NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

A branch of

the Namibia Scientific Society
and
the Southern African Ornithological Society

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LANIOTURDUS

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CONTENTS

Table 1. Counts of wetland birds at the Swakop River Lagoon in summer 1992/1993. Count a= 30/12/1992 at 19h00, b= 31/12/1992 at 08h30, c=03/01/1993 at 17h45, d= 04/01/1993 at 07h00.

Species	Counts a	b	c	d	mean	range
	High Tide		Low Tide			
Resident waders						
Whitefronted Plover	6	7	5	7	6	5- 7
Threebanded Plover	6	1	0	1	2	0- 6
Blacksmith Plover	6	4	2	4	5	2- 6
Avocet	1	1	2	2	2	1- 2
Palaearctic waders						
Turnstone	2	1	0	0	1	0- 2
Grey Plover	12	10	6	4	8	4-12
Curlew Sandpiper	6	9	3	7	6	3- 9
Little Stint	5	7	6	4	6	4- 7
Ruff	1	2	0	0	1	0- 2
Common Sandpiper	0	2	1	2	1	0- 2
Bartailed Godwit	52	0	0	0	13	0-52
Kittlitz Plover	0	2	1	2	2	0- 2
Ringed Plover	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Marsh Sandpiper	4	4	0	1	2	0- 4
Resident non-waders						
Dabchick	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Whitebreasted Cormorant	0	5	0	0	1	0- 5
Cape Cormorant	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Cape Teal	2	0	0	5	2	2- 5
Moorhen	3	7	5	6	5	3- 7
Kelp Gull	0	15	1	0	4	0-15
Hartlaub's Gull	94	6	132	22	63	6-132
Grey Heron	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Cape Wagtail	1	1	0	0	1	0- 1
Intra-African non-waders						
White Pelican	8	0	0	1	2	0- 8
Greater Flamingo	0	1	2	2	1	0- 2
Lesser Flamingo	2	180	88	201	118	2-201
South African Shelduck	2	2	0	0	1	0- 2
Palaearctic non-waders						
Sandwich Tern	36	4	6	0	10	0-36
Total number of birds	249	275	260	270	264	249-275
Total number of species	19	25	14	16	19	14-25
Highest count of each species	531					

neither here at the estuary, nor at the Swakopmund sewage works, which, sometimes, is their alternate breeding site. A visit to the sewage works in late December confirmed this.

The Phragmites reeds supported Common Waxbills, African Marsh Warblers, Masked Weavers and European Swallows as in the previous report. Naturally there were, again, more birds in the early morning than in the afternoon, after the day's disruption and noise.

We support the idea of an enclosure for the wetland: a fence on the north and south beach sides to prevent vehicles from entering, the erection of sign boards, guided tours by conservation officers and the construction of an observation hide, similar to the one at the Bird Paradise in Walvis Bay. This would be an asset for our wetland fauna - and for tourism in Swakopmund.

REFERENCES

BROWN, C. 1991. Birds of the Swakop River Lagoon. Lanioturdus 26: 16-21.

NAMIBIA'S THIRD NATIONAL WETLAND BIRD SURVEY, JULY 1992

ROB SIMMONS

Ornithology Section, Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation & Tourism,
P/Bag 13306, Windhoek.

INTRODUCTION

Namibia's third national wetland bird count, a part of the international effort to monitor wetland birds throughout the continent, took place in July 1992. Counters covered about 90% of our major wetlands. As usual, most counts were undertaken by nature conservation staff, but with an encouraging increase in the number of counters from the Namibia bird club. The areas counted, the species richness and total birds seen are summarised below.

RESULTS

Namibia, like other southern hemisphere countries continued to suffer from a prolonged drought, apparently the result of a strong El Nino event in the Pacific Ocean. Australia has also undergone a crippling drought and one can only assume that many wetland birds including temperate migrants must have had a torrid time of it in 1992. This is reflected in many dry pans, which needless to say had no birds. However, contrary to what one might expect in a major drought, the count for July 1992 was very high with over 170 000 birds recorded from 40 wetlands (Table 1). However, almost 30 fewer wetland species occurred than in July 1991. In that count 100 847 birds and 107 species were recorded from 27 wetlands.

