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NEW BIRD RECORDS FOR THE EAST CAPRIVI, NAMIBIA.

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INTRODUCTION

I was stationed from February to June 1988 at M'Pacha, East Caprivi, as a medical officer at the military sick bay. Despite limited time and transport, I managed to atlas ten atlas squares in the region, primarily during those months when most migrants were absent.

The Caprivi Strip forms a finger like projection form northern-eastern Namibia. It is divided into the West Caprivi and the East Caprivi zones by the Kwando river. This article is limited to the East Caprivi (ECZ). The northern border is formed by the Zambezi river while the southern border is a continuation of the Kwando river; it changes name to the Mashi, Linyanti and finally Chobe. The Chobe and the Zambezi river unite to end the strip. The strip is bordered by Zambia to the north, Botswana to the south, and Zimbabwe to the east. It lies in the Kalahari basin and has a subtropical climate with an average rainfall of 600 - 800 mm per annum (Koen 1988). During floods that occurred in 1958, Lake Liambezi in the south of the country was formed. In recent years severe drought conditions have resulted in this lake drying up and many floodplains becoming dry grassland.

With many large rivers, it is not surprising that much of the Caprivi consists of reed banks and floodplains. Most of the far eastern Caprivi is a large floodplain formed by the Zambezi and the Chobe River. Major dry-land plant communities consist of a belt of thickets and forest near Katima Mulilo and M'Pacha, Terminalia woodland near M'Pacha and Latala Pan, a central belt of Mopane woodland flanked on the north by Baikiaea woodland and Acacia to the south. All dry-land communities contain grasslands and pans (temporary or permanent). The floodplains along the Zambezi, Chobe and Linyanti rivers comprise rivers, swamps, pools, floodplains, grassland, thickets and forest. A belt of riverine forest occurs along the Zambezi and Chobe rivers. Manmade habitats also exist. For a detailed survey of the vegetation of the Caprivi, refer to Koen (1988).

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A limited number of studies have been conducted in the Caprivi in the past (Smithers 1964, Winterbottom 1971, Irwin et al. 1969, Kemp 1971, Koen 1988). This list of 'new' and unusual bird records is primarily based on the absence of these species in previous references, and in standard avian references for the East Caprivi (e.g., Maclean 1985). I also document noteworthy bird species recorded in wetter years, but which were noticeably absent in this study. Bird species are divided into broad categories eg. waterbirds and waders for simplicity and to hold the readers' interest, rather than simply listing these birds in numerical order.

A) Water dependent birds and related species.

Drought conditions appeared to have had a profound effect on waterbird and wader populations in the East Caprivi. Lake Liambezi was dry, as were a number of 'permanent' pans. The channel feeding Lake Liambezi from the Zambezi now has a low level roadway built across it. Changes in bird populations since June 1979 (the last date for which records exist, Koen 1988) include:

49. White Pelican Pelecanus onocrotalus

Recorded by Koen (1988) at Lake Liambezi. Absent in this study.

50. Pinkbacked Pelican Pelecanus rufescens

Recorded breeding at Lake Liambezi (Koen 1988). Absent in this study.

55. Whitebreasted Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo

A numerous resident of rivers and lakes (Koen 1988). Recorded once flying over Latala pan near M'Pacha.

74. Greenbacked Heron Butorides striatus

Uncommon resident recorded along the Zambezi at Katima Mulilo, Hippo Island and M'Palela Island. Also recorded in floodplains near Bukalo. Usually seen flying. First record for the East Caprivi.

95. African Spoonbill Platalea alba

A rare resident either singly or in mixed parties of herons or storks (Koen 1988). Not recorded in this study.

96. Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber

A rare vagrant to Lake Liambezi (Koen 1988). Unrecorded in this study.

100. Fulvous Duck Dendrocygna bicolor

A rare resident recorded on a few occasions on a temporary pan just outside M'Pacha (April and March) + on the Kwando/Mashi river at Lianshulu (May). Shy and unobtrusive - usually in pairs. Previously recorded at Lake Liambezi by Irwin et al. (1969).

