

Namibia Bird News



No 10, September 2014

Goodbye Winter, hello Summer

Spring most certainly has sprung! The Southern Masked-Weaver in our garden has been wooing the ladies just about non-stop, in the process destroying our acacia/palm trees for nest sites/material. The African Reed-Warbler hasn't stopped warbling and the Wattled Starlings provide an incessant background noise.

Of course, this means that we should also get out and do something. Forget wooing the ladies and that... get out there and do some birding! And while you're at it, why not add a bit of purpose to your outing by completing an atlas card. There are only nine-and-a-bit thousand pentads left to map so there really is no excuse not to "klap" a few of them.

This issue is once again crammed with exciting news from all around Namibia. Many thanks to the regular contributors but there are many more people out there doing "stuff" - so how about a short note to the NBN?

Happy birding!
Holger



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Congratulations!

At this year's fund raising dinner in Swakopmund to celebrate International Vulture Awareness Day, Mr Kenneth /Uiseb was announced as the winner of the Vulture Conservationist of the year 2014. The Marc Dürr Award, named after one of Vultures Namibia's most enthusiastic and dedicated supporters who unfortunately succumbed to cancer at a far too young age, was given to Kenneth for his support to vulture conservation related activities in Namibia. Kenneth is Deputy Director of Scientific Services in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Amongst other things Kenneth ensured the funding of the printing of the new *Poisons and Pesticides* booklet, was instrumental in getting the Waterberg Plateau Park vulture restaurant re-activated and provided camera traps for it and is still pushing to get the protocol regarding poisoned wildlife accepted by MET management. He has also supported the participation of the MET ornithologist in the annual vulture chick ringing exercise on farms and in the Namib. Congratulations Kenneth, you certainly deserve this award!

Birders' Paradise

Holger Kolberg

Photos by Claire Kolberg

Recently I had to do some of my real work (game counts) in Mangetti National Park. On the way there I noticed a new sign for a campsite which, amongst other things, proclaimed the presence of a huge inland lake. Now, years of travel in my motherland have made me take a rather cynical view of such adverts but I decided to check it out on my way back.



With the game count completed we commenced our return journey and turned off the main road to go and inspect this glorified *gat dam*, because I was sure that this was exactly what it was. After the indicated four kilometres I nearly fell out of the car! Holy Scarecrow! Water as far as the eye can see! And birds! African Openbill, African Spoonbill, herons, egrets, ducks, plovers—you name it, it was there!

The owners, Marina and Christo, welcomed us heartily and indicated that we were free to have a look around in case we wanted to stay. Well, it didn't take much convincing, I can tell you that. We parked the car under one of the huge trees and went on a short excursion to check the place out. Apart from the waterbirds there were also plenty of bush birds including Black-faced Babblers, White-crowned Shrikes and a host of little brown ones which I tend to ignore. Yes, we'll stay the night, thank you!





We pitched our tent (not because I'm a woosie but because there are vervet monkeys around and I've had my experiences with them on the Orange River) and then celebrated finding this place with one of Namibia's finest. We went for another stroll around and without overexerting ourselves racked up over thirty species on our atlas card. Christo explained to us that the water currently was quite low but that when the lake is full it covers 2500 hectares, spreading into the neighbouring farm.

Paradise Rest Camp is about 80 km north of Grootfontein on the B8. Each campsite has its own fireplace and there are clean ablutions (although these may become a bit stressed when the camp is full since there are only two for each gender). Two luxury tents are available for the ones without camping gear and there is a restaurant and a bar as well as a swimming pool. Marina and Christo can be contacted at paradiserestcamp@yahoo.com



Abundant seabirds for a bountiful Benguela

Holger Kolberg

Photos by Jessica Kemper

The African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) held a workshop in Swakopmund from 9 to 12 September 2014 to draft a multiple species action plan for coastal seabirds in the Benguela upwelling region. The plan specifically concentrated on species identified as a conservation priority, these being African Penguin, Bank Cormorant, Crowned Cormorant, Cape Cormorant, Cape Gannet, Damara Tern, Caspian Tern, Swift Tern and African Black Oystercatcher.



AEWA is an intergovernmental treaty dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, Greenland and the Canadian Archipelago. One way in which the agreement attempts to execute its mandate is by species action plans and several of these have been drafted but this was the first time that a multi-species plan was tackled.

To achieve this a group of bird experts from Angola, Namibia and South Africa were invited and two representatives from AEWA also attended the meeting. The viability of the target species was assessed and then threats to each one of them were identified and ranked. Finally, actions were proposed to mitigate or eliminate the threats. The material will now be assembled into an action plan which will be submitted to the meeting of parties of AEWA next year for approval. A short outing to some of the conservation sites along the coast was conducted on 11 September.





Rüppell's Korhaan with a chick photographed by Hugo Haussmann in the Marienfluss.



African Skimmer on what appears to be a nest photographed by Hugo Haussmann on the Chobe River.

Finally!!

