

Namibia Bird News

No 4, December 2012



'T is the season to be jolly...

This is the fourth issue of NBN and the last one for 2012. I'm sure everyone is looking forward to some time off over the holiday period just to re-charge the batteries and get that motor running to face the challenges of 2013.

So while you are charging your batteries, why don't you bird atlas a virgin pentad or two? Be quick, because there are not many left, only just over ten thousand or so! And whilst you are twiddling your thumbs waiting for the Christmas turkey/goose/kudu *boud* to roast, why don't give your creative side a chance and write something for the NBN? Ok, so you're not Goethe, then grab your camera and snap a few interesting birds/mammals/dragonflies/etc in your 'hood. Submit them to the ADU's virtual museum and 'bang', you're famous. So much to do, so little time!

I thank all the people that have sent contributions and have encouraged me to continue the newsletter. You make it all worthwhile!

Remember to send contributions, comments and other useful stuff to nambirdnews@gmail.com.

Happy birding!
Holger



Photo Elaine Grane

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Who is this?



The above bird was photographed by Jessica Kemper in Lüderitzbucht on 29 November 2012. Currently the jury is still out on whether it is a Red-footed Falcon or an Amur Falcon.

Fifty years Namibia Bird Club: some childhood memories

Holger Kolberg

The Namibia Bird Club recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and this brought back some fond memories since my father was one of the founders of the bird club in 1962. That was before I was born, so needless to say that I have had a connection to the club all my life.



Holger, his "kühles Kissen" (cool pillow) and Bonzo the pavement special in the "bungalow" at Goreangab (photo Hans Kolberg).

The bird club, or working group (*Arbeitsgruppe*) as it was called in those days, was a very active group of people. Some of my earliest memories are of weekend outings to Goreangab Dam. Yes! You read correctly: weekend outings to Goreangab Dam. Of course, in those days it was more akin to an overland expedition than the quiet drive through the suburbs it is now. Once you passed the state hospital and the few houses of old Khomasdal you drove through the bush for what seemed like hours before you got to the dam. We used to camp below the dam wall next to the bubbling creek that originated in the Gammams sewage works. There even was a "bungalow" for us to sleep in. This luxury accommodation consisted of a rickety wooden frame that my father would drape an *administrasie-seil* over in the rainy season to stop us from getting wet.

My father owned an old Ford – I think it was a 1948 model. One day, during the rainy season, we were traveling back from Goreangab. My brother was driving, my dad sat in front and the young folk, Dieter Ludwig, my sister and I, sat on the back. We hadn't gotten far when a mighty downpour hit us. Dieter just grabbed a folding table and held it over us to stop us getting soaked. Now this is no mean feat because this was one of my father's homemade folding tables and in true *Oubaas* Kolberg tradition it was *gebou om te hou* (you can drive a tank over it and it won't buckle!). I'm sure Dieter would have qualified for the clean and jerk in the Olympics without a problem. Anyway, the end result of it all was that all of us ended up in the cab of the Ford and all we worried about was whether we would make it through the rivers on the way home or not.

Every Saturday, if we weren't in the bush somewhere, my father would have a meeting with Dr Rust, the secretary of the Scientific Society. My mom would walk with us kids from the Scientific Society (it was where the National Arts Gallery is now) down to the Model Supermarket (that was where the Shoprite is now) to do shopping. We would return with our shopping and head straight for the Scientific Society's library. Frau Benseler, the librarian and also a keen birder, would sit my sister and me down at one of the tables and give us a book to look at, usually one with lots of pictures whilst she and my mom would have a *Kaffeeklatsch* and wait for my dad to finish his meeting. I'm sure this is where I developed my fondness for books which I haven't lost to this day!.



Oubaas Kolberg and his Ford on the way to Goreangab Dam (photo Peter Becker).

There were also long-weekend "excursions" to such far-away and exotic places as the Waterberg. Again, in those days it wasn't the quick hop, skip and jump down the B1 that it is now. For these excursions we were allowed to use the Series I Landrover of the Scientific Society. Most of the time the road was so bad that you couldn't travel at the vehicle's alleged top speed of 50mph. The cacophony of rattles, bangs and whines made it nigh on impossible to keep up a civilised conversation, so my sister and I kept ourselves entertained by singing *Fahrtenlieder* which we mostly made up ourselves. After the 200-and-umpteenth verse of "*Okosongomingo, Okosongomingo, trinkt noch Milch von der Muuhuuter*" (sung to something resembling the tune of Oh my darling Caroline) my dad would eventually snap and order us to shut up!



