

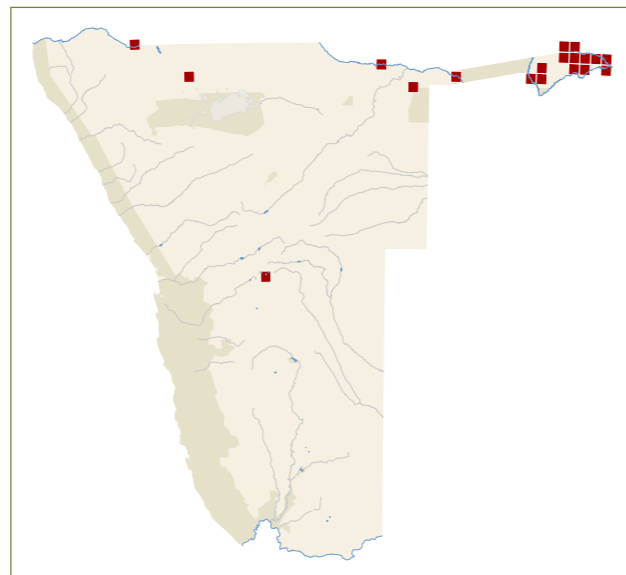
National Park. There are several additional records from the Salambala Conservancy that offers it further protection from possible overgrazing by the large number of cattle present in the Zambezi region. It is not a conservation priority in Namibia because birds occur well beyond Namibia's borders in Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola (Tree 1997).

### Village Indigobird (Steelblue Widowfinch) | *Vidua chalybeata*

This species and the Purple Indigobird (Purple Widowfinch) *V. purpurascens* show great similarity in their distributions which, in southern Africa, are predominantly in the savannahs and broad-leafed woodlands of Zimbabwe, northern South Africa, and eastern and northern Botswana. In Namibia, both occur very rarely along the Okavango River, with only this species occurring in the thorn savannahs and edges of broad-leafed woodland in the Zambezi region (Barnard 1997b, 1997c). Here, they are found only in the wetter months, from October to April (M Paxton pers. obs.). Both species have also been recorded in the woodland associated with the Kunene River near Ruacana, and occasionally into the Cuvelai drainage system in northern Namibia (Barnard 1997c). The more common Village Indigobird occupies 8,400 km<sup>2</sup> in Namibia (14% of which is in protected areas), with a reporting rate of 7%, and is a brood parasite of the Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* and the Brown Firefinch *L. nitidula*. True to its name, the Village Indigobird is at home in the mosaic of agriculture and rural villages found in the north-east (Payne 1985, M Paxton pers. obs.). In 1995, Red-billed Firefinches were recorded for the first time in the Windhoek area. This population bred and became established as one of the more common garden birds, spreading up the Okahandja valley and down the Swakop River. In 2009, the first



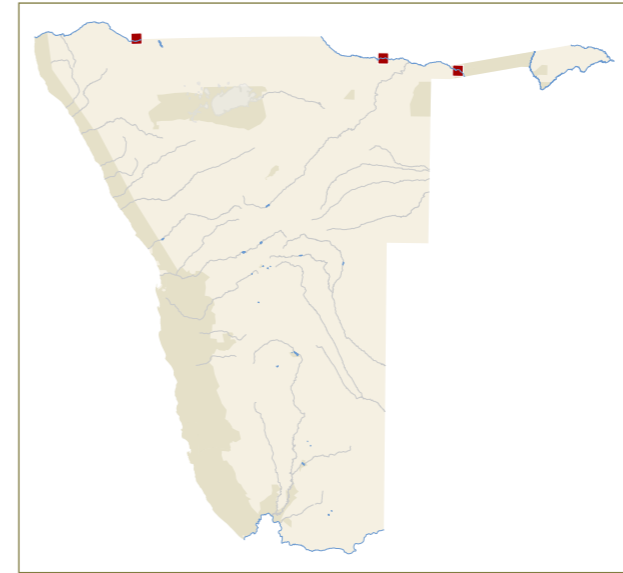
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confirmed sighting of a Village Indigobird, the western race *V. c. okavangoensis*, was recorded in Windhoek. Since then, the species has expanded rapidly across the city and northwards along the valley towards Okahandja, with a number of records of brood parasitism of the firefinch. These two populations are isolated from their nearest conspecifics by about 700 km (Schubert *et al.* 2012, Brown 2015). The Village Indigobird is common elsewhere and does not warrant conservation attention in Namibia.