At the fund raising dinner for Vultures Namibia in 2013 we hoped to make money to purchase some camera traps. As it turned out we made enough to purchase three camera traps and over the Easter weekend went on an excursion to put these up at Hotsas where we were hoping to get plenty photos of tagged vultures. At the end of the weekend we already had well over 10 000 photos—mostly of zebras coming to drink at night. The next download was no different—a brazillion zebra photos, some of oryx and the odd photo of my colleagues, tourists and horse safaris, no vultures. Ok, we'll just have to wait. Finally, some time in July, we got our first vultures. Plenty of tags but none of them readable because the cameras are too far away. Enter Mark and his intrepid camera moving team to re-situate the cameras. In an operation that would make the SAS blush the cameras were swiftly repositioned and two weeks later we had at least six identifiable birds.

F090, photographed 20 August 2014, ringed as a chick on 16 October 2010 at Bakenkop by Peter Bridgeford. Time elapsed: 3 years, 10 months, 5 days; distance moved: 47.052 km

L211, photographed 20 August 2014, ringed as a chick on 16 October 2010 near Ganab by Holger Kolberg. Time elapsed: 3 years, 10 months, 5 days; distance moved: 11.814 km

F097, photographed 26 August 2014, ringed as a chick on 17 October 2010 at Alberts' Koppies by Uschi Kirchner. Time elapsed: 3 years, 10 months, 10 days; distance moved: 25.708 km

L372, photographed 27 August 2014, ringed as a chick on 9 December 2012 near Tinkas by Dawid van der Merwe. Time elapsed: 1 year, 8 months, 17 days; distance moved: 23.949 km

L344, photographed 27 August 2014, ringed as a chick on 12 October 2012 east of the D1998 by Paul Jandrell. Time elapsed: 1 year, 10 months, 15 days; distance moved: 33.648 km

L264, photographed 03 September 2014, ringed as a chick on 16 October 2011 near Gemsbokwater by Holger Kolberg. This chick had several bee-stings on its head then, good to see it survived. Time elapsed: 2 years, 10 months, 19 days; distance moved: 13.959 km

Hopefully this is the beginning of a never ending stream of re-sightings. Many Thanks to Mark and his team for all the effort put into this!

Holger Kolberg



Bird Atlas Update

By now most of you will have noticed that the SABAP website has changed. The most significant change is that you can now edit your data online. So if you made a mistake with one of the species or forgot to add one, all you need to do is go to the website, log in, open the card and edit whatever needs editing. You can also change the pentad, add observers etc.

An atlasing bash to Hardap Game Park was conducted from 23 to 26 August 2013. Participation was limited because this would be a “camping without facilities, 4X4 required”, trip. We met at the park gate on the 23rd and proceeded to Klein Komatzas where we would be staying for the duration of the visit.

The Hardap Game Park is covered by seven pentads of which only four had been atlased previously, so our intention was to concentrate on the three “virgin” pentads. We had a go at the first one of these in the afternoon before returning to camp for a well-deserved drink and a “kuier” around the campfire.

The next morning found us all shivering because it was freezing! That did not deter us though and we soon hit the road in our quest to cover the pentads. Fortunately it warmed up and by lunchtime we were happy to retire to the shade of the big camelthorn at our camp. We continued in the afternoon and in the end tallied 22, 51 and 35 species respectively for the three pentads.

On Monday we proceeded to cover the “dam pentads” i.e. the four pentads that had been covered before and also did a wetland bird count at the same time. These pentads yielded 76, 57, 33 and 42 species respectively.

All too soon Tuesday arrived and we packed up our camp and returned home. Many thanks to Wilma Moller for granting us permission to camp in the park and thanks also to the participants for their help.

Keep atlasing!

Holger Kolberg

Regional Atlas Coordinator for Namibia



As it stands...

627 pentads atlased

5.91% coverage

96 active observers

1816 cards submitted

Atlasing bash at Hardap Game Park, 23 to 26 August 2014



Calendar of Events

- 11 October 2014:** Namibia Bird Club at the Biomarkt.
- 12 October 2014:** Namibia Bird Club morning walk at the Gammams water works.
- 9 November 2014:** Namibia Bird Club morning walk at Avis Dam.
- 23 November 2014:** Namibia Bird Club big birding day at Monte Christo.
- 14 December 2014:** Namibia Bird Club morning walk at the Gammams water works.
- 2 February 2015:** World Wetland Day.
- 20 March 2015:** World Sparrow Day (serious! Check Wikipedia).
- 22 March 2015:** World Water Day.
- 22 April 2015:** Earth Day.
- 25 April 2015:** World Penguin Day.
- 4 May 2015:** International Respect for Chickens Day (Yes!).
- 9 and 10 May 2015:** World Migratory Bird Day.
- 22 May 2015:** World Biodiversity Day.
- 1 to 9 June 2015:** Meeting of the contracting parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in Punta del Este, Uruguay.
- 5 June 2015:** World Environment Day.
- 8 June 2015:** World Oceans Day.
- 9 June 2015:** Donald Duck Day.
- 5 September 2015:** International Vulture Awareness Day.



What do you get when you stick twenty scientists in a room? *Kabelsalat!* Photo taken by Jessica Kemper at the AEWA species action planning workshop in Swakopmund.