Excursion to Farm Sissekab, the von Maltzahn's farm near Otavi, the "Wissenschafts Kombi" is in the background (photo Kolberg archive).

The Scientific Society eventually sold the Landy and bought a VW Kombi which then became the excursion vehicle. This was really neat because my dad would take out the back seat, pack all the *trommels* and other stuff in there, throw the bedding on top and that was then our (Herta and me) den for the journey. The middle seat, after all, was reserved for some of the esteemed members of the *Arbeitsgruppe* such as Frau Benseler and Mrs Charlton who would travel with us.

I remember there was always a flock of VW Beetles on the excursions – Werhahn had one (sans passenger seat!), the Joerges', the teachers Claus etc. And then there was the *Mutterschiff* (the mothership). The Ludwigs had one of those big lumbering things, I think it

was a Holden stationwagon. It just didn't fit in with the whole Veedub theme but the coolest thing about the *Mutterschiff* was, at least for us kids, that you could crank down the back window of the car. How cool is that?!

There were always hordes of kids on the trips: two Kolbergs, four Stöcks, two Joerges' and usually a handful of friends, cousins and visitors. We always had a blast! Remember this is pre-electronic age so we would entertain ourselves by creating some nonsense or other. If it wasn't coating each other with fresh cow dung (called Fipsing after Fips our fox-terrier who would take great delight in rolling in fresh cow patties) then we would try to shoot down wasps nests with our cattles etc. Its almost criminal how "unworried" our parents were about us and what we got up to. If that was now, our parents would probably be charged with child abuse. All they had was a reasonably well equipped first-aid box because there were always thorns in feet, cut fingers (Hey, check my new pocket knife, ouch!) and other minor abrasions and bruises. There was also the odd bruised ego when your mates had played a particularly mean trick on you but that was usually cured by a "*Komm, stell dich nicht so an!*" and off you went plotting serious revenge.

Dieter Ludwig, as the youngest of the adults didn't have it easy. Apart from being called the *Stift* (= apprentice – because he was an apprentice carpenter and ringer at that time) he always was the target of us kids' practical jokes. I clearly remember one occasion, I think it was on farm Frischgewagt, the adults had gone up to the farmhouse to *kuier* in the evening, leaving us kids to our own resources. Dieter, sticking with the Ludwig tradition of big lumbering vehicles, had just bought an El Camino **with** a canopy and had put his bedroll behind the car where he was going to sleep. So of course us lighties thought it a brilliant idea to put the bedroll back into the bakkie. Apparently later that night Dieter searched at length for his bedroll and just when he got *moedeloos* and decided to sleep in the back of the bakkie...



Cornelius Werhahn (the bearded man with the cup) always entertained us with jokes and stories around the campfire at night (photo Kolberg archive).

But Dieter also caused a fair share of his own troubles. On one occasion we were camping next to a big dam on a farm. Not far away from the dam there was a ruin of an old building. So when dusk arrived Dieter proclaimed he would inspect the ruin for owls and off he went. In a flash he was back, breathing heavily and pale as if he'd seen a ghost. It turns out that as Dieter poked



Early morning on Farm Frauenstein, Dieter Ludwig, Holger and Herta Kolberg huddling around the fire (photo Peter Becker).

his head through one of the windows the resident farm donkey poked his head through the window opposite and brayed. Of course, there was a lot of goodhearted banter around the fire that night!

The objective of that visit was to ring a whole lot of egret chicks that were in nests in a tree in the middle of the dam. The farmer had a boat (it was quite a large dam) and Dieter and the horde of kids went to do a nest inspection. Dieter edged the bow of the boat into the tree and confirmed that there were indeed chicks in the nest. Inspection done, it was time to go back and Dieter wanted to reverse all *windgat* away from the tree at full speed but selected forward instead of reverse. Soon all of us found out why a *haak-en-steek* is called precisely

that! In the mad rush for cover, my sister even got hit on the head by the echo sounder – a solid wooden dropper used to gauge the depth of the water. Needless to say, more banter!