106. Cape Teal Anas capensis

Uncommon resident recorded at Latala Pan and on the Zambezi river flood plains. Less conspicuous than other teals. Not recorded previously.

210. African Rail Rallus caerulescens

Rare resident recorded at Latala pan (March and April) and along the Zambezi river reedbanks (April). Last recorded by Kemp (1971) at Sangwali.

212. African Crake Crex egregia

Rare summer visitor recorded at Latala Pan (March and April) and at M'Palela Island (eastern floodplains in April). No previous records exist for the Caprivi.

224. Lesser Gallinule Porphyrula alleni

A resident observed frequently on the Kwando, Linyanti and Chobe rivers by Koen (1988). Not recorded in this study.

227. Lesser Moorhen Gallinula angulata

Recorded as a widespread resident, possibly as common as the moorhen by Koen (1988). Not recorded in this study.

228. Redknobbed Coot Fulica cristata

Koen (1988) found this to be a common resident in suitable habitat. Only regularly recorded at a permanent pan outside Katima Mulilo; a rare resident elsewhere. Omitted from bird guide distribution maps for the Caprivi.

229. African Finfoot Podica senegalensis

Rare resident - recorded near Katima Mulilo and Hippo Island in March. Probably overlooked. Usually secretive but once recorded in the middle of the Zambezi river. Last recorded by Winterbottom (1971). Record accepted by SWA rarities committee.

246. Whitefronted Plover Charadrius marginatus

Rare vagrant - recorded as a small group on M'Pacha runway (a single occasion in June). Previously recorded on Zambezi river sandbanks by Winterbottom (1971).

248. Kittlitz's Plover Charadrius pecuarius

Rare; recorded once in a small group on M'Palela Island (eastern floodplain) in April. Last record by Kemp (1971)

252. Caspian Plover Charadrius asiaticus

A rare summer visitor seen as a small group on M'Palela Island in April. Kemp (1971) recorded this species last.

258. Blacksmith Plover Vanellus armatus

Considered to be a rare vagrant by Koen (1988), but common to very common widespread resident in this study.

259. Whitecrowned Plover Vanellus albiceps

Uncommon resident recorded along the Zambezi river (April) and at M'Palela Island (May). Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

260. Wattled Plover Vanellus senegallus

A rare resident (Koen 1988). In this study a common resident especially along the Zambezi and Kwando/Mashi rivers. Usually in small groups.

261. Longtoed Plover Vanellus crassirostris

Rare resident; a single bird recorded in April along the Zambezi river. Last recorded by Irwin et al. (1969).

266. Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola

A rare resident; found at Katima Mulilo sewage pans February to June. Found to be widespread on pools and pans by Kemp (1971).

269. Marsh Sandpiper Tringa stagnatilis

Uncommon, widespread summer visitor. Previously recorded by Kemp (1971).

270. Greenshank Tringa nebularia

Rare visitor recorded on a single occasion by Koen (1988). Found to be an uncommon, widespread summer visitor in this study.

272. Curlew Sandpiper Calidris ferruginea

Rare summer visitor recorded once as a large group at M'Pacha sewage works in March. Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

274. Little Stint Calidris minuta

Common, widespread summer visitor recorded in fairly large flocks. Kemp (1971) recorded this species last.

294. Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta

A frequent resident of all shallow lakes, pools and pans (Koen 1988). Only one record for March from the Zambezi floodplains in this study.

295. Blackwinged Stilt Himantopus himantopus

A resident on all the pans according to Koen (1988), but unrecorded in this study.

303. Bronzewinged Courser Rhinoptilus chalcopterus

Single record for M'Palela Island in April. Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

306. Rock Pratincole Glareola nuchalis

Rare resident small group recorded at Chobe river rapids south of M'Palela Island (April). Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

339. Whitewinged Tern Chlidonias leucopterus

Common summer visitor large numbers recorded in breeding plumage over the Zambezi river in April. Previously recorded by Kemp (1971).