DISCUSSION

The most likely explanation for the high number of wetland birds is that they became concentrated on larger water bodies (exactly those which were counted) as the smaller pans (e.g. Bushmanland) and dams dried up. Hence the higher numbers. The lower species diversity may be due to those species that require special conditions (e.g. flooded grasslands) not finding their critical habitat and dispersing. The large number of dry pans (below) support this possibility.

Table 1. Summary of the number of species and the total number of wetland birds counted at 40 major wetlands throughout Namibia.

AREA	(COUNTERS)	No. SPECIES	No. BIRDS
1. Cunene River mouth	( )	not counted	
2. Hoarusib River mouth	( )	not counted	
3. Hoanib River mouth	(Rod Braby)	19	348
4. Huab River mouth	(Jan H. Friede)	19	147
5. Ugab River mouth	(Rob Davis)	4	13
6. Cape Cross saltworks	(L & R Stafford)	17	4 088
7. Mile 4 saltworks	(Dr G/Gladys Friede)	21	100 292
8. Swakop River mouth	(Rod Braby/G Friede)	17	151
9. Swakop sewage works	(Dr G/Gladys Friede)	13	231
10. Nonidas (Swakopmund)	(Dr G/Gladys Friede)	14	73
11. Palmenhorst	(Ole Friede)	4	24
Sandwich N. wetlands	(Simmons, Braby and)	35	596
Sandwich S. mudflats	(Barnard)	41	60 169
13. Luderitz: Agate+	(Mark Roods &)	Data not	
Luderitz: Radford+	(J.D. Mutibi)	available	
Luderitz: Guano Bay	(")		
Luderitz: G. Bucht	(")		
14. Bushmanland: Baraka	(Sakkie v. Plato)	0 (DRY)	0
Nyae Nyae	(")	0 "	0
Makuri V.	(")	0 "	0
Klein Dobe	(")	0 "	0
15. Etosha: Fisher's P.	(Johan Le Roux)	0 (DRY)	0
Klein Namutoni	(")	4	5
16. Ekuma R./Opono L.	(von Plato/Versfeld)	2	10
17. Hardap Dam	(Martin Britz)	22	1 213
18. Friedenau Dam	( )	not counted	
19. Omatako Dam	(H. Dedekind)	29	1 342
20. Otjivero Dam	(Dieter Ludwig)	17	404
21. Naute Dam	(W.H. Lategan)	9	555
22. Dreihukdam	(J.L. Nel)	11	263
23. Kambingama Dam	(H. Rookan-Smith)	0 (DRY)	0
24. von Bach Dam	(Kevin Roberts)	16	724
25. Oanob Dam	(Dieter Ludwig)	17	205
26. Swakoppoort Dam	(Kevin Roberts)	25	3 243
27. Windhoek Sewage wks	(D.Ludwig et al.)	22	636
28. Rundu Sewage wks	(P. Lane & R.Perrin)	10	233
29. Kavango R. (2km)	(")	10	27
30. Mahango Reserve	(Patrick Lane)	38	915
31. Nkasa/Mamili N.P	(Kye Hillen)	9	30
32. Kwando River (5km)	( )	not counted	
33. Tsondab Vlei	(Peter Bridgeford)	0 (DRY)	0
34. Sossusvlei	(")	0 (DRY)	0
35. Borodimo Dam	(" / Mrs Jackson)	10	65
36. Nauchas Dam	(" ")	6	38
37. Guisis Dam	(" ")	20	291
38. Lepec Dam	(" ")	4	29
39. Haris dams, K.Hochl	(D. Ludwig)	16	240
40. Prospect dam "	(")	10	47
41. Rotenfels dam, Otavi	(Neil Thomson)	0 (DRY)	0
42. Esere dam, Otavi	(")	0 (DRY)	0
43. Wolwedans, Malthoe	(Mark Paxton)	3	3
44. Avis Dam, Windhoek	(S. Mallet-Veale)	0 (DRY)	0
45. Middelbult dam, Wtbg	( )	not counted	
TOTALS	AREAS COUNTED: 40	SPECIES 88	BIRDS: 176 649

A look at the composition of the counts indicates that just two areas consistently add a substantial portion to the overall numbers. They are the Mile 4 saltworks with massive numbers of Cape Cormorants breeding on artificial guano platforms, and Sandwich Harbour which adds between 15 000 and 60 000 birds to the total. These two areas alone this year comprised 161 000 of the 176 000 birds, or 91% of the total. One problem with such a skew is that counting such large numbers could greatly bias the results if any one count was wrong. Just such a problem may arise with Mile 4 guano platforms.