Then there was the expedition to Gobabeb over the Easter weekend. Paradise for us kids! You had the Kuiseb River and the sand dunes **and** the Topnaar's goats! One could swear that mistnets are goat magnets – at least one net was destroyed by a magnificent specimen of a Topnaar bok. That didn't worry us kids that much because we had dune boards. Yep, how much fun can you have with a rectangular piece of hardboard and a can of Cobra polish (lavender flavour works the best, trust me!). Of course soon it wasn't much fun anymore to go one-one on a board so we tried to fit as many onto one board as possible. Then some bright spark had the idea to overlap the two boards and all of us could go at once! Holger as the smallest (in stature) of the lot had to sit in front and hold up the edge (the logic defies!) whilst some of the older, more mature ones would steer from the back. And away we went, straight at a rather large clump of *boesman steekgras* or whatever species it was. It must have been quite spectacular, given the right viewing angle, to see this row of kids come bursting through the *steekgras* and then landing in one great big heap on top of the smallest one. End of dune boarding experiments for me! In the evenings there were always great big campfires with braai and jacket potatoes. To this day I still maintain that it was the overdose of salt on my jacket potato that made me throw up that night and not the copious number of Easter sweets that I had eaten. Also spare a thought for poor Gerdi Stöck who was unceremoniously yanked out of his bed by his mother because she thought it was him being sick!



Outing to Farm Ombuerendende, Oubaas Kolberg with his characteristic *Gustav Gans* (Gladstone Gander) hat, Herta and Holger (photo Hans Kolberg).

Another great memory was the trip to Sandwich Harbour. What an adventure! We travelled to Walvis Bay by train. It was the first time ever I had been on a train and I was determined to make the most of it. The train left Windhoek late in the afternoon, stopped at Brakwater, then at Teufelsbach, Osona... I managed to stay awake till Okahandja; the next big city on the route was Karibib. When my mom woke me up the next morning as we were rolling into Walvis Bay my first question was: "Have we passed Karibib yet?" We were met at the station by Dr Rolf Jensen, the ornithologist for nature conservation, and Mr Hu Berry (he was still studying to be a Dr) and together with them and the Stöcks who had driven from Windhoek in their new Landrover we tackled the tricky journey to Sandwich. Tricky, we were told, because there was one place where you could only get through at low tide, so your timing had to be absolutely spot-on. We arrived at what I can only describe as a wetland wonderland although at the time I didn't fully appreciate the importance of this place. Accommodation was in a rustic wooden house and it wasn't long before we kids were scrambling up and down the massive sand dunes behind the house. Dr Jensen was a fitness fanatic so every morning – before breakfast – we had to run up the dune and



Easter 1969 at Farm Diekmannshausen, Waterberg (photo Hans Kolberg).

then down again. Which was, of course, where the nonsense started, because what is funnier than to trip someone that is barrelling full tilt down a dune? We even managed to do it to my dad once, after which he always made sure that he was the last one to leave the top of the dune.

The Stöck's farm, Frauenstein, soon became a regular weekend destination for us. Most of the bird ringing took place at Schumannndamm. It was always us kids' duty to check the nets and we were even allowed to extricate birds from them (it was my dad's opinion that the small fingers of children more easily got birds out of nets than large adult fingers – having inherited the old man's huge hands I can now attest to

that fact!). On the odd occasion when there were too many birds in the nets we would just shout "SOS!" and that would be the signal for the adults to come to our rescue.

I still remember very clearly the tenth anniversary celebrations of the *Arbeitsgruppe*. This was held at the Karakul hall on the Windhoek show grounds and was a major occasion. Weeks in advance we spent evenings at the Scientific Society preparing material for the event. Apart from live birds, there were also exhibits of nests, bird wings and ringing equipment. Of course for us kids it provided an opportunity to *jol* around the show grounds uninhibited, explore and play cowboys and crooks.

Morning walks at Avis Dam usually passed without any major incident but on one occasion, Sidney Seftel provided us with some light entertainment. Sidney was walking along looking at some bird through his binoculars when *Kartoffel!* He disappeared in a cloud of dust down an enormous aardvark hole. Antje Joerges, one of the kids, still had time to exclaim: "Sidney, what are you doing?!" before the whole bunch of us had to scurry behind the nearest *hakkiebos* to hide because we were laughing so much. I cannot remember what the adults did, but I'm sure they had a tough time to keep a straight face trying to help Sidney out of the hole.



At Avis Dam with the *Gesellschaft's Landy* (photo Kolberg archive).

My father was transferred to Swakopmund in 1976 and our active participation in *Arbeitsgruppe* activities pretty much came to an end although I do have fond memories of renovating the observation hut of the *Arbeitsgruppe* at the Swakop sewage works (any excuse not to do homework!). I stayed in Swakop until I finished school but will always look back at the early years of the bird club as a youth well spent!



The "Stift" cooking the breakfast pap, pith helmet and alles! (photo Hans Kolberg).

Bird Atlas Update

We are eight months down the line from the official start of the bird atlas in Namibia and things are going well. At the time of writing we have covered 214 pentads (or 2.0219% of the country) and 49 active atlasers have submitted 399 cards. The average number of species per card is 43 with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 133.