B. RAPTORS

A number of differences exist for raptor populations recorded in this study and those reported in previous studies. A number of species were recorded for the first time. The density of the vegetation especially during the rainy season made the sighting of the smaller raptors particularly difficult.

118. Secretary Bird Sagittarius serpentarius

A rare resident recorded by Koen (1988) and Kemp (1971). Unrecorded in this study.

130. Honey Buzzard Pernis apivorus

Rare summer migrant recorded once outside M'Pacha (March). Awaiting ratification by rarities committee. Previously unrecorded.

134. Lesser Spotted Eagle Aquila pomarina

Recorded once by Koen (1988). An uncommon summer visitor recorded in immature and adult plumage, usually seen in flight. Recorded in March and April. Often seen near M'Pacha airfield.

135. Wahlberg's Eagle Aquila wahlbergi

Uncommon summer resident recorded in March and April especially in M'Pacha and Katima areas. Recorded only five times by Koen (1988) in the south and the west. All previous records for September until February.

136. Booted Eagle Hieraaetus pennatus

Rare but widespread resident, recorded from March through June. Usually in pale plumage phase. First record for the Caprivi.

139. Longcrested Eagle Lophaetus occipitalis

A rare resident probably overlooked. A single juvenile recorded near Schuckmansburg (eastern floodplains). An adult bird was recorded perch hunting in suitable habitat along the Zambezi near Katima Mulilo.

145. Western Banded Snake Eagle Circaetus cinerascens

A single adult seen near Katima in April. Rare resident, seen sporadically in the past.

154. Lizard Buzzard Kaupifalco monogrammicus

Rare resident at Katima and M'Pacha sewage works. First Caprivian record.

160. African Goshawk Accipiter tachiro

Single record in Terminalia woodland near Latala (April). Last recorded by Kemp (1971) at Katima.

162. Pale Chanting Goshawk Melierax canorus

Seen twice by Koen (1988). Not recorded in this study.

163. Dark Chanting Goshawk Melierax metabates

Common, fairly widespread resident especially along the Katima - M'Pacha road. Previously recorded by Kemp (1971) near Linyanti.

167. Pallid Harrier Circus macrourus

Rare vagrant; recorded once in April over the eastern floodplains. Not previously recorded in the Caprivi.

170. Osprey Pandion haliaetus

Rare vagrant - recorded once in March along the Katima - M'Pacha road. No previous Caprivian records exist for this species.

174. African Hobby Falco cuvierii

A single record for the Kwando river (N'Kasa Island) in May. Previously unrecorded in the Caprivi.

178. Rednecked Falcon Falco chicquera

Rare resident - single record for the Zambezi river (!) near Schuckmansburg. Last recorded by Irwin (1969).

182. Greater Kestrel Falco rupicoloides

Rare resident - single record for Latala Pan in May. No previous records exist for this species in the Caprivi.

183. Lesser Kestrel Falco naumanni

Rare summer visitor - single record for M'Pacha in March. Previously unrecorded in the Caprivi.

185. Dickinson's Kestrel Falco dickinsoni

The commonest small diurnal raptor in the Caprivi. Kemp (1971) had similar findings, but the species was not recorded by Koen (1988).

397. Whitefaced Owl Otus leucotis

Fairly common widespread resident recorded at Latala, Lianshulu, M'Palela Island and M'Pacha. Not often seen, usually heard. First record for the Caprivi.

399. Barred Owl Glaucidium capense

Uncommon resident - recorded regularly at Latala pan in Terminalia and at M'Pacha. Recorded once only by Koen (1988). Smithers (1964) found this species to be 'locally common in riverine forest and well developed woodland in the Caprivi'.

403. Pel's Fishing Owl Scotopelia peli

Recorded once by Koen (1988). Not recorded in this study.

C. SANDGROUSE

344. Namaqua Sandgrouse Pterocles namaqua

Rare resident - a single bird recorded on Nkasa Island (Linyanti swamp system) in May. First record for the Caprivi.

