitter in Namibia

Whose vulture is this?! This bird once again illustrates my point that 'birds know no boundaries'! The plight of the Cape Vulture in southern Africa is precarious, with birds from the major colonies in the Magaliesberg area in South Africa being almost totally dependent on 'vulture restaurants', and facing daily risks from poisoning, electrocution and collisions with powerlines. Despite the dwindling population in Namibia, I believe that Botswana and Namibia have an important contribution to make to the conservation of this species since both have relatively intact ecosystems where these birds can forage naturally.

Vulture issues – Namibia and Botswana, along with many African countries, are confronted with the scourge of poisoning of vultures. Just as NARREC and other organizations in Namibia are combating this issue, so too is BirdLife Botswana. From experience elsewhere within the BirdLife partnership, we know that banning of the agrochemicals used is not always the best solution, unless neighbouring countries are working closely together. For example, when the Kenyans convinced FMC, the manufacturer of Carbofuran (one of the most widely used and toxic substances), to buy back all stocks of this product, it simply entered the country illegally from adjacent countries. In southern Africa, we need to have a common strategy for addressing this problem.

Wattled Crane – due to the movements of this species throughout the region, co-ordinated crane surveys were conducted by most crane range states during the period 2001 to 2003. BirdLife Botswana was assisted in this task by aerial survey expert Dr Colin Craig (from Namibia) and undertook three consecutive annual surveys of the Okavango crane population during this period.

The estimate that emerged from these surveys, of 1,300 Wattled Cranes in the Okavango Delta, was at first disappointing until we found out that compared to other countries, the Okavango has the largest, single population remaining. In most range states, crane numbers had decreased significantly, with the 1994 estimate of 15,000 Wattled Cranes having halved in a decade to 7,500 to 8,000 birds. After the 2003 survey, representatives from most Wattled Crane range states met in Maun to assist in the development of a Wattled Crane Action Plan; Mike and Ann Scott, from the Namibia Crane Working Group, were present at this workshop.

Blue Crane – BirdLife Botswana has also been liaising closely with the Namibia Crane Working Group over the plight of the Blue Crane, endemic to South Africa with outlying populations in Etosha and the very similar Makgadikgadi Pans. The Etosha population has dwindled steadily in recent years, with the 2012 survey totaling only 20 individuals, and the hope has been that these birds may have moved to Botswana. However, our own population of this species, which used to breed in the Makgadikgadi grasslands, has similarly diminished, and is now believed to be locally extinct. There have been no sightings of this species in Botswana for over a decade now.

Slaty Egret – this Botswana near-endemic is shared with Namibia, as the global population is centred on the Okavango but spills over into the Caprivi Strip and eastern Bushmanland. BirdLife Botswana has undertaken a baseline study of this species, but even so, relatively little is known about it. There are very few recorded breeding sites; however, there is one

breeding colony reported from Namibia, from the early 1990s from eastern Bushmanland, documented by Chris Hines. It is important that Namibian birders keep a lookout for this species and record their observations in *Lanioturdus*.



Botswana Wattled Crane survey team (Namibian aerial survey expert, Dr Colin Craig on extreme right)

A Slaty Egret Action Plan was compiled at a workshop in Maun in 2011, involving stakeholders from all range states (Holger Kolberg from MET represented Namibia), and this forms the blueprint for the conservation of the species.



Participants from Slaty Egret range states at Maun workshop to compile Species Action Plan.

Lesser Flamingo – it is counter-intuitive to think that the African population of several million Lesser Flamingos could be Near

Threatened, but indeed this is the case! The reason for this is because the Lesser Flamingo only breeds in four places in Africa (following the success of Mark Anderson’s artificial breeding island at Kamfer’s Dam, prior to which there were only three breeding sites).

The other two southern African sites are Etosha Pan, and the very similar Sua Pan in Botswana. BirdLife Botswana member, Dr Graham McCulloch has been monitoring the breeding numbers at Sua Pan for over a decade, and has also fitted several individuals with satellite transmitters to see where they move to. Part of the reason for this latter project is to see whether the southern and eastern African flamingo populations are linked, but so far none of the study birds has moved to East Africa. The other objective of the satellite tracking project is to identify critical ephemeral wetlands that are important as feeding areas or as staging posts for the flamingos.



Dr McCulloch with captured flamingo and (inset) satellite backpack fitted on flamingo

Interestingly, to date, none of the study birds has moved to Etosha! However, it is predicted that they will in the future when conditions are optimal for feeding and/or breeding. There has been a regular movement from Sua Pan to the west coast (Walvis Bay) and also to Kamfer’s Dam. Flamingos are great travelers and the southern African population needs to be monitored and managed as a unit.



Five pelicans on nests on a floating island in the middle of Lake Ngami

Great White Pelican – the final example of a bird species which moves regularly between Namibia and Botswana is the Great White Pelican. During 2004 when Lake Ngami filled with water for the first time in decades, most of southern Africa’s pelican population converged on the area, including one immature ringed at Dassen Island earlier that year. How this bird knew that the lake existed and had water is anyone’s guess! During 2011, the pelicans attempted to breed on islands of floating vegetation in the middle of the lake!