With the holidays upon us and people traveling I trust that by the end of the year we will have hit the 2.5% mark, i.e. just over 250 pentads, and although this is a far cry from my rather enthusiastic challenge to have 10% covered by the end of the year I am still very proud of what we have achieved. To put things in perspective, we have 10 584 pentads and 49 active observers i.e. 216 pentads per observer. Compare this to Limpopo Province in South Africa where there are 5 (that's right: five!) pentads per observer and, the cherry on top, Gauteng, where there are more observers than pentads!

The challenge is thus to manage this so that we can get best value for our money. *Ad hoc* lists i.e. lists where you have not been able to spend the required two hours of intensive birding will be the bread and butter of the Namibian atlas. Neil Thomson is a shining example of this. He has to travel to quite a few "exotic" locations in the line of his work but then, in true African fashion, he usually has to spend some time waiting for other colleagues to arrive. During that time he makes a bird list and submits it as an *ad hoc* record. Way to go! So, here's my challenge to all of you that spend your time on the road, when you have a few minutes somewhere, make a bird list and submit it, it all helps to contribute toward the bigger picture.

However, full protocol cards are the holy grail of the atlas and I'm very pleased to see that every time the bird club goes on an outing a card is submitted. That is why, for example, the pentad containing Avis Dam is a healthy purple colour and the one with the Gammams sewage works is a lush green colour. Eckart Demasius regularly sends cards for the Mile 4 salt works. These records are very important because they provide long-term data series which will eventually yield information on e.g. when migrants appear and disappear. Therefore, again, my challenge to all of you out there is that if you visit a site regularly, please make an atlas card and send it in, we need that information.

I hereby would like to thank all the persons that have sent in atlas records (and filled in the numerous ORFs that came with them!). You are this project and you will make it a success!

Keep atlassing!

Holger Kolberg

Regional Atlas Coordinator for Namibia



AERIAL SURVEY/RINGING OF BREEDING LAPPET-FACED VULTURES IN THE NAMIB-NAUKLUFT PARK & FARM PROJECT October 2012

Introduction

Namib-Naukluft Park

The monitoring and ringing of Lappet-faced Vultures (LFV) in the Namib-Naukluft Park (NNP) started in 1991. The Ministry Environment and Tourism (MET) supports this long-term project. It is providing an increasing amount of data, which wildlife management can use for planning by ornithologists and biodiversity researchers. This project also generates good publicity for the vultures and the realization of the many dangers faced by these birds when they leave protected areas.

In 2000, for the first time, an aerial survey of part of the breeding area at Ganab took place. In 2001, an aerial survey of 15 hours covered most of the known breeding areas. Because of the positive results of the 2001 aerial survey, the decision was made to continue using an aircraft to find the occupied nests. Since then, there has been an aerial survey every year, followed by the ringing. Patagial tags were introduced in 2006.

During the aerial survey, the co-ordinates of occupied nests are stored on a GPS. From the air, adult birds, chicks and even eggs are visible in the nests. However, it is very difficult to differentiate between birds roosting on nests and breeding birds. Although expensive, the aerial survey is the most cost-effective way of finding the nests of breeding birds scattered over hundreds of square kilometres. This also reduces off-road driving in sensitive areas.

Farm Project

The project involves the farmer, his family and workers and brings the plight of vultures to the notice of these people. As the majority of vultures in Namibia feed on farms and this is where they are sometimes poisoned, the goodwill of landowners is essential to the survival of these birds. The project has been very successful because it involves the people living on the land and the ringing of the vulture chicks is a hands-on project. The landowners see and handle the vulture chicks, help with the extension ladder and it all makes a lasting impression. While in the field, we talk of the dangers faced by vultures, the misuse of poison and other threats. We have handed out booklets and posters about ringing, vultures, owls, other raptors and poison. We now ring regularly on several farms and each year we attempt to ring on additional farms. What is significant is the number of farmers who contact us and want to become involved in the project. The farmers involved have become ambassadors for vultures and the fact that they are donating money to the project is a sign of its positive nature.

The first demonstration of bird ringing took place early in 2003 and was initiated by Dirk Heinrich and Holger Kolberg. They showed members of the Hochfeld Conservancy how garden birds are caught in nets/ traps and ringed. They discussed vulture conservation and this led to an invitation to ring vultures on farms. In September 2003, Dirk, Holger and I ringed vultures on several farms.

The ringing and tagging is now done under the banner of Vultures Namibia. This is not an attempt to take over the project from individuals, but rather market the conservation efforts of many people under one banner, and the brand is Vultures Namibia. The Vultures Namibia website can be found at: www.vultures-namibia.com (and there is also a facebook page – Ed.)