D. CUCKOOS AND COUCALS

382. Jacobin Cuckoo Clamator jacobinus

Uncommon summer resident at M'Pacha and Latala. Recorded in both colour phases. Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

384. Emerald Cuckoo Chrysococcyx cupreus

Rare summer resident recorded in Zambezi forest near Katima Mulilo and Hippo Island. First record for the Caprivi. Accepted by the Namibia rarities committee.

385. Klaas's Cuckoo Chrysococcyx klaas

Rare summer resident recorded in Zambezi river forest near Katima Mulilo and Hippo Island. First Caprivian record.

388. Black Coucal Centropus bengalensis

Rare resident recorded on a number of occasions in the Zambezi river reedbanks. First definite Caprivian record. Record accepted by the rarities committee. Collected by J. Komen (pers. comm.).

E. **NIGHTJARS**

407. Natal Nightjar Caprimulgus natalensis

Rare, localized resident recorded at M'Palela Island (eastern floodplains) on a single occasion. Recorded by Irwin et al. (1969) as 'fairly common on the floodplains opposite Serondela, Botswana'. First Caprivian record.

408. Freckled Nightjar Caprimulgus tristigma

Rare, localized resident recorded in March at Latala Pan (Terminalia) and April (Latala Pan and M'Palela Island). Previously unrecorded in the Caprivi.

410. Pennantwinged Nightjar Macrodipteryx vexillaria

Koen (1988) described this species as 'a numerous migrant to the Baikiaea from August to April'. Although this particular region was not atlassed in this study, the species was recorded on M'Palela Island in April.

F. **SWIFTS, SWALLOWS AND MARTINS**

412. Black Swift Apus barbatus

Uncommon sporadic visitor seen in fairly large groups over M'Pacha (March and April) and over the Zambezi (April). A possible record from Katima Mulilo for September 1970 (Kemp, 1971).

415. Whiterumped Swift Apus caffer

Common, widespread visitor to M'Pacha and the Zambezi river. Recorded until June. No previous Caprivian records.

417. Little Swift Apus affinis

Common, localized summer visitor recorded in large numbers on M'Palela Island (April and May). First record for the Caprivi.

520. Whitethroated Swallow Hirundo albigularis

Common, widespread summer resident. Recorded until May. Last noted by Winterbottom (1971).

522. Wiretailed Swallow Hirundo smithii

Uncommon, widespread resident favouring the Zambezi and Kwando/Mashi rivers. Nest building near Katima Mulilo in April. Recorded as widespread by Winterbottom (1971) and Kemp (1971).

523. Pearlbreasted Swallow Hirundo dimidiata

Common, widespread resident favouring the Zambezi and Kwando/Mashi rivers, the eastern floodplains and the Linyanti swamps. Last recorded by Kemp (1971) at Katima Mulilo.

524. Redbreasted Swallow Hirundo semirufa

Uncommon summer resident, fairly widespread in Terminalia, eastern floodplains and thickets along the Zambezi river. Recorded until May. No previous Caprivian records.

531. Greyrumped Swallow Pseudhirundo griseopyga

Uncommon resident recorded along the Zambezi river and adjacent floodplains. Usually in small groups. Last recorded by Winterbottom (1971) as 'a common species on the floodplains'.

532. Sand Martin Riparia riparia

Rare summer visitor recorded along the Zambezi river in small groups (April). First record for the Caprivi.

536. Black Sawwing Swallow Psalidoprocne holomelas

Rare vagrant - a group of birds recorded at Katima Mulilo in March. No previous Caprivian records.

G. **TROGONS**

427. Narina Trogon Apaloderma narina

Heard on Hippo Island (Zambezi river, near Katima Mulilo). Uncommon localized resident in riverine forest. Last recorded on M'Palela Island by Smithers (1964).

H. **KINGFISHERS, BEE-EATERS**

436. Greyhooded Kingfisher Halcyon leucocephala

Uncommon summer resident along Zambezi and Linyanti rivers - locally common in Katima Mulilo. Koen (1988) found this species commonly along the Kwando but rarely in the Zambezi forest.