The saltworks-owners have calculated the number of birds per square metre of platform and knowing the entire platform area, estimate that between 500 000 and 1 000 000 birds breed there !! (R. Braby pers. comm.). Our counts have estimated between 61 000 to 100 000 birds - an order of magnitude difference! Thus it is very important that we count such areas as accurately as possible - by aerial photography or systematic techniques. Our experiences indicate that large flocks are always under-counted, and thus it is likely that the Mile 4 guano platforms hold more birds than our counts indicate.

Highlights of the wetland counts, July 1992

1. More birds than expected (176 000) occurred on the 40 wetlands counted, but 19 fewer species (88 vs. 107) occurred than in 1991. The drought thus appeared to concentrate those species able to tolerate the adverse conditions.

2. Once again the highest totals were recorded from Mile 4 guano platforms and surrounding wetland (100 292) and Sandwich Harbour (60 169). It is likely that the cormorants were under-counted.

3. The highest species richness was recorded on Sandwich Harbours's southern mudflats (41) closely followed by the Mahango Reserve (38).

4. The large storage dams once again proved their worth alongside sewage works in Windhoek (counted by Dieter Ludwig). Of the large dams, Swakoppoort (counted by Kevin Roberts) led with 3 243 birds (of 25 spp.) followed by Omatako (counted by Hartwig Dedekind) with 1 342 birds (and 29 spp.).

5. The counters who added most to this bi-annual monitoring were: Peter Bridgeford (6 wetlands), Dr Gisela and Gladys Friede (4 wetlands) and Dieter Ludwig (4 wetlands). The most difficult sites must surely be the far north-east (Mamili Park and Kavango River) with its difficult terrain, big crocs and logistical problems, counted by Kye Hillen and Patrick Lane/Roger Perrin respectively.

6. I estimate that over 90% of our wetlands are sampled, but due to logistical problems those in the north are under-sampled.

The future

In future, and beginning with the second census in 1993, counts will no longer be in July. They have been moved forward to MID APRIL. We have done this, in conjunction with other African countries, to attempt to determine the maximum number of wetland birds present

in Namibia at any one time (both January and July counts miss this peak). In this way we can still have a long-term baseline monitoring count (January), but in addition we can get an idea of just how productive our wetlands are with a count just after the rains in April.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to all counters particularly those in the north where conditions are far from ideal, and to those who have regularly counted and submitted forms over the last 2 years.

WHEN IN DOUBT, CHECK AGAIN!!

JAN AND SUZI VAN DE REEP

P.O. Box 180, Outjo

On the 12th of January 1991 we were rolling along in a westerly direction between Halali and Okaukuejo camps in Etosha. Just beyond Rietfontein waterhole in the dense mopane, the guinea fowls were vigorously shouting their alarm call. This particular area being excellent for leopards, we stopped and searched. We scanned every bush and stone, every tree and log. It was impossible to make out in which direction they were warning, as each guinea was looking somewhere else. But they would not stop cackling.

There was a small bird of prey tucked into a mopane tree, quietly surveying the scene. I casually remarked that it was an Eastern Redfooted Kestrel and continued searching for the spotted cat. No luck.

Some 40 minutes later we began on our way again. I was flipping through the bird book when I stumbled over the picture of the Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*). When I showed Jan the picture, he decided we must double-check with the bird in the tree and we drove back. So far, we were very calm and relaxed, somewhat weary from not having been able to find the leopard. And it was hot. But as we got out the 40X scope and fixed it on the bird and called out the different features we were seeing, our excitement rose. There were the deep yellow legs with black talons, the same yellow bill with black tip, the yellow eye-ring with a black mask extending almost from the ear coverts to the cere. The bird was a uniform grey except for the almost black primaries, which extended BEYOND the tail feathers!