Photo Holger Kolberg



Photo Holger Kolberg

Aerial survey in NNP 2012

The survey started on Monday 1 October, at the Ganab airfield in the NNP. This year we were fortunate to have two aircraft to do the survey. Gustav Holz of WestAir Wings Group piloted his Maule 170 (V5-DPP) and Paul van Schalkwyk flew his Cessna 170 (V5-AFT). Peter Keil, of WestAir Wings Group, arrived by vehicle with additional equipment and camping gear. This company also donated fuel for the survey. Observers were Telané Greyling and I. Holger Kolberg from MET was the liaison officer and kept an eye on the survey. Helen Kolb and Robin Burns drove the back-up vehicles and assisted with logistics.

The survey of about 18 hours, has over the past few years, been done over four days. However, with two aircraft, the survey was completed in two days. On Tuesday morning, 2 October, while the aircraft continued with the survey, the ground crew moved to Sossusvlei Lodge airfield. As it was being resurfaced, we also used the MET airfield at Sesriem. The survey ended on Tuesday afternoon and including ferry time, took 19 hours. Both planes are ideal for this kind of survey where low, slow flying is required. Thanks to Gustav, Paul and Peter, who not only piloted the aircraft but also helped to look for occupied vulture nests.



Photo Hartmut Kolb

Ring-necking NNP 2012

On Wednesday morning the whole crew went to ring the two chicks in the Sesriem area. Gustav, Paul and Peter then returned to Windhoek. On Wednesday and Thursday we continued ring-necking in the Tsamsvlei area. We were joined by Hartmut Kolb on Thursday morning. On a hot and windy Friday afternoon, friends and sponsors met at Namibwater and enjoyed a swim in the reservoir before making camp under the camel thorn trees. . Paul Jandrell and Christo Snyman joined us for the week. On Saturday morning, we moved to Escourt and the Tsondab River and camped at the mouth of the vlei. On Sunday, the vast Tsondab Plains were crossed and another two chicks ring-necked. Instead of battling over the dunes to get to Saagberg, we drove out at Escourt and took the main road via Solitaire to Saagberg. Here the Windhoek contingent said goodbye and headed for home. Many thanks to Daneel, Rein and families for the financial support and for cheerfully helping with the heavy ladder. Hopefully one of the children will become a vulture ring-necker.

We continued ring-necking on Sunday afternoon, Monday morning and returned via Ganab. Holger and I went to Walvis and printed maps with the marked nests. On Tuesday Holger returned to Ganab and with Christo and Paul, ring-necked the chicks in the Mirabib and Tinkas/Bloedkoppie area on Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday afternoon I headed for Ganab after Martin Wood and David Gomes from Johannesburg loaded my vehicle with ladder and other equipment. Many of our 'vulture friends' had arrived at the Ganab campsites. Several new faces were seen and it was encouraging to have several enthusiastic children in the group.

On Saturday morning Holger took half the group and moved to Hotsas/Gemsbokwater area while I took the other half south to the Kriess Rus section. We managed to ring-neck nine chicks before returning and Holger's group did eleven. On Sunday morning some people had to leave and we then went in one group to ring-neck the remaining chicks. By Sunday evening all the work was done and only a small group remained at Ganab. On Monday on the way to Walvis, Martin, Dave and I ring-necked the last two chicks at Tumas View.

Results of the ring-necking

A total of 69 Lappet-faced Vulture chicks were ring-necked, as opposed to 45 last year. No vulture chicks were found in the Tsauchab River but one was close to Sesriem and another north of Elim Dune. Vultures breeding in the Sossusvlei area remain low, probably because of disturbance by the high volume of tourist vehicles, sightseeing aircraft and hot-air balloons.

North of Sesriem, in the Sukses/Tsamsvlei area there were six chicks ring-necked. This number is up in comparison to the previous two years. The Tson-dab area had 10 breeding records in 2009 and 2010, but only four in 2011. This year we ring-necked

seven. Between Saagberg and Kamberg, we ring-necked five chicks in 2010, but only one in 2011. This year we found three chicks. Ganab surprised us, with 52 chicks ring-necked. In 2010, we ring-necked 64 chicks, but only 35 in 2011. There are still large numbers of gemsbok, springbok, mountain zebra and ostriches here.

Both the aerial survey and ring-necking went with almost no hitches. New sponsors joined the team and we are very grateful for their support. Some of the past sponsors once again contributed to the project.