438. European Bee-eater Merops apiaster

Uncommon summer visitor - common along the Katima - M'Pacha road in March. Previously recorded at Linyanti in October 1970 (Kemp 1971).

439. Olive Bee-eater Merops superciliosus

Rare visitor - a single sighting of a small group of birds in the eastern floodplain (M'Palela Island) in April. First record for the Caprivi. Awaiting ratification by the rarities committees.

440. Bluecheeked Bee-eater Merops persicus

Uncommon summer visitor to the eastern floodplains and Latala pan. Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

443. Whitefronted Bee-eater Merops bullockoides

Uncommon, widespread resident always near water (especially Kwando/Mashi and Zambezi rivers). A breeding colony was recorded at Hippo Island in April. Usually in small groups.

I. HORNBILLS, HONEYGUIDES AND WOODPECKERS

458. Redbilled Hornbill Tockus erythrorhynchus

Recorded on a single occasion along the Kwando river in May. Koen (1988) found this to be 'a numerous and widespread resident'.

460. Crowned Hornbill Tockus alboterminatus

Fairly common widespread resident and especially of terminalia and thickets in the M'Pacha region. Usually singly or in small groups. Vocal species. First record for the Caprivi.

461. Bradfield's Hornbill Tockus bradfieldi

Fairly common to common resident of Terminalia and Mopane woodland. Usually singly or in small groups. Vocal species not previously recorded in the Caprivi.

463. Ground Hornbill Bucorvus leadbeateri

Rare resident recorded in a small group once at Latala Pan (open grassland) in May. Koen (1988) found it to be a numerous and widespread resident.

474. Greater Honeyguide Indicator indicator

Rare resident; a single sighting along the Kwando river in a thicket (April). Probably overlooked. Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

476. Lesser Honeyguide Indicator minor

Rare resident; recorded at M'Pacha and Katima (April and June). Probably overlooked. Known from Kasane, Botswana (Smithers, 1964). First Caprivian record.

478. Sharpbilled Honeyguide Prodotiscus regulus

Rare resident; a pair recorded regularly at M'Pacha, and a single bird recorded at Kongola. First records for the Caprivi.

487. Bearded Woodpecker Thripias namaquus

Uncommon, widespread resident of Terminalia thickets and mopane. Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

J. LARKS

494. Rufousnaped Lark Mirafra africana

Uncommon, localized resident, recorded regularly at M'Pacha airfield and once at Nkasa Island (Linyanti Swamps). Previously recorded by Kemp (1971).

497. Fawncoloured lark Mirafra africanoides

Rare, localized resident; recorded at M'Pacha airfield in April and May. Last recorded by Irwin et al. (1969).

505. Dusky Lark Pinarocorys nigricans

Rare, localized, summer resident; recorded in April, May and early June at M'Pacha airfield and at a pan along the Katima - M'Pacha road. Usually in small groups. First record for the Caprivi.

507. Redcapped Lark Calandrella cinerea

Rare, localized resident; single records for M'Palela Island (eastern floodplain). In April and N'Kasa Island (Linyanti swamps) in May. Previously unrecorded in the Caprivi.

515. Chestnut-Backed Finchlark Eremopterix leucotis

Fairly widespread resident recorded at the M'Pacha airfield, in Terminalia grasslands and in the eastern floodplain (M'Palela Island). Recorded at Kabuta in the eastern floodplains in July 1949 - no records since then.

K. CUCKOOSHRIKES AND ORIOLES

538. Black Cuckooshrike Campephaga flava

Rare resident; recorded twice in Zambezi riverine forest and once in Kwando river thickets. First Caprivian record.

543. European Golden Oriole Oriolus oriolus

Rare summer visitor recorded at M'Pacha and from riverine forest along the Zambezi in March. Previously recorded only at Linyanti by Kemp (1971) in October 1970.

L. **PENDULINE TITS AND ROBINS**

558. Grey Penduline Tit Anthoscopus caroli

Uncommon resident recorded in riverine thickets (Kwando/Mashi and Zambezi) and in eastern floodplains (M'Palela Island). Last recorded by Winterbottom (1971).