We set up the video and got sufficient footage for Steve Braine at Hobatere Lodge to get all excited and later Chris Brown confirmed the sighting too.

There have been few sighting from Namibia of this bird. Some of the reasons may lie in the fact that it is easily overlooked, and that it is incorrectly identified when it IS seen (like our initial reaction!). One doesn't expect to see a Sooty Falcon. Steve had a sighting at Hobatere on two successive days about 2 weeks after our observation. Possibly the same bird?

DIE ERNÄHRUNG DER EULEN NAMIBIAS: EINE ÜBERSICHT

ROLF SCHOPPE

Am Galgenberg 52, D33034 Brakel, Deutschland

EINLEITUNG

Untersuchungen zur Ernährung südwestafrikanischer Eulen haben in Namibia eine lange Tradition und sind z.T. auf das engste mit der Tätigkeit der Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe der Namibia Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft oder, etwas aktueller ausgedrückt, dem Namibia Bird Club verbunden. So sammelten Mitglieder der Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe in den Jahren 1963-73 große Mengen von Eulengewöllen in unterschiedlichen Regionen des Landes, auf die Niethammer (1967/68, 1974/75) seine Veröffentlichungen aufbauen konnte.

Doch erste, wenn auch spärliche Angaben zur Ernährung südwestafrikanischer Eulen finden sich bereits bei Andersson (1872). Die bei Hoesch und Niethammer (1940) und Hoesch (1955) verzeichneten Angaben gehen auf direkte Beobachtungen oder Magenuntersuchungen einzelner Vögel zurück und liefern weitere Bausteine zu einem allerdings auch heute noch nicht abgerundeten Bild.

Waren direkte Beobachtungen und Magenuntersuchungen nicht dazu geeignet, umfassendes Material zur Ernährung der Eulen zusammenzutragen, eröffnet die Methode der Gewölleanalyse die Möglichkeit umfangreicher qualitativer und quantitativer Untersuchung. Als grundlegende Arbeit setzte die Veröffentlichung Niethammers (1967/68) wesentliche Impulse und steht am Beginn einer Folge von Untersuchungen, die bis in die Gegenwart reichen und sich mit der Ernährung der namibischen Eulen befassen (siehe Literaturverzeichnis).

Neben der grundlegenden Intention, etwas über die Ernährungsgewohnheiten der Eulen zu erfahren, fanden bereits früh andere Fragestellungen, die sich ebenfalls dieser Methode bedienten, das Interesse der Forscher, stellten das Beutetier in den Mittelpunkt der Betrachtung und erarbeiteten so grundlegendes Wissen zur Faunistik (Avery 1986, Niethammer 1967/68, 1974/75), Systematik (Bauer und Niethammer 1959), Morphologie (Niethammer 1967/68, 1974/75), Diagnose (Niethammer 1967/68), Ökologie (Tilson und LaRoux 1983) Vergesellschaftung (Avery 1986, Bauer und Niethammer 1955) und Populationsstruktur (Avery 1986) südwestafrikanischer Kleinsäuger. In neuerer Zeit wurde das Spektrum durch die Einbeziehung der Paläoökologie, die die Veränderung von Landschaften und Ökosystemen anhand biologischer Parameter zu erforschen sucht, erheblich erweitert (Avery 1984, Brain 1974, 1977). Wesentliche Arbeitshilfe bei der Diagnose von Säugetierresten aus Eulengewöllen bildet der von Coetzee (1972) erarbeitete Bestimmungsschlüssel.

Ziel der vorliegenden Darstellung ist es, den aktuellen Kenntnisstand zu Ernährung der Eulen zu dokumentieren und zu einem möglichst umfassenden Bild zusammenzufassen. Dabei möchte ich mich jedoch in einem doppelten Sinn bescheiden. Aspekte, die auf südwestafrikanische Untersuchungen zurückgehen, aber nicht die Eulen in den Mittelpunkt stellen, sondern sich mit allgemeinen ökologischen, paläoökologischen oder mammologischen Fragestellungen befassen, wurden bewußt ausgeklammert. Zudem habe ich mich bewußt auf