Photo Peter Bridgeford

Logistics and costs

The Lappet-faced Vulture breeds over a vast area in the Namib-Naukluft Park and this increases the time and costs during the aerial survey and ringing. However, because of the generous sponsorship this year, the costs to Vultures Namibia were minimal. Thank you to all the people who gave time and funds to assist the project.

Aerial survey, over 2 days	18 hours
Ringing.....	9 days
Distance travelled by Vultures Namibia vehicle: Load avgas, aerial survey & ringing.	2 600 km
Hire of aircraft.....	Sponsored
Avgas 3 drums	Sponsored

Farm Project

The ringing took place from 16 September to 26 September. The ringing started on Smalhoek in the Dordabis area and on the Sunday, 21 members of the Namibia Bird Club attended and assisted with the ringing and tagging. Thanks to the hospitality of Iris and Helmut Stehn who fed and watered Holger and I. Hanno von Ditfurth arrived on Smalhoek via an aardvark hole that almost swallowed his vehicle. On Tuesday we left Smalhoek with Hanno leading us through the farms on a short-cut to reach Heimat, ring one White backed Vulture (WBV) chick and then onto Lauwater Suid. Here Frikkie Engels joined us for the morning's ringing and we stayed in his hunting camp. Frikkie, Hanno and the Willys Jeep had an altercation with an aardvark hole, but all survived. The next morning Frikkie and Annetjie joined us while we ringed four WBV chicks.



We then headed for Hanno and Hilke's farm Rietfontein for the night.

On Thursday morning Holger and I went to Garib to ring one WBV and one LfV. From there to Dordabis to attend the Dordabis Farmer's Union meeting. After the meeting we drove to Autabib where we met Gert Niehaus who accommodated us in the hunter's cottage. Early on Friday morning we were out and after ringing, we returned to Rietfontein. The veld fire was burning on the mountain behind the house and by Saturday morning was on the lower slopes. Holger and I returned to Windhoek and the afternoon drove to Aris to ring there with Hanjo Böhme and friends.

On Monday we were on the road again, this time to Rainhof. The Düvel's could not accompany us, but sent a farm worker to guide and assist us. That evening we were guests of the Düvels. On Tuesday we were on the road to Gobabis and met Kallie Nel and ringed on the farm Neuhof. We then moved to Oas and ringed here as well, accompanied by three workers. That evening we stayed on Neuhof in the hunting cottage. On Wednesday we ringed on the other side of Gobabis on Okatjokopo. Gerrit van der Merwe was not there, but arranged with his foreman to accompany us. After lunch we returned to Windhoek.

On Thursday I went to see Peter Keil at WestAir Wings offices and loaded four drums of Avgas. By late afternoon I was home in Walvis Bay. On Saturday Holger and a few Bird Club members went to Teufelsbach and ringed six WBV chicks.

This project would not be possible without the assistance of MET in the person of Holger Kolberg and the use of his official vehicle. Many thanks to Deputy Director Kenneth Uiseb, MET Scientific Services for his support. Holger was always willing to go the extra mile to bring the plight of vultures to the attention of the farmers on whose land we were allowed to ring. Without the enthusiastic support of these landowners, we would not have achieved a thing. Thank you. Your hospitality is truly appreciated.





Total vultures ringed on farms 2012

Farm	WBV	LFV
Smalhoek	18	
Rainhof	5	
Lauwater Suid	8	
Aris	1	
Heimat	1	
Neuhof	3	
Garib	1	1
Oas	2	
Autabib	3	1
Okatjokopo	8	
Binsenheim		1
Teufelsbach	6	
Total	56	3

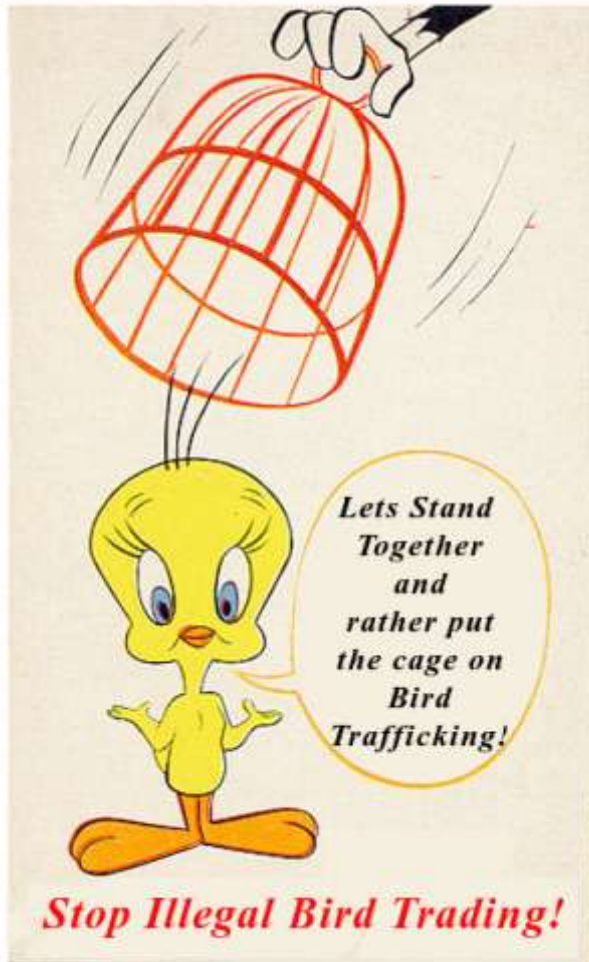
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not continue without the support of several people and organisations. Vultures Namibia thanks the following:

- MET for allowing the survey, tagging and ringing to continue.
- Chief Control Warden Manie le Roux for enthusiastic support of the project.
- Deputy Director Kenneth Uiseb, MET Scientific Services for support.
- Holger Kolberg for his drive and enthusiasm.
- Pilots Gustav Holz, Paul van Schalkwyk and Peter Keil.
- Paul van Schalkwyk for donating his time and aircraft.
- WestAir Wings Group for donating their aircraft and fuel.
- Jannes Brandt, Johan van der Hoven, Sandra Gush, Rein van Veen, Daneel v d Walt, Robin Burns for donations.
- Old Mutual for financial support and Christo Snyman who organised the sponsorship.
- Sandra Dantu & Mark Boorman who organised the popular Gala Dinner in aid of vulture conservation and all those people and businesses who supported the event.
- Hilke and Hanno von Ditfurth for promoting vulture conservation in Dordabis and organising the ringing on farms in that area (and the cool hats and fleeces—Ed.).
- Helen Kolb and Robin Burns as ground crew and Telané Greyling as observer.
- Birds of Prey Program of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, for support and tagging equipment.
- Namibia Nature Foundation looked after our finances.
- All the vulture friends who helped with the ringing, carried the ladder and shared our campfires.
- If I have forgotten anybody, please accept my humble apologies. All the people who made the ringing fun and enjoyable, **thank you**. See you there next year!

Peter Bridgeford





Stop illegal bird trading

The Avicultural Association of Namibia (AAN) is a self policing, voluntary group of aviculturalists. Because of the voluntary nature of the group not all who associate with the group adhere to proposed norms and standards for best practice and these standards may even be ignored among AAN members, most of whom breed and trade with parrot species. In order to trade with wildlife a permit is required from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and in order to breed and sell parrot species the birds must have permanent identification. This is done with a closed ring fitted over the baby bird's foot so that once the bird has grown the ring can no longer slip off the foot. The ring provides an identification proving that the bird was bred in captivity. This method is very poorly enforced and many members of the public do not seem to know that buying a parrot without a closed ring is buying an illegal bird, a bird that may have been part of unsustainable harvesting from a wild population.

Aviculture is one of the greatest threats to parrot species globally. A case in point is the extinction of the Spix's Macaw, a beautiful blue bird poached to extinction in the 1990's just across the Atlantic Ocean in Brazil. It is the ease of transporting birds, the lack of local

inspection and enforcement by authorities and the lack of information given to the general public that puts all avicultural species at risk of unscrupulous action. On the 25th July 2012, INTERPOL's Environmental Crime Program reported that nearly 4 000 people were arrested across 32 countries because of the illegal trade and exploitation of birds and their products. The report states that "Operation Cage" clearly demonstrates the global scale of the illegal trade in birds and other wildlife and states "This is not only an organized crime issue, but also a global bio-security risk".

Africa has its' own parrot species at risk and on a continental scale the African Grey Parrot is most at risk from the scourge of illegal trapping and trading. In a message from Jamie Gilardi, the executive director of the World Parrot Trust, he writes "If you care about wildlife, nature, your pets, our planet, and all things good, you need to support the suspension of all trade in grey parrots from Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Thousands of these long-lived, intelligent parrots are ripped out of the wild every year, packed into cramped travel crates, fed on moldy peanuts, and then sold into the lucrative wildlife trade. Many die from exhaustion or fatal injury in nets and snares or from dehydration, disease and stress in rudimentary wooden crates when being stored, transported and sold by local trappers. Even more die in cramped travel crates in transit to rural markets were thousands of grey parrots are collected by exporters and quarantined until they are sold, euthanized or die...." In Namibia we must be aware that we are one of the countries through which birds are trafficked and we have a busy port through which birds can be moved around the globe. .