600. Natal Robin Cossypha natalensis

Rare resident, fairly widespread - recorded in riverine forest (Zambezi) and in thickets (M'Pacha airfield). Not previously recorded in the Caprivi.

613. Whitebrowed Robin Erythropygia leucophrys

Common, widespread resident; last recorded by Kemp (1971).

617. Bearded Robin Erythropygia quadrivirgata

Uncommon, widespread resident - recorded in Terminalia (Latala Pan), thickets (M'Pacha Island), M'Pacha thickets and Kwando river thickets (Lianshulu). Last recorded by Smithers (1964) along the Chobe river.

M. **WARBLERS, CISTICOLAS AND ALLIES**

619. Garden Warbler Sylvia borin

Uncommon, fairly widespread summer visitor recorded in thickets (M'Pacha, Katima Mulilo and along the Zambezi river). Last recorded in March. A single bird trapped by Koen (1988) along the Kwando river in March.

625. Icterine Warbler Hippolais icterina

Rare summer visitor recorded from thickets along the Zambezi river in March. Previously unrecorded in the Caprivi.

638. African Sedge Warbler Bradypterus baboecala

Uncommon resident of reedbanks along the Zambezi and Kwando/Mashi rivers. Recorded by Smithers (1964) as 'widespread throughout the Caprivi.'

648. Yellowbreasted Apalis Apalis flavida

Uncommon, widespread resident of thickets along the Zambezi and Kwando/Mashi rivers, mixed woodland near M'Pacha and thickets in Terminalia. Last recorded by Kemp (1971) at Katima Mulilo during September and October 1970.

653. Yellowbellied Eremomela Eremomela icteropygialis

Fairly common, widespread resident recorded regularly at M'Pacha in thickets and along the Zambezi/Kwando/Mashi rivers. 'Occurs throughout the Caprivi' (Smithers 1964).

655. Greencapped Eremomela Eremomela scotops

Rare resident - recorded twice in riverine thickets (Katima Mulilo and Lianshulu). No definite previous records for the Caprivi.

656. Burntnecked Eremomela Eremomela usticollis

Uncommon resident found in thickets near M'Pacha and along the Zambezi/Kwando/Mashi rivers. Last recorded by Smithers (1964).

657. Bleating Warbler Camaroptera brachyura

Common, widespread resident - very common in thickets near M'Pacha and in terminalia. No previous records for the Caprivi.

658. Barred warbler Camaroptera fasciolata

Uncommon, widespread resident recorded in thickets near M'Pacha, in terminalia (Latala Pan) and along the Kwando/Mashi rivers (Lianshulu). Unrecorded in the Caprivi in the past.

659. Stierling's Barred Warbler Camaroptera stierlingi

Rare vagrant - single record from Terminalia thicket (Latala Pan) in March. No Caprivian records exist for this species.

665. Desert Cisticola Cisticola aridula

Uncommon, widespread resident occurring in suitable habitat. No previous Caprivian records for this species.

671. Tinkling Cisticola Cisticola rufilata

Uncommon resident recorded in Terminalia thickets, mixed bushveld near M'Pacha and in thickets on N'Kasa Island (arid regions in Linyanti swamps). Not previously recorded in the Caprivi.

674. Redfaced Cisticola Cisticola erythrops

Fairly common resident of reedbanks along the major rivers. No previous Caprivian records for this species.

675. Blackbacked Cisticola Cisticola galactotes

Fairly common resident of reedbanks along the major rivers. Collected at Katima Mulilo by Kemp (1971).

678. Croaking Cisticola Cisticola natalensis

Rare vagrant - single recording at Katima sewage works in May. First record for the Caprivi.

681. Neddicky Cisticola fulvicapilla

Uncommon, widespread resident recorded in thickets near M'Pacha, terminalia near Latala Pan, thickets in the eastern floodplain (M'Palela Island) and Mopane/Acacia (Lianshulu/Linyanti area). Last recorded by Smithers (1964).