### Purple Indigobird (Purple Widowfinch) | *Vidua purpurascens*

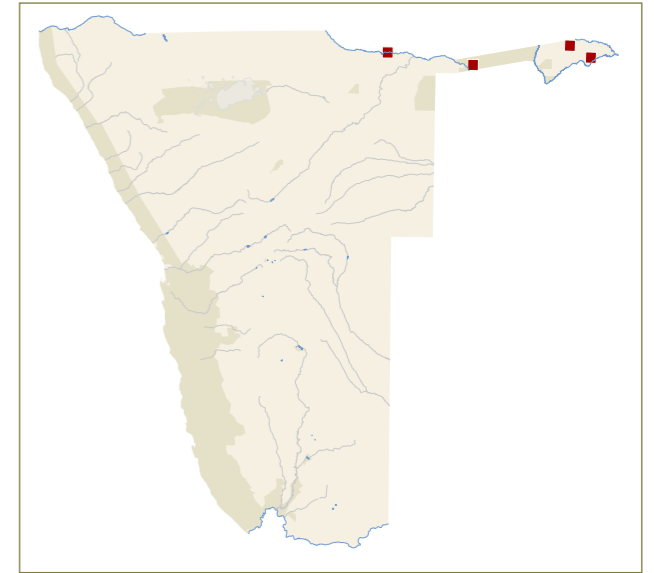
This species occupies a small area of 1,300 km<sup>2</sup> (38% of which is in protected areas) in the broad-leafed woodland savannahs associated with the Okavango



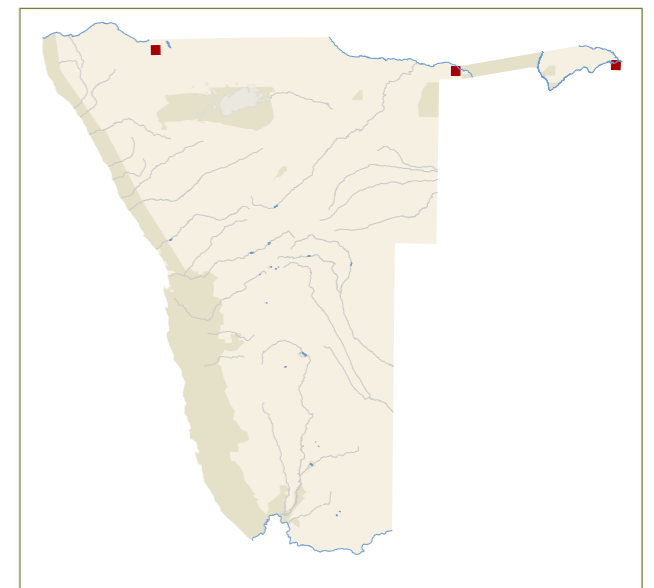
River in Namibia, and the Kunene River near Ruacana (Barnard 1997b). It is seasonal in its appearance, occurring there only in the wetter months (M Paxton pers. obs.). Elsewhere in southern Africa, it is found in northern Botswana, Zimbabwe and northern South Africa, with a reporting rate in Namibia of less than 4% (Jarvis *et al.* 2001). It is much rarer than the similar Village Indigobird (Steelblue Widowfinch) *V. chalybeata*. Purple Indigobirds parasitise Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*. Both species of indigobird are probably under-recorded because females and non-breeding birds are difficult to identify (Barnard 1997b, 1997c). The two species only differ in their response to human habitat alteration, with riverine forest degradation probably affecting numbers of the Purple Indigobird more than the Village Indigobird. These species occur throughout large parts of Africa and as such do not warrant special conservation attention in Namibia.

### Cuckoo Finch | *Anomalospiza imberbis*

Common in suitable habitat throughout sub-Saharan Africa, this brood parasitic species is confined to Zimbabwe, northern South Africa and the north-eastern region of Namibia; it is rarely seen on the Okavango River (Tree 1997, Paxton 2010). It appears to be irruptive, appearing in some areas in large flocks after rains, where its favoured habitat is open grassland and well-vegetated wetlands (Tree 1997). In Namibia, it has only been recorded in December, March, May and September, and occupies an area of 1,700 km<sup>2</sup>, none of which occurs in protected areas. However, birds have also been recorded in the Mahango area of the Bwabwata National Park and appear in the Omurambas in wet years (P Lane pers. obs.). It parasitises cisticolas and prinias, and lays its eggs between September and April (Tarboton 2001). It is not a conservation priority in Namibia.



### Northern Grey-headed Sparrow | *Passer griseus*



This species can be distinguished from the ubiquitous Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *P. diffusus* by its larger size and more robust appearance with longer tail and larger bill. The plumage is darker and has a less distinct white wing bar (Dean 2005g). This species is common from the Sahel region south to Angola and northern Mozambique. Very few records occur in Namibia because it is below the southern limit of its normal range (which may change with climate warming), and because of probable confusion with the Southern Grey-headed Sparrow. It is found in a wide range of habitats, from desert oases to forest clearings. Two records from Namibia are from Ruacana and from the Zambezi region (Dean 2005g). It has also been recently recorded from Impalila Island on the eastern tip of the Caprivi Strip and from the Kavango. Its abundance elsewhere precludes it from entering any threat category.