On a national scale Namibia's five species are all at risk of illegal trade and this trade can only be limited by the factor of the connection between demand and supply. The more people globally that are aware of the inhuman treatment of animals during trafficking operations the closer we can get to blocking the de-

mand for wild caught birds.

When the Avicultural Association approached NARREC to contribute information for their stall at the annual Windhoek Agricultural Show there were a number of avicultural issues that came to mind, for example cage sizes, information of best husbandry practices for the public and why permits are necessary, however even knowing the miserable life that many captive animals endure, for the future of many species NARREC chose to highlight the issue of illegal trade through posters and flyers displayed at the Avicultural Association's stall at the Windhoek Agricultural Show.

Liz Komen

Some exciting stuff from the literature

Exhaustive Family Tree for Birds Shows Recent, Rapid Diversification—A Yale-led scientific team has produced the most comprehensive family tree for birds to date, connecting all living bird species - nearly 10,000 in total - and revealing surprising new details about their evolutionary history and its geographic context. Walter Jetz of Yale confirmed that this is the first time that the full global picture of diversification in time and space has been generated for such a large group of species and with a high degree of confidence. The research shows that birds' diversification rate has increased over the last 50 million years. The researchers attribute the growing rate of avian diversity to an abundance of group-specific adaptations. Birds' exceptional mobility may also have contributed because it allowed them to colonise new regions and exploit unused ecological niches. Diversification rates are higher in the Western Hemisphere than in the Eastern, and higher on islands than on mainlands. Surprisingly, there is little difference in rates between the tropics and high latitudes. Read more at: W. Jetz, Thomas, G. H., Joy, J.B., Hartmann, K. & A.O. Mooers. **The global diversity of birds in space and time.** *Nature*, October 31, 2012 DOI: [10.1038/nature11631](https://doi.org/10.1038/nature11631)

Two new Emperor Penguin colonies in Antarctica—Two new Emperor Penguin colonies totalling 6000 chicks have been observed near Mertz Glacier by scientists from the *Institut Pluridisciplinaire Hubert Curien* in Strasbourg. The two new colonies were revealed during the late winter season trip of the MSS Astrolabe 1 although suspicions of additional colonies had been raised since 1999. Read more at: Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) (2012, November 8). Two new emperor penguin colonies in Antarctica. *ScienceDaily*. [http://www.sciencedaily.com- /releases/2012/11/121108181439.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/11/121108181439.htm)

Drought in the Horn of Africa delays migrating birds—Several migratory songbird species arrived extremely late in northern Europe due to the catastrophic drought that affected the Horn of Africa last year. Small backpacks fitted on birds collected data that not only revealed the birds' migration route but also an extended stay in the Horn of Africa. The birds, such as Thrush Nightingale and Red-backed Shrike, spent about a week longer in the Horn of Africa in 2011 than they did in previous years. The birds would have needed more time to feed and gain energy for their onward travels due to the drought and this caused a delayed arrival and breeding in Europe. The data backpacks weigh just one gram and have allowed the researchers to re-construct 26 migration routes. Read more at: University of Copenhagen (2012, December 6). Drought in the Horn of Africa delays migrating birds. *ScienceDaily*. <http://www.sciencedaily.com- /releases/2012/12/121206142012.htm>

Selected recoveries, retraps, controls etc.

On 10 December 2012 Rod Braby found a carcass of an adult Cape Gannet about 1km from the ocean at Caution Reef just south of Swakopmund with ring 9A46545. The bird was ringed as a chick on Mercury Island by MCM (RSA Dept of Marine and Coastal Management) on 25 January 2003.

On 28 August 2012 Ben van Wyk spotted a tagged Cape Vulture on Eden Game Ranch in the Grootfontein District. The vulture with tag number C126 was ringed by David Pretorius at the Blouberg Nature Reserve in Limpopo Province, South Africa, on 24 November 2011, after rehabilitation. The bird had moved 1127km in 10 months.

On 27 September 2012 Wessel Swanepoel photographed Lapped-faced Vulture E148 about 3km north-west of Etosha National Park's King Nehale gate. The bird was ringed as a chick on 15 October 2009 about 3km north-east of Okaukuejo by Wilferd Versfeld.



Calendar of Events

2 February 2013: World Wetlands Day

9 & 10 February 2012: Walvis Bay wetland bird count

1 – 5 March 2013: BirdLife South Africa AGM “Flock at Sea” with a stop at Walvis Bay

12 March 2013: Namibia Bird Club AGM

If you have any contributions for the calendar of events please send them in.