685. Blackchested Prinia Prinia flavicans

Rare vagrant - recorded once in thicket near M'Pacha in breeding plumage (March). No previous Caprivian records.

N. SHRIKES

734. Sousa's Shrike Lanius souzae

Rare localized resident recorded near M'Pacha airfield in March on a single occasion. Awaiting ratification by the rarities committee. No previous Caprivian records.

751. Greyheaded Bush Shrike Malaconotus blanchoti

Rare resident recorded in thickets near M'Pacha and Schuckmansburg in March. Solidary and vocal. Last recorded at Katima Mulilo (Kemp 1971).

754. Redbilled Helmetshrike Prionops retzii

Rare localized resident in Terminalia (Latala Pan) recorded in May. Last recorded by Winterbottom (1971).

O. SUNBIRDS

778. Coppery Sunbird Nectarinia cuprea

Rare resident recorded at M'Pacha (April) and Lianshulu (May). Record accepted by the SWA rarities committee. No previous Caprivian records exist for this species.

780. Purplebanded Sunbird Nectarinia bifasciata

Uncommon, widespread, resident recorded at Lianshulu, M'Pacha and Kongola. Last recorded by Smithers (1964)

793. Collared Sunbird Anthreptes collaris .

Uncommon, widespread resident recorded at M'Pacha, Katima Mulilo and M'Palela Island (eastern floodplains). Last recorded by Kemp (1971).

P. SPARROWS, WEAVERS AND ALLIES

799. Whitebrowed Sparrow Weaver Plocepasser mahali

Common, localized resident of Terminalia regularly recorded outside M'Pacha and at Latala Pan. Breeding in March, April and May. Not previously recorded in the Caprivi.

820. Cuckoo Finch Anomalospiza imberbis

Rare vagrant - a pair recorded once in M'Pacha in March. First record for the Caprivi.

828. Redshouldered Widow Euplectes axillaris

Common resident recorded in the eastern floodplains - males in breeding plumage but forming large non breeding groups in April. Described by Koen (1988) as 'a rare resident recorded on nine occasions along the Linyanti and Chobe rivers'.

829. Whitewinged Widow Euplectes albonotatus

Uncommon resident recorded in the eastern floodplains and at a temporary pan near Katima Mulilo. In breeding plumage until April. Single males seen usually; sometimes seen in mixed flocks with redshouldered widows. First record for the Caprivi.

Q. **OTHER SPECIES**

864. Black Widow Finch Vidua funerea

Rare resident, localized to M'Pacha - recorded calling for protracted periods from treetops in April. First record for the Caprivi.

CONCLUSION

Although there is considerable overlap in published bird lists for the East Caprivi (see Koen 1988), this study has provided a number of new observations of species previously overlooked, and furthermore has noted the unusual absence of some water-dependent bird species (cf. Koen 1988). Factors influencing the considerable variation in species and numbers of species recorded since Koen's (1988) study include drought conditions during this study; many of the large shallow pans recorded by Koen were dry in this study (detrimental to birds such as pelicans and flamingos) while more shoreline was exposed (beneficial to waders and plovers). There is some evidence that populations of birds move considerable distances within the East Caprivi (unpublished data), with species staying for fairly short periods of time in a particular area. These movements occur especially in winter. The vegetation in the East Caprivi is often difficult for bird-watching; riverine thickets and forests and vast, inaccessible floodplains. It is therefore feasible that all these studies (including this one) have overlooked bird species. A number of species recorded regularly in the Caprivi during this study are not included in bird guide distribution maps for this area. The following species continue to appear on bird distribution maps for the Caprivi but have, as yet, not been recorded for the area: Redchested Cuckoo Cuculus solitarius, Rock Kestrel Falco tinnunculus, Alpine Swift Apus melba, and Rock Martin Hirundo fuligula.

The Caprivi is largely unspoilt, providing a diversity of unique water and forest habitat and a number of rare bird species thrive in this environment. For this reason this habitat must be protected, and urgent action is needed to prevent this ecological gem from becoming sterile wasteland and being lost for all time.

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