They would have succeeded had it not been for human disturbance – eventually they gave up and abandoned their nests. Shortly thereafter, Wilferd Versfeld reported that a few pelicans were breeding at Etosha. I only learnt recently that the pelicans breed regularly at Hardap Dam – these Namibian breeding sites (including the platform at Walvis Bay) replenish the southern African pelican population which is shared between several countries.

Conclusion

It should be apparent by now that my underlying theme is not just that birds know no boundaries – the flip side of this is that we as conservationists should also not be restrained by political borders. Indeed, we are already working well together in the region, as illustrated repeatedly in my presentation. The

question is “how can we formalize and improve this cross-boundary co-operation”? I believe that the BirdLife partnership is making huge strides in this respect, particularly with conserving birds along flyways, and it would be great to have Namibia in the partnership. There are many similarities between the way the BirdLife programmes function and the way you do things here in Namibia – it would not require a great transformation to fit into the partnership, and the benefits in terms of bird conservation would be manifold. Let’s see more “working together for birds and people”!

Three Kalahari Rivers

John Mendelsohn

(**John Mendelsohn** is a former director of the National Museum of Namibia and now runs RAISON (Research and Information Services of Namibia).



Photo © Dirk Heinrich

Rivers in the Kalahari basin are characterised by having almost no dissolved or suspended sediments, are poor in nutrients and are shared by three countries: Angola, Botswana and Namibia. They support perennial and ephemeral wetlands which can be either freshwater or saline. The water gathers value further downstream whereas the catchments are out of sight and hence out of mind. The water of the Kwando gets an added nutrient supply from the kimberlites over which it

flows. The fringing vegetation acts as a massive filter system and therefore the upstream wetlands are rich in nutrients and life. Downstream there is a slow percolating flow of distilled water. This system is almost pristine. The Okavango is characterised by slow flowing, clean water. The floodplains and marshes act as filters and most of the nutrients are concentrated in the delta. It is a river of changing values with high human population density upstream and lots of wildlife and tourism downstream. The Cuvelai system is characterised by high human population density, especially on the Namibian side. It runs through a very flat area hence flooding is common.

The ADU in Namibia

Les Underhill

(**Les Underhill** is Professor of Avian Demography at the University of Cape Town and an expert on waders and statistics!)

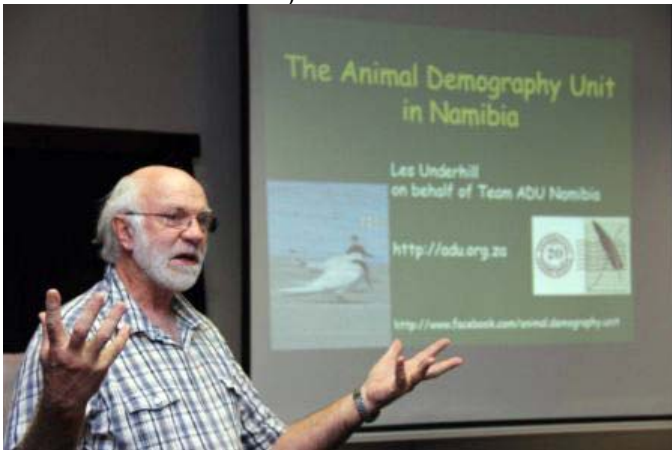


Photo © Dirk Heinrich

The Animal Demography Unit (ADU) of the University of Cape Town has strong ties with Namibia with twelve completed post-graduate studies with a Namibian connection. Two examples are Dieter Oschadleus' study on the patterns of primary mould in weavers (PhD 2005) and Justine Braby's PhD on Damara Terns in 2011. Currently there are two post-doctoral and two MSc studies involving Namibia.

Official Launch of SABAP 2 in Namibia

Chris Brown

(**Chris Brown** is a former ornithologist at the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, former director of the Namibia Nature Foundation and currently co-director of the Namibian Institute of Sustainable Development.)



Photo © Dirk Heinrich

The first bird atlas was started in Namibia in 1970 and joined the southern African bird atlas project (SABAP) from 1987 to 1993. There have only been three atlas projects in Namibia: the bird atlas, the tree atlas and a carnivore atlas (on a small scale). Atlas information is very important for land use planning, conservation planning and zonation, ecotourism and bird tourism, environmental assessments and monitoring because birds are good indicators of change. There has been a large change in land use in Namibia from when the last bird atlas finished. There are now more areas under some form of conservation management and there is less livestock and more wildlife in the country. Climate change will impact on agricultural production systems in the country and therefore we need to monitor key biodiversity indicators. Birds are very good for this because they respond quickly to environmental change and hence a new bird atlas will contribute significantly.

