



CONTENTS

THOMSON N Editorial	1
SWANEPOEL W Angola Cave Chat <i>Xenocopychus ansorgei</i> in the Kaokoveld of Namibia	2
WOOLLEY S Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i> at Rundu Sewage Works – a New Species for Namibia	3
KEMPER J Cat Alert on Halifax Island	4
BROWN C Notes on Arnot’s Chat and Sharp-tailed Starling from Eastern Caprivi, Namibia	6
KOLBERG H Summary of the 2011 Ringing Season in Namibia	7
DEMASIUS E An Interesting Observation on Feeding Behaviour	10
THOMSON N Are you sure that “your” Garden Birds really are “your” Garden Birds?	11
KOLBERG H Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations : Rails, Gallinules, Coot and Jacana	13
THOMSON N A Weekend at Omandumba	17

MÜLLER E Report on the 2012 Namibian Ringers’ Get-together	19
KOLBERG H Summary of the 2012 Sum- mer Wetland Bird Counts in Namibia	21
THOMSON N Red-billed Queleas	21
ATLAS UPDATE	24
RARITIES AND INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS	25

Editorial

In this issue I am delighted to be able to publish articles on two species new to Namibia, one of which is in fact new to the southern African sub-region and is believed to be resident in the far north west of Namibia.

In May 2012 Wessel Swanepoel discovered a population of Angola Cave Chats on the southern slopes of the Zebra Mountains west of Swartbooisdrif in the far northwest of Namibia. This species was thought to be an Angolan endemic but has now been found south of the border. Please take note of Wessel’s request that he be informed of any further sightings of this species in order to facilitate his research into this species in Namibia.

The second species new to Namibia which we feature in this issue is the Lesser Yellowlegs seen by Simon Woolley at the Rundu Sewage

crew it was either thrown overboard next to the island and swam ashore or was deposited there. The actual story of how the cat got onto the island and what happened to it in the end will, however, always remain a mystery.

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Notes on Arnot's Chat and Sharp-tailed Starling from Eastern Caprivi

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In Namibia, Arnot's Chat *Myrmecocichla arnoti* is confined to the north-eastern regions from Ohangwena in the west through parts of Kavango and into Caprivi (Figure 1). It is recorded from just 36 quarter degree squares (Jarvis et al. 2001) and occurs in well-developed broad-leafed woodlands,

particularly those dominated by *Burkea*, *Biakiaea* and *Pterocarpus* tree species, and mopane woodland. Its population density varies considerably. Along river systems in parts of Botswana about 833 birds were estimated per 10 km² (Herremans 1997) while in the mopane-dominated woodlands of the Salambala Conservancy bordering the Chobe River in Caprivi only two birds were recorded during a bird survey of seven square km blocks (Ward & Robertson 2002).

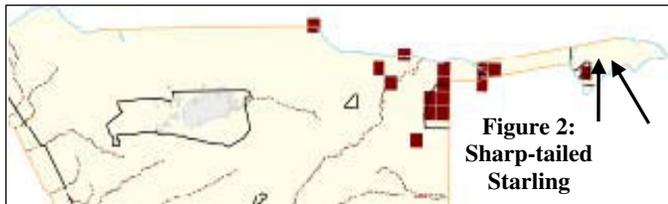


On 26-27 September 2011 an avifaunal survey was carried out in quarter degree squares 1723Dd and 1724Cc which lie some 40 km south-west of Katima Mulilo between the B8 road from Kongola to Katima Mumilo and the D3511 from Linyanti village to Karima (see arrows on maps). A transect of 27 km was driven slowly through the “Mopane-Aristida Woodland” vegetation type which is a subset of the broader Caprivi Mopane Woodland system, on a small 4x4 track. The visibility on each side of the track was on average about 100 m, and all the Arnot's Chats seen were within this distance of the track, i.e. a survey area of about 5.4 km². This gives a density of about 22 birds per 10 km².

If we assume that on average one third of the habitat of the 36 quarter degree squares in which Arnot's Chats have been recorded is of suitable habitat this would give about 6,000 km² of suitable habitat. If we applied the density figures for Salambala and those from the above transect, we would get a national population that ranges between 1,700 and 13,200, with an average of these two estimates of 7,000 to 8,000 birds probably being fairly realistic.

The Sharp-tailed Starling *Lamprotornis acuticaudus* has a similar range and occupies similar woodland habitats in the sandveld areas of Namibia to Arnot's Chat, except that it is more sparsely distributed, particularly in the Caprivi where it has been recorded only in

the Mudumu National Park (Underhill & Brown 1997). It has been recorded from just 15 quarter degree squares. During the above described avifaunal survey two flocks of Sharp-tailed Starlings were encountered with a total of 11 birds in the 5.4 km² transect. This gives a density of about 20 birds per 10 km². This is the first record of Sharp-tailed Starlings in the Mopane woodlands in the interior of eastern Caprivi (Figure 2).



If we again assume that on average one third of the habitat of the now 17 quarter degree squares in which Sharp-tailed Starlings have been recorded is suitable habitat this would give about 2,500 km² of suitable habitat. Applying the above density figure to this area gives an estimate of about 5,000 birds. However, one survey can be misleading and additional information is needed before we can make any reliable estimates.

It is evident that we have poor population estimates on many bird species in Namibia. These simple transect counts can provide useful information on the status of many species, and the more transect information we have, the better will be the estimates.

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Summary of the 2011 Ringing Season in Namibia

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Namibian ringers once again excelled in 2011 ringing close to 16,000 birds of 248 species. Four ringers handled over 2,000 birds (Dirk, Neil, Mark B and Ursula) and Dirk's tenacity once again put him on top of the list for the number of species ringed. Two seabird species, Black Tern and African Penguin, top the list of all species handled whilst Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk just pips two vulture species to the top of the raptor list. Seabirds dominate the top of the list of waterbirds.

Nine of our endemic bird species were handled. Klein Windhoek is turning into a real hotbed of bird ringing, proving that town-based ringers can make significant contributions.

Several project based ringing activities continued this year. Sigi Braby continued the Damara Tern monitoring notwithstanding some serious difficulties, Mark Boorman continued his dedication to terns, especially Black Terns, Wilferd Versfeld managed to catch six Blue Cranes and the vulture ringers again had a good season.

Many thanks to all the ringers for their cooperation and hard work.