Appendix I: Programme for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Namibia Bird Club

Sunday, 29 April 2012

10:00 - Bird Atlassing Workshop at the Namibia Scientific Society by Arnold van der Westhuizen, with a practical session in the afternoon.

Monday, 30 April 2012

06:30 – Bird atlassing at Avis Dam
10:00 – Registration, Tea at Arebbusch Lodge
10:15 – Welcome by Gudrun Middendorff, chair of the NBC
10:30 – *A Brief History of the Namibia Bird Club* by Holger Kolberg
11:15 – *A Pan-African Approach to Vulture Conservation* by Andre Botha
12:00 – *The Albatross Task Force in Namibia* by John Paterson
12:45 to 14:00 Lunch



Photo © Eckart Demasius

14:00 – *Angola Birding – a Diamond in the Rough* by Dayne Braine
14:45 - *Satellite Tracking Black Harriers Reveals a New Migration Route to Lesotho* by R
15:30 – *Kimberley's Pink Gems* by Mark Anderson
16:15 – *Dial in to PHOWN* by Dieter Oschadleus
17:00 Close

19:00 Celebratory Dinner at Arebbusch Lodge, dress code smart casual

Tuesday 1 May 2012

06:30 – Bird Atlassing at Windhoek Sewage Works
10:00 – Tea at Arebbusch Lodge
10:15 – *Birds Know No Boundaries* by Pete Hancock

11:00 – *Three Kalahari Rivers* by John Mendelsohn
11:45 – *The ADU in Namibia* by Les Underhill
12:30 – *Official Launch of the Bird Atlas in Namibia* by Chris Brown
13:00 to 14:00 Lunch
14:00 – *Namibia Bird Club – the next 50 years* open discussion on activities etc. that the club should undertake. Bird atlassing questions, clarifications etc.

Wednesday 2 May 2012

Serious bird atlassing at Monte Christo

Acknowledgements

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Gamsberg Macmillan publishers for the donation of the Christine Marais prints which were presented to some of the speakers.

John Carlyon for the discounted copies of *Nocturnal Birds of Southern Africa* which were presented to other speakers.

All others who contributed to the success of the event.

Appendix II: List of Attendees

Elke Ahrens	Liz Komen
Mark Anderson	Dieter Ludwig
Gillian Barnes	Gimmey Ludwig
Michael Bartlewski	Torsten Ludwig
Sonja Bartlewski	Christiane Maluche
Ursula Bauer	John Mendelsohn
Hanjo Böhme	Gudrun Middendorff
Mark Boorman	Pieter Mostert
Andre Botha	Tessa Mostert
Dayne Braine	Anna Muller
Marilyn Bridgeford	Helen Newmarch
Peter Bridgeford	Richard Niddrie
Chris Brown	Wanja Njuguna
Hilda-Marie Burger	Dieter Oschadleus
Leona Compion	John Pallett
Lesley Crawford	Barbara Paterson
Peter Cunningham	John Paterson
Barbara Curtis	Danie Piek
Sandra Dantu	Gertrud Piek
Colleen Deane	Hoens Potgieter
Eckart Demasius	Stefan Rust
Helga Detering	Rob Simmons
Annegret Finke	Roger Perrin
Judy Fuller	Pat Sivertsen
Pete Hancock	Sylvia Steenkamp
Dirk Heinrich	Neil Thomson
Klaus Hoffmann	Kenneth /Uiseb
Marita Hosk	Les Underhill
Erda Iben	Arnold van der Westhuizen
Dave Joubert	Johan van Tonder
Allen Kafene	Hilke von Ditfurth
Jessica Kemper	Klaus von Ludwiger
Uschi Kirchner	Gerda von Maltzahn
Claire Kolberg	Werner von Maltzahn
Hildegard Kolberg	Anita Zimny
Holger Kolberg	Alrun zur Strassen
Joris Komen	Helmut zur Strassen

About the Namibia Bird Club

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. We organize monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Sewage Works and occasional weekend trips further afield.

Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we have lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive a programme of forthcoming events (Namibia Bird News) and the Bird Club journal, Lanioturdus.

Membership Fees 2012

Members have been able to receive a discounted subscription to the *Africa Birds and Birding* magazine. This publication has been discontinued and the committee is investigating the possibility of obtaining bulk subscriptions to either *Africa Geographic* magazine which will now incorporate birding articles or a new birding publication, *African Birdlife*, that is being produced by BirdLife South Africa.

Category

Single member	N\$ 140
Family membership	N\$ 160
Junior member	N\$ 90
Pensioner	N\$ 100
Foreign member	N\$ 165
Corporate membership	N\$ 700

Namibia Bird Club Committee 2012

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In order to raise funds for the Namibia Bird Club we will accept advertisements to be published in Lanioturdus at the following rates:-

Full page	N\$ 300.00
Half page	N\$ 150.00
Quarter page	N\$ 75.00
Small advertisement	N\